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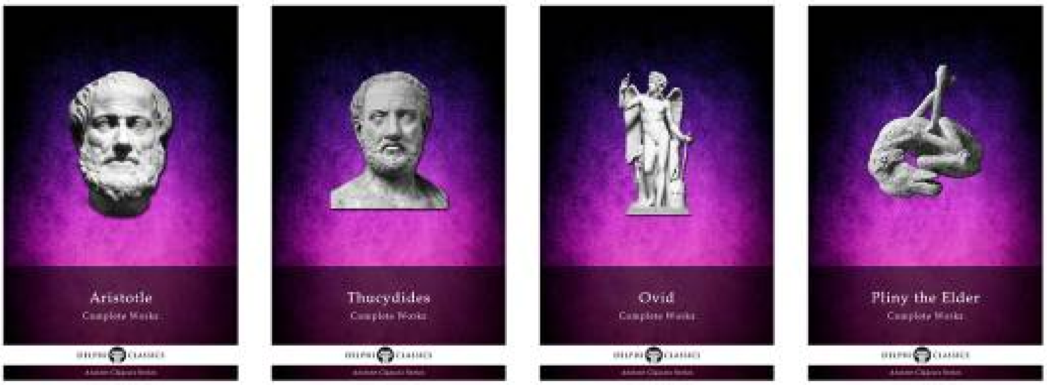
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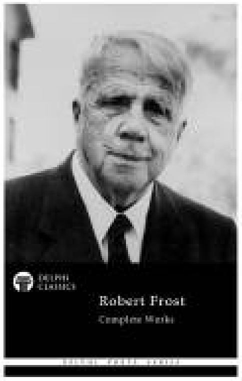
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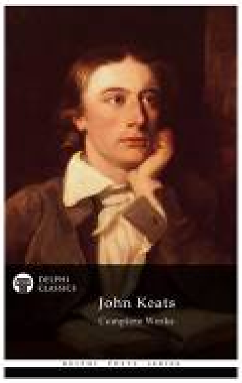
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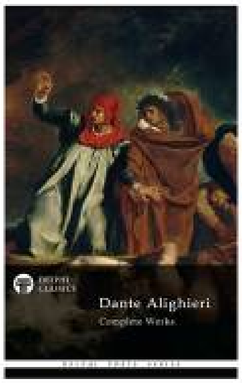
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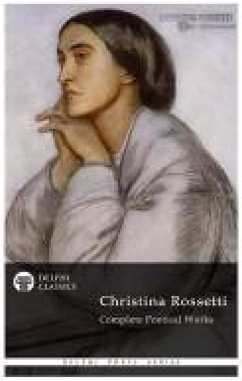
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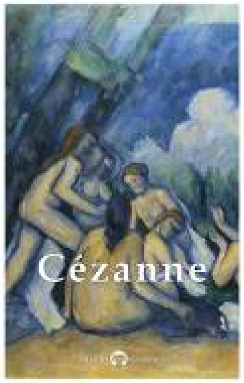
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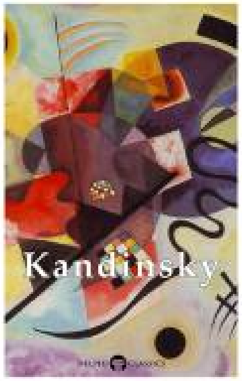
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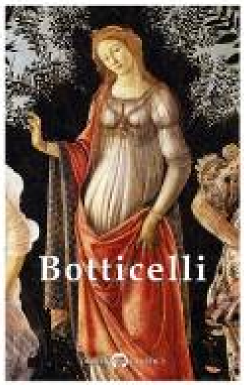
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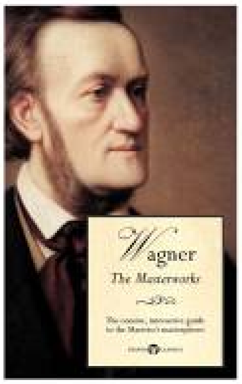
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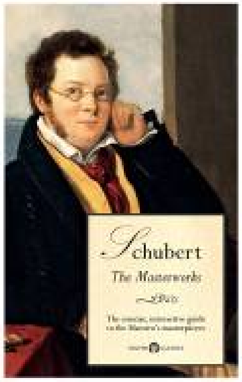
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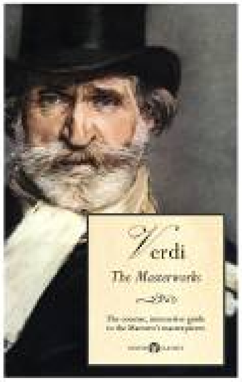
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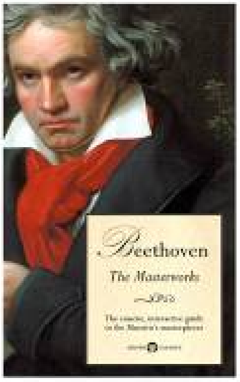
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The Complete Works of
ARTHUR MACHEN

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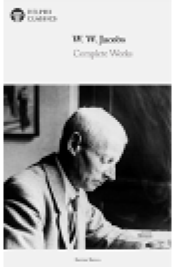
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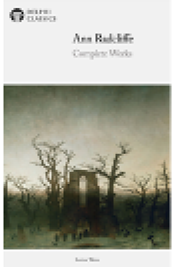
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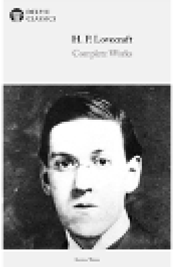
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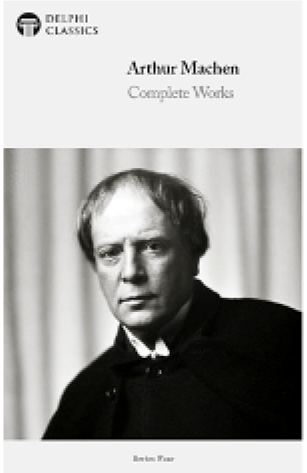
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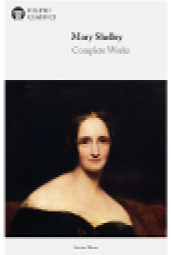
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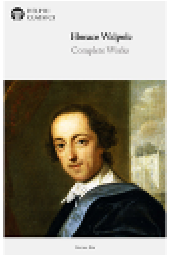
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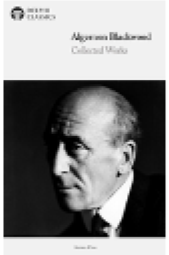
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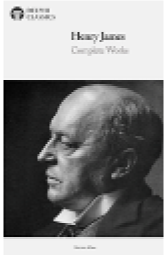
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The Novels

Machen’s birthplace in Caerleon, near Newport in South Wales

CAERLEON AND DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY
BIRTHPLACE
OF
ARTHUR MACHEN
AUTHOR
1863 - 1947
ARTHUR MACHEN SOCIETY
Y STRYD FAWR
HIGH STREET

The commemorative blue plaque at Machen’s birthplace

The Hill of Dreams

Written between 1895 and 1897, but not published until 1907, this is Machen's most notable full-length novel and is a classic of the decadent and aesthetic movement of the late-Victorian period. The decadent movement suffered a setback in 1895 when its major proponent, Oscar Wilde, was arrested and tried on charges of 'gross indecency'. In the aftermath of the trial, the decadent school of writing and amoral ethos of art for art's sake fell out of fashion – but Machen continued writing in that mode privately.

By 1907, Machen's writing career had resumed after a ten-year break in which he continued to write, but published nothing. Recognising *The Hill of Dreams* as among his best work, he decided finally to publish the novel, which was met with minimal, but enthusiastic acclaim (one of its major supporters was Wilde's former lover, Lord Alfred Douglas). A cult classic for many years, the novel is now recognised as an important example of late-Victorian decadent writing and a major landmark in Welsh literature.

Partly autobiographical, the novel tells of the development of the writer Lucian Taylor as he moves from his native Wales to London in pursuit of artistic fulfilment. Gradually, Lucian finds that he is damned by his dream-contact with pagan gods and his own inner demons.

Part of the remains of a Roman fort near Caerleon. The novel is set in the area where Machen grew up and these remains were one source of inspiration for the ‘hill of dreams’ amongst which Machen’s protagonist experiences his pagan reveries.

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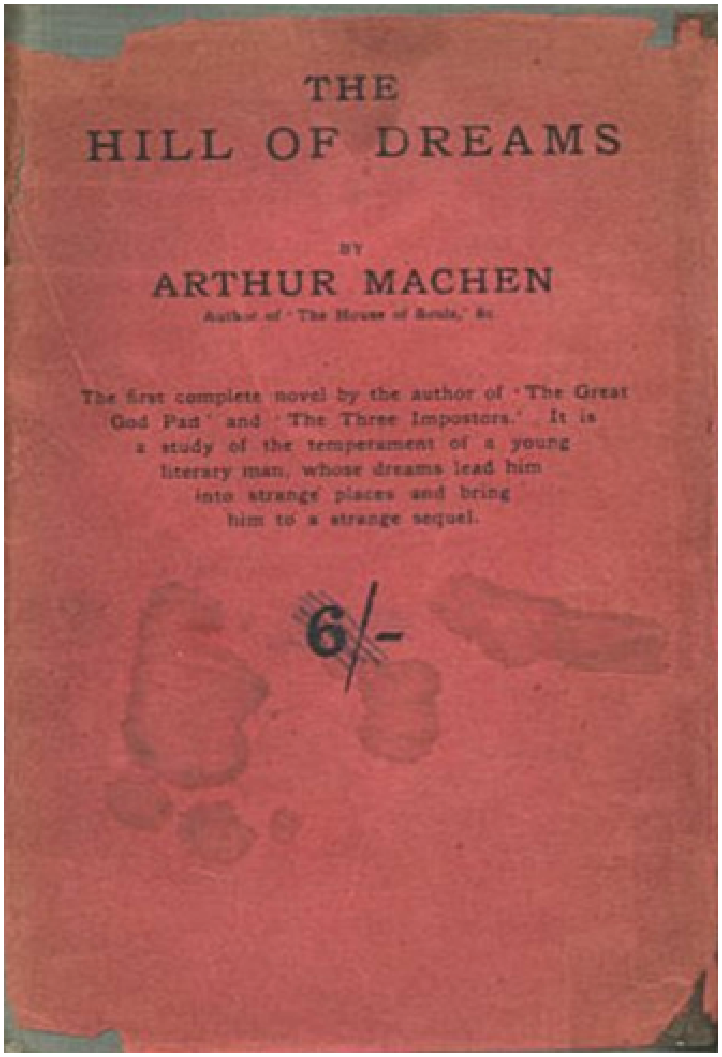


THE
HILL OF DREAMS

BY
ARTHUR MACHEN
Author of 'The House of Souls,' &c.

The first complete novel by the author of 'The Great
God Pan' and 'The Three Impostors.' It is
a study of the temperament of a young
literary man, whose dreams lead him
into strange places and bring
him to a strange sequel.

6/-

Cover of the first edition

I

THERE WAS A glow in the sky as if great furnace doors were opened.

But all the afternoon his eyes had looked on glamour; he had strayed in fairyland. The holidays were nearly done, and Lucian Taylor had gone out resolved to lose himself, to discover strange hills and prospects that he had never seen before. The air was still, breathless, exhausted after heavy rain, and the clouds looked as if they had been molded of lead. No breeze blew upon the hill, and down in the well of the valley not a dry leaf stirred, not a bough shook in all the dark January woods.

About a mile from the rectory he had diverged from the main road by an opening that promised mystery and adventure. It was an old neglected lane, little more than a ditch, worn ten feet deep by its winter waters, and shadowed by great untrimmed hedges, densely woven together. On each side were turbid streams, and here and there a torrent of water gushed down the banks, flooding the lane. It was so deep and dark that he could not get a glimpse of the country through which he was passing, but the way went down and down to some unconjectured hollow.

Perhaps he walked two miles between the high walls of the lane before its descent ceased, but he thrilled with the sense of having journeyed very far, all the long way from the know to the unknown. He had come as it were into the bottom of a bowl amongst the hills, and black woods shut out the world. From the road behind him, from the road before him, from the unseen wells beneath the trees, rivulets of waters swelled and streamed down towards the center to the brook that crossed the lane. Amid the dead and wearied silence of the air, beneath leaden and motionless clouds, it was strange to hear such a tumult of gurgling and rushing water, and he stood for a while on the quivering footbridge and watched the rush of dead wood and torn branches and wisps of straw, all hurrying madly past him, to plunge into the heaped spume, the barmy froth that had gathered against a fallen tree.

Then he climbed again, and went up between limestone rocks, higher and higher, till the noise of waters became indistinct, a faint humming of swarming hives in summer. He walked some distance on level ground, till there was a break in the banks and a stile on which he could lean and look out. He found himself, as he had hoped, afar and forlorn; he had strayed into outland and occult territory. From the eminence of the lane, skirting the brow of a hill, he looked down into deep valleys and dingles, and beyond, across the trees, to remoter country, wild bare hills and dark wooded lands meeting the grey still sky. Immediately beneath his feet the ground sloped steep down to the valley, a hillside of close grass patched with dead bracken, and dotted here and there with stunted thorns, and below there were deep oak woods, all still and silent, and lonely as if no one ever passed that way. The grass and bracken and thorns and woods, all were brown and grey beneath the leaden sky, and as Lucian looked he was amazed, as though he were reading a wonderful story, the meaning of which was a little greater than his understanding. Then, like the hero of a fairy-book, he went on and on, catching now and again glimpses of the amazing country into which he had penetrated, and perceiving rather than seeing that as the day waned everything grew more grey and somber. As he advanced he heard the evening sounds of the farms, the low of the cattle, and the barking of the sheepdogs; a faint thin noise from far away. It was growing late, and as the shadows blackened he walked faster, till once more the lane began to descend, there was a sharp turn, and he found himself, with a good deal of relief, and a little disappointment, on familiar ground. He had nearly described a circle, and knew this end of the lane very well; it was not much more than a mile from home. He walked smartly down the hill; the air was all glimmering and indistinct, transmuting trees and hedges into ghostly shapes, and the walls of the White House Farm flickered on the hillside, as if they were moving towards him. Then a change came. First, a little breath of wind brushed with a dry whispering sound through the hedges, the few leaves left on the boughs began to stir, and one or two danced madly, and as the wind freshened and came up from a new quarter, the sapless branches above rattled against one another like bones. The growing breeze seemed to clear the air and lighten it. He was passing the stile where a path led to old Mrs. Gibbon’s desolate little cottage, in the middle of the fields, at some distance even from the lane, and he saw the light blue smoke of her chimney rise distinct above the gaunt greengage trees, against a pale band that was broadening along the horizon. As he passed the stile with his head bent, and his eyes on the ground, something white started out from the black shadow of the hedge, and in the strange twilight, now tinged with a flush from the west, a figure seemed to swim past him and disappear. For a moment he wondered who it could be, the light was so flickering and unsteady, so unlike the real atmosphere of the day, when he recollected it was only Annie Morgan, old Morgan’s daughter at the White House. She was three years older than he, and it annoyed him to find that though she was only fifteen, there had been a dreadful increase in her height since the summer holidays. He had got to the bottom of the hill, and, lifting up his eyes, saw the strange changes of the sky. The pale band had broadened into a clear vast space of light, and above, the heavy leaden clouds were breaking apart and driving across the heaven before the wind. He stopped to watch, and looked up at the great mound that jutted out from the hills into mid-valley. It was a natural formation, and always it must have had something of the form of a fort, but its steepness had been increased by Roman art, and there were high banks on the summit which Lucian’s father had told him were the *vallum* of the camp, and a deep ditch had been dug to the north to sever it from the hillside. On this summit oaks had grown, queer stunted-looking trees with twisted and contorted trunks, and writhing branches; and these now stood out black against the lighted sky. And then the air changed once more; the flush increased, and a spot like blood appeared in the pond by the gate, and all the clouds were touched with fiery spots and dapples of flame; here and there it looked as if awful furnace doors were being opened.

The wind blew wildly, and it came up through the woods with a noise like a scream, and a great oak by the roadside ground its boughs together with a dismal grating jar. As the red gained in the sky, the earth and all upon it glowed, even the grey winter fields and the bare hillsides crimsoned, the waterpools were cisterns of molten brass, and the very road glittered. He was wonder-struck, almost aghast, before the scarlet magic of the afterglow. The old Roman fort was invested with fire; flames from heaven were smitten about its walls, and above there was a dark floating cloud, like fume of smoke, and every haggard writhing tree showed as black as midnight against the black of the furnace.

When he got home he heard his mother's voice calling: "Here's Lucian at last. Mary, Master Lucian has come, you can get the tea ready." He told a long tale of his adventures, and felt somewhat mortified when his father seemed perfectly acquainted with the whole course of the lane, and knew the names of the wild woods through which he had passed in awe.

"You must have gone by the Darren, I suppose" — that was all he said. "Yes, I noticed the sunset; we shall have some stormy weather. I don't expect to see many in church tomorrow."

There was buttered toast for tea "because it was holidays." The red curtains were drawn, and a bright fire was burning, and there was the old familiar furniture, a little shabby, but charming from association. It was much pleasanter than the cold and squalid schoolroom; and much better to be reading *Chambers's Journal* than learning Euclid; and better to talk to his father and mother than to be answering such remarks as: "I say, Taylor, I've torn my trousers; how much do you charge for mending?" "Lucy, dear, come quick and sew this button on my shirt."

That night the storm woke him, and he groped with his hands amongst the bedclothes, and sat up, shuddering, not knowing where he was. He had seen himself, in a dream, within the Roman fort, working some dark horror, and the furnace doors were opened and a blast of flame from heaven was smitten upon him.

Lucian went slowly, but not discreditably, up the school, gaining prizes now and again, and falling in love more and more with useless reading and unlikely knowledge. He did his elegiacs and iambics well enough, but he preferred exercising himself in the rhymed Latin of the middle ages. He liked history, but he loved to meditate on a land laid waste, Britain deserted by the legions, the rare pavements riven by frost, Celtic magic still brooding on the wild hills and in the black depths of the forest, the rosy marbles stained with rain, and the walls growing grey. The masters did not encourage these researches; a pure enthusiasm, they felt, should be for cricket and football, the *dilettanti* might even play fives and read Shakespeare without blame, but healthy English boys should have nothing to do with decadent periods. He was once found guilty of recommending Villon to a school-fellow named Barnes. Barnes tried to extract unpleasantness from the text during preparation, and rioted in his place, owing to his incapacity for the language. The matter was a serious one; the headmaster had never heard of Villon, and the culprit gave up the name of his literary admirer without remorse. Hence, sorrow for Lucian, and complete immunity for the miserable illiterate Barnes, who resolved to confine his researches to the Old Testament, a book which the headmaster knew well. As for Lucian, he plodded on, learning his work decently, and sometimes doing very creditable Latin and Greek prose. His school-fellows thought him quite mad, and tolerated him, and indeed were very kind to him in their barbarous manner. He often remembered in after life acts of generosity and good nature done by wretches like Barnes, who had no care for old French nor for curious meters, and such recollections always moved him to emotion. Travelers tell such tales; cast upon cruel shores amongst savage races, they have found no little kindness and warmth of hospitality.

He looked forward to the holidays as joyfully as the rest of them. Barnes and his friend Duscot used to tell him their plans and anticipation; they were going home to brothers and sisters, and to cricket, more cricket, or to football, more football, and in the winter there were parties and jollities of all sorts. In return he would announce his intention of studying the Hebrew language, or perhaps Provençal, with a walk up a bare and desolate mountain by way of open-air amusement, and on a rainy day for choice. Whereupon Barnes would impart to Duscot his confident belief that old Taylor was quite cracked. It was a queer, funny life that of school, and so very unlike anything in *Tom Brown*. He once saw the headmaster patting the head of the bishop’s little boy, while he called him “my little man,” and smiled hideously. He told the tale grotesquely in the lower fifth room the same day, and earned much applause, but forfeited all liking directly by proposing a voluntary course of scholastic logic. One barbarian threw him to the ground and another jumped on him, but it was done very pleasantly. There were, indeed, some few of a worse class in the school, solemn sycophants, prigs perfected from tender years, who thought life already “serious,” and yet, as the headmaster said, were “joyous, manly young fellows.” Some of these dressed for dinner at home, and talked of dances when they came back in January. But this virulent sort was comparatively infrequent, and achieved great success in after life. Taking his school days as a whole, he always spoke up for the system, and years afterward he described with enthusiasm the strong beer at a roadside tavern, some way out of the town. But he always maintained that the taste for tobacco, acquired in early life, was the great life, was the great note of the English Public School.

Three years after Lucian's discovery of the narrow lane and the vision of the flaming fort, the August holidays brought him home at a time of great heat. It was one of those memorable years of English weather, when some Provençal spell seems wreathed round the island in the northern sea, and the grasshoppers chirp loudly as the cicadas, the hills smell of rosemary, and white walls of the old farmhouses blaze in the sunlight as if they stood in Arles or Avignon or famed Tarascon by Rhone.

Lucian's father was late at the station, and consequently Lucian bought the *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* which he saw on the bookstall. When his father did drive up, Lucian noticed that the old trap had had a new coat of dark paint, and that the pony looked advanced in years.

"I was afraid that I should be late, Lucian," said his father, "though I made old Polly go like anything. I was just going to tell George to put her into the trap when young Philip Harris came to me in a terrible state. He said his father fell down 'all of a sudden like' in the middle of the field, and they couldn't make him speak, and would I please to come and see him. So I had to go, though I couldn't do anything for the poor fellow. They had sent for Dr. Burrows, and I am afraid he will find it a bad case of sunstroke. The old people say they never remember such a heat before."

The pony jogged steadily along the burning turnpike road, taking revenge for the hurrying on the way to the station. The hedges were white with the limestone dust, and the vapor of heat palpitated over the fields. Lucian showed his *Confessions* to his father, and began to talk of the beautiful bits he had already found. Mr. Taylor knew the book well — had read it many years before. Indeed he was almost as difficult to surprise as that character in Daudet, who had one formula for all the chances of life, and when he saw the drowned Academician dragged out of the river, merely observed "*J'ai vu tout ça.*" Mr. Taylor the parson, as his parishioners called him, had read the fine books and loved the hills and woods, and now knew no more of pleasant or sensational surprises. Indeed the living was much depreciated in value, and his own private means were reduced almost to vanishing point, and under such circumstances the great style loses many of its finer savors. He was very fond of Lucian, and cheered by his return, but in the evening he would be a sad man again, with his head resting on one hand, and eyes reproaching sorry fortune.

Nobody called out “Here’s your master with Master Lucian; you can get tea ready,” when the pony jogged up to the front door. His mother had been dead a year, and a cousin kept house. She was a respectable person called Deacon, of middle age, and ordinary standards; and, consequently, there was cold mutton on the table. There was a cake, but nothing of flour, baked in ovens, would rise at Miss Deacon’s evocation. Still, the meal was laid in the beloved “parlor,” with the view of hills and valleys and climbing woods from the open window, and the old furniture was still pleasant to see, and the old books in the shelves had many memories. One of the most respected of the armchairs had become weak in the castors and had to be artfully propped up, but Lucian found it very comfortable after the hard forms. When tea was over he went out and strolled in the garden and orchards, and looked over the stile down into the brake, where foxgloves and bracken and broom mingled with the hazel undergrowth, where he knew of secret glades and untracked recesses, deep in the woven green, the cabinets for many years of his lonely meditations. Every path about his home, every field and hedgerow had dear and friendly memories for him; and the odor of the meadowsweet was better than the incense steaming in the sunshine. He loitered, and hung over the stile till the far-off woods began to turn purple, till the white mists were wreathing in the valley.

Day after day, through all that August, morning and evening were wrapped in haze; day after day the earth shimmered in the heat, and the air was strange, unfamiliar. As he wandered in the lanes and sauntered by the cool sweet verge of the woods, he saw and felt that nothing was common or accustomed, for the sunlight transfigured the meadows and changed all the form of the earth. Under the violent Provençal sun, the elms and beeches looked exotic trees, and in the early morning, when the mists were thick, the hills had put on an unearthly shape.

The one adventure of the holidays was the visit to the Roman fort, to that fantastic hill about whose steep bastions and haggard oaks he had seen the flames of sunset writhing nearly three years before. Ever since that Saturday evening in January, the lonely valley had been a desirable place to him; he had watched the green battlements in summer and winter weather, had seen the heaped mounds rising dimly amidst the drifting rain, had marked the violent height swim up from the ice-white mists of summer evenings, had watched the fairy bulwarks glimmer and vanish in hovering April twilight. In the hedge of the lane there was a gate on which he used to lean and look down south to where the hill surged up so suddenly, its summit defined on summer evenings not only by the rounded ramparts but by the ring of dense green foliage that marked the circle of oak trees. Higher up the lane, on the way he had come that Saturday afternoon, one could see the white walls of Morgan’s farm on the hillside to the north, and on the south there was the stile with the view of old Mrs. Gibbon’s cottage smoke; but down in the hollow, looking over the gate, there was no hint of human work, except those green and antique battlements, on which the oaks stood in circle, guarding the inner wood.

The ring of the fort drew him with stronger fascination during that hot August weather. Standing, or as his headmaster would have said, “mooning” by the gate, and looking into that enclosed and secret valley, it seemed to his fancy as if there were a halo about the hill, an aureole that played like flame around it. One afternoon as he gazed from his station by the gate the sheer sides and the swelling bulwarks were more than ever things of enchantment; the green oak ring stood out against the sky as still and bright as in a picture, and Lucian, in spite of his respect for the law of trespass, slid over the gate. The farmers and their men were busy on the uplands with the harvest, and the adventure was irresistible. At first he stole along by the brook in the shadow of the alders, where the grass and the flowers of wet meadows grew richly; but as he drew nearer to the fort, and its height now rose sheer above him, he left all shelter, and began desperately to mount. There was not a breath of wind; the sunlight shone down on the bare hillside; the loud chirp of the grasshoppers was the only sound. It was a steep ascent and grew steeper as the valley sank away. He turned for a moment, and looked down towards the stream which now seemed to wind remote between the alders; above the valley there were small dark figures moving in the cornfield, and now and again there came the faint echo of a high-pitched voice singing through the air as on a wire. He was wet with heat; the sweat streamed off his face, and he could feel it trickling all over his body. But above him the green bastions rose defiant, and the dark ring of oaks promised coolness. He pressed on, and higher, and at last began to crawl up the *vallum*, on hands and knees, grasping the turf and here and there the roots that had burst through the red earth. And then he lay, panting with deep breaths, on the summit.

Within the fort it was all dusky and cool and hollow; it was as if one stood at the bottom of a great cup. Within, the wall seemed higher than without, and the ring of oaks curved up like a dark green vault. There were nettles growing thick and rank in the foss; they looked different from the common nettles in the lanes, and Lucian, letting his hand touch a leaf by accident, felt the sting burn like fire. Beyond the ditch there was an undergrowth, a dense thicket of trees, stunted and old, crooked and withered by the winds into awkward and ugly forms; beech and oak and hazel and ash and yew twisted and so shortened and deformed that each seemed, like the nettle, of no common kind. He began to fight his way through the ugly growth, stumbling and getting hard knocks from the rebound of twisted boughs. His foot struck once or twice against something harder than wood, and looking down he saw stones white with the leprosy of age, but still showing the work of the axe. And farther, the roots of the stunted trees gripped the foot-high relics of a wall; and a round heap of fallen stones nourished rank, unknown herbs, that smelt poisonous. The earth was black and unctuous, and bubbling under the feet, left no track behind. From it, in the darkest places where the shadow was thickest, swelled the growth of an abominable fungus, making the still air sick with its corrupt odor, and he shuddered as he felt the horrible thing pulped beneath his feet. Then there was a gleam of sunlight, and as he thrust the last boughs apart, he stumbled into the open space in the heart of the camp. It was a lawn of sweet close turf in the center of the matted brake, of clean firm earth from which no shameful growth sprouted, and near the middle of the glade was a stump of a felled yew-tree, left untrimmed by the woodman. Lucian thought it must have been made for a seat; a crooked bough through which a little sap still ran was a support for the back, and he sat down and rested after his toil. It was not really so comfortable a seat as one of the school forms, but the satisfaction was to find anything at all that would serve for a chair. He sat there, still panting after the climb and his struggle through the dank and jungle-like thicket, and he felt as if he were growing hotter and hotter; the sting of the nettle was burning his hand, and the tingling fire seemed to spread all over his body.

Suddenly, he knew that he was alone. Not merely solitary; that he had often been amongst the woods and deep in the lanes; but now it was a wholly different and a very strange sensation. He thought of the valley winding far below him, all its fields by the brook green and peaceful and still, without path or track. Then he had climbed the abrupt surge of the hill, and passing the green and swelling battlements, the ring of oaks, and the matted thicket, had come to the central space. And behind there were, he knew, many desolate fields, wild as common, untrodden, unvisited. He was utterly alone. He still grew hotter as he sat on the stump, and at last lay down at full length on the soft grass, and more at his ease felt the waves of heat pass over his body.

And then he began to dream, to let his fancies stray over half-imagined, delicious things, indulging a virgin mind in its wanderings. The hot air seemed to beat upon him in palpable waves, and the nettle sting tingled and itched intolerably; and he was alone upon the fairy hill, within the great mounds, within the ring of oaks, deep in the heart of the matted thicket. Slowly and timidly he began to untie his boots, fumbling with the laces, and glancing all the while on every side at the ugly misshapen trees that hedged the lawn. Not a branch was straight, not one was free, but all were interlaced and grew one about another; and just above ground, where the cankered stems joined the protuberant roots, there were forms that imitated the human shape, and faces and twining limbs that amazed him. Green mosses were hair, and tresses were stark in grey lichen; a twisted root swelled into a limb; in the hollows of the rotted bark he saw the masks of men. His eyes were fixed and fascinated by the simulacra of the wood, and could not see his hands, and so at last, and suddenly, it seemed, he lay in the sunlight, beautiful with his olive skin, dark haired, dark eyed, the gleaming bodily vision of a strayed faun.

Quick flames now quivered in the substance of his nerves, hints of mysteries, secrets of life passed trembling through his brain, unknown desires stung him. As he gazed across the turf and into the thicket, the sunshine seemed really to become green, and the contrast between the bright glow poured on the lawn and the black shadow of the brake made an odd flickering light, in which all the grotesque postures of stem and root began to stir; the wood was alive. The turf beneath him heaved and sank as with the deep swell of the sea. He fell asleep, and lay still on the grass, in the midst of the thicket.

He found out afterwards that he must have slept for nearly an hour. The shadows had changed when he awoke; his senses came to him with a sudden shock, and he sat up and stared at his bare limbs in stupid amazement. He huddled on his clothes and laced his boots, wondering what folly had beset him. Then, while he stood indecisive, hesitating, his brain a whirl of puzzled thought, his body trembling, his hands shaking; as with electric heat, sudden remembrance possessed him. A flaming blush shone red on his cheeks, and glowed and thrilled through his limbs. As he awoke, a brief and slight breeze had stirred in a nook of the matted boughs, and there was a glinting that might have been the flash of sudden sunlight across shadow, and the branches rustled and murmured for a moment, perhaps at the wind's passage.

He stretched out his hands, and cried to his visitant to return; he entreated the dark eyes that had shone over him, and the scarlet lips that had kissed him. And then panic fear rushed into his heart, and he ran blindly, dashing through the wood. He climbed the *vallum*, and looked out, crouching, lest anybody should see him. Only the shadows were changed, and a breath of cooler air mounted from the brook; the fields were still and peaceful, the black figures moved, far away, amidst the corn, and the faint echo of the high-pitched voices sang thin and distant on the evening wind. Across the stream, in the cleft on the hill, opposite to the fort, the blue wood smoke stole up a spiral pillar from the chimney of old Mrs. Gibbon's cottage. He began to run full tilt down the steep surge of the hill, and never stopped till he was over the gate and in the lane again. As he looked back, down the valley to the south, and saw the violent ascent, the green swelling bulwarks, and the dark ring of oaks; the sunlight seemed to play about the fort with an aureole of flame.

"Where on earth have you been all this time, Lucian?" said his cousin when he got home. "Why, you look quite ill. It is really madness of you to go walking in such weather as this. I wonder you haven't got a sunstroke. And the tea must be nearly cold. I couldn't keep your father waiting, you know."

He muttered something about being rather tired, and sat down to his tea. It was not cold, for the "cozy" had been put over the pot, but it was black and bitter strong, as his cousin expressed it. The draught was unpalatable, but it did him good, and the thought came with great consolation that he had only been asleep and dreaming queer, nightmarish dreams. He shook off all his fancies with resolution, and thought the loneliness of the camp, and the burning sunlight, and possibly the nettle sting, which still tingled most abominably, must have been the only factors in his farrago of impossible recollections. He remembered that when he had felt the sting, he had seized a nettle with thick folds of his handkerchief, and having twisted off a good length, and put it in his pocket to show his father. Mr. Taylor was almost interested when he came in from his evening stroll about the garden and saw the specimen.

“Where did you manage to come across that, Lucian?” he said. “You haven’t been to Caermaen, have you?”

“No. I got it in the Roman fort by the common.”

“Oh, the twyn. You must have been trespassing then. Do you know what it is?”

“No. I thought it looked different from the common nettles.”

“Yes; it’s a Roman nettle — *arctic pilulifera*. It’s a rare plant. Burrows says it’s to be found at Caermaen, but I was never able to come across it. I must add it to the *flora* of the parish.”

Mr. Taylor had begun to compile a *flora* accompanied by a *hortus siccus*, but both stayed on high shelves dusty and fragmentary. He put the specimen on his desk, intending to fasten it in the book, but the maid swept it away, dry and withered, in a day or two.

Lucian tossed and cried out in his sleep that night, and the awakening in the morning was, in a measure, a renewal of the awakening in the fort. But the impression was not so strong, and in a plain room it seemed all delirium, a phantasmagoria. He had to go down to Caermaen in the afternoon, for Mrs. Dixon, the vicar’s wife, had “commanded” his presence at tea. Mr. Dixon, though fat and short and clean shaven, ruddy of face, was a safe man, with no extreme views on anything. He “deplored” all extreme party convictions, and thought the great needs of our beloved Church were conciliation, moderation, and above all “amolgamation” — so he pronounced the word. Mrs. Dixon was tall, imposing, splendid, well fitted for the Episcopal order, with gifts that would have shone at the palace. There were daughters, who studied German Literature, and thought Miss Frances Ridley Havergal wrote poetry, but Lucian had no fear of them; he dreaded the boys. Everybody said they were such fine, manly fellows, such gentlemanly boys, with such a good manner, sure to get on in the world. Lucian had said "Bother!" in a very violent manner when the gracious invitation was conveyed to him, but there was no getting out of it. Miss Deacon did her best to make him look smart; his ties were all so disgraceful that she had to supply the want with a narrow ribbon of a sky-blue tint; and she brushed him so long and so violently that he quite understood why a horse sometimes bites and sometimes kicks the groom. He set out between two and three in a gloomy frame of mind; he knew too well what spending the afternoon with honest manly boys meant. He found the reality more lurid than his anticipation. The boys were in the field, and the first remark he heard when he got in sight of the group was:

"Hullo, Lucian, how much for the tie?" "Fine tie," another, a stranger, observed. "You bagged it from the kitten, didn't you?"

Then they made up a game of cricket, and he was put in first. He was l.b.w. in his second over, so they all said, and had to field for the rest of the afternoon. Arthur Dixon, who was about his own age, forgetting all the laws of hospitality, told him he was a beastly muff when he missed a catch, rather a difficult catch. He missed several catches, and it seemed as if he were always panting after balls, which, as Edward Dixon said, any fool, even a baby, could have stopped. At last the game broke up, solely from Lucian's lack of skill, as everybody declared. Edward Dixon, who was thirteen, and had a swollen red face and a projecting eye, wanted to fight him for spoiling the game, and the others agreed that he funked the fight in a rather dirty manner. The strange boy, who was called De Carti, and was understood to be faintly related to Lord De Carti of M'Carthytown, said openly that the fellows at his place wouldn't stand such a sneak for five minutes. So the afternoon passed off very pleasantly indeed, till it was time to go into the vicarage for weak tea, homemade cake, and unripe plums. He got away at last. As he went out at the gate, he heard De Carti's final observation:

"We like to dress well at our place. His governor must be beastly poor to let him go about like that. D'y' see his trousers are all ragged at heel? Is old

Taylor a gentleman?"

It had been a very gentlemanly afternoon, but there was a certain relief when the vicarage was far behind, and the evening smoke of the little town, once the glorious capital of Siluria, hung haze-like over the ragged roofs and mingled with the river mist. He looked down from the height of the road on the huddled houses, saw the points of light start out suddenly from the cottages on the hillside beyond, and gazed at the long lovely valley fading in the twilight, till the darkness came and all that remained was the somber ridge of the forest. The way was pleasant through the solemn scented lane, with glimpses of dim country, the vague mystery of night overshadowing the woods and meadows. A warm wind blew gusts of odor from the meadowsweet by the brook, now and then bee and beetle span homeward through the air, booming a deep note as from a great organ far away, and from the verge of the wood came the "who-oo, who-oo, who-oo" of the owls, a wild strange sound that mingled with the whirr and rattle of the night-jar, deep in the bracken. The moon swam up through the films of misty cloud, and hung, a golden glorious lantern, in mid-air; and, set in the dusky hedge, the little green fires of the glowworms appeared. He sauntered slowly up the lane, drinking in the religion of the scene, and thinking the country by night as mystic and wonderful as a dimly-lit cathedral. He had quite forgotten the "manly young fellows" and their sports, and only wished as the land began to shimmer and gleam in the moonlight that he knew by some medium of words or color how to represent the loveliness about his way.

"Had a pleasant evening, Lucian?" said his father when he came in.

"Yes, I had a nice walk home. Oh, in the afternoon we played cricket. I didn't care for it much. There was a boy named De Carti there; he is staying with the Dixons. Mrs. Dixon whispered to me when we were going in to tea, 'He's a second cousin of Lord De Carti's,' and she looked quite grave as if she were in church."

The parson grinned grimly and lit his old pipe.

"Baron De Carti's great-grandfather was a Dublin attorney," he remarked. "Which his name was Jeremiah M'Carthy. His prejudiced fellow-citizens called him the Unjust Steward, also the Bloody Attorney, and I believe that ‘to hell with M’Carthy’ was quite a popular cry about the time of the Union.”

Mr. Taylor was a man of very wide and irregular reading and a tenacious memory; he often used to wonder why he had not risen in the Church. He had once told Mr. Dixon a singular and *drolatique* anecdote concerning the bishop’s college days, and he never discovered why the prelate did not bow according to his custom when the name of Taylor was called at the next visitation. Some people said the reason was lighted candles, but that was impossible, as the Reverend and Honorable Smallwood Stafford, Lord Beamys’s son, who had a cure of souls in the cathedral city, was well known to burn no end of candles, and with him the bishop was on the best of terms. Indeed the bishop often stayed at Coplesey (pronounced “Copsey”) Hall, Lord Beamys’s place in the west.

Lucian had mentioned the name of De Carti with intention, and had perhaps exaggerated a little Mrs. Dixon’s respectful manner. He knew such incidents cheered his father, who could never look at these subjects from a proper point of view, and, as people said, sometimes made the strangest remarks for a clergyman. This irreverent way of treating serious things was one of the great bonds between father and son, but it tended to increase their isolation. People said they would often have liked to asked Mr. Taylor to garden-parties, and tea-parties, and other cheap entertainments, if only he had not been such an *extreme* man and so *queer*. Indeed, a year before, Mr. Taylor had gone to a garden-party at the Castle, Caermaen, and had made such fun of the bishop’s recent address on missions to the Portuguese, that the Gervases and Dixons and all who heard him were quite shocked and annoyed. And, as Mrs. Meyrick of Lanyravon observed, his black coat was perfectly *green* with age; so on the whole the Gervases did not like to invite Mr. Taylor again. As for the son, nobody cared to have him; Mrs. Dixon, as she said to her husband, really asked him out of charity.

“I am afraid he seldom gets a real meal at home,” she remarked, “so I thought he would enjoy a good wholesome tea for once in a way. But he is such an *unsatisfactory* boy, he would only have one slice of that nice plain cake, and I couldn’t get him to take more than two plums. They were really quite ripe too, and boys are usually so fond of fruit.”

Thus Lucian was forced to spend his holidays chiefly in his own company, and make the best he could of the ripe peaches on the south wall of the rectory garden. There was a certain corner where the heat of that hot August seemed concentrated, reverberated from one wall to the other, and here he liked to linger of mornings, when the mists were still thick in the valleys, "mooning," meditating, extending his walk from the quince to the medlar and back again, beside the moldering walls of mellowed brick. He was full of a certain wonder and awe, not unmixed with a swell of strange exultation, and wished more and more to be alone, to think over that wonderful afternoon within the fort. In spite of himself the impression was fading; he could not understand that feeling of mad panic terror that drove him through the thicket and down the steep hillside; yet, he had experienced so clearly the physical shame and reluctance of the flesh; he recollected that for a few seconds after his awakening the sight of his own body had made him shudder and writhe as if it had suffered some profoundest degradation. He saw before him a vision of two forms; a faun with tingling and prickling flesh lay expectant in the sunlight, and there was also the likeness of a miserable shamed boy, standing with trembling body and shaking, unsteady hands. It was all confused, a procession of blurred images, now of rapture and ecstasy, and now of terror and shame, floating in a light that was altogether phantasmal and unreal. He dared not approach the fort again; he lingered in the road to Caermaen that passed behind it, but a mile away, and separated by the wild land and a strip of wood from the towering battlements. Here he was looking over a gate one day, doubtful and wondering, when he heard a heavy step behind him, and glancing round quickly saw it was old Morgan of the White House.

"Good afternoon, Master Lucian," he began. "Mr. Taylor pretty well, I suppose? I be goin' to the house a minute; the men in the fields are wantin' some more cider. Would you come and taste a drop of cider, Master Lucian? It's very good, sir, indeed."

Lucian did not want any cider, but he thought it would please old Morgan if he took some, so he said he should like to taste the cider very much indeed. Morgan was a sturdy, thick-set old man of the ancient stock; a stiff churchman, who breakfasted regularly on fat broth and Caerphilly cheese in the fashion of his ancestors; hot, spiced elder wine was for winter nights, and gin for festal seasons. The farm had always been the freehold of the family, and when Lucian, in the wake of the yeoman, passed through the deep porch by the oaken door, down into the long dark kitchen, he felt as though the seventeenth century still lingered on. One mullioned window, set deep in the sloping wall, gave all the light there was through quarries of thick glass in which there were whorls and circles, so that the lapping rose-branch and the garden and the fields beyond were distorted to the sight. Two heavy beams, oaken but whitewashed, ran across the ceiling; a little glow of fire sparkled in the great fireplace, and a curl of blue smoke fled up the cavern of the chimney. Here was the genuine chimney-corner of our fathers; there were seats on each side of the fireplace where one could sit snug and sheltered on December nights, warm and merry in the blazing light, and listen to the battle of the storm, and hear the flame spit and hiss at the falling snowflakes. At the back of the fire were great blackened tiles with raised initials and a date. — I.M., 1684.

“Sit down, Master Lucian, sit down, sir,” said Morgan.

“Annie,” he called through one of the numerous doors, “here’s Master Lucian, the parson, would like a drop of cider. Fetch a jug, will you, directly?”

“Very well, father,” came the voice from the dairy and presently the girl entered, wiping the jug she held. In his boyish way Lucian had been a good deal disturbed by Annie Morgan; he could see her on Sundays from his seat in church, and her skin, curiously pale, her lips that seemed as though they were stained with some brilliant pigment, her black hair, and the quivering black eyes, gave him odd fancies which he had hardly shaped to himself. Annie had grown into a woman in three years, and he was still a boy. She came into the kitchen, curtsying and smiling.

“Good-day, Master Lucian, and how is Mr. Taylor, sir?”

“Pretty well, thank you. I hope you are well.”

“Nicely, sir, thank you. How nice your voice do sound in church, Master Lucian, to be sure. I was telling father about it last Sunday.”

Lucian grinned and felt uncomfortable, and the girl set down the jug on the round table and brought a glass from the dresser. She bent close over him as she poured out the green oily cider, fragrant of the orchard; her hand touched his shoulder for a moment, and she said, “I beg your pardon, sir,” very prettily. He looked up eagerly at her face; the black eyes, a little oval in shape, were shining, and the lips smiled. Annie wore a plain dress of some black stuff, open at the throat; her skin was beautiful. For a moment the ghost of a fancy hovered unsubstantial in his mind; and then Annie curtsied as she handed him the cider, and replied to his thanks with, "And welcome kindly, sir."

The drink was really good; not thin, nor sweet, but round and full and generous, with a fine yellow flame twinkling through the green when one held it up to the light. It was like a stray sunbeam hovering on the grass in a deep orchard, and he swallowed the glassful with relish, and had some more, warmly commending it. Mr. Morgan was touched.

"I see you do know a good thing, sir," he said. "Is, indeed, now, it's good stuff, though it's my own makin'. My old grandfather he planted the trees in the time of the wars, and he was a very good judge of an apple in his day and generation. And a famous grafter he was, to be sure. You will never see no swelling in the trees he grafted at all whatever. Now there's James Morris, Penyrhaul, he's a famous grafter, too, and yet them Redstreaks he grafted for me five year ago, they be all swollen-like below the graft already. Would you like to taste a Blemmin pippin, now, Master Lucian? there be a few left in the loft, I believe."

Lucian said he should like an apple very much, and the farmer went out by another door, and Annie stayed in the kitchen talking. She said Mrs. Trevor, her married sister, was coming to them soon to spend a few days.

"She's got such a beautiful baby," said Annie, "and he's quite sensible-like already, though he's only nine months old. Mary would like to see you, sir, if you would be so kind as to step in; that is, if it's not troubling you at all, Master Lucian. I suppose you must be getting a fine scholar now, sir?"

"I am doing pretty well, thank you," said the boy. "I was first in my form last term."

"Fancy! To think of that! D'you hear, father, what a scholar Master Lucian be getting?"

"He be a rare grammarian, I'm sure," said the farmer. "You do take after your father, sir; I always do say that nobody have got such a good deliverance in the pulpit."

Lucian did not find the Blenheim Orange as good as the cider, but he ate it with all the appearance of relish, and put another, with thanks, in his pocket. He thanked the farmer again when he got up to go; and Annie curtsied and smiled, and wished him good-day, and welcome, kindly.

Lucian heard her saying to her father as he went out what a nice-mannered young gentleman he was getting, to be sure; and he went on his way, thinking that Annie was really very pretty, and speculating as to whether he would have the courage to kiss her, if they met in a dark lane. He was quite sure she would only laugh, and say, “Oh, Master Lucian!”

For many months he had occasional fits of recollection, both cold and hot; but the bridge of time, gradually lengthening, made those dreadful and delicious images grow more and more indistinct, till at last they all passed into that wonderland which a youth looks back upon in amazement, not knowing why this used to be a symbol of terror or that of joy. At the end of each term he would come home and find his father a little more despondent, and harder to cheer even for a moment; and the wall paper and the furniture grew more and more dingy and shabby. The two cats, loved and ancient beasts, that he remembered when he was quite a little boy, before he went to school, died miserably, one after the other. Old Polly, the pony, at last fell down in the stable from the weakness of old age, and had to be killed there; the battered old trap ran no longer along the well-remembered lanes. There was long meadow grass on the lawn, and the trained fruit trees on the wall had got quite out of hand. At last, when Lucian was seventeen, his father was obliged to take him from school; he could no longer afford the fees. This was the sorry ending of many hopes, and dreams of a double-first, a fellowship, distinction and glory that the poor parson had long entertained for his son, and the two moped together, in the shabby room, one on each side of the sulky fire, thinking of dead days and finished plans, and seeing a grey future in the years that advanced towards them. At one time there seemed some chance of a distant relative coming forward to Lucian’s assistance; and indeed it was quite settled that he should go up to London with certain definite aims. Mr. Taylor told the good news to his acquaintances — his coat was too green now for any pretence of friendship; and Lucian himself spoke of his plans to Burrows the doctor and Mr. Dixon, and one or two others. Then the whole scheme fell through, and the parson and his son suffered much sympathy. People, of course, had to say they were sorry, but in reality the news was received with high spirits, with the joy with which one sees a stone, as it rolls down a steep place, give yet another bounding leap towards the pool beneath. Mrs. Dixon heard the pleasant tidings from Mrs. Colley, who came in to talk about the Mothers' Meeting and the Band of Hope. Mrs. Dixon was nursing little Athelwig, or some such name, at the time, and made many affecting observations on the general righteousness with which the world was governed. Indeed, poor Lucian's disappointment seemed distinctly to increase her faith in the Divine Order, as if it had been some example in Butler's *Analogy*.

"Aren't Mr. Taylor's views very *extreme?*" she said to her husband the same evening.

"I am afraid they are," he replied. "I was quite *grieved* at the last Diocesan Conference at the way in which he spoke. The dear old bishop had given an address on Auricular Confession; he was *forced* to do so, you know, after what had happened, and I must say that I never felt prouder of our beloved Church."

Mr. Dixon told all the Homeric story of the conference, reciting the achievements of the champions, "deploring" this and applauding that. It seemed that Mr. Taylor had had the audacity to quote authorities which the bishop could not very well repudiate, though they were directly opposed to the "safe" Episcopal pronouncement.

Mrs. Dixon of course was grieved; it was "sad" to think of a clergyman behaving so shamefully.

"But you know, dear," she proceeded, "I have been thinking about that unfortunate Taylor boy and his disappointments, and after what you've just told me, I am sure it's some kind of judgment on them both. Has Mr. Taylor forgotten the vows he took at his ordination? But don't you think, dear, I am right, and that he has been punished: 'The sins of the fathers'?"

Somehow or other Lucian divined the atmosphere of threatenings and judgments, and shrank more and more from the small society of the countryside. For his part, when he was not "mooning" in the beloved fields and woods of happy memory, he shut himself up with books, reading whatever could be found on the shelves, and amassing a store of incongruous and obsolete knowledge. Long did he linger with the men of the seventeenth century; delaying the gay sunlit streets with Pepys, and listening to the charmed sound of the Restoration Revel; roaming by peaceful streams with Izaak Walton, and the great Catholic divines; enchanted with the portrait of Herbert the loving ascetic; awed by the mystic breath of Crashaw. Then the cavalier poets sang their gallant songs; and Herrick made Dean Prior magic ground by the holy incantation of a verse. And in the old proverbs and homely sayings of the time he found the good and beautiful English life, a time full of grace and dignity and rich merriment. He dived deeper and deeper into his books; he had taken all obsolescence to be his province; in his disgust at the stupid usual questions, "Will it pay?" "What good is it?" and so forth, he would only read what was uncouth and useless. The strange pomp and symbolism of the Cabala, with its hint of more terrible things; the Rosicrucian mysteries of Fludd, the enigmas of Vaughan, dreams of alchemists — all these were his delight. Such were his companions, with the hills and hanging woods, the brooks and lonely waterpools; books, the thoughts of books, the stirrings of imagination, all fused into one phantasy by the magic of the outland country. He held himself aloof from the walls of the fort; he was content to see the heaped mounds, the violent height with faerie bulwarks, from the gate in the lane, and to leave all within the ring of oaks in the mystery of his boyhood's vision. He professed to laugh at himself and at his fancies of that hot August afternoon, when sleep came to him within the thicket, but in his heart of hearts there was something that never faded — something that glowed like the red glint of a gypsy's fire seen from afar across the hills and mists of the night, and known to be burning in a wild land. Sometimes, when he was sunken in his books, the flame of delight shot up, and showed him a whole province and continent of his nature, all shining and aglow; and in the midst of the exultation and triumph he would draw back, a little afraid. He had become ascetic in his studious and melancholy isolation, and the vision of such ecstasies frightened him. He began to write a little; at first very tentatively and feebly, and then with more confidence. He showed some of his verses to his father, who told him with a sigh that he had once hoped to write — in the old days at Oxford, he added.

"They are very nicely done," said the parson; "but I'm afraid you won't find anybody to print them, my boy."

So he pottered on; reading everything, imitating what struck his fancy, attempting the effect of the classic meters in English verse, trying his hand at a masque, a Restoration comedy, forming impossible plans for books which rarely got beyond half a dozen lines on a sheet of paper; beset with splendid fancies which refused to abide before the pen. But the vain joy of conception was not altogether vain, for it gave him some armor about his heart.

The months went by, monotonous, and sometimes blotted with despair. He wrote and planned and filled the waste-paper basket with hopeless efforts. Now and then he sent verses or prose articles to magazines, in pathetic ignorance of the trade. He felt the immense difficulty of the career of literature without clearly understanding it; the battle was happily in a mist, so that the host of the enemy, terribly arrayed, was to some extent hidden. Yet there was enough of difficulty to appall; from following the intricate course of little nameless brooks, from hushed twilight woods, from the vision of the mountains, and the breath of the great wind, passing from deep to deep, he would come home filled with thoughts and emotions, mystic fancies which he yearned to translate into the written word. And the result of the effort seemed always to be bathos! Wooden sentences, a portentous stilted style, obscurity, and awkwardness clogged the pen; it seemed impossible to win the great secret of language; the stars glittered only in the darkness, and vanished away in clearer light. The periods of despair were often long and heavy, the victories very few and trifling; night after night he sat writing after his father had knocked out his last pipe, filling a page with difficulty in an hour, and usually forced to thrust the stuff away in despair, and go unhappily to bed, conscious that after all his labor he had done nothing. And these were moments when the accustomed vision of the land alarmed him, and the wild domed hills and darkling woods seemed symbols of some terrible secret in the inner life of that stranger — himself. Sometimes when he was deep in his books and papers, sometimes on a lonely walk, sometimes amidst the tiresome chatter of Caermaen “society,” he would thrill with a sudden sense of awful hidden things, and there ran that quivering flame through his nerves that brought back the recollection of the matted thicket, and that earlier appearance of the bare black boughs enwrapped with flames. Indeed, though he avoided the solitary lane, and the sight of the sheer height, with its ring of oaks and molded mounds, the image of it grew more intense as the symbol of certain hints and suggestions. The exultant and insurgent flesh seemed to have its temple and castle within those olden walls, and he longed with all his heart to escape, to set himself free in the wilderness of London, and to be secure amidst the murmur of modern streets.

II

LUCIAN WAS GROWING really anxious about his manuscript. He had gained enough experience at twenty-three to know that editors and publishers must not be hurried; but his book had been lying at Messrs Beit's office for more than three months. For six weeks he had not dared to expect an answer, but afterwards life had become agonizing. Every morning, at post-time, the poor wretch nearly choked with anxiety to know whether his sentence had arrived, and the rest of the day was racked with alternate pangs of hope and despair. Now and then he was almost assured of success; conning over these painful and eager pages in memory, he found parts that were admirable, while again, his inexperience reproached him, and he feared he had written a raw and awkward book, wholly unfit for print. Then he would compare what he remembered of it with notable magazine articles and books praised by reviewers, and fancy that after all there might be good points in the thing; he could not help liking the first chapter for instance. Perhaps the letter might come tomorrow. So it went on; week after week of sick torture made more exquisite by such gleams of hope; it was as if he were stretched in anguish on the rack, and the pain relaxed and kind words spoken now and again by the tormentors, and then once more the grinding pang and burning agony. At last he could bear suspense no longer, and he wrote to Messrs Beit, inquiring in a humble manner whether the manuscript had arrived in safety. The firm replied in a very polite letter, expressing regret that their reader had been suffering from a cold in the head, and had therefore been unable to send in his report. A final decision was promised in a week's time, and the letter ended with apologies for the delay and a hope that he had suffered no inconvenience. Of course the "final decision" did not come at the end of the week, but the book was returned at the end of three weeks, with a circular thanking the author for his kindness in submitting the manuscript, and regretting that the firm did not see their way to producing it. He felt relieved; the operation that he had dreaded and deprecated for so long was at last over, and he would no longer grow sick of mornings when the letters were brought in. He took his parcel to the sunny corner of the garden, where the old wooden seat stood sheltered from the biting March winds. Messrs Beit had put in with the circular one of their short lists, a neat booklet, headed: *Messrs Beit & Co.'s Recent Publications*.

He settled himself comfortably on the seat, lit his pipe, and began to read: "*A Bad Un to Beat:* a Novel of Sporting Life, by the Honorable Mrs. Scudamore Runnymede, author of *Yoicks, With the Mudshire Pack, The Sportleigh Stables*, etc., etc., 3 vols. At all Libraries." The *Press*, it seemed, pronounced this to be a "charming book. Mrs. Runnymede has wit and humor enough to furnish forth half-a-dozen ordinary sporting novels." "Told with the sparkle and vivacity of a past-mistress in the art of novel writing," said the *Review*; while Miranda, of *Smart Society*, positively bubbled with enthusiasm. "You must forgive me, Aminta," wrote this young person, "if I have not sent the description I promised of Madame Lulu's new creations and others of that ilk. I must a tale unfold; Tom came in yesterday and began to rave about the Honorable Mrs. Scudamore Runnymede's last novel, *A Bad Un to Beat*. He says all the Smart Set are talking of it, and it seems the police have to regulate the crowd at Mudie's. You know I read everything Mrs. Runnymede writes, so I set out Miggs directly to beg, borrow or steal a copy, and I confess I burnt the midnight oil before I laid it down. Now, mind you get it, you will find it so awfully *chic*." Nearly all the novelists on Messrs Beit's list were ladies, their works all ran to three volumes, and all of them pleased the *Press*, the *Review*, and Miranda of *Smart Society*. One of these books, *Millicent's Marriage*, by Sarah Pocklington Sanders, was pronounced fit to lie on the school-room table, on the drawing-room bookshelf, or beneath the pillow of the most gently nurtured of our daughters. "This," the reviewer went on, "is high praise, especially in these days when we are deafened by the loud-voiced clamor of self-styled 'artists.' We would warn the young men who prate so persistently of style and literature, construction and prose harmonies, that we believe the English reading public will have none of them. Harmless amusement, a gentle flow of domestic interest, a faithful reproduction of the open and manly life of the hunting field, pictures of innocent and healthy English girlhood such as Miss Sanders here affords us; these are the topics that will always find a welcome in our homes, which remain bolted and barred against the abandoned artist and the scrofulous stylist."

He turned over the pages of the little book and chuckled in high relish; he discovered an honest enthusiasm, a determination to strike a blow for the good and true that refreshed and exhilarated. A beaming face, spectacled and whiskered probably, an expansive waistcoat, and a tender heart, seemed to shine through the words which Messrs Beit had quoted; and the alliteration of the final sentence; that was good too; there was style for you if you wanted it. The champion of the blushing cheek and the gushing eye showed that he too could handle the weapons of the enemy if he cared to trouble himself with such things. Lucian leant back and roared with indecent laughter till the tabby tom-cat who had succeeded to the poor dead beasts looked up reproachfully from his sunny corner, with a face like the reviewer's, innocent and round and whiskered. At last he turned to his parcel and drew out some half-dozen sheets of manuscript, and began to read in a rather desponding spirit; it was pretty obvious, he thought, that the stuff was poor and beneath the standard of publication. The book had taken a year and a half in the making; it was a pious attempt to translate into English prose the form and mystery of the domed hills, the magic of occult valleys, the sound of the red swollen brook swirling through leafless woods. Day-dreams and toil at nights had gone into the eager pages, he had labored hard to do his very best, writing and rewriting, weighing his cadences, beginning over and over again, grudging no patience, no trouble if only it might be pretty good; good enough to print and sell to a reading public which had become critical. He glanced through the manuscript in his hand, and to his astonishment, he could not help thinking that in its measure it was decent work. After three months his prose seemed fresh and strange as if it had been wrought by another man, and in spite of himself he found charming things, and impressions that were not commonplace. He knew how weak it all was compared with his own conceptions; he had seen an enchanted city, awful, glorious, with flame smitten about its battlements, like the cities of the Sangraal, and he had molded his copy in such poor clay as came to his hand; yet, in spite of the gulf that yawned between the idea and the work, he knew as he read that the thing accomplished was very far from a failure. He put back the leaves carefully, and glanced again at Messrs Beit's list. It had escaped his notice that *A Bad Un to Beat* was in its third three-volume edition. It was a great thing, at all events, to know in what direction to aim, if he wished to succeed. If he worked hard, he thought, he might some day win the approval of the coy and retiring

Miranda of *Smart Society*; that modest maiden might in his praise interrupt her task of disinterested advertisement, her philanthropic counsels to "go to Jumper's, and mind you ask for Mr. C. Jumper, who will show you the lovely blue paper with the yellow spots at ten shillings the piece." He put down the pamphlet, and laughed again at the books and the reviewers: so that he might not weep. This then was English fiction, this was English criticism, and farce, after all, was but an ill-played tragedy.

The rejected manuscript was hidden away, and his father quoted Horace's maxim as to the benefit of keeping literary works for some time "in the wood." There was nothing to grumble at, though Lucian was inclined to think the duration of the reader's catarrh a little exaggerated. But this was a trifle; he did not arrogate to himself the position of a small commercial traveler, who expects prompt civility as a matter of course, and not at all as a favor. He simply forgot his old book, and resolved that he would make a better one if he could. With the hot fit of resolution, the determination not to be snuffed out by one refusal upon him, he began to beat about in his mind for some new scheme. At first it seemed that he had hit upon a promising subject; he began to plot out chapters and scribble hints for the curious story that had entered his mind, arranging his circumstances and noting the effects to be produced with all the enthusiasm of the artist. But after the first breath the aspect of the work changed; page after page was tossed aside as hopeless, the beautiful sentences he had dreamed of refused to be written, and his puppets remained stiff and wooden, devoid of life or motion. Then all the old despairs came back, the agonies of the artificer who strives and perseveres in vain; the scheme that seemed of amorous fire turned to cold hard ice in his hands. He let the pen drop from his fingers, and wondered how he could have ever dreamed of writing books. Again, the thought occurred that he might do something if he could only get away, and join the sad procession in the murmuring London streets, far from the shadow of those awful hills. But it was quite impossible; the relative who had once promised assistance was appealed to, and wrote expressing his regret that Lucian had turned out a "loafer," wasting his time in scribbling, instead of trying to earn his living. Lucian felt rather hurt at this letter, but the parson only grinned grimly as usual. He was thinking of how he signed a check many years before, in the days of his prosperity, and the check was payable to this didactic relative, then in but a poor way, and of a thankful turn of mind.

The old rejected manuscript had almost passed out of his recollection. It was recalled oddly enough. He was looking over the *Reader*, and enjoying the admirable literary criticisms, some three months after the return of his book, when his eye was attracted by a quoted passage in one of the notices. The thought and style both wakened memory, the cadences were familiar and beloved. He read through the review from the beginning; it was a very favorable one, and pronounced the volume an immense advance on Mr. Ritson's previous work. "Here, undoubtedly, the author has discovered a vein of pure metal," the reviewer added, "and we predict that he will go far." Lucian had not yet reached his father's stage, he was unable to grin in the manner of that irreverent parson. The passage selected for high praise was taken almost word for word from the manuscript now resting in his room, the work that had not reached the high standard of Messrs Beit & Co., who, curiously enough, were the publishers of the book reviewed in the *Reader*. He had a few shillings in his possession, and wrote at once to a bookseller in London for a copy of *The Chorus in Green*, as the author had oddly named the book. He wrote on June 21st and thought he might fairly expect to receive the interesting volume by the 24th; but the postman, true to his tradition, brought nothing for him, and in the afternoon he resolved to walk down to Caermaen, in case it might have come by a second post; or it might have been mislaid at the office; they forgot parcels sometimes, especially when the bag was heavy and the weather hot. This 24th was a sultry and oppressive day; a grey veil of cloud obscured the sky, and a vaporous mist hung heavily over the land, and fumed up from the valleys. But at five o'clock, when he started, the clouds began to break, and the sunlight suddenly streamed down through the misty air, making ways and channels of rich glory, and bright islands in the gloom. It was a pleasant and shining evening when, passing by devious back streets to avoid the barbarians (as he very rudely called the respectable inhabitants of the town), he reached the post-office; which was also the general shop.

"Yes, Mr. Taylor, there is something for you, sir," said the man. "Williams the postman forgot to take it up this morning," and he handed over the packet. Lucian took it under his arm and went slowly through the ragged winding lanes till he came into the country. He got over the first stile on the road, and sitting down in the shelter of a hedge, cut the strings and opened the parcel. *The Chorus in Green* was got up in what reviewers call a dainty manner: a bronze-green cloth, well-cut gold lettering, wide margins and black "old-face" type, all witnessed to the good taste of Messrs Beit & Co. He cut the pages hastily and began to read. He soon found that he had wronged Mr. Ritson — that old literary hand had by no means stolen his book wholesale, as he had expected. There were about two hundred pages in the pretty little volume, and of these about ninety were Lucian's, dovetailed into a rather different scheme with skill that was nothing short of exquisite. And Mr. Ritson's own work was often very good; spoilt here and there for some tastes by the "cataloguing" method, a somewhat materialistic way of taking an inventory of the holy country things; but, for that very reason, contrasting to a great advantage with Lucian's hints and dreams and note of haunting. And here and there Mr. Ritson had made little alterations in the style of the passages he had conveyed, and most of these alterations were amendments, as Lucian was obliged to confess, though he would have liked to argue one or two points with his collaborator and corrector. He lit his pipe and leant back comfortably in the hedge, thinking things over, weighing very coolly his experience of humanity, his contact with the "society" of the countryside, the affair of the *The Chorus in Green*, and even some little incidents that had struck him as he was walking through the streets of Caermaen that evening. At the post-office, when he was inquiring for his parcel, he had heard two old women grumbling in the street; it seemed, so far as he could make out, that both had been disappointed in much the same way. One was a Roman Catholic, hardened, and beyond the reach of conversion; she had been advised to ask alms of the priests, "who are always creeping and crawling about." The other old sinner was a Dissenter, and, "Mr. Dixon has quite enough to do to relieve good Church people."

Mrs. Dixon, assisted by Henrietta, was, it seemed, the lady high almoner, who dispensed these charities. As she said to Mrs. Colley, they would end by keeping all the beggars in the county, and they really couldn't afford it. A large family was an expensive thing, and the girls *must* have new frocks. "Mr. Dixon is always telling me and the girls that we must not *demoralize* the people by indiscriminate charity." Lucian had heard of these sage counsels, and through it them as he listened to the bitter complaints of the gaunt, hungry old women. In the back street by which he passed out of the town he saw a large "healthy" boy kicking a sick cat; the poor creature had just strength enough to crawl under an outhouse door; probably to die in torments. He did not find much satisfaction in thrashing the boy, but he did it with hearty good will. Further on, at the corner where the turnpike used to be, was a big notice, announcing a meeting at the school-room in aid of the missions to the Portuguese. “Under the Patronage of the Lord Bishop of the Diocese,” was the imposing headline; the Reverend Merivale Dixon, vicar of Caermaen, was to be in the chair, supported by Stanley Gervase, Esq., J.P., and by many of the clergy and gentry of the neighborhood. Senhor Diabo, “formerly a Romanist priest, now an evangelist in Lisbon,” would address the meeting. “Funds are urgently needed to carry on this good work,” concluded the notice. So he lay well back in the shade of the hedge, and thought whether some sort of an article could not be made by vindicating the terrible Yahoos; one might point out that they were in many respects a simple and unsophisticated race, whose faults were the result of their enslaved position, while such virtues as they had were all their own. They might be compared, he thought, much to their advantage, with more complex civilizations. There was no hint of anything like the Beit system of publishing in existence amongst them; the great Yahoo nation would surely never feed and encourage a scabby Houyhnhnm, expelled for his foulness from the horse-community, and the witty dean, in all his minuteness, had said nothing of “safe” Yahoos. On reflection, however, he did not feel quite secure of this part of his defense; he remembered that the leading brutes had favorites, who were employed in certain simple domestic offices about their masters, and it seemed doubtful whether the contemplated vindication would not break down on this point. He smiled queerly to himself as he thought of these comparisons, but his heart burned with a dull fury. Throwing back his unhappy memory, he recalled all the contempt and scorn he had suffered; as a boy he had heard the masters murmuring their disdain of him and of his desire to learn other than ordinary school work. As a young man he had suffered the insolence of these wretched people about him; their cackling laughter at his poverty jarred and grated in his ears; he saw the acrid grin of some miserable idiot woman, some creature beneath the swine in intelligence and manners, merciless, as he went by with his eyes on the dust, in his ragged clothes. He and his father seemed to pass down an avenue of jeers and contempt, and contempt from such animals as these! This putrid filth, molded into human shape, made only to fawn on the rich and beslaver them, thinking no foulness too foul if it were done in honor of those in power and authority; and no refined cruelty of contempt too cruel if it were contempt of the poor and humble and oppressed; it was to this obscene and ghastly throng that he was something to be pointed at. And these men and women spoke of sacred things, and knelt before the awful altar of God, before the altar of tremendous fire, surrounded as they professed by Angels and Archangels and all the Company of Heaven; and in their very church they had one aisle for the rich and another for the poor. And the species was not peculiar to Caermaen; the rich business men in London and the successful brother author were probably amusing themselves at the expense of the poor struggling creature they had injured and wounded; just as the "healthy" boy had burst into a great laugh when the miserable sick cat cried out in bitter agony, and trailed its limbs slowly, as it crept away to die. Lucian looked into his own life and his own will; he saw that in spite of his follies, and his want of success, he had not been consciously malignant, he had never deliberately aided in oppression, or looked on it with enjoyment and approval, and he felt that when he lay dead beneath the earth, eaten by swarming worms, he would be in a purer company than now, when he lived amongst human creatures. And he was to call this loathsome beast, all sting and filth, brother! "I had rather call the devils my brothers," he said in his heart, "I would fare better in hell." Blood was in his eyes, and as he looked up the sky seemed of blood, and the earth burned with fire.

The sun was sinking low on the mountain when he set out on the way again. Burrows, the doctor, coming home in his trap, met him a little lower on the road, and gave him a friendly good-night.

"A long way round on this road, isn't it?" said the doctor. "As you have come so far, why don't you try the short cut across the fields? You will find it easily enough; second stile on the left hand, and then go straight ahead."

He thanked Dr. Burrows and said he would try the short cut, and Burrows span on homeward. He was a gruff and honest bachelor, and often felt very sorry for the lad, and wished he could help him. As he drove on, it suddenly occurred to him that Lucian had an awful look on his face, and he was sorry he had not asked him to jump in, and to come to supper. A hearty slice of beef, with strong ale, whisky and soda afterwards, a good pipe, and certain Rabelaisian tales which the doctor had treasured for many years, would have done the poor fellow a lot of good, he was certain. He half turned round on his seat, and looked to see if Lucian were still in sight, but he had passed the corner, and the doctor drove on, shivering a little; the mists were beginning to rise from the wet banks of the river.

Lucian trailed slowly along the road, keeping a look out for the stile the doctor had mentioned. It would be a little of an adventure, he thought, to find his way by an unknown track; he knew the direction in which his home lay, and he imagined he would not have much difficulty in crossing from one stile to another. The path led him up a steep bare field, and when he was at the top, the town and the valley winding up to the north stretched before him. The river was stilled at the flood, and the yellow water, reflecting the sunset, glowed in its deep pools like dull brass. These burning pools, the level meadows fringed with shuddering reeds, the long dark sweep of the forest on the hill, were all clear and distinct, yet the light seemed to have clothed them with a new garment, even as voices from the streets of Caermaen sounded strangely, mounting up thin with the smoke. There beneath him lay the huddled cluster of Caermaen, the ragged and uneven roofs that marked the winding and sordid streets, here and there a pointed gable rising above its meaner fellows; beyond he recognized the piled mounds that marked the circle of the amphitheatre, and the dark edge of trees that grew where the Roman wall whitened and waxed old beneath the frosts and rains of eighteen hundred years. Thin and strange, mingled together, the voices came up to him on the hill; it was as if an outland race inhabited the ruined city and talked in a strange language of strange and terrible things. The sun had slid down the sky, and hung quivering over the huge dark dome of the mountain like a burnt sacrifice, and then suddenly vanished. In the afterglow the clouds began to writhe and turn scarlet, and shone so strangely reflected in the pools of the snake-like river, that one would have said the still waters stirred, the fleeting and changing of the clouds seeming to quicken the stream, as if it bubbled and sent up gouts of blood. But already about the town the darkness was forming; fast, fast the shadows crept upon it from the forest, and from all sides banks and wreaths of curling mist were gathering, as if a ghostly leaguer were being built up against the city, and the strange race who lived in its streets. Suddenly there burst out from the stillness the clear and piercing music of the *réveillé*, calling, recalling, iterated, reiterated, and ending with one long high fierce shrill note with which the steep hills rang. Perhaps a boy in the school band was practicing on his bugle, but for Lucian it was magic. For him it was the note of the Roman trumpet, *tuba mirum spargens sonum*, filling all the hollow valley with its command, reverberated in dark places in the far forest, and resonant in the old graveyards without the walls. In his imagination he saw the earthen gates of the tombs broken open, and the serried legion swarming to the eagles. Century by century they passed by; they rose, dripping, from the river bed, they rose from the level, their armor shone in the quiet orchard, they gathered in ranks and companies from the cemetery, and as the trumpet sounded, the hill fort above the town gave up its dead. By hundreds and thousands the ghostly battle surged about the standard, behind the quaking mist, ready to march against the moldering walls they had built so many years before.

He turned sharply; it was growing very dark, and he was afraid of missing his way. At first the path led him by the verge of a wood; there was a noise of rustling and murmuring from the trees as if they were taking evil counsel together. A high hedge shut out the sight of the darkening valley, and he stumbled on mechanically, without taking much note of the turnings of the track, and when he came out from the wood shadow to the open country, he stood for a moment quite bewildered and uncertain. A dark wild twilight country lay before him, confused dim shapes of trees near at hand, and a hollow below his feet, and the further hills and woods were dimmer, and all the air was very still. Suddenly the darkness about him glowed; a furnace fire had shot up on the mountain, and for a moment the little world of the woodside and the steep hill shone in a pale light, and he thought he saw his path beaten out in the turf before him. The great flame sank down to a red glint of fire, and it led him on down the ragged slope, his feet striking against ridges of ground, and falling from beneath him at a sudden dip. The bramble bushes shot out long prickly vines, amongst which he was entangled, and lower he was held back by wet bubbling earth. He had descended into a dark and shady valley, beset and tapestried with gloomy thickets; the weird wood noises were the only sounds, strange, unutterable mutterings, dismal, inarticulate. He pushed on in what he hoped was the right direction, stumbling from stile to gate, peering through mist and shadow, and still vainly seeking for any known landmark. Presently another sound broke upon the grim air, the murmur of water poured over stones, gurgling against the old misshapen roots of trees, and running clear in a deep channel. He passed into the chill breath of the brook, and almost fancied he heard two voices speaking in its murmur; there seemed a ceaseless utterance of words, an endless argument. With a mood of horror pressing on him, he listened to the noise of waters, and the wild fancy seized him that he was not deceived, that two unknown beings stood together there in the darkness and tried the balances of his life, and spoke his doom. The hour in the matted thicket rushed over the great bridge of years to his thought; he had sinned against the earth, and the earth trembled and shook for vengeance. He stayed still for a moment, quivering with fear, and at last went on blindly, no longer caring for the path, if only he might escape from the toils of that dismal shuddering hollow. As he plunged through the hedges the bristling thorns tore his face and hands; he fell amongst stinging-nettles and was pricked as he beat out his way amidst the gorse. He raced headlong, his head over his shoulder, through a windy wood, bare of undergrowth; there lay about the ground moldering stumps, the relics of trees that had thundered to their fall, crashing and tearing to earth, long ago; and from these remains there flowed out a pale thin radiance, filling the spaces of the sounding wood with a dream of light. He had lost all count of the track; he felt he had fled for hours, climbing and descending, and yet not advancing; it was as if he stood still and the shadows of the land went by, in a vision. But at last a hedge, high and straggling, rose before him, and as he broke through it, his feet slipped, and he fell headlong down a steep bank into a lane. He lay still, half-stunned, for a moment, and then rising unsteadily, he looked desperately into the darkness before him, uncertain and bewildered. In front it was black as a midnight cellar, and he turned about, and saw a glint in the distance, as if a candle were flickering in a farm-house window. He began to walk with trembling feet towards the light, when suddenly something pale started out from the shadows before him, and seemed to swim and float down the air. He was going down hill, and he hastened onwards, and he could see the bars of a stile framed dimly against the sky, and the figure still advanced with that gliding motion. Then, as the road declined to the valley, the landmark he had been seeking appeared. To his right there surged up in the darkness the darker summit of the Roman fort, and the streaming fire of the great full moon glowed through the bars of the wizard oaks, and made a halo shine about the hill. He was now quite close to the white appearance, and saw that it was only a woman walking swiftly down the lane; the floating movement was an effect due to the somber air and the moon's glamour. At the gate, where he had spent so many hours gazing at the fort, they walked foot to foot, and he saw it was Annie Morgan.

“Good evening, Master Lucian,” said the girl, “it’s very dark, sir, indeed.”

“Good evening, Annie,” he answered, calling her by her name for the first time, and he saw that she smiled with pleasure. “You are out late, aren’t you?”

“Yes, sir; but I’ve been taking a bit of supper to old Mrs. Gibbon. She’s been very poorly the last few days, and there’s nobody to do anything for her.”

Then there were really people who helped one another; kindness and pity were not mere myths, fictions of “society,” as useful as Doe and Roe, and as non-existent. The thought struck Lucian with a shock; the evening’s passion and delirium, the wild walk and physical fatigue had almost shattered him in body and mind. He was “degenerate,” *decadent*, and the rough rains and blustering winds of life, which a stronger man would have laughed at and enjoyed, were to him “hail-storms and fire-showers.” After all, Messrs Beit, the publishers, were only sharp men of business, and these terrible Dixons and Gervases and Colleys merely the ordinary limited clergy and gentry of a quiet country town; sturdier sense would have dismissed Dixon as an old humbug, Stanley Gervase, Esquire, J.P., as a “bit of a bounder,” and the ladies as “rather a shoddy lot.” But he was walking slowly now in painful silence, his heavy, lagging feet striking against the loose stones. He was not thinking of the girl beside him; only something seemed to swell and grow and swell within his heart; it was all the torture of his days, weary hopes and weary disappointment, scorn rankling and throbbing, and the thought “I had rather call the devils my brothers and live with them in hell.” He choked and gasped for breath, and felt involuntary muscles working in his face, and the impulses of a madman stirring him; he himself was in truth the realization of the vision of Caermaen that night, a city with moldering walls beset by the ghostly legion. Life and the world and the laws of the sunlight had passed away, and the resurrection and kingdom of the dead began. The Celt assailed him, becoming from the weird wood he called the world, and his far-off ancestors, the “little people,” crept out of their caves, muttering charms and incantations in hissing inhuman speech; he was beleaguered by desires that had slept in his race for ages.

“I am afraid you are very tired, Master Lucian. Would you like me to give you my hand over this rough bit?”

He had stumbled against a great round stone and had nearly fallen. The woman’s hand sought his in the darkness; as he felt the touch of the soft warm flesh he moaned, and a pang shot through his arm to his heart. He looked up and found he had only walked a few paces since Annie had spoken; he had thought they had wandered for hours together. The moon was just mounting above the oaks, and the halo round the dark hill brightened. He stopped short, and keeping his hold of Annie’s hand, looked into her face. A hazy glory of moonlight shone around them and lit up their eyes. He had not greatly altered since his boyhood; his face was pale olive in color, thin and oval; marks of pain had gathered about the eyes, and his black hair was already stricken with grey. But the eager, curious gaze still remained, and what he saw before him lit up his sadness with a new fire. She stopped too, and did not offer to draw away, but looked back with all her heart. They were alike in many ways; her skin was also of that olive color, but her face was sweet as a beautiful summer night, and her black eyes showed no dimness, and the smile on the scarlet lips was like a flame when it brightens a dark and lonely land.

“You are sorely tired, Master Lucian, let us sit down here by the gate.”

It was Lucian who spoke next: “My dear, my dear.” And their lips were together again, and their arms locked together, each holding the other fast. And then the poor lad let his head sink down on his sweetheart’s breast, and burst into a passion of weeping. The tears streamed down his face, and he shook with sobbing, in the happiest moment that he had ever lived. The woman bent over him and tried to comfort him, but his tears were his consolation and his triumph. Annie was whispering to him, her hand laid on his heart; she was whispering beautiful, wonderful words, that soothed him as a song. He did not know what they meant.

“Annie, dear, dear Annie, what are you saying to me? I have never heard such beautiful words. Tell me, Annie, what do they mean?”

She laughed, and said it was only nonsense that the nurses sang to the children.

“No, no, you are not to call me Master Lucian any more,” he said, when they parted, “you must call me Lucian; and I, I worship you, my dear Annie.”

He fell down before her, embracing her knees, and adored, and she allowed him, and confirmed his worship. He followed slowly after her, passing the path which led to her home with a longing glance. Nobody saw any difference in Lucian when he reached the rectory. He came in with his usual dreamy indifference, and told how he had lost his way by trying the short cut. He said he had met Dr. Burrows on the road, and that he had recommended the path by the fields. Then, as dully as if he had been reading some story out of a newspaper, he gave his father the outlines of the Beit case, producing the pretty little book called *The Chorus in Green*. The parson listened in amazement.

“You mean to tell me that *you* wrote this book?” he said. He was quite roused.

“No; not all of it. Look; that bit is mine, and that; and the beginning of this chapter. Nearly the whole of the third chapter is by me.”

He closed the book without interest, and indeed he felt astonished at his father’s excitement. The incident seemed to him unimportant.

“And you say that eighty or ninety pages of this book are yours, and these scoundrels have stolen your work?”

“Well, I suppose they have. I’ll fetch the manuscript, if you would like to look at it.”

The manuscript was duly produced, wrapped in brown paper, with Messrs Beit’s address label on it, and the post-office dated stamps.

“And the other book has been out a month.” The parson, forgetting the sacerdotal office, and his good habit of grinning, swore at Messrs Beit and Mr. Ritson, calling them damned thieves, and then began to read the manuscript, and to compare it with the printed book.

“Why, it’s splendid work. My poor fellow,” he said after a while, “I had no notion you could write so well. I used to think of such things in the old days at Oxford; ‘old Bill,’ the tutor, used to praise my essays, but I never wrote anything like this. And this infernal ruffian of a Ritson has taken all your best things and mixed them up with his own rot to make it go down. Of course you’ll expose the gang?”

Lucian was mildly amused; he couldn't enter into his father's feelings at all. He sat smoking in one of the old easy chairs, taking the rare relish of a hot grog with his pipe, and gazing out of his dreamy eyes at the violent old parson. He was pleased that his father liked his book, because he knew him to be a deep and sober scholar and a cool judge of good letters; but he laughed to himself when he saw the magic of print. The parson had expressed no wish to read the manuscript when it came back in disgrace; he had merely grinned, said something about boomerangs, and quoted Horace with relish. Whereas now, before the book in its neat case, lettered with another man's name, his approbation of the writing and his disapproval of the "scoundrels," as he called them, were loudly expressed, and, though a good smoker, he blew and puffed vehemently at his pipe.

"You'll expose the rascals, of course, won't you?" he said again.

"Oh no, I think not. It really doesn't matter much, does it? After all, there are some very weak things in the book; doesn't it strike you as 'young?' I have been thinking of another plan, but I haven't done much with it lately. But I believe I've got hold of a really good idea this time, and if I can manage to see the heart of it I hope to turn out a manuscript worth stealing. But it's so hard to get at the core of an idea — the heart, as I call it," he went on after a pause. "It's like having a box you can't open, though you know there's something wonderful inside. But I do believe I've a fine thing in my hands, and I mean to try my best to work it."

Lucian talked with enthusiasm now, but his father, on his side, could not share these ardors. It was his part to be astonished at excitement over a book that was not even begun, the mere ghost of a book flitting elusive in the world of unborn masterpieces and failures. He had loved good letters, but he shared unconsciously in the general belief that literary attempt is always pitiful, though he did not subscribe to the other half of the popular faith — that literary success is a matter of very little importance. He thought well of books, but only of printed books; in manuscripts he put no faith, and the *paulo-post-futurum* tense he could not in any manner conjugate. He returned once more to the topic of palpable interest.

"But about this dirty trick these fellows have played on you. You won't sit quietly and bear it, surely? It's only a question of writing to the papers."

"They wouldn't put the letter in. And if they did, I should only get laughed at. Some time ago a man wrote to the *Reader*, complaining of his play being stolen. He said that he had sent a little one-act comedy to Burleigh, the great dramatist, asking for his advice. Burleigh gave his advice and took the idea for his own very successful play. So the man said, and I daresay it was true enough. But the victim got nothing by his complaint. 'A pretty state of things,' everybody said. 'Here's a Mr. Tomson, that no one has ever heard of, bothers Burleigh with his rubbish, and then accuses him of petty larceny. Is it likely that a man of Burleigh's position, a playwright who can make his five thousand a year easily, would borrow from an unknown Tomson?' I should think it very likely, indeed," Lucian went on, chuckling, "but that was their verdict. No; I don't think I'll write to the papers."

"Well, well, my boy, I suppose you know your own business best. I think you are mistaken, but you must do as you like."

"It's all so unimportant," said Lucian, and he really thought so. He had sweeter things to dream of, and desired no communion of feeling with that madman who had left Caermaen some few hours before. He felt he had made a fool of himself, he was ashamed to think of the fatuity of which he had been guilty, such boiling hatred was not only wicked, but absurd. A man could do no good who put himself into a position of such violent antagonism against his fellow-creatures; so Lucian rebuked his heart, saying that he was old enough to know better. But he remembered that he had sweeter things to dream of; there was a secret ecstasy that he treasured and locked tight away, as a joy too exquisite even for thought till he was quite alone; and then there was that scheme for a new book that he had laid down hopelessly some time ago; it seemed to have arisen into life again within the last hour; he understood that he had started on a false tack, he had taken the wrong aspect of his idea. Of course the thing couldn't be written in that way; it was like trying to read a page turned upside down; and he saw those characters he had vainly sought suddenly disambushed, and a splendid inevitable sequence of events unrolled before him.

It was a true resurrection; the dry plot he had constructed revealed itself as a living thing, stirring and mysterious, and warm as life itself. The parson was smoking stolidly to all appearance, but in reality he was full of amazement at his own son, and now and again he slipped sly furtive glances towards the tranquil young man in the arm-chair by the empty hearth. In the first place, Mr. Taylor was genuinely impressed by what he had read of Lucian's work; he had so long been accustomed to look upon all effort as futile that success amazed him. In the abstract, of course, he was prepared to admit that some people did write well and got published and made money, just as other persons successfully backed an outsider at heavy odds; but it had seemed as improbable that Lucian should show even the beginnings of achievement in one direction as in the other. Then the boy evidently cared so little about it; he did not appear to be proud of being worth robbing, nor was he angry with the robbers.

He sat back luxuriously in the disreputable old chair, drawing long slow wreaths of smoke, tasting his whisky from time to time, evidently well at ease with himself. The father saw him smile, and it suddenly dawned upon him that his son was very handsome; he had such kind gentle eyes and a kind mouth, and his pale cheeks were flushed like a girl's. Mr. Taylor felt moved. What a harmless young fellow Lucian had been; no doubt a little queer and different from others, but wholly inoffensive and patient under disappointment. And Miss Deacon, her contribution to the evening's discussion had been characteristic; she had remarked, firstly, that writing was a very unsettling occupation, and secondly, that it was extremely foolish to entrust one's property to people of whom one knew nothing. Father and son had smiled together at these observations, which were probably true enough. Mr. Taylor at last left Lucian along; he shook hands with a good deal of respect, and said, almost deferentially:

"You mustn't work too hard, old fellow. I wouldn't stay up too late, if I were you, after that long walk. You must have gone miles out of your way."

"I'm not tired now, though. I feel as if I could write my new book on the spot"; and the young man laughed a gay sweet laugh that struck the father as a new note in his son's life.

He sat still a moment after his father had left the room. He cherished his chief treasure of thought in its secret place; he would not enjoy it yet. He drew up a chair to the table at which he wrote or tried to write, and began taking pens and paper from the drawer. There was a great pile of ruled paper there; all of it used, on one side, and signifying many hours of desperate scribbling, of heart-searching and rack of his brain; an array of poor, eager lines written by a waning fire with waning hope; all useless and abandoned. He took up the sheets cheerfully, and began in delicious idleness to look over these fruitless efforts. A page caught his attention; he remembered how he wrote it while a November storm was dashing against the panes; and there was another, with a queer blot in one corner; he had got up from his chair and looked out, and all the earth was white fairyland, and the snowflakes whirled round and round in the wind. Then he saw the chapter begun of a night in March: a great gale blew that night and rooted up one of the ancient yews in the churchyard. He had heard the trees shrieking in the woods, and the long wail of the wind, and across the heaven a white moon fled awfully before the streaming clouds. And all these poor abandoned pages now seemed sweet, and past unhappiness was transmuted into happiness, and the nights of toil were holy. He turned over half a dozen leaves and began to sketch out the outlines of the new book on the unused pages; running out a skeleton plan on one page, and dotting fancies, suggestions, hints on others. He wrote rapidly, overjoyed to find that loving phrases grew under his pen; a particular scene he had imagined filled him with desire; he gave his hand free course, and saw the written work glowing; and action and all the heat of existence quickened and beat on the wet page. Happy fancies took shape in happier words, and when at last he leant back in his chair he felt the stir and rush of the story as if it had been some portion of his own life. He read over what he had done with a renewed pleasure in the nimble and flowing workmanship, and as he put the little pile of manuscript tenderly in the drawer he paused to enjoy the anticipation of tomorrow’s labor.

And then — but the rest of the night was given to tender and delicious things, and when he went up to bed a scarlet dawn was streaming from the east.

III

FOR DAYS LUCIAN lay in a swoon of pleasure, smiling when he was addressed, sauntering happily in the sunlight, hugging recollection warm to his heart. Annie had told him that she was going on a visit to her married sister, and said, with a caress, that he must be patient. He protested against her absence, but she fondled him, whispering her charms in his ear till he gave in and then they said good-bye, Lucian adoring on his knees. The parting was as strange as the meeting, and that night when he laid his work aside, and let himself sink deep into the joys of memory, all the encounter seemed as wonderful and impossible as magic.

"And you really don't mean to do anything about those rascals?" said his father.

"Rascals? Which rascals? Oh, you mean Beit. I had forgotten all about it. No; I don't think I shall trouble. They're not worth powder and shot."

And he returned to his dream, pacing slowly from the medlar to the quince and back again. It seemed trivial to be interrupted by such questions; he had not even time to think of the book he had recommenced so eagerly, much less of this labor of long ago. He recollected without interest that it cost him many pains, that it was pretty good here and there, and that it had been stolen, and it seemed that there was nothing more to be said on the matter. He wished to think of the darkness in the lane, of the kind voice that spoke to him, of the kind hand that sought his own, as he stumbled on the rough way. So far, it was wonderful. Since he had left school and lost the company of the worthy barbarians who had befriended him there, he had almost lost the sense of kinship with humanity; he had come to dread the human form as men dread the hood of the cobra. To Lucian a man or a woman meant something that stung, that spoke words that rankled, and poisoned his life with scorn. At first such malignity shocked him: he would ponder over words and glances and wonder if he were not mistaken, and he still sought now and then for sympathy. The poor boy had romantic ideas about women; he believed they were merciful and pitiful, very kind to the unlucky and helpless. Men perhaps had to be different; after all, the duty of a man was to get on in the world, or, in plain language, to make money, to be successful; to cheat rather than to be cheated, but always to be successful; and he could understand that one who fell below this high standard must expect to be severely judged by his fellows. For example, there was young Bennett, Miss Spurry's nephew. Lucian had met him once or twice when he was spending his holidays with Miss Spurry, and the two young fellows compared literary notes together. Bennett showed some beautiful things he had written, over which Lucian had grown both sad and enthusiastic. It was such exquisite magic verse, and so much better than anything he ever hoped to write, that there was a touch of anguish in his congratulations. But when Bennett, after many vain prayers to his aunt, threw up a safe position in the bank, and betook himself to a London garret, Lucian was not surprised at the general verdict.

Mr. Dixon, as a clergyman, viewed the question from a high standpoint and found it all deplorable, but the general opinion was that Bennett was a hopeless young lunatic. Old Mr. Gervase went purple when his name was mentioned, and the young Dixons sneered very merrily over the adventure.

"I always thought he was a beastly young ass," said Edward Dixon, "but I didn't think he'd chuck away his chances like that. Said he couldn't stand a bank! I hope he'll be able to stand bread and water. That's all those littery fellows get, I believe, except Tennyson and Mark Twain and those sort of people."

Lucian of course sympathized with the unfortunate Bennett, but such judgments were after all only natural. The young man might have stayed in the bank and succeeded to his aunt's thousand a year, and everybody would have called him a very nice young fellow— "clever, too." But he had deliberately chosen, as Edward Dixon had said, to chuck his chances away for the sake of literature; piety and a sense of the main chance had alike pointed the way to a delicate course of wheedling, to a little harmless practicing on Miss Spurry's infirmities, to frequent compliances of a soothing nature, and the "young ass" had been blind to the direction of one and the other. It seemed almost right that the vicar should moralize, that Edward Dixon should sneer, and that Mr. Gervase should grow purple with contempt. Men, Lucian thought, were like judges, who may pity the criminal in their hearts, but are forced to vindicate the outraged majesty of the law by a severe sentence. He felt the same considerations applied to his own case; he knew that his father should have had more money, that his clothes should be newer and of a better cut, that he should have gone to the university and made good friends. If such had been his fortune he could have looked his fellow-men proudly in the face, upright and unashamed. Having put on the whole armor of a first-rate West End tailor, with money in his purse, having taken anxious thought for the morrow, and having some useful friends and good prospects; in such a case he might have held his head high in a gentlemanly and Christian community. As it was he had usually avoided the reproachful glance of his fellows, feeling that he deserved their condemnation. But he had cherished for a long time his romantic sentimentalities about women; literary conventions borrowed from the minor poets and pseudo-medievalists, or so he thought afterwards. But, fresh from school, wearied a little with the perpetual society of barbarian though worthy boys, he had in his soul a charming image of womanhood, before which he worshipped with mingled passion and devotion. It was a nude figure, perhaps, but the shining arms were to be wound about the neck of a vanquished knight; there was rest for the head of a wounded lover; the hands were stretched forth to do works of pity, and the smiling lips were to murmur not love alone, but consolation in defeat. Here was the refuge for a broken heart; here the scorn of men would but make tenderness increase; here was all pity and all charity with loving-kindness. It was a delightful picture, conceived in the "come rest on this bosom," and "a ministering angel thou" manner, with touches of allurement that made devotion all the sweeter. He soon found that he had idealized a little; in the affair of young Bennett, while the men were contemptuous the women were virulent. He had been rather fond of Agatha Gervase, and she, so other ladies said, had "set her cap" at him. Now, when he rebelled, and lost the goodwill of his aunt, dear Miss Spurry, Agatha insulted him with all conceivable rapidity. "After all, Mr. Bennett," she said, "you will be nothing better than a beggar; now, will you? You mustn't think me cruel, but I can't help speaking the truth. *Write books!*" Her expression filled up the incomplete sentence; she waggled with indignant emotion. These passages came to Lucian's ears, and indeed the Gervases boasted of "how well poor Agatha had behaved."

"Never mind, Gathy," old Gervase had observed. "If the impudent young puppy comes here again, we'll see what Thomas can do with the horsewhip."

“Poor dear child,” Mrs. Gervase added in telling the tale, “and she was so fond of him too. But of course it couldn’t go on after his shameful behavior.”

But Lucian was troubled; he sought vainly for the ideal womanly, the tender note of “come rest on this bosom.” Ministering angels, he felt convinced, do not rub red pepper and sulfuric acid into the wounds of suffering mortals.

Then there was the case of Mr. Vaughan, a squire in the neighborhood, at whose board all the aristocracy of Caermaen had feasted for years. Mr. Vaughan had a first-rate cook, and his cellar was rare, and he was never so happy as when he shared his good things with his friends. His mother kept his house, and they delighted all the girls with frequent dances, while the men sighed over the amazing champagne. Investments proved disastrous, and Mr. Vaughan had to sell the grey manor-house by the river. He and his mother took a little modern stucco villa in Caermaen, wishing to be near their dear friends. But the men were “very sorry; rough on you, Vaughan. Always thought those Patagonians were risky, but you wouldn’t hear of it. Hope we shall see you before very long; you and Mrs. Vaughan must come to tea some day after Christmas.”

“Of course we are all very sorry for them,” said Henrietta Dixon. “No, we haven’t called on Mrs. Vaughan yet. They have no regular servant, you know; only a woman in the morning. I hear old mother Vaughan, as Edward will call her, does nearly everything. And their house is absurdly small; it’s little more than a cottage. One really can’t call it a gentleman’s house.”

Then Mr. Vaughan, his heart in the dust, went to the Gervases and tried to borrow five pounds of Mr. Gervase. He had to be ordered out of the house, and, as Edith Gervase said, it was all very painful; “he went out in such a funny way,” she added, “just like the dog when he’s had a whipping. Of course it’s sad, even if it is all his own fault, as everybody says, but he looked so ridiculous as he was going down the steps that I couldn’t help laughing.” Mr. Vaughan heard the ringing, youthful laughter as he crossed the lawn.

Young girls like Henrietta Dixon and Edith Gervase naturally viewed the Vaughans’ comical position with all the high spirits of their age, but the elder ladies could not look at matters in this frivolous light.

"Hush, dear, hush," said Mrs. Gervase, "it's all too shocking to be a laughing matter. Don't you agree with me, Mrs. Dixon? The sinful extravagance that went on at Pentre always *frightened* me. You remember that ball they gave last year? Mr. Gervase assured me that the champagne must have cost *at least* a hundred and fifty shillings the dozen."

"It's dreadful, isn't it," said Mrs. Dixon, "when one thinks of how many poor people there are who would be thankful for a crust of bread?"

"Yes, Mrs. Dixon," Agatha joined in, "and you know how absurdly the Vaughans spoilt the cottagers. Oh, it was really wicked; one would think Mr. Vaughan wished to make them above their station. Edith and I went for a walk one day nearly as far as Pentre, and we begged a glass of water of old Mrs. Jones who lives in that pretty cottage near the brook. She began praising the Vaughans in the most fulsome manner, and showed us some flannel things they had given her at Christmas. I assure you, my dear Mrs. Dixon, the flannel was the very best quality; no lady could wish for better. It couldn't have cost less than half-a-crown a yard."

"I know, my dear, I know. Mr. Dixon always said it couldn't last. How often I have heard him say that the Vaughans were pauperizing all the common people about Pentre, and putting every one else in a most unpleasant position. Even from a worldly point of view it was very poor taste on their part. So different from the *true* charity that Paul speaks of."

"I only wish they had given away nothing worse than flannel," said Miss Colley, a young lady of very strict views. "But I assure you there was a perfect orgy, I can call it nothing else, every Christmas. Great joints of prime beef, and barrels of strong beer, and snuff and tobacco distributed wholesale; as if the poor wanted to be encouraged in their disgusting habits. It was really impossible to go through the village for weeks after; the whole place was poisoned with the fumes of horrid tobacco pipes."

"Well, we see how that sort of thing ends," said Mrs. Dixon, summing up judicially. "We had intended to call, but I really think it would be impossible after what Mrs. Gervase has told us. The idea of Mr. Vaughan trying to sponge on poor Mr. Gervase in that shabby way! I think meanness of that kind is so hateful."

It was the practical side of all this that astonished Lucian. He saw that in reality there was no high-flown quixotism in a woman's nature; the smooth arms, made he had thought for caressing, seemed muscular; the hands meant for the doing of works of pity in his system, appeared dexterous in the giving of "stingers," as Barnes might say, and the smiling lips could sneer with great ease. Nor was he more fortunate in his personal experiences. As has been told, Mrs. Dixon spoke of him in connection with "judgments," and the younger ladies did not exactly cultivate his acquaintance. Theoretically they "adored" books and thought poetry "too sweet," but in practice they preferred talking about mares and fox-terriers and their neighbors.

They were nice girls enough, very like other young ladies in other country towns, content with the teaching of their parents, reading the Bible every morning in their bedrooms, and sitting every Sunday in church amongst the well-dressed "sheep" on the right hand. It was not their fault if they failed to satisfy the ideal of an enthusiastic dreamy boy, and indeed, they would have thought his feigned woman immodest, absurdly sentimental, a fright ("never wears stays, my dear") and *horrid*.

At first he was a good deal grieved at the loss of that charming tender woman, the work of his brain. When the Miss Dixons went haughtily by with a scornful waggle, when the Miss Gervases passed in the wagonette laughing as the mud splashed him, the poor fellow would look up with a face of grief that must have been very comic; "like a dying duck," as Edith Gervase said. Edith was really very pretty, and he would have liked to talk to her, even about fox-terriers, if she would have listened. One afternoon at the Dixons' he really forced himself upon her, and with all the obtuseness of an enthusiastic boy tried to discuss the *Lotus Eaters* of Tennyson. It was too absurd. Captain Kempton was making signals to Edith all the time, and Lieutenant Gatwick had gone off in disgust, and he had promised to bring her a puppy "by Vick out of Wasp." At last the poor girl could bear it no longer:

"Yes, it's very sweet," she said at last. "When did you say you were going to London, Mr. Taylor?"

It was about the time that his disappointment became known to everybody, and the shot told. He gave her a piteous look and slunk off, "just like the dog when he's had a whipping," to use Edith's own expression. Two or three lessons of this description produced their due effect; and when he saw a male Dixon or Gervase approaching him he bit his lip and summoned up his courage. But when he descried a "ministering angel" he made haste and hid behind a hedge or took to the woods. In course of time the desire to escape became an instinct, to be followed as a matter of course; in the same way he avoided the adders on the mountain. His old ideals were almost if not quite forgotten; he knew that the female of the *bête humaine*, like the adder, would in all probability sting, and he therefore shrank from its trail, but without any feeling of special resentment. The one had a poisoned tongue as the other had a poisoned fang, and it was well to leave them both alone. Then had come that sudden fury of rage against all humanity, as he went out of Caermaen carrying the book that had been stolen from him by the enterprising Beit. He shuddered as he though of how nearly he had approached the verge of madness, when his eyes filled with blood and the earth seemed to burn with fire. He remembered how he had looked up to the horizon and the sky was blotched with scarlet; and the earth was deep red, with red woods and red fields. There was something of horror in the memory, and in the vision of that wild night walk through dim country, when every shadow seemed a symbol of some terrible impending doom. The murmur of the brook, the wind shrilling through the wood, the pale light flowing from the moldered trunks, and the picture of his own figure fleeing and fleeting through the shades; all these seemed unhappy things that told a story in fatal hieroglyphics. And then the life and laws of the sunlight had passed away, and the resurrection and kingdom of the dead began. Though his limbs were weary, he had felt his muscles grow strong as steel; a woman, one of the hated race, was beside him in the darkness, and the wild beast woke within him, ravening for blood and brutal lust; all the raging desires of the dim race from which he came assailed his heart. The ghosts issued out from the weird wood and from the caves in the hills, besieging him, as he had imagined the spiritual legion besieging Caermaen, beckoning him to a hideous battle and a victory that he had never imagined in his wildest dreams. And then out of the darkness the kind voice spoke again, and the kind hand was stretched out to draw him up from the pit. It was sweet to think of that which he had found at last; the boy's picture incarnate, all the passion and compassion of his longing, all the pity and love and consolation. She, that beautiful passionate woman offering up her beauty in sacrifice to him, she was worthy indeed of his worship. He remembered how his tears had fallen upon her breast, and how tenderly she had soothed him, whispering those wonderful unknown words that sang to his heart. And she had made herself defenseless before him, caressing and fondling the body that had been so despised. He exulted in the happy thought that he had knelt down on the ground before her, and had embraced her knees and worshipped. The woman's body had become his religion; he lay awake at night looking into the darkness with hungry eyes; wishing for a miracle, that the appearance of the so-desired form might be shaped before him. And when he was alone in quiet places in the wood, he fell down again on his knees, and even on his face, stretching out vain hands in the air, as if they would feel her flesh. His father noticed in those days that the inner pocket of his coat was stuffed with papers; he would see Lucian walking up and down in a secret shady place at the bottom of the orchard, reading from his sheaf of manuscript, replacing the leaves, and again drawing them out. He would walk a few quick steps, and pause as if enraptured, gazing in the air as if he looked through the shadows of the world into some sphere of glory, feigned by his thought. Mr. Taylor was almost alarmed at the sight; he concluded of course that Lucian was writing a book. In the first place, there seemed something immodest in seeing the operation performed under one's eyes; it was as if the "make-up" of a beautiful actress were done on the stage, in full audience; as if one saw the rounded calves fixed in position, the fleshings drawn on, the voluptuous outlines of the figure produced by means purely mechanical, blushes mantling from the paint-pot, and the golden tresses well secured by the wigmaker. Books, Mr. Taylor thought, should swim into one's ken mysteriously; they should appear all printed and bound, without apparent genesis; just as children are suddenly told that they have a little sister, found by mamma in the garden. But Lucian was not only engaged in composition; he was plainly rapturous, enthusiastic; Mr. Taylor saw him throw up his hands, and bow his head with strange gesture. The parson began to fear that his son was like some of those mad Frenchmen of whom he had read, young fellows who had a sort of fury of literature, and gave their whole lives to it, spending days over a page, and years over a book, pursuing art as Englishmen pursue money, building up a romance as if it were a business. Now Mr. Taylor held firmly by the "walking-stick" theory; he believed that a man of letters should have a real profession, some solid employment in life. “Get something to do,” he would have liked to say, “and then you can write as much as you please. Look at Scott, look at Dickens and Trollope.” And then there was the social point of view; it might be right, or it might be wrong, but there could be no doubt that the literary man, as such, was not thought much of in English society. Mr. Taylor knew his Thackeray, and he remembered that old Major Pendennis, society personified, did not exactly boast of his nephew’s occupation. Even Warrington was rather ashamed to own his connection with journalism, and Pendennis himself laughed openly at his novel-writing as an agreeable way of making money, a useful appendage to the cultivation of dukes, his true business in life. This was the plain English view, and Mr. Taylor was no doubt right enough in thinking it good, practical common sense. Therefore when he saw Lucian loitering and sauntering, musing amorously over his manuscript, exhibiting manifest signs of that fine fury which Britons have ever found absurd, he felt grieved at heart, and more than ever sorry that he had not been able to send the boy to Oxford.

“B.N.C. would have knocked all this nonsense out of him,” he thought. “He would have taken a double First like my poor father and made something of a figure in the world. However, it can’t be helped.” The poor man sighed, and lit his pipe, and walked in another part of the garden.

But he was mistaken in his diagnosis of the symptoms. The book that Lucian had begun lay unheeded in the drawer; it was a secret work that he was engaged on, and the manuscripts that he took out of that inner pocket never left him day or night. He slept with them next to his heart, and he would kiss them when he was quite alone, and pay them such devotion as he would have paid to her whom they symbolized. He wrote on these leaves a wonderful ritual of praise and devotion; it was the liturgy of his religion. Again and again he copied and recopied this madness of a lover; dallying all days over the choice of a word, searching for more exquisite phrases. No common words, no such phrases as he might use in a tale would suffice; the sentences of worship must stir and be quickened, they must glow and burn, and be decked out as with rare work of jewelry. Every part of that holy and beautiful body must be adored; he sought for terms of extravagant praise, he bent his soul and mind low before her, licking the dust under her feet, abased and yet rejoicing as a Templar before the image of Baphomet. He exulted more especially in the knowledge that there was nothing of the conventional or common in his ecstasy; he was not the fervent, adoring lover of Tennyson's poems, who loves with passion and yet with a proud respect, with the love always of a gentleman for a lady. Annie was not a lady; the Morgans had farmed their land for hundreds of years; they were what Miss Gervase and Miss Colley and the rest of them called common people. Tennyson's noble gentleman thought of their ladies with something of reticence; they imagined them dressed in flowing and courtly robes, walking with slow dignity; they dreamed of them as always stately, the future mistresses of their houses, mothers of their heirs. Such lovers bowed, but not too low, remembering their own honor, before those who were to be equal companions and friends as well as wives. It was not such conceptions as these that he embodied in the amazing emblems of his ritual; he was not, he told himself, a young officer, "something in the city," or a rising barrister engaged to a Miss Dixon or a Miss Gervase. He had not thought of looking out for a nice little house in a good residential suburb where they would have pleasant society; there were to be no consultations about wall-papers, or jocose whispers from friends as to the necessity of having a room that would do for a nursery. No glad young thing had leant on his arm while they chose the suite in white enamel, and china for "our bedroom," the modest salesman doing his best to spare their blushes. When Edith Gervase married she would get mamma to look out for two really good servants, "as we must begin quietly," and mamma would make sure that the drains and everything were right. Then her "girl friends" would come on a certain solemn day to see all her "lovely things." "Two dozen of everything!" "Look, Ethel, did you ever see such ducky frills?" "And that insertion, isn't it quite too sweet?" "My dear Edith, you are a lucky girl." "All the underlinen specially made by Madame Lulu!" "What delicious things!" "I hope he knows what a prize he is winning." "Oh! do look at those lovely ribbon-bows!" "You darling, how happy you must be." "Real Valenciennes!" Then a whisper in the lady's ear, and her reply, "Oh, don't, Nelly!" So they would chirp over their treasures, as in Rabelais they chirped over their cups; and every thing would be done in due order till the wedding-day, when mamma, who had strained her sinews and the commandments to bring the match about, would weep and look indignantly at the unhappy bridegroom. "I *hope* you'll be kind to her, Robert." Then in a rapid whisper to the bride: "Mind, you *insist* on Wyman's flushing the drains when you come back; servants are so careless and dirty too. Don't let him go about by himself in Paris. Men are so *queer*, one never knows. You *have* got the pills?" And aloud, after these *secreta*, "God bless you, my dear; good-bye! *cluck*, *cluck*, good-bye!"

There were stranger things written in the manuscript pages that Lucian cherished, sentences that burnt and glowed like "coals of fire which hath a most vehement flame." There were phrases that stung and tingled as he wrote them, and sonorous words poured out in ecstasy and rapture, as in some of the old litanies. He hugged the thought that a great part of what he had invented was in the true sense of the word occult: page after page might have been read aloud to the uninitiated without betraying the inner meaning. He dreamed night and day over these symbols, he copied and recopied the manuscript nine times before he wrote it out fairly in a little book which he made himself of a skin of creamy vellum. In his mania for acquirements that should be entirely useless he had gained some skill in illumination, or limning as he preferred to call it, always choosing the obscurer word as the obscurer arts. First he set himself to the severe practice of the text; he spent many hours and days of toil in struggling to fashion the serried columns of black letter, writing and rewriting till he could shape the massive character with firm true hand. He cut his quills with the patience of a monk in the scriptorium, shaving and altering the nib, lightening and increasing the pressure and flexibility of the points, till the pen satisfied him, and gave a stroke both broad and even. Then he made experiments in inks, searching for some medium that would rival the glossy black letter of the old manuscripts; and not till he could produce a fair page of text did he turn to the more entrancing labor of the capitals and borders and ornaments. He mused long over the Lombardic letters, as glorious in their way as a cathedral, and trained his hand to execute the bold and flowing lines; and then there was the art of the border, blossoming in fretted splendor all about the page. His cousin, Miss Deacon, called it all a great waste of time, and his father thought he would have done much better in trying to improve his ordinary handwriting, which was both ugly and illegible. Indeed, there seemed but a poor demand for the limner's art. He sent some specimens of his skill to an "artistic firm" in London; a verse of the "Maud," curiously emblazoned, and a Latin hymn with the notes pricked on a red stave. The firm wrote civilly, telling him that his work, though good, was not what they wanted, and enclosing an illuminated text. "We have great demand for this sort of thing," they concluded, "and if you care to attempt something in this style we should be pleased to look at it." The said text was "Thou, God, seest me." The letter was of a degraded form, bearing much the same relation to the true character as a "churchwarden gothic" building does to Canterbury Cathedral; the colours were varied. The initial was pale gold, the *h* pink, the *o* black, the *u* blue, and the first letter was somehow connected with a bird's nest containing the young of the pigeon, who were waited on by the female bird.

"What a pretty text," said Miss Deacon. "I should like to nail it up in my room. Why don't you try to do something like that, Lucian? You might make something by it."

"I sent them these," said Lucian, "but they don't like them much."

"My dear boy! I should think not! Like them! What were you thinking of to draw those queer stiff flowers all round the border? Roses? They don't look like roses at all events. Where do you get such ideas from?"

"But the design is appropriate; look at the words."

"My dear Lucian, I can't read the words; it's such a queer old-fashioned writing. Look how plain that text is; one can see what it's about. And this other one; I can't make it out at all."

"It's a Latin hymn."

"A Latin hymn? Is it a Protestant hymn? I may be old-fashioned, but *Hymns Ancient and Modern* is quite good enough for me. This is the music, I suppose? But, my dear boy, there are only four lines, and who ever heard of notes shaped like that: you have made some square and some diamond-shape? Why didn't you look in your poor mother's old music? It's in the ottoman in the drawing-room. I could have shown you how to make the notes; there are crotchets, you know, and quavers."

Miss Deacon laid down the illuminated *Urbs Beata* in despair; she felt convinced that her cousin was "next door to an idiot."

And he went out into the garden and raged behind a hedge. He broke two flower-pots and hit an apple-tree very hard with his stick, and then, feeling more calm, wondered what was the use in trying to do anything. He would not have put the thought into words, but in his heart he was aggrieved that his cousin liked the pigeons and the text, and did not like his emblematical roses and the Latin hymn. He knew he had taken great pains over the work, and that it was well done, and being still a young man he expected praise. He found that in this hard world there was a lack of appreciation; a critical spirit seemed abroad. If he could have been scientifically observed as he writhed and smarted under the strictures of “the old fool,” as he rudely called his cousin, the spectacle would have been extremely diverting. Little boys sometimes enjoy a very similar entertainment; either with their tiny fingers or with mamma’s nail scissors they gradually deprive a fly of its wings and legs. The odd gyrations and queer thin buzzings of the creature as it spins comically round and round never fail to provide a fund of harmless amusement. Lucian, indeed, fancied himself a very ill-used individual; but he should have tried to imitate the nervous organization of the flies, which, as mamma says, “can’t really feel.”

But now, as he prepared the vellum leaves, he remembered his art with joy; he had not labored to do beautiful work in vain. He read over his manuscript once more, and thought of the designing of the pages. He made sketches on furtive sheets of paper, and hunted up books in his father’s library for suggestions. There were books about architecture, and medieval iron work, and brasses which contributed hints for adornment; and not content with mere pictures he sought in the woods and hedges, scanning the strange forms of trees, and the poisonous growth of great water-plants, and the parasite twining of honeysuckle and briony. In one of these rambles he discovered a red earth which he made into a pigment, and he found in the unctuous juice of a certain fern an ingredient which he thought made his black ink still more glossy. His book was written all in symbols, and in the same spirit of symbolism he decorated it, causing wonderful foliage to creep about the text, and showing the blossom of certain mystical flowers, with emblems of strange creatures, caught and bound in rose thickets. All was dedicated to love and a lover’s madness, and there were songs in it which haunted him with their lilt and refrain. When the book was finished it replaced the loose leaves as his constant companion by day and night. Three times a day he repeated his ritual to himself, seeking out the loneliest places in the woods, or going up to his room; and from the fixed intentness and rapture of his gaze, the father thought him still severely employed in the questionable process of composition. At night he contrived to wake for his strange courtship; and he had a peculiar ceremony when he got up in the dark and lit his candle. From a steep and wild hillside, not far from the house, he had cut from time to time five large boughs of spiked and prickly gorse. He had brought them into the house, one by one, and had hidden them in the big box that stood beside his bed. Often he woke up weeping and murmuring to himself the words of one of his songs, and then when he had lit the candle, he would draw out the gorse-boughs, and place them on the floor, and taking off his nightgown, gently lay himself down on the bed of thorns and spines. Lying on his face, with the candle and the book before him, he would softly and tenderly repeat the praises of his dear, dear Annie, and as he turned over page after page, and saw the raised gold of the majuscules glow and flame in the candle-light, he pressed the thorns into his flesh. At such moments he tasted in all its acute savor the joy of physical pain; and after two or three experiences of such delights he altered his book, making a curious sign in vermilion on the margin of the passages where he was to inflict on himself this sweet torture. Never did he fail to wake at the appointed hour, a strong effort of will broke through all the heaviness of sleep, and he would rise up, joyful though weeping, and reverently set his thorny bed upon the floor, offering his pain with his praise. When he had whispered the last word, and had risen from the ground, his body would be all freckled with drops of blood; he used to view the marks with pride. Here and there a spine would be left deep in the flesh, and he would pull these out roughly, tearing through the skin. On some nights when he had pressed with more fervor on the thorns his thighs would stream with blood, red beads standing out on the flesh, and trickling down to his feet. He had some difficulty in washing away the bloodstains so as not to leave any traces to attract the attention of the servant; and after a time he returned no more to his bed when his duty had been accomplished. For a coverlet he had a dark rug, a good deal worn, and in this he would wrap his naked bleeding body, and lie down on the hard floor, well content to add an aching rest to the account of his pleasures. He was covered with scars, and those that healed during the day were torn open afresh at night; the pale olive skin was red with the angry marks of blood, and the graceful form of the young man appeared like the body of a tortured martyr. He grew thinner and thinner every day, for he ate but little; the skin was stretched on the bones of his face, and the black eyes burnt in dark purple hollows. His relations noticed that he was not looking well.

“Now, Lucian, it’s perfect madness of you to go on like this,” said Miss Deacon, one morning at breakfast. “Look how your hand shakes; some people would say that you have been taking brandy. And all that you want is a little medicine, and yet you won't be advised. You know it's not my fault; I have asked you to try Dr. Jelly's Cooling Powders again and again."

He remembered the forcible exhibition of the powders when he was a boy, and felt thankful that those days were over. He only grinned at his cousin and swallowed a great cup of strong tea to steady his nerves, which were shaky enough. Mrs. Dixon saw him one day in Caermaen; it was very hot, and he had been walking rather fast. The scars on his body burnt and tingled, and he tottered as he raised his hat to the vicar's wife. She decided without further investigation that he must have been drinking in public-houses.

"It seems a mercy that poor Mrs. Taylor was taken," she said to her husband. "She has certainly been spared a great deal. That wretched young man passed me this afternoon; he was quite intoxicated."

"How very said," said Mr. Dixon. "A little port, my dear?"

"Thank you, Merivale, I will have another glass of sherry. Dr. Burrows is always scolding me and saying I *must* take something to keep up my energy, and this sherry is so weak."

The Dixons were not teetotalers. They regretted it deeply, and blamed the doctor, who "insisted on some stimulant." However, there was some consolation in trying to convert the parish to total abstinence, or, as they curiously called it, temperance. Old women were warned of the sin of taking a glass of beer for supper; aged laborers were urged to try Cork-ho, the new temperance drink; an uncouth beverage, styled coffee, was dispensed at the reading-room. Mr. Dixon preached an eloquent "temperance" sermon, soon after the above conversation, taking as his text: *Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees*. In his discourse he showed that fermented liquor and leaven had much in common, that beer was at the present day "put away" during Passover by the strict Jews; and in a moving peroration he urged his dear brethren, "and more especially those amongst us who are poor in this world's goods," to beware indeed of that evil leaven which was sapping the manhood of our nation. Mrs. Dixon cried after church:

“Oh, Merivale, what a beautiful sermon! How earnest you were. I hope it will do good.”

Mr. Dixon swallowed his port with great decorum, but his wife fuddled herself every evening with cheap sherry. She was quite unaware of the fact, and sometimes wondered in a dim way why she always had to scold the children after dinner. And so strange things sometimes happened in the nursery, and now and then the children looked queerly at one another after a red-faced woman had gone out, panting.

Lucian knew nothing of his accuser’s trials, but he was not long in hearing of his own intoxication. The next time he went down to Caermaen he was hailed by the doctor.

“Been drinking again today?”

“No,” said Lucian in a puzzled voice. “What do you mean?”

“Oh, well, if you haven’t, that’s all right, as you’ll be able to take a drop with me. Come along in?”

Over the whisky and pipes Lucian heard of the evil rumors affecting his character.

“Mrs. Dixon assured me you were staggering from one side of the street to the other. You quite frightened her, she said. Then she asked me if I recommended her to take one or two ounces of spirit at bedtime for the palpitation; and of course I told her two would be better. I have my living to make here, you know. And upon my word, I think she wants it; she’s always gurgling inside like waterworks. I wonder how old Dixon can stand it.”

“I like ‘ounces of spirit,’” said Lucian. “That’s taking it medicinally, I suppose. I’ve often heard of ladies who have to ‘take it medicinally’; and that’s how it’s done?”

“That’s it. ‘Dr Burrows won’t *listen* to me’: ‘I tell him how I dislike the taste of spirits, but he says they are absolutely *necessary* for my constitution’: ‘my medical man *insists* on something at bedtime’; that’s the style.”

Lucian laughed gently; all these people had become indifferent to him; he could no longer feel savage indignation at their little hypocrisies and malignancies. Their voices uttering calumny, and morality, and futility had become like the thin shrill angry note of a gnat on a summer evening; he had his own thoughts and his own life, and he passed on without heeding.

“You come down to Caermaen pretty often, don’t you?” said the doctor. “I’ve seen you two or three times in the last fortnight.”

“Yes, I enjoy the walk.”

“Well, look me up whenever you like, you know. I am often in just at this time, and a chat with a human being isn’t bad, now and then. It’s a change for me; I’m often afraid I shall lose my patients.”

The doctor had the weakness of these terrible puns, dragged headlong into the conversation. He sometimes exhibited them before Mrs. Gervase, who would smile in a faint and dignified manner, and say:

“Ah, I see. Very amusing indeed. We had an old coachmen once who was very clever, I believe, at that sort of thing, but Mr. Gervase was obliged to send him away, the laughter of the other domestics was so very boisterous.”

Lucian laughed, not boisterously, but good-humouredly, at the doctor’s joke. He liked Burrows, feeling that he was a man and not an automatic gabbling machine.

“You look a little pulled down,” said the doctor, when Lucian rose to go. “No, you don’t want my medicine. Plenty of beef and beer will do you more good than drugs. I daresay it’s the hot weather that has thinned you a bit. Oh, you’ll be all right again in a month.”

As Lucian strolled out of the town on his way home, he passed a small crowd of urchins assembled at the corner of an orchard. They were enjoying themselves immensely. The “healthy” boy, the same whom he had seen some weeks ago operating on a cat, seemed to have recognized his selfishness in keeping his amusements to himself. He had found a poor lost puppy, a little creature with bright pitiful eyes, almost human in their fond, friendly gaze. It was not a well-bred little dog; it was certainly not that famous puppy “by Vick out of Wasp”; it had rough hair and a foolish long tail which it wagged beseechingly, at once deprecating severity and asking kindness. The poor animal had evidently been used to gentle treatment; it would look up in a boy’s face, and give a leap, fawning on him, and then bark in a small doubtful voice, and cower a moment on the ground, astonished perhaps at the strangeness, the bustle and animation. The boys were beside themselves with eagerness; there was quite a babble of voices, arguing, discussing, suggesting. Each one had a plan of his own which he brought before the leader, a stout and sturdy youth.

“Drown him! What be you thinkin’ of, mun?” he was saying. “‘Tain’t no sport at all. You shut your mouth, gwaes. Be you goin’ to ask your mother for the boiling-water? Is, Bob Williams, I do know all that: but where be you a-going to get the fire from? Be quiet, mun, can’t you? Thomas Trevor, be this dog yourn or mine? Now, look you, if you don’t all of you shut your bloody mouths, I’ll take the dog ‘ome and keep him. There now!”

He was a born leader of men. A singular depression and lowness of spirit showed itself on the boys’ faces. They recognized that the threat might very possibly be executed, and their countenances were at once composed to humble attention. The puppy was still cowering on the ground in the midst of them: one or two tried to relieve the tension of their feelings by kicking him in the belly with their hobnail boots. It cried out with the pain and writhed a little, but the poor little beast did not attempt to bite or even snarl. It looked up with those beseeching friendly eyes at its persecutors, and fawned on them again, and tried to wag its tail and be merry, pretending to play with a straw on the road, hoping perhaps to win a little favor in that way.

The leader saw the moment for his master-stroke. He slowly drew a piece of rope from his pocket.

“What do you say to that, mun? Now, Thomas Trevor! We’ll hang him over that there bough. Will that suit you, Bobby Williams?”

There was a great shriek of approval and delight. All was again bustle and animation. “I’ll tie it round his neck?” “Get out, mun, you don’t know how it be done.” “Is, I do, Charley.” “Now, let me, gwaes, now do let me.” “You be sure he won’t bite?” “He hain’t mad, be he?” “Suppose we were to tie up his mouth first?”

The puppy still fawned and curried favor, and wagged that sorry tail, and lay down crouching on one side on the ground, sad and sorry in his heart, but still with a little gleam of hope; for now and again he tried to play, and put up his face, praying with those fond, friendly eyes. And then at last his gambols and poor efforts for mercy ceased, and he lifted up his wretched voice in one long dismal whine of despair. But he licked the hand of the boy that tied the noose.

He was slowly and gently swung into the air as Lucian went by unheeded; he struggled, and his legs twisted and writhed. The "healthy" boy pulled the rope, and his friends danced and shouted with glee. As Lucian turned the corner, the poor dangling body was swinging to and fro, the puppy was dying, but he still kicked a little.

Lucian went on his way hastily, and shuddering with disgust. The young of the human creature were really too horrible; they defiled the earth, and made existence unpleasant, as the pulpy growth of a noxious and obscene fungus spoils an agreeable walk. The sight of those malignant little animals with mouths that uttered cruelty and filthy, with hands dexterous in torture, and feet swift to run all evil errands, had given him a shock and broken up the world of strange thoughts in which he had been dwelling. Yet it was no good being angry with them: it was their nature to be very loathsome. Only he wished they would go about their hideous amusements in their own back gardens where nobody could see them at work; it was too bad that he should be interrupted and offended in a quiet country road. He tried to put the incident out of his mind, as if the whole thing had been a disagreeable story, and the visions amongst which he wished to move were beginning to return, when he was again rudely disturbed. A little girl, a pretty child of eight or nine, was coming along the lane to meet him. She was crying bitterly and looking to left and right, and calling out some word all the time.

"Jack, Jack, Jack! Little Jackie! Jack!"

Then she burst into tears afresh, and peered into the hedge, and tried to peep through a gate into a field.

"Jackie, Jackie, Jackie!"

She came up to Lucian, sobbing as if her heart would break, and dropped him an old-fashioned curtsy.

"Oh, please sir, have you seen my little Jackie?"

"What do you mean?" said Lucian. "What is it you've lost?"

"A little dog, please sir. A little terrier dog with white hair. Father gave me him a month ago, and said I might keep him. Someone did leave the garden gate open this afternoon, and he must ‘a got away, sir, and I was so fond of him sir, he was so playful and loving, and I be afraid he be lost.”

She began to call again, without waiting for an answer.

“Jack, Jack, Jack!”

“I’m afraid some boys have got your little dog,” said Lucian. “They’ve killed him. You’d better go back home.”

He went on, walking as fast as he could in his endeavor to get beyond the noise of the child’s crying. It distressed him, and he wished to think of other things. He stamped his foot angrily on the ground as he recalled the annoyances of the afternoon, and longed for some hermitage on the mountains, far above the stench and the sound of humanity.

A little farther, and he came to Croeswen, where the road branched off to right and left. There was a triangular plot of grass between the two roads; there the cross had once stood, “the goodly and famous roode” of the old local chronicle. The words echoed in Lucian’s ears as he went by on the right hand. “There were five steps that did go up to the first pace, and seven steps to the second pace, all of clene hewn ashler. And all above it was most curiously and gloriously wrought with thorowgh carved work; in the highest place was the Holy Roode with Christ upon the Cross having Marie on the one syde and John on the other. And below were six splendent and glisteringe archaungels that bore up the roode, and beneath them in their stories were the most fair and noble images of the xii Apostles and of divers other Saints and Martirs. And in the lowest storie there was a marvelous imagerie of divers Beasts, such as oxen and horses and swine, and little dogs and peacocks, all done in the finest and most curious wise, so that they all seemed as they were caught in a Wood of Thorns, the which is their torment of this life. And here once in the year was a marvelous solemn service, when the parson of Caermaen came out with the singers and all the people, singing the psalm *Benedicite omnia opera* as they passed along the road in their procession. And when they stood at the roode the priest did there his service, making certain prayers for the beasts, and then he went up to the first pace and preached a sermon to the people, shewing them that as our lord Jhu dyed upon the Tree of his deare mercy for us, so we too owe mercy to the beasts his Creatures, for that they are all his poor lieges and silly servants. And that like as the Holy Aungells do their suit to him on high, and the Blessed xii Apostles and the Martirs, and all the Blissful Saints served him aforetime on earth and now praise him in heaven, so also do the beasts serve him, though they be in torment of life and below men. For their spirit goeth downward, as Holy Writ teacheth us."

It was a quaint old record, a curious relic of what the modern inhabitants of Caermaen called the Dark Ages. A few of the stones that had formed the base of the cross still remained in position, grey with age, blotched with black lichen and green moss. The remainder of the famous rood had been used to mend the roads, to build pigsties and domestic offices; it had turned Protestant, in fact. Indeed, if it had remained, the parson of Caermaen would have had no time for the service; the coffee-stall, the Portuguese Missions, the Society for the Conversion of the Jews, and important social duties took up all his leisure. Besides, he thought the whole ceremony unscriptural.

Lucian passed on his way, wondering at the strange contrasts of the Middle Ages. How was it that people who could devise so beautiful a service believed in witchcraft, demoniacal possession and obsession, in the incubus and succubus, and in the Sabbath an in many other horrible absurdities? It seemed astonishing that anybody could even pretend to credit such monstrous tales, but there could be no doubt that the dread of old women who rode on broomsticks and liked black cats was once a very genuine terror.

A cold wind blew up from the river at sunset, and the scars on his body began to burn and tingle. The pain recalled his ritual to him, and he began to recite it as he walked along. He had cut a branch of thorn from the hedge and placed it next to his skin, pressing the spikes into the flesh with his hand till the warm blood ran down. He felt it was an exquisite and sweet observance for her sake; and then he thought of the secret golden palace he was building for her, the rare and wonderful city rising in his imagination. As the solemn night began to close about the earth, and the last glimmer of the sun faded from the hills, he gave himself anew to the woman, his body and his mind, all that he was, and all that he had.

IV

IN THE COURSE of the week Lucian again visited Caermaen. He wished to view the amphitheatre more precisely, to note the exact position of the ancient walls, to gaze up the valley from certain points within the town, to imprint minutely and clearly on his mind the surge of the hills about the city, and the dark tapestry of the hanging woods. And he lingered in the museum where the relics of the Roman occupation had been stored; he was interested in the fragments of tessellated floors, in the glowing gold of drinking cups, the curious beads of fused and colored glass, the carved amber-work, the scent-flagons that still retained the memory of unctuous odors, the necklaces, brooches, hair-pins of gold and silver, and other intimate objects which had once belonged to Roman ladies. One of the glass flagons, buried in damp earth for many hundred years, had gathered in its dark grave all the splendors of the light, and now shone like an opal with a moonlight glamour and gleams of gold and pale sunset green, and imperial purple. Then there were the wine jars of red earthenware, the memorial stones from graves, and the heads of broken gods, with fragments of occult things used in the secret rites of Mithras. Lucian read on the labels where all these objects were found: in the churchyard, beneath the turf of the meadow, and in the old cemetery near the forest; and whenever it was possible he would make his way to the spot of discovery, and imagine the long darkness that had hidden gold and stone and amber. All these investigations were necessary for the scheme he had in view, so he became for some time quite a familiar figure in the dusty deserted streets and in the meadows by the river. His continual visits to Caermaen were a tortuous puzzle to the inhabitants, who flew to their windows at the sound of a step on the uneven pavements. They were at a loss in their conjectures; his motive for coming down three times a week must of course be bad, but it seemed undiscoverable. And Lucian on his side was at first a good deal put out by occasional encounters with members of the Gervase or Dixon or Colley tribes; he had often to stop and exchange a few conventional expressions, and such meetings, casual as they were, annoyed and distracted him. He was no longer infuriated or wounded by sneers of contempt or by the cackling laughter of the young people when they passed him on the road (his hat was a shocking one and his untidiness terrible), but such incidents were unpleasant just as the smell of a drain was unpleasant, and threw the strange mechanism of his thoughts out of fear for the time. Then he had been disgusted by the affair of the boys and the little dog; the loathsomeness of it had quite broken up his fancies. He had read books of modern occultism, and remembered some of the experiments described. The adept, it was alleged, could transfer the sense of consciousness from his brain to the foot or hand, he could annihilate the world around him and pass into another sphere. Lucian wondered whether he could not perform some such operation for his own benefit. Human beings were constantly annoying him and getting in his way, was it not possible to annihilate the race, or at all events to reduce them to wholly insignificant forms? A certain process suggested itself to his mind, a work partly mental and partly physical, and after two or three experiments he found to his astonishment and delight that it was successful. Here, he thought, he had discovered one of the secrets of true magic; this was the key to the symbolic transmutations of the Eastern tales. The adept could, in truth, change those who were obnoxious to him into harmless and unimportant shapes, not as in the letter of the old stories, by transforming the enemy, but by transforming himself. The magician puts men below him by going up higher, as one looks down on a mountain city from a loftier crag. The stones on the road and such petty obstacles do not trouble the wise man on the great journey, and so Lucian, when obliged to stop and converse with his fellow-creatures, to listen to their poor pretences and inanities, was no more inconvenienced than when he had to climb an awkward stile in the course of a walk. As for the more unpleasant manifestations of humanity; after all they no longer concerned him. Men intent on the great purpose did not suffer the current of their thoughts to be broken by the buzzing of a fly caught in a spider’s web, so why should he be perturbed by the misery of a puppy in the hands of village boys? The fly, no doubt, endured its tortures; lying helpless and bound in those slimy bands, it cried out in its thin voice when the claws of the horrible monster fastened on it; but its dying agonies had never vexed the reverie of a lover. Lucian saw no reason why the boys should offend him more than the spider, or why he should pity the dog more than he pitied the fly. The talk of the men and women might be wearisome and inept and often malignant; but he could not imagine an alchemist at the moment of success, a general in the hour of victory, or a financier with a gigantic scheme of swindling well on the market being annoyed by the buzz of insects. The spider is, no doubt, a very terrible brute with a hideous mouth and hairy tiger-like claws when seen through the microscope; but Lucian had taken away the microscope from his eyes. He could now walk the streets of Caermaen confident and secure, without any dread of interruption, for at a moment's notice the transformation could be effected. Once Dr. Burrows caught him and made him promise to attend a bazaar that was to be held in aid of the Hungarian Protestants; Lucian assented the more willingly as he wished to pay a visit to certain curious mounds on a hill a little way out of the town, and he calculated on slinking off from the bazaar early in the afternoon. Lord Beamys was visiting Sir Vivian Ponsonby, a local magnate, and had kindly promised to drive over and declare the bazaar open. It was a solemn moment when the carriage drew up and the great man alighted. He was rather an evil-looking old nobleman, but the clergy and gentry, their wives and sons and daughters welcomed him with great and unctuous joy. Conversations were broken off in mid-sentence, slow people gaped, not realizing why their friends had so suddenly left them, the Meyricks came up hot and perspiring in fear lest they should be too late, Miss Colley, a yellow virgin of austere regard, smiled largely, Mrs. Dixon beckoned wildly with her parasol to the "girls" who were idly strolling in a distant part of the field, and the archdeacon ran at full speed. The air grew dark with bows, and resonant with the genial laugh of the archdeacon, the cackle of the younger ladies, and the shrill parrot-like voices of the matrons; those smiled who had never smiled before, and on some maiden faces there hovered that look of adoring ecstasy with which the old maidens graced their angels. Then, when all the due rites had been performed, the company turned and began to walk towards the booths of their small Vanity Fair. Lord Beamys led the way with Mrs. Gervase, Mrs. Dixon followed with Sir Vivian Ponsonby, and the multitudes that followed cried, saying, "What a dear old man!"— "Isn't it *kind* of him to come all this way?"— "What a sweet expression, isn't it?"— "I think he's an old love"— "One of the good old sort"— "Real English nobleman"— "Oh most correct, I assure you; if a girl gets into trouble, notice to quit at once"— "Always stands by the Church"— "Twenty livings in his gift"— "Voted for the Public Worship Regulation Act"— "Ten thousand acres strictly preserved." The old lord was leering pleasantly and muttering to himself: “Some fine gals here. Like the looks of that filly with the pink hat. Ought to see more of her. She’d give Lotty points.”

The pomp swept slowly across the grass: the archdeacon had got hold of Mr. Dixon, and they were discussing the misdeeds of some clergyman in the rural deanery.

“I can scarce credit it,” said Mr. Dixon.

“Oh, I assure you, there can be no doubt. We have witnesses. There can be no question that there was a procession at Llanfihangel on the Sunday before Easter; the choir and minister went round the church, carrying palm branches in their hands.”

“Very shocking.”

“It has distressed the bishop. Martin is a hard-working man enough, and all that, but those sort of things can’t be tolerated. The bishop told me that he had set his face against processions.”

“Quite right: the bishop is perfectly right. Processions are unscriptural.”

“It’s the thin end of the wedge, you know, Dixon.”

“Exactly. I have always resisted anything of the kind here.”

“Right. *Principiis obsta*, you know. Martin is so *imprudent*. There’s a *way* of doing things.”

The “scriptural” procession led by Lord Beamys broke up when the stalls were reached, and gathered round the nobleman as he declared the bazaar open.

Lucian was sitting on a garden-seat, a little distance off, looking dreamily before him. And all that he saw was a swarm of flies clustering and buzzing about a lump of tainted meat that lay on the grass. The spectacle in no way interrupted the harmony of his thoughts, and soon after the opening of the bazaar he went quietly away, walking across the fields in the direction of the ancient mounds he desired to inspect.

All these journeys of his to Caermaen and its neighborhood had a peculiar object; he was gradually leveling to the dust the squalid kraals of modern times, and rebuilding the splendid and golden city of Siluria. All this mystic town was for the delight of his sweetheart and himself; for her the wonderful villas, the shady courts, the magic of tessellated pavements, and the hangings of rich stuffs with their intricate and glowing patterns. Lucian wandered all day through the shining streets, taking shelter sometimes in the gardens beneath the dense and gloomy ilex trees, and listening to the plash and trickle of the fountains. Sometimes he would look out of a window and watch the crowd and color of the market-place, and now and again a ship came up the river bringing exquisite silks and the merchandise of unknown lands in the Far East. He had made a curious and accurate map of the town he proposed to inhabit, in which every villa was set down and named. He drew his lines to scale with the gravity of a surveyor, and studied the plan till he was able to find his way from house to house on the darkest summer night. On the southern slopes about the town there were vineyards, always under a glowing sun, and sometimes he ventured to the furthest ridge of the forest, where the wild people still lingered, that he might catch the golden gleam of the city far away, as the light quivered and scintillated on the glittering tiles. And there were gardens outside the city gates where strange and brilliant flowers grew, filling the hot air with their odor, and scenting the breeze that blew along the streets. The dull modern life was far away, and people who saw him at this period wondered what was amiss; the abstraction of his glance was obvious, even to eyes not over-sharp. But men and women had lost all their power of annoyance and vexation; they could no longer even interrupt his thought for a moment. He could listen to Mr. Dixon with apparent attention, while he was in reality enraptured by the entreating music of the double flute, played by a girl in the garden of Avallaunius, for that was the name he had taken. Mr. Dixon was innocently discoursing archeology, giving a brief *résumé* of the view expressed by Mr. Wyndham at the last meeting of the antiquarian society.

“There can be no doubt that the temple of Diana stood there in pagan times,” he concluded, and Lucian assented to the opinion, and asked a few questions which seemed pertinent enough. But all the time the flute notes were sounding in his ears, and the ilex threw a purple shadow on the white pavement before his villa. A boy came forward from the garden; he had been walking amongst the vines and plucking the ripe grapes, and the juice had trickled down over his breast. Standing beside the girl, unashamed in the sunlight, he began to sing one of Sappho’s love songs. His voice was as full and rich as a woman’s, but purged of all emotion; he was an instrument of music in the flesh. Lucian looked at him steadily; the white perfect body shone against the roses and the blue of the sky, clear and gleaming as marble in the glare of the sun. The words he sang burned and flamed with passion, and he was as unconscious of their meaning as the twin pipes of the flute. And the girl was smiling. The vicar shook hands and went on, well pleased with his remarks on the temple of Diana, and also with Lucian's polite interest.

"He is by no means wanting in intelligence," he said to his family. "A little curious in manner, perhaps, but not stupid."

"Oh, papa," said Henrietta, "don't you think he is rather silly? He can't talk about anything — anything interesting, I mean. And he pretends to know a lot about books, but I heard him say the other day he had never read *The Prince of the House of David* or *Ben-Hur*. Fancy!"

The vicar had not interrupted Lucian. The sun still beat upon the roses, and a little breeze bore the scent of them to his nostrils together with the smell of grapes and vine-leaves. He had become curious in sensation, and as he leant back upon the cushions covered with glistening yellow silk, he was trying to analyze a strange ingredient in the perfume of the air. He had penetrated far beyond the crude distinctions of modern times, beyond the rough: "there's a smell of roses," "there must be sweetbriar somewhere." Modern perceptions of odor were, he knew, far below those of the savage in delicacy. The degraded black fellow of Australia could distinguish odors in a way that made the consumer of "damper" stare in amazement, but the savage's sensations were all strictly utilitarian. To Lucian as he sat in the cool porch, his feet on the marble, the air came laden with scents as subtly and wonderfully interwoven and contrasted as the harmonica of a great master. The stained marble of the pavement gave a cool reminiscence of the Italian mountain, the blood-red roses palpitating in the sunlight sent out an odor mystical as passion itself, and there was the hint of inebriation in the perfume of the trellised vines. Besides these, the girl's desire and the unripe innocence of the boy were as distinct as benzoin and myrrh, both delicious and exquisite, and exhaled as freely as the scent of the roses. But there was another element that puzzled him, an aromatic suggestion of the forest. He understood it at last; it was the vapor of the great red pines that grew beyond the garden; their spicy needles were burning in the sun, and the smell was as fragrant as the fume of incense blown from far. The soft entreaty of the flute and the swelling rapture of the boy’s voice beat on the air together, and Lucian wondered whether there were in the nature of things any true distinction between the impressions of sound and scent and color. The violent blue of the sky, the song, and the odours seemed rather varied symbols of one mystery than distinct entities. He could almost imagine that the boy’s innocence was indeed a perfume, and that the palpitating roses had become a sonorous chant.

In the curious silence which followed the last notes, when the boy and girl had passed under the purple ilex shadow, he fell into a reverie. The fancy that sensations are symbols and not realities hovered in his mind, and led him to speculate as to whether they could not actually be transmuted one into another. It was possible, he thought, that a whole continent of knowledge had been undiscovered; the energies of men having been expended in unimportant and foolish directions. Modern ingenuity had been employed on such trifles as locomotive engines, electric cables, and cantilever bridges; on elaborate devices for bringing uninteresting people nearer together; the ancients had been almost as foolish, because they had mistaken the symbol for the thing signified. It was not the material banquet which really mattered, but the thought of it; it was almost as futile to eat and take emetics and eat again as to invent telephones and high-pressure boilers. As for some other ancient methods of enjoying life, one might as well set oneself to improve calico printing at once.

“Only in the garden of Avallaunius,” said Lucian to himself, “is the true and exquisite science to be found.”

He could imagine a man who was able to live in one sense while he pleased; to whom, for example, every impression of touch, taste, hearing, or seeing should be translated into odor; who at the desired kiss should be ravished with the scent of dark violets, to whom music should be the perfume of a rose-garden at dawn.

When, now and again, he voluntarily resumed the experience of common life, it was that he might return with greater delight to the garden in the city of refuge. In the actual world the talk was of Nonconformists, the lodger franchise, and the Stock Exchange; people were constantly reading newspapers, drinking Australian Burgundy, and doing other things equally absurd. They either looked shocked when the fine art of pleasure was mentioned, or confused it with going to musical comedies, drinking bad whisky, and keeping late hours in disreputable and vulgar company. He found to his amusement that the profligate were by many degrees duller than the pious, but that the most tedious of all were the persons who preached promiscuity, and called their system of "pigging" the "New Morality."

He went back to the city lovingly, because it was built and adorned for his love. As the metaphysicians insist on the consciousness of the ego as the implied basis of all thought, so he knew that it was she in whom he had found himself, and through whom and for whom all the true life existed. He felt that Annie had taught him the rare magic which had created the garden of Avallaunius. It was for her that he sought strange secrets and tried to penetrate the mysteries of sensation, for he could only give her wonderful thoughts and a wonderful life, and a poor body stained with the scars of his worship.

It was with this object, that of making the offering of himself a worthy one, that he continually searched for new and exquisite experiences. He made lovers come before him and confess their secrets; he pried into the inmost mysteries of innocence and shame, noting how passion and reluctance strive together for the mastery. In the amphitheatre he sometimes witnessed strange entertainments in which such tales as *Daphnis and Chloe* and *The Golden Ass* were performed before him. These shows were always given at nighttime; a circle of torch-bearers surrounded the stage in the center, and above, all the tiers of seats were dark. He would look up at the soft blue of the summer sky, and at the vast dim mountain hovering like a cloud in the west, and then at the scene illumined by a flaring light, and contrasted with violent shadows. The subdued mutter of conversation in a strange language rising from bench after bench, swift hissing whispers of explanation, now and then a shout or a cry as the interest deepened, the restless tossing of the people as the end drew near, an arm lifted, a cloak thrown back, the sudden blaze of a torch lighting up purple or white or the gleam of gold in the black serried ranks; these were impressions that seemed always amazing. And above, the dusky light of the stars, around, the sweet-scented meadows, and the twinkle of lamps from the still city, the cry of the sentries about the walls, the wash of the tide filling the river, and the salt savor of the sea. With such a scenic ornament he saw the tale of Apuleius represented, heard the names of Fotis and Byrrhaena and Lucius proclaimed, and the deep intonation of such sentences as *Ecce Veneris hortator et armiger Liber advenit ultro*. The tale went on through all its marvelous adventures, and Lucian left the amphitheatre and walked beside the river where he could hear indistinctly the noise of voices and the singing Latin, and note how the rumor of the stage mingled with the murmur of the shuddering reeds and the cool lapping of the tide. Then came the farewell of the cantor, the thunder of applause, the crash of cymbals, the calling of the flutes, and the surge of the wind in the great dark wood.

At other times it was his chief pleasure to spend a whole day in a vineyard planted on the steep slope beyond the bridge. A grey stone seat had been placed beneath a shady laurel, and here he often sat without motion or gesture for many hours. Below him the tawny river swept round the town in a half circle; he could see the swirl of the yellow water, its eddies and miniature whirlpools, as the tide poured up from the south. And beyond the river the strong circuit of the walls, and within, the city glittered like a charming piece of mosaic. He freed himself from the obtuse modern view of towns as places where human beings live and make money and rejoice or suffer, for from the standpoint of the moment such facts were wholly impertinent. He knew perfectly well that for his present purpose the tawny sheen and shimmer of the tide was the only fact of importance about the river, and so he regarded the city as a curious work in jewelry. Its radiant marble porticoes, the white walls of the villas, a dome of burning copper, the flash and scintillation of tiled roofs, the quiet red of brickwork, dark groves of ilex, and cypress, and laurel, glowing rose-gardens, and here and there the silver of a fountain, seemed arranged and contrasted with a wonderful art, and the town appeared a delicious ornament, every cube of color owing its place to the thought and inspiration of the artificer. Lucian, as he gazed from his arbour amongst the trellised vines, lost none of the subtle pleasures of the sight; noting every *nuance* of color, he let his eyes dwell for a moment on the scarlet flash of poppies, and then on a glazed roof which in the glance of the sun seemed to spout white fire. A square of vines was like some rare green stone; the grapes were massed so richly amongst the vivid leaves, that even from far off there was a sense of irregular flecks and stains of purple running through the green. The laurel garths were like cool jade; the gardens, where red, yellow, blue and white gleamed together in a mist of heat, had the radiance of opal; the river was a band of dull gold. On every side, as if to enhance the preciousness of the city, the woods hung dark on the hills; above, the sky was violet, specked with minute feathery clouds, white as snowflakes. It reminded him of a beautiful bowl in his villa; the ground was of that same brilliant blue, and the artist had fused into the work, when it was hot, particles of pure white glass.

For Lucian this was a spectacle that enchanted many hours; leaning on one hand, he would gaze at the city glowing in the sunlight till the purple shadows grew down the slopes and the long melodious trumpet sounded for the evening watch. Then, as he strolled beneath the trellises, he would see all the radiant facets glimmering out, and the city faded into haze, a white wall shining here and there, and the gardens veiled in a dim glow of color. On such an evening he would go home with the sense that he had truly lived a day, having received for many hours the most acute impressions of beautiful color.

Often he spent the night in the cool court of his villa, lying amidst soft cushions heaped upon the marble bench. A lamp stood on the table at his elbow, its light making the water in the cistern twinkle. There was no sound in the court except the soft continual plashing of the fountain. Throughout these still hours he would meditate, and he became more than ever convinced that man could, if he pleased, become lord of his own sensations. This, surely, was the true meaning concealed under the beautiful symbolism of alchemy. Some years before he had read many of the wonderful alchemical books of the later Middle Ages, and had suspected that something other than the turning of lead into gold was intended. This impression was deepened when he looked into *Lumen de Lumine* by Vaughan, the brother of the Silurist, and he had long puzzled himself in the endeavor to find a reasonable interpretation of the hermetic mystery, and of the red powder, “glistening and glorious in the sun.” And the solution shone out at last, bright and amazing, as he lay quiet in the court of Avallaunius. He knew that he himself had solved the riddle, that he held in his hand the powder of projection, the philosopher’s stone transmuting all it touched to fine gold; the gold of exquisite impressions. He understood now something of the alchemical symbolism; the crucible and the furnace, the “Green Dragon,” and the “Son Blessed of the Fire” had, he saw, a peculiar meaning. He understood, too, why the uninitiated were warned of the terror and danger through which they must pass; and the vehemence with which the adepts disclaimed all desire for material riches no longer struck him as singular. The wise man does not endure the torture of the furnace in order that he may be able to compete with operators in pork and company promoters; neither a steam yacht, nor a grouse-moor, nor three liveried footmen would add at all to his gratifications. Again Lucian said to himself:

“Only in the court of Avallaunius is the true science of the exquisite to be found.”

He saw the true gold into which the beggarly matter of existence may be transmuted by spagyric art; a succession of delicious moments, all the rare flavors of life concentrated, purged of their lees, and preserved in a beautiful vessel. The moonlight fell green on the fountain and on the curious pavements, and in the long sweet silence of the night he lay still and felt that thought itself was an acute pleasure, to be expressed perhaps in terms of odor or color by the true artist.

And he gave himself other and even stranger gratifications. Outside the city walls, between the baths and the amphitheatre, was a tavern, a place where wonderful people met to drink wonderful wine. There he saw priests of Mithras and Isis and of more occult rites from the East, men who wore robes of bright colours, and grotesque ornaments, symbolizing secret things. They spoke amongst themselves in a rich jargon of colored words, full of hidden meanings and the sense of matters unintelligible to the uninitiated, alluding to what was concealed beneath roses, and calling each other by strange names. And there were actors who gave the shows in the amphitheatre, officers of the legion who had served in wild places, singers, and dancing girls, and heroes of strange adventure.

The walls of the tavern were covered with pictures painted in violent hues; blues and reds and greens jarring against one another and lighting up the gloom of the place. The stone benches were always crowded, the sunlight came in through the door in a long bright beam, casting a dancing shadow of vine leaves on the further wall. There a painter had made a joyous figure of the young Bacchus driving the leopards before him with his ivy-staff, and the quivering shadow seemed a part of the picture. The room was cool and dark and cavernous, but the scent and heat of the summer gushed in through the open door. There was ever a full sound, with noise and vehemence, there, and the rolling music of the Latin tongue never ceased.

“The wine of the siege, the wine that we saved,” cried one.

“Look for the jar marked *Faunus*; you will be glad.”

“Bring me the wine of the Owl’s Face.”

“Let us have the wine of Saturn’s Bridge.”

The boys who served brought the wine in dull red jars that struck a charming note against their white robes. They poured out the violet and purple and golden wine with calm sweet faces as if they were assisting in the mysteries, without any sign that they heard the strange words that flashed from side to side. The cups were all of glass; some were of deep green, of the color of the sea near the land, flawed and specked with the bubbles of the furnace. Others were of brilliant scarlet, streaked with irregular bands of white, and having the appearance of white globules in the molded stem. There were cups of dark glowing blue, deeper and more shining than the blue of the sky, and running through the substance of the glass were veins of rich gamboge yellow, twining from the brim to the foot. Some cups were of a troubled and clotted red, with alternating blotches of dark and light, some were variegated with white and yellow stains, some wore a film of rainbow colours, some glittered, shot with gold threads through the clear crystal, some were as if sapphires hung suspended in running water, some sparkled with the glint of stars, some were black and golden like tortoiseshell.

A strange feature was the constant and fluttering motion of hands and arms. Gesture made a constant commentary on speech; white fingers, whiter arms, and sleeves of all colours, hovered restlessly, appeared and disappeared with an effect of threads crossing and re-crossing on the loom. And the odor of the place was both curious and memorable; something of the damp cold breath of the cave meeting the hot blast of summer, the strangely mingled aromas of rare wines as they fell plashing and ringing into the cups, the drugged vapor of the East that the priests of Mithras and Isis bore from their steaming temples; these were always strong and dominant. And the women were scented, sometimes with unctuous and overpowering perfumes, and to the artist the experiences of those present were hinted in subtle and delicate *nuances* of odor.

They drank their wine and caressed all day in the tavern. The women threw their round white arms about their lover's necks, they intoxicated them with the scent of their hair, the priests muttered their fantastic jargon of Theurgy. And through the sonorous clash of voices there always seemed the ring of the cry:

"Look for the jar marked *Faunus*; you will be glad."

Outside, the vine tendrils shook on the white walls glaring in the sunshine; the breeze swept up from the yellow river, pungent with the salt sea savor.

These tavern scenes were often the subject of Lucian's meditation as he sat amongst the cushions on the marble seat. The rich sound of the voices impressed him above all things, and he saw that words have a far higher reason than the utilitarian office of imparting a man's thought. The common notion that language and linked words are important only as a means of expression he found a little ridiculous; as if electricity were to be studied solely with the view of "wiring" to people, and all its other properties left unexplored, neglected. Language, he understood, was chiefly important for the beauty of its sounds, by its possession of words resonant, glorious to the ear, by its capacity, when exquisitely arranged, of suggesting wonderful and indefinable impressions, perhaps more ravishing and farther removed from the domain of strict thought than the impressions excited by music itself. Here lay hidden the secret of the sensuous art of literature; it was the secret of suggestion, the art of causing delicious sensation by the use of words. In a way, therefore, literature was independent of thought; the mere English listener, if he had an ear attuned, could recognize the beauty of a splendid Latin phrase.

Here was the explanation of the magic of *Lycidas*. From the standpoint of the formal understanding it was an affected lament over some wholly uninteresting and unimportant Mr. King; it was full of nonsense about "shepherds" and "flocks" and "muses" and such stale stock of poetry; the introduction of St Peter on a stage thronged with nymphs and river gods was blasphemous, absurd, and, in the worst taste; there were touches of greasy Puritanism, the twang of the conventicle was only too apparent. And *Lycidas* was probably the most perfect piece of pure literature in existence;

because every word and phrase and line were sonorous, ringing and echoing with music.

“Literature,” he re-enunciated in his mind, “is the sensuous art of causing exquisite impressions by means of words.”

And yet there was something more; besides the logical thought, which was often a hindrance, a troublesome though inseparable accident, besides the sensation, always a pleasure and a delight, besides these there were the indefinable inexpressible images which all fine literature summons to the mind. As the chemist in his experiments is sometimes astonished to find unknown, unexpected elements in the crucible or the receiver, as the world of material things is considered by some a thin veil of the immaterial universe, so he who reads wonderful prose or verse is conscious of suggestions that cannot be put into words, which do not rise from the logical sense, which are rather parallel to than connected with the sensuous delight. The world so disclosed is rather the world of dreams, rather the world in which children sometimes live, instantly appearing, and instantly vanishing away, a world beyond all expression or analysis, neither of the intellect nor of the senses. He called these fancies of his “Meditations of a Tavern,” and was amused to think that a theory of letters should have risen from the eloquent noise that rang all day about the violet and golden wine.

“Let us seek for more exquisite things,” said Lucian to himself. He could almost imagine the magic transmutation of the senses accomplished, the strong sunlight was an odor in his nostrils; it poured down on the white marble and the palpitating roses like a flood. The sky was a glorious blue, making the heart joyous, and the eyes could rest in the dark green leaves and purple shadow of the ilex. The earth seemed to burn and leap beneath the sun, he fancied he could see the vine tendrils stir and quiver in the heat, and the faint fume of the scorching pine needles was blown across the gleaming garden to the seat beneath the porch. Wine was before him in a cup of carved amber; a wine of the color of a dark rose, with a glint as of a star or of a jet of flame deep beneath the brim; and the cup was twined about with a delicate wreath of ivy. He was often loath to turn away from the still contemplation of such things, from the mere joy of the violent sun, and the responsive earth. He loved his garden and the view of the tessellated city from the vineyard on the hill, the strange clamor of the tavern, and white Fotis appearing on the torch-lit stage. And there were shops in the town in which he delighted, the shops of the perfume makers, and jewelers, and dealers in curious ware. He loved to see all things made for ladies' use, to touch the gossamer silks that were to touch their bodies, to finger the beads of amber and the gold chains which would stir above their hearts, to handle the carved hairpins and brooches, to smell odors which were already dedicated to love.

But though these were sweet and delicious gratifications, he knew that there were more exquisite things of which he might be a spectator. He had seen the folly of regarding fine literature from the standpoint of the logical intellect, and he now began to question the wisdom of looking at life as if it were a moral representation. Literature, he knew, could not exist without some meaning, and considerations of right and wrong were to a certain extent inseparable from the conception of life, but to insist on ethics as the chief interest of the human pageant was surely absurd. One might as well read *Lycidas* for the sake of its denunciation of "our corrupted Clergy," or Homer for "manners and customs." An artist entranced by a beautiful landscape did not greatly concern himself with the geological formation of the hills, nor did the lover of a wild sea inquire as to the chemical analysis of the water. Lucian saw a colored and complex life displayed before him, and he sat enraptured at the spectacle, not concerned to know whether actions were good or bad, but content if they were curious.

In this spirit he made a singular study of corruption. Beneath his feet, as he sat in the garden porch, was a block of marble through which there ran a scarlet stain. It began with a faint line, thin as a hair, and grew as it advanced, sending out offshoots to right and left, and broadening to a pool of brilliant red. There were strange lives into which he looked that were like the block of marble; women with grave sweet faces told him the astounding tale of their adventures, and how, they said, they had met the faun when they were little children. They told him how they had played and watched by the vines and the fountains, and dallied with the nymphs, and gazed at images reflected in the water pools, till the authentic face appeared from the wood. He heard others tell how they had loved the satyrs for many years before they knew their race; and there were strange stories of those who had longed to speak but knew not the word of the enigma, and searched in all strange paths and ways before they found it.

He heard the history of the woman who fell in love with her slave-boy, and tempted him for three years in vain. He heard the tale from the woman's full red lips, and watched her face, full of the ineffable sadness of lust, as she described her curious stratagems in mellow phrases. She was drinking a sweet yellow wine from a gold cup as she spoke, and the odor in her hair and the aroma of the precious wine seemed to mingle with the soft strange words that flowed like an unguent from a carven jar. She told how she bought the boy in the market of an Asian city, and had him carried to her house in the grove of fig-trees. "Then," she went on, "he was led into my presence as I sat between the columns of my court. A blue veil was spread above to shut out the heat of the sun, and rather twilight than light shone on the painted walls, and the wonderful colours of the pavement, and the images of Love and the Mother of Love. The men who brought the boy gave him over to my girls, who undressed him before me, one drawing gently away his robe, another stroking his brown and flowing hair, another praising the whiteness of his limbs, and another caressing him, and speaking loving words in his hear. But the boy looked sullenly at them all, striking away their hands, and pouting with his lovely and splendid lips, and I saw a blush, like the rosy veil of dawn, reddening his body and his cheeks. Then I made them bathe him, and anoint him with scented oils from head to foot, till his limbs shone and glistened with the gentle and mellow glow of an ivory statue. Then I said: 'You are bashful, because you shine alone amongst us all; see, we too will be your fellows.' The girls began first of all, fondling and kissing one another, and doing for each other the offices of waiting-maids. They drew out the pins and loosened the bands of their hair, and I never knew before that they were so lovely. The soft and shining tresses flowed down, rippling like sea-waves; some had hair golden and radiant as this wine in my cup, the faces of others appeared amidst the blackness of ebony; there were locks that seemed of burnished and scintillating copper, some glowed with hair of tawny splendor, and others were crowned with the brightness of the sardonyx. Then, laughing, and without the appearance of shame, they unfastened the brooches and bands which sustained their robes, and so allowed silk and linen to flow swiftly to the stained floor, so that one would have said there was a sudden apparition of the fairest nymphs. With many festive and jocose words they began to incite each other to mirth, praising the beauties that shone on every side, and calling the boy by a girl's name, they invited him to be their playmate.

But he refused, shaking his head, and still standing dumb-founded and abashed, as if he saw a forbidden and terrible spectacle. Then I ordered the women to undo my hair and my clothes, making them caress me with the tenderness of the fondest lover, but without avail, for the foolish boy still scowled and pouted out his lips, stained with an imperial and glorious scarlet."

She poured out more of the topaz-colored wine in her cup, and Lucian saw it glitter as it rose to the brim and mirrored the gleam of the lamps. The tale went on, recounting a hundred strange devices. The woman told how she had tempted the boy by idleness and ease, giving him long hours of sleep, and allowing him to recline all day on soft cushions, that swelled about him, enclosing his body. She tried the experiment of curious odors: causing him to smell always about him the oil of roses, and burning in his presence rare gums from the East. He was allured by soft dresses, being clothed in silks that caressed the skin with the sense of a fondling touch. Three times a day they spread before him a delicious banquet, full of savor and odor and color; three times a day they endeavored to intoxicate him with delicate wine.

"And so," the lady continued, "I spared nothing to catch him in the glistening nets of love; taking only sour and contemptuous glances in return. And at last in an incredible shape I won the victory, and then, having gained a green crown, fighting in agony against his green and crude immaturity, I devoted him to the theatre, where he amused the people by the splendor of his death."

On another evening he heard the history of the man who dwelt alone, refusing all allurements, and was at last discovered to be the lover of a black statue. And there were tales of strange cruelties, of men taken by mountain robbers, and curiously maimed and disfigured, so that when they escaped and returned to the town, they were thought to be monsters and killed at their own doors. Lucian left no dark or secret nook of life unvisited; he sat down, as he said, at the banquet, resolved to taste all the savors, and to leave no flagon unvisited.

His relations grew seriously alarmed about him at this period. While he heard with some inner ear the suave and eloquent phrases of singular tales, and watched the lamp-light in amber and purple wine, his father saw a lean pale boy, with black eyes that burnt in hollows, and sad and sunken cheeks.

“You ought to try and eat more, Lucian,” said the parson; “and why don’t you have some beer?”

He was looking feebly at the roast mutton and sipping a little water; but he would not have eaten or drunk with more relish if the choicest meat and drink had been before him.

His bones seemed, as Miss Deacon said, to be growing through his skin; he had all the appearance of an ascetic whose body has been reduced to misery by long and grievous penance. People who chanced to see him could not help saying to one another: “How ill and wretched that Lucian Taylor looks!” They were of course quite unaware of the joy and luxury in which his real life was spent, and some of them began to pity him, and to speak to him kindly.

It was too late for that. The friendly words had as much lost their meaning as the words of contempt. Edward Dixon hailed him cheerfully in the street one day:

“Come in to my den, won’t you, old fellow?” he said. “You won’t see the pater. I’ve managed to bag a bottle of his old port. I know you smoke like a furnace, and I’ve got some ripping cigars. You will come, won’t you! I can tell you the pater’s booze is first rate.”

He gently declined and went on. Kindness and unkindness, pity and contempt had become for him mere phrases; he could not have distinguished one from the other. Hebrew and Chinese, Hungarian and Pushtu would be pretty much alike to an agricultural laborer; if he cared to listen he might detect some general differences in sound, but all four tongues would be equally devoid of significance.

To Lucian, entranced in the garden of Avallaunius, it seemed very strange that he had once been so ignorant of all the exquisite meanings of life. Now, beneath the violet sky, looking through the brilliant trellis of the vines, he saw the picture; before, he had gazed in sad astonishment at the squalid rag which was wrapped about it.

V

AND HE WAS at last in the city of the unending murmuring streets, a part of the stirring shadow, of the amber-lighted gloom.

It seemed a long time since he had knelt before his sweetheart in the lane, the moon-fire streaming upon them from the dark circle of the fort, the air and the light and his soul full of haunting, the touch of the unimaginable thrilling his heart; and now he sat in a terrible "bed-sitting-room" in a western suburb, confronted by a heap and litter of papers on the desk of a battered old bureau.

He had put his breakfast-tray out on the landing, and was thinking of the morning's work, and of some very dubious pages that he had blackened the night before. But when he had lit his disreputable briar, he remembered there was an unopened letter waiting for him on the table; he had recognized the vague, staggering script of Miss Deacon, his cousin. There was not much news; his father was "just the same as usual," there had been a good deal of rain, the farmers expected to make a lot of cider, and so forth. But at the close of the letter Miss Deacon became useful for reproof and admonition.

"I was at Caermaen on Tuesday," she said, "and called on the Gervases and the Dixons. Mr. Gervase smiled when I told him you were a literary man, living in London, and said he was afraid you wouldn't find it a very practical career. Mrs. Gervase was very proud of Henry's success; he passed fifth for some examination, and will begin with nearly four hundred a year. I don't wonder the Gervases are delighted. Then I went to the Dixons, and had tea. Mrs. Dixon wanted to know if you had published anything yet, and I said I thought not. She showed me a book everybody is talking about, called the *Dog and the Doctor*. She says it's selling by thousands, and that one can't take up a paper without seeing the author's name. She told me to tell you that you ought to try to write something like it. Then Mr. Dixon came in from the study, and your name was mentioned again. He said he was afraid you had made rather a mistake in trying to take up literature as if it were a profession, and seemed to think that a place in a house of business would be more *suitable* and more practical. He pointed out that you had not had the advantages of a university training, and said that you would find men who had made good friends, and had the *tone* of the university, would be before you at every step. He said Edward was doing very well at Oxford. He writes to them that he knows several noblemen, and that young Philip Bullingham (son of Sir John Bullingham) is his most intimate friend; of course this is *very* satisfactory for the Dixons. I am afraid, my dear Lucian, you have rather overrated your powers. Wouldn't it be better, even now, to look out for some *real work* to do, instead of wasting your time over those silly old books? I know quite well how the Gervases and the Dixons feel; they think idleness so injurious for a young man, and likely to lead to *bad habits*. You know, my dear Lucian, I am only writing like this because of my affection for you, so I am sure, my dear boy, you won't be offended."

Lucian pigeon-holed the letter solemnly in the receptacle lettered "Barbarians." He felt that he ought to ask himself some serious questions: "Why haven't I passed fifth? why isn't Philip (son of Sir John) my most intimate friend? why am I an idler, liable to fall into bad habits?" but he was eager to get to his work, a curious and intricate piece of analysis. So the battered bureau, the litter of papers, and the thick fume of his pipe, engulfed him and absorbed him for the rest of the morning. Outside were the dim October mists, the dreary and languid life of a side street, and beyond, on the main road, the hum and jangle of the gliding trains. But he heard none of the uneasy noises of the quarter, not even the shriek of the garden gates nor the yelp of the butcher on his round, for delight in his great task made him unconscious of the world outside.

He had come by curious paths to this calm hermitage between Shepherd's Bush and Acton Vale. The golden weeks of the summer passed on in their enchanted procession, and Annie had not returned, neither had she written. Lucian, on his side, sat apart, wondering why his longing for her were not sharper. As he though of his raptures he would smile faintly to himself, and wonder whether he had not lost the world and Annie with it. In the garden of Avallaunius his sense of external things had grown dim and indistinct; the actual, material life seemed every day to become a show, a fleeting of shadows across a great white light. At last the news came that Annie Morgan had been married from her sister's house to a young farmer, to whom it appeared, she had been long engaged, and Lucian was ashamed to find himself only conscious of amusement, mingled with gratitude. She had been the key that opened the shut palace, and he was now secure on the throne of ivory and gold. A few days after he had heard the news he repeated the adventure of his boyhood; for the second time he scaled the steep hillside, and penetrated the matted brake. He expected violent disillusion, but his feeling was rather astonishment at the activity of boyish imagination. There was no terror nor amazement now in the green bulwarks, and the stunted undergrowth did not seem in any way extraordinary. Yet he did not laugh at the memory of his sensations, he was not angry at the cheat. Certainly it had been all illusion, all the heats and chills of boyhood, its thoughts of terror were without significance. But he recognized that the illusions of the child only differed from those of the man in that they were more picturesque; belief in fairies and belief in the Stock Exchange as bestowers of happiness were equally vain, but the latter form of faith was ugly as well as inept. It was better, he knew, and wiser, to wish for a fairy coach than to cherish longings for a well-appointed brougham and liveried servants.

He turned his back on the green walls and the dark oaks without any feeling of regret or resentment. After a little while he began to think of his adventures with pleasure; the ladder by which he had mounted had disappeared, but he was safe on the height. By the chance fancy of a beautiful girl he had been redeemed from a world of misery and torture, the world of external things into which he had come a stranger, by which he had been tormented. He looked back at a kind of vision of himself seen as he was a year before, a pitiable creature burning and twisting on the hot coals of the pit, crying lamentably to the laughing bystanders for but one drop of cold water wherewith to cool his tongue. He confessed to himself, with some contempt, that he had been a social being, depending for his happiness on the goodwill of others; he had tried hard to write, chiefly, it was true, from love of the art, but a little from a social motive. He had imagined that a written book and the praise of responsible journals would ensure him the respect of the county people. It was a quaint idea, and he saw the lamentable fallacies naked; in the first place, a painstaking artist in words was not respected by the respectable; secondly, books should not be written with the object of gaining the goodwill of the landed and commercial interests; thirdly and chiefly, no man should in any way depend on another.

From this utter darkness, from danger of madness, the ever dear and sweet Annie had rescued him. Very beautifully and fitly, as Lucian thought, she had done her work without any desire to benefit him, she had simply willed to gratify her own passion, and in doing this had handed to him the priceless secret. And he, on his side, had reversed the process; merely to make himself a splendid offering for the acceptance of his sweetheart, he had cast aside the vain world, and had found the truth, which now remained with him, precious and enduring.

And since the news of the marriage he found that his worship of her had by no means vanished; rather in his heart was the eternal treasure of a happy love, untarnished and spotless; it would be like a mirror of gold without alloy, bright and lustrous for ever. For Lucian, it was no defect in the woman that she was desirous and faithless; he had not conceived an affection for certain moral or intellectual accidents, but for the very woman. Guided by the self-evident axiom that humanity is to be judged by literature, and not literature by humanity, he detected the analogy between *Lycidas* and Annie. Only the dullard would object to the nauseous cant of the one, or to the indiscretions of the other. A sober critic might say that the man who could generalize Herbert and Laud, Donne and Herrick, Sanderson and Juxon, Hammond and Lancelot Andrewes into “our corrupted Clergy” must be either an imbecile or a scoundrel, or probably both. The judgment would be perfectly true, but as a criticism of *Lycidas* it would be a piece of folly. In the case of the woman one could imagine the attitude of the conventional lover; of the chevalier who, with his tongue in his cheek, “reverences and respects” all women, and coming home early in the morning writes a leading article on St English Girl. Lucian, on the other hand, felt profoundly grateful to the delicious Annie, because she had at precisely the right moment voluntarily removed her image from his way. He confessed to himself that, latterly, he had a little dreaded her return as an interruption; he had shivered at the thought that their relations would become what was so terribly called an “intrigue” or “affair.” There would be all the threadbare and common stratagems, the vulgarity of secret assignations, and an atmosphere suggesting the period of Mr. Thomas

Moore and Lord Byron and “segars.” Lucian had been afraid of all this; he had feared lest love itself should destroy love.

He considered that now, freed from the torment of the body, leaving untasted the green water that makes thirst more burning, he was perfectly initiated in the true knowledge of the splendid and glorious love. There seemed to him a monstrous paradox in the assertion that there could be no true love without a corporal presence of the beloved; even the popular sayings of “Absence makes the heart grow fonder,” and “familiarity breeds contempt,” witnessed to the contrary. He thought, sighing, and with compassion, of the manner in which men are continually led astray by the cheat of the senses. In order that the unborn might still be added to the born, nature had inspired men with the wild delusion that the bodily companionship of the lover and the beloved was desirable above all things, and so, by the false show of pleasure, the human race was chained to vanity, and doomed to an eternal thirst for the non-existent.

Again and again he gave thanks for his own escape; he had been set free from a life of vice and sin and folly, from all the dangers and illusions that are most dreaded by the wise. He laughed as he remembered what would be the common view of the situation. An ordinary lover would suffer all the sting of sorrow and contempt; there would be grief for a lost mistress, and rage at her faithlessness, and hate in the heart; one foolish passion driving on another, and driving the man to ruin. For what would be commonly called the real woman he now cared nothing; if he had heard that she had died in her farm in Utter Gwent, he would have experienced only a passing sorrow, such as he might feel at the death of any one he had once known. But he did not think of the young farmer’s wife as the real Annie; he did not think of the frost-bitten leaves in winter as the real rose. Indeed, the life of many reminded him of the flowers; perhaps more especially of those flowers which to all appearance are for many years but dull and dusty clumps of green, and suddenly, in one night, burst into the flame of blossom, and fill all the misty lawns with odor; till the morning. It was in that night that the flower lived, not through the long unprofitable years; and, in like manner, many human lives, he thought, were born in the evening and dead before the coming of day. But he had preserved the precious flower in all its glory, not suffering it to wither in the hard light, but keeping it in a secret place, where it could never be destroyed. Truly now, and for the first time, he possessed Annie, as a man possesses the gold which he has dug from the rock and purged of its baseness.

He was musing over these things when a piece of news, very strange and unexpected, arrived at the rectory. A distant, almost a mythical relative, known from childhood as “Cousin Edward in the Isle of Wight,” had died, and by some strange freak had left Lucian two thousand pounds. It was a pleasure to give his father five hundred pounds, and the rector on his side forgot for a couple of days to lean his head on his hand. From the rest of the capital, which was well invested, Lucian found he would derive something between sixty and seventy pounds a year, and his old desires for literature and a refuge in the murmuring streets returned to him. He longed to be free from the incantations that surrounded him in the country, to work and live in a new atmosphere; and so, with many good wishes from his father, he came to the retreat in the waste places of London.

He was in high spirits when he found the square, clean room, horribly furnished, in the by-street that branched from the main road, and advanced in an unlovely sweep to the mud pits and the desolation that was neither town nor country. On every side monotonous grey streets, each house the replica of its neighbor, to the east an unexplored wilderness, north and west and south the brickfields and market-gardens, everywhere the ruins of the country, the tracks where sweet lanes had been, gangrened stumps of trees, the relics of hedges, here and there an oak stripped of its bark, white and haggard and leprous, like a corpse. And the air seemed always grey, and the smoke from the brickfields was grey.

At first he scarcely realized the quarter into which chance had led him. His only thought was of the great adventure of letters in which he proposed to engage, and his first glance round his “bed-sitting-room” showed him that there was no piece of furniture suitable for his purpose. The table, like the rest of the suite, was of bird’s-eye maple; but the maker seemed to have penetrated the druidic secret of the rocking-stone, the thing was in a state of unstable equilibrium perpetually. For some days he wandered through the streets, inspecting the second-hand furniture shops, and at last, in a forlorn byway, found an old Japanese bureau, dishonored and forlorn, standing amongst rusty bedsteads, sorry china, and all the refuse of homes dead and desolate. The bureau pleased him in spite of its grime and grease and dirt. Inlaid mother-of-pearl, the gleam of lacquer dragons in red gold, and hints of curious design shone through the film of neglect and ill-usage, and when the woman of the shop showed him the drawers and well and pigeon-holes, he saw that it would be an apt instrument for his studies.

The bureau was carried to his room and replaced the “bird’s-eye” table under the gas-jet. As Lucian arranged what papers he had accumulated: the sketches of hopeless experiments, shreds and tatters of stories begun but never completed, outlines of plots, two or three notebooks scribbled through and through with impressions of the abandoned hills, he felt a thrill of exaltation at the prospect of work to be accomplished, of a new world all open before him.

He set out on the adventure with a fury of enthusiasm; his last thought at night when all the maze of streets was empty and silent was of the problem, and his dreams ran on phrases, and when he awoke in the morning he was eager to get back to his desk. He immersed himself in a minute, almost a microscopic analysis of fine literature. It was no longer enough, as in the old days, to feel the charm and incantation of a line or a word; he wished to penetrate the secret, to understand something of the wonderful suggestion, all apart from the sense, that seemed to him the *differentia* of literature, as distinguished from the long follies of “character-drawing,” “psychological analysis,” and all the stuff that went to make the three-volume novel of commerce.

He found himself curiously strengthened by the change from the hills to the streets. There could be no doubt, he thought, that living a lonely life, interested only in himself and his own thoughts, he had become in a measure inhuman. The form of external things, black depths in woods, pools in lonely places, those still valleys curtained by hills on every side, sounding always with the ripple of their brooks, had become to him an influence like that of a drug, giving a certain peculiar color and outline to his thoughts. And from early boyhood there had been another strange flavor in his life, the dream of the old Roman world, those curious impressions that he had gathered from the white walls of Caermaen, and from the looming bastions of the fort. It was in reality the subconscious fancies of many years that had rebuilt the golden city, and had shown him the vine-trellis and the marbles and the sunlight in the garden of Avallaunius. And the rapture of love had made it all so vivid and warm with life, that even now, when he let his pen drop, the rich noise of the tavern and the chant of the theatre sounded above the murmur of the streets. Looking back, it was as much a part of his life as his schooldays, and the tessellated pavements were as real as the square of faded carpet beneath his feet.

But he felt that he had escaped. He could now survey those splendid and lovely visions from without, as if he read of opium dreams, and he no longer dreaded a weird suggestion that had once beset him, that his very soul was being molded into the hills, and passing into the black mirror of still waterpools. He had taken refuge in the streets, in the harbor of a modern suburb, from the vague, dreaded magic that had charmed his life. Whenever he felt inclined to listen to the old wood-whisper or to the singing of the fauns he bent more earnestly to his work, turning a deaf ear to the incantations.

In the curious labor of the bureau he found refreshment that was continually renewed. He experienced again, and with a far more violent impulse, the enthusiasm that had attended the writing of his book a year or two before, and so, perhaps, passed from one drug to another. It was, indeed, with something of rapture that he imagined the great procession of years all to be devoted to the intimate analysis of words, to the construction of the sentence, as if it were a piece of jewelry or mosaic.

Sometimes, in the pauses of the work, he would pace up and down his cell, looking out of the window now and again and gazing for an instant into the melancholy street. As the year advanced the days grew more and more misty, and he found himself the inhabitant of a little island wreathed about with the waves of a white and solemn sea. In the afternoon the fog would grow denser, shutting out not only sight but sound; the shriek of the garden gates, the jangling of the tram-bell echoed as if from a far way. Then there were days of heavy incessant rain; he could see a grey drifting sky and the drops plashing in the street, and the houses all dripping and saddened with wet.

He cured himself of one great aversion. He was no longer nauseated at the sight of a story begun and left unfinished. Formerly, even when an idea rose in his mind bright and wonderful, he had always approached the paper with a feeling of sickness and dislike, remembering all the hopeless beginnings he had made. But now he understood that to begin a romance was almost a separate and special art, a thing apart from the story, to be practiced with sedulous care. Whenever an opening scene occurred to him he noted it roughly in a book, and he devoted many long winter evenings to the elaboration of these beginnings. Sometimes the first impression would yield only a paragraph or a sentence, and once or twice but a splendid and sonorous word, which seemed to Lucian all dim and rich with unsurmised adventure. But often he was able to write three or four vivid pages, studying above all things the hint and significance of the words and actions, striving to work into the lines the atmosphere of expectation and promise, and the murmur of wonderful events to come.

In this one department of his task the labor seemed almost endless. He would finish a few pages and then rewrite them, using the same incident and nearly the same words, but altering that indefinite something which is scarcely so much style as manner, or atmosphere. He was astonished at the enormous change that was thus effected, and often, though he himself had done the work, he could scarcely describe in words how it was done. But it was clear that in this art of manner, or suggestion, lay all the chief secrets of literature, that by it all the great miracles were performed. Clearly it was not style, for style in itself was untranslatable, but it was that high theurgic magic that made the English *Don Quixote*, roughly traduced by some Jervas, perhaps the best of all English books. And it was the same element that made the journey of Roderick Random to London, so ostensibly a narrative of coarse jokes and common experiences and burlesque manners, told in no very choice diction, essentially a wonderful vision of the eighteenth century, carrying to one's very nostrils the aroma of the Great North Road, iron-bound under black frost, darkened beneath shuddering woods, haunted by highwaymen, with an adventure waiting beyond every turn, and great old echoing inns in the midst of lonely winter lands.

It was this magic that Lucian sought for his opening chapters; he tried to find that quality that gives to words something beyond their sound and beyond their meaning, that in the first lines of a book should whisper things unintelligible but all significant. Often he worked for many hours without success, and the grim wet dawn once found him still searching for hieroglyphic sentences, for words mystical, symbolic. On the shelves, in the upper part of his bureau, he had placed the books which, however various as to matter, seemed to have a part in this curious quality of suggestion, and in that sphere which might almost be called supernatural. To these books he often had recourse, when further effort appeared altogether hopeless, and certain pages in Coleridge and Edgar Allan Poe had the power of holding him in a trance of delight, subject to emotions and impressions which he knew to transcend altogether the realm of the formal understanding. Such lines as:

Bottomless vales and boundless floods,
  And chasms, and caves, and Titan woods,
    With forms that no man can discover
  For the dews that drip all over;

had for Lucian more than the potency of a drug, lulling him into a splendid waking-sleep, every word being a supreme incantation. And it was not only his mind that was charmed by such passages, for he felt at the same time a strange and delicious bodily languor that held him motionless, without the desire or power to stir from his seat. And there were certain phrases in *Kubla Khan* that had such a magic that he would sometimes wake up, as it were, to the consciousness that he had been lying on the bed or sitting in the chair by the bureau, repeating a single line over and over again for two or three hours. Yet he knew perfectly well that he had not been really asleep; a little effort recalled a constant impression of the wall-paper, with its pink flowers on a buff ground, and of the muslin-curtained window, letting in the grey winter light. He had been some seven months in London when this odd experience first occurred to him. The day opened dreary and cold and clear, with a gusty and restless wind whirling round the corner of the street, and lifting the dead leaves and scraps of paper that littered the roadway into eddying mounting circles, as if a storm of black rain were to come. Lucian had sat late the night before, and rose in the morning feeling weary and listless and heavy-headed. While he dressed, his legs dragged him as with weights, and he staggered and nearly fell in bending down to the mat outside for his tea-tray. He lit the spirit lamp on the hearth with shaking, unsteady hands, and could scarcely pour out the tea when it was ready. A delicate cup of tea was one of his few luxuries; he was fond of the strange flavor of the green leaf, and this morning he drank the straw-colored liquid eagerly, hoping it would disperse the cloud of languor. He tried his best to coerce himself into the sense of vigor and enjoyment with which he usually began the day, walking briskly up and down and arranging his papers in order. But he could not free himself from depression; even as he opened the dear bureau a wave of melancholy came upon him, and he began to ask himself whether he were not pursuing a vain dream, searching for treasures that had no existence. He drew out his cousin's letter and read it again, sadly enough. After all there was a good deal of truth in what she said; he had "overrated" his powers, he had no friends, no real education. He began to count up the months since he had come to London; he had received his two thousand pounds in March, and in May he had said good-bye to the woods and to the dear and friendly paths. May, June, July, August, September, October, November, and half of December had gone by; and what had he to show? Nothing but the experiment, the attempt, futile scribblings which had no end nor shining purpose. There was nothing in his desk that he could produce as evidence of his capacity, no fragment even of accomplishment. It was a thought of intense bitterness, but it seemed as if the barbarians were in the right — a place in a house of business would have been more suitable. He leaned his head on his desk overwhelmed with the severity of his own judgment. He tried to comfort himself again by the thought of all the hours of happy enthusiasm he had spent amongst his papers, working for a great idea with infinite patience. He recalled to mind something that he had always tried to keep in the background of his hopes, the foundation-stone of his life, which he had hidden out of sight. Deep in his heart was the hope that he might one day write a valiant book; he scarcely dared to entertain the aspiration, he felt his incapacity too deeply, but yet this longing was the foundation of all his painful and patient effort. This he had proposed in secret to himself, that if he labored without ceasing, without tiring, he might produce something which would at all events be art, which would stand wholly apart from the objects shaped like books, printed with printers' ink, and called by the name of books that he had read. Giotto, he knew, was a painter, and the man who imitated walnut-wood on the deal doors opposite was a painter, and he had wished to be a very humble pupil in the class of the former. It was better, he thought, to fail in attempting exquisite things than to succeed in the department of the utterly contemptible; he had vowed he would be the dunce of Cervantes's school rather than top-boy in the academy of *A Bad Un to Beat* and *Millicent's Marriage*. And with this purpose he had devoted himself to laborious and joyous years, so that however mean his capacity, the pains should not be wanting. He tried now to rouse himself from a growing misery by the recollection of this high aim, but it all seemed hopeless vanity. He looked out into the grey street, and it stood a symbol of his life, chill and dreary and grey and vexed with a horrible wind. There were the dull inhabitants of the quarter going about their common business; a man was crying “mackerel” in a doleful voice, slowly passing up the street, and staring into the white-curtained “parlors,” searching for the face of a purchaser behind the India-rubber plants, stuffed birds, and piles of gaudy gilt books that adorned the windows. One of the blistered doors over the way banged, and a woman came scurrying out on some errand, and the garden gate shrieked two melancholy notes as she opened it and let it swing back after her. The little patches called gardens were mostly untilled, uncared for, squares of slimy moss, dotted with clumps of coarse ugly grass, but here and there were the blackened and rotting remains of sunflowers and marigolds. And beyond, he knew, stretched the labyrinth of streets more or less squalid, but all grey and dull, and behind were the mud pits and the steaming heaps of yellowish bricks, and to the north was a great wide cold waste, treeless, desolate, swept by bitter wind. It was all like his own life, he said again to himself, a maze of unprofitable dreariness and desolation, and his mind grew as black and hopeless as the winter sky. The morning went thus dismally till twelve o’clock, and he put on his hat and great-coat. He always went out for an hour every day between twelve and one; the exercise was a necessity, and the landlady made his bed in the interval. The wind blew the smoke from the chimneys into his face as he shut the door, and with the acrid smoke came the prevailing odor of the street, a blend of cabbage-water and burnt bones and the faint sickly vapor from the brickfields. Lucian walked mechanically for the hour, going eastward, along the main road. The wind pierced him, and the dust was blinding, and the dreariness of the street increased his misery. The row of common shops, full of common things, the blatant public-houses, the Independent chapel, a horrible stucco parody of a Greek temple with a façade of hideous columns that was a nightmare, villas like smug Pharisees, shops again, a church in cheap Gothic, an old garden blasted and riven by the builder, these were the pictures of the way. When he got home again he flung himself on the bed, and lay there stupidly till sheer hunger roused him. He ate a hunch of bread and drank some water, and began to pace up and down the room, wondering whether there were no escape from despair. Writing seemed quite impossible, and hardly knowing what he did he opened his bureau and took out a book from the shelves. As his eyes fell on the page the air grew dark and heavy as night, and the wind wailed suddenly, loudly, terribly.

“By woman wailing for her Demon lover.” The words were on his lips when he raised his eyes again. A broad band of pale clear light was shining into the room, and when he looked out of the window he saw the road all brightened by glittering pools of water, and as the last drops of the rainstorm starred these mirrors the sun sank into the wrack. Lucian gazed about him, perplexed, till his eyes fell on the clock above his empty hearth. He had been sitting, motionless, for nearly two hours without any sense of the passage of time, and without ceasing he had murmured those words as he dreamed an endless wonderful story. He experienced somewhat the sensations of Coleridge himself; strange, amazing, ineffable things seemed to have been presented to him, not in the form of the idea, but actually and materially, but he was less fortunate than Coleridge in that he could not, even vaguely, image to himself what he had seen. Yet when he searched his mind he knew that the consciousness of the room in which he sat had never left him; he had seen the thick darkness gather, and had heard the whirl of rain hissing through the air. Windows had been shut down with a crash, he had noted the pattering footsteps of people running to shelter, the landlady’s voice crying to some one to look at the rain coming in under the door. It was like peering into some old bituminous picture, one could see at last that the mere blackness resolved itself into the likeness of trees and rocks and travelers. And against this background of his room, and the storm, and the noises of the street, his vision stood out illuminated, he felt he had descended to the very depths, into the caverns that are hollowed beneath the soul. He tried vainly to record the history of his impressions; the symbols remained in his memory, but the meaning was all conjecture.

The next morning, when he awoke, he could scarcely understand or realize the bitter depression of the preceding day. He found it had all vanished away and had been succeeded by an intense exaltation. Afterwards, when at rare intervals he experienced the same strange possession of the consciousness, he found this to be the invariable result, the hour of vision was always succeeded by a feeling of delight, by sensations of brightened and intensified powers. On that bright December day after the storm he rose joyously, and set about the labor of the bureau with the assurance of success, almost with the hope of formidable difficulties to be overcome. He had long busied himself with those curious researches which Poe had indicated in the *Philosophy of Composition*, and many hours had been spent in analyzing the singular effects which may be produced by the sound and resonance of words. But he had been struck by the thought that in the finest literature there were more subtle tones than the loud and insistent music of “never more,” and he endeavored to find the secret of those pages and sentences which spoke, less directly, and less obviously, to the soul rather than to the ear, being filled with a certain grave melody and the sensation of singing voices. It was admirable, no doubt, to write phrases that showed at a glance their designed rhythm, and rang with sonorous words, but he dreamed of a prose in which the music should be less explicit, of names rather than notes. He was astonished that morning at his own fortune and facility; he succeeded in covering a page of ruled paper wholly to his satisfaction, and the sentences, when he read them out, appeared to suggest a weird elusive chanting, exquisite but almost imperceptible, like the echo of the plainsong reverberated from the vault of a monastic church.

He thought that such happy mornings well repaid him for the anguish of depression which he sometimes had to suffer, and for the strange experience of “possession” recurring at rare intervals, and usually after many weeks of severe diet. His income, he found, amounted to sixty-five pounds a year, and he lived for weeks at a time on fifteen shillings a week. During these austere periods his only food was bread, at the rate of a loaf a day; but he drank huge draughts of green tea, and smoked a black tobacco, which seemed to him a more potent mother of thought than any drug from the scented East. “I hope you go to some nice place for dinner,” wrote his cousin; “there used to be some excellent eating-houses in London where one could get a good cut from the joint, *with plenty of gravy*, and a boiled potato, for a shilling. Aunt Mary writes that you should try Mr. Jones’s in Water Street, Islington, whose father came from near Caermaen, and was always most comfortable in her day. I daresay the walk there would do you good. It is such a pity you smoke that horrid tobacco. I had a letter from Mrs. Dolly (Jane Diggs, who married your cousin John Dolly) the other day, and she said they would have been delighted to take you for only twenty-five shillings a week for the sake of the family if you had not been a smoker. She told me to ask you if you had ever seen a horse or a dog smoking tobacco. They are such nice, comfortable people, and the children would have been company for you. Johnnie, who used to be such a dear little fellow, has just gone into an office in the City, and seems to have excellent prospects. How I wish, my dear Lucian, that you could do something in the same way. Don't forget Mr. Jones's in Water Street, and you might mention your name to him."

Lucian never troubled Mr. Jones; but these letters of his cousin's always refreshed him by the force of contrast. He tried to imagine himself a part of the Dolly family, going dutifully every morning to the City on the bus, and returning in the evening for high tea. He could conceive the fine odor of hot roast beef hanging about the decorous house on Sunday afternoons, papa asleep in the dining-room, mamma lying down, and the children quite good and happy with their "Sundays books." In the evening, after supper, one read the *Quiver* till bedtime. Such pictures as these were to Lucian a comfort and a help, a remedy against despair. Often when he felt overwhelmed by the difficulty of the work he had undertaken, he thought of the alternative career, and was strengthened.

He returned again and again to that desire of a prose which should sound faintly, not so much with an audible music, but with the memory and echo of it. In the night, when the last tram had gone jangling by, and he had looked out and seen the street all wrapped about in heavy folds of the mist, he conducted some of his most delicate experiments. In that white and solitary midnight of the suburban street he experienced the curious sense of being on a tower, remote and apart and high above all the troubles of the earth. The gas lamp, which was nearly opposite, shone in a pale halo of light, and the houses themselves were merely indistinct marks and shadows amidst that palpable whiteness, shutting out the world and its noises. The knowledge of the swarming life that was so still, though it surrounded him, made the silence seem deeper than that of the mountains before the dawn; it was as if he alone stirred and looked out amidst a host sleeping at his feet. The fog came in by the open window in freezing puffs, and as Lucian watched he noticed that it shook and wavered like the sea, tossing up wreaths and drifts across the pale halo of the lamp, and, these vanishing, others succeeded. It was as if the mist passed by from the river to the north, as if it still passed by in the silence.

He would shut his window gently, and sit down in his lighted room with all the consciousness of the white advancing shroud upon him. It was then that he found himself in the mood for curious labors, and able to handle with some touch of confidence the more exquisite instruments of the craft. He sought for that magic by which all the glory and glamour of mystic chivalry were made to shine through the burlesque and gross adventures of Don Quixote, by which Hawthorne had lit his infernal Sabbath fires, and fashioned a burning aureole about the village tragedy of the *Scarlet Letter*. In Hawthorne the story and the suggestion, though quite distinct and of different worlds, were rather parallel than opposed to one another; but Cervantes had done a stranger thing. One read of Don Quixote, beaten, dirty, and ridiculous, mistaking windmills for giants, sheep for an army; but the impression was of the enchanted forest, of Avalon, of the San Graal, "far in the spiritual city." And Rabelais showed him, beneath the letter, the Tourainian sun shining on the hot rock above Chinon, on the maze of narrow, climbing streets, on the high-pitched, gabled roofs, on the grey-blue *tourelles*, pricking upward from the fantastic labyrinth of walls. He heard the sound of sonorous plain-song from the monastic choir, of gross exuberant gaiety from the rich vineyards; he listened to the eternal mystic mirth of those that halted in the purple shadow of the *sorbier* by the white, steep road. The gracious and ornate *châteaux* on the Loire and the Vienne rose fair and shining to confront the incredible secrets of vast, dim, far-lifted Gothic naves, that seemed ready to take the great deep, and float away from the mist and dust of earthly streets to anchor in the haven of the clear city that hath foundations. The rank tale of the *garderobe*, of the farm-kitchen, mingled with the reasoned, endless legend of the schools, with luminous Platonic argument; the old pomp of the Middle Ages put on the robe of a fresh life. There was a smell of wine and of incense, of June meadows and of ancient books, and through it all he hearkened, intent, to the exultation of chiming bells ringing for a new feast in a new land. He would cover pages with the analysis of these marvels, tracking the suggestion concealed beneath the words, and yet glowing like the golden threads in a robe of samite, or like that device of the old binders by which a vivid picture appeared on the shut edges of a book. He tried to imitate this art, to summon even the faint shadow of the great effect, rewriting a page of Hawthorne, experimenting and changing an epithet here and there, noting how sometimes the alteration of a trifling word would plunge a whole scene into darkness, as if one of those blood-red fires had instantly been extinguished. Sometimes, for severe practice, he attempted to construct short tales in the manner of this or that master. He sighed over these desperate attempts, over the clattering pieces of mechanism which would not even simulate life; but he urged himself to an infinite perseverance. Through the white hours he worked on amidst the heap and litter of papers; books and manuscripts overflowed from the bureau to the floor; and if he looked out he saw the mist still pass by, still passing from the river to the north.

It was not till the winter was well advanced that he began at all to explore the region in which he lived. Soon after his arrival in the grey street he had taken one or two vague walks, hardly noticing where he went or what he saw; but for all the summer he had shut himself in his room, beholding nothing but the form and color of words. For his morning walk he almost invariably chose the one direction, going along the Uxbridge Road towards Notting Hill, and returning by the same monotonous thoroughfare. Now, however, when the new year was beginning its dull days, he began to diverge occasionally to right and left, sometimes eating his luncheon in odd corners, in the bulging parlors of eighteenth-century taverns, that still fronted the surging sea of modern streets, or perhaps in brand new "publics" on the broken borders of the brickfields, smelling of the clay from which they had swollen. He found waste by-places behind railway embankments where he could smoke his pipe sheltered from the wind; sometimes there was a wooden fence by an old pear-orchard where he sat and gazed at the wet desolation of the market-gardens, munching a few currant biscuits by way of dinner. As he went farther afield a sense of immensity slowly grew upon him; it was as if, from the little island of his room, that one friendly place, he pushed out into the grey unknown, into a city that for him was uninhabited as the desert.

He came back to his cell after these purposeless wanderings always with a sense of relief, with the thought of taking refuge from grey. As he lit the gas and opened the desk of his bureau and saw the pile of papers awaiting him, it was as if he had passed from the black skies and the stinging wind and the dull maze of the suburb into all the warmth and sunlight and violent color of the south.

VI

IT WAS IN this winter after his coming to the grey street that Lucian first experienced the pains of desolation. He had all his life known the delights of solitude, and had acquired that habit of mind which makes a man find rich company on the bare hillside and leads him into the heart of the wood to meditate by the dark waterpools. But now in the blank interval when he was forced to shut up his desk, the sense of loneliness overwhelmed him and filled him with unutterable melancholy. On such days he carried about with him an unceasing gnawing torment in his breast; the anguish of the empty page awaiting him in his bureau, and the knowledge that it was worse than useless to attempt the work. He had fallen into the habit of always using this phrase "the work" to denote the adventure of literature; it had grown in his mind to all the austere and grave significance of "the great work" on the lips of the alchemists; it included every trifling and laborious page and the vague magnificent fancies that sometimes hovered below him. All else had become mere by-play, unimportant, trivial; the work was the end, and the means and the food of his life — it raised him up in the morning to renew the struggle, it was the symbol which charmed him as he lay down at night. All through the hours of toil at the bureau he was enchanted, and when he went out and explored the unknown coasts, the one thought allured him, and was the colored glass between his eyes and the world. Then as he drew nearer home his steps would quicken, and the more weary and grey the walk, the more he rejoiced as he thought of his hermitage and of the curious difficulties that awaited him there. But when, suddenly and without warning, the faculty disappeared, when his mind seemed a hopeless waste from which nothing could arise, then he became subject to a misery so piteous that the barbarians themselves would have been sorry for him. He had known some foretaste of these bitter and inexpressible griefs in the old country days, but then he had immediately taken refuge in the hills, he had rushed to the dark woods as to an anodyne, letting his heart drink in all the wonder and magic of the wild land. Now in these days of January, in the suburban street, there was no such refuge.

He had been working steadily for some weeks, well enough satisfied on the whole with the daily progress, glad to awake in the morning, and to read over what he had written on the night before. The new year opened with faint and heavy weather and a breathless silence in the air, but in a few days the great frost set in. Soon the streets began to suggest the appearance of a beleaguered city, the silence that had preceded the frost deepened, and the mist hung over the earth like a dense white smoke. Night after night the cold increased, and people seemed unwilling to go abroad, till even the main thoroughfares were empty and deserted, as if the inhabitants were lying close in hiding. It was at this dismal time that Lucian found himself reduced to impotence. There was a sudden break in his thought, and when he wrote on valiantly, hoping against hope, he only grew more aghast on the discovery of the imbecilities he had committed to paper. He ground his teeth together and persevered, sick at heart, feeling as if all the world were fallen from under his feet, driving his pen on mechanically, till he was overwhelmed. He saw the stuff he had done without veil or possible concealment, a lamentable and wretched sheaf of verbiage, worse, it seemed, than the efforts of his boyhood. He was not longer tautological, he avoided tautology with the infernal art of a leader-writer, filling his wind bags and mincing words as if he had been a trained journalist on the staff of the *Daily Post*. There seemed all the matter of an insufferable tragedy in these thoughts; that his patient and enduring toil was in vain, that practice went for nothing, and that he had wasted the labor of Milton to accomplish the tenth-rate. Unhappily he could not “give in”; the longing, the fury for the work burnt within him like a burning fire; he lifted up his eyes in despair.

It was then, while he knew that no one could help him, that he languished for help, and then, though he was aware that no comfort was possible, he fervently wished to be comforted. The only friend he had was his father, and he knew that his father would not even understand his distress. For him, always, the printed book was the beginning and end of literature; the agony of the maker, his despair and sickness, were as accursed as the pains of labor. He was ready to read and admire the work of the great Smith, but he did not wish to hear of the period when the great Smith had writhed and twisted like a scotched worm, only hoping to be put out of his misery, to go mad or die, to escape somehow from the bitter pains. And Lucian knew no one else. Now and then he read in the paper the fame of the great *littérateurs*; the Gypsies were entertaining the Prince of Wales, the Jolly Beggars were dining with the Lord Mayor, the Old Mumpers were mingling amicably and gorgeously with the leading members of the Stock Exchange. He was so unfortunate as to know none of these gentlemen, but it hardly seemed likely that they could have done much for him in any case. Indeed, in his heart, he was certain that help and comfort from without were in the nature of things utterly impossible, his ruin and grief were within, and only his own assistance could avail. He tried to reassure himself, to believe that his torments were a proof of his vocation, that the facility of the novelist who stood six years deep in contracts to produce romances was a thing wholly undesirable, but all the while he longed for but a drop of that inexhaustible fluency which he professed to despise.

He drove himself out from that dreary contemplation of the white paper and the idle pen. He went into the frozen and deserted streets, hoping that he might pluck the burning coal from his heart, but the fire was not quenched. As he walked furiously along the grim iron roads he fancied that those persons who passed him cheerfully on their way to friends and friendly hearths shrank from him into the mists as they went by. Lucian imagined that the fire of his torment and anguish must in some way glow visibly about him; he moved, perhaps, in a nimbus that proclaimed the blackness and the flames within. He knew, of course, that in misery he had grown delirious, that the well-coated, smooth-hatted personages who loomed out of the fog upon him were in reality shuddering only with cold, but in spite of common sense he still conceived that he saw on their faces an evident horror and disgust, and something of the repugnance that one feels at the sight of a venomous snake, half-killed, trailing its bleeding vileness out of sight. By design Lucian tried to make for remote and desolate places, and yet when he had succeeded in touching on the open country, and knew that the icy shadow hovering through the mist was a field, he longed for some sound and murmur of life, and turned again to roads where pale lamps were glimmering, and the dancing flame of firelight shone across the frozen shrubs. And the sight of these homely fires, the thought of affection and consolation waiting by them, stung him the more sharply perhaps because of the contrast with his own chills and weariness and helpless sickness, and chiefly because he knew that he had long closed an everlasting door between his heart and such felicities. If those within had come out and had called him by his name to enter and be comforted, it would have been quite unavailing, since between them and him there was a great gulf fixed. Perhaps for the first time he realized that he had lost the art of humanity for ever. He had thought when he closed his ears to the wood whisper and changed the fauns' singing for the murmur of the streets, the black pools for the shadows and amber light of London, that he had put off the old life, and had turned his soul to healthy activities, but the truth was that he had merely exchanged one drug for another. He could not be human, and he wondered whether there were some drop of the fairy blood in his body that made him foreign and a stranger in the world.

He did not surrender to desolation without repeated struggles. He strove to allure himself to his desk by the promise of some easy task; he would not attempt invention, but he had memoranda and rough jottings of ideas in his note-books, and he would merely amplify the suggestions ready to his hand. But it was hopeless, again and again it was hopeless. As he read over his notes, trusting that he would find some hint that might light up the dead fires, and kindle again that pure flame of enthusiasm, he found how desperately his fortune had fallen. He could see no light, no color in the lines he had scribbled with eager trembling fingers; he remembered how splendid all these things had been when he wrote them down, but now they were meaningless, faded into grey. The few words he had dashed on to the paper, enraptured at the thought of the happy hours they promised, had become mere jargon, and when he understood the idea it seemed foolish, dull, unoriginal. He discovered something at last that appeared to have a grain of promise, and determined to do his best to put it into shape, but the first paragraph appalled him; it might have been written by an unintelligent schoolboy. He tore the paper in pieces, and shut and locked his desk, heavy despair sinking like lead into his heart. For the rest of that day he lay motionless on the bed, smoking pipe after pipe in the hope of stupefying himself with tobacco fumes. The air in the room became blue and thick with smoke; it was bitterly cold, and he wrapped himself up in his great-coat and drew the counterpane over him. The night came on and the window darkened, and at last he fell asleep.

He renewed the effort at intervals, only to plunge deeper into misery. He felt the approaches of madness, and knew that his only hope was to walk till he was physically exhausted, so that he might come home almost fainting with fatigue, but ready to fall asleep the moment he got into bed. He passed the mornings in a kind of torpor, endeavoring to avoid thought, to occupy his mind with the pattern of the paper, with the advertisements at the end of a book, with the curious greyness of the light that glimmered through the mist into his room, with the muffled voices that rumbled now and then from the street. He tried to make out the design that had once colored the faded carpet on the floor, and wondered about the dead artist in Japan, the adorner of his bureau. He speculated as to what his thoughts had been as he inserted the rainbow mother-of-pearl and made that great flight of shining birds, dipping their wings as they rose from the reeds, or how he had conceived the lacquer dragons in red gold, and the fantastic houses in the garden of peach-trees. But sooner or later the oppression of his grief returned, the loud shriek and clang of the garden-gate, the warning bell of some passing bicyclist steering through the fog, the noise of his pipe falling to the floor, would suddenly awaken him to the sense of misery. He knew that it was time to go out; he could not bear to sit still and suffer. Sometimes she cut a slice of bread and put it in his pocket, sometimes he trusted to the chance of finding a public-house, where he could have a sandwich and a glass of beer. He turned always from the main streets and lost himself in the intricate suburban byways, willing to be engulfed in the infinite whiteness of the mist.

The roads had stiffened into iron ridges, the fences and trees were glittering with frost crystals, everything was of strange and altered aspect. Lucian walked on and on through the maze, now in a circle of shadowy villas, awful as the buried streets of Herculaneum, now in lanes dipping onto open country, that led him past great elm-trees whose white boughs were all still, and past the bitter lonely fields where the mist seemed to fade away into grey darkness. As he wandered along these unfamiliar and ghastly paths he became the more convinced of his utter remoteness from all humanity, he allowed that grotesque suggestion of there being something visibly amiss in his outward appearance to grow upon him, and often he looked with a horrible expectation into the faces of those who passed by, afraid lest his own senses gave him false intelligence, and that he had really assumed some frightful and revolting shape. It was curious that, partly by his own fault, and largely, no doubt, through the operation of mere coincidence, he was once or twice strongly confirmed in this fantastic delusion. He came one day into a lonely and unfrequented byway, a country lane falling into ruin, but still fringed with elms that had formed an avenue leading to the old manor-house. It was now the road of communication between two far outlying suburbs, and on these winter nights lay as black, dreary, and desolate as a mountain track. Soon after the frost began, a gentleman had been set upon in this lane as he picked his way between the corner where the bus had set him down, and his home where the fire was blazing, and his wife watched the clock. He was stumbling uncertainly through the gloom, growing a little nervous because the walk seemed so long, and peering anxiously for the lamp at the end of his street, when the two footpads rushed at him out of the fog. One caught him from behind, the other struck him with a heavy bludgeon, and as he lay senseless they robbed him of his watch and money, and vanished across the fields. The next morning all the suburb rang with the story; the unfortunate merchant had been grievously hurt, and wives watched their husbands go out in the morning with sickening apprehension, not knowing what might happen at night. Lucian of course was ignorant of all these rumors, and struck into the gloomy by-road without caring where he was or whither the way would lead him.

He had been driven out that day as with whips, another hopeless attempt to return to the work had agonised him, and existence seemed an intolerable pain. As he entered the deeper gloom, where the fog hung heavily, he began, half consciously, to gesticulate; he felt convulsed with torment and shame, and it was a sorry relief to clench his nails into his palm and strike the air as he stumbled heavily along, bruising his feet against the frozen ruts and ridges. His impotence was hideous, he said to himself, and he cursed himself and his life, breaking out into a loud oath, and stamping on the ground. Suddenly he was shocked at a scream of terror, it seemed in his very ear, and looking up he saw for a moment a woman gazing at him out of the mist, her features distorted and stiff with fear. A momentary convulsion twitched her arms into the ugly mimicry of a beckoning gesture, and she turned and ran for dear life, howling like a beast.

Lucian stood still in the road while the woman's cries grew faint and died away. His heart was chilled within him as the significance of this strange incident became clear. He remembered nothing of his violent gestures; he had not known at the time that he had sworn out loud, or that he was grinding his teeth with impotent rage. He only thought of that ringing scream, of the horrible fear on the white face that had looked upon him, of the woman's headlong flight from his presence. He stood trembling and shuddering, and in a little while he was feeling his face, searching for some loathsome mark, for the stigmata of evil branding his forehead. He staggered homewards like a drunken man, and when he came into the Uxbridge Road some children saw him and called after him as he swayed and caught at the lamp-post. When he got to his room he sat down at first in the dark. He did not dare to light the gas. Everything in the room was indistinct, but he shut his eyes as he passed the dressing-table, and sat in a corner, his face turned to the wall. And when at last he gathered courage and the flame leapt hissing from the jet, he crept piteously towards the glass, and ducked his head, crouching miserably, and struggling with his terrors before he could look at his own image.

To the best of his power he tried to deliver himself from these more grotesque fantasies; he assured himself that there was nothing terrific in his countenance but sadness, that his face was like the face of other men. Yet he could not forget that reflection he had seen in the woman's eyes, how the surest mirrors had shown him a horrible dread, her soul itself quailing and shuddering at an awful sight. Her scream rang and rang in his ears; she had fled away from him as if he offered some fate darker than death.

He looked again and again into the glass, tortured by a hideous uncertainty. His senses told him there was nothing amiss, yet he had had a proof, and yet, as he peered most earnestly, there was, it seemed, something strange and not altogether usual in the expression of the eyes. Perhaps it might be the unsteady flare of the gas, or perhaps a flaw in the cheap looking-glass, that gave some slight distortion to the image. He walked briskly up and down the room and tried to gaze steadily, indifferently, into his own face. He would not allow himself to be misguided by a word. When he had pronounced himself incapable of humanity, he had only meant that he could not enjoy the simple things of common life. A man was not necessarily monstrous, merely because he did not appreciate high tea, a quiet chat about the neighbors, and a happy noisy evening with the children. But with what message, then, did he appear charged that the woman's mouth grew so stark? Her hands had jerked up as if they had been pulled with frantic wires; she seemed for the instant like a horrible puppet. Her scream was a thing from the nocturnal Sabbath.

He lit a candle and held it close up to the glass so that his own face glared white at him, and the reflection of the room became an indistinct darkness.

He saw nothing but the candle flame and his own shining eyes, and surely they were not as the eyes of common men. As he put down the light, a sudden suggestion entered his mind, and he drew a quick breath, amazed at the thought. He hardly knew whether to rejoice or to shudder. For the thought he conceived was this: that he had mistaken all the circumstances of the adventure, and had perhaps repulsed a sister who would have welcomed him to the Sabbath.

He lay awake all night, turning from one dreary and frightful thought to the other, scarcely dozing for a few hours when the dawn came. He tried for a moment to argue with himself when he got up; knowing that his true life was locked up in the bureau, he made a desperate attempt to drive the phantoms and hideous shapes from his mind. He was assured that his salvation was in the work, and he drew the key from his pocket, and made as if he would have opened the desk. But the nausea, the remembrances of repeated and utter failure, were too powerful. For many days he hung about the Manor Lane, half dreading, half desiring another meeting, and he swore he would not again mistake the cry of rapture, nor repulse the arms extended in a frenzy of delight. In those days he dreamed of some dark place where they might celebrate and make the marriage of the Sabbath, with such rites as he had dared to imagine.

It was perhaps only the shock of a letter from his father that rescued him from these evident approaches to madness. Mr. Taylor wrote how they had missed him at Christmas, how the farmers had inquired after him, of the homely familiar things that recalled his boyhood, his mother’s voice, the friendly fireside, and the good old fashions that had nurtured him. He remembered that he had once been a boy, loving the cake and puddings and the radiant holly, and all the seventeenth-century mirth that lingered on in the ancient farmhouses. And there came to him the more holy memory of Mass on Christmas morning. How sweet the dark and frosty earth had smelt as he walked beside his mother down the winding lane, and from the stile near the church they had seen the world glimmering to the dawn, and the wandering lanthorns advancing across the fields. Then he had come into the church and seen it shining with candles and holly, and his father in pure vestments of white linen sang the longing music of the liturgy at the altar, and the people answered him, till the sun rose with the grave notes of the Paternoster, and a red beam stole through the chancel window.

The worst horror left him as he recalled the memory of these dear and holy things. He cast away the frightful fancy that the scream he had heard was a shriek of joy, that the arms, rigidly jerked out, invited him to an embrace. Indeed, the thought that he had longed for such an obscene illusion, that he had gloated over the recollection of that stark mouth, filled him with disgust. He resolved that his senses were deceived, that he had neither seen nor heard, but had for a moment externalized his own slumbering and morbid dreams. It was perhaps necessary that he should be wretched, that his efforts should be discouraged, but he would not yield utterly to madness.

Yet when he went abroad with such good resolutions, it was hard to resist an influence that seemed to come from without and within. He did not know it, but people were everywhere talking of the great frost, of the fog that lay heavy on London, making the streets dark and terrible, of strange birds that came fluttering about the windows in the silent squares. The Thames rolled out duskily, bearing down the jarring ice-blocks, and as one looked on the black water from the bridges it was like a river in a northern tale. To Lucian it all seemed mythical, of the same substance as his own fantastic thoughts. He rarely saw a newspaper, and did not follow from day to day the systematic readings of the thermometer, the reports of ice-fairs, of coaches driven across the river at Hampton, of the skating on the fens; and hence the iron roads, the beleaguered silence and the heavy folds of mist appeared as amazing as a picture, significant, appalling. He could not look out and see a common suburban street foggy and dull, nor think of the inhabitants as at work or sitting cheerfully eating nuts about their fires; he saw a vision of a grey road vanishing, of dim houses all empty and deserted, and the silence seemed eternal. And when he went out and passed through street after street, all void, by the vague shapes of houses that appeared for a moment and were then instantly swallowed up, it seemed to him as if he had strayed into a city that had suffered some inconceivable doom, that he alone wandered where myriads had once dwelt. It was a town as great as Babylon, terrible as Rome, marvelous as Lost Atlantis, set in the midst of a white wilderness surrounded by waste places. It was impossible to escape from it; if he skulked between hedges, and crept away beyond the frozen pools, presently the serried stony lines confronted him like an army, and far and far they swept away into the night, as some fabled wall that guards an empire in the vast dim East. Or in that distorting medium of the mist, changing all things, he imagined that he trod an infinite desolate plain, abandoned from ages, but circled and encircled with dolmen and menhir that loomed out at him, gigantic, terrible. All London was one grey temple of an awful rite, ring within ring of wizard stones circled about some central place, every circle was an initiation, every initiation eternal loss. Or perhaps he was astray for ever in a land of grey rocks. He had seen the light of home, the flicker of the fire on the walls; close at hand, it seemed, was the open door, and he had heard dear voices calling to him across the gloom, but he had just missed the path. The lamps vanished, the voices sounded thin and died away, and yet he knew that those within were waiting, that they could not bear to close the door, but waited, calling his name, while he had missed the way, and wandered in the pathless desert of the grey rocks. Fantastic, hideous, they beset him wherever he turned, piled up into strange shapes, pricked with sharp peaks, assuming the appearance of goblin towers, swelling into a vague dome like a fairy rath, huge and terrible. And as one dream faded into another, so these last fancies were perhaps the most tormenting and persistent; the rocky avenues became the camp and fortalice of some half-human, malignant race who swarmed in hiding, ready to bear him away into the heart of their horrible hills. It was awful to think that all his goings were surrounded, that in the darkness he was watched and surveyed, that every step but led him deeper and deeper into the labyrinth.

When, of an evening, he was secure in his room, the blind drawn down and the gas flaring, he made vigorous efforts toward sanity. It was not of his free will that he allowed terror to overmaster him, and he desired nothing better than a placid and harmless life, full of work and clear thinking. He knew that he deluded himself with imagination, that he had been walking through London suburbs and not through Pandemonium, and that if he could but unlock his bureau all those ugly forms would be resolved into the mist. But it was hard to say if he consoled himself effectually with such reflections, for the return to common sense meant also the return to the sharp pangs of defeat. It recalled him to the bitter theme of his own inefficiency, to the thought that he only desired one thing of life, and that this was denied him. He was willing to endure the austerities of a monk in a severe cloister, to suffer cold, to be hungry, to be lonely and friendless, to forbear all the consolation of friendly speech, and to be glad of all these things, if only he might be allowed to illuminate the manuscript in quietness. It seemed a hideous insufferable cruelty, that he should so fervently desire that which he could never gain.

He was led back to the old conclusion; he had lost the sense of humanity, he was wretched because he was an alien and a stranger amongst citizens. It seemed probable that the enthusiasm of literature, as he understood it, the fervent desire for the fine art, had in it something of the inhuman, and dissevered the enthusiast from his fellow-creatures. It was possible that the barbarian suspected as much, that by some slow process of rumination he had arrived at his fixed and inveterate impression, by no means a clear reasoned conviction; the average Philistine, if pressed for the reasons of his dislike, would either become inarticulate, ejaculating "faugh" and "pah" like an old-fashioned Scots Magazine, or else he would give some imaginary and absurd reason, alleging that all "littery men" were poor, that composers never cut their hair, that painters were rarely public-school men, that sculptors couldn't ride straight to hounds to save their lives, but clearly these imbecilities were mere afterthoughts; the average man hated the artist from a deep instinctive dread of all that was strange, uncanny, alien to his nature; he gibbered, uttered his harsh, semi-bestial "faugh," and dismissed Keats to his gallipots from much the same motives as usually impelled the black savages to dismiss the white man on an even longer journey.

Lucian was not especially interested in this hatred of the barbarian for the maker, except from this point, that it confirmed him in his belief that the love of art dissociated the man from the race. One touch of art made the whole world alien, but surely miseries of the civilized man cast amongst savages were not so much caused by dread of their ferocity as by the terror of his own thoughts; he would perhaps in his last despair leave his retreat and go forth to perish at their hands, so that he might at least die in company, and hear the sound of speech before death. And Lucian felt most keenly that in his case there was a double curse; he was as isolated as Keats, and as inarticulate as his reviewers. The consolation of the work had failed him, and he was suspended in the void between two worlds.

It was no doubt the composite effect of his failures, his loneliness of soul, and solitude of life, that had made him invest those common streets with such grim and persistent terrors. He had perhaps yielded to a temptation without knowing that he had been tempted, and, in the manner of De Quincey, had chosen the subtle in exchange for the more tangible pains. Unconsciously, but still of free will, he had preferred the splendor and the gloom of a malignant vision before his corporal pains, before the hard reality of his own impotence. It was better to dwell in vague melancholy, to stray in the forsaken streets of a city doomed from ages, to wander amidst forlorn and desperate rocks than to awake to a gnawing and ignoble torment, to confess that a house of business would have been more suitable and more practical, that he had promised what he could never perform. Even as he struggled to beat back the phantasmagoria of the mist, and resolved that he would no longer make all the streets a stage of apparitions, he hardly realized what he had done, or that the ghosts he had called might depart and return again.

He continued his long walks, always with the object of producing a physical weariness and exhaustion that would enable him to sleep of nights. But even when he saw the foggy and deserted avenues in their proper shape, and allowed his eyes to catch the pale glimmer of the lamps, and the dancing flame of the firelight, he could not rid himself of the impression that he stood afar off, that between those hearths and himself there was a great gulf fixed. As he paced down the footpath he could often see plainly across the frozen shrubs into the homely and cheerful rooms. Sometimes, late in the evening, he caught a passing glimpse of the family at tea, father, mother, and children laughing and talking together, well pleased with each other's company. Sometimes a wife or a child was standing by the garden gate peering anxiously through the fog, and the sight of it all, all the little details, the hideous but comfortable armchairs turned ready to the fire, maroon-red curtains being drawn close to shut out the ugly night, the sudden blaze and illumination as the fire was poked up so that it might be cheerful for father; these trivial and common things were acutely significant. They brought back to him the image of a dead boy — himself. They recalled the shabby old "parlor" in the country, with its shabby old furniture and fading carpet, and renewed a whole atmosphere of affection and homely comfort. His mother would walk to the end of the drive and look out for him when he was late (wandering then about the dark woodlands); on winter evenings she would make the fire blaze, and have his slippers warming by the hearth, and there was probably buttered toast "as a treat." He dwelt on all these insignificant petty circumstances, on the genial glow and light after the muddy winter lanes, on the relish of the buttered toast and the smell of the hot tea, on the two old cats curled fast asleep before the fender, and made them instruments of exquisite pain and regret. Each of these strange houses that he passed was identified in his mind with his own vanished home; all was prepared and ready as in the old days, but he was shut out, judged and condemned to wander in the frozen mist, with weary feet, anguished and forlorn, and they that would pass from within to help him could not, neither could he pass to them. Again, for the hundredth time, he came back to the sentence: he could not gain the art of letters and he had lost the art of humanity. He saw the vanity of all his thoughts; he was an ascetic caring nothing for warmth and cheerfulness and the small comforts of life, and yet he allowed his mind to dwell on such things. If one of those passers-by, who walked briskly, eager for home, should have pitied him by some miracle and asked him to come in, it would have been worse than useless, yet he longed for pleasures that he could not have enjoyed. It was as if he were come to a place of torment, where they who could not drink longed for water, where they who could feel no warmth shuddered in the eternal cold. He was oppressed by the grim conceit that he himself still slept within the matted thicket, imprisoned by the green bastions of the Roman fort. He had never come out, but a changeling had gone down the hill, and now stirred about the earth.

Beset by such ingenious terrors, it was not wonderful that outward events and common incidents should abet his fancies. He had succeeded one day in escaping from the mesh of the streets, and fell on a rough and narrow lane that stole into a little valley. For the moment he was in a somewhat happier mood; the afternoon sun glowed through the rolling mist, and the air grew clearer. He saw quiet and peaceful fields, and a wood descending in a gentle slope from an old farmstead of warm red brick. The farmer was driving the slow cattle home from the hill, and his loud halloo to his dog came across the land a cheerful mellow note. From another side a cart was approaching the clustered barns, hesitating, pausing while the great horses rested, and then starting again into lazy motion. In the well of the valley a wandering line of bushes showed where a brook crept in and out amongst the meadows, and, as Lucian stood, lingering, on the bridge, a soft and idle breath ruffled through the boughs of a great elm. He felt soothed, as by calm music, and wondered whether it would not be better for him to live in some such quiet place, within reach of the streets and yet remote from them. It seemed a refuge for still thoughts; he could imagine himself sitting at rest beneath the black yew tree in the farm garden, at the close of a summer day. He had almost determined that he would knock at the door and ask if they would take him as a lodger, when he saw a child running towards him down the lane. It was a little girl, with bright curls tossing about her head, and, as she came on, the sunlight glowed upon her, illuminating her brick-red frock and the yellow king-cups in her hat. She had run with her eyes on the ground, chirping and laughing to herself, and did not see Lucian till she was quite near him. She started and glanced into his eyes for a moment, and began to cry; he stretched out his hand, and she ran from him screaming, frightened no doubt by what was to her a sudden and strange apparition. He turned back towards London, and the mist folded him in its thick darkness, for on that evening it was tinged with black. It was only by the intensest strain of resolution that he did not yield utterly to the poisonous anodyne which was always at hand. It had been a difficult struggle to escape from the mesh of the hills, from the music of the fauns, and even now he was drawn by the memory of these old allurements. But he felt that here, in his loneliness, he was in greater danger, and beset by a blacker magic. Horrible fancies rushed wantonly into his mind; he was not only ready to believe that something in his soul sent a shudder through all that was simple and innocent, but he came trembling home one Saturday night, believing, or half-believing, that he was in communion with evil. He had passed through the clamorous and blatant crowd of the “high street,” where, as one climbed the hill, the shops seemed all aflame, and the black night air glowed with the flaring gas-jets and the naphtha-lamps, hissing and wavering before the February wind. Voices, raucous, clamant, abominable, were belched out of the blazing public-houses as the doors swung to and fro, and above these doors were hideous brassy lamps, very slowly swinging in a violent blast of air, so that they might have been infernal thuribles, censing the people. Some man was calling his wares in one long continuous shriek that never stopped or paused, and, as a respond, a deeper, louder voice roared to him from across the road. An Italian whirled the handle of his piano-organ in a fury, and a ring of imps danced mad figures around him, danced and flung up their legs till the rags dropped from some of them, and they still danced on. A flare of naphtha, burning with a rushing noise, threw a light on one point of the circle, and Lucian watched a lank girl of fifteen as she came round and round to the flash. She was quite drunk, and had kicked her petticoats away, and the crowd howled laughter and applause at her. Her black hair poured down and leapt on her scarlet bodice; she sprang and leapt round the ring, laughing in Bacchic frenzy, and led the orgy to triumph. People were crossing to and fro, jostling against each other, swarming about certain shops and stalls in a dense dark mass that quivered and sent out feelers as if it were one writhing organism. A little farther a group of young men, arm in arm, were marching down the roadway chanting some music-hall verse in full chorus, so that it sounded like plainsong. An impossible hubbub, a hum of voices angry as swarming bees, the squeals of five or six girls who ran in and out, and dived up dark passages and darted back into the crowd; all these mingled together till his ears quivered. A young fellow was playing the concertina, and he touched the keys with such slow fingers that the tune wailed solemn into a dirge; but there was nothing so strange as the burst of sound that swelled out when the public-house doors were opened.

He walked amongst these people, looked at their faces, and looked at the children amongst them. He had come out thinking that he would see the English working class, "the best-behaved and the best-tempered crowd in the world," enjoying the simple pleasure of the Saturday night's shopping. Mother bought the joint for Sunday's dinner, and perhaps a pair of boots for father; father had an honest glass of beer, and the children were given bags of sweets, and then all these worthy people went decently home to their well-earned rest. De Quincey had enjoyed the sight in his day, and had studied the rise and fall of onions and potatoes. Lucian, indeed, had desired to take these simple emotions as an opiate, to forget the fine fret and fantastic trouble of his own existence in plain things and the palpable joy of rest after labor. He was only afraid lest he should be too sharply reproached by the sight of these men who fought bravely year after year against starvation, who knew nothing of intricate and imagined grief, but only the weariness of relentless labor, of the long battle for their wives and children. It would be pathetic, he thought, to see them content with so little, brightened by the expectation of a day's rest and a good dinner, forced, even then, to reckon every penny, and to make their children laugh with halfpence. Either he would be ashamed before so much content, or else he would be again touched by the sense of his inhumanity which could take no interest in the common things of life. But still he went to be at least taken out of himself, to be forced to look at another side of the world, so that he might perhaps forget a little while his own sorrows.

He was fascinated by what he saw and heard. He wondered whether De Quincey also had seen the same spectacle, and had concealed his impressions out of reverence for the average reader. Here there were no simple joys of honest toilers, but wonderful orgies, that drew out his heart to horrible music. At first the violence of sound and sight had overwhelmed him; the lights flaring in the night wind, the array of naphtha lamps, the black shadows, the roar of voices. The dance about the piano-organ had been the first sign of an inner meaning, and the face of the dark girl as she came round and round to the flame had been amazing in its utter furious abandon. And what songs they were singing all around him, and what terrible words rang out, only to excite peals of laughter. In the public-houses the workmen's wives, the wives of small tradesmen, decently dressed in black, were drinking their faces to a flaming red, and urging their husbands to drink more. Beautiful young women, flushed and laughing, put their arms round the men's necks and kissed them, and then held up the glass to their lips. In the dark corners, at the openings of side streets, the children were talking together, instructing each other, whispering what they had seen; a boy of fifteen was plying a girl of twelve with whisky, and presently they crept away. Lucian passed them as they turned to go, and both looked at him. The boy laughed, and the girl smiled quietly. It was above all in the faces around him that he saw the most astounding things, the Bacchic fury unveiled and unashamed. To his eyes it seemed as if these revelers recognized him as a fellow, and smiled up in his face, aware that he was in the secret. Every instinct of religion, of civilization even, was swept away; they gazed at one another and at him, absolved of all scruples, children of the earth and nothing more. Now and then a couple detached themselves from the swarm, and went away into the darkness, answering the jeers and laughter of their friends as they vanished.

On the edge of the pavement, not far from where he was standing, Lucian noticed a tall and lovely young woman who seemed to be alone. She was in the full light of a naphtha flame, and her bronze hair and flushed cheeks shone illuminate as she viewed the orgy. She had dark brown eyes, and a strange look as of an old picture in her face; and her eyes brightened with an urgent gleam. He saw the revelers nudging each other and glancing at her, and two or three young men went up and asked her to come for a walk. She shook her head and said “No thank you” again and again, and seemed as if she were looking for somebody in the crowd.

"I'm expecting a friend," she said at last to a man who proposed a drink and a walk afterwards; and Lucian wondered what kind of friend would ultimately appear. Suddenly she turned to him as he was about to pass on, and said in a low voice:

"I'll go for a walk with you if you like; you just go on, and I'll follow in a minute."

For a moment he looked steadily at her. He saw that the first glance has misled him; her face was not flushed with drink as he had supposed, but it was radiant with the most exquisite color, a red flame glowed and died on her cheek, and seemed to palpitate as she spoke. The head was set on the neck nobly, as in a statue, and about the ears the bronze hair strayed into little curls. She was smiling and waiting for his answer.

He muttered something about being very sorry, and fled down the hill out of the orgy, from the noise of roaring voices and the glitter of the great lamps very slowly swinging in the blast of wind. He knew that he had touched the brink of utter desolation; there was death in the woman's face, and she had indeed summoned him to the Sabbath. Somehow he had been able to refuse on the instant, but if he had delayed he knew he would have abandoned himself to her, body and soul. He locked himself in his room and lay trembling on the bed, wondering if some subtle sympathy had shown the woman her perfect companion. He looked in the glass, not expecting now to see certain visible and outward signs, but searching for the meaning of that strange glance that lit up his eyes. He had grown even thinner than before in the last few months, and his cheeks were wasted with hunger and sorrow, but there were still about his features the suggestion of a curious classic grace, and the look as of a faun who has strayed from the vineyards and olive gardens. He had broken away, but now he felt the mesh of her net about him, a desire for her that was a madness, as if she held every nerve in his body and drew him to her, to her mystic world, to the rosebush where every flower was a flame.

He dreamed all night of the perilous things he had refused, and it was loss to awake in the morning, pain to return to the world. The frost had broken and the fog had rolled away, and the grey street was filled with a clear grey light. Again he looked out on the long dull sweep of the monotonous houses, hidden for the past weeks by a curtain of mist. Heavy rain had fallen in the night, and the garden rails were still dripping, the roofs still dark with wet, all down the line the dingy white blinds were drawn in the upper windows. Not a soul walked the street; every one was asleep after the exertions of the night before; even on the main road it was only at intervals that some straggler paddled by. Presently a woman in a brown Ulster shuffled off on some errand, then a man in shirt-sleeves poked out his head, holding the door half-open, and stared up at a window opposite. After a few minutes he slunk in again, and three loafers came slouching down the street, eager for mischief or beastliness of some sort. They chose a house that seemed rather smarter than the rest, and, irritated by the neat curtains, the little grass plot with its dwarf shrub, one of the ruffians drew out a piece of chalk and wrote some words on the front door. His friends kept watch for him, and the adventure achieved, all three bolted, bellowing yahoo laughter. Then a bell began, tang, tang, tang, and here and there children appeared on their way to Sunday-school, and the chapel "teachers" went by with verjuice eyes and lips, scowling at the little boy who cried "Piper, piper!" On the main road many respectable people, the men shining and ill-fitted, the women hideously bedizened, passed in the direction of the Independent nightmare, the stuccoed thing with Doric columns, but on the whole life was stagnant. Presently Lucian smelt the horrid fumes of roast beef and cabbage; the early risers were preparing the one-o'clock meal, but many lay in bed and put off dinner till three, with the effect of prolonging the cabbage atmosphere into the late afternoon. A drizzly rain began as the people were coming out of church, and the mothers of little boys in velvet and little girls in foolishness of every kind were impelled to slap their offspring, and to threaten them with father. Then the torpor of beef and beer and cabbage settled down on the street; in some houses they snorted and read the Parish Magazine, in some they snored and read the murders and collected filth of the week; but the only movement of the afternoon was a second procession of children, now bloated and distended with food, again answering the summons of tang, tang, tang. On the main road the trams, laden with impossible people, went humming to and fro, and young men who wore bright blue ties cheerfully haw-hawed and smoked penny cigars. They annoyed the shiny and respectable and verjuice-lipped, not by the frightful stench of the cigars, but because they were cheerful on Sunday. By and by the children, having heard about Moses in the Bulrushes and Daniel in the

Lion’s Den, came straggling home in an evil humor. And all the day it was as if on a grey sheet grey shadows flickered, passing by.

And in the rose-garden every flower was a flame! He thought in symbols, using the Persian imagery of a dusky court, surrounded by white cloisters, gilded by gates of bronze. The stars came out, the sky glowed a darker violet, but the cloistered wall, the fantastic trellises in stone, shone whiter. It was like a hedge of may-blossom, like a lily within a cup of lapis-lazuli, like sea-foam tossed on the heaving sea at dawn. Always those white cloisters trembled with the lute music, always the garden sang with the clear fountain, rising and falling in the mysterious dusk. And there was a singing voice stealing through the white lattices and the bronze gates, a soft voice chanting of the Lover and the Beloved, of the Vineyard, of the Gate and the Way. Oh! the language was unknown; but the music of the refrain returned again and again, swelling and trembling through the white nets of the latticed cloisters. And every rose in the dusky air was a flame.

He had seen the life which he expressed by these symbols offered to him, and he had refused it; and he was alone in the grey street, with its lamps just twinkling through the dreary twilight, the blast of a ribald chorus sounding from the main road, a doggerel hymn whining from some parlor, to the accompaniment of the harmonium. He wondered why he had turned away from that woman who knew all secrets, in whose eyes were all the mysteries. He opened the desk of his bureau, and was confronted by the heap and litter of papers, lying in confusion as he had left them. He knew that there was the motive of his refusal; he had been unwilling to abandon all hope of the work. The glory and the torment of his ambition glowed upon him as he looked at the manuscript; it seemed so pitiful that such a single desire should be thwarted. He was aware that if he chose to sit down now before the desk he could, in a manner, write easily enough — he could produce a tale which would be formally well constructed and certain of favorable reception. And it would not be the utterly commonplace, entirely hopeless favorite of the circulating library; it would stand in those ranks where the real thing is skillfully counterfeited, amongst the books which give the reader his orgy of emotions, and yet contrive to be superior, and “art,” in his opinion. Lucian had often observed this species of triumph, and had noted the acclamation that never failed the clever sham. *Romola*, for example, had made the great host of the serious, the portentous, shout for joy, while the real book, *The Cloister and the Hearth*, was a comparative failure.

He knew that he could write a *Romola*; but he thought the art of counterfeiting half-crowns less detestable than this shabby trick of imitating literature. He had refused definitely to enter the atelier of the gentleman who pleased his clients by ingeniously simulating the grain of walnut; and though he had seen the old oaken ambry kicked out contemptuously into the farmyard, serving perhaps the necessities of hens or pigs, he would not apprentice himself to the masters of veneer. He paced up and down the room, glancing now and again at his papers, and wondering if there were not hope for him. A great thing he could never do, but he had longed to do a true thing, to imagine sincere and genuine pages.

He was stirred again to this fury for the work by the event of the evening before, by all that had passed through his mind since the melancholy dawn. The lurid picture of that fiery street, the flaming shops and flaming glances, all its wonders and horrors, lit by the naphtha flares and by the burning souls, had possessed him; and the noises, the shriek and the whisper, the jangling rattle of the piano-organ, the long-continued scream of the butcher as he dabbled in the blood, the lewd litany of the singers, these seemed to be resolved into an infernal overture, loud with the expectation of lust and death. And how the spectacle was set in the cloud of dark night, a phantom play acted on that fiery stage, beneath those hideous brassy lamps, very slowly swinging in a violent blast. As all the medley of outrageous sights and sounds now fused themselves within his brain into one clear impression, it seemed that he had indeed witnessed and acted in a drama, that all the scene had been prepared and vested for him, and that the choric songs he had heard were but preludes to a greater act. For in that woman was the consummation and catastrophe of it all, and the whole stage waited for their meeting. He fancied that after this the voices and the lights died away, that the crowd sank swiftly into the darkness, and that the street was at once denuded of the great lamps and of all its awful scenic apparatus.

Again, he thought, the same mystery would be represented before him; suddenly on some dark and gloomy night, as he wandered lonely on a deserted road, the wind hurrying before him, suddenly a turn would bring him again upon the fiery stage, and the antique drama would be re-enacted. He would be drawn to the same place, to find that woman still standing there; again he would watch the rose radiant and palpitating upon her cheek, the argent gleam in her brown eyes, the bronze curls gilding the white splendor of her neck. And for the second time she would freely offer herself. He could hear the wail of the singers swelling to a shriek, and see the dusky dancers whirling round in a faster frenzy, and the naphtha flares tinged with red, as the woman and he went away into the dark, into the cloistered court where every flower was a flame, whence he would never come out.

His only escape was in the desk; he might find salvation if he could again hide his heart in the heap and litter of papers, and again be rapt by the cadence of a phrase. He threw open his window and looked out on the dim world and the glimmering amber lights. He resolved that he would rise early in the morning, and seek once more for his true life in the work.

But there was a strange thing. There was a little bottle on the mantelpiece, a bottle of dark blue glass, and he trembled and shuddered before it, as if it were a fetish.

VII

IT WAS VERY dark in the room. He seemed by slow degrees to awake from a long and heavy torpor, from an utter forgetfulness, and as he raised his eyes he could scarcely discern the pale whiteness of the paper on the desk before him. He remembered something of a gloomy winter afternoon, of driving rain, of gusty wind: he had fallen asleep over his work, no doubt, and the night had come down.

He lay back in his chair, wondering whether it were late; his eyes were half closed, and he did not make the effort and rouse himself. He could hear the stormy noise of the wind, and the sound reminded him of the half-forgotten days. He thought of his boyhood, and the old rectory, and the great elms that surrounded it. There was something pleasant in the consciousness that he was still half dreaming; he knew he could wake up whenever he pleased, but for the moment he amused himself by the pretence that he was a little boy again, tired with his rambles and the keen air of the hills. He remembered how he would sometimes wake up in the dark at midnight, and listen sleepily for a moment to the rush of the wind straining and crying amongst the trees, and hear it beat upon the walls, and then he would fall to dreams again, happy in his warm, snug bed.

The wind grew louder, and the windows rattled. He half opened his eyes and shut them again, determined to cherish that sensation of long ago. He felt tired and heavy with sleep; he imagined that he was exhausted by some effort; he had, perhaps, been writing furiously without rest. He could not recollect at the instant what the work had been; it would be delightful to read the pages when he had made up his mind to bestir himself.

Surely that was the noise of boughs, swaying and grinding in the wind. He remembered one night at home when such a sound had roused him suddenly from a deep sweet sleep. There was a rushing and beating as of wings upon the air, and a heavy dreary noise, like thunder far away upon the mountain. He had got out of bed and looked from behind the blind to see what was abroad. He remembered the strange sight he had seen, and he pretended it would be just the same if he cared to look out now. There were clouds flying awfully from before the moon, and a pale light that made the familiar land look strange and terrible. The blast of wind came with a great shriek, and the trees tossed and bowed and quivered; the wood was scourged and horrible, and the night air was ghastly with a confused tumult, and voices as of a host. A huge black cloud rolled across the heaven from the west and covered up the moon, and there came a torrent of bitter hissing rain.

It was all a vivid picture to him as he sat in his chair, unwilling to wake. Even as he let his mind stray back to that night of the past years, the rain beat sharply on the window-panes, and though there were no trees in the grey suburban street, he heard distinctly the crash of boughs. He wandered vaguely from thought to thought, groping indistinctly amongst memories, like a man trying to cross from door to door in a darkened unfamiliar room. But, no doubt, if he were to look out, by some magic the whole scene would be displayed before him. He would not see the curve of monotonous two-storied houses, with here and there a white blind, a patch of light, and shadows appearing and vanishing, not the rain plashing in the muddy road, not the amber of the gas-lamp opposite, but the wild moonlight poured on the dearly loved country; far away the dim circle of the hills and woods, and beneath him the tossing trees about the lawn, and the wood heaving under the fury of the wind.

He smiled to himself, amidst his lazy meditations, to think how real it seemed, and yet it was all far away, the scenery of an old play long ended and forgotten. It was strange that after all these years of trouble and work and change he should be in any sense the same person as that little boy peeping out, half frightened, from the rectory window. It was as if looking in the glass one should see a stranger, and yet know that the image was a true reflection.

The memory of the old home recalled his father and mother to him, and he wondered whether his mother would come if he were to cry out suddenly. One night, on just such a night as this, when a great storm blew from the mountain, a tree had fallen with a crash and a bough had struck the roof, and he awoke in a fright, calling for his mother. She had come and had comforted him, soothing him to sleep, and now he shut his eyes, seeing her face shining in the uncertain flickering candle light, as she bent over his bed. He could not think she had died; the memory was but a part of the evil dreams that had come afterwards.

He said to himself that he had fallen asleep and dreamed sorrow and agony, and he wished to forget all the things of trouble. He would return to happy days, to the beloved land, to the dear and friendly paths across the fields. There was the paper, white before him, and when he chose to stir, he would have the pleasure of reading his work. He could not quite recollect what he had been about, but he was somehow conscious that the had been successful and had brought some long labor to a worthy ending. Presently he would light the gas, and enjoy the satisfaction that only the work could give him, but for the time he preferred to linger in the darkness, and to think of himself as straying from stile to stile through the scented meadows, and listening to the bright brook that sang to the alders.

It was winter now, for he heard the rain and the wind, and the swaying of the trees, but in those old days how sweet the summer had been. The great hawthorn bush in blossom, like a white cloud upon the earth, had appeared to him in twilight, he had lingered in the enclosed valley to hear the nightingale, a voice swelling out from the rich gloom, from the trees that grew around the well. The scent of the meadowsweet was blown to him across the bridge of years, and with it came the dream and the hope and the longing, and the afterglow red in the sky, and the marvel of the earth. There was a quiet walk that he knew so well; one went up from a little green byroad, following an unnamed brooklet scarce a foot wide, but yet wandering like a river, gurgling over its pebbles, with its dwarf bushes shading the pouring water. One went through the meadow grass, and came to the larch wood that grew from hill to hill across the stream, and shone a brilliant tender green, and sent vague sweet spires to the flushing sky. Through the wood the path wound, turning and dipping, and beneath, the brown fallen needles of last year were soft and thick, and the resinous cones gave out their odor as the warm night advanced, and the shadows darkened. It was quite still; but he stayed, and the faint song of the brooklet sounded like the echo of a river beyond the mountains. How strange it was to look into the wood, to see the tall straight stems rising, pillar-like, and then the dusk, uncertain, and then the blackness. So he came out from the larch wood, from the green cloud and the vague shadow, into the dearest of all hollows, shut in on one side by the larches and before him by high violent walls of turf, like the slopes of a fort, with a clear line dark against the twilight sky, and a weird thorn bush that grew large, mysterious, on the summit, beneath the gleam of the evening star.

And he retraced his wanderings in those deep old lanes that began from the common road and went away towards the unknown, climbing steep hills, and piercing the woods of shadows, and dipping down into valleys that seemed virgin, unexplored, secret for the foot of man. He entered such a lane not knowing where it might bring him, hoping he had found the way to fairyland, to the woods beyond the world, to that vague territory that haunts all the dreams of a boy. He could not tell where he might be, for the high banks rose steep, and the great hedges made a green vault above. Marvelous ferns grew rich and thick in the dark red earth, fastening their roots about the roots of hazel and beech and maple, clustering like the carven capitals of a cathedral pillar. Down, like a dark shaft, the lane dipped to the well of the hills, and came amongst the limestone rocks. He climbed the bank at last, and looked out into a country that seemed for a moment the land he sought, a mysterious realm with unfamiliar hills and valleys and fair plains all golden, and white houses radiant in the sunset light.

And he thought of the steep hillsides where the bracken was like a wood, and of bare places where the west wind sang over the golden gorse, of still circles in mid-lake, of the poisonous yew-tree in the middle of the wood, shedding its crimson cups on the dank earth. How he lingered by certain black waterpools hedged on every side by drooping wych-elms and black-stemmed alders, watching the faint waves widening to the banks as a leaf or a twig dropped from the trees.

And the whole air and wonder of the ancient forest came back to him. He had found his way to the river valley, to the long lovely hollow between the hills, and went up and up beneath the leaves in the warm hush of midsummer, glancing back now and again through the green alleys, to the river winding in mystic esses beneath, passing hidden glens receiving the streams that rushed down the hillside, ice-cold from the rock, passing the immemorial tumulus, the graves where the legionaries waited for the trumpet, the grey farmhouses sending the blue wreaths of wood smoke into the still air. He went higher and higher, till at last he entered the long passage of the Roman road, and from this, the ridge and summit of the wood, he saw the waves of green swell and dip and sink towards the marshy level and the gleaming yellow sea. He looked on the surging forest, and thought of the strange deserted city moldering into a petty village on its verge, of its encircling walls melting into the turf, of vestiges of an older temple which the earth had buried utterly.

It was winter now, for he heard the wail of the wind, and a sudden gust drove the rain against the panes, but he thought of the bee’s song in the clover, of the foxgloves in full blossom, of the wild roses, delicate, enchanting, swaying on a long stem above the hedge. He had been in strange places, he had known sorrow and desolation, and had grown grey and weary in the work of letters, but he lived again in the sweetness, in the clear bright air of early morning, when the sky was blue in June, and the mist rolled like a white sea in the valley. He laughed when he recollected that he had sometimes fancied himself unhappy in those days; in those days when he could be glad because the sun shone, because the wind blew fresh on the mountain. On those bright days he had been glad, looking at the fleeting and passing of the clouds upon the hills, and had gone up higher to the broad dome of the mountain, feeling that joy went up before him.

He remembered how, a boy, he had dreamed of love, of an adorable and ineffable mystery which transcended all longing and desire. The time had come when all the wonder of the earth seemed to prefigure this alone, when he found the symbol of the Beloved in hill and wood and stream, and every flower and every dark pool discoursed a pure ecstasy. It was the longing for longing, the love of love, that had come to him when he awoke one morning just before the dawn, and for the first time felt the sharp thrill of passion.

He tried in vain to express to himself the exquisite joys of innocent desire. Even now, after troubled years, in spite of some dark cloud that overshadowed the background of his thought, the sweetness of the boy’s imagined pleasure came like a perfume into his reverie. It was no love of a woman but the desire of womanhood, the Eros of the unknown, that made the heart tremble. He hardly dreamed that such a love could ever be satisfied, that the thirst of beauty could be slaked. He shrank from all contact of actuality, not venturing so much as to imagine the inner place and sanctuary of the mysteries. It was enough for him to adore in the outer court, to know that within, in the sweet gloom, were the vision and the rapture, the altar and the sacrifice.

He remembered, dimly, the passage of many heavy years since that time of hope and passion, but, perhaps, the vague shadow would pass away, and he could renew the boy's thoughts, the unformed fancies that were part of the bright day, of the wild roses in the hedgerow. All other things should be laid aside, he would let them trouble him no more after this winter night. He saw now that from the first he had allowed his imagination to bewilder him, to create a fantastic world in which he suffered, molding innocent forms into terror and dismay. Vividly, he saw again the black circle of oaks, growing in a haggard ring upon the bastions of the Roman fort. The noise of the storm without grew louder, and he thought how the wind had come up the valley with the sound of a scream, how a great tree had ground its boughs together, shuddering before the violent blast. Clear and distinct, as if he were standing now in the lane, he saw the steep slopes surging from the valley, and the black crown of the oaks set against the flaming sky, against a blaze and glow of light as if great furnace doors were opened. He saw the fire, as it were, smitten about the bastions, about the heaped mounds that guarded the fort, and the crooked evil boughs seemed to writhe in the blast of flame that beat from heaven. Strangely with the sight of the burning fort mingled the impression of a dim white shape floating up the dusk of the lane towards him, and he saw across the valley of years a girl's face, a momentary apparition that shone and vanished away.

Then there was a memory of another day, of violent summer, of white farmhouse walls blazing in the sun, and a far call from the reapers in the cornfields. He had climbed the steep slope and penetrated the matted thicket and lay in the heat, alone on the soft short grass that grew within the fort. There was a cloud of madness, and confusion of broken dreams that had no meaning or clue but only an indefinable horror and defilement. He had fallen asleep as he gazed at the knotted fantastic boughs of the stunted brake about him, and when he woke he was ashamed, and fled away fearing that "they" would pursue him. He did not know who "they" were, but it seemed as if a woman's face watched him from between the matted boughs, and that she summoned to her side awful companions who had never grown old through all the ages.

He looked up, it seemed, at a smiling face that bent over him, as he sat in the cool dark kitchen of the old farmhouse, and wondered why the sweetness of those red lips and the kindness of the eyes mingled with the nightmare in the fort, with the horrible Sabbath he had imagined as he lay sleeping on the hot soft turf. He had allowed these disturbed fancies, all this mad wreck of terror and shame that he had gathered in his mind, to trouble him for too long a time; presently he would light up the room, and leave all the old darkness of his life behind him, and from henceforth he would walk in the day.

He could still distinguish, though very vaguely, the pile of papers beside him, and he remembered, now, that he had finished a long task that afternoon, before he fell asleep. He could not trouble himself to recollect the exact nature of the work, but he was sure that he had done well; in a few minutes, perhaps, he would strike a match, and read the title, and amuse himself with his own forgetfulness. But the sight of the papers lying there in order made him think of his beginnings, of those first unhappy efforts which were so impossible and so hopeless. He saw himself bending over the table in the old familiar room, desperately scribbling, and then laying down his pen dismayed at the sad results on the page. It was late at night, his father had been long in bed, and the house was still. The fire was almost out, with only a dim glow here and there amongst the cinders, and the room was growing chilly. He rose at last from his work and looked out on a dim earth and a dark and cloudy sky.

Night after night he had labored on, persevering in his effort, even through the cold sickness of despair, when every line was doomed as it was made. Now, with the consciousness that he knew at least the conditions of literature, and that many years of thought and practice had given him some sense of language, he found these early struggles both pathetic and astonishing. He could not understand how he had persevered so stubbornly, how he had had the heart to begin a fresh page when so many folios of blotted, painful effort lay torn, derided, impossible in their utter failure. It seemed to him that it must have been a miracle or an infernal possession, a species of madness, that had driven him on, every day disappointed, and every day hopeful.

And yet there was a joyous side to the illusion. In these dry days that he lived in, when he had bought, by a long experience and by countless hours of misery, a knowledge of his limitations, of the vast gulf that yawned between the conception and the work, it was pleasant to think of a time when all things were possible, when the most splendid design seemed an affair of a few weeks. Now he had come to a frank acknowledgment; so far as he was concerned, he judged every book wholly impossible till the last line of it was written, and he had learnt patience, the art of sighing and putting the fine scheme away in the pigeon-hole of what could never be. But to think of those days! Then one could plot out a book that should be more curious than Rabelais, and jot down the outlines of a romance to surpass Cervantes, and design renaissance tragedies and volumes of *contes*, and comedies of the Restoration; everything was to be done, and the masterpiece was always the rainbow cup, a little way before him.

He touched the manuscript on the desk, and the feeling of the pages seemed to restore all the papers that had been torn so long ago. It was the atmosphere of the silent room that returned, the light of the shaded candle falling on the abandoned leaves. This had been painfully excogitated while the snowstorm whirled about the lawn and filled the lanes, this was of the summer night, this of the harvest moon rising like a fire from the tithebarn on the hill. How well he remembered those half-dozen pages of which he had once been so proud; he had thought out the sentences one evening, while he leaned on the foot-bridge and watched the brook swim across the road. Every word smelt of the meadowsweet that grew thick upon the banks; now, as he recalled the cadence and the phrase that had seemed so charming, he saw again the ferns beneath the vaulted roots of the beech, and the green light of the glowworm in the hedge.

And in the west the mountains swelled to a great dome, and on the dome was a mound, the memorial of some forgotten race, that grew dark and large against the red sky, when the sun set. He had lingered below it in the solitude, amongst the winds, at evening, far away from home; and oh, the labor and the vain efforts to make the form of it and the awe of it in prose, to write the hush of the vast hill, and the sadness of the world below sinking into the night, and the mystery, the suggestion of the rounded hillock, huge against the magic sky.

He had tried to sing in words the music that the brook sang, and the sound of the October wind rustling through the brown bracken on the hill. How many pages he had covered in the effort to show a white winter world, a sun without warmth in a grey-blue sky, all the fields, all the land white and shining, and one high summit where the dark pines towered, still in the still afternoon, in the pale violet air.

To win the secret of words, to make a phrase that would murmur of summer and the bee, to summon the wind into a sentence, to conjure the odor of the night into the surge and fall and harmony of a line; this was the tale of the long evenings, of the candle flame white upon the paper and the eager pen.

He remembered that in some fantastic book he had seen a bar or two of music, and, beneath, the inscription that here was the musical expression of Westminster Abbey. His boyish effort seemed hardly less ambitious, and he no longer believed that language could present the melody and the awe and the loveliness of the earth. He had long known that he, at all events, would have to be content with a far approach, with a few broken notes that might suggest, perhaps, the magistral everlasting song of the hill and the streams.

But in those far days the impossible was but a part of wonderland that lay before him, of the world beyond the wood and the mountain. All was to be conquered, all was to be achieved; he had but to make the journey and he would find the golden world and the golden word, and hear those songs that the sirens sang. He touched the manuscript; whatever it was, it was the result of painful labor and disappointment, not of the old flush of hope, but it came of weary days, of correction and re-correction. It might be good in its measure; but afterwards he would write no more for a time. He would go back again to the happy world of masterpieces, to the dreams of great and perfect books, written in an ecstasy.

Like a dark cloud from the sea came the memory of the attempt he had made, of the poor piteous history that had once embittered his life. He sighed and said alas, thinking of his folly, of the hours when he was shaken with futile, miserable rage. Some silly person in London had made his manuscript more saleable and had sold it without rendering an account of the profits, and for that he had been ready to curse humanity. Black, horrible, as the memory of a stormy day, the rage of his heart returned to his mind, and he covered his eyes, endeavoring to darken the picture of terror and hate that shone before him. He tried to drive it all out of his thought, it vexed him to remember these foolish trifles; the trick of a publisher, the small pomposities and malignancies of the country folk, the cruelty of a village boy, had inflamed him almost to the pitch of madness. His heart had burnt with fury, and when he looked up the sky was blotched, and scarlet as if it rained blood.

Indeed he had almost believed that blood had rained upon him, and cold blood from a sacrifice in heaven; his face was wet and chill and dripping, and he had passed his hand across his forehead and looked at it. A red cloud had seemed to swell over the hill, and grow great, and come near to him; he was but an ace removed from raging madness.

It had almost come to that; the drift and the breath of the scarlet cloud had well-nigh touched him. It was strange that he had been so deeply troubled by such little things, and strange how after all the years he could still recall the anguish and rage and hate that shook his soul as with a spiritual tempest.

The memory of all that evening was wild and troubled; he resolved that it should vex him no more, that now, for the last time, he would let himself be tormented by the past. In a few minutes he would rise to a new life, and forget all the storms that had gone over him.

Curiously, every detail was distinct and clear in his brain. The figure of the doctor driving home, and the sound of the few words he had spoken came to him in the darkness, through the noise of the storm and the pattering of the rain. Then he stood upon the ridge of the hill and saw the smoke drifting up from the ragged roofs of Caermaen, in the evening calm; he listened to the voices mounting thin and clear, in a weird tone, as if some outland folk were speaking in an unknown tongue of awful things.

He saw the gathering darkness, the mystery of twilight changing the huddled squalid village into an unearthly city, into some dreadful Atlantis, inhabited by a ruined race. The mist falling fast, the gloom that seemed to issue from the black depths of the forest, to advance palpably towards the walls, were shaped before him; and beneath, the river wound, snake-like, about the town, swimming to the flood and glowing in its still pools like molten brass. And as the water mirrored the afterglow and sent ripples and gouts of blood against the shuddering reeds, there came suddenly the piercing trumpet-call, the loud reiterated summons that rose and fell, that called and recalled, echoing through all the valley, crying to the dead as the last note rang. It summoned the legion from the river and the graves and the battlefield, the host floated up from the sea, the centuries swarmed about the eagles, the array was set for the last great battle, behind the leaguer of the mist.

He could imagine himself still wandering through the dim unknown, terrible country, gazing affrighted at the hills and woods that seemed to have put on an unearthly shape, stumbling amongst the briars that caught his feet. He lost his way in a wild country, and the red light that blazed up from the furnace on the mountains only showed him a mysterious land, in which he strayed aghast, with the sense of doom weighing upon him. The dry mutter of the trees, the sound of an unseen brook, made him afraid as if the earth spoke of his sin, and presently he was fleeing through a desolate shadowy wood, where a pale light flowed from the moldering stumps, a dream of light that shed a ghostly radiance.

And then again the dark summit of the Roman fort, the black sheer height rising above the valley, and the moonfire streaming around the ring of oaks, glowing about the green bastions that guarded the thicket and the inner place.

The room in which he sat appeared the vision, the trouble of the wind and rain without was but illusion, the noise of the waves in the seashell. Passion and tears and adoration and the glories of the summer night returned, and the calm sweet face of the woman appeared, and he thrilled at the soft touch of her hand on his flesh.

She shone as if she had floated down into the lane from the moon that swam between films of cloud above the black circle of the oaks. She led him away from all terror and despair and hate, and gave herself to him with rapture, showing him love, kissing his tears away, pillowing his cheek upon her breast.

His lips dwelt on her lips, his mouth upon the breath of her mouth, her arms were strained about him, and oh! she charmed him with her voice, with sweet kind words, as she offered her sacrifice. How her scented hair fell down, and floated over his eyes, and there was a marvelous fire called the moon, and her lips were aflame, and her eyes shone like a light on the hills.

All beautiful womanhood had come to him in the lane. Love had touched him in the dusk and had flown away, but he had seen the splendor and the glory, and his eyes had seen the enchanted light.

AVE ATQUE VALE

The old words sounded in his ears like the ending of a chant, and he heard the music’s close. Once only in his weary hapless life, once the world had passed away, and he had known her, the dear, dear Annie, the symbol of all mystic womanhood.

The heaviness of languor still oppressed him, holding him back amongst these old memories, so that he could not stir from his place. Oddly, there seemed something unaccustomed about the darkness of the room, as if the shadows he had summoned had changed the aspect of the walls. He was conscious that on this night he was not altogether himself; fatigue, and the weariness of sleep, and the waking vision had perplexed him. He remembered how once or twice when he was a little boy startled by an uneasy dream, and had stared with a frightened gaze into nothingness, not knowing where he was, all trembling, and breathing quick, till he touched the rail of his bed, and the familiar outlines of the looking-glass and the chiffonier began to glimmer out of the gloom. So now he touched the pile of manuscript and the desk at which he had worked so many hours, and felt reassured, though he smiled at himself, and he felt the old childish dread, the longing to cry out for some one to bring a candle, and show him that he really was in his own room. He glanced up for an instant, expecting to see perhaps the glitter of the brass gas jet that was fixed on the wall, just beside his bureau, but it was too dark, and he could not rouse himself and make the effort that would drive the cloud and the muttering thoughts away.

He leant back again, picturing the wet street without, the rain driving like fountain spray about the gas lamp, the shrilling of the wind on those waste places to the north. It was strange how in the brick and stucco desert where no trees were, he all the time imagined the noise of tossing boughs, the grinding of the boughs together. There was a great storm and tumult in this wilderness of London, and for the sound of the rain and the wind he could not hear the hum and jangle of the trams, and the jar and shriek of the garden gates as they opened and shut. But he could imagine his street, the rain-swept desolate curve of it, as it turned northward, and beyond the empty suburban roads, the twinkling villa windows, the ruined field, the broken lane, and then yet another suburb rising, a solitary gas-lamp glimmering at a corner, and the plane tree lashing its boughs, and driving great showers against the glass.

It was wonderful to think of. For when these remote roads were ended one dipped down the hill into the open country, into the dim world beyond the glint of friendly fires. Tonight, how waste they were, these wet roads, edged with the red-brick houses, with shrubs whipped by the wind against one another, against the paling and the wall. There the wind swayed the great elms scattered on the sidewalk, the remnants of the old stately fields, and beneath each tree was a pool of wet, and a torment of raindrops fell with every gust. And one passed through the red avenues, perhaps by a little settlement of flickering shops, and passed the last sentinel wavering lamp, and the road became a ragged lane, and the storm screamed from hedge to hedge across the open fields. And then, beyond, one touched again upon a still remoter avant-garde of London, an island amidst the darkness, surrounded by its pale of twinkling, starry lights.

He remembered his wanderings amongst these outposts of the town, and thought how desolate all their ways must be tonight. They were solitary in wet and wind, and only at long intervals some one pattered and hurried along them, bending his eyes down to escape the drift of rain. Within the villas, behind the close-drawn curtains, they drew about the fire, and wondered at the violence of the storm, listening for each great gust as it gathered far away, and rocked the trees, and at last rushed with a huge shock against their walls as if it were the coming of the sea. He thought of himself walking, as he had often walked, from lamp to lamp on such a night, treasuring his lonely thoughts, and weighing the hard task awaiting him in his room. Often in the evening, after a long day’s labor, he had thrown down his pen in utter listlessness, feeling that he could struggle no more with ideas and words, and he had gone out into driving rain and darkness, seeking the word of the enigma as he tramped on and on beneath these outer battlements of London.

Or on some grey afternoon in March or November he had sickened of the dull monotony and the stagnant life that he saw from his window, and had taken his design with him to the lonely places, halting now and again by a gate, and pausing in the shelter of a hedge through which the austere wind shivered, while, perhaps, he dreamed of Sicily, or of sunlight on the Provençal olives. Often as he strayed solitary from street to field, and passed the Syrian fig tree imprisoned in Britain, nailed to an ungenial wall, the solution of the puzzle became evident, and he laughed and hurried home eager to make the page speak, to note the song he had heard on his way.

Sometimes he had spent many hours treading this edge and brim of London, now lost amidst the dun fields, watching the bushes shaken by the wind, and now looking down from a height whence he could see the dim waves of the town, and a barbaric water tower rising from a hill, and the snuff-colored cloud of smoke that seemed blown up from the streets into the sky.

There were certain ways and places that he had cherished; he loved a great old common that stood on high ground, curtained about with ancient spacious houses of red brick, and their cedarn gardens. And there was on the road that led to this common a space of ragged uneven ground with a pool and a twisted oak, and here he had often stayed in autumn and looked across the mist and the valley at the great theatre of the sunset, where a red cloud like a charging knight shone and conquered a purple dragon shape, and golden lances glittered in a field of faerie green.

Or sometimes, when the unending prospect of trim, monotonous, modern streets had wearied him, he had found an immense refreshment in the discovery of a forgotten hamlet, left in a hollow, while all new London pressed and surged on every side, threatening the rest of the red roofs with its vulgar growth. These little peaceful houses, huddled together beneath the shelter of trees, with their bulging leaded windows and uneven roofs, somehow brought back to him the sense of the country, and soothed him with the thought of the old farm-houses, white or grey, the homes of quiet lives, harbors where, perhaps, no tormenting thoughts ever broke in.

For he had instinctively determined that there was neither rest nor health in all the arid waste of streets about him. It seemed as if in those dull rows of dwellings, in the prim new villas, red and white and staring, there must be a leaven working which transformed all to base vulgarity. Beneath the dull sad slates, behind the blistered doors, love turned to squalid intrigue, mirth to drunken clamor, and the mystery of life became a common thing; religion was sought for in the greasy piety and flatulent oratory of the Independent chapel, the stuccoed nightmare of the Doric columns. Nothing fine, nothing rare, nothing exquisite, it seemed, could exist in the weltering suburban sea, in the habitations which had risen from the stench and slime of the brickfields. It was as if the sickening fumes that steamed from the burning bricks had been sublimed into the shape of houses, and those who lived in these grey places could also claim kinship with the putrid mud.

Hence he had delighted in the few remains of the past that he could find still surviving on the suburb's edge, in the grave old houses that stood apart from the road, in the moldering taverns of the eighteenth century, in the huddled hamlets that had preserved only the glow and the sunlight of all the years that had passed over them. It appeared to him that vulgarity and greasiness and squalor had come with a flood, that not only the good but also the evil in man's heart had been made common and ugly, that a sordid scum was mingled with all the springs, of death as of life. It would be alike futile to search amongst these mean two-storied houses for a splendid sinner as for a splendid saint; the very vices of these people smelt of cabbage water and a pothouse vomit.

And so he had often fled away from the serried maze that encircled him, seeking for the old and worn and significant as an antiquary looks for the fragments of the Roman temple amidst the modern shops. In some way the gusts of wind and the beating rain of the night reminded him of an old house that had often attracted him with a strange indefinable curiosity. He had found it on a grim grey day in March, when he had gone out under a leaden-molded sky, cowering from a dry freezing wind that brought with it the gloom and the doom of far unhappy Siberian plains. More than ever that day the suburb had oppressed him; insignificant, detestable, repulsive to body and mind, it was the only hell that a vulgar age could conceive or make, an inferno created not by Dante but by the jerry-builder. He had gone out to the north, and when he lifted up his eyes again he found that he had chanced to turn up by one of the little lanes that still strayed across the broken fields. He had never chosen this path before because the lane at its outlet was so wholly degraded and offensive, littered with rusty tins and broken crockery, and hedged in with a paling fashioned out of scraps of wire, rotting timber, and bending worn-out rails. But on this day, by happy chance, he had fled from the high road by the first opening that offered, and he no longer groped his way amongst obscene refuse, sickened by the bloated bodies of dead dogs, and fetid odors from unclean decay, but the malpassage had become a peaceful winding lane, with warm shelter beneath its banks from the dismal wind. For a mile he had walked quietly, and then a turn in the road showed him a little glen or hollow, watered by such a tiny rushing brooklet as his own woods knew, and beyond, alas, the glaring foreguard of a “new neighborhood”; raw red villas, semi-detached, and then a row of lamentable shops.

But as he was about to turn back, in the hope of finding some other outlet, his attention was charmed by a small house that stood back a little from the road on his right hand. There had been a white gate, but the paint had long faded to grey and black, and the wood crumbled under the touch, and only moss marked out the lines of the drive. The iron railing round the lawn had fallen, and the poor flower-beds were choked with grass and a faded growth of weeds. But here and there a rosebush lingered amidst suckers that had sprung grossly from the root, and on each side of the hall door were box trees, untrimmed, ragged, but still green. The slate roof was all stained and livid, blotched with the drippings of a great elm that stood at one corner of the neglected lawn, and marks of damp and decay were thick on the uneven walls, which had been washed yellow many years before. There was a porch of trellis work before the door, and Lucian had seen it rock in the wind, swaying as if every gust must drive it down. There were two windows on the ground floor, one on each side of the door, and two above, with a blind space where a central window had been blocked up.

This poor and desolate house had fascinated him. Ancient and poor and fallen, disfigured by the slate roof and the yellow wash that had replaced the old mellow dipping tiles and the warm red walls, and disfigured again by spots and patches of decay; it seemed as if its happy days were for ever ended. To Lucian it appealed with a sense of doom and horror; the black streaks that crept upon the walls, and the green drift upon the roof, appeared not so much the work of foul weather and dripping boughs, as the outward signs of evil working and creeping in the lives of those within.

The stage seemed to him decked for doom, painted with the symbols of tragedy; and he wondered as he looked whether any one were so unhappy as to live there still. There were torn blinds in the windows, but he had asked himself who could be so brave as to sit in that room, darkened by the dreary box, and listen of winter nights to the rain upon the window, and the moaning of wind amongst the tossing boughs that beat against the roof.

He could not imagine that any chamber in such a house was habitable. Here the dead had lain, through the white blind the thin light had filtered on the rigid mouth, and still the floor must be wet with tears and still that great rocking elm echoed the groaning and the sobs of those who watched. No doubt, the damp was rising, and the odor of the earth filled the house, and made such as entered draw back, foreseeing the hour of death.

Often the thought of this strange old house had haunted him; he had imagined the empty rooms where a heavy paper peeled from the walls and hung in dark strips; and he could not believe that a light ever shone from those windows that stared black and glittering on the neglected lawn. But tonight the wet and the storm seemed curiously to bring the image of the place before him, and as the wind sounded he thought how unhappy those must be, if any there were, who sat in the musty chambers by a flickering light, and listened to the elm-tree moaning and beating and weeping on the walls.

And tonight was Saturday night; and there was about that phrase something that muttered of the condemned cell, of the agony of a doomed man. Ghastly to his eyes was the conception of any one sitting in that room to the right of the door behind the larger box tree, where the wall was cracked above the window and smeared with a black stain in an ugly shape.

He knew how foolish it had been in the first place to trouble his mind with such conceits of a dreary cottage on the outskirts of London. And it was more foolish now to meditate these things, fantasies, feigned forms, the issue of a sad mood and a bleak day of spring. For soon, in a few moments, he was to rise to a new life. He was but reckoning up the account of his past, and when the light came he was to think no more of sorrow and heaviness, of real or imagined terrors. He had stayed too long in London, and he would once more taste the breath of the hills, and see the river winding in the long lovely valley; ah! he would go home.

Something like a thrill, the thrill of fear, passed over him as he remembered that there was no home. It was in the winter, a year and a half after his arrival in town, that he had suffered the loss of his father. He lay for many days prostrate, overwhelmed with sorrow and with the thought that now indeed he was utterly alone in the world. Miss Deacon was to live with another cousin in Yorkshire; the old home was at last ended and done. He felt sorry that he had not written more frequently to his father: there were things in his cousin’s letters that had made his heart sore. “Your poor father was always looking for your letters," she wrote, "they used to cheer him so much. He nearly broke down when you sent him that money last Christmas; he got it into his head that you were starving yourself to send it him. He was hoping so much that you would have come down this Christmas, and kept asking me about the plum-puddings months ago."

It was not only his father that had died, but with him the last strong link was broken, and the past life, the days of his boyhood, grew faint as a dream. With his father his mother died again, and the long years died, the time of his innocence, the memory of affection. He was sorry that his letters had gone home so rarely; it hurt him to imagine his father looking out when the post came in the morning, and forced to be sad because there was nothing. But he had never thought that his father valued the few lines that he wrote, and indeed it was often difficult to know what to say. It would have been useless to write of those agonizing nights when the pen seemed an awkward and outlandish instrument, when every effort ended in shameful defeat, or of the happier hours when at last wonder appeared and the line glowed, crowned and exalted. To poor Mr. Taylor such tales would have seemed but trivial histories of some Oriental game, like an odd story from a land where men have time for the infinitely little, and can seriously make a science of arranging blossoms in a jar, and discuss perfumes instead of politics. It would have been useless to write to the rectory of his only interest, and so he wrote seldom.

And then he had been sorry because he could never write again and never see his home. He had wondered whether he would have gone down to the old place at Christmas, if his father had lived. It was curious how common things evoked the bitterest griefs, but his father's anxiety that the plum-pudding should be good, and ready for him, had brought the tears into his eyes. He could hear him saying in a nervous voice that attempted to be cheerful: "I suppose you will be thinking of the Christmas puddings soon, Jane; you remember how fond Lucian used to be of plum-pudding. I hope we shall see him this December." No doubt poor Miss Deacon paled with rage at the suggestion that she should make Christmas pudding in July; and returned a sharp answer; but it was pathetic. The wind wailed, and the rain dashed and beat again and again upon the window. He imagined that all his thoughts of home, of the old rectory amongst the elms, had conjured into his mind the sound of the storm upon the trees, for, tonight, very clearly he heard the creaking of the boughs, the noise of boughs moaning and beating and weeping on the walls, and even a pattering of wet, on wet earth, as if there were a shrub near the window that shook off the raindrops, before the gust.

That thrill, as it were a shudder of fear, passed over him again, and he knew not what had made him afraid. There were some dark shadow on his mind that saddened him; it seemed as if a vague memory of terrible days hung like a cloud over his thought, but it was all indefinite, perhaps the last grim and ragged edge of the melancholy wrack that had swelled over his life and the bygone years. He shivered and tried to rouse himself and drive away the sense of dread and shame that seemed so real and so awful, and yet he could not grasp it. But the torpor of sleep, the burden of the work that he had ended a few hours before, still weighed down his limb and bound his thoughts. He could scarcely believe that he had been busy at his desk a little while ago, and that just before the winter day closed it and the rain began to fall he had laid down the pen with a sigh of relief, and had slept in his chair. It was rather as if he had slumbered deeply through a long and weary night, as if an awful vision of flame and darkness and the worm that dieth not had come to him sleeping. But he would dwell no more on the darkness; he went back to the early days in London when he had said farewell to the hills and to the waterpools, and had set to work in this little room in the dingy street.

How he had toiled and labored at the desk before him! He had put away the old wild hopes of the masterpiece conceived and executed in a fury of inspiration, wrought out in one white heat of creative joy; it was enough if by dint of long perseverance and singleness of desire he could at last, in pain and agony and despair, after failure and disappointment and effort constantly renewed, fashion something of which he need not be ashamed. He had put himself to school again, and had, with what patience he could command, ground his teeth into the rudiments, resolved that at last he would test out the heart of the mystery. They were good nights to remember, these; he was glad to think of the little ugly room, with its silly wall-paper and its “bird’s-eye” furniture, lighted up, while he sat at the bureau and wrote on into the cold stillness of the London morning, when the flickering lamplight and the daystar shone together. It was an interminable labor, and he had always known it to be as hopeless as alchemy. The gold, the great and glowing masterpiece, would never shine amongst the dead ashes and smoking efforts of the crucible, but in the course of the life, in the interval between the failures, he might possibly discover curious things.

These were the good nights that he could look back on without any fear or shame, when he had been happy and content on a diet of bread and tea and tobacco, and could hear of some imbecility passing into its hundredth thousand, and laugh cheerfully — if only that last page had been imagined aright, if the phrases noted in the still hours rang out their music when he read them in the morning. He remembered the drolleries and fantasies that the worthy Miss Deacon used to write to him, and how he had grinned at her words of reproof, admonition, and advice. She had once instigated Dolly *fils* to pay him a visit, and that young prop of respectability had talked about the extraordinary running of Bolter at the Scurragh meeting in Ireland; and then, glancing at Lucian's books, had inquired whether any of them had "warm bits." He had been kind though patronizing, and seemed to have moved freely in the most brilliant society of Stoke Newington. He had not been able to give any information as to the present condition of Edgar Allan Poe's old school. It appeared eventually that his report at home had not been a very favorable one, for no invitation to high tea had followed, as Miss Deacon had hoped. The Dollys knew many nice people, who were well off, and Lucian's cousin, as she afterwards said, had done *her* best to introduce him to the *beau monde* of those northern suburbs.

But after the visit of the young Dolly, with what joy he had returned to the treasures which he had concealed from profane eyes. He had looked out and seen his visitor on board the tram at the street corner, and he laughed out loud, and locked his door. There had been moments when he was lonely, and wished to hear again the sound of friendly speech, but, after such an irruption of suburban futility, it was a keen delight, to feel that he was secure on his tower, that he could absorb himself in his wonderful task as safe and silent as if he were in mid-desert.

But there was one period that he dared not revive; he could no bear to think of those weeks of desolation and terror in the winter after his coming to London. His mind was sluggish, and he could not quite remember how many years had passed since that dismal experience; it sounded all an old story, but yet it was still vivid, a flaming scroll of terror from which he turned his eyes away. One awful scene glowed into his memory, and he could not shut out the sight of an orgy, of dusky figures whirling in a ring, of lurid naphtha flares blazing in the darkness, of great glittering lamps, like infernal thuribles, very slowly swaying in a violent blast of air. And there was something else, something which he could not remember, but it filled him with terror, but it slunk in the dark places of his soul, as a wild beast crouches in the depths of a cave.

Again, and without reason, he began to image to himself that old moldering house in the field. With what a loud incessant noise the wind must be clamoring about on this fearful night, how the great elm swayed and cried in the storm, and the rain dashed and pattered on the windows, and dripped on the sodden earth from the shaking shrubs beside the door. He moved uneasily on his chair, and struggled to put the picture out of his thoughts; but in spite of himself he saw the stained uneven walls, that ugly blot of mildew above the window, and perhaps a feeble gleam of light filtered through the blind, and some one, unhappy above all and for ever lost, sat within the dismal room. Or rather, every window was black, without a glimmer of hope, and he who was shut in thick darkness heard the wind and the rain, and the noise of the elm-tree moaning and beating and weeping on the walls.

For all his effort the impression would not leave him, and as he sat before his desk looking into the vague darkness he could almost see that chamber which he had so often imagined; the low whitewashed ceiling held up by a heavy beam, the smears of smoke and long usage, the cracks and fissures of the plaster. Old furniture, shabby, deplorable, battered, stood about the room; there was a horsehair sofa worn and tottering, and a dismal paper, patterned in a livid red, blackened and moldered near the floor, and peeled off and hung in strips from the dank walls. And there was that odor of decay, of the rank soil steaming, of rotting wood, a vapor that choked the breath and made the heart full of fear and heaviness.

Lucian again shivered with a thrill of dread; he was afraid that he had overworked himself and that he was suffering from the first symptoms of grave illness. His mind dwelt on confused and terrible recollections, and with a mad ingenuity gave form and substance to phantoms; and even now he drew a long breath, almost imagining that the air in his room was heavy and noisome, that it entered his nostrils with some taint of the crypt. And his body was still languid, and though he made a half motion to rise he could not find enough energy for the effort, and he sank again into the chair. At all events, he would think no more of that sad house in the field; he would return to those long struggles with letters, to the happy nights when he had gained victories.

He remembered something of his escape from the desolation and the worse than desolation that had obsessed him during that first winter in London. He had gone free one bleak morning in February, and after those dreary terrible weeks the desk and the heap and litter of papers had once more engulfed and absorbed him. And in the succeeding summer, of a night when he lay awake and listened to the birds, shining images came wantonly to him. For an hour, while the dawn brightened, he had felt the presence of an age, the resurrection of the life that the green fields had hidden, and his heart stirred for joy when he knew that he held and possessed all the loveliness that had so long moldered. He could scarcely fall asleep for eager and leaping thoughts, and as soon as his breakfast was over he went out and bought paper and pens of a certain celestial stationer in Notting Hill. The street was not changed as he passed to and fro on his errand. The rattling wagons jostled by at intervals, a rare hansom came spinning down from London, there sounded the same hum and jangle of the gliding trams. The languid life of the pavement was unaltered; a few people, un-classed, without salience or possible description, lounged and walked from east to west, and from west to east, or slowly dropped into the byways to wander in the black waste to the north, or perhaps go astray in the systems that stretched towards the river. He glanced down these by-roads as he passed, and was astonished, as always, at their mysterious and desert aspect. Some were utterly empty; lines of neat, appalling residences, trim and garnished as if for occupation, edging the white glaring road; and not a soul was abroad, and not a sound broke their stillness. It was a picture of the desolation of midnight lighted up, but empty and waste as the most profound and solemn hours before the day. Other of these by-roads, of older settlement, were furnished with more important houses, standing far back from the pavement, each in a little wood of greenery, and thus one might look down as through a forest vista, and see a way smooth and guarded with low walls and yet untrodden, and all a leafy silence. Here and there in some of these echoing roads a figure seemed lazily advancing in the distance, hesitating and delaying, as if lost in the labyrinth. It was difficult to say which were the more dismal, these deserted streets that wandered away to right and left, or the great main thoroughfare with its narcotic and shadowy life. For the latter appeared vast, interminable, grey, and those who traveled by it were scarcely real, the bodies of the living, but rather the uncertain and misty shapes that come and go across the desert in an Eastern tale, when men look up from the sand and see a caravan pass them, all in silence, without a cry or a greeting. So they passed and repassed each other on those pavements, appearing and vanishing, each intent on his own secret, and wrapped in obscurity. One might have sworn that not a man saw his neighbor who met him or jostled him, that here every one was a phantom for the other, though the lines of their paths crossed and recrossed, and their eyes stared like the eyes of live men. When two went by together, they mumbled and cast distrustful glances behind them as though afraid all the world was an enemy, and the pattering of feet was like the noise of a shower of rain. Curious appearances and simulations of life gathered at points in the road, for at intervals the villas ended and shops began in a dismal row, and looked so hopeless that one wondered who could buy. There were women fluttering uneasily about the greengrocers, and shabby things in rusty black touched and retouched the red lumps that an unshaven butcher offered, and already in the corner public there was a confused noise, with a tossing of voices that rose and fell like a Jewish chant, with the senseless stir of marionettes jerked into an imitation of gaiety. Then, in crossing a side street that seemed like grey mid-winter in stone, he trespassed from one world to another, for an old decayed house amidst its garden held the opposite corner. The laurels had grown into black skeletons, patched with green drift, the ilex gloomed over the porch, the deodar had blighted the flower-beds. Dark ivies swarmed over an elm-tree, and a brown clustering fungus sprang in gross masses on the lawn, showing where the roots of dead trees moldered. The blue verandah, the blue balcony over the door, had faded to grey, and the stucco was blotched with ugly marks of weather, and a dank smell of decay, that vapor of black rotten earth in old town gardens, hung heavy about the gates. And then a row of musty villas had pushed out in shops to the pavement, and the things in faded black buzzed and stirred about the limp cabbages, and the red lumps of meat.

It was the same terrible street, whose pavements he had trodden so often, where sunshine seemed but a gaudy light, where the fume of burning bricks always drifted. On black winter nights he had seen the sparse lights glimmering through the rain and drawing close together, as the dreary road vanished in long perspective. Perhaps this was its most appropriate moment, when nothing of its smug villas and skeleton shops remained but the bright patches of their windows, when the old house amongst its moldering shrubs was but a dark cloud, and the streets to the north and south seemed like starry wastes, beyond them the blackness of infinity. Always in the daylight it had been to him abhorred and abominable, and its grey houses and purlieus had been fungus-like sproutings, an efflorescence of horrible decay.

But on that bright morning neither the dreadful street nor those who moved about it appalled him. He returned joyously to his den, and reverently laid out the paper on his desk. The world about him was but a grey shadow hovering on a shining wall; its noises were faint as the rustling of trees in a distant wood. The lovely and exquisite forms of those who served the Amber Venus were his distinct, clear, and manifest visions, and for one amongst them who came to him in a fire of bronze hair his heart stirred with the adoration of love. She it was who stood forth from all the rest and fell down prostrate before the radiant form in amber, drawing out her pins in curious gold, her glowing brooches of enamel, and pouring from a silver box all her treasures of jewels and precious stones, chrysoberyl and sardonyx, opal and diamond, topaz and pearl. And then she stripped from her body her precious robes and stood before the goddess in the glowing mist of her hair, praying that to her who had given all and came naked to the shrine, love might be given, and the grace of Venus. And when at last, after strange adventures, her prayer was granted, then when the sweet light came from the sea, and her lover turned at dawn to that bronze glory, he saw beside him a little statuette of amber. And in the shrine, far in Britain where the black rains stained the marble, they found the splendid and sumptuous statue of the Golden Venus, the last fine robe of silk that the lady had dedicated falling from her fingers, and the jewels lying at her feet. And her face was like the lady’s face when the sun had brightened it on that day of her devotion.

The bronze mist glimmered before Lucian’s eyes; he felt as though the soft floating hair touched his forehead and his lips and his hands. The fume of burning bricks, the reek of cabbage water, never reached his nostrils that were filled with the perfume of rare unguents, with the breath of the violet sea in Italy. His pleasure was an inebriation, an ecstasy of joy that destroyed all the vile Hottentot kraals and mud avenues as with one white lightning flash, and through the hours of that day he sat enthralled, not contriving a story with patient art, but rapt into another time, and entranced by the urgent gleam in the lady's eyes.

The little tale of *The Amber Statuette* had at last issued from a humble office in the spring after his father's death. The author was utterly unknown; the author's Murray was a wholesale stationer and printer in process of development, so that Lucian was astonished when the book became a moderate success. The reviewers had been sadly irritated, and even now he recollected with cheerfulness an article in an influential daily paper, an article pleasantly headed: "Where are the disinfectants?"

And then — but all the months afterwards seemed doubtful, there were only broken revelations of the laborious hours renewed, and the white nights when he had seen the moonlight fade and the gaslight grow wan at the approach of dawn.

He listened. Surely that was the sound of rain falling on sodden ground, the heavy sound of great swollen drops driven down from wet leaves by the gust of wind, and then again the strain of boughs sang above the tumult of the air; there was a doleful noise as if the storm shook the masts of a ship. He had only to get up and look out of the window and he would see the treeless empty street, and the rain starring the puddles under the gas-lamp, but he would wait a little while.

He tried to think why, in spite of all his resolutions, a dark horror seemed to brood more and more over all his mind. How often he had sat and worked on just such nights as this, contented if the words were in accord though the wind might wail, though the air were black with rain. Even about the little book that he had made there seemed some taint, some shuddering memory that came to him across the gulf of forgetfulness. Somehow the remembrance of the offering to Venus, of the phrases that he had so lovingly invented, brought back again the dusky figures that danced in the orgy, beneath the brassy glittering lamps; and again the naphtha flares showed the way to the sad house in the fields, and the red glare lit up the mildewed walls and the black hopeless windows. He gasped for breath, he seemed to inhale a heavy air that reeked of decay and rottenness, and the odor of the clay was in his nostrils.

That unknown cloud that had darkened his thoughts grew blacker and engulfed him, despair was heavy upon him, his heart fainted with a horrible dread. In a moment, it seemed, a veil would be drawn away and certain awful things would appear.

He strove to rise from his chair, to cry out, but he could not. Deep, deep the darkness closed upon him, and the storm sounded far away. The Roman fort surged up, terrific, and he saw the writhing boughs in a ring, and behind them a glow and heat of fire. There were hideous shapes that swarmed in the thicket of the oaks; they called and beckoned to him, and rose into the air, into the flame that was smitten from heaven about the walls. And amongst them was the form of the beloved, but jets of flame issued from her breasts, and beside her was a horrible old woman, naked; and they, too, summoned him to mount the hill.

He heard Dr. Burrows whispering of the strange things that had been found in old Mrs. Gibbon's cottage, obscene figures, and unknown contrivances. She was a witch, he said, and the mistress of witches.

He fought against the nightmare, against the illusion that bewildered him. All his life, he thought, had been an evil dream, and for the common world he had fashioned an unreal red garment, that burned in his eyes. Truth and the dream were so mingled that now he could not divide one from the other. He had let Annie drink his soul beneath the hill, on the night when the moonfire shone, but he had not surely seen her exalted in the flame, the Queen of the Sabbath. Dimly he remembered Dr. Burrows coming to see him in London, but had he not imagined all the rest?

Again he found himself in the dusky lane, and Annie floated down to him from the moon above the hill. His head sank upon her breast again, but, alas, it was aflame. And he looked down, and he saw that his own flesh was aflame, and he knew that the fire could never be quenched.

There was a heavy weight upon his head, his feet were nailed to the floor, and his arms bound tight beside him. He seemed to himself to rage and struggle with the strength of a madman; but his hand only stirred and quivered a little as it lay upon the desk.

Again he was astray in the mist; wandering through the waste avenues of a city that had been ruined from ages. It had been splendid as Rome, terrible as Babylon, and for ever the darkness had covered it, and it lay desolate for ever in the accursed plain. And far and far the grey passages stretched into the night, into the icy fields, into the place of eternal gloom.

Ring within ring the awful temple closed around him; unending circles of vast stones, circle within circle, and every circle less throughout all ages. In the center was the sanctuary of the infernal rite, and he was borne thither as in the eddies of a whirlpool, to consummate his ruin, to celebrate the wedding of the Sabbath. He flung up his arms and beat the air, resisting with all his strength, with muscles that could throw down mountains; and this time his little finger stirred for an instant, and his foot twitched upon the floor.

Then suddenly a flaring street shone before him. There was darkness round about him, but it flamed with hissing jets of light and naphtha fires, and great glittering lamps swayed very slowly in a violent blast of air. A horrible music, and the exultation of discordant voices, swelled in his ears, and he saw an uncertain tossing crowd of dusky figures that circled and leapt before him. There was a noise like the chant of the lost, and then there appeared in the midst of the orgy, beneath a red flame, the figure of a woman. Her bronze hair and flushed cheeks were illuminate, and an argent light shone from her eyes, and with a smile that froze his heart her lips opened to speak to him. The tossing crowd faded away, falling into a gulf of darkness, and then she drew out from her hair pins of curious gold, and glowing brooches in enamel, and poured out jewels before him from a silver box, and then she stripped from her body her precious robes, and stood in the glowing mist of her hair, and held out her arms to him. But he raised his eyes and saw the mould and decay gaining on the walls of a dismal room, and a gloomy paper was dropping to the rotting floor. A vapor of the grave entered his nostrils, and he cried out with a loud scream; but there was only an indistinct guttural murmur in his throat.

And presently the woman fled away from him, and he pursued her. She fled away before him through midnight country, and he followed after her, chasing her from thicket to thicket, from valley to valley. And at last he captured her and won her with horrible caresses, and they went up to celebrate and make the marriage of the Sabbath. They were within the matted thicket, and they writhed in the flames, insatiable, for ever. They were tortured, and tortured one another, in the sight of thousands who gathered thick about them; and their desire rose up like a black smoke.

Without, the storm swelled to the roaring of an awful sea, the wind grew to a shrill long scream, the elm-tree was riven and split with the crash of a thunderclap. To Lucian the tumult and the shock came as a gentle murmur, as if a brake stirred before a sudden breeze in summer. And then a vast silence overwhelmed him.

A few minutes later there was a shuffling of feet in the passage, and the door was softly opened. A woman came in, holding a light, and she peered curiously at the figure sitting quite still in the chair before the desk. The woman was half dressed, and she had let her splendid bronze hair flow down, her cheeks were flushed, and as she advanced into the shabby room, the lamp she carried cast quaking shadows on the moldering paper, patched with marks of rising damp, and hanging in strips from the wet, dripping wall. The blind had not been drawn, but no light or glimmer of light filtered through the window, for a great straggling box tree that beat the rain upon the panes shut out even the night. The woman came softly, and as she bent down over Lucian an argent gleam shone from her brown eyes, and the little curls upon her neck were like golden work upon marble. She put her hand to his heart, and looked up, and beckoned to some one who was waiting by the door.

“Come in, Joe,” she said. “It’s just as I thought it would be: ‘Death by misadventure’”; and she held up a little empty bottle of dark blue glass that was standing on the desk. “He would take it, and I always knew he would take a drop too much one of these days.”

“What’s all those papers that he’s got there?”

“Didn’t I tell you? It was crool to see him. He got it into ‘is ‘ead he could write a book; he’s been at it for the last six months. Look ‘ere.”

She spread the neat pile of manuscript broadcast over the desk, and took a sheet at haphazard. It was all covered with illegible hopeless scribblings; only here and there it was possible to recognize a word.

“Why, nobody could read it, if they wanted to.”

“It’s all like that. He thought it was beautiful. I used to ‘ear him jabbering to himself about it, dreadful nonsense it was he used to talk. I did my best to tongue him out of it, but it wasn’t any good.”

“He must have been a bit dotty. He’s left you everything.”

“Yes.”

“You’ll have to see about the funeral.”

“There’ll be the inquest and all that first.”

“You’ve got evidence to show he took the stuff.”

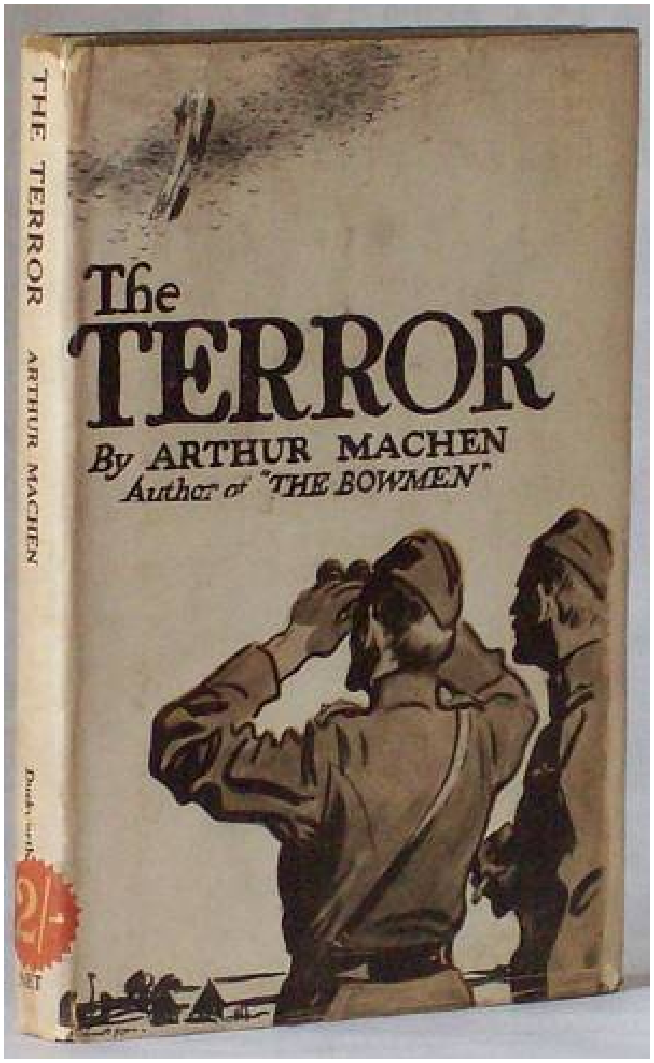
“Yes, to be sure I have. The doctor told him he would be certain to do for himself, and he was found two or three times quite silly in the streets. They had to drag him away from a house in Halden Road. He was carrying on dreadful, shaking at the gaite, and calling out it was ‘is ‘ome and they wouldn’t let him in. I heard Dr. Manning myself tell ‘im in this very room that he’d kill ‘imself one of these days. Joe! Aren’t you ashamed of yourself. I declare you’re quite rude, and it’s almost Sunday too. Bring the light over here, can’t you?”

The man took up the blazing paraffin lamp, and set it on the desk, beside the scattered heap of that terrible manuscript. The flaring light shone through the dead eyes into the dying brain, and there was a glow within, as if great furnace doors were opened.

THE END

The Terror

Written in 1917, this novella is Machen’s response to the horror of the First World War. In the narrative, investigations into a series of unexplained and horrific deaths in the Welsh countryside gradually reveal the terrifying possibility that nature itself may have turned against mankind in response to our barbarity towards each other.


THE TERROR
ARTHUR MACHEN
The TERROR
By ARTHUR MACHEN
Author of "THE BOWMEN"
2/-
NET

The cover of the first edition

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CHAPTER I. The Coming of the Terror

AFTER TWO YEARS we are turning once more to the morning's news with a sense of appetite and glad expectation. There were thrills at the beginning of the war; the thrill of horror and of a doom that seemed at once incredible and certain; this was when Namur fell and the German host swelled like a flood over the French fields, and drew very near to the walls of Paris. Then we felt the thrill of exultation when the good news came that the awful tide had been turned back, that Paris and the world were safe; for awhile at all events.

Then for days we hoped for more news as good as this or better. Has Von Kluck been surrounded? Not to-day, but perhaps he will be surrounded to-morrow. But the days became weeks, the weeks drew out to months; the battle in the West seemed frozen. Now and again things were done that seemed hopeful, with promise of events still better. But Neuve Chapelle and Loos dwindled into disappointments as their tale was told fully; the lines in the West remained, for all practical purposes of victory, immobile. Nothing seemed to happen; there was nothing to read save the record of operations that were clearly trifling and insignificant. People speculated as to the reason of this inaction; the hopeful said that Joffre had a plan, that he was "nibbling," others declared that we were short of munitions, others again that the new levies were not yet ripe for battle. So the months went by, and almost two years of war had been completed before the motionless English line began to stir and quiver as if it awoke from a long sleep, and began to roll onward, overwhelming the enemy.

The secret of the long inaction of the British Armies has been well kept. On the one hand it was rigorously protected by the censorship, which severe, and sometimes severe to the point of absurdity— "the captains and the … depart," for instance — became in this particular matter ferocious. As soon as the real significance of that which was happening, or beginning to happen, was perceived by the authorities, an underlined circular was issued to the newspaper proprietors of Great Britain and Ireland. It warned each proprietor that he might impart the contents of this circular to one other person only, such person being the responsible editor of his paper, who was to keep the communication secret under the severest penalties. The circular forbade any mention of certain events that had taken place, that might take place; it forbade any kind of allusion to these events or any hint of their existence, or of the possibility of their existence, not only in the Press, but in any form whatever. The subject was not to be alluded to in conversation, it was not to be hinted at, however obscurely, in letters; the very existence of the circular, its subject apart, was to be a dead secret.

These measures were successful. A wealthy newspaper proprietor of the North, warmed a little at the end of the Throwsters' Feast (which was held as usual, it will be remembered), ventured to say to the man next to him: "How awful it would be, wouldn't it, if…." His words were repeated, as proof, one regrets to say, that it was time for "old Arnold" to "pull himself together"; and he was fined a thousand pounds. Then, there was the case of an obscure weekly paper published in the county town of an agricultural district in Wales. The *Meiros Observer* (we will call it) was issued from a stationer's back premises, and filled its four pages with accounts of local flower shows, fancy fairs at vicarages, reports of parish councils, and rare bathing fatalities. It also issued a visitors' list, which has been known to contain six names.

This enlightened organ printed a paragraph, which nobody noticed, which was very like paragraphs that small country newspapers have long been in the habit of printing, which could hardly give so much as a hint to any one — to any one, that is, who was not fully instructed in the secret. As a matter of fact, this piece of intelligence got into the paper because the proprietor, who was also the editor, incautiously left the last processes of this particular issue to the staff, who was the Lord-High-Every-thing-Else of the establishment; and the staff put in a bit of gossip he had heard in the market to fill up two inches on the back page. But the result was that the *Meiros Observer* ceased to appear, owing to "untoward circumstances" as the proprietor said; and he would say no more. No more, that is, by way of explanation, but a great deal more by way of execration of "damned, prying busybodies."

Now a censorship that is sufficiently minute and utterly remorseless can do amazing things in the way of hiding … what it wants to hide. Before the war, one would have thought otherwise; one would have said that, censor or no censor, the fact of the murder at X or the fact of the bank robbery at Y would certainly become known; if not through the Press, at all events through rumor and the passage of the news from mouth to mouth. And this would be true — of England three hundred years ago, and of savage tribelands of to-day. But we have grown of late to such a reverence for the printed word and such a reliance on it, that the old faculty of disseminating news by word of mouth has become atrophied. Forbid the Press to mention the fact that Jones has been murdered, and it is marvelous how few people will hear of it, and of those who hear how few will credit the story that they have heard. You meet a man in the train who remarks that he has been told something about a murder in Southwark; there is all the difference in the world between the impression you receive from such a chance communication and that given by half a dozen lines of print with name, and street and date and all the facts of the case. People in trains repeat all sorts of tales, many of them false; newspapers do not print accounts of murders that have not been committed.

Then another consideration that has made for secrecy. I may have seemed to say that the old office of rumor no longer exists; I shall be reminded of the strange legend of “the Russians” and the mythology of the “Angels of Mons.” But let me point out, in the first place, that both these absurdities depended on the papers for their wide dissemination. If there had been no newspapers or magazines Russians and Angels would have made but a brief, vague appearance of the most shadowy kind — a few would have heard of them, fewer still would have believed in them, they would have been gossiped about for a bare week or two, and so they would have vanished away.

And, then, again, the very fact of these vain rumors and fantastic tales having been so widely believed for a time was fatal to the credit of any stray mutterings that may have got abroad. People had been taken in twice; they had seen how grave persons, men of credit, had preached and lectured about the shining forms that had saved the British Army at Mons, or had testified to the trains, packed with gray-coated Muscovites, rushing through the land at dead of night: and now there was a hint of something more amazing than either of the discredited legends. But this time there was no word of confirmation to be found in daily paper, or weekly review, or parish magazine, and so the few that heard either laughed, or, being serious, went home and jotted down notes for essays on “War-time Psychology: Collective Delusions.”

I followed neither of these courses. For before the secret circular had been issued my curiosity had somehow been aroused by certain paragraphs concerning a “Fatal Accident to Well-known Airman.” The propeller of the airplane had been shattered, apparently by a collision with a flight of pigeons; the blades had been broken and the machine had fallen like lead to the earth. And soon after I had seen this account, I heard of some very odd circumstances relating to an explosion in a great munition factory in the Midlands. I thought I saw the possibility of a connection between two very different events.

It has been pointed out to me by friends who have been good enough to read this record, that certain phrases I have used may give the impression that I ascribe all the delays of the war on the Western front to the extraordinary circumstances which occasioned the issue of the Secret Circular. Of course this is not the case, there were many reasons for the immobility of our lines from October 1914 to July 1916. These causes have been evident enough and have been openly discussed and deplored. But behind them was something of infinitely greater moment. We lacked men, but men were pouring into the new army; we were short of shells, but when the shortage was proclaimed the nation set itself to mend this matter with all its energy. We could undertake to supply the defects of our army both in men and munitions — *if* the new and incredible danger could be overcome. It has been overcome; rather, perhaps, it has ceased to exist; and the secret may now be told.

I have said my attention was attracted by an account of the death of a well-known airman. I have not the habit of preserving cuttings, I am sorry to say, so that I cannot be precise as to the date of this event. To the best of my belief it was either towards the end of May or the beginning of June 1915. The newspaper paragraph announcing the death of Flight-Lieutenant

Western-Reynolds was brief enough; accidents, and fatal accidents, to the men who are storming the air for us are, unfortunately, by no means so rare as to demand an elaborated notice. But the manner in which Western-Reynolds met his death struck me as extraordinary, inasmuch as it revealed a new danger in the element that we have lately conquered. He was brought down, as I said, by a flight of birds; of pigeons, as appeared by what was found on the bloodstained and shattered blades of the propeller. An eye-witness of the accident, a fellow-officer, described how Western-Reynolds set out from the aerodrome on a fine afternoon, there being hardly any wind. He was going to France; he had made the journey to and fro half a dozen times or more, and felt perfectly secure and at ease.

"'Wester' rose to a great height at once, and we could scarcely see the machine. I was turning to go when one of the fellows called out, 'I say! What's this?' He pointed up, and we saw what looked like a black cloud coming from the south at a tremendous rate. I saw at once it wasn't a cloud; it came with a swirl and a rush quite different from any cloud I've ever seen. But for a second I couldn't make out exactly what it was. It altered its shape and turned into a great crescent, and wheeled and veered about as if it was looking for something. The man who had called out had got his glasses, and was staring for all he was worth. Then he shouted that it was a tremendous flight of birds, 'thousands of them.' They went on wheeling and beating about high up in the air, and we were watching them, thinking it was interesting, but not supposing that they would make any difference to 'Wester,' who was just about out of sight. His machine was just a speck. Then the two arms of the crescent drew in as quick as lightning, and these thousands of birds shot in a solid mass right up there across the sky, and flew away somewhere about nor'-nor'-by-west. Then Henley, the man with the glasses, called out, 'He's down!' and started running, and I went after him. We got a car and as we were going along Henley told me that he'd seen the machine drop dead, as if it came out of that cloud of birds. He thought then that they must have mucked up the propeller somehow. That turned out to be the case. We found the propeller blades all broken and covered with blood and pigeon feathers, and carcasses of the birds had got wedged in between the blades, and were sticking to them."

This was the story that the young airman told one evening in a small company. He did not speak "in confidence," so I have no hesitation in reproducing what he said. Naturally, I did not take a verbatim note of his conversation, but I have something of a knack of remembering talk that interests me, and I think my reproduction is very near to the tale that I heard. And let it be noted that the flying man told his story without any sense or indication of a sense that the incredible, or all but the incredible, had happened. So far as he knew, he said, it was the first accident of the kind. Airmen in France had been bothered once or twice by birds — he thought they were eagles — flying viciously at them, but poor old "Wester" had been the first man to come up against a flight of some thousands of pigeons.

"And perhaps I shall be the next," he added, "but why look for trouble? Anyhow, I'm going to see *Toodle-oo* to-morrow afternoon."

Well, I heard the story, as one hears all the varied marvels and terrors of the air; as one heard some years ago of "air pockets," strange gulfs or voids in the atmosphere into which airmen fell with great peril; or as one heard of the experience of the airman who flew over the Cumberland mountains in the burning summer of 1911, and as he swam far above the heights was suddenly and vehemently blown upwards, the hot air from the rocks striking his plane as if it had been a blast from a furnace chimney. We have just begun to navigate a strange region; we must expect to encounter strange adventures, strange perils. And here a new chapter in the chronicles of these perils and adventures had been opened by the death of Western-Reynolds; and no doubt invention and contrivance would presently hit on some way of countering the new danger.

It was, I think, about a week or ten days after the airman's death that my business called me to a northern town, the name of which, perhaps, had better remain unknown. My mission was to inquire into certain charges of extravagance which had been laid against the working people, that is, the munition workers of this especial town. It was said that the men who used to earn £2 10s. a week were now getting from seven to eight pounds, that "bits of girls" were being paid two pounds instead of seven or eight shillings, and that, in consequence, there was an orgy of foolish extravagance. The girls, I was told, were eating chocolates at four, five, and six shillings a pound, the women were ordering thirty-pound pianos which they couldn’t play, and the men bought gold chains at ten and twenty guineas apiece.

I dived into the town in question and found, as usual, that there was a mixture of truth and exaggeration in the stories that I had heard. Gramophones, for example: they cannot be called in strictness necessaries, but they were undoubtedly finding a ready sale, even in the more expensive brands. And I thought that there were a great many very spick and span perambulators to be seen on the pavement; smart perambulators, painted in tender shades of color and expensively fitted.

“And how can you be surprised if people will have a bit of a fling?” a worker said to me. “We’re seeing money for the first time in our lives, and it’s bright. And we work hard for it, and we risk our lives to get it. You’ve heard of explosion yonder?”

He mentioned certain works on the outskirts of the town. Of course, neither the name of the works nor of the town had been printed; there had been a brief notice of “Explosion at Munition Works in the Northern District: Many Fatalities.” The working man told me about it, and added some dreadful details.

“They wouldn’t let their folks see bodies; screwed them up in coffins as they found them in shop. The gas had done it.”

“Turned their faces black, you mean?”

“Nay. They were all as if they had been bitten to pieces.”

This was a strange gas.

I asked the man in the northern town all sorts of questions about the extraordinary explosion of which he had spoken to me. But he had very little more to say. As I have noted already, secrets that may not be printed are often deeply kept; last summer there were very few people outside high official circles who knew anything about the “Tanks,” of which we have all been talking lately, though these strange instruments of war were being exercised and tested in a park not far from London. So the man who told me of the explosion in the munition factory was most likely genuine in his profession that he knew nothing more of the disaster. I found out that he was a smelter employed at a furnace on the other side of the town to the ruined factory; he didn’t know even what they had been making there; some very dangerous high explosive, he supposed. His information was really nothing more than a bit of gruesome gossip, which he had heard probably at third or fourth or fifth hand. The horrible detail of faces “as if they had been bitten to pieces” had made its violent impression on him, that was all.

I gave him up and took a tram to the district of the disaster; a sort of industrial suburb, five miles from the center of the town. When I asked for the factory, I was told that it was no good my going to it as there was nobody there. But I found it; a raw and hideous shed with a walled yard about it, and a shut gate. I looked for signs of destruction, but there was nothing. The roof was quite undamaged; and again it struck me that this had been a strange accident. There had been an explosion of sufficient violence to kill workpeople in the building, but the building itself showed no wounds or scars.

A man came out of the gate and locked it behind him. I began to ask him some sort of question, or rather, I began to “open” for a question with “A terrible business here, they tell me,” or some such phrase of convention. I got no farther. The man asked me if I saw a policeman walking down the street. I said I did, and I was given the choice of getting about my business forthwith or of being instantly given in charge as a spy. “Th’ast better be gone and quick about it,” was, I think, his final advice, and I took it.

Well, I had come literally up against a brick wall. Thinking the problem over, I could only suppose that the smelter or his informant had twisted the phrases of the story. The smelter had said the dead men’s faces were “bitten to pieces”; this might be an unconscious perversion of “eaten away.” That phrase might describe well enough the effect of strong acids, and, for all I knew of the processes of munition-making, such acids might be used and might explode with horrible results in some perilous stage of their admixture.

It was a day or two later that the accident to the airman, Western-Reynolds, came into my mind. For one of those instants which are far shorter than any measure of time there flashed out the possibility of a link between the two disasters. But here was a wild impossibility, and I drove it away. And yet I think that the thought, mad as it seemed, never left me; it was the secret light that at last guided me through a somber grove of enigmas.

It was about this time, so far as the date can be fixed, that a whole district, one might say a whole county, was visited by a series of extraordinary and terrible calamities, which were the more terrible inasmuch as they continued for some time to be inscrutable mysteries. It is, indeed, doubtful whether these awful events do not still remain mysteries to many of those concerned; for before the inhabitants of this part of the country had time to join one link of evidence to another the circular was issued, and thenceforth no one knew how to distinguish undoubted fact from wild and extravagant surmise.

The district in question is in the far west of Wales; I shall call it, for convenience, Meirion. In it there is one seaside town of some repute with holiday-makers for five or six weeks in the summer, and dotted about the county there are three or four small old towns that seem drooping in a slow decay, sleepy and gray with age and forgetfulness. They remind me of what I have read of towns in the west of Ireland. Grass grows between the uneven stones of the pavements, the signs above the shop windows decline, half the letters of these signs are missing, here and there a house has been pulled down, or has been allowed to slide into ruin, and wild greenery springs up through the fallen stones, and there is silence in all the streets. And, it is to be noted, these are not places that were once magnificent. The Celts have never had the art of building, and so far as I can see, such towns as Towy and Merthyr Tegveth and Meiros must have been always much as they are now, clusters of poorish, meanly-built houses, ill-kept and down at heel.

And these few towns are thinly scattered over a wild country where north is divided from south by a wilder mountain range. One of these places is sixteen miles from any station; the others are doubtfully and deviously connected by single-line railways served by rare trains that pause and stagger and hesitate on their slow journey up mountain passes, or stop for half an hour or more at lonely sheds called stations, situated in the midst of desolate marshes. A few years ago I traveled with an Irishman on one of these queer lines, and he looked to right and saw the bog with its yellow and blue grasses and stagnant pools, and he looked to left and saw a ragged hillside, set with gray stone walls. “I can hardly believe,” he said, “that I’m not still in the wilds of Ireland.”

Here, then, one sees a wild and divided and scattered region a land of outland hills and secret and hidden valleys. I know white farms on this coast which must be separate by two hours of hard, rough walking from any other habitation, which are invisible from any other house. And inland, again, the farms are often ringed about by thick groves of ash, planted by men of old days to shelter their roof-trees from rude winds of the mountain and stormy winds of the sea; so that these places, too, are hidden away, to be surmised only by the wood smoke that rises from the green surrounding leaves. A Londoner must see them to believe in them; and even then he can scarcely credit their utter isolation.

Such, then in the main is Meirion, and on this land in the early summer of last year terror descended — a terror without shape, such as no man there had ever known.

It began with the tale of a little child who wandered out into the lanes to pick flowers one sunny afternoon, and never came back to the cottage on the hill.

CHAPTER II. Death in the Village

THE CHILD WHO was lost came from a lonely cottage that stands on the slope of a steep hillside called the Allt, or the height. The land about it is wild and ragged; here the growth of gorse and bracken, here a marshy hollow of reeds and rushes, marking the course of the stream from some hidden well, here thickets of dense and tangled undergrowth, the outposts of the wood. Down through this broken and uneven ground a path leads to the lane at the bottom of the valley; then the land rises again and swells up to the cliffs over the sea, about a quarter of a mile away. The little girl, Gertrude Morgan, asked her mother if she might go down to the lane and pick the purple flowers — these were orchids — that grew there, and her mother gave her leave, telling her she must be sure to be back by tea-time, as there was apple-tart for tea.

She never came back. It was supposed that she must have crossed the road and gone to the cliff's edge, possibly in order to pick the sea-pinks that were then in full blossom. She must have slipped, they said, and fallen into the sea, two hundred feet below. And, it may be said at once, that there was no doubt some truth in this conjecture, though it stopped very far short of the whole truth. The child's body must have been carried out by the tide, for it was never found.

The conjecture of a false step or of a fatal slide on the slippery turf that slopes down to the rocks was accepted as being the only explanation possible. People thought the accident a strange one because, as a rule, country children living by the cliffs and the sea become wary at an early age, and Gertrude Morgan was almost ten years old. Still, as the neighbors said, "that's how it must have happened, and it's a great pity, to be sure." But this would not do when in a week's time a strong young laborer failed to come to his cottage after the day's work. His body was found on the rocks six or seven miles from the cliffs where the child was supposed to have fallen; he was going home by a path that he had used every night of his life for eight or nine years, that he used of dark nights in perfect security, knowing every inch of it. The police asked if he drank, but he was a teetotaler; if he were subject to fits, but he wasn't. And he was not murdered for his wealth, since agricultural laborers are not wealthy. It was only possible again to talk of slippery turf and a false step; but people began to be frightened. Then a woman was found with her neck broken at the bottom of a disused quarry near Llanfihangel, in the middle of the county. The "false step" theory was eliminated here, for the quarry was guarded with a natural hedge of gorse bushes. One would have to struggle and fight through sharp thorns to destruction in such a place as this; and indeed the gorse bushes were broken as if some one had rushed furiously through them, just above the place where the woman's body was found. And this was strange: there was a dead sheep lying beside her in the pit, as if the woman and the sheep together had been chased over the brim of the quarry. But chased by whom, or by what? And then there was a new form of terror.

This was in the region of the marshes under the mountain. A man and his son, a lad of fourteen or fifteen, set out early one morning to work and never reached the farm where they were bound. Their way skirted the marsh, but it was broad, firm and well metalled, and it had been raised about two feet above the bog. But when search was made in the evening of the same day Phillips and his son were found dead in the marsh, covered with black slime and pondweed. And they lay some ten yards from the path, which, it would seem, they must have left deliberately. It was useless of course, to look for tracks in the black ooze, for if one threw a big stone into it a few seconds removed all marks of the disturbance. The men who found the two bodies beat about the verges and purlieus of the marsh in hope of finding some trace of the murderers; they went to and fro over the rising ground where the black cattle were grazing, they searched the alder thickets by the brook; but they discovered nothing.

Most horrible of all these horrors, perhaps, was the affair of the Highway, a lonely and unfrequented by-road that winds for many miles on high and lonely land. Here, a mile from any other dwelling, stands a cottage on the edge of a dark wood. It was inhabited by a laborer named Williams, his wife, and their three children. One hot summer's evening, a man who had been doing a day's gardening at a rectory three or four miles away, passed the cottage, and stopped for a few minutes to chat with Williams, the laborer, who was pottering about his garden, while the children were playing on the path by the door. The two talked of their neighbors and of the potatoes till Mrs. Williams appeared at the doorway and said supper was ready, and Williams turned to go into the house. This was about eight o'clock, and in the ordinary course the family would have their supper and be in bed by nine, or by half-past nine at latest. At ten o'clock that night the local doctor was driving home along the Highway. His horse shied violently and then stopped dead just opposite the gate to the cottage. The doctor got down, frightened at what he saw; and there on the roadway lay Williams, his wife, and the three children, stone dead, all of them. Their skulls were battered in as if by some heavy iron instrument; their faces were beaten into a pulp.

CHAPTER III. The Doctors Theory

IT IS NOT easy to make any picture of the horror that lay dark on the hearts of the people of Meirion. It was no longer possible to believe or to pretend to believe that these men and women and children had met their deaths through strange accidents. The little girl and the young laborer might have slipped and fallen over the cliffs, but the woman who lay dead with the dead sheep at the bottom of the quarry, the two men who had been lured into the ooze of the marsh, the family who were found murdered on the Highway before their own cottage door; in these cases there could be no room for the supposition of accident. It seemed as if it were impossible to frame any conjecture or outline of a conjecture that would account for these hideous and, as it seemed, utterly purposeless crimes. For a time people said that there must be a madman at large, a sort of country variant of Jack the Ripper, some horrible pervert who was possessed by the passion of death, who prowled darkling about that lonely land, hiding in woods and in wild places, always watching and seeking for the victims of his desire.

Indeed, Dr. Lewis, who found poor Williams, his wife and children miserably slaughtered on the Highway, was convinced at first that the presence of a concealed madman in the countryside offered the only possible solution to the difficulty.

“I felt sure,” he said to me afterwards, “that the Williams’s had been killed by a homicidal maniac. It was the nature of the poor creatures’ injuries that convinced me that this was the case. Some years ago thirty-seven or thirty-eight years ago as a matter of fact — I had something to do with a case which on the face of it had a strong likeness to the Highway murder. At that time I had a practice at Usk, in Monmouthshire. A whole family living in a cottage by the roadside were murdered one evening; it was called, I think, the Llangibby murder; the cottage was near the village of that name. The murderer was caught in Newport; he was a Spanish sailor, named Garcia, and it appeared that he had killed father, mother, and the three children for the sake of the brass works of an old Dutch clock, which were found on him when he was arrested.

“Garcia had been serving a month’s imprisonment in Usk Jail for some small theft, and on his release he set out to walk to Newport, nine or ten miles away; no doubt to get another ship. He passed the cottage and saw the man working in his garden. Garcia stabbed him with his sailor’s knife. The wife rushed out; he stabbed her. Then he went into the cottage and stabbed the three children, tried to set the place on fire, and made off with the clockworks. That looked like the deed of a madman, but Garcia wasn’t mad — they hanged him, I may say — he was merely a man of a very low type, a degenerate who hadn’t the slightest value for human life. I am not sure, but I think he came from one of the Spanish islands, where the people are said to be degenerates, very likely from too much inter-breeding.

“But my point is that Garcia stabbed to kill and did kill, with one blow in each case. There was no senseless hacking and slashing. Now those poor people on the Highway had their heads smashed to pieces by what must have been a storm of blows. Any one of them would have been fatal, but the murderer must have gone on raining blows with his iron hammer on people who were already stone dead. And *that* sort of thing is the work of a madman, and nothing but a madman. That’s how I argued the matter out to myself just after the event.

“I was utterly wrong, monstrously wrong. But who could have suspected the truth?”

Thus Dr. Lewis, and I quote him, or the substance of him, as representative of most of the educated opinion of the district at the beginnings of the terror. People seized on this theory largely because it offered at least the comfort of an explanation, and any explanation, even the poorest, is better than an intolerable and terrible mystery. Besides, Dr. Lewis’s theory was plausible; it explained the lack of purpose that seemed to characterize the murders. And yet — there were difficulties even from the first. It was hardly possible that a strange madman should be able to keep hidden in a countryside where any stranger is instantly noted and noticed; sooner or later he would be seen as he prowled along the lanes or across the wild places. Indeed, a drunken, cheerful, and altogether harmless tramp was arrested by a farmer and his man in the fact and act of sleeping off beer under a hedge; but the vagrant was able to prove complete and undoubted alibis, and was soon allowed to go on his wandering way.

Then another theory, or rather a variant of Dr. Lewis's theory, was started. This was to the effect that the person responsible for the outrages was, indeed, a madman; but a madman only at intervals. It was one of the members of the Porth Club, a certain Mr. Remnant, who was supposed to have originated this more subtle explanation. Mr. Remnant was a middle-aged man, who, having nothing particular to do, read a great many books by way of conquering the hours. He talked to the club — doctors, retired colonels, parsons, lawyers — about "personality," quoted various psychological textbooks in support of his contention that personality was sometimes fluid and unstable, went back to "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" as good evidence of this proposition, and laid stress on Dr. Jekyll's speculation that the human soul, so far from being one and indivisible, might, possibly turn out to be a mere polity, a state in which dwelt many strange and incongruous citizens, whose characters were not merely unknown but altogether unsurmised by that form of consciousness which so rashly assumed that it was not only the president of the republic but also its sole citizen.

"The long and the short of it is," Mr. Remnant concluded, "that any one of us may be the murderer, though he hasn't the faintest notion of the fact. Take Llewelyn there."

Mr. Payne Llewelyn was an elderly lawyer, a rural Tulkinghorn. He was the hereditary solicitor to the Morgans of Pentwyn. This does not sound anything tremendous to the Saxons of London; but the style is far more than noble to the Celts of West Wales; it is immemorial; Teilo Sant was of the collaterals of the first known chief of the race. And Mr. Payne Llewelyn did his best to look like the legal adviser of this ancient house. He was weighty, he was cautious, he was sound, he was secure. I have compared him to Mr. Tulkinghorn of Lincoln's Inn Fields; but Mr. Llewelyn would most certainly never have dreamed of employing his leisure in peering into the cupboards where the family skeletons were hidden. Supposing such cupboards to have existed, Mr. Payne Llewelyn would have risked large out-of-pocket expenses to furnish them with double, triple, impregnable locks. He was a new man, an *advena*, certainly; for he was partly of the

Conquest, being descended on one side from Sir Payne Turberville; but he meant to stand by the old stock.

“Take Llewelyn now,” said Mr. Remnant. “Look here, Llewelyn, can you produce evidence to show where you were on the night those people were murdered on the Highway? I thought not.”

Mr. Llewelyn, an elderly man, as I have said, hesitated before speaking.

“I thought not,” Remnant went on. “Now I say that it is perfectly possible that Llewelyn may be dealing death throughout Meirion, although in his present personality he may not have the faintest suspicion that there is another Llewelyn within him, a Llewelyn who follows murder as a fine art.”

Mr. Payne Llewelyn did not at all relish Mr. Remnant’s suggestion that he might well be a secret murderer, ravening for blood, remorseless as a wild beast. He thought the phrase about his following murder as a fine art was both nonsensical and in the worst taste, and his opinion was not changed when Remnant pointed out that it was used by De Quincey in the title of one of his most famous essays.

“If you had allowed me to speak,” he said with some coldness of manner, “I would have told you that on Tuesday last, the night on which those unfortunate people were murdered on the Highway I was staying at the Angel Hotel, Cardiff. I had business in Cardiff, and I was detained till Wednesday afternoon.”

Having given this satisfactory alibi, Mr. Payne Llewelyn left the club, and did not go near it for the rest of the week.

Remnant explained to those who stayed in the smoking room that, of course, he had merely used Mr. Llewelyn as a concrete example of his theory, which, he persisted, had the support of a considerable body of evidence.

“There are several cases of double personality on record,” he declared. “And I say again that it is quite possible that these murders may have been committed by one of us in his secondary personality. Why, I may be the murderer in my Remnant B. state, though Remnant A. knows nothing whatever about it, and is perfectly convinced that he could not kill a fowl, much less a whole family. Isn't it so, Lewis?"

Dr. Lewis said it was so, in theory, but he thought not in fact.

"Most of the cases of double or multiple personality that have been investigated," he said, "have been in connection with the very dubious experiments of hypnotism, or the still more dubious experiments of spiritualism. All that sort of thing, in my opinion, is like tinkering with the works of a clock — amateur tinkering, I mean. You fumble about with the wheels and cogs and bits of mechanism that you don't really know anything about; and then you find your clock going backwards or striking 240 at tea-time. And I believe it's just the same thing with these psychical research experiments; the secondary personality is very likely the result of the tinkering and fumbling with a very delicate apparatus that we know nothing about. Mind, I can't say that it's impossible for one of us to be the Highway murderer in his B. state, as Remnant puts it. But I think it's extremely improbable. Probability is the guide of life, you know, Remnant," said Dr. Lewis, smiling at that gentleman, as if to say that he also had done a little reading in his day. "And it follows" therefore, that improbability is also the guide of life. When you get a very high degree of probability, that is, you are justified in taking it as a certainty; and on the other hand, if a supposition is highly improbable, you are justified in treating it as an impossible one. That is, in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand."

"How about the thousandth case?" said Remnant. "Supposing these extraordinary crimes constitute the thousandth case?"

The doctor smiled and shrugged his shoulders, being tired of the subject. But for some little time highly respectable members of Porth society would look suspiciously at one another wondering whether, after all, there mightn't be "something in it." However, both Mr. Remnant's somewhat crazy theory and Dr. Lewis's plausible theory became untenable when two more victims of an awful and mysterious death were offered up in, sacrifice, for a man was found dead in the Llanfihangel quarry, where the woman had been discovered. And on the same day a girl of fifteen was found broken on the jagged rocks under the cliffs near Porth. Now, it appeared that these two deaths must have occurred at about the same time, within an hour of one another, certainly; and the distance between the quarry and the cliffs by Black Rock is certainly twenty miles.

“A motor could do it,” one man said.

But it was pointed out that there was no high road between the two places; indeed, it might be said that there was no road at all between them. There was a network of deep, narrow, and tortuous lands that wandered into one another at all manner of queer angles for, say, seventeen miles; this in the middle, as it were, between Black Rock and the quarry at Llanfihangel. But to get to the high land of the cliffs one had to take a path that went through two miles of fields; and the quarry lay a mile away from the nearest by-road in the midst of gorse and bracken and broken land. And, finally, there was no track of motor-car or motor-bicycle in the lanes which must have been followed to pass from one place to the other.

“What about an airplane, then?” said the man of the motor-car theory. Well, there was certainly an aerodrome not far from one of the two places of death; but somehow, nobody believed that the Flying Corps harbored a homicidal maniac. It seemed clear, therefore, that there must be more than one person concerned in the terror of Meirion. And Dr. Lewis himself abandoned his own theory.

“As I said to Remnant at the Club,” he remarked, “improbability is the guide of life. I can’t believe that there are a pack of madmen or even two madmen at large in the country. I give it up.”

And now a fresh circumstance or set of circumstances became manifest to confound judgment and to awaken new and wild surmises. For at about this time people realized that none of the dreadful events that were happening all about them was so much as mentioned in the Press. I have already spoken of the fate of the *Meiros Observer.* This paper was suppressed by the authorities because it had inserted a brief paragraph about some person who had been “found dead under mysterious circumstances”; I think that paragraph referred to the first death of Llanfihangel quarry. Thenceforth, horror followed on horror, but no word was printed in any of the local journals. The curious went to the newspaper offices — there were two left in the county — but found nothing save a firm refusal to discuss the matter. And the Cardiff papers were drawn and found blank; and the London Press was apparently ignorant of the fact that crimes that had no parallel were terrorizing a whole countryside. Everybody wondered what could have happened, what was happening; and then it was whispered that the coroner would allow no inquiry to be made as to these deaths of darkness.

“In consequence of instructions received from the Home Office,” one coroner was understood to have said, “I have to tell the jury that their business will be to hear the medical evidence and to bring in a verdict immediately in accordance with that evidence. I shall disallow all questions.”

One jury protested. The foreman refused to bring in any verdict at all.

“Very good,” said the coroner. “Then I beg to inform you, Mr. Foreman and gentlemen of the jury, that under the Defense of the Realm Act, I have power to supersede your functions, and to enter a verdict according to the evidence which has been laid before the Court as if it had been the verdict of you all.”

The foreman and jury collapsed and accepted what they could not avoid. But the rumors that got abroad of all this, added to the known fact that the terror was ignored in the Press, no doubt by official command, increased the panic that was now; arising, and gave it a new direction. Clearly, people reasoned, these Government restrictions and prohibitions could only refer to the war, to some great danger in connection with the war. And that being so, it followed that the outrages which must be kept so secret were the work of the enemy, that is of concealed German agents.

CHAPTER IV. The Spread of the Terror

IT IS TIME, I think, for me to make one point clear. I began this history with certain references to an extraordinary accident to an airman whose machine fell to the ground after collision with a huge flock of pigeons; and then to an explosion in a northern munition factory, an explosion, as I noted, of a very singular kind. Then I deserted the neighborhood of London, and the northern district, and dwelt on a mysterious and terrible series of events which occurred in the summer of 1915 in a Welsh county, which I have named, for convenience, Meirion.

Well, let it be understood at once that all this detail that I have given about the occurrences in Meirion does not imply that the county in the far west was alone or especially afflicted by the terror that was over the land. They tell me that in the villages about Dartmoor the stout Devonshire hearts sank as men's hearts used to sink in the time of plague and pestilence. There was horror, too, about the Norfolk Broads, and far up by Perth no one would venture on the path that leads by Scone to the wooded heights above the Tay. And in the industrial districts: I met a man by chance one day in an odd London corner who spoke with horror of what a friend had told him.

"'Ask no questions, Ned,' he says to me, 'but I tell yow a' was in Bairnigan t'other day, and a' met a pal who'd seen three hundred coffins going out of a works not far from there.'"

And then the ship that hovered outside the mouth of the Thames with all sails set and beat to and fro in the wind, and never answered any hail, and showed no light! The forts shot at her and brought down one of the masts, but she went suddenly about with a change of wind under what sail still stood, and then veered down Channel, and drove ashore at last on the sandbanks and pinewoods of Arcachon, and not a man alive on her, but only rattling heaps of bones! That last voyage of the *Semiramis* would be something horribly worth telling; but I only heard it at a distance as a yarn, and only believed it because it squared with other things that I knew for certain.

This, then, is my point; I have written of the terror as it fell on Meirion, simply because I have had opportunities of getting close there to what really happened. Third or fourth or fifth hand in the other places; but round about Porth and Merthyr Tegveth I have spoken with people who have seen the tracks of the terror with their own eyes.

Well, I have said that the people of that far western county realized, not only that death was abroad in their quiet lanes and on their peaceful hills, but that for some reason it was to be kept all secret. Newspapers might not print any news of it, the very juries summoned to investigate it were allowed to investigate nothing. And so they concluded that this veil of secrecy must somehow be connected with the war; and from this position it was not a long way to a further inference: that the murderers of innocent men and women and children were either Germans or agents of Germany. It would be just like the Huns, everybody agreed, to think out such a devilish scheme as this; and they always thought out their schemes beforehand. They hoped to seize Paris in a few weeks, but when they were beaten on the Marne they had their trenches on the Aisne ready to fall back on: it had all been prepared years before the war. And so, no doubt, they had devised this terrible plan against England in case they could not beat us in open fight: there were people ready, very likely, all over the country, who were prepared to murder and destroy everywhere as soon as they got the word. In this way the Germans intended to sow terror throughout England and fill our hearts with panic and dismay, hoping so to weaken their enemy at home that he would lose all heart over the war abroad. It was the Zeppelin notion, in another form; they were committing these horrible and mysterious outrages thinking that we should be frightened out of our wits.

It all seemed plausible enough; Germany had by this time perpetrated so many horrors and had so excelled in devilish ingenuities that no abomination seemed too abominable to be probable, or too ingeniously wicked to be beyond the tortuous malice of the Hun. But then came the questions as to who the agents of this terrible design were, as to where they lived, as to how they contrived to move unseen from field to field, from lane to lane. All sorts of fantastic attempts were made to answer these questions; but it was felt that they remained unanswered. Some suggested that the murderers landed from submarines, or flew from hiding places on the West Coast of Ireland, coming and going by night; but there were seen to be flagrant impossibilities in both these suggestions. Everybody agreed that the evil work was no doubt the work of Germany; but nobody could begin to guess how it was done. Somebody at the Club asked Remnant for his theory.

“My theory,” said that ingenious person, “is that human progress is simply a long march from one inconceivable to another. Look at that airship of ours that came over Porth yesterday: ten years ago that would have been an inconceivable sight. Take the steam engine, stake printing, take the theory of gravitation: they were all inconceivable till somebody thought of them. So it is, no doubt, with this infernal dodgery that we’re talking about: the Huns have found it out, and we haven’t; and there you are. We can’t conceive how these poor people have been murdered, because the method’s inconceivable to us.”

The club listened with some awe to this high argument. After Remnant had gone, one member said:

“Wonderful man, that.” “Yes,” said Dr. Lewis. “He was asked whether he knew something. And his reply really amounted to ‘No, I don’t,’ But I have never heard it better put.”

It was, I suppose, at about this time when the people were puzzling their heads as to the secret methods used by the Germans or their agents to accomplish their crimes that a very singular circumstance became known to a few of the Porth people. It related to the murder of the Williams family on the Highway in front of their cottage door. I do not know that I have made it plain that the old Roman road called the Highway follows the course of a long, steep hill that goes steadily westward till it slants down and droops towards the sea. On either side of the road the ground falls away, here into deep shadowy woods, here to high pastures, now and again into a field of corn, but for the most part into the wild and broken land that is characteristic of Arfon. The fields are long and narrow, stretching up the steep hillside; they fall into sudden dips and hollows, a well springs up in the midst of one and a grove of ash and thorn bends over it, shading it; and beneath it the ground is thick with reeds and rushes. And then may come on either side of such a field territories glistening with the deep growth of bracken, and rough with gorse and rugged with thickets of blackthorn, green lichen hanging strangely from the branches; such are the lands on either side of the Highway.

Now on the lower slopes of it, beneath the Williams's cottage, some three or four fields down the hill, there is a military camp. The place has been used as a camp for many years, and lately the site has been extended and huts have been erected. But a considerable number of the men were under canvas here in the summer of 1915.

On the night of the Highway murder this camp, as it appeared afterwards, was the scene of the extraordinary panic of the horses.

A good many men in the camp were asleep in their tents soon after 9:30, when the Last Post was sounded. They woke up in panic. There was a thundering sound on the steep hillside above them, and down upon the tents came half a dozen horses, mad with fright, trampling the canvas, trampling the men, bruising dozens of them and killing two.

Everything was in wild confusion, men groaning and screaming in the darkness, struggling with the canvas and the twisted ropes, shouting out, some of them, raw lads enough, that the Germans had landed, others wiping the blood from their eyes, a few, roused suddenly from heavy sleep, hitting out at one another, officers coming up at the double roaring out orders to the sergeants, a party of soldiers who were just returning to camp from the village seized with fright at what they could scarcely see or distinguish, at the wildness of the shouting and cursing and groaning that they could not understand, bolting out of the camp again and racing for their lives back to the village: everything in the maddest confusion of wild disorder.

Some of the men had seen the horses galloping down the hill as if terror itself was driving them. They scattered off into the darkness, and somehow or another found their way back in the night to their pasture above the camp. They were grazing there peacefully in the morning, and the only sign of the panic of the night before was the mud they had scattered all over themselves as they pelted through a patch of wet ground. The farmer said they were as quiet a lot as any in Meirion; he could make nothing of it.

“Indeed,” he said, “I believe they must have seen the devil himself to be in such a fright as that: save the people!”

Now all this was kept as quiet as might be at the time when it happened; it became known to the men of the Porth Club in the days when they were discussing the difficult question of the German outrages, as the murders were commonly called. And this wild stampede of the farm horses was held by some to be evidence of the extraordinary and unheard of character of the dreadful agency that was at work. One of the members of the club had been told by an officer who was in the camp at the time of the panic that the horses that came charging down were in a perfect fury of fright, that he had never seen horses in such a state, and so there was endless speculation as to the nature of the sight or the sound that had driven half a dozen quiet beasts into raging madness.

Then, in the middle of this talk, two or three other incidents, quite as odd and incomprehensible, came to be known, borne on chance trickles of gossip that came into the towns from outland farms, or were carried by cottagers tramping into Porth on market day with a fowl or two and eggs and garden stuff; scraps and fragments of talk gathered by servants from the country folk and repeated — to their mistresses. And in such ways it came out that up at Plas Newydd there had been a terrible business over swarming the bees; they had turned as wild as wasps and much more savage. They had come about the people who were taking the swarms like a cloud. They settled on one man's face so that you could not see the flesh for the bees crawling all over it, and they had stung him so badly that the doctor did not know whether he would get over it, and they had chased a girl who had come out to see the swarming, and settled on her and stung her to death. Then they had gone off to a brake below the farm and got into a hollow tree there, and it was not safe to go near it, for they would come out at you by day or by night.

And much the same thing had happened, it seemed, at three or four farms and cottages where bees were kept. And there were stories, hardly so clear or so credible, of sheep dogs, mild and trusted beasts, turning as savage as wolves and injuring the farm boys in a horrible manner — in one case it was said with fatal results. It was certainly true that old Mrs. Owen's favorite Brahma-Dorking cock had gone mad; she came into Porth one Saturday morning with her face and her neck all bound up and plastered. She had gone out to her bit of a field to feed the poultry the night before, and the bird had flown at her and attacked her most savagely, inflicting some very nasty wounds before she could beat it off.

“There was a stake handy, lucky for me,” she said, “and I did beat him and beat him till the life was out of him. But what is come to the world, whatever?”

Now Remnant, the man of theories, was also a man of extreme leisure. It was understood that he had succeeded to ample means when he was quite a young man, and after tasting the savors of the law, as it were, for half a dozen terms at the board of the Middle Temple, he had decided that it would be senseless to bother himself with passing examinations for a profession which he had not the faintest intention of practising. So he turned a deaf ear to the call of “Manger” ringing through the Temple Courts, and set himself out to potter amiably through the world. He had pottered all over Europe, he had looked at Africa, and had even put his head in at the door of the East, on a trip which included the Greek isles and Constantinople. Now getting into the middle fifties, he had settled at Porth for the sake, as he said, of the Gulf Stream and the fuchsia hedges, and pottered over his books and his theories and the local gossip. He was no more brutal than the general public, which revels in the details of mysterious crime; but it must be said that the terror, black though it was, was a boon to him. He peered and investigated and poked about with the relish of a man to whose life a new zest has been added. He listened attentively to the strange tales of bees and dogs and poultry that came into Porth with the country baskets of butter, rabbits, and green peas; and he evolved at last a most extraordinary theory.

Full of this discovery, as he thought it, he went one night to see Dr. Lewis and take his view of the matter.

“I want to talk to you,” said Remnant to the doctor, “about what I have called provisionally, the Z Ray.”

CHAPTER V. The Incident of the Unknown Tree

DR. LEWIS, SMILING indulgently, and quite prepared for some monstrous piece of theorizing, led Remnant into the room that overlooked the terraced garden and the sea.

The doctor’s house, though it was only a ten minutes’ walk from the center of the town, seemed remote from all other habitations. The drive to it from the road came through a deep grove of trees and a dense shrubbery, trees were about the house on either side, mingling with neighboring groves, and below, the garden fell down, terrace by green terrace, to wild growth, a twisted path amongst red rocks, and at last to the yellow sand of a little cove. The room to which the doctor took Remnant looked over these terraces and across the water to the dim boundaries of the bay. It had French windows that were thrown wide open, and the two men sat in the soft light of the lamp — this was before the days of severe lighting regulations in the Far West — and enjoyed the sweet odors and the sweet vision of the summer evening. Then Remnant began:

“I suppose, Lewis, you’ve heard these extraordinary stories of bees and dogs and things that have been going about lately?”

“Certainly I have heard them. I was called in at Plas Newydd, and treated Thomas Trevor, who’s only just out of danger, by the way. I certified for the poor child, Mary Trevor. She was dying when I got to the place. There was no doubt she was stung to death by bees, and I believe there were other very similar cases at Llantarnam and Morwen; none fatal, I think. What about them?”

“Well: then there are the stories of good-tempered old sheepdogs turning wicked and ‘savaging’ children?”

“Quite so. I haven’t seen any of these cases professionally; but I believe the stories are accurate enough.”

“And the old woman assaulted by her own poultry?”

"That's perfectly true. Her daughter put some stuff of their own concoction on her face and neck, and then she came to me. The wounds seemed going all right, so I told her to continue the treatment, whatever it might be."

"Very good," said Mr. Remnant. He spoke now with an italic impressiveness. "*Don't you see the link between all this and the horrible things that have been happening about here for the last month?*"

Lewis stared at Remnant in amazement. He lifted his red eyebrows and lowered them in a kind of scowl. His speech showed traces of his native accent.

"Great burning!" he exclaimed. "What on earth are you getting at now? It is madness. Do you mean to tell me that you think there is some connection between a swarm or two of bees that have turned nasty, a cross dog, and a wicked old barn-door cock and these poor people that have been pitched over the cliffs and hammered to death on the road? There's no sense in it, you know."

"I am strongly inclined to believe that there is a great deal of sense in it," replied Remnant, with extreme calmness. "Look here, Lewis, I saw you grinning the other day at the club when I was telling the fellows that in my opinion all these outrages had been committed, certainly by the Germans, but by some method of which we have no conception. But what I meant to say when I talked about inconceivables was just this: that the Williams's and the rest of them have been killed in some way that's not in theory at all, not in our theory, at all events, some way we've not contemplated, not thought of for an instant. Do you see my point?"

"Well, in a sort of way. You mean there's an absolute originality in the method? I suppose that is so. But what next?"

Remnant seemed to hesitate, partly from a sense of the portentous nature of what he was about to say, partly from a sort of half-unwillingness to part with so profound a secret.

"Well," he said, "you will allow that we have two sets of phenomena of a very extraordinary kind occurring at the same time. Don't you think that it's only reasonable to connect the two sets with one another."

"So the philosopher of Tenterden steeple and the Goodwin Sands thought, certainly," said Lewis. "But what is the connection? Those poor folks on the

Highway weren't stung by bees or worried by a dog. And horses don't throw people over cliffs or stifle them in marshes."

"No; I never meant to suggest anything so absurd. It is evident to me that in all these cases of animals turning suddenly savage the cause has been terror, panic, fear. The horses that went charging into the camp were mad with fright, we know. And I say that in the other instances we have been discussing the cause was the same. The creatures were exposed to an infection of fear, and a frightened beast or bird or insect uses its weapons, whatever they may be. If, for example, there had been anybody with those horses when they took their panic they would have lashed out at him with their heels."

"Yes, I dare say that that is so. Well."

"Well; my belief is that the Germans have made an extraordinary discovery. I have called it the Z Ray. You know that the ether is merely an hypothesis; we have to suppose that it's there to account for the passage of the Marconi current from one place to another. Now, suppose that there is a psychic ether as well as a material ether, suppose that it is possible to direct irresistible impulses across this medium, suppose that these impulses are towards murder or suicide; then I think that you have an explanation of the terrible series of events that have been happening in Meirion for the last few weeks. And it is quite clear to my mind that the horses and the other creatures have been exposed to this Z Ray, and that it has produced on them the effect of terror, with ferocity as the result of terror. Now what do you say to that? Telepathy, you know, is well established; so is hypnotic suggestion. You have only to look in the Encyclopædia Britannica' to see that, and suggestion is so strong in some cases as to be an irresistible imperative. Now don't you feel that putting telepathy and suggestion together, as it were, you have more than the elements of what I call the Z Ray? I feel myself that I have more to go on in making my hypothesis than the inventor of the steam engine had in making his hypothesis when he saw the lid of the kettle bobbing up and down. What do you say?"

Dr. Lewis made no answer. He was watching the growth of a new, unknown tree in his garden.

The doctor made no answer to Remnant's question. For one thing, Remnant was profuse in his eloquence — he has been rigidly condensed in this history — and Lewis was tired of the sound of his voice. For another thing, he found the Z Ray theory almost too extravagant to be bearable, wild enough to tear patience to tatters. And then as the tedious argument continued Lewis became conscious that there was something strange about the night.

It was a dark summer night. The moon was old and faint, above the Dragon's Head across the bay, and the air was very still. It was so still that Lewis had noted that not a leaf stirred on the very tip of a high tree that stood out against the sky; and yet he knew that he was listening to some sound that he could not determine or define. It was not the wind in the leaves, it was not the gentle wash of the water of the sea against the rocks; that latter sound he could distinguish quite easily. But there was something else. It was scarcely a sound; it was as if the air itself trembled and fluttered, as the air trembles in a church when they open the great pedal pipes of the organ.

The doctor listened intently. It was not an illusion, the sound was not in his own head, as he had suspected for a moment; but for the life of him he could not make out whence it came or what it was. He gazed down into the night over the terraces of his garden, now sweet with the scent of the flowers of the night; tried to peer over the tree-tops across the sea towards the Dragon's Head. It struck him suddenly that this strange fluttering vibration of the air might be the noise of a distant aeroplane or airship; there was not the usual droning hum, but this sound might be caused by a new type of engine. A new type of engine? Possibly it was an enemy airship; their range, it had been said, was getting longer; and Lewis was just going to call Remnant's attention to the sound, to its possible cause, and to the possible danger that might be hovering over them, when he saw something that caught his breath and his heart with wild amazement and a touch of terror.

He had been staring upward into the sky, and, about to speak to Remnant, he had let his eyes drop for an instant. He looked down towards the trees in the garden, and saw with utter astonishment that one had changed its shape in the few hours that had passed since the setting of the sun. There was a thick grove of ilexes bordering the lowest terrace, and above them rose one tall pine, spreading its head of sparse, dark branches dark against the sky.

As Lewis glanced down over the terraces he saw that the tall pine tree was no longer there. In its place there rose above the ilexes what might have been a greater ilex; there was the blackness of a dense growth of foliage rising like a broad and far-spreading and rounded cloud over the lesser trees.

Here, then was a sight wholly incredible, impossible. It is doubtful whether the process of the human mind in such a case has ever been analyzed and registered; it is doubtful whether it ever can be registered. It is hardly fair to bring in the mathematician, since he deals with absolute truth (so far as mortality can conceive absolute truth); but how would a mathematician feel if he were suddenly confronted with a two-sided triangle? I suppose he would instantly become a raging madman; and Lewis, staring wide-eyed and wild-eyed at a dark and spreading tree which his own experience informed him was not there, felt for an instant that shock which should affront us all when we first realize the intolerable antinomy of Achilles and the Tortoise. Common sense tells us that Achilles will flash past the tortoise almost with the speed of the lightning; the inflexible truth of mathematics assures us that till the earth boils and the heavens cease to endure the Tortoise must still be in advance; and thereupon we should, in common decency, go mad. We do not go mad, because, by special grace, we are certified that, in the final: court of appeal, all science is a lie, even the highest science of all; and so we simply grin at Achilles and the Tortoise, as we grin at Darwin, deride Huxley, and laugh at Herbert Spencer.

Dr. Lewis did not grin. He glared into the dimness of the night, at the great spreading tree that he knew could not be there. And as he gazed he saw that what at first appeared the dense blackness of foliage was fretted and starred with wonderful appearances of lights and colors.

Afterwards he said to me: “I remember thinking to myself: ‘Look here, I am not delirious; my temperature is perfectly normal. I am not drunk; I only had a pint of Graves with my dinner, over three hours ago. I have not eaten any poisonous fungus; I have not taken *Anhelonium Lewinii* experimentally. So, now then! What is happening?’”

The night had gloomed over; clouds obscured the faint moon and the misty stars. Lewis rose, with some kind of warning and inhibiting gesture to Remnant, who, he was conscious was gaping at him in astonishment. He walked to the open French window, and took a pace forward on to the path outside, and looked, very intently, at the dark shape of the tree, down below the sloping garden, above the washing of the waves. He shaded the light of the lamp behind him by holding his hands on each side of his eyes.

The mass of the tree — the tree that couldn't be there — stood out against the sky, but not so clearly, now that the clouds had rolled up. Its edges, the limits of its leafage, were not so distinct. Lewis thought that he could detect some sort of quivering movement in it; though the air was at a dead calm. It was a night on which one might hold up a lighted match and watch it burn without any wavering or inclination of the flame.

"You know," said Lewis, "how a bit of burnt paper will sometimes hang over the coals before it goes up the chimney, and little worms of fire will shoot through it. It was like that, if you should be standing some distance away. Just threads and hairs of yellow light I saw, and specks and sparks of fire, and then a twinkling of a ruby no bigger than a pin point, and a green wandering in the black, as if an emerald were crawling, and then little veins of deep blue. 'Woe is me!' I said to myself in Welsh, 'What is all this color and burning?'

"And, then, at that very moment there came a thundering rap at the door of the room inside, and there was my man telling me that I was wanted directly up at the Garth, as old Mr. Trevor Williams had been taken very bad. I knew his heart was not worth much, so I had to go off directly, and leave Remnant to make what he could of it all."

CHAPTER VI. Mr. Remnant's Z Ray

DR. LEWIS WAS kept some time at the Garth. It was past twelve when he got back to his house.

He went quickly to the room that overlooked the garden and the sea and threw open the French window and peered into the darkness. There, dim indeed against the dim sky but unmistakable, was the tall pine with its sparse branches, high above the dense growth of the ilex trees. The strange boughs which had amazed him had vanished; there was no appearance now of colors or of fires.

He drew his chair up to the open window and sat there gazing and wondering far into the night, till brightness came upon the sea and sky, and the forms of the trees in the garden grew clear and evident. He went up to his bed at last filled with a great perplexity, still asking questions to which there was no answer.

The doctor did not say anything about the strange tree to Remnant. When they next met, Lewis said that he had thought there was a man hiding amongst the bushes — this in explanation of that warning gesture he had used, and of his going out into the garden and staring into the night. He concealed the truth because he dreaded the Remnant doctrine that would undoubtedly be produced; indeed, he hoped that he had heard the last of the theory of the Z Ray. But Remnant firmly reopened this subject.

"We were interrupted just as I was putting my case to you," he said. "And to sum it all up, it amounts to this: that the Huns have made one of the great leaps of science. They are sending 'suggestions' (which amount to irresistible commands) over here, and the persons affected are seized with suicidal or homicidal mania. The people who were killed by falling over the cliffs or into the quarry probably committed suicide; and so with the man and boy who were found in the bog. As to the Highway case, you remember that Thomas Evans said that he stopped and talked to Williams on the night of the murder. In my opinion Evans was the murderer. He came under the influence of the Ray, became a homicidal maniac in an instant, snatched Williams's spade from his hand and killed him and the others."

"The bodies were found by me on the road."

"It is possible that the first impact of the Ray produces violent nervous excitement, which would manifest itself externally. Williams might have called to his wife to come and see what was the matter with Evans. The children would naturally follow their mother. It seems to me simple. And as for the animals — the horses, dogs, and so forth, they as I say, were no doubt panic stricken by the Ray, and hence driven to frenzy."

"Why should Evans have murdered Williams instead of Williams murdering Evans? Why should the impact of the Ray affect one and not the other?"

"Why does one man react violently to a certain drug, while it makes no impression on another man? Why is A able to drink a bottle of whisky and remain sober, while B is turned into something very like a lunatic after he has drunk three glasses?"

"It is a question of idiosyncrasy," said the doctor.

"Is idiosyncrasy Greek for 'I don't know'?" asked Remnant.

"Not at all," said Lewis, smiling blandly. "I mean that in some diatheses whisky — as you have mentioned whisky — appears not to be pathogenic, or at all events not immediately pathogenic. In other cases, as you very justly observed, there seems to be a very marked cachexia associated with the exhibition of the spirit in question, even in comparatively small doses."

Under this cloud of professional verbiage Lewis escaped from the Club and from Remnant. He did not want to hear any more about that Dreadful Ray, because he felt sure that the Ray was all nonsense. But asking himself why he felt this certitude in the matter he had to confess that he didn't know. An aeroplane, he reflected, was all nonsense before it was made; and he remembered talking in the early nineties to a friend of his about the newly discovered X Rays. The friend laughed incredulously, evidently didn't believe a word of it, till Lewis told him that there was an article on the subject in the current number of the *Saturday Review*; whereupon the unbeliever said, "Oh, is that so? Oh, really. I *see*," and was converted on the X Ray faith on the spot. Lewis, remembering this talk, marveled at the strange processes of the human mind, its illogical and yet all-compelling *ergos*, and wondered whether he himself was only waiting for an article on the Z Ray in the *Saturday Review* to become a devout believer in the doctrine of Remnant.

But he wondered with far more fervor as to the extraordinary thing he had seen in his own garden with his own eyes. The tree that changed all its shape for an hour or two of the night, the growth of strange boughs, the apparition of secret fires among them, the sparkling of emerald and ruby lights: how could one fail to be afraid with great amazement at the thought of such a mystery?

Dr. Lewis's thoughts were distracted from the incredible adventure of the tree by the visit of his sister and her husband. Mr. and Mrs. Merritt lived in a well-known manufacturing town of the Midlands, which was now, of course, a center of munition work. On the day of their arrival at Porth, Mrs. Merritt, who was tired after the long, hot journey, went to bed early, and Merritt and Lewis went into the room by the garden for their talk and tobacco. They spoke of the year that had passed since their last meeting, of the weary dragging of the war, of friends that had perished in it, of the hopelessness of an early ending of all this misery. Lewis said nothing of the terror that was on the land. One does not greet a tired man who is come to a quiet, sunny place for relief from black smoke and work and worry with a tale of horror. Indeed, the doctor saw that his brother-in-law looked far from well. And he seemed "jumpy"; there was an occasional twitch of his mouth that Lewis did not like at all.

"Well," said the doctor, after an interval of silence and port wine, "I am glad to see you here again. Porth always suits you. I don't think you're looking quite up to your usual form. But three weeks of Meirion air will do wonders."

"Well, I hope it will," said the other. "I am not up to the mark. Things are not going well at Midlingham."

"Business is all right, isn't it?"

"Yes. Business is all right. But there are other things that are all wrong. We are living under a reign of terror. It comes to that."

"What on earth do you mean?"

“Well, I suppose I may tell you what I know. It’s not much. I didn’t dare write it. But do you know that at every one of the munition works in Midlingham and all about it there’s a guard of soldiers with drawn bayonets and loaded rifles day and night? Men with bombs, too. And machine-guns at the big factories.”

“German spies?”

“You don’t want Lewis guns to fight spies with. Nor bombs. Nor a platoon of men. I woke up last night. It was the machine-gun at Benington’s Army Motor Works. Firing like fury. And then bang! bang! bang! That was the hand bombs.”

“But what against?”

“Nobody knows.”

“Nobody knows what is happening,” Merritt repeated, and he went on to describe the bewilderment and terror that hung like a cloud over the great industrial city in the Midlands, how the feeling of concealment, of some intolerable secret danger that must not be named, was worst of all.

“A young fellow I know,” he said, “was on short leave the other day from the front, and he spent it with his people at Belmont — that’s about four miles out of Midlingham, you know. ‘Thank God,’ he said to me, ‘I am going back to-morrow. It’s no good saying that the Wipers salient is nice, because it isn’t. But it’s a damned sight better than this. At the front you know what you’re up against anyhow.’ At Midlingham everybody has the feeling that we’re up against something awful and we don’t know what; it’s that that makes people inclined to whisper. There’s terror in the air.”

Merritt made a sort of picture of the great town cowering in its fear of an unknown danger.

“People are afraid to go about alone at nights in the outskirts. They make up parties at the stations to go home together if it’s anything like dark, or if there are any lonely bits on their way.”

“But why? I don’t understand. What are they afraid of?”

“Well, I told you about my being awakened up the other night with the machine-guns at the motor works rattling away, and the bombs exploding and making the most terrible noise. That sort of thing alarms one, you know. It's only natural."

"Indeed, it must be very terrifying. You mean, then, there is a general nervousness about, a vague sort of apprehension that makes people inclined to herd together?"

"There's that, and there's more. People have gone out that have never come back. There were a couple of men in the train to Holme, arguing about the quickest way to get to Northend, a sort of outlying part of Holme where they both lived. They argued all the way out of Midlingham, one saying that the high road was the quickest though it was the longest way. 'It's the quickest going because it's the cleanest going,' he said."

"The other chap fancied a short cut across the fields, by the canal. 'It's half the distance,' he kept on. 'Yes, if you don't lose your way,' said the other. Well, it appears they put an even half-crown on it, and each was to try his own way when they got out of the train. It was arranged that they were to meet at the 'Wagon' in Northend. 'I shall be at the "Wagon" first,' said the man who believed in the short cut, and with that he climbed over the stile and made off across the fields. It wasn't late enough to be really dark, and a lot of them thought he might win the stakes. But he never turned up at the Wagon — or anywhere else for the matter of that."

"What happened to him?"

"He was found lying on his back in the middle of a field — some way from the path. He was dead. The doctors said he'd-been suffocated. Nobody knows how. Then there have been other cases. We whisper about them at Midlingham, but we're afraid to speak out."

Lewis was ruminating all this profoundly. Terror in Meirion and terror far away in the heart of England; but at Midlingham, so far as he could gather from these stories of soldiers on guard, of crackling machine-guns, it was a case of an organized attack on the munitioning of the army. He felt that he did not know enough to warrant his deciding that the terror of Meirion and of Stratfordshire were one.

Then Merritt began again:

"There's a queer story going about, when the door's shut and the curtain's drawn, that is, as to a place right out in the country over the other side of

Midlingham; on the opposite side to Dunwich. They've built one of the new factories out there, a great red brick town of sheds they tell me it is, with a tremendous chimney. It's not been finished more than a month or six weeks. They plumped it down right in the middle of the fields, by the line, and they're building huts for the workers as fast as they can but up to the present the men are billeted all about, up and down the line.

"About two hundred yards from this place there's an old footpath, leading from the station and the main road up to a small hamlet on the hillside. Part of the way this path goes by a pretty large wood, most of it thick undergrowth. I should think there must be twenty acres of wood, more or less. As it happens, I used this path once long ago; and I can tell you it's a black place of nights.

"A man had to go this way one night. He got along all right till he came to the wood. And then he said his heart dropped out of his body. It was awful to hear the noises in that wood. Thousands of men were in it, he swears that. It was full of rustling, and pattering of feet trying to go dainty, and the crack of dead boughs lying on the ground as some one trod on them, and swishing of the grass, and some sort of chattering speech going on, that sounded, so he said, as if the dead sat in their bones and talked! He ran for his life, anyhow; across fields, over hedges, through brooks. He must have run, by his tale, ten miles out of his way before he got home to his wife, and beat at the door, and broke in, and bolted it behind him.".

"There is something rather alarming about any wood at night," said Dr. Lewis.

Merritt shrugged his shoulders.

"People say that the Germans have landed, and that they are hiding in underground places all over the country."

CHAPTER VII. The Case of the Hidden Germans

LEWIS GASPED FOR a moment, silent in contemplation of the magnificence of rumor. The Germans already landed, hiding underground, striking by night, secretly, terribly, at the power of England! Here was a conception which made the myth of “The Russians” a paltry fable; before which the Legend of Mons was an ineffectual thing.

It was monstrous. And yet —

He looked steadily at Merritt; a square-headed, black-haired, solid sort of man. He had symptoms of nerves about him for the moment, certainly, but one could not wonder at that, whether the tales he told were true, or whether he merely believed them to be true. Lewis had known his brother-in-law for twenty years or more, and had always found him a sure man in his own small world. “But then,” said the doctor to himself, “those men, if they once get out of the ring of that little world of theirs, they are lost. Those are the men that believed in Madame Blavatsky.”

“Well,” he said, “what do you think yourself? The Germans landed and hiding somewhere about the country: there’s something extravagant in the notion, isn’t there?”

“I don’t know what to think. You can’t get over the facts. There are the soldiers with their rifles and their guns at the works all over Stratfordshire, and those guns go off. I told you I’d heard them. Then who are the soldiers shooting at? That’s what we ask ourselves at Midlingham.”

“Quite so; I quite understand. It’s an extraordinary state of things.”

“It’s more than extraordinary; it’s an awful state of things. It’s terror in the dark, and there’s nothing worse than that. As that young fellow I was telling you about said, ‘At the front you do know what you’re up against.’”

“And people really believe that a number of Germans have somehow got over to England and have hid themselves underground?”

“People say they’ve got a new kind of poison-gas. Some think that they dig underground places and make the gas there, and lead it by secret pipes into the shops; others say that they throw gas bombs into the factories. It must be worse than anything they’ve used in France, from what the authorities say.”

“The authorities? Do *they* admit that there are Germans in hiding about Midlingham?”

“No. They call it ‘explosions.’ But we know it isn’t explosions. We know in the Midlands what an explosion sounds like and looks like. And we know that the people killed in these ‘explosions’ are put into their coffins in the works. Their own relations are not allowed to see them.”

“And so you believe in the German theory?”

“If I do, it’s because one must believe in something. Some say they’ve seen the gas. I heard that a man living in Dunwich saw it one night like a black cloud with sparks of fire in it floating over the tops of the trees by Dunwich Common.”

The light of an ineffable amazement came into Lewis’s eyes. The night of Remnant’s visit, the trembling vibration of the air, the dark tree that had grown in his garden since the setting of the sun, the strange leafage that was starred with burning, with emerald and ruby fires, and all vanished away when he returned from his visit to the Garth; and such a leafage had appeared as a burning cloud far in the heart of England: what intolerable mystery, what tremendous doom was signified in this? But one thing was clear and certain: that the terror of Meirion was also the terror of the Midlands.

Lewis made up his mind most firmly that if possible all this should be kept from his brother-in-law. Merritt had come to Porth as to a city of refuge from the horrors of Midlingham; if it could be managed he should be spared the knowledge that the cloud of terror had gone before him and hung black over the western land. Lewis passed the port and said in an even voice:

“Very strange, indeed; a black cloud with sparks of fire?”

“I can’t answer for it, you know; it’s only a rumor.”

"Just so; and you think or you're inclined to think that this and all the rest you've told me is to be put down to the hidden Germans?"

"As I say; because one must think something.

"I quite see your point. No doubt, if it's true, it's the most awful blow that has ever been dealt at any nation in the whole history of man. The enemy established in our vitals! But is it possible, after all? How could it have been worked?"

Merritt told Lewis how it had been worked, or rather, how people said it had been worked. The idea, he said, was that this was a part, and a most important part, of the great German plot to destroy England and the British Empire.

The scheme had been prepared years ago, some thought soon after the Franco-Prussian War. Moltke had seen that the invasion of England (in the ordinary sense of the term invasion) presented very great difficulties. The matter was constantly in discussion in the inner military and high political circles, and the general trend of opinion in these quarters was that at the best, the invasion of England would involve Germany in the gravest difficulties, and leave France in the position of the *tertius gaudens*. This was the state of affairs when a very high Prussian personage was approached by the Swedish professor, Huvelius.

Thus Merritt, and here I would say in parenthesis that this Huvelius was by all accounts an extraordinary man. Considered personally and apart from his writings he would appear to have been a most amiable individual. He was richer than the generality of Swedes, certainly far richer than the average university professor in Sweden. But his shabby, green frock-coat, and his battered, furry hat were notorious in the university town where he lived. No one laughed, because it was well known that Professor Huvelius spent every penny of his private means and a large portion of his official stipend on works of kindness and charity. He hid his head in a garret, some one said, in order that others might be able to swell on the first floor. It was told of him that he restricted himself to a diet of dry bread and coffee for a month in order that a poor woman of the streets, dying of consumption, might enjoy luxuries in hospital.

And this was the man who wrote the treatise “De Facinore Humano”; to prove the infinite corruption of the human race.

Oddly enough, Professor Huvelius wrote the most cynical book in the world — Hobbes preaches rosy sentimentalism in comparison — with the very highest motives. He held that a very large part of human misery, misadventure, and sorrow was due to the false convention that the heart of man was naturally and in the main well disposed and kindly, if not exactly righteous. “Murderers, thieves, assassins, violators, and all the host of the abominable,” he says in one passage, “are created by the false pretense and foolish credence of human virtue. A lion in a cage is a fierce beast, indeed; but what will he be if we declare him to be a lamb and open the doors of his den? Who will be guilty of the deaths of the men, women and children whom he will surely devour, save those who unlocked the cage?” And he goes on to show that kings and the rulers of the peoples could decrease the sum of human misery to a vast extent by acting on the doctrine of human wickedness. “War,” he declares, “which is one of the worst of evils, will always continue to exist. But a wise king will desire a brief war rather than a lengthy one, a short evil rather than a long evil. And this not from the benignity of his heart towards his enemies, for we have seen that the human heart is naturally malignant, but because he desires to conquer, and to conquer easily, without a great expenditure of men or of treasure, knowing that if he can accomplish this feat his people will love him and his crown will be secure. So he will wage brief victorious wars, and not only spare his own nation, but the nation of the enemy, since in a short war the loss is less on both sides than in a long war. And so from evil will come good.”

And how, asks Huvelius, are such wars to be waged? The wise prince, he replies, will begin by assuming the enemy to be infinitely corruptible and infinitely stupid, since stupidity and corruption are the chief characteristics of man. So the prince will make himself friends in the very councils of his enemy, and also amongst the populace, bribing the wealthy by proffering to them the opportunity of still greater wealth, and winning the poor by swelling words. “For, contrary to the common opinion, it is the wealthy who are greedy of wealth; while the populace are to be gained by talking to them about liberty, their unknown god. And so much are they enchanted by the words liberty, freedom, and such like, that the wise can go to the poor, rob them of what little they have, dismiss them with a hearty kick, and win their hearts and their votes for ever, if only they will assure them that the treatment which they have received is called liberty."

Guided by these principles, says Huvelius, the wise prince will entrench himself in the country that he desires to conquer; "nay, with but little trouble, he may actually and literally throw his garrisons into the heart of the enemy country before war has begun."

This is a long and tiresome parenthesis; but it is necessary as explaining the long tale which Merritt told his brother-in-law, he having received it from some magnate of the Midlands, who had traveled in Germany. It is probable that the story was suggested in the first place by the passage from Huvelius which I have just quoted.

Merritt knew nothing of the real Huvelius, who was all but a saint; he thought of the Swedish professor as a monster of iniquity, "worse," as he said, "than Neech" — meaning, no doubt, Nietzsche.

So he told the story of how Huvelius had sold his plan to the Germans; a plan for filling England with German soldiers. Land was to be bought in certain suitable and well-considered places, Englishmen were to be bought as the apparent owners of such land, and secret excavations were to be made, till the country was literally undermined. A subterranean Germany, in fact, was to be dug under selected districts of England; there were to be great caverns, underground cities, well drained, well ventilated, supplied with water, and in these places vast stores both of food and of munitions were to be accumulated, year after year, till "the Day" dawned. And then, warned in time, the secret garrison would leave shops, hotels, offices, villas, and vanish underground, ready to begin their work of bleeding England at the heart.

"That's what Henson told me," said Merritt at the end of his long story. "Henson, head of the Buckley Iron and Steel Syndicate. He has been a lot in Germany."

"Well," said Lewis, "of course, it may be so. If it is so, it is terrible beyond words."

Indeed, he found something horribly plausible in the story. It was an extraordinary plan, of course; an unheard of scheme; but it did not seem impossible. It was the Trojan Horse on a gigantic scale; indeed, he reflected, the story of the horse with the warriors concealed within it which was dragged into the heart of Troy by the deluded Trojans themselves might be taken as a prophetic parable of what had happened to England — if Henson’s theory were well founded. And this theory certainly squared with what one had heard of German preparations in Belgium and in France: emplacements for guns ready for the invader, German manufactories which were really German forts on Belgian soil, the caverns by the Aisne made ready for the cannon; indeed, Lewis thought he remembered something about suspicious concrete tennis-courts on the heights commanding London. But a German army hidden under English ground! It was a thought to chill the stoutest heart.

And it seemed from that wonder of the burning tree, that the enemy mysteriously and terribly present at Midlingham, was present also in Meirion. Lewis, thinking of the country as he knew it, of its wild and desolate hillsides, its deep woods, its wastes and solitary places, could not but confess that no more fit region could be found for the deadly enterprise of secret men. Yet, he thought again, there was but little harm to be done in Meirion to the armies of England or to their munitionment. They were working for panic terror? Possibly that might be so; but the camp under the Highway? That should be their first object, and no harm had been done there.

Lewis did not know that since the panic of the horses men had died terribly in that camp; that it was now a fortified place, with a deep, broad trench, a thick tangle of savage barbed wire about it, and a machine-gun planted at each corner.

CHAPTER VIII. What Mr. Merritt Found

MR. MERRITT BEGAN to pick up his health and spirits a good deal. For the first morning or two of his stay at the doctor's he contented himself with a very comfortable deck chair close to the house, where he sat under the shade of an old mulberry tree beside his wife and watched the bright sunshine on the green lawns, on the creamy crests of the waves, on the headlands of that glorious coast, purple even from afar with the imperial glow of the heather, on the white farmhouses gleaming in the sunlight, high over the sea, far from any turmoil, from any troubling of men.

The sun was hot, but the wind breathed all the while gently, incessantly, from the east, and Merritt, who had come to this quiet place, not only from dismay, but from the stifling and oily airs of the smoky Midland town, said that that east wind, pure and clear and like well water from the rock, was new life to him. He ate a capital dinner, at the end of his first day at Porth and took rosy views. As to what they had been talking about the night before, he said to Lewis, no doubt there must be trouble of some sort, and perhaps bad trouble; still, Kitchener would soon put it all right.

So things went on very well. Merritt began to stroll about the garden, which was full of the comfortable spaces, groves, and surprises that only country gardens know. To the right of one of the terraces he found an arbor or summer-house covered with white roses, and he was as pleased as if he had discovered the Pole. He spent a whole day there, smoking and lounging and reading a rubbishy sensational story, and declared that the Devonshire roses had taken many years off his age. Then on the other side of the garden there was a filbert grove that he had never explored on any of his former visits; and again there was a find. Deep in the shadow of the filberts was a bubbling well, issuing from rocks, and all manner of green, dewy ferns growing about it and above it, and an angelica springing beside it. Merritt knelt on his knees, and hollowed his hand and drank the well water. He said (over his port) that night that if all water were like the water of the filbert well the world would turn to teetotalism. It takes a townsman to relish the manifold and exquisite joys of the country.

It was not till he began to venture abroad that Merritt found that something was lacking of the old rich peace that used to dwell in Meirion. He had a favorite walk which he never neglected, year after year. This walk led along the cliffs towards Meiros, and then one could turn inland and return to Porth by deep winding lanes that went over the Allt. So Merritt set out early one morning and got as far as a sentry-box at the foot of the path that led up to the cliff. There was a sentry pacing up and down in front of the box, and he called on Merritt to produce his pass, or to turn back to the main road. Merritt was a good deal put out, and asked the doctor about this strict guard. And the doctor was surprised.

“I didn’t know they had put their bar up there,” he said. “I suppose it’s wise. We are certainly in the far West here; still, the Germans might slip round and raid us and do a lot of damage just because Meirion is the last place we should expect them to go for.”

“But there are no fortifications, surely, on the cliff?”

“Oh, no; I never heard of anything of the kind there.”

“Well, what’s the point of forbidding the public to go on the cliff, then? I can quite understand putting a sentry on the top to keep a look-out for the enemy. What I don’t understand is a sentry at the bottom who can’t keep a look-out for anything, as he can’t see the sea. And why warn the public off the cliffs? I couldn’t facilitate a German landing by standing on Pengareg, even if I wanted to.”

“It is curious,” the doctor agreed. “Some military reasons, I suppose.”

He let the matter drop, perhaps because the matter did not affect him. People who live in the country all the year round, country doctors certainly, are little given to desultory walking in search of the picturesque.

Lewis had no suspicion that sentries whose object was equally obscure were being dotted all over the country. There was a sentry, for example, by the quarry at Llanfihangel, where the dead woman and the dead sheep had been found some weeks before. The path by the quarry was used a good deal, and its closing would have inconvenienced the people of the neighborhood very considerably. But the sentry had his box by the side of the track and had his orders to keep everybody strictly to the path, as if the quarry were a secret fort.

It was not known till a month or two ago that one of these sentries was himself a victim of the terror. The men on duty at this place were given certain very strict orders, which from the nature of the case, must have seemed to them unreasonable. For old soldiers, orders are orders; but here was a young bank clerk, scarcely in training for a couple of months, who had not begun to appreciate the necessity of hard, literal obedience to an order which seemed to him meaningless. He found himself on a remote and lonely hillside, he had not the faintest notion that his every movement was watched; and he disobeyed a certain instruction that had been given him. The post was found deserted by the relief; the sentry's dead body was found at the bottom of the quarry.

This by the way; but Mr. Merritt discovered again and again that things happened to hamper his walks and his wanderings. Two or three miles from Porth there is a great marsh made by the Afon river before it falls into the sea, and here Merritt had been accustomed to botanize mildly. He had learned pretty accurately the causeways of solid ground that lead through the sea of swamp and ooze and soft yielding soil, and he set out one hot afternoon determined to make a thorough exploration of the marsh, and this time to find that rare Bog Bean, that he felt sure, must grow somewhere in its wide extent.

He got into the by-road that skirts the marsh, and to the gate which he had always used for entrance.

There was the scene as he had known it always, the rich growth of reeds and flags and rushes, the mild black cattle grazing on the "islands" of firm turf, the scented procession of the meadowsweet, the royal glory of the loosestrife, flaming pennons, crimson and golden, of the giant dock.

But they were bringing out a dead man's body through the gate.

A laboring man was holding open the gate on the marsh. Merritt, horrified, spoke to him and asked who it was, and how it had happened.

"They do say he was a visitor at Porth. Somehow he has been drowned in the marsh, whatever."

"But it's perfectly safe. I've been all over it a dozen times."

“Well, indeed, we did always think so. If you did slip by accident, like, and fall into the water, it was not so deep; it was easy enough to climb out again. And this gentleman was quite young, to look at him, poor man; and he has come to Meirion for his pleasure and holiday and found his death in it!”

“Did he do it on purpose? Is it suicide?”

“They say he had no reasons to do that.”

Here the sergeant of police in charge of the party interposed, according to orders, which he himself did not understand.

“A terrible thing, sir, to be sure, and a sad pity; and I am sure this is not the sort of sight you have come to see down in Meirion this beautiful summer. So don’t you think, sir, that it would be more pleasant like, if you would leave us to this sad business of ours? I have heard many gentlemen staying in Porth say that there is nothing to beat the view from the hill over there, not in the whole of Wales.”

Every one is polite in Meirion, but somehow Merritt understood that, in English, this speech meant “move on.”

Merritt moved back to Porth — he was not in the humor for any idle, pleasurable strolling after so dreadful a meeting with death. He made some inquiries in the town about the dead man, but nothing seemed known of him. It was said that he had been on his honeymoon, that he had been staying at the Porth Castle Hotel; but the people of the hotel declared that they had never heard of such a person. Merritt got the local paper at the end of the week; there was not a word in it of any fatal accident in the marsh. He met the sergeant of police in the street. That officer touched his helmet with the utmost politeness and a “hope you are enjoying yourself, sir; indeed you do look a lot better already”; but as to the poor man who was found drowned or stifled in the marsh, he knew nothing.

The next day Merritt made up his mind to go to the marsh to see whether he could find anything to account for so strange a death. What he found was a man with an armlet standing by the gate. The armlet had the letters “C.W.” on it, which are understood to mean Coast Watcher. The Watcher “said he had strict instructions to keep everybody away from the marsh. Why? He didn’t know, but some said that the river was changing its course since the new railway embankment was built, and the marsh had become dangerous to people who didn’t know it thoroughly.

“Indeed, sir,” he added, “it is part of my orders not to set foot on the other side of that gate myself, not for one scrag-end of a minute.”

Merritt glanced over the gate incredulously. The marsh looked as it had always looked; there was plenty of sound, hard ground to walk on; he could see the track that he used to follow as firm as ever. He did not believe in the story of the changing course of the river, and Lewis said he had never heard of anything of the kind. But Merritt had put the question in the middle of general conversation; he had not led up to it from any discussion of the death in the marsh, and so the doctor was taken unawares. If he had known of the connection in Merritt’s mind between the alleged changing of the Afon’s course and the tragical event in the marsh, no doubt he would have confirmed the official explanation. He was, above all things, anxious to prevent his sister and her husband from finding out that the invisible hand of terror that ruled at Midlingham was ruling also in Meirion.

Lewis himself had little doubt that the man who was found dead in the marsh had been struck down by the secret agency, whatever it was, that had already accomplished so much of evil; but it was a chief part of the terror that no one knew for certain that this or that particular event was to be ascribed to it. People do occasionally fall over cliffs through their own carelessness, and as the case of Garcia, the Spanish sailor, showed, cottagers and their wives and children are now and then the victims of savage and purposeless violence. Lewis had never wandered about the marsh himself; but Remnant had pottered round it and about it, and declared that the man who met his death there — his name was never known, in Porth at all events — must either have committed suicide by deliberately lying prone in the ooze and stifling himself, or else must have been held down in it. There were no details available, so it was clear that the authorities had classified this death with the others; still, the man might have committed suicide, or he might have had a sudden seizure and fallen in the slimy water face-downwards. And so on: it was possible to believe that case A *or* B *or* C was in the category of ordinary accidents or ordinary crimes. But it was not possible to believe that A *and* B *and* C were all in that category. And thus it was to the end, and thus it is now. We know that the terror reigned, and how it reigned, but there were many dreadful events ascribed to its rule about which there must always be room for doubt.

For example, there was the case of the *Mary Ann*, the rowing-boat which came to grief in so strange a manner, almost under Merritt’s eyes. In my opinion he was quite wrong in associating the sorry fate of the boat and her occupants with a system of signaling by flashlights which he detected or thought that he detected, on the afternoon in which the *Mary Ann* was capsized. I believe his signaling theory to be all nonsense, in spite of the naturalized German governess who was lodging with her employers in the suspected house. But, on the other hand, there is no doubt in my own mind that the boat was overturned and those in it drowned by the work of the terror.

CHAPTER IX. The Light on the Water

LET IT BE noted carefully that so far Merritt had not the slightest suspicion that the terror of Midlingham was quick over. Meirion. Lewis had watched and shepherded him carefully. He had let out no suspicion of what had happened in Meirion, and before taking his brother-in-law to the club he had passed round a hint among the members. He did not tell the truth about Midlingham — and here again is a point of interest, that as the terror deepened the general public cooperated voluntarily, and, one would say, almost subconsciously, with the authorities in concealing what they knew from one another — but he gave out a desirable portion of the truth: that his brother-in-law was "nervy," not by any means up to the mark, and that it was therefore desirable that he should be spared the knowledge of the intolerable and tragic mysteries which were being enacted all about them.

"He knows about that poor fellow who was found in the marsh," said Lewis, "and he has a kind of vague suspicion that there is something out of the common about the case; but no more than that."

"A clear case of suggested, or rather commanded suicide," said Remnant. "I regard it as a strong confirmation of my theory."

"Perhaps so," said the doctor, dreading lest he might have to hear about the Z Ray all over again. "But please don't let anything out to him; I want him to get built up thoroughly before he goes back to Midlingham."

Then, on the other hand, Merritt was as still as death about the doings of the Midlands; he hated to think of them, much more to speak of them; and thus, as I say, he and the men at the Porth Club kept their secrets from one another; and thus, from the beginning to the end of the terror, the links were not drawn together. In many cases, no doubt, A and B met every day and talked familiarly, it may be confidentially, on other matters of all sorts, each having in his possession half of the truth, which he concealed from the other. So the two halves were never put together to make a whole.

Merritt, as the doctor guessed, had a kind of uneasy feeling — it scarcely amounted to a suspicion — as to the business of the marsh; chiefly because he thought the official talk about the railway embankment and the course of the river rank nonsense. But finding that nothing more happened, he let the matter drop from his mind, and settled himself down to enjoy his holiday.

He found to his delight that there were no sentries or watchers to hinder him from the approach to Larnac Bay, a delicious cove, a place where the ashgrove and the green meadow and the glistening bracken sloped gently down to red rocks and firm yellow sands. Merritt remembered a rock that formed a comfortable seat, and here he established himself of a golden afternoon, and gazed at the blue of the sea and the crimson bastions and bays of the coast as it bent inward to Sarnau and swept out again southward to the odd-shaped promontory called the Dragon's Head. Merritt gazed on, amused by the antics of the porpoises who were tumbling and splashing and gamboling a little way out at sea, charmed by the pure and radiant air that was so different from the oily smoke that often stood for heaven at Midlingham, and charmed, too, by the white farmhouses dotted here and there on the heights of the curving coast.

Then he noticed a little row-boat at about two hundred yards from the shore. There were two or three people aboard, he could not quite make out how many, and they seemed to be doing something with a line; they were no doubt fishing, and Merritt (who disliked fish) wondered how people could spoil such an afternoon, such a sea, such pellucid and radiant air by trying to catch white, flabby, offensive, evil-smelling creatures that would be excessively nasty when cooked. He puzzled over this problem and turned away from it to the contemplation of the crimson headlands. And then he says that he noticed that signaling was going on. Flashing lights of intense brilliance, he declares, were coming from one of those farms on the heights of the coast; it was as if white fire was spouting from it. Merritt was certain, as the light appeared and disappeared, that some message was being sent, and he regretted that he knew nothing of heliography. Three short flashes, a long and very brilliant flash, then two short flashes. Merritt fumbled in his pocket for pencil and paper so that he might record these signals, and, bringing his eyes down to the sea level, he became aware, with amazement and horror, that the boat had disappeared. All that he could see was some vague, dark object far to westward, running out with the tide.

Now it is certain, unfortunately, that the *Mary Ann* was capsized and that two schoolboys and the sailor in charge were drowned. The bones of the boat were found amongst the rocks far along the coast, and the three bodies were also washed ashore. The sailor could not swim at all, the boys only a little, and it needs an exceptionally fine swimmer to fight against the outward suck of the tide as it rushes past Pengareg Point.

But I have no belief whatever in Merritt's theory. He held (and still holds, for all I know), that the flashes of light which he saw coming from Penyrhaul, the farmhouse oh the height, had some connection with the disaster to the *Mary Ann*. When it was ascertained that a family were spending their summer at the farm, and that the governess was a German, though a long naturalized German, Merritt could not see that there was anything left to argue about, though there might be many details to discover. But, in my opinion, all this was a mere mare's nest; the flashes of brilliant light were caused, no doubt, by the sun lighting up one window of the farmhouse after the other.

Still, Merritt was convinced from the very first, even before the damning circumstance of the German governess was brought to light; and on the evening of the disaster, as Lewis and he sat together after dinner, he was endeavoring to put what he called the common sense of the matter to the doctor.

"If you hear a shot," said Merritt, "and you see a man fall, you know pretty well what killed him."

There was a flutter of wild wings in the room. A great moth beat to and fro and dashed itself madly against the ceiling, the walls, the glass bookcase. Then a sputtering sound, a momentary dimming of the lamp. The moth had succeeded in its mysterious quest.

"Can you tell me," said Lewis as if he were answering Merritt, "why moths rush into the flame?"

Lewis had put his question as to the strange habits of the common moth to Merritt with the deliberate intent of closing the debate on death by heliograph. The query was suggested, of course, by the incident of the moth in the lamp, and Lewis thought that he had said, "Oh, shut up!" in a somewhat elegant manner. And, in fact Merritt looked dignified, remained silent, and helped himself to port.

That was the end that the doctor had desired. He had no doubt in his own mind that the affair of the *Mary Ann* was but one more item in the long account of horrors that grew larger almost with every day; and he was in no humor to listen to wild and futile theories as to the manner in which the disaster had been accomplished. Here was a proof that the terror that was upon them was mighty not only on the land but on the waters; for Lewis could not see that the boat could have been attacked by any ordinary means of destruction. From Merritt's story, it must have been in shallow water. The shore of Larnac Bay shelves very gradually, and the Admiralty charts showed the depth of water two hundred yards out to be only two fathoms; this would be too shallow for a submarine. And it could not have been shelled, and it could not have been torpedoed; there was no explosion. The disaster might have been due to carelessness; boys, he considered, will play the fool anywhere, even in a boat; but he did not think so; the sailor would have stopped them. And, it may be mentioned, that the two boys were as a matter of fact extremely steady, sensible young fellows, not in the least likely to play foolish tricks of any kind.

Lewis was immersed in these reflections, having successfully silenced his brother-in-law; he was trying in vain to find some clue to the horrible enigma. The Midlingham theory of a concealed German force, hiding in places under the earth, was extravagant enough, and yet it seemed the only solution that approached plausibility; but then again even a subterranean German host would hardly account for this wreckage of a boat, floating on a calm sea. And then what of the tree with the burning in it that had appeared in the garden there a few weeks ago, and the cloud with a burning in it that had shown over the trees of the Midland village?

I think I have, already written something of the probable emotions of the mathematician confronted suddenly with an undoubted two-sided triangle. I said, if I remember, that he would be forced, in decency, to go mad; and I believe that Lewis was very near to this point. He felt himself confronted with an intolerable problem that most instantly demanded solution, and yet, with the same breath, as it were, denied the possibility of there being any solution. People were being killed in an inscrutable manner by some inscrutable means, day after day, and one asked "why" and "how"; and there seemed no answer. In the Midlands, where every kind of munitionment was manufactured, the explanation of German agency was plausible; and even if the subterranean notion was to be rejected as savoring altogether too much of the fairytale, or rather of the sensational romance, yet it was possible that the backbone of the theory was true; the Germans might have planted their agents in some way or another in the midst of our factories. But here in Meirion, what serious effect could be produced by the casual and indiscriminate slaughter of a couple of schoolboys in a boat, of a harmless holiday-maker in a marsh? The creation of an atmosphere of terror and dismay? It was possible, of course, but it hardly seemed tolerable, in spite of the enormities of Louvain and of the *Lusitania*.

Into these meditations, and into the still dignified silence of Merritt broke the rap on the door of Lewis's man, and those words which harass the ease of the country doctor when he tries to take any ease: "You're wanted in the surgery, if you please, sir." Lewis bustled out, and appeared no more that night.

The doctor had been summoned to a little hamlet on the outskirts of Porth, separated from it by half a mile or three-quarters of road. One dignifies, indeed, this settlement without a name in calling it a hamlet; it was a mere row of four cottages, built about a hundred years ago for the accommodation of the workers in a quarry long since disused. In one of these cottages the doctor found a father and mother weeping and crying out to "doctor bach, doctor bach," and two frightened children, and one little body, still and dead. It was the youngest of the three, little Johnnie, and he was dead.

The doctor found that the child had been asphyxiated. He felt the clothes; they were dry; it was not a case of drowning. He looked at the neck; there was no mark of strangling. He asked the father how it had happened, and father and mother, weeping most lamentably, declared they had no knowledge of how their child had been killed: "unless it was the People that had done it." The Celtic fairies are still malignant. Lewis asked what had happened that evening; where had the child been?

"Was he with his brother and sister? Don't they know anything about it?"

Reduced into some sort of order from its original piteous confusion, this is the story that the doctor gathered.

All three children had been well and happy through the day. They had walked in with the mother, Mrs. Roberts, to Porth on a marketing expedition in the afternoon; they had returned to the cottage, had had their tea, and afterwards played about on the road in front of the house. John Roberts had come home somewhat late from his work, and it was after dusk when the family sat down to supper. Supper over, the three children went out again to play with other children from the cottage next door, Mrs. Roberts telling them that they might have half an hour before going to bed.

The two mothers came to the cottage gates at the same moment and called out to their children to come along and be quick about it. The two small families had been playing on the strip of turf across the road, just by the stile into the fields. The children ran across the road; all of them except Johnnie Roberts. His brother Willie said that just as their mother called them he heard Johnnie cry out:

“Oh, what is that beautiful shiny thing over the stile?”

CHAPTER X. The Child and the Moth

THE LITTLE ROBERTS'S ran across the road, up the path, and into the lighted room. Then they noticed that Johnnie had not followed them. Mrs. Roberts was doing something in the back kitchen, and Mr. Roberts had gone out to the shed to bring in some sticks for the next morning's fire. Mrs. Roberts heard the children run in and went on with her work. The children whispered to one another that Johnnie would "catch it" when their mother came out of the back room and found him missing; but they expected he would run in through the open door any minute. But six or seven, perhaps ten, minutes passed, and there was no Johnnie. Then the father and mother came into the kitchen together, and saw that their little boy was not there.

They thought it was some small piece of mischief — that the two other children had hidden the boy somewhere in the room: in the big cupboard perhaps.

"What have you done with him then?" said Mrs. Roberts. "Come out, you little rascal, directly in a minute."

There was no little rascal to come out, and Margaret Roberts, the girl, said that Johnnie had not come across the road with them: he must be still playing all by himself by the hedge.

"What did you let him stay like that for?" said Mrs. Roberts. "Can't I trust you for two minutes together? Indeed to goodness, you are all of you more trouble than you are worth." She went to the open door:

"Johnnie! Come you in directly, or you will be sorry for it. Johnnie!"

The poor woman called at the door. She went out to the gate and called there:

"Come you, little Johnnie. Come you, bachgen, there's a good boy. I do see you hiding there."

She thought he must be hiding in the shadow of the hedge, and that he would come running and laughing— "he was always such a happy little fellow" — to her across the road. But no little merry figure danced out of the gloom of the still, dark night; it was all silence.

It was then, as the mother's heart began to chill, though she still called cheerfully to the missing child, that the elder boy told how Johnnie had said there was something beautiful by the stile: "and perhaps he did climb over, and he is running now about the meadow, and has lost his way."

The father got his lantern then, and the whole family went crying and calling about the meadow, promising cakes and sweets and a fine toy to poor Johnnie if he would come to them.

They found the little body, under the ashgrove in the middle of the field. He was quite still and dead, so still that a great moth had settled on his forehead, fluttering away when they lifted him up.

Dr. Lewis heard this story. There was nothing to be done; little to be said to these most unhappy people.

"Take care of the two that you have left to you," said the doctor as he went away. "Don't let them out of your sight if you can help it. It is dreadful times that we are living in."

It is curious to record, that all through these dreadful times the simple little "season" went through its accustomed course at Porth. The war and its consequences had somewhat thinned the numbers of the summer visitors; still a very fair contingent of them occupied the hotels and boarding-houses and lodging-houses and bathed from the old-fashioned machines on one beach, or from the new-fashioned tents on the other, and sauntered in the sun, or lay stretched out in the shade under the trees that grow down almost to the water's edge. Porth never tolerated Ethiopians or shows of any kind on its sands, but "The Rockets" did very well during that summer in their garden entertainment, given in the castle grounds, and the fit-up companies that came to the Assembly Rooms are said to have paid their bills to a woman and to a man.

Porth depends very largely on its midland and northern custom, custom of a prosperous, well-established sort. People who think Llandudno overcrowded and Colwyn Bay too raw and red and new, come year after year to the placid old town in the southwest and delight in its peace; and as I say, they enjoyed themselves much as usual there in the summer of 1915.

Now and then they became conscious, as Mr. Merritt became conscious, that they could not wander about quite in the old way; but they accepted sentries and coast-watchers and people who politely pointed out the advantages of seeing the view from this point rather than from that as very necessary consequences of the dreadful war that was being waged; nay, as a Manchester man said, after having been turned back from his favorite walk to Castell Coch, it was gratifying to think that they were so well looked after.

“So far as I can see,” he added, “there’s nothing to prevent a submarine from standing out there by Ynys Sant and landing half a dozen men in a collapsible boat in any of these little coves. And pretty fools we should look, shouldn’t we, with our throats cut on the sands; or carried back to Germany in the submarine?” He tipped the coast-watcher half-a-crown.

“That’s right, lad,” he said, “you give us the tip.”

Now here was a strange thing. The north-countryman had his thoughts on elusive submarines and German raiders; the watcher had simply received instructions to keep people off the Castell Coch fields, without reason assigned. And there can be no doubt that the authorities themselves, while they marked out the fields as in the “terror zone,” gave their orders in the dark and were themselves profoundly in the dark as to the manner of the slaughter that had been done there; for if they had understood what had happened, they would have understood also that their restrictions were useless.

The Manchester man was warned off his walk about ten days after Johnnie Roberts’s death. The Watcher had been placed at his post because, the night before, a young farmer had been found by his wife lying in the grass close to the Castle, with no scar on him, nor any mark of violence, but stone dead.

The wife of the dead man, Joseph Cradock, finding her husband lying motionless on the dewy turf, went white and stricken up the path to the village and got two men who bore the body to the farm. Lewis was sent for, and knew, at once when he saw the dead man that he had perished in the way that the little Roberts boy had perished — whatever that awful way might be. Cradock had been asphyxiated; and here again there was no mark of a grip on the throat. It might have been a piece of work by Burke and

Hare, the doctor reflected; a pitch plaster might have been clapped over the man’s mouth and nostrils and held there.

Then a thought struck him; his brother-in-law had talked of a new kind of poison gas that was said to be used against the munition workers in the Midlands: was it possible that the deaths of the man and the boy were due to some such instrument? He applied his tests but could find no trace of any gas having been employed. Carbonic acid gas? A man could not be killed with that in the open air; to be fatal that required a confined space, such a position as the bottom of a huge vat or of a well.

He did not know how Cradock had been killed; he confessed it to himself. He had been suffocated; that was all he could say.

It seemed that the man had gone out at about half-past nine to look after some beasts. The field in which they were was about five minutes’ walk from the house. He told his wife he would be back in a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes. He did not return, and when he had been gone for three-quarters of an hour Mrs. Cradock went out to look for him. She went into the field where the beasts were, and everything seemed all right, but there was no trace of Cradock. She called out; there was no answer.

Now the meadow in which the cattle were pastured is high ground; a hedge divides it from the fields which fall gently down to the castle and the sea. Mrs. Cradock hardly seemed able to say why, having failed to find her husband among his beasts, she turned to the path which led to Castell Coch. She said at first that she had thought that one of the oxen might have broken through the hedge and strayed, and that Cradock had perhaps gone after it. And then, correcting herself, she said:

“There was that; and then there was something else that I could not make out at all. It seemed to me that the hedge did look different from usual. To be sure, things do look different at night, and there was a bit of sea mist about, but somehow it did look odd to me, and I said to myself, ‘have I lost my way, then?’”

She declared that the shape of the trees in the hedge appeared to have changed, and besides, it had a look “as if it was lighted up, somehow,” and so she went on towards the stile to see what all this could be, and when she came near everything was as usual. She looked over the stile and called and hoped to see her husband coming towards her or to hear his voice; but there was no answer, and glancing down the path she saw, or thought she saw, some sort of brightness on the ground, "a dim sort of light like a bunch of glow-worms in a hedge-bank.

"And so I climbed over the stile and went down the path, and the light seemed to melt away; and there was my poor husband lying on his back, saying not a word to me when I spoke to him and touched him."

So for Lewis the terror blackened and became altogether intolerable, and others, he perceived, felt as he did. He did not know, he never asked whether the men at the club had heard of these deaths of the child and the young farmer; but no one spoke of them. Indeed, the change was evident; at the beginning of the terror men spoke of nothing else; now it had become all too awful for ingenious chatter or labored and grotesque theories. And Lewis had received a letter from his brother-in-law at Midlingham; it contained the sentence, "I am afraid Fanny's health has not greatly benefited by her visit to Porth; there are still several symptoms I don't at all like." And this told him, in a phraseology that the doctor and Merritt had agreed upon, that the terror remained heavy in the Midland town.

It was soon after the death of Cradock that people began to tell strange tales of a sound that was to be heard of nights about the hills and valleys to the northward of Porth. A man who had missed the last train from Meiros and had been forced to tramp the ten miles between Meiros and Porth seems to have been the first to hear it. He said he had got to the top of the hill by Tredonoc, somewhere between half-past ten and eleven, when he first noticed an odd noise that he could not make out at all; it was like a shout, a long, drawn-out, dismal wail coming from a great way off, faint with distance. He stopped to listen, thinking at first that it might be owls hooting in the woods; but it was different, he said, from that: it was a long cry, and then there was silence and then it began over again. He could make nothing of it, and feeling frightened, he did not quite know of what, he walked on briskly and was glad to see the lights of Porth station.

He told his wife of this dismal sound that night, and she told the neighbors, and most of them thought that it was “all fancy” — or drink, or the owls after all. But the night after, two or three people, who had been to some small merrymaking in a cottage just off the Meiros road, heard the sound as they were going home, soon after ten. They, too, described it as a long, wailing cry, indescribably dismal in the stillness of the autumn night; “like the ghost of a voice,” said one; “as if it came up from the bottom of the earth,” said another.

CHAPTER XI. At Treff Loyne Farm

LET IT BE remembered, again and again, that, all the while that the terror lasted, there was no common stock of information as to the dreadful things that were being done. The press had not said one word upon it, there was no criterion by which the mass of the people could separate fact from mere vague rumor, no test by which ordinary misadventure or disaster could be distinguished from the achievements of the secret and awful force that was at work.

And so with every event of the passing day. A harmless commercial traveler might show himself in the course of his business in the tumbledown main street of Meiros and find himself regarded with looks of fear and suspicion as a possible worker of murder, while it is likely enough that the true agents of the terror went quite unnoticed. And since the real nature of all this mystery of death was unknown, it followed easily that the signs and warnings and omens of it were all the more unknown. Here was horror, there was horror; but there was no links to join one horror with another; no common basis of knowledge from which the connection between this horror and that horror might be inferred.

So there was no one who suspected at all that this dismal and hollow sound that was now heard of nights in the region to the north of Porth, had any relation at all to the case of the little girl who went out one afternoon to pick purple flowers and never returned, or to the case of the man whose body was taken out of the peaty slime of the marsh, or to the case of Cradock, dead in his fields, with a strange glimmering of light about his body, as his wife reported. And it is a question as to how far the rumor of this melancholy, nocturnal summons got abroad at all. Lewis heard of it, as a country doctor hears of most things, driving up and down the lanes, but he heard of it without much interest, with no sense that it was in any sort of relation to the terror. Remnant had been given the story of the hollow and echoing voice of the darkness in a colored and picturesque form; he employed a Tredonoc man to work in his garden once a week. The gardener had not heard the summons himself, but he knew a man who had done so.

“Thomas Jenkins, Pentoppin, he did put his head out late last night to see what the weather was like, as he was cutting a field of corn the next day, and he did tell me that when he was with the Methodists in Cardigan he did never hear no singing eloquence in the chapels that was like to it. He did declare it was like a wailing of Judgment Day.”

Remnant considered the matter, and was inclined to think that the sound must be caused by a subterranean inlet of the sea; there might be, he supposed, an imperfect or half-opened or tortuous blow-hole in the Tredonoc woods, and the noise of the tide, surging up below, might very well produce that effect of a hollow wailing, far away. But neither he nor any one else paid much attention to the matter; save the few who heard the call at dead of night, as it echoed awfully over the black hills.

The sound had been heard for three or perhaps four nights, when the people coming out of Tredonoc church after morning service on Sunday noticed that there was a big yellow sheepdog in the churchyard. The dog, it appeared, had been waiting for the congregation; for it at once attached itself to them, at first to the whole body, and then to a group of half a dozen who took the turning to the right. Two of these presently went off over the fields to their respective houses, and four strolled on in the leisurely Sunday-morning manner of the country, and these the dog followed, keeping to heel all the time. The men were talking hay, corn and markets and paid no attention to the animal, and so they strolled along the autumn lane till they came to a gate in the hedge, whence a roughly made farm road went through the fields, and dipped down into the woods and to Treff Loyne farm.

Then the dog became like a possessed creature. He barked furiously. He ran up to one of the men and looked up at him, “as if he were begging for his life,” as the man said, and then rushed to the gate and stood by it, wagging his tail and barking at intervals. The men stared and laughed.

“Whose dog will that be?” said one of them.

“It will be Thomas Griffith’s, Treff Loyne,” said another.

“Well, then, why doesn’t he go home? Go home then!” He went through the gesture of picking up a stone from the road and throwing it at the dog. “Go home, then! Over the gate with you.”

But the dog never stirred. He barked and whined and ran up to the men and then back to the gate. At last he came to one of them, and crawled and abased himself on the ground and then took hold of the man’s coat and tried to pull him in the direction of the gate. The farmer shook the dog off, and the four went on their way; and the dog stood in the road and watched them and then put up its head and uttered a long and dismal howl that was despair.

The four farmers thought nothing of it; sheepdogs in the country are dogs to look after sheep, and their whims and fancies are not studied. But the yellow dog — he was a kind of degenerate collie — haunted the Tredonoc lanes from that day. He came to a cottage door one night and scratched at it, and when it was opened lay down, and then, barking, ran to the garden gate and waited, entreating, as it seemed, the cottager to follow him. They drove him away and again he gave that long howl of anguish. It was almost as bad, they said, as the noise that they had heard a few nights before. And then it occurred to somebody, so far as I can make out with no particular reference to the odd conduct of the Treff Loyne sheepdog, that Thomas Griffith had not been seen for some time past. He had missed market day at Porth, he had not been at Tredonoc church, where he was a pretty regular attendant on Sunday; and then, as heads were put together, it appeared that nobody had seen any of the Griffith family for days and days.

Now in a town, even in a small town, this process of putting heads together is a pretty quick business. In the country, especially in a countryside of wild lands and scattered and lonely farms and cottages, the affair takes time. Harvest was going on, everybody was busy in his own fields, and after the long day’s hard work neither the farmer nor his men felt inclined to stroll about in search of news or gossip. A harvester at the day’s end is ready for supper and sleep and for nothing else.

And so it was late in that week when it was discovered that Thomas Griffith and all his house had vanished from this world.

I have often been reproached for my curiosity over questions which are apparently of slight importance, or of no importance at all. I love to inquire, for instance, into the question of the visibility of a lighted candle at a distance. Suppose, that is, a candle lighted on a still, dark night in the country; what is the greatest distance at which you can see that there is a light at all? And then as to the human voice; what is its carrying distance, under good conditions, as a mere sound, apart from any matter of making out words that may be uttered?

They are trivial questions, no doubt, but they have always interested me, and the latter point has its application to the strange business of Treff Loyne. That melancholy and hollow sound, that wailing summons that appalled the hearts of those who heard it was, indeed, a human voice, produced in a very exceptional manner; and it seems to have been heard at points varying from a mile and a half to two miles from the farm. I do not know whether this is anything extraordinary; I do not know whether the peculiar method of production was calculated to increase or to diminish the carrying power of the sound.

Again and again I have laid emphasis in this story of the terror on the strange isolation of many of the farms and cottages in Meirion. I have done so in the effort to convince the townsman of something that he has never known. To the Londoner a house a quarter of a mile from the outlying suburban lamp, with no other dwelling within two hundred yards, is a lonely house, a place to fit with ghosts and mysteries and terrors. How can he understand then, the true loneliness of the white farmhouses of Meirion, dotted here and there, for the most part not even on the little lanes and deep winding byways, but set in the very heart of the fields, or alone on huge bastioned headlands facing the sea, and whether on the high verge of the sea or on the hills or in the hollows of the inner country, hidden from the sight of men, far from the sound of any common call. There is Penyrhaul, for example, the farm from which the foolish Merritt thought he saw signals of light being made: from seaward it is of course, widely visible; but from landward, owing partly to the curving and indented configuration of the bay, I doubt whether any other habitation views it from a nearer distance than three miles.

And of all these hidden and remote places, I doubt if any is so deeply buried as Treff Loyne. I have little or no Welsh, I am sorry to say, but I suppose that the name is corrupted from Trellwyn, or Tref-y-llwyn, “the place in the grove,” and, indeed, it lies in the very heart of dark, overhanging woods. A deep, narrow valley runs down from the high lands of the Allt, through these woods, through steep hillsides of bracken and gorse, right down to the great marsh, whence Merritt saw the dead man being carried. The valley lies away from any road, even from that by-road, little better than a bridlepath, where the four farmers, returning from church were perplexed by the strange antics of the sheepdog. One cannot say that the valley is overlooked, even from a distance, for so narrow is it that the ashgroves that rim it on either side seem to meet and shut it in. I, at all events, have never found any high place from which Treff Loyne is visible; though, looking down from the Allt, I have seen blue wood-smoke rising from its hidden chimneys.

Such was the place, then, to which one September afternoon a party went up to discover what had happened to Griffith and his family. There were half a dozen farmers, a couple of policemen, and four soldiers, carrying their arms; those last had been lent by the officer commanding at the camp. Lewis, too, was of the party; he had heard by chance that no one knew what had become of Griffith and his family; and he was anxious about a young fellow, a painter, of his acquaintance, who had been lodging at Treff Loyne all the summer.

They all met by the gate of Tredonoc churchyard, and tramped solemnly along the narrow lane; all of them, I think, with some vague discomfort of mind, with a certain shadowy fear, as of men who do not quite know what they may encounter. Lewis heard the corporal and the three soldiers arguing over their orders.

“The Captain says to me,” muttered the corporal, “‘Don’t hesitate to shoot if there’s any trouble.’ ‘Shoot what, sir,’ I says. ‘The trouble,’ says he, and that’s all I could get out of him.”

The men grumbled in reply; Lewis thought he heard some obscure reference to ratpoison, and wondered what they were talking about.

They came to the gate in the hedge, where the farm road led down to Treff Loyne. They followed this track, roughly made, with grass growing up between its loosely laid stones, down by the hedge from field to wood, till at last they came to the sudden walls of the valley, and the sheltering groves of the ash trees. Here the way curved down the steep hillside, and bent southward, and followed henceforward the hidden hollow of the valley, under the shadow of the trees.

Here was the farm enclosure; the outlying walls of the yard and the barns and sheds and outhouses. One of the farmers threw open the gate and walked into the yard, and forthwith began bellowing at the top of his voice:

“Thomas Griffith! Thomas Griffith! Where be you, Thomas Griffith?”

The rest followed him. The corporal snapped out an order over his shoulder, and there was a rattling metallic noise as the men fixed their bayonets and became in an instant dreadful dealers out of death, in place of harmless fellows with a feeling for beer.

“Thomas Griffith!” again bellowed the farmer.

There was no answer to this summons. But they found poor Griffith lying on his face at the edge of the pond in the middle of the yard. There was a ghastly wound in his side, as if a sharp stake had been driven into his body.

CHAPTER XII. The Letter of Wrath

IT WAS A still September afternoon. No wind stirred in the hanging woods that were dark all about the ancient house of Treff Loyne; the only sound in the dim air was the lowing of the cattle; they had wandered, it seemed, from the fields and had come in by the gate of the farmyard and stood there melancholy, as if they mourned for their dead master. And the horses; four great, heavy, patient-looking beasts they were there too, and in the lower field the sheep were standing, as if they waited to be fed.

“You would think they all knew there was something wrong,” one of the soldiers muttered to another. A pale sun showed for a moment and glittered on their bayonets. They were standing about the body of poor, dead Griffith, with a certain grimness growing on their faces and hardening there. Their corporal snapped something at them again; they were quite ready. Lewis knelt down by the dead man and looked closely at the great gaping wound in his side.

“He’s been dead a long time,” he said. “A week, two weeks, perhaps. He was killed by some sharp pointed weapon. How about the family? How many are there of them? I never attended them.”

“There was Griffith, and his wife, and his son Thomas and Mary Griffith, his daughter. And I do think there was a gentleman lodging with them this summer.”

That was from one of the farmers. They all looked at one another, this party of rescue, who knew nothing of the danger that had smitten this house of quiet people, nothing of the peril which had brought them to this pass of a farmyard with a dead man in it, and his beasts standing patiently about him, as if they waited for the farmer to rise up and give them their food. Then the party turned to the house. It was an old, sixteenth century building, with the singular round, “Flemish” chimney that is characteristic of Meirion. The walls were snowy with whitewash, the windows were deeply set and stone mullioned, and a solid, stone-tiled porch sheltered the doorway from any winds that might penetrate to the hollow of that hidden valley. The windows were shut tight. There was no sign of any life or movement about the place. The party of men looked at one another, and the churchwarden amongst the farmers, the sergeant of police, Lewis, and the corporal drew together.

“What is it to goodness, doctor?” said the churchwarden.

“I can tell you nothing at all — except that that poor man there has been pierced to the heart,” said Lewis.

“Do you think they are inside and they will shoot us?” said another farmer. He had no notion of what he meant by “they,” and no one of them knew better than he. They did not know what the danger was, or where it might strike them, or whether it was from without or from within. They stared at the murdered man, and gazed dismally at one another.

“Come!” said Lewis, “we must do something. We must get into the house and see what is wrong.”

“Yes, but suppose they are at us while we are getting in,” said the sergeant. “Where shall we be then, Doctor Lewis?”

The corporal put one of his men by the gate at the top of the farmyard, another at the gate by the bottom of the farmyard, and told them to challenge and shoot. The doctor and the rest opened the little gate of the front garden and went up to the porch and stood listening by the door. It was all dead silence. Lewis took an ash stick from one of the farmers and beat heavily three times on the old, black, oaken door studded with antique nails.

He struck three thundering blows, and then they all waited. There was no answer from within. He beat again, and still silence. He shouted to the people within, but there was no answer. They all turned and looked at one another, that party of quest and rescue who knew not what they sought, what enemy they were to encounter. There was an iron ring on the door. Lewis turned it but the door stood fast; it was evidently barred and bolted. The sergeant of police called out to open, but again there was no answer.

They consulted together. There was nothing for it but to blow the door open, and some one of them called in a loud voice to anybody that might be within to stand away from the door, or they would be killed. And at this very moment the yellow sheepdog came bounding up the yard from the woods and licked their hands and fawned on them and barked joyfully.

“Indeed now,” said one of the farmers; “he did know that there was something amiss. A pity it was, Thomas Williams, that we did not follow him when he implored us last Sunday.”

The corporal motioned the rest of the party back, and they stood looking fearfully about them at the entrance to the porch. The corporal disengaged his bayonet and shot into the keyhole, calling out once more before he fired. He shot and shot again; so heavy and firm was the ancient door, so stout its bolts and fastenings. At last he had to fire at the massive hinges, and then they all pushed together and the door lurched open and fell forward. The corporal raised his left hand and stepped back a few paces. He hailed his two men at the top and bottom of the farmyard. They were all right, they said. And so the party climbed and struggled over the fallen door into the passage, and into the kitchen of the farmhouse.

Young Griffith was lying dead before the hearth, before a dead fire of white wood ashes. They went on towards the “parlor,” and in the doorway of the room was the body of the artist, Secretan, as if he had fallen in trying to get to the kitchen. Upstairs the two women, Mrs. Griffith and her daughter, a girl of eighteen, were lying together on the bed in the big bedroom, clasped in each others’ arms.

They went about the house, searched the pantries, the back kitchen and the cellars; there was no life in it.

“Look!” said Dr. Lewis, when they came back to the big kitchen, “look! It is as if they had been besieged. Do you see that piece of bacon, half gnawed through?”

Then they found these pieces of bacon, cut from the sides on the kitchen wall, here and there about the house. There was no bread in the place, no milk, no water.

“And,” said one of the farmers, “they had the best water here in all Meirion. The well is down there in the wood; it is most famous water. The old people did use to call it Ffynnon Teilo; it was Saint Teilo’s Well, they did say.”

“They must have died of thirst,” said Lewis. “They have been dead for days and days.”

The group of men stood in the big kitchen and stared at one another, a dreadful perplexity in their eyes. The dead were all about them, within the house and without it; and it was in vain to ask why they had died thus. The old man had been killed with the piercing thrust of some sharp weapon; the rest had perished, it seemed probable, of thirst; but what possible enemy was this that besieged the farm and shut in its inhabitants? There was no answer.

The sergeant of police spoke of getting a cart and taking the bodies into Porth, and Dr. Lewis went into the parlor that Secretan had used as a sitting-room, intending to gather any possessions or effects of the dead artist that he might find there. Half a dozen portfolios were piled up in one corner, there were some books on a side table, a fishing-rod and basket behind the door — that seemed all. No doubt there would be clothes and such matters upstairs, and Lewis was about to rejoin the rest of the party in the kitchen, when he looked down at some scattered papers lying with the books on the side table. On one of the sheets he read to his astonishment the words: "Dr. James Lewis, Porth." This was written in a staggering trembling scrawl, and examining the other leaves he saw that they were covered with writing.

The table stood in a dark corner of the room, and Lewis gathered up the sheets of paper and took them to the window-ledge and began to read, amazed at certain phrases that had caught his eye. But the manuscript was in disorder; as if the dead man who had written it had not been equal to the task of gathering the leaves into their proper sequence; it was some time before the doctor had each page in its place. This was the statement that he read, with ever-growing wonder, while a couple of the farmers were harnessing one of the horses in the yard to a cart, and the others were bringing down the dead women.

"I do not think that I can last much longer. We shared out the last drops of water a long time ago. I do not know how many days ago. We fall asleep and dream and walk about the house in our dreams, and I am often not sure whether I am awake or still dreaming, and so the days and nights are confused in my mind. I awoke not long ago, at least I suppose I awoke and found I was lying in the passage. I had a confused feeling that I had had an awful dream which seemed horribly real, and I thought for a moment what a relief it was to know that it wasn't true, whatever it might have been. I made up my mind to have a good long walk to freshen myself up, and then I looked round and found that I had been lying on the stones of the passage; and it all came back to me. There was no walk for me.

"I have not seen Mrs. Griffith or her daughter for a long while. They said they were going upstairs to have a rest. I heard them moving about the room at first, now I can hear nothing. Young Griffith is lying in the kitchen, before the hearth. He was talking to himself about the harvest and the weather when I last went into the kitchen. He didn't seem to know I was there, as he went gabbling on in a low voice very fast, and then he began to call the dog, Tiger.

"There seems no hope for any of us. We are in the dream of death…."

Here the manuscript became unintelligible for half a dozen lines. Secretan had written the words "dream of death" three or four times over. He had begun a fresh word and had scratched it out and then followed strange, unmeaning characters, the script, as Lewis thought, of a terrible language. And then the writing became clear, clearer than it was at the beginning of the manuscript, and the sentences flowed more easily, as if the cloud on Secretan's mind had lifted for a while. There was a fresh start, as it were, and the writer began again, in ordinary letter-form:

"DEAR LEWIS,

"I hope you will excuse all this confusion and wandering. I intended to begin a proper letter to you, and now I find all that stuff that you have been reading — if this ever gets into your hands. I have not the energy even to tear it up. If you read it you will know to what a sad pass I had come when it was written. It looks like delirium or a bad dream, and even now, though my mind seems to have cleared up a good deal, I have to hold myself in tightly to be sure that the experiences of the last days in this awful place are true, real things, not a long nightmare from which I shall wake up presently and find myself in my rooms at Chelsea.

"I have said of what I am writing, 'if it ever gets into your hands,' and I am not at all sure that it ever will. If what is happening here is happening everywhere else, then I suppose, the world is coming to an end. I cannot understand it, even now I can hardly believe it. I know that I dream such wild dreams and walk in such mad fancies that I have to look out and look about me to make sure that I am not still dreaming.

“Do you remember that talk we had about two months ago when I dined with you? We got on, somehow or other, to space and time, and I think we agreed that as soon as one tried to reason about space and time one was landed in a maze of contradictions. You said something to the effect that it was very curious but this was just like a dream. ‘A man will sometimes wake himself from his crazy dream,’ you said, ‘by realizing that he is thinking nonsense.’ And we both wondered whether these contradictions that one can’t avoid if one begins to think of time and space may not really be proofs that the whole of life is a dream, and the moon and the stars bits of nightmare. I have often thought over that lately. I kick at the walls as Dr. Johnson kicked at the stone, to make sure that the things about me are there. And then that other question gets into my mind — is the world really coming to an end, the world as we have always known it; and what on earth will this new world be like? I can’t imagine it; it’s a story like Noah’s Ark and the Flood. People used to talk about the end of the world and fire, but no one ever thought of anything like this.

“And then there’s another thing that bothers me. Now and then I wonder whether we are not all mad together in this house. In spite of what I see and know, or, perhaps, I should say, because what I see and know is so impossible, I wonder whether we are not all suffering from a delusion. Perhaps we are our own gaolers, and we are really free to go out and live. Perhaps what we think we see is not there at all. I believe I have heard of whole families going mad together, and I may have come under the influence of the house, having lived in it for the last four months. I know there have been people who have been kept alive by their keepers forcing food down their throats, because they are quite sure that their throats are closed, so that they feel they are unable to swallow a morsel. I wonder now and then whether we are all like this in Treff Loyne; yet in my heart I feel sure that it is not so.

“Still, I do not want to leave a madman’s letter behind me, and so I will not tell you the full story of what I have seen, or believe I have seen. If I am a sane man you will be able to fill in the blanks for yourself from your own knowledge. If I am mad, burn the letter and say nothing about it. Or perhaps — and indeed, I am not quite sure — I may wake up and hear Mary Griffith calling to me in her cheerful sing-song that breakfast will be ready ‘directly, in a minute,’ and I shall enjoy it and walk over to Porth and tell you the queerest, most horrible dream that a man ever had, and ask what I had better take.

“I think that it was on a Tuesday that we first noticed that there was something queer about, only at the time we didn’t know that there was anything really queer in what we noticed. I had been out since nine o’clock in the morning trying to paint the marsh, and I found it a very tough job. I came home about five or six o’clock and found the family at Treff Loyne laughing at old Tiger, the sheepdog. He was making short runs from the farmyard to the door of the house, barking, with quick, short yelps. Mrs. Griffith and Miss Griffith were standing by the porch, and the dog would go to them, look in their faces, and then run up the farmyard to the gate, and then look back with that eager yelping bark, as if he were waiting for the women to follow him. Then, again and again, he ran up to them and tugged at their skirts as if he would pull them by main force away from the house.

“Then the men came home from the fields and he repeated this performance. The dog was running all up and down the farmyard, in and out of the barn and sheds yelping, barking; and always with that eager run to the person he addressed, and running away directly, and looking back as, if to see whether we were following him. When the house door was shut and they all sat down to supper, he would give them no peace, till at last they turned him out of doors. And then he sat in the porch and scratched at the door with his claws, barking all the while. When the daughter brought in my meal, she said: ‘We can’t think what is come to old Tiger, and indeed, he has always been a good dog, too.’

“The dog barked and yelped and whined and scratched at the door all through the evening. They let him in once, but he seemed to have become quite frantic. He ran up to one member of the family after another; his eyes were bloodshot and his mouth was foaming, and he tore at their clothes till they drove him out again into the darkness. Then he broke into a long, lamentable howl of anguish, and we heard no more of him.”

CHAPTER XIII. The Last Words of Mr. Secretan

“I SLEPT ILL that night I awoke again and again from uneasy M dreams, and I seemed in my sleep to hear strange calls and noises and a sound of murmurs and beatings on the door. There were deep, hollow voices, too, that echoed in my sleep, and when I woke I could hear the autumn wind, mournful, on the hills above us. I started up once with a dreadful scream in my ears; but then the house was all still, and I fell again into uneasy sleep.

“It was soon after dawn when I finally roused myself. The people in the house were talking to each other in high voices, arguing about something that I did not understand.

“‘It is those damned gipsies, I tell you,’ said old Griffith.

“‘What would they do a thing like that for?’ asked Mrs. Griffith. ‘If it was stealing now— ‘“

“‘It is more likely that John Jenkins has done it out of spite,’ said the son. ‘He said that he would remember you when we did catch him poaching.’”

“They seemed puzzled and angry, so far as I could make out, but not at all frightened. I got up and began to dress. I don’t think I looked out of the window. The glass on my dressing-table is high and broad, and the window is small; one would have to poke one’s head round the glass to see anything.

“The voices were still arguing downstairs. I heard the old man say, ‘Well, here’s for a beginning anyhow,’ and then the door slammed.

“A minute later the old man shouted, I think, to his son. Then there was a great noise which I will not describe more particularly, and a dreadful screaming and crying inside the house and a sound of rushing feet. They all cried out at once to each other. I heard the daughter crying, ‘it is no good, mother, he is dead, indeed they have killed him,’ and Mrs. Griffith screaming to the girl to let her go. And then one of them rushed out of the kitchen and shot the great bolts of oak across the door, just as something beat against it with a thundering crash.

“I ran downstairs. I found them all in wild confusion, in an agony of grief and horror and amazement. They were like people who had seen something so awful that they had gone mad.

“I went to the window looking out on the farmyard. I won’t tell you all that I saw. But I saw poor old Griffith lying by the pond, with the blood pouring out of his side.

“I wanted to go out to him and bring him in. But they told me that he must be stone dead, and such things also that it was quite plain that any one who went out of the house would not live more than a moment. We could not believe it, even as we gazed at the body of the dead man; but it was there. I used to wonder sometimes what one would feel like if one saw an apple drop from the tree and shoot up into the air and disappear. I think I know now how one would feel.

“Even then we couldn’t believe that it would last. We were not seriously afraid for ourselves. We spoke of getting out in an hour or two, before dinner anyhow. It couldn’t last, because it was impossible. Indeed, at twelve o’clock young Griffith said he would go down to the well by the back way and draw another pail of water. I went to the door and stood by it. He had not gone a dozen yards before they were on him. He ran for his life, and we had all we could do to bar the door in time. And then I began to get frightened.

“Still we could not believe in it. Somebody would come along shouting in an hour or two and it would all melt away and vanish. There could not be any real danger. There was plenty of bacon in the house, and half the weekly baking of loaves and some beer in the cellar and a pound or so of tea, and a whole pitcher of water that had been drawn from the well the night before. We could do all right for the day and in the morning it would have all gone away.

“But day followed day and it was still there. I knew Treff Loyne was a lonely place — that was why I had gone there, to have a long rest from all the jangle and rattle and turmoil of London, that makes a man alive and kills him too. I went to Treff Loyne because it was buried in the narrow valley under the ash trees, far away from any track. There was not so much as a footpath that was near it; no one ever came that way. Young Griffith had told me that it was a mile and a half to the nearest house, and the thought of the silent peace and retirement of the farm used to be a delight to me.

“And now this thought came back without delight, with terror. Griffith thought that a shout might be heard on a still night up away on the Allt, ‘if a man was listening for it,’ he added, doubtfully. My voice was clearer and stronger than his, and on the second night I said I would go up to my bedroom and call for help through the open window. I waited till it was all dark and still, and looked out through the window before opening it. And then I saw over the ridge of the long barn across the yard what looked like a tree, though I knew there was no tree there. It was a dark mass against the sky, with wide-spread boughs, a tree of thick, dense growth. I wondered what this could be, and I threw open the window, not only because I was going to call for help, but because I wanted to see more clearly what the dark growth over the barn really was.

“I saw in the depth of the dark of it points of fire, and colors in light, all glowing and moving, and the air trembled. I stared out into the night, and the dark tree lifted over the roof of the barn and rose up in the air and floated towards me. I did not move till at the last moment when it was close to the house; and then I saw what it was and banged the window down only just in time. I had to fight, and I saw the tree that was like a burning cloud rise up in the night and sink again and settle over the barn.

“I told them downstairs of this. They sat with white faces, and Mrs. Griffith said that ancient devils were let loose and had come out of the trees and out of the old hills because of the wickedness that was on the earth. She began to, murmur something to herself, something that sounded to me like broken-down Latin.

“I went up to my room again an hour later, but the dark tree swelled over the barn. Another day went by, and at dusk I looked out, but the eyes of fire were watching me. I dared not open the window.

“And then I thought of another plan. There was the great old fireplace, with the round Flemish chimney going high above the house. If I stood beneath it and shouted I thought perhaps the sound might be carried better than if I called out of the window; for all I knew the round chimney might act as a sort of megaphone. Night after night, then, I stood in the hearth and called for help from nine o'clock to eleven. I thought of the lonely place, deep in the valley of the ashtrees, of the lonely hills and lands about it. I thought of the little cottages far away and hoped that my voice might reach to those within them. I thought of the winding lane high on the Allt, and of the few men that came there of nights; but I hoped that my cry might come to one of them.

"But we had drunk up the beer, and we would only let ourselves have water by little drops, and on the fourth night my throat was dry, and I began to feel strange and weak; I knew that all the voice I had in my lungs would hardly reach the length of the field by the farm.

"It was then we began to dream of wells and fountains, and water coming very cold, in little drops, out of rocky places in the middle of a cool wood. We had given up all meals; now and then one would cut a lump from the sides of bacon on the kitchen wall and chew a bit of it, but the saltness was like fire.

"There was a great shower of rain one night. The girl said we might open a window and hold out bowls and basins and catch the rain. I spoke of the cloud with burning eyes. She said 'we will go to the window in the dairy at the back, and one of us can get some water at all events,' She stood up with her basin on the stone slab in the dairy and looked out and heard the plashing of the rain, falling very fast. And she unfastened the catch of the window and had just opened it gently with one hand, for about an inch, and had her basin in the other hand. 'And then,' said she, 'there was something that began to tremble and shudder and shake as it did when we went to the Choral Festival at St. Teilo's, and the organ played, and there was the cloud and the burning close before me.'

"And then we began to dream, as I say. I woke up in my sitting-room one hot afternoon when the sun was shining, and I had been looking and searching in my dream all through the house, and I had gone down to the old cellar that wasn't used, the cellar with the pillars and the vaulted room, with an iron pike in my hand. Something said to me that there was water there, and in my dream I went to a heavy stone by the middle pillar and raised it up, and there beneath was a bubbling well of cold, clear water, and

I had just hollowed my hand to drink it when I woke. I went into the kitchen and told young Griffith. I said I was sure there was water there. He shook his head, but he took up the great kitchen poker and we went down to the old cellar. I showed him the stone by the pillar, and he raised it up. But there was no well.

“Do you know, I reminded myself of many people whom I have met in life? I would not be convinced. I was sure that, after all, there was a well there. They had a butcher’s cleaver in the kitchen and I took it down to the old cellar and hacked at the ground with it. The others didn’t interfere with me. We were getting past that. We hardly ever spoke to one another. Each one would be wandering about the house, upstairs and downstairs, each one of us, I suppose, bent on his own foolish plan and mad design, but we hardly ever spoke. Years ago, I was an actor for a bit, and I remember how it was on first nights; the actors treading softly up and down the wings, by their entrance, their lips moving and muttering over the words of their parts, but without a word for one another. So it was with us. I came upon young Griffith one evening evidently trying to make a subterranean passage under one of the walls of the house. I knew he was mad, as he knew I was mad when he saw me digging for a well in the cellar; but neither said anything to the other.

“Now we are past all this. We are too weak. We dream when we are awake and when we dream we think we wake. Night and day come and go and we mistake one for another; I hear Griffith murmuring to himself about the stars when the sun is high at noonday, and at midnight I have found myself thinking that I walked in bright sunlit meadows beside cold, rushing streams that flowed from high rocks.

“Then at the dawn figures in black robes, carrying lighted tapers in their hands pass slowly about and about; and I hear great rolling organ music that sounds as if some tremendous rite were to begin, and voices crying in an ancient song shrill from the depths of the earth.

“Only a little while ago I heard a voice which sounded as if it were at my very ears, but rang and echoed and resounded as if it were rolling and reverberated from the vault of some cathedral, chanting in terrible modulations. I heard the words quite clearly.

“*Incipit liber iræ Domini Dei nostri.* (Here beginneth The Book of the Wrath of the Lord our God.)

“And then the voice sang the word *Aleph,* prolonging it, it seemed through ages, and a light was extinguished as it began the chapter:

“*In that day, saith the Lord, there shall be a cloud over the land, and in the cloud a burning and a shape of fire, and out of the cloud shall issue forth my messengers; they shall run all together, they shall not turn aside; this shall be a day of exceeding bitterness, without salvation. And on every high hill, saith the Lord of Hosts, I will set my sentinels, and my armies shall encamp in the place of every valley; in the house that is amongst rushes I will execute judgment, and in vain shall they fly for refuge to the munitions of the rocks. In the groves of the woods, in the places where the leaves are as a tent above them, they shall find the sword of the slayer; and they that put their trust in walled cities shall be confounded. Woe unto the armed man, woe unto him that taketh pleasure in the strength of his artillery, for a little thing shall smite him, and by one that hath no might shall he be brought down into the dust. That which is low shall be set on high; I will make the lamb and the young sheep to be as the lion from the swellings of Jordan; they shall not spare, saith the Lord, and the doves shall be as eagles on the hill Engedi; none shall be found that may abide the onset of their battle.*

“Even now I can hear the voice rolling far away, as if it came from the altar of a great church and I stood at the door. There are lights very far away in the hollow of a vast darkness, and one by one they are put out. I hear a voice chanting again with that endless modulation that climbs and aspires to the stars, and shines there, and rushes down to the dark depths of the earth, again to ascend; the word is *Zain.*”

Here the manuscript lapsed again, and finally into utter, lamentable confusion. There were scrawled lines wavering across the page on which Secretan seemed to have been trying to note the unearthly music that swelled in his dying ears. As the scrapes and scratches of ink showed, he had tried hard to begin a new sentence. The pen had dropped at last out of his hand upon the paper, leaving a blot and a smear upon it.

Lewis heard the tramp of feet along the passage; they were carrying out the dead to the cart.

CHAPTER XIV. The End of the Terror

DR. LEWIS MAINTAINED that we should never begin to understand the real significance of life until we began to study just those aspects of it which we now dismiss and overlook as utterly inexplicable, and therefore, unimportant.

We were discussing a few months ago the awful shadow of the terror which at length had passed away from the land. I had formed my opinion, partly from observation, partly from certain facts which had been communicated to me, and the pass-words having been exchanged, I found that Lewis had come by very different ways to the same end.

“And yet,” he said, “it is not a true end, or rather, it is like all the ends of human inquiry, it leads one to a great mystery. We must confess that what has happened might have happened at any time in the history of the world. It did not happen till a year ago as a matter of fact, and therefore we made up our minds that it never could happen; or, one would better say, it was outside the range even of imagination. But this is our way. Most people are quite sure that the Black Death — otherwise the Plague — will never invade Europe again. They have made up their complacent minds that it was due to dirt and bad drainage. As a matter of fact the Plague had nothing to do with dirt or with drains; and there is nothing to prevent its ravaging England to-morrow. But if you tell people so, they won’t believe you. They won’t believe in anything that isn’t there at the particular moment when you are talking to them. As with the Plague, so with the Terror. We could not believe that such a thing could ever happen. Remnant said, truly enough, that whatever it was, it was outside theory, outside our theory. Flatland cannot believe in the cube or the sphere.”

I agreed with all this. I added that sometimes the world was incapable of seeing, much less believing, that which was before its own eyes.

“Look,” I said, “at any eighteenth century print of a Gothic cathedral. You will find that the trained artistic eye even could not behold in any true sense the building that was before it. I have seen an old print of Peterborough Cathedral that looks as if the artist had drawn it from a clumsy model, constructed of bent wire and children's bricks.

"Exactly; because Gothic was outside the aesthetic theory (and therefore vision) of the time. You can't believe what you don't see: rather, you can't see what you don't believe. It was so during the time of the Terror. All this bears out what Coleridge said as to the necessity of having the idea before the facts could be of any service to one. Of course, he was right; mere facts, without the correlating idea, are nothing and lead to no conclusion. We had plenty of facts, but we could make nothing of them. I went home at the tail of that dreadful procession from Treff Loyne in a state of mind very near to madness. I heard one of the soldiers saying to the other: 'There's no rat that'll spike a man to the heart, Bill.' I don't know why, but I felt that if I heard any more of such talk as that I should go crazy; it seemed to me that the anchors of reason were parting. I left the party and took the short cut across the fields into Porth. I looked up Davies in the High Street and arranged with him that he should take on any cases I might have that evening, and then I went home and gave my man his instructions to send people on. And then I shut myself up to think it all out — if I could.

"You must not suppose that my experiences of that afternoon had afforded me the slightest illumination. Indeed, if it had not been that I had seen poor old Griffith's body lying pierced in his own farmyard, I think I should have been inclined to accept one of Secretan's hints, and to believe that the whole family had fallen a victim to a collective delusion or hallucination, and had shut themselves up and died of thirst through sheer madness. I think there have been such cases. It's the insanity of inhibition, the belief that you can't do something which you are really perfectly capable of doing. But; I had seen the body of the murdered man and the wound that had killed him.

"Did the manuscript left by Secretan give me no hint? Well, it seemed to me to make confusion worse confounded. You have seen it; you know that in certain places it is evidently mere delirium, the wanderings of a dying mind. How was I to separate the facts from the phantasms — lacking the key to the whole enigma. Delirium is often a sort of cloud-castle, a sort of magnified and distorted shadow of actualities, but it is a very difficult thing, almost an impossible thing, to reconstruct the real house from the distortion of it, thrown on the clouds of the patient's brain. You see, Secretan in writing that extraordinary document almost insisted on the fact that he was not in his proper sense; that for days he had been part asleep, part awake, part delirious. How was one to judge his statement, to separate delirium from fact? In one thing he stood confirmed; you remember he speaks of calling for help up the old chimney of Treff Loyne; that did seem to fit in with the tales of a hollow, moaning cry that had been heard upon the Allt: so far one could take him as a recorder of actual experiences. And I looked in the old cellars of the farm and found a frantic sort of rabbit-hole dug by one of the pillars; again he was confirmed. But what was one to make of that story of the chanting voice, and the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and the chapter out of some unknown Minor Prophet? When one has the key it is easy enough to sort out the facts, or the hints of facts from the delusions; but I hadn't the key on that September evening. I was forgetting the 'tree' with lights and fires in it; that, I think, impressed me more than anything with the feeling that Secretan's story was, in the main, a true story. I had seen a like appearance down there in my own garden; but what was it?

"Now, I was saying that, paradoxically, it is only by the inexplicable things that life can be explained. We are apt to say, you know, 'a very odd coincidence' and pass the matter by, as if there were no more to be said, or as if that were the end of it. Well, I believe that the only real path lies through the blind alleys."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, this is an instance of what I mean. I told you about Merritt, my brother-in-law, and the capsizing of that boat, the *Mary Ann*. He had seen, he said, signal lights flashing from one of the farms on the coast, and he was quite certain that the two things were intimately connected as cause and effect. I thought it all nonsense, and I was wondering how I was going to shut him up when a big moth flew into the room through that window, fluttered about, and succeeded in burning itself alive in the lamp. That gave me my cue; I asked Merritt if he knew why moths made for lamps or something of the kind; I thought it would be a hint to him that I was sick of his flashlights and his half-baked theories. So it was — he looked sulky and held his tongue.

“But a few minutes later I was called out by a man who had found his little boy dead in a field near his cottage about an hour before. The child was so still, they said, that a great moth had settled on his forehead and only fluttered away when they lifted up the body. It was absolutely illogical; but it was this odd ‘coincidence’ of the moth in my lamp and the moth on the dead boy’s forehead that first set me on the track. I can’t say that it guided me in any real sense; it was more like a great flare of red paint on a wall; it rang up my attention, if I may say so; it was a sort of shock like a bang on the big drum. No doubt Merritt was talking great nonsense that evening so far as his particular instance went; the flashes of light from the farm had nothing to do with the wreck of the boat. But his general principle was sound; when you hear a gun go off and see a man fall it is idle to talk of ‘a mere coincidence.’ I think a very interesting book might be written on this question: I would call it ‘A Grammar of Coincidence.’

“But as you will remember, from having read my notes on the matter, I was called in about ten days later to see a man named Cradock, who had been found in a field near his farm quite dead. This also was at night. His wife found him, and there were some very queer things in her story. She said that the hedge of the field looked as if it were changed; she began to be afraid that she had lost her way and got into the wrong field. Then she said the hedge was lighted up as if there were a lot of glow-worms in it, and when she peered over the stile there seemed to be some kind of glimmering upon the ground, and then the glimmering melted away, and she found her husband’s body near where this light had been. Now this man Cradock had been suffocated just as the little boy Roberts had been suffocated, and as that man in the Midlands who took a short cut one night had been suffocated. Then I remembered that poor Johnnie Roberts had called out about ‘something shiny’ over the stile just before he played truant. Then, on my part, I had to contribute the very remarkable sight I witnessed here, as I looked down over the garden; the appearance as of a spreading tree where I knew there was no such tree, and then the shining and burning of lights and moving colors. Like the poor child and Mrs. Cradock, I had seen something shiny, just as some man in Stratfordshire had seen a dark cloud with points of fire in it floating over the trees. And Mrs. Cradock thought that the shape of the trees in the hedge had changed.

“My mind almost uttered the word that was wanted; but you see the difficulties. This set of circumstances could not, so far as I could see, have any relation with the other circumstances of the Terror. How could I connect all this with the bombs and machine-guns of the Midlands, with the armed men who kept watch about the munition shops by day and night. Then there was the long list of people here who had fallen over the cliffs or into the quarry; there were the cases of the men stifled in the slime of the marshes; there was the affair of the family murdered in front of their cottage on the Highway; there was the capsized *Mary Ann*. I could not see any thread that could bring all these incidents together; they seemed to me to be hopelessly disconnected. I could not make out any relation between the agency that beat out the brains of the Williams’s and the agency, that overturned the boat. I don’t know, but I think it’s very likely if nothing more had happened that I should have put the whole thing down as an unaccountable series of crimes and accidents which chanced to occur in Meirion in the summer of 1915. Well, of course, that would have been an impossible standpoint in view of certain incidents in Merritt’s story. Still, if one is confronted by the insoluble, one lets it go at last. If the mystery is inexplicable, one pretends that there isn’t any mystery. That is the justification for what is called free thinking.

“Then came that extraordinary business of Treff Loyne. I couldn’t put that on one side. I couldn’t pretend that nothing strange or out of the way had happened. There was no getting over it or getting round it. I had seen with my eyes that there was a mystery, and a most horrible mystery. I have forgotten my logic, but one might say that Treff Loyne demonstrated the existence of a mystery in the figure of Death.

“I took it all home, as I have told you, and sat down for the evening before it. It appalled me, not only by its horror, but here again by the discrepancy between its terms. Old Griffith, so far as I could judge, had been killed by the thrust of a pike or perhaps of a sharpened stake: how could one relate this to the burning tree that had floated over the ridge of the barn. It was as if I said to you: ‘here is a man drowned, and here is a man burned alive: show that each death was caused by the same agency!’ And the moment that I left this particular case of Treff Loyne, and tried to get some light on it from other instances of the Terror, I would think of the man in the midlands who heard the feet of a thousand men rustling in the wood, and their voices as if dead men sat up in their bones and talked. And then I would say to myself, ‘and how about that boat overturned in a calm sea?’ There seemed no end to it, no hope of any solution.

“It was, I believe, a sudden leap of the mind that liberated me from the tangle. It was quite beyond logic. I went back to that evening when Merritt was boring me with his flashlights, to the moth in the candle, and to the moth on the forehead of poor Johnnie Roberts. There was no sense in it; but I suddenly determined that the child and Joseph Cradock the farmer, and that unnamed Stratfordshire man, all found at night, all asphyxiated, had been choked by vast swarms of moths. I don’t pretend even now that this is demonstrated, but I’m sure it’s true.

“Now suppose you encounter a swarm of these creatures in the dark. Suppose the smaller ones fly up your nostrils. You will gasp for breath and open your mouth. Then, suppose some hundreds of them fly into your mouth, into your gullet, into your windpipe, what will happen to you? You will be dead in a very short time, choked, asphyxiated.”

“But the moths would be dead too. They would be found in the bodies.”

“The moths? Do you know that it is extremely difficult to kill a moth with cyanide of potassium? Take a frog, kill it, open its stomach. There you will find its dinner of moths and small beetles, and the ‘dinner’ will shake itself and walk off cheerily, to resume an entirely active existence. No; that is no difficulty.

“Well, now I came to this. I was shutting out all the other cases. I was confining myself to those that came under the one formula. I got to the assumption or conclusion, whichever you like, that certain people had been asphyxiated by the action of moths. I had accounted for that extraordinary appearance of burning or colored lights that I had witnessed myself, when I saw the growth of that strange tree in my garden. That was clearly the cloud with points of fire in it that the Stratfordshire man took for a new and terrible kind of poison gas, that was the shiny something that poor little Johnnie Roberts had seen over the stile, that was the glimmering light that had led Mrs. Cradock to her husband’s dead body, that was the assemblage of terrible eyes that had watched over Treff Loyne by night. Once on the right track I understood all this, for coming into this room in the dark, I have been amazed by the wonderful burning and the strange fiery colors of the eyes of a single moth, as it crept up the pane of glass, outside. Imagine the effect of myriads of such eyes, of the movement of these lights and fires in a vast swarm of moths, each insect being in constant motion while it kept its place in the mass: I felt that all this was clear and certain.

“Then the next step. Of course, we know nothing really about moths; rather, we know nothing of moth reality. For all I know there may be hundreds of books which treat of moth and nothing but moth. But these are scientific books, and science only deals with surfaces; it has nothing to do with realities — it is impertinent if it attempts to do with realities. To take a very minor matter; we don’t even know why the moth desires the flame. But we do know what the moth does not do; it does not gather itself into swarms with the object of destroying human life. But here, by the hypothesis, were cases in which the moth had done this very thing; the moth race had entered, it seemed, into a malignant conspiracy against the human race. It was quite impossible, no doubt — that is to say, it had never happened before — but I could see no escape from this conclusion.

“These insects, then, were definitely hostile to man; and then I stopped, for I could not see the next step, obvious though it seems to me now. I believe that the soldiers’ scraps of talk on the way to Treff Loyne and back flung the next plank over the gulf. They had spoken of ‘rat poison,’ of no rat being able to spike a man through the heart; and then, suddenly, I saw my way clear. If the moths were infected with hatred of men, and possessed the design and the power of combining against him; why not suppose this hatred, this design, this power shared by other non-human creatures.

“The secret of the Terror might be condensed into a sentence: the animals had revolted against men.

“Now, the puzzle became easy enough; one had only to classify. Take the cases of the people who met their deaths by falling over cliffs or over the edge of quarries. We think of sheep as timid creatures, who always ran away. But suppose sheep that don’t run away; and, after all, in reason why should they run away? Quarry or no quarry, cliff or no cliff; what would happen to you if a hundred sheep ran after you instead of running from you? There would be no help for it; they would have you down and beat you to death or stifle you. Then suppose man, woman, or child near a cliff’s edge or a quarry-side, and a sudden rush of sheep. Clearly there is no help;

there is nothing for it but to go over. There can be no doubt that that, is what happened in all these cases.

“And again; you know the country and you know how a herd of cattle will sometimes pursue people through the fields in a solemn, stolid sort of way. They behave as if they wanted to close in on you. Townspeople sometimes get frightened and scream and run; you or I would take no notice, or at the utmost, wave our sticks at the herd, which will stop dead or lumber off. But suppose they don’t lumber off. The mildest old cow, remember, is stronger than any man. What can one man or half a dozen men do against half a hundred of these beasts no longer restrained by that mysterious inhibition, which has made for ages the strong the humble slaves of the weak? But if you are botanizing in the marsh, like that poor fellow who was staying at Porth, and forty or fifty young cattle gradually close round you, and refuse to move when you shout and wave your stick, but get closer and closer instead, and get you into the slime. Again, where is your help? If you haven’t got an automatic pistol, you must go down and stay down, while the beasts lie quietly on you for five minutes. It was a quicker death for poor Griffith of Treff Loyne — one of his own beasts gored him to death with one sharp thrust of its horn into his heart. And from that morning those within the house were closely besieged by their own cattle and horses and sheep; and when those unhappy people within opened a window to call for help or to catch a few drops of rain water to relieve their burning thirst, the cloud waited for them with its myriad eyes of fire. Can you wonder that Secretan’s statement reads in places like mania? You perceive the horrible position of those people in Treff Loyne; not only did they see death advancing on them, but advancing with incredible steps, as if one were to die not only in nightmare but by nightmare. But no one in his wildest, most fiery dreams had ever imagined such a fate. I am not astonished that Secretan at one moment suspected the evidence of his own senses, at another surmised that the world’s end had come.”

“And how about the Williams’s who were murdered on the Highway near here?”

“The horses were the murderers; the horses that afterwards stampeded the camp below. By some means which is still obscure to me they lured that family into the road and beat their brains out; their shod hoofs were the instruments of execution. And, as for the *Mary Ann*, the boat that was capsized, I have no doubt that it was overturned by a sudden rush of the porpoises that were gamboling about in the water of Larnac Bay. A porpoise is a heavy beast — half a dozen of them could easily upset a light rowing-boat. The munition works? Their enemy was rats. I believe that it has been calculated that in 'greater London' the number of rats is about equal to the number of human beings, that is, there are about seven millions of them. The proportion would be about the same in all the great centers of population; and the rat, moreover, is, on occasion, migratory in its habits. You can understand now that story of the *Semiramis*, beating about the mouth of the Thames, and at last cast away by Arcachon, her only crew dry heaps of bones. The rat is an expert boarder of ships. And so one can understand the tale told by the frightened man who took the path by the wood that led up from the new munition works. He thought he heard a thousand men treading softly through the wood and chattering to one another in some horrible tongue; what he did hear was the marshaling of an army of rats — their array before the battle.

"And conceive the terror of such an attack. Even one rat in a fury is said to be an ugly customer to meet; conceive then, the irruption of these terrible, swarming myriads, rushing upon the helpless, unprepared, astonished workers in the munition shops."

There can be no doubt, I think, that Dr. Lewis was entirely justified in these extraordinary conclusions. As I say, I had arrived at pretty much the same end, by different ways; but this rather as to the general situation, while Lewis had made his own particular study of those circumstances of the Terror that were within his immediate purview, as a physician in large practice in the southern part of Meirion. Of some of the cases which he reviewed he had, no doubt, no immediate or first-hand knowledge; but he judged these instances by their similarity to the facts which had come under his personal notice. He spoke of the affairs of the quarry at Llanfihangel on the analogy of the people who were found dead at the bottom of the cliffs near Porth, and he was no doubt justified in doing so. He told me that, thinking the whole matter over, he was hardly more astonished by the Terror in itself than by the strange way in which he had arrived at his conclusions.

"You know," he said, "those certain evidences of animal malevolence which we knew of, the bees that stung the child to death, the trusted sheepdog's turning savage, and so forth. Well, I got no light whatever from all this; it suggested nothing to me — simply because I had not got that 'idea' which Coleridge rightly holds necessary in all inquiry; facts *qua* facts, as we said, mean nothing and, come to nothing. You do not believe, therefore you cannot see.

"And then, when the truth at last appeared it was through the whimsical 'coincidence' as we call such signs, of the moth in my lamp and the moth on the dead child's forehead. This, I think, is very extraordinary."

"And there seems to have been one beast that remained faithful; the dog at Treff Loyne. That is strange."

"That remains a mystery."

It would not be wise, even now, to describe too closely the terrible scenes that were to be seen in the munition areas of the north and the midlands during the black months of the Terror. Out of the factories issued at black midnight the shrouded dead in their coffins, and their very kinsfolk did not know how they had come by their deaths. All the towns were full of houses of mourning, were full of dark and terrible rumors; incredible, as the incredible reality. There were things done and suffered that perhaps never will be brought to light, memories and secret traditions of these things will be whispered in families, delivered from father to son, growing wilder with the passage of the years, but never growing wilder than the truth.

It is enough to say that the cause of the Allies was for awhile in deadly peril. The men at the front called in their extremity for guns and shells. No one told them what was happening in the places where these munitions were made.

At first the position was nothing less than desperate; men in high places were almost ready to cry "mercy" to the enemy. But, after the first panic, measures were taken such as those described by Merritt in his account of the matter. The workers were armed with special weapons, guards were mounted, machine-guns were placed in position, bombs and liquid flame were ready against the obscene hordes of the enemy, and the "burning clouds" found a fire fiercer than their own. Many deaths occurred amongst the airmen; but they, too, were given special guns, arms that scattered shot broadcast, and so drove away the dark flights that threatened the airplanes.

And, then, in the winter of 1915-16, the Terror ended suddenly as it had begun. Once more a sheep was a frightened beast that ran instinctively from a little child; the cattle were again solemn, stupid creatures, void of harm; the spirit and the convention of malignant design passed out of the hearts of all the animals. The chains that they had cast off for awhile were thrown again about them.

And, finally, there comes the inevitable "why?" Why did the beasts who had been humbly and patiently subject to man, or affrighted by his presence, suddenly know their strength and learn how to league together, and declare bitter war against their ancient master?

It is a most difficult and obscure question. I give what explanation I have to give with very great diffidence, and an eminent disposition to be corrected, if a clearer light can be found.

Some friends of mine, for whose judgment I have very great respect, are inclined to think that there was a certain contagion of hate. They hold that the fury of the whole world at war, the great passion of death that seems driving all humanity to destruction, infected at last these lower creatures, and in place of their native instinct of submission, gave them rage and wrath and ravening.

This may be the explanation. I cannot say that it is not so, because I do not profess to understand the working of the universe. But I confess that the theory strikes me as fanciful. There may be a contagion of hate as there is a contagion of smallpox; I do not know, but I hardly believe it.

In my opinion, and it is only an opinion, the source of the great revolt of the beasts is to be sought in a much subtler region of inquiry. I believe that the subjects revolted because the king abdicated. Man has dominated the beasts throughout the ages, the spiritual has reigned over the rational through the peculiar quality and grace of spirituality that men possess, that makes a man to be that which he is. And when he maintained this power and grace, I think it is pretty clear that between him and the animals there was a certain treaty and alliance. There was supremacy on the one hand, and submission on the other; but at the same time there was between the two that cordiality which exists between lords and subjects in a well-organized state. I know a socialist who maintains that Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" give a picture of true democracy. I do not know about that, but I see that knight and miller were able to get on quite pleasantly together, just because the knight knew that he was a knight and the miller knew that he was a miller. If the knight had had conscientious objections to his knightly grade, while the miller saw no reason why he should not be a knight, I am sure that their intercourse would have been difficult, unpleasant, and perhaps murderous.

So with man. I believe in the strength and truth of tradition. A learned man said to me a few weeks ago: "When I have to choose between the evidence of tradition and the evidence of a document, I always believe the evidence of tradition. Documents may be falsified, and often are falsified; tradition is never falsified." This is true; and, therefore, I think, one may put trust in the vast body of folklore which asserts that there was once a worthy and friendly alliance between man and the beasts. Our popular tale of Dick Whittington and his Cat no doubt represents the adaptation of a very ancient legend to a comparatively modern personage, but we may go back into the ages and find the popular tradition asserting that not only are the animals the subjects, but also the friends of man.

All that was in virtue of that singular spiritual element in man which the rational animals do not possess. Spiritual does not mean respectable, it does not even mean moral, it does not mean "good" in the ordinary acceptation of the word. It signifies the royal prerogative of man, differentiating him from the beasts.

For long ages he has been putting off this royal robe, he has been wiping the balm of consecration from his own breast. He has declared, again and again, that he is not spiritual, but rational, that is, the equal of the beasts over whom he was once sovereign. He has vowed that he is not Orpheus but Caliban.

But the beasts also have within them something which corresponds to the spiritual quality in men — we are content to call it instinct. They perceived that the throne was vacant — not even friendship was possible between them and the self-deposed monarch. If he were not king he was a sham, an imposter, a thing to be destroyed.

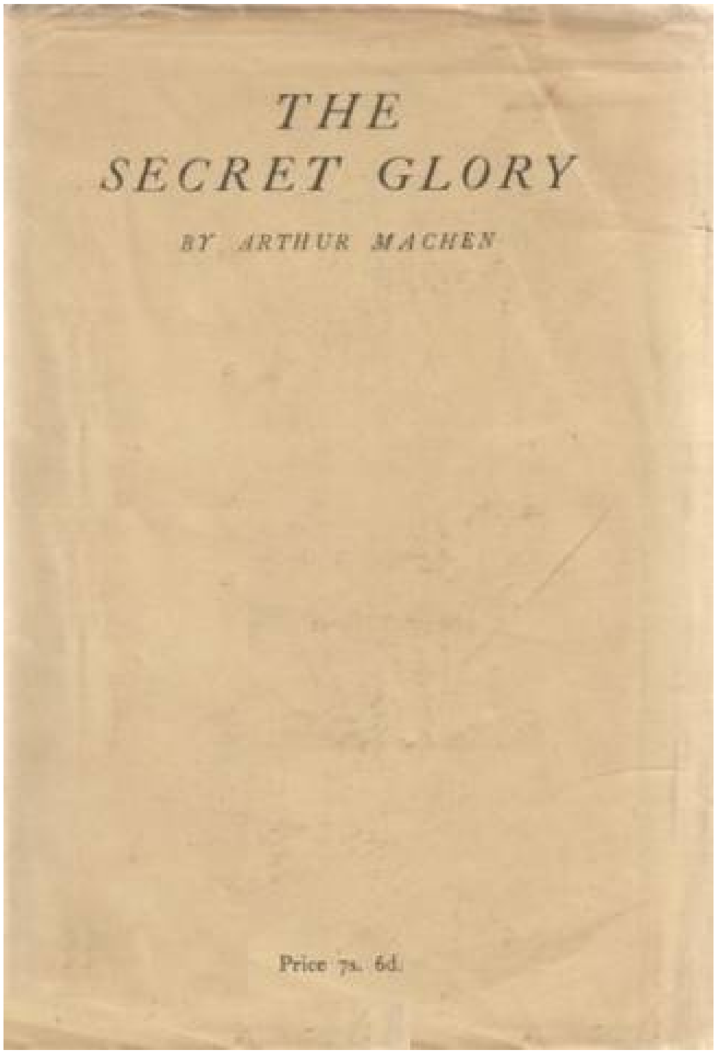
Hence, I think, the Terror. They have risen once — they may rise again.

THE END

The Secret Glory

This novel was written between 1899 and 1908, but was not published until 1922. The story concerns a disenchanted public schoolboy, Ambrose Meyrick, who embarks on a quest for the meaning of life after becoming entranced by tales of the Holy Grail. The last two chapters, in which the Grail is retrieved, were omitted from the 1922 edition and remained unpublished during the author's lifetime.

The novel draws on themes of Celtic mysticism and was much admired by the poet John Betjeman, who mentions it in his poem 'Summoned by Bells'.



The cover of the first edition

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EPILOGUE

The Nanteos cup, in the possession of the Powell family and a possible contender for the Holy Grail in Wales.

Note

One of the schoolmasters in "The Secret Glory" has views on the subject of football similar to those entertained by a well-known schoolmaster whose Biography appeared many years ago. That is the only link between the villain of invention and the good man of real life.

PREFACE

SOME YEARS AGO I met my old master, Sir Frank Benson — he was Mr. F. R. Benson then — and he asked me in his friendly way what I had been doing lately.

"I am just finishing a book," I replied, "a book that everybody will hate."

"As usual," said the Don Quixote of our English stage — if I knew any nobler title to bestow upon him, I would, bestow it— "as usual; running your head against a stone wall!"

Well, I don't know about "as usual"; there may be something to be said for the personal criticism or there may not; but it has struck me that Sir Frank's remark is a very good description of "The Secret Glory," the book I had in mind as I talked to him. It is emphatically the history of an unfortunate fellow who ran his head against stone walls from the beginning to the end. He could think nothing and do nothing after the common fashion of the world; even when he "went wrong," he did so in a highly unusual and eccentric manner. It will be for the reader to determine whether he were a saint who had lost his way in the centuries or merely an undeveloped lunatic; I hold no passionate view on either side. In every age, there are people great and small for whom the times are out of joint, for whom everything is, somehow, wrong and askew. Consider Hamlet; an amiable man and an intelligent man. But what a mess he made of it! Fortunately, my hero — or idiot, which you will — was not called upon to intermeddle with affairs of State, and so only brought himself to grief: if it were grief; for the least chink of the door should be kept open, I am inclined to hold, for the other point of view. I have just been rereading Kipling's "The Miracle of Purun Bhagat," the tale of the Brahmin Prime Minister of the Native State in India, who saw all the world and the glory of it, in the West as well as in the East, and suddenly abjured all to become a hermit in the wood. Was he mad, or was he supremely wise? It is just a matter of opinion.

The origin and genesis of "The Secret Glory" were odd enough. Once on a time, I read the life of a famous schoolmaster, one of the most notable schoolmasters of these later days. I believe he was an excellent man in every way; but, somehow, that "Life" got on my nerves. I thought that the School Songs — for which, amongst other things, this master was famous — were drivel; I thought his views about football, regarded, not as a good game, but as the discipline and guide of life, were rot, and poisonous rot at that. In a word, the "Life" of this excellent man got my back up.

Very good. The year after, schoolmasters and football had ceased to engage my attention. I was deeply interested in a curious and minute investigation of the wonderful legend of the Holy Grail; or rather, in one aspect of that extraordinary complex. My researches led me to the connection of the Grail Legend with the vanished Celtic Church which held the field in Britain in the fifth and sixth and seventh centuries; I undertook an extraordinary and fascinating journey into a misty and uncertain region of Christian history. I must not say more here, lest — as Nurse says to the troublesome and persistent child — I "begin all over again"; but, indeed, it was a voyage on perilous seas, a journey to faery lands forlorn — and I would declare, by the way, my conviction that if there had been no Celtic Church, Keats could never have written those lines of tremendous evocation and incantation.

Again; very good. The year after, it came upon me to write a book. And I hit upon an original plan; or so I thought. I took my dislike of the good schoolmaster's "Life," I took my knowledge of Celtic mysteries — and combined my information.

Original, this plan! It was all thought of years before I was born. Do you remember the critic of the "Eatanswill Gazette"? He had to review for that admirable journal a work on Chinese Metaphysics. Mr. Pott tells the story of the article.

"He read up for the subject, at my desire, in the Encyclopædia Britannica … he read for metaphysics under the letter M, and for China under the letter C, and combined his information!"

PART I

I

A HEAVY CLOUD passed swiftly away before the wind that came with the night, and far in a clear sky the evening star shone with pure brightness, a gleaming world set high above the dark earth and the black shadows in the lane. In the ending of October a great storm had blown from the west, and it was through the bare boughs of a twisted oak that Ambrose Meyrick saw the silver light of the star. As the last faint flash died in the sky he leaned against a gate and gazed upward; and then his eyes fell on the dull and weary undulations of the land, the vast circle of dun ploughland and grey meadow bounded by a dim horizon, dreary as a prison wall. He remembered with a start how late it must be; he should have been back an hour before, and he was still in the open country, a mile away at least from the outskirts of Lupton. He turned from the star and began to walk as quickly as he could along the lane through the puddles and the sticky clay, soaked with three weeks' heavy rain.

He saw at last the faint lamps of the nearest streets where the shoemakers lived and he tramped hurriedly through this wretched quarter, past its penny shops, its raw public-house, its rawer chapel, with twelve foundation-stones on which are written the names of the twelve leading Congregationalists of Lupton, past the squalling children whose mothers were raiding and harrying them to bed. Then came the Free Library, an admirable instance, as the *Lupton Mercury* declared, of the adaptation of Gothic to modern requirements. From a sort of tower of this building a great arm shot out and hung a round clock-face over the street, and Meyrick experienced another shock when he saw that it was even later than he had feared. He had to get to the other side of the town, and it was past seven already! He began to run, wondering what his fate would be at his uncle's hands, and he went by "our grand old parish church" (completely "restored" in the early 'forties), past the remains of the market-cross, converted most successfully, according to local opinion, into a drinking fountain for dogs and cattle, dodging his way among the late shoppers and the early loafers who lounged to and fro along the High Street.

He shuddered as he rang the bell at the Old Grange. He tried to put a bold face on it when the servant opened the door, and he would have gone straight down the hall into the schoolroom, but the girl stopped him.

“Master said you’re to go to the study at once, Master Meyrick, as soon as ever you come in.”

She was looking strangely at him, and the boy grew sick with dread. He was a “funk” through and through, and was frightened out of his wits about twelve times a day every day of his life. His uncle had said a few years before: “Lupton will make a man of you,” and Lupton was doing its best. The face of the miserable wretch whitened and grew wet; there was a choking sensation in his throat, and he felt very cold. Nelly Foran, the maid, still looked at him with strange, eager eyes, then whispered suddenly:

“You must go directly, Master Meyrick, Master heard the bell, I know; but I’ll make it up to you.”

Ambrose understood nothing except the approach of doom. He drew a long breath and knocked at the study door, and entered on his uncle’s command.

It was an extremely comfortable room. The red curtains were drawn close, shutting out the dreary night, and there was a great fire of coal that bubbled unctuously and shot out great jets of flame — in the schoolroom they used coke. The carpet was soft to the feet, and the chairs promised softness to the body, and the walls were well furnished with books. There were Thackeray, Dickens, Lord Lytton, uniform in red morocco, gilt extra; the Cambridge Bible for Students in many volumes, Stanley’s *Life of Arnold*, Coplestone’s *Prælectiones Academicæ*, commentaries, dictionaries, first editions of Tennyson, school and college prizes in calf, and, of course, a great brigade of Latin and Greek classics. Three of the wonderful and terrible pictures of Piranesi hung in the room; these Mr.

Horbury admired more for the subject-matter than for the treatment, in which he found, as he said, a certain lack of the *aurea mediocritas* — almost, indeed, a touch of morbidity. The gas was turned low, for the High Usher was writing at his desk, and a shaded lamp cast a bright circle of light on a mass of papers.

He turned round as Ambrose Meyrick came in. He had a high, bald forehead, and his fresh-coloured face was edged with reddish “mutton-chop” whiskers. There was a dangerous glint in his grey-green eyes, and his opening sentence was unpromising.

“Now, Ambrose, you must understand quite definitely that this sort of thing is not going to be tolerated any longer.”

Perhaps it would not have fared quite so badly with the unhappy lad if only his uncle had not lunched with the Head. There was a concatenation accordingly, every link in which had helped to make Ambrose Meyrick’s position hopeless. In the first place there was boiled mutton for luncheon, and this was a dish hateful to Mr. Horbury’s palate. Secondly, the wine was sherry. Of this Mr. Horbury was very fond, but unfortunately the Head’s sherry, though making a specious appeal to the taste, was in reality far from good and teemed with those fiery and irritating spirits which make the liver to burn and rage. Then Chesson had practically found fault with his chief assistant’s work. He had not, of course, told him in so many words that he was unable to teach; he had merely remarked:

“I don’t know whether you’ve noticed it, Horbury, but it struck me the other day that there was a certain lack of grip about those fellows of yours in the fifth. Some of them struck me as *muddlers*, if you know what I mean: there was a sort of *vagueness*, for example, about their construing in that chorus. Have you remarked anything of the kind yourself?”

And then, again, the Head had gone on:

“And, by the way, Horbury, I don’t quite know what to make of your nephew, Meyrick. He was your wife’s nephew, wasn’t he? Yes. Well, I hardly know whether I can explain what I feel about the boy; but I can’t help saying that there is something wrong about him. His work strikes me as good enough — in fact, quite above the form average — but, to use the musical term, he seems to be in the wrong key. Of course, it may be my fancy; but the lad reminds me of those very objectionable persons who are said to have a joke up their sleeve. I doubt whether he is taking the Lupton stamp; and when he gets up in the school I shall be afraid of his influence on the other boys.”

Here, again, the master detected a note of blame; and by the time he reached the Old Grange he was in an evil humour. He hardly knew which he found the more offensive — Chesson's dish or his discourse. He was a dainty man in his feeding, and the thought of the great fat gigot pouring out a thin red stream from the gaping wound dealt to it by the Head mingled with his resentment of the indirect scolding which he considered that he had received, and on the fire just kindled every drop of that corrosive sherry was oil. He drank his tea in black silence, his rage growing fiercer for want of vent, and it is doubtful whether in his inmost heart he was altogether displeased when report was made at six o'clock that Meyrick had not come in. He saw a prospect — more than a prospect — of satisfactory relief.

Some philosophers have affirmed that lunatic doctors (or mental specialists) grow in time to a certain resemblance to their patients, or, in more direct language, become half mad themselves. There seems a good deal to be said for the position; indeed, it is probably a more noxious madness to swear a man into perpetual imprisonment in the company of maniacs and imbeciles because he sings in his bath and will wear a purple dressing-gown at dinner than to fancy oneself Emperor of China. However this may be, it is very certain that in many cases the schoolmaster is nothing more or less than a bloated schoolboy: the beasts are, radically, the same, but morbid conditions have increased the venom of the former's sting. Indeed, it is not uncommon for well-wishers to the great Public School System to praise their favourite masters in terms which admit, nay, glory in, this identity. Read the memorial tributes to departed Heads in a well-known and most respectable Church paper. "To the last he was a big boy at heart," writes Canon Diver of his friend, that illiterate old sycophant who brought up the numbers of the school to such a pitch by means of his conciliator policy to Jews, Turks, heretics and infidels that there was nothing for it but to make him a bishop. "I always thought he seemed more at home in the playing fields than in the sixth-form room…. He had all the English boy's healthy horror of anything approaching pose or eccentricity…. He could be a severe disciplinarian when severity seemed necessary, but everybody in the school knew that a well-placed 'boundary,' a difficult catch or a goal well won or well averted would atone for all but the most serious offences." There are many other points of resemblance between the average master and the average boy: each, for example, is intensely cruel, and experiences a quite abnormal joy in the infliction of pain. The baser boy tortures those animals which are not *méchants*. Tales have been told (they are hushed up by all true friends of the "System") of wonderful and exquisite orgies in lonely hollows of the moors, in obscure and hidden thickets: tales of a boy or two, a lizard or a toad, and the slow simmering heat of a bonfire. But these are the exceptional pleasures of the *virtuosi*; for the average lad there is plenty of fun to be got out of his feebler fellows, of whom there are generally a few even in the healthiest community. After all, the weakest must go to the wall, and if the bones of the weakest are ground in the process, that is their fault. When some miserable little wretch, after a year or two of prolonged and exquisite torture of body and mind, seeks the last escape of suicide, one knows how the Old Boys will come forward, how gallantly they will declare that the days at the "dear old school" were the happiest in their lives; how "the Doctor" was their father and the Sixth their nursing-mother; how the delights of the Mahomedans' fabled Paradise are but grey and weary sport compared with the joys of the happy fag, whose heart, as the inspired bard of Harrow tells us, will thrill in future years at the thought of the Hill. They write from all quarters, these brave Old Boys: from the hard-won Deanery, result of many years of indefatigable attack on the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith; from the comfortable villa, the reward of commercial activity and acuteness on the Stock Exchange; from the courts and from the camps; from all the high seats of the successful; and common to them all is the convincing argument of praise. And we all agree, and say there is nothing like our great Public Schools, and perhaps the only dissentient voices are those of the father and mother who bury the body of a little child about whose neck is the black sign of the rope. But let them be comforted: the boy was no good at games, though his torments were not bad sport while he lasted.

Mr. Horbury was an old Luptonian; he was, in the words of Canon Diver, but "a big boy at heart," and so he gave orders that Meyrick was to be sent in the study directly he came in, and he looked at the clock on the desk before him with satisfaction and yet with impatience. A hungry man may long for his delayed dinner almost with a sense of fury, and yet at the back of his mind he cannot help being consoled by the thought of how wonderfully he will enjoy the soup when it appears at last. When seven struck, Mr. Horbury moistened his lips slightly. He got up and felt cautiously behind one of the bookshelves. The object was there, and he sat down again. He listened; there were footfalls on the drive. Ah! there was the expected ring. There was a brief interval, and then a knock. The fire was glowing with red flashes, and the wretched toad was secured.

“Now, Ambrose, you must understand quite definitely that this sort of thing isn’t going to be tolerated any longer. This is the third time during this term that you have been late for lockup. You know the rules: six o’clock at latest. It is now twenty minutes past seven. What excuse have you to make? What have you been doing with yourself? Have you been in the Fields?”

“No, Sir.”

“Why not? You must have seen the Resolution of the Sixth on the notice-board of the High School? You know what it promised any boy who shirked rocker? ‘A good sound thrashing with tuds before the First Thirty.’ I am afraid you will have a very bad time of it on Monday, after Graham has sent up your name to the Room.”

There was a pause. Mr. Horbury looked quietly and lengthily at the boy, who stood white and sick before him. He was a rather sallow, ugly lad of fifteen. There was something of intelligence in his expression, and it was this glance that Chesson, the Headmaster, had resented. His heart beat against his breast, his breath came in gasps and the sweat of terror poured down his body. The master gazed at him, and at last spoke again.

“But what have you been doing? Where have you been all this time?”

“If you please, Sir, I walked over to Selden Abbey.”

“To Selden Abbey? Why, it’s at least six miles away! What on earth did you want to go to Selden Abbey for? Are you fond of old stones?”

“If you please, Sir, I wanted to see the Norman arches. There is a picture of them in *Parker’s Glossary*.”

“Oh, I see! You are a budding antiquarian, are you, Ambrose, with an interest in Norman arches — eh? I suppose we are to look forward to the time when your researches will have made Lupton famous? Perhaps you would like to lecture to the school on St. Paul’s Cathedral? Pray, what are your views as to the age of Stonehenge?”

The wit was heavy enough, but the speaker’s position gave a bitter sting to his lash. Mr. Horbury saw that every cut had told, and, without prejudice to more immediate and acuter pleasures, he resolved that such biting satire must have a larger audience. Indeed, it was a long time before Ambrose Meyrick heard the last of those wretched Norman arches. The method was absurdly easy. "Openings" presented themselves every day. For example, if the boy made a mistake in construing, the retort was obvious:

"Thank you, Meyrick, for your most original ideas on the force of the aorist. Perhaps if you studied your Greek Grammar a little more and your favourite *Glossary of Architecture* a little less, it would be the better. Write out 'Aorist means indefinite' five hundred times."

Or, again, perhaps the Classic Orders were referred to. Mr. Horbury would begin to instruct the form as to the difference between Ionic and Doric. The form listened with poor imitation of interest. Suddenly the master would break off:

"I beg your pardon. I was forgetting that we have a great architectural authority amongst us. Be so kind as to instruct us, Meyrick. What does Parker say? Or perhaps you have excogitated some theories of your own? I know you have an original mind, from the extraordinary quantities of your last copy of verse. By the way, I must ask you to write out 'The *e* in *venio* is short' five hundred times. I am sorry to interfere with your more important architectural studies, but I am afraid there is no help for it."

And so on; while the form howled with amusement.

But Mr. Horbury kept these gems for future and public use. For the moment he had more exciting work on hand. He burst out suddenly:

"The fact is, Ambrose Meyrick, you're a miserable little humbug! You haven't the honesty to say, fair and square, that you funked rocker and went loafing about the country, looking for any mischief you could lay your hands on. Instead of that you make up this cock-and-bull story of Selden Abbey and Norman arches — as if any boy in his senses ever knew or cared twopence about such things! I hope you haven't been spending the afternoon in some low public-house? There, don't speak! I don't want to hear any more lies. But, whatever you have been doing, you have broken the rules, and you must be taught that the rules have to be kept. Stand still!"

Mr. Horbury went to the bookshelf and drew out the object. He stood at a little distance behind Meyrick and opened proceedings with a savage cut at his right arm, well above the elbow. Then it was the turn of the left arm, and the master felt the cane bite so pleasantly into the flesh that he distributed some dozen cuts between the two arms. Then he turned his attention to the lad's thighs and finished up in the orthodox manner, Meyrick bending over a chair.

The boy's whole body was one mass of burning, stinging torture; and, though he had not uttered a sound during the process, the tears were streaming down his cheeks. It was not the bodily anguish, though that was extreme enough, so much as a far-off recollection. He was quite a little boy, and his father, dead long since, was showing him the western doorway of a grey church on a high hill and carefully instructing him in the difference between "billetty" and "chevronny."

"It's no good snivelling, you know, Ambrose. I daresay you think me severe, but, though you won't believe me now, the day will come when you will thank me from your heart for what I have just done. Let this day be a turning-point in your life. Now go to your work."

II

IT WAS STRANGE, but Meyrick never came in the after days and thanked his uncle for that sharp dose of physical and mental pain. Even when he was a man he dreamed of Mr. Horbury and woke up in a cold sweat, and then would fall asleep again with a great sigh of relief and gladness as he realised that he was no longer in the power of that "infernal old swine," "that filthy, canting, cruel brute," as he roughly called his old master.

The fact was, as some old Luptonians remarked, the two had never understood one another. With the majority of the boys the High Usher passed for a popular master enough. He had been a distinguished athlete in his time, and up to his last days at the school was a football enthusiast. Indeed, he organised a variety of the Lupton game which met with immense popularity till the Head was reluctantly compelled to stop it; some said because he always liked to drop bitter into Horbury's cup when possible; others — and with more probability on their side — maintained that it was in consequence of a report received from the school doctor to the effect that this new species of football was rapidly setting up an old species of heart disease in the weaker players.

However that might be, there could be no doubt as to Horbury's intense and deep-rooted devotion to the school. His father had been a Luptonian before him. He himself had gone from the school to the University, and within a year or two of taking his degree he had returned to Lupton to serve it as a master. It was the general opinion in Public School circles that the High Usher had counted for as much as Chesson, the Headmaster, if not for more, in the immense advance in prestige and popularity that the school had made; and everybody thought that when Chesson received the episcopal order Horbury's succession was a certainty. Unfortunately, however, there were wheels within wheels, and a total stranger was appointed, a man who knew nothing of the famous Lupton traditions, who (it was whispered) had been heard to say that "this athletic business" was getting a bit overdone.

Mr. Horbury's friends were furious, and Horbury himself, it was supposed, was bitterly disappointed. He retreated to one of the few decent canonries which have survived the wave of agricultural depression; but those who knew him best doubted whether his ecclesiastical duties were an adequate consolation for the loss of that coveted Headmastership of Lupton.

To quote the memoir which appeared in the *Guardian* soon after his death, over some well-known initials:

"His friends were shocked when they saw him at the Residence. He seemed no longer the same man, he had aged more in six months, as some of them expressed themselves, than in the dozen years before. The old joyous Horbury, full of mirth, an apt master of word-play and logic-fence, was somehow 'dimmed,' to use the happy phrase of a former colleague, the Dean of Dorchester. Old Boys who remembered the sparkle of his wit, the zest which he threw into everything, making the most ordinary form-work better fun than the games at other schools, as one of them observed, missed something indefinable from the man whom they had loved so long and so well. One of them, who had perhaps penetrated as closely as any into the *arcana* of Horbury's friendship (a privilege which he will ever esteem as one of the greatest blessings of his life), tried to rouse him with an extravagant rumour which was then going the round of the popular Press, to the effect that considerable modifications were about to be introduced into the compulsory system of games at X., one of the greatest of our great Public Schools. Horbury flushed; the old light came into his eyes; his friend was reminded of the ancient war-horse who hears once more the inspiring notes of the trumpet. 'I can't believe it,' he said, and there was a tremor in his voice. 'They wouldn't dare. Not even Y. (the Headmaster of X.) would do such a scoundrelly thing as that. I *won't* believe it.' But the flush soon faded and his apathy returned. 'After all,' he said, 'I shouldn't wonder if it were so. Our day is past, I suppose, and for all I know they may be construing the Breviary and playing dominoes at X. in a few years' time.'

"I am afraid that those last years at Wareham were far from happy. He felt, I think, out of tune with his surroundings, and, *pace* the readers of the *Guardian*, I doubt whether he was ever quite at home in his stall. He confessed to one of his old associates that he doubted the wisdom of the whole Cathedral system. 'What,' he said, in his old characteristic manner, 'would St. Peter say if he could enter this building and see that gorgeous window in which he is represented with mitre, cope and keys?' And I do not think that he was ever quite reconciled to the daily recitation of the Liturgy, accompanied as it is in such establishments by elaborate music and all the pomp of the surpliced choir. 'Rome and water, Rome and water!' he has been heard to mutter under his breath as the procession swept up the nave, and before he died I think that he had the satisfaction of feeling that many in high places were coming round to his views.

"But to the very last he never forgot Lupton. A year or two before he died he wrote the great school song, 'Follow, follow, follow!' He was pleased, I know, when it appeared in the *Luptonian*, and a famous Old Boy informs me that he will never forget Horbury's delight when he was told that the song was already a great favourite in 'Chantry.' To many of your readers the words will be familiar; but I cannot resist quoting the first verse:

"I am getting old and grey and the hills seem far away, And I cannot hear the horn that once proclaimed the morn When we sallied forth upon the chase together; For the years are gone — alack! — when we hastened on the track, And the huntsman's whip went crack! as a signal to our pack Riding in the sunshine and fair weather. And yet across the ground I seem to hear a sound, A sound that comes up floating from the hollow; And its note is very clear As it echoes in my ear, And the words are: 'Lupton, follow, follow, follow!'

Chorus.

"Lupton, follow away! The darkness lies behind us, and before us is the day. Follow, follow the sun, The whole world's to be won, So, Lupton, follow, follow, follow, follow away!

"An old pupil sang this verse to him on his death-bed, and I think, perhaps, that some at least of the readers of the *Guardian* will allow that George Horbury died 'fortified,' in the truest sense, 'with the rites of the Church' — the Church of a Great Aspiration."

Such was the impression that Mr. Horbury had evidently made upon some of his oldest friends; but Meyrick was, to the last, an infidel. He read the verses in the *Guardian* (he would never subscribe to the *Luptonian*) and jeered savagely at the whole sentiment of the memoir, and at the poetry, too.

“Isn’t it incredible?” he would say. “Let’s allow that the main purpose of the great Public Schools is to breed brave average boobies by means of rocker, sticker and mucker and the rest of it. Still, they do acknowledge that they have a sort of *parergon* — the teaching of two great literatures, two literatures that have moulded the whole of Western thought for more than two thousand years. And they pay an animal like this to teach these literatures — a swine that has not enough literature of any kind in him to save the soul of a louse! Look at those verses! Why, a decent fourth form boy would be ashamed to put his name to them!”

He was foolish to talk in this fashion. People merely said that it was evident he was one of the failures of the great Public School system; and the song was much admired in the right circles. A very well-turned *idem Latine* appeared in the *Guardian* shortly after the publication of the memoir, and the initials at the foot of the version were recognised as those of a literary dean.

And on that autumn evening, far away in the ‘seventies, Meyrick, the boy, left Mr. Horbury’s study in a white fury of grief and pain and rage. He would have murdered his master without the faintest compunction, nay, with huge delight. Psychologically, his frame of mind was quite interesting, though he was only a schoolboy who had just had a sound thrashing for breaking rules.

For the fact, of course, was that Horbury, the irritating influence of the Head’s conversation and sherry apart, was by no means a bad fellow. He was for the moment savagely cruel, but then, most men are apt to be savagely cruel when they suffer from an inflamed liver and offensive superiors, more especially when there is an inferior, warranted defenceless, in their power. But, in the main, Horbury was a very decent specimen of his class — English schoolmaster — and Meyrick would never allow that. In all his reasoning about schools and schoolmasters there was a fatal flaw — he blamed both for not being what they never pretended to be. To use a figure that would have appealed to him, it was if one quarrelled with a plain, old-fashioned meeting-house because it was not in the least like Lincoln Cathedral. A chimney may not be a decorative object, but then it does not profess to be a spire or a pinnacle far in the spiritual city.

But Meyrick was always scolding meeting-houses because they were not cathedrals. He has been heard to rave for hours against useful, unpretentious chimney-pots because they bore no resemblance to celestial spires. Somehow or other, possibly by inheritance, possibly by the influence of his father's companionship, he had unconsciously acquired a theory of life which bore no relation whatever to the facts of it. The theory was manifest in his later years; but it must have been stubbornly, if vaguely, present in him all through his boyhood. Take, for instance, his comment on poor Canon Horbury's verses. He judged those, as we have seen, by the rules of the fine art of literature, and found them rubbish. Yet any old Luptonian would have told him that to hear the whole six hundred boys join in the chorus, "Lupton, follow away!" was one of the great experiences of life; from which it appears that the song, whatever its demerits from a literary point of view, fully satisfied the purpose for which is was written. In other words, it was an excellent chimney, but Meyrick still persisted in his easy and futile task of proving that it was not a bit like a spire. Then, again, one finds a fallacy of still huger extent in that major premiss of his: that the great Public Schools purpose to themselves as a secondary and minor object the imparting of the spirit and beauty of the Greek and Latin literatures. Now, it is very possible that at some distant period in the past this was an object, or even, perhaps, *the* object of the institutions in question. The Humanists, it may be conjectured, thought of school and University as places where Latin and Greek were to be learned, and to be learned with the object of enjoying the great thought and the great style of an antique world. One sees the spirit of this in Rabelais, for example. The Classics are a wonderful adventure; to learn to understand them is to be a spiritual Columbus, a discoverer of new seas and unknown continents, a drinker of new-old wine in a new-old land. To the student of those days a mysterious drowned Atlantis again rose splendid from the waves of the great deep. It was these things that Meyrick (unconsciously, doubtless) expected to find in his school life; it was for the absence of these things that he continued to scold the system in his later years; wherein, like Jim in *Huckleberry Finn*, he missed the point by a thousand miles.

The Latin and Greek of modern instruction are, of course, most curious and interesting survivals; no longer taught with any view of enabling students to enjoy and understand either the thought or beauty of the originals; taught rather in such a manner as to nauseate the learner for the rest of his days with the very notion of these lessons. Still, the study of the Classics survives, a curious and elaborate ritual, from which all sense and spirit have departed. One has only to recollect the form master's lessons in the *Odyssey* or the *Bacchæ*, and then to view modern Free-masons celebrating the Mystic Death and Resurrection of Hiram Abiff; the analogy is complete, for neither the master nor the Masons have the remotest notion of what they are doing. Both persevere in strange and mysterious actions from inveterate conservatism.

Meyrick was a lover of antiquity and a special lover of survivals, but he could never see that the round of Greek syntax, and Latin prose, of Elegiacs and verbs in [Greek: mi], with the mystery of the Oratio obliqua and the Optative, was one of the most strange and picturesque survivals of modern life. It is to be noted, by the way, that the very meaning of the word "scholar" has been radically changed. Thus a well-known authority points out that "Melancholy" Burton had no "scholarship" in the real sense of the word; he merely used his vast knowledge of ancient and modern literature to make one of the most entertaining and curious books that the world possesses. True "scholarship," in the modern sense, is to be sought for not in the Jacobean translators of the Bible, but in the Victorian revisers. The former made the greatest of English books out of their Hebrew and Greek originals; but the latter understood the force of the aorist. It is curious to reflect that "scholar" once meant a man of literary taste and knowledge.

Meyrick never mastered these distinctions, or, if he did so in later years, he never confessed to his enlightment, but went on railing at the meeting-house, which, he still maintained, *did* pretend to be a cathedral. He has been heard to wonder why a certain Dean, who had pointed out the vast improvements that had been effected by the Revisers, did not employ a few young art students from Kensington to correct the infamous drawing of the fourteenth-century glass in his cathedral. He was incorrigible; he was always incorrigible, and thus, in his boyhood, on the dark November evening, he meditated the murder of his good master and uncle — for at least a quarter of an hour.

His father, he remembered, had always spoken of Gothic architecture as the most wonderful and beautiful thing in the world: a thing to be studied and loved and reverenced. His father had never so much as mentioned rocker, much less had he preached it as the one way by which an English boy must be saved. Hence, Ambrose maintained inwardly that his visit to Selden Abbey was deserving of reward rather than punishment, and he resented bitterly, the savage injustice (as he thought it) of his caning.

III

YET MR. HORBURY had been right in one matter, if not in all. That evening was a turning-point in Meyrick's life. He had felt the utmost rage of the enemy, as it were, and he determined that he would be a funk no longer. He would not degenerate into the state of little Phipps, who had been bullied and "rockered" and beaten into such a deplorable condition that he fainted dead away while the Headmaster was operating on him for "systematic and deliberate lying." Phipps not only fainted, but, being fundamentally sensible, as Dr. Johnson expressed it, showed a strong disinclination to return to consciousness and the precious balms of the "dear old Head." Chesson was rather frightened, and the school doctor, who had his living to get, said, somewhat dryly, that he thought the lad had better go home for a week or two.

So Phipps went home in a state which made his mother cry bitterly and his father wonder whether the Public School system was not over-praised. But the old family doctor went about raging and swearing at the "scoundrels" who had reduced a child of twelve to a nervous wreck, with "neurasthenia cerebralis" well on its way. But Dr. Walford had got his education in some trumpery little academy, and did not understand or value the *ethos* of the great Public Schools.

Now, Ambrose Meyrick had marked the career of wretched Phipps with concern and pity. The miserable little creature had been brought by careful handling from masters and boys to such a pitch of neurotic perfection that it was only necessary to tap him smartly on the back or on the arm, and he would instantly burst into tears. Whenever anyone asked him the simplest question he suspected a cruel trap of some sort, and lied and equivocated and shuffled with a pitiable lack of skill. Though he was pitched by the heels into mucker about three times a week, that he might acquire the useful art of natation, he still seemed to grow dirtier and dirtier. His school books were torn to bits, his exercises made into darts; he had impositions for losing books and canings for not doing his work, and he lied and cried all the more.

Meyrick had never got to this depth. He was a sturdy boy, and Phipps had always been a weakly little animal; but, as he walked from the study to the schoolroom after his thrashing, he felt that he had been in some danger of descending on that sad way. He finally resolved that he would never tread it, and so he walked past the baize-lined doors into the room where the other boys were at work on prep, with an air of unconcern which was not in the least assumed.

Mr. Horbury was a man of considerable private means and did not care to be bothered with the troubles and responsibilities of a big House. But there was room and to spare in the Old Grange, so he took three boys besides his nephew. These three were waiting with a grin of anticipation, since the nature of Meyrick's interview with "old Horbury" was not dubious. But Ambrose strolled in with a "Hallo, you fellows!" and sat down in his place as if nothing had happened. This was intolerable.

"I say, Meyrick," began Pelly, a beefy boy with a red face, "you *have* been blubbing! Feel like writing home about it? Oh! I forgot. This is your home, isn't it? How many cuts? I didn't hear you howl."

The boy took no notice. He was getting out his books as if no one had spoken.

"Can't you answer?" went on the beefy one. "How many cuts, you young sneak?"

"Go to hell!"

The whole three stared aghast for a moment; they thought Meyrick must have gone mad. Only one, Bates the observant, began to chuckle quietly to himself, for he did not like Pelly. He who was always beefy became beefier; his eyes bulged out with fury.

"I'll give it you," he said and made for Ambrose, who was turning over the leaves of the Latin dictionary. Ambrose did not wait for the assault; he rose also and met Pelly half-way with a furious blow, well planted on the nose. Pelly took a back somersault and fell with a crash to the floor, where he lay for a moment half stunned. He rose staggering and looked about him with a pathetic, bewildered air; for, indeed, a great part of his little world had crumbled about his ears. He stood in the middle of the room, wondering what it meant, whether it was true indeed that Meyrick was no longer of any use for a little quiet fun. A horrible and incredible transmutation had, apparently, been effected in the funk of old. Pelly gazed wildly about him as he tried to staunch the blood that poured over his mouth.

“Foul blow!” ventured Rawson, a lean lad who liked to twist the arms of very little boys till they shrieked for mercy. The full inwardness of the incident had not penetrated to his brain; he saw without believing, in the manner of the materialist who denies the marvellous even when it is before his eyes.

“Foul blow, young Meyrick!”

The quiet student had gone back to his place and was again handling his dictionary. It was a hard, compact volume, rebound in strong boards, and the edge of these boards caught the unfortunate Rawson full across the eyes with extraordinary force. He put his face in his hands and blubbered quietly and dismally, rocking to and fro in his seat, hardly hearing the fluent stream of curses with which the quiet student inquired whether the blow he had just had was good enough for him.

Meyrick picked up his dictionary with a volley of remarks which would have done credit to an old-fashioned stage-manager at the last dress rehearsal before production.

“Hark at him,” said Pelly feebly, almost reverently. “Hark at him.” But poor Rawson, rocking to and fro, his head between his hands, went on blubbering softly and spoke no word.

Meyrick had never been an unobservant lad; he had simply made a discovery that evening that in Rome certain Roman customs must be adopted. The wise Bates went on doing his copy of Latin verse, chuckling gently to himself. Bates was a cynic. He despised all the customs and manners of the place most heartily and took the most curious care to observe them. He might have been the inventor and patentee of rocker, if one judged him by the fervour with which he played it. He entered his name for every possible event at the sports, and jumped the jumps and threw the hammer and ran the races as if his life depended on it. Once Mr. Horbury had accidentally over-head Bates saying something about “the honour of the

House" which went to his heart. As for cricket, Bates played as if his sole ambition was to become a first-class professional. And he chuckled as he did his Latin verses, which he wrote (to the awe of other boys) "as if he were writing a letter" — that is, without making a rough copy. For Bates had got the "hang" of the whole system from rocker to Latin verse, and his copies were much admired. He grinned that evening, partly at the transmutation of Meyrick and partly at the line he was jotting down:

"*Mira loquor, cœlo resonans vox funditur alto.*"

In after life he jotted down a couple of novels which sold, as the journalists said, "like hot cakes." Meyrick went to see him soon after the first novel had gone into its thirtieth thousand, and Bates was reading "appreciations" and fingering a cheque and chuckling.

"Mira loquor, populo, resonans, *cheque* funditur alto," he said. "I know what schoolmasters and boys and the public want, and I take care they get it — *sale espèce de sacrés cochons de N. de D.*!"

The rest of prep. went off quite quietly. Pelly was slowly recovering from the shock that he had received and began to meditate revenge. Meyrick had got him unawares, he reflected. It was merely an accident, and he resolved to challenge Meyrick to fight and give him back the worst licking he had ever had in his life. He was beefy, but a bold fellow. Rawson, who was really a cruel coward and a sneak, had made up his mind that he wanted no more, and from time to time cast meek and propitiatory glances in Meyrick's direction.

At half-past nine they all went into their dining-room for bread and cheese and beer. At a quarter to ten Mr. Horbury appeared in cap and gown and read a chapter from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, with one or two singularly maundering and unhappy prayers. He stopped the boys as they were going up to their rooms.

"What's this, Pelly?" he said. "Your nose is all swollen. It's been bleeding, too, I see. What have you been doing to yourself? And you, Rawson, how do you account for your eyes being black? What's the meaning of all this?"

"Please, Sir, there was a very stiff bully down at rocker this afternoon, and Rawson and I got tokered badly."

"Were you in the bully, Bates?"

"No, Sir; I've been outside since the beginning of the term. But all the fellows were playing up tremendously, and I saw Rawson and Pelly had been touched when we were changing."

"Ah! I see. I'm very glad to find the House plays up so well. As for you, Bates, I hear you're the best outside for your age that we've ever had. Good night."

The three said "Thank you, Sir," as if their dearest wish had been gratified, and the master could have sworn that Bates flushed with pleasure at his word of praise. But the fact was that Bates had "suggested" the flush by a cunning arrangement of his features.

The boys vanished and Mr. Horbury returned to his desk. He was editing a selection called "English Literature for Lower Forms." He began to read from the slips that he had prepared:

"*So all day long the noise of battle roll'd Among the mountains by the winter sea; Until King Arthur's table, man by man, Had fallen in Lyonnesse* — — "

He stopped and set a figure by the last word, and then, on a blank slip, with a corresponding letter, he repeated the figure and wrote the note:

Lyonnesse — the Sicilly Isles.

Then he took a third slip and wrote the question:

Give the ancient name of the Sicilly Isles.

These serious labours employed him till twelve o'clock. He put the materials of his book away as the clock struck, and solemnly mixed himself his nightly glass of whisky and soda — in the daytime he never touched spirits — and bit the one cigar which he smoked in the twenty-four hours. The stings of the Head's sherry and of his conversation no longer burned within him; time and work and the bite of the cane in Meyrick's flesh had soothed his soul, and he set himself to dream, leaning back in his arm-chair, watching the cheerful fire.

He was thinking of what he would do when he succeeded to the Headmastership. Already there were rumours that Chesson had refused the Bishopric of St. Dubric's in order that he might be free to accept Dorchester, which, in the nature of things, must soon be vacant. Horbury had no doubt that the Headmastership would be his; he had influential friends who assured him that the trustees would not hesitate for an instant. Then he would show the world what an English Public School could be made. In five years, he calculated, he would double the numbers. He saw the coming importance of the modern side, and especially of science. Personally, he detested "stinks," but he knew what an effect he would produce with a great laboratory fitted with the very best appliances and directed by a highly qualified master. Then, again, an elaborate gymnasium must be built; there must be an engineer's shop, too, and a carpenter's as well. And people were beginning to complain that a Public School Education was of no use in the City. There must be a business master, an expert from the Stock Exchange who would see that this reproach was removed. Then he considered that a large number of the boys belonged to the land-owning class. Why should a country gentleman be at the mercy of his agent, forced for lack of technical knowledge to accept statements which he could not check? It was clear that the management of land and great estates must have its part in the scheme; and, again, the best-known of the Crammers must be bought on his own terms, so that the boys who wished to get into the Army or the Civil Service would be practically compelled to come to Lupton. Already he saw paragraphs in the *Guardian* and *The Times* — in all the papers — paragraphs which mentioned the fact that ninety-five per cent of the successful candidates for the Indian Civil Service had received their education at the foundation of "stout old Martin Rolle." Meanwhile, in all this flood of novelty, the old traditions should be maintained with more vigour than ever. The classics should be taught as they never had been taught. Every one of the masters on this side should be in the highest honours and, if possible, he would get famous men for the work — they should not merely be good, but also notorious scholars. Gee, the famous explorer in Crete, who had made an enormous mark in regions widely removed from the scholastic world by his wonderful book, *Dædalus; or, The Secret of the Labyrinth*, must come to Lupton at any price; and Maynard, who had discovered some most important Greek manuscripts in Egypt, he must have a form, too. Then there was Rendell, who had done so well with his *Thucydides*, and Davies, author of *The Olive of Athene*, a daring but most brilliant book which promised to upset the whole established theory of mythology — he would have such a staff as no school had ever dreamed of. "We shall have no difficulty about paying them," thought Horbury; "our numbers will go up by leaps and bounds, and the fees shall be five hundred pounds a year — and such terms will do us more good than anything."

He went into minute detail. He must take expert advice as to the advisability of the school farming on its own account, and so supplying the boys with meat, milk, bread, butter and vegetables at first cost. He believed it could be done; he would get a Scotch farmer from the Lowlands and make him superintendent at a handsome salary and with a share in the profits. There would be the splendid advertisement of "the whole dietary of the school supplied from the School Farms, under the supervision of Mr. David Anderson, formerly of Haddanneuk, the largest tenancy in the Duke of Ayr's estates." The food would be better and cheaper, too; but there would be no luxury. The "Spartan" card was always worth playing; one must strike the note of plain living in a luxurious age; there must be no losing of the old Public School severity. On the other hand, the boy's hands should be free to go into their own pockets; there should be no restraint here. If a boy chose to bring in *Dindonneau aux truffes* or *Pieds de mouton à la Ste Menehould* to help out his tea, that was his look-out. Why should not the school grant a concession to some big London firm, who would pay handsomely for the privilege of supplying the hungry lads with every kind of expensive dainty? The sum could be justly made a large one, as any competing shop could be promptly put out of bounds with reason or without it. On one side, *confiserie*; at the other counter, *charcuterie*; enormous prices could be charged to the wealthy boys of whom the school would be composed. Yet, on the other hand, the distinguished visitor — judge, bishop, peer or what not — would lunch at the Headmaster's house and eat the boys' dinner and go away saying it was quite the plainest and very many times the best meal he had ever tasted. There would be well-hung saddle of mutton, roasted and not baked; floury potatoes and cauliflower; apple pudding with real English cheese, with an excellent glass of the school beer, an honest and delicious beverage made of malt and hops in the well-found school brewery. Horbury knew enough of modern eating and drinking to understand that such a meal would be a choice rarity to nine rich people out of ten; and yet it was "Spartan," utterly devoid of luxury and ostentation.

Again, he passed from detail and minutiæ into great Napoleonic regions. A thousand boys at £500 a year; that would be an income for the school of five hundred thousand pounds! The profits would be gigantic, immense. After paying large, even extravagant, prices to the staff, after all building expenses had been deducted, he hardly dared to think how vast a sum would accrue year by year to the Trustees. The vision began to assume such magnificence that it became oppressive; it put on the splendours and delights of the hashish dream, which are too great and too piercing for mortal hearts to bear. And yet it was no mirage; there was not a step that could not be demonstrated, shown to be based on hard; matter-of-fact business considerations. He tried to keep back his growing excitement, to argue with himself that he was dealing in visions, but the facts were too obstinate. He saw that it would be his part to work the same miracle in the scholastic world as the great American storekeepers had operated in the world of retail trade. The principle was precisely the same: instead of a hundred small shops making comparatively modest and humdrum profits you had the vast emporium doing business on the gigantic scale with vastly diminished expenses and vastly increased rewards.

Here again was a hint. He had thought of America, and he knew that here was an inexhaustible gold mine, that no other scholastic prospector had even dreamed of. The rich American was notoriously hungry for everything that was English, from frock-coats to pedigrees. He had never thought of sending his son to an English Public School because he considered the system hopelessly behind the times. But the new translated Lupton would be to other Public Schools as a New York hotel of the latest fashion is to a village beer-shop. And yet the young millionaire would grow up in the company of the sons of the English gentlemen, imbibing the unique culture of English life, while at the same time he enjoyed all the advantages of modern ideas, modern science and modern business training. Land was still comparatively cheap at Lupton; the school must buy it quietly, indirectly, by degrees, and then pile after pile of vast buildings rose before his eyes. He saw the sons of the rich drawn from all the ends of the world to the Great School, there to learn the secret of the Anglo-Saxons.

Chesson was mistaken in that idea of his, which he thought daring and original, of establishing a distinct Jewish House where the food should be “Kosher.” The rich Jew who desired to send his son to an English Public School was, in nine cases out of ten, anxious to do so precisely because he wanted to sink his son’s connection with Jewry in oblivion. He had heard

Chesson talk of “our Christian duty to the seed of Israel” in this connection. The man was clearly a fool. No, the more Jews the better, but no Jewish House. And no Puseyism either: broad, earnest religious teaching, with a leaning to moderate Anglicanism, should be the faith of Lupton. As to this Chesson was, certainly, sound enough. He had always made a firm stand against ecclesiasticism in any form. Horbury knew the average English parent of the wealthier classes thoroughly; he knew that, though he generally called himself a Churchman, he was quite content to have his sons prepared for confirmation by a confessed Agnostic. Certainly this liberty must not be narrowed when Lupton became cosmopolitan. “We will retain all the dignified associations which belong to the Established Church,” he said to himself, “and at the same time we shall be utterly free from the taint of over-emphasising dogmatic teaching.” He had a sudden brilliant idea. Everybody in Church circles was saying that the English bishops were terribly overworked, that it was impossible for the most strenuous men with the best intentions to supervise effectually the huge dioceses that had descended from the sparsely populated England of the Middle Ages. Everywhere there was a demand for suffragans and more suffragans. In the last week’s *Guardian* there were three letters on the subject, one from a clergyman in their own diocese. The Bishop had been attacked by some rabid ritualistic person, who had pointed out that nine out of every ten parishes had not so much as seen the colour of his hood ever since his appointment ten years before. The Archdeacon of Melby had replied in a capital letter, scathing and yet humorous. Horbury turned to the paper on the table beside his chair and looked up the letter. “In the first place,” wrote the Archdeacon, “your correspondent does not seem to have realised that the *ethoes* of the Diocese of Melby is not identical with that of sacerdotalism. The sturdy folk of the Midlands have not yet, I am thankful to say, forgotten the lessons of our great Reformation. They have no wish to see a revival of the purely mechanical religion of the Middle Ages — of the system of a sacrificing priesthood and of sacraments efficacious *ex opere operato*. Hence they do not regard the episcopate quite in the same light as your correspondent ‘Senex,’ who, it seems to me, looks upon a bishop as a sort of Christianised ‘medicine-man,’ endowed with certain mysterious thaumaturgic powers which have descended to him by an (imaginary) spiritual succession. This was not the view of Hooker, nor, I venture to say, has it ever been the view of the really representative divines of the Established Church of England.

“Still,” the Archdeacon went on, “it must be admitted that the present diocese of Melby is unwieldy and, it may be fairly said, unworkable.”

Then there followed the humorous anecdote of Sir Boyle Roche and the Bird, and finally the Archdeacon emitted the prayer that God in His own good time would put it into the hearts of our rulers in Church and State to give their good Bishop an episcopal curate.

Horbury got up from his chair and paced up and down the study; his excitement was so great that he could keep quiet no longer. His cigar had gone out long ago, and he had barely sipped the whisky and soda. His eyes glittered with excitement. Circumstances seemed positively to be playing into his hands; the dice of the world were being loaded in his favour. He was like Bel Ami at his wedding. He almost began to believe in Providence.

For he was sure it could be managed. Here was a general feeling that no one man could do the work of the diocese. There must be a suffragan, and Lupton must give the new Bishop his title. No other town was possible. Dunham had certainly been a see in the eighth century, but it was now little more than a village and a village served by a miserable little branch line; whereas Lupton was on the great main track of the Midland system, with easy connections to every part of the country. The Archdeacon, who was also a peer, would undoubtedly become the first Bishop of Lupton, and he should be the titular chaplain of the Great School! “Chaplain! The Right Reverend Lord Selwyn, Lord Bishop of Lupton.” Horbury gasped; it was too magnificent, too splendid. He knew Lord Selwyn quite well and had no doubt as to his acceptance. He was a poor man, and there would be no difficulty whatever in establishing a *modus*. The Archdeacon was just the man for the place. He was no pedantic theologian, but a broad, liberal-minded man of the world. Horbury remembered, almost with ecstasy, that he had lectured all over the United States with immense success. The American Press had been enthusiastic, and the First Congregational Church of Chicago had implored Selwyn to accept its call, preach what he liked and pocket an honorarium of twenty-five thousand dollars a year. And, on the other hand, what could the most orthodox desire safer than a chaplain who was not only a bishop, but a peer of the realm? Wonderful! Here were the three birds — Liberalism, Orthodoxy and Reverence for the House of Lords — caught safe and secure in this one net.

The games? They should be maintained in all their glory, rather on an infinitely more splendid scale. Cricket and sticker (the Lupton hockey), rackets and fives, should be all encouraged; and more, Lupton should be the only school to possess a tennis court. The noble *jeu de paume*, the game of kings, the most aristocratic of all sports, should have a worthy home at Lupton. They would train champions; they would have both French and English markers skilled in the latest developments of the *chemin de fer* service. "Better than half a yard, I think," said Horbury to himself; "they will have to do their best to beat that."

But he placed most reliance on rocker. This was the Lupton football, a variant as distinctive in its way as the Eton Wall Game. People have thought that the name is a sort of portmanteau word, a combination of Rugger and Soccer; but in reality the title was derived from the field where the game used to be played in old days by the townsfolk. As in many other places, football at Lupton had been originally an excuse for a faction-fight between two parishes in the town — St. Michael's and St. Paul's-in-the-Fields. Every year, on Shrove Tuesday, the townsfolk, young and old, had proceeded to the Town Field and had fought out their differences with considerable violence. The field was broken land: a deep, sluggish stream crossed one angle of it, and in the middle there were quarries and jagged limestone rocks. Hence football was called in the town "playing rocks," for, indeed, it was considered an excellent point of play to hurl a man over the edge of the quarry on to the rocks beneath, and so late as 1830 a certain Jonas Simpson of St. Michael's had had his spine broken in this way. However, as a boy from St. Paul's was drowned in the Wand the same day, the game was always reckoned a draw. It was from the peculiarities of this old English sport that the school had constructed its game. The Town Field had, of course, long been stolen from the townsfolk and built over; but the boys had, curiously enough, perpetuated the tradition of its peculiarities in a kind of football ritual. For, besides the two goals, one part of the field was marked by a line of low white posts: these indicated the course of a non-existent Wand brook, and in the line of these posts it was lawful to catch an opponent by the throat and choke him till he turned black in the face — the best substitute for drowning that the revisers of the game could imagine.

Again: about the centre of the field two taller posts indicated the position of the quarries, and between these you might be hit or kicked full in the stomach without the smallest ground of complaint: the stroke being a milder version of the old fall on the rocks.

There were many other like amenities in rocker; and Horbury maintained it was by far the manliest variant of the game. For this pleasing sport he now designed a world-wide fame. Rocker should be played wherever the English flag floated: east and west, north and south; from Hong Kong to British Columbia; in Canada and New Zealand there should be the *Temenoi* of this great rite; and the traveller seeing the mystic enclosure — the two goals, the line of little posts marking "brooks" and the two poles indicating "quarries" — should know English soil as surely as by the Union Jack. The technical terms of rocker should become a part of the great Anglo-Saxon inheritance; the whole world should hear of "bully-downs" and "tokering," of "outsides" and "rammers." It would require working, but it was to be done: articles in the magazines and in the Press; perhaps a story of school life, a new *Tom Brown* must be written. The Midlands and the North must be shown that there was money in it, and the rest would be easy.

One thing troubled Horbury. His mind was full of the new and splendid buildings that were to be erected, but he was aware that antiquity still counted for something, and unfortunately Lupton could show very little that was really antique. Forty years before, Stanley, the first reforming Headmaster, had pulled down the old High School. There were prints of it: it was a half-timbered, fifteenth-century building, with a wavering roof-line and an overhanging upper story; there were dim, leaded windows and a grey arched porch — an ugly old barn, Stanley called it. Scott was called in and built the present High School, a splendid hall in red brick: French thirteenth-century, with Venetian detail; it was much admired. But Horbury was sorry that the old school had been destroyed; he saw for the first time that it might have been made a valuable attraction. Then again, Dowsing, who succeeded Stanley, had knocked the cloisters all to bits; there was only one side of the quadrangle left, and this had been boarded up and used as a gardeners' shed. Horbury did not know what to say of the destruction of the Cross that used to stand in the centre of the quad. No doubt Dowsing was right in thinking it superstitious; still, it might have been left as a curiosity and shown to visitors, just as the instruments of bygone cruelty — the rack and the Iron Maid — are preserved and exhibited to wondering sightseers. There was no real danger of any superstitious adoration of the Cross; it was, as a matter of fact, as harmless as the axe and block at the Tower of London; Dowsing had ruined what might have been an important asset in the exploitation of the school.

Still, perhaps the loss was not altogether irreparable. High School was gone and could not be recovered; but the cloisters might be restored and the Cross, too. Horbury knew that the monument in front of Charing Cross Railway Station was considered by many to be a genuine antique: why not get a good man to build them a Cross? Not like the old one, of course; that "Fair Roode with our Deare Ladie Saint Marie and Saint John," and, below, the stories of the blissful Saints and Angels — that would never do. But a vague, Gothic erection, with plenty of kings and queens, imaginary benefactors of the school, and a small cast-iron cross at the top: that could give no offence to anybody, and might pass with nine people out of ten as a genuine remnant of the Middle Ages. It could be made of soft stone and allowed to weather for a few years; then a coat of invisible anti-corrosive fluid would preserve carvings and imagery that would already appear venerable in decay. There was no need to make any precise statements: parents and the public might be allowed to draw their own conclusions.

Horbury was neglecting nothing. He was building up a great scheme in his mind, and to him it seemed that every detail was worth attending to, while at the same time he did not lose sight of the whole effect. He believed in finish: there must be no rough edges. It seemed to him that a school legend must be invented. The real history was not quite what he wanted, though it might work in with a more decorative account of Lupton's origins. One might use the *Textus Receptus* of Martin Rolle's Foundation — the bequest of land *c.* 1430 to build and maintain a school where a hundred boys should be taught grammar, and ten poor scholars and six priests should pray for the Founder's soul. This was well enough, but one might hint that Martin Rolle really refounded and re-endowed a school of Saxon origin, probably established by King Alfred himself in Luppa's Tun. Then, again, who could show that Shakespeare had not visited Lupton? His famous schoolboy, "creeping like snail unwillingly to school," might very possibly have been observed by the poet as he strolled by the banks of the Wand. Many famous men might have received their education at Lupton; it would not be difficult to make a plausible list of such. It must be done carefully and cautiously, with such phrases as “it has always been a tradition at Lupton that Sir Walter Raleigh received part of his education at the school”; or, again, “an earlier generation of Luptonians remembered the initials ‘W. S. S. on A.’ cut deeply in the mantel of old High School, now, unfortunately, demolished.” Antiquarians would laugh? Possibly; but who cared about antiquarians? For the average man “Charing” was derived from “*chère reine*,” and he loved to have it so, and Horbury intended to appeal to the average man. Though he was a schoolmaster he was no recluse, and he had marked the ways of the world from his quiet study in Lupton; hence he understood the immense value of a grain of quackery in all schemes which are meant to appeal to mortals. It was a deadly mistake to suppose that anything which was all quackery would be a success — a permanent success, at all events; it was a deadlier mistake still to suppose that anything quite devoid of quackery could pay handsomely. The average English palate would shudder at the flavour of *aioli*, but it would be charmed by the insertion of that *petit point d’ail* which turned mere goodness into triumph and laurelled perfection. And there was no need to mention the word “garlic” before the guests. Lupton was not going to be all garlic: it was to be infinitely the best scholastic dish that had ever been served — the ingredients should be unsurpassed and unsurpassable. But — King Alfred’s foundation of a school at Luppa’s Tun, and that “W. S. S. on A.” cut deeply on the mantel of the vanished High School — these and legends like unto them, these would be the last touch, *le petit point d’ail*.

It was a great scheme, wonderful and glorious; and the most amazing thing about it was that it was certain to be realised. There was not a flaw from start to finish. The Trustees were certain to appoint him — he had that from a sure quarter — and it was but a question of a year or two, perhaps only of a month or two, before all this great and golden vision should be converted into hard and tangible fact. He drank off his glass of whisky and soda; it had become flat and brackish, but to him it was nectar, since it was flavoured with ecstasy.

He frowned suddenly as he went upstairs to his room. An unpleasant recollection had intruded for a moment on his amazing fantasy; but he dismissed the thought as soon as it arose. That was all over, there could be no possibility of trouble from that direction; and so, his mind filled with images, he fell asleep and saw Lupton as the centre of the whole world, like Jerusalem in the ancient maps.

A student of the deep things of mysticism has detected a curious element of comedy in the management of human concerns; and there certainly seems a touch of humour in the fact that on this very night, while Horbury was building the splendid Lupton of the future, the palace of his thought and his life was shattered for ever into bitter dust and nothingness. But so it was. The Dread Arrest had been solemnly recognised, and that wretched canonry at Wareham was irrevocably pronounced for doom. Fantastic were the elements of forces that had gone to the ordering of this great sentence: raw corn spirit in the guise of sherry, the impertinence (or what seemed such) of an elderly clergyman, a boiled leg of mutton, a troublesome and disobedient boy, and — another person.

PART II

I

HE WAS STANDING in a wild, bare country. Something about it seemed vaguely familiar: the land rose and fell in dull and weary undulations, in a vast circle of dun ploughland and grey meadow, bounded by a dim horizon without promise or hope, dreary as a prison wall. The infinite melancholy of an autumn evening brooded heavily over all the world, and the sky was hidden by livid clouds.

It all brought back to him some far-off memory, and yet he knew that he gazed on that sad plain for the first time. There was a deep and heavy silence over all; a silence unbroken by so much as the fluttering of a leaf. The trees seemed of a strange shape, and strange were the stunted thorns dotted about the broken field in which he stood. A little path at his feet, bordered by the thorn bushes, wandered away to the left into the dim twilight; it had about it some indefinable air of mystery, as if it must lead one down into a mystic region where all earthly things are forgotten and lost for ever.

He sat down beneath the bare, twisted boughs of a great tree and watched the dreary land grow darker and yet darker; he wondered, half-consciously, where he was and how he had come to that place, remembering, faintly, tales of like adventure. A man passed by a familiar wall one day, and opening a door before unnoticed, found himself in a new world of unsurmised and marvellous experiences. Another man shot an arrow farther than any of his friends and became the husband of the fairy. Yet — this was not fairyland; these were rather the sad fields and unhappy graves of the underworld than the abode of endless pleasures and undying delights. And yet in all that he saw there was the promise of great wonder.

Only one thing was clear to him. He knew that he was Ambrose, that he had been driven from great and unspeakable joys into miserable exile and banishment. He had come from a far, far place by a hidden way, and darkness had closed about him, and bitter drink and deadly meat were given him, and all gladness was hidden from him. This was all he could remember; and now he was astray, he knew not how or why, in this wild, sad land, and the night descended dark upon him.

Suddenly there was, as it were, a cry far away in the shadowy silence, and the thorn bushes began to rustle before a shrilling wind that rose as the night came down. At this summons the heavy clouds broke up and dispersed, fleeting across the sky, and the pure heaven appeared with the last rose flush of the sunset dying from it, and there shone the silver light of the evening star. Ambrose's heart was drawn up to this light as he gazed: he saw that the star grew greater and greater; it advanced towards him through the air; its beams pierced to his soul as if they were the sound of a silver trumpet. An ocean of white splendour flowed over him: he dwelt within the star.

It was but for a moment; he was still sitting beneath the tree of the twisted branches. But the sky was now clear and filled with a great peace; the wind had fallen and a more happy light shone on the great plain. Ambrose was thirsty, and then he saw that beside the tree there was a well, half hidden by the arching roots that rose above it. The water was still and shining, as though it were a mirror of black marble, and marking the brim was a great stone on which were cut the letters:

“FONS VITAE IMMORTALIS.”

He rose and, bending over the well, put down his lips to drink, and his soul and body were filled as with a flood of joy. Now he knew that all his days of exile he had borne with pain and grief a heavy, weary body. There had been dolours in every limb and achings in every bone; his feet had dragged upon the ground, slowly, wearily, as the feet of those who go in chains. But dim, broken spectres, miserable shapes and crooked images of the world had his eyes seen; for they were eyes bleared with sickness, darkened by the approach of death. Now, indeed, he clearly beheld the shining vision of things immortal. He drank great draughts of the dark, glittering water, drinking, it seemed, the light of the reflected stars; and he was filled with life. Every sinew, every muscle, every particle of the deadly flesh shuddered and quickened in the communion of that well-water. The nerves and veins rejoiced together; all his being leapt with gladness, and as one finger touched another, as he still bent over the well, a spasm of exquisite pleasure quivered and thrilled through his body. His heart throbbed with bliss that was unendurable; sense and intellect and soul and spirit were, as it were, sublimed into one white flame of delight. And all the while it was known to him that these were but the least of the least of the pleasures of the kingdom, but the overrunnings and base tricklings of the great supernal cup. He saw, without amazement, that, though the sun had set, the sky now began to flush and redden as if with the northern light. It was no longer the evening, no longer the time of the procession of the dusky night. The darkness doubtless had passed away in mortal hours while for an infinite moment he tasted immortal drink; and perhaps one drop of that water was endless life. But now it was the preparation for the day. He heard the words:

"*Dies venit, dies Tua In qua reflorent omnia.*"

They were uttered within his heart, and he saw that all was being made ready for a great festival. Over everything there was a hush of expectation; and as he gazed he knew that he was no longer in that weary land of dun ploughland and grey meadow, of the wild, bare trees and strange stunted thorn bushes. He was on a hillside, lying on the verge of a great wood; beneath, in the valley, a brook sang faintly under the leaves of the silvery willows; and beyond, far in the east, a vast wall of rounded mountain rose serene towards the sky. All about him was the green world of the leaves: odours of the summer night, deep in the mystic heart of the wood, odours of many flowers, and the cool breath rising from the singing stream mingled in his nostrils. The world whitened to the dawn, and then, as the light grew clear, the rose clouds blossomed in the sky and, answering, the earth seemed to glitter with rose-red sparks and glints of flame. All the east became as a garden of roses, red flowers of living light shone over the mountain, and as the beams of the sun lit up the circle of the earth a bird's song began from a tree within the wood. Then were heard the modulations of a final and exultant ecstasy, the chant of liberation, a magistral *In Exitu*; there was the melody of rejoicing trills, of unwearied, glad reiterations of choirs ever aspiring, prophesying the coming of the great feast, singing the eternal antiphon.

As the song aspired into the heights, so there aspired suddenly before him the walls and pinnacles of a great church set upon a high hill. It was far off, and yet as though it were close at hand he saw all the delicate and wonderful imagery cut in its stones. The great door in the west was a miracle: every flower and leaf, every reed and fern, were clustered in the work of the capitals, and in the round arch above moulding within moulding showed all the beasts that God has made. He saw the rose-window, a maze of fretted tracery, the high lancets of the fair hall, the marvellous buttresses, set like angels about this holy house, whose pinnacles were as a place of many springing trees. And high above the vast, far-lifted vault of the roof rose up the spire, golden in the light. The bells were ringing for the feast; he heard from within the walls the roll and swell and triumph of the organ:

O pius o bonus o placidus sonus hymnus eorum.

He knew not how he had taken his place in this great procession, how, surrounded by ministrants in white, he too bore his part in endless litanies. He knew not through what strange land they passed in their fervent, admirable order, following their banners and their symbols that glanced on high before them. But that land stood ever, it seemed, in a clear, still air, crowned with golden sunlight; and so there were those who bore great torches of wax, strangely and beautifully adorned with golden and vermilion ornaments. The delicate flame of these tapers burned steadily in the still sunlight, and the glittering silver censers as they rose and fell tossed a pale cloud into the air. They delayed, now and again, by wayside shrines, giving thanks for unutterable compassions, and, advancing anew, the blessed company surged onward, moving to its unknown goal in the far blue mountains that rose beyond the plain. There were faces and shapes of awful beauty about him; he saw those in whose eyes were the undying lamps of heaven, about whose heads the golden hair was as an aureole; and there were they that above the girded vesture of white wore dyed garments, and as they advanced around their feet there was the likeness of dim flames.

The great white array had vanished and he was alone. He was tracking a secret path that wound in and out through the thickets of a great forest. By solitary pools of still water, by great oaks, worlds of green leaves, by fountains and streams of water, by the bubbling, mossy sources of the brooks he followed this hidden way, now climbing and now descending, but still mounting upward, still passing, as he knew, farther and farther from all the habitations of men. Through the green boughs now he saw the shining sea-water; he saw the land of the old saints, all the divisions of the land that men had given to them for God; he saw their churches, and it seemed as if he could hear, very faintly, the noise of the ringing of their holy bells. Then, at last, when he had crossed the Old Road, and had gone by the Lightning-struck Land and the Fisherman's Well, he found, between the forest and the mountain, a very ancient and little chapel; and now he heard the bell of the saint ringing clearly and so sweetly that it was as it were the singing of the angels. Within it was very dark and there was silence. He knelt and saw scarcely that the chapel was divided into two parts by a screen that rose up to the round roof. There was a glinting of shapes as if golden figures were painted on this screen, and through the joinings of its beams there streamed out thin needles of white splendour as if within there was a light greater than that of the sun at noonday. And the flesh began to tremble, for all the place was filled with the odours of Paradise, and he heard the ringing of the Holy Bell and the voices of the choir that out-sang the Fairy Birds of Rhiannon, crying and proclaiming:

"*Glory and praise to the Conqueror of Death: to the Fountain of Life Unending.*"

Nine times they sang this anthem, and then the whole place was filled with blinding light. For a door in the screen had been opened, and there came forth an old man, all in shining white, on whose head was a gold crown. Before him went one who rang the bell; on each side there were young men with torches; and in his hands he bore the *Mystery of Mysteries* wrapped about in veils of gold and of all colours, so that it might not be discerned; and so he passed before the screen, and the light of heaven burst forth from that which he held. Then he entered in again by a door that was on the other side, and the Holy Things were hidden.

And Ambrose heard from within an awful voice and the words:

Woe and great sorrow are on him, for he hath looked unworthily into the Tremendous Mysteries, and on the Secret Glory which is hidden from the Holy Angels.

II

"POETRY IS THE only possible way of saying anything that is worth saying at all." This was an axiom that, in later years, Ambrose Meyrick's friends were forced to hear at frequent intervals. He would go on to say that he used the term poetry in its most liberal sense, including in it all mystic or symbolic prose, all painting and statuary that was worthy to be called art, all great architecture, and all true music. He meant, it is to be presumed, that the mysteries can only be conveyed by symbols; unfortunately, however, he did not always make it quite clear that this was the proposition that he intended to utter, and thus offence was sometimes given — as, for example, to the scientific gentleman who had been brought to Meyrick's rooms and went away early, wondering audibly and sarcastically whether "your clever friend" wanted to metrify biology and set Euclid to Bach's Organ Fugues.

However, the Great Axiom (as he called it) was the justification that he put forward in defence of the notes on which the previous section is based.

"Of course," he would say, "the symbolism is inadequate; but that is the defect of speech of any kind when you have once ventured beyond the multiplication table and the jargon of the Stock Exchange. Inadequacy of expression is merely a minor part of the great tragedy of humanity. Only an ass thinks that he has succeeded in uttering the perfect content of his thought without either excess or defect."

"Then, again," he might go on, "the symbolism would very likely be misleading to a great many people; but what is one to do? I believe many good people find Turner mad and Dickens tiresome. And if the great sometimes fail, what hope is there for the little? We cannot all be — well — popular novelists of the day."

Of course, the notes in question were made many years after the event they commemorate; they were the man's translation of all the wonderful and inexpressible emotions of the boy; and, as Meyrick puts it, many "words" (or symbols) are used in them which were unknown to the lad of fifteen.

“Nevertheless,” he said, “they are the best words that I can find.”

As has been said, the Old Grange was a large, roomy house; a space could easily have been found for half a dozen more boys if the High Usher had cared to be bothered with them. As it was, it was a favour to be at Horbury’s, and there was usually some personal reason for admission. Pelly, for example, was the son of an old friend; Bates was a distant cousin; and Rawson’s father was the master of a small Grammar School in the north with which certain ancestral Horburys were somehow connected. The Old Grange was a fine large Caroline house; it had a grave front of red brick, mellowed with age, tier upon tier of tall, narrow windows, flush with the walls, and a high-pitched, red-tiled roof. Above the front door was a rich and curious wooden pent-house, deeply carven; and within there was plenty of excellent panelling, and some good mantelpieces, added, it would seem, somewhere about the Adam period. Horbury had seen its solid and comfortable merits and had bought the freehold years before at a great bargain. The school was increasing rapidly even in those days, and he knew that before long more houses would be required. If he left Lupton he would be able to let the Old Grange easily — he might almost put it up for auction — and the rent would represent a return of fifty per cent on his investment. Many of the rooms were large; of a size out of all proportion to the boys’ needs, and at a very trifling expense partitions might be made and the nine or ten available rooms be subdivided into studies for twenty or even twenty-five boys. Nature had gifted the High Usher with a careful, provident mind in all things, both great and small; and it is but fair to add that on his leaving Lupton for Wareham he found his anticipations more than justified. To this day Charles Horbury, his nephew, a high Government official, draws a comfortable income from his uncle’s most prudent investment, and the house easily holds its twenty-five boys. Rainy, who took the place from Horbury, was an ingenious fellow and hit upon a capital plan for avoiding the expense of making new windows for some of the subdivided studies. After thoughtful consideration he caused the wooden partitions which were put up to stop short of the ceiling by four inches, and by this device the study with a window lighted the study that had none; and, as Rainy explained to some of the parents, a diffused light was really better for the eyes than a direct one.

In the old days, when Ambrose Meyrick was being made a man of, the four boys "rattled," as it were, in the big house. They were scattered about in odd corners, remote from each other, and it seemed from everybody else. Meyrick's room was the most isolated of any, but it was also the most comfortable in winter, since it was over the kitchen, to the extreme left of the house. This part, which was hidden from the road by the boughs of a great cedar, was an after-thought, a Georgian addition in grey brick, and rose only to two stories, and in the one furnished room out of the three or four over the kitchen and offices slept Ambrose. He wished his days could be as quiet and retired as his nights. He loved the shadows that were about his bed even on the brightest mornings in summer; for the cedar boughs were dense, and ivy had been allowed to creep about the panes of the window; so the light entered dim and green, filtered through the dark boughs and the ivy tendrils.

Here, then, after the hour of ten each night, he dwelt secure. Now and again Mr. Horbury would pay nocturnal surprise visits to see that all lights were out; but, happily, the stairs at the end of the passage, being old and badly fitted, gave out a succession of cracks like pistol shots if the softest foot was set on them. It was simple, therefore, on hearing the first of these reports, to extinguish the candle in the small secret lantern (held warily so that no gleam of light should appear from under the door) and to conceal the lantern under the bed-clothes. One wetted one's finger and pinched at the flame, so there was no smell of the expiring snuff, and the lantern slide was carefully drawn to guard against the possibility of suspicious grease-marks on the linen. It was perfect; and old Horbury's visits, which were rare enough, had no terrors for Ambrose.

So that night, while the venom of the cane still rankled in his body, though it had ceased to disturb his mind, instead of going to bed at once, according to the regulations, he sat for a while on his box seeking a clue in a maze of odd fancies and conceits. He took off his clothes and wrapped his aching body in the rug from the bed, and presently, blowing out the official paraffin lamp, he lit his candle, ready at the first warning creak on the stairs to douse the glim and leap between the sheets.

Odd enough were his first cogitations. He was thinking how very sorry he was to have hit Pelly that savage blow and to have endangered Rawson's eyesight by the hard boards of the dictionary! This was eccentric, for he had endured from those two young Apaches every extremity of unpleasantness for upwards of a couple of years. Pelly was not by any means an evil lad: he was stupid and beefy within and without, and the great Public School system was transmuting him, in the proper course and by the proper steps, into one of those Brave Average Boobies whom Meyrick used to rail against afterwards. Pelly, in all probability (his fortunes have not been traced), went into the Army and led the milder and more serious subalterns the devil's own life. In India he "lay doggo" with great success against some hill tribe armed with seventeenth-century muskets and rather barbarous knives; he seems to have been present at that "Conference of the Powers" described so brightly by Mr. Kipling. Promoted to a captaincy, he fought with conspicuous bravery in South Africa, winning the Victoria Cross for his rescue of a wounded private at the instant risk of his own life, and he finally led his troop into a snare set by an old farmer; a rabbit of average intelligence would have smelt and evaded it.

For Rawson one is sorry, but one cannot, in conscience, say much that is good, though he has been praised for his tact. He became domestic chaplain to the Bishop of Dorchester, whose daughter Emily he married.

But in those old days there was very little to choose between them, from Meyrick's point of view. Each had displayed a quite devilish ingenuity in the art of annoyance, in the whole cycle of jeers and sneers and "scores," as known to the schoolboy, and they were just proceeding to more active measures. Meyrick had borne it all meekly; he had returned kindly and sometimes quaint answers to the unceasing stream of remarks that were meant to wound his feelings, to make him look a fool before any boys that happened to be about. He had only countered with a mild: "What do you do that for, Pelly?" when the brave one smacked his head. "Because I hate sneaks and funks," Pelly had replied and Meyrick said no more. Rawson took a smaller size in victims when it was a question of physical torments; but he had invented a most offensive tale about Meyrick and had told it all over the school, where it was universally believed. In a word, the two had done their utmost to reduce him to a state of utter misery; and now he was sorry that he had punched the nose of one and bombarded the other with a dictionary!

The fact was that his forebearance had not been all cowardice; it is, indeed, doubtful whether he was in the real sense a coward at all. He went in fear, it is true, all his days, but what he feared was not the insult, but the intention, the malignancy of which the insult, or the blow, was the outward sign. The fear of a mad bull is quite distinct from the horror with which most people look upon a viper; it was the latter feeling which made Meyrick's life a burden to him. And again there was a more curious shade of feeling; and that was the intense hatred that he felt to the mere thought of "scoring" off an antagonist, of beating down the enemy. He was a much sharper lad than either Rawson or Pelly; he could have retorted again and again with crushing effect, but he held his tongue, for all such victories were detestable to him. And this odd sentiment governed all his actions and feelings; he disliked "going up" in form, he disliked winning a game, not through any acquired virtue, but by inherent nature. Poe would have understood Meyrick's feelings; but then the author of *The Imp of the Perverse* penetrated so deeply into the inmost secrets of humanity that Anglo-Saxon criticism has agreed in denouncing him as a wholly "inhuman" writer.

With Meyrick this mode of feeling had grown stronger by provocation; the more he was injured, the more he shrank from the thought of returning the injury. In a great measure the sentiment remained with him in later life. He would sally forth from his den in quest of fresh air on top of an omnibus and stroll peacefully back again rather than struggle for victory with the furious crowd. It was not so much that he disliked the physical contest: he was afraid of getting a seat! Quite naturally, he said that people who "pushed," in the metaphorical sense, always reminded him of the hungry little pigs fighting for the largest share of the wash; but he seemed to think that, whereas this course of action was natural in the little pigs, it was profoundly unnatural in the little men. But in his early boyhood he had carried this secret doctrine of his to its utmost limits; he had assumed, as it were, the rôle of the coward and the funk; he had, without any conscious religious motive certainly, but in obedience to an inward command, endeavoured to play the part of a Primitive Christian, of a religious, in a great Public School! *Ama nesciri et pro nihilo æstimari.* The maxim was certainly in his heart, though he had never heard it; but perhaps if he had searched the whole world over he could not have found a more impossible field for its exercise than this seminary, where the broad, liberal principles of Christianity were taught in a way that satisfied the Press, the public and the parents.

And he sat in his room and grieved over the fashion in which he had broken this discipline. Still, something had to be done: he was compelled to stay in this place, and he did not wish to be reduced to the imbecility of wretched little Phipps who had become at last more like a whimpering kitten with the mange than a human being. One had not the right to allow oneself to be made an idiot, so the principle had to be infringed — but externally only, never internally! Of that he was firmly resolved; and he felt secure in his recollection that there had been no anger in his heart. He resented the presence of Pelly and Rawson, certainly, but in the manner with which some people resent the presence of a cat, a mouse, or a black-beetle, as disagreeable objects which can't help being disagreeable objects. But his bashing of Pelly and his smashing of Rawson, his remarks (gathered from careful observation by the banks of the Lupton and Birmingham Canal); all this had been but the means to an end, the securing of peace and quiet for the future. He would not be murdered by this infernal Public School system either, after the fashion of Phipps — which was melancholy, or after the fashion of the rest — which was more melancholy still, since it is easier to recover from nervous breakdown than from suffusion of cant through the entire system, mental and spiritual. Utterly from his heart he abjured and renounced all the horrible shibboleths of the school, its sham enthusiasm, its "ethos," its "tone," its "loyal co-operation — masters and boys working together for the good of the whole school" — all its ridiculous fetish conventions and absurd observances, the joint contrivances of young fools and old knaves. But his resistance should be secret and not open, for a while; there should be no more "bashing" than was absolutely necessary.

And one thing he resolved upon — he would make all he could out of the place; he would work like a tiger and get all the Latin and Greek and French obtainable, in spite of the teaching and its imbecile pedantry. The school work must be done, so that trouble might be avoided, but here at night in his room he would really learn the languages they pottered over in form, wasting half their time in writing sham Ciceronian prose which would have made Cicero sick, and verse evil enough to cause Virgil to vomit. Then there was French, taught chiefly out of pompous eighteenth-century fooleries, with lists of irregular verbs to learn and Babylonish nonsense about the past participle, and many other rotten formulas and rules, giving to the whole tongue the air of a tiresome puzzle which had been dug up out of a prehistoric grave. This was not the French that he wanted; still, he could write out irregular verbs by day and learn the language at night. He wondered whether unhappy French boys had to learn English out of the *Rambler*, Blair's *Sermons* and Young's *Night Thoughts*. For he had some sort of smattering of English literature which a Public School boy has no business to possess. So he went on with this mental tirade of his: one is not over-wise at fifteen. It is true enough, perhaps, that the French of the average English schoolboy is something fit to move only pity and terror; it may be true also that nobody except Deans and schoolmasters seems to bring away even the formulas and sacred teachings (such as the Optative mystery and the Doctrine of Dum) of the two great literatures. There is, doubtless, a good deal to be said on the subject of the Public Schoolman's knowledge of the history and literature of his own country; an infinite deal of comic stuff might be got out of his views and acquirements in the great science of theology — still let us say, *Floreat*!

Meyrick turned from his review of the wisdom of his elders and instructors to more intimate concerns. There were a few cuts of that vigorous cane which still stung and hurt most abominably, for skill or fortune had guided Mr. Horbury's hand so that he had been enabled here and there to get home twice in the same place, and there was one particular weal on the left arm where the flesh, purple and discoloured, had swelled up and seemed on the point of bursting. It was no longer with rage, but with a kind of rapture, that he felt the pain and smarting; he looked upon the ugly marks of the High Usher's evil humours as though they had been a robe of splendour. For he knew nothing of that bad sherry, nothing of the Head's conversation; he knew that when Pelly had come in quite as late it had only been a question of a hundred lines, and so he persisted in regarding himself as a martyr in the cause of those famous "Norman arches," which was the cause of that dear dead enthusiast, his father, who loved Gothic architecture and all other beautiful "unpractical" things with an undying passion. As soon as Ambrose could walk he had begun his pilgrimages to hidden mystic shrines; his father had led him over the wild lands to places known perhaps only to himself, and there, by the ruined stones, by the smooth hillock, had told the tale of the old vanished time, the time of the "old saints."

III

IT WAS FOR this blessed and wonderful learning, he said to himself, that he had been beaten, that his body had been scored with red and purple stripes. He remembered his father's oft-repeated exclamation, "cythrawl Sais!" He understood that the phrase damned not Englishmen *qua* Englishmen, but Anglo-Saxonism — the power of the creed that builds Manchester, that "does business," that invents popular dissent, representative government, adulteration, suburbs, and the Public School system. It was, according to his father, the creed of "the Prince of this world," the creed that made for comfort, success, a good balance at the bank, the praise of men, the sensible and tangible victory and achievement; and he bade his little boy, who heard everything and understood next to nothing, fly from it, hate it and fight against it as he would fight against the devil— "and," he would add, "it *is* the only devil you are ever likely to come across."

And the little Ambrose had understood not much of all this, and if he had been asked — even at fifteen — what it all meant, he would probably have said that it was a great issue between Norman mouldings and Mr. Horbury, an Armageddon of Selden Abbey *versus* rocker. Indeed, it is doubtful whether old Nicholas Meyrick would have been very much clearer, for he forgot everything that might be said on the other side. He forgot that Anglo-Saxonism (save in the United States of America) makes generally for equal laws; that civil riot ("Labour" movements, of course, excepted) is more a Celtic than a Saxon vice; that the penalty of burning alive is unknown amongst Anglo-Saxons, unless the provocation be extreme; that Englishmen have substituted "Indentured Labour" for the old-world horrors of slavery; that English justice smites the guilty rich equally with the guilty poor; that men are no longer poisoned with swift and secret drugs, though somewhat unwholesome food may still be sold very occasionally. Indeed, the old Meyrick once told his rector that he considered a brothel a house of sanctity compared with a modern factory, and he was beginning to relate some interesting tales concerning the Three Gracious Courtesans of the Isle of

Britain when the rector fled in horror — he came from Sydenham. And all this was a nice preparation for Lupton.

A wonderful joy, an ecstasy of bliss, swelled in Ambrose’s heart as he assured himself that he was a witness, though a mean one, for the old faith, for the faith of secret and beautiful and hidden mysteries as opposed to the faith of rocker and sticker and mucker, and “the thought of the school as an inspiring motive in life” — the text on which the Head had preached the Sunday before. He bared his arms and kissed the purple swollen flesh and prayed that it might ever be so, that in body and mind and spirit he might ever be beaten and reviled and made ridiculous for the sacred things, that he might ever be on the side of the despised and the unsuccessful, that his life might ever be in the shadow — in the shadow of the mysteries.

He thought of the place in which he was, of the hideous school, the hideous town, the weary waves of the dun Midland scenery bounded by the dim, hopeless horizon; and his soul revisited the faery hills and woods and valleys of the West. He remembered how, long ago, his father had roused him early from sleep in the hush and wonder of a summer morning. The whole world was still and windless; all the magic odours of the night rose from the earth, and as they crossed the lawn the silence was broken by the enchanted song of a bird rising from a thorn tree by the gate. A high white vapour veiled the sky, and they only knew that the sun had risen by the brightening of this veil, by the silvering of the woods and the meadows and the water in the rejoicing brook. They crossed the road, and crossed the brook in the field beneath, by the old foot-bridge tremulous with age, and began to climb the steep hillside that one could see from the windows, and, the ridge of the hill once surmounted, the little boy found himself in an unknown land: he looked into deep, silent valleys, watered by trickling streams; he saw still woods in that dreamlike morning air; he saw winding paths that climbed into yet remoter regions. His father led him onward till they came to a lonely height — they had walked scarcely two miles, but to Ambrose it seemed a journey into another world — and showed him certain irregular markings in the turf.

And Nicholas Meyrick murmured:

“The cell of Iltyd is by the seashore, The ninth wave washes its altar, There is a fair shrine in the land of Morgan.

“The cell of Dewi is in the City of the Legions, Nine altars owe obedience to it, Sovereign is the choir that sings about it.

“The cell of Cybi is the treasure of Gwent, Nine hills are its perpetual guardians, Nine songs befit the memory of the saint.”

“See,” he said, “there are the Nine Hills.” He pointed them out to the boy, telling him the tale of the saint and his holy bell, which they said had sailed across the sea from Syon and had entered the Severn, and had entered the Usk, and had entered the Soar, and had entered the Canthwr; and so one day the saint, as he walked beside the little brook that almost encompassed the hill in its winding course, saw the bell “that was made of metal that no man might comprehend,” floating under the alders, and crying:

“*Sant, sant, sant, I sail from Syon To Cybi Sant!*”

“And so sweet was the sound of that bell,” Ambrose’s father went on, “that they said it was as the joy of angels *ym Mharadwys*, and that it must have come not from the earthly, but from the heavenly and glorious Syon.”

And there they stood in the white morning, on the uneven ground that marked the place where once the Saint rang to the sacrifice, where the quickening words were uttered after the order of the Old Mass of the Britons.

“And then came the Yellow Hag of Pestilence, that destroyed the bodies of the Cymri; then the Red Hag of Rome, that caused their souls to stray; last is come the Black Hag of Geneva, that sends body and soul quick to hell. No honour have the saints any more.”

Then they turned home again, and all the way Ambrose thought he heard the bell as it sailed the great deeps from Syon, crying aloud: “Sant, Sant, Sant!” And the sound seemed to echo from the glassy water of the little brook, as it swirled and rippled over the shining stones circling round those lonely hills.

So they made strange pilgrimages over the beloved land, going farther and farther afield as the boy grew older. They visited deep wells in the heart of the woods, where a few broken stones, perhaps, were the last remains of the hermitage. “Ffynnon Ilar Bysgootwr — the well of Saint Ilar the Fisherman,” Nicholas Meyrick would explain, and then would follow the story of Ilar; how no man knew whence he came or who his parents were.

He was found, a little child, on a stone in a river in Armorica, by King Alan, and rescued by him. And ever after they discovered on the stone in the river where the child had lain every day a great and shining fish lying, and on this fish Ilar was nourished. And so he came with a great company of the saints to Britain, and wandered over all the land.

“So at last Ilar Sant came to this wood, which people now call St. Hilary’s wood because they have forgotten all about Ilar. And he was weary with his wandering, and the day was very hot; so he stayed by this well and began to drink. And there on that great stone he saw the shining fish, and so he rested, and built an altar and a church of willow boughs, and offered the sacrifice not only for the quick and the dead, but for all the wild beasts of the woods and the streams.

“And when this blessed Ilar rang his holy bell and began to offer, there came not only the Prince and his servants, but all the creatures of the wood. There, under the hazel boughs, you might see the hare, which flies so swiftly from men, come gently and fall down, weeping greatly on account of the Passion of the Son of Mary. And, beside the hare, the weasel and the pole-cat would lament grievously in the manner of penitent sinners; and wolves and lambs together adored the saint’s hierurgy; and men have beheld tears streaming from the eyes of venomous serpents when Ilar Agios uttered ‘Curiluson’ with a loud voice — since the serpent is not ignorant that by its wickedness sorrow came to the whole world. And when, in the time of the holy ministry, it is necessary that frequent Alleluyas should be chanted and vociferated, the saint wondered what should be done, for as yet none in that place was skilled in the art of song. Then was a great miracle, since from all the boughs of the wood, from every bush and from every green tree, there resounded Alleluyas in enchanting and prolonged harmony; never did the Bishop of Rome listen to so sweet a singing in his church as was heard in this wood. For the nightingale and thrush and blackbird and blackcap, and all their companions, are gathered together and sing praises to the Lord, chanting distinct notes and yet concluding in a melody of most ravishing sweetness; such was the mass of the Fisherman. Nor was this all, for one day as the saint prayed beside the well he became aware that a bee circled round and round his head, uttering loud buzzing sounds, but not endeavouring to sting him. To be short; the bee went before Ilar, and led him to a hollow tree not far off, and straightway a swarm of bees issued forth, leaving a vast store of wax behind them. This was their oblation to the Most High, for from their wax Ilar Sant made goodly candles to burn at the Offering; and from that time the bee is holy, because his wax makes light to shine upon the Gifts."

This was part of the story that Ambrose's father read to him; and they went again to see the Holy Well. He looked at the few broken and uneven stones that were left to distinguish it from common wells; and there in the deep green wood, in the summer afternoon, under the woven boughs, he seemed to hear the strange sound of the saint's bell, to see the woodland creatures hurrying through the undergrowth that they might be present at the Offering. The weasel beat his little breast for his sins; the big tears fell down the gentle face of the hare; the adders wept in the dust; and all the chorus of the birds sang: "Alleluya, Alleluya, Alleluya!"

Once they drove a long way from the Wern, going towards the west, till they came to the Great Mountain, as the people called it. After they had turned from the high road they went down a narrow lane, and this led them with many windings to a lower ridge of the mountain, where the horse and trap were put up at a solitary tavern. Then they began to toil upward on foot, crossing many glistening and rejoicing streams that rushed out cold from the limestone rock, mounting up and up, through the wet land where the rare orchis grew amongst the rushes, through hazel brakes, through fields that grew wilder as they still went higher, and the great wind came down from the high dome above them. They turned, and all the shining land was unrolled before them; the white houses were bright in the sunlight, and there, far away, was the yellow sea and the two islands, and the coasts beyond.

Nicholas Meyrick pointed out a tuft of trees on a hill a long way off and told his son that the Wern was hidden beyond it; and then they began to climb once more, till they came at last to the line where the fields and hedges ended, and above there was only the wild mountain land. And on this verge stood an old farmhouse with strong walls, set into the rock, sheltered a little from the winds by a line of twisted beeches. The walls of the house were gleaming white, and by the porch there was a shrub covered with bright yellow flowers. Mr. Meyrick beat upon the oak door, painted black and studded with heavy nails. An old man, dressed like a farmer, opened it, and Ambrose noticed that his father spoke to him with something of reverence in his voice, as if he were some very great person. They sat down in a long room, but dimly lighted by the thick greenish glass in the quarried window, and presently the old farmer set a great jug of beer before them. They both drank heartily enough, and Mr. Meyrick said:

“Aren’t you about the last to brew your own beer, Mr. Cradock?”

“Iss; I be the last of all. They do all like the muck the brewer sends better than *cwrw dda*.”

“The whole world likes muck better than good drink, now.”

“You be right, Sir. Old days and old ways of our fathers, they be gone for ever. There was a blasted preacher down at the chapel a week or two ago, saying — so they do tell me — that they would all be damned to hell unless they took to ginger-beer directly. Iss indeed now; and I heard that he should say that a man could do a better day’s work on that rot-belly stuff than on good beer. Wass you ever hear of such a liarr as that?”

The old man was furious at the thought of these infamies and follies; his esses hissed through his teeth and his r’s rolled out with fierce emphasis. Mr. Meyrick nodded his approval of this indignation.

“We have what we deserve,” he said. “False preachers, bad drink, the talk of fools all the day long — even on the mountain. What is it like, do you think, in London?”

There fell a silence in the long, dark room. They could hear the sound of the wind in the beech trees, and Ambrose saw how the boughs were tossed to and fro, and he thought of what it must be like in winter nights, here, high upon the Great Mountain, when the storms swept up from the sea, or descended from the wilds of the north; when the shafts of rain were like the onset of an army, and the winds screamed about the walls.

“May we see It?” said Mr. Meyrick suddenly.

“I did think you had come for that. There be very few now that remember.”

He went out, and returned carrying a bunch of keys. Then he opened a door in the room and warned “the young master” to take care of the steps. Ambrose, indeed, could scarcely see the way. His father led him down a short flight of uneven stone steps, and they were in a room which seemed at first quite dark, for the only light came from a narrow window high up in the wall, and across the glass there were heavy iron bars.

Cradock lit two tall candles of yellow wax that stood in brass candlesticks on a table; and, as the flame grew clear, Ambrose saw that he was opening a sort of aumbry constructed in the thickness of the wall. The door was a great slab of solid oak, three or four inches thick — as one could see when it was opened — and from the dark place within the farmer took an iron box and set it carefully upon the floor, Mr. Meyrick helping him. They were strong men, but they staggered under the weight of the chest; the iron seemed as thick as the door of the cupboard from which it was taken, and the heavy, antique lock yielded, with a grating scream, to the key. Inside it there was another box of some reddish metal, which, again, held a case of wood black with age; and from this, with reverent hands, the farmer drew out a veiled and splendid cup and set it on the table between the two candles. It was a bowl-like vessel of the most wonderful workmanship, standing on a short stem. All the hues of the world were mingled on it, all the jewels of the regions seemed to shine from it; and the stem and foot were encrusted with work in enamel, of strange and magical colours that shone and dimmed with alternating radiance, that glowed with red fires and pale glories, with the blue of the far sky, the green of the faery seas, and the argent gleam of the evening star. But before Ambrose had gazed more than a moment he heard the old man say, in pure Welsh, not in broken English, in a resonant and chanting voice:

“Let us fall down and adore the marvellous and venerable work of the Lord God Almighty.”

To which his father responded:

“Agyos, Agyos, Agyos. Mighty and glorious is the Lord God Almighty, in all His works and wonderful operations. Curiluson, Curiluson, Curiluson.”

They knelt down, Cradock in the midst, before the cup, and Ambrose and his father on either hand. The holy vessel gleamed before the boy’s eyes, and he saw clearly its wonder and its beauty. All its surface was a marvel of the most delicate intertwining lines in gold and silver, in copper and in bronze, in all manner of metals and alloys; and these interlacing patterns in their brightness, in the strangeness of their imagery and ornament, seemed to enthral his eyes and capture them, as it were, in a maze of enchantment;

and not only the eyes; for the very spirit was rapt and garnered into that far bright world whence the holy magic of the cup proceeded. Among the precious stones which were set into the wonder was a great crystal, shining with the pure light of the moon; about the rim of it there was the appearance of faint and feathery clouds, but in the centre it was a white splendour; and as Ambrose gazed he thought that from the heart of this jewel there streamed continually a shower of glittering stars, dazzling his eyes with their incessant motion and brightness. His body thrilled with a sudden ineffable rapture, his breath came and went in quick pantings; bliss possessed him utterly as the three crowned forms passed in their golden order. Then the interwoven sorcery of the vessel became a ringing wood of golden, and bronze, and silver trees; from every side resounded the clear summons of the holy bells and the exultant song of the faery birds; he no longer heard the low-chanting voices of Cradock and his father as they replied to one another in the forms of some antique liturgy. Then he stood by a wild seashore; it was a dark night, and there was a shrilling wind that sang about the peaks of the sharp rock, answering to the deep voices of the heaving sea. A white moon, of fourteen days old, appeared for a moment in the rift between two vast black clouds, and the shaft of light showed all the savage desolation of the shore — cliffs that rose up into mountains, into crenellated heights that were incredible, whose bases were scourged by the torrents of hissing foam that were driven against them from the hollow-sounding sea. Then, on the highest of those awful heights, Ambrose became aware of walls and spires, of towers and battlements that must have touched the stars; and, in the midst of this great castle, there surged up the aspiring vault of a vast church, and all its windows were ablaze with a light so white and glorious that it was as if every pane were a diamond. And he heard the voices of a praising host, or the clamour of golden trumpets and the unceasing choir of the angels. And he knew that this place was the Sovereign Perpetual Choir, Cor-arbennic, into whose secret the deadly flesh may scarcely enter. But in the vision he lay breathless, on the floor before the gleaming wall of the sanctuary, while the shadows of the hierurgy were enacted; and it seemed to him that, for a moment of time, he saw in unendurable light the Mystery of Mysteries pass veiled before him, and the Image of the Slain and Risen.

For a brief while this dream was broken. He heard his father singing softly:

“Gogoniant y Tâd ac y Mab ac yr Yspryd Glân.”

And the old man answered:

“Agya Trias eleeson ymas.”

Then again his spirit was lost in the bright depths of the crystal, and he saw the ships of the saints, without oar or sail, afloat on the faery sea, seeking the Glassy Isle. All the whole company of the Blessed Saints of the Isle of Britain sailed on the adventure; dawn and sunset, night and morning, their illuminated faces never wavered; and Ambrose thought that at last they saw bright shores in the dying light of a red sun, and there came to their nostrils the scent of the deep apple-garths in Avalon, and odours of Paradise.

When he finally returned to the presence of earthly things he was standing by his father; while Cradock reverently wrapped the cup in the gleaming veils which covered it, saying as he did so, in Welsh:

“Remain in peace, O holy and divine cup of the Lord. Henceforth I know not whether I shall return to thee or not; but may the Lord vouchsafe me to see thee in the Church of the Firstborn which is in Heaven, on the Altar of the Sacrifice which is from age unto ages.”

Ambrose went up the steps and out into the sunshine on the mountain side with the bewilderment of strange dreams, as a coloured mist, about him. He saw the old white walls, the yellow blossoms by the porch; above, the wild, high mountain wall; and, below, all the dear land of Gwent, happy in the summer air, all its woods and fields, its rolling hills and its salt verge, rich in a golden peace. Beside him the cold water swelled from the earth and trickled from the grey rock, and high in the air an exultant lark was singing. The mountain breeze was full of life and gladness, and the rustling and tossing of the woods, the glint and glimmer of the leaves beneath, made one think that the trees, with every creature, were merry on that day. And in that dark cell beneath many locks, beneath wood and iron, concealed in golden, glittering veils, lay hidden that glorious and awful cup, glass of wonderful vision, portal and entrance of the Spiritual Place.

His father explained to him something of that which he had seen. He told him that the vessel was the Holy Cup of Teilo sant, which he was said to have received from the Lord in the state of Paradise, and that when Teilo said Mass, using that Chalice, the choir of angels was present visibly; that it was a cup of wonders and mysteries, the bestower of visions and heavenly graces.

“But whatever you do,” he said, “do not speak to anyone of what you have seen to-day, because if you do the mystery will be laughed at and blasphemed. Do you know that your uncle and aunt at Lupton would say that we were all mad together? That is because they are fools, and in these days most people are fools, and malignant fools too, as you will find out for yourself before you are much older. So always remember that you must hide the secrets that you have seen; and if you do not do so you will be sorry.”

Mr. Meyrick told his son why old Cradock was to be treated with respect — indeed, with reverence.

“He is just what he looks,” he said, “an old farmer with a small freehold up here on the mountain side; and, as you heard, his English is no better than that of any other farmer in this country. And, compared with Cradock, the Duke of Norfolk is a man of yesterday. He is of the tribe of Teilo the Saint; he is the last, in direct descent, of the hereditary keepers of the holy cup; and his race has guarded that blessed relic for thirteen hundred years. Remember, again, that to-day, on this mountain, you have seen great marvels which you must keep in silence.”

Poor Ambrose! He suffered afterwards for his forgetfulness of his father’s injunction. Soon after he went to Lupton one of the boys was astonishing his friends with a brilliant account of the Crown jewels, which he had viewed during the Christmas holidays. Everybody was deeply impressed, and young Meyrick, anxious to be agreeable in his turn, began to tell about the wonderful cup that he had once seen in an old farmhouse. Perhaps his manner was not convincing, for the boys shrieked with laughter over his description. A monitor who was passing asked to hear the joke, and, having been told the tale, clouted Ambrose over the head for an infernal young liar. This was a good lesson, and it served Ambrose in good stead when one of the masters having, somehow or other, heard the story, congratulated him in the most approved scholastic manner before the whole form on his wonderful imaginative gifts.

"I see the budding novelist in you, Meyrick," said this sly master. "Besant and Rice will be nowhere when you once begin. I suppose you are studying character just at present? Let us down gently, won't you? [To the delighted form.] We must be careful, mustn't we, how we behave? 'A chiel's amang us takin' notes,'" etc. etc.

But Meyrick held his tongue. He did not tell his form master that he was a beast, a fool and a coward, since he had found out that the truth, like many precious things, must often be concealed from the profane. A late vengeance overtook that foolish master. Long years after, he was dining at a popular London restaurant, and all through dinner he had delighted the ladies of his party by the artful mixture of brutal insolence and vulgar chaff with which he had treated one of the waiters, a humble-looking little Italian. The master was in the highest spirits at the success of his persiflage; his voice rose louder and louder, and his offensiveness became almost supernaturally acute. And then he received a heavy earthen casserole, six quails, a few small onions and a quantity of savoury but boiling juices full in the face. The waiter was a Neapolitan.

The hours of the night passed on, as Ambrose sat in his bedroom at the Old Grange, recalling many wonderful memories, dreaming his dreams of the mysteries, of the land of Gwent and the land of vision, just as his uncle, but a few yards away in another room of the house, was at the same time rapt into the world of imagination, seeing the new Lupton descending like a bride from the heaven of headmasters. But Ambrose thought of the Great Mountain, of the secret valleys, of the sanctuaries and hallows of the saints, of the rich carven work of lonely churches hidden amongst the hills and woods. There came into his mind the fragment of an old poem which he loved:

"In the darkness of old age let not my memory fail, Let me not forget to celebrate the beloved land of Gwent. If they imprison me in a deep place, in a house of pestilence, Still shall I be free, when I remember the sunshine upon Mynydd Maen. There have I listened to the singing of the lark, my soul has ascended with the song of the little bird; The great white clouds were the ships of my spirit, sailing to the haven of the Almighty. Equally to be held in honour is the site of the Great Mountain, Adorned with the gushing of many waters — Sweet is the shade of its hazel thickets, There a treasure is preserved, which I will not celebrate, It is glorious, and deeply concealed. If Teilo should return, if happiness were restored to the Cymri, Dewi and Dyfrig should serve his Mass; then a great marvel would be made visible. O blessed and miraculous work, then should my bliss be as the bliss of angels; I had rather behold this Offering than kiss the twin lips of dark Gwenllian. Dear my land of Gwent, *O quam dilecta tabernacula*! Thy rivers are like precious golden streams of Paradise, Thy hills are as the Mount Syon — Better a grave on Twyn Barlwm than a throne in the palace of the Saxons at Caer-Ludd."

And then, by the face of contrast, he thought of the first verse of the great school song, "Rocker," one of the earliest of the many poems which his uncle had consecrated to the praise of the dear old school:

"Once on a time, in the books that bore me, I read that in olden days before me Lupton town had a wonderful game, It was a game with a noble story (Lupton town was then in its glory, Kings and Bishops had brought it fame). It was a game that you all must know, And 'rocker' they called it, long ago.

Chorus.

"Look out for 'brooks,' or you're sure to drown, Look out for 'quarries,' or else you're down — That was the way 'Rocker' to play — Once on a day That was the way, Once on a day, That was the way that they used to play in Lupton town."

Thinking of the two songs, he put out his light and, wearied, fell into a deep sleep.

IV

THE BRITISH SCHOOLBOY, considered in a genial light by those who have made him their special study, has not been found to be either observant or imaginative. Or, rather, it would be well to say that his powers of observation, having been highly specialised within a certain limited tract of thought and experience (bounded mainly by cricket and football), are but faint without these bounds; while it is one of the chiefest works of the System to kill, destroy, smash and bring to nothing any powers of imagination he may have originally possessed. For if this were not done thoroughly, neither a Conservative nor a Liberal administration would be possible, the House of Commons itself would cease to exist, the Episcopus (var. Anglicanus) would go the way of the Great Bustard; a "muddling through somehow" (which must have been *the* brightest jewel in the British crown, wrung from King John by the barons) would become a lost art. And, since all these consequences would be clearly intolerable, the great Public Schools have perfected a very thorough system of destroying the imaginative toxin, and few cases of failure have been so far reported.

Still, there are facts which not even the densest dullards, the most complete boobies, can help seeing; and a good many of the boys found themselves wondering "what was the matter with Meyrick" when they saw him at Chapel on the Sunday morning. The news of his astounding violences both of act and word on the night before had not yet circulated generally. Bates was attending to that department, but hadn't had time to do much so far; and the replies of Pelly and Rawson to enquiries after black eyes and a potato-like nose were surly and misleading. Afterwards, when the tale was told, when Bates, having enlarged the incidents to folk-lore size, showed Pelly lying in a pool of his own blood, Rawson screaming as with the torments of the lost and Meyrick rolling out oaths — all original and all terrible — for the space of a quarter of an hour, then indeed the school was satisfied; it was no wonder if Meyrick did look a bit queer after the achievement of such an adventure. The funk of aforetime had found courage; the air of rapture was easily understood. It is probable that if, in the nature of things, it had been possible for an English schoolboy to meet St. Francis of Assisi, the boy would have concluded that the saint must have just made 200 not out in first-class cricket.

But Ambrose walked in a strange light; he had been admitted into worlds undreamed of, and from the first brightness of the sun, when he awoke in the morning in his room at the Grange, it was the material world about him, the walls of stone and brick, the solid earth, the sky itself, and the people who talked and moved and seemed alive — these were things of vision, unsubstantial shapes, odd and broken illusions of the mind. At half-past seven old Toby, the man-of-all-work at the old Grange banged at his door and let his clean boots fall with a crash on the boards after the usual fashion. He awoke, sat up in bed, staring about him. But what was this? The four walls covered with a foolish speckled paper, pale blue and pale brown, the white ceiling, the bare boards with the strip of carpet by the bedside: he knew nothing of all this. He was not horrified, because he knew that it was all non-existent, some plastic fantasy that happened to be presented for the moment to his brain. Even the big black wooden chest that held his books (*Parker*, despised by Horbury, among them) failed to appeal to him with any sense of reality; and the bird's-eye washstand and chest of drawers, the white water-jug with the blue band, were all frankly phantasmal. It reminded him of a trick he had sometimes played: one chose one's position carefully, shut an eye and, behold, a mean shed could be made to obscure the view of a mountain! So these walls and appurtenances made an illusory sort of intrusion into the true vision on which he gazed. That yellow washstand rising out of the shining wells of the undying, the speckled walls in the place of the great mysteries, a chest of drawers in the magic garden of roses — it had the air of a queer joke, and he laughed aloud to himself as he realized that he alone knew, that everybody else would say, "That is a white jug with a blue band," while he, and he only, saw the marvel and glory of the holy cup with its glowing metals, its interlacing myriad lines, its wonderful images, and its hues of the mountain and the stars, of the green wood and the faery sea where, in a sure haven, anchor the ships that are bound for Avalon.

For he had a certain faith that he had found the earthly presentation and sacrament of the Eternal Heavenly Mystery.

He smiled again, with the quaint smile of an angel in an old Italian picture, as he realized more fully the strangeness of the whole position and the odd humours which would relieve to play a wonderful game of make-believe; the speckled walls, for instance, were not really there, but he was to behave just as if they were solid realities. He would presently rise and go through an odd pantomine of washing and dressing, putting on brilliant boots, and going down to various mumbo-jumbo ceremonies called breakfast, chapel and dinner, in the company of appearances to whom he would accord all the honours due to veritable beings. And this delicious phantasmagoria would go on and on day after day, he alone having the secret; and what a delight it would be to "play up" at rocker! It seemed to him that the solid-seeming earth, the dear old school and rocker itself had all been made to minister to the acuteness of his pleasure; they were the darkness that made the light visible, the matter through which form was manifested. For the moment he enclosed in the most secret place of his soul the true world into which he had been guided; and as he dressed he hummed the favourite school song, "Never mind!"

"If the umpire calls 'out' at your poor second over, If none of your hits ever turns out a 'rover,' If you fumble your fives and 'go rot' over sticker, If every hound is a little bit quicker; If you can't tackle rocker at all, not at all, And kick at the moon when you try for the ball, Never mind, never mind, never mind — if you fall, Dick falls before rising, Tom's short ere he's tall, Never mind! Don't be one of the weakest who go to the wall: Never mind!"

Ambrose could not understand how Columbus could have blundered so grossly. Somehow or other he should have contrived to rid himself of his crew; he should have returned alone, with a dismal tale of failure, and passed the rest of his days as that sad and sorry charlatan who had misled the world with his mad whimsies of a continent beyond the waters of the Atlantic. If he had been given wisdom to do this, how great — how wonderful would his joys have been! They would have pointed at him as he paced the streets in his shabby cloak; the boys would have sung songs about him and his madness; the great people would have laughed contemptuously as he went by. And he would have seen in his heart all that vast far world of the west, the rich islands barred by roaring surf, a whole hemisphere of strange regions and strange people; he would have known that he alone possessed the secret of it. But, after all, Ambrose knew that his was a greater joy even than this; for the world that he had discovered was not far across the seas, but within him.

Pelly stared straight before him in savage silence all through breakfast; he was convinced that mere hazard had guided that crushing blow, and he was meditating schemes of complete and exemplary vengeance. He noticed nothing strange about Meyrick, nor would he have cared if he had seen the images of the fairies in his eyes. Rawson, on the other hand, was full of genial civility and good fellowship; it was "old chap" and "old fellow" every other word. But he was far from unintelligent, and, as he slyly watched Meyrick, he saw that there was something altogether unaccustomed and incomprehensible. Unknown lights burned and shone in the eyes, reflections of one knew not what; the expression was altered in some queer way that he could not understand. Meyrick had always been a rather ugly, dogged-looking fellow; his black hair and something that was not usual in the set of his features gave him an exotic, almost an Oriental appearance; hence a story of Rawson's to the effect that Meyrick's mother was a nigger woman in poor circumstances and of indifferent morality had struck the school as plausible enough.

But now the grimness of the rugged features seemed abolished; the face shone, as it were, with the light of a flame — but a flame of what fire? Rawson, who would not have put his observations into such terms, drew his own conclusions readily enough and imparted them to Pelly after Chapel.

"Look here, old chap," he said, "did you notice young Meyrick at breakfast?"

Pelly simply blasted Meyrick and announced his intention of giving him the worst thrashing he had ever had at an early date.

"Don't you try it on," said Rawson. "I had my eye on him all the time. He didn't see I was spotting him. He's cracked; he's dangerous. I shouldn't wonder if he were in a strait waistcoat in the County Lunatic Asylum in a week's time. My governor had a lot to do with lunatics, and he always says he can tell by the eyes. I'll swear Meyrick is raging mad."

"Oh, rot!" said Pelly. "What do you know about it?"

"Well, look out, old chap, and don't say I didn't give you the tip. Of course, you know a maniac is stronger than three ordinary men? The only thing is to get them down and crack their ribs. But you want at least half a dozen men before you can do it."

"Oh, shut up!"

So Rawson said no more, remaining quite sure that he had diagnosed Ambrose's symptoms correctly. He waited for the catastrophe with a dreadful joy, wondering whether Meyrick would begin by cutting old Horbury's throat with his own razor, or whether he would rather steal into Pelly's room at night and tear him limb from limb, a feat which, as a madman, he could, of course, accomplish with perfect ease. As a matter of fact, neither of these events happened. Pelly, a boy of the bulldog breed, smacked Ambrose's face a day or two later before a huge crowd of boys, and received in return such a terrific blow under the left ear that a formal fight in the Tom Brown manner was out of the question.

Pelly reached the ground and stayed there in an unconscious state for some while; and the other boys determined that it would be as well to leave Meyrick to himself. He might be cracked but he was undoubtedly a hard hitter. As for Pelly, like the sensible fellow that he was, he simply concluded that Meyrick was too good for him. He did not quite understand it; he dimly suspected the intrusion of some strange forces, but with such things he had nothing to do. It was a fair knock-out, and there was an end of it.

Bates had glanced up as Ambrose came into the dining-room on the Sunday morning. He saw the shining face, the rapturous eyes, and had silently wondered, recognising the presence of elements which transcended all his calculations.

Meanwhile the Lupton Sunday went on after its customary fashion. At eleven o'clock the Chapel was full of boys. There were nearly six hundred of them there, the big ones in frock-coats, with high, pointed collars, which made them look like youthful Gladstones. The younger boys wore broad, turn-down collars and had short, square jackets made somewhat in the Basque fashion. Young and old had their hair cut close to the scalp, and this gave them all a brisk but bullety appearance. The masters, in cassock, gown and hood, occupied the choir stalls. Mr. Horbury, the High Usher, clothed in a flowing surplice, was taking Morning Prayer, and the Head occupied a kind of throne by the altar.

The Chapel was not an inspiring building. It was the fourteenth century, certainly, but the fourteenth century translated by 1840, and, it is to be feared, sadly betrayed by the translators. The tracery of the windows was poor and shallow; the mouldings of the piers and arches faulty to a degree; the chancel was absurdly out of proportion, and the pitch-pine benches and stalls had a sticky look. There was a stained-glass window in memory of the Old Luptonians who fell in the Crimea. One wondered what the Woman of Samaria by the Well had to do either with Lupton or the Crimea. And the colouring was like that used in very common, cheap sweets.

The service went with a rush. The prayers, versicles and responses, and psalms were said, the officiant and the congregation rather pressing than pausing — often, indeed, coming so swiftly to cues that two or three words at the end of one verse or two or three at the beginning of the next would be lost in a confused noise of contending voices. But *Venite* and *Te Deum* and *Benedictus* were rattled off to frisky Anglicans with great spirit; sometimes the organ tooted, sometimes it bleated gently, like a flock of sheep; now one might have sworn that the music of penny whistles stole on the ear, and again, as the organist coupled up the full organ, using suddenly all the battery of his stops, a gas explosion and a Salvation Army band seemed to strive against one another. A well-known nobleman who had been to Chapel at Lupton was heard to say, with reference to this experience: “I am no Ritualist, heaven knows — but I confess I like a hearty service.”

But it was, above all, the sermon that has made the Chapel a place of many memories. The Old Boys say — and one supposes that they are in earnest — that the tall, dignified figure of the Doctor, standing high above them all, his scarlet hood making a brilliant splash of colour against the dingy, bilious paint of the pale green walls, has been an inspiration to them in all quarters of the globe, in all manner of difficulties and temptations.

One man writes that in the midst of a complicated and dangerous deal on the Stock Exchange he remembered a sermon of Dr. Chesson’s called in the printed volume, “Fighting the Good Fight.”

“You have a phrase amongst you which I often hear,” said the Head. “That phrase is ‘Play the game,’ and I wish to say that, though you know it not; though, it may be, the words are often spoken half in jest; still, they are but your modern, boyish rendering of the old, stirring message which I have just read to you.

"Fight the Good Fight.' 'Play the Game.' Remember the words in the storm and struggle, the anxiety and stress that may be — nay, must be — before you — etc., etc., etc."

"After the crisis was over," wrote the Stock Exchange man, "I was thankful that I *had* remembered those words."

"That voice sounding like a trumpet on the battle-field, bidding us all remember that Success was the prize of Effort and Endurance — — " So writes a well-known journalist.

"I remembered what the Doctor said to us once about 'running the race,'" says a young soldier, recounting a narrow escape from a fierce enemy, "so I stuck to my orders."

Ambrose, on that Sunday morning, sat in his place, relishing acutely all the savours of the scene, consumed with inward mirth at the thought that this also professed to be a rite of religion. There was an aimless and flighty merriment about the chant to the *Te Deum* that made it difficult for him to control his laughter; and when he joined in the hymn "Pleasant are Thy courts above," there was an odd choke in his voice that made the boy next to him shuffle uneasily.

But the sermon!

It will be found on page 125 of the *Lupton Sermons*. It dealt with the Parable of the Talents, and showed the boys in what the sin of the man who concealed his Talent really consisted.

"I daresay," said the Head, "that many of the older amongst you have wondered what this man's sin really was. You may have read your Greek Testaments carefully, and then have tried to form in your minds some analogy to the circumstances of the parable — and it would not surprise me if you were to tell me that you had failed.

"What manner of man was this? I can imagine your saying one to another. I shall not be astonished if you confess that, for you at least, the question seems unanswerable.

“Yes; Unanswerable to you. For you are English boys, the sons of English gentlemen, to whom the atmosphere of casuistry, of concealment, of subtlety, is unknown; by whom such an atmosphere would be rejected with scorn. You come from homes where there is no shadow, no dark corner which must not be pried into. Your relations and your friends are not of those who hide their gifts from the light of day. Some of you, perhaps, have had the privilege of listening to the talk of one or other of the great statesmen who guide the doctrines of this vast Empire. You will have observed, I am sure, that in the world of politics there is no vain simulation of modesty, no feigned reluctance to speak of worthy achievement. All of you are members of this great community, of which each one of us is so proud, which we think of as the great inspiration and motive force of our lives. Here, you will say, there are no Hidden Talents, for the note of the English Public School (thank God for it!) is openness, frankness, healthy emulation; each endeavouring to do his best for the good of all. In our studies and in our games each desires to excel to carry off the prize. We strive for a corruptible crown, thinking that this, after all, is the surest discipline for the crown that is incorruptible. If a man say that he loveth God whom he hath not seen, and love not his brother whom he hath seen! Let your light *shine* before men. Be sure that we shall never win Heaven by despising earth.

“Yet that man hid his Talent in a napkin. What does the story mean? What message has it for us to-day?

“I will tell you.

“Some years ago during our summer holidays I was on a walking tour in a mountainous district in the north of England. The sky was of a most brilliant blue, the sun poured, as it were, a gospel of gladness on the earth. Towards the close of the day I was entering a peaceful and beautiful valley amongst the hills, when three sullen notes of a bell came down the breeze towards me. There was a pause. Again the three strokes, and for a third time this dismal summons struck my ears. I walked on in the direction of the sound, wondering whence it came and what it signified; and soon I saw before me a great pile of buildings, surrounded by a gloomy and lofty wall.

“It was a Roman Catholic monastery. The bell was ringing the Angelus, as it is called.

“I obtained admittance to this place and spoke to some of the unhappy monks. I should astonish you if I mentioned the names of some of the deluded men who had immured themselves in this prison-house. It is sufficient to say that among them were a soldier who had won distinction on the battle-field, an artist, a statesman and a physician of no mean repute.

“Now do you understand? Ah! a day will come — you know, I think, what that day is called — when these poor men will have to answer the question: ‘Where is the Talent that was given to you?’

“‘Where was your sword in the hour of your country’s danger?’

“‘Where was your picture, your consecration of your art to the service of morality and humanity, when the doors of the great Exhibition were thrown open?’

“‘Where was your silver eloquence, your voice of persuasion, when the strife of party was at its fiercest?’

“‘Where was your God-given skill in healing when One of Royal Blood lay fainting on the bed of dire — almost mortal — sickness?’

“And the answer? ‘I laid it up in a napkin.’ And now, etc., etc.”

Then the whole six hundred boys sang “O Paradise! O Paradise!” with a fervour and sincerity that were irresistible. The organ thundered till the bad glass shivered and rattled, and the service was over.

V

ALMOST THE LAST words that Ambrose had heard after his wonderful awaking were odd enough, though at the time he took little note of them, since they were uttered amidst passionate embraces, amidst soft kisses on his poor beaten flesh. Indeed, if these words recurred to him afterwards, they never made much impression on his mind, though to most people they would seem of more serious import than much else that was uttered that night! The sentences ran something like this:

“The cruel, wicked brute! He shall be sorry all his days, and every blow shall be a grief to him. My dear! I promise you he shall pay for to-night ten times over. His heart shall ache for it till it stops beating.”

There cannot be much doubt that this promise was kept to the letter. No one knew how wicked rumours concerning Mr. Horbury got abroad in Lupton, but from that very day the execution of the sentence began. In the evening the High Usher, paying a visit to a friend in town, took a short cut through certain dark, ill-lighted streets, and was suddenly horrified to hear his name shrieked out, coupled with a most disgusting accusation. His heart sank down in his breast; his face, he knew, was bloodless; and then he rushed forward to the malpassage whence the voice seemed to proceed.

There was nothing there. It was a horrid little alley, leading from one slum to another, between low walls and waste back-gardens, dismal and lampless. Horbury ran at top speed to the end of it, but there was nothing to be done. A few women were gossiping at their doors, a couple of men slouched past on their way to the beer-shop at the corner — that was all. He asked one of the women if she had seen anybody running, and she said no, civilly enough — and yet he fancied that she had leered at him.

He turned and went back home. He was not in the mood for paying visits. It was some time before he could compose his mind by assuring himself that the incident, though unpleasant, was not of the slightest significance. But from that day the nets were about his feet, and his fate was sealed.

Personally, he was subjected to no further annoyance, and soon forgot that unpleasant experience in the back-street. But it seems certain that from that Sunday onwards a cloud of calumny overshadowed the High Usher in all his ways. No one said anything definite, but everyone appeared to be conscious of something unpleasant when Horbury's name was mentioned. People looked oddly at one another, and the subject was changed.

One of the young masters, speaking to a colleague, did indeed allude casually to Horbury as Xanthias Phoceus. The other master, a middle-aged man, raised his eyebrows and shook his head without speaking. It is understood that these muttered slanders were various in their nature; but, as has been said, everything was indefinite, intangible as contagion — and as deadly to the master's worldly health.

That horrible accusation which had been screamed out of the alley was credited by some; others agreed with the young master; while a few had a terrible story of an idiot girl in a remote Derbyshire village. And the persistence of all these fables was strange.

It was four years before Henry Vibart Chesson, D. D., ascended the throne of St. Guthmund at Dorchester; and all through those four years the fountain of evil innuendo rose without ceasing. It is doubtful how far belief in the truth of these scandals was firm and settled, or how far they were in the main uttered and circulated by ill-natured people who disliked Horbury, but did not in their hearts believe him guilty of worse sins than pompousness and arrogance. The latter is the more probable opinion.

Of course, the deliberations of the Trustees were absolutely secret, and the report that the Chairman, the Marquis of Dunham, said something about Cæsar's wife is a report and nothing more. It is evident that the London press was absolutely in the dark as to the existence of this strange conspiracy of vengeance, since two of the chief dailies took the appointment of the High Usher to the Headmastership as a foregone conclusion, prophesying, indeed, a rule of phenomenal success. And then Millward, a Winchester man, understood to be rather unsound on some scholastic matters— "not *quite* the right man"; "just a *little* bit of a Jesuit" — received the appointment, and people did begin to say that there must be a screw loose somewhere. And Horbury was overwhelmed, and began to die.

The odd thing was that, save on that Sunday night, he never saw the enemy; he never suspected that there was an enemy; And as for the incident of the alley, after a little consideration he treated it with contempt. It was only some drunken beast in the town who knew him by sight and wished to be offensive, in the usual fashion of drunken beasts.

And there was nothing else. Lupton society was much too careful to allow its suspicions to be known. A libel action meant, anyhow, a hideous scandal and might have no pleasant results for the libellers. Besides, no one wanted to offend Horbury, who was suspected of possessing a revengeful temper; and it had not dawned on the Lupton mind that the rumours they themselves were circulating would eventually ruin the High Usher's chances of the Headmastership. Each gossip heard, as it were, only his own mutter at the moment. He did not realize that when a great many people are muttering all at once an ugly noise of considerable volume is being produced.

It is true that a few of the masters were somewhat cold in their manner. They lacked the social gift of dissimulation, and could not help showing their want of cordiality. But Horbury, who noticed this, put it down to envy and disaffection, and resolved that the large powers given him by the Trustees should not be in vain so far as the masters in question were concerned.

Indeed, C. L. Wood, who was afterwards Headmaster of Marcester and died in Egypt a few years ago, had a curious story which in part relates to the masters in question, and perhaps throws some light on the extraordinary tale of Horbury's ruin.

Wood was an old Luptonian. He was a mighty athlete in his time, and his records for the Long Jump and Throwing the Cricket Ball have not been beaten at Lupton to this day. He had been one of the first boarders taken at the Old Grange. The early relations between Horbury and himself had been continued in later life, and Wood was staying with his former master at the time when the Trustee's decision was announced. It is supposed, indeed, that Horbury had offered him a kind of unofficial, but still important, position in the New Model; in fact, Wood confessed over his port that the idea was that he should be a kind of "Intelligence Department" to the Head. He did not seem very clear as to the exact scope of his proposed duties. We may certainly infer, however, that they would have been of a very confidential nature, for Wood had jotted down his recollections of that fatal morning somewhat as follows:

“I never saw Horbury in better spirits. Indeed, I remember thinking that he was younger than ever — younger than he was in the old days when he was a junior master and I was in the Third. Of course, he was always energetic; one could not disassociate the two notions of Horbury and energy, and I used to make him laugh by threatening to include the two terms in the new edition of my little book, *Latin and English Synonyms*. It did not matter whether he were taking the Fifth, or editing Classics for his boys, or playing rocker — one could not help rejoicing in the vivid and ebullient energy of the man. And perhaps this is one reason why shirkers and loafers dreaded him, as they certainly did.

“But during those last few days at Lupton his vitality had struck me as quite superhuman. As all the world knows, his succession to the Headmastership was regarded by everyone as assured, and he was, naturally and properly, full of the great task which he believed was before him. This is not the place to argue the merits or demerits of the scheme which had been maturing for many years in his brain.

“A few persons who, I cannot but think, have received very imperfect information on the subject, have denounced Horbury’s views of the modern Public School as revolutionary. Revolutionary they certainly were, as an express engine is revolutionary compared to an ox-waggon. But those who think of the late Canon Horbury as indifferent to the good side of Public School traditions knew little of the real man. However, were his plans good or bad, they were certainly of vast scope, and on the first night of my visit he made me sit up with him till two o’clock while he expounded his ideas, some of which, as he was good enough to say, he trusted to me to carry out. He showed me the piles of MS. he had accumulated: hundreds of pages relating to the multiple departments of the great organisation which he was to direct, or rather to create; sheets of serried figures, sheaves of estimates which he had caused to be made out in readiness for immediate action.

“Nothing was neglected. I remember seeing a note on the desirability of compiling a ‘Lupton Hymn Book’ for use in the Chapel, and another on the question of forming a Botanical Garden, so that the school botany might be learned from ‘the green life,’ as he beautifully expressed it, not from dry letterpress and indifferent woodcuts. Then, I think, on a corner of the 'Botany Leaf' was a jotting — a mere hasty scrawl, waiting development and consideration: 'Should we teach Hindustani? Write to Tucker *re* the Moulvie Ahmed Khan.'

"I despair of giving the reader any conception of the range and minuteness of these wonderful memoranda. I remember saying to Horbury that he seemed to be able to use the microscope and the telescope at the same time. He laughed joyously, and told me to wait till he was really at work. 'You will have your share, I promise you,' he added. His high spirits were extraordinary and infectious. He was an excellent *raconteur*, and now and again, amidst his talk of the New Lupton which he was about to translate from the idea into substance, he told some wonderful stories which I have not the heart to set down here. *Tu ne quœsieris.* I have often thought of those lines when I remember Horbury's intense happiness, the nervous energy which made the delay of a day or two seem almost intolerable. His brain and his fingers tingled, as it were, to set about the great work before him. He reminded me of a mighty host, awaiting but the glance of their general to rush forward with irresistible force.

"There was not a trace of misgiving. Indeed, I should have been utterly astonished if I had seen anything of the kind. He told me, indeed, that for some time past he had suspected the existence of a sort of cabal or clique against him. 'A. and X., B. and Y., M. and N., and, I think, Z., are in it,' he said, naming several of the masters. 'They are jealous, I suppose, and want to make things as difficult as they can. They are all cowards, though, and I don't believe one of them — except, perhaps, M. — would fail in obedience, or rather in subservience, when it comes to the point. But I am going to make short work of the lot.' And he told me his intention of ridding the school of these disaffected elements. 'The Trustees will back me up, I know,' he added, 'but we must try to avoid all unnecessary friction'; and he explained to me a plan he had thought of for eliminating the masters in question. 'It won't do to have half-hearted officers on our ship,' was the way in which he put it, and I cordially agreed with him.

"Possibly he may have underrated the force of the opposition which he treated so lightly; possibly he altogether misjudged the situation. He certainly regarded the appointment as already made, and this, of course, was, or appeared to be, the conviction of all who knew anything of Lupton and Horbury.

“I shall never forget the day on which the news came. Horbury made a hearty breakfast, opening letters, jotting down notes, talking of his plans as the meal proceeded. I left him for a while. I was myself a good deal excited, and I strolled up and down the beautiful garden at the Old Grange, wondering whether I should be able to satisfy such a chief who, the soul of energy himself, would naturally expect a like quality in his subordinates. I rejoined him in the course of an hour in the study, where he was as busy as ever— ‘snowed up,’ as he expressed it, in a vast pile of papers and correspondence.

“He nodded genially and pointed to a chair, and a few minutes later a servant came in with a letter. She had just found it in the hall, she explained. I had taken a book and was reading. I noticed nothing till what I can only call a groan of intense anguish made me look up in amazement — indeed, in horror — and I was shocked to see my old friend, his face a ghastly white, his eyes staring into vacancy, and his expression one of the most terrible — *the* most terrible — that I have ever witnessed. I cannot describe that look. There was an agony of grief and despair, a glance of the wildest amazement, terror, as of an impending awful death, and with these the fiercest and most burning anger that I have ever seen on any human face. He held a letter clenched in his hand. I was afraid to speak or move.

“It was fully five minutes before he regained his self-control, and he did this with an effort which was in itself dreadful to contemplate — so severe was the struggle. He explained to me in a voice which faltered and trembled with the shock that he had received, that he had had very bad news — that a large sum of money which was absolutely necessary to the carrying out of his projects had been embezzled by some unscrupulous person, that he did not know what he should do. He fell back into his chair; in a few minutes he had become an old man.

“He did not seem upset, or even astonished, when, later in the day, a telegram announced that he had failed in the aim of his life — that a stranger was to bear rule in his beloved Lupton. He murmured something to the effect that it was no matter now. He never held up his head again.”

This note is an extract from *George Horbury: a Memoir*. It was written by Dr. Wood for the use of a few friends and privately printed in a small edition of a hundred and fifty copies. The author felt, as he explains in his brief *Foreword*, that by restricting the sale to those who either knew Horbury or were especially interested in his work, he was enabled to dwell somewhat intimately on matters which could hardly have been treated in a book meant for the general public.

The extract that has been made from this book is interesting on two points. It shows that Horbury was quite unaware of what had been going on for four years before Chesson's resignation and that he had entirely misinterpreted the few and faint omens which had been offered him. He was preparing to break a sulky sentinel or two when all the ground of his fortalice was a very network of loaded mines! The other point is still more curious. It will be seen from Wood's story that the terrific effect that he describes was produced by a letter, received some hours before the news of the Trustees' decision arrived by telegram. "Later in the day" is the phrase in the Memoir; as a matter of fact, the final deliberation of the Lupton Trustees, held at Marshall's Hotel in Albemarle Street, began at eleven-thirty and was not over till one-forty-five. It is not likely that the result could have reached the Old Grange before two-fifteen; whereas the letter found in the hall must have been read by Horbury before ten o'clock. The invariable breakfast hour at the Old Grange was eight o'clock.

C. L. Wood says: "I rejoined him in the course of an hour," and the letter was brought in "a few minutes later." Afterwards, when the fatal telegram arrived, the Memoir notes that the unfortunate man was not "even astonished." It seems to follow almost necessarily from these facts that Horbury learnt the story of his ruin from the letter, for it has been ascertained that the High Usher's account of the contents of the letter was false from beginning to end. Horbury's most excellent and sagacious investments were all in the impeccable hands of "Witham's" (Messrs. Witham, Venables, Davenport and Witham), of Raymond Buildings, Gray's Inn, who do not include embezzlement in their theory and practice of the law; and, as a matter of fact, the nephew, Charles Horbury, came into a very handsome fortune on the death of his uncle — eighty thousand pounds in personality, with the Old Grange and some valuable ground rents in the new part of Lupton. It is as certain as anything can be that George Horbury never lost a penny by embezzlement or, indeed, in any other way.

One may surmise, then, the real contents of that terrible letter. In general, that is, for it is impossible to conjecture whether the writer told the whole story; one does not know, for example, whether Meyrick's name was mentioned or not: whether there was anything which carried the reader's mind to that dark evening in November when he beat the white-faced boy with such savage cruelty. But from Dr. Wood's description of the wretched man's appearance one understands how utterly unexpected was the crushing blow that had fallen upon him. It was a lightning flash from the sky at its bluest, and before that sudden and awful blast his whole life fell into deadly and evil ruin.

"He never held up his head again." He never lived again, one may say, unless a ceaseless wheel of anguish and anger and bitter and unavailing and furious regret can be called life. It was not a man, but a shell, full of gall and fire, that went to Wareham; but probably he was not the first of the Klippoth to be made a Canon.

As we have no means of knowing exactly what or how much that letter told him, one is not in a position to say whether he recognised the singularity — one might almost say, the eccentricity — with which his punishment was stage-managed. *Nec deus intersit* certainly; but a principle may be pushed too far, and a critic might point out that, putting avenging deities in their machines on one side, it was rather going to the other extreme to bring about the Great Catastrophe by means of bad sherry, a trying Headmaster, boiled mutton, a troublesome schoolboy and a servant-maid. Yet these were the agents employed; and it seems that we are forced to the conclusion that we do not altogether understand the management of the universe. The conclusion is a dangerous one, since we may be led by it, unless great care is exercised, into the worst errors of the Dark Ages.

There is the question, of course, of the truthfulness or falsity of the various slanders which had such a tremendous effect. The worst of them were lies — there can be little doubt of that — and for the rest, it may be hinted that the allusion of the young master to Xanthias Phoceus was not very far wide of the mark. Mrs. Horbury had been dead some years, and it is to be feared that there had been passages between the High Usher and Nelly Foran which public opinion would have condemned. It would be difficult to tell the whole story, but the girl's fury of revenge makes one apt to believe that she was exacting payment not only for Ambrose's wrongs, but for some grievous injury done to herself.

But before all these things could be brought to their ending, Ambrose Meyrick had to live in wonders and delights, to be initiated in many mysteries, to discover the meaning of that voice which seemed to speak within him, denouncing him because he had pried unworthily into the Secret which is hidden from the Holy Angels.

PART III

I

ONE OF AMBROSE Meyrick's favourite books was a railway timetable. He spent many hours in studying these intricate pages of figures, noting times of arrival and departure on a piece of paper, and following the turnings and intersections of certain lines on the map. In this way he had at last arrived at the best and quickest route to his native country, which he had not seen for five years. His father had died when he was ten years old.

This result once obtained, the seven-thirty to Birmingham got him in at nine-thirty-five; the ten-twenty for the west was a capital train, and he would see the great dome of Mynydd Mawr before one o'clock. His fancy led him often to a bridge which crossed the railway about a mile out of Lupton. East and west the metals stretched in a straight line, defying, it seemed, the wisdom of Euclid. He turned from the east and gazed westward, and when a red train went by in the right direction he would lean over the bridge and watch till the last flying carriage had vanished into the distance. He imagined himself in that train and thought of the joy of it, if the time ever came — for it seemed long — the joy in every revolution of the wheels, in every whistle of the engine; in the rush and in the rhythm of this swift flight from that horrible school and that horrible place.

Year after year went by and he had not revisited the old land of his father. He was left alone in the great empty house in charge of the servants during the holidays — except one summer when Mr. Horbury despatched him to a cousin of his who lived at Yarmouth.

The second year after his father's death there was a summer of dreadful heat. Day after day the sky was a glare of fire, and in these abhorred Midlands, far from the breath of the sea and the mountain breeze, the ground baked and cracked and stank to heaven. A dun smoke rose from the earth with the faint, sickening stench of a brick-field, and the hedgerows swooned in the heat and in the dust. Ambrose's body and soul were athirst with the desire of the hills and the woods; his heart cried out within him for the waterpools in the shadow of the forest; and in his ears continually he heard the cold water pouring and trickling and dripping from the grey rocks on the great mountain side. And he saw that awful land which God has no doubt made for manufacturers to prepare them for their eternal habitation, its weary waves burning under the glaring sky: the factory chimneys of Lupton vomiting their foul smoke; the mean red streets, each little hellway with its own stink; the dull road, choking in its dust. For streams there was the Wand, running like black oil between black banks, steaming here as boiling poisons were belched into it from the factory wall; there glittering with iridescent scum vomited from some other scoundrel's castle. And for the waterpools of the woods he was free to gaze at the dark green liquor in the tanks of the Sulphuric Acid factory, but a little way out of town. Lupton was a very rising place.

His body was faint with the burning heat and the foulness of all about him, and his soul was sick with loneliness and friendlessness and unutterable longing. He had already mastered his Bradshaw and had found out the bridge over the railway; and day after day he leaned over the parapet and watched the burning metals vanishing into the west, into the hot, thick haze that hung over all the land. And the trains sped away towards the haven of his desire, and he wondered if he should ever see again the dearly loved country or hear the song of the nightingale in the still white morning, in the circle of the green hills. The thought of his father, of the old days of happiness, of the grey home in the still valley, swelled in his heart and he wept bitterly, so utterly forsaken and wretched seemed his life.

It happened towards the end of that dreadful August that one night he had tossed all through the hours listening to the chiming bells, only falling into a fevered doze a little while before they called him. He woke from ugly and oppressive dreams to utter wretchedness; he crawled downstairs like an old man and left his breakfast untouched, for he could eat nothing. The flame of the sun seemed to burn in his brain; the hot smoke of the air choked him. All his limbs ached. From head to foot he was a body of suffering. He struggled out and tottered along the road to the bridge and gazed with dim, hopeless eyes along the path of desire, into the heavy, burning mist in the far distance. And then his heart beat quick, and he cried aloud in his amazed delight; for, in the shimmering glamour of the haze, he saw as in a mirror the vast green wall of the Great Mountain rise before him — not far, but as if close at hand. Nay, he stood upon its slope; his feet were in the sweet-smelling bracken; the hazel thicket was rustling beneath him in the brave wind, and the shining water poured cold from the stony rock. He heard the silver note of the lark, shrilling high and glad in the sunlight. He saw the yellow blossoms tossed by the breeze about the porch of the white house. He seemed to turn in this vision and before him the dear, long-remembered land appeared in its great peace and beauty: meadows and cornfield, hill and valley and deep wood between the mountains and the far sea. He drew a long breath of that quickening and glorious air, and knew that life had returned to him. And then he was gazing once more down the glittering railway into the mist; but strength and hope had replaced that deadly sickness of a moment before, and light and joy came back to his eyes.

The vision had doubtless been given to him in his sore and pressing need. It returned no more; not again did he see the fair height of Mynydd Mawr rise out of the mist. But from that day the station on the bridge was daily consecrated. It was his place of refreshment and hope in many seasons of evil and weariness. From this place he could look forward to the hour of release and return that must come at last. Here he could remind himself that the bonds of the flesh had been broken in a wonderful manner; that he had been set free from the jaws of hell and death.

Fortunately, few people came that way. It was but a by-road serving a few farms in the neighbourhood, and on the Sunday afternoon, in November, the Head’s sermon over and dinner eaten, he betook himself to his tower, free to be alone for a couple of hours, at least.

He stood there, leaning on the wall, his face turned, as ever, to the west, and, as it were, a great flood of rapture overwhelmed him. He sank down, deeper, still deeper, into the hidden and marvellous places of delight. In his country there were stories of the magic people who rose all gleaming from the pools in lonely woods; who gave more than mortal bliss to those who loved them; who could tell the secrets of that land where flame was the most material substance; whose inhabitants dwelt in palpitating and quivering colours or in the notes of a wonderful melody. And in the dark of the night all legends had been fulfilled.

It was a strange thing, but Ambrose Meyrick, though he was a public schoolboy of fifteen, had lived all his days in a rapt innocence. It is possible that in school, as elsewhere, enlightenment, pleasant or unpleasant, only comes to those who seek for it — or one may say certainly that there are those who dwell under the protection of enchantments, who may go down into the black depths and yet appear resurgent and shining, without any stain or defilement of the pitch on their white robes. For these have ears so intent on certain immortal songs that they cannot hear discordant voices; their eyes are veiled with a light that shuts out the vision of evil. There are flames about these feet that extinguish the gross fires of the pit.

It is probable that all through those early years Ambrose's father had been charming his son's heart, drawing him forth from the gehenna-valley of this life into which he had fallen, as one draws forth a beast that has fallen into some deep and dreadful place. Various are the methods recommended. There is the way of what is called moral teaching, the way of physiology and the way of a masterly silence; but Mr. Meyrick's was the strange way of incantation. He had, in a certain manner, drawn the boy aside from that evil traffic of the valley, from the stench of the turmoil, from the blows and the black lechery, from the ugly fight in the poisonous smoke, from all the amazing and hideous folly that practical men call life, and had set him in that endless procession that for ever and for ever sings its litanies in the mountains, going from height to height on its great quest. Ambrose's soul had been caught in the sweet thickets of the woods; it had been bathed in the pure water of blessed fountains; it had knelt before the altars of the old saints, till all the earth was become a sanctuary, all life was a rite and ceremony, the end of which was the attainment of the mystic sanctity — the achieving of the Graal. For this — for what else? — were all things made. It was this that the little bird sang of in the bush, piping a few feeble, plaintive notes of dusky evenings, as if his tiny heart were sad that it could utter nothing better than such sorry praises. This also celebrated the awe of the white morning on the hills, the breath of the woods at dawn. This was figured in the red ceremony of sunset, when flames shone over the dome of the great mountain, and roses blossomed in the far plains of the sky. This was the secret of the dark places in the heart of the woods. This the mystery of the sunlight on the height; and every little flower, every delicate fern, and every reed and rush was entrusted with the hidden declaration of this sacrament. For this end, final and perfect rites had been given to men to execute; and these were all the arts, all the far-lifted splendour of the great cathedral; all rich carven work and all glowing colours; all magical utterance of word and tones: all these things were the witnesses that consented in the One Offering, in the high service of the Graal.

To this service also, together with songs and burning torches and dyed garments and the smoke of the bruised incense, were brought the incense of the bruised heart, the magic torches of virtue hidden from the world, the red dalmatics of those whose souls had been martyred, the songs of triumph and exultation chanted by them that the profane had crushed into the dust; holy wells and water-stoups were fountains of tears. So must the Mass be duly celebrated in Cor-arbennic when Cadwaladr returned, when Teilo Agyos lifted up again the Shining Cup.

Perhaps it was not strange that a boy who had listened to such spells as these should heed nothing of the foolish evils about him, the nastiness of silly children who, for want of wits, were “crushing the lilies into the dunghill.” He listened to nothing of their ugly folly; he heard it not, understood it not, thought as little of it as of their everlasting chatter about “brooks” and “quarries” and “leg-hits” and “beaks from the off.” And when an unseemly phrase did chance to fall on his ear it was of no more import or meaning than any or all of the stupid jargon that went on day after day, mixing itself with the other jargon about the optative and the past participle, the oratio obliqua and the verbs in [Greek: mi]. To him this was all one nothingness, and he would not have dreamed of connecting anything of it with the facts of life, as he understood life.

Hence it was that for him all that was beautiful and wonderful was a part of sanctity; all the glory of life was for the service of the sanctuary, and when one saw a lovely flower it was to be strewn before the altar, just as the bee was holy because by its wax the Gifts are illuminated. Where joy and delight and beauty were, there he knew by sure signs were the parts of the mystery, the glorious apparels of the heavenly vestments. If anyone had told him that the song of the nightingale was an unclean thing he would have stared in amazement, as though one had blasphemed the Sanctus. To him the red roses were as holy as the garments of the martyrs. The white lilies were pure and shining virtues; the imagery of the *Song of Songs* was obvious and perfect and unassailable, for in this world there was nothing common nor unclean. And even to him the great gift had been freely given.

So he stood, wrapt in his meditations and in his ecstasy, by the bridge over the Midland line from Lupton to Birmingham. Behind him were the abominations of Lupton: the chimneys vomiting black smoke faintly in honour of the Sabbath; the red lines of the workmen's streets advancing into the ugly fields; the fuming pottery kilns, the hideous height of the boot factory. And before him stretched the unspeakable scenery of the eastern Midlands, which seems made for the habitation of English Nonconformists — dull, monotonous, squalid, the very hedgerows cropped and trimmed, the trees looking like rows of Roundheads, the farmhouses as uninteresting as suburban villas. On a field near at hand a scientific farmer had recently applied an agreeable mixture consisting of superphosphate of lime, nitrate of soda and bone meal. The stink was that of a chemical works or a Texel cheese. Another field was just being converted into an orchard. There were rows of grim young apple trees planted at strictly mathematical intervals from one another, and grisly little graves had been dug between the apple trees for the reception of gooseberry bushes. Between these rows the farmer hoped to grow potatoes, so the ground had been thoroughly trenched. It looked sodden and unpleasant. To the right Ambrose could see how the operations on a wandering brook were progressing. It had moved in and out in the most wasteful and absurd manner, and on each bank there had grown a twisted brake of trees and bushes and rank water plants. There were wonderful red roses there in summer time. Now all this was being rectified. In the first place the stream had been cut into a straight channel with raw, bare banks, and then the rose bushes, the alders, the willows and the rest were being grubbed up by the roots and so much valuable land was being redeemed. The old barn which used to be visible on the left of the line had been pulled down for more than a year. It had dated perhaps from the seventeenth century. Its roof-tree had dipped and waved in a pleasant fashion, and the red tiles had the glow of the sun in their colours, and the half-timbered walls were not lacking in ruinous brace. It was a dilapidated old shed, and a neat-looking structure with a corrugated iron roof now stood in its place.

Beyond all was the grey prison wall of the horizon; but Ambrose no longer gazed at it with the dim, hopeless eyes of old. He had a Breviary among his books, and he thought of the words: *Anima mea erepta est sicut passer de laqueo venantium*, and he knew that in a good season his body would escape also. The exile would end at last.

He remembered an old tale which his father was fond of telling him — the story of Eos Amherawdur (the Emperor Nightingale). Very long ago, the story began, the greatest and the finest court in all the realms of faery was the court of the Emperor Eos, who was above all the kings of the Tylwydd Têg, as the Emperor of Rome is head over all the kings of the earth. So that even Gwyn ap Nudd, whom they now call lord over all the fair folk of the Isle of Britain, was but the man of Eos, and no splendour such as his was ever seen in all the regions of enchantment and faery. Eos had his court in a vast forest, called Wentwood, in the deepest depths of the green-wood between Caerwent and Caermaen, which is also called the City of the Legions; though some men say that we should rather name it the city of the Waterfloods. Here, then, was the Palace of Eos, built of the finest stones after the Roman manner, and within it were the most glorious chambers that eye has ever seen, and there was no end to the number of them, for they could not be counted. For the stones of the palace being immortal, they were at the pleasure of the Emperor. If he had willed, all the hosts of the world could stand in his greatest hall, and, if he had willed, not so much as an ant could enter into it, since it could not be discerned. But on common days they spread the Emperor's banquet in nine great halls, each nine times larger than any that are in the lands of the men of Normandi. And Sir Caw was the seneschal who marshalled the feast; and if you would count those under his command — go, count the drops of water that are in the Uske River. But if you would learn the splendour of this castle it is an easy matter, for Eos hung the walls of it with Dawn and Sunset. He lit it with the sun and moon. There was a well in it called Ocean. And nine churches of twisted boughs were set apart in which Eos might hear Mass; and when his clerks sang before him all the jewels rose shining out of the earth, and all the stars bent shining down from heaven, so enchanting was the melody. Then was great bliss in all the regions of the fair folk. But Eos was grieved because mortal ears could not hear nor comprehend the enchantment of their song. What, then, did he do? Nothing less than this. He divested himself of all his glories and of his kingdom, and transformed himself into the shape of a little brown bird, and went flying about the woods, desirous of teaching men the sweetness of the faery melody. And all the other birds said: "This is a contemptible stranger." The eagle found him not even worthy to be a prey; the raven and the magpie called him simpleton; the pheasant asked where he had got that ugly livery; the lark wondered why he hid himself in the darkness of the wood; the peacock would not suffer his name to be uttered. In short never was anyone so despised as was Eos by all the chorus of the birds. But wise men heard that song from the faery regions and listened all night beneath the bough, and these were the first who were bards in the Isle of Britain.

Ambrose had heard the song from the faery regions. He had heard it in swift whispers at his ear, in sighs upon his breast, in the breath of kisses on his lips. Never was he numbered amongst the despisers of Eos.

II

MR. HORBURY HAD suffered from one or two slight twinges of conscience for a few days after he had operated on his nephew. They were but very slight pangs, for, after all, it was a case of flagrant and repeated disobedience to rules, complicated by lying. The High Usher was quite sincere in scouting the notion of a boy's taking any interest in Norman architecture, and, as he said to himself, truly enough, if every boy at Lupton could come and go when and how he pleased, and choose which rules he would keep and which disobey — why, the school would soon be in a pretty state. Still, there was a very faint and indistinct murmur in his mind which suggested that Meyrick had received, in addition to his own proper thrashing, the thrashings due to the Head, his cook and his wine merchant. And Horbury was rather sorry, for he desired to be just according to his definition of justice — unless, indeed justice should be excessively inconvenient.

But these faint scruples were soon removed — turned, indeed, to satisfaction by the evident improvement which declared itself in Ambrose Meyrick's whole tone and demeanour. He no longer did his best to avoid rocker. He played, and played well and with relish. The boy was evidently all right at heart: he had only wanted a sharp lesson, and it was clear that, once a loafer, he was now on his way to be a credit to the school. And by some of those secret channels which are known to masters and to masters alone, rather more than a glimmering of the truth as to Rawson's black eyes and Pelly's disfigured nose was vouchsafed to Horbury's vision, and he was by no means displeased with his nephew. The two boys had evidently asked for punishment, and had got it. It served them right. Of course, if the swearing had been brought to his notice by official instead of by subterranean and mystic ways, he would have had to cane Meyrick a second time, since, by the Public School convention, an oath is a very serious offence — as bad as smoking, or worse; but, being far from a fool, under the circumstances he made nothing of it. Then the lad's school work was so very satisfactory. It had always been good, but it had become wonderfully good. That last Greek prose had shown real grip of the language. The High Usher was pleased. His sharp lesson had brought forth excellent results, and he foresaw the day when he would be proud of having taught a remarkably fine scholar.

With the boys Ambrose was becoming a general favourite. He learned not only to play rocker, he showed Pelly how he thought that blow under the ear should be dealt with. They all said he was a good fellow; but they could not make out why, without apparent reason, he would sometimes burst out into loud laughter. But he said it was something wrong with his inside — the doctors couldn't make it out — and this seemed rather interesting.

In after life he often looked back upon this period when, to all appearance, Lupton was "making a man" of him, and wondered at its strangeness. To boys and masters alike he was an absolutely normal schoolboy, busy with the same interests as the rest of them. There was certainly something rather queer in his appearance; but, as they said, generously enough, a fellow couldn't help his looks; and, that curious glint in the eyes apart, he seemed as good a Luptonian as any in the whole six hundred. Everybody thought that he had absolutely fallen into line; that he was absorbing the *ethos* of the place in the most admirable fashion, subduing his own individuality, his opinions, his habits, to the general tone of the community around him — putting off, as it were, the profane dust of his own spirit and putting on the mental frock of the brotherhood. This, of course, is one of the aims — rather, *the* great aim — of the system: this fashioning of very diverse characters into one common form, so that each great Public School has its type, which is easily recognisable in the grown-up man years after his school days are over. Thus, in far lands, in India and Egypt, in Canada and New Zealand, one recognises the brisk alertness of the Etonian, the exquisite politeness of Harrow, the profound seriousness of Rugby; while the note of Lupton may, perhaps, be called finality. The Old Luptonian no more thinks of arguing a question than does the Holy Father, and his conversation is a series of irreformable dogmas, and the captious person who questions any one article is made to feel himself a cad and an outsider.

Thus it has been related that two men who had met for the first time at a certain country house-party were getting on together capitally in the evening over their whisky and soda and cigars. Each held identical views of equal violence on some important topic — Home Rule or the Transvaal or

Free Trade — and, as the more masterful of the two asserted that hanging was too good for Blank (naming a well-known statesman), the other would reply: “I quite agree with you: hanging is too good for Blank.”

“He ought to be burned alive,” said the one.

“That’s about it: he ought to be burned at the stake,” answered the other.

“Look at the way he treated Dash! He’s a coward and a damned scoundrel!”

“Perfectly right. He’s a damned cursed scoundrel!”

This was splendid, and each thought the other a charming companion. Unfortunately, however, the conversation, by some caprice, veered from the iniquities of Blank and glanced aside to cookery — possibly by the track of Irish stew, used metaphorically to express the disastrous and iniquitous policy of the great statesman with regard to Ireland. But, as it happened, there was not the same coincidence on the question of cookery as there had been on the question of Blank. The masterful man said:

“No cookery like English. No other race in the world can cook as we do. Look at French cookery — a lot of filthy, greasy messes.”

Now, instead of assenting briskly and firmly as before the other man said: “Been much in France? Lived there?”

“Never set foot in the beastly country! Don’t like their ways, and don’t care to dine off snails and frogs swimming in oil.”

The other man began then to talk of the simple but excellent meals he had relished in France — the savoury *croûte-au-pot*, the *bouilli* — good eating when flavoured by a gherkin or two; velvety *épinards au jus*, a roast partridge, a salad, a bit of Roquefort and a bunch of grapes. But he had barely mentioned the soup when the masterful one wheeled round his chair and offered a fine view of his strong, well-knit figure — as seen from the back. He did not say anything — he simply took up the paper and went on smoking. The other men stared in amazement: the amateur of French cookery looked annoyed. But the host — a keen-eyed old fellow with a white moustache, turned to the enemy of frogs and snails and grease and said quite simply: “I say, Mulock, I never knew you’d been at Lupton.”

Mulock gazed. The other men held their breath for a moment as the full force of the situation dawned on them, and then a wild scream of laughter shrilled from their throats. Yells and roars of mirth resounded in the room. Their delight was insatiable. It died for a moment for lack of breath, and then burst out anew in still louder, more uproarious clamour, till old Sir Henry Rawnsley, who was fat and short, could do nothing but choke and gasp and crow out a sound something between a wheeze and a chuckle. Mulock left the room immediately, and the house the next morning. He made some excuse to his host, but he told enquiring friends that, personally, he disliked bounders.

The story, true or false, illustrates the common view of the Lupton stamp.

"We try to teach the boys to know their own minds," said the Headmaster, and the endeavour seems to have succeeded in most cases. And, as Horbury noted in an article he once wrote on the Public School system, every boy was expected to submit himself to the process, to form and reform himself in accordance with the tone of the school.

"I sometimes compare our work with that of the metal founder," he says in the article in question. "Just as the metal comes to the foundry *rudis indigestaque moles*, a rough and formless mass, without the slightest suggestion of the shape which it must finally assume, so a boy comes to a great Public School with little or nothing about him to suggest the young man who, in eight or nine years' time, will say good-bye to the dear old school, setting his teeth tight, restraining himself from giving up to the anguish of this last farewell. Nay, I think that ours is the harder task, for the metal that is sent to the foundry has, I presume, been freed of its impurities; we have to deal rather with the ore — a mass which is not only shapeless, but contains much that is not metal at all, which must be burnt out and cast aside as useless rubbish. So the boy comes from his home, which may or may not have possessed valuable formative influences; which we often find has tended to create a spirit of individualism and assertiveness; which, in numerous cases, has left the boy under the delusion that he has come into the world to live his own life and think his own thoughts. This is the ore that we cast into our furnace. We burn out the dross and rubbish; we liquefy the stubborn and resisting metal till it can be run into the mould — the mould being the whole tone and feeling of a great community. We discourage all excessive individuality; we make it quite plain to the boy that he has come to Lupton, not to live his life, not to think his thoughts, but to live *our* life, to think *our* thoughts. Very often, as I think I need scarcely say, the process is a somewhat unpleasant one, but, sooner or later, the stubbornest metal yields to the cleansing, renewing, restoring fires of discipline and public opinion, and the shapeless mass takes on the shape of the Great School. Only the other day an old pupil came to see me and confessed that, for the whole of his first year at Lupton, he had been profoundly wretched. 'I was a dreamy young fool,' he said. 'My head was stuffed with all sorts of queer fancies, and I expect that if I hadn't come to Lupton I should have turned out an absolute loafer. But I hated it badly that first year. I loathed rocker — I did, really — and I thought the fellows were a lot of savages. And then I seemed to go into a kind of cloud. You see, Sir, I was losing my old self and hadn't got the new self in its place, and I couldn't make out what was happening. And then, quite suddenly, it all came out light and clear. I saw the purpose behind it all — how we were all working together, masters and boys, for the dear old school; how we were all "members one of another," as the Doctor said in Chapel; and that I had a part in this great work, too, though I was only a kid in the Third. It was like a flash of light: one minute I was only a poor little chap that nobody cared for and who didn't matter to anybody, and the next I saw that, in a way, I was as important as the Doctor himself — I was a part of the failure or success of it all. Do you know what I did, Sir? I had a book I thought a lot of — *Poems and Tales* of Edgar Allan Poe. It was my poor sister's book; she had died a year before when she was only seventeen, and she had written my name in it when she was dying — she knew I was fond of reading it. It was just the sort of thing I used to like — morbid fancies and queer poems, and I was always reading it when the fellows would let me alone. But when I saw what life really was, when the meaning of it all came to me, as I said just now, I took that book and tore it to bits, and it was like tearing myself up. But I knew that writing all that stuff hadn't done that American fellow much good, and I didn't see what good I should get by reading it. I couldn't make out to myself that it would fit in with the Doctor's plans of the spirit of the school, or that I should play up at rocker any better for knowing all about the "Fall of the House of Usher," or whatever it's called. I knew my poor sister would understand, so I tore it up, and I've gone straight ahead ever since — thanks to Lupton.' *Like a refiner's fire. I* remembered the dreamy, absent-minded child of fifteen years before; I could scarcely believe that he stood before — keen, alert, practical, living every moment of his life, a force, a power in the world, certain of successful achievement."

Such were the influences to which Ambrose Meyrick was being subjected, and with infinite success, as it seemed to everybody who watched him. He was regarded as a conspicuous instance of the efficacy of the system — he had held out so long, refusing to absorb the "tone," presenting an obstinate surface to the millstones which would, for his own good, have ground him to powder, not concealing very much his dislike of the place and of the people in it. And suddenly he had submitted with a good grace: it was wonderful! The masters are believed to have discussed the affair amongst themselves, and Horbury, who confessed or boasted that he had used sharp persuasion, got a good deal of *kudos* in consequence.

III

A FEW YEARS ago a little book called *Half-holidays* attracted some attention in semi-scholastic, semi-clerical circles. It was anonymous, and bore the modest motto *Crambe bis cocta*; but those behind the scenes recognised it as the work of Charles Palmer, who was for many years a master at Lupton. His acknowledged books include a useful little work on the Accents and an excellent summary of Roman History from the Fall of the Republic to Romulus Augustulus. The *Half-holidays* contains the following amusing passage; there is not much difficulty in identifying the N. mentioned in it with Ambrose Meyrick.

"The cleverest dominie sometimes discovers" — the passage begins— "that he has been living in a fool's paradise, that he has been tricked by a quiet and persistent subtlety that really strikes one as almost devilish when one finds it exhibited in the person of an English schoolboy. A good deal of nonsense, I think, has been written about boys by people who in reality know very little about them; they have been credited with complexities of character, with feelings and aspirations and delicacies of sentiment which are quite foreign to their nature. I can quite believe in the dead cat trick of Stalky and his friends, but I confess that the incident of the British Flag leaves me cold and sceptical. Such refinement of perception is not the way of the boy — certainly not of the boy as I have known him. He is radically a simple soul, whose feelings are on the surface; and his deepest laid schemes and manœuvres hardly call for the talents of a Sherlock Holmes if they are to be detected and brought to naught. Of course, a good deal of rubbish has been talked about the wonderful success of our English plan of leaving the boys to themselves without the everlasting supervision which is practised in French schools. As a matter of fact, the English schoolboy is under constant supervision; where in a French school one wretched usher has to look after a whole horde of boys, in an English school each boy is perpetually under the observation of hundreds of his fellows. In reality, each boy is an unpaid *pion*, a watchdog whose vigilance never relaxes. He is not aware of this; one need scarcely say that such a notion is far from his wildest thoughts. He thinks, and very rightly, doubtless, that he is engaged in maintaining the honour of the school, in keeping up the observance of the school tradition, in dealing sharply with slackers and loafers who would bring discredit on the place he loves so well. He is, no doubt, absolutely right in all this; none the less, he is doing the master's work unwittingly and admirably. When one thinks of this, and of the Compulsory System of Games, which ensures that every boy shall be in a certain place at a certain time, one sees, I think, that the phrase about our lack of supervision *is* a phrase and nothing more. There is no system of supervision known to human wit that approaches in thoroughness and minuteness the supervision under which every single boy is kept all through his life at an English Public School.

"Hence one is really rather surprised when, in spite of all these unpaid assistants, who are the whole school, one is thoroughly and completely taken in. I can only remember one such case, and I am still astonished at the really infernal ability with which the boy in question lived a double life under the very eyes of the masters and six hundred other boys. N., as I shall call him, was not in my House, and I can scarcely say how I came to watch his career with so much interest; but there was certainly something about him which did interest me a good deal. It may have been his appearance: he was an odd-looking boy — dark, almost swarthy, dreamy and absent in manner, and, for the first years of his school life, a quite typical loafer. Such boys, of course, are not common in a big school, but there are a few such everywhere. One never knows whether this kind will write a successful book, or paint a great picture, or go to the devil — from my observation I am sorry to say that the last career is the most usual. I need scarcely say that such boys meet with but little encouragement; it is not the type which the Public School exists to foster, and the boy who abandons himself to morbid introspection is soon made to feel pretty emphatically that he is matter in the wrong place. Of course, one may be crushing genius. If this ever happened it would be very unfortunate; still, in all communities the minority must suffer for the good of the majority, and, frankly, I have always been willing to run the risk. As I have hinted, the particular sort of boy I have in my mind turns out in nine cases out of ten to be not a genius, but that much more common type — a blackguard.

"Well, as I say, I was curious about N. I was sorry for him, too; both his parents were dead, and he was rather in the position of the poor fellows who have no home life to look forward to when the holidays are getting near. And his obstinacy astonished me; in most cases the pressure of public opinion will bring the slackest loafer to a sense of the error of his ways before his first term is ended; but N. seemed to hold out against us all with a sort of dreamy resistance that was most exasperating. I do not think he can have had a very pleasant time. His general demeanour suggested that of a sage who has been cast on an island inhabited by a peculiarly repulsive and degraded tribe of savages, and I need scarcely say that the other boys did their best to make him realise the extreme absurdity of such behaviour. He was clever enough at his work, but it was difficult to make him play games, and impossible to make him play up. He seemed to be looking through us at something else; and neither the boys nor the masters liked being treated as unimportant illusions. And then, quite suddenly, N. altered completely. I believe his housemaster, worn out of all patience, gave him a severe thrashing; at any rate, the change was instant and marvellous.

“I remember that a few days before N.’s transformation we had been discussing the question of the cane at the weekly masters’ meeting. I had confessed myself a very half-hearted believer in the efficacy of the treatment. I forget the arguments that I used, but I know that I was strongly inclined to favour the ‘Anti-baculist Party,’ as the Head jocosely named it. But a few months later when N.’s housemaster pointed out N. playing up at football like a young demon, and then with a twinkle in his eye reminded me of the position I had taken up at the masters’ meeting, there was nothing for it but to own that I had been in the wrong. The cane had certainly, in this case, proved itself a magic wand; the sometime loafer had been transformed by it into one of the healthiest and most energetic fellows in the whole school. It was a pleasure to watch him at the games, and I remember that his fast bowling was at once terrific in speed and peculiarly deadly in its accuracy.

“He kept up this deception, for deception it was, for three or four years. He was just going up to Oxford, and the whole school was looking forward to a career which we knew would be quite exceptional in its brilliance. His scholarship papers astonished the Balliol authorities. I remember one of the Fellows writing to our Head about them in terms of the greatest enthusiasm, and we all knew that N.’s bowling would get him into the University Eleven in his first term. Cricketers have not yet forgotten a certain performance of his at the Oval, when, as a poetic journalist observed, wickets fell before him as ripe corn falls before the sickle. N. disappeared in the middle of term. The whole school was in a ferment; masters and boys looked at one another with wild faces; search parties were sent out to scour the country; the police were communicated with; on every side one heard the strangest surmises as to what had happened. The affair got into the papers; most people thought it was a case of breakdown and loss of memory from overwork and mental strain. Nothing could be heard of N., till, at the end of a fortnight, his Housemaster came into our room looking, as I thought, puzzled and frightened.

"'I don't understand,' he said. 'I've had this by the second post. It's in N.'s handwriting. I can't make head or tail of it. It's some sort of French, I suppose.'

"He held out a paper closely written in N.'s exquisite, curious script, which always reminded me vaguely of some Oriental character. The masters shook their heads as the manuscript went from hand to hand, and one of them suggested sending for the French master. But, as it happened, I was something of a student of Old French myself, and I found I could make out the drift of the document that N. had sent his master.

"It was written in the manner and in the language of Rabelais. It was quite diabolically clever, and beyond all question the filthiest thing I have ever read. The writer had really exceeded his master in obscenity, impossible as that might seem: the purport of it all was a kind of nightmare vision of the school, the masters and the boys. Everybody and everything were distorted in the most horrible manner, seen, we might say, through an abominable glass, and yet every feature was easily recognisable; it reminded me of Swift's disgusting description of the Yahoos, over which one may shudder and grow sick, but which one cannot affect to misunderstand. There was a fantastic episode which I remember especially. One of us, an ambitious man, who for some reason or other had become unpopular with a few of his colleagues, was described as endeavouring to climb the school clock-tower, on the top of which a certain object was said to be placed. The object was defended, so the writer affirmed, by 'the Dark Birds of Night,' who resisted the master's approach in all possible and impossible manners. Even to indicate the way in which this extraordinary theme was treated would be utterly out of the question; but I shall never forget the description of the master’s face, turned up towards the object of his quest, as he painfully climbed the wall. I have never read even in the most filthy pages of Rabelais, or in the savagest passages of Swift, anything which approached the revolting cruelty of those few lines. They were compounded of hell-fire and the Cloaca Maxima.

“I read out and translated a few of the least abominable sentences. I can hardly say whether the feeling of disgust or that of bewilderment predominated amongst us. One of my colleagues stopped me and said they had heard enough; we stared at one another in silence. The astounding ability, ferocity and obscenity of the whole thing left us quite dumbfounded, and I remember saying that if a volcano were suddenly to belch forth volumes of flame and filth in the middle of the playing fields I should scarcely be more astonished. And all this was the work of N., whose brilliant abilities in games and in the schools were to have been worth many thousands a year to X., as one of us put it! This was the boy that for the last four years we had considered as a great example of the formative influences of the school! This was the N. who we thought would have died for the honour of the school, who spoke as if he could never do enough to repay what X. had done for him! As I say, we looked at one another with faces of blank amazement and horror. At last somebody said that N. must have gone mad, and we tried to believe that it was so, for madness, awful calamity as it is, would be more endurable than sanity under such circumstances as these. I need scarcely say that this charitable hypothesis turned out to be quite unfounded: N. was perfectly sane; he was simply revenging himself for the suppression of his true feelings for the four last years of his school life. The ‘conversion’ on which we prided ourselves had been an utter sham; the whole of his life had been an elaborately organised hypocrisy maintained with unfailing and unflinching skill term after term and year after year. One cannot help wondering when one considers the inner life of this unhappy fellow. Every morning, I suppose, he woke up with curses in his soul; he smiled at us all and joined in the games with black rage devouring him. So far as one can say, he was quite sincere in his concealed opinions at all events. The hatred, loathing and contempt of the whole system of the place displayed in that extraordinary and terrible document struck me as quite genuine; and while I was reading it I could not help thinking of his eager, enthusiastic face as he joined with a will in the school songs; he seemed to inspire all the boys about him with something of his own energy and devotion. The apparition was a shocking one; I felt that for a moment I had caught a glimpse of a region that was very like hell itself.

“I remember that the French master contributed a characteristic touch of his own. Of course, the Headmaster had to be told of the matter, and it was arranged that M. and myself should collaborate in the unpleasant task of making a translation. M. read the horrible stuff through with an expression on his face that, to my astonishment, bordered on admiration, and when he laid down the paper he said:

“‘*Eh bien: Maître François est encore en vie, évidemment. C’est le vrai renouveau de la Renaissance; de la Renaissance en très mauvaise humeur, si vous voulez, mais de la Renaissance tout-de-même. Si, si; c’est de la crû véritable, je vous assure. Mais, notre bon N. est un Rabelais qui a habité une terre affreusement sèche.*’

“I really think that to the Frenchman the terrible moral aspect of the case was either entirely negligible or absolutely non-existent; he simply looked on N.’s detestable and filthy performance as a little masterpiece in a particular literary *genre*. Heaven knows! One does not want to be a Pharisee; but as I saw M. grinning appreciatively over this dung-heap I could not help feeling that the collapse of France before Germany offered no insoluble problem to the historian.

“There is little more to be said as to this extraordinary and most unpleasant affair. It was all hushed up as much as possible. No further attempts to discover N.’s whereabouts were made. It was some months before we heard by indirect means that the wretched fellow had abandoned the Balliol Scholarship and the most brilliant prospects in life to attach himself to a company of greasy barnstormers — or ‘Dramatic Artists,’ as I suppose they would be called nowadays. I believe that his subsequent career has been of a piece with these beginnings; but of that I desire to say nothing.”

The passage has been quoted merely in evidence of the great success with which Ambrose Meyrick adapted himself to his environment at Lupton. Palmer, the writer, who was a very well-meaning though intensely stupid person, has told the bare facts as he saw them accurately enough; it need not be said that his inferences and deductions from the facts are invariably ridiculous. He was a well-educated man; but in his heart of hearts he thought that Rabelais, *Maria Monk, Gay Life in Paris and La Terre* all came to much the same thing.

IV

IN AN OLD notebook kept by Ambrose Meyrick in those long-past days there are some curious entries which throw light on the extraordinary experiences that befell him during the period which poor Palmer has done his best to illustrate. The following is interesting:

"I told her she must not come again for a long time. She was astonished and asked me why — was I not fond of her? I said it was because I was so fond of her, that I was afraid that if I saw her often I could not live. I should pass away in delight because our bodies are not meant to live for long in the middle of white fire. I was lying on my bed and she stood beside it. I looked up at her. The room was very dark and still. I could only just see her faintly, though she was so close to me that I could hear her breathing quite well. I thought of the white flowers that grew in the dark corners of the old garden at the Wern, by the great ilex tree. I used to go out on summer nights when the air was still and all the sky cloudy. One could hear the brook just a little, down beyond the watery meadow, and all the woods and hills were dim. One could not see the mountain at all. But I liked to stand by the wall and look into the darkest place, and in a little time those flowers would seem to grow out of the shadow. I could just see the white glimmer of them. She looked like the flowers to me, as I lay on the bed in my dark room.

"Sometimes I dream of wonderful things. It is just at the moment when one wakes up; one cannot say where one has been or what was so wonderful, but you know that you have lost everything in waking. For just that moment you knew everything and understood the stars and the hills and night and day and the woods and the old songs. They were all within you, and you were all light. But the light was music, and the music was violet wine in a great cup of gold, and the wine in the golden cup was the scent of a June night. I understood all this as she stood beside my bed in the dark and stretched out her hand and touched me on the breast.

"I knew a pool in an old, old grey wood a few miles from the Wern. I called it the grey wood because the trees were ancient oaks that they say must have grown there for a thousand years, and they have grown bare and terrible. Most of them are all hollow inside and some have only a few boughs left, and every year, they say, one leaf less grows on every bough. In the books they are called the Foresters' Oaks. If you stay under them you feel as if the old times must have come again. Among these trees there was a great yew, far older than the oaks, and beneath it a dark and shadowy pool. I had been for a long walk, nearly to the sea, and as I came back I passed this place and, looking into the pool, there was the glint of the stars in the water.

"She knelt by my bed in the dark, and I could just see the glinting of her eyes as she looked at me — the stars in the shadowy waterpool!

"I had never dreamed that there could be anything so wonderful in the whole world. My father had told me of many beautiful and holy and glorious things, of all the heavenly mysteries by which those who know live for ever, all the things which the Doctor and my uncle and the other silly clergymen in the Chapel … because they don't really know anything at all about them, only their names, so they are like dogs and pigs and asses who have somehow found their way into a beautiful room, full of precious and delicate treasures. These things my father told me of long ago, of the Great Mystery of the Offering.

"And I have learned the wonders of the old venerable saints that once were marvels in our land, as the Welch poem says, and of all the great works that shone around their feet as they went upon the mountains and sought the deserts of ocean. I have seen their marks and writings cut on the edges of the rocks. I know where Sagramnus lies buried in Wlad Morgan. And I shall not forget how I saw the Blessed Cup of Teilo Agyos drawn out from golden veils on Mynydd Mawr, when the stars poured out of the jewel, and I saw the sea of the saints and the spiritual things in Cor-arbennic. My father read out to me all the histories of Teilo, Dewi, and Iltyd, of their marvellous chalices and altars of Paradise from which they made the books of the Graal afterwards; and all these things are beautiful to me. But, as the Anointed Bard said: 'With the bodily lips I receive the drink of mortal vineyards; with spiritual understanding wine from the garths of the undying. May Mihangel intercede for me that these may be mingled in one cup; let the door between body and soul be thrown open. For in that day earth will have become Paradise, and the secret sayings of the bards shall be verified.' I always knew what this meant, though my father told me that many people thought it obscure or, rather, nonsense. But it is just the same really as another poem by the same Bard, where he says:

"'My sin was found out, and when the old women on the bridge pointed at me I was ashamed; I was deeply grieved when the boys shouted rebukes as I went from Caer-Newydd. How is it that I was not ashamed before the Finger of the Almighty? I did not suffer agony at the rebuke of the Most High. The fist of Rhys Fawr is more dreadful to me than the hand of God.'

"He means, I think, that our great loss is that we separate what is one and make it two; and then, having done so, we make the less real into the more real, as if we thought the glass made to hold wine more important than the wine it holds. And this is what I had felt, for it was only twice that I had known wonders in my body, when I saw the Cup of Teilo sant and when the mountains appeared in vision, and so, as the Bard says, the door is shut. The life of bodily things is *hard*, just as the wineglass is hard. We can touch it and feel it and see it always before us. The wine is drunk and forgotten; it cannot be held. I believe the air about us is just as substantial as a mountain or a cathedral, but unless we remind ourselves we think of the air as nothing. It is not *hard*. But now I was in Paradise, for body and soul were molten in one fire and went up in one flame. The mortal and the immortal vines were made one. Through the joy of the body I possessed the joy of the spirit. And it was so strange to think that all this was through a woman — through a woman I had seen dozens of times and had thought nothing of, except that she was pleasant-looking and that the colour of her hair, like copper, was very beautiful.

"I cannot understand it. I cannot feel that she is really Nelly Foran who opens the door and waits at table, for she is a miracle. How I should have wondered once if I had seen a stone by the roadside become a jewel of fire and glory! But if that were to happen, it would not be so strange as what happened to me. I cannot see now the black dress and the servant's cap and apron. I see the wonderful, beautiful body shining through the darkness of my room, the glimmering of the white flower in the dark, the stars in the forest pool.

"'O gift of the everlasting! O wonderful and hidden mystery! Many secrets have been vouchsafed to me. I have been long acquainted with the wisdom of the trees; Ash and oak and elm have communicated to me from my boyhood, The birch and the hazel and all the trees of the green wood have not been dumb. There is a caldron rimmed with pearls of whose gifts I am not ignorant. I will speak little of it; its treasures are known to Bards. Many went on the search of Caer-Pedryfan, Seven alone returned with Arthur, but my spirit was present. Seven are the apple trees in a beautiful orchard. I have eaten of their fruit, which is not bestowed on Saxons. I am not ignorant of a Head which is glorious and venerable. It made perpetual entertainment for the warriors; their joys would have been immortal. If they had not opened the door of the south, they could have feasted for ever, Listening to the song of the Fairy Birds of Rhiannon. Let not anyone instruct me concerning the Glassy Isle, In the garments of the saints who returned from it were rich odours of Paradise. All this I knew and yet my knowledge was ignorance, For one day, as I walked by Caer-rhiu in the principal forest of Gwent, I saw golden Myfanwy, as she bathed in the brook Tarógi. Her hair flowed about her. Arthur's crown had dissolved into a shining mist. I gazed into her blue eyes as it were into twin heavens. All the parts of her body were adornments and miracles. O gift of the everlasting! O wonderful and hidden mystery! When I embraced Myfanwy a moment became immortality!'

"And yet I daresay this 'golden Myfanwy' was what people call 'a common girl,' and perhaps she did rough, hard work, and nobody thought anything of her till the Bard found her bathing in the brook of Tarógi. The birds in the wood said, when they saw the nightingale: 'This is a contemptible stranger!'

"*June 24.* Since I wrote last in this book the summer has come. This morning I woke up very early, and even in this horrible place the air was pure and bright as the sun rose up and the long beams shone on the cedar outside the window. She came to me by the way they think is locked and fastened, and, just as the world is white and gold at the dawn, so was she. A blackbird began to sing beneath the window. I think it came from far, for it sang to me of morning on the mountain, and the woods all still, and a little bright brook rushing down the hillside between dark green alders, and air that must be blown from heaven.

There is a bird that sings in the valley of the Soar. Dewi and Tegfeth and Cybi preside over that region; Sweet is the valley, sweet the sound of its waters.

There is a bird that sings in the valley of the Soar; Its voice is golden, like the ringing of the saints’ bells; Sweet is the valley, echoing with melodies.

There is a bird that sings in the valley of the Soar; Tegfeth in the south won red martyrdom. Her song is heard in the perpetual choirs of heaven.

There is a bird that sings in the valley of the Soar; Dewi in the west had an altar from Paradise. He taught the valleys of Britain to resound with Alleluia.

There is a bird that sings in the valley of the Soar; Cybi in the north was the teacher of Princes. Through him Edlogan sings praise to heaven.

There is a bird that sings in the valley of the Soar When shall I hear again the notes of its melody? When shall I behold once more Gwladys in that valley?’

“When I think of what I know, of the wonders of darkness and the wonders of dawn, I cannot help believing that I have found something which all the world has lost. I have heard some of the fellows talking about women. Their words and their stories are filthy, and nonsense, too. One would think that if monkeys and pigs could talk about their she-monkeys and sows, it would be just like that. I might have thought that, being only boys, they knew nothing about it, and were only making up nasty, silly tales out of their nasty, silly minds. But I have heard the poor women in the town screaming and scolding at their men, and the men swearing back; and when they think they are making love, it is the most horrible of all.

“And it is not only the boys and the poor people. There are the masters and their wives. Everybody knows that the Challises and the Redburns ‘fight like cats,’ as they say, and that the Head’s daughter was ‘put up for auction’ and bought by the rich manufacturer from Birmingham — a horrible, fat beast, more than twice her age, with eyes like pig’s. They called it a splendid match.

“So I began to wonder whether perhaps there are very few people in the world who know; whether the real secret is lost like the great city that was drowned in the sea and only seen by one or two. Perhaps it is more like those shining Isles that the saints sought for, where the deep apple orchards are, and all the delights of Paradise. But you had to give up everything and get into a boat without oar or sails if you wanted to find Avalon or the Glassy Isle. And sometimes the saints could stand on the rocks and see those Islands far away in the midst of the sea, and smell the sweet odours and hear the bells ringing for the feast, when other people could see and hear nothing at all.

“I often think now how strange it would be if it were found out that nearly everybody is like those who stood on the rocks and could only see the waves tossing and stretching far away, and the blue sky and the mist in the distance. I mean, if it turned out that we have all been in the wrong about everything; that we live in a world of the most wonderful treasures which we see all about us, but we don’t understand, and kick the jewels into the dirt, and use the chalices for slop-pails and make the holy vestments into dish-cloths, while we worship a great beast — a monster, with the head of a monkey, the body of a pig and the hind legs of a goat, with swarming lice crawling all over it. Suppose that the people that they speak of now as ‘superstitious’ and ‘half-savages’ should turn out to be in the right, and very wise, while we are all wrong and great fools! It would be something like the man who lived in the Bright Palace. The Palace had a hundred and one doors. A hundred of them opened into gardens of delight, pleasure-houses, beautiful bowers, wonderful countries, fairy seas, caves of gold and hills of diamonds, into all the most splendid places. But one door led into a cesspool, and that was the only door that the man ever opened. It may be that his sons and his grandsons have been opening that one door ever since, till they have forgotten that there are any others, so if anyone dares to speak of the ways to the garden of delight or the hills of gold he is called a madman, or a very wicked person.

“*July 15.* The other day a very strange thing happened. I had gone for a short walk out of the town before dinner on the Dunham road and came as far as the four ways where the roads cross. It is rather pretty for Lupton just there; there is a plot of grass with a big old elm tree in the middle of it, and round the tree is a rough sort of seat, where tramps and such people are often resting. As I came along I heard some sort of music coming from the direction of the tree; it was like fairies dancing, and then there were strange solemn notes like the priests’ singing, and a choir answered in a deep, rolling swell of sound, and the fairies danced again; and I thought somehow of a grey church high on the cliff above a singing sea, and the Fair People outside dancing on the close turf, while the service was going on all the while. As I came nearer I heard the sea waves and the wind and the cry of the seagulls, and again the high, wonderful chanting, as if the fairies and the rocks and the waves and the wild birds were all subject to that which was being done within the church. I wondered what it could be, and then I saw there was an old ragged man sitting on the seat under the tree, playing the fiddle all to himself, and rocking from side to side. He stopped directly he saw me, and said:

"'Ah, now, would your young honour do yourself the pleasure of giving the poor old fiddler a penny or maybe two: for Lupton is the very hell of a town altogether, and when I play to dirty rogues the Reel of the Warriors, they ask for something about Two Obadiahs — the devil's black curse be on them! And it's but dry work playing to the leaf and the green sod — the blessing of the holy saints be on your honour now, this day, and for ever! 'Tis but a scarcity of beer that I have tasted for a long day, I assure your honour.'

"I had given him a shilling because I thought his music so wonderful. He looked at me steadily as he finished talking, and his face changed. I thought he was frightened, he stared so oddly. I asked him if he was ill.

"'May I be forgiven,' he said, speaking quite gravely, without that wheedling way he had when he first spoke. 'May I be forgiven for talking so to one like yourself; for this day I have begged money from one that is to gain Red Martyrdom; and indeed that is yourself.'

"He took off his old battered hat and crossed himself, and I stared at him, I was so amazed at what he said. He picked up his fiddle, and saying 'May you remember me in the time of your glory,' he walked quickly off, going away from Lupton, and I lost sight of him at the turn of the road. I suppose he was half crazy, but he played wonderfully."

PART IV

I

THE MATERIALS FOR the history of an odd episode in Ambrose Meyrick's life are to be found in a sort of collection he made under the title "Concerning Gaiety." The episode in question dates from about the middle of his eighteenth year.

"I do not know" — he says— "how it all happened. I had been leading two eager lives. On the outside I was playing games and going up in the school with a rush, and in the inside I was being gathered more and more into the sanctuaries of immortal things. All life was transfigured for me into a radiant glory, into a quickening and catholic sacrament; and, the fooleries of the school apart, I had more and more the sense that I was a participant in a splendid and significant ritual. I think I was beginning to be a little impatient with the outward signs: I *think* I had a feeling that it was a pity that one had to drink wine out of a cup, a pity that kernels seemed to imply shells. I wanted, in my heart, to know nothing but the wine itself flowing gloriously from vague, invisible fountains, to know the things 'that really are' in their naked beauty, without their various and elaborate draperies. I doubt whether Ruskin understood the motive of the monk who walked amidst the mountains with his eyes cast down lest he might see the depths and heights about him. Ruskin calls this a narrow asceticism; perhaps it was rather the result of a very subtle aestheticism. The monk's inner vision might be fixed with such rapture on certain invisible heights and depths, that he feared lest the sight of their visible counterparts might disturb his ecstasy. It is probable, I think, that there is a point where the ascetic principle and the aesthetic become one and the same. The Indian fakir who distorts his limbs and lies on spikes is at the one extreme, the men of the Italian Renaissance were at the other. In each case the true line is distorted and awry, for neither system attains either sanctity or beauty in the highest. The fakir dwells in *surfaces*, and the Renaissance artist dwelt in *surfaces*; in neither case is there the inexpressible radiance of the invisible world shining through the surfaces. A cup of Cellini's work is no doubt very lovely; but it is not beautiful in the same way as the old Celtic cups are beautiful.

“I think I was in some danger of going wrong at the time I am talking about. I was altogether too impatient of surfaces. Heaven forbid the notion that I was ever in danger of being in any sense of the word a Protestant; but perhaps I was rather inclined to the fundamental heresy on which Protestantism builds its objection to what is called Ritual. I suppose this heresy is really Manichee; it is a charge of corruption and evil made against the visible universe, which is affirmed to be not ‘very good,’ but ‘very bad’ — or, at all events, too bad to be used as the vehicle of spiritual truth. It is extraordinary by the way, that the thinking Protestant does not perceive that this principle damns all creeds and all Bibles and all teaching quite as effectually as it damns candles and chasubles — unless, indeed, the Protestant thinks that the logical understanding is a competent vehicle of Eternal Truth, and that God can be properly and adequately defined and explained in human speech. If he thinks *that*, he is an ass. Incense, vestments, candles, all ceremonies, processions, rites — all these things are miserably inadequate; but they do not abound in the horrible pitfalls, misapprehensions, errors which are inseparable from speech of men used as an expression of the Church. In a savage dance there may be a vast deal more of the truth than in many of the hymns in our hymn-books.

“After all, as Martinez said, we must even be content with what we have, whether it be censers or syllogisms, or both. The way of the censer is certainly the safer, as I have said; I suppose because the ruin of the external universe is not nearly so deep nor so virulent as the ruin of men. A flower, a piece of gold, no doubt approach their archetypes — what they were meant to be — much more nearly than man does; hence their appeal is purer than the speech or the reasoning of men.

“But in those days at Lupton my head was full of certain sentences which I had lit upon somewhere or other — I believe they must have been translations from some Eastern book. I knew about a dozen of these maxims; all I can remember now are:

“*If you desire to be inebriated: abstain from wine.*” “*If you desire beauty: look not on beautiful things.*” “*If you desire to see: let your eyes be blindfolded.*” “*If you desire love: refrain from the Beloved.*”

“I expect the paradox of these sayings pleased me. One must allow that if one has the inborn appetite of the somewhat subtle, of the truth not too crudely and barely expressed, there is no such atmosphere as that of a Public School for sharpening this appetite to an edge of ravening, indiscriminate hunger. Think of our friend the Colonel, who is by way of being a *fin gourmet*; imagine him fixed in a boarding-house where the meals are a repeating cycle of Irish Stew, Boiled Rabbit, Cold Mutton and Salt Cod (without oyster or any other sause)! Then let him out and place him in the Café Anglais. With what a fierce relish would he set tooth into curious and sought-out dishes! It must be remembered that I listened every Sunday in every term to one of the Doctor’s sermons, and it is really not strange that I gave an eager ear to the voice of *Persian Wisdom* — as I think the book was called. At any rate, I kept Nelly Foran at a distance for nine or ten months, and when I saw a splendid sunset I averted my eyes. I longed for a love purely spiritual, for a sunset of vision.

“I caught glimpses, too, I think, of a much more profound *askesis* than this. I suppose you have the *askesis* in its simplest, most rationalised form in the Case of Bill the Engine-driver — I forget in what great work of *Theologia Moralis* I found the instance; perhaps Bill was really *Quidam* in the original, and his occupation stated as that of *Nauarchus*. At all events, Bill is fond of four-ale; but he had perceived that two pots of this beverage consumed before a professional journey tended to make him rather sleepy, rather less alert, than he might be in the execution of his very responsible duties. Hence Bill, considering this, wisely contents himself with *one* pot before mounting on his cab. He has deprived himself of a sensible good in order that an equally sensible but greater good may be secured — in order that he and the passengers may run no risks on the journey. Next to this simple asceticism comes, I suppose, the ordinary discipline of the Church — the abandonment of sensible goods to secure spiritual ends, the turning away from the type to the prototype, from the sight of the eyes to the vision of the soul. For in the true asceticism, whatever its degree, there is always action to a certain end, to a perceived good. Does the self-tormenting fakir act from this motive? I don’t know; but if he does not, his discipline is not asceticism at all, but folly, and impious folly, too. If he mortifies himself merely for the sake of mortifying himself; then he defiles and blasphemes the Temple. This in parenthesis.

“But, as I say, I had a very dim and distant glimpse of another region of the *askesis*. Mystics will understand me when I say that there are moments when the Dark Night of the Soul is seen to be brighter than her brightest day; there are moments when it is necessary to drive away even the angels that there may be place for the Highest. One may ascend into regions so remote from the common concerns of life that it becomes difficult to procure the help of analogy, even in the terms and processes of the Arts. But suppose a painter — I need not say that I mean an artist — who is visited by an idea so wonderful, so super-exalted in its beauty that he recognises his impotence; he knows that no pigments and no technique can do anything but grossly parody his vision. Well, he will show his greatness by *not* attempting to paint that vision: he will write on a bare canvass *vidit anima sed non pinxit manus*. And I am sure that there are many romances which have never been written. It was a highly paradoxical, even a dangerous philosophy that affirmed God to be rather *Non-Ens* than *Ens*; but there are moods in which one appreciates the thought.

“I think I caught, as I say, a distant vision of that Night which excels the Day in its splendour. It began with the eyes turned away from the sunset, with lips that refused kisses. Then there came a command to the heart to cease from longing for the dear land of Gwent, to cease from that aching desire that had never died for so many years for the sight of the old land and those hills and woods of most sweet and anguished memory. I remember once, when I was a great lout of sixteen, I went to see the Lupton Fair. I always liked the great booths and caravans and merry-go-rounds, all a blaze of barbaric green and red and gold, flaming and glowing in the middle of the trampled, sodden field against a background of Lupton and wet, grey autumn sky. There were country folk then who wore smock-frocks and looked like men in them, too. One saw scores of these brave fellows at the Fair: dull, good Jutes with flaxen hair that was almost white, and with broad pink faces. I liked to see them in the white robe and the curious embroidery; they were a note of wholesomeness, an embassage from the old English village life to our filthy ‘industrial centre.’ It was odd to see how they stared about them; they wondered, I think, at the beastliness of the place, and yet, poor fellows, they felt bound to admire the evidence of so much money. Yes, they were of Old England; they savoured of the long, bending, broad village street, the gable ends, the grave fronts of old mellow bricks, the thatched roofs here and there, the bulging window of the ‘village shop,’ the old church in decorous, somewhat dull perpendicular among the elms, and, above all, the old tavern — that excellent abode of honest mirth and honest beer, relic of the time when there were men, and men who *lived*. Lupton is very far removed from Hardy's land, and yet as I think of these country-folk in their smock-frocks all the essence of Hardy is distilled for me; I see the village street all white in snow, a light gleaming very rarely from an upper window, and presently, amid ringing bells, one hears the carol-singers begin:

'*Remember Adam's fall, O thou man.*'

"And I love to look at the whirl of the merry-go-rounds, at the people sitting with grave enjoyment on those absurd horses as they circle round and round till one's eyes were dazed. Drums beat and thundered, strange horns blew raucous calls from all quarters, and the mechanical music to which those horses revolved belched and blazed and rattled out its everlasting monotony, checked now and again by the shriek of the steam whistle, groaning into silence for a while: then the tune clanged out once more, and the horses whirled round and round.

"But on this Fair Day of which I am speaking I left the booths and the golden, gleaming merry-go-rounds for the next field, where horses were excited to brief madness and short energy. I had scarcely taken up my stand when a man close by me raised his voice to a genial shout as he saw a friend a little way off. And he spoke with the beloved accent of Gwent, with those tones that come to me more ravishing, more enchanting than all the music in the world. I had not heard them for years of weary exile! Just a phrase or two of common greeting in those chanting accents: the Fair passed away, was whirled into nothingness, its shouting voices, the charging of horses, drum and trumpet, clanging, metallic music — it rushed down into the abyss. There was the silence that follows a great peal of thunder; it was early morning and I was standing in a well-remembered valley, beside the blossoming thorn bush, looking far away to the wooded hills that kept the East, above the course of the shining river. I was, I say, a great lout of sixteen, but the tears flooded my eyes, my heart swelled with its longing.

"Now, it seemed, I was to quell such thoughts as these, to desire no more the fervent sunlight on the mountain, or the sweet scent of the dusk about the runnings of the brook. I had been very fond of ‘going for walks’ — walks of the imagination. I was afraid, I suppose, that unless by constant meditation I renewed the shape of the old land in my mind, its image might become a blurred and fading picture; I should forget little by little the ways of those deep, winding lanes that took courses that were almost subterranean over hill and vale, by woodside and waterside, narrow, cavernous, leaf-vaulted; cool in the greatest heats of summer. And the wandering paths that crossed the fields, that led one down into places hidden and remote, into still depths where no one save myself ever seemed to enter, that sometimes ended with a certain solemnity at a broken stile in a hedgerow grown into a thicket — within a plum tree returning to the savage life of the wood, a forest, perhaps, of blue lupins, and a great wild rose about the ruined walls of a house — all these ways I must keep in mind as if they were mysteries and great secrets, as indeed they were. So I strolled in memory through the Pageant of Gwent: ‘lest I should forget the region of the flowers, lest I should become unmindful of the wells and the floods.’

“But the time came, as I say, when it was represented to me that all this was an indulgence which, for a season at least, must be pretermitted. With an effort I voided my soul of memory and desire and weeping; when the idols of doomed Twyn-Barlwm, and great Mynydd Maen, and the silver esses of the Usk appeared before me, I cast them out; I would not meditate white Caerleon shining across the river. I endured, I think, the severest pains. De Quincey, that admirable artist, that searcher into secrets and master of mysteries, has described my pains for me under the figure of the Opium Eater breaking the bonds of his vice. How often, when the abominations of Lupton, its sham energies, its sham morals, its sham enthusiasms, all its battalia of cant surged and beat upon me, have I been sorely tempted to yield, to suffer no more the press of folly, but to steal away by a secret path I knew, to dwell in a secure valley where the foolish could never trouble me. Sometimes I ‘fell,’ as I drank deep then of the magic well-water, and went astray in the green dells and avenues of the wildwood. Still I struggled to refrain my heart from these things, to keep my spirit under the severe discipline of abstention; and with a constant effort I succeeded more and more.

“But there was a yet deeper depth in this process of *catharsis*. I have said that sometimes one must expel the angels that God may have room; and now the strict ordinance was given that I should sever myself from that great dream of Celtic sanctity that for me had always been *the* dream, the innermost shrine in which I could take refuge, the house of sovran medicaments where all the wounds of soul and body were healed. One does not wish to be harsh; we must admit, I suppose, that moderate, sensible Anglicanism must have *something* in it — since the absolute sham cannot very well continue to exist. Let us say, then, that it is highly favourable to a respectable and moral life, that it encourages a temperate and well-regulated spirit of devotion. It was certainly a very excellent and (according to her lights) devout woman who, in her version of the *Anima Christi* altered 'inebriate me' to 'purify me,' and it was a good cleric who hated the Vulgate reading, *calix meus inebrians*. My father had always instructed me that we must conform outwardly, and bear with *Dearly Beloved Brethren*; while we celebrated in our hearts the Ancient Mass of the Britons, and waited for Cadwaladr to return. I reverenced his teaching, I still reverence it, and agree that we must conform; but in my heart I have always doubted whether moderate Anglicanism be Christianity in any sense, whether it even deserves to be called a religion at all. I do not doubt, of course, that many truly religious people have professed it: I speak of the system, and of the atmosphere which emanates from it. And when the Public School *ethos* is added to this — well, the resultant teaching comes pretty much to the dogma that Heaven and the Head are strict allies. One must not degenerate into ecclesiastical controversy; I merely want to say that I never dreamed of looking for religion in our Chapel services. No doubt the *Te Deum* was *still the Te Deum*, but the noblest of hymns is degraded, obscured, defiled, made ridiculous, if you marry it to a tune that would disgrace a penny gaff. Personally, I think that the airs on the piano-organs are much more reverend compositions than Anglican chants, and I am sure that many popular hymn tunes are vastly inferior in solemnity to *'E Dunno where 'e are*.

"No; the religion that led me and drew me and compelled me was that wonderful and doubtful mythos of the Celtic Church. It was the study — nay, more than the study, the enthusiasm — of my father's life; and as I was literally baptized with water from a Holy Well, so spiritually the great legend of the Saints and their amazing lives had tinged all my dearest aspirations, had become to me the glowing vestment of the Great Mystery. One may sometimes be deeply interested in the matter of a tale while one is wearied or sickened by the manner of it; one may have to embrace the bright divinity on the horrid lips of the serpent of Cos. Or, on the other hand, the manner — the style — may be admirable, and the matter a mere nothing but a ground for the embroidery. But for me the Celtic Mythos was the Perfect Thing, the King's Daughter: *Omnis gloria ejus filiæ Regis ab, intus, in fimbriis aureis circumamicta varietatibus*. I have learned much more of this great mystery since those days — I have seen, that is, how entirely, how absolutely my boyhood's faith was justified; but even then with but little knowledge I was rapt at the thought of this marvellous knight-errantry, of this Christianity which was not a moral code, with some sort of metaphorical Heaven held out as a reward for its due observance, but a great mystical adventure into the unknown sanctity. Imagine a Bishop of the Established Church getting into a boat without oar or sails! Imagine him, if you can, doing anything remotely analagous to such an action. Conceive the late Archbishop Tait going apart into the chapel at Lambeth for three days and three nights; then you may well conceive the people in the opposite bank being dazzled with the blinding supernatural light poured forth from the chapel windows. Of course, the end of the Celtic Church was ruin and confusion — but Don Quixote failed and fell, while Sancho Panza lived a fat, prosperous peasant. He inherited, I think, a considerable sum from the knight, and was, no doubt, a good deal looked up to in the village.

"Yes; the Celtic Church was the Company of the Great Errantry, of the Great Mystery, and, though all the history of it seems but a dim and shadowy splendour, its burning rose-red lamp yet glows for a few, and from my earliest childhood I was indoctrinated in the great Rite of Cor-arbennic. When I was still very young I had been humoured with the sight of a wonderful Relic of the Saints — never shall I forget that experience of the holy magic of sanctity. Every little wood, every rock and fountain, and every running stream of Gwent were hallowed for me by some mystical and entrancing legend, and the thought of this High Spiritual City and its Blessed Congregation could, in a moment, exercise and drive forth from me all the ugly and foolish and gibbering spectres that made up the life of that ugly and foolish place where I was imprisoned.

"Now, with a sorrowful farewell, I bade good-bye for a brief time (as I hoped it would be) to this golden legend; my heart was emptied of its treasures and its curious shows, and the lights on the altars were put out, and the images were strictly veiled. Hushed was the chanting in the

Sovereign and Perpetual Choir, hidden were the High Hallows of the Saints, no more did I follow them to their cells in the wild hills, no more did I look from the rocks in the west and see them set forth for Avalon. Alas!

“A great silence seemed to fall upon me, the silence of the depths beneath the earth. And with the silence there was darkness. Only in a hidden place there was reserved the one taper — the Light of Conformity, of a perfect submission, that from the very excess of sorrow and deprivation drew its secret but quintessential joy. I am reminded, now that I look back upon this great purgation of the soul, of the story that I once read of the Arabic Alchemist. He came to the Caliph Haroun with a strange and extravagant proposal. Haroun sat in all his splendour, his viziers, his chamberlains, his great officers about him, in his golden court which displayed all the wonders and superfluities of the East. He gave judgment; the wicked were punished, the virtuous were rewarded; God’s name was exalted, the Prophet was venerated. There came before the Commander of the Faithful a poor old man in the poor and ragged robes of a wandering poet; he was oppressed by the weight of his years, and his entrance was like the entrance of misery. So wretched was his appearance that one of the chamberlains, who was well acquainted with the poets, could not help quoting the well-known verses:

“‘Between the main and a drop of rain the difference seen is nothing great. The sun so bright and the taper’s light are alike and one save in pomp and state. In the grain of sand and in all the land what may ye arraign as disparate? A crust of bread and a King’s board spread will hunger’s lust alike abate. With the smallest blade or with host arrayed the Ruler may quench his gall and hate. A stone in a box and a quarry of rocks may be shown to be of an equal freight. With a sentence bold or with gold untold the lover may hold or capture his mate. The King and the Bard may alike be debarred from the fold of the Lord Compassionate.’”

“The Commander of the Faithful praised God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, the King of the Day of Judgment, and caused the chamberlain to be handsomely rewarded. He then enquired of the old man for what reason he came before him, and the beggar (as, indeed, he seemed) informed the Caliph that he had for many years prosecuted his studies in magic, alchemy, astrology and geomancy and all other curious and surprising arts, in Spain, Grand Cairo, the land of the Moors, India, China, in various Cities of the Infidels; in fact, in every quarter of the world where magicians were to be found. In proof of his proficiency he produced a little box which he carried about him for the purpose of his geomantic operations and asked anyone who was willing to stand forth, that he might hear his whole life, past, present and future. The Caliph ordered one of his officers to submit himself to this ordeal, and the beggar having made the points in the sand, and having erected the figure according to the rules of the geomantic art, immediately informed the officer of all the most hidden transactions in which he had been engaged, including several matters which this officer thought had been secrets locked in his own breast. He also foretold his death in a year's time from a certain herb, and so it fell out, for he was strangled with a hempen cord by order of the Caliph. In the meantime, the Commander of the Faithful and all about him were astonished, and the Beggar Magician was ordered to proceed with his story. He spoke at great length, and everyone remarked the elegance and propriety of his diction, which was wanting in no refinement of classical eloquence. But the sum of his speech was this — that he had discovered the greatest wonder of the whole world, the name of which he declared was Asrar, and by this talisman he said that the Caliph might make himself more renowned than all the kings that had ever reigned on the earth, not excepting King Solomon, the son of David. This was the method of the operation which the beggar proposed. The Commander of the Faithful was to gather together all the wealth of his entire kingdom, omitting nothing that could possibly be discovered; and while this was being done the magician said that he would construct a furnace of peculiar shape in which all these splendours and magnificences and treasures of the world must be consumed in a certain fire of art, prepared with wisdom. And at last, he continued, after the operation had endured many days, the fire being all the while most curiously governed, there would remain but one drop no larger than a pearl, but glorious as the sun to the moon and all the starry heavens and the wonders of the compassionate; and with this drop the Caliph Haroun might heal all the sorrows of the universe. Both the Commander of the Faithful and all his viziers and officers were stupefied by this proposal, and most of the assemblage considered the beggar to be a madman. The Caliph, however, asked him to return the next day in order that his plans might receive more mature consideration.

“The beggar prostrated himself and went forth from the hall of audience, but he returned no more, nor could it be discovered that he had been seen again by anyone.

“‘But one drop no larger than a pearl,’ and ‘where there is Nothing there is All.’ I have often thought of those sentences in looking back on that time when, as Chesson said, I was one of those ‘light-hearted and yet sturdy and reliable young fellows to whose hands the honour and safety of England might one day be committed.’ I cast all the treasures I possessed into the alembic; again and again they were rectified by the heat of the fire ‘most curiously governed’; I saw the ‘engendering of the Crow’ black as pitch, the flight of the Dove with Silver Wings, and at last Sol rose red and glorious, and I fell down and gave thanks to heaven for this most wonderful gift, the ‘Sun blessed of the Fire.’ I had dispossessed myself of all, and I found that I possessed all; I had thrown away all the money in my purse, and I was richer than I had ever been; I had died, and I had found a new life in the land of the living.

“It is curious that I should now have to explain the pertinency of all that I have written to the title of this Note — concerning Gaiety. It should not be necessary. The chain of thought is almost painfully obvious. But I am afraid it is necessary.

“Well: I once read an interesting article in the daily paper. It was written apropos of some Shakespearean celebrations or other, and its purport was that modern England was ever so much happier than mediæval or Elizabethian England. It is possible that an acute logician might find something to say on this thesis; but my interest lay in the following passages, which I quote:

“‘Merrie England,’ with its maypoles and its Whitsun Ales, and its Shrove-tide jousts and junketings is dead for us, from the religious point of view. The England that has survived is, after all, a greater England still. It is Puritan England…. The spirit has gone. Surely it is useless to revive the form. Wherefore should the May Queen be “holy, wise, and fair,” if not to symbolise the Virgin Mary? And as for Shrove-tide, too, what point in jollity without a fast to follow?’

“The article is not over-illuminating, but I think the writer had caught a glimpse of the truth that there is a deep relation between Mirth and Sanctity;

that no real mirth is possible without the apprehension of the mysteries as its antecedent. The fast and the feast are complementary terms. He is right; there is no point in jollity unless there is a fast or something of the nature of a fast to follow — though, of course, there is nothing to hinder the most advanced thinker from drinking as much fusel-oil and raw Russian spirit as he likes. But the result of this course is not real mirth or jollity; it is perhaps more essentially dismal than a 'Tea' amongst the Protestant Dissenters. And, on the other hand, true gaiety is only possible to those who have fasted; and now perhaps it will be seen that I have been describing the preparations for a light-hearted festival.

"The cloud passed away from me, the restrictions and inhibitions were suddenly removed, and I woke up one morning in dancing, bubbling spirits, every drop of blood in my body racing with new life, my nerves tingling and thrilling with energy. I laughed as I awoke; I was conscious that I was to engage in a strange and fantastic adventure, though I had not the remotest notion of what it was to be."

II

AMBROSE MEYRICK'S ADVENTURE was certainly of the fantastic order. His fame had long been established on a sure footing with his uncle and with everybody else, and Mr. Horbury had congratulated him with genuine enthusiasm on his work in the examinations — the Summer term was drawing to a close. Mr. Horbury was Ambrose's trustee, and he made no difficulty about signing a really handsome cheque for his nephew's holiday expenses and outfit. "There," he said "you ought to be able to do pretty well on that. Where do you think of going?"

Ambrose said that he had thought of North Devon, of tramping over Exmoor, visiting the Doone country, and perhaps of working down to Dartmoor.

"You couldn't do better. You ought to try your hand at fishing: wonderful sport in some of those streams. It mightn't come off at first, but with your eye and sense of distance you'll soon make a fine angler. If you *do* have a turn at the trout, get hold of some local man and make him give you a wrinkle or two. It's no good getting your flies from town. Now, when I was fishing in Hampshire — — "

Mr. Horbury went on; but the devil of gaiety had already dictated a wonderful scheme to Ambrose, and that night he informed Nelly Foran that she must alter her plans; she was to come with him to France instead of spending a fortnight at Blackpool. He carried out this mad device with an ingenuity that poor Mr. Palmer would certainly have called "diabolical." In the first place, there was to be a week in London — for Nelly must have some clothes; and this week began as an experience of high delight. It was not devoid of terror, for masters might be abroad, and Ambrose did not wish to leave Lupton for some time. However, they neither saw nor were seen. Arriving at St. Pancras, the luggage was left in the station, and Ambrose, who had studied the map of London, stood for a while on the pavement outside Scott's great masterpiece of architecture and considered the situation with grave yet humorous deliberation. Nelly proved herself admirably worthy of the adventure; its monstrous audacity appealed to her, and she was in a state of perpetual subdued laughter for some days after their arrival. Meyrick looked about him and found that the Euston Road, being squalid and noisy, offered few attractions; and with sudden resolution he took the girl by the arm and steered into the heart of Bloomsbury. In this charmingly central and yet retired quarter they found rooms in a quiet byway which, oddly enough, looked on a green field; and under the pleasant style of Mr. and Mr. Lupton they partook of tea while the luggage was fetched by somebody — probably a husband — who came with a shock of red, untidy hair from the dark bowels of the basement. They screamed with mirth over the meal. Mr. Horbury had faults, but he kept a good table for himself, his boys and his servants; and the exotic, quaint flavour of the "bread" and "butter" seemed to these two young idiots exquisitely funny. And the queer, faint, close smell, too, of the whole house — it rushed out at one when the hall door was opened: it was heavy, and worth its weight in gold.

"I never know," Ambrose used to say afterwards, "whether to laugh or cry when I have been away for some time from town, and come back and smell that wonderful old London aroma. I don't believe it's so strong or so rare as it used to be; I have been disappointed once or twice in houses in quite shabby streets. It was *there*, of course, but — well, if it were a vintage wine I should say it was a second growth of a very poor year — Margaux, no doubt, but a Margaux of one of those very indifferent years in the early 'seventies. Or it may be like the smell of grease-paints; one doesn't notice it after a month or two. But I don't think it is.

"Still," he would go on, "I value what I can smell of it. It brings back to me that afternoon, that hot, choking afternoon of ever so many years ago. It was really tremendously hot — ninety-two degrees, I think I saw in the paper the next day — and when we got out at St. Pancras the wind came at one like a furnace blast. There was no sun visible; the sky was bleary — a sort of sickly, smoky yellow, and the burning wind came in gusts, and the dust hissed and rattled on the pavement. Do you know what a low public-house smells like in London on a hot afternoon? Do you know what London bitter tastes like on such a day — the publican being evidently careful of his clients' health, and aware of the folly of drinking cold beverages during a period of extreme heat? I do. Nelly, poor dear, had warm lemonade, and I had warm beer — warm chemicals, I mean. But the odour! Why doesn't some scientific man stop wasting his time over a lot of useless rubbish and discover a way of bottling the odour of the past?

"Ah! but if he did so, in a phial of rare crystal with a stopper as secure as the seal of Solimaun ben Daoud would I preserve one most precious scent, inscribing on the seal, within a perfect pentagram, the mystic legend 'No. 15, Little Russell Row.'"

The cat had come in with the tea-tray. He was a black cat, not very large, with a decent roundness of feature, and yet with a suggestion of sinewy skinniness about him — the Skinniness of the wastrel, not of the poor starveling. His bright green eyes had, as Ambrose observed, the wisdom of Egypt; on his tomb should be inscribed "The Justified in Sekht." He walked solemnly in front of the landlady, his body describing strange curves, his tail waving in the air, and his ears put back with an expression of intense cunning. He seemed delighted at "the let," and when Nelly stroked his back he gave a loud shriek of joy and made known his willingness to take a little refreshment.

They laughed so heartily over their tea that when the landlady came in to clear the things away they were still bubbling over with aimless merriment.

"I likes to see young people 'appy," she said pleasantly, and readily provided a latchkey in case they cared to come in rather late. She told them a good deal of her life: she had kept lodgings in Judd Street, near King's Cross — a nasty, noisy street, she called it — and she seemed to think the inhabitants a low lot. She had to do with all sorts, some good some bad, and the business wasn't what it had been in her mother's day.

They sat a little while on the sofa, hand in hand still consumed with the jest of their being there at all, and imagining grotesque entrances of Mr. Horbury or Dr. Chesson. Then they went out to wander about the streets, to see London easily, merrily, without bothering the Monument, or the British Museum, or Madame Tussaud's — finally, to get something to eat, they didn't know when or where or how, and they didn't in the least care! There was one "sight" they were not successful in avoiding: they had not journeyed far before the great portal of the British Museum confronted them, grandiose and gloomy. So, by the sober way of Great Russell Street, they made their way into Tottenham Court Road and, finally, into Oxford

Street. The shops were bright and splendid, the pavement was crowded with a hurrying multitude, as it seemed to the country folk, though it was the dullest season of the year. It was a great impression — decidedly London was a wonderful place. Already Ambrose felt a curious sense of being at home in it; it was not beautiful, but it was on the immense scale; it did something more than vomit stinks into the air, poison into the water and rows of workmen's houses on the land. They wandered on, and then they had the fancy that they would like to explore the regions to the south; it was so impossible, as Ambrose said, to know where they would find themselves eventually. He carefully lost himself within a few minutes of Oxford Street. A few turnings to right and then to left; the navigation of strange alleys soon left them in the most satisfactory condition of bewilderment; the distinctions of the mariner's compass, its pedantry of east and west, north and south, were annihilated and had ceased to be; it was an adventure in a trackless desert, in the Australian bush, but on safer ground and in an infinitely more entertaining scene. At first they had passed through dark streets, Georgian and Augustan ways, gloomy enough, and half deserted; there were grave houses, with many stories of windows, now reduced to printing offices, to pickle warehouses, to odd crafts such as those of the metal assayer, the crucible maker, the engraver of seals, the fabricator of Boule. But how wonderful it was to see the actual place where those things were done! Ambrose had read of such arts, but had always thought of them as existing in a vague void — if some of them even existed at all in those days: but there in the windows were actual crucibles, strange-looking curvilinear pots of grey-yellowish ware, the veritable instruments of the Magnum Opus, inventions of Arabia. He was no longer astonished when a little farther he saw a harpsichord, which had only been a name to him, a beautiful looking thing, richly inlaid, with its date — 1780 — inscribed on a card above it. It was now utterly wonderland: he could very likely buy armour round the corner; and he had scarcely formed the thought when a very fine sixteenth-century suit, richly damascened, rose up before him, handsomely displayed between two black jacks. These were the comparatively silent streets; but they turned a corner, and what a change! All the roadway, not the pavement only, seemed full of a strolling, chatting, laughing mob of people: the women were bareheaded, and one heard nothing but the roll of the French "r," torrents of sonorous sound trolled out with the music of happy song. The papers in the shops were all French, ensigns on every side proclaimed “Vins Fins,” “Beaune Supérieur”: the tobacconists kept their tobacco in square blue, yellow and brown packets; “Charcuterie” made a brave and appetising show. And here was a “Café Restaurant: au château de Chinon.” The name was enough; they could not dine elsewhere, and Ambrose felt that he was honouring the memory of the great Rabelais.

It was probably not a very good dinner. It was infinitely better than the Soho dinner of these days, for the Quarter had hardly begun to yield to the attack of Art, Intellect and the Suburbs which, between them, have since destroyed the character and unction of many a good cook-shop. Ambrose only remembered two dishes; the *pieds de porc grillés* and the salad. The former he thought both amusing and delicious, and the latter was strangely and artfully compounded of many herbs, of little vinegar, of abundant Provençal oil, with the *chapon*, or crust rubbed with garlic, reposing at the bottom of the bowl after Madame had “tormented” the ingredients — the salad was a dish from Fairyland. There be no such salads now in all the land of Soho.

“Let me celebrate, above all, the little red wine,” says Ambrose in a brief dithyrambic note. “Not in any mortal vineyard did its father grape ripen; it was not nourished by the warmth of the visible sun, nor were the rains that made it swell common waters from the skies above us. Not even in the Chinonnais, sacred earth though that be, was the press made that caused its juices to be poured into the *cuve*, nor was the humming of its fermentation heard in any of the good cellars of the lower Touraine. But in that region which Keats celebrates when he sings the ‘Mermaid Tavern’ was this juice engendered — the vineyard lay low down in the south, among the starry plains where is the *Terra Turonensis Celestis*, that unimaginable country which Rabelais beheld in his vision where mighty Gargantua drinks from inexhaustible vats eternally, where Pantagruel is athirst for evermore, though he be satisfied continually. There, in the land of the Crowned Immortal Tosspots was that wine of ours vintaged, red with the rays of the Dog-star, made magical by the influence of Venus, fertilised by the happy aspect of Mercury. O rare, superabundant and most excellent juice, fruit of all fortunate stars, by thee were we translated, exalted into the fellowship of that Tavern of which the old poet writes: *Mihi est propositum in Taberna mori!*”

There were few English people in the Château de Chinon — indeed, it is doubtful whether there was more than one — the ménage Lupton excepted. This one compatriot happened to be a rather remarkable man — it was Carrol. He was not in the vanguard of anything; he knew no journalists and belonged to no clubs; he was not even acquainted in the most distant manner with a single person who could be called really influential or successful. He was an obscure literary worker, who published an odd volume every five or six years: now and then he got notices, when there was no press of important stuff in the offices, and sometimes a kindly reviewer predicted that he would come out all right in time, though he had still much to learn. About a year before he died, an intelligent reading public was told that one or two things of his were rather good; then, on his death, it was definitely discovered that the five volumes of verse occupied absolutely unique ground, that a supreme poet had been taken from us, a poet who had raised the English language into a fourth dimension of melody and magic. The intelligent reading public read him no more than they ever did, but they buy him in edition after edition, from large quarto to post octavo; they buy him put up into little decorated boxes; they buy him on Japanese vellum; they buy him illustrated by six different artists; they discuss no end of articles about him; they write their names in the Carrol Birthday Book; they set up the Carrol Calendar in their boudoirs; they have quotations from him in Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's Cathedral; they sing him in the famous Carrol Cycle of Song; and, last and best of all, a brilliant American playwright is talking even now of dramatising him. The Carrol Club, of course, is ancient history. Its membership is confined to the ranks of intellect and art; it invites to its dinners foreign princes, bankers, major-generals and other persons of distinction — all of whom, of course, are intensely interested in the master's book; and the record and praise of the Club are in all the papers. It is a pity that Carrol is dead. He would not have sworn: he would have grinned.

Even then, though he was not glorious, he was observant, and he left a brief note, a sort of thumb-nail sketch, of his impressions that night at the Château de Chinon.

"I was sitting in my old corner," he says, "wondering why the devil I wrote so badly on the whole, and what the devil I was going to do with the subject that I had tackled. The dinner was not so bad at the old Château in those days, though now they say the plate-glass is the best dish in the establishment. I liked the old place; it was dingy and low down and rather disreputable, I fancy, and the company was miscellaneous French with a dash of Italian. Nearly all of us knew each other, and there were regulars who sat in the same seat night after night. I liked it all. I liked the coarse tablecloths and the black-handled knives and the lead spoons and the damp, adhesive salt, and the coarse, strong, black pepper that one helped with a fork handle. Then there was Madame sitting on high, and I never saw an uglier woman nor a more good-natured. I was getting through my roast fowl and salad that evening, when two wonderful people came in, obviously from fairyland! I saw they had never been in such a place in all their lives before — I don't believe either of them had set foot in London until that day, and their wonder and delight and enjoyment of it all were so enormous that I had another helping of food and an extra half-bottle of wine. I enjoyed them, too, in their way, but I could see that *their* fowl and *their* wine were not a bit the same as mine. *I* once knew the restaurant they were really dining at — Grand Café de Paradis — some such name as that. He was an extraordinary looking chap, quite young, I should fancy, black hair, dark skin, and such burning eyes! I don't know why, but I felt he was a bit out of his setting, and I kept thinking how I should like to see him in a monk's robe. Madame was different. She was a lovely girl with amazing copper hair; dressed rather badly — of the people, I should imagine. But what a gaiety she had! I couldn't hear what they were saying, but one had to smile with sheer joy at the sight of her face — it positively danced with mirth, and a good musician could have set it to music, I am sure. There was something a little queer — too pronounced, perhaps — about the lower part of her face. Perhaps it would have been an odd tune, but I know I should have liked to hear it!"

Ambrose lit a black Caporal cigarette — he had bought a packet on his way. He saw an enticing bottle, of rotund form, paying its visits to some neighbouring tables, and the happy fools made the acquaintance of Benedictine.

"Oh, yes, it is all very well," Ambrose has been heard to say on being offered this agreeable and aromatic liqueur, "it's nice enough, I daresay. But you should have tasted the *real* stuff. I got it at a little cafe in Soho some years ago — the Château de Chinon. No, it's no good going there now, it's quite different. All the walls are plate-glass and gold; the head waiter is called Maître d'hôtel, and I am told it's quite the thing, both in southern and northern suburbs, to make up dinner parties at the Château — everything most correct, evening dress, fans, opera cloaks, 'Hide-seek' champagne, and stalls afterwards. One gets a glimpse of Bohemian life that way, and everybody says it's been such a queer evening, but quite amusing, too. But you can't get the real Benedictine there now.

"Where can you get it? Ah! I wish I knew. *I* never come across it. The bottle looks just the same, but it's quite a different flavour. The phylloxera may be responsible, of course, but I don't think it is. Perhaps the bottle that went round the table that night was like the powder in *Jekyll and Hyde* — its properties were the result of some strange accident. At all events, they were quite magical."

The two adventurers went forth into the maze of streets and lost themselves again. Heaven knows where they went, by what ways they wandered, as with wide-gleaming eyes, arm locked in arm, they gazed on an enchanted scene which they knew must be London and nothing else — what else could it be? Indeed, now and again, Ambrose thought he recognized certain features and monuments and public places of which he had read; but still! That wine of the Château was, by all mundane reckonings, of the smallest, and one little glass of Benedictine with coffee could not disturb the weakest head: yet was it London, after all?

What they saw was, doubtless, the common world of the streets and squares, the gay ways and the dull, the broad, ringing, lighted roads and the dark, echoing passages; yet they saw it all as one sees a mystery play, through a veil. But the veil before their eyes was a transmuting vision, and its substance was shot as if it were samite, with wonderful and admirable golden ornaments. In the Eastern Tales, people find themselves thus suddenly transported into an unknown magical territory, with cities that are altogether things of marvel and enchantment, whose walls are pure gold, lighted by the shining of incomparable jewels; and Ambrose declared later that never till that evening had he realized the extraordinary and absolute truth to nature of the *Arabian Nights*. Those who were present on a certain occasion will not soon forget his rejoinder to "a gentleman in the company" who said that for truth to nature he went to George Eliot.

“I was speaking of men and women, Sir,” was the answer, “not of lice.”

The gentleman in question, who was quite an influential man — some whisper that he was an editor — was naturally very much annoyed.

Still, Ambrose maintained his position. He would even affirm that for crude realism the Eastern Tales were absolutely unique.

“Of course,” he said, “I take realism to mean absolute and essential truthfulness of description, as opposed to merely conventional treatment. Zola is a realist, not — as the imbeciles suppose — because he described — well, rather minutely — many unpleasant sights and sounds and smells and emotions, but because he was a poet, a seer; because, in spite of his pseudo-philosophies, his cheap materialisms, he saw the true heart, the reality of things. Take *La Terre*; do you think it is ‘realistic’ because it describes minutely, and probably faithfully, the event of a cow calving? Not in the least; the local vet. who was called in could probably do all that as well, or better. It is ‘realist’ because it goes behind all the brutalities, all the piggeries and inhumanities, of those frightful people, and shows us the strange, mad, transcendent passion that lay behind all those things — the wild desire for the land — a longing that burned, that devoured, that inflamed, that drove men to hell and death as would a passion for a goddess who might never be attained. Remember how ‘La Beauce’ is personified, how the earth swells and quickens before one, how every clod and morsel of the soil cries for its service and its sacrifice and its victims — I call *that* realism.

“The *Arabian Nights* is also profoundly realistic, though both the subject-matter and the method of treatment — the technique — are very different from the subject-matter and the technique of Zola. Of course, there may be people who think that if you describe a pigsty well you are a ‘realist,’ and if you describe an altar well you are ‘romantic.’ … I do not know that the mental processes of Crétins form a very interesting subject for discussion.”

One may surmise, if one will, that the sudden violence of the change was a sufficient cause of exaltation. That detestable Lupton left behind; no town, but a collection of stink and poison factories and slave quarters; that more detestable school, more ridiculous than the Academy of Lagado; that most detestable routine, games, lessons and the Doctor’s sermons — the transition was tremendous to the freedom of fabled London, of the unknown streets and unending multitudes.

Ambrose said he hesitated to talk of that walk, lest he should be thought an aimless liar. They strolled for hours seeing the most wonderful things, the most wonderful people; but he declared that the case was similar to that of the Benedictine — he could never discover again the regions that he had perambulated. Somewhere, he said, close to the Château de Chinon there must be a passage which had since been blocked up. By it was the entrance to Fairyland.

When at last they found Little Russell Row, the black cat was awaiting them with an expression which was pleased and pious, too; he had devoured the greater portion of that quarter-pound of dubious butter. Ambrose smoked black cigarettes in bed till the packet was finished.

III

IT WAS AN amazing week they spent in London. For a couple of days Nelly was busied in getting "things" and "odds and ends," and, to her credit, she dressed the part most admirably. She abjured all the imperial purples, the Mediterranean blues, the shrieking lilacs that her class usually affects, and appeared at last a model of neat gaiety.

In the meantime, while these shopping expeditions were in progress, while Nelly consulted with those tall, dark-robed, golden-haired and awful Elegances which preside over the last mysteries of the draper and milliner, Ambrose sat at home in Little Russell Row and worked out the outlines of some fantasies that had risen in his mind. It was, in fact, during these days that he made the notes which were afterwards expanded into the curious *Defence of Taverns*, a book which is now rare and sought after by collectors. It is supposed that it was this work that was in poor Palmer's mind when the earnest man referred with a sort of gloomy reticence to Meyrick's later career. He had, in all probability, not read a line of it; but the title was certainly not a very pleasing one, judged by ordinary scholastic standards. And it must be said that the critical reception of the book was not exactly encouraging. One paper wondered candidly why such a book was ever written or printed; another denounced the author in good, set terms as an enemy of the great temperance movement; while a third, a Monthly Reviewer, declared that the work made his blood boil. Yet even the severest moralists should have seen by the epigraph that the Apes and Owls and Antiques hid mysteries of some sort, since a writer whose purposes were really evil and intemperate would never have chosen such a motto as: *Jalalúd-Din praised the behaviour of the Inebriated and drank water from the well*. But the reviewers thought that this was unintelligible nonsense, and merely a small part of the writer's general purpose to annoy.

The rough sketch is contained in the first of the *Note Books*, which are still unpublished, and perhaps are likely to remain so. Meyrick jotted down his hints and ideas in the dingy "first floor front" of the Bloomsbury lodging-house, sitting at the rosewood “Davenport” which, to the landlady, seemed the last word in beautiful furniture.

The ménage rose late. What a relief it was to be free of the horrible bells that poisoned one’s rest at Lupton, to lie in peace as long as one liked, smoking a matutinal cigarette or two to the accompaniment of a cup of tea! Nelly was acquiring the art of the cigarette-smoker by degrees. She did not like the taste at all at first, but the wild and daring deviltry of the practice sustained her, and she persevered. And while they thus wasted the best hours of the day, Ambrose would make to pass before the bottom of the bed a long procession of the masters, each uttering his characteristic word of horror and astonishment as he went by, each whirled away by some invisible power in the middle of a sentence. Thus would enter Chesson, fully attired in cassock, cap and gown:

“Meyrick! It is impossible? Are you not aware that such conduct as this is entirely inconsistent with the tone of a great Public School? Have the Games …” But he was gone; his legs were seen vanishing in a whirlwind which bore him up the chimney.

Then Horbury rose out of the carpet:

“Plain living and clear thinking are the notes of the System. A Spartan Discipline — Meyrick! Do you call this a Spartan Discipline? Smoking tobacco and reposing with …” He shot like an arrow after the Head.

“We discourage luxury by every means in our power. Boy! This is luxury! Boy, boy! You are like the later Romans, boy! Heliogabalus was accustomed …” The chimney consumed Palmer also; and he gave place to another.

“Roughly speaking, a boy should be always either in school or playing games. He should never be suffered to be at a loose end. Is this your idea of playing games? I tell you, Meyrick …”

The game amused Nelly, more from its accompanying “business” and facial expression than from any particular comprehension of the dialogue. Ambrose saw that she could not grasp all the comedy of his situations, so he invented an Idyll between the Doctor and a notorious and flamboyant barmaid at the “Bell.” The fame of this lady ran great but not gracious through all Lupton. This proved a huge success; beginning as a mere episode, it gathered to itself a complicated network of incidents and adventures, of wild attempts and strange escapes, of stratagems and ambushes, of disguises and alarms. Indeed, as Ambrose instructed Nelly with great solemnity, the tale, at first an idyll, the simple, pastoral story of the loves of the Shepherd Chesson and the Nymph Bella, was rapidly becoming epical in its character. He talked of dividing it into twelve books! He enlarged very elaborately the Defeat of the Suitors. In this the dear old Head, disguised as a bookmaker, drugged the whisky of the young bloods who were accustomed to throng about the inner bar of the "Bell." There was quite a long passage describing the compounding of the patent draught from various herbs, the enormous cook at the Head's house enacting a kind of Canidia part, and helping in the concoction of the dose.

"Mrs. Belper," the Doctor would observe, "This is *most* gratifying. I had no idea that your knowledge of simples was so extensive. Do I understand you to affirm that those few leaves which you hold in your hand will produce marked symptoms?"

"Bless your dear 'art, Doctor Chesson, and if you'll forgive me for talking so to such a learned gentleman, and so good, I'm sure, but you'll find there's nothing in the world like it. Often and often have I 'eard my pore old mother that's dead and gone these forty year come Candlemas …"

"Mrs. Belper, Mrs. Belper, I am surprised at you! Are you not aware that the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council has pronounced the observance of the festival you so lightly name to be of a highly superstitious nature? Your deceased mother, you were saying, will have entered into her reward forty years ago on February the second of next year? Is not this the case?"

"These forty years came Febbymas, I mean, and a good woman she was, and never have I seen a larger wart on the nose and her legs bad as bad for years and years!"

"These details, though, no doubt, of high personal interest, seem hardly germane to our present undertaking. However, Mrs. Belper, proceed in your remarks."

"And thank you kindly, Sir, and not forgetting you are a clergyman — but there! we can't all of us be everything. And my pore mother, as I was saying, Sir, she said, again and again, that if she'd been like some folks she'd a made a fortune in golden money from this very yarb I'm a-showing you, Sir."

"Dear me, Mrs. Belper! You interest me deeply. I have often thought how wrong it is of us to neglect, as undoubtedly we *do* neglect, the bounteous gifts of the kindly earth. Your lamented mother used this specific with remarkable success?"

"Lord a mercy, Doctor 'Chesson! elephants couldn't a stood against it, nor yet whales, being as how it's stronger than the strongest gunpowder that was ever brewed or blasted, and miles better than the nasty rubbidge you get in them doctors' shops, and a pretty penny they make you pay for it and no better than calomel, if you ask me, Sir. But be it the strongest of the strong, I'll take my Gospel oath it's weak to what my pore mother made, and that anybody in Much Moddle parish would tell you, for man, woman or child who took one of Mrs. Marjoram's Mixtures and got over it, remember it, he would, until his dying day. And my pore old mother, she was that funny — never was a cheerfuller woman, I do believe, and when Tom Copus, the lame fiddler, he got married, pore mother! though she could hardly walk, her legs was that bad, come she would, and if she didn't slip a little of the mixture into the beer when everybody was looking another way! Pore, dear soul! as she said herself afterwards, 'mirth becomes marriage,' and so to be sure it does, and merry they all were that day that didn't touch the beer, preferring spirits, which pore mother couldn't get at, being locked up — a nasty, mean trick, I call it, and always will."

"Enough, Mrs. Belper, enough! You have amply satisfied me as to the potency of the late Mrs. Marjoram's pharmacopoeia. We will, if you have no objection, Mrs. Belper, make the mixture — to use the words of Shakespeare— 'slab and thick.'"

"And bless your kind 'art, Sir, and a good, kind master you've always been to me, if you 'aven't got enough 'ere to lay out all the Lupton town, call me a Dutchwoman, and that I never was, nor pore Belper neither."

"Certainly not, Mrs. Belper. The Dutch belong to a different branch of the great Teutonic stock, or, if identity had ever existed, the two races have long been differentiated. I think, Mrs. Belper, that the most eminent physicians have recognised the beneficial effects of a gentle laxative during the treacherous (though delightful) season of spring?"

“Law bless you, Sir, you’re right, as you always are, or why, Doctor? As my pore mother used to say when she made up the mixture: ‘Scour ’em out is the right way about!’ And laugh she would as she pounded the stuff up till I really thought she would ‘a busted, and shaking like the best blancmanges all the while.”

“Mrs. Belper, you have removed a weight from my mind. You think, then, that I shall be freed from all unfair competition while I pay my addresses to my young friend, Miss Floyer?”

“As free you will be, Doctor Chesson, Sir, as the little birds in the air; for not one of them young fellers will stand on his feet for days, and groans and ‘owls will be the best word that mortal man will speak, and bless you they will with their dying breath. So, Sir, you’ll ‘ave the sweet young lady, bless her dear ‘art, all to yourself, and if it’s twins, don’t blame me!”

“Mrs. Belper, your construction, if I may say so, is somewhat proleptic in its character. Still, I am sure that your meaning is good. Ha! I hear the bell for afternoon school.”

The Doctor’s voice happened to be shrill and piercing, with something of the tone of the tooth-comb and tissue-paper; while the fat cook spoke in a suety, husky contralto. Ambrose reproduced these peculiarities with the gift of the born mimic, adding appropriate antic and gesture to grace the show, and Nelly’s appreciation of its humours was intense.

Day by day new incidents and scenes were added. The Head, in the pursuit of his guilty passion, hid in the coal-cellar of the “Bell,” and, rustling sounds being heard, evaded detection for a while by imitating the barks of a terrier in chase of a rat. Nelly liked to hear the “Wuff! wuff! wuff!” which was introduced at this point. She liked also the final catastrophe, when the odd man of the “Bell” burst into the bar and said: “Dang my eyes, if it ain’t the Doctor! I seed his cap and gown as he run round and round the coals on all fours, a-growling ‘orrible.” To which the landlady rejoined: “Don’t tell your silly lies here! How *could* he growl, him being a clergyman?” And all the loafers joined in the chorus: “That’s right, Tom; why *do* you talk such silly lies as that — him being a clergyman?”

They laughed so loud and so merrily over their morning tea and these lunacies that the landlady doubted gravely as to their marriage lines. She cared nothing; they had paid what she asked, money down in advance, and, as she said: “Young gentlemen *will* have their fun with the young ladies — so what’s the good of talking?”

Breakfast came at length. They gave the landlady a warning bell some half-hour in advance, so the odd food was, at all events, not cold. Afterwards Nelly sallied off on her shopping expeditions, which, as might have been expected, she enjoyed hugely, and Ambrose stayed alone, with his pen and ink and a fat notebook which had captured his eye in a stationer’s window.

Under these odd circumstances, then, he laid the foundations of his rare and precious *Defence of Taverns*, which is now termed by those fortunate enough to possess copies as a unique and golden treatise. Though he added a good deal in later years and remodelled and rearranged freely, there is a certain charm of vigour and freshness about the first sketch which is quite delightful in its way. Take, for example, the description of the whole world overwhelmed with sobriety: a deadly absence of inebriation annulling and destroying all the works and thoughts of men, the country itself at point to perish of the want of good liquor and good drinkers. He shows how there is grave cause to dread that, by reason of this sad neglect of the Dionysiac Mysteries, humanity is fast falling backward from the great heights to which it had ascended, and is in imminent danger of returning to the dumb and blind and helpless condition of the brutes.

“How else,” he says, “can one account for the stricken state in which all the animal world grows and is eternally impotent? To them, strange, vast and enormous powers and faculties have been given. Consider, for example, the curious equipments of two odd extremes in this sphere — the ant and the elephant. The ant, if one may say so, is very near to us. We have our great centres of industry, our Black Country and our slaves who, if not born black, become black in our service. And the ants, too, have their black, enslaved races who do their dirty work for them, and are, perhaps, congratulated on their privileges as sharing in the blessings of civilisation — though this may be a refinement. The ant slaves, I believe, will rally eagerly to the defence of the nest and the eggs, and they say that the labouring classes are Liberal to the core. Nay; we grow mushrooms by art, and so they. In some lands, I think, they make enormous nests which are the nuisance and terror of the country. We have Manchester and Lupton and Leeds, and many such places — one would think them altogether civilised.

“The elephant, again, has many gifts which we lack. Note the curious instinct (or intuition, rather) of danger. The elephant knows, for example, when a bridge is unsafe, and refuses to pass, where a man would go on to destruction. One might examine in the same way all the creatures, and find in them singular capacities.

“Yet — they have no art. They see — but they see not. They hear — and they hear not. The odour in their nostrils has no sweetness at all. They have made no report of all the wonders that they knew. Their houses are, sometimes, as ingenious as a Chemical Works, but never is there any beauty for beauty’s sake.

“It is clear that their state is thus desolate, because of the heavy pall of sobriety that hangs over them all; and it scarcely seems to have occurred to our ‘Temperance’ advocates that when they urge on us the example and abstinence of the beasts they have advanced the deadliest of all arguments against their nostrum. The Laughing Jackass is a teetotaller, doubtless, but no sane man should desire to be a Laughing Jackass.

“But the history of the men who have attained, who have done the glorious things of the earth and have become for ever exalted is the history of the men who have quested the Cup. Dionysius, said the Greeks, *civilised* the world; and the Bacchic Mystery was, naturally, the heart and core of Greek civilisation.

“Note the similitudes of Vine and Vineyard in Old Testament.

“Note the Quest of the San Graal.

“Note Rabelais and *La Dive Bouteille*.

“Place yourself in imagination in a Gothic Cathedral of the thirteenth century and assist at High Mass. Then go to the nearest Little Bethel, and look, and listen. Consider the difference in the two buildings, in those who worship in one and listen and criticise in the other. You have the difference between the Inebriated and the Sober, displayed in their works. As Little Bethel is to Tintern, so is Sobriety to Inebriation.

“Modern civilisation has advanced in many ways? Yes. Bethel has a stucco front. This material was quite unknown to the builders of Tintern Abbey. Advanced? What is advancement? Freedom from excesses, from extravagances, from wild enthusiasms? Small Protestant tradesmen are free from all these things, certainly. But is the joy of Adulteration to be the last goal, the final Initiation of the Race of Men? *Cœlumque tueri* — to sand the sugar?

“The Flagons of the Song of Songs did not contain ginger-beer.

“But the worst of it is we shall not merely descend to the beasts. We shall fall very far below the beasts. A black fellow is good, and a white fellow is good. But the white fellow who ‘goes Fantee’ does not become a negro — he becomes something infinitely worse, a horrible mass of the most putrid corruption.

“If we can clear our minds of the horrible cant of our ‘civilisation,’ if we can look at a modern ‘industrial centre’ with eyes purged of illusions, we shall have some notion of the awful horror to which we are descending in our effort to become as the ants and bees — creatures who know nothing of

CALIX INEBRIANS.

“I doubt if we can really make this effort. Blacks, Stinks, Desolations, Poisons, Hell’s Nightmare generally have, I suspect, worked themselves into the very form and mould of our thoughts. We are sober, and perhaps the Tavern door is shut for ever against us.

“Now and then, perhaps, at rarer and still rarer intervals, a few of us will hear very faintly the far echoes of the holy madness within the closed door:

“When up the thyrse is raised, and when the sound Of sacred orgies flies ‘around, around.’

“Which is the *Sonus Epulantium in Æterno Convivio*.

“But this we shall not be able to discern. Very likely we shall take the noise of this High Choir for the horrid mirth of Hell. How strange it is that those who are pledged officially and ceremonially, as it were, to a Rite of Initiation which figures certainly a Feast, should in all their thoughts and words and actions be continually blaspheming and denying all the uses and ends of feastings and festivals.

“This is not the refusal of the *species* for the sake of enjoying perfectly the most beautiful and desirable *genus*; it is the renouncing of species and genus, the pronouncing of Good to be Evil. The Universal being denied, the Particular is degraded and defiled. What is called ‘The Drink Curse’ is the natural and inevitable result and sequence of the ‘Protestant Reformation.’ If the clear wells and fountains of the magic wood are buried out of sight, then men (who must have Drink) will betake them to the Slime Ponds and Poison Pools.

“In the Graal Books there is a curse — an evil enchantment — on the land of Logres because the mystery of the Holy Vessel is disregarded. The Knight sees the Dripping Spear and the Shining Cup pass before him, and says no word. He asks no question as to the end and meaning of this ceremony. So the land is blasted and barren and songless, and those who dwell in it are in misery.

“Every day of our lives we see the Graal carried before us in a wonderful order, and every day we leave the question unasked, the Mystery despised and neglected. Yet if we could ask that question, bowing down before these Heavenly and Glorious Splendours and Hallows — then every man should have the meat and drink that his soul desired; the hall would be filled with odours of Paradise, with the light of Immortality.

“In the books the Graal was at last taken away because of men’s unworthiness. So it will be, I suppose. Even now, the Quester’s adventure is a desperate one — few there be that find It.

“Ventilation and sanitation are well enough in their way. But it would not be very satisfactory to pass the day in a ventilated and sanitated Hell with nothing to eat or drink. If one is perishing of hunger and thirst, sanitation seems unimportant enough.

“How wonderful, how glorious it would be if the Kingdom of the Great Drinkers could be restored! If we could only sweep away all the might of the Sober Ones — the factory builders, the poison makers, the politicians, the manufacturers of bad books and bad pictures, together with Little Bethel and the morality of Mr. Mildmay, the curate (a series of negative propositions) — then imagine the Great Light of the Great Inebriation shining on every face, and not any work of man’s hands, from a cathedral to a penknife, without the mark of the Tavern upon it! All the world a great festival; every well a fountain of strong drink; every river running with the New Wine; the Sangraal brought back from Sarras, restored to the awful shrine of Cor-arbennic, the Oracle of the *Dive Bouteille* once more freely given, the ruined Vineyard flourishing once more, girt about by shining, everlasting walls! Then we should hear the Old Songs again, and they would dance the Old Dances, the happy, ransomed people, Commensals and Compotators of the Everlasting Tavern."

The whole treatise, of which this extract is a fragment in a rudimentary and imperfect stage, is, of course, an impassioned appeal for the restoration of the quickening, exuberant imagination, not merely in art, but in all the inmost places of life. There is more than this, too. Here and there one can hear, as it were, the whisper and the hint of deeper mysteries, visions of a great experiment and a great achievement to which some men may be called. In his own words: "Within the Tavern there is an Inner Tavern, but the door of it is visible to few indeed."

In Ambrose's mind in the after years the stout notebook was dear, perhaps as a substitute for that aroma of the past in a phial which he has declared so desirable an invention. It stood, not so much for what was written in it as for the place and the circumstances in which it was written. It recalled Little Russell Row and Nelly, and the evenings at the Château de Chinon, where, night by night, they served still stranger, more delicious meats, and the red wine revealed more clearly its high celestial origin. One evening was diversified by an odd encounter.

A middle-aged man, sitting at an adjoining table, was evidently in want of matches, and Ambrose handed his box with the sympathetic smile which one smoker gives to another in such cases. The man — he had a black moustache and a small, pointed beard — thanked him in fluent English with a French accent, and they began to talk of casual things, veering, by degrees, in the direction of the arts. The Frenchman smiled at Meyrick's enthusiasm.

"What a life you have before you!" he said. "Don't you know that the populace always hates the artist — and kills him if it can? You are an artist and mystic, too. What a fate!

"Yes; but it is that applause, that *réclame* that comes after the artist is dead," he went on, replying to some objection of Ambrose's; "it is that which is the worst cruelty of all. It is fine for Burns, is it not, that his stupid compatriots have not ceased to utter follies about him for the last eighty years? Scotchmen? But they should be ashamed to speak his name! And Keats, and how many others in my country and in yours and in all countries? The imbeciles are not content to calumniate, to persecute, to make wretched the artist in his lifetime. They follow him with their praise to the grave — the grave that they have digged! Praise of the populace! Praise of a race of pigs! For, you see, while they are insulting the dead with their compliments they are at the same time insulting the living with their abuse.”

He dropped into silence; from his expression he seemed to be cursing “the populace” with oaths too frightful to be uttered. He rose suddenly and turned to Ambrose.

“Artist — and mystic. Yes. You will probably be crucified. Good evening … and a fine martyrdom to you!”

He was gone with a charming smile and a delightful bow to “Madame.” Ambrose looked after him with a puzzled face; his last words had called up some memory that he could not capture; and then suddenly he recollected the old, ragged Irish fiddler, the player of strange fantasies under the tree in the outskirts of Lupton. He thought of his phrase about “red martyrdom”; it was an odd coincidence.

IV

THE PHRASES KEPT recurring to his mind after they had gone out, and as they wandered through the lighted streets with all their strange and variegated show, with glittering windows and glittering lamps, with the ebb and flow of faces, the voices and the laughter, the surging crowds about the theatre doors, the flashing hansoms and the omnibuses lumbering heavily along to strange regions, such as Turnham Green and Castlenau, Cricklewood and Stoke Newington — why, they were as unknown as cities in Cathay!

It was a dim, hot night; all the great city smoked as with a mist, and a tawny moon rose through films of cloud far in the vista of the east. Ambrose thought with a sudden recollection that the moon, that world of splendour, was shining in a farther land, on the coast of the wild rocks, on the heaving sea, on the faery apple-garths in Avalon, where, though the apples are always golden, yet the blossoms of enchantment never fade, but hang for ever against the sky.

They were passing a half-lit street, and these dreams were broken by the sudden clanging, rattling music of a piano-organ. For a moment they saw the shadowy figures of the children as they flitted to and fro, dancing odd measures in the rhythm of the tune. Then they came into a long, narrow way with a church spire in the distance, and near the church they passed the "church-shop" — Roman, evidently, from the subjects and the treatment of the works of art on view. But it was strange! In the middle of the window was a crude, glaring statue of some saint. He was in bright red robes, sprinkled with golden stars; the blood rained down from a wound in his forehead, and with one hand he drew the scarlet vestment aside and pointed to the dreadful gash above his heart, and from this, again, the bloody drops fell thick. The colours stared and shrieked, and yet, through the bad, cheap art there seemed to shine a rapture that was very near to beauty; the thing expressed was so great that it had to a certain extent overcome the villainy of the expression.

They wandered vaguely, after their custom. Ambrose was silent; he was thinking of Avalon and "Red Martyrdom" and the Frenchman's parting salutation, of the vision in one of the old books, "the Man clothed in a robe redder and more shining than burning fire, and his feet and his hands and his face were of a like flame, and five angels in fiery vesture stood about him, and at the feet of the Man the ground was covered with a ruddy dew."

They passed under an old church tower that rose white in the moonlight above them. The air had cleared, the mist had floated away, and now the sky glowed violet, and the white stones of the classic spirit shone on high. From it there came suddenly a tumult of glad sound, exultant bells in ever-changing order, pealing out as if to honour some great victory, so that the mirth of the street below became but a trivial restless noise. He thought of some passage that he had read but could not distinctly remember: a ship was coming back to its haven after a weary and tempestuous voyage over many dreadful seas, and those on board saw the tumult in the city as their sails were sighted; heard afar the shouts of gladness from the rejoicing people; heard the bells from all the spires and towers break suddenly into triumphant chorus, sounding high above the washing of the waves.

Ambrose roused himself from his dreams. They had been walking in a circle and had returned almost to the street of the Château, though, their knowledge of the district being of an unscientific character, they were under the impression that they were a mile or so away from that particular point. As it happened, they had not entered this street before, and they were charmed at the sudden appearance of stained glass lighted up from within. The colour was rich and good; there were flourished scrolls and grotesques in the Renaissance manner, many emblazoned shields in ruby and gold and azure; and the centre-piece showed the Court of the Beer King — a jovial and venerable figure attended by a host of dwarfs and kobolds, all holding on high enormous mugs of beer. They went in boldly and were glad. It was the famous "Three Kings" in its golden and unreformed days, but this they knew not. The room was of moderate size, very low, with great dark beams in the white ceiling. White were the walls; on the plaster, black-letter texts with vermilion initials praised the drinker's art, and more kobolds, in black and red, loomed oddly in unsuspected corners. The lighting, presumably, was gas, but all that was visible were great antique lanterns depending from iron hooks, and through their dull green glass only a dim radiance fell upon the heavy oak tables and the drinkers. From the middle beam an enormous bouquet of fresh hops hung on high; there was a subdued murmur of talk, and now and then the clatter of the lid of a mug, as fresh beer was ordered. In one corner there was a kind of bar; behind it a couple of grim women — the kobolds apparently — performed their office; and above, on a sort of rack, hung mugs and tankards of all sizes and of all fantasies. There were plain mugs of creamy earthenware, mugs gaudily and oddly painted with garlanded goats, with hunting scenes, with towering castles, with flaming posies of flowers. Then some friend of the drunken, some sage who had pried curiously into the secrets of thirst, had made a series of wonders in glass, so shining and crystalline that to behold them was as if one looked into a well, for every glitter of the facets gave promise of satisfaction. There were the mugs, capacious and very deep, crowned for the most part not with mere plain lids of common use and make, but with tall spires in pewter, richly ornamented, evident survivals from the Middle Ages. Ambrose's eyes glistened; the place was altogether as he would have designed it. Nelly, too, was glad to sit down, for they had walked longer than usual. She was refreshed by a glass of some cool drink with a borage flower and a cherry floating in it, and Ambrose ordered a mug of beer.

It is not known how many of these *krugs* he emptied. It was, as has been noted, a sultry night, and the streets were dusty, and that glass of Benedictine after dinner rather evokes than dismisses the demon of thirst. Still, Munich beer is no hot and rebellious drink, so the causes of what followed must probably be sought for in other springs. Ambrose took a deep draught, gazed upward to the ceiling, and ordered another mug of beer for himself and some more of the cool and delicate and flowery beverage for Nelly. When the drink was set upon the board, he thus began, without title or preface:

"You must know, Nelly dear," he said, "that the marriage of Panurge, which fell out in due time (according to the oracle and advice of the Holy Bottle), was by no means a fortunate one. For, against all the counsel of Pantagruel and of Friar John, and indeed of all his friends, Panurge married in a fit of spleen and obstinacy the crooked and squinting daughter of the little old man who sold green sauce in the Rue Quincangrogne at Tours — you will see the very place in a few days, and then you will understand everything. You do not understand that? My child, that is impiety, since it accuses the

Zeitgest, who is certainly the only god that ever existed, as you will see more fully demonstrated in Huxley and Spencer and all the leading articles in all the leading newspapers. *Quod erat demonstrandum.* To be still more precise: You must know that when I am dead, and a very great man indeed, many thousands of people will come from all the quarters of the globe — not forgetting the United States — to Lupton. They will come and stare very hard at the Old Grange, which will have an inscription about me on the wall; they will spend hours in High School; they will walk all round Playing Fields; they will cut little bits off 'brooks' and 'quarries.' Then they will view the Sulphuric Acid works, the Chemical Manure factory and the Free Library, and whatever other stink-pots and cesspools Lupton town may contain; they will finally enjoy the view of the Midland Railway Goods Station. Then they will say: '*Now* we understand him; *now* one sees how he got all his inspiration in that lovely old school and the wonderful English country-side.' So you see that when I show you the Rue Quincangrogne you will perfectly understand this history. Let us drink; the world shall never be drowned again, so have no fear.

"Well, the fact remains that Panurge, having married this hideous wench aforesaid, was excessively unhappy. It was in vain that he argued with his wife in all known languages and in some that are unknown, for, as she said, she only knew two languages, the one of Touraine and the other of the Stick, and this second she taught Panurge *per modum passionis* — that is by beating him, and this so thoroughly that poor Pilgarlic was sore from head to foot. He was a worthy little fellow, but the greatest coward that ever breathed. Believe me, illustrious drinkers and most precious…. Nelly, never was man so wretched as this Panurge since Paradise fell from Adam. This is the true doctrine; I heard it when I was at Eleusis. You enquire what was the matter? Why, in the first place, this vile wretch whom they all called — so much did they hate her — La Vie Mortale, or Deadly Life, this vile wretch, I say: what do you think that she did when the last note of the fiddles had sounded and the wedding guests had gone off to the 'Three Lampreys' to kill a certain worm — the which worm is most certainly immortal, since it is not dead yet! Well, then, what did Madame Panurge? Nothing but this: She robbed her excellent and devoted husband of all that he had. Doubtless you remember how, in the old days, Panurge had played ducks and drakes with the money that Pantagruel had given him, so that he borrowed on his corn while it was still in the ear, and before it was sown, if we enquire a little more closely. In truth, the good little man never had a penny to bless himself withal, for the which cause Pantagruel loved him all the more dearly. So that when the Dive Bouteille gave its oracle, and Panurge chose his spouse, Pantagruel showed how preciously he esteemed a hearty spender by giving him such a treasure that the goldsmiths who live under the bell of St. Gatien still talk of it before they dine, because by doing so their mouths water, and these salivary secretions are of high benefit to the digestion: read on this, Galen. If you would know how great and glorious this treasure was, you must go to the Library of the Archevêché at Tours, where they will show you a vast volume bound in pigskin, the name of which I have forgotten. But this book is nothing else than the list of all the wonders and glories of Pantagruel's wedding present to Panurge; it contains surprising things, I can tell you, for, in good coin of the realm alone, never was gift that might compare with it; and besides the common money there were ancient pieces, the very names of which are now incomprehensible, and incomprehensible they will remain till the coming of the Coqcigrues. There was, for instance, a great gold Sol, a world in itself, as some said truly, and I know not how many myriad myriad of Étoiles, all of the finest silver that was ever minted, and Anges-Gardiens, which the learned think must have been first coined at Angers, though others will have it that they were the same as our Angels; and, as for Roses de Paradis and Couronnes Immortelles, I believe he had as many of them as ever he would. Beauties and joys he was to keep for pocket-money; small change is sometimes great gain. And, as I say, no sooner had Panurge married that accursed daughter of the Rue Quincangrogne than she robbed him of everything, down to the last brass farthing. The fact is that the woman was a witch; she was also something else which I leave out for the present. But, if you will believe me, she cast such a spell upon Panurge that he thought himself an absolute beggar. Thus he would look at his Sol d'Or and say: 'What is the use of that? It is only a great bright lump: I can see it every day.' Then when they said, 'But how about those Anges-Gardiens?' he would reply, 'Where are they? Have you seen them? *I* never see them. Show them to me,' and so with all else; and all the while that villain of a woman beat, thumped and belaboured him so that the tears were always in his eyes, and they say you could hear him howling all over the world. Everybody said that he had made a pretty mess of it, and would come to a bad end.

“Luckily for him, this … witch of a wife of his would sometimes doze off for a few minutes, and then he had a little peace, and he would wonder what had become of all the gay girls and gracious ladies that he had known in old times — for he had played the devil with the women in his day and could have taught Ovid lessons in *arte amoris*. Now, of course, it was as much as his life was worth to mention the very name of one of these ladies, and as for any little sly visits, stolen endearments, hidden embraces, or any small matters of that kind, it was *good-bye, I shall see you next Nevermas*. Nor was this all, but worse remains behind; and it is my belief that it is the thought of what I am going to tell you that makes the wind wail and cry of winter nights, and the clouds weep, and the sky look black; for in truth it is the greatest sorrow that ever was since the beginning of the world. I must out with it quick, or I shall never have done: in plain English, and as true as I sit here drinking good ale, not one drop or minim or drachm or pennyweight of drink had Panurge tasted since the day of his wedding! He had implored mercy, he had told her how he had served Gargantua and Pantagruel and had got into the habit of drinking in his sleep, and his wife had merely advised him to go to the devil — she was not going to let him so much as look at the nasty stuff. ‘“Touch not, taste not, smell not,” is my motto,’ said she. She gave him a blue ribbon, which she said would make up for it. ‘What do you want with Drink?’ said she. ‘Go and do business instead, it’s much better for you.’

“Sad, then, and sorry enough was the estate of poor Panurge. At last, so wretched did he become, that he took advantage of one of his wife’s dozes and stole away to the good Pantagruel, and told him the whole story — and a very bad one it was — so that the tears rolled down Pantagruel’s cheeks from sheer grief, and each teardrop contained exactly one hundred and eighteen gallons of aqueous fluid, according to the calculations of the best geometers. The great man saw that the case was a desperate one, and Heaven knew, he said, whether it could be mended or not; but certain it was that a business such as this could not be settled in a hurry, since it was not like a game at shove-ha’penny to be got over between two gallons of wine. He therefore counselled Panurge to have patience and bear with his wife for a few thousand years, and in the meantime they would see what could be done. But, lest his patience should wear out, he gave him an odd drug or medicine, prepared by the great artist of the Mountains of Cathay, and this he was to drop into his wife’s glass — for though he might have no drink, she was drunk three times a day, and she would sleep all the longer, and leave him awhile in peace. This Panurge very faithfully performed, and got a little rest now and again, and they say that while that devil of a woman snored and snorted he was able, by odd chances once or twice, to get hold of a drop of the right stuff — good old Stingo from the big barrel — which he lapped up as eagerly as a kitten laps cream. Others there be who declare that once or twice he got about his sad old tricks, while his ugly wife was sleeping in the sun; the women on the Maille make no secret of their opinion that his old mistress, Madame Sophia, was seen stealing in and out of the house as slyly as you please, and God knows what goes on when the door is shut. But the Tourainians were always sad gossips, and one must not believe all that one hears. I leave out the flat scandal-mongers who are bold enough to declare that he kept one mistress at Jerusalem, another at Eleusis, another in Egypt and about as many as are contained in the seraglio of the Grand Turk, scattered up and down in the towns and villages of Asia; but I do believe there was some kissing in dark corners, and a curtain hung across one room in the house could tell odd tales. Nevertheless, La Vie Mortale (a pest on her!) was more often awake than asleep, and when she was awake Panurge's case was worse than ever. For, you see, the woman was no piece of a fool, and she saw sure enough that something was going on. The Stingo in the barrel was lower than of rights, and more than once she had caught her husband looking almost happy, at which she beat the house about his ears. Then, another time, Madame Sophia dropped her ring, and again this sweet lady came one morning so strongly perfumed that she scented the whole place, and when La Vie woke up it smelt like a church. There was fine work then, I promise you; the people heard the bangs and curses and shrieks and groans as far as Amboise on the one side and Luynes on the other; and that year the Loire rose ten feet higher than the banks on account of Panurge's tears. As a punishment, she made him go and be industrial, and he built ten thousand stink-pot factories with twenty thousand chimneys, and all the leaves and trees and green grass and flowers in the world were blackened and died, and all the waters were poisoned so that there were no perch in the Loire, and salmon fetched forty sols the pound at Chinon market. As for the men and women, they became yellow apes and listened to a codger named Calvin, who told them they would all be damned eternally (except himself and his friends), and they found his doctrine very comforting, and probable too, since they had the sense to know that they were more than half damned already. I don't know whether Panurge's fate was worse on this occasion or on another when his wife found a book in his writing, full from end to end of poetry; some of it about the wonderful treasure that Pantagruel had given him, which he was supposed to have forgotten. Some of it verses to those old light-o'-loves of his, with a whole epic in praise of his mistress-in-chief, Sophia. Then, indeed, there was the very deuce to pay; it was bread and water, stripes and torment, all day long, and La Vie swore a great oath that if he ever did it again he should be sent to spend the rest of his life in Manchester, whereupon he fell into a swoon from horrid fright and lay like a log, so that everybody thought he was dead.

"All this while the great Pantagruel was not idle. Perceiving how desperate the matter was, he summoned the Thousand and First Great Œcumenical Council of all the sages of the wide world, and when the fathers had come, and had heard High Mass at St. Gatien's, the session was opened in a pavilion in the meadows by the Loire just under the Lanterne of Roche Corbon, whence this Council is always styled the great and holy Council of the Lantern. If you want to know where the place is you can do so very easily, for there is a choice tavern on the spot where the pavilion stood, and there you may have *malelotte* and *friture* and amber wine of Vouvray, better than in any tavern in Touraine. As for the history of the acts of this great Council, it is still a-writing, and so far only two thousand volumes in elephant folio have been printed *sub signo Lucernæ cum permissu superiorum*. However, as it is necessary to be brief, it may be said that the holy fathers of the Lantern, after having heard the whole case as it was exposed to them by the great clerks of Pantagruel, having digested all the arguments, looked into the precedents, applied themselves to the doctrine, explored the hidden wisdom, consulted the Canons, searched the Scriptures, divided the dogma, distinguished the distinctions and answered the questions, resolved with one voice that there was no help in the world for Panurge, save only this: he must forthwith achieve the most high, noble and glorious quest of the Sangraal, for no other way was there under heaven by which he might rid himself of that pestilent wife of his, La Vie Mortale.

"And on some other occasion," said Ambrose, "you may hear of the last voyage of Panurge to the Glassy Isle of the Holy Graal, of the incredible adventures that he achieved, of the dread perils through which he passed, of the great wonders and marvels and compassions of the way, of the manner in which he received the title Plentyn y Tonau, which signifies ‘Child of the Waterfloods,’ and how at last he gloriously attained the vision of the Sangraal, and was most happily translated out of the power of La Vie Mortale.”

“And where is he now?” said Nelly, who had found the tale interesting but obscure.

“It is not precisely known — opinions vary. But there are two odd things: one is that he is exactly like that man in the red dress whose statue we saw in the shop window to-night; and the other is that from that day to this he has never been sober for a single minute.

“*Calix meus inebrians quam præclarus est!*”

V

AMBROSE TOOK A great draught from the mug and emptied it, and forthwith rapped the lid for a fresh supply. Nelly was somewhat nervous; she was afraid he might begin to sing, for there were extravagances in the history of Panurge which seemed to her to be of alcoholic source. However, he did not sing; he lapsed into silence, gazing at the dark beams, the hanging hops, the bright array of the tankards and the groups of drinkers dotted about the room. At a neighbouring table two Germans were making a hearty meal, chumping the meat and smacking their lips in a kind of heavy ecstasy. He had but little German, but he caught scraps of the conversation.

One man said:

“Heavenly swine cutlets!”

And the other answered:

“Glorious eating!”

“Nelly,” said Ambrose, “I have a great inspiration!”

She trembled visibly.

“Yes; I have talked so much that I am hungry. We will have some supper.”

They looked over the list of strange eatables and, with the waiter’s help, decided on Leberwurst and potato-salad as light and harmless. With this they ate crescent loaves, sprinkled with caraway seeds: there was more Munich Lion-Brew and more flowery drink, with black coffee, a *fine* and a Maraschino to end all. For Nelly the kobolds began to perform a grotesque and mystic dance in the shadows, the glass tankards on the rack glittered strangely, the white walls with the red and black texts retreated into vast distances, and the bouquet of hops seemed suspended from a remote star. As for Ambrose, he was certainly not *ebrius* according to the Baron’s definition; he was hardly *ebriolus*; but he was sensible, let us say, of a certain quickening of the fancy, of a more vivid and poignant enjoyment of the whole situation, of the unutterable gaiety of this mad escape from the conventions of Lupton.

“It was a Thursday night,” said Ambrose in the after years, “and we were thinking of starting for Touraine either the next morning or on Saturday at latest. It will always be bright in my mind, that picture — the low room with the oak beams, the glittering tankards, the hops hanging from the ceiling, and Nelly sitting before me sipping the scented drink from a green glass. It was the last night of gaiety, and even then gaiety was mixed with odd patterns — the Frenchman’s talk about martyrdom, and the statue of the saint pointing to the marks of his passion, standing in that dyed vesture with his rapt, exultant face; and then the song of final triumph and deliverance that rang out on the chiming bells from the white spire. I think the contrast of this solemn undertone made my heart all the lighter; I was in that odd state in which one delights to know that one is not being understood — so I told poor Nelly ‘the story of Panurge’s marriage to La Vie Mortale; I am sure she thought I was drunk!

“We went home in a hansom, and agreed that we would have just one cigarette and then go to bed. It was settled that we would catch the night boat to Dieppe on the next day, and we both laughed with joy at the thought of the adventure. And then — I don’t know how it was — Nelly began to tell me all about herself. She had never said a word before; I had never asked her — I never ask anybody about their past lives. What does it matter? You know a certain class of plot — novelists are rather fond of using it — in which the hero’s happiness is blasted because he finds out that the life of his wife or his sweetheart has not always been spotless as the snow. Why should it be spotless as the snow? What is the hero that he should be dowered with the love of virgins of Paradise? I call it cant — all that — and I hate it; I hope Angel Clare was eventually entrapped by a young person from Piccadilly Circus — she would probably be much too good for him! So, you see, I was hardly likely to have put any very searching questions to Nelly; we had other things to talk about.

“But this night I suppose she was a bit excited. It had been a wild and wonderful week. The transition from that sewage-pot in the Midlands to the Abbey of Theleme was enough to turn any head; we had laughed till we had grown dizzy. The worst of that miserable school discipline is is that it makes one take an insane and quite disproportionate enjoyment in little things, in the merest trifles which ought really to be accepted as a matter of course. I assure you that every minute that I spent in bed after seven o'clock was to me a grain of Paradise, a moment of delight. Of course, it's ridiculous; let a man get up early or get up late, as he likes or as he finds best — and say no more about it. But at that wretched Lupton early rising was part of the infernal blether and blatter of the place, that made life there like a long dinner in which every dish has the same sauce. It may be a good sauce enough; but one is sick of the taste of it. According to our Bonzes there, getting up early on a winter's day was a high virtue which acquired merit. I believe I should have liked a hard chair to sit in of my own free will, if one of our old fools — Palmer — had not always been gabbling about the horrid luxury of some boys who had arm-chairs in their studies. Unless you were doing something or other to make yourself very uncomfortable, he used to say you were like the 'later Romans.' I am sure he believed that those lunatics who bathe in the Serpentine on Christmas Day would go straight to heaven!

"And there you are. I would awake at seven o'clock from persistent habit, and laugh as I realised that I was in Little Russell Row and not at the Old Grange. Then I would doze off again and wake up at intervals — eight, nine, ten — and chuckle to myself with ever-increasing enjoyment. It was just the same with smoking. I don't suppose I should have touched a cigarette for years if smoking had not been one of the mortal sins in our Bedlam Decalogue. I don't know whether smoking is bad for boys or not; I should think not, as I believe the Dutch — who are sturdy fellows — begin to puff fat cigars at the age of six or thereabouts; but I do know that those pompous old boobies and blockheads and leather-skulls have discovered exactly the best way to make a boy think that a packet of Rosebuds represents the quintessence of frantic delight.

"Well, you see how it was, how Little Russell Row — the dingy, the stuffy, the dark retreat of old Bloomsbury — became the abode of miraculous joys, a bright portion of fairyland. Ah! it was a strong new wine that we tasted, and it went to our heads, and not much wonder. It all rose to its height on that Thursday night when we went to the 'Three Kings' and sat beneath the hop bush, drinking Lion-Brew and flowery drink as I talked extravagances concerning Panurge. It was time for the curtain to be rung down on our comedy.

“The one cigarette had become three or four when Nelly began to tell me her history; the wine and the rejoicing had got into her head also. She described the first things that she remembered: a little hut among wild hills and stony fields in the west of Ireland, and the great sea roaring on the shore but a mile away, and the wind and the rain always driving from across the waves. She spoke of the place as if she loved it, though her father and mother were as poor as they could be, and little was there to eat even in the old cabin. She remembered Mass in the little chapel, an old, old place hidden way in the most desolate part of the country, small and dark and bare enough except for the candles on the altar and a bright statue or two. St. Kieran’s cell, they called it, and it was supposed that the Mass had never ceased to be said there even in the blackest days of persecution. Quite well she remembered the old priest and his vestments, and the gestures that he used, and how they all bowed down when the bell rang; she could imitate his quavering voice saying the Latin. Her own father, she said, was a learned man in his way, though it was not the English way. He could not read common print, or write; he knew nothing about printed books, but he could say a lot of the old Irish songs and stories by heart, and he had sticks on which he wrote poems on all sorts of things, cutting notches on the wood in Oghams, as the priest called them; and he could tell many wonderful tales of the saints and the people. It was a happy life altogether; they were as poor as poor could be, and praised God and wanted for nothing. Then her mother went into a decline and died, and her father never lifted up his head again, and she was left an orphan when she was nine years old. The priest had written to an aunt who lived in England, and so she found herself one black day standing on the platform of the station in a horrible little manufacturing village in Lancashire; everything was black — the sky and the earth, and the houses and the people; and the sound of their rough, harsh voices made her sick. And the aunt had married an Independent and turned Protestant, so she was black, too, Nelly thought. She was wretched for a long time, she said. The aunt was kind enough to her, but the place and the people were so awful. Mr. Deakin, the husband, said he couldn’t encourage Popery in his house, so she had to go to the meeting-house on Sunday and listen to the nonsense they called ‘religion’ — all long sermons with horrible shrieking hymns. By degrees she forgot her old prayers, and she was taken to the Dissenters’ Sunday School, where they learned texts and heard about King Solomon’s Temple, and Jonadab the son of Rechab, and

Jezebel, and the Judges. They seemed to think a good deal of her at the school; she had several prizes for Bible knowledge.

“She was sixteen when she first went out to service. She was glad to get away — nothing could be worse than Farnworth, and it might be better. And then there were tales to tell! I never have had a clearer light thrown on the curious and disgusting manners of the lower middle-class in England — the class that prides itself especially on its respectability, above all, on what it calls ‘Morality’ — by which it means the observance of one particular commandment. You know the class I mean: the brigade of the shining hat on Sunday, of the neat little villa with a well-kept plot in front, of the consecrated drawing-room, of the big Bible well in evidence. It is more often Chapel than Church, this tribe, but it draws from both sources. It is above all things shiny — not only the Sunday hat, but the furniture, the linoleum, the hair and the very flesh which pertain to these people have an unwholesome polish on them; and they prefer their plants and shrubs to be as glossy as possible — this *gens lubrica*.

“To these tents poor Nelly went as a slave; she dwelt from henceforth on the genteel outskirts of more or less prosperous manufacturing towns, and she soon profoundly regretted the frank grime and hideousness of Farnworth. A hedgehog is a rough and prickly fellow — better his prickles than the reptile’s poisonous slime. The tales that yet await the novelist who has courage (what is his name, by the way?), who has the insight to see behind those Venetian blinds and white curtains, who has the word that can give him entrance through the polished door by the encaustic porch! What plots, what pictures, what characters are ready for his cunning hand, what splendid matter lies unknown, useless, and indeed offensive, which, in the artist’s crucible, would be transmuted into golden and exquisite perfection. Do you know that I can never penetrate into the regions where these people dwell without a thrill of wonder and a great desire that I might be called to execute the masterpieces I have hinted at? Do you remember how Zola, viewing these worlds from the train when he visited London, groaned because he had no English, because he had no key to open the treasure-house before his eyes? He, of course, who was a great diviner, saw the infinite variety of romance that was concealed beneath those myriads of snug commonplace roofs: I wish he could have observed in English and recorded in French. He was a brave man, his defence of Dreyfus shows that;

but, supposing the capacity, I do not think he was brave enough to tell the London suburbs the truth about themselves in their own tongue.

“Yes, I walk down these long ways on Sunday afternoons, when they are at their best. Sometimes, if you choose the right hour, you may look into one ‘breakfast room’ — an apartment half sunken in the earth — after another, and see in each one the table laid for tea, showing the charming order and uniformity that prevail. Tea in the drawing-room would be, I suppose, a desecration. I wonder what would happen if some chance guest were to refuse tea and to ask for a glass of beer, or even a brandy and soda? I suppose the central lake that lies many hundreds of feet beneath London would rise up, and the sinful town would be overwhelmed. Yes: consider these houses well; how demure, how well-ordered, how shining, as I have said; and then think of what they conceal.

“Generally speaking, you know, ‘morality’ (in the English suburban sense) has been a tolerably equal matter. I shouldn’t imagine that those ‘later Romans’ that poor old Palmer was always bothering about were much better or worse than the earlier Babylonians; and London as a whole is very much the same thing in this respect as Pekin as a whole. Modern Berlin and sixteenth-century Venice might compete on equal terms — save that Venice, I am sure, was very picturesque, and Berlin, I have no doubt is very piggy. The fact is, of course (to use a simple analogy), man, by his nature, is always hungry, and, that being the case, he will sometimes eat too much dinner and sometimes he will get his dinner in odd ways, and sometimes he will help himself to more or less unlawful snacks before breakfast and after supper. There it is, and there is an end of it. But suppose a society in which the fact of hunger was officially denied, in which the faintest hint at an empty stomach was considered the rankest, most abominable indecency, the most detestable offence against the most sacred religious feelings? Suppose the child severely reprimanded at the mere mention of bread and butter, whipped and shut up in a dark room for the offence of reading a recipe for making plum pudding; suppose, I say, a whole society organised on the strict official understanding that no decent person ever is or has been or can be conscious of the physical want of food; that breakfast, lunch, tea, dinner and supper are orgies only used by the most wicked and degraded wretches, destined to an awful and eternal doom? In such a world, I think, you would discover some very striking irregularities in diet. Facts are known to be stubborn things, but if their very existence is denied they become ferocious and terrible things. Coventry Patmore was angry, and with reason, when he heard that even at the Vatican the statues had received the order of the fig-leaf.

“Nelly went among these Manichees. She had been to the world beyond the Venetians, the white muslin curtains and the india-rubber plant, and she told me her report. They talk about the morality of the theatre, these swine! In the theatre — if there is anything of the kind — it is a case of a wastrel and a wanton who meet and part on perfectly equal terms, without deceit or false pretences. It is not a case of master creeping into a young girl’s room at dead of night, with a Bible under his arm — the said Bible being used with grotesque skill to show that ‘master’s’ wishes must be at once complied with under pain of severe punishment, not only in this world, but in the world to come. Every Sunday, you must remember, the girl has seen ‘master’ perhaps crouching devoutly in his pew, perhaps in the part of sidesman or even church-warden, more probably supplementing the gifts of the pastor at some nightmarish meeting-house. ‘Master’ offers prayer with wonderful fervour; he speaks to the Lord as man to man; in the emotional passages his voice gets husky, and everybody says how good he is. He is a deacon, a guardian of the poor (gracious title!), a builder and an earnest supporter of the British and Foreign Bible Society: in a word, he is of the great middle-class, the backbone of England and of the Protestant Religion. He subscribes to the excellent society which prosecutes booksellers for selling the Decameron of Boccaccio. He has from ten to fifteen children, all of whom were found by Mamma in the garden.

“‘Mr. King was a horrible man,’ said Nelly, describing her first place; ‘he had a great greasy pale face with red whiskers, and a shiny bald head; he was fat, too, and when he smiled it made one feel sick. Soon after I got the place he came into the kitchen. Missus was away for three days, and the children were all in bed. He sat down by the hearth and asked whether I was saved, and did I love the Lord as I ought to, and if I ever had any bad thoughts about young men? Then he opened the Bible and read me nasty things from the Old Testament, and asked if I understood what it meant. I said I didn’t know, and he said we must approach the Lord in prayer so that we might have grace to search the Scriptures together. I had to kneel down close to him, and he put his arm round my waist and began to pray, as he called it; and when we got up he took me on his knee and said he felt to me as if I were his own daughter.'

“There, that is enough of Mr. King. You can imagine what the poor child had to go through time after time. On prayer-meeting nights she used to put the chest of drawers against her bedroom door: there would be gentle, cautious pushes, and then a soft voice murmuring: ‘My child, why is your heart so bad and stubborn?’ I think we can conceive the general character of ‘master’ from these examples. ‘Missus,’ of course, requires a treatise to herself; her more frequent failings are child-torture, secret drinking and low amours with oily commercial travellers.

“Yes, it is a hideous world enough, isn’t it? And isn’t it a pleasant thought that you and I practically live under the government of these people? ‘Master’ is the ‘man in the street,’ the ‘hard-headed, practical man of the world,’ ‘the descendant of the sturdy Puritans,’ whose judgment is final on all questions from Poetics to Liturgiology. We hardly think that this picture will commend itself to the ‘man in the street’ — a course of action that is calculated to alienate practical men. Pleasant, isn’t it? *Suburbia locuta est: causa finita est.*

“I suppose that, by nature, these people would not be so very much more depraved than the ordinary African black fellow. Their essential hideousness comes, I take it, from their essential and most abominable hypocrisy. You know how they are always prating about Bible Teaching — the ‘simple morality of the Gospel,’ and all that nauseous stuff? And what would be the verdict, in this suburban world, on a man who took no thought for the morrow, who regulated his life by the example of the lilies, who scoffed at the idea of saving money? You know perfectly well that his relations would have him declared a lunatic. *There* is the villainy. If you are continually professing an idolatrous and unctuous devotion to a body of teaching which you are also persistently and perpetually disregarding and disobeying in its plainest, most simple, most elementary injunctions, well, you will soon interest anglers in search of bait.

“Yes, such is the world behind the india-rubber plant into which Nelly entered. I believe she repelled the advances of ‘master’ with success. Her final undoing came from a different quarter, and I am afraid that drugs, not Biblical cajoleries, were the instruments used. She cried bitterly when she spoke of this event, but she said, too; ‘I will kill him for it!’ It was an ugly story, and a sad one, alas! — the saddest tale I ever listened to. Think of it: to come from that old cabin on the wild, bare hills, from the sound of the great sea, from the pure breath of the waves and the wet salt wind, to the stenches and the poisons of our ‘industrial centres.’ She came from parents who had nothing and possessed all things, to our civilisation which has everything, and lies on the dung-heap that it has made at the very gates of Heaven — destitute of all true treasures, full of sores and vermin and corruption. She was nurtured on the wonderful old legends of the saints and the fairies; she had listened to the songs that her father made and cut in Oghams; and we gave her the penny novelette and the works of Madame Chose. She had knelt before the altar, adoring the most holy sacrifice of the Mass; now she knelt beside ‘master’ while he approached the Lord in prayer, licking his fat white lips. I can imagine no more terrible transition.

“I do not know how or why it happened, but as I listened to Nelly’s tale my eyes were opened to my own work and my own deeds, and I saw for the first time my wickedness. I should despair of explaining to anyone how utterly innocent I had been in intention all the while, how far I was from any deliberate design of guilt. In a sense, I was learned, and yet, in a sense, I was most ignorant; I had been committing what is, doubtless a grievous sin, under the impression that I was enjoying the greatest of all mysteries and graces and blessings — the great natural sacrament of human life.

“Did I not know I was doing wrong? I knew that if any of the masters found me with Nelly I should get into sad trouble. Certainly I knew that. But if any of the masters had caught me smoking a cigarette, or saying ‘damn,’ or going into a public-house to get a glass of beer, or using a crib, or reading Rabelais, I should have got into sad trouble also. I knew that I was sinning against the ‘tone’ of the great Public School; you may imagine how deeply I felt the guilt of such an offence as that! And, of course, I had heard the boys telling their foolish indecencies; but somehow their nasty talk and their filthy jokes were not in any way connected in my mind with my love of Nelly — no more, indeed, than midnight darkness suggests daylight, or torment symbolises pleasure. Indeed, there was a hint — a dim intuition — deep down in my consciousness that all was not well; but I knew of no reason for this; I held it a morbid dream, the fantasy of an imagination over-exalted, perhaps; I would not listen to a faint voice that seemed without sense or argument.

"And now that voice was ringing in my ears with the clear, resonant and piercing summons of a trumpet; I saw myself arraigned far down beside the pestilent horde of whom I have just spoken; and, indeed, my sin was worse than theirs, for I had been bred in light, and they in darkness. All heedless, without knowledge, without preparation, without receiving the mystic word, I had stumbled into the shrine, uninitiated I had passed beyond the veil and gazed upon the hidden mystery, on the secret glory that is concealed from the holy angels. Woe and great sorrow were upon me, as if a priest, devoutly offering the sacrifice, were suddenly to become aware that he was uttering, all inadvertently, hideous and profane blasphemies, summoning Satan in place of the Holy Spirit. I hid my face in my hands and cried out in my anguish.

"Do you know that I think Nelly was in a sense relieved when I tried to tell her of my mistake, as I called it; even though I said, as gently as I could, that it was all over. She was relieved, because for the first time she felt quite sure that I was altogether in my senses; I can understand it. My whole attitude must have struck her as bordering on insanity, for, of course, from first to last I had never for a moment taken up the position of the unrepentant but cheerful sinner, who knows that he is being a sad dog, but means to continue in his naughty way. She, with her evil experience, had thought the words I had sometimes uttered not remote from madness. She wondered, she told me, whether one night I might not suddenly take her throat in my hands and strangle her in a sudden frenzy. She hardly knew whether she dreaded such a death or longed for it.

"'You spoke so strangely,' she said; 'and all the while I knew we were doing wrong, and I wondered.'

"Of course, even after I had explained the matter as well as I could she was left to a large extent bewildered as to what my state of mind could have been; still, she saw that I was not mad, and she was relieved, as I have said.

"I do not know how she was first drawn to me — how it was that she stole that night to the room where I lay bruised and aching. Pity and desire and revenge, I suppose, all had their share. She was so sorry, she said, for me. She could see how lonely I was, how I hated the place and everybody about it, and she knew that I was not English. I think my wild Welsh face attracted her, too.

“Alas! that was a sad night, after all our laughter. We had sat on and on till the dawn began to come in through the drawn blinds. I told her that we must go to bed, or we should never get up the next day. We went into the bedroom, and there, sad and grey, the dawn appeared. There was a heavy sky covered with clouds and a straight, soft rain was pattering on the leaves of a great plane tree opposite; heavy drops fell into the pools in the road.

“It was still as on the mountain, filled with infinite sadness, and a sudden step clattering on the pavement of the square beyond made the stillness seem all the more profound. I stood by the window and gazed out at the weeping, dripping tree, the ever-falling rain and the motionless, leaden clouds — there was no breath of wind — and it was as if I heard the saddest of all music, tones of anguish and despair and notes that cried and wept. The theme was given out, itself wet, as it were, with tears. It was repeated with a sharper cry, a more piteous supplication; it was re-echoed with a bitter utterance, and tears fell faster as the raindrops fell plashing from the weeping tree. Inexorable in its sad reiterations, in its remorseless development, that music wailed and grew in its lamentation in my own heart; heavy it was, and without hope; heavy as those still, leaden clouds that hung motionless in heaven. No relief came to this sorrowing melody — rather a sharper note of anguish; and then for a moment, as if to embitter bitterness, sounded a fantastic, laughing air, a measure of jocund pipes and rushing violins, echoing with the mirth of dancing feet. But it was beaten into dust by the sentence of despair, by doom that was for ever, by a sentence pitiless, relentless; and, as a sudden breath shook the wet boughs of the plane tree and a torrent fell upon the road, so the last notes of that inner music were to me as a burst of hopeless weeping.

“I turned away from the window and looked at the dingy little room where we had laughed so well. It was a sad room enough, with its pale blue, stripy-patterned paper, its rickety old furniture and its feeble pictures. The only note of gaiety was on the dressing-table, where poor little Nelly had arranged some toys and trinkets and fantasies that she had bought for herself in the last few days. There was a silver-handled brush and a flagon of some scent that I liked, and a little brooch of olivines that had caught her fancy; and a powder-puff in a pretty gilt box. The sight of these foolish things cut me to the heart. But Nelly! She was standing by the bedside, half undressed, and she looked at me with the most piteous longing. I think that she had really grown fond of me. I suppose that I shall never forget the sad enchantment of her face, the flowing of her beautiful coppery hair about it; and the tears were wet on her cheeks. She half stretched out her bare arms to me and then let them fall. I had never known all her strange allurement before. I had refined and symbolised and made her into a sign of joy, and now before me she shone disarrayed — not a symbol, but a woman, in the new intelligence that had come to me, and I longed for her. I had just enough strength and no more.”

EPILOGUE

IT IS UNFORTUNATE — or fortunate: that is a matter to be settled by the taste of the reader — that with this episode of the visit to London all detailed material for the life of Ambrose Meyrick comes to an end. Odd scraps of information, stray notes and jottings are all that is available, and the rest of Meyrick's life must be left in dim and somewhat legendary outline.

Personally, I think that this failure of documents is to be lamented. The four preceding chapters have, in the main, dealt with the years of boyhood, and therefore with a multitude of follies. One is inclined to wonder, as poor Nelly wondered, whether the lad was quite right in his head. It is possible that if we had fuller information as to his later years we might be able to dismiss him as decidedly eccentric, but well-meaning on the whole.

But, after all, I cannot be confident that he would get off so easily. Certainly he did not repeat the adventure of Little Russell Row, nor, so far as I am aware, did he address anyone besides his old schoolmaster in a Rabelaisian epistle. There are certain acts of lunacy which are like certain acts of heroism: they are hardly to be achieved twice by the same men.

But Meyrick continued to do odd things. He became a strolling player instead of becoming a scholar of Balliol. If he had proceeded to the University, he would have encountered the formative and salutary influence of Jowett. He wandered up and down the country for two or three years with the actors, and writes the following apostrophe to the memory of his old company.

"I take off my hat when I hear the old music, for I think of the old friends and the old days; of the theatre in the meadows by the sacred river, and the swelling song of the nightingales on sweet, spring nights. There is no doubt that we may safely hold with Plato his opinion, and safely may we believe that all brave earthly shows are but broken copies and dim lineaments of immortal things. Therefore, I hope and trust that I shall again be gathered unto the true Hathaway Company *quæ sursum est*, which is the purged and exalted image of the lower, which plays for ever a great mystery in the theatre of the meadows of asphodel, which wanders by the happy, shining streams, and drinks from an Eternal Cup in a high and blissful and everlasting Tavern. *Ave, cara sodalitas, ave semper.*"

Thus does he translate into wild speech *crêpe* hair and grease paints, dirty dressing-rooms and dirtier lodgings. And when his strolling days were over he settled down in London, paying occasional visits to his old home in the west. He wrote three or four books which are curious and interesting in their way, though they will never be popular. And finally he went on a strange errand to the East; and from the East there was for him no returning.

It will be remembered that he speaks of a Celtic cup, which had been preserved in one family for many hundred years. On the death of the last "Keeper" this cup was placed in Meyrick's charge. He received it with the condition that it was to be taken to a certain concealed shrine in Asia and there deposited in hands that would know how to hide its glories for ever from the evil world.

He went on this journey into unknown regions, travelling by ragged roads and mountain passes, by the sandy wilderness and the mighty river. And he forded his way by the quaking and dubious track that winds in and out among the dangers and desolations of the *Kevir* — the great salt slough.

He came at last to the place appointed and gave the word and the treasure to those who know how to wear a mask and to keep well the things which are committed to them, and then set out on his journey back. He had reached a point not very far from the gates of West and halted for a day or two amongst Christians, being tired out with a weary pilgrimage. But the Turks or the Kurds — it does not matter which — descended on the place and worked their customary works, and so Ambrose was taken by them.

One of the native Christians, who had hidden himself from the miscreants, told afterwards how he saw "the stranger Ambrosian" brought out, and how they held before him the image of the Crucified that he might spit upon it and trample it under his feet. But he kissed the icon with great joy and penitence and devotion. So they bore him to a tree outside the village and crucified him there.

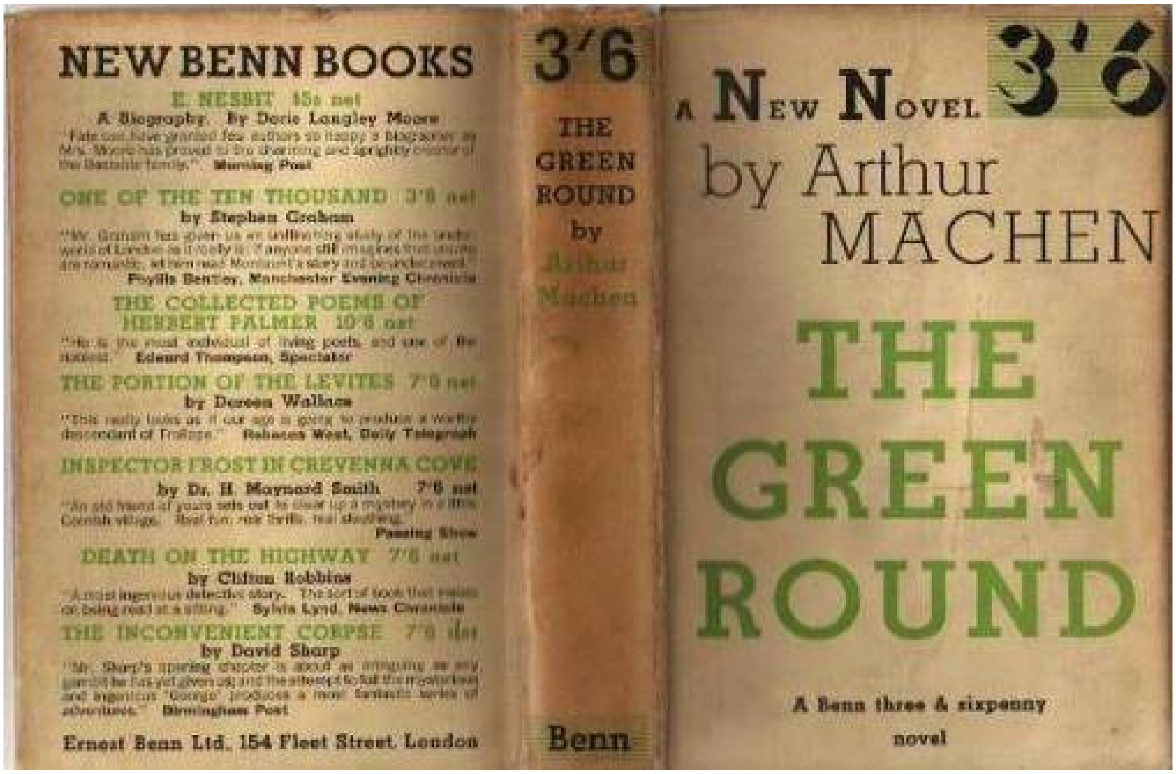
And after he had hung on the tree some hours, the infidels, enraged, as it is said, by the shining rapture of his face, killed him with their spears.

It was in this manner that Ambrose Meyrick gained Red Martyrdom and achieved the most glorious Quest and Adventure of the Sangraal.

THE END

The Green Round

Machen’s final novel was published in 1933. It revisits a perennial trope of his fiction: that of a supernatural horror tracking the protagonist from rural Wales to the heart of the modern metropolis. In this novel, the protagonist, Lawrence Hillyer is holidaying in Pembrokeshire on the west coast of Wales. When he visits the mysterious natural feature known as the ‘Green Round’, he acquires an unwanted shadow that follows him back to London.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PROLOGUE

"IS THERE TO BE NO END OF THIS SPOILING OF all the beauties of our lovely country?" wrote Brown of Clapham or Smith of Wimbledon — the name is of no consequence — to a London paper at the beginning of the summer of 1929. And having asked his rhetorical question, Smith or Brown proceeded to give his instance.

"For some years past," he wrote, "I have been accustomed to take my family for the annual holiday to the picturesque little watering-place of Porth, in the west of Wales. The place has always commended itself to me, not only for the beauty of the rocky coast, the excellent sands with their facilities for safe bathing, and the capital golf course, but also for the quiet, so valuable for those whose nerves have been set on edge by the inevitable racket and hurry of modern life. Within ten minutes' stroll of the centre of the town, it was always possible to secure perfect peace on the dunes, where I have been accustomed to spend many hours, greatly to the benefit of my health.

"Last week, I was unexpectedly called to Porth on a matter of business. Judge of my disgust when, on the first day of my visit, finding myself at leisure for a couple of hours, I took my usual stroll on the dunes, and found myself in the midst of a scene far noisier than Piccadilly Circus or Charing Cross. A hideous building, of staring red brick and grotesque design, has been erected in the midst of what was once a grassy amphitheatre, sweet with the growth of the wild thyme. On a balcony, a jazz band was emitting ear-splitting cacophonies, and dancing was in full swing. Coconut shies, swings, roundabouts, and shooting galleries were all in evidence and seemed fully patronised. The more popular entertainments were surrounded by a surging mass of people; the noise was deafening. The whole effect was that of a country fair on a Saturday night. I walked back to my hotel at once, horrified at the growth of a crude commercialism which has vulgarised and destroyed the peace and beauty of what was once one of the most charming spots in the island."

Thus Smith of Wimbledon — I think we will let him have the credit of the deed — and thus began the famous Beauty Spot correspondence and controversy.

For, of course, Smith was not allowed to have it all his own way. A good many people agreed with him and confirmed his complaint. One man wrote from “a typical old English town in the midlands The Town Hall, he said, a beautiful specimen of sixteenth-century half-timber architecture, had stood in the middle of the town, and gave character to the place. “With the object, I suppose, of enabling motorists to dash through the town at an even greater speed than that to which they have been accustomed, this beautiful building has been destroyed. Moreover, the Watch House, a fine example of Queen Anne brickwork, has been pulled down, and its place taken by the new Town Hall, a square monstrosity in white concrete, adorned (?) with grotesque sculptures in the manner of Easter Island.”

Then there was the sad story of Dix Regis, famous formerly for its thatched cottages and its brook running down the middle of the winding village way; now much more famous for its motor factory, and its blocks of workers’ dwellings; “all of them strictly functional in design,” as a lover of the new order of things protested. There was Morrow End, with its ancient avenue of walnut-trees; these had been cut down, every one of them, because the residents, as a whole, considered that they made the houses damp. An F.S.A. was in a very bad temper about the doings at Polters Ambo, on the Yorkshire coast. This was a little place that had been a maze of old red brick courts and alleys and backways with narrow, steep flights of steps leading from one winding street to another, and an interesting chapel of St. Michael, in very fair preservation, built in the thirteenth century on a jagged rock in the middle of the harbour. Ambo was strangely transmuted. Few of the old courts and alleys survived. Their place had been taken by rows of lodging houses in glazed brick and tasty tiles, by big hotels in concrete and lots of glass. There were lifts from the harbour to the High Town. It had been found necessary to destroy St. Michael’s Chapel, and to blast away the upper part of the rock, the lower portion of which helped to support the pier and its cheerful pavilion. The F.S.A., as I have remarked, wrote very crossly about these Ambo doings; and the like complaints came from all over the country about other doings of the same kind: the making of deep, ferny, oak-shadowed lanes into ditches like railway cuttings, setting up aerodromes in ancient solitudes, and erecting “prehistoric beastliness” — as the enemy called it — as sculptured memorials on quiet village greens.

“I have to pass this horrible group,” wrote a country parson, “every time I enter the church. I sometimes think I must be in Nbanga — Nbanga Land, not in Sussex.”

And, of course, there was the other side — plenty of it. Mrs. Partington was quoted a great deal. The merits of modern architecture were explained, very patiently; with dissertations on the suitability of steel and glass for structural work. It was pointed out, again and again, that we were not living in the sixteenth century, but in the twentieth; and that the traffic of the present could not move on the bridle-paths and water-tracks of the past. The F.S.A., who had shown temper over the alterations at Ambo, was convicted of selfishness. “An insanitary and tortuous village,” wrote the Mayor, “has been converted into a happy, cheerful resort, where thousands of poor workers wash away the smoke of the mills in the health-giving, ozone-laden breezes of the north sea. The pier, of which ‘F.S.A.’ makes such bitter complaint, brings the weary toilers into close quarters with the sea; and the round of entertainments given in the Pavilion, most of them of very high quality, offer an alternative to the dubious pleasures of the public-house.

It was, no doubt, unfortunate that the old chapel had to be destroyed; but many feel that the Pier and Pavilion correspond more closely with the ideas and requirements of the present time.” Another correspondent addressed himself briefly to the question at large. “We have become a poor nation,” he said. “Poor people cannot afford luxuries. Crooked roads and ruined chapels are, no doubt, luxuries to some of us; but we must learn to do without them.” An artist, with a curiously exotic name, declared that the brick-sculpture, “The Birth of the Calf”, executed in yellow bricks, which adorned the village green at Little Pedlington, marked an epoch. Somebody wrote to say that he didn’t like it at all; but the artist simply replied, “O God! O Montreal!” and was considered to have scored heavily.

It was a highly entertaining correspondence, and went on for weeks. So far as I remember, very little notice was taken of an indignant letter from the Town Clerk of Porth, the Welsh watering-place where all the row began. It was, I say, an indignant letter, with signs of suppressed spluttering about it, but, considering the provocation, laudably restrained.

“I am at a loss to understand the letter of your correspondent, Mr. Smith of Wimbledon.

“He informs your readers that an unsightly and blatant building has been erected on the dunes — I presume he refers to the Burrows — near Porth.

“He adds that a band played jazz music, that dancing was in progress, that coconut shies, roundabouts, swings and shooting galleries had attracted throngs of people, and that the noise was deafening. In short, he gives your readers to understand that the amenities of Porth have been completely ruined.

“My reply to this, is that there is not one word of truth in your correspondent’s allegations. No such building as he describes has been erected on the Burrows. No band plays or has played there or anywhere in the neighbourhood. The ground is quite unsuited for dancing, and, in fact, no dancing has taken place in the position indicated. No booths, coconut shies, shooting galleries, swings, or roundabouts would be permitted on the Burrows; and there was nothing of the kind there on the date indicated. The majority of the visitors to Porth betake themselves to the sands, the finest in Europe, and avail themselves of the bathing facilities provided by the Municipality. The natural golf course (eighteen holes), second to none in the island, attracts many, while others are glad to visit the beautiful scenery, coastal and inland, and the ancient castles for which the county is famous. For these, an admirable service of luxurious motor coaches is provided.

“In no case, and under no circumstances, will surging masses of people be found on the Burrows, where those who desire quiet and solitude will always be able to gratify their wishes.

“It is true that the Annual Fair, held under a charter of Henry III, took place on June 1st and 2nd, as usual. But the fair is held in a field, near the railway station, at the other side of the town; the site it has occupied since 1860. Before that date the booths, roundabouts, etc., were set up in the High Street, opposite the church.

“I can only conclude that your correspondent, under the influence of some slight temporary confusion, mistook his right hand for his left, and thus took the wrong turning; afterwards forgetting the direction in which his steps had led him.

"At the same time I find it difficult to understand how your correspondent contrived to confuse the level expanse of the station meadow with the miniature Switzerland of the Burrows."

Very little notice was taken of the Town Clerk's letter, since the controversy had sailed off from particular instances to general principles. Smith might have been mistaken; but, anyhow, that sort of thing was being done all over the country; and was it an infamous scandal, or was it a sign that England was waking up and seeing straight? It made a luxurious and luxuriant quarrel.

At the end, everybody was pleased, even the indignant Town Clerk, for visitors were arriving at Porth in large numbers, and the season promised prosperously. Everybody was pleased — excepting Smith of Wimbledon. The poor man had devoted a week-end to another visit to the town. He had popped out of the train, tired as he was from the long journey, and had made straight for the dunes, as he still called them. There they were, silent in the golden peace of a summer evening; undisturbed, solitary, blest. The feet of Smith pressed on the short, sweet turf, and trod down the fragrant circles of the wild thyme, passed among the burnet roses, passed by pink centaury and tiny eyebright. The sun was sinking, and no breeze stirred, and Smith, standing on one of the highest of the Burrows, saw the sea as a luminous blue jewel. Beneath him, the sand-hills about it, was the green round, where, he could have sworn, and could still swear, he had seen the red brick building, the centre of horrible noise and vulgar gaiety. Indignant in his set conviction, he descended from his height and went exploring in and out among the hills and valleys, expecting every moment to light upon the horror he had witnessed a week or ten days before. There was nothing of the kind to be found; he was forced to admit it. He returned to the town and dined in a state of sullen amazement and then went out and about, and was sly and crafty; asking guileless questions of the policeman, and the barmaids of the Rose and the Red Dragon, and chance passengers on the pavement. "Could you tell me the way…?"

"Does the Dance Hall on the dunes, the Burrows, stay open…?"

"I suppose the new Dance Hall down on the Burrows is a great success?" — all that sort of clever, detective talk. But without result: people said they didn't know what he was driving at. Smith spent the next day in his traffics and enquiries. He went over the dunes and round the dunes in rings, perplexing the few quiet people who were enjoying the solitude by appearing and reappearing over their lairs. Further enquiries in the town and about it were fruitless. Some people in the lounge of his hotel were discussing the matter, and he listened eagerly, with his face turned away from them. He heard, firstly, that you couldn't believe a word you saw in the papers, and secondly, to his rage, that he, Smith, of Wimbledon, must have been drunk. He came to the conclusion, he was forced to it, that he had been mistaken.

And yet, at breakfast, the next morning, as he mingled his perplexity with coffee and bacon and eggs, he heard a fragment of conversation from two men, pausing for a moment by the open door of the coffee-room. "… infernal row; about two o'clock in the morning."

"You don't say so!"

"Noise like a brass band in full blast woke me up, I tell you. I looked out of my window, and there was some damned *tamasha* going on on the Burrows: all lit up..

The hotel door opened and shut with a crash. Two well-set-up men passed the window by Smith's table. He would have liked to follow and question; but they looked too trim, tweedy, and self-contained for that.

In a cloud of bewilderment he took train from Porth. He never returned; for the summer holiday of the Smiths from that year onwards was spent at some place on the Wash, where it is so bracing.

CHAPTER I

1

IT WAS AT THE END OF A DREARY SPRING DAY when Mr. Lawrence Hillyer came to the uneasy conclusion that something was amiss, and that it was time to pull himself together. It was in May, and summer-time had come in, and the sun should still be shining brightly. But all the day long it had been grey and dismal, with hardly a gleam of sunlight; only now and again a watery light above, and a pallor on grey walls; and the wind blew in gusts, coldish, as if it had been March instead of May. In the middle of the road, in front of Hillyer's rooms, where Layburn Street branched to right and left and became Layburn Square, there was a triangular enclosure of dingy grass and soot-infected beds, where flower-growing had been abandoned many years before, in the seventies perhaps, when the last carriage company abandoned the region. Here, the spotted laurel bushes were at their dreariest, and the blotched boughs of the plane-trees had hardly broken into their sickly yellow buds. The only hope in this horrid patch came from an elder-bush, doubtless a stray chance-comer, which had put on a lively festal green, a witness in the grey heart of London that there was a world of country outside; just as the vine on a neighbouring wall of Pentonville and the great fig-tree that had filled a dank area in the Gray's Inn Road, testified to sunny hills in France and Syrian gardens.

All the weary day with its gloomy heaven and ill wind had been neither good nor bad to Hillyer. He had been deep in books and papers at his old Japanese bureau, and thought no more of the weather than he thought of the golden figures engaged in unintelligible employments in the decorated scheme of the bureau. He had worked all the morning, and had gone out to lunch at an obscure tavern called "The Quill", which lurked in a tortuous passage near at hand, and had returned to his papers and to a long reverie, which was only broken by his landlady bringing up tea. The tea was over, the tray on the sideboard, and the pipe was lit. Hillyer strolled to the window and contemplated the misery and desolation of the scene. It did not move him to despair or to any other emotion, since he did not live in it, but in a secret science of his own making. The thoughtless and inconsiderate have been heard to say that they are hanged if they care if it snows pink. No one credits them; we all know that they would run howling to shelter if such an unlikely phenomenon were manifested; but Hillyer could have taken this oath with truth, if it had occurred to him to take it; which it never did. There are advantages in living for the most part outside the visible world; though there are, doubtless, items on the other side of the account. And Hillyer, turning from the ashen light of the window, was not so utterly rapt from the phenomenal as not to perceive that the fire was low and near to going out. He bent down to take the shovel and put on more coal, and as he did so a sharp neuralgic pain zigzagged through his head. There was nothing alarming about it; most of us know these occasional momentary pangs that flicker unaccountably over our nerves; and Hillyer, pondering the matter afterwards, decided that he had not been a bit frightened. It was what came next that alarmed him. It was as he dug the shovel into the coal-scuttle, as the black cat asleep on the hearth-rug rose up and hunched its back, as he threw three or four lumps of coal on the fire, that he found himself murmuring: "Black cat… coal-scuttle… shovel… putting coals on the fire… that was exactly what happened… when the Cardinal… when I missed that great chance…" He put the shovel back in its place, and straightened himself. He looked about him, with a dumb, bewildered enquiry. What was he saying, what was he thinking, what was happening? What were these incoherences? What was the connexion between this accustomed and very ordinary action of putting coal on the fire, while a cat sat on the hearth-rug, and the acute sense of a great chance neglected, of a supreme opportunity in life allowed to slip away, unembraced, unused? If he had… uttered some word, performed some action… he knew not what or which… the whole course of his days would have been changed to a vague golden felicity… but… was it an incoherent dream recollected? Had he read of something of the kind?

He slid into the saddle-bag armchair with the doubtful spring, and took up the pipe he had laid on the small table beside him, and sat there, the pipe dangling from his hand, in that state which the Scots call a dwam, in which the mind questions its own authority and its own process, and is ready to deny the evidence that the senses have laid before it. Seeing is no longer believing; not in any subtle, philosophical significance of the words, but in their obvious, everyday meaning; the universe collapses, and returns for a while into its first condition: it is without form and void, and darkness is on the face of the deep. Or if this be all too fine a way of putting it, let us say that there is no sense any more; only nonsense remains. And, perhaps, only those who have endured this experience know that is very awful.

Hillyer sat in his chair trembling a little. The horrid gibberish of cat, coal and cardinal became less vivid and threatening in his mind. He knocked the ash out of his pipe, and began slowly to refill it, and tried to collect himself. The suggested image is near enough to the facts of the case. Hillyer, sitting in his room on that dreary evening in the May of'29, might well be compared to a jigsaw puzzle that has been broken up and scattered abroad. The intelligible whole had been shattered; the parts that made it up, severally meaningless nonsense, were here, there, and everywhere in amorphous confusion. He tried to gather them together to collect them, and for some time with poor enough success. Life seemed to have become all misty, uncertain; his own identity was blurred in his mind. There were things to be done, he knew, but he could not say for the moment exactly what they were; he saw neither the days behind with their finished work nor the tasks and interests of the days that were to come; he was pretty much, mentally, in the condition of a man in a thick London fog, whose own doorstep has been transmuted into a monstrous unfamiliarity, before whom open gulfs and caverns of smoking terror — where the streets and shops had been in the morning. It is a horrid state; summed up for common use in the familiar phrase, "suffering from loss of memory," lest the true description, loss of *ego,* loss of true being, should confuse and alarm. Hillyer certainly wondered what he was doing in his own sitting-room, and wondered, further, where he would get if he went out and turned to right or left. He confessed to himself that he didn't know. A heavy bewilderment clouded his mind all the rest of the evening. He read a little without making much of what he read; he looked through a notebook and grasped the points and questions that he had set down very dimly, as if he were poking into another man's work, and trying to appreciate interests that were foreign to him. He took something hot last thing, but slept ill enough in spite of his dose.

The trouble was, very likely, due to over absorption in a singular enquiry, immensely aggravated by isolation. Scholars, men of research, high-priests of science are usually gregarious, both in body and mind. Very often, as Sidney Dobell said of poets, they grow in clumps, like primroses; they have their centres in the college, the university, the learned society, and medical school. If these people of the mind are merely men of letters, they are apt to meet one another in clubs and drawing rooms; and for one reason or another they generally keep in touch with the main currents of life. Hillyer had gone another way; he had fallen out of the march, and had loft sight of his fellow-travellers. He was fifty-five and for thirty years he had been growing more and more a solitary. His relations in the country were all dead. His early friends — they were not many — had set to work, married, gone to China and California. Hillyer had a small income, and not entering any business, made no new friends or connexions, and, perhaps, he lacked the sociable habit of mind, as he certainly lacked the equally valuable habit of being interested, if but mildly, in matters which interested the mass of his fellow-creatures. Now and then, in his early days in London, he found himself in company — and invariably wondered what he did there. When people meet, there is always something of a simple game at ball, and most of us who miss one ball make a fair catch of another. Now, when a lady asked Hillyer what he thought of Polenska’s new dance, he didn’t know what he thought, for he had never seen it. Very well; but he was just as bad when a man asked him what he thought of Chamberlain now. And, then, in literary society, the talk of “rates per thou”, and “£500 down on account of royalties” failed to move him: he didn’t care; and we know that “Don’t Care” was eaten by lions. It is possible that these lions had begun to snuff the track of Hillyer on that cold May evening. At all events, it is clear that he had not the social gift which is the capacity for being interested, or simulating interest — it doesn’t matter which — in all the small change that passes in company. And, it could not be said that, even if he had possessed the necessary confidence, he was in a position to make conversation out of his own topics. He was in the beginning of his researches, treading doubtfully in a dubious region, wondering as to whether he were on the right way, wondering sometimes whether there were a way at all. As to his secret science, he was much in the position of Ashmole as to other secret sciences: he knew enough to hold his tongue, but not enough to speak. He had made an entry in one of his first notebooks.

“I am moved to wonder, whether what we call ‘fairy-tales’ do not, in fact, contain a strange wisdom and the secrets of a very strange and mysterious psychology. Take the old tale of the fairy gold and its transmutation into ugly rubbish, as an example. To most of us it is a tale and nothing more than a tale; without any reason, without any meaning, without any sort of sense or significance in it. We accept it just as a piece of picturesque fancy and nothing more; the turning of the magic gold into dry leaves was just a happy notion of the unknown and remote individual who made up the story. But suppose that there is something more than this; rather, something quite different from this? Is it possible that there is, now and then, a more hidden and interior sense in some of the tales of the fairylands and the fairies? I am inclined to think that this may be so; that the stories are — occasionally, not always by any means — the veils of certain rare interior experiences of mankind; dangerous experiences, perhaps. The gold faded into dead leaves; it may be more than a pretty story.

“And the way to find the Fairy Queen — *in occlusum Regina palatium*?”

Now that sort of thing may be sense or nonsense; but it is, clearly, not the current coinage of general conversation. Anyhow, there is no need to enquire into the value of Hillyer’s researches; but being absorbed in them, and sometimes visited by gleams of a light in which he hardly dared believe, it is not much wonder that he gradually drew apart from the crowd, and became a hermit, a solitary, in the midst of myriads. At first he had rooms in Little Russell Street, quiet and handy for the Museum Reading Room; but he felt rather than saw that Bloomsbury had changed and was changing every day, that dimness was departing from it, that it began to glitter and to shine and to be manifested. He withdrew himself. He had the habit of aimless walking, finding out by instinct quiet places fit for his strange meditations, and had thus discovered the unknown region that lies beyond the Gray’s Inn Road: a world where only the unknown live, which never gets into the papers, which is never traversed by steps familiar with Piccadilly and Kensington. He found out rooms on the height of Layburn Street facing the dank enclosure of spotted laurels and blotched plane-trees. Nothing has been altered in this quarter for eighty or ninety years; Hillyer felt himself at ease in it, and lapsed into deeper, stranger dreams.

3

They were roughly broken by the unpleasant experience that came upon him so suddenly. This was the intrusion of a very different order from that to which he was accustomed. There was something physically wrong; and he went the next day to Dr. Flanagan, whose brass plate he had often observed in Layburn Square. The doctor, a cheerful man, listened to the symptoms and shook his head.

“Indeed, all that’s not much in my way,” he said, very frankly. “It’s your nerves that are all wrong, and we don’t have much to do with nerves in this part of the world. I’ll send you to a specialist, but first I’ll just give you a sedative that’ll make you feel more comfortable.”

Whereupon, the amazed Hillyer was taken into a sitting-room, furnished in the seventies of the last century, and given Irish whiskey hot, with sugar, at eleven o’clock in the morning; the doctor joining him. ‘ The specialist was interested, and a little alarming. He spoke of the dangers of continued solitude. “I had chambers in Gray’s Inn when I was a young man, and there were men there that had got into the habit of living alone: they mostly ended with suicide. Just as it is in Dickens; he knew the Inns. A wonderful observer, Dickens, whatever the young people may say.

“Well, you’ve been living a great deal too much alone, and I gather you don’t get about much, and don’t go in for any outside interests or amusements, and the result is that you’re getting jumpy. If you aren’t careful you’ll begin to see things, and that won’t do at all. You want change — change of air, change of scene, change of habit, change of everything. So the sooner you get out of town, the better.”

The doctor advised sea air, preferably in the west. Hillyer remembered going with his parents to Porth when he was a small boy; and so he stood in the golden sunlight over the sea in the calm evenings, and it may well be that he and Mr. Smith passed each other in the streets of Porth.

4

At the end of a week Hillyer felt distinctly the better for the change. He sat on the sands, and listened to the chatter of the children, of their fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers and nurses. He heard the tones of Manchester and Birmingham, of the London suburb with its curious compound vowels, listening with rapt attention to the manner in which the simple “me” was enriched to “mah-eh-ee” in a wonderful fashion. And as a relief, came the chant of the native speech, a rich melody, a relic of the age when all speech was song. He would stroll up and down, making his way between sand-castles with their flooded moats, children dancing in rings as they came out of the sea, and earnest men talking of cotton; getting as much noise and chatter into his ears as he could, feeling that to be the best remedy for the deep silence in which he had lived so long. In the hotel smoking-room in the evening he did his best to break himself into the habit of speech, and to amend the errors of his youth. He tried his utmost to answer the question that he had refused in his earlier years: “What do you think of Chamberlain now?” It was a different Chamberlain, but Hillyer read — with pain it must be confessed — all the leading articles every morning directly after breakfast, and was able to say a few words in the evening on the subject of derating to Mr. Sykes, a pleasant man from the north; though he felt strongly inclined to quote Mr. Cleaver, in *Our Mutual Friend*: “‘Deration, oh, don’t.” There were all sorts of topics, he found, which he could acquire by a careful study of the paper; and he got them up as well as he could, though he found it almost impossible at his age to acquire the complicated technique of the racing news. But as he advanced in his studies he began to be seriously interested, and found that even here there were minor mysteries that entertained him. For example, he was sitting one evening with Mr and Mrs. Sykes in the hotel lounge over coffee and cigarettes. After some cogitation he thought of a brilliant opening and asked Mrs. Sykes about her jewelled pipes.

“What on earth are you talking about? “said Mrs. Sykes, in a state of amazement; and Hillyer explained, abashed a little, that he had read only that morning in the woman’s page of a popular paper, that fashionable women were all smoking briar pipes heavily jewelled, and that rubies and emeralds were the most popular combination. The lady laughed and told him that nobody paid any attention to that nonsense— “except very young typists, perhaps, and they may try to believe in it.” Then there was another party, with a very pretty dark daughter in it. He asked her why she hadn’t painted her caste-mark on her forehead; and was horrified at the storm of fury which burst from her father, General Clinton, who had served for many years in India. Yet Hillyer had seen a paragraph to the effect that with smart women the caste-mark on the forehead had become a craze. He apologised humbly to the lady and her father; but putting two and two together, he came to the most interesting conclusion that a great part of the daily paper dealt with a world of pure fiction, reporting its news with all the gravity of one who deals with the plain and common facts of life. Women did not smoke jewelled briars, they did not paint Hindoo caste-marks on their brows, they did not clothe their legs and feet with gold-leaf in place of stockings. The reason of these strange inventions puzzled Hillyer profoundly; they seemed to him shapes in a magic lantern show; and, passing to the "Personal" column, he carried his new scepticism so far as to doubt the very existence of Captain "Sam" Hurlingham and Lady "Billy" Donkin, who were always being seen lunching together at the Grandeur. If he had ever thought of the mysteries as things hidden away and apart, remote from the general stream of life, he saw now that he was mistaken. The mysteries were part of the very tissue and being of man; they were not to be avoided. The quest for that which was concealed by the golden and jewelled world of the *Arabian Nights* was conducted in the columns of the daily press: behind Persian lattice-work, in a tiled court, deep azure, where the music of falling water rang from the fountain, he saw the appearance of the dark lady with the jewelled pipe, the caste-mark on her forehead, her feet gleaming golden on the rose-marble floor.

Hillyer shook his head; these images were leading him back to old and too familiar ground: he had come to Porth to escape from dreams, not to cherish them. He directed his attention to the League of Nations, to Unemployment, to the Indian troubles, to the Labour Policy, to the Problems of Canada and Australia. He borrowed solid novels from the Library, and read them with infinite satisfaction and benefit, since they seemed to him more free than the daily record of the press from the elements which he recognised as dangerous — during the period of his cure, at all events. They shut out wonder from their picture of existence; they gave him the rest that would be afforded by an old, terraced, brick-walled garden to a man who has been in peril in a land of rocks and desert places. So the treatment went on prosperously; and Hillyer never failed to attend the performances of the excellent town orchestra — not the jazz band of Smith's fevered imagination — which played twice daily. He was not a learned lover of good music, but he recognised the enormous benefit of listening to it. For the one sure effect: of all music good or bad is to destroy thought for the time being. It is comparatively easy to think in mere noise: a man will soon accustom himself to the jar and jangle of trams, the rattle of passing trains, the song that the sirens sing down by the docks, the hubbub of a busy street, the loud brisk squabbles of the slum round the corner. He can look for the fifth figure in Logic in the midst of all this, invent an original plot for a detective story, or plan a poem and write it. But when music — sound in order and rhythm — is heard, thought is forthwith extinguished. The quality of the music has nothing to do with this effect of it, which will be produced as surely by a Bach fugue as by the silliest song of the Halls or the cabarets. Hillyer found the two hours spent daily in listening to the Porth orchestra a most valuable part of his course; since it was a two hours abstinence from thinking, of immersion in an element which negatived thought.

5

For some weeks Hillyer, remembering the doctor's warnings against the solitary habit, kept well in touch with company. If the weather were wet, he frequented the lounge of his hotel, first reading the papers and then discussing the news with any acquaintance who seemed ready for conversation. If it were fine, there was a little garden across the road reserved for the hotel guests and pleasantly provided with deckchairs. Here, sitting in comfort, well in the world of the living, he smoked and played the game at Lords', or trembled at the situation in the Balkans, and gazed out on the glittering waters of the bay, and the coast curving round to the Dragon's Head in the east. Everyday, he felt better, renewed in body and spirit; and he became confident; he began to go farther afield, to walk along the cliffs one day, to lose himself in deep inland lanes on another. And then he discovered the attraction of the dunes, of their sand mountains, of their valleys of flowery turf and of wild thyme in purple circles of bloom. The desire of this region grew upon him, and by degrees he spent more and more of his time in wandering in and out among the hills of sand, in taking his place in the green round that Mr. Smith had once frequented. There was a ledge of turf on one side of this place that made an easy seat. There was solitude without desolation; every now and again explorers like himself would pass by, delay a little and look about them, botanise, and go onwards in search of an appetite for lunch or dinner. Hillyer began to be conscious that the Labour Policy, the situation in Australia, and the economics of the Balkans, had served their turn; he was glad to be silent, and yet to see that his fellows were at hand. There was a charm about this hollow, with its glimpse of blue sea and a misty coast far away, seen through a cleft in the sandhills, that won him more and more; and hour after hour, he would delay here, morning and evening. He felt that his health was quite restored, that his nerves were in splendid order; but he could not make up his mind to leave these happy shores for the grey lodgings on the grim hillside in desert London. It was an obscure set of circumstances, that at last made up his mind for him, and sent him hurrying back to town in a very pitiable state of terror and bewilderment. In a way, it all began with the story of a missing woman, though this business and its ending were rather of the accidents not of the essence of Hillyer's trouble.

The case was thus. A few miles from Porth, going eastward, the coast rises slowly from the sea into high sloping land covered with heather. Here and there on these heights clearings have been made, and two or three white farmhouses face the sea and the cliffs on which Porth stands. Hillyer, sitting in the little hotel garden, had often rejoiced in the sight of the white walls, shining in the sun, amidst their few fields of corn and meadows of rough pasture, islands with the heathery steeps all about them and dividing them from one another. To him, looking across the sea, the farms seemed close enough together; but, in fact, each was separated from its nearest neighbour by at least a mile of steep ascent and descent, through rough land, difficult walking, and the best way little better than a sheep track. In one of these lonely farms, with the odd name of Ty Captain (which means Captain's House), there was living a man named Prothero with his wife and two children, a boy and girl of eight and eleven. Mrs. Prothero was a handsome, red-cheeked, black-haired woman of thirty or a little over.

Early one Saturday morning, about a fortnight before Hillyer's visit, Mrs. Prothero set out for market at Porth, her basket, with a couple of fowls and some eggs, on her arm.

She took her usual way, which was the only way; the rough track through the heather that trailed across the hillside, then down on the other side by a farm road, and so to the main road and St. Fagan's station, about ten miles from Porth, and between two and three miles from Ty Captain farm. Her husband saw her climbing up the path as he stood by the garden gate, and then he went to his work in the fields, and thought no more of her till the evening. The time passed by and she did not return; Prothero and the children waited by the gate till it grew dark, and she did not come. The man told the frightened children some story about their mother staying with her friend, Mrs. Evans at Porth, and got them hot milk and sent them off to bed. He put the lamp in the window and kept watch all night. Two or three times he took his lantern and went out on the track that his wife had taken; looking to left and right into the black darkness; stopping, calling her name, and then going on a little, and calling again. The only thing that he could think was that she had slipped and fallen and broken a leg, and was now lying helpless in the heather. There was no answer to his shouts, his lantern shewed him nothing but the wild growth; and he went back to the farm hoping that, somehow or other, he might find her there. As soon as it was light he took the two children and set out for St. Fagan's. He knocked up the people at the first house he passed, told them his story and left the children in their care. Then, at St. Fagan's, he woke the station-master — there were no trains till the afternoon on Sundays — and heard that Mrs. Prothero had not been seen at the station the day before; the station-master had thought she must be ill, since she took the 8.40 for Porth every Saturday. Prothero got a lift in a car and went to the police at Porth. The usual thing followed; search-parties, official and unofficial, the "missing" broadcast, the summons of Scotland Yard, vain clues that led nowhere, idle theories that led to the combing of Camden Town, and a sharp look-out at Northampton. A month after Mrs. Prothero's disappearance her body, shamefully torn and mutilated, was found hidden in a dense thicket of blackthorn about a hundred yards from the farm-track that went to the main road and the station. The poor woman's murderer was never discovered; he had left no trace behind him, save his horrible violence; there was no thread for the police to hold or follow. The case of Mrs. Prothero simply went down on the tolerably long list of undiscovered murders; there was nothing to be done or said.

Nothing, indeed, to be said in reason; but horrors make many people hysterical and therefore highly unreasonable; and the people at Porth, both the natives and the visitors talked an incredible amount of nonsense about the murder. And their nonsense affected Hillyer in a very strange manner. Though, if we begin to talk of strangeness…

Hillyer was not what is called, I believe, a noticing man. He had roused himself so far that he was ready to take part in the casual conversation of the hotel lounge or the sands; he no longer hid himself away from his fellow-men. But he stood on no watch-tower, and kept no sharp look-out; he was not curious in minute shades of manner, nor ready to deduce this or that from the raising of an eyebrow or the compression of a lip. He was not acutely interested in any of the agreeable chance acquaintances he had made; and so for some time he failed to perceive that anything was amiss. And then, after four or five days, during which a sharper, or perhaps, a more deeply interested man, would have scented something a little queer in the social air, Hillyer did begin to be aware of a difference. People were distinctly less genial where he was concerned. The hitherto friendly groups on the sands answered his greetings drily. If he attempted to discuss the architecture of sand castles with the builders, there was apt to be a cry from a deck-chair: “Peter, Betty! come here for a minute; I want you.” He found that his approach was apt to break up the small after-dinner circles of the lounge; Mrs. Sykes would remind Mr. Sykes that they had arranged to stroll to the Black Rock before it got dark; and General Clinton, though he had seemed to forgive the caste-mark business, glared and said nothing. Once or twice, perceiving that a brisk and eager conversation became an awkward silence on his approach, he guessed that he had been the subject of the talk; and wondered, but not very much. If he supposed anything, he supposed that these people, having given him a fair trial, found him dull company, and were happier among themselves with their own interests. He had no objection to this, no defence to make: very likely they were right. It was only when Bradshaw, the analytical chemist from Birmingham, addressed him one day as he was coming back to lunch after a morning spent in the green round of the Burrows, that he began to wonder seriously, and to ask himself what was amiss. Bradshaw was waiting for him at the top of the flight of steps leading from the sands and the Burrows to the Front, or Esplanade. He looked very oddly at Hillyer, though Hillyer noted nothing of this.

“I saw you on the Burrows, just now,” he remarked.

“Yes,” replied Hillyer cheerfully, “I spend a lot of time there. I like it.”

“But what have you done with your friend? Why don’t you bring him along to the Dragon?” Hillyer stared at Bradshaw.

“Friend,” said he, “… friend? I beg your pardon… friend… done with my friend? I am very sorry, but I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“You don’t? Very good,” and Bradshaw walked away without more words, leaving Hillyer confused and a little troubled. He sat down for a few minutes on one of the seats on the front, and wondered what Bradshaw was driving at with this talk of “your friend”. He could make nothing of it, and went on to his lunch at the Red Dragon. He entered the coffee-room and took his usual place at a small table by one of the windows; and was perplexed anew as he noticed that his entrance made a distinct sensation and by no means an agreeable one. Bradshaw was talking eagerly to some friends at the other side of the room. They leaned across the table, evidently so that they might miss nothing, and one of them looked towards Hillyer with a glance of great abhorrence. And afterwards he saw a shade of much the same kind on many faces, as he went through the lounge into the street. He met it again, two or three hours later. He was sitting on the ledge of turf in his favourite hollow in the Burrows, still feeling a little upset, and vastly puzzled, by what had happened in the morning, when glancing up, he saw a man named Davies, another acquaintance of the hotel, standing on the sandy height opposite, and staring towards him with an extraordinary intentness. There was violent dislike and amazement too, and something of fear in the man’s expression. Hillyer gaped at him blankly for a few moments, and then called out, to break the scene: “Why don’t you come down here? Very pleasant in the shade.” Davies opened his mouth to speak, and then turned and hurried away towards the town, looking backward once, with dread in his gaze, with an awful surmise written on his countenance. That night the people in the hotel threw away ceremony and form, and cut Hillyer to his face. The next morning, Poggi, the manager, beckoned him into the office, and expressed his regret that No. 23 was booked in advance from that date onward, and wished he had not forgotten to mention the fact on Hillyer’s arrival.

“There is something the matter,” said Hillyer. “Of course, I shall make no trouble about going. But, in strict confidence, tell me what it is all about. I shall be very much obliged, if you will.”

Poggi raised his broad and benignant shoulders, and began to do wonderful things with the fingers of his left hand.

“Not a word, no? Good. I think they are mad; but they say you are a friend of that murderer of the woman Prothero; that you are hiding him, and that very likely you will hang also. I know they are mad; but— “ and the fingers and the hand executed an amazing fantasia in the air.

6

Hillyer packed his bag, paid his bill, and left the hotel ten minutes later. He saw the half-dozen people who were about eyeing him curiously and furiously, and he took his way at a brisk pace towards the station; the morning train for Paddington was due in twenty minutes. He walked on to the platform — the station was an open one — bought a paper at the bookstall, and paced up and down in sight of everyone.

Passengers for London thickened about him; huge piles of luggage were piled up at intervals on the platform; then when the train came in, country people who were going to the market poured out of the carriages, obstructing the entrance of those who were Paddington bound, and burned for corner places facing the engine. In the midst of all this confusion, Hillyer stole out of the station by a side path, and fetching a compass, made his way to a second-rate street at the back of the town, and secured two small rooms without difficulty. He thought it most unlikely that the people in this obscure street would know his face or be familiar with the rumours of the Red Dragon on the front; and he wanted to lie latent for a day or two, that he might study his problem in peace, and see if he could discover any materials for its solution. For three days he lay snug and hidden; perplexed and pondering, and quite unable to pitch on any explanation that was at all tolerable to his common-sense. He had a bad half-hour soon after he was established in his retreat, for, looking at certain strange and terrifying pictures confronting him, in which moonlight was indicated by an inlay of mother-of-pearl, it suddenly struck him that he must be suffering from delusions, that the change of air and scene had failed to effect a cure of his nervous trouble, and that all the alarms of the last few days were figments of his disordered brain. But he cast this from him. At times, every man is infallible, and, in spite of philosophic doubts, is able to say “I know.” You cannot, for instance, persuade a country farmer who has been going to market every Saturday for thirty or forty years that he is uncertain as to market day: on that point at least he is ready with fast assurance to defy all the schools of the sceptics. He knows. So Hillyer knew that he had been confronted with facts, not fancies; and with this moderate satisfaction he was left to find out what these facts signified. Looking back he made his calculation: first of all, as he saw now more clearly than he had done at the time, the friendly people of the hotel had begun to edge off from his company, to make excuses for retreat when he appeared, to become deaf when he spoke of lawn tennis, or the Labour policy, or the Balkans. Then, there had been that Birmingham chemist, who asked him what he had done with his friend; why he didn't bring his friend to the Dragon. He could find no explanation of these extraordinary questions. There was something offensive, almost threatening about the man's manner; for this he could find no explanation. And then, as he sat alone in the peaceful circle of the green amphitheatre, Davies appearing on the sandy summit staring at him aghast, in horror, and making off in frightened haste; here again he came dead against a blank wall. And as for the manager of the hotel, and his talk of hiding the Ty Captain murderer, what on earth could that mean? So far as Hillyer could see, it implied, first of all that the police had made up their minds as to the identity of the murderer, that they were unable to lay hands on the suspect, and that, somehow or other — he could not conceive how — these transitory birds, these visitors, his fellow-guests at the hotel, knew the supposed miscreant, and had seen him in Hillyer's company. All of which was a string of nonsense, and absolutely intolerable.

It would still have been intolerable; but the burden would have been lightened a little, if Hillyer's newspaper studies had been more thorough and more prolonged. He would have been familiar with certain processes of the public mind when confronted with a murder mystery; his recollections would have furnished him with many enlightening instances and examples. An old woman is murdered in her sweet shop: Mrs. Bunkin, which clear starches, is sure to come forward and describe a man with a black moustache, in a blue serge suit, who was loafing about the street between eleven and twelve. The supposed villain turns out to be a builder in a small way, who had an appointment with a bookmaker; but Mrs. Bunkin is convinced to the end that he was the very murderer. She felt, at the time, she says, that he was up to no good, and that is considered conclusive evidence. That is the way it is done, and if Hillyer had been acquainted with the method he might have guessed at the manner in which one of the minor links in his puzzle was forged. There had been muttered confabulations in snug corners of the Dragon: "one of the most horrible-looking fellows I've ever seen," “made my blood run cold,”

“something quite ghastly about him,”

“my notion of a murderer,”

“a dwarf, you said?”

“Yes, but those deformed creatures are often tremendously strong: looked as if murder would be child’s play to him” — and so forth and so forth; and after two or three such conferences, the unknown was firmly established as the Ty Captain murderer. Still, if Hillyer had divined all this it would not have helped him much as to the major problem. He had not been in company with anyone during his stay at Porth, excepting these hotel people, who had become rabid; and so… It was impossible to finish the sentence.

On the fourth day, Hillyer emerged from his retreat. Meditation had done nothing to elucidate the dark riddle that perplexed him; he would try action, if going abroad and shewing himself could be called action. He walked up and down the town, strolled about the sands, and sat on the front gazing blandly out to sea. He met two or three of his former associates of the Dragon. They stared at him amazed, threatening, furious; stopped dead, as if stricken suddenly, glared helpless astonishment. Hillyer was as if he saw them not, passed and repassed, and betook himself, after his usual routine, to the green round in the Burrows. He repeated these proceedings after lunch, taking some pains as to his goings and comings, so that possible sleuths, watchers and trackers of the company of the Red Dragon might be thrown off the scent. The next day he followed the same procedure; and in the late afternoon, when the wind fell, he thought, as he sat on his seat in the green round that he could distinguish stealthy rustlings in the coarse grass that grew about the encircling dunes; and once or twice, keeping a sharp look-out, he noted appearances that were neither grass nor sand. He guessed that prone watchers, half buried in sand, were observing him all the while. “And the devil knows why,” he said to himself.

The next morning the crisis came. He had been sitting for an hour or more in the usual place, and the sunlight and blue sky, and the faint breeze from the east was so enchanting that he had almost forgotten the maniacs that beset his ways. It was fortunate that his stay at Porth had really and effectively restored the apparatus of his nerves. There was a sudden shrill excruciating whistle: from every tussock in the circle of the dunes a man shot up, raging, and then flung himself headlong down the slope. In an instant Hillyer, stupid with surprise, found himself in the midst of a circle of men, shouting, foaming, cursing, yelling incoherences. Two of them had poured down at his back and held him tightly, one on each arm; and then, as suddenly as it rose, the tumult died away, and stupefaction and silence fell upon this strange assembly. They glared at Hillyer, they glared at one another. There were about a dozen of them. Some of them Hillyer recognised as his former acquaintances of the Red Dragon. Davies and Bradshaw held him by the arms. There was General Clinton, open eyed, open-mouthed staring at him; there was the face of Sykes, as of one confounded; a man named Sullivan held a heavy cane above his head, as if it were a broad-sword in a stage combat. Others he had seen on the sands; some faces were altogether strange to him; and all of them, in furious action and furious utterance a moment before, now stood silent, motionless, frozen in sheer amazement; as their faces declared.

The General at last found speech:

“Hold him tight,” he said to Hillyer’s guards, “or he’ll get away like the other. Take him a few yards off, you fellows; there’s some infernal hanky-panky here. There must be a trap-door hidden in the turf, and we’ve got to find it.”

One man had a stick with a long iron ferule. Under the General’s direction, he poked and prodded the bank of turf where Hillyer had been sitting, and the turf all around. The stick went in easily; there was hardly more than an inch of soil over a depth of sand. Others climbed the banks and looked round and about, in the hopes of seeing a creeping or a flying figure. The General marched up and down, stamping at intervals; he would be able to detect a hollow beneath. There was a thick growth of brambles in one spot; it was all beaten down to the sand in no time. The poking, prodding, beating, stamping went on for twenty minutes.

“Stop!” the General called out. “They’re too many for us. I never saw the Rope Trick. I never believed in it. I always thought it was a damned lie. This is worse. Let that fellow go; we can’t do anything to him.”

And then, after a pause:

"But, by God! I saw that infernal, murdering scoundrel with my own eyes."

He turned and walked away towards the town, and the others followed him in dead silence.

Hillyer was left standing; he also said nothing. He had no notion of threatening an action for assault and violent constraint; it did not occur to him to demand a humble apology from General Clinton, from Davies, from Bradshaw, from the whole pack of them. Utter stupor overwhelmed him and pressed down his tongue like the great ox of the Greek proverb. The actions and the words of these raging people gave him some inkling of his supposed offences; in a way his problem was answered; but the answer was worse than the enigma; in itself an enigma and a chaos.

"And I haven't the remotest notion what has happened," that was all he could find to say to himself, as he in his turn walked away from this scene of a wild experience. But he decided that any benefit that Porth could give him was exhausted; and he left the town by the earliest possible train, glad to think of the refuge awaiting him on the remoter side of the Gray's Inn Road.

He settled down peacefully to his old routine and scheme of daily life. In spite of the unpleasantness which had spoilt the end of his visit, he was glad he had made it, since it had opened his eyes to the significance of the daily paper, a source of information he had hitherto scandalously neglected. He recalled now, with a free mind, those mysterious news items concerning jewelled pipes, Hindu caste-marks, gilded feet. Immediately on his return he gave an order to the local newsagent to send him two popular papers every day; and he was overjoyed to read at once in one of them the remarkable intelligence that the "lastest fad of the Seaside Girl" was to enamel her toe-nails in brilliant colours. The other paper reported that one of the smartest women in society had been seen wearing a fez at lunch. All this struck Hillyer as most important. The idea evidently was, as he had seen from the first, to suggest the gorgeous symbolism of the *Arabian Nights;* that great vision of a world which all men desire, to which few attain. Here, indeed, were "fairy-tales" of profound significance.

CHAPTER II

1

HILLYER DID NOT INTEND TO LAPSE INTO HIS former state of dark absorption in his studies, meditations and researches. The odd seizure that had befallen him, and the grave warning of the nerve specialist, had not failed of their effect; he made up his mind to go warily and take care of his paths for the future. He would give the evening and perhaps a goodly portion of the night to his work; in the morning he would stir about and move with men, and survey the infinite world of London: in itself, as he reflected, the study of a lifetime. No longer a self-sentenced prisoner in the narrow compass of his lodgings, he began to discover what strange regions might be reached by the wise expenditure of a few pence on an omnibus ride. Nay, to turn a corner, or to take a way hitherto neglected, might unlock the doors of a new region; and he was reminded of one of the old tales that were the subject of his constant meditations — the story of the man who, passing along some street that he has trodden a hundred times, sees a door before unnoticed, and opening it enters a world of marvel and strange experience, that has been unsuspected but close at hand all his days. On one of these voyages through the ocean of myriad-streeted London, he came one day upon a little square or oasis of greenery in the very heart of a grey and dismal quarter. The racket of King's Cross was not far off, trams jangled near at hand, and a cloud of depression hung like a mist on the surrounding streets. But Belmore Square had lived on from another age. It was composed of little two-storied houses, on whose walls the vine and the fig-tree mingled and brought Syria to the heart of London; and each little house had its little garden, with palings of faded green, and flowers fit for cottage gardens by a country lane. In the green centre, the town supremacy of the plane was disputed by the mystic ash, by wych elm, by birch and hornbeam, and in their shade were a few seats, on which a few old people sat when the sun shone. Hillyer came round a corner that he had never turned before, and saw the green and the quiet of the place and delighted in it. He made a perambulation, wondered who were so fortunate as to enjoy this humble peace and pleasantness, and sat down to smoke beneath green boughs for half an hour or more, then passed on his way. He had been gone five minutes when two old men who had been sitting on a bench at the upper end of the enclosure began to discourse:

“That was a queer-looking customer,” said old Tom Bryce.

“Who was that then?” asked old Sam Simmons.

“Why, him down over on the seat opposite, that’s just gone.”

“The one in grey clothes? I didn’t see anything very queer about him. Quiet-looking man; might be a schoolmaster, I should say.”

“I don’t mean him. I mean the little chap sitting by him.”

“I never saw anyone sitting by him.”

“Of course you did; how could you help seeing of him?”

“Well, I didn’t see him.”

“Do you mean to tell me, you sitting there next to me, at my elbow, as you might say, you say you didn’t see that short chap, sitting on that bench, over there, not so much as forty foot off from where us two are sitting now? Don’t talk such nonsense, Sam Simmons.”

“Don’t you talk nonsense then. There was that quiet grave sort of gentleman, like a schoolmaster, or you might say a man who might have retired from something; might have been a clerk who’d come into a bit of money from what I could see; very nice grey suit of clothes he was wearing. There he was sitting and he put on his pipe, and he looked pleased with himself. And he’s the only man I see, or you either, if it comes to that.”

Mr. Bryce stared at his old friend in angry amazement. He called down a meaningless curse upon himself, and continued his argument:

“Now, are you sure we mean the same seat? I mean that bench, over there, opposite, under that tree with spiky leaves. And there’s white chalk-marks on the top of the back of the bench on the left hand. Do you see what I tell you?”

“Yes, I do; as plain as I see you. I’ve got eyes in my head. I can see that bench all right. What about it?”

“I’ll tell you. There was two men sitting on that bench not ten minutes ago.”

“I say there was one man, and no more than one.”

“There was two, I tell you. There was that quiet-looking man in the grey suit you’ve been gassing about; and there was another small man sitting a foot off him, or thereabouts. A foot, you might say, or it might be a foot and a half. But not two foot."

"So there was another man, was there? And what sort of a man might he be, as you saw him so plain?"

"Well, that's the funny thing," said Brice, soothed by what he considered old Sam's admission. He pondered.

"It is a funny thing," he went on, after consideration of the case, "I saw him, as I tell you, as plain as I see you now. But if you ask me what he was like…"

"Of course I ask you. You saw him plain, didn't you?"

"I did see him plain. No doubt about it. But there's some people… well, you know them all right when you see them, and yet it's hard to say how you know them, if you take my meaning. Now, there's Harry Jackson. You know Harry Jackson in the Caledonian Road? Next door to Puller's coffeehouse?"

"Never mind about him. I know him. I want to hear about this other chap that you say you see sitting over there just opposite."

"Well, that's a difficult proposal. It isn't so easy as it sounds, not by a long way. You know the Private Bar at the Belmore; but I daresay you might find it not so easy to hit it off so that another man would recognise it as soon as he went in."

"If you saw this man at all, you can tell what you saw. That's what I say."

Old Mr. Bryce was profoundly disturbed. He wagged his short white beard from side to side. He tried to speak, but gibbered meaningless syllables. At last, "I did see him, I'll take my oath, and there was something wrong about him, and I'm blest if I can tell you any more than that."

Sam Simmons looked at his old friend with some apprehension in his glance.

"Come along," he said. "Them children will be swarming out of school in a minute and I don't want to listen to their noise. What about a pint at the Belmore? There's chop toad at Puller's. Saw it up in the window as I went by this morning."

They went off together. Old Bryce’s face was working, and he looked nervously away as they passed the bench with the chalk-marks on its back.

2

Twenty-nine, Layburn Street, Hillyer’s abode, was a very quiet house. In the basement, the landlady, Mrs. Jolly, and her daughter, a young woman of twenty or a little more or a little less, dwelt in a gentle gloom; on the ground floor there was a middle-aged clerk, who got up early in the morning and made off for somewhere in the far east, down by the docks. Hillyer had the first floor, and the two rooms above held two young men who followed skilled crafts in Soho workshops. One was supposed to be a bookbinder, the other a worker in gold and silver; but this was more conjecture and doubtful rumour than ascertained fact. There was no bond that held the inhabitants of the house together; they were all quiet, keeping little company and never banging doors. The two craftsmen strolled in and out of each other’s rooms sometimes of an evening; and Hillyer and the clerk just knew each other by sight, after the passage of a good many years. Once upon a time, more than twenty years before, there had been a reveller on the ground floor, who had gathered his young friends about him once or twice, and had endeavoured to revive the tradition of the late-sitting, jovial party with an occasional chorus. But he was given to understand that doings forbidden in the green tree of Mrs. Raddle were anathema in the dry day of Mrs. Jolly. He slunk away: to look for Bob Sawyer and Ben Allen possibly in another world; and since his exit peace had reigned profound on every landing.

That peace was broken, and with it the heavy moonless silence of a summer night, not long after Hillyer’s return from his seaside visit. It was on the stroke of two in the morning, as afterwards appeared, that a tremendous crash rent the air. The day had been faint with burning heavy heat, and the little breeze that had sprung up at sunset had died away. Leaden clouds covered the sky and shut in the hot breath of the innumerable streets. A man strolling up Layburn Street, seeking perhaps for fresh air on the eminences of Sadlers Wells and Islington, stopped a moment, lit a match and watched the flame burn without quivering. Even in that region where old fashions linger, where forgotten prints hang on the walls, where lustres are common enough, and at least one example of the right Victorian wax-flowers school has been observed; even there windows had been thrown open and suffered to stay open, in spite of the general belief in the mysterious venoms of the air of night.

The roar of London has long ceased to exist. It was dead silence, or all but dead silence. A late car or taxi in the Gray's Inn Road, a late footfall on a distant pavement made no more sound than a stirring of leaves before a feeble momentary breath of wind, or the patter of a few scarce drops of rain on a laurel bush. And then, a tremendous splintering crash tore the stillness into tatters; and on it fell the two broken thunders of Big Ben.

After this, there was a pause of a few seconds. Thereupon, the confused noise of people jumping out of bed, pattering over the floor, stumbling and fumbling on their way to the gas, upsetting chairs and small tables: *fragor et strepitus.* The clerk on the ground floor woke up with a sonorous shout, as though he occupied his business in deep waters, instead of in a warehouse near the Docks. One of the young men on the top floor opened his door and made a Slavonic noise. Mrs. Jolly left her daughter trembling in bed, came up in set silence, stood at Hillyer's door, and called on him for goodness' sake to say what he was doing.

And at that moment, he appeared; confounded by sleep and the shock of his awakening. He stared about him, inarticulate. His fellow-lodgers came up the stairs, came down the stairs, and in their odd costumes gathered and gaped: a group for the last act of a farcical comedy.

"What was that noise?" gasped Hillyer at last. "Is it the gas? Is anybody hurt?"

"It was in your room," said Mr. Pytle, the clerk from downstairs. "I thought the house was coming down on me. Front room," he added, as Hillyer gaped at the bedroom he had just left. Hillyer threw open the door of his sitting-room, and they all trooped in.

"Take care of the glass," shouted the man who had cried out words of Slavonic sound, going with a cautious step towards the gas. They checked, and as the two jets flamed, stared at the ruin about them.

Above the mantelpiece there had stood a vast mirror with a heavily decorated gold frame, in the most ornate manner of the 'sixties. Mrs. Jolly and her friends thought it very handsome, costly, and in these degenerate days, rare. This horrible thing had, somehow, escaped from its cords, and had fallen forward on the table, and had shattered itself into two or three hundred pieces, that now glittered insanely on the floor. Mrs. Jolly lamented the ruin of the mirror, which had come from her Aunt Bessy, of Nuneaton; the rest of the party gaped and jabbered for a while, till one of the young craftsmen climbed from a chair to the white marble mantelpiece, and examined the cord, which had given in two places.

“Perfectly sound, it is,” he said, testing what remained unbroken. “Looks as if it had been regular torn apart. Funny.”

“Don’t try to set things right to-night,” said Hillyer, to the afflicted Mrs. Jolly, “and, whatever you do, don’t go down on your knees; you’ll cut yourself to pieces. Bring up a broom or something in the morning. And you needn’t bother about my breakfast; I’ll go out and get something.”

They all agreed that there was nothing to be done till the next day, and crept back to their beds, yawning. Hillyer thought no more of the matter, save to be somewhat glad that the vulgar and pretentious state of the huge mirror was no more. He made an excellent breakfast at a station hotel the next morning, and came back to find his room in neat order, “Bolton Abbey in the Olden Time” hanging in the place of the monstrous glass, and his landlady mournful but calm. She was slightly uneasy as to the supposed bad luck indicated or caused by a broken mirror; but comforted herself by saying that there were many who didn’t believe in that sort of thing now.

A few days later he was tempted into making a morning excursion of a farther range than usual. The wind had changed to the north and had blown away the heavy oppression that had hung over London. The freshness and sweetness of the country floated about the grey walls of Layburn Street, and the sunlight danced and glittered on a poplar that rose, a huge billow of green, from a wilderness of grim yards at the back of the house. Hillyer sallied forth, and with favouring ‘buses found himself on Wimbledon Common, in a radiant, rejoicing air. He was strolling slowly along, by a road lined with houses of a rich and prosperous aspect, conjectured rather than seen through groves and shrubberies, when his steps were arrested for a moment by the sudden noise of smashing glass. He walked on again without curiosity; but a rapid patter of feet, a shout of “Stop!” came behind him, and a rough hand grasped his shoulder and twisted him round. He was in strong keeping. The person of well-to-do appearance who had captured him was thickset and muscular, with features resembling those of the late Professor Huxley: benevolent in repose, no doubt, but at the moment erupting indignation. “Did you do that?” he ejaculated.

“Do what?” said doubting Hillyer.

“Smash my greenhouse. You might have killed me!”

“I say!” exclaimed Hillyer. “Do I look as if I would smash your greenhouse or anybody else’s? Besides, I haven’t seen a greenhouse this morning; I haven’t been off this path for the last ten minutes. What do you mean by talking like this?”

The angry man glared at Hillyer for a moment; then snatched his hands, right and left, and inspected the open palms.

“I beg your pardon. I see I’ve made a mistake. I apologise. But would you mind coming with me for a moment? I should like to show you what’s happened.”

Hillyer turned back, and Mr. Horncastle, as he introduced himself, led the way by a postern gate into his demesne. A winding path through deodars, wellingtonias, box, cypress and yew led them to the gravelled space on one side of the large suburban mansion, and Mr. Horncastle pointed eloquently. There was a big greenhouse, as ugly as its tribe or a trifle uglier, and the bulge of its pretentious dome shewed a large and jagged hole. And on the floor inside, with broken flower-pots, scattered mould, and sad blossoms about it, was a huge lump of coal.

Hillyer understood the fierce examination of his hands.

“And where the devil could that have come from?” asked Mr. Horncastle, as the two returned to the open.

Hillyer pointed out that it was too far a cast from the roadway, unless one posited the presence of a Celtic Champion at hurling things through the air; a soured man, of a malicious and mischievous habit of mind. This seemed most unlikely.

“It must have been someone hiding in those laurels, at the edge of your plantation. He popped out, threw the lump of coal, and went back into hiding. He may be there now.”

"It's possible. Suppose we have hunt a for him."

"I'm afraid he waited for you to rush out, and made off as soon as he saw us both safe in the greenhouse. But we might try."

They went to and fro amongst the evergreens, and beat about, and peered and poked and pried into the recesses of the close-growing box and cypress. The result was nothing. It seemed quite possible that the offender had indeed watched the outward rush of Mr. Horncastle, his return with Hillyer and the entrance of the two into the greenhouse, and had then taken flight. There was whiskey and soda in the billiard-room after the futile search. Mr Horncastle said he had dismissed an undergardener six months before. It seemed possible that he might have taken his revenge. Mr. Horncastle said he would have a talk to the local detective, apologised once more, and saw Hillyer off the premises. And Hillyer went on his way, entertained on the whole with the small adventure. He had lived so long in obscure retirement that little things diverted him, as the movement of a dull street seems gaiety to the man who has spent years in prison. He found himself speculating as to what manner of rich occupation in the City nurtured Mr. Horncastle, as to the possible guilt of the dismissed under-gardener, as to the result of the conference with the police. Johnson was inclined to wonder at the disuse of smoking at the latter end of the eighteenth century, since, as he pointed out, it was a relief from mere vacuity. But there are many substitutes for tobacco.

The skies were of a calm and even grey, the air was still and a little mournful, as with a prophecy of the autumn to come; and Hillyer made his way back from one of his visits to the Reading Room of the British Museum — now become rarer than in former years — and climbed the steps to the house in Layburn Street. He was in a satisfied and happy mood; for his two or three hours of research had gone prosperously and he had by sheer lucky chance found an unexpected treasure in turning over the pages of the catalogue. His main object in visiting Great Russell Street, once dim and rich in its suggestion, now grown red and rancid, was to investigate the relation between the legends of the Seven Sleepers class and those that tell of mortals who have dwelt for a while with the Queen of the Fairies; to query the identity of the Fairy Queen with Tannhauser's Venus, to determine the exact shade of guilt imputed to personages like Thomas of Ercildoune and the British King in the Mapp story. And then, another point:

what was the relation, if any, between these fables and the singular story of the Entertainment of the Venerable Head in the Mabinogion? Did they all symbolise the same experience? Or, were there two experiences, one supernal, and the other, if not infernal, as in Tannhaüser, then at least, dubious, suspect, perilous? All the legends in their essence, no doubt, were pre-Christian: might one take it that those in which the implied experience was held up to reprobation were the stories which had come under the review of the Church; while the Mabinogion mythos (for example) had, for one reason or another, escaped ecclesiastical censure, coming down to us in its original form with its original feeling? Very interesting questions, these, Hillyer thought; and he reviewed them thoughtfully, verified his impressions of the sources, noted down this and that point.

"Query," he wrote, "whether the Church's condemnation, as implied in some of the legends, may not arise from confounding the nature of the sign with the things signified: the Fairy Queen and Venus being taken as sexual symbols, and therefore condemned. Yet this objection should lie equally against the imagery of the Song of Songs. Here the symbolism is undoubtedly and definitely sexual, but the book had not been excluded from the Canon on that account, nor had the nature of the sign been permitted to obscure or tarnish the thing signified. Moderns, of course, have questioned the existence of any symbolism whatever, and are content to hold the book as a passionate love song and nothing more. This position is negligible, as not only opposed to the tradition and doctrine of the whole of Christendom, but to the entire consensus of the East on this matter. The Song of Solomon is written in a symbolical language which would be understood by Easterns of every faith and of all ages.

"All this seems fairly plain and straightforward; but there are perplexed and difficult questions in the background. Putting the Song with its authorised and orthodox interpretation on one side, it is to be enquired whether it be lawful to regain or to attempt to regain the *Earthly* Paradise; to pass, as it were, under the guard of the flaming swords; to recover a state which is represented as definitely ended, so far as bodily existence is concerned. In the Mabinogion story, it may be noted, there is a marked analogy with the Eden story of Genesis. The eating of a certain forbidden fruit in this case, and the opening of a certain forbidden door in that break the enchantment for ever. Adam and Eve know that the gates of Paradise are finally closed against them; the companions of Bendigeid Vran, when the door that looked towards Cornwall and Aber Henvelen was thrown open, saw that all their felicity was accomplished and ended, ‘And when they had looked, they were as conscious of all the evils they had ever sustained, and of all the friends and companions they had lost, and of all the misery that had befallen them, as if all had happened in that very spot.’ The ‘Entertaining of the Noble Head’ was finished.

“There was no hope or possibility of renewing it: never would they hear again the three fairy birds of Rhiannon ‘singing unto them a certain song’

“Of course it may he said that the Fairy Queen tales are to be taken in the same sense, and as referring to the same mysterious loss as the Genesis story and the Welsh story; they may all be understood to refer to the *Parens Protoplastus*, to Adam, the archetypal or Platonic man, not to any actual man; though in this or that legend an individual and actual man, such as Thomas of Ercildoune, is made to achieve the adventure of fairyland. This is a point worth noting: it may or may not be valid.”

He had made his notes and practically finished the work of the afternoon, when, as he glanced through one of the volumes of the catalogue, he came upon a title which, somehow, attracted him. The author was the Reverend Thomas Hampole, and the book was called *A London Walk*: *Meditations in the streets of the Metropolis.* It bore the date 1853. Hillyer could scarcely say what it was that drew him in this sententious title, with its hint of moralising: perhaps his own recent walks abroad made him desire to compare his experiences with those of a fellow-traveller of long ago. At all events, he made out his form, and got the book, a thinnish octavo, bound in faded brown cloth stamped with blind tools of weak invention. There was a frontispiece entitled, “The Old Wells, Canonbury”, a steel engraving by J. Rospickx, after the well-known painting by R. Landon: not a great performance, and yet hinting that curious sense of enchantment that is often lacking in the cleverer work of to-day. In the distance, a glimpse of a classic facade; umbrageous trees drooped over smooth lawns in the middle distance; and in the foreground fashionable ladies and gentlemen, dressed in the habit of the Regency, gathered about a glassy waterpool, admiring a marble nymph who rose from its depths. Glancing at this odd performance, Hillyer turned to the book, found himself addressed as “Courteous Reader”, but persevered.

“Has it ever been your fortune, courteous reader,” the author enquired, “to rise in the earliest dawning of a summer day, ere yet the radiant beams of the sun have done more than touch with light the domes and spires of the great city? Have you risen from your couch, weary, perchance, of sleepless hours of tossing to and fro, or, it may be, impelled by the call of business, and gone forth through the familiar street where your abode is situated, the street which had known your steps by day and by night, but never before at the hour of dawn? If this has been your lot, have you not observed that magic powers have apparently been at work? The accustomed scene has lost its familiar appearance. The houses which you have passed daily, it may be for many years, as you have issued forth on your avocations or your amusements, now seem as if you beheld them for the first time. They have suffered a mysterious change, into something rich and strange. Though they may have been designed by no extraordinary exertion of the art of architecture, though their materials may be of common brick and stone and piaster, though neither Pentelicus nor Ferrara has assisted in the adornment of these edifices; yet you have been ready to affirm that they now ‘Stand in glory, shine like stars, apparelled in a light serene They have become magical habitations, supernal dwellings; more desirable to the eye than the fabled pleasure dome of the Eastern potentate, or the bejewelled hall built by the Genie for Aladdin in the Arabian Tale.”

And so forth, and so forth:

“And if the boughs of a tree chance to extend over a garden wall, you are ready to vow that its roots must flourish in the soil of Paradise.”

“Your perspective may be closed by the heights of Hampstead or of Highgate; but in the light of the Aurora these hills rise in the land that is very far off,”

A good deal in this vein; and then a curious passage:

“But all these are transitory effects that soon disappear. As the sun mounts in the sky, the vision fades *into the light of common day*; buildings, trees, objects close at hand and distant vistas resume their ordinary aspect; the whole enchanting scene is now *a sullen street of common clay.* You may, perhaps, reproach yourself with having allowed your senses to be beguiled and your imagination to be overcome by the mere fact that you have gazed on a familiar scene in unusual circumstances. Yet, some have declared that it lies within our own choice to gaze continually upon a world of like beauty, or even greater. It is said by these that all the experiments of the alchemists of the Dark Ages, generally supposed to be ‘dreams at the dawn of philosophy’, the feeble gropings of an ignorant and superstitious time after the truths of philosophical knowledge, are, in fact, related not to the transmutation of metals, but to the transmutation of the entire Universe. The avowed aim of these *alchemical philosophers* was not always regarded with favour by those high in Church and state; but it is said, I do not know whether on good or bad authority, that their concealed principles and projects would have caused them to incur still greater odium, and indeed, have made them liable to persecution of the most rigorous kind. This seems probable enough, when we are reminded by the history of the famous Friar Bacon that those in authority during the period of the Middle Ages had but little tolerance for unlicensed or unusual theories and experiments.”

Hillyer skipped over a few pages. He felt that this discovery of his, this oddest of odd books, deserved a day’s clear study; it was not to be taken as a mere epilogue to the afternoon’s work. But before he returned the brown volume to the desk, his eye was arrested by a passage printed in italics:

“*This method, or art, or science, or whatever we choose to call it (supposing that it really exists*) *is simply concerned to restore the delights of the primal Paradise; to enable men, if they will, to inhabit a world of joy and of splendour. I have no authority either to affirm or to deny that there is such an experiment, and that some have made it. I therefore abandon the matter to the consideration and the enquiry of men of equal and ingenious mind.”*

Hillyer felt, as he shut the door of his room, that his afternoon had been exceptionally fruitful. He resolved to make a careful study of A *London Walk;* and to find out all that he could as to the author, this obscure Thomas Hampole, who dated his brief preface, Hillyer had observed, from Clifford’s Inn. The apparatus of his tea, with the spirit-lamp, was set ready for him on the table, and this done, and the dusky tobacco well lighted, he settled down for the evening to enter up the notes he had made at the Reading Room, materials for the curious book that might be written — some day.

And while he was in the midst of these calm pursuits, all hell broke loose above him. With a terrific crash some heavy piece of furniture thundered to the floor, and a shower of plaster covered Hillyer, his table, and the carpet with white dust. One would have said that, in the room above, Badminton, fait Badminton, was being played with chairs for shuttlecocks; and a minor game was going on with the vases on the mantelpiece. Hillyer ran from his room and summoned the landlady from her depths.

“God help us!” she cried. “Mr. Zerny must have gone mad, and who’s to pay?”

Indeed, the noise came from Mr. Zerny’s room — he put a good many more letters into his name, but his English friends did not trouble about them — as was speedily evident, when Mrs. Jolly and Hillyer entered without ceremony. For the room was wreck and disaster. A great wardrobe cupboard had fallen on the floor. The two chairs were smashed out of shape. The china was in fragments. It was all a horrible spectacle of ruin. And when Mr. Zerny saw it he screamed. But the mischief was clearly not due to any madness of his, since he had been working overtime, and did not get home from his shop till an hour later. His neighbour, Haddock, was out of town, having been sent away on some job in the country. Doubt, anger and distraction fell upon the whole house. And that question that Mrs. Jolly had asked herself and the world, “Who’s to pay?” bore upon her more heavily than the riddle of the Sphinx. “On the top of my beautiful glass smashed to bits the other night in Mr. Hillyer’s room,” as she said to her friends and neighbours, “What is one to make of it? Indeed, you may ask, and echo answers you, as they say: what is anybody to make of it? And who’s to pay? Five pounds wouldn’t buy me another glass like the one I’ve had broken to bits, and there’s the chairs only good for firewood, and all that china just fit for the dustman to take away in his cart.”

“But how did it happen? And who done it? That’s what I should want to know if I was in your place, Mrs. Jolly. I should indeed.”

“That’s what I said to my husband last night,” broke in another lady. “I said to him: ‘Albert,’

I said, ‘there’s something behind all this,’ I said, ‘that we don’t know of. First of all,’ I said, ‘there’s that beautiful glass that was over the mantelpiece in the front-room of Mrs. Jolly’s first floor. You don’t tell me,’ I said, ‘that that lovely mirror was broke natural. Mrs. Jolly gave me them cords to hold in me hand,’ as you did, Mrs. Jolly, ‘and anybody could see,’ I said, ‘that it wasn’t no accident. Them cords was strong, like new, and they must have been torn and done on purpose, and it was a strong hand and arm that done it. And what I say is,’ I said, ‘ ‘oo done it? That’s what I should want to know,’ I said to my husband. And now that top room; as if wild men had been fighting in it!”

And a third counsellor:

“I can’t say as to that glass. I never saw it, and I never saw the cord that held it. Funny things do happen with cord; we know that. But chairs don’t throw themselves about. That’s certain. Then, who threw them? It’s what I call a mystery. This is a mystery, I said to myself last night when I heard about it, if ever there was one. We know somebody upset that wardrobe, and threw those two chairs about and broke that china. Who was it? Was it somebody in the house or did they come in from the street? It must have been one or the other, it seems to me.”

Mrs. Jolly explained the position:

“It was just on seven o’clock when it all happened,” she began. “Mr. Pytle had been back for half an hour, or it might be a little over. I was frying a chop for his supper, and it was all ready and waiting in the oven, and Annie here” — indicating her daughter— “had just run round to the Quill in New Street for a pint of mild and bitter for Mr. Pytle’s supper, and I was waiting by the window to see her come back, and dish up and take up his tray for him. And the minute I see her come down the Steps, I put the plate on the tray and Annie come in with the jug, and then there came that awful bang and crash, and Mr. Hillyer calling out. I thought I should have dropped. So I don’t see how anybody could have got into the house, with me watching up to the last minute.”. “Not that minute,” said one of the ladies, “no, certainly not. But they might have been hid somewhere for hours for all you know or we know either. In the very room, it might be, for all we can tell. I suppose you hadn’t been in the room since the morning when you done the bed.”

“Well!” exclaimed Mrs. Jolly, who found this possibility of hidden foes lurking concealed in her house a terrifying supposition. “To think of that! You’re quite right, Mrs. Dolman. I get all my rooms nice and tidy as soon as ever I can, and I hadn’t occasion to go up on that floor, let alone Mr. Zerny’s room since ten in the morning.”

"There, you see. Anybody might have been there. You can't be watching the street door all day long, and there's plenty of people that locks don't puzzle."

"But suppose they was in, how'd they get out?"

"Easy enough. Them as can get in and hide can hide and get out. I don't suppose, Mrs. Jolly, you troubled to look into the other room on your top floor."

"I never thought of it," gasped Mrs. Jolly. "Dear, oh dear!"

"That was the way, then. Waited till it was dark and all quiet, and you in your beds, and then slipped out as easy as easy."

It was felt that Mrs. Dolman had solved the enigma. But Mrs. Jolly propounded a new problem.

"But what on earth did they do such a wicked thing for? I haven't got an enemy in the world so far as I can say. And nothing taken. I can't see the sense of it."

They all confessed that they could make nothing of it. The police were consulted. They came, examined the house, questioned the lodgers, enquired as to the possibility of dismissed servants of a spiteful nature; and, like Mrs. Jolly and her friends, made nothing of it.

The Inspector, or Superintendent, or whatever he was, certainly had a suggestion, but it did not seem to lead anybody very far.

"I seem to remember," he said to Mrs. Jolly, "something of the same kind over Hornsey way, nine or ten years ago. It didn't come under our official notice at all, there being no suggestion of anything criminal. In consequence, we haven't any sort of record available for purposes of comparison. But it was all written up a good deal in the papers, especially the evening papers; columns of it there were. As far as I can remember, having read these newspaper articles as a member of the public, this Hornsey business was an affair of breakages: two or three pounds' worth of damage done, I believe. Things thrown about, you know. The family would be sitting round their fire comfortable of an evening, and there'd be a smash of glass and a lump of coal falling in the middle of the room. China and glass ornaments, too; they'd be flung from one side of the room to the other, in a very surprising manner, from what the papers said about it. There was a clergyman, a friend of the family, I believe, told one of the newspaper reporters that he'd seen a metal ash-tray fly off the mantelpiece and fall at his feet, right across the room. Very surprising, no doubt. I don't profess to have fathomed it out at all myself; speaking solely from what I read about it, it was my impression that there was some jiggery-pokery or other in the background, as I expect there is in your business, Mrs. Jolly.

"But one thing comes back to my mind; it struck me at the time as very singular. I must say, I couldn't make anything of it. There were some young people in the family, a couple of boys, thirteen to fifteen years old, I think they were. Well, it was announced three or four weeks after the disturbances had terminated, or it might be more, that one of these boys had become subject to epileptic fits. I must say, I don't see myself that fits are here or there, supposing these people and their friend the minister spoke the truth; but there it is.

Now, Mrs. Jolly, I gather that your daughter's the only inhabitant of your house who might be termed young. That is so, I believe."

Mrs. Jolly grew red in the face before the policeman's interrogative eye.

"Not at all," she said briskly. "Mr. Zerny and Mr. Haddock are quite young."

"Now what age would you say they are? As far as you can judge, you know."

"Well, Mr. Zerny may be twenty-five, and Mr. Haddock a couple of years older — just about that, I should say, more or less."

"Ah, yes, Mrs. Jolly, but that isn't quite what I had in my mind when I was talking of young persons. Twenty-five, you may say, is grown up and a little bit over. No, I was thinking of something younger than that, more about in the 'teens, as they say. Now what age is your daughter that we were speaking of — if one may ask a young lady's age?"

Mrs. Jolly, as she said afterwards, looked very straight at the officer. She would have liked — she fervently desired — to tell him to mind his own business. But she held that it was no good to set their backs up; so she answered coldly:

"Annie is nineteen; nineteen next December, that is."

"Exactly, exactly. Now we're coming to cues, as a theatrical gentleman I knew once was in the habit of saying. That's much more like it. And — you'll excuse me, I'm sure — but has she ever had any trouble of the sort we were speaking of? You take my meaning?"

Mrs. Jolly was appalled. She was not a reader of detective fiction; but she had heard the almost miraculous powers of detectives discussed. She had not believed in these tales. "All make-up and a lot of nonsense, if you ask me," had expressed her attitude. Now she believed and trembled. Who would have thought it? Her goods and chattels had been maliciously damaged and destroyed; she had called in the police, and by tortuous and mysterious ways they had brought it round to Annie's fits. She had not the courage to deny.

"Not real fits," she distinguished. "And all over years ago. She fell down the kitchen stairs when she was thirteen and hurt her head. But the doctor said she would get over them. And she did. She's had no trouble at all since she was fifteen."

"Quite so, quite so," said the officer. "I quite understand. Well, I'm afraid we can't do anything further, Mrs. Jolly. Good morning."

He went off with the air of a man who has solved a dark and obscure mystery by the exertion of faculties verging on the superhuman. And he left Mrs. Jolly a firm and awed believer in the miracle of the detective art. It was two or three hours before she was able to judge the situation with her usual sagacious commonsense. Indeed, it was with a shock that she at last realised that, in hard fact, the detective had really detected nothing. It was absolutely certain that Annie had nothing whatever to do either with the shattering of the picture or with the wrecking of Mr. Zerny's room. In the one case the girl had been asleep in bed beside her mother; in the other she had been standing by the kitchen table, with the beer-jug in her hand. Annie's alibis were undoubted, firm, above all question. "So that's that," said Mrs. Jolly to herself, in the deplorable idiom which she had, somehow, acquired.

And yet it hurt her a little to have to return to the flat sanity of her former attitude on the mystery and craft of detection.

“After all,” she observed, to an old friend, consoling herself, “I will say it was a marvel the way he found out about my poor girl’s illness. I don’t know how he done it. Wonderful. Why, nobody’s past life isn’t safe from them, Mrs. Hemmons.”

CHAPTER III

1

I HAVE OFTEN SPECULATED, HILLYER WROTE, IN one of his notebooks, as to the state of the human consciousness immediately after death. I am inclined to believe that the most salient feature of that extraordinary mode of existence, in its opening period, at all events, is confusion. Once or twice, I have found myself in a familiar room in total darkness; by the accident of having forgotten to take matches in my pocket, or by the accident of having omitted to place the box of matches in its usual position on shelf or table. It is extraordinary how easily and quickly all sense of direction and position are lost. Perhaps there may have been an initial mistake, in the nervous flurry of looking for those matches and not finding them. Dazzled with the darkness, if such a phrase may be allowed, I have gone to the right, intending the left, and after the first false step the confusion becomes more and more hopeless. The hands are stretched out to touch the expected object, and find nothingness; the feet stumble on obstacles which are not supposed to exist. Distances are misjudged, all reckonings are falsified; the armchair where I have sat day after day has become a terrifying enigma. I resolve to get out of this room that is confounding me, and I cannot find the door. I suffer from a kind of false panic; I am only sustained by the firm conviction that, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, I am in my own familiar room, though it seems through the well-used door that I have passed into a black unknown chaos. Yet, I know that this is a false report, and that I shall come out into the light at last. There may be something like this at the moment — but there are no longer moments — that succeeds death.

Or, it is possible that a better image is to be found in the dream state, and its interaction on the consciousness of the waking hours? There is a wonderful passage in De Quincey, describing the strange way in which some figure in his dreams would occasionally survive, as it were, the awakening. I think the particular instance he gives is of a dream of a dance. Cavaliers and their ladies tread an ancient, splendid measure: the dreamer awakes suddenly, and sees, dimly, the familiar forms of his own room. But there, standing on the floor at the bottom of his bed, is a beautiful woman, one of the figures of the dream, seen clearly for an instant in the light of dreamland. I have myself experienced something of this kind: the presence of the two worlds; the dark dome of the enchanted mountain and the dark mass of the dressing-table both seen at once. A man once told me a very curious experience of his, which illustrates this most singular confusion, or interaction, of the two states. He dreamed that he was in bed, fast asleep — as he was. He then dreamed that he woke up and remembered that the night before he had been engaged with certain papers of extraordinary and secret importance; and that he had been so careless as to leave them exposed on his desk. There was no truth, or semblance of truth in this; he had no papers of any consequence in his possession, and no secrets worth twopence. And then, this dreamer thought of another matter of anxiety. There were those papers teeming with their deadly secrets, lying open in the next room, and at half-past eight his brother-in-law would be coming round to breakfast: he of all men must never see those tremendous documents. They must be concealed before he came. And here truth again peeped in. He had a brother-in-law, who was expected to look in for breakfast. The man, deep asleep all the while, opened his eyes. It was quite dark and therefore early. Jack (the brother-in-law) would not be coming yet awhile. Still, he felt that he must make sure of the time, so he got up, and went to the chair where his coat was hanging; the matches were in one of the pockets. He felt in the pocket; it was empty. Then he remembered that the night before, out of his usual custom, he had left the box of matches on the dressing-table. He crossed the room, found the matches on the table, returned, and struck a match, and looked at the clock by his bedside. Five o’clock; more than three hours before Jack would be likely to turn up. He would hear the daily servant coming at a little before eight. There would be plenty of time to hide the papers then; in the meantime, he would get back to bed and sleep. But all these manœuvres of his, the shufflings and stumblings about the room, and then the hiss and flare of the match, had woke up my friend’s wife. She asked him, with some irritation, what on earth he was doing. He tried to explain the situation; the nature of the secrets, the importance, the dire importance of keeping them from Jack. She, half awake, and only dimly perceiving that nonsense was being talked, said tartly: “Oh, do get back to bed and go to sleep!” This impudent and careless contempt — so he took it — for matters of great moment filled my friend’s heart with rage. He was furious; it was with difficulty that he restrained himself from uttering the bitterest reproaches. He went back to bed in savage silence, and, as he told me, it was only as he laid his head on the pillow that he woke up and realised that he had been thinking, ailing, and talking nonsense of the wildest kind.

Here is an instance, then, of the two states, the waking state and the dream state, impinging on one another, mingling sheer fantasy and delusion with the plain facts of life. In some particulars, the memory was both sane and active: Jack, the brother-in-law, existed, and he was coming to breakfast. Moreover, he was actually a most inquisitive man; it might almost be said that, in his business, curiosity was a virtue. Further, there was the co-operation of the memory and the senses in the finding of the matchbox, after the initial forgetfulness, and in the inspection of the clock; and yet the whole operation was based on a vain figment. The man was asleep and dreaming; and yet he was awake; the one world was inextricably mingled with the other. It is, perhaps, in some such confusion that the newly dead may move. But what we should call their past life is, doubtless, the wild dream that troubles them. They cannot rouse themselves from the delusion that the weight of intolerable sorrows is pressing on their hearts; and then again, they are vexed at the first dawning of the thought — one must use mortal words — that those old ecstatic joys were also delusions and figments without significance.

But all this apart — and more than enough of a world for which we have no words; since, like music, it is beyond words, beyond ideas — there is another sense in which the dream world mingles with the world of actuality. There is a common phrase, which, perhaps, means more than it is intended to mean. “You must have dreamt it!” people say when they hear something that astonishes them a good deal. On the face of it, the phrase implies, “That’s not true”; really, it simply means, “you surprise me very much.” But, perhaps, in rare cases, the teller of the tale had dreamt “it”, and had allowed it to trickle into his consciousness as a piece of actual experience or veritable knowledge. And, on the other hand, these may be impressions about which a man is uncertain; wondering whether this or that were an actual experience, a thing seen or heard, or read; or whether it did not come out of some dream of the night. Something of this kind happened to me, very much to my alarm at the time. I found myself repeating, internally, a string of senseless jargon, and beating about in my endeavour to find some rational source or origin for the gibberish I was repeating, trying vainly to connect it with actual experience… with something read… with a dream; inclining, on the whole, to the belief that it was a broken recollection of a dream, perhaps of many years ago. For dreams certainly remain in the memory under the same conditions and according to the same laws as those governing our waking impressions.

I remember, vividly, every detail of a horrid nightmare that beset me when I cannot have been more than five years old. I can recall the awful oppression of formless terror with which I awoke with much greater distinctness than many actual events of far later years. Many of these, indeed, I have, as we say, forgotten — though, of course, nothing is really forgotten — but the horror that befell by that bend of the road close to my old home is as clear in my mind as the image of the houses opposite, or clearer; though I glanced at them ten minutes ago, and the nightmare must be nearly fifty years away. And there is another question which may open strange vistas of thought: whether it is only the dreams recollected on awakening that remain in our memories. These are but a few out of a great number. Some day, perhaps in the hour of death, the rest may return, and appear before us, a wild multitude.

But the experience which alarmed me, to which I have referred, was, I think, a morbid symptom. I had shut myself up with my books and my investigations for too long a time, and my nervous system must have been near the breaking point. The specialist whom I consulted advised me to go away to a new scene and fresher air, to be idle, to distract myself from my work, and to take things more lightly and easily for the future. I did as I was told, and found myself better; as well, indeed, as I hope to be for the rest of my day. And this, in spite of a very strange and unpleasant experience which happened towards the end of my stay at Porth, in South Wales. It was an experience which annoyed and puzzled me very much at the time. Now and again, I have been tempted to set it down as a grotesque and extremely ill-natured practical joke; but some of the circumstances were hardly patient of this explanation, and I am still bewildered whenever I think of the affair. However, I did not allow it to affect my health or my mental composure, either at the time or afterwards. My nervous trouble, or whatever it was, fell upon me in May. I spent most of June at the seaside, and came back feeling perfectly fit and well, as I have said. I am quite sure that my nerves were as sound as they ever had been. I was keeping in mind all the time the advice the doctor had given me. I no longer "shut myself up in a cupboard" with my books all day long and most of the night — I am using the specialist's phrases. I read the papers and went out and about every morning; and so gave mind and body the air; it was only in the afternoon and evening that I devoted myself to the fairy gold. In the course of these researches, now carried on with a little more sense than before, pure luck led me to a most interesting discovery. This was an odd little book, called A *London Walk*, published by some obscure firm nearly eighty years ago, and, so far as I can make out, utterly neglected and unknown. It was written by a clergyman, the Rev. Thomas Hampole, and is the author's only title in the British Museum Catalogue. The Rev. Thomas was sententious and occasionally pompous — after the manner of his tribe, as some might say — but his book had some extremely curious things in it which interested me immensely; they were things that, so far as I could see, were quite in the line of my studies and quests. Or, on parallel lines, perhaps: rather in the vein of: "There is a great experiment, and some there are that have made it": which is not quite what I am after, but something like it. The end may be the same in both cases; but I am not sure about that. Anyhow, there were some very striking things in this Hampole book; and I was inquisitive. I wanted, naturally, to know something about the man himself, where he came from, how he lived, what he had done besides writing *A London Walk*; but I was a good deal more interested to know where his book came from, what its literary sources were. The author did not strike me as having the creative, originating mind: he was rather of the "from information received" type, and I wanted to know where he had got his information. There were traces of the influence of Blake; but, one would have said, much stronger traces of Traherne's *Centuries of Meditations.* There was the difficulty. *A London Walk* was published in the early 'fifties, and the manuscript of the *Centuries* was not discovered till at least fifty years later. Of course, it was quite possible that this manuscript, which came to light at last on a bookstall in Farringdon Street, had not remained uninspected and unread since 1674 or thereabouts, when it was written. It was possible, if it came to that, that it had been in the possession of Hampole himself. Well, there were a good many odd questions connected with the book; and I have no doubt that they occupied my mind pretty constantly. I daresay that I had Hampole in my mind as I was sitting one night in my room, somewhere between nine and ten. It was one of the hot and heavy nights of the London summer, when any wind there may be falls with the sun, and the heat seems to swelter from the pavements and the walls. I had the window wide open, and I was sitting at my desk with a shaded candle lamp beside me; I always use one for working, and find it very much better than gas or electric light. There was a tap at the door, and thinking it was my landlady with some question of bacon and eggs, I said: "Come in," and turned round on my chair. I was a good deal surprised to see an old friend, Montonnier Hawkins, especially as he was a bibliographer of experience, and exactly the man I wanted to see. I welcomed him, put out my candle, turned on the gas, sat him down, and asked how he got in. "I didn't hear your knock."

"The door was open. About the time of going for the supper beer? So I walked up." We talked a little of old times, of good event and ill event that had fallen to men we had known, twenty, thirty years ago; of some that had died, and of others that were sorry, perhaps, to be surviving. And then I came to the matter that was so much in my mind just then. I found Hawkins knew about Hampole — what there was to be known, and that not much.

He came, it seemed, of an old yeoman family who had been long settled in a village near Northampton. His parents were well-to-do people, and they sent him to Oxford, where he took his degree in 1830. He was ordained deacon and priest by the Bishop of Lichfield, was curate at Alfreton in Derbyshire, then in Stafford, and finally at Altrincham, near Manchester. About 1840, he received a legacy from an uncle, enough apparently to make him independent of his profession, since shortly afterwards he took chambers at Clifford's Inn, and only did occasional duty for the rest of his life. He died in 1871. Nothing much more was known of him. He was supposed to have corresponded with the author of *A Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery*, but, according to Hawkins, none of his letters had been preserved.

It was not much. With the one exception of the reputed association between Hampole, and the author of a very singular book, it threw little light on his literary origins. Hawkins, I found, knew nothing about the subject matter of *A London Walk*; and indeed, his interests were purely bibliographical. It was a rare book, he said, but not generally “collected”: it would be worth four or five pounds, not more. Many copies had been ruined by the work of Grangerisers, or extra-illustrators, who had torn out the frontispiece.

I had been bending over the table, taking notes of such dates and facts as Hawkins gave me. At the end of his remarks, I looked up from the paper, and met his eye. I was struck at once by something strange and unfamiliar in his expression. There was a look of fury in his face that terrified me. He did not utter a word. There was dead silence in the room. I thought he had suddenly gone mad, and I would have given anything to start to my feet, and shout and rush at him; but a ghastly oppression weighed on me and held me fast, and held my lips. It was as if I had been gagged and bound; and as if a heavy weight had been laid on my breast. I suffered an unutterable horror. The figure opposite to me seemed to change into a dreadful and unspeakable and most detestable shape, and then everything was black darkness.

I came to myself trembling with fear. I did not dare to move for some time. Then I heard a clock strike eleven. I looked about the room fearfully; saw there was nothing amiss, and ventured at last to my feet, and crawled to the cupboard, and poured out and drank off half a glass of whiskey. I felt myself slowly returning from a world of very awful experience: the fiery mist out of which I seemed to have come melted slowly away. For a long time I was afraid to go to bed. I drank more whiskey, deliberately, not to raise my spirits, but to stupefy myself into sleep that I hoped would be dreamless. It was three o’clock in the morning when at last I went heavily to bed.

It was some days before I could shake off the terrible sense of fear. As soon as I began to think the matter over with some approach to calmness, I made up my mind that I had fallen asleep in my chair, and had been visited by violent nightmare; the weight and oppression I had experienced seemed to me decisive. And, indeed, these symptoms apart, there was no other explanation to be given. I wanted badly to write to Hawkins, shaping my letter in such a way that if, indeed, he had been to see me that night, the fact would appear in his reply, I was ashamed to do so. About a fortnight later, I ran across him in the Reading Room and managed to get out a question as to Hampole and *A London Walk.* He said he had just heard of the book as a minor rarity, that he believed that it was sought for to some extent in occult circles. Then I asked him about the author, and, to my glowing relief, Hawkins declared that he knew nothing about him. I felt that I had been a fool to want his assurance; but so it was. And the experience passed into the region of dreams.

And in spite of that, it still persisted vividly, with all the force and the impression of an actual experience. It would stay with me as though it had happened; and it stays with me still: a dream, and yet an event. I have to be on my guard against it; against the recognition of it as something that is, veritably, part of my life. And, no doubt, it is the panic terror, the deadly oppression of fear with which the dream ended that fortifies me against taking it as actuality. Here are the marks of nightmare, not to be mistaken. The first part of the dream; the tap on the door, Hawkins entering and explaining probably enough, that the street door had been left open for the return of somebody with a beer-jug — I have heard my landlady say that she always locks the area gate when it gets dark — all this was perfectly in the common order of things. And so were his replies to my questions; his account of Thomas Hampole's very ordinary and uninteresting career, his bibliographer's summing up of the rarity and comparatively small value of the book; his remark as to the imperfect state of many copies, owing to the tearing out of the frontispiece; again, everything is strictly according to common order. I must say that if it had all stopped there, or, rather, if Hawkins had stayed a little longer and chatted odds and ends before leaving, I should most certainly have believed that he had paid me an actual visit. I should have woke up, looked about me with the dazed bewilderment of the awaking sleeper, and concluded that I had fallen asleep in my chair after seeing Hawkins out at the street door. No doubt, as I say, there would be a sense of bewilderment, of questioning uncertainty; the 'Have I been dreaming, or what?' mood. The edges would have been a little misty and undecided; there would have been a certain vagueness, let us say, about the beginning and end of the dream. But, I make no doubt that if it had all kept within the lines I have mentioned, the whole thing would have passed into my mind as an ordinary bit of experience. I should have accepted Hawkins's somewhat bald data as entirely trustworthy, and probably have regarded them as a starting point for more searching enquiries. It was the fright in which I awoke, the instant recollection of the abominable transformation that I had witnessed, which convicted the whole of being a mere figment of the sleeping brain, stirred, no doubt, into this most disagreeable form of activity by something wrong with the digestion. No one can suspect true nightmare of being a part of actuality: its own evidence is destructive of any such claim. If Westminster Abbey turns into a cloud that descends upon you and chokes your breath and suffocates you, you know when you wake, panting and trembling, that it was all a dream and that you are safe. *Credo quia impossibile*: using the old phrase with a new twist.

And yet: that test may lead us to strange conclusions. “The impossible, the contradiction in terms must be a dream”; where shall we find ourselves if we allow that axiom to mark the distinction between dream and waking? To leave on one side our attempted definitions of time and space, which involve us in bottomless pits of absurdity and contradiction: think of the mark on the paper which we are told is a line; that which is length without breadth and therefore invisible for ever to the eye of flesh. Think also of Achilles in his vain chase of the tortoise; and see into what hideous nonsense the certainty of mathematics leads us. If the belief in monstrous absurdity and contradiction be the sure mark of dreaming, then what do we do daily? What world is it that we inhabit?

Let me note this. It is possible that those who find their way to the Queen of Fairyland are liberated from these dreams and monsters and delusions, and behold with a rapture of delight the real world. But it is agreed on all hands that such are forced to return, and the fairy gold is dust and ashes in the morning.

But all this is beside the mark; beside the present mark at all events. I said that it was the extravagant and monstrous ending that convinced me that Hawkins’s visit was nothing but a dream: all that went before was rational and orderly enough, and dull enough, too, to be part of any day. But there was one singular circumstance which so far I have not noted. Before I went to bed on that evil night, I gathered up the loose papers that were about the room, and locked them in my desk. I have always had the good habit of leaving my sitting-room tidy at night. Loose papers are apt to go astray; and they are in the way of the landlady’s daughter, when she comes to lay the table in the morning. When this particular morning came, and I had done my best with the breakfast before me, I felt that I needed a very liberal dose of fresh air. Indeed, I thought the case almost pointed to Brighton and back, but this seemed an extreme measure, so I went on ‘bus outside to

Wimbledon. I had found that the air blew freshly on the Common, and I meant to combine its benefits with an enquiry into an odd business which had happened when I was last there, a few weeks earlier. One of the prosperous people who live in the big houses on the Common had run out of his garden as I was passing by, and had accused me of smashing his greenhouse by throwing a lump of coal at it. I soon convinced him that I had nothing to do with the outrage, and that nobody could have hit the greenhouse from the road. Mr. Horncastle — or something northern of that kind — made up his mind that the criminal must be a gardener whom he had discharged some time before; and I thought I should like to hear what had happened. But it turned out that the gardener had been at Plymouth on that particular day, by clear evidence; and there was nothing more to be done. But at all events, I had my dose of fresh breezes, and I came back feeling all the better for the excursion. After tea, I went to my desk and began to set my papers in order — and was on the verge of a relapse. There, on one of the sheets of paper, were the notes concerning Thomas Hampole that I dreamed I had taken. "I dreamed I had taken!" But I had taken them. There they were; very plainly written by me:

"*Thomas Hampole b. The Lees*, *Hedgworth, nr. Northampton, c.* 1809. *Queen's Coll. Oxon. A.D.* 1830. *Ordained*, *Bp of Lichfield. D.* 32.

P. 33. *Curate Alfreton, Derb.* 32-35: *Stafford* 36-38: *Altrincham, nr. Manchester,* 38-40. *Settled Clifford's Inn,* 1842. *Ob.* 1871."

Then it all happened. That was my first thought, and I was sick with fear. Then it had all happened. And that abomination had been accomplished here before my eyes. For a moment, it was a relief to me to remember what the doctor had said to me a few weeks before: "If you don't take care you will be seeing things." It was a relief, that is, to think that I was going mad.

It was some time before I was able to calm myself and consider the whole business with sense, instead of panic. I remembered the affair of that friend of mine; his dream of the secret papers not to be seen by his brother-in-law; how, fast asleep all the while, he had hunted his matchbox from pocket to table, struck a light, inspected the clock, gone back to bed, not awaking till his head had touched the pillow. I found a great similarity between the two cases. If he could look at a clock and tell the time in his sleep, I might just as easily take pencil and paper, and put down the inventions of my dream. This was, no doubt, exactly what had happened, and — save for the senseless horror of the dream, which will haunt me, I suppose, as that nightmare of my childhood has haunted me — there the matter rests. I confess that I have made no further researches into the life of Thomas Hampole, or into the literary origins, if any, of *A London Walk.* I do not like to think how I might feel, if such research confirmed all the facts which I jotted down in my dream. I suppose I should have to fall back on the hypothesis that I had read it all, perhaps without attention, many years before, that it had sunk below the level of my conscious mind, and that it had risen from the depths of the subconscious during the dream. Such things do happen; I have found myself in a dream pattering Greek phrases far beyond my waking capacity. I have remembered these phrases on waking, and verified them with the aid of Liddell and Scott, finding to my astonishment that I was more learned by night than by day. I should be prepared, then, if I happened to discover that the bibliographer of the dream had been strictly accurate; and there I intend to let the matter rest. And as for Hampole's book and its connexions, that is to rest too. I have a superstitious doubt whether the chance that led me to it were altogether a happy one.

2

It seems probable that Hillyer made these personal notes and wrote down the accompanying reasonings and meditations by way of relief. He had very few friends, and nearly all of them, if not all, were less friends than acquaintances. He had lived alone for many years. He had lost the habit of ready speech; if he had ever possessed it. When he did talk, it was of external things, never of his own feelings or inner experiences. Still, it is to be supposed that he felt the need of expression; and so, apparently, he made a quarto manuscript book serve the office of an intimate friend. More men are in this case, perhaps, than is generally supposed. Pepys was familiar enough, in a sense, with plenty of jolly gossips, and *bona robas,* and men of State; but he held his real converse with himself in the shorthand cypher: Pepys was the only confidant of Pepys. Hillyer, whose mere acquaintances were few enough, had all the greater need of shewing his heart to himself.

He wound up the odd affair of Hampole to his own satisfaction, but before long he was at work again.

Life has some strange satisfactions, alleviations, and escapes from trouble — the new page begins. I remember long ago, soon after I first came to London and before I had taken the final vows of solitude, or something very near solitude, being confronted by a queer experience in its trivial way. Some people I knew who lived at Highgate used to encourage their friends to drop in for coffee, whiskey, tobacco and talk on Sunday nights. I don't think they went so far as to say they were At Home. One cold winter night, with a wind roaring about the housetop and whining in the chimney, we all drew our chairs in a rough semi-circle about the fire. We had been sitting in this way for half an hour or more when there was a slight but intense sort of noise. I do not know whether to call it a puff, or a hiss, or a whiz; perhaps it was a combination of all three. With the noise, some object shot off the mantelpiece, and fell with a flop on the ground before us, in the centre of the semi-circle. One of the party picked up the object, and it turned out to be a matchbox. In it, there were four or five matches. They had been used; the wood was blackened; but they were quite cold. No doubt somebody out of range of the fireplace and the nearest ash-tray had used the matchbox in their stead, and had finally put it down on the mantelshelf. The man who picked up the box and examined it, flung it into the fire with an expression of faint contempt, as if he disapproved of the transaction. We speculated vaguely for a few minutes as to what had happened and how it had happened, and then dropped the subject. Some of the party, encountering one another a few days afterwards, did a little more wondering and suggesting of possible explanations; but nobody was much interested, because everybody knew there was some trick, and, it seemed, a clever one, since it remained undiscovered. But nobody was really curious, or puzzled, or perturbed; since nobody believed that the matchbox had been shot through the air by occult forces, hidden from man. Miracles are not on the modern map; and our disbelief in them is one of the escapes from trouble to which I have alluded. We see something that we do not understand; and we conclude that there is a trick somewhere. And usually, unless we are seriously affected by the event, we trouble no farther, not even to find out what the trick may have been.

I have been laying this consolation to my heart lately. For some weeks we have been vexed here in an odd manner enough, and I am afraid that my landlady, who does her best for us all, has been very considerably distressed. And I am afraid, too, that for some time, at all events, I bore the trouble lightly, since it did not greatly affect my comfort or convenience. It began with the fall of the mirror that used to hang over the mantelpiece in my room. The thing came down in the dead of night with a bang and a crash that woke up the house. One of the lodgers, a young workman of some kind, said that the cords were sound and that it looked as if they had been violently torn. I don't think anybody paid much attention to this very improbable conjecture. Mrs. Jolly, the landlady, was sorry to lose a handsome piece of furniture, as she considered it, and I think she feared the bad luck that is supposed to follow the breaking of a glass. And I was relieved to be rid of the horrid object. Then, not long afterwards, there was some more smashing. The furniture in a room on the floor above mine was thrown about in an extraordinary manner, and everything breakable was broken. Nobody could explain it. The police were called in, I believe quite ineffectually. The Inspector, or whatever he was, seems to have insinuated that Mrs. Jolly's daughter was somehow or other at the bottom of the mischief, but I believe the girl was down in the kitchen with her mother when the furniture was falling about over our heads. And again, I am afraid that beyond a general dislike of rows and disturbances of all kinds, I took no great interest in the affair. We are mostly selfish, not so much in an active as in a passive way. I was mildly sorry that a very decent woman should be harassed and be the worse off by three or four pounds; but my rest was not broken by the thought of Mrs. Jolly's troubles. When my own turn came, it is hardly necessary to state that I was moved more deeply.

I was working one afternoon at my desk. I wanted to consult a book which was on a shelf in my bedroom. I shut the door' of the sitting-room behind me and went into the bedroom next door. I was delayed a little in getting the book I wanted, as I had carelessly put it back in a hurry on the wrong shelf some weeks before. But I could not have been out of my sitting-room for more than three minutes. When I got back I was amazed and horrified to find one of the notebooks I had been using lying on the floor, torn to shreds and fragments. It might be possible, I thought, to piece it all together, at the cost of a great deal of time and trouble; but how on earth had it happened? I had not done it; that was certain. I am sometimes absent-minded. I juggle with small objects such as pipes and pens and pencils and look for them everywhere but in the place where I have laid them five minutes before: but I was very sure that I had not torn up my own notebook and forgotten all about it three minutes afterwards. Who had done it? I was the only lodger in the house at the time. I went down to the kitchen and found Mrs. Jolly asleep in her armchair and her daughter mending things by the window. I made some instruction about breakfast a little earlier to-morrow my excuse for disturbing them, and went back and stood bewildered in the middle of my room; not knowing in the least what to think of the scraps and fragments of paper littering the floor. "Look at the hangman when it comes home to him," I quoted somewhat harshly and irrelevantly from *Barnaby Rudge.* But I had been brought up hard against a blank wall. I gathered the torn pieces into a heap by the waste-paper basket, so that it might look probable, the result of an author's despair, when they brought up my tea-things; and I spent the rest of the evening and a good part of the night in doing a sort of jig-saw puzzle with the fragments, a bottle of gum, and a blank book. This was distraction of a kind; but, the one puzzle solved with tolerable success, the other presented itself again, and remained — intolerable and unsolvable. I had to invent a deadly enemy for Mrs. Jolly before I could go to bed with any hope of going to sleep. I made my figment as plausible as I could. I feigned two opposition letters of lodgings in the same street, many years before, borrowing pretty freely from *Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings.* There was competition and deadly enmity between the two. Finally, Mrs. Jolly had triumphed all along the line, and Mrs. X. bankrupt, sold up and utterly defeated, had fled the country. She had returned after the long years, had tracked Mrs. Jolly down, and was now wreaking vengeance on her old foe. She had lived amongst the Blackfellows of Australia, and had learnt their stealthy secrets. Her plan was, no doubt, to make No. 29 uninhabitable, to drive the lodgers away, and thus reduce Mrs. Jolly to ruin and beggary. And, for the time, this strange story served its turn. Later, I picked holes in it, detected improbabilities, doubted whether that sort of thing really happened; and yet reflected that, after all, the strangest things did happen, and that plots and stratagems quite as unusual were on record. There was clearly a trick, a series of tricks somewhere: manuscript books do not tear themselves any more than matchboxes fly off mantel-shelves of their own accord. My explanation of the notebook trick might not be altogether satisfactory; but it was good enough.

Within a few weeks, however, I was concerned in a number of misadventures, which, so far as I see, cannot be accounted for by the hypothesis I put forward to cover the incidents at 29 Layburn Street. I say I was concerned with these affairs, but this is not quite exact. I was present when they occurred; a different matter.

I was having my lunch — or rather dinner — at the Quill two days after the incident of the torn manuscript. I had just lit my pipe, when one of the big glass jars, used for holding spirits, standing on a shelf at the back of the bar, fell forward and smashed to pieces on the floor.

The next day, in the morning, I was going along Holborn on the top of a ‘bus. A strong wind was blowing, and I was holding my hat. It was nearly blown away a few minutes before. On the south side of the street, near one of the Turnstiles into Lincoln’s Inn Fields, I noticed a house, with high hoardings, and an elaborate galleried scaffolding in front of it. In a moment, just as we were going past, the whole structure seemed to fall to pieces and collapse, like a pagoda built of cards. The hoardings fell out on the pavement; the poles and planks of the scaffolding fell to right and left. I believe that a man employed in the rebuilding work and a passerby were injured, but not seriously.

On the afternoon of the same day I was walking back to my rooms by way of Oxford Street. I was passing a jeweller’s shop when there was a crash of glass. There was a great jagged opening in one of the panes of the shopfront. There was a rush of people to the spot, yells and shouts, blowing of police whistles. Very much to my disgust I found myself in the centre of the scrummage, and got pretty roughly handled — or, rather, shoved. I heard that nothing was stolen, and that nobody had seen the “smash and grab” man get away.

Three days later I had to see my solicitor on some business. We were discussing it in his room, when there was a loud crack and then the noise of a heavy fall. In the next room, separated from the one in which we were sitting by a wooden partition, the Letter Books of the firm were kept on shelves. A clerk wanted to consult one of these volumes dated thirty or forty years back, and standing on a high shelf. The man had gone up a library ladder to get the book. He was a heavy man, and they said there was a defect in the wood. The ladder broke and the clerk went headlong. But he was not seriously hurt, I am glad to say.

Four days later. Collapse of a cellar flap in Soho Street, just after I had walked over it.

The same day, a couple of hours afterwards. Precisely similar accident in the Caledonian Road; but in this case I was on the other side of the street.

Five days later. I could not settle down to my work on this particular evening, and went round to see a friend who had a flat — or lower part of a "converted" house — in the Finchley Road. As we were talking, there was a noise like thunder above us, and a shower of plaster covered us and everything in the room. My friend ran upstairs, and found that an old-fashioned wardrobe had fallen forward — jarred out of place, the people supposed, by the heavy traffic.

Next morning, I was going under the covered space between the Great Central Hotel and Marylebone Station. There was a splintering crash of broken glass, and something fell to the ground five or six feet to my left. It was a butcher's weight of four pounds. I heard a man say that it must have been flung out of one of the hotel windows. I do not know whether this was found to be the case.

In the ten days following there were four more incidents of the same order, in which I was present, though as I have said, and maintain, I was in no way concerned.

And I draw no conclusions whatever. I do not believe that there is any conclusion to be drawn. A good many people would say, I suppose, that it is highly improbable that one man should be present at, or at least in the near neighbourhood of, so many disasters in the course of three weeks and four days. It is not in the least improbable when the vastness of London and its myriad movements and activities are considered. No doubt, it appears strange, but the strangeness is only in appearance. It appears strange when a man gets an entire suit dealt to him at cards; in reality that hand of his is no stranger than any other combination of thirteen cards. The world is full of these combinations, of events as well as of cards, which invite us to draw conclusions; to say, therefore, this, that or the other. But there is no "therefore". A man once thought it worth while writing to the paper to chronicle one of these odd coincidences. He bought a watch, he said, somewhere in the straits Settlements. Thirty years later, he was in London. The watch was out of order, and he walked into a shop, I think in Holborn, to have it seen to. The man across the counter who took the watch, was the man who had sold the watch in the far east all those years before. It happened so; and again, there is no "therefore", no conclusion to be drawn.

Nor was there any connexion between the broken bottles and smashed ladders and the events that have troubled us at the lodging-house in Layburn Street. In the latter case, I have no doubt that my fable was not far from the fact. Somebody had a grudge against my landlady and tried to scare away her lodgers and ruin her business. I don't profess to understand how the trick was done: I am puzzled. But then I am puzzled by the simplest card-trick— "choose a card. Put it back; don't show me where, etc., etc." — till they tell me how it is done. But the great thing to remember when one is confronted with apparent impossibilities is: there is a trick somewhere. As for the other smashes and crashes — the affairs of tavern and street, lawyer's office, and cellar flap — as I have noted, there is no puzzle here, no improbability, even much less impossibility. Here, the only thing to remember is that London stretches for ten miles in every direction, and that it contains more than eight million inhabitants.

3

It would appear that the last sentence in Hillyer's remarks on certain odd experiences that had befallen him — which he declined to consider odd — dwelt in his mind. He had evidently been thinking over the question of probabilities, and weighing their importance and their applicability to his own field of research. He continues his notes:

I was very much struck, when I was reading Whately's *Logic* for the first time, by a footnote on Probability. Indeed, I have forgotten the statement in the text thus annotated, but the note was to the effect that the Insurance Offices employed people whose business it was to estimate probability; to reduce it and transmute it from probability to certainty; and to do so with such nice exactness that the result of this marvellous process might be expressed in pounds, shillings, and pence — surely the utmost word of accuracy. Thus, if a man living near the Monument wanted to insure against the column falling on his house he will find, as I have been told, that the chances have been precisely reckoned, and that his yearly payment must be eighteen-pence per cent. And to me, such a process seems to grapple almost with the infinite, to draw very near to the land where Achilles will race past the tortoise and all parallel straight lines will meet at last.

It must be confessed, however, that such a reckoning and most of those which are the matter of insurance calculations are material in their conditions and in their issues. There is a question whether a house will burn, a ship sink, or a tall column fall headlong. The likelihood of these events happening is estimated, and the chances are expressed in terms of money. But the material event and the monetary payments are not the process itself but the application of it to commercial purposes. By means of the process, the Insurance Office ascertains the exact degree of likelihood that the Monument will tumble down, and even the likelihood of its falling to east, west, north or south. And the result is expressed, for the special purposes of insurer and insured, in terms of eighteenpence per cent., per annum. But I see no reason why the method should not be applied to the things of the mind as well as the things of the body. And the question of money is accidental, not essential. Why is there not an office where, in return for a sufficient fee, one might be informed as to the exact chance of a man of the highest literary genius appearing in the next fifty years? We may be inclined to say that the question is incalculable, but this is probably not the case. There would be a difficulty, the affair would have to be in the hands of a college or society or brotherhood, since the highest genius is not always recognised in its own age. Shakespeare was, no doubt, held to be a very clever man in his own time, and was handsomely rewarded. His social position was, perhaps, something higher than that of a writer of successful farcical comedies in our day: he might be fairly equated in general esteem with the late W. S. Gilbert. Milton had to wait for some years: Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats were not immediately acclaimed. Hence, the necessity of a college or permanent body, if we are to deal with the risk of a supreme genius being born: the college might have to wait a hundred years before the reply to its question could be tested. I like to think of some of the calculations to be made, of the strange reckonings that would go into the account. For example, suppose we simplify the problem, and deal only with England and with England merely from the time of Shakespeare onwards. How many have been born in that period? And then, what is the percentage of men of supreme literary genius? Supposing a hundred million lives: how many great masters should we expect? And, of course, apart from this drudgery of figures, there are the wider, vaguer, subtler, enquiries. Sometimes genius may depend to a certain extent on the attitude, atmosphere and fashion of the age; and it may be said that these are things that cannot be prophesied far in advance. But when Ascham denounced the *Morte d'Arthur* as a bad book, when the Elizabethan Puritans protested against holidays and feasts because it was written "six days shalt thou labour" — then Gradgrind and Bounderby rose clearly into view.

But there is one region into which the doctrine of probability cannot enter. That is the land where the Queen of the Fairies holds court, where they give gold that turns into dead leaves; into dead ashes. There is no list of those who have gone down into that valley; merely hints and rumours that go on from age to age. Those who have visited the enchanted region are either unable or unwilling to give any very definite account of their experiences on their return. But it is to be gathered that a certain transformation or transmutation of the world is effected; both within and without.

CHAPTER IV

1

ONE OF THE STRANGE MATTERS OF DREAMING — Hillyer recurs here to what was perhaps a favourite subject — is the manner in which the dream sometimes bears witness to itself. Indirectly, not directly. Nobody says: "This is all true, and it is actually happening." But the kind of dream of which I am speaking affirms its own reality by connecting itself with innumerable other experiences in the past, with a whole cycle of events, with a recognised group of characters, in fact, with life; but with a life that is wholly of dreamland. In our actual waking hours, we hear, or we read that our friend X is dead, or is appointed Governor of Kafiristan, or has discovered a new metal. But whatever fate may have befallen him, we are at once conscious of a whole circle of events, emotions, recollections, in all of which X had some share. X's name brings X's world with it; to a greater or less extent we also are inhabitants of that world, and find ourselves in familiar, recognised company. And so with these dreams. The main action of the dream is confirmed by a hundred subsidiary recollections. Say, we are to descend into a dark and obscure valley, deeply wooded, silent save for a faint ripple of water that seems to come from far away. We are to go down into this valley; and there is a secret to be discovered there, in the darkness underneath the trees. But we have heard of all this before; the adventure is well known; it has been described again and again; what were A and C and E saying about it a week ago? That all who went into that valley returned with a mark on their breasts? Or were they changed into…? And so on and so on: but however monstrous the matter of the dream, however mad its circumstances, all are entirely acceptable to the mind of the dreamer, and are perceived to be a part of daily and accustomed life, to be congruous with half a dozen or half a hundred associations and recollections. Sometimes, indeed, such a dream is so fixed and established in its (apparent) actuality, that it is with a very considerable effort that it is dismissed and discharged from the region of actual things when the sleeper awakes; and, as I have noted before, it may hang about the consciousness with a strange persistence, and become perhaps, at last recognised as part of the waking world: “something I must have read long ago,”

“something I heard when I was a boy and got all mixed up.” And I think also that it is the sense of continuity, of being a part of a familiar life, that leads some people to affirm that they dream of a certain place, of a certain event or adventure, over and over again. The dream suggestion: “I have been here before,”

“I know what is coming next,” and so forth, is so strong that the sleeper awakened is convinced that this particular dream is recurrent; that it repeats itself at intervals. Of course, there may be dreams which do recur; I believe that the case of the Cornishman who dreamed on two (or three?) successive nights that he saw Percival the Prime Minister being assassinated is well attested; but I hold that the great majority of (apparently) recurring dreams are to be explained in the manner I have suggested.

The point interests me personally. I have no doubt that a short time ago — I cannot fix a precise date — I had a singularly vivid dream. I was walking pretty briskly on the pavement of a London Street; of a street, rather, since I did not distinguish it, or recognise this feature or that; I simply took it for granted. I think I was conscious of a faint rustle as of leaves; but I am not sure of this. It was night-time, and evidently late since very few people were about. I was aware that I had an appointment, some end to my walk; but this end, whatever it was, was in the background of my mind, not continuously and sharply apprehended. I think this is often so in our waking hours. A man has settled that he is to meet Jones at a certain time and a certain place. He sets out to keep his appointment, and very likely dismisses it from his mind as he goes to that place. He may be thinking of politics or incunabula, or hybridising for most of the way; since the art of the young waterman, thinking of nothing at all, is a very difficult and rare achievement. So there was just this impression on my mind as I passed through the lighted street. Then I came to my journey’s end. I was in Layburn Street. I knew it by the steep ascent of the road, and by the vague darkness of the group of trees at the top, where the way branches to left and right. And I was standing before number 29, the house in which I live. I was not in the least astonished to see the whole house blazing with light; shining out radiant into the night, and resonant with music. As it was, so it was accepted without question; in the manner after which St. Paul’s Cathedral is accepted by people who go eastward up Ludgate Hill. I went up the steps, through the open door, and found myself not in Mrs.

Jolly's extremely modest apartments, but in a gorgeous palace. Here one would suppose, the absurdity should have arrested me, and brought the whole fabric of the dream crashing to the ground. It was not so. I knew that this was not the aspect of the place to which I was used. For an inappreciable instant of time, the jaundiced marble paper of the passage, the dingy carpet on the stairs, the sordid light that crept through the landing window were present to me; that, I recollected, was the accustomed greeting of the house. I quite appreciated the vast difference between that and this splendour into which I had entered; but I understood perfectly what had happened. For this, it seems, was one of those dreams which do not stand alone as solitary incidents, but are a part of a larger whole, and in relation to a whole world of circumstance. And so the palace of golden and glorious light in which! Stood was utterly rational and acceptable. In the dream, I say, I was in the secret, I knew what had happened and how and why it had happened. It was all a part of a scheme which was perfectly familiar to me; I received it and rejoiced in it, not as one who is incredulous and all amazed at the coming of some tremendous unexpected good, saying to himself, scarcely daring to believe: "Then my dreams have come true!" but rather, as a man witnessing a happy ending which he has long foreseen in the fashioning of which he has, perhaps, played his part. I say, "a happy ending" for the figures about me were, I knew, possessed with the felicity that was in my heart. I was sharing in a great festival of ineffable joy. And the cause and reason of it were not hidden from me; I participated in the secret possessed by all, and could have uttered it in a word. But when I awoke, the word, though it was even then on my lips, was lost.

I find my recollection insisting very strongly on this master word. It was as if all the secret, all the magic of the adventure in which I supposed myself engaged were made by it and summed up in it. It was the cause of all and the end of all; the deep foundation stone and the highest pinnacle of the palace. If it were taken away, all would fall into ugly ruin. Indeed, I am reminded a little of the Lost Word which the Freemasons seek; and it is likely enough that the word of my dream arose from a confused recollection of the Masonic legend.

I have said that the dream was a singularly vivid one. So it was. Not so much in the recollection of its detail and imagery, as in my extraordinary conviction on awaking, and after awaking of having gone through a real and veritable experience. I can remember something of a certain ritual in which I joined, of which I was a witness. In the dream it all seemed just and right; in the awakening its strangeness was incredible. But not so much the external imagery as the inward felicity impressed itself upon me. And curiously (as I think) this felicity was very largely negative in its nature. Curiously, because I believe that most of us regard happiness, or joy, or well-being or what you will, as a positive thing, based on what a man has gained, or received, or possessed himself of in one way or another: it is an affair of having. But in the dream my delight — and it was greater than words can utter — was founded not on what I had gained, but on what I had lost. What I had lost was all the burden of life. I do not think that many of us realise what that amounts to. Perhaps it might be said that we do not know that it is there — till it has dropped off. And who can tell of this experience? Very few, I suppose; and I only of a belief in a dream.

For the burden of life is made up of an infinite number of little things. The great sorrows, the terrible losses, the horrible defeats, the remorse for grievous misdoings: these are in the pack, but there is much more. It is piled up with the trifles that we suppose we have forgotten. There are few days on which we do not do something amiss. There are few days on which something is not done amiss to us. There are few days on which something amiss does not happen, without our fault or the fault of another. I think if you put this to the next man he would probably admit that this is so. “But,” he would add, “I’ve no time to think of trifles. Thingumbob did give me a nasty look in the train; and I’m afraid I was a bit short with Whatd’yecall; and the chop I had for lunch was as tough as hell. But I’m not bothering much about little things like that. I’ve got more serious matters to think of.” He is perfectly sensible and perfectly right; and if he did otherwise he would in all probability go mad. Nevertheless, this wise neglect of trifles does not abolish them or annihilate them. They are, very properly, dismissed from the working, practical memory. But they sink down, one by one, into their appointed depths; and every day the burden grows a little heavier though the greater part of the small odds and ends that stuff it are forgotten. But all the time the weight is on the shoulders; a constant part of life. The trifles are forgotten, and so they survive. We have striven with the great troubles: the deadly wrongs and sins, the grievous sorrows and losses have been in greater or less measure encountered and accounted for; their measure has been taken, their sting drawn. And the odds and ends are set on one side, neglected and, as we say, forgotten; and yet surviving: the burden of life.

It was all this heavy burden that in my dream was taken from me, and I was raised up in an instant from thick darkness to shining light; knowing only in that instant how heavy the burden had been. And so I say that the felicity which I enjoyed was negative; and I remember vaguely receiving some intimation that this was but the first degree of a new life, that there were brighter enlightenments and far more intense joys to succeed in their order.

And I awoke out of all this astounding fantasy of sleep into our common actual world, which I, like most other men, had found bearable enough, and often enjoyable. I awoke into misery, as one who has been for the second time put out of Paradise. I had lost the word; the golden world had fallen into dust. And as I have noted, I could not persuade myself that it had been a solitary experience. It was rather the culmination of a long series of such dreams; not the same dream, perhaps, but all of the same order.

2

Mrs. Jolly, the landlady of 29, Layburn Street, wished with all her heart that she had never called in the police. There had been no more breakages of furniture — she knew nothing of the affair of Hillyer’s torn manuscript — and the house had regained its ancient peace. She gave no credit to the police on that account. She felt sure that it would have been just the same if they had never come near the place, prying and poking about, and talking a lot of nonsense, as if they knew all about it. Couldn’t find out who was breaking up the home; never said a word as to how she was going to get her money back that she spent on new things for Mr. Zerny’s room, nor about that beautiful glass of Aunt Bessie’s, that was worth pounds — and if you had the money to spend, you wouldn’t get anything a half or a quarter as good in these times; they couldn’t make them like that now. All that policeman fellow did was to come round and ask a lot of impudent questions about her daughter, making his insinuations that were nothing better than falsehoods and lies; you couldn’t call them nothing but lies, and the poor girl standing by that very table all the time. “Fits, indeed! I’d give him fits, and see how he liked it" — so Mrs. Jolly ended her secret; the last words spoken aloud, as if they had been: *Per omnia sæcula saculorum. Amen.*

The fact was, that the Inspector had been stirring again. He had made up his mind firmly that the girl was, somehow or other, at the bottom of the trouble at No. 29. He did not know exactly how she had done it. He brushed aside the alibi that Mrs. Jolly had set up for her daughter: "The sort of woman who would say anything if she thought her daughter was likely to get into trouble." He remembered the dictum of a master detective to the effect that it would be a good thing if all girls between fifteen and twenty could be shut up somewhere, as the police would then be saved a lot of trouble. But, anyhow, the officer summed up in his mind, it was not a matter for police action, and that was all about it. And then, a month or so later, odd rumours came to his ears, information of a cloudy and perplexing kind was received, and the Inspector found that Mrs. Jolly's house was again his business; or looked as if it might possibly become his business.

A sort of forewarning of the trouble that was to come was vouchsafed to the landlady — if she could have taken it in that light. Marketing in Exeter Street, Islington, she met a neighbour and acquaintance, Mrs. Teed of Baker Street. They were politic for a while over cabbages and kippers, and then Mrs. Teed remarked:

"I always say it's pleasant to have cheerful people about you. You and I, Mrs. Jolly, we know well enough that there's no fortune in lodgings, and I'm sure there's plenty of work. So, as I say, if the lodgers are cheerful and like a bit of fun it's all the better for all concerned. Though some would call it burning the candle at both ends. There's your Mr. Pytle now. Up for the best part of the night, and off first thing in the morning. However can he do it? But there you are: one man's meat is another man's poison, as granny used to say. Well, I've got to buy a rabbit before I get home, so good morning to you, Mrs. Jolly. Rather warm, I find it."

Mrs. Jolly received this farago in a dumb and gaping silence; stupid with perplexity, with searching for meaning where, for her, no meaning was. She had not the remotest notion of what Mrs. Teed was talking about. "Burning the candle at both ends!" Who burned it? Once or twice, certainly, Mr. Zerny and the other young man on the top floor had been to a Palais de

Danse, and had not got home till late; but it had not happened three times in the last six months, and not at all for six weeks or more; she knew that. They were steady young fellows, both of them. Came in from their work, brought home sausages for her to cook sometimes, sometimes a tin of salmon, went out again as a rule after supper, and had a pint of beer in the private bar of the Quill, and mostly called "good night" to her down the stairs, as they came in. And not a sound or a song from them till seven o'clock the next morning. Whatever could Mrs. Teed be thinking of? As for Mr. Pytle, at his time of life; the woman must be off her head to think of such a thing. Every Sunday morning of his life regular at the Barnsbury Chapel, Baptist, and taught Sunday school till that bad cough took him last winter. And Mr. Hillyer as quiet as quiet, and his nose never out of his books. Revolving such things, Mrs. Jolly walked home in an indignant daze. Again and again she sought for a clue and found none, and could only wonder many times what on earth the woman was thinking about. And Inspector Martin was making his stealthy enquiries as to her and as to all the lodgers under her roof.

For the fact was that a man lodging in a house on the other side of the street, a little higher up, was employed Fleet Street way, in the mechanical department of a newspaper, and thus was accustomed to get back from his work at about three o'clock in the morning. And he had been much astonished at strange things to be seen in Layburn Street at that hour, for three or four nights running. He declared that No. 29 was blazing and bursting with light, the brightest, whitest light he had ever seen. "Were the blinds all up, then?" he was asked. He couldn't say about that, he hadn't noticed whether they were up or down. It was all ablaze, that was all he could say; he didn't think anything of blinds or curtains either. And as to seeing anybody through the windows, there again, the man was drawn blank. He didn't know; there might be people inside, or there might not be. He thought he was dazzled with the light and could see nothing else. And this story, variegated, embroidered, illuminated in all colours, went abroad in the quarter in many versions. Mrs. Teed, as we may conjecture, had heard that there were such doings at Mrs. Jolly's, a party every night, and up to any hours, and people going home with the milk. "A gay lot, and no mistake," was the opinion of those who held this view of the case. But there were darker opinions. There was talk of clubs, more specifically of nightclubs; of gambling clubs, of drinking clubs, of dance instructresses —

here were sneers and bitter laughter — of whiskey served in coffee cups, and — worst of all— “champagne galore”. Mrs. Jolly, on her marketing excursions and perambulations grew conscious that things were, somehow, different from usual. She found herself coming in upon muttered confidences, which ceased at her approach. She would hear: ‘There she is! That’s Mrs. Jolly,” as she passed on her way. The shopmen received her orders with a new attention. Some of her friends greeted her with curious smiles, others frowned moral judgments; and smiles and frowns alike enraged and perplexed her, and she felt inclined to ask herself, in the Hillyer manner, whether she were asleep or awake.

And then, a very summit of annoyance and affliction, Inspector Martin called, with bland enquiries. Of course it was the night-club stories of the strange doings at 29, Layburn Street that had attracted his interest. These, in the course of a week or ten days, had assumed a remarkable solidity and consistency. The folk-lore imagination of the neighbourhood had been at work; details at first vague and conjectural, were now clear cut, precise, undoubted. Gaming dropped out of the account; drink and worse evils took its place. The Inspector was doubtful at first.

“There must be a lot of cars and taxis drawing up before the house, then,” he remarked, to a voluble informant. “I should have thought we would have heard about it from the man on the beat.”

“Not a bit of it; they’re too artful for that. They don’t come near the street. One pulls up at the corner of Theobald’s Road, and another one may go right into King’s Cross Station, d’you see? There may be a couple stop in Acton Street, and another in Lloyd’s Square, and one more by the Free Hospital in Gray’s Inn Road, that’s how they do it. And the toffs don’t mind a bit of a walk, so long as they can keep it snug.”

The Inspector had heard of such unworthy dodges before; he began to think there was something in it. But there were grave improbabilities. Mrs. Jolly had been the tenant of 29, Layburn Street for many years; there was nothing against her or the house or any of her lodgers. He had looked into them, when the police were called in over that smash-up on the top floor; and there was nothing against any of them. Still, he went round and began to put his bland suggestions. Whereupon, to his amazement, Mrs. Jolly turned on him in her fury, and told her story. Of mutterings and whisperings in the market-place, of Mrs. Teed and her madness, of nods and scowls and smiles of innuendo. It was a vague tale enough, but there was bewildered rage behind it, and the landlady vowed she would have them up in the police court, if they went on with their wicked lies and backbiting. And the officer went away to make further enquiries, and they led him into quicksands and swamps of fabrications and contradictions, but to no certain ground of fact whatever. For the newspaper mechanic had been sent by his firm to Newcastle-on-Tyne; and no one else had seen the bright and shining appearances of Layburn Street. And so all the superstructures, the castles and domes and palaces of loose talk, and vain invention that had been built upon the man's story fell apart, were disintegrated, and dispersed into shapeless mists.

3

NOT LONG AGO, A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO, perhaps — said the eminent nerve specialist — a rather queer case came my way. He had had a fright, and had gone to the first brass plate that he saw in his neighbourhood. The G.P. sent him on to me; and he came round in a very shaky condition. His eyes were in an odd state. I should have suspected opium, but he said that he had never taken hypnotics of any kind, and I believed him. Well, he told me his story. He had been putting coals on the fire or doing something equally ordinary, and he suddenly found himself, as he put it, thinking gibberish; forming in his mind sentences entirely wanting in sense of any sort, absolute incoherence, as far as I could make out. He gibbered to himself, and wondered whether he were dreaming, or quoting out of a book which he didn't remember reading. And then it struck him that he wasn't exactly clear as to who he was or where he was, or what he was doing there. I gathered that he wasn't quite sure whether he was alive or dead for the next hour or so.

I got him to tell me about himself; where he lived, and what he did, and how he passed his time generally. Well in the first place, it seemed he had been living for twenty years or more in some unearthly part of London that nobody had ever heard of or ever goes to; somewhere in the north, off the Gray's Inn Road or the King's Cross Road. He lived in two rooms in a lodging house, said "thank you" twice a day to his landlady, and "good evening" to a fellow-lodger about once a week. Hardly any friends, never went out except now and then to the B.M. Reading Room, and was absorbed in the study of some branch of folklore, as well as I could gather. He was a clear case of Claustrophilia. He had got into the way of shutting himself up, living alone, never speaking to anybody, avoiding the society of his fellow-creatures, dreading the very thought of society of any kind. And the result was, he'd got himself into a devil of a state. In a very few weeks, I should think he would have lost his memory and his identity and have been found wandering about, wondering who he was and where he lived. Or he might have killed himself. There's a great deal of sound observation, you know, in that chapter in *Pickwick* about the old Inns of Court, and the people who shut themselves up in them.

I told this patient of mine that he must have a thorough change; get away to the sea, stay somewhere where he would meet people and be pretty well forced to talk to them, read the papers, take an interest in things in general, and so on and so on. I warned him that if he stuck in his old rut, he'd be seeing things before he was much older. As a matter of fact, I didn't think the trouble would take that form; but I thought I'd better give him a bit of a fright. Anyhow, I gathered later that he had followed the prescription, and gone to a seaside place; and as he said, had felt very much better, in fact, quite well.

"And I feel quite well now," he told me, the next time I saw him. "But…"

It was a very big "but" indeed. I had seen him for the first time at the end of May. He came to me again in the beginning of the October of the same year. Before listening to what he had to say — I stopped him as he was beginning his story — I made the usual examination, and put him through the ordinary tests. He was right in saying that he felt well; he was well. Everything as sound as it could be in a man in the 'fifties; and a good deal sounder, I should say, than the average man of that age. But the fellow was frightened out of his life. What at? He suffered from a delusion; and it was the most extraordinary delusion that I've ever come across. His delusion was that he thought he was going mad. "You know," he said, "that you warned me that if I didn't take care I should be seeing things." And then he began to tell me all about it; but before he got very far, I stopped him. I saw that there were some very singular and, indeed, unique features about the case — so far as my experience goes. It was getting late in the morning, and I had an important consultation in half an hour, and I wanted to go into the case thoroughly, without bothering about the time. As it happened, my wife was going to some show that evening with friends; so I asked him if he would mind coming round after dinner to talk the whole thing over in comfort. And I told him to cheer up; there was nothing to be frightened about. “Nothing to be frightened about?” he repeated. “Then you think it was really there?”

In the evening I heard the whole story from first to last. I settled him in a comfortable chair, and he lit his pipe, and sipped at his whiskey and soda as if he enjoyed it. That told me something. I knew that his trouble, whatever it was, had nothing to do with alcohol. An alcoholic patient doesn’t sip whiskey and soda as if he enjoyed it. He takes it as people take very nasty medicine: a shudder and a clutch and down it goes, with an ugly quiver of the face to follow.

The tale began with his stay at a seaside town in Wales, where he had gone to carry out my advice. He said he had enjoyed it very much. He read the papers every day as I had told him, and got up some sort of an interest in what he found in them; he even went through the social gossip and the “Woman’s Page”, I gathered — which is more than I can do. He talked to the people at the hotel, and tried to play with their children on the sands; in fait, he carried out my directions and took his medicine like a Briton. He said he felt better every day; so well indeed, after two or three weeks of the treatment that he felt it would be safe to relax a little. You see, I don’t think he would ever be a sociable man at heart. He struck me as the sort of fellow who might have a few intimate friends — though, I gathered, this had not been the case — but casual come and go acquaintance and casual chatter would always represent a bit of an effort to him. So he thought that as he had been such a good boy, he might allow himself a holiday between breakfast and lunch, and he took to strolling about the dunes in the morning by himself, and finally fixed on a sort of natural amphitheatre, a pleasant turfy, flowery sort of place, where he sat and smoked and felt pleased with himself and everything. “And that was the beginning of the trouble,” he said. He reproached himself for his over-confidence, and for disobeying my orders, as he put it. He felt quite sure that if he had stuck to instructions and kept among other people all the time, he would have been quite all right. He soon found, as he declared, the bad results of getting back even for two or three hours a day to his solitary habits. He began to have delusions. He was convinced, he said, that the people at his hotel were no longer friendly. He was sure they were talking about him among themselves. They looked at him in a very odd way. Parties broke up when he came near them.

They spied on him when he was sitting in his favourite hollow in the dunes. One of them asked him why he didn't bring his friend to the hotel. At last, nobody would speak to him, and the manager asked him to leave. The man said the other guests accused him of consorting with a suspected murderer. My patient left the hotel and took lodgings in the town. And then, one day when he was at his old place, the green round, a whole gang rushed him and held him, while they looked for somebody who wasn't there, who, they were quite sure, had been there a moment before.

He went back to town after that, feeling naturally, a good deal upset. He assured me that he was absolutely convinced at the time that everything had happened just as he had told it to me.

"Once or twice," he said, "I had a horrible qualm. I remembered what you had told me about the state of my nerves, and your hint that things might get very much worse if I didn't take care of myself. I asked myself:

'Are you quite certain that all that really happened?' But I was quite certain; so certain that I was thoroughly reassured. I took it that for some reason or other, I didn't in the least know what, these people at the hotel had taken a dislike to me, and that the whole thing was a very ill-natured practical joke to get me out of the place. I tried to remember what I could have done to offend them. Then I recollected that I had said something that had annoyed an old general very much indeed. I hadn't the smallest intention of being offensive; in fact, I was trying to make myself agreeable to his daughter, but I saw afterwards that I had put my foot into it very badly. The general got into a foaming rage, and of course I apologised most humbly, and called myself the worst names I could think of. I thought I was forgiven, but when things turned out as they did, and I went back to town, I thought it all over, and came to the conclusion that the old man was still furious and had taken it out of me in his own way. And, in a way, that set my mind at ease."

"And now," I said to him, "you think the whole business was a delusion?"

"I am quite sure of that, I am sorry to say," he replied. And then he went on with his tale. It was certainly an odd one. The man was struggling you know, all the time against falling back into his foolish way of living, before

I had warned him of what that sort of thing led to. He took a certain amount of exercise, I gathered; walked about London, went on ‘bus rides, did no work in the morning. And he was almost morbidly over-anxious to avoid the mere suspicion of morbidity of any kind. When he found himself indulging in fancies that were a little off the main track of life, he pulled himself together and read the daily paper for all he was worth. That was all very well; but I can’t help thinking that the subject in which he was interested, the psychology of certain folk-lore legends, so far as I could gather, was not exactly the best direction for his thoughts. I told him that the Queen of Fairyland — she seemed the principal bee in his bonnet — was rather of pathological than psychological interest; and I may say, by the way, that in my opinion, legends of this kind are simply confused and fanciful reports of cases of hyperæsthesia. Still, a man may have a crazy hobby and be quite sound apart from it; and that was the way this patient impressed me. But queer things happened to him. He had not been back in London long, when his morning walk took him to some God-forsaken little square somewhere near his rooms, and he sat down on one of the benches to smoke and meditate. There were two old men on another bench, and he noticed presently that one of them was staring at him in a very queer sort of way — as if he saw something that frightened him, as my patient put it. He turned away and looked at the houses of the square, and admired the gardens in front of him; but when he glanced towards the bench opposite, there was the old fellow glaring in terror: “Not exactly at me, but as though he saw something on the bench beside me. He looked so frightened that he frightened me. The other old chap was puffing at his pipe and seemed as cheerful as possible; but I got up and went away, feeling a little disturbed and uneasy. Then it struck me that one old man was, perhaps, a little queer in the head, and that the other was a friend who took him out and looked after him; and I thought no more of it.”

Then he went on to tell me about things being smashed up in the house where he lodged. A big mirror over the fireplace in his sitting-room, some chairs and crockery on the floor above him, a notebook that he had left on his desk for two or three minutes, torn to pieces. And then a long list of breakages and smashes that had happened when he was about, in all sorts of places: in a public-house, in an office, in the street. I told him that there was nothing in all that beyond coincidence. London was a big place; hoardings would blow down, and things get broken and ladders give way — I am giving some of his misadventures. He told me that that was exactly the way he talked to himself; he wouldn't admit that there was anything queer, anything to be uneasy about. He stuck out against it, as he said, and accounted for everything on commonsense lines. He said he had made up a story about someone who had quarrelled with his landlady to explain her broken furniture and his torn notebook.

"Well," I said, "that sounds a likely story enough, so far as I can see. I don't make out the bearing of all this upon your case. The only advice I can give you is to change your rooms. I'm told there's very snug lying in Kensington."

He grinned at the allusion; but then it all came out. He had hinted at something of the kind at the beginning of his story. He was convinced that there was not a word of truth in it from beginning to end. He was sure that he was suffering from delusions; that nothing had happened as he had told it, that all that trouble at the seaside place was imaginary, and that nothing had been smashed, broken, or damaged in any way; either in his rooms or out of them. I reminded him of the torn notebook.

"You have evidence of that at least," I pointed out. "You told me you fitted the torn scraps together and pasted them into a new book." But he had his answer. No doubt, he had torn the book to pieces himself, and then had forgotten all about it.

I was beginning to get extremely interested in the man. There was something exceptional about him. It is not usual for paranoiacs to insist on their insanity. As a rule, they are quite certain that their wildest delusions are hard facts. You may have a man worth a hundred thousand pounds who is quite certain that he will be in the workhouse in a week. You show him his bank-book with the hard figures. It's no good. Either, the bank is in the plot or else there are huge debts which nobody knows about. The man is dead sure that he is a beggar; and that the figures in the bankbook are part of a conspiracy. And here was this patient insisting that a mass of experiences which he had taken for facts at the time were the creations of his diseased brain. I determined to settle the matter one way or the other by a very simple test. I got dates, places, and addresses out of him, and noted them down. "Now," I said, "I believe that your case is a very hopeful one. I am almost sure that it will yield to treatment. Go down to Brighton for a fortnight, and come and see me on October 17th, in the evening."

I proceeded to apply the test I had thought of. As it happened I knew the seaside place he had stayed at in the early summer, and I had stayed at the same hotel. I wrote to the manager and put the case to him just as I had heard it from the patient. I asked him to let me know, confidentially, whether anything of the kind had taken place, whether the circumstances were as represented. He wrote to me confirming the patient's story in every particular, so far as the facts came under his knowledge. He said that some of the people staying in his hotel declared that they had seen my patient in a certain spot on the Burrows, in company with a horrible-looking man, who, they were quite sure, was the man wanted by the police for the Ty Captain murder. He added, that he understood from some talk in his lounge that after my friend had left the hotel there had been some kind of scuffle on the Burrows, and he hoped that nothing would get into the papers.

That was one point. Then I took up the business of the breakages at his lodgings. There again the patient's story was absolutely confirmed; even to the torn notebook. The landlady's daughter remembered seeing the carpet all littered with bits of paper with writing on them one afternoon, when she took up the gentleman's tea things. Then, he had told me that when he called on his solicitor, a library ladder with a clerk on it came to grief in the next room. It was perfectly true. I saw the clerk, who was still limping a bit, and I saw the lawyer. That was enough for me. A most extraordinary case; the absolute reverse of the conditions we are usually called on to deal with. Many mental cases think they are persecuted when they aren't; this man had been persecuted in a sort of a way, and was quite sure that his persecution was a delusion; in other words, that he was mad. He was as sane as I am. And, yet, was he? I began to wonder. We say that a man who sees a cow in the garden which isn't there is mad. What about the man who sees a cow in the garden which is there, and says it isn't; that it's the creation of his morbid brain? Theoretically, that's a nice point; but such cases are so rare that I don't think it has ever come up for judgment. Anyhow, my business was practical, and I thought I should be able to untie the knots into which the man had wound himself.

He kept his appointment. I told him what I had done. I put the facts before him, fair and square. I shewed him that in every instance in which I had tested his statements he had been proved veridical and accurate in the smallest particular. Of course I suppressed that odd query that had risen in my mind. I said:

“Let’s take the principal case. You said you were cold-shouldered by those people at the hotel. Well; it’s quite true. The whole hotel staff noticed it. You say the manager asked you to leave. He did. Here’s his letter. You say you were attacked as you were sitting in your favourite place in the dunes — or Burrows, as they seem to call them. Look at the bottom of the page: ‘some sort of a scuffle on the Burrows’. And now what have you got to say for yourself?”

I expected him to look intensely relieved. He didn’t. He looked puzzled. He didn’t speak for some time. He looked down at the carpet and seemed to be weighing something in his mind; going over it, and again going over it, in a maze of perplexity. At last he spoke. He looked at me. There was terror in his face.

“If you are right,” he said, and the words were blurred together as he uttered them, “if you are right: who is that horrible child that follows me wherever I go?”

And the story came out. About three weeks or a month before his second visit to me, he became vaguely conscious, as he said, that he was watched. He couldn’t be more exact. He felt that there was an eye on him; there was somebody just outside his line of vision. He felt sure that if he turned his head sharply, he would see the watcher, as he called him. And then again, he said to himself: “This is a mere fancy; liver trouble, or, perhaps, eye trouble. Of course there is nobody there.” He did turn round at last, and there was nobody there. Still, the sense of being watched persisted; not throughout the whole day, but at intervals. He would be on one of his walks and suddenly have a very strong feeling that someone was “in attendance”, walking on the other side of the street, a little to the rear, and keeping an intent eye on him all the time. Or he might be in his room, sitting at his desks writing or reading; and he would get the same notion that he was being observed, and feel obliged to look under the sofa, or move the big armchair, to make sure that the room was empty, except for himself. And in five minutes the sensation would return; he was sure that “there was somebody there.” On one occasion, he crept across the room on tiptoe, flung open the door with a crash, and rushed out — and, naturally, didn’t find anyone on the landing. Then, with the liver notion in his head, he dosed himself with medicine; but that was no good. There was still that recurring sense of the attendant watcher, not seen, but felt to be present; sometimes only for a moment. One day, he said, he had taken out his latch-key and was just putting it into the lock of the front door, when the sudden conviction rushed on him that someone was standing immediately behind him. He spun round in an instant. The usual result: no one there. Another time, he had gone into the country, and was strolling along a Hertfordshire byeway, when it struck him that he was being followed by his persecutor, who crept along all the while on the other side of the hedge. He was sure that he would get the fellow this time. He jumped over the first stile he came to, and looked all along the straight hedge. And then pulled himself together, asked himself why he had been such a fool. Of course, there was nobody on the other side of the hedge; there never had been. He was out of sorts. In a woman his condition would be called hysterical; he must exercise it out of him. So he walked ten miles at four miles an hour, got home and slept like a log — and woke up with a start at four in the morning and searched the wardrobe.

This state of things went on for about ten days. The man was getting distressed and a little shaky, but he held stoutly to his opinion that the trouble was due to something wrong physically. Then one day when he was wandering about the rather dreary part he lives in, he felt, as he told me, that the whole thing was lifted from him, as if a heavy pack had been taken off his back. He felt as if he must do something festive; have a big drink or go to the British Museum and find somebody to talk to. And as he was hesitating, he saw a very ugly little boy standing by a lamp-post on the other side of the road, and grinning at him: “Something twisted and deformed about the creature; he had the old face of a dwarf.” He went on his way, to a pub or the Reading Room, I don’t know which. As he was walking up the steep street where he lives on his way home, he saw the dwarfish child again. He was standing in the middle of the road this time, with that evil grin still on his face. My patient hated the sight of him, supposed he lived somewhere in the neighbourhood, and thought no more about it. The next day, he was wandering about Kew Gardens, and as he was going along the rhododendron walk, he heard a rustle; and there was the imp looking at him from a rhododendron bush. He didn’t understand it at all. He was on his way back on the top of a ‘bus and looking about him for an old inn he remembered years ago on the London side of Turnham Green. There was the little horror glaring at him from an open window in the roof of one of the houses. For a moment he thought of stopping the ‘bus and going to the house — the ground floor was a grocer’s shop — and making enquiries, under the pretence of warning the people that their little boy was in a dangerous position at the open window above. But then what he called a cold thrill at his heart warned him to do nothing of the kind. He began to fear the possible solution of the puzzle. For a week after that there was no trouble. Then one morning, as he woke up, he saw that hideous little shape by his door. It appeared to open the door. It went out and the door was closed. He screamed in his terror, and the landlady ran up the stairs to his room. He asked her, as soon as he could speak plainly, who that horrible child was, and what it was doing in his room. He noticed the look of shock and alarm on the woman’s face. She mumbled something about her sister’s child, how they were afraid he wasn’t quite so strong in the head as he might be, and promised to keep the child downstairs. He didn’t believe a word of this; and not long after he broke down completely, and became quite sure that this hateful visitant was but one of the delusions from which he had suffered all the summer. And then he came to me.

I heard him to the end of his story. I was puzzled. It really looked as if this last business was a delusion. I asked him if he had been troubled at Brighton. He said he thought there had been something on the platform when he got out of the train on his arrival; otherwise he had been left in peace.

“But,” he said, “as I was ringing your bell to-night, I looked round, and it walked away towards Cavendish Square.”

The man was miserably depressed. I did what I could to cheer him a little. I said it was a very singular case — that was true enough, I told him that I was certain he could be cured. There was more hope than certainty about that pronouncement; but I pointed out that he had been almost if not quite free from the mischief at Brighton, and that a long sea voyage would most likely cure him for good and all. I made an appointment for him to see me in a week’s time. As soon as he was gone, I wrote to his landlady. I didn’t say too much. I told her that her lodger, my patient, was suffering from nervous depression, that I thought of ordering him a sea voyage, and I asked her if she could manage to keep her little nephew as much out of his way as possible for the next week or so. She answered me that the only nephew she had was a man of thirty who was a carpenter at Devizes; that she had made up the tale to try to make the gentleman more easy in his mind, but she was afraid he was in a bad way, and she was frightened about him. The patient did not keep his appointment, and I went round to his place that evening. He had walked out of the house the day before, carrying a brown paper parcel, not like luggage, more like a parcel for the post. He had left a note for the landlady on his table. There was a month's money instead of notice in it. A well-known firm would call for his books and store them, and the landlady could have his clothes. He said he was going abroad for his health.

I have seen nothing more of him. But I have heard, indirectly, that he is living somewhere in the near east; and I understand that he is quite well. An odd case, as I said.

EPILOGUE

DR. WILLIAM BROWN, WHO IS,! BELIEVE, READER in Psychology, at the University of Oxford, saw some very extraordinary things one evening at the National Laboratory for Psychical Research. The date was sometime in the spring of this year, 1932; and the occasion was a "sitting" to test the powers of the young Austrian, Rudi Schneider. Dr. Brown was immensely impressed at the time. If I remember rightly, he said he had seen things done of which he could find no explanation on ordinary physical lines. I have forgotten the exact nature of the phenomena, but, let us say, the law of gravity was flagrantly broken. Solid objects soared and floated instead of falling; all possibility of trickery or conjuring apparatus being excluded, in the judgment of the expert scientific observers, of whom Dr. Brown was one. Dr. Brown wrote two letters to *The Times* on the subject; and the second letter does not so much qualify the first, as make the necessary reservation of the immensity of our ignorance; a reservation which applies to all our experiences and all our knowledge. "I am still unable," Dr. Brown wrote, in this second letter, "to dispute the genuineness of the phenomena that I witnessed. On the other hand, the extensive *lacuna* in my knowledge of this wider circle of facts prevents me from going sponsor for the phenomena, in spite of their immediate impressiveness." And that means, I take it, that the scientific mind is loath to accept isolated supernormal phenomena which have no theory behind them, no *logos* to rationalise them, no scheme in which they can be fitted. The man of science sees a phenomenon, which he judges to be a contravention of the laws of nature, as these laws are known to him. He cannot deny, he cannot explain away what he has seen; and yet he cannot unreservedly accept it, because of the *lacuna,* the gaps in his knowledge. A mass of lead, ten pounds in weight, let us say, has floated gently up to 'the ceiling, hovered there, and slowly fluttered down again. Our scientific witness has seen it happen, and yet he will not accept it as an undoubted fact; because nobody can furnish him with an acceptable and reasoned theory explaining how lumps of lead, under certain conditions, will behave exactly in this way.

Such, to the scientific observer, was the case of Rudi Schneider; such, also, is the case of Lawrence Hillyer. The *lacuna*, the gaps in the history are both wide and deep. And they are of two kinds; the gaps in any theory which can be constructed of what actually happened to Hillyer; and then the *lacuna* in the actual story, gathered in odd pieces from here and from there, and put together doubtfully, conjecturally; without any very strong conviction, in some instances at any rate, that this jig goes into that saw.

A good deal of the material available is derived from Hillyer's notebooks. His landlady, anxious to tell all that there was to be told, mentioned the brown paper parcel which he was seen carrying away with him. This contained the notebooks in question; and I was the consignee. I had known Hillyer as most of his friends knew him, slightly, in the on-and-off fashion, for a good many years. He enclosed a letter to the effect that he thought some of his notes were in my way and might interest me. If not, I was to destroy them; he had no further use for them. He ended: "I have managed to get myself into a very extraordinary state, which I think is dangerous. I am going abroad, far abroad, to see if I can get free. I don't think of coming back to England, or of renewing any of my old interests."

I heard from him in the course of last summer. He has settled in Aleppo, where he has some interest in the sponge trade, and according to his own story, is doing very fairly well. He has never attempted to give me any account of what happened to him in the year 1929; chiefly, I think," because he doesn't know what did happen to him. Hence the fragments, hence the gaps, hence the rough, unfinished ends in the tale. Sometimes there has been frank reconstruction, in the manner of our modern historians. For example, there is that scene in the north London square, in which Hillyer and two old men were oddly engaged. There are foundations; something of the kind must have happened. The authorities are, partly Hillyer's statement to the specialist, and partly a puzzling and confused argument between the two old codgers, overheard fortuitously in a private bar somewhere deep in Barnsbury. Then there are uncertainties. There is that business of Hampole and his book, *A London Walk*, which melts into the story of Hillyer's mysterious visitor — or of a very bad dream. And the bright light which a man — and only one man, apparently — saw pouring from the house where Hillyer lodged, in the dead of night. That is a loose end, and I must leave it loose.

But there can be no doubt that Hillyer was subjected to a series of very horrible tricks, of varying orders. And here we come to the *lacuna* of theory. At one time, as in the Green Round of the sandhills, and in the square by the Caledonian Road, his attendant was invisible to himself, but visible to others, or rather, to some others. Then, in the last stages, before his flight, the dwarfish child of his terror was seen by no eye but his own; so far as we know, at least. At other times, the power that troubled him converted him into an involuntary *poltergeist*: destruction was about all his ways. Here, however, the proceedings followed the established order, and we may even grasp at least the tail of a theory. For it is certain that the *poltergeist* — when it is not a naughty child, playing mischievous tricks — is always involuntary and unconscious of its own work. It has no more volition, control, or direction of the energy which it transmits than has the wire of the electric current which passes along it.

But as to the origin of the experiences to which Lawrence Hillyer was subjected: some light, I think, is thrown on the problem by the strange adventure of Mr. Smith of Wimbledon, as I have called him; the gentleman who, paying a chance visit to his favourite seaside town found to his horror and indignation the Green Round, the peaceful retreat on the sand-dunes, turned into a sort of 'Fun City', vile with the dissonant jargon of the jazz band struggling against the shriek and clangour of roundabouts, jigging with dancers of uncouth measures, a centre of vulgar and raucous merriment. The newspaper discussion which his letter set going went off very quickly into all sorts of foolishness and irrelevance; and nobody seemed to notice the very vital point, that the Town Clerk of the Welsh watering-place in question wrote a formal and full denial of Mr. Smith's story. The Town Clerk said that there was no jazz band on the dunes or anywhere near them. He denied the band, the roundabouts, the Palais de Danse, the hard tennis courts, and all the riot of sound and sight that Smith described. He admitted a fair held by ancient charter in a field on the other side of the town; and he rather hinted at some indiscretion on the part of Mr. Smith, which had led that gentleman to mistake his right hand for his left. But the storm centre of the discussion had by this time deserted the dunes of Porth and the Green Round, and was occupied safely with odd obscenities in brick-sculpture and the new theatre at Stratford-on-Avon. Mr. Smith, it is true, was still interested in his own experience and went down to Wales in indignation only to return to Wimbledon in confusion. He had both seen and heard, and now all had vanished without a trace, as if it had been Aladdin's palace in the Eastern Tale. We do not know what he made of it; but it is probable that his state of mind was not very different from that of Dr. William Brown after the "sitting" with Rudi Schneider; though Mr. Smith would not be able to express himself with the clarity of the man of science.

But here, in the Green Round by the shore of Porth, was evidently the source of all the strange trouble that befell Hillyer. Again, we must take refuge in those *lacuna*, and profess our entire ignorance both of the nature and of the laws of the power that for a time at least had its centre in this place. We cannot pretend to determine, for instance, why one man was subject to the influence, while another was immune. Smith, on the face of it, was not a likely man to be affected. But it is quite possible that he had recovered from a bad attack of influenza a week or two before his visit; and his state of health may have laid him open to the attack of another enemy. The case of Hillyer is easier. He had been on the verge of a nervous breakdown in London immediately before his stay at Porth. No doubt he was benefited, as he says, by the sea air, the change of scene and the very different habit of life that he adopted for a time. Still, he was convalescent, not absolutely well. The walls of the fortress had been repaired and strengthened; but there seems reason to suppose that they were in no state to stand a siege. And, in fact, the enemy poured through the breech in a somewhat terrible manner. And in one respect at all events, Hillyer's affair stands alone, at least, that is my impression. There are, no doubt, many cases of a particular locality harbouring forces unbenignant to man, and so constituting what is commonly called a "haunted" house, or a "haunted" wood; but at the moment I cannot recall any instance of these obscure and nameless energies following a man home, as it were, and harassing him at a distance from the place of their awful habitation. There is, for example, the book called *An Adventure*, the extraordinary story of what happened to Miss Ann Moberly and Miss Eleanor F. Jourdain at Versailles. For them, the clock was put back; time was no more. They were no longer in the twentieth century. They were rapt back into the eighteenth. They became witnesses of events that happened at Versailles, so far as time is concerned, on a particular day in the course of the French Revolution; and the trees, the lawns, the bridges were as they were in the Versailles of 1789. And such is the clear veracity of the record of these ladies' experiences, that I have never known any person who has read it be anything but perfectly convinced that every word is true. But let this be noted: once the ladies were without the walls of Versailles, the powers that were within ceased to operate or to manifest. Those that had seen the evidence of their presence, saw it no more when once the gates were passed. And, so far as I am informed, the like rule obtained in the following experience, which appeared in *Light* — issue of May 23rd, 1931 — which is quoted here, *in extenso,* by the kind permission of my friend, Mr. David Gow, Advisory Editor of *Light.* It is entitled "A Mountain Adventure". "J.C.P.", the author, is stated to be a woman in a responsible and dignified position. Her story, like the story of the ladies of Versailles, gives me the impression of absolute and scrupulous veracity.

"About the twentieth of July, 1929, while climbing the mountain, Nephin, in the weft of Ireland above Lough Conn, we had the following curious experience.

"The six, who climbed the mountain on one of the clearest of July days, consisted of three women and three men; one of the party — a girl — had an injured knee, and so did not go further than the place at which we stopped for lunch.

"The ascent was started about eleven o'clock. After climbing for an hour, through very heavy heather, we stopped beside a burn for lunch. After lunch we continued up the mountain, the girl with the injured knee going back to the cottage at which we had left the car, to wait for our return. We reached the top of the mountain about a quarter to three, and sat for a while looking at the surrounding country.

"We started down at about three, or a little after, in groups and singly, my husband by himself, F.H., James and myself together, and the other man quite a bit ahead of us. Suddenly F.H. turned away, and vanished over the shoulder of the mountain. Little was said, for she often took her own way down the various mountains we climbed during the summer. James and I continued our way for a while, then turned to each other and said: 'Something has happened to F.H.!' We felt so sure of this that we called to the other two men, who returned. We agreed that they should go back to the mountain to where she was last seen, and search for her, while I should continue down and meet them at the cottage.

“Now this I did not know till afterwards, but F.H. does not know, cannot possibly imagine, what happened to her. She can only say that it was as though she had lapsed into complete unconsciousness, and all the while thought she was walking beside us. She was in reality walking straight away from us. She does not know what it was that ‘took’ her suddenly; she said it was as though there were *no Time* for a moment, and some strange force were pulling her away. Then she realised that we were not there, and heard the crying of voices. She went in the direction of the sound, thinking she would find someone; on crossing a ravine the voices were still audible, and she heard someone blowing a horn, but no one was in sight. Then she thought she saw a small person beyond and below her, possibly a child; she went down towards it, but on crossing another ravine, found no one, though the voices still continued. After this she realised she was lost, and headed for the white roadway below her, and walked about eight miles to a police-barracks, where we later found her.

“Now, when I left the men I went down the mountain. When I was half-way down I decided to look for F.H. on my lower level. I walked along, falling twice up to my waist into caves that were hidden beneath the heather. Presently I sat down and had no sooner done that than I heard crying behind me — a funny kind of crying, like a child that was lost — very distinctly. Looking around I saw, a long distance above me, someone I took to be James, waving. I waved back, got up, crossed a couple of hillocks, and looked for James again. No one was there. I sat down again, and was admiring the view when, directly behind me, someone laughed. Looking around I saw no one for a moment; then above me in almost the same place, I thought I saw James again.

“Getting up once more, I went straight up the mountain in his direction. In crossing a small burn I lost sight of him, and when I came out of the stream-bed I found no one. After this I went down the mountain to the cottage, expecting to find the girl with the injured knee there, but the cottage people told me she had not been there all the afternoon. Presently she came in, very angry, saying that early in the afternoon I had come down the mountain and waved to her, but had not waited for her to come up. (She had not gone up very far as she stumbled into a bog, and found the walking too hard.) Obviously I had not done any such thing.

"By 7.30 p in the men came back, exhausted, and without F.H. James had a curious story.. Twice he had seen, out of the tail of his eye, a club coming down on him. So strong had been the impression that he had jumped considerable distances down the mountain on each occasion. We were very worried by this time about F.H.'s disappearance. I asked the man of the cottage what there was to fall into on the mountain.

"'Quarries?' I suggested.

"'Nothing,' he said.

"'Children on the mountain?' I asked.

"'No, they're in school,' he said.

"'What about the Little People?'

"He became very severe, and turned to go out, saying:

"'We do not talk about that.'

"We now took the car to search along the roads at the foot of the mountain, and so came upon F.H. at the police station."

Here again, the adventure ended at the foot of the mountain. The party were not pursued to their homes, as was Lawrence Hillyer. There are, indeed, likenesses between the two cases; notably, in the triviality of the annoyances inflicted. It is trivial and childish to make a woman lose her way on a mountain, to afflict a man with the sense that somebody is flinging clubs after him. It is trivial and childish to cause a man to be harried and seized by an angry and unreasoning officer and his stupid friends. It is even more trivial and childish to strew his track with broken chairs and shattered mirrors. But whatever this other side of things may be in itself, I have often noticed that its manifestations on this side are apt to be trifling and meaningless. The apparitions recorded by the Psychical Research Society are mostly insignificant, without purpose: a miller sees the ghost of a farmer, a mere casual acquaintance; and nothing happens. One of the most remarkable instances of the predictive faculty, combined with "clear sight" is contained in Mr. Theodore Besterman's book on Crystal gazing. A lady looking in the crystal at a house near Salisbury one morning saw Lady Barnby (wife of "For all the Saints" Barnby) washing her hands in a bedroom with an open door, in a Folkestone Hotel, about three and a half hours afterwards. This was verified in an extraordinary manner afterwards by Sir Joseph Barnby, who was present at the crystal gazing. I have no doubt that the story is veridical; but the prophetic gift has been employed on more tremendous issues.

But as to what is, or should be, the main question: what, who are the powers or forces that were manifested on Mount Nephin and in the Green Round? The Little People, the Fairies?

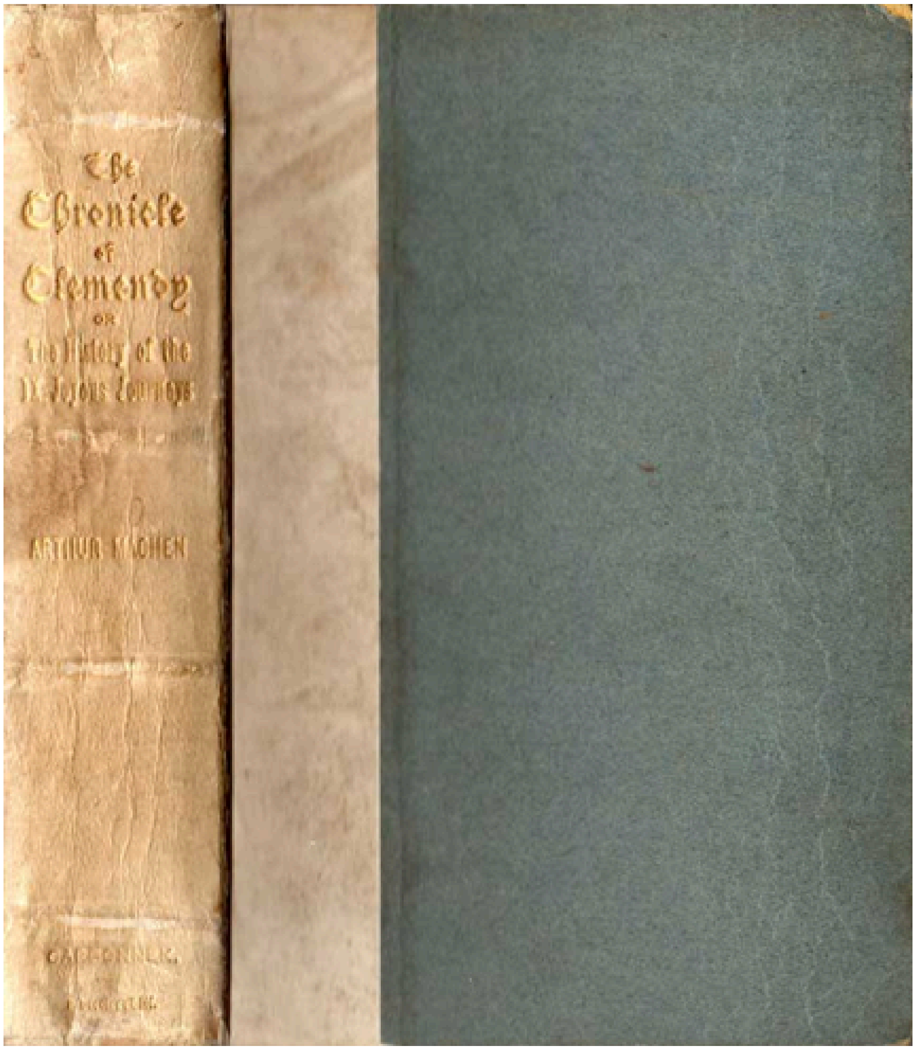
I believe there is no answer. We had better say, with the man of the cottage: "We do not talk about that."

The Shorter Fiction

Hereford Cathedral; as a boy, Machen received a classical education at the nearby Cathedral School

The Chronicle of Clemendy: or the History of the Ix Joyous Journeys. Carbonnek

This story collection, which contains Machen's first published fiction, was published in 1888 while Machen was working as a cataloguer, magazine editor and translator. The book is influenced by the French Renaissance writer of fantastical satire, François Rabelais. Indeed, the work is presented as a translation of an old French text, 'privately printed' in 'Carbonnek' exclusively for 'the Society of Pantagruelists'. It is thus a pastiche of Rabelais himself (whose best-known work is the bawdy *Gargantua and Pantagruel*) and of the antiquarian circles in which early English printed editions of Rabelais's work were circulated.


The Chronicle of Clemendy or The History of the IX Jocund Journeys
ARTHUR MACHEN

The cover of the first edition

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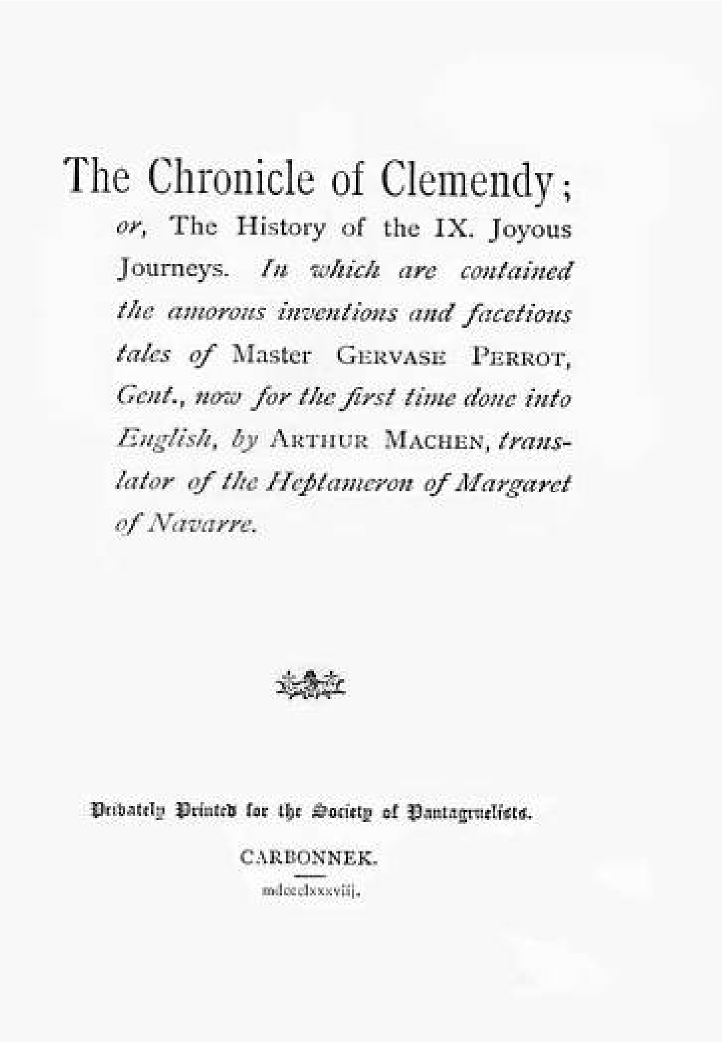


The Chronicle of Clemendy;
or, The History of the IX. Joyous
Journeys. *In which are contained
the amorous inventions and facetious
tales of* Master GERVASE PERROT,
*Gent., now for the first time done into
English, by* ARTHUR MACHEN, *translator of the Heptameron of Margaret
of Navarre.*

* * *

Privately Printed for the Society of Pantagrueliſts.

CARBONNEK.

mdccclxxxviij.

Title page of the first edition, a pastiche of early English printed editions of continental Renaissance writers

INTRODUCTION

LONG AGO I read a passage in some story about Italy which caught my attention sharply and still remains in my memory. My recollection of the surrounding circumstances, as it were, is vague enough; but to the best of my belief the scene is laid in Naples, ten or twenty years after the fall of the old Bourbon dynasty, and the triumph of an enlightened Liberalism. There is a priest, a villainous reactionary, who is lamenting the change from the old rule to the new, and alleging various instances to shew that things have altered for the worse. One of these instances, oddly enough, is the Aquarium, recently set up in Naples by the moderns.

"*Look at the Aquarium," says the old priest.* "*Have you seen the sea monsters that they have placed there? They are so hideous, so horrible, that they make one doubt the goodness of the good God who created them."*

In the year 1885, *I was twenty-two years old. I had knocked about London for two years already: "knocking about" being understood to mean living on dry bread, tea, and tobacco in a little room in Notting Hill Gate. I knew nobody, I spoke to nobody, and nobody wanted to speak to me. My sole amusement was the taking of long, aimless, endless walks to north and west; and while I walked abroad, and while I sat at home trying to warm my hands at the gas-jet, my only dream, my only desire was literature. I longed for it as some men long for wealth and a settled position in society. That desire and that dream were the salt of my life, so that nothing else mattered: the bitter, lonely days, the semi-starvation, the dismal little room: these would be not merely tolerable but glorious, if only I could make a book that in some minor sort should be a book indeed.*

Two years before, in the same little room in Clarendon Road, I had written a book called "The Anatomy of Tobacco," which I had found out since then. Still, I was only twenty when I wrote it, and much must be pardoned to twenty. It was a horrible failure: now I was to try again. All through that summer of'85 *I pondered over the book that was to be, the book that must be, the book that was to have some core of goodness and reality in it this* *time. And at last, as I lay awake at night, a sort of shining, irradiated vision of the precious volume came to me; the bright image of the book as if borne by angels, with lamps about it, and incense smoking before it; a celestial* theoria *which made all pains and penances and vigils into joy. There was almost light upon the midnight wall; there was certainly life and light in my heart.*

Let it be understood that no detailed information was given me. But after many weeks of thought and desire, I worked out a scheme; an earthly vessel, as it were, which might contain the heavenly balms and elixirs that had been exhibited. I began to prove it: forthwith it clattered into shards and fragments in my hands. All through that autumn I tried, and renewed trials; and at last some veritable light and guidance — as I thought — tame to me. In the August of 1886, *being then a little more than twenty-three, I finished* THE CHRONICLE OF CLEMENDY. I *had grudged no pains, I had spared no labours. Again and again my pen staggered miserably into sheer futility; again and again I had torn the sheets and begun anew; and all done, as I knew then and know now, in a sheer and pure enthusiasm for the work of letters. I expected no money, I looked for no paragraphs, I desired no introduction to influential literary circles; it was the work, and the whole work and nothing but the work that drove me on through black fogs of despair and dismal sloughs of hopeless difficulty; even to the end, written as the August sun dawned over Wentwood, down in Gwent.*

THE CHRONICLE OF CLEMENDY *was printed in* 1888. *I read the proofs with pride. I don't think I did much more than glance at a page here and a page there at long intervals during the next thirty-seven years. But I held the belief that it was a good book, up to this year* 1925, *when I read the proofs for this present reissue.*

I cordially agree with the old Neapolitan priest: most of the creatures in the Aquarium tanks are filthy brutes that would be much better left at the bottom of the sea. But are there not other spectacles than these that tempt one to doubt the goodness of the good God: the spectacle of a fervent and pure desire, of great and patient labour — and THE CHRONICLE OF CLEMENDY *for an end of it all.*

A. M.

EPISTLE DEDICATORY

To the Right Honourable, Illustrious and Puissant Prince,

HUMPHREY, DUKE OF GLOUCESTER,

Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, etc., etc.

IT were but lost labour on my part (most illustrious) should I presume to give the especial reasons or prerogative instances whereby I am moved to offer unto Your Grace these poor ingatherings of a scholar's toil. For your universal favour and benevolent encouragement toward men of letters is a thing widely known; and if amongst scholars, that are vulgarly supposed to form a Commonwealth, it be lawful to set up lordship, this I make no doubt shall by the consent of all be assigned unto you. Of late years, I confess, Patronage hath been a thing little used and but meanly conceited of; but indeed I know not how it would have gone with myself and many others of like employ, had it not been for Your Grace's hospitality. How many a poor author hath had at home but a scurvy bin and piggin, a bare floor and barer trencher, a cup void not only of canary, but even of small ale. How many a scholar, I say, hath passed away the best years of his life, the flower of his age, in some mean cock-loft, with scarce enough air (let alone meat and drink) for his sustenance; the which lack of air being by itself well recognised for a sufficient cause of melancholy. And when we consider the other misfortunes which are rather to be esteemed essential than accidental to such a life: the slow decay of hope, the loneliness of days and weeks and years, the scorn of others, and (often) the contempt of one's very self, it will readily be received that whosoever doth aught to mitigate the hardships of this estate is most worthy of praise, thankofferings, and lowly service. The which hath been Your Grace's office, I mean to entertain a sort of men mighty little esteemed in the Commonwealth, being held by the most of the people at an equal price with mere strollers or common vagabonds; differing only in this, that we scholars so far from roaming about do rather use not to venture out of doors, for fear and shame lest our ragged small-clothes and greasy doublets should draw on us open scorn and derision. But

I suspect that in this particular I shall scarcely gain much credit, scholarship and shame being generally accounted as incompatibles, and as little likely to coexist in one person as heat and cold, at the same time, in one and the same substance. And indeed it were well for us if this should be so: and let him that leaveth the shelter of his chimney corner (though it be in a kitchen) and adventureth up to town to make his fortune by letters, take heed that he have about his heart that harness of strong oak and triple brass that Horace writes of. I say nothing of them that are driven by ill hap to try their luck (as the phrase goes), they have no choice, and may be are as well off as they expected. But I would have him who abandons of his own free will a good home, kindred, acquaintance, and the like to make account of these things. That for plenty, he shall have want, for love, scorn and contempt, for familiarity, loneliness and desolation. For pure air he shall gain a Stygian fume, a black mist, a sooty smoke: for those delicious meadows, heathery mountains, rustling woods, and all such prospects of delight, a Cretan Labyrinth, a stony wilderness, a dædal wandering along whose turnings and returnings do go such companies and pomps as the old Tuscan Poet beheld in his vision. *Vexilla regis prodeunt inferni,* said he of them, in a parody of Vincentius his hymn; and I doubt not that the line would stand as good in application to certain of our trained bands as to those of Hell itself. Truly then do we poor folk owe what service we are able to pay Your Grace, who, spite of mean dress and poverty (justly accounted by Mr. Hobbes for shame and dishonour) is pleased to entertain us at that board, where so great a multitude of our brotherhood has feasted before. For your illustrious line hath now for many generations made it a peculiar glory to supply the needs of lettered men; and as we sit at meat it seems (methinks) as if those mighty men of old did sit beside us and taste with us once more the mingled cup we drink. The ingenious author of Don Quixote de la Mancha must, I suppose, have often dined with the Duke of his age, Mr. Peter Corneille and Mr. Otway, Senhor Camoens, Rare Old Ben, Signori Tasso and Ariosto, not seldom: while young Mr. Chatterton the poet did not only dine, but break his fast, take his morning draught, and sup with Your Grace’s great-grandfather, till at last he died of a mere repletion. In fine, throughout all ages the House of Gloucester hath stood our friend; and not one whit do you (most honourable) degenerate from the Dukes of the former time. Nay, I believe that there are as many bucks killed and butts of claret and canary tapped, as many benches round the board now as ever there were; for our race doth in these days discover no very manifest signs of diminution: I can assert at all events that did we (like Holy Church) draw our graces and inspiration as by a chain and a continual succession, there would be no fear warranted lest the line should become extinct.

This poor offering then I am bold to present for Your Grace's acceptance; and if there shall be found in it aught of sweet savour or pleasant discoursing, lay it not up to my poor wit (or at least in but a small degree) but to Your Grace's entertainment and familiarity. And let it please you, my Lord, to be assured of this: that the butler may always set a cup and trencher on the board for me, since (unlike to some others) I shall never scorn Your Grace's hospitality:

But do now, and ever shall remain Your Grace's most obliged, humble servant,

Arthur Machen, Silurist.

Here begins the veracious Chronicle of Clemendy, the which was compiled and written by Gervase Perrot of Clemendy, Gentleman, Lord of the Manour of Pwllcwrw (Beerpool) and Tankard Marshall of the Assize of Ale. And in this volume are contained all those witty and facetious discourses, jests and histories done in the parlour of Clemendy, on the Forest Road, and in the town of Uske, when the Silurists journeyed thither on the Portreeve's festival. And first is set down the Discourse of Ale, the same standing first in the Latin book.

MASTER PERROT’S DISCOURSE OF ALE

OF THE INVENTION of beer divers tales are told; for some say that the Egyptians first concocted this super-excellent and glorious juice; some place that primitive brewery among the Germans, lauding their King Gambrinus, and some stiffly maintain that those Asiatic peoples that fought with Xenophon did used to get drunk on ale, and nothing else. But I believe these be idle tales, legendary fables, and false conceits, for our old bards in their Triads name cwrw (and that is ale) as one of the three special blessings of the Land of Summer. Hence I believe that the Silurians, while they dwelt in that land, by some happy chance brewed beer, and, as they journeyed westward, imparted the secret of its concoction to the races through whose midst they passed; and finally, having brought their ships to anchor off the coast of Gwent, made a stay at last to all their wandering, and set up their vats beside the waters of the Uske. And this Manour of Pwllcwrw, in which I dwell, I suspect to have been from the very first a moist yet ever thirsty soil; for the word meaneth Beer Pool, or in the Latin tongue, as it is styled in the ancient Court Rolls, Stagnum de Cervisiâ. And unto this day, if you shall ask a man in the manour who is casting barley-seed upon the ground, “Friend, what sow you?” he will answer, without more ado, “Hot beer.” Whereby you will perceive how subtle a people we are, and how keenly we search into eschatology, looking rather to final ends and effects than to what is but passing and transitory. And, if you come to practice and leave theories, I suppose there is not a man amongst us that loveth not a cup of old and corny ale, who will not joyfully dip his beard into the foam, turn up the can, and pour the torrent down. Wherefore amongst us the Mystery of Ale Drapers is held in great honour and repute, from the highest into the lowest, from the little taverns on lonely roads, atop of hills, and in forgotten valleys to the great masters of the Tankard that fill the can in our fenced cities and towns of fréquentation. Of these last we have some egregious specimens, fellows with round paunches and long heads, who have seen so many generations of travellers, and such diversity of morals, trickeries, methods, humours, counterfeits, revelries, noses, doublets, lecheries, japes, breeches, arguments, and appetites that their wits have grown very sharp, so that they perfectly comprehend the difference between a cassock and a smock, understand when it is wise to ask questions, and when to lay finger unto - nose, when to call the crier, and when mumchance is the only word. Sometimes these gentry lose all sense of hearing and seeing to boot, and inquisitive strangers who wish to find out things, and have a well-founded conceit that the master of the Ivy-Bush sees what is done under the ivy, are greatly astonished at a deep, impenetrable ignorance, and go away as they deserve, no wiser than they came. But at other times Red Lion and Boar’s Head see through the blankets and hear through the keyhole most wondrously well; they have, I believe, a special kind of tankard in the which they look when they desire to learn the A B C of an affair, and likewise a fashion of ear-trumpet that carries the click (it is some such sound, at all events) of a kiss from the cock-loft to the cellar. These Master Tankards are, in fact, mighty pleasant fellows, who bear witness to the error of giving the name “fuddlecap” to them that have much traffic with ale; and this is, it seems certain, a very great mistake, which all good Christians ought to avoid. A man who comes home late, goes to bed by a lanthorn which he has forgotten to light, and blows it out heedfully before he gets between the sheets, doubtless seems a little foolish; but, if you should interrogate him, he would be able to give good reasons and arguments of justification, showing that he was a judicious and agreeable Silurian, and that you were a jolterhead. Well, then! leave Silurians alone when they come home late and do strange things, for you must know they have been gazing, for I wis not how many hours, into a certain dark brown, foaming, silvery fountain, wherein they have seen all manner of strange sights, visions, hieroglyphics, steganographies, pyramids, triangles, spells, perpetual motions, hot fiery conjunctions, drolleries, and mosaics; they are therefore illuminated with a transcendent science which often makes them laugh very heartily to themselves, whenas they think how ignorant and silly others are. And, from seeing in that admirable fountain and absymal well how this earthly sphere does certainly whirl around the sun in an everlasting gyre (indeed Pythagoras taught as much, but nobody would listen to him), Silurians are obnoxious to a circularity of motion after these meditations, the which the old hieroglyphical writers symbolise by the likeness of a man driving turkeys along a road.

Praised be the home of the Greyhound in Abergavenny, and the habitation of the Salmons in Uske; thither we all hasten after we have crossed the bridge, for we see the shield from afar, azure, three salmons nayant in pale argent; ’tis a very goodly coat. But all the company within must be blazoned hauriant and not naiant, for they sit drinking and drinking evermore, forgetful that the Portreeve passeth along the road, they hear not the noise of his trumpets nor the beating of his drums. No thought give they to the high service in St. Mary’s quire, nor to dalliance with fair ladies in the castle that overlooks the town; but the tankards, and cans, and cups foam up, and foam again, and in the Salmons they sit still drinking, and drinking evermore. And thou, most swift Greyhound, that swingest in the city dreaming below great hills, where the Gavenny and the Uske do meet and interflow, for thee, I say, they have set up a rare kennel, a kennel with a courtyard and low passages, where is stored baronial ale, ale such as was pleasant to De Braose what time he had lordship here, and dwelt in a mighty fortress. Hither journey weary men who have crossed mountains and are sore afoot; along the road they come at evensong and count the miles unto thy gate, till the noise of chiming bells grows near, and they enter in and sit them down, and with a long breath do drain oblivion of all their toils. Hither comes the cold and melancholic people and go away duly spiced, and warmed and gingered; hither also do the merry folk hold their synods, and Silurianise till the flame leapeth out through the chimney-top, and the tiles clatter together with their singing and their mirth. Gather ye, O gather ye, and pull the greyhound’s tail, all dumpish and doting men. I cite, summon, and admonish you to be and appear before the High Court of Cervisage holden within the afore-named tavern at six of the clock in the afternoon on the Calends of May, that ye may, there and then purge ye of your contempt toward this honourable Silurian Assize. Fill your purses, and be ready to do suit and service and pay your quit rents to the High Tosspot our lord paramount, and to his magistrates the Lords Maltworm of Wales, humbly craving pardon for past sadness, dolour, wry mouths, cramped foreheads, knitted brows, griefs, ill haps, and all the like iniquities. For ’tis a very merciful Court, and will ever pardon them that desire to amend. I have known one come before the Most High and Mighty Lord Tosspot confessing that he had fared well in no single undertaking of his life, that all the glad hopes and expectations of his youth had come to nought, that his days were passed in misery and woe, and that he wished for nothing better than to die; yet he submitted himself to his liege lord, and craved mercy. But my lord looked pitifully upon this wretched sinner, and charged Levrier d'Argent, his herald, to set him in the ingle-nook, and there to deliver to him the sentence of the Court; and that was brought in a great tankard of old ale, so strong that it burned upon the fire like oil, so concocted that it smelt as a garden of spices of Arabia. Then the session went on, and the Sub-chanter raised the song —

Potus blandus! Potus fortis
Regibus, cleris et scortis
Et in hortis atque portis
O dulcis cervisia:

after the order appointed in the Consuetudinary of the Court. Then was read a piece from "The Red Book of Rabanus Jocosus," and the whole assembly from the High Tosspot to the Clericus Spigotti recounted tales so quaint and admirable that the guilty, pardoned man was like to have been bursten with laughter, notably at the tale of a certain clerk, called *The History of the Silver Tankard with the Golden Spout, and how rain water flowed forth from it.* Which I would gladly set down here had I not sworn by Gwen-Wen and the Round Table not to publish nor blaze abroad the acts done in Cervisage at the Greyhound; but this tale is engrossed on the Court Rolls, with many other choice relations that the Court l a; heard told and laughed at, you may be sure, as they have deserved. This ancient society of Cwrw Dda was founded, it seems certain, in the time of King Arthur, and sat for many years in that quarter of Caerleon which has ever since been renowned for its malt-houses; but about the time that the Normans came over great alterations and reformations were made, and, on account of the decayed magnificence and diminished frequention of Caerleon, the Court was removed to Abergavenny and the day of session fixed for the Calends of May, being the day on which the great May Mart is held at the aforesaid town. And shortly after this, summons was directed to Gruffydd Perrot, assigning to him the office of Tankard Marshall, unto him and his heirs for ever— "quia ille et ante-cessores sui semper habuerunt domum

Columbariam in manerio de Stagno Cervisiæ" — for that he and his forefathers have always held Clemendy in the Manour of Beerpool. And then I think this High Court was constituted as it is now, and records kept by the Clerk of the Acts in Cervisage; yet all customs and precedents of weight were curiously maintained and are observed unto this day as they were in the reign of King Arthur. For all our doctors and antiquaries who have searched the Chronicles and turned up the soil of the Caerleon meadows are agreed that the High Tosspot, and his proctors, lieutenants, summoners, clerks and surrogates, with all their acts, arrests, proscriptions, methods and consuetudinaries, their *merum et mixtum cervisium,* their writ of *Cyathum hausit extremum* and all other their benefices, exemptions and immunities, have their source and beginning from that wonderful Round Table, which is as potent now as when King Arthur and his Knights first made it famous. From this origin proceeds the Benefice of Free Sokage and the famous charter of *Terra Sahulosa* or Sandy Soil. And this latter name is given to no desert place nor stony land but rather to the fairest and most delicious manours, and the merriest cities of Gwent, and confers inestimable privileges. But, before it be granted and set forth under the seal of the High Tosspot, the Clericus Spigotti visits the place and strictly interrogates all men, gentle and simple, whether they be verily addicted to strong ale and waggish ways; and, if he finds so much as one politique or rancorous meddler therein, without more ado he tears his mandate in twain and rides hot foot away. But if the Spigot Clerk find the folk to be true Silurians, mellow men; the girls comely and jesticulous; the country provided with sunny nooks for winter and shadowed summer byways; and, above all, the ale mighty and sound to the core; he brings a good report to the Court and speaks favourably of that land. And if it be a town the Spigot Clerk must find a fair open street or square for wags to walk in; and walled gardens and trees and orchards, without which the largest town is no better than a rat-hole and fitter for brutes than Christian men. Then is the charter engrossed, and signed and sealed by the High Tosspot, and carried with pomp and worship to the place with trumpets, and vyalls and banners and the rarest show imaginable. The which place is thenceforth called Sandy Soil, because the thirst of it is insatiable, and craving moisture without end. Observe, then, what lordship Ale hath over us Silurians, and especially over the folk of Pwllcwrw; for 'twas by virtue of holding land in this gracious manour that my ancestor was cited to the Court and had an honourable office given him at the Reformation, which he and those who have come from his body have fulfilled through rain and sun ever since, both at High Sessions in Abergavenny, and at Petty Sessions in Uske. We Perrots indeed have gone wet foot and dry foot to these solemnities, not let by turmoil or distress, and when Levrier d'Argent calls *Canthari Mareschallus,* our *adsum* never fails, nor the function of our Marshalsea, nor have we broken faith with the Round Table. And know that by this Sasiwn Cwrw Dda ale is ennobled and glorified for us, exalted from a tinker's drain to a sempiternal spring of deep signification and high method, whence comes Silurianism and all that joyous knowledge which will not let us be dumpish, disconsolate, nor over-sorrowful have we never so much reason for sadness and dolour. Of these sweet thoughts the Saxons know nothing at all, and hold our mirth for folly and dotage, and, merely seeing that many of us are poor and meanly clad, deride and despise Silurians more than all other men, declaring that we are fools, dolts, jolterheads, idlers, whoremongers, drunkards, and so forth, and at the best pity us with a kind of scorn as a moonstruck silly folk, harmless for want of sense. But we, though we hear these people so declaring in their pride that our Round Table is nothing more than a Roman shambles or slaughter-house, merely shrug up our shoulders, smile under our beards, and utter some quaint saying as to the foolishness of men talking about a place to which they have never been, or at least do not understand in the smallest degree. But by the Oar and the Stillions! by the Spigot and the Pitch! these stupid persons are not worthy of a seat in the Greyhound nor the Salmons neither; nor should they be allowed so much as to cross the boundaries of the Land of the Moon, lest they make us as dull and dismal as they themselves always are and always have been. But, if you wish to learn a little Silurian wisdom, go any day to Uske, and spend a few hours and a little money at the Salmons, taking the seat between the fire and the window which looks out on a fair open place, where there is always some pleasantry or racy galliardise on foot. Then you shall go to the Boar's Head, and there they will give you all you want, whatever it may be or how much so ever of it you require at their hands. 'Tis the first degree in Cervisage, and so you must go on, till the fame of your deeds and conversation come to the ears of the High Court, who will in due course issue the writ, *Bene, Bene, Bene Bibere*, and cite you to their Petty Sessions. It may be that I have said too much of the customs of Cervisage, and am growing somewhat wearisome; but, by the Bottomless

Vat! I have looked so long into the Tankard that it is still dancing, shimmering, brawling, foaming, ebbing, flowing, before my eyes; and as for my ears there is ever a humming, a surging on the Brim, a deep thorough Bassus sounding in them, with treble, tenor, and counter-tenor, duly falling in and making up the concert in more descants, symphonies, antiphons, fugues, madrigals, rounds, canons, and catches, than it is convenient for one man to listen to. And the chime of silver cans is still clanging, ringing, and tingling against the tympanum, the meatus, and Eustachius his tubes, running back and fore from the outer ear to the inner, so that I can hear nothing else. In fine, all my five senses (some naughty fellow has added a sixth, fye on him!) rational and vegetal soul, sensus communis, memory, understanding, will, and phantasy, are quite absorbed in this one subject; and, if you talk to me of letters, I can but think of the Library of Burgavenny, where are so many great embossed books clothed in skins, and bound in chains; such chests of parchments and rolls, where is kept the Silver Oar borne before the High Tosspot, where are desks, lecterns, and stalls for learned Silurists, where in the midst hangs a silver lamp, fed with pure and quintessential ale, and such a store of wonderful and joyous histories, and phantastic inventions that a London bookseller would go raving mad to think thereon. Am I not, then, a complete and special Tankard Marshall, and a true Silurian? One of that company who cannot laugh too much or turn the tap too often; and in truth, whether it be good or bad, that is all our philosophy. As for the rest; reforming, regenerating, couzening, amending, perfecting, leading-by-the-nose, and beatifying our fellow-men, we leave to the wise folks, those I mean that have a finger in every pie, and whose pockets never lack plums; maybe we should be tempted to follow their example did we not see these same righteous busybodies, and sanctified intermeddlers sometimes giving one another odd, sour looks, and drawing their foreheads into all manner of comical shapes, which they call gravity and expect us to consider mighty solemn. But we Silurians had rather laugh and lie still, leaving other matters to God and the King, who (it is lawful to say) can be trusted to do what is best. What ho! My Lord High Tosspot cometh with his Silver Oar and Great Seals, and all his merry company. There go the vyalls and the horns to the tune of O *my Madam in the Can.* Lo! you; in crossing the brook the Clericus Spigotti hath been spilt; there'll be a tang of beer about the water till it flows into the Uske hard by Caerleon. Fill up a foaming measure, and make all ready for the joyous session of the Cwrw Dda.

THE PORTREEVE'S GAUDY-DAY

I — *The Preparation*

IN THE MIDST of the journey of my mortal life, I sent one day letters to three friends of mine asking them to come to me at Clemendy, and make merry with me for a little while; ere the honeysuckle and the roses had fallen to earth once more. For it must be understood that I had been taking a dip into the Devil's Bath; and being recovered was willing to celebrate my happy case in some fitting and joyful manner. I know not whether any of you who may read the Silurian Mythologies have ever had a plunge into this same Balneum Diaboli; but if not let me tell you 'tis a mighty hot fountain; and yet has lumps of ice floating in it that freeze the heart while the head's on fire. In fine 'tis a bath to be remembered all the days of a man's life, a bath held in especial abhorrence by Silurists, because, whenas they are in it, they laugh little, drink less, and will scarce say "thank you" if a pretty lass beckon with her finger, and pout her lips into shapes never so enticing. And, as it is well, known in what esteem Love, Ale, and Laughter are held by the good folk of Gwent, you may conceive how sorely sick they must be to have no relish for these delights, and even to rail against them and to blaspheme; uttering all manner of waspish censures against broad grins, brown bowls, and cherry lips. It is in these sad times when Beelzebub takes us by the neck, dips us under, and asks, "How do you like that?" that we say sour and ill-natured things against everybody, pry into matters which should be covered with leaves like the baskets in Ceres' Pomp, and find fault with everything. Others write books while they are soused in the Bath; works full of unpleasant doctrines and sad moralities to the intent that our Mortal Life is a pitiful Tragic Show, full of tears, and sighing, and sorrow; instead of the true, veracious, and Silurian position, namely that it is the drollest, merriest, wildest, and most fantastical comedy; a comedy better than any that the witty clerk Aristophanes invented for the men of Athens, and rigged out with the rarest jokes, trickeries, brawls, intrigues, miz-mazes, counterfeits, gods-from-the-machine, choruses, waggeries, oil-flasks, wine-skins, masks, and music. This is what it really is, tho' when one is in the Devil's Bath it seems quite different; but then it is silly to touch the quill at such a season, and can only waste time, ink, and paper.

And since I had come once more to my right reason, and the blue sky opened no more for me a pall of blackness, as I have said, I bade my friends come and sleep for a few nights under my roof, that we all of us might get some gladness whilst we were able. And on the appointed day I waited for them, sitting in an elbow chair set in the shade of the lawn, and had on a little table beside me a flagon of wine, a cup, and the famous books called *The Red Book of Rabanus,* and *The Joyous Inventions of the Monk Galliardus.* With these good fellows I — passed the afternoon, lying well back in my stall with my legs stretched out, reading with grave delight the pleasant adventures of the Seigneur of Ville-aux-Echelles and Madam Amalaswonda, and the wonderful history of the Rose-Chapter held in the Abbey of Arsanno on the Vigil of St. Ypocras. And amongst other strange relations I read as follows from the *Periphrasis* of the Spanish friar, Antonio of Calvados; the which plainly declares the delight taken in our land by the nations oversea:

STRANGE STORY OF A RED JAR

IF YOU EVER chance to spend a few weeks in the County of Monmouth, and are one of those clever people who know where to look for what is good, you will not fail to roam over the hills and across the valleys till you come to a little town called Uske. This town lies beside the fair river of the same name, and is sheltered on every side by wooded hills and sweet, greeny slopes; and to the east you can see the enchanted forest of Wentwood, where there are deep dells, shady alleys, rocks with water everlastingly dripping from them, and the finest black cherries that anybody could wish to taste. But, if you once cross the bridge and get into Uske, you will have plenty to look at without thinking of Wentwood, that is, if you are fond of quaint houses, wild old-fashioned gardens, and odd nooks and corners of every sort. And, better than all, there are old tales and legends still lingering about the sunny streets, and sleeping on the settles next to the fire; but it is getting rather difficult to wake them up now, because you see they are very old. They are, in fact, the last vestiges of the good old monks, who had a Priory in Uske, and this tale I am going to tell is considered by experienced judges to be as pleasant a story as any of them, because it has such a fine moral, without which a story is no more use than a wasp without his sting.

You must know, then, that there was once a monk at the Priory, named Brother Drogo, who was regarded by everybody as a splendid specimen of a monk; and not without reason, for he stood six feet high, and had a waist like a wine-tub. He had roving twinkling black eyes, a firm mouth, and a voice like the roar of the pedal-pipes of the organ, and it must be confessed that in his quire habit he looked a well-proportioned man, and a pillar of the Church. As for his intellect, all the brethren allowed him to be an admirable logician, an orthodox divine, and the best judge of sauces, seasonings, hot relishes, sweetmeats, and preserved dainties of the whole convent, and this was saying a great deal. It was Brother Drogo's science and deep knowledge of the nature of things, and of how to mingle hot and sweet together, that made the pious brethren long for Lent and fast-days, and desire to mortify their throats with curious dishes of which none but himself and the cook ever understood the composition. But yet this was not Brother Drogo's greatest art; for he was the Cellarer of the Priory, and took care of the casks in the cellar, and of that pleasant vineyard on a southern slope, where the sun was nearly always to be found; and if he were great in the kitchen and the larder, he was far greater in the affairs of the fragrant world below. But here his one fault got the better of him, and sometimes played him queer tricks; for, to tell the truth, Brother Drogo used now and then to get very drunk. When is this state he usually saw visions, which made some esteem him a very holy man (since it is only such that are blessed in this fashion); but others said that his visions were of the wrong sort and should be kept out of the monastic Chronicle. However this may be, the last vision that he ever saw was such a wonderful one that it lasted him the rest of his life, since he never touched anything but water afterwards; and this was the manner of it.

It was a very hot drowsy sort of day in the beginning of September; a day when the sickles were busy in the corn-fields round Uske, a day of blue dim mists over the woods and hills and the river, a day of mellowed golden sunlight good for the vines and apples and pears and plums, and all the autumn fruits that were ripening in those tangled gardens of Gwent. In the castle above the town the lords and ladies were lying in the shade upon the grass and listening to the ballads and love-songs of the minstrel Master Jehan de Laune of Paris town; and the girls let the squires and pages tickle them and snatch sly kisses as much as ever they liked; because it was too hot to scream and they knew it was right to bear and forbear. In the Priory the monks were (most of them) asleep and dreaming holy dreams that made them smile as they slept; but Brother Drogo was wide awake and walking up and down the cloister. Why was this? Well, it was because he was terribly thirsty, and felt as if a Lollard were being roasted somewhere at the back of his throat, and the reason that he did not drink was that he had doubts whether he should ever stop if he once began. This was in fact a knotty case of conscience and it puzzled the good man and made him feel thirstier than ever; the which was natural since theology is known to be a dry and thirsty science. It is bad enough when two or three divines are muddling a question between them, but this unfortunate monk had to be Praeses, Opponent, and Respondent all at once; and he found that it was necessary for him to take a little wine to clear his brain, for being a conscientious man he wished to settle this point before doing anything else. He therefore picked his way past a dozen or so monks, all smiling very hard, and went along a dark passage, and began to go down the steps to the cellar. Now the steps were many and by reason of their great age, uneven; so it was slow work getting to the bottom, and the Cellarer had to stop short very often and tap his skull, for the cool air from below seemed to make his blood hotter than before. And when he stopped he held up his lamp and looked at the walls, which had been decorated in rather a curious manner by an ancient monk who had been dead a good many hundred years. This artist's fancy had led him to suppose that views of Purgatory and warmer places would be a nice ornament to the cellar stair; but whether he intended all these flames, fagots, and streams of fire as a sort of whet for the wine, or whether he meant to say "that's what'll come to you if you get drunk" is more than I can tell. But these pictures made Brother Drogo feel warmer and warmer, though he couldn't help looking at them; and in one place where a fine powerful demon was sousing a big monk in a cauldron of fire and poking him with a three-pronged fork to see if he were done, the Cellarer was forced to discern a huge resemblance between the monk's features and his own. However, he trod the last step in due time, and stood in the vaulted cellar, the which had aisles, transepts, side chapels, and ambulatories in abundance, but there were casks everywhere of all shapes and sizes, and a few curious-looking jars with Greek letters cut on them. In this shadowy world of wine Brother Drogo stood awhile and gazed about in an abstracted kind of way, rolling his tongue in his mouth and telling his tale on his fingers as he thought of Burgundy, Beaulne, Champagne, and all the vintages of the fair land of France, of Valdepenas and Amontillado, of the juice of the Rhine mountains, and of the famous wines of Italy, which are drawn from the very mouth of the fire below. But the Cellarer's thirst was such a stupendous one that he could not see his way to allaying it on any of these; so he just drew himself a pint of his own red wine of Uske, and sat down on a stone form to consider things. When he had finished his draught he began to walk about among the casks and to peer into odd shelves and crannies in out of the way recesses and blind corners of the cellar, muttering to himself all the time "Burgundy, Beaulne, Champagne, Valdepenas, Amontillado, Montepulciano" as if he were bidding the beads of St. Bacchus. By chance he came to a nook in the darkest part of the cellar, in the which nothing was kept, nor had been for many a long day;

and holding up his lamp and peering about the dim and shadowy wall he saw faintly a great red jar, of the most ancient and uncouth form imaginable, graved all over with ivy leaves, vine tendrils, pine cones and a pomp of nymphs and fauns dancing all around it. But there was no mark, nor label to say what this jar held; so Brother Drogo found it was his duty as Cellarer to look a little more closely into the matter. Indeed he had his doubts as to whether this jar was a good Christian, so he got on a stone step and began to use his tools on the jar's mouth, which was covered tightly with black pitch. And as he cut this pitch away faint odours of delicious fragrance began to steal out tickling Brother Drogo's weakest places. "The Prior will thank me for this day's work" thought he; and thus he cut the last piece away and the soul of the jar poured its whole fragrance out upon him like a breeze from the Islands in the High Levant, and went past into the cellar, and up the stair into the cloister where the monks were asleep, and out into the town so that the townsfolk said to one another "'Twas a balmy day, indeed marvellously balmy." As for the girls in the castle their gallants squeezed them a little more closely, and they smiled and seemed to think everything was being properly performed and going on nicely; but then it was a sweet gale that blew upon them.

But Brother Drogo said to himself "one cup — one little cup — of this wonderful wine will quite quench my thirst; better than a hogshead of any other wine; indeed if I were now half-seas-over, it would be my duty to taste it; am I not Cellarer?

How shall I bring the matter before the Prior without having tasted?" You see Brother Drogo had not read Aristotle for nothing, so he gently inclined the jar to his cup, and let a dark purple stream run slowly like oil into it, till it was quite full. And when he tasted he had drained the cup, and when he had drained the cup, he knew that he, the Cellarer of the Convent of St. Mary, was a sinful man that had gloried all his days in a nice discrimination of various juices, when in point of fact, he had that moment tasted wine for the first time in his life. But instead of running up the stairs and telling the Prior, Brother Drogo drank and drank again, cup after cup, till he got chimes in his ears, fire in his veins and a miz-maze in his brain. This veracious history does not say how many cups Brother Drogo lifted out of the red jar; but it was certainly a great many for he was a man of large capabilities. However, as he was drawing the jar o fill once more that little cup, he seemed suddenly to fall asleep, and to have down cushions laid under his head, but this strange circumstance happened so suddenly that he had no time to take notes; and it is not possible to give so full a description of the affair as I should have wished. But the really strange part of the tale is that when he had slept till he could sleep no more, and woke up again, he was no longer in the cellar of the Convent at Uske; how this happened neither he nor I nor anybody else has ever made out, but it is certainly a fact that Brother Drogo rubbed his eyes and found himself lying on green grass. And when he had rubbed his eyes a second time, had stood up and looked about him, he saw that he was standing on the highest point of a mountain girt around with woods of dark pine-trees, and dwarf oak thickets, and brakes of tangled undergrowth. Below very far was a city of a strange fashion, and beyond the city mountains rising one above the other; and behind him was the sea of a very deep blue. Before the Cellarer had finished wondering where he was and how he got there, his ears caught a noise of jangling and clashing of brass on brass, with shrill flute notes, beating drums, and loud cries and hails now from one quarter and now from another, gathering together and drawing towards him. I do not see what Brother Drogo could do but open his mouth; it is certain that he did so, for he could not recollect what passage it was that led out of the cellar to the top of this mountain. But while he was thinking the matter over, the drums, tambourines, cymbals, single flutes, double flutes, and loud calling grew loud enough to deafen one; and all at once he was surrounded on all sides by a company of girls whose clothes seemed to be at the wash, for there was not enough linen (or of anything else) to make a kerchief on the whole company. And when they began to dance round the poor man, calling to him in a tongue he did not understand, he began to be afraid he had got into bad company, not suited for a monk of St. Bennet's rule. But he could not help allowing that these girls had very nice figures and seemed to be able to make a great noise. "If I were a layman," thought he, "it would be different, but these amusements are not quite proper for ecclesiastical persons." Round, around they whirled in dancing and the din of cymbals clashed louder yet; but then the figures of the naked girls became shadows and their music was hushed to a dull murmur. The next thing Brother Drogo heard was the words of the Prior of his Convent, saying "He will yet live, and drink another cup."

“Of water only” answered the poor Cellarer, who began to think he was always to be moving, from cellar to mountain and from mountain to his bed. In fact, he had been found, after much seeking, lying on his back in the cellar, with a nasty cut on his head, a great wine jar lying in shards beside him, and a pool of dark red wine on the floor giving forth a fragrance that made the monks sniff eagerly. Some persons have said that Brother Drogo must have slipped backwards, knocking his skull against the edge of a stone ascent, and pulling the wine jar after him. These persons make out that he dreamt whatever he saw, but I am disposed to think them rather too clever for this dull world of ours. But as I said at the beginning of the tale the Cellarer kept to water for the rest of his life, and leaving the cellar to another hand became the chief gardener of the Priory, and grew such worts, and flowers, and fruits as were not to be seen elsewhere in all Gwent. Indeed he invented that great green plum, as big as an egg, that melts in the mouth as sweet as honey, and is rightly called “Soif de Dru,” or “Drogo’s Thirst.”

And the moral of this history is — Leave old jars on the shelf. It seems to me a good one.

And when the shadows began to climb up from the brook Gwithian and the valley of Deep Dendraeth, and to give coolness to the western hills; far away I heard a horn winding, and knew the notes for the call of Nick Leonard, of Uske. But presently two other bugles joined in the music and told me that Tom Bamfylde of Abergavenny, and Phil Ambrose of Penryhayle were also journeying to Clemendy. After the horns came the noise of horses’ feet; so I went forth to meet my guests and saw them soon coming at a sober pace, one after another along the depths of the road. So to greeting and to supper and wine-reward for the journey done; which with certain pipes of tobacco and a canon sung made us fit for no unwelcome rest. But on the morrow we agreed to be merry, remembering that we were officers of the Cwrw Dda, having Free Sokage and dwelling *in Terra Sabulosa.*

THE SPIGOT CLERK'S FIRST TALE

ON THE MORROW when we had breakfasted, we got out our pipes and began to smoke tobacco as we all of us did use, and soon the parlour was decked out with those blue clouds that savour so sweetly of a morning, and each was filled with a grave contentment with the world, and especially with the Land of the Moon (that is Gwent) as being the most productive in pleasant things of all countries whatsoever. And after some time I thought fit to say "What contentment shall we use this morning that we may pass the time cheerfully and not grow weary and wish the sun a-bed? For my part I am content to sit still and smoke, but I know that in Uske and Abergavenny this employment is not held sufficient." Whereon Dick Leonard said "Let us play at bowls, 'tis a hearty game and a choice diversion, and not laborious like Tennis which sweats a body half away."

"The devil loveth the bias, and useth bowls of liquid fire; if you believe me not, read the Itinerario Infernale of the Licentiate Sanctius, who saw the fiends playing with the heads of Kings and Cardinals." This Tom Bamfylde spoke contra, and to him assented Master Ambrose, who protested that he cared not a tittle whether the devil used bowls, but was hot enough already and determined to sit still. "But," quoth he, "let us rather tell tales in turn, so that three may smoke while one recounts, and 'tis odd if we four Silurians are not able to furnish each other with entertainment till the clock strike dinner-time. Placetne vobis, domini?"

"We might do worse," said Master Leonard, "and your entertainment may serve our occasions; but it is but just that as Spigot Clerk will have stories told, Spigot Clerk should make a beginning of telling stories, wherefore hold ye your peace, most gentle Knights, and hearken to the fat products of Ambrosius his brain."

"Not so," cried Phil, "but rather we will recount by lot, and leave the judgment to our sweet lady Chance who still deals kindly with us."

“Your lady Chance is no Christian, she hath not been sanctified” said the Rubrican, “but is a mere Pagan, and a slut to boot; yet we will use her for this turn, since it is a trivial. But what manner of lot shall we employ?”

“Why this” I answered: “Let him whose pipe first goeth out tell the first tale, and have likewise the power to name his successor, and so on, till we have all devised some history. And the deviser shall for his turn sit in the chair by the window, the which was made after the conceit of one of our house that was a great bard, and it is alleged that this seat maketh him who sitteth thereon to be fertile and mightily productive.”

“How precious a chair is this,” quoth Dick Leonard, “and in what esteem would I hold such an one if such were in my possession. Truly I believe there are not a few households in Gwent that would find a chair of these properties convenient, for it would explain matters that are now a mystery. By the Round Table a very special chair, and worthy of the Manour of Pwllcwrw. But hush I for we must all smoke slow, if we wish not for the prerogative in devising.” So all applied them to the task of burning tobacco by slow degrees, but Phil Ambrose in his caution let the fire in his pipe die out altogether, and though he might puff and blow, he blew nothing but ashes from the bowl, and so in spite of all he had to begin our pastime. But first I duly took him by the hand and set him in his stall, with as much ridiculous solemnity and observance as I could master, and said to Tom Bamfylde “Do you, O learned Rubrican, use the words of the herald when an Act in Cervisage is to be discharged.” Then the tenor in a plain song, after the manner of distinct reading — *With closed lips and gaping ears, I pray you, I charge you, good Lords of Gwent hearken to what is to come, then be joyous and laugh gaily. Seal up the door.*

HOW THE FOLK OF ABERGAVENNY WERE PESTERED BY AN ACCURSED KNIGHT

ALL GOOD SILURISTS love the sweet town of Abergavenny, wherefore I need crave no pardon in telling a tale of it. But you know there stands outside the east gate a very fine church that was formerly the quire of the good old monks, settled there by the great Lord Marcher Hamelin de Baladun, not by Drogo de Baladun nor Bryan de Insula, as some have said; though indeed this question is of little importance to my history. And you know what curious and special works are to be seen in this quire, what storied and annealed windows, with monuments of charge and show most choicely wrought, and blazoned with right noble bearings. There the great lords lie well, as it becomes lords to lie, decked out in their harness, their head and feet resting on strange monstrous creatures and with calm faces and uplifted hands, wrought full rarely in the goodly stone and alabaster. Beside these are their dear wives and sweethearts vested in wimple, couvre-chef, and cote-hardie, with their little pets cut beside them. One of these sweet ladies hath a squirrel in her hand and they say that while she ran after the merry little beast she fell down from the castle wall and quite lost her breath. Is it not pitiful to think of this and of all these ladies and their knights, who of old time loved and laughed right heartily and were warm and glowing from head to foot, and are now so cold and quiet? But it was certainly a sorrowful thing to die for a little fellow with bright eyes and a curly tail; ’twas bad enough when a lady died for her big pet, who could put his arms all round the cote-hardie, and fondle it, and say pretty things, and kiss those full red lips, that are now so white and chilly. But yet ’tis of none of these dear dead maidens that I am going to talk, nor of their brave Knights that payed quit rent to them in kisses, and did with their embraces full knightly suit and service. Though one wrestled with a bull till the brute’s horns broke off, and another charged twice through the stricken field of Banbury, pole-axe in hand, though one fought two days and nights with a few small ships against a host of French and Spanish galleys (hard by to Rochelle, this did Jehan de Hastings, third of that name), yet I know you care not much about them, or their noble and ancient coats, and I wis that you would not weep at the fate of the last Seigneur who died when he was but seventeen being pierced through the body in a tourney. I will therefore devise you a tale of another marvel of the minster, which (to speak the plain truth) made a great noise in its day, was a notable nuisance to the lords and ladies aforesaid, pestered the good monks till their stalls were too hot to hold them, and played the very deuce with the honest townsfolk of Burgavenny, who then, as now, lived a quiet life and asked for nothing but to be left alone. And what was this marvel? How could anything about a church be so wicked as to worry people and make them say naughty words in the old French Tongue, in the Dog-Latin Tongue, and in the language of Paradise itself, for everybody knows that Adam was a Welshman, that from his body came all the Ap-Adams, one of the largest and noblest families in the world, who have made themselves loved, feared, reverenced, and honoured both in the lands on this side the sea and in the lands beyond seas. There are some currish fellows now (and I suppose there always have been such), who say there never was, never is, and never will be an Àp-Adam good for anything alive or dead but fattening the soil, that this earth would be passably pleasant if there were no Ap-Adams on it, that the young Ap-Adams who are round and soft and wear cote-hardies cause more burning plagues and hot damnifications than the old ones with bristly beards, breeches, and grisly oaths. But these are ill-natured folks who have been crossed in love, so you mustn't mind what they say; and besides in this very church outside the east gate of Burgavenny lies the glorious tomb of Sir William ap-Thomas from whose body cometh the worshipful and illustrious house of Herbert, and he was the grandson of Jenkin ap-Adam, nor can the heralds trace this house back any further. But after all this genealogical and moral discourse you are still in the dark as to what it was that made all Abergavenny into a stewpan with a hot, glowing fire under it, and in it a heap of Drogos, Humphreys, Mauds, Matildas, Efans, Owens, Jorwerths, and Gwrgans with Prior Hadrian de Mortuo Mari and his monks, all snorting, blowing, thinning down, murmuring and crying *Splendeur Diou, Diaoul, in ignem aternam et favillam cum Diabolo et angelis suis* — for the good old monks were the only people then who really understood theological arrangements, so they naturally expressed their thoughts with better grace and at more length. Well I will out with it; it was a mere clock, a thing of cogs and wheels and bells to tick off hours and minutes and seconds, to strike eating time and drinking time and kissing time, by which conceptions, horoscopes, and all the products of mind and body might be dated, in sun and shade, in the which point clocks are better than Dials, for these latter are not very useful on cloudy days, and moreover on each and every Dial are the words *We Must*, and people do not like to be always drinking the joyous sunshine and sweet nectar of the air from a death's head, unless they are fantastic and tired of the blue sky, the green earth and the Ap-Adams upon the earth. Now this clock aforesaid lived in a tower built on to the monastic church solely for its use and benefit to the intent that it might be plainly seen and clearly heard, and tell the Burgavennians when to breakfast, dine, and sup, when to yawn and awake, when to yawn and go to sleep, when to squeeze the ladies hard and to kiss their nice red lips till they were out of breath (these kisses leave blisters) and when to listen to the juice going guggle, guggle, guggle into the cups. Besides this it marked off Mass and Matins, separated Sext and called to Compline, and as I have said dwelt in a high campanile, that looked over the town walls and peeped into all the byeways, dark alleys, walled gardens, pleasaunces and closes of Abergavenny, indeed it is supposed that the clock was the witness of many a little matter known only to two besides. Now the tintinnabulous functions thereof were performed by a very fine piece of mechanique, I would say by the statue of an armed knight standing in a habitacle with a double row of bells hung beside him on which he smote the hours and the quarters with his axe, and also at the Canonical Hours struck out a verse of the hymn appointed to be sung, the which duties he discharged to admiration, and was accounted an honest fellow, notwithstanding all the ugly dragons, basilisks, and serpents that were cut in the stone all about him. To be short he was called by the common people Sir Jenkin Thomas, and was known by report all over Gwent, aye, and had had bequests and charges and rents erected for him by pious people, who thought Sir Jenkin looked after them and kept Abergavenny quiet and in good order. There was a charge of three shillings and four pence per annum on the meadow called Tirgwain-y-groes, of one shilling and ninepence on the seigneur's mill, of sixpence three farthings on the land called Penycoed; while my lady Loys had given him a pair of gold spurs and a certain Sir Reginald de Braose had devised ten golden pounds to the knight: all these benefactions being for the renewing of the gilt on Sir Jenkin's armour, the repainting of his face, and also the repairing and beautifying of the tower whereon he dwelt. And as all rent-charges due to the Priory were collected by the Prior, we may be pretty certain that Sir Jenkin was not defrauded of his due. But you will ask how came this clock in Abergavenny? Well, it was one of the fruits of the leisure of the good old monks, who even in their idlest hours were not entirely idle, but rather were for ever inventing, fertilising, concocting, devising, fabricating, producing and making productive. Ah! we owe a great deal to these holy men who saw into the essence of things and knew more than we do about juices and the *perpetuum mobile.* Accordingly one of them at Burgavenny Priory as he sat in the sunny garden looking at the wonderful hill called the Blorenge, and meditating upon what mechanical device he should next put his hands and mind to, suddenly bethought him that they had no clock worthy of their quire, and presently determined that he would make a clock that should be the pride of the Convent, the town, and the Lordship. And when this canon (his name was Dom. Maria de Wick) told the Prior of what he intended to do the Prior said *O — Admirabile,* and nothing doubted but that they would have a very special clock as Dom. Maria was known to have made an instrument in which was a wheel eternally moving and yet not finishing one revolution in seven thousand years. And in much less time than that Dom. Maria had made all his wheels, and cogs and chains and had fitted them with weights, having likewise fashioned the face, splendidly coloured in red and blue and gold, and all manner of astrological tables written on it, so that this clock got the name, among the curious, of *Medulla Quadripartiti* — the marrow of the Quadripartitum which as you know is the Institutes of Astrology. In the meantime the Prior had paid a visit to the Baron in his castle, and had talked very kindly to the brave honest knight, explaining to him that one of the canons was making a very fine clock for the Priory Church, and that it was necessary that this clock should be provided with a tower. Just then pretty Eva or Maud or Isabella came in, and the Prior's affair was done in no time and the campanile as good as built, for the Prior was a very holy man and a great favourite with the ladies, his penitents. To be short the tower was built at the Baron's charges, and the clock set up in it, and then and not till then did Dom. Maria lead forth Sir Jenkin, whom he had concealed in his laboratory, for he had worked on this figure with great ingenuity, and thought even better of it than of his wheel, which to be sure did nothing but go round somewhat leisurely. And when the Prior, the Sub-prior, the canons, and the monks saw this admirable statue, so artificially perfected with helmet, coif, hauberk, coudiéres, baldrick, and chausses, and marked how the face was enamelled to the life, they knew not exactly what to say; some cried "*miles ad vivum,"* and others "*admirabile,"* only the Sub-prior muttered something to himself about "*sollers hominem ponere"* and *"plane perfectum est,"* but then he knew rather too much and afterwards came to grief. Then Dom. Maria expounded his great work to them, and showed that he could easily link it to his clock and make it strike the hours and even play tunes with a moderate amount of contrivance; and of this the Prior altogether approved— "'Twill sanctify the town" said he. Thus the habitacle was fashioned high up on the tower, and the dragons, lizards, and other monsters choicely cut out by a Freemason who had come to the great Fair on May Day, and had been chosen by Dom. Maria to execute the work. Finally on St. Petronilla's Day Sir Jenkin Thomas was hoisted to his place and with his axe (the oblation of the Mystery of Cordwainers) knocked off *Jam luris orto sidere* on the peal of bells (the oblation of the Mystery of Ale-Drapers) and shortly after struck six o'clock as coolly as a husband kisses his wife.

I need say nothing of the rites and ceremonies observed, but you may be sure the Prior wore his gold cope with the orphrey of roses and lilies and the peacock hood, that wax tapers, incense, holy water, and holy men were as thick about that tower as flies round a cow's head on Midsummer Day. And besides the monks the castle and the town and all the country side had come to see this sanctification: there was the Baron with his little son, and the Lords Marcher of Estrighoil and Uske, wearing splendid surcoats bejewelled and glowing with lions, ravens, boars' heads, and flower-de-luces; there was the Baron's Lieutenant Sir Raoul Lezayre (but he was looking all the while at the ladies instead of Sir Jenkin), to say nothing of Esquires, Captains, and men-at-arms. As for the ladies they were there also finely tricked out in silk, and velvet, and sly smiles; and to mention things unlike together, the Chancery of Burgavenny was present in black gown and square cap, together with the Rolls and the Requests wagging their heads and looking solemn; and lastly all the commonalty of the town and country from the Mayor to the wild shepherds from the mountain. Thus was Dom. Maria's work hallowed in the presence of a great multitude, yet it was noted that after the consecration, after Sir Jenkin, his battle-axe and bells had been sprinkled with holy water, the Freemason who had cut the stone-work, craved leave to go up and set his mark thereon, saying that he had by some mischance forgotten to do this before. Which leave was given him, and it is alleged that when he had come down again, and had vanished back into the crowd he was heard to laugh indecently and full scornfully, and the Burgavennians assert that this Freemason was no more than one of Hell’s Commissioners, who by that mark he set upon the stone undid all that the holy water and benedictions had effected, and in fine, was the author of all the mischief that came to pass. They say also that the Baron hearing how the fellow had laughed, was willing to have spoken with him in his castle (or may be under it) and bade a man-at-arms attach his person; but to no effect, since there was no Freemason to be seen, either then or afterwards in all the coasts of Gwent.

But nobody thought very much about him at the time, for they had plenty of other things to take up their thoughts, namely feasting and drinking; for never was there such a festival at Abergavenny as that of St. Petronilla de Clochasterio, as this lady (virgo non m’ra) was called by the monks ever after. For first of all there was a very sufficient table at the Priory, where the great Lords and Ladies, their Esquires, Pages, and Fools (so they named Men of Letters in those days) were so stuffed with peacocks, pheasants, swans, partridges, capons, salmon, carp, trout, boars’ heads, larded beef, and venison of all sorts and sizes, to say nothing of the rivers of sauces monastically concocted of spices (such as the cursed monk, &c., &c.), of cunning condiments, of sweet confections with one notable device in marchpane, imaging the new tower, that they must but for the wine assuredly have choked. But the wine saved them for it was ecclesiastical and entirely canonical both as to quantity and quality; so that between the monastic spices and the purple juices this was a day remembered by lords and ladies in more ways than one. Nor did the townsfolk or the country folk starve, and if you put for peacocks, ducks, and for swans, geese, for boar’s head, pork, for venison, mutton, and for wine strong ale, they made as hearty a banquet in the meadow as their betters did in the refectory, and were no more fit to hear Evensong than the monks were to sing it; and indeed you could scarcely make out the Psalms for the clatter of the *misereres*, as one monk after another fell forwards and lost his balance. And that night at the castle it is said that the three Lords Marcher began to discuss theological questions, the which proves that they must have been half-seas-over. Why? Because when these great seigneurs were sober they never talked of such things, knowing that matters ecclesiastical are beyond a curly pate, which must pass under the razor to tackle these dogmatical affairs. Nevertheless, on St. Petronilla de Clochasterio her feast they not only discussed Divinity and the Symbols of Holy Church, but even wrangled thereon, contradicting one another bitterly and stubbornly; and pelting each other with infamous accusations and malevolent censures all as if they had been Præses, Opponent and Respondent in the Schools at Oxon. At last my lord Bryan de Monte-Fixo of Estrighoil, and my lord Lawrence de Salso Mari co of Uske, fell together on my lord of Burgavenny, insinuating with indecent perspicuity that his ancestor Walter de Baladun had brought home counterfeit reliques from the Holy Land; whereupon there was a silence, for this was a dreadful thing to say, and my lord of Burgavenny's moustachios grew as stiff and upright as the tails of two dogs before they begin to fly at each other's throats. But in this silence voices came up from the lower table where the squires were sitting, and lo and behold these gentry were doing exactly the same thing as their lords, namely wrangling and disputing on the tenets of our Holy Church. The which was evidently pernicious and unbearable, so the three Barons vehemently commanded their esquires to hold their peace and go on drinking like honest gentlemen, and moreover they enforced this pious precept by example, till they were as drunk as it is possible for Lords Marcher to be; and finally were carried to bed by six of their Clerks in Chancery. And this is the very manner in which the Burgavennians celebrated the festival of St. Petronilla de Clochasterio. And for the space of a hundred years Sir Jenkin Thomas (but the monks called him Bramantip) struck the hours and played his hymns to the admiration of all men, and, as I have said, won great fame in Gwent for a doughty knight; and had monies and rents and charges devised to him, so that seventy years after Dom. Maria was buried (he became sub-prior of the Convent) Sir Jenkin glittered all over with gold and silver, and was as fresh and ruddy of countenance as on the day he was set in his place. And in course of time a new officer was created in the Convent, who was called Clochasteriarius and had a cell in the tower, his duty being to keep in order the curious mechanique of the clock, also to astrologise or star-gaze: but one or two of them that held this office are reported to have abused it, that is in place of prying into matters sidereal they pryed into matters Burgavennian, and what was worse talked of what they had seen, by which bad conduct much scandal arose. And certainly they that devised those curious optical glasses by the which we can see what kind of a place Venus is, never intended us to use them for spying into orchards or walled gardens to the great annoyance of respectable people. And one of these holy star-gazers, Brother Roger by name, when reproved by the Prior for this same misplaced curiosity, replied that a strong conceit had possessed him to the effect that Venus was as a matter of fact the earth and the earth Venus, and so he thought it his business to see what was being done on that planet: but the Prior would not listen to these refinements, and gave the post of Clochasteriarius to the oldest monk in the Convent, who merely sang with an open book before him for form's sake, since his sight had failed him in his eighty-ninth year.

But when Sir Jenkin (or Bramantip if you like it better) had rung out *Now that the star of day doth rise* about thirty-six thousand, five hundred times, the cursed mark of the Freemason began to take effect, though why the devil had waited all these years is more than I can say, unless it be true that Satan loves to do everything in a cross-grained roundabout kind of way, unlike everybody else. And the first folk that Bramantip worried were the monks, and the first monk to be used spitefully was his own special monk or keeper, the monk who loved him and oiled him, brushed him down, burnished his gold, saw that his bells were nicely hung, and now and again dabbed his face with paint so that Saxons and strangers from outlandish countries beyond seas might not say when they came to the great May Fair: "The Knight of Burgavenny groweth old and wrinklesome, he botched his hymn most woefully, his armour is dull and tarnished, and his arm stiff with age. In fine Sir Jenkin plainly dotes, and is altogether decayed." Yet it was upon the good monk who loved him and cared for him that the old rascal played a scurvy unhandsome trick in the manner following, as it was told by the monk aforesaid, called in religion Brother John. Who deponed before the Prior, the Sub-prior and the Canons that whilst he sat in his cell ravished in celestial speculations, he suddenly heard a great blow struck on his door as it had been a battle-axe smiting violently upon it, and immediately the door flew open, so that, turning round in great dismay, he beheld the statue, called of the monks Bramantip and of the townsfolk Sir Jenkin Thomas, standing in the doorway, with a wrathful and indignant countenance and his axe uplifted as if to smite him Brother John aforesaid, dead as he sat. Thereupon overcome by grievous terror and affright he made the sign of the cross and swooned away, and remained without knowing anything until he was revived by the Sub-prior, who found him lying at full length upon the floor. The which relation was confirmed by the Sub-prior so far as he was able to speak of his own knowledge; but he said also that going up into the tower to talk with Brother John, he met a woman (as he conceived) who seemed to be in great distress and misery, and fled past him on the stair, hiding her face with her robe. But whether this woman were only a vision, or an evil spirit, or whether she had aught to do with this affair, he, the Sub-prior aforesaid, was not able to determine. And on being interrogated by the Prior Dom. Hadrian de Mortuo Mari, whether any audible species were emitted by her footfalls, he answered Yes, but it was found on consideration that demons were not seldom audible; and, further interrogated, he confessed that she appeared to him to be a young woman, and if he might judge by certain curves and spherical indications a right comely wench, but refused to take any oath touching this strange appearance in question. Thereupon the Prior bade all leave him, save only Brother John, whom he is said to have interrogated sharply and persistently both in Chapter and in camera; but nothing more was known of this matter, some saying one thing and some another; and this was Sir Jenkin's first act of malice, the rumour of which went not beyond the Convent walls.

And his second foul practice was done in this wise. You must know that the then Lord of Abergavenny had a daughter, Isabella by name, who at this time was in her sixteenth year, of a most beautiful and exquisite feature, a woman in all but age, and (so says the old Chronicle) evidently made for Love. And in the castle was a young gentleman who bore on a very noble coat, the baton sinister, the same having been from his youth in the service of the Baron, who had trained him in arms and in all that it becomes a gentleman to learn. Who being now seventeen years of age was, it is conceived, pricked and stung * * * * by the adorable and ravishing beauty of the Lady Isabella, in such wise that he was quite unable to contain himself, and finding the lady aforesaid to look not unkindly on him, became against all honour and religion her lover *par amours.* And it fell out on a hot afternoon in May, they two being together in a retired arbour hard by the castle, were terribly and fearfully surprised by the Knight of the Tower, standing after an enraged and malevolent sort over against them, having his axe uplifted in the air. So the lover and his mistress became as dead for fear, thinking the Knight was come to kill them both their souls and their bodies, for their outrecuidance and impudency; and were found as they lay by the Baron, the young gentleman having his arms about the body of the Lady

Isabella aforesaid. But what came of this adventure I will not tell you, for it were a sorrowful and piteous story; but this was the second mischief done of Sir Jenkin; and this could not be concealed but the rumour of it was rather blazed all over the town and Lordship.

And the third appearance of this villainous and malicious Knight was in the town of Abergavenny, and came about as follows. There lived hard by the Parish Church a fellow called Hen Phil yr Salutation; being a taverner and host of the Salutation Inn, the which was much resorted to by the townsfolk of the baser sort, who met there to exercise their wit on matters beyond them and to drink small ale and sour cider. This Philip was known to be a fellow of craft and marvellous skill in money-grubbing, being moreover suspected by many of unduly and unlawfully concocting his ale with water and strong drugs, so that his customers were sooner fuddled and made utterly foolish than at any tavern in the town. And how Sir Jenkin dealt with him was not clearly understood, but most said that while Phil was in his cellar, foully practising alchemy on his ale, he heard a clanging step come down the stairs, the door (which he had barred and bolted) was smitten open with a single blow, and by the light of his lanthorn he saw Sir Jenkin making toward him as if to cleave him asunder. Whereupon he fainted away, and fell with his head against the edge of a cask, and was struck silly for the remnant of his days, and these were few. But the Monk John de Ferula who lived at that time in Abergavenny, and left behind him a curious book of Annals, insinuates that besides practising baratry with his ale, Phil did also meddle with his wife's maid, and that she was in the cellar with him when Sir Jenkin burst open the door.

And from that time there was no more peace at all in Abergavenny, nor for gentle nor simple, clergy nor lay folk, but all in turn were continually pestered by this fearsome and horrible statue, who seemed to know all that was being done from the lardarium of the convent to the bower of the castle, and interfered as readily as can be imagined with the privity of the whole town, sparing none but molesting all. Hence all the pleasantry of the place decayed, the young squires and frolicsome ladies, the jolly old monks and the hearty men-at-arms, with all the fat inn-keepers, buxom widows, merry jokers and witty wags were tormented out of their lives by this fellow with his nasty battle-axe, who made no scruple of turning up at a confidential colloquy when he ought to have been standing in his tabernacle on the tower and hammering away at his bells; for it was no use to make little arrangements to transact business at Evensong nor Compline nor Matins neither, since Sir Jenkin always made a third at these small parties. But what puzzled the good people so terribly was that the hours were rung out just the same, as also the hymns without a note missing; and this indeed the Burgavennians could scarcely be expected to take quietly, and as a matter of fact not a few men who had hitherto borne a large paunch with great credit, grew thin and pale through endeavouring to untie this knot. Once the good folk tried making a ring round the tower to watch for Sir Jenkin's descent; but then one cannot stand with one's head in the air all day and all night, and to do so for a couple of hours makes a body's neck ache terribly. And then it began to rain and hail and snow all at once, so everybody went home, and the Knight was at his old work again before the day was done. Nor could any walls, doors, locks, bolts or bars, keep him out, however high or strong they were; and the Baron gained nothing by lowering the portcullis, raising the drawbridge, setting a double watch on the barbican, bartisans and battlements; for Sir Jenkin knocked at his door and interrupted him and altogether muddled things in the castle. It is said there were two special cauldrons of boiling lead kept simmering day and night for a week above the main entrance and two cauldrons of boiling oil maintained for the same period above the postern, but though the machicolations were beautifully made and the baron's men handy fellows with the ladle they saw no one, and yet the Knight got into the interior parts of the fortress somehow or other. And since the Baron of Burgavenny, Lord Marcher of Wales, was not able to defend his strong place against Sir Jenkin, the small gentry, and the petty merchants knew they might as well give up trying: as for the monks they had given in long ago and had taken to horse-hair, knotted scourges, dreadful penances, all-night vigils, fasting on bread and water, and general morality, the which was a state of things unknown at the Priory since the days of the pious founder. But everybody confessed that it was not pleasant to live at Abergavenny as it formerly had been, and agreed that if Sir Jenkin were not done away with the castle, convent and city would all go to the devil together. And then began consultations and whisperings and conferences to take place and messengers were running all day from the castle to the convent, and from the convent to the town; and at last half a score of humble petitions were delivered to the Prior, the first beautifully engrossed by the best clerk in the

Chancery of Burgavenny, and sealed with a great lump of wax as big as a French pear, with boars' heads and lions, and flower-de-luces on it, and the last rather blotted and scurvily written with no seal at all, from the poorest people in the place (for though a man be poor he doesn't like his little pleasures to be interfered with). But all these petitions were very humble and reverent, and all craved the same boon, namely that the false Knight, Sir Jenkin Thomas de Clochasterio, should be seized and haled before the Ecclesiastical Court, for that he harboured within him a certain, foul, damnable, pestilent, and infernal spirit or demon, the name of the demon aforesaid being unknown, and this to the great loss and hurt of the petitioners, who prayed that without needless delay or adjournment the Knight aforesaid should be brought to account for his horrid crimes and notorious iniquities. Which petitions were received by the Prior in full chapter after High Mass had been sung on the Festival of St. Benedict, the said Prior being pleased to use great courtesy toward the petitioners, promising to consider their desires, and finally sending them away with his benediction. And after this you may conceive what a stir and work there was amongst the ecclesiastics, what letters passed between the Prior and the Bishop of Llandaff, the Abbot of Tintern, the Abbot of Caerleon, the Abbot of Grace-Dieu, and the Priors of Uske, and Estrighoil and Llanthony; what questions were put to the Canonists and grave Doctors of the Church; for Dom. Hadrian de Mortuo Mari had sworn a great oath to do the business thoroughly and to leave no stone unturned. At last when St. Petronilla de Clochasterio her feast day came round everything had been settled, matters were in trim, and if Sir Jenkin had had an ounce of brains under his helmet he would have got down from his habitacle on the tower for good and all, and gone in search of Dom. Maria or the Freemason or the Devil or whomsoever was his responsible author. But then you see he had nothing inside his head or his belly either but brass wheels and cogs, and it seems that though these contrivances were sufficient to plague a lot of harmless quiet people, they were not clever enough to let Sir Jenkin know that he was in a nasty scrape and stood a decent chance of being burned. But on St. Petronilla's vigil, the convent and the castle and the city were as full as they could hold of Churchmen, Canonists, Casuists, Surrogates, Lawyers, Chancellors, Summoners, Apparitors, and Clerks, together with a great army of hangers-on and camp followers, who all ate and drank and walked and talked from one end of the town to the other; but kept themselves very quiet for all that, since they were terribly afraid that the Knight knew their business and would burst upon them and make holes in their skulls with that axe of his to let out the Canon Law and Divinity and Clergy and so render any processes invalid. Certainly Sir Jenkin must have been somewhat thickheaded, for he could not help seeing a great big stake driven into the ground by the west door of the Priory Church as one might say right under his nose, and likewise fellows coming in from the country bringing huge loads of dry sticks on their backs, and on mules, and in wagons, and any man-of-letters could have told him that these preparations looked very bad indeed. But on the morrow when the Abbot of Tintern had sung Pontifical High Mass, the Abbot of Caerleon being deacon and the Abbot of Grace-Dieu sub-deacon, the Court was formed in the Chapter House, and the sub-prior of Abergavenny read a great many letters from the Churchmen who hold the chief authority in these merry affairs, by which the Court was fully constituted and invested with plenary power to deal with this detestable and monstrous case. Then Sir Jenkin Thomas was summoned to appear in the Chapter House by a grim-looking personage in a yellow skin and square cap, and this preconisation was so formal and lengthy an affair that before square-cap had called the luckless Knight's name for the ninth time, the workmen had hauled him down, and dragged him to the door, whereat his body was presently attached by the Sergeant, and he was seated in a chair straight in front of my lord Abbot of Tintern who was the chief judge. Then came the pleadings, which I would like to rehearse to you for they are pleasant reading and admirably expressed, but I have them not, and my memory will not suffice for the recollection of all the sworn statements, deeds, depositions, warrants, petitions, bills of accusation, incriminating documents, evidences by word of mouth; together with precedents, recitations, Decretals, Extravagants, Authorities, Scriptures, Rescripts, and extracts put in by the gentry in square caps: all being set down in that delicious Latin dialect that seems made for cases of this kind. But I believe that no less than a hundred witnesses were cited before my Lord Abbot and examined in his presence, and the clerks (there was a long row of them) wrote hard all the time and enjoyed it, for it was not often they had a chance of covering their yellow skins (of parchment I mean) with such curious histories, or of moistening their yellow lips to such good purpose as they still wrote on and on. And at Evensong time the great silver lamp that hung in the middle of the Chapter House was lighted and sconces also all round the walls, and the trial still proceeded while outside the Priory was a great multitude of people of all conditions and from all the coasts of Gwent waiting to hear sentence given. And all the while Sir Jenkin never moved, and would not answer a single question; but perhaps he knew it would be no good, and so held his tongue to save trouble. But if he held his tongue other people did not, for they felt that such a chance as this was too good to be lost, since it might never occur again, and all sorts of interruptions to the real business took place, some of which were quite indecent. I believe that close upon Midnight a young Canonist put in an objection to the effect that a device of metal work, not having any soul nor principle of life, was incapable of being judged by the Ecclesiastical Law; whereupon there was first of all a terrible wrangle about the nature of the soul which gave the young Canonist his opportunity to read out Aristotle, Averroes, St. Denys the Areopagite, Erigena, St. Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Peter Lombard, &c., &c., till he had to be stopped by force, for he never would have stopped of his own accord. But my Lord Abbot made short work with this objection, proving syllogistically and illatively that nothing in the whole world was outside the Laws Ecclesiastical which go over everything like a blanket, and keep the earth warm. Indeed this remark of the young Canonist's was a very foolish one, and showed that he was fresh to his work. Finally, some time on the next morning, the judges held a short conference apart, and then they proceeded to the judgment which was delivered on these four Articles of the Bill of Accusation; namely: —

I °. That the accursed Knight Sir Jenkin Thomas, of the Tower was able to do what no man could do; much less a figure of metal, insomuch as he was proved to have often climbed over high walls, and burst open strong doors barred with iron.

II°. That the accursed Knight aforesaid always caused them that beheld him to swoon away.

III °. That the accursed Knight aforesaid had often intermeddled in the private affairs of religious men.

IV°. That the accursed Knight aforesaid was able to be in two places at the same time; the which was a pernicious, hurtful and heretical practice, of itself very worthy of the stake.

Now these four counts stood in the Bill as IX XXXI, L, and LXXXIX respectively; there being in all a hundred charges against Sir Jenkin, but some of these were rather frivolous, so my Lord Abbot of Tintern, my Lord Abbot of Caerleon, my Lord Abbot of Grace-Dieu, and the Priors of Burgavenny, Uske, and Estrighoil directed the Clerk to strike out ninety-six counts, and then proceeded to give judgment upon the remaining four; and this reformation of the Articles was allowed by the Lawyers to be just and according to precedent. Then my Lord Abbot of Tintern stood up and everyone saw what a splendid man he was, tall and white-haired, with a glitter in the corner of his eyes. And he adjudged Sir Jenkin to be guilty of all these four charges, by the plain evidence of many persons freely given before the Court and by many depositions of people of every sort and condition, but notably by the deposition of the Baron of Burgavenny, Lord Marcher of Wales, who had put himself and his clerk to much pains that the several circumstances might be made manifest to the Court, as they had fallen out. On the second count my Lord Abbot spoke to the effect that this was evident art magic and diabolic contrivance, for the persons who had swooned, swooned not from fear of death (though perchance they themselves might think so) but rather from a trembling and awful dread stirred up in the breast of man when brought near to a demon. On the third count my Lord Abbot said that these acts of intermeddling with religious persons, and holy men of the Order of St. Benedict were further marks of Satan’s handiwork, since none but a devil or one possessed of a devil would pester and annoy men sanctified and set apart for the service of God. And on the fourth account my Lord Abbot said that to be in two places at the same time was a noisome, hideous, and unutterable offence (scelus tetrum, horrible, et infandum) well worthy as the accuser had said, of fire and fagot. And Sir Jenkin being pronounced guilty of all these crimes was asked by the Clerk if he could show cause why sentence of combustion should not be pronounced against him, but gave no answer and sat quite still. Then the Abbot arose again and signed himself with the sign of our Holy Faith and condemned the Knight of the tower to be burned with fire, and presently, and in a place provided for that end hard by the quire of the Convent. Then Sir Jenkin was dragged out, and the people shouted with such a shout that for a week after they could not so much as whisper, so glad were they to see this bad Knight doomed to die, and he was chained to the stake, and an incredible pile of wood lighted all around him and below him, and in this sort he was burned with fire and the lump of metal that was found cast into a hole in the earth and covered up out of sight. And it is related that the monks of Llanthony heard the great shouting of the people when Sir Jenkin was brought forth and looked toward Abergavenny and lo! the sky grew red as blood with the flame of the fire; and they certainly thought that the Welsh had stormed the Castle, were burning the town and slaughtering the people. And after this Abergavenny returned to its old ways of pleasantness and began to laugh again, and drink and make love without fear of Sir Jenkin or his horrid battle-axe, and indeed began to laugh at him in his turn, though nobody who had seen him at close-quarters did this. And the tower being stripped of its roof fell by degrees into decay, and in the course of a hundred years there was not one stone of it to be seen on its original position, but a great many stones of it might be seen in Abergavenny and the country round about, where they were doing duty in walls and houses, and indeed they were very special achiler stones, too good to pave the roads with. As to the Freemason's carven work of dragons and other beasts whereon he had set his damnable mark, by the earnest counsel of the Prior of Estrighoil it was smitten into powder and cast into the air; for this Prior had been in France and Spain and knew all the crafty tricks of the Prince of Darkness, who must be entirely brought low, or he will jump up again as frisky as ever he was before. And here I would end my tale were it not that the monk John de Ferula in his exact annals hath set down a report concerning these curious circumstances which I must tell you of, for I will imitate the good monk and leave nothing out. And this report was to the effect that the Prior, the Baron and the townsfolk, had one and all been most thoroughly and deliciously duped and deceived in this matter; for the whole affair was a piece of trickery contrived by a company of merry wags of the place, the sole end and aim of whose lives was to serve up bamboozlements, trumperies, balderdashes, impostures and beguilements to their fellow men, and their greatest delight to watch them digesting these gallimawfries and moreover concocting sauces of their own to make the dish yet more pleasant. And John de Ferula declares that these jokers of Burgavenny were bound together into a mystery or Corporate Body, with pass-words and secret signs, and that some of them were young esquires in the Baron's household, that some were monks, and some the sons of gentry in the town, so that they were verily and indeed able to be in a good many places at one and the same time, and had a perfect intelligence of all the pleasant treaties, Cyprian covenants, and amorous pacifications that were afoot. Thus with a suit of armour and a mask their designs were accomplished with great ease, and to ward off suspicion one of the company would now and again pretend the Knight had visited him; and some were for prolonging the trickery after Sir Jenkin had been burned, but 'twas judged wise to stop there for fear lest some one should pluck up a heart and tackle the demon with the carnal arm. And John de Ferula (some called him plain John Rodd) says that this waggish invention was engendered in the brain of one Sir Peter de Fontibus who was also of the Society called the Cwrw Dda (qui erat quoque Socius Societatis Bonæ Cervisiae q v. Cwrw Dda). But the exact annalist says openly that all this was mere rumour, not talked of or noised about till long after Sir Jenkin was burnt, and believed by very few and not at all by himself, for, says he, I know that the Devil is very strong in Burgavenny, and to his malice there are no bounds. And the only circumstance that at all confirms this story is that Sir Peter de Fontibus aforesaid, who was a gentleman of consideration in the town, and was present at the famous trial of Sir Jenkin, was heard all the while to gurgle and make a clicking noise to himself, when the more curious circumstances were recited, but he was known to be tormented by defluctions of rheum to the teeth which caused him great anguish, and as at that time to grow purple in the face and twist his body to and fro. But I believe that it is true that this gentleman was of our Sokage: what say you Master Bamfylde, is it not so?

"Sir Peter de Fontibus," answered the Rubrican, "was without doubt of our Sokage, and in point of fact was called in Cervisage Ratabus the Powt, being the same that instituted the Charter of 'Thirsty Soil,' as Dick Leonard will tell you. But if he did verily contrive the joyous trumpery, the which you have so choicely narrated to us, he left no record thereof, at the least none that I have seen; nor is it in the Red Book of Rabanus. But whom do you will should come after you in devising; for it is your part to choose a taleteller?"

“The next deviser,” quoth I, “shall be Master Cook, for it wants but twenty minutes to noon, and there would be no time to tell another tale. But if this affair of the clock was indeed a piece of cozenage, as I believe it was, it is surely as choice a deceit as ever sprang from the fertile soil of old Siluria.” Then Dick Leonard said: “What takes me most is the Court, with all the Abbots, Priors, and Decretalists, the row of parchment scrapers, and the officers of the ecclesiastical law, sitting all through the night under the silver lamp, digesting this fantastic lump of trickery and sending it down with the strong wine of their own imaginations.”

“Now let’s dine,” said I, “and though you will not have a feast like the banquet of the monks that Spigot Clerk hath so wittily delineated for us; yet my cook is a good disguiser of raw stuff, and a man of some invention, and for your drink I have a very sufficient Rhenish wine, in the which we will give a health to the waggish memory of Ratabus, who was called the Powt.”

THE LORD MALTWORM'S FIRST TALE

WHEN WE HAD sufficiently nourished our internal juices by dining I let my three worshipful jokers know that there was a spacious shadow ready for them on the lawn, where I had caused chairs to be set as easy as I had, for a man who has made a good dinner needs gentle treatment and a little luxury of comfort, so that he may meditate on nothing, and stroke himself down without let or hindrance. Some people cannot sit still and do nothing even after dinner, they must still be fretting and fuming, still reforming, still setting matters right. O miserable race of men; tell me how it comes that there is any wrong or crookedness upon the earth, for since your great Originall began to mend our fortunes, you, his apes, have never ceased to botch, to rip, to tear, to drive in nails and pull them out, to loosen the tight and to tighten the loose, and all the while to go solemnly to work, to use long words and to drink cold water. But we four Silurians were not of this Reforming and Beatifying company, and were able to sit very still in the shade, watching the sunlight play upon the trees, and the filmy clouds floating across the sky, and listening to the ripple of the brook as it sped over the stones toward Caerleon. Phil Ambrose, the Spigot Clerk, who had in the morning told the rare tale of Sir Jenkin, was especially resigned and calm, and leant back in his elbow chair, smoking a mighty long clay pipe, seeming to my eyes a very mellow personage and a dignified also, if you take away his shape, for he was a little barrel of a man. And after he had sat thus somewhile he began to be inquisitive and to ask questions about old sayings and proverbs and those quaint words used by our forefathers, which we now hold for condemned or at least suspect. But I believe that if we persevere in this sort much longer a man will be ashamed to speak of his belly or his guts, and be shown the door if he name these members in a polite assembly. However that may be, nothing passed between us worthy of note, for it is not good for a man to put out his mind in the afternoon, the which has been provided for us to dream in, and talk lightly, and idly to pursue small love-affairs; for I deny not that this petty exertion is to be allowed after four o'clock; indeed if properly discharged it may give a man a gust for his supper. But I forbid all kissing, since this amusement makes one warm, and is hard to leave off, besides.

But after we had supped and the bottle began to go round, the Rubrican, Tom Bamfylde, began one of those dissertations he was addicted to relating to the old privileges and customs of the Court of Cervisage; I think he was trying to clear up our understandings on one of the knotty points in our *Rituale,* namely the circumstance of a Death's Head being placed before the High Tosspot and delineated on one of the quarters of his seal; the which hath perplexed many of us, for in our teaching we utterly abhor all doleful, hypochondriac imaginations. And the Rubrican, being somewhat drunk, was fumbling desperately at this entanglement, quoting the old Annals of the Court, and moralising our Legends and Songs till he seemed to himself to have found out a high method and signification in this terrible symbol; "'tis the very pith and most dogmatical article of our knowledge," said he. "For you must consider that the whole world and all our life is a most rare and quintessential jest or merry piece, so subtile indeed is the peal of joyous laughter that sounds through it that the gross ears perceive it not and imagine that the noises they hear are a continual sobbing, a bitter ceaseless wailing, a crying and a lamentable moan for mercy, and sighs and weeping without end. But these noises we Silurists know well to be mere fictions, like the sounds heard by deaf people of drums and bells; and are all of us agreed that to see the best play one need only live. So the world being shown to be an exceeding merry world, and man being of it the microcosm (as it is well termed by the Brethren of the R.C.), it would follow that the image of a man might stand for the effigies and symbol of the Silurian Knowledge and joyous philosophy. But the great sages who founded the Session Cwrw Dda, and in their Round Table have mystically taught us whence all things come and whither all things go, have refined upon this conceit, and truly considering that a man standing for the world, his head may best represent man (for the head is in fact that admirable aumbry holding inventions, wit, methods, conceits, fantasies; a storehouse of delights) have chosen a Deathshead as an image of the Cwrw Dda, and I believe it to be both suitable (as I have shown) and subtle. For many by this symbol are puzzled, and scratch their heads, and wander into wrong tracks; and all this for our enjoyment; and in short I would have you believe that by it is meant "The Merriment of the Whole World." This farrago was received in silence, Dick Leonard only saying mildly, "Master Perrot's wine is very strong; but I believe there is some truth in what the Rubrican says, for though drunk he is a learned man and accustomed to peer into the essence of things. And now I think of it a conceit has come into my brain touching the morrow, the which I believe will please you all; let us, I say, go to Uske."

"Why should we especially go to-morrow?"

"Because 'tis to-morrow that the burgesses proceed to the solemn election of a worshipful Portreeve, whom they choose with many admirable rites and significant ceremonies; and all the town is full of gentry, rogues, Egyptians, wits, saltimbancos, zanies, clerks and birds of our feather."

"We will certainly go then," said I, "if Phil Ambrose and Tom Bamfylde be well-disposed unto this journey."

"We are so," quoth the Spigot Clerk, "for we are not accustomed to miss these solemnities, insomuch as they furnish us with gay adventures, choice comedies, and a fine stock of tales and pleasant sayings for the winter nights. For a man should be ever heedful of that hutch or cupboard of his, the brain; to keep the shelves well-stocked with good fare, duly spiced and seasoned, that he is ever able to draw out a dainty dish and to set it before his friend."

"Let us go, let us go," assented Tom Bamfylde, "I warrant we shall return the wiser, and carry back with us more than we brought."

"Of that I am not altogether certain," said Nick Leonard, "sometimes it happens so, and sometimes contrariwise, but it is of no great consequence. And now, my merry jokers, what says the wise Hebdomadarius of the Eighth Week" (he was speaking of the "Joyous Inventions" of the monk Galliard) "*Be not dull at sunset when the rain falls and the night comes on, but search for sweet memories through the byways of your brains, be droll and witty, and the devil take him that keeps a sour countenance*." Wherefore let someone tell a tale and strive to match the relation we heard in the forenoon."

"You have spoken," said Phil Ambrose, "and you shall devise for us, for it is my part to choose a successor."

"So be it then," quoth Nick Leonard, "but first let me sit in the Bardic Chair, that my cervical substance may be fertilised, and bring forth ripe fruit. And do you, Master Rubrican, intone us the Herald’s Proclamation, or some chant fit for our occasion, if your plain song be not altogether drowned in Rhenish wine.” Then the Rubrican sang as follows: *If any speak while these things are being set forth, may he quaff water for the remainder of his days; but when all is done, laugh and drink unto the nail.*

HOW A MAN OF CAERLEON FOUND A GREAT TREASURE

MY TALE SHALL be of Caerleon-on-Uske; and since the Spigot Clerk devised his history of Abergavenny wherein our Court now holds session, it will not be amiss if I speak somewhat of Caerleon, whereat the tosspots of Gwent were first banded together by our glorious King Arthur, of right worthy memory. But I will not tell you any stories of roofs shining like gold, or of the tower that overtopped Christchurch Hill and looked on to the Severn Sea, or of chargeable palaces, standing splendidly in the little town, since all these things are underground like the Barons of Burgavenny and have become somewhat wearisome. But what I have to tell happened about two hundred years agone, when Caerleon was little different from what it is now, or from what it will be two hundred years hence, if the curtain do not fall on our merry Comedy, ere that time be accomplished. Now you have it well set in your heads that as there are two Sicilies, so there are two Caerleons, one on this side the bridge, and one on the other; and there being two Caerleons I must tell you that he, concerning whom this history is related, dwelt in Caerleon-over-Bridge, and in a little hut by the river's bank, not far from the bridge itself. As for his name it was Griffith, and he was called Griffith the Delver, and sometimes Twrch Ddaer which is in the letter Earth-Hog and in the spirit Mole; hence we see how poetical and florid is the language of the Welsh. This Griffith was in fact one of those that are eternally digging, who dig early and late and leave no rest for our old Mother Earth, who must surely be more patient than most ladies, since they heartily dislike being scratched. It is true that a girl does not object to being tickled, if you do it nicely, and choose the right places; but there can be no resemblance between a lover's finger-tips "desipientes in loco" and the rough blows of spade, mattock, and pick-axe striking here, there, and everywhere, turning everything upside down. And of all diggers and delvers Griffith was the most sempiternal, for he dug deep, turning the clods well over, and never left off. And yet he was not a common spade-man, and never thought of planting anything in the bares he made, and indeed his operations were in no way agricultural; since in place of putting seeds into the ground, his aim was to draw something out of it. He was in fine a treasure monger, having been bitten with this madness when a boy, and when he was a good many years better than three-score, was not yet cured. His malady was caused by his overhearing two monks talking together of the enormous treasure that the old Romans and the British Kings had concealed; and as these two ecclesiastics were very great liars and engaged at that time in compiling a Chronicle, you may be sure that they heaped up gold, silver, and jewels to an incredible and monstrous degree. One was describing with minute exactitude the twelve chests of pure silver, each of two feet in length, two feet in breadth, and two feet in depth, each sealed with King Arthur's seal, the Red Dragon, and buried in the midst of St. Julian's wood, under a great stone. "And the first," said the holy man, "hath in it twelve diamonds, each several diamond being cut in twelve facets and each standing for a Knight of the Round Table. And the twelfth of the price of a single stone would suffice to build a Cathedral Church, more chargeable than any church in Christendom, and plentiful to endow it with lands for the Dean, Canons, Vicars, Prebends, songmen, and quiristers, so that it should be better served than the quire of Canterbury."

"And the second," broke in the other monk, "hath in it twelve Rubies, each ruby the size of a man's head, and each standing for a saint of Britain."

"And the third," quoth the first monk, "hath in it twelve opals, shining with every colour in the universe, most glorious to see, and each personates a beautiful lady of King Arthur's Court." In this fashion they ran through the twelve chests as if it had been a grocer and his man, ticking off casks of sugar; and never a smile on the faces of them. Next they made a bill of ingots of gold, to the number of one hundred and twenty-five, sunken in the Uske, in a straight line from Merthollye Chapel, each ingot being stamped with the name of a Roman Emperor, but they could not quite agree together as to which of the Emperors had owned this great treasure. So they proceeded to emerald vases filled to the brim and over-running with gold pieces, to cups and chalices of pure gold and of a monstrous size, with pattens, flagons, brooches, chains (one was of a thousand links, and did use to be hung across the lists of turney), crosses, mitres, rings, candelabra, till the lad's head fairly went round to hear of all this wealth and much of it within a few yards of him. For the two Cistercians left nothing conjectural, but laid down precisely where each hoard was to be sought for, and seemed likely to continue the list to infinity. But just as one of them was speaking of the great bell twelve feet high, and fashioned of pure gold that hung in the Castle Mound, the bells of his Abbey rung out and called them both away to Evensong. But Master Griffith stood still where he was, being quite unable to move, since it never came into his head that the two monks were mere historians, who were getting their hands in for the writing-room. But hearing them note every particular so exactly and precisely, even to the depth in feet and inches below the surface, he conceived them to be speaking the truth, as some people have done since his time, and with less excuse, for Griffith was thought to have always been a little simple. And from the time when he heard these ecclesiastical narrations the poor lad became unable to sleep well at night, for the light of the jewels shone before his eyes and filled the nasty dirty room with a splendid and wonderful glow, blood-red, and golden, and sapphire, and twelve blinding rays from the twelve diamonds shot through all the other hues, and dimmed his eyes with glory Then the walls changed to gold and silver, the door was a slice of a single emerald, and his head got muddled, and he began to fancy all sorts of things still more extraordinary. As for eating and drinking it became tedious to him, for a wooden platter and piggin were not nearly so fine as the pattens and chalices he had heard tell of, and so he did not trouble himself to devour their contents, the which was somewhat foolish, it must be confessed. And when he was sauntering about in the meadows he did nothing but twist his neck and try to stare the sun out of countenance; for he had heard one monk telling the other of a marvellous dish, "whereof the compass was one twelfth of the compass of the Round Table, of a metal that was neither gold nor silver, but more excellent than either, and having in its centre the Name Iao, written in the character of the magicians. Which dish was made by no artificer nor mortal worker in metal, but proceeded from a supernatural marriage or conjunction of the sun and moon, and was drawn down to earth by Merlin, and now lies five feet three inches below the midst of the Round Table." Of this extraordinary nonsense much was lost on Griffith, but he nevertheless made it his business to keep a sharp look out on the heavenly bodies, in order to catch them at their amorous play, the nature of which he understood very imperfectly and was desirous of learning. But this amusement brought him nothing better than a wry neck, and he was forced to conclude that love-affairs up above were transacted much as they are down here, that is in strict privacy. And he was no sooner able to get a spade than he began to dig and make holes wherever he thought there was treasure; for though Griffith's wits were not perhaps of the brightest, yet he perfectly remembered every circumstance he had heard, and indeed the whole story seemed written in fiery letters on the air. So he sought now in one place and now in another for all these fine things, and folks soon became aware of his folly, the which was deemed very entertaining, and a piece of a blessing in dull times when there was very little to laugh at. But when the two historians heard of the Delver, they understood the matter thoroughly, and were vexed at it, for they were pious men, desirous of amusing people and not of driving them mad. So they went together to Griffith and endeavoured to open his understanding and to show him the true state of the case; but to no avail, for he, an unlettered man, had no notion of History, and thought the two monks were trying to make a fool of him that they might keep all the treasure for themselves. Perceiving the poor man's madness the historians did the best they were able, and interceded with the Abbot so that the Delver was fed at the Almonry every day for the rest of his life, the which was, as I said at the beginning of my tale, spent in turning earth upside down, wandering through St. Julian's wood, prodding walls, poking under the roots of trees, and the like investigations. Before long the Caerleon people had got used to Griffith, and no longer took the trouble to laugh at him; indeed a gentleman who had a large garden tried to profit by his little infirmity, and caused it to be conveyed to the Mole that this garden aforesaid certainly contained gold and silver in abundance to be had for the digging. By which device he hoped to have his soil turned over very cheaply, but the fish, as the saying goes, would not bite; Griffith having certain fixed notions of his own capable of no amendment or alteration. So for forty years and more he persisted in this folly, for the twelve rays of the twelve diamonds still blinded him, and the great golden bell within the Castle Mound rung all through the night in a deep mellow voice, and to him the painted images in the windows of the Quire were rubies and sapphires beyond all price. And in these fantastic imaginations he would doubtless have died peacefully enough, had it not been for the coming of a stranger to Caerleon, a merry young gentleman, who was fond of folly and always encouraged it to the best of his ability, who seeing Griffith mooning about the place and driving his spade into the earth, enquired as to the reason of these proceedings, and was observed when his understanding had been enlightened, to grow suddenly grave and thoughtful, as he was accustomed when a joke came into his head. And henceforth the wag watched the Delver at his work, and noted how he often came back to one place, namely the bottom of the Round Table; for the great dish neither gold nor silver but better than either, had taken Griffith's fancy, perhaps because it was a little out of the common. But if I had been in his place I believe I should have let this dish lie, since the goldsmiths would be very likely to say unkind things about it, as stupid people always do of matters beyond their comprehension. But the young gentleman seeing how Griffith was everlastingly at the bottom of the hollow took his measures, and then sat down to see what would come of them. And of a dark, windy night, with sudden gusts of rain blowing up from Severn Sea; as Griffith the Delver sat in his horrible little den by the riverside his thoughts ran as usual on the buried treasure of Caerleon; and the notion, species and imagination of the wonderful dish pricked him more violently than it had ever done, so that he was forced to take his spade, light his lantern, and sally forth without delay. And as he went over the bridge, the wind gave a howl, and the rain dashed in his face, and he felt the whole scaffold shake and quiver beneath him, as if it desired to sail down the river into the open sea. In fine it was precisely the sort of night to have put out an ordinary lantern in what is sometimes called a brace of shakes, but Griffith's lantern had been made by himself on scientific principles and would have hung from the mast of a ship off Cape Thundertops, without so much as a wink or half a twinkle. It was a glorious lantern, a credit to the town, and had been out in all weathers and at all times of the day and night in search of ideas, conceits, fictions, and all the flowery inventions of the monastic chroniclers. With this treasure of a lantern and the sempiternal light which the diamonds flashed into the Delver's brain he made his way in a few minutes to the Round Table and was soon digging away as if he were twenty and going to work for the first time, instead of being as he was sixty and more, and a very old hand at this foolish business. And when he had dug to the depth of about three feet his spade struck somewhat that was neither earth nor stone and made a clanging noise, the which was the sweetest sound the Delver had heard since the monks talked together of the twelve chests of pure silver. So he propped the lantern on a lump of earth and stooped down, and felt warily with his hands in the place the noise came from; and before long drew out a quaintly shapen vase, of a greenish colour and mighty heavy in the hands. Just then the lantern overbalanced and fell into the hole, but of course that did not make it go out or burn its own sides, like lanterns do nowadays; so Griffith set it back in its place more securely, and sat down and dipped his hand into the green vase. It was very nearly full to the brim with coins; they slipped between his fingers and slid along his palm, and went chink, chink, chink either against other, and against the vase, and then the golden bell inside the mound began to toll and the glorious ruby and sapphire lights glowed out and filled all the Round Table with their flames. And Griffith saw the Twelve Knights sitting each in his place guarding the mystic rose, and each Knight had on his forehead a diamond cut in twelve facets, from which the rays shot forth with incredible brightness: and above all the Knights the great King Arthur, into whose eyes it was impossible to look, for they were of a terrible beauty. Then these things faded and a mist closed about the Delver, who sat in the place he had made for himself, clutching the vase with one hand, the lantern with another, and having the spade between his legs. And this mist was pearly white, but yet it was also of manifold colours, that went and came and glowed and faded and seemed full of lovely faces and figures that might have attracted the poor man if he had not been getting rather astonished at these strange sights. In a desperate sort of way he drove his hand again into the vase and felt the coins, and all these glamours immediately vanished; but the lantern still burnt on, and Griffith thought that he would like to have a look at his treasure trove. And to have this pleasure he accordingly turned the vase upside down and a great stream of coins poured out; at the sight of which Griffith's heart stood still and he swooned quite away. For you see they were only copper coins of modern date which the wag had buried a few days before; but the Delver was terribly disappointed that they were not gold. You and I and everybody else would be glad enough to find a crown's worth in pence and halfpence; one can buy a good deal with five shillings, but the Delver had hoped for rather more than he got, and his animal spirits and humours for the next ten minutes had a bad time of it. And I daresay you would guess that when he regained his senses there were very few left to him, you would say, in short, that though he was crazy before, now he was a raving madman. But the real facts were quite opposite; for instead of losing his wits altogether he got back those he had lost forty years before, and sat down and began to ponder matters reasonably, and consider what was best to be done. And now all sorts of notions came into his head, and notions to some purpose, for among the rest in some wonderful way the Delver found out who had put this trick upon him, and determined to cry quits before another nightfall. So without delay he emptied the coppers into a bag he had about him, threw the vase back into the hole and heaped the earth over it, and then with his bag, lantern, and spade he set off at a sharp walk for the house of him who had devised this piece of trickery. And having reached his doorway, Griffith fell once more to his old trade, I mean of digging, and long before the light dawned he had constructed a spacious and luxurious pit, fairly deep, with a puddle at the bottom of it, and also a few sharp jagged stones by way of relish. And why or wherefore old Twrch Ddær took all this trouble, is more than I can tell you; but it certainly seemed rather likely that anyone going in or coming out of the house, without due warning, would fall into this pit aforesaid, and so indeed it happened. For the gay young joker came home with a companion early in the morning, their heads being in a very muddled state and their notions in great confusion, and their throats spouting out scraps of drinking songs. *Cor imbutum nectare volat ad superna,* hiccoughs one; *Nasonem post calices facile preibo* stutters the other; and then they began to quote all the most wanton pieces of Ovidius Naso they could remember, which were not very many, seeing they were too drunk. However they made shift to help one another through that naughty and amorous canticle *'Twas very hot, when at noonday;* and then they began to discuss the beauties of certain ladies of their acquaintance, so you may judge what sort of a night they had been spending in the house where the lights never went out, for the porter was too deaf to hear the curfew, and the ladies and their friends were dancing, laughing, singing, and fiddling in such wise that they heard no noises save those of their own making. And being in this state of mind you will not wonder that in the dim twilight of dawn the two companions saw nothing of the Delver's preparations for their comfort, but went merrily on, and in the natural course of things fell one on top of the other into the pit, where they sustained a good many bruises against the sharp stones, and (it is said) quite dried up the pool of water at the bottom, being young gentlemen of a mighty warm complexion. Here they lay very quietly, not puzzling their heads about anything, but taking it easily and keeping still, until a servant opened the door an hour or two later, and saw his master and his friend waiting to be let in after the fashion I have described. In the meantime

Griffith the Mole had gone into exile somewhere on the other side of Wentwood Chase, since he suspected that this item might be set down to his account, and the bill presented in a manner not at all to his taste. However, a few weeks after the wag left Caerleon, not liking the Welsh way of joking, and it is said that he died shortly afterwards of a bad sore throat, a complaint which was very common in those glorious old days, in fine he lost his head, and that is a loss fatal to all of us unless we happen to be saints and then, you know, one can pick up one's head and go up the hill. As for Griffith the Delver he returned to his hovel in Caerleon-over-Bridge, and though he missed at first the flaming light of the jewells and the tolling of the golden bell, yet he settled down and passed the remnant of his days in great comfort. But he did no more digging for he had found a much better employment than scratching and tormenting Mother Earth.

What was that? Why to do nothing, of which he soon learnt the art, for he was a good Silurian at bottom and most likely never would have done anything all his life, if he had not been so unfortunate as to hear how History is written. So he sat in the sun in summer and by the fire in winter, and the good old monks took care of him and gave him plenty to eat and drink while he was alive, and a handsome funeral with plenty of tapers after that he had finished with this world; the which event happened when he was aged ninety-five and getting rather tired. For this is what we must all come to, even if we pass our days in the beautiful sunlight and by the warm hearth, doing nothing; since even of this a man gets tired in time. And then he looks out for a nice quiet corner in the churchyard and curls himself round and goes to sleep, and doesn't answer when they come to call him in the morning. Then it's no good to hammer at the door and bellow "Hi! get up, it's half-past twelve. Are you going to sleep all day?" since the old Silurian doesn't hear anything and lies very still. But of this story there are two morals: and the first is Don't believe everything the historians tell you; and the second Keep sober till the joke be over: and I think these are good morals, especially the last.

Thus Nick Leonard brought his tale of Caerleon to a close; and we all praised him for it, though we had found it in parts a little tedious; but yet on the whole it is a pleasant, moral, story. The Rubrican however said: "I find fault with this tale and also the tale of Sir Jenkin, and my fault is that in the both of them the wrong circumstance hath been chosen, and the less made the greater. For consider, Phil, what a sweet mournful tale of love you could have devised of the Noble Bastard and the Lady Isabella; and you Nick I believe could have told us some adventure of the waggish gentleman far more pleasant than the folly of the old Mole, who was, I am convinced, an ass."

"It always seems thus," answered Phil Ambrose, "to those who hear the stories; but if you will take thought you will see plainly that piteous love *par amours* is a tale that has been told many times; aye, verily since the world was in her orchard days and apples meant more than they do now, this story has been still weaving; and so soon as ever the scissors cut one smock in twain another is on the loom." But Nick Leonard said: "Since Tom doth take on him the part of Cato, he shall tell the next story and sit in the Bard's seat; and there let him show his right to draw the thumbnail under our fine phrases and moralities, or else for ever hold his peace."

"It is decreed," said I, "squat thee down Master Rubrican; and the Spigot Clerk shall preconise silence after our laudable custom and use." Then Phil Ambrose poured out a glass of wine, sent it down fairly, and sang in a severe and ancient mode — *O let not any voice he heard, my lords of Gwent: for by these things the sweet method of laughter is shown to you, and how the ale surges upon the Brim of the whole world.*

THE RUBRICAN'S FIRST TALE

What Fell out in the Ancient Keep of Caldicot

OF MY LORD Humphrey de Bohun, tenth and last of that name, many pleasant adventures are related, for he had livery of Caldicot Castle when he was but a young man, and so was disposed to hold a merry court therein. In this he succeeded admirably; but not so well in his designs of afterwards turning over a new leaf and being gravely sober, since he died young, as if to show there was quite enough gravity already if not too much. But during the ten or twelve years of his reign that fine Castle of Caldicot was full of jokes and entertainments; indeed, some have supposed that this plentitude of jest caused the walls to bulge out and afterwards to crack; but I believe the great hole by the eastern tower was made in the muddled times of the Roses when Earl Humphrey had been under earth for many years. You know he married my lady Joan of Arundel, with whom he had been brought up, so that husband and wife understood each other's little ways, and managed to live together very comfortably at Caldicot, where there was plenty of room for every body. And one of my lord's whims was to gather about him a company of those quaint fellows sometimes called "men of genius"; for what reason I know not, but so goes the phrase. But I certainly think the genii in attendance on these gentlemen are by no means to be envied, since the work is hard, the laud little, and the wages less; and if "like master like man" hold good these poor devils must have had but a scurvy life of it. Nevertheless some people profess great love for these queer customers, and the High Constable was one of them, and he would have stowed inside the castle a small army of poets, romancers, stargazers, scholars, cunning mechanics, and dabblers in Hermetical affairs, and all at the same time; and they saw that he got his money's worth out of them for they often made him laugh till he cried. Others think he might have been more thrifty in his amusements and declare that he would have done well to content himself with his household fool who made folly his profession whereas the rest were mere virtuosi or amateurs of foolishness. Yet by this assemblage of oddities my lord enjoyed a great variety and diversity of doublets, faces, and methods of madness; and he delighted in nothing so much as to watch his jokers at dinner, or in their other employments the which were manifold. It is reported that in an apartment of the south-western tower, somewhat near the sky but provided with a fair hanging gallery, Master Jehan Doucereutz perfected his rare piece called *Le Roman de la Mouche*, admired by all virtuous people for its fine colloquies, dialogues, allegories, fables, and moralities, though some critics call it a tedious and lengthy poem. But in these dissolute times a piece of more than twelve thousand lines tires out our patience, and really good poets of severe morality like Maistre Jehan can gain no hearing. Formerly no maiden of gentle blood would have dared to skip a line of *Le Roman de la Mouche*, and many right virtuous and illustrious ladies have confessed that they owe all their good qualities to it and their tapestry work; but all this is changed. Hard by the postern gate was lodged Master Geoffrey Tudor, and here he wrote the fifth Book of *Sir Percival of Trematon,* a romance stuffed fuller of enchantments, battles, dragons, giants, magicians, peerless ladies, mirrors of chivalry and coat-armour than any other work of the species; and it is stated that the exquisite delineation of the Castle of Joyous Garde in the fifth book is the exact portraiture of Caldicot as it was in the reign of the last De Bohun. Atop of the south-eastern tower was the apartment of Master Ignoramus de Prato, one of those gentry who interfere with the privacy of the Lunatics, Mercurials, Jovials, and (worst of all) Venerians, who know rather more about the future than about the present, and who will tell you whether you will dance from a ladder or say your prayers kneeling — at the block; and what's more they'll show you the reasons of it, and how it must be so from a malign aspect of Saturn, and in such wise and in so many hard words that for very decency's sake you'll not presume to die in your bed. Master Ignoramus his little tract (500 pp folio) on Decumbitures was first printed at Venice in the year of grace 1495, and with it is his Dedication to "The Most Noble Prince, Humphrey, Earl of Hereford Lord Marcher of Wales and Lord High Constable of the Realm of England." Underneath this astrological personage, sometime dwelt Messer Antonio dei Coglonieri, a Venetian and a great clerk, who knew Greek and many things besides; but both his temper and his complexion were too hot to be pleasant, and everybody from my lord to the serving-maids agreed that there was no satisfying him, and that the sooner he were gone the better it would be. In the western tower of the grand gate-house was the apartment of Master

Nicholas Bubbewyth, a man far gone in mechanical knowledge, who was able to twist a large river round his little finger, and to make it go up or down, to right or left, in a straight line, a spiral, or in maze-wise just as he pleased without any reference to the natural predilections of the water. It was Master Bubbewyth who perfected that pleasant contrivance by the which all the meadows about the castle could be put under water in five minutes; and also a device, not less pleasant, for shooting boiling lead through the air; but he was a man of wit and merry fancy who knew what a joke was, and understood the violent, mixt, and natural motion of projectiles. Last and best of all this company came Dom Benedict Rotherham who had been in Arabia and Syria and amongst the Moors both of Spain and Africa, and in these places had practised the art of multiplication, and was affirmed to be an adept in the operation of Hermes. And besides those high mysteries that relate to the making of gold, and the preparation of the life-giving essence, he was learned in the physick of the Arabians, and understood the concoction of potions and powders of wonderful efficacy, whether to kill or cure, and it was whispered that he knew enough of magick to set down Caldicot Castle in the realms of the Great Cham between the hours of matins and prime. In fine the High Constable regarded Dom Rotherham as his rarest diamond, and had given him at his own desire an apartment in the great keep. Which keep was the oldest part of the castle, and stood at the north-western angle of the wall, on a lofty mound, having been built in the gloriously muddled days of King Stephen, when it was well if one had a good thickness of wall between the vital parts of one’s body and the austerities of the climate. For in those days it rained spears, hailed battle-axes, and snowed iron-headed shafts, and in Gwent there was often a Welsh frost besides; and all these weathers were noisome for man and calculated to bring on bad complaints. Therefore Humphrey de Bohun, third of that name, who married Margaret, daughter to Earl Milo of Hereford made the walls of his mistress tower ten feet thick, and took great care that the masons set the stones truly to the square, and filled up the chinks and crannies with mortar, lest perchance there should be a draught. You will wonder that this lusty lord was so particular not to have a blast of cold air blowing at the back of his neck, but I assure you there was nothing that our old nobles hated more than a draught. Why was that? Well, you see a draught was more hurtful then than nowadays; for in our times it breeds a rheum and sets our noses running, but in the days of

Humphrey III, it was very apt (if the hole were large enough) to breed men-at-arms and set blood running; the which sanguinary defluction is worse than any rheum, and cannot be treated with hot water and a handkerchief. Below the ground story, some ten feet beneath the earth, and full twenty feet from the slope of the mound was a sweet capacious dungeon, a dungeon where a man could lie snug and still, without bothering his head about politics, or theology or any knotty points, since nobody could disturb him in this retreat. For some reason or other Dom Benedict when he first came to Caldicot, and saw all the splendour of the palace (for in the later days it was no less), the fair rooms on the walls and in the towers, whence one could step out on the alures or galleries and take the air easily and pleasantly, came to a stand at the old donjon and would have my lord assign him an apartment there, saying that it was very fit for his purposes. The High Constable was astonished at this request, and showed how much fairer and better rooms there were in Caldicot, and wondered greatly when the adept still desired a place in the keep. But here it was that Dom Benedict went to work and lit his fires, filling the whole tower with dreadful stenches, that seemed to make their way even through those mighty walls and float out on to the court and to the noses of the lords and ladies as they sat in the hall or in the bowers. Father Raymond the chaplain swore by the Gospels that he looked one night out of the window and saw the whole keep aglow with fire, and every joining of the stones marked out in a blinding line of light; others professed that they had heard dreadful noises issuing from it, as it were of a storm of thunder; a few had seen a flaming cloud float across the sky and hover over the tower; but the High Constable was glad to hear these reports, since they showed he had got a man who understood his business and had some little interest with the fiends and elemental spirits. But though the adept was assuredly a clever fellow, who had gone deeper into the nature of things than most of us, he could not justly be called a pretty man, nor a well-favoured, nor a handsome; since his face was too yellow, and had too many wrinkles in it to be altogether a nice countenance. Moreover his eyes were uncertain and variable, some said they were coal-black, some that they were blue, and some that they were sea-green; but all agreed they were more like two small fire-balls than anything else, since a look out of them shot through you, disturbed your faculties, and confused your understanding, like a swinging fisticuff, fairly delivered above the nose. And the body of Dom Benedict was mighty lean, and clothed in a black cassock, and appeared to be thoroughly dried up by the hot suns of Africa and Syria and the fetid smoke of his furnaces; in such wise that all the ladies and women of the castle had a very poor conceit of him, as being more of a bellow than a man. But in this they were mistaken as ladies sometimes are, even in matters that concern them nearest, for the adept was very strong and had worked up all sorts of things in those crucibles of his besides The Green Lion and The Son blessed of the Fire. Sometimes he would come out of his laboratory and walk in the galleries whence he could see the country far and wide and looked down into the bailey and watched the Knights pass to and fro and the men-at-arms, but he spoke only when he could not help speaking, and few save the High Constable troubled him with their conversation. In fact Dom Benedict stunk abominably of chemical materials, and it was best to keep at a distance from him, since he made one feel faint and sickly and dried up the throat: but my lord when he would talk with him always had a boy with a flagon of wine by his side; and as he drank all the time he was in the tower it is no great wonder that he often felt confused about the operation of Hermes when he came out, and found going down the ladder a mighty ticklish affair. There could be no doubt that the alchemist was a very different personage to all the other ingenious gentlemen entertained in the castle, for Maistre Jehan Doucereutz, though a moral and didactical versifier, more profitable for young maidens than any other tutor, was a great favourite with everybody and fitted his conversation to all needs, for as he moralises in his poem the wise man is like a key that will turn back any bolt, and open every door. To my lord he told tales, some say better and pithier relations than any in the *Roman de la Mouche;* to my lady and her cousins he read what he had written the night before, with the knights and esquires he was mirthful, and all the maidens loved him, and he them; though none could wag his head in time with Father Raymond's better than this witty and excellent man. And it was the same with the rest, for they all tried to make the time pass pleasantly, as it should in a castle; and if men did not try to be companionable, what would the poor girls do; for they cannot play their little games all by themselves, or if they try they soon begin to yawn and get dull; and this shows that we men are intended to be always with them, to help them laugh and cry, eat and drink, dance and sing, keep still and make a noise. Why even Master Nick Bubbewyth, who was a plain outspoken kind of man, did his best and made the ladies little mechanical toys, most ingeniously and artificially invented and cut out; and as for Master Geoffrey Tudor when he began to tell a chivalrous adventure full of dwarfs, spired towers, magick swords, and enchanted forests, the whole hall grew as still as death; and when he had done all the maids wanted to kiss him, to which I am sure he would have had no objection. But this alchemical personage was entirely disagreeable both to mind and body, and even my lord, though he was proud to have a man at Caldicot that could make gold and knew all about the fiends, yet confessed that Dom Benedict was an unwholesome fellow and smelt very strong. But still the adept abode in the keep and pursued his investigations; and it is said that he made by art a great store of gold, with which the High Constable enriched the castle with rare metal work from Flanders and finished the Tennis Court so that it was finer than the King's Jeu de Paume in France.

Now among the women of my lady Joan there was a girl named Loyse, who came from Bretagne, and was a great favourite with the Countess, perchance with the Earl also, for she was good to look upon, and well shaped all over. But however this may be it is certain that she gave none of her favours to anybody else, nay, not so much as a kiss, and yet had lips that seemed devised for nothing besides, and as sweet a little body as any Christian woman could desire. But she seemed, somehow or other, to be still waiting for something or somebody, and would stand for hours on the alures, gazing across the plain, or watching the gilt vanes swing from north to south. Loyse was in short a grave, quiet girl, and on that account loved by the Countess, who found her other maidens rather too fond of amusing themselves with the pages and young gentlemen who were learning their business at Caldicot; but as she said it was all her husband's fault, since he was never better pleased than when he caught a page with his arms round a maiden's neck, kissing her like anything, and putting all manner of foolish notions into the poor girl's head. This always made the High Constable laugh tremendously, and he would say to the pair "That's right my children, be sure to enjoy yourself, and don't mind me." So it is not to be wondered at that these pastimes became very popular at Caldicot, and the esquires, pages, captains, and lieutenants were always tickling, squeezing, enticing, and kissing some girl or another, but never Loyse for she did not appear to care about enjoying herself like the rest of them. Yet they all loved her for she was a kind, pitiful girl, and so beautiful withal that a good deed done by her seemed somehow of a much better quality than the good deeds of the governess Mistress Eleanora Malkin, who was not exactly well-favoured, nor quite as young as she had been. How this was I can't tell you, but it is just the same in our days, and I expect never will be different. Moreover each and every of the young gallants hoped to overcome her scruples before next July, and treated themselves with imaginations of the first kiss on those maiden lips, for the sprouting chivalry of Caldicot was point de vice and thought no small beer of itself in war, or love or tennis; the which were the principal amusements of those days. And the three pastimes are alike in many ways: in each victory is very sweet and defeat as bitter, for each one must be strong and a thorough man, and in each great practice and long experience is required if you want to divide your enemy scientifically into two equal parts, to take your lady's heart quite out of her body, or to best "better than half-a-yard." And every gentleman at Caldicot wished to do these things, and worked hard from morning to night and from night to morning, at one or the other, and the ladies helped them as well as they were able, since one could not be unkind to people who were so persevering. I suppose that even the smallest page, little Raoul de Monthermer, who was only ten (it was pleasant to hear him talking of his mistress and the lady of his thoughts) would be dead by this time in the natural course of nature; but many of the High Constable's establishment died young from a too rigorous pursuit of their favourite amusements, for they forgot that one should be temperate in all things and seemed to think themselves as strong as that Seigneur d'Ercules who was a Lord Marcher of Greece and did things that are too hard for us now. And this courageous chivalry was madly in love with Loyse, partly because she really had a nice figure *(droit corsage* the French call it) and partly because she would have nothing to do with it, and when it began to say pretty things and to stretch out a wanton hand, she would move further off and begin to talk about something else. And once there was a Court of Love held at Caldicot, to the which came Ladies, Knights, poets, and pursuivants d'amour from all Christendom, and the Assize was held in a tent set up in a meadow, most gorgeous to behold, all shining and glittering and glowing with gold cloth, and noble blazons and banners of the Knights. Hereat arose so sweet a noise of sonnets and canzones, of amorous rhapsodies and songs burning with love, of ghitterns and of lutes; that if you stand under the old ruinous Castle walls in June whiles the sun is setting, you may chance to hear some few faint notes of that delicious musique, and catch a glimpse of the fluttering banners, though it was all done many an hundred year ago. And to this Court came many petitions from the Castle, and pleaded the Rebellion against our Liege Lord Love of Mistress Loyse, showing that she had never paid to him who is paramount lord of all women and men, her suit and service. And the *Arrest d'Amour* was duly proclaimed bidding this rebel make amends to her sovereign, and choose some gentleman to be her true lover, as you may read in the *Faictes et Gestes joyeuses de la Cour Dorée*, a book which is now in the King's Library at Paris.

But still Loyse continued obstinate and kissed nobody but her mistress and the other girls, liked to have a room to herself, and went about dreamily, heeding not at all the frolicsome, merry, wanton, life that everybody beside herself was leading; I should say beside herself and the Hermetic Philosopher Dom Benedict Rotherham; but sweet Loyse did not remind one in the least of the adept, since, as I have above noted, his skin was too yellow and his eyes too burning to be pleasant to look at. Not to speak of his figure, which was of quite a different shape from the maiden's.

But one day after Evensong, when the whole house was sitting down to supper, it appeared that Loyse was nowhere to be seen, for many soon missed her, though she gave *droit d'amour* to none. And first they went to her chamber, but she was not there; nor indeed in any other part of the castle, though no coign nor carrel was left unsearched from my lady's bower to the guard-room by the grand gateway. At the latter place the men-at-arms answered that they had seen nothing of her, sorrowfully enough, since it was like asking a poor shepherd if he had a pipe of malmsey in his cabin: and the watch were quite assured that Mistress Loyse had not left the castle; in fine, she seemed utterly to have vanished like a puff of smoke on a windy day.

I need not say that the keep was searched from top to bottom, from the wooden gallery on the roof, to the dungeon below the mound: but as one might expect there were no maidens of any kind to be seen within the walls thereof. There was however a most fetid and noisome stench proceeding from some *prima materia* that was gaily purging itself of its gross qualities over a brisk fire, and in truth everybody judged these qualities to be as gross as could be reasonably desired. Dom Benedict indeed was hanging his nose over the crucible as if he rather liked these vapours which made the throats of the searchers feel like a ploughed field after a long drought with a hot sun shining on it; but then he was a man of peculiar tastes and not a little eccentric. He did not seem thoroughly to comprehend what all this curious rout was doing in his laboratory and when the High Constable endeavoured to enlighten his understanding he merely said “Mistress Loyse, Mistress Loyse” as if he were thinking of something else; and as it was very evident that she was not there they all left him and tumbled down the ladder, and ran to the buttery directly to take the taste of the *prima materia* out of their throats. But every other place was searched again and again, even to the lockers in the walls and the chests in the Record Room of the Chancery of Caldicot, but there was no Loyse anywhere, neither amidst the towels nor the rolls. And this was indeed a wonderful affair which puzzled all the lay-people tremendously, but Father Raymond is alleged to have had his eyes open at a very early stage of this business and to have smelt sulphur in it from the first. He certainly sent letters to Oxon, which brought a learned clerk to Caldicot, a man of great skill in matters wherein the devil was thought to have his finger, who understood all the intricacies of affairs like this; yet even he was for a long time quite at fault. But if anybody could have seen through the walls of the keep and looked into Dom Benedict’s laboratory, they would have beheld a very strange sight, as appears from the confession of the adept, made by him on the fifth day of the question, and written down by Giles Sandys one of the clerks to the Chapter of St. Peters at Llandaff. The which document sets forth that the accused person Benedictus de Rotherham, a native of the Bishopric of Durham, and aged fifty-five years, three months and ten days at the time in which this confession was made; had formerly been a monk of the Benedictine House of Religion at Durham, but was beset even from his boyhood by an itching desire for knowledge, and more especially for knowledge which is occult, and not lawfully to be acquired by Christians. And Benedictus de Rotherham, the accused person aforesaid, having found out by reading a certain book in the monastic Library, that the highest and most magistral secrets of the occult philosophy are not to be discovered in the Realm of England, nor in any other Christian land, but must be sought amongst the followers of the Accursed Prophet Mahommed (whom God confound), broke his monastic vows and fled the cloister, having stolen a jewell from the shrine of St. Cuthbert, worth better than a hundred pounds. By means of which the accused person aforesaid journeyed to the Levant and lived for many years amongst the Infidels, having renounced his Saviour, and becoming in all respects an outcast from our Holy Faith, so that he might attain to the knowledge of Alchemy and Diabolical Magick, and have intercourse with demons and the fiends of hell. And being as he professes a man of a natural and acute wit, he came in course of years to know greater secrets than the Magicians, his tutors; and has confessed to deeds which were not fit to set down on any parchment, being that they would set the parchment crackling and the ink hissing and are altogether abominable and accursed, and moreover not necessary to the process now directed against this man under the Ecclesiastical Law by and with the authority of Roger Lord Bishop of the See of Llandaff. But the accused person, Benedictus de Rotherham aforesaid has also made full confession as regarding the crime for which he has now been arraigned; namely that he did by magic arts seduce the person of one Loyse de la Haye, who has afterwards died without making any confession or receiving absolution for her sins; her body having been exhausted and her reason destroyed by the usage she endured. But before the hand of death, cut short her life she raved continually of a lover whom she called by the pagan and outlandish name of Yussuf, and still murmured words taken from Love’s Promptorium, the which was never known to be in her hands. And the accused person, Benedictus de Rotherham aforesaid having been subjected to torments unendurable, that the truth might appear the more clearly, has cpnfessed that when he had inhabited the Castle of Caldicot for the space of three months he became possessed with a stronger lust to enjoy the body of Loyse de la Haye, than had ever affected him towards other women, though he had dwelt for many years among the Infidels who are known to be preposterously and beyond all measure addicted to venery. And this desire so influenced him that he had almost died of it, and often he swooned away and became senseless from hot, intolerable imaginations in the which the beautiful body of Loyse de la Haye was continually presented to him in such wise that all his inward parts appeared to burn with the unquenchable flames of Hell. And being well assured that he was not able to get possession of her by natural means, by which maidens are used to be won, he determined to enjoy her by the power of his art, not doubting its sufficiency for this or any other purpose. And as the girl Loyse aforesaid passed below his lodging he appeared to her at the head of the stair, having transformed himself into the appearance of a young man of very great beauty, vested in rich stuffs of the Moorish fashion. Then as she came to the foot of the ladder, curious to know who this might be so handsome of feature and in such gorgeous attire, he called her to mount up and cast a spell over her so that she must needs obey whether she would or no. And when the maiden had climbed the stair he went on before her, and immediately bestowed her in a secret place contrived in the thickness of the wall, whereon, by his art he was advertised so soon as he beheld the tower on his first coming to Caldicot; and this he did knowing that she would presently be missed, and a search made everywhere. But after the High Constable and his people were gone from the keep, he led forth Loyse and drew her to him, caressing and fondling her and slaking on her lips the intolerable thirst by which he was consumed, and so working with his enchantments that before night fell she was more eager for love than even he, and gave him back all his embraces and fiery kisses in a manner which showed that she was by nature hot-blooded, and had long restrained herself. And the accused person Benedictus de Rotherham aforesaid states that they spent the night in the dungeon of the keep which by art magick was changed into a delicious bower, draped about with hangings and tapestry work, furnished with couches and stools of velvet and samite, and lighted by a jewell hung from the vault by one hundred chains of fine gold, and shedding a light as it were of a harvest moon of fourteen nights. And in the midst of this chamber, so artificially prepared was spread a banquet of delicates and the most potent wine that was ever pressed from the days of Noe until now; for a few drops of it would turn the most holy of the saints into the most infuriate of sinners. And while they feasted and toyed with one another the magick harmonies seemed to swell into their ears, and thrilled every nerve and vein in their bodies with a sharp and exquisite pleasure. * * * * * In this wise they lived together in the tower of Caldicot Castle, the accused person, Benedictus de Rotherham aforesaid, sometimes leaving his mistress and showing himself to the High Constable and his people, so that no suspicion might be stirred up against him. And when he returned to the dungeon that had been transformed into the temple of Venus, he ever found Loyse hungering for him, and remembering nothing of the Countess or her former virtuous life. But at last, by the great skill and prudence of the clerk from Oxon, their wickedness was discovered and the whole matter brought to light, as has been declared in the evidence delivered before the Ecclesiastical Court, and written down by me, Giles Sandys, appointed as scrivener to the Court on this behalf. And here the accused person Benedictus de Rotherham aforesaid became silent, and would say nothing more; whereupon he was questioned as before, but swooned away, and was pronounced by the physician, employed by the Ecclesiastical Court on his behalf, to be in danger of death; and was accordingly led back to his cell.

How like you the flavour of the old Records of St. Peter's, my merry masters? Do they not make your throats as dry and husky as mine is growing with all this talk? But I thought I would give you a taste of an old fashioned dish, though the sauces and condiments have somewhat of a fiery smack to which we are unaccustomed: and you must acknowledge that Giles the Scrivener knew how to take a confession and write it down ecclesiastically and minutely. But if you want to know what became of the accused person Benedictus de Rotherham aforesaid, I can tell you this much that he died soon after he made confession of his detestable enormities, and indeed he had made the world too hot to hold him, for he was burnt to death. It is said that no sooner was he chained to the stake than the fagots burst into flame without any torch being set to them, which circumstance seems to prove that this alchemist was rather a bad fellow, who deserved everything he got There is always one thing however which is pleasing in these affairs, namely that work was found for the parchment-scrapers, canonists, and ecclesiastical quill-drivers, who lead for the most part dull lives enough, and are glad to have a little variety. This mishap was also a warning to the girls at Caldicot, not to be too virtuous and severe, nor to bind the devil with iron chains; since this makes Satan angry and inclined to do mischief when he gets loose, which he is sure to do sooner or later. Mind you, I do not know that they particularly needed this cautel, but at all events it made them be careful what they were about. But the Countess was sorry for Loyse.

Ending with these words his tale of Nether-went, our Rubrican upheaved himself from the wondrous chair, and stood up, looking round as who should say "you can find no fault in my relation, I believe." But we sat in a row with our heads on one side, each man holding his pipe to his lips, and puffing pensively, for we could not exactly discover what we thought of this story. At last Tom sat down again and filled his glass and his pipe and began to drink and smoke himself; for he was not going to wait to receive judgement like a felon before the justice. Then Nick Leonard commenced to say "'Tis not altogether a bad tale, but neither is it a good one, at least to my taste; there's too great a heat about those old ecclesiastical arraigns for July, and the fable seems to me somewhat of a hellish one." To this the Rubrican answered "Do you assert that my story, which I have told, is not a moral story?"

"Nay, nay," I cried out, "he says nothing of the kind, for 'tis assuredly a very moral story, but there's a whiff of sulphur about it for all that, and you know, Master Rubrican, that the old records are apt to be strongly flavoured."

"How is it," put in Phil Ambrose, "that the ink in which such things are written doth never lose its sheen, and that the gold and gules, azure and purple are still as fresh as though the pen were hardly dried."

"The reason of this is," quoth the Rubrican, "that the scribes were the old monks, who did everything thoroughly; who, when they have once set foot in a country, can never be blotted out of it, nor die away into forgetfulness. Doubtless they were mortal men, even as we are, and had their little failings, but they were very strong men and knew how to make red ink and build monastic edifices. And now Abergavenny Fair is the only place where this ink can be bought, and the scriptorium of the Cwrw Dda the only place wherein it is used: and who knows how long the Sokage hold together in these days whenas all good ancient customs are dying out or being uprooted by main force?"

"Take comfort," said Nick, "for there will always be Silurians as long as the world doth last; though I believe they will sometimes be very few and scattered about the land, and forced to work hard for hard masters, and be roughly treated in many ways. But still they will remain until King Arthur come once more, with his Twelve Knights and all his wonderful array, riding through the woods and across the hills to the musick of his magick horn. Then shall old Dubric sing mass in the metropolitical city, and then shall begin the Great Silurian Year. But lo! the night goes on and we waste the time by talking of what shall be, when we, at all events, shall have been borne with singing along the valley and up the slope of the long hill to our quiet home beneath the grass, where are no storms, nor rains, and the roaring October winds shall sound merely through the boughs above us, nor break at all our rest. Search, search my masters through the fantastick alleys of your mind, and set some merry tale on foot; recall again the joyous days of old, and let the owls hoot as mournfully as they please.”

“I give my place unto mine host, the good Tankard Marshall,” said Tom, “I will sing mumchance through my nose, lest any babbler break the story short.” Then came the chant: *Hear and speak not a word, for merriment is a-making and a strong concoction of choicer wit; and the blacksmith forgeth on his ringing anvil drolls.*

THE TANKARD MARSHALL’S FIRST TALE

The Quest of the Dial and the Vane

HUMPHREY DE BOHUN, the High Constable, of whom we have heard somewhat before, once upon a time kept Eastertide with great pomp and ceremony, assembling in his hall as many ladies and knights as he could gather together and doing his best to entertain them merrily. Dim and dark personages, whom you and I know very well (for the genus doth remain immortal) shortly say that my lord and all his guests did eat, drink, laugh, dance, sing, and make love to a most scandalous extent; they say to be sure that each and every of the company at Caldicot enjoyed a great deal too much of all these pleasures. But we know well enough what this means, we understand, I believe, what kind of a world these sour fellows would make if they had the chance. First they would paint the blue sky black and the green trees white, all flowers should be dark brown, all meats loathsome, all sounds hideous, and all girls ugly. ’Tis a good thing, is it not, that these godly men are not yet quite strong enough for this; truly they do as much as they are able by making themselves as loathsome and hideous as is possible; but our precious world still laughs, whirls round, and keeps up the dance with the circling stars. And at Caldicot everybody from the Earl to the scullions did his best to keep pace with this mad and joyous melody and now at Eastertide when so great a company of fair and beauteous ladies and noble warriors were gathered together, some said the good old days had returned again and that they might look before long for King Arthur himself with all his host to return again. And Maistre Jehan Doucereutz the moral rhymer made a piece, richly rhymed, which he called “The Argument of the Dial and the Vane, or Constancy and Variety in Love.” This he taught to two young ladies called Alicia and Avisa, and showed them how to stand and hold their figures, while they repeated it; and one evening when the serving men had borne in the tapers and lighted the lamps, this fine poem was recited before all, with so ravishing a grace and gestures so lovely that the High Constaole’s guests gazed silently at the young maids’ lips without uttering a word. But when it was finished a great dispute arose as to the arguments and conclusions between the Dial and the Vane, for in his wisdom Maistre Jehan had left the matter doubtful, and none could determine which of the two he thought was best. Every lady and most of the young knights swore by the pheasant and the peacock that Variety in amours was treason to love; that no virtuous lady would listen to a gentleman that was variable, and that Constancy was one of love's sweetest graces. "What though our ladies slight us, and speak scornfully of us," said Sir Nicholas Kemeys, a young and high-flown gallant, "what though they frown upon us, and turn away when we look at them. Let us honour them yet more reverently and with a perfect worship bow down at their feet, holding but the sight of their beauty too great a reward for our poor service and adoration." Every lady in the hall lauded these words and some let their eyes rove slyly towards him, and thus the champion of Constancy was treated with Variety; as if to show us the way to get praise and pudding by one stroke. But the High Constable and the more experienced knights laughed at these fine Platonic sentiments and said there was nothing like Variety in everything and especially in love and my lord showed paradoxically and philosophically that before a gentleman can be constant he must first be variable; since constancy is bottomed on good judging and good judging on wide experience and many trials. "One must love," said he, "at least a dozen maids, every one of a different pattern and each one in a different manner, before one can be fixed at last; so the mariner shall sail over various floods and many waters ere he drop anchor in the still waters of his haven." So between ladies and knights the field was stricken, and now one and now another champion came forth to onset armed with pompous phrases and muddled arguments; but my lady Joan would say nothing, alleging that she had always known my lord to be a reprobate; but she spoke with laughter, and was answered by him with certain gestures which made her laugh still more. Meanwhile the lettered men had listened and held their tongues, Maistre Jehan being mightily delighted at the good success of his piece and the entertainment it had made for all the noble folk; and presently he and Master Geoffrey Tudor the romancer were observed to put their heads together, as if they were concocting some good and joyous invention. And while somebody was saying, "We see the preexcellence of the one over the other by the lively symbols wherein Maistre Jehan has set forth his parable; for the vane is ever gay and merry, still on the viretot, and always tells us something; whereas the dial has no story in the shadow, and is but a useless piece of brass while the vanes are clattering and swinging joyously"; Master Tudor stood up and prayed for the High Constable's ear, the which was readily granted him and all kept silence. "I would make an oration to you, my lord," said he, "for that my brother, Maistre Jehan Doucereutz and I, have, unless I am mistaken, concocted for your pleasure and the pleasure of fair ladies and the noble chivalry of Christendom, so choice an adventure and rare an emprise that I believe no deeds that are written in the Book of the Round Table nor in any writings of errantry shall be found worthy to be compared with it. And in fine our plan is this: namely, let each array in this gentle battle choose a champion, the most worthy and knightly that may be, and let them ride forth, the one in quest of Constancy and the other of Variety; and let the one bear the badge of a dial and the other the badge of a vane; so when their quest be done they shall return again to Caldicot and give us the history of whatsoever they have done or seen. I pray you my lord consider this, and advise with yourself and your knights whether it be not a rare design." But forthwith the High Constable smote the table with glee and swore by the Ships of the Air, by the Ways through the Mountains, by the Castles under the Sea, and by many other things, that this quest should be made, and he charged each side to choose a knight, and Brother Benignus the German Monk to work on the two badges, the which were fashioned by the cunning artificer aforesaid in gold, curiously and choicely. And presently two champions were chosen; for Constancy was Sir Nicholas Kemeys by the suffrages of all the ladies, and for Variety Sir Dru de Braose, a knight full hardy and experienced in many affairs. Then vast cups passed round to the health of these noble champions; and the High Constable named Maistre Jehan and Master Geoffrey clerks of this high emprise to keep records and to write histories of all the fair deeds that should be done in the quest, so that it might never be forgotten but be written in the Rolls of the Court of Caldicot. But when the talk began to be of sleeping my lord commended to Sir Nicholas and to Sir Dru the ministrations of his fool Thomas, whom he affirmed to be a very comfortable person and able to give them weighty counsels as to the conduct of their adventure. And to Sir Nicholas Thomas said, amongst other foolish things "Above all beware of rope-ladders" the which words he pronounced with such a knowing smile that the Champion of the Dial suspected there was something besides folly in them But the fool's counsel to Sir Dru was “Have nothing to do with anyone driving nine black hogs, for they will lead you to the devil.” And after wishing both knights plenty of folly, wantonness, trickery, queer sights, broken sounds, and odd odours on their quest, the very precious and jocular Thomas withdrew himself chuckling hugely; and so all slept hard without rolling. But on the morrow, when they had dined, the two knights began to arm, the two girls Alicia and Avisa helping them and binding on their badges to the delight of all the company. And when they had bidden farewell to the High Constable the knights mounted their horses and rode forth from the grand gateway, the trumpets sounding for them, and all the walks along the battlements and the high galleries being thronged with ladies, and with knights who waved scarves and shouted good luck as their warriors pricked across the meadows. And the Champion of the Dial and the Champion of the Vane were last seen riding together by the limits of a great wood of beeches; when one turned to the right and the other to the left and so rode out of sight.

Thus the knights errant started on their quest; to ride far and wide by land and sea in search of Constancy and Variety, and often they were spoken of at Caldicot of evenings, all longing for their return and to hear the tale of their adventures. Once after they had departed six months and more a man came with a wild story to the intent that he had seen both of them together at Abergavenny but, though he affirmed he knew well the faces of of Sir Nicholas and Sir Dru, he was considered to lie; since they were certainly very far away, and most like, in the lands beyond the seas. But the two Clerks, who had been appointed by their lord scriveners and prothonotaries in this behalf had each a mighty quill cut broadly, and two fair skins of vellum, the one of which bore atop the limning of a dial and the words “The History of the Quest of Constancy”; and the other the limning of a vane and the words “The History of the Quest of Variety.” So summer and harvest-time and Michaelmas did pass by and Christmas came bringing high revel; but the knights came not. And the snow lay deep in Wentwood as January came in; in February the rain fell down, all through the month, and March brought winds, merchandise of Moscovy; while the High Constable and his house waited for the return of the two champions. But when Eastertide was come and the hall triumphed with banqueting and mirth as it had done a year ago; the watchman above the gate called out that he saw a knight riding toward the Castle at about a mile’s distance and my lord when he heard of it said "'Tis one of them returned with his story," and so all the company went up to the high alures along the southern wall and watched the knight as he rode along. What chattering and dispute arose as to which of the two it were, or whether it were either of them, I need not tell you; but presently Mistress Alicia cried out "'Tis our true knight Sir Nicholas, I know his bearing and the paces of his horse," and she was indeed in the right. Then the High Constable bade his trumpeters sound a welcome on their clarions to this mirror of chivalry, and the guard were set all in order clothed in mail, and the portcullis men and the drawbridge men stood by their chains lest the gallant knight after many perils and hazards should end by falling into a pit. So as the trumpets pealed forth their close the bridge fell down, and bowing low to his lord above the gate Sir Nicholas was received once more within the bailey of Caldicot. First, as was right, the maids disarmed him and bore basins of fair water, and unguents and odours, and clothed him in a surcoat fit for the King's Majesty and tenderly handled him; for they saw Sir Nicholas was pale and thin and judged him to have gone through divers sore dangers in their behalf. Then (as if he had been a boar's head or peacock) he was brought into the hall in a pomp, to wit by the steward, the castellan, and the sergeant-marshall, with a music of pipes and vyalls and sweet singing, and the fool Thomas walked behind for his reward; and so was set at the Earl's right-hand, and feasted with the most delicate and opiparous fare and the most curious wines imaginable; for the High Constable noted that Sir Nicholas seemed all the while like a man in his twy-senses, between the call and the awakening. Scarce a word moreover, came from his lips, but he knit his brows, tapped his skull, and was heard once or twice to mutter "Surely I am myself and this is the hall of Caldicot in Netherwent, and my lord Humphrey sits beside me." They that heard these conjectures concluded therefrom that the poor gentleman's head was dazed and somewhat muddled, but we must not say hard things of them on this account, because, you know, they lived a long while ago and were ignorant of true science. But in our days if a man desire to make a noise in the world, and to be accounted a philosopher whose thoughts are deep down below the form and nature of things, he has only to write his Meditations or Considerations declaring in quaint and quidditative terms how uncertain it is whether "I" is "I." And all this is quite right, but to each age pertain its own perfections. But my lord, the ladies and the knights waited anxiously for Sir Nicholas his lips to open to better purpose; and had good hopes or hearing a fine history when the Knight of the Dial had drunk his wits back again. At last my lady Joan could wait no longer, but cried “Sir Nicholas, Sir Nicholas begin your tale, or else it will be cockcrow before you are half-way through.”

“It shall be so,” answered he, “I will tell all and would have begun before were not my adventures so wonderful as to be almost beyond belief; but now since you bid me, I will omit nothing.” Then the company about the board was hushed to silence, and the fool closed one eye, while the chins of Maistre Jehan and Master Geoffrey sought their hands, since it was their function to chronicle what was to come. Then Sir Nicholas Kemeys, the Knight of the Dial began his relation of…

THE QUEST OF CONSTANCY

SPEAKING FOR SOME tway turning of the horologe in a voice of grave sweetness that drew all eyes intent upon him. In this history he told them how he had lost his way in a vast forest, where he was beset by the folk of Faerie, who played him a thousand tricks and bewildered his sight and mind and all his rational faculties with their enchantments, showing him the sweet unearthly bodies of ladies lying asleep beneath the trees, and sending dwarfs to waylay him and draw him aside from his track. Nevertheless through all these magic meshes he won through, and at last reached a flat land on the summit of a mountain, where he found the people celebrating the Festival of Wine Skins, with songs and music and interludes and many pleasant diversions, but there was nothing like Constancy to be met with among them in love or in anything else. Thence Sir Nicholas went down to the valley beyond, and saw in the midst thereof a great city on a hill, having a spire rising from it of incredible height that seemed to sway to and fro from star to star. And the hill whereon the city stood was so steep that no horse nor mule might mount it, and the only way for a man to ascend was by way of four stout and well-set ladders, made of ropes, one on each side of the city. “So,” said the Knight, “I was forced to leave my horse below while I mounted upwards, till I had laid my foot on two thousand steps, and stood before the northern gate; and blew my horn before the drawbridge that I might have entrance. The which without question or delay was granted me, and I came through a broad and sunny street, planted with trees and established with high-built houses, to the market place before the great spire, and here the people bought and sold, and played at tables and flew enormous kites shaped in the similitude of dragons and birds of ravine and monstrous creatures: and on a high seat sat the king of that city clothed in blood-red vestments, holding a golden rod; and there was his court before him. To the king himself I showed my quest, and told him all my desire; and when I had finished he answered: ‘You could have chosen no better place, Sir Knight, than my fair town of Ladders; for we have here an example of splendid constancy, and this you shall see presently.’ Then he called ten men-at-arms, and whispered apart to their captain, who beckoned me to follow him. This did I, and we went out of the square down a narrow alley, till we came to a door-way and this being opened showed a winding stair rising from it. But I would not go up as the captain asked me, for I had had enough of mounting; whereupon he and his soldiers fell on me all at once and grasped my head and throat and body and arms and legs so that I could not stir; then one bound my hands and 'climb' they said and I had no choice for the spears of that city have sharp points. And when I had gone round and round up that stair, so that my limbs sunk from under me, and my senses were confounded, I became like one who walks in his sleep and could count the steps no more; but before this I had surmounted five thousand of them. At last we came to a door in the wall, and here they unbound my hands and unlocked the door and bade me go in and gaze as long as I would above or below it mattered not which, for either way there was constancy and plenty of it, 'Since most gallant knight errant and mirror of chivalry, if you look over your shoulder you will have a close view of a special vane of beaten brass, the which follows the wind whithersoever it leadeth it, and this it does in all weathers, by day or night. But if you yourself are not over constant, and like change, you have but to look down on our square, when you will see us all constant in constantly taking our pleasure; only go not too near the ledge of your habitacle, since a mile through the air is a long fall.'" Here Sir Nicholas groaned deeply and went on to explain that he found himself in a little cell or habitacle made some ten feet under the capstone of that spire he had seen from afar, and, as he judges, full a mile from solid earth. And all the company groaned and cried 'las!' and called on the dear saints, hearing of such a fearful adventure; and some of the girls fancied they were falling from that tremendous height, but in fact they were deceived since most of them were borne up by an arm in need ere they had gone back three inches. "And there indeed for many days and nights also (so said Sir Nicholas) have I seen the mighty vane of shining brass in the image of a most foul and malicious dragon, swinging to and fro above my head and screaming as it went, like a woman in her agony; but my greatest terror was the swaying of the spire, the which seemed to be in sempiternal motion and rocked continually as a tree upon the mountains. As for looking beneath I durst not do it, for I feared that I should instantly fall down and doubted whether they would pick me up alive after such a tumble. And my food no man brought to me; but just after sunrise and sunset, I would hear a noise like wings beating the air; and opposite to my habitacle there would flutter a great kite, having fastened to it a flask of wine, a little meat, and a loaf of bread, all of which were good enough, the wine indeed being of Catholic and Christian quiddity. And with a hook on a spear shaft I would draw the kite to me and take my victual and then let go again; so I lived in this place for better than nine months." Herewith the Knight of the Vane came to a full stop, and only by slow degrees was the history of his escape drawn from him by the Countess and the fair ladies. And the Chronicle indited by the skilful hand of Maistre Jehan Doucereutz proceeds to relate how Sir Nicholas grew desperate on the lofty spire and how one evening when the great kite drew near to him, it being made like a bird of prey with mighty flapping wings, he took not his provision from it nor let it go, as he was used, but leapt upon it floating in the air and cut the cord that held it with his dagger. "Then with a great shout of the people ringing up into mine ears, in place of falling to the earth, I floated away, being carried far above their heads by a fair breeze, and soon was beyond that hateful ladder city. And now for six days and nights I was born amidst the clouds over deep woods and mountain tops, and lakes, pinnacled castles, and walled cities, and they that looked up and saw me were in terror, thinking, as I suppose, some fearful monster was about to waste their land. Now the wind lifted me high towards the heavens, where I looked upon the stars and saw clouds rolling beneath me, like the billows of the sea; and now I swam the air but a little distance above the earth, and have thus passed over dreaming towns, and armies in array, and have gazed on the wandering miz-maze of the world. Sometimes have I flown swiftly before a tempest, and heard the wind rush by as an onset of battle; and have passed unstricken amid the flame of rapid lightnings and the roaring of the thunder; and anon the air hath been still and peaceful and (I think) filled with the chiming of many bells from the churches and snatches of organ musick; or else my brain was sick and imagined to itself these harmonies. But on the morning of the seventh day, as I hung over a great forest, stretching far and wide to the limit of my vision, I felt that the bird was slowly sinking downwards, and was glad, for I was sorely in need of food and of drink. To be short it descended on to an oak, and I making haste to set my feet amid the boughs, let it go for an instant; and thus it is that I can show you no proof of my story; for the kite was seized by a sudden breeze and rose aloft into the air till it was but a speck against the blue, and afterwards I have not seen it. And lo! beneath the tree was my horse that I had left behind when I climbed up into Ladder Town; and how this happened is beyond my wit, neither can I get to the bottom of it at all. Then rode I away, and for three months have I journeyed through wild lands, foreign peoples, many perils, and much misery; but the vane on the spire of the accursed city is the only constant creature that I have beheld in this my quest."

No sooner had Sir Nicholas brought this stupendous history to a close than the blast of a horn, blown long and loud, assailed the ears of the High Constable and his company, who marvelled so at this circumstance that they forgot to marvel at the story. "Go, Thomas," said my lord to the fool, "go quickly and see who it is that is without so late; since a fool is best to open to one that comes on a fool's errand."

"Truly I think I am the right man for this occasion," answered the precious Thomas, who kept one eye still closed, so that they said "He is, in fact, a great fool," and that is how the phrase originated. Remember this when you speak of your friends behind their backs, and forget not to feel thankful to the witty lords and ladies who have furnished you with this expression of true friendship. But Thomas went forth, while the horn still rang through the towers, along the alures, and into the hall; and ere long returned leading with him no less a personage than Sir Dru de Braose, who looked hearty and well, and had not so warm a welcome from the ladies as Sir Nicholas; both because he was on the wrong side in the quarrel, and because he seemed in full possession of his mental faculties. But then he had fewer of these to take care of than the Knight of the Dial, and so kept what he had in better order. But the Earl took care of him and saw that the jovial knight was duly stuffed with good things, and his throat well swilled with wine; and all expected to hear from him a history of pleasant and amorous adventures and some rather juicy tales, and the ladies prepared to blush, as it is proper for ladies to do on such an occasion. Some of the prettiest of them were blushing already, but these were mere private and peculiar blushes, not connected with the public business or necessities. But it appeared when Sir Dru began the story of that he had had almost as rough a time of it as Sir Nicholas himself; but to be sure he spoke at much shorter length and appeared now and then to stop short and knit his brow as if he had forgotten what had next befallen him. And thus he began: "After that I had parted from my companion I rode onward over the level many miles till I came to a stream with high banks of yellow mud, and no bridge was to be seen, whereby I might have passed over. But presently I beheld a large boat moored to a post on the bank, and into this boat I and my horse descended. But as I would have steered it over to the other side the wind rose suddenly and caught the sails and the force of the water took the boat and drove it violently down the brook till we came into the open sea. And here again, as I strove to guide my vessel the rudder broke in pieces, and the might of wind and wave growing in violence urged us onward, and the air grew dark with the storm, so that I gave myself up for lost, and thought each moment to be overwhelmed amidst the high billows. And for three days and three nights the tempest continued: and all the while we lay in thick darkness as if it had been a continual night, so that at last I fell asleep from hunger and weariness and slept, as I believe, for many hours. For when I woke no clouds were on the sky and no longer in mid ocean, the boat slowly sailed along the shore of a deep bay in still water; but out at sea I saw all the waves ridged with white foam because of the storm that was overpast. And seeing the water was shallow, I made shift with my lance to guide the boat aground and mounted my horse once more and set forth through a narrow valley that I might discover to what manner of country I had come." Here Sir Dru paused and laid his finger for a minute to his skull; and then began to speak of his inland journey; of green lawns, brooks of sweet water, delicious fruits, sweet singing of birds, and many other pleasant circumstances such as sailors conceive in a calenture; but which are neither new nor over pertinent to the story. "And before I had ridden for an hour," said he, "I overtook an old hideous woman who drove before her nine black hogs, very monstrous and fierce to behold, having tusks like to wild boars' tusks and the grunting of them was like the noise of a fierce lion. The old woman I addressed and asked her if there were no lord in the country that showed hospitality to wandering knights and refreshed them after they had undergone great peril and distress. 'Truly,' she made answer, 'most hardy and gallant knight, you have but to follow me, and I will take you to a very great lord, who loves nothing better than to entertain strangers and weary men, notably if they be mighty warriors of gentle birth as you are. And to his castle I am now driving these nine hogs that have of late had pannage in the woods hard by the sea.' Thus the old woman with the swine led me through a fair open country till we came to a high wall of stone around a castle, having towers and alures and a strong gate house, even as this castle of Caldicot. At this gate house the old woman bade me wait while she drove her hogs round by the postern, and in a little while the drawbridge fell down, and the lord of the castle came forth to meet me, a grave and comely man with blue eyes and a long white beard. And he took me by the hand and led me in, calling me brother and bidding me command him and all his men to do whatsoever I would. ‘Many a year gone by,’ said he, ‘a gallant knight like you came here in search of adventures, and so fertile a land did he find it that he never returned to his country, but died here; and he too was of Gwent.’ With these words we came to the banqueting house, lofty and magnificent, and in a gallery was a quire that sang and played every manner of instrument while the company were at meat. Then mine host made me sit beside him at the high table, whereat sat also his nine daughters, such girls as it does a man’s eyes good to gaze upon, for one of them would turn an abbey upside down. And at the board below was as brave a sort of ladies and of knights as I ever desire to see, all gallant and gay, and dressed in splendid robes of velvet and silk and golden stuff, enriched with jewells beyond all price. Let me say nothing of the feast or of the wine that graced it, for neither surely did come from any earthly cook or perishable vineyard, but were rather drawn down from Olympus Hill on the Marches of Greece; being altogether most delicious and wondrously tasty on the tongue. And before I had rinsed my mouth with many cups of these celestial juices, my eyes began to wander over the nine maidens, and soon met with an answer from the eyes of one of them, joined to sly smiles and downcast looks that, to speak the truth made me desirous of knowing more of her. Ladies, I crave your pardon, but I tell you this girl’s lips were mighty red. But when we had finished feasting, and I had informed my host how I had wandered away from Gwent in the quest of Variety, curtains fell over the windows and the hall was suddenly darkened; but only for a moment; and I heard a sound of most strange palpitating music that swelled and died away and rose again; then were the doors thrown open, and two tall men entered carrying great tapers of wax aloft; and after them the minstrels, and then fifty more men bearing tapers, and these stood around the hall. So the music that had entered went up to the high table and played there; they that were in the gallery answering them, and the ladies and the knights began to tread a dance, weaving and unweaving perplex’d figures continually. But seeing the girl I had marked out still sitting I drew near to her, and endeavoured as courteously as I could to entertain her with such polished phrases and gentle discourse as my wit supplied. And to speak the truth she was not backward, her eyes consumed my soul and her voice thrilled through me as we talked and we told one another old flaming tales of passionate lovers, how that fire of love had burnt to the ground many noble houses, and had brought to desolation lordships, and dominions and mighty kingdoms, as it was with Queen Guinevere and Sir Lancelot du Lac. And in some way or other, as we were rehearsing these fair conclusions, I found her hand in mine, but I profess I know not how it got there; yet ’twas not at all unpleasant, and I had an inclination to prolong our discourse. But as we were debating some knotty point in gallantry my girl said to me ‘surely, fair sir, we could solve these intricate questions better in quietness by ourselves; come then, follow me and I will lead you to a fit school, but we will have no præses, for there is no need for one.’ And I made no scruple at all to follow Madam Enantha (this was her name) out of the noise of music, and dancing and laughter; and she went before me through a side door, along a passage, and up a stairway till we stood together on the alures. Then what with the moonlight that shone through the open casements, the faint sound of the lutes and vyalls, and the strangeness of the adventure my head became confused for some while; but when I awoke I found Enantha’s arms about my neck and her lips set fast on mine, indeed she was a nice girl and seemed mighty affectionate. Then we paced along the alures till we came to a tower, and whilst we delighted ourselves there with warm caresses, a voice that turned my heart to ice sounded (as it appeared) from close beside us. ‘Now farewell (it said) most courteous and loving knight, descend without steps and at dawning look on the dial, and find there in the ever shifting shadow the true exemplar of variety.’ But before mine host (for I know it was none other) had finished this strange speech the floor beneath me began to sink and I passed from the arms of my mistress down through the tower into darkness till I was at the bottom of this secret shaft, far below the earth. Here I might beat the walls and cry out and none hindered me; and all through the night I raved like one written in the Books of the Moon even till the dawning came and one long ray came into that foul and loathsome pit lighting upon a dial set in the midst. And this place was so contrived with squint holes fashioned through the walls, that all the day the sunshine fell upon the dial and marked the hour, and by its brightness made my prison-house yet more noisome and abhorred. What food I had was flung down to me from above, but I saw no face and heard no spoken words throughout all the time I was thus clapped up, namely for nine months, more or less. And there doubtless I had died wretchedly, save that one day in my frenzy I cast mine arms about the pillar on which the dial stood and pulled with all my might striving to uproot it. And after many a grievous tug, in the strength of my madness, what I endeavoured I at last effected, and the pillar yielded and fell to one side, bringing with it the floor around in a circle of a cubit's diameter. And the beam of sunlight shining on this place showed me a steep flight of steps, and beyond an odd glistening of some other brightness. My way it seems is lower still, said I to myself, and as quickly as I could I ran down the stairs and found myself in a passage lined with smooth mirrors of steel, and illuminated by small lamps hanging from the roof at equal distance part. From these lamps came pleasant odours, as they burnt, but I stayed not to examine anything, rather coursing along for my life, for I feared there had been a watch set on me in my dungeon, though I knew not of it. And when I had run three or four miles, and was nearly breathless, the lamps ceased, and I was in darkness, and the track grew rough and stony, and the walls when I felt them were of hewn rock. Then the way widened, and my feet trod over sand, till I saw once more the light of heaven, that I had not beheld except on that cursed dial for many a weary week. To be short I came out by a cave on the sea shore, and had not far to go before I found my boat lying just as I had left it above the wash of the tide. I need not say how swift I was to embark and sail away with a blessed wind from those shores, nor how by land and sea I have returned to Gwent once more, since I have devised for you all the matter pertinent to this my quest of variety."

Herewith Sir Dru's tongue ceased from wagging and Master Geoffrey's pen from flickering; and none knew what to say, for it seemed as if the Argument of the Dial and the Vane had not been concluded by the knightly quests; but rather mixed, muddled, confounded, obscured, dedalised, and entangled to an intolerable extent. Then by the High Constable's solemn decree this great question was adjourned, prorogued, and continued to next Easter; and they all went to bed hoping that the morrow would be a warm and shiny day. But both the histories were curiously engrossed by the lettered men and laid up amongst the records of the Castle for the admiration of the after-ages. But it was discovered a short while afterwards that in neither of them was there one jot or tittle of the truth, since they both proceeded from the fertile brain of Sir Nicholas Kemeys, who had taken the hints of that great fool Thomas in the management of his fables. And in fact the two knights errant had been enjoying themselves all the time at Abergavenny, revelling, feasting, and making love to their hearts' content; drinking the strongest men under the table and hiding in aumbries and in dark corners till the town was too hot to hold them. And when my lord Humphrey had the real truth of this affair carried to him, so well-pleased was he with the ingenious and finely conceited lying of Sir Nicholas and Sir Dru that he gave to each of them a fat manor in his lordship of Netherwent, and would have them always in presence at Caldicot till he died.

Thus I brought my relation to a close; and it was then found to be time for sleeping, so that no man laid his thumbnail on what I had said, unless he did it in his dreams.

BY THE WAY

ON THE NEXT morning while the darkness still palpitated in the sky, and the lucent day-star shone over the dreaming woods and rivulets; a tread of heavy boots clamoured about the passages and stairs, and at our doors was a knocking and a voice crying "Domini ocula aperiatis," or words resembling these, for I could never teach Efan to latinise honestly, though I had laboured a whole month to put some learning into him. But I was pleased to hear Tom Bamfylde responding in a set Latin speech beginning "Justum: nam ibimus per vias nemorosas et vereta locorum amaena" — It is meet: for we are to go by wooded ways and pleasant greeny places— "by streams of water and running brooks," he went on, "by the castle on the hill and the church by the road, even unto that delicious city the very jewell of sweet old Gwent." For Latin came from his tongue full smoothly, and hearing that tongue spoken half asleep he answered in it, much to the confusion and dismay of Efan who hated the language he was compelled now and again to speak; and as he would say "The words do rankle in my belly like sour ale, for they be not good words nor wholesome; but loathsome and hideous." And hearing this flight of Latin whistling about his ears, he made haste, and cursed himself in Welsh, and having sworn profanely, withdrew himself as quickly as he could. Then was great haste made on our part also and before long we were dressed in point; for I took out a fine habit I had of crimson velvet, well laced and purfled: and my three guests had, as I have said, vestments of murry and tawny plush, so that we were, all four of us, right gallant and brave and fit for Uske on the Portreeve's holyday. So one after another stamped down the stairs, and felt his way in the dim twilight along the passages and stumbled into the parlour; here was a fire burning, the shutters closed, and six tapers lighted, for us to see our breakfast, on which we fell solemnly and earnestly to work and passed around a tankard of the Brown Nut. And outside we heard the cocks singing lauds, with festal antiphons and ruling of the quire; for by Clemendy they had a house under a Chanticleer and subchanticleer and lived together as virtuously as could be expected. And when we had done with cup and platter we sallied forth and got into the saddle, just as the sun rose above Kemeys and Wentwood and flung his light right over the great round hills that are in the west. Then the horns began to play before the porch at Clemendy; a rousing melody they made with tarantaras and magistral flourishes; full pompously and gorgeously we rode out at the gate, doffed our feathers to the church and turned up the road to Uske. But for all our clamour I heard a full rich voice swelling up from the village— "*What bird is this, I pray thee tell me, That carolleth so loud at dawning, O dear mother*," and in the fine trills and graces of the old Welsh song, I recognised very well the sweet throat of a sweetheart of mine called Mevanwy, who thus (dear merry maiden) sent us on our merry way. Then along the deep and narrow road, one riding after another between high banks of flowers and green leaves, till we began to pass through the midst of the forest, and here the buglers ceased, for with blowing their throats were dry, and with puffing their cheeks weary; and the way being wider we were able to go more together and to talk at our ease. "Here halt," said Nick Leonard the Lord Maltworm, "and cease horn, and strike flint on steel, for I am minded to smoke a strong whiffling pipe of tobacco."

"So we, for one cannot relish the morning air without tobacco smoke, this forest roadway is so sweetly sheltered and embowered on either side that the blue clouds we blow, shall float and die into the larger blue, gently and by slow degrees." Thus the Rubrican answered for us all, and the smoke's wreaths rose upwards as he had said, and truly I shall never forget, so long as I live, the delicious savour of that pipe of Trinidado, taken in midforest and mingled with the morning, and gladness, sunlight, and green leaves and many roadside flowers. So we rode slowly along, and after a little while Tom Bamfylde (ah, what a fair monument has poor Tom in Abergavenny minster) said "Let the fat Spigot Clerk smoke out his pipe and show forth one of the best tales he has in his hutch; and when we have to ride singly again, he shall be second, and bawl out the phrases of his story, as if he were a herald on a coronacion day."

"Well, well," replied Phil Ambrose, "it is my turn, and I will do my best to add one more pleasant circumstance to the Uske Roadway and the Forest of Gyronne."

"Of flower de Luce and the Lyonne Rampant you should rather say," quoth I. "I speak of the field," said he, "I speak of the field; for there are no lions in the forest nor flower-de-luces; but the subtilest foxes and vixens in all Gwent, and an undergrowth of daffodils and afterwards of red campion and the purple Iacinth, the flower that cries woe. And before Michaelmas it is truly gyronny of gules and or. But talk not to me now, but let me smoke my pipe to the last ash, and then you shall have my tale.” And before long the pipe came to an end, and Phil looked around him: “Blow horns,” said he, “sound me one long and glorious strain as at the knights’ onsetting, make me purple musick, my companions; before I devise my story of old Gwent.” Then the bugles rang out full and clearly, till all the valley and the wood seemed satiate with sound; and as the last dying note dropped back from the hilltops upon us the Spigot Clerk began his tale.

THE SPIGOT CLERK’S SECOND TALE.

How a Knight of Uske Kept Guard over a Tree

IT APPEARS TO me, gentlemen, that since we are going this day to Uske with the deliberate intent and fixed resolve of taking our pleasure there, it would be well for me to devise a tale concerning that town aforesaid, and so I will bring a text for you out of its byways and make an ancient moral story. You shall understand then that a good many years ago (how many I will not say, lest the Rubrican catch me tripping in my antiquities) there was a young gentleman living in Uske, called the Sieur Payne Martell, whose coat was so splendid and princely a one that he could never have it blazoned on his vestments in full, because the bill would have been too long for anything, or for his purse at all events. When I say never I speak not by the book, for I mean to say in his young days with which my tale is concerned; but when he was about fifty years old he went as brave as any one; and for this you may look in the tournament-rolls of Windsor and in the *Inquisitio Post Mortem* held some years afterwards. This young knight then lived at Uske in a very pleasant and retired manner, subsisting on the contents of a small chest he had; the said chest containing a beggarly number of gold pieces; how gained I will not dare to say: because I really don’t know. For all I can pronounce they might have been the few remaining feathers of a fine bird that had flown away; an estate to wit, maybe they came from the high toby; in which case we should call them extract of moonlight and fifth essence of the dark lantern. But since it is of no great consequence how money be gotten, it would be waste of time to discuss these hypothetical; for the fact that I want to get into your heads is that these yellowboys kept disappearing till at last there were very few left. Not that there was any mystery in the matter, any more than there is in the necessity our mortal nature has for meat and drink; but there was a good deal of mystery in Sir Payne’s mind as to how he should refill his chest again. This question he endeavoured to solve in lonely walks about the woods and hillsides, and along the banks of the fair water of the Uske, lying full length in the long grass under the shade of a hedge-row and looking hard into the river. I believe he expected a river-maiden to take a fancy to him and bring up her treasure from the chambers below the Uske; for he was not a bad looking gentleman and your nymphs and all their sort are notoriously addicted to imprudent wedlock with mortal men. But Sir Payne was never startled out of his dreamy gazing by the sudden radiance of dripping golden hair, and he began to be afraid that the tales of these damp ardent girls were not quite true. This thought made him feel sadder than before, since he was a knight loving of wonders, full of faith, as poor as a rat, and fond of fine girls: but he did not despair and still chiefly frequented the Uske, sometimes amusing himself by throwing sticks into the stream and watching them float away. And when the angelus sounded in the valley (though he sometimes waited till the sunset) he would get on his legs with a sigh and trudge home and then lie down in his cockloft and fall asleep, muttering to himself "I don't much care if I never wake again in this horrible earth" — though, to be sure, he did not quite mean it. But you see the poor gentleman was in want of everything that makes life pleasant; and there are times when all of us, with cause and without, read King Solomon's Sermons with a sad relish. But Sir Payne would have done well to remember that this good King wrote a Song (and a Song of Songs) as well as a Sermon; and if one has a smack or two of the whip, why by the splendour of Love's firmament! there's a smack of a kiss and the unction (what sweeter, what more comfortable) distilled from a pair of darling lips, also. In our degenerate days, doubtless, it would be thought unwise of a man to spend his days by the riverside, waiting for a water-maid to woo him; but Sir Payne was no pagan and had great faith; and from my history you will understand that he was in the right and could have chosen no better way to mend his fortune. It was one day in June, between Midsummer and Petertide, a highday of Beelzebub (if he in truth have lordship over the flies), a day of swarming bees, of ripening cherries, of chiming foxglove, of still air moved now and again by faint breezes, but most of all a day of roses. Roses did hang everywhere, by hedgerow and byway and brake and river, white and red, in bud and blossoming, filling the fields with a faint scent that could scarce be perceived but might not be denied. And on this day Sir Payne was lying according to his use by the Uske, keeping well in the hedge's shadow, and just above him with boughs falling to his hand was a great blush of pink roses, and here and there was a blossom almost as red as blood, but most were paler. But their odour came not to his nostrils since beside the rose bush grew an elder tree, the bloom of which is strongly fragrant, and it made the air heavy all around. And while he thus lay, pondering and dreaming and listening to the perpetual ripple of the river (for on the opposite side it was shallow) the bell of the Priory began to ring for Nonesong very sweetly, and looking up he noticed the roses, and a quaint thought came into his head. How these fancies are engendered I — know not; but it is certain that if one seek for them they are not to be found, but they come and go at their pleasure and are altogether licentious. And this thought of Sir Payne's was to fashion a wreath of roses and to cast it on the current of the Uske; and thus to make an oblation to those maidens of high race of Faerie, to whom belongeth every winding of the river, every ripple and little tributary brooklet, all broad spaces and reaches of still and glassy water, from the wells in the mountains unto Severn Sea. And so he twined his fret of blossoms, setting four of the reddest at four points of the circle, and cast it well out into the stream. At first he was afraid, for the wreath floated to the other side and seemed in danger of being caught by a great bramble that hung from the bank; but it did but touch a thorn and swam out again into midstream, and passed round the bend of the river. And to speak the truth Payne had not long to wait for an answer to his flower offering; for in less time than a good church clock takes to strike noon, he heard the even plash of oars, mingling with vyall notes and the sound of singing, coming towards him from the way of Caerleon. The knight made no doubt at all that he was about to be borne away to Avilion like King Arthur by three fair ladies of Faerie; but herein he went a little too far, for that Island is kept for great lords and princes, else it would be overcrowded. But presently (the music and the noise of oars growing louder and more plainly measured) Payne saw a painted barge swing round into his view, rowed by six rowers who now held their oars aloft; and an old white-bearded knight in glittering vesture held artfully the helm. Below him sat three or four ladies with as many knights and beyond them was the musick, who now ceased a little while, to rest. But as they came nearer Sir Payne saw to his wonder and rejoicing that his rose-garland crowned one of the ladies and instantly he plucked another of the redder blossoms and held it in his hand. Now as the barge grew point by point along the river the musick fell to again and began with long drawn harmony of vyalls and a deep tenor throat that divine ballad *Soubz cest Amour mon coeur est endormy.* And as they passed by, Sir Payne gazed a moment into the eyes of the girl sitting nearest to the helmsman, who wore his rosy fret, and he saw that she was very beautiful. And she, who was keen of wit and sight, noted the red rose in the poor knight's fingers, and smiled on him: ah! such a smile, that made the earth seem lovelier; and the passionate melody thrilled to his heart — *mon coeur est endormy* he sang to himself softly and the barge had passed. And soon by another winding of the river it was hidden from his sight and the musick came faintly on the summer air, and Sir Payne was alone once more. But can we call him alone when on the swirl of the water he saw that gilded, painted barge perpetually advancing, heard the stroke of the oars, and the first long sweep of the bow upon the vyalls. And there in the marvellous mirror of the Uske he likewise saw the maiden sitting beneath his rose garland, a maiden clad in white velvet, wearing a collar of jewells, and having wings of golden gauze floating from her head, like the wings of a gorgeous butterfly! All this was a rare and curious sight for the eyes of a gallant gentleman to feast upon, and Payne saw everything very clearly, for you must remember he had been fasting for some time like any hermit, and was therefore in the right state to see visions. He found them indeed so entirely to his taste that neither evensong, nor curfew, nor compline stirred him; and it was in the meadow by the riverside that he took his sleep that night and woke up the next morning rather hungry and quite ready for breakfast and whatsoever should happen to come after it. As to the former contentment he was fortunate in having the acquaintance of the Lardarius of the Priory at Uske, one brother Pacificus, a monk to the backbone. The which is so much as to say, a man with strong sinews, a deep bass voice and a sound heart. This honest monk Sir Payne sought out in his larder, a small room, but a fragrant, and full of good things such as sauces, condiments, old cheese, tasty preserved meats and sausages, with odd-looking little flasks stowed away here and there in nooks and crannies. Herein the hungry knight found the Larderer who had just taken off his quire habit, for primesong was scarcely over, and Sir Payne hinted that if anybody thought of taking breakfast he should not be averse to fall in with the notion. "Surely, fair son," answered the monk, "I am about to take some little refreshment myself and here there is always a cup and a platter for you: and for a beginning try these cherries from our orchard, just gathered, one of these white manchets, a few strawberries and a flask of cool red wine that has spent an hour or two in the well." With these simple dainties they began and then Brother Pacificus drew out the substantial part and the truly monastic fare. This was a sausage about as long as a man's arm, rather crooked, but splendidly attired in a vestment of gold leaf, as though it had been an uncial J in a Missal. In short it was one of those "Uske Puddings" for which the Priory had been famed time out of mind, of which the Prior made an Easter offering every year to the Bishop of Llandaff, and on which many high ecclesiastical persons had been regaled on Gaudy-Days. While Brother Pacificus was stripping this peppery unctuous customer of his skin, Sir Payne's blue eyes twinkled finely, for he knew the taste of these gay fellows and was aware that it was always necessary to drink a lot of good wine afterwards; and when a man had done this he was in the humour to pull Satan's tail and follow up the attention with a hearty kick. And when the two comrades were in the midst of their disjune the knight began to ask the monk (who knew everybody) about the barge he had seen the day before. "An old knight, Father, steered it; a well-looking man with a white beard and a gyppon all glistening with gold; and below him sat a fair young lady, golden haired and intolerably beautiful, in a tunic of white velours; and other ladies and knights were there, and minstrels also."

"You saw, I think, Sir Rowland Bluet; for he often goes thus on the water, and his daughter Alianor is truly a comely maiden; but what was his coat, since you doubtless noted it?"

"He bore three golden chevrons on a sanguine field crusoly of the first, and the maiden's cote hardie was pounced all over with the golden crosses."

"That to be sure is Sir Rowland's coat; a good knight, a very worshipful gentleman, but somewhat stern and not by any man to be trifled with. But you may see his house not far from the Castle, with a high wall all around it and a great chestnut tree growing in the court. As for Mistress Alianor, she is the child of his old age, very dear to him, and intended for some great lord; and to be sure together with her beauty she will bring her husband a comfortable dowry and many a fat meadow in the vale of Uske." This comfortable news was the best sauce in the larder for Sir Payne, and he got very genial over his tenth cup, since he made no account of Sir Rowland Bluet's severity or of his disposition of his daughter, justly reckoning such matters of small importance. And by the time the bell began to ring for terce Sir Payne thought a little rest and meditation in some shady place would be good for him; as his head was very clear, and he felt that if he could have quiet he would soon be able to make excellent arrangements. The people of Porth-y-carne street who saw him walking towards the bridge said he was drunk, but for once, they made a mistake I believe; since it is wrong to call a man drunk or fuddled who is arguing and smiling to himself so brightly and merrily that the very children laugh to see him. In this agreeable state Sir Payne met at least five pretty girls, and he kissed every one in a calm but decided manner. The which shows his wits were in good order, for one cannot mark one's approbation of a nice feature in a nicer way. Will anybody deny this? I believe not. And after resolutely and admirably discharging these duties the knight got away to his old nook by the river and there dreamt a thousand pleasant dreams, wove innumerable fancies, bathed his head in sunshine and the water of the Uske, and perceived that the brightest butterflies all carry on their backs a little naked boy, and that every flower whereon they rest hath a little maid of faery in it. He saw also long pomps of folk in green array pass below the tall grasses, with minstrels blowing great honeysuckle trumpets and heralds in golden tabards; and down in the river the stars were shining. I suppose it was in these stars that it was figured that Mistress Alianor Bluet would walk on the river bank after Evensong with no more retinue than her page and a girl; but however that may be he discovered this fact and duly betook himself to thitherward, wearing on his sleeve a red rose and looking for all his poor vestments a gentleman of true blood and loyal lineage. It is in this high regard that a man of quality is easily discerned and distinguished from a rich scurf whose only arms are the royal ones on his gold crowns. There by the woods and waterside Sir Payne met the lady of his thoughts slowly and gently pacing, and whispering to the girl beside her; who was only a little way behind her mistress in beauty. From afar off the pair spied one another, and like the afterglow of sunset flushed Alianor's cheeks, so that she was considered to blush, and she caught her fellow tightly by the arm, murmuring "He whom you see approaching us it was that sent me the garland yesterday. Shall we not turn and pass away through the woods."

"Courage! mistress," answered the girl; "he seems to me a proper gentleman enough and a hardy; and you know:

Jamais d'amoureux couard

Ovez bien dire.

However let us see how he carries himself at close quarters, and then you can turn back if it be your pleasure.” This advice suited Alianor very well, so they paced still slowly on, till they met Sir Payne Martell, who took care to let his rose be seen, and directed one look of humble supplication towards the lovely Alianor. And when they had gone a little way he turned and followed them, the which was soon perceived by the waiting-maid who beckoned to him with her eyes and lips to have a good heart and not to be afraid. Thus encouraged Sir Payne followed in their footsteps hoping to see Alianor turn her face a little toward him, but she was indeed too bashful, and her maid had much ado to bring her up to the mark. At last when they came to a very quiet bend, thickly wooded on both sides (but one or two spaces of sunset flame appeared between the leaves) the page left his lady’s train and coming to the knight said “my lady Alianor Bluet bids you come before her presently.” This did Sir Payne, you may be sure, and found the two maidens seated on the grass, the servant glancing roguishly at him, and Alianor half smiling half frowning, but altogether almost too lovely even for Gwent and th; purlieus of Uske. “What makes you follow me thus?” said she as the knight bent before her, for she wished to begin the service in a high tone, trusting they might come to the *secreta* afterwards, contrary to the use of ecclesiastics. “I guard your ways, sweet mistress,” answered he, “for that I am a knight of the Rose and bound by my vows and solemn promises to wait on the chiefest of all roses, in whom alone is conjoined the perfect red and white.”

“By St. Dorothy, sir knight, I have never heard tell of such an order, pray teach me who is the sovereign of it.”

“He is called by some the Lord of Love, for he is a mighty and puissant prince.”

“Are there many knights then enrolled in this order?”

“Many for one cannot be a perfect knight without a lot in this brotherhood, in which high courage and the worship of loveliness are taught us, and all the service of incomparable beauty.” (“He uses mighty fine words” said the serving-maid, “he talks like a grammarian, and hath a noble nose.”) “And how fares your brotherhood in poverty," went on Alianor, "for perhaps some of you have not very large estates and are not able to make a brave show, nor to sit beside the ladies you adore, nor to lead them out to dance."

"'Tis then our sovereign lord doth succour us and opens to us the wicket into his close, and there we either live most blissfully or gladly die seised of Love's demesne." Thus Alianor and her knight played at question and answer, like two girls on a lawn tossing the ball either to other and coming nearer at every throw. Meanwhile the maid and the page were playing amidst the trees and laughing, for the boy wished to kiss the girl, she said he was too young for kissing, told him to wait a year or two and then he might do what he liked with her lips. But he could not wait and chased her round and round the oaks till her foot slipped and she fell right into his arms and lay still there thinking a pretty boy of thirteen better than nothing. And as these pastimes went on the ball turned and returned between Alianor and Payne till at last they got so close together that the poor knight ventured to slide his fingers into the lady's hand, and not long after to draw her to him, supposing that as she said not a word she found his ways not quite distasteful. But by the time Payne was beginning to discover what it was to have won the love of the prettiest girl along the Uske, the serving-maid and page came up with reverent faces to let the lovers know that it was almost dark and full time to separate; and indeed it is likely that neither of them would have found out these facts without some prompting. However they made an appointment to meet again in certain woods that lie on the hills to northward of the town and said goodnight fondly to one another. Maybe you remember the first time that your sweetheart said goodnight to you in sweetheart-wise, for there are circumstances therein that make the blood run swiftly and raise golden fancies in the mind. And if you have not forgotten you will understand how Payne wandered home to his garret, marvelling how happy a world it is and how beautiful all things surely are. In fact the streets of Uske grew very spacious, and loftily the houses rose upward in the gloom, especially the mansion of Sir Rowland Bluet that had a high wall all around, above which one could see the great chestnut tree. Sir Payne slept that night a happy sleep, a sleep furnished with fragments of sweet musick, snatches of quaint song, curious scents and pinnacled castles, a sleep rigged out with the most rarest dreams and illuminated with red stars. The which must be set down I suppose to the gentleman's being in love, a complaint that bears the responsibility of a good many transactions and is as needful to a tale as a nose is to a face. Depend upon it a face without a nose is no true face, it is incomplete, and the like may be said of a story that lacks love. But this matter at Uske was indeed a fine love affair, secret, ardent and well-planned from the beginning; daily calling for fresh stratagems and new meeting-places and all those counterfeits that lovers take delight in, though to be sure they are made more for show than use. Yet I suppose this couple might have learnt the alphabet together for a long time without being found out, if Payne had been content to bear his mistress company in her country walks and sunset meditations in the woods by the river. But being a young fellow of adventure, fond of dangerous places and warm corners he must needs propose a midnight interview, notwithstanding that he knew well enough Sir Rowland's sharp ways and his dislike of uninvited guests. Alianor received this plan with a shake of the head at first, but before long became convinced that it would be rather pleasant, and at last agreed to Payne's desire. This was dead against the counsel of her maid who affirmed that such meetings often led to bad blood, cuts, slashes, and strong language, nay, she said, brave gallant gentlemen had sometimes left the world on such occasions without having leisure to see after their affairs. However nobody paid any attention to this wise girl, who was fond of pleasure but very wary, having noticed that people who enjoy themselves too much often die young. In short Alianor agreed to keep wide awake on the Wednesday night following, the which arrangement left Payne two clear days to knock his notions into shape and to perfect whatever contrivances he had in his brain. The Tuesday he spent chiefly at the Priory, eating and drinking of the best and hearing conclusions from the most experienced monks concerning the excellent and kindred arts of getting into and getting out of difficult and perilous places. On these points Payne heard some curious discourses and Breviates, but the advice that pleased him best was that delivered by a very ancient monk who had seen many Priors enthroned and had helped to sing the *Dirige* and the *De Profundis* over most of them. "My son," said Brother Audoenus, "take the nearest path, follow your nose, go on steadily, and if necessary fall asleep till the coast be clear. For thus you will imitate the pious example *Sanctorum vij Dormientium* — of the Seven Sleepers, whose holyday we keep to-morrow: and they, you know, slept hard and went on sleeping as only saints can sleep, till the right time came to them for rubbing their eyes. And don't forget that though you may seem to be sliding down hill very fast, yet it's probable you may strike upon a side passage that will lead you to the top."

"Brethren, pray fill this holy man a full cup, for I think we have in his words the kernel of the matter." This was done and Brother Audoenus raised his chalice in the air and drank to the pious memory of the Seven Sleepers, and Sir Payne went home to ponder over the counsels of the ancient monk, and to discover how they might be fitted to his necessities. But just as he was going out Brother Pacificus the Larderer slipt something into his hand, muttering "take this, it will be sure to come in useful" and this something proved to be one of the monastic sausages, royally arrayed in cloth of gold. On the night following close upon midnight Sir Payne began his enterprise by scaling the court-wall of Sir Rowland Bluet's mansion, the which he accomplished not without difficulty, but at last came to the top and set forth straightway on his journey to his lady's lattice, the road being along the boughs of the chestnut tree that spread from the wall to the house. You may be sure he trod softly and made no more noise than he was able, often stopping and peering about to discover whether he was on the right road, for the branches went in all directions and Payne had no great desire for an interview with Sir Rowland, who might wish to know what he wanted with him. However by slow degrees he reached a bough overhanging Alianor's window and began to sing under his breath *Soubz cest Amour* as was agreed upon; when the lattice was swiftly opened and his sweetheart's face looked out and her hand beckoned him to come. This he did quickly enough, swinging himself down as aptly as if he were a mariner; and the lovers began busily to engage themselves in making up for the time they had lost, fondly gazing into each other's eyes and again and again drawing close together to drink that sweet essence that some set far above the rarest wine. But in the midst of this pleasant pastime, whiles their blood ran hot and swiftly, and their cheeks were close together, their arms twined around one another's necks, they heard suddenly deep oaths, clashing steel, and trampling feet, all these noises manifestly rolling toward Alianor's chamber and growing every moment louder and more vehement. I do not doubt that those of my hearers who are sharp-witted have guessed that Sir Rowland had discovered he had more guests under his roof than he was aware, and while Payne and Alianor are cooling down a little and making the best of their short time for reflection I will tell you how the old knight had gained his knowledge. You must understand then that there dwelt in the house an animal called a scholar, by name Master Lawrence, the same being some kind of kinsman to Sir Rowland, and having free lodging with him whenever he chose to lie at Uske. Most part of this fellow's time was spent in dodging between Oxford and Paris, Padua and Salamanca, in which places he peddled philosophy, always finding people ready to deal in his wares, for he cast a confused light on places that had hitherto been plain enough, and wrapped up what was obscure in the dark mists of his brain. This Master Lawrence was also known to have a new system of his own invention, the which was very quidditative and had statements in it that made simple people stare and press their hands to their heads: and thereat he was now labouring in his apartment not very far from Alianor's. You see if he had been a true scholar the noise of someone feeling his way along the branches of the chestnut would not have moved him in the least; but as it was he put out his lamp and set himself to watch for what should come next. We know of course that Sir Payne came next, and no sooner had he set his feet on the floor of his sweetheart's room than Master Lawrence postad off to the old knight's bedside and then and there let him know that his daughter had a friend staying with her, just arrived from anywhere you like by way of the tree. I confess the news was rather startling, but I don't think it was right for an old man to swear so violently, and to abuse his servants because they were asleep and not awake at midnight was clearly unreasonable. However they were all armed to the teeth in fifty *Aves,* and began their march to the lady's bower, and Sir Rowland led the cursing which was not pleasant to listen to. When this noise and the noise of steel first came to Payne's ears he wished to stand beside Alianor and make a fight of it, though a short sword was the only arm he had, but she would by no means suffer him, bidding him begone as he came through the window. But just as he put his foot on the ledge a shout arose from the court, and there he saw plainly enough four stout fellows with torches and drawn swords, who had that instant come forth from within; and the red glare from the street told him that he was expected there also. Circumstances of this kind try a man's wits, and Payne stood still a moment doubtful what to do, but a rush against the door and a cry from Alianor pricked him on; so drawing the golden sausage from his sleeve and whirling it round and round in the air he leapt into the midst of the leaves with a fearful din ringing in his ears, and a howl from one of the men below on whose nose a piece of dead wood had dropped unexpectedly, much to his terror and annoyance. However they all thought they had caught their bird as certainly as if they had him in the cage; Sir Rowland and the scholar waiting in the room to guard the window and the rest going down into the court and the street, where they stood in a ring with their swords in readiness and their faces all turned upwards like a sort of astrologers on a quodlibet day. One or two hardy souls were for mounting up there and then and taking captive or putting to the sword, but they who had seen Payne come forth would have none of that. “He hath, look you,” said they, “a great brand that he whirls around like lightning, and would kill every soul of us, one by one, if we went up in the dark.” So it was agreed to wait till dawn and then to bring ladders and plant them all round and carry the place by storm; to which Sir Rowland consented, for he perceived that his men would not do otherwise. To Alianor he said little, keeping all his wrath for her gallant, and from what he did say he got little satisfaction, since she flatly denied that anyone had been with her. Thus was watch and ward kept around the chestnut tree all through that night, till the day dawned and people in Uske began to run together, to stand in rows, to roar with laughter, to chuckle and to grin at the sight of half a dozen men armed to the teeth with drawn swords and ghastly torches, standing under a wall holding their heads on one side, and not speaking a word. But it was sorry fun to them on guard for they ached all over, and their necks had become fixed awry, and not one relished the prospect of encountering the sausage which they had made into a sword; even in broad daylight.

But when the sun was well above the woods, strong cordial waters were served out to each, and Sir Rowland made an oration to them from the window promising fine things to the man who should make capture of the miscreant. Then by way of beginning fairly they shot three flights of arrows into the tree, waiting after each volley for a groan or a heavy fall, but there was not a sound, and poor Alianor, whose soul was in her ears, began to take courage and to hope that her lover had contrived somehow to steal away. Then ladders were brought and fixed all round the stem of the tree, and whilst the chosen men began to climb, the rest kept double watch determined to be taken aback by no sudden leaps. But the crowd (which grew every minute) when they saw the men’s heads appear above the wall, as they mounted upwards, grew silent, for this seemed an entertainment too good for common mirth, and by a great deal better than a hanging. I think indeed that the explorers went up the steps very much as if they were about to be hanged; however this perilous climb was accomplished in safety and they began to tread the boughs warily and tenderly as if they trod eggs, expecting at each step the onset of the enemy. But the fates did not will that any should die by that fearful sword, and they wandered unharmed from one side to the other, from the top to the bottom, and found not him they sought nor any trace of him at all. So they called for more to help them, and one or two young rascals of the town, mere jackanapes at climbing, swarmed up to the swaying summit and lay out on the farthest boughs, these squinting crosswise and those downward, whilst the solid serving men poked and beat and squatted and leaned over in the more central and secure places. But after an hour of this curious forestcraft it evidently appeared that he whom the searchers searched for was not there; and then I must confess the crowd began to jeer and hoot and make horns; since to keep guard all night over nothing and then to seek for it at dawning seemed to them an act of folly. But Sir Rowland was fit to burst with rage, and stamped about reviling his daughter and cursing his men, who (he swore) had slept standing, and at last turned on Master Lawrence, telling him that he had conceived the whole affair in his cloudy besotted brain, and this was all the reward Lawrence got for his pains. But when the story reached the Priory the monks made a shrewd guess as to who had got into this scrape and doubted not that he had crawled out of it by following the advice of Brother Audoenus — and by the aid of the gilt pudding, said the Larderer unto himself. But as a matter of fact Payne had taken a long leap through the gloom of midnight, across the flame of torches into the depths of the tree; and while he steadied himself a moment his hand pressed hard on a bough above his head, just in the place where there was an odd lump in the bark. Then strange to say the solid wood gave way from beneath his feet and he began to go down and down; down-a-down, steadily and swiftly to silence and pitch darkness, till he verily believed that he should soon discover whether Sir John Maundeville were right or wrong concerning the antipodes. Not that he cared two pins about the matter, but he thought since he had come so far it would be as well to look into it. However the earth brought at last his deep courses to a stay, and Payne was free to choose his own path and go wherever he liked, by which I mean to say, wherever he could. And now I am going to be exact and mighty positive about what happened down below; since I do not wish you to swallow a pack of fantastick lying legends, but only the exact truth. But the old Canon who told me this story thought fit to do quite otherwise (I suppose he took me for a fool); and gravely enough, without a crease in his cassock, showed how Sir Payne struck upon a passage that led to the underground Abbey of Thermopota, and lay there for eight nights, while the monks celebrated the high feast of Set. Ypocras, and held their great Rose-Chapter. But I take it there is no truth in this; rather, when Sir Payne found there was no more falling to be done, he proceeded to light a wax taper, and with this to speculate and survey into what kind of a place he had come. But before proceeding about this business in earnest he had a hearty laugh over the people up above, who were on the look out for his descent, and firmly resolved to follow the advice of old Audoenus, who clearly understood these matters. Looking around he then perceived that he was in a small vaulted chamber with an opening in the stones through which he came, and the walls were strangely painted with mystical devices in red and gold and on them were carven symbols and hieroglyphical emblems, like those they say adorn the wonderful Cloud Castle of Rohalgo. But of more account than these curiosities he held the oak door thickly pounced with great iron nails, and feeling the handle he found that it moved easily and so was the way laid open before him. Therewith went Payne from the vaulted room below the roots of the tree, and saw that he had come to a level passage, in height about six feet and four in breadth, and in length as it might be, for one taper will not light an alley. With his nose for leader he began to pace along this dark allure, comforting himself with the thought that it certainly led somewhither, and praising himself for his foresight in bringing a candle with him, but ’twas not before he had gone a hundred paces that he found out what fine things this candle was able to show him. Then casting a side glance to his right he saw a painting on the wall, as fresh and gay as if it had just received the last touch, and furnished with some curious conceits. On a marble bench, overshadowed with mulberry trees, he saw an ugly old man with goggle eyes sitting, and beside him were masks of all shapes and forms, each one wrinkled into a stupendous grin; and with his hands the old fellow was kneading and twisting the mouth of one of these masks, while at his elbow lay one whose nose he had adorned with warts and knobs most hideous to behold. And beneath this picture was written in Latin *The Invention of Laughter.* A little beyond stood painted a court of ancient, black gowned men sitting at a table; with their clerks beneath them writing on great rolls of parchment; and before this court were a naked youth and a maiden, hand in hand, who seemed to plead for mercy. This was called *The Court Baron of Love.* I pass over other pictures that Sir Payne did see, called *Joyous Disport, The Triumph of Folly,* and *The Battle of the Rocks;* and stop at the likeness of a great white goose, standing by a stream and bending her neck round to her tail, for under this was a long legend, beginning *Form and Matter.* Next was a maiden of bewitching comeliness, lying amidst flowers beside a wandering brooklet, with flashes of sunlight lighting on her beautiful faery body, but vainly matching itself against the glory of her black eyes, and the roguish smile on her full red lips. Her name was set down in large characters, and she was no less than *The Muse of Gwent.* Here was a chemist's laboratory, wherein a man of savage and starved countenance and tattered vestments stirred a great furnace, for he was *Extracting Fifth Essence;* and to cut short the last picture Payne saw was entitled *The Manour Perpetual* — a sheltered wooded valley; a place of lawns, and quiet waters and tall blossoming hedges, beneath which lay men who seemed to rest at last. But these devices I have named are not the tenth part of them that he beheld on the walls of the dim passage; so that when he had gazed upon them all and the way began to mount again, he was weary and was fain to dout his light and lie down to sleep. How long he slept I know not, but when he awoke he lit again his taper, and joyfully remembering the sausage fell upon it with a will, drinking a little out of a cordial flask he had about him. This refreshment gave Payne courage for the upward journey; though to be sure he had to drain his flask before his mounting was done, for it seemed to be without end. Now he turned to right and now to left; now went round and round as in a tower, till at last to his joy he heard a voice close to him, and what is more, a voice somewhat familiar and dear; for it was Alianor's. Then with his candle he viewed the wall to search for an escape, and presently came to a wood panel with a boss of wood in the midst of it. And he listened again and heard that it was Alianor and her maid who talked; and then once more came from his lips the song *Soubz ce si amour mon coeur endormy.* In a moment his sweetheart ran forward, and as she came to the wall Sir Payne pressed the boss and half the panel sank down, and once more her arms did twine about his neck. One cannot speak of meetings of this kind, for it is not possible to describe what they are like, and to be short, if you wish to know, you must have them, and then you will understand quite perfectly. And since I hear the bells of Uske begin to chime I will tell you in brief that Payne lay hid in

Alianor's chamber till the coast was clear, and then slipt away with her maid and became a servant of the Baron of Burgavenny, for whom he struck many a weighty stroke in the wars of the Marches. But since the panel was in place again when Sir Rowland came in and found the room empty, this affair was never rightly understood at Uske, though most who passed along Porthycarne Street looked wise when they saw the great chestnut. And the moral of this story is that we may reach our goal by a crooked path through an opening in an unexpected place.

THE PORTREEVE'S SOLEMNITY

FROM ST. MADOC'S Church to Uske is a short mile in distance and the road doth follow the river, passing under a high cliff mantled with trees; the same being a sweet road and a pleasant ennobled by the prospect of the embowered town, distant greeny hills, and the neighbourhood of the clearly flowing water. No sooner had we left the narrow by-way from Landevennoc than we were in the midst of a great throng of people, tramping a-foot, riding on horses, nags, and mules, and pressing forward, as we, unto the great solemnity. Here was a fine patchwork quilt, the which did one's eyes good to look at, for in one place was a piece of satin and gold lace, in another dusky subfusc tatters: there was a parson in his priest's cloak and cassock, there an esquire glittering with gold galoon, there an Egyptian with his bien morte, there a handsome, laughing maiden walking beside her lover. Close beside us were three comely wenches, berubanded like a Maypole, and with them joked three gentlemen of Newport who tried to perplex them and make them blush: and on the other side was an ecclesiastic tall and broad, riding on a proper nag, and especially cassocked and buckled up with silver. Behind him rode his serving man with his mails, and behind the serving man a rout of gypsies, tinkers, sweetmeat sellers, and gay ladies, discoursing together after their use and making a great uproar. In front were some half-dozen mariners from Caerleon; two poor clerks in torn cassocks, expatiating rhetorically in the Latin tongue on this admirable admixture; a lawyer with a keen eye and a stooping back; and a body of minstrels, dressed in motley and fantastick guise, and carrying in their hands, horns, vyalls, and lutes. All clamoured together, some sang, some strove to dance short steps; and all pressed onward; while the sun baked us so that we should have dried up had it not been for the sight of the river and a cool breeze blowing from the eastward slope of Wentwood Chase. I turned me round to a fellow walking at my horse's tail, who bore a heavy pack, and asked him what he did at Uske, and he told me that he would sell there certain sweet cakes of his making, and that he stood for the better part of the day by the Minster gate. Then, burdened with his load of delicates, he fell behind, and another took his place, with a wallet of ballads, one of which he roared out in a rattling bass as a sample of his wares, and sang all the way. At last we came to the bridge and passed into Uske; and as we crossed the river, the bells which for a little while had kept silence, began to chime anew, and up the street called Maryport we made our way slowly amidst a still greater and more various copie of people, and from the castle battlements above us they began to shoot off guns. And as we rode up the street Phil Ambrose put his finger to his nose, and vanished away, down a narrow passage to the left hand, the which so far as I could see, appeared to lead into a garden.

Then, when we came into the square, and saw the Moot House in front of us, there rose a shout from the great congregation of the people; the doors were thrown open and the pomp began to come down the stairs. First walked two tabarders wearing surcoats of blue silk, and blowing a blast of musick on their trumpets; next, the eleven yeomen of the guard carrying pikes, thirdly the two Master Sergeants in black cassocks and square caps, then the three macemen, who bore black wands tipped with gold, and wore heavy mantles of blue cloth, with red tassels hanging from the shoulders. To these succeeded the two Chamberlains, the Recorder or Prothonotary, and the Town Clerk, with the Water Bailiffs, all decently vested and carrying the symbols of their several functions; and for a finish walked, to the right hand, the Constable of the Castle, and to the left hand the Portreeve, both being clothed most gorgeously and magnificently in satin and velvet and furs; and behind them came the bailiffs, who are the Portreeve's assessors. And at the foot of the stairs of the Moot House, the trumpeters sounded a halt and the Prothonotary began to read clearly and audibly the *Inspeximus* of King Edward IV. whereby all powers, benefits and privileges formerly enjoyed by ancient charters are confirmed and established to the Portreeve, Bailiffs, and Burgesses of this borough of Uske. And by it the burgesses of Uske are declared free and exempt of all murage, pontage, pickage, tronage, kayage, lastage, passage, portage and terrage throughout the kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland, and Gascony, and Aquitaine and all other lands within the Realm of England, both on this side the sea and beyond the seas. From the street to the left the town musique advanced to meet them, and so soon as the procession was at the foot of the steps, their melody began, and the minstrels went forth before the tabarders down the street unto the river till they reached the Water Gate. Hither we followed them, through the press, amid a din and clamour indescribable; and when we gained the water side, we found the whole pomp standing in a half-circle by the gate with a trumpeter at either end and the Portreeve in the middle; and the musick was hushed. “Now watch the river,” said Nick Leonard, “for it is time for the officer of our Sokage to appear from above the bridge, since he by a fiction is supposed to row in a boat all the way from Abergavenny, but to speak exactly, steps into a coracle a few yards beyond the bridge.” So I looked up the river and presently a small wicker boat used in these waters shot under the bridge, and in it was Phil Ambrose the Spigot Clerk of the Cwrw Dda, for this was his office if he were present. And guiding his craft skilfully across the rapids, he brought it to a stand over against the water-gate, and took out a great roll of parchment which he held in his hand. To whom the Portreeve, “Whence come you, and on what errand?” Then the clerk began “I come from the town of Burgavenny, from the Most High and Mighty Tosspot Ratabus, third of that name, from the worshipful Lords Maltworm of Wales, and from all the whole Court of Cervisage; and herewith I give you my authority and letters of credence.” Then he hands his roll up to a yeoman of the guard who gives it to the Portreeve that he may read it. This done the Portreeve asked, “What is it you would have of me?”

“I would ask you these things — In Primis: will you drive away from your borough of Uske all erroneous, blasphemous, heretical and strange doctrines, such as and especially that it is good for man to drink water rather than ale?” And the Portreeve answers: “I will do so, for a year and a day, while I hold mine office.” Spigot Clerk, “Will you promote laughter, and joyous conversation, discourage gravity and pensiveness, and temper justice with jokes?” The Portreeve answers as before. Spigot Clerk, “Will you, to the utmost of your power be an abettor and fautor of the Most High and Mighty Tosspot, the Lords Maltworm and the whole Sokage of the Cwrw Dda so far as the High Tos pot aforesaid is concerned with you and your town?” And the Portreeve again answering that he will do what is required of him, the Spigot Clerk takes off his cap, stands up in the boat and cries out in a loud voice, “then a good greeting to John, twentieth of that name, the right worshipful Portreeve of Uske. A fair voyage to him and a dry throat and wine enow for ten; may the plague consume his enemies, and the sun keep him warm. All this by and with the authority of Ratabus, High Tosspot of the Cwrw Dda. Fare ye well.” Then the Clerk ran his boat ashore some way farther down and did reverence to the Portreeve and came amongst us again, and the musick swelled forth gladly and joyously and the bells crashed all together. But now to answer them the bells of St. Madoc's Church, down the river, began to chime, and a whole host of coracles were drawn near the water gate, for the Portreeve and all his company have been used from time immemorial to sail down the river to St. Madoc's Church and there to hear a solemn service. And for the magistrate and the Constable of the Castle, and the Bailiffs a very large wicker boat is provided and another for the musique who play their water piece; but all the rest go each in a coracle apart; and they must steer warily, for the river is shallow by Uske, and there is only a narrow passage that a boat can use. But my comrades and I would not go upon the river, but watched the college getting one by one into the boats, and saw them sailing down in a long line, so far as we could make out without any mishap. It is said that once upon a time a Portreeve, magnificently inclined, endeavoured to have his coracle drawn by swans; but the birds would not go by rule and landed the magistrate in the water, if it be lawful to say so. It is, indeed, without swans, a most rare and delicious solemnity, smacking strongly of the days of old, that were so fertile in rituals, observances, processions, ceremonies, pomps, and pageantries; and should be curiously observed and held in honour, for these vestiges of antiquity are becoming scarce. But let this be enough to say concerning it; and let us begone to the glorious Salmons, who have opened their mouths very wide.

Here we asked the Host to put us in a room by ourselves, for the common rooms were replete and roaring with laughter from many throats; but he said that he would set us in a chamber where there was good company and not too much of it; and this pleased us better than privity would have done. So we go down a long passage and mount three steps and find ourselves in a low room looking on the garden of the Inn, and in it are the ecclesiastic we saw on the way and a young gentleman gallantly dressed, who was speaking when we came in, and was manifestly a stranger from the land over sea. And from his talk it appeared that he was giving the clergyman some notions of the Ecclesiastical Polity of France and of the various oddities and queer theological habits certain of the sacred personages had in that realm, and at his account our Welsh churchman was evidently much pleased; for the cassocks like to hear how their brethren abroad are faring. With this odd brace we made haste to be acquainted, and gave and received titles, localities, coat-armour, ancestry, estates, styles, dignities, and all such epithetic ware, for without this truck we could not be true commensals nor give opinions on any matter. And firstly the churchman; who told us that he was named David Phillips of Fleur-de-Lys in the shire of Cardigan, that he was a Cursal Canon in the Cathedral Church of St. David, the worship of which stall he mightily extolled, “for,” said he, “in our Chapter the King’s Majesty is but Cursal the First, and ’tis an august office to be Sacristan.” Somewhat he spoke of great princes, his ancestors, somewhat of checky, crusoly, martlets, ermines, and gringolly, somewhat of the castle of Fleur-de-Lys, and ancient vessels of silver; but most of this is impertinent and I pass to the young gallant. Who told us that he came from the Realm of France, that he was of the house of La Roche Nemours (de Rupe Nemorosa) in Brittany, and was travelling in Gwent for his curiosity, which made him go whither his fellows went not. But as we understood his English poorly and he our French no better we agreed to speak Latin together, the which we all pronounced monastically and not after the picked, newfangled fashion. And since it appeared that we were all somewhat addicted to the exhaustion of claret before other wines, I called the host and instructed him how to provide for us. “Bring hither,” quoth I, “the most convenient and decent drinking-cup you have, and pour me into it as much claret as it will carry, and serve us some kind of drawer-on.” Forthwith he brought us a silver chalice brimming with about a quart of scented wine, and set down some bottles in a corner if we were thirstier than we thought, for there is no possibility of exact calculation, and to chase a landlord to and fro for more when one journey sufficeth, misbecomes a gentleman. With this he bore a service of broiled fowl, hissing hot from the flames, and in truth it tasted in the mouth like burning coals. But the wine was well cooled in the bubbling fountain of the Salmons, and was very fragrant delicious claret, and light and easily carried in the belly and the head; so we were comfortable enough by dinner time. But when our meal was duly discharged, we called our host again, and craved him to set us a table and chairs under a shady mulberry in his garden, and this he easily granted us; so we were greatly at our ease, and sat listening to the roaring and shouting and singing of the multitude, whom no sun could keep quiet. But when the day began to cool and our wits to grow clear, we all asked the Seigneur of La Roche Nemours to devise some relation for us, since he came from beyond seas and could tell us of what we knew not. “Nay,” answered he, “but the pleasantest adventure I have in my head was produced by your own soil of Gwent, and was recounted to me by a young clerk of Chepstow, with whom I journeyed this very day.”

“Let us hear it, by all means,” quoth the Canon Cursal, “for I know this soil to be a rich and racy one teeming with good things both for mind and body. Wait but a moment while I move my chair, for the sun is gaining on me; and then do you devise.” So sitting in the shade, hearing now and again above the noise and clamour closes and intonations of strange solemn music, that seemed to come from a ruined realm of færy, we hearkened to the stranger’s tale of our own dear land.

THE TALE TOLD BY THE SEIGNEUR OF LA ROCHE NEMOURS

THE QUAINT HISTORY of a Lord of Gwent and how His Wife Desired to Smell a Rose

ROGER DE SCO. MAURO was seised of his castle of Penhow when he was about twenty-five years of age, and was thought a fortunate young knight, since the estates of the St. Maurs were just now beginning to be in a very fat and prosperous condition, and to draw some blood out of the country. This was partly owing to a little agreement of three parts between Gilbert Marshall Seigneur of Estrighoil, Sir William de Sco. Mauro, and Morgan Howell, Seigneur of Caerleon; and the event of this agreement was that this Morgan Howell, aforesaid, was gently eased and relieved of his Manor of Woundy in Gwent Level; the which for the future did appertain to the noble house of St. Maur, who do not appear to have left their wits behind in Normandy. And with the manor went many a pleasant fish-pool, and mills and quit-rents and estovers, and a good slice by way of house-bote and hay-bote out of Wentwood Chase, as the old records of the Jury will tell you. With this, and a few small easements in addition, the walls of Penhow grew warm and comfortable, and when the place came to Roger, and the Steward had given him an account of his possessions, he determined to lose no time but to enjoy himself with all speed. So he called together a goodly flock of his boon companions who were many, and now increased every day, and bade them to Penhow that they might try his cellars, test the merits of the manorial preserves, and receive joy-bote and jest-bote from their entertainment. This summons, it will be supposed, met with few nays, and before long the manor-house overflowed with gay surcoats, who ate, drank, hunted, tilted, made love, and played ball with laudable hardiness; indeed between one thing and another, they gave themselves but little time for sleeping. Among these laborious persons were Sir Bogo de Knovill, Sir Dru de Dynam, Sir Philip de Bendeville, Sir William Denford de Crick, and many another stalwart lusty man, who was rather more important a few hundred years ago than now, the which must be my excuse for not giving you a roll of them all like the old blind clerk of Scio, or the glorious Virgilius; since they doubtless took time over their catalogues and trimmed and garnished them with choice adornments so that they are not tedious but smack smoothly in the mouth. But you may conceive if you can the trampling of the horses of this company as they rode up to Penhow, the glittering of the steel, the blaze of coat armour, and the fine clatter of old French, scraps of love-songs of Provence, or merry ballads from Paris town, and every now and then a rather strong expression by way of comma. I leave the gentlemen and pass to the ladies, who come last, like the canons in a procession; for one should always keep the best for last, and these ladies were assuredly creatures of rarity and art, diamonds of clear water. I know not precisely where they all came from, but they were finely dressed and well proportioned and seemed always cheerful and ready for a joke, in fact there is little doubt that Roger's feminine guests were exceedingly nice girls, though some severe persons have chid him for keeping bad company. I do not exactly understand what this phrase means, for no company is bad for a wise man; and I think the people who talk in this way cannot have heard tell of Socrates, the king of wisdom, who no sooner was advised of the advent of Madam Theodota, a notorious strumpet, to the dearly-beloved city of Cecrops than he cried out "by the dog" and (as if he had been bitten by a mad one) posted off to this pretty piece in a tremendous hurry. And you remember how he found a painter pleasantly employed in setting her on canvas, and how these two, the beautiful witty strumpet and the old goggle-eyed flat-nosed quintessencer, talked together, for you have without doubt read the *Pollakis ethaumasa.* And the moral of this is that Socrates knew what he was about, for he was a very great extractor of fifth essence, and that all of us, who are as logs compared to him, must touch our caps and not venture to contradict a word he said. And how anybody could call the Fair Ladies of Penhow, as this gay sisterhood was termed during their reign, bad company, is beyond my conceit; for I do assure you they had the most joyous dancing eyes, — blue, brown, grey, and black, — the sweetest little lips, soft sanguine cushions whereon the bare Lord of Love held Assize sempiternal, ever issuing blithe decrees, enunciating arrests, forging endless golden chains with sharp hooks to fasten hearts together, and engaging in his daintiest workmanship of kisses, to the which wares he imparts a perpetual variety, an unfailing sweetness, joys continual and ecstasies that are never wearisome. Shall we not therefore honour and reverence the place which gives us all these nice things; and is it right to talk of "bad company" in connection with such delicious dainties? And Loyse, Isobelle, and Erminie and Rosamonde served up all this fare in perfection, and pleased the gentlemen exceedingly, for they were not like some ignorant awkward girls that we have nowadays to whom a man is obliged to teach everything, owing to the horrible deficiencies in their education. But these damsels kept the knights amused, roused them up, and prevented them from being dull, if it rained; contrived all manner of jokes, sang love-ballads, played on the lute, and were all over the house, putting their lovers through their paces. All this was fine sport for Sir Roger and his guests; but it must be confessed that it came rather expensive, since Penhow got such a name, that as soon as one knight had gone out at the gatehouse with his suite of steel-clad, bottle-nosed, and ever-droughty followers, two more came in, very hot and thirsty and ready for anything that was to be had. The ladies too could not live on air and love, poor dears, and their sweet little bodies and smooth dainty skins had to be filled with sweetmeats and choice wines; and besides these they had several small necessities without which ladies cannot get on, but which cost a good deal of money when one has to pay the shot for a dozen or more. Whence it came about that after a few months of this fine fun it became expedient that Sir Roger de Sco. Mauro should try to draw his purse strings in very tight, and send all his merry guests about their business if he did not want them to run away with his woods and meadows, his commons, estovers, house-botes and hay-botes, mills, fishpools, and everything that he had. But yet he was very loathe to do this, and had long conversation with Master Robert Pykott his steward, Father Hadrian his chaplain, and Dom. Hierome Jessaye, a man of law, who was full of expedients, and had assisted at synods like these many times before. And so it came to pass that Sir Roger was forced often to leave all the mirth, laughter, and mellow sounding of the lutes, vyalls, and hand-organs, the fantastic quips of gallantry and the beautiful theories of the wondrous clerk of the Academy, the tales of chivalry and love, and the swift ball play against the high wall at the angle where it joins the tower; to meet the three sages who were all of them a little musty, and whose talk was dull. Inside a room of the tower they sat, with chests and hanapers and coffers all around them, and before the steward and the man-of-law were great vessels of ink, and long vicious-looking goose-quills that made ugly marks against everything and wrote down unpleasant items. And the business was to inspect, peer into, tote up, balance, and certify, charters, copyhold-rolls, receipts, grants, manor-lists; and to set these against sundry bills of debts that filled a capacious chest and seemed likely to lift the lid off their receptacle, to say nothing of lifting the lead off Penhow, the cattle off the meadows, and the fish out of the pool, if some order were not taken with them. Against these hideous bills the manor-rolls showed very poorly, though they were famously written and engrossed on great skins of parchment, and as Master Hierome Jessaye declared, had been executed by an Italian clerk as beautifully and artifically as any he had ever seen. But as the man-of-law was pleased also to remark fair flourishes fill not full flagons, nor gold frets an abounding chest, and sometimes ’tis better to have a single live sheep than a dozen sheepskins; and the next time Master Hierome came to Penhow after making these facetious observations, he brought a little horn of red ink with him with which he wrote down terrible things that seemed to promise abundance of dry bread and as much cold water as it liked you for Penhow; and Roger began to recollect that there was no well in the castle and all the water had to be fetched in a bouget from the fountain down below, for hitherto he had looked upon his cellar and his ale-tubs as the only fountains with which he was concerned. Meanwhile Master Pykott was hard at work with a lot of little sticks notched all over with lines and figures, but the tallies had no more comfort in them than the rolls since the bills of debt were too strong for anything.

In the midst of all this ink, parchment, and law-latin, Roger grew very sad, for he was not a good clerk, and did not like to see how fast Master Hierome’s enormous quill leapt and flickered over the parchment, as if it were a bird of ravine; and it seemed to him that a man who wrote so quickly could not be good for any respectable family, in the which conjecture he may not have been far from the truth. And though the chaplain tried to ease his heart with comfortable and pious allusions to a fiery furnace, he got to feel quite down in the mouth, especially when a long bright ray of sunlight shot through the lattice and lighted on the municipal and forensic nose of Master Hierome Jessaye, showing a few flaws and patches of faulty colour on this grand member, for one cannot expect to be good all round, and the carnations of the man-at-law were, it must be confessed, miserably blotched. Then Sir Roger would fall to making comparisons (impertinent as

I conceive) between this nose and other noses he knew something about, especially the nose of dark eyed Maud, with whom he was said to be on very friendly terms. And by some Cervical Capitulary or Notional Law, the nature of which you will find fully explained in Aristotle, Alexander Aphrodisiensis, Plotinus and other learned clerks, nose led him to eyes, eyes to cheeks, cheeks to lips, and so on, and so on; till he was deep in the consideration of privileges, quit-rents, and tolls entirely different from those noted in his muniments. How this came about I cannot exactly tell you, nor am I entirely certain as to whether all the doctors I have mentioned agree in their definitions and explanations; I thought the matter out some years ago but I confess that at present my head is slightly muddled on the subject. But I have reason to think that this Law of the Brain is made expressly on behalf of hapless lovers, so that whether they see a squirrel eating nuts on a bough, a girl carrying clothes from the wash, or a man with a brown doublet, it is all one to them and in about a minute and a half they are muttering to themselves "O my darling, my love, my dear, dear sweetheart, let me kiss thee, let me fondle thee, let me embrace thee but once again," or some nonsense of this description. And then they begin to recollect and run over everything, and their hearts seem to melt away and their throats get husky. So merely a sunbeam on a lawyer's nose sent Sir Roger off to a land of pretty fancies, and while he was thus a-maze, the sound of a rich mellow voice mounted up and came in like the ray of sunlight through the lattice, and with it tender lute-notes that tickled the heart, and bred love in excess. And this is what Sir Roger heard above the scraping and squeaking of Master Hierome's quill, in the muniment room of the tower of Penhow:

All through the nightertale I longed for thee,
In loneliness, and hearkened for the door
To open, or a footstep on the floor.

O lief sweetheart, I pray thee pity me,
I hunger for thy kisses evermore;
All through the nightertale I longed for thee.

Joyesse is turned to wo, and misery
Is my solace, certes, my heart is sore,
Yet these poor lips a smile at morning bore,
Though all the nightertale I longed for thee.

And then a slowly dying close on the lute, that seemed to tremble and thrill with love like the "yes" that comes at last, and to beat against the lattice like a bird against the bars of its cage. And seeing that Madam Maud was the chorister, you will not wonder that Sir Roger's head got between his hands, since this pretty girl was expensive in her habits and had cost him a lot of money, and he was so unfortunate as to be dreadfully fond of her; indeed her reproachful song was far from being deserved by her lover. But he knew that she was too great a luxury for a poor man, and it troubled him exceedingly to think with what inferior wares he would be forced to put up for the future. But his meditations were cut short by Master Hierome giving his final judgment that all these frolics must come to an end without delay, and that Sir Roger de Sco. Mauro would have to be content for a good many years to come with a rather retired and secluded manner of living. And the steward and the chaplain were obliged to confirm this decree, because they saw there was nothing else to be done; so the man-of-law took a new pen and began to make his arrangements for the payment of that monstrous pile of debts, and Roger had to look on. And in a week's time all the pleasant company had gone from Penhow to search for the four winds, and Sir Roger was left to himself and had plenty of time to consider affairs in general, and his lack of everything that was pleasant and desirable, in particular; and it was at this cheerful season that a white hair or two began to hang about his ears, and his smooth young forehead began to show faint lines here and there. And finding his lonely life quite intolerable after the gay racket of the past, he determined to get out his best suit of armour, grind a keener edge to his sword, sharpen his lance-head to as fine a point as a lady's little finger-tip, and see if he could not pick up a living by breaking heads and bounteous bloodletting. The which was, it must be agreed, a resolution worthy of a brave man, the descendant of an ancient house, and moreover a very salutary one, for anybody who understands mankind, knows that the blood of most people is far too hot and superabundant, hence he who makes it his business in one way or another to cool our passions and make us more reasonable and less violent, is evidently a great benefactor and philanthropist. But misfortune was already beginning to improve Sir Roger, and it made him come to this laudable determination of leaving his castle in Gwent Level, and going over sea to ameliorate the condition of mankind and his own purse at the same time. And before he had been seised of Penhow for a year and a day he was on shipboard, having with him as esquire a young fellow from his Manor of Woundy, whom he had noticed to be sharp witted and handy in many ways, and not addicted to asking questions when his lord told him to do anything. This esquire's name was Gilbert Tapp, and though young, he was grim and stern-set of feature, and slow to take in a joke; for this was the nature he had received from his father and mother, who were by no means pleasant people. Thus the Knight and Esquire made their way by land and sea to Germany, and some say they remained there for more than twenty years in the service of divers great nobles, now fighting for one and now for another, since so long as the pay was good and there was plenty of employment neither Sir Roger nor Gilbert cared a rap for whom they warrayed. Some say that they went to the peninsula of Italy as well, and assisted to conclude the various disagreements between the cities, duchies, principalities and kingdoms by vigorous applications of the Gwentian sword, spear, and battleaxe; and that they were at the stricken field of La Grandella and in many other affairs of the same kind in connection with those troublesome two Sicilies. It is likewise recorded by one or two annalists that Sir Roger served Baldwin, second of that name, Emperor of Constantinople, and had to get out of the way very quickly on the night of July the twenty-fifth, when Alexius Strategopoulos climbed over the wall and cleared out the Latins. But all agree that the Knight of Penhow carried the golden wings over battlements and breaches, through blood and fire and steel-hedges, most knightly and gloriously; and Gilbert Tapp followed close at his heels so that when Sir Roger poked a man in the ribs with his spear, the Esquire hit him hard over the head with his sword, and relieved him of any troubles that he might be destined to have in this mortal life. In this fashion they made themselves useful to their employers and got together many gold pieces, but the work was very hard and grew in time to be wearisome. For there are only a certain number of ways in which a man may be killed, and when you have gone through all these and begun again at the beginning, and are still drudging at the same mill, you begin to long for something fresh and cannot run your enemy through the breast or cleave him to the spine with any true art or relish for the business. Besides this constant warfare is like old Time and leaves certain indelible memorials in the way of scars, seams, holes, hacks, unhealed wounds, and tender places, for people will not be killed if they can help it and when hard pressed are apt to cut out their epitaphs on a hostile surface of flesh. And by the time Sir Roger had acquired a broad blue seam from his forehead to his jawbone, another across his left cheek, had lost one ear, and had gained a nasty wound in the side (Gilbert being rather worse off, for he was more obstinate) he began to consider that he had about enough of these memorial inscriptions written on him and that it would be a good thing to leave fighting to younger men for the future and rest his bones again in Gwent. And he felt that he might do this very comfortably, for besides a good round sum in money, he had some five or six chests full of brooches, rings, chains, and bracelets fashioned of the precious metals and for the most part of gold, together with a few emeralds, sapphires, rubies, diamonds and such like gauds, which he had picked up in the course of his busy life, for he was fond of curiosities of this kind and would say jokingly that no collector had such opportunities as a free-lance.

I believe indeed that Sir Roger had enjoyed his little pleasures as well as worked hard during this stormy period of war and battle; and it seems credible that he had forgotten Madam Maud a good many years ago having in his time seen a great variety of ladies, grave and gay, hot and cold, moist and dry, black, brown, and tawny-yellow. Altogether he felt that it was high time to take things more quietly and to hang up the red banner with the golden wings in the hall at Penhow. And when he got home and began to examine into his accounts he found that all the old debts were paid, excepted only an item due to Master Hierome Jessaye, who had kept the manors warm, or as some said, had been kept warm by them. And since from an accurate observation and adding up it appeared that the man-at-law had already made a tolerable swarf-penny out of his rewardship, Sir Roger refused in a very decided kind of voice to pay him another farthing; and as his moustachios began to bristle like a hog’s back and the scars of him to turn a fiery purple, Master Hierome was generous and forgave him his debt. This is what it is to deal with an upright honest lawyer; but some of them rob and pill their clients without mercy. And from that time Sir Roger led a very happy and respectable life at Penhow, amusing himself with keeping the people round about in order, looking after his privileges, and building a bit to the castle here and there, and maintaining open house and a hospitable table for all comers, but especially folk from over sea, for he liked to talk over old times and to hear how things were going on in the castles he had burnt, the towns he had stormed, and the families whose numbers he had reduced. To Gilbert Tapp he had given the captainship over the garrison, for it was necessary to be on the safe side and not to tempt one's neighbours to ransack one's money chest; a very sinful habit but a common one in those days and accompanied by such annotations as throat-cutting and general destruction and deviltry, so that the gloss was worse than the text. On this account a strong body of men-at-arms was maintained at Penhow, and the old battered and scored esquire took good care that they were well up to the mark and perfect in their exercises. In this sort Sir Roger lived till he was getting on in life and had seen the sun set on his grand climacteric; but as he was riding one day through the village it chanced that he met an old woman trotting along as fast as her legs would carry her. "Whither go you so fast, mother?" said Sir Roger. "If it please you to the wife of John-ap-Griffith," answered she. "And what would you do with her?" asked the Knight, for he felt curious, he knew not why. "Why I would be with her in her labour and ease her of her first child," answered the old woman, and this reply set Sir Roger a-thinking, though as I have said he was no great clerk. But it seemed very plain to him that if he waited much longer before begetting a lawful heir of his body the business was likely to fall through and the castle and manors would pass to his cousin, whose conversation he did not much relish. Wherefore he determined to set this matter in train as soon as might be, and to cast his eyes round the castles of Gwent for a pretty modest maiden to be his wife and to bear him (if God willed) a son, who should succeed him. On this behalf he consulted Gilbert, but not to any great purpose, forasmuch as the esquire was not addicted to the company of ladies, and even in his youth had had as little to do with them as he was able, and "I suppose we can't very well do without them" was the best word he had ever said of women-folk. But Sir Roger looked about him and took stock of all the noble marriageable maidens in Gwent, and found out as far as he could their virtues and defects, for he was determined that his wife should be somewhere near perfection (that is so near as a woman can be expected to attain) and it would have grieved him to have thrown himself and all his experience away on a girl that was at all flighty or misdemeanant in her habits. And as he had still that old weakness of his for black eyes and a well moulded breast, he had a good deal of trouble, for beauty and sense are not often met with in the same skin. But at last, when he was beginning to grow desperate, he saw one day at the Castle of Estrighoil a pair of eyes that pierced to his heart in the old delicious way, and on enquiry he found that the young lady to whom they belonged was called Eva de St. Pol and was of French parentage but had been an orphan for many years. And hearing from all hands sunset accounts of her, her beauty and her virtues, and being himself altogether in love with her innocent beseeching face, exquisite curves, and gracious ways, he in due form craved her hand of the Lord of Estrighoil who was her guardian and had authority over her. And as Sir Roger was known to have lined his coat pretty warmly with gold besants and was besides a very gentle and perfect knight who had maintained the honour of the Marches full valorously in the lands beyond sea, my lord and lady of Estrighoil considered him a good match for Eva who was poor and hardly had a carucate of land that she could call her own. As for the maid she made no difficulty over the business (not that it would have gone for much if she had) since she was sharp enough to find out that the old knight was deeply dyed with love for her, and hence Madam Eva foresaw that she would get her own way with him and rule joyously at Penhow. Of course she had one or two scruples over her betrothal, and could not help thinking rather sadly of the pretty speeches a young gentleman named Rupert de Launay had whispered in her ear; nay of certain occasions when he had misjudged his distance and put his mouth rather lower down; but perhaps Rupert knew something about the inwards of the ear and wished to communicate his intelligence by way of those pipes at the back of the gullet. But all these little talks had taken place the summer before, after evensong, in the alleys of the Rose Garden, and Rupert was far away, in strange countries; so it was no good speculating about him or his nice manners. Therefore in due course of time Eva de St. Pol was wed to Roger de St. Maur by my lord of Llandaff, who was observed to glance at the bridegroom rather doubtfully while he sang certain prayers as if he thought he was wasting his breath.

Nevertheless the old and the young were securely tied together and Eva pledged her troth to Sir Roger to be honour and buxom in bed and at board, and there was feasting and high holiday in the hall of Estrighoil. So the knight took home his wife, who soon began to make the castle more lively than it had ever been since Madam Maud ruled the roast, for a girl of seventeen years will chase dullness out of most places with trills of laughter and song, bright eyes, gay gowns, and all those pleasant varieties, modes, and manners which do entrance us ever. And with the young wife comes a joyous procession of keen pages and artful chambermaids, who are versed in all sorts of tricks and waggeries, and run up and down the stairs and galleries, hide in the big aumbries, and are always inventing some fresh mystery, though the fable is always much the same. Well-nigh the first thing that Eva did was to ransack her husband's jewell caskets, trying on all the necklaces and brooches, and fitting her little white fingers with the finest rings she could discover, while her good man looked on, and at last pulled her on his knee and stroked her beautiful brown hair and kissed her, for he loved her better every day. And nine months after the wedding Eva gave her lord a sturdy son, who would doubtless have been like his father if he had happened to be seventy years old instead of an hour, and to have a bristling white moustache and shaggy eyebrows. It will be supposed that Sir Roger loved his wife none the worse after all his hopes were thus fulfilled, nevertheless his love was henceforth Platonicall; for he was not so strong as when he came to his estates, and had knocked about a good deal in his time. But though he was quite satisfied with one heir, Eva thought very differently on the matter, as was to be expected of a girl of eighteen, and kept exhorting her husband to the intent that it was advisable to provide Penhow with another branch, in case the first were by some misadventure to fail. And finding her admonitions, soft speeches, kisses, caresses and blandishments had no effect, only making Sir Roger look sheepish and ashamed of himself, she rang this peal in his ears all day and night, and endeavoured by every method to bring him to a sense of his duties towards her. But it was to no purpose, since the old knight could kiss her and stroke her and fondle her but nothing more, though he made himself rather ill by drinking the vile concoctions flavoured and spiced by a doctor of medicine, who had won a high repute by his treatment of these cases. It is to be feared however (by the leave of the Fratres Fraternitatis R. C.) that no beverages, though they be sopho-spagirically concocted can make a young man out of an old one; certainly they did Sir Roger more harm than good and made him say ill-natured things of the physician and smash his vials. Hence poor Eva became very melancholy for want of love, and hushed her joyous singing and laughter, and spoke seldom and in a plaintive voice, to the distress of her husband, who was happy in all else and especially in his son who grew every day to be a fine specimen of the stout old stock of St. Maur. And the pages looked at Eva slyly, as if they knew what ailed her, and with her women she often wept over her fate, as they worked at the tapestry; but it seemed as if there was no help for it, since Sir Roger was not likely to grow more vigorous as he got older. It is not to be wondered at then that Eva became fantastic in her habits, and thought strange sick thoughts within herself; on Monday she would be racing all over the house and making everybody stare at her frolics, and on Tuesday she sat in the same place from Prime to Evensong, spoke not a word, and ate nothing. On Wednesday she would hardly leave the Lady Chapel of the church, but on Thursday her romping mood returned again; so that in one way or another she did her best to torment her husband and her companions out of their lives, for no one ever knew what would happen next. But one day it fell out that as Sir Roger and his lady sat at meat, a stranger came into the hall, for the knight still continued to welcome travellers and to listen to their tales and adventures. This man was clothed in a habit of brown and yellow with long hanging sleeves and there was a gold bracelet of curious workmanship on the wrist of his right arm; his face was quaint and his eyes most keen and piercing. And while he spoke all kept silence and held the morsel they were to eat in their fingers, waiting for his words; because he told them of wonders in a deep sweet voice that seemed to come from far away; and none had ever heard stories like these told of the man in brown and yellow. For all his talk was of the High Levant, and the Isles of India, and the great marvels and miracles that are done in those parts, and the curious arts that are understood there, such as necromancy, geomancy, pyromancy and the like, and how there are islands and cities in the which dwell no living man, but multitudes of spirits and ghostly people, who now and again come among men and take mortal women to wife. And while he recounted these strange histories his face never changed a whit, but his voice rose and fell and thrilled like the organs when they are played skilfully, and it sank deep into the hearts of all who were at the board. But Eva was more enchanted than the rest by the odd deviser, and would have him come to her bower after dinner, that she might still listen to him, for his voice stirred up old memories in her heart and made her think of the alleys of Estrighoil Castle and likewise of Rupert de Launay, though for the life of her she could not discover why it was so. And being seated on a stool, the stranger began his incantations anew, and talked more and more wildly and fantastically, till Eva and her women thought the walls were turning round and the floor heaving, and took hold of each others hands and squeezed them hard as though they had been a bevy of lovers. And this is how the brown and yellow man brought his histories to a close. “Now,” said he, “’tis almost time for me to be gone since I must sup to-night with the Lord of the Castle of Rohalgo; but one more relation I will devise for you. Know that in the realm of the Great Chan there is an exceeding vast desert, to cross the which you shall journey five years, if you have good camels and skilled guides who lead you by the shortest way. But ’tis more like that you take ten years, and few care to travel through this wilderness, preferring to journey along the border of it, by a track where there is victual and provender for them and their beasts. And some say that there are no wells nor fountains, nor trees, nor any green thing nor living creatures throughout the whole length and breadth of this desert; but this is not the truth, for I talked with a wise man of Cathay who used geomancy, and he showed me the nature of the place, and gave me such reasons that I perceived he was not lying nor deceiving me. Know then that toward the midst of the wilderness there is a great circle of sand that never is still, but heaves up and down in waves and breakers like the waves of Ocean, and this compass of sandy sea is about ten miles in breadth, so that none can pass through it save by a miracle and art magick. For so quick is it that it sucks in and draws down whatever is cast into it and in a moment of time, since it is full of whirlpools. But if any man could reach the other side, he would see a country as fair and fruitful as any in the world, with meadows, woods, running brooks, orchards all most green and pleasant to the sight. And on the hills are castles, fairer and stronger than any in Christendom, with towers and pinnacles that cannot be conceived, insomuch as the images adorning them are ten times the height of a man, and from the ground seem to be puppets; and the sound of the bells chiming in the high belfries is heard of still evenings in Ermony and India from a distance of many thousand leagues. And they who live in that country are men descended from the giants that in old time dwelt upon the earth, and they have many arts and mysteries of which we can understand nothing, and to strive after this secret knowledge is great sin in common men. But one marvel they have that they sometimes impart to us; for they know of our affairs and have intelligence of things which are done by us in privity, and sometimes will grant boons to them that are deserving of the same. Understand then that there grows in this land a manner of tree, with a blossom somewhat like a rose, for it is red in colour, but in each flower there are twelve leaves, and it is fairer to see than any rose, because the hue of it is not fixed nor always the same, but seems like fire all glowing and palpitating, so that it is a very glorious sight. And whosoever smells the scent of one of these flowers forgets all the bitter memories and sorrows of his past life, grieveth no more for present woe, nor is able to be touched by any ill fortune that may come; since from the eyes of him that smelleth the thick veil falleth away, and he beholdeth the wondrous beauty of the things which verily are; and his ears are opened and the everlasting musick soundeth in them, so that in a moment of time his old life becomes like a dream a man dreamt when he was a boy, and remembers faintly all his days. And the sweet imaginations which come now and again into the minds of all of us, dimly and staying but an instant, by the scent of the rose blossom gloriously like unto it, and abide for evermore; and in the brain of him that has smelt this bloom of faery an old rhyme still runs:

We *have a quiet place wherein to dwell.*
A quiet place wherein to hear the swell
Break with a hollow roar upon the land
And rattle of the pebbles on the strand
And rain come pattering on the closed door
But we shall rest for evermore.

And, as he finished the rhyme, the stranger rose upon his feet and looked Eva de St. Maur through and through for a moment, then he did reverence and went forth, and they never saw his face again; though some pretended to see the brown and yellow robe moving swiftly along the passages of the Castle of hot summer nights, for many a year after; but these clever personages are suspected to have had the sun still in their eyes or to have seen double. But when the stranger had left the bower Eva and her ladies all sat quiet still and close together, for their hearts were beating swiftly and their breasts heaving violently, and their breath came quick and short; while the blood ran a furious course through their veins even as the knights make their onset of battle. And it is well known that all these symptoms are bad ones, prognostic of mischief, especially if ladies are thus affected, since they are a little apt to let their imagination get the better of them, and to kick poor old Master Logick in his tattered gown and rusty cassock out of doors. And who comes in when Genus and Species go out? Why the most puissant prince and paramount Lord Phantasy, all gallantly bedecked in gold and green, bringing with him a host of mad whimsies, who are his great officers of state; and his Lord

Marshall is none but Love. And to be plain these giddy girls made wild work that night, and for some nights after, and stored up trouble for themselves which made them wish they had never heard the stranger's voice, for they all agreed that it was this, rather than the matter of his stories, which turned their heads and made them forgetful when they ought to have remembered. But in Eva's brain the relation of the Rose took root, and grew day by day, till she forgot or seemed to forget her old trouble in this new one, for now her one desire was to smell the wondrous blossom, and she longed for the scent continually and was always saying to herself "Oh, if I could but smell the flower!" Sir Roger, who as I have shown, had seen a good deal of the world in his time, had heard many strange stories, and talked with many strange people, endeavoured to laugh this notion out of his wife's head; for as he told her he had lived long enough to find out that all soils produced an abundant crop of lies, but especially the soil of the Levant, where fictions attained to a monstrous height and luxuriance. As for the man in brown and yellow he cursed him and denounced him for the most malicious and damnable liar that this world had ever generated, and swore by *Corpus Domini,* St. Michael the Archangel, the candid host of martyrs, and all the whole company of saints that if he ever came within the lordship again, he should go hot-foot to his father, the devil, and tell his tales to the fiends of hell. This was, it must be confessed, rather violent language, but Sir Roger was in fact a little angry with the man for turning Penhow upside down, making the girls giddier than they were before, and crazing Eva by his nonsensical tales which nobody in his wits credited, though the knight confessed that they were amusing enough to listen to. And if the traveller had returned it is probable that Gilbert Tapp would have treated him roughly and played him some scurvy tricks; but he knew better, and those who saw his vestment were never able to catch him up for he walked too fast. Meanwhile Eva still pined after the rose, thinking of it during the day, and dreaming hot dreams of it at night, and still, sleeping or waking her words were "Oh, if I could but smell the flower."

But who do you think was seen at Penhow one fine morning in May, when the shade began to be more pleasant than the sun, and the young beech-leaves shone like silver? Why none but the old lover Rupert de Launay, who had returned from over sea no richer than when he left Estrighoil, for he had not Sir Roger's wit, but was stuffed with all sorts of rubbish about glory and gentle deeds, and a fair fame; so you may be sure he found that most people took him at his word, and let him fight for these fine entities and abstractions without troubling such a mirror of chivalry with more salt than would keep his lance in rest and his arm strong. By some means he tickled Sir Roger in the right spot and obtained free quarters and a hearty welcome at Penhow, where he took the pages under his care and taught them the science of arms, and all manner of knightly courtesies, philosophies, and refinements, such as they would never have learned from Gilbert, who looked very grim when he heard the things that began to be spoken of at dinner and in the evening, for these niceties did not enter into his system of chivalry, which dealt less with theory than practice. As for Sir Roger he leant back in his high elbow-chair and laughed at all the high-flown nonsense and romantic methods with which Rupert seasoned his discourse; and as he laughed he asked himself "where should I have been now, if I had warrayed for the love of glory?" and then he shook his head and looked wise and winked at Gilbert Tapp. But Eva paid little or no heed to Rupert or his talk, and tho' she would speak to him kindly enough it was plain that she had quite forgotten the sweet susurrations of the garden of Estrighoil, or if she remembered them it was with no particular desire to renew an ancient amity. And Rupert on his side was either with the sprouting chivalry, or hunting in Wentwood Chase, or talking to the old knight, to whom he did great reverence, as to a right worshipful and valiant warrior (and indeed Sir Roger had been all this in his day) and listened to his tales of fights, sieges, and stormings of strong places. And in appearance Rupert de Launay was as proper and personable a man as the chivalry of Christendom could show, standing six feet high, and well proportioned in his limbs, and being somewhat thin of face, though very handsome with a clear olive skin and deep blue eyes. And when he wore the surcoat given to him by the Emperor, which had his bearings exquisitely worked thereon — or, three ravens sable party per pale a palise gules and or — he looked a very fine specimen of a knight and seemed to have stepped out of the great book of romances from which he was used to read aloud on wet days and at candle-time. Hence you will not wonder that the girls grew soft hearted over this fine gentleman, for they love strength, valour, and gallant manhood and also high-flown romantic fantasy; so that when these qualities cohere in the same substance they are by nature strongly drawn and attracted to it. But Rupert de Launay seems not to have troubled himself greatly to encourage their fancies; for he was flying at more noble game, and studying the ground before he sat down and besieged the place in form. And it appears that he took the trouble to make himself thoroughly acquainted with the Chronicles of Penhow, so far as they related to my lady Eva, thus the keen pages told him all about her melancholy because she might not have another child, and also of the visit of the man in brown and yellow and of her longing to smell the wonderful twelve-petaled rose that grew in the great wilderness. And when Rupert had found out these facts, and pondered them over in his mind, it is likely that he put them together and found links where nobody else had seen any, for he is acknowledged to have been very artful in the conduct of this affair, and to have shown great strategy and opiniastrety therein. For you must understand that all the while he was oversea he had cherished and cockered up his love for Eva St. Pol, keeping her portraiture before him when the trumpets sounded, and the steel began to ring; never telling his nearest friend a word about her, but burning his lamp of love in secrecy till the flame of it made the heart of him white hot and scorched his brain. And when at last he returned to Gwent and found his mistress the wife of old Sir Roger, he would doubtless have done well to look out for another sweetheart, but he rather added oil to the flame and determined to win her by one means or another. And after he had been about three months at Penhow, he found himself walking in the garden in the cool of evening, knowing, it may be, that Eva often came there after evensong alone, to gaze at the sun sinking slowly into the deep glades of Wentwood, and to fancy it the likeness of the rose of Cathay, as the red lights began to burn and glow. And in due time, after Rupert had cast many a glance at the opening in the box hedges, his lady came, clothed in a dress of creamy white, the which fitted the curves of her body to admiration, and did not make the lover any cooler or less ardent. And it may be noted that these two seemed intended for one another, for both had skins of clear olive, and a feature beautifully cut out; and in Eva's eyes there was a great yearning and desire for she knew not exactly what, and also in Rupert's though he understood quite plainly what he wanted. And when she saw Rupert, she seemed to wonder a little, for the garden was no haunt of his; but merely gave him good evening as he bent before her, and then they stood a long time side by side watching the sunset. And when the lord of day had descended some while into his western habitations, a curving line of dappled cloud that rose like a serpent from above old Kemeys tower, and mounted afar into the vault of heaven, began to change from pale yellow to deep gold; from gold to red, and at last became most bloody and fiery gules, which signifieth the love of our neighbour. And for a moment Rupert gave a side glance at Eva's face and saw tears in those beautiful yearning eyes, then he broke silence saying "And yet that streaming sanguine cloud is pale beside the ardour of the petals of the Rose." Instantly his lady turned to him, full eagerly and impatiently, and said "What do you know of the Rose, who can gain a blossom for me, is it indeed so precious and beautiful?"

"No man can tell its excellence," answered he, "its glory goes beyond all mortal wit, and they who talk of pleasure, not having smelt its fragrance, do but babble out of square, and speak of that they know not." And she "Ah, who will gain it for me, since my husband says that it is a lie and a deceit." And he answered "I, Rupert de Launay, have crossed the whirl of sand and the terrible billows of the quaking wilderness; and for you and you alone, I gathered a blossom from the fairest tree of all, that grows in the pleasaunce of the Cloud Castle of Rohalgo. Hark do you not hear the chiming of a hundred bells as from a far distance; for this is a sign from the Lords of the Land?" And indeed Eva heard bells enow deeply ringing, but 'twas within her brain they rung, for she was filled with rapturous joy. And she said "Give me the flower O thou true loyal knight, that I may satisfy my longing." But Rupert answered "That will I, but O my darling, my delight, my treasure, let me kiss thy lips and take thee to my arms, let me slake the thirst with which I am consumed; for am I not thy lief sweetheart who has never ceased to long for thee!" And without waiting for an answer he cast his arms about her neck and drew all her body and her face close to him, and kissed her lips as though he would never have done. And Eva said not a word but let him squeeze her and kiss her to his heart's content since she thought it a small price to pay for the thing he had promised her; and beside she was a woman who, in fact, had no husband so that this love dalliance was by no means disagreeable. And before very long she answered his lips with hers, after the manner prescribed in the Use of Paffo, and practised by all lovers, and threw one white arm around Rupert's neck, so that altogether there was not much room left between them. And while they still kissed and clung to one another; there came a man stealthily and secretly behind the high hedge of the garden, moving like a cat before it springs, and bending down and listening for the sound of his own breath. This was none other than the old esquire Gilbert Tapp, who had seen Rupert go into the garden, and had watched him there from the tower; hence he had perceived how the knight talked with Eva; but when it came to kissing, he felt that he had his sword and ran down the tower stair, for it seemed to Gilbert that this fine couple were getting on rather friendly terms. Then he went softly and quickly behind the hedge, intending to creep behind Rupert and to kill him as he stood, the which he could have done very easily and not have hurt Eva, being an exceedingly cunning and dexterous swordsman. And it seems probable that he would have accomplished his desire; but just as Rupert began to grow more ardent and his hands to wander indiscreetly, Gilbert entangled his foot in a bough that stretched across the path, and fell headlong to the ground with a hideous clatter of steel and a dreadful storm of oaths, for this mischance vexed him. At this Eva cried out "O leave me, begone, there's no time to spare, in five minutes the guard will be out, and we surrounded, make haste, speed you, make haste, for your life." And Rupert answered speaking swiftly as well he might: "Farewell; but when you hear them singing *It is ordained by Love's decree,* look for me." So saying he leapt away, and vanished into the woods, while Gilbert swore hard, since when he got to his feet, he was dizzy and staggered from side to side, as if he were half seas over. Meanwhile Eva ran by another way to her bower, and sat down in no little fear as to what her husband might do or say when he came to hear Gilbert's story. The which, you may be sure, was recounted presently, with due emphasis and perspicuity, to the great astonishment of Sir Roger, who had never thought to be troubled with an adventure of this kind; and passed his hand across his forehead as if he expected to find certain protuberances already sprouting out therefrom. Gilbert was for sending out a party to raise hutesium et clamorem, to scour the woods, ransack the barns, poke spears into the mows of hay, and explore the ditches: "'tis ten to one," said he, "we should catch the young devil curled up in some cranny, and thus take away the risk of any mistakes in the future." But Sir Roger answered "No, no, he's far away by this, you may be sure, and I expect will put Severn Sea betwixt him and Penhow before morning; and I suppose we shall hear his tales of chivalry no more. Let him go then, for after all there was no great harm done, and you know Gilbert, young blood is warm." Then Sir Roger dismissed his captain, and sent for Eva, to whom he discoursed at some length on her folly and misdemeanour, promised her faithfully to cut Rupert de Launay into little pieces if he should catch him, and sent her away, to all appearance penitent, but in fact exultant, since Eva was now very artful. How was this? Why, because she was in love and had all the chambers of her mind illuminated by a clear dazzling light that showed her everything more plainly than the tapers show the waxen images on a king's hearse; and as she went she laughed to herself and sang *It is ordained by Love's decree* but very softly. But you must observe that she flattered herself all the while that it was the Rose she longed for and not her lover's lips; though she confessed that Rupert's system of kissing was vastly superior to any methods her husband practised. So from this sweet yet dreadful night Eva walked about the castle delicately, living in a beautiful dream world full of rosy clouds and fancies, and languorous delights which made her blush when she was alone. But you may be sure that as she walked, stood, sat, or lay down, in hall or bower, in her garden or on her bed, she kept all her ears wide open for the signal, knowing not from what quarter it should come. And her husband on his part forbade her to go beyond the walls of the castle, and set a watch upon her, whilst Gilbert and his men-at-arms were continually vigilant, and let not so much as an old woman pass the gate unquestioned. And Eva smiled to see their care, for she knew that Rupert loved her, and that no portcullis can keep out love, who always manages to slip through the holes and to pass the guard on his blind side, for the little god is very crafty. And one evening about six o'clock as Eva paced beside the box hedges in her clinging dress, looking very beautiful in the mellow light of evening, a boy's voice suddenly began to sing *It is ordained by Love's decree* and looking upward she saw one of the pages walking on the gallery of the tower, and trilling out his melody carelessly and gaily enough as if he knew of nothing better to do. Quickly she turned away and leant against a plum tree, for the fierce blood surged up over her breasts and neck and face, and she trembled exceedingly, not knowing what might happen next, or whether Rupert might not be within a stone's throw of her. But looking all around she saw no one, and the page's song had come to an end, and he was leaning against the beams of the gallery with his chin on his hands. And soon after the twilight came on, and Eva walked unsteadily to her bedchamber and made her women undress her and then leave her, save one girl whom she trusted and who slept in the same room on a smaller bed. But Sir Roger slept not with her and had not done so for many years. This wench Eva cautioned, so soon as they were alone, and bade her sleep her soundest and on no account to see or hear anything till dawn, speaking half in jest and half in earnest; and the girl laughed merrily and promised to be as deaf and blind as the bed-posts, for she scented a mystery, and relished having some sort of a part to play therein, though it were a mute one. And Eva lay with her eyes wide open, listening for every sound, and thinking every moment that the door was moving; but it was midnight before her wish was fulfilled. And I believe she had at last fallen asleep, and was aroused in the sweetest manner that can possibly be conceived, namely by the warmth of a pair of eager lips pressing on her own, and the first words she heard were pleasant words enough though trite being "my darling." And here I think we had better leave Eva and her gallant who had to make the best excuses he was able for not bringing the Rose with him, the which I doubt not, he did to admiration. But I deem it worth while to tell you how he contrived to get inside Penhow, guarded as it was by men trained in war, for the manner of it was very curious and artful. You must know then that Rupert, in those days when he was elaborating his plans and marking out a course of amorous adventure, had foreseen that he was more likely than not to be surprised in the midst of his first onset, and like a wise general had heedfully provided for this event. For so gallant and brave a knight was he that the risk and hazard spurred him on and strengthened his resolve; and well he knew how swiftly his sword leapt from the scabbard, and how surely it cut through steel and flesh and bone, for he had made this blade to drink the life-blood of mighty warriors. Therefore he was all the more resolved to bring the affair to a conclusion, and took order wisely so as to be prepared for the event. For he practised with a page whom he favoured above his fellows, and instructed him that if he, Rupert, went suddenly from Penhow, this page was to coin an excuse and the third morning after come to the tallest oak tree by Kemeys Tower, and there wait for him. Also Rupert had won over by fair words and gold pieces the two men in the castle who commonly fetched water from the well below, and they had promised him to do his pleasure in the fashion he showed to them. And when Rupert was forced suddenly to flee away, right as Sir Roger said, he passed over Severn Sea; but returned in time to meet his factor by Kemeys, and then and there taught him how he was to sing the song in Eva's hearing, and likewise charged him to warn the two watermen, that they should delay their office as late as they were able, and drive all folk away from the well. Thus these fellows waited till it was quite dark, and then drew the great barrel-on-wheels down to the fountain, giving many a glance to right and left, for they knew that if this complot were discovered, there would be a noose and a ladder for each of them. And no sooner did they come to the well than Rupert de Launay stepped out of the darkness; off went the head of the barrel, and in he crept, and so was drawn up the hill and through the gateway of Penhow and remained curled up where the water should have been, till he thought all safe and made his way across the courtyard and up the stair, and so woke his sweetheart with a kiss. But the next day it was discovered that there was no sign of moisture in the cask, it was as droughty as a field in summer; everybody was interrogated as to this strange circumstance, but none knew anything of the matter; and the watermen swore that the machine was heavy enough to draw up the night before; and this indeed was nothing but the truth. And Rupert lay concealed all through that day in Eva's chamber; nor did the time pass wearily, for his mistress came to him ever and anon, and stayed with him as long as she dared, since she thought no more of any rose but love, the which she now tasted for the first time, and could not satiate herself therewith. But you may suppose that the girl who slept with Eva was posted conveniently and kept a sharp look out for the enemy, lest the sweethearts should be interrupted in their sport by the whistling of a sword blade, and have no time to put their affairs in order, or to look about them. To be short the dear day of love came to a close all too soon, as such days mostly do, and when it was dark again the wench rapped at the door of the chamber and said "They are ready." I doubt not gentlemen you have heard and read a good deal about the farewells that take place on these occasions, and maybe have had experience in the matter (saving always your Canonical reverence) so I will cut my tale as short as the lover's final kiss was long, and briefly tell you that by good luck (as I believe), more than anything else, the gallant got again into the barrel and was trundled out of Penhow Castle and down the hill. I conceive however that he laid as firm a hold upon his sword as he was able when Gilbert stopped them by the gate, and adjured the men to make no more mistakes as to the water, if they desired to escape the lash: and as he spoke gave the cask a sounding blow with his truncheon by way of emphasis. But that was all; so Rupert leapt out in safety, bountifully rewarded the carriers, and sped away, no one knows whither, for his hiding place at this period has never been revealed. And so soon as Sir Roger's mind was set at ease about his wife, he hindered her not from walking abroad with her women, as she had formerly been used; and one day not long after whenas Eva and the girl in whom she trusted were pacing through a wood near Penhow, a splendid knight and his yeoman came riding after them and reined in their horses. Then the knight drew up Eva bidding her fear not and cling close to him, and the yeoman made a place for the wench, so with a joyous blast on the horn, they rode away beneath the trees, the boughs closed behind them and they were seen no more in Gwent. But that very morning Gilbert Tapp had cursed a page for trilling out from the gallery *The swallows fly the greenwood shade*, *To flit across the sea, And there the joyous sun hath made A merry home for me: Far from the forest glade.* Hence it came to pass that Sir Roger de Sco. Mauro was left alone with the grim old squire; and passed his time chiefly in looking at the rings and jewells Eva had liked best and in wondering what she could have found so desirable in Rupert de Launay. But he died soon after, expressing to the last a poor opinion of wedlock, and exhorting his son to feel his way very carefully when he came to have truck with womenfolk. As for Eva and her paramour they are stated to have fled to France, and to have lived a merry life there, meeting with no particular misfortunes, but getting off scot-free in this world at any rate. And there is certainly in Picardy a right noble and illustrious house of that name, who dwell in a fine castle, and trace their line to one of Charlemagne's Paladins; but whether this family had its root in the unlawful love of Eva and Rupert does not certainly appear. But there is trouble when seventy is matched with seventeen.

Thus the Seigneur of Roche-Nemours brought his tale to an end, and as he finished, the strange musick that had sounded brokenly all the while, came clearly on the cool breeze of evening to our ears, and died away to a wistful singing close. And we all praised the story, but the Cursal Canon could not bear that Eva and her leman should escape their temporal punishment. And he urged my lord to mend this, if he recounted it again, and to drown the pair of lovers within sight of France, especially if any illiterate persons were within earshot. “For” (said he) “though the dull and gross idiots are slow enough to extract morality from what they hear, they snuff out lechery, give tongue, and follow after it as briskly as a good hound scents the fox. And the very same folk are the worst backbiters and most malicious, and if they heard your name would turn up their eyes and whine out ‘Alas! alas! he tells very wanton tales. I fear he lives but lewdly.’”

“Truly, father, I believe you speak the truth,” answered my lord, “and for the future I will follow your counsels and make these poor sinners die most miserably and wretchedly; or better still, Eva shall live and turn into a shrew, and so make Rupert’s days a burthen unto him.” And now the sky began to darken, and the mists to rise from the river, so we called our host and paid our shot, and went forth into the town, that was by this time beginning to resound with genuine mirth and to exhibit pleasant personages far gone in Silurianism. But the Cursal Canon gave us his blessing and bade us farewell, for he was purposed to ride as far as Abergavenny and to lie there for the night. And at his departure we were sorry, for he was a devout, fat man, and we had hoped to hear from his lips some fine story of the old Decretal Days, or other pleasant case drawn from the Records of St. David’s Chapter. Nevertheless we passed an hour or two pleasantly, wandering to and fro among the Silurians, and watching their amusements, and above all we delighted to hear odd scraps of talk as folk went by us, and strove to make sense out of such phrases as “came softly and scraped the key-hole,”

“she knows you not yet, and asked me the other day who you were,”

“it was for the third time and her mother.” But I strove all the while to find out the musick I had heard from the garden, being desirous of hearing them play some piece from beginning to end, but there was no vestige of them to be seen. I believe Phil Ambrose would have willingly stayed in the streets all the night, for such festivals as this were his chiefest joy, and he walked with his head on one side smiling quaintly to himself. But since the Rubrican, Tom Bamfylde, by dint of running like a coney into every burrow with a sign or bush above it, was becoming very drunk and somewhat tedious, we were resolved to make a start, and waited for him at the door of an inn, but still he came not forth. At last I went after him and going dubiously along a passage that seemed to be without end, found my companion seated in the the easiest chair, smoking, drinking, and talking all at once; and in front of him on the settle was a row of olden gray-beards of Uske, who seemed to be listening attentively to his facetious discourses. Forthwith I made my way through a thick cloud of smoke and made Tom follow me out; the which he was very loathe to do, since he was a man apt to hang over his cups. Yet before ten struck we were on horseback, and had sped over the bridge; and went together till the turning to Landevennoc, and here my Lord of Roche-Nemours left us, for his way was to Caerleon. Then we fell into a single file, and Phil Ambrose set a catch going, and so with singing we passed through the solemn scented night, and strove to make the journey fro as pleasant as it had been to.

THE JOURNEY HOMEWARD

THUS WE HAD accomplished about a half-part of our returning, when we came to a place where a steep hill rises from the road, and a path goeth up therefrom, passing through a thicket on the bank, and leading into a deep and gloomy wood. And in the midst of this brake is a tall beech-tree, and around it a space of smooth, short grass, the which is cool and green even in the thirstiest droughts of August. And as we drew near to this place we saw the flame of a fire burning therein, and suddenly came a strain of sweetly measured musick, like a nightingale singing, and we could hear voices speaking a foreign tongue. Then the flute (for such it was) hushed, and a violin began a low descant, but swelled and thrilled, and rose (it seemed) in lamentation; but changed anon to a solemn tune like church musick, with long sustained notes and ancient closes. Then a lute began its amorous song, and a tenor voice chimed in with it and sang so sweetly a love-song of Italy that each of us thought of his mistress and wished her at hand. But when this was finished they all began to talk again in their vowelled speech, and then we determined to send an ambassador to this company that, if they willed, we might hear something more of their art. So I got off my nag and began to climb the bank, making my way in and out among the hazel-bushes, the wild raspberries, the maples, and the brambles, now ducking my head to escape a stiff bough, and now picking my way amidst the thorns, guiding my steps by the glare of the fire, and the sound of voices. At last I pushed aside two meeting bushes of may-thorn and stood within the circle. In the midst was the great beech, and its boughs stretched widely out on all sides, and rustled in the wind; below it a fire of dry sticks was piled up, crackling and blazing bravely and casting an uncertain and fantastic light on the musicians who sat around it. To whom I doffed my beaver and told them that I with some other honest gentlemen had heard their choice melodies as we passed on our way, and by their leave would gladly join their session under the beech-tree, and pay handsomely to hear them at greater length. And when I had done, a man who seemed to be the eldest of them answered me in indifferent English, bidding me and my companions welcome, very courteously and floridly, “for,” said he, “all lovers of good musick are our brothers.” So I called out to Nick Leonard and he and the other two came slowly up, as best they could, cursing now and then as a bough rapped in their eyes or a bramble tripped them up. And when they had found their way, we all sat down together, and the elder man began to inform us as to the condition of his band, and their manner of living. “We are,” he began, “a company of musicians from Italy; this young fellow who is sitting on the root of the tree and eating sweet-cakes is called Giacomo Corelli of Aspignano; he plays the viol d’amore and is something of a poet. Next to him you see there squats a little fat fellow (by your leave Nanni); his name is Giovanni Mosca, Siena gave him birth, and the flute is his instrument. Next you have the sweet lutist, who softens maidens’ hearts and makes lovers sigh, he is of Babbiena, and is called Piero Latini. Fourthly Coppo Cacci of Pisa, whose art on the violin you heard but lately; and lastly myself, who love the bass-viol better than any other instrument, and am styled Andrea Galliano of Perugia. As to our business it is to wander upon the earth, and make musick for men, who are good enough to let us live in return, and indeed your men are as a rule harmless creatures enough, though sometimes a little brutish.”

“And how did you fare to-day?” asked Phil Ambrose, for I suppose you have been at Uske.”

“Right well,” answered Andrea, “for the people made much of our musick all the morning and thumped down their pieces as heartily as one could wish; and indeed your folk are by no means devoid of harmony; for as we played I noted often how now one, now another of the crowd would edge close to us, hum the tune over once or twice to himself, then throw his head back, and sing to our playing in a full tenor voice, though somewhat slowly. And they tell me that the words are improvised, even after our own Italian manner, and that your Welsh tongue is very fit for singing and rolls from the throat richly and gloriously. But lord! how the people delighted themselves when the singing and the musick came together, and showered money on us, and would have us drink ale and still drink more, and themselves swilled down more of ale and cyder than I could have conceived. But the best part of our day was in the afternoon, when as we were going up the street a serving-man came and fetched us into a house, and led us through a long passage into a court, and from the court by a green alure, and thence into a fair garden, where were several ladies and gentlemen, of right noble houses as I suppose. These were sitting under a yew tree and had a table spread with a very white and comely piece of damask before them, and on it were flasks of wine and cups of Venetian glass, and plates of sweetmeats. Then they bade us play for them our most excellent and curious musick; and I was in some doubt as to what I should chose, so I asked Giacomo and he bade me notice that these personages were all noble lovers, and must be fed with strange mystical melodies, and quaint dances, joyous exultant love-songs, and wailing, forlorn lamentations, following fast upon one another. So we made them as fantastic fare as we were able, and it pleased us to note how hands stole together, and shy glances were interchanged; one put his arm upon the table and so shielded bent down and kissed his sweetheart's forehead, and none could laugh for all were stung alike. Then at sunset a gentleman, whose garden it seemed to be, rose up and praised us mightily for our musique, 'and all of us,' said he, 'praise you, but the ladies (and here he took off his hat) most of all, and if you and your company were ever with us our mistresses would never have to call us to account for hearts tender and soft no more.' Then he himself served us with wine and sweetmeats and we drank a health to those beautiful ladies, whose comeliness is more perfect than that of Tuscan maidens, for our girls are burnt up by the sun. And when the servant led us away he gave me a purseful of gold, and so we shall think often of that garden of Uske and pray for the good success of the noble lovers in love and in all other their concernments."

"And whither are you now bound?" said I. "We are never bound," answered the young man, Giacomo Corelli, "but wander hither and thither as the fancy takes us, setting smooth times against rough, and warm sunshine against the bitter wind and sky of lead. For our chief delight is to have no fixed time or places but to go where we list, and to be ready for any adventure that may befall us, since if our affairs are unprosperous and our hearts sad, we have our musick and our songs of Tuscany; and he that has art, whether of sweet colour, or sweetly measured words, or sweet closes of melody, should deem himself blessed and be very thankful to God, though his cup be dry, his platter empty and his journey through life grievous."

"You speak with reason, I think," said the little fellow called Mosca, "but yet meat and wine are good creatures and make the skin smooth and comfortable; wherefore let us sup, and afterwards these gentlemen shall hear how we fulfil all our bragging of our art." Nor did they delay but opened their wallets and drew out little dainties and sundry flasks and made us share with them: and piled more sticks on the fire from a heap at hand, and then was heard a crackling and hissing from the greener bark, joined to a gurgling noise as one flask after another was tossed into the air. "Certainly," said Tom, the Rubrican, "if this be a sample of your victual, I think you fare well, and I believe I shall take down my father's old vial and join your company."

"Ah! sir," answered Piero Latini (a man with thin jaws that worked fast) "'tis not often that we sup so decently. But you must know that having our purses full this evening we determined to give our bellies good cheer, and looked about us to find a confectioner. And after some dispute we fixed on a little shop near the bridge, with a window hanging over the road; and bade the girl who waited bring us the choicest delicates she had. But this wench was one of your modest maidens with a black and roving eye, who see more of what goes on in the street than in the shop, so she called her father, who was certainly a very capable man and a complete cook. And he soon filled our wallets with savoury pies, brawn, tongues, sausages, sweet-cakes, confects, tarts, and puddings, and as he brought them out from one bin or another described each piece very exquisitely, telling us its properties and good parts, and finished up by asking a scandalous sum the which we brought down to half with a little trouble. Now this piece I am eating is a fair sample of his craft, it is, he told us, a compost of capon's flesh, and veal, and pigeons, and ham, brayed together in a mortar and flavoured with herbs and spices and curious condiments, and indeed it is good provision and gives a relish to the wine."

"And what fine sausages are these," said Phil Ambrose, holding one up and then gnawing at it, with an evident gust: but I was busy with some sort of a pie, I know not of what essence, but certainly the cook that made it must have had a great intellect and a painful, elaborate artfulness. In fine we supped as handsomely as it is possible to sup, and when all the meats were entombed, the Italians began to stand in order and to finger their instruments, talking to themselves in Tuscan: but we drew out our tobacco pipes and lit them with chips of burning wood, which are the rarest pipe lights in the world. Then beyond the flickering flame and the fragrant curling smoke of Trinidado a low sweet musick came, for the Signor Mosca was moving his lips along his flute, and the nightingales in the wood ceased, to listen to him; and Coppo Cacci, and Corelli, and Andrea followed after with violin, viol d'amore, and bass-viol; and thus I heard the symphony of which some faint snatches came to my ears while I listened to the Seigneur de Roche Nemours his story. For they told me afterwards that this was what they played in the garden to the lovers. Truly it was a wonderful musick and full of strange fancies for which I tried to find a meaning but could not; since it seems probable that such harmonies are drawn from the Outside Realm, and are in themselves but semitones and broken voices from the concert sempiternal and transcendent. And it appeared that Giacomo Corelli, whom Andrea had called a poet, himself devised this symphony (as he told us) in times when he was hungry and thirsty and a-cold; and when I looked at him he appeared to me like one who listens for sounds not heard of other men. And when the last deep thunder came from the bass-viol, and the final dying close wandered away into the darkness of the wood, the circle closed again about the fire, and we fell to talking of indifferent matters. And all the musicians had curious tales to tell concerning their instruments, their strange virtues and properties, how they are answerable to one another, and occasionally make them that handle the bow their servants, and play them all manner of tricks. Messer Corelli was good enough to give me the complete anatomy of the vyall, according to the most approved theories, and from what he said it appears that vyalls certainly have souls, indeed he showed me the exact position thereof as Master Réné of the Rolls has pinned down the reasonable soul of man to the pineal gland. Then Messer Cacci made a very ingenious relation of two companions and two violins, and showed when one was played, the other of itself echoed the musick, though many hundred miles were between them; and how the companions answered, either to other, in like manner, and dying at the same instant of time, their vyalls likewise in that hour fell to pieces with a loud twang. "And this," said he, "was made evidently to appear, and is commonly believed all over Italy": "Is commonly believed to be a lie you would say," quoth Mosca, "for he who credits these violin histories must have soft brains." But all the others cried out upon him with one voice, and promised that so soon as they set foot again in Tuscany the Holy Office should take order with him and eradicate his unbelief: "Certainly, Nanni," said Andrea, "the fagots that shall make a roast of thee have begun to sprout, for thou wilt assuredly come to be burnt.” And seeing that the little man did not relish these jokes over much, Nick Leonard asked the musicians if they knew of any curious or fantastic case, besides their craft-tales, “for these,” said the Lord Maltworm, “seem to breed dispute, a thing detested by us of Gwent, who are accustomed to take everything quietly and as it comes. And if as you say, Signor Mosca’s notions have really a taste of the fagot about them, doubtless the Holy Office will attend to him in due time; and you need not therefore to grow solicitous concerning the poor gentleman.”

“’Tis well spoken Nick,” said Tom Bamfylde, “come my masters, surely in your wanderings you have picked up some curious and well-seasoned tales; and though I have both devised histories and listened to them, yet I have never seen a time or place or company fitter for the production of these commodities. And as to Signor Mosca, why, you may set your minds at ease as to that false, damnable, and pernicious position of his viz that in vyalls there is merely natural wood and sheep’s-gut, and no rational soul nor sympathy. For I assure you that the Venerable Philip Jenkins, Archdeacon of Monmouth, would give odds to the Inquisitors of the Holy Office, so capable a divine is he, and so vigilant to uproot erroneous doctrines and heresy. And moreover he’s a kinsman of mine, and I’ll make interest with him, and have Signor Mosca presented in the next Consistory Court at Caerleon, and I promise you it shall go very hard with him.” After this pledge they could dispute no more, but began to advise together as to who had the best and strangest relation in his head, and it was agreed that Piero Latini of Babbiena was seised of a mighty quaint history, the which had been mellowed and ripened by age, so that there was no sourness or crudity left in it. And Andrea declared that Piero was able to talk nonsense with a graver face than any one of them, and so was fittest to entertain us. Forthwith he struck one or two deep notes from his bass-viol, and Piero began his story.

SIGNOR PIERO LATINI'S TALE

HOW THE DUKE of San Giuliano Made Build a High Wall

UPON the northern slope of the Mountain di San Giuliano a good many stones have been piled together and erected into walls and towers, the which taken together make up a considerable castle, and seem to have been well arranged, for they show no signs of old age or decay, though they have stood there for five hundred years and more. This fine building is the nest of the Dukes of San Giuliano, who trace their line very far back, and are mixed up with the old Patricians and pagan knights, till at last you find yourself in a thick brake on a Sabine Hill, the which brake is the resort of a nymph or some such special wanton, and here civil people stop short, for it is well known these nymphs did not relish being peeped at, and were used to be respectfully spoken of. And inquisitive intermeddling personages who wished to know more than other people they taught manners and afflicted them grievously, turning them into stags, softening their brains, and altogether making examples of them, so that others might clearly understand that nymphs are best left alone. Wherefore we will not enquire further into the far-back affairs of this noble house; but merely say that they chose the mountain for their abode so long ago as the time of the Emperor Charlemagne, and were continually strengthening their castle, building thick walls and running up high towers, until it became as safe a place as any in Tuscany, and very fit for the habitation of great princes who require retreats of this description wherein they can contemplate at their ease the silly passions of the common people and the violence of party spirit. Some of the Tuscan nobles have chosen to leave the brave old strongholds of their forefathers, and have come down to the cities in the vales, but the lords of San Giuliano knew better than this, and though they were always glad to see the townsfolk climb puffing and panting up the mountain side, and never failed to welcome them heartily if rudely, with spear-heads and arrow-shafts, they still clung to their battlements and gilt pinnacles above the broad mountain woods. They had noticed you see, that nobles who dwell in towns became townsfolk, and got involved in town disputes, and sometimes came off second best and had to sit below some stupid fat huckster who called himself Podesta, Gonfaloniere, or Consul, and tried to persuade himself and other people that they were on the whole a finer and more spirited sort of men than the old pagan Romans. This rubbish always made the Dukes of San Giuliano sick, and irritable in temper besides; and as I have said they took good care to stay up on the mountain and made it very hot climbing for anybody who wished to hang his cap on the vanes of the castle or to discover the thickness of the walls by the process of pulling them down. Duke Mark (who had to wife Yolande of Perpignan) was especially averse to the townsfolk, and when they gave him any trouble, always burnt a village, without stopping to enquire whether it were the right one; and thus his neighbours grew to understand him and his odd ways, and agreed to let him go his own road. Fourth in descent from Duke Mark was Duke Guido, and he it is of whom I am about to devise, for searching in the byways of my brain I can find no better tale than this, which is still relished of cool evenings in the taverns of Tuscany, though the case fell out three hundred years ago, or maybe more. Now this Duke Guido di San Giuliano is confessed to have been a very witty and ingenious personage, and to have had a good knowledge of Grammar, Law, Logic, and Philosophy, and some say he smattered in Theology to boot; but I believe he was too wise a man to do so, since he must have known that our Holy Religion is under the charge of the Holy Father and the Cardinals who do not require any help in their duties. And they are quite right to keep these affairs right under their fists; for what should I say to a ploughboy who would teach me how to tune my lute, and for laymen to dispute over weighty matters of clergy is not a jot the wiser. But in all other learning I am convinced that the duke was far gone; and he had learnt the Greek tongue from one Argyropulo, a scholar from Byzantium, who was then in Italy, being an envoy from the Patriarch to the Pope. Also he showed great favour to those who did things in the vulgar speech, to painters and to skilful carvers, so that Monte di San Giuliano became our Italian Parnassus, and the castle the watch-tower of the Arts and Humanities. My lord had for wife a beautiful and illustrious lady, called Constance degli Interminelli, the same being of a right noble house, of an angelic comeliness, and endowed with a cheerful imagination which got fun out of everything and even out of her husband, who, in spite of his learning and good parts was somewhat gloomy and austere. And though this couple were well matched in years, yet they had no children, and people said that my lord spent his nights chiefly in mending and annotating Greek and Latin texts, and labouring to find out whether *et ita* or *itaque* was most to Tully's liking, and holding up old deeds and charters to the lamp to see if they were written over some golden work of the ancients. But the duchess never remonstrated with him or spoke angrily about his bad taste in preferring his parchments to his wife, for he was a young man, and she thought he would sow these learned oats of his and come to his senses before very long. And then, Constance would whisper to herself, my lord will notice my golden hair and blue eyes, and forget all about these heathens and their cold philosophy. She once tried meddling with his lamp, in such wise that it went out in a slow and sickly manner, just as the duke had taken out his manuscript of Homer, and was sitting down to make a night of it; but my lord flew into such a furious rage (being a choleric man when provoked) that this expedient was never again attempted. But after six years or more of this manner of living Constance perceived that her husband's case (and her own) was becoming desperate, and that some sharp remedy must be applied if things were to be mended, for the duke grew worse every day and began to stoop and peer and fumble about the castle all as if he had been a poor bachelor at the University, instead of being a very mighty prince, whose bearings the English Heralds would blazon in precious stones and jewells if not with the stars of heaven. This scholarly behaviour was certainly not worthy of one whose ancestors, the mighty nobles of the old time, had always been found where hard knocks were to be got, where the trumpets smote through the air, where the hammering of steel on steel was like the noise of a thousand smithies. And still less did it become my lord of San Giuliano thus to neglect his wife, seeing that the ancient princes of his line made no less of Venus than of her leman Monsignor Mars, and had loved so heartily that they furnished many a pleasant tale to the craftsmen of Paris, who dressed their adventures up and tricked them out in fine language. Altogether you will agree with me that Constance had good ground for complaint, and with those blue eyes and golden locks of hers had a just title to the duke's love and affection, especially since her only rivals were a lot of nasty mouldy parchments, which had much better have been left to perish decently in the black holes of the monasteries. And being purposed to cure her lord of his Ciceronianism by some means or another she consulted her ladies one summer evening, while they were walking together in the shady alleys that were all around the castle, as to how she should best make the duke to amend his ways and live more like a good Christian gentleman for the future. And they all said that to consider this matter it was necessary that they should be seated and at their ease, for it was a knotty question and the very mention of it made them warm. So they walked on until they came to a large and special seat, placed under a great oak, and most exquisitely cut out in marble, and adorned with admirable devices that had generated in the brain and were shapen by the chisel of a young gentleman of Florence employed by the duke in the beautifying of his castle. Then my lady took her place in the centre of this fine form, and the rest who were (most of them) dark beauties, sat down with much rustling of silk and satin on either side of her; the girls who could not find places lying down on the grass in all sorts of pretty postures, and thus this brave Parliament proceeded to debate. And as is usual with assemblies of this kind there was a great diversity of opinions, theories, speculations, and methods; some would have Constance smile more on her lord, beguile him with allurements, and gently draw him into the mesh of love: some were for frowns, black looks, and words of reproach; some for floods of tears, long drawn sighs, and a pitiful beseeching countenance. Francesca of Mantua, who was one of the Bedchamber women, counselled Constance never to leave the duke by night or day, but to be ever beside him; and Laura degli Cavalcante bade her go still abroad, and when she was at home, to keep her chamber "for so" said she, "my lord will feel the lack of you." But a girl named Agnes, who lay apart upon the ground, and had a face full of maliciousness and wit, plainly told her mistress that there was only one cure for the duke's sickness; "and this," she said, "is for you to choose some young gallant from among the gentlemen of your court, and openly to show your kindness for him by pleasant words and by acceptance of his service; the which I warrant me will open my lord's eyes, and show him along what manner of road he is posting. This is a medicine I have known operate most marvellously, and unless I am much mistaken it will teach your husband that there is more wit in women than in Cicero, or any man at all, dead or alive." At this hardy speech Constance looked down and was thought to blush but ever so little, and the ladies agreed that though Agnes was young there was some tincture of sense in what she said, and that if my lady furnished her husband with a pair of horns he would have no right to be angry, since he had of his own acts and deeds (or rather the want of them) forfeited all his claims and privileges. But an old dame with white hair, who had seen a good deal of life, and knew that such remedies as these now and then turn out worse than the sickness itself and bring on bad complaints, advised Constance not to be hasty in the matter, but to send for some learned physician, and consult with him, and open up all her grief "since" (quoth the old dame) "the doctors understand these affairs better than anyone, and are often able to give comfort, when there seems to be no hope." And with this their session broke up, and the marble fauns at either end of the bench were left alone, to look slyly at one another as if they knew that there was mischief a-brewing. Perhaps unkind people would say that when a company of ladies plot schemes together, the results are not likely to be very salutary to anyone concerned; but this is an opinion to which I do not consent, since it proceeds from a bad source, namely from the brains of ugly men whose lips are so large that no girl will kiss them; hence it is evident that whatever comes from those lips aforesaid should be looked upon with suspicion and in most cases rejected. However that may be, it chanced next morning that the duchess was seized with a violent pain in the head, just as she came out from hearing Mass, and was borne fainting to her chamber and put to bed by her women, who at first did not perceive the trickery, for, to be short, it was nothing else. But the duke verily believed his wife to be in grievous case and, since he loved her well enough in his quiet way, sat down and wrote letters and sealed them with a curious seal he had, it being the likeness of a man in armour, with two snakes for feet, and his face turned away, driving four horses in a chariot: and on one side of him was a star, and on the other a half moon; this seal being artfully cut out in green jasper. The letters, thus sealed, were given into the hands of messengers, who rode swiftly, and in due course brought back with them to San Giuliano no less a person than the renowned physician Signor Albericus of Padua, whose consultations are still made much of and esteemed not only by doctors but by curious persons and lettered men, who find therein many strange diseases and witty cures, set down in grave and choice phrases, and enlivened by some flashes of mirth. This learned person having heard what the duke could tell him, was taken to Constance's chamber, and there left alone with her, because as he merrily said he was used to this kind of thing and might be trusted. And indeed he was a good distance on the wrong side of sixty, fat and rotund in person, and altogether not a man to make a jealous husband put his hand to his forehead, though the wife were never so beautiful. And so soon as the door was shut and the duke out of earshot, Constance eagerly began to pour her woes out before the good doctor, whose brain she bewildered with an infinity of feminine lamentations and prayers for aid. And when Albericus had heard the whole story and put the fragments all together, he perceived that he had got mixed up in rather a ticklish business, the which might possibly give him trouble and disturb his peace and quietness. And since he loved an easy life above everything, he determined to be wary in the matter and to keep a good look out for pitfalls; so when Constance began delicately to throw out hints about philtres and full-flavoured medicaments of the same kind, he cut her short, by saying that his system of medicine did not allow of such remedies, which he affirmed to be of an uncertain and hazardous nature, the manner of whose operations it was impossible to predict. However, he promised to speak earnestly to her husband, and to admonish him that his wife required different treatment at his hands, or else would fade away like a flower shut out from the sun. The which promise Albericus faithfully fulfilled, and bade my lord look more into Constance's beautiful eyes and less into his manuscripts; "since," said he, "change of all things is sweet, and you, my lord duke, have surely had enough of yellow and black, and would do well to inspect and examine a little more closely that admirable red and white; in the which process you will discover more poetry, philosophy, science, and measured eloquence than there is in all the books of the ancients." I think this was excellent advice, and well worthy the author of the Consultations; but as it fell out the doctor made a slip which quite spoilt everything. For he thought to humour the duke by speaking to him in Latin, and strove to do so elegantly, and indeed he rounded off his periods very floridly and pompously, and avoided ending a sentence with a word of one syllable as is done in the Missal and Breviary. But unfortunately he used a word found only in very early writers and very late ones, which twanged so hideously in my lord's ears that he paid Signor Albericus his fee and sent him away without more ado, and read Cicero all night, like a man that has tasted an addled egg and must swill out his mouth with pure water and choice wine, to purify it. Hence Constance fared not a whit the better for the physician's counsel, for the duke made no account of a man who used such solecisms, and troubled himself the less when he heard that my lady went abroad again; and indeed she found staying in bed dull work enough. And it seems likely that Constance began to weigh in her mind what that mischievous

Agnes had advised, for she was observed to look curiously on the gentlemen of her court, now gazing at one and now at another, as if she wished to know which was most fit to be used as an emplaster. I mean a plaster of the fiery burning sort, concocted out of the most furious virtuous mustard, to be laid on Duke Guido's heart, and to draw out the love that doubtless was there. And it must be confessed, that one could not wish to see a more gallant company of young gentlemen than that which sat down at the ducal table, for they were gathered from all the most noble and illustrious families of Italy, and thought it honour to call themselves the servants of so mighty a prince as my lord of San Giuliano. In fact Constance must have been very hard to please if she could not have fancied one or other of them; since they ranged in age from fourteen up to forty, and were nearly all gentlemen of pleasant manners and few scruples, who would have done a great deal at the command of their master, and in point of fact adored their mistress and grew rapturous over her rare beauty, as is the manner of Italian nobles, who are wanting in moderation. So you may guess that if Constance had bent her little finger in the direction of one of these gallants, she might have had him body and soul, for life and death; but it seems that for some reason or another she passed over all this gay silken company, and left them to content themselves with such divinities of lesser rank as they could propitiate and make look kindly on them. And after these fine gentlemen there were artists whom the duke entertained, namely artists in marble, and metal-work, and colour, some of them being young and proper men, and besides their craft-skill, of sharp wit and good address. There was for example Messer Belacqua the painter, who was limning Domesday above the altar of the chapel in fresco, and marshalling on the high space of wall all ancient prophets and patriarchs, apostles, elders, martyrs, and the virgins feeding amidst lilies, all in solemn order and degree by their companies, and the strong and most awful angels were flying forth from the throne under their captain St. Michael to set this last assize. But the glory of the colours it is impossible to describe, for they were of the sunlight and the blue sky of heaven, and the red clouds of the Northern Light. And the painter Belacqua was a sweet courteous gentleman, a lover of fair ladies, and would have been well content to serve the duchess in any fashion, but certainly would have most blithely assisted her in the way of making the duke jealous. Yet she passed him and his fellows by and made an odd choice, which proves her to have had a good heart, as some think, and as others declare, a mighty weak head. For she must needs pick out a little scholar and poet, Luigi Cortanto by name, who was not held in much esteem by anybody, being of a low family, as poor as a rat, and of a small insignificant figure. Besides these defects he was a quiet and shy sort of a man, who was happiest when people would leave him alone either with his lamp, his papers and his ink, or in some cool alley or arbour where he could pace up and down with his eyes on the ground, or sit dreaming and imagining those choice conceits which have earned an eternal glory for him. And the duke had summoned him to San Giuliano and entertained him there, because of some verses in the Greek language made by this Luigi aforesaid, the which were so artfully conceited and ingeniously made out that they were published among all the lettered men of Italy, and so mightily enchanted my lord that he must needs have the author at his castle. But in fact Messer Cortanto did not himself esteem highly this kind of work, for his whole delight was in a Book of Pastoralls in the speech of Tuscany; the which he was fashioning with sweet and mellifluous eloquence after the model of Virgil the great master. And this piece it is which has kept his name alive and is to this day a fragrant memorial of him, but then all these pastoral songs were known only to himself, and were hidden in a chest in his cell at San Giuliano. Who then was surprised but Messer Luigi when his mistress began to make sweet eyes at him, and to let glances fall in his way that no man might mistake; since he thought his cassock was shabby enough to keep off all darts of Love, and had been used to look at Constance from a great distance, below all the fine gentlemen and young nobles of the court. And certainly it did not seem likely that this beautiful lady would take the trouble to climb up the many stairs that led to the poet's chamber, and lighten his dark room with the golden glory of her hair, and the rays from those deep blue eyes of hers: when there was such brave lodging to be had on the ground floor amid silk and velvet and all manner of rich furniture. But one can never get at the Rhyme and Reason of Love, whose decrees are not to be questioned nor reformed, one must only bow the head and say 'So be it' without enquiring into the why and wherefore. And perhaps Constance saw something in Luigi's features not visible to other people at that time; I mean, all those sweet amorous conclusions and gracious meditations which you may find in the twelve books of "Il Pastor Intronato," which, as I have said, were fashioned with such curious and painful art that they have never been surpassed nor equalled by any of our Tuscan poets. But let the reasons be what they may, it became very plain to Luigi that those swift glances were meant for none but himself, and before long he shyly ventured to return them, and was not less than rapturous when one day the duchess drew him apart before all her ladies and courtiers, and walked with him in the garden, though, indeed, he could find but little wit wherewith to answer all the pleasant speeches and delicate little compliments of his noble mistress. But that malicious maiden Agnes laughed, for she saw that her counsel was being taken after all; and then laughed again saying to herself "Truly these great ladies make an odd choice." As for the poet, his ideas and rational faculties were in a very confused state, and obscured, pleasantly enough, by golden and rosy-coloured clouds which floated in his brain; but before the actual sun had set that night, the sun of love rose for poor Luigi and began to shine upon him and to scorch his heart with a heat that was of the noonday. And whereas the duchess had merely intended to make her husband's conscience prick him, she had made this fierce flame of love lighten the poor scholar, kindling in his breast all manner of desires and cravings which poverty had hitherto effectually subdued, and illuminating his cell with the blaze of that ardent lamp which shows everything so plainly. But her husband made no account of Constance's kindness to Messer Luigi, nor is it clearly ascertained that he so much as saw it, though it became every day more evident to the ladies and nobles of the Court, who began to think there must be rather more in the poor poet than they had suspected. And so long as this strangely matched couple merely sauntered about the walks of the garden before the eyes of all, I don't think much harm was done, though Luigi's compliments were getting rather high-flown and fetched from a tremendous distance, and Constance looked more and more softly upon him, perceiving that his mind was lovelier than his body, though even in this latter she tried to see some excellence and worship. But when it came to the mistress and her servant dropping far behind the rest in their walks along the alleys, I believe the duke would have done well to take some order with them, and to become jealous as was expected of him. But he had peered so long at his manuscripts that he had become rather shortsighted in other affairs; so that Constance and Luigi by slow degrees became lovers in real earnest on both side, instead of on one only, as it had been at the beginning. I know not precisely how, when, or where this was declared between them, or if it were ever so declared, since the fair dialects of passion in those days led noble lovers onward by fine phrases and Platonical sentiments, so that all abrupt and sudden falls from friendship into love were avoided, and from *Fille des pensées* to *Chasteau de par amours* was a brave road through a delicious country, abounding in sunlit meadows, shady groves and rippling brooks, thrilling with the song of nightingales. Imagine then, I pray you, my beautiful Constance (who assuredly must have carried in her bosom a wonderful spell against Sirius, for that malefic star could not hurt her nor scorch her red and white), and the little dark man with hungry eyes in his dingy scholar's vestments walking hand in hand (ah! how fiercely pressed together) down the long road; and halting now and again for a little while in the arbours by the way. But mark, now the poor poet leads and beckons Constance to hasten onward, and she cannot disobey him, and had he bade her kiss him before the whole Court I verily believe she would not have refused, since he was her Lord Paramount and held that enchanting body with all its loveliness bound fast in his service. In short they reached the valley together and mounted up unto the wonderful Chasteau de Par Amours, where, certes, there is choice entertainment and soft lodging; musick too from horns, harps, and vyalls to pierce the heart; and deambulatories in rose-gardens and along incredible galleries hanging from the summits of pinnaced tower and of stony wall. But alas! one must pay one's shot for all this, the musick turns at last to sickness and fear, there's nightshade amidst the rose hedges, and sharp rocks below those high hanging ways. What shall I say of the overshadowed parliaments in the woods, their countersigns and secret signals to one another, and of the times when Constance, full of shame yet fuller of love, went stealthily in the dead of night along dark passages by the savage warriors of the arras, and up the long weary winding stair to Luigi's chamber? Once Duke Guido met her and asked her what she did at such an hour, but the keen wit of a woman in love easily found an excuse to satisfy her husband, so the revelling at the Castle went on gaily. You see all her notions of winning her husband's love had quite fallen into forgetfulness, and she thought only of enjoying Luigi's, wondering dimly, now and then, as she lay in his arms, at her old innocent life, but never desiring that it might come back. For when it has come to this pass, and the drawbridge of the castle has been drawn up, a woman who is sharp-witted knows that there is no returning: the card is on the board and may not be taken again. How this strange affair would have ended, if it had been left alone, is more than I can tell, but I suspect Luigi would have tired of his mistress, and have gone back quite easily and contentedly to his garret in Florence, there to put the last finish to his pastoral pieces and then to set them forth. For now he wrote verses no more, being his brain was burnt up and adust with hot passion, which could not find voice in the calmly measured and perfect sweetness of duly chosen words. But it fell out that a gentleman of the Court, near akin by blood to the Marquis of Mantua, who had formerly pressed Constance hard to no avail, and was now the lover of Agnes, by the intelligence this girl gave him, and his own wit, had come to understand how things were going between his mistress and Messer Luigi, and spied upon them constantly. In this gallant there was only one fault, and that a fixed habit of keeping old insults and bad turns in a warm, dry corner of his heart, whence every night and morning he brought forth these commodities, looked at them, and returned them again, till the time came to give them back to their rightful possessors. And since he had taken Constance's refusal of his love very grievously and had long cherished a sincere desire of crying quits with her, he began to see daylight, and to say, like the rest of the courtiers, that the poor scholar was after all an admirable sort of man; for through him he saw a door leading to the sweet desert of vengeance. And by dint of hiding in he trees by the most retired alleys, lurking behind arbours, and in the recesses of the castle stairs he was soon able to make out a very pretty process of arraignment, for he became a party to the plot, which before was only known to Luigi and Constance, and the marble satyrs, and the mighty warriors waving on the arras. Thus he felt himself in good company, and was observed by his friends to be in high spirits, for generally he had the repute of being somewhat gloomy and of sullen conversation. Indeed this gentleman enjoyed himself greatly in these days, and needed no fire of cold nights, for he warmed his heart with the view of a rare revenge, worthy of his ancestry and noble bearings, and well befitting an illustrious house. But he waited for some time that there might be no mistake or bungling in the matter, since he knew that a trifling miscalculation might cost him his head and leave Constance and her sweetheart to make merry at his expense above ground, while he would be taking his ease in Phlegethon below. And to make everything complete he entered into close acquaintance with Luigi, and by dint of flattery and his knowledge soon heard the whole tale from the scholar's own mouth, and applauded him mightily, only bidding him consider how various and unstable were all earthly concernments, especially those which appertained to the Lordship of Love. At last all was in train and the noble gentleman of Mantua had arranged in his mind the time, place and manner of his repaying to Constance this his just debt. You must understand then, that in the gardens of the castle of San Giuliano there was a great and admirable labyrinth or Siege of Troy, contrived of laurels, cypresses, and box trees, with windings in and out, turnings, returnings, dædal wanderings and perplexed passages, almost beyond conceit or imagination. And in the courses of the maze were arbours here and there with seats for them to rest awhile, who took the pains to tread these windings; and many of these trees were cut into the fantastic similitude of towers and castle walls, strange monstrous beasts, and symbols of secret meaning. And at the entrance was a stone pillar, about four feet in height, and on the top was this legend:

Hie quem Creticus edit Daedalus est Laberinthus,

De quo nullus vadere quivit qui fuit intus,

Ni Theseus gratis Ariadne staminé jutus.

And in the midst of the labyrinth was a very fair and pleasant bower of box, with the likenesses of peacocks, foxes, pheasants, and doves devised in the topiary manner, and a seat of marble very exquisitely carved. Now this place was often resorted to by Constance and the scholar, who were never weary of tracking out its windings in company, and had found out a secret concerning it; namely that one of the hedges was in fact double and had within itself a passage, which might only be entered by pressing down a bough at a certain place; and when they had gone in they perceived that none who passed by could spy them out since the green walls on either side were thick and impenetrable. And you may guess that they often came hither, for it seemed a very secure place; but so did the noble gentleman of Mantua who had enough craft to see rather than to be seen, and marked the trick of the bough to a nicety, while the lovers thought there was not a soul within the whole labyrinth. But in the cool of a memorable day this gentleman contrived so that Duke Guido should walk with him in the garden, and as they paced up and down he showed his master wnat kind of a wife Constance was, speaking softly with picked words, and using no sort of violence or indignation. At first the duke would believe none of it and began to frown in a fashion that made the courtier grow sick and pass his hand to the back of his neck, for he seemed to feel the rope squeezing and the first prick of the axe at the same time. But nevertheless he gave the duke such proofs and insisted so on what he had said that my lord began to grow uneasy in his turn, and at last said "Are you able to show me them together in such wise that I cannot fail to be convinced?" And the gentleman answered "Come with me." So he took this poor husband toward the Siege of Troy and led him in, and then along the wandering endless passages, between the high green hedges, now to the right and now to the left, and stopped at last before a smooth wall of box and pointed with his finger as if to say the lovers were within it. But the duke himself knew not of this cranny, and would have spoken, but the gentleman held up his hand again and drew his sword. Then he slowly and warily put down his hand among the leaves and caught the bough with a grasp like a smith's vice: and in an instant had torn it away so that the duke saw Constance his wife and Luigi Cortanto the scholar with their lips hard set together, and their arms around one another's necks. And the gentleman thought that his master would have leapt in and made short work of them both, and had turned away, for he rather liked the scholar and had no particular wish to see him die violently, only he listened for Constance her death scream. But the duke did not so much as draw his sword; merely looking once into his wife's eyes, and then going back, he took hold of the gentleman's arm and led him forth. But when they had again come to the entrance my lord of San Giuliano put his finger on top of the pillar and pointed to the line *De quo nullus vadere qui fuit intus,* and said no more but only bade the courtier go to the castle and fetch an hundred men-at-arms to that place. This done, the soldiers were set all round the labyrinth, and their charge was to keep close watch, and if anyone strove to come out, by no means to kill but merely to push them back again within the maze. And the duke likewise sent messengers to the officers over all the townships within his lordship, to what intent you shall presently understand. Thus the hanging gallery of the Chasteau de Par Amours had fallen beneath Constance and her lover, and they were now tasting the points of the rocks beneath. But how they fared together, whether they reproached or consoled one another is not known, only before long one of the soldiers heard a rustling in the leaves opposite to him, and

Luigi’s head came out. And seeing the men-at-arms made no sign of hurting him the poor poet gave a whistle and a swift pattering of feet came along the passage inside the labyrinth. Then Luigi began slowly to ease himself out, and still the soldier did nothing, but when he was clear of the hedge and had turned to help Constance, the man seized him by his neck and pushed him back again by force, so that all his struggling could not keep him on the right side of his prison, and while he was doing this the pikeman heard someone’s breath caught sharply, and a noise like sobbing. And once or twice Luigi tried to escape that night and put his head out as before, and saw standing by each soldier a serving man holding a great torch, and neither said anything, but let him painfully work his way out as before, and then thrust him back. And just as the sun set at the close of the next day the messengers the duke had sent began to return, and with them came companies of men, whom my lord himself received, and showed them where they might get stones, rough and smooth, for these fellows were masons. Straightway they went to their work, and as more came, they too fell to their tools, and at midnight many score of men were a-labouring by torchlight, and a place had been made ready for the foundations of a wall right around the maze. Nor was there any delay, but the stones were set one above other, and compacted with mortar, and still the men-at-arms stood in their order, but Luigi only came out once more. And it chanced that as he did so the duke stood opposite to him by the wall which was beginning to rise above the earth, and the poet looked into the eyes of his lord and went back of his own will into the windings of his prison. But the duke remembered the old saw “God keep you from the eye of a lettered man,” and knew that the masons might set about his own tomb also. Nevertheless he made no sign, and night and day the work went on; and the guard was changed, and none in the castle dared to ask a question, or so much as to see the wall before their eyes, for by this time everybody was aware that Duke Guido was a chip of the old block, whose answers would be a gibbet and a rope. But the gentleman who had played the spy, and given the duke his information, had grown gloomy and sour again, for he was obliged to confess to himself that this vengeance of his master’s was more curiously and choicely invented than anything he had conceited of; and this thought mortified him and made him wish he had not interfered in the matter, since he could not bear to be in any wise surpassed. To be short, before a week had passed the labyrinth was shut in by a great wall forty feet in height, without doorway or entrance, only in the place over against the pillar there was cut the line from it *Nemo vadere quivit qui fuit intus* in fair and deep letters on a smooth ashlar. Then the masons received six times the price of their labour and were sent back again to their several towns, and the guard was kept no longer, since there was not likely to be anyone inside who was able to climb that lofty wall. And about three months after this fine monument of love was concluded, Duke Guido caught the pestilence and died miserably, for Luigi had looked upon him, and woe is ever in store for them upon whom hath fallen the eye of a lettered man. But the noble gentleman of Mantua went up to the poet's chamber, and in a mournful meditative way, began to burst open his chests and to ransack his wallets, for indeed he was sorry for the poor scholar, against whom he had no grudge. "Alas! alas!" murmured he to himself, "all the evil that we men suffer in this vale of misery must be put down to the wickedness and devilish entanglements of the women. And now this Constance hath made three honest gentlemen to suffer for her sins, and hath killed two outright. Truly it were well for us poor silly men, if there were no women in the world." Sadly and pensively musing in this wise the noble gentleman ran through all Luigi's papers; for he loved good letters and understood well how to distinguish choice writing from mean. And when he came to "II Pastor Intronato," and saw what a rarest work of art was in his hands, he well-nigh wept, saying: "Alack! alack! a very admirable poet, a gentle witty clerk; dear soul, and he's come to this pitiful end, and through a woman's wanton, wicked ways." And thus it was by this gentleman's hands that this delicious piece of Luigi's was set forth, and remains, as I have said, a fragrant and everlasting memorial of him, together with the great stone wall around the miz-maze of San Giuliano. The which stands there to this day, and none has ever climbed it, nor entered the labyrinth; and so it is not known at all how the lovers lie, or whether they met their doom together or apart. But I must tell you that when Duke Guido's brother who came after him had been seised of the Lordship of San Giuliano for a year or so, the malicious rout of certain cities sub-adjacent began again their old villainous seditions, clamouring that the bodies of the lovers should be buried with rites of Holy Church, and the monstrous wall thrown to the ground; and thence fell once more to their rubbish about the Romans, talking of the Tarquins, Gracchi, tyrants, tribunes, and the devil knows what infernal nonsense besides. And in their blustering speeches they confounded dates so scandalously, and got Roman History into such a woeful muddle that Duke Antony (who like his brother was something of a scholar and precisian) became annoyed, and was obliged to take a leaf out of Duke Mark's book, and to remind his subjects, by means of fire, sword, and halter, that all their pagan Pompeys and Brutuses had been put under the sod a long time ago. And as to the wall I have seen it with mine eyes, and it is indeed a very special wall.

No sooner had Piero brought his story to an end than Messer Mosca drew out from his wallet a bottle, round bellied and thin necked, and gave it to me bidding me to drink and pass it round. And when we had emptied it of its fragrant, oily juice Giacomo Corelli began to chide Piero for his lack of art in telling the tale, "since," said he, "you should have enlarged upon the shadowy terrors of Constance's midnight journeys to her lover, and have made the warriors of the arras play her all manner of tricks, as is customary in Romances. Likewise you fell short in the building of the wall, and did not hold your torches on high and make them flame and smoke and cast strange lights around, nor did you cause the harness of the men-at-arms to glitter, nor the moon to shine with a calm golden effulgence on that fantastic scene."

"I have told the tale as I received it," answered Piero, "and all these graces that you speak of can very easily be conceived by the hearers, without the trouble of recounting them, since such ornaments are, as you say, common to all romances."

"And now, sirs," broke in Coppo Cacci, the cunning player of the violin, "it is time for you to pay your shot, and this you shall do by devising us some history of your own country, and in no other way whatsoever."

"Nay," said Nick Leonard, "we will content you in both ways, for I am in the humour to tell a merry case, and I think I have one in my head which will be found not altogether unpleasant, though it is but an old song." And Andrea answered, "We listen and await your musick, for I expect it will be no less."

THE LORD MALTWORM'S SECOND TALE

The Affair Done at the House with the Lattice

IN THE TIME of Jehan de Hastings, third of that name, Baron of Burgavenny, and Earl of Pembroke, there came a young knight to the town of Abergavenny, having the style of Sir Philip Meyrick of Caerwent, and being on the whole rather a pleasant young gentleman. That is to say he was of moderate height, had yellow hair and blue eyes, and a cheerful grin, of the which commodity he was very liberal. You will know what I mean when I tell you that some ladies called him an impudent fellow, whilst others had nothing to say when Sir Philip's name was mentioned, but blushed and smiled a little to themselves, as people do when they have pleasant recollections. The knight was lodged, I believe, at the Priory, where he had an uncle, an old Canon of some eighty odd years, who had begun life by enjoying it, and still persisted in this course, only he had changed his methods; for a spark of twenty and a Canonicus of eighty go to work in different ways. On this good old ecclesiastic Sir Philip is supposed to have fastened, and at the Priory he lived some while snug and at his ease, though the Cellarius hinted once or twice to the Prior that all the casks in the cellar had sprung a leak of late, and that if things went on in this style much longer, they would infallibly run dry. But the Prior rebuked him for his want of faith and showed him plainly how the saints love monks and casks and take care of them, and even when hard put to it, have been known to work great miracles in their behalf. I suppose however you would be glad to hear some few particulars about Sir Philip, and how he came to test the barrels of Burgavenny and the faith of the monks. And if you have ever walked through Abergavenny with your heads on one side you will doubtless be inquisitive about that fine house a little way out of the town, that seems to have just stopped short of being a castle, and has an extensive and complicated coat of arms cut over the porch. But I am going to tell you about these matters, and you shall understand how this mansion was built, and what it had to do with Sir Philip Meyrick. Who, as I have said, was styled of Caerwent, and indeed he came from the neighbourhood of that town of an old Welsh family, whose pedigree kept getting longer and longer and their rent roll shorter and shorter as the Saxons followed the Romans, and the Danes the Saxons, and the Normans the Danes. Every century in fact added quarters to their shield, and subtracted carucates from their possessions, until uncivil people began to whisper that the Meyricks of Caerwent were decaying and would ere long be all uprooted from the soil or rooted under it; it did not matter which. But you may judge what a sound old family this was by the time it took them to fall to pieces, your modern houses gave a crack and thunder in a moment to the earth in a cloud of dust and mortar, and dirt of all sorts, but this old ancient race who had once ruled all Gwent, and had furnished the Calendar with three or four saints, merely dropped a stone here and there, and then went on quietly for another hundred years. However when Sir Philip took possession he found the house, the garden, a field or two, and little else; and the rain came through the roof and soaked him through when he was in bed. These circumstances would have discouraged many young gentlemen, but being a Meyrick he had the hole mended and sat down to do a little thinking, for he perceived that the family was in a languid state and needed to be revived. Sir Philip had, to be sure, that cheerful confidence in himself, which helps a man on in the world, and fills his cup for him, and it need not be said that he considered himself equal to the task of restoring his house and collecting together a few acres of that dust whence we come and which bears corn and oak trees as well as men — some say a good field of corn is worth more than a fool; but I suspect this opinion is heretical and unreasonable besides. Why? Because rain sometimes falls and spoils the ingathering of the wheat; whereas no rain beats down nor does the mildew destroy the plentiful and everlasting crop of folly, which is ripe all the year round and groweth more luxuriant every day. But I return to Sir Philip, who when he had laudably determined in one way or another to magnify once more the name of Meyrick, began to go farther and to consider in what way he should do this. And finding himself master of no arts but those of warfare and horsemanship, he determined to try what chivalry would do for him and made the journey oversea to France, the which realm one of our glorious kings was at that time engaged in tormenting. This expedition Sir Philip performed in company with a band of pretty fellows of Gwent, of whom some had made the country too warm for them, some found the times too dull at home, some like himself were desirous of mending divers rags and tatters in their estates. And I believe that this Silurian band did not disgrace their ancestors, and came to be much respected by the French as a sturdy set of men who made large gaps and cut to the bone. This was well enough, but yet Sir Philip did not find his pockets get any fuller, and heard no talk of a grant of land or lordship, or office about the Court, or government of an island, or any of those contentments which are good for an old decayed family. Hence he made his way home again, perceiving that chivalry was going to the devil, and that this war was a very unrighteous war that did nobody any good. For he was not so silly as to think that killing Peers of France, burning their towns and castles and pilling the people was in itself a comely undertaking; though he might have excused it if it had brought him one or two of those little easements that I have mentioned. After this disappointment he was for a few weeks perplexed as to what he should turn his hands to, and at last concluded to roam for a while about the country, keeping his eyes open and his brain clear, since no one knows after what fashion good luck shall come to us. It really is a very simple thing this finding of the golden cup at the foot of the rainbow, and a rainbow generally follows rain and storm and driving clouds. Some few there are who profess to care nothing for this quest and spend their days in the courtyard, looking down into the dim old well, and dazzling their eyes with the stars they see therein. They think themselves wise, and in point of fact they are quaint fellows, which perhaps comes to the same thing. But Sir Philip knew better than they, and had no intention of leading this dreamy sort of life, for his great ambition (or so he said) was to have at last a good monument over him in alabaster, carved artfully, with all his quarters painted on the stone and in the window above. To enjoy this benefit, and to lie like a Christian when he was dead, it was necessary to lie like one when he was alive; that is, of course, in a warm bed under a leaden roof, with a full belly. And he was too wise a man (though he was a young one) to vex his heart over his poor estate and ill success at the wars; for he understood the benefit of misfortune and early buffets, the which give a vast relish to the warm hearth and good wine of after years. Hence he proceeded cheerfully to his geographical studies, strolling discursively from town to town, from castle to castle, and from convent to convent; never hurrying himself in the least, and always finding out the pleasantest paths and the most sheltered nooks. In this pilgrimage he acquired an immense account of knowledge, and found out all the fine things our land is fertile in, tasting the full-flavoured gilded puddings of Uske Priory, products of the vineyards of Lantonia Abbey in Gloucester, the hams of Caerleon, and the larded meats and sweet cakes of Monmouth. And since he always made himself agreeable, sang a pretty French song, and kissed the black-eyed Silurian maidens with liberality and in a pleasing manner, Sir Philip was welcomed by all and enjoyed himself exceedingly, as he deserved to do. But he never forgot business in his amusements, still keeping his eyes open, and sharpening his wits every day against other folks' brains, as he sat in the snuggest seat of the common-room, or hall, or tavern, ever ready to catch the morsel which should satisfy him for the remainder of his days. After about a year of this life, wherein he learnt more than Oxford, Paris, Padua, and Salamanca could have taught him, he hit upon the notion of visiting his uncle, the old Canon Ambrosius, of Abergavenny; for he was a pious young man, and had heard tell that the cook of the Priory had a curious art of preserving ducks in hot sauces, and that his condiments were on the whole more ecclesiastical than any in the Marches. So between the desire of enjoying the conversation of this admirable cook, and of dutifully serving his uncle, who came of a jovial stock, namely the Ap Adams of Hafod, Sir Philip used more speed in his journey to the Grand Seignory of Burgavenny than he was accustomed, and had to sit very still for many days after he had got there. As for the old Canonicus he welcomed his nephew, made much of him, and saw that he had plenty to eat and drink, and was lodged well; and listened to the Silurian wisdom he had acquired in his wanderings, for the good man relished the sapience of the tankard and the sparkling black eyes, having himself compiled some Breviates of this pleasant philosophy in his younger days. To be short Sir Philip found himself in desirable quarters, and sometimes of a morning after he had been mortifying his flesh with the warm sauces of Master Cook and the cool juices of Master Cellarer, he would grow melancholy and think of turning monk himself, so that he might keep his throat in a continual state of mortification. But these pensive thoughts went off with his morning draught, after which he commonly went his rounds about Abergavenny to his own delight and that of the townsfolk who loved a pretty man in a gay surcoat who could tell a merry tale. His chief guide and Cicero was a certain lawyer of the place, called John of Gloucester, the same being an officer of the Chancery of Burgavenny, and by no means bearing the gown in vain. He certainly did not look over sharp, being pudding-faced (if it be lawful to say so) and of a squat figure, but nevertheless his upper stories were well furnished, and he showed Sir Philip all the entertainments that were being performed in the town, and told him below what windows it was amusing to wait after dusk. By the advertisements he received of this witty lawyer Sir Philip threaded many a maze and soon knew the histories and adventures of the townsfolk very perfectly; but found nothing of solid advantage therein, until he had been in Abergavenny better than six months. And one evening as he was passing along a bye street with his companion, he saw a large well-compacted house, as fair as, or fairer than any in the town; but on the face of it there appeared but one lattice window, and this high up above the door. "Who dwells there?" said he to Master John. "Why nobody exactly knows," answered the lawyer, "for the inhabitants of this house are what is called quiet people who mind their own business so well that they give other folk no opportunity of helping them. But I believe that one Maurice Torlesse doth actually dwell here, with two servants, an old man and an old woman, very hideous to behold, and also his daughter whose name I know not, though I have seen her."

"Where did you catch a sight of her?" asked Philip, pricking up his ears, for he loved mysteries. "At that very lattice I have once seen the lady, as I passed below, and by *corpus Domini* I thought I should have swooned away."

"Was she then so foul to look upon?"

"Sir Philip, Sir Philip, she was as fair as a lady of faery and had oh! (here the little man sighed deeply to himself) such eyes.'Las! they pierced utterly to my heart, and taught me that all the beauties I had seen before were mere clumsy wenches. And I have seen her also going to the Mass and vesper-music at the Monastic Church, but shrouded and hidden by a thick veil and attended by the old hideous woman, who seems to be her governess."

"Her father then keeps her very close?"

"Right as he keeps his treasure, whereof I believe he hath good store; and I may tell you what a porter once told me; namely that going to the house on a certain day he was let in with his load and found the walls most chargeably adorned with hangings, and golden vessells on the cupboard finer than my lord has in the castle. But, as you may guess, he was in the street again before very long, and though he troubled himself to invent many ingenious tales as to what he had seen and heard, they are too improbable to be worth recounting."

"And has this beautiful young lady no lovers?"

"Not one, saving myself, who can never forget her."

"Why in that case (with your leave) I can do no less than to be her sweetheart," said Sir Philip. "I love beautiful eyes, and golden vessells, and comely hangings, and have always used to look closely into such ware; and I believe this damsel will suit me well enough — that is if she be well proportioned."

"I should judge that her taille is a rarer and more lautitious taille than that of Madam Phryne; but, by cock! if you win this lady you must be a very discreet knight, and a cunning, and a daring to boot; since Master Torlesse will have no gallants, keeps his doors bolted, and shoots bolts at any he sees lurking about."

"Well, well, I must advise and consider, and concoct plans and strategies, and call me a fool if I do not give you some parchments to engross before the year is done." With this they parted and Philip passed the night in trying to get some sense out of this queer sort of household, applying all his experience and rules of art to it, but nevertheless the morning found him muddled, for though he had heard of many pretty girls with three or four lovers, and understood the complications arising therefrom, a pretty girl with no lovers at all was an entirely new leaf in his book. He perceived therefore that he must gather more facts and look into the affair himself; and so made it his business to walk slowly between the church and the house of Master Torlesse, about Evensong time, in hopes to meet the lady who had done such damage to the heart of John of Gloucester. And this he did for a week and saw nothing; but one stormy rainy evening as he was loitering along a narrow passage, he perceived two persons coming swiftly and shyly towards him, who when they saw him seemed at first minded to turn back, but in the end pressed on, more hastily than before. And as they passed Sir Philip doffed his cap, and bowed low, equally to both, since he was not quite a fool, and knew that it is rather more important in the beginning of a love affair to have the good will of the governess than the mistress. But they seemed to make no account of his civility and courteous observance; and he could only mark that the young lady was indeed of a fine shape, richly dressed and specially scented, but so closely veiled that he could not lighten his heart with a glint of those marvellous eyes of hers. And as they fared along this passage, the trees that hung over the wall of it, wept and rained upon them, as the gusts of wind came up; and Sir Philip stood gazing dizzily, for though he had seen little, yet the strange influence of a perfect grace and beauty had fallen on his soul, so that his brain was mazed and wildered. But after a little while he followed the lady of his thoughts to the church, and found the monks at Evensong, and looking around saw the two figures kneeling together in a pew. Forthwith he set himself in a convenient place behind a pillar and watched them attentively, hoping the young lady might raise her veil, but she remained with head bent and enshrouded all through Evensong, and the service sung, went forth as if she saw no one save her old governess, who should certainly have been veiled herself, for her countenance was of a mystical and stupendous ugliness. In this wise Sir Philip saw his lady once or twice and still bowed low before her, and worshipped her presence, and likewise the presence of the hag, who, he thought, looked at him not unpleasantly; but he spoke not a word, for he considered that it was not yet time for speaking. And in the next place he began to linger in the neighbourhood of their house, casting many wistful glances up at the lattice, and expecting every moment to have a dose of boiling water, or maybe an iron bolt through his body, since Master Torlesse appeared from all accounts to be a man who did not like to have his mansion or his daughter stared at. But a really gallant gentleman cares nothing for the anger of parents or guardians, trusting in his own manly feature, the courage of his heart, above all in the très-noble and puissant God of Love, who still prevents and succours true, loyal, and steadfast lovers, his liege subjects, delighting in their service and helping them to make a mock and a song of those silly persons who guard beauty, and think themselves strong enough to keep Love out of a lady’s heart. It is this same Diou Damur that is Chancellor of the Schools of Lovers, and teaches therein by his professors (who have many names) a joyous Trivium and Quadrivium, giving some to drink of the red wine of Desire, feeding others with the sweet apples of Cozenge and Trompery, and making all more sharp and cunning than the subtlest doctors or masters in philosophy. And those that serve him well he will never desert. Hence one night, about the time of the Compline-song, as Sir Philip paced to and fro beneath the high house of Master Maurice Torlesse, in the dusky radiance of a moon seven days old, he suddenly saw a light gleam through the lattice of his longing; then a hand pushed the cancels open, and lo! his lady looked forth upon him. "Come near," said she, in a voice sweet and plaintive as a virelai, that drew Sir Philip more strongly and graciously than the west wind draweth the ships of holy pilgrims to the port of their desire. And coming close under the wall he looked upwards to her face leaning out of the window, and gazed into her most beautiful brown eyes, which would have made St. Benedict himself tear up his Rule, and would have burnt up all stern Capitularies and Edicts in their liquid fire. But now they were pitiful and moist with tears, and as she spoke to her true knight her voice ever and again broke short. "Are you not young," said she, "or have you lost the desire to live, that you come to this house so often and so hardily. Certainly you cannot know what fashion of man my father is; but know now that the next time you hie hither will be the last, since he to-day oiled his cross-bow and bade Richard dig a grave, as he said, for a proper man."

"And if you will look forth and smile upon me dying, I would it were now to-morrow and your father's bolt was sped. But understand O maiden most beauteous and adorable, that my heart and soul and life are yours altogether; I am your mere creature and desire but to gaze upon that super-excellent loveliness and worship it; and if you should scorn my service I shall indeed die more miserably than by any bolt or sword." Perhaps you may divine that while these pretty speeches, so gallantly phrased and amorously conceited were being delivered, the two were gazing either on other, and Sir Philip's eyes spoke more fairly and delivered more honest arguments than his lips; for you see he was too many feet below his mistress to make any effectual use of this latter organ; by the which a girl is more thoroughly convinced *ex opere operato,* in five minutes without a word being uttered than if her lover spoke like Demosthenes, Æschines, Cicero, and Chrysostom all at once. However the young knight did what he could with his fine blue eyes, and between them and his hardy and knightly orations, full of amorous doctrines and high courage, the maid began to feel a fluttering at her heart, and a strange delicious sensation that made her wish Sir Philip had a ladder. But as she heard her governess's footstep tottering along the passage, she merely answered "Sir Knight I do not quite conceive your meaning; but if you are not weary of the sun come not in my path to-morrow, since I am purposed to shrive me at the monastic church, and if my father hear that you were to be seen on the way, he will assuredly cause you to die.” And with that she clapped the window to, and Sir Philip was fain to begone, for he had noted the shy smile that played about her lips as she finished speaking, and understood her intent to perfection. Hence he betook himself to Master Cellarer at the priory, and astonished that good monk with his capacity for drinking, till the man crossed himself violently, thinking this guest was a kind of incarnate Wine-God, who had come over the hills to Abergavenny, as Bacchus came to Thebes, and would do damage to somebody ere he left it. Indeed Brother Toricellus expected every moment to see vine leaves wreathing round Philip’s temples, and to hear cymbals clanging: but as a matter of fact the knight was only anxious to have his brain in good order, so that he might reason clearly, and see his way through this strange dædal of Love. At last he left the cellarer to his devotions, very solemnly and earnestly charging him to be moderate in his cups, and walked steadily to his lodging with about a gallon of French wine in his inwards and a fertile crop of ideas and conceptions in his brain. And the next morning he sought out his uncle, the old Canon, and explained the whole matter to him, dropping some hints as to a new rood screen for the quire when the marriage was concluded. The which hit Father Ambrosius in the soft place, for he was zealous for the good of the community: but yet when he heard the name of Torlesse he looked grave and explained to his nephew that this man was indeed a crusty customer, who was suspected of heresy by the church, but lived in peace by making large oblations to the parson and the prior. “Leave all that to me,” answered the young knight, “but tell me who shall shrive Mistress Torlesse to-day?”

“Father Andrew,” answered the Canon. “And is he not a man somewhat resembling myself in figure?”

“Yea, but stoops exceedingly and shambles in his walk.”

“That is well, and with your favour and his, I will take his place and inspect the conscience of the fair penitent, and prescribe a penance for her, better than any in Father Andrew’s brain.” To be short Sir Philip got on the blind side of Father Andrew and obtained the loan of his habit, and at the appointed time for hearing confessions, shambled with his eyes bent on the ground into what is now called the Herbert Chapel, and there awaited his mistress, with the cowl drawn over his head, and his hands on his knees, in the shriving pew. Thither also came the girl, pale and trembling between joy and fear, for her heart had been beating terribly all the way, and at every step she looked for her lover; and, to be sure, she had dreamt of nothing else all through the night, in her little chamber or the lattice. And having left her governess kneeling in the church, she came slowly and totteringly to the chapel, stopping now and then for a moment to lay her hand upon the tombs of the old lords, for she had scarce strength to walk. And as the false monk heard those footsteps, his heart also leapt, but joyfully, and when she was within a few paces of him he started up, and then those poor trembling limbs of hers were, you may be sure, rarely sustained, and the red maiden lips felt what delight there is in a kiss. Some there are who say that all this rapture is a mere fantasy, the concept of a mind extravagant and delirious, but I believe, for my part that it is as real as any other earthly thing. At all events young people will always take a certain pleasure in the business, and certainly this penitent and confessor did so kiss, fondle, hug, and caress, murmuring such fervent endearments and pretty phrases, that poor Eva de Braose must have heard them from her monument hard by, and moved her right hand a little nearer to her stony heart. In fine Mistress Torlesse made a very famous shrift, confessing in the first place that her name was Edith, and in the second that she accepted Sir Philip's service, and would take him for her true loyal lover. But she bade him by no means come before her window any more, since her father had a keen eye and a cool aim, "and," said she, "I would rather never see your face again, my darling, than have you die for love of me and my poor loveliness." Then Sir Philip (after that he had answered in a proper manner to this nice speech) began to enquire as to the old governess, and found that she was somewhat favourably inclined towards him, though she feared her master more than God, the saints, and the devil, but yet a little gold might work wonders with her. "Then give her this," said he, drawing forth a purse with a matter of twenty pieces in it, "and promise her five times as much on our wedding day." And after making certain arrangements and appointments, the time came for them to part, the which they did, not without some trouble, for at these farewells each desires to give the last caress, and to kiss but once more, and all this takes time. However Edith went away at last, and the Pseudo-Andrew shuffled back to the convent, and gave the priest back his vestments, assuring him that things were in a very prosperous state. And from that time Sir Philip knelt beside his Edith on most days whereon she came to Mass and Evensong, with the connivance of the ancient hideous governess, to whom he persisted in paying most lowly reverence, continually dropping little purses into her hand, the which he obtained from the Canon Ambrosius. And once or twice instead of going to the monastic quire his lady met him just outside the town, and they pleased themselves by walking beside the Gavenny hand in hand. And the more Sir Philip heard of Master Maurice Torlesse the less he liked him, for everything that could be told of him was bad, save only that he was undoubtedly very rich, and kept in his house chests full of good things; besants, rose-nobles, flagons, and chalices of gold, to wit. But it fell out one day (it was in autumn, as the story was told to me) when the lovers were parting fondly after their vesper-musick was duly and sweetly sung, Edith bade her lover by no means look for her on the morrow, "since," said she, "there will be a dreadful and violent storm of thunder and lightning and furious rain, that will slay many men, and beasts, and tear up the oaks on the mountain side, and pour the brooks and the rivers all across the land." At this prophecy Sir Philip was in no little astonishment, for the air was dry and not too clear, no cloud was in the sky, and the western heaven was filled with the clear red glow of the sunset. And with many questions he tried to make Edith tell him what her intent was, or how she knew of tempests before they fell, when there was no sign or apparent likelihood of the same; but she would not resolve him, replying with put-offs and kisses, and twining her arms fast round his neck, so that he had to be content with these doubtful though pleasant explanations. And as he went home he saw an old husband working in the fields, whom he asked plainly if he thought a storm was approaching, receiving for answer that there could be no better prospect of fine weather; though the man, who was a wary old Silurist, ended his reply by saying "so we should think, however," but this he always did, knowing by long experience that there is no certitude or sure opinion in mortal affairs. But he always excepted one thing, and still stiffly maintained that strong ale was a good drink and a desirable. In this as we know, he was right, as he was in his all but universal cautel judicious and philosophical, notably in this matter of the weather, for on the morrow there burst a terrible and destroying storm over the town, bearing rain in torrents, and winds that hurled down wall and tower, flung heavy stones into the air, and tore up tall trees and whirled them as though they had been hazel saplings. And all the sky crashed with thunder, and the lightning seemed as if it shot up into the black accursed air from the rocks of the Great Skirrid and the mighty dome of the Blorenge, and the peak of the Sugar Loaf; and the waters of the Uske and the Gavenny boiled and seethed and streamed out all upon the land. Then did the great bells of the Priory chime out, and the bells of St. John's, and of the Churches of St. Michael and St. Teilo, and the two St. Davids, even till the quires of the mountains were ringing down the storm and matching the voices of the bells with the roaring of the thunder. In this wise they of course got the storm under at last, for no tempest can withstand the chime of bells, if they be rung aright; but everybody wished the wind and lightning had given in a little sooner before half-a-dozen men, a score of beasts, and as many sheep and horses had been struck dead; to say nothing of houses in flames or else quite ruinated. But it was noted that of late years there had been several of these cursed storms at Abergavenny, and some tried to prove that the weather like everything else was getting into a bad predicament and wanted the Holy Father after it. As for Sir Philip, he was in a perturbed state of mind, not wishing to have a prophetess to wife, believing that such personages were well enough in the old time, but now inconvenient, and likely to bring a man into trouble with the Archdeacon and the ecclesiastical courts. Wherefore he pressed his sweetheart strongly to tell him how she came to know anything about futurity, and perceived that his words annoyed her and drew tears into her eyes, and made her lips tremble. So with comforting the poor girl, stroking her soft hair, and kissing away the tears he forgot all about his perplexities, till he was alone again. And then they bothered him worse than before, because he saw that she was afraid to resolve him, the which made Sir Philip suspect that this was a bad business. After such sort a good many interviews were held between them, always with the same beginning and end; and Philip was so strongly bound with love's tendrils that he could not break away; but he got rather thin about the face, and a hogshead of Bordeaux wine lost all but the scent and fragrance of what it had once held. In these days Brother Toricellus the Cellarer would not patiently listen to anyone who affirmed Sir Philip Meyrick of Caerwent to be made of the same stuff as common men. "The times are coming," he would say, "when the Prior, the Sub-Prior, the Canons, and you and I, unworthy brethren and chiefest of sinners, shall drink water; *de torrente in via bibemus*, for there will soon be no wine left in the casks"; and all the monks grew pale and crossed themselves, for they began to think Sir Philip was a Silenus sent to chastise them for their shortcomings and misdemeanours. But Brother Toricellus, a man without faith, had led them astray, and made them shoot wide of the mark. But about a month after the storm, as Sir Philip and Edith were talking in their accustomed manner, he pressing her to clear up his doubts and she sadly and silently hanging down her head, her love for him prevailed, and she said at last, “Well then if it must be so, come to the back of our house tomorrow evening, at four o’clock, and wait by the door of the garden wall till I open to you. But if you die, your death will be of your own seeking, and my soul shall soon follow yours, for I am not able to live apart from you, my true knight. But if you will enter this perilous tourney, put on a surcoat of green, a green cap, and be prepared to lie closely and privily.” With that she burst into tears and clung to her lover, weeping as if her heart was rent in twain. But Sir Philip was overjoyed at her words, and went to his comrade the lawyer, and told him that the Romance was getting into its last books. “And John,” said he, “prepare choice skins, and cut your quills very aptly, for I will have my marriage deeds executed by you and by none else.” At this the lawyer puckered up his mouth, and put his hand to his head, for musing, he conceived that rolls pertaining to other matters might have to be made out. But he willingly obtained for Sir Philip a green surcoat and cap of soft cloth; “She will make you hide among leaves,” said he. “So I suppose” answered the knight, “and look you, I’ll have my sword not very far from me, and if there be a burial, ‘twill not be of a Meyrick of Caerwent.” So, like a knight of faery, he went all in green, to the appointed place, by a door in a high wall; and sat down on the grass, with his hand on his sword, looking somewhat grimly on it, for Master Torlesse had put him to great inconvenience and trouble, and he would have relished no task better than that of piercing this sour old devil to the heart. It was on occasions of this kind that Sir Philip’s jaws shut tight down, and his brows and moustache went up, and between ourselves I should have preferred to let him alone, if I had seen him in such a mood, for to speak the truth when he was in the humour, and his teeth were clenched, he would have fought all the hosts of hell. *Requiem aeternum,* he was a true son of Gwent and a very perfect knight. But when the dials marked four of the afternoon, Sir Philip heard a gentle rustle at his back, and looking up he saw the door slowly open, and his lady standing with a pale face, beckoning to him. Then did Sir Philip enter, and found himself in a thick grove of trees, growing close to one another, and after that with one long and solemn kiss they had kissed each other’s lips, she set him in his place, where he could lie down and look through the leaves, and forthwith left him, telling him not to stir nor make a sound, on peril of his life. And for the next hour or two the knight had full leisure allotted him, wherein to meditate on this strange case, and what he was to see that should explain his sweetheart's foreknowledge of the storm. As for the garden he found it ordinary enough, in nothing different from other closes, unless for one or two flowers of exceeding sweet fragrance and rare beauty, the which he had never seen before. But when he had turned over everything in his mind a good many times, and was feeling puzzled, weary, and very thirsty, he saw a tall old man, grey-bearded and hawk-nosed, come into the midst of the pleasaunce from the house, the same being in fact Master Torlesse, and his habit was a dark brown cloak with long hanging sleeves of tawny yellow, a black undervest, and a yellow cap on his head, shaped like a cap of maintenance, having on the front of it a jewell in silver, being the image of an eagle holding a serpent in its beak. And in his right hand was a long black wand, and from his baldrick hung a sword, and what Sir Philip saw afterwards you will find in the chests of the Court *In Banco Domini* of the old Lordship and Grand Seigneury *of* Burgavenny. The which parchments are marked on the outside "*In the affair of the pardon of Philippus Meyrick de Caerwent, Miles Auratus, for the murder of Mauritius called Torlesse, a man of unknown lineage and estate.*" And as I myself, by the favour of the Clerk, have seen these strange documents, have indeed fingered them and held them under my nose for many hours together till I seemed to hear an ancient law-man reciting and droning the dim old story in my ears, I will make an abbreviature and digest of it for you using as far as I can the phrase of the original. The which beginneth somewhat as follows. In the year of our Saviour MCCCLXXII, the forty-fifth year of our Sovereign Lord King Edward third of that name since the Conquest, the fourth of our Lord Jehan third of that name, Baron of Burgavenny, Earl of Pembroke, Lieutenant of Acquitaine, and Lord Marcher of Wales; on St. Denys his day at eleven o'clock in the forenoon there came before us, Guillaume de Oskington, being the judge appointed under the seal of our Lord Jehan aforesaid, rightly and duly to discharge, do and execute justice in his Lordship of Burgavenny, Clement la Touche Prior of the Convent of St. Mary the Virgin, in the town of Abergavenny, the same appearing in the stead of the Canon Ambrosius, who professes that he is from age and infirmity unable himself to appear and plead his petition. And Prior Clement the above-named ecclesiastic, being honourably received by us, and we having allowed him to plead in the place of the Canon Ambrosius, he has humbly sued that a pardon shall be made out, granted, and published to the person named Philip Meyrick, a knight, who, having been delivered into the hands of our Master Sergeant, is now in the prison of the Court, and there awaits his trial on the ground that he did violently and maliciously take away the life of a certain Maurice Torlesse, an inhabitant of this town, unduly, unlawfully, feloniously and against the peace of our Lord Jehan, third of that name. And we having consented to receive this petition and to hear testimony and witness upon it, so that, if it may be, it shall be supported, buttressed, and firmly established out of the mouths of several persons, who have professed themselves willing to give evidence before us, Guillaume de Oskington, on this behalf; we have caused our clerk to write down the matter of their depositions, so that the truth of this affair may be the more clearly known and understanded. And in the first place has come before us John of Gloucester, a lawyer of the Chancery of this Lordship, who has read to the Court the relation of this affair taken down by him in cursive characters from the lips of Sir Philip Meyrick, to the which document Sir Philip Meyrick has affixed his seal in token that it is the truth. And in this deed is shown how the petitioner having become enamoured of Mistress Edith Torlesse…. (Here I shall leave out a page, for we have heard all this before)… and that after he had lain hidden in the grove, as he conceives for the space of two hours, he saw the late Maurice Torlesse come into the garden and stand in the midst thereof, holding in his hand a long wand, the which is now in the keeping of the Court. And he affirms that up to this time it was as fine and as dry a day, as he had ever seen, and that there were no clouds to be made out from one side of heaven to the other. But he states that Maurice Torlesse, standing in the midst of the close, first struck the earth with his wand, then, throwing up both his hands, with the palms turned out and open. Forthwith the ground began to tremble and shake, and to heave up and down, sending out evil vapours, which curled in wreaths and floated in the air. Then Maurice Torlesse struck the earth a second time, pronouncing with a loud voice the name Sabiao; and the earth shook more violently, and in the one place piled itself into the similitude of mountains, and in another fell as it were into valleys; and springs of water burst forth and flowed between the hills like to brooks and rivers. Then was the bare earth covered with grass and trees and cornfields, and whilst the wizard continually uttered invocations (which the petitioner does not recollect, for he professes not to be a clerk, and affirms moreover that with this wild monstrous work his brain was muddled) slowly was built up in a valley below a bare round hill, twice the height of an ant-hill, the walls of a town, and the houses of it, and without one gate was a castle, and without the other gate a quire. Then the mansions and churches and farmsteads and cabins appeared on the face of the country around, and cattle and horses and sheep were made, and last of all men and women walking through the town, or labouring in the fields. Then did Sir Philip Meyrick perceive that he saw before him in little, the likeness of the town of Abergavenny; and the hills were the Blorenge, and Skirrid, and Sugar Loaf, and the streams the Honthy and Gavenny and Uske. But as he beheld this wonder the wreaths of accursed smoke, which came forth from the earth, began to mix with one another, and to gather together, and spread out above the earth, like clouds, and to drift across the mountains, as Maurice Torlesse continually waved his wand above them. Then did they change to a black colour, and seemed like ink, and the wizard smote the earth, where it resembled the cleft of the Great Skirrid, and flame gushed out from the end of the wand and ran all along the clouds as it had been lightning, and a noise of thunder began to sound, and the clouds poured forth a storm of rain upon the earth. But whilst all this was being done in little by art magic and devilish contrivance, the same was being performed in great, and in truth a very terrible storm of rain and thunder had fallen on Abergavenny, and the church bells were set ringing, at the sound whereof the wizard laughed aloud, and smote his clouds asunder so that he might look down upon the town and see here a burnt mansion, here a heap of ruins, and here a man scorched and blackened with the forking fire, or struggling for his life in the flood. But as he gazed thus, it is supposed that he must have glanced at his own garden, and so have seen Sir Philip Meyrick hiding amidst the trees; for without more ado, he drew his sword, and rushed furiously towards him, leaving the storm to take care of itself. And the petitioner deposeth that seeing this dreadful wizard coming thus with sword in hand, he was in some dismay, not for fear of his adversary’s arm, but for terror of his art; and also because he was an old grey beard, whom to kill would bring no honour nor worship. Yet, seeing no choice in the matter, and not wishing to die by hands so vile and abominable, he called upon the Heavenly Host and especially upon his patron St. Philip the Apostle, and drawing his sword, went forth against Maurice Torlesse, and had need of all his capacity, or else he affirms he would have been pierced through at the first onset. But never has he had so bitter a fight, in any battle oversea against knights of renown and fame, mighty warriors clad cap-a-pé in steel harness, as against this old man, for the sword of him seemed to dart from all quarters at once, and ever sought to home within his heart. And in this fight Sir Philip Meyrick received ten grievous wounds, some of which did put his life in danger, but at last, he suddenly stepped back, and with all the hatred of his soul whirling his sword aloft cleft the wizard from top to toe, so that he died not long after. And at the death of him all his fantastic device of mountains and streams and the walled town seemed to melt away, and the clouds also as they appeared, in thin wreaths; and at that time the veritable storm of heaven ceased to rage. And this he professes is the whole truth of the matter, no more and no less, wherefore he craves of his liege Lord Jehan, third of that name, misericorde and pardon, for that the late Maurice Torlesse was a right foul and pestilent wizard, to send whom to his eternal torment of hell-fire was well done and thankworthy. And here endeth the relation and prayer of Sir Philip Meyrick, Knight of Caerwent; the which deed we have read and inspected, and declare that it is duly signed, sealed, witnessed, and attested.

Next have come before us, Guillaume de Oskington, Masters Robin Pyatt and Samuel Owen, surgeons, who state that they have had experience in sword cuts, spear thrusts, hacks, stabs, and the like wounds, having been in the wars oversea against the French and Spaniards. And they declare themselves to be competent persons, sufficiently learned in the ancient physical authors, and have produced for our satisfaction divers parchments the which we have read and find them sufficient witness and surety for the aptness of these persons. Who declare that they have made examination of the body of Sir Philip Meyrick, and have found upon it ten wounds, being about the head, midriff, arms and breast, and they declare that five of these wounds are grievous and should have been mortal, had not the blood of the wounded man been pure and uncorrupted, and his strength very great. And they have also examined the body of the late Maurice Torlesse, and find that it was cleft into two equal parts by a most admirable and artificial stroke, the which no bone or sinew could resist. And they have found no other wound upon the dead man, from his head to his feet. But craving the indulgence and consideration of the Court, they have prayed us to look favourably upon the accused knight, saying that a man who cuts so clean is too good for the axe or halter, since there are no traces of bungling or awkwardness about his handiwork.

Next has come before us Mistress Edith Torlesse, the sweetheart of Sir Philip Meyrick, who has shown us how this affair came about, confirming in all respects the words of the knight. And having lifted her veil, at our desire, she has answered all such questions as we have thought fit to put her, in a modest and maidenly manner; only with great difficulty confessing her father to have been a man in all respects malicious and cruel, but could say nothing as to his parentage, nor from whence he came at the first, for she knew nought on these matters. And having been interrogated by us, as to how she knew when her father was about to do these works of the devil, she has replied that from his laughter and glee she ever knew when he had this operation in his mind. And being further questioned by us, for what cause was it that her father would not give her in marriage, or allow her to meddle with love affairs, the which, *obiter dicendo,* we Guillaume de Oskington affirmed to be the natural, fit, and laudable employment for so rare a beauty and perfect grace of maidenhood; she has answered to us, not without blushes, that it was for fear lest her lover might come to be informed of her father’s practices, and so bring him to ruin. And hereupon we have ended our interrogation, and have had this maiden honourably escorted back to her own house.

And lastly has come before us Dom. Anthony Flambard, a Canon of the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, in the City of London; an ecclesiastic well acquainted with the Canon Law, and a very sound and capable divine. Who, having read all the depositions relating to this affair of the murder of Maurice called Torlesse, and having talked at length with Sir Philip Meyrick and Mistress Edith Torlesse, has come to a thorough understanding of the matter; and has declared to us the whole nature and essence of the incantations whereby storms and tempests are drawn down to earth. And all his opinions and doctrines he has confirmed and maintained out of Holy Writ, the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and out of the works of learned men of the Universities of Salamanca and Padua; so that in all of what he has said there are no mistakes at all. And he declares that this operation and invocation of tempests is done by means of devils and fiends of hell, and that it is a foul sin and shame in any Christian man to do such works. Wherefore he is of opinion (speaking with all submission toward my Lord Jehan de Hastings, third of that name, and this honourable Court) that Maurice Torlesse was fitly punished by the hands of Sir Philip Meyrick. Though he declares that he would this accursed wizard could have been taken alive and delivered into the hands of Holy Church, that a fit punishment might have been meted out to him, who was not worthy of so knightly a death.

And we, Guillaume de Oskington, having received authority from my Lord Jehan, third of that name, Baron of Burgavenny, Earl of Pembroke, Lieutenant of Acquitaine, and Lord Marcher of Wales, in this behalf, for that our Lord aforesaid is now beyond seas in the service of our Lord the King; and having power in this affair either to give doom of death or life whichever shall seem good to us; having duly gone through all the evidence that could be brought before us, and having examined Sir Philip Meyrick of Caerwent, both publickly and privily, have determined to grant the petition of Clement la Touche, Prior of the Convent of St. Mary, the same being proctor for the Canon Ambrosius, as is aforesaid. And we have therefore caused a pardon to be made out in the form accustomed and sealed with the Great Seal of my Lord Jehan; and have decreed that Sir Philip Meyrick shall be forthwith enlarged from his captivity and be no more in the custody of our Master Sergeant; and that no fines nor amercements of any kind be taken from him, on this behalf, neither now, nor hereafter.

So the old record ends, and under the name of the good judge is the great waxen seal of the Barons of Burgavenny; which in those days was strong enough to open dungeons and shut them, to kill or to save. Hence it was that Sir Philip and Edith were brought together before the altar of the conventual church of St. Mary's, and became the bravest couple in all Gwent. And the first thing that Sir Philip did, after he had received Maurice Torlesse his estate by right of his wife, was to bear a thousand pieces of gold to the Prior, that the roodscreen and loft, with a fair rood and images of St. Mary and St. John, might be forthwith executed, the which was done so sumptuously and honestly that there was not another to compare with it in all the Marches of Wales. And every year Sir Philip made an oblation of a hogshead of French wine to the monastery, and he made build also the chapel of St. Philip, having an altar of alabaster, and a shrine adorned with jewells, and stories annealed in the window o'er the altar: and this he did because the saint had succoured him in his great necessity. And here he and his wife were buried, when they had lived for long years together happily and their last day was done, and a glorious tomb was made over them carved with images, and coat armour, very specially and decently cut out. But all this chapel, has since been ruined and prophaned by wicked men, on whose heads may God's curse alight, both here and hereafter. But the Prior Clement la Touche said to the Cellarer "Next time, Brother Toricellus, have a little more faith." In such wise was renewed again the house of Meyrick, and so firmly established that it hath never been more prosperous than now. But you see how foolishly the old wizard conducted his affairs, and what an ass he was to think he could subdue the God of Love, and shut his doors upon lovers. It was this folly of his that brought death and dishonour to him at last; for I daresay that if he had behaved like a sensible man, and treated Sir Philip courteously and honourably, his son-in-law would have looked over his little eccentricities and let him die in peace. But I suppose he would hava made him live a good way off, because a father-in-law who deals in storms and is in the habit of pumping thunder, is by no means a desirable neighbour. However I dare say everything happened for the best, and certainly Sir Philip and his sweetheart got on very well without this unpleasant old personage, who not content with being a wizard, must needs be also a fool. But let all of us ever serve our Liege Lord Love, and worship him with a perfect worship; swearing still by the Ladies and the Peacock.

So did Nick Leonard bring his tale of the Lady of the Lattice to an end; and we clapped our hands, for we had relished it mightily all through, and thought it might compare with the story of Abergavenny told by Master Ambrose. The musicians praised it also to excess, for they had not heard anything quite like this before; though I should suspect that some fine strokes were lost upon them. And while we were discussing and pointing out to these good fellows the beauties and Silurian wisdom of the relation, we began to wonder at the marvellous art and grammar of the old wizard, who was able to perform such a magistery. All of us agreed that there is no such work done in our days, and Mosca said, "If you, sir, had not so clearly and evidently shown the matter to us, I should have thought this a thing impossible to men."

"Why, signor," answered Nick, "you must know that it is not altogether of faith to believe the story, though I myself credit it entirely; as I do everything set forth and approved by the good judge Guillaume; and he it is plain believed every word of Sir Philip's deposition, or else had not granted him pardon. But I must in honesty tell you there is another account of the affair done at the House with the Lattice; the source of which is the mouths of evil-speakers, who are always ready to spit upon dead men's graves and to defile honourable families.

These fellows tell us that Sir Philip was a profligate and idle rascal, my sweet Edith a harebrained foolish wench, and Maurice Torlesse an honest grave gentleman, who with much ado tried to keep his daughter a virtuous woman. And they declare that Sir Philip murdered the poor man in cold blood, and with his sweetheart concocted all the strange story of the incantation, because the elder would not give this rakish wastrel his daughter. But who would credit such an idle story? None I believe but a foolish, malicious personage, whose heart was galled with the dignity and worship of a right illustrious, honourable and ancient house. However 'tis of no more use to get warm and use strong language concerning this matter than any other; for trust me, gentlemen, all things are solved by sitting still, and not by walking about with cheeks puffed out with big words. Come Tom, spit out a tale, but by the Dogstar and the full moon in glory, let's have no more of your devilish alchemists or any theological tales or records." The good Rubrican was hurt by this address, for he had a great notion of his story of Caldicot, the which he considered a moral and profitable relation; however he suffered the insult to pass and stroked his stomach softly for a few seconds, then put his finger to his nose, and thus began.

THE RUBRICAN'S SECOND TALE

The Triumph of Love

ONE FINE MORNING in July, just as the shadows were equal all round the world (or at all events in Gwent, and that is sufficient for our purposes) and the clocks of our holy faith were confessing in a variety of manners that it was noonday; the Fair Folk of Wentwood Chase were amusing themselves by the spectacle of a young knight, wandering about under the greenwood in a perplexed and vagrant fashion, as if he did not exactly know whitherwards to go or what to do with himself. What the Fair Folk thought of him, I can't tell you, because I am unhappily unlearned in the language of Faery, and have read none of their Chronicles, Memorabilia, Annals, or Commentaries; but I have reason to think they approved of him because he chanced to wear a green surcoat and was a proper man besides. On this green vestment were blazed three golden stags in pale; and to speak the truth they paced through herbage of a faded and autumnal sort, which bore the russet vestiges of many a storm of wine, and had undoubtedly done good service in its day. From my mention of the knight's coat you will have guessed, of course, that he was of the d'Espalions of Gascony, and this is indeed the fact; and he of whom I tell you bore the name of Sir Symon d'Espalion, and thus was the son of a right illustrious house forced to wander through the forests of a foreign land. Is not this shocking? But there was no help for it, since he had been so unfortunate as to get mixed up in disputes with the High Sheriff of Gascony, who grew violent and desired to hang Sir Symon by the neck; but the knight thought it would be foolhardy to try the experiment, and left France suddenly. Never enter into arguments with these Sheriffs, because they are testy fellows, and have friends who are rather fond of trying how long one can live without any breath. However Symon was young and somewhat untried in the wickedness of the world, so it is not admirable that he made a few mistakes at the beginning — some men do nothing else from beginning to end, and are it is plain themselves mere incarnate fallacies. It needs not to enquire concerning the matter of the discussion between the Sheriff and the Knight; but I am pretty certain that in this case as in all others love was at the bottom of the mischief. Possibly it was love of black eyes, red lips, and a neat figure, or maybe of curiosities such as coins, jewells, bracelets and gauds of that description, or perchance merely a love of a complete vengeance — it's of no importance. But I incline to think it was the last item that sent Sir Symon abroad; from certain hints and dark sayings in the Chronicle; and certainly Vengeance was the mistress of many in that age; whereby she is proven to be a notorious slut and wanton as well as an ill-tempered harridan.

But however that may be, here was the knight a good many miles away from his native castle, with very few nobles in his pocket, and not too much victual or drink in his stomach, wandering on this fine July morrow through the wet glades of Wentwood Chase. For it had rained without ceasing a whole week, and even now the great white clouds were slowly rolling away to westward like tall ships in full sail, and leaving behind them a deep blue firmament and a hot sun, which made everything smoke and steam. You will suppose perhaps that the warmth and light and pleasant air caused the exile to cheer up and sing snatches of ballads and rondels; but I assure you it was not so. For what good is an azure heaven to a man when his heart is shrouded in sable and thick darkness; or do you think a joyous dancing air that sets the boughs a-tremble and the fairy-bells a-chiming can rejoice him whose soul is driven across a wilderness of sorrow without hope? Nay these things do but increase our grief (unless we be thoroughly indoctrinated and inebriated with the subtlest and mellowest knowledge of Siluria) and only made Sir Symon regret with sharper anguish the misfortune that had reft him from the bluer sky of his own country. But as it happened he was one of those persons who are well taken care of, and somehow or other, set upon their legs. People fortunate in the same way declare the cause to be a keen wit and a skill in untying tangles; others who are poor all their days and leave no money for wax tapers or masses, say it's all luck and impudence. I don't pretend to decide which of the two opinions be the verity; and I really don't think it matters a pin's head, for our business is to take whatever comes without noise of rejoicing or lamentation, since neither will last for very long. As for the wandering knight he chanced upon a road leading through the forest to a castle built there by the Lord Marcher of Estrighoil, both for the defence of his lordship and for his pleasure when he would leave his halls above Wye water, and go a-hunting in Wentwood. This castle was at first only one great round tower, but afterwards it had been made larger and furnished with an eight-sided tower and a hall, and surrounded by a pool of water; and it was on a high place looking over the greeny billows of the forest and many a hill and valley and long level of the beloved Gwentian land. As for the name I am in some difficulty, for some call it Taroggy, some Strogul, and others Struggle, which has made learned men mix things up and confound this forest fort with the great castle of Estrighoil above the Wye and the Severn and Chepstow town. But I believe Struggle will suit us best, for it means something, and this is more than can be said of Taroggy, unless one happens to understand the niceties, contractions, mutations and amplifications of the tongue of the Terrestrial Paradise. And so it fell out that Sir Symon d'Espalion found himself about half-a-mile from this place, and as he stood musing and doubting whether to toil up or shamble down, the faint notes of a horn wound afar off were borne unto his ears; and looking to the quarter whence this music came, he saw in the valley below a goodly company on horseback, knights in glittering steel, with bannerets; and as he rightly judged ladies also, and men following a-foot; all coming leisurely in brave array toward him, and sounding the horn by turns. And again Sir Symon was in doubt, namely as to whether he should run into the deep hollows of the wood and hide himself; or rather run to meet this gallant band; and his difficulty he solved by sitting down on the roots of a beech-tree as being a less troublesome method than either of the other two. This was certainly a moderate and contemplative conclusion and was perhaps the best he could have made; and to be short it served his occasion. For two knights rode on in front of the main body, whose business it was to keep a sharp look out for cut-throats, high and low tobies, banded robbers and other bad characters who are to be met with in large woods; I must crave pardon for calling these artists bad, but in fact they are not salutary for travellers. And the two knights spying out Sir Symon rode up to him cautiously, for there might possibly be more in him than met the eye, and more of him behind the trees; however no cross-bolts rapped their armour, and they halted opposite to the knight and began to ask him questions, in order to find out whether he were a rogue or an honest man; or, to be more precise, Silurian, and philosophical, whether there were more of roguery or of honesty in him. But when he answered them courteously in fine phrases of Paris town, that he was of the d’Espalions, pointing to the blazon of his surcoat; they perceived at once that he was a good Christian and a virtuous gentleman; and if a due and melodious accent, a pleasant smile, and a good coat are not sufficient evidences of virtue and a good heart underneath, I profess I know not what are. In fine Sir Symon prayed the knights to take him before their lord, who they let him know was no less than Ivo Fitz-Baderon, Earl of Estrighoil, and Lord of Netherwent on the Marches of Wales. And when he drew near to and met this nobleman as he rode at the head of his band, Symon perceived that this was indeed a great lord and worshipful, for, in the words of the old poem, there was:

A ramping lyon on his breast; Five golden lilies gay
About it were, and for his crest
He bore a raven aye.

And beside him rode his daughter Bertha, of whom I will speak more hereafter, and behind him ladies, knights, esquires, pages, men-at-arms, and serving men, and, to be short, it was a right brave array glittering with gold and silken stuff and stronger steel and dark eyes of maidens strongest of all. And when Sir Symon came before the Lord Ivo Fitz-Baderon, he bowed low and craved leave to address him; which being granted he thus began. “You see before you, my lord, a poor, banished, and luckless knight, whom envy and severity have driven away from his country and who is now forced to lie like a robber in woods and mountains and secret places, and to live like a wild-beast rather than a gentleman; and all this to his great hurt, sorrow, and ennuy. Wherefore I humbly crave your help and aid, and for ever I will be your liege man and warray against all your enemies.” And the Earl a noble of a large heart and some sense, seeing that Sir Symon was a well made man whose arm might come useful, replied by bidding one of the men-at-arms give the knight his horse, and then made him ride at his side, while he asked him a few questions and made sure that he wore his own coat and that his genealogy was a tolerably long one. As to the reasons which brought Sir Symon across the water the Earl left them alone, knowing that knights of the best kind sometimes have to leave their homes rapidly and pick up a living roughly in odd places. Soon they reached the utmost height of the hill and came before the gate of Struggle, where was the Ranger of Wentwood and his men bowing low; for you must understand that Earl Ivo intended to lie here some weeks and to kill a good many fat bucks or whatever he could find even if it chanced to be a marten or a fox. And since I have said that there had been great rains for some time before, I will tell you that things had been terribly dull at Estrighoil; there had been yawning from dawn to dusk and melancholy listening to the plash of the rain and the rattle of the vanes as they swung round from south to west and from west to south. Some people, I know, think Dullness a young deity born late and in our own days, and conceive that the lords of the old time had so many battles, sieges, storms, rebellions, jousts and tournaments to attend to that they never were idle; but this is not the truth. Some of them amused themselves in dull times by looking after the morals of their subjects and hanging folks by the neck, but this made them unpopular because the common people have no patience with anybody who tells them they are doing wrong and tries to raise them heaven-ward. Earl Ivo certainly, an easy-going, merry, old lord who knew he was made of clay himself, was not the sort of man to take advantage of others' flaws and cracks, and never strangled anyone unless he was obliged to, even in rainy weather. But his temper, it must be confessed, used to get terribly short, and his odd profane expressions in which he mixed up all sorts of things, made the gargoyles laugh; but then they had plenty to do and spouted water all day and all night And Bertha his daughter and her ladies were in not much better case; being bored and ready to say yes to anything, or to anybody that would invent some new entertainment for them. The which is a very dangerous state for maidens to be in; and if I were master of a house of them, I would myself draw my mouth into queer shapes, squint, and play the fool to make them laugh: but I hope I shall never have very many to look after Some of the knights and pages did their best to amuse the poor girls by making love to them; but somehow they were not in the humour for it, and only yawned at the very finest speeches and the most passionate orations. The fool also had done his best and was more successful for a while, since he was no ordinary jester or concocter of stale jokes; but a man of subtle and curious wit who played with a merry sadness on the black keys of this our Mortal Life, and drew therefrom quaint harmony that made one cry and laugh at the same time. But the lords and ladies grew weary of him also and called him hard names, since they were all in that cheerful humour which tires and grows sick of everything, and conceives the worst torment of Hell to be an everlasting Dullness. On the whole therefore, it was rather fortunate, when the drip, drip, drip of the rain ceased and the sun shone down through the high windows of the hall casting many a glorious tincture of blazonry on the floor and on the arras. Without much consideration or brow-knitting Earl Ivo determined to hold a hunting month at Struggle, and told Bertha to gather her gear together, which she did very willingly, loving the greenwood and the woodland air. Perhaps you would like to know what Bertha was like, and if this be so I will endeavour to satisfy you; though in my own opinion all young maids are just like — that is, to them that like them. However this was the fashion of her, and this is the kind of girl that makes a Silurian's lips pucker up into an O, his right arm bend into a curve, his heart beat fast, and his mouth water. Understand then that her hair (to begin where one should begin) was like an old bronze medal that has been dipped a moment into *aqua fortis,* and shows here like red gold, there well-nigh black, and here, there and everywhere all manner of glints and shadows between the two extremes. Of forehead there was not much, for forehead we ask not, and shall not cry "gra'merci" if you exhibit to us one never so lofty and well compacted; but what eyebrows and lashes, and below what eyes — black, or say rather, like two deep wells at noonday, with stars shining in them, and in these wells many were drowned, and all swore there's none such pleasant death as drowning. Her nose was a special nose, neither too long nor too short, too flat nor too high, too thin nor too thick, but had just that little turn at the end which virtuosi in noses declare to be desirable. For these gentlemen aver that this dainty button says as much as "I'm a woman and not an angel," and is a sure sign of those charming imperfections which make ladies perfect. As for Bertha's mouth it was (to be honest with you) the only member of her that could be taxed or censured. Why? For that it was incomplete and not perfect nor sufficient in itself, being so choicely and rarely contrived with concave and convex parts that it was evidently devised to fit into another piece of like workmanship, if nature had turned out any at all comparable with it. Of her chin I must maintain that it was a chin dear, delicate, and intolerably precious, with dimples playing at Barley Break across it, as sunshine quivers across the rippling water of a pebbly brook, when it has to pass through many leaves, and lights now here, now there, according as the breeze stirs the boughs high or low, to right or left. And what a figure had this noble maiden! One must not go closely into these matters, but know that Bertha was of a most exquisite taille, which matched her face in every respect, and would have made Madam Phryne feel spiteful. But now I have said all these nice things about this nice girl, I am compelled in common honesty to tell you that those fine eyes of hers were roving eyes which glanced here, there and everywhere, and when joined to her smile, were known to have made Canons and Archdeacons stutter and lose their places. And while Earl Ivo, and Bertha, knights, esquires, pages, and Sir Symon d'Espalion were nourishing themselves and irrigating their throats in the hall at Struggle, my lady looked once or twice so sweetly and shyly on the stranger that he forgot all his troubles in a moment, and understood that he was in for a pretty sharp attack of love. He resigned himself to the disease quietly, knowing that on the whole love is an amusing affair enough, full of various experiences and novelties, and sometimes not without solid profit, if it be judiciously conducted. As for Bertha she dropped her lashes once too often; since Sir Symon was a blade of keener metal than any she had dealt with, and she found him before long to be a doctor in that science of which all profess to know a piece; and they that talk least of it often know most. However Sir Symon had other things to think of that evening, for Earl Ivo proposed to take him into his service, to give him a new surcoat twice a year and as much meat and drink as a gentleman ought to have — *e a sustenir le devant dit Symon taunt come il vivera en manager e en beovere avenauntement come a gental homme a peut* — as it stands in the indenture drawn up by Master David, the Earl's scrivener. I do not think it necessary to tell you all the particulars of this document; because you might grow rather weary, and besides (to speak the truth), the learned disagree as to the quantity of oats that Sir Symon's horses were to eat a day, and I should be sorry to put any false notions into your heads on this important point. But you may depend on it that the knight agreed pretty quickly to this offer, as he would have done in any case, but now all the more since he had farsed the indenture in his own mind with another item, namely "e en amur," for a gentleman requires something more besides meat and drink and two robes yearly. This agreement dated, witnessed, signed and sealed, Sir Symon made himself very agreeable to everybody by telling the newest tales that were being relished in Gascony; regular candle-time relations, the which raised such deep roars of laughter that the oak-trees of Wentwood heard the sound and have been laughing among themselves ever since, though silly people call it sighing. As if a stout old oak, sound to the heart, and devoid of care, ever did anything so foolish as to sigh!

But these numskulls think the whole world is in the dumps as they themselves are. And from that day began the pleasantest time Sir Symon had in his life; for the sun, that puissant Lord Marcher, swept the clouds right away into Severn Sea and ruled in a Lordship of perpetual azure. Then was it pleasant to ride beneath the branches beside Bertha and her ladies, and to study the sweet varieties of maidenhood, the which is indeed an enchanting thing — when it happens to be in a good temper. But we may be sure Sir Symon had changed his dress and smartened himself up, for he knew that ladies have almost as much liking for a surcoat rightly embroidered and cut to the fashion as for the Theological Virtues, and much more than for the first two Evangelical Counsels, though they think that the third, Obedience, is becoming in a husband. But while Sir Symon made good cheer for all the girls, he kept his choicest fare for Bertha, and little by little wove his incantations round her till her girlish soul was quite hushed and submissive under the sweetest and strangest of all spells on earth. There are many methods and systems in this curious magic, and I suppose everybody puts some little originality into his love-making; but one thing is very certain, namely that love is a thing which does not grow stale: a doctrine which is clearly proved by the persistence and obstinacy of the human race in this pursuit. I suppose it is more than five thousand years since the first kiss came off; concerning which you may read in the books written by the Rosy Cross Fraternity, and therein you will find the U*bi* and *Quando,* and *Relatio* of it. But it is wonderful to think how much kissing has been going on ever since, and not a sign, so far, of its going out of fashion. And after Bertha and her knight had ridden a good many times side by side and he had said a number of pretty things which she had answered with glances that slid out of her eyes like summer lightning from an ebon sky; it fell out that they rode one day before all the rest, and roamed even farther, till the sound of voices and laughing was broken and died into silence. And now the only sounds were a gentle rustling as the boughs above swayed to and fro in the southern wind, and that continual murmur of summer time, which tells us of the labour of the bees. And the voices of Bertha and Sir Symon were hushed also, but they rode very close together and seemed to lean toward one another; so that Gwyn-ap-Neath the King of

Faery who happened to be going the same way, held his little sides for laughing and poked his little Prothonotary hard in the ribs, to make him understand there was a joke. You will wonder perhaps that the knight did not set about his business in earnest, finding himself thus alone with his dear lady; but the reason is that love is fearful; though at the same time it is most hardy; the which is a dogma to be believed without any questions, cavils, or argumentations. But before long, finding they were far away from their fellows he leant toward Bertha and kissed her on the cheek, without asking leave or license, whence we may perceive that the field was ready for the crop, the fagots for the torch, the bread for the oven, and, in effect, Bertha's cheek for her lover's lips. For indeed she made no remonstrance whatever, only a crimson dawn of Very Love flushed from her breast to her forehead; and since she had been anxiously expecting some such pleasant occurrence for the last mile, it would have been foolish to scream when it came about. But it is really impossible to talk to one's sweetheart, as she should be talked to, on horseback (unless you are both on the same horse) wherefore Sir Symon presently jumped down, and laying his arm delicately round Bertha's waist, had her most exquisite arms twined about his neck and so brought her to the ground. Then did he spread her a soft throne of ferns on the roots of a tree, and kneeling at her feet, began to intone the Hours of Paphos in a mellow and passionate voice, for they had said the *secreta* some time before. Perhaps you do not understand me and have never heard of these offices, and indeed they are no longer sung in the flaming old-fashioned manner; for the times are degenerate. Well this is how Sir Symon began— "Darling, when the sun ariseth the shines in through my window and finds me awake and pale for thinking of thee; and when he sinketh below the western hills he leaves me still enlightened with the rarer glories of thine eyes."

"Las, dear love," answered Bertha, "far away below us are the level moors; but we are in a greeny dell of Wentwood Chase; so was my life before thou earnest compared to what it now is. O my sweetheart how shall I love thee aright?"

"Love me and the kisses of my mouth even as the meadows love the dew in August, as the stones love the ripple of the brook, as the cornfields love the harvest moon ruddily ascending or shaped in sickle wise."

“Thou art my mighty glorious sun and I thine earth yearning for the rays of thy love.”

“Thou art mine evening star, shining in the glow of sunset; my rose-garden and my paradise wherein I take my pleasure.” The King of Faery heard all this and a great deal more; but he found a little of it go a long way and moved on with his train to hold a speech-court under a great oak, whither all the Fair Folk of Wentwood assembled. And after Bertha and Sir Symon d’Espalion had brought their service to an end, had kissed and colled and looked into one another’s eyes, had spoken and remained silent; they began to consider that it would be as well to mount and make their way to Struggle without delay, since folks are apt to be suspicious and fay nasty things of a knight and a lady who get lost in the woods together. The general lack of charity indeed, was and is, a most sorrowful thing; one has only to be seen going by the same road once or twice in a week and they say directly “What wench is he after?”

“Who lives on the other side of the hill?” And if a young gentleman is seen alone with a lady there are seldom wanting malicious personages who declare they are lovers. I hope you will always avoid these courses and if you see me at any time rather close to a girl with black eyes; say presently “They are discussing philosophical questions,” in the which statement you cannot fail to be right and accurate. But the two lovers of Wentwood, in mortal fear of busybodies and unkind observations rode swiftly, or as swiftly as the undergrowth would let them, to Struggle and found the knights and hunting men in the court slicing up a few bucks and drinking as much as gentlemen ought to drink. Here Sir Symon handed Bertha down with such a complete and icy courtesy that several knowing winks were nipped short, and mouths were opened instead of eyes being shut; for they were simple men and unversed in stratagems and deceits. And all the evening Sir Symon clung to the skirts of a nice girl with yellow hair and long fingers, whom he entertained with ballads, canzonets, little stories, and odd questions, and, I am afraid, rather turned her head; for his manners, it must be confessed, were extremely pleasing. And using some caution and looking out for brambles in his path Sir Symon contrived to live as joyously as any knight could desire for the next week or two; for how pleasant are the beginnings of love and the various wandering byways which all lead to the same place. Byways, do I say? Rather ladders, graduais to the Mount

Marvellous and the Castle beyond Conceit, mounting through deep blossoming orchards, flowery closes, and boskages of solemn scent; and the way now illuminate and radiant, now dim and mystical; but all most lovely, sweet, unearthly, quite passing all compare. Here we cannot climb alone, to the solitary the gate is barred, and the bridge drawn up across the deep blackness of the moat of melancholy; but hither maiden hands do guide us, red lips entice, and a girl's eyes are lamps before us. From what I have said before of my Bertha, you know that she was one whom the stars had shapen marvellously, and choicely well, and Sir Symon found that she led him by sweeter paths to bliss than any that his dreaming soul had trodden; or any that he had fashioned formerly in the bygone ballad of his life.

Let us no more say that they rode through Wentwood, or looked on Severn Sea and the waving cornfields of Gwent; but rather, wandering they went among the mazes of a Forest of Phansy; rested beneath trees of might unimaginable; and saw below them golden clouds, shining water, and glittering vanes, high turrets, and pinnacles now lifted merely above a silver misty sea, and now rising from tower and gateway and stony wall. And oh! the pomps and glorious shows they beheld (when their hands were clasped) in the courts of the castle; for thither *all ancient noble lovers did resort* as the old poet tells us. For he says —

They that have truly kept the ordinance
The King has made, which is our Lord Royall,
With perfect love and leal observance;
When that the doom of death do on them fall
Then do they win their bliss and maintenance
And joyous pleasure in a wondrous hall.
It is so fair, I guess it passeth thought.
And by no rhyming may at all be sought.

Hither then did Bertha and Symon look from the greeny lattices that the hazel and the rose and honeysuckle twisted; since they had vowed, either to other, a perfect and enduring love, and so had fellowship with the true lovers of the old time, who for their King's sake had endured pain and sorrow, shame, death and dishonour rather than transgress their faith and law. But one day as these two sweethearts were busily engaged in their favourite occupations; that is to say the business and quidditative investigation of searching for the soul of a kiss; pursuing that queer, subtle, and undoubtedly delicious entity through all its transformations; a sudden thought came into Bertha's depositary of notions, and this thought made her knit her brows. "Do you think my Father would like to see us thus?" asked she, stroking Sir Symon's curly hair in a meditative kind of way. "Hardly I suppose," answered the knight, "seeing that I am an exiled man, living only from his board: but it isn't of much consequence, is it?"

"Only that my Father is Ivo Fitz-Baderon, Lord of Estrighoil, and master here of all men's lives and liberties."

"Well he could only hang me."

"I don't think I should altogether like to see you hanged; besides if that happened you would not be able to marry me, and you would like me to be your wife, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, I should certainly like to marry you now you remind me, and as you say, the ecclesiastical law forbids wedlock with ghostly men. But do you think my Lord suspects anything?"

"He never suspects, but he sometimes hangs when he thinks he is in danger of being suspicious, for he says this is a very sinful state of mind."

"Then shall we ride away together?"

"To whitherward?"

"Why I don't know exactly, but I suppose there are lords on the Marches, who would willingly buy the sword of a gallant gentleman and shelter him against his enemies."

"Ay, there is my Lord Humphrey de Bohun of Caldicot, to whose son I am promised; and the Baron of Burgavenny my father's brother-in-arms, and the Lord of Uske our cousin; think you that these would have warm sheets ready for us."

“Well, yes; but perhaps too warm; and now I think I should like to kiss you.” Then they began their game of sweetlips over again, for this was their antiphon which began and ended everything they did. But for all that, a short time after as Sir Symon was riding with a knight of the company, named Sir Rouf de la Grave; a good natured young fellow with no guile at all in him, the Frenchman began suddenly “What do you conjecture would happen if I were to marry Bertha?” Sir Rouf jerked the reins, rubbed his eyes, and looked into Sir Symon’s face, to discover if he were in earnest, but saw about as much expression there as in the face of a man who asks his sweetheart how her mother does to-day. He concluded therefore that the Frenchman being a joker, was playing on him and endeavouring to make his chin fall — that is to say to make a fool of him: and answered with as empty a face as Sir Symon’s: “I suppose you would dance.”

“How?”

“With high steps, Sir Symon, most gracefully and wondrously.”

“This is too deep for me; let me have your meaning plainer.”

“Why then you would swing.”

“Swing what?”

“A mere trifle, no more than your body; and that to be sure would be a lighter burden than it is now, for it would be relieved of its soul before very long. “It is not possible you mean I should be hanged?” said the French knight, laughing all the while to himself at Sir Rouf’s poor wit and thick head. “I do not know about being hanged, since that is not a polite expression, nor one used by people of good breeding; but I am quite certain that you would feel it necessary to mount a ladder, tie a scarf rather tightly round your neck; and then begin to foot the mazles of the air, as I have said.”

“Ah, what would I give to have been nurtured in this land where air and wit are of equal sharpness; but to speak the truth the hot sun of Gascony spoilt my brains when I was quite a little boy.” With that Sir Symon talked no more of marrying or hanging, but began to speak of fights and battles he had seen; and Sir Rouf looking at his broad shoulders and thick arms thought to himself “He may not have much to boast of in the way of brains but he would be an awkward customer to meet in a stricken field or joust or tournament.” But some years afterwards, Sir Rouf having pondered these matters over in his leisure moments (for he could not eat or fight or drink or make love and think at the same time) all at once smote his head and said so that his wife could not hear him “he was certainly making an ass of me.” But Sir Symon, after duly considering this affair, was forced to believe that if he married his dear Bertha, he would come to grief in some way or another, if not by rope than by axe, and to his mind there was not a pin to choose between either, and both were an abomination to him. Altogether he did not like to the look of things and almost wished he had been hanged in France, which was his native country; and a true patriot like Sir Symon always chooses to give employment to his countrymen rather than strangers. But this wish seems to me not very sensible, since if he were hanged for carrying off the sweet body and unspeakable charms of Bertha, he would have so to speak, his money’s worth; nay I profess it were well worth to be the husband of such a girl for a week and then to swing away. And, in effect, he determined to make her his wife, come what might, and they began to plot together how best to bring their love to its consummation. Then Bertha remembered that below Wentwood not far from the Uske river is a little church called Kemeys; by the which the road from Caerleon to Uske passeth — a small church it is in truth and lowly, being named Inferior to distinguish it from that other Kemeys beyond called Commander. But here Bertha said the parson was an old priest who had once looked after souls at Estrighoil Castle, and had loved her beyond all (as was indeed natural) and she believed that he would knot them together ecclesiastically in the sacrament of matrimony. But it was as well (they thought), to be sure of this beforehand; because if the parson took it into his head to curse instead of to bless it would be rather awkward. Wherefore Bertha wrote a letter (the which she could do very well) superscribing it “*For the hands of Dom. Andrew de Fago, parson of Kemeys; these:*” and this she gave to Sir Symon who rode down through the wood and came out on the road to Uske not far from Kemeys Church. He had not, you will suppose, much trouble to find the parson; though the good man had taken to call himself Beeche since he had changed the Wye for the Uske, thinking perhaps that his parishioners had quite enough Latin on Sundays and holidays. But Sir Symon soon made out the parsonage and found Master Andrew dogmatising and theologically disporting himself in company with a volume of the “Questions,” and a flagon of wine; for he was not ignorant of any philosophy. Hospitably he received the stranger and gave him his best chair, and bore another flagon of wine for refreshment and postviaticum; and then received his daughter Bertha's letter; which made him stare and disturbed his brain. For he thought within himself "If I don't marry them they will certainly agree to dispense with any service at all; and thus they and I through them shall be guilty of mortal sin; to say nothing of robbing the Church of her dues. But if I do marry them there'll be trouble for me and the Archdeacon of Monmouth will doubtless be moved to interfere and take order in the matter to my no small discomfort and annoy." This, you see, was what is called a dilemma, a dilemma that pushed hard and had sharp horns; but since Father Andrew loved Bertha exceedingly and cared more for her health and pleasure than his own; he concluded *affirmative*, after subjecting Sir Symon to a short examination to make sure that he had no pestilent notions in him, and believed entirely all the doctrines of our Holy Faith. Here indeed he was on safe ground; since the knight hated hereticks as the devil, and it was safer to call him a recreant and a coward than to speak a word in his hearing against the Church or the doctrines thereof. But at the same time the parson warned him that he was putting his body into the dungeon and maybe his neck into the noose; though since Father Andrew de Fago had been young himself once upon a time he did not expect to have much effect. In fine, he agreed to join this fine couple together in three days' time, and he let Sir Symon know that there was a ship that should weigh anchor from Caerleon that very morning and its voyage was to Venice in Italy. And as it seemed certain that it would be a good thing for the knight and his lady to get beyond call of Estrighoil Castle and Earl Ivo Fitz-Baderon it was determined that they should sail in the *Torch-bearer* and hasten to southward ere the stormy weather and troublous time began. And the good old parson promised to agree with the master of the ship (to whom he was akin) so that all should be in readiness for them; and sent Sir Symon away up the hill with his blessing. So was this affair brought to a conclusion, for a man and a woman, the one dressed like a poor clerk and the other as a merchant's daughter, stole away from Struggle and vanished into the mist of the morning, and not a soul of the Earl's company could perceive to whitherward they had gone, when the hue and cry should have been raised after them. But old parson Andrew de Fago joined them in wedlock, and after houselled them at the altar of the little church between the wood and the water; hence good Silurians hold Kemeys

Church in special reverence and pray there for the souls of the fortunate lovers, who found, either in other, what each desired. And after they were married they sped away to Caerleon and got on board the *Torchbearer;* and so sailed down the Uske into Severn Sea, following the triumph of the sun. Here dimness closes around them and their happy love, as the ship vanisheth into the flushing clouds of sunset; but we think we can see Bertha and her lover standing upon the deck, hand in hand, gazing into the west, and heeding not the rush of water nor the noise of the wind that speeds them. But soon the glory fades and they turn and find no weariness in looking into one another's eyes, for there truly are the torches burning of light celestial and ineffable, since they were kindled at the altar of Love the Sovereign and Lord Royall.

Thus did close our Rubrican's story; and the fire was burning low, and I heard the wind upon the hill wailing sadly, as it is wont when it calls to the clouds and draweth them from the western sea. So we bade farewell to the Tuscans, and made them for all their denials a little purse for their hour of adversity. Then to their music we rode away once more, and thus did close the Portreeve's Gaudy-Day.

(Here ends the CHRONICLE OF CLEMENDY or HISTORY OF THE NINE JOYOUS JOURNEYS.)

EPILOGUE

HERE, IT APPEARS, the first tome of the Silurian Mythologies comes to an end, and you are at liberty to take off your spectacles (if you have any) and to make use of the expressions made and provided for such occasions. But if you and I have here to grin and say "good-day," I have to part also with my sweet companion, who has come all the way to Cock-Loft Land to help me and to whisper strange stories in my ear 5 I mean no less an one than the merry Muse of Gwent. There she is standing by the door, my lovely mistress of quaint fancies and odd memories, laughing that magic laugh that makes my landlady look grave when she sees me, since she is of London town and does not understand Silurianism, nor how Muses with flashing eyes and cherry lips come to moping scholars at midnight to comfort them. But some people always put a bad construction on everything they see and hear, and in fact they are very troublesome folks.

But now the joyous maiden must return to her hedgerows, and rivulets, and meadow realm of flowers; since in all likelihood my days and nights will shortly be wholly devoted and given over to weighty matters of state and the service of my lord of Gloucester. For a few days ago His Grace did take me aside into his cabinet, and looking kindly upon me (though some call him a stern and awful noble) said: "Why Master Leolinus you look but sickly, poor gentleman, poor gentleman, I protest you're but a shadow, do not your Abbreviatures bring you in a goodly revenue?"

"Not so, Your Grace," answered I, "to the present time I have abbreviated all in vain, and were it not for the hospitality of your table, I know not how I should win through."

"How goes it then with your Silurian Histories, with which I am mightily in love by your talk of them, and would by no means have them remain unfinished."

"With them, may it please Your Grace, it fares exceedingly well, and this very morning I have made an end of writing the First Journey, containing many agreeable histories and choice discourses."

"I believe indeed it will be a rare book, fit to read to the monks of Tintern while they dine. But yet I will have you lay it aside a little, since I have a good piece of preferment for you, an office (or I mistake you) altogether to your taste. What say you, Master Scholar, to the lordship of an Island, and no less an Island that Farre Joyaunce in the Western Seas? How stand you thitherwards? Will you take ship presently?" At hearing this, I was, as you may guess, half bewildered with sudden joy, that is apt to bring tears into the eyes of them that have toiled in many a weary struggle with adversity; I could but kneel and kiss His Grace's hand, and say, "My lord."

"Enough, enough," said this kind nobleman, "I have long desired this place for you; when you first broke bread with me, I said to my chaplain, 'That man hath in him all the essentials of a Governour, for he eats clean and drinks very dry. Farre Joyaunce shall certainly have him, so soon as my cousin Gwared dies.' And this day the ship came into the river from Sure Haven, bringing letters from the Bishop to the intent that Gwared fell asleep a month ago, and that the people of the Island anxiously await a new Governour. So if you will, the office is your own, the ship *Salutation* will trip anchor on St. Denys his day, and can bear Leolinus, first of that name since the Conquest, to his Island of Farre Joyaunce."

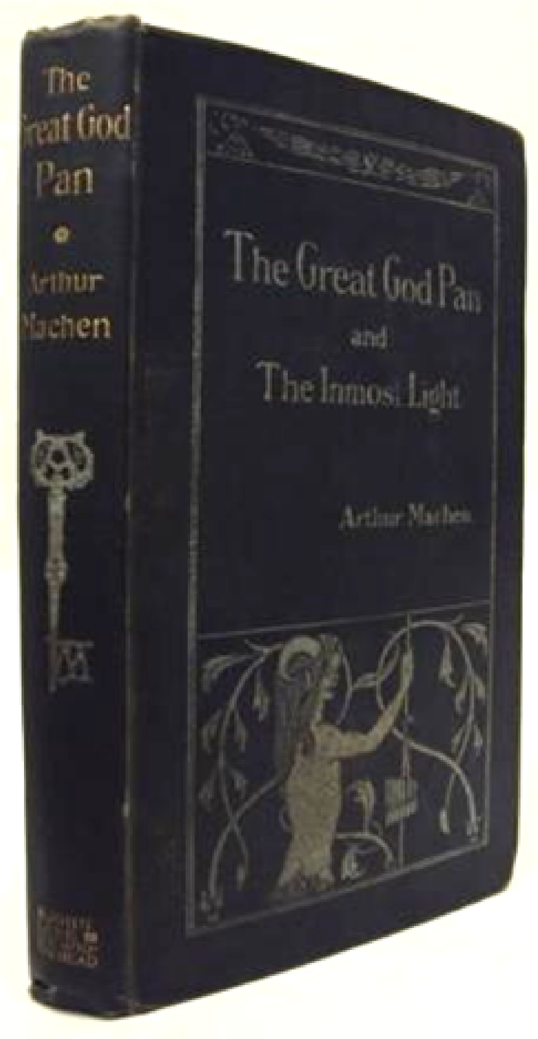
So it has come to pass that in a few days I shall be bound for Sure Haven in that pleasant island of the west, and shall be forced to put aside my writings that I may advise concerning the duties of my lordship, its law, civil and ecclesiastical, its privileges, tolls, heriots, estovers, and all customary dues. And that I may sooner comprehend them I have much talk with the Paumier de Seigneur, who came in the ship *Salutation,* and is a high officer in Farre Joyaunce, where the chief disport is tennis-play, and a skilful player more worshipped and honoured than almost anyone. Surely this shall be a Blessed Isle; but ere we drop anchor we shall be, I fear, sorely buffeted by storm and tempest, and shall scarcely sight the castle towers before the clerks are singing the O *Sapientia.* Nevertheless I am in good hopes of keeping Christmas in my castle aforesaid, and will endeavour to show my subjects what it is to have a Governour that has dwelt in Cock-Loft Land. And then once more to my book that I may make it an acceptable and a worthy offering to my lord, slowly and artfully brewing my strong ale, storing up in fair bins and vessels my curious sausages, my mangoes hot and sweet, spices, delicate liquors, and choice confections, until at last I — have such mauresque fare to offer as shall be very pleasant to the taste, and shall make men come and come again, and incite and spur them to the Silurian Wisdom. So my book shall be shown in the after time, when I am gone to the Abiding Home— "This is the Chronicle of Clemendy, and a curious piece. Master Leolinus, the Silurist, who was sometime Lord of Farre Joyaunce, wrote it; a painful man and mightily addicted to good letters, good ale, and good tobacco."

But here is my Paumier, with his parchments, to advise with me concerning a grant of Water Baylage to the Abbey of St. Michael, and also concerning the ceremonies observed in the island at Christmas-tide. He tells me that the voyage will surely be a rough and tempestuous one, but with the captain of the *Salutation* there need be no fear. And so farewell, till the anchor be dropt in the Sure Haven of Farre Joyaunce.

The Great God Pan, and the Inmost Light

This story collection was published in 1894 by John Lane, in his experimental ‘Keynotes’ series. ‘The Great God Pan’ concerns a scientific experiment by one Dr Raymond to open the mind’s eye to hidden dimensions of the natural universe – an effect he associates with the mythical god Pan. His experiments have a terrible consequence, however, in the creation of a hybrid of god and woman, which terrorises the London social scene. ‘The Inmost Light’ is another story of a fatal experiment on an unfortunate female victim, this time telling of a man who succeeds in trapping his wife’s soul inside a jewel, leaving her body free for occupation by something altogether more unnatural.

The collection (and ‘The Great God Pan’ in particular) shot Machen to literary fame, whilst also making him notorious as a purveyor of immoral and decadent fictions. ‘The Great God Pan’ is still widely read and very highly regarded today, with no less an authority than Stephen King calling it ‘one of the best horror stories ever written’.


The Great God Pan
Arthur Machen
The Great God Pan
and
The Inmost Light
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Aubrey Beardsley's cover design for the first edition

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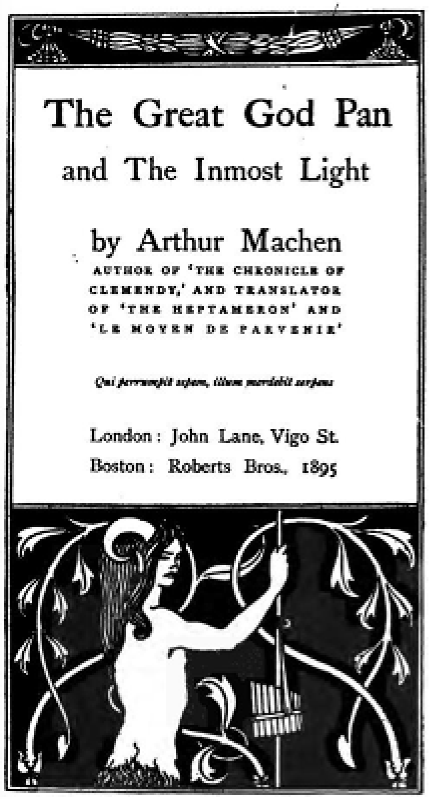


The Great God Pan

and The Inmost Light

by Arthur Machen

AUTHOR OF 'THE CHRONICLE OF
CLEMENDY,' AND TRANSLATOR
OF 'THE HEPTAMERON' AND
'LE MOYEN DE PARVENIR'

Qui perrumpit sepem, illum mordebit serpens

London: John Lane, Vigo St.
Boston: Roberts Bros., 1895

Title page of the first edition

A scene from a 2008 theatrical production of ‘The Great God Pan’, produced in Chicago by the WildClaw Theatre Company. To date, this is the only adaptation of this classic story.

The Great God Pan

I. THE EXPERIMENT

"I AM GLAD you came, Clarke; very glad indeed. I was not sure you could spare the time."

"I was able to make arrangements for a few days; things are not very lively just now. But have you no misgivings, Raymond? Is it absolutely safe?"

The two men were slowly pacing the terrace in front of Dr. Raymond's house. The sun still hung above the western mountain-line, but it shone with a dull red glow that cast no shadows, and all the air was quiet; a sweet breath came from the great wood on the hillside above, and with it, at intervals, the soft murmuring call of the wild doves. Below, in the long lovely valley, the river wound in and out between the lonely hills, and, as the sun hovered and vanished into the west, a faint mist, pure white, began to rise from the hills. Dr. Raymond turned sharply to his friend.

"Safe? Of course it is. In itself the operation is a perfectly simple one; any surgeon could do it."

"And there is no danger at any other stage?"

"None; absolutely no physical danger whatsoever, I give you my word. You are always timid, Clarke, always; but you know my history. I have devoted myself to transcendental medicine for the last twenty years. I have heard myself called quack and charlatan and impostor, but all the while I knew I was on the right path. Five years ago I reached the goal, and since then every day has been a preparation for what we shall do tonight."

"I should like to believe it is all true." Clarke knit his brows, and looked doubtfully at Dr. Raymond. "Are you perfectly sure, Raymond, that your theory is not a phantasmagoria — a splendid vision, certainly, but a mere vision after all?"

Dr. Raymond stopped in his walk and turned sharply. He was a middle-aged man, gaunt and thin, of a pale yellow complexion, but as he answered

Clarke and faced him, there was a flush on his cheek.

“Look about you, Clarke. You see the mountain, and hill following after hill, as wave on wave, you see the woods and orchard, the fields of ripe corn, and the meadows reaching to the reed-beds by the river. You see me standing here beside you, and hear my voice; but I tell you that all these things — yes, from that star that has just shone out in the sky to the solid ground beneath our feet — I say that all these are but dreams and shadows; the shadows that hide the real world from our eyes. There is a real world, but it is beyond this glamour and this vision, beyond these ‘chases in Arras, dreams in a career,’ beyond them all as beyond a veil. I do not know whether any human being has ever lifted that veil; but I do know, Clarke, that you and I shall see it lifted this very night from before another’s eyes. You may think this all strange nonsense; it may be strange, but it is true, and the ancients knew what lifting the veil means. They called it seeing the god Pan.”

Clarke shivered; the white mist gathering over the river was chilly.

“It is wonderful indeed,” he said. “We are standing on the brink of a strange world, Raymond, if what you say is true. I suppose the knife is absolutely necessary?”

“Yes; a slight lesion in the grey matter, that is all; a trifling rearrangement of certain cells, a microscopical alteration that would escape the attention of ninety-nine brain specialists out of a hundred. I don’t want to bother you with ‘shop,’ Clarke; I might give you a mass of technical detail which would sound very imposing, and would leave you as enlightened as you are now. But I suppose you have read, casually, in out-of-the-way corners of your paper, that immense strides have been made recently in the physiology of the brain. I saw a paragraph the other day about Digby’s theory, and Browne Faber’s discoveries. Theories and discoveries! Where they are standing now, I stood fifteen years ago, and I need not tell you that I have not been standing still for the last fifteen years. It will be enough if I say that five years ago I made the discovery that I alluded to when I said that ten years ago I reached the goal. After years of labour, after years of toiling and groping in the dark, after days and nights of disappointments and sometimes of despair, in which I used now and then to tremble and grow cold with the thought that perhaps there were others seeking for what I sought, at last, after so long, a pang of sudden joy thrilled my soul, and I knew the long journey was at an end. By what seemed then and still seems a chance, the suggestion of a moment's idle thought followed up upon familiar lines and paths that I had tracked a hundred times already, the great truth burst upon me, and I saw, mapped out in lines of sight, a whole world, a sphere unknown; continents and islands, and great oceans in which no ship has sailed (to my belief) since a Man first lifted up his eyes and beheld the sun, and the stars of heaven, and the quiet earth beneath. You will think this all high-flown language, Clarke, but it is hard to be literal. And yet; I do not know whether what I am hinting at cannot be set forth in plain and lonely terms. For instance, this world of ours is pretty well girded now with the telegraph wires and cables; thought, with something less than the speed of thought, flashes from sunrise to sunset, from north to south, across the floods and the desert places. Suppose that an electrician of today were suddenly to perceive that he and his friends have merely been playing with pebbles and mistaking them for the foundations of the world; suppose that such a man saw uttermost space lie open before the current, and words of men flash forth to the sun and beyond the sun into the systems beyond, and the voice of articulate-speaking men echo in the waste void that bounds our thought. As analogies go, that is a pretty good analogy of what I have done; you can understand now a little of what I felt as I stood here one evening; it was a summer evening, and the valley looked much as it does now; I stood here, and saw before me the unutterable, the unthinkable gulf that yawns profound between two worlds, the world of matter and the world of spirit; I saw the great empty deep stretch dim before me, and in that instant a bridge of light leapt from the earth to the unknown shore, and the abyss was spanned. You may look in Browne Faber's book, if you like, and you will find that to the present day men of science are unable to account for the presence, or to specify the functions of a certain group of nerve-cells in the brain. That group is, as it were, land to let, a mere waste place for fanciful theories. I am not in the position of Browne Faber and the specialists, I am perfectly instructed as to the possible functions of those nerve-centers in the scheme of things. With a touch I can bring them into play, with a touch, I say, I can set free the current, with a touch I can complete the communication between this world of sense and — we shall be able to finish the sentence later on. Yes, the knife is necessary; but think what that knife will effect. It will level utterly the solid wall of sense, and probably, for the first time since man was made, a spirit will gaze on a spirit-world. Clarke, Mary will see the god Pan!"

"But you remember what you wrote to me? I thought it would be requisite that she— "

He whispered the rest into the doctor's ear.

"Not at all, not at all. That is nonsense. I assure you. Indeed, it is better as it is; I am quite certain of that."

"Consider the matter well, Raymond. It's a great responsibility. Something might go wrong; you would be a miserable man for the rest of your days."

"No, I think not, even if the worst happened. As you know, I rescued Mary from the gutter, and from almost certain starvation, when she was a child; I think her life is mine, to use as I see fit. Come, it's getting late; we had better go in."

Dr. Raymond led the way into the house, through the hall, and down a long dark passage. He took a key from his pocket and opened a heavy door, and motioned Clarke into his laboratory. It had once been a billiard-room, and was lighted by a glass dome in the centre of the ceiling, whence there still shone a sad grey light on the figure of the doctor as he lit a lamp with a heavy shade and placed it on a table in the middle of the room.

Clarke looked about him. Scarcely a foot of wall remained bare; there were shelves all around laden with bottles and phials of all shapes and colours, and at one end stood a little Chippendale book-case. Raymond pointed to this.

"You see that parchment Oswald Crollius? He was one of the first to show me the way, though I don't think he ever found it himself. That is a strange saying of his: 'In every grain of wheat there lies hidden the soul of a star.'"

There was not much furniture in the laboratory. The table in the centre, a stone slab with a drain in one corner, the two armchairs on which Raymond and Clarke were sitting; that was all, except an odd-looking chair at the furthest end of the room. Clarke looked at it, and raised his eyebrows.

"Yes, that is the chair," said Raymond. "We may as well place it in position." He got up and wheeled the chair to the light, and began raising and lowering it, letting down the seat, setting the back at various angles, and adjusting the foot-rest. It looked comfortable enough, and Clarke passed his hand over the soft green velvet, as the doctor manipulated the levers.

"Now, Clarke, make yourself quite comfortable. I have a couple hours' work before me; I was obliged to leave certain matters to the last."

Raymond went to the stone slab, and Clarke watched him drearily as he bent over a row of phials and lit the flame under the crucible. The doctor had a small hand-lamp, shaded as the larger one, on a ledge above his apparatus, and Clarke, who sat in the shadows, looked down at the great shadowy room, wondering at the bizarre effects of brilliant light and undefined darkness contrasting with one another. Soon he became conscious of an odd odour, at first the merest suggestion of odour, in the room, and as it grew more decided he felt surprised that he was not reminded of the chemist's shop or the surgery. Clarke found himself idly endeavouring to analyse the sensation, and half conscious, he began to think of a day, fifteen years ago, that he had spent roaming through the woods and meadows near his own home. It was a burning day at the beginning of August, the heat had dimmed the outlines of all things and all distances with a faint mist, and people who observed the thermometer spoke of an abnormal register, of a temperature that was almost tropical. Strangely that wonderful hot day of the fifties rose up again in Clarke's imagination; the sense of dazzling all-pervading sunlight seemed to blot out the shadows and the lights of the laboratory, and he felt again the heated air beating in gusts about his face, saw the shimmer rising from the turf, and heard the myriad murmur of the summer.

"I hope the smell doesn't annoy you, Clarke; there's nothing unwholesome about it. It may make you a bit sleepy, that's all."

Clarke heard the words quite distinctly, and knew that Raymond was speaking to him, but for the life of him he could not rouse himself from his lethargy. He could only think of the lonely walk he had taken fifteen years ago; it was his last look at the fields and woods he had known since he was a child, and now it all stood out in brilliant light, as a picture, before him. Above all there came to his nostrils the scent of summer, the smell of flowers mingled, and the odour of the woods, of cool shaded places, deep in the green depths, drawn forth by the sun's heat; and the scent of the good earth, lying as it were with arms stretched forth, and smiling lips, overpowered all. His fancies made him wander, as he had wandered long ago, from the fields into the wood, tracking a little path between the shining undergrowth of beech-trees; and the trickle of water dropping from the limestone rock sounded as a clear melody in the dream. Thoughts began to go astray and to mingle with other thoughts; the beech alley was transformed to a path between ilex-trees, and here and there a vine climbed from bough to bough, and sent up waving tendrils and drooped with purple grapes, and the sparse grey-green leaves of a wild olive-tree stood out against the dark shadows of the ilex. Clarke, in the deep folds of dream, was conscious that the path from his father's house had led him into an undiscovered country, and he was wondering at the strangeness of it all, when suddenly, in place of the hum and murmur of the summer, an infinite silence seemed to fall on all things, and the wood was hushed, and for a moment in time he stood face to face there with a presence, that was neither man nor beast, neither the living nor the dead, but all things mingled, the form of all things but devoid of all form. And in that moment, the sacrament of body and soul was dissolved, and a voice seemed to cry "Let us go hence," and then the darkness of darkness beyond the stars, the darkness of everlasting.

When Clarke woke up with a start he saw Raymond pouring a few drops of some oily fluid into a green phial, which he stoppered tightly.

"You have been dozing," he said; "the journey must have tired you out. It is done now. I am going to fetch Mary; I shall be back in ten minutes."

Clarke lay back in his chair and wondered. It seemed as if he had but passed from one dream into another. He half expected to see the walls of the laboratory melt and disappear, and to awake in London, shuddering at his own sleeping fancies. But at last the door opened, and the doctor returned, and behind him came a girl of about seventeen, dressed all in white. She was so beautiful that Clarke did not wonder at what the doctor had written to him. She was blushing now over face and neck and arms, but Raymond seemed unmoved.

"Mary," he said, "the time has come. You are quite free. Are you willing to trust yourself to me entirely?"

"Yes, dear."

“Do you hear that, Clarke? You are my witness. Here is the chair, Mary. It is quite easy. Just sit in it and lean back. Are you ready?”

“Yes, dear, quite ready. Give me a kiss before you begin.”

The doctor stooped and kissed her mouth, kindly enough. “Now shut your eyes,” he said. The girl closed her eyelids, as if she were tired, and longed for sleep, and Raymond placed the green phial to her nostrils. Her face grew white, whiter than her dress; she struggled faintly, and then with the feeling of submission strong within her, crossed her arms upon her breast as a little child about to say her prayers. The bright light of the lamp fell full upon her, and Clarke watched changes fleeting over her face as the changes of the hills when the summer clouds float across the sun. And then she lay all white and still, and the doctor turned up one of her eyelids. She was quite unconscious. Raymond pressed hard on one of the levers and the chair instantly sank back. Clarke saw him cutting away a circle, like a tonsure, from her hair, and the lamp was moved nearer. Raymond took a small glittering instrument from a little case, and Clarke turned away shudderingly. When he looked again the doctor was binding up the wound he had made.

“She will awake in five minutes.” Raymond was still perfectly cool. “There is nothing more to be done; we can only wait.”

The minutes passed slowly; they could hear a slow, heavy, ticking. There was an old clock in the passage. Clarke felt sick and faint; his knees shook beneath him, he could hardly stand.

Suddenly, as they watched, they heard a long-drawn sigh, and suddenly did the colour that had vanished return to the girl’s cheeks, and suddenly her eyes opened. Clarke quailed before them. They shone with an awful light, looking far away, and a great wonder fell upon her face, and her hands stretched out as if to touch what was invisible; but in an instant the wonder faded, and gave place to the most awful terror. The muscles of her face were hideously convulsed, she shook from head to foot; the soul seemed struggling and shuddering within the house of flesh. It was a horrible sight, and Clarke rushed forward, as she fell shrieking to the floor.

Three days later Raymond took Clarke to Mary’s bedside. She was lying wide-awake, rolling her head from side to side, and grinning vacantly.

“Yes,” said the doctor, still quite cool, “it is a great pity; she is a hopeless idiot. However, it could not be helped; and, after all, she has seen the Great God Pan.”

II. MR. CLARKE'S MEMOIRS

MR. CLARKE, THE gentleman chosen by Dr. Raymond to witness the strange experiment of the god Pan, was a person in whose character caution and curiosity were oddly mingled; in his sober moments he thought of the unusual and eccentric with undisguised aversion, and yet, deep in his heart, there was a wide-eyed inquisitiveness with respect to all the more recondite and esoteric elements in the nature of men. The latter tendency had prevailed when he accepted Raymond's invitation, for though his considered judgment had always repudiated the doctor's theories as the wildest nonsense, yet he secretly hugged a belief in fantasy, and would have rejoiced to see that belief confirmed. The horrors that he witnessed in the dreary laboratory were to a certain extent salutary; he was conscious of being involved in an affair not altogether reputable, and for many years afterwards he clung bravely to the commonplace, and rejected all occasions of occult investigation. Indeed, on some homeopathic principle, he for some time attended the seances of distinguished mediums, hoping that the clumsy tricks of these gentlemen would make him altogether disgusted with mysticism of every kind, but the remedy, though caustic, was not efficacious. Clarke knew that he still pined for the unseen, and little by little, the old passion began to reassert itself, as the face of Mary, shuddering and convulsed with an unknown terror, faded slowly from his memory. Occupied all day in pursuits both serious and lucrative, the temptation to relax in the evening was too great, especially in the winter months, when the fire cast a warm glow over his snug bachelor apartment, and a bottle of some choice claret stood ready by his elbow. His dinner digested, he would make a brief pretence of reading the evening paper, but the mere catalogue of news soon palled upon him, and Clarke would find himself casting glances of warm desire in the direction of an old Japanese bureau, which stood at a pleasant distance from the hearth. Like a boy before a jam-closet, for a few minutes he would hover indecisive, but lust always prevailed, and Clarke ended by drawing up his chair, lighting a candle, and sitting down before the bureau. Its pigeon-holes and drawers teemed with documents on the most morbid subjects, and in the well reposed a large manuscript volume, in which he had painfully entered the gems of his collection. Clarke had a fine contempt for published literature; the most ghostly story ceased to interest him if it happened to be printed; his sole pleasure was in the reading, compiling, and rearranging what he called his "Memoirs to prove the Existence of the Devil," and engaged in this pursuit the evening seemed to fly and the night appeared too short.

On one particular evening, an ugly December night, black with fog, and raw with frost, Clarke hurried over his dinner, and scarcely deigned to observe his customary ritual of taking up the paper and laying it down again. He paced two or three times up and down the room, and opened the bureau, stood still a moment, and sat down. He leant back, absorbed in one of those dreams to which he was subject, and at length drew out his book, and opened it at the last entry. There were three or four pages densely covered with Clarke's round, set penmanship, and at the beginning he had written in a somewhat larger hand:

Singular Narrative told me by my Friend, Dr. Phillips.

He assures me that all the facts related

therein are strictly and wholly True, but

refuses to give either the Surnames of the

Persons Concerned, or the Place where these

Extraordinary Events occurred.

Mr. Clarke began to read over the account for the tenth time, glancing now and then at the pencil notes he had made when it was told him by his friend. It was one of his humours to pride himself on a certain literary ability; he thought well of his style, and took pains in arranging the circumstances in dramatic order. He read the following story: —

The persons concerned in this statement are Helen V., who, if she is still alive, must now be a woman of twenty-three, Rachel M., since deceased, who was a year younger than the above, and Trevor W., an imbecile, aged eighteen. These persons were at the period of the story inhabitants of a village on the borders of Wales, a place of some importance in the time of the Roman occupation, but now a scattered hamlet, of not more than five hundred souls. It is situated on rising ground, about six miles from the sea, and is sheltered by a large and picturesque forest.

Some eleven years ago, Helen V. came to the village under rather peculiar circumstances. It is understood that she, being an orphan, was adopted in her infancy by a distant relative, who brought her up in his own house until she was twelve years old. Thinking, however, that it would be better for the child to have playmates of her own age, he advertised in several local papers for a good home in a comfortable farmhouse for a girl of twelve, and this advertisement was answered by Mr. R., a well-to-do farmer in the above-mentioned village. His references proving satisfactory, the gentleman sent his adopted daughter to Mr. R., with a letter, in which he stipulated that the girl should have a room to herself, and stated that her guardians need be at no trouble in the matter of education, as she was already sufficiently educated for the position in life which she would occupy. In fact, Mr. R. was given to understand that the girl be allowed to find her own occupations and to spend her time almost as she liked. Mr. R. duly met her at the nearest station, a town seven miles away from his house, and seems to have remarked nothing extraordinary about the child except that she was reticent as to her former life and her adopted father. She was, however, of a very different type from the inhabitants of the village; her skin was a pale, clear olive, and her features were strongly marked, and of a somewhat foreign character. She appears to have settled down easily enough into farmhouse life, and became a favourite with the children, who sometimes went with her on her rambles in the forest, for this was her amusement. Mr. R. states that he has known her to go out by herself directly after their early breakfast, and not return till after dusk, and that, feeling uneasy at a young girl being out alone for so many hours, he communicated with her adopted father, who replied in a brief note that Helen must do as she chose. In the winter, when the forest paths are impassable, she spent most of her time in her bedroom, where she slept alone, according to the instructions of her relative. It was on one of these expeditions to the forest that the first of the singular incidents with which this girl is connected occurred, the date being about a year after her arrival at the village. The preceding winter had been remarkably severe, the snow drifting to a great depth, and the frost continuing for an unexampled period, and the summer following was as noteworthy for its extreme heat. On one of the very hottest days in this summer, Helen V. left the farmhouse for one of her long rambles in the forest, taking with her, as usual, some bread and meat for lunch. She was seen by some men in the fields making for the old Roman Road, a green causeway which traverses the highest part of the wood, and they were astonished to observe that the girl had taken off her hat, though the heat of the sun was already tropical. As it happened, a labourer, Joseph W. by name, was working in the forest near the Roman Road, and at twelve o'clock his little son, Trevor, brought the man his dinner of bread and cheese. After the meal, the boy, who was about seven years old at the time, left his father at work, and, as he said, went to look for flowers in the wood, and the man, who could hear him shouting with delight at his discoveries, felt no uneasiness. Suddenly, however, he was horrified at hearing the most dreadful screams, evidently the result of great terror, proceeding from the direction in which his son had gone, and he hastily threw down his tools and ran to see what had happened. Tracing his path by the sound, he met the little boy, who was running headlong, and was evidently terribly frightened, and on questioning him the man elicited that after picking a posy of flowers he felt tired, and lay down on the grass and fell asleep. He was suddenly awakened, as he stated, by a peculiar noise, a sort of singing he called it, and on peeping through the branches he saw Helen V. playing on the grass with a "strange naked man," who he seemed unable to describe more fully. He said he felt dreadfully frightened and ran away crying for his father. Joseph W. proceeded in the direction indicated by his son, and found Helen V. sitting on the grass in the middle of a glade or open space left by charcoal burners. He angrily charged her with frightening his little boy, but she entirely denied the accusation and laughed at the child's story of a "strange man," to which he himself did not attach much credence. Joseph W. came to the conclusion that the boy had woke up with a sudden fright, as children sometimes do, but Trevor persisted in his story, and continued in such evident distress that at last his father took him home, hoping that his mother would be able to soothe him. For many weeks, however, the boy gave his parents much anxiety; he became nervous and strange in his manner, refusing to leave the cottage by himself, and constantly alarming the household by waking in the night with cries of "The man in the wood! father! father!"

In course of time, however, the impression seemed to have worn off, and about three months later he accompanied his father to the home of a gentleman in the neighborhood, for whom Joseph W. occasionally did work. The man was shown into the study, and the little boy was left sitting in the hall, and a few minutes later, while the gentleman was giving W. his instructions, they were both horrified by a piercing shriek and the sound of a fall, and rushing out they found the child lying senseless on the floor, his face contorted with terror. The doctor was immediately summoned, and after some examination he pronounced the child to be suffering form a kind of fit, apparently produced by a sudden shock. The boy was taken to one of the bedrooms, and after some time recovered consciousness, but only to pass into a condition described by the medical man as one of violent hysteria. The doctor exhibited a strong sedative, and in the course of two hours pronounced him fit to walk home, but in passing through the hall the paroxysms of fright returned and with additional violence. The father perceived that the child was pointing at some object, and heard the old cry, “The man in the wood,” and looking in the direction indicated saw a stone head of grotesque appearance, which had been built into the wall above one of the doors. It seems the owner of the house had recently made alterations in his premises, and on digging the foundations for some offices, the men had found a curious head, evidently of the Roman period, which had been placed in the manner described. The head is pronounced by the most experienced archaeologists of the district to be that of a faun or satyr. [Dr. Phillips tells me that he has seen the head in question, and assures me that he has never received such a vivid presentment of intense evil.]

From whatever cause arising, this second shock seemed too severe for the boy Trevor, and at the present date he suffers from a weakness of intellect, which gives but little promise of amending. The matter caused a good deal of sensation at the time, and the girl Helen was closely questioned by Mr. R., but to no purpose, she steadfastly denying that she had frightened or in any way molested Trevor.

The second event with which this girl’s name is connected took place about six years ago, and is of a still more extraordinary character.

At the beginning of the summer of 1882, Helen contracted a friendship of a peculiarly intimate character with Rachel M., the daughter of a prosperous farmer in the neighbourhood. This girl, who was a year younger than Helen, was considered by most people to be the prettier of the two, though Helen’s features had to a great extent softened as she became older. The two girls, who were together on every available opportunity, presented a singular contrast, the one with her clear, olive skin and almost Italian appearance, and the other of the proverbial red and white of our rural districts. It must be stated that the payments made to Mr. R. for the maintenance of Helen were known in the village for their excessive liberality, and the impression was general that she would one day inherit a large sum of money from her relative. The parents of Rachel were therefore not averse from their daughter's friendship with the girl, and even encouraged the intimacy, though they now bitterly regret having done so. Helen still retained her extraordinary fondness for the forest, and on several occasions Rachel accompanied her, the two friends setting out early in the morning, and remaining in the wood until dusk. Once or twice after these excursions Mrs. M. thought her daughter's manner rather peculiar; she seemed languid and dreamy, and as it has been expressed, "different from herself," but these peculiarities seem to have been thought too trifling for remark. One evening, however, after Rachel had come home, her mother heard a noise which sounded like suppressed weeping in the girl's room, and on going in found her lying, half undressed, upon the bed, evidently in the greatest distress. As soon as she saw her mother, she exclaimed, "Ah, mother, mother, why did you let me go to the forest with Helen?" Mrs. M. was astonished at so strange a question, and proceeded to make inquiries. Rachel told her a wild story. She said —

Clarke closed the book with a snap, and turned his chair towards the fire. When his friend sat one evening in that very chair, and told his story, Clarke had interrupted him at a point a little subsequent to this, had cut short his words in a paroxysm of horror. "My God!" he had exclaimed, "think, think what you are saying. It is too incredible, too monstrous; such things can never be in this quiet world, where men and women live and die, and struggle, and conquer, or maybe fail, and fall down under sorrow, and grieve and suffer strange fortunes for many a year; but not this, Phillips, not such things as this. There must be some explanation, some way out of the terror. Why, man, if such a case were possible, our earth would be a nightmare."

But Phillips had told his story to the end, concluding:

"Her flight remains a mystery to this day; she vanished in broad sunlight; they saw her walking in a meadow, and a few moments later she was not there.”

Clarke tried to conceive the thing again, as he sat by the fire, and again his mind shuddered and shrank back, appalled before the sight of such awful, unspeakable elements enthroned as it were, and triumphant in human flesh. Before him stretched the long dim vista of the green causeway in the forest, as his friend had described it; he saw the swaying leaves and the quivering shadows on the grass, he saw the sunlight and the flowers, and far away, far in the long distance, the two figures moved toward him. One was Rachel, but the other?

Clarke had tried his best to disbelieve it all, but at the end of the account, as he had written it in his book, he had placed the inscription:

ET DIABOLUS INCARNATE EST. ET HOMO FACTUS EST.

III. THE CITY OF RESURRECTIONS

"HERBERT! GOOD GOD! Is it possible?"

"Yes, my name's Herbert. I think I know your face, too, but I don't remember your name. My memory is very queer."

"Don't you recollect Villiers of Wadham?"

"So it is, so it is. I beg your pardon, Villiers, I didn't think I was begging of an old college friend. Good-night."

"My dear fellow, this haste is unnecessary. My rooms are close by, but we won't go there just yet. Suppose we walk up Shaftesbury Avenue a little way? But how in heaven's name have you come to this pass, Herbert?"

"It's a long story, Villiers, and a strange one too, but you can hear it if you like."

"Come on, then. Take my arm, you don't seem very strong."

The ill-assorted pair moved slowly up Rupert Street; the one in dirty, evil-looking rags, and the other attired in the regulation uniform of a man about town, trim, glossy, and eminently well-to-do. Villiers had emerged from his restaurant after an excellent dinner of many courses, assisted by an ingratiating little flask of Chianti, and, in that frame of mind which was with him almost chronic, had delayed a moment by the door, peering round in the dimly-lighted street in search of those mysterious incidents and persons with which the streets of London teem in every quarter and every hour. Villiers prided himself as a practised explorer of such obscure mazes and byways of London life, and in this unprofitable pursuit he displayed an assiduity which was worthy of more serious employment. Thus he stood by the lamp-post surveying the passers-by with undisguised curiosity, and with that gravity known only to the systematic diner, had just enunciated in his mind the formula: "London has been called the city of encounters; it is more than that, it is the city of Resurrections," when these reflections were suddenly interrupted by a piteous whine at his elbow, and a deplorable appeal for alms. He looked around in some irritation, and with a sudden shock found himself confronted with the embodied proof of his somewhat stilted fancies. There, close beside him, his face altered and disfigured by poverty and disgrace, his body barely covered by greasy ill-fitting rags, stood his old friend Charles Herbert, who had matriculated on the same day as himself, with whom he had been merry and wise for twelve revolving terms. Different occupations and varying interests had interrupted the friendship, and it was six years since Villiers had seen Herbert; and now he looked upon this wreck of a man with grief and dismay, mingled with a certain inquisitiveness as to what dreary chain of circumstances had dragged him down to such a doleful pass. Villiers felt together with compassion all the relish of the amateur in mysteries, and congratulated himself on his leisurely speculations outside the restaurant.

They walked on in silence for some time, and more than one passer-by stared in astonishment at the unaccustomed spectacle of a well-dressed man with an unmistakable beggar hanging on to his arm, and, observing this, Villiers led the way to an obscure street in Soho. Here he repeated his question.

“How on earth has it happened, Herbert? I always understood you would succeed to an excellent position in Dorsetshire. Did your father disinherit you? Surely not?”

“No, Villiers; I came into all the property at my poor father’s death; he died a year after I left Oxford. He was a very good father to me, and I mourned his death sincerely enough. But you know what young men are; a few months later I came up to town and went a good deal into society. Of course I had excellent introductions, and I managed to enjoy myself very much in a harmless sort of way. I played a little, certainly, but never for heavy stakes, and the few bets I made on races brought me in money — only a few pounds, you know, but enough to pay for cigars and such petty pleasures. It was in my second season that the tide turned. Of course you have heard of my marriage?”

“No, I never heard anything about it.”

“Yes, I married, Villiers. I met a girl, a girl of the most wonderful and most strange beauty, at the house of some people whom I knew. I cannot tell you her age; I never knew it, but, so far as I can guess, I should think she must have been about nineteen when I made her acquaintance. My friends had come to know her at Florence; she told them she was an orphan, the child of an English father and an Italian mother, and she charmed them as she charmed me. The first time I saw her was at an evening party. I was standing by the door talking to a friend, when suddenly above the hum and babble of conversation I heard a voice which seemed to thrill to my heart. She was singing an Italian song. I was introduced to her that evening, and in three months I married Helen. Villiers, that woman, if I can call her woman, corrupted my soul. The night of the wedding I found myself sitting in her bedroom in the hotel, listening to her talk. She was sitting up in bed, and I listened to her as she spoke in her beautiful voice, spoke of things which even now I would not dare whisper in the blackest night, though I stood in the midst of a wilderness. You, Villiers, you may think you know life, and London, and what goes on day and night in this dreadful city; for all I can say you may have heard the talk of the vilest, but I tell you you can have no conception of what I know, not in your most fantastic, hideous dreams can you have imaged forth the faintest shadow of what I have heard — and seen. Yes, seen. I have seen the incredible, such horrors that even I myself sometimes stop in the middle of the street and ask whether it is possible for a man to behold such things and live. In a year, Villiers, I was a ruined man, in body and soul — in body and soul."

"But your property, Herbert? You had land in Dorset."

"I sold it all; the fields and woods, the dear old house — everything."

"And the money?"

"She took it all from me."

"And then left you?"

"Yes; she disappeared one night. I don't know where she went, but I am sure if I saw her again it would kill me. The rest of my story is of no interest; sordid misery, that is all. You may think, Villiers, that I have exaggerated and talked for effect; but I have not told you half. I could tell you certain things which would convince you, but you would never know a happy day again. You would pass the rest of your life, as I pass mine, a haunted man, a man who has seen hell."

Villiers took the unfortunate man to his rooms, and gave him a meal. Herbert could eat little, and scarcely touched the glass of wine set before him. He sat moody and silent by the fire, and seemed relieved when Villiers sent him away with a small present of money.

“By the way, Herbert,” said Villiers, as they parted at the door, “what was your wife’s name? You said Helen, I think? Helen what?”

“The name she passed under when I met her was Helen Vaughan, but what her real name was I can’t say. I don’t think she had a name. No, no, not in that sense. Only human beings have names, Villiers; I can’t say anymore. Good-bye; yes, I will not fail to call if I see any way in which you can help me. Good-night.”

The man went out into the bitter night, and Villiers returned to his fireside. There was something about Herbert which shocked him inexpressibly; not his poor rags nor the marks which poverty had set upon his face, but rather an indefinite terror which hung about him like a mist. He had acknowledged that he himself was not devoid of blame; the woman, he had avowed, had corrupted him body and soul, and Villiers felt that this man, once his friend, had been an actor in scenes evil beyond the power of words. His story needed no confirmation: he himself was the embodied proof of it. Villiers mused curiously over the story he had heard, and wondered whether he had heard both the first and the last of it. “No,” he thought, “certainly not the last, probably only the beginning. A case like this is like a nest of Chinese boxes; you open one after the other and find a quainter workmanship in every box. Most likely poor Herbert is merely one of the outside boxes; there are stranger ones to follow.”

Villiers could not take his mind away from Herbert and his story, which seemed to grow wilder as the night wore on. The fire seemed to burn low, and the chilly air of the morning crept into the room; Villiers got up with a glance over his shoulder, and, shivering slightly, went to bed.

A few days later he saw at his club a gentleman of his acquaintance, named Austin, who was famous for his intimate knowledge of London life, both in its tenebrous and luminous phases. Villiers, still full of his encounter in Soho and its consequences, thought Austin might possibly be able to shed some light on Herbert’s history, and so after some casual talk he suddenly put the question:

“Do you happen to know anything of a man named Herbert — Charles Herbert?”

Austin turned round sharply and stared at Villiers with some astonishment.

“Charles Herbert? Weren’t you in town three years ago? No; then you have not heard of the Paul Street case? It caused a good deal of sensation at the time.”

“What was the case?”

“Well, a gentleman, a man of very good position, was found dead, stark dead, in the area of a certain house in Paul Street, off Tottenham Court Road. Of course the police did not make the discovery; if you happen to be sitting up all night and have a light in your window, the constable will ring the bell, but if you happen to be lying dead in somebody’s area, you will be left alone. In this instance, as in many others, the alarm was raised by some kind of vagabond; I don’t mean a common tramp, or a public-house loafer, but a gentleman, whose business or pleasure, or both, made him a spectator of the London streets at five o’clock in the morning. This individual was, as he said, ‘going home,’ it did not appear whence or whither, and had occasion to pass through Paul Street between four and five a.m. Something or other caught his eye at Number 20; he said, absurdly enough, that the house had the most unpleasant physiognomy he had ever observed, but, at any rate, he glanced down the area and was a good deal astonished to see a man lying on the stones, his limbs all huddled together, and his face turned up. Our gentleman thought his face looked peculiarly ghastly, and so set off at a run in search of the nearest policeman. The constable was at first inclined to treat the matter lightly, suspecting common drunkenness; however, he came, and after looking at the man’s face, changed his tone, quickly enough. The early bird, who had picked up this fine worm, was sent off for a doctor, and the policeman rang and knocked at the door till a slatternly servant girl came down looking more than half asleep. The constable pointed out the contents of the area to the maid, who screamed loudly enough to wake up the street, but she knew nothing of the man; had never seen him at the house, and so forth. Meanwhile, the original discoverer had come back with a medical man, and the next thing was to get into the area. The gate was open, so the whole quartet stumped down the steps. The doctor hardly needed a moment’s examination; he said the poor fellow had been dead for several hours, and it was then the case began to get interesting. The dead man had not been robbed, and in one of his pockets were papers identifying him as — well, as a man of good family and means, a favourite in society, and nobody's enemy, as far as could be known. I don't give his name, Villiers, because it has nothing to do with the story, and because it's no good raking up these affairs about the dead when there are no relations living. The next curious point was that the medical men couldn't agree as to how he met his death. There were some slight bruises on his shoulders, but they were so slight that it looked as if he had been pushed roughly out of the kitchen door, and not thrown over the railings from the street or even dragged down the steps. But there were positively no other marks of violence about him, certainly none that would account for his death; and when they came to the autopsy there wasn't a trace of poison of any kind. Of course the police wanted to know all about the people at Number 20, and here again, so I have heard from private sources, one or two other very curious points came out. It appears that the occupants of the house were a Mr. and Mrs. Charles Herbert; he was said to be a landed proprietor, though it struck most people that Paul Street was not exactly the place to look for country gentry. As for Mrs. Herbert, nobody seemed to know who or what she was, and, between ourselves, I fancy the divers after her history found themselves in rather strange waters. Of course they both denied knowing anything about the deceased, and in default of any evidence against them they were discharged. But some very odd things came out about them. Though it was between five and six in the morning when the dead man was removed, a large crowd had collected, and several of the neighbours ran to see what was going on. They were pretty free with their comments, by all accounts, and from these it appeared that Number 20 was in very bad odour in Paul Street. The detectives tried to trace down these rumours to some solid foundation of fact, but could not get hold of anything. People shook their heads and raised their eyebrows and thought the Herberts rather 'queer,' 'would rather not be seen going into their house,' and so on, but there was nothing tangible. The authorities were morally certain the man met his death in some way or another in the house and was thrown out by the kitchen door, but they couldn't prove it, and the absence of any indications of violence or poisoning left them helpless. An odd case, wasn't it? But curiously enough, there's something more that I haven't told you. I happened to know one of the doctors who was consulted as to the cause of death, and some time after the inquest I met him, and asked him about it. 'Do you really mean to tell me,' I said, 'that you were baffled by the case, that you actually don't know what the man died of?' 'Pardon me,' he replied, 'I know perfectly well what caused death. Blank died of fright, of sheer, awful terror; I never saw features so hideously contorted in the entire course of my practice, and I have seen the faces of a whole host of dead.' The doctor was usually a cool customer enough, and a certain vehemence in his manner struck me, but I couldn't get anything more out of him. I suppose the Treasury didn't see their way to prosecuting the Herberts for frightening a man to death; at any rate, nothing was done, and the case dropped out of men's minds. Do you happen to know anything of Herbert?"

"Well," replied Villiers, "he was an old college friend of mine."

"You don't say so? Have you ever seen his wife?"

"No, I haven't. I have lost sight of Herbert for many years."

"It's queer, isn't it, parting with a man at the college gate or at Paddington, seeing nothing of him for years, and then finding him pop up his head in such an odd place. But I should like to have seen Mrs. Herbert; people said extraordinary things about her."

"What sort of things?"

"Well, I hardly know how to tell you. Everyone who saw her at the police court said she was at once the most beautiful woman and the most repulsive they had ever set eyes on. I have spoken to a man who saw her, and I assure you he positively shuddered as he tried to describe the woman, but he couldn't tell why. She seems to have been a sort of enigma; and I expect if that one dead man could have told tales, he would have told some uncommonly queer ones. And there you are again in another puzzle; what could a respectable country gentleman like Mr. Blank (we'll call him that if you don't mind) want in such a very queer house as Number 20? It's altogether a very odd case, isn't it?"

"It is indeed, Austin; an extraordinary case. I didn't think, when I asked you about my old friend, I should strike on such strange metal. Well, I must be off; good-day."

Villiers went away, thinking of his own conceit of the Chinese boxes; here was quaint workmanship indeed.

IV. THE DISCOVERY IN PAUL STREET

A FEW MONTHS after Villiers' meeting with Herbert, Mr. Clarke was sitting, as usual, by his after-dinner hearth, resolutely guarding his fancies from wandering in the direction of the bureau. For more than a week he had succeeded in keeping away from the "Memoirs," and he cherished hopes of a complete self-reformation; but, in spite of his endeavours, he could not hush the wonder and the strange curiosity that the last case he had written down had excited within him. He had put the case, or rather the outline of it, conjecturally to a scientific friend, who shook his head, and thought Clarke getting queer, and on this particular evening Clarke was making an effort to rationalize the story, when a sudden knock at the door roused him from his meditations.

"Mr. Villiers to see you sir."

"Dear me, Villiers, it is very kind of you to look me up; I have not seen you for many months; I should think nearly a year. Come in, come in. And how are you, Villiers? Want any advice about investments?"

"No, thanks, I fancy everything I have in that way is pretty safe. No, Clarke, I have really come to consult you about a rather curious matter that has been brought under my notice of late. I am afraid you will think it all rather absurd when I tell my tale. I sometimes think so myself, and that's just what I made up my mind to come to you, as I know you're a practical man."

Mr. Villiers was ignorant of the "Memoirs to prove the Existence of the Devil."

"Well, Villiers, I shall be happy to give you my advice, to the best of my ability. What is the nature of the case?"

"It's an extraordinary thing altogether. You know my ways; I always keep my eyes open in the streets, and in my time I have chanced upon some queer customers, and queer cases too, but this, I think, beats all. I was coming out of a restaurant one nasty winter night about three months ago; I had had a capital dinner and a good bottle of Chianti, and I stood for a moment on the pavement, thinking what a mystery there is about London streets and the companies that pass along them. A bottle of red wine encourages these fancies, Clarke, and I dare say I should have thought a page of small type, but I was cut short by a beggar who had come behind me, and was making the usual appeals. Of course I looked round, and this beggar turned out to be what was left of an old friend of mine, a man named Herbert. I asked him how he had come to such a wretched pass, and he told me. We walked up and down one of those long and dark Soho streets, and there I listened to his story. He said he had married a beautiful girl, some years younger than himself, and, as he put it, she had corrupted him body and soul. He wouldn't go into details; he said he dare not, that what he had seen and heard haunted him by night and day, and when I looked in his face I knew he was speaking the truth. There was something about the man that made me shiver. I don't know why, but it was there. I gave him a little money and sent him away, and I assure you that when he was gone I gasped for breath. His presence seemed to chill one's blood."

"Isn't this all just a little fanciful, Villiers? I suppose the poor fellow had made an imprudent marriage, and, in plain English, gone to the bad."

"Well, listen to this." Villiers told Clarke the story he had heard from Austin.

"You see," he concluded, "there can be but little doubt that this Mr. Blank, whoever he was, died of sheer terror; he saw something so awful, so terrible, that it cut short his life. And what he saw, he most certainly saw in that house, which, somehow or other, had got a bad name in the neighbourhood. I had the curiosity to go and look at the place for myself. It's a saddening kind of street; the houses are old enough to be mean and dreary, but not old enough to be quaint. As far as I could see most of them are let in lodgings, furnished and unfurnished, and almost every door has three bells to it. Here and there the ground floors have been made into shops of the commonest kind; it's a dismal street in every way. I found Number 20 was to let, and I went to the agent's and got the key. Of course I should have heard nothing of the Herberts in that quarter, but I asked the man, fair and square, how long they had left the house and whether there had been other tenants in the meanwhile. He looked at me queerly for a minute, and told me the Herberts had left immediately after the unpleasantness, as he called it, and since then the house had been empty."

Mr. Villiers paused for a moment.

“I have always been rather fond of going over empty houses; there’s a sort of fascination about the desolate empty rooms, with the nails sticking in the walls, and the dust thick upon the window-sills. But I didn’t enjoy going over Number 20, Paul Street. I had hardly put my foot inside the passage when I noticed a queer, heavy feeling about the air of the house. Of course all empty houses are stuffy, and so forth, but this was something quite different; I can’t describe it to you, but it seemed to stop the breath. I went into the front room and the back room, and the kitchens downstairs; they were all dirty and dusty enough, as you would expect, but there was something strange about them all. I couldn’t define it to you, I only know I felt queer. It was one of the rooms on the first floor, though, that was the worst. It was a largish room, and once on a time the paper must have been cheerful enough, but when I saw it, paint, paper, and everything were most doleful. But the room was full of horror; I felt my teeth grinding as I put my hand on the door, and when I went in, I thought I should have fallen fainting to the floor. However, I pulled myself together, and stood against the end wall, wondering what on earth there could be about the room to make my limbs tremble, and my heart beat as if I were at the hour of death. In one corner there was a pile of newspapers littered on the floor, and I began looking at them; they were papers of three or four years ago, some of them half torn, and some crumpled as if they had been used for packing. I turned the whole pile over, and amongst them I found a curious drawing; I will show it to you presently. But I couldn’t stay in the room; I felt it was overpowering me. I was thankful to come out, safe and sound, into the open air. People stared at me as I walked along the street, and one man said I was drunk. I was staggering about from one side of the pavement to the other, and it was as much as I could do to take the key back to the agent and get home. I was in bed for a week, suffering from what my doctor called nervous shock and exhaustion. One of those days I was reading the evening paper, and happened to notice a paragraph headed: ‘Starved to Death.’ It was the usual style of thing; a model lodging-house in Marylebone, a door locked for several days, and a dead man in his chair when they broke in. ‘The deceased,’ said the paragraph, ‘was known as Charles Herbert, and is believed to have been once a prosperous country gentleman. His name was familiar to the public three years ago in connection with the mysterious death in Paul Street, Tottenham Court Road, the deceased being the tenant of the house Number 20, in the area of which a gentleman of good position was found dead under circumstances not devoid of suspicion.' A tragic ending, wasn't it? But after all, if what he told me were true, which I am sure it was, the man's life was all a tragedy, and a tragedy of a stranger sort than they put on the boards."

"And that is the story, is it?" said Clarke musingly.

"Yes, that is the story."

"Well, really, Villiers, I scarcely know what to say about it. There are, no doubt, circumstances in the case which seem peculiar, the finding of the dead man in the area of Herbert's house, for instance, and the extraordinary opinion of the physician as to the cause of death; but, after all, it is conceivable that the facts may be explained in a straightforward manner. As to your own sensations, when you went to see the house, I would suggest that they were due to a vivid imagination; you must have been brooding, in a semi-conscious way, over what you had heard. I don't exactly see what more can be said or done in the matter; you evidently think there is a mystery of some kind, but Herbert is dead; where then do you propose to look?"

"I propose to look for the woman; the woman whom he married. She is the mystery."

The two men sat silent by the fireside; Clarke secretly congratulating himself on having successfully kept up the character of advocate of the commonplace, and Villiers wrapped in his gloomy fancies.

"I think I will have a cigarette," he said at last, and put his hand in his pocket to feel for the cigarette-case.

"Ah!" he said, starting slightly, "I forgot I had something to show you. You remember my saying that I had found a rather curious sketch amongst the pile of old newspapers at the house in Paul Street? Here it is."

Villiers drew out a small thin parcel from his pocket. It was covered with brown paper, and secured with string, and the knots were troublesome. In spite of himself Clarke felt inquisitive; he bent forward on his chair as Villiers painfully undid the string, and unfolded the outer covering. Inside was a second wrapping of tissue, and Villiers took it off and handed the small piece of paper to Clarke without a word.

There was dead silence in the room for five minutes or more; the two men sat so still that they could hear the ticking of the tall old-fashioned clock that stood outside in the hall, and in the mind of one of them the slow monotony of sound woke up a far, far memory. He was looking intently at the small pen-and-ink sketch of the woman's head; it had evidently been drawn with great care, and by a true artist, for the woman's soul looked out of the eyes, and the lips were parted with a strange smile. Clarke gazed still at the face; it brought to his memory one summer evening, long ago; he saw again the long lovely valley, the river winding between the hills, the meadows and the cornfields, the dull red sun, and the cold white mist rising from the water. He heard a voice speaking to him across the waves of many years, and saying "Clarke, Mary will see the god Pan!" and then he was standing in the grim room beside the doctor, listening to the heavy ticking of the clock, waiting and watching, watching the figure lying on the green chair beneath the lamplight. Mary rose up, and he looked into her eyes, and his heart grew cold within him.

"Who is this woman?" he said at last. His voice was dry and hoarse.

"That is the woman who Herbert married."

Clarke looked again at the sketch; it was not Mary after all. There certainly was Mary's face, but there was something else, something he had not seen on Mary's features when the white-clad girl entered the laboratory with the doctor, nor at her terrible awakening, nor when she lay grinning on the bed. Whatever it was, the glance that came from those eyes, the smile on the full lips, or the expression of the whole face, Clarke shuddered before it at his inmost soul, and thought, unconsciously, of Dr. Phillip's words, "the most vivid presentment of evil I have ever seen." He turned the paper over mechanically in his hand and glanced at the back.

"Good God! Clarke, what is the matter? You are as white as death."

Villiers had started wildly from his chair, as Clarke fell back with a groan, and let the paper drop from his hands.

"I don't feel very well, Villiers, I am subject to these attacks. Pour me out a little wine; thanks, that will do. I shall feel better in a few minutes."

Villiers picked up the fallen sketch and turned it over as Clarke had done.

“You saw that?” he said. “That’s how I identified it as being a portrait of Herbert’s wife, or I should say his widow. How do you feel now?”

“Better, thanks, it was only a passing faintness. I don’t think I quite catch your meaning. What did you say enabled you to identify the picture?”

“This word— ‘Helen’ — was written on the back. Didn’t I tell you her name was Helen? Yes; Helen Vaughan.”

Clarke groaned; there could be no shadow of doubt.

“Now, don’t you agree with me,” said Villiers, “that in the story I have told you to-night, and in the part this woman plays in it, there are some very strange points?”

“Yes, Villiers,” Clarke muttered, “it is a strange story indeed; a strange story indeed. You must give me time to think it over; I may be able to help you or I may not. Must you be going now? Well, good-night, Villiers, good-night. Come and see me in the course of a week.”

V. THE LETTER OF ADVICE

"DO YOU KNOW, Austin," said Villiers, as the two friends were pacing sedately along Piccadilly one pleasant morning in May, "do you know I am convinced that what you told me about Paul Street and the Herberts is a mere episode in an extraordinary history? I may as well confess to you that when I asked you about Herbert a few months ago I had just seen him."

"You had seen him? Where?"

"He begged of me in the street one night. He was in the most pitiable plight, but I recognized the man, and I got him to tell me his history, or at least the outline of it. In brief, it amounted to this — he had been ruined by his wife."

"In what manner?"

"He would not tell me; he would only say that she had destroyed him, body and soul. The man is dead now."

"And what has become of his wife?"

"Ah, that's what I should like to know, and I mean to find her sooner or later. I know a man named Clarke, a dry fellow, in fact a man of business, but shrewd enough. You understand my meaning; not shrewd in the mere business sense of the word, but a man who really knows something about men and life. Well, I laid the case before him, and he was evidently impressed. He said it needed consideration, and asked me to come again in the course of a week. A few days later I received this extraordinary letter."

Austin took the envelope, drew out the letter, and read it curiously. It ran as follows: —

"MY DEAR VILLIERS, — I have thought over the matter on which you consulted me the other night, and my advice to you is this. Throw the portrait into the fire, blot out the story from your mind. Never give it another thought, Villiers, or you will be sorry. You will think, no doubt, that

I am in possession of some secret information, and to a certain extent that is the case. But I only know a little; I am like a traveller who has peered over an abyss, and has drawn back in terror. What I know is strange enough and horrible enough, but beyond my knowledge there are depths and horrors more frightful still, more incredible than any tale told of winter nights about the fire. I have resolved, and nothing shall shake that resolve, to explore no whit farther, and if you value your happiness you will make the same determination.

"Come and see me by all means; but we will talk on more cheerful topics than this."

Austin folded the letter methodically, and returned it to Villiers.

"It is certainly an extraordinary letter," he said, "what does he mean by the portrait?"

"Ah! I forgot to tell you I have been to Paul Street and have made a discovery."

Villiers told his story as he had told it to Clarke, and Austin listened in silence. He seemed puzzled.

"How very curious that you should experience such an unpleasant sensation in that room!" he said at length. "I hardly gather that it was a mere matter of the imagination; a feeling of repulsion, in short."

"No, it was more physical than mental. It was as if I were inhaling at every breath some deadly fume, which seemed to penetrate to every nerve and bone and sinew of my body. I felt racked from head to foot, my eyes began to grow dim; it was like the entrance of death."

"Yes, yes, very strange certainly. You see, your friend confesses that there is some very black story connected with this woman. Did you notice any particular emotion in him when you were telling your tale?"

"Yes, I did. He became very faint, but he assured me that it was a mere passing attack to which he was subject."

"Did you believe him?"

"I did at the time, but I don't now. He heard what I had to say with a good deal of indifference, till I showed him the portrait. It was then that he was seized with the attack of which I spoke. He looked ghastly, I assure you."

"Then he must have seen the woman before. But there might be another explanation; it might have been the name, and not the face, which was familiar to him. What do you think?"

"I couldn't say. To the best of my belief it was after turning the portrait in his hands that he nearly dropped from the chair. The name, you know, was written on the back."

"Quite so. After all, it is impossible to come to any resolution in a case like this. I hate melodrama, and nothing strikes me as more commonplace and tedious than the ordinary ghost story of commerce; but really, Villiers, it looks as if there were something very queer at the bottom of all this."

The two men had, without noticing it, turned up Ashley Street, leading northward from Piccadilly. It was a long street, and rather a gloomy one, but here and there a brighter taste had illuminated the dark houses with flowers, and gay curtains, and a cheerful paint on the doors. Villiers glanced up as Austin stopped speaking, and looked at one of these houses; geraniums, red and white, drooped from every sill, and daffodil-coloured curtains were draped back from each window.

"It looks cheerful, doesn't it?" he said.

"Yes, and the inside is still more cheery. One of the pleasantest houses of the season, so I have heard. I haven't been there myself, but I've met several men who have, and they tell me it's uncommonly jovial."

"Whose house is it?"

"A Mrs. Beaumont's."

"And who is she?"

"I couldn't tell you. I have heard she comes from South America, but after all, who she is is of little consequence. She is a very wealthy woman, there's no doubt of that, and some of the best people have taken her up. I hear she has some wonderful claret, really marvellous wine, which must have cost a fabulous sum. Lord Argentine was telling me about it; he was there last Sunday evening. He assures me he has never tasted such a wine, and Argentine, as you know, is an expert. By the way, that reminds me, she must be an oddish sort of woman, this Mrs. Beaumont. Argentine asked her how old the wine was, and what do you think she said? ‘About a thousand years, I believe.’ Lord Argentine thought she was chaffing him, you know, but when he laughed she said she was speaking quite seriously and offered to show him the jar. Of course, he couldn’t say anything more after that; but it seems rather antiquated for a beverage, doesn’t it? Why, here we are at my rooms. Come in, won’t you?”

“Thanks, I think I will. I haven’t seen the curiosity-shop for a while.”

It was a room furnished richly, yet oddly, where every jar and bookcase and table, and every rug and jar and ornament seemed to be a thing apart, preserving each its own individuality.

“Anything fresh lately?” said Villiers after a while.

“No; I think not; you saw those queer jugs, didn’t you? I thought so. I don’t think I have come across anything for the last few weeks.”

Austin glanced around the room from cupboard to cupboard, from shelf to shelf, in search of some new oddity. His eyes fell at last on an odd chest, pleasantly and quaintly carved, which stood in a dark corner of the room.

“Ah,” he said, “I was forgetting, I have got something to show you.” Austin unlocked the chest, drew out a thick quarto volume, laid it on the table, and resumed the cigar he had put down.

“Did you know Arthur Meyrick the painter, Villiers?”

“A little; I met him two or three times at the house of a friend of mine. What has become of him? I haven’t heard his name mentioned for some time.”

“He’s dead.”

“You don’t say so! Quite young, wasn’t he?”

“Yes; only thirty when he died.”

“What did he die of?”

“I don’t know. He was an intimate friend of mine, and a thoroughly good fellow. He used to come here and talk to me for hours, and he was one of the best talkers I have met. He could even talk about painting, and that’s more than can be said of most painters. About eighteen months ago he was feeling rather overworked, and partly at my suggestion he went off on a sort of roving expedition, with no very definite end or aim about it. I believe New York was to be his first port, but I never heard from him. Three months ago I got this book, with a very civil letter from an English doctor practising at Buenos Ayres, stating that he had attended the late Mr. Meyrick during his illness, and that the deceased had expressed an earnest wish that the enclosed packet should be sent to me after his death. That was all."

"And haven't you written for further particulars?"

"I have been thinking of doing so. You would advise me to write to the doctor?"

"Certainly. And what about the book?"

"It was sealed up when I got it. I don't think the doctor had seen it."

"It is something very rare? Meyrick was a collector, perhaps?"

"No, I think not, hardly a collector. Now, what do you think of these Ainu jugs?"

"They are peculiar, but I like them. But aren't you going to show me poor Meyrick's legacy?"

"Yes, yes, to be sure. The fact is, it's rather a peculiar sort of thing, and I haven't shown it to any one. I wouldn't say anything about it if I were you. There it is."

Villiers took the book, and opened it at haphazard.

"It isn't a printed volume, then?" he said.

"No. It is a collection of drawings in black and white by my poor friend Meyrick."

Villiers turned to the first page, it was blank; the second bore a brief inscription, which he read:

Silet per diem universus, nec sine horrore secretus est; lucet nocturnis ignibus, chorus Aegipanum undique personatur: audiuntur et cantus tibiarum, et tinnitus cymbalorum per oram maritimam.

On the third page was a design which made Villiers start and look up at Austin; he was gazing abstractedly out of the window. Villiers turned page after page, absorbed, in spite of himself, in the frightful Walpurgis Night of evil, strange monstrous evil, that the dead artist had set forth in hard black and white. The figures of Fauns and Satyrs and Aegipans danced before his eyes, the darkness of the thicket, the dance on the mountain-top, the scenes by lonely shores, in green vineyards, by rocks and desert places, passed before him: a world before which the human soul seemed to shrink back and shudder. Villiers whirled over the remaining pages; he had seen enough, but the picture on the last leaf caught his eye, as he almost closed the book.

“Austin!”

“Well, what is it?”

“Do you know who that is?”

It was a woman’s face, alone on the white page.

“Know who it is? No, of course not.”

“I do.”

“Who is it?”

“It is Mrs. Herbert.”

“Are you sure?”

“I am perfectly sure of it. Poor Meyrick! He is one more chapter in her history.”

“But what do you think of the designs?”

“They are frightful. Lock the book up again, Austin. If I were you I would burn it; it must be a terrible companion even though it be in a chest.”

“Yes, they are singular drawings. But I wonder what connection there could be between Meyrick and Mrs. Herbert, or what link between her and these designs?”

“Ah, who can say? It is possible that the matter may end here, and we shall never know, but in my own opinion this Helen Vaughan, or Mrs. Herbert, is only the beginning. She will come back to London, Austin; depend on it, she will come back, and we shall hear more about her then. I doubt it will be very pleasant news."

VI. THE SUICIDES

LORD ARGENTINE WAS a great favourite in London Society. At twenty he had been a poor man, decked with the surname of an illustrious family, but forced to earn a livelihood as best he could, and the most speculative of money-lenders would not have entrusted him with fifty pounds on the chance of his ever changing his name for a title, and his poverty for a great fortune. His father had been near enough to the fountain of good things to secure one of the family livings, but the son, even if he had taken orders, would scarcely have obtained so much as this, and moreover felt no vocation for the ecclesiastical estate. Thus he fronted the world with no better armour than the bachelor's gown and the wits of a younger son's grandson, with which equipment he contrived in some way to make a very tolerable fight of it. At twenty-five Mr. Charles Aubernon saw himself still a man of struggles and of warfare with the world, but out of the seven who stood before him and the high places of his family three only remained. These three, however, were "good lives," but yet not proof against the Zulu assegais and typhoid fever, and so one morning Aubernon woke up and found himself Lord Argentine, a man of thirty who had faced the difficulties of existence, and had conquered. The situation amused him immensely, and he resolved that riches should be as pleasant to him as poverty had always been. Argentine, after some little consideration, came to the conclusion that dining, regarded as a fine art, was perhaps the most amusing pursuit open to fallen humanity, and thus his dinners became famous in London, and an invitation to his table a thing covetously desired. After ten years of lordship and dinners Argentine still declined to be jaded, still persisted in enjoying life, and by a kind of infection had become recognized as the cause of joy in others, in short, as the best of company. His sudden and tragical death therefore caused a wide and deep sensation. People could scarcely believe it, even though the newspaper was before their eyes, and the cry of "Mysterious Death of a Nobleman" came ringing up from the street. But there stood the brief paragraph: "Lord Argentine was found dead this morning by his valet under distressing circumstances. It is stated that there can be no doubt that his lordship committed suicide, though no motive can be assigned for the act. The deceased nobleman was widely known in society, and much liked for his genial manner and sumptuous hospitality. He is succeeded by," etc., etc.

By slow degrees the details came to light, but the case still remained a mystery. The chief witness at the inquest was the deceased's valet, who said that the night before his death Lord Argentine had dined with a lady of good position, whose name was suppressed in the newspaper reports. At about eleven o'clock Lord Argentine had returned, and informed his man that he should not require his services till the next morning. A little later the valet had occasion to cross the hall and was somewhat astonished to see his master quietly letting himself out at the front door. He had taken off his evening clothes, and was dressed in a Norfolk coat and knickerbockers, and wore a low brown hat. The valet had no reason to suppose that Lord Argentine had seen him, and though his master rarely kept late hours, thought little of the occurrence till the next morning, when he knocked at the bedroom door at a quarter to nine as usual. He received no answer, and, after knocking two or three times, entered the room, and saw Lord Argentine's body leaning forward at an angle from the bottom of the bed. He found that his master had tied a cord securely to one of the short bed-posts, and, after making a running noose and slipping it round his neck, the unfortunate man must have resolutely fallen forward, to die by slow strangulation. He was dressed in the light suit in which the valet had seen him go out, and the doctor who was summoned pronounced that life had been extinct for more than four hours. All papers, letters, and so forth seemed in perfect order, and nothing was discovered which pointed in the most remote way to any scandal either great or small. Here the evidence ended; nothing more could be discovered. Several persons had been present at the dinner-party at which Lord Argentine had assisted, and to all these he seemed in his usual genial spirits. The valet, indeed, said he thought his master appeared a little excited when he came home, but confessed that the alteration in his manner was very slight, hardly noticeable, indeed. It seemed hopeless to seek for any clue, and the suggestion that Lord Argentine had been suddenly attacked by acute suicidal mania was generally accepted.

It was otherwise, however, when within three weeks, three more gentlemen, one of them a nobleman, and the two others men of good position and ample means, perished miserably in the almost precisely the same manner. Lord Swanleigh was found one morning in his dressing-room, hanging from a peg affixed to the wall, and Mr. Collier-Stuart and Mr. Herries had chosen to die as Lord Argentine. There was no explanation in either case; a few bald facts; a living man in the evening, and a body with a black swollen face in the morning. The police had been forced to confess themselves powerless to arrest or to explain the sordid murders of Whitechapel; but before the horrible suicides of Piccadilly and Mayfair they were dumbfoundered, for not even the mere ferocity which did duty as an explanation of the crimes of the East End, could be of service in the West. Each of these men who had resolved to die a tortured shameful death was rich, prosperous, and to all appearances in love with the world, and not the acutest research should ferret out any shadow of a lurking motive in either case. There was a horror in the air, and men looked at one another's faces when they met, each wondering whether the other was to be the victim of the fifth nameless tragedy. Journalists sought in vain for their scrapbooks for materials whereof to concoct reminiscent articles; and the morning paper was unfolded in many a house with a feeling of awe; no man knew when or where the next blow would light.

A short while after the last of these terrible events, Austin came to see Mr. Villiers. He was curious to know whether Villiers had succeeded in discovering any fresh traces of Mrs. Herbert, either through Clarke or by other sources, and he asked the question soon after he had sat down.

"No," said Villiers, "I wrote to Clarke, but he remains obdurate, and I have tried other channels, but without any result. I can't find out what became of Helen Vaughan after she left Paul Street, but I think she must have gone abroad. But to tell the truth, Austin, I haven't paid much attention to the matter for the last few weeks; I knew poor Herries intimately, and his terrible death has been a great shock to me, a great shock."

"I can well believe it," answered Austin gravely, "you know Argentine was a friend of mine. If I remember rightly, we were speaking of him that day you came to my rooms."

"Yes; it was in connection with that house in Ashley Street, Mrs. Beaumont's house. You said something about Argentine's dining there."

"Quite so. Of course you know it was there Argentine dined the night before — before his death."

"No, I had not heard that."

"Oh, yes; the name was kept out of the papers to spare Mrs. Beaumont. Argentine was a great favourite of hers, and it is said she was in a terrible state for sometime after."

A curious look came over Villiers' face; he seemed undecided whether to speak or not. Austin began again.

"I never experienced such a feeling of horror as when I read the account of Argentine's death. I didn't understand it at the time, and I don't now. I knew him well, and it completely passes my understanding for what possible cause he — or any of the others for the matter of that — could have resolved in cold blood to die in such an awful manner. You know how men babble away each other's characters in London, you may be sure any buried scandal or hidden skeleton would have been brought to light in such a case as this; but nothing of the sort has taken place. As for the theory of mania, that is very well, of course, for the coroner's jury, but everybody knows that it's all nonsense. Suicidal mania is not small-pox."

Austin relapsed into gloomy silence. Villiers sat silent, also, watching his friend. The expression of indecision still fleeted across his face; he seemed as if weighing his thoughts in the balance, and the considerations he was resolving left him still silent. Austin tried to shake off the remembrance of tragedies as hopeless and perplexed as the labyrinth of Daedalus, and began to talk in an indifferent voice of the more pleasant incidents and adventures of the season.

"That Mrs. Beaumont," he said, "of whom we were speaking, is a great success; she has taken London almost by storm. I met her the other night at Fulham's; she is really a remarkable woman."

"You have met Mrs. Beaumont?"

"Yes; she had quite a court around her. She would be called very handsome, I suppose, and yet there is something about her face which I didn't like. The features are exquisite, but the expression is strange. And all the time I was looking at her, and afterwards, when I was going home, I had a curious feeling that very expression was in some way or another familiar to me.”

“You must have seen her in the Row.”

“No, I am sure I never set eyes on the woman before; it is that which makes it puzzling. And to the best of my belief I have never seen anyone like her; what I felt was a kind of dim far-off memory, vague but persistent. The only sensation I can compare it to, is that odd feeling one sometimes has in a dream, when fantastic cities and wondrous lands and phantom personages appear familiar and accustomed.”

Villiers nodded and glanced aimlessly round the room, possibly in search of something on which to turn the conversation. His eyes fell on an old chest somewhat like that in which the artist’s strange legacy lay hid beneath a Gothic scutcheon.

“Have you written to the doctor about poor Meyrick?” he asked.

“Yes; I wrote asking for full particulars as to his illness and death. I don’t expect to have an answer for another three weeks or a month. I thought I might as well inquire whether Meyrick knew an Englishwoman named Herbert, and if so, whether the doctor could give me any information about her. But it’s very possible that Meyrick fell in with her at New York, or Mexico, or San Francisco; I have no idea as to the extent or direction of his travels.”

“Yes, and it’s very possible that the woman may have more than one name.”

“Exactly. I wish I had thought of asking you to lend me the portrait of her which you possess. I might have enclosed it in my letter to Dr. Matthews.”

“So you might; that never occurred to me. We might send it now. Hark! what are those boys calling?”

While the two men had been talking together a confused noise of shouting had been gradually growing louder. The noise rose from the eastward and swelled down Piccadilly, drawing nearer and nearer, a very torrent of sound; surging up streets usually quiet, and making every window a frame for a face, curious or excited. The cries and voices came echoing up the silent street where Villiers lived, growing more distinct as they advanced, and, as Villiers spoke, an answer rang up from the pavement:

“The West End Horrors; Another Awful Suicide; Full Details!”

Austin rushed down the stairs and bought a paper and read out the paragraph to Villiers as the uproar in the street rose and fell. The window was open and the air seemed full of noise and terror.

“Another gentleman has fallen a victim to the terrible epidemic of suicide which for the last month has prevailed in the West End. Mr. Sidney Crashaw, of Stoke House, Fulham, and King’s Pomeroy, Devon, was found, after a prolonged search, hanging dead from the branch of a tree in his garden at one o’clock today. The deceased gentleman dined last night at the Carlton Club and seemed in his usual health and spirits. He left the club at about ten o’clock, and was seen walking leisurely up St. James’s Street a little later. Subsequent to this his movements cannot be traced. On the discovery of the body medical aid was at once summoned, but life had evidently been long extinct. So far as is known, Mr. Crashaw had no trouble or anxiety of any kind. This painful suicide, it will be remembered, is the fifth of the kind in the last month. The authorities at Scotland Yard are unable to suggest any explanation of these terrible occurrences.”

Austin put down the paper in mute horror.

“I shall leave London to-morrow,” he said, “it is a city of nightmares. How awful this is, Villiers!”

Mr. Villiers was sitting by the window quietly looking out into the street. He had listened to the newspaper report attentively, and the hint of indecision was no longer on his face.

“Wait a moment, Austin,” he replied, “I have made up my mind to mention a little matter that occurred last night. It stated, I think, that Crashaw was last seen alive in St. James’s Street shortly after ten?”

“Yes, I think so. I will look again. Yes, you are quite right.”

“Quite so. Well, I am in a position to contradict that statement at all events. Crashaw was seen after that; considerably later indeed.”

“How do you know?”

“Because I happened to see Crashaw myself at about two o’clock this morning.”

“You saw Crashaw? You, Villiers?”

“Yes, I saw him quite distinctly; indeed, there were but a few feet between us.”

“Where, in Heaven’s name, did you see him?”

“Not far from here. I saw him in Ashley Street. He was just leaving a house.”

“Did you notice what house it was?”

“Yes. It was Mrs. Beaumont’s.”

“Villiers! Think what you are saying; there must be some mistake. How could Crashaw be in Mrs. Beaumont’s house at two o’clock in the morning? Surely, surely, you must have been dreaming, Villiers; you were always rather fanciful.”

“No; I was wide awake enough. Even if I had been dreaming as you say, what I saw would have roused me effectually.”

“What you saw? What did you see? Was there anything strange about Crashaw? But I can’t believe it; it is impossible.”

“Well, if you like I will tell you what I saw, or if you please, what I think I saw, and you can judge for yourself.”

“Very good, Villiers.”

The noise and clamour of the street had died away, though now and then the sound of shouting still came from the distance, and the dull, leaden silence seemed like the quiet after an earthquake or a storm. Villiers turned from the window and began speaking.

“I was at a house near Regent’s Park last night, and when I came away the fancy took me to walk home instead of taking a hansom. It was a clear pleasant night enough, and after a few minutes I had the streets pretty much to myself. It’s a curious thing, Austin, to be alone in London at night, the gas-lamps stretching away in perspective, and the dead silence, and then perhaps the rush and clatter of a hansom on the stones, and the fire starting up under the horse's hoofs. I walked along pretty briskly, for I was feeling a little tired of being out in the night, and as the clocks were striking two I turned down Ashley Street, which, you know, is on my way. It was quieter than ever there, and the lamps were fewer; altogether, it looked as dark and gloomy as a forest in winter. I had done about half the length of the street when I heard a door closed very softly, and naturally I looked up to see who was abroad like myself at such an hour. As it happens, there is a street lamp close to the house in question, and I saw a man standing on the step. He had just shut the door and his face was towards me, and I recognized Crashaw directly. I never knew him to speak to, but I had often seen him, and I am positive that I was not mistaken in my man. I looked into his face for a moment, and then — I will confess the truth — I set off at a good run, and kept it up till I was within my own door."

"Why?"

"Why? Because it made my blood run cold to see that man's face. I could never have supposed that such an infernal medley of passions could have glared out of any human eyes; I almost fainted as I looked. I knew I had looked into the eyes of a lost soul, Austin, the man's outward form remained, but all hell was within it. Furious lust, and hate that was like fire, and the loss of all hope and horror that seemed to shriek aloud to the night, though his teeth were shut; and the utter blackness of despair. I am sure that he did not see me; he saw nothing that you or I can see, but what he saw I hope we never shall. I do not know when he died; I suppose in an hour, or perhaps two, but when I passed down Ashley Street and heard the closing door, that man no longer belonged to this world; it was a devil's face I looked upon."

There was an interval of silence in the room when Villiers ceased speaking. The light was failing, and all the tumult of an hour ago was quite hushed. Austin had bent his head at the close of the story, and his hand covered his eyes.

"What can it mean?" he said at length.

"Who knows, Austin, who knows? It's a black business, but I think we had better keep it to ourselves, for the present at any rate. I will see if I cannot learn anything about that house through private channels of information, and if I do light upon anything I will let you know."

VII. THE ENCOUNTER IN SOHO

THREE WEEKS LATER Austin received a note from Villiers, asking him to call either that afternoon or the next. He chose the nearer date, and found Villiers sitting as usual by the window, apparently lost in meditation on the drowsy traffic of the street. There was a bamboo table by his side, a fantastic thing, enriched with gilding and queer painted scenes, and on it lay a little pile of papers arranged and docketed as neatly as anything in Mr. Clarke's office.

"Well, Villiers, have you made any discoveries in the last three weeks?"

"I think so; I have here one or two memoranda which struck me as singular, and there is a statement to which I shall call your attention."

"And these documents relate to Mrs. Beaumont? It was really Crashaw whom you saw that night standing on the doorstep of the house in Ashley Street?"

"As to that matter my belief remains unchanged, but neither my inquiries nor their results have any special relation to Crashaw. But my investigations have had a strange issue. I have found out who Mrs. Beaumont is!"

"Who is she? In what way do you mean?"

"I mean that you and I know her better under another name."

"What name is that?"

"Herbert."

"Herbert!" Austin repeated the word, dazed with astonishment.

"Yes, Mrs. Herbert of Paul Street, Helen Vaughan of earlier adventures unknown to me. You had reason to recognize the expression of her face; when you go home look at the face in Meyrick's book of horrors, and you will know the sources of your recollection."

"And you have proof of this?"

“Yes, the best of proof; I have seen Mrs. Beaumont, or shall we say Mrs. Herbert?”

“Where did you see her?”

“Hardly in a place where you would expect to see a lady who lives in Ashley Street, Piccadilly. I saw her entering a house in one of the meanest and most disreputable streets in Soho. In fact, I had made an appointment, though not with her, and she was precise to both time and place.”

“All this seems very wonderful, but I cannot call it incredible. You must remember, Villiers, that I have seen this woman, in the ordinary adventure of London society, talking and laughing, and sipping her coffee in a commonplace drawing-room with commonplace people. But you know what you are saying.”

“I do; I have not allowed myself to be led by surmises or fancies. It was with no thought of finding Helen Vaughan that I searched for Mrs. Beaumont in the dark waters of the life of London, but such has been the issue.”

“You must have been in strange places, Villiers.”

“Yes, I have been in very strange places. It would have been useless, you know, to go to Ashley Street, and ask Mrs. Beaumont to give me a short sketch of her previous history. No; assuming, as I had to assume, that her record was not of the cleanest, it would be pretty certain that at some previous time she must have moved in circles not quite so refined as her present ones. If you see mud at the top of a stream, you may be sure that it was once at the bottom. I went to the bottom. I have always been fond of diving into Queer Street for my amusement, and I found my knowledge of that locality and its inhabitants very useful. It is, perhaps, needless to say that my friends had never heard the name of Beaumont, and as I had never seen the lady, and was quite unable to describe her, I had to set to work in an indirect way. The people there know me; I have been able to do some of them a service now and again, so they made no difficulty about giving their information; they were aware I had no communication direct or indirect with Scotland Yard. I had to cast out a good many lines, though, before I got what I wanted, and when I landed the fish I did not for a moment suppose it was my fish. But I listened to what I was told out of a constitutional liking for useless information, and I found myself in possession of a very curious story, though, as I imagined, not the story I was looking for. It was to this effect. Some five or six years ago, a woman named Raymond suddenly made her appearance in the neighbourhood to which I am referring. She was described to me as being quite young, probably not more than seventeen or eighteen, very handsome, and looking as if she came from the country. I should be wrong in saying that she found her level in going to this particular quarter, or associating with these people, for from what I was told, I should think the worst den in London far too good for her. The person from whom I got my information, as you may suppose, no great Puritan, shuddered and grew sick in telling me of the nameless infamies which were laid to her charge. After living there for a year, or perhaps a little more, she disappeared as suddenly as she came, and they saw nothing of her till about the time of the Paul Street case. At first she came to her old haunts only occasionally, then more frequently, and finally took up her abode there as before, and remained for six or eight months. It's of no use my going into details as to the life that woman led; if you want particulars you can look at Meyrick's legacy. Those designs were not drawn from his imagination. She again disappeared, and the people of the place saw nothing of her till a few months ago. My informant told me that she had taken some rooms in a house which he pointed out, and these rooms she was in the habit of visiting two or three times a week and always at ten in the morning. I was led to expect that one of these visits would be paid on a certain day about a week ago, and I accordingly managed to be on the look-out in company with my cicerone at a quarter to ten, and the hour and the lady came with equal punctuality. My friend and I were standing under an archway, a little way back from the street, but she saw us, and gave me a glance that I shall be long in forgetting. That look was quite enough for me; I knew Miss Raymond to be Mrs. Herbert; as for Mrs. Beaumont she had quite gone out of my head. She went into the house, and I watched it till four o'clock, when she came out, and then I followed her. It was a long chase, and I had to be very careful to keep a long way in the background, and yet not lose sight of the woman. She took me down to the Strand, and then to Westminster, and then up St. James's Street, and along Piccadilly. I felt queerish when I saw her turn up Ashley Street; the thought that Mrs. Herbert was Mrs. Beaumont came into my mind, but it seemed too impossible to be true. I waited at the corner, keeping my eye on her all the time, and I took particular care to note the house at which she stopped. It was the house with the gay curtains, the home of flowers, the house out of which Crashaw came the night he hanged himself in his garden. I was just going away with my discovery, when I saw an empty carriage come round and draw up in front of the house, and I came to the conclusion that Mrs. Herbert was going out for a drive, and I was right. There, as it happened, I met a man I know, and we stood talking together a little distance from the carriage-way, to which I had my back. We had not been there for ten minutes when my friend took off his hat, and I glanced round and saw the lady I had been following all day. 'Who is that?' I said, and his answer was 'Mrs. Beaumont; lives in Ashley Street.' Of course there could be no doubt after that. I don't know whether she saw me, but I don't think she did. I went home at once, and, on consideration, I thought that I had a sufficiently good case with which to go to Clarke."

"Why to Clarke?"

"Because I am sure that Clarke is in possession of facts about this woman, facts of which I know nothing."

"Well, what then?"

Mr. Villiers leaned back in his chair and looked reflectively at Austin for a moment before he answered:

"My idea was that Clarke and I should call on Mrs. Beaumont."

"You would never go into such a house as that? No, no, Villiers, you cannot do it. Besides, consider; what result…"

"I will tell you soon. But I was going to say that my information does not end here; it has been completed in an extraordinary manner.

"Look at this neat little packet of manuscript; it is paginated, you see, and I have indulged in the civil coquetry of a ribbon of red tape. It has almost a legal air, hasn't it? Run your eye over it, Austin. It is an account of the entertainment Mrs. Beaumont provided for her choicer guests. The man who wrote this escaped with his life, but I do not think he will live many years. The doctors tell him he must have sustained some severe shock to the nerves."

Austin took the manuscript, but never read it. Opening the neat pages at haphazard his eye was caught by a word and a phrase that followed it; and, sick at heart, with white lips and a cold sweat pouring like water from his temples, he flung the paper down.

“Take it away, Villiers, never speak of this again. Are you made of stone, man? Why, the dread and horror of death itself, the thoughts of the man who stands in the keen morning air on the black platform, bound, the bell tolling in his ears, and waits for the harsh rattle of the bolt, are as nothing compared to this. I will not read it; I should never sleep again.”

“Very good. I can fancy what you saw. Yes; it is horrible enough; but after all, it is an old story, an old mystery played in our day, and in dim London streets instead of amidst the vineyards and the olive gardens. We know what happened to those who chanced to meet the Great God Pan, and those who are wise know that all symbols are symbols of something, not of nothing. It was, indeed, an exquisite symbol beneath which men long ago veiled their knowledge of the most awful, most secret forces which lie at the heart of all things; forces before which the souls of men must wither and die and blacken, as their bodies blacken under the electric current. Such forces cannot be named, cannot be spoken, cannot be imagined except under a veil and a symbol, a symbol to the most of us appearing a quaint, poetic fancy, to some a foolish tale. But you and I, at all events, have known something of the terror that may dwell in the secret place of life, manifested under human flesh; that which is without form taking to itself a form. Oh, Austin, how can it be? How is it that the very sunlight does not turn to blackness before this thing, the hard earth melt and boil beneath such a burden?”

Villiers was pacing up and down the room, and the beads of sweat stood out on his forehead. Austin sat silent for a while, but Villiers saw him make a sign upon his breast.

“I say again, Villiers, you will surely never enter such a house as that? You would never pass out alive.”

“Yes, Austin, I shall go out alive — I, and Clarke with me.”

“What do you mean? You cannot, you would not dare…”

“Wait a moment. The air was very pleasant and fresh this morning; there was a breeze blowing, even through this dull street, and I thought I would take a walk. Piccadilly stretched before me a clear, bright vista, and the sun flashed on the carriages and on the quivering leaves in the park. It was a joyous morning, and men and women looked at the sky and smiled as they went about their work or their pleasure, and the wind blew as blithely as upon the meadows and the scented gorse. But somehow or other I got out of the bustle and the gaiety, and found myself walking slowly along a quiet, dull street, where there seemed to be no sunshine and no air, and where the few foot-passengers loitered as they walked, and hung indecisively about corners and archways. I walked along, hardly knowing where I was going or what I did there, but feeling impelled, as one sometimes is, to explore still further, with a vague idea of reaching some unknown goal. Thus I forged up the street, noting the small traffic of the milk-shop, and wondering at the incongruous medley of penny pipes, black tobacco, sweets, newspapers, and comic songs which here and there jostled one another in the short compass of a single window. I think it was a cold shudder that suddenly passed through me that first told me that I had found what I wanted. I looked up from the pavement and stopped before a dusty shop, above which the lettering had faded, where the red bricks of two hundred years ago had grimed to black; where the windows had gathered to themselves the dust of winters innumerable. I saw what I required; but I think it was five minutes before I had steadied myself and could walk in and ask for it in a cool voice and with a calm face. I think there must even then have been a tremor in my words, for the old man who came out of the back parlour, and fumbled slowly amongst his goods, looked oddly at me as he tied the parcel. I paid what he asked, and stood leaning by the counter, with a strange reluctance to take up my goods and go. I asked about the business, and learnt that trade was bad and the profits cut down sadly; but then the street was not what it was before traffic had been diverted, but that was done forty years ago, 'just before my father died,' he said. I got away at last, and walked along sharply; it was a dismal street indeed, and I was glad to return to the bustle and the noise. Would you like to see my purchase?"

Austin said nothing, but nodded his head slightly; he still looked white and sick. Villiers pulled out a drawer in the bamboo table, and showed Austin a long coil of cord, hard and new; and at one end was a running noose.

"It is the best hempen cord," said Villiers, "just as it used to be made for the old trade, the man told me. Not an inch of jute from end to end."

Austin set his teeth hard, and stared at Villiers, growing whiter as he looked.

“You would not do it,” he murmured at last. “You would not have blood on your hands. My God!” he exclaimed, with sudden vehemence, “you cannot mean this, Villiers, that you will make yourself a hangman?”

“No. I shall offer a choice, and leave Helen Vaughan alone with this cord in a locked room for fifteen minutes. If when we go in it is not done, I shall call the nearest policeman. That is all.”

“I must go now. I cannot stay here any longer; I cannot bear this. Good-night.”

“Good-night, Austin.”

The door shut, but in a moment it was open again, and Austin stood, white and ghastly, in the entrance.

“I was forgetting,” he said, “that I too have something to tell. I have received a letter from Dr. Harding of Buenos Ayres. He says that he attended Meyrick for three weeks before his death.”

“And does he say what carried him off in the prime of life? It was not fever?”

“No, it was not fever. According to the doctor, it was an utter collapse of the whole system, probably caused by some severe shock. But he states that the patient would tell him nothing, and that he was consequently at some disadvantage in treating the case.”

“Is there anything more?”

“Yes. Dr. Harding ends his letter by saying: ‘I think this is all the information I can give you about your poor friend. He had not been long in Buenos Ayres, and knew scarcely any one, with the exception of a person who did not bear the best of characters, and has since left — a Mrs. Vaughan.’”

VIII. THE FRAGMENTS

[AMONGST THE PAPERS of the well-known physician, Dr. Robert Matheson, of Ashley Street, Piccadilly, who died suddenly, of apoplectic seizure, at the beginning of 1892, a leaf of manuscript paper was found, covered with pencil jottings. These notes were in Latin, much abbreviated, and had evidently been made in great haste. The MS. was only deciphered with difficulty, and some words have up to the present time evaded all the efforts of the expert employed. The date, "XXV Jul. 1888," is written on the right-hand corner of the MS. The following is a translation of Dr. Matheson's manuscript.]

"Whether science would benefit by these brief notes if they could be published, I do not know, but rather doubt. But certainly I shall never take the responsibility of publishing or divulging one word of what is here written, not only on account of my oath given freely to those two persons who were present, but also because the details are too abominable. It is probably that, upon mature consideration, and after weighting the good and evil, I shall one day destroy this paper, or at least leave it under seal to my friend D., trusting in his discretion, to use it or to burn it, as he may think fit.

"As was befitting, I did all that my knowledge suggested to make sure that I was suffering under no delusion. At first astounded, I could hardly think, but in a minute's time I was sure that my pulse was steady and regular, and that I was in my real and true senses. I then fixed my eyes quietly on what was before me.

"Though horror and revolting nausea rose up within me, and an odour of corruption choked my breath, I remained firm. I was then privileged or accursed, I dare not say which, to see that which was on the bed, lying there black like ink, transformed before my eyes. The skin, and the flesh, and the muscles, and the bones, and the firm structure of the human body that I had thought to be unchangeable, and permanent as adamant, began to melt and dissolve.

“I know that the body may be separated into its elements by external agencies, but I should have refused to believe what I saw. For here there was some internal force, of which I knew nothing, that caused dissolution and change.

“Here too was all the work by which man had been made repeated before my eyes. I saw the form waver from sex to sex, dividing itself from itself, and then again reunited. Then I saw the body descend to the beasts whence it ascended, and that which was on the heights go down to the depths, even to the abyss of all being. The principle of life, which makes organism, always remained, while the outward form changed.

“The light within the room had turned to blackness, not the darkness of night, in which objects are seen dimly, for I could see clearly and without difficulty. But it was the negation of light; objects were presented to my eyes, if I may say so, without any medium, in such a manner that if there had been a prism in the room I should have seen no colours represented in it.

“I watched, and at last I saw nothing but a substance as jelly. Then the ladder was ascended again… [here the MS. is illegible] …for one instance I saw a Form, shaped in dimness before me, which I will not farther describe. But the symbol of this form may be seen in ancient sculptures, and in paintings which survived beneath the lava, too foul to be spoken of… as a horrible and unspeakable shape, neither man nor beast, was changed into human form, there came finally death.

“I who saw all this, not without great horror and loathing of soul, here write my name, declaring all that I have set on this paper to be true.

“ROBERT MATHESON, Med. Dr.”

…Such, Raymond, is the story of what I know and what I have seen. The burden of it was too heavy for me to bear alone, and yet I could tell it to none but you. Villiers, who was with me at the last, knows nothing of that awful secret of the wood, of how what we both saw die, lay upon the smooth, sweet turf amidst the summer flowers, half in sun and half in shadow, and holding the girl Rachel’s hand, called and summoned those companions, and shaped in solid form, upon the earth we tread upon, the horror which we can but hint at, which we can only name under a figure. I would not tell Villiers of this, nor of that resemblance, which struck me as with a blow upon my heart, when I saw the portrait, which filled the cup of terror at the end. What this can mean I dare not guess. I know that what I saw perish was not Mary, and yet in the last agony Mary's eyes looked into mine. Whether there can be any one who can show the last link in this chain of awful mystery, I do not know, but if there be any one who can do this, you, Raymond, are the man. And if you know the secret, it rests with you to tell it or not, as you please.

I am writing this letter to you immediately on my getting back to town. I have been in the country for the last few days; perhaps you may be able to guess in which part. While the horror and wonder of London was at its height — for "Mrs. Beaumont," as I have told you, was well known in society — I wrote to my friend Dr. Phillips, giving some brief outline, or rather hint, of what happened, and asking him to tell me the name of the village where the events he had related to me occurred. He gave me the name, as he said with the less hesitation, because Rachel's father and mother were dead, and the rest of the family had gone to a relative in the State of Washington six months before. The parents, he said, had undoubtedly died of grief and horror caused by the terrible death of their daughter, and by what had gone before that death. On the evening of the day which I received Phillips' letter I was at Caermaen, and standing beneath the mouldering Roman walls, white with the winters of seventeen hundred years, I looked over the meadow where once had stood the older temple of the "God of the Deeps," and saw a house gleaming in the sunlight. It was the house where Helen had lived. I stayed at Caermaen for several days. The people of the place, I found, knew little and had guessed less. Those whom I spoke to on the matter seemed surprised that an antiquarian (as I professed myself to be) should trouble about a village tragedy, of which they gave a very commonplace version, and, as you may imagine, I told nothing of what I knew. Most of my time was spent in the great wood that rises just above the village and climbs the hillside, and goes down to the river in the valley; such another long lovely valley, Raymond, as that on which we looked one summer night, walking to and fro before your house. For many an hour I strayed through the maze of the forest, turning now to right and now to left, pacing slowly down long alleys of undergrowth, shadowy and chill, even under the midday sun, and halting beneath great oaks; lying on the short turf of a clearing where the faint sweet scent of wild roses came to me on the wind and mixed with the heavy perfume of the elder, whose mingled odour is like the odour of the room of the dead, a vapour of incense and corruption. I stood at the edges of the wood, gazing at all the pomp and procession of the foxgloves towering amidst the bracken and shining red in the broad sunshine, and beyond them into deep thickets of close undergrowth where springs boil up from the rock and nourish the water-weeds, dank and evil. But in all my wanderings I avoided one part of the wood; it was not till yesterday that I climbed to the summit of the hill, and stood upon the ancient Roman road that threads the highest ridge of the wood. Here they had walked, Helen and Rachel, along this quiet causeway, upon the pavement of green turf, shut in on either side by high banks of red earth, and tall hedges of shining beech, and here I followed in their steps, looking out, now and again, through partings in the boughs, and seeing on one side the sweep of the wood stretching far to right and left, and sinking into the broad level, and beyond, the yellow sea, and the land over the sea. On the other side was the valley and the river and hill following hill as wave on wave, and wood and meadow, and cornfield, and white houses gleaming, and a great wall of mountain, and far blue peaks in the north. And so at least I came to the place. The track went up a gentle slope, and widened out into an open space with a wall of thick undergrowth around it, and then, narrowing again, passed on into the distance and the faint blue mist of summer heat. And into this pleasant summer glade Rachel passed a girl, and left it, who shall say what? I did not stay long there.

In a small town near Caermaen there is a museum, containing for the most part Roman remains which have been found in the neighbourhood at various times. On the day after my arrival in Caermaen I walked over to the town in question, and took the opportunity of inspecting the museum. After I had seen most of the sculptured stones, the coffins, rings, coins, and fragments of tessellated pavement which the place contains, I was shown a small square pillar of white stone, which had been recently discovered in the wood of which I have been speaking, and, as I found on inquiry, in that open space where the Roman road broadens out. On one side of the pillar was an inscription, of which I took a note. Some of the letters have been defaced, but I do not think there can be any doubt as to those which I supply. The inscription is as follows:

DEVOMNODENT*i*

FLA*v*IVSSENILISPOSSV*it*

PROPTERNVPtia

*qua*SVIDITSVBVMB*ra*

“To the great god Nodens (the god of the Great Deep or Abyss) Flavius Senilis has erected this pillar on account of the marriage which he saw beneath the shade.”

The custodian of the museum informed me that local antiquaries were much puzzled, not by the inscription, or by any difficulty in translating it, but as to the circumstance or rite to which allusion is made.

…And now, my dear Clarke, as to what you tell me about Helen Vaughan, whom you say you saw die under circumstances of the utmost and almost incredible horror. I was interested in your account, but a good deal, nay all, of what you told me I knew already. I can understand the strange likeness you remarked in both the portrait and in the actual face; you have seen Helen’s mother. You remember that still summer night so many years ago, when I talked to you of the world beyond the shadows, and of the god Pan. You remember Mary. She was the mother of Helen Vaughan, who was born nine months after that night.

Mary never recovered her reason. She lay, as you saw her, all the while upon her bed, and a few days after the child was born she died. I fancy that just at the last she knew me; I was standing by the bed, and the old look came into her eyes for a second, and then she shuddered and groaned and died. It was an ill work I did that night when you were present; I broke open the door of the house of life, without knowing or caring what might pass forth or enter in. I recollect your telling me at the time, sharply enough, and rightly too, in one sense, that I had ruined the reason of a human being by a foolish experiment, based on an absurd theory. You did well to blame me, but my theory was not all absurdity. What I said Mary would see she saw, but I forgot that no human eyes can look on such a sight with impunity. And

I forgot, as I have just said, that when the house of life is thus thrown open, there may enter in that for which we have no name, and human flesh may become the veil of a horror one dare not express. I played with energies which I did not understand, you have seen the ending of it. Helen Vaughan did well to bind the cord about her neck and die, though the death was horrible. The blackened face, the hideous form upon the bed, changing and melting before your eyes from woman to man, from man to beast, and from beast to worse than beast, all the strange horror that you witness, surprises me but little. What you say the doctor whom you sent for saw and shuddered at I noticed long ago; I knew what I had done the moment the child was born, and when it was scarcely five years old I surprised it, not once or twice but several times with a playmate, you may guess of what kind. It was for me a constant, an incarnate horror, and after a few years I felt I could bear it no more, and I sent Helen Vaughan away. You know now what frightened the boy in the wood. The rest of the strange story, and all else that you tell me, as discovered by your friend, I have contrived to learn from time to time, almost to the last chapter. And now Helen is with her companions…

The Inmost Light

I

ONE EVENING IN autumn, when the deformities of London were veiled in faint blue mist, and its vistas and far-reaching streets seemed splendid, Mr. Charles Salisbury was slowly pacing down Rupert Street, drawing nearer to his favourite restaurant by slow degrees. His eyes were downcast in study of the pavement, and thus it was that as he passed in at the narrow door a man who had come up from the lower end of the street jostled against him.

“I beg your pardon — wasn’t looking where I was going. Why, it’s Dyson!”

“Yes, quite so. How are you, Salisbury?”

“Quite well. But where have you been, Dyson? I don’t think I can have seen you for the last five years?”

“No; I dare say not. You remember I was getting rather hard up when you came to my place at Charlotte Street?”

“Perfectly. I think I remember your telling me that you owed five weeks’ rent, and that you had parted with your watch for a comparatively small sum.”

“My dear Salisbury, your memory is admirable. Yes, I was hard up. But the curious thing is that soon after you saw me I became harder up. My financial state was described by a friend as ‘stone broke.’ I don’t approve of slang, mind you, but such was my condition. But suppose we go in; there might be other people who would like to dine — it’s human weakness, Salisbury.”

“Certainly; come along. I was wondering as I walked down whether the corner table were taken. It has a velvet back you know.”

“I know the spot; it’s vacant. Yes, as I was saying, I became even harder up.”

“What did you do then?” asked Salisbury, disposing of his hat, and settling down in the corner of the seat, with a glance of fond anticipation at the menu.

“What did I do? Why, I sat down and reflected. I had a good classical education, and a positive distaste for business of any kind: that was the capital with which I faced the world. Do you know, I have heard people describe olives as nasty! What lamentable Philistinism! I have often thought, Salisbury, that I could write genuine poetry under the influence of olives and red wine.

Let us have Chianti; it may not be very good, but the flasks are simply charming.”

“It is pretty good here. We may as well have a big flask.”

“Very good. I reflected, then, on my want of prospects, and I determined to embark in literature.”

“Really; that was strange. You seem in pretty comfortable circumstances, though.”

“Though! What a satire upon a noble profession. I am afraid, Salisbury, you haven’t a proper idea of the dignity of an artist. You see me sitting at my desk — or at least you can see me if you care to call — with pen and ink, and simple nothingness before me, and if you come again in a few hours you will (in all probability) find a creation!”

“Yes, quite so. I had an idea that literature was not remunerative.”

“You are mistaken; its rewards are great. I may mention, by the way, that shortly after you saw me I succeeded to a small income. An uncle died, and proved unexpectedly generous.”

“Ah, I see. That must have been convenient.”.”It was pleasant — undeniably pleasant. I have always considered it in the light of an endowment of my researches. I told you I was a man of letters; it would, perhaps, be more correct to describe myself as a man of science.”

“Dear me, Dyson, you have really changed very much in the last few years. I had a notion, don’t you know, that you were a sort of idler about town, the kind of man one might meet on the north side of Piccadilly every day from May to July.”

“Exactly. I was even then forming myself, though all unconsciously. You know my poor father could not afford to send me to the University. I used to grumble in my ignorance at not having completed my education. That was the folly of youth, Salisbury; my University was Piccadilly.

There I began to study the great science which still occupies me.”

“What science do you mean?”

“The science of the great city; the physiology of London; literally and metaphysically the greatest subject that the mind of man can conceive. What an admirable salmi this us; undoubtedly the final end of the pheasant. Yet I feel sometimes positively overwhelmed with the thought of the vastness and complexity of London. Paris a man may get to understand thoroughly with a reasonable amount of study; but London is always a mystery. In Paris you may say: ‘Here live the actresses, here the Bohemians, and the Ratés’; but it is different in London. You may point out a street, correctly enough, as the abode of washerwomen; but, in that second floor, a man may be studying Chaldee roots, and in the garret over the way a forgotten artist is dying by inches.”

“I see you are Dyson, unchanged and unchangeable,” said Salisbury, slowly sipping his Chianti. “I think you are misled by a too fervid imagination; the mystery of London exists only in your fancy. It seems to me a dull place enough. We seldom hear of a really artistic crime in London, whereas I believe Paris abounds in that sort of thing.”

“Give me some more wine. Thanks. You are mistaken, my dear fellow, you are really mistaken. London has nothing to be ashamed of in the way of crime. Where we fail is for want of Homers, not Agamemnons. Carent quia vate sacro, you know.”

“I recall the quotation. But I don’t think I quite follow you.”

“Well, in plain language, we have no good writers in London who make a speciality of that kind of thing. Our common reporter is a dull dog; every story that he has to tell is spoilt in the telling. His idea of horror and of what excites horror is so lamentably deficient. Nothing will content the fellow but blood, vulgar red blood, and when he can get it he lays it on thick, and considers that he has produced a telling article. It’s a poor notion. And, by some curious fatality, it is the most commonplace and brutal murders which always attract the most attention and get written up the most. For instance, I dare say that you never heard of the Harlesden case?"

"No; no, I don't remember anything about it."

"Of course not. And yet the story is a curious one. I will tell you over our coffee. Harlesden, you know, or I expect you don't know, is quite on the out-quarters of London; something curiously different from your fine old crusted suburb like Norwood or Hampstead, different as each of these is from the other. Hampstead, I mean, is where you look for the head of your great China house with his three acres of land and pine-houses, though of late there is the artistic substratum; while Norwood is the home of the prosperous middle-class family who took the house 'because it was near the Palace,' and sickened of the Palace six months afterwards; but Harlesden is a place of no character. It's too new to have any character as yet. There are the rows of red houses and the rows of white houses and the bright green Venetians, and the blistering.doorways, and the little backyards they call gardens, and a few feeble shops, and then, just as you think you're going to grasp the physiognomy of the settlement, it all melts away."

"How the dickens is that? The houses don't tumble down before one's eyes, I suppose!"

"Well, no, not exactly that. But Harlesden as an entity disappears. Your street turns into a quiet lane, and your staring houses into elm trees, and the back-gardens into green meadows. You pass instantly from town to country; there is no transition as in a small country town, no soft gradations of wider lawns and orchards, with houses gradually becoming less dense, but a dead stop. I believe the people who live there mostly go into the City. I have seen once or twice a laden bus bound thitherwards. But however that may be, I can't conceive a greater loneliness in a desert at midnight than there is there at midday. It is like a city of the dead; the streets are glaring and desolate, and as you pass it suddenly strikes you that this too is part of London. Well, a year or two ago there was a doctor living there; he had set up his brass plate and his red lamp at the very end of one of those shining streets, and from the back of the house, the fields stretched away to the north. I don't know what his reason was in settling down in such an out-of-the-way place, perhaps Dr. Black, as we call him, was a far-seeing man and looked ahead. His relations, so it appeared afterwards, had lost sight of him for many years and didn’t even know he was a doctor, much less where he lived. However, there he was settled in Harlesden, with some fragments of a practice, and an uncommonly pretty wife. People used to see them walking out together in the summer evenings soon after they came to Harlesden, and, so far as could be observed, they seemed a very affectionate couple. These walks went on through the autumn, and then ceased, but, of course, as the days grew dark and the weather cold, the lanes near Harlesden might be expected to lose many of their attractions. All through the winter nobody saw anything of Mrs.

Black, the doctor used to reply to his patients’ inquiries that she was a ‘little out of sorts, would be better, no doubt, in the spring.’ But the spring came, and the summer, and no Mrs. Black appeared, and at last people began to rumour and talk amongst themselves, and all sorts of queer things were said at ‘high teas,’ which you may possibly have heard are the only form of entertainment known in such suburbs. Dr. Black began to surprise some very odd looks cast in his direction, and the practice, such as it was, fell off before his eyes. In short, when the neighbours whispered about the matter, they whispered that Mrs. Black was dead, and that the doctor had made away with her. But this wasn’t the case; Mrs. Black was seen alive in June. It was a Sunday afternoon, one of those few exquisite days that an English climate offers, and half London had strayed out into the fields, north, south, east, and west to smell the scent of the white May, and to see if the wild roses were yet in blossom in the hedges. I had gone out myself early in the morning, and had had a long ramble, and somehow or other as I was steering homeward I found myself in this very Harlesden we have been talking about. To be exact, I had a glass of beer in the General Gordon, the most flourishing house in the neighbourhood, and as I was wandering rather aimlessly about, I saw an uncommonly tempting gap in a hedgerow, and resolved to explore the meadow beyond. Soft grass is very grateful to the feet after the infernal grit strewn on suburban sidewalks, and after walking about for some time I thought I should like to sit down on a bank and have a smoke. While I was getting out my pouch, I looked up in the direction of the houses, and as I looked I felt my breath caught back, and my teeth began to chatter, and the stick I had in one hand snapped in two with the grip I gave it. It was as if I had had an electric current down my spine, and yet for some moment of time which seemed long, but which must have been very short, I caught myself wondering what on earth was the matter.

Then I knew I what had made my very heart shudder and my bones grind together in an agony. As I glanced up I had looked straight towards the last house in the row before me, and in an upper.window of that house I had seen for some short fraction of a second a face. It was the face of a woman, and yet it was not human. You and I, Salisbury, have heard in our time, as we sat in our seats in church in sober English fashion, of a lust that cannot be satiated and of a fire that is unquenchable, but few of us have any notion what these words mean. I hope you never may, for as I saw that face at the window, with the blue sky above me and the warm air playing in gusts about me, I knew I had looked into another world — looked through the window of a commonplace, brand-new house, and seen hell open before me. When the first shock was over, I thought once or twice that I should have fainted; my face streamed with a cold sweat, and my breath came and went in sobs, as if I had been half drowned. I managed to get up at last, and walk round to the street, and there I saw the name 'Dr. Black' on the post by the front gate. As fate or my luck would have it, the door opened and a man came down the steps as I passed by. I had no doubt it was the doctor himself. He was of a type rather common in London; long and thin, with a pasty face and a dull black moustache. He gave me a look as we passed each other on the pavement, and though it was merely the casual glance which one foot-passenger bestows on another, I felt convinced in my mind that here was an ugly customer to deal with. As you may imagine, I went my way a good deal puzzled and horrified too by what I had seen; for I had paid another visit to the General Gordon, and had got together a good deal of the common gossip of the place about the Blacks. I didn't mention the fact that I had seen a woman's face in the window; but I heard that Mrs. Black had been much admired for her beautiful golden hair, and round what had struck me with such a nameless terror, there was a mist of flowing yellow hair, as it was an aureole of glory round the visage of a satyr. The whole thing bothered me in an indescribable manner; and when I got home I tried my best to think of the impression I had received as an illusion, but it was no use. I knew very well I had seen what I have tried to describe to you, and I was morally certain that I had seen Mrs. Black. And then there was the gossip of the place, the suspicion of foul play, which I knew to be false, and my own conviction that there was some deadly mischief or other going on in that bright red house at the corner of Devon Road: how to construct a theory of a reasonable kind out of these two elements. In short, I found myself in a world of mystery; I puzzled my head over it and filled up my leisure moments by gathering together odd threads of speculation, but I never moved a step towards any real solution, and as the summer days went on the matter seemed to grow misty and indistinct, shadowing some vague terror, like a nightmare of last month. I suppose it would before long have faded into the background of my brain — I should not have forgotten it, for such a thing could never be forgotten — but one morning as I was looking over the paper my eye was caught by a heading over some two dozen lines of small type. The words I had seen were simply: ‘The Harlesden Case,’ and I knew what I was going to read. Mrs. Black was dead. Black had called in another medical man to certify as to cause of death, and something or other had aroused the strange doctor’s suspicions and there had been an inquest and post-mortem. And the result? That, I will confess, did astonish me considerably; it was the triumph of the unexpected. The two doctors who made the autopsy were obliged to confess that they could not discover the faintest trace of any kind of foul play; their most exquisite tests and reagents failed to detect the presence of poison in the most infinitesimal quantity. Death, they found, had been caused by a somewhat obscure and scientifically interesting form of brain disease. The tissue of the brain and the molecules of the grey matter had undergone a most extraordinary series of changes; and the younger of the two doctors, who has some reputation, I believe, as a specialist in brain trouble, made some remarks in giving his evidence which struck me deeply at the time, though I did not then grasp their full significance. He said: ‘At the commencement of the examination I was.astonished to find appearances of a character entirely new to me, notwithstanding my somewhat large experience. I need not specify these appearances at present, it will be sufficient for me to state that as I proceeded in my task I could scarcely believe that the brain before me was that of a human being at all.’ There was some surprise at this statement, as you may imagine, and the coroner asked the doctor if he meant that the brain resembled that of an animal. ‘No,’ he replied, ‘I should not put it in that way. Some of the appearances I noticed seemed to point in that direction, but others, and these were the more surprising, indicated a nervous organization of a wholly different character from that either of man or the lower animals.’ It was a curious thing to say, but of course the jury brought in a verdict of death from natural causes, and, so far as the public was concerned, the case came to an end. But after I had read what the doctor said I made up my mind that I should like to know a good deal more, and I set to work on what seemed likely to prove an interesting investigation. I had really a good deal of trouble, but I was successful in a measure. Though why — my dear fellow, I had no notion at the time. Are you aware that we have been here nearly four hours? The waiters are staring at us. Let's have the bill and be gone."

The two men went out in silence, and stood a moment in the cool air, watching the hurrying traffic of Coventry Street pass before them to the accompaniment of the ringing bells of hansoms and the cries of the newsboys; the deep far murmur of London surging up ever and again from beneath these louder noises.

"It is a strange case, isn't it?" said Dyson at length. "What do you think of it?"

"My dear fellow. I haven't heard the end, so I will reserve my opinion. When will you give me the sequel?"

"Come to my rooms some evening; say next Thursday. Here's the address. Good-night; I want to get down to the Strand." Dyson hailed a passing hansom, and Salisbury turned northward to walk home to his lodgings.

II

MR. SALISBURY, AS may have been gathered from the few remarks which he had found it possible to introduce in the course of the evening, was a young gentleman of a peculiarly solid form of intellect, coy and retiring before the mysterious and the uncommon, with a constitutional dislike of paradox. During the restaurant dinner he had been forced to listen in almost absolute silence to a strange tissue of improbabilities strung together with the ingenuity of a born meddler in plots and mysteries, and it was with a feeling of weariness that he crossed Shaftesbury Avenue, and dived into the recesses of Soho, for his lodgings were in a modest neighbourhood to the north of Oxford Street. As he walked he speculated on the probable fate of Dyson, relying on literature, unbefriended by a thoughtful relative, and could not help concluding that so much subtlety united to a too vivid imagination would in all likelihood have been rewarded with a pair of sandwich-boards or a super's banner. Absorbed in this train of thought, and admiring the perverse dexterity which could transmute the face of a sickly woman and a case of brain disease into the crude elements of romance, Salisbury strayed on through the dimly lighted streets, not noticing the gusty wind which drove sharply round corners and whirled the stray rubbish of the pavement into the air in eddies, while black clouds gathered over the sickly yellow moon. Even a stray drop or two of rain blown into his face did not rouse him from his meditations, and it was only when with a sudden rush the storm tore down upon the street that he began to consider the expediency of finding some shelter. The rain, driven by the wind, pelted down with the violence of a thunderstorm, dashing up from the stones and hissing through the air, and soon a perfect.torrent of water coursed along the kennels and accumulated in pools over the choked-up drains.

The few stray passengers who had been loafing rather than walking about the street had scuttered away, like frightened rabbits, to some invisible places of refuge, and though Salisbury whistled loud and long for a hansom, no hansom appeared. He looked about him, as if to discover how far he might be from the haven of Oxford Street, but strolling carelessly along, he had turned out of his way, and found himself in an unknown region, and one to all appearance devoid even of a public house where shelter could be bought for the modest sum of two pence. The street lamps were few and at long intervals, and burned behind grimy glasses with the sickly light of oil, and by this wavering glimmer Salisbury could make out the shadowy and vast old~ houses of which the street was composed. As he passed along, hurrying, and shrinking from the full sweep of the rain, he noticed the innumerable bell-handles, with names that seemed about to vanish of old age graven on brass plates beneath them, and here and there a richly carved penthouse overhung the door, blackening with the grime of fifty years. The storm seemed to grow more and more furious; he was wet through, and a new hat had become a ruin, and still Oxford Street seemed as far off as ever; it was with deep relief that the dripping man caught sight of a dark archway which seemed to promise shelter from the rain if not from the wind. Salisbury took up his position in the driest corner and looked about him; he was standing in a kind of passage contrived under part of a house, and behind him stretched a narrow footway leading between blank walls to regions unknown. He had stood there for some time, vainly endeavouring to rid himself of some of his superfluous moisture, and listening for the passing wheel of a hansom, when his attention was aroused by a loud noise coming from the direction of the passage behind, and growing louder as it drew nearer. In a couple of minutes he could make out the shrill, raucous voice of a woman, threatening and renouncing and making the very stones echo with her accents, while now and then a man grumbled and expostulated. Though to all appearance devoid of romance, Salisbury had some relish for street rows, and was, indeed, somewhat of an amateur in the more amusing phases of drunkenness; he therefore composed himself to listen and observe with something of the air of a subscriber to grand opera. To his annoyance, however, the tempest seemed suddenly to be composed, and he could hear nothing but the impatient steps of the woman and the slow lurch of the man as they came towards him. Keeping back in the shadow of the wall, he could see the two drawing nearer; the man was evidently drunk, and had much ado to avoid frequent collision with the wall as he tacked across from one side to the other, like some bark beating up against a wind. The woman was looking straight in front of her, with tears streaming from her blazing eyes, but suddenly as they went by the flame blazed up again, and she burst forth into a torrent of abuse, facing round upon her companion.

“You low rascal, you mean, comtemptible cur,” she went on, after an incoherent storm of curses, “you think I’m to work and slave for you always, I suppose, while you’re after that Green Street girl and drinking every penny you’ve got? But you’re mistaken, Sam — indeed, I’ll bear it no longer. Damn you, you dirty thief, I’ve done with you and your master too, so you can go your own errands, and I only hope they’ll get you into trouble.”

The woman tore at the bosom of her dress, and taking something out that looked like paper, crumpled it up and flung it away. It fell at Salisbury’s feet. She ran out and disappeared in the darkness, while the man lurched slowly into the street, grumbling indistinctly to himself in a perplexed tone of voice. Salisbury looked out after him, and saw him maundering along the pavement, halting now and then and swaying indecisively, and then starting off at some fresh tangent. The sky had cleared, and white fleecy clouds were fleeting across the moon, high in the heaven. The light came and went by turns, as the clouds passed by, and, turning round as the.clear, white rays shone into the passage, Salisbury saw the little ball of crumpled paper which the woman had cast down. Oddly curious to know what it might contain, he picked it up and put it in his pocket, and set out afresh on his journey.

III

SALISBURY WAS A man of habit. When he got home, drenched to the skin, his clothes hanging lank about him, and a ghastly dew besmearing his hat, his only thought was of his health, of which he took studious care. So, after changing his clothes and encasing himself in a warm dressing-gown, he proceeded to prepare a sudorific in the shape of hot gin and water, warming the latter over one of those spirit-lamps which mitigate the austerities of the modern hermit's life. By the time this preparation had been exhibited, and Salisbury's disturbed feelings had been soothed by a pipe of tobacco, he was able to get into bed in a happy state of vacancy, without a thought of his adventure in the dark archway, or of the weird fancies with which Dyson had seasoned his dinner. It was the same at breakfast the next morning, for Salisbury made a point of not thinking of anything until that meal was over; but when the cup and saucer were cleared away, and the morning pipe was lit, he remembered the little ball of paper, and began fumbling in the pockets of his wet coat. He did not remember into which pocket he had put it, and as he dived now into one and now into another, he experienced a strange feeling of apprehension lest it should not be there at all, though he could not for the life of him have explained the importance he attached to what was in all probability mere rubbish. But he sighed with relief when his fingers touched the crumpled surface in an inside pocket, and he drew it out gently and laid it on the little desk by his easy chair with as much care as if it had been some rare jewel. Salisbury sat smoking and staring at his find for a few minutes, an odd temptation to throw the thing in the fire and have done with it struggling with as odd a speculation as to its possible contents, and as to the reason why the infuriated woman should have flung a bit of paper from her with such vehemence. As might be expected, it was the latter feeling that conquered in the end, and yet it was with something like repugnance that he at last took the paper and unrolled it, and laid it out before him. It was a piece of common dirty paper, to all appearance torn out of a cheap exercise book, and in the middle were a few lines written in a queer cramped hand. Salisbury bent his head and stared eagerly at it for a moment, drawing a long breath, and then fell back in his chair gazing blankly before him, till at last with a sudden revulsion he burst into a peal of laughter, so long and loud and uproarious that the landlady’s baby in the floor below awoke from sleep and echoed his mirth with hideous yells. But he laughed again and again, and took the paper up to read a second time what seemed such meaningless nonsense.

“Q. has had to go and see his friends in Paris,” it began. “Traverse Handel S. ‘Once around the grass, and twice around the lass, and thrice around the maple-tree.’ “

Salisbury took up the paper and crumpled it as the angry woman had done, and aimed it at the fire. He did not throw it there, however, but tossed it carelessly into the well of the desk, and laughed again. The sheer folly of the thing offended him, and he was ashamed of his own eager speculation, as one who pores over the high-sounding announcements in the agony column of the daily paper, and finds nothing but advertisement and trivality. He walked to the window, and stared out at the languid morning life of his quarter; the maids in slatternly print dresses washing door-steps, the fishmonger and the butcher on their rounds, and the tradesmen standing at the doors of their small shops, drooping for lack of trade and excitement. In the distance a blue haze gave some grandeur to the prospect, but the view as a whole was depressing, and would only.have interested a student of the life of London, who finds something rare and choice in its every aspect. Salisbury turned away in disgust, and settled himself in the easy chair, upholstered in a bright shade of green, and decked with yellow gimp, which was the pride and attraction of the apartments. Here he composed himself to his morning’s occupation — the perusal of a novel that dealt with sport and love in a manner that suggested the collaboration of a stud-groom and a ladies’ college. In an ordinary way, however, Salisbury would have been carried on by the interest of the story up to lunch time, but this morning he fidgeted in and out of his chair, took the book up and laid it down again, and swore at last to himself and at himself in mere irritation.

In point of fact the jingle of the paper found in the archway had “got into his head,” and do what he would he could not help muttering over and over, “Once around the grass, and twice around the lass, and thrice around the maple-tree.” It became a positive pain, like the foolish burden of a music-hall song, everlastingly quoted, and sung at all hours of the day and night, and treasured by the street boys as an unfailing resource for six months together. He went out into the streets, and tried to forget his enemy in the jostling of the crowds and the roar and clatter of the traffic, but presently he would find himself stealing quietly aside, and pacing some deserted byway.

vainly puzzling his brains, and trying to fix some meaning to phrases that were meaningless. It was a positive relief when Thursday came, and he remembered that he had made an appointment to go and see Dyson; the flimsy reveries of the self-styled man of letters appeared entertaining when compared with this ceaseless iteration, this maze of thought from which there seemed no possibility of escape. Dyson's abode was in one of the quietest of the quiet streets that lead down from the Strand to the river, and when Salisbury passed from the narrow stairway into his friend's room, he saw that the uncle had been beneficent indeed. The floor glowed and flamed with all the colours of the East; it was, as Dyson pompously remarked, "a sunset in a dream,"

and the lamplight, the twilight of London streets, was shut out with strangely worked curtains, glittering here and there with threads of gold. In the shelves of an oak armoire stood jars and plates of old French china, and the black and white of etchings not to be found in the Haymarket or in Bond Street, stood out against the splendour of a Japanese paper. Salisbury sat down on the settle by the hearth, and sniffed and mingled fumes of incense and tobacco, wondering and dumb before all this splendour after the green rep and the oleographs, the gilt-framed mirror, and the lustres of his own apartment.

"I am glad you have come, ' said Dyson. "Comfortable little room, isn't it? But you don't look very well, Salisbury. Nothing disagreed with you, has it?"

"No; but I have been a good deal bothered for the last few days. The fact is I had an odd kind of — of — adventure, I suppose I may call it, that night I saw you, and it has worried me a good deal. And the provoking part of it is that it's the merest nonsense — but, however, I will tell you all about it, by and by. You were going to let me have the rest of that odd story you began at the restaurant."

"Yes. But I am afraid, Salisbury, you are incorrigible. You are a slave to what you call matter of fact. You know perfectly well that in your heart you think the oddness in that case is of my making, and that it is all really as plain as the police reports. However, as I have begun, I will go on. But first we will have something to drink, and you may as well light your pipe."

Dyson went up to the oak cupboard, and drew from its depths a rotund bottle and two little glasses, quaintly gilded.

"It's Benedictine," he said. "You'll have some, won't you?"

Salisbury assented, and the two men sat sipping and smoking reflectively for some minutes before Dyson began..''Let me see," he said at lasts "we were at the inquest, weren't we? No, we had done with that.

Ah, I remember. I was telling you that on the whole I had been successful in my inquiries, investigation, or whatever you like to call it, into the matter. Wasn't that where I left off?"

"Yes, that was it. To be precise, I think 'though' was the last word you said on the matter."

"Exactly. I have been thinking it all over since the other night, and I have come to the conclusion that that 'though' is a very big 'though' indeed. Not to put too fine a point on it, I have had to confess that what I found out, or thought I found out, amounts in reality to nothing. I am as far away from the heart of the case as ever. However, I may as well tell you what I do know. You may remember my saying that I was impressed a good deal by some remarks of one of the doctors who gave evidence at the inquest. Well, I determined that my first step must be to try if I could get something more definite and intelligible out of that doctor. Somehow or other I managed to get an introduction to the man, and he gave me an appointment to come and see him.

He turned out to be a pleasant, genial fellow; rather young and not in the least like the typical medical man, and he began the conference by offering me whisky and cigars. I didn't think it worth while to beat about the bush, so I began by saying that part of his evidence at the Harlesden inquest struck me as very peculiar, and I gave him the printed report, with the sentences in question underlined. He just glanced at the slip, and gave me a queer look. 'It struck you as peculiar, did it?" said he. 'Well, you must remember that the Harlesden case was very peculiar. In fact, I think I may safely say that in some features it was unique — quite unique.'

‘Quite so,’ I replied, ‘and that’s exactly why it interests me, and why I want to know more about it. And I thought that if anybody could give me any information it would be you. What is your opinion of the matter?’
“It was a pretty downright sort of question, and my doctor looked rather taken aback.

“ ‘Well,’ he said, ‘as I fancy your motive in inquiring into the question must be mere curiosity, I think I may tell you my opinion with tolerable freedom. So, Mr. Dyson, if you want to know my theory, it is this: I believe that Dr. Black killed his wife.’
“‘But the verdict,’ I answered, ‘the verdict was given from your own evidence.’
“‘Quite so; the verdict was given in accordance with the evidence of my colleague and myself, and, under the circumstances, I think the jury acted very sensibly. In fact, I don’t see what else they could have done. But I stick to my opinion, mind you, and I say this also. I don’t wonder at Black’s doing what I firmly believe he did. I think he was justified.’
“‘Justified! How could that be?’ I asked. I was astonished, as you may imagine, at the answer I had got. The doctor wheeled round his chair and looked steadily at me for a moment before he answered.

“ ‘I suppose you are not a man of science yourself? No; then it would be of no use my going into detail. I have always been firmly opposed myself to any partnership between physiology and psychology. I believe that both are bound to suffer. No one recognizes more decidedly than I do the impassable gulf, the fathomless abyss that separates the world of consciousness from the sphere of matter. We know that every change of consciousness is accompanied by a rear-rangement of the molecules in the grey matter; and that is all. What the link between them is, or why they occur together, we do not know, and the most authorities believe that we never can know. Yet, I will tell you that as I did my work, the knife in my hand, I felt convinced, in spite of all theories, that what lay before me was not the brain of a dead woman — not the brain of a human being at all. Of course I saw the face; but it was quite placid, devoid of all expression. It must have been a beautiful face, no doubt, but I can honestly say that I would not have looked in that face when there was life behind it for a thousand guineas, no, nor for twice that sum.’.” ‘My dear sir,’ I said, ‘you surprise me extremely. You say that it was not the brain of a human being. What was it, then?’

"'The brain of a devil.' He spoke quite coolly, and never moved a muscle. 'The brain of a devil,' he repeated, 'and I have no doubt that Black found some way of putting an end to it. I don't blame him if he did. Whatever Mrs. Black was, she was not fit to stay in this world. Will you have anything more? No? Good-night, good-night.'

"It was a queer sort of opinion to get from a man of science, wasn't it? When he was saying that he would not have looked on that face when alive for a thousand guineas, or two thousand guineas, I was thinking of the face I had seen, but I said nothing. I went again to Harlesden, and passed from one shop to another, making small purchases, and trying to find out whether there was anything about the Blacks which was not already common property, but there was very little to hear. One of the tradesmen to whom I spoke said he had known the dead woman well; she used to buy of him such quantities of grocery as were required for their small household, for they never kept a servant, but had a charwoman in occasionally, and she had not seen Mrs. Black for months before she died. According to this man Mrs. Black was 'a nice lady,' always kind and considerate, and so fond of her husband and he of her, as every one thought. And yet, to put the doctor's opinion on one side, I knew what I had seen. And then after thinking it over, and putting one thing with another, it seemed to me that the only person likely to give me much assistance would be Black himself, and I made up my mind to find him. Of course he wasn't to be found in Harlesden; he had left, I was told, directly after the funeral. Everything in the house had been sold, and one fine day Black got into the train with a small portmanteau, and went, nobody knew where. It was a chance if he were ever heard of again, and it was by a mere chance that I came across him at last. I was walking one day along Gray's Inn Road, not bound for anywhere in particular, but looking about me, as usual, and holding on to my hat, for it was a gusty day in early March, and the wind was making the treetops in the Inn rock and quiver. I had come up from the Holborn end, and I had almost got to Theobald's Road when I noticed a man walking in front of me, leaning on a stick, and to all appearance very feeble. There was something about his look that made me curious, I don't know why, and I began to walk briskly with the idea of overtaking him, when of a sudden his hat blew off and came bounding along the pavement to my feet. Of course I rescued the hat, and gave it a glance as I went towards its owner. It was a biography in itself; a Piccadilly maker's name in the inside, but t don't think

a beggar would have picked it out of the gutter. Then I looked up and saw Dr. Black of Harlesden waiting for me. A queer thing, wasn't it? But, Salisbury, what a change! When I saw Dr. Black come down the steps of his house at Harlesden he was an upright man, walking firmly with well-built limbs; a man, should say, in the prime of his life. And now before me there crouched this wretched creature, bent and feeble, with shrunken cheeks, and hair that was whitening fast, and limbs that trembled and shook together, and misery in his eyes. He thanked me for bringing him his hat, saying, 'I don't think I should ever have got it, I can't run much now. A gusty day, sir, isn't it?'
and with this he was turning way, but by little and little I contrived to draw him into the current of conversation, and we walked together eastward. I think the man would have been glad to get rid of me; but I didn't intend to let him go, and he stopped at last in front of a miserable house in a miserable street. It was, I verily believe, one of the most wretched quarters I have ever seen:

houses that must have been sordid and hideous enough when new, that had gathered foulness with every year, and now seemed to lean and totter to their fall. 'I live up there,' said Black, pointing to the tiles, 'not in the front — in the back. I am very quiet there. I won't ask you to come in now, but perhaps some other day— ' I caught him up at that, and told him I should be only too.glad to come and see him. He gave me an odd sort of glance, as if he were wondering what on earth I or anybody else could care about him, and I left him fumbling with his latchkey. I think you will say I did pretty well when I tell you that within a few weeks I had made myself an intimate friend of Black's. I shall never forget the first time I went to his room; I hope I shall never see such abject, squalid misery again. The foul paper, from which all pattern or trace of a pattern had long vanished, subdued and penetrated with the grime of the evil street, was hanging in mouldering pennons from the wall. Only at the end of the room was it possible to stand upright, and the sight of the wretched bed and the odour of corruption that pervaded the place made me turn faint and sick. Here I found him munching a piece of bread; he seemed surprised to find that I had kept my promise, but he gave me his chair and sat on the bed while we talked. I used to go to see him often, and we had long conversations together, but he never mentioned Harlesden or his wife. I fancy that he supposed me ignorant of the matter, or thought that if I had heard of it, I should never connect the respectable Dr. Black of Harlesden with a poor garreteer in the backwoods of London. He was a strange man, and as we sat together smoking, I often wondered whether he were made or sane, for I think the wildest dreams of Paracelsus and the Rosicrucians would appear plain and sober fact compared with the theories I have heard him earnestly advance in that grimy den of his. I once ventured to hint something of the sort to him. I suggested that something he had said was in flat contradiction to all science and all experience.

'No,' he answered, 'not all experience, for mine counts for something. I am no dealer in unproved theories; what I say I have proved for myself, and at a terrible cost. There is a region of knowledge which you will never know, which wise men seeing from afar off shun like the plague, as well they may, but into that region I have gone. If you knew, if you could even dream of what may be done, of what one or two men have done in this quiet world of ours, your very soul would shudder and faint within you. What you have heard from me has been but the merest husk and outer covering of true science — that science which means death, and that which is more awful than death, to those who gain it. No, when men say that there are strange things in the world, they little know the awe and the terror that dwell always with them and about them.'

There was a sort of fascination about the man that drew me to him, and I was quite sorry to have to leave London for a month or two; I missed his odd talk. A few days after I came back to town I thought I would look him up, but when I gave the two rings at the bell that used to summon him, there was no answer. I rang and rang again, and was just turning to go away, when the door opened and a dirty woman asked me what I wanted. From her look I fancy she took me for a plain-clothes officer after one of her lodgers, but when I inquired if Mr. Black were in, she gave me a stare of another kind. 'There's no Mr. Black lives here,' she said. 'He's gone. He's dead this six weeks.' I always thought he was a bit queer in his head, or else had been and got into some trouble or other. He used to go out every morning from ten till one, and one Monday morning we heard him come in, and go into his room and shut the door, and a few minutes after, just as we was a-sitting down to our dinner, there was such a scream that I thought I should have gone right off. And then we heard a stamping, and down he came, raging and cursing most dreadful, swearing he had been robbed of something that was worth millions. And then he just dropped down in the passage, and we thought he was dead. We got him up to his room, and put him on his bed, and I just sat there and waited, while my ‘usband he went for the doctor. And there was the winder wide open, and a little tin box he had lying on the floor open and empty, but of course nobody could possible have got in at the winder, and as for him having anything that was worth anything, it’s nonsense, for he was often weeks and weeks behind with his rent, and my ‘usband he threatened often and often to turn him into the street, for, as he said, we’ve got a.living to myke like other people — and, of course, that’s true; but, somehow, I didn’t like to do it, though he was an odd kind of a man, and I fancy had been better off. And then the doctor came and looked at him, and said as he couldn’t do nothing, and that night he died as I was a-sitting by his bed; and I can tell you that, with one thing and another, we lost money by him, for the few bits of clothes as he had were worth next to nothing when they came to be sold.’ I gave the woman half a sovereign for her trouble, and went home thinking of Dr. Black and the epitaph she had made him, and wondering at his strange fancy that he had been robbed. I take it that he had very little to fear on that score, poor fellow; but I suppose that he was really mad, and died in a sudden access of his mania. His landlady said that once or twice when she had had occasion to go into his room (to dun the poor wretch for his rent, most likely), he would keep her at the door for about a minute, and that when she came in she would find him putting away his tin box in the corner by the window; I suppose he had become possessed with the idea of some great treasure, and fancied himself a wealthy man in the midst of all his misery. Explicit, my tale is ended, and you see that though I knew Black, I knew nothing of his wife or of the history of her death — That’s the Harlesden case, Salisbury, and I think it interests me all the more deeply because there does not seem the shadow of a possibility that I or any one else will ever know more about it.

What do you think of it?”

“Well, Dyson, I must say that I think you have contrived to surround the whole thing with a mystery of your own making. I go for the doctor’s solution: Black murdered his wife, being himself in all probability an undeveloped lunatic.”

“What? Do you believe, then, that this woman was something too awful, too terrible to be allowed to remain on the earth? You will remember that the doctor said it was the brain of a devil?"

"Yes, yes, but he was speaking, of course, metaphorically. It's really quite a simple matter if you only look at it like that."

"Ah, well, you may be right; but yet I am sure you are not. Well, well, it's not good discussing it any more. A little more Benedictine? That's right; try some of this tobacco. Didn't you say that you had been bothered by something — something which happened that night we dined together?"

"Yes, I have been worried, Dyson, worried a great deal. I — But it's such a trivial matter — indeed, such an absurdity — that I feel ashamed to trouble you with it."

"Never mind, let's have it, absurd or not."

With many hesitations, and with much inward resentment of the folly of the thing, Salisbury told his tale, and repeated reluctantly the absurd intelligence and the absurder doggerel of the scrap of paper, expecting to hear Dyson burst out into a roar of laughter.

"Isn't it too bad that I should let myself be bothered by such stuff as that?" he asked, when he had stuttered out the jingle of once, and twice, and thrice.

Dyson had listened to it all gravely, even to the end, and meditated for a few minutes in silence.

"Yes," he said at length, "it was a curious chance, your taking shelter in that archway just as those two went by. But I don't know that I should call what was written on the paper nonsense; it is bizarre certainly but I expect it has a meaning for somebody. Just repeat it again, will you, and I will write it down. Perhaps we might find a cipher of some sort, though I hardly think we shall."

Again had the reluctant lips of Salisbury slowly to stammer out the rubbish that he abhorred, while Dyson jotted it down on a slip of paper.."Look over it, will you?" he said, when it was done; "it may be important that I should have every word in its place. Is that all right?"

"Yes; that is an accurate copy. But I don't think you will get much out of it. Depend upon it, it is mere nonsense, a wanton scribble. I must be going now, Dyson. No, no more; that stuff of yours is pretty strong. Good-night."

“I suppose you would like to hear from me, if I did find out anything?”

“No, not I; I don’t want to hear about the thing again. You may regard the discovery, if it is one, as your own.”

“Very well. Good-night.”

IV

A GOOD MANY hours after Salisbury had returned to the company of the green rep chairs, Dyson still sat at his desk, itself a Japanese romance, smoking many pipes, and meditating over his friend's story. The bizarre quality of the inscription which had annoyed Salisbury was to him an attraction, and now and again he took it up and scanned thoughtfully what he had written, especially the quaint jingle at the end. It was a token, a symbol, he decided, and not a cipher, and the woman who had flung it away was in all probability entirely ignorant of its meaning; she was but the agent of the "Sam" she had abused and discarded, and he too was again the agent of some one unknown; possibly of the individual styled Q, who had been forced to visit his French friends. But what to make of "Traverse Handel S." Here was the root and source of the enigma, and not all the tobacco of Virginia seemed likely to suggest any clue here. It seemed almost hopeless, but Dyson regarded himself as the Wellington of mysteries, and went to bed feeling assured that sooner or later he would hit upon the right track. For the next few days he was deeply engaged in his literary labours, labours which were a profound mystery even to the most intimate of his friends, who searched the railway bookstalls in vain for the result of so many hours spent at the Japanese bureau in company with strong tobacco and black tea. On this occasion Dyson confined himself to his room for four days, and it was with genuine relief that he laid down his pen and went out into the streets in quest of relaxation and fresh air. The gas-lamps were being lighted, and the fifth edition of the evening papers was being howled through the streets, and Dyson, feeling that he wanted quiet, turned away from the clamorous Strand, and began to trend away to the north-west. Soon he found himself in streets that echoed to his footsteps, and crossing a broad new thoroughfare, and verging still to the west, Dyson discovered that he had penetrated to the depths of Soho. Here again was life; rare vintages of France and Italy, at prices which seemed contemptibly small, allured the passer-by; here were cheeses, vast and rich, here olive oil, and here a grove of Rabelaisian sausages; while in a neighbouring shop the whole press of Paris appeared to be on sale. In the middle of the roadway a strange miscellany of nations sauntered to and fro, for there cab and hansom rarely ventured; and from window over window the inhabitants looked forth in pleased contemplation of the scene. Dyson made his way slowly along, mingling with the crowd on the cobble-stones, listening to the queer babel of French and German, and Italian and English, glancing now and again at the shop windows with their levelled batteries of bottles, and had almost gained the end of the street, when his attention was arrested by a small shop at the corner, a vivid contrast to its neighbours. It was the typical shop of the poor quarter; a shop entirely English. Here were vended tobacco and sweets, cheap pipes of clay and cherrywood; penny exercise books and penholders jostled for precedence with comic songs, and story papers with appalling cuts showed that romance claimed.its place beside the actualities of the evening paper, the bills of which fluttered at the doorway.

Dyson glanced up at the name above the door, and stood by the kennel trembling, for a sharp pang, the pang of one who has made a discovery, had for a moment left him incapable of motion.

The name over the shop was Travers. Dyson looked up again, this time at the corner of the wall above the lamppost, and read in white letters on a blue ground the words “Handel Street, W. C.”

and the legend was repeated in fainter letters just below. He gave a little sigh of satisfaction, and without more ado walked boldly into the shop, and stared full in the face of the fat man who was sitting behind the counter. The fellow rose to his feet, and returned the stare a little curiously, and then began in stereotyped phrase— “What can I do for you, sir?”

Dyson enjoyed the situation and a dawning perplexity on the man’s face. He propped his stick carefully against the counter and leaning over it, said slowly and impressively— “Once around the grass, and twice around the lass, and thrice around the maple-tree.”

Dyson had calculated on his words producing an effect, and he was not disappointed. The vendor of the miscellanies gasped, open-mouthed like a fish, and steadied himself against the counter. When he spoke, after a short interval, it was in a hoarse mutter, tremulous and unsteady.

“Would you mind saying that again, sir? I didn’t quite catch it.”

"My good man, I shall most certainly do nothing of the kind. You heard what I said perfectly well. You have got a clock in your shop, I see; an admirable timekeeper, I have no doubt. Well, I give you a minute by your own clock."

The man looked about him in a perplexed indecision, and Dyson felt that it was time to be bold.

"Look here, Travers, the time is nearly up. You have heard of Q, I think. Remember, I hold your life in my hands. Now!"

Dyson was shocked at the result of his own audacity. The man shrank and shrivelled in terror, the sweat poured down a face of ashy white, and he held up his hands before him.

"Mr. Davies, Mr. Davies, don't say that — don't for Heaven's sake. I didn't know you at first, I didn't indeed. Good God! Mr. Davies, you wouldn't ruin me? I'll get it in a moment."

"You had better not lose any more time."

The man slunk piteously out of his own shop, and went into a back parlour. Dyson heard his trembling fingers fumbling with a bunch of keys, and the creak of an opening box. He came back presently with a small package neatly tied up in brown paper in his hands, and still, full of terror, handed it to Dyson.

"I'm glad to be rid of it," he said. "I'll take no more jobs of this sort."

Dyson took the parcel and his stick, and walked out of the shop with a nod, turning round as he passed the door. Travers had sunk into his seat, his face still white with terror, with one hand over his eyes, and Dyson speculated a good deal as he walked rapidly away as to what queer chords those could be on which he had played so roughly. He hailed the first hansom he could see and drove home, and when he had lit his hanging lamp, and laid his parcel on the table, he paused for a moment, wondering on what strange thing the lamp-light would soon shine. He locked his door, and cut the strings, and unfolded the paper layer after layer, and came at last to a small wooden box, simply but solidly made. There was no lock, and Dyson had simply to raise the lid, and as he did so he drew a long breath and started back. The lamp seemed to glimmer feebly like a single candle, but the whole room blazed with light — and not with light alone, but with a thousand colours, with all the glories of some painted window; and upon the walls of his room and on the familiar furniture, the glow flamed back and seemed to flow again to its source,.the little wooden box. For there upon a bed of soft wool lay the most splendid jewel, a jewel such as Dyson had never dreamed of, and within it shone the blue of far skies, and the green of the sea by the shore, and the red of the ruby, and deep violet rays, and in the middle of all it seemed aflame as if a fountain of fire rose up, and fell, and rose again with sparks like stars for drops.

Dyson gave a long deep sigh, and dropped into his chair, and put his hands over his eyes to think.

The jewel was like an opal, but from a long experience of the shop windows he knew there was no such thing as an opal one quarter or one eighth of its size. He looked at the stone again, with a feeling that was almost awe, and placed it gently on the table under the lamp, and watched the wonderful flame that shone and sparkled in its centre, and then turned to the box, curious to know whether it might contain other marvels. He lifted the bed of wool on which the opal had reclined, and saw beneath, no more jewels, but a little old pocketbook, worn and shabby with use. Dyson opened it at the first leaf, and dropped the book again appalled. He had read the name of the owner, neatly written in blue ink:

Steven Black, M.D., Oranmore, Devon Road, Harlesden.

It was several minutes before Dyson could bring himself to open the book a second time; he remembered the wretched exile in his garret; and his strange talk, and the memory too of the face he had seen at the window, and of what the specialist had said, surged up in his mind, and as he held his finger on the cover, he shivered, dreading what might be written within. When at last he held it in his hand, and turned the pages, he found that the first two leaves were blank, but the third was covered with clear, minute writing, and Dyson began to read with the light of the opal flaming in his eyes.

V

“EVER SINCE I was a young man” — the record began— “I devoted all my leisure and a good deal of time that ought to have been given to other studies to the investigation of curious and obscure branches of knowledge. What are commonly called the pleasures of life had never any attractions for me, and I lived alone in London, avoiding my fellow students, and in my turn avoided by them as a man self-absorbed and unsympathetic. So long as I could gratify my desire of knowledge of a peculiar kind, knowledge of which the very existence is a profound secret to most men, I was intensely happy, and I have often spent whole nights sitting in the darkness of my room, and thinking of the strange world on the brink of which I trod. My professional studies, however, and the necessity of obtaining a degree, for some time forced my more obscure employment into the background, and soon after I had qualified I met Agnes, who became my wife. We took a new house in this remote suburb, and I began the regular routine of a sober practice, and for some months lived happily enough, sharing in the life about me, and only thinking at odd intervals of that occult science which had once fascinated my whole being. I had learnt enough of the paths I had begun to tread to know that they were beyond all expression difficult and dangerous, that to persevere meant in all probability the wreck of a life, and that they led to regions so terrible, that the mind of man shrinks appalled at the very thought.

Moreover, the quiet and the peace I had enjoyed since my marriage had wiled me away to a great.extent from places where I knew no peace could dwell. But suddenly — I think indeed it was the work of a single night, as I lay awake on my bed gazing into the darkness — suddenly, I say, the old desire, the former longing, returned, and returned with a force that had been intensified ten times by its absence; and when the day dawned and I looked out of the window, and saw with haggard eyes the sunrise in the east, I knew that my doom had been pronounced; that as I had gone far, so now I must go farther with unfaltering steps. I turned to the bed where my wife was sleeping peacefully, and lay down again, weeping bitter tears, for the sun had set on our happy life and had risen with a dawn of terror to us both. I will not set down here in minute detail what followed; outwardly I went about the day's labour as before, saying nothing to my wife. But she soon saw that I had changed; I spent my spare time in a room which I had fitted up as a laboratory, and often I crept upstairs in the grey dawn of the morning, when the light of many lamps still glowed over London; and each night I had stolen a step nearer to that great abyss which I was to bridge over, the gulf between the world of consciousness and the world of matter.

My experiments were many and complicated in their nature, and it was some months before I realized whither they all pointed, and when this was borne in upon me in a moment's time, I felt my face whiten and my heart still within me. But the power to draw back, the power to stand before the doors that now opened wide before me and not to enter in, had long ago been absent; the way was closed, and I could only pass onward. My position was as utterly hopeless as that of the prisoner in an utter dungeon, whose only light is that of the dungeon above him; the doors were shut and escape was impossible. Experiment after experiment gave the same result, and I knew, and shrank even as the thought passed through my mind, that in the work I had to do there must be elements which no laboratory could furnish, which no scales could ever measure. In that work, from which even I doubted to escape with life, life itself must enter; from some human being there must be drawn that essence which men call the soul, and in its place (for in the scheme of the world there is no vacant chamber) — in its place would enter in what the lips can hardly utter, what the mind cannot conceive without a horror more awful than the horror of death itself. And when I knew this, I knew also on whom this fate would fall; I looked into my wife's eyes. Even at that hour, if I had gone out and taken a rope and hanged myself, I might have escaped, and she also, but in no other way. At last I told her all. She shuddered, and wept, and called on her dead mother for help, and asked me if I had no mercy, and I could only sigh. I concealed nothing from her; I told her what she would become, and what would enter in where her life had been; I told her of all the shame and of all the horror. You who will read this when I am dead — if indeed I allow this record to survive — you who have opened the box and have seen what lies there, if you could understand what lies hidden in that opal! For one night my wife consented to what I asked of her, consented with the tears running down her beautiful face, and hot shame flushing red over her neck and breast, consented to undergo this for me. I threw open the window, and we looked together at the sky and the dark earth for the last time; it was a fine starlight night, and there was a pleasant breeze blowing: and I kissed her on her lips, and her tears ran down upon my face. That night she came down to my laboratory, and there, with shutters bolted and barred down, with curtains drawn thick and close, so that the very stars might be shut out from the sight of that room, while the crucible hissed and boiled over the lamp, I did what had to be done, and led out what was no longer a woman. But on the table the opal flamed and sparkled with such light as no eyes of man have ever gazed on, and the rays of the flame that was within it flashed and glittered, and shone even to my heart. My wife had only asked one thing of me; that when there came at last what I had told her, I would kill her. I have kept that promise.”.There was nothing more. Dyson let the little pocketbook fall, and turned and looked again at the opal with its flaming inmost light, and then with unutterable irresistible horror surging up in his heart, grasped the jewel, and flung it on the ground, and trampled it beneath his heel. His face was white with terror as he turned away, and for a moment stood sick and trembling, and then with a start he leapt across the room and steadied himself against the door. There was an angry hiss, as of steam escaping under great pressure, and as he gazed, motionless, a volume of heavy yellow smoke was slowly issuing from the very centre of the jewel, and wreathing itself in snakelike coils above it. And then a thin white flame burst forth from the smoke, and shot up into the air and vanished; and on the ground there lay a thing like a cinder, black and crumbling to the touch.

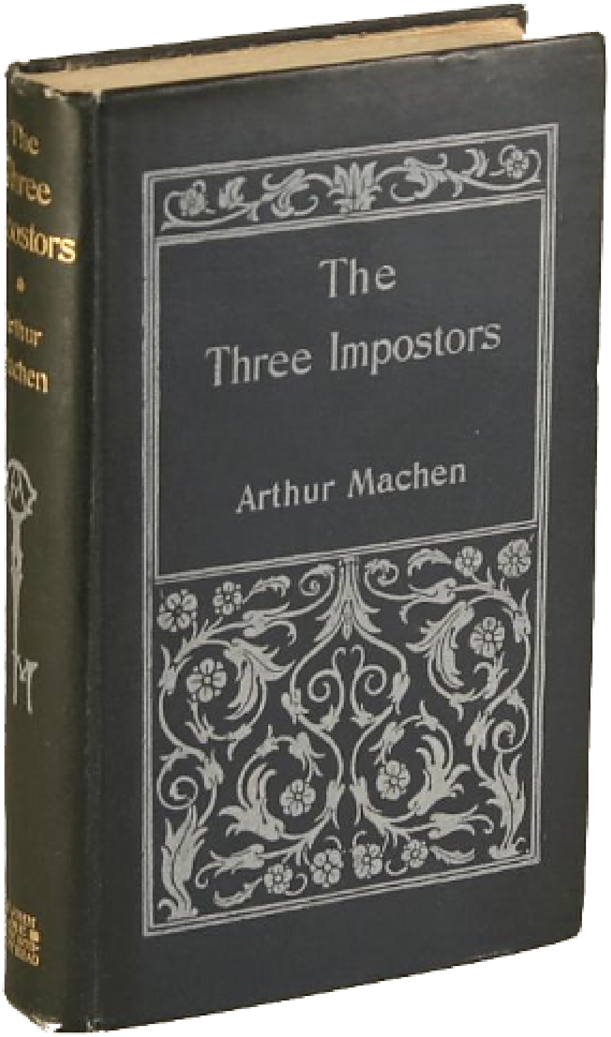
THE END

The Three Impostors: or the Transmutations

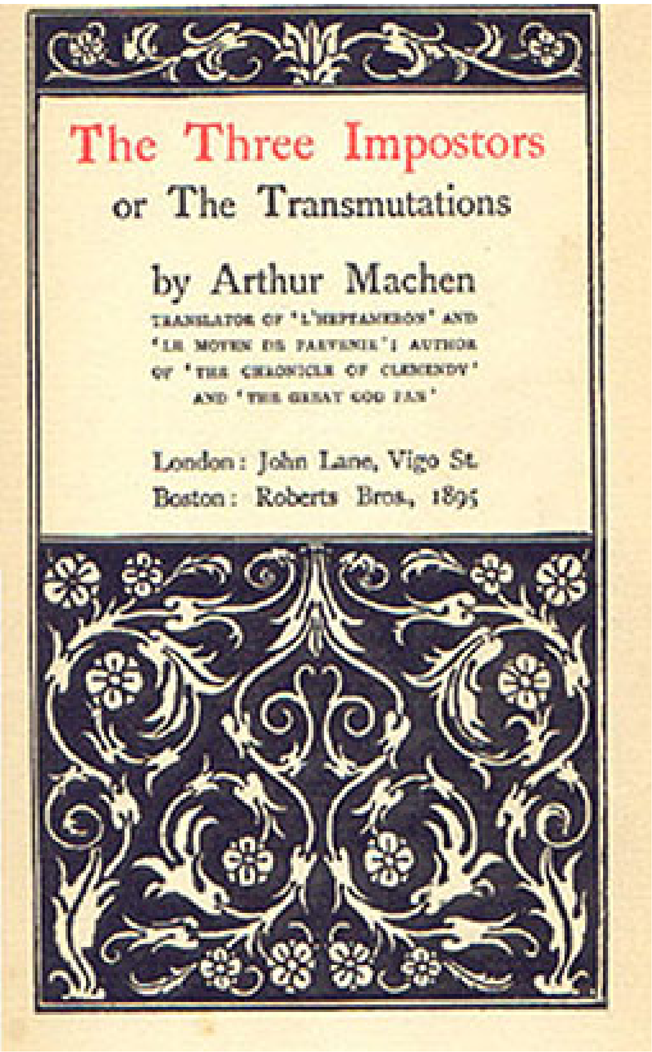
This book was published in 1895 and is made up of inter-related short stories connected by a frame narrative in which two urban dandies attempt to unravel the mystery surrounding an elusive bespectacled young man. The stories are consummate examples of late-Victorian Gothic horror, while the frame narrative itself has a memorably grisly ending which, in an unusual structural move, takes place immediately before the novel's opening scene.

Although modestly-received at the time, Machen's story has since come to be recognised as a classic text of late-Victorian Gothic tradition. Along with his most famous story, *The Great God Pan*, *The Three Impostors* typifies the tradition's preoccupation with degeneration, the occult, scientific experimentation, colonial expansion, the increasing independence of women and the unknowable labyrinth of 'darkest London'. The dandified protagonists, whose *louche ennui* will be familiar to readers of Wilde's stories and plays, also connect the novel to the aesthetic and decadent tradition of 1890s writing, with its amoral obsession for elegance, refinement and an epicurean search for new and esoteric sources of curiosity and pleasure. Indeed, the novel was first published as part of John Lane's experimental 'Keynotes' series, which was intricately linked with the decadent movement in literature.

The book's episodic structure and its fantastical 'romanticisation' of late-Victorian London were influenced by R. L. Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights*, which Machen greatly admired. In turn, the book influenced the emerging tradition of 'weird fiction' of the variety made famous by H. P. Lovecraft (a great admirer of Machen's work), in which the Gothic and the occult blends with scientific speculation and the unnameable horrors of the cosmic past.


The Three Impostors
Arthur Machen

The first edition



The Three Impostors
or The Transmutations

by Arthur Machen
TRANSLATOR OF 'L'HEPTAMERON' AND
'LE MOYEN DE PARVENIR'; AUTHOR
OF 'THE CHRONICLE OF CLEMENDY'
AND 'THE GREAT GOD PAN'

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Title page of the first edition

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Arthur Machen in the 1890s

THREE IMPOSTORS PROLOGUE.

"AND MR. JOSEPH Walters is going to stay the night?" said the smooth clean-shaven man to his companion, an individual not of the most charming appearance, who had chosen to make his ginger-colored mustache merge into a pair of short chin-whiskers.

The two stood at the hall door, grinning evilly at each other; and presently a girl ran quickly down, the stairs, and joined them. She was quite young, with a quaint and piquant rather than a beautiful face, and her eyes were of a shining hazel. She held a neat paper parcel in one hand, and laughed with her friends.

"Leave the door open," said the smooth man to the other, as they were going out. "Yes, by —— ," he went on with an ugly oath. "We'll leave the front door on the jar. He may like to see company, you know."

The other man looked doubtfully about him. "Is it quite prudent do you think, Davies?" he said, pausing with his hand on the mouldering knocker. "I don't think Lipsius would like it. What do you say, Helen?"

"I agree with Davies. Davies is an artist, and you are commonplace, Richmond, and a bit of a coward. Let the door stand open, of course. But what a pity Lipsius had to go away! He would have enjoyed himself."

"Yes," replied the smooth Mr. Davies, "that summons to the west was very hard on the doctor."

The three passed out, leaving the hall door, cracked and riven with frost and wet, half open, and they stood silent for a moment under the ruinous shelter of the porch.

"Well," said the girl, "it is done at last. I shall hurry no more on the track of the young man with spectacles."

"We owe a great deal to you," said Mr. Davies politely; "the doctor said so before he left. But have we not all three some farewells to make? I, for my part, propose to say good-by, here, before this picturesque but mouldy residence, to my friend Mr. Burton, dealer in the antique and curious," and the man lifted his hat with an exaggerated bow.

"And I," said Richmond, "bid adieu to Mr. Wilkins, the private secretary, whose company has, I confess, become a little tedious."

"Farewell to Miss Lally, and to Miss Leicester also," said the girl, making as she spoke a delicious courtesy. "Farewell to all occult adventure; the farce is played."

Mr. Davies and the lady seemed full of grim enjoyment, but Richmond tugged at his whiskers nervously.

"I feel a bit shaken up," he said. "I've seen rougher things in the States, but that crying noise he made gave me a sickish feeling. And then the smell — But my stomach was never very strong."

The three friends moved away from the door, and began to walk slowly up and down what had been a gravel path, but now lay green and pulpy with damp mosses. It was a fine autumn evening, and a faint sunlight shone on the yellow walls of the old deserted house, and showed the patches of gangrenous decay, and all the stains, the black drift of rain from the broken pipes, the scabrous blots where the bare bricks were exposed, the green weeping of a gaunt laburnum that stood beside the porch, and ragged marks near the ground where the reeking clay was gaining on the worn foundations. It was a queer rambling old place, the centre perhaps two hundred years old, with dormer windows sloping from the tiled roof, and on each side there were Georgian wings; bow windows had been carried up to the first floor, and two dome-like cupolas that had once been painted a bright green were now gray and neutral. Broken urns lay upon the path, and a heavy mist seemed to rise from the unctuous clay; the neglected shrubberies, grown all tangled and unshapen, smelt dank and evil, and there was an atmosphere all about the deserted mansion that proposed thoughts of an opened grave. The three friends looked dismally at the rough grasses and the nettles that grew thick over lawn and flower-beds; and at the sad water-pool in the midst of the weeds. There, above green and oily scum instead of lilies, stood a rusting Triton on the rocks, sounding a dirge through a shattered horn; and beyond, beyond the sunk fence and the far meadows; the sun slid down and shone red through the bars of the elm trees.

Richmond shivered and stamped his foot. “We had better be going soon,” he said; “there is nothing else to be done here.”

“No,” said Davies, “it is finished at last. I thought for some time we should never get hold of the gentleman with the spectacles. He was a clever fellow, but, Lord! he broke up badly at last. I can tell you he looked white at me when I touched him on the arm in the bar. But where could he have hidden the thing? We can all swear it was not on him.”

The girl laughed, and they turned away, when Richmond gave a violent start. “Ah!” he cried, turning to the girl, “what have you got there? Look, Davies, look! it’s all oozing and dripping.”

The young woman glanced down at the little parcel she was carrying, and partially unfolded the paper.

“Yes, look both of you,” she said; “it’s my own idea. Don’t you think it will do nicely for the doctor’s museum? It comes from the right hand, the hand that took the gold Tiberius.”

Mr. Davies nodded with a good deal of approbation, and Richmond lifted his ugly high-crowned bowler, and wiped his forehead with a dingy handkerchief.

“I’m going,” he said; “you two can stay if you like.”

The three went round by the stable path, past the withered wilderness of the old kitchen garden, and struck off by a hedge at the back, making for a particular point in the road. About five minutes later two gentlemen, whom idleness had led to explore these forgotten outskirts of London, came sauntering up the shadowy carriage drive. They had spied the deserted house from the road, and as they observed all the heavy desolation of the place they began to moralize in the great style, with considerable debts to Jeremy Taylor.

“Look, Dyson,” said the one as they drew nearer, “look at those upper windows; the sun is setting, and though the panes are dusty, yet

“The grimy sash an oriel burns.”

“Phillipps,” replied the elder and (it must be said) the more pompous of the two, “I yield to fantasy, I cannot withstand the influence of the grotesque. Here, where all is falling into dimness and dissolution, and we walk in cedarn gloom, and the very air of heaven goes mouldering to the lungs, I cannot remain commonplace. I look at that deep glow on the panes, and the house lies all enchanted; that very room, I tell you, is within all blood and fire.”

ADVENTURE OF THE GOLD TIBERIUS.

THE ACQUAINTANCE BETWEEN Mr. Dyson and Mr. Charles Phillipps arose from one of those myriad chances which are every day doing their work in the streets of London. Mr. Dyson was a man of letters, and an unhappy instance of talents misapplied. With gifts that might have placed him in the flower of his youth among the most favored of Bentley's favorite novelists, he had chosen to be perverse; he was, it is true, familiar with scholastic logic, but he knew nothing of the logic of life, and he flattered himself with the title of artist, when he was in fact but an idle and curious spectator of other men's endeavors. Amongst many delusions, he cherished one most fondly, that he was a strenuous worker; and it was with a gesture of supreme weariness that he would enter his favorite resort, a small tobacco shop in Great Queen Street, and proclaim to any one who cared to listen that he had seen the rising and setting of two successive suns. The proprietor of the shop, a middle-aged man of singular civility, tolerated Dyson partly out of good nature, and partly because he was a regular customer; he was allowed to sit on an empty cask, and to express his sentiments on literary and artistic matters till he was tired or the time for closing came; and if no fresh customers were attracted, it is believed that none were turned away by his eloquence. Dyson, was addicted to wild experiments in tobacco; he never wearied of trying new combinations, and one evening he had just entered the shop and given utterance to his last preposterous formula, when a young fellow, of about his own age, who had come in a moment later, asked the shopman to duplicate the order on his account, smiling politely, as he spoke, to Mr. Dyson's address. Dyson felt profoundly flattered, and after a few phrases the two entered into conversation, and in an hour's time the tobacconist saw the new friends sitting side by side on a couple of casks, deep in talk.

"My dear sir," said Dyson, "I will give you the task of the literary man in a phrase. He has got to do simply this: to invent a wonderful story, and to tell it in a wonderful manner."

“I will grant you that,” said Mr. Phillipps, “but you will allow me to insist that in the hands of the true artist in words all stories are marvellous, and every circumstance has its peculiar wonder. The matter is of little consequence, the manner is everything. Indeed, the highest skill is shown in taking matter apparently commonplace and transmuting it by the high alchemy of style into the pure gold of art.”

“That is indeed a proof of great skill, but it is great skill exerted foolishly, or at least unadvisedly. It is as if a great violinist were to show us what marvellous harmonies he could draw from a child’s banjo.”

“No, no, you are really wrong. I see you take a radically mistaken view of life. But we must thresh this out. Come to my rooms; I live not far from here.”

It was thus that Mr. Dyson became the associate of Mr. Charles Phillipps, who lived in a quiet square not far from Holborn. Thenceforth they haunted each other’s rooms at intervals, sometimes regular, and occasionally the reverse, and made appointments to meet at the shop in Queen Street, where their talk robbed the tobacconist’s profit of half its charm. There was a constant jarring of literary formulas, Dyson exalting the claims of the pure imagination, while Phillipps, who was a student of physical science and something of an ethnologist, insisted that all literature ought to have a scientific basis. By the mistaken benevolence of deceased relatives both young men were placed out of reach of hunger, and so, meditating high achievements, idled their time pleasantly away, and revelled in the careless joys of a Bohemianism devoid of the sharp seasoning of adversity.

One night in June Mr. Phillipps was sitting in his room in the calm retirement of Red Lion Square. He had opened the window, and was smoking placidly, while he watched the movement of life below. The sky was clear, and the afterglow of sunset had lingered long about it; and the flushing twilight of a summer evening, vying with the gas-lamps in the square, had fashioned a chiaroscuro that had in it something unearthly; and the children, racing to and fro upon the pavement, the lounging idlers by the public, and the casual passers-by rather flickered, and hovered in the play of lights than stood out substantial things. By degrees in the houses opposite one window after another leaped out a square of light, now and again a figure would shape itself against a blind and vanish, and to all this semitheatrical magic the runs and flourishes of brave Italian opera played a little distance off on a piano-organ seemed an appropriate accompaniment, while the deep-muttered bass of the traffic of Holborn never ceased. Phillipps enjoyed the scene and its effects; the light in the sky faded and turned to darkness, and the square gradually grew silent, and still he sat dreaming at the window, till the sharp peal of the house bell roused him, and looking at his watch he found that it was past ten o'clock. There was a knock at the door, and his friend Mr. Dyson entered, and, according to his custom, sat down in an armchair and began to smoke in silence.

"You know, Phillipps," he said at length, "that I have always battled for the marvellous. I remember your maintaining in that chair that one has no business to make use of the wonderful, the improbable, the odd coincidence in literature, and you took the ground that it was wrong to do so, because, as a matter of fact, the wonderful and the improbable don't happen, and men's lives are not really shaped by odd coincidence. Now, mind you, if that were so, I would not grant your conclusion, because I think the "criticism-of-life" theory is all nonsense; but I deny your premise. A most singular thing has happened to me to-night."

"Really, Dyson, I am very glad to hear it. Of course I oppose your argument, whatever it may be; but if you would be good enough to tell me of your adventure I should be delighted."

"Well, it came about like this. I have had a very hard day's work; indeed, I have scarcely moved from my old bureau since seven o'clock last night. I wanted to work out that idea we discussed last Tuesday, you know, the notion of the fetish-worshipper."

"Yes, I remember. Have you been able to do anything with it?"

"Yes; it came out better than I expected; but there were great difficulties, the usual agony between the conception and the execution. Anyhow I got it done at about seven o'clock to-night, and I thought I should like a little of the fresh air. I went out and wandered rather aimlessly about the streets; my head was full of my tale, and I didn't much notice where I was going. I got into those quiet places to the north of Oxford Street as you go west, the genteel residential neighborhood of stucco and prosperity. I turned east again without knowing it, and it was quite dark when I passed along a sombre little by-street, ill lighted and empty. I did not know at the time in the least where I was, but I found out afterwards that it was not very far from Tottenham Court Road. I strolled idly along, enjoying the stillness; on one side there seemed to be the back premises of some great shop; tier after tier of dusty windows lifted up into the night, with gibbet-like contrivances for raising heavy goods, and below large doors, fast closed and bolted, all dark and desolate. Then there came a huge pantechnicon warehouse; and over the way a grim blank wall, as forbidding as the wall of a jail, and then the headquarters of some volunteer regiment, and afterwards a passage leading to a court where wagons were standing to be hired. It was, one might almost say, a street devoid of inhabitants, and scarce a window showed the glimmer of a light. I was wondering at the strange peace and dimness there, where it must be close to some roaring main artery of London life, when suddenly I heard the noise of dashing feet tearing along the pavement at full speed, and from a narrow passage, a mews or something of that kind, a man was discharged as from a catapult under my very nose and rushed past me, flinging something from him as he ran. He was gone and down another street in an instant, almost before I knew what had happened, but I didn’t much bother about him, I was watching something else. I told you he had thrown something away; well, I watched what seemed a line of flame flash through the air and fly quivering over the pavement, and in spite of myself I could not help tearing after it. The impetus lessened, and I saw something like a bright half-penny roll slower and slower, and then deflect towards the gutter, hover for a moment on the edge, and dance down into a drain. I believe I cried out in positive despair, though I hadn’t the least notion what I was hunting; and then to my joy I saw that, instead of dropping into the sewer, it had fallen flat across two bars. I stooped down and picked it up and whipped it into my pocket, and I was just about to walk on when I heard again that sound of dashing footsteps. I don’t know why I did it, but as a matter of fact I dived down into the mews, or whatever it was, and stood as much in the shadow as possible. A man went by with a rush a few paces from where I was standing, and I felt uncommonly pleased that I was in hiding. I couldn’t make out much feature, but I saw his eyes gleaming and his teeth showing, and he had an ugly-looking knife in one hand, and I thought things would be very unpleasant for gentleman number one if the second robber, or robbed, or what you like, caught him up. I can tell you, Phillipps, a fox hunt is exciting enough, when the horn blows clear on a winter morning, and the hounds give tongue, and the red-coats charge away, but it’s nothing to a man hunt, and that’s what I had a slight glimpse of to-night. There was murder in the fellow’s eyes as he went by, and I don’t think there was much more than fifty seconds between the two. I only hope it was enough.”

Dyson leant back in his armchair and relit his pipe, and puffed thoughtfully. Phillipps began to walk up and down the room, musing over the story of violent death fleeting in chase along the pavement, the knife shining in the lamplight, the fury of the pursuer, and the terror of the pursued.

“Well,” he said at last, “and what was it, after all, that you rescued from the gutter?”

Dyson jumped up, evidently quite startled. “I really haven’t a notion. I didn’t think of looking. But we shall see.”

He fumbled in his waistcoat pocket and drew out a small and shining object, and laid it on the table. It glowed there beneath the lamp with the radiant glory of rare old gold; and the image and the letters stood out in high relief, clear and sharp, as if it had but left the mint a month before. The two men bent over it, and Phillipps took it up and examined it closely.

“Imp. Tiberius Cæsar Augustus,” he read the legend, and then, looking at the reverse of the coin, he stared in amazement, and at last turned to Dyson with a look of exultation.

“Do you know what you have found?” he said.

“Apparently a gold coin of some antiquity,” said Dyson, coolly.

“Quite so, a gold Tiberius. No, that is wrong. You have found *the* gold Tiberius. Look at the reverse.”

Dyson looked and saw the coin was stamped with the figure of a faun standing amidst reeds and flowing water. The features, minute as they were, stood out in delicate outline; it was a face lovely and yet terrible, and Dyson thought of the well-known passage of the lad’s playmate, gradually growing with his growth and increasing with his stature, till the air was filled with the rank fume of the goat.

“Yes,” he said, “it is a curious coin. Do you know it?”

"I know about it. It is one of the comparatively few historical objects in existence; it is all storied like those jewels we have read of. A whole cycle of legend has gathered round the thing; the tale goes that it formed part of an issue struck by Tiberius to commemorate an infamous excess. You see the legend on the reverse: 'Victoria.' It is said that by an extraordinary accident the whole issue was thrown into the melting pot, and that only this one coin escaped. It glints through history and legend, appearing and disappearing, with intervals of a hundred years in time and continents in place. It was discovered by an Italian humanist, and lost and rediscovered. It has not been heard of since 1727, when Sir Joshua Byrde, a Turkey merchant, brought it home from Aleppo, and vanished with it a month after he had shown it to the virtuosi, no man knew or knows where. And here it is!"

"Put it into your pocket, Dyson," he said, after a pause. "I would not let any one have a glimpse of the thing, if I were you. I would not talk about it. Did either of the men you saw see you?"

"Well, I think not. I don't think the first man, the man who was vomited out of the dark passage, saw anything at all; and I am sure that the second could not have seen me."

"And you didn't really see them. You couldn't recognize either the one or the other if you met him in the street to-morrow?"

"No, I don't think I could. The street, as I said, was dimly lighted, and they ran like mad-men."

The two men sat silent for some time, each weaving his own fancies of the story; but lust of the marvellous was slowly overpowering Dyson's more sober thoughts.

"It is all more strange than I fancied," he said at last. "It was queer enough what I saw; a man is sauntering along a quiet, sober, every-day London street, a street of gray houses and blank walls, and there, for a moment, a veil seems drawn aside, and the very fume of the pit steams up through the flagstones, the ground glows, red hot, beneath his feet, and he seems to hear the hiss of the infernal caldron. A man flying in mad terror for his life, and furious hate pressing hot on his steps with knife drawn ready; here indeed is horror. But what is all that to what you have told me? I tell you, Phillipps, I see the plot thicken, our steps will henceforth be dogged with mystery, and the most ordinary incidents will teem with significance. You may stand out against it, and shut your eyes, but they will be forced open; mark my words, you will have to yield to the inevitable. A clue, tangled if you like, has been placed by chance in our hands; it will be our business to follow it up. As for the guilty person or persons in this strange case, they will be unable to escape us, our nets will be spread far and wide over this great city, and suddenly, in the streets and places of public resort, we shall in some way or other be made aware that we are in touch with the unknown criminal. Indeed, I almost fancy I see him slowly approaching this quiet square of yours; he is loitering at street corners, wandering, apparently without aim, down far-reaching thoroughfares, but all the while coming nearer and nearer, drawn by an irresistible magnetism, as ships were drawn to the Loadstone Rock in the Eastern tale."

"I certainly think," replied Phillipps, "that, if you pull out that coin and flourish it under people's noses as you are doing at the present moment, you will very probably find yourself in touch with the criminal, or a criminal. You will undoubtedly be robbed with violence. Otherwise, I see no reason why either of us should be troubled. No one saw you secure the coin, and no one knows you have it. I, for my part, shall sleep peacefully, and go about my business with a sense of security and a firm dependence on the natural order of things. The events of the evening, the adventure in the street, have been odd, I grant you, but I resolutely decline to have any more to do with the matter, and, if necessary, I shall consult the police. I will not be enslaved by a gold Tiberius, even though it swims into my ken in a manner which is somewhat melodramatic."

"And I for my part," said Dyson, "go forth like a knight-errant in search of adventure. Not that I shall need to seek; rather adventure will seek me; I shall be like a spider in the midst of his web, responsive to every movement, and ever on the alert."

Shortly afterwards Dyson took his leave, and Mr. Phillipps spent the rest of the night in examining some flint arrow-heads which he had purchased. He had every reason to believe that they were the work of a modern and not a palæolithic man, still he was far from gratified when a close scrutiny showed him that his suspicions were well founded. In his anger at the turpitude which would impose on an ethnologist, he completely forgot

Dyson and the gold Tiberius; and when he went to bed at first sunlight, the whole tale had faded utterly from his thoughts.

THE ENCOUNTER OF THE PAVEMENT.

MR. DYSON, WALKING leisurely along Oxford. Street, and staring with bland inquiry at whatever caught his attention, enjoyed in all its rare flavors the sensation that he was really very hard at work. His observation of mankind, the traffic, and the shop-windows tickled his faculties with an exquisite bouquet; he looked serious, as one looks on whom charges of weight and moment are laid, and he was attentive in his glances to right and left, for fear lest he should miss some circumstance of more acute significance. He had narrowly escaped being run over at a crossing by a charging van, for he hated to hurry his steps, and indeed the afternoon was warm; and he had just halted by a place of popular refreshment, when the astounding gestures of a well dressed individual on the opposite pavement held him enchanted and gasping like a fish. A treble line of hansoms, carriages, vans, cabs, and omnibuses, was tearing east and west, and not the most daring adventurer of the crossings would have cared to try his fortune; but the person who had attracted Dyson’s attention seemed to rage on the very edge of the pavement, now and then darting forward at the hazard of instant death, and at each repulse absolutely dancing with excitement, to the rich amusement of the passers-by. At last, a gap that would, have tried the courage of a street-boy appeared between the serried lines of vehicles, and the man rushed across in a frenzy, and escaping by a hair’s breadth pounced upon Dyson as a tiger pounces on her prey. “I saw you looking about you,” he said, sputtering out his words in his intense eagerness; “would you mind telling me this? Was the man who came out of the Aerated Bread Shop and jumped, into the hansom three minutes ago a youngish looking man with dark whiskers and spectacles? Can’t you speak, man? For Heaven’s sake can’t you speak? Answer me; it’s a matter of life and death.”

The words bubbled and boiled out of the man’s mouth in the fury of his emotion, his face went from red to white, and the beads of sweat stood out on his forehead, and he stamped his feet as he spoke and tore with his hand at his coat, as if something swelled and choked him, stopping the passage of his breath.

“My dear sir,” said Dyson, “I always like to be accurate. Your observation was perfectly correct. As you say, a youngish man, a man, I should say, of somewhat timid bearing, ran rapidly out of the shop here, and bounced into a hansom that must have been waiting for him, as it went eastwards at once. Your friend also wore spectacles, as you say. Perhaps you would like me to call a hansom for you to follow the gentleman?”

“No, thank you; it would be waste of time.” The man gulped down something which appeared to rise in his throat, and Dyson was alarmed to see him shaking with hysterical laughter, and he clung hard to a lamp-post and swayed and staggered like a ship in a heavy gale.

“How shall I face the doctor?” he murmured to himself. “It is too hard to fail at the last moment.” Then he seemed to recollect himself, and stood straight again, and looked quietly at Dyson. I owe you an apology for my violence, he said at last. “Many men would not be so patient as you have been. Would you mind adding to your kindness by walking with me a little way? I feel a little sick; I think it’s the sun.”

Dyson nodded assent, and devoted himself to a quiet scrutiny of this strange personage as they moved on together. The man was dressed in quiet taste, and the most scrupulous observer could find nothing amiss with the fashion or make of his clothes, yet, from his hat to his boots, everything seemed inappropriate. His silk hat, Dyson thought, should have been a high bowler of odious pattern worn with a baggy morning-coat, and an instinct told him that the fellow did not commonly carry a clean pocket-handkerchief. The face was not of the most agreeable pattern, and was in no way improved by a pair of bulbous chin-whiskers of a ginger hue, into which mustaches of light color merged imperceptibly. Yet in spite of these signals hung out by nature, Dyson felt that the individual beside him was something more than compact of vulgarity. He was struggling with himself, holding his feelings in check, but now and again passion would mount black to his face, and it was evidently by a supreme effort that he kept himself from raging like a madman. Dyson found something curious and a little terrible in the spectacle of an occult emotion thus striving for the mastery, and threatening to break out at every instant with violence, and they had gone some distance before the person whom he had met by so odd a hazard was able to speak quietly.

"You are really very good," he said. "I apologize again; my rudeness was really most unjustifiable. I feel my conduct demands an explanation, and I shall be happy to give it you. Do you happen to know of any place near here where one could sit down? I should really be very glad."

"My dear sir," said Dyson, solemnly, "the only café in London is close by. Pray do not consider yourself as bound to offer me any explanation, but at the same time I should be most happy to listen to you. Let us turn down here."

They walked down a sober street and turned into what seemed a narrow passage past an iron-barred gate thrown back. The passage was paved with flagstones, and decorated with handsome shrubs in pots on either side, and the shadow of the high walls made a coolness which was very agreeable after the hot breath of the sunny street. Presently the passage opened out into a tiny square, a charming place, a morsel of France transplanted into the heart of London. High walls rose on either side, covered with glossy creepers, flower-beds beneath were gay with nasturtiums, geraniums, and marigolds, and odorous with mignonette, and in the centre of the square a fountain hidden by greenery sent a cool shower continually plashing into the basin beneath, and the very noise made this retreat delightful. Chairs and tables were disposed at convenient intervals, and at the other end of the court broad doors had been thrown back; beyond was a long, dark room, and the turmoil of traffic had become a distant murmur. Within the room one or two men were sitting at the tables, writing and sipping, but the courtyard was empty.

"You see, we shall be quiet," said Dyson. "Pray sit down here, Mr. — ?"

"Wilkins. My name is Henry Wilkins."

"Sit here, Mr. Wilkins. I think you will find that a comfortable seat. I suppose you have not been here before? This is the quiet time; the place will be like a hive at six o'clock, and the chairs and tables will overflow into that little alley there."

A waiter came in response to the bell; and after Dyson had politely inquired after the health of M. Annibault, the proprietor, he ordered a bottle of the wine of Champigny.

“The wine of Champigny,” he observed to Mr. Wilkins, who was evidently a good deal composed by the influence of the place, “is a Tourainian wine of great merit. Ah, here it is; let me fill your glass. How do you find it?”

“Indeed,” said Mr. Wilkins, “I should have pronounced it a fine Burgundy. The bouquet is very exquisite. I am fortunate in lighting upon such a good Samaritan as yourself. I wonder you did not think me mad. But if you knew the terrors that assailed me, I am sure you would no longer be surprised at conduct which was certainly most unjustifiable.”

He sipped his wine, and leant back in his chair, relishing the drip and trickle of the fountain, and the cool greenness that hedged in this little port of refuge.

“Yes,” he said at last, “that is indeed an admirable wine. Thank you; you will allow me to offer you another bottle?”

The waiter was summoned, and descended through a trap-door in the floor of the dark apartment, and brought up the wine. Mr. Wilkins lit a cigarette, and Dyson pulled out his pipe.

“Now,” said Mr. Wilkins, “I promised to give you an explanation of my strange behavior. It is rather a long story, but I see, sir, that you are no mere cold observer of the ebb and flow of life. You take, I think, a warm and an intelligent interest in the chances of your fellow-creatures, and I believe you will find what I have to tell not devoid of interest.”

Mr. Dyson signified his assent to these propositions, and though he thought Mr. Wilkins’s diction a little pompous, prepared to interest himself in his tale. The other, who had so raged with passion half an hour before, was now perfectly cool, and when he had smoked out his cigarette, he began in an even voice to relate the

NOVEL OF THE DARK VALLEY.

I AM THE son of a poor but learned clergyman in the West of England, — but I am forgetting, these details are not of special interest. I will briefly state, then, that my father, who was, as I have said, a learned man, had never learnt the specious arts by which the great are flattered, and would never condescend to the despicable pursuit of self-advertisement. Though his fondness for ancient ceremonies and quaint customs, combined with a kindness of heart that was unequalled and a primitive and fervent piety, endeared him to his moor-land parishioners, such were not the steps by which clergy then rose in the Church, and at sixty my father was still incumbent of the little benefice he had accepted in his thirtieth year. The income of the living was barely sufficient to support life in the decencies which are expected of the Anglican parson; and when my father died a few years ago, I, his only child, found myself thrown upon the world with a slender capital of less than a hundred pounds, and all the problem of existence before me. I felt that there was nothing for me to do in the country, and as usually happens in such eases, London drew me like a magnet. One day in August, in the early morning, while the dew still glittered on the turf, and on the high green banks of the lane, a neighbor drove me to the railway station, and I bade good-bye to the land of the broad moors and unearthly battlements of the wild tors. It was six o'clock as we neared London; the faint sickly fume of the brickfields about Acton came in puffs through the open window, and a mist was rising from the ground. Presently the brief view of successive streets, prim and uniform, struck me with a sense of monotony; the hot air seemed to grow hotter; and when we had rolled beneath the dismal and squalid houses, whose dirty and neglected back yards border the line near Paddington, I felt as if I should be stifled in this fainting breath of London. I got a hansom and drove off, and every street increased my gloom; gray houses with blinds drawn down, whole thoroughfares almost desolate, and the foot-passengers who seemed to stagger wearily along rather than walk, all made me feel a sinking at heart. I put up for the night at a small hotel in a street leading from the

Strand, where my father had stayed on his few brief visits to town; and when I went out after dinner, the real gayety and bustle of the Strand and Fleet Street could cheer me but little, for in all this great city there was no single human being whom I could claim even as an acquaintance. I will not weary you with the history of the next year, for the adventures of a man who sinks are too trite to be worth recalling. My money did not last me long; I found that I must be neatly dressed, or no one to whom I applied would so much as listen to me; and I must live in a street of decent reputation if I wished to be treated with common civility. I applied for various posts, for which, as I now see, I was completely devoid of qualification; I tried to become a clerk without having the smallest notion of business habits, and I found, to my cost, that a general knowledge of literature and an execrable style of penmanship are far from being looked upon with favor in commercial circles. I had read one of the most charming of the works of a famous novelist of the present day, and I frequented the Fleet Street taverns in the hope of making literary friends, and so getting the introductions which I understood were indispensable in the career of letters. I was disappointed; I once or twice ventured to address gentlemen who were sitting in adjoining boxes, and I was answered, politely indeed, but in a manner that told me my advances were unusual. Pound by pound, my small resources melted; I could no longer think of appearances; I migrated to a shy quarter, and my meals became mere observances. I went out at one and returned to my room at two, but nothing but a milk-cake had occurred in the interval. In short, I became acquainted with misfortune; and as I sat amidst slush and ice on a seat in Hyde Park, munching a piece of bread, I realized the bitterness of poverty, and the feelings of a gentleman reduced to something far below the condition of a vagrant. In spite of all discouragement I did not desist in my efforts to earn a living. I consulted advertisement columns, I kept my eyes open for a chance, I looked in at the windows of stationers' shops, but all in vain. One evening I was sitting in a Free Library, and I saw an advertisement in one of the papers. It was something like this: "Wanted, by a gentleman a person of literary taste and abilities as secretary and amanuensis. Must not object to travel." Of course I knew that such an advertisement would have answers by the hundred, and I thought my own chances of securing the post extremely small; however, I applied at the address given, and wrote to Mr. Smith, who was staying at a large hotel at the West End. I must confess that my heart gave a jump when

I received a note a couple of days later, asking me to call at the Cosmopole at my earliest convenience. I do not know, sir, what your experiences of life may have been, and so I cannot tell whether you have known such moments. A slight sickness, my heart beating rather more rapidly than usual, a choking in the throat, and a difficulty of utterance; such were my sensations as I walked to the Cosmopole. I had to mention the name twice before the hall porter could understand me, and as I went upstairs my hands were wet. I was a good deal struck by Mr. Smith's appearance; he looked younger than I did, and there was something mild and hesitating about his expression. He was reading when I came in, and he looked up when I gave my name. "My dear sir," he said, "I am really delighted to see you. I have read very carefully the letter you were good enough to send me. Am I to understand that this document is in your own handwriting?" He showed me the letter I had written, and I told him I was not so fortunate as to be able to keep a secretary myself. "Then, sir," he went on, "the post I advertised is at your service. You have no objection to travel, I presume?" As you may imagine, I closed pretty eagerly with the offer he made, and thus I entered the service of Mr. Smith. For the first few weeks I had no special duties; I had received a quarter's salary, and a handsome allowance was made me in lieu of board and lodging. One morning, however, when I called at the hotel according to instructions, my master informed me that I must hold myself in readiness for a sea-voyage, and, to spare unnecessary detail, in the course of a fortnight we had landed at New York. Mr. Smith told me that he was engaged on a work of a special nature, in the compilation of which some peculiar researches had to be made; in short, I was given to understand that we were to travel to the far West.

After about a week had been spent in New York we took our seats in the cars, and began a journey tedious beyond all conception. Day after day, and night after night, the great train rolled on, threading its way through cities the very names of which were strange to me, passing at slow speed over perilous viaducts, skirting mountain ranges and pine forests, and plunging into dense tracts of wood, where mile after mile and hour after hour the same monotonous growth of brushwood met the eye, and all along the continual clatter and rattle of the wheels upon the ill-laid lines made it difficult to hear the voices of our fellow-passengers. We were a heterogeneous and ever-changing company; often I woke up in the dead of night with the sudden grinding jar of the brakes, and looking out found that we had stopped in the shabby street of some frame-built town, lighted chiefly by the flaring windows of the saloon. A few rough-looking fellows would often come out to stare at the cars, and sometimes passengers got down, and sometimes there was a party of two or three waiting on the wooden sidewalk to get on board. Many of the passengers were English; humble households torn up from the moorings of a thousand years, and bound for some problematical paradise in the alkali desert or the Rockies. I heard the men talking to one another of the great profits to be made on the virgin soil of America, and two or three, who were mechanics, expatiated on the wonderful wages given to skilled labor on the railways and in the factories of the States. This talk usually fell dead after a few minutes, and I could see a sickness and dismay in the faces of these men as they looked at the ugly brush or at the desolate expanse of the prairie, dotted here and there with frame-houses, devoid of garden, or flowers or trees, standing all alone in what might have been a great gray sea frozen into stillness. Day after day the waving sky line, and the desolation of a land without form or color or variety, appalled the hearts of such of us as were Englishmen, and once in the night as I lay awake I heard a woman weeping and sobbing, and asking what she had done to come to such a place. Her husband tried to comfort her in the broad speech of Gloucestershire, telling her the ground was so rich that one had only to plough it up and it would grow sunflowers of itself, but she cried for her mother and their old cottage and the beehives, like a little child. The sadness of it all overwhelmed me, and I had no heart to think of other matters; the question of what Mr. Smith could have to do in such a country, and of what manner of literary research could be carried on in the wilderness, hardly troubled me. Now and again my situation struck me as peculiar; I had been engaged as a literary assistant at a handsome salary, and yet my master was still almost a stranger to me; sometimes he would come to where I was sitting in the cars and make a few banal remarks about the country, but for the most part of the journey he sat by himself, not speaking to any one, and so far as I could judge, deep in his thoughts. It was I think on the fifth day from New York when I received, the intimation that we should shortly leave the cars; I had been watching some distant mountains which rose wild and savage before us, and I was wondering if there were human beings so unhappy as to speak of home in connection with those piles of lumbered rock, when Mr. Smith touched me lightly on the shoulder. “You will be glad to be done with, the cars, I have no doubt, Mr. Wilkins," he said. "You were looking at the mountains, I think? Well, I hope we shall be there to-night. The train stops at Reading, and I dare say we shall manage to find our way."

A few hours later the brakeman brought the tram to a standstill at the Reading depot and we got out. I noticed that the town, though of course built almost entirely of frame-houses, was larger and busier than any we had passed for the last two days. The depot was crowded, and as the bell and whistle sounded, I saw that a number of persons were preparing to leave the cars, while an even greater number were waiting to get on board. Besides the passengers, there was a pretty dense crowd of people, some of whom had come to meet or to see off their friends and relatives, while others were mere loafers. Several of our English fellow passengers got down at Reading, but the confusion was so great that they were lost to my sight almost immediately. Mr. Smith beckoned to me to follow him, and we were soon in the thick of the mass; and the continual ringing of bells, the hubbub of voices, the shrieking of whistles, and the hiss of escaping steam, confused my senses, and I wondered dimly as I struggled after my employer, where we were going, and how we should be able to find our way through an unknown country. Mr. Smith had put on a wide-brimmed hat, which he had sloped over his eyes, and as all the men wore hats of the same pattern, it was with some difficulty that I distinguished him in the crowd. We got free at last, and he struck down a side street, and made one or two sharp turns to right and left. It was getting dusk, and we seemed to be passing through a shy portion of the town, there were few people about in the ill-lighted streets, and these few were men of the most unprepossessing pattern. Suddenly we stopped before a corner house, a man was standing at the door, apparently on the look-out for some one, and I noticed that he and Smith gave sharp glances one to the other.

"From New York City, I expect, mister?"

"From New York!"

"All right; they 're ready, and you can have 'em when you choose. I know my orders, you see, and I mean to run this business through."

"Very well, Mr. Evans, that is what we want. Our money is good, you know. Bring them round."

I had stood silent, listening to this dialogue, and wondering what it meant. Smith began to walk impatiently up and down the street, and the man Evans was still standing at his door. He had given a sharp whistle, and I saw him looking me over in a quiet leisurely way, as if to make sure of my face for another time. I was thinking what all this could mean, when an ugly, slouching lad came up a side passage, leading two raw-boned horses.

“Get up, Mr. Wilkins, and be quick about it,” said Smith. “We ought to be on our way.”

We rode off together into the gathering darkness, and before long I looked back and saw the far plain behind us, with the lights of the town glimmering faintly; and in front rose the mountains. Smith guided his horse on the rough track as surely as if he had been riding along Piccadilly, and I followed him as well as I could. I was weary and exhausted, and scarcely took note of anything; I felt that the track was a gradual ascent, and here and there I saw great boulders by the road. The ride made but little impression on me; I have a faint recollection of passing through a dense black pine forest, where our horses had to pick their way among the rocks, and I remember the peculiar effect of the rarefied air as we kept still mounting higher and higher. I think I must have been half asleep for the latter half of the ride, and it was with a shock that I heard Smith saying —

“Here we are, Wilkins. This is Blue-Rock Park. You will enjoy the view to-morrow. To-night we will have something to eat, and then go to bed.”

A man came out of a rough-looking house and took the horses, and we found some fried steak and coarse whiskey awaiting us inside. I had come to a strange place. There were three rooms, — the room in which we had supper, Smith’s room and my own. The deaf old man who did the work slept in a sort of shed, and when I woke up the next morning and walked out I found that the house stood in a sort of hollow amongst the mountains; the clumps of pines and some enormous bluish-gray rocks that stood here and there between the trees had given the place the name of Blue-Rock Park. On every side the snow-covered mountains surrounded us, the breath of the air was as wine, and when I climbed the slope and looked down, I could see that, so far as any human fellowship was concerned I might as well have been wrecked on some small island in mid-Pacific. The only trace of man I could see was the rough log-house where I had slept, and in my ignorance I did not know that there were similar houses within comparatively easy distance, as distance is reckoned in the Rockies. But at the moment, the utter, dreadful loneliness rushed upon me, and the thought of the great plain and the great sea that parted me from the world I knew, caught me by the throat, and I wondered if I should die there in that mountain hollow. It was a terrible instant, and I have not yet forgotten it. Of course I managed to conquer my horror; I said I should be all the stronger for the experience, and I made up my mind to make the best of everything. It was a rough life enough, and rough enough board and lodging. I was left entirely to myself. Smith I scarcely ever saw, nor did I know when he was in the house. I have often thought he was far away, and have been surprised to see him walking out of his room, locking the door behind him and putting the key in his pocket; and on several occasions when I fancied he was busy in his room, I have seen him come in with his boots covered with dust and dirt. So far as work went I enjoyed a complete sinecure; I had nothing to do but to walk about the valley, to eat, and to sleep. With one thing and another I grew accustomed, to the life, and managed to make myself pretty comfortable, and by degrees I began to venture farther away from the house, and to explore the country. One day I had contrived to get into a neighboring valley, and suddenly I came upon a group of men sawing timber. I went up to them, hoping that perhaps some of them might be Englishmen; at all events they were human beings, and I should hear articulate speech, for the old man I have mentioned, besides being half blind and stone deaf, was wholly dumb so far as I was concerned. I was prepared to be welcomed in a rough and ready fashion, without much, of the forms of politeness, but the grim glances and the short gruff answers I received astonished me. I saw the men glancing oddly at each other, and one of them who had stopped work began fingering a gun, and I was obliged to return on my path uttering curses on the fate which had brought me into a land where men were more brutish than the very brutes. The solitude of the life began to oppress me as with a nightmare, and a few days later I determined to walk to a kind of station some miles distant, where a rough inn was kept for the accommodation of hunters and tourists. English gentlemen occasionally stopped there for the night, and I thought I might perhaps fall in with some one of better manners than the inhabitants of the country. I found as I had expected a group of men lounging about the door of the log-house that served as a hotel, and as I came nearer I could see that heads were put together and looks interchanged, and when I walked up the six or seven trappers stared at me in stony ferocity, and with something of the disgust that one eyes a loathsome and venomous snake. I felt that I could bear it no longer, and I called out: —

“Is there such a thing as an Englishman here, or any one with a little civilization?”

One of the men put his hand to his belt, but his neighbor checked him and answered me.

“You’ll find we’ve got some of the resources of civilization before very long, mister, and I expect you’ll not fancy them extremely. But anyway, there’s an Englishman tarrying here, and I’ve no doubt he’ll be glad to see you. There you are, that’s Mr. D’Aubernoun.”

A young man, dressed like an English country squire, came and stood at the door, and looked at me. One of the men pointed to me and said: —

“That’s the individual we were talking about last night. Thought you might like to have a look at him, squire, and here he is.”

The young fellow’s good-natured English face clouded over, and he glanced sternly at me, and turned away with a gesture of contempt and aversion.

“Sir,” I cried, “I do not know what I have done to be treated in this manner. You are my fellow-countryman, and I expected some courtesy.”

He gave me a black look and made as if he would go in, but he changed his mind, and faced me.

“You are rather imprudent, I think, to behave in this manner. You must be counting on a forbearance which cannot last very long; which may last a very short time, indeed. And let me tell you this, sir, you may call yourself an Englishman and drag the name of England through the dirt, but you need not count on any English influence to help you. If I were you, I would not stay here much longer.”

He went into the inn, and the men quietly watched my face, as I stood there, wondering whether I was going mad. The woman of the house came out and stared at me as if I were a wild beast or a savage, and I turned to her, and spoke quietly.

"I am very hungry and thirsty, I have walked a long way. I have plenty of money. Will you give me something to eat and drink?"

"No, I won't," she said. "You had better quit this."

I crawled home like a wounded beast, and lay down on my bed. It was all a hopeless puzzle to me. I knew nothing but rage and shame and terror, and I suffered little more when I passed by a house in an adjacent valley, and some children who were playing outside ran from me shrieking. I was forced to walk to find some occupation. I should have died if I had sat down quietly in Blue Rock Park and looked all day at the mountains; but wherever I saw a human being I saw the same glance of hatred and aversion, and once as I was crossing a thick brake I heard a shot, and the venomous hiss of a bullet close to my ear.

One day I heard a conversation which astounded me; I was sitting behind a rock resting, and two men came along the track and halted. One of them had got his feet entangled in some wild vines, and swore fiercely, but the other laughed, and said they were useful things sometimes.

"What the hell do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing much. But they 're uncommon tough, these here vines, and sometimes rope is skerse and dear."

The man who had sworn chuckled at this, and I heard them sit down and light their pipes.

"Have you seen him lately?" asked the humorist.

"I sighted him the other day, but the darned bullet went high. He's got his master's luck, I expect, sir, but it can't last much longer. You heard about him going to Jinks's and trying his brass, but the young Britisher downed him pretty considerable, I can tell you."

"What the devil is the meaning of it?"

"I don't know, but I believe it'll have to be finished, and done in the old style, too. You know how they fix the niggers?"

"Yes, sir, I've seen a little of that. A couple of gallons of kerosene'll cost a dollar at Brown's store, but I should say it's cheap anyway."

They moved off after this, and I lay still behind the rock, the sweat pouring down my face. I was so sick that I could barely stand, and I walked home as slowly as an old man, leaning on my stick. I knew that the two men had been talking about me, and I knew that some terrible death was in store for me. That night I could not sleep. I tossed on the rough bed and tortured myself to find out the meaning of it all. At last in the very dead of night I rose from the bed, and put on my clothes, and went out. I did not care where I went, but I felt that I must walk till I had tired myself out. It was a clear moonlight night, and in a couple of hours I found I was approaching a place of dismal reputation in the mountains, a deep cleft in the rocks, known as Black Gulf Cañon. Many years before, an unfortunate party of Englishmen and Englishwomen had camped here and had been surrounded by Indians. They were captured, outraged, and put to death with almost inconceivable tortures, and the roughest of the trappers or woodsmen gave the cañon a wide berth even in the day-time. As I crushed through the dense brushwood which grew above the cañon, I heard voices, and wondering who could be in such a place at such a time, I went on, walking more carefully and making as little noise as possible. There was a great tree growing on the very edge of the rocks, and I lay down and looked out from behind the trunk. Black Gulf Cañon was below me, the moonlight shining bright into its very depths from midheaven, and casting shadows as black as death from the pointed rock, and all the sheer rock on the other side, overhanging the cañon, was in darkness. At intervals a light veil obscured the moonlight, as a filmy cloud fleeted across the moon; and a bitter wind blew shrill across the gulf. I looked down as I have said, and saw twenty men standing in a semicircle round a rock; I counted them one by one, and knew most of them. They were the very vilest of the vile, more vile than any den in London could show, and there was murder and worse than murder on the heads of not a few. Facing them and me stood Mr. Smith with the rock before him, and on the rock was a great pair of scales, such, as are used in the stores. I heard his voice ringing down the cañon as I lay beside the tree, and my heart turned cold as I heard it.

“Life for gold,” he cried, “a life for gold. The blood and the life of an enemy for every pound of gold.”

A man stepped out and raised one hand, and with the other flung a bright lump of something into the pan of the scales, which clanged down, and

Smith muttered something in his ear. Then he cried again: —

“Blood for gold; for a pound of gold, the life of an enemy. For every pound of gold upon the scales, a life.”

One by one the men came forward, each lifting up his right hand; and the gold was weighed in the scales, and each time Smith leaned forward and spoke to each man in his ear. Then he cried again: —

“Desire and lust, for gold on the scales. For every pound of gold, enjoyment of desire.”

I saw the same thing happen as before; the uplifted hand, and the metal weighed, and the mouth whispering, and black passion on every face.

Then, one by one, I saw the men again step up to Smith. A muttered conversation seemed to take place; I could see that Smith was explaining and directing, and I noticed that he gesticulated a little as one who points out the way, and once or twice he moved his hands quickly as if he would show that the path was clear and could not be missed. I kept my eyes so intently on his figure that I noted little else, and at last it was with a start that I realized that the cañon was empty. A moment before I thought I had seen the group of villainous faces, and the two standing, a little apart by the rock; I had looked down a moment, and when I glanced again into the cañon there was no one there. In dumb terror I made my way home, and I fell asleep in an instant from exhaustion. No doubt I should have slept on for many hours, but when I woke up, the sun was only rising, and the light shone in on my bed. I had started up from sleep with the sensation of having received a violent shock, and as I looked in confusion about me I saw to my amazement that there were three men in the room. One of them had his hand on my shoulder and spoke to me.

“Come, mister, wake up. Your time’s up now, I reckon, and the boys are waiting for you outside, and they ‘re in a big hurry. Come on; you can put on your clothes, it’s kind of chilly this morning.”

I saw the other two men smiling sourly at each other, but I understood nothing. I simply pulled on my clothes, and said I was ready.

“All right, come on then. You go first, Nichols, and Jim and I will give the gentleman an arm.”

They took me out into the sunlight, and then I understood the meaning of a dull murmur that had vaguely perplexed me while I was dressing. There were about two hundred men waiting outside, and some women too, and when they saw me there was a low muttering growl. I did not know what I had done, but that noise made my heart beat and the sweat come out on my face. I saw confusedly, as through a veil, the tumult and tossing of the crowd, discordant voices were speaking, and amongst all those faces there was not one glance of mercy, but a fury of lust that I did not understand. I found myself presently walking in a sort of procession up the slope of the valley, and on every side of me there were men with revolvers in their hands. Now and then a voice struck me, and I heard words and sentences of which I could form no connected story. But I understood that there was one sentence of execration; I heard scraps of stories that seemed strange and improbable. Some one was talking of men, lured by cunning devices from their homes and murdered with hideous tortures, found writhing like wounded snakes in dark and lonely places, only crying for some one to stab them to the heart, and so end their torments; and I heard another voice speaking of innocent girls who had vanished for a day or two, and then had come back and died, blushing red with shame even in the agonies of death. I wondered what it all meant, and what was to happen, but I was so weary that I walked on in a dream, scarcely longing for anything but sleep. At last we stopped. We had reached the summit of the hill, overlooking Blue Rock Valley, and I saw that I was standing beneath a clump of trees where I had often sat. I was in the midst of a ring of armed men, and I saw that two or three men were very busy with piles of wood, while others were fingering a rope. Then there was a stir in the crowd, and a man was pushed forward. His hands and feet were tightly bound with cord, and though his face was unutterably villainous I pitied him for the agony that worked his features and twisted his lips. I knew him; he was amongst those that had gathered round Smith in Black Gulf Cañon. In an instant he was unbound, and stripped naked; and borne beneath one of the trees, and his neck encircled by a noose that went around the trunk. A hoarse voice gave some kind of order; there was a rush of feet, and the rope tightened; and there before me I saw the blackened face and the writhing limbs and the shameful agony of death. One after another, half a dozen men, all of whom I had seen in the cañon the night before, were strangled before me, and their bodies were flung forth on the ground. Then there was a pause, and the man who had roused me a short while before, came up to me and said: —

“Now, mister, it’s your turn. We give you five minutes to cast up your accounts, and when that’s clocked, by the living God we will burn you alive at that tree.”

It was then I awoke and understood. I cried out: —

“Why, what have I done? Why should you hurt me? I am a harmless man, I never did you any wrong.” I covered my face with my hands; it seemed so pitiful, and it was such a terrible death.

“What have I done?” I cried again. “You must take me for some other man. You cannot know me.”

“You black-hearted devil,” said the man at my side, “we know you well enough. There’s not a man within thirty miles of this that won’t curse Jack Smith when you are burning in hell.”

“My name is not Smith,” I said, with some hope left in me. “My name is Wilkins. I was Mr. Smith’s secretary, but I knew nothing of him.”

“Hark at the black liar,” said the man. “Secretary be damned! You were clever enough, I dare say, to slink out at night, and keep your face in the dark, but we’ve tracked you out at last. But your time’s up. Come along.”

I was dragged to the tree and bound to it with chains, and I saw the piles of wood heaped all about me, and shut my eyes. Then I felt myself drenched all over with some liquid, and looked again, and a woman grinned at me. She had just emptied a great can of petroleum over me and over the wood. A voice shouted, “Fire away,” and I fainted and knew nothing more.

When I opened my eyes I was lying on a bed in a bare comfortless room. A doctor was holding some strong salts to my nostrils, and a gentleman standing by the bed, whom I afterwards found to be the sheriff, addressed me: —

“Say, mister,” he began, “you’ve had an uncommon narrow squeak for it. The boys were just about lighting up when I came along with the posse, and I had as much as I could do to bring you off, I can tell you. And, mind you, I don’t blame, them; they had made up their minds, you see, that you were the head of the Black Gulf gang, and at first nothing I could say would persuade them you weren’t Jack Smith. Luckily, a man from here named Evans, that came along with us, allowed he had seen you with Jack Smith, and that you were yourself. So we brought you along and jailed you, but you can go if you like, when you’re through with this faint turn.”

I got on the cars the next day, and in three weeks I was in London; again almost penniless. But from that time my fortune seemed to change. I made influential friends in all directions; bank directors courted my company, and editors positively flung themselves into my arms. I had only to choose my career, and after a while I determined that I was meant by nature for a life of comparative leisure. With an ease that seemed almost ridiculous I obtained a well-paid position in connection with a prosperous political club. I have charming chambers in a central neighborhood close to the parks; the club *chef* exerts himself when I lunch or dine, and the rarest vintages in the cellar are always at my disposal. Yet, since my return to London, I have never known a day’s security or peace; I tremble when I awake lest Smith should be standing at my bed, and every step I take seems to bring me nearer to the edge of the precipice. Smith, I knew, had escaped free from the raid of the vigilantes, and I grew faint at the thought that he would in all probability return to London, and that suddenly and unprepared I should meet him face to face. Every morning as I left my house, I would peer up and down the street, expecting to see that dreaded figure awaiting me; I have delayed at street corners, my heart in my mouth, sickening at the thought that a few quick steps might bring us together; I could not bear to frequent the theatres or music halls, lest by some bizarre chance he should prove to be my neighbor. Sometimes, I have been forced, against my will, to walk out at night, and then in silent squares the shadows have made me shudder, and in the medley of meetings in the crowded thoroughfares, I have said to myself, “It must come sooner or later; he will surely return to town, and I shall see him when I feel most secure.” I scanned the newspapers for hint or intimation of approaching danger, and no small type nor report of trivial interest was allowed to pass unread. Especially I read and re-read the advertisement columns, but without result. Months passed by and I was undisturbed till, though I felt far from safe, I no longer suffered from the intolerable oppression of instant and ever present terror. This afternoon as I was walking quietly along Oxford Street, I raised my eyes, and looked across the road, and then at last I saw the man who had so long haunted my thoughts.

Mr. Wilkins finished his wine, and leaned back in his chair, looking sadly at Dyson; and then, as if a thought struck him, fished out of an inner pocket a leather letter case, and handed a newspaper cutting across the table.

Dyson glanced closely at the slip, and saw that it had been extracted from the columns of an evening paper. It ran as follows: —

WHOLESALE LYNCHING.

SHOCKING STORY.

A Dalziel telegram from Reading (Colorado) states that advices received there from Blue Bock Park report a frightful instance of popular vengeance. For some time the neighborhood has been terrorized by the crimes of a gang of desperadoes, who, under the cover of a carefully planned organization, have perpetrated the most infamous cruelties on men and women. A Vigilance Committee was formed, and it was found that the leader of the gang was a person named Smith, living in Blue Rock Park. Action was taken, and six of the worst in the band were summarily strangled in the presence of two or three hundred men and women. Smith is said to have escaped.

“This is a terrible story,” said Dyson; “I can well believe that your days and nights are haunted by such fearful scenes as you have described. But surely you have no need to fear Smith? He has much, more cause to fear you. Consider, you have only to lay your information before the police, and a warrant would be immediately issued for his arrest. Besides, you will, I am sure, excuse me for what I am going to say.”

“My dear sir,” said Mr. Wilkins, “I hope you will speak to me with perfect freedom.”

“Well, then, I must confess that my impression was that you were rather disappointed at not being able to stop the man before he drove off. I thought you seemed annoyed that you could not get across the street.”

“Sir, I did not know what I was about. I caught sight of the man, but it was only for a moment, and the agony you witnessed was the agony of suspense. I was not perfectly certain of the face; and the horrible thought that Smith was again in London overwhelmed me. I shuddered at the idea of this incarnate fiend, whose soul is black with shocking crimes, mingling free and unobserved amongst the harmless crowds, meditating perhaps a new and more fearful cycle of infamies. I tell you, sir, that an awful being stalks through the streets, a being before whom the sunlight itself should blacken, and the summer air grow chill and dank. Such thoughts as these rushed upon me with the force of a whirlwind; I lost my senses."

"I see. I partly understand your feelings, but I would impress on you that you have nothing really to fear. Depend upon it, Smith will not molest you in any way. You must remember he himself has had a warning; and indeed from the brief glance I had of him, he seemed to me to be a frightened-looking man. However, I see it is getting late, and if you will excuse me, Mr. Wilkins, I think I will be going. I dare say we shall often meet here."

Dyson walked off smartly, pondering the strange story chance had brought him, and finding on cool reflection that there was something a little strange in Mr. Wilkins's manner, for which not even so weird a catalogue of experiences could altogether account.

ADVENTURE OF THE MISSING BROTHER.

MR. CHARLES PHILLIPPS was, as has been hinted, a gentleman of pronounced scientific tastes. In his early days he had devoted himself with fond enthusiasm to the agreeable study of biology, and a brief monograph on the Embryology of the Microscopic Holothuria had formed his first contribution to the belles lettres. Later, he had somewhat relaxed the severity of his pursuits, and had dabbled in the more frivolous subjects of palæontology and ethnology; he had a cabinet in his sitting-room whose drawers were stuffed with rude flint implements, and a charming fetish from the South Seas was the dominant note in the decorative scheme of the apartment. Flattering himself with the title of materialist, he was in truth one of the most credulous of men, but he required a marvel to be neatly draped in the robes of science before he would give it any credit, and the wildest dreams took solid shape to him if only the nomenclature were severe and irreproachable; he laughed at the witch, but quailed before the powers of the hypnotist, lifting his eyebrows when Christianity was mentioned, but adoring protyle and the ether. For the rest, he prided himself on a boundless scepticism; the average tale of wonder he heard with nothing but contempt, and he would certainly not have credited a word or syllable of Dyson's story of the pursuer and pursued unless the gold coin had been produced as visible and tangible evidence. As it was he half suspected that Dyson had imposed on him; he knew his friend's disordered fancies, and his habit of conjuring up the marvellous to account for the entirely commonplace; and on the whole he was inclined to think that the so-called facts in the odd adventure had been gravely distorted in the telling. Since the evening on which he had listened to the tale, he had paid Dyson a visit, and had delivered himself of some serious talk on the necessity of accurate observation, and the folly, as he put it, of using a kaleidoscope instead of a telescope in the view of things, to which remarks his friend had listened with a smile that was extremely sardonic "My dear fellow," Dyson had remarked at last, "you will allow me to tell you that I see your drift perfectly. However, you will be astonished to hear that I consider you to be the visionary, while I am a sober and serious spectator of human life. You have gone round the circle, and while you fancy yourself far in the golden land of new philosophies, you are in reality a dweller in a metaphorical Clapham; your scepticism has defeated itself and become a monstrous credulity; you are in fact in the position of the bat or owl, I forget which it was, who denied the existence of the sun at noonday, and I shall be astonished if you do not one day come to me full of contrition for your manifold intellectual errors, with a humble resolution to see things in their true light for the future." This tirade had left Mr. Phillipps unimpressed; he considered Dyson as hopeless, and he went home to gloat over some primitive stone implements that a friend had sent him from India. He found that his landlady, seeing them displayed in all their rude formlessness upon the table, had removed the collection to the dustbin, and had replaced it by lunch; and the afternoon was spent in malodorous research. Mrs. Brown, hearing these stones spoken of as very valuable knives, had called him in his hearing "poor Mr. Phillipps," and between rage and evil odors he spent a sorry afternoon. It was four o'clock before he had completed his work of rescue; and, overpowered with the flavors of decaying cabbage-leaves, Phillipps felt that he must have a walk to gain an appetite for the evening meal. Unlike Dyson, he walked fast, with his eyes on the pavement, absorbed in his thoughts and oblivious of the life around him; and he could not have told by what streets he had passed, when he suddenly lifted up his eyes and found himself in Leicester Square. The grass and flowers pleased him, and he welcomed the opportunity of resting for a few minutes, and glancing round, he saw a bench which had only one occupant, a lady, and as she was seated at one end, Phillipps took up a position at the other extremity, and began to pass in angry review the events of the afternoon. He had noticed as he came up to the bench that the person already there was neatly dressed, and to all appearance young; her face he could not see, as it was turned away in apparent contemplation of the shrubs, and moreover shielded with her hand; but it would be doing wrong to Mr. Phillipps to imagine that his choice of a seat was dictated by any hopes of an affair of the heart; he had simply preferred the company of one lady to that of five dirty children, and having seated himself was immersed directly in thoughts of his misfortunes. He had meditated changing his lodgings; but now, on a judicial review of the case in all its bearings, his calmer judgment told him that the race of landladies is like to the race of the leaves, and that there was but little to choose between them. He resolved, however, to talk to Mrs. Brown, the offender, very coolly and yet severely, to point out the extreme indiscretion of her conduct, and to express a hope for better things in the future. With this decision registered in his mind, Phillipps was about to get up from the seat and move off, when he was intensely annoyed to hear a stifled sob, evidently from the lady, who still continued her contemplation of the shrubs and flower-beds. He clutched his stick desperately, and in a moment would have been in full retreat, when the lady turned her face towards him, and with a mute entreaty bespoke his attention. She was a young girl with a quaint and piquant rather than a beautiful face, and she was evidently in the bitterest distress, and Mr. Phillipps sat down again, and cursed his chances heartily. The young lady looked at him with a pair of charming eyes of a shining hazel, which showed no trace of tears, though a handkerchief was in her hand; she bit her lip, and seemed to struggle with some overpowering grief, and her whole attitude was all beseeching and imploring. Phillipps sat on the edge of the bench gazing awkwardly at her, and wondering what was to come next, and she looked at him still without speaking.

“Well, madam,” he said at last, “I understood from your gesture that you wished to speak to me. Is there anything I can do for you? Though, if you will pardon me, I cannot help saying that that seems highly improbable.”

“Ah, sir,” she said in a low murmuring voice, “do not speak harshly to me. I am in sore straits, and I thought from your face that I could safely ask your sympathy, if not your help.”

“Would you kindly tell me what is the matter?” said Phillipps. “Perhaps you would like some tea?”

“I knew I could not be mistaken,” the lady replied. “That offer of refreshment bespeaks a generous mind. But tea, alas! is powerless to console me. If you will let me, I will endeavor to explain my trouble.”

“I should be glad if you would.”

“I will do so, and I will try and be brief, in spite of the numerous complications which have made me, young as I am, tremble before what seems the profound and terrible mystery of existence. Yet the grief which now racks my very soul is but too simple; I have lost my brother.”

“Lost your brother! How on earth can that be?”

“I see I must trouble you with a few particulars. My brother, then, who is by some years my elder, is a tutor in a private school in the extreme north of London. The want of means deprived him of the advantages of a University education; and lacking the stamp of a degree, he could not hope for that position which his scholarship and his talents entitled him to claim. He was thus forced to accept the post of classical master at Dr. Saunderson’s Highgate Academy for the sons of gentlemen, and he has performed his duties with perfect satisfaction to his principal for some years. My personal history need not trouble you; if will be enough if I tell you that for the last month I have been governess in a family residing at Tooting. My brother and I have always cherished the warmest mutual affection; and though circumstances into which I need not enter have kept us apart for some time, yet we have never lost sight of one another. We made up our minds that unless one of us was absolutely unable to rise from a bed of sickness, we would never let a week pass by without meeting, and some time ago we chose this square as our rendezvous on account of its central position and its convenience of access. And indeed, after a week of distasteful toil, my brother felt little inclination for much walking, and we have often spent two or three hours on this bench, speaking of our prospects and of happier days, when we were children. In the early spring it was cold and chilly; still we enjoyed the short respite, and I think that we were often taken for a pair of lovers, as we sat close together, eagerly talking. Saturday after Saturday we have met each other here, and though the doctor told him it was madness, my brother would not allow the influenza to break the appointment. That was some time ago; last Saturday we had a long and happy afternoon, and separated more cheerfully than usual, feeling that the coming week would be bearable, and resolving that our next meeting should be if possible still more pleasant. I arrived here at the time agreed upon, four o’clock, and sat down and watched for my brother, expecting every moment to see him advancing towards me from that gate at the north side of the square. Five minutes passed by, and he had not arrived; I thought he must have missed his train, and the idea that our interview would be cut short by twenty minutes, or perhaps half an hour, saddened me; I had hoped we should be so happy together to-day. Suddenly, moved by I know not what impulse, I turned abruptly round, and how can I describe to you my astonishment when I saw my brother advancing slowly towards me from the southern side of the square, accompanied by another person. My first thought, I remember, had in it something of resentment that this man, whoever he was, should intrude himself into our meeting; I wondered who it could possibly be, for my brother had, I may say, no intimate friends. Then as I looked still at the advancing figures, another feeling took possession of me; it was a sensation of bristling fear, the fear of the child in the dark, unreasonable and unreasoning, but terrible, clutching at my heart as with the cold grip of a dead man's hands. Yet I overcame the feeling, and looked steadily at my brother, waiting for him to speak, and more closely at his companion. Then I noticed that this man was leading my brother rather than walking arm-in-arm with him; he was a tall man, dressed in quite ordinary fashion. He wore a high bowler hat, and, in spite of the warmth of the day, a plain black overcoat, tightly buttoned, and I noticed his trousers, of a quiet black and gray stripe. The face was commonplace too, and indeed I cannot recall any special features, or any trick of expression; for though I looked at him as he came near, curiously enough his face made no impression on me, it was as though I had seen a well-made mask. They passed in front of me, and to my unutterable astonishment I heard my brother's voice speaking to me, though his lips did not move, nor his eyes look into mine. It was a voice I cannot describe, though I knew it, but the words came to my ears as if mingled with plashing water and the sound of a shallow brook flowing amidst stones. I heard, then, the words, 'I cannot stay,' and for a moment the heavens and the earth seemed to rush together with the sound of thunder, and I was thrust forth from the world into a black void without beginning and without end. For, as my brother passed me, I saw the hand that held him by the arm, and seemed to guide him, and in one moment of horror I realized that it was as a formless thing that has mouldered for many years in the grave. The flesh was peeled in strips from the bones, and hung apart dry and granulated, and the fingers that encircled my brother's arm were all unshapen, claw-like things, and one was but a stump from which the end had rotted off. When I recovered my senses I saw the two passing out by that gate. I paused for a moment, and then with a rush as of fire to my heart I knew that no horror could, stay me, but that I must follow my brother and save him, even though all hell rose up against me. I ran out and looked up the pavement, and saw the two figures walking amidst the crowd. I ran across the road, and saw them turn up that side street, and I reached the corner a moment later. In vain I looked to right and left, for neither my brother nor his strange guardian was in sight; two elderly men were coming down arm-in-arm, and a telegraph boy was walking lustily along whistling. I remained there a moment horror-struck, and then I bowed my head and returned to this seat, where you found me. Now, sir, do you wonder at my grief? Oh, tell me what has happened to my brother, or I feel I shall go mad."

Mr. Phillipps, who had listened with exemplary patience to this tale, hesitated a moment before he spoke.

"My dear madam," he said at length, "you have known how to engage me in your service, not only as a man, but as a student of science. As a fellow-creature I pity you most profoundly; you must have suffered extremely from what you saw, or rather from what you fancied you saw. For, as a scientific observer, it is my duty to tell you the plain truth, which, indeed, besides being true, must also console you. Allow me to ask you then to describe your brother."

"Certainly," said the lady, eagerly; "I can describe him accurately. My brother is a somewhat young-looking man; he is pale, has small black whiskers, and wears spectacles. He has rather a timid, almost a frightened expression, and looks about him nervously from side to side. Think, think! Surely you must have seen him. Perhaps you are an *habitué* of this engaging quarter; you may have met him on some previous Saturday. I may have been mistaken in supposing that he turned up that side street; he may have gone on, and you may have passed each other. Oh, tell me, sir, whether you have not seen him?"

"I am afraid I do not keep a very sharp lookout when I am walking," said Phillipps, who would have passed his mother unnoticed; "but I am sure your description is admirable. And now will you describe the person, who, you say, held your brother by the arm?"

"I cannot do so. I told you, his face seemed devoid of expression or salient feature. It was like a mask."

"Exactly; you cannot describe what you have never seen. I need hardly point out to you the conclusion to be drawn; you have been the victim of an hallucination. You expected to see your brother, you were alarmed because you did not see him, and unconsciously, no doubt, your brain went to work, and finally you saw a mere projection of your own morbid thoughts; a vision of your absent brother, and a mere confusion of terrors incorporated in a figure which you can't describe. Of course your brother has been in some way prevented from coming to meet you as usual. I expect you will hear from him in a day or two."

The lady looked seriously at Mr. Phillipps, and then for a second there seemed almost a twinkling as of mirth about her eyes, but her face clouded sadly at the dogmatic conclusions to which the scientist was led so irresistibly.

"Ah," she said, "you do not know. I cannot doubt the evidence of my waking senses. Besides, perhaps I have had experiences even more terrible. I acknowledge the force of your arguments, but a woman has intuitions which never deceive her. Believe me, I am not hysterical; feel my pulse, it is quite regular."

She stretched out her hand with a dainty gesture, and a glance that enraptured Phillipps in spite of himself. The hand held out to him was soft and white and warm, and as, in some confusion, he placed his fingers on the purple vein, he felt profoundly touched by the spectacle of love and grief before him.

"No," he said, as he released her wrist, "as you say, you are evidently quite yourself. Still, you must be aware that living men do not possess dead hands. That sort of thing doesn't happen. It is, of course, barely possible that you did see your brother with another gentleman, and that important business prevented him from stopping. As for the wonderful hand, there may have been some deformity, a finger shot off by accident, or something of that sort."

The lady shook her head mournfully.

"I see you are a determined rationalist," she said. "Did you not hear me say that I have had experiences even more terrible? I too was once a sceptic, but after what I have known I can no longer affect to doubt."

"Madam," replied Mr. Phillipps, "no one shall make me deny my faith. I will never believe, nor will I pretend to believe, that two and two make five, nor will I on any pretences admit the existence of two-sided triangles."

"You are a little hasty," rejoined the lady. "But may I ask you if you ever heard the name of Professor Gregg, the authority on ethnology and kindred subjects?"

"I have done much more than merely hear of Professor Gregg," said Phillipps. "I always regarded him as one of our most acute and clear-headed observers; and his last publication, the 'Text-book of Ethnology,' struck me as being quite admirable in its kind. Indeed, the book had but come into my hands when I heard of the terrible accident which cut short Gregg's career. He had, I think, taken a country house in the West of England for the summer, and is supposed to have fallen into a river. So far as I remember, his body was never recovered."

"Sir, I am sure that you are discreet. Your conversation seems to declare as much, and the very title of that little work of yours which you mentioned, assures me that you are no empty trifler. In a word, I feel that I may depend on you. You appear to be under the impression that Professor Gregg is dead; I have no reason to believe that that is the case."

"What?" cried Phillipps, astonished and perturbed. "You do not hint that there was anything disgraceful? I cannot believe it. Gregg was a man of clearest character; his private life was one of great benevolence; and though I myself am free from delusions, I believe him to have been a sincere and devout Christian. Surely you cannot mean to insinuate that some disreputable history forced him to flee the country?"

"Again you are in a hurry," replied the lady. "I said nothing of all this. Briefly, then, I must tell you that Professor Gregg left his house one morning in full health both of mind and body. He never returned, but his watch and chain, a purse containing three sovereigns in gold and some loose silver, with a ring that he wore habitually, were found three days later on a wild and savage hillside, many miles from the river. These articles were placed beside a limestone rock of fantastic form; they had been wrapped into a parcel with a kind of rough parchment which was secured with gut. The parcel was opened, and the inner side of the parchment bore an inscription done with some red substance; the characters were undecipherable, but seemed to be a corrupt cuneiform."

"You interest me intensely," said Phillips. "Would you mind continuing your story? The circumstance you have mentioned seems to me of the most inexplicable character, and I thirst for an elucidation.”

The young lady seemed to meditate for a moment, and she then proceeded to relate the

NOVEL OF THE BLACK SEAL.

I MUST NOW give you some fuller particulars of my history. I am the daughter of a civil engineer, Steven Lally by name, who was so unfortunate as to die suddenly at the outset of his career, and before he had accumulated sufficient means to support his wife and her two children. My mother contrived to keep the small household going on resources which must have been incredibly small; we lived in a remote country village, because most of the necessaries of life were cheaper than in a town, but even so we were brought up with the severest economy. My father was a clever and well-read man, and left behind him a small but select collection of books, containing the best Greek, Latin, and English classics, and these books were the only amusement we possessed. My brother, I remember, learned Latin out of Descartes' "Meditationes," and I, in place of the little tales which children are usually told to read, had nothing more charming than a translation of the "Gesta Romanorum." We grew up thus, quiet and studious children, and in course of time my brother provided for himself in the manner I have mentioned. I continued to live at home; my poor mother had become an invalid, and demanded my continual care, and about two years ago she died after many months of painful illness. My situation was a terrible one; the shabby furniture barely sufficed to pay the debts I had been forced to contract, and the books I despatched to my brother, knowing how he would value them. I was absolutely alone. I was aware how poorly my brother was paid; and though I came up to London in the hope of finding employment, with the understanding that he would defray my expenses, I swore it should only be for a month, and that if I could not in that time find some work, I would starve rather than deprive him of the few miserable pounds he had laid by for his day of trouble. I took a little room in a distant suburb, the cheapest that I could find. I lived on bread and tea, and I spent my time in vain answering of advertisements, and vainer walks to addresses I had noted. Day followed on day, and week on week, and still I was unsuccessful, till at last the term I had appointed drew to a close, and I saw before me the grim prospect of slowly dying of starvation. My landlady was good-natured in her way; she knew the slenderness of my means, and I am sure that she would not have turned me out of doors. It remained for me then to go away, and to try and die in some quiet place. It was winter then, and a thick white fog gathered in the early part of the afternoon, becoming more dense as the day wore on; it was a Sunday, I remember, and the people of the house were at chapel. At about three o'clock I crept out and walked away as quickly as I could, for I was weak from abstinence. The white mist wrapped all the streets in silence, and a hard frost had gathered thick upon the bare branches of the trees, and frost crystals glittered on the wooden fences, and on the cold cruel ground beneath my feet. I walked on, turning to right and left in utter haphazard, without caring to look up at the names of the streets, and all that I remember of my walk on that Sunday afternoon seems but the broken fragments of an evil dream. In a confused vision I stumbled on, through roads half town and half country; gray fields melting into the cloudy world of mist on one side of me, and on the other comfortable villas with a glow of firelight flickering on the walls; but all unreal, red brick walls, and lighted windows, vague trees, and glimmering country, gas-lamps beginning to star the white shadows, the vanishing perspectives of the railway line beneath high embankments, the green and red of the signal lamps, — all these were but momentary pictures flashed on my tired brain and senses numbed by hunger. Now and then I would hear a quick step ringing on the iron road, and men would pass me well wrapped up, walking fast for the sake of warmth, and no doubt eagerly foretasting the pleasures of a glowing hearth, with curtains tightly drawn about the frosted panes, and the welcomes of their friends; but as the early evening darkened and night approached, foot-passengers got fewer and fewer, and I passed through street after street alone. In the white silence I stumbled on, as desolate as if I trod the streets of a buried city; and as I grew more weak and exhausted, something of the horror of death was folding thickly round my heart. Suddenly, as I turned a corner, some one accosted me courteously beneath the lamp-post, and I heard a voice asking if I could kindly point the way to Avon Road. At the sudden shock of human accents I was prostrated and my strength gave way, and I fell all huddled on the side-walk and wept and sobbed and laughed in violent hysteria. I had gone out prepared to die, and as I stepped across the threshold that had sheltered me, I consciously bade adieu to all hopes and all remembrances; the door clanged behind me with the noise of thunder, and I felt that an iron curtain had fallen on the brief passages of my life, and that henceforth I was to walk a little way in a world, of gloom and shadow; I entered on the stage of the first act of death. Then came my wandering in the mist, the whiteness wrapping all things, the void streets, and muffled silence, till when that voice spoke to me, it was as if I had died and life returned to me. In a few minutes I was able to compose my feelings, and as I rose I saw that I was confronted by a middle-aged gentleman of specious appearance, neatly and correctly dressed. He looked at me with an expression of great pity, but before I could stammer out my ignorance of the neighborhood, for indeed I had not the slightest notion of where I had wandered, he spoke.

“My dear madam,” he said, “you seem in some terrible distress. You cannot think how you alarmed me. But may I inquire the nature of your trouble? I assure you that you can safely confide in me.”

“You are very kind,” I replied; “but, I fear there is nothing to be done. My condition seems a hopeless one.”

“Oh, nonsense, nonsense! You are too young to talk like that. Come, let us walk down here, and you must tell me your difficulty. Perhaps I may be able to help you.”

There was something very soothing and persuasive in his manner, and as we walked together, I gave him an outline of my story, and told of the despair that had oppressed me almost to death.

“You were wrong to give in so completely,” he said, when I was silent. “A month is too short a time in which to feel one’s way in London. London, let me tell you, Miss Lally, does not lie open and undefended; it is a fortified place, fossed and double-moated with curious intricacies. As must always happen in large towns, the conditions of life have become hugely artificial; no mere simple palisade is run up to oppose the man or woman who would take the place by storm, but serried lines of subtle contrivances, mines, and pitfalls which it needs a strange skill to overcome. You, in your simplicity, fancied you had only to shout for these walls to sink into nothingness, but the time is gone for such startling victories as these. Take courage; you will learn the secret of success before very long.”

“Alas, sir,” I replied, “I have no doubt your conclusions are correct, but at the present moment I seem to be in a fair way to die of starvation. You spoke of a secret; for heaven's sake, tell it me, if you have any pity for my distress."

He laughed genially. "There lies the strangeness of it all. Those who know the secret cannot tell it if they would; it is positively as ineffable as the central doctrine of Freemasonry. But I may say this, that you yourself have penetrated at least the outer husk of the mystery," and he laughed again.

"Pray do not jest with me," I said. "What have I done, *que sais-je*? I am so far ignorant that I have not the slightest idea of how my next meal is to be provided."

"Excuse me. You ask what you have done? You have met me. Come, we will fence no longer. I see you have self-education, the only education which is not infinitely pernicious, and I am in want of a governess for my two children. I have been a widower for some years; my name is Gregg. I offer you the post I have named, and shall we say a salary of a hundred a year?"

I could only stutter out my thanks, and slipping a card with his address and a bank-note by way of earnest into my hand, Mr. Gregg bade me good-bye, asking me to call in a day or two.

Such was my introduction to Professor Gregg, and can you wonder that the remembrance of despair and the cold blast that had blown from the gates of death upon me, made me regard him as a second father? Before the close of the week. I was installed in my new duties; the professor had leased an old brick manor house in a western suburb of London, and here, surrounded by pleasant lawns and orchards, and soothed with the murmur of the ancient elms that rocked their boughs above the roof, the new chapter of my life began. Knowing as you do the nature of the professor's occupations, you will not be surprised to hear that the house teemed with books; and cabinets full of strange and even hideous objects filled every available nook in the vast low rooms. Gregg was a man whose one thought was for knowledge, and I too before long caught something of his enthusiasm, and strove to enter into his passion for research. In a few months I was perhaps more his secretary than the governess of the two children, and many a night I have sat at the desk in the glow of the shaded lamp while he, pacing up and down in the rich, gloom of the firelight, dictated to me the substance of his "Text-book of Ethnology." But amidst these more sober and accurate studies I always detected a something hidden, a longing and desire for some object to which he did not allude, and now and then he would break short in what he was saying and lapse into revery, entranced, as it seemed to me, by some distant prospect of adventurous discovery. The text-book was at last finished, and we began to receive proofs from the printers, which were intrusted to me for a first reading, and then underwent the final revision of the professor. All the while his weariness of the actual business he was engaged on increased, and it was with the joyous laugh of a schoolboy when term is over that he one day handed me a copy of the book. “There,” he said, “I have kept my word; I promised to write it, and it is done with. Now I shall be free to live for stranger things; I confess it, Miss Lally, I covet the renown of Columbus. You will, I hope, see me play the part of an explorer.”

“Surely,” I said, “there is little left to explore. You have been born a few hundred years too late for that.”

“I think you are wrong,” he replied; “there are still, depend upon it, quaint undiscovered countries and continents of strange extent. Ah, Miss Lally, believe me, we stand amidst sacraments and mysteries full of awe, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be. Life, believe me, is no simple thing, no mass of gray matter and congeries of veins and muscles to be laid naked by the surgeon’s knife; man is the secret which I am about to explore, and before I can discover him I must cross over weltering seas indeed, and oceans and the mists of many thousand years. You know the myth of the lost Atlantis; what if it be true, and I am destined to be called the discoverer of that wonderful land?”

I could see excitement boiling beneath his words, and in his face was the heat of the hunter; before me stood a man who believed himself summoned to tourney with the unknown. A pang of joy possessed me when I reflected that I was to be in a way associated with him in the adventure, and I too burned with the lust of the chase, not pausing to consider that I knew not what we were to unshadow.

The next morning Professor Gregg took me into his inner study, where ranged against the wall stood a nest of pigeon-holes, every drawer neatly labelled, and the results of years of toil classified in a few feet of space.

“Here,” he said, “is my life; here are all the facts which I have gathered together with so much pains, and yet it is all nothing. No, nothing to what I am about to attempt. Look at this;” and he took me to an old bureau, a piece fantastic and faded, which stood in a corner of the room. He unlocked the front and opened one of the drawers.

“A few scraps of paper,” he went on, pointing to the drawer, “and a lump of black stone, rudely annotated with queer marks and scratches, — that is all that drawer holds. Here you see is an old envelope with the dark red stamp of twenty years ago, but I have pencilled a few lines at the back; here is a sheet of manuscript, and here some cuttings from obscure local journals. And if you ask me the subject matter of the collection, it will not seem extraordinary. A servant girl at a farmhouse, who disappeared from her place and has never been heard of, a child supposed to have slipped down some old working on the mountains, some queer scribbling on a limestone rock, a man murdered with a blow from a strange weapon; such is the scent I have to go upon. Yes, as you say, there is a ready explanation for all this; the girl may have run away to London, or Liverpool, or New York; the child may be at the bottom of the disused shaft; and the letters on the rock may be the idle whims of some vagrant. Yes, yes, I admit all that; but I know I hold the true key. Look!” and he held me out a slip of yellow paper.

“Characters found inscribed on a limestone rock on the Gray Hills,” I read, and then there was a word erased, presumably the name of a county, and a date some fifteen years back. Beneath was traced a number of uncouth characters, shaped somewhat like wedges or daggers, as strange and outlandish as the Hebrew alphabet.

“Now the seal,” said Professor Gregg, and he handed me the black stone, a thing about two inches long, and something like an old-fashioned tobacco stopper, much enlarged.

I held it up to the light, and saw to my surprise the characters on the paper repeated on the seal.

“Yes,” said the professor, “they are the same. And the marks on the limestone rock were made fifteen years ago, with some red substance. And the characters on the seal are four thousand years old at least. Perhaps much more.”

"Is it a hoax?" I said.

"No, I anticipated that. I was not to be led to give my life to a practical joke. I have tested the matter very carefully. Only one person besides myself knows of the mere existence of that black seal. Besides, there are other reasons which I cannot enter into now."

"But what does it all mean?" I said. "I cannot understand to what conclusion all this leads."

"My dear Miss Lally, that is a question I would rather leave unanswered for some little time. Perhaps I shall never be able to say what secrets are held here in solution; a few vague hints, the outlines of village tragedies, a few marks done with red earth upon a rock, and an ancient seal. A queer set of data to go upon? Half-a-dozen pieces of evidence, and twenty years before even so much could be got together; and who knows what mirage or terra incognita may be beyond all this? I look across deep waters, Miss Lally, and the land beyond may be but a haze after all. But still I believe it is not so, and a few months will show whether I am right or wrong."

He left me, and alone I endeavored to fathom the mystery, wondering to what goal such eccentric odds and ends of evidence could lead. I myself am not wholly devoid of imagination, and I had reason to respect the professor's solidity of intellect; yet I saw in the contents of the drawer but the materials of fantasy, and vainly tried to conceive what theory could be founded on the fragments that had been placed before me. Indeed, I could discover in what I had heard and seen but the first chapter of an extravagant romance; and yet deep in my heart I burned with curiosity, and day after day I looked eagerly in Professor Gregg's face for some hint of what was to happen.

It was one evening after dinner that the word came.

"I hope you can make your preparations without much trouble," he said suddenly to me. "We shall be leaving here in a week's time."

"Really!" I said in astonishment. "Where are we going?"

"I have taken a country house in the west of England, not far from Caermaen, a quiet little town, once a city, and the headquarters of a Roman legion. It is very dull there, but the country is pretty, and the air is wholesome."

I detected a glint in his eyes, and guessed that this sudden move had some relation to our conversation of a few days before.

“I shall just take a few books with me,” said Professor Gregg, “that is all. Everything else will remain here for our return. I have got a holiday,” he went on, smiling at me, “and I shan’t be sorry to be quit for a time of my old bones and stones and rubbish. Do you know,” he went on, “I have been grinding away at facts for thirty years; it is time for fancies.”

The days passed quickly; I could see that the professor was all quivering with suppressed excitement, and I could scarce credit the eager appetence of his glance as we left the old manor house behind us, and began our journey. We set out at mid-day, and it was in the dusk of the evening that we arrived at a little country station. I was tired, and excited, and the drive through, the lanes seems all a dream. First the deserted streets of a forgotten village, while I heard Professor Gregg’s voice talking of the Augustan Legion and the clash of arms, and all the tremendous pomp that followed the eagles; then the broad river swimming to full tide with the last afterglow glimmering duskily in the yellow water, the wide meadows, and the cornfields whitening, and the deep lane winding on the slope between the hills and the water. At last we began to ascend, and the air grew rarer; I looked down and saw the pure white mist tracking the outline of the river like a shroud, and a vague and shadowy country, imaginations and fantasy of swelling hills and hanging woods, and half-shaped outlines of hills beyond, stand in the distance the glare of the furnace fire on the mountain, growing by turns a pillar of shining flame, and fading to a dull point of red. We were slowly mounting a carriage drive, and then there came to me the cool breath and the scent of the great wood that was above us; I seemed to wander in its deepest depths, and there was the sound of trickling water, the scent of the green leaves, and the breath of the summer night. The carriage stopped at last, and I could scarcely distinguish the form of the house as I waited a moment at the pillared porch; and the rest of the evening seemed a dream of strange things bounded by the great silence of the wood and the valley and the river.

The next morning when I awoke and looked out of the bow window of the big old-fashioned bedroom, I saw under a gray sky a country that was still all mystery. The long, lovely valley, with the river winding in and out below, crossed, in mid vision by a mediæval bridge of vaulted and buttressed stone, the clear presence of the rising ground beyond, and the woods that I had only seen in shadow the night before, seemed tinged with enchantment, and the soft breath, of air that sighed in at the opened pane was like no other wind. I looked across the valley, and beyond, hill followed on hill as wave on wave, and here a faint blue pillar of smoke rose still in the morning air from the chimney of an ancient gray farmhouse, there was a rugged height crowned with dark firs, and in the distance I saw the white streak of a road that climbed and vanished into some unimagined country. But the boundary of all was a great wall of mountain, vast in the west, and ending like a fortress with a steep ascent and a domed tumulus clear against the sky.

I saw Professor Gregg walking up and down the terrace path below the windows, and it was evident that he was revelling in the sense of liberty, and the thought that he had, for a while, bidden good-bye to task-work. When I joined him there was exultation in his voice as he pointed out the sweep of valley and the river that wound beneath the lovely hills.

“Yes,” he said, “it is a strangely beautiful country; and to me, at least, it seems full of mystery. You have not forgotten the drawer I showed you, Miss Lally? No; and you have guessed that I have come here not merely for the sake of the children and the fresh air?”

“I think I have guessed as much as that,” I replied; “but you must remember I do not know the mere nature of your investigations; and as for the connection between the search and this wonderful valley, it is past my guessing.”

He smiled queerly at me. “You must not think I am making a mystery for the sake of mystery,” he said. “I do not speak out because, so far, there is nothing to be spoken, nothing definite I mean, nothing that can be set down in hard black and white, as dull and sure and irreproachable as any blue book. And then I have another reason: many years ago a chance paragraph in a newspaper caught my attention, and focussed in an instant the vagrant thoughts and half-formed fancies of many idle and speculative hours into a certain hypothesis. I saw at once that I was treading on a thin crust; my theory was wild and fantastic in the extreme, and I would not for any consideration have written a hint of it for publication. But I thought that in the company of scientific men like myself, men who knew the course of discovery, and were aware that the gas that blazes and flares in the gin-palace was once a wild hypothesis; I thought that with such men as these I might hazard my dream — let us say Atlantis, or the philosopher's stone, or what you like — without danger of ridicule. I found I was grossly mistaken; my friends looked blankly at me and at one another, and I could see something of pity, and something also of insolent contempt, in the glances they exchanged. One of them called on me next day, and hinted that I must be suffering from overwork and brain exhaustion. 'In plain terms,' I said, 'you think I am going mad. I think not;' and I showed him out with some little appearance of heat. Since that day I vowed that I would never whisper the nature of my theory to any living soul; to no one but yourself have I ever shown the contents of that drawer. After all, I may be following a rainbow; I may have been misled by the play of coincidence; but as I stand here in this mystic hush and silence amidst the woods and wild hills, I am more than ever sure that I am hot on the scent. Come, it is time we went in."

To me in all this there was something both of wonder and excitement; I knew how in his ordinary work Professor Gregg moved step by step, testing every inch of the way, and never venturing on assertion without proof that was impregnable. Yet I divined more from his glance and the vehemence of his tone than from the spoken word that he had in his every thought the vision of the almost incredible continually with him; and I, who was with some share of imagination no little of a sceptic, offended at a hint of the marvellous, could not help asking myself whether he was cherishing a monomania, and barring out from this one subject all the scientific method of his other life.

Yet, with, this image of mystery haunting my thoughts, I surrendered wholly to the charm of the country. Above the faded house on the hillside began the great forest; a long dark line seen from the opposing hills, stretching above the river for many a mile from north to south, and yielding in the north to even wilder country, barren and savage hills, and ragged common land, a territory all strange and unvisited, and more unknown to Englishmen than the very heart of Africa. The space of a couple of steep fields alone separated the house from the wood, and the children were delighted to follow me up the long alleys of undergrowth, between smooth pleached walls of shining beech, to the highest point in the wood, whence one looked on one side across the river and the rise and fall of the country to the great western mountain wall, and on the other, over the surge and dip of the myriad trees of the forest, over level meadows and the shining yellow sea to the faint coast beyond. I used to sit at this point on the warm sunlit turf which marked the track of the Roman Road, while the two children raced about hunting for the whinberries that grew here and there on the banks. Here beneath the deep blue sky and the great clouds rolling, like olden galleons with sails full-bellied, from the sea to the hills, as I listened to the whispered charm of the great and ancient wood, I lived solely for delight, and only remembered strange things when we would return to the house, and find Professor Gregg either shut up in the little room he had made his study, or else pacing the terrace with the look, patient and enthusiastic, of the determined seeker.

One morning, some eight or nine days after our arrival, I looked out of my window and saw the whole landscape transmuted before me. The clouds had dipped low and hidden the mountain in the west, and a southern wind was driving the rain in shifting pillars up the valley, and the little brooklet that burst the hill below the house now raged, a red torrent, down to the river. We were perforce obliged to keep snug within doors, and when I had attended to my pupils, I sat down in the morning-room where the ruins of a library still encumbered an old-fashioned bookcase. I had inspected the shelves once or twice, but their contents had failed to attract me; volumes of eighteenth century sermons, an old book on farriery, a collection of “Poems” by “persons of quality,” Prideaux’s “Connection,” and an odd volume of Pope were the boundaries of the library, and there seemed little doubt that everything of interest or value had been removed. Now, however, in desperation, I began to re-examine the musty sheepskin and calf bindings, and found, much to my delight, a fine old quarto printed by the Stephani, containing the three books of Pomponius Mela, “De Situ Orbis,” and other of the ancient geographers. I knew enough of Latin to steer my way through an ordinary sentence, and I soon became absorbed in the odd mixture of fact and fancy; light shining on a little of the space of the world, and beyond mist and shadow and awful forms. Glancing over the clear-printed pages, my attention was caught by the heading of a chapter in Solinus, and I read the words: —

MIRA DE INTIMIS GENTIBUS LIBYAE, DE LAPIDE HEXECONTALITHO.

“The wonders of the people that inhabit the inner parts of Libya, and of the stone called Sixtystone.”

The odd title attracted me and I read on: —

“Gens ista avia et secreta habitat, in montibus horrendis fœda mysteria celebrat. De hominibus nihil aliud illi præferunt quam figuram, ab humano ritu prorsus exulant, oderunt deum lucis. Stridunt potius quam loquuntur; vox absona nec sine horrore auditur. Lapide quodam gloriantur, quem Hexecontalithon vocant, dicunt enim hunc lapidem sexaginta notas ostendere. Cujus lapidis nomen secretum ineffabile colunt: quod Ixaxar.”

“This folk,” I translated to myself, “dwells in remote and secret places, and celebrates foul mysteries on savage hills. Nothing have they in common with men save the face, and the customs of humanity are wholly strange to them; and they hate the sun. They hiss rather than speak; their voices are harsh, and not to be heard without fear. They boast of a certain stone, which they call Sixtystone; for they say that it displays sixty characters. And this stone has a secret unspeakable name; which is Ixaxar.”

I laughed at the queer inconsequence of all this, and thought it fit for Sinbad the Sailor or other of the supplementary Nights. When I saw Professor Gregg in the course of the day, I told him of my find in the bookcase, and the fantastic rubbish I had been reading. To my surprise, he looked up at me with an expression of great interest.

“That is really very curious,” he said. “I have never thought it worth while to look into the old geographers, and I daresay I have missed a good deal. Ah, that is the passage, is it. It seems a shame to rob you of your entertainment, but I really think I must carry off the book.”

The next day the professor called to me to come to the study. I found him sitting at a table in the full light of the window, scrutinizing something very attentively with a magnifying-glass.

“Ah, Miss Lally,” he began, “I want to use your eyes. This glass is pretty good, but not like my old one that I left in town. Would you mind examining the thing yourself, and telling me how many characters are cut on it?”

He handed me the object in his hand, and I saw that it was the black seal he had shown me in London, and my heart began to beat with the thought that

I was presently to know something. I took the seal, and holding it up to the light checked off the grotesque dagger-shaped characters one by one.

“I make sixty-two,” I said at last.

“Sixty-two? Nonsense; it’s impossible. Ah, I see what you have done, you have counted that and that,” and he pointed to two marks which I had certainly taken as letters with the rest.

“Yes, yes,” Professor Gregg went on; “but those are obvious scratches, done accidentally; I saw that at once. Yes, then that’s quite right. Thank you very much, Miss Lally.”

I was going away, rather disappointed at my having been called in merely to count a number of marks on the black seal, when suddenly there flashed into my mind what I had read in the morning.

“But, Professor Gregg, I cried, breathless, the seal, the seal. Why, it is the stone Hexecontalithos that Solinus writes of; it is Ixaxar.”

“Yes,” he said, “I suppose it is. Or it maybe a mere coincidence. It never does to be too sure, you know, in these matters. Coincidence killed the professor.”

I went away puzzled by what I had heard, and as much as ever at a loss to find the ruling clew in this maze of strange evidence. For three days the bad weather lasted, changing from driving rain to a dense mist, fine and dripping, and we seemed to be shut up in a white cloud that veiled all the world away from us. All the while Professor Gregg was darkling in his room, unwilling, it appeared, to dispense confidences or talk of any kind, and I heard him walking to and fro with a quick, impatient step, as if he were in some way wearied of inaction. The fourth morning was fine, and at breakfast the professor said briskly: —

“We want some extra help about the house; a boy of fifteen or sixteen, you know. There are a lot of little odd jobs that take up the maids’ time, which a boy could do much better.”

“The girls have not complained to me in any way,” I replied. “Indeed, Anne said there was much less work than in London, owing to there being so little dust.”

"Ah, yes, they are very good girls. But I think we shall do much better with a boy. In fact, that is what has been bothering me for the last two days."

"Bothering you?" I said in astonishment, for as a matter of fact the professor never took the slightest interest in the affairs of the house.

"Yes," he said, "the weather, you know. I really couldn't go out in that Scotch mist; I don't know the country very well, and I should have lost my way. But I am going to get the boy this morning."

"But how do you know there is such a boy as you want anywhere about?"

"Oh, I have no doubt as to that. I may have to walk a mile or two at the most, but I am sure to find just the boy I require."

I thought the professor was poking, but though his tone was airy enough there was something grim and set about his features that puzzled me. He got his stick, and stood at the door looking meditatively before him, and as I passed through the hall he called to me.

"By the way, Miss Lally, there was one thing I wanted to say to you. I daresay you may have heard that some of these country lads are not over bright; idiotic would be a harsh word to use, and they are usually called 'naturals,' or something of the kind, I hope you won't mind if the boy I am after should turn out not too keen-witted; he will be perfectly harmless, of course, and blacking boots doesn't need much mental effort."

With that he was gone, striding up the road that led to the wood; and I remained stupefied, and then for the first time my astonishment was mingled with a sudden note of terror, arising I knew not whence, and all unexplained even to myself, and yet I felt about my heart for an instant something of the chill of death, and that shapeless, formless dread of the unknown that is worse than death itself. I tried to find courage in the sweet air that blew up from the sea, and in the sunlight after rain, but the mystic woods seemed to darken around me; and the vision of the river coiling between the reeds, and the silver gray of the ancient bridge, fashioned in my mind symbols of vague dread, as the mind of a child fashions terror from things harmless and familiar.

Two hours later Professor Gregg returned. I met him as he came down the road, and asked quietly if he had been able to find a boy.

“Oh, yes,” he answered; “I found one easily enough. His name is Jervase Cradock, and I expect he will make himself very useful. His father has been dead for many years, and the mother, whom I saw, seemed very glad at the prospect of a few shillings extra coming in on Saturday nights. As I expected, he is not too sharp, has fits at times, the mother said; but as he will not be trusted with the china, that doesn’t much matter, does it? And he is not in any way dangerous, you know, merely a little weak.”

“When is he coming?”

“To-morrow morning at eight o’clock. Anne will show him what he has to do, and how to do it. At first he will go home every night, but perhaps it may ultimately turn out more convenient for him to sleep here, and only go home for Sundays.”

I found nothing to say to all this. Professor Gregg spoke in a quiet tone of matter-of-fact, as indeed was warranted by the circumstance; and yet I could not quell my sensation of astonishment at the whole affair. I knew that in reality no assistance was wanted in the housework, and the professor’s prediction that the boy he was to engage might prove a little “simple,” followed by so exact a fulfilment, struck me as bizarre in the extreme. The next morning I heard from, the housemaid that the boy Cradock had come at eight, and that she had been trying to make him useful. “He doesn’t seem quite all there, I don’t think, miss,” was her comment; and later in the day I saw him helping the old man who worked in the garden. He was a youth of about fourteen, with black hair and black eyes, and an olive skin, and I saw at once from the curious vacancy of his expression that he was mentally weak. He touched his forehead awkwardly as I went by, and I heard him answering the gardener in a queer, harsh voice that caught my attention; it gave me the impression of some one speaking deep below under the earth, and there was a strange sibilance, like the hissing of the phonograph as the pointer travels over the cylinder. I heard that he seemed anxious to do what he could, and was quite docile and obedient, and Morgan the gardener, who knew his mother, assured me he was perfectly harmless. “He’s always been a bit queer,” he said, “and no wonder, after what his mother went through before he was born. I did know his father, Thomas Cradock, well, and a very fine workman he was too, indeed. He got something wrong with his lungs owing to working in the wet woods, and never got over it, and went off quite sudden like. And they do say as how Mrs. Cradock was quite off her head; anyhow, she was found by Mr. Hillyer, Ty Coch, all crouched up on the Gray Hills, over there, crying and weeping like a lost soul. And Jervase he was born about eight months afterwards, and as I was saying, he was a bit queer always; and they do say when he could scarcely walk he would frighten the other children into fits with the noises he would make."

A word in the story had stirred up some remembrance within me, and vaguely curious, I asked the old man where the Gray Hills were.

"Up there," he said, with the same gesture he had used before; "you go past the Fox and Hounds, and through the forest, by the old ruins. It's a good five mile from here, and a strange sort of a place. The poorest soil between this and Monmouth, they do say, though it's good feed for sheep. Yes, it was a sad thing for poor Mrs. Cradock."

The old man turned to his work, and I strolled on down the path between the espaliers, gnarled and gouty with age, thinking of the story I had heard, and groping for the point in it that had some key to my memory. In an instant it came before me; I had seen the phrase "Gray Hills" on the slip of yellowed paper that Professor Gregg had taken from the drawer in his cabinet. Again I was seized with pangs of mingled curiosity and fear; I remembered the strange characters copied from the limestone rock, and then again their identity with the inscription on the age-old seal, and the fantastic fables of the Latin geographer. I saw beyond doubt that, unless coincidence had set all the scene and disposed all these bizarre events with curious art, I was to be a spectator of things far removed from the usual and customary traffic and jostle of life. Professor Gregg I noted day by day. He was hot on his trail, growing lean with eagerness; and in the evenings, when the sun was swimming on the verge of the mountain, he would pace the terrace to and fro with his eyes on the ground, while the mist grew white in the valley, and the stillness of the evening brought far voices near, and the blue smoke rose a straight column from the diamond-shaped chimney of the gray farmhouse, just as I had seen it on the first morning. I have told you I was of sceptical habit; but though I understood little or nothing, I began to dread, vainly proposing to myself the iterated dogmas of science that all life is material, and that in the system of things there is no undiscovered land even beyond the remotest stars, where the supernatural can find a footing. Yet there struck in on this the thought that matter is as really awful and unknown as spirit, that science itself but dallies on the threshold, scarcely gaining more than a glimpse of the wonders of the inner place.

There is one day that stands up from amidst the others as a grim red beacon, betokening evil to come. I was sitting on a bench in the garden, watching the boy Cradock weeding, when I was suddenly alarmed by a harsh and choking sound, like the cry of a wild beast in anguish, and I was unspeakably shocked to see the unfortunate lad standing in full view before me, his whole body quivering and shaking at short intervals as though shocks of electricity were passing through him, and his teeth grinding, and foam gathering on his lips, and his face all swollen and blackened to a hideous mask of humanity. I shrieked with terror, and Professor Gregg came running; and as I pointed to Cradock, the boy with one convulsive shudder fell face forward, and lay on the wet earth, his body writhing like a wounded blind-worm, and an inconceivable babble of sounds bursting and rattling and hissing from his lips; he seemed to pour forth an infamous jargon, with words, or what seemed words, that might have belonged to a tongue dead since untold ages, and buried deep beneath Nilotic mud, or in the inmost recesses of the Mexican forest. For a moment the thought passed through my mind, as my ears were still revolted with that infernal clamor, “Surely this is the very speech of hell,” and then I cried out again and again, and ran away shuddering to my inmost soul. I had seen Professor Gregg’s face as he stooped over the wretched boy and raised him, and I was appalled by the glow of exultation that shone on every lineament and feature. As I sat in my room with drawn blinds, and my eyes hidden in my hands, I heard heavy steps beneath, and I was told afterwards that Professor Gregg had carried Cradock to his study, and had locked the door. I heard voices murmur indistinctly, and I trembled to think of what might be passing within a few feet of where I sat; I longed to escape to the woods and sunshine, and yet I dreaded the sights that might confront me on the way. And at last, as I held the handle of the door nervously, I heard Professor Gregg’s voice calling to me with a cheerful ring: “It’s all right now, Miss Lally,” he said. “The poor fellow has got over it, and I have been arranging for him to sleep here after to-morrow. Perhaps I may be able to do something for him.”

“Yes,” he said later, “it was a very painful sight, and I don’t wonder you were alarmed. We may hope that good food will build him up a little, but I am afraid he will never be really cured;" and he affected the dismal and conventional air with which one speaks of hopeless illness, and yet beneath it I detected the delight that leapt up rampant within him, and fought and struggled to find utterance. It was as if one glanced down on the even surface of the sea, clear and immobile, and saw beneath raging depths, and a storm of contending billows. It was indeed to me a torturing and offensive problem that this man, who had so bounteously rescued me from the sharpness of death, and showed himself in all the relations of life full of benevolence and pity and kindly forethought, should so manifestly be for once on the side of the demons, and take a ghastly pleasure in the torments of an afflicted fellow-creature. Apart, I struggled with the horned difficulty, and strove to find the solution, but without the hint of a clue; beset by mystery and contradiction, I saw nothing that might help me, and began to wonder whether, after all, I had not escaped from the white mist of the suburb at too dear a rate. I hinted something of my thought to the professor; I said enough to let him know that I was in the most acute perplexity, but the moment after regretted what I had done, when I saw his face contort with a spasm of pain.

"My dear Miss Lally," he said, "you surely do not wish to leave us? No, no, you would not do it. You do not know how I rely on you; how confidently I go forward, assured that you are here to watch over my children. You, Miss Lally, are my rear-guard; for, let me tell you, that the business in which I am engaged is not wholly devoid of peril. You have not forgotten what I said the first morning here; my lips are shut by an old and firm resolve, till they can open to utter no ingenious hypothesis or vague surmise but irrefragable fact, as certain as a demonstration in mathematics. Think over it, Miss Lally, not for a moment would I endeavor to keep you here against your own instincts, and yet I tell you frankly that I am persuaded that it is here, here amidst the woods, that your duty lies."

I was touched by the eloquence of his tone, and by the remembrance that the man, after all, had been my salvation, and I gave him my hand on a promise to serve him loyally and without question. A few days later the rector of our church, a little church, gray and severe and quaint, that hovered on the very banks of the river and watched the tides swim and return, came to see us, and Professor Gregg easily persuaded him to stay and share our dinner. Mr. Meyrick was a member of an antique family of squires, whose old manor house stood amongst the hills some seven miles away, and thus rooted in the soil, the rector was a living store of all the old fading customs and lore of the country. His manner, genial with a deal of retired oddity, won on Professor Gregg; and towards the cheese, when a curious Burgundy had begun its incantations, the two men glowed like the wine, and talked of philology with the enthusiasm of a burgess over the peerage. The parson was expounding the pronunciation of the Welsh *ll*, and producing sounds like the gurgle of his native brooks, when Professor Gregg struck in.

"By the way," he said, "that was a very odd word I met with the other day. You know my boy, poor Jervase Cradock. Well, he has got the bad habit of talking to himself, and the day before yesterday I was walking in the garden here and heard him; he was evidently quite unconscious of my presence. A lot of what he said I couldn't make out, but one word, struck me distinctly. It was such an odd sound; half-sibilant, half-guttural, and as quaint as those double *ll*'s you have been demonstrating. I do not know whether I can give you an idea of the sound. "Ishakshar" is perhaps as near as I can get; but the *k* ought to be a Greek *chi* or a Spanish *j*. Now what does it mean in Welsh?"

"In Welsh?" said the parson. "There is no such word in Welsh, nor any word remotely resembling it. I know the book-Welsh, as they call it, and the colloquial dialects as well as any man, but there's no word like that from Anglesea to Usk. Besides, none of the Cradocks speak a word of Welsh; it's dying out about here."

"Really. You interest me extremely, Mr. Meyrick. I confess the word didn't strike me as having the Welsh ring. But I thought it might be some local corruption."

"No, I never heard such a word, or anything like it. Indeed," he added, smiling whimsically, "if it belongs to any language, I should say it must be that of the fairies, — the Tylwydd Têg, as we call them."

The talk went on to the discovery of a Roman villa in the neighborhood; and soon after I left the room, and sat down apart to wonder at the drawing together of such strange clues of evidence. As the professor had spoken of the curious word, I had caught the glint of his eye upon me; and though the pronunciation he gave was grotesque in the extreme, I recognized the name of the stone of sixty characters mentioned by Solinus, the black seal shut up in some secret drawer of the study, stamped forever by a vanished race with signs that no man could read, signs that might, for all I knew, be the veils of awful things done long ago, and forgotten before the hills were moulded into form.

When, the next morning, I came down, I found Professor Gregg pacing the terrace in his eternal walk.

“Look at that bridge,” he said when he saw me, “observe the quaint and Gothic design, the angles between the arches, and the silvery gray of the stone in the awe of the morning light. I confess it seems to me symbolic; it should illustrate a mystical allegory of the passage from one world to another.”

“Professor Gregg,” I said quietly, “it is time that I knew something of what has happened, and of what is to happen.”

For the moment he put me off, but I returned again with the same question in the evening, and then Professor Gregg flamed with excitement. “Don’t you understand yet?” he cried. “But I have told you a good deal; yes, and shown you a good deal. You have heard pretty nearly all that I have heard, and seen what I have seen; or at least,” and his voice chilled as he spoke, “enough to make a good deal clear as noonday. The servants told you, I have no doubt, that the wretched boy Cradock had another seizure the night before last; he awoke me with cries in that voice you heard in the garden, and I went to him, and God forbid you should see what I saw that night. But all this is useless; my time here is drawing to a close; I must be back in town in three weeks, as I have a course of lectures to prepare, and need all my books about me. In a very few days it will be all over, and I shall no longer hint, and no longer be liable to ridicule as a madman and a quack. No, I shall speak plainly, and I shall be heard with such emotions as perhaps no other man has ever drawn from the breasts of his fellows.”

He paused, and seemed to grow radiant with the joy of great and wonderful discovery.

“But all that is for the future, the near future certainly, but still the future,” he went on at length. “There is something to be done yet; you will remember my telling you that my researches were not altogether devoid of peril? Yes, there is a certain amount of danger to be faced; I did not know how much when I spoke on the subject before, and to a certain extent I am still in the dark. But it will be a strange adventure, the last of all, the last demonstration in the chain.”

He was walking up and down the room as he spoke, and I could hear in his voice the contending tones of exultation and despondence, or perhaps I should say awe, the awe of a man who goes forth on unknown waters, and I thought of his allusion to Columbus on the night he had laid his book before me. The evening was a little chilly, and a fire of logs had been lighted in the study where we were, and the remittent flame and the glow on the walls reminded me of the old days. I was sitting silent in an armchair by the fire, wondering over all I had heard, and still vainly speculating as to the secret springs concealed from me under all the phantasmagoria I had witnessed, when I became suddenly aware of a sensation that change of some sort had been at work in the room, and that there was something unfamiliar in its aspect. For some time I looked about me, trying in vain to localize the alteration that I knew had been made; the table by the window, the chairs, the faded settee were all as I had known them. Suddenly, as a sought-for recollection flashes into the mind, I knew what was amiss. I was facing the professor’s desk, which stood on the other side of the fire, and above the desk was a grimy looking bust of Pitt, that I had never seen there before. And then I remembered the true position of this work of art; in the furthest corner by the door was an old cupboard, projecting into the room, and on the top of the cupboard, fifteen feet from the floor, the bust had been, and there no doubt it had delayed, accumulating dirt since the early years of the century.

I was utterly amazed, and sat silent still, in a confusion of thought. There was, so far as I knew, no such thing as a step-ladder in the house, for I had asked for one to make some alterations in the curtains of my room; and a tall man standing on a chair would have found it impossible to take down the bust. It had been placed not on the edge of the cupboard, but far back against the wall; and Professor Gregg was, if anything, under the average height.

“How on earth did you manage to get down Pitt?” I said at last.

The professor looked curiously at me, and seemed to hesitate a little.

"They must have found you a step-ladder, or perhaps the gardener brought in a short ladder from outside."

"No, I have had no ladder of any kind. Now, Miss Lally," he went on with an awkward simulation of jest, "there is a little puzzle for you; a problem in the manner of the inimitable Holmes; there are the facts, plain and patent; summon your acuteness to the solution of the puzzle. For Heaven's sake," he cried with a breaking voice, "say no more about it. I tell you, I never touched the thing," and he went out of the room with horror manifest on his face, and his hand shook and jarred the door behind him.

I looked round the room in vague surprise, not at all realizing what had happened, making vain and idle surmises by way of explanation, and wondering at the stirring of black waters by an idle word, and the trivial change of an ornament. "This is some petty business, some whim on which I have jarred," I reflected; "the professor is perhaps scrupulous and superstitious over trifles, and my question may have outraged unacknowledged fears, as though one killed a spider or spilled the salt before the very eyes of a practical Scotchwoman." I was immersed in these fond suspicions, and began to plume myself a little on my immunity from such empty fears, when the truth fell heavily as lead upon my heart, and I recognized with cold terror that some awful influence had been at work. The bust was simply inaccessible; without a ladder no one could have touched it.

I went out to the kitchen and spoke as quietly as I could to the housemaid.

"Who moved that bust from the top of the cupboard, Anne?" I said to her. "Professor Gregg says he has not touched it. Did you find an old step-ladder in one of the outhouses?"

The girl looked at me blankly.

"I never touched it," she said. "I found it where it is now the other morning when I dusted the room. I remember now, it, was Wednesday morning, because it was the morning after Cradock was taken bad in the night. My room is next to his, you know, miss," the girl went on piteously; "and it was awful to hear how he cried and called out names that I couldn't understand. It made me feel all afraid, and then master came, and I heard him speak, and he took down Cradock to the study and gave him something."

“And you found that bust moved the next morning?”

“Yes, miss, there was a queer sort of a smell in the study when I came down and opened the windows; a bad smell it was, and I wondered what it could be. Do you know, miss, I went a long time ago to the Zoo in London with my cousin Thomas Barker, one afternoon that I had off, when I was at Mrs. Prince’s in Stanhope Gate, and we went into the snake-house to see the snakes, and it was just the same sort of a smell, very sick it made me feel, I remember, and I got Barker to take me out. And it was just the same kind of a smell in the study, as I was saying, and I was wondering what it could be from, when I see that bust with Pitt cut in it standing on the master’s desk, and I thought to myself, now who has done that, and how have they done it? And when I came to dust the things, I looked at the bust, and I saw a great mark on it where the dust was gone, for I don’t think it can have been touched with a duster for years and years, and it wasn’t like finger-marks, but a large patch like, broad and spread out. So I passed my hand over it, without thinking what I was doing, and where that patch was it was all sticky and slimy, as if a snail had crawled over it. Very strange, isn’t it, miss? and I wonder who can have done it, and how that mess was made.”

The well-meant gabble of the servant touched me to the quick. I lay down upon my bed, and bit my lip that I should not cry out loud in the sharp anguish of my terror and bewilderment. Indeed, I was almost mad with dread; I believe that if it had been daylight I should have fled hot foot, forgetting all courage and all the debt of gratitude that was due to Professor Gregg, not caring whether my fate were that I must starve slowly so long as I might escape from the net of blind and panic fear that every day seemed to draw a little closer round me. If I knew, I thought, if I knew what there were to dread, I could guard against it; but here, in this lonely house, shut in on all sides by the olden woods and the vaulted hills, terror seems to spring inconsequent from every covert, and the flesh is aghast at the half-heard murmurs of horrible things. All in vain I strove to summon scepticism to my aid, and endeavored by cool common-sense to buttress my belief in a world of natural order, for the air that blew in at the open window was a mystic breath, and in the darkness I felt the silence go heavy and sorrowful as a mass of requiem, and I conjured images of strange shapes gathering fast amidst the reeds, beside the wash of the river.

In the morning, from the moment that I set foot in the breakfast-room I felt that the unknown plot was drawing to a crisis; the professor's face was firm and set, and he seemed hardly to hear our voices when we spoke.

"I am going out for rather a long walk," he said, when the meal was over. "You mustn't be expecting me, now, or thinking anything has happened if I don't turn up to dinner. I have been getting stupid lately, and I dare say a miniature walking tour will do me good. Perhaps I may even spend the night in some little inn, if I find any place that looks clean and comfortable."

I heard this, and knew by my experience of Professor Gregg's manner that it was no ordinary business or pleasure that impelled him. I knew not, nor even remotely guessed, where he was bound, nor had I the vaguest notion of his errand, but all the fear of the night before returned; and as he stood, smiling, on the terrace, ready to set out, I implored him to stay, and to forget all his dreams of the undiscovered continent.

"No, no, Miss Lally," he replied, still smiling, "it's too late now. *Vestigia nulla retrorsum*, you know, is the device of all true explorers, though I hope it won't be literally true in my ease. But, indeed, you are wrong to alarm yourself so; I look upon my little expedition as quite commonplace; no more exciting than a day with the geological hammers. There is a risk, of course, but so there is on the commonest excursion. I can afford to be jaunty; I am doing nothing so hazardous as 'Arry does a hundred times over in the course of every Bank Holiday. Well, then, you must look more cheerfully; and so good-by till to-morrow at latest."

He walked briskly up the road, and I saw him open the gate that marks the entrance of the wood, and then he vanished in the gloom of the trees.

All the day passed heavily with a strange darkness in the air, and again I felt as if imprisoned amidst the ancient woods, shut in an olden land of mystery and dread, and as if all was long ago and forgotten by the living outside. I hoped and dreaded, and when the dinner-hour came, I waited expecting to hear the professor's step in the hall, and his voice exulting at I knew not what triumph. I composed my face to welcome him gladly, but the night descended dark, and he did not come.

In the morning when the maid knocked at my door, I called out to her, and asked if her master had returned; and when she replied that his bedroom stood open and empty, I felt the cold clasp of despair. Still, I fancied he might have discovered genial company, and would return for luncheon, or perhaps in the afternoon, and I took the children for a walk in the forest, and tried my best to play and laugh with them, and to shut out the thoughts of mystery and veiled terror. Hour after hour I waited, and my thoughts grew darker; again the night came and found me watching, and at last, as I was making much ado to finish my dinner, I heard steps outside and the sound of a man's voice.

The maid came in and looked oddly at me.

"Please, miss," she began, "Mr. Morgan the gardener wants to speak to you for a minute, if you didn't mind."

"Show him in, please," I answered, and I set my lips tight.

The old man came slowly into the room, and the servant shut the door behind him.

"Sit down, Mr. Morgan," I said; "what is it that you want to say to me?"

"Well, miss, Mr. Gregg he gave me something for you yesterday morning, just before he went off; and he told me particular not to hand it up before eight o'clock this evening exactly, if so be as he wasn't back again home before, and if he should come home before I was just to return it to him in his own hands. So, you see, as Mr. Gregg isn't here yet, I suppose I'd better give you the parcel directly."

He pulled out something from his pocket, and gave it to me, half rising. I took it silently, and seeing that Morgan seemed doubtful as to what he was to do next, I thanked him and bade him good-night, and he went out. I was left alone in the room with the parcel in my hand, — a paper parcel neatly sealed and directed to me, with the instructions Morgan had quoted all written in the professor's large loose hand. I broke the seals with a choking at my heart, and found an envelope inside, addressed also, but open, and I took the letter out.

“MY DEAR MISS LALLY,” it began, “To quote the old logic manual, the case of your reading this note is a case of my having made a blunder of some sort, and, I am afraid, a blunder that turns these lines into a farewell. It is practically certain that neither you nor anyone else will ever see me again. I have made my will with provision for this eventuality, and I hope you will consent to accept the small remembrance addressed to you, and my sincere thanks for the way in which you joined your fortunes to mine. The fate which has come upon me is desperate and terrible beyond the remotest dreams of man; but this fate you have a right to know — if you please. If you look in the left-hand drawer of my dressing-table, you will find the key of the escritoire, properly labelled. In the well of the escritoire is a large envelope sealed and addressed to your name. I advise you to throw it forthwith into the fire; you will sleep better of nights if you do so. But if you must know the history of what has happened, it is all written down for you to read.”

The signature was firmly written below, and again I turned the page and read out the words one by one, aghast and white to the lips, my hands cold as ice, and sickness choking me. The dead silence of the room, and the thought of the dark woods and hills closing me in on every side, oppressed me, helpless and without capacity, and not knowing where to turn for counsel. At last I resolved that though knowledge should haunt my whole life and all the days to come, I must know the meaning of the strange terrors that had so long tormented me, rising gray, dim, and awful, like the shadows in the wood at dusk. I carefully carried out Professor Gregg’s directions, and not without reluctance broke the seal of the envelope, and spread out his manuscript before me. That manuscript I always carry with me, and I see that I cannot deny your unspoken request to read it. This, then, was what I read that night, sitting at the desk, with a shaded lamp beside me.

The young lady who called herself Miss Lally then proceeded to recite: —

The Statement of William Gregg, F.R.S., etc.

It is many years since the first glimmer of the theory which is now almost, if not quite, reduced to fact dawned first on my mind. A somewhat extensive course of miscellaneous and obsolete reading had done a good deal to prepare the way, and, later, when I became somewhat of a specialist and immersed myself in the studies known as ethnological, I was now and then startled by facts that would not square with orthodox scientific opinion, and by discoveries that seemed to hint at something still hidden for all our research. More particularly I became convinced that much of the folk-lore of the world is but an exaggerated account of events that really happened, and I was especially drawn to consider the stories of the fairies, the good folk of the Celtic races. Here I thought I could detect the fringe of embroidery and exaggeration, the fantastic guise, the little people dressed in green and gold sporting in the flowers, and I thought I saw a distinct analogy between the name given to this race (supposed to be imaginary) and the description of their appearance and manners. Just as our remote ancestors called the dreaded beings "fair" and "good" precisely because they dreaded them, so they had dressed them up in charming forms, knowing the truth to be the very reverse. Literature, too, had gone early to work, and had lent a powerful hand in the transformation, so that the playful elves of Shakespeare are already far removed from the true original, and the real horror is disguised in a form of prankish mischief. But in the older tales, the stories that used to make men cross themselves as they sat round the burning logs, we tread a different stage; I saw a widely opposed spirit in certain histories of children and of men and women who vanished strangely from the earth. They would be seen by a peasant in the fields walking towards some green and rounded hillock, and seen no more on earth; and there are stories of mothers who have left a child quietly sleeping with the cottage door rudely barred with a piece of wood, and have returned, not to find the plump and rosy little Saxon, but a thin and wizened creature, with sallow skin and black piercing eyes, the child of another race. Then, again, there were myths darker still; the dread of witch and wizard, the lurid evil of the Sabbath, and the hint of demons who mingled with the daughters of men. And just as we have turned the terrible "fair folk" into a company of benignant, if freakish, elves, so we have hidden from us the black foulness of the witch and her companions under a popular *diablerie* of old women and broomsticks and a comic cat with tail on end. So the Greeks called the hideous furies benevolent ladies, and thus the northern nations have followed their example. I pursued my investigations, stealing odd hours from other and more imperative labors, and I asked myself the question: Supposing these traditions to be true, who were the demons who are reported to have attended the Sabbaths? I need not say that I laid aside what I may call the supernatural hypothesis of the middle ages, and came to the conclusion that fairies and devils were of one and the same race and origin; invention, no doubt, and the Gothic fancy of old days had done much in the way of exaggeration and distortion; yet I firmly believed that beneath all this imagery there was a black background of truth. As for some of the alleged wonders, I hesitated. While I should be very loth to receive any one specific instance of modern spiritualism as containing even a grain of the genuine, yet I was not wholly prepared to deny that human flesh may now and then, once perhaps in ten million cases, be the veil of powers which seem magical to us; powers which, so far from proceeding from the heights and leading men thither, are in reality survivals from the depths of being. The amœba and the snail have powers which we do not possess; and I thought it possible that the theory of reversion might explain many things which seem wholly inexplicable. Thus stood my position; I saw good reason to believe that much of the tradition, a vast deal of the earliest and uncorrupted tradition of the so-called fairies, represented solid fact, and I thought that the purely supernatural element in these traditions, was to be accounted for on the hypothesis that a race which had fallen out of the grand march of evolution might have retained, as a survival, certain powers which would be to us wholly miraculous. Such was my theory as it stood conceived in my mind; and working with, this in view, I seemed to gather confirmation from every side, from the spoils of a tumulus or a barrow, from a local paper reporting an antiquarian meeting in the country, and from general literature of all kinds. Amongst other instances, I remember being struck by the phrase "articulate-speaking men" in Homer, as if the writer knew or had heard of men whose speech was so rude that it could hardly be termed articulate; and on my hypothesis of a race who had lagged far behind the rest, I could easily conceive that such a folk would speak a jargon but little removed from the inarticulate noises of brute-beasts.

Thus I stood, satisfied that my conjecture was at all events not far removed from fact, when a chance paragraph in a small country print one day arrested my attention. It was a short account of what was to all appearance the usual sordid tragedy of the village; a young girl unaccountably missing, and evil rumor blatant and busy with her reputation. Yet I could read between the lines that all this scandal was purely hypothetical, and in all probability invented to account for what was in any other manner unaccountable. A flight to London or Liverpool, or an undiscovered body lying with a weight about its neck in the foul depths of a woodland pool, of perhaps murder, — such were the theories of the wretched girl's neighbors. But as I idly scanned the paragraph, a flash of thought passed through me with the violence of an electric shock: What if the obscure and horrible race of the hills still survived, still remained haunting wild places, and barren hills, and now and then repeating the evil of Gothic legend, unchanged and unchangeable as the Turanian Shelta, or the Basques of Spain. I have said that the thought came with violence; and indeed I drew in my breath sharply, and clung with both hands to my elbow-chair, in a strange confusion of horror and elation. It was as if one of my *confrères* of physical science, roaming in a quiet English wood, had been suddenly stricken aghast by the presence of the slimy and loathsome terror of the ichthyosaurus, the original of the stories of the awful worms killed by valorous knights, or had seen the sun darkened by the pterodactyl, the dragon of tradition. Yet as a resolute explorer of knowledge, the thought of such a discovery threw me into a passion of joy, and I cut out the slip from the paper, and put it in a drawer in my old bureau, resolved that it should be but the first piece in a collection of the strangest significance. I sat long that evening dreaming of the conclusions I should establish, nor did cooler reflection at first dash my confidence. Yet as I began to put the case fairly, I saw that I might be building on an unstable foundation; the facts might possibly be in accordance with local opinion; and I regarded the affair with a mood of some reserve. Yet I resolved to remain perched on the look-out, and I hugged to myself the thought that I alone was watching and wakeful, while the great crowd of thinkers and searchers stood heedless and indifferent, perhaps letting the most prerogative facts pass by unnoticed.

Several years elapsed before I was enabled to add to the contents of the drawer; and the second find was in reality not a valuable one, for it was a mere repetition of the first, with only the variation of another and distant locality. Yet I gained something; for in the second case, as in the first, the tragedy took place in a desolate and lonely country, and so far my theory seemed justified. But the third piece was to me far more decisive. Again, amongst outland hills, far even from a main road of traffic, an old man was found done to death, and the instrument of execution was left beside him. Here, indeed, there was rumor and conjecture, for the deadly tool was a primitive stone axe, bound by gut to the wooden handle, and surmises the most extravagant and improbable were indulged in. Yet, as I thought with a kind of glee, the wildest conjectures went far astray; and I took the pains to enter into correspondence with the local doctor, who was called at the inquest. He, a man of some acuteness, was dumfoundered. “It will not do to speak of these things in country places, he wrote to me; but, frankly, Professor Gregg, there is some hideous mystery here. I have obtained possession of the stone axe, and have been so curious as to test its powers. I took it into the back-garden of my house one Sunday afternoon when my family and the servants were all out, and there, sheltered by the poplar hedges, I made my experiments. I found the thing utterly unmanageable. Whether there is some peculiar balance, some nice adjustment of weights, which require incessant practice, or whether an effectual blow can be struck only by a certain trick of the muscles, I do not know; but I assure you that I went into the house with but a sorry opinion of my athletic capacities. It was like an inexperienced man trying ‘putting the hammer;’ the force exerted seemed to return on oneself, and I found myself hurled backwards with violence, while the axe fell harmless to the ground. On another occasion I tried the experiment with a clever woodman of the place; but this man, who had handled his axe for forty years, could do nothing with the stone implement, and missed every stroke most ludicrously. In short, if it were not so supremely absurd, I should say that for four thousand years no one on earth could have struck an effective blow with the tool that undoubtedly was used to murder the old man.” This, as may be imagined, was to me rare news; and afterwards, when I heard the whole story, and learned that the unfortunate old man had babbled tales of what might be seen at night on a certain wild hillside, hinting at unheard-of wonders, and that he had been found cold one morning on the very hill in question, my exultation was extreme, for I felt I was leaving conjecture far behind me. But the next step was of still greater importance. I had possessed for many years an extraordinary stone seal, — a piece of dull black stone, two inches long from the handle to the stamp, and the stamping end a rough hexagon an inch and a quarter in diameter. Altogether, it presented the appearance of an enlarged tobacco-stopper of an old-fashioned make. It had been sent to me by an agent in the East, who informed me that it had been found near the site of the ancient Babylon. But the characters engraved on the seal were to me an intolerable puzzle. Somewhat of the cuneiform pattern, there were yet striking differences, which I detected at the first glance, and all efforts to read the inscription on the hypothesis that the rules for deciphering the arrow-headed writing would apply proved futile. A riddle such as this stung my pride, and at odd moments I would take the Black Seal out of the cabinet, and scrutinize it with so much idle perseverance that every letter was familiar to my mind, and I could have drawn the inscription from memory without the slightest error. Judge then of my surprise, when I one day received from a correspondent in the west of England a letter and an enclosure that positively left me thunderstruck. I saw carefully traced on a large piece of paper the very characters of the Black Seal, without alteration of any kind, and above the inscription my friend had written: *Inscription found on a limestone rock on the Grey Hills, Monmouthshire. Done in some red earth and quite recent*. I turned to the letter. My friend wrote: “I send you the enclosed inscription with all due reserve. A shepherd who passed by the stone a week ago swears that there was then no mark of any kind. The characters, as I have noted, are formed by drawing some red earth over the stone, and are of an average height of one inch. They look to me like a kind of cuneiform character, a good deal altered, but this of course is impossible. It may be either a hoax or more probably some scribble of the gypsies, who are plentiful enough in this wild country. They have, as you are aware, many hieroglyphics which they use in communicating with one another. I happened to visit the stone in question two days ago in connection with a rather painful incident which has occurred here.”

As may be supposed, I wrote immediately to my friend, thanking him for the copy of the inscription, and asking him in a casual manner, the history of the incident he mentioned. To be brief, I heard that a woman named Cradock, who had lost her husband a day before, had set out to communicate the sad news to a cousin who lived some five miles away. She took a short cut which led by the Gray Hills. Mrs. Cradock, who was then quite a young woman, never arrived at her relative’s house. Late that night a farmer who had lost a couple of sheep, supposed to have wandered from the flock, was walking over the Gray Hills, with a lantern and his dog. His attention was attracted by a noise, which he described as a kind of wailing, mournful and pitiable to hear; and, guided by the sound, he found the unfortunate Mrs. Cradock crouched on the ground by the limestone rock, swaying her body to and fro, and lamenting and crying in so heart-rending a manner that the farmer was, as he says, at first obliged to stop his ears, or he would have run away. The woman allowed herself to be taken home, and a neighbor came to see to her necessities. All the night she never ceased her crying, mixing her lament with words of some unintelligible jargon, and when the doctor arrived he pronounced her insane. She lay on her bed for a week, now wailing, as people said, like one lost and damned for eternity, and now sunk in a heavy coma; it was thought that grief at the loss of her husband had unsettled her mind, and the medical man did not at one time expect her to live. I need not say that I was deeply interested in this story, and I made my friend write to me at intervals with all the particulars of the case. I heard then that in the course of six weeks the woman gradually recovered the use of her faculties and some months later she gave birth to a son, christened Jervase, who unhappily proved to be of weak intellect. Such were the facts known to the village; but to me while I whitened at the suggested thought of the hideous enormities that had doubtless been committed, all this was nothing short of conviction, and I incautiously hazarded a hint of something like the truth to some scientific friends. The moment the words had left my lips I bitterly regretted having spoken, and thus given away the great secret of my life, but with a good deal of relief mixed with indignation, I found my fears altogether misplaced, for my friends ridiculed me to my face, and I was regarded as a madman; and beneath a natural anger I chuckled to myself, feeling as secure amidst these blockheads, as if I had confided what I knew to the desert sands.

But now, knowing so much, I resolved I would know all, and I concentrated my efforts on the task of deciphering the inscription on the Black Seal. For many years I made this puzzle the sole object of my leisure moments; for the greater portion of my time was, of course, devoted to other duties, and it was only now and then that I could snatch a week of clear research. If I were to tell the full history of this curious investigation, this statement would be wearisome in the extreme, for it would contain simply the account of long and tedious failure. By what I knew already of ancient scripts I was well-equipped for the chase, as I always termed it to myself. I had correspondents amongst all the scientific men in Europe, and, indeed, in the world, and I could not believe that in these days any character, however ancient and however perplexed, could long resist the search-light I should bring to bear upon it. Yet, in point of fact, it was fully fourteen years before

I succeeded. With every year my professional duties increased, and my leisure became smaller. This no doubt retarded me a good deal; and yet, when I look back on those years I am astonished at the vast scope of my investigation of the Black Seal. I made my bureau a centre, and from all the world and from all the ages I gathered transcripts of ancient writing. Nothing, I resolved, should pass me unawares, and the faintest hint should be welcomed and followed up. But as one covert after another was tried and proved empty of result, I began in the course of years to despair, and to wonder whether the Black Seal were the sole relic of some race that had vanished from the world and left no other trace of its existence, — had perished, in fine, as Atlantis is said to have done, in some great cataclysm, its secrets perhaps drowned beneath the ocean or moulded into the heart of the hills. The thought chilled my warmth a little, and though I still persevered, it was no longer with the same certainty of faith. A chance came to the rescue. I was staying in a considerable town in the north of England, and took the opportunity of going over the very creditable museum that had for some time been established in the place. The curator was one of my correspondents; and, as we were looking through one of the mineral cases, my attention was struck by a specimen, a piece of black stone some four inches square, the appearance of which reminded me in a measure of the Black Seal. I took it up carelessly, and was turning it over in my hand, when I saw, to my astonishment, that the under side was inscribed. I said, quietly enough, to my friend the curator that the specimen interested me, and that I should be much obliged if he would allow me to take it with me to my hotel for a couple of days. He, of course, made no objection, and I hurried to my rooms, and found that my first glance had not deceived me. There were two inscriptions; one in the regular cuneiform character, another in the character of the Black Seal, and I realized that my task was accomplished. I made an exact copy of the two inscriptions; and when I got to my London study, and had the Seal before me, I was able seriously to grapple with the great problem. The interpreting inscription on the museum specimen, though in itself curious enough, did not bear on my quest, but the transliteration made me master of the secret of the Black Seal. Conjecture, of course, had to enter into my calculations; there was here and there uncertainty about a particular ideograph, and one sign recurring again and again on the Seal baffled me for many successive nights. But at last the secret stood open before me in plain English, and I read the key of the awful transmutation of the hills. The last word was hardly written, when with fingers all trembling and unsteady I tore the scrap of paper into the minutest fragments, and saw them flame and blacken in the red hollow of the fire, and then I crushed the gray films that remained into finest powder. Never since then have I written those words; never will I write the phrases which tell me how man can be reduced to the slime from which he came, and be forced to put on the flesh of the reptile and the snake. There was now but one thing remaining. I knew; but I desired to see, and I was after some time able to take a house in the neighborhood of the Gray Hills, and not far from the cottage where Mrs. Cradock and her son Jervase resided. I need not go into a full and detailed account of the apparently inexplicable events which have occurred here, where I am writing this. I knew that I should find in Jervase Cradock something of the blood of the "Little People," and I found later that he had more than once encountered his kinsmen in lonely places in that lonely land. When I was summoned one day to the garden, and found him in a seizure speaking or hissing the ghastly jargon of the Black Seal, I am afraid that exultation prevailed over pity. I heard bursting from his lips the secrets of the underworld, and the word of dread, "Ishakshar," the signification of which I must be excused from giving.

But there is one incident I cannot pass over unnoticed. In the waste hollow of the night I awoke at the sound of those hissing syllables I knew so well; and on going to the wretched boy's room, I found him convulsed and foaming at the mouth, struggling on the bed as if he strove to escape the grasp of writhing demons. I took him down to my room and lit the lamp, while he lay twisting on the floor, calling on the power within his flesh to leave him. I saw his body swell and become distended as a bladder, while the face blackened before my eyes; and then at the crisis I did what was necessary according to the directions on the Seal, and putting all scruple on one side, I became a man of science, observant of what was passing. Yet the sight I had to witness was horrible, almost beyond the power of human conception and the most fearful fantasy; something pushed out from the body there on the floor, and stretched forth, a slimy wavering tentacle, across the room, and grasped the bust upon the cupboard, and laid it down on my desk.

When it was over, and I was left to walk up and down all the rest of the night, white and shuddering, with sweat pouring from my flesh, I vainly tried to reason with myself; I said, truly enough, that I had seen nothing really supernatural, that a snail pushing out his horns and drawing them in was but an instance on a smaller scale of what I had witnessed; and yet horror broke through all such reasonings and left me shattered and loathing myself for the share I had taken in the night's work.

There is little more to be said. I am going now to the final trial and encounter; for I have determined that there shall be nothing wanting, and I shall meet the "Little People" face to face. I shall have the Black Seal and the knowledge of its secrets to help me, and if I unhappily do not return from my journey, there is no need to conjure up here a picture of the awfulness of my fate.

Pausing a little at the end of Professor Gregg's statement, Miss Lally continued her tale in the following words: —

Such was the almost incredible story that the professor had left behind him. When I had finished reading it, it was late at night, but the next morning I took Morgan with me, and we proceeded to search the Gray Hills for some trace of the lost professor. I will not weary you with a description of the savage desolation of that tract of country, a tract of utterest loneliness, of bare green hills dotted over with gray limestone boulders, worn by the ravage of time into fantastic semblances of men and beasts. Finally, after many hours of weary searching, we found what I told you — the watch and chain, the purse, and the ring — wrapped in a piece of coarse parchment. When Morgan cut the gut that bound the parcel together, and I saw the professor's property, I burst into tears, but the sight of the dreaded characters of the Black Seal repeated on the parchment froze me to silent horror, and I think I understood for the first time the awful fate that had come upon my late employer.

I have only to add that Professor Gregg's lawyer treated my account of what had happened as a fairy tale, and refused even to glance at the documents I laid before him. It was he who was responsible for the statement that appeared in the public press, to the effect that Professor Gregg had been drowned, and that his body must have been swept into the open sea.

Miss Lally stopped speaking and looked at Mr. Phillipps, with a glance of some enquiry. He, for his part, was sunken in a deep revery of thought; and when he looked up and saw the bustle of the evening gathering in the square, men and women hurrying to partake of dinner, and crowds already besetting the music-halls, all the hum and press of actual life seemed unreal and visionary, a dream in the morning after an awakening.

“I thank you,” he said at last, “for your most interesting story, interesting to me, because I feel fully convinced of its exact truth.”

“Sir,” said the lady, with some energy of indignation, “you grieve and offend me. Do you think I should waste my time and yours by concocting fictions on a bench in Leicester Square?”

“Pardon me, Miss Lally, you have a little misunderstood me. Before you began I knew that whatever you told would be told in good faith, but your experiences have a far higher value than that of *bona fides*. The most extraordinary circumstances in your account are in perfect harmony with the very latest scientific theories. Professor Lodge would, I am sure, value a communication from you extremely; I was charmed from the first by his daring hypothesis in explanation of the wonders of Spiritualism (so called), but your narrative puts the whole matter out of the range of mere hypothesis.”

“Alas, sir, all this will not help me. You forget, I have lost my brother under the most startling and dreadful circumstances. Again, I ask you, did you not see him as you came here? His black whiskers, his spectacles, his timid glance to right and left; think, do not these particulars recall his face to your memory?”

“I am sorry to say I have never seen any one of the kind,” said Phillipps, who had forgotten all about the missing brother. “But let me ask you a few questions. Did you notice whether Professor Gregg— “

“Pardon me, sir, I have stayed too long. My employers will be expecting me. I thank you for your sympathy. Good bye.”

Before Mr. Phillipps had recovered from his amazement at this abrupt departure, Miss Lally had disappeared from his gaze, passing into the crowd that now thronged the approaches to the Empire. He walked home in a pensive frame of mind, and drank too much tea. At ten o’clock he had made his third brew, and had sketched out the outlines of a little work to be called *Protoplasmic Reversion*.

INCIDENT OF THE PRIVATE BAR.

MR. DYSON OFTEN meditated at odd moments over the singular tale he had listened to at the Café de la Touraine. In the first place he cherished a profound conviction that the words of truth were scattered with a too niggardly and sparing hand over the agreeable history of Mr. Smith and the Black Gulf Cañon; and, secondly, there was the undeniable fact of the profound agitation of the narrator, and his gestures on the pavement, too violent to be simulated. The idea of a man going about London haunted by the fear of meeting a young man with spectacles struck Dyson as supremely ridiculous; he searched his memory for some precedent in romance, but without success; he paid visits at odd times to the little café, hoping to find Mr. Wilkins there; and he kept a sharp watch on the great generation of the spectacled men without much doubt that he would remember the face of the individual whom he had seen dart out of the Aerated Bread Shop. All his peregrinations and researches, however, seemed to lead to nothing of value, and Dyson needed all his warm conviction of his innate detective powers and his strong scent for mystery to sustain him in his endeavors. In fact, he had two affairs on hand; and every day, as he passed through streets crowded or deserted, and lurked in the obscure districts, and watched at corners, he was more than surprised to find that the affair of the gold coin persistently avoided him; while the ingenious Wilkins, and the young man with spectacles whom he dreaded, seemed to have vanished from the pavements.

He was pondering these problems one evening in a house of call in the Strand, and the obstinacy with which the persons he so ardently desired to meet hung back gave the modest tankard before him an additional touch of bitter. As it happened, he was alone in his compartment, and, without thinking, he uttered aloud the burden of his meditations. “How bizarre it all is!” he said, “a man walking the pavement with the dread of a timid-looking young man with spectacles continually hovering before his eyes. And there was some tremendous feeling at work, I could swear to that.” Quick as thought, before he had finished the sentence, a head popped round the barrier, and was withdrawn again; and while Dyson was wondering what this could mean, the door of the compartment was swung open, and a smooth, clean-shaven, and smiling gentleman entered.

“You will excuse me, sir,” he said politely, “for intruding on your thoughts, but you made a remark a minute ago.”

“I did,” said Dyson; “I have been puzzling over a foolish matter, and I thought aloud. As you heard what I said, and seem interested, perhaps you may be able to relieve my perplexity?”

“Indeed. I scarcely know; it is an odd coincidence. One has to be cautions. I suppose, sir, that you would have no repulsion in assisting the ends of justice.”

“Justice,” replied Dyson, “is a term of such wide meaning, that I too feel doubtful about giving an answer. But this place is not altogether fit for such a discussion; perhaps you would come to my rooms?”

“You are very kind; my name is Burton, but I am sorry to say I have not a card with me. Do you live near here?”

“Within ten minutes’ walk.”

Mr. Burton took out his watch and seemed to be making a rapid calculation.

“I have a train to catch,” he said; “but after all, it is a late one. So, if you don’t mind, I think I will come with you. I am sure we should have a little talk together. We turn up here?”

The theatres were filling as they crossed the Strand, the street seemed alive with voices, and Dyson looked fondly about him. The glittering lines of gas-lamps, with here and there the blinding radiance of an electric light, the hansoms that flashed to and fro with ringing bells, the laden buses, and the eager hurrying east and west of the foot passengers, made his most enchanting picture; and the graceful spire of St. Mary le Strand, on the one hand, and the last flush of sunset on the other, were to him a cause of thanksgiving, as the gorse blossom to Linnæus. Mr. Burton caught his look of fondness as they crossed the street.

“I see you can find the picturesque in London,” he said. “To me this great town is as I see it is to you, the study and the love of life. Yet how few there are that can pierce the veils of apparent monotony and meanness! I have read in a paper which is said to have the largest circulation in the world, a comparison between the aspects of London and Paris, a comparison which should be positively laureat, as the great masterpiece of fatuous stupidity. Conceive if you can a human being of ordinary intelligence preferring the Boulevards to our London streets; imagine a man calling for the wholesale destruction of our most charming city, in order that the dull uniformity of that whited sepulchre called Paris should be reproduced here in London. Is it not positively incredible?"

"My dear sir," said Dyson, regarding Burton with a good deal of interest. "I agree most heartily with your opinions, but I really cannot share your wonder. Have you heard how much George Eliot received for 'Romola'? Do you know what the circulation of 'Robert Elsmere' was? Do you read 'Tit Bits' regularly? To me, on the contrary, it is constant matter both for wonder and thanksgiving that London was not boulevardized twenty years ago. I praise that exquisite jagged sky line that stands up against the pale greens and fading blues and flushing clouds of sunset, but I wonder even more than I praise. As for St. Mary le Strand, its preservation is a miracle, nothing more or less. A thing of exquisite beauty *versus* four buses abreast! Really, the conclusion is too obvious. Didn't you read the letter of the man who proposed that the whole mysterious system, the immemorial plan of computing Easter, should, be abolished off-hand because he doesn't like his son having his holidays as early as March 20th? But shall we be going on?"

They had lingered at the corner of a street on the north side of the Strand, enjoying the contrasts and the glamour of the scene. Dyson pointed the way with a gesture, and they strolled up the comparatively deserted streets, slanting a little to the right, and thus arriving at Dyson's lodging on the verge of Bloomsbury. Mr. Burton took a comfortable armchair by the open window, while Dyson lit the candles and produced the whiskey and soda and cigarettes.

"They tell me these cigarettes are very good," he said, "but I know nothing about it myself. I hold at last that there is only one tobacco, and that is shag. I suppose I could not tempt you to try a pipeful?"

Mr. Burton smilingly refused the offer, and picked out a cigarette from the box. When he had smoked it half through, he said with some hesitation: —

“It is really kind of you to have me here, Mr. Dyson; the fact is that the interests at issue are far too serious to be discussed in a bar, where, as you found for yourself, there may be listeners, voluntary or involuntary, on each side. I think the remark I heard you make was something about the oddity of an individual going about London in deadly fear of a young man with spectacles.”

“Yes, that was it.”

“Well, would you mind confiding to me the circumstances that gave rise to the reflection?”

“Not in the least; it was like this.” And he ran over in brief outline the adventure in Oxford Street, dwelling on the violence of Mr. Wilkins’s gestures, but wholly suppressing the tale told in the café. “He told me he lived in constant terror of meeting this man; and I left him when I thought he was cool enough to look after himself,” said Dyson, ending his narrative.

“Really,” said Mr. Burton. “And you actually saw this mysterious person.”

“Yes.”

“And could you describe him?”

“Well, he looked to me a youngish man, pale and nervous. He had small black side whiskers, and wore rather large spectacles.”

“But this is simply marvellous! You astonish me. For I must tell you that my interest in the matter is this. I am not in the least in terror of meeting a dark young man with spectacles, but I shrewdly suspect a person of that description would much rather not meet me. And yet the account you give of the man tallies exactly. A nervous glance to right and left — is it not so? And, as you observed, he wears prominent spectacles, and has small black whiskers. There cannot be surely two people exactly identical — one a cause of terror, and the other, I should imagine, extremely anxious to get out of the way. But have you seen this man since?”

“No, I have not; and I have been looking out for him pretty keenly. But, of course, he may have left London, and England too for the matter of that.”

Hardly, I think. Well, Mr. Dyson, it is only fair that I should explain my story, now that I have listened, to yours. I must tell you, then, that I am an agent for curiosities and precious things of all kinds. An odd employment, isn’t it? Of course I wasn’t brought up to the business; I gradually fell into it. I have always been fond of things queer and rare, and by the time I was twenty I had made half a dozen collections. It is not generally known how often farm laborers come upon rarities; you would be astonished if I told you what I have seen turned up by the plough. I lived in the country in those days, and I used to buy anything the men on the farms brought me; and I had the queerest set of rubbish, as my friends called my collection. But that’s how I got the scent of the business, which means everything; and, later on, it struck me that I might very well turn my knowledge to account and add to my income. Since those early days I have been in most quarters of the world, and some very valuable things have passed through my hands, and I have had to engage in difficult and delicate negotiations. You have possibly heard of the Khan opal — called in the East ‘The Stone of a Thousand and One Colors’? Well, perhaps the conquest of that stone was my greatest achievement. I call it myself the stone of the thousand and one lies, for I assure you that I had to invent a cycle of folk-lore before the Rajah who owned it would consent to sell the thing. I subsidized wandering story-tellers, who told tales in which the opal played a frightful part; I hired a holy man, a great ascetic, to prophesy against the thing in the language of Eastern symbolism; in short, I frightened the Rajah out of his wits. So you see there is room for diplomacy in the traffic I am engaged in. I have to be ever on my guard, and I have often been sensible that unless I watched every step and weighed every word my life would not last me much longer. Last April I became aware of the existence of a highly valuable antique gem. It was in Southern Italy, and in the possession of persons who were ignorant of its real value. It has always been my experience that it is precisely the ignorant who are most difficult to deal with. I have met farmers who were under the impression that a shilling of George I. was a find of almost incalculable value; and all the defeats I have sustained have been at the hands of people of this description. Reflecting on these facts, I saw that the acquisition of the gem I have mentioned would be an affair demanding the nicest diplomacy; I might possibly have got it by offering a sum approaching its real value, but I need not point out to you that such a proceeding would be most unbusinesslike. Indeed, I doubt whether it would have been successful, for the cupidity of such persons is aroused by a sum which seems enormous, and the low cunning which serves them in place of intelligence immediately suggests that the object for which such an amount is offered must be worth at least double. Of course, when it is a matter of an ordinary curiosity — an old jug, a carved chest, or a queer brass lantern — one does not much care; the cupidity of the owner defeats its object, the collector laughs, and goes away, for he is aware that such things are by no means unique. But this gem I fervently desired to possess; and as I did not see my way to giving more than a hundredth part of its value, I was conscious that all my, let us say, imaginative and diplomatic powers would have to be exerted. I am sorry to say that I came to the conclusion that I could not undertake to carry the matter through single-handed, and I determined to confide in my assistant, a young man named William Robbins, whom I judged to be by no means devoid of capacity. My idea was that Robbins should get himself up as a low-class dealer in precious stones; he could patter a little Italian, and would go to the town in question and manage to see the gem we were after, possibly by offering some trifling articles of jewelry for sale, but that I left to be decided, then my work was to begin, but I will not trouble you with a tale told twice over. In due course, then, Robbins went off to Italy with an assortment of uncut stones and a few rings, and some jewelry I bought in Birmingham, on purpose for his expedition. A week later I followed him, travelling leisurely, so that I was a fortnight later in arriving at our common destination. There was a decent hotel in the town, and on my inquiring of the landlord whether there were many strangers in the place, he told me very few; he had heard there was an Englishman staying in a small tavern, a pedlar he said, who sold beautiful trinkets very cheaply, and wanted to buy old rubbish. For five or six days I took life leisurely, and I must say I enjoyed myself. It was part of my plan to make the people think I was an enormously rich man; and I knew that such items as the extravagance of my meals, and the price of every bottle of wine I drank, would not be suffered, as Sancho Panza puts it, to rot in the landlord's breast. At the end of the week I was fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of Signor Melini, the owner of the gem I coveted, at the café, and with his ready hospitality and my geniality I was soon established as a friend of the house. On my third or fourth visit I managed to make the Italians talk about the English pedlar, who, they said, spoke a most detestable Italian. 'But that does not matter,' said the Signora Melini, 'for he has beautiful things, which he sells very very cheap.' 'I hope you may not find he has cheated you,' I said, 'for I must tell you that English people give these fellows a very wide berth. They usually make a great parade of the cheapness of their goods, which often turn out to be double the price of better articles in the shops,’ They would not hear of this, and Signora Melini insisted on showing me the three rings and the bracelet she had bought of the pedlar. She told me the price she had paid; and after scrutinizing the articles carefully, I had to confess that she had made a bargain, and indeed Robbins had sold her the things at about fifty per cent below market value. I admired the trinkets as I gave them back to the lady, and I hinted that the pedlar must be a somewhat foolish specimen of his class. Two days later, as I was taking my vermouth at the café with Signor Melini, he led the conversation back to the pedlar, and mentioned casually that he had shown the man a little curiosity, for which he had made rather a handsome offer. ‘My dear sir,’ I said, ‘I hope you will be careful. I told you that the travelling tradesman does not bear a very high reputation in England; and notwithstanding his apparent simplicity, this fellow may turn out to be an arrant cheat. May I ask you what is the nature of the curiosity you have shown him?’ He told me it was a little thing, a pretty little stone with some figures cut on it: people said it was old. ‘I should like to examine it,’ I replied; ‘as it happens I have, seen a good deal of these gems. We have a fine collection of them in our museum at London.’ In due course I was shown the article, and I held the gem I so coveted between my fingers. I looked at it coolly, and put it down carelessly on the table. ‘Would you mind telling me, signor,’ I said, ‘how much my fellow-countryman offered you for this?’ ‘Well,’ he said, ‘my wife says the man must be mad; he said he would give me twenty lire for it.’

“I looked at him quietly, and took up the gem and pretended to examine it in the light more carefully; I turned it over and over, and finally pulled out a magnifying glass from my pocket, and seemed to search every line in the cutting with minutest scrutiny. ‘My dear sir,’ I said at last, ‘I am inclined to agree with Signora Melini. If this gem were genuine, it would be worth some money; but as it happens to be a rather bad forgery, it is not worth twenty centesimi. It was sophisticated, I should imagine, some time in the last century, and by a very unskilful hand.’ ‘Then we had better get rid of it,’ said Melini. ‘I never thought it was worth anything myself. Of course I am sorry for the pedlar, but one must let a man know his own trade. I shall tell him we will take the twenty lire.’ ‘Excuse me,’ I said, ‘the man wants a lesson. It would be a charity to give him one. Tell him that you will not take anything under eighty lire, and I shall be much surprised if he does not close with you at once.

“A day or two later I heard that the English pedlar had gone away, after debasing the minds of the country people with Birmingham art jewelry; for I admit that the gold sleeve links like kidney beans, the silver chains made apparently after the pattern of a dog-chain, and the initial brooches, have always been heavy on my conscience. I cannot acquit myself of having indirectly contributed to debauch the taste of a simple folk; but I hope that the end I had in view may finally outbalance this heavy charge. Soon afterwards, I paid a farewell visit at the Melinis, and the signor informed me with an oily chuckle that the plan I had suggested had been completely successful. I congratulated him on his bargain, and went away after expressing a wish that heaven might send many such pedlars in his path.

“Nothing of interest occurred on my return journey. I had arranged that Robbins was to meet me at a certain place on a certain day, and I went to the appointment full of the coolest confidence; the gem had been conquered, and I had only to reap the fruits of victory. I am sorry to shake that trust in our common human nature which I am sure you possess, but I am compelled to tell you that up to the present date I have never set eyes on my man Robbins, or on the antique gem in his custody. I have found out that he actually arrived in London, for he was seen three days before my arrival in England by a pawnbroker of my acquaintance consuming his favorite beverage, four ale, in the tavern where we met to-night. Since then he has not been heard of. I hope you will now pardon my curiosity as to the history and adventures of dark young men with spectacles. You will, I am sure, feel for me in my position; the savor of life has disappeared for me; it is a bitter thought that I have rescued one of the most perfect and exquisite specimens of antique art from the hands of ignorant, and indeed unscrupulous persons, only to deliver it into the keeping of a man who is evidently utterly devoid of the very elements of commercial morality.”

“My dear sir,” said Dyson, “you will allow me to compliment you on your style; your adventures have interested me exceedingly. But, forgive me, you just now used the word morality; would not some persons take exception to your own methods of business? I can conceive, myself, flaws of a moral kind being found in the very original conception you have described to me.

I can imagine the Puritan shrinking in dismay from your scheme, pronouncing it unscrupulous, nay, dishonest.”

Mr. Burton helped himself, very frankly, to some more whiskey.

“Your scruples entertain me,” he said. “Perhaps you have not gone very deeply into these questions of ethics. I have been compelled to do so myself, just as I was forced to master a simple system of book-keeping. Without book-keeping, and still more without a system of ethics, it is impossible to conduct a business such as mine. But I assure you that I am often profoundly saddened as I pass through the crowded streets and watch the world at work by the thought of how few amongst all these hurrying individuals, black hatted, well dressed, educated we may presume sufficiently, — how few amongst them have any reasoned system of morality. Even you have not weighed the question; although you study life and affairs, and to a certain extent penetrate the veils and masks of the comedy of man, even you judge by empty conventions, and the false money which is allowed to pass current as sterling coin. Allow me to play the part of Socrates; I shall teach you nothing that you do not know. I shall merely lay aside the wrappings of prejudice and bad logic, and show you the real image which you possess in your soul. Come then. Do you allow that happiness is anything?”

“Certainly,” said Dyson.

“And happiness is desirable or undesirable?”

“Desirable of course.”

“And what shall we call the man who gives happiness? Is he not a philanthropist?”

“I think so.”

“And such a person is praiseworthy, and the more praiseworthy in the proportion of the persons whom he makes happy?”

“By all means.”

“So that he who makes a whole nation happy, is praiseworthy in the extreme, and the action by which he gives happiness is the highest virtue?”

"It appears so, O Burton," said Dyson, who found something very exquisite in the character of his visitor.

"Quite so; you find the several conclusions inevitable. Well, apply them to the story I have told, you. I conferred happiness on myself by obtaining (as I thought) possession of the gem; I conferred happiness on the Melinis by getting them eighty lire instead of an object for which they had not the slightest value, and I intended to confer happiness on the whole British nation by selling the thing to the British Museum, to say nothing of the happiness a profit of about nine thousand per cent would have conferred on me. I assure you I regard Robbins as an interferer with the cosmos and fair order of things. But that is nothing; you perceive that I am an apostle of the very highest morality; you have been forced to yield to argument."

"There certainly seems a great deal in what you advance," said Dyson. "I admit that I am a mere amateur of ethics, while you, as you say, have brought the most acute scrutiny to bear on these perplexed and doubtful questions. I can well understand your anxiety to meet the fallacious Robbins, and I congratulate myself on the chance which has made us acquainted. But you will pardon my seeming inhospitality, I see it is half past eleven, and I think you mentioned a train."

"A thousand thanks, Mr. Dyson, I have just time, I see. I will look you up some evening if I may. Good-night."

THE DECORATIVE IMAGINATION.

IN THE COURSE of a few weeks Dyson became accustomed, to the constant incursions of the ingenious Mr. Burton, who showed himself ready to drop in at all hours, not averse to refreshment, and a profound guide in the complicated questions of life. His visits at once terrified and delighted Dyson, who could no longer seat himself at his bureau secure from interruption while he embarked on literary undertakings, each one of which was to be a masterpiece. On the other hand, it was a vivid pleasure to be confronted with views so highly original; and if here and there Mr. Burton's reasonings seemed tinged with fallacy, yet Dyson freely yielded to the joy of strangeness, and never failed to give his visitor a frank and hearty welcome. Mr. Burton's first inquiry was always after the unprincipled Robbins, and he seemed to feel the stings of disappointment when Dyson told him that he had failed to meet this outrage on all morality, as Burton styled him, vowing that sooner or later he would take vengeance on such a shameless betrayal of trust.

One evening they had sat together for some time discussing the possibility of laying down for this present generation and our modern and intensely complicated order of society, some rules of social diplomacy, such as Lord Bacon gave to the courtiers of King James I. "It is a book to make," said Mr. Burton, "but who is there capable of making it? I tell you people are longing for such a book; it would bring fortune to its publisher. Bacon's Essays are exquisite, but they have now no practical application; the modern strategist can find but little use in a treatise 'De Re Militari,' written by a Florentine in the fifteenth century. Scarcely more dissimilar are the social conditions of Bacon's time and our own; the rules that he lays down so exquisitely for the courtier and diplomatist of James the First's age will avail us little in the rough-and-tumble struggle of to-day. Life, I am afraid, has deteriorated; it gives little play for fine strokes such as formerly advanced men in the state. Except in such businesses as mine, where a chance does occur now and then, it has all become, as I said, an affair of rough and tumble; men still desire to attain, it is true, but what is their *moyen de parvenir*? A mere imitation, and not a gracious one, of the arts of the soap-vender and the proprietor of baking powder. When I think of these things, my dear Dyson, I confess that I am tempted to despair of my century.”

“You are too pessimistic, my dear fellow; you set up too high a standard. Certainly, I agree with you that the times are decadent in many ways. I admit a general appearance of squalor; it needs much philosophy to extract the wonderful and the beautiful from the Cromwell Road or the Nonconformist conscience. Australian wines of fine Burgundy character, the novels alike of the old women and the new women, popular journalism, — these things indeed make for depression. Yet we have our advantages. Before us is unfolded the greatest spectacle the world has ever seen, — the mystery of the innumerable unending streets, the strange adventures that must infallibly arise from so complicated a press of interests. Nay, I will say that he who has stood in the ways of a suburb and has seen them stretch before him all shining, void, and desolate at noonday, has not lived in vain. Such a sight is in reality more wonderful than any perspective of Bagdad or Grand Cairo. And, to set on one side the entertaining history of the gem which you told me, surely you must have had many singular adventures in your own career?”

“Perhaps not so many as you would think; a good deal — the larger part — of my business has been as commonplace as linen-drapery. But of course things happen now and then. It is ten years since I have established my agency, and I suppose that a house and estate agent who had been in trade for an equal time could tell you some queer stories. But I must give you a sample of my experiences some night.

“Why not to-night?” said Dyson. “This evening seems to me admirably adapted for an odd chapter. Look out into the street; you can catch a view of it, if you crane your neck from that chair of yours. Is it not charming? The double row of lamps growing closer in the distance, the hazy outline of the plane-tree in the square, and the lights of the hansoms swimming to and fro, gliding and vanishing; and above, the sky all clear and blue and shining. Come, let us have one of your *cent nouvelles nouvelles*.”

“My dear Dyson, I am delighted to amuse you.” With these words Mr. Burton prefaced the

NOVEL OF THE IRON MAID.

I THINK THE most extraordinary event which I can recall took place about five years ago. I was then still feeling my way; I had declared for business, and attended regularly at my office, but I had not succeeded in establishing a really profitable connection, and consequently I had a good deal of leisure time on my hands. I have never thought fit to trouble you with the details of my private life; they would be entirely devoid of interest. I must briefly say, however, that I had a numerous circle of acquaintance, and was never at a loss as to how to spend my evenings. I was so fortunate as to have friends in most of the ranks of the social order; there is nothing so unfortunate, to my mind, as a specialized circle, wherein a certain round of ideas is continually traversed and retraversed. I have always tried to find out new types and persons whose brains contained something fresh to me; one may chance to gain information even from the conversation of city men on an omnibus. Amongst my acquaintance I knew a young doctor who lived in a far outlying suburb, and I used often to brave the intolerably slow railway journey, to have the pleasure of listening to his talk. One night we conversed so eagerly together over our pipes and whiskey that the clock passed unnoticed, and when I glanced up I realized with a shock that I had just five minutes in which to catch the last tram. I made a dash for my hat and stick, and jumped out of the house and down the steps, and tore at full speed up the street. It was no good, however; there was a shriek of the engine whistle, and I stood there at the station door and saw far on the long dark line of the embankment a red light shine and vanish, and a porter came down and shut the door with a bang.

“How far to London?” I asked him.

“A good nine miles to Waterloo Bridge;” and with that he went off.

Before me was the long suburban street, its dreary distance marked by rows of twinkling lamps, and the air was poisoned by the faint sickly smell of burning bricks; it was not a cheerful prospect by any means, and I had to walk through nine miles of such streets, deserted as those of Pompeii. I knew pretty well what direction to take; so I set out wearily, looking at the stretch of lamps vanishing in perspective; and as I walked, street after street branched off to right and left, — some far reaching to distances that seemed endless, communicating with, other systems of thoroughfare; and some mere protoplasmic streets, beginning in orderly fashion with serried two-storied houses, and ending suddenly in waste, and pits, and rubbish heaps, and fields whence the magic had departed. I have spoken of systems of thoroughfare, and I assure you that, walking alone through these silent places, I felt phantasy growing on me, and some glamour of the infinite. There was here. I felt, an immensity as in the outer void, of the universe. I passed from unknown to unknown, my way marked by lamps like stars, and on either band was an unknown world where myriads of men dwelt and slept, street leading into street, as it seemed to world's end. At first the road by which I was travelling was lined with houses of unutterable monotony, — a wall of gray brick pierced by two stories of windows, drawn close to the very pavement. But by degrees I noticed an improvement: there were gardens, and these grew larger. The suburban builder began to allow himself a wider scope; and for a certain distance each flight of steps was guarded by twin lions of plaster, and scents of flowers prevailed over the fume of heated bricks. The road began to climb a hill, and, looking up a side street, I saw the half moon rise over plane-trees, and there on the other side was as if a white cloud had fallen, and the air around it was sweetened as with incense; it was a may-tree in full bloom. I pressed on stubbornly, listening for the wheels and the clatter of some belated hansom; but into that land of men who go to the city in the morning and return in the evening, the hansom rarely enters, and I had resigned myself once more to the walk, when I suddenly became aware that some one was advancing to meet me along the sidewalk. The man was strolling rather aimlessly; and though the time and the place would have allowed an unconventional style of dress, he was vested in the ordinary frock coat, black tie, and silk hat of civilization. We met each other under the lamp, and, as often happens in this great town, two casual passengers brought face to face found, each in the other an acquaintance.

"Mr. Mathias, I think?" I said.

"Quite so. And you are Frank Burton. You know you are a man with a Christian name, so I won't apologize for my familiarity. But may I ask where you are going?”

I explained the situation to him, saying I had traversed a region as unknown to me as the darkest recesses of Africa. “I think I have only about five miles farther,” I concluded.

“Nonsense; you must come home with me. My house is close by; in fact, I was just taking my evening walk when we met. Come along; I dare say you will find a makeshift bed easier than a five-mile walk.”

I let him take my arm and lead me along, though I was a good deal surprised at so much geniality from a man who was, after all, a mere casual club acquaintance. I suppose I had not spoken to Mr. Mathias half-a-dozen times; he was a man who would sit silent in an armchair for hours, neither reading nor smoking, but now and again moistening his lips with his tongue and smiling queerly to himself. I confess he had never attracted me, and on the whole I should have preferred to continue my walk. But he took my arm and led me up a side street, and stopped at a door in a high wall. We passed through the still moonlit garden, beneath the black shadow of an old cedar, and into an old red brick house with many gables. I was tired enough, and I sighed with relief as I let myself fall into a great leather armchair. You know the infernal grit with which they strew the sidewalk in those suburban districts; it makes walking a penance, and I felt my four-mile tramp had made me more weary than ten miles on an honest country road. I looked about the room with some curiosity. There was a shaded lamp which threw a circle of brilliant light on a heap of papers lying on an old brass-bound secretaire of the last century; but the room was all vague and shadowy, and I could only see that it was long and low, and that it was filled with indistinct objects which might be furniture. Mr. Mathias sat down in a second armchair, and looked about him with that odd smile of his. He was a queer-looking man, clean-shaven, and white to the lips. I should think his age was something between fifty and sixty.

“Now I have got you here,” he began, “I must inflict my hobby on you. You knew I was a collector? Oh, yes, I have devoted many years to collecting curiosities, which I think are really curious. But we must have a better light.”

He advanced into the middle of the room, and lit a lamp which hung from the ceiling; and as the bright light flashed round the wick, from every corner and space there seemed to start a horror. Great wooden frames with complicated apparatus of ropes and pulleys stood against the wall; a wheel of strange shape had a place beside a thing that looked like a gigantic gridiron. Little tables glittered with bright steel instruments carelessly put down as if ready for use; a screw and vice loomed out, casting ugly shadows; and in another nook was a saw with cruel jagged teeth.

“Yes,” said Mr. Mathias; “they are, as you suggest, instruments of torture, — of torture and death. Some — many, I may say — have been used; a few are reproductions after ancient examples. Those knives were used for flaying; that frame is a rack, and a very fine specimen. Look at this; it comes from Venice. You see that sort of collar, something like a big horse-shoe? Well, the patient, let us call him, sat down quite comfortably, and the horse-shoe was neatly fitted round his neck. Then the two ends were joined with a silken band, and the executioner began to turn a handle connected with the band. The horse-shoe contracted very gradually as the band tightened, and the turning continued till the man was strangled. It all took place quietly, in one of those queer garrets under the leads. But these things are all European; the Orientals are, of course, much more ingenious. These are the Chinese contrivances. You have heard of the ‘heavy death’? It is my hobby, this sort of thing. Do you know, I often sit here, hour after hour, and meditate over the collection. I fancy I see the faces of the men who have suffered — faces lean with agony and wet with sweats of death — growing distinct out of the gloom, and I hear the echoes of their cries for mercy. But I must show you my latest acquisition. Come into the next room.”

I followed Mr. Mathias out. The weariness of the walk, the late hour, and the strangeness of it all, made me feel like a man in a dream; nothing would have surprised me very much. The second room was as the first, crowded with ghastly instruments; but beneath the lamp was a wooden platform, and a figure stood on it. It was a large statue of a naked woman, fashioned in green bronze; the arms were stretched out, and there was a smile on the lips; it might well have been intended for a Venus, and yet there was about the thing an evil and a deadly look.

Mr. Mathias looked at it complacently. “Quite a work of art, isn’t it?” he said. “It’s made of bronze, as you see, but it has long had the name of the Iron Maid. I got it from Germany, and it was only unpacked this afternoon; indeed, I have not yet had time to open the letter of advice. You see that very small knob between the breasts? Well, the victim was bound to the Maid, the knob was pressed, and the arms slowly tightened round the neck. You can imagine the result.”

As Mr. Mathias talked, he patted the figure affectionately. I had turned away, for I sickened at the sight of the man and his loathsome treasure. There was a slight click, of which I took no notice, — it was not much louder than the tick of a clock; and then I heard a sudden whir, the noise of machinery in motion, and I faced round. I have never forgotten the hideous agony on Mathias’s face as those relentless arms tightened about his neck; there was a wild struggle as of a beast in the toils, and then a shriek that ended in a choking groan. The whirring noise had suddenly changed into a heavy droning. I tore with all my might at the bronze arms, and strove to wrench them apart, but I could do nothing. The head had slowly bent down, and the green lips were on the lips of Mathias.

Of course I had to attend at the inquest. The letter which had accompanied the figure was found unopened on the study table. The German firm of dealers cautioned their client to be most careful in touching the Iron Maid, as the machinery had been put in thorough working order.

For many revolving weeks Mr. Burton delighted Dyson by his agreeable conversation, diversified by anecdote, and interspersed with the narration of singular adventures. Finally, however, he vanished as suddenly as he had appeared, and on the occasion of his last visit he contrived to loot a copy of his namesake’s Anatomy. Dyson, considering this violent attack on the rights of property, and certain glaring inconsistencies in the talk of his late friend, arrived at the conclusion that his stories were fabulous, and that the Iron Maid only existed in the sphere of a decorative imagination.

THE RECLUSE OF BAYSWATER.

AMONGST THE MANY friends who were favored with the occasional pleasure of Mr. Dyson's society was Mr. Edgar Russell, realist and obscure struggler, who occupied a small back room on the second floor of a house in Abingdon Grove, Notting Hill. Turning off from the main street and walking a few paces onward, one was conscious of a certain calm, a drowsy peace, which made the feet inclined to loiter; and this was ever the atmosphere of Abingdon Grove. The houses stood a little back, with gardens where the lilac and laburnum and blood-red may blossomed gayly in their seasons, and there was a corner where an older house in another street had managed to keep a back garden of real extent; a walled-in garden whence there came a pleasant scent of greenness after the rains of early summer, where old elms held memories of the open fields, where there was yet sweet grass to walk on. The houses in Abingdon Grove belonged chiefly to the nondescript stucco period of thirty-five years ago, tolerably built with passable accommodation for moderate incomes; they had largely passed into the state of lodgings, and cards bearing the inscription "Furnished Apartments" were not infrequent over the doors. Here, then, in a house of sufficiently good appearance, Mr. Russell had established himself; for he looked upon the traditional dirt and squalor of Grub Street as a false and obsolete convention, and preferred, as he said, to live within sight of green leaves. Indeed, from his room one had a magnificent view of a long line of gardens, and a screen of poplars shut out the melancholy back premises of Wilton Street during the summer months. Mr. Russell lived chiefly on bread and tea, for his means were of the smallest; but when Dyson came to see him, he would send out the slavey for six-ale, and Dyson was always at liberty to smoke as much of his own tobacco as he pleased. The landlady had been so unfortunate as to have her drawing-room floor vacant for many months; a card had long proclaimed the void within; and Dyson, when he walked up the steps one evening in early autumn, had a sense that something was missing, and, looking at the fanlight, saw the appealing card had disappeared.

“You have let your first floor, have you?” he said, as he greeted Mr. Russell.

“Yes; it was taken about a fortnight ago by a lady.”

“Indeed,” said Dyson, always curious; “a young lady?”

“Yes, I believe so. She is a widow, and wears a thick crape veil. I have met her once or twice on the stairs and in the street, but I should not know her face.”

“Well,” said Dyson, when the beer had arrived, and the pipes were in full blast, “and what have you been doing? Do you find the work getting any easier?”

“Alas!” said the young man, with an expression of great gloom, “the life is a purgatory, and all but a hell. I write, picking out my words, weighing and balancing the force of every syllable, calculating the minutest effects that language can produce, erasing and rewriting, and spending a whole evening over a page of manuscript. And then in the morning when I read what I have written — Well, there is nothing to be done but to throw it in the waste-paper basket if the verso has been already written on, or to put it in the drawer if the other side happens to be clean. When I have written a phrase which undoubtedly embodies a happy turn of thought, I find it dressed up in feeble commonplace; and when the style is good, it serves only to conceal the baldness of superannuated fancies. I sweat over my work, Dyson, — every finished line means so much agony. I envy the lot of the carpenter in the side street who has a craft which he understands. When he gets an order for a table, he does not writhe with anguish; but if I were so unlucky as to get an order for a book, I think I should go mad.”

“My dear fellow, you take it all too seriously. You should let the ink flow more readily. Above all, firmly believe, when you sit down to write, that you are an artist, and that whatever you are about is a masterpiece. Suppose ideas fail you, say; as I heard one of our most exquisite artists say, “It’s of no consequence; the ideas are all there, at the bottom of that box of cigarettes.” You, indeed, smoke tobacco, but the application is the same. Besides, you must have some happy moments, and these should be ample consolation.”

“Perhaps you are right. But such moments are so few; and then there is the torture of a glorious conception matched, with execution beneath the standard of the Family Story Paper. For instance, I was happy for two hours a night or two ago; I lay awake and saw visions. But then the morning!"

"What was your idea?"

"It seemed to me a splendid one; I thought of Balzac and the 'Comédie Humaine,' of Zola and the Rougon-Macquart family. It dawned upon me that I would write the history of a street. Every house should form a volume. I fixed upon the street, I saw each house, and read, as clearly as in letters, the physiology and psychology of each. The little by-way stretched before me in its actual shape, — a street that I know and have passed down a hundred times; with some twenty houses, prosperous and mean, and lilac bushes in purple blossom; and yet it was at the same time a symbol, a *via dolorosa* of hopes cherished and disappointed, of years of monotonous existence without content or discontent, of tragedies and obscure sorrows; and on the door of one of those houses I saw the red stain of blood, and behind a window two shadows, blackened and faded, on the blind, as they swayed on tightened cords, — the shadows of a man and a woman hanging in a vulgar, gas-lit parlor. These were my fancies; but when pen touched paper, they shrivelled and vanished away,"

"Yes," said. Dyson, "there is a lot in that. I envy you the pains of transmuting vision into reality, and still more I envy you the day when you will look at your bookshelf and see twenty goodly books upon the shelves, — the series complete and done forever. Let me entreat you to have them bound in solid parchment, with gold lettering. It is the only real cover for a valiant book. When I look in at the windows of some choice shop, and see the bindings of Levant morocco, with pretty tools and panellings, and your sweet contrasts of red and green, I say to myself, 'These are not books, but bibelots.' A book bound so — a true book, mind you — is like a Gothic statue draped in brocade of Lyons."

"Alas!" said Russell, "we need not discuss the binding, — the books are not begun."

The talk went on as usual till eleven o'clock, when Dyson bade his friend good-night. He knew the way downstairs, and walked down by himself; but greatly to his surprise, as he crossed the first-floor landing, the door opened slightly, and a hand was stretched out, beckoning.

Dyson was not the man to hesitate under such circumstances. In a moment he saw himself involved in adventure; and, as he told himself, the Dysons had never disobeyed a lady's summons. Softly, then, with due regard for the lady's honor, he would have entered the room, when a low but clear voice spoke to him, —

"Go downstairs and open the door, and shut it again rather loudly. Then come up to me; and for heaven's sake, walk softly."

Dyson obeyed her commands, — not without some hesitation, for he was afraid of meeting the landlady or the maid on his return journey. But walking like a cat, and making each step he trod on crack loudly, he flattered himself that he had escaped observation; and as he gained the top of the stairs, the door opened wide before him, and he found himself in the lady's drawing-room, bowing awkwardly.

"Pray be seated, sir. Perhaps this chair will be the best; it was the favored chair of my landlady's deceased husband. I would ask you to smoke, but the odor would betray me. I know my proceedings must seem to you unconventional; but I saw you arrive this evening, and I do not think you would refuse to help a woman who is so unfortunate as I am."

Mr. Dyson looked shyly at the young lady before him. She was dressed in deep mourning; but the piquant smiling face and charming hazel eyes ill accorded with the heavy garments, and the mouldering surface of the crape.

"Madam," he said gallantly, "your instinct has served you well. We will not trouble, if you please, about the question of social conventions; the chivalrous gentleman knows nothing of such matters. I hope I may be privileged to serve you."

"You are very kind to me, but I knew it would be so. Alas, sir, I have had experience of life, and I am rarely mistaken. Yet man is too often so vile and so misjudging that I trembled even as I resolved to take this step, which, for all I knew, might prove to be both desperate and ruinous."

"With me you have nothing to fear," said Dyson. "I was nurtured in the faith of chivalry, and I have always endeavored to remember the proud traditions of my race. Confide in me then, and count upon my secrecy, and, if it prove possible, you may rely on my help."

“Sir, I will not waste your time, which I am sure is valuable, by idle parleyings. Learn, then, that I am a fugitive, and in hiding here. I place myself in your power; you have but to describe my features, and I fall into the hands of my relentless enemy.”

Mr. Dyson wondered for a passing instant how this could be; but he only renewed his promise of silence, repeating that he would be the embodied spirit of dark concealment.

“Good,” said the lady; “the Oriental fervor of your style is delightful. In the first place, I must disabuse your mind of the conviction that I am a widow. These gloomy vestments have been forced on me by strange circumstance; in plain language, I have deemed it expedient to go disguised. You have a friend, I think, in the house, — Mr. Russell? He seems of a coy and retiring nature.”

“Excuse me, madam,” said Dyson, “he is not coy, but he is a realist; and perhaps you are aware that no Carthusian monk can emulate the cloistral seclusion in which a realistic novelist loves to shroud himself. It is his way of observing human, nature.”

“Well, well,” said the lady; “all this, though deeply interesting is not germane to our affair. I must tell you my history.”

With these words the young lady proceeded to relate the

NOVEL OF THE WHITE POWDER.

MY NAME IS Leicester; my father. Major General Wyn Leicester, a distinguished officer of artillery, succumbed five years ago to a complicated liver complaint acquired in the deadly climate of India. A year later my only brother, Francis, came home after an exceptionally brilliant career at the University, and settled down with the resolution of a hermit to master what has been well called the great legend of the law. He was a man who seemed to live in utter indifference to everything that is called pleasure; and though he was handsomer than most men, and could talk as merrily and wittily as if he were a mere vagabond, he avoided society, and shut himself up in a large room at the top of the house to make himself a lawyer. Ten hours a day of hard reading was at first his allotted portion; from the first light in the east to the late afternoon he remained shut up with his books, taking a hasty half-hour's lunch with me as if he grudged the wasting of the moments, and going out for a short walk when it began to grow dusk. I thought that such relentless application must be injurious, and tried to cajole him from the crabbed text-books; but his ardor seemed to grow rather than diminish, and his daily tale of hours increased. I spoke to him seriously, suggesting some occasional relaxation, if it were but an idle afternoon with a harmless novel; but he laughed, and said that he read about feudal tenures when he felt in need of amusement, and scoffed at the notion of theatres, or a month's fresh confessed that he looked well, and seemed not to suffer from his labors; but I knew that such unnatural toil would take revenge at last, and I was not mistaken. A look of anxiety began to lurk about his eyes, and he seemed languid, and at last he avowed that he was no longer in perfect health; he was troubled, he said, with a sensation of dizziness, and awoke now and then of nights from fearful dreams, terrified and cold with icy sweats. "I am taking care of myself," he said; "so you must not trouble. I passed the whole of yesterday afternoon in idleness, leaning back in that comfortable chair you gave me, and scribbling nonsense on a sheet of paper. No, no; I will not overdo my work. I shall be well enough in a week or two, depend upon it."

Yet, in spite of his assurances, I could see that he grew no better, but rather worse; he would enter the drawing-room with a face all miserably wrinkled and despondent, and endeavor to look gayly when my eyes fell on him, and I thought such symptoms of evil omen, and was frightened sometimes at the nervous irritation of his movements, and at glances which I could not decipher. Much against his will, I prevailed on him to have medical advice, and with an ill grace he called in our old doctor.

Dr. Haberden cheered me after his examination of his patient.

“There is nothing really much amiss,” he said to me. “No doubt he reads too hard, and eats hastily, and then goes back again to his books in too great a hurry; and the natural consequence is some digestive trouble, and a little mischief in the nervous system. But I think — I do, indeed, Miss Leicester — that we shall be able to set this all right. I have written him a prescription which ought to do great things. So you have no cause for anxiety.”

My brother insisted on having the prescription made up by a chemist in the neighborhood; it was an odd old-fashioned shop, devoid of the studied coquetry and calculated glitter that make so gay a show on the counters and shelves of the modern apothecary; but Francis liked the old chemist, and believed in the scrupulous purity of his drugs. The medicine was sent in due course, and I saw that my brother took it regularly after lunch and dinner. It was an innocent-looking white powder, of which a little was dissolved, in a glass of cold water. I stirred it in, and it seemed to disappear, leaving the water clear and colorless. At first Francis seemed to benefit greatly; the weariness vanished from his face, and he became more cheerful than he had ever been since the time when he left school; he talked gayly of reforming himself, and avowed to me that he had wasted his time.

“I have given too many hours to law,” he said, laughing; “I think you have saved me in the nick of time. Come, I shall be Lord Chancellor yet, but I must not forget life. You and I will have a holiday together before long; we will go to Paris and enjoy ourselves, and keep away from the Bibliothèque Nationale.”

I confessed myself delighted with the prospect.

“When shall we go?” I said. “I can start the day after to-morrow, if you like.”

“Ah, that is perhaps a little too soon; after all, I do not know London yet, and I suppose a man ought to give the pleasures of his own country the first choice. But we will go off together in a week or two, so try and furbish up your French. I only know law French myself, and I am afraid that wouldn’t do.”

We were just finishing dinner, and he quaffed off his medicine with a parade of carousal as if it had been wine from some choicest bin.

“Has it any particular taste?” I said.

“No; I should not know I was not drinking water,” and he got up from his chair, and began to pace up and down the room as if he were undecided as to what he should do next.

“Shall we have coffee in the drawing-room,” I said, “or would you like to smoke?”

“No; I think I will take a turn, it seems a pleasant evening. Look at the afterglow; why, it is as if a great city were burning in flames, and down there between the dark houses it is raining blood fast, fast. Yes, I will go out. I may be in soon, but I shall take my key, so good-night, dear, if I don’t see you again.”

The door slammed behind him, and I saw him walk lightly down the street, swinging his malacca cane, and I felt grateful to Dr. Haberden for such an improvement.

I believe my brother came home very late that night; but he was in a merry mood the next morning.

“I walked on without thinking where I was going,” he said, “enjoying the freshness of the air, and livened by the crowds as I reached more frequented quarters. And then I met an old college friend, Orford, in the press of the pavement, and then — well, we enjoyed ourselves. I have felt what it is to be young and a man, I find I have blood in my veins, as other men have. I made an appointment with Orford for to-night; there will be a little party of us at the restaurant. Yes, I shall enjoy myself for a week or two, and hear the chimes at midnight, and then we will go for our little trip together.”

Such was the transmutation of my brother’s character that in a few days he became a lover of pleasure, a careless and merry idler of western pavements, a hunter out of snug restaurants, and a fine critic of fantastic dancing; he grew fat before my eyes, and said no more of Paris, for he had clearly found his Paradise in London. I rejoiced, and yet wondered a little, for there was, I thought, something in his gayety that indefinitely displeased me, though I could not have defined my feeling. But by degrees there came a change; he returned still in the cold, hours of the morning, but I heard no more about his pleasures, and one morning as we sat at breakfast together, I looked suddenly into his eyes and saw a stranger before me.

“Oh, Francis!” I cried; “Oh, Francis, Francis, what have you done?” and rending sobs cut the words short, and I went weeping out of the room, for though I knew nothing, yet I knew all, and by some odd play of thought I remembered the evening when he first went abroad to prove his manhood, and the picture of the sunset sky glowed before me; the clouds like a city in burning flames, and the rain of blood. Yet I did battle with such thoughts, resolving that perhaps, after all, no great harm had been done, and in the evening at dinner I resolved to press him to fix a day for our holiday in Paris. We had talked easily enough, and my brother had just taken his medicine, which he had continued all the while. I was about to begin my topic, when the words forming in my mind vanished, and I wondered for a second what icy and intolerable weight oppressed my heart and suffocated me as with the unutterable horror of the coffin-lid nailed down on the living.

We had dined without candles, and the room had slowly grown from twilight to gloom, and the walls and corners were indistinct in the shadow. But from where I sat I looked out into the street; and as I thought of what I would say to Francis, the sky began to flush and shine, as it had done on a well-remembered evening, and in the gap between two dark masses that were houses an awful pageantry of flame appeared. Lurid whorls of writhed cloud, and utter depths burning, and gray masses like the fume blown from a smoking city, and an evil glory blazing far above shot with tongues of more ardent fire, and below as if there were a deep pool of blood. I looked down to where my brother sat facing me, and the words were shaped on my lips, when I saw his hand resting on the table. Between the thumb and forefinger of the closed hand, there was a mark, a small patch about the size of a sixpence, and somewhat of the color of a bad bruise. Yet, by some sense I cannot define, I knew that what I saw was no bruise at all. Oh, if human flesh could burn with flame, and if flame could be black as pitch, such was that before me! Without thought or fashioning of words, gray horror shaped within me at the sight, and in an inner cell it was known to be a brand. For a moment the stained sky became dark as midnight, and when the light returned to me, I was alone in the silent room, and soon after I heard my brother go out.

Late as it was, I put on my bonnet and went to Dr. Haberden, and in his great consulting-room, ill-lighted by a candle which the doctor brought in with him, with stammering lips, and a voice that would break in spite of my resolve, I told him all; from the day on which my brother began to take the medicine down to the dreadful thing I had seen scarcely half an hour before.

When I had done, the doctor looked at me for a minute with an expression of great pity on his face.

“My dear Miss Leicester,” he said, “you have evidently been anxious about your brother; you have been worrying over him, I am sure. Come, now, is it not so?

“I have certainly been anxious,” I said. “For the last week or two I have not felt at ease.”

“Quite so; you know, of course, what a queer thing the brain is?”

“I understand what you mean; but I was not deceived. I saw what I have told you with my own eyes.”

“Yes, yes, of course. But your eyes had been staring at that very curious sunset we had to-night. That is the only explanation. You will see it in the proper light to-morrow, I am sure. But, remember, I am always ready to give any help that is in my power; do not scruple to come to me, or to send for me if you are in any distress.”

I went away but little comforted, all confusion and terror and sorrow, not knowing where to turn. When my brother and I met the next day, I looked quickly at him, and noticed, with a sickening at heart, that the right hand, the hand on which I had clearly seen the patch as of a black fire, was wrapped up with a handkerchief.

“What is the matter with your hand, Francis?” I said in a steady voice.

“Nothing of consequence. I cut a finger last night, and it bled rather awkwardly, so I did it up roughly to the best of my ability.”

“I will do it neatly for you, if you like.”

“No, thank you, dear, this will answer very well. Suppose we have breakfast; I am quite hungry.”

We sat down, and I watched him. He scarcely ate or drank at all, but tossed his meat to the dog when he thought my eyes were turned away; and there was a look in his eyes that I had never yet seen, and the thought fled across my mind that it was a look that was scarcely human. I was firmly convinced that awful and incredible as was the thing I had seen the night before, yet it was no illusion, no glamour of bewildered sense, and in the course of the morning I went again to the doctor’s house.

He shook his head with an air puzzled and incredulous, and seemed to reflect for a few minutes.

“And you say he still keeps up the medicine? But why? As I understand, all the symptoms he complained of have disappeared long ago; why should he go on taking the stuff when he is quite well? And by the bye where did he get it made up? At Sayce’s? I never send any one there; the old man is getting careless. Suppose you come with me to the chemist’s; I should like to have some talk with him.”

We walked together to the shop. Old Sayce knew Dr. Haberden, and was quite ready to give any information.

“You have been sending that in to Mr. Leicester for some weeks, I think, on my prescription,” said the doctor, giving the old man a pencilled scrap of paper.

The chemist put on his great spectacles with trembling uncertainty, and held up the paper with a shaking hand.

“Oh, yes,” he said, “I have very little of it left; it is rather an uncommon drug, and I have had it in stock some time. I must get in some more, if Mr. Leicester goes on with it.”

“Kindly let me have a look at the stuff,” said Haberden; and the chemist gave him a glass bottle. He took out the stopper and smelt the contents, and looked strangely at the old man.

“Where did you get this?” he said, “and what is it? For one thing, Mr. Sayce, it is not what I prescribed. Yes, yes, I see the label is right enough, but I tell you this is not the drug.”

“I have had it a long time,” said the old man, in feeble terror. “I got it from Burbage’s in the usual way. It is not prescribed often, and I have had it on the shelf for some years. You see there is very little left.”

“You had better give it to me,” said Haberden. “I am afraid something wrong has happened.”

We went out of the shop in silence, the doctor carrying the bottle neatly wrapped in paper under his arm.

“Dr. Haberden,” I said when we had walked a little way— “Dr. Haberden.”

“Yes,” he said, looking at me gloomily enough.

“I should like you to tell me what my brother has been taking twice a day for the last month or so.”

“Frankly, Miss Leicester, I don’t know. We will speak of this when we get to my house,”

We walked on quickly without another word till we reached Dr. Haberden’s. He asked me to sit down, and began pacing up and down the room, his face clouded over, as I could see, with no common fears.

“Well,” he said at length, “this is all very strange; it is only natural that you should feel alarmed, and I must confess that my mind is far from easy. We will put aside, if you please, what you told me last night and this morning, but the fact remains that for the last few weeks Mr. Leicester has been impregnating his system with a drug which is completely unknown to me. I tell you, it is not what I ordered; and what that stuff in the bottle really is remains to be seen.”

He undid the wrapper, and cautiously tilted a few grains of the white powder on to a piece of paper, and peered curiously at it.

“Yes,” he said, “it is like the sulphate of quinine, as you say; it is flaky. But smell it.”

He held the bottle to me, and I bent over it. It was a strange sickly smell, vaporous and overpowering, like some strong anæsthetic.

“I shall have it analyzed,” said Haberden. “I have a friend who has devoted his whole life to chemistry as a science. Then we shall have something to go upon. No, no, say no more about that other matter; I cannot listen to that, and take my advice and think no more about it yourself.”

That evening my brother did not go out as usual after dinner.

“I have had my fling,” he said with a queer laugh; “and I must go back to my old ways. A little law will be quite a relaxation after so sharp a dose of pleasure,” and he grinned to himself, and soon after went up to his room. His hand was still all bandaged.

Dr. Haberden called a few days later.

“I have no special news to give you,” he said. “Chambers is out of town, so I know no more about that stuff than you do. But I should like to see Mr. Leicester if he is in.”

“He is in his room,” I said; “I will tell him you are here.”

“No, no, I will go up to him; we will have a little quiet talk together. I dare say that we have made a good deal of fuss about very little; for, after all, whatever the white powder may be, it seems to have done him good.”

The doctor went upstairs, and standing in the hall I heard his knock, and the opening and shutting of the door; and then I waited in the silent house for an hour, and the stillness grew more and more intense as the hands of the clock crept round. Then there sounded from above the noise of a door shut sharply, and the doctor was coming down the stairs. His footsteps crossed the hall, and there was a pause at the door. I drew a long sick breath with difficulty, and saw my face white in a little mirror, and he came in and stood at the door. There was an unutterable horror shining in his eyes; he steadied himself by holding the back of a chair with one hand, and his lower lip trembled like a horse’s, and he gulped and stammered unintelligible sounds before he spoke.

“I have seen that man,” he began in a dry whisper. “I have been sitting in his presence for the last hour. My God! and I am alive and in my senses! I, who have dealt with death all my life, and have dabbled with the melting ruins of the earthly tabernacle. But not this! Oh, not this,” and he covered his face with his hands as if to shut out the sight of something before him.

“Do not send for me again, Miss Leicester,” he said with more composure. “I can do nothing in this house. Good-bye.”

As I watched him totter down the steps and along the pavement towards his house, it seemed to me that he had aged by ten years since the morning.

My brother remained in his room. He called out to me in a voice I hardly recognized, that he was very busy, and would like his meals brought to his door and left there, and I gave the order to the servants. From that day it seemed as if the arbitrary conception we call time had been annihilated for me. I lived in an ever present sense of horror, going through the routine of the house mechanically, and only speaking a few necessary words to the servants. Now and then I went out and paced the streets for an hour or two and came home again; but whether I were without or within, my spirit delayed before the closed door of the upper room, and, shuddering, waited for it to open. I have said that I scarcely reckoned time, but I suppose it must have been a fortnight after Dr. Haberden’s visit that I came home from my stroll a little refreshed and lightened. The air was sweet and pleasant, and the hazy form of green leaves, floating cloud-like in the square, and the smell of blossoms, had charmed my senses, and I felt happier and walked more briskly. As I delayed a moment at the verge of the pavement, waiting for a van to pass by before crossing over to the house, I happened to look up at the windows, and instantly there was the rush and swirl of deep cold waters in my ears, and my heart leapt up, and fell down, down as into a deep hollow, and I was amazed with a dread and terror without form or shape. I stretched out a hand blindly through folds of thick darkness, from the black and shadowy valley, and held myself from falling, while the stones beneath my feet rocked and swayed and tilted, and the sense of solid things seemed to sink away from under me. I had glanced up at the window of my brother’s study, and at that moment the blind was drawn aside, and something that had life stared out into the world. Nay, I cannot say I saw a face or any human likeness; a living thing, two eyes of burning flame glared at me, and they were in the midst of something as formless as my fear, the symbol and presence of all evil and all hideous corruption. I stood shuddering and quaking as with the grip of ague, sick with unspeakable agonies of fear and loathing, and for five minutes I could not summon force or motion to my limbs. When I was within the door, I ran up the stairs to my brother’s room, and knocked.

“Francis, Francis,” I cried, “for heaven’s sake answer me. What is the horrible thing in your room? Cast it out, Francis, cast it from you!”

I heard a noise as of feet shuffling slowly and awkwardly, and a choking, gurgling sound, as if some one was struggling to find utterance, and then the noise of a voice, broken and stifled, and words that I could scarcely understand.

“There is nothing here,” the voice said, “Pray do not disturb me. I am not very well to-day.”

I turned away, horrified and yet helpless. I could do nothing, and I wondered why Francis had lied to me, for I had seen the appearance beyond the glass too plainly to be deceived, though it was but the sight of a moment. And I sat still, conscious that there had been something else, something I had seen in the first flash of terror before those burning eyes had looked at me. Suddenly I remembered; as I lifted my face the blind was being drawn back, and I had had an instant’s glance of the thing that was moving it, and in my recollection I knew that a hideous image was engraved forever on my brain. It was not a hand: there were no fingers that held the blind, but a black stump pushed it aside; the mouldering outline and the clumsy movement as of a beast’s paw had glowed into my senses before the darkling waves of terror had overwhelmed me as I went down quick into the pit. My mind was aghast at the thought of this, and of the awful presence that dwelt with my brother in his room; I went to his door and cried to him again, but no answer came. That night one of the servants came up to me and told me in a whisper that for three days food had been regularly placed at the door and left untouched; the maid had knocked, but had received no answer; she had heard the noise of shuffling feet that I had noticed. Day after day went by, and still my brother’s meals were brought to his door and left untouched; and though I knocked and called again and again, I could get no answer. The servants began to talk to me; it appeared they were as alarmed as I. The cook said that when my brother first shut himself up in his room, she used to hear him come out at night and go about the house; and once, she said, the hall door had opened and closed again, but for several nights she had heard no sound. The climax came at last. It was in the dusk of the evening, and I was sitting in the darkening dreary room when a terrible shriek jarred and rang harshly out of the silence, and I heard a frightened scurry of feet dashing down the stairs. I waited, and the servant maid staggered into the room and faced me, white and trembling.

“O Miss Helen,” she whispered. “Oh, for the Lord’s sake, Miss Helen, what has happened? Look at my hand, miss; look at that hand!” I drew her to the window, and saw there was a black wet stain upon her hand.

“I do not understand you,” I said. “Will you explain to me?”

“I was doing your room just now,” she began. “I was turning down the bedclothes, and all of a sudden there was something fell upon my hand wet, and I looked up, and the ceiling was black and dripping on me.”

I looked bard at her, and bit my lip. “Come with me,” I said. “Bring your candle with you.”

The room I slept in was beneath my brother’s, and as I went in I felt I was trembling. I looked up at the ceiling, and saw a patch, all black and wet and a dew of black drops upon it, and a pool of horrible liquor soaking into the white bedclothes.

I ran upstairs and knocked loudly.

“O Francis, Francis, my dear brother,” I cried, “what has happened to you?”

And I listened. There was a sound of choking, and a noise like water bubbling and regurgitating, but nothing else, and I called louder, but no answer came.

In spite of what Dr. Haberden had said, I went to him, and with tears streaming down my cheeks, I told him of all that had happened, and he listened to me with a face set hard and grim.

“For your father’s sake,” he said at last, “I will go with you, though I can do nothing.”

We went out together; the streets were dark and silent, and heavy with heat and a drought of many weeks. I saw the doctor’s face white under the gas-lamps, and when we reached the house his hand was shaking. We did not hesitate, but went upstairs directly. I held the lamp, and he called out in a loud, determined voice: —

“Mr. Leicester, do you hear me? I insist on seeing you. Answer me at once.”

There was no answer, but we both heard that choking noise I have mentioned.

“Mr. Leicester, I am waiting for you. Open the door this instant, or I shall break it down.” And he called a third time in a voice that rang and echoed from the walls.

“Mr. Leicester! For the last time I order you to open the door.”

“Ah!” he said, after a pause of heavy silence, “we are wasting time here. Will you be so kind as to get me a poker, or something of the kind?”

I ran into a little room at the back where odd articles were kept, and found a heavy adze-like tool that I thought might serve the doctor’s purpose.

“Very good,” he said, “that will do, I dare say. I give you notice, Mr. Leicester,” he cried loudly at the keyhole, “that I am now about to break into your room.”

Then I heard the wrench of the adze, and the woodwork split and cracked under it, and with a loud crash the door suddenly burst open; and for a moment we started back aghast at a fearful screaming cry, no human voice, but as the roar of a monster, that burst forth inarticulate and struck at us out of the darkness.

“Hold the lamp,” said the doctor, and we went in and glanced quickly round the room. “There it is,” said Dr. Haberden, drawing a quick breath; “look, in that corner.”

I looked, and a pang of horror seized my heart as with a white-hot iron. There upon the floor was a dark and putrid mass, seething with corruption and hideous rottenness, neither liquid nor solid, but melting and changing before our eyes, and bubbling with unctuous oily bubbles like boiling pitch. And out of the midst of it shone two burning points like eyes, and I saw a writhing and stirring as of limbs, and something moved and lifted up that might have been an arm. The doctor took a step forward, and raised the iron bar and struck at the burning points, and drove in the weapon, and struck again and again in a fury of loathing. At last the thing was quiet.

A week or two later, when I had to some extent recovered from the terrible shock, Dr. Haberden came to see me.

“I have sold my practice,” he began, “and to-morrow I am sailing on a long voyage. I do not know whether I shall ever return to England; in all probability I shall buy a little land in California, and settle there for the remainder of my life. I have brought you this packet, which you may open and read when you feel able to do so. It contains the report of Dr. Chambers on what I submitted to him. Good-bye, Miss Leicester, good-bye.”

When he was gone, I opened the envelope; I could not wait, and proceeded to read the papers within. Here is the manuscript; and if you will allow me, I will read you the astounding story it contains.

“My dear Haberden,” the letter began, “I have delayed inexcusably in answering your questions as to the white substance you sent me. To tell you the truth, I have hesitated for some time as to what course I should adopt, for there is a bigotry and an orthodox standard in physical science as in theology, and I knew that if I told you the truth I should offend rooted prejudices which I once held dear myself. However, I have determined to be plain with you, and first I must enter into a short personal explanation.

“You have known me, Haberden, for many years as a scientific man; you and I have often talked of our profession together, and discussed the hopeless gulf that opens before the feet of those who think to attain to truth by any means whatsoever, except the beaten way of experiment and observation, in the sphere of material things. I remember the scorn with which you have spoken to me of men of science who have dabbled a little in the unseen, and have timidly hinted that perhaps the senses are not, after all, the eternal, impenetrable bounds of all knowledge, the everlasting walls beyond which no human being has ever passed. We have laughed together heartily, and I think justly, at the “occult” follies of the day, disguised under various names, — the mesmerisms, spiritualisms, materializations, theosophies, all the rabble rant of imposture, with their machinery of poor tricks and feeble conjuring, the true back-parlor magic of shabby London streets. Yet, in spite of what I have said, I must confess to you that I am no materialist, taking the word of course in its usual signification. It is now many years since I have convinced myself, convinced myself a sceptic remember, that the old iron-bound theory is utterly and entirely false. Perhaps this confession will not wound you so sharply as it would have done twenty years ago; for I think you cannot have failed to notice that for some time hypotheses have been advanced by men of pure science which are nothing less than transcendental, and I suspect that most modern chemists and biologists of repute would not hesitate to subscribe the *dictum* of the old Schoolman, *Omnia exeunt in mysterium*, which means, I take it, that every branch of human knowledge if traced up to its source and final principles vanishes into mystery. I need not trouble you now with a detailed account of the painful steps which led me to my conclusions; a few simple experiments suggested a doubt as to my then standpoint, and a train of thought that rose from circumstances comparatively trifling brought me far. My old conception of the universe has been swept away, and I stand in a world that seems as strange and awful to me as the endless waves of the ocean seen for the first time, shining, from a Peak in Darien. Now I know that the walls of sense that seemed so impenetrable, that seemed to loom up above the heavens and to be founded below the depths, and to shut us in forevermore, are no such everlasting impassable barriers as we fancied, but thinnest and most airy veils that melt away before the seeker, and dissolve as the early mist of the morning about the brooks. I know that you never adopted the extreme materialistic position: you did not go about trying to prove a universal negative, for your logical sense withheld you from that crowning absurdity; yet I am sure that you will find all that I am saying strange and repellent to your habits of thought. Yet, Haberden, what I tell you is the truth, nay, to adopt our common language, the sole and scientific truth, verified by experience; and the universe is verily more splendid and more awful than we used to dream. The whole universe, my friend, is a tremendous sacrament; a mystic, ineffable force and energy, veiled by an outward form of matter; and man, and the sun and the other stars, and the flower of the grass, and the crystal in the test-tube, are each and every one as spiritual, as material, and subject to an inner working.

“You will perhaps wonder, Haberden, whence all this tends; but I think a little thought will make it clear. You will understand that from such a standpoint the whole view of things is changed, and what we thought incredible and absurd may be possible enough. In short, we must look at legend and belief with other eyes, and be prepared to accept tales that had become mere fables. Indeed, this is no such great demand. After all, modern science will concede as much, in a hypocritical manner. You must not, it is true, believe in witchcraft, but you may credit hypnotism; ghosts are out of date, but there is a good deal to be said for the theory of telepathy. Give a superstition a Greek name, and believe in it, should almost be a proverb.

“So much for my personal explanation. You sent me, Haberden, a phial, stoppered and sealed, containing a small quantity of a flaky white powder, obtained from a chemist who has been dispensing it to one of your patients. I am not surprised to hear that this powder refused to yield any results to your analysis. It is a substance which was known to a few many hundred years ago, but which I never expected to have submitted to me from the shop of a modern apothecary. There seems no reason to doubt the truth of the man’s tale; he no doubt got, as he says, the rather uncommon salt you prescribed from the wholesale chemist’s; and it has probably remained on his shelf for twenty years, or perhaps longer. Here what we call chance and coincidence begins to work; during all these years the salt in the bottle was exposed to certain recurring variations of temperature, variations probably ranging from 40° to 80°. And, as it happens, such changes, recurring year after year at irregular intervals, and with varying degrees of intensity and duration, have constituted a process, and a process so complicated and so delicate, that I question whether modern scientific apparatus directed with the utmost precision could produce the same result. The white powder you sent me is something very different from the drug you prescribed; it is the powder from which the wine of the Sabbath, the *Vinum Sabbati* was prepared. No doubt you have read of the Witches’ Sabbath, and have laughed at the tales which terrified our ancestors; the black cats, and the broomsticks, and dooms pronounced against some old woman’s cow. Since I have known the truth I have often reflected that it is on the whole a happy thing that such burlesque as this is believed, for it serves to conceal much that it is better should not be known generally. However, if you care to read the appendix to Payne Knight’s monograph, you will find that the true Sabbath was something very different, though the writer has very nicely refrained from printing all he knew. The secrets of the true Sabbath were the secrets of remote times surviving into the Middle Ages, secrets of an evil science which existed long before Aryan man entered Europe. Men and women, seduced from their homes on specious pretences, were met by beings well qualified to assume, as they did assume, the part of devils, and taken by their guides to some, desolate and lonely place, known to the initiate by long tradition and unknown to all else. Perhaps it was a cave in some bare and wind-swept hill; perhaps some inmost recess of a great forest, and there the Sabbath was held. There, in the blackest hour of night, the *Vinum Sabbati* was prepared, and this evil graal was poured forth and offered to the neophytes, and they partook of an infernal sacrament; *sumentes calicem principis inferorum,* as an old author well expresses it. And suddenly, each one that had drunk found himself attended by a companion, a shape of glamour and unearthly allurement, beckoning him apart to share in joys more exquisite, more piercing than the thrill of any dream, to the consummation of the marriage of the Sabbath. It is hard to write of such things as these, and chiefly because that shape that allured with loveliness was no hallucination, but, awful as it is to express, the man himself. By the power of that Sabbath wine, a few grains of white powder thrown into a glass of water, the house of life was riven asunder, and the human trinity dissolved, and the worm which never dies, that which lies sleeping within us all, was made tangible and an external thing, and clothed with a garment of flesh. And then in the hour of midnight, the primal fall was repeated and represented, and the awful thing veiled in the mythos of the Tree in the Garden was done anew. Such was the *nuptiæ Sabbati*.

“I prefer to say no more; you, Haberden, know as well as I do that the most trivial laws of life are not to be broken with impunity; and for so terrible an act as this, in which the very inmost place of the temple was broken open and defiled, a terrible vengeance followed. What began with corruption ended also with corruption.”

Underneath is the following in Dr. Haberden’s writing: —

“The whole of the above is unfortunately strictly and entirely true. Your brother confessed all to me on that morning when I saw him in his room. My attention was first attracted to the bandaged hand, and I forced him to show it me. What I saw made me, a medical man of many years standing, grow sick with loathing; and the story I was forced to listen to was infinitely more frightful than I could have believed possible. It has tempted me to doubt the Eternal Goodness which can permit nature to offer such hideous possibilities; and if you had not with your own eyes seen the end, I should have said to you — disbelieve it all. I have not, I think, many more weeks to live, but you are young, and may forget all this.

“JOSEPH HABERDEN, M.D.”

In the course of two or three months I heard that Dr. Haberden had died at sea, shortly after the ship left England.

Miss Leicester ceased speaking, and looked pathetically at Dyson, who could not refrain from exhibiting some symptoms of uneasiness.

He stuttered out some broken phrases expressive of his deep interest in her extraordinary history, and then said with a better grace —

“But, pardon me, Miss Leicester, I understood you were in some difficulty. You were kind enough to ask me to assist you in some way.”

“Ah,” she said, “I had forgotten that. My own present trouble seems of such little consequence in comparison with what I have told you. But as you are so good to me, I will go on. You will scarcely believe it, but I found that certain persons suspected, or rather pretended to suspect that I had murdered my brother. These persons were relatives of mine, and their motives were extremely sordid ones; but I actually found myself subject to the shameful indignity of being watched. Yes, sir, my steps were dogged when I went abroad, and at home I found myself exposed to constant if artful observation. With my high spirit this was more than I could brook, and I resolved to set my wits to work and elude the persons who were shadowing me. I was so fortunate as to succeed. I assumed this disguise, and for some time have lain snug and unsuspected. But of late I have reason to believe that the pursuer is on my track; unless I am greatly deceived, I saw yesterday the detective who is charged with the odious duty of observing my movements. You, sir, are watchful and keen-sighted; tell me, did you see any one lurking about this evening?”

“I hardly think so,” said Dyson, “but perhaps you would give me some description of the detective in question.”

“Certainly; he is a youngish man, dark, with dark whiskers. He has adopted spectacles of large size in the hope of disguising himself effectually, but he cannot disguise his uneasy manner, and the quick, nervous glances he casts to right and left.”

This piece of description was the last straw for the unhappy Dyson, who was foaming with impatience to get out of the house, and would gladly have sworn eighteenth century oaths if propriety had not frowned on such a course.

“Excuse me, Miss Leicester,” he said with cold politeness, “I cannot assist you.”

“Ah!” she said sadly, “I have offended you in some way. Tell me what I have done, and I will ask you to forgive me.”

“You are mistaken,” said Dyson, grabbing his hat, but speaking with some difficulty; “you have done nothing. But, as I say, I cannot help you. Perhaps,” he added, with some tinge of sarcasm, “my friend Russell might be of service.”

“Thank you,” she replied; “I will try him,” and the lady went off into a shriek of laughter, which filled up Mr. Dyson’s cup of scandal and confusion.

He left the house shortly afterwards, and had the peculiar delight of a five-mile walk, through streets which slowly changed from black to gray, and from gray to shining passages of glory for the sun to brighten. Here and there he met or overtook strayed revellers, but he reflected that no one could have spent the night in a more futile fashion than himself; and when he reached his home he had made resolves for reformation. He decided that he would abjure all Milesian and Arabian methods of entertainment, and subscribe to Mudie’s for a regular supply of mild and innocuous romance.

STRANGE OCCURRENCE IN CLERKENWELL.

MR. DYSON HAD inhabited for some years a couple of rooms in a moderately quiet street in Bloomsbury, where, as he somewhat pompously expressed it, he held his finger on the pulse of life without being deafened with the thousand rumors of the main arteries of London. It was to him a source of peculiar, if esoteric gratification, that from the adjacent corner of Tottenham Court Road a hundred lines of omnibuses went to the four quarters of the town; he would dilate on the facilities for visiting Dalston, and dwell on the admirable line that knew extremest Ealing and the streets beyond Whitechapel. His rooms, which had been originally "furnished apartments," he had gradually purged of their more peccant parts; and though one would not find here the glowing splendors of his old chambers in the street off the Strand, there was something of severe grace about the appointments which did credit to his taste. The rugs were old, and of the true faded beauty; the etchings, nearly all of them proofs printed by the artist, made a good show with broad white margins and black frames, and there was no spurious black oak. Indeed, there was but little furniture of any kind: a plain and honest table, square and sturdy, stood in one corner; a seventeenth century settle fronted the hearth; and two wooden elbow-chairs, and a bookshelf of the Empire made up the equipment, with an exception worthy of note. For Dyson cared for none of these things. His place was at his own bureau, a quaint old piece of lacquered-work at which he would sit for hour after hour, with his back to the room, engaged in the desperate pursuit of literature, or, as he termed his profession, the chase of the phrase. The neat array of pigeon-holes and drawers teemed and overflowed with manuscript and note-books, the experiments and efforts of many years; and the inner well, a vast and cavernous receptacle, was stuffed with accumulated ideas. Dyson was a craftsman who gloved all the detail and the technique of his work intensely; and if, as has been hinted, he deluded himself a little with the name of artist, yet his amusements were eminently harmless, and, so far as can be ascertained, he (or the publishers) had chosen the good part of not tiring the world with printed matter.

Here, then, Dyson would shut himself up with his fancies, experimenting with words, and striving, as his friend the recluse of Bayswater strove, with the almost invincible problem of style, but always with a fine confidence, extremely different from the chronic depression of the realist. He had been almost continuously at work on some scheme that struck him as well-nigh magical in its possibilities since the night of his adventure with the ingenious tenant of the first floor in Abingdon Grove; and as he laid down the pen with a glow of triumph, he reflected that he had not viewed, the streets for five days in succession. With all the enthusiasm of his accomplished labor still working in his brain, he put away his papers, and went out, pacing the pavement at first in that rare mood of exultation which finds in every stone upon the way the possibilities of a masterpiece. It was growing late, and the autumn evening was drawing to a close amidst veils of haze and mist, and in the stilled air the voices, and the roaring traffic, and incessant feet seemed, to Dyson like the noise upon the stage when all the house is silent. In the square, the leaves rippled down as quick as summer rain, and the street beyond was beginning to flare with the lights in the butcher’s shops and the vivid illumination of the green-grocer. It was a Saturday night, and the swarming populations of the slums were turning out in force; the battered women in rusty black had begun to paw the lumps of cagmag, and others gloated over unwholesome cabbages, and there was a brisk demand for four-ale. Dyson passed through these night-fires with some relief; he loved to meditate, but his thoughts were not as De Quincey’s after his dose; he cared not two straws whether onions were dear or cheap, and would not have exulted if meat had fallen to twopence a pound. Absorbed in the wilderness of the tale he had been writing, weighing nicely the points of plot and construction, relishing the recollection of this and that happy phrase, and dreading failure here and there, he left the rush and the whistle of the gas-flares behind him, and began to touch upon pavements more deserted.

He had turned, without taking note, to the northward, and was passing through an ancient fallen street, where now notices of floors and offices to let hung out, but still about it there was the grace and the stiffness of the Age of Wigs; a broad roadway, a broad pavement, and on each side a grave line of houses with long and narrow windows flush with the walls, all of mellowed brick-work. Dyson walked with quick steps, as he resolved that short work must be made of a certain episode; but he was in that happy humor of invention, and another chapter rose in the inner chamber of his brain, and he dwelt on the circumstances he was to write down with curious pleasure. It was charming to have the quiet streets to walk in, and in his thought he made a whole district the cabinet of his studies, and vowed he would come again. Heedless of his course, he struck off to the east again, and soon found himself involved in a squalid network of gray two-storied houses, and then in the waste void and elements of brick-work, the passages and unmade roads behind great factory walls, encumbered with the refuse of the neighborhood, forlorn, ill-lighted, and desperate. A brief turn, and there rose before him the unexpected, a hill suddenly lifted from the level ground, its steep ascent marked by the lighted lamps, and eager as an explorer Dyson found his way to the place, wondering where his crooked paths had brought him. Here all was again decorous, but hideous in the extreme. The builder, some one lost in the deep gloom of the early ‘twenties, had conceived the idea of twin villas in gray brick, shaped in a manner to recall the outlines of the Parthenon, each with its classic form broadly marked with raised bands of stucco. The name of the street was all strange, and for a further surprise, the top of the hill was crowned with an irregular plot of grass and fading trees, called a square, and here again the Parthenon-motive had persisted. Beyond the streets were curious, wild in their irregularities, here a row of sordid, dingy dwellings, dirty and disreputable in appearance, and there, without warning, stood a house genteel and prim with wire blinds and brazen knocker, as clean and trim as if it had been the doctor’s house in some benighted little country town. These surprises and discoveries began to exhaust Dyson, and he hailed with delight the blazing windows of a public-house, and went in with the intention of testing the beverage provided for the dwellers in this region, as remote as Libya and Pamphylia and the parts about Mesopotamia. The babble of voices from within warned him that he was about to assist at the true parliament of the London workman, and he looked about him for that more retired entrance called private. When he had settled himself on an exiguous bench, and had ordered some beer, he began to listen to the jangling talk in the public bar beyond; it was a senseless argument, alternately furious and maudlin, with appeals to Bill and Tom, and mediæval survivals of speech, words that Chaucer wrote belched out with zeal and relish, and the din of pots jerked down and coppers rapped smartly on the zinc counter made a thorough bass for it all. Dyson was calmly smoking his pipe between the sips of beer, when an indefinite looking figure slid rather than walked into the compartment. The man started violently when he saw Dyson placidly sitting in the corner, and glanced keenly about him. He seemed to be on wires, controlled by some electric machine, for he almost bolted out of the door when the barman asked with what he could serve him, and his hand shivered as he took the glass. Dyson inspected him with a little curiosity; he was muffled up almost to the lips, and a soft felt hat was drawn down over his eyes; he looked as if he shrank from every glance, and a more raucous voice suddenly uplifted in the public bar seemed to find in him a sympathy that made him shake and quiver like a jelly. It was pitiable to see any one so thrilled with nervousness, and Dyson was about to address some trivial remark of casual inquiry to the man, when another person came into the compartment, and, laying a hand on his arm, muttered something in an undertone, and vanished as he came. But Dyson had recognized him as the smooth-tongued and smooth-shaven Burton, who had displayed so sumptuous a gift in lying; and yet he thought little of it, for his whole faculty of observation was absorbed in the lamentable and yet grotesque spectacle before him. At the first touch of the hand on his arm, the unfortunate man had wheeled round as if spun on a pivot, and shrank back with a low, piteous cry, as if some dumb beast were caught in the toils. The blood fled away from the wretch’s face, and the skin became gray as if a shadow of death had passed in the air and fallen on it, and Dyson caught a choking whisper —

“Mr. Davies! For God’s sake, have pity on me, Mr. Davies. On my oath, I say— “ and his voice sank to silence as he heard the message, and strove in vain to bite his lip; and summon up to his aid some tinge of manhood. He stood there a moment, wavering as the leaves of an aspen, and then he was gone out into the street, as Dyson thought silently, with his doom upon his head. He had not been gone a minute when it suddenly flashed into Dyson’s mind that he knew the man; it was undoubtedly the young man with spectacles for whom so many ingenious persons were searching; the spectacles indeed were missing, but the pale face, the dark whiskers, and the timid glances were enough to identify him, Dyson saw at once that by a succession of hazards he had unawares hit upon the scent of some desperate conspiracy, wavering as the track of a loathsome snake in and out of the highways and byways of the London cosmos; the truth was instantly pictured before him, and he divined that all unconscious and unheeding he had been privileged to see the shadows of hidden forms, chasing and hurrying, and grasping and vanishing across the bright curtain of common life, soundless and silent, or only babbling fables and pretences. For him in an instant the jargoning of voices, the garish splendor, and all the vulgar tumult of the public-house became part of magic; for here before his eyes a scene in this grim mystery play had been enacted, and he had seen human flesh grow gray with a palsy of fear; the very hell of cowardice and terror had gaped wide within an arm's breadth. In the midst of these reflections, the barman came up and stared at him as if to hint that he had exhausted his right to take his ease, and Dyson bought another lease of the seat by an order for more beer. As he pondered the brief glimpse of tragedy, he recollected that with his first start of haunted fear the young man with whiskers had drawn his hand swiftly from his great coat pocket, and that he had heard something fall to the ground; and pretending to have dropped his pipe, Dyson began to grope in the corner, searching with his fingers. He touched some thing, and drew it gently to him, and with one brief glance, as he put it quietly in his pocket, he saw it was a little old-fashioned note book, bound in faded green morocco.

He drank down his beer at a gulp, and left the place, overjoyed at his fortunate discovery, and busy with conjecture as to the possible importance of the find. By turns he dreaded to find perhaps mere blank leaves, or the labored follies of a betting-book, but the faded morocco cover seemed to promise better things, and hint at mysteries. He piloted himself with no little difficulty out of the sour and squalid quarter he had entered with a light heart, and emerging at Gray's Inn Road, struck off down Guilford Street, and hastened home, only anxious for a lighted candle and solitude.

Dyson sat down at his bureau, and placed the little book before him; it was an effort to open the leaves and dare disappointment. But in desperation at last he laid his finger between the pages at haphazard, and rejoiced to see a compact range of writing with a margin, and as it chanced, three words caught his glance, and stood out apart from the mass. Dyson read:

THE GOLD TIBERIUS,

and his face flushed with fortune and the lust of the hunter.

He turned at once to the first leaf of the pocket-book, and proceeded to read with rapt interest the

HISTORY OF THE YOUNG MAN WITH SPECTACLES

FROM THE FILTHY and obscure lodging, situated, I verily believe, in one of the foulest slums of Clerkenwell, I indite this history of a life which, daily threatened, cannot last for very much longer. Every day, nay, every hour, I know too well my enemies are drawing their nets closer about me; even now, I am condemned to be a close prisoner in my squalid room, and I know that when I go out I shall go to my destruction. This history, if it chance to fall into good hands, may, perhaps, be of service in warning young men of the dangers and pitfalls that most surely must accompany any deviation from the ways of rectitude.

My name is Joseph Walters. When I came of age I found myself in possession of a small but sufficient income, and I determined that I would devote my life to scholarship. I do not mean the scholarship of these days; I had no intention of associating myself with men whose lives are spent in the unspeakably degrading occupation of "editing" classics, befouling the fair margins of the fairest books with idle and superfluous annotation, and doing their utmost to give a lasting disgust of all that is beautiful. An abbey church turned to the base use of a stable or a bake-house is a sorry sight; but more pitiable still is a masterpiece spluttered over with the commentator's pen, and his hideous mark "cf."

For my part I chose the glorious career of scholar in its ancient sense; I longed to possess encyclopædic learning, to grow old amongst books, to distil day by day, and year after year, the inmost sweetness of all worthy writings. I was not rich enough to collect a library, and I was therefore forced to betake myself to the Reading-Room of the British Museum.

O dim, far-lifted and mighty dome, Mecca of many minds, mausoleum of many hopes, sad house where all desires fail. For there men enter in with hearts uplifted, and dreaming minds, seeing in those exalted stairs a ladder to fame, in that pompous portico the gate of knowledge; and going in, find but vain vanity, and all but in vain. There, when the long streets are ringing, is silence, there eternal twilight, and the odor of heaviness. But there the blood flows thin and cold, and the brain burns adust; there is the hunt of shadows, and the chase of embattled phantoms; a striving against ghosts, and a war that has no victory. O dome, tomb of the quick; surely in thy galleries where no reverberant voice can call, sighs whisper ever, and mutterings of dead hopes; and there men's souls mount like moths towards the flame, and fall scorched and blackened beneath thee, O dim, far-lifted, and mighty dome.

Bitterly do I now regret the day when I took my place at a desk for the first time, and began my studies. I had not been an habitué of the place for many months, when I became acquainted with a serene and benevolent gentleman, a man somewhat past middle age, who nearly always occupied a desk next to mine. In the Reading-Room it takes little to make an acquaintance, a casual offer of assistance, a hint as to the search in the catalogue, and the ordinary politeness of men who constantly sit near each other; it was thus I came to know the man calling himself Dr. Lipsius. By degrees I grew to look for his presence, and to miss him when he was away, as was sometimes the case, and so a friendship sprang up between us. His immense range of learning was placed freely at my service; he would often astonish me by the way in which he would sketch out in a few minutes the bibliography of a given subject, and before long I had confided to him my ambitions.

"Ah," he said, "you should have been a German. I was like that myself when I was a boy. It is a wonderful resolve, an infinite career. 'I will know all things;' yes, it is a device indeed. But it means this — a life of labor without end, and a desire unsatisfied at last. The scholar has to die, and die saying, 'I know very little.'"

Gradually, by speeches such as these, Lipsius seduced me: he would praise the career, and at the same time hint that it was as hopeless as the search for the philosopher's stone, and so by artful suggestions, insinuated with infinite address, he by degrees succeeded in undermining all my principles. "After all," he used to say, "the greatest of all sciences, the key to all knowledge, is the science and art of pleasure. Rabelais was perhaps the greatest of all the encyclopædic scholars; and he, as you know, wrote the most remarkable book that has ever been written. And what does he teach men in this book? Surely, the joy of living. I need not remind you of the words, suppressed in most of the editions, the key of all the Rabelaisian mythology, of all the enigmas of his grand philosophy, *Vivez joyeux*. There you have all his learning; his work is the institutes of pleasure as the fine art; the finest art there is; the art of all arts. Rabelais had all science, but he had all life too. And we have gone a long way since his time. You are enlightened, I think; you do not consider all the petty rules and by-laws that a corrupt society has made for its own selfish convenience as the immutable decrees of the eternal."

Such were the doctrines that he preached; and it was by such insidious arguments, line upon line, here a little and there a little, that he at last succeeded in making me a man at war with the whole social system. I used to long for some opportunity to break the chains and to live a free life, to be my own rule and measure. I viewed existence with the eyes of a pagan, and Lipsius understood to perfection the art of stimulating the natural inclinations of a young man hitherto a hermit. As I gazed up at the great dome I saw it flushed with the flames and colors of a world of enticement, unknown to me, my imagination played me a thousand wanton tricks, and the forbidden drew me as surely as a loadstone draws on iron. At last my resolution was taken, and I boldly asked Lipsius to be my guide.

He told me to leave the Museum at my usual hour, half past four, to walk slowly along the northern pavement of Great Russell Street, and to wait at the corner of the street till I was addressed, and then to obey in all things the instructions of the person who came up to me. I carried out these directions, and stood at the corner looking about me anxiously, my heart beating fast, and my breath coming in gasps. I waited there for some time, and had begun to fear I had been made the object of a joke, when I suddenly became conscious of a gentleman who was looking at me with evident amusement from the opposite pavement of Tottenham Court Road. He came over, and raising his hat, politely begged me to follow him, and I did so without a word, wondering where we were going, and what was to happen. I was taken to a house of quiet and respectable aspect in a street lying to the north of Oxford Street, and my guide rang the bell, and a servant showed us into a large room, quietly furnished, on the ground floor. We sat there in silence for some time, and I noticed that the furniture, though unpretending, was extremely valuable. There were large oak-presses, two book-cases of extreme elegance, and in one corner a carved chest which must have been mediæval. Presently Dr. Lipsius came in and welcomed me with his usual manner, and after some desultory conversation, my guide left the room. Then an elderly man dropped in and began talking to Lipsius; and from their conversation I understood that my friend was a dealer in antiques; they spoke of the Hittite seal, and of the prospects of further discoveries, and later, when two or three more persons had joined us, there was an argument as to the possibility of a systematic exploration of the pre-celtic monuments in England I was; in fact, present at an archæological reception of an informal kind; and at nine o'clock, when the antiquaries were gone, I stared at Lipsius in a manner that showed I was puzzled, and sought an explanation.

"Now," he said, "we will go upstairs."

As we passed up the stairs, Lipsius lighting the way with a hand-lamp, I heard the sound of a jarring lock and bolts and bars shot on at the front door. My guide drew back a baize door, and we went down a passage, and I began to hear odd sounds, a noise of curious mirth, and then he pushed me through a second door, and my initiation began. I cannot write down what I witnessed that night; I cannot bear to recall what went on in those secret rooms fast shuttered and curtained so that no light should escape into the quiet street; they gave me red wine to drink, and a woman told me as I sipped it that it was wine of the Red Jar that Avallaunius had made. Another asked me how I liked the Wine of the Fauns, and I heard a dozen fantastic names, while the stuff boiled in my veins, and stirred, I think, something that had slept within me from the moment I was born. It seemed as if my self-consciousness deserted me; I was no longer a thinking agent, but at once subject and object. I mingled in the horrible sport and watched the mystery of the Greek groves and fountains enacted before me, saw the reeling dance, and heard the music calling as I sat beside my mate, and yet I was outside it all, and viewed my own part an idle spectator. Thus with strange rites they made me drink the cup, and when I woke up in the morning I was one of them, and had sworn to be faithful. At first I was shown the enticing side of things. I was bidden to enjoy myself and care for nothing but pleasure, and Lipsius himself indicated to me as the acutest enjoyment the spectacle of the terrors of the unfortunate persons who were from time to time decoyed into the evil house. But after a time it was pointed out to me that I must take my share in the work, and so I found myself compelled to be in my turn a seducer; and thus it is on my conscience that I have led many to the depths of the pit.

One day Lipsius summoned me to his private room, and told me that he had a difficult task to give me. He unlocked a drawer, and gave me a sheet of type-written paper, and had me read it. It was without place, or date, or signature, and ran as follows: —

“Mr. James Headley, F.S.A., will receive from his agent in Armenia, on the 12th inst., a unique coin, the gold Tiberius. It hears on the reverse a faun, with the legend VICTORIA. It is believed that this coin is of immense value. Mr. Headley will come up to town to show the coin to his friend, Professor Memys, of Chenies Street, Oxford Street, on some date between the 13th and the 18th.”

Dr. Lipsius chuckled at my face of blank surprise when I laid down this singular communication.

“You will have a good chance of showing your discretion,” he said. “This is not a common case; it requires great management and infinite tact. I am sure I wish I had a Panurge in my service, but we will see what you can do.”

“But is it not a joke?” I asked him. “How can you know, or rather how can this correspondent of yours know that a coin has been despatched from Armenia to Mr. Headley? And how is it possible to fix the period in which Mr. Headley will take it into his head to come up to town? It seems to me a lot of guess work.”

“My dear Mr. Walters,” he replied; “we do not deal in guess work here. It would bore you if I went into all these little details, the cogs and wheels, if I may say so, which move the machine. Don’t you think it is much more amusing to sit in front of the house and be astonished, than to be behind the scenes and see the mechanism? Better tremble at the thunder, believe me, than see the man rolling the cannon ball. But, after all, you needn’t bother about the how and why; you have your share to do. Of course, I shall give you full instructions, but a great deal depends on the way the thing is carried out. I have often heard very young men maintain that style is everything in literature, and I can assure you that the same maxim holds good in our far more delicate profession. With us style is absolutely everything, and that is why we have friends like yourself."

I went away in some perturbation; he had no doubt designedly left everything in mystery, and I did not know what part I should have to play. Though I had assisted at scenes of hideous revelry, I was not yet dead to all echo of human feeling, and I trembled lest I should receive the order to be Mr. Headley's executioner.

A week later, it was on the sixteenth of the month, Dr. Lipsius made me a sign to come into his room.

"It is for to-night," he began. "Please to attend carefully to what I am going to say, Mr. Walters, and on peril of your life, for it is a dangerous matter, — on peril of your life I say, follow these instructions to the letter. You understand? Well, to-night at about half-past seven you will stroll quietly up the Hampstead Road till you come to Vincent Street. Turn down here and walk along, taking the third turning to your right, which is Lambert Terrace. Then follow the terrace, cross the road, and go along Hertford Street, and so into Lillington Square. The second turning you will come to in the square is called Sheen Street; but in reality it is more a passage between blank walls than a street. Whatever you do, take care to be at the corner of this street at eight o'clock precisely. You will walk along it, and just at the bend, where you lose sight of the square, you will find an old gentleman with white beard and whiskers. He will in all probability be abusing a cabman for having brought him to Sheen Street instead of Chenies Street. You will go up to him quietly and offer your services; he will tell you where he wants to go, and you will be so courteous as to offer to show him the way. I may say that Professor Memys moved, into Chenies Street a month ago; thus Mr. Headley has never been to see him there, and moreover he is very short-sighted, and knows little of the topography of London. Indeed he has quite lived the life of a learned hermit at Audley Hall.

"Well, need I say more to a man of your intelligence? You will bring him to this house; he will ring the bell, and a servant in quiet livery will let him in. Then your work will be done, and I am sure done well. You will leave Mr. Headley at the door, and simply continue your walk, and I shall hope to see you the next day. I really don't think there is anything more I can tell you."

These minute instructions I took care to carry out to the letter. I confess that I walked up the Tottenham Court Road by no means blindly, but with an uneasy sense that I was coming to a decisive point in my life. The noise and rumor of the crowded pavements were to me but dumb-show. I revolved again and again in ceaseless iteration the task that had been laid on me, and I questioned myself as to the possible results. As I got near the point of turning, I asked myself whether danger were not about my steps; the cold thought struck me that I was suspected and observed, and every chance foot-passenger who gave me a second glance seemed to me an officer of police. My time was running out, the sky had darkened, and I hesitated, half resolved to go no farther, but to abandon Lipsius and his friends forever. I had almost determined to take this course, when the conviction suddenly came to me that the whole thing was a gigantic joke, a fabrication of rank improbability. Who could have procured the information about the Armenian agent, I asked myself. By what means could Lipsius have known the particular day, and the very train that Mr. Headley was to take? How engage him to enter one special cab amongst the dozens waiting at Paddington? I vowed it a mere Milesian tale, and went forward merrily, and turned down Vincent Street, and threaded out the route that Lipsius had so carefully impressed upon me. The various streets he had named were all places of silence and an oppressive cheap gentility; it was dark, and I felt alone in the musty squares and crescents, where people pattered by at intervals, and the shadows were growing blacker. I entered Sheen Street, and found it, as Lipsius had said, more a passage than a street; it was a by-way, on one side a low wall and neglected gardens and grim backs of a line of houses, and on the other a timber yard. I turned the corner, and lost sight of the square, and then to my astonishment I saw the scene of which I had been told. A hansom cab had come to a stop beside the pavement, and an old man carrying a handbag was fiercely abusing the cabman, who sat on his perch the image of bewilderment.

“Yes, but I’m sure you said Sheen Street, and that’s where I brought you,” I heard him saying, as I came up, and the old gentleman boiled in a fury, and threatened police and suits at law.

The sight gave me a shock; and in an instant I resolved to go through with it. I strolled on, and without noticing the cabman, lifted my hat politely to old Mr. Headley.

“Pardon me, sir,” I said, “but is there any difficulty? I see you are a traveller; perhaps the cabman has made a mistake. Can I direct you?”

The old fellow turned to me, and I noticed that he snarled and showed his teeth like an ill-tempered cur as he spoke.

“This drunken fool has brought me here,” he said. “I told him to drive to Chenies Street, and he brings me to this infernal place. I won’t pay him a farthing, and I meant to have given him a handsome sum. I am going to call for the police and give him in charge.”

At this threat the cabman seemed to take alarm. He glanced round as if to make sure that no policeman was in sight and drove off grumbling loudly, and Mr. Headley grinned, savagely with satisfaction at having saved his fare, and put back one and sixpence into his pocket, the “handsome sum” the cabman had lost.

“My dear sir,” I said, “I am afraid this piece of stupidity has annoyed you a great deal. It is a long way to Chenies Street, and you will have some difficulty in finding the place unless you know London pretty well.”

“I know it very little,” he replied. “I never come up except on important business, and I’ve never been to Chenies Street in my life.”

“Really? I should be happy to show you the way. I have been for a stroll, and it will not at all inconvenience me to take you to your destination.”

“I want to go to Professor Memys, at number 15. It’s most annoying to me. I’m short-sighted, and I can never make out the numbers on the doors.”

“This way if you please,” I said, and we set out.

I did not find Mr. Headley an agreeable man; indeed, he grumbled the whole way. He informed me of his name, and I took care to say, “The well-known antiquary?” and thenceforth I was compelled to listen to the history of his complicated squabbles with publishers, who had treated him, as he said, disgracefully. The man was a chapter in the Irritability of Authors. He told me that he had been on the point of making the fortune of several firms, but had been compelled to abandon the design owing to their rank ingratitude. Besides these ancient histories of wrong and the more recent misadventure of the cabman, he had another grievous complaint to make. As he came along in the train, he had been sharpening a pencil, and the sudden jolt of the engine as it drew up at a station had driven the penknife against his face, inflicting a small triangular wound just on the cheek-bone, which he showed me. He denounced the railway company, and heaped imprecations on the head of the driver, and talked of claiming damages. Thus he grumbled all the way, not noticing in the least where he was going, and so inamiable did his conduct appear to me that I began to enjoy the trick I was playing on him.

Nevertheless my heart beat a little faster as we turned into the street where Lipsius was waiting. A thousand accidents, I thought, might happen. Some chance might bring one of Headley's friends to meet us; perhaps, though he knew not Chenies Street, he might know the street where I was taking him; in spite of his short-sight he might possibly make out the number, or in a sudden fit of suspicion he might make an inquiry of the policeman at the corner. Thus every step upon the pavement, as we drew nearer to the goal, was to me a pang and a terror, and every approaching passenger carried a certain threat of danger. I gulped down my excitement with an effort, and made shift to say pretty quietly: —

"No. 15, I think you said? That is the third house from this. If you will allow me, I will leave you now; I have been delayed a little, and my way lies on the other side of Tottenham Court Road."

He snarled out some kind of thanks, and I turned my back and walked swiftly in the opposite direction. A minute or two later, I looked round and saw Mr. Headley standing on the doorstep, and then the door opened and he went in. For my part I gave a sigh of relief, and hastened to get away from the neighborhood and endeavored to enjoy myself in merry company.

The whole of the next day I kept away from Lipsius. I felt anxious, but I did not know what had happened or what was happening, and a reasonable regard for my own safety told me that I should do well to remain quietly at home. My curiosity, however, to learn the end of the odd drama in which I had played a part stung me to the quick, and late in the evening I made up my mind to go and see how events had turned out. Lipsius nodded when I came in, and asked me if I could give him five minutes' talk. We went into his room, and he began to walk up and down, and I sat waiting for him to speak.

“My dear Mr. Walters,” he said at length, “I congratulate you warmly. Your work was done in the most thorough and artistic manner. You will go far. Look.”

He went to his escritoire and pressed a secret spring, and a drawer flew out, and he laid something on the table. It was a gold coin, and I took it up and examined it eagerly, and read the legend about the figure of the faun.

“Victoria,” I said, smiling.

“Yes, it was a great capture, which we owe to you. I had great difficulty in persuading Mr. Headley that a little mistake had been made; that was how I put it. He was very disagreeable, and indeed ungentlemanly about it; didn’t he strike you as a very cross old man?”

I held the coin, admiring the choice and rare design, clear cut as if from the mint; and I thought the fine gold glowed and burned like a lamp.

“And what finally became of Mr. Headley?” I said at last.

Lipsius smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

“What on earth does it matter?” he said. “He might be here, or there, or anywhere; but what possible consequence could it be? Besides, your question rather surprises me. You are an intelligent man, Mr. Walters. Just think it over, and I’m sure you won’t repeat the question.”

“My dear sir,” I said, “I hardly think you are treating me fairly. You have paid me some handsome compliments on my share in the capture, and I naturally wish to know how the matter ended. From what I saw of Mr. Headley, I should think you must have had some difficulty with him.”

He gave me no answer for the moment, but began again to walk up and down the room, apparently absorbed in thought.

“Well,” he said at last, “I suppose there is something in what you say. We are certainly indebted to you. I have said, that I have a high opinion of your intelligence, Mr. Walters. Just look here, will you.”

He opened a door communicating with another room and pointed.

There was a great box lying on the floor; a queer coffin-shaped thing. I looked at it and saw it was a mummy case like those in the British Museum, vividly painted in the brilliant Egyptian colors, with I knew not what proclamation of dignity or hopes of life immortal. The mummy, swathed about in the robes of death, was lying within, and the face had been uncovered.

“You are going to send this away?” I said, forgetting the question I had put.

“Yes; I have an order from a local museum. Look a little more closely, Mr. Walters.”

Puzzled by his manner, I peered into the face, while he held up the lamp. The flesh was black with the passing of the centuries; but as I looked I saw upon the right cheek-bone a small triangular scar, and the secret of the mummy flashed upon me. I was looking at the dead body of the man whom I had decoyed into that house.

There was no thought or design of action in my mind. I held the accursed coin in my hand, burning me with a foretaste of hell, and I fled as I would have fled from pestilence and death, and dashed into the street in blind horror, not knowing where I went. I felt the gold coin grasped in my clenched list, and threw it away, I knew not where, and ran on and on through by-streets and dark ways, till at last I issued out into a crowded thoroughfare, and checked myself. Then, as consciousness returned, I realized my instant peril, and understood what would happen if I fell into the hands of Lipsius. I knew that I had put forth my finger to thwart a relentless mechanism rather than a man; my recent adventure with the unfortunate Mr. Headley had taught me that Lipsius had agents in all quarters, and I foresaw that if I fell into his hands, he would remain true to his doctrine of style, and cause me to die a death of some horrible and ingenious torture. I bent my whole mind to the task of outwitting him and his emissaries, three of whom I knew to have proved their ability for tracking down persons who for various reasons preferred to remain obscure. These servants of Lipsius were two men and a woman, and the woman was incomparably the most subtle and the most deadly. Yet I considered that I too had some portion of craft, and I took my resolve. Since then I have matched myself day by day and hour by hour against the ingenuity of Lipsius and his myrmidons. For a time I was successful; though they beat furiously after me in the covert of London, I remained *perdu*, and watched with some amusement their frantic efforts to recover the scent lost in two or three minutes. Every lure and wile was put forth to entice me from my hiding-place. I was informed by the medium of the public prints that what I had taken had been recovered, and meetings were proposed in which I might hope to gain a great deal without the slightest risk. I laughed at their endeavors, and began a little to despise the organization I had so dreaded, and ventured more abroad. Not once or twice, but several times, I recognized the two men who were charged with my capture, and I succeeded in eluding them easily at close quarters; and a little hastily I decided that I had nothing to dread, and that my craft was greater than theirs. But in the mean while, while I congratulated myself on my cunning, the third of Lipsius's emissaries was weaving her nets, and in an evil hour I paid a visit to an old friend, a literary man named Russell, who lived in a quiet street in Bayswater. The woman, as I found out too late, a day or two ago, occupied rooms in the same house, and I was followed and tracked down. Too late, as I have said, I recognized that I had made a fatal mistake, and that I was besieged. Sooner or later I shall find myself in the power of an enemy without pity; and so surely as I leave this house I shall go to receive doom. I hardly dare to guess how it will at last fall upon me. My imagination, always a vivid one, paints to me appalling pictures of the unspeakable torture which I shall probably endure; and I know that I shall die with Lipsius standing near and gloating over the refinements of my suffering and my shame.

Hours, nay, minutes, have become very precious to me. I sometimes pause in the midst of anticipating my tortures, to wonder whether even now I cannot hit upon some supreme stroke, some design of infinite subtlety, to free myself from the toils. But I find that the faculty of combination has left me. I am as the scholar in the old myth, deserted by the power which has helped, me hitherto. I do not know when the supreme moment will come, but sooner or later it is inevitable, and before long I shall receive sentence, and from the sentence to execution will not be long.

I cannot remain here a prisoner any longer. I shall go out to-night when the streets are full of crowds and clamors, and make a last effort to escape.

It was with profound astonishment that Dyson closed the little book, and thought of the strange series of incidents which had brought him into touch with the plots and counterplots connected with the Gold Tiberius. He had bestowed the coin carefully away, and he shuddered at the bare possibility of its place of deposit becoming known to the evil band who seemed to possess such extraordinary sources of information.

It had grown late while he read, and he put the pocket-book away, hoping with all his heart that the unhappy Walters might even at the eleventh hour escape the doom he dreaded.

ADVENTURE OF THE DESERTED RESIDENCE.

"A WONDERFUL STORY, as you say; an extraordinary sequence and play of coincidence. I confess that your expressions when you first showed me the Gold Tiberius were not exaggerated. But do you think that Walters has really some fearful fate to dread?"

"I cannot say. Who can presume to predict events when life itself puts on the robe of coincidence and plays at drama? Perhaps we have not yet reached the last chapter in the queer story. But, look, we are drawing near to the verge of London; there are gaps, you see, in the serried ranks of brick, and a vision of green fields beyond."

Dyson had persuaded the ingenious Mr. Phillipps to accompany him on one of those aimless walks to which he was himself so addicted. Starting from the very heart of London, they had made their way westward through the stony avenues, and were now just emerging from the red lines of an extreme suburb, and presently the half-finished road ended, a quiet lane began, and they were beneath the shade of elm-trees. The yellow autumn sunlight that had lit up the bare distance of the suburban street now filtered down through the boughs of the trees and shone on the glowing carpet of fallen leaves, and the pools of rain glittered and shot back the gleam of light. Over all the broad pastures there was peace and the happy rest of autumn before the great winds begin, and afar off, London lay all vague and immense amidst the veiling mist; here and there a distant window catching the sun and kindling with fire, and a spire gleaming high, and below the streets in shadow, and the turmoil of life. Dyson and Phillipps walked on in silence beneath the high hedges, till at a turn of the lane they saw a mouldering and ancient gate standing open, and the prospect of a house at the end of a moss-grown carriage drive.

"There is a survival for you," said Dyson; "it has come to its last days, I imagine. Look how the laurels have grown gaunt, and weedy, and black, and bare, beneath; look at the house, covered with yellow wash and patched with green damp. Why, the very notice-board which informs all and singular that the place is to be let has cracked and half fallen."

"Suppose we go in and see it," said Phillipps. "I don't think there is anybody about."

They turned up the drive, and walked slowly, towards this remnant of old days. It was a large straggling house, with curved wings at either end, and behind a series of irregular roofs and projections, showing that the place had been added to at divers dates; the two wings were roofed in cupola fashion, and at one side, as they came nearer, they could see a stable-yard, and a clock turret with a bell, and the dark masses of gloomy cedars. Amidst all the lineaments of dissolution, there was but one note of contrast: the sun was setting beyond the elm-trees, and all the west and the south were in flames, and on the upper windows of the house the glow shone reflected, and it seemed as if blood and fire were mingled. Before the yellow front of the mansion, stained, as Dyson had remarked, with gangrenous patches, green and blackening, stretched what once had been, no doubt, a well-kept lawn, but it was now rough and ragged, and nettles and great docks, and all manner of coarse weeds, struggled in the places of the flower-beds. The urns had fallen from their pillars beside the walk, and lay broken in shards upon the ground, and everywhere from grass-plot and path a fungoid growth had sprung up and multiplied, and lay dank and slimy like a festering sore upon the earth. In the middle of the rank grass of the lawn was a desolate fountain; the rim of the basin was crumbling and pulverized with decay, and within, the water stood stagnant, with green scum for the lilies that had once bloomed there; and rust had eaten into the bronze flesh of the Triton that stood in the middle, and the conch-shell he held was broken.

"Here," said Dyson, "one might moralize over decay and death. Here all the stage is decked out with the symbols of dissolution; the cedarn gloom and twilight hangs heavy around us, and everywhere within the pale dankness has found a harbor, and the very air is changed and brought to accord with the scene. To me, I confess, this deserted house is as moral as a graveyard, and I find something sublime in that lonely Triton, deserted in the midst of his water-pool. He is the last of the gods; they have left him and he remembers the sound of water falling on water, and the days that were sweet."

"I like your reflections extremely," said Phillipps, "but I may mention that the door of the house is open.".

"Let us go in then."

The door was just ajar, and they passed into the mouldy hall, and looked in at a room on one side. It was a large room, going far back, and the rich old red flock paper was peeling from the walls in long strips, and blackened with vague patches of rising damp; the ancient clay, the dank reeking earth rising up again, and subduing all the work of men's hands after the conquest of many years. And the floor was thick with the dust of decay, and the painted ceiling fading from all gay colors and light fancies of cupids in a career, and disfigured with sores of dampness, seemed transmuted into other work. No longer the amorini chased one another pleasantly, with limbs that sought not to advance, and hands that merely simulated the act of grasping at the wreathed flowers, but it appeared some savage burlesque of the old careless world and of its cherished conventions, and the dance of the loves had become a dance of Death; black pustules and festering sores swelled and clustered on fair limbs, and smiling faces showed corruption, and the fairy blood had boiled with the germs of foul disease; it was a parable of the leaven working, and worms devouring for a banquet the heart of the rose.

Strangely, under the painted ceiling, against the decaying walls, two old chairs still stood alone, the sole furniture of the empty place. High-backed, with curving arms and twisted legs, covered with faded gold leaf, and upholstered in tattered damask, they too were a part of the symbolism, and struck Dyson with surprise. "What have we here?" he said. "Who has sat in these chairs? Who, clad in peach-bloom satin, with lace ruffles and diamond buckles, all golden, *a conté fleurettes* to his companion? Phillipps, we are in another age. I wish I had some snuff to offer you, but failing that, I beg to offer you a seat, and we will sit and smoke tobacco. A horrid practice, but I am no pedant."

They sat down on the queer old chairs, and looked out of the dim and grimy panes to the ruined lawn, and the fallen urns, and the deserted Triton.

Presently Dyson ceased his imitation of eighteenth century airs; he no longer pulled forward imaginary ruffles, or tapped a ghostly snuff-box.

“It’s a foolish fancy,” he said at last, “but I keep thinking I hear a noise like some one groaning. Listen; no, I can’t hear it now. There it is again! Did you notice it, Phillipps?

“No, I can’t say I heard anything. But I believe that old places like this are like shells from the shore, ever echoing with noises. The old beams, mouldering piecemeal, yield a little and groan, and such a house as this I can fancy all resonant at night with voices, the voices of matter so slowly and so surely transformed into other shapes; the voice of the worm that gnaws at last the very heart of the oak; the voice of stone grinding on stone, and the voice of the conquest of time.”

They sat still in the old armchairs and grew graver in the musty ancient air, — the air of a hundred years ago.

“I don’t like the place,” said Phillipps, after a long pause. “To me it seems, as if there were a sickly, unwholesome smell about it, a smell of something burning.”

“You are right; there is an evil odor here. I wonder what it is! Hark! Did you hear that?”

A hollow sound, a noise of infinite sadness and infinite pain broke in upon the silence; and the two men looked fearfully at one another, horror and the sense of unknown things glimmering in their eyes.

“Come,” said Dyson, “we must see into this,” and they went into the hall and listened in the silence.

“Do you know,” said Phillipps, “it seems absurd, but I could almost fancy that the smell is that of burning flesh.”

They went up the hollow-sounding stairs, and the the odor became thick and noisome, stifling the breath; and a vapor, sickening as the smell of the chamber of death, choked them. A door was open and they entered the large upper room, and clung hard to one another, shuddering at the sight they saw.

A naked man was lying on the floor, his arms and legs stretched wide apart, and bound to pegs that had been hammered into the boards. The body was torn and mutilated in the most hideous fashion, scarred with the marks of red-hot irons, a shameful ruin of the human shape. But upon the middle of the body a fire of coals was smouldering; the flesh had been burned through. The man was dead, but the smoke of his torment mounted still, a black vapor.

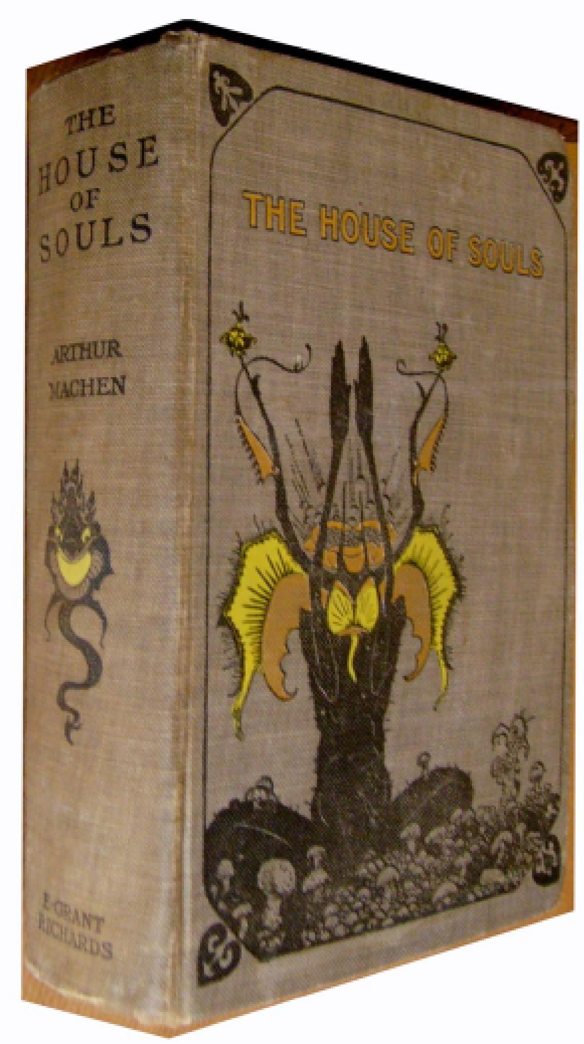
“The young man with spectacles,” said Mr. Dyson.

THE END

The House of Souls

This story collection, published in 1906, brings together in book form several stories previously published in magazines or in other collections. In this sense, it might be seen as the first 'collected edition' of Machen's short fiction. It was the first new volume of fiction published by Machen since *The Three Impostors* in 1895 – a gap largely ascribable to the declining fashion for the scandalous excesses of decadent writing in the aftermath of the Wilde trials.

As well as 'The Great God Pan' and 'The Inmost Light', the collection includes three stories which appear here for the first time in book form. 'A Fragment of Life' is about a transcendent experience that befalls the Darnell family, while 'The White People' is a powerful and frightening story of a young girl's encounter with supernatural evil. 'The Red Hand' revisits the theme of a degenerate 'lost race'. The collection contains some of Machen's best work and helped to secure his reputation with a new generation of twentieth-century readers.


THE HOUSE OF SOULS
ARTHUR MACHEN
E. GRANT RICHARDS
THE HOUSE OF SOULS

The first edition

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Please note: *The Great God Pan* and *The Inmost Light* already appear in the previous collection: THE GREAT GOD PAN, AND THE INMOST LIGHT.

Introduction

It was somewhere, I think, towards the autumn of the year 1889 that the thought occurred to me that I might perhaps try to write a little in the modern way. For, hitherto, I had been, as it were, wearing costume in literature. The rich, figured English of the earlier part of the seventeenth century had always had a peculiar attraction for me. I accustomed myself to write in it, to think in it; I kept a diary in that manner, and half-unconsciously dressed up my every day thoughts and common experiences in the habit of the Cavalier or of the Caroline Divine. Thus, when in 1884 I got a commission to translate the Heptameron, I wrote quite naturally in the language of my favourite period, and, as some critics declare, made my English version somewhat more antique and stiff than the original. And so "The Anatomy of Tobacco" was an exercise in the antique of a different kind; and "The Chronicle of Clemendy" was a volume of tales that tried their hardest to be mediæval; and the translation of the "Moyen de Parvenir" was still a thing in the ancient mode.

It seemed, in fine, to be settled that in literature I was to be a hanger on of the past ages; and I don't quite know how I managed to get away from them. I had finished translating "Casanova" — more modern, but not thoroughly up to date — and I had nothing particular on hand, and, somehow or other, it struck me that I might try a little writing for the papers. I began with a "turnover" as it was called, for the old vanished Globe, a harmless little article on old English proverbs; and I shall never forget my pride and delight when one day, being at Dover, with a fresh autumn wind blowing from the sea, I bought a chance copy of the paper and saw my essay on the front page. Naturally, I was encouraged to persevere, and I wrote more turnovers for the Globe and then tried the St. James's Gazette and found that they paid two pounds instead of the guinea of the Globe, and again, naturally enough, devoted most of my attention to the St. James's Gazette. From the essay or literary paper, I somehow got into the habit of the short story, and did a good many of these, still for the St. James's, till in the autumn of 1890, I wrote a tale called "The Double Return." Well, Oscar Wilde asked: "Are you the author of that story that fluttered the dovecotes? I thought it was very good." But: it did flutter the dovecotes, and the St. James's Gazette and I parted.

But I still wrote short stories, now chiefly for what were called "society" papers, which have become extinct. And one of these appeared in a paper, the name of which I have long forgotten. I had called the tale "Resurrectio Mortuorum," and the editor had very sensibly rendered the title into "The Resurrection of the Dead."

I do not clearly remember how the story began. I am inclined to think something in this way:

"Old Mr. Llewellyn, the Welsh antiquary, threw his copy of the morning paper on the floor and banged the breakfast-table, exclaiming: 'Good God! Here's the last of the Caradocs of the Garth, has been married in a Baptist Chapel by a dissenting preacher; somewhere in Peckham.'" Or, did I take up the tale a few years after this happy event and shew the perfectly cheerful contented young commercial clerk running somewhat too fast to catch the bus one morning, and feeling dazed all day long over the office work, and going home in a sort of dimness, and then at his very doorstep, recovering as it were, his ancestral consciousness. I think it was the sight of his wife and the tones of her voice that suddenly announced to him with the sound of a trumpet that he had nothing to do with this woman with the Cockney accent, or the pastor who was coming to supper, or the red brick villa, or Peckham or the City of London. Though the old place on the banks of the Usk had been sold fifty years before, still, he was Caradoc of the Garth. I forget how I ended the story: but here was one of the sources of "A Fragment of Life."

And somehow, though the tale was written and printed and paid for; it stayed with me as a tale half told in the years from 1890 to 1899. I was in love with the notion: this contrast between the raw London suburb and its mean limited life and its daily journeys to the City; its utter banality and lack of significance; between all this and the old, grey mullioned house under the forest near the river, the armorial bearings on the Jacobean porch, and noble old traditions: all this captivated me and I thought of my mistold tale at intervals, while I was writing "The Great God Pan," "The Red Hand," "The Three Impostors," "The Hill of Dreams," "The White People," and "Hieroglyphics." It was at the back of my head, I suppose, all the time, and at last in '99 I began to write it all over again from a somewhat different standpoint.

The fact was that one grey Sunday afternoon in the March of that year, I went for a long walk with a friend. I was living in Gray's Inn in those days, and we stravaged up Gray's Inn Road on one of those queer, unscientific explorations of the odd corners of London in which I have always delighted. I don't think that there was any definite scheme laid down; but we resisted manifold temptations. For on the right of Gray's Inn Road is one of the oddest quarters of London — to those, that is, with the unsealed eyes. Here are streets of 1800-1820 that go down into a valley — Flora in "Little Dorrit" lived in one of them — and then crossing King's Cross Road climb very steeply up to heights which always suggest to me that I am in the hinder and poorer quarter of some big seaside place, and that there is a fine view of the sea from the attic windows. This place was once called Spa Fields, and has very properly an old meeting house of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connection as one of its attractions. It is one of the parts of London which would attract me if I wished to hide; not to escape arrest, perhaps, but rather to escape the possibility of ever meeting anybody who had ever seen me before.

But: my friend and I resisted it all. We strolled along to the parting of many ways at King's Cross Station, and struck boldly up Pentonville. Again: on our left was Barnsbury, which is like Africa. In Barnsbury semper aliquid novi, but our course was laid for us by some occult influence, and we came to Islington and chose the right hand side of the way. So far, we were tolerably in the region of the known, since every year there is the great Cattle Show at Islington, and many men go there. But, trending to the right, we got into Canonbury, of which there are only Travellers' Tales. Now and then, perhaps, as one sits about the winter fire, while the storm howls without and the snow falls fast, the silent man in the corner has told how he had a great aunt who lived in Canonbury in 1860; so in the fourteenth century you might meet men who had talked with those who had been in Cathay and had seen the splendours of the Grand Cham. Such is Canonbury; I hardly dare speak of its dim squares, of the deep, leafy back-gardens behind the houses, running down into obscure alleyways with discreet, mysterious postern doors: as I say, "Travellers' Tales"; things not much credited.

But, he who adventures in London has a foretaste of infinity. There is a region beyond Ultima Thule. I know not how it was, but on this famous

Sunday afternoon, my friend and I, passing through Canonbury came into something called the Balls Pond Road — Mr. Perch, the messenger of Dombey & Son, lived somewhere in this region — and so I think by Dalston down into Hackney where caravans, or trams, or, as I think you say in America, trolley cars set out at stated intervals to the limits of the western world.

But in the course of that walk which had become an exploration of the unknown, I had seen two common things which had made a profound impression upon me. One of these things was a street, the other a small family party. The street was somewhere in that vague, uncharted, Balls Pond-Dalston region. It was a long street and a grey street. Each house was exactly like every other house. Each house had a basement, the sort of story which house-agents have grown to call of late a "lower ground floor." The front windows of these basements were half above the patch of black, soot-smeared soil and coarse grass that named itself a garden, and so, passing along at the hour of four o'clock or four-thirty, I could see that in everyone of these "breakfast rooms" — their technical name — the tea tray and the tea cups were set out in readiness. I received from this trivial and natural circumstance an impression of a dull life, laid out in dreadful lines of patterned uniformity, of a life without adventure of body or soul.

Then, the family party. It got into the tram down Hackney way. There were father, mother and baby; and I should think that they came from a small shop, probably from a small draper's shop. The parents were young people of twenty-five to thirty-five. He wore a black shiny frock coat — an "Albert" in America? — a high hat, little side whiskers and dark moustache and a look of amiable vacuity. His wife was oddly bedizened in black satin, with a wide spreading hat, not ill-looking, simply unmeaning. I fancy that she had at times, not too often, "a temper of her own." And the very small baby sat upon her knee. The party was probably going forth to spend the Sunday evening with relations or friends.

And yet, I said to myself, these two have partaken together of the great mystery, of the great sacrament of nature, of the source of all that is magical in the wide world. But have they discerned the mysteries? Do they know that they have been in that place which is called Syon and Jerusalem? — I am quoting from an old book and a strange book.

It was thus that, remembering the old story of the "Resurrection of the Dead," I was furnished with the source of "A Fragment of Life." I was writing "Hieroglyphics" at the time, having just finished "The White People"; or rather, having just decided that what now appears in print under that heading was all that would ever be written, that the Great Romance that should have been written — in manifestation of the idea — would never be written at all. And so, when Hieroglyphics was finished, somewhere about May 1899, I set about "A Fragment of Life" and wrote the first chapter with the greatest relish and the utmost ease. And then my own life was dashed into fragments. I ceased to write. I travelled. I saw Syon and Bagdad and other strange places — see "Things Near and Far" for an explanation of this obscure passage — and found myself in the lighted world of floats and battens, entering L. U. E., crossing R and exiting R 3; and doing all sorts of queer things.

But still, in spite of all these shocks and changes, the "notion" would not leave me. I went at it again, I suppose in 1904; consumed with a bitter determination to finish what I had begun. Everything now had become difficult. I tried this way and that way and the other way. They all failed and I broke down on every one of them; and I tried and tried again. At last I cobbled up some sort of an end, an utterly bad one, as I realized as I wrote every single line and word of it, and the story appeared, in 1904 or 1905, in Horlick's Magazine under the editorship of my old and dear friend, A. E. Waite.

Still; I was not satisfied. That end was intolerable and I knew it. Again, I sat down to the work, night after night I wrestled with it. And I remember an odd circumstance which may or may not be of some physiological interest. I was then living in a circumscribed "upper part" of a house in Cosway Street, Marylebone Road. That I might struggle by myself, I wrote in the little kitchen; and night after night as I fought grimly, savagely, all but hopelessly for some fit close for "A Fragment of Life," I was astonished and almost alarmed to find that my feet developed a sensation of most deadly cold. The room was not cold; I had lit the oven burners of the little gas cooking stove. I was not cold; but my feet were chilled in a quite extraordinary manner, as if they had been packed in ice. At last I took off my slippers with a view of poking my toes into the oven of the stove, and feeling my feet with my hand, I perceived that, in fact, they were not cold at *all! But the sensation remained; there, I suppose, you have an odd case of a transference of something that was happening in the brain to the extremities. My feet were quite warm to the palm of my hand, but to my sense they were frozen. But what a testimony to the fitness of the American idiom, "cold feet," as signifying a depressed and desponding mood! But, somehow or other, the tale was finished and the "notion" was at last out of my head. I have gone into all this detail about "A Fragment of Life" because I have been assured in many quarters that it is the best thing that I have ever done, and students of the crooked ways of literature may be interested to hear of the abominable labours of doing it.*

"The White People" belongs to the same year as the first chapter of "A Fragment of Life," 1899, which was also the year of "Hieroglyphics." The fact was I was in high literary spirits, just then. I had been harassed and worried for a whole year in the office of Literature, a weekly paper published by The Times, and getting free again, I felt like a prisoner released from chains; ready to dance in letters to any extent. Forthwith I thought of "A Great Romance," a highly elaborate and elaborated piece of work, full of the strangest and rarest things. I have forgotten how it was that this design broke down; but I found by experiment that the great romance was to go on that brave shelf of the unwritten books, the shelf where all the splendid books are to be found in their golden bindings. "The White People" is a small piece of salvage from the wreck. Oddly enough, as is insinuated in the Prologue, the mainspring of the story is to be sought in a medical textbook. In the Prologue reference is made to a review article by Dr. Coryn. But I have since found out that Dr. Coryn was merely quoting from a scientific treatise that case of the lady whose fingers became violently inflamed because she saw a heavy window sash descend on the fingers of her child. With this instance, of course, are to be considered all cases of stigmata, both ancient and modern: and then the question is obvious enough: what limits can we place to the powers of the imagination? Has not the imagination the potentiality at least of performing any miracle, however marvelous, however incredible, according to our ordinary standards? As to the decoration of the story, that is a mingling which I venture to think somewhat ingenious of odds and ends of folk lore and witch lore with pure inventions of my own. Some years later I was amused to receive a letter from a gentleman who was, if I remember, a schoolmaster somewhere in Malaya. This gentleman, an earnest student of folklore, was

writing an article on some singular things he had observed amongst the Malayans, and chiefly a kind of were-wolf state into which some of them were able to conjure themselves. He had found, as he said, startling resemblances between the magic ritual of Malaya and some of the ceremonies and practices hinted at in "The White People." He presumed that all this was not fancy but fact; that is that I was describing practices actually in use among superstitious people on the Welsh border; he was going to quote from me in the article for the Journal of the Folk Lore Society, or whatever it was called, and he just wanted to let me know. I wrote in a hurry to the folklore journal to bid them beware: for the instances selected by the student were all fictions of my own brain!

"The Great God Pan" and "The Inmost Light" are tales of an earlier date, going back to 1890, '91, '92. I have written a good deal about them in "Far Off Things," and in a preface to an edition of "The Great God Pan," published by Messrs. Simpkin, Marshall in 1916, I have described at length the origins of the book. But I must quote anew some extracts from the reviews which welcomed "The Great God Pan" to my extraordinary entertainment, hilarity and refreshment. Here are a few of the best:

"It is not Mr. Machen's fault but his misfortune, that one shakes with laughter rather than with dread over the contemplation of his psychological bogey." — Observer.

"His horror, we regret to say, leaves us quite cold ... and our flesh obstinately refuses to creep." — Chronicle.

"His bogies don't scare." — Sketch.

"We are afraid he only succeeds in being ridiculous." — Manchester Guardian.

"Gruesome, ghastly and dull." — Lady's Pictorial.

"Incoherent nightmare of sex ... which would soon lead to insanity if unrestrained ... innocuous from its absurdity." — Westminster Gazette.

And so on, and so on. Several papers, I remember, declared that "The Great God Pan" was simply a stupid and incompetent rehash of Huysmans' "Là-Bas" and "À Rebours." I had not read these books so I got them both. Thereon, I perceived that my critics had not read them either.

A Fragment of Life

I

EDWARD DARNELL AWOKE from a dream of an ancient wood, and of a clear well rising into grey film and vapour beneath a misty, glimmering heat; and as his eyes opened he saw the sunlight bright in the room, sparkling on the varnish of the new furniture. He turned and found his wife's place vacant, and with some confusion and wonder of the dream still lingering in his mind, he rose also, and began hurriedly to set about his dressing, for he had overslept a little, and the 'bus passed the corner at 9.15. He was a tall, thin man, dark-haired and dark-eyed, and in spite of the routine of the City, the counting of coupons, and all the mechanical drudgery that had lasted for ten years, there still remained about him the curious hint of a wild grace, as if he had been born a creature of the antique wood, and had seen the fountain rising from the green moss and the grey rocks.

The breakfast was laid in the room on the ground floor, the back room with the French windows looking on the garden, and before he sat down to his fried bacon he kissed his wife seriously and dutifully. She had brown hair and brown eyes, and though her lovely face was grave and quiet, one would have said that she might have awaited her husband under the old trees, and bathed in the pool hollowed out of the rocks.

They had a good deal to talk over while the coffee was poured out and the bacon eaten, and Darnell's egg brought in by the stupid, staring servant-girl of the dusty face. They had been married for a year, and they had got on excellently, rarely sitting silent for more than an hour, but for the past few weeks Aunt Marian's present had afforded a subject for conversation which seemed inexhaustible. Mrs. Darnell had been Miss Mary Reynolds, the daughter of an auctioneer and estate agent in Notting Hill, and Aunt Marian was her mother's sister, who was supposed rather to have lowered herself by marrying a coal merchant, in a small way, at Turnham Green. Marian had felt the family attitude a good deal, and the Reynoldses were sorry for many things that had been said, when the coal merchant saved money and took up land on building leases in the neighbourhood of Crouch End, greatly to his advantage, as it appeared. Nobody had thought that Nixon could ever do very much; but he and his wife had been living for years in a beautiful house at Barnet, with bow-windows, shrubs, and a paddock, and the two families saw but little of each other, for Mr. Reynolds was not very prosperous. Of course, Aunt Marian and her husband had been asked to Mary's wedding, but they had sent excuses with a nice little set of silver apostle spoons, and it was feared that nothing more was to be looked for. However, on Mary's birthday her aunt had written a most affectionate letter, enclosing a cheque for a hundred pounds from 'Robert' and herself, and ever since the receipt of the money the Darnells had discussed the question of its judicious disposal. Mrs. Darnell had wished to invest the whole sum in Government securities, but Mr. Darnell had pointed out that the rate of interest was absurdly low, and after a good deal of talk he had persuaded his wife to put ninety pounds of the money in a safe mine, which was paying five per cent. This was very well, but the remaining ten pounds, which Mrs. Darnell had insisted on reserving, gave rise to legends and discourses as interminable as the disputes of the schools.

At first Mr. Darnell had proposed that they should furnish the 'spare' room. There were four bedrooms in the house: their own room, the small one for the servant, and two others overlooking the garden, one of which had been used for storing boxes, ends of rope, and odd numbers of 'Quiet Days' and 'Sunday Evenings,' besides some worn suits belonging to Mr. Darnell which had been carefully wrapped up and laid by, as he scarcely knew what to do with them. The other room was frankly waste and vacant, and one Saturday afternoon, as he was coming home in the 'bus, and while he revolved that difficult question of the ten pounds, the unseemly emptiness of the spare room suddenly came into his mind, and he glowed with the idea that now, thanks to Aunt Marian, it could be furnished. He was busied with this delightful thought all the way home, but when he let himself in, he said nothing to his wife, since he felt that his idea must be matured. He told Mrs. Darnell that, having important business, he was obliged to go out again directly, but that he should be back without fail for tea at half-past six; and Mary, on her side, was not sorry to be alone, as she was a little behindhand with the household books. The fact was, that Darnell, full of the design of furnishing the spare bedroom, wished to consult his friend Wilson, who lived at Fulham, and had often given him judicious advice as to the laying out of money to the very best advantage. Wilson was connected with the Bordeaux wine trade, and Darnell's only anxiety was lest he should not be at home.

However, it was all right; Darnell took a tram along the Goldhawk Road, and walked the rest of the way, and was delighted to see Wilson in the front garden of his house, busy amongst his flower-beds.

'Haven't seen you for an age,' he said cheerily, when he heard Darnell's hand on the gate; 'come in. Oh, I forgot,' he added, as Darnell still fumbled with the handle, and vainly attempted to enter. 'Of course you can't get in; I haven't shown it you.'

It was a hot day in June, and Wilson appeared in a costume which he had put on in haste as soon as he arrived from the City. He wore a straw hat with a neat pugaree protecting the back of his neck, and his dress was a Norfolk jacket and knickers in heather mixture.

'See,' he said, as he let Darnell in; 'see the dodge. You don't *turn* the handle at all. First of all push hard, and then pull. It's a trick of my own, and I shall have it patented. You see, it keeps undesirable characters at a distance — such a great thing in the suburbs. I feel I can leave Mrs. Wilson alone now; and, formerly, you have no idea how she used to be pestered.'

'But how about visitors?' said Darnell. 'How do they get in?'

'Oh, we put them up to it. Besides,' he said vaguely, 'there is sure to be somebody looking out. Mrs. Wilson is nearly always at the window. She's out now; gone to call on some friends. The Bennetts' At Home day, I think it is. This is the first Saturday, isn't it? You know J. W. Bennett, don't you? Ah, he's in the House; doing very well, I believe. He put me on to a very good thing the other day.'

'But, I say,' said Wilson, as they turned and strolled towards the front door, 'what do you wear those black things for? You look hot. Look at me. Well, I've been gardening, you know, but I feel as cool as a cucumber. I dare say you don't know where to get these things? Very few men do. Where do you suppose I got 'em?'

'In the West End, I suppose,' said Darnell, wishing to be polite.

‘Yes, that’s what everybody says. And it is a good cut. Well, I’ll tell you, but you needn’t pass it on to everybody. I got the tip from Jameson — you know him, “Jim-Jams,” in the China trade, 39 Eastbrook — and he said he didn’t want everybody in the City to know about it. But just go to Jennings, in Old Wall, and mention my name, and you’ll be all right. And what d’you think they cost?’

‘I haven’t a notion,’ said Darnell, who had never bought such a suit in his life.

‘Well, have a guess.’

Darnell regarded Wilson gravely.

The jacket hung about his body like a sack, the knickerbockers drooped lamentably over his calves, and in prominent positions the bloom of the heather seemed about to fade and disappear.

‘Three pounds, I suppose, at least,’ he said at length.

‘Well, I asked Dench, in our place, the other day, and he guessed four ten, and his father’s got something to do with a big business in Conduit Street. But I only gave thirty-five and six. To measure? Of course; look at the cut, man.’

Darnell was astonished at so low a price.

‘And, by the way,’ Wilson went on, pointing to his new brown boots, ‘you know where to go for shoe-leather? Oh, I thought everybody was up to that! There’s only one place. “Mr. Bill,” in Gunning Street, — nine and six.’

They were walking round and round the garden, and Wilson pointed out the flowers in the beds and borders. There were hardly any blossoms, but everything was neatly arranged.

‘Here are the tuberous-rooted Glasgownias,’ he said, showing a rigid row of stunted plants; ‘those are Squintaceæ; this is a new introduction, Moldavia Semperflorida Andersonii; and this is Prattsia.’

‘When do they come out?’ said Darnell.

‘Most of them in the end of August or beginning of September,’ said Wilson briefly. He was slightly annoyed with himself for having talked so much about his plants, since he saw that Darnell cared nothing for flowers; and, indeed, the visitor could hardly dissemble vague recollections that came to him; thoughts of an old, wild garden, full of odours, beneath grey walls, of the fragrance of the meadowsweet beside the brook.

‘I wanted to consult you about some furniture,’ Darnell said at last. ‘You know we’ve got a spare room, and I’m thinking of putting a few things into it. I haven’t exactly made up my mind, but I thought you might advise me.’

‘Come into my den,’ said Wilson. ‘No; this way, by the back’; and he showed Darnell another ingenious arrangement at the side door whereby a violent high-toned bell was set pealing in the house if one did but touch the latch. Indeed, Wilson handled it so briskly that the bell rang a wild alarm, and the servant, who was trying on her mistress’s things in the bedroom, jumped madly to the window and then danced a hysteric dance. There was plaster found on the drawing-room table on Sunday afternoon, and Wilson wrote a letter to the ‘Fulham Chronicle,’ ascribing the phenomenon ‘to some disturbance of a seismic nature.’

For the moment he knew nothing of the great results of his contrivance, and solemnly led the way towards the back of the house. Here there was a patch of turf, beginning to look a little brown, with a background of shrubs. In the middle of the turf, a boy of nine or ten was standing all alone, with something of an air.

‘The eldest,’ said Wilson. ‘Havelock. Well, Lockie, what are ye doing now? And where are your brother and sister?’

The boy was not at all shy. Indeed, he seemed eager to explain the course of events.

‘I’m playing at being Gawd,’ he said, with an engaging frankness. ‘And I’ve sent Fergus and Janet to the bad place. That’s in the shrubbery. And they’re never to come out any more. And they’re burning for ever and ever.’

‘What d’you think of that?’ said Wilson admiringly. ‘Not bad for a youngster of nine, is it? They think a lot of him at the Sunday-school. But come into my den.’

The den was an apartment projecting from the back of the house. It had been designed as a back kitchen and washhouse, but Wilson had draped the ‘copper’ in art muslin and had boarded over the sink, so that it served as a workman’s bench.

‘Snug, isn’t it?’ he said, as he pushed forward one of the two wicker chairs. ‘I think out things here, you know; it’s quiet. And what about this furnishing? Do you want to do the thing on a grand scale?’

‘Oh, not at all. Quite the reverse. In fact, I don’t know whether the sum at our disposal will be sufficient. You see the spare room is ten feet by twelve, with a western exposure, and I thought if we *could* manage it, that it would seem more cheerful furnished. Besides, it’s pleasant to be able to ask a visitor; our aunt, Mrs. Nixon, for example. But she is accustomed to have everything very nice.’

‘And how much do you want to spend?’

‘Well, I hardly think we should be justified in going much beyond ten pounds. That isn’t enough, eh?’

Wilson got up and shut the door of the back kitchen impressively.

‘Look here,’ he said, ‘I’m glad you came to me in the first place. Now you’ll just tell me where you thought of going yourself.’

‘Well, I had thought of the Hampstead Road,’ said Darnell in a hesitating manner.

‘I just thought you’d say that. But I’ll ask you, what is the good of going to those expensive shops in the West End? You don’t get a better article for your money. You’re merely paying for fashion.’

‘I’ve seen some nice things in Samuel’s, though. They get a brilliant polish on their goods in those superior shops. We went there when we were married.’

‘Exactly, and paid ten per cent more than you need have paid. It’s throwing money away. And how much did you say you had to spend? Ten pounds. Well, I can tell you where to get a beautiful bedroom suite, in the very highest finish, for six pound ten. What d’you think of that? China included, mind you; and a square of carpet, brilliant colours, will only cost you fifteen and six. Look here, go any Saturday afternoon to Dick’s, in the Seven Sisters Road, mention my name, and ask for Mr. Johnston. The suite’s in ash, “Elizabethan” they call it. Six pound ten, including the china, with one of their “Orient” carpets, nine by nine, for fifteen and six. Dick’s.’

Wilson spoke with some eloquence on the subject of furnishing. He pointed out that the times were changed, and that the old heavy style was quite out of date.

‘You know,’ he said, ‘it isn’t like it was in the old days, when people used to buy things to last hundreds of years. Why, just before the wife and I were married, an uncle of mine died up in the North and left me his furniture. I was thinking of furnishing at the time, and I thought the things might come in handy; but I assure you there wasn’t a single article that I cared to give house-room to. All dingy, old mahogany; big bookcases and bureaus, and claw-legged chairs and tables. As I said to the wife (as she was soon afterwards), “We don’t exactly want to set up a chamber of horrors, do we?” So I sold off the lot for what I could get. I must confess I like a cheerful room.’

Darnell said he had heard that artists liked the old-fashioned furniture.

‘Oh, I dare say. The “unclean cult of the sunflower,” eh? You saw that piece in the “Daily Post”? I hate all that rot myself. It isn’t healthy, you know, and I don’t believe the English people will stand it. But talking of curiosities, I’ve got something here that’s worth a bit of money.’

He dived into some dusty receptacle in a corner of the room, and showed Darnell a small, worm-eaten Bible, wanting the first five chapters of Genesis and the last leaf of the Apocalypse. It bore the date of 1753.

‘It’s my belief that’s worth a lot,’ said Wilson. ‘Look at the worm-holes. And you see it’s “imperfect,” as they call it. You’ve noticed that some of the most valuable books are “imperfect” at the sales?’

The interview came to an end soon after, and Darnell went home to his tea. He thought seriously of taking Wilson’s advice, and after tea he told Mary of his idea and of what Wilson had said about Dick’s.

Mary was a good deal taken by the plan when she had heard all the details. The prices struck her as very moderate. They were sitting one on each side of the grate (which was concealed by a pretty cardboard screen, painted with landscapes), and she rested her cheek on her hand, and her beautiful dark eyes seemed to dream and behold strange visions. In reality she was thinking of Darnell’s plan.

‘It would be very nice in some ways,’ she said at last. ‘But we must talk it over. What I am afraid of is that it will come to much more than ten pounds in the long run. There are so many things to be considered. There’s the bed. It would look shabby if we got a common bed without brass mounts. Then the bedding, the mattress, and blankets, and sheets, and counterpane would all cost something.’

She dreamed again, calculating the cost of all the necessaries, and Darnell stared anxiously; reckoning with her, and wondering what her conclusion would be. For a moment the delicate colouring of her face, the grace of her form, and the brown hair, drooping over her ears and clustering in little curls about her neck, seemed to hint at a language which he had not yet learned; but she spoke again.

‘The bedding would come to a great deal, I am afraid. Even if Dick’s are considerably cheaper than Boon’s or Samuel’s. And, my dear, we must have some ornaments on the mantelpiece. I saw some very nice vases at eleven-three the other day at Wilkin and Dodd’s. We should want six at least, and there ought to be a centre-piece. You see how it mounts up.’

Darnell was silent. He saw that his wife was summing up against his scheme, and though he had set his heart on it, he could not resist her arguments.

‘It would be nearer twelve pounds than ten,’ she said.

‘The floor would have to be stained round the carpet (nine by nine, you said?), and we should want a piece of linoleum to go under the washstand. And the walls would look very bare without any pictures.’

‘I thought about the pictures,’ said Darnell; and he spoke quite eagerly. He felt that here, at least, he was unassailable. ‘You know there’s the “Derby Day” and the “Railway Station,” ready framed, standing in the corner of the box-room already. They’re a bit old-fashioned, perhaps, but that doesn’t matter in a bedroom. And couldn’t we use some photographs? I saw a very neat frame in natural oak in the City, to hold half a dozen, for one and six. We might put in your father, and your brother James, and Aunt Marian, and your grandmother, in her widow’s cap — and any of the others in the album. And then there’s that old family picture in the hair-trunk — that might do over the mantelpiece.’

‘You mean your great-grandfather in the gilt frame? But that’s *very* old-fashioned, isn’t it? He looks so queer in his wig. I don’t think it would quite go with the room, somehow.’

Darnell thought a moment. The portrait was a ‘kitcat’ of a young gentleman, bravely dressed in the fashion of 1750, and he very faintly remembered some old tales that his father had told him about this ancestor — tales of the woods and fields, of the deep sunken lanes, and the forgotten country in the west.

‘No,’ he said, ‘I suppose it is rather out of date. But I saw some very nice prints in the City, framed and quite cheap.’

‘Yes, but everything counts. Well, we will talk it over, as you say. You know we must be careful.’

The servant came in with the supper, a tin of biscuits, a glass of milk for the mistress, and a modest pint of beer for the master, with a little cheese and butter. Afterwards Edward smoked two pipes of honeydew, and they went quietly to bed; Mary going first, and her husband following a quarter of an hour later, according to the ritual established from the first days of their marriage. Front and back doors were locked, the gas was turned off at the meter, and when Darnell got upstairs he found his wife already in bed, her face turned round on the pillow.

She spoke softly to him as he came into the room.

‘It would be impossible to buy a presentable bed at anything under one pound eleven, and good sheets are dear, anywhere.’

He slipped off his clothes and slid gently into bed, putting out the candle on the table. The blinds were all evenly and duly drawn, but it was a June night, and beyond the walls, beyond that desolate world and wilderness of grey Shepherd’s Bush, a great golden moon had floated up through magic films of cloud, above the hill, and the earth was filled with a wonderful light between red sunset lingering over the mountain and that marvellous glory that shone into the woods from the summit of the hill. Darnell seemed to see some reflection of that wizard brightness in the room; the pale walls and the white bed and his wife’s face lying amidst brown hair upon the pillow were illuminated, and listening he could almost hear the corncrake in the fields, the fern-owl sounding his strange note from the quiet of the rugged place where the bracken grew, and, like the echo of a magic song, the melody of the nightingale that sang all night in the alder by the little brook. There was nothing that he could say, but he slowly stole his arm under his wife's neck, and played with the ringlets of brown hair. She never moved, she lay there gently breathing, looking up to the blank ceiling of the room with her beautiful eyes, thinking also, no doubt, thoughts that she could not utter, kissing her husband obediently when he asked her to do so, and he stammered and hesitated as he spoke.

They were nearly asleep, indeed Darnell was on the very eve of dreaming, when she said very softly —

'I am afraid, darling, that we could never afford it.' And he heard her words through the murmur of the water, dripping from the grey rock, and falling into the clear pool beneath.

Sunday morning was always an occasion of idleness. Indeed, they would never have got breakfast if Mrs. Darnell, who had the instincts of the housewife, had not awoke and seen the bright sunshine, and felt that the house was too still. She lay quiet for five minutes, while her husband slept beside her, and listened intently, waiting for the sound of Alice stirring down below. A golden tube of sunlight shone through some opening in the Venetian blinds, and it shone on the brown hair that lay about her head on the pillow, and she looked steadily into the room at the 'duchesse' toilet-table, the coloured ware of the washstand, and the two photogravures in oak frames, 'The Meeting' and 'The Parting,' that hung upon the wall. She was half dreaming as she listened for the servant's footsteps, and the faint shadow of a shade of a thought came over her, and she imagined dimly, for the quick moment of a dream, another world where rapture was wine, where one wandered in a deep and happy valley, and the moon was always rising red above the trees. She was thinking of Hampstead, which represented to her the vision of the world beyond the walls, and the thought of the heath led her away to Bank Holidays, and then to Alice. There was not a sound in the house; it might have been midnight for the stillness if the drawling cry of the Sunday paper had not suddenly echoed round the corner of Edna Road, and with it came the warning clank and shriek of the milkman with his pails.

Mrs. Darnell sat up, and wide awake, listened more intently. The girl was evidently fast asleep, and must be roused, or all the work of the day would be out of joint, and she remembered how Edward hated any fuss or discussion about household matters, more especially on a Sunday, after his long week's work in the City. She gave her husband an affectionate glance as he slept on, for she was very fond of him, and so she gently rose from the bed and went in her nightgown to call the maid.

The servant's room was small and stuffy, the night had been very hot, and Mrs. Darnell paused for a moment at the door, wondering whether the girl on the bed was really the dusty-faced servant who bustled day by day about the house, or even the strangely bedizened creature, dressed in purple, with a shiny face, who would appear on the Sunday afternoon, bringing in an early tea, because it was her 'evening out.' Alice's hair was black and her skin was pale, almost of the olive tinge, and she lay asleep, her head resting on one arm, reminding Mrs. Darnell of a queer print of a 'Tired Bacchante' that she had seen long ago in a shop window in Upper Street, Islington. And a cracked bell was ringing; that meant five minutes to eight, and nothing done.

She touched the girl gently on the shoulder, and only smiled when her eyes opened, and waking with a start, she got up in sudden confusion. Mrs. Darnell went back to her room and dressed slowly while her husband still slept, and it was only at the last moment, as she fastened her cherry-coloured bodice, that she roused him, telling him that the bacon would be overdone unless he hurried over his dressing.

Over the breakfast they discussed the question of the spare room all over again. Mrs. Darnell still admitted that the plan of furnishing it attracted her, but she could not see how it could be done for the ten pounds, and as they were prudent people they did not care to encroach on their savings. Edward was highly paid, having (with allowances for extra work in busy weeks) a hundred and forty pounds a year, and Mary had inherited from an old uncle, her godfather, three hundred pounds, which had been judiciously laid out in mortgage at 4½ per cent. Their total income, then, counting in Aunt Marian's present, was a hundred and fifty-eight pounds a year, and they were clear of debt, since Darnell had bought the furniture for the house out of money which he had saved for five or six years before. In the first few years of his life in the City his income had, of course, been smaller, and at first he had lived very freely, without a thought of laying by. The theatres and music-halls had attracted him, and scarcely a week passed without his going (in the pit) to one or the other; and he had occasionally bought photographs of actresses who pleased him. These he had solemnly burnt when he became engaged to Mary; he remembered the evening well; his heart had been so full of joy and wonder, and the landlady had complained bitterly of the mess in the grate when he came home from the City the next night. Still, the money was lost, as far as he could recollect, ten or twelve shillings; and it annoyed him all the more to reflect that if he had put it by, it would have gone far towards the purchase of an ‘Orient’ carpet in brilliant colours. Then there had been other expenses of his youth: he had purchased threepenny and even fourpenny cigars, the latter rarely, but the former frequently, sometimes singly, and sometimes in bundles of twelve for half-a-crown. Once a meerschaum pipe had haunted him for six weeks; the tobacconist had drawn it out of a drawer with some air of secrecy as he was buying a packet of ‘Lone Star.’ Here was another useless expense, these American-manufactured tobaccos; his ‘Lone Star,’ ‘Long Judge,’ ‘Old Hank,’ ‘Sultry Clime,’ and the rest of them cost from a shilling to one and six the two-ounce packet; whereas now he got excellent loose honeydew for threepence halfpenny an ounce. But the crafty tradesman, who had marked him down as a buyer of expensive fancy goods, nodded with his air of mystery, and, snapping open the case, displayed the meerschaum before the dazzled eyes of Darnell. The bowl was carved in the likeness of a female figure, showing the head and *torso*, and the mouthpiece was of the very best amber — only twelve and six, the man said, and the amber alone, he declared, was worth more than that. He explained that he felt some delicacy about showing the pipe to any but a regular customer, and was willing to take a little under cost price and ‘cut the loss.’ Darnell resisted for the time, but the pipe troubled him, and at last he bought it. He was pleased to show it to the younger men in the office for a while, but it never smoked very well, and he gave it away just before his marriage, as from the nature of the carving it would have been impossible to use it in his wife’s presence. Once, while he was taking his holidays at Hastings, he had purchased a malacca cane — a useless thing that had cost seven shillings — and he reflected with sorrow on the innumerable evenings on which he had rejected his landlady’s plain fried chop, and had gone out to *flaner* among the Italian restaurants in Upper Street, Islington (he lodged in Holloway), pampering himself with expensive delicacies: cutlets and green peas, braised beef with tomato sauce, fillet steak and chipped potatoes, ending the banquet very often with a small wedge of Gruyère, which cost twopence. One night, after receiving a rise in his salary, he had actually drunk a quarter-flask of Chianti and had added the enormities of Benedictine, coffee, and cigarettes to an expenditure already disgraceful, and sixpence to the waiter made the bill amount to four shillings instead of the shilling that would have provided him with a wholesome and sufficient repast at home. Oh, there were many other items in this account of extravagance, and Darnell had often regretted his way of life, thinking that if he had been more careful, five or six pounds a year might have been added to their income.

And the question of the spare room brought back these regrets in an exaggerated degree. He persuaded himself that the extra five pounds would have given a sufficient margin for the outlay that he desired to make; though this was, no doubt, a mistake on his part. But he saw quite clearly that, under the present conditions, there must be no levies made on the very small sum of money that they had saved. The rent of the house was thirty-five, and rates and taxes added another ten pounds — nearly a quarter of their income for house-room. Mary kept down the housekeeping bills to the very best of her ability, but meat was always dear, and she suspected the maid of cutting surreptitious slices from the joint and eating them in her bedroom with bread and treacle in the dead of night, for the girl had disordered and eccentric appetites. Mr. Darnell thought no more of restaurants, cheap or dear; he took his lunch with him to the City, and joined his wife in the evening at high tea — chops, a bit of steak, or cold meat from the Sunday's dinner. Mrs. Darnell ate bread and jam and drank a little milk in the middle of the day; but, with the utmost economy, the effort to live within their means and to save for future contingencies was a very hard one. They had determined to do without change of air for at least three years, as the honeymoon at Walton-on-the-Naze had cost a good deal; and it was on this ground that they had, somewhat illogically, reserved the ten pounds, declaring that as they were not to have any holiday they would spend the money on something useful.

And it was this consideration of utility that was finally fatal to Darnell's scheme. They had calculated and recalculated the expense of the bed and bedding, the linoleum, and the ornaments, and by a great deal of exertion the total expenditure had been made to assume the shape of 'something very little over ten pounds,' when Mary said quite suddenly —

'But, after all, Edward, we don't really *want* to furnish the room at all. I mean it isn't necessary. And if we did so it might lead to no end of expense. People would hear of it and be sure to fish for invitations. You know we have relatives in the country, and they would be almost certain, the Mallings, at any rate, to give hints.'

Darnell saw the force of the argument and gave way. But he was bitterly disappointed.

'It would have been very nice, wouldn't it?' he said with a sigh.

'Never mind, dear,' said Mary, who saw that he was a good deal cast down. 'We must think of some other plan that will be nice and useful too.'

She often spoke to him in that tone of a kind mother, though she was by three years the younger.

'And now,' she said, 'I must get ready for church. Are you coming?'

Darnell said that he thought not. He usually accompanied his wife to morning service, but that day he felt some bitterness in his heart, and preferred to lounge under the shade of the big mulberry tree that stood in the middle of their patch of garden — relic of the spacious lawns that had once lain smooth and green and sweet, where the dismal streets now swarmed in a hopeless labyrinth.

So Mary went quietly and alone to church. St. Paul's stood in a neighbouring street, and its Gothic design would have interested a curious inquirer into the history of a strange revival. Obviously, mechanically, there was nothing amiss. The style chosen was 'geometrical decorated,' and the tracery of the windows seemed correct. The nave, the aisles, the spacious chancel, were reasonably proportioned; and, to be quite serious, the only feature obviously wrong was the substitution of a low 'chancel wall' with iron gates for the rood screen with the loft and rood. But this, it might plausibly be contended, was merely an adaptation of the old idea to modern requirements, and it would have been quite difficult to explain why the whole building, from the mere mortar setting between the stones to the Gothic gas standards, was a mysterious and elaborate blasphemy. The canticles were sung to Joll in B flat, the chants were ‘Anglican,’ and the sermon was the gospel for the day, amplified and rendered into the more modern and graceful English of the preacher. And Mary came away.

After their dinner (an excellent piece of Australian mutton, bought in the ‘World Wide’ Stores, in Hammersmith), they sat for some time in the garden, partly sheltered by the big mulberry tree from the observation of their neighbours. Edward smoked his honeydew, and Mary looked at him with placid affection.

‘You never tell me about the men in your office,’ she said at length. ‘Some of them are nice fellows, aren’t they?’

‘Oh, yes, they’re very decent. I must bring some of them round, one of these days.’

He remembered with a pang that it would be necessary to provide whisky. One couldn’t ask the guest to drink table beer at tenpence the gallon.

‘Who are they, though?’ said Mary. ‘I think they might have given you a wedding present.’

‘Well, I don’t know. We never have gone in for that sort of thing. But they’re very decent chaps. Well, there’s Harvey; “Sauce” they call him behind his back. He’s mad on bicycling. He went in last year for the Two Miles Amateur Record. He’d have made it, too, if he could have got into better training.

‘Then there’s James, a sporting man. You wouldn’t care for him. I always think he smells of the stable.’

‘How horrid!’ said Mrs. Darnell, finding her husband a little frank, lowering her eyes as she spoke.

‘Dickenson might amuse you,’ Darnell went on. ‘He’s always got a joke. A terrible liar, though. When he tells a tale we never know how much to believe. He swore the other day he’d seen one of the governors buying cockles off a barrow near London Bridge, and Jones, who’s just come, believed every word of it.’

Darnell laughed at the humorous recollection of the jest.

‘And that wasn’t a bad yarn about Salter’s wife,’ he went on. ‘Salter is the manager, you know. Dickenson lives close by, in Notting Hill, and he said one morning that he had seen Mrs. Salter, in the Portobello Road, in red stockings, dancing to a piano organ.’

‘He’s a little coarse, isn’t he?’ said Mrs. Darnell. ‘I don’t see much fun in that.’

‘Well, you know, amongst men it’s different. You might like Wallis; he’s a tremendous photographer. He often shows us photos he’s taken of his children — one, a little girl of three, in her bath. I asked him how he thought she’d like it when she was twenty-three.’

Mrs. Darnell looked down and made no answer.

There was silence for some minutes while Darnell smoked his pipe. ‘I say, Mary,’ he said at length, ‘what do you say to our taking a paying guest?’

‘A paying guest! I never thought of it. Where should we put him?’

‘Why, I was thinking of the spare room. The plan would obviate your objection, wouldn’t it? Lots of men in the City take them, and make money of it too. I dare say it would add ten pounds a year to our income. Redgrave, the cashier, finds it worth his while to take a large house on purpose. They have a regular lawn for tennis and a billiard-room.’

Mary considered gravely, always with the dream in her eyes. ‘I don’t think we could manage it, Edward,’ she said; ‘it would be inconvenient in many ways.’ She hesitated for a moment. ‘And I don’t think I should care to have a young man in the house. It is so very small, and our accommodation, as you know, is so limited.’

She blushed slightly, and Edward, a little disappointed as he was, looked at her with a singular longing, as if he were a scholar confronted with a doubtful hieroglyph, either wholly wonderful or altogether commonplace. Next door children were playing in the garden, playing shrilly, laughing, crying, quarrelling, racing to and fro. Suddenly a clear, pleasant voice sounded from an upper window.

‘Enid! Charles! Come up to my room at once!’

There was an instant sudden hush. The children’s voices died away.

‘Mrs. Parker is supposed to keep her children in great order,’ said Mary. ‘Alice was telling me about it the other day. She had been talking to Mrs. Parker’s servant. I listened to her without any remark, as I don’t think it right to encourage servants’ gossip; they always exaggerate everything. And I dare say children often require to be corrected.’

The children were struck silent as if some ghastly terror had seized them.

Darnell fancied that he heard a queer sort of cry from the house, but could not be quite sure. He turned to the other side, where an elderly, ordinary man with a grey moustache was strolling up and down on the further side of his garden. He caught Darnell’s eye, and Mrs. Darnell looking towards him at the same moment, he very politely raised his tweed cap. Darnell was surprised to see his wife blushing fiercely.

‘Sayce and I often go into the City by the same ‘bus,’ he said, ‘and as it happens we’ve sat next to each other two or three times lately. I believe he’s a traveller for a leather firm in Bermondsey. He struck me as a pleasant man. Haven’t they got rather a good-looking servant?’

‘Alice has spoken to me about her — and the Sayces,’ said Mrs. Darnell. ‘I understand that they are not very well thought of in the neighbourhood. But I must go in and see whether the tea is ready. Alice will be wanting to go out directly.’

Darnell looked after his wife as she walked quickly away. He only dimly understood, but he could see the charm of her figure, the delight of the brown curls clustering about her neck, and he again felt that sense of the scholar confronted by the hieroglyphic. He could not have expressed his emotion, but he wondered whether he would ever find the key, and something told him that before she could speak to him his own lips must be unclosed. She had gone into the house by the back kitchen door, leaving it open, and he heard her speaking to the girl about the water being ‘really boiling.’ He was amazed, almost indignant with himself; but the sound of the words came to his ears as strange, heart-piercing music, tones from another, wonderful sphere. And yet he was her husband, and they had been married nearly a year; and yet, whenever she spoke, he had to listen to the sense of what she said, constraining himself, lest he should believe she was a magic creature, knowing the secrets of immeasurable delight.

He looked out through the leaves of the mulberry tree. Mr. Sayce had disappeared from his view, but he saw the light-blue fume of the cigar that he was smoking floating slowly across the shadowed air. He was wondering at his wife's manner when Sayce's name was mentioned, puzzling his head as to what could be amiss in the household of a most respectable personage, when his wife appeared at the dining-room window and called him in to tea. She smiled as he looked up, and he rose hastily and walked in, wondering whether he were not a little 'queer,' so strange were the dim emotions and the dimmer impulses that rose within him.

Alice was all shining purple and strong scent, as she brought in the teapot and the jug of hot water. It seemed that a visit to the kitchen had inspired Mrs. Darnell in her turn with a novel plan for disposing of the famous ten pounds. The range had always been a trouble to her, and when sometimes she went into the kitchen, and found, as she said, the fire 'roaring halfway up the chimney,' it was in vain that she reproved the maid on the ground of extravagance and waste of coal. Alice was ready to admit the absurdity of making up such an enormous fire merely to bake (they called it 'roast') a bit of beef or mutton, and to boil the potatoes and the cabbage; but she was able to show Mrs. Darnell that the fault lay in the defective contrivance of the range, in an oven which 'would not get hot.' Even with a chop or a steak it was almost as bad; the heat seemed to escape up the chimney or into the room, and Mary had spoken several times to her husband on the shocking waste of coal, and the cheapest coal procurable was never less than eighteen shillings the ton. Mr. Darnell had written to the landlord, a builder, who had replied in an illiterate but offensive communication, maintaining the excellence of the stove and charging all the faults to the account of 'your good lady,' which really implied that the Darnells kept no servant, and that Mrs. Darnell did everything. The range, then, remained, a standing annoyance and expense. Every morning, Alice said, she had the greatest difficulty in getting the fire to light at all, and once lighted it 'seemed as if it fled right up the chimney.' Only a few nights before Mrs. Darnell had spoken seriously to her husband about it; she had got Alice to weigh the coals expended in cooking a cottage pie, the dish of the evening, and deducting what remained in the scuttle after the pie was done, it appeared that the wretched thing had consumed nearly twice the proper quantity of fuel.

‘You remember what I said the other night about the range?’ said Mrs. Darnell, as she poured out the tea and watered the leaves. She thought the introduction a good one, for though her husband was a most amiable man, she guessed that he had been just a little hurt by her decision against his furnishing scheme.

‘The range?’ said Darnell. He paused as he helped himself to the marmalade and considered for a moment. ‘No, I don’t recollect. What night was it?’

‘Tuesday. Don’t you remember? You had “overtime,” and didn’t get home till quite late.’

She paused for a moment, blushing slightly; and then began to recapitulate the misdeeds of the range, and the outrageous outlay of coal in the preparation of the cottage pie.

‘Oh, I recollect now. That was the night I thought I heard the nightingale (people say there are nightingales in Bedford Park), and the sky was such a wonderful deep blue.’

He remembered how he had walked from Uxbridge Road Station, where the green ‘bus stopped, and in spite of the fuming kilns under Acton, a delicate odour of the woods and summer fields was mysteriously in the air, and he had fancied that he smelt the red wild roses, drooping from the hedge. As he came to his gate he saw his wife standing in the doorway, with a light in her hand, and he threw his arms violently about her as she welcomed him, and whispered something in her ear, kissing her scented hair. He had felt quite abashed a moment afterwards, and he was afraid that he had frightened her by his nonsense; she seemed trembling and confused. And then she had told him how they had weighed the coal.

‘Yes, I remember now,’ he said. ‘It is a great nuisance, isn’t it? I hate to throw away money like that.’

‘Well, what do you think? Suppose we bought a really good range with aunt’s money? It would save us a lot, and I expect the things would taste much nicer.’

Darnell passed the marmalade, and confessed that the idea was brilliant.

‘It’s much better than mine, Mary,’ he said quite frankly. ‘I am so glad you thought of it. But we must talk it over; it doesn’t do to buy in a hurry. There are so many makes.’

Each had seen ranges which looked miraculous inventions; he in the neighbourhood of the City; she in Oxford Street and Regent Street, on visits to the dentist. They discussed the matter at tea, and afterwards they discussed it walking round and round the garden, in the sweet cool of the evening.

‘They say the “Newcastle” will burn anything, coke even,’ said Mary.

‘But the “Glow” got the gold medal at the Paris Exhibition,’ said Edward.

‘But what about the “Eutopia” Kitchener? Have you seen it at work in Oxford Street?’ said Mary. ‘They say their plan of ventilating the oven is quite unique.’

‘I was in Fleet Street the other day,’ answered Edward, ‘and I was looking at the “Bliss” Patent Stoves. They burn less fuel than any in the market — so the makers declare.’

He put his arm gently round her waist. She did not repel him; she whispered quite softly —

‘I think Mrs. Parker is at her window,’ and he drew his arm back slowly.

‘But we will talk it over,’ he said. ‘There is no hurry. I might call at some of the places near the City, and you might do the same thing in Oxford Street and Regent Street and Piccadilly, and we could compare notes.’

Mary was quite pleased with her husband’s good temper. It was so nice of him not to find fault with her plan; ‘He’s so good to me,’ she thought, and that was what she often said to her brother, who did not care much for Darnell. They sat down on the seat under the mulberry, close together, and she let Darnell take her hand, and as she felt his shy, hesitating fingers touch her in the shadow, she pressed them ever so softly, and as he fondled her hand, his breath was on her neck, and she heard his passionate, hesitating voice whisper, ‘My dear, my dear,’ as his lips touched her cheek. She trembled a little, and waited. Darnell kissed her gently on the cheek and drew away his hand, and when he spoke he was almost breathless.

‘We had better go in now,’ he said. ‘There is a heavy dew, and you might catch cold.’

A warm, scented gale came to them from beyond the walls. He longed to ask her to stay out with him all night beneath the tree, that they might whisper to one another, that the scent of her hair might inebriate him, that he might feel her dress still brushing against his ankles. But he could not find the words, and it was absurd, and she was so gentle that she would do whatever he asked, however foolish it might be, just because he asked her. He was not worthy to kiss her lips; he bent down and kissed her silk bodice, and again he felt that she trembled, and he was ashamed, fearing that he had frightened her.

They went slowly into the house, side by side, and Darnell lit the gas in the drawing-room, where they always sat on Sunday evenings. Mrs. Darnell felt a little tired and lay down on the sofa, and Darnell took the arm-chair opposite. For a while they were silent, and then Darnell said suddenly —

‘What’s wrong with the Sayces? You seemed to think there was something a little strange about them. Their maid looks quite quiet.’

‘Oh, I don’t know that one ought to pay any attention to servants’ gossip. They’re not always very truthful.’

‘It was Alice told you, wasn’t it?’

‘Yes. She was speaking to me the other day, when I was in the kitchen in the afternoon.’

‘But what was it?’

‘Oh, I’d rather not tell you, Edward. It’s not pleasant. I scolded Alice for repeating it to me.’

Darnell got up and took a small, frail chair near the sofa.

‘Tell me,’ he said again, with an odd perversity. He did not really care to hear about the household next door, but he remembered how his wife’s cheeks flushed in the afternoon, and now he was looking at her eyes.

‘Oh, I really couldn’t tell you, dear. I should feel ashamed.’

‘But you’re my wife.’

‘Yes, but it doesn’t make any difference. A woman doesn’t like to talk about such things.’

Darnell bent his head down. His heart was beating; he put his ear to her mouth and said, ‘Whisper.’

Mary drew his head down still lower with her gentle hand, and her cheeks burned as she whispered —

‘Alice says that — upstairs — they have only — one room furnished. The maid told her — herself.’

With an unconscious gesture she pressed his head to her breast, and he in turn was bending her red lips to his own, when a violent jangle clamoured through the silent house. They sat up, and Mrs. Darnell went hurriedly to the door.

‘That’s Alice,’ she said. ‘She is always in in time. It has only just struck ten.’

Darnell shivered with annoyance. His lips, he knew, had almost been opened. Mary’s pretty handkerchief, delicately scented from a little flagon that a school friend had given her, lay on the floor, and he picked it up, and kissed it, and hid it away.

The question of the range occupied them all through June and far into July. Mrs. Darnell took every opportunity of going to the West End and investigating the capacity of the latest makes, gravely viewing the new improvements and hearing what the shopmen had to say; while Darnell, as he said, ‘kept his eyes open’ about the City. They accumulated quite a literature of the subject, bringing away illustrated pamphlets, and in the evenings it was an amusement to look at the pictures. They viewed with reverence and interest the drawings of great ranges for hotels and public institutions, mighty contrivances furnished with a series of ovens each for a different use, with wonderful apparatus for grilling, with batteries of accessories which seemed to invest the cook almost with the dignity of a chief engineer. But when, in one of the lists, they encountered the images of little toy ‘cottage’ ranges, for four pounds, and even for three pounds ten, they grew scornful, on the strength of the eight or ten pound article which they meant to purchase — when the merits of the divers patents had been thoroughly thrashed out.

The ‘Raven’ was for a long time Mary’s favourite. It promised the utmost economy with the highest efficiency, and many times they were on the point of giving the order. But the ‘Glow’ seemed equally seductive, and it was only £8. 5s. as compared with £9. 7s. 6d., and though the ‘Raven’ was supplied to the Royal Kitchen, the ‘Glow’ could show more fervent testimonials from continental potentates.

It seemed a debate without end, and it endured day after day till that morning, when Darnell woke from the dream of the ancient wood, of the fountains rising into grey vapour beneath the heat of the sun. As he dressed, an idea struck him, and he brought it as a shock to the hurried breakfast, disturbed by the thought of the City ‘bus which passed the corner of the street at 9.15.

‘I’ve got an improvement on your plan, Mary,’ he said, with triumph. ‘Look at that,’ and he flung a little book on the table.

He laughed. ‘It beats your notion all to fits. After all, the great expense is the coal. It’s not the stove — at least that’s not the real mischief. It’s the coal is so dear. And here you are. Look at those oil stoves. They don’t burn any coal, but the cheapest fuel in the world — oil; and for two pounds ten you can get a range that will do everything you want.’

‘Give me the book,’ said Mary, ‘and we will talk it over in the evening, when you come home. Must you be going?’

Darnell cast an anxious glance at the clock.

‘Good-bye,’ and they kissed each other seriously and dutifully, and Mary’s eyes made Darnell think of those lonely water-pools, hidden in the shadow of the ancient woods.

So, day after day, he lived in the grey phantasmal world, akin to death, that has, somehow, with most of us, made good its claim to be called life. To Darnell the true life would have seemed madness, and when, now and again, the shadows and vague images reflected from its splendour fell across his path, he was afraid, and took refuge in what he would have called the sane ‘reality’ of common and usual incidents and interests. His absurdity was, perhaps, the more evident, inasmuch as ‘reality’ for him was a matter of kitchen ranges, of saving a few shillings; but in truth the folly would have been greater if it had been concerned with racing stables, steam yachts, and the spending of many thousand pounds.

But so went forth Darnell, day by day, strangely mistaking death for life, madness for sanity, and purposeless and wandering phantoms for true beings. He was sincerely of opinion that he was a City clerk, living in Shepherd's Bush — having forgotten the mysteries and the far-shining glories of the kingdom which was his by legitimate inheritance.

II

All day long a fierce and heavy heat had brooded over the City, and as Darnell neared home he saw the mist lying on all the damp lowlands, wreathed in coils about Bedford Park to the south, and mounting to the west, so that the tower of Acton Church loomed out of a grey lake. The grass in the squares and on the lawns which he overlooked as the 'bus lumbered wearily along was burnt to the colour of dust. Shepherd's Bush Green was a wretched desert, trampled brown, bordered with monotonous poplars, whose leaves hung motionless in air that was still, hot smoke. The foot passengers struggled wearily along the pavements, and the reek of the summer's end mingled with the breath of the brickfields made Darnell gasp, as if he were inhaling the poison of some foul sick-room.

He made but a slight inroad into the cold mutton that adorned the tea-table, and confessed that he felt rather 'done up' by the weather and the day's work.

'I have had a trying day, too,' said Mary. 'Alice has been very queer and troublesome all day, and I have had to speak to her quite seriously. You know I think her Sunday evenings out have a rather unsettling influence on the girl. But what is one to do?'

'Has she got a young man?'

'Of course: a grocer's assistant from the Goldhawk Road — Wilkin's, you know. I tried them when we settled here, but they were not very satisfactory.'

'What do they do with themselves all the evening? They have from five to ten, haven't they?'

'Yes; five, or sometimes half-past, when the water won't boil. Well, I believe they go for walks usually. Once or twice he has taken her to the City Temple, and the Sunday before last they walked up and down Oxford Street, and then sat in the Park. But it seems that last Sunday they went to tea with his mother at Putney. I should like to tell the old woman what I really think of her.’

‘Why? What happened? Was she nasty to the girl?’

‘No; that’s just it. Before this, she has been very unpleasant on several occasions. When the young man first took Alice to see her — that was in March — the girl came away crying; she told me so herself. Indeed, she said she never wanted to see old Mrs. Murry again; and I told Alice that, if she had not exaggerated things, I could hardly blame her for feeling like that.’

‘Why? What did she cry for?’

‘Well, it seems that the old lady — she lives in quite a small cottage in some Putney back street — was so stately that she would hardly speak. She had borrowed a little girl from some neighbour’s family, and had managed to dress her up to imitate a servant, and Alice said nothing could be sillier than to see that mite opening the door, with her black dress and her white cap and apron, and she hardly able to turn the handle, as Alice said. George (that’s the young man’s name) had told Alice that it was a little bit of a house; but he said the kitchen was comfortable, though very plain and old-fashioned. But, instead of going straight to the back, and sitting by a big fire on the old settle that they had brought up from the country, that child asked for their names (did you ever hear such nonsense?) and showed them into a little poky parlour, where old Mrs. Murry was sitting “like a duchess,” by a fireplace full of coloured paper, and the room as cold as ice. And she was so grand that she would hardly speak to Alice.’

‘That must have been very unpleasant.’

‘Oh, the poor girl had a dreadful time. She began with: “Very pleased to make your acquaintance, Miss Dill. I know so very few persons in service.” Alice imitates her mincing way of talking, but I can’t do it. And then she went on to talk about her family, how they had farmed their own land for five hundred years — such stuff! George had told Alice all about it: they had had an old cottage with a good strip of garden and two fields somewhere in Essex, and that old woman talked almost as if they had been country gentry, and boasted about the Rector, Dr. Somebody, coming to see them so often, and of Squire Somebody Else always looking them up, as if they didn’t visit them out of kindness. Alice told me it was as much as she could do to keep from laughing in Mrs. Murry’s face, her young man having told her all about the place, and how small it was, and how the Squire had been so kind about buying it when old Murry died and George was a little boy, and his mother not able to keep things going. However, that silly old woman “laid it on thick,” as you say, and the young man got more and more uncomfortable, especially when she went on to speak about marrying in one’s own class, and how unhappy she had known young men to be who had married beneath them, giving some very pointed looks at Alice as she talked. And then such an amusing thing happened: Alice had noticed George looking about him in a puzzled sort of way, as if he couldn’t make out something or other, and at last he burst out and asked his mother if she had been buying up the neighbours’ ornaments, as he remembered the two green cut-glass vases on the mantelpiece at Mrs. Ellis’s, and the wax flowers at Miss Turvey’s. He was going on, but his mother scowled at him, and upset some books, which he had to pick up; but Alice quite understood she had been borrowing things from her neighbours, just as she had borrowed the little girl, so as to look grander. And then they had tea — water bewitched, Alice calls it — and very thin bread and butter, and rubbishy foreign pastry from the Swiss shop in the High Street — all sour froth and rancid fat, Alice declares. And then Mrs. Murry began boasting again about her family, and snubbing Alice and talking at her, till the girl came away quite furious, and very unhappy, too. I don’t wonder at it, do you?’

‘It doesn’t sound very enjoyable, certainly,’ said Darnell, looking dreamily at his wife. He had not been attending very carefully to the subject-matter of her story, but he loved to hear a voice that was incantation in his ears, tones that summoned before him the vision of a magic world.

‘And has the young man’s mother always been like this?’ he said after a long pause, desiring that the music should continue.

‘Always, till quite lately, till last Sunday in fact. Of course Alice spoke to George Murry at once, and said, like a sensible girl, that she didn’t think it ever answered for a married couple to live with the man’s mother, “especially,” she went on, “as I can see your mother hasn’t taken much of a fancy to me.” He told her, in the usual style, it was only his mother’s way, that she didn’t really mean anything, and so on; but Alice kept away for a long time, and rather hinted, I think, that it might come to having to choose between her and his mother. And so affairs went on all through the spring and summer, and then, just before the August Bank Holiday, George spoke to Alice again about it, and told her how sorry the thought of any unpleasantness made him, and how he wanted his mother and her to get on with each other, and how she was only a bit old-fashioned and queer in her ways, and had spoken very nicely to him about her when there was nobody by. So the long and the short of it was that Alice said she might come with them on the Monday, when they had settled to go to Hampton Court — the girl was always talking about Hampton Court, and wanting to see it. You remember what a beautiful day it was, don't you?'

'Let me see,' said Darnell dreamily. 'Oh yes, of course — I sat out under the mulberry tree all day, and we had our meals there: it was quite a picnic. The caterpillars were a nuisance, but I enjoyed the day very much.' His ears were charmed, ravished with the grave, supernal melody, as of antique song, rather of the first made world in which all speech was descant, and all words were sacraments of might, speaking not to the mind but to the soul. He lay back in his chair, and said —

'Well, what happened to them?'

'My dear, would you believe it; but that wretched old woman behaved worse than ever. They met as had been arranged, at Kew Bridge, and got places, with a good deal of difficulty, in one of those char-à-banc things, and Alice thought she was going to enjoy herself tremendously. Nothing of the kind. They had hardly said "Good morning," when old Mrs. Murry began to talk about Kew Gardens, and how beautiful it must be there, and how much more convenient it was than Hampton, and no expense at all; just the trouble of walking over the bridge. Then she went on to say, as they were waiting for the char-à-banc, that she had always heard there was nothing to see at Hampton, except a lot of nasty, grimy old pictures, and some of them not fit for any decent woman, let alone girl, to look at, and she wondered why the Queen allowed such things to be shown, putting all kinds of notions into girls' heads that were light enough already; and as she said that she looked at Alice so nastily — horrid old thing — that, as she told me afterwards, Alice would have slapped her face if she hadn't been an elderly woman, and George's mother. Then she talked about Kew again, saying how wonderful the hot-houses were, with palms and all sorts of wonderful things, and a lily as big as a parlour table, and the view over the river. George was very good, Alice told me. He was quite taken aback at first, as the old woman had promised faithfully to be as nice as ever she could be; but then he said, gently but firmly, “Well, mother, we must go to Kew some other day, as Alice has set her heart on Hampton for to-day, and I want to see it myself!” All Mrs. Murry did was to snort, and look at the girl like vinegar, and just then the char-à-banc came up, and they had to scramble for their seats. Mrs. Murry grumbled to herself in an indistinct sort of voice all the way to Hampton Court. Alice couldn’t very well make out what she said, but now and then she seemed to hear bits of sentences, like: *Pity to grow old, if sons grow bold*; and *Honour thy father and mother*; and *Lie on the shelf, said the housewife to the old shoe, and the wicked son to his mother*; and *I gave you milk and you give me the go-by*. Alice thought they must be proverbs (except the Commandment, of course), as George was always saying how old-fashioned his mother is; but she says there were so many of them, and all pointed at her and George, that she thinks now Mrs. Murry must have made them up as they drove along. She says it would be just like her to do it, being old-fashioned, and ill-natured too, and fuller of talk than a butcher on Saturday night. Well, they got to Hampton at last, and Alice thought the place would please her, perhaps, and they might have some enjoyment. But she did nothing but grumble, and out loud too, so that people looked at them, and a woman said, so that they could hear, “Ah well, they’ll be old themselves some day,” which made Alice very angry, for, as she said, they weren’t doing anything. When they showed her the chestnut avenue in Bushey Park, she said it was so long and straight that it made her quite dull to look at it, and she thought the deer (you know how pretty they are, really) looked thin and miserable, as if they would be all the better for a good feed of hog-wash, with plenty of meal in it. She said she knew they weren’t happy by the look in their eyes, which seemed to tell her that their keepers beat them. It was the same with everything; she said she remembered market-gardens in Hammersmith and Gunnersbury that had a better show of flowers, and when they took her to the place where the water is, under the trees, she burst out with its being rather hard to tramp her off her legs to show her a common canal, with not so much as a barge on it to liven it up a bit. She went on like that the whole day, and Alice told me she was only too thankful to get home and get rid of her. Wasn’t it wretched for the girl?’

‘It must have been, indeed. But what happened last Sunday?’

‘That’s the most extraordinary thing of all. I noticed that Alice was rather queer in her manner this morning; she was a longer time washing up the breakfast things, and she answered me quite sharply when I called to her to ask when she would be ready to help me with the wash; and when I went into the kitchen to see about something, I noticed that she was going about her work in a sulky sort of way. So I asked her what was the matter, and then it all came out. I could scarcely believe my own ears when she mumbled out something about Mrs. Murry thinking she could do very much better for herself; but I asked her one question after another till I had it all out of her. It just shows one how foolish and empty-headed these girls are. I told her she was no better than a weather-cock. If you will believe me, that horrid old woman was quite another person when Alice went to see her the other night. Why, I can’t think, but so she was. She told the girl how pretty she was; what a neat figure she had; how well she walked; and how she’d known many a girl not half so clever or well-looking earning her twenty-five or thirty pounds a year, and with good families. She seems to have gone into all sorts of details, and made elaborate calculations as to what she would be able to save, “with decent folks, who don’t screw, and pinch, and lock up everything in the house,” and then she went off into a lot of hypocritical nonsense about how fond she was of Alice, and how she could go to her grave in peace, knowing how happy her dear George would be with such a good wife, and about her savings from good wages helping to set up a little home, ending up with “And, if you take an old woman’s advice, deary, it won’t be long before you hear the marriage bells.”’

‘I see,’ said Darnell; ‘and the upshot of it all is, I suppose, that the girl is thoroughly dissatisfied?’

‘Yes, she is so young and silly. I talked to her, and reminded her of how nasty old Mrs. Murry had been, and told her that she might change her place and change for the worse. I think I have persuaded her to think it over quietly, at all events. Do you know what it is, Edward? I have an idea. I believe that wicked old woman is trying to get Alice to leave us, that she may tell her son how changeable she is; and I suppose she would make up some of her stupid old proverbs: “A changeable wife, a troublesome life,” or some nonsense of the kind. Horrid old thing!’

‘Well, well,’ said Darnell, ‘I hope she won’t go, for your sake. It would be such a bother for you, hunting for a fresh servant.’

He refilled his pipe and smoked placidly, refreshed somewhat after the emptiness and the burden of the day. The French window was wide open, and now at last there came a breath of quickening air, distilled by the night from such trees as still wore green in that arid valley. The song to which Darnell had listened in rapture, and now the breeze, which even in that dry, grim suburb still bore the word of the woodland, had summoned the dream to his eyes, and he meditated over matters that his lips could not express.

‘She must, indeed, be a villainous old woman,’ he said at length.

‘Old Mrs. Murry? Of course she is; the mischievous old thing! Trying to take the girl from a comfortable place where she is happy.’

‘Yes; and not to like Hampton Court! That shows how bad she must be, more than anything.’

‘It is beautiful, isn’t it?’

‘I shall never forget the first time I saw it. It was soon after I went into the City; the first year. I had my holidays in July, and I was getting such a small salary that I couldn’t think of going away to the seaside, or anything like that. I remember one of the other men wanted me to come with him on a walking tour in Kent. I should have liked that, but the money wouldn’t run to it. And do you know what I did? I lived in Great College Street then, and the first day I was off, I stayed in bed till past dinner-time, and lounged about in an arm-chair with a pipe all the afternoon. I had got a new kind of tobacco — one and four for the two-ounce packet — much dearer than I could afford to smoke, and I was enjoying it immensely. It was awfully hot, and when I shut the window and drew down the red blind it grew hotter; at five o’clock the room was like an oven. But I was so pleased at not having to go into the City, that I didn’t mind anything, and now and again I read bits from a queer old book that had belonged to my poor dad. I couldn’t make out what a lot of it meant, but it fitted in somehow, and I read and smoked till tea-time. Then I went out for a walk, thinking I should be better for a little fresh air before I went to bed; and I went wandering away, not much noticing where I was going, turning here and there as the fancy took me. I must have gone miles and miles, and a good many of them round and round, as they say they do in Australia if they lose their way in the bush; and I am sure I couldn't have gone exactly the same way all over again for any money. Anyhow, I was still in the streets when the twilight came on, and the lamp-lighters were trotting round from one lamp to another. It was a wonderful night: I wish you had been there, my dear.'

'I was quite a little girl then.'

'Yes, I suppose you were. Well, it was a wonderful night. I remember, I was walking in a little street of little grey houses all alike, with stucco copings and stucco door-posts; there were brass plates on a lot of the doors, and one had "Maker of Shell Boxes" on it, and I was quite pleased, as I had often wondered where those boxes and things that you buy at the seaside came from. A few children were playing about in the road with some rubbish or other, and men were singing in a small public-house at the corner, and I happened to look up, and I noticed what a wonderful colour the sky had turned. I have seen it since, but I don't think it has ever been quite what it was that night, a dark blue, glowing like a violet, just as they say the sky looks in foreign countries. I don't know why, but the sky or something made me feel quite queer; everything seemed changed in a way I couldn't understand. I remember, I told an old gentleman I knew then — a friend of my poor father's, he's been dead for five years, if not more — about how I felt, and he looked at me and said something about fairyland; I don't know what he meant, and I dare say I didn't explain myself properly. But, do you know, for a moment or two I felt as if that little back street was beautiful, and the noise of the children and the men in the public-house seemed to fit in with the sky and become part of it. You know that old saying about "treading on air" when one is glad! Well, I really felt like that as I walked, not exactly like air, you know, but as if the pavement was velvet or some very soft carpet. And then — I suppose it was all my fancy — the air seemed to smell sweet, like the incense in Catholic churches, and my breath came queer and catchy, as it does when one gets very excited about anything. I felt altogether stranger than I've ever felt before or since.'

Darnell stopped suddenly and looked up at his wife. She was watching him with parted lips, with eager, wondering eyes.

'I hope I'm not tiring you, dear, with all this story about nothing. You have had a worrying day with that stupid girl; hadn't you better go to bed?'

‘Oh, no, please, Edward. I’m not a bit tired now. I love to hear you talk like that. Please go on.’

‘Well, after I had walked a bit further, that queer sort of feeling seemed to fade away. I said a bit further, and I really thought I had been walking about five minutes, but I had looked at my watch just before I got into that little street, and when I looked at it again it was eleven o’clock. I must have done about eight miles. I could scarcely believe my own eyes, and I thought my watch must have gone mad; but I found out afterwards it was perfectly right. I couldn’t make it out, and I can’t now; I assure you the time passed as if I walked up one side of Edna Road and down the other. But there I was, right in the open country, with a cool wind blowing on me from a wood, and the air full of soft rustling sounds, and notes of birds from the bushes, and the singing noise of a little brook that ran under the road. I was standing on the bridge when I took out my watch and struck a wax light to see the time; and it came upon me suddenly what a strange evening it had been. It was all so different, you see, to what I had been doing all my life, particularly for the year before, and it almost seemed as if I couldn’t be the man who had been going into the City every day in the morning and coming back from it every evening after writing a lot of uninteresting letters. It was like being pitched all of a sudden from one world into another. Well, I found my way back somehow or other, and as I went along I made up my mind how I’d spend my holiday. I said to myself, “I’ll have a walking tour as well as Ferrars, only mine is to be a tour of London and its environs,” and I had got it all settled when I let myself into the house about four o’clock in the morning, and the sun was shining, and the street almost as still as the wood at midnight!’

‘I think that was a capital idea of yours. Did you have your tour? Did you buy a map of London?’

‘I had the tour all right. I didn’t buy a map; that would have spoilt it, somehow; to see everything plotted out, and named, and measured. What I wanted was to feel that I was going where nobody had been before. That’s nonsense, isn’t it? as if there could be any such places in London, or England either, for the matter of that.’

‘I know what you mean; you wanted to feel as if you were going on a sort of voyage of discovery. Isn’t that it?’

‘Exactly, that’s what I was trying to tell you. Besides, I didn’t want to buy a map. I made a map.’

‘How do you mean? Did you make a map out of your head?’

‘I’ll tell you about it afterwards. But do you really want to hear about my grand tour?’

‘Of course I do; it must have been delightful. I call it a most original idea.’

‘Well, I was quite full of it, and what you said just now about a voyage of discovery reminds me of how I felt then. When I was a boy I was awfully fond of reading of great travellers — I suppose all boys are — and of sailors who were driven out of their course and found themselves in latitudes where no ship had ever sailed before, and of people who discovered wonderful cities in strange countries; and all the second day of my holidays I was feeling just as I used to when I read these books. I didn’t get up till pretty late. I was tired to death after all those miles I had walked; but when I had finished my breakfast and filled my pipe, I had a grand time of it. It was such nonsense, you know; as if there could be anything strange or wonderful in London.’

‘Why shouldn’t there be?’

‘Well, I don’t know; but I have thought afterwards what a silly lad I must have been. Anyhow, I had a great day of it, planning what I would do, half making-believe — just like a kid — that I didn’t know where I might find myself, or what might happen to me. And I was enormously pleased to think it was all my secret, that nobody else knew anything about it, and that, whatever I might see, I would keep to myself. I had always felt like that about the books. Of course, I loved reading them, but it seemed to me that, if I had been a discoverer, I would have kept my discoveries a secret. If I had been Columbus, and, if it could possibly have been managed, I would have found America all by myself, and never have said a word about it to anybody. Fancy! how beautiful it would be to be walking about in one’s own town, and talking to people, and all the while to have the thought that one knew of a great world beyond the seas, that nobody else dreamed of. I should have loved that!

‘And that is exactly what I felt about the tour I was going to make. I made up my mind that nobody should know; and so, from that day to this, nobody has heard a word of it.'

'But you are going to tell me?'

'You are different. But I don't think even you will hear everything; not because I won't, but because I can't tell many of the things I saw.'

'Things you saw? Then you really did see wonderful, strange things in London?'

'Well, I did and I didn't. Everything, or pretty nearly everything, that I saw is standing still, and hundreds of thousands of people have looked at the same sights — there were many places that the fellows in the office knew quite well, I found out afterwards. And then I read a book called "London and its Surroundings." But (I don't know how it is) neither the men at the office nor the writers of the book seem to have seen the things that I did. That's why I stopped reading the book; it seemed to take the life, the real heart, out of everything, making it as dry and stupid as the stuffed birds in a museum.

'I thought about what I was going to do all that day, and went to bed early, so as to be fresh. I knew wonderfully little about London, really; though, except for an odd week now and then, I had spent all my life in town. Of course I knew the main streets — the Strand, Regent Street, Oxford Street, and so on — and I knew the way to the school I used to go to when I was a boy, and the way into the City. But I had just kept to a few tracks, as they say the sheep do on the mountains; and that made it all the easier for me to imagine that I was going to discover a new world.'

Darnell paused in the stream of his talk. He looked keenly at his wife to see if he were wearying her, but her eyes gazed at him with unabated interest — one would have almost said that they were the eyes of one who longed and half expected to be initiated into the mysteries, who knew not what great wonder was to be revealed. She sat with her back to the open window, framed in the sweet dusk of the night, as if a painter had made a curtain of heavy velvet behind her; and the work that she had been doing had fallen to the floor. She supported her head with her two hands placed on each side of her brow, and her eyes were as the wells in the wood of which Darnell dreamed in the night-time and in the day.

‘And all the strange tales I had ever heard were in my head that morning,’ he went on, as if continuing the thoughts that had filled his mind while his lips were silent. ‘I had gone to bed early, as I told you, to get a thorough rest, and I had set my alarum clock to wake me at three, so that I might set out at an hour that was quite strange for the beginning of a journey. There was a hush in the world when I awoke, before the clock had rung to arouse me, and then a bird began to sing and twitter in the elm tree that grew in the next garden, and I looked out of the window, and everything was still, and the morning air breathed in pure and sweet, as I had never known it before. My room was at the back of the house, and most of the gardens had trees in them, and beyond these trees I could see the backs of the houses of the next street rising like the wall of an old city; and as I looked the sun rose, and the great light came in at my window, and the day began.

‘And I found that when I was once out of the streets just about me that I knew, some of the queer feeling that had come to me two days before came back again. It was not nearly so strong, the streets no longer smelt of incense, but still there was enough of it to show me what a strange world I passed by. There were things that one may see again and again in many London streets: a vine or a fig tree on a wall, a lark singing in a cage, a curious shrub blossoming in a garden, an odd shape of a roof, or a balcony with an uncommon-looking trellis-work in iron. There’s scarcely a street, perhaps, where you won’t see one or other of such things as these; but that morning they rose to my eyes in a new light, as if I had on the magic spectacles in the fairy tale, and just like the man in the fairy tale, I went on and on in the new light. I remember going through wild land on a high place; there were pools of water shining in the sun, and great white houses in the middle of dark, rocking pines, and then on the turn of the height I came to a little lane that went aside from the main road, a lane that led to a wood, and in the lane was a little old shadowed house, with a bell turret in the roof, and a porch of trellis-work all dim and faded into the colour of the sea; and in the garden there were growing tall, white lilies, just as we saw them that day we went to look at the old pictures; they were shining like silver, and they filled the air with their sweet scent. It was from near that house I saw the valley and high places far away in the sun. So, as I say, I went “on and on,” by woods and fields, till I came to a little town on the top of a hill, a town full of old houses bowing to the ground beneath their years, and the morning was so still that the blue smoke rose up straight into the sky from all the roof-tops, so still that I heard far down in the valley the song of a boy who was singing an old song through the streets as he went to school, and as I passed through the awakening town, beneath the old, grave houses, the church bells began to ring.

‘It was soon after I had left this town behind me that I found the Strange Road. I saw it branching off from the dusty high road, and it looked so green that I turned aside into it, and soon I felt as if I had really come into a new country. I don’t know whether it was one of the roads the old Romans made that my father used to tell me about; but it was covered with deep, soft turf, and the great tall hedges on each side looked as if they had not been touched for a hundred years; they had grown so broad and high and wild that they met overhead, and I could only get glimpses here and there of the country through which I was passing, as one passes in a dream. The Strange Road led me on and on, up and down hill; sometimes the rose bushes had grown so thick that I could scarcely make my way between them, and sometimes the road broadened out into a green, and in one valley a brook, spanned by an old wooden bridge, ran across it. I was tired, and I found a soft and shady place beneath an ash tree, where I must have slept for many hours, for when I woke up it was late in the afternoon. So I went on again, and at last the green road came out into the highway, and I looked up and saw another town on a high place with a great church in the middle of it, and when I went up to it there was a great organ sounding from within, and the choir was singing.’

There was a rapture in Darnell’s voice as he spoke, that made his story well-nigh swell into a song, and he drew a long breath as the words ended, filled with the thought of that far-off summer day, when some enchantment had informed all common things, transmuting them into a great sacrament, causing earthly works to glow with the fire and the glory of the everlasting light.

And some splendour of that light shone on the face of Mary as she sat still against the sweet gloom of the night, her dark hair making her face more radiant. She was silent for a little while, and then she spoke —

‘Oh, my dear, why have you waited so long to tell me these wonderful things? I think it is beautiful. Please go on.’

‘I have always been afraid it was all nonsense,’ said Darnell. ‘And I don’t know how to explain what I feel. I didn’t think I could say so much as I have to-night.’

‘And did you find it the same day after day?’

‘All through the tour? Yes, I think every journey was a success. Of course, I didn’t go so far afield every day; I was too tired. Often I rested all day long, and went out in the evening, after the lamps were lit, and then only for a mile or two. I would roam about old, dim squares, and hear the wind from the hills whispering in the trees; and when I knew I was within call of some great glittering street, I was sunk in the silence of ways where I was almost the only passenger, and the lamps were so few and faint that they seemed to give out shadows instead of light. And I would walk slowly, to and fro, perhaps for an hour at a time, in such dark streets, and all the time I felt what I told you about its being my secret — that the shadow, and the dim lights, and the cool of the evening, and trees that were like dark low clouds were all mine, and mine alone, that I was living in a world that nobody else knew of, into which no one could enter.

‘I remembered one night I had gone farther. It was somewhere in the far west, where there are orchards and gardens, and great broad lawns that slope down to trees by the river. A great red moon rose that night through mists of sunset, and thin, filmy clouds, and I wandered by a road that passed through the orchards, till I came to a little hill, with the moon showing above it glowing like a great rose. Then I saw figures pass between me and the moon, one by one, in a long line, each bent double, with great packs upon their shoulders. One of them was singing, and then in the middle of the song I heard a horrible shrill laugh, in the thin cracked voice of a very old woman, and they disappeared into the shadow of the trees. I suppose they were people going to work, or coming from work in the gardens; but how like it was to a nightmare!

‘I can’t tell you about Hampton; I should never finish talking. I was there one evening, not long before they closed the gates, and there were very few people about. But the grey-red, silent, echoing courts, and the flowers falling into dreamland as the night came on, and the dark yews and shadowy-looking statues, and the far, still stretches of water beneath the avenues; and all melting into a blue mist, all being hidden from one’s eyes, slowly, surely, as if veils were dropped, one by one, on a great ceremony! Oh! my dear, what could it mean? Far away, across the river, I heard a soft bell ring three times, and three times, and again three times, and I turned away, and my eyes were full of tears.

‘I didn’t know what it was when I came to it; I only found out afterwards that it must have been Hampton Court. One of the men in the office told me he had taken an A. B. C. girl there, and they had great fun. They got into the maze and couldn’t get out again, and then they went on the river and were nearly drowned. He told me there were some spicy pictures in the galleries; his girl shrieked with laughter, so he said.’

Mary quite disregarded this interlude.

‘But you told me you had made a map. What was it like?’

‘I’ll show it you some day, if you want to see it. I marked down all the places I had gone to, and made signs — things like queer letters — to remind me of what I had seen. Nobody but myself could understand it. I wanted to draw pictures, but I never learnt how to draw, so when I tried nothing was like what I wanted it to be. I tried to draw a picture of that town on the hill that I came to on the evening of the first day; I wanted to make a steep hill with houses on top, and in the middle, but high above them, the great church, all spires and pinnacles, and above it, in the air, a cup with rays coming from it. But it wasn’t a success. I made a very strange sign for Hampton Court, and gave it a name that I made up out of my head.’

The Darnells avoided one another’s eyes as they sat at breakfast the next morning. The air had lightened in the night, for rain had fallen at dawn; and there was a bright blue sky, with vast white clouds rolling across it from the south-west, and a fresh and joyous wind blew in at the open window; the mists had vanished. And with the mists there seemed to have vanished also the sense of strange things that had possessed Mary and her husband the night before; and as they looked out into the clear light they could scarcely believe that the one had spoken and the other had listened a few hours before to histories very far removed from the usual current of their thoughts and of their lives. They glanced shyly at one another, and spoke of common things, of the question whether Alice would be corrupted by the insidious Mrs. Murry, or whether Mrs. Darnell would be able to persuade the girl that the old woman must be actuated by the worst motives.

‘And I think, if I were you,’ said Darnell, as he went out, ‘I should step over to the stores and complain of their meat. That last piece of beef was very far from being up to the mark — full of sinew.’

III

It might have been different in the evening, and Darnell had matured a plan by which he hoped to gain much. He intended to ask his wife if she would mind having only one gas, and that a good deal lowered, on the pretext that his eyes were tired with work; he thought many things might happen if the room were dimly lit, and the window opened, so that they could sit and watch the night, and listen to the rustling murmur of the tree on the lawn. But his plans were made in vain, for when he got to the garden gate his wife, in tears, came forth to meet him.

‘Oh, Edward,’ she began, ‘such a dreadful thing has happened! I never liked him much, but I didn’t think he would ever do such awful things.’

‘What do you mean? Who are you talking about? What has happened? Is it Alice’s young man?’

‘No, no. But come in, dear. I can see that woman opposite watching us: she’s always on the look out.’

‘Now, what is it?’ said Darnell, as they sat down to tea. ‘Tell me, quick! you’ve quite frightened me.’

‘I don’t know how to begin, or where to start. Aunt Marian has thought that there was something queer for weeks. And then she found — oh, well, the long and short of it is that Uncle Robert has been carrying on dreadfully with some horrid girl, and aunt has found out everything!’

‘Lord! you don’t say so! The old rascal! Why, he must be nearer seventy than sixty!’

‘He’s just sixty-five; and the money he has given her — — ‘

The first shock of surprise over, Darnell turned resolutely to his mince.

‘We’ll have it all out after tea,’ he said; ‘I am not going to have my meals spoilt by that old fool of a Nixon. Fill up my cup, will you, dear?’

‘Excellent mince this,’ he went on, calmly. ‘A little lemon juice and a bit of ham in it? I thought there was something extra. Alice all right to-day?

That’s good. I expect she’s getting over all that nonsense.’

He went on calmly chattering in a manner that astonished Mrs. Darnell, who felt that by the fall of Uncle Robert the natural order had been inverted, and had scarcely touched food since the intelligence had arrived by the second post. She had started out to keep the appointment her aunt had made early in the morning, and had spent most of the day in a first-class waiting-room at Victoria Station, where she had heard all the story.

‘Now,’ said Darnell, when the table had been cleared, ‘tell us all about it. How long has it been going on?’

‘Aunt thinks now, from little things she remembers, that it must have been going on for a year at least. She says there has been a horrid kind of mystery about uncle’s behaviour for a long time, and her nerves were quite shaken, as she thought he must be involved with Anarchists, or something dreadful of the sort.’

‘What on earth made her think that?’

‘Well, you see, once or twice when she was out walking with her husband, she has been startled by whistles, which seemed to follow them everywhere. You know there are some nice country walks at Barnet, and one in particular, in the fields near Totteridge, that uncle and aunt rather made a point of going to on fine Sunday evenings. Of course, this was not the first thing she noticed, but, at the time, it made a great impression on her mind; she could hardly get a wink of sleep for weeks and weeks.’

‘Whistling?’ said Darnell. ‘I don’t quite understand. Why should she be frightened by whistling?’

‘I’ll tell you. The first time it happened was one Sunday in last May. Aunt had a fancy they were being followed a Sunday or two before, but she didn’t see or hear anything, except a sort of crackling noise in the hedge. But this particular Sunday they had hardly got through the stile into the fields, when she heard a peculiar kind of low whistle. She took no notice, thinking it was no concern of hers or her husband’s, but as they went on she heard it again, and then again, and it followed them the whole walk, and it made her so uncomfortable, because she didn’t know where it was coming from or who was doing it, or why. Then, just as they got out of the fields into the lane, uncle said he felt quite faint, and he thought he would try a little brandy at the “Turpin’s Head,” a small public-house there is there. And she looked at him and saw his face was quite purple — more like apoplexy, as she says, than fainting fits, which make people look a sort of greenish-white. But she said nothing, and thought perhaps uncle had a peculiar way of fainting of his own, as he always was a man to have his own way of doing everything. So she just waited in the road, and he went ahead and slipped into the public, and aunt says she thought she saw a little figure rise out of the dusk and slip in after him, but she couldn’t be sure. And when uncle came out he looked red instead of purple, and said he felt much better; and so they went home quietly together, and nothing more was said. You see, uncle had said nothing about the whistling, and aunt had been so frightened that she didn’t dare speak, for fear they might be both shot.

‘She wasn’t thinking anything more about it, when two Sundays afterwards the very same thing happened just as it had before. This time aunt plucked up a spirit, and asked uncle what it could be. And what do you think he said? “Birds, my dear, birds.” Of course aunt said to him that no bird that ever flew with wings made a noise like that: sly, and low, with pauses in between; and then he said that many rare sorts of birds lived in North Middlesex and Hertfordshire. “Nonsense, Robert,” said aunt, “how can you talk so, considering it has followed us all the way, for a mile or more?” And then uncle told her that some birds were so attached to man that they would follow one about for miles sometimes; he said he had just been reading about a bird like that in a book of travels. And do you know that when they got home he actually showed her a piece in the “Hertfordshire Naturalist” which they took in to oblige a friend of theirs, all about rare birds found in the neighbourhood, all the most outlandish names, aunt says, that she had never heard or thought of, and uncle had the impudence to say that it must have been a Purple Sandpiper, which, the paper said, had “a low shrill note, constantly repeated.” And then he took down a book of Siberian Travels from the bookcase and showed her a page which told how a man was followed by a bird all day long through a forest. And that’s what Aunt Marian says vexes her more than anything almost; to think that he should be so artful and ready with those books, twisting them to his own wicked ends. But, at the time, when she was out walking, she simply couldn’t make out what he meant by talking about birds in that random, silly sort of way, so unlike him, and they went on, that horrible whistling following them, she looking straight ahead and walking fast, really feeling more huffy and put out than frightened. And when they got to the next stile, she got over and turned round, and “lo and behold,” as she says, there was no Uncle Robert to be seen! She felt herself go quite white with alarm, thinking of that whistle, and making sure he’d been spirited away or snatched in some way or another, and she had just screamed out “Robert” like a mad woman, when he came quite slowly round the corner, as cool as a cucumber, holding something in his hand. He said there were some flowers he could never pass, and when aunt saw that he had got a dandelion torn up by the roots, she felt as if her head were going round.’

Mary’s story was suddenly interrupted. For ten minutes Darnell had been writhing in his chair, suffering tortures in his anxiety to avoid wounding his wife’s feelings, but the episode of the dandelion was too much for him, and he burst into a long, wild shriek of laughter, aggravated by suppression into the semblance of a Red Indian’s war-whoop. Alice, who was washing-up in the scullery, dropped some three shillings’ worth of china, and the neighbours ran out into their gardens wondering if it were murder. Mary gazed reproachfully at her husband.

‘How can you be so unfeeling, Edward?’ she said, at length, when Darnell had passed into the feebleness of exhaustion. ‘If you had seen the tears rolling down poor Aunt Marian’s cheeks as she told me, I don’t think you would have laughed. I didn’t think you were so hard-hearted.’

‘My dear Mary,’ said Darnell, faintly, through sobs and catching of the breath, ‘I am awfully sorry. I know it’s very sad, really, and I’m not unfeeling; but it is such an odd tale, now, isn’t it? The Sandpiper, you know, and then the dandelion!’

His face twitched and he ground his teeth together. Mary looked gravely at him for a moment, and then she put her hands to her face, and Darnell could see that she also shook with merriment.

‘I am as bad as you,’ she said, at last. ‘I never thought of it in that way. I’m glad I didn’t, or I should have laughed in Aunt Marian’s face, and I wouldn’t have done that for the world. Poor old thing; she cried as if her heart would break. I met her at Victoria, as she asked me, and we had some soup at a confectioner’s. I could scarcely touch it; her tears kept dropping into the plate all the time; and then we went to the waiting-room at the station, and she cried there terribly.’

‘Well,’ said Darnell, ‘what happened next? I won’t laugh any more.’

‘No, we mustn’t; it’s much too horrible for a joke. Well, of course aunt went home and wondered and wondered what could be the matter, and tried to think it out, but, as she says, she could make nothing of it. She began to be afraid that uncle’s brain was giving way through overwork, as he had stopped in the City (as he said) up to all hours lately, and he had to go to Yorkshire (wicked old story-teller!), about some very tiresome business connected with his leases. But then she reflected that however queer he might be getting, even his queerness couldn’t make whistles in the air, though, as she said, he was always a wonderful man. So she had to give that up; and then she wondered if there were anything the matter with her, as she had read about people who heard noises when there was really nothing at all. But that wouldn’t do either, because though it might account for the whistling, it wouldn’t account for the dandelion or the Sandpiper, or for fainting fits that turned purple, or any of uncle’s queerness. So aunt said she could think of nothing but to read the Bible every day from the beginning, and by the time she got into Chronicles she felt rather better, especially as nothing had happened for three or four Sundays. She noticed uncle seemed absent-minded, and not as nice to her as he might be, but she put that down to too much work, as he never came home before the last train, and had a hansom twice all the way, getting there between three and four in the morning. Still, she felt it was no good bothering her head over what couldn’t be made out or explained anyway, and she was just settling down, when one Sunday evening it began all over again, and worse things happened. The whistling followed them just as it did before, and poor aunt set her teeth and said nothing to uncle, as she knew he would only tell her stories, and they were walking on, not saying a word, when something made her look back, and there was a horrible boy with red hair, peeping through the hedge just behind, and grinning. She said it was a dreadful face, with something unnatural about it, as if it had been a dwarf, and before she had time to have a good look, it popped back like lightning, and aunt all but fainted away.’

‘A red-headed *boy*?’ said Darnell. ‘I thought —— What an extraordinary story this is. I’ve never heard of anything so queer. Who was the boy?’

‘You will know in good time,’ said Mrs. Darnell. ‘It *is* very strange, isn’t it?’

‘Strange!’ Darnell ruminated for a while.

‘I know what I think, Mary,’ he said at length. ‘I don’t believe a word of it. I believe your aunt is going mad, or has gone mad, and that she has delusions. The whole thing sounds to me like the invention of a lunatic.’

‘You are quite wrong. Every word is true, and if you will let me go on, you will understand how it all happened.’

‘Very good, go ahead.’

‘Let me see, where was I? Oh, I know, aunt saw the boy grinning in the hedge. Yes, well, she was dreadfully frightened for a minute or two; there was something so queer about the face, but then she plucked up a spirit and said to herself, “After all, better a boy with red hair than a big man with a gun,” and she made up her mind to watch Uncle Robert closely, as she could see by his look he knew all about it; he seemed as if he were thinking hard and puzzling over something, as if he didn’t know what to do next, and his mouth kept opening and shutting, like a fish’s. So she kept her face straight, and didn’t say a word, and when he said something to her about the fine sunset, she took no notice. “Don’t you hear what I say, Marian?” he said, speaking quite crossly, and bellowing as if it were to somebody in the next field. So aunt said she was very sorry, but her cold made her so deaf, she couldn’t hear much. She noticed uncle looked quite pleased, and relieved too, and she knew he thought she hadn’t heard the whistling. Suddenly uncle pretended to see a beautiful spray of honeysuckle high up in the hedge, and he said he must get it for aunt, only she must go on ahead, as it made him nervous to be watched. She said she would, but she just stepped aside behind a bush where there was a sort of cover in the hedge, and found she could see him quite well, though she scratched her face terribly with poking it into a rose bush. And in a minute or two out came the boy from behind the hedge, and she saw uncle and him talking, and she knew it was the same boy, as it wasn’t dark enough to hide his flaming red head. And uncle put out his hand as if to catch him, but he just darted into the bushes and vanished. Aunt never said a word at the time, but that night when they got home she charged uncle with what she’d seen and asked him what it all meant. He was quite taken aback at first, and stammered and stuttered and said a spy wasn’t his notion of a good wife, but at last he made her swear secrecy, and told her that he was a very high Freemason, and that the boy was an emissary of the order who brought him messages of the greatest importance. But aunt didn't believe a word of it, as an uncle of hers was a mason, and he never behaved like that. It was then she began to be afraid that it was really Anarchists, or something of the kind, and every time the bell rang she thought that uncle had been found out, and the police had come for him.'

'What nonsense! As if a man with house property would be an Anarchist.'

'Well, she could see there must be some horrible secret, and she didn't know what else to think. And then she began to have the things through the post.'

'Things through the post! What do you mean by that?'

'All sorts of things; bits of broken bottle-glass, packed carefully as if it were jewellery; parcels that unrolled and unrolled worse than Chinese boxes, and then had "cat" in large letters when you came to the middle; old artificial teeth, a cake of red paint, and at last cockroaches.'

'Cockroaches by post! Stuff and nonsense; your aunt's mad.'

'Edward, she showed me the box; it was made to hold cigarettes, and there were three dead cockroaches inside. And when she found a box of exactly the same kind, half-full of cigarettes, in uncle's great-coat pocket, then her head began to turn again.'

Darnell groaned, and stirred uneasily in his chair, feeling that the tale of Aunt Marian's domestic troubles was putting on the semblance of an evil dream.

'Anything else?' he asked.

'My dear, I haven't repeated half the things poor aunt told me this afternoon. There was the night she thought she saw a ghost in the shrubbery. She was anxious about some chickens that were just due to hatch out, so she went out after dark with some egg and bread-crumbs, in case they might be out. And just before her she saw a figure gliding by the rhododendrons. It looked like a short, slim man dressed as they used to be hundreds of years ago; she saw the sword by his side, and the feather in his cap. She thought she should have died, she said, and though it was gone in a minute, and she tried to make out it was all her fancy, she fainted when she got into the house. Uncle was at home that night, and when she came to and told him he ran out, and stayed out for half-an-hour or more, and then came in and said he could find nothing; and the next minute aunt heard that low whistle just outside the window, and uncle ran out again.'

'My dear Mary, do let us come to the point. What on earth does it all lead to?'

'Haven't you guessed? Why, of course it was that girl all the time.'

'Girl? I thought you said it was a boy with a red head?'

'Don't you see? She's an actress, and she dressed up. She won't leave uncle alone. It wasn't enough that he was with her nearly every evening in the week, but she must be after him on Sundays too. Aunt found a letter the horrid thing had written, and so it has all come out. Enid Vivian she calls herself, though I don't suppose she has any right to one name or the other. And the question is, what is to be done?'

'Let us talk of that again. I'll have a pipe, and then we'll go to bed.'

They were almost asleep when Mary said suddenly —

'Doesn't it seem queer, Edward? Last night you were telling me such beautiful things, and to-night I have been talking about that disgraceful old man and his goings on.'

'I don't know,' answered Darnell, dreamily. 'On the walls of that great church upon the hill I saw all kinds of strange grinning monsters, carved in stone.'

The misdemeanours of Mr. Robert Nixon brought in their train consequences strange beyond imagination. It was not that they continued to develop on the somewhat fantastic lines of these first adventures which Mrs. Darnell had related; indeed, when 'Aunt Marian' came over to Shepherd's Bush, one Sunday afternoon, Darnell wondered how he had had the heart to laugh at the misfortunes of a broken-hearted woman.

He had never seen his wife's aunt before, and he was strangely surprised when Alice showed her into the garden where they were sitting on the warm and misty Sunday in September. To him, save during these latter days, she had always been associated with ideas of splendour and success: his wife had always mentioned the Nixons with a tinge of reverence; he had heard, many times, the epic of Mr. Nixon's struggles and of his slow but triumphant rise. Mary had told the story as she had received it from her parents, beginning with the flight to London from some small, dull, and unprosperous town in the flattest of the Midlands, long ago, when a young man from the country had great chances of fortune. Robert Nixon's father had been a grocer in the High Street, and in after days the successful coal merchant and builder loved to tell of that dull provincial life, and while he glorified his own victories, he gave his hearers to understand that he came of a race which had also known how to achieve. That had been long ago, he would explain: in the days when that rare citizen who desired to go to London or to York was forced to rise in the dead of night, and make his way, somehow or other, by ten miles of quagmirish, wandering lanes to the Great North Road, there to meet the 'Lightning' coach, a vehicle which stood to all the countryside as the visible and tangible embodiment of tremendous speed— 'and indeed,' as Nixon would add, 'it was always up to time, which is more than can be said of the Dunham Branch Line nowadays!' It was in this ancient Dunham that the Nixons had waged successful trade for perhaps a hundred years, in a shop with bulging bay windows looking on the market-place. There was no competition, and the townsfolk, and well-to-do farmers, the clergy and the country families, looked upon the house of Nixon as an institution fixed as the town hall (which stood on Roman pillars) and the parish church. But the change came: the railway crept nearer and nearer, the farmers and the country gentry became less well-to-do; the tanning, which was the local industry, suffered from a great business which had been established in a larger town, some twenty miles away, and the profits of the Nixons grew less and less. Hence the hegira of Robert, and he would dilate on the poorness of his beginnings, how he saved, by little and little, from his sorry wage of City clerk, and how he and a fellow clerk, 'who had come into a hundred pounds,' saw an opening in the coal trade — and filled it. It was at this stage of Robert's fortunes, still far from magnificent, that Miss Marian Reynolds had encountered him, she being on a visit to friends in Gunnersbury. Afterwards, victory followed victory; Nixon's wharf became a landmark to bargemen; his power stretched abroad, his dusky fleets went outwards to the sea, and inward by all the far reaches of canals. Lime, cement, and bricks were added to his merchandise, and at last he hit upon the great stroke — that extensive taking up of land in the north of London. Nixon himself ascribed this *coup* to native sagacity, and the possession of capital; and there were also obscure rumours to the effect that some one or other had been ‘done’ in the course of the transaction. However that might be, the Nixons grew wealthy to excess, and Mary had often told her husband of the state in which they dwelt, of their liveried servants, of the glories of their drawing-room, of their broad lawn, shadowed by a splendid and ancient cedar. And so Darnell had somehow been led into conceiving the lady of this demesne as a personage of no small pomp. He saw her, tall, of dignified port and presence, inclining, it might be, to some measure of obesity, such a measure as was not unbefitting in an elderly lady of position, who lived well and lived at ease. He even imagined a slight ruddiness of complexion, which went very well with hair that was beginning to turn grey, and when he heard the door-bell ring, as he sat under the mulberry on the Sunday afternoon, he bent forward to catch sight of this stately figure, clad, of course, in the richest, blackest silk, girt about with heavy chains of gold.

He started with amazement when he saw the strange presence that followed the servant into the garden. Mrs. Nixon was a little, thin old woman, who bent as she feebly trotted after Alice; her eyes were on the ground, and she did not lift them when the Darnells rose to greet her. She glanced to the right, uneasily, as she shook hands with Darnell, to the left when Mary kissed her, and when she was placed on the garden seat with a cushion at her back, she looked away at the back of the houses in the next street. She was dressed in black, it was true, but even Darnell could see that her gown was old and shabby, that the fur trimming of her cape and the fur boa which was twisted about her neck were dingy and disconsolate, and had all the melancholy air which fur wears when it is seen in a second-hand clothes-shop in a back street. And her gloves — they were black kid, wrinkled with much wear, faded to a bluish hue at the finger-tips, which showed signs of painful mending. Her hair, plastered over her forehead, looked dull and colourless, though some greasy matter had evidently been used with a view of producing a becoming gloss, and on it perched an antique bonnet, adorned with black pendants that rattled paralytically one against the other.

And there was nothing in Mrs. Nixon’s face to correspond with the imaginary picture that Darnell had made of her. She was sallow, wrinkled, pinched; her nose ran to a sharp point, and her red-rimmed eyes were a queer water-grey, that seemed to shrink alike from the light and from encounter with the eyes of others. As she sat beside his wife on the green garden-seat, Darnell, who occupied a wicker-chair brought out from the drawing-room, could not help feeling that this shadowy and evasive figure, muttering replies to Mary's polite questions, was almost impossibly remote from his conceptions of the rich and powerful aunt, who could give away a hundred pounds as a mere birthday gift. She would say little at first; yes, she was feeling rather tired, it had been so hot all the way, and she had been afraid to put on lighter things as one never knew at this time of year what it might be like in the evenings; there were apt to be cold mists when the sun went down, and she didn't care to risk bronchitis.

'I thought I should never get here,' she went on, raising her voice to an odd querulous pipe. 'I'd no notion it was such an out-of-the-way place, it's so many years since I was in this neighbourhood.'

She wiped her eyes, no doubt thinking of the early days at Turnham Green, when she married Nixon; and when the pocket-handkerchief had done its office she replaced it in a shabby black bag which she clutched rather than carried. Darnell noticed, as he watched her, that the bag seemed full, almost to bursting, and he speculated idly as to the nature of its contents: correspondence, perhaps, he thought, further proofs of Uncle Robert's treacherous and wicked dealings. He grew quite uncomfortable, as he sat and saw her glancing all the while furtively away from his wife and himself, and presently he got up and strolled away to the other end of the garden, where he lit his pipe and walked to and fro on the gravel walk, still astounded at the gulf between the real and the imagined woman.

Presently he heard a hissing whisper, and he saw Mrs. Nixon's head inclining to his wife's. Mary rose and came towards him.

'Would you mind sitting in the drawing-room, Edward?' she murmured. 'Aunt says she can't bring herself to discuss such a delicate matter before you. I dare say it's quite natural.'

'Very well, but I don't think I'll go into the drawing-room. I feel as if a walk would do me good. You mustn't be frightened if I am a little late,' he said; 'if I don't get back before your aunt goes, say good-bye to her for me.'

He strolled into the main road, where the trams were humming to and fro. He was still confused and perplexed, and he tried to account for a certain relief he felt in removing himself from the presence of Mrs. Nixon. He told himself that her grief at her husband's ruffianly conduct was worthy of all pitiful respect, but at the same time, to his shame, he had felt a certain physical aversion from her as she sat in his garden in her dingy black, dabbing her red-rimmed eyes with a damp pocket-handkerchief. He had been to the Zoo when he was a lad, and he still remembered how he had shrunk with horror at the sight of certain reptiles slowly crawling over one another in their slimy pond. But he was enraged at the similarity between the two sensations, and he walked briskly on that level and monotonous road, looking about him at the unhandsome spectacle of suburban London keeping Sunday.

There was something in the tinge of antiquity which still exists in Acton that soothed his mind and drew it away from those unpleasant contemplations, and when at last he had penetrated rampart after rampart of brick, and heard no more the harsh shrieks and laughter of the people who were enjoying themselves, he found a way into a little sheltered field, and sat down in peace beneath a tree, whence he could look out on a pleasant valley. The sun sank down beneath the hills, the clouds changed into the likeness of blossoming rose-gardens; and he still sat there in the gathering darkness till a cool breeze blew upon him, and he rose with a sigh, and turned back to the brick ramparts and the glimmering streets, and the noisy idlers sauntering to and fro in the procession of their dismal festival. But he was murmuring to himself some words that seemed a magic song, and it was with uplifted heart that he let himself into his house.

Mrs. Nixon had gone an hour and a half before his return, Mary told him. Darnell sighed with relief, and he and his wife strolled out into the garden and sat down side by side.

They kept silence for a time, and at last Mary spoke, not without a nervous tremor in her voice.

'I must tell you, Edward,' she began, 'that aunt has made a proposal which you ought to hear. I think we should consider it.'

'A proposal? But how about the whole affair? Is it still going on?'

'Oh, yes! She told me all about it. Uncle is quite unrepentant. It seems he has taken a flat somewhere in town for that woman, and furnished it in the most costly manner. He simply laughs at aunt’s reproaches, and says he means to have some fun at last. You saw how broken she was?’

‘Yes; very sad. But won’t he give her any money? Wasn’t she very badly dressed for a woman in her position?’

‘Aunt has no end of beautiful things, but I fancy she likes to hoard them; she has a horror of spoiling her dresses. It isn’t for want of money, I assure you, as uncle settled a very large sum on her two years ago, when he was everything that could be desired as a husband. And that brings me to what I want to say. Aunt would like to live with us. She would pay very liberally. What do you say?’

‘Would like to live with us?’ exclaimed Darnell, and his pipe dropped from his hand on to the grass. He was stupefied by the thought of Aunt Marian as a boarder, and sat staring vacantly before him, wondering what new monster the night would next produce.

‘I knew you wouldn’t much like the idea,’ his wife went on. ‘But I do think, dearest, that we ought not to refuse without very serious consideration. I am afraid you did not take to poor aunt very much.’

Darnell shook his head dumbly.

‘I thought you didn’t; she was so upset, poor thing, and you didn’t see her at her best. She is really so good. But listen to me, dear. Do you think we have the right to refuse her offer? I told you she has money of her own, and I am sure she would be dreadfully offended if we said we wouldn’t have her. And what would become of me if anything happened to you? You know we have very little saved.’

Darnell groaned.

‘It seems to me,’ he said, ‘that it would spoil everything. We are so happy, Mary dear, by ourselves. Of course I am extremely sorry for your aunt. I think she is very much to be pitied. But when it comes to having her always here — — ‘

‘I know, dear. Don’t think I am looking forward to the prospect; you know I don’t want anybody but you. Still, we ought to think of the future, and besides we shall be able to live so very much better. I shall be able to give you all sorts of nice things that I know you ought to have after all that hard work in the City. Our income would be doubled.'

'Do you mean she would pay us £150 a year?'

'Certainly. And she would pay for the spare room being furnished, and any extra she might want. She told me, specially, that if a friend or two came now and again to see her, she would gladly bear the cost of a fire in the drawing-room, and give something towards the gas bill, with a few shillings for the girl for any additional trouble. We should certainly be more than twice as well off as we are now. You see, Edward, dear, it's not the sort of offer we are likely to have again. Besides, we must think of the future, as I said. Do you know aunt took a great fancy to you?'

He shuddered and said nothing, and his wife went on with her argument.

'And, you see, it isn't as if we should see so very much of her. She will have her breakfast in bed, and she told me she would often go up to her room in the evening directly after dinner. I thought that very nice and considerate. She quite understands that we shouldn't like to have a third person always with us. Don't you think, Edward, that, considering everything, we ought to say we will have her?'

'Oh, I suppose so,' he groaned. 'As you say, it's a very good offer, financially, and I am afraid it would be very imprudent to refuse. But I don't like the notion, I confess.'

'I am so glad you agree with me, dear. Depend upon it, it won't be half so bad as you think. And putting our own advantage on one side, we shall really be doing poor aunt a very great kindness. Poor old dear, she cried bitterly after you were gone; she said she had made up her mind not to stay any longer in Uncle Robert's house, and she didn't know where to go, or what would become of her, if we refused to take her in. She quite broke down.'

'Well, well; we will try it for a year, anyhow. It may be as you say; we shan't find it quite so bad as it seems now. Shall we go in?'

He stooped for his pipe, which lay as it had fallen, on the grass. He could not find it, and lit a wax match which showed him the pipe, and close beside it, under the seat, something that looked like a page torn from a book. He wondered what it could be, and picked it up.

The gas was lit in the drawing-room, and Mrs. Darnell, who was arranging some notepaper, wished to write at once to Mrs. Nixon, cordially accepting her proposal, when she was startled by an exclamation from her husband.

‘What is the matter?’ she said, startled by the tone of his voice. ‘You haven’t hurt yourself?’

‘Look at this,’ he replied, handing her a small leaflet; ‘I found it under the garden seat just now.’

Mary glanced with bewilderment at her husband and read as follows: —

THE NEW AND CHOSEN SEED OF ABRAHAM

PROPHECIES TO BE FULFILLED IN THE PRESENT YEAR

1. The Sailing of a Fleet of One hundred and Forty and Four Vessels for Tarshish and the Isles.

2. Destruction of the Power of the Dog, including all the instruments of anti-Abrahamic legislation.

3. Return of the Fleet from Tarshish, bearing with it the gold of Arabia, destined to be the Foundation of the New City of Abraham.

4. The Search for the Bride, and the bestowing of the Seals on the Seventy and Seven.

5. The Countenance of Father to become luminous, but with a greater glory than the face of Moses.

6. The Pope of Rome to be stoned with stones in the valley called Berek-Zittor.

7. Father to be acknowledged by Three Great Rulers. Two Great Rulers will deny Father, and will immediately perish in the Effluvia of Father’s Indignation.

8. Binding of the Beast with the Little Horn, and all Judges cast down.

9. Finding of the Bride in the Land of Egypt, which has been revealed to Father as now existing in the western part of London.

10. Bestowal of the New Tongue on the Seventy and Seven, and on the One Hundred and Forty and Four. Father proceeds to the Bridal Chamber.

11. Destruction of London and rebuilding of the City called No, which is the New City of Abraham.

12. Father united to the Bride, and the present Earth removed to the Sun for the space of half an hour.

Mrs. Darnell’s brow cleared as she read matter which seemed to her harmless if incoherent. From her husband’s voice she had been led to fear something more tangibly unpleasant than a vague catena of prophecies.

‘Well,’ she said, ‘what about it?’

‘What about it? Don’t you see that your aunt dropped it, and that she must be a raging lunatic?’

‘Oh, Edward! don’t say that. In the first place, how do you know that aunt dropped it at all? It might easily have blown over from any of the other gardens. And, if it were hers, I don’t think you should call her a lunatic. I don’t believe, myself, that there are any real prophets now; but there are many good people who think quite differently. I knew an old lady once who, I am sure, was very good, and she took in a paper every week that was full of prophecies and things very like this. Nobody called her mad, and I have heard father say that she had one of the sharpest heads for business he had ever come across.’

‘Very good; have it as you like. But I believe we shall both be sorry.’

They sat in silence for some time. Alice came in after her ‘evening out,’ and they sat on, till Mrs. Darnell said she was tired and wanted to go to bed.

Her husband kissed her. ‘I don’t think I will come up just yet,’ he said; ‘you go to sleep, dearest. I want to think things over. No, no; I am not going to change my mind: your aunt shall come, as I said. But there are one or two things I should like to get settled in my mind.’

He meditated for a long while, pacing up and down the room. Light after light was extinguished in Edna Road, and the people of the suburb slept all around him, but still the gas was alight in Darnell’s drawing-room, and he walked softly up and down the floor. He was thinking that about the life of Mary and himself, which had been so quiet, there seemed to be gathering on all sides grotesque and fantastic shapes, omens of confusion and disorder, threats of madness; a strange company from another world. It was as if into the quiet, sleeping streets of some little ancient town among the hills there had come from afar the sound of drum and pipe, snatches of wild song, and there had burst into the market-place the mad company of the players, strangely bedizened, dancing a furious measure to their hurrying music, drawing forth the citizens from their sheltered homes and peaceful lives, and alluring them to mingle in the significant figures of their dance.

Yet afar and near (for it was hidden in his heart) he beheld the glimmer of a sure and constant star. Beneath, darkness came on, and mists and shadows closed about the town. The red, flickering flame of torches was kindled in the midst of it. The song grew louder, with more insistent, magical tones, surging and falling in unearthly modulations, the very speech of incantation; and the drum beat madly, and the pipe shrilled to a scream, summoning all to issue forth, to leave their peaceful hearths; for a strange rite was preconized in their midst. The streets that were wont to be so still, so hushed with the cool and tranquil veils of darkness, asleep beneath the patronage of the evening star, now danced with glimmering lanterns, resounded with the cries of those who hurried forth, drawn as by a magistral spell; and the songs swelled and triumphed, the reverberant beating of the drum grew louder, and in the midst of the awakened town the players, fantastically arrayed, performed their interlude under the red blaze of torches. He knew not whether they were players, men that would vanish suddenly as they came, disappearing by the track that climbed the hill; or whether they were indeed magicians, workers of great and efficacious spells, who knew the secret word by which the earth may be transformed into the hall of Gehenna, so that they that gazed and listened, as at a passing spectacle, should be entrapped by the sound and the sight presented to them, should be drawn into the elaborated figures of that mystic dance, and so should be whirled away into those unending mazes on the wild hills that were abhorred, there to wander for evermore.

But Darnell was not afraid, because of the Daystar that had risen in his heart. It had dwelt there all his life, and had slowly shone forth with clearer and clearer light, and he began to see that though his earthly steps might be in the ways of the ancient town that was beset by the Enchanters, and resounded with their songs and their processions, yet he dwelt also in that serene and secure world of brightness, and from a great and unutterable height looked on the confusion of the mortal pageant, beholding mysteries in which he was no true actor, hearing magic songs that could by no means draw him down from the battlements of the high and holy city.

His heart was filled with a great joy and a great peace as he lay down beside his wife and fell asleep, and in the morning, when he woke up, he was glad.

IV

In a haze as of a dream Darnell's thoughts seemed to move through the opening days of the next week. Perhaps nature had not intended that he should be practical or much given to that which is usually called 'sound common sense,' but his training had made him desirous of good, plain qualities of the mind, and he uneasily strove to account to himself for his strange mood of the Sunday night, as he had often endeavoured to interpret the fancies of his boyhood and early manhood. At first he was annoyed by his want of success; the morning paper, which he always secured as the 'bus delayed at Uxbridge Road Station, fell from his hands unread, while he vainly reasoned, assuring himself that the threatened incursion of a whimsical old woman, though tiresome enough, was no rational excuse for those curious hours of meditation in which his thoughts seemed to have dressed themselves in unfamiliar, fantastic habits, and to parley with him in a strange speech, and yet a speech that he had understood.

With such arguments he perplexed his mind on the long, accustomed ride up the steep ascent of Holland Park, past the incongruous hustle of Notting Hill Gate, where in one direction a road shows the way to the snug, somewhat faded bowers and retreats of Bayswater, and in another one sees the portal of the murky region of the slums. The customary companions of his morning's journey were in the seats about him; he heard the hum of their talk, as they disputed concerning politics, and the man next to him, who came from Acton, asked him what he thought of the Government now. There was a discussion, and a loud and excited one, just in front, as to whether rhubarb was a fruit or vegetable, and in his ear he heard Redman, who was a near neighbour, praising the economy of 'the wife.'

'I don't know how she does it. Look here; what do you think we had yesterday? Breakfast: fish-cakes, beautifully fried — rich, you know, lots of herbs, it's a receipt of her aunt's; you should just taste 'em. Coffee, bread, butter, marmalade, and, of course, all the usual etceteras. Dinner: roast beef, Yorkshire, potatoes, greens, and horse-radish sauce, plum tart, cheese. And where will you get a better dinner than that? Well, I call it wonderful, I really do.'

But in spite of these distractions he fell into a dream as the 'bus rolled and tossed on its way Citywards, and still he strove to solve the enigma of his vigil of the night before, and as the shapes of trees and green lawns and houses passed before his eyes, and as he saw the procession moving on the pavement, and while the murmur of the streets sounded in his ears, all was to him strange and unaccustomed, as if he moved through the avenues of some city in a foreign land. It was, perhaps, on these mornings, as he rode to his mechanical work, that vague and floating fancies that must have long haunted his brain began to shape themselves, and to put on the form of definite conclusions, from which he could no longer escape, even if he had wished it. Darnell had received what is called a sound commercial education, and would therefore have found very great difficulty in putting into articulate speech any thought that was worth thinking; but he grew certain on these mornings that the 'common sense' which he had always heard exalted as man's supremest faculty was, in all probability, the smallest and least-considered item in the equipment of an ant of average intelligence. And with this, as an almost necessary corollary, came a firm belief that the whole fabric of life in which he moved was sunken, past all thinking, in the grossest absurdity; that he and all his friends and acquaintances and fellow-workers were interested in matters in which men were never meant to be interested, were pursuing aims which they were never meant to pursue, were, indeed, much like fair stones of an altar serving as a pigsty wall. Life, it seemed to him, was a great search for — he knew not what; and in the process of the ages one by one the true marks upon the ways had been shattered, or buried, or the meaning of the words had been slowly forgotten; one by one the signs had been turned awry, the true entrances had been thickly overgrown, the very way itself had been diverted from the heights to the depths, till at last the race of pilgrims had become hereditary stone-breakers and ditch-scourers on a track that led to destruction — if it led anywhere at all. Darnell's heart thrilled with a strange and trembling joy, with a sense that was all new, when it came to his mind that this great loss might not be a hopeless one, that perhaps the difficulties were by no means insuperable. It might be, he considered, that the stone-breaker had merely to throw down his hammer and set out, and the way would be plain before him; and a single step would free the delver in rubbish from the foul slime of the ditch.

It was, of course, with difficulty and slowly that these things became clear to him. He was an English City clerk, ‘flourishing’ towards the end of the nineteenth century, and the rubbish heap that had been accumulating for some centuries could not be cleared away in an instant. Again and again the spirit of nonsense that had been implanted in him as in his fellows assured him that the true world was the visible and tangible world, the world in which good and faithful letter-copying was exchangeable for a certain quantum of bread, beef, and house-room, and that the man who copied letters well, did not beat his wife, nor lose money foolishly, was a good man, fulfilling the end for which he had been made. But in spite of these arguments, in spite of their acceptance by all who were about him, he had the grace to perceive the utter falsity and absurdity of the whole position. He was fortunate in his entire ignorance of sixpenny ‘science,’ but if the whole library had been projected into his brain it would not have moved him to ‘deny in the darkness that which he had known in the light.’ Darnell knew by experience that man is made a mystery for mysteries and visions, for the realization in his consciousness of ineffable bliss, for a great joy that transmutes the whole world, for a joy that surpasses all joys and overcomes all sorrows. He knew this certainly, though he knew it dimly; and he was apart from other men, preparing himself for a great experiment.

With such thoughts as these for his secret and concealed treasure, he was able to bear the threatened invasion of Mrs. Nixon with something approaching indifference. He knew, indeed, that her presence between his wife and himself would be unwelcome to him, and he was not without grave doubts as to the woman’s sanity; but after all, what did it matter? Besides, already a faint glimmering light had risen within him that showed the profit of self-negation, and in this matter he had preferred his wife’s will to his own. *Et non sua poma*; to his astonishment he found a delight in denying himself his own wish, a process that he had always regarded as thoroughly detestable. This was a state of things which he could not in the least understand; but, again, though a member of a most hopeless class, living in the most hopeless surroundings that the world has ever seen, though he knew as much of the *askesis* as of Chinese metaphysics; again, he had the grace not to deny the light that had begun to glimmer in his soul.

And he found a present reward in the eyes of Mary, when she welcomed him home after his foolish labours in the cool of the evening. They sat together, hand in hand, under the mulberry tree, at the coming of the dusk, and as the ugly walls about them became obscure and vanished into the formless world of shadows, they seemed to be freed from the bondage of Shepherd's Bush, freed to wander in that undisfigured, undefiled world that lies beyond the walls. Of this region Mary knew little or nothing by experience, since her relations had always been of one mind with the modern world, which has for the true country an instinctive and most significant horror and dread. Mr. Reynolds had also shared in another odd superstition of these later days — that it is necessary to leave London at least once a year; consequently Mary had some knowledge of various seaside resorts on the south and east coasts, where Londoners gather in hordes, turn the sands into one vast, bad music-hall, and derive, as they say, enormous benefit from the change. But experiences such as these give but little knowledge of the country in its true and occult sense; and yet Mary, as she sat in the dusk beneath the whispering tree, knew something of the secret of the wood, of the valley shut in by high hills, where the sound of pouring water always echoes from the clear brook. And to Darnell these were nights of great dreams; for it was the hour of the work, the time of transmutation, and he who could not understand the miracle, who could scarcely believe in it, yet knew, secretly and half consciously, that the water was being changed into the wine of a new life. This was ever the inner music of his dreams, and to it he added on these still and sacred nights the far-off memory of that time long ago when, a child, before the world had overwhelmed him, he journeyed down to the old grey house in the west, and for a whole month heard the murmur of the forest through his bedroom window, and when the wind was hushed, the washing of the tides about the reeds; and sometimes awaking very early he had heard the strange cry of a bird as it rose from its nest among the reeds, and had looked out and had seen the valley whiten to the dawn, and the winding river whiten as it swam down to the sea. The memory of all this had faded and become shadowy as he grew older and the chains of common life were riveted firmly about his soul; all the atmosphere by which he was surrounded was well-nigh fatal to such thoughts, and only now and again in half-conscious moments or in sleep he had revisited that valley in the far-off west, where the breath of the wind was an incantation, and every leaf and stream and hill spoke of great and ineffable mysteries. But now the broken vision was in great part restored to him, and looking with love in his wife's eyes he saw the gleam of water-pools in the still forest, saw the mists rising in the evening, and heard the music of the winding river.

They were sitting thus together on the Friday evening of the week that had begun with that odd and half-forgotten visit of Mrs. Nixon, when, to Darnell's annoyance, the door-bell gave a discordant peal, and Alice with some disturbance of manner came out and announced that a gentleman wished to see the master. Darnell went into the drawing-room, where Alice had lit one gas so that it flared and burnt with a rushing sound, and in this distorting light there waited a stout, elderly gentleman, whose countenance was altogether unknown to him. He stared blankly, and hesitated, about to speak, but the visitor began.

'You don't know who I am, but I expect you'll know my name. It's Nixon.'

He did not wait to be interrupted. He sat down and plunged into narrative, and after the first few words, Darnell, whose mind was not altogether unprepared, listened without much astonishment.

'And the long and the short of it is,' Mr. Nixon said at last, 'she's gone stark, staring mad, and we had to put her away to-day — poor thing.'

His voice broke a little, and he wiped his eyes hastily, for though stout and successful he was not unfeeling, and he was fond of his wife. He had spoken quickly, and had gone lightly over many details which might have interested specialists in certain kinds of mania, and Darnell was sorry for his evident distress.

'I came here,' he went on after a brief pause, 'because I found out she had been to see you last Sunday, and I knew the sort of story she must have told.'

Darnell showed him the prophetic leaflet which Mrs. Nixon had dropped in the garden. 'Did you know about this?' he said.

'Oh, *him*,' said the old man, with some approach to cheerfulness; 'oh yes, I thrashed *him* black and blue the day before yesterday.'

'Isn't he mad? Who is the man?'

‘He’s not mad, he’s bad. He’s a little Welsh skunk named Richards. He’s been running some sort of chapel over at New Barnet for the last few years, and my poor wife — she never could find the parish church good enough for her — had been going to his damned schism shop for the last twelvemonth. It was all that finished her off. Yes; I thrashed *him* the day before yesterday, and I’m not afraid of a summons either. I know him, and he knows I know him.’

Old Nixon whispered something in Darnell’s ear, and chuckled faintly as he repeated for the third time his formula —

‘I thrashed *him* black and blue the day before yesterday.’

Darnell could only murmur condolences and express his hope that Mrs. Nixon might recover.

The old man shook his head.

‘I’m afraid there’s no hope of that,’ he said. ‘I’ve had the best advice, but they couldn’t do anything, and told me so.’

Presently he asked to see his niece, and Darnell went out and prepared Mary as well as he could. She could scarcely take in the news that her aunt was a hopeless maniac, for Mrs. Nixon, having been extremely stupid all her days, had naturally succeeded in passing with her relations as typically sensible. With the Reynolds family, as with the great majority of us, want of imagination is always equated with sanity, and though many of us have never heard of Lombroso we are his ready-made converts. We have always believed that poets are mad, and if statistics unfortunately show that few poets have really been inhabitants of lunatic asylums, it is soothing to learn that nearly all poets have had whooping-cough, which is doubtless, like intoxication, a minor madness.

‘But is it really true?’ she asked at length. ‘Are you certain uncle is not deceiving you? Aunt seemed so sensible always.’

She was helped at last by recollecting that Aunt Marian used to get up very early of mornings, and then they went into the drawing-room and talked to the old man. His evident kindliness and honesty grew upon Mary, in spite of a lingering belief in her aunt’s fables, and when he left, it was with a promise to come to see them again.

Mrs. Darnell said she felt tired, and went to bed; and Darnell returned to the garden and began to pace to and fro, collecting his thoughts. His immeasurable relief at the intelligence that, after all, Mrs. Nixon was not coming to live with them taught him that, despite his submission, his dread of the event had been very great. The weight was removed, and now he was free to consider his life without reference to the grotesque intrusion that he had feared. He sighed for joy, and as he paced to and fro he savoured the scent of the night, which, though it came faintly to him in that brick-bound suburb, summoned to his mind across many years the odour of the world at night as he had known it in that short sojourn of his boyhood; the odour that rose from the earth when the flame of the sun had gone down beyond the mountain, and the afterglow had paled in the sky and on the fields. And as he recovered as best he could these lost dreams of an enchanted land, there came to him other images of his childhood, forgotten and yet not forgotten, dwelling unheeded in dark places of the memory, but ready to be summoned forth. He remembered one fantasy that had long haunted him. As he lay half asleep in the forest on one hot afternoon of that memorable visit to the country, he had ‘made believe’ that a little companion had come to him out of the blue mists and the green light beneath the leaves — a white girl with long black hair, who had played with him and whispered her secrets in his ear, as his father lay sleeping under a tree; and from that summer afternoon, day by day, she had been beside him; she had visited him in the wilderness of London, and even in recent years there had come to him now and again the sense of her presence, in the midst of the heat and turmoil of the City. The last visit he remembered well; it was a few weeks before he married, and from the depths of some futile task he had looked up with puzzled eyes, wondering why the close air suddenly grew scented with green leaves, why the murmur of the trees and the wash of the river on the reeds came to his ears; and then that sudden rapture to which he had given a name and an individuality possessed him utterly. He knew then how the dull flesh of man can be like fire; and now, looking back from a new standpoint on this and other experiences, he realized how all that was real in his life had been unwelcomed, uncherished by him, had come to him, perhaps, in virtue of merely negative qualities on his part. And yet, as he reflected, he saw that there had been a chain of witnesses all through his life: again and again voices had whispered in his ear words in a strange language that he now recognized as his native tongue; the common street had not been lacking in visions of the true land of his birth; and in all the passing and repassing of the world he saw that there had been emissaries ready to guide his feet on the way of the great journey.

A week or two after the visit of Mr. Nixon, Darnell took his annual holiday.

There was no question of Walton-on-the-Naze, or of anything of the kind, as he quite agreed with his wife's longing for some substantial sum put by against the evil day. But the weather was still fine, and he lounged away the time in his garden beneath the tree, or he sauntered out on long aimless walks in the western purlieus of London, not unvisited by that old sense of some great ineffable beauty, concealed by the dim and dingy veils of grey interminable streets. Once, on a day of heavy rain he went to the 'box-room,' and began to turn over the papers in the old hair trunk — scraps and odds and ends of family history, some of them in his father's handwriting, others in faded ink, and there were a few ancient pocket-books, filled with manuscript of a still earlier time, and in these the ink was glossier and blacker than any writing fluids supplied by stationers of later days. Darnell had hung up the portrait of the ancestor in this room, and had bought a solid kitchen table and a chair; so that Mrs. Darnell, seeing him looking over his old documents, half thought of naming the room 'Mr. Darnell's study.' He had not glanced at these relics of his family for many years, but from the hour when the rainy morning sent him to them, he remained constant to research till the end of the holidays. It was a new interest, and he began to fashion in his mind a faint picture of his forefathers, and of their life in that grey old house in the river valley, in the western land of wells and streams and dark and ancient woods. And there were stranger things than mere notes on family history amongst that odd litter of old disregarded papers, and when he went back to his work in the City some of the men fancied that he was in some vague manner changed in appearance; but he only laughed when they asked him where he had been and what he had been doing with himself. But Mary noticed that every evening he spent at least an hour in the box-room; she was rather sorry at the waste of time involved in reading old papers about dead people. And one afternoon, as they were out together on a somewhat dreary walk towards Acton, Darnell stopped at a hopeless second-hand bookshop, and after scanning the rows of shabby books in the window, went in and purchased two volumes. They proved to be a Latin dictionary and grammar, and she was surprised to hear her husband declare his intention of acquiring the Latin language.

But, indeed, all his conduct impressed her as indefinably altered; and she began to be a little alarmed, though she could scarcely have formed her fears in words. But she knew that in some way that was all indefined and beyond the grasp of her thought their lives had altered since the summer, and no single thing wore quite the same aspect as before. If she looked out into the dull street with its rare loiterers, it was the same and yet it had altered, and if she opened the window in the early morning the wind that entered came with a changed breath that spoke some message that she could not understand. And day by day passed by in the old course, and not even the four walls were altogether familiar, and the voices of men and women sounded with strange notes, with the echo, rather, of a music that came over unknown hills. And day by day as she went about her household work, passing from shop to shop in those dull streets that were a network, a fatal labyrinth of grey desolation on every side, there came to her sense half-seen images of some other world, as if she walked in a dream, and every moment must bring her to light and to awakening, when the grey should fade, and regions long desired should appear in glory. Again and again it seemed as if that which was hidden would be shown even to the sluggish testimony of sense; and as she went to and fro from street to street of that dim and weary suburb, and looked on those grey material walls, they seemed as if a light glowed behind them, and again and again the mystic fragrance of incense was blown to her nostrils from across the verge of that world which is not so much impenetrable as ineffable, and to her ears came the dream of a chant that spoke of hidden choirs about all her ways. She struggled against these impressions, refusing her assent to the testimony of them, since all the pressure of credited opinion for three hundred years has been directed towards stamping out real knowledge, and so effectually has this been accomplished that we can only recover the truth through much anguish. And so Mary passed the days in a strange perturbation, clinging to common things and common thoughts, as if she feared that one morning she would wake up in an unknown world to a changed life. And Edward Darnell went day by day to his labour and returned in the evening, always with that shining of light within his eyes and upon his face, with the gaze of wonder that was greater day by day, as if for him the veil grew thin and soon would disappear.

From these great matters both in herself and in her husband Mary shrank back, afraid, perhaps, that if she began the question the answer might be too wonderful. She rather taught herself to be troubled over little things; she asked herself what attraction there could be in the old records over which she supposed Edward to be poring night after night in the cold room upstairs. She had glanced over the papers at Darnell's invitation, and could see but little interest in them; there were one or two sketches, roughly done in pen and ink, of the old house in the west: it looked a shapeless and fantastic place, furnished with strange pillars and stranger ornaments on the projecting porch; and on one side a roof dipped down almost to the earth, and in the centre there was something that might almost be a tower rising above the rest of the building. Then there were documents that seemed all names and dates, with here and there a coat of arms done in the margin, and she came upon a string of uncouth Welsh names linked together by the word 'ap' in a chain that looked endless. There was a paper covered with signs and figures that meant nothing to her, and then there were the pocket-books, full of old-fashioned writing, and much of it in Latin, as her husband told her — it was a collection as void of significance as a treatise on conic sections, so far as Mary was concerned. But night after night Darnell shut himself up with the musty rolls, and more than ever when he rejoined her he bore upon his face the blazonry of some great adventure. And one night she asked him what interested him so much in the papers he had shown her.

He was delighted with the question. Somehow they had not talked much together for the last few weeks, and he began to tell her of the records of the old race from which he came, of the old strange house of grey stone between the forest and the river. The family went back and back, he said, far into the dim past, beyond the Normans, beyond the Saxons, far into the Roman days, and for many hundred years they had been petty kings, with a strong fortress high up on the hill, in the heart of the forest; and even now the great mounds remained, whence one could look through the trees towards the mountain on one side and across the yellow sea on the other. The real name of the family was not Darnell; that was assumed by one Iolo ap Taliesin ap Iorwerth in the sixteenth century — why, Darnell did not seem to understand. And then he told her how the race had dwindled in prosperity, century by century, till at last there was nothing left but the grey house and a few acres of land bordering the river.

‘And do you know, Mary,’ he said, ‘I suppose we shall go and live there some day or other. My great-uncle, who has the place now, made money in business when he was a young man, and I believe he will leave it all to me. I know I am the only relation he has. How strange it would be. What a change from the life here.’

‘You never told me that. Don’t you think your great-uncle might leave his house and his money to somebody he knows really well? You haven’t seen him since you were a little boy, have you?’

‘No; but we write once a year. And from what I have heard my father say, I am sure the old man would never leave the house out of the family. Do you think you would like it?’

‘I don’t know. Isn’t it very lonely?’

‘I suppose it is. I forget whether there are any other houses in sight, but I don’t think there are any at all near. But what a change! No City, no streets, no people passing to and fro; only the sound of the wind and the sight of the green leaves and the green hills, and the song of the voices of the earth.’… He checked himself suddenly, as if he feared that he was about to tell some secret that must not yet be uttered; and indeed, as he spoke of the change from the little street in Shepherd’s Bush to that ancient house in the woods of the far west, a change seemed already to possess himself, and his voice put on the modulation of an antique chant. Mary looked at him steadily and touched his arm, and he drew a long breath before he spoke again.

‘It is the old blood calling to the old land,’ he said. ‘I was forgetting that I am a clerk in the City.’

It was, doubtless, the old blood that had suddenly stirred in him; the resurrection of the old spirit that for many centuries had been faithful to secrets that are now disregarded by most of us, that now day by day was quickened more and more in his heart, and grew so strong that it was hard to conceal. He was indeed almost in the position of the man in the tale, who, by a sudden electric shock, lost the vision of the things about him in the London streets, and gazed instead upon the sea and shore of an island in the Antipodes; for Darnell only clung with an effort to the interests and the atmosphere which, till lately, had seemed all the world to him; and the grey house and the wood and the river, symbols of the other sphere, intruded as it were into the landscape of the London suburb.

But he went on, with more restraint, telling his stories of far-off ancestors, how one of them, the most remote of all, was called a saint, and was supposed to possess certain mysterious secrets often alluded to in the papers as the ‘Hidden Songs of Iolo Sant.’ And then with an abrupt transition he recalled memories of his father and of the strange, shiftless life in dingy lodgings in the backwaters of London, of the dim stucco streets that were his first recollections, of forgotten squares in North London, and of the figure of his father, a grave bearded man who seemed always in a dream, as if he too sought for the vision of a land beyond the strong walls, a land where there were deep orchards and many shining hills, and fountains and water-pools gleaming under the leaves of the wood.

‘I believe my father earned his living,’ he went on, ‘such a living as he did earn, at the Record Office and the British Museum. He used to hunt up things for lawyers and country parsons who wanted old deeds inspected. He never made much, and we were always moving from one lodging to another — always to out-of-the-way places where everything seemed to have run to seed. We never knew our neighbours — we moved too often for that — but my father had about half a dozen friends, elderly men like himself, who used to come to see us pretty often; and then, if there was any money, the lodging-house servant would go out for beer, and they would sit and smoke far into the night.

‘I never knew much about these friends of his, but they all had the same look, the look of longing for something hidden. They talked of mysteries that I never understood, very little of their own lives, and when they did speak of ordinary affairs one could tell that they thought such matters as money and the want of it were unimportant trifles. When I grew up and went into the City, and met other young fellows and heard their way of talking, I wondered whether my father and his friends were not a little queer in their heads; but I know better now.’

So night after night Darnell talked to his wife, seeming to wander aimlessly from the dingy lodging-houses, where he had spent his boyhood in the company of his father and the other seekers, to the old house hidden in that far western valley, and the old race that had so long looked at the setting of the sun over the mountain. But in truth there was one end in all that he spoke, and Mary felt that beneath his words, however indifferent they might seem, there was hidden a purpose, that they were to embark on a great and marvellous adventure.

So day by day the world became more magical; day by day the work of separation was being performed, the gross accidents were being refined away. Darnell neglected no instruments that might be useful in the work; and now he neither lounged at home on Sunday mornings, nor did he accompany his wife to the Gothic blasphemy which pretended to be a church. They had discovered a little church of another fashion in a back street, and Darnell, who had found in one of the old notebooks the maxim *Incredibilia sola Credenda*, soon perceived how high and glorious a thing was that service at which he assisted. Our stupid ancestors taught us that we could become wise by studying books on ‘science,’ by meddling with test-tubes, geological specimens, microscopic preparations, and the like; but they who have cast off these follies know that they must read not ‘science’ books, but mass-books, and that the soul is made wise by the contemplation of mystic ceremonies and elaborate and curious rites. In such things Darnell found a wonderful mystery language, which spoke at once more secretly and more directly than the formal creeds; and he saw that, in a sense, the whole world is but a great ceremony or sacrament, which teaches under visible forms a hidden and transcendent doctrine. It was thus that he found in the ritual of the church a perfect image of the world; an image purged, exalted, and illuminate, a holy house built up of shining and translucent stones, in which the burning torches were more significant than the wheeling stars, and the fuming incense was a more certain token than the rising of the mist. His soul went forth with the albed procession in its white and solemn order, the mystic dance that signifies rapture and a joy above all joys, and when he beheld Love slain and rise again victorious he knew that he witnessed, in a figure, the consummation of all things, the Bridal of all Bridals, the mystery that is beyond all mysteries, accomplished from the foundation of the world. So day by day the house of his life became more magical.

And at the same time he began to guess that if in the New Life there are new and unheard-of joys, there are also new and unheard-of dangers. In his manuscript books which professed to deliver the outer sense of those mysterious ‘Hidden Songs of Iolo Sant’ there was a little chapter that bore the heading: *Fons Sacer non in communem Vsum convertendus est*, and by diligence, with much use of the grammar and dictionary, Darnell was able to construe the by no means complex Latin of his ancestor. The special book which contained the chapter in question was one of the most singular in the collection, since it bore the title *Terra de Iolo*, and on the surface, with an ingenious concealment of its real symbolism, it affected to give an account of the orchards, fields, woods, roads, tenements, and waterways in the possession of Darnell’s ancestors. Here, then, he read of the Holy Well, hidden in the Wistman’s Wood — *Sylva Sapientum*— ‘a fountain of abundant water, which no heats of summer can ever dry, which no flood can ever defile, which is as a water of life, to them that thirst for life, a stream of cleansing to them that would be pure, and a medicine of such healing virtue that by it, through the might of God and the intercession of His saints, the most grievous wounds are made whole.’ But the water of this well was to be kept sacred perpetually, it was not to be used for any common purpose, nor to satisfy any bodily thirst; but ever to be esteemed as holy, ‘even as the water which the priest hath hallowed.’ And in the margin a comment in a later hand taught Darnell something of the meaning of these prohibitions. He was warned not to use the Well of Life as a mere luxury of mortal life, as a new sensation, as a means of making the insipid cup of everyday existence more palatable. ‘For,’ said the commentator, ‘we are not called to sit as the spectators in a theatre, there to watch the play performed before us, but we are rather summoned to stand in the very scene itself, and there fervently to enact our parts in a great and wonderful mystery.’

Darnell could quite understand the temptation that was thus indicated. Though he had gone but a little way on the path, and had barely tested the over-runnings of that mystic well, he was already aware of the enchantment that was transmuting all the world about him, informing his life with a strange significance and romance. London seemed a city of the Arabian Nights, and its labyrinths of streets an enchanted maze; its long avenues of lighted lamps were as starry systems, and its immensity became for him an image of the endless universe. He could well imagine how pleasant it might be to linger in such a world as this, to sit apart and dream, beholding the strange pageant played before him; but the Sacred Well was not for common use, it was for the cleansing of the soul, and the healing of the grievous wounds of the spirit. There must be yet another transformation:

London had become Bagdad; it must at last be transmuted to Syon, or in the phrase of one of his old documents, the City of the Cup.

And there were yet darker perils which the Iolo MSS. (as his father had named the collection) hinted at more or less obscurely. There were suggestions of an awful region which the soul might enter, of a transmutation that was unto death, of evocations which could summon the utmost forces of evil from their dark places — in a word, of that sphere which is represented to most of us under the crude and somewhat childish symbolism of Black Magic. And here again he was not altogether without a dim comprehension of what was meant. He found himself recalling an odd incident that had happened long ago, which had remained all the years in his mind unheeded, amongst the many insignificant recollections of his childhood, and now rose before him, clear and distinct and full of meaning. It was on that memorable visit to the old house in the west, and the whole scene returned, with its smallest events, and the voices seemed to sound in his ears. It was a grey, still day of heavy heat that he remembered: he had stood on the lawn after breakfast, and wondered at the great peace and silence of the world. Not a leaf stirred in the trees on the lawn, not a whisper came from the myriad leaves of the wood; the flowers gave out sweet and heavy odours as if they breathed the dreams of the summer night; and far down the valley, the winding river was like dim silver under that dim and silvery sky, and the far hills and woods and fields vanished in the mist. The stillness of the air held him as with a charm; he leant all the morning against the rails that parted the lawn from the meadow, breathing the mystic breath of summer, and watching the fields brighten as with a sudden blossoming of shining flowers as the high mist grew thin for a moment before the hidden sun. As he watched thus, a man weary with heat, with some glance of horror in his eyes, passed him on his way to the house; but he stayed at his post till the old bell in the turret rang, and they dined all together, masters and servants, in the dark cool room that looked towards the still leaves of the wood. He could see that his uncle was upset about something, and when they had finished dinner he heard him tell his father that there was trouble at a farm; and it was settled that they should all drive over in the afternoon to some place with a strange name. But when the time came Mr. Darnell was too deep in old books and tobacco smoke to be stirred from his corner, and Edward and his uncle went alone in the dog-cart. They drove swiftly down the narrow lane, into the road that followed the winding river, and crossed the bridge at Caermaen by the mouldering Roman walls, and then, skirting the deserted, echoing village, they came out on a broad white turnpike road, and the limestone dust followed them like a cloud. Then, suddenly, they turned to the north by such a road as Edward had never seen before. It was so narrow that there was barely room for the cart to pass, and the footway was of rock, and the banks rose high above them as they slowly climbed the long, steep way, and the untrimmed hedges on either side shut out the light. And the ferns grew thick and green upon the banks, and hidden wells dripped down upon them; and the old man told him how the lane in winter was a torrent of swirling water, so that no one could pass by it. On they went, ascending and then again descending, always in that deep hollow under the wild woven boughs, and the boy wondered vainly what the country was like on either side. And now the air grew darker, and the hedge on one bank was but the verge of a dark and rustling wood, and the grey limestone rocks had changed to dark-red earth flecked with green patches and veins of marl, and suddenly in the stillness from the depths of the wood a bird began to sing a melody that charmed the heart into another world, that sang to the child's soul of the blessed faery realm beyond the woods of the earth, where the wounds of man are healed. And so at last, after many turnings and windings, they came to a high bare land where the lane broadened out into a kind of common, and along the edge of this place there were scattered three or four old cottages, and one of them was a little tavern. Here they stopped, and a man came out and tethered the tired horse to a post and gave him water; and old Mr. Darnell took the child's hand and led him by a path across the fields. The boy could see the country now, but it was all a strange, undiscovered land; they were in the heart of a wilderness of hills and valleys that he had never looked upon, and they were going down a wild, steep hillside, where the narrow path wound in and out amidst gorse and towering bracken, and the sun gleaming out for a moment, there was a gleam of white water far below in a narrow valley, where a little brook poured and rippled from stone to stone. They went down the hill, and through a brake, and then, hidden in dark-green orchards, they came upon a long, low whitewashed house, with a stone roof strangely coloured by the growth of moss and lichens. Mr. Darnell knocked at a heavy oaken door, and they came into a dim room where but little light entered through the thick glass in the deep-set window. There were heavy beams in the ceiling, and a great fireplace sent out an odour of burning wood that Darnell never forgot, and the room seemed to him full of women who talked all together in frightened tones. Mr. Darnell beckoned to a tall, grey old man, who wore corduroy knee-breeches, and the boy, sitting on a high straight-backed chair, could see the old man and his uncle passing to and fro across the window-panes, as they walked together on the garden path. The women stopped their talk for a moment, and one of them brought him a glass of milk and an apple from some cold inner chamber; and then, suddenly, from a room above there rang out a shrill and terrible shriek, and then, in a young girl's voice, a more terrible song. It was not like anything the child had ever heard, but as the man recalled it to his memory, he knew to what song it might be compared — to a certain chant indeed that summons the angels and archangels to assist in the great Sacrifice. But as this song chants of the heavenly army, so did that seem to summon all the hierarchy of evil, the hosts of Lilith and Samael; and the words that rang out with such awful modulations — *neumata inferorum* — were in some unknown tongue that few men have ever heard on earth.

The women glared at one another with horror in their eyes, and he saw one or two of the oldest of them clumsily making an old sign upon their breasts. Then they began to speak again, and he remembered fragments of their talk.

'She has been up there,' said one, pointing vaguely over her shoulder.

'She'd never know the way,' answered another. 'They be all gone that went there.'

'There be nought there in these days.'

'How can you tell that, Gwenllian? 'Tis not for us to say that.'

'My great-grandmother did know some that had been there,' said a very old woman. 'She told me how they was taken afterwards.'

And then his uncle appeared at the door, and they went their way as they had come. Edward Darnell never heard any more of it, nor whether the girl died or recovered from her strange attack; but the scene had haunted his mind in boyhood, and now the recollection of it came to him with a certain note of warning, as a symbol of dangers that might be in the way.

It would be impossible to carry on the history of Edward Darnell and of Mary his wife to a greater length, since from this point their legend is full of impossible events, and seems to put on the semblance of the stories of the Graal. It is certain, indeed, that in this world they changed their lives, like King Arthur, but this is a work which no chronicler has cared to describe with any amplitude of detail. Darnell, it is true, made a little book, partly consisting of queer verse which might have been written by an inspired infant, and partly made up of 'notes and exclamations' in an odd dog-Latin which he had picked up from the 'Iolo MSS.', but it is to be feared that this work, even if published in its entirety, would cast but little light on a perplexing story. He called this piece of literature 'In Exitu Israel,' and wrote on the title page the motto, doubtless of his own composition, '*Nunc certe scio quod omnia legenda; omnes historiæ, omnes fabulæ, omnis Scriptura sint de ME narrata*.' It is only too evident that his Latin was not learnt at the feet of Cicero; but in this dialect he relates the great history of the 'New Life' as it was manifested to him. The 'poems' are even stranger. One, headed (with an odd reminiscence of old-fashioned books) 'Lines written on looking down from a Height in London on a Board School suddenly lit up by the Sun' begins thus: —

One day when I was all alone I found a wondrous little stone, It lay forgotten on the road Far from the ways of man's abode. When on this stone mine eyes I cast I saw my Treasure found at last. I pressed it hard against my face, I covered it with my embrace, I hid it in a secret place. And every day I went to see This stone that was my ecstasy; And worshipped it with flowers rare, And secret words and sayings fair. O stone, so rare and red and wise O fragment of far Paradise, O Star, whose light is life! O Sea, Whose ocean is infinity! Thou art a fire that ever burns, And all the world to wonder turns; And all the dust of the dull day By thee is changed and purged away, So that, where'er I look, I see A world of a Great Majesty. The sullen river rolls all gold, The desert park's a faery wold, When on the trees the wind is borne I hear the sound of Arthur's horn I see no town of grim grey ways, But a great city all ablaze With burning torches, to light up The pinnacles that shrine the Cup. Ever the magic wine is poured, Ever the Feast shines on the board, Ever the song is borne on high That chants the holy Magistry — Etc. etc. etc.

From such documents as these it is clearly impossible to gather any very definite information. But on the last page Darnell has written —

‘So I awoke from a dream of a London suburb, of daily labour, of weary, useless little things; and as my eyes were opened I saw that I was in an ancient wood, where a clear well rose into grey film and vapour beneath a misty, glimmering heat. And a form came towards me from the hidden places of the wood, and my love and I were united by the well.’

The White People

PROLOGUE

‘SORCERY AND SANCTITY,’ said Ambrose, ‘these are the only realities. Each is an ecstasy, a withdrawal from the common life.’

Cotgrave listened, interested. He had been brought by a friend to this mouldering house in a northern suburb, through an old garden to the room where Ambrose the recluse dozed and dreamed over his books.

‘Yes,’ he went on, ‘magic is justified of her children. There are many, I think, who eat dry crusts and drink water, with a joy infinitely sharper than anything within the experience of the “practical” epicure.’

‘You are speaking of the saints?’

‘Yes, and of the sinners, too. I think you are falling into the very general error of confining the spiritual world to the supremely good; but the supremely wicked, necessarily, have their portion in it. The merely carnal, sensual man can no more be a great sinner than he can be a great saint. Most of us are just indifferent, mixed-up creatures; we muddle through the world without realizing the meaning and the inner sense of things, and, consequently, our wickedness and our goodness are alike second-rate, unimportant.’

‘And you think the great sinner, then, will be an ascetic, as well as the great saint?’

‘Great people of all kinds forsake the imperfect copies and go to the perfect originals. I have no doubt but that many of the very highest among the saints have never done a “good action” (using the words in their ordinary sense). And, on the other hand, there have been those who have sounded the very depths of sin, who all their lives have never done an “ill deed.”’

He went out of the room for a moment, and Cotgrave, in high delight, turned to his friend and thanked him for the introduction.

‘He’s grand,’ he said. ‘I never saw that kind of lunatic before.’

Ambrose returned with more whisky and helped the two men in a liberal manner. He abused the teetotal sect with ferocity, as he handed the seltzer, and pouring out a glass of water for himself, was about to resume his monologue, when Cotgrave broke in —

‘I can’t stand it, you know,’ he said, ‘your paradoxes are too monstrous. A man may be a great sinner and yet never do anything sinful! Come!’

‘You’re quite wrong,’ said Ambrose. ‘I never make paradoxes; I wish I could. I merely said that a man may have an exquisite taste in Romanée Conti, and yet never have even smelt four ale. That’s all, and it’s more like a truism than a paradox, isn’t it? Your surprise at my remark is due to the fact that you haven’t realized what sin is. Oh, yes, there is a sort of connexion between Sin with the capital letter, and actions which are commonly called sinful: with murder, theft, adultery, and so forth. Much the same connexion that there is between the A, B, C and fine literature. But I believe that the misconception — it is all but universal — arises in great measure from our looking at the matter through social spectacles. We think that a man who does evil to *us* and to his neighbours must be very evil. So he is, from a social standpoint; but can’t you realize that Evil in its essence is a lonely thing, a passion of the solitary, individual soul? Really, the average murderer, *quâ* murderer, is not by any means a sinner in the true sense of the word. He is simply a wild beast that we have to get rid of to save our own necks from his knife. I should class him rather with tigers than with sinners.’

‘It seems a little strange.’

‘I think not. The murderer murders not from positive qualities, but from negative ones; he lacks something which non-murderers possess. Evil, of course, is wholly positive — only it is on the wrong side. You may believe me that sin in its proper sense is very rare; it is probable that there have been far fewer sinners than saints. Yes, your standpoint is all very well for practical, social purposes; we are naturally inclined to think that a person who is very disagreeable to us must be a very great sinner! It is very disagreeable to have one’s pocket picked, and we pronounce the thief to be a very great sinner. In truth, he is merely an undeveloped man. He cannot be a saint, of course; but he may be, and often is, an infinitely better creature than thousands who have never broken a single commandment. He is a great nuisance to *us*, I admit, and we very properly lock him up if we catch him; but between his troublesome and unsocial action and evil — Oh, the connexion is of the weakest.'

It was getting very late. The man who had brought Cotgrave had probably heard all this before, since he assisted with a bland and judicious smile, but Cotgrave began to think that his 'lunatic' was turning into a sage.

'Do you know,' he said, 'you interest me immensely? You think, then, that we do not understand the real nature of evil?'

'No, I don't think we do. We over-estimate it and we under-estimate it. We take the very numerous infractions of our social "bye-laws" — the very necessary and very proper regulations which keep the human company together — and we get frightened at the prevalence of "sin" and "evil." But this is really nonsense. Take theft, for example. Have you any *horror* at the thought of Robin Hood, of the Highland caterans of the seventeenth century, of the moss-troopers, of the company promoters of our day?

'Then, on the other hand, we underrate evil. We attach such an enormous importance to the "sin" of meddling with our pockets (and our wives) that we have quite forgotten the awfulness of real sin.'

'And what is sin?' said Cotgrave.

'I think I must reply to your question by another. What would your feelings be, seriously, if your cat or your dog began to talk to you, and to dispute with you in human accents? You would be overwhelmed with horror. I am sure of it. And if the roses in your garden sang a weird song, you would go mad. And suppose the stones in the road began to swell and grow before your eyes, and if the pebble that you noticed at night had shot out stony blossoms in the morning?

'Well, these examples may give you some notion of what sin really is.'

'Look here,' said the third man, hitherto placid, 'you two seem pretty well wound up. But I'm going home. I've missed my tram, and I shall have to walk.'

Ambrose and Cotgrave seemed to settle down more profoundly when the other had gone out into the early misty morning and the pale light of the lamps.

‘You astonish me,’ said Cotgrave. ‘I had never thought of that. If that is really so, one must turn everything upside down. Then the essence of sin really is — — ‘

‘In the taking of heaven by storm, it seems to me,’ said Ambrose. ‘It appears to me that it is simply an attempt to penetrate into another and higher sphere in a forbidden manner. You can understand why it is so rare. There are few, indeed, who wish to penetrate into other spheres, higher or lower, in ways allowed or forbidden. Men, in the mass, are amply content with life as they find it. Therefore there are few saints, and sinners (in the proper sense) are fewer still, and men of genius, who partake sometimes of each character, are rare also. Yes; on the whole, it is, perhaps, harder to be a great sinner than a great saint.’

‘There is something profoundly unnatural about sin? Is that what you mean?’

‘Exactly. Holiness requires as great, or almost as great, an effort; but holiness works on lines that *were* natural once; it is an effort to recover the ecstasy that was before the Fall. But sin is an effort to gain the ecstasy and the knowledge that pertain alone to angels, and in making this effort man becomes a demon. I told you that the mere murderer is not *therefore* a sinner; that is true, but the sinner is sometimes a murderer. Gilles de Raiz is an instance. So you see that while the good and the evil are unnatural to man as he now is — to man the social, civilized being — evil is unnatural in a much deeper sense than good. The saint endeavours to recover a gift which he has lost; the sinner tries to obtain something which was never his. In brief, he repeats the Fall.’

‘But are you a Catholic?’ said Cotgrave.

‘Yes; I am a member of the persecuted Anglican Church.’

‘Then, how about those texts which seem to reckon as sin that which you would set down as a mere trivial dereliction?’

‘Yes; but in one place the word “sorcerers” comes in the same sentence, doesn’t it? That seems to me to give the key-note. Consider: can you imagine for a moment that a false statement which saves an innocent man’s life is a sin? No; very good, then, it is not the mere liar who is excluded by those words; it is, above all, the “sorcerers” who use the material life, who use the failings incidental to material life as instruments to obtain their infinitely wicked ends. And let me tell you this: our higher senses are so blunted, we are so drenched with materialism, that we should probably fail to recognize real wickedness if we encountered it.’

‘But shouldn’t we experience a certain horror — a terror such as you hinted we would experience if a rose tree sang — in the mere presence of an evil man?’

‘We should if we were natural: children and women feel this horror you speak of, even animals experience it. But with most of us convention and civilization and education have blinded and deafened and obscured the natural reason. No, sometimes we may recognize evil by its hatred of the good — one doesn’t need much penetration to guess at the influence which dictated, quite unconsciously, the “Blackwood” review of Keats — but this is purely incidental; and, as a rule, I suspect that the Hierarchs of Tophet pass quite unnoticed, or, perhaps, in certain cases, as good but mistaken men.’

‘But you used the word “unconscious” just now, of Keats’ reviewers. Is wickedness ever unconscious?’

‘Always. It must be so. It is like holiness and genius in this as in other points; it is a certain rapture or ecstasy of the soul; a transcendent effort to surpass the ordinary bounds. So, surpassing these, it surpasses also the understanding, the faculty that takes note of that which comes before it. No, a man may be infinitely and horribly wicked and never suspect it. But I tell you, evil in this, its certain and true sense, is rare, and I think it is growing rarer.’

‘I am trying to get hold of it all,’ said Cotgrave. ‘From what you say, I gather that the true evil differs generically from that which we call evil?’

‘Quite so. There is, no doubt, an analogy between the two; a resemblance such as enables us to use, quite legitimately, such terms as the “foot of the mountain” and the “leg of the table.” And, sometimes, of course, the two speak, as it were, in the same language. The rough miner, or “puddler,” the untrained, undeveloped “tiger-man,” heated by a quart or two above his usual measure, comes home and kicks his irritating and injudicious wife to death. He is a murderer. And Gilles de Raiz was a murderer. But you see the gulf that separates the two? The “word,” if I may so speak, is accidentally the same in each case, but the “meaning” is utterly different. It is flagrant “Hobson Jobson” to confuse the two, or rather, it is as if one supposed that Juggernaut and the Argonauts had something to do etymologically with one another. And no doubt the same weak likeness, or analogy, runs between all the “social” sins and the real spiritual sins, and in some cases, perhaps, the lesser may be “schoolmasters” to lead one on to the greater — from the shadow to the reality. If you are anything of a Theologian, you will see the importance of all this.’

‘I am sorry to say,’ remarked Cotgrave, ‘that I have devoted very little of my time to theology. Indeed, I have often wondered on what grounds theologians have claimed the title of Science of Sciences for their favourite study; since the “theological” books I have looked into have always seemed to me to be concerned with feeble and obvious pieties, or with the kings of Israel and Judah. I do not care to hear about those kings.’

Ambrose grinned.

‘We must try to avoid theological discussion,’ he said. ‘I perceive that you would be a bitter disputant. But perhaps the “dates of the kings” have as much to do with theology as the hobnails of the murderous puddler with evil.’

‘Then, to return to our main subject, you think that sin is an esoteric, occult thing?’

‘Yes. It is the infernal miracle as holiness is the supernal. Now and then it is raised to such a pitch that we entirely fail to suspect its existence; it is like the note of the great pedal pipes of the organ, which is so deep that we cannot hear it. In other cases it may lead to the lunatic asylum, or to still stranger issues. But you must never confuse it with mere social misdoing. Remember how the Apostle, speaking of the “other side,” distinguishes between “charitable” actions and charity. And as one may give all one’s goods to the poor, and yet lack charity; so, remember, one may avoid every crime and yet be a sinner.’

‘Your psychology is very strange to me,’ said Cotgrave, ‘but I confess I like it, and I suppose that one might fairly deduce from your premisses the conclusion that the real sinner might very possibly strike the observer as a harmless personage enough?’

‘Certainly; because the true evil has nothing to do with social life or social laws, or if it has, only incidentally and accidentally. It is a lonely passion of the soul — or a passion of the lonely soul — whichever you like. If, by chance, we understand it, and grasp its full significance, then, indeed, it will fill us with horror and with awe. But this emotion is widely distinguished from the fear and the disgust with which we regard the ordinary criminal, since this latter is largely or entirely founded on the regard which we have for our own skins or purses. We hate a murderer, because we know that we should hate to be murdered, or to have any one that we like murdered. So, on the “other side,” we venerate the saints, but we don’t “like” them as we like our friends. Can you persuade yourself that you would have “enjoyed” St. Paul’s company? Do you think that you and I would have “got on” with Sir Galahad?

‘So with the sinners, as with the saints. If you met a very evil man, and recognized his evil; he would, no doubt, fill you with horror and awe; but there is no reason why you should “dislike” him. On the contrary, it is quite possible that if you could succeed in putting the sin out of your mind you might find the sinner capital company, and in a little while you might have to reason yourself back into horror. Still, how awful it is. If the roses and the lilies suddenly sang on this coming morning; if the furniture began to move in procession, as in De Maupassant’s tale!’

‘I am glad you have come back to that comparison,’ said Cotgrave, ‘because I wanted to ask you what it is that corresponds in humanity to these imaginary feats of inanimate things. In a word — what is sin? You have given me, I know, an abstract definition, but I should like a concrete example.’

‘I told you it was very rare,’ said Ambrose, who appeared willing to avoid the giving of a direct answer. ‘The materialism of the age, which has done a good deal to suppress sanctity, has done perhaps more to suppress evil. We find the earth so very comfortable that we have no inclination either for ascents or descents. It would seem as if the scholar who decided to “specialize” in Tophet, would be reduced to purely antiquarian researches. No palæontologist could show you a *live* pterodactyl.’

‘And yet you, I think, have “specialized,” and I believe that your researches have descended to our modern times.’

‘You are really interested, I see. Well, I confess, that I have dabbled a little, and if you like I can show you something that bears on the very curious subject we have been discussing.’

Ambrose took a candle and went away to a far, dim corner of the room. Cotgrave saw him open a venerable bureau that stood there, and from some secret recess he drew out a parcel, and came back to the window where they had been sitting.

Ambrose undid a wrapping of paper, and produced a green pocket-book.

‘You will take care of it?’ he said. ‘Don’t leave it lying about. It is one of the choicer pieces in my collection, and I should be very sorry if it were lost.’

He fondled the faded binding.

‘I knew the girl who wrote this,’ he said. ‘When you read it, you will see how it illustrates the talk we have had to-night. There is a sequel, too, but I won’t talk of that.’

‘There was an odd article in one of the reviews some months ago,’ he began again, with the air of a man who changes the subject. ‘It was written by a doctor — Dr. Coryn, I think, was the name. He says that a lady, watching her little girl playing at the drawing-room window, suddenly saw the heavy sash give way and fall on the child’s fingers. The lady fainted, I think, but at any rate the doctor was summoned, and when he had dressed the child’s wounded and maimed fingers he was summoned to the mother. She was groaning with pain, and it was found that three fingers of her hand, corresponding with those that had been injured on the child’s hand, were swollen and inflamed, and later, in the doctor’s language, purulent sloughing set in.’

Ambrose still handled delicately the green volume.

‘Well, here it is,’ he said at last, parting with difficulty, it seemed, from his treasure.

‘You will bring it back as soon as you have read it,’ he said, as they went out into the hall, into the old garden, faint with the odour of white lilies.

There was a broad red band in the east as Cotgrave turned to go, and from the high ground where he stood he saw that awful spectacle of London in a dream.

THE GREEN BOOK

The morocco binding of the book was faded, and the colour had grown faint, but there were no stains nor bruises nor marks of usage. The book looked as if it had been bought ‘on a visit to London’ some seventy or eighty years ago, and had somehow been forgotten and suffered to lie away out of sight. There was an old, delicate, lingering odour about it, such an odour as sometimes haunts an ancient piece of furniture for a century or more. The end-papers, inside the binding, were oddly decorated with coloured patterns and faded gold. It looked small, but the paper was fine, and there were many leaves, closely covered with minute, painfully formed characters.

I found this book (the manuscript began) in a drawer in the old bureau that stands on the landing. It was a very rainy day and I could not go out, so in the afternoon I got a candle and rummaged in the bureau. Nearly all the drawers were full of old dresses, but one of the small ones looked empty, and I found this book hidden right at the back. I wanted a book like this, so I took it to write in. It is full of secrets. I have a great many other books of secrets I have written, hidden in a safe place, and I am going to write here many of the old secrets and some new ones; but there are some I shall not put down at all. I must not write down the real names of the days and months which I found out a year ago, nor the way to make the Aklo letters, or the Chian language, or the great beautiful Circles, nor the Mao Games, nor the chief songs. I may write something about all these things but not the way to do them, for peculiar reasons. And I must not say who the Nymphs are, or the Dôls, or Jeelo, or what voolas mean. All these are most secret secrets, and I am glad when I remember what they are, and how many wonderful languages I know, but there are some things that I call the secrets of the secrets of the secrets that I dare not think of unless I am quite alone, and then I shut my eyes, and put my hands over them and whisper the word, and the Alala comes. I only do this at night in my room or in certain woods that I know, but I must not describe them, as they are secret woods. Then there are the Ceremonies, which are all of them important, but some are more delightful than others — there are the White Ceremonies, and the

Green Ceremonies, and the Scarlet Ceremonies. The Scarlet Ceremonies are the best, but there is only one place where they can be performed properly, though there is a very nice imitation which I have done in other places. Besides these, I have the dances, and the Comedy, and I have done the Comedy sometimes when the others were looking, and they didn’t understand anything about it. I was very little when I first knew about these things.

When I was very small, and mother was alive, I can remember remembering things before that, only it has all got confused. But I remember when I was five or six I heard them talking about me when they thought I was not noticing. They were saying how queer I was a year or two before, and how nurse had called my mother to come and listen to me talking all to myself, and I was saying words that nobody could understand. I was speaking the Xu language, but I only remember a very few of the words, as it was about the little white faces that used to look at me when I was lying in my cradle. They used to talk to me, and I learnt their language and talked to them in it about some great white place where they lived, where the trees and the grass were all white, and there were white hills as high up as the moon, and a cold wind. I have often dreamed of it afterwards, but the faces went away when I was very little. But a wonderful thing happened when I was about five. My nurse was carrying me on her shoulder; there was a field of yellow corn, and we went through it, it was very hot. Then we came to a path through a wood, and a tall man came after us, and went with us till we came to a place where there was a deep pool, and it was very dark and shady. Nurse put me down on the soft moss under a tree, and she said: ‘She can’t get to the pond now.’ So they left me there, and I sat quite still and watched, and out of the water and out of the wood came two wonderful white people, and they began to play and dance and sing. They were a kind of creamy white like the old ivory figure in the drawing-room; one was a beautiful lady with kind dark eyes, and a grave face, and long black hair, and she smiled such a strange sad smile at the other, who laughed and came to her. They played together, and danced round and round the pool, and they sang a song till I fell asleep. Nurse woke me up when she came back, and she was looking something like the lady had looked, so I told her all about it, and asked her why she looked like that. At first she cried, and then she looked very frightened, and turned quite pale. She put me down on the grass and stared at me, and I could see she was shaking all over. Then she said I had been dreaming, but I knew I hadn’t. Then she made me promise not to say a word about it to anybody, and if I did I should be thrown into the black pit. I was not frightened at all, though nurse was, and I never forgot about it, because when I shut my eyes and it was quite quiet, and I was all alone, I could see them again, very faint and far away, but very splendid; and little bits of the song they sang came into my head, but I couldn’t sing it.

I was thirteen, nearly fourteen, when I had a very singular adventure, so strange that the day on which it happened is always called the White Day. My mother had been dead for more than a year, and in the morning I had lessons, but they let me go out for walks in the afternoon. And this afternoon I walked a new way, and a little brook led me into a new country, but I tore my frock getting through some of the difficult places, as the way was through many bushes, and beneath the low branches of trees, and up thorny thickets on the hills, and by dark woods full of creeping thorns. And it was a long, long way. It seemed as if I was going on for ever and ever, and I had to creep by a place like a tunnel where a brook must have been, but all the water had dried up, and the floor was rocky, and the bushes had grown overhead till they met, so that it was quite dark. And I went on and on through that dark place; it was a long, long way. And I came to a hill that I never saw before. I was in a dismal thicket full of black twisted boughs that tore me as I went through them, and I cried out because I was smarting all over, and then I found that I was climbing, and I went up and up a long way, till at last the thicket stopped and I came out crying just under the top of a big bare place, where there were ugly grey stones lying all about on the grass, and here and there a little twisted, stunted tree came out from under a stone, like a snake. And I went up, right to the top, a long way. I never saw such big ugly stones before; they came out of the earth some of them, and some looked as if they had been rolled to where they were, and they went on and on as far as I could see, a long, long way. I looked out from them and saw the country, but it was strange. It was winter time, and there were black terrible woods hanging from the hills all round; it was like seeing a large room hung with black curtains, and the shape of the trees seemed quite different from any I had ever seen before. I was afraid. Then beyond the woods there were other hills round in a great ring, but I had never seen any of them; it all looked black, and everything had a voor over it. It was all so still and silent, and the sky was heavy and grey and sad, like a wicked voorish dome in Deep Dendo. I went on into the dreadful rocks. There were hundreds and hundreds of them. Some were like horrid-grinning men; I could see their faces as if they would jump at me out of the stone, and catch hold of me, and drag me with them back into the rock, so that I should always be there. And there were other rocks that were like animals, creeping, horrible animals, putting out their tongues, and others were like words that I could not say, and others like dead people lying on the grass. I went on among them, though they frightened me, and my heart was full of wicked songs that they put into it; and I wanted to make faces and twist myself about in the way they did, and I went on and on a long way till at last I liked the rocks, and they didn't frighten me any more. I sang the songs I thought of; songs full of words that must not be spoken or written down. Then I made faces like the faces on the rocks, and I twisted myself about like the twisted ones, and I lay down flat on the ground like the dead ones, and I went up to one that was grinning, and put my arms round him and hugged him. And so I went on and on through the rocks till I came to a round mound in the middle of them. It was higher than a mound, it was nearly as high as our house, and it was like a great basin turned upside down, all smooth and round and green, with one stone, like a post, sticking up at the top. I climbed up the sides, but they were so steep I had to stop or I should have rolled all the way down again, and I should have knocked against the stones at the bottom, and perhaps been killed. But I wanted to get up to the very top of the big round mound, so I lay down flat on my face, and took hold of the grass with my hands and drew myself up, bit by bit, till I was at the top. Then I sat down on the stone in the middle, and looked all round about. I felt I had come such a long, long way, just as if I were a hundred miles from home, or in some other country, or in one of the strange places I had read about in the 'Tales of the Genie' and the 'Arabian Nights,' or as if I had gone across the sea, far away, for years and I had found another world that nobody had ever seen or heard of before, or as if I had somehow flown through the sky and fallen on one of the stars I had read about where everything is dead and cold and grey, and there is no air, and the wind doesn't blow. I sat on the stone and looked all round and down and round about me. It was just as if I was sitting on a tower in the middle of a great empty town, because I could see nothing all around but the grey rocks on the ground. I couldn't make out their shapes any more, but I could see them on and on for a long way, and I looked at them, and they seemed as if they had been arranged into patterns, and shapes, and figures. I knew they couldn’t be, because I had seen a lot of them coming right out of the earth, joined to the deep rocks below, so I looked again, but still I saw nothing but circles, and small circles inside big ones, and pyramids, and domes, and spires, and they seemed all to go round and round the place where I was sitting, and the more I looked, the more I saw great big rings of rocks, getting bigger and bigger, and I stared so long that it felt as if they were all moving and turning, like a great wheel, and I was turning, too, in the middle. I got quite dizzy and queer in the head, and everything began to be hazy and not clear, and I saw little sparks of blue light, and the stones looked as if they were springing and dancing and twisting as they went round and round and round. I was frightened again, and I cried out loud, and jumped up from the stone I was sitting on, and fell down. When I got up I was so glad they all looked still, and I sat down on the top and slid down the mound, and went on again. I danced as I went in the peculiar way the rocks had danced when I got giddy, and I was so glad I could do it quite well, and I danced and danced along, and sang extraordinary songs that came into my head. At last I came to the edge of that great flat hill, and there were no more rocks, and the way went again through a dark thicket in a hollow. It was just as bad as the other one I went through climbing up, but I didn’t mind this one, because I was so glad I had seen those singular dances and could imitate them. I went down, creeping through the bushes, and a tall nettle stung me on my leg, and made me burn, but I didn’t mind it, and I tingled with the boughs and the thorns, but I only laughed and sang. Then I got out of the thicket into a close valley, a little secret place like a dark passage that nobody ever knows of, because it was so narrow and deep and the woods were so thick round it. There is a steep bank with trees hanging over it, and there the ferns keep green all through the winter, when they are dead and brown upon the hill, and the ferns there have a sweet, rich smell like what oozes out of fir trees. There was a little stream of water running down this valley, so small that I could easily step across it. I drank the water with my hand, and it tasted like bright, yellow wine, and it sparkled and bubbled as it ran down over beautiful red and yellow and green stones, so that it seemed alive and all colours at once. I drank it, and I drank more with my hand, but I couldn’t drink enough, so I lay down and bent my head and sucked the water up with my lips. It tasted much better, drinking it that way, and a ripple would come up to my mouth and give me a kiss, and I laughed, and drank again, and pretended there was a nymph, like the one in the old picture at home, who lived in the water and was kissing me. So I bent low down to the water, and put my lips softly to it, and whispered to the nymph that I would come again. I felt sure it could not be common water, I was so glad when I got up and went on; and I danced again and went up and up the valley, under hanging hills. And when I came to the top, the ground rose up in front of me, tall and steep as a wall, and there was nothing but the green wall and the sky. I thought of 'for ever and for ever, world without end, Amen'; and I thought I must have really found the end of the world, because it was like the end of everything, as if there could be nothing at all beyond, except the kingdom of Voor, where the light goes when it is put out, and the water goes when the sun takes it away. I began to think of all the long, long way I had journeyed, how I had found a brook and followed it, and followed it on, and gone through bushes and thorny thickets, and dark woods full of creeping thorns. Then I had crept up a tunnel under trees, and climbed a thicket, and seen all the grey rocks, and sat in the middle of them when they turned round, and then I had gone on through the grey rocks and come down the hill through the stinging thicket and up the dark valley, all a long, long way. I wondered how I should get home again, if I could ever find the way, and if my home was there any more, or if it were turned and everybody in it into grey rocks, as in the 'Arabian Nights.' So I sat down on the grass and thought what I should do next. I was tired, and my feet were hot with walking, and as I looked about I saw there was a wonderful well just under the high, steep wall of grass. All the ground round it was covered with bright, green, dripping moss; there was every kind of moss there, moss like beautiful little ferns, and like palms and fir trees, and it was all green as jewellery, and drops of water hung on it like diamonds. And in the middle was the great well, deep and shining and beautiful, so clear that it looked as if I could touch the red sand at the bottom, but it was far below. I stood by it and looked in, as if I were looking in a glass. At the bottom of the well, in the middle of it, the red grains of sand were moving and stirring all the time, and I saw how the water bubbled up, but at the top it was quite smooth, and full and brimming. It was a great well, large like a bath, and with the shining, glittering green moss about it, it looked like a great white jewel, with green jewels all round. My feet were so hot and tired that I took off my boots and stockings, and let my feet down into the water, and the water was soft and cold, and when I got up I wasn't tired any more, and I felt I must go on, farther and farther, and see what was on the other side of the wall. I climbed up it very slowly, going sideways all the time, and when I got to the top and looked over, I was in the queerest country I had seen, stranger even than the hill of the grey rocks. It looked as if earth-children had been playing there with their spades, as it was all hills and hollows, and castles and walls made of earth and covered with grass. There were two mounds like big beehives, round and great and solemn, and then hollow basins, and then a steep mounting wall like the ones I saw once by the seaside where the big guns and the soldiers were. I nearly fell into one of the round hollows, it went away from under my feet so suddenly, and I ran fast down the side and stood at the bottom and looked up. It was strange and solemn to look up. There was nothing but the grey, heavy sky and the sides of the hollow; everything else had gone away, and the hollow was the whole world, and I thought that at night it must be full of ghosts and moving shadows and pale things when the moon shone down to the bottom at the dead of the night, and the wind wailed up above. It was so strange and solemn and lonely, like a hollow temple of dead heathen gods. It reminded me of a tale my nurse had told me when I was quite little; it was the same nurse that took me into the wood where I saw the beautiful white people. And I remembered how nurse had told me the story one winter night, when the wind was beating the trees against the wall, and crying and moaning in the nursery chimney. She said there was, somewhere or other, a hollow pit, just like the one I was standing in, everybody was afraid to go into it or near it, it was such a bad place. But once upon a time there was a poor girl who said she would go into the hollow pit, and everybody tried to stop her, but she would go. And she went down into the pit and came back laughing, and said there was nothing there at all, except green grass and red stones, and white stones and yellow flowers. And soon after people saw she had most beautiful emerald earrings, and they asked how she got them, as she and her mother were quite poor. But she laughed, and said her earrings were not made of emeralds at all, but only of green grass. Then, one day, she wore on her breast the reddest ruby that any one had ever seen, and it was as big as a hen's egg, and glowed and sparkled like a hot burning coal of fire. And they asked how she got it, as she and her mother were quite poor. But she laughed, and said it was not a ruby at all, but only a red stone. Then one day she wore round her neck the loveliest necklace that any one had ever seen, much finer than the queen's finest, and it was made of great bright diamonds, hundreds of them, and they shone like all the stars on a night in June. So they asked her how she got it, as she and her mother were quite poor. But she laughed, and said they were not diamonds at all, but only white stones. And one day she went to the Court, and she wore on her head a crown of pure angel-gold, so nurse said, and it shone like the sun, and it was much more splendid than the crown the king was wearing himself, and in her ears she wore the emeralds, and the big ruby was the brooch on her breast, and the great diamond necklace was sparkling on her neck. And the king and queen thought she was some great princess from a long way off, and got down from their thrones and went to meet her, but somebody told the king and queen who she was, and that she was quite poor. So the king asked why she wore a gold crown, and how she got it, as she and her mother were so poor. And she laughed, and said it wasn't a gold crown at all, but only some yellow flowers she had put in her hair. And the king thought it was very strange, and said she should stay at the Court, and they would see what would happen next. And she was so lovely that everybody said that her eyes were greener than the emeralds, that her lips were redder than the ruby, that her skin was whiter than the diamonds, and that her hair was brighter than the golden crown. So the king's son said he would marry her, and the king said he might. And the bishop married them, and there was a great supper, and afterwards the king's son went to his wife's room. But just when he had his hand on the door, he saw a tall, black man, with a dreadful face, standing in front of the door, and a voice said —

Venture not upon your life, This is mine own wedded wife.

Then the king's son fell down on the ground in a fit. And they came and tried to get into the room, but they couldn't, and they hacked at the door with hatchets, but the wood had turned hard as iron, and at last everybody ran away, they were so frightened at the screaming and laughing and shrieking and crying that came out of the room. But next day they went in, and found there was nothing in the room but thick black smoke, because the black man had come and taken her away. And on the bed there were two knots of faded grass and a red stone, and some white stones, and some faded yellow flowers. I remembered this tale of nurse's while I was standing at the bottom of the deep hollow; it was so strange and solitary there, and I felt afraid. I could not see any stones or flowers, but I was afraid of bringing them away without knowing, and I thought I would do a charm that came into my head to keep the black man away. So I stood right in the very middle of the hollow, and I made sure that I had none of those things on me, and then I walked round the place, and touched my eyes, and my lips, and my hair in a peculiar manner, and whispered some queer words that nurse taught me to keep bad things away. Then I felt safe and climbed up out of the hollow, and went on through all those mounds and hollows and walls, till I came to the end, which was high above all the rest, and I could see that all the different shapes of the earth were arranged in patterns, something like the grey rocks, only the pattern was different. It was getting late, and the air was indistinct, but it looked from where I was standing something like two great figures of people lying on the grass. And I went on, and at last I found a certain wood, which is too secret to be described, and nobody knows of the passage into it, which I found out in a very curious manner, by seeing some little animal run into the wood through it. So I went after the animal by a very narrow dark way, under thorns and bushes, and it was almost dark when I came to a kind of open place in the middle. And there I saw the most wonderful sight I have ever seen, but it was only for a minute, as I ran away directly, and crept out of the wood by the passage I had come by, and ran and ran as fast as ever I could, because I was afraid, what I had seen was so wonderful and so strange and beautiful. But I wanted to get home and think of it, and I did not know what might not happen if I stayed by the wood. I was hot all over and trembling, and my heart was beating, and strange cries that I could not help came from me as I ran from the wood. I was glad that a great white moon came up from over a round hill and showed me the way, so I went back through the mounds and hollows and down the close valley, and up through the thicket over the place of the grey rocks, and so at last I got home again. My father was busy in his study, and the servants had not told about my not coming home, though they were frightened, and wondered what they ought to do, so I told them I had lost my way, but I did not let them find out the real way I had been. I went to bed and lay awake all through the night, thinking of what I had seen. When I came out of the narrow way, and it looked all shining, though the air was dark, it seemed so certain, and all the way home I was quite sure that I had seen it, and I wanted to be alone in my room, and be glad over it all to myself, and shut my eyes and pretend it was there, and do all the things I would have done if I had not been so afraid. But when I shut my eyes the sight would not come, and I began to think about my adventures all over again, and I remembered how dusky and queer it was at the end, and I was afraid it must be all a mistake, because it seemed impossible it could happen. It seemed like one of nurse's tales, which I didn't really believe in, though I was frightened at the bottom of the hollow; and the stories she told me when I was little came back into my head, and I wondered whether it was really there what I thought I had seen, or whether any of her tales could have happened a long time ago. It was so queer; I lay awake there in my room at the back of the house, and the moon was shining on the other side towards the river, so the bright light did not fall upon the wall. And the house was quite still. I had heard my father come upstairs, and just after the clock struck twelve, and after the house was still and empty, as if there was nobody alive in it. And though it was all dark and indistinct in my room, a pale glimmering kind of light shone in through the white blind, and once I got up and looked out, and there was a great black shadow of the house covering the garden, looking like a prison where men are hanged; and then beyond it was all white; and the wood shone white with black gulfs between the trees. It was still and clear, and there were no clouds on the sky. I wanted to think of what I had seen but I couldn't, and I began to think of all the tales that nurse had told me so long ago that I thought I had forgotten, but they all came back, and mixed up with the thickets and the grey rocks and the hollows in the earth and the secret wood, till I hardly knew what was new and what was old, or whether it was not all dreaming. And then I remembered that hot summer afternoon, so long ago, when nurse left me by myself in the shade, and the white people came out of the water and out of the wood, and played, and danced, and sang, and I began to fancy that nurse told me about something like it before I saw them, only I couldn't recollect exactly what she told me. Then I wondered whether she had been the white lady, as I remembered she was just as white and beautiful, and had the same dark eyes and black hair; and sometimes she smiled and looked like the lady had looked, when she was telling me some of her stories, beginning with 'Once on a time,' or 'In the time of the fairies.' But I thought she couldn't be the lady, as she seemed to have gone a different way into the wood, and I didn't think the man who came after us could be the other, or I couldn't have seen that wonderful secret in the secret wood. I thought of the moon: but it was afterwards when I was in the middle of the wild land, where the earth was made into the shape of great figures, and it was all walls, and mysterious hollows, and smooth round mounds, that I saw the great white moon come up over a round hill. I was wondering about all these things, till at last I got quite frightened, because I was afraid something had happened to me, and I remembered nurse's tale of the poor girl who went into the hollow pit, and was carried away at last by the black man. I knew I had gone into a hollow pit too, and perhaps it was the same, and I had done something dreadful. So I did the charm over again, and touched my eyes and my lips and my hair in a peculiar manner, and said the old words from the fairy language, so that I might be sure I had not been carried away. I tried again to see the secret wood, and to creep up the passage and see what I had seen there, but somehow I couldn't, and I kept on thinking of nurse's stories. There was one I remembered about a young man who once upon a time went hunting, and all the day he and his hounds hunted everywhere, and they crossed the rivers and went into all the woods, and went round the marshes, but they couldn't find anything at all, and they hunted all day till the sun sank down and began to set behind the mountain. And the young man was angry because he couldn't find anything, and he was going to turn back, when just as the sun touched the mountain, he saw come out of a brake in front of him a beautiful white stag. And he cheered to his hounds, but they whined and would not follow, and he cheered to his horse, but it shivered and stood stock still, and the young man jumped off the horse and left the hounds and began to follow the white stag all alone. And soon it was quite dark, and the sky was black, without a single star shining in it, and the stag went away into the darkness. And though the man had brought his gun with him he never shot at the stag, because he wanted to catch it, and he was afraid he would lose it in the night. But he never lost it once, though the sky was so black and the air was so dark, and the stag went on and on till the young man didn't know a bit where he was. And they went through enormous woods where the air was full of whispers and a pale, dead light came out from the rotten trunks that were lying on the ground, and just as the man thought he had lost the stag, he would see it all white and shining in front of him, and he would run fast to catch it, but the stag always ran faster, so he did not catch it. And they went through the enormous woods, and they swam across rivers, and they waded through black marshes where the ground bubbled, and the air was full of will-o'-the-wisps, and the stag fled away down into rocky narrow valleys, where the air was like the smell of a vault, and the man went after it. And they went over the great mountains and the man heard the wind come down from the sky, and the stag went on and the man went after. At last the sun rose and the young man found he was in a country that he had never seen before; it was a beautiful valley with a bright stream running through it, and a great, big round hill in the middle. And the stag went down the valley, towards the hill, and it seemed to be getting tired and went slower and slower, and though the man was tired, too, he began to run faster, and he was sure he would catch the stag at last. But just as they got to the bottom of the hill, and the man stretched out his hand to catch the stag, it vanished into the earth, and the man began to cry; he was so sorry that he had lost it after all his long hunting. But as he was crying he saw there was a door in the hill, just in front of him, and he went in, and it was quite dark, but he went on, as he thought he would find the white stag. And all of a sudden it got light, and there was the sky, and the sun shining, and birds singing in the trees, and there was a beautiful fountain. And by the fountain a lovely lady was sitting, who was the queen of the fairies, and she told the man that she had changed herself into a stag to bring him there because she loved him so much. Then she brought out a great gold cup, covered with jewels, from her fairy palace, and she offered him wine in the cup to drink. And he drank, and the more he drank the more he longed to drink, because the wine was enchanted. So he kissed the lovely lady, and she became his wife, and he stayed all that day and all that night in the hill where she lived, and when he woke he found he was lying on the ground, close to where he had seen the stag first, and his horse was there and his hounds were there waiting, and he looked up, and the sun sank behind the mountain. And he went home and lived a long time, but he would never kiss any other lady because he had kissed the queen of the fairies, and he would never drink common wine any more, because he had drunk enchanted wine. And sometimes nurse told me tales that she had heard from her great-grandmother, who was very old, and lived in a cottage on the mountain all alone, and most of these tales were about a hill where people used to meet at night long ago, and they used to play all sorts of strange games and do queer things that nurse told me of, but I couldn’t understand, and now, she said, everybody but her great-grandmother had forgotten all about it, and nobody knew where the hill was, not even her great-grandmother. But she told me one very strange story about the hill, and I trembled when I remembered it. She said that people always went there in summer, when it was very hot, and they had to dance a good deal. It would be all dark at first, and there were trees there, which made it much darker, and people would come, one by one, from all directions, by a secret path which nobody else knew, and two persons would keep the gate, and every one as they came up had to give a very curious sign, which nurse showed me as well as she could, but she said she couldn't show me properly. And all kinds of people would come; there would be gentle folks and village folks, and some old people and boys and girls, and quite small children, who sat and watched. And it would all be dark as they came in, except in one corner where some one was burning something that smelt strong and sweet, and made them laugh, and there one would see a glaring of coals, and the smoke mounting up red. So they would all come in, and when the last had come there was no door any more, so that no one else could get in, even if they knew there was anything beyond. And once a gentleman who was a stranger and had ridden a long way, lost his path at night, and his horse took him into the very middle of the wild country, where everything was upside down, and there were dreadful marshes and great stones everywhere, and holes underfoot, and the trees looked like gibbet-posts, because they had great black arms that stretched out across the way. And this strange gentleman was very frightened, and his horse began to shiver all over, and at last it stopped and wouldn't go any farther, and the gentleman got down and tried to lead the horse, but it wouldn't move, and it was all covered with a sweat, like death. So the gentleman went on all alone, going farther and farther into the wild country, till at last he came to a dark place, where he heard shouting and singing and crying, like nothing he had ever heard before. It all sounded quite close to him, but he couldn't get in, and so he began to call, and while he was calling, something came behind him, and in a minute his mouth and arms and legs were all bound up, and he fell into a swoon. And when he came to himself, he was lying by the roadside, just where he had first lost his way, under a blasted oak with a black trunk, and his horse was tied beside him. So he rode on to the town and told the people there what had happened, and some of them were amazed; but others knew. So when once everybody had come, there was no door at all for anybody else to pass in by. And when they were all inside, round in a ring, touching each other, some one began to sing in the darkness, and some one else would make a noise like thunder with a thing they had on purpose, and on still nights people would hear the thundering noise far, far away beyond the wild land,

and some of them, who thought they knew what it was, used to make a sign on their breasts when they woke up in their beds at dead of night and heard that terrible deep noise, like thunder on the mountains. And the noise and the singing would go on and on for a long time, and the people who were in a ring swayed a little to and fro; and the song was in an old, old language that nobody knows now, and the tune was queer. Nurse said her great-grandmother had known some one who remembered a little of it, when she was quite a little girl, and nurse tried to sing some of it to me, and it was so strange a tune that I turned all cold and my flesh crept as if I had put my hand on something dead. Sometimes it was a man that sang and sometimes it was a woman, and sometimes the one who sang it did it so well that two or three of the people who were there fell to the ground shrieking and tearing with their hands. The singing went on, and the people in the ring kept swaying to and fro for a long time, and at last the moon would rise over a place they called the Tole Deol, and came up and showed them swinging and swaying from side to side, with the sweet thick smoke curling up from the burning coals, and floating in circles all around them. Then they had their supper. A boy and a girl brought it to them; the boy carried a great cup of wine, and the girl carried a cake of bread, and they passed the bread and the wine round and round, but they tasted quite different from common bread and common wine, and changed everybody that tasted them. Then they all rose up and danced, and secret things were brought out of some hiding place, and they played extraordinary games, and danced round and round and round in the moonlight, and sometimes people would suddenly disappear and never be heard of afterwards, and nobody knew what had happened to them. And they drank more of that curious wine, and they made images and worshipped them, and nurse showed me how the images were made one day when we were out for a walk, and we passed by a place where there was a lot of wet clay. So nurse asked me if I would like to know what those things were like that they made on the hill, and I said yes. Then she asked me if I would promise never to tell a living soul a word about it, and if I did I was to be thrown into the black pit with the dead people, and I said I wouldn’t tell anybody, and she said the same thing again and again, and I promised. So she took my wooden spade and dug a big lump of clay and put it in my tin bucket, and told me to say if any one met us that I was going to make pies when I went home. Then we went on a little way till we came to a little brake growing right down into the road, and nurse stopped, and looked up the road and down it, and then peeped through the hedge into the field on the other side, and then she said, ‘Quick!’ and we ran into the brake, and crept in and out among the bushes till we had gone a good way from the road. Then we sat down under a bush, and I wanted so much to know what nurse was going to make with the clay, but before she would begin she made me promise again not to say a word about it, and she went again and peeped through the bushes on every side, though the lane was so small and deep that hardly anybody ever went there. So we sat down, and nurse took the clay out of the bucket, and began to knead it with her hands, and do queer things with it, and turn it about. And she hid it under a big dock-leaf for a minute or two and then she brought it out again, and then she stood up and sat down, and walked round the clay in a peculiar manner, and all the time she was softly singing a sort of rhyme, and her face got very red. Then she sat down again, and took the clay in her hands and began to shape it into a doll, but not like the dolls I have at home, and she made the queerest doll I had ever seen, all out of the wet clay, and hid it under a bush to get dry and hard, and all the time she was making it she was singing these rhymes to herself, and her face got redder and redder. So we left the doll there, hidden away in the bushes where nobody would ever find it. And a few days later we went the same walk, and when we came to that narrow, dark part of the lane where the brake runs down to the bank, nurse made me promise all over again, and she looked about, just as she had done before, and we crept into the bushes till we got to the green place where the little clay man was hidden. I remember it all so well, though I was only eight, and it is eight years ago now as I am writing it down, but the sky was a deep violet blue, and in the middle of the brake where we were sitting there was a great elder tree covered with blossoms, and on the other side there was a clump of meadowsweet, and when I think of that day the smell of the meadowsweet and elder blossom seems to fill the room, and if I shut my eyes I can see the glaring blue sky, with little clouds very white floating across it, and nurse who went away long ago sitting opposite me and looking like the beautiful white lady in the wood. So we sat down and nurse took out the clay doll from the secret place where she had hidden it, and she said we must ‘pay our respects,’ and she would show me what to do, and I must watch her all the time. So she did all sorts of queer things with the little clay man, and I noticed she was all streaming with perspiration, though we had walked so slowly, and then she told me to ‘pay my respects,’ and I did everything she did because I liked her, and it was such an odd game. And she said that if one loved very much, the clay man was very good, if one did certain things with it, and if one hated very much, it was just as good, only one had to do different things, and we played with it a long time, and pretended all sorts of things. Nurse said her great-grandmother had told her all about these images, but what we did was no harm at all, only a game. But she told me a story about these images that frightened me very much, and that was what I remembered that night when I was lying awake in my room in the pale, empty darkness, thinking of what I had seen and the secret wood. Nurse said there was once a young lady of the high gentry, who lived in a great castle. And she was so beautiful that all the gentlemen wanted to marry her, because she was the loveliest lady that anybody had ever seen, and she was kind to everybody, and everybody thought she was very good. But though she was polite to all the gentlemen who wished to marry her, she put them off, and said she couldn’t make up her mind, and she wasn’t sure she wanted to marry anybody at all. And her father, who was a very great lord, was angry, though he was so fond of her, and he asked her why she wouldn’t choose a bachelor out of all the handsome young men who came to the castle. But she only said she didn’t love any of them very much, and she must wait, and if they pestered her, she said she would go and be a nun in a nunnery. So all the gentlemen said they would go away and wait for a year and a day, and when a year and a day were gone, they would come back again and ask her to say which one she would marry. So the day was appointed and they all went away; and the lady had promised that in a year and a day it would be her wedding day with one of them. But the truth was, that she was the queen of the people who danced on the hill on summer nights, and on the proper nights she would lock the door of her room, and she and her maid would steal out of the castle by a secret passage that only they knew of, and go away up to the hill in the wild land. And she knew more of the secret things than any one else, and more than any one knew before or after, because she would not tell anybody the most secret secrets. She knew how to do all the awful things, how to destroy young men, and how to put a curse on people, and other things that I could not understand. And her real name was the Lady Avelin, but the dancing people called her Cassap, which meant somebody very wise, in the old language. And she was whiter than any of them and taller, and her eyes shone in the dark like burning rubies; and she could sing songs that none of the others could sing, and when she sang they all fell down on their faces and worshipped her. And she could do what they called shib-show, which was a very wonderful enchantment. She would tell the great lord, her father, that she wanted to go into the woods to gather flowers, so he let her go, and she and her maid went into the woods where nobody came, and the maid would keep watch. Then the lady would lie down under the trees and begin to sing a particular song, and she stretched out her arms, and from every part of the wood great serpents would come, hissing and gliding in and out among the trees, and shooting out their forked tongues as they crawled up to the lady. And they all came to her, and twisted round her, round her body, and her arms, and her neck, till she was covered with writhing serpents, and there was only her head to be seen. And she whispered to them, and she sang to them, and they writhed round and round, faster and faster, till she told them to go. And they all went away directly, back to their holes, and on the lady's breast there would be a most curious, beautiful stone, shaped something like an egg, and coloured dark blue and yellow, and red, and green, marked like a serpent's scales. It was called a glame stone, and with it one could do all sorts of wonderful things, and nurse said her great-grandmother had seen a glame stone with her own eyes, and it was for all the world shiny and scaly like a snake. And the lady could do a lot of other things as well, but she was quite fixed that she would not be married. And there were a great many gentlemen who wanted to marry her, but there were five of them who were chief, and their names were Sir Simon, Sir John, Sir Oliver, Sir Richard, and Sir Rowland. All the others believed she spoke the truth, and that she would choose one of them to be her man when a year and a day was done; it was only Sir Simon, who was very crafty, who thought she was deceiving them all, and he vowed he would watch and try if he could find out anything. And though he was very wise he was very young, and he had a smooth, soft face like a girl's, and he pretended, as the rest did, that he would not come to the castle for a year and a day, and he said he was going away beyond the sea to foreign parts. But he really only went a very little way, and came back dressed like a servant girl, and so he got a place in the castle to wash the dishes. And he waited and watched, and he listened and said nothing, and he hid in dark places, and woke up at night and looked out, and he heard things and he saw things that he thought were very strange. And he was so sly that he told the girl that waited on the lady that he was really a young man, and that he had dressed up as a girl because he loved her so very much and wanted to be in the same house with her, and the girl was so pleased that she told him many things, and he was more than ever certain that the Lady Avelin was deceiving him and the others. And he was so clever, and told the servant so many lies, that one night he managed to hide in the Lady Avelin's room behind the curtains. And he stayed quite still and never moved, and at last the lady came. And she bent down under the bed, and raised up a stone, and there was a hollow place underneath, and out of it she took a waxen image, just like the clay one that I and nurse had made in the brake. And all the time her eyes were burning like rubies. And she took the little wax doll up in her arms and held it to her breast, and she whispered and she murmured, and she took it up and she laid it down again, and she held it high, and she held it low, and she laid it down again. And she said, 'Happy is he that begat the bishop, that ordered the clerk, that married the man, that had the wife, that fashioned the hive, that harboured the bee, that gathered the wax that my own true love was made of.' And she brought out of an aumbry a great golden bowl, and she brought out of a closet a great jar of wine, and she poured some of the wine into the bowl, and she laid her mannikin very gently in the wine, and washed it in the wine all over. Then she went to a cupboard and took a small round cake and laid it on the image's mouth, and then she bore it softly and covered it up. And Sir Simon, who was watching all the time, though he was terribly frightened, saw the lady bend down and stretch out her arms and whisper and sing, and then Sir Simon saw beside her a handsome young man, who kissed her on the lips. And they drank wine out of the golden bowl together, and they ate the cake together. But when the sun rose there was only the little wax doll, and the lady hid it again under the bed in the hollow place. So Sir Simon knew quite well what the lady was, and he waited and he watched, till the time she had said was nearly over, and in a week the year and a day would be done. And one night, when he was watching behind the curtains in her room, he saw her making more wax dolls. And she made five, and hid them away. And the next night she took one out, and held it up, and filled the golden bowl with water, and took the doll by the neck and held it under the water. Then she said —

Sir Dickon, Sir Dickon, your day is done, You shall be drowned in the water wan.

And the next day news came to the castle that Sir Richard had been drowned at the ford. And at night she took another doll and tied a violet cord round its neck and hung it up on a nail. Then she said —

Sir Rowland, your life has ended its span, High on a tree I see you hang.

And the next day news came to the castle that Sir Rowland had been hanged by robbers in the wood. And at night she took another doll, and drove her bodkin right into its heart. Then she said —

Sir Noll, Sir Noll, so cease your life, Your heart piercèd with the knife.

And the next day news came to the castle that Sir Oliver had fought in a tavern, and a stranger had stabbed him to the heart. And at night she took another doll, and held it to a fire of charcoal till it was melted. Then she said —

Sir John, return, and turn to clay, In fire of fever you waste away.

And the next day news came to the castle that Sir John had died in a burning fever. So then Sir Simon went out of the castle and mounted his horse and rode away to the bishop and told him everything. And the bishop sent his men, and they took the Lady Avelin, and everything she had done was found out. So on the day after the year and a day, when she was to have been married, they carried her through the town in her smock, and they tied her to a great stake in the market-place, and burned her alive before the bishop with her wax image hung round her neck. And people said the wax man screamed in the burning of the flames. And I thought of this story again and again as I was lying awake in my bed, and I seemed to see the Lady Avelin in the market-place, with the yellow flames eating up her beautiful white body. And I thought of it so much that I seemed to get into the story myself, and I fancied I was the lady, and that they were coming to take me to be burnt with fire, with all the people in the town looking at me. And I wondered whether she cared, after all the strange things she had done, and whether it hurt very much to be burned at the stake. I tried again and again to forget nurse's stories, and to remember the secret I had seen that afternoon, and what was in the secret wood, but I could only see the dark and a glimmering in the dark, and then it went away, and I only saw myself running, and then a great moon came up white over a dark round hill. Then all the old stories came back again, and the queer rhymes that nurse used to sing to me; and there was one beginning ‘Halsy cumsy Helen musty,’ that she used to sing very softly when she wanted me to go to sleep. And I began to sing it to myself inside of my head, and I went to sleep.

The next morning I was very tired and sleepy, and could hardly do my lessons, and I was very glad when they were over and I had had my dinner, as I wanted to go out and be alone. It was a warm day, and I went to a nice turfy hill by the river, and sat down on my mother’s old shawl that I had brought with me on purpose. The sky was grey, like the day before, but there was a kind of white gleam behind it, and from where I was sitting I could look down on the town, and it was all still and quiet and white, like a picture. I remembered that it was on that hill that nurse taught me to play an old game called ‘Troy Town,’ in which one had to dance, and wind in and out on a pattern in the grass, and then when one had danced and turned long enough the other person asks you questions, and you can’t help answering whether you want to or not, and whatever you are told to do you feel you have to do it. Nurse said there used to be a lot of games like that that some people knew of, and there was one by which people could be turned into anything you liked, and an old man her great-grandmother had seen had known a girl who had been turned into a large snake. And there was another very ancient game of dancing and winding and turning, by which you could take a person out of himself and hide him away as long as you liked, and his body went walking about quite empty, without any sense in it. But I came to that hill because I wanted to think of what had happened the day before, and of the secret of the wood. From the place where I was sitting I could see beyond the town, into the opening I had found, where a little brook had led me into an unknown country. And I pretended I was following the brook over again, and I went all the way in my mind, and at last I found the wood, and crept into it under the bushes, and then in the dusk I saw something that made me feel as if I were filled with fire, as if I wanted to dance and sing and fly up into the air, because I was changed and wonderful. But what I saw was not changed at all, and had not grown old, and I wondered again and again how such things could happen, and whether nurse’s stories were really true, because in the daytime in the open air everything seemed quite different from what it was at night, when I was frightened, and thought I was to be burned alive. I once told my father one of her little tales, which was about a ghost, and asked him if it was true, and he told me it was not true at all, and that only common, ignorant people believed in such rubbish.

He was very angry with nurse for telling me the story, and scolded her, and after that I promised her I would never whisper a word of what she told me, and if I did I should be bitten by the great black snake that lived in the pool in the wood. And all alone on the hill I wondered what was true. I had seen something very amazing and very lovely, and I knew a story, and if I had really seen it, and not made it up out of the dark, and the black bough, and the bright shining that was mounting up to the sky from over the great round hill, but had really seen it in truth, then there were all kinds of wonderful and lovely and terrible things to think of, so I longed and trembled, and I burned and got cold. And I looked down on the town, so quiet and still, like a little white picture, and I thought over and over if it could be true. I was a long time before I could make up my mind to anything; there was such a strange fluttering at my heart that seemed to whisper to me all the time that I had not made it up out of my head, and yet it seemed quite impossible, and I knew my father and everybody would say it was dreadful rubbish. I never dreamed of telling him or anybody else a word about it, because I knew it would be of no use, and I should only get laughed at or scolded, so for a long time I was very quiet, and went about thinking and wondering; and at night I used to dream of amazing things, and sometimes I woke up in the early morning and held out my arms with a cry. And I was frightened, too, because there were dangers, and some awful thing would happen to me, unless I took great care, if the story were true. These old tales were always in my head, night and morning, and I went over them and told them to myself over and over again, and went for walks in the places where nurse had told them to me; and when I sat in the nursery by the fire in the evenings I used to fancy nurse was sitting in the other chair, and telling me some wonderful story in a low voice, for fear anybody should be listening. But she used to like best to tell me about things when we were right out in the country, far from the house, because she said she was telling me such secrets, and walls have ears. And if it was something more than ever secret, we had to hide in brakes or woods; and I used to think it was such fun creeping along a hedge, and going very softly, and then we would get behind the bushes or run into the wood all of a sudden, when we were sure that none was watching us; so we knew that we had our secrets quite all to ourselves, and nobody else at all knew anything about them. Now and then, when we had hidden ourselves as I have described, she used to show me all sorts of odd things. One day, I remember, we were in a hazel brake, overlooking the brook, and we were so snug and warm, as though it was April; the sun was quite hot, and the leaves were just coming out. Nurse said she would show me something funny that would make me laugh, and then she showed me, as she said, how one could turn a whole house upside down, without anybody being able to find out, and the pots and pans would jump about, and the china would be broken, and the chairs would tumble over of themselves. I tried it one day in the kitchen, and I found I could do it quite well, and a whole row of plates on the dresser fell off it, and cook's little work-table tilted up and turned right over 'before her eyes,' as she said, but she was so frightened and turned so white that I didn't do it again, as I liked her. And afterwards, in the hazel copse, when she had shown me how to make things tumble about, she showed me how to make rapping noises, and I learnt how to do that, too. Then she taught me rhymes to say on certain occasions, and peculiar marks to make on other occasions, and other things that her great-grandmother had taught her when she was a little girl herself. And these were all the things I was thinking about in those days after the strange walk when I thought I had seen a great secret, and I wished nurse were there for me to ask her about it, but she had gone away more than two years before, and nobody seemed to know what had become of her, or where she had gone. But I shall always remember those days if I live to be quite old, because all the time I felt so strange, wondering and doubting, and feeling quite sure at one time, and making up my mind, and then I would feel quite sure that such things couldn't happen really, and it began all over again. But I took great care not to do certain things that might be very dangerous. So I waited and wondered for a long time, and though I was not sure at all, I never dared to try to find out. But one day I became sure that all that nurse said was quite true, and I was all alone when I found it out. I trembled all over with joy and terror, and as fast as I could I ran into one of the old brakes where we used to go — it was the one by the lane, where nurse made the little clay man — and I ran into it, and I crept into it; and when I came to the place where the elder was, I covered up my face with my hands and lay down flat on the grass, and I stayed there for two hours without moving, whispering to myself delicious, terrible things, and saying some words over and over again. It was all true and wonderful and splendid, and when I remembered the story I knew and thought of what I had really seen, I got hot and I got cold, and the air seemed full of scent, and flowers, and singing. And first I wanted to make a little clay man, like the one nurse had made so long ago, and I had to invent plans and stratagems, and to look about, and to think of things beforehand, because nobody must dream of anything that I was doing or going to do, and I was too old to carry clay about in a tin bucket. At last I thought of a plan, and I brought the wet clay to the brake, and did everything that nurse had done, only I made a much finer image than the one she had made; and when it was finished I did everything that I could imagine and much more than she did, because it was the likeness of something far better. And a few days later, when I had done my lessons early, I went for the second time by the way of the little brook that had led me into a strange country. And I followed the brook, and went through the bushes, and beneath the low branches of trees, and up thorny thickets on the hill, and by dark woods full of creeping thorns, a long, long way. Then I crept through the dark tunnel where the brook had been and the ground was stony, till at last I came to the thicket that climbed up the hill, and though the leaves were coming out upon the trees, everything looked almost as black as it was on the first day that I went there. And the thicket was just the same, and I went up slowly till I came out on the big bare hill, and began to walk among the wonderful rocks. I saw the terrible voor again on everything, for though the sky was brighter, the ring of wild hills all around was still dark, and the hanging woods looked dark and dreadful, and the strange rocks were as grey as ever; and when I looked down on them from the great mound, sitting on the stone, I saw all their amazing circles and rounds within rounds, and I had to sit quite still and watch them as they began to turn about me, and each stone danced in its place, and they seemed to go round and round in a great whirl, as if one were in the middle of all the stars and heard them rushing through the air. So I went down among the rocks to dance with them and to sing extraordinary songs; and I went down through the other thicket, and drank from the bright stream in the close and secret valley, putting my lips down to the bubbling water; and then I went on till I came to the deep, brimming well among the glittering moss, and I sat down. I looked before me into the secret darkness of the valley, and behind me was the great high wall of grass, and all around me there were the hanging woods that made the valley such a secret place. I knew there was nobody here at all besides myself, and that no one could see me. So I took off my boots and stockings, and let my feet down into the water, saying the words that I knew. And it was not cold at all, as I expected, but warm and very pleasant, and when my feet were in it I felt as if they were in silk, or as if the nymph were kissing them. So when I had done, I said the other words and made the signs, and then I dried my feet with a towel I had brought on purpose, and put on my stockings and boots. Then I climbed up the steep wall, and went into the place where there are the hollows, and the two beautiful mounds, and the round ridges of land, and all the strange shapes. I did not go down into the hollow this time, but I turned at the end, and made out the figures quite plainly, as it was lighter, and I had remembered the story I had quite forgotten before, and in the story the two figures are called Adam and Eve, and only those who know the story understand what they mean. So I went on and on till I came to the secret wood which must not be described, and I crept into it by the way I had found. And when I had gone about halfway I stopped, and turned round, and got ready, and I bound the handkerchief tightly round my eyes, and made quite sure that I could not see at all, not a twig, nor the end of a leaf, nor the light of the sky, as it was an old red silk handkerchief with large yellow spots, that went round twice and covered my eyes, so that I could see nothing. Then I began to go on, step by step, very slowly. My heart beat faster and faster, and something rose in my throat that choked me and made me want to cry out, but I shut my lips, and went on. Boughs caught in my hair as I went, and great thorns tore me; but I went on to the end of the path. Then I stopped, and held out my arms and bowed, and I went round the first time, feeling with my hands, and there was nothing. I went round the second time, feeling with my hands, and there was nothing. Then I went round the third time, feeling with my hands, and the story was all true, and I wished that the years were gone by, and that I had not so long a time to wait before I was happy for ever and ever.

Nurse must have been a prophet like those we read of in the Bible. Everything that she said began to come true, and since then other things that she told me of have happened. That was how I came to know that her stories were true and that I had not made up the secret myself out of my own head. But there was another thing that happened that day. I went a second time to the secret place. It was at the deep brimming well, and when I was standing on the moss I bent over and looked in, and then I knew who the white lady was that I had seen come out of the water in the wood long ago when I was quite little. And I trembled all over, because that told me other things. Then I remembered how sometime after I had seen the white people in the wood, nurse asked me more about them, and I told her all over again, and she listened, and said nothing for a long, long time, and at last she said, ‘You will see her again.’ So I understood what had happened and what was to happen. And I understood about the nymphs; how I might meet them in all kinds of places, and they would always help me, and I must always look for them, and find them in all sorts of strange shapes and appearances. And without the nymphs I could never have found the secret, and without them none of the other things could happen. Nurse had told me all about them long ago, but she called them by another name, and I did not know what she meant, or what her tales of them were about, only that they were very queer. And there were two kinds, the bright and the dark, and both were very lovely and very wonderful, and some people saw only one kind, and some only the other, but some saw them both. But usually the dark appeared first, and the bright ones came afterwards, and there were extraordinary tales about them. It was a day or two after I had come home from the secret place that I first really knew the nymphs. Nurse had shown me how to call them, and I had tried, but I did not know what she meant, and so I thought it was all nonsense. But I made up my mind I would try again, so I went to the wood where the pool was, where I saw the white people, and I tried again. The dark nymph, Alanna, came, and she turned the pool of water into a pool of fire….

EPILOGUE

‘That’s a very queer story,’ said Cotgrave, handing back the green book to the recluse, Ambrose. ‘I see the drift of a good deal, but there are many things that I do not grasp at all. On the last page, for example, what does she mean by “nymphs”?’

‘Well, I think there are references throughout the manuscript to certain “processes” which have been handed down by tradition from age to age. Some of these processes are just beginning to come within the purview of science, which has arrived at them — or rather at the steps which lead to them — by quite different paths. I have interpreted the reference to “nymphs” as a reference to one of these processes.’

‘And you believe that there are such things?’

‘Oh, I think so. Yes, I believe I could give you convincing evidence on that point. I am afraid you have neglected the study of alchemy? It is a pity, for the symbolism, at all events, is very beautiful, and moreover if you were acquainted with certain books on the subject, I could recall to your mind phrases which might explain a good deal in the manuscript that you have been reading.’

‘Yes; but I want to know whether you seriously think that there is any foundation of fact beneath these fancies. Is it not all a department of poetry; a curious dream with which man has indulged himself?’

‘I can only say that it is no doubt better for the great mass of people to dismiss it all as a dream. But if you ask my veritable belief — that goes quite the other way. No; I should not say belief, but rather knowledge. I may tell you that I have known cases in which men have stumbled quite by accident on certain of these “processes,” and have been astonished by wholly unexpected results. In the cases I am thinking of there could have been no possibility of “suggestion” or sub-conscious action of any kind. One might as well suppose a schoolboy “suggesting” the existence of Æschylus to himself, while he plods mechanically through the declensions.

‘But you have noticed the obscurity,’ Ambrose went on, ‘and in this particular case it must have been dictated by instinct, since the writer never thought that her manuscripts would fall into other hands. But the practice is universal, and for most excellent reasons. Powerful and sovereign medicines, which are, of necessity, virulent poisons also, are kept in a locked cabinet. The child may find the key by chance, and drink herself dead; but in most cases the search is educational, and the phials contain precious elixirs for him who has patiently fashioned the key for himself.'

'You do not care to go into details?'

'No, frankly, I do not. No, you must remain unconvinced. But you saw how the manuscript illustrates the talk we had last week?'

'Is this girl still alive?'

'No. I was one of those who found her. I knew the father well; he was a lawyer, and had always left her very much to herself. He thought of nothing but deeds and leases, and the news came to him as an awful surprise. She was missing one morning; I suppose it was about a year after she had written what you have read. The servants were called, and they told things, and put the only natural interpretation on them — a perfectly erroneous one.

'They discovered that green book somewhere in her room, and I found her in the place that she described with so much dread, lying on the ground before the image.'

'It was an image?'

'Yes, it was hidden by the thorns and the thick undergrowth that had surrounded it. It was a wild, lonely country; but you know what it was like by her description, though of course you will understand that the colours have been heightened. A child's imagination always makes the heights higher and the depths deeper than they really are; and she had, unfortunately for herself, something more than imagination. One might say, perhaps, that the picture in her mind which she succeeded in a measure in putting into words, was the scene as it would have appeared to an imaginative artist. But it is a strange, desolate land.'

'And she was dead?'

'Yes. She had poisoned herself — in time. No; there was not a word to be said against her in the ordinary sense. You may recollect a story I told you the other night about a lady who saw her child's fingers crushed by a window?'

'And what was this statue?'

‘Well, it was of Roman workmanship, of a stone that with the centuries had not blackened, but had become white and luminous. The thicket had grown up about it and concealed it, and in the Middle Ages the followers of a very old tradition had known how to use it for their own purposes. In fact it had been incorporated into the monstrous mythology of the Sabbath. You will have noted that those to whom a sight of that shining whiteness had been vouchsafed by chance, or rather, perhaps, by apparent chance, were required to blindfold themselves on their second approach. That is very significant.’

‘And is it there still?’

‘I sent for tools, and we hammered it into dust and fragments.’

‘The persistence of tradition never surprises me,’ Ambrose went on after a pause. ‘I could name many an English parish where such traditions as that girl had listened to in her childhood are still existent in occult but unabated vigour. No, for me, it is the “story” not the “sequel,” which is strange and awful, for I have always believed that wonder is of the soul.’

The Red Hand

The Problem of the Fish-Hooks

‘THERE CAN BE no doubt whatever,’ said Mr. Phillipps, ‘that my theory is the true one; these flints are prehistoric fish-hooks.’

‘I dare say; but you know that in all probability the things were forged the other day with a door-key.’

‘Stuff!’ said Phillipps; ‘I have some respect, Dyson, for your literary abilities, but your knowledge of ethnology is insignificant, or rather non-existent. These fish-hooks satisfy every test; they are perfectly genuine.’

‘Possibly, but as I said just now, you go to work at the wrong end. You neglect the opportunities that confront you and await you, obvious, at every corner; you positively shrink from the chance of encountering primitive man in this whirling and mysterious city, and you pass the weary hours in your agreeable retirement of Red Lion Square fumbling with bits of flint, which are, as I said, in all probability, rank forgeries.’

Phillipps took one of the little objects, and held it up in exasperation.

‘Look at that ridge,’ he said. ‘Did you ever see such a ridge as that on a forgery?’

Dyson merely grunted and lit his pipe and the two sat smoking in rich silence, watching through the open window the children in the square as they flitted to and fro in the twilight of the lamps, as elusive as bats flying on the verge of a dark wood.

‘Well,’ said Phillipps at last, ‘it is really a long time since you have been round. I suppose you have been working at your old task.’

‘Yes,’ said Dyson, ‘always the chase of the phrase. I shall grow old in the hunt. But it is a great consolation to meditate on the fact that there are not a dozen people in England who know what style means.’

‘I suppose not; for the matter of that, the study of ethnology is far from popular. And the difficulties! Primitive man stands dim and very far off across the great bridge of years.’

‘By the way,’ he went on after a pause, ‘what was that stuff you were talking just now about shrinking from the chance of encountering primitive man at the corner, or something of the kind? There are certainly people about here whose ideas are very primitive.’

‘I wish, Phillipps, you would not rationalize my remarks. If, I recollect the phrases correctly, I hinted that you shrank from the chance of encountering primitive man in this whirling and mysterious city, and I meant exactly what I said. Who can limit the age of survival? The troglodyte and the lake-dweller, perhaps representatives of yet darker races, may very probably be lurking in our midst, rubbing shoulders with frock-coated and finely draped humanity, ravening like wolves at heart and boiling with the foul passions of the swamp and the black cave. Now and then as I walk in Holborn or Fleet Street I see a face which I pronounce abhorred, and yet I could not give a reason for the thrill of loathing that stirs within me.’

‘My dear Dyson, I refuse to enter myself in your literary “trying-on” department. I know that survivals do exist, but all things have a limit, and your speculations are absurd. You must catch me your troglodyte before I will believe in him.’

‘I agree to that with all my heart,’ said Dyson, chuckling at the ease with which he had succeeded in ‘drawing’ Phillipps. ‘Nothing could be better. It’s a fine night for a walk,’ he added taking up his hat.

‘What nonsense you are talking, Dyson!’ said Phillipps. ‘However, I have no objection to taking a walk with you: as you say, it is a pleasant night.’

‘Come along then,’ said Dyson, grinning, ‘but remember our bargain.’

The two men went out into the square, and threading one of the narrow passages that serve as exits, struck towards the north-east. As they passed along a flaring causeway they could hear at intervals between the clamour of the children and the triumphant *Gloria* played on a piano-organ the long deep hum and roll of the traffic in Holborn, a sound so persistent that it echoed like the turning of everlasting wheels. Dyson looked to the right and left and conned the way, and presently they were passing through a more peaceful quarter, touching on deserted squares and silent streets black as midnight. Phillipps had lost all count of direction, and as by degrees the region of faded respectability gave place to the squalid, and dirty stucco offended the eye of the artistic observer, he merely ventured the remark that he had never seen a neighbourhood more unpleasant or more commonplace.

‘More mysterious, you mean,’ said Dyson. ‘I warn you, Phillipps, we are now hot upon the scent.’

They dived yet deeper into the maze of brickwork; some time before they had crossed a noisy thoroughfare running east and west, and now the quarter seemed all amorphous, without character; here a decent house with sufficient garden, here a faded square, and here factories surrounded by high, blank walls, with blind passages and dark corners; but all ill-lighted and unfrequented and heavy with silence.

Presently, as they paced down a forlorn street of two-story houses, Dyson caught sight of a dark and obscure turning.

‘I like the look of that,’ he said; ‘it seems to me promising.’ There was a street lamp at the entrance, and another, a mere glimmer, at the further end. Beneath the lamp, on the pavement, an artist had evidently established his academy in the daytime, for the stones were all a blur of crude colours rubbed into each other, and a few broken fragments of chalk lay in a little heap beneath the wall.

‘You see people do occasionally pass this way,’ said Dyson, pointing to the ruins of the screever’s work. ‘I confess I should not have thought it possible. Come, let us explore.’

On one side of this byway of communication was a great timber-yard, with vague piles of wood looming shapeless above the enclosing wall; and on the other side of the road a wall still higher seemed to enclose a garden, for there were shadows like trees, and a faint murmur of rustling leaves broke the silence. It was a moonless night, and clouds that had gathered after sunset had blackened, and midway between the feeble lamps the passage lay all dark and formless, and when one stopped and listened, and the sharp echo of reverberant footsteps ceased, there came from far away, as from beyond the hills, a faint roll of the noise of London. Phillipps was bolstering up his courage to declare that he had had enough of the excursion, when a loud cry from Dyson broke in upon his thoughts.

‘Stop, stop, for Heaven’s sake, or you will tread on it! There! almost under your feet!’ Phillipps looked down, and saw a vague shape, dark, and framed in surrounding darkness, dropped strangely on the pavement, and then a white cuff glimmered for a moment as Dyson lit a match, which went out directly.

‘It’s a drunken man,’ said Phillipps very coolly.

‘It’s a murdered man,’ said Dyson, and he began to call for police with all his might, and soon from the distance running footsteps echoed and grew louder, and cries sounded.

A policeman was the first to come up.

‘What’s the matter?’ he said, as he drew to a stand, panting. ‘Anything amiss here?’ for he had not seen what was on the pavement.

‘Look!’ said Dyson, speaking out of the gloom. ‘Look there! My friend and I came down this place three minutes ago, and that is what we found.’

The man flashed his light on the dark shape and cried out.

‘Why, it’s murder,’ he said; ‘there’s blood all about him, and a puddle of it in the gutter there. He’s not dead long, either. Ah! there’s the wound! It’s in the neck.’

Dyson bent over what was lying there. He saw a prosperous gentleman, dressed in smooth, well-cut clothes. The neat whiskers were beginning to grizzle a little; he might have been forty-five an hour before; and a handsome gold watch had half slipped out of his waistcoat pocket. And there in the flesh of the neck, between chin and ear, gaped a great wound, clean cut, but all clotted with drying blood, and the white of the cheeks shone like a lighted lamp above the red.

Dyson turned, and looked curiously about him; the dead man lay across the path with his head inclined towards the wall, and the blood from the wound streamed away across the pavement, and lay a dark puddle, as the policeman had said, in the gutter. Two more policemen had come up, the crowd gathered, humming from all quarters, and the officers had as much as they could do to keep the curious at a distance. The three lanterns were flashing here and there, searching for more evidence, and in the gleam of one of them Dyson caught sight of an object in the road, to which he called the attention of the policeman nearest to him.

‘Look, Phillipps,’ he said, when the man had secured it and held it up. ‘Look, that should be something in your way!’

It was a dark flinty stone, gleaming like obsidian, and shaped to a broad edge something after the manner of an adze. One end was rough, and easily grasped in the hand, and the whole thing was hardly five inches long. The edge was thick with blood.

‘What is that, Phillipps?’ said Dyson; and Phillipps looked hard at it.

‘It’s a primitive flint knife,’ he said. ‘It was made about ten thousand years ago. One exactly like this was found near Abury, in Wiltshire, and all the authorities gave it that age.’

The policeman stared astonished at such a development of the case; and Phillipps himself was all aghast at his own words. But Mr. Dyson did not notice him. An inspector who had just come up and was listening to the outlines of the case, was holding a lantern to the dead man’s head. Dyson, for his part, was staring with a white heat of curiosity at something he saw on the wall, just above where the man was lying; there were a few rude marks done in red chalk.

‘This is a black business,’ said the inspector at length: ‘does anybody know who it is?’

A man stepped forward from the crowd. ‘I do, governor,’ he said, ‘he’s a big doctor, his name’s Sir Thomas Vivian; I was in the ‘orspital abart six months ago, and he used to come round; he was a very kind man.’

‘Lord,’ cried the inspector, ‘this is a bad job indeed. Why, Sir Thomas Vivian goes to the Royal Family. And there’s a watch worth a hundred guineas in his pocket, so it isn’t robbery.’

Dyson and Phillipps gave their cards to the authority, and moved off, pushing with difficulty through the crowd that was still gathering, gathering fast; and the alley that had been lonely and desolate now swarmed with white staring faces and hummed with the buzz of rumour and horror, and rang with the commands of the officers of police. The two men once free from this swarming curiosity stepped out briskly, but for twenty minutes neither spoke a word.

‘Phillipps,’ said Dyson, as they came into a small but cheerful street, clean and brightly lit, ‘Phillipps, I owe you an apology. I was wrong to have spoken as I did to-night. Such infernal jesting,’ he went on, with heat, ‘as if there were no wholesome subjects for a joke. I feel as if I had raised an evil spirit.’

‘For Heaven’s sake say nothing more,’ said Phillipps, choking down horror with visible effort. ‘You told the truth to me in my room; the troglodyte, as you said, is still lurking about the earth, and in these very streets around us, slaying for mere lust of blood.’

‘I will come up for a moment,’ said Dyson, when they reached Red Lion Square, ‘I have something to ask you. I think there should be nothing hidden between us at all events.’

Phillipps nodded gloomily, and they went up to the room, where everything hovered indistinct in the uncertain glimmer of the light from without.

When the candle was lighted and the two men sat facing each other, Dyson spoke.

‘Perhaps,’ he began, ‘you did not notice me peering at the wall just above the place where the head lay. The light from the inspector’s lantern was shining full on it, and I saw something that looked queer to me, and I examined it closely. I found that some one had drawn in red chalk a rough outline of a hand — a human hand — upon the wall. But it was the curious position of the fingers that struck me; it was like this’; and he took a pencil and a piece of paper and drew rapidly, and then handed what he had done to Phillipps. It was a rough sketch of a hand seen from the back, with the fingers clenched, and the top of the thumb protruded between the first and second fingers, and pointed downwards, as if to something below.

‘It was just like that,’ said Dyson, as he saw Phillipps’s face grow still whiter. ‘The thumb pointed down as if to the body; it seemed almost a live hand in ghastly gesture. And just beneath there was a small mark with the powder of the chalk lying on it — as if someone had commenced a stroke and had broken the chalk in his hand. I saw the bit of chalk lying on the ground. But what do you make of it?’

‘It’s a horrible old sign,’ said Phillipps— ‘one of the most horrible signs connected with the theory of the evil eye. It is used still in Italy, but there can be no doubt that it has been known for ages. It is one of the survivals; you must look for the origin of it in the black swamp whence man first came.’

Dyson took up his hat to go.

‘I think, jesting apart,’ said he, ‘that I kept my promise, and that we were and are hot on the scent, as I said. It seems as if I had really shown you primitive man, or his handiwork at all events.’

Incident of the Letter

About a month after the extraordinary and mysterious murder of Sir Thomas Vivian, the well-known and universally respected specialist in heart disease, Mr. Dyson called again on his friend Mr. Phillipps, whom he found, not as usual, sunk deep in painful study, but reclining in his easy-chair in an attitude of relaxation. He welcomed Dyson with cordiality.

‘I am very glad you have come,’ he began; ‘I was thinking of looking you up. There is no longer the shadow of a doubt about the matter.’

‘You mean the case of Sir Thomas Vivian?’

‘Oh, no, not at all. I was referring to the problem of the fish-hooks. Between ourselves, I was a little too confident when you were here last, but since then other facts have turned up; and only yesterday I had a letter from a distinguished F.R.S. which quite settles the affair. I have been thinking what I should tackle next; and I am inclined to believe that there is a good deal to be done in the way of so-called undecipherable inscriptions.’

‘Your line of study pleases me,’ said Dyson, ‘I think it may prove useful. But in the meantime, there was surely something extremely mysterious about the case of Sir Thomas Vivian.’

‘Hardly, I think. I allowed myself to be frightened that night; but there can be no doubt that the facts are patient of a comparatively commonplace explanation.’

‘Really! What is your theory then?’

‘Well, I imagine that Vivian must have been mixed up at some period of his life in an adventure of a not very creditable description, and that he was murdered out of revenge by some Italian whom he had wronged.’

‘Why Italian?’

‘Because of the hand, the sign of the *mano in fica*. That gesture is now only used by Italians. So you see that what appeared the most obscure feature in the case turns out to be illuminant.’

‘Yes, quite so. And the flint knife?’

‘That is very simple. The man found the thing in Italy, or possibly stole it from some museum. Follow the line of least resistance, my dear fellow, and you will see there is no need to bring up primitive man from his secular grave beneath the hills.’

‘There is some justice in what you say,’ said Dyson. ‘As I understand you, then, you think that your Italian, having murdered, Vivian, kindly chalked up that hand as a guide to Scotland Yard?’

‘Why not? Remember a murderer is always a madman. He may plot and contrive nine-tenths of his scheme with the acuteness and the grasp of a chess-player or a pure mathematician; but somewhere or other his wits leave him and he behaves like a fool. Then you must take into account the insane pride or vanity of the criminal; he likes to leave his mark, as it were, upon his handiwork.’

‘Yes, it is all very ingenious; but have you read the reports of the inquest?’

‘No, not a word. I simply gave my evidence, left the court, and dismissed the subject from my mind.’

‘Quite so. Then if you don’t object I should like to give you an account of the case. I have studied it rather deeply, and I confess it interests me extremely.’

‘Very good. But I warn you I have done with mystery. We are to deal with facts now.’

‘Yes, it is fact that I wish to put before you. And this is fact the first. When the police moved Sir Thomas Vivian’s body they found an open knife beneath him. It was an ugly-looking thing such as sailors carry, with a blade that the mere opening rendered rigid, and there the blade was all ready, bare and gleaming, but without a trace of blood on it, and the knife was found to be quite new; it had never been used. Now, at the first glance it looks as if your imaginary Italian were just the man to have such a tool. But consider a moment. Would he be likely to buy a new knife expressly to commit murder? And, secondly, if he had such a knife, why didn't he use it, instead of that very odd flint instrument?

'And I want to put this to you. You think the murderer chalked up the hand after the murder as a sort of "melodramatic Italian assassin his mark" touch. Passing over the question as to whether the real criminal ever does such a thing, I would point out that, on the medical evidence, Sir Thomas Vivian hadn't been dead for more than an hour; That would place the stroke at about a quarter to ten, and you know it was perfectly dark when we went out at 9.30. And that passage was singularly gloomy and ill-lighted, and the hand was drawn roughly, it is true, but correctly and without the bungling of strokes and the bad shots that are inevitable when one tries to draw in the dark or with shut eyes. Just try to draw such a simple figure as a square without looking at the paper, and then ask me to conceive that your Italian, with the rope waiting for his neck, could draw the hand on the wall so firmly and truly, in the black shadow of that alley. It is absurd. By consequence, then, the hand was drawn early in the evening, long before any murder was committed; or else — mark this, Phillipps — it was drawn by some one to whom darkness and gloom were familiar and habitual; by some one to whom the common dread of the rope was unknown!

'Again: a curious note was found in Sir Thomas Vivian's pocket. Envelope and paper were of a common make, and the stamp bore the West Central postmark. I will come to the nature of the contents later on, but it is the question of the handwriting that is so remarkable. The address on the outside was neatly written in a small clear hand, but the letter itself might have been written by a Persian who had learnt the English script. It was upright, and the letters were curiously contorted, with an affectation of dashes and backward curves which really reminded me of an Oriental manuscript, though it was all perfectly legible. But — and here comes the poser — on searching the dead man's waistcoat pockets a small memorandum book was found; it was almost filled with pencil jottings. These memoranda related chiefly to matters of a private as distinct from a professional nature; there were appointments to meet friends, notes of theatrical first-nights, the address of a good hotel in Tours, and the title of a new novel — nothing in any way intimate. And the whole of these jottings were written in a hand nearly identical with the writing of the note found in the dead man's coat pocket! There was just enough difference between them to enable the expert to swear that the two were not written by the same person. I will just read you so much of Lady Vivian's evidence as bears on this point of the writing; I have the printed slip with me. Here you see she says: "I was married to my late husband seven years ago; I never saw any letter addressed to him in a hand at all resembling that on the envelope produced, nor have I ever seen writing like that in the letter before me. I never saw my late husband using the memorandum book, but I am sure he did write everything in it; I am certain of that because we stayed last May at the Hotel du Faisan, Rue Royale, Tours, the address of which is given in the book; I remember his getting the novel 'A Sentinel' about six weeks ago. Sir Thomas Vivian never liked to miss the first-nights at the theatres. His usual hand was perfectly different from that used in the note-book."

'And now, last of all, we come back to the note itself. Here it is in facsimile. My possession of it is due to the kindness of Inspector Cleeve, who is pleased to be amused at my amateur inquisitiveness. Read it, Phillipps; you tell me you are interested in obscure inscriptions; here is something for you to decipher.'

Mr. Phillipps, absorbed in spite of himself in the strange circumstances Dyson had related, took the piece of paper, and scrutinized it closely. The handwriting was indeed bizarre in the extreme, and, as Dyson had noted, not unlike the Persian character in its general effect, but it was perfectly legible.

'Read it aloud,' said Dyson, and Phillipps obeyed.

'"Hand did not point in vain. The meaning of the stars is no longer obscure. Strangely enough, the black heaven vanished, or was stolen yesterday, but that does not matter in the least, as I have a celestial globe. Our old orbit remains unchanged; you have not forgotten the number of my sign, or will you appoint some other house? I have been on the other side of the moon, and can bring something to show you."'

'And what do you make of that?' said Dyson.

‘It seems to me mere gibberish,’ said Phillipps; ‘you suppose it has a meaning?’

‘Oh, surely; it was posted three days before the murder; it was found in the murdered man’s pocket; it is written in a fantastic hand which the murdered man himself used for his private memoranda. There must be purpose under all this, and to my mind there is something ugly enough hidden under the circumstances of this case of Sir Thomas Vivian.’

‘But what theory have you formed?’

‘Oh, as to theories, I am still in a very early stage; it is too soon to state conclusions. But I think I have demolished your Italian. I tell you, Phillipps, again the whole thing has an ugly look to my eyes. I cannot do as you do, and fortify myself with cast-iron propositions to the effect that this or that doesn’t happen, and never has happened. You note that the first word in the letter is “hand”. That seems to me, taken with what we know about the hand on the wall, significant enough, and what you yourself told me of the history and meaning of the symbol, its connection with a world-old belief and faiths of dim far-off years, all this speaks of mischief, for me at all events. No; I stand pretty well to what I said to you half in joke that night before we went out. There are sacraments of evil as well as of good about us, and we live and move to my belief in an unknown world, a place where there are caves and shadows and dwellers in twilight. It is possible that man may sometimes return on the track of evolution, and it is my belief that an awful lore is not yet dead.’

‘I cannot follow you in all this,’ said Phillipps; ‘it seems to interest you strangely. What do you propose to do?’

‘My dear, Phillipps,’ replied Dyson, speaking in a lighter tone, ‘I am afraid I shall have to go down a little in the world. I have a prospect of visits to the pawnbrokers before me, and the publicans must not be neglected. I must cultivate a taste for four ale; shag tobacco I already love and esteem with all my heart.’

Search for the Vanished Heaven

For many days after the discussion with Phillipps. Mr. Dyson was resolute in the line of research he had marked out for himself. A fervent curiosity and an innate liking for the obscure were great incentives, but especially in this case of Sir Thomas Vivian's death (for Dyson began to boggle a little at the word 'murder') there seemed to him an element that was more than curious. The sign of the red hand upon the wall, the tool of flint that had given death, the almost identity between the handwriting of the note and the fantastic script reserved religiously, as it appeared, by the doctor for trifling jottings, all these diverse and variegated threads joined to weave in his mind a strange and shadowy picture, with ghastly shapes dominant and deadly, and yet ill-defined, like the giant figures wavering in an ancient tapestry. He thought he had a clue to the meaning of the note, and in his resolute search for the 'black heaven', which had vanished, he beat furiously about the alleys and obscure streets of central London, making himself a familiar figure to the pawnbroker, and a frequent guest at the more squalid pot-houses.

For a long time he was unsuccessful, and he trembled at the thought that the 'black heaven' might be hid in the coy retirements of Peckham, or lurk perchance in distant Willesden, but finally, improbability, in which he put his trust, came to the rescue. It was a dark and rainy night, with something in the unquiet and stirring gusts that savoured of approaching winter, and Dyson, beating up a narrow street not far from the Gray's Inn Road, took shelter in an extremely dirty 'public', and called for beer, forgetting for the moment his preoccupations, and only thinking of the sweep of the wind about the tiles and the hissing of the rain through the black and troubled air. At the bar there gathered the usual company: the frowsy women and the men in shiny black, those who appeared to mumble secretly together, others who wrangled in interminable argument, and a few shy drinkers who stood apart, each relishing his dose, and the rank and biting flavour of cheap spirit. Dyson was wondering at the enjoyment of it all, when suddenly there came a sharper accent. The folding-doors swayed open, and a middle-aged woman staggered towards the bar, and clutched the pewter rim as if she stepped a deck in a roaring gale. Dyson glanced at her attentively as a pleasing specimen of her class; she was decently dressed in black, and carried a black bag of somewhat rusty leather, and her intoxication was apparent and far advanced. As she swayed at the bar, it was evidently all she could do to stand upright, and the barman, who had iooked at her with disfavour, shook his head in reply to her thick-voiced demand for a drink. The woman glared at him, transformed in a moment to a fury, with bloodshot eyes, and poured forth a torrent of execration, a stream of blasphemies and early English phraseology.

‘Get out of this,’ said the man; ‘shut up and be off, or I’ll send for the police.’

‘Police, you — — ‘ bawled the woman ‘I’ll —— well give you something to fetch the police for!’ and with a rapid dive into her bag she pulled out some object which she hurled furiously at the barman’s head.

The man ducked down, and the missile flew over his head and smashed a bottle to fragments, while the woman with a peal of horrible laughter rushed to the door, and they could hear her steps pattering fast over the wet stones.

The barman looked ruefully about him.

‘Not much good going after her,’ he said, ‘and I’m afraid what she’s left won’t pay for that bottle of whisky.’ He fumbled amongst the fragments of broken glass, and drew out something dark, a kind of square stone it seemed, which he held up.

‘Valuable cur’osity,’ he said, ‘any gent like to bid?’

The habitues had scarcely turned from their pots and glasses during these exciting incidents; they gazed a moment, fishily, when the bottle smashed, and that was all, and the mumble of the confidential was resumed and the jangle of the quarrelsome, and the shy and solitary sucked in their lips and relished again the rank flavour of the spirit.

Dyson looked quickly at what the barman held before him.

‘Would you mind letting me see it?’ he said; ‘it’s a queer-looking old thing, isn’t it?’

It was a small black tablet, apparently of stone, about four inches long by two and a half broad, and as Dyson took it he felt rather than saw that he touched the secular with his flesh. There was some kind of carving on the surface, and, most conspicuous, a sign that made Dyson’s heart leap.

‘I don’t mind taking it,’ he said quietly. ‘Would two shillings be enough?’

‘Say half a dollar,’ said the man, and the bargain was concluded. Dyson drained his pot of beer, finding it delicious, and lit his pipe, and went out deliberately soon after. When he reached his apartment he locked the door, and placed the tablet on his desk, and then fixed himself in his chair, as resolute as an army in its trenches before a beleaguered city. The tablet was full under the light of the shaded candle, and scrutinizing it closely, Dyson saw first the sign of the hand with the thumb protruding between the fingers; it was cut finely and firmly on the dully black surface of the stone, and the thumb pointed downward to what was beneath.

'It is mere ornament,' said Dyson to himself, 'perhaps symbolical ornament, but surely not an inscription, or the signs of any words ever spoken.'

The hand pointed at a series of fantastic figures, spirals and whorls of the finest, most delicate lines, spaced at intervals over the remaining surface of the tablet. The marks were as intricate and seemed almost as much without design as the pattern of a thumb impressed upon a pane of glass.

'Is it some natural marking?' thought Dyson; 'there have been queer designs, likenesses of beasts and flowers, in stones with which man's hand had nothing to do'; and he bent over the stone with a magnifier, only to be convinced that no hazard of nature could have delineated these varied labyrinths of line. The whorls were of different sizes; some were less than the twelfth of an inch in diameter, and the largest was a little smaller than a sixpence, and under the glass the regularity and accuracy of the cutting were evident, and in the smaller spirals the lines were graduated at intervals of a hundredth of an inch. The whole thing had a marvellous and fantastic look, and gazing at the mystic whorls beneath the hand, Dyson became subdued with an impression of vast and far-off ages, and of a living being that had touched the stone with enigmas before the hills were formed, when the hard rocks still boiled with fervent heat.

'The 'black heaven' is found again,' he said, 'but the meaning of the stars is likely to be obscure for everlasting so far as I am concerned.'

London stilled without, and a chill breath came into the room as Dyson sat gazing at the tablet shining duskily under the candle-light; and at last as he closed the desk over the ancient stone, all his wonder at the case of Sir Thomas Vivian increased tenfold, and he thought of the well-dressed prosperous gentleman lying dead mystically beneath the sign of the hand, and the insupportable conviction seized him that between the death of this fashionable West End doctor and the weird spirals of the tablet there were most secret and unimaginable links.

For days he sat before his desk gazing at the tablet, unable to resist its lodestone fascination, and yet quite helpless, without even the hope of solving the symbols so secretly inscribed. At last, desperate he called in Mr. Phillipps in consultation, and told in brief the story of the finding the stone.

‘Dear me!’ said Phillipps, ‘this is extremely curious; you have had a find indeed. Why, it looks to me even more ancient than the Hittite seal. I confess the character, if it is a character, is entirely strange to me. These whorls are really very quaint.’ ‘Yes, but I want to know what they mean. You must remember this tablet is the ‘black heaven’ of the letter found in Sir Thomas Vivian’s pocket; it bears directly on his death.’

‘Oh, no, that is nonsense! This is, no doubt, an extremely ancient tablet, which has been stolen from some collection. Yes, the hand makes an odd coincidence, but only a coincidence after all.’

‘My dear Phillipps, you are a living example of the truth of the axiom that extreme scepticism is mere credulity. But can you decipher the inscription?’

‘I undertake to decipher anything,’ said Phillipps. ‘I do not believe in the insoluble. These characters are curious, but I cannot fancy them to be inscrutable.’

‘Then take the thing away with you and make what you can of it. It has begun to haunt me; I feel as if I had gazed too long into the eyes of the Sphinx.’

Phillipps departed with the tablet in an inner pocket. He had not much doubt of success, for he had evolved thirty-seven rules for the solution of inscriptions. Yet when a week had passed and he called to see Dyson there was no vestige of triumph on his features. He found his friend in a state of extreme irritation, pacing up and down in the room like a man in a passion. He turned with a start as the door opened.

‘Well,’ said Dyson, ‘you have got it? What is it all about?’

‘My dear fellow, I am sorry to say I have completely failed. I have tried every known device in vain. I have even been so officious as to submit it to a friend at the Museum, but he, though a man of prime authority on the subject, tells me he is quite at fault. It must be some wreckage of a vanished race, almost, I think — a fragment of another world than ours. I am not a superstitious man, Dyson, and you know that I have no truck with even the noble delusions, but I confess I yearn to be rid of this small square of blackish stone. Frankly, it has given me an ill week; it seems to me troglodytic and abhorred.’

Phillipps drew out the tablet and laid it on the desk before Dyson.

‘By the way,’ he went on, ‘I was right at all events in one particular; it has formed part of some collection. There is a piece of grimy paper on the back that must have been a label.’

‘Yes, I noticed that,’ said Dyson, who had fallen into deepest disappointment; ‘no doubt the paper is a label. But as I don’t much care where the tablet originally came from, and only wish to know what the inscription means, I paid no attention to the paper. The thing is a hopeless riddle, I suppose, and yet it must surely be of the greatest importance.’

Phillipps left soon after, and Dyson, still despondent, took the tablet in his hand and carelessly turned it over. The label had so grimed that it seemed merely a dull stain, but as Dyson looked at it idly, and yet attentively, he could see pencil-marks, and he bent over it eagerly, with his glass to his eye. To his annoyance, he found that part of the paper had been torn away, and he could only with difficulty make out odd words and pieces of words. First he read something that looked like ‘inroad’, and then beneath, ‘stony-hearted step — — ‘ and a tear cut off the rest. But in an instant a solution suggested itself, and he chuckled with huge delight.

‘Certainly,’ he said out loud, ‘this is not only the most charming but the most convenient quarter in all London; here I am, allowing for the accidents of side streets, perched on a tower of observation.’

He glanced triumphant out of the window across the street to the gate of the British Museum. Sheltered by the boundary wall of that agreeable institution, a ‘screever’, or artist in chalks, displayed his brilliant impressions on the pavement, soliciting the approval and the coppers of the gay and serious.

‘This,’ said Dyson, ‘is more than delightful! An artist is provided to my hand.’

The Artist of the Pavement

Mr. Phillipps, in spite of all disavowals — in spite of the wall of sense of whose enclosure and limit he was wont to make his boast — yet felt in his heart profoundly curious as to the case of Sir Thomas Vivian. Though he kept a brave face for his friend, his reason could not decently resist the conclusion that Dyson had enunciated, namely, that the whole affair had a look both ugly and mysterious. There was the weapon of a vanished race that had pierced the great arteries; the red hand, the symbol of a hideous faith, that pointed to the slain man; and then the tablet which Dyson declared he had expected to find, and had certainly found, bearing the ancient impress of the hand of malediction, and a legend written beneath in a character compared with which the most antique cuneiform was a thing of yesterday. Besides all this, there were other points that tortured and perplexed. How to account for the bare knife found unstained beneath the body? And the hint that the red hand upon the wall must have been drawn by some one whose life was passed in darkness thrilled him with a suggestion of dim and infinite horror. Hence he was in truth not a little curious as to what was to come, and some ten days after he had returned the tablet he again visited the ‘mystery-man’, as he privately named his friend.

Arrived in the grave and airy chambers in Great Russell Street, he found the moral atmosphere of the place had been transformed. All Dyson’s irritation had disappeared, his brow was smoothed with complacency, and he sat at a table by the window gazing out into the street with an expression of grim enjoyment, a pile of books and papers lying unheeded before him.

‘My dear Phillipps, I am delighted to see you! Pray excuse my moving. Draw your chair up here to the table, and try this admirable shag tobacco.’

‘Thank you,’ said Phillipps, ‘judging by the flavour of the smoke, I should think it is a little strong. But what on earth is all this? What are you looking at?’

‘I am on my watch-tower. I assure you that the time seems short while I contemplate this agreeable street and the classic grace of the Museum portico.’

‘Your capacity for nonsense is amazing,’ replied Phillipps, ‘but have you succeeded in deciphering the tablet? It interests me.’

‘I have not paid much attention to the tablet recently,’ said Dyson. ‘I believe the spiral character may wait.’

‘Really! And how about the Vivian murder?’

‘Ah, you do take an interest in that case? Well, after all, we cannot deny that it was a queer business. But is not “murder” rather a coarse word? It smacks a little, surely, of the police poster. Perhaps I am a trifle decadent, but I cannot help believing in the splendid word; “sacrifice”, for example, is surely far finer than “murder”.’

‘I am all in the dark,’ said Phillipps. ‘I cannot even imagine by what track you are moving in this labyrinth.’

‘I think that before very long the whole matter will be a good deal clearer for us both, but I doubt whether you will like hearing the story.’

Dyson lit his pipe afresh and leant back, not relaxing, however, in his scrutiny of the street. After a somewhat lengthy pause, he startled Phillipps by a loud breath of relief as he rose from the chair by the window and began to pace the floor.

‘It’s over for the day,’ he said, ‘and, after all, one gets a little tired.’

Phillipps looked with inquiry into the street. The evening was darkening, and the pile of the Museum was beginning to loom indistinct before the lighting of the lamps, but the pavements were thronged and busy. The artist in chalks across the way was gathering together his materials, and blurring all the brilliance of his designs, and a little lower down there was the clang of shutters being placed in position. Phillipps could see nothing to justify Mr. Dyson’s sudden abandonment of his attitude of surveillance, and grew a little irritated by all these thorny enigmas.

‘Do you know, Phillipps,’ said Dyson, as he strolled at ease up and down the room, ‘I will tell you how I work. I go upon the theory of improbability. The theory is unknown to you? I will explain. Suppose I stand on the steps of St. Paul’s and look out for a blind man lame of the left leg to pass me, it is evidently highly improbable that I shall see such a person by waiting for an hour. If I wait two hours the improbability is diminished, but is still enormous, and a watch of a whole day would give little expectation of success. But suppose I take up the same position day after day, and week after week, don’t you perceive that the improbability is lessening constantly

— growing smaller day after day. Don’t you see that two lines which are not parallel are gradually approaching one another, drawing nearer and nearer to a point of meeting, till at last they do meet, and improbability has vanished altogether. That is how I found the black tablet: I acted on the theory of improbability. It is the only scientific principle I know of which can enable one to pick out an unknown man from amongst five million.’

‘And you expect to find the interpreter of the black tablet by this method?’

‘Certainly.’

‘And the murderer of Sir Thomas Vivian also?’

‘Yes, I expect to lay my hands on the person concerned in the death of Sir Thomas Vivian in exactly the same way.’

The rest of the evening after Phillipps had left was devoted by Dyson to sauntering in the streets, and afterwards, when the night grew late, to his literary labours, or the chase of the phrase, as he called it. The next morning the station by the window was again resumed. His meals were brought to him at the table, and he ate with his eyes on the street. With briefest intervals, snatched reluctantly from time to time, he persisted in his survey throughout the day, and only at dusk, when the shutters were put up and the ‘screever’ ruthlessly deleted all his labour of the day, just before the gas-lamps began to star the shadows, did he feel at liberty to quit his post. Day after day this ceaseless glance upon the street continued, till the landlady grew puzzled and aghast at such a profitless pertinacity.

But at last, one evening, when the play of lights and shadows was scarce beginning, and the clear cloudless air left all distinct and shining, there came the moment. A man of middle age, bearded and bowed, with a touch of grey about the ears, was strolling slowly along the northern pavement of Great Russell Street from the eastern end. He looked up at the Museum as he went by, and then glanced involuntarily at the art of the ‘screever’, and at the artist himself, who sat beside his pictures, hat in hand. The man with the beard stood still an instant, swaying slightly to and fro as if in thought, and Dyson saw his fists shut tight, and his back quivering, and the one side of his face in view twitched and grew contorted with the indescribable torment of approaching epilepsy. Dyson drew a soft hat from his pocket, and dashed the door open, taking the stair with a run.

When he reached the street, the person he had seen so agitated had turned about, and, regardless of observation, was racing wildly towards Bloomsbury Square, with his back to his former course. Mr. Dyson went up to the artist of the pavement and gave him some money, observing quietly, ‘You needn’t trouble to draw that thing again.’

Then he, too, turned about, and strolled idly down the street in the opposite direction to that taken by the fugitive. So the distance between Dyson and the man with the bowed head grew steadily greater.

Story of the Treasure-house

‘There are many reasons why I chose your rooms for the meeting in preference to my own. Chiefly, perhaps because I thought the man would be more at his ease on neutral ground.’

‘I confess, Dyson,’ said Phillipps, ‘that I feel both impatient and uneasy. You know my standpoint: hard matter of fact, materialism if you like, in its crudest form. But there is something about all this affair of Vivian that makes me a little restless. And how did you induce the man to come?’

‘He has an exaggerated opinion of my powers. You remember what I said about the doctrine of improbability? When it does work out, it gives results which seem very amazing to a person who is not in the secret. That is eight striking, isn’t it? And there goes the bell.’

They heard footsteps on the stair, and presently the door opened, and a middle-aged man, with a bowed head, bearded, and with a good deal of grizzling hair about his ears, came into the room. Phillipps glanced at his features, and recognised the lineaments of terror.

‘Come in, Mr. Selby,’ said Dyson. ‘This is Mr. Phillipps, my intimate friend and our host for this evening. Will you take anything? Then perhaps we had better hear your story — a very singular one, I am sure.’

The man spoke in a voice hollow and a little quavering, and a fixed stare that never left his eyes seemed directed to something awful that was to remain before him by day and night for the rest of his life.

‘You will, I am sure, excuse preliminaries,’ he began; ‘what I have to tell is best told quickly. I will say, then, that I was born in a remote part of the west of England, where the very outlines of the woods and hills, and the winding of the streams in the valleys, are apt to suggest the mystical to any one strongly gifted with imagination. When I was quite a boy there were certain huge and rounded hills, certain depths of hanging wood, and secret valleys bastioned round on every side that filled me with fancies beyond the bourne of rational expression, and as I grew older and began to dip into my father's books, I went by instinct, like the bee, to all that would nourish fantasy. Thus, from a course of obsolete and occult reading, and from listening to certain wild legends in which the older people still secretly believed, I grew firmly convinced of the existence of treasure, the hoard of a race extinct for ages, still hidden beneath the hills, and my every thought was directed to the discovery of the golden heaps that lay, as I fancied within a few feet of the green turf. To one spot, in especial, I was drawn as if by enchantment; it was a tumulus, the domed memorial of some forgotten people, crowning the crest of a vast mountain range; and I have often lingered there on summer evenings, sitting on the great block of limestone at the summit, and looking out far over the yellow sea towards the Devonshire coast. One day as I dug heedlessly with the ferrule of my stick at the mosses and lichens which grew rank over the stone, my eye was caught by what seemed a pattern beneath the growth of green; there was a curving line, and marks that did not look altogether the work of nature. At first I thought I had bared some rarer fossil, and I took out my knife and scraped away at the moss till a square foot was uncovered. Then I saw two signs which startled me; first, a closed hand, pointing downwards, the thumb protruding between the fingers, and beneath the hand a whorl or spiral, traced with exquisite accuracy in the hard surface of the rock. Here I persuaded myself, was an index to the great secret, but I chilled at the recollection of the fact that some antiquarians had tunnelled the tumulus through and through, and had been a good deal surprised at not finding so much as an arrowhead within. Clearly, then, the signs on the limestone had no local significance; and I made up my mind that I must search abroad. By sheer accident I was in a measure successful in my quest. Strolling by a cottage, I saw some children playing by the roadside; one was holding up some object in his hand, and the rest were going through one of the many forms of elaborate pretence which make up a great part of the mystery of a child's life. Something in the object held by the little boy attracted me, and I asked him to let me see it. The plaything of these children consisted of an oblong tablet of black stone; and on it was inscribed the hand pointing downwards, just as I had seen it on the rock, while beneath, spaced over the tablet, were a number of whorls and spirals, cut, as it seemed to me, with the utmost care and nicety. I bought the toy for a couple of shillings; the woman of the house told me it had been lying about for years; she thought her husband had found it one day in the brook which ran in front of the cottage: it was a very hot summer, and the stream was almost dry, and he saw it amongst the stones. That day I tracked the brook to a well of water gushing up cold and clear at the head of a lonely glen in the mountain. That was twenty years ago, and I only succeeded in deciphering the mysterious inscription last August. I must not trouble you with irrelevant details of my life; it is enough for me to say that I was forced, like many another man, to leave my old home and come to London. Of money I had very little, and I was glad to find a cheap room in a squalid street off the Gray's Inn Road. The late Sir Thomas Vivian, then far poorer and more wretched than myself, had a garret in the same house, and before many months we became intimate friends, and I had confided to him the object of my life. I had at first great difficulty in persuading him that I was not giving my days and my nights to an inquiry altogether hopeless and chimerical; but when he was convinced he grew keener than myself, and glowed at the thought of the riches which were to be the prize of some ingenuity and patience. I liked the man intensely, and pitied his case; he had a strong desire to enter the medical profession, but he lacked the means to pay the smallest fees, and indeed he was, not once or twice, but often reduced to the very verge of starvation. I freely and solemnly promised, that under whatever chances, he should share in my heaped fortune when it came, and this promise to one who had always been poor, and yet thirsted for wealth and pleasure in a manner unknown to me, was the strongest incentive. He threw himself into the task with eager interest, and applied a very acute intellect and unwearied patience to the solution of the characters on the tablet. I, like other ingenious young men, was curious in the matter of handwriting, and I had invented or adapted a fantastic script which I used occasionally, and which took Vivian so strongly that he was at the pains to imitate it. It was arranged between us that if we were ever parted, and had occasion to write on the affair that was so close to our hearts, this queer hand of my invention was to be used, and we also contrived a semi-cypher for the same purpose. Meanwhile we exhausted ourselves in efforts to get at the heart of the mystery, and after a couple of years had gone by I could see that Vivian begall to sicken a little of the adventure, and one night he told me with some emotion that he feared both our lives were being passed away in idle and hopeless endeavour. Not many months afterwards he was so happy as to receive a considerable legacy from an aged and distant relative whose very existence had been almost forgotten by him; and with money at the bank, he became at once a stranger to me. He had passed his preliminary examination many years before, and forthwith decided to enter at St. Thomas's Hospital, and he told me that he must look out for a more convenient lodging. As we said good-bye, I reminded him of the promise I had given, and solemnly renewed it; but Vivian laughed with something between pity and contempt in his voice and expression as he thanked me. I need not dwell on the long struggle and misery of my existence, now doubly lonely; I never wearied or despaired of final success, and every day saw me at work, the tablet before me, and only at dusk would I go out and take my daily walk along Oxford Street, which attracted me, I think, by the noise and motion and glitter of lamps.

'This walk grew with me to a habit; every night, and in all weathers, I crossed the Gray's Inn Road and struck westward, sometimes choosing a northern track, by the Euston Road and Tottenham Court Road, sometimes I went by Holborn, and I sometimes by way of Great Russell Street. Every night I walked for an hour to and fro on the northern pavement of Oxford Street, and the tale of De Quincey and his name for the Street, 'Stony-hearted step mother', often recurred to my memory. Then I would return to my grimy den and spend hours more in endless analysis of the riddle before me.

'The answer came to me one night a few weeks; ago; it flashed into my brain in a moment, and I read the inscription, and saw that after all I had not wasted my days. 'The place of the treasure-house of them that dwell below,' were the first words I read, and then followed minute indications of the spot in my own country where the great works of gold were to be kept for ever. Such a track was to be followed, such a pitfall avoided; here the way narrowed almost to a fox's hole, and there it broadened, and so at last the chamber would be reached. I determined to lose no time in verifying my discovery — not that I doubted at that great moment, but I would not risk even the smallest chance of disappointing my old friend Vivian, now a rich and prosperous man. I took the train for the West, and one night, with chart in hand, traced out the passage of the hills, and went so far that I saw the gleam of gold before me. I would not go on; I resolved that Vivian must be with me; and I only brought away a strange knife of flint which lay on the path, as confirmation of what I had to tell. I returned to London, and was a good deal vexed to find the stone tablet had disappeared from my rooms. My landlady, an inveterate drunkard, denied all knowledge of the fact, but I have little doubt she had stolen the thing for the sake of the glass of whisky it might fetch. However, I knew what was written on the tablet by heart, and I had also made an exact facsimile of the characters, so the loss was not severe. Only one thing annoyed me: when I first came into possession of the stone, I had pasted a piece of paper on the back and had written down the date and place of finding, and later on I had scribbled a word or two, a trivial sentiment, the name of my street, and such-like idle pencillings on the paper; and these memories of days that had seemed so hopeless were dear to me: I had thought they would help to remind me in the future of the hours when I had hoped against despair. However, I wrote at once to Sir Thomas Vivian, using the handwriting I have mentioned and also the quasi-cypher. I told him of my success, and after mentioning the loss of the tablet and the fact that I had a copy of the inscription, I reminded him once more of my promise, and asked him either to write or call. He replied that he would see me in a certain obscure passage in Clerkenwell well known to us both in the old days, and at seven o’clock one evening I went to meet him. At the corner of this by way, as I was walking to and fro, I noticed the blurred pictures of some street artist, and I picked up a piece of chalk he had left behind him, not much thinking what I was doing. I paced up and down the passage, wondering a good deal, as you may imagine, as to what manner of man I was to meet after so many years of parting, and the thoughts of the buried time coming thick upon me, I walked mechanically without raising my eyes from the ground. I was startled out of my reverie by an angry voice and a rough inquiry why I didn’t keep to the right side of the pavement, and looking up I found I had confronted a prosperous and important gentleman, who eyed my poor appearance with a look of great dislike and contempt. I knew directly it was my old comrade, and when I recalled myself to him, he apologized with some show of regret, and began to thank me for my kindness, doubtfully, as if he hesitated to commit himself, and, as I could see, with the hint of a suspicion as to my sanity. I would have engaged him at first in reminiscences of our friendship, but I found Sir Thomas viewed those days with a good deal of distaste, and replying politely to my remarks, continually edged in “business matters”, as he called them. I changed my topics, and told him in greater detail what I have told you. Then I saw his manner suddenly change; as I pulled out the flint knife to prove my journey “to the other side of the moon”, as we called it in our jargon, there came over him a kind of choking eagerness, his features were somewhat discomposed, and I thought I detected a shuddering horror, a clenched resolution, and the effort to keep quiet succeed one another in a manner that puzzled me. I had occasion to be a little precise in my particulars, and it being still light enough, I remembered the red chalk in my pocket, and drew the hand on the wall. “Here, you see, is the hand”, I said, as I explained its true meaning, “note where the thumb issues from between the first and second fingers”, and I would have gone on, and had applied the chalk to the wall to continue my diagram, when he struck my hand down much to my surprise. “No, no,” he said, “I do not want all that. And this place is not retired enough; let us walk on, and do you explain everything to me minutely.” I complied readily enough, and he led me away choosing the most unfrequented by-ways, while I drove in the plan of the hidden house word by word. Once or twice as I raised my eyes I caught Vivian looking strangely about him; he seemed to give a quick glint up and down, and glance at the houses; and there was a furtive and anxious air about him that displeased me. “Let us walk on to the north,” he said at length, “we shall come to some pleasant lanes where we can discuss these matters, quietly; my night’s rest is at your service.” I declined, on the pretext that I could not dispense with my visit to Oxford Street, and went on till he understood every turning and winding and the minutest detail as well as myself. We had returned on our footsteps, and stood again in the dark passage, just where I had drawn the red hand on the wall, for I recognized the vague shape of the trees whose branches hung above us. “We have come back to our starting-point,” I said; “I almost think I could put my finger on the wall where I drew the hand. And I am sure you could put your finger on the mystic hand in the hills as well as I. Remember between stream and stone.”

‘I was bending down, peering at what I thought must be my drawing, when I heard a sharp hiss of breath, and started up, and saw Vivian with his arm uplifted and a bare blade in his hand, and death threatening in his eyes. In sheer self-defence I caught at the flint weapon in my pocket, and dashed at him in blind fear of my life, and the next instant he lay dead upon the stones.

‘I think that is all,’ Mr. Selby continued after a pause, ‘and it only remains for me to say to you, Mr. Dyson, that I cannot conceive what means enabled you to run me down.’

‘I followed many indications,’ said Dyson, ‘and I am bound to disclaim all credit for acuteness, as I have made several gross blunders. Your celestial cypher did not, I confess, give me much trouble; I saw at once that terms of astronomy were substituted for common words and phrases. You had lost something black, or something black had been stolen from you; a celestial globe is a copy of the heavens, so I knew you meant you had a copy of what you had lost. Obviously, then, I came to the conclusion that you had lost a black object with characters or symbols written or inscribed on it, since the object in question certainly contained valuable information and all information must be written or pictured. “Our old orbit remains unchanged”; evidently our old course or arrangement. “The number of my sign” must mean the number of my house, the allusion being to the signs of the zodiac. I need not say that “the other side of the moon” can stand for nothing but some place where no one else has been; and “some other house” is some other place of meeting, the “house” being the old term “house of the heavens.” Then my next step was to find the “black heaven” that had been stolen, and by a process of exhaustion I did so.’

‘You have got the tablet?’

‘Certainly. And on the back of it, on the slip of paper you have mentioned, I read ‘inroad,’ which puzzled me a good deal, till I thought of Grey’s Inn Road; you forgot the second *n*. “Stony-hearted step — — “ immediately suggested the phrase of De Quincey you have alluded to; and I made the wild but correct shot, that you were a man who lived in or near the Gray’s Inn Road, and had the habit of walking in Oxford Street, for you remember how the opium-eater dwells on his wearying promenades along that thoroughfare. On the theory of improbability, which I have explained to my friend here, I concluded that occasionally, at all events, you would choose the way by Guildford Street, Russell Square, and Great Russell Street, and I knew that if I watched long enough I should see you. But how was I to recognize my man? I noticed the screever opposite my rooms, and got him to draw every day a large hand, in the gesture so familiar to us all, upon the wall behind him. I thought that when the unknown person did pass he would certainly betray some emotion at the sudden vision of the sign, to him the most terrible of symbols. You know the rest. Ah, as to catching you an hour later, that was, I confess, a refinement. From the fact of your having occupied the same rooms for so many years, in a neighbourhood moreover where lodgers are migratory to excess, I drew the conclusion that you were a man of fixed habit, and I was sure that after you had got over your fright you would return for the walk down Oxford Street. You did, by way of New Oxford Street, and I was waiting at the corner.'

'Your conclusions are admirable,' said Mr. Selby. 'I may tell you that I had my stroll down Oxford Street the night Sir Thomas Vivian died. And I think that is all I have to say.'

'Scarcely,' said Dyson. 'How about the treasure?'

'I had rather we did not speak of that,' said Mr. Selby, with a whitening of the skin about the temples.

'Oh, nonsense, sir, we are not blackmailers. Besides, you know you are in our power.'

'Then, as you put it like that, Mr. Dyson, I must tell you I returned to the place. I went on a little farther than before.'

The man stopped short; his mouth began to twitch, his lips moved apart, and he drew in quick breaths, sobbing.

'Well, well,' said Dyson, 'I dare say you have done comfortably.'

'Comfortably,' Selby went on, constraining himself with an effort, 'yes, so comfortably that hell burns hot within me for ever. I only brought one thing away from that awful house within the hills; it was lying just beyond the spot where I found the flint knife.'

'Why did you not bring more?'

The whole bodily frame of the wretched man visibly shrank and wasted; his face grew yellow as tallow, and the sweat dropped from his brows. The spectacle was both revolting and terrible, and when the voice came it sounded like the hissing of a snake.

‘Because the keepers are still there, and I saw them, and because of this,’ and he pulled out a small piece of curious gold-work and held it up.

‘There,’ he said, ‘that is the Pain of the Goat.’

Phillipps and Dyson cried out together in horror at the revolting obscenity of the thing.

‘Put it away, man; hide it, for Heaven’s sake, hide it!’

‘I brought that with me; that is all,’ he said. ‘You do not wonder that I did not stay long in a place where those who live are a little higher than the beasts, and where what you have seen is surpassed a thousandfold?’

‘Take this,’ said Dyson, ‘I brought it with me in case it might be useful ‘; and he drew out the black tablet, and handed it to the shaking, horrible man.

‘And now,’ said Dyson, ‘will you go out?’

The two friends sat silent a little while, facing one another with restless eyes and lips that quivered.

‘I wish to say that I believe him,’ said Phillipps.

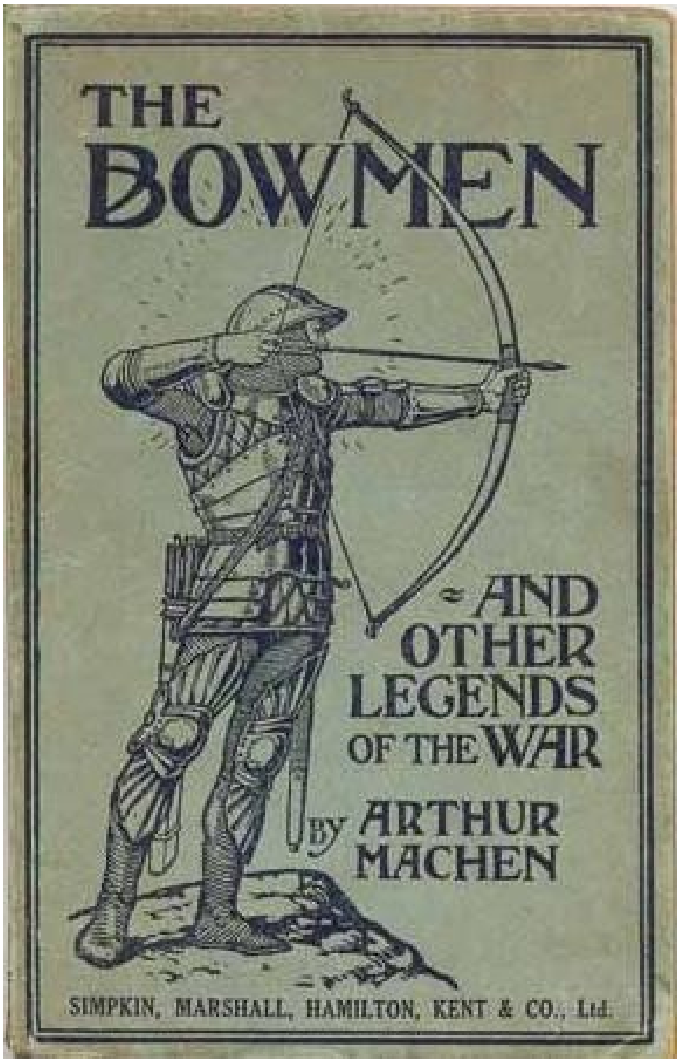
‘My dear Phillipps,’ said Dyson as he threw the windows wide open, ‘I do not know that, after all, my blunders in this queer case were so very absurd.’

THE END

The Angels of Mons

This collection was subtitled *The Bowmen and Other Legends of the War*, after its most notable story, ‘The Bowmen’. First published in *The Evening News* in September 1914, it tells of the appearance of spectral Bowmen from the Battle of Agincourt appearing at the disastrous Battle of Mons to aid a British soldier, who has called on St. George for help. The story was not advertised as fiction, however, and was mistaken for a factual account of a supernatural encounter – an error that led to its single-handedly creating the enduring legend of the ‘angels of Mons’. The legend has outlived Machen himself and taken on a life of its own, with many (perhaps understandably, given the terrible tragedy of the First World War) reluctant to abandon the idea that God had intervened on the side of the British forces.

The remaining stories make a similar use of supernatural intervention during wartime, ranging from a haunted German soldier to a moving evocation of Heaven as a comfortable British tavern.



THE BOWMEN
AND OTHER LEGENDS OF THE WAR
BY ARTHUR MACHEN
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT & CO., Ltd.

Cover of the first edition

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Allied positions at Gallipoli, the setting for the story ‘The Men of Troy’

Introduction

I HAVE BEEN asked to write an introduction to the story of “The Bowmen”, on its publication in book form together with three other tales of similar fashion. And I hesitate. This affair of “The Bowmen” has been such an odd one from first to last, so many queer complications have entered into it, there have been so many and so divers currents and cross-currents of rumour and speculation concerning it, that I honestly do not know where to begin. I propose, then, to solve the difficulty by apologising for beginning at all.

For, usually and fitly, the presence of an introduction is held to imply that there is something of consequence and importance to be introduced. If, for example, a man has made an anthology of great poetry, he may well write an introduction justifying his principle of selection, pointing out here and there, as the spirit moves him, high beauties and supreme excellencies, discoursing of the magnates and lords and princes of literature, whom he is merely serving as groom of the chamber. Introductions, that is, belong to the masterpieces and classics of the world, to the great and ancient and accepted things; and I am here introducing a short, small story of my own which appeared in *The Evening News* about ten months ago.

I appreciate the absurdity, nay, the enormity of the position in all its grossness. And my excuse for these pages must be this: that though the story itself is nothing, it has yet had such odd and unforeseen consequences and adventures that the tale of them may possess some interest. And then, again, there are certain psychological morals to be drawn from the whole matter of the tale and its sequel of rumours and discussions that are not, I think, devoid of consequence; and so to begin at the beginning.

This was in last August, to be more precise, on the last Sunday of last August. There were terrible things to be read on that hot Sunday morning between meat and mass. It was in *The Weekly Dispatch* that I saw the awful account of the retreat from Mons. I no longer recollect the details; but I have not forgotten the impression that was then on my mind, I seemed to see a furnace of torment and death and agony and terror seven times heated, and in the midst of the burning was the British Army. In the midst of the flame, consumed by it and yet aureoled in it, scattered like ashes and yet triumphant, martyred and for ever glorious. So I saw our men with a shining about them, so I took these thoughts with me to church, and, I am sorry to say, was making up a story in my head while the deacon was singing the Gospel.

This was not the tale of “The Bowmen”. It was the first sketch, as it were, of “The Soldiers’ Rest”. I only wish I had been able to write it as I conceived it. The tale as it stands is, I think, a far better piece of craft than “The Bowmen”, but the tale that came to me as the blue incense floated above the Gospel Book on the desk between the tapers: that indeed was a noble story — like all the stories that never get written. I conceived the dead men coming up through the flames and in the flames, and being welcomed in the Eternal Tavern with songs and flowing cups and everlasting mirth. But every man is the child of his age, however much he may hate it; and our popular religion has long determined that jollity is wicked. As far as I can make out modern Protestantism believes that Heaven is something like Evensong in an English cathedral, the service by Stainer and the Dean preaching. For those opposed to dogma of any kind — even the mildest — I suppose it is held that a Course of Ethical Lectures will be arranged.

Well, I have long maintained that on the whole the average church, considered as a house of preaching, is a much more poisonous place than the average tavern; still, as I say, one’s age masters one, and clouds and bewilders the intelligence, and the real story of “The Soldiers’ Rest”, with its “sonus epulantium in æterno convivio”, was ruined at the moment of its birth, and it was some time later that the actual story got written. And in the meantime the plot of “The Bowmen” occurred to me. Now it has been murmured and hinted and suggested and whispered in all sorts of quarters that before I wrote the tale I had heard something. The most decorative of these legends is also the most precise: “I know for a fact that the whole thing was given him in typescript by a lady-in-waiting.” This was not the case; and all vaguer reports to the effect that I had heard some rumours or hints of rumours are equally void of any trace of truth.

Again I apologise for entering so pompously into the minutiæ of my bit of a story, as if it were the lost poems of Sappho; but it appears that the subject interests the public, and I comply with my instructions. I take it, then, that the origins of "The Bowmen" were composite. First of all, all ages and nations have cherished the thought that spiritual hosts may come to the help of earthly arms, that gods and heroes and saints have descended from their high immortal places to fight for their worshippers and clients. Then Kipling's story of the ghostly Indian regiment got in my head and got mixed with the mediævalism that is always there; and so "The Bowmen" was written. I was heartily disappointed with it, I remember, and thought it — as I still think it — an indifferent piece of work. However, I have tried to write for these thirty-five long years, and if I have not become practised in letters, I am at least a past master in the Lodge of Disappointment. Such as it was, "The Bowmen" appeared in *The Evening News* of September 29th, 1914.

Now the journalist does not, as a rule, dwell much on the prospect of fame; and if he be an evening journalist, his anticipations of immortality are bounded by twelve o'clock at night at the latest; and it may well be that those insects which begin to live in the morning and are dead by sunset deem themselves immortal. Having written my story, having groaned and growled over it and printed it, I certainly never thought to hear another word of it. My colleague "The Londoner" praised it warmly to my face, as his kindly fashion is; entering, very properly, a technical caveat as to the language of the battle-cries of the bowmen. "Why should English archers use French terms?" he said. I replied that the only reason was this — that a "Monseigneur" here and there struck me as picturesque; and I reminded him that, as a matter of cold historical fact, most of the archers of Agincourt were mercenaries from Gwent, my native country, who would appeal to Mihangel and to saints not known to the Saxons — Teilo, Iltyd, Dewi, Cadwaladyr Vendigeid. And I thought that that was the first and last discussion of "The Bowmen". But in a few days from its publication the editor of *The Occult Review* wrote to me. He wanted to know whether the story had any foundation in fact. I told him that it had no foundation in fact of any kind or sort; I forget whether I added that it had no foundation in rumour but I should think not, since to the best of my belief there were no rumours of heavenly interposition in existence at that time. Certainly I had heard of none. Soon afterwards the editor of *Light* wrote asking a like question, and I made him a like reply. It seemed to me that I had stifled any "Bowmen" mythos in the hour of its birth.

A month or two later, I received several requests from editors of parish magazines to reprint the story. I — or, rather, my editor — readily gave permission; and then, after another month or two, the conductor of one of these magazines wrote to me, saying that the February issue containing the story had been sold out, while there was still a great demand for it. Would I allow them to reprint "The Bowmen" as a pamphlet, and would I write a short preface giving the exact authorities for the story? I replied that they might reprint in pamphlet form with all my heart, but that I could not give my authorities, since I had none, the tale being pure invention. The priest wrote again, suggesting — to my amazement — that I must be mistaken, that the main "facts" of "The Bowmen" must be true, that my share in the matter must surely have been confined to the elaboration and decoration of a veridical history. It seemed that my light fiction had been accepted by the congregation of this particular church as the solidest of facts; and it was then that it began to dawn on me that if I had failed in the art of letters, I had succeeded, unwittingly, in the art of deceit. This happened, I should think, some time in April, and the snowball of rumour that was then set rolling has been rolling ever since, growing bigger and bigger, till it is now swollen to a monstrous size.

It was at about this period that variants of my tale began to be told as authentic histories. At first, these tales betrayed their relation to their original. In several of them the vegetarian restaurant appeared, and St. George was the chief character. In one case an officer — name and address missing — said that there was a portrait of St. George in a certain London restaurant, and that a figure, just like the portrait, appeared to him on the battlefield, and was invoked by him, with the happiest results. Another variant — this, I think, never got into print — told how dead Prussians had been found on the battlefield with arrow wounds in their bodies. This notion amused me, as I had imagined a scene, when I was thinking out the story, in which a German general was to appear before the Kaiser to explain his failure to annihilate the English.

"All-Highest," the general was to say, "it is true, it is impossible to deny it. The men were killed by arrows; the shafts were found in their bodies by the burying parties."

I rejected the idea as over-precipitous even for a mere fantasy. I was therefore entertained when I found that what I had refused as too fantastical for fantasy was accepted in certain occult circles as hard fact.

Other versions of the story appeared in which a cloud interposed between the attacking Germans and the defending British. In some examples the cloud served to conceal our men from the advancing enemy; in others, it disclosed shining shapes which frightened the horses of the pursuing German cavalry. St. George, it will he noted, has disappeared — he persisted some time longer in certain Roman Catholic variants — and there are no more bowmen, no more arrows. But so far angels are not mentioned; yet they are ready to appear, and I think that I have detected the machine which brought them into the story.

In “The Bowmen” my imagined soldier saw “a long line of shapes, with a shining about them.” And Mr. A.P. Sinnett, writing in the May issue of *The Occult Review*, reporting what he had heard, states that “those who could see said they saw ‘a row of shining beings’ between the two armies.” Now I conjecture that the word “shining” is the link between my tale and the derivative from it. In the popular view shining and benevolent supernatural beings are angels, and so, I believe, the Bowmen of my story have become “the Angels of Mons.” In this shape they have been received with respect and credence everywhere, or almost everywhere.

And here, I conjecture, we have the key to the large popularity of the delusion — as I think it. We have long ceased in England to take much interest in saints, and in the recent revival of the cultus of St. George, the saint is little more than a patriotic figurehead. And the appeal to the saints to succour us is certainly not a common English practice; it is held Popish by most of our countrymen. But angels, with certain reservations, have retained their popularity, and so, when it was settled that the English army in its dire peril was delivered by angelic aid, the way was clear for general belief, and for the enthusiasms of the religion of the man in the street. And so soon as the legend got the title “The Angels of Mons” it became impossible to avoid it. It permeated the Press: it would not be neglected; it appeared in the most unlikely quarters — in *Truth* and *Town Topics*, *The New Church Weekly* (Swedenborgian) and *John Bull*. The editor of *The Church Times* has exercised a wise reserve: he awaits that evidence which so far is lacking; but in one issue of the paper I noted that the story furnished a text for a sermon, the subject of a letter, and the matter for an article. People send me cuttings from provincial papers containing hot controversy as to the exact nature of the appearances; the "Office Window" of *The Daily Chronicle* suggests scientific explanations of the hallucination; the *Pall Mall* in a note about St. James says he is of the brotherhood of the Bowmen of Mons — this reversion to the bowmen from the angels being possibly due to the strong statements that I have made on the matter. The pulpits both of the Church and of Non-conformity have been busy: Bishop Welldon, Dean Hensley Henson (a disbeliever), Bishop Taylor Smith (the Chaplain-General), and many other clergy have occupied themselves with the matter. Dr. Horton preached about the "angels" at Manchester; Sir Joseph Compton Rickett (President of the National Federation of Free Church Councils) stated that the soldiers at the front had seen visions and dreamed dreams, and had given testimony of powers and principalities fighting for them or against them. Letters come from all the ends of the earth to the Editor of *The Evening News* with theories, beliefs, explanations, suggestions. It is all somewhat wonderful; one can say that the whole affair is a psychological phenomenon of considerable interest, fairly comparable with the great Russian delusion of last August and September.

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Now it is possible that some persons, judging by the tone of these remarks of mine, may gather the impression that I am a profound disbeliever in the possibility of any intervention of the super-physical order in the affairs of the physical order. They will be mistaken if they make this inference; they will be mistaken if they suppose that I think miracles in Judæa credible but miracles in France or Flanders incredible. I hold no such absurdities. But I confess, very frankly, that I credit none of the "Angels of Mons" legends, partly because I see, or think I see, their derivation from my own idle fiction, but chiefly because I have, so far, not received one jot or tittle of evidence that should dispose me to belief. It is idle, indeed, and foolish enough for a man to say: "I am sure that story is a lie, because the supernatural element enters into it;" here, indeed, we have the maggot writhing in the midst of corrupted offal denying the existence of the sun. But if this fellow be a fool — as he is — equally foolish is he who says, "If the tale has anything of the supernatural it is true, and the less evidence the better;" and I am afraid this tends to be the attitude of many who call themselves occultists. I hope that I shall never get to that frame of mind. So I say, not that super-normal interventions are impossible, not that they have not happened during this war — I know nothing as to that point, one way or the other — but that there is not one atom of evidence (so far) to support the current stories of the angels of Mons. For, be it remarked, these stories are specific stories. They rest on the second, third, fourth, fifth hand stories told by "a soldier," by "an officer," by "a Catholic correspondent," by "a nurse," by any number of anonymous people. Indeed, names have been mentioned. A lady's name has been drawn, most unwarrantably as it appears to me, into the discussion, and I have no doubt that this lady has been subject to a good deal of pestering and annoyance. She has written to the Editor of *The Evening News* denying all knowledge of the supposed miracle. The Psychical Research Society's expert confesses that no real evidence has been proffered to her Society on the matter. And then, to my amazement, she accepts as fact the proposition that some men on the battlefield have been "hallucinated," and proceeds to give the theory of sensory hallucination. She forgets that, by her own showing, there is no reason to suppose that anybody has been hallucinated at all. Someone (unknown) has met a nurse (unnamed) who has talked to a soldier (anonymous) who has seen angels. But *that* is not evidence; and not even Sam Weller at his gayest would have dared to offer it as such in the Court of Common Pleas. So far, then, nothing remotely approaching proof has been offered as to any supernatural intervention during the Retreat from Mons. Proof may come; if so, it will be interesting and more than interesting.

But, taking the affair as it stands at present, how is it that a nation plunged in materialism of the grossest kind has accepted idle rumours and gossip of the supernatural as certain truth? The answer is contained in the question: it is precisely because our whole atmosphere is materialist that we are ready to credit anything — save the truth. Separate a man from good drink, he will swallow methylated spirit with joy. Man is created to be inebriated; to be "nobly wild, not mad." Suffer the Cocoa Prophets and their company to seduce him in body and spirit, and he will get himself stuff that will make him ignobly wild and mad indeed. It took hard, practical men of affairs, business men, advanced thinkers, Freethinkers, to believe in Madame Blavatsky and Mahatmas and the famous message from the Golden Shore: "Judge's plan is right; follow him and *stick*."

And the main responsibility for this dismal state of affairs undoubtedly lies on the shoulders of the majority of the clergy of the Church of England. Christianity, as Mr. W.L. Courtney has so admirably pointed out, is a great Mystery Religion; it is *the* Mystery Religion. Its priests are called to an awful and tremendous hierurgy; its pontiffs are to be the pathfinders, the bridge-makers between the world of sense and the world of spirit. And, in fact, they pass their time in preaching, not the eternal mysteries, but a twopenny morality, in changing the Wine of Angels and the Bread of Heaven into gingerbeer and mixed biscuits: a sorry transubstantiation, a sad alchemy, as it seems to me.

The Bowmen

IT WAS DURING the Retreat of the Eighty Thousand, and the authority of the Censorship is sufficient excuse for not being more explicit. But it was on the most awful day of that awful time, on the day when ruin and disaster came so near that their shadow fell over London far away; and, without any certain news, the hearts of men failed within them and grew faint; as if the agony of the army in the battlefield had entered into their souls.

On this dreadful day, then, when three hundred thousand men in arms with all their artillery swelled like a flood against the little English company, there was one point above all other points in our battle line that was for a time in awful danger, not merely of defeat, but of utter annihilation. With the permission of the Censorship and of the military expert, this corner may, perhaps, be described as a salient, and if this angle were crushed and broken, then the English force as a whole would be shattered, the Allied left would be turned, and Sedan would inevitably follow.

All the morning the German guns had thundered and shrieked against this corner, and against the thousand or so of men who held it. The men joked at the shells, and found funny names for them, and had bets about them, and greeted them with scraps of music-hall songs. But the shells came on and burst, and tore good Englishmen limb from limb, and tore brother from brother, and as the heat of the day increased so did the fury of that terrific cannonade. There was no help, it seemed. The English artillery was good, but there was not nearly enough of it; it was being steadily battered into scrap iron.

There comes a moment in a storm at sea when people say to one another, “It is at its worst; it can blow no harder,” and then there is a blast ten times more fierce than any before it. So it was in these British trenches.

There were no stouter hearts in the whole world than the hearts of these men; but even they were appalled as this seven-times-heated hell of the German cannonade fell upon them and overwhelmed them and destroyed them. And at this very moment they saw from their trenches that a tremendous host was moving against their lines. Five hundred of the thousand remained, and as far as they could see the German infantry was pressing on against them, column upon column, a grey world of men, ten thousand of them, as it appeared afterwards.

There was no hope at all. They shook hands, some of them. One man improvised a new version of the battlesong, “Good-bye, good-bye to Tipperary,” ending with “And we shan’t get there”. And they all went on firing steadily. The officers pointed out that such an opportunity for high-class, fancy shooting might never occur again; the Germans dropped line after line; the Tipperary humorist asked, “What price Sidney Street?” And the few machine guns did their best. But everybody knew it was of no use. The dead grey bodies lay in companies and battalions, as others came on and on and on, and they swarmed and stirred and advanced from beyond and beyond.

“World without end. Amen,” said one of the British soldiers with some irrelevance as he took aim and fired. And then he remembered — he says he cannot think why or wherefore — a queer vegetarian restaurant in London where he had once or twice eaten eccentric dishes of cutlets made of lentils and nuts that pretended to be steak. On all the plates in this restaurant there was printed a figure of St. George in blue, with the motto, *Adsit Anglis Sanctus Geogius* — May St. George be a present help to the English. This soldier happened to know Latin and other useless things, and now, as he fired at his man in the grey advancing mass — 300 yards away — he uttered the pious vegetarian motto. He went on firing to the end, and at last Bill on his right had to clout him cheerfully over the head to make him stop, pointing out as he did so that the King’s ammunition cost money and was not lightly to be wasted in drilling funny patterns into dead Germans.

For as the Latin scholar uttered his invocation he felt something between a shudder and an electric shock pass through his body. The roar of the battle died down in his ears to a gentle murmur; instead of it, he says, he heard a great voice and a shout louder than a thunder-peal crying, “Array, array, array!”

His heart grew hot as a burning coal, it grew cold as ice within him, as it seemed to him that a tumult of voices answered to his summons. He heard, or seemed to hear, thousands shouting: “St. George! St. George!”

“Ha! messire; ha! sweet Saint, grant us good deliverance!”

“St. George for merry England!”

“Harow! Harow! Monseigneur St. George, succour us.”

“Ha! St. George! Ha! St. George! a long bow and a strong bow.”

“Heaven’s Knight, aid us!”

And as the soldier heard these voices he saw before him, beyond the trench, a long line of shapes, with a shining about them. They were like men who drew the bow, and with another shout their cloud of arrows flew singing and tingling through the air towards the German hosts.

The other men in the trench were firing all the while. They had no hope; but they aimed just as if they had been shooting at Bisley. Suddenly one of them lifted up his voice in the plainest English, “Gawd help us!” he bellowed to the man next to him, “but we’re blooming marvels! Look at those grey… gentlemen, look at them! D’ye see them? They’re not going down in dozens, nor in ‘undreds; it’s thousands, it is. Look! look! there’s a regiment gone while I’m talking to ye.”

“Shut it!” the other soldier bellowed, taking aim, “what are ye gassing about!”

But he gulped with astonishment even as he spoke, for, indeed, the grey men were falling by the thousands. The English could hear the guttural scream of the German officers, the crackle of their revolvers as they shot the reluctant; and still line after line crashed to the earth.

All the while the Latin-bred soldier heard the cry: “Harow! Harow! Monseigneur, dear saint, quick to our aid! St. George help us!”

“High Chevalier, defend us!”

The singing arrows fled so swift and thick that they darkened the air; the heathen horde melted from before them.

“More machine guns!” Bill yelled to Tom.

“Don’t hear them,” Tom yelled back. “But, thank God, anyway; they’ve got it in the neck.”

In fact, there were ten thousand dead German soldiers left before that salient of the English army, and consequently there was no Sedan. In Germany, a country ruled by scientific principles, the Great General Staff decided that the contemptible English must have employed shells containing an unknown gas of a poisonous nature, as no wounds were discernible on the bodies of the dead German soldiers. But the man who knew what nuts tasted like when they called themselves steak knew also that St. George had brought his Agincourt Bowmen to help the English.

The Soldiers’ Rest

THE SOLDIER WITH the ugly wound in the head opened his eyes at last, and looked about him with an air of pleasant satisfaction.

He still felt drowsy and dazed with some fierce experience through which he had passed, but so far he could not recollect much about it. But — an agreeable glow began to steal about his heart — such a glow as comes to people who have been in a tight place and have come through it better than they had expected. In its mildest form this set of emotions may be observed in passengers who have crossed the Channel on a windy day without being sick. They triumph a little internally, and are suffused with vague, kindly feelings.

The wounded soldier was somewhat of this disposition as he opened his eyes, pulled himself together, and looked about him. He felt a sense of delicious ease and repose in bones that had been racked and weary, and deep in the heart that had so lately been tormented there was an assurance of comfort — of the battle won. The thundering, roaring waves were passed; he had entered into the haven of calm waters. After fatigues and terrors that as yet he could not recollect he seemed now to be resting in the easiest of all easy chairs in a dim, low room.

In the hearth there was a glint of fire and a blue, sweet-scented puff of wood smoke; a great black oak beam roughly hewn crossed the ceiling. Through the leaded panes of the windows he saw a rich glow of sunlight, green lawns, and against the deepest and most radiant of all blue skies the wonderful far-lifted towers of a vast, Gothic cathedral — mystic, rich with imagery.

“Good Lord!” he murmured to himself. “I didn’t know they had such places in France. It’s just like Wells. And it might be the other day when I was going past the Swan, just as it might be past that window, and asked the ostler what time it was, and he says, ‘What time? Why, summer-time’; and there outside it looks like summer that would last for ever. If this was an inn they ought to call it *The Soldiers' Rest*."

He dozed off again, and when he opened his eyes once more a kindly looking man in some sort of black robe was standing by him.

"It's all right now, isn't it?" he said, speaking in good English.

"Yes, thank you, sir, as right as can be. I hope to be back again soon."

"Well well; but how did you come here? Where did you get that?" He pointed to the wound on the soldier's forehead.

The soldier put his hand: up to his brow and looked dazed and puzzled.

"Well, sir," he said at last, "it was like this, to begin at the beginning. You know how we came over in August, and there we were in the thick of it, as you might say, in a day or two. An awful time it was, and I don't know how I got through it alive. My best friend was killed dead beside me as we lay in the trenches. By Cambrai, I think it was.

"Then things got a little quieter for a bit, and I was quartered in a village for the best part of a week. She was a very nice lady where I was, and she treated me proper with the best of everything. Her husband he was fighting; but she had the nicest little boy I ever knew, a little fellow of five, or six it might be, and we got on splendid. The amount of their lingo that kid taught me— 'We, we' and 'Bong swot' and 'Commong voo potty we' and all — and I taught him English. You should have heard that nipper say "Arf a mo', old un!' It was a treat.

"Then one day we got surprised. There was about a dozen of us in the village, and two or three hundred Germans came down on us early one morning. They got us; no help for 'it. Before we could shoot.

"Well there we were. They tied our hands behind our backs, and smacked our faces and kicked us a bit, and we were lined up opposite the house where I'd been staying.

"And then that poor little chap broke away from his mother, and he run out and saw one of the Boshes, as we call them, fetch me one over the jaw with his clenched fist. Oh dear! oh dear! he might have done it a dozen times if only that little child hadn't seen him.

“He had a poor bit of a toy I’d bought him at the village shop; a toy gun it was. And out he came running, as I say, Crying out something in French like ‘Bad man! bad man! don’t hurt my Anglish or I shoot you’; and he pointed that gun at the German soldier. The German, he took his bayonet, and he drove it right through the poor little chap’s throat.”

The soldier’s face worked and twitched and twisted itself into a sort of grin, and he sat grinding his teeth and staring at the man in the black robe. He was silent for a little. And then he found his voice, and the oaths rolled terrible, thundering from him, as he cursed that murderous wretch, and bade him go down and burn for ever in hell. And the tears were raining down his face, and they choked him at last.

“I beg your pardon, sir, I’m sure,” he said, “especially you being a minister of some kind, I suppose; but I can’t help it, he was such a dear little man.”

The man in black murmured something to himself: “*Pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors innocentium ejus*” — Dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of His innocents. Then he put a hand very gently on the soldier’s shoulder.

“Never mind,” said he; “I’ve seen some service in my time, myself. But what about that wound?”

“Oh, that; that’s nothing. But I’ll tell you how I got it. It was just like this. The Germans had us fair, as I tell you, and they shut us up in a barn in the village; just flung us on the ground and left us to starve seemingly. They barred up the big door of the barn, and put a sentry there, and thought we were all right.

“There were sort of slits like very narrow windows in one of the walls, and on the second day it was, I was looking out of these slits down the street, and I could see those German devils were up to mischief. They were planting their machine-guns everywhere handy where an ordinary man coming up the street would never see them, but I see them, and I see the infantry lining up behind the garden walls. Then I had a sort of a notion of what was coming; and presently, sure enough, I could hear some of our chaps singing ‘Hullo, hullo, hullo!’ in the distance; and I says to myself, ‘Not this time.’

“So I looked about me, and I found a hole under the wall; a kind of a drain I should think it was, and I found I could just squeeze through. And I got out and crept, round, and away I goes running down the street, yelling for all I was worth, just as our chaps were getting round the corner at the bottom. ‘Bang, bang!’ went the guns, behind me and in front of me, and on each side of me, and then — bash! something hit me on the head and over I went; and I don’t remember anything more till I woke up here just now.”

The soldier lay back in his chair and closed his eyes for a moment. When he opened them he saw that there were other people in the room besides the minister in the black robes. One was a man in a big black cloak. He had a grim old face and a great beaky nose. He shook the soldier by the hand.

“By God! sir,” he said, “you’re a credit to the British Army; you’re a damned fine soldier and a good man, and, by God! I’m proud to shake hands with you.”

And then someone came out of the shadow, someone in queer clothes such as the soldier had seen worn by the heralds when he had been on duty at the opening of Parliament by the King.

“Now, by *Corpus Domini*,” this man said, “of all knights ye be noblest and gentlest, and ye be of fairest report, and now ye be a brother of the noblest brotherhood that ever was since this world’s beginning, since ye have yielded dear life for your friends’ sake.”

The soldier did not understand what the man was saying to him. There were others, too, in strange dresses, who came and spoke to him. Some spoke in what sounded like French. He could not make it out; but he knew that they all spoke kindly and praised him.

“What does it all mean?” he said to the minister. “What are they talking about? They don’t think I’d let down my pals?”

“Drink this,” said the minister, and he handed the soldier a great silver cup, brimming with wine.

The soldier took a deep draught, and in that moment all his sorrows passed from him.

“What is it?” he asked?

“*Vin nouveau du Royaume*,” said the minister. “New Wine of the Kingdom, you call it.” And then he bent down and murmured in the soldier’s ear.

“What,” said the wounded man, “the place they used to tell us about in Sunday school? With such drink and such joy— “

His voice was hushed. For as he looked at the minister the fashion of his vesture was changed. The black robe seemed to melt away from him. He was all in armour, if armour be made of starlight, of the rose of dawn, and of sunset fires; and he lifted up a great sword of flame.

Full in the midst, his Cross of Red Triumphant Michael brandished, And trampled the Apostate’s pride.

The Monstrance

THEN IT FELL out in the sacring of the Mass that right as the priest heaved up the Host there came a beam redder than any rose and smote upon it, and then it was changed bodily into the shape and fashion of a Child having his arms stretched forth, as he had been nailed upon the Tree. — Old Romance.

So far things were going very well indeed. The night was thick and black and cloudy, and the German force had come three-quarters of their way or more without an alarm. There was no challenge from the English lines; and indeed the English were being kept busy by a high shell-fire on their front. This had been the German plan; and it was coming off admirably. Nobody thought that there was any danger on the left; and so the Prussians, writhing on their stomachs over the ploughed field, were drawing nearer and nearer to the wood. Once there they could establish themselves comfortably and securely during what remained of the night; and at dawn the English left would be hopelessly enfiladed — and there would be another of those movements which people who really understand military matters call "readjustments of our line."

The noise made by the men creeping and crawling over the fields was drowned by the cannonade, from the English side as well as the German. On the English centre and right things were indeed very brisk; the big guns were thundering and shrieking and roaring, the machine-guns were keeping up the very devil's racket; the flares and illuminating shells were as good as the Crystal Palace in the old days, as the soldiers said to one another. All this had been thought of and thought out on the other side. The German force was beautifully organised. The men who crept nearer and nearer to the wood carried quite a number of machine guns in bits on their backs; others of them had small bags full of sand; yet others big bags that were empty. When the wood was reached the sand from the small bags was to be emptied into the big bags; the machine-gun parts were to be put together, the guns mounted behind the sandbag redoubt, and then, as Major Von und

Zu pleasantly observed, “the English pigs shall to gehenna-fire quickly come.”

The major was so well pleased with the way things had gone that he permitted himself a very low and guttural chuckle; in another ten minutes success would be assured. He half turned his head round to whisper a caution about some detail of the sandbag business to the big sergeant-major, Karl Heinz, who was crawling just behind him. At that instant Karl Heinz leapt into the air with a scream that rent through the night and through all the roaring of the artillery. He cried in a terrible voice, “The Glory of the Lord!” and plunged and pitched forward, stone dead. They said that his face as he stood up there and cried aloud was as if it had been seen through a sheet of flame.

“They” were one or two out of the few who got back to the German lines. Most of the Prussians stayed in the ploughed field. Karl Heinz’s scream had frozen the blood of the English soldiers, but it had also ruined the major’s plans. He and his men, caught all unready, clumsy with the burdens that they carried, were shot to pieces; hardly a score of them returned. The rest of the force were attended to by an English burying party. According to custom the dead men were searched before they were buried, and some singular relies of the campaign were found upon them, but nothing so singular as Karl Heinz’s diary.

He had been keeping it for some time. It began with entries about bread and sausage and the ordinary incidents of the trenches; here and there Karl wrote about an old grandfather, and a big china pipe, and pinewoods and roast goose. Then the diarist seemed to get fidgety about his health. Thus:

April 17. — Annoyed for some days by murmuring sounds in my head. I trust I shall not become deaf, like my departed uncle Christopher.

April 20. — The noise in my head grows worse; it is a humming sound. It distracts me; twice I have failed to hear the captain and have been reprimanded.

April 22. — So bad is my head that I go to see the doctor. He speaks of tinnitus, and gives me an inhaling apparatus that shall reach, he says, the middle ear.

April 25. — The apparatus is of no use. The sound is now become like the booming of a great church bell. It reminds me of the bell at St. Lambart on that terrible day of last August.

April 26. — I could swear that it is the bell of St. Lambart that I hear all the time. They rang it as the procession came out of the church.

The man's writing, at first firm enough, begins to straggle unevenly over the page at this point. The entries show that he became convinced that he heard the bell of St. Lambart's Church ringing, though (as he knew better than most men) there had been no bell and no church at St. Lambart's since the summer of 1914. There was no village either — the whole place was a rubbish-heap.

Then the unfortunate Karl Heinz was beset with other troubles.

May 2. — I fear I am becoming ill. To-day Joseph Kleist, who is next to me in the trench, asked me why I jerked my head to the right so constantly. I told him to hold his tongue; but this shows that I am noticed. I keep fancying that there is something white just beyond the range of my sight on the right hand.

May 3. — This whiteness is now quite clear, and in front of me. All this day it has slowly passed before me. I asked Joseph Kleist if he saw a piece of newspaper just beyond the trench. He stared at me solemnly — he is a stupid fool — and said, "There is no paper."

May 4. — It looks like a white robe. There was a strong smell of incense to-day in the trench. No one seemed to notice it. There is decidedly a white robe, and I think I can see feet, passing very slowly before me at this moment while I write.

There is no space here for continuous extracts from Karl Heinz's diary. But to condense with severity, it would seem that he slowly gathered about himself a complete set of sensory hallucinations. First the auditory hallucination of the sound of a bell, which the doctor called tinnitus. Then a patch of white growing into a white robe, then the smell of incense. At last he lived in two worlds. He saw his trench, and the level before it, and the English lines; he talked with his comrades and obeyed orders, though with a certain difficulty; but he also heard the deep boom of St. Lambart's bell, and saw continually advancing towards him a white procession of little children, led by a boy who was swinging a censer. There is one extraordinary entry: “But in August those children carried no lilies; now they have lilies in their hands. Why should they have lilies?”

It is interesting to note the transition over the border line. After May 2 there is no reference in the diary to bodily illness, with two notable exceptions. Up to and including that date the sergeant knows that he is suffering from illusions; after that he accepts his hallucinations as actualities. The man who cannot see what he sees and hear what he hears is a fool. So he writes: “I ask who is singing ‘Ave Maria Stella.’ That blockhead Friedrich Schumacher raises his crest and answers insolently that no one sings, since singing is strictly forbidden for the present.”

A few days before the disastrous night expedition the last figure in the procession appeared to those sick eyes.

The old priest now comes in his golden robe, the two boys holding each side of it. He is looking just as he did when he died, save that when he walked in St. Lambart there was no shining round his head. But this is illusion and contrary to reason, since no one has a shining about his head. I must take some medicine.

Note here that Karl Heinz absolutely accepts the appearance of the martyred priest of St. Lambart as actual, while he thinks that the halo must be an illusion; and so he reverts again to his physical condition.

The priest held up both his hands, the diary states, “as if there were something between them. But there is a sort of cloud or dimness over this object, whatever it may be. My poor Aunt Kathie suffered much from her eyes in her old age.”

One can guess what the priest of St. Lambart carried in his hands when he and the little children went out into the hot sunlight to implore mercy, while the great resounding bell of St. Lambart boomed over the plain. Karl Heinz knew what happened then; they said that it was he who killed the old priest and helped to crucify the little child against the church door. The baby was only three years old. He died calling piteously for “mummy” and “daddy.”

And those who will may guess what Karl Heinz saw when the mist cleared from before the monstrance in the priest’s hands. Then he shrieked and died.

The Dazzling Light

THE NEW HEAD-COVERING is made of heavy steel, which has been specialty treated to increase its resisting power. The walls protecting the skull are particularly thick, and the weight of the helmet renders its use in open warfare out of the question. The rim is large, like that of the headpiece of Mambrino, and the soldier can at will either bring the helmet forward and protect his eyes or wear it so as to protect the base of the skull… Military experts admit that continuance of the present trench warfare may lead to those engaged in it, especially bombing parties and barbed wire cutters, being more heavily armoured than the knights, who fought at Bouvines and at Agincourt. — *The Times*, July 22, 1915

The war is already a fruitful mother of legends. Some people think that there are too many war legends, and a Croydon gentleman — or lady, I am not sure which — wrote to me quite recently telling me that a certain particular legend, which I will not specify, had become the "chief horror of the war." There may be something to be said for this point of view, but it strikes me as interesting that the old myth-making faculty has survived into these days, a relic of noble, far-off Homeric battles. And after all, what do we know? It does not do to be too sure that this, that, or the other hasn't happened and couldn't have happened.

What follows, at any rate, has no claim to be considered either as legend or as myth. It is merely one of the odd circumstances of these times, and I have no doubt it can easily be "explained away." In fact, the rationalistic explanation of the whole thing is patent and on the surface. There is only one little difficulty, and that, I fancy, is by no means insuperable. In any case this one knot or tangle may be put down as a queer coincidence and nothing more.

Here, then, is the curiosity or oddity in question. A young fellow, whom we will call for avoidance of all identification Delamere Smith — he is now Lieutenant Delamere Smith — was spending his holidays on the coast of west South Wales at the beginning of the war. He was something or other not very important in the City, and in his leisure hours he smattered lightly and agreeably a little literature, a little art, a little antiquarianism. He liked the Italian primitives, he knew the difference between first, second, and third pointed, he had looked through Boutell's "Engraved Brasses." He had been heard indeed to speak with enthusiasm of the brasses of Sir Robert de Septvans and Sir Roger de Trumpington.

One morning — he thinks it must have been the morning of August 16, 1914 — the sun shone so brightly into his room that he woke early, and the fancy took him that it would be fine to sit on the cliffs in the pure sunlight. So he dressed and went out, and climbed up Giltar Point, and sat there enjoying the sweet air and the radiance of the sea, and the sight of the fringe of creaming foam about the grey foundations of St. Margaret's Island. Then he looked beyond and gazed at the new white monastery on Caldy, and wondered who the architect was, and how he had contrived to make the group of buildings look exactly like the background of a mediæval picture.

After about an hour of this and a couple of pipes, Smith confesses that he began to feel extremely drowsy. He was just wondering whether it would be pleasant to stretch himself out on the wild thyme that scented the high place and go to sleep till breakfast, when the mounting sun caught one of the monastery windows, and Smith stared sleepily at the darting flashing light till it dazzled him. Then he felt "queer." There was an odd sensation as if the top of his head were dilating and contracting, and then he says he had a sort of shock, something between a mild current of electricity and the sensation of putting one's hand into the ripple of a swift brook.

Now, what happened next Smith cannot describe at all clearly. He knew he was on Giltar, looking across the waves to Caldy; he heard all the while the hollow, booming tide in the caverns of the rocks far below him, And yet he saw, as if in a glass, a very different country — a level fenland cut by slow streams, by long avenues of trimmed trees.

"It looked," he says, "as if it ought to have been a lonely country, but it was swarming with men; they were thick as ants in an anthill. And they were all dressed in armour; that was the strange thing about it.

"I thought I was standing by what looked as if it had been a farmhouse; but it was all battered to bits, just a heap of ruins and rubbish. All that was left was one tall round chimney, shaped very much like the fifteenth-century chimneys in Pembrokeshire. And thousands and tens of thousands went marching by.

“They were all in armour, and in all sorts of armour. Some of them had overlapping tongues of bright metal fastened on their clothes, others were in chain mail from head to foot, others were in heavy plate armour.

“They wore helmets of all shapes and sorts and sizes. One regiment had steel caps with wide trims, something like the old barbers’ basins. Another lot had knights’ tilting helmets on, closed up so that you couldn’t see their faces. Most of them wore metal gauntlets, either of steel rings or plates, and they had steel over their boots. A great many had things like battle-maces swinging by their sides, and all these fellows carried a sort of string of big metal balls round their waist. Then a dozen regiments went by, every man with a steel shield slung over his shoulder. The last to go by were cross-bowmen.”

In fact, it appeared to Delamere Smith that he watched the passing of a host of men in mediæval armour before him, and yet he knew — by the position of the sun and of a rosy cloud that was passing over the Worm’s Head — that this vision, or whatever it was, only lasted a second or two. Then that slight sense of shock returned, and Smith returned to the contemplation of the physical phenomena of the Pembrokeshire coast — blue waves, grey St. Margaret’s, and Caldy Abbey white in the sunlight.

It will be said, no doubt, and very likely with truth, that Smith fell asleep on Giltar, and mingled in a dream the thought of the great war just begun with his smatterings of mediæval battle and arms and armour. The explanation seems tolerable enough.

But there is the one little difficulty. It has been said that Smith is now Lieutenant Smith. He got his commission last autumn, and went out in May. He happens to speak French rather well, and so he has become what is called, I believe, an officer of liaison, or some such term. Anyhow, he is often behind the French lines.

He was home on short leave last week, and said:

“Ten days ago I was ordered to —— . I got there early in the morning, and had to wait a bit before I could see the General. I looked about me, and there on the left of us was a farm shelled into a heap of ruins, with one round chimney standing, shaped like the ‘Flemish’ chimneys in Pembrokeshire. And then the men in armour marched by, just as I had seen them — French regiments. The things like battle-maces were bomb-throwers, and the metal balls round the men’s waists were the bombs. They told me that the cross-bows were used for bomb-shooting.

“The march I saw was part of a big movement; you will hear more of it before long.”

The Bowmen And Other Noble Ghosts

By "The Londoner"

THERE WAS A journalist — and the *Evening News* reader well knows the initials of his name — who lately sat down to write a story.

Of course his story had to be about the war; there are no other stories nowadays. And so he wrote of English soldiers who, in the dusk on a field of France, faced the sullen mass of the oncoming Huns. They were few against fearful odds, but, as they sent the breech-bolt home and aimed and fired, they became aware that others fought beside them. Down the air came cries to St. George and twanging of the bow-string; the old bowmen of England had risen at England's need from their graves in that French earth and were fighting for England.

He said that he made up that story by himself, that he sat down and wrote it out of his head. But others knew better. It must really have happened. There was, I remember, a clergyman of good credit who told him that he was clean mistaken; the archers had really and truly risen up to fight for England: the tale was all up and down the front.

For my part I had thought that he wrote out of his head; I had seen him at the detestable job of doing it. I myself have hated this business of writing ever since I found out that it was not so easy as it looks, and I can always spare a little sympathy for a man who is driving a pen to the task of putting words in their right places. Yet the clergyman persuaded me at last. Who am I that I should doubt the faith of a clerk in holy orders? It must have happened. Those archers fought for us, and the grey-goose feather has flown once again in English battle.

Since that day I look eagerly for the ghosts who must be taking their share in this world-war. Never since the world began was such a war as this: surely Marlborough and the Duke, Talbot and Harry of Monmouth, and many another shadowy captain must be riding among our horsemen. The old gods of war are wakened by this loud clamour of the guns.

All the lands are astir. It is not enough that Asia should be humming like an angry hive and the far islands in arms, Australia sending her young men and Canada making herself a camp. When we talk over the war news, we call up ancient names: we debate how Rome stands and what is the matter with Greece.

As for Greece, I have ceased to talk of her. If I wanted to say anything about Greece I should get down the Poetry Book and quote Lord Byron's fine old ranting verse. "The mountains look on Marathon — and Marathon looks on the sea." But "standing on the Persians' grave" Greece seems in the same humour that made Lord Byron give her up as a hopelessly flabby country.

"'Tis Greece, but living Greece no more" is as true as ever it was. That last telegram of the Kaiser must have done its soothing work. You remember how it ran: the Kaiser was too busy to make up new phrases. He telegraphed to his sister the familiar Potsdam sentence: "Woe to those who dare to draw the sword against me." I am sure that I have heard that before. And he added — delightful and significant postscript!— "My compliments to Tino."

And Tino — King Constantine of the Hellenes — understood. He is in bed now with a very bad cold, and like to stay in bed until the weather be more settled. But before going to bed he was able to tell a journalist that Greece was going quietly on with her proper business; it was her mission to carry civilisation to the world. Truly that was the mission of ancient Greece. What we get from Tino's modern Greece is not civilisation but the little black currants for plum-cake.

But Rome. Greece may be dead or in the currant trade. Rome is alive and immortal. Do not talk to me about Signor Giolitti, who is quite sure that the only things that matter in this new Italy, which is old Rome, are her commercial relations with Germany. Rome of the legions, our ancient mistress and conqueror, is alive to-day, and she cannot be for an ignoble peace. Here in my newspaper is the speech of a poet spoken in Rome to a shouting crowd: I will cut out the column and put it in the Poetry Book.

He calls to the living and to the dead: "I saw the fire of Vesta, O Romans, lit yesterday in the great steel works of Liguria, The fountain of Juturna, O Romans, I saw its water run to temper armour, to chill the drills that hollow out the bore of guns." This is poetry of the old Roman sort. I imagine that scene in Rome: the latest poet of Rome calling upon the Romans in the name of Vesta's holy fire, in the name of the springs at which the Great Twin Brethren washed their horses. I still believe in the power and the ancient charm of noble words. I do not think that Giolitti and the stockbrokers will keep old Rome off the old roads where the legions went.

Postscript

WHILE THIS VOLUME was passing through the press, Mr. Ralph Shirley, the Editor of “The Occult Review” callled my attention to an article that is appearing in the August issue of his magazine, and was kind enough to let me see the advance proof sheets.

The article is called “The Angelic Leaders” It is written by Miss Phyllis Campbell. I have read it with great care.

Miss Campbell says that she was in France when the war broke out. She became a nurse, and while she was nursing the wounded she was informed that an English soldier wanted a “holy picture.” She went to the man and found him to be a Lancashire Fusilier. He said that he was a Wesleyan Methodist, and asked “for a picture or medal (he didn’t care which) of St. George… because he had seen him on a white horse, leading the British at Vitry-le-François, when the Allies turned”

This statement was corroborated by a wounded R.F.A. man who was present. He saw a tall man with yellow hair, in golden armour, on a white horse, holding his sword up, and his mouth open as if he was saying, “Come on, boys! I’ll put the kybosh on the devils” This figure was bareheaded — as appeared later from the testimony of other soldiers — and the R.F.A. man and the Fusilier knew that he was St. George, because he was exactly like the figure of St. George on the sovereigns. “Hadn’t they seen him with his sword on every ‘quid’ they’d ever had?”

From further evidence it seemed that while the English had seen the apparition of St. George coming out of a “yellow mist” or “cloud of light,” to the French had been vouchsafed visions of St. Michael the Archangel and Joan of Arc. Miss Campbell says: —

“Everybody has seen them who has fought through from Mons to Ypres; they all agree on them individually, and have no doubt at all as to the final issue of their interference”

Such are the main points of the article as it concerns the great legend of "The Angels of Mons." I cannot say that the author has shaken my incredulity — firstly, because the evidence is second-hand. Miss Campbell is perhaps acquainted with "Pickwick" and I would remind her of that famous (and golden) ruling of Stareleigh, J.: to the effect that you mustn't tell us what the soldier said; it's not evidence. Miss Campbell has offended against this rule, and she has not only told us what the soldier said, but she has omitted to give us the soldier's name and address.

If Miss Campbell proffered herself as a witness at the Old Bailey and said, "John Doe is undoubtedly guilty. A soldier I met told me that he had seen the prisoner put his hand into an old gentleman's pocket and take out a purse" — well, she would find that the stout spirit of Mr. Justice Stareleigh still survives in our judges.

The soldier must be produced. Before that is done we are not technically aware that he exists at all.

Then there are one or two points in the article itself which puzzle me. The Fusilier and the R.F.A. man had seen "St, George leading the British at Vitry-le-François, when the Allies turned." Thus the time of the apparition and the place of the apparition were firmly fixed in the two soldiers' minds.

Yet the very next paragraph in the article begins: —

"'Where was this?' I asked. But neither of them could tell"

This is an odd circumstance. They knew, and yet they did not know; or, rather, they had forgotten a piece of information that they had themselves imparted a few seconds before.

Another point. The soldiers knew that the figure on the horse was St. George by his exact likeness to the figure of the saint on the English sovereign.

This, again, is odd. The apparition was of a bareheaded figure in golden armour. The St. George of the coinage is naked, except for a short cape flying from the shoulders, and a helmet. He is not bareheaded, and has no armour — save the piece on his head. I do not quite see how the soldiers were so certain as to the identity of the apparition.

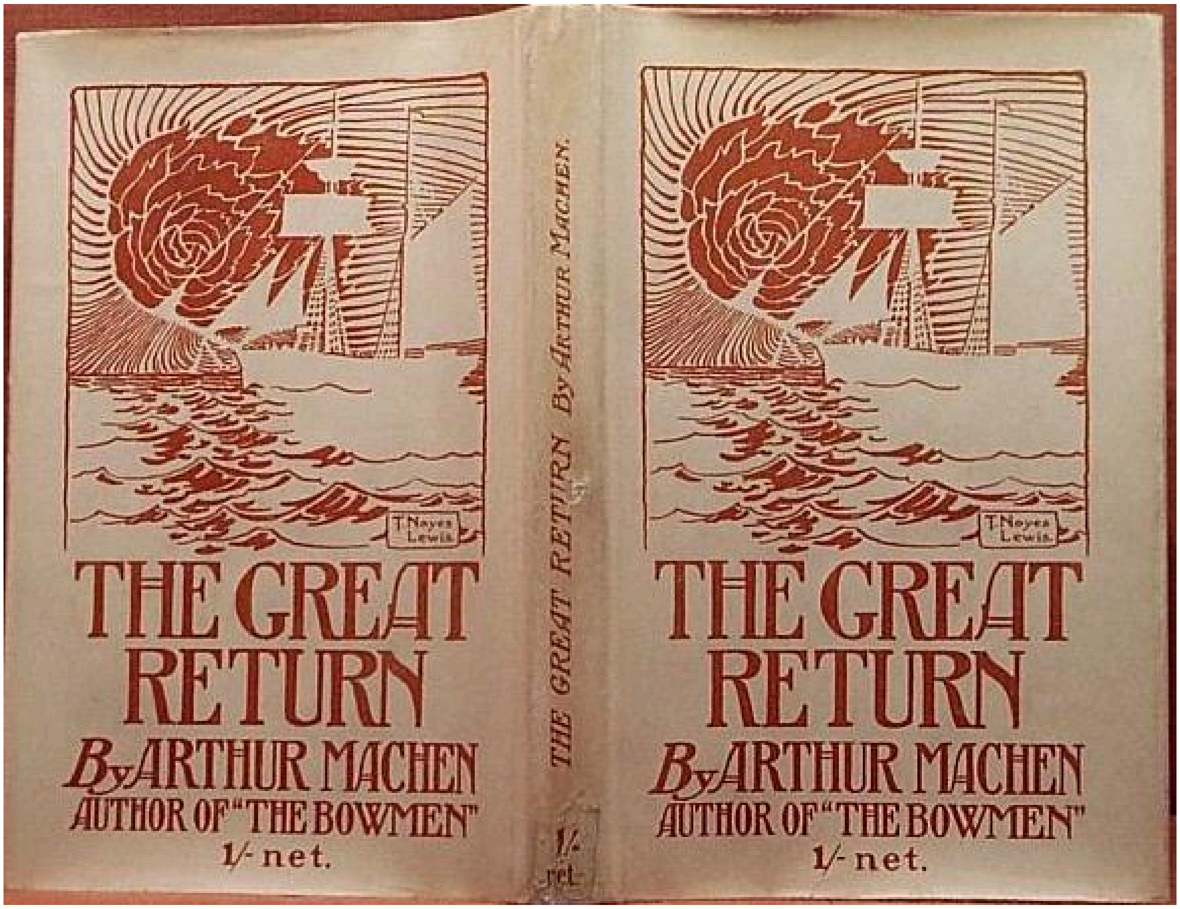
Lastly, Miss Campbell declares that “everybody” who fought from Mons to Ypres saw the apparitions. If that be so, it is again odd that Nobody has come forward to testify at first hand to the most amazing event of his life. Many men have been back on leave from the front, we have many wounded in hospital, many soldiers have written letters home. And they have all combined, this great host, to keep silence as to the most wonderful of occurrences, the most inspiring assurance, the surest omen of victory.

It may be so, but —

Arthur Machen.

The Great Return

This novella was first published in London by the Faith Press in 1915. Like Machen’s later *The Secret Glory*, it is based on the idea that the Holy Grail might have come to rest in Wales and is at the root of a series of mystical and supernatural phenomena.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The Church of the three saints at Llantrisant, South Wales, which features in the novella

THE GREAT RETURN

CHAPTER I. THE RUMOUR OF THE MARVELLOUS

THERE ARE STRANGE things lost and forgotten in obscure corners of the newspaper. I often think that the most extraordinary item of intelligence that I have read in print appeared a few years ago in the London Press. It came from a well known and most respected news agency; I imagine it was in all the papers. It was astounding.

The circumstances necessary — not to the understanding of this paragraph, for that is out of the question — but, we will say, to the understanding of the events which made it possible, are these. We had invaded Thibet, and there had been trouble in the hierarchy of that country, and a personage known as the Tashai Lama had taken refuge with us in India. He went on pilgrimage from one Buddhist shrine to another, and came at last to a holy mountain of Buddhism, the name of which I have forgotten. And thus the morning paper.

His Holiness the Tashai Lama then ascended the Mountain and was transfigured. — Reuter.

That was all. And from that day to this I have never heard a word of explanation or comment on this amazing statement.

There was no more, it seemed, to be said. “Reuter,” apparently, thought he had made his simple statement of the facts of the case, had thereby done his duty, and so it all ended. Nobody, so far as I know, ever wrote to any paper asking what Reuter meant by it, or what the Tashai Lama meant by it. I suppose the fact was that nobody cared two-pence about the matter; and so this strange event — if there were any such event — was exhibited to us for a moment, and the lantern show revolved to other spectacles.

This is an extreme instance of the manner in which the marvellous is flashed out to us and then withdrawn behind its black veils and concealments; but I have known of other cases. Now and again, at intervals of a few years, there appear in the newspapers strange stories of the strange doings of what are technically called *poltergeists*. Some house, often a lonely farm, is suddenly subjected to an infernal bombardment. Great stones crash through the windows, thunder down the chimneys, impelled by no visible hand. The plates and cups and saucers are whirled from the dresser into the middle of the kitchen, no one can say how or by what agency. Upstairs the big bedstead and an old chest or two are heard bounding on the floor as if in a mad ballet. Now and then such doings as these excite a whole neighbourhood; sometimes a London paper sends a man down to make an investigation. He writes half a column of description on the Monday, a couple of paragraphs on the Tuesday, and then returns to town. Nothing has been explained, the matter vanishes away; and nobody cares. The tale trickles for a day or two through the Press, and then instantly disappears, like an Australian stream, into the bowels of darkness. It is possible, I suppose, that this singular incuriousness as to marvellous events and reports is not wholly unaccountable. It may be that the events in question are, as it were, psychic accidents and misadventures. They are not meant to happen, or, rather, to be manifested. They belong to the world on the other side of the dark curtain; and it is only by some queer mischance that a corner of that curtain is twitched aside for an instant. Then — for an instant — we see; but the personages whom Mr. Kipling calls the Lords of Life and Death take care that we do not see too much. Our business is with things higher and things lower, with things different, anyhow; and on the whole we are not suffered to distract ourselves with that which does not really concern us. The Transfiguration of the Lama and the tricks of the *poltergeist* are evidently no affairs of ours; we raise an uninterested eyebrow and pass on — to poetry or to statistics.

Be it noted; I am not professing any fervent personal belief in the reports to which I have alluded. For all I know, the Lama, in spite of Reuter, was not transfigured, and the *poltergeist*, in spite of the late Mr. Andrew Lang, may in reality be only mischievous Polly, the servant girl at the farm. And to go farther: I do not know that I should be justified in putting either of these cases of the marvellous in line with a chance paragraph that caught my eye last summer; for this had not, on the face of it at all events, anything wildly out of the common. Indeed, I dare say that I should not have read it, should not have seen it, if it had not contained the name of a place which I had once visited, which had then moved me in an odd manner that I could not understand. Indeed, I am sure that this particular paragraph deserves to stand alone, for even if the *poltergeist* be a real *poltergeist*, it merely reveals the psychic whimsicality of some region that is not our region. There were better things and more relevant things behind the few lines dealing with Llantrisant, the little town by the sea in Arfonshire.

Not on the surface, I must say, for the cutting I have preserved it — reads as follows: —

LLANTRISANT. — The season promises very favourably: temperature of the sea yesterday at noon, 65 deg. Remarkable occurrences are supposed to have taken place during the recent Revival. The lights have not been observed lately. “The Crown.” “The Fisherman’s Rest.”

The style was odd certainly; knowing a little of newspapers. I could see that the figure called, I think, *tmesis*, or cutting, had been generously employed; the exuberances of the local correspondent had been pruned by a Fleet Street expert. And these poor men are often hurried; but what did those “lights” mean? What strange matters had the vehement blue pencil blotted out and brought to naught?

That was my first thought, and then, thinking still of Llantrisant and how I had first discovered it and found it strange, I read the paragraph again, and was saddened almost to see, as I thought, the obvious explanation. I had forgotten for the moment that it was war-time, that scares and rumours and terrors about traitorous signals and flashing lights were current everywhere by land and sea; someone, no doubt, had been watching innocent farmhouse windows and thoughtless fanlights of lodging houses; these were the “lights” that had not been observed lately.

I found out afterwards that the Llantrisant correspondent had no such treasonous lights in his mind, but something very different. Still; what do we know? He may have been mistaken, “the great rose of fire” that came over the deep may have been the port light of a coasting-ship. Did it shine at last from the old chapel on the headland? Possibly; or possibly it was the doctor’s lamp at Sarnau, some miles away. I have had wonderful opportunities lately of analysing the marvels of lying, conscious and unconscious; and indeed almost incredible feats in this way can be performed. If I incline to the less likely explanation of the “lights” at Llantrisant, it is merely because this explanation seems to me to be altogether congruous with the “remarkable occurrences” of the newspaper paragraph.

After all, if rumour and gossip and hearsay are crazy things to be utterly neglected and laid aside: on the other hand, evidence is evidence, and when a couple of reputable surgeons assert, as they do assert in the case of Olwen Phillips, Croeswen, Llantrisant, that there has been a “kind of resurrection of the body,” it is merely foolish to say that these things don’t happen. The girl was a mass of tuberculosis, she was within a few hours of death; she is now full of life. And so, I do not believe that the rose of fire was merely a ship’s light, magnified and transformed by dreaming Welsh sailors.

But now I am going forward too fast. I have not dated the paragraph, so I cannot give the exact day of its appearance, but I think it was somewhere between the second and third week of June. I cut it out partly because it was about Llantrisant, partly because of the “remarkable occurrences.” I have an appetite for these matters, though I also have this misfortune, that I require evidence before I am ready to credit them, and I have a sort of lingering hope that some day I shall be able to elaborate some scheme or theory of such things.

But in the meantime, as a temporary measure, I hold what I call the doctrine of the jig-saw puzzle. That is: this remarkable occurrence, and that, and the other may be, and usually are, of no significance. Coincidence and chance and unsearchable causes will now and again make clouds that are undeniable fiery dragons, and potatoes that resemble Eminent Statesmen exactly and minutely in every feature, and rocks that are like eagles and lions. All this is nothing; it is when you get your set of odd shapes and find that they fit into one another, and at last that they are but parts of a large design; it is then that research grows interesting and indeed amazing, it is then that one queer form confirms the other, that the whole plan displayed justifies, corroborates, explains each separate piece.

So, it was within a week or ten days after I had read the paragraph about Llantrisant and had cut it out that I got a letter from a friend who was taking an early holiday in those regions.

“You will be interested,” he wrote, “to hear that they have taken to ritualistic practices at Llantrisant. I went into the church the other day, and instead of smelling like a damp vault as usual, it was positively reeking with incense.”

I knew better than that. The old parson was a firm Evangelical; he would rather have burnt sulphur in his church than incense any day. So I could not make out this report at all; and went down to Arfon a few weeks later determined to investigate this and any other remarkable occurrence at Llantrisant.

CHAPTER II. ODOURS OF PARADISE

I WENT DOWN to Arfon in the very heat and bloom and fragrance of the wonderful summer that they were enjoying there. In London there was no such weather; it rather seemed as if the horror and fury of the war had mounted to the very skies and were there reigning. In the mornings the sun burnt down upon the city with a heat that scorched and consumed; but then clouds heavy and horrible would roll together from all quarters of the heavens, and early in the afternoon the air would darken, and a storm of thunder and lightning, and furious, hissing rain would fall upon the streets. Indeed, the torment of the world was in the London weather. The city wore a terrible vesture; within our hearts was dread; without we were clothed in black clouds and angry fire.

It is certain that I cannot show in any words the utter peace of that Welsh coast to which I came; one sees, I think, in such a change a figure of the passage from the disquiets and the fears of earth to the peace of paradise. A land that seemed to be in a holy, happy dream, a sea that changed all the while from olivine to emerald, from emerald to sapphire, from sapphire to amethyst, that washed in white foam at the bases of the firm, grey rocks, and about the huge crimson bastions that hid the western bays and inlets of the waters; to this land I came, and to hollows that were purple and odorous with wild thyme, wonderful with many tiny, exquisite flowers. There was benediction in centaury, pardon in eye-bright, joy in lady’s slipper; and so the weary eyes were refreshed, looking now at the little flowers and the happy bees about them, now on the magic mirror of the deep, changing from marvel to marvel with the passing of the great white clouds, with the brightening of the sun. And the ears, torn with jangle and racket and idle, empty noise, were soothed and comforted by the ineffable, unutterable, unceasing murmur, as the tides swam to and fro, uttering mighty, hollow voices in the caverns of the rocks.

For three or four days I rested in the sun and smelt the savour of the blossoms and of the salt water, and then, refreshed, I remembered that there was something queer about Llantrisant that I might as well investigate. It was no great thing that I thought to find, for, it will be remembered, I had ruled out the apparent oddity of the reporter's-or commissioner's? — reference to lights, on the ground that he must have been referring to some local panic about signalling to the enemy; who had certainly torpedoed a ship or two off Lundy in the Bristol Channel. All that I had to go upon was the reference to the "remarkable occurrences" at some revival, and then that letter of Jackson's, which spoke of Llantrisant church as "reeking" with incense, a wholly incredible and impossible state of things. Why, old Mr. Evans, the rector, looked upon coloured stoles as the very robe of Satan and his angels, as things dear to the heart of the Pope of Rome. But as to incense! As I have already familiarly observed, I knew better.

But as a hard matter of fact, this may be worth noting: when I went over to Llantrisant on Monday, August 9th, I visited the church, and it was still fragrant and exquisite with the odour of rare gums that had fumed there.

Now I happened to have a slight acquaintance with the rector. He was a most courteous and delightful old man, and on my last visit he had come across me in the churchyard, as I was admiring the very fine Celtic cross that stands there. Besides the beauty of the interlaced ornament there is an inscription in Ogham on one of the edges, concerning which the learned dispute; it is altogether one of the more famous crosses of Celtdom. Mr. Evans, I say, seeing me looking at the cross, came up and began to give me, the stranger, a resume — somewhat of a shaky and uncertain resume, I found afterwards — of the various debates and questions that had arisen as to the exact meaning of the inscription, and I was amused to detect an evident but underlying belief of his own: that the supposed Ogham characters were, in fact, due to boys' mischief and weather and the passing of the ages. But then I happened to put a question as to the sort of stone of which the cross was made, and the rector brightened amazingly. He began to talk geology, and, I think, demonstrated that the cross or the material for it must have been brought to Llantrisant from the south-west coast of Ireland. This struck me as interesting, because it was curious evidence of the migrations of the Celtic saints, whom the rector, I was delighted to find, looked upon as good Protestants, though shaky on the subject of crosses; and so, with concessions on my part, we got on very well. Thus, with all this to the good, I was emboldened to call upon him.

I found him altered. Not that he was aged; indeed, he was rather made young, with a singular brightening upon his face, and something of joy upon it that I had not seen before, that I have seen on very few faces of men. We talked of the war, of course, since that is not to be avoided; of the farming prospects of the county; of general things, till I ventured to remark that I had been in the church, and had been surprised, to find it perfumed with incense.

“You have made some alterations in the service since I was here last? You use incense now?”

The old man looked at me strangely, and hesitated.

“No,” he said, “there has been no change. I use no incense in the church. I should not venture to do so.”

“But,” I was beginning, “the whole church is as if High Mass had just been sung there, and— “

He cut me short, and there was a certain grave solemnity in his manner that struck me almost with awe.

“I know you are a railer,” he said, and the phrase coming from this mild old gentleman astonished, me unutterably. “You are a railer and a bitter railer; I have read articles that you have written, and I know your contempt and your hatred for those you call Protestants in your derision; though your grandfather, the vicar of Caerleon-on-Usk, called himself Protestant and was proud of it, and your great-grand-uncle Hezekiah, *ffeiriad coch yr Castletown* — the Red Priest of Castletown — was a great man with the Methodists in his day, and the people flocked by their thousands when he administered the Sacrament. I was born and brought up in Glamorganshire, and old men have wept as they told me of the weeping and contrition that there was when the Red Priest broke the Bread and raised the Cup. But you are a railer, and see nothing but the outside and the show. You are not worthy of this mystery that has been done here.”

I went out from his presence rebuked indeed, and justly rebuked; but rather amazed. It is curiously true that the Welsh are still one people, one family almost, in a manner that the English cannot understand, but I had never thought that this old clergyman would have known anything of my ancestry or their doings. And as for my articles and such-like, I knew that the country clergy sometimes read, but I had fancied my pronouncements sufficiently obscure, even in London, much more in Arfon.

But so it happened, and so I had no explanation from the rector of Llantrisant of the strange circumstance, that his church was full of incense and odours of paradise.

I went up and down the ways of Llantrisant wondering, and came to the harbour, which is a little place, with little quays where some small coasting trade still lingers. A brigantine was at anchor here, and very lazily in the sunshine they were loading it with anthracite; for it is one of the oddities of Llantrisant that there is a small colliery in the heart of the wood on the hillside. I crossed a causeway which parts the outer harbour from the inner harbour, and settled down on a rocky beach hidden under a leafy hill. The tide was going out, and some children were playing on the wet sand, while two ladies — their mothers, I suppose — talked together as they sat comfortably on their rugs at a little distance from me.

At first they talked of the war, and I made myself deaf, for of that talk one gets enough, and more than enough, in London. Then there was a period of silence, and the conversation had passed to quite a different topic when I caught the thread of it again. I was sitting on the further side of a big rock, and I do not think that the two ladies had noticed my approach. However, though they spoke of strange things, they spoke of nothing which made it necessary for me to announce my presence.

“And, after all,” one of them was saying, “what is it all about? I can’t make out what is come to the people.”

This speaker was a Welshwoman; I recognised the clear, over-emphasised consonants, and a faint suggestion of an accent. Her friend came from the Midlands, and it turned out that they had only known each other for a few days. Theirs was a friendship of the beach and of bathing; such friendships are common, at small seaside places.

“There is certainly something odd about the people here. I have never been to Llantrisant before, you know; indeed, this is the first time we’ve been in Wales for our holidays, and knowing nothing about the ways of the people and not being accustomed to hear Welsh spoken, I thought, perhaps, it must be my imagination. But you think there really is something a little queer?”

“I can tell you this: that I have been in two minds whether I should not write to my husband and ask him to take me and the children away. You know where I am at Mrs. Morgan’s, and the Morgans’ sitting-room is just the other side of the passage, and sometimes they leave the door open, so that I can hear what they say quite plainly. And you see I understand the Welsh, though they don’t know it. And I hear them saying the most alarming things!”

“What sort of things?

“Well, indeed, it sounds like some kind of a religious service, but it’s not Church of England, I know that. Old Morgan begins it, and the wife and children answer. Something like; ‘Blessed be God for the messengers of Paradise.’ ‘Blessed be His Name for Paradise in the meat and in the drink.’ ‘Thanksgiving for the old offering.’ ‘Thanksgiving for the appearance of the old altar,’ ‘Praise for the joy of the ancient garden.’ ‘Praise for the return of those that have been long absent.’ And all that sort of thing. It is nothing but madness.”

“Depend upon it,” said the lady from the Midlands, “there’s no real harm in it. They’re Dissenters; some new sect, I dare say. You know some Dissenters are very queer in their ways.”

“All that is like no Dissenters that I have ever known in all my life whatever,” replied the Welsh lady somewhat vehemently, with a very distinct intonation of the land. “And have you heard them speak of the bright light that shone at midnight from the church?”

CHAPTER III. A SECRET IN A SECRET PLACE

NOW HERE WAS I altogether at a loss and quite bewildered. The children broke into the conversation of the two ladies and cut it all short, just as the midnight lights from the church came on the field, and when the little girls and boys went back again to the sands whooping, the tide of talk had turned, and Mrs. Harland and Mrs. Williams were quite safe and at home with Janey's measles, and a wonderful treatment for infantile earache, as exemplified in the case of Trevor. There was no more to be got out of them, evidently, so I left the beach, crossed the harbour causeway, and drank beer at the "Fishermen's Rest" till it was time to climb up two miles of deep lane and catch the train for Penvro, where I was staying. And I went up the lane, as I say, in a kind of amazement; and not so much, I think, because of evidences and hints of things strange to the senses, such as the savour of incense where no incense had smoked for three hundred and fifty years and more, or the story of bright light shining from the dark, closed church at dead of night, as because of that sentence of thanksgiving "for paradise in meat and in drink."

For the sun went down and the evening fell as I climbed the long hill through the deep woods and the high meadows, and the scent of all the green things rose from the earth and from the heart of the wood, and at a turn of the lane far below was the misty glimmer of the still sea, and from far below its deep murmur sounded as it washed on the little hidden, enclosed bay where Llantrisant stands. And I thought, if there be paradise in meat and in drink, so much the more is there paradise in the scent of the green leaves at evening and in the appearance of the sea and in the redness of the sky; and there came to me a certain vision of a real world about us all the while, of a language that was only secret because we would not take the trouble to listen to it and discern it.

It was almost dark when I got to the station, and here were the few feeble oil lamps lit, glimmering in that lonely land, where the way is long from farm to farm. The train came on its way, and I got into it; and just as we moved from the station I noticed a group under one of those dim lamps. A woman and her child had got out, and they were being welcomed by a man who had been waiting for them. I had not noticed his face as I stood on the platform, but now I saw it as he pointed down the hill towards Llantrisant, and I think I was almost frightened.

He was a young man, a farmer’s son, I would say, dressed in rough brown clothes, and as different from old Mr. Evans, the rector, as one man might be from another. But on his face, as I saw it in the lamplight, there was the like brightening that I had seen on the face of the rector. It was an illuminated face, glowing with an ineffable joy, and I thought it rather gave light to the platform lamp than received light from it. The woman and her child, I inferred, were strangers to the place, and had come to pay a visit to the young man’s family. They had looked about them in bewilderment, half alarmed, before they saw him; and then his face was radiant in their sight, and it was easy to see that all their troubles were ended and over. A wayside station and a darkening country, and it was as if they were welcomed by shining, immortal gladness — even into paradise.

But though there seemed in a sense light all about my ways, I was myself still quite bewildered. I could see, indeed, that something strange had happened or was happening in the little town hidden under the hill, but there was so far no clue to the mystery, or rather, the clue had been offered to me, and I had not taken it, I had not even known that it was there; since we do not so much as see what we have determined, without judging, to be incredible, even though it be held up before our eyes. The dialogue that the Welsh Mrs. Williams had reported to her English friend might have set me on the right way; but the right way was outside all my limits of possibility, outside the circle of my thought. The palæontologist might see monstrous, significant marks in the slime of a river bank, but he would never draw the conclusions that his own peculiar science would seem to suggest to him; he would choose any explanation rather than the obvious, since the obvious would also be the outrageous — according to our established habit of thought, which we deem final.

The next day I took all these strange things with me for consideration to a certain place that I knew of not far from Penvro. I was now in the early stages of the jig-saw process, or rather I had only a few pieces before me, and — to continue the figure my difficulty was this: that though the markings on each piece seemed to have design and significance, yet I could not make the wildest guess as to the nature of the whole picture, of which these were the parts. I had clearly seen that there was a great secret; I had seen that on the face of the young farmer on the platform of Llantrisant station; and in my mind there was all the while the picture of him going down the dark, steep, winding lane that led to the town and the sea, going down through the heart of the wood, with light about him.

But there was bewilderment in the thought of this, and in the endeavour to match it with the perfumed church and the scraps of talk that I had heard and the rumour of midnight brightness; and though Penvro is by no means populous, I thought I would go to a certain solitary place called the Old Camp Head, which looks towards Cornwall and to the great deeps that roll beyond Cornwall to the far ends of the world; a place where fragments of dreams — they seemed such then — might, perhaps, be gathered into the clearness of vision.

It was some years since I had been to the Head, and I had gone on that last time and on a former visit by the cliffs, a rough and difficult path. Now I chose a landward way, which the county map seemed to justify, though doubtfully, as regarded the last part of the journey. So I went inland and climbed the hot summer by-roads, till I came at last to a lane which gradually turned turfy and grass-grown, and then on high ground, ceased to be. It left me at a gate in a hedge of old thorns; and across the field beyond there seemed to be some faint indications of a track. One would judge that sometimes men did pass by that way, but not often.

It was high ground but not within sight of the sea. But the breath of the sea blew about the hedge of thorns, and came with a keen savour to the nostrils. The ground sloped gently from the gate and then rose again to a ridge, where a white farmhouse stood all alone. I passed by this farmhouse, threading an uncertain way, followed a hedgerow doubtfully; and saw suddenly before me the Old Camp, and beyond it the sapphire plain of waters and the mist where sea and sky met. Steep from my feet the hill fell away, a land of gorse-blossom, red-gold and mellow, of glorious purple heather. It fell into a hollow that went down, shining with rich green bracken, to the glimmering sea; and before me and beyond the hollow rose a height of turf, bastioned at the summit with the awful, age-old walls of the Old Camp; green, rounded circumvallations, wall within wall, tremendous, with their myriad years upon them.

Within these smoothed, green mounds, looking across the shining and changing of the waters in the happy sunlight, I took out the bread and cheese and beer that I had carried in a bag, and ate and drank, and lit my pipe, and set myself to think over the enigmas of Llantrisant. And I had scarcely done so when, a good deal to my annoyance, a man came climbing up over the green ridges, and took up his stand close by, and stared out to sea. He nodded to me, and began with “Fine weather for the harvest” in the approved manner, and so sat down and engaged me in a net of talk. He was of Wales, it seemed, but from a different part of the country, and was staying for a few days with relations — at the white farmhouse which I had passed on my way. His tale of nothing flowed on to his pleasure and my pain, till he fell suddenly on Llantrisant and its doings. I listened then with wonder, and here is his tale condensed. Though it must be clearly understood that the man’s evidence was only second-hand; he had heard it from his cousin, the farmer.

So, to be brief, it appeared that there had been a long feud at Llantrisant between a local solicitor, Lewis Prothero (we will say), and a farmer named James. There had been a quarrel about some trifle, which had grown more and more bitter as the two parties forgot the merits of the original dispute, and by some means or other, which I could not well understand, the lawyer had got the small freeholder “under his thumb.” James, I think, had given a bill of sale in a bad season, and Prothero had bought it up; and the end was that the farmer was turned out of the old house, and was lodging in a cottage. People said he would have to take a place on his own farm as a labourer; he went about in dreadful misery, piteous to see. It was thought by some that he might very well murder the lawyer, if he met him.

They did meet, in the middle of the market-place at Llantrisant one Saturday in June. The farmer was a little black man, and he gave a shout of rage, and the people were rushing at him to keep him off Prothero.

“And then,” said my informant, “I will tell you what happened. This lawyer, as they tell me, he is a great big brawny fellow, with a big jaw and a wide mouth, and a red face and red whiskers. And there he was in his black coat and his high hard hat, and all his money at his back, as you may say. And, indeed, he did fall down on his knees in the dust there in the street in front of Philip James, and every one could see that terror was upon him. And he did beg Philip James’s pardon, and beg of him to have mercy, and he did implore him by God and man and the saints of paradise. And my cousin, John Jenkins, Penmawr, he do tell me that the tears were falling from Lewis Prothero’s eyes like the rain. And he put his hand into his pocket and drew out the deed of Pantyreos, Philip James’s old farm that was, and did give him the farm back and a hundred pounds for the stock that was on it, and two hundred pounds, all in notes of the bank, for amendment and consolation.

“And then, from what they do tell me, all the people did go mad, crying and weeping and calling out all manner of things at the top of their voices. And at last nothing would do but they must all go up to the churchyard, and there Philip James and Lewis Prothero they swear friendship to one another for a long age before the old cross, and everyone sings praises. And my cousin he do declare to me that there were men standing in that crowd that he did never see before in Llantrisant in all his life, and his heart was shaken within him as if it had been in a whirl-wind.”

I had listened to all this in silence. I said then:

“What does your cousin mean by that? Men that he had never seen in Llantrisant? What men?”

“The people,” he said very slowly, “call them the Fishermen.”

And suddenly there came into my mind the “Rich Fisherman” who in the old legend guards the holy mystery of the Graal.

CHAPTER IV. THE RINGING OF THE BELL

SO FAR I have not told the story of the things of Llantrisant, but rather the story of how I stumbled upon them and among them, perplexed and wholly astray, seeking, but yet not knowing at all what I sought; bewildered now and again by circumstances which seemed to me wholly inexplicable; devoid, not so much of the key to the enigma, but of the key to the nature of the enigma. You cannot begin to solve a puzzle till you know what the puzzle is about. “Yards divided by minutes,” said the mathematical master to me long ago, “will give neither pigs, sheep, nor oxen.” He was right; though his manner on this and on all other occasions was highly offensive. This is enough of the personal process, as I may call it; and here follows the story of what happened at Llantrisant last summer, the story as I pieced it together at last.

It all began, it appears, on a hot day, early in last June; so far as I can make out, on the first Saturday in the month. There was a deaf old woman, a Mrs. Parry, who lived by herself in a lonely cottage a mile or so from the town. She came into the market-place early on the Saturday morning in a state of some excitement, and as soon as she had taken up her usual place on the pavement by the churchyard, with her ducks and eggs and a few very early potatoes, she began to tell her neighbours about her having heard the sound of a great bell. The good women on each side smiled at one another behind Mrs. Parry’s back, for one had to bawl into her ear before she could make out what one meant; and Mrs. Williams, Penycoed, bent over and yelled: “What bell should that be, Mrs. Parry? There’s no church near you up at Penrhiw. Do you hear what nonsense she talks?” said Mrs. Williams in a low voice to Mrs. Morgan. “As if she could hear any bell, whatever.”

“What makes you talk nonsense your self?” said Mrs. Parry, to the amazement of the two women. “I can hear a bell as well as you, Mrs. Williams, and as well as your whispers either.”

And there is the fact, which is not to be disputed; though the deductions from it may be open to endless disputations; this old woman who had been all but stone deaf for twenty years — the defect had always been in her family — could suddenly hear on this June morning as well as anybody else. And her two old friends stared at her, and it was some time before they had appeased her indignation, and induced her to talk about the bell.

It had happened in the early morning, which was very misty. She had been gathering sage in her garden, high on a round hill looking over the sea. And there came in her ears a sort of throbbing and singing and trembling, "as if there were music coming out of the earth," and then something seemed to break in her head, and all the birds began to sing and make melody together, and the leaves of the poplars round the garden fluttered in the breeze that rose from the sea, and the cock crowed far off at Twyn, and the dog barked down in Kemeys Valley. But above all these sounds, unheard for so many years, there thrilled the deep and chanting note of the bell, "like a bell and a man's voice singing at once."

They stared again at her and at one another. "Where did it sound from?" asked one. "It came sailing across the sea," answered Mrs. Parry quite composedly, "and I did hear it coming nearer and nearer to the land."

"Well, indeed," said Mrs. Morgan, "it was a ship's bell then, though I can't make out why they would be ringing like that."

"It was not ringing on any ship, Mrs. Morgan," said Mrs. Parry.

"Then where do you think it was ringing?"

"Ym Mharadwys," replied Mrs. Parry. Now that means "in Paradise," and the two others changed the conversation quickly. They thought that Mrs. Parry had got back her hearing suddenly — such things did happen now and then — and that the shock had made her "a bit queer." And this explanation would no doubt have stood its ground, if it had not been for other experiences. Indeed, the local doctor who had treated Mrs. Parry for a dozen years, not for her deafness, which he took to be hopeless and beyond cure, but for a tiresome and recurrent winter cough, sent an account of the case to a colleague at Bristol, suppressing, naturally enough, the reference to Paradise. The Bristol physician gave it as his opinion that the symptoms were absolutely what mighty have been expected.

"You have here, in all probability," he wrote, "the sudden breaking down of an old obstruction in the aural passage, and I should quite expect this process to be accompanied by tinnitus of a pronounced and even violent character."

But for the other experiences? As the morning wore on and drew to noon, high market, and to the utmost brightness of that summer day, all the stalls and the streets were full of rumours and of awed faces. Now from one lonely farm, now from another, men and women came and told the story of how they had listened in the early morning with thrilling hearts to the thrilling music of a bell that was like no bell ever heard before. And it seemed that many people in the town had been roused, they knew not how, from sleep; waking up, as one of them said, as if bells were ringing and the organ playing, and a choir of sweet voices singing all together: "There were such melodies and songs that my heart was full of joy."

And a little past noon some fishermen who had been out all night returned, and brought a wonderful story into the town of what they had heard in the mist and one of them said he had seen something go by at a little distance from his boat. "It was all golden and bright," he said, "and there was glory about it." Another fisherman declared "there was a song upon the water that was like heaven."

And here I would say in parenthesis that on returning to town I sought out a very old friend of mine, a man who has devoted a lifetime to strange and esoteric studies. I thought that I had a tale that would interest him profoundly, but I found that he heard me with a good deal of indifference. And at this very point of the sailors' stories I remember saying: "Now what do you make of that? Don't you think it's extremely curious?" He replied: "I hardly think so. Possibly the sailors were lying; possibly it happened as they say. Well; that sort of thing has always been happening." I give my friend's opinion; I make no comment on it.

Let it be noted that there was something remarkable as to the manner in which the sound of the bell was heard — or supposed to be heard. There are, no doubt, mysteries in sound as in all else; indeed, I am informed that during one of the horrible outrages that have been perpetrated on London during this autumn there was an instance of a great block of workmen's dwellings in which the only person who heard the crash of a particular bomb falling was an old deaf woman, who had been fast asleep till the moment of the explosion. This is strange enough of a sound that was entirely in the natural (and horrible) order; and so it was at Llantrisant, where the sound was either a collective auditory hallucination or a manifestation of what is conveniently, if inaccurately, called the supernatural order.

For the thrill of the bell did not reach to all ears — or hearts. Deaf Mrs. Parry heard it in her lonely cottage garden, high above the misty sea; but then, in a farm on the other or western side of Llantrisant, a little child, scarcely three years old, was the only one out of a household of ten people who heard anything. He called out in stammering baby Welsh something that sounded like "Clychau fawr, clychau fawr" — the great bells, the great bells — and his mother wondered what he was talking about. Of the crews of half a dozen trawlers that were swinging from side to side in the mist, not more than four men had any tale to tell. And so it was that for an hour or two the man who had heard nothing suspected his neighbour who had heard marvels of lying; and it was some time before the mass of evidence coming from all manner of diverse and remote quarters convinced the people that there was a true story here. A might suspect B, his neighbour, of making up a tale; but when C, from some place on the hills five miles away, and D, the fisherman on the waters, each had a like report, then it was clear that something had happened.

And even then, as they told me, the signs to be seen upon the people were stranger than the tales told by them and among them. It has struck me that many people in reading some of the phrases that I have reported, will dismiss them with laughter as very poor and fantastic inventions; fishermen, they will say, do not speak of "a song like heaven" or of "a glory about it." And I dare say this would be a just enough criticism if I were reporting English fishermen; but, odd though it may be, Wales has not yet lost the last shreds of the grand manner. And let it be remembered also that in most cases such phrases are translated from another language, that is, from the Welsh.

So, they come trailing, let us say, fragments of the cloud of glory in their common speech; and so, on this Saturday, they began to display, uneasily enough in many cases, their consciousness that the things that were reported were of their ancient right and former custom. The comparison is not quite fair; but conceive Hardy’s old Durbeyfield suddenly waking from long slumber to find himself in a noble thirteenth-century hall, waited on by kneeling pages, smiled on by sweet ladies in silken côtehardies.

So by evening time there had come to the old people the recollection of stories that their fathers had told them as they sat round the hearth of winter nights, fifty, sixty, seventy years; ago; stories of the wonderful bell of Teilo Sant, that had sailed across the glassy seas from Syon, that was called a portion of Paradise, “and the sound of its ringing was like the perpetual choir of the angels.”

Such things were remembered by the old and told to the young that evening, in the streets of the town and in the deep lanes that climbed far hills. The sun went down to the mountain red with fire like a burnt offering, the sky turned violet, the sea was purple, as one told another of the wonder that had returned to the land after long ages.

CHAPTER V. THE ROSE OF FIRE

IT WAS DURING the next nine days, counting from that Saturday early in June the first Saturday in June, as I believe — that Llantrisant and all the regions about became possessed either by an extraordinary set of hallucinations or by a visitation of great marvels.

This is not the place to strike the balance between the two possibilities. The evidence is, no doubt, readily available; the matter is open to systematic investigation.

But this may be said: The ordinary man, in the ordinary passages of his life, accepts in the main the evidence of his senses, and is entirely right in doing so. He says that he sees a cow, that he sees a stone wall, and that the cow and the stone wall are “there.”

This is very well for all the practical purposes of life, but I believe that the metaphysicians are by no means so easily satisfied as to the reality of the stone wall and the cow. Perhaps they might allow that both objects are “there” in the sense that one’s reflection is in a glass; there is an actuality, but is there a reality external to oneself? In any event, it is solidly agreed that, supposing a real existence, this much is certain — it is not in the least like our conception of it. The ant and the microscope will quickly convince us that we do not see things as they really are, even supposing that we see them at all. If we could “see” the real cow she would appear utterly incredible, as incredible as the things I am to relate.

Now, there is nothing that I know much more unconvincing than the stories of the red light on the sea. Several sailors, men on small coasting ships, who were working up or down the Channel on that Saturday night, spoke of “seeing” the red light, and it must be said that there is a very tolerable agreement in their tales. All make the time as between midnight of the Saturday and one o’clock on the Sunday morning. Two of those sailormen are precise as to the time of the apparition; they fix it by elaborate calculations of their own as occurring at 12.20 a.m. And the story?

A red light, a burning spark seen far away in the darkness, taken at the first moment of seeing for a signal, and probably an enemy signal. Then it approached at a tremendous speed, and one man said he took it to be the port light of some new kind of navy motor-boat which was developing a rate hitherto unheard of, a hundred or a hundred and fifty knots an hour. And then, in the third instant of the sight, it was clear that this was no earthly speed. At first a red spark in the farthest distance; then a rushing lamp; and then, as if in an incredible point of time, it swelled into a vast rose of fire that filled all the sea and all the sky and hid the stars and possessed the land. "I thought the end of the world had come," one of the sailors said.

And then, an instant more, and it was gone from them, and four of them say that there was a red spark on Chapel Head, where the old grey chapel of St. Teilo stands, high above the water, in a cleft of the limestone rocks.

And thus the sailors; and thus their tales are incredible; but they are not incredible. I believe that men of the highest eminence in physical science have testified to the occurrence of phenomena every whit as marvellous, to things as absolutely opposed to all natural order, as we conceive it; and it may be said that nobody minds them. "That sort of thing has always been happening," as my friend remarked to me. But the men, whether or no the fire had ever been without them, there was no doubt that it was now within them, for it burned in their eyes. They were purged as if they had passed through the Furnace of the Sages, governed with Wisdom that the alchemists know. They spoke without much difficulty of what they had seen, or had seemed to see, with their eyes, but hardly at all of what their hearts had known when for a moment the glory of the fiery rose had been about them.

For some weeks afterwards they were still, as it were, amazed; almost, I would say, incredulous. If there had been nothing more than the splendid and fiery appearance, showing and vanishing, I do believe that they themselves would have discredited their own senses and denied the truth of their own tales. And one does not dare to say whether they would not have been right. Men like Sir William Crookes and Sir Oliver Lodge are certainly to be heard with respect, and they bear witness to all manner of apparent eversions of laws which we, or most of us, consider far more deeply founded than the ancient hills. They may be justified; but in our hearts we doubt. We cannot wholly believe in inner sincerity that the solid table did rise, without mechanical reason or cause, into the air, and so defy that which we name the "law of gravitation." I know what may be said on the other side; I know that there is no true question of "law" in the case; that the law of gravitation really means just this: that I have never seen a table rising without mechanical aid, or an apple, detached from the bough, soaring to the skies instead of falling to the ground. The so-called law is just the sum of common observation and nothing more; yet I say, in our hearts we do not believe that the tables rise; much less do we believe in the rose of fire that for a moment swallowed up the skies and seas and shores of the Welsh coast last June.

And the men who saw it would have invented fairy tales to account for it, I say again, if it had not been for that which was within them.

They said, all of them, and it was certain now that they spoke the truth, that in the moment of the vision, every pain and ache and malady in their bodies had passed away. One man had been vilely drunk on venomous spirit, procured at "Jobson's Hole" down by the Cardiff Docks. He was horribly ill; he had crawled up from his bunk for a little fresh air; and in an instant his horrors and his deadly nausea had left him. Another man was almost desperate with the raging hammering pain of an abscess on a tooth; he says that when the red flame came near he felt as if a dull, heavy blow had fallen on his jaw, and then the pain was quite gone; he could scarcely believe that there had been any pain there.

And they all bear witness to an extraordinary exaltation of the senses. It is indescribable, this; for they cannot describe it. They are amazed, again; they do not in the least profess to know what happened; but there is no more possibility of shaking their evidence than there is a possibility of shaking the evidence of a man who says that water is wet and fire hot.

"I felt a bit queer afterwards," said one of them, "and I steadied myself by the mast, and I can't tell how I felt as I touched it. I didn't know that touching a thing like a mast could be better than a big drink when you're thirsty, or a soft pillow when you're sleepy."

I heard other instances of this state of things, as I must vaguely call it, since I do not know what else to call it. But I suppose we can all agree that to the man in average health, the average impact of the external world on his senses is a matter of indifference. The average impact; a harsh scream, the bursting of a motor tyre, any violent assault on the aural nerves will annoy him, and he may say “damn.” Then, on the other hand, the man who is not “fit” will easily be annoyed and irritated by someone pushing past him in a crowd, by the ringing of a bell, by the sharp closing of a book.

But so far as I could judge from the talk of these sailors, the average impact of the external world had become to them a fountain of pleasure. Their nerves were on edge, but an edge to receive exquisite sensuous impressions. The touch of the rough mast, for example; that was a joy far greater than is the joy of fine silk to some luxurious skins; they drank water and stared as if they had been *fins gourmets* tasting an amazing wine; the creak and whine of their ship on its slow way were as exquisite as the rhythm and song of a Bach fugue to an amateur of music.

And then, within; these rough fellows have their quarrels and strifes and variances and envyings like the rest of us; but that was all over between them that had seen the rosy light; old enemies shook hands heartily, and roared with laughter as they confessed one to another what fools they had been.

“I can’t exactly say how it has happened or what has happened at all,” said one, “but if you have all the world and the glory of it, how can you fight for fivepence?”

The church of Llantrisant is a typical example of a Welsh parish church, before the evil and horrible period of “restoration.”

This lower world is a palace of lies, and of all foolish lies there is none more insane than a certain vague fable about the mediæval freemasons, a fable which somehow imposed itself upon the cold intellect of Hallam the historian. The story is, in brief, that throughout the Gothic period, at any rate, the art and craft of church building were executed by wandering guilds of “freemasons,” possessed of various secrets of building and adornment, which they employed wherever they went. If this nonsense were true, the Gothic of Cologne would be as the Gothic of Colne, and the Gothic of Arles like to the Gothic of Abingdon. It is so grotesquely untrue that almost every county, let alone every country, has its distinctive style in Gothic architecture. Arfon is in the west of Wales; its churches have marks and features which distinguish them from the churches in the east of Wales.

The Llantrisant church has that primitive division between nave and chancel which only very foolish people decline to recognise as equivalent to the Oriental iconostasis and as the origin of the Western rood-screen. A solid wall divided the church into two portions; in the centre was a narrow opening with a rounded arch, through which those who sat towards the middle of the church could see the small, red-carpeted altar and the three roughly shaped lancet windows above it.

The "reading pew" was on the outer side of this wall of partition, and here the rector did his service, the choir being grouped in seats about him. On the inner side were the pews of certain privileged houses of the town and district.

On the Sunday morning the people were all in their accustomed places, not without a certain exultation in their eyes, not without a certain expectation of they knew not what. The bells stopped ringing, the rector, in his old-fashioned, ample surplice, entered the reading-desk, and gave out the hymn: "My God, and is Thy Table spread."

And, as the singing began, all the people who were in the pews within the wall came out of them and streamed through the archway into the nave. They took what places they could find up and down the church, and the rest of the congregation looked at them in amazement.

Nobody knew what had happened. Those whose seats were next to the aisle tried to peer into the chancel, to see what had happened or what was going on there. But somehow the light flamed so brightly from the windows above the altar, those being the only windows in the chancel, one small lancet in the south wall excepted, that no one could see anything at all.

"It was as if a veil of gold adorned with jewels was hanging there," one man said; and indeed there are a few odds and scraps of old painted glass left in the eastern lancets.

But there were few in the church who did not hear now and again voices speaking beyond the veil.

CHAPTER VI. OLWEN'S DREAM

THE WELL-TO-DO AND dignified personages who left their pews in the chancel of Llantrisant Church and came hurrying into the nave could give no explanation of what they had done. They felt, they said, that they had to go, and to go quickly; they were driven out, as it were, by a secret, irresistible command. But all who were present in the church that morning were amazed, though all exulted in their hearts; for they, like the sailors who saw the rose of fire on the waters, were filled with a joy that was literally ineffable, since they could not utter it or interpret it to themselves.

And they too, like the sailors, were transmuted, or the world was transmuted for them. They experienced what the doctors call a sense of *bien être* but a *bien être* raised, to the highest power. Old men felt young again, eyes that had been growing dim now saw clearly, and saw a world that was like Paradise, the same world, it is true, but a world rectified and glowing, as if an inner flame shone in all things, and behind all things.

And the difficulty in recording this state is this, that it is so rare an experience that no set language to express it is in existence. A shadow of its raptures and ecstasies is found in the highest poetry; there are phrases in ancient books telling of the Celtic saints that dimly hint at it; some of the old Italian masters of painting had known it, for the light of it shines in their skies and about the battlements of their cities that are founded on magic hills. But these are but broken hints.

It is not poetic to go to Apothecaries' Hall for similes. But for many years I kept by me an article from the *Lancet* or the *British Medical Journal* — I forget which — in which a doctor gave an account of certain experiments he had conducted with a drug called the Mescal Button, or Anhelonium Lewinii. He said that while under the influence of the drug he had but to shut his eyes, and immediately before him there would rise incredible Gothic cathedrals, of such majesty and splendour and glory that no heart had ever conceived. They seemed to surge from the depths to the very heights of heaven, their spires swayed amongst the clouds and the stars, they were fretted with admirable imagery. And as he gazed, he would presently become aware that all the stones were living stones, that they were quickening and palpitating, and then that they were glowing jewels, say, emeralds, sapphires, rubies, opals, but of hues that the mortal eye had never seen.

That description gives, I think, some faint notion of the nature of the transmuted world into which these people by the sea had entered, a world quickened and glorified and full of pleasures. Joy and wonder were on all faces; but the deepest joy and the greatest wonder were on the face of the rector. For he had heard through the veil the Greek word for “holy,” three times repeated. And he, who had once been a horrified assistant at High Mass in a foreign church, recognised the perfume of incense that filled the place from end to end.

It was on that Sunday night that Olwen Phillips of Croeswen dreamed her wonderful dream. She was a girl of sixteen, the daughter of small farming people, and for many months she had been doomed to certain death. Consumption, which flourishes in that damp, warm climate, had laid hold of her; not only her lungs but her whole system was a mass of tuberculosis. As is common enough, she had enjoyed many fallacious brief recoveries in the early stages of the disease, but all hope had long been over, and now for the last few weeks she had seemed to rush vehemently to death. The doctor had come on the Saturday morning, bringing with him a colleague. They had both agreed that the girl’s case was in its last stages. “She cannot possibly last more than a day or two,” said the local doctor to her mother. He came again on the Sunday morning and found his patient perceptibly worse, and soon afterwards she sank into a heavy sleep, and her mother thought that she would never wake from it.

The girl slept in an inner room communicating with the room occupied by her father and mother. The door between was kept open, so that Mrs. Phillips could hear her daughter if she called to her in the night. And Olwen called to her mother that night, just as the dawn was breaking. It was no faint summons from a dying bed that came to the mother’s ears, but a loud cry that rang through the house, a cry of great gladness. Mrs. Phillips started up from sleep in wild amazement, wondering what could have happened. And then she saw Olwen, who had not been able to rise from her bed for many weeks past, standing in the doorway in the faint light of the growing day. The girl called to her mother: “Mam! mam! It is all over. I am quite well again.”

Mrs. Phillips roused her husband, and they sat up in bed staring, not knowing on earth, as they said afterwards, what had been done with the world. Here was their poor girl wasted to a shadow, lying on her death-bed, and the life sighing from her with every breath, and her voice, when she last uttered it, so weak that one had to put one’s ear to her mouth. And here in a few hours she stood up before them; and even in that faint light they could see that she was changed almost beyond knowing. And, indeed, Mrs. Phillips said that for a moment or two she fancied that the Germans must have come and killed them in their sleep, and so they were all dead together. But Olwen called, out again, so the mother lit a candle and got up and went tottering across the room, and there was Olwen all gay and plump again, smiling with shining eyes. Her mother led her into her own room, and set down the candle there, and felt her daughter’s flesh, and burst into prayers and tears of wonder and delight, and thanksgivings, and held the girl again to be sure that she was not deceived. And then Olwen told her dream, though she thought it was not a dream.

She said she woke up in the deep darkness, and she knew the life was fast going from her. She could not move so much as a finger, she tried to cry out, but no sound came from her lips. She felt that in another instant the whole world would fall from her — her heart was full of agony. And as the last breath was passing her lips, she heard a very faint, sweet sound, like the tinkling of a silver bell. It came from far away, from over by Ty-newydd. She forgot her agony and listened, and even then, she says, she felt the swirl of the world as it came back to her. And the sound of the bell swelled and grew louder, and it thrilled all through her body, and the life was in it. And as the bell rang and trembled in her ears, a faint light touched the wall of her room and reddened, till the whole room was full of rosy fire. And then she saw standing before her bed three men in blood-coloured robes with shining faces. And one man held a golden bell in his hand. And the second man held up something shaped like the top of a table. It was like a great jewel, and it was of a blue colour, and there were rivers of silver and of gold running through it and flowing as quick streams flow, and there were pools in it as if violets had been poured out into water, and then it was green as the sea near the shore, and then it was the sky at night with all the stars shining, and then the sun and the moon came down and washed in it. And the third man held up high above this a cup that was like a rose on fire; “there was a great burning in it, and a dropping of blood in it, and a red cloud above it, and I saw a great secret. And I heard a voice that sang nine times, ‘Glory and praise to the Conqueror of Death, to the Fountain of Life immortal.’ Then the red light went from the wall, and it was all darkness, and the bell rang faint again by Capel Teilo, and then I got up and called to you.”

The doctor came on the Monday morning with the death certificate in his pocket-book, and Olwen ran out to meet him. I have quoted his phrase in the first chapter of this record: “A kind of resurrection of the body.” He made a most careful examination of the girl; he has stated that he found that every trace of disease had disappeared. He left on the Sunday morning a patient entering into the coma that precedes death, a body condemned utterly and ready for the grave. He met at the garden gate on the Monday morning a young woman in whom life sprang up like a fountain, in whose body life laughed and rejoiced as if it had been a river flowing from an unending well.

Now this is the place to ask one of those questions — there are many such — which cannot be answered. The question is as to the continuance of tradition; more especially as to the continuance of tradition among the Welsh Celts of today. On the one hand, such waves and storms have gone over them. The wave of the heathen Saxons went over them, then the wave of Latin mediævalism, then the waters of Anglicanism; last of all the flood of their queer Calvinistic Methodism, half Puritan, half pagan. It may well be asked whether any memory can possibly have survived such a series of deluges. I have said that the old people of Llantrisant had their tales of the Bell of Teilo Sant; but these were but vague and broken recollections. And then there is the name by which the “strangers” who were seen in the market-place were known; that is more precise. Students of the Graal legend know that the keeper of the Graal in the romances is the “King Fisherman,” or the “Rich Fisherman”; students of Celtic hagiology know that it was prophesied before the birth of Dewi (or David) that he should be “a man of aquatic life,” that another legend tells how a little child, destined to be a saint, was discovered on a stone in the river, how through his childhood a fish for his nourishment was found on that stone every day, while another saint, Ilar, if I remember, was expressly known as “The Fisherman.” But has the memory of all this persisted in the church-going and chapel-going people of Wales at the present day? It is difficult to say. There is the affair of the Healing Cup of Nant Eos, or Tregaron Healing Cup, as it is also called. It is only a few years ago since it was shown to a wandering harper, who treated it lightly, and then spent a wretched night, as he said, and came back penitently and was left alone with the sacred vessel to pray over it, till “his mind was at rest.” That was in 1887.

Then for my part — I only know modern Wales on the surface, I am sorry to say — I remember three or four years ago speaking to my temporary landlord of certain relics of Saint Teilo, which are supposed to be in the keeping of a particular family in that country. The landlord is a very jovial, merry fellow, and I observed with some astonishment that his ordinary, easy manner was completely altered as he said, gravely, “That will be over there, up by the mountain,” pointing vaguely to the north. And he changed the subject, as a Freemason changes the subject.

There the matter lies, and its appositeness to the story of Llantrisant is this: that the dream of Olwen Phillips was, in fact, the Vision of the Holy Graal.

CHAPTER VII. THE MASS OF THE SANGRAAL

“*FFEIRIADWYR MELCISIDEC! FFEIRIADWYR Melcisidec!*” shouted the old Calvinistic Methodist deacon with the grey beard. “Priesthood of Melchizedek! Priesthood of Melchizedek!”

And he went on:

“The Bell that is like *y glwys yr angel ym mharadwys* — the joy of the angels in Paradise — is returned; the Altar that is of a colour that no men can discern is returned, the Cup that came from Syon is returned, the ancient Offering is restored, the Three Saints have come back to the church of the *tri sant*, the Three Holy Fishermen are amongst us, and their net is full. *Gogoniant, gogoniant* — glory, glory!”

Then another Methodist began to recite in Welsh a verse from Wesley’s hymn.

God still respects Thy sacrifice,
Its savour sweet doth always please;
The Offering smokes through earth and skies,
Diffusing life and joy and peace;
To these Thy lower courts it comes
And fills them with Divine perfumes.

The whole church was full, as the old books tell, of the odour of the rarest spiceries. There were lights shining within the sanctuary, through the narrow archway.

This was the beginning of the end of what befell at Llantrisant. For it was the Sunday after that night on which Olwen Phillips had been restored from death to life. There was not a single chapel of the Dissenters open in the town that day. The Methodists with their minister and their deacons and all the Nonconformists had returned on this Sunday morning to “the old hive.” One would have said, a church of the Middle Ages, a church in Ireland today. Every seat — save those in the chancel — was full, all the aisles were full, the churchyard was full; everyone on his knees, and the old rector kneeling before the door into the holy place.

Yet they can say but very little of what was done beyond the veil. There was no attempt to perform the usual service; when the bells had stopped the old deacon raised his cry, and priest and people fell down on their knees as they thought they heard a choir within singing “Alleluya, alleluya, alleluya.” And as the bells in the tower ceased ringing, there sounded the thrill of the bell from Syon, and the golden veil of sunlight fell across the door into the altar, and the heavenly voices began their melodies.

A voice like a trumpet cried from within the brightness.

Agyos, Agyos, Agyos.

And the people, as if an age-old memory stirred in them, replied:

Agyos yr Tâd, agyos yr Mab, agyos yr Yspryd Glan. Sant, sant, sant, Drindod sant vendigeid. Sanctus Arglwydd Dduw Sabaoth, Dominus Deus.

There was a voice that cried and sang from within the altar; most of the people had heard some faint echo of it in the chapels; a voice rising and falling and soaring in awful modulations that rang like the trumpet of the Last Angel. The people beat upon their breasts, the tears were like rain of the mountains on their cheeks; those that were able fell down flat on their faces before the glory of the veil. They said afterwards that men of the hills, twenty miles away, heard that cry and that singing, roaring upon them on the wind, and they fell down on their faces, and cried, “The offering is accomplished,” knowing nothing of what they said.

There were a few who saw three come out of the door of the sanctuary, and stand for a moment on the pace before the door. These three were in dyed vesture, red as blood. One stood before two, looking to the west, and he rang the bell. And they say that all the birds of the wood, and all the waters of the sea, and all the leaves of the trees, and all the winds of the high rocks uttered their voices with the ringing of the bell. And the second and the third; they turned their faces one to another. The second held up the lost altar that they once called Sapphirus, which was like the changing of the sea and of the sky, and like the immixture of gold and silver. And the third heaved up high over the altar a cup that was red with burning and the blood of the offering.

And the old rector cried aloud then before the entrance:

Bendigeid yr Offeren yn oes oesoedd — blessed be the Offering unto the age of ages.

And then the Mass of the Sangraal was ended, and then began the passing out of that land of the holy persons and holy things that had returned to it after the long years. It seemed, indeed, to many that the thrilling sound of the bell was in their ears for days, even for weeks after that Sunday morning. But thenceforth neither bell nor altar nor cup was seen by anyone; not openly, that is, but only in dreams by day and by night. Nor did the people see Strangers again in the market of Llantrisant, nor in the lonely places where certain persons oppressed by great affliction and sorrow had once or twice encountered them.

But that time of visitation will never be forgotten by the people. Many things happened in the nine days that have not been set down in this record — or legend. Some of them were trifling matters, though strange enough in other times. Thus a man in the town who had a fierce dog that was always kept chained up found one day that the beast had become mild and gentle.

And this is odder: Edward Davies, of Lanafon, a farmer, was roused from sleep one night by a queer yelping and barking in his yard. He looked out of the window and saw his sheep-dog playing with a big fox; they were chasing each other by turns, rolling over and over one another, "cutting such capers as I did never see the like," as the astonished farmer put it. And some of the people said that during this season of wonder the corn shot up, and the grass thickened, and the fruit was multiplied on the trees in a very marvellous manner.

More important, it seemed, was the case of Williams, the grocer; though this may have been a purely natural deliverance. Mr. Williams was to marry his daughter Mary to a smart young fellow from Carmarthen, and he was in great distress over it. Not over the marriage itself, but because things had been going very badly with him for some time, and he could not see his way to giving anything like the wedding entertainment that would be expected of him. The wedding was to be on the Saturday — that was the day on which the lawyer, Lewis Prothero, and the farmer, Philip James, were reconciled — and this John Williams, without money or credit, could not think how shame would not be on him for the meagreness and poverty of the wedding feast. And then on the Tuesday came a letter from his brother, David Williams, Australia, from whom he had not heard for fifteen years. And David, it seemed, had been making a great deal of money, and was a bachelor, and here was with his letter a paper good for a thousand pounds: "You may as well enjoy it now as wait till I am dead." This was enough, indeed, one might say; but hardly an hour after the letter had come the lady from the big house (Plas Mawr) drove up in all her grandeur, and went into the shop and said, "Mr. Williams, your daughter Mary has always been a very good girl, and my husband and I feel that we must give her some little thing on her wedding, and we hope she'll be very happy." It was a gold watch worth fifteen pounds. And after Lady Watcyn, advances the old doctor with a dozen of port, forty years upon it, and a long sermon on how to decant it. And the old rector's old wife brings to the beautiful dark girl two yards of creamy lace, like an enchantment, for her wedding veil, and tells Mary how she wore it for her own wedding fifty years ago; and the squire, Sir Watcyn, as if his wife had not been already with a fine gift, calls from his horse, and brings out Williams and barks like a dog at him, "Goin' to have a weddin', eh, Williams? Can't have a weddin' without champagne, y' know; wouldn't be legal, don't y' know. So look out for a couple of cases." So Williams tells the story of the gifts; and certainly there was never so famous a wedding in Llantrisant before.

All this, of course, may have been altogether in the natural order; the "glow," as they call it, seems more difficult to explain. For they say that all through the nine days, and indeed after the time had ended, there never was a man weary or sick at heart in Llantrisant, or in the country round it. For if a man felt that his work of the body or the mind was going to be too much for his strength, then there would come to him of a sudden a warm glow and a thrilling all over him and he felt as strong as a giant, and happier than he had ever been in his life before, so that lawyer and hedger each rejoiced in the task that was before him, as if it were sport and play.

And much more wonderful than this or any other wonders was forgiveness, with love to follow it. There were meetings of old enemies in the market-place and in the street that made the people lift up their hands and declare that it was as if one walked the miraculous streets of Syon.

But as to the "phenomena," the occurrences for which, in ordinary talk, we should reserve the word "miraculous"? Well, what do we know? The question that I have already stated comes up again, as to the possible survival of old tradition in a kind of dormant, or torpid, semi-conscious state. In other words, did the people "see" and "hear" what they expected to see and hear? This point, or one similar to it, occurred in a debate between Andrew Lang and Anatole France as to the visions of Joan of Arc. M. France stated that when Joan saw St. Michael, she saw the traditional archangel of the religious art of her day, but to the best of my belief Andrew Lang proved that the visionary figure Joan described was not in the least like the fifteenth-century conception of St. Michael. So, in the case of Llantrisant, I have stated that there was a sort of tradition about the Holy Bell of Teilo Sant; and it is, of course, barely possible that some vague notion of the Graal Cup may have reached even Welsh country folks through Tennyson's Idylls. But so far I see no reason to suppose that these people had ever heard of the portable altar (called Sapphirus in William of Malmesbury) or of its changing colours "that no man could discern."

And then there are the other questions of the distinction between hallucination and vision, of the average duration of one and the other, and of the possibility of collective hallucination. If a number of people all see (or think they see) the same appearances, can this be merely hallucination? I believe there is a leading case on the matter, which concerns a number of people seeing the same appearance on a church wall in Ireland; but there is, of course, this difficulty, that one may be hallucinated and communicate his impression to the others, telepathically.

But at the last, what do we know?

The Shining Pyramid, 1923

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The Priest and the Barber

‘IT IS MIGHTY well,’ said the priest, ‘but now we are in York Street, let us see this library of which you have told us so much.’ ‘With all my heart,’ answered the barber, and calling the housekeeper, he bade her light the way to the room containing so many curious books. They went up more flights of stairs than I can number, in short the sky was not far off, when the housekeeper stopped before a door and presently unlocked it. This she did, not without terror, knowing that many of the books treated of Magic, Necromancy, Spells, and Incantations, but the priest told her not to be afraid, since he was a Bachelor of Arts, and had his exorcisms on the tip of his tongue. He said this in jest, for he knew that books seldom hurt men in any other way than by sending them to sleep, and without more ado they all went in, and setting down the candle, began to look around them. And the first book that Master Nicholas the barber put into the priest’s hands was a piece written with the pen, being the last two books of Ptolemy’s *Quadripartite or Tetrabiblion*. ‘This,’ said the Licentiate, ‘seems a thing of mystery, for I suppose that the *Quadripartite* was the first work on Astrology, of any account, written in the learned tongues; and from it have arisen an infinite swarm of commentaries, paraphrases, volumes of cloudy annotations, and the like. And from its weight and authority it has been done into all our modern languages.’ ‘That is true,’ said the barber, ‘and this volume was first translated into the Latin by Melancthon, and from his Latin into English. But I see here another version of it, the four books translated by one James Wilson; and yet another, with notes, by James Ashmead. But tell me, Master Licentiate, what is this book I have, the title of which I cannot read, for I do not know Chinese.’ ‘Nor is it necessary that you should,’ answered the priest, ‘but for all that, this writing is not Chinese, nor yet Arabic, but good Greek, and spells: *Christologia*. This is a curious book, and should be curiously kept, for it is by that learned and exact divine, Doctor Butler, Bishop of Durham, who wrote the *Analogy*. It is said that he began to write this piece to confute Astrologers, and ended by becoming one himself. But what are those books bound in boards on that shelf at the back?’ Taking the candle, the barber began to examine the books in question and to read out their titles. 'Here,' said he, 'are the Select Works of one Porpery, or Borphery — .' 'Porphyry, you would say,' struck in the Licentiate, 'I know him well, though I do not understand him, since he is an obscure writer. And in this volume, I perceive, is contained the 'Care of the Nymphs,' wherein he makes old Homer as fantastic as himself; but yet his allegorical notions are beautifully set forth, and well contrived. But the translation, I see, was done by Thomas Taylor, the famous Platonist, who is reported to have sacrificed a bull to Jove in the back parlour of his lodging.' 'And here,' said the barber, as he groped in his dusty and dark corner, 'are more translations by this same Taylor, who indeed seems to have been a very notable botcher of ancient doublets. This is the *Fragments of Ancient Pythagoreans*, this, Plato's *Dialogues*, and here we have *The Lost Writings of Proclus*, surnamed the Successor. Pray, Master Licentiate, where do these Successors live, for I know no family of that name?' 'You mistake, you mistake, Master Nicholas,' said the priest, not without smiling, 'this Proclus was the successor of Plato, and (so he said) the last link of the Hermaic Chain. But let us have done with him, for I see on the shelf *The Triumphal Chariot of Antimony*, by Basilius Valentinus, with *Anima Magica Abscondita*, and *Lumen de Lumine*, by Thomas Vaughan, called in Alchemy, Eugenius Philaletbes. And just beyond is the *Victorious Philosophical Stone*, and, by St. Chrysostom! *The Comte de Gabalis*. All these, Master Nicholas, are exceeding choice reading, and books not to be found every day. But while I dip into these, do you put that great folio to the question, for though it be a big book, it may chance to be a good one also.' And while the barber struggled with the folio aforesaid, drawing it from under quartos, octavos, and duodecimos innumerable, the priest lifting his eyes happened to catch sight of a volume which made him put back *Lumen de Lumine* into darkness. 'A jewel! a jewel! Master Nicholas,' cried he, in so high a tone, that the barber left his task and came running, and said, 'By what chance could a jewel or anything of worth come in a room where there are only books?' 'I would not say,' answered the Licentiate, 'that I have here the shining and unconquerable diamond, or any store of right orient pearls, or mystical opals; but for all that, I have a book full joyous. It is, in fine, the treatise of Henry Cornelius Agrippa, or Herr Trippa, as Rabelais styles him, on *The Vanity and Uncertainty of all the Sciences and Arts*. Truly this is *liber jucundissim* us, and full of curious learning also. But bring hither that great folio and open it on the table.' And when the book was brought into the light, it was found to be ‘Zoega de origine et usu Obeliscorum,’ and the priest began to examine it with great curiosity, for it had many plates of obelisks, choicely printed. However, he is not recorded to have said anything about this book, or concerning obelisks; and in this it would have been well if others had followed his example of silence, for few can speak of obelisks and to the point at the same time.

But while the Licentiate was investigating the obelisks Master Nicholas was by no means idle, and presently called out, ‘Here, master priest, I have found a whole nest of curious books, and all engrossed by hand, and painted and adorned with figures, but as easy to read as print.’ ‘Declare to me the titles of some of them,’ answered the priest, ‘and we shall see if they be of any account.’ Forthwith the barber began: ‘*Collectanea Chimica: a Collection of Rare and Curious Treatises on Hermetic Science*, *Mr. Yardley’s Process for Making Gold*, *Book of the Offices and Orders of Spirits*, *Key of Solomon the King*,’ and would have gone on had not the priest stopped him, that he might himself look into these volumes. But as he turned the leaves over, admiring the seals, pentacles, magic writings, circles, figures of the Cabala, and the like wonders of Theurgy, there slipped out a sheet of paper closely written on in a fine character. ‘What is that?’ said the barber, as the priest picked it up and began to read it; but he got no answer for some while. At last the priest said: ‘This, Master Nicholas, is a Relation of an Interview with a Spirit, showing how a man conjured a demon to appear and how they spoke together. But put it back in the volume of Divine Magic whence it came, since my blood begins to run cold. And see, what is that worthy folio yonder?’ ‘This,’ said the barber, ‘is *The Herball*, by Gerarde; and, as I am a Catholic Christian, here are images of all manner of sweet and wholesome herbs set in lively portraiture on every page. To speak the truth, this is just as if I walked in my own garden; why, I could almost pluck this sprig of borage and put it in a cup of wine (would that I had such, for this learned dust makes my throat mighty dry). And Lord! here is bugloss, of which a neighbour of mine makes so comfortable a syrup, and thyme, and vervain, and balm.’ It is probable that Master Nicholas would in this fashion have run over the whole Generall Historie of Plants, ‘from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall,’ but the priest cut him short with, ‘Master Nicholas, Master Nicholas, we are come here to see books, not to hear nor to deliver lectures and discourses, unless, indeed, I have occasion to speak a word in season, to do which is a privilege that pertains to bachelors and doctors. Do you, therefore, instead of prating, proclaim, like a King-at-Armes, the style and title of the several books.’ Forthwith the barber began: ‘*Oriatrike, or Physick Refined, being a new Rise and Progress of Philosophy and Medicine for the Destruction of Diseases and the Prolongation of Life*.’ ‘Stay,’ said the Licentiate, ‘since this seems no common book, pray declare who wrote it.’ ‘One Val Helmont, it appears,’ answered the barber. ‘Say not one Val Helmont, for there is but one, and a most ingenious, subtle doctor. In his *Oriatrike* and his *Ternary of Paradoxes* you will find strange, unheard-of curiosities; as the Birth of Tartar in Wine and the Deliramenta Catarrhi, which means the Ravings of the Rheum. But read on.’ ‘*The Discovery of Witchcraft, wherein is displayed Lewde Unchristian Practices of Witchmongers*.’ ‘That, Master Nicholas, is Scot’s *Discovery*, and a kind of barn where conjurations, horoscopes, witches’ Sabbaths, necromancies, and the like are stacked roof high.’ ‘That were an ill barn to sleep in on an Eve of May. But I have here a book that pleases me, for it is the *Prognostications of Nostradamus*, and that, I am sure, must be a very comfortable book.’ ‘It is so,’ answered the priest; ‘but do not read it, neighbour, for fear you should also begin to prognosticate, and so turn from an honest barber into a false prophet. Instead read me the title of that small volume you are handling.’ ‘*The Open Entrance to the Shut Palace of the King*.’ ‘I know the book, and have read it in the Latin, but can scarce say the entrance is altogether an open one. Rather it is a wonderful maze, adorned with mystical figures that shadow forth the Great Work. But what is that chest of books that you have opened?’ ‘It seems to me,’ said Master Nicholas, ‘that this chest is full of Magnetisms, Somnambulisms, and Phrenologies.’ ‘I think you are right,’ said the priest, as he picked out one or two of the volumes, ‘and in the chest they shall for the present time remain, except this Swedenborg and Mesmer, which seem noteworthy.’ ‘But I wonder by what strange chance this old book called Sc*iographia, or the Art of Shadows*, has got among these modern tracts on magnetisms, mesmerisms, and somnambulisms.’ (This came from the barber, who should have been an Inquisitor.) ‘It were hard indeed to say,’ answered the priest, ‘what shadows have to do with such grave and weighty books; but I see this is a work on making dials, printed in the seventeenth century, which may be called the age of dials, as this present time is the age of clocks. But what have we here? by Virgil’s tomb none less than Delno on Magic, and in vellum too. These, Master Nicholas, are, I verily believe, the most curious and wonderful six books in the world, fitted out with all manner of strange stories and quaint, stupend relations. For, believe me, the good father Delno was not like one of our modern scribblers, who pick here and pick there, mingling scraps of all sorts like a cook making a stew, but rather one of those learned persons called by the author of Pantagruel quintessencers, or extractors of fifth essence, who do everything judiciously and admirably. Take him from my hands and lay him back softly in his stall, for fear he should fascinate me, and with his incantations root my eyes to his page.' But as the barber did this, whether he was over careful, or whether it was so fated, a whole battalion of books slipped out, and, without crying 'Santiago,' came charging on his skull, like men in mail. 'Why this,' said the barber, as he rubbed his pate, 'is just as if the church tower or some such mass of masonry had fallen on one.' 'You say truly,' answered the priest, picking up the volumes that had well-nigh overwhelmed the barber, 'for here are whole hosts of masonic books concerning the Royal Arch Degree, the Flower Shushan, the Divine name, and the like secret matters of the Craft. But cheer up, it was not fated you should die so, as you may see, if you will, in this Complete Book of Knowledge, showing the Effects of the Planets, also Pythagoras's Wheel of Fortune, Palmistry, and the Interpretation of Dreams. But here I see all the wonderful works of Jacob Behmen, that Prince and Prodigy of all Theosophers. Here we behold, like Daphnis in Virgil, both the clouds and the stars, the Aurora, the Tables of Divine Revelation, and the Discourse of Souls, all irradiated in a wonderful and awful light. But read on, what have you there?' 'An*ima Astrologiæ; or a Guide for Astrologers*, by Mr. William Lilly, printed in 1676 'I know the book well,' answered the Licentiate; 'in it are the one hundred and forty-six Considerations of Guido Bonatus, and the Choicest Aphorisms of the Seven Segments of Jerom Cardan of Milan; but this edition of 1676 I have not seen before, since it is of the rarest.' 'And here, Master Licentiate, is another book by this same Lilly — namely, his *Christian Astrology*, modestly treated of in Three Books; and at hand I see a whole pile of thick and glossy books called *Ephemeris*, a word I do not remember to have heard before.' 'It is merely Greek for an Almanack,' the priest answered, 'and the plural is Ephemerides, though indeed it is not necessary for you, who are a barber, to know so much.' 'But pray, sir, among so many curious books, treating of wonderful arts, is there no pleasant and easy work showing a man how to live his hundred years or so with less trouble than many take now to live to fifty or sixty?' 'We have seen something of this sort already, but I have here a choicer way,' answered the priest, 'namely, *Hermippus Redivivus*, and a merry, witty treatise it is. But I am grievously afraid your wife would mislike the method, and would have you reinforce your radical heat and moisture after some other fashion.' Now, as may be imagined, all this precise scrutiny had not been done in a moment; and as the barber began to say: 'I think, Master Licentiate, we might do worse than cast our eyes over the books in those top-shelves yonder,' the housekeeper adjured them from below to come down presently, unless they both had a mind to pass the rest of the night in cock-loft land. And so, with many regrets that they could not linger any more in this dusty and fantastic realm, the Licentiate and the barber went out and left the books in darkness.

The Spagyric Quest of Beroaldus Cosmopolita

WHEN THE WORTHY quintessencer and most respectable traveller in the subterranean Heaven, Master Beroalde, of fragrant and delectable memory, had reduced into elemental powder and sophospagyrick dust all his worldly goods and found himself so sophisticated, metallurgised, suffused, salivated, and petrobolised that he had not a crown in his pouch, he cried out without caring who heard him, *Accursed be my furnace*, and proceeded to drive his servant away, which was wrong, for he was a canon, and as such should not have endeavoured to be better than his neighbours, who were all canons, and who all kept serving-maids. Hence we may conclude that he was extremely annoyed and desperately despairing, which indeed was the case, for he had passed the following articles through the furnace without any result:

Item — Twelve meadows by the river.*Item* — A house, by the same.*Item* — Three orchards.*Item* — A vineyard.*Item* — A medlar tree, bearing one hundred sacks of medlars every year.*Item* — Three cows, whose tails had been docked as a sign of mortification, to show that they were theological animals.*Item* — A house with a garden in the best street of Tours (where can one find in these days such a house and such a garden as this was?).*Item* — Three thousand crowns; and there remained not a farthing, or an apple, or a wine-flask, or a blade of grass, or a medlar. — *Amen*.

The devil take those who endeavour to lead us the wrong way and make us meddle with metals, or medals; persons whose throats are dry with smoke so that they cannot taste good wine! Let us leave such men and their devices and search for the delectable quintessence of the true Alchemy and the first matter of the world, which cannot thus be obtained, since it is mystagorical and resides in the mountains of the Moon. Be silent! This is the true path, and it was opened to the Canon Beroaldus that very night in which he cursed his furnace; and for seven days he was not to be found in his stall, nor anywhere else. At this much popular indignation was aroused, for his disappearance was connected with his sending away his poor girl, who had served him well and theologically, and had done her best. But people said that the produce of his own country was not good enough for Beroaldus, and he was gone to Paris to see what he could find. There were some in the chapter who said he had thereby offended ecclesiastically, and should be admonished to be content with what came to his hand, like the countryman of whom it is said that on whatever, or whomsoever, he put his hand, he did it with all his might. Some of the canons, however, thought differently, and a dispute arose *concerning warming-pans*. (I make no apology for using theological terms, for the story is a theological one.)

Stay! Let us argue no more, but search for the cause of things, which is to be found in certain circular vessels well known to œnologists, and the brethren of the Holy Jar. This treatise teaches the true way of the Spagyrick Quest, and is the most opuscular of all opusculums, *opus-coleorum*, as an old canon used to call it, but he lived in the old scholastic days, when ecclesiastics could dispute in mode and figure.

Beroaldus then having foresworn his furnace, became in a state to receive grace *ex congruo*; which is a theological mystery not to be disputed, though some persons have not been able to understand how he could receive anything *ex congruo* after sending away his maid. Peace! do not tamper with the faith, or your fate will be like that of the student who undertook to see a girl named Faith home from the fair, and was afterwards burnt alive for heresy: he had tampered with Faith. Let this be a lesson to you.

The Canon sat alone in his room, which smelt like the Bottomless Pit smells on melting-day when there is a heavy consignment of fat heretics, smug water-drinkers, and blasphemers of joyous diversions to be boiled down. His furnace was empty; the room was dark, and the books sat still on the shelves, looking about as lively as an Œcumenical Council, a row of empty bottles, or the Three Barbels on the sign. Thus dark and drear sat Beroalde in his room, when, as he gazed before him, expecting I do not know what, there rose a light at the window, which grew brighter and brighter, fumes of sweet-scented vapour, smelling like the incense at the Introit, gathered below and above and all around the light so glorious, and in the midst and inmost brightness Beroalde saw written these high and famous sentences, which are the essence, groundwork, foundation *ante sæcula*, interior meaning, full commentary, perspicuous gloss, hypothetical symbol, cabalistic import, and gnostic mystigorification of all tomes of true science and registers of ancient wisdom. It is certain that on the Tomb of the Scarab, on the Gate of the Abyss of Demiourgos, on the tables of the Sephiroth, near to Ayin-Soph, in the lightened places of the Subterranean Heaven, and in the Authentic Formula of the first matter of the world, this magistral breviate is inscribed. For it means — Hush! let us have it first, and the meaning will become apparent. On the outer circle was written: — ALGAR + ALGASTNA +++ AMRTET +. On the inner circle was written: — TE + DAGIRAM @ ADAM @. And on the inmost circle was written the four letters R T N T. There! you who have been working at the bellows and calling on Baal, you who have ridden post through wet and dry, up hill and down dale in Valentine's Triumphal Chariot, and have never reached the Mons Magorum Invisibilis, you who have taken Our Sulphur, Our Salt, Our Earth, and Our Mercury, you who live on Cabalistic Sauces and drink the juices of the Green Dragon, you know now how to philosophise to some purpose, and by philosophise I mean the obtaining of the Philosophical Stone; the source of which is contained in the letters of the above juicy inscription or conscription, as the Penitentiarius, who was noted for beginning everything with *con*, would have called it. You ask why I call the above inscription or conscription juicy? I bid you who ask go and search in that rich treasure-house of conceptions, interludes, furnaces, fountains, sauces, records, mirrors, high tomes of weighty meaning, and lamps for sages to lanternise withal, where our Great Master dispenses wisdom in eternal paraphrases, while the great golden clouds cease their flight to listen to him. There are stored in golden vessels those juices which alone avail to the completion of the Spagyrick Quest, which are called in good lingo the Sum of the Stars. Wait! let us come to our purpose. The Canon got up from his chair and gazed at the appearance like dogs gaze at the full moon, and then he saw a hand pointing to a wheel of fire at one side of the circle, and then another hand beside it, and strange to say he saw two arms which appeared to pertain to the two hands. 'Good,' said he to himself, 'now we are getting at it; they will bring you strong wine if you drink all day.' When he had gazed till the words of light were deeply printed in the hollows of his skull, all of a sudden the whole blaze vanished out of sight, and instead of it there was the sun shining in at the window, though it was an hour after sunset. Beroalde, the Spagyrist, stared long enough at this marvel, as he thought somebody must have been saying mass backwards over him; but his wonder was much increased when he heard a mellow voice saying ‘Shall we set out now?’ He looked at the place where the voice came from, and there he saw a short thick-set man, yellow-skinned and black-haired, with a mouth as large as a cow’s, and eyes of fire. He wore a square cap and scholar’s gown, and stood just under the window where the vision had appeared. ‘Who are you, and where should we go?’ said the Canon, in whose body butter was flowing. ‘I am sent,’ said the short man, ‘to lead you to the place where what is below is that which is above, where the earth is separated from the fire, where the brood of the crow change their feathers and are made like unto doves, where is performed the engendering of the sun from the Philosophal Egg. For know that of your own wit you can never attain to this work, but in a manner you are found worthy. Follow me.’ Forthwith he touched the window and the glass melted away, and Beroalde followed him, and saw that from the window was built a very great flight of steps of white marble, that descended and went down, and was prolonged, extended, pursued, multiplied, and reduplicated, till it became black and invisible, and (as it was revealed) it consists only of seven steps added to one another in a certain mystic manner. And the guide said again, ‘Follow me, but look not to the right or to the left where is the Abyss, but only beyond and above.’ And Beroalde, looking beyond, saw only the stairs, and above he saw how the heaven was divided, and half of it was night with the moon and stars, and half of it was light with the sun shining. ‘This is the mystery of the heaven above the earth called celestial, we seek the mystery of the heaven below the earth called subterranean,’ said the guide; and forthwith he began to descend the stairs, Beroalde following closely behind him. Verily, it seemed as if they would never reach the deepest depth, as the king once observed on a notorious occasion, which cost some persons who had pushed the matter on their share of the royal favour. Well, but all things come to an end at last; wedding-nights, the generating of fools and of quintessencers, the dreams of dreamers, organ-sounds and singers’ voices; the pinnacles of the Cloud Castle of Rohalgo and the old Canon’s Easter sermon, and the journey across the Waste, do they not all cease? Truly they do, and, in one way or another, sleep. Amen. So then it came to pass that Beroalde and his guide came at last to the lowest stair, and the man in the scholar’s gown told the Canon to look round, and there he saw far off as far could be the top of the stair leading into his house, and the city of Tours with clouds all around it. This was a marvel, but the guide led him on through a narrow passage, which was quite dark, but short enough, and then he knocked at a door five times, and it was opened. And as it was being opened the guide whispered to Beroalde, ‘Enter into the Foursquare Garden, where all things are lawful, and here you shall learn what you desire.’ ‘Here comes the Spagyrist,’ cried out the porter, whom Beroalde knew very well, for he kept the *Three Puddings* in Tours; ‘come in, come in, most worthy sir, there are puddings enough here, and chitterlings, and sauces, and enough mustard for the Great Master himself, and a puncheonful of grapeguts. What the devil! Ora pro nobis in omnia sæcula sæculorum, amen, alleluia, alleluia; there are girls, too, Deo Gratias, the fields are ready for the harvest, ut bos locutus est in populo barbaro, O Domine feliposophidexterando rum.’ Beroalde made no answer to this intelligible discourse, for he was looking before him, and turning to his guide said to him, ‘Tell me, most admirable leader, what these things mean.’ ‘Call me Liripipiastor,’ answered he; ‘and come forward, and I will show everything to you, as you have indeed much to learn, and many doctrines wherewith to be indoctrinated. But tell me, before we go farther, can you answer me this: *In quo sit bonum vinum continendum*?’ ‘In botelus, et flaccis, et barillis, et tonnis,’ answered Beroalde, who was a learned metaphysician and jurist, and had taken a great part in the trial before the Cathedral Penitentiary of the woman accused of offending with a wine-skin. This great case, be it added, was tried before the Penitentiary Raoul de Fermeboise, lasted for two years, and resulted in the condemnation of the accused, whereby great tumults were excited among the Tourainian women, who considered the sentence as an unjust abbreviature of their liberties. The Canon therefore answered firmly, and looked the scholar in the face, but Master Liripipiastor said, ‘ ’Tis answered carnally and according to the wisdom of the flesh, which, as the Apostle teacheth, is accursed, such answers will not pass here. Come with me and hear how the matter stands.’ And Beroalde followed him, but what was it that he saw the meaning of which he craved to know? He saw the four-square garden. What is that? It is a garden of pleasure, of high discourse, of wisdom, of sages, of good wine, of philosophising, lanternising, symbolising, spagyrising, the garden of the old concoction and the new juice, of songs and melodies, where there are hundreds piping and hundreds playing on viols; it is a garden to look for maidens in. Did I say to find them? No; then do not interrupt me. It is a garden of games and pastimes and joyous diversions, where they play and extract fifth essence, and toss balls, and drink all day; in fine, it is a garden whence all good books proceed. What books are good? Why those which teach us in a thousand ways to laugh, and therefore contain all wisdom; books of concubines, multiplication, entrances into secret places, books full of merry demons who dance and twine about every page. It is a garden full of sun and shade, of groves and lawns, and hedgerows and rivulets, and pools, and wells; of marble seats and carven stalls, of rich stuffs, of halls, sculptures, towers, bells, chimes, pinnacles, galleries, courts, cupboards; a garden where they make green sauce all night. All these circumstances and pursuits made the Canon Beroalde wish to know about things, and the scholar Liripipiastor drew him through the throng who were amusing themselves to a well where the Great Master sat on a marble seat, and was discoursing to a few apart. And what a man was he, of what a noble presence, with long white beard and a cassock flowing royally about him like a king's robe. He made Beroalde look down, since the Canon had never met such a gaze before, and he asked, 'Who is this, Liripipiastor? Is he dogmatised sufficiently to come here?' 'He is the alchemist Beroalde, whom I led down the stairs to-night as he desires to attain the spagyrick quest.' 'Ha! ha! he comes from Tours, I swear, his father sold onions in the Rue Chaude; well, son, do you know in what good wine should be contained, or, in other words, what is the temple of good wine?' 'He lacks right knowledge on that point,' said Liripipiastor, 'for he says it is contained in botelus, et flaccis, et barillis, et tonnis; wherefore I have brought him to you to be instructed.' 'Listen, then, Beroalde, and you Liripipiastor, Grobiscornus, Rotifuntulus, and Patuloformus, and you other wenches. What, there are no wenches; well, bottles then, and let us see whether they are not *ejusdem substantiæ*. *Sic probatur!* What would be the use of bottles without openings? The wine would have to be drunk *inclusivè*; that is to say, it would be included in the bottles and secluded from you, therefore it would not be drunk at all; or, better still, it would be drunk, and not drunk, *ut probatum est*, which is a contradiction, *ergo non esse Deum*. What do you say to this, philosophasters and lanternisers? But let us return to our potage, or rather our *potus*. Bottles must have openings, *ut probatum est*, and so must girls, for if they had not openings they could not eat; therefore bottles and wenches are of the same substance, *ut probatum est*. Listen to that, you doggrelisers of good logic, and learn what it is to conclude in *primâ figurâ, modo Bacchi*. As I was saying, listen, you other bottles, and learn what is the temple of good wine. What is wine? It is the true *primum mobile* which turns the spheres. You will see that proved in Raymond Lully and Bernard of Trevisan, and Arnold de Villa Nova and Aristotle *De Gluc*, chapter three. Wine therefore contains the universe, and makes the planets dance and engender stars; and how can anything contain that which contains all things? Listen: this is a great mystery, not to be revealed to the vulgar, but only to the true tosspots of true poculations, who live vivified and permeated with right doctrine. Matter is contained in space, but the soul contains space, the clouds, the sun and the stars, the oceans, and the heavens. *Ergo*, the soul contains *bonum vinum*, and by soul I mean the belly; therefore the sage's belly is the temple of good wine, *ut probatum est*. And the corollary of this fundamental dogma is that the soul must be purged and prepared, cleansed, sanctified, mystagorified, and enlightened by the mystagorical preparation, which is mustard. Now you have heard the reason of these things; and we will now sanctify our souls, I mean drink good wine, or rather make that which is above descend to that which is below, or perform the transmutation of juice into laughter, or what you please.' 'Master,' said Liripipiastor, 'I heard a bottle chink from the well.' 'Hush, it is an oracle, a globular omen, a regurgitation, an influence from the spheres. Stoop down, Rotifuntulus, and listen to the voice from the well of science.' The young man, Rotifuntulus, who looked to Beroalde an angel of beauty, stooped down and put his ear to the bubbling well, and listened, but not a sound did Beroalde hear except the noise of the water. But the listener presently got up and said, 'The holy and omniscient oracle has been delivered in my ear of the word *Algarum*, and from inspection of the well I foresee that a transmutation is at hand.' 'Son,' said the Master to the alchemist, 'this is a word for you, and you are now about to learn the First Matter of the work. (Give me some more wine, for I am dry. Ah, ha! that smacks well, *nota bene*.) Know that the interpretation of the mystical and regenerating symbol and allegorised paraphrase *Algarum* (a word well known to the magicians, who make children with it; ask again how it is done) is as follows: IN THE FRUIT OF THE TREE OF THE SECOND JUICE, which indeed is evident, as in the word there are seven letters, which render these paraphrases so mystagorical that mixed with water they turn into wine. Let him listen to me if any sophister or spagyrist desire to know how to turn water into wine by the addition of paraphrases, since the method is contained in these discourses. But I have spoken enough: go, son, and seek for that which is in the fruit of the tree of the second juice.’ ‘Who will show me how this is to be performed?’ said the Canon. ‘Go, go, get into the midst of the garden and ask for the tree and it will be shown to you and everything else. *Pax vobiscum amen, venite compotemus*.’ At this Beroalde was compelled to depart, and, as it is related, he turned now to the right and now to the left and became entangled in a *Labyrinth* (for he was now without a guide) which would have put Dædalus to shame; it turned and returned a thousand times upon itself, and was so dark and vast a place that the Canon grew near to despair. But at last he came to a place where lamps were set, each lamp hanging by a golden chain, as it seemed, from empty space, and the light they gave him showed what was painted on the wall. And there was delineated in the most admirable colours and the most glorious gold the whole Operation of the Sons of Wisdom, or the Heavenly Marriage; proceeding from the First Concoction, the Birth of the Eagle, the Engendering of the Crow, the Balneum Solis, the Great Procession, the Torchbearers, the Storm at Night, the White Woman in the Purple Field, and the Son blessed of the Fire, so that Beroalde was utterly amazed, but yet without understanding, since he knew not the First Matter of the Work, nor how the White Woman could have copulation with the Red Man. So he wandered around and around in this Labyrinth, passing from Light to Dark and from Dark to Light, seeing now and again Pictures at the lasciviousness of which he was astonished, for he did not understand the spirit but only the letter. At last, weary and sick of all, he cried out, ‘O Domine Deus, if I could have a seat in the sun and a flask of wine I should be content, for this labyrinth is toil without knowledge.’ No sooner had he said this than he beheld a little door in the wall, and over it was written SOLUS INTROITUS IN V. S. D. M., and Beroalde lifted up the latch and passed through, and from black his garments had turned to white, and his hand feeling in the air closed upon a wine flask. Now, indeed, he had attained through the Labyrinth to the place called the Magician’s Heavenly Chaos, where the subterranean sun shines eternally, bringing the magic fruit to perfection. It was surrounded with a wall of trees, thick, high, and dark; it was a green meadow of the softest grass, with banks whereon to lie in the sunlight. In the midst Beroalde beheld the so famous Seven Fountains which are set about the Tree of the Second Juice, and are as follows, according to the description of the best authors.

The First is the fountain of the Spiritual Sol; it is a golden bowl, having carven on it the thousand names, the Process, the Multiplication, the Colour, the Immensity, the Depth, the Sound, the Voice, in short what is whispered at the Door. You understand what I mean; silence! This bowl is immeasurable, no one can say how broad it is; it is, in fact, a golden sea, welling up with an eternal spring; in the depths of its waters are all things reflected, the water is magical, a fluid in which to bathe most of the volumes that have been written.

The Second is the fountain of the Spiritual Luna, and contains the liquid from which beautiful girls with enticing shapes are produced by a quintessential process. In shape it is a spire of light, continually ascending, pointed like a spear, and having its base in the floods and waters. With a drop of this liquid of Luna a philosopher once anointed his flagon, and ever after it was full of wine.

The Third is the fountain of the Spiritual Venus, in shape a sphere, abounding and glowing with ruddy light. In the liquid of this sphere the Great Master beheld his Voyages and discovered the Way to Attain, for it contains all philosophies: in it may be seen the flights of all the Stars and the most precious secret of the Generation of Fools; a mystic matter; in it is delivered the sense of the words Kogx dmpax.

The Fourth is the fountain of the Spiritual Mercurius, the *Argent Vive*, full of a thick viscid and spermatic fluid which runs a race round a Bowl of Earth, and from it doves rise up continually and fly away into the heaven. I read in an ancient book that this liquor is the seed of the world and makes everything fertile; it was symbolised in those mysteries of Priapus, the Father of the Chitterlings, now counted obscene.

The Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh are not, as might be thought, Fountains of Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars, but are Mirrors in which each man sees what he desires; in them are cities, maidens, dances, clouds, stars, spires, phrases, allegories, treatises, breviates, tomes, songs and chanting, hieroglyphics, visions, and tennis-balls. Look in them for facetious sayings, you whose brains run dry; look for sunlight in the dark days, when a fine rain falls continually, these mirrors are magistral and enigmatical, fit only for sages.

While Beroalde was busily engaged in sucking in all these mysteries, without lifting an eye to what stood in the midst, he heard a voice saying, ‘First drink, and then demand what you will,’ and Beroalde saw an old man standing beside him, in a robe of ash-grey. ‘What shall I drink?’ asked the Canon. ‘Drink the volume of delectation in your hand; it is the true wine, the comfortable potation, the orthodox commentary; it is full of reasons of everything, it warms the skull, and fills its dark places with the sun.’ So Beroalde drank and became full of boldness, and said with great courage, ‘I come here in search of Algarum; otherwise what is contained in the fruit of the tree of the Second Juice.’ ‘Where do you come from?’ ‘The World.’ ‘What is the World?’ ‘Listen; for I am drunk and full of reasons. Once there was a true world, a holy, spiritual city; but long ago, before the secrets of hot sauces were discovered, the Arch Concocter of Bad Productions dreamt an ill dream which we now call the world.’ ‘Well answered. How came you?’ ‘By the Seven Stairs, and through the Four-square Garden, to the presence of the Master and to the Oracular Well. Hence I came through the Labyrinth, fortified with the word of Algarum, a paraphrase which turns water into wine.’ ‘Then behold, son of regeneration, the Tree of the Second Juice, and the fruit thereof.’ And Beroalde lifted up his face, and beheld in the midst of the fountains the mightiest tree he had ever seen, so lofty that the clouds swam across its top, and in breadth a day’s journey, covered with dark green leaves from which is prepared the Green Sauce of the Philosophers, and with the golden fruit, somewhat like an apple, which the world desires in vain. And amidst the branches were cities, and castles, and golden spires, inhabited by the Homunculi; and Beroalde was bidden to climb this tree if he would gain the fruit. He therefore took of the Spiritual Mercurius and the Spiritual Sol from the fountains, and anointing himself, was carried on high into the tree, where he underwent the seven transmutations. He became a volume, a cloud, a star, a pinnacle, a faun, a song, a dream; he ate the fruit and drank the mixed draught, and was wedded to the Queen Soteris in the mystical marriage. And when he returned to the ground, he carried with him a book containing one leaf, and in it written: ‘IN THE SIXTH HOUR OF THE NIGHT SEARCH NOTHING BUT THYSELF, AND THOU SHALT FIND THE FIRST MATTER OF THE STONE, AND IN NO OTHER PLACE IN THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD SHALT THOU FIND IT.’

A Wonderful Woman

ON AN ISLE of refuge, a Patmos mercifully set in the midst of an ever-roaring torrent of hansoms going from the north to the south of London and *vice versa*, two men, who had not seen each other for many years, met face to face one sultry afternoon in early autumn. They recognised each other simultaneously, and shook hands.

‘My dear Villiers,’ said the elder of the two, a grizzled man of forty, ‘it must be seven or eight years since we have seen anything of each other. I am glad to meet you — extremely glad to meet you again.’

‘You are very kind, Richardson. As you say, we managed to lose sight of each other. One does in London, I think, almost without knowing it. And how are you getting on?’

‘Thank you, moderately well, I am happy to say. As you know, I am in the India trade, and of late years I have managed to increase my connection to a great extent. At present we are doing, I think I may say, respectably. Have you entered any business?’

Villiers laughed; merrily, like a boy. ‘No, Richardson. I have no time for business; I have definitely chosen a great subject, the study of which will occupy me for the rest of my life.’

‘Indeed! A scientific subject, I presume?’

‘Yes; the fact is I am a student of London; I survey mankind from Cricklewood to Tooting, from Turnham Green to the Isle of Dogs. Can you speak the French of Soho? Do you understand Yiddish?’

‘Certainly not. Mr Jones, our corresponding clerk, is a good linguist, but I do not remember his speaking of the dialects you mention. I am afraid, Villiers, you are still rather an idler; I had hoped that when your poor father died you would have entered the China trade.’

‘No, I sold my interest in the business. In one sense my interest in it was very small indeed, but from a practical point of view it yields me a good income. Have you still got your rooms at Clement's Inn?'

Mr Richardson blushed. He was rather a grim-looking man, with a straight mouth and a forbidding whisker. He was thoroughly good natured, but dry and devoid of humour. But he blushed and a queer, sly smile played about his lips.

'No, Villiers, I don't live in Clement's Inn now. I am married.'

'You, Richardson! You married! You really astonish me. I thought you were the typical bachelor. I must congratulate you. When did the event take place?'

'We were married three months ago. My wife and I met quite by accident; in fact, I was enabled to render her some assistance in a dispute with an insolent cab-driver; and the acquaintance ripened into affection. I am a very happy man, Villiers.'

'You deserve to be, Richardson, you are a good fellow. I should like to meet your wife.'

'So you shall. Are you free tomorrow? Good! Then come down and dine with us at seven. Here is my card.'

The two friends parted, each darting through a momentary gap in the race of cabs. Villiers looked at the card; it referred him to 'The Limes, Angelina Terrace, Clapham.' He wondered exceedingly what manner of wife this good-hearted, dry, city man had found for himself; and his wonder sharpened the sauces at his little dinner at the Italian Restaurant in Regent Street and gave additional zest to the Falerno. He was still wondering as he walked out of Clapham station the next day.

Villiers was some time in finding Angelina Terrace. The neighbourhood was a very new one; two or three old mansions, with their pleasant lawns and cedars, had been 'developed'; the result was a maze of brand-new streets and terraces, street like to street, and terrace to terrace, and every house built after the same pattern in blinding white brick, with red facings and green Venetian blinds. The inhabitants thought it a cheerful neighbourhood, artists swore at it, and Villiers accepted it as a fresh chapter in his great study. He found the desired terrace at last, and was shown into the drawing-room at The Limes. He had barely time to notice that the most prominent work on the polished round table was a ‘Memoir of the Rev. Alex. Macaw, of Dunblather,’ when Richardson came in, beaming with pleasure.

‘That’s right,’ he said; ‘you have broken the ice, and I hope we shall often see you. Nice cheerful place, isn’t it? Better than the dingy old red-brick inn, eh? Here’s my wife. This is my old friend, Villiers, my dear; I was just saying that I hoped he would come down often.’

Villiers had started as if he had received an electric shock, as the pretty, though demure-looking woman entered the room. He managed to join pretty well in the indifferent conversation which Richardson kept up during the dinner. Mrs Richardson was silent; indeed, her manner to Villiers was remarkably cold. Her husband addressed himself to her now and again, calling her ‘my dear Agnes,’ but Villiers was thinking all the while of one Mary Reynolds; of certain merry dinners at this or that restaurant; of little trips to Hampton and Richmond; of the scent of patchouli, and the green-room at the Gaiety. He seemed to hear the popping of champagne corks (Mrs Richardson drank a little water from a wine-glass) and certain strains of French songs of a *fin de siècle* character; Richardson’s quiet stream of talk sounded idly in his ears, like a brook murmuring far away. Villiers looked furtively at the grave lady at the head of the table; she was wearing a diamond brooch he himself had given to Mary Reynolds. He gasped for breath.

‘Yes,’ Richardson was saying, ‘my wife has some really beautiful jewellery, which she inherited from a distant cousin: Sir Lawrence Buller of Beaulieu Park, in Norfolk. That brooch, which I perceive you are admiring, is by no means the finest piece. After dinner, my dear, you must show Villiers your jewellery; those pearl necklaces are truly magnificent.’

‘I don’t think Mr Villiers takes much interest in such matters.’

The tone was hard and threatening. Villiers bowed and smiled in a dazed sort of way; the champagne, foaming bright in the glasses, danced before his eyes, and his ears were ringing with the daring *chanson*. What a strong scent of patchouli there was in the room; he felt stifled.

* * * * *

‘You don’t seem quite the thing tonight, Villiers,’ said Mr Richardson, as he showed his guest out. ‘Take care of the steps.’

‘Thanks, I’m all right now; I think the heat has been too much for me. Trying weather, isn’t it? Good night, Richardson.’

Villiers went home in a kind of stupor; he felt sure he had not been misled by a chance likeness. He remembered the brooch too well. A few days later an irresistible impulse made him find out Mr Richardson’s city address and call upon him there. The worthy man seemed constrained in his manner; he was kind, but looked anxious, like a man charged with some unpleasant duty. The climax came when Villiers proposed to accompany him home and take ‘pot-luck.’

‘My dear Villiers, you know I always liked you very much; your poor father was very kind to me; it’s a great pity. But, to tell the truth, Agnes is very particular; she has evidently heard some stories about you (I am afraid, Villiers, you have never lived a very strict life), and she says that as a married woman, she would not care to meet you again. It grieves me, I assure you, to have to say this; but, after all, one would not wish one’s wife …’

Villiers had been staring in stupid astonishment, but at this point he burst into a wild peal of laughter, which echoed above the clamour of Cornhill. He roared and roared again, till the tears ran down his cheeks.

‘My dear Richardson,’ he said at last, ‘I congratulate you again; you have married a wonderful woman. Goodbye.’

Villiers went on his way, and as he disappeared into a hansom he was still bubbling over with unconquerable mirth.

The Lost Club

ONE HOT AFTERNOON in August a gorgeous young gentleman, one would say the last of his race in London, set out from the Circus end, and proceeded to stroll along the lonely expanse of Piccadilly Deserta. True to the traditions of his race, faithful even in the wilderness, he had not bated one jot or tittle of his regulation equipage; a glorious red and yellow blossom in his wholly and exquisitely-cut frock coat proclaimed him a true son of the carnation; hat and boots and chin were all polished to the highest pitch; though there had not been rain for many weeks his trouser-ends were duly turned up, and the poise of the gold-headed cane was in itself a liberal education. But ah! the heavy changes since June, when the leaves glanced green in the sunlit air, and the club windows were filled, and the hansoms flashed in long processions through the streets, and girls smiled from every carriage. The young man sighed; he thought of the quiet little evenings at the Phoenix, of encounters of the Row, of the drive to Hurlingham, and many pleasant dinners in joyous company. Then he glanced up and saw a bus, half empty, slowly lumbering along the middle of the street, and in front of the White Horse Cellars a four-wheeler had stopped still (the driver was asleep on his seat), and in the Badminton the blinds were down. He half expected to see the Briar Rose trailing gracefully over the Hotel Cosmopole; certainly the Beauty, if such a thing were left in Piccadilly, was fast asleep.

Absorbed in these mournful reflections the hapless Johnny strolled on without observing that an exact duplicate of himself was advancing on the same pavement from the opposite direction; save that the inevitable carnation was salmon colour, and the cane a silver-headed one, instruments of great magnifying power would have been required to discriminate between them. The two met; each raised his eyes simultaneously at the strange sight of a well-dressed man, and each adjured the same old-world deity.

‘By Jove! old man, what the deuce are you doing here?’

The gentleman who had advanced from the direction of Hyde Park Corner was the first to answer.

‘Well, to tell the truth, Austin, I am detained in town on — ah — legal business. But how is it you are not in Scotland?’

‘Well, it’s curious; but the fact is, I have legal business in town also.’

‘You don’t say so? Great nuisance, ain’t it? But these things must be seen to, or a fellow finds himself in no end of a mess, don’t you know?’

‘He does, by Jove! That’s what I thought.’

Mr Austin relapsed into silence for a few moments.

‘And where are you off to, Phillipps?’

The conversation had passed with the utmost gravity on both sides; at the joint mention of legal business, it was true, a slight twinkle had passed across their eyes, but the ordinary observer would have said that the weight of ages rested on those unruffled brows.

‘I really couldn’t say. I thought of having a quiet dinner at Azario’s. The Badminton is closed, you know, for repairs or somethin’, and I can’t stand the Junior Wilton. Come along with me, and let’s dine together.’

‘By Jove! I think I will. I thought of calling on my solicitor, but I dare say he can wait.’

‘Ah! I should think he could. We’ll have some of that Italian wine — stuff in salad-oil flasks — you know what I mean.’

The pair solemnly wheeled around, and solemnly paced towards the Circus, meditating, doubtless, on many things. The dinner in the little restaurant pleased them with a grave pleasure, as did the Chianti, of which they drank a good deal too much; ‘quite a light wine, you know,’ said Phillipps, and Austin agreed with him, so they emptied a quart flask between them and finished up with a couple of glasses apiece of Green Chartreuse. As they came out into the quiet street smoking vast cigars, the two slaves to duty and ‘legal business’ felt a dreamy delight in all things, the streets seemed full of fantasy in the dim light of the lamps, and a single star shining in the clear sky above seemed to Austin exactly of the same colour as Green Chartreuse. Phillipps agreed with him. ‘You know, old fellow,’ he said, ‘there are times when a fellow feels all sorts of strange things — you know, the sort of things they put in magazines, don’t you know, and novels. By Jove, Austin, old man, I feel as if I could write a novel myself.’

The pair wandered aimlessly on, not quite knowing where they were going, turning from one street to another, and discoursing in a maudlin strain. A great cloud had been slowly moving up from the south, darkening the sky, and suddenly it began to rain, at first slowly with great heavy drops, and then faster and faster in a pitiless, hissing shower; the gutters flooded over, and the furious drops danced up from the stones. The two Johnnies walked on as fast as they could, whistling and calling ‘Hansom!’ in vain; they were really getting very wet.

‘Where the dickens are we?’ said Phillipps. ‘Confound it all, I don’t know. We ought to be in Oxford Street.’

They walked on a little farther, when suddenly, to their great joy, they found a dry archway, leading into a dark passage or courtyard. They took shelter silently, too thankful and too wet to say anything. Austin looked at his hat; it was a wreck; and Phillipps shook himself feebly, like a tired terrier.

‘What a beastly nuisance this is,’ he muttered: ‘I only wish I could see a hansom.’

Austin looked into the street; the rain was still falling in torrents; he looked up the passage, and noticed for the first time that it led to a great house, which towered grimly against the sky. It seemed all dark and gloomy, except that from some chink in a shutter a light shone out. He pointed it out to Phillipps, who stared vacantly about him, then exclaimed:

‘Hang it! I know where we are now. At least, I don’t exactly know, you know, but I once came by here with Wylliams, and he told me there was some club or somethin’ down this passage; I don’t recollect exactly what he said. Hullo! why there goes Wylliams. I say, Wylliams, tell us where we are!’

A gentleman had brushed past them in the darkness and was walking fast down the passage. He heard his name and turned round, looking rather annoyed.

‘Well, Phillipps, what do you want? Good evening, Austin; you seem rather wet, both of you.’

‘I should think we were wet; got caught in the rain. Didn’t you tell me once there was some club down here? I wish you’d take us in, if you’re a member.’

Mr Wylliams looked steadfastly at the two forlorn young men for a moment, hesitated, and said:

‘Well, gentlemen, you may come with me if you like. But I must impose a condition; that you both give me your word of honour never to mention the club, or anything that you see while you are in it, to any individual whatsoever.’

‘Certainly not,’ replied Austin; ‘of course we shouldn’t dream of doing so, should we, Phillipps?’

‘No, no; go ahead, Wylliams, we’ll keep it dark enough.’

The party moved slowly down the passage till they came to the house. It was a very large house and very old; it looked as though it might have been an embassy of the last century. Wylliams whistled, knocked twice at the door, and whistled again, and it was opened by a man in black.

‘Friends of yours, Mr Wylliams?’

Wylliams nodded and they passed on.

‘Now mind,’ he whispered, as they paused at a door, ‘you are not to recognise anybody, and nobody will recognise you.’

The two friends nodded, and the door was opened, and they entered a vast room, brilliantly lighted with electric lamps. Men were standing in knots, walking up and down, and smoking at little tables; it was just like any club smoking room. Conversation was going on, but in a low murmur, and every now and then someone would stop talking, and look anxiously at the door at the other end of the room, and then turn round again. It was evident that they were waiting for someone or somebody. Austin and Phillipps were sitting on a sofa, lost in amazement; nearly every face was familiar to them. The flower of the Row was in that strange club room; several young noblemen, a young fellow who had just come into an enormous fortune, three or four fashionable artists and literary men, an eminent actor, and a well-known canon. What could it mean? They were all supposed to be scattered far and wide over the habitable globe, and yet here they were.

Suddenly there came a loud knock at the door; and every man started, and those who were sitting got up. A servant appeared.

‘The President is awaiting you, gentlemen,’ he said, and vanished.

One by one the members filed out, and Wylliams and the two guests brought up the rear. They found themselves in a room still larger than the first, but almost quite dark. The President sat at a long table and before him burned two candles, which barely lit up his face. It was the famous Duke of Dartington, the largest landowner in England. As soon as the members had entered he said in a cold, hard voice, ‘Gentlemen, you know our rules; the book is prepared. Whoever opens it at the black page is at the disposal of the committee and myself. We had better begin.’ Someone began to read out the names in a low distinct voice, pausing after each name, and the member called came up to the table and opened at random the pages of a big folio volume that lay between the two candles. The gloomy light made it difficult to distinguish features, but Phillipps heard a groan beside him, and recognised an old friend. His face was working fearfully, the man was evidently in an agony of terror. One by one the members opened the book; as each man did so he passed out by another door. At last there was only one left; it was Phillipps’s friend. There was foam upon his lips as he passed up the table, and his hand shook as he opened up the leaves. Wylliams had passed out after whispering to the President, and had returned to his friends’ side. He could hardly hold them back as the unfortunate man groaned in agony and leant against the table; he had opened the book at the black page. ‘Kindly come with me, Mr D’Aubigny,’ said the President, and they passed out together.

‘We can go now,’ said Wylliams, ‘I think the rain has gone off. Remember your promise, gentlemen. You have been at a meeting of the Lost Club. You will never see that young man again. Good night.’

‘It isn’t *murder,* is it?’ gasped Austin.

‘Oh no, not at all. Mr D’Aubigny will, I hope, live for many years; he has disappeared, merely disappeared. Good night; there’s a hansom that will do for you.’

The two friends went to their homes in dead silence. They did not meet again for three weeks, and each thought the other looked ill and shaken.

They walked drearily, with grave averted faces, down Piccadilly, each afraid to begin the recollection of the terrible club. Of a sudden Phillipps stopped as if he had been shot. ‘Look there, Austin,’ he muttered, ‘look at that.’ The posters of the evening papers were spread out beside the pavement, and on one of them Austin saw in large blue letters, ‘Mysterious disappearance of a Gentleman’. Austin bought a copy and turned over the leaves with shaking fingers till he found the brief paragraph:

Mr St John D’Aubigny, of Stoke D’Aubigny, in Sussex, has disappeared under mysterious circumstances. Mr D’Aubigny was staying at Strathdoon, in Scotland, and came up to London, as is stated, on business, on August 16th. It has been ascertained that he arrived safely at King’s Cross, and drove to Piccadilly Circus, where he got out. It is said that he was last seen at the corner of Glass House Street, leading from Regent Street into Soho. Since the above date the unfortunate gentleman, who was much liked in London society, has not been heard of. Mr D’Aubigny was to have been married in September. The police are extremely reticent.

‘Good God! Austin, this is dreadful. You remember the date. Poor fellow, poor fellow!’

‘Phillipps, I think I shall go home, I feel sick.’

D’Aubigny was never heard of again. But the strangest part of the story remains to be told. The two friends called upon Wylliams, and charged him with being a member of the Lost Club, and an accomplice in the fate of D’Aubigny. The placid Mr Wylliams at first stared at the two pale, earnest faces, and finally roared with laughter.

‘My dear fellows, what on earth are you talking about? I never heard such a cock-and-bull story in my life. As you say, Phillipps, I once pointed out to you a house said to be a club, as we were walking through Soho; but that was a low gambling club, frequented by German waiters. I am afraid the fact is that Azario’s Chianti was rather too strong for you. However, I will try to convince you of your mistake.’

Wylliams forthwith summoned his man, who swore that he and his master were in Cairo during the whole of August, and offered to produce the hotel bills. Phillipps shook his head, and they went away. Their next step was to try and find the archway where they had taken shelter, and after a good deal of trouble they succeeded. They knocked at the door of the gloomy house, whistling as Wylliams had done. They were admitted by a respectable mechanic in a white apron, who was evidently astonished at the whistle; in fact he was inclined to suspect the influence of a ‘drop too much’. The place was a billiard table factory, and had been so (as they learnt in the neighbourhood) for many years. The rooms must once have been large and magnificent, but most of them had been divided into three or four separate workshops by wooden partitions.

Phillipps sighed; he could do no more for his lost friend; but both he and Austin remained unconvinced. In justice to Mr Wylliams, it must be stated that Lord Henry Harcourt assured Phillipps that he had seen Wylliams in Cairo about the middle of August; he thought, but could not be sure, on the 16th; and also, that the recent disappearances of some well known men about town are patient of explanations which would exclude the agency of the Lost Club.

Nature, or, The Splendid Holiday

‘AND THERE WAS a broad level by the river,’ Julian went on, telling the story of his holiday. ‘A broad level of misty meadows, divided by low banks, between the hills and the river. They say the Roman world is lost beneath the turf, that a whole city sleeps there, gold and marble and amber all buried for ever.’

‘You did not see anything?’

‘No, I suppose not. I used to get up early, and go out, and leave the little modern village behind me, hidden in the hot haze. And then I would stand in the misty meadows, and watch the green turf shimmer and lighten, as the grey halo rolled away. Oh! the silence. There was no sound except the lapping of the river, the wash of the water on the reeds.

‘The banks are yellow mud,’ he went on, ‘but in the early morning, as the sun began to shine in the mist, they pearled and grew like silver. There was a low mound that hid something, and on it an old thorn tree bent towards the east; it was a little way from the tide’s brim. I stood there and saw the woods swell out of the haze in the early morning, and that white sun seemed to encompass the town with gleaming walls. If I had stayed still, I think I should have seen the glittering legion and the eagles, I should have heard the sonorous trumpets pealing from the walls.’

‘I expect you have seen and heard more than that,’ said his friend. ‘I always told you that the earth too, and the hills, and even the old walls are a language, hard to translate.’

‘And I came upon a place that made me think of that,’ said Julian. ‘It was far from the town; I lost my way amongst those rolling hills, and strayed by footpaths from field to wood, and all that I saw of man was here and there a blue smoke that crawled up from the earth, from the tree, it might be, or the brook, for I could see no house. I went on, always with the sense that I was following an unknown object, and, suddenly, a shape rose from forgotten dreams. An old farm-house, built of grey, silvering stones; a long barn wavering and dipping down to a black pool, pine trees overhanging the roof. It was all dim, as if it had been seen reflected in water. I went a little nearer, and I found that I was lifted free of the maze of hills. I fronted the mountain, looking across a deep broad valley, and all the year the mountain winds must blow upon the porch; they look from their deep windows and see the fleeting of the clouds and the sun, on that vast green hillside. Yellow flowers were shaking in the garden, for even on that still day the mountain wind swept across the valley. But those grey glistening walls! A light flowed from them, and they spoke of something beyond thought.

'I visited, too, the river valley, passing out to the north. The town was soon hidden behind trees, behind a curtain of Lombardy poplars, whispering of Italy, of the vine, the olive garden. The curving lane led me beneath orchards, their under-boughs dark-green, almost black, in the shadow, and the road winding between orchard and river led me into the long valley, where the forest is as a cloud upon the hill. I watched the yellow tide cease, and the water flow clear, and the breath of the wind was unearthly. It was there that I saw the burning pools.'

'You stayed for the sunset?'

'Yes, I stayed all the day within the valley. The sky was grey, but not cloudy; rather it was a glowing of silver light that made the earth seem dim and yet shining. Indeed, I say that though the sun was hidden, you would have dreamed that white moons were floating through the air, for now and again I saw the misty hillside pale and lighten, and a tree would appear suddenly in mid-forest, and glitter as if it blossomed. Yes, and in the calm meadows by the riverside there were little points of brightness, as if tongues of white fire sparkled in the grey grass.'

'And the river itself?'

'It was all the day a hieroglyphic, winding in esses beneath those haunting banks, colourless, and yet alight like all the world around. At last, in the evening, I sat down beneath a wych-elm on the slope, where I breathed the scent and knew the heavy stillness of the wood. Then a strong wind blew, high up in heaven, and the grey veil vanished. The sky was clear pale blue; in the west there was exhibited an opal burning green, and beneath a purple wall. Then, in the middle of the purple, a rent opened; there was a red glint, and red momentary rays, as if rose-hot metal were beaten and dinted on the anvil, and the sparks fled abroad. So the sun sank.

‘I thought I would wait and see all the valley, the river, and the level, and the woods sink into twilight, become sombre, formless. The light went out from the river, the water paled as it flowed between the sad reeds and grasses. I heard a harsh, melancholy cry, and above, in the dusky air, a flight of great birds passed seaward in changing, hieroglyphic order. The keen line of the hills by sunset home seemed to melt away, to become vague.

‘Then I saw the sky was blossoming in the north. Rose gardens appeared there, with golden hedges, and bronze gates, and the great purple wall caught fire as it grew leaden. The earth was lit again, but with unnatural jewelled colours; the palest light was sardonyx, the darkness was amethyst. And then the valley was aflame. Fire in the wood, the fire of a sacrifice beneath the oaks. Fire in the level fields, a great burning in the north, and vehement flame to the south, above the town. And in the still river the very splendour of fire, yes, as if all precious things were cast into its furnace pools, as if gold and roses and jewels became flame.’

‘And then?’

‘Then, the shining of the evening star.’

‘And you,’ said his friend, ‘perhaps without knowing, have told me the story of a wonderful and incredible passion.’

Julian stared at him, in amazement.

‘You are quite right,’ he said at length.

Drake’s Drum

WE WAKE SOMETIMES from dreams uttering strange phrases, murmuring incredible things. At the moment of waking, for some ineffable instant of time, the words we speak, or perhaps think we speak, seem to us full of illumination. To everyone who speculates at all as to the heights and depths of the soul, there comes at very rare moments — there are not, perhaps, more than half a dozen such experiences given to any man’s lifetime — the sense of the true world which lies beyond this dark place of images and shadows; a world that is full of light and glory, a world where our dim desires are interpreted and fulfilled. It is as if we stood among shadows before a black curtain, as if for one moment a fold were caught back and we saw that which we can never utter: but never deny.

In dreams and waking and in waking dreams, most of us, I suppose, penetrate into this other world, the world beyond the black curtain. But we are not suffered to make any report of it; the secret, it seems, must be kept fast. And this is one of the reasons why I am usually inclined to disbelieve most stories of the communicating spirits of the dead. Their messages are, to my judgement, altogether too lucid, too comfortably and easily and clearly set forth. There is no obscurity in the interpretation of their sentences, no impression as of a great gulf of the spirit which has been traversed with the utmost difficulty. And if we, still in the flesh, cannot utter to ourselves our own visions, it scarcely seems likely that those who have passed beyond the flaming ramparts of the world should be able to chatter to us so easily and colloquially of the regions of their dwelling.

The speech of that far land, if any speech there be, will, I think, be delivered rather in sensible images than in logical and grammatical utterance. And it is only the unspiritual who can discern nothing of the spirit in sensible images and symbols.

Here is the true meaning of such a presentation.

On the 11th of November, 1918, the armistice between the Allies and the German Empire was signed. This meant that the incredible had happened. A few months before we had all been in terror of a Power that seemed capable of fighting all the world. Now, in a moment, as if by enchantment, that Power had ceased to exist. The armistice terms were, most justly and wisely, rigorous, and on November 21st., 1918, it was appointed that practically the whole German fleet should surrender to the British. I said that the event was incredible, and so true is this that the British Navy could scarce believe that the surrender would be accomplished peacefully. Sailors are generous men to all, but more especially to other sailors. There is a brotherhood of the deep, which surpasses the bounds of nations, and our Navy could not believe that the German sailors would give up their ships without fighting; even though the fight might be a hopeless one for them. Consequently, on the morning of November 21st., 1918, the British Navy awaited the enemy in a state of mind that is hard to describe. The surrender of the German fleet, they all knew, had been demanded and granted; but at the last moment, our men thought, the unutterable disgrace must boil in the veins of those German sailors, and the guns of their great ships must speak their final word of fire before they sank beneath the water. Every preparation was made for the fight. The ships were cleared. The men were at ‘action stations’. Naval discipline was at its strictest. Every man on board every ship knew his place to an inch, his duty to the most minute detail. The King’s ships had made them ready for battle; it is hard for a landsman to realise the awful and inexorable import of such an array.

The Fleet steamed to the appointed rendezvous, waited, and looked eastward. It was a misty morning with a gentle breeze.

One of the ships was the *Royal Oak*, chiefly manned by sailors of Devonshire. She was flying on that day a magnificent silk ensign, made for her by Devonshire ladies. On her bridge, sixty feet above the top deck was a group of officers: Admiral Grant, Captain MacLachlan, of the *Royal Oak*, the Commander, and others. It was soon after nine o’clock in the morning when the German fleet appeared, looming through the mist. Admiral Grant saw them and waited; he could scarcely believe, he says, that they would not instantly open fire.

Then the drum began to beat on the *Royal Oak*. The sound was unmistakable; it was that of a small drum being beaten ‘in rolls’. At first, the officers on the bridge paid little attention, if any, to the sound; so intent were they on the approaching enemy. But when it became evident that the Germans were not to show fight, Admiral Grant turned to the Captain of the *Royal Oak*, and remarked on the beating of the drum. The Captain said that he heard it, but could not understand it, since the ship was cleared for action, and every man on board was at his battle station. The Commander also heard, but was perplexed, and sent messengers all over the ship to investigate. Twice the messengers were sent about the ship, about all the decks. They reported that every man was at his station. Yet the drum continued to beat. Then the Commander himself made a special tour of investigation through the *Royal Oak*. He, too, found that every man was at his station.

It must be noted, by the way, that if someone, playing a practical joke, had been beating a drum between decks, the sound would have been inaudible to the officers on the bridge. Again, when a ship is cleared for action, the members of the band have specially important duties in connection with the fire-control apparatus assigned to them. The band instruments are all stored away in the band room, right aft, and below decks.

All the while the British fleet was closing round the German fleet, coming to anchor in a square about it so that the German ships were hemmed in. And all the while that this was being done, the noise of the drum was heard at intervals, beating in rolls. All who heard it are convinced that it was no sound of flapping stays or any such accident. The ear of the naval officer is attuned to all the noises of his ship in fair weather and in foul; it makes no mistakes. All who heard knew that they heard the rolling of a drum.

At about two o’clock in the afternoon the German fleet was enclosed and helpless, and the British ships dropped anchor, some fifteen miles off the Firth of Forth. The utter, irrevocable ruin and disgrace of the German Navy was consummated. And at that moment the drum stopped beating and was no more heard.

But those who had heard it — Admiral, Captain, Commander, other officers and men of all ratings — held then and hold now one belief as to the rolling music. They believe that the sound they heard was that of ‘Drake’s Drum’: the audible manifestation of the spirit of the great sea captain, present at this hour of the tremendous triumph of Britain on the seas. This is the firm belief of them all.

It may be so. It may be that Drake did quit the port of Heaven in a ship of fire, and driving the Germans across the sea with the flame of his spirit, drummed them down to their pitiful and shameful doom.

The Shining Pyramid, 1924

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The Arrow-Head Character

"HAUNTED, YOU SAID?"

"Yes, haunted. Don't you remember, when I saw you three years ago, you told me about your place in the west with the ancient woods hanging all about it, and the wild, domed hills, and the ragged land? It has always remained a sort of enchanted picture in my mind as I sit at my desk and hear the traffic rattling in the Street in the midst of whirling London. But when did you come up?"

"The fact is, Dyson, I have only just got out of the train. I drove to the station early this morning and caught the 10.45."

"Well, I am very glad you looked in on me. How have you been getting on since we last met? There is no Mrs. Vaughan, I suppose?"

"No," said Vaughan, "I am still a hermit, like yourself. I have done nothing but loaf about."

Vaughn had lit his pipe and sat in the elbow chair, fidgeting and glancing about him in a somewhat dazed and restless manner. Dyson had wheeled round his chair when his visitor entered and sat with one arm fondly reclining on the desk of his bureau, and touching the litter of manuscript.

"And you are still engaged in the old task?" said Vaughan, pointing to the pile of papers and the teeming pigeon-holes.

"Yes, the vain pursuit of literature, as idle as alchemy, and as entrancing. But you have come to town for some time I suppose; what shall we do to-night?"

"Well, I rather wanted you to try a few days with me down in the west. It would do you a lot of good. I'm sure."

"You are very kind, Vaughan, but London in September is hard to leave. Doré could not have designed anything more wonderful and mystic than Oxford Street as I saw it the other evening; the sunset flaming, the blue haze transmuting the plain street into a road 'far in the spiritual city.'"

“I should like you to come down though. You would enjoy roaming over our hills. Does this racket go on all day and night? It quite bewilders me; I wonder how you can work through it. I am sure you would revel in the great peace of my old home among the woods.”

Vaughan lit his pipe again, and looked anxiously at Dyson to see if his inducements had had any effect, but the man of letters shook his head, smiling, and vowed in his heart a firm allegiance to the streets.

“You cannot tempt me,” he said.

‘Well, you may be right. Perhaps, after all, I was wrong to speak of the peace of the country. There, when a tragedy does occur, it is like a stone thrown into a pond; the circles of disturbance keep on widening, and it seems as if the water would never be still again.”

“Have you ever any tragedies where you are?”

“I can hardly say that. But I was a good deal disturbed about a month ago by something that happened; it may or may not have been a tragedy in the usual sense of the word.”

“What was the occurrence?”

“Well, the fact is a girl disappeared in a way which seems highly mysterious. Her parents, people of the name of Trevor, are well-to-do farmers, and their eldest daughter Annie was a sort of village beauty; she was really remarkably handsome. One afternoon she thought she would go and see her aunt, a widow who farms her own land, and as the two houses are only about five or six miles apart, she started off, telling her parents she would take the short cut over the hills. She never got to her aunt’s, and she never was seen again. That’s putting it in a few words.”

“What an extraordinary thing! I suppose there are no disused mines, are there, on the hills? I don’t think you quite run to anything so formidable as a precipice?”

“No; the path the girl must have taken had no pitfalls of any description; it is just a track over wild, bare hillside, far, even from a byroad. One may walk for miles without meeting a soul, but it is perfectly safe.”

“And what do people say about it?”

"Oh, they talk nonsense — among themselves. You have no notion as to how superstitious English cottagers are in out-of-the-way parts like mine. They are as bad as the Irish, every whit, and even more secretive."

"But what do they say?"

"Oh, the poor girl is supposed to have 'gone with the fairies,' or to have been 'taken by the fairies.' Such stuff!" he went on, "one would laugh if it were not for the real tragedy of the case."

Dyson looked somewhat interested.

"Yes," he said, "'fairies' certainly strike a little curiously on the ear in these days. But what do the police say? I presume they do not accept the fairy-tale hypothesis?"

"No; but they seem quite at fault. What I am afraid of is that Annie Trevor must have fallen in with some scoundrels on her way. Castletown is a large seaport, you know, and some of the worst of the foreign sailors occasionally desert their ships and go on the tramp up and down the country. Not many years ago a Spanish sailor named Garcia murdered a whole family for the sake of plunder that was not worth sixpence. They are hardly human, some of these fellows, and I am dreadfully afraid the poor girl must have come to an awful end."

"But no foreign sailor was seen by anyone about the country?"

"No; there is certainly that; and of course country people are quick to notice anyone whose appearance and dress are a little out of the common. Still it seems as if my theory were the only possible explanation."

"There are no data to go upon," said Dyson, thoughtfully. "There was no question of a love affair, or anything of the kind, I suppose?"

"Oh, no, not a hint of such a thing. I am sure if Annie were alive she would have contrived to let her mother know of her safety."

"No doubt, no doubt. Still it is barely possible that she is alive and yet unable to communicate with her friends. But all this must have disturbed you a good deal."

"Yes, it did; I hate a mystery, and especially a mystery which is probably the veil of horror. But frankly, Dyson, I want to make a clean breast of it; I did not come here to tell you all this."

"Of course not," said Dyson, a little surprised at Vaughan's uneasy manner. "You came to have a chat on more cheerful topics."

"No, I did not. What I have been telling you about happened a month ago, but something which seems likely to affect me more personally has taken place within the last few days, and to be quite plain, I came up to town with the idea that you might be able to help me. You recollect that curious case you spoke to me about on our last meeting; something about a spectacle-maker."

"Oh, yes, I remember that. I know I was quite proud of my acumen at the time; even to this day the police have no idea why those peculiar yellow spectacles were wanted. But, Vaughan, you really look quite put out; I hope there is nothing serious?"

"No, I think I have been exaggerating, and I want you to reassure me. But what has happened is very odd."

"And what has happened?"

"I am sure that you will laugh at me, but this is the story. You must know there is a path, a right of way, that goes through my land, and to be precise, close to the wall of the kitchen garden. It is not used by many people; a woodman now and again finds it useful, and five or six children who go to school in the village pass twice a day. Well, a few days ago I was taking a walk about the place before breakfast, and I happened to stop to fill my pipe just by the large doors in the garden wall. The wood, I must tell you, comes to within a few feet of the wall, and the track I spoke of runs right in the shadow of the trees. I thought the shelter from a brisk wind that was blowing rather pleasant, and I stood there smoking with my eyes on the ground. Then something caught my attention. Just under the wall, on the short grass; a number of small flints were arranged in a pattern; something like this": and Mr. Vaughan caught at a pencil and piece of paper, and dotted down a few strokes.

"You see," he went on, "there were, I should think, twelve little stones neatly arranged in lines, and spaced at equal distances, as I have shown it on the paper. They were pointed stones, and the points were very carefully directed one way."

"Yes," said Dyson, without much interest, "no doubt the children you have mentioned had been playing there on their way from school. Children, as you know, are very fond of making such devices with oyster shells or flints or flowers, or with whatever comes in their way."

"So I thought; I just noticed these flints were arranged in a sort of pattern and then went on. But the next morning I was taking the same round, which, as a matter of fact, is habitual with me, and again I saw at the same spot a device in flints. This time it was really a curious pattern; something like the spokes of a wheel, all meeting at a common centre, and this centre formed by a device which looked like a bowl; all, you understand done in flints."

"You are right," said Dyson, "that seems odd enough. Still it is reasonable that your half-a-dozen school children are responsible for these fantasies in stone."

"Well, I thought I would set the matter at rest. The children pass the gate every evening at half-past five, and I walked by at six, and found the device just as I had left it in the morning. The next day I was up and about at a quarter to seven, and I found the whole thing had been changed. There was a pyramid outlined in flints upon the grass. The children I saw going by an hour and a half later, and they ran past the spot without glancing to right or left. In the evening I watched them going home, and this morning when I got to the gate at six o'clock there was a thing like a half moon waiting for me."

"So then the series runs thus: firstly ordered lines, then, the device of the spokes and the bowl, then the pyramid, and finally, this morning, the half moon. That is the order, isn't it?"

"Yes; that is right. But do you know it has made me feel very uneasy? I suppose it seems absurd, but I can't help thinking that some kind of signalling is going on under my nose, and that sort of thing is disquieting."

"But what have you to dread? You have no enemies?"

"No; but I have some very valuable old plate."

"You are thinking of burglars then?" said Dyson, with an accent of considerable interest, "but you must know your neighbours. Are there any suspicious characters about?"

“Not that I am aware of. But you remember what I told you of the sailors.”

“Can you trust your servants?”

“Oh, perfectly. The plate is preserved in a strong room; the butler, an old family servant, alone knows where the key is kept. There is nothing wrong there. Still, everybody is aware that I have a lot of old silver, and all country folks are given to gossip. In that way information may have got abroad in very undesirable quarters.”

“Yes, but I confess there seems something a little unsatisfactory in the burglar theory. Who is signalling to whom? I cannot see my way to accepting such an explanation. What put the plate into your head in connection with these flints signs, or whatever one may call them?”

“It was the figure of the Bowl,” said Vaughan. “I happen to possess a very large and very valuable Charles II punch-bowl. The chasing is really exquisite, and the thing is worth a lot of money. The sign I described to you was exactly the same shape as my punch-bowl.”

“A queer coincidence certainly. But the other figures or devices: you have nothing shaped like a pyramid?”

“Ah, you will think that queerer. As it happens, this punch-bowl of mine, together with a set of rare old ladles, is kept in a mahogany chest of a pyramidal shape. The four sides slope upwards, the narrow towards the top.”

“I confess all this interests me a good deal,” said Dyson. “let us go on then. What about the other figures; how about the Army, as we may call the first sign, and the Crescent or Half moon?”

“Ah, there is no reference that I can make out of these two. Still, you see I have some excuse for curiosity at all events. I should be very vexed to lose any of the old plate; nearly all the pieces have been in the family for generations. And I cannot get it out of my head that some scoundrels mean to rob me, and are communicating with one another every night.”

“Frankly,” said Dyson, “I can make nothing of it; I am as much in the dark as yourself. Your theory seems certainly the only possible explanation, and yet the difficulties are immense.”

He leaned back in his chair, and the two men faced each other, frowning, and perplexed by so bizarre a problem.

“By the way,” said Dyson, after a long pause, “what is your geological formation down there?”

Mr. Vaughan looked up, a good deal surprised by the question.

“Old red sandstone and limestone, I believe,” he said. “We are just beyond the coal measures, you know.”

“But surely there are no flints either in the sandstone or the limestone?”

“No, I never see any flints in the fields. I confess that did strike me as a little curious.”

“I should think so! It is very important. By the way, what size were the flints used in making these devices?”

“I happen to have brought one with me; I took it this morning.”

“From the Half moon?”

“Exactly. Here it is.”

He handed over a small flint, tapering to a point, and about three inches in length.

Dyson’s face blazed up with excitement as he took the thing from Vaughan.

“Certainly,” he said, after a moment’s pause, “you have some curious neighbours in your country. I hardly think they can harbour any designs on your punch-bowl. Do you know this is a flint arrowhead of vast antiquity, and not only that, but an arrow-head of a unique kind? I have seen specimens from all parts of the world, but there are features about this thing that are quite peculiar.” He laid down his pipe, and took out a book from a drawer.

“We shall just have time to catch the 5.45 to Castletown,” he said.

The Eyes on the Wall

MR. DYSON DREW in a long breath of the air of the hills and felt all the enchantment of the scene about him. It was very early morning, and he stood on the terrace in the front of the house.

Vaughan’s ancestor had built on the lower slope of a great hill, in the shelter of a deep and ancient wood that gathered on three sides about the house, and on the fourth side, the southwest, the land fell gently away and sank to the valley, where a brook wound in and out in mystic esses, and the dark and gleaming alders tracked the stream’s course to the eye. On the terrace in the sheltered place no wind blew, and far beyond, the trees were still. Only one sound broke in upon the silence, and Dyson heard the noise of the brook singing far below, the song of clear and shining water rippling over the stones, whispering and murmuring as it sank to dark deep pools.

Across the stream, just below the house, rose a grey stone bridge, vaulted and buttressed, a fragment of the Middle Ages, and then beyond the bridge the hills rose again, vast and rounded like bastions, covered here and there with dark woods and thickets of undergrowth, but the heights were all bare of trees, showing only grey turf and patches of bracken, touched here and there with the gold of fading fronds; Dyson looked to the north and south, and still he saw the wall of the hills, and the ancient woods, and the stream drawn in and out between them; all grey and dim with morning mist beneath a grey sky in a hushed and haunted air.

Mr. Vaughan’s voice broke in upon the silence.

“I thought you would be too tired to be about so early,” he said. “I see you are admiring the view. It is very pretty, isn’t it, though I suppose old Meyrick Vaughan didn’t think much about the scenery when he built the house. A queer grey, old place, isn’t it?”

“Yes, and how it fits into the surroundings; it seems of a piece with the grey hills and the grey bridge below.”

“I am afraid I have brought you down on false pretences, Dyson,” said Vaughan, as they began to walk up and down the terrace. “I have been to the place, and there is not a sign of anything this morning.”

“Ah, indeed. Well, suppose we go round together.”

They walked across the lawn and went by a path through the ilex shrubbery to the back of the house. There Vaughan pointed out the track leading down to the valley and up to the heights above the wood, and presently they stood beneath the garden wall, by the door.

“Here, you see, it was,” said Vaughan, pointing to a spot on the turf. “I was standing just where you are now that morning I first saw the flints.”

“Yes, quite so. That morning it was the Army, as I call it; then the Bowl, then the Pyramid, and, yesterday, the Half moon. What a queer old stone that is,” he went on, pointing to a block of limestone rising out of the turf just beneath the wall. ‘It looks like a sort of dwarf pillar, but I suppose it is natural.”

“Oh, yes, I think so. I imagine it was brought here, though, as we stand on the red sandstone. No doubt it was used as a foundation stone for some older building.”

“Very likely,” Dyson was peering about him attentively, looking from the ground to the wall, and from the wall to the deep wood that hung almost over the garden and made the place dark even in the morning.

“Look here,” said Dyson at length, “it is certainly a case of children this time. Look at that.” He was bending down and staring at the dull red surface of the mellowed bricks of the wall.

Vaughan came up and looked hard where Dyson’s finger was pointing, and could scarcely distinguish a faint mark in deeper red.

“What is it?” he said. “I can make nothing of it.”

“Look a little more closely. Don’t you see it is an attempt to draw the human eye?”

“Ah, now I see what you mean. My sight is not very sharp. Yes, so it is, it is meant for an eye, no doubt, as you say. I thought the children learnt drawing at school.”

“Well, it is an odd eye enough. Do you notice the peculiar almond shape; almost like the eye of a Chinaman?”

Dyson looked meditatively at the work of the undeveloped artist, and scanned the wall again, going down on his knees in the minuteness of his inquisition.

“I should like very much,” he said at length, “to know how a child in this out of the way place could have any idea of the shape of the Mongolian eye. You see the average child has a very distinct impression of the subject; he draws a circle, or something like a circle, and put a dot in the centre. I don’t think any child imagines that the eye is really made like that; it’s just a convention of infantile art. But this almond-shaped thing puzzles me extremely. Perhaps it may be derived from a gilt Chinaman on a tea-canister in the grocer’s shop. Still that’s hardly likely.”

“But why are you so sure it was done by a child?”

“Why! Look at the height. These old-fashioned bricks are little more than two inches thick; there are twenty courses from the ground to the sketch if we call it so; that gives a height of three and a half feet. Now, just imagine you are going to draw something on this wall. Exactly; your pencil, if you had one, would touch the wall somewhere on the level with your eyes, that is, more than five feet from the ground. It seems, therefore, a very simple deduction to conclude that this eye on the wall was drawn by a child about ten years old.”

“Yes, I had not thought of that. Of course one of the children must have done it.”

“I suppose so; and yet as I said, there is something singularly unchildlike about those two lines, and the eyeball itself, you see, is almost an oval. To my mind, the thing has an odd, ancient air; and a touch that is not altogether pleasant. I cannot help fancying that if we could see a whole face from the same hand it would not be altogether agreeable. However, that is nonsense, after all, and we are not getting farther in our investigations. It is odd that the flint series has come to such an abrupt end.”

The two men walked away towards the house, and as they went in at the porch there was a break in the grey sky, and a gleam of sunshine on the grey hill before them.

All the day Dyson prowled meditatively about the fields and woods surrounding the house. He was thoroughly and completely puzzled by the trivial circumstances he proposed to elucidate, and now he again took the flint arrow-head from his pocket, turning it over and examining it with deep attention. There was something about the thing that was altogether different from the specimens he had seen at the museums and private collections; the shape was of a distinct type, and around the edge there was a line of little punctured dots, apparently a suggestion of ornament. Who, thought Dyson, could possess such things in so remote a place; and who, possessing the flints, could have put them to the fantastic use of designing meaningless figures under Vaughan's garden wall? The rank absurdity of the whole affair offended him unutterably; and as one theory after another rose in his mind only to be rejected, he felt strongly tempted to take the next train back to town. He had seen the silver plate which Vaughan treasured, and had inspected the punch-bowl, the gem of the collection, with close attention; and what he saw and his interview with the butler convinced him that a plot to rob the strong box was out of the limits of enquiry. The chest in which the bowl was kept, a heavy piece of mahogany, evidently dating from the beginning of the century, was certainly strongly suggestive of a pyramid, and Dyson was at first inclined to the inept manoeuvres of the detective, but a little sober thought convinced him of the impossibility of the burglary hypothesis, and he cast wildly about for something more satisfying. He asked Vaughan if there were any gipsies in the neighbourhood, and heard that the Romany had not been seen for years. This dashed him a good deal, as he knew the gipsy habit of leaving queer hieroglyphics on the line of march, and had been much elated when the thought occurred to him. He was facing Vaughan by the old-fashioned hearth when he put the question, and leaned back in his chair in disgust at the destruction of his theory.

“It is odd,” said Vaughan, “but the gipsies never trouble us here. Now and then the farmers find traces of fires in the wildest part of the hills, but nobody seems to know who the fire-lighters are.”

“Surely that looks like gipsies?”

“No, not in such places as those. Tinkers and gipsies and wanderers of all sorts stick to the roads and don't go very far from the farmhouses.”

“Well, I can make nothing of it. I saw the children going by this afternoon, and, as you say, they ran straight on. So we shall have no more eyes on the wall at all events.”

“No, I must waylay them one of these days and find out who is the artist.”

The next morning when Vaughan strolled in his usual course from the lawn to the back of the house he found Dyson already awaiting him by the garden door, and evidently in a state of high excitement, for he beckoned furiously with his hand, and gesticulated violently.

“What is it?” asked Vaughan. “The flints again?”

“No; but look here, look at the wall. There; don’t you see it?”

“There’s another of those eyes!”

“Exactly. Drawn, you see, at a little distance from the first, almost on the same level, but slightly lower.”

“What on earth is one to make of it? It couldn’t have been done by the children; it wasn’t there last night, and they won’t pass for another hour. What can it mean?”

“I think the very devil is at the bottom of all this,” said Dyson. “Of course, one cannot resist the conclusion that these infernal almond eyes are to be set down to the same agency as the devices in the arrow-heads; and where that conclusion is to lead us is more than I can tell. For my part, I have to put a strong check on my imagination, or it would run wild.”

“Vaughan,” he said, as they turned away from the wall, “has it struck you that there is one point — a very curious point — in common between the figures done in flints and the eyes drawn on the wall?”

“What is that?” asked Vaughan, on whose face there had fallen a certain shadow of indefinite dread.

“It is this. We know that the signs of the Army, the Bowl, the Pyramid, and the Half moon must have been done at night. Presumably they were meant to be seen at night. Well, precisely the same reasoning applies to those eyes on the wall.”

“I do not quite see your point.”

"Oh, surely. The nights are dark just now, and have been very cloudy, I know, since I came down. Moreover, those overhanging trees would throw that wall into deep shadow even on a clear night."

"Well?"

"What struck me was this. What very peculiarly sharp eyesight, they, whoever 'they' are, must have to be able to arrange arrow-heads in intricate order in the blackest shadow of the wood, and then draw the eyes on the wall without a trace of bungling, or a false line."

"I have read of persons confined in dungeons for many years who have been able to see quite well in the dark," said Vaughan.

"Yes," said Dyson, "there was the abbé in Monte Cristo. But it is a singular point."

The Search for the Bowl

“WHO WAS THAT old man that touched his hat to you just now?” said Dyson, as they came to the bend of the lane near the house.

“Oh, that was old Trevor. He looks very broken, poor old fellow.”

“Who is Trevor?”

“Don’t you remember? I told you the story that afternoon I came to your rooms — about a girl named Annie Trevor, who disappeared in the most inexplicable manner about five weeks ago. That was her father.”

“Yes, yes, I recollect now. To tell the truth I had forgotten all about it. And nothing has been heard of the girl?”

“Nothing whatever. The police are quite at fault.”

“I am afraid I did not pay very much attention to the details you gave me. Which way did the girl go?”

“Her path would take her right across those wild hills above the house: the nearest point in the track must be about two miles from here.”

“Is it near that little hamlet I saw yesterday?”

“You mean Croesyceiliog, where the children came from? No; it goes more to the north.”

“Ah, I have never been that way.”

They went into the house, and Dyson shut himself up in his room, sunk deep in doubtful thought, but yet with the shadow of a suspicion growing within him that for a while haunted his brain, all vague and fantastic, refusing to take definite form. He was sitting by the open window and looking out on the valley and saw, as if in a picture, the intricate winding of the brook, the grey bridge, and the vast hills rising beyond; all still and without a breath of wind to stir the mystic hanging woods, and the evening sunshine glowed warm on the bracken, and down below a faint mist, pure white, began to rise from the stream. Dyson sat by the window as the day darkened and the huge bastioned hills loomed vast and vague, and the woods became dim and more shadowy: and the fancy that had seized him no longer appeared altogether impossible. He passed the rest of the evening in a reverie, hardly hearing what Vaughan said; and when he took his candle in the hall, he paused a moment before bidding his friend good-night.

“I want a good rest,” he said. “I have got some work to do to-morrow.”

“Some writing, you mean?”

“No. I am going to look for the Bowl.”

“The Bowl! If you mean my punch-bowl, that is safe in the chest.”

“I don’t mean the punch-bowl. You may take my word for it that your plate has never been threatened. No; I will not bother you with any suppositions. We shall in all probability have something much stronger than suppositions before long. Good-night, Vaughan.”

The next morning Dyson set off after breakfast. He took the path by the garden wall, and noted that there were now eight of the weird almond eyes dimly outlined on the brick.

“Six days more,” he said to himself, but as he thought over the theory he had formed, he shrank, in spite of strong conviction, from such a wildly incredible fancy. He struck up through the dense shadows of the wood, and at length came out on the bare hillside, and climbed higher and higher over the slippery turf, keeping well to the north, and following the indications given him by Vaughan. As he went on, he seemed to mount ever higher above the world of human life and customary things; to his right he looked at a fringe of orchard and saw a faint blue smoke rising like a pillar; there was the hamlet from which the children came to school, and there the only sign of life, for the woods embowered and concealed Vaughan’s old grey house. As he reached what seemed the summit of the hill, he realized for the first time the desolate loneliness and strangeness of the land; there was nothing but grey sky and grey hill, a high, vast plain that seemed to stretch on for ever and ever, and a faint glimpse of a blue-peaked mountain far away and to the north. At length he came to the path, a slight track scarcely noticeable, and from its position and by what Vaughan had told him he knew that it was the way the lost girl, Annie Trevor, must have taken. He followed the path on the bare hill-top, noticing the great limestone rocks that cropped out of the turf, grim and hideous, and of an aspect as forbidding as an idol of the South Seas; and suddenly he halted, astonished, although he had found what he searched for.

Almost without warning the ground shelved suddenly away on all sides, and Dyson looked down into a circular depression, which might well have been a Roman amphitheatre, and the ugly crags of limestone rimmed it round as if with a broken wall. Dyson walked round the hollow, and noted the position of the stones, and then turned on his way home.

“This,” he thought to himself, “is more than curious. The Bowl is discovered, but where is the Pyramid?”

“My dear Vaughan,” he said, when he got back, “I may tell you that I have found the Bowl, and that is all I shall tell you for the present. We have six days of absolute inaction before us; there is really nothing to be done.”

The Secret of the Pyramid

“I HAVE JUST been round the garden,” said Vaughan one morning. “I have been counting those infernal eyes, and I find there are fourteen of them. For heaven’s sake, Dyson, tell me what the meaning of it all is.”

“I should be very sorry to attempt to do so. I may have guessed this or that, but I always make it a principle to keep my guesses to myself. Besides, it is really not worth while anticipating events; you will remember my telling you that we had six days of inaction before us? Well, this is the sixth day, and the last of idleness. To-night, I propose we take a stroll.”

“A stroll! Is that all the action you mean to take?”

“Well, it may show you some very curious things. To be plain, I want you to start with me at nine o’clock this evening for the hills. We may have to be out all night, so you had better wrap up well, and bring some of that brandy.”

“Is it a joke?” asked Vaughan, who was bewildered with strange events and strange surmises.

“No, I don’t think there is much joke in it. Unless I am much mistaken we shall find a very serious explanation of the puzzle. You will come with me, I am sure?”

“Very good. Which way do you want to go?”

“By the path you told me of; the path Annie Trevor is supposed to have taken.”

Vaughan looked white at the mention of the girl’s name.

“I did not think you were on that track,” he said. “I thought it was the affair of those devices in flint and of the eyes on the wall that you were engaged on. It’s no good saying any more, but I will go with you.”

At a quarter to nine that evening the two men set out, taking the path through the wood, and up the hill-side. It was a dark and heavy night, the sky was thick with clouds, and the valley full of mist, and all the way they seemed to walk in a world of shadow and gloom, hardly speaking, and afraid to break the haunted silence. They came out at last on the steep hill-side, and instead of the oppression of the wood there was the long, dim sweep of the turf, and higher, the fantastic limestone rocks hinted horror through the darkness, and the wind sighed as it passed across the mountain to the sea, and in its passage beat chill about their hearts. They seemed to walk on and on for hours, and the dim outline of the hill still stretched before them, and the haggard rocks still loomed through the darkness, when suddenly Dyson whispered, drawing his breath quickly, and coming close to his companion:

“Here,” he said, “we will lie down. I do not think there is anything yet.”

“I know the place,” said Vaughan, after a moment. “I have often been by in the daytime. The country people are afraid to come here, I believe; it is supposed to be a fairies’ castle, or something of the kind. But why on earth have we come here?”

“Speak a little lower,” said Dyson. “It might not do us any good if we are overheard.”

“Overheard here! There is not a soul within three miles of us.”

“Possibly not; indeed, I should say certainly not. But there might be a body somewhat nearer.”

“I don’t understand you in the least,” said Vaughan, whispering to humour Dyson, “but why have we come here?”

“Well, you see this hollow before us is the Bowl. I think we had better not talk even in whispers.”

They lay full length upon the turf; the rock between their faces and the Bowl, and now and again, Dyson, slouching his dark, soft hat over his forehead, put out the glint of an eye, and in a moment drew back, not daring to take a prolonged view. Again he laid an ear to the ground and listened, and the hours went by, and the darkness seemed to blacken, and the faint sigh of the wind was the only sound.

Vaughan grew impatient with this heaviness of silence, this watching for indefinite terror; for to him there was no shape or form of apprehension, and he began to think the whole vigil a dreary farce.

“How much longer is this to last?” he whispered to Dyson, and Dyson who had been holding his breath in the agony of attention put his mouth to Vaughan’s ear and said:

“Will you listen?” with pauses between each syllable, and in the voice with which the priest pronounces the awful words.

Vaughan caught the ground with his hands, and stretched forward, wondering what he was to hear. At first there was nothing, and then a low and gentle noise came very softly from the Bowl, a faint sound, almost indescribable, but as if one held the tongue against the roof of the mouth and expelled the breath. He listened eagerly and presently the noise grew louder, and became a strident and horrible hissing as if the pit beneath boiled with fervent heat, and Vaughan, unable to remain in suspense any longer, drew his cap half over his face in imitation of Dyson, and looked down to the hollow below.

It did, in truth, stir and seethe like an infernal caldron. The whole of the sides and bottom tossed and writhed with vague and restless forms that passed to and fro without the sound of feet, and gathered thick here and there and seemed to speak to one another in those tones of horrible sibilance, like the hissing of snakes, that he had heard. It was as if the sweet turf and the cleanly earth had suddenly become quickened with some foul writhing growth. Vaughan could not draw back his face, though he felt Dyson’s finger touch him, but he peered into the quaking mass and saw faintly that there were things like faces and human limbs, and yet he felt his inmost soul chill with the sure belief that no fellow soul or human thing stirred in all that tossing and hissing host. He looked aghast, choking back sobs of horror, and at length the loathsome forms gathered thickest about some vague object in the middle of the hollow, and the hissing of their speech grew more venomous, and he saw in the uncertain light the abominable limbs, vague and yet too plainly seen, writhe and intertwine, and he thought he heard, very faint, a low human moan striking through the noise of speech that was not of man. At his heart something seemed to whisper ever “the worm of corruption, the worm that dieth not,” and grotesquely the image was pictured to his imagination of a piece of putrid offal stirring through and through with bloated and horrible creeping things.

The writhing of the dusky limbs continued, they seemed clustered round the dark form in the middle of the hollow, and the sweat dripped and poured off Vaughan's forehead, and fell cold on his hand beneath his face.

Then, it seemed done in an instant, the loathsome mass melted and fell away to the sides of the Bowl, and for a moment Vaughan saw in the middle of the hollow the tossing of human arms.

But a spark gleamed beneath, a fire kindled, and as the voice of a woman cried out loud in a shrill scream of utter anguish and terror, a great pyramid of flame spired up like a bursting of a pent fountain, and threw a blaze of light upon the whole mountain. In that instant Vaughan saw the myriads beneath; the things made in the form of men but stunted like children hideously deformed, the faces with the almond eyes burning with evil and unspeakable lusts; the ghastly yellow of the mass of naked flesh and then as if by magic the place was empty, while the fire roared and crackled, and the flames shone abroad.

“You have seen the Pyramid,” said Dyson in his ear, “the Pyramid of fire.”

The Little People

"THEN YOU RECOGNIZE the thing?"

"Certainly. It is a brooch that Annie Trevor used to wear on Sundays; I remember the pattern. But where did you find it? You don't mean to say that you have discovered the girl?"

"My dear Vaughan, I wonder you have not guessed where I found the brooch. You have not forgotten last night already?"

"Dyson," said the other, speaking very seriously, "I have been turning it over in my mind this morning while you have been out. I have thought about what I saw, or perhaps I should say about what I thought I saw, and the only conclusion I can come to is this, that the thing won't bear recollection. As men live, I have lived soberly and honestly, in the fear of God, all my days, and all I can do is believe that I suffered from some monstrous delusion, from some phantasmagoria of the bewildered senses. You know we went home together in silence, not a word passed between us as to what I fancied I saw; had we not better agree to keep silence on the subject? When I took my walk in the peaceful morning sunshine, I thought all the earth seemed full of praise, and passing by that wall I noticed there were no more signs recorded, and I blotted out those that remained. The mystery is over, and we can live quietly again. I think some poison has been working for the last few weeks; I have trod on the verge of madness, but I am sane now."

Mr. Vaughan had spoken earnestly, and bent forward in his chair and glanced at Dyson with something of entreaty.

"My dear Vaughan," said the other, after a pause, "what's the use of this? It is much too late to take that tone; we have gone too deep. Besides you know as well as I that there is no delusion in the case; I wish there were with all my heart. No, in justice to myself I must tell you the whole story, so far as I know it."

"Very good," said Vaughan with a sigh, "if you must, you must."

“Then,” said Dyson, “we will begin with the end if you please. I found this brooch you have just identified in the place we have called the Bowl. There was a heap of grey ashes, as if a fire had been burning, indeed, the embers were still hot, and this brooch was lying on the ground, just outside the range of the flame. It must have dropped accidentally from the dress of the person who was wearing it. No, don’t interrupt me; we can pass now to the beginning, as we have had the end. Let us go back to that day you came to see me in my rooms in London. So far as I can remember, soon after you came in you mentioned, in a somewhat casual manner, that an unfortunate and mysterious incident had occurred in your part of the country; a girl named Annie Trevor had gone to see a relative, and had disappeared. I confess freely that what you said did not greatly interest me; there are so many reasons which may make it extremely convenient for a man and more especially a woman to vanish from the circle of their relations and friends. I suppose, if we were to consult the police, one would find that in London somebody disappears mysteriously every other week, and the officers would, no doubt, shrug their shoulders, and tell you that by the law of averages it could not be otherwise. So I was very culpably careless to your story, and besides, here is another reason for my lack of interest; your tale was inexplicable. You could only suggest a blackguard sailor on the tramp, but I discarded the explanation immediately.

“For many reasons, but chiefly because the occasional criminal, the amateur in brutal crime, is always found out, especially if he selects the country as the scene of his operations. You will remember the case of that Garcia you mentioned; he strolled into a railway station the day after the murder, his trousers covered with blood, and the works of the Dutch clock, his loot, tied in a neat parcel. So rejecting this, your only suggestion, the whole tale became, as I say, inexplicable, and, therefore, profoundly uninteresting. Yes, therefore, it is a perfectly valid conclusion. Do you ever trouble your head about problems which you know to be insoluble? Did you ever bestow much thought on the old puzzle of Achilles and the tortoise? Of course not, because you knew it was a hopeless quest, and so when you told me the story of a country girl who had disappeared I simply placed the whole thing down in the category of the insoluble, and thought no more about the matter. I was mistaken, so it has turned out; but if you remember, you immediately passed on to an affair which interested you more intensely, because personally, I need not go over the very singular narrative of the flint signs, at first I thought it all trivial, probably some children's game, and if not that a hoax of some sort; but your showing me the arrow-head awoke my acute interest. Here, I saw, there was something widely removed from the commonplace, and matter of real curiosity; and as soon as I came here I set to work to find the solution, repeating to myself again and again the signs you had described. First came the sign we have agreed to call the Army; a number of serried lines of flints, all pointing in the same way. Then the lines, like the spokes of a wheel, all converging towards the figure of a Bowl, then the triangle or Pyramid, and last of all the Half moon. I confess that I exhausted conjecture in my efforts to unveil this mystery, and as you will understand it was a duplex or rather triplex problem. For I had not merely to ask myself: what do these figures mean? but also, who can possibly be responsible for the designing of them? And again, who can possibly possess such valuable things, and knowing their value thus throw them down by the wayside? This line of thought led me to suppose that the person or persons in question did not know the value of unique flint arrow-heads, and yet this did not lead me far, for a well-educated man might easily be ignorant on such a subject. Then came the complication of the eye on the wall, and you remember that we could not avoid the conclusion that in the two cases the same agency was at work. The peculiar position of these eyes on the wall made me inquire if there was such a thing as a dwarf anywhere in the neighbourhood, but I found that there was not, and I knew that the children who pass by every day had nothing to do with the matter. Yet I felt convinced that whoever drew the eyes must be from three and a half to four feet high, since, as I pointed out at the time, anyone who draws on a perpendicular surface chooses by instinct a spot about level with his face. Then again, there was the question of the peculiar shape of the eyes; that marked Mongolian character of which the English countryman could have no conception, and for a final cause of confusion the obvious fact that the designer or designers must be able practically to see in the dark. As you remarked, a man who has been confined for many years in an extremely dark cell or dungeon might acquire that power; but since the days of Edmond Dantès, where would such a prison be found in Europe? A sailor, who had been immured for a considerable period in some horrible Chinese oubliette, seemed the individual I was in search of, and though it looked improbable, it was not absolutely impossible that a sailor or, let us say, a man employed on shipboard, should be a dwarf. But how to account for my imaginary sailor being in possesion of prehistoric arrow-heads? And the possession granted, what was the meaning and object of these mysterious signs of flint, and the almond-shaped eyes? Your theory of a contemplated burglary I saw, nearly from the first, to be quite untenable, and I confess I was utterly at a loss for a working hypothesis. It was a mere accident which put me on the track; we passed poor old Trevor, and your mention of his name and of the disappearance of his daughter, recalled the story which I had forgotten, or which remained unheeded. Here, then, I said to myself, is another problem, uninteresting, it is true, by itself; but what if it prove to be in relation with all these enigmas which torture me? I shut myself in my room, and endeavoured to dismiss all prejudice from my mind, and I went over everything de novo, assuming for theory's sake that the disappearance of Annie Trevor had some connection with the flint signs and the eyes on the wall. This assumption did not lead me very far, and I was on the point of giving the whole problem up in despair, when a possible significance of the Bowl struck me. As you know there is a 'Devil's Punch-bowl' in Surrey, and I saw that the symbol might refer to some feature in the country. Putting the two extremes together, I determined to look for the Bowl near the path which the lost girl had taken, and you know how I found it. I interpreted the sign by what I knew, and read the first, the Army, thus:

"'there is to be a gathering or assembly at the Bowl in a fortnight (that is the Half moon) to see the Pyramid, or to build the Pyramid.'

"The eyes, drawn one by one, day by day, evidently checked off the days, and I knew that there would be fourteen and no more. Thus far the way seemed pretty plain; I would not trouble myself to inquire as to the nature of the assembly, or as to who was to assemble in the loneliest and most dreaded place among these lonely hills. In Ireland or China or the West of America the question would have been easily answered; a muster of the disaffected, the meeting of a secret society; vigilantes summoned to report: the thing would be simplicity itself; but in this quiet corner of England, inhabited by quiet folk, no such suppositions were possible for a moment. But I knew that I should have an opportunity of seeing and watching the assembly, and I did not care to perplex myself with hopeless research; and in place of reasoning a wild fancy entered into judgment: I remembered what people had said about Annie Trevor's disappearance, that she had been 'taken by the fairies.' I tell you, Vaughan, I am a sane man as you are, my brain is not, I trust, mere vacant space to let to any wild improbability, and I tried my best to thrust the fantasy away. And the hint came of the old name of fairies, ‘the little people,’ and the very probable belief that they represent a tradition of the prehistoric Turanian inhabitants of the country, who were cave dwellers: and then I realized with a shock that I was looking for a being under four feet in height, accustomed to live in darkness, possessing stone instruments, and familiar with the Mongolian cast of features! I say this, Vaughan, that I should be ashamed to hint at such visionary stuff to you, if it were not for that which you saw with your very eyes last night, and I say that I might doubt the evidence of my senses, if they were not confirmed by yours. But you and I cannot look each other in the face and pretend delusion; as you lay on the turf beside me I felt your flesh shrink and quiver, and I saw your eyes in the light of the flame. And so I tell you without any shame what was in my mind last night as we went through the wood and climbed the hill, and lay hidden beneath the rock.

“There was one thing that should have been most evident that puzzled me to the very last. I told you how I read the sign of the Pyramid; the assembly was to see a pyramid, and the true meaning of the symbol escaped me to the last moment. The old derivation from ‘up, fire,’ though false, should have set me on the track, but it never occurred to me.

“I think I need say very little more. You know we were quite helpless, even if we had foreseen what was to come. Ah, the particular place where these signs were displayed? Yes, that is a curious question. But this house is, so far as I can judge, in a pretty central situation amongst the hills; and possibly, who can say yes or no, that queer, old limestone pillar by your garden wall was a place of meeting before the Celt set foot in Britain. But there is one thing I must add: I don’t regret our inability to rescue the wretched girl. You saw the appearance of those things that gathered thick and writhed in the Bowl; you may be sure that what lay bound in the midst of them was no longer fit for earth.”

“So?” said Vaughan.

“So she passed in the Pyramid of Fire,” said Dyson, “and they passed again to the underworld, to the places beneath the hills.”

THE END

The Glorious Mystery

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The Rose Garden

AND AFTERWARDS SHE went very softly, and opened the window and looked out. Behind her the room was in a mystical semi-darkness; chairs and tables were hovering, ill-defined shapes, there was but the faintest illusory glitter from the talc moons in the rich Indian curtain which she had drawn across the door. The yellow silk draperies of the bed were but suggestions of colour, and the pillow and the white sheets glimmered as a white cloud in a far sky at twilight.

She turned from the dusky room, and with dewy tender eyes gazed out across the garden towards the lake. She could not rest nor lay herself down to sleep; though it was late, and half the night had passed, she could not rest. A sickle moon was slowly drawing upwards through certain filmy clouds that stretched in a long band from east to west, and a pallid light began to flow from the dark water, as if there also some vague star were rising. She looked with eyes insatiable for wonder; and she found a strange Eastern effect in the bordering of reeds, in their spear-like shapes, in the liquid ebony that they shadowed, in the fine inlay of pearl and silver as the moon shone free; a bright symbol in the steadfast calm of the sky.

There were faint stirring sounds heard from the fringe of reeds, and now and then the drowsy broken cry of water-fowl, for they knew that the dawn was not far off. In the centre of the lake was a carved white pedestal, and on it shone a white boy holding the double flute to his lips.

Beyond the lake the park began, and sloped gently to the verge of the wood, now but a dark cloud beneath the sickle moon. And then beyond and farther still, undiscovered hills, grey bands of cloud, and the steep pale height of the heaven. She gazed on with her tender eyes, bathing herself as it were in the deep rest of the night, veiling her soul with the half-light and the half-shadow, stretching out her delicate hands into the coolness of the misty silvered air, wondering at her hands.

And then she turned from the window, and made herself a divan of cushion on the Persian carpet, and half sat, half lay there, as motionless, as ecstatic as a poet dreaming under roses, far in Ispahan. She gazed out, after all, to assure herself that sight and the eyes showed nothing but a glimmering veil, a gauze of curious lights and figures, that in it there was no reality or substance. He had always told her that there was only one existence, one science, one religion, that the external world was but a variegated shadow, which might either conceal or reveal the truth; and now she believed.

He had shown her that bodily rapture might be the ritual and expression of the ineffable mysteries, of the world beyond sense, that must be entered by the way of sense; and now she believed. She had never much doubted any of his words, from the moment of their meeting a month before. She had looked up as she sat in the arbour, and her father was walking down between the avenue of roses bringing to her the stranger, thin and dark with a pointed beard and melancholy eyes. He murmured something to himself as they shook hands; she could hear the rich unknown words that sounded as the echo of far music. Afterwards he had told her what the lines were:

How say ye that I was lost? I wandered among roses.

Can he go astray who enters the rose garden?

The lover in the house of his Darling is not forlorn.

I wandered among roses. How say ye that I was lost?

His voice, murmuring the strange words, had persuaded her, and now she had the rapture of the perfect knowledge. She had looked out into the silvery uncertain night in order that she might experience the sense that for her these things no longer existed. She was not any more a part of the garden, or of the lake, or of the wood, or of the life that she had led hitherto. Another line that he had quoted came to her:

The kingdom of I and We forsake, and your home in annihilation make.

It had seemed at first almost nonsense, if it had been possible for him to talk nonsense; but now she was thrilled and filled with the meaning of it. Herself was annihilated; at his bidding she had destroyed all her old feelings, and emotions, her likes and dislikes, all the inherited loves and hates that her father and mother had given her; the old life had been thrown utterly away.

It grew light, and when the dawn burned she fell asleep, murmuring:

“How say ye that I was lost?”

Psychology, or, Fragments of Paper

MR DALE, WHO had quiet rooms in a western part of London, was very busily occupied one day with a pencil and little scraps of paper. He would stop in the middle of his writing, of his monotonous tramp from door to window, jot down a line of hieroglyphics, and turn again to his work. At lunch he kept his instruments on the table beside him, and a little notebook accompanied him on his evening walk about the Green. Sometimes he seemed to experience a certain difficulty in the act of writing, as if the heat of shame or even incredulous surprise held his hand, but one by one the fragments of paper fell into the drawer, and a full feast awaited him at the day's close.

As he lit his pipe at dusk, he was standing by the window and looking out into the street. In the distance cab-lights flashed to and fro, up and down the hill, on the main road. Across the way he saw the long line of sober grey houses, cheerfully lit up for the most part, displaying against the night the dining-room and the evening meal. In one house, just opposite, there was brighter illumination, and the open windows showed a modest dinner-party in progress, and here and there a drawing-room on the first floor glowed ruddy, as the tall shaded lamp was lit. Everywhere Dale saw a quiet and comfortable respectability; if there were no gaiety there was no riot, and he thought himself fortunate to have got 'rooms' in so sane and meritorious a street.

The pavement was almost deserted. Now and again a servant would dart out from a side door and scurry off in the direction of the shops, returning in a few minutes in equal haste. But foot passengers were rare, and only at long intervals a stranger would drift from the highway and wander with slow speculation down Abingdon Road, as if he had passed its entrance a thousand times and had at last been piqued with curiosity and the desire of exploring the unknown. All the inhabitants of the quarter prided themselves on their quiet and seclusion, and many of them did not so much as dream that if one went far enough the road degenerated and became abominable, the home of the hideous, the mouth of a black purlieu. Indeed stories, ill and malodorous, were told of the streets parallel, to east and west, which perhaps communicated with the terrible sink beyond, but those who lived at the good end of Abingdon Road knew nothing of their neighbours.

Dale leant far out of his window. The pale London sky deepened to violet as the lamps were lit, and in the twilight the little gardens before the houses shone, seemed as if they grew more clear. The golden laburnum but reflected the last bright yellow veil that had fallen over the sky after sunset, the white hawthorn was a gleaming splendour, the red may a flameless fire in the dusk. From the open window, Dale could note the increasing cheerfulness of the diners opposite, as the moderate cups were filled and emptied; blinds in the higher stories brightened up and down the street when the nurses came up with the children. A gentle breeze that smelt of grass and woods and flowers, fanned away the day's heat from the pavement stones, rustled through the blossoming boughs, and sank again, leaving the road to calm.

All the scene breathed the gentle domestic peace of the stories; there were regular lives, dull duties done, sober and common thoughts on every side. He felt that he needed not to listen at the windows, for he could divine all the talk, and guess the placid and usual channels in which the conversation flowed. Here there were no spasms, nor raptures, nor the red storms of romance, but a safe rest; marriage and birth and begetting were no more here than breakfast and lunch and afternoon tea.

And then he turned away from the placid transparency of the street, and sat down before his lamp and the papers he had so studiously noted. A friend of his, an 'impossible' man named Jenyns, had been to see him the night before, and they had talked about the psychology of the novelists, discussing their insight, and the depth of their probe.

'It is all very well as far as it goes,' said Jenyns. 'Yes, it is perfectly accurate. Guardsmen do like chorus-girls, the doctor's daughter is fond of the curate, the grocer's assistant of the Baptist persuasion has sometimes religious difficulties, "smart" people no doubt think a great deal about social events and complications: the Tragic Comedians felt and wrote all that stuff, I dare say. But do you think that is all? Do you call a description of the gilt tools on the morocco here an exhaustive essay on Shakespeare?'

‘But what more is there?’’ said Dale. ‘‘Don’t you think, then, that human nature has been fairly laid open? What more?’

‘Songs of the frantic lupanar; delirium of the madhouse. Not extreme wickedness, but the insensate, the unintelligible, the lunatic passion and idea, the desire that must come from some other sphere that we cannot even faintly imagine. Look for yourself; it is easy.’

Dale looked now at the ends and scraps of paper. On them he had carefully registered all the secret thoughts of the day, the crazy lusts, the senseless furies, the foul monsters that his heart had borne, the maniac phantasies that he had harboured. In every note he found a rampant madness, the equivalents in thought of mathematical absurdity, of two-sided triangles, of parallel straight lines which met.

‘And we talk of absurd dreams,’ he said to himself. ‘And these are wilder than the wildest visions. And our sins; but these are the sins of nightmare.

‘And every day,’ he went on, ‘we lead two lives, and the half of our soul is madness, and half heaven is lit by a black sun. I say I am a man, but who is the other that hides in me?’

The Holy Things

THE SKY WAS blue above Holborn, and only one little cloud, half white, half golden, floated on the wind's way from west to east. The long aisle of the street was splendid in the full light of the summer, and away in the west, where the houses seemed to meet and join, it was as a rich tabernacle, mysterious, the carven house of holy things.

A man came into the great highway from a quiet court. He had been sitting under plane-tree shade for an hour or more, his mind racked with perplexities and doubts, with the sense that all was without meaning or purpose, a tangle of senseless joys and empty sorrows. He had stirred in it and fought and striven, and now disappointment and success were alike tasteless. To struggle was weariness, to attain was weariness, to do nothing was weariness. He had felt, a little while before, that from the highest to the lowest things of life there was no choice, there was not one thing that was better than another: the savour of the cinders was no sweeter than the savour of the ashes. He had done work which some men liked and others disliked, and liking and disliking were equally tiresome to him. His poetry or his pictures or whatever it was that he worked at had utterly ceased to interest him, and he had tried to be idle, and found idleness as impossible as work. He had lost the faculty for making and he had lost the power of resting; he dozed in the day-time and started up and cried at night. Even that morning he had doubted and hesitated, wondering whether to stay indoors or to go out, sure that in either plan there was an infinite weariness and disgust.

When he at last went abroad he let the crowd push him into the quiet court, and at the same time cursed them in a low voice for doing so; he tried to persuade himself that he had meant to go somewhere else. When he sat down he desperately endeavoured to rouse himself, and as he knew that all the strong interests are egotistic, he made an effort to grow warm over the work he had done, to find a glow of satisfaction in the thought that he had accomplished something. It was nonsense; he had found out a clever trick and had made the most of it, and it was over. Besides, how would it interest him if afterwards he was praised when he was dead? And what was the use of trying to invent some new tricks? It was folly; and he ground his teeth as a new idea came into his mind and was rejected. To get drunk always made him so horribly ill, and other things were more foolish and tiresome than poesy or painting, whichever it was.

He could not even rest on the uncomfortable bench beneath the dank, stinking plane tree. A young man and a girl came up and sat next to him, and the girl said, ‘Oh, isn’t it beautiful today?’ and then they began to jabber to one another — the blasted fools! He flung himself from the seat and went out into Holborn.

As far as one could see, there were two processions of omnibuses, cabs, and vans that went east and west and west and east. Now the long line would move on briskly, now it stopped. The horses’ feet rattled and pattered on the asphalt, the wheels ground and jarred, a bicyclist wavered in and out between the serried ranks, jangling his bell. The foot passengers went to and fro on the pavement, with an endless change of unknown faces; there was an incessant hum and murmur of voices. In the safety of a blind passage an Italian whirled round the handle of his piano-organ; the sound of it swelled and sank as the traffic surged and paused, and now and then one heard the shrill voices of the children who danced and shrieked in time to the music. Close to the pavement a coster pushed his barrow, and proclaimed flowers in an odd intonation, reminding one of the Gregorian chant. The cyclist went by again with his jangling insistent bell, and a man who stood by the lamp-post set fire to his pastille ribbon, and let the faint blue smoke rise into the sun. Away in the west, where the houses seemed to meet, the play of sunlight on the haze made, as it were, golden mighty shapes that paused and advanced, and paused again.

He had viewed the scene hundreds of times, and for a long while had found it a nuisance and a weariness. But now as he walked stupidly, slowly, along the southern side of Holborn, a change fell. He did not in the least know what it was, but there seemed to be a strange air, and a new charm that soothed his mind.

When the traffic was stopped, to his soul there was a solemn hush that summoned remnants of a far-off memory. The voices of the passengers sank away, the street was endued with a grave and reverent expectation. A shop that he passed had a row of electric lamps burning above the door, and the golden glow of them in the sunlight was, he felt, significant. The grind and jar of the wheels, as the procession moved on again, gave out a chord of music, the opening of some high service that was to be done, and now, in an ecstasy, he was sure that he heard the roll and swell and triumph of the organ, and shrill sweet choristers began to sing. So the music sank and swelled and echoed in the vast aisle — in Holborn.

What could these lamps mean, burning in the bright sunlight? The music was hushed in a grave close, and in the rattle of traffic he heard the last deep sonorous notes shake against the choir walls — he had passed beyond the range of the Italian's instrument. But then a rich voice began alone, rising and falling in monotonous but awful modulations, singing a longing triumphant song, bidding the faithful lift up their hearts, be joined in heart with the Angels and Archangels, with the Thrones and Dominations. He could see no longer, he could not see the man who passed close beside him, pushing his barrow, and calling flowers.

Ah! He could not be mistaken, he was sure now. The air was blue with incense, he smelt the adorable fragrance. The time had almost come. And then the silvery, reiterated, instant summons of a bell; and again, and again.

The tears fell from his eyes, in his weeping the tears poured a rain upon his cheeks. But he saw in the distance, in the far distance, the carven tabernacle, golden mighty figures moving slowly, imploring arms stretched forth.

There was a noise of a great shout; the choir sang in the tongue of his boyhood that he had forgotten:

SANT … SANT … SANT

Then the silvery bell tinkled anew; and again, and again. He looked and saw the Holy, White, and Shining Mysteries exhibited — in Holborn.

A New Christmas Carol

SCROOGE WAS UNDOUBTEDLY getting on in life, to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that.

Ten years had gone by since the spirit of old Jacob Marley had visited him, and the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Christmas Present, and Christmas Yet to Come had shown him the error of his mean, niggardly, churlish ways, and had made him the merriest old boy that ever walked on ’Change with a chuckle, and was called “Old Medlar” by the young dogs who never reverenced anybody or anything.

And, not a doubt of it, the young dogs were in the right. Ebenezer Scrooge was a meddler. He was always ferreting about into other peoples’ business; so that he might find out what good he could do them. Many a hard man of affairs softened as he thought of Scrooge and of the old man creeping round to the countinghouse where the hard man sat in despair, and thought of the certain ruin before him.

“My dear Mr. Hardman,” old Scrooge had said, “not another word. Take this draft for thirty thousand pounds, and use it as none knows better. Why, you’ll double it for me before six months are out.”

He would go out chuckling on that, and Charles the waiter, at the old City tavern where Scrooge dined, always said that Scrooge was a fortune for him and to the house. To say nothing of what Charles got by him; everybody ordered a fresh supply of hot brandy and water when his cheery, rosy old face entered the room.

It was Christmastide. Scrooge was sitting before his roaring fire, sipping at something warm and comfortable, and plotting happiness for all sorts of people.

“I won’t bear Bob’s obstinacy,” he was saying to himself — the firm was Scrooge and Cratchit now— “he does all the work, and it’s not fair for a useless old fellow like me to take more than a quarter share of the profits.”

A dreadful sound echoed through the grave old house. The air grew chill and sour. The something warm and comfortable grew cold and tasteless as Scrooge sipped it nervously. The door flew open, and a vague but fearful form stood in the doorway.

“Follow me,” it said.

Scrooge is not at all sure what happened then. He was in the streets. He recollected that he wanted to buy some sweetmeats for his little nephews and nieces, and he went into a shop.

“Past eight o’clock, sir,” said the civil man. “I can’t serve you.”

He wandered on through the streets that seemed strangely altered. He was going westward, and he began to feel faint. He thought he would be the better for a little brandy and water, and he was just turning into a tavern when all the people came out and the iron gates were shut with a clang in his face.

“What’s the matter?” he asked feebly of the man who was closing the doors.

“Gone ten,” the fellow said shortly, and turned out all the lights.

Scrooge felt sure that the second mince-pie had given him indigestion, and that he was in a dreadful dream. He seemed to fall into a deep gulf of darkness, in which all was blotted out.

When he came to himself again it was Christmas Day, and the people were walking about the streets.

Scrooge, somehow or other, found himself among them. They smiled and greeted one another cheerfully, but it was evident that they were not happy. Marks of care were on their faces, marks that told of past troubles and future anxieties. Scrooge heard a man sigh heavily just after he had wished a neighbor a Merry Christmas. There were tears on a woman s face as she came down the church steps, all in black.

“Poor John!” she was murmuring. “I am sure it was the wearing cark of money troubles that killed him. Still, he is in heaven now. But the clergyman said in his sermon that heaven was only a pretty fairy tale.” She wept anew.

All this disturbed Scrooge dreadfully. Something seemed to be pressing on his heart.

“But,” said he, “I shall forget all this when I sit down to dinner with Nephew Fred and my niece and their young rascals.”

It was late in the afternoon; four o’clock and dark, but in capital time for dinner. Scrooge found his nephew’s house. It was as dark as the sky; not a window was lighted up. Scrooge’s heart grew cold.

He knocked and knocked again, and rang a bell that sounded as faint and far as if it had rung in a grave.

At last a miserable old woman opened the door for a few inches and looked out suspiciously.

“Mr. Fred?” said she. “Why, he and his missus have gone off to the Hotel Splendid, as they call it, and they won’t be home till midnight. They got their table six weeks ago! The children are away at Eastbourne.”

“Dining in a tavern on Christmas day!” Scrooge murmured. “What terrible fate is this? Who is so miserable, so desolate, that he dines at a tavern on Christmas day? And the children at Eastbourne!”

The air grew misty about him. He seemed to hear as though from a great distance the voice of Tiny Tim, saying “God help us, every one!”

Again the Spirit stood before him. Scrooge fell upon his knees.

“Terrible Phantom!” he exclaimed. “Who and what are thou? Speak, I entreat thee.”

“Ebenezer Scrooge,” replied the Spirit in awful tones. “I am the Ghost of the Christmas of 1920. With me I bring the demand note of the Commissioners of Income Tax!”

Scrooge’s hair bristled as he saw the figures. But it fell out when he saw that the Apparition had feet like those of a gigantic cat.

“My name is Pussyfoot. I am also called Ruin and Despair,” said the Phantom, and vanished.

With that Scrooge awoke and drew back the curtains of his bed.

“Thank God!” he uttered from his heart. “It was but a dream!”

THE END

Ornaments in Jade

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The Turanians

THE SMOKE OF the tinkers' camp rose a thin pale blue from the heart of the wood.

Mary had left her mother at work on 'things,' and had gone out with a pale and languid face into the hot afternoon. She had talked of walking across the fields to the Green, and of having a chat with the doctor's daughter, but she had taken the other path that crept down towards the hollow and the dark thickets of the wood.

After all, she had felt too lazy to rouse herself, to make the effort of conversation, and the sunlight scorched the path that was ruled straight from stile to stile across the brown August fields, and she could see, even from far away, how the white dust clouds were smoking on the road by the Green. She hesitated, and at last went down under the far-spreading oak-trees, by a winding way of grass that cooled her feet.

Her mother, who was very kind and good, used to talk to her sometimes on the evils of 'exaggeration,' on the necessity of avoiding phrases violently expressed, words of too fierce an energy. She remembered how she had run into the house a few days before and had called her mother to look at a rose in the garden that 'burnt like a flame.' Her mother had said the rose was very pretty, and a little later had hinted her doubts as to the wisdom of 'such very strong expressions.'

'I know, my dear Mary,' she had said, 'that in your case it isn't affectation. You really feel what you say, don't you? Yes; but is it nice to feel like that? Do you think that it's quite right, even?'

The mother had looked at the girl with a curious wistfulness, almost as if she would say something more, and sought for the fit words, but could not find them. And then she merely remarked:

'You haven't seen Alfred Moorhouse since the tennis party, have you? I must ask him to come next Tuesday; you like him?'

The daughter could not quite see the link between her fault of ‘exaggeration’ and the charming young barrister, but her mother’s warning recurred to her as she strayed down the shadowed path, and felt the long dark grass cool and refreshing about her feet. She would not have put this sensation into words, but she thought it was as though her ankles were gently, sweetly kissed as the rich grass touched them, and her mother would have said it was not right to think such things.

And what a delight there was in the colours all about her! It was as though she walked in a green cloud; the strong sunlight was filtered through the leaves, reflected from the grass, and made all visible things, the tree-stems, the flowers, and her own hands seem new, transformed into another likeness. She had walked by the wood-path over and over again, but today it had become full of mystery and hinting, and every turn brought a surprise.

Today the mere sense of being alone under the trees was an acute secret joy, and as she went down deeper and the wood grew dark about her, she loosened her brown hair, and when the sun shone over the fallen tree she saw her hair was not brown but bronze and golden, glowing on her pure white dress.

She stayed by the well in the rock, and dared to make the dark water her mirror, looking to right and left with shy glances and listening for the rustle of parted boughs, before she would match her gold with luminous ivory. She saw wonders in a glass as she leaned over the shadowed mysterious pool, and smiled at the smiling nymph, whose lips parted as if to whisper secrets.

As she went on her way, the thin blue smoke rose from a gap in the trees, and she remembered her childish dread of ‘the gipsies.’ She walked a little farther, and laid herself to rest on a smooth patch of turf, and listened to the strange intonations that sounded from the camp. ‘Those horrible people’’ she had heard the yellow folk called, but she found now a pleasure in voices that sang and, indistinctly heard, were almost chanting, with a rise and fall of notes and a wild wail, and the solemnity of unknown speech. It seemed a fit music for the unknown woodland, in harmony with the drip of the well, and the birds’ sharp notes, and the rustle and hurry of the wood creatures.

She rose again and went on till she could see the red fire between the boughs; and the voices thrilled into an incantation. She longed to summon up courage, and talk to these strange wood-folk, but she was afraid to burst into the camp. So she sat down under a tree and waited, hoping that one of them might happen to come her way.

There were six or seven men, as many women, and a swarm of fantastic children, lolling and squatting about the fire, gabbling to one another in their singsong speech. They were people of curious aspect, short and squat, high-cheekboned, with dingy yellow skin and long almond eyes; only in one or two of the younger men there was a suggestion of a wild, almost faunlike grace, as of creatures who always moved between the red fire and the green leaf. Though everybody called them gipsies, they were in reality Turanian metal-workers, degenerated into wandering tinkers; their ancestors had fashioned the bronze battle-axes, and they mended pots and kettles. Mary waited under the tree, sure that she had nothing to fear, and resolved not to run away if one of them appeared.

The sun sank into a mass of clouds and the air grew close and heavy; a mist steamed up about the trees, a blue mist like the smoke of a wood-fire. A strange smiling face peered out from between the leaves, and the girl knew that her heart leapt as the young man walked towards her.

The Turanians moved their camp that night. There was a red glint, like fire, in the vast shadowy west, and then a burning paten floated up from a wild hill. A procession of weird bowed figures passed across the crimson disk, one stumbling after another in long single file, each bending down beneath his huge shapeless pack, and the children crawled last, goblinlike, fantastic.

The girl was lying in her white room, caressing a small green stone, a curious thing cut with strange devices, awful with age. She held it close to the luminous ivory, and the gold poured upon it.

She laughed for joy, and murmured and whispered to herself, asking herself questions in the bewilderment of her delight. She was afraid to say anything to her mother.

The Idealist

'DID YOU NOTICE Symonds while Beever was telling that story just now?' said one clerk to the other.

'No. Why? Didn't he like it?'

The second clerk had been putting away his papers and closing his desk in a grave and business-like manner, but when Beever's story was recalled to him he began to bubble anew, tasting the relish of the tale for a second time.

'He's a fair scorcher, old Beever,' he remarked between little gasps of mirth. 'But didn't Symonds like it?'

'Like it? He looked disgusted, I can tell you. Made a face, something in this style:' and the man drew his features into a design of sour disapproval, as he gave his hat the last polish with his coatsleeve.

'Well, I'm off now,' he said. 'I want to get home early, as there's tart for tea,' and he fashioned another grimace, an imitation of his favourite actor's favourite contortion.

'Well, goodbye,' said his friend. 'You are a hot 'un, you are. You're worse than Beever. See you on Monday. What will Symonds say?' and he shouted after him as the door swung to and fro.

Charles Symonds, who had failed to see the humour of Mr Beever's tale, had left the office a few minutes earlier and was now pacing slowly westward, mounting Fleet Street. His fellow clerk had not been much amiss in his observation. Symonds had heard the last phrases of Beever's story, and unconsciously had looked half round towards the group, angry and disgusted at their gross and stupid merriment. Beever and his friends seemed to him guilty of sacrilege; he likened them to plough-boys pawing and deriding an exquisite painted panel, blaring out their contempt and brutal ignorance. He could not control his features; in spite of himself he looked loathing at the three yahoos. He would have given anything if he could have found words and told them what he thought, but even to look displeasure was difficult. His shyness was a perpetual amusement to the other clerks, who often did little things to annoy him, and enjoyed the spectacle of Symonds inwardly raging and burning like Etna, but too hopelessly diffident to say a word. He would turn dead man's white, and grind his teeth at an insult, and pretend to join in the laugh, and pass it off as a joke. When he was a boy his mother was puzzled by him, not knowing whether he were sullen or insensible, or perhaps very good-tempered.

He climbed Fleet Street, still raw with irritation, partly from a real disgust at the profane coarseness of the clerks, and partly from a feeling that they talked so because they knew he hated such gross farces and novels. It was hideous to live and work with such foul creatures, and he glanced back fury at the City, the place of the stupid, the blatant, the intolerable.

He passed into the rush and flood of the Strand, into the full tide of a Saturday afternoon, still meditating the outrage, and constructing a cutting sentence for future use, heaping up words which should make Beever tremble. He was quite aware that he would never utter one of those biting phrases, but the pretence soothed him, and he began to remember other things. It was in late November and the clouds were already gathering for the bright solemnity of the sunset, flying to their places before the wind. They curled into fantastic shapes, high up there in the wind's whirlpool, and Symonds, looking towards the sky, was attracted by two grey writhing clouds that drew together in the west, in the far perspective of the Strand. He saw them as if they had been living creatures, noting every change and movement and transformation, till the shaking winds made them one and drove a vague form away to the south.

The curious interest he had taken in the cloud shapes had driven away the thought of the office, of the fetid talk which he so often heard. Beever and his friends ceased to exist, and Symonds escaped to his occult and private world which no one had ever divined. He lived far away down in Fulham, but he let the buses rock past him, and walked slowly, endeavouring to prolong the joys of anticipation. Almost with a visible gesture he drew himself apart, and went solitary, his eyes downcast, and gazing not on the pavement but on certain clear imagined pictures.

He quickened his steps as he passed along the northern pavement of Leicester Square, hurrying to escape the sight of the enamelled strange spectra who were already beginning to walk and stir abroad, issuing from their caves and waiting for the gas-light. He scowled as he looked up and chanced to see on a hoarding an icon with raddled cheeks and grinning teeth, at which some young men were leering; and one was recalling this creature’s great song:

‘And that’s the way they do it.
How d’ye fink it’s done?
Oh, *that’s* the way they do it.
Doesn’t it taike the bun?’

Symonds scowled at the picture of her, remembering how Beever had voted her ‘good goods,’ how the boys bellowed the chorus under his windows of Saturday nights. Once he had opened the window as they passed by, and had sworn at them and cursed them, in a whisper, lest he should be overheard.

He peered curiously at the books in a Piccadilly shop; now and then when he could save a few pounds he had made purchases there, but the wares the bookseller dealt in were expensive, and he was obliged to be rather neatly dressed at the office, and he had other esoteric expenses. He had made up his mind to learn Persian and he hesitated as to whether he should turn back now, and see if he could pick up a grammar in Great Russell Street at a reasonable price. But it was growing dark, and the mists and shadows that he loved were gathering and inviting him onwards to those silent streets near the river.

When he at last diverged from the main road he made his way by a devious and eccentric track, threading an intricate maze of streets which to most people would have been dull and gloomy and devoid of interest. But to Symonds these backwaters of London were as bizarre and glowing as a cabinet of Japanese curios; he found here his delicately chased bronzes, work in jade, the flush and flame of extraordinary colours. He delayed at a corner, watching a shadow on a lighted blind, watching it fade and blacken and fade, conjecturing its secrets, inventing dialogue for this drama in

Ombres Chinoises. He glanced up at another window, and saw a room vivid, in a hard yellow light of flaming gas, and lurked in the shelter of an old elm till he was perceived and the curtains were drawn hastily. On the way he had chosen, it was his fortune to pass many well-ordered decent streets, by villas detached and semi-detached, half hidden behind flowering-shrubs and evergreens. At this hour, on a Saturday in November, few were abroad, and Symonds was often able, crouching down by the fence, to peer into a lighted room, to watch persons who thought themselves utterly unobserved. As he came near to his home he went through meaner streets, and he stopped at a corner, observing two children at play, regarding them with the minute scrutiny of an entomologist at the microscope. A woman who had been out shopping crossed the road and drove the children home, and Symonds moved on, hastily, but with a long sigh of enjoyment.

His breath came quick, in gusts, as he drew out his latch-key. He lived in an old Georgian house, and he raced up the stairs, and locked the door of the great lofty room in which he lived. The evening was damp and chilly, but the sweat streamed down his face. He struck a match, and there was a strange momentary vision of the vast room, almost empty of furniture, a hollow space bordered by grave walls and the white glimmer of the corniced ceiling.

He lit a candle, opened a large box that stood in a corner, and set to work. He seemed to be fitting together some sort of lay figure; a vague hint of the human shape increased under his hands. The candle sparkled at the other end of the room, and Symonds was sweating over his task in a cavern of dark shadow. His nervous shaking fingers fumbled over that uncertain figure, and then he began to draw out incongruous monstrous things. In the dusk, white silk shimmered, laces and delicate frills hovered for a moment, as he bungled over the tying of knots, the fastening of bands. The old room grew rich, heavy, vaporous with subtle scents; the garments that were passing through his hands had been drenched with fragrance. Passion had contorted his face; he grinned stark in the candlelight.

When he had finished the work he drew it with him to the window, and lighted three more candles. In his excitement, for that night he forgot the effect of Ombres Chinoises, and those who passed and happened to look up at the white staring blind found singular matter for speculation.

Witchcraft

'RATHER LEFT THE others behind, haven't we, Miss Custance?' said the captain, looking back to the gate and the larchwood.

'I'm afraid we have, Captain Knight. I hope you don't mind very much, do you?'

'Mind? Delighted, you know. Sure this damp air isn't bad for you, Miss Custance?'

'Oh, d'you think it's damp? I like it. Ever since I can remember I've enjoyed these quiet autumn days. I won't hear of father's going anywhere else.'

'Charmin' place, the Grange. Don't wonder you like comin' down here.'

Captain Knight glanced back again and suddenly chuckled.

'I say, Miss Custance,' he said, 'I believe the whole lot's lost their way. Don't see a sign of them. Didn't we pass another path on the left?'

'Yes, and don't you remember you wanted to turn off?'

'Yes, of course. I thought it looked more possible, don't you know. That's where they must have gone. Where does it lead?'

'Oh, nowhere exactly. It dwindles and twists about a lot, and I'm afraid the ground is rather marshy.'

'You don't say so?' The captain laughed out loud. 'How awfully sick Ferris will be. He hates crossing Piccadilly if there's a bit of mud about.'

'Poor Mr Ferris!' And the two went on, picking their way on the rough path, till they came in sight of a little old cottage sunken alone in a hollow amongst the woods.

'Oh, you must come and see Mrs Wise,' said Miss Custance. 'She's such a dear old thing, I'm sure you'd fall in love with her. And she'd never forgive me if she heard afterwards that we'd passed so close without coming in. Only for five minutes, you know.'

'Certainly, Miss Custance. Is that the old lady there at the door?'

'Yes. She's always been so good to us children, and I know she'll talk of our coming to see her for months. You don't mind, do you?'

'I shall be charmed, I'm sure,' and he looked back once more to see if there were any appearance of Ferris and his party.

'Sit down, Miss Ethel, sit down, please, miss,' said the old woman when they went in. 'And please to sit down here, sir, will you be so kind?'

She dusted the chairs, and Miss Custance enquired after the rheumatism and the bronchitis, and promised to send something from the Grange. The old woman had good country manners, and spoke well, and now and then politely tried to include Captain Knight in the conversation. But all the time she was quietly looking at him.

'Yes, sir, I be a bit lonely at times,' she said when her visitors rose. 'I do miss Nathan sorely; you can hardly remember my husband, can you, Miss Ethel? But I have the Book, sir, and good friends too.'

A couple of days later Miss Custance came alone to the cottage. Her hand trembled as she knocked at the door.

'Is it done?' she asked, when the old woman appeared.

'Come in, miss,' said Mrs Wise, and she shut the door, and put up the wooden bolt. Then she crept to the hearth, and drew out something from a hiding-place in the stones.

'Look at that,' she said, showing it to the young lady. 'Isn't it a picture?'

Miss Custance took the object into her fine delicate hands, and glanced at it, and then flushed scarlet.

'How horrible!' she exclaimed. 'What did you do that for? You never told me.'

'It's the only way, miss, to get what you want.'

'It's a loathsome thing. I wonder you're not ashamed of yourself.'

‘I be as much ashamed as you be, I think,’ said Mrs Wise, and she leered at the pretty, shy-faced girl. Their eyes met and their eyes laughed at one another.

‘Cover it up, please, Mrs Wise; I needn’t look at it now, at all events. But are you sure?’

‘There’s never been a mishap since old Mrs Cradoc taught me, and she’s been dead for sixty year and more. She used to tell of her grandmother’s days when there were meetings in the wood over there.’

‘And you’re quite sure?’

‘You do as I tell you. You must take it like this’; and the old woman whispered her instructions, and would have put out a hand in illustration, but the girl pushed it away.

‘I understand now, Mrs Wise. No, don’t do that. I quite see what you mean. Here’s the money.’

‘And whatever you do, don’t you forget the ointment as I told you,’ said Mrs Wise.

‘I’ve been to read to poor old Mrs Wise,’ Ethel said that evening to Captain Knight. ‘She’s over eighty and her eyesight is getting very bad.’

‘Very good of you, Miss Custance, I’m sure,’ said Captain Knight, and he moved away to the other end of the drawing-room, and began to talk to a girl in yellow, with whom he had been exchanging smiles at a distance, ever since the men came in from the dining-room.

That night, when she was alone in her room, Ethel followed Mrs Wise’s instructions. She had hidden the object in a drawer, and as she drew it out, she looked about her, though the curtains were drawn close.

She forgot nothing, and when it was done she listened.

The Ceremony

FROM HER CHILDHOOD, from those early and misty days which began to seem unreal, she recollected the grey stone in the wood.

It was something between the pillar and the pyramid in shape, and its grey solemnity amidst the leaves and the grass shone and shone from those early years, always with some hint of wonder. She remembered how, when she was quite a little girl, she had strayed one day, on a hot afternoon, from her nurse's side, and only a little way in the wood the grey stone rose from the grass, and she cried out and ran back in panic terror.

'What a silly little girl,' the nurse had said. 'It's only the — stone.' She had quite forgotten the name that the servant had given, and she was always ashamed to ask as she grew older.

But always that hot day, that burning afternoon of her childhood when she had first looked consciously on the grey image in the wood, remained not a memory but a sensation. The wide wood swelling like the sea, the tossing of the bright boughs in the sunshine, the sweet smell of the grass and flowers, the beating of the summer wind upon her cheek, the gloom of the underglade rich, indistinct, gorgeous, significant as old tapestry; she could feel it and see it all, and the scent of it was in her nostrils. And in the midst of the picture, where the strange plants grew gross in shadow, was the old grey shape of the stone.

But there were in her mind broken remnants of another and far earlier impression. It was all uncertain, the shadow of a shadow, so vague that it might well have been a dream that had mingled with the confused waking thoughts of a little child. She did not know that she remembered, she rather remembered the memory. But again it was a summer day, and a woman, perhaps the same nurse, held her in her arms, and went through the wood. The woman carried bright flowers in one hand; the dream had in it a glow of bright red, and the perfume of cottage roses. Then she saw herself put down for a moment on the grass, and the red colour stained the grim stone, and there was nothing else — except that one night she woke up and heard the nurse sobbing.

She often used to think of the strangeness of very early life; one came, it seemed, from a dark cloud, there was a glow of light, but for a moment, and afterwards the night. It was as if one gazed at a velvet curtain, heavy, mysterious, impenetrable blackness, and then, for the twinkling of an eye, one spied through a pin-hole a storeyed town that flamed, with fire about its walls and pinnacles. And then again the folding darkness, so that sight became illusion, almost in the seeing. So to her was that earliest, doubtful vision of the grey stone, of the red colour spilled upon it, with the incongruous episode of the nursemaid, who wept at night.

But the later memory was clear; she could feel, even now, the inconsequent terror that sent her away shrieking, running to the nurse's skirts. Afterwards, through the days of girlhood, the stone had taken its place amongst the vast array of unintelligible things which haunt every child's imagination. It was part of life, to be accepted and not questioned; her elders spoke of many things which she could not understand, she opened books and was dimly amazed, and in the Bible there were many phrases which seemed strange. Indeed, she was often puzzled by her parents' conduct, by their looks at one another, by their half-words, and amongst all these problems which she hardly recognised as problems, was the grey ancient figure rising from dark grass.

Some semi-conscious impulse made her haunt the wood where shadow enshrined the stone. One thing was noticeable; that all through the summer months the passers-by dropped flowers there. Withered blossoms were always on the ground, amongst the grass, and on the stone fresh blooms constantly appeared. From the daffodil to the Michaelmas daisy there was marked the calendar of the cottage gardens, and in the winter she had seen sprays of juniper and box, mistletoe and holly. Once she had been drawn through the bushes by a red glow, as if there had been a fire in the wood, and when she came to the place, all the stone shone and all the ground about it was bright with roses.

In her eighteenth year she went one day into the wood, carrying with her a book that she was reading. She hid herself in a nook of hazel, and her soul was full of poetry, when there was a rustling, the rapping of parted boughs returning to their place. Her concealment was but a little way from the stone, and she peered through the net of boughs, and saw a girl timidly approaching. She knew her quite well; it was Annie Dolben, the daughter of a labourer, lately a promising pupil at Sunday school. Annie was a nice-mannered girl, never failing in her curtsy, wonderful for her knowledge of the Jewish Kings. Her face had taken an expression that whispered, that hinted strange things; there was a light and a glow behind the veil of flesh. And in her hand she bore lilies.

The lady hidden in hazels watched Annie come close to the grey image; for a moment her whole body palpitated with expectation, almost the sense of what was to happen dawned upon her. She watched Annie crown the stone with flowers, she watched the amazing ceremony that followed.

And yet, in spite of all her blushing shame, she herself bore blossoms to the wood a few months later. She laid white hothouse lilies upon the stone, and orchids of dying purple, and crimson exotic flowers. Having kissed the grey image with devout passion, she performed there all the antique immemorial rite.

Torture

'I REALLY DO not know what to do with him,' said the father. 'He seems absolutely stupid.'

'Poor boy!' said his mother, 'I am afraid he is not well. He doesn't look in good health.'

'But what's the matter with him? He eats well enough; he had two helpings of meat, and two of pudding today at dinner, and a quarter of an hour afterwards he was munching some sweet stuff. His appetite's all right, you see, anyhow.'

'But he's very pale. He makes me feel anxious.'

'And he makes me feel anxious. Look at this letter from Wells, the headmaster. Here you see he says: "It seems almost impossible to get him to play games; he has had two or three thrashings, as I hear, for shirking cricket. And his form master gives me a very bad account of his work during the term, so that I fear the school is doing him little if any good." And you see, Mary, it isn't as if he were a little boy; he was fifteen last April. It's getting serious, you know.'

'What d'you think we had better do?'

'I wish I knew. Look at him here. He's only been home for a week, and you'd think he'd be in the best of spirits, enjoying himself with the squire's boys, and singing and racketing about all over the place. And you know the way he has been going on, almost from the day he came back; lounging and crawling from the house to the garden and back again, staying in bed half the day, and coming down with his eyes half open. I must insist on that being put a stop to, at all events. I shall trust to you to get him up at a proper time.'

'Very well, dear. I thought he looked so tired.'

'But he does nothing to make him tired! I wouldn't mind so much if the fellow were bookish, but you see what Wells says on that score. Why, I can’t even get him to read a story-book. I declare his face is enough to make one angry. One can see he’s totally devoid of any interest in anything.’

‘I’m afraid he’s unhappy, Robert.’

‘Unhappy! A schoolboy unhappy! Well, I wish you’d see what you can do. I find it perfectly useless to talk to him myself.’

It was curious, but the father was quite right in laughing at the notion of his son’s unhappiness. Harry was, in his quiet way, in the best of spirits. It was perfectly true that he hated cricket, and, the headmaster might have added, he hated other boys. He cared nothing for printed matter of any kind, whether fact or fiction, and he found *Treasure Island* as dull as Cicero. But all through the past term he had been pondering an idea; it had been with him in the early mornings in the dormitory, in schooltime and in playtime, and he watched with it at night, long after the other boys had gone to sleep. Before the coming of the idea he had found his existence unhappy enough. He had a puffy, unwholesome face and sandy hair, and his great wide mouth was made the subject of many jests. He was unpopular because he did not like games, and because he would not bathe unless he were flung into the water, and he was always in trouble over his lessons, which he could not understand. He burst out crying one night in the middle of preparation, and of course he would not say what was the matter. The fact was that he had been trying to extract the meaning from some weary nonsense about triangles, known by the absurd name of Euclid, and he had found it utterly impossible to learn the rabid stuff by heart. The impossibility of it, and the hopeless cloud in his mind, and the terror of the thrashing he would get in the morning, broke him down; the ‘blubbering idiot,’ as they said.

Those were unhappy times, but that very night his idea came to him, and the holidays became indeed desirable, and ten times desirable. Every day and all the day he elaborated and re-elaborated his great thought, and though he was as stupid, as unpopular, and unprofitable as ever, he was no longer wretched.

When he got home at the end of term he lost no time in setting about his task. It was true that he was sleepy and heavy in the mornings, but that was because he worked till late at night. He found it impossible to do much in the day-time; his parents spied out his ways, and he knew that he was much too dull to invent lies and explanations. The day after his return his father had come across him as he slunk into a dark corner of the shrubbery with something hidden under his coat. He could only stand and look hopeless, idiotic, when an empty beer bottle was drawn forth; he could not say what he was doing or what he wanted with a green glass bottle. His father had left him, telling him not to play the fool, and he felt that he was always watched. When he took the cord from the back-kitchen one of the maids was peering after him down the passage, and his mother found him trying to bind a large log of wood to the trunk of one of the trees. She wanted to know what he was doing, and whether he could not find some more sensible amusement, and he stared at her with his heavy white face. He knew that he was under observation, and so he worked at night. The two servant girls who slept in the next room often awoke, fancying they heard a queer sort of noise, a 'chink-chink,' as one of them described the sensation, but they could not make out what it was.

And at last he was ready. He was 'loafing about' one afternoon, and he happened to meet Charlotte Emery, a little girl of twelve, the daughter of a neighbour. Harry flushed to a dull burning red.

'Come for a walk with me to the Beeches?' he said. 'I wish you would.'

'Oh, I mustn't, Harry. Mother wouldn't like it.'

'Do come. I've got a new game; grand fun.'

'Is it really? What sort of game is it?'

'I can't show you here. Just walk on towards the Beeches, and I'll follow you directly. I knew you would.'

Harry ran full tilt to the hiding-place where he had bestowed his apparatus. He soon over-took Charlotte, and the two went off together towards the Beeches, a lonely wooded hill, a mile away. The boy's father would have been astonished if he could have seen him; Harry was glowing and burning with that dull red colour, but he laughed as he walked beside Charlotte.

When they were alone together in the wood, Charlotte said:

'Now you must show me the game. You promised.'

'I know. But you must do just as I tell you.'

'Yes, I will.'

‘Even if it hurts?’

‘Yes. But you wouldn’t hurt me, Harry. I like you.’

The boy stared at her, gazed with his dull, fishy, light-blue eyes; his white, unwholesome face glared at her almost in terror. She was a dark girl, olive-skinned, with black eyes and black hair, and the scent of her hair had already half-intoxicated him, as they walked close together.

‘You like me,’ he said at last, stuttering.

‘Yes, I like you very much. I love you, Harry dear. Won’t you give me a kiss?’ And she put her arm round his neck, round the neck of the ugly, pasty schoolboy. The leaden marks under his eyes seemed to grow darker.

He dropped the parcel that he held under one arm. It broke open and the contents fell to the ground. There were three or four fantastic instruments, ugly little knives made of green bottle-glass, clumsily set into wooden handles. He had stolen a broom for this purpose. And there were some lengths of rope, fitted with running nooses. It was the idea that he had so long cherished.

But he threw himself full length upon the grass, and burst into tears — the ‘blubbering idiot.’

Midsummer

THE OLD FARM-HOUSE on the hill flushed rose in the afterglow, and then, as the dusk began to mount from the brook, faded and yet grew brighter, its whitewashed walls gleaming as though light flowed from them, as the moon gleams when the red clouds turn to grey.

The ancient hawthorn tree at the barn-end became a tall black stem and its leaves and boughs a black mass against the pale uncertain blue of the twilight sky. Leonard looked up with a great sigh of relief. He was perched on the stile by the bridge, and as the wind fell, the ripple of the water swelled into a sweeter song, and there was no other sound to be heard. His pipe was finished, and though he knew that his rooms up at the farm looked out on the red rose and the white, he could not make up his mind to leave the view of the shimmering unearthly walls, and the melody of clear running water.

The contrast of it all with London was almost too immense, hardly realised or credible. A few hours before, and his ears seemed bursting with the terrible battle of the streets, with the clangour and jangle of great waggons thundering over the stones, with the sharp rattle of hansoms, the heavy rumble of swaying omnibuses. And during the journey his eyes still saw the thronging crowds, the turbid, furious streams of men that pushed eastward and westward, hurrying and jostling one another, wearying the brain with their constant movement, the everlasting flux and reflux of white faces. And the air, a hot smoke, a faint sick breath as though from a fever-stricken city; the sky, all grey heat that beat upon weary men, as they looked up through the cloud of dust that went before and followed them.

And now he was soothed in the deep silence and soothed by the chanting water, his eyes saw the valley melting into soft shadow, and in his nostrils was the ineffable incense of a summer night, that as a medicine allayed all the trouble and pain of body and mind. He wet his hands in the dew of the long grass and bathed his forehead, as if all the defilement and anguish of the streets should thus be washed utterly away.

He tried to analyse the scent of the night. The green leaves that overshadowed the brook and made the water dark at noon, gave out their odour, and the deep meadow grass was fragrant, a gale of scent breathed from the huge elder-bush that lit up the vague hillside, hanging above the well. But the meadow-sweet was bursting into blossom at his feet, and ah! the wild red roses drooped down from dreamland.

At last he began to climb the hillside towards those white magic walls that had charmed him. His two rooms were at the end of the long low farm-house, and though there was a passage leading to the big kitchen, Leonard's sitting-room opened immediately on the garden, on the crimson roses. He could go and come as he pleased without disturbing the household, or as the pleasant farmer had expressed it, he had a home of his own. He entered and locked the door, and lit the two candles that stood in bright brass candlesticks on the mantelpiece. The room had a low ceiling crossed by a whitewashed beam, the walls were bulging and uneven, decked with samplers, with faded prints, and in a corner stood a glass cupboard, displaying quaint flowery china of some forgotten local pattern.

The room was as quiet, as full of peace, as the air and the night, and Leonard knew that here, at the old bureau, he would find the treasure he had been long vainly seeking. He was tired, but he did not feel inclined to go to bed. He lit his pipe again, and began to arrange his papers, and idly sat down at the bureau, thinking of the task, or rather of the delight, before him. An idea flashed suddenly into his mind, and he began to write hurriedly, in an ecstasy, afraid lest he should lose what he had so happily found.

At midnight his window was still bright on the hill, and he laid down his pen with a sigh of pleasure at the accomplished work. And now he could not go to bed; he felt he must wander into the night, and summon sleep from the velvet air, from the scent of darkness, from the dew. He gently unlocked and locked the door, and walked slowly between the Persian roses, and climbed the stone stile in the garden wall. The moon was mounting to a throne, in full splendour; below, at a little distance, there seemed the painted scene of a village, and higher, beyond the farm-house, a great wood began. And as he thought of the green retreats he had glanced at in the sunlit evening, he was filled with a longing for the wood-world at night, with a desire for its darkness, for the mystery of it beneath the moon. He followed the path he had noted, till on the wood's verge he looked back and found that the shape of the farm-house had fallen into the night and vanished.

He entered the shadow, treading softly, and let the track lead him away from the world. The night became full of whisperings, of dry murmuring noises; it seemed soon as if a stealthy host were beneath the trees, every man tracking another. Leonard quite forgot his work, and its triumph, and felt as though his soul were astray in a new dark sphere that dreams had foretold. He had come to a place remote, without form or colour, made alone of shadow and overhanging gloom. Unconsciously he wandered from the path, and for a time he fought his way through the undergrowth, struggling with interlacing boughs and brambles that dragged back his feet.

At last he got free, and found that he had penetrated into a broad avenue, piercing, it seemed, through the heart of the wood. The moon shone bright from above the tree-tops, and gave a faint green colour to the track which ascended to an open glade; a great amphitheatre amidst the trees. He was tired, and lay down in the darkness beside the turfy road, and wondered whether he had lit on some forgotten way, on some great path that the legions had trodden. And as he lay there watching, gazing at the pale moonlight, he saw a shadow advancing on the grass before him.

‘A breath of wind must be stirring some bough behind me,’ he thought, but in the instant a woman went by, and then the shadows and white women followed thick.

Leonard gripped hard at a stick he was carrying, and drove his nails into the flesh. He saw the farmer’s daughter, the girl who had waited on him a few hours before, and behind her came girls with like faces, no doubt the quiet modest girls of the English village, of the English farm-house.

For a moment they fronted him, shameless, unabashed before one another, and then they had passed.

He had seen their smiles, he had seen their gestures, and things that he had thought the world had long forgotten.

The white writhing figures passed up towards the glade, and the boughs hid them, but he never doubted as to what he had seen.

The Cosy Room and Other Stories

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The Cosy Room

I

AND HE FOUND to his astonishment that he came to the appointed place with a sense of profound relief. It was true that the window was somewhat high up in the wall, and that, in case of fire, it might be difficult, for many reasons, to get out that way; it was barred like the basement windows that one sees now and then in London houses, but as for the rest it was an extremely snug room. There was a gay flowering paper on the walls, a hanging bookshelf — his stomach sickened for an instant — a little table under the window with a board and draughtsmen on it, two or three good pictures, religious and ordinary, and the man who looked after him was arranging the tea-things on the table in the middle of the room. And there was a nice wicker chair by a bright fire. It was a thoroughly pleasant room; cosy you would call it. And, thank God, it was all over, anyhow.

II

It had been a horrible time for the last three months, up to an hour ago. First of all there was the trouble; all over in a minute, that was, and couldn't be helped, though it was a pity, and the girl wasn't worth it. But then there was the getting out of the town. He thought at first of just going about his ordinary business and knowing nothing about it; he didn't think that anybody had seen him following Joe down to the river. Why not loaf about as usual, and say nothing, and go into the Ringland Arms for a pint? It might be days before they found the body under the alders; and there would be an inquest, and all that. Would it be the best plan just to stick it out, and hold his tongue if the police came asking him questions? But then, how could he account for himself and his doings that evening? He might say he went for a stroll in Bleadon Woods and home again without meeting anybody. There was nobody who could contradict him that he could think of.

And now, sitting in the snug room with the bright wallpaper, sitting in the cosy chair by the fire — all so different from the tales they told of such places — he wished he had stuck it out and faced it out, and let them come on and find out what they could. But, then, he had got frightened. Lots of men had heard him swearing it would be outing does for Joe if he didn't leave the girl alone. And he had shown his revolver to Dick Haddon, and 'Lobster' Carey, and Finniman, and others, and then they would be fitting the bullet into the revolver, and it would be all up. He got into a panic and shook with terror, and knew he could never stay in Ledham, not another hour.

III

Mrs Evans, his landlady, was spending the evening with her married daughter at the other side of the town, and would not be back till eleven. He shaved off his stubbly black beard and moustache, and slunk out of the town in the dark and walked all through the night by a lonely by-road, and got to Darnley, twenty miles away, in the morning in time to catch the London excursion. There was a great crowd of people, and, so far as he could see, nobody that he knew, and the carriages packed full of Darnleyites and Lockwood weavers all in high spirits and taking no notice of him. They all got out at King's Cross, and he strolled about with the rest, and looked round here and there as they did and had a glass of beer at a crowded bar. He didn't see how anybody was to find out where he had gone.

IV

He got a back room in a quiet street off the Caledonian Road, and waited. There was something in the evening paper that night, something that you couldn't very well make out. By the next day Joe's body was found, and they got to Murder — the doctor said it couldn't be suicide. Then his own name came in, and he was missing and was asked to come forward. And then he read that he was supposed to have gone to London, and he went sick with fear. He went hot and he went cold. Something rose in his throat and choked him. His hands shook as he held the paper, his head whirled with terror. He was afraid to go home to his room, because he knew he could not stay still in it; he would be tramping up and down, like a wild beast, and the landlady would wonder. And he was afraid to be in the streets, for fear a policeman would come behind and put a hand on his shoulder. There was kind of small square round the corner and he sat down on one of the benches there and held up the paper before his face, with the children yelling and howling and playing all about him on the asphalt paths. They took no notice of him, and yet they were company of a sort; it was not like being all alone in that little, quiet room. But it soon got dark and the man came to shut the gates.

V

And after that night; nights and days of horror and sick terrors that he never had known a man could suffer and live. He had brought enough money to keep him for a while, but every time he changed a note he shook with fear, wondering whether it would be traced. What could he do? Where could he go? Could he get out of the country? But there were passports and papers of all sorts; that would never do. He read that the police held a clue to the Ledham Murder Mystery; and he trembled to his lodgings and locked himself in and moaned in his agony, and then found himself chattering words and phrases at random, without meaning or relevance; strings of gibbering words: ‘all right, all right, all right … yes, yes, yes, yes … there, there, there … well, well, well, well …’ just because he must utter something, because he could not bear to sit still and silent, with that anguish tearing his heart, with that sick horror choking him, with that weight of terror pressing on his breast. And then, nothing happened; and a little, faint, trembling hope fluttered in his breast for a while, and for a day or two he felt he might have a chance after all.

One night he was in such a happy state that he ventured round to the little public-house at the corner, and drank a bottle of Old Brown Ale with some enjoyment, and began to think of what life might be again, if by a miracle — he recognised, even then, that it would be a miracle — all this horror passed away, and he was once more just like other men, with nothing to be afraid of. He was relishing the Brown Ale, and quite plucking up a spirit, when a chance phrase from the bar caught him: ‘looking for him not far from here, so they say.’ He left the glass of beer half full, and went out wondering whether he had the courage to kill himself that night. As a matter of fact the men at the bar were talking about a recent and sensational cat burglar; but every such word was doom to this wretch. And ever and again, he would check himself in his horrors, in his mutterings and gibberings, and wonder with amazement that the heart of a man could suffer such bitter agony, such rending torment. It was as if he had found out and discovered, he alone of all men living, a new world of which no man before had ever dreamed, in which no man could believe, if he were told the story of it. He had woken up in his past life from such nightmares, now and again, as most men suffer. They were terrible, so terrible that he remembered two or three of them that had oppressed him years before; but they were pure delight to what he now endured. Not endured, but writhed under as a worm twisting amidst red, burning coals.

He went out into the streets, some noisy, some dull and empty, and considered in his panic-stricken confusion which he should choose. They were looking for him in that part of London; there was deadly peril in every step. The streets where people went to and fro and laughed and chattered might be the safer; he could walk with the others and seem to be of them, and so be less likely to be noticed by those who were hunting on his track. But then, on the other hand, the great electric lamps made these streets almost as bright as day, and every feature of the passers-by was clearly seen. True, he was clean-shaven now, and the pictures of him in the papers showed a bearded man, and his own face in the glass still looked strange to him. Still, there were sharp eyes that could penetrate such disguises; and they might have brought down some man from Ledham who knew him well, and knew the way he walked; and so he might be haled and held at any moment. He dared not walk under the clear blaze of the electric lamps. He would be safe in the dark, quiet by-ways.

He was turning aside, making for a very quiet street close by, when he hesitated. This street, indeed, was still enough after dark, and not over well lighted. It was a street of low, two-storied houses of grey brick that had grimed, with three or four families in each house. Tired men came home here after working hard all day, and people drew their blinds early and stirred very little abroad, and went early to bed; footsteps were rare in this street and in other streets into which it led, and the lamps were few and dim compared with those in the big thoroughfares. And yet, the very fact that few people were about made such as were all the more noticeable and conspicuous. And the police went slowly on their beats in the dark streets as in the bright, and with few people to look at no doubt they looked all the more keenly at such as passed on the pavement. In his world, that dreadful world that he had discovered and dwelt in alone, the darkness was brighter than the daylight, and solitude more dangerous than a multitude of men. He dared not go into the light, he feared the shadows, and went trembling to his room and shuddered there as the hours of the night went by; shuddered and gabbled to himself his infernal rosary: ‘all right, all right, all right … splendid, splendid … that’s the way, that’s the way, that’s the way, that’s the way … yes, yes, yes … first rate, first rate … all right … one, one, one, one’ — gabbled in a low mutter to keep himself from howling like a wild beast.

VI

It was somewhat in the manner of a wild beast that he beat and tore against the cage of his fate. Now and again it struck him as incredible. He would not believe that it was so. It was something that he would wake from, as he had waked from those nightmares that he remembered, for things did not really happen so. He could not believe it, he would not believe it. Or, if it were so indeed, then all these horrors must be happening to some other man into whose torments he had mysteriously entered. Or he had got into a book, into a tale which one read and shuddered at, but did not for one moment credit; all make-believe, it must be, and presumably everything would be all right again. And then the truth came down on him like a heavy hammer, and beat him down, and held him down — on the burning coals of his anguish.

Now and then he tried to reason with himself. He forced himself to be sensible, as he put it; not to give way, to think of his chances. After all, it was three weeks since he had got into the excursion train at Darnley, and he was still a free man, and every day of freedom made his chances better. These things often die down. There were lots of cases in which the police never got the man they were after. He lit his pipe and began to think things over quietly. It might be a good plan to give his landlady notice, and leave at the end of the week, and make for somewhere in South London, and try to get a job of some sort: that would help to put them off his track. He got up and looked thoughtfully out of the window; and caught his breath. There, outside the little newspaper shop opposite, was the bill of the evening paper: New Clue in Ledham Murder Mystery.

VII

The moment came at last. He never knew the exact means by which he was hunted down. As a matter of fact, a woman who knew him well happened to be standing outside Darnley station on the Excursion Day morning, and she had recognised him, in spite of his beardless chin. And then, at the other end, his landlady, on her way upstairs, had heard his mutterings and gabblings, though the voice was low. She was interested, and curious, and a little frightened, and wondered whether her lodger might be dangerous, and naturally she talked to her friends. So the story trickled down to the ears of the police, and the police asked about the date of the lodger's arrival. And there you were. And there was our nameless friend, drinking a good, hot cup of tea, and polishing off the bacon and eggs with rare appetite; in the cosy room with the cheerful paper; otherwise the Condemned Cell.

A Double Return

THE EXPRESS FROM the west rushed through Acton with a scream, whirling clouds of dust around it; and Frank Halswell knocked out the ashes from his pipe and proceeded to gather from various quarters of the carriage his newspapers, his hat-box, his handbag, and, chief of all, a large portfolio carefully packed in brown paper. He looked at his watch, and said to himself: ‘6.30; we shall be at Paddington in five minutes; and only five minutes late, for a wonder.’ But he congratulated himself and the railway company rather too soon: a few minutes later and the train began to slacken, the speed grew slower and slower, and at last came the grinding sound of the brakes and a dead stop. Halswell looked out of the window over the dreary expanse of Wormwood Scrubbs, and heard someone in the next carriage explaining the cause of the delay with pardonable pride in his technical knowledge. ‘You see, them there signals is against us, and if we was to go on we should jolly well go to kingdom come, we should.’ Halswell looked at his watch again and drummed his heels against the floor, wondering impatiently when they would be at Paddington, when, with a sudden whirl, a down train swept by them and the western express once more moved on. Halswell rubbed his eyes; he had looked up as the down train passed, and in one of the carriages he thought he had seen his own face. It was only for a second, and he could not be sure. ‘It must have been a reflection,’ he kept on saying, ‘from the glass of one window to the other. Still, I fancied I saw a black coat, and mine is light. But of course it was a reflection.’

The express rolled into the terminus with dignity — it was only ten minutes late, after all; and Frank Halswell bundled himself and his traps into a hansom, congratulating himself on the paucity of his bags and the absence of his trunks as he watched the excited mob rushing madly at a Redan of luggage. ‘153, the Mall, Kensington!’ he shouted to the driver above the hubbub of the platform; and they were soon threading deftly along the dingy streets that looked so much dingier than usual after the blue mist upon the sea, the purple heather and the sunny fields. Frank (he was a very popular artist in those days — a rising man, indeed) had been on a sketching tour in Devon and Cornwall: he had wandered along the deep sheltered lanes from hill to hill, by the orchards already red and gold, by moorland and lowland, by the rocky coast and the combes sinking down to the wondrous sea.

On the Cornish roads he had seen those many ancient crosses, with their weird interlacing carving, which sometimes stand upon a mound and mark where two ways meet; and as he put his portfolio beside him he could not help feeling a glow of pride at its contents. ‘I fancy I shall make a pretty good show by next spring,’ he thought. Poor fellow! he was never to paint another picture; but he did not know it. Then, as the hansom verged westward, gliding with its ringing bells past the great mansions facing the park, Halswell’s thoughts went back to the hotel at Plymouth and the acquaintance he had made there. ‘Yes; Kerr was an amusing fellow,’ he thought; ‘glad I gave him my card. Louie is sure to get on with him. Curious thing, too, he was wonderfully like me, if he had been only clean shaven and not “bearded like the pard.” Dare say we shall see him before long; he said he was going to pay a short visit to London. I fancy he must be an actor; I never saw such a fellow to imitate a man’s voice and gestures. I wonder what made him go off in such a hurry yesterday. Hullo! here we are; hi, cabman! there’s 153.’

The twin doors of the hansom banged open; the garden gate shrieked and clanged, and Halswell bounded up the steps and rapped loudly at the door. The maid opened it. Even as he said, ‘Thank you, Jane; your mistress quite well, I suppose?’ he thought he noticed a strange look, half questioning, half surprised, in her eyes; but he ran past her, up the stairs, and burst into the pretty drawing-room. His wife was lying on the sofa; but she rose with a cry as he came in.

‘Frank! Back again so soon? I am so glad! I thought you said you might have to be away a week.’

‘My dear Louie, what do you mean? I have been away three weeks, haven’t I? I rather think I left for Devonshire in the first week of August.’

‘Yes, of course, my dear; but then you came back late last night.’

‘What! I came back last night? I slept last night at Plymouth. What are you talking about?’

‘Don’t be silly, Frank. You know very well you rang us all up at twelve o’clock. Just like you, to come home in the middle of the night when nobody expected you. You know you said in your last letter you were not coming until today.’

‘Louise dear, you must be dreaming. I never came here last night. Here is my bill at the hotel; you see, it is dated this morning.’

Mrs Halswell stared blankly at the bill; then she got up and rang the bell. How hot it was! The close air of the London street seemed to choke her. Halswell walked a few paces across the room, then suddenly stopped and shuddered.

‘Jane, I want to ask you whether your master did not come here last night at twelve o’clock; and whether you did not get him a cab early this morning?’

‘Yes, mum, at least— ‘

‘At least what? You let him in yourself.’

‘Yes, mum, of course I did. But, begging your pardon, sir, I thought as how your voice didn’t sound quite natural this morning when you called out to the cabman to drive to Stepney, because you had changed your mind, and didn’t want to go to Waterloo.’

‘Good God! What are you thinking about? I never came here. I was in Plymouth.’

‘Frank! You are joking! Look here, you left this behind you.’

She showed him a little silver cigarette case with his initials engraved on it. It was a present from his wife, he had missed it one day when he was strolling with Kerr, and had regretted it deeply, searching in the grass in vain.

Halswell held the toy in his hand. He thought he was indeed in a dream, and through the open window came the shrieks of the newsboys, ‘Extry speshal! extry speshal!’ The light had faded; it was getting dark. But suddenly it all flashed upon him. He remembered Kerr and the face he had caught sight of in the passing train; he remembered the strange likeness; he knew who had found the cigarette case; he knew well who it was that had come to his house.

The maid was a good girl; she had stolen away. No one knows what manner of conversation Frank and his wife had together in the darkness; but that night he went away, as it was said, to America. Mrs Halswell was dead before the next summer.

Munitions of War

THERE WAS A thick fog, acrid and abominable, all over London when I set out for the West. And in the heart of the fog, as it were, was the shudder of the hard frost that made one think of those winters in Dickens that had seemed to have become fabulous. It was a day on which to hear in dreams the iron ring of the horses' hoofs on the Great North Road, to meditate the old inns with blazing fires, the coach going onward into the darkness, into a frozen world. A few miles out of London the fog lifted. The horizon was still vague in a purple mist of cold, but the sun shone brilliantly from a pale clear sky of blue, and all the earth was a magic of whiteness: white fields stretched to that dim violet mist far away, white hedges divided them, and the trees were all snowy white with the winter blossom of the frost. The train had been delayed a little by the thick fog about London; now it was rushing at a tremendous speed through this strange white world.

My business with the famous town in the West was to attempt to make some picture of it as it faced the stress of war, to find out whether it prospered or not. From what I had seen in other large towns, I expected to find it all of a bustle on the Saturday, its shops busy, its streets thronged and massed with people. Therefore, it was with no small astonishment that I found the atmosphere of Westpool wholly different from anything I had observed at Sheffield or Birmingham. Hardly anybody seemed to leave the train at the big station, and the broad road into the town wore a shy, barred-up air; it reminded one somewhat of the streets by which the traveller passes into forgotten places, little villages that once were great cities. I remember how in the town of my birth, Caerleon-on-Usk, the doctor's wife would leave the fire and run to the window if a step sounded in the main street outside; and strangely I was reminded of this as I walked from the Westpool station. Save for one thing: at intervals there were silent parties huddled together as if for help ard comfort, and all making for the outskirts of the city.

There is a fair quarter of an hour's walk between Westpool station and the centre of the town. And here I would say that though Westpool is one of the biggest and busiest cities in England, it is also, in my judgment one of the most beautiful. Not only on account of the ancient timbered houses that still overhang many of its narrower streets, not only because of its glorious churches and noble old traditions of splendour — I am known to be weak and partial where such things are concerned — but rather because of its site. For the very heart of the great town a narrow, river runs, full of tall ships, bordered by bustling quays; and so you can often look over your garden wall and see a cluster of masts, and the shaking out of sails for a fair wind. And this brining of deep-sea business into the middle of the dusty streets has always seemed to me an enchantment; there is something of Sindbad and Basra and Bagdad and the Nights in it. But this is not all the delight of Westpool; from the very quays of the river the town rushes up to great heights, with streets so steep that often they are flights of steps as in St Peter Port, and ladder-like ascents. And as I came to Middle Quay in Westpool that winter day, the sun hovered over the violet mists, and the windows of the houses on the heights flamed and flashed red, vehement fires.

But the slight astonishment with which I had noted the shuttered and dismal aspect of the station road now became bewilderment. Middle Quay is the heart of Westpool, and all its business. I had always seen it swarm like an anthill. There were scarcely half a dozen people there on Saturday afternoon; and they seemed to be hurrying away. The Vintry and the Little Vintry, those famous streets, were deserted. I saw in a moment that I had come on a fool's errand: in Westpool assuredly there was no hurry or rush of war-business, no swarm of eager shoppers for me to describe. I had an introduction to a well-known Westpool man. 'Oh no,' he said, 'we are very slack in Westpool. We are doing hardly anything. There's an aeroplane factory out at Oldham, and they're making high explosives by Portdown, but that doesn't affect us. Things are quiet, very quiet.' I suggested that they might brighten up a little at night. 'No,' he said, 'it really wouldn't be worth your while to stay on; you wouldn't find anything to write about, I assure you.'

I was not satisfied. I went out and about the desolate streets of the great city; I made inquiries at random, and always heard the same story—

‘Things were very slack.’ And I began to receive an extraordinary impression: that the few I met were frightened, and were making the best of their way, either out of the town, or to the safety of their own bolted doors and barred shutters. It was only the very special mention of a friendly commercial traveller of my acquaintance that got me a room for the night at the ‘Pineapple’ on Middle Quay, overlooking the river. The landlord assented with difficulty, after praising the express to town. ‘It’s a noisy place, this,’ he said, ‘if you’re not used to it.’ I looked at him. It was as quiet as if we were in the heart of the forest or the desert. ‘You see,’ he said, ‘we don’t do much in munitions, but there’s a lot of night transport for the docks at Portdown. You know those climbing motors that they use in the Army, caterpillars or whatever they call them. We get a lot of them through Westpool; we get all sorts of heavy stuff, and I expect they’ll wake you at night. I wouldn’t go to the window, if I were you, if you do wake up. They don’t like anybody peering about.

And I woke up in the dead of night. There was a thundering and a rumbling and a trembling of the earth such as I had never heard. And shouting too; and rolling oaths that sounded like judgment. I got up and drew the blind a little aside, in spite of the landlord’s warning, and there was that desolate Middle Quay swarming with men, and the river full of great ships, faint and huge in the frosty mist, and sailing-ships too. Men were rolling casks by the hundred down to the ships. ‘Hurry up, you lazy lubbers, you damned sons of guns, damn ye !’ said a great voice. ‘Shall the King’s Majesty lack powder?’ ‘No, by God, he shall not!’ roared the answer. ‘I rolled it aboard for old King George, and young King George shall be none the worse for me.’

‘And who the devil are you to speak so bold?’

‘Blast ye, bos’n; I fell at Trafalgar.’

The Gift of Tongues

MORE THAN A hundred years ago a simple German maid-of-all-work caused a great sensation. She became subject to seizures of a very singular character, of so singular a character that the family inconvenienced by these attacks were interested and, perhaps a little proud of a servant whose fits were so far removed from the ordinary convulsion. The case was thus. Anna, or Gretchen, or whatever her name might be, would suddenly become oblivious of soup, sausage, and the material world generally.

But she neither screamed, nor foamed, nor fell to earth after the common fashion of such seizures. She stood up, and from her mouth rolled sentence after sentence of splendid sound, in a sonorous tongue, filling her hearers with awe and wonder. Not one of her listeners understood a word of Anna’s majestic utterances, and it was useless to question her in her uninspired moments, for the girl knew nothing of what had happened.

At length, as it fell out, some scholarly personage was present during one of these extraordinary fits; and he at once declared that the girl was speaking Hebrew, with a pure accent and perfect intonation. And, in a sense, the wonder was now greater than ever. How could the simple Anna speak Hebrew? She had certainly never learnt it. She could barely read and write her native German. Everyone was amazed, and the occult mind of the day began to formulate theories and speak of possession and familiar spirits. Unfortunately (as I think, for I am a lover of all insoluble mysteries), the problem of the girl’s Hebrew speech was solved; solved, that is, to a certain extent.

The tale got abroad, and so it became known that some years before Anna had been servant to an old scholar. This personage was in the habit of declaiming Hebrew as he walked up and down his study and the passages of his house, and the maid had unconsciously stored the chanted words in some cavern of her soul; in that receptacle, I suppose, which we are content to call the subconsciousness. I must confess that the explanation does not strike me as satisfactory in all respects. In the first place, there is the extraordinary tenacity of memory; but I suppose that other instances of this, though rare enough, might be cited. Then, there is the association of this particular storage of the subconscious with a species of seizure; I do not know whether any similar instances can be cited.

Still, minor puzzles apart, the great mystery was mysterious no more: Anna spoke Hebrew because she had heard Hebrew and, in her odd fashion, had remembered it.

To the best of my belief, cases that offer some points of similarity are occasionally noted at the present day. Persons ignorant of Chinese deliver messages in that tongue; the speech of Abyssinia is heard from lips incapable, in ordinary moments, of anything but the pleasing idiom of the United States of America, and untaught Cockneys suddenly become fluent in Basque.

But all this, so far as I am concerned, is little more than rumour; I do not know how far these tales have been subjected to strict and systematic examination. But in any case, they do not interest me so much as a very odd business that happened on the Welsh border more than sixty years ago. I was not very old at the time, but I remember my father and mother talking about the affair, just as I remember them talking about the Franco-Prussian War in the August of 1870, and coming to the conclusion that the French seemed to be getting the worst of it. And later, when I was growing up and the mysteries were beginning to exercise their fascination upon me, I was able to confirm my vague recollections and add to them a good deal of exact information. The odd business to which I am referring was the so-called ‘Speaking with Tongues’ at Bryn Sion Chapel, Treowen, Monmouthshire, on a Christmas Day of the early ‘seventies.

Treowen is one of a chain of horrible mining villages that wind in and out of the Monmouthshire and Glamorganshire valleys. Above are the great domed heights, quivering with leaves (like the dear Zacynthus of Ulysses), on their lower slopes, and then mounting by far stretches of deep bracken, glittering in the sunlight, to a golden land of gorse, and at last to wild territory, bare and desolate, that seems to surge upward for ever. But beneath, in the valley, are the black pits and the blacker mounds, and heaps of refuse, vomiting chimneys, mean rows and ranks of grey houses faced with red brick; all as dismal and detestable as the eye can see.

Such a place is Treowen; uglier and blacker now than it was sixty years ago; and all the worse for the contrast of its vileness with those glorious and shining heights above it. Down in the town there are three great chapels of the Methodists and Baptists and Congregationalists; architectural monstrosities all three of them, and a red brick church does not do much to beautify the place. But above all this, on the hillside, there are scattered white-washed farms, and a little hamlet of white, thatched cottages, remnants all of a pre-industrial age, and here is situated the old meeting-house called Bryn Sion, which means, I believe, the Brow of Zion. It must have been built about 1790-1800, and, being a simple, square building, devoid of crazy ornament, is quite inoffensive.

Here came the mountain farmers and cottagers, trudging, some of them, long distances on the wild tracks and paths of the hillside; and here ministered, from 1860 to 1880, the Reverend Thomas Beynon, a bachelor, who lived in the little cottage next to the chapel, where a grove of beech trees was blown into a thin straggle of tossing boughs by the great winds of the mountain.

Now, Christmas Day falling on a Sunday in this year of long ago, the usual service was held at Bryn Sion Chapel, and, the weather being fine, the congregation was a large one — that is, something between forty and fifty people. People met and shook hands and wished each other ‘Merry Christmas,’ and exchanged the news of the week and prices at Newport market, till the elderly, white-bearded minister, in his shining black, went into the chapel. The deacons followed him and took their places in the big pew by the open fireplace, and the little meeting-house was almost full. The minister had a windsor chair, a red hassock, and a pitch-pine table in a sort of raised pen at the end of the chapel, and from this place he gave out the opening hymn. Then followed a long portion of Scripture, a second hymn, and the congregation settled themselves to attend to the prayer.

It was at this moment that the service began to vary from the accustomed order. The minister did not kneel down in the usual way; he stood staring at the people, very strangely, as some of them thought. For perhaps a couple of minutes he faced them in dead silence, and here and there people shuffled uneasily in their pews. Then he came down a few paces and stood in front of the table with bowed head, his back to the people. Those nearest to the ministerial pen or rostrum heard a low murmur coming from his lips. They could not make out the words.

Bewilderment fell upon them all, and, as it would seem, a confusion of mind, so that it was difficult afterwards to gather any clear account of what actually happened that Christmas morning at Bryn Sion Chapel. For some while the mass of the congregation heard nothing at all; only the deacons in the Big Seat could make out the swift mutter that issued from their pastor's lips; now a little higher in tone, now sunken so as to be almost inaudible. They strained their ears to discover what he was saying in that low, continued utterance; and they could hear words plainly, but they could not understand. It was not Welsh.

It was neither Welsh — the language of the chapel — nor was it English. They looked at one another, those deacons, old men like their minister most of them; looked at one another with something of strangeness and fear in their eyes. One of them, Evan Tudor, Torymynydd, ventured to rise in his place and to ask the preacher, in a low voice, if he were ill. The Reverend Thomas Beynon took no notice; it was evident that he did not hear the question: swiftly the unknown words passed his lips.

'He is wrestling with the Lord in prayer,' one deacon whispered to another, and the man nodded — and looked frightened.

And it was not only this murmured utterance that bewildered those who heard it; they, and all who were present, were amazed at the pastor's strange movements. He would stand before the middle of the table and bow his head, and go now to the left of the table, now to the right of it, and then back again to the middle. He would bow down his head, and raise it, and look up, as a man said afterwards, as if he saw the heavens opened. Once or twice he turned round and faced the people, with his arms stretched wide open, and a swift word on his lips, and his eyes staring and seeing nothing, nothing that anyone else could see. And then he would turn again. And all the while the people were dumb and stricken with amazement; they hardly dared to look at each other; they hardly dared to ask themselves what could be happening before them. And then, suddenly, the minister began to sing.

It must be said that the Reverend Thomas Beynon was celebrated all through the valley and beyond it for his ‘singing religious eloquence,’ for that singular chant which the Welsh call the *hwyl.* But his congregation had never heard so noble, so aweful a chant as this before. It rang out and soared on high, and fell, to rise again with wonderful modulations; pleading to them and calling them and summoning them; with the old voice of the *hwyl,* and yet with a new voice that they had never heard before: and all in those sonorous words that they could not understand. They stood up in their wonder, their hearts shaken by the chant; and then the voice died away. It was as still as death in the chapel. One of the deacons could see that the minister’s lips still moved; but he could hear no sound at all. Then the minister raised up his hands as if he held something between them; and knelt down, and rising, again lifted his hands. And there came the faint tinkle of a bell from the sheep grazing high up on the mountain side.

The Reverend Thomas Beynon seemed to come to himself out of a dream, as they said. He looked about him nervously, perplexed, noted that his people were gazing at him strangely, and then, with a stammering voice, gave out a hymn and afterwards ended the service. He discussed the whole matter with the deacons and heard what they had to tell him. He knew nothing of it himself and had no explanation to offer. He knew no languages, he declared, save Welsh and English. He said that he did not believe there was evil in what had happened, for he felt that he had been in Heaven before the Throne. There was a great talk about it all, and that queer Christmas service became known as the Speaking with Tongues of Bryn Sion.

Years afterwards, I met a fellow-countryman, Edward Williams, in London, and we fell talking, in the manner of exiles, of the land and its stories. Williams was many years older than myself, and he told me of an odd thing that had once happened to him.

‘It was years ago,’ he said, ‘and I had some business — I was a mining-engineer in those days — at Treowen, up in the hills. I had to stay over Christmas, which was on a Sunday that year, and talking to some people there about the *hwyl,* they told me that I ought to go up to Bryn Sion if I wanted to hear it done really well. Well, I went, and it was the queerest service I ever heard of. I don’t know much about the Methodists’ way of doing things, but before long it struck me that the minister was saying some sort of Mass. I could hear a word or two of the Latin service now and again, and then he sang the Christmas Preface right through: "*Quia per incarnati Verbi mysterium*" — you know.'

Very well; but there is always a loophole by which the reasonable, or comparatively reasonable, may escape. Who is to say that the old preacher had not strayed long before into some Roman Catholic Church at Newport or Cardiff on a Christmas Day, and there heard Mass with exterior horror but interior love?

The Islington Mystery

I

THE PUBLIC TASTE in murders is often erratic, and sometimes, I think, fallible enough. Take, for example, that Crippen business. It happened seventeen years ago, and it is still freshly remembered and discussed with interest. Yet it was by no means a murder of the first rank. What was there in it? The outline is crude enough; simple, easy, and disgusting, as Dr. Johnson observed of another work of art. Crippen was cursed with a nagging wife of unpleasant habits; and he cherished a passion for his typist. Whereupon he poisoned Mrs. Crippen, cut her up and buried the pieces in the coal-cellar. This was well enough, though elementary; and if the foolish little man had been content to lie quiet and do nothing, he might have lived and died peaceably. But he must needs disappear from his house — the action of a fool — and cross the Atlantic with his typist absurdly and obviously disguised as a boy: sheer, bungling imbecility. Here, surely, there is no single trace of the master's hand; and yet, as I say, the Crippen Murder is reckoned amongst the masterpieces. It is the same tale in all the arts: the low comedian was always sure of a laugh if he cared to tumble over a pin; and the weakest murderer is sure of a certain amount of respectful attention if he will take the trouble to dismember his subject. And then, with respect to Crippen: he was caught by means of the wireless device, then in its early stages. This, of course, was utterly irrelevant to the true issue; but the public wallows in irrelevance. A great art critic may praise a great picture, and make his criticism a masterpiece in itself. He will be unread; but let some asinine paragraphist say that the painter always sings "Tom Bowling" as he sets his palette, and dines on boiled fowl and apricot sauce three times a week — then the world will proclaim the artist great.

II

The success of the second-rate is deplorable in itself; but it is more deplorable in that it very often obscures the genuine masterpiece. If the crowd runs after the false, it must neglect the true. The intolerable *Romola* is praised; the admirable *Cloister and the Hearth* is waived aside. So, while the very indifferent and clumsy performance of Crippen filled the papers, the extraordinary Battersea Murder was served with a scanty paragraph or two in obscure corners of the Press. Indeed, we were so shamefully starved of detail that I only retain a bare outline of this superb crime in my memory; but, roughly, the affair was shaped as follows: In the first floor of one of the smaller sets of flats in Battersea a young fellow (? 18 — 20) was talking to an actress, a "touring" actress of no particular fame, whose age, if I recollect, was drawing on from thirty to forty. A shot, a near shot, broke in suddenly on their talk. The young man dashed out of the flat, down the stairs, and there, in the entry of the flats, found his own father, shot dead. The father, it should be remarked, was a touring actor, and an old friend of the lady upstairs. But here comes the magistral element in this murder. Beside the dead man, or in the hand of the dead man, or in a pocket of the dead man's coat — I am not sure how it was — there was found a weapon made of heavy wire — a vile and most deadly contraption, fashioned with curious and malignant ingenuity. It was night-time, but the bright light of a moon ten days old was shining, and the young man said he saw someone running and leaping over walls.

But mark the point: the dead actor was hiding beneath his friend's flat, hiding and lying in wait, with his villainous weapon to his hand. He was expecting an encounter with some enemy, on whom he was resolved to work at least deadly mischief, if not murder.

Who was that enemy? Whose bullet was it that was swifter than the dead man's savage and premeditated desire?

We shall probably never know. A murder that might have stood in the very first rank, that might have vied with the affair of Madeleine Smith — there were certain indications that made this seem possible — was suffered to fade into obscurity, while the foolish crowd surged about elementary Crippen and his bungling imbecilities. So there were once people who considered *Robert Elsmere* as a literary work of palmary significance.

III

Naturally, and with some excuse, the war was responsible for a good deal of this sort of neglect. In those appalling years there was but one thing in men’s heads; all else was blotted out. So, little attention was paid to the affair of the woman’s body, carefully wrapped in sacking, which was found in Regent’s Square, by the Gray’s Inn Road. A man was hanged without phrases, but there were one or two curious points in the case.

Then, again, there was the Wimbledon Murder, a singular business. A well-to-do family had just moved into a big house facing the Common, so recently that many of its goods and chattels were still in the packing-cases. The master of the house was murdered one night by a man who made off with his booty. It was a curious haul, consisting of a mackintosh worth, perhaps, a couple of pounds, and a watch which would have been dear at ten shillings. This murderer, too, was hanged without comment; and yet, on the face of it, his conduct seems in need of explanation. But the most singular case of all those that suffered from the preoccupations of the war was, there is no doubt, the Islington Mystery, as the Press called it. It was a striking headline, but the world was too busy to attend. The affair got abroad, so far as it did get abroad, about the time of the first employment of the tanks; and people were trying not to see through the war correspondents, not to perceive that the inky fandangoes and corroborees of these gentlemen hid a sense of failure and disappointment.

IV

But as to the Islington Mystery — this is how it fell out. There is an odd street, not far from the region which was once called Spa Fields, not far from the Pentonville or Islington Fields, where Grimaldi the clown was once accused of inciting the mob to chase an overdriven ox. It goes up a steep hill, and the rare adventurer who pierces now and then into this unknown quarter of London is amazed and bewildered at the very outset, since there are no steep hills in the London of his knowledge, and the contours of the scene remind him of the cheap lodging-house area at the back of hilly seaside resorts. But if the site is strange, the buildings on it are far stranger. They were no doubt set up at the high tide of Sir Walter Scott Gothic, which has left such queer memorials behind it. The houses of Lloyd Street are in couples, and the architect, combining the two into one design, desired to create an illusion of a succession of churches, in the Perpendicular or Third Pointed manner, climbing up the hill. The detail is rich, there are finials to rejoice the heart, and gargoyles of fine fantasy, all carried out in the purest stucco. At the lowest house on the right-hand side lived Mr. Harold Boale and his wife, and a brass plate on the Gothic door said, “Taxidermist: Skeletons Articulated”. As it chanced, this lowest house of Lloyd Street has a longer garden than its fellows, giving on a contractor’s yard, and at the end of the garden Mr. Boale had set up the apparatus of his craft in an outhouse, away from the noses of his fellow-men.

So far as can be gathered, the stuffer and articulator was a harmless and inoffensive little fellow. His neighbours liked him, and he and the Boule cabinet-maker from next door, the Shell box-maker over the way, the seal-engraver and the armourer from Baker Square at the top of the hill, and the old mercantile marine skipper who lived round the corner in Marchmont Street, at the house with the ivory junk in the window, used to spend many a genial evening together in the parlour of the Quill in the days before everything was spoilt by the war.

They did not drink very much or talk very much, any of them; but they enjoyed their moderate cups and the snug comfort of the place, and stared solemnly at the old coaching prints that were upon the walls, and at the large glass painting depicting the landing of England’s Injured Queen, which hung over the mantelpiece, between two Pink Dogs with gold collars. Mr. Boale passed as a very nice sort of man in this circle and everybody was sorry for him. Mrs. Boale was a tartar and a scold. The men of the quarter kept out of her way; the women were afraid of her. She led poor Boale the devil’s own life. Her voice, often enough, would be heard at the Quill door, vomiting venom at her husband’s address; and he, poor man, would tremble and go forth, lest some worse thing might happen. Mrs. Boale was a short dark woman. Her hair was coal-black, her face wore an expression of acid malignity, and she walked quickly but with a decided limp. She was full of energy and the pest of the neighbourhood, and more than a pest to her husband.

The war, with its scarcity and its severe closing-hours, made the meetings at the Quill rarer than before, and deprived them of a good deal of their old comfort. Still, the circle was not wholly broken up, and one evening Boale announced that his wife had gone to visit relations in Lancashire, and would most likely be away for a considerable time.

“Well, there’s nothing like a change of air, so they say,” said the skipper, “though I’ve had more than enough of it myself.”

The others said nothing, but congratulated Boale in their hearts. One of them remarked afterwards that the only change that would do Mrs. Boale good was a change to Kingdom Come, and they all agreed. They were not aware that Mrs. Boale was enjoying the advantages of the recommended treatment.

V

As I recollect, Mr. Boale's worries began with the appearance of Mrs. Boale's sister, Mary Aspinall, a woman almost as ill-tempered and malignant as Mrs. Boale herself. She had been for some years nurse with a family in Capetown, and had come home with her mistress. In the first place, the woman had written two or three letters to her sister, and there had been no reply. This struck her as odd, for Mrs. Boale had been a very good correspondent, filling her letters with "nasty things" about her husband. So, on her first afternoon off after her return, Mary Aspinall called at the house in Lloyd Street to get the truth of the matter from her sister's own lips. She strongly suspected Boale of having suppressed her letters. "The dirty little tyke; I'll serve him," she said to herself. So came Miss Aspinall to Lloyd Street and brought out Boale from his workshop. And when he saw her his heart sank. He had read her letters. But the decision to return to England had been taken suddenly; Miss Aspinall had, therefore, said not a word about it. Boale had thought of his wife's sister as established at the other end of the world for the next ten, twenty years, perhaps; and he meant to go away and lose himself under a new name in a year or two. And so, when he saw the woman, his heart sank.

Mary Aspinall went straight to the point.

"Where's Elizabeth?" she asked. "Upstairs? I wonder she didn't come down when she heard the bell."

"No," said Boale. He comforted himself with the thought of the curious labyrinth he had drawn about his secret; he felt secure in the centre of it.

"No, she's not upstairs. She's not in the house."

"Oh, indeed. Not in the house. Gone to see some friends, I suppose. When do you expect her back?"

"The truth is, Mary, that I don't expect her back. She's left me — three months ago, it is."

“You mean to tell me that! Left you! Showed her sense, I think. Where has she gone?”

“Upon my word, Mary, I don’t know. We had a bit of a to-do one evening, though I don’t think I said much. But she said she’d had enough, and she packed a few things in a bag, and off she went. I ran after her and called to her to come back, but she wouldn’t so much as turn her head, and went off King’s Cross way. And from that day to this I’ve never seen her, nor had a word from her. I’ve had to send all her letters back to the post office.”

Mary Aspinall stared hard at her brother-in-law and pondered. Beyond telling him that he had brought it on himself, there seemed nothing to say. So she dealt with Boale on those lines very thoroughly, and made an indignant exit from the parlour. He went back to stuff peacocks, for all I know. He was feeling comfortable again. There had been a very unpleasant sensation in the stomach for a few seconds — a very horrible fear at the moment that one of the outer walls of that labyrinth of his had been breached; but now all was well again.

And all might have been permanently well if Miss Aspinall had not happened to meet Mrs. Horridge in the main road, close to the bottom of Lloyd Street. Mrs. Horridge was the wife of the Shell box-maker, and the two had met once or twice long ago at Mrs. Boale’s tea-table. They recognized each other, and, after a few unmeaning remarks, Mrs. Horridge asked Miss Aspinall if she had seen her sister since her return to England.

“How could I see her when I don’t know where she is?” asked Miss Aspinall with some ferocity.

“Dear me, you haven’t seen Mr. Boale, then?”

“I’ve just come from him this minute.”

“But he can’t have lost the Lancashire address, surely?”

And so one thing led to another, and Mary Aspinall gathered quite clearly that Boale had told his friends that his wife was paying a long visit to relations in Lancashire. In the first place the Aspinalls had no relations in Lancashire — they came from Suffolk — and secondly Boale had informed her that Elizabeth had gone away in a rage, he knew not where. She did not pay him another visit then and there, as she had at first intended. It was growing late, and she took her considerations back with her to Wimbledon, determined on thinking the matter out.

Next week she called again at Lloyd Street. She charged Boale with deliberate lying, placing frankly before him the two tales he had told. Again that horrid sinking sensation lay heavy upon Boale. But he had reserves.

“Indeed,” he said, “I’ve told you no lies, Mary. It all happened just as I said before. But I did make up that tale about Lancashire for the people about here. I didn’t like them to have my troubles to talk over, especially as Elizabeth is bound to come back some time, and I hope it will be soon.”

Miss Aspinall stared at the little man in a doubtful, threatening fashion for a moment, and then hurried upstairs. She came down soon afterwards.

“I’ve gone through Elizabeth’s drawers,” she said with defiance. “There’s a good many things missing. I don’t see those bits of lace she had from Granny, and the set of jet is gone, and so is the garnet necklace, and the coral brooch. I couldn’t find the ivory fan, either.”

“I found all the drawers wide open after she’d gone,” sighed Mr. Boale. “I supposed she’d taken the things away with her.”

It must be confessed that Mr. Boale, taught, perhaps, by the nicety of his craft, had paid every attention to detail. He had realized that it would be vain to tell a tale of his wife going away and leaving her treasures behind her. And so the treasures had disappeared.

Really, the Aspinall vixen did not know what to say. She had to confess that Boale had explained the difficulty of his two stories quite plausibly. So she informed him that he was more like a worm than a man, and banged the hall door. Again Boale went back to his workshop with a warmth about his heart. His labyrinth was still secure, its secret safe. At first, when confronted again by the accusing Aspinall, he had thought of bolting the moment he got the woman out of the house; but that was unreasoning panic. He was in no danger. And he remembered, like the rest of us, the Crippen case. It was running away that had brought Crippen to ruin; if he had sat tight he would have sat secure, and the secret of the cellar would never have been known. Though, as Mr. Boale reflected, anybody was welcome to search his cellar, to search here and there and anywhere on his premises, from the hall door in front to the workshop at the back. And he proceeded to give his calm, whole-souled attention to a fine raven that had been sent round in the morning.

Miss Aspinall took the extraordinary disappearance of her sister back with her to Wimbledon and thought it over. She thought it over again and again, and she could make nothing of it. She did not know that people are constantly disappearing for all sorts of reasons; that nobody hears anything about such cases unless some enterprising paper sees matter for a “stunt”, and rouses all England to hunt for John Jones or Mrs. Carraway. To Miss Aspinall, the vanishing of Elizabeth Boale seemed a portent and a wonder, a unique and terrible event; and she puzzled her head over it, and still could find no exit from her labyrinth — a different structure from the labyrinth maintained by the serene Boale. The Aspinall had no suspicions of her brother-in-law; both his manner and his matter were straightforward, clear, and square. He was a worm, as she had informed him, but he was certainly telling the truth. But the woman was fond of her sister, and wanted to know where she had gone and what had happened to her; and so she put the matter into the hands of the police.

VI

She furnished the best description that she could of the missing woman, but the officer in charge of the case pointed out that she had not seen her sister for many years, and that Mrs Boale was obviously the person to be consulted in the matter. So the taxidermist was again drawn from his scientific labours. He was shown the information laid by Miss Aspinall and the description furnished by her. He told his simple story once more, mentioning the incident of his lying to his neighbours to avoid unpleasant gossip, and added several details to Miss Aspinall’s picture of his wife. He then furnished the constable with two photographs, pointed out the better likeness of the two, and saw his visitor off the premises with cheerful calm.

In due course, the “Missing” bill, garnished with a reproduction of the photograph selected by Mr. Boale, with minute descriptive details, including the “marked limp”, was posted up at the police-stations all over the country, and glanced at casually by a few passers-by here and there. There was nothing sensational about the placard; and the statement “Last seen going in the direction of King’s Cross” was not a very promising clue for the amateur detective. No hint of the matter got into the Press; as I have pointed out, hardly one per cent of these cases of "missing" does get into the Press. And just then we were all occupied in reading the pæans of the war correspondents, who were proving that an advance of a mile and a half on a nine-mile front constituted a victory which threw Waterloo into the shade. There was no room for discussing the whereabouts of an obscure woman whom Islington knew no more.

It was sheer accident that brought about the catastrophe. James Curry, a medical student who had rooms in Percy Street, Tottenham Court Road, was prowling about his quarter one afternoon in an indefinite and idle manner, gazing at shop windows and mooning at street corners. He knew that he would never want a cash register, but he inspected the stock with the closest attention, and chose a fine specimen listed at £75. Again, he invested heavily in costly Oriental rugs, and furnished a town mansion in the Sheraton manner at very considerable expense. And so his tour of inspection brought him to the police-station; and there he proceeded to read the bills posted outside, including the bill relating to Elizabeth Boale.

"Walks with a marked limp."

James Curry felt his breath go out of his body in a swift gasp. He put out a hand towards the railing to steady himself as he read that amazing sentence over again. And then he walked straight into the police-station.

The fact was that he had bought from Harold Boale, three weeks after the date on which Elizabeth Boale was last seen, a female skeleton. He had got it comparatively cheaply because of the malformation of one of the thigh-bones. And now it struck him that the late owner of that thigh-bone must have walked with a very marked limp.

VII

M'Aulay made his reputation at the trial. He defended Harold Boale with magnificent audacity. I was in court — it was a considerable part of my business in those days to frequent the Old Bailey — and I shall never forget the opening phrases of his speech for the prisoner. He rose slowly, and let his glance go slowly round the court. His eyes rested at last with grave solemnity on the jury. At length he spoke, in a low, clear, deliberate voice, weighing, as it seemed, every word he uttered.

“Gentlemen,” he began, “a very great man, and a very wise man, and a very good man once said that probability is the guide of life. I think you will agree with me that this is a weighty utterance. When we once leave the domain of pure mathematics, there is very little that is certain. Supposing we have money to invest: we weigh the pros and cons of this scheme and that, and decide at last on probable grounds. Or it may be our lot to have to make an appointment; we have to choose a man to fill a responsible position in which both honesty and sagacity are of the first consequence. Again probability must guide us to a decision. No one man can form a certain and infallible judgment of another. And so through all the affairs of life: we must be content with probability, and again and again with probability. Bishop Butler was right.

“But every rule has its exception. The rule which we have just laid down has its exception. That exception confronts you terribly, tremendously, at this very moment. You may think — I do not say that you do think — but you may think that Harold Boale, the prisoner at the bar, in all probability murdered his wife, Elizabeth Boale.”

There was a long pause at this point. Then:

“If you think that, then it is your imperative duty to acquit the prisoner at the bar. The only verdict which you dare give is a verdict of ‘Not Guilty’.”

Up to this, moment, Counsel had maintained the low, deliberate utterance with which he had begun his speech, pausing now and again and seeming to consider within himself the precise value of every word that came to his lips. Suddenly his voice rang out, resonant, piercing. One word followed swiftly on another:

“This, remember, is not a court of probability. Bishop Butler’s maxim does not apply here. Here there is no place for probability. This is a court of certainty. And unless you are certain that my client is guilty, unless you are as certain of his guilt as you are certain that two and two make four, then you must acquit him.

“Again, and yet again — this is a court of certainty. In the ordinary affairs of life, as we have seen, we are guided by probability. We sometimes makes mistakes; in most cases these mistakes may be rectified. A disastrous investment may be counterbalanced by a prosperous investment; a bad servant may be replaced by a good one. But in this place, where life and death hang in the balances which are in your hands, there is no room for mistakes, since here mistakes are irreparable. You cannot bring a dead man back to life. You must not say, ‘This man is probably a murderer, and therefore he is guilty.’ Before you bring in such a verdict, you must be able to say, ‘This man is certainly a murderer.’ And that you cannot say, and I will tell you why.”

M’Aulay then took the evidence piece by piece. Scientific witnesses had declared that the malformation of the thighbone in the skeleton exhibited would produce exactly the sort of limp which had characterized Elizabeth Boale. Counsel for the defence had worried the doctors, had made them admit that such a malformation was by no means unique. It was uncommon. Yes, but not very uncommon? Perhaps not.

Finally, one doctor admitted that in the course of thirty years of hospital and private practice he had known of five such cases of malformation of the thigh-bone. M’Aulay gave an inaudible sigh of relief; he felt that he had got his verdict.

He made all this quite clear to the jury. He dwelt on the principle that no one can be condemned unless the *corpus delicti*, the body, or some identifiable portion of the body of the murdered person can be produced. He told them the story of the Campden Wonder; how the “murdered” man walked into his village two years after three people had been hanged for murdering him. “Gentlemen,” he said, “for all I know, and for all you know, Elizabeth Boale may walk into this court at any moment. I say boldly that we have no earthly right to assume that she is dead.”

Of course Boale’s defence was a very simple one. The skeleton which he sold to Mr. Curry had been gradually assembled by him in the course of the last three years. He pointed out that the two hands were not a very good match; and, indeed, this was a little detail that he had not overlooked.

The jury took half an hour to consider their verdict. Harold Boale was found “Not Guilty”.

He was seen by an old friend a couple of years ago. He had emigrated to America, and was doing prosperously in his old craft in a big town of the Middle West. He had married a pleasant girl of Swedish extraction.

“You see,” he explained, “the lawyers told me I should be safe in presuming poor Elizabeth’s death.”

He smiled amiably.

And finally, I beg to state that this account of mine is a grossly partial narrative. For all I know, assuming for a moment the severe standards of M’Aulay, Boale was an innocent man. It is possible that his story was a true one. Elizabeth Boale may, after all, be living; she may return after the fashion of the “murdered” man in the Campden Wonder. All the thoughts, devices, meditations that I have put into the heart and mind of Boale may be my own malignant inventions without the shadow of true substance behind them.

In theory, then, the Islington Mystery is an open question. Certainly; but in fact?

Awaking

A Children's Story

I

Far up on the hillside Johnny sat on the stile in his garden hedge, looked out on the rough lands, the marshes with rushes, the thickets of ash and thorn, the little glittering stream, and on the twinkling town below and the dark forest far away. The sun had just set behind him on the huge hill in the west, and at first there were red lights in the river that wound about the town, and the thorns and thickets blossomed as if they were rose-gardens. Then the glow grew dim on the earth and in the sky, and the dusk came on, and after it the night. But the town in the valley twinkled all the more as the lights came out one after another; and more lights still on the level meadow by the river.

For tomorrow was the great Midsummer Fair, and to this, as Johnny believed, there came all the people of the world, bringing with them the world's wonders, and he had a groat to spend, which was as good as five shillings of our money, or much better. And there, in the Fair meadow, as he looked from his high perch on the steep hillside, he could see the lamps and lights dancing to and fro, moving here, moving there, going together like a swarm of golden flies, scattering apart, swimming through the darkness, and here and there flames shooting up from a bonfire. For all the Fair folk were setting up their booths and stalls and tents and tabernacles, getting ready for the business of the next day.

Johnny gazed on and on, down the dark hillside, where the bats were shrilling on their thin, high pipes, where the owls cried 'Hoo, hoo, hoo,' as if they were afraid, and the fern owl, hidden in bracken, drove his whirring rattle round and round. And in the field of corn the crake cried in a harsh voice 'Jar, jar.' Johnny sat still on the stile, and listened to these strange sounds and voices, and watched the hurrying and floating of the lights in the Fair meadow, till at last his mother called him, and he went in to the house, and to his cot under the thatch, and then to such happy sleep as comes on a hillside on still summer nights.

II

Very early the next morning Johnny got up from his bed, and saw the sun come dancing over the trees of the forest, and shining on all the round world. The owl and the bat, the crake and the jar were all hidden and asleep, deep in the thickets and in stony places, but the birds of the day were singing together as Johnny ran down the twisting path that led into the valley and the town. And there all was stirring and awaking, and shouts and cries mingling in the streets: there trumpets calling, and horns blowing, and drums beating, and clear pipes sounding like the wind, and bread and wine set out by the gate of Paradise, and by the door of Heaven, according to the custom of the manor, on the Fair of Midsummer Day. Paradise and Heaven, I must say, were the names of the two high taverns of the town, and the people meant no harm. But Johnny, who had eaten bread and meat and had drunk milk before he set out, went into the church and heard Mass and rejoiced in the white-robed men singing in the choir, and in the red beam, redder than any rose, that came down upon the priest from the painted window over the altar. And bells were rung, and deep voices spoke from the organ, and the singing men cried out ‘Hosanna.’

III

Then went Johnny leaping to the Fair, through the streets garlanded with green boughs, with rich carpets hanging out of the windows, and so to the field by the river and the old walls of the Romans. Here was, first of all, the encampment of the Knights, jewelled with pavilions of gold and green, of silver and crimson, of scarlet and purple; the banners all figured with lions and dragons, wyverns and leopards, flying over them; and the place prepared for the joust, with palisades and bars. Presently, the ringing trumpets echoed from the hill and the thunder of the horses’ hoofs answered, and the two knights in their glittering armour crashed together. Johnny saw a lance fly in splinters into the air, and a knight falling headlong, and then the people all rushed together, shouting, and he saw no more, but turned to the Fair. And here were all the good and fine things in the world. There was silken and rich stuff blazing in the sunlight; there was a man with birds of all colours that spoke and uttered words and sentences.

There were cups of gold and silver and vessels of brass; there were puppets that went dancing and did a mystery before all; there were swords and armour, and jars of wine, and meat roasting, and horns calling, and a man that came with a pipe and a drum and morris men following him, and a fool in gold and green, arm in arm with a grisly Death. And such a singing and a ringing, such shouts and tumult, that Johnny felt his head turn round and he went out of the Fair, and walked all alone far along the meadows by the river. And there was a very old and twisted thorn tree that threw a shadow on a green bank. And here Johnny lay down and fell asleep for a long while.

IV

When he woke up all the world had changed. He thought that the sun must have struck him before he lay down under the thorn. For he recollected broken dreams, and pains all over him, and fallings into darkness, and waking again into a room with a twinkling light and black shadows in it, and voices, half heard, murmuring about him, and the last music of the Fair dying down very far away. And when he could get up, everything that he knew had passed away. The clothes people wore were different from those that he remembered; there seemed to be no knights in glittering armour; the shops had no such treasures as he had seen at the Fair; all the wonder and the glory had gone from the world. When he tried to speak of what he remembered, nobody would listen to him.

He ended as a poet. His family did not care to have it mentioned. They said that it all began with the sunstroke he got when he was a little boy, and that it was a great pity.

As his Aunt Elizabeth always said:

‘He would go off to that horrible, common Fair, all alone, and just like a boy, he left his cap in the hall, though it was blazing Midsummer. Then, there was the Salvation Army holding a meeting in the market-place, bawling and banging in their usual way; and I’m sure the cornet, as old Sam Smith plays it, is enough to split anybody’s head in two. Then off to the Fair, that, I say, ought to have been put down a hundred years ago; and in and out of the tents; boxing and prize-fighting, and ‘Maria Marten’ and the rest of it, and the Performing Parrots and Punch and Judy, and Potter’s Perfect Pierrots, and the Flying Serpents, and that burning sun all the time. No wonder he got a sunstroke, and has been very queer ever since.’

Opening the Door

THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER, from the nature of the case, has generally to deal with the commonplaces of life. He does his best to find something singular and arresting in the spectacle of the day's doings; but, in spite of himself, he is generally forced to confess that whatever there may be beneath the surface, the surface itself is dull enough.

I must allow, however, that during my ten years or so in Fleet Street, I came across some tracks that were not devoid of oddity. There was that business of Campo Tosto, for example. That never got into the papers. Campo Tosto, I must explain, was a Belgian, settled for many years in England, who had left all his property to the man who looked after him.

My news editor was struck by something odd in the brief story that appeared in the morning paper, and sent me down to make inquiries. I left the train at Reigate; and there I found that Mr Campo Tosto had lived at a place called Burnt Green — which is a translation of his name into English — and that he shot at trespassers with a bow and arrows. I was driven to his house, and saw through a glass door some of the property which he had bequeathed to his servant: fifteenth-century triptychs, dim and rich and golden; carved statues of the saints; great spiked altar candlesticks; storied censers in tarnished silver; and much more of old church treasure. The legatee, whose name was Turk, would not let me enter; but, as a treat, he took my newspaper from my pocket and read it upside down with great accuracy and facility. I wrote this very queer story, but Fleet Street would not suffer it. I believe it struck them as too strange a thing for their sober columns.

And then there was the affair of the J.H.V.S. Syndicate, which dealt with a Cabalistic cipher, and the phenomenon, called in the Old Testament, 'the Glory of the Lord,' and the discovery of certain objects buried under the site of the Temple at Jerusalem: that story was left half told, and I never heard the ending of it. And I never understood the affair of the hoard of coins that a storm disclosed on the Suffolk coast near Aldeburgh. From the talk of the longshoremen, who were on the look-out amongst the dunes, it appeared that a great wave came in and washed away a slice of the sand cliff just beneath them. They saw glittering objects as the sea washed back, and retrieved what they could. I viewed the treasure — it was a collection of coins; the earliest of the twelfth century, the latest, pennies, three or four of them, of Edward VII, and a bronze medal of Charles Spurgeon. There are, of course, explanations of the puzzle; but there are difficulties in the way of accepting any one of them. It is very clear, for example, that the hoard was not gathered by a collector of coins; neither the twentieth-century pennies nor the medal of the great Baptist preacher would appeal to a numismatologist.

But perhaps the queerest story to which my newspaper connections introduced me was the affair of the Reverend Secretan Jones, the 'Canonbury Clergyman,' as the headlines called him.

To begin with, it was a matter of sudden disappearance. I believe people of all sorts disappear by dozens in the course of every year, and nobody hears of them or their vanishings. Perhaps they turn up again, or perhaps they don't; anyhow, they never get so much as a line in the papers, and there is an end of it. Take, for example, that unknown man in the burning car, who cost the amorous commercial traveller his life. In a certain sense, we all heard of him; but he must have disappeared from somewhere in space, and nobody knew that he had gone from his world. So it is often; but now and then there is some circumstance that draws attention to the fact that A. or B. was in his place on Monday and missing from it on Tuesday and Wednesday; and then inquiries are made and usually the lost man is found, alive or dead, and the explanation is often simple enough.

But as to the case of Secretan Jones. This gentleman, a cleric as I have said, but seldom, it appeared, exercising his sacred office, lived retired in a misty, 1830-40 square in the recesses of Canonbury. He was understood to be engaged in some kind of scholarly research, was a well-known figure in the Reading Room of the British Museum, and looked anything between fifty and sixty. It seems probable that if he had been content with that achievement he might have disappeared as often as he pleased, and nobody would have troubled; but one night as he sat late over his books in the stillness of that retired quarter, a motor-lorry passed along a road not far from Tollit Square, breaking the silence with a heavy rumble and causing a tremor of the ground that penetrated into Secretan Jones's study. A teacup and saucer on a side-table trembled slightly, and Secretan Jones's attention was taken from his authorities and notebooks.

This was in February or March of 1907, and the motor industry was still in its early stages. If you preferred a horse-bus, there were plenty left in the streets. Motor coaches were non-existent, hansom cabs still jogged and jingled on their cheerful way; and there were very few heavy motor-vans in use. But to Secretan Jones, disturbed by the rattle of his cup and saucer, a vision of the future, highly coloured, was vouchsafed, and he began to write to the papers. He saw the London streets almost as we know them today; streets where a horse-vehicle would be almost a matter to show one's children for them to remember in their old age; streets in which a great procession of huge omnibuses carrying fifty, seventy, a hundred people was continually passing; streets in which vans and trailers loaded far beyond the capacity of any manageable team of horses would make the ground tremble without ceasing.

The retired scholar, with the happy activity which does sometimes, oddly enough, distinguish the fish out of water, went on and spared nothing. Newton saw the apple fall, and built up a mathematical universe; Jones heard the teacup rattle, and laid the universe of London in ruins. He pointed out that neither the roadways nor the houses beside them were constructed to withstand the weight and vibration of the coming traffic. He crumbled all the shops in Oxford Street and Piccadilly into dust; he cracked the dome of St Paul's, brought down Westminster Abbey, reduced the Law Courts to a fine powder. What was left was dealt with by fire, flood, and pestilence. The prophetic Jones demonstrated that the roads must collapse, involving the various services beneath them. Here, the water-mains and the main drainage would flood the streets; there, huge volumes of gas would escape, and electric wires fuse; the earth would be rent with explosions, and the myriad streets of London would go up in a great flame of fire. Nobody really believed that it would happen, but it made good reading, and Secretan Jones gave interviews, started discussions, and enjoyed himself thoroughly. Thus he became the 'Canonbury Clergyman.' 'Canonbury Clergyman says that Catastrophe is Inevitable'; 'Doom of London pronounced by Canonbury Clergyman'; 'Canonbury Clergyman's Forecast: London a Carnival of Flood, Fire and Earthquake' — that sort of thing.

And thus Secretan Jones, though his main interests were liturgical, was able to secure a few newspaper paragraphs when he disappeared rather more than a year after his great campaign in the Press, which was not quite forgotten, but not very clearly remembered.

A few paragraphs, I said, and stowed away, most of them, in out-of-the-way corners of the papers. It seemed that Mrs Sedger, the woman who shared with her husband the business of looking after Secretan Jones, brought in tea on a tray to his study at four o'clock as usual, and came, again as usual, to take it away at five. And, a good deal to her astonishment, the study was empty. She concluded that her master had gone out for a stroll, though he never went out for strolls between tea and dinner. He didn't come back for dinner; and Sedger, inspecting the hall, pointed out that the master's hats and coats and sticks and umbrellas were all on their pegs and in their places. The Sedgers conjectured this, that, and the other, waited a week, and then went to the police, and the story came out and perturbed a few learned friends and correspondents: Prebendary Lincoln, author of *The Roman Canon in the Third Century*; Dr Brightwell, wise on the Rite of Malabar; and Stokes, the Mozarabic man. The rest of the populace did not take very much interest in the affair, and when, at the end of six weeks, there was a line or two stating that 'the Rev. Secretan Jones, whose disappearance at the beginning of last month from his house in Tollit Square, Canonbury, caused some anxiety to his friends, returned yesterday,' there was neither enthusiasm nor curiosity. The last line of the paragraph said that the incident was supposed to be the result of a misunderstanding; and nobody even asked what that statement meant.

And there would have been the end of it — if Sedger had not gossiped to the circle in the private bar of 'The King of Prussia.' … Some mysterious and unofficial person, in touch with this circle, insinuated himself into the presence of my news editor and told him Sedger's tale. Mrs Sedger, a careful woman, had kept all the rooms tidy and well dusted. On the Tuesday afternoon she had opened the study door and saw, to her amazement and delight, her master sitting at his table with a great book open beside him and a pencil in his hand. She exclaimed:

'Oh, sir, I *am* glad to see you back again!'

‘Back again?’ said the clergyman. ‘What do you mean? I think I should like some more tea.’

‘I don’t know in the least what it’s all about,’ said the news editor, ‘but you might go and see Secretan Jones and have a chat with him. There may be a story in it.’ There was a story in it, but not for my paper, or any other paper.

I got into the house in Tollit Square on some unhandsome pretext connected with Secretan Jones’s traffic scare of the year before. He looked at me in a dim, abstracted way at first — the ‘great book’ of his servant’s story, and other books, and many black quarto notebooks were about him — but my introduction of the proposed design for a ‘mammoth carrier’ clarified him, and he began to talk eagerly, and as it seemed to me lucidly, of the grave menace of the new mechanical transport.

‘But what’s the use of talking?’ he ended. ‘I tried to wake people up to the certain dangers ahead. I seemed to succeed for a few weeks; and then they forgot all about it. You would really say that the great majority are like dreamers, like sleepwalkers. Yes; like men walking in a dream; shutting out all the actualities, all the facts of life. They know that they are, in fact, walking on the edge of a precipice; and yet they are able to believe, it seems, that the precipice is a garden path; and they behave as if it were a garden path, as safe as that path you see down there, going to the door at the bottom of my garden.’

The study was at the back of the house, and looked on the long garden, heavily overgrown with shrubs run wild, mingling with one another, some of them flowering richly, and altogether and happily obscuring and confounding the rigid grey walls that doubtless separated each garden from its neighbours. Above the tall shrubs, taller elms and planes and ash trees grew unlopped and handsomely neglected; and under this deep concealment of green boughs the path went down to a green door, just visible under a cloud of white roses.

‘As safe as that path you see there,’ Secretan Jones repeated, and, looking at him, I thought his expression changed a little; very slightly, indeed, but to a certain questioning, one might say to a meditative doubt. He suggested to me a man engaged in an argument, who puts his case strongly, decisively; and then hesitates for the fraction of a second as a point occurs to him of which he had never thought before; a point as yet unweighed, unestimated; dimly present, but more as a shadow than a shape.

The newspaper reporter needs the gestures of the serpent as well as its wisdom. I forget how I glided from the safe topic of the traffic peril to the dubious territory which I had been sent to explore. At all events, my contortions were the most graceful that I could devise; but they were altogether vain. Secretan Jones's kind, lean, clean-shaven face took on an expression of distress. He looked at me as one in perplexity; he seemed to search his mind not for the answer that he should give me, but rather for some answer due to himself.

'I am extremely sorry that I cannot give you the information you want,' he said, after a considerable pause. 'But I really can't go any farther into the matter. In fact, it is quite out of the question to do so. You must tell your editor or sub-editor; which is it? — that the whole business is due to a misunderstanding, a misconception, which I am not at liberty to explain. But I am really sorry that you have come all this way for nothing.'

There was real apology and regret, not only in his words, but in his tones and in his aspect. I could not clutch my hat and get on my way with a short word in the character of a disappointed and somewhat disgusted emissary; so we fell on general talk, and it came out that we both came from the Welsh borderland, and had long ago walked over the same hills and drank of the same wells. Indeed, I believe we proved cousinship, in the seventh degree or so, and tea came in, and before long Secretan Jones was deep in liturgical problems, of which I knew just enough to play the listener's part. Indeed, when I had told him that the *hwyl*, or chanted eloquence, of the Welsh Methodists was, in fact, the Preface Tone of the Roman Missal, he overflowed with grateful interest, and made a note in one of his books, and said the point was most curious and important. It was a pleasant evening, and we strolled through the french windows into the green-shadowed, blossoming garden, and went on with our talk, till it was time — and high time — for me to go. I had taken up my hat as we left the study, and as we stood by the green door in the wall at the end of the garden, I suggested that I might use it.

'I'm so sorry,' said Secretan Jones, looking, I thought, a little worried, 'but I am afraid it's jammed, or something of that kind. It has always been an awkward door, and I hardly ever use it.’

So we went through the house, and on the doorstep he pressed me to come again, and was so cordial that I agreed to his suggestion of the Saturday sennight. And so at last I got an answer to the question with which my newspaper had originally entrusted me; but an answer by no means for newspaper use. The tale, or the experience, or the impression, or whatever it may be called, was delivered to me by very slow degrees, with hesitations, and in a manner of tentative suggestion that often reminded me of our first talk together. It was as if Jones were, again and again, questioning himself as to the matter of his utterances, as if he doubted whether they should not rather be treated as dreams, and dismissed as trifles without consequence.

He said once to me: ‘People do tell their dreams, I know; but isn’t it usually felt that they are telling nothing? That’s what I am afraid of.’

I told him that I thought we might throw a great deal of light on very dark places if more dreams were told.

‘But there,’ I said, ‘is the difficulty. I doubt whether the dreams that I am thinking of *can* be told. There are dreams that are perfectly lucid from beginning to end, and also perfectly insignificant. There are others which are blurred by a failure of memory, perhaps only on one point: you dream of a dead man as if he were alive. Then there are dreams which are prophetic: there seems on the whole, no doubt of that. Then you may have sheer clotted nonsense; I once chased Julius Caesar all over London to get his recipe for curried eggs. But, besides these, there is a certain dream of another order: utter lucidity up to the moment of waking, and then perceived to be beyond the power of words to express. It is neither sense nor nonsense; it has, perhaps, a notation of its own, but … well, you can’t play Euclid on the violin.’

Secretan Jones shook his head. ‘I am afraid my experiences are rather like that,’ he said. It was clear, indeed, that he found great difficulty in finding a verbal formula which should convey some hint of his adventures.

But that was later. To start with, things were fairly easy; but, characteristically enough, he began his story before I realised that the story was begun. I had been talking of the queer tricks a man’s memory sometimes plays him. I was saying that a few days before, I was suddenly interrupted in some work I was doing. It was necessary that I should clear my desk in a hurry. I shuffled a lot of loose papers together and put them away, and awaited my caller with a fresh writing-pad before me. The man came. I attended to the business with which he was concerned, and went back to my former affair when he had gone. But I could not find the sheaf of papers. I thought I had put them in a drawer. They were not in the drawer; they were not in any drawer, or in the blotting-book, or in any place where one might reasonably expect to find them. They were found next morning by the servant who dusted the room, stuffed hard down into the crevice between the seat and the back of an armchair, and carefully hidden under a cushion.

‘And,’ I finished, ‘I hadn’t the faintest recollection of doing it. My mind was blank on the matter.’

‘Yes,’ said Secretan Jones, ‘I suppose we all suffer from that sort of thing at times. About a year ago I had a very odd experience of the same kind. It troubled me a good deal at the time. It was soon after I had taken up that question of the new traffic and its probable — its certain — results. As you may have gathered, I have been absorbed for most of my life in my own special studies, which are remote enough from the activities and interests of the day. It hasn’t been at all my way to write to the papers to say there are too many dogs in London, or to denounce street musicians. But I must say that the extraordinary dangers of using our present road system for a traffic for which it was not designed did impress themselves very deeply upon me; and I dare say I allowed myself to be over-interested and overexcited.

‘There is a great deal to be said for the Apostolic maxim: ‘Study to be quiet and to mind your own business.’ I am afraid I got the whole thing on the brain, and neglected my own business, which at that particular time, if I remember, was the investigation of a very curious question — the validity or non-validity of the Consecration Formula of the *Grand Saint Graal*: *Car chou est li sanc di ma nouviele loy, li miens meismes*. Instead of attending to my proper work, I allowed myself to be drawn into the discussion I had started, and for a week or two I thought of very little else: even when I was looking up authorities at the British Museum, I couldn’t get the rumble of the motor-van out of my head. So, you see, I allowed myself to get harried and worried and distracted, and I put down what followed to all the bother and excitement I was going through. The other day, when you had to leave your work in the middle and start on something else, I dare say you felt annoyed and put out, and shoved those papers of yours away without really thinking of what you were doing, and I suppose something of the same kind happened to me. Though it was still queerer, I think.'

He paused, and seemed to meditate doubtfully, and then broke out with an apologetic laugh, and: 'It really sounds quite crazy!' And then: 'I forgot where I lived.'

'Loss of memory, in fact, through overwork and nervous excitement?'

'Yes, but not quite in the usual way. I was quite clear about my name and my identity. And I knew my address perfectly well: Thirty-nine, Tollit Square, Canonbury.'

'But you said you forgot where you lived.'

'I know; but there's the difficulty of expression we were talking about the other day. I am looking for the notation, as you called it. But it was like this: I had been working all the morning in the Reading Room with the motor danger at the back of my mind, and as I left the Museum, feeling a sort of heaviness and confusion, I made up my mind to walk home. I thought the air might freshen me a little. I set out at a good pace. I knew every foot of the way, as I had often done the walk before, and I went ahead mechanically, with my mind wrapt up in a very important matter relating to my proper studies. As a matter of fact, I had found in a most unexpected quarter a statement that threw an entirely new light on the Rite of the Celtic Church, and I felt that I might be on the verge of an important discovery. I was lost in a maze of conjectures, and when I looked up I found myself standing on the pavement by the 'Angel,' Islington, totally unaware of where I was to go next.

'Yes, quite so: I knew the 'Angel' when I saw it, and I knew I lived in Tollit Square; but the relation between the two had entirely vanished from my consciousness. For me, there were no longer any points of the compass; there was no such thing as direction, neither north nor south, nor left nor right, an extraordinary sensation, which I don't feel I have made plain to you at all. I was a good deal disturbed, and felt that I must move somewhere, so I set off — and found myself at King's Cross railway station. Then I did the only thing there was to be done: took a hansom and got home, feeling shaky enough.'

I gathered that this was the first incident of significance in a series of odd experiences that befell this learned and amiable clergyman. His memory became thoroughly unreliable, or so he thought at first.

He began to miss important papers from his table in the study. A series of notes, on three sheets lettered A, B, and C, were placed by him on the table under a paperweight one night, just before he went up to bed. They were missing when he went into his study the next morning. He was certain that he had put them in that particular place, under the bulbous glass weight with the pink roses embedded in its depths: but they were not there. Then Mrs Sedger knocked at the door and entered with the papers in her hand. She said she had found them between the bed and the mattress in the master's bedroom, and thought they might be wanted.

Secretan Jones could not make it out at all. He supposed he must have put the papers where they were found and then forgotten all about it, and he was uneasy, feeling afraid that he was on the brink of a nervous breakdown. Then there were difficulties about his books, as to which he was very precise, every book having its own place. One morning he wanted to consult the *Missale de Arbuthnot*, a big red quarto, which lived at the end of a bottom shelf near the window. It was not there. The unfortunate man went up to his bedroom, and felt the bed all over and looked under his shirts in the chest of drawers, and searched all the room in vain. However, determined to get what he wanted, he went to the Reading Room, verified his reference, and returned to Canonbury: and there was the red quarto in its place. Now here, it seemed certain, there was no room for loss of memory; and Secretan Jones began to suspect his servants of playing tricks with his possessions, and tried to find a reason for their imbecility or villainy — he did not know what to call it. But it would not do at all. Papers and books disappeared and reappeared, or now and then vanished without return. One afternoon, struggling, as he told me, against a growing sense of confusion and bewilderment, he had with considerable difficulty filled two quarto sheets of ruled paper with a number of extracts necessary to the subject he had in hand. When this was done, he felt his bewilderment thickening like a cloud about him: 'It was, physically and mentally, as if the objects in the room became indistinct, were presented in a shimmering mist or darkness.'

He felt afraid, and rose, and went out into the garden. The two sheets of paper he had left on his table were lying on the path by the garden door.

I remember he stopped dead at this point. To tell the truth, I was thinking that all these instances were rather matter for the ear of a mental specialist than for my hearing. There was evidence enough of a bad nervous breakdown, and it seemed to me, of delusions. I wondered whether it was my duty to advise the man to go to the best doctor he knew, and without delay. Then Secretan Jones began again:

‘I won’t tell you any more of these absurdities. I know they are drivel, pantomime tricks and traps, children’s conjuring; contemptible, all of it.

‘But it made me afraid. I felt like a man walking in the dark, beset with uncertain sounds and faint echoes of his footsteps that seem to come from a vast depth, till he begins to fear that he is treading by the edge of some awful precipice. There was something unknown about me; and I was holding on hard to what I knew, and wondering whether I should be sustained.

‘One afternoon I was in a very miserable and distracted state. I could not attend to my work. I went out into the garden, and walked up and down trying to calm myself. I opened the garden door and looked into the narrow passage which runs at the end of all the gardens on this side of the square. There was nobody there — except three children playing some game or other. They were horrible, stunted little creatures, and I turned back into the garden and walked into the study. I had just sat down, and had turned to my work hoping to find relief in it, when Mrs Sedger, my servant, came into the room and cried out, in an excited sort of way, that she was glad to see me back again.

‘I made up some story. I don’t know whether she believes it. I suppose she thinks I have been mixed up in something disreputable.’

‘And what had happened?’

‘I haven’t the remotest notion.’

We sat looking at each other for some time.

‘I suppose what happened was just this,’ I said at last. ‘Your nervous system had been in a very bad way for some time. It broke down utterly; you lost your memory, your sense of identity — everything. Your may have spent the six weeks in addressing envelopes in the City Road.'

He turned to one of the books on the table and opened it. Between the leaves there were the dimmed red and white petals of some flower that looked like an anemone.

'I picked this flower,' he said, 'as I was walking down the path that afternoon. It was the first of its kind to be in bloom — very early. It was still in my hand when I walked back into this room, six weeks later, as everybody declares. But it was quite fresh.'

There was nothing to be said. I kept silent for five minutes, I suppose, before I asked him whether his mind was an utter blank as to the six weeks during which no known person had set eyes on him; whether he had no sort of recollection, however vague.

'At first, nothing at all. I could not believe that more than a few seconds came between my opening the garden door and shutting it. Then in a day or two there was a vague impression that I had been somewhere where everything was absolutely right. I can't say more than that. No fairyland joys, or bowers of bliss, or anything of that kind; no sense of anything strange or unaccustomed. But there was no care there at all. *Est enim magnum chaos*.'

But that means 'For there is a great void,' or 'A great gulf.'

We never spoke of the matter again. Two months later he told me that his nerves had been troubling him, and that he was going to spend a month or six weeks at a farm near Llanthony, in the Black Mountains, a few miles from his old home. In three weeks I got a letter, addressed in Secretan Jones's hand. Inside was a slip of paper on which he had written the words:

Est enim magnum chaos.

The day on which the letter was posted he had gone out in wild autumn weather, late one afternoon, and had never come back. No trace of him has ever been found.

The Compliments of the Season

‘YOU KNOW,’ SAID Tyndall to his quiet friend Andrews, ‘that I have long felt that there is only one citadel to be captured. If we can take that, we’ve won, and rationalism will be the only possible attitude for sane men to adopt.’

‘That sounds excellent,’ said Andrews, ‘but I don’t quite follow you. One citadel? Is there anything that depends on one citadel? You mean, I suppose, one particular centre of argument?’

‘If you like to put it like that. But I’ll show you what I mean. You know the enemy have taken refuge in the arts, the æsthetic impulses, and their results. You can corner them, you can say, ‘Here’s this religion of yours, with its doctrines and its dogmas, its emotions and its prayers, its rites and its ceremonies and the rest of it. Very good; but can you give any rational account of it? Can you offer any intelligible reason for going to Mass or meeting or wherever you do go? As the Balliol don said to the undergraduate: “can you *think* it?” ‘

‘I think that’s very good, very strongly put indeed, as far as it goes,’ said Andrews thoughtfully. ‘After all, you know, “the enemy,” as you call them, are always insisting — to use a favourite phrase of theirs — that every good gift is from above. And, I take it, that they can’t deny that the intellect is a good gift: no, they could scarcely do that. They couldn’t have the face to say that the perfect man is a being who has completely sterilised and stifled all his intellectual faculties. So, if they have to confess that this religious business of theirs can’t stand the examination of the intellect, and mustn’t be asked to give a rational account of itself; well, really, I should have thought you had them already.’

‘We used to think so. But, then, they’ve lugged in the arts. They say frankly that they can’t give a logical and rational intelligible account of their spiritual universe; and, by the way, it’s rather convenient for us that they don’t turn round and ask *us* to give a rational account of our physical universe. But they don't do that. They say: "All right; if you like, we don't know why we go to Mass, and we can't put that revival feeling into a series of logical propositions. But can *you* explain why you go to concerts, and why you become hysterical, or almost hysterical, over this soprano and that violinist? You have written libraries of books and spent millions of money over what is nothing more nor less than a lot of noises. Men have passed their lives in daubing canvasses with coloured earths, and other men have spent their fortunes in buying these canvasses. How much money has been poured out in the last hundred years in buying Keats's poems? How many hours have been spent in reading them? Where's the intellectual justification for all this? And, anyhow, what does *faery lands forlorn* mean? Where are they?" You see the argument: "If you do things which you can't explain logically; why shouldn't we?" That is, they ask us to accept the existence of super-rational faculties and emotions peculiar to man. And that won't do.'

Andrews looked thoughtful.

'I see your point; as you say, it won't do. We should have them praying all over the place, as the verger at the Abbey said. I see; that's what you meant by "the citadel." Well?'

'I've taken it,' said Tyndall, and stuffed his pipe, and lit it, and blew a triumphant blast. 'It's ours. They're done.'

'You know,' Andrews murmured in his quiet way, 'in spite of what has been said in favour of vintage wines, and Brillat Savarin and Alpine climbing, and bridge and all sorts of things; there are very few pleasures to beat a clean demonstration. That Eureka feeling.'

'I agree with you. Well, I found out the right line to take with these people in an odd sort of way. Someone sent me that Frenchman's book about birds; the second book he's written about birds. An English translation appeared in the autumn.

'It's not my subject; but I read it with a good deal of interest: plenty of keen observation; a bit flowery and fanciful for my taste, but still, an intelligent book. There was one thing that caught my attention particularly: the Frenchman described certain birds, two or three sorts, I believe, that have the curious habit of sticking bright flowers and feathers into their nests;

nobody knows why. Queer, isn't it? As the author points out, the bird that sticks bright objects into its nest makes it conspicuous, and most birds do their best in the opposite direction. He didn't attempt to explain the difficulty. It's a minor difficulty, no doubt, and after all we can't expect to understand everything.'

Andrews looked up at this. His expression was somewhat whimsical.

Tyndall went on:

'I just thought of it as a queer exception to the rule, and let it drop. About a fortnight ago, I went down to stay with some friends in Pembrokeshire, the Voyles of Penyrhaul. They've got a beautiful place in a sheltered cove, facing due south: much better climate than the Riviera, if people would only believe it. They hadn't been touched by the frost there; there were roses and snapdragons and chrysanthemums and hollyhocks still lingering, and the spring flowers, violets and primroses and primulas, getting into blossom. In the greenhouse they had some splendid early lilies; really noble specimens. One day Mrs Voyle was shaking her head over them. 'We usually keep the door locked,' she said, 'but Friday was so fine that we left it open in the middle of the day, and when I came to lock up, two of the finest lilies had gone — snapped off.' She showed me the stems. 'Those little Morgans, I am afraid. Bad boys!'

'It really is a wonderful climate. What sort of weather did you have in town last Monday?'

'Old-fashioned fog; black frost.'

'Do you know, at Penyrhaul the sun was absolutely hot in the morning: the sky deep blue. I thought I would stroll down to the beach and sit by the sea; the family had all gone out somewhere. As I was walking through the little brake at the bottom of the garden, I heard the most extraordinary twittering and whistling of birds; and I went very softly, thinking I should see a very odd sight. I have read about small birds mobbing an enemy, an owl or a weasel. I came to a turn of the path, and peeped round the corner. I could scarcely believe my eyes.'

'What was happening?'

'There is a prehistoric stone, a menhir, beside the path. The flat limestone was nearly covered with green moss, and as I looked, about half a dozen small birds came flying with moss in their beaks, and filled up a bare patch. They had made — I saw it, mind you, and I saw sparrows putting the last touches to it — a perfect little figure, like a doll, lying in a cradle of moss; made out of twigs of evergreens, and bits of straw, and reeds, and flowers. And on each side of this doll, they had stuck those two lilies from Mrs Voyle's greenhouse. They looked like candles. And hundreds of birds fluttering and flying in a circle above it, and singing on the boughs of the brake.

'There was my Eureka! There was the origin of the æsthetic faculty. Purely animal, purely material. The French naturalist had seen a mere hint; I had observed the whole process. No doubt a simple seasonal impulse, with definite biological ends.'

'A seasonal impulse,' said Andrews thoughtfully. 'Yes. No doubt. Last Monday you said, didn't you?'

'Last Monday.'

'That was Christmas Day.'

THE END

The Children of the Pool, and Other Stories

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A COUPLE OF summers ago I was staying with old friends in my native county, on the Welsh border. It was in the heat and drought of a hot and dry year, and I came into those green, well-watered valleys with a sense of a great refreshment. Here was relief from the burning of London streets, from the close and airless nights, when all the myriad walls of brick and stone and concrete and the pavements that are endless give out into the heavy darkness the fires that all day long have been drawn from the sun. And from those roadways that have become like railways, with their changing lamps, and their yellow globes, and their bars and studs of steel; from the menace of instant death if your feet stray from the track: from all this what a rest to walk under the green leaf in quiet, and hear the stream trickling from the heart of the hill.

My friends were old friends, and they were urgent that I should go my own way. There was breakfast at nine, but it was equally serviceable and excellent at ten; and I could be in for something cold for lunch, if I liked; and if I didn't like I could stay away till dinner at half past seven; and then there was all the evening for talks about old times and about the changes, with comfortable drinks, and bed soothed by memories and tobacco, and by the brook that twisted under dark alders through the meadow below. And not a red bungalow to be seen for many a mile around! Sometimes, when the heat even in that green land was more than burning, and the wind from the mountains in the west ceased, I would stay all day under shade on the lawn, but more often I went afield and trod remembered ways, and tried to find new ones, in that happy and bewildered country. There, paths go wandering into undiscovered valleys, there from deep and narrow lanes with overshadowing hedges, still smaller tracks that I suppose are old bridlepaths, creep obscurely, obviously leading nowhere in particular.

It was on a day of cooler air that I went adventuring abroad on such an expedition. It was a "day of the veil." There were no clouds in the sky, but a high mist, grey and luminous, had been drawn all over it. At one moment, it would seem that the sun must shine through, and the blue appear; and then the trees in the wood would seem to blossom, and the meadows lightened; and then again the veil would be drawn. I struck off by the stony lane that led from the back of the house up over the hill; I had last gone that way a-many years ago, of a winter afternoon, when the ruts were frozen into hard ridges, and dark pines on high places rose above snow, and the sun was red and still above the mountain. I remembered that the way had given good sport, with twists to right and left, and unexpected descents, and then risings to places of thorn and bracken, till it darkened to the hushed stillness of a winter's night, and I turned homeward reluctant. Now I took another chance with all the summer day before me, and resolved to come to some end and conclusion of the matter.

I think I had gone beyond the point at which I had stopped and turned back as the frozen darkness and the bright stars came on me. I remembered the dip in the hedge, from which I saw the round tumulus on high at the end of the mountain wall; and there was the white farm on the hill-side, and the farmer was still calling to his dog, as he — or his father — had called before, his voice high and thin in the distance. After this point, I seemed to be in undiscovered country; the ash trees grew densely on either side of the way and met above it: I went on and on into the unknown in the manner of the only good guide-books, which are the tales of old knights. The road went down, and climbed, and again descended, all through the deep of the wood. Then, on both sides, the trees ceased, though the hedges were so high that I could see nothing of the way of the land about me. And just at the wood's ending, there was one of those tracks or little paths of which I have spoken, going off from my lane on the right, and winding out of sight quickly under all its leafage of hazel and wild rose, maple and hornbeam, with a holly here and there, and honeysuckle golden, and dark briony shining and twining everywhere. I could not resist the invitation of a path so obscure and uncertain, and set out on its track of green and profuse grass, with the ground beneath still soft to the feet, even in the drought of that fiery summer. The way wound, as far as I could make out, on the slope of a hill, neither ascending nor descending, and after a mile or more of this rich walking, it suddenly ceased, and I found myself on a bare hill-side, on a rough track that went down to a grey house. It was now a farm by its looks and surroundings, but there were signs of old state about it: good sixteenth-century mullioned windows and a Jacobean porch projecting from the centre, with dim armorial bearings mouldering above the door.

It struck me that bread and cheese and cider would be grateful, and I beat upon the door with my stick, and brought a pleasant woman to open it.

“Do you think,” I began, “you could be so good as… . “

And then came a shout from somewhere at the end of the stone passage, and a great voice called:

“Come in, then, come in, you old scoundrel, if your name is Meyrick, as I’m sure it is.”

I was amazed. The pleasant woman grinned and said:

“It seems you are well known here, sir, already. But perhaps you had heard that Mr. Roberts was staying here.”

My old acquaintance, James Roberts, came tumbling out from his den at the back. He was a man whom I had known a long time, but not very well. Our affairs in London moved on different lines, and so we did not often meet. But I was glad to see him in that unexpected place: he was a round man, always florid and growing redder in the face with his years. He was a countryman of mine, but I had hardly known him before we both went to town, since his home had been at the northern end of the county.

He shook me cordially by the hand, and looked as if he would like to smack me on the back — he was, a little, that kind of man — and repeated his “Come in, come in!” adding to the pleasant woman:

“And bring you another plate, Mrs. Morgan, and all the rest of it. I hope you’ve not forgotten how to eat Caerphilly cheese, Meyrick. I can tell you, there is none better than Mrs. Morgan’s making. And, Mrs. Morgan, another jug of cider, and *seidr dda*, mind you.”

I never knew whether he had been brought up as a boy to speak Welsh. In London he had lost all but the faintest trace of accent, but down here in Gwent the tones of the country had quickly returned to him; and he smacked as strongly of the land in his speech as the cheerful farmer’s wife herself. I judged his accent was a part of his holiday.

He drew me into the little parlour with its old furniture and its pleasant old-fashioned ornaments and faintly flowering wallpaper, and set me in an elbow-chair at the round table, and gave me, as I told him, exactly what I had meant to ask for; bread and cheese and cider. All very good; Mrs. Morgan, it was clear, had the art of making a Caerphilly cheese that was succulent — a sort of white *bel paese* — far different from those dry and stony cheeses that often bring dishonour on the Caerphilly name. And afterwards there was gooseberry jam and cream. And the tobacco that the country uses: Shag-on-the-Back, from the Welsh Back, Bristol. And then there was gin.

This last we partook of out of doors, in an old stone summerhouse, in the garden at the side. A white rose had grown all over the summer-house, and shaded and glorified it. The water in the big jug had just been drawn from the well in the limestone rock — and I told Roberts gratefully that I felt a great deal better than when I had knocked at the farmhouse door. I told him where I was staying — he knew my host by name — and he, in turn, informed me that it was his first visit to Lanypwll, as the farm was called. A neighbour of his at Lee had recommended Mrs. Morgan's cooking very highly: and, as he said, you couldn't speak too well of her in that way or any other.

We sipped and smoked through the afternoon in that pleasant retreat under the white roses, I meditated gratefully on the fact that I should not dare to enjoy Shag-on-the-Back so freely in London: a potent tobacco, of full and ripe savour, but not for the hard streets,

"You say the farm is called Lanypwll," I interjected, "that means 'by the pool,' doesn't it? Where is the pool? I don't see it."

"Come you," said Roberts, "and I will show you."

He took me by a little gate through the garden hedge of laurels, thick and high, and round to the left of the house, the opposite side to that by which I had made my approach. And there we climbed a green rounded bastion of the old ages, and he pointed down to a narrow valley, shut in by steep wooded hills. There at the bottom was a level, half marshland and half black water lying in still pools, with green islands of iris and of all manner of rank and strange growths that love to have their roots in slime.

“There is your pool for you,” said Roberts.

It was the most strange place. I thought, hidden away under the hills as if it were a secret. The steeps that went down to it were a tangle of undergrowth, of all manner of boughs mingled with taller trees rising above the mass, and down at the edge of the marsh some of these had perished in the swampy water, and stood white and bare and ghastly, with leprous limbs.

“An ugly looking place,” I said to Roberts.

“I quite agree with you. It is an ugly place enough. They tell me at the farm it’s not safe to go near it, or you may get fever and I don’t know what else. And, indeed, if you didn’t go down carefully and watch your steps, you might easily find yourself up to the neck in that black muck there.”

We turned back into the garden and to our summer-house, and soon after, it was time for me to make my way home.

“How long are you staying with Nichol?” Roberts asked me as we parted. I told him, and he insisted on my dining with him at the end of the week.

“I will ‘send’ you,” he said. “I will take you by a short cut across the fields and see that you don’t lose your way. Roast duck and green peas,” he added alluringly, “and something good for the digestion afterwards.”

It was a fine evening when I next journeyed to the farm, but indeed we got tired of saying “fine weathers” throughout that wonderful summer. I found Roberts cheery and welcoming, but, I thought, hardly in such rosy spirits as on my former visit. We were having a cocktail of his composition in the summer-house, as the famous duck gained the last glow of brown perfection; and I noticed that his speech was not bubbling so freely from him as before. He fell silent once or twice and looked thoughtful. He told me he’d ventured down to the pool, the swampy place at the bottom. “And it looks no better when you see it close at hand. Black, oily stuff that isn’t like water, with a scum upon it, and weeds like a lot of monsters. I never saw such queer, ugly plants. There’s one rank-looking thing down there covered with dull crimson blossoms, all bloated out and speckled like a toad.”

“You’re no botanist,” I remarked.

"No, not I. I know buttercups and daisies and not much more. Mrs. Morgan here was quite frightened when I told her where I'd been. She said she hoped I mightn't be sorry for it. But I feel as well as ever. I don't think there are many places left in the country now where you can get malaria."

We proceeded to the duck and the green peas and rejoiced in their perfection. There was some very old ale that Mr. Morgan had bought when an ancient tavern in the neighbourhood had been pulled down; its age and original excellence had combined to make a drink like a rare wine. The "something good for the digestion" turned out to be a mellow brandy that Roberts had brought with him from town. I told him that I had never known a better hour. He warmed up with the good meat and drink and was cheery enough; and yet I thought there was a reserve, something obscure at the back of his mind that was by no means cheerful.

We had a second glass of the mellow brandy, and Roberts, after a moment's indecision, spoke out. He dropped his holiday game of Welsh countryman completely.

"You wouldn't think, would you." he began, "that a man would come down to a place like this to be blackmailed at the end of the journey?"

"Good Lord!" I gasped in amazement, "I should think not indeed. What's happened?"

He looked very grave. I thought even that be looked frightened.

"Well, I'll tell you. A couple of nights ago, I went for a stroll after my dinner; a beautiful night, with the moon shining, and a nice, clean breeze. So I walked up over the hill, and then took the path that leads down through the wood to the brook. I'd got into the wood, fifty yards or so, when I heard my name called out: 'Roberts! James Roberts!' in a shrill, piercing voice, a young girl's voice, and I jumped pretty well out of my skin, I can tell you. I stopped dead and stared all about me. Of course I could see nothing at all — bright moonlight and black shadow and all those trees — anybody could hide. Then it came to me that it was some girl of the place having a game with her sweetheart: James Roberts is a common enough name, especially in this part of the country. So I was just going on, not bothering my head about the local love-affairs, when that scream came right in my ear:

‘Roberts! Roberts! James Roberts!’ — and then half a dozen words that I won’t trouble you with; not yet, at any rate.”

I have said that Roberts was by no means an intimate friend of mine. But I had always known him as a genial, cordial fellow, a thoroughly good-natured man; and I was sorry and shocked, too, to see him sitting there wretched and dismayed. He looked as if he had seen a ghost; he looked much worse than that. He looked as if he had seen terror.

But it was too early to press him closely. I said:

“What did you do then?”

“I turned about, and ran back through the wood, and tumbled over the stile. I got home here as quick as ever I could, and shut myself up in this room, dripping with fright and gasping for breath. I was almost crazy, I believe. I walked up and down. I sat down in the chair and got up again. I wondered whether I should wake up in my bed and find I’d been having a nightmare. I cried; at last I’ll tell you the truth: I put my head in my hands, and the tears ran down my cheeks. I was quite broken.”

“But, look here,” I said, “isn’t this making a great to-do about very little? I can quite see it must have been a nasty shock. But, how long did you say you had been staying here; ten days, was it?”

“A fortnight, to-morrow.”

“Well; you know country ways as well as I do. You may be sure that everybody within three or four miles of Lanypwll knows about a gentleman from London, a Mr. James Roberts, staying at the farm. And there are always unpleasant young people to be found, wherever you go. I gather that this girl used very abusive language when she hailed you. She probably thought it was a good joke. You had taken that walk through the wood in the evening a couple of times before? No doubt, you had been noticed going that way, and the girl and her friend or friends planned to give you a shock. I wouldn’t think any more of it, if I were you.”

He almost cried out.

“Think any more of it! What will the world think of it?” There was an anguish of terror in his voice. I thought it was time to come to cues. I spoke up pretty briskly:

"Now, look here, Roberts, it's no good beating about the bush. Before we can do anything, we've got to have the whole tale, fair and square. What I've gathered is this: you go for a walk in a wood near here one evening, and a girl — you say it was a girl's voice — hails you by your name, and then screams out a lot of filthy language. Is there anything more in it than that?"

"There's a lot more than that. I was going to ask you not to let it go any further; but as far as I can see, there won't be any secret in it much longer. There's another end to the story, and it goes back a good many years — to the time when I first came to London as a young man. That's twenty-five years ago."

He stopped speaking. When he began again, I could feel that he spoke with unutterable repugnance. Every word was a horror to him.

"You know as well as I do, that there are all sorts of turnings in London that a young fellow can take; good, bad, and indifferent. There was a good deal of bad luck about it. I do believe, and I was too young to know or care much where I was going; but I got into a turning with the black pit at the end of it."

He beckoned me to lean forward across the table, and whispered for a minute or two in my ear. In my turn, I heard not without horror. I said nothing.

"*That* was what I heard shrieked out in the wood. What do you say?"

"You've done with all that long ago?"

"It was done with very soon after it was begun. It was no more than a bad dream. And then it all flashed back on me like deadly lightning. What do you say? What can I do?"

I told him that I had to admit that it was no good to try to put the business in the wood down to accident, the casual filthy language of a depraved village girl. As I said, it couldn't be a case of a bow drawn at a venture.

"There must be somebody behind it. Can you think of anybody?"

"There may be one or two left. I can't say. I haven't heard of any of them for years. I thought they had all gone; dead, or at the other side of the world."

“Yes; but people can get back from the other side of the world pretty quickly in these days. Yokohama is not much farther off than Yarmouth. But you haven’t heard of any of these people lately?”

“As I said, not for years. But the secret’s out.”

“But, let’s consider. Who is this girl? Where does she live? We must get at her, and try if we can’t frighten the life out of her. And, in the first place, we’ll find out the source of her information. Then we shall know where we are. I suppose you have discovered who she is?”

“I’ve not a notion of who she is or where she lives.”

“I daresay you wouldn’t care to ask the Morgans any questions. But to go back to the beginning: you spoke of blackmail. Did this damned girl ask you for money to shut her mouth?”

“No; I shouldn’t have called it blackmail. She didn’t say anything about money.”

“Well; that sounds more helpful. Let’s see; to-night is Saturday. You took this unfortunate walk of yours a couple of nights ago; on Thursday night. And you haven’t heard anything more since. I should keep away from that wood, and try to find out who the young lady is. That’s the first thing to be done, clearly.”

I was trying to cheer him up a little; but he only stared at me with his horror-stricken eyes.

“It didn’t finish with the wood,” he groaned. “My bedroom is next door to this room where we are. When I had pulled myself together a bit that night, I had a stiff glass, about double my allowance, and went off to bed and to sleep. I woke up with a noise of tapping at the window, just by the head of the bed. Tap, tap, tap, it went. I thought it might be a bough beating on the glass. And then I heard that voice calling me: ‘James Roberts: open, open!’

“I tell you, my flesh crawled on my bones. I would have cried out, but I couldn’t make a sound. The moon had gone down, and there’s a great old pear tree close to the window, and it was quite dark. I sat up in my bed, shaking for fear. It was dead still, and I began to think that the fright I had got in the wood had given me a nightmare. Then the voice called again, and louder:

"'James Roberts! Open. Quick.'

"And I had to open. I leaned half out of bed, and got at the latch, and opened the window a little. I didn't dare to look out. But it was too dark to see anything in the shadow of the tree. And then she began to talk to me. She told me all about it from the beginning. She knew all the names. She knew where my business was in London, and where I lived, and who my friends were. She said that they should all know. And she said: 'And you yourself shall tell them, and you shall not be able to keep back a single word!'"

The wretched man fell back in his chair, shuddering and gasping for breath. He beat his hands up and down, with a gesture of hopeless fear and misery; and his lips grinned with dread.

I won't say that I began to see light. But I saw a hint of certain possibilities of light or — let us say — of a lessening of the darkness. I said a soothing word or two, and let him get a little more quiet. The telling of this extraordinary and very dreadful experience had set his nerves all dancing; and yet, having made a clean breast of it all, I could see that he felt some relief. His hands lay quiet on the table, and his lips ceased their horrible grimacing. He looked at me with a faint expectancy, I thought; as if he had begun to cherish a dim hope that I might have some sort of help for him. He could not see himself the possibility of rescue; still, one never knew what resources and freedoms the other man might bring.

That, at least, was what his poor, miserable face seemed to me to express; and I hoped I was right, and let him simmer a little, and gather to himself such twigs and straws of hope as he could. Then, I began again:

"This was on the Thursday night. And last night? Another visit?"

"The same as before. Almost word for word."

"And it was all true, what she said? The girl was not lying?"

"Every word of it was true. There were some things that I had forgotten myself; but when she spoke of them, I remembered at once. There was the number of a house in a certain street, for example. If you had asked me for that number a week ago I should have told you, quite honestly, that I knew nothing about it. But when I heard it, I knew it in the instant: I could see that number in the light of a street lamp. The sky was dark and cloudy, and a bitter wind was blowing, and driving the leaves on the pavement — that November night."

"When the fire was lit?"

"That night. When they appeared."

"And you haven't seen this girl? You couldn't describe her?"

"I was afraid to look; I told you. I waited when she stopped speaking. I sat there for half an hour or an hour. Then I lit my candle and shut the window-latch. It was three o'clock and growing light."

I was thinking it over. I noted, that Roberts confessed that every word spoken by his visitant was true. She had sprung no surprises on him; there had been no suggestion of fresh details, names, or circumstances. That struck me as having a certain — possible — significance; and the knowledge of Roberts's present circumstances, his City address, and his home address, and the names of his friends: that was interesting, too.

There was a glimpse of a possible hypothesis. I could not be sure; but I told Roberts that I thought something might be done. To begin with, I said, I was going to keep him company for the night. Nichol would guess that I had shirked the walk home after nightfall; that would be quite all right. And in the morning he was to pay Mrs. Morgan for the two extra weeks he had arranged to stay, with something by way of compensation. "And it should be something handsome," I added with emotion, thinking of the duck and the old ale. "And then," I finished, "I shall pack you off to the other side of the island."

Of that old ale I made him drink a liberal dose by way of sleeping-draught. He hardly needed a hypnotic; the terror that he had endured and the stress of telling it had worn him out. I saw him fall into bed and fall asleep in a moment, and I curled up, comfortably enough, in a roomy armchair. There was no trouble in the night, and when I writhed myself awake, I saw Roberts sleeping peacefully. I let him alone, and wandered about the house and the shining morning garden, till I came upon Mrs. Morgan, busy in the kitchen.

I broke the trouble to her. I told her that I was afraid that the place was not agreeing at all with Mr. Roberts. "Indeed," I said, "he was taken so ill last night that I was afraid to leave him. His nerves seem to be in a very bad way."

"Indeed, then, I don't wonder at all," replied Mrs. Morgan, with a very grave face. But I wondered a good deal at this remark of hers, not having a notion as to what she meant.

I went on to explain what I had arranged for our patient, as I called him: east-coast breezes, and crowds of people, the noisier the better, and, indeed, that was the cure that I had in mind. I said that I was sure Mr. Roberts would do the proper thing.

"That will be all right, sir, I am sure: don't you trouble yourself about that. But the sooner you get him away after I have given you both your breakfasts, the better I shall be pleased. I am frightened to death for him, I can tell you."

And she went off to her work, murmuring something that sounded like "Plant y pwll, plant y pwll."

I gave Roberts no time for reflection. I woke him up, bustled him out of bed, hurried him through his breakfast, saw him pack his suitcase, make his farewells to the Morgans, and had him sitting in the shade on Nichol's lawn well before the family were back from church. I gave Nichol a vague outline of the circumstances — nervous breakdown and so forth — introduced them to one another, and left them talking about the Black Mountains, Roberts's land of origin. The next day I saw him off at the station, on his way to Great Yarmouth, via London. I told him with an air of authority that he would have no more trouble, "from any quarter," I emphasized. And he was to write to me at my town address in a week's time.

"And, by the way," I said, Just before the train slid along the platform, "here's a bit of Welsh for you. What does 'plant y pwll' mean? Something of the pool?"

"'Plant y pwll,'" he explained, "means 'children of the pool.'"

When my holiday was ended, and I had got back to town. I began my investigations into the case of James Roberts and his nocturnal visitant. When he began his story I was extremely distressed — I made no doubt as to the bare truth of it, and was shocked to think of a very kindly man threatened with overwhelming disgrace and disaster. There seemed nothing impossible in the tale stated at large, and in the first outline. It is not altogether unheard of for very decent men to have had a black patch in their lives, which they have done their best to live down and atone for and forget. Often enough, the explanation of such misadventure is not hard to seek. You have a young fellow, very decently but very simply brought up among simple country people, suddenly pitched into the labyrinth of London, into a maze in which there are many turnings, as the unfortunate Roberts put it, which lead to disaster, or to something blacker than disaster. The more experienced man, the man of keen instincts and perceptions, knows the aspect of these tempting passages and avoids them; some have the wit to turn back in time; a few are caught in the trap at the end. And in some cases, though there may be apparent escape, and peace and security for many years, the teeth of the snare are about the man's leg all the while, and close at last on highly reputable chairmen and churchwardens and pillars of all sorts of seemly institutions. And then gaol, or at best, hissing and extinction.

So, on the first face of it, I was by no means prepared to pooh-pooh Robert's tale. But when he came to detail, and I had time to think it over, that entirely illogical faculty, which sometimes takes charge of our thoughts and judgments, told me that there was some huge flaw in all this, that somehow or other, things had not happened so. This mental process, I may say, is strictly indefinable and unjustifiable by any laws of thought that I have ever heard of. It won't do to take our stand with Bishop Butler, and declare with him that probability is the guide of life; deducing from this premise the conclusion that the improbable doesn't happen. Any man who cares to glance over his experience of the world and of things in general is aware that the most wildly improbable events are constantly happening. For example, I take up to-day's paper, sure that I shall find something to my purpose, and in a minute I come across the headline: "Damaging a Model Elephant." A father, evidently a man of substance, accuses his son of this strange offence. Last summer, the father told the court, his son constructed in their front garden a large model of an elephant, the material being bought by witness. The skeleton of the elephant was made of tubing, and it was covered with soil and fibre, and held together with wire netting. Flowers were planted on it, and it cost £3 5s.

A photograph of the elephant was produced in court, and the clerk remarked: “It is a fearsome-looking thing.”

And then the catastrophe. The son got to know a married woman much older than himself, and his parents frowned, and there were quarrels. And so, one night, the young man came to his father’s house, jumped over the garden wall and tried to push the elephant over. Failing, he proceeded to disembowel the elephant with a pair of wire clippers.

There! Nothing can be much more improbable than that tale, but it all happened so, as the *Daily Telegraph* assures me, and I believe every word of it. And I have no doubt that if I care to look I shall find something as improbable, or even more improbable, in the newspaper columns three or perhaps four times a week. What about the old man, unknown, unidentified, found in the Thames: in one pocket, a stone Buddha; in the other, a leather wallet, with the inscription: “The hen that sits on the china egg is best off?”

The improbable happens and is constantly happening; but, using that faculty which I am unable to define, I rejected Roberts’s girl of the wood and the window. I did not suspect him for a moment of leg-pulling of an offensive and vicious kind. His misery and terror were too clearly manifest for that, and I was certain that he was suffering from a very serious and dreadful shock — and yet I didn’t believe in the truth of the story he had told me. I felt convinced that there was no girl in the case; either in the wood or at the window. And when Roberts told me, with increased horror, that every word she spoke was true, that she had even reminded him of matters that he had himself forgotten, I was greatly encouraged in my growing surmise. For, it seemed to me at least probable that if the case had been such as he supposed it, there would have been new and damning circumstances in the story, utterly unknown to him and unsuspected by him. But, as it was, everything that he was told he accepted; as a man in a dream accepts without hesitation the wildest fantasies as matters and incidents of his daily experience. Decidedly, there was no girl there.

On the Sunday that he spent with me at the Wern, Nichol’s place, I took advantage of his calmer condition — the night’s rest had done him good — to get some facts and dates out of him, and when I returned to town, I put these to the test. It was not altogether an easy investigation since, on the surface, at least, the matters to be investigated were eminently trivial; the early days of a young man from the country up in London in a business house; and twenty-five years ago. Even really exciting murder trials and changes of ministries become blurred and uncertain in outline, if not forgotten, in twenty-five years, or in twelve years for that matter: and compared with such events, the affair of James Roberts seemed perilously like nothing at all.

However, I had made the best use I could of the information that Roberts had given me; and I was fortified for the task by a letter I received from him. He told me that there had been no recurrence of the trouble (as he expressed it), that he felt quite well, and was enjoying himself immensely at Yarmouth. He said that the shows and entertainments on the sands were doing him "no end of good. There's a retired executioner who does his old business in a tent, with the drop and everything. And there's a bloke who calls himself Archbishop of London, who fasts in a glass case, with his mitre and all his togs on." Certainly, my patient was either recovered, or in a very fair way to recovery: I could set about my researches in a calm spirit of scientific curiosity, without the nervous tension of the surgeon called upon at short notice to perform a life-or-death operation.

As a matter of fact it was all more simple than I thought it would be. True, the results were nothing, or almost nothing, but that was exactly what I had expected and hoped. With the slight sketch of his early career in London, furnished me by Roberts, the horrors omitted by my request; with a name or two and a date or two, I got along very well. And what did it come to? Simply this: here was a lad — he was just seventeen — who had been brought up amongst lonely hills and educated at a small grammar school, furnished through a London uncle with a very small stool in a City office. By arrangement, settled after a long and elaborate correspondence, he was to board with some distant cousins, who lived in the Cricklewood–Kilburn-Brondesbury region, and with them he settled down, comfortably enough, as it seemed, though Cousin Ellen objected to his learning to smoke in his bedroom, and begged him to desist. The household consisted of Cousin Ellen, her husband, Henry Watts, and the two daughters, Helen and Justine. Justine was about Robert's own age; Helen three or four years older. Mr. Watts had married rather late in life, and had retired from his office a year or so before. He interested himself chiefly in tuberous-rooted begonias, and in the season went out a few miles to his cricket club and watched the game on Saturday afternoons. Every morning there was breakfast at eight, every evening there was high tea at seven, and in the meantime young Roberts did his best in the City, and liked his job well enough. He was shy with the two girls at first, but Justine was lively, and couldn't help having a voice like a peacock, and Helen was adorable. And so things went on very pleasantly for a year or perhaps eighteen months; on this basis, that Justine was a great joke, and that Helen was adorable. The trouble was that Justine didn't think she was a great joke.

For, it must be said that Roberts's stay with his cousins ended in disaster. I rather gather that the young man and the quiet Helen were guilty of — shall, we say — amiable indiscretions, though without serious consequences. But it appeared that Cousin Justine, a girl with black eyes and black hair, made discoveries which she resented savagely, denouncing the offenders at the top of that piercing voice of hers, in the waste hours of the Brondesbury night, to the immense rage, horror, and consternation of the whole house. In fact, there was the devil to pay, and Mr. Watts then and there turned young Roberts out of the house. And there is no doubt that he should have been thoroughly ashamed of himself. But young men… .

Nothing very much happened. Old Watts had cried in his rage that he would let Roberts's chief in the City hear the whole story; but, on reflection, he held his tongue. Roberts roamed about London for the rest of the night, refreshing himself occasionally at coffee-stalls. When the shops opened, he had a wash and brush-up, and was prompt and bright at his office. At midday, in the underground smoking-room of the tea-shop, he conferred with a fellow clerk over their dominoes, and arranged to share rooms with him out Norwood way. From that point onwards, the career of James Roberts had been eminently quiet, uneventful, successful.

Now, everybody, I suppose, is aware that in recent years the silly business of divination by dreams has ceased to be a joke and has become a very serious science. It is called "Psycho-analysis"; and is compounded, I would say, by mingling one grain of sense with a hundred of pure nonsense. From the simplest and most obvious dreams, the psycho-analyst deduces the most incongruous and extravagant results. A black savage tells him that he has dreamed of being chased by lions, or, maybe, by crocodiles: and the psycho man knows at once that the black is suffering from the &OElig;dipus complex. That is, he is madly in love with his own mother, and is, therefore, afraid of the vengeance of his father. Everybody knows, of course, that "lion" and "crocodile" are symbols of "father." And I understand that there are educated people who believe this stuff.

It is all nonsense, to be sure; and so much the greater nonsense inasmuch as the true interpretation of many dreams — not by any means of all dreams — moves, it may be said, in the opposite direction to the method of psycho-analysis. The psycho-analyst infers the monstrous and abnormal from a trifle; it is often safe to reverse the process. If a man dreams that he has committed a sin before which the sun hid his face, it is often safe to conjecture that, in sheer forgetfulness, he wore a red tie, or brown boots with evening dress. A slight dispute with the vicar may deliver him in sleep into the clutches of the Spanish Inquisition, and the torment of a fiery death. Failure to catch the post with a rather important letter will sometimes bring a great realm to ruin in the world of dreams. And here, I have no doubt, we have the explanation of part of the explanation of the Roberts affair. Without question, he had been a bad boy; there was something more than a trifle at the heart of his trouble. But his original offence, grave as we may think it, had in his hidden consciousness, swollen and exaggerated itself into a monstrous mythology of evil. Some time ago, a learned and curious investigator demonstrated how Coleridge had taken a bald sentence from an old chronicler, and had made it the nucleus of *The Ancient Mariner*. With a vast gesture of the spirit, he had unconsciously gathered from all the four seas of his vast reading all manner of creatures into his net: till the bare hint of the old book glowed into one of the great masterpieces of the world's poetry. Roberts had nothing in him of the poetic faculty, nothing of the shaping power of the imagination, no trace of the gift of expression, by which the artist delivers his soul of its burden. In him, as in many men, there was a great gulf fixed between the hidden and the open consciousness; so that which could not come out into the light grew and swelled secretly, hugely, horribly in the darkness. If Roberts had been a poet or a painter or a musician; we might have had a masterpiece. As he was neither: we had a monster. And I do not at all believe that his years had consciously been vexed by a deep sense of guilt. I gathered in the course of my researches that not long after the flight from Brondesbury, Roberts was made aware of unfortunate incidents in the Watts saga — if we may use this honoured term — which convinced him that there were extenuating circumstances in his offence, and excuses for his wrongdoing. The actual fact had, no doubt, been forgotten or remembered very slightly, rarely, casually, without any sense of grave moment or culpability attached to it; while, all the while, a pageantry of horror was being secretly formed in the hidden places of the man's soul. And at last, after the years of growth and swelling in the darkness; the monster leapt into the light, and with such violence that to the victim it seemed an actual and objective entity.

And, in a sense, it had risen from the black waters of the pool. I was reading a few days ago, in a review of a grave book on psychology, the following very striking sentences:

The things which we distinguish as qualities or values are inherent in the real environment to make the configuration that they do make with our sensory response to them. There is such a thing as a "sad" landscape, even when we who look at it are feeling jovial; and if we think it is "sad" only because we attribute to it something derived from our own past associations with sadness, Professor Koffka gives us good reason to regard the view as superficial. That is not imputing human attributes to what are described as "demand characters" in the environment, but giving proper recognition to the other end of a nexus, of which only one end is organised in our own mind.

Psychology is, I am sure, a difficult and subtle science, which, perhaps naturally, must be expressed in subtle and difficult language. But so far as I can gather the sense of the passage which I have quoted, it comes to, this: that a landscape, a certain configuration of wood, water, height and depth, light and dark, flower and rock, is, in fact, an objective reality, a thing; just as opium and wine are things, not clotted fancies, mere creatures of our make-believe, to which we give a kind of spurious reality and efficacy. The dreams of De Quincey were a synthesis of De Quincey, *plus* opium; the riotous gaiety of Charles Surface and his friends was the product and result of the wine they had drunk, *plus* their personalities. So, the profound Professor Koffka — his book is called *Principles of Gestalt Psychology* — insists that the "sadness" which we attribute to a particular landscape is really and efficiently in the landscape and not merely in ourselves; and consequently that the landscape can affect us and produce results in us, in precisely the same manner as drugs and meat and drink affect us in their several ways. Poe, who knew many secrets, knew this, and taught that landscape gardening was as truly a fine art as poetry or painting; since it availed to communicate the mysteries to the human spirit.

And perhaps, Mrs. Morgan of Lanypwll Farm put all this much better in the speech of symbolism, when she murmured about the children of the pool. For if there is a landscape of sadness, there is certainly also a landscape of a horror of darkness and evil; and that black and oily depth, overshadowed with twisted woods, with its growth of foul weeds and, its dead trees and leprous boughs was assuredly potent in terror. To Roberts it was a strong drug, a drag of evocation; the black deep without calling to the black deep within, and summoning the inhabitant thereof to come forth. I made no attempt to extract the legend of that dark place from Mrs. Morgan; and I do not suppose that she would have been communicative if I had questioned her. But it has struck me as possible and even probable that Roberts was by no means the first to experience the power of the pool. Old stories often turn out to be true.

Out of the Earth

THERE WAS SOME sort of confused complaint during last August of the ill behaviour of the children at certain Welsh watering-places. Such reports and vague rumours are most difficult to trace to their heads and fountains; none has better reason to know that than myself. I need not go over the old ground here, but I am afraid that many people are wishing by this time that they had never heard my name; again, a considerable number of estimable persons are concerning themselves gloomily enough, from my point of view, with my everlasting welfare. They write me letters, some in kindly remonstrance, begging me not to deprive poor, sick-hearted souls of what little comfort they possess amidst their sorrows. Others send me tracts and pink leaflets with allusions to “the daughter of a well-known canon”; others again are violently and anonymously abusive. And then in open print, in fair book form, Mr. Begbie has dealt with me righteously but harshly, as I cannot but think.

Yet, it was all so entirely innocent, nay casual, on my part. A poor linnet of prose, I did but perform my indifferent piping in the Evening News because I wanted to do so, because I felt that the story of “The Bowmen” ought to be told. An inventor of fantasies is a poor creature, heaven knows, when all the world is at war; but I thought that no harm would be done, at any rate, if I bore witness, after the fashion of the fantastic craft, to my belief in the heroic glory of the English host who went back from Mons fighting and triumphing.

And then, somehow or other, it was as if I had touched a button and set in action a terrific, complicated mechanism of rumours that pretended to be sworn truth, of gossip that posed as evidence, of wild tarradiddles that good men most firmly believed. The supposed testimony of that “daughter of a well-known canon” took parish magazines by storm, and equally enjoyed the faith of dissenting divines. The “daughter” denied all knowledge of the matter, but people still quoted her supposed sure word; and the issues were confused with tales, probably true, of painful hallucinations and deliriums of our retreating soldiers, men fatigued and shattered to the very verge of death. It all became worse than the Russian myths, and as in the fable of the Russians, it seemed impossible to follow the streams of delusion to their fountain-head — or heads. Who was it who said that “Miss M. knew two officers who, etc., etc.”? I suppose we shall never know his lying, deluding name.

And so, I dare say, it will be with this strange affair of the troublesome children of the Welsh seaside town, or rather of a group of small towns and villages lying within a certain section or zone, which I am not going to indicate more precisely than I can help, since I love that country, and my recent experience with “The Bowmen” have taught me that no tale is too idle to be believed. And, of course, to begin with, nobody knew how this odd and malicious piece of gossip originated. So far as I know, it was more akin to the Russian myth than to the tale of “The Angels of Mons.” That is, rumour preceded print; the thing was talked of here and there and passed from letter to letter long before the papers were aware of its existence. And — here it resembles rather the Mons affair — London and Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham were muttering vague unpleasant things while the little villages concerned basked innocently in the sunshine of an unusual prosperity.

In this last circumstance, as some believe, is to be sought the root of the whole matter. It is well known that certain east coast towns suffered from the dread of air-raids, and that a good many of their usual visitors went westward for the first time. So there is a theory that the east coast was mean enough to circulate reports against the west coast out of pure malice and envy. It may be so; I do not pretend to know. But here is a personal experience, such as it is, which illustrated the way in which the rumour was circulated. I was lunching one day at my Fleet Street tavern — this was early in July — and a friend of mine, a solicitor, of Serjeants’ Inn, came in and sat at the same table. We began to talk of holidays and my friend Eddis asked me where I was going. “To the same old place,” I said. “Manavon. You know we always go there.” “Are you really?” said the lawyer; “I thought that coast had gone off a lot. My wife has a friend who’s heard that it’s not at all that it was.”

I was astonished to hear this, not seeing how a little village like Manavon could have “gone off.” I had known it for ten years as having accommodation for about twenty visitors, and I could not believe that rows of lodging houses had sprung up since the August of 1914. Still I put the question to Eddis: “Trippers?” I asked, knowing firstly that trippers hate the solitudes of the country and the sea; secondly, that there are no industrial towns within cheap and easy distance, and thirdly, that the railways were issuing no excursion tickets during the war.

“No, not exactly trippers,” the lawyer replied. “But my wife’s friend knows a clergyman who says that the beach at Tremaen is not at all pleasant now, and Tremaen’s only a few miles from Manavon, isn’t it?”

“In what way not pleasant?” I carried on my examination. “Pierrots and shows, and that sort of thing?” I felt that it could not be so, for the solemn rocks of Tremaen would have turned the liveliest Pierrot to stone. He would have frozen into a crag on the beach, and the seagulls would carry away his song and make it a lament by lonely, booming caverns that look on Avalon. Eddis said he had heard nothing about showmen; but he understood that since the war the children of the whole district had gone quite out of hand.

“Bad language, you know,” he said, “and all that sort of thing, worse than London slum children. One doesn’t want one’s wife and children to hear foul talk at any time, much less on their holiday. And they say that Castell Coch is quite impossible; no decent woman would be seen there!”

I said: “Really, that’s a great pity,” and changed the subject. But I could not make it out at all. I knew Castell Coch well — a little bay bastioned by dunes and red sandstone cliffs, rich with greenery. A stream of cold water runs down there to the sea; there is the ruined Norman Castle, the ancient church and the scattered village; it is altogether a place of peace and quiet and great beauty. The people there, children and grown-ups alike, were not merely decent but courteous folk: if one thanked a child for opening a gate, there would come the inevitable response: “And welcome kindly, sir.” I could not make it out at all. I didn’t believe the lawyer’s tales; for the life of me I could not see what he could be driving at. And, for the avoidance of all unnecessary mystery, I may as well say that my wife and child and myself went down to Manavon last August and had a most delightful holiday. At the time we were certainly conscious of no annoyance or unpleasantness of any kind. Afterwards, I confess, I heard a story that puzzled and still puzzles me, and this story, if it be received, might give its own interpretation to one or two circumstances which seemed in themselves quite insignificant.

But all through July I came upon traces of evil rumours affecting this most gracious corner of the earth. Some of these rumours were repetitions of Eddis's gossip; others amplified his vague story and made it more definite. Of course, no first-hand evidence was available. There never is any first-hand evidence in these cases. But A knew B who had heard from C that her second cousin's little girl had been set upon and beaten by a pack of young Welsh savages. Then people quoted "a doctor in large practice in a well-known town in the Midlands," to the effect that Tremaen was a sink of juvenile depravity. They said that a responsible medical man's evidence was final and convincing; but they didn't bother to find out who the doctor was, or whether there was any doctor at all — or any doctor relevant to the issue. Then the thing began to get into the papers in a sort of oblique, by-the-way sort of manner. People cited the case of these imaginary bad children in support of their educational views. One side said that "these unfortunate little ones'' would have been quite well behaved if they had had no education at all; the opposition declared that continuation schools would speedily reform them and make them into admirable citizens. Then the poor Arfonshire children seemed to become involved in quarrels about Welsh disestablishment and in the question of the miners; and all the while they were going about behaving politely and admirably as they always do behave. I knew all the time that it was all nonsense, but I couldn't understand in the least what it meant, or who was pulling the wires of rumour, or their purpose in so pulling. I began to wonder whether the pressure and anxiety and suspense of a terrible war had unhinged the public mind, so that it was ready to believe any fable, to debate the reasons for happenings which had never happened. At last, quite incredible things began to be whispered: visitors' children had not only been beaten, they had been tortured; a little boy had been found impaled on a stake in a lonely field near Manavon; another child had been lured to destruction over the cliffs at Castell Coch. A London paper sent a good man down quietly to Arfon to investigate. He was away for a week, and at the end of that period returned to his office and in his own phrase, "threw the whole story down." There was not a word of truth, he said, in any of these rumours; no vestige of a foundation for the mildest forms of all this gossip. He had never seen such a beautiful country; he had never met pleasanter men, women or children; there was not a single case of anyone having been annoyed or troubled in any sort or fashion.

Yet all the while the story grew, and grew more monstrous and incredible. I was too much occupied in watching the progress of my own mythological monster to pay much attention. The town clerk of Tremaen, to which the legend had at length penetrated, wrote a brief letter to the press indignantly denying that there was the slightest foundation for “the unsavoury rumours” which, he understood, were being circulated; and about this time we went down to Manavon and, as I say, enjoyed ourselves extremely. The weather was perfect: blues of paradise in the skies, the seas all a shimmering wonder, olive greens and emeralds, rich purples, glassy sapphires changing by the rocks; far away a haze of magic lights and colours at the meeting of sea and sky. Work and anxiety had harried me; I found nothing better than to rest on the thymy banks by the shore, finding an infinite balm and refreshment in the great sea before me, in the tiny flowers beside me. Or we would rest all the summer afternoon on a “shelf” high on the grey cliffs and watch the tide creaming and surging about the rocks, and listen to it booming in the hollows and caverns below. Afterwards, as I say, there were one or two things that struck cold. But at the time those were nothing. You see a man in an odd white hat pass by and think little or nothing about it. Afterwards, when you hear that a man wearing just such a hat had committed murder in the next street five minutes before, then you find in that hat a certain interest and significance. “Funny children,” was the phrase my little boy used; and I began to think they were “funny” indeed.

If there be a key at all to this queer business, I think it is to be found in a talk I had not long ago with a friend of mine named Morgan. He is a Welshman and a dreamer, and some people say he is like a child who has grown up and yet has not grown up like other children of men. Though I did not know it, while I was at Manavon, he was spending his holiday time at Castell Coch. He was a lonely man and he liked lonely places, and when we met in the autumn he told me how, day after day, he would carry his bread and cheese and beer in a basket to a remote headland on that coast known as the Old Camp. Here, far above the waters, are solemn, mighty walls, turf-grown; circumvallations rounded and smooth with the passing of many thousand years. At one end of this most ancient place there is a tumulus, a tower of observation, perhaps, and underneath it slinks the green, deceiving ditch that seems to wind into the heart of the camp, but in reality rushes down to sheer rock and a precipice over the waters.

Here came Morgan daily, as he said, to dream of Avalon, to purge himself from the fuming corruption of the streets.

And so, as he told me, it was with singular horror that one afternoon as he dozed and dreamed and opened his eyes now and again to watch the miracle and magic of the sea, as he listened to the myriad murmurs of the waves, his meditation was broken by a sudden burst of horrible raucous cries — and the cries of children, too, but children of the lowest type. Morgan says that the very tones made him shudder— “They were to the ear what slime is to the touch,” and then the words: every foulness, every filthy abomination of speech; blasphemies that struck like blows at the sky, that sank down into the pure, shining depths, defiling them! He was amazed. He peered over the green wall of the fort, and there in the ditch he saw a swarm of noisome children, horrible little stunted creatures with old men’s faces, with bloated faces, with little sunken eyes, with leering eyes. It was worse than uncovering a brood of snakes or a nest of worms.

No; he would not describe what they were about. “Read about Belgium,” said Morgan, “and think they couldn’t have been more than five or six years old.” There was no infamy, he said, that they did not perpetrate; they spared no horror of cruelty. “I saw blood running in streams, as they shrieked with laughter, but I could not find the mark of it on the grass afterwards.”

Morgan said he watched them and could not utter a word; it was as if a hand held his mouth tight. But at last he found his voice and shrieked at them, and they burst into a yell of obscene laughter and shrieked back at him, and scattered out of sight. He could not trace them; he supposes that they hid in the deep bracken behind the Old Camp.

“Sometimes I can’t understand my landlord at Castell Coch,” Morgan went on. “He’s the village postmaster and has a little farm of his own — a decent, pleasant, ordinary sort of chap. But now and again he will talk oddly. I was telling him about these beastly children and wondering who they could be when he broke into Welsh, something like ‘the battle that is for age unto ages; and the People take delight in it.’ “

So far Morgan, and it was evident that he did not understand at all. But this strange tale of his brought back an odd circumstance or two that I recollected: a matter of our little boy straying away more than once, and getting lost among the sand dunes and coming back screaming, evidently frightened horribly, and babbling about “funny children.” We took no notice; did not trouble, I think, to look whether there were any children wandering about the dunes or not. We were accustomed to his small imaginations.

But after hearing Morgan’s story I was interested and I wrote an account of the matter to my friend, old Doctor Duthoit, of Hereford. And he:

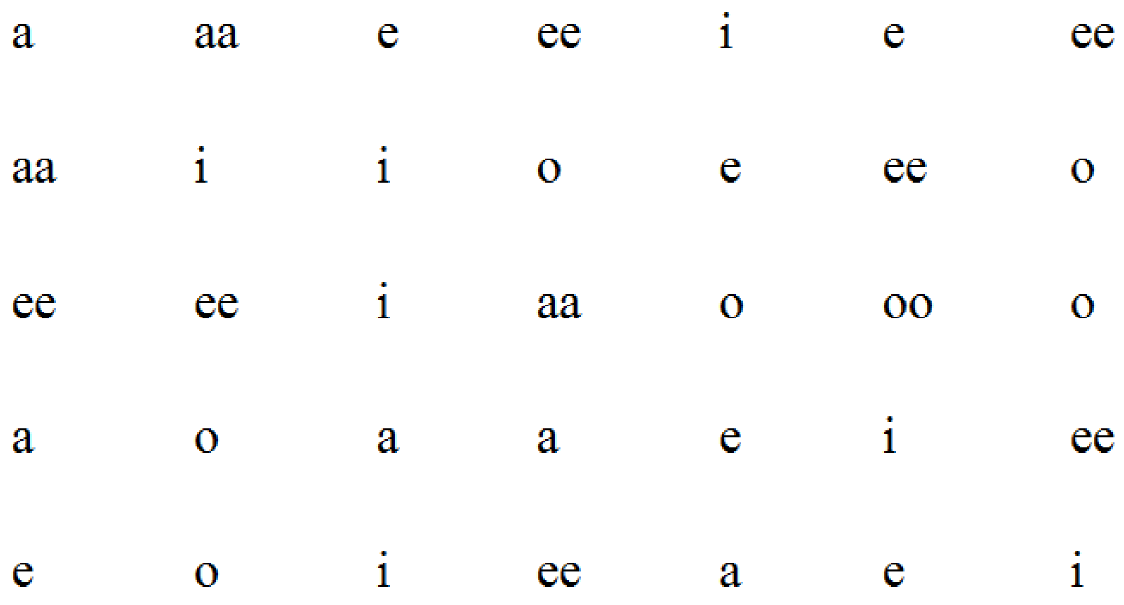
“They were only visible, only audible to children and the childlike. Hence the explanation of what puzzled you at first; the rumours, how did they arise? They arose from nursery gossip, from scraps and odds and ends of half-articulate children’s talk of horrors that they didn’t understand, of words that shamed their nurses and their mothers.

“These little people of the earth rise up and rejoice in these times of ours. For they are glad, as the Welshman said, when they know that men follow their ways.”

Change

“HERE,” SAID OLD Mr. Vincent Rimmer, fumbling in the pigeon-holes of his great and ancient bureau, “is an oddity which may interest you.”

He drew a sheet of paper out of the dark place where it had been hidden, and handed it to Reynolds, his curious guest. The oddity was an ordinary sheet of notepaper, of a sort which has long been popular; a bluish grey with slight flecks and streaks of a darker blue embedded in its substance. It had yellowed a little with age at the edges. The outer page was blank; Reynolds laid it open, and spread it out on the table beside his chair. He read something like this:



a	aa	e	ee	i	e	ee
aa	i	i	o	e	ee	o
ee	ee	i	aa	o	oo	o
a	o	a	a	e	i	ee
e	o	i	ee	a	e	i

Reynolds scanned it with stupefied perplexity.

“What on earth is it?” he said. “Does it mean anything? Is it a cypher, or a silly game, or what?”

Mr. Rimmer chuckled. “I thought it might puzzle you,” he remarked. “Do you happen to notice anything about the writing; anything out of the way at all?”

Reynolds scanned the document more closely.

“Well, I don’t know that there is anything out of the way in the script itself. The letters are rather big, perhaps, and they are rather clumsily formed. But it’s difficult to judge handwriting by a few letters, repeated again and again. But, apart from the writing, what is it?”

“That’s a question that must wait a bit. There are many strange things related to that bit of paper. But one of the strangest things about it is this; that it is intimately connected with the Darren Mystery.”

“What Mystery did you say? The Darren Mystery? I don’t think I ever heard of it.”

“Well, it was a little before your time. And, in any case, I don’t see how you could have heard of it. There were, certainly, some very curious and unusual circumstances in the case, but I don’t think that they were generally known, and if they were known, they were not understood. You won’t wonder at that, perhaps, when you consider that the bit of paper before you was one of those circumstances.”

“But what exactly happened?”

“That is largely a matter of conjecture. But, anyhow, here’s the outside of the case, for a beginning. Now, to start with, I don’t suppose you’ve ever been to Meirion? Well, you should go. It’s a beautiful county, in West Wales, with a fine sea-coast, and some very pleasant places to stay at, and none of them too large or too popular. One of the smallest of these places, Trenant, is just a village. There is a wooded height above it called the Allt; and down below, the church, with a Celtic cross in the churchyard, a dozen or so of cottages, a row of lodging-houses on the slope round the corner, a few more cottages dotted along the road to Meiros, and that’s all. Below the village are marshy meadows where the brook that comes from the hills spreads abroad, and then the dunes, and the sea, stretching away to the Dragon’s Head in the far east and enclosed to the west by the beginnings of the limestone cliffs. There are fine, broad sands all the way between Trenant and Porth, the market-town, about a mile and a half away, and it’s just the place for children.

“Well, just forty-five years ago, Trenant was having a very successful season. In August there must have been eighteen or nineteen visitors in the village. I was staying in Porth at the time, and, when I walked over, it struck me that the Trenant beach was quite crowded — eight or nine children castle-building and learning to swim, and looking for shells, and all the usual diversions. The grown-up people sat in groups on the edge of the dunes and read and gossiped, or took a turn towards Porth, or perhaps tried to catch prawns in the rock-pools at the other end of the sands. Altogether a very pleasant, happy scene in its simple way, and, as it was a beautiful summer, I have no doubt they all enjoyed themselves very much. I walked to Trenant and back three or four times, and I noticed that most of the children were more or less in charge of a very pretty dark girl, quite young, who seemed to advise in laying out the ground-plan of the castle, and to take off her stockings and tuck up her skirts — we thought a lot of Legs in those days — when the bathers required supervision. She also indicated the kinds of shells which deserved the attention of collectors: an extremely serviceable girl.

“It seemed that this girl, Alice Hayes, was really in charge of the children — or of the greater part of them. She was a sort of nursery-governess or lady of all work to Mrs. Brown, who had come down from London in the early part of July with Miss Hayes and little Michael, a child of eight, who refused to recover nicely from his attack of measles. Mr. Brown had joined them at the end of the month with the two elder children, Jack and Rosamund. Then, there were the Smiths, with their little family, and the Robinsons with their three; and the fathers and mothers, sitting on the beach every morning, got to know each other very easily. Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Robinson soon appreciated Miss Hayes’s merits as a child-herd; they noticed that Mrs. Brown sat placid and went on knitting in the sun, quite safe and unperturbed, while they suffered from recurrent alarms. Jack Smith, though barely fourteen, would be seen dashing through the waves, out to sea, as if he had quite made up his mind to swim to the Dragon’s Head, about twenty miles away, or Jane Robinson, in bright pink, would appear suddenly right away among the rocks of the point, ready to vanish into the perilous unknown round the corner. Hence, alarums and excursions, tiring expeditions of rescue and remonstrance, through soft sand or over slippery rocks under a hot sun. And then these ladies would discover that certain of their offspring had entirely disappeared or were altogether missing from the landscape; and dreadful and true tales of children who had driven tunnels into the sand and had been overwhelmed therein rushed to the mind. And all the while Mrs. Brown sat serene, confident in the overseership of her Miss Hayes. So, as was to be gathered, the other two took counsel together. Mrs. Brown was approached, and something called an arrangement was made, by which Miss Hayes undertook the joint mastership of all three packs, greatly to the ease of Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Robinson.

It was about this time, I suppose, that I got to know this group of holiday-makers. I had met Smith, whom I knew slightly in town, in the street of Porth, just as I was setting out for one of my morning walks. We strolled together to Trenant on the firm sand down by the water's edge, and introductions went round, and so I joined the party, and sat with them, watching the various diversions of the children and the capable superintendence of Miss Hayes.

"Now there's a queer thing about this little place," said Brown, a genial man, connected, I believe, with Lloyd's. "Wouldn't you say this was as healthy a spot as any you could find? Well sheltered from the north, southern aspect, never too cold in winter, fresh sea-breeze in summer: what could you have more?"

"Well," I replied, "it always agrees with me very well: a little relaxing, perhaps, but I like being relaxed. Isn't it a healthy place, then? What makes you think so?"

"I'll tell you. We have rooms in Govan Terrace, up there on the hill-side. The other night I woke up with a coughing fit. I got out of bed to get a drink of water, and then had a look out of the windows to see what sort of night it was. I didn't like the look of those clouds in the south-west after sunset the night before. As you can see, the upper windows of Govan Terrace command a good many of the village houses. And, do you know, there was a light in almost every house? At two o'clock in the morning. Apparently the village is full of sick people. But who would have thought it?"

We were sitting a little apart from the rest. Smith had brought a London paper from Porth and he and Robinson had their heads together over the City article. The three women were knitting and talking hard, and down by the blue, creaming water Miss Hayes and her crew were playing happily in the sunshine.

“Do you mind,” I said to Brown, “if I swear you to secrecy? A limited secrecy: I don’t want you to speak of this to any of the village people. They wouldn’t like it. And have you told your wife or any of the party about what you saw?”

“As a matter of fact, I haven’t said a word to anybody. Illness isn’t a very cheerful topic for a holiday, is it? But what’s up? You don’t mean to say there’s some sort of epidemic in the place that they’re keeping dark? I say! That would be awful. We should have to leave at once. Think of the children.”

“Nothing of the kind. I don’t think that there’s a single case of illness in the place — unless you count old Thomas Evans, who has been in what he calls a decline for thirty years. You won’t say anything? Then I’m going to give you a shock. The people have a light burning in their houses all night to keep out the fairies.”

I must say it was a success. Brown looked frightened. Not of the fairies; most certainly not; rather at the reversion of his established order of things. He occupied his business in the City; he lived in an extremely comfortable house at Addiscombe; he was a keen though sane adherent of the Liberal Party; and in the world between these points there was no room at all either for fairies or for people who believed in fairies. The latter were almost as fabulous to him as the former, and still more objectionable.

“Look here!” he said at last. “You’re pulling my leg. Nobody believes in fairies. They haven’t for hundreds of years. Shakespeare didn’t believe in fairies. He says so.”

I let him run on. He implored me to tell him whether it was typhoid, or only measles, or even chicken-pox. I said at last:

“You seem very positive on the subject of fairies. Are you sure there are no such things?”

“Of course I am,” said Brown, very crossly.

“How do you know?”

It is a shocking thing to be asked a question like that, to which, be it observed, there is no answer. I left him seething dangerously.

“Remember,” I said, “not a word of lit windows to anybody; but if you are uneasy as to epidemics, ask the doctor about it.”

He nodded his head glumly. I knew he was drawing all sorts of false conclusions; and for the rest of our stay I would say that he did not seek me out — until the last day of his visit. I had no doubt that he put me down as a believer in fairies and a maniac; but it is, I consider, good for men who live between the City and Liberal Politics and Addiscombe to be made to realize that there is a world elsewhere. And, as it happens, it was quite true that most of the Trenant people believed in the fairies and were horribly afraid of them.

But this was only an interlude. I often strolled over and joined the party. And I took up my freedom with the young members by contributing posts and a tennis net to the beach sports. They had brought down rackets and balls, in the vague idea that they might be able to get a game somehow and somewhere, and my contribution was warmly welcomed. I helped Miss Hayes to fix the net, and she marked out the court, with the help of many suggestions from the elder children, to which she did not pay the slightest attention. I think the constant disputes as to whether the ball was “in” or “out” brightened the game, though Wimbledon would not have approved. And sometimes the elder children accompanied their parents to Porth in the evening and watched the famous Japanese Jugglers or Pepper’s Ghost at the Assembly Rooms, or listened to the Mysterious Musicians at the De Barry Gardens — and altogether everybody had, you would say, a very jolly time.

It all came to a dreadful end. One morning when I had come out on my usual morning stroll from Porth, and had got to the camping ground of the party at the edge of the dunes, I found somewhat to my surprise that there was nobody there. I was afraid that Brown had been in part justified in his dread of concealed epidemics, and that some of the children had “caught something” in the village. So I walked up in the direction of Govan Terrace, and found Brown standing at the bottom of his flight of steps, and looking very much upset.

I hailed him.

“I say,” I began, “I hope you weren’t right, after all. None of the children down with measles, or anything of that sort?”

“It’s something worse than measles. We none of us know what has happened. The doctor can make nothing of it. Come in, and we can talk it over.”

Just then a procession came down the steps leading from a house a few doors further on. First of all there was the porter from the station, with a pile of luggage on his truck. Then came the two elder Smith children, Jack and Millicent, and finally, Mr. and Mrs. Smith. Mr. Smith was carrying something wrapped in a bundle in his arms.

“Where’s Bob?” He was the youngest; a brave, rosy little man of five or six.

“Smith’s carrying him,” murmured Brown. “What’s happened? Has he hurt himself on the rocks? I hope it’s nothing serious.”

I was going forward to make my enquiries, but Brown put a hand on my arm and checked me. Then I looked at the Smith party more closely, and I saw at once that there was something very much amiss. The two elder children had been crying, though the boy was doing his best to put up a brave face against disaster — whatever it was. Mrs. Smith had drawn her veil over her face, and stumbled as she walked, and on Smith’s face there was a horror as of ill dreams.

“Look,” said Brown in his low voice.

Smith had half-turned, as he set out with his burden to walk down the hill to the station. I don’t think he knew we were there; I don’t think any of the party had noticed us as we stood on the bottom step, half-hidden by a blossoming shrub. But as he turned uncertainly, like a man in the dark, the wrappings fell away a little from what he carried, and I saw a little wizened, yellow face peering out; malignant, deplorable.

I turned helplessly to Brown, as that most wretched procession went on its way and vanished out of sight.

“What on earth has happened? That’s not Bobby. Who is it?”

“Come into the house,” said Brown, and he went before me up the long flight of steps that led to the terrace.

There was a shriek and a noise of thin, shrill, high-pitched laughter as we came into the lodging-house.

“That’s Miss Hayes in blaspheming hysterics,” said Brown grimly. “My wife’s looking after her. The children are in the room at the back. I daren’t let them go out by themselves in this awful place.” He beat with his foot on the floor and glared at me, awe-struck, a solid man shaken.

“Well,” he said at last, “I’ll tell you what we know; and as far as I can make out, that’s very little. However…. You know Miss Hayes, who helps Mrs. Brown with the children, had more or less taken over the charge of the lot; the young Robinsons and the Smiths, too. You’ve seen how well she looks after them all on the sands in the morning. In the afternoon she’s been taking them inland for a change. You know there’s beautiful country if you go a little way inland; rather wild and woody; but still very nice; pleasant and shady. Miss Hayes thought that the all-day glare of the sun on the sands might not be very good for the small ones, and my wife agreed with her. So they took their teas with them and picnicked in the woods and enjoyed themselves very much, I believe. They didn’t go more than a couple of miles or three at the outside; and the little ones used to take turns in a go-cart. They never seemed too tired.

“Yesterday at lunch they were talking about some caves at a place called the Darren, about two miles away. My children seemed very anxious to see them, and Mrs. Probert, our landlady, said they were quite safe, so the Smiths and Robinsons were called in, and they were enthusiastic, too; and the whole party set off with their tea-baskets, and candles and matches, in Miss Hayes’s charge. Somehow they made a later start than usual, and from what I can make out they enjoyed themselves so much in the cool dark cave, first of all exploring, and then looking for treasure, and winding up with tea by candlelight, that they didn’t notice how the time was going — nobody had a watch — and by the time they’d packed up their traps and come out from underground, it was quite dark. They had a little trouble making out the way at first, but not very much, and came along in high spirits, tumbling over molehills and each other, and finding it all quite an adventure.

“They had got down in the road there, and were sorting themselves out into the three parties, when somebody called out: ‘Where’s Bobby Smith?’ Well, he wasn’t there. The usual story; everybody thought he was with somebody else. They were all mixed up in the dark, talking and laughing and shrieking at the top of their voices, and taking everything for granted — I suppose it was like that. But poor little Bob was missing. You can guess what a scene there was. Everybody was much too frightened to scold Miss Hayes, who had no doubt been extremely careless, to say the least of it — not like her. Robinson pulled us together. He told Mrs. Smith that the little chap would be perfectly all right: there were no precipices to fall over and no water to fall into, the way they’d been, that it was a warm night, and the child had had a good stuffing tea, and he would be as right as rain when they found him. So we got a man from the farm, with a lantern, and Miss Hayes to show us exactly where they’d been, and Smith and Robinson and I went off to find poor Bobby, feeling a good deal better than at first. I noticed that the farm man seemed a good deal put out when we told him what had happened and where we were going. ‘Got lost in the Darren,’ he said, ‘indeed, that is a pity.’ That set Smith off at once; and he asked Williams what he meant; what was the matter with the place? Williams said there was nothing the matter with it at all whatever but it was ‘a tiresome place to be in after dark.’ That reminded me of what you were saying a couple of weeks ago about the people here. ‘Some damned superstitious nonsense,’ I said to myself, and thanked God it was nothing worse. I thought the fellow might be going to tell us of a masked bog or something like that. I gave Smith a hint in a whisper as to where the land lay; and we went on, hoping to come on little Bob any minute. Nearly all the way we were going through open fields without any cover or bracken or anything of that sort, and Williams kept twirling his lantern, and Miss Hayes and the rest of us called out the child’s name; there didn’t seem much chance of missing him.

“However, we saw nothing of him — till we got to the Darren. It’s an odd sort of place, I should think. You’re in an ordinary field, with a gentle upward slope, and you come to a gate, and down you go into a deep, narrow valley; a regular nest of valleys as far as I could make out in the dark, one leading into another, and the sides covered with trees. The famous caves were on one of these steep slopes, and, of course, we all went in. They didn’t stretch far; nobody could have got lost in them, even if the candles gave out. We searched the place thoroughly, and saw where the children had

had their tea: no signs of Bobby. So we went on down the valley between the woods, till we came to where it opens out into a wide space, with one tree growing all alone in the middle. And then we heard a miserable whining noise, like some little creature that's got hurt. And there under the tree was — what you saw poor Smith carrying in his arms this morning.

"It fought like a wild cat when Smith tried to pick it up, and jabbered some unearthly sort of gibberish. Then Miss Hayes came along and seemed to soothe it; and it's been quiet ever since. The man with the lantern was shaking with terror; the sweat was pouring down his face."

I stared hard at Brown. "And," I thought to myself, "you are very much in the same condition as Williams."

Brown was obviously overcome with dread. We sat there in silence.

"Why do you say 'it'?" I asked. "Why don't you say 'him'?"

"You saw."

"Do you mean to tell me seriously that you don't believe that child you helped to bring home was Bobby? What does Mrs. Smith say?"

"She says the clothes are the same. I suppose it must be Bobby. The doctor from Porth says the child must have had a severe shock. I don't think he knows anything about it."

He stuttered over his words, and said at last: "I was thinking of what you said about the lighted windows. I hoped you might be able to help. Can you do anything? We are leaving this afternoon; all of us. Is there nothing to be done?"

"I am afraid not."

I had nothing else to say. We shook hands and parted without more words.

The next day I walked over to the Darren. There was something fearful about the place, even in the haze of a golden afternoon. As Brown had said, the entrance and the disclosure of it were sudden and abrupt. The fields of the approach held no hint of what was to come. Then, past the gate, the ground fell violently away on every side, grey rocks of an ill shape pierced through it, and the ash trees on the steep slopes overshadowed all. The descent was into silence, without the singing of a bird, into a wizard shade. At the farther end, where the wooded heights retreated somewhat, there was the open space, or circus, of turf; and in the middle of it a very ancient, twisted thorn tree, beneath which the party in the dark had found the little creature that whined and cried out in unknown speech. I turned about, and on my way back I entered the caves, and lit the carriage candle I had brought with me. There was nothing much to see — I never think there is much to see in caves. There was the place where the children and others before them had taken their tea, with a ring of blackened stones within which many fires and twigs had been kindled. In caves or out of caves, townsfolk in the country are always alike in leaving untidy and unseemly litter behind; and here were the usual scraps of greasy paper, daubed with smears of jam and butter, the half-eaten sandwich, and the gnawed crust. Amidst all this nastiness I saw a piece of folded notepaper, and in sheer idleness picked it up and opened it. You have just seen it. When I asked you if you saw anything peculiar about the writing, you said that the letters were rather big and clumsy. The reason of that is that they were written by a child. I don't think you examined the back of the second leaf. Look: "Rosamund" — Rosamund Brown, that is. And beneath; there, in the corner.

Reynolds looked, and read, and gaped aghast.

"That was — her other name; her name in the dark."

"Name in the dark?"

"In the dark night of the Sabbath. That pretty girl had caught them all. They were in her hands, those wretched children, like the clay images she made. I found one of those things, hidden in a cleft of the rocks, near the place where they had made their fire. I ground it into dust beneath my feet."

"And I wonder what her name was?"

"They called her, I think, the Bridegroom and the Bride."

"Did you ever find out who she was, or where she came from?"

"Very little. Only that she had been a mistress at the Home for Christian Orphans in North Tottenham, where there was a hideous scandal some years before."

“Then she must have been older than she looked, according to your description.”

“Possibly.”

They sat in silence for a few minutes. Then Reynolds said:

“But I haven’t asked you about this formula, or whatever you may call it — all these vowels, here. Is it a cypher?”

“No. But it is really a great curiosity, and it raises some extraordinary questions, which are outside this particular case. To begin with — and I am sure I could go much farther back than my beginning, if I had the necessary scholarship — I once read an English rendering of a Greek manuscript of the second or third century — I won’t be certain which. It’s a long time since I’ve seen the thing. The translator and editor of it was of the opinion that it was a Mithraic Ritual; but I have gathered that weightier authorities are strongly inclined to discredit this view. At any rate, it was no doubt an initiation rite into some mystery; possibly it had Gnostic connections; I don’t know. But our interest lies in this, that one of the stages or portals, or whatever you call them, consisted almost exactly of that formula you have in your hand. I don’t say that the vowels and double vowels are in the same order; I don’t think the Greek manuscript has any *aes* or *aas*. But it is perfectly clear that the two documents are of the same kind and have the same purpose. And, advancing a little in time from the Greek manuscript, I don’t think it is very surprising that the final operation of an incantation in mediæval and later magic consisted of this wailing on vowels arranged in a certain order.

“But here is something that is surprising. A good many years ago I strolled one Sunday morning into a church in Bloomsbury, the headquarters of a highly respectable sect. And in the middle of a very dignified ritual, there rose quite suddenly, without preface or warning, this very sound, a wild wail of vowels. The effect was astounding, anyhow; whether it was terrifying or merely funny, is a matter of taste. You’ll have guessed what I heard: they call it ‘speaking with tongues,’ and they believe it to be a heavenly language. And I need scarcely say that they meant very well. But the problem is: how did a congregation of solid Scotch Presbyterians hit on that queer, ancient and not over-sanctified method of expressing spiritual emotion? It is a singular puzzle.

“And that woman? That is not by any means so difficult. The good Scotchmen — I can’t think how they did it — got hold of something that didn’t belong to them: she was in her own tradition. And, as they say down there: *asakai dasa*: the darkness is undying.”

The Exalted Omega

I

ONE DARKENING AUTUMN evening, not long ago, a man stopped a moment in his quarter-deck walk up and down his sitting-room in Gray's Inn Square and gazed out of the window at the trees, tossing and restless before the west wind, with a look of vague perplexity, in which there was a slight hint of uneasiness. Not more than a hint; it was rather the air of a man who is confronted by a minor difficulty or obstacle in some little plans he is making, or in the train of thought he is following; and to be precise, with J.F. Mansel, the personage in question, it was hardly so large a matter as that. The fact was that Mansel had been a good deal struck by an odd book he had once read, the 'Adventure' of two English ladies in the gardens of Versailles. Most people, I suppose, have read the book in question, and have puzzled their heads over it, and tried to find some plausible explanation of its story: a day in the French Revolution returning over the gulf of years; the image of the lady sketching in the garden, the lady who must have been Mary Antoinette, the hurrying messengers, perturbed footmen, stolid gardeners; all, as it appeared, going about their affairs, quiet or unquiet, as they had gone about them on that October day in 1789.

But Mansel was not thinking, as he stared out of the window, of the men and women whose apparitions, as it seemed, had been called up to puzzle the two scholastic Englishwomen and their readers. For the moment, it was not the ghostly people, but the ghostly landscape of the vision — or whatever it was — that slightly troubled him. He recollected that either Miss Moberly or Miss Jourdain — or was it both ladies? — had noted at the time of the strange experience, as they walked by woods and groves that are not marked in the modern maps of Versailles, since they have long ceased to exist, that the scene had something unusual in its aspect, that the trees were more like the pictured trees in a tapestry, objects on the flat, than the stout growth of the common wood. And, as it happened, Mansel looking out of his window on that familiar scene — the plane trees of the Inn Garden, and the turf beneath, and a glimpse here and there of Raymond Buildings on the other side of the lawn — was reminded of the Versailles manifestation. There was, he hesitated, something not altogether solid and satisfactory in the sight before him. It looked, he felt, as though leafage and tree trunks, green turf and grey bricks of Raymond Buildings wavered together, as he had seen vistas and towers wavering on the theatre backcloth, in the old days when things, perhaps, were generally more cheerful, and he had been used to go to the play. He glanced again, and doubtfully supposed it was all right, because it must be all right; and then turned from the window to the fireplace, and sat down in the ugly, comfortable arm-chair, which he had brought up from his old home in the west, quite a long time ago. There was a little round table beside the chair, one of those papier mâché pieces of the ‘thirties and ‘forties, that people are beginning to esteem curious. It had a painting of woods, and a lake, and distant mountains on it, with an inlay of mother-of-pearl and a cusped and gilded edge. It had been in his Aunt Eleanor’s drawing-room at the Garth. Aunt Eleanor’s work-box usually stood on it, and obstructed the view of the painted scene, somewhat to the distress of Johnny — as they called him then. He wanted to stand by the gleaming lake, where the sunset light shone on the water through a cleft in the trees. He desired also to track a path — he saw the entrance and the beginning of it — that wound through the dark, rich wood; there to gather unknown purple flowers that drooped in the shade, and at last, perhaps, to come out and ascend the shining mountain-tops: which he called The Land that is Very Far Off.

The work-box had vanished long ago; he thought that Cousin Emma had taken it away with her after the funeral; and when Emma died thirty — or forty? — years ago, there had been a sale and everything was scattered. He rather missed the work-box now, and wished he had secured it; but Durham was a long journey. There was a book on the table, the *Secret Counsels of a Certain Exile.* He laid a hand on it to take it up, but let it stay beside the lake, and sat back in his chair, and half-dozed and half-waked, and scarcely distinguished between a broken dream and a confused waking. Outside, the September evening darkened, and the leaves stilled as the west wind sank to peace. The jangle of the ‘buses, the cry of the newsboys, the traffic of Theobald’s Road, sounded very faintly; now and again there was a dull thud as the last clerks to go banged the outer doors of the lawyers’ offices on the stairs. The place grew heavy with the silence, and the lamps began to flicker in the square.

Mansel lay back in the soft comfort of his arm-chair. When he woke, or half-woke, he found his room dark about him, and didn't trouble to light the candles — he had never used gas or electricity in his rooms. He would soon get up and light two candles on the mantel-shelf; but, as he considered, there was nothing particular to do, and he might have supper instead of dinner; there was a 'bus that would take him from the corner of Theobald's Road down to Shaftesbury Avenue. He thought of the jolly hours when, perhaps, 'things had been more cheerful,' long ago, soon after he had come to live in the inn: great evenings at the Café de l'Europe in its golden days. Indeed; why shouldn't he go there tonight for his supper? It might be, likely enough, that he might meet Tom, or Dick, or Harry there; or, perhaps, all three of them; and the old quartet would be assembled again, and the old jokes and passwords recalled, and the band in its balcony would play the tunes from *The Belle of New York*. The recollection merged into a dream: there he was at the table in the corner, with his old friends about him, and nothing said about his long absence, and the band blared away as in the merry time. There was the question of a dream within the dream. For as he sat and talked and laughed with his friends: it suddenly struck him that, after all, it was not as it had been: there was a sad and heavy background, or a cloud that drifted across his happiness, that he had known nothing of long ago. Let go: but, what if he had dreamed all those years of heaviness, as he slept in his chair in the inn? They had never been, perhaps; he had met Tom, and Dick, and Harry last night, and he would meet them tomorrow. He shook his head, as if to drive the shadow away, and rattled the lid of his *krug*, and left it open, to show the waiter that he wanted more Munich beer. He had quite forgotten that Tom, and Dick, and Harry had been dead for years, that friendship had failed before life failed; and that the Café de l'Europe had closed its doors twenty years before.

The scene of the café had dissolved, and formless sleep had come heavily upon him, when he started up, roused by a woman's voice, raw and raucous. As he woke, he heard the words:

'Quiet? Mahvlessly quiet, I'm sure. In fact, I should call it bloody quiet.' She shrieked like a macaw.

The voice burst through his head, like an express train whirling and thundering through a station. He staggered up out of his chair, and stared, distraught, about him. For a moment, swift and gone as a flash, though he had not lit those candles after all, the room seemed glaring bright, and all disturbed and quaking, till his chairs and tables and bookcases shivered and settled down into their accustomed places. They were his chairs and tables? The garden was in moonlight; and he crept cautiously about the room, and satisfied himself that each piece was in its accustomed place.

Mansel had long been aware that the sharp outlines of life and time and daily event were becoming blurred and indistinct for him. He was apt, he knew quite well, to confuse the years and those who passed through them. He would assign in thought this or that friend to a year long before the time when the two first met; he would think of men talking together who, in fact, had never encountered; a whole group of interests were antedated or postdated. Edwardians wandered back into the Victorian years and sometimes a young countryman of his boyhood in the west would stray into the café and seem familiar with the place and with those other men whom he had never met, or even heard of. And, then, Mansel would question himself: ‘After all, wasn’t there a night when Vaughan joined us and came up to my rooms afterwards? He did come up to town once, I’m sure. Or, did I dream it all?’ He was never quite sure. He felt that his lonely habit and silent days were more and more closing in upon him like a cloud; but by the time he had realised the danger — if it were a danger — his resolution and will to live clearly and in the light of the day had weakened and dissolved. Once or twice, old friends had looked him up and tried to rouse him and to renew laughter and life within him. But it would not do. Mansel remembered very well who they were, or rather, who they had been; for they had become strangers, or ghosts that spoke of ghostly meetings that had lost all savour. The talk would die down, the man would feel his cheerful intent sink away from him, and go as quickly as he could, and hardly summon a conventional smile as Mansel closed his outer door.

‘Poor Mansel!’ he might say afterwards. ‘I could do nothing with him. He’s not interested in anything. I tried him with the sort of talk that used to set him on fire; but no good. He might as well be dead, it seems to me.’

So, one by one, his friends dropped away and left him alone, wondering what had happened to dry up all the springs of joy. Indeed, the question was an obscure one. There had been no tragedy, no violent disappointment or loss, no specific malady of mind or body, to be ascertained, defined, and encountered with remedies. He had been conscious of a savour gradually departing from the whole body of life, so that a grave book or a gay gathering had become alike flat and meaningless. Walking up and down his rooms, laying down the law, arguing, growing heated about the essence of poetry or the demerits of Meredith: that had been fine, relishing sport once on a time: and now it was nothing. He would look at old note-books he had filled, and wonder what possessed him to write down all those futilities. And then; the last cheerful evening that he had attempted with his old friends, who drank a little and laughed a great deal; that held no cheerfulness for Mansel. He asked with Johnson: 'Where's the merriment?' and stole away home very sadly, and sat alone in the dark room. And one of these old friends talking to another, said: 'I don't know what's happened to Mansel. He may have sinned against the light or he may be suffering from some obscure form of liver. I feel sure he hasn't taken to drinking methylated.'

Mansel was a good deal vexed with that sudden shriek of a woman's voice that had made him start up from his dreams and drowsy recollections. He could not make it out. There was nobody in any one of his three rooms; he was sure of that. He found his outer door shut fast. The only other person to have a key was his laundress, and she only came in the morning. Besides; she did not talk like that. Her voice was soft and heavy and suety; and she was particular as to what she said, in the presence of her clients, at all events. The voice could not have come across the landing; where the rooms were inhabited by another lonely bachelor. It might have been somebody wandering about the place, looking for rooms, and standing on the landing itself. There was certainly that small opening contrived in the wall, by the door, to enable the tenant, summoned by a knock, to stand in the darkness and inspect his caller, displayed in the light of the window or the lamp. The raucous cry that had roused him might, perhaps, have penetrated through the hole in the wall. He hoped that no such company might come about his stairs again.

But here he was disappointed. Again and again, and constantly, his journeys into the past, and dreams and meditations were broken by a hubbub of voices, shouts of laughter, always accompanied by that glare of light in the moment of awakening, the sense of disturbance and confusion in the objects about him. He was perplexed and frightened, and wondered whether he were going mad, for it was clear that there was no ordinary explanation of the strange trouble. He thought of consulting a doctor, but he knew he could never summon up the resolution for such an encounter. And so he grew into the sense of being hemmed about by these dismal visitants, creatures, he supposed, of his own morbid fancies or diseased body. They were not real; he was sure of that. In the darkness of the night, as he came up from the wood of the purple flowers, and stood in the sunlight on a shining, happy hill — perhaps the true Land that was Very Far Off — a shriek of laughter would shatter his dreams, and he would start up in terror, and his gloomy bedroom would be ablaze.

And, then, the trouble began to beset his day-dreams in another form, without the violence of the awaking. He heard the woman, her voice subdued, though it still grated on his ears, murmuring, murmuring, and a gruff man's tones, assenting or objecting or denying. It would seem that this muffled talk went on, day after day, night after night; and by degrees Mansel got the impression that he was listening to the plot of a deadly business. There were mysterious allusions to 'a bottle party,' which conveyed nothing to him; and someone called 'Cousin Jerome' was to get a drink from the right bottle; and the man's voice, answering, it seemed, a question, said 'eighty thousand at least, perhaps more.' And, then, again the words came: 'No danger, no danger. No weed killer for me, no fly-papers, or any damn childish tricks of that sort. You have only to hang the leg of mutton long enough; and the juice of it will have no taste or smell or colour. The place will be all shut while we are away in the country. If anything gets through closed doors and windows; I daresay rats die under the floor now and then.'

And one … night or day, he could hardly tell which; as if the low voice were speaking in his very ear: 'Old Mansel will never tell.' And then they laughed, quite quietly for once: and those five words struck through his soul with unutterable horror.

He thought that one misty evening he must have left his rooms and wandered out of the inn to escape that instant horror that beset him. He could not tell the way he took, but he thought he remembered crossing a bridge, and straying on through unknown places, till he found himself in a maze of streets almost deserted; streets of little houses; dismal, monotonous, and yet pretentious. There was one house with a great green bush growing up from the area, and here he stopped, and somehow found himself within it. He was in a small room on the ground floor; a shabby and flashy room with flaring, foolish ornaments above the empty grate, and a gaudy linoleum on the floor. At the gimcrack table there sat a party of seven people, there were six men and a woman; three on each side; and at one end, a stout, dark, middle-aged woman, with black and greasy hair elaborately done in a sort of structure on top of her head. She wore a black and shiny and belaced dress, shabby and pretentious like all else in that place. The others bent their heads in an attitude of profound attention; the woman at the head of the table seemed to gaze before her, as if she saw nothing. She held up her hands in the Jewish attitude of prayer; and began to sway gently to and fro. The light was dim, for there was only one gas jet burning, and that was turned low, but Mansel noted big rings studded with apparent emeralds, rubies, and diamonds thick on her fingers. One of the men at the table got up and sat down again, and a gramophone began to discourse, ‘Abide With Me.’

The dark woman spoke in a thick, unctuous voice:

‘I get a message for Sam. Is there anyone here named Samuel?’

A man looked up eagerly, and stuttered, as he answered.

‘I haven’t been called Samuel since I was a nipper nine years old. My name is Albert Samuel Morton, right enough, but I always call myself Albert Morton. Who can it be?’

‘I get a message for Sam. Ask him if he remembers Aunt Clara. Clara? Clara? I am not certain about this name.’

‘It’s not Clara,’ said the man, excitedly. ‘I had an Aunt Sarah, all right.’

‘It comes through clearly now. Ask him if he remembers his Aunt Sarah, and her china dogs.’

‘So she had!’ exclaimed the man. ‘On her mantelpiece in the parlour. I can remember them. It’s wonderful.’

‘The message says: “Look after the pence, and the pounds will look after themselves!” ‘

‘That’s Aunt Sarah, right enough!’ The man bubbled with amazement and delight. ‘Why, that was a regular saying of hers. My dad always called her “Saving Sarah”! Isn’t it wonderful? Well, I’m glad to think she’s not forgotten me.’

There were more messages of much the same character. Most of them seemed to find an echo in the breasts of those present. There was one woman who could not remember any ‘Cousin Joshua,’ who seemed distressed about some matter which he said she would understand. The woman reflected, and said: No. No, she couldn’t recollect any Cousin Joshua.

‘Perhaps,’ said the lady at the head of the table, ‘he died when you were very young. There may have been something painful, which prevented his friends talking about him.’

The woman’s face was blank; then she started slightly, and kept silence; looking a little frightened.

There was a pause. The gramophone had run down. The dark woman had seemed to deliver her last message with a certain difficulty. Her voice faltered; she paled through her paint. There was silence in the dim room.

The woman shuddered as if an electric shock had passed through her. She shook from head to foot. Her face was twisted all awry. And then she suddenly bent forward, and began to scribble with a pencil on a piece of paper that lay on the table before her. Her crooked face was all ghastly and twitching, as she rather struck with the pencil than wrote; and in a few seconds, it seemed, there was a harsh noise in her throat, and she fell sideways from her chair to the floor, in some kind of fit or seizure, that was very dreadful to behold.

The clients started in alarm from their places. Someone turned up the gas, and the two women of the party approached the epileptic fearfully. A bell was rung, and a timid, shadowy little man came running upstairs and looked into the room, a sluttish servant following on his heels. Two or three of the party carried out the dark woman, still struggling and foaming. One of those who was left picked up the paper that had fallen to the floor. He scanned it curiously under the gas, now flaring.

'You can't get much out of that,' he said, in a disappointed tone. 'A lot of marks that don't look as if they meant anything, and something about "grows my spirit," and more marks. The fit was on her, no doubt.'

He laid down the paper on the table, and turned to go.

Mansel, vague as usual, supposed he must have found his way out with the rest of the party. No doubt, he mused and wondered over the strange ending of the evening as he made his way back to the inn, and took no note of the streets through which he passed; for his next impression was of the familiar room. It was silent at first; and then he caught once more the mutter of those evil voices.

II

There can be no doubt, I am afraid, that Mrs Ladislaw sometimes cheated. Her mediumship had often been assailed, and not merely by the incredulous outsiders who take a pleasure in turning on their torches at inopportune moments, and in grasping at ectoplasm and giving it another name. Eminent Spiritualists had exposed her in their papers. It is true, that other eminent Spiritualists had at first taken her part, and had called for justice and for the spirit of English fair play. There had been the spirit paintings, for example, which were supposed to blaze out suddenly on a blank sheet of paper. It seemed alright at first. There was the paper laying white and virgin, on the table before Mrs Ladislaw; and half a dozen coloured chalks beside it. She would lay a large, fat hand upon it and the chalks, and go into a mild trance; then, the hand was lifted, and a glowing work of art appeared on the page. But an elderly and honoured Spiritualist first of all recognised the picture submitted to him as an indifferent copy of a coloured plate that had appeared in a Christmas Number many years before. There was a controversy about this in the *Metapsychical Review* and in *Daybreak.* It was pointed out that the subject matter of the picture was beside the point; the question was how had it appeared on a piece of blank paper in the course of a few seconds. How, if not through the agency of Red Bull, Mrs Ladislaw's control? This question was answered before long in a sense which seemed to make the aid of Red Bull superfluous and unnecessary. Then, there were questions on slips of paper, which were placed in a casket, and duly sealed by one of the sitters, who had brought with him an old armorial signet ring, with an elaborate coat engraved on it. At the next séance, the casket was passed round, and it was clear that the seal had not been tampered with in any way. It was then solemnly broken by the owner of the jewel; and inside the box, there were the slips of paper with the questions, and answers, more or less coherent, written beneath in scrawling, untidy script. This interesting manifestation was repeated several times and made a considerable impression. It seemed quite clear that on each occasion the seal was absolutely undisturbed; and people of some intelligence were beginning to be interested, when one of these thought of turning the mysterious casket upside down, and discovered the secret in the construction of the bottom of the box. It slid open, in response to judicious pressure on one side of the four knobs or feet on which it rested. So, on the whole, it was felt in the higher circles of Spiritualism that Mrs Ladislaw must be dropped; that she must be seen no more at the College of Research, or at the Spiritualist Institute. So she carried on her business in some obscure street in South London, and, on the whole, satisfied her local clients very well. They were not critical; they had never heard of the *Metapsychical Review*, they accepted the messages they received, and when the lights were turned quite out, they enjoyed the marvellous things that happened. None of them carried an electric torch to the dark seance; none of them raised objections if the spirit of a Roman Cardinal uttered the blessed word ‘Benedictine.’ So Mrs Ladislaw sank to the lower levels of necromantic culture, and was heard of no more amongst literate Spiritualists. And yet, a few who had seen her in her more prosperous days maintained that, in spite of all, there was something strange about the woman, something not altogether explicable. They confessed that she was, beyond doubt, an arrant cheat: ‘there can be no doubt that Eusapia Palladino cheated, and cheated almost openly at times,’ one of them reminded me, and he went on: ‘Mrs Ladislaw’s childish tricks don’t deceive me for a moment. They were old tricks that were going in the ‘sixties, as you can see if you look up the newspaper files of the time. They were exposed then, and were forgotten, and this woman, whose mother may have been in the business for anything I know, brought them up again, and ran them till they were exposed a second time. But it wasn’t all cheating; not quite all. I remember sitting with her at the Institute, seven or eight years ago. It was a summer afternoon, and the seance room was in full light. There were about a dozen people there. Mrs Ladislaw was doing the Red Bull act. She had passed round the half-sheet of note-paper that was to show the picture in a minute or two, so that everybody might see that it was absolutely blank and clean. It went round from hand to hand, and people looked at it hard, and held it up to the light, and felt the texture of the paper to be sure that it was one piece, not two. One man pulled a magnifying-glass from his pocket, and went over the surface inch by inch. Two or three were trying what they could make of the coloured chalks, turning them over, and weighing them in their hands: I don't know what they thought that would do, I am sure. I wasn't bothering about the chalks or the paper myself, you see, because I know how it is done.

'Anyhow: pretty well everybody was busy investigating and testing and the rest of it, with their eyes fixed on the table, or the paper going its round, and two or three of them were arguing in low voices about the fluidity of matter.

'You don't know Séance Room 5 at the Institute? Well, the table runs down the room between the fire-place and the window. I was sitting half-way down with my back to the fire-place. I was looking at Mrs Ladislaw, dark and greasy, who was sitting straight up with her fat hands flat on the table before her. She was doing the dignified and impassive very fairly well: presently, as I knew, when those keen fellows had finished investigating, she would begin her trick.

'Her face changed. She turned her head a little, and I saw her staring at the wall behind me. She went white. Her mouth dropped open. She was glaring with terror at something that was happening at the back of my head. Naturally, I looked round to see what had frightened the woman.

'In the middle of the mantelshelf behind me was one of those infernal Greek Temple clocks, in black and green marble, with rows of pillars and gilding where it had no business; an ugly, heavy thing. It was at this clock that Mrs Ladislaw was staring: frozen with fright. And then I saw the clock rise high from the mantelpiece and sail gently down onto the floor. Mrs Ladislaw fell forward with her face on the table, in a faint.

The séance broke up in confusion. The women looked after Mrs Ladislaw. In the process, the picture that was to have appeared if things had gone better fluttered from somewhere onto the floor, and there was some argument as to what this proved. I got up, and looked at the clock, which was sitting on the carpet. I lifted it up — heavy goods — and put it back in its place. No; no wire, or thread, or anything of the sort, and if there had been, it wouldn't have accounted for anything. If that lumping thing had been twitched from the mantelpiece, it would have fallen with a crash. It *sailed* down, quite gently, like a feather. You can call it a Poltergeist case, if you think that makes it any clearer. I don't. I don't know how in the least it was done. But, as I was saying, I've always thought since then that there was something odd about the old swindler that she didn't understand herself. I never saw anybody look so frightened as she did.'

It is to be assumed that this tinge of interest in 'the old swindler' led this cautious and sceptical investigator of obscure things to keep in some sort of touch with her down in the lower levels to which she had drifted. Anyhow, it was through this man, Welling, that I was made acquainted with a very queer business, in which Mrs Ladislaw played a part — a principal part perhaps it might be called, but I don't know about that.

A month or so before, Welling had sent me a singular script, an example, as he said, of what is called 'automatic writing.' A lady living in a small town in Somerset had discovered that she possessed this gift. She had sat down at her desk with pencil and paper before her, intending to make a list of goods she required from the grocer. She took the pencil in her hand, and, as she declared, it 'ran away with her,' and proceeded to scrawl and scribble away at a great rate. The slip of paper was soon exhausted, Miss Tuke supplied another, and again the pencil raced away. It had covered six or seven sheets before the impulse or whatever it is ceased. And this had happened several times when Miss Tuke communicated with my acquaintance, Welling, and asked his opinion: should she persist, or resist the impulse when it next occurred?

'I told her,' said Welling, 'to go on if she liked; provided she regarded it as a parlour game, without any consequence, and quite devoid of any sort of authority. The scripts? Oh, the usual thing: pious exclamations — I understand Miss Tuke is a Wesleyan — and moral maxims, and all sorts of vagueness, and words running into each other, and some repeated three or four times. But this last thing she sent me is a bit of a curiosity; it seems to be Latin tied into knots. I haven't time to disentangle them. But the lady assures me that she doesn't understand it, as she knows no language but her own.'

I took the slip home, and found it was much as Welling said: scraps of Latin that read as if they had been taken down from dictation by somebody ignorant of Latin. I corrected the text without much difficulty, and it gave up a number of admirable sentences that might have been extracted from the Fathers: 'Jordan was driven back that Israel might enter the land of promise: in like manner it is necessary that the river of our sins be turned back if we would come into that holy land of our inheritance': and a good deal more in that vein. How Miss Tuke came by it all, we never knew. I gathered from Welling that there was no reason to doubt her word, that she knew no Latin. He was inclined to think that she had read it all without understanding it when she was a child, and that it had been preserved, imperfectly enough, in her subconscious memory: a guess, nothing more. And soon after, Welling told me that Miss Tuke had written to him to say that she had given up her 'sittings' with pencil and paper, as she thought it was an unsuitable employment for a middle-aged woman.

And all this leads up to something much more significant; at least, so it strikes me. One day, not long ago, Welling called on me, and began at once on Miss Tuke's Latin script.

'You know how you made sense of that stuff. Well, look here. This is worse, and I wonder whether you will be able to make anything of it. Here you are; see what you can do.' And he handed me a sheet of paper that gave the effect of a child's scribble.

'And what is one to make of that trident thing or whatever it is?' He was evidently a good deal interested. And I was more than interested when I saw the device which he had called 'that trident thing.'

It was the oddest looking document. At the head of the paper, the word 'quotient' was repeated six times. Then came 'poison' scrawled in large, loose letters. Then the word 'ore' was written twice, followed by 'or,' and then 'oar' was written three times. Then 'quite' and finally, the words, 'grows my spirit.'

It was not difficult. It was, clearly, an attempt at a familiar phrase in *Hamlet,* 'the potent poison quite o'ercrows my spirit'; written, apparently, by a person in delirium. ‘Quotient’ for ‘potent’ was odd; but there were similar mistakes in the more subdued scripts of Miss Tuke: the effect being, as I noted in some of her communications, that of a dictation taken down by somebody who failed to catch the exact sound of individual words, and had no notion of the meaning of the complete sentence.

But all this was a very minor matter. It was the symbol that I found exciting. It was dashed all over the paper, sometimes obscuring the writing. It was not exactly a trident. I should have described it as a small Greek omega, at the end of a stick. The two outer lines of the letter were curved inwardly; the middle line, which in a trident is equal in length to the others, was barely indicated. The ‘stick,’ as I have called it, was about an inch and a half long.

‘Now,’ I said to Welling, ‘would you tell me about it, and where it comes from?’

‘Well, it’s rather queer. You remember me talking to you about that medium, Mrs Ladislaw, and the clock business?

Well, for that reason I kept something of an eye on her doings. You know she’s been down in the world some time now. She lives somewhere in Stockwell, and has séances there, and makes what she can; the old game, the old tricks. There was one of these séances a week ago; and people were getting messages from Aunt This and Uncle That, and they were satisfied, and everything was going all right, when quite suddenly, Mrs Ladislaw began to twist her face about and scribble away on this bit of paper. And then she went into a fit, and a pretty bad one. A man I know was there, and brought this along, thinking it might interest me. What do you think of it?’

I told him that, apart from the *Hamlet* quotation, there were some interesting points that I should like to go into at leisure. I promised to let him know if there were anything of real consequence involved, and so sent him on his way.

It was the omega mark that concerned me. About twenty-five years ago, I was living in Verulam Buildings, Gray’s Inn. In summer, it was often my habit to take a turn about the Square, on fine nights, after the gates were shut; and I soon became aware of a small nocturnal population, who were never seen about the inn at daytime. There were three of four — perhaps five or six — of them; and they prowled in a hapless, aimless, hesitating fashion; stopping now and then and looking vaguely about them, and then moving on, dragging one foot slowly after another. They never spoke to each other, or seemed aware of one another in any sort of way. It is a race that has long been familiar in the Inns of Court. Dickens, who knew all about them, thought that it was the gloom and isolation of the sets of the inns that had reduced them to their dismal apathy and misery. It may be so, or it is possible that the solemn air of antiquity and retirement in the heart of London appeals to men of retired and melancholy habit. I have been long absent from the courts and squares and buildings, and I do not know whether the silent men still resort in these places.

It was an accident that introduced me to one of them. One June night, about ten o'clock, when the sky was still luminous, I was strolling round the Square, and was just passing one of the brotherhood of the night, when he slipped on something on the pavement, and fell sideways, very awkwardly. I helped him up at once, and put him on his feet, and he gave a cry of pain as I did so. He had sprained or strained his ankle muscle, and was evidently in anguish when he tried to set the foot on the ground. I told him to lean on me, and I would see him home. He said his name was Mansel, and he gave me his number; one of the top sets on the west side of the Square. I got him up the stairs with a good deal of difficulty, took his key and supported him to his arm-chair by the fire-place. Then I suggested fetching the doctor from Warwick Place; but he wouldn't hear of that. 'We will see how it feels after a good night's rest. I don't like sending for the doctor; you never know what they may say.'

I expressed my doubts as to the effects of the night's rest, and proposed that I should leave him in his candle-lit room.

'I wish you would sit down and keep me company for an hour, if you can spare the time. Light your pipe — I've seen you smoking in the square — and if you don't mind going to that cupboard, I think you'll find some whiskey there, and glasses, and a jug of water.'

The whiskey bottle was unopened and dusty, and I searched at his direction in a drawer for the corkscrew. I set a glass beside him, and was about to pour, when he checked me with a gesture, and a 'help yourself.' And then, relenting, he said: ‘I think I will have a little tonight. I am still feeling rather shaky.’ But he stopped me when about a tablespoonful had gone into the glass, and added water largely, and so made himself a ghostly and ineffectual drink.

We began to talk. He told me he had been living in the inn for four or five years; he didn’t seem certain as to the precise duration of his residence.

‘One gets a little vague, don’t you think, living in these old rooms, looking down on the trees,’ he apologised, ‘and, somehow, I have rather fallen out of the way of seeing people, and getting about, and so forth, and so forth. One drifts along from day to day, rather sluggishly and ineffectually, I’m afraid … and, the edges get dulled, I suppose.’

He was a man in the early or middle thirties by his looks: a slight, dark man, with small features, and nothing very distinctive or distinguished about him.

He was difficult to talk to. He never read the papers, he told me. He spoke with a glint of fervour about his old home in the west, of waterbrooks in still hidden valleys, of the wild outlands where no one came, of the sun shining on the bracken on the mountain-side, of the grove of ash trees and their magic.

‘*Hic vox sine clamore sonat; hic saltat et cantat chorus nympharum eternus*.’ He spoke as if he were quoting some familiar text.

He drifted on, in his own terms, rather sluggishly and ineffectually. I noted that book-cases, well filled, took up a great part of the wall space.

‘You have at least good company there,’ I said, pointing to the shelves.

‘Well, I have read a good deal in my time. Yes; I used to be a considerable reader — of a very unsystematic kind, I may say. I never read a book that I didn’t want to read. Nobody shall shove books down my throat… . But I find myself losing the habit of reading; I can’t get the relish that I used to find in it. What did I say just now? The edges are dulled… . When a man finds *Tristram Shandy* flat, you know? I remember when I first read it, and for long after that, it was pure sorcery to me; a spell, a spell.’

He took up the book from the little table by his chair, and handed it to me as if in illustration of what he had just said. It was an early nineteenth century edition, rather shabbily printed.

I turned over the leaves of the great fantasy, and something on the fly-leaf caught my attention: an odd mark or symbol; the mark that I have described as an omega on a stick. We talked a little longer, and then I left him, with the hope that he might find the remedy of a night's rest efficient in the cure of the twisted ankle. He looked a disconsolate figure in his chair in the dim room, with the misty night in the plane trees of the inn garden as a background.

The next day my business took me up north, among the singing voices of Northumberland. I was away for nearly a week, and when I got back there were evening engagements and amusements to occupy me. I must have been ten days before leisure and a pale green sky led me to take my stroll about the Square. Three or four of the usual nocturnal company were dawdling and creeping round the pavement in the usual manner; but there was no sign of Mansel. I knew it would be of no use to ask about him from these men; it was not likely that any one of them would know his name. I went up his stair, and knocked at the black door. There was no reply, no sound. I waited and knocked again and louder: still, nothing. For a third time I beat my summons, and then there were slow footsteps sounding along the passage. The door was opened; and there stood Mansel, carrying a candle; and the light of it showed a face of strong distaste for the caller; for any caller. But he relaxed a little when he saw me, and asked me to follow him. He was still limping from the injury of ten days before. No doubt, he had tried neither care nor cure.

'It hasn't troubled me much,' he remarked when we sat down. 'If I had wanted to get about it would have been tiresome, I daresay. But then, I never do want to get about. I hardly ever go beyond the inn gates. I have seen it all, I don't want to see it again.'

He spoke a little of his reading, which had become, he repeated, distasteful to him.

'You get to the end of it all,' he murmured. 'Or, so I have found. Everywhere, you come to a blank wall. Every path and track you take ends with a blank wall. Not read everything? No indeed; I have neglected vast deserts of dullness. Would you advise me to try Mommsen, or Professor

Freeman, or Darwin? Science deals with surfaces; what have I to do with surfaces?'

— I was saying that Dickens knew about the solitaries of the Inns of Court. As Mansel was talking his weary nonsense, about coming to the end of everything, of being brought up by a blank wall whatever track he took, I was reminded very strongly of Mr Parkle's friend in 'Chambers.'

One dry hot autumn evening at twilight, this man, being then turned of fifty, looked in upon Parkle in his usual lounging way, with his cigar in his mouth as usual, and said: 'I am going out of town.' As he never went out of town Parkle said: 'Oh, indeed! At last?' 'Yes,' says he, 'at last. For what is a man to do? London is so small! If you go west, you come to Hounslow. If you go east, you come to Bow. If you go south, there's Brixton or Norwood. If you go north, you can't get rid of Barnet.

It struck me as odd that two such different people as the actual Mansel and the Dickens' character should reach the same end by their varying ways. The blank wall loomed equally before them. I hoped that Mansel would not find at last the same end as Parkle's friend; the end of a suicide's rope.

I tried to stir the man a little out of his apathy. I misquoted a well-known passage of a well-known writer; and he flickered into a faint gleam of interest.

'Not quite that, is it? "We are all as God made us, and many of us a great deal worse." Surely. "and often a great deal worse"? Would you mind verifying? There's the book, at the end of the second shelf.'

'I verified the Don Quixote quotation; and he nodded a very brief satisfaction at having the phrase correctly. I was putting the book back in its place, and it slipped from my hand to the floor. As I picked it up, I noticed again the mark of the omega; this time on the title page.

'May I ask,' I said, 'if this odd omega in your books has any particular meaning?'

He smiled faintly. 'That,' he explained, 'is a bit of schoolboy nonsense. I don't recollect whether it was because I was proud of having learnt the Greek alphabet; but I got into the way of putting that thing in my books instead of my name or initials, and I kept it up afterwards. You would find it in every book on the shelves, and sometimes I've used it to mark a passage, in the margin. Indeed, I used to sign my letters to old friends with the Omega Exalted, as I called it.'

I stayed on at Gray's Inn for the next six or seven months, and I suppose I repeated my visit to Mansel three or four times. I could not say that I was welcome, but I was not exactly unwelcome. It was a pang for him to open his door, but he was not displeased to let me in. There was no change in him, no sign that he would revive, and live again like other men. Then I left London, and remained away for many years, and I cannot say that Mansel was much more than a dim image in my memory. On my return, finding myself one day in Holborn, it struck me that I might make some enquiries. They told me in the inn that Mr Mansel was understood to be very infirm; that he had not been seen outside his chambers for years and years. I thought I had better not look him up; he would not remember me or desire to do so.

A year ago his laundress found him dead in his chair next to the fire-place. It appeared on examination that his heart had given out. He had left his money and his goods to a distant cousin in the west, who came up to town, did what was necessary, and went down again to some obscure retreat by the sunset. Mansel's books and furniture — there was nothing of value — were sold and dispersed.

The inn painted and papered the set of rooms on the top floor of the Square, and made them look as gay as they could look. But they did not let readily. There were plenty of applicants, but I gathered that people who came in a hurry to secure chambers giving on the garden, drew back when they were taken into the set. Something seemed amiss; they could not say what. They didn't 'fancy' the place. Everything in the way of decoration, it was allowed, was extremely bright and cheerful. One prospective tenant, it was a lady, was seized with a fit of shivering and said she felt as if icy water were trickling down her spine. It must have been nine or ten months after Mansel's death that the set was taken by a young couple, who seemed to think themselves lucky, and made no complaint as to 'something' or anything. The gentleman was connected with finance, and the lady was gaiety itself. She had a loud and cheerful voice, and a louder laugh, and expressed herself, so it was said, with considerable freedom. These people laid themselves out to brighten things. They gave frequent parties, a little on the loud side, it was thought, for the Inn, and the porters at the Holborn Gate were busy long after midnight.

And then, all this liveliness came to an end in a very tragic manner. In the middle of a ‘bottle party,’ when everything was at a high pitch, one of the guests, a Mr Jerome Platt, understood to be a cousin of the host’s, suddenly complained of agonising internal pains. He was taken to the hotel where he was staying, and doctors were summoned, and everything done that could be done. But Mr Platt died the next day; of acute ptomaine poisoning as the evidence at the inquest demonstrated. He had dined at a fashionable West End restaurant before going on to the party at Gray’s Inn. There were no complaints from any other of the diners.

By the end of the month, old Mansel’s rooms were again vacant. The bright tenants, very naturally, as people said, felt they could not go on living in a place where such a terrible thing had happened. They were supposed to have gone abroad within three weeks of the disastrous ‘bottle party.’

And as to that very different party given by Mrs Ladislaw, and the end of it, and the scribble on the paper? So far as I can make out from what Welling has told me, the Ladislaw séance must have taken place a day, or perhaps two days, before that grim gathering in Gray’s Inn. Mansel had been dead for many months: what are we to infer? Had he anything to do with the seizure of the medium, and with what was written by her?

There is one point that should not be forgotten. I noted that, in Welling’s opinion, the corrupt Latin ‘messages’ written by Miss Tuke might very well be subconscious memories, imperfectly preserved, of something she had read without understanding years before, and which had entirely disappeared from her conscious mind. So, perhaps, with the ‘exalted omega.’ Mansel’s books had been dispersed. None of them was of any interest to the big second-hand booksellers, to the dealers in rarities; the volumes would therefore tend to find their way to the small shops and the poorer neighbourhoods. Mrs Ladislaw might very well have passed such shops on her marketing rounds; she might have turned over the books in the threepenny and sixpenny boxes — and she might easily have seen old Mansel’s omega mark; very likely without consciously noting it.

It is distinctly possible that this is the solution of the problem; though here also there are lurking difficulties and obscurities.

The Tree of Life

I

THE MORGANS OF Llantrisant were regarded for many centuries as among the most considerable of the landed gentry of South Wales. They had been called Reformation *parvenus*, but this was a piece of unhistorical and unjust abuse. They could trace their descent back, without doubt, certainly as far as Morgan ab Ifor, who fought and, no doubt, flourished in his way *c.*980. He, in his turn, was always regarded as of the tribe of St Teilo; and the family kept, as a most precious relic, a portable altar which was supposed to have belonged to the saint. And for many hundred years, the eldest son had borne the name of Teilo. They had intermarried, now and again, with the Normans, and lived in a thirteenth-century castle, with certain additions for comfort and amenity made in the reign of Henry VII, whose cause they had supported with considerable energy. From Henry, they had received grants of forfeited estates, both in Monmouthshire and Glamorganshire. At the dissolution of the religious houses, the Sir Teilo of the day was given Llantrisant Abbey with all its possessions. The monastic church was stripped of its lead roof, and soon fell into ruin, and became a quarry for the neighbourhood. The abbot's lodging and other of the monastic buildings were kept in repair, and being situated in a sheltered valley, were used by the family as a winter residence in preference to the castle, which was on a bare hill, high above the abbey. In the seventeenth century, Sir Henry Morgan — his elder brother had died young — was a Parliament man. He changed his opinions, and rose for the King in 1648; and, in consequence, had the mortification of seeing the outer wall of the castle on the hill, not razed to the ground, but carefully reduced to a height of four or five feet by the Cromwellian major-general commanding in the west. Later in the century, the Morgans became Whigs, and later still were able to support Mr Gladstone, up to the Home Rule Bill of 1886. They still held most of the lands which they had gathered together gradually for eight or nine hundred years. Many of these lands had been wild, remote, and mountainous, of little use or profit save for the sport of hunting the hare; but early in the nineteenth century mining experts from the north, Fothergills and Renshaws, had found coal, and pits were sunk in the wild places, and the Morgans became wealthy in the modern way. By consequence, the bad seasons of the late ‘seventies and the agricultural depression of the early ‘eighties hardly touched them. They reduced rents and remitted arrears and throve on their mining royalties: they were still great people of the county. It was a very great pity that Teilo Morgan of Llantrisant was an invalid and an enforced recluse; especially as he was devoted to the memories of his house, and to the estate, and to the interests of the people on it.

The Llantrisant Abbey of his day had been so altered from age to age that the last abbot would certainly have seen little that was familiar to his eyes. It was set in rich and pleasant meadow-land, with woods of oak and beech and ash and elm all about it. Through the park ran the swift, clear river, Avon Torfaen, the stone or boulder-crusher, so named from its furious courses in the mountains where it rose. And the hills stood round the Abbey on every side. Here and there in the southern-facing front of the house, there could be seen traces of fifteenth-century building; but on this had been imposed the Elizabethan gables of the first lay resident, and Inigo Jones was said to have added the brick wing with the Corinthian pilasters, and there was a stuccoed projection in the sham Gothic of the time of George II. It was architecturally ridiculous but it was supposed to be the warmest part of the house, and Teilo Morgan occupied a set of five or six rooms on the first floor, and often looked out on the park, and opened the windows to hear the sound of the pouring Avon, and the murmur of the wood-pigeons in the trees, and the noise of the west wind from the mountain. He longed to be out among it all, running as he saw boys running on the hill-side through a gap in the wood; but he knew that there was a gulf fixed between him and that paradise. There was, it seemed, no specific disease but a profound weakness, a *marasmus* that had stopped short of its term, but kept the patient chronically incapable of any physical exertion, even the slightest. They had once tried taking him out on a very fine day in the park, in a wheeled chair; but even that easy motion was too much for him. After ten minutes, he had fainted, and lay for two or three days on his back, alive, but little more than alive. Most of his time was spent on a couch. He would sit up for his meals and to interview the estate agent; but it was effort to do so much as this. He used to read in county histories and in old family records of the doings of his ancestors; and wonder what they would have said to such a successor. The storming of castles at dead darkness of night, the firing of them so that the mountains far away shone, the arrows of the Gwent bowmen darkening the air at Crècy, the battle of the dawn by the river, when it was seen scarlet by the first light in the east, the drinking of Gascon wine in hall from moonrise to sunrise: he was no figure for the old days and works of the Morgans.

It was probable that his feeble life was chiefly sustained by his intense interest in the doings of the estate. The agent, Captain Vaughan, a keen, middle-aged man, had often told him that a monthly interview would be sufficient and more than sufficient. ‘I’m afraid you find all this detail terribly tiring,’ he would say. ‘And you know it’s not really necessary. I’ve one or two good men under me, and between us we manage to keep things in very decent order. I do assure you, you needn’t bother. As a matter of fact; if I brought you a statement once a quarter, it would be quite enough.’

But Teilo Morgan would not entertain any such laxity.

‘It doesn’t tire me in the least,’ he always replied to the agent’s remonstrances. ‘It does me good. You know a man must have exercise in some form or another. I get mine on your legs. I’m still enjoying that tramp of yours up to Castell-y-Bwch three years ago. You remember?’

Captain Vaughan seemed at a loss for a moment.

‘Let me see,’ he said. ‘Three years ago? Castell-y-Bwch? Now, what was I doing up there?’

‘You can’t have forgotten. Don’t you recollect? It was just after the great snowstorm. You went up to see that the roof was all right, and fell into a fifteen-foot drift on the way.’

‘I remember now,’ said Vaughan. ‘I should think I do remember. I don’t think I’ve been so cold and so wet before or since — worse than the Balkans. I wasn’t prepared for it. And when I got through the snow, there was an infernal mountain stream still going strong beneath it all.’

‘But there was a good fire at the pub when you got there?’

‘Half-way up the chimney; coal and wood mixed; roaring, I’ve never seen such a blaze: six foot by three, I should think. And I told them to mix it strong.’

‘I wish I’d been there,’ said the squire. ‘Let me see; you recommended that some work should be done on the place, didn’t you? Re-roofing, wasn’t it?’

‘Yes, the slates were in a bad way, and in the following March we replaced them by stone tiles, extra heavy. Slates are not good enough, half-way up the mountain. To the west, of course, the place is more or less protected by the wood, but the south-east pine end is badly exposed and was letting the wet through, so I ran up an oak frame, nine inches from the wall, and fixed tiles on that. You remember passing the estimate?’

‘Of course, of course. And it’s done all right? No trouble since?’

‘No trouble with wind or weather. When I was there last, the fat daughter was talking about going to service in Cardiff. I don’t think Mrs Samuel fancied it much. And young William wants to go down the pit when he leaves school.’

‘Thomas is staying to help his father with the farm, I hope? And how is the farm doing now?’

‘Fairly well. They pay their rent regularly, as you know. In spite of what I tell them, they will try to grow wheat. It’s much too high up.’

‘How do the people on the mountain like the new parson?’

‘They get on with him all right. He tries to persuade them to come to Mass, as he calls it, and they stay away and go to meeting. But quite on friendly terms — out of business hours.’

‘I see. I should think he would be more at home in one of the Cardiff parishes. We must see if it can’t be worked somehow. And how about those new pigsties at Ty, Captain? Have you got the estimate with you? Read it out, will you? My eyes are tired this morning. You went to Davies for the estimate? That’s right: the policy of the estate is, always encourage the small man. Have you looked into that business of the marsh?’

‘The marsh? Oh, you mean at Kemeys? Yes, I’ve gone into it. But I don’t think it would pay for draining. You’d never see your money back.’

‘You think not? That’s a pity.’

Teilo Morgan seemed depressed by the agent’s judgment on the Kemeys marshland. He weighed the matter.

‘Well; I suppose you are right. We mustn’t go in for fancy farming. But look here! It’s just struck me. Why not utilise the marsh for growing willows? We could run a sluice from the brook right across it. It might be possible to start basket-making — in a small way, of course, at first. What do you think?’

‘That wants looking into,’ said Captain Vaughan. ‘I know a place in Somerset where they are doing something of the kind. I’ll go over on Wednesday and see if I can get some useful information. I hardly think the margin of profit would be a big one. But you would be satisfied with two per cent?’

‘Certainly. And here’s a thing I’ve been wanting to talk to you about for a long time — for the last three or four Mondays — and I’ve always forgotten. You know the Graeg on the home farm? A beautiful southern exposure, and practically wasted. I feel sure that egg-plants would do splendidly there. Could you manage to get out some figures for next Monday? There’s no reason why the egg-plant shouldn’t become as popular as the tomato and the banana; if a cheap supply were forthcoming. You will see to that, won’t you? If you’re busy, you might put off going to Somerset till next week: no hurry about the marsh.’

‘Very good. The Graeg: egg-plants.’ The agent made an entry in his note-book, and took his leave soon afterwards. He paced a long corridor till he came to the gallery, from which the main staircase of the Abbey went down to the entrance hall. There he encountered an important-looking personage, square-chinned, black-coated, slightly grizzled.

‘As usual, I suppose?’ the personage enquired.

‘As usual.’

‘What was it this time?’

‘Egg-plants.’

The important one nodded, and Captain Vaughan went on his way.

II

As soon as the agent had gone, Teilo Morgan rang a bell. His man came, and lifted him skilfully out of the big chair, and laid him on the day-bed by the window, propping him with cushions behind his back.

‘Two cushions will be enough,’ said the squire. ‘I’m rather tired this morning.’

The man put the bell within easy reach, and went out softly. Teilo Morgan lay back quite still; thinking of old days, and of happy years, and of the bad season that followed them. His first recollections were of a little cottage, snow-white, high upon the mountain, a little higher than the hamlet of Castell-y-Bwch, of which he had been talking to the agent. The shining walls of the cottage, freshly whitened every Easter, were very thick, and sloped outward to the ground: the windows were deep-set in the wall. By the porch which sheltered the front door from the great winds of the mountain, were two shrubs, one on each side, that were covered in their season with orange-coloured flowers, as round as oranges, and these golden flowers were, in his memory, tossed and shaken to and fro, in the breeze that always blew in that high land, when every leaf and blossom of the lower slopes were still. About the house was the garden, and a rough field, and a small cherry orchard, in a sheltered dip of land, and a well dripping from the grey rock with water very clear and cold. Above the cottage and its small demesne came a high bank, with a hedge of straggling, wind-beaten trees and bramble thickets on top of it, and beyond, the steep and wild ascent of the mountain, where the dark green whin bushes bore purple berries, where white cotton grew on the grass, and the bracken shimmered in the sun, and the imperial heather glowed on golden autumn days. Teilo remembered well how, a long age ago, he would stand in summer weather by the white porch, and look down on the great territory, as if on the whole world, far below: wave following wave of hill and valley, of dark wood and green pastures and cornfields, pale green or golden, the white farms shining, the mist of blue smoke above the Roman city, and to the right, the far waters of the yellow sea. And then there were the winter nights: all the air black as pitch, and a noise of tumult and battle, when the great winds and driving rain beat upon wall and window; and it was praise and thanksgiving to lie safe and snug in a cot by the settle near the light and the warmth of the fire, while without the heavens and the hills were confounded together in the roaring darkness.

In the white cottage on the high land, Teilo had lived with his mother and grandmother, very old, bent and wrinkled; with a sallow face, and hair still black in spite of long years. But he was a very small boy, when a gentleman who had often been there before, came and took his mother and himself away, down into the valley; and his next memories were of the splendours of Llantrisant Abbey, where the three of them lived together, and were waited on by many servants, and he found that the gentleman was his father: a cheerful man, always laughing, with bright blue eyes and a thick, tawny moustache, that drooped over his chin. Here Teilo ran about the park, and; raced sticks in the racing Avon, and climbed up the steep hill they called the Graeg, and liked to be there because with the shimmering, sweet-scented bracken it was like the mountain-side. His walks and runs and climbs did not last long. The strange illness that nobody seemed to understand struck him down, and when after many weeks of bitter pains and angry, fiery dreams, the anguish of day and night left him; he was weak and helpless, and lay still, waiting to get well, and never got well again. Month after month he lay there in his bed, able to move his hands faintly, and no more. At the end of a year he felt a little stronger and tried to walk, and just managed to get across the room, helping himself from chair to chair. There was one thing that was for the better: he had been a silent child, happy to sit all by himself hour after hour on the mountain and then on the steep slope of the Graeg, without uttering a word or wanting anyone to come and talk to him. Now, in his weakness, he chattered eagerly, and thought of admirable things. He would tell his father and mother all the schemes and plans he was making, and he wondered why they looked so sadly at him.

And then, disaster. His father died, and his mother and he had to leave Llantrisant Abbey; they never told him why. They went to live in a grey, dreary street somewhere in the north of London. It was a place full of ugly sights and sounds, with a stench of burning bones always in the heavy air, and an unseemly litter of egg-shells and torn paper and cabbage-stalks about the gutters, and screams and harsh cries fouling the ears at midnight. And in winter, the yellow sulphur mist shut out the sky and burned sourly in the nostrils. A dreadful place, and the exile was long there. His mother went out on most days soon after breakfast, and often did not come back till ten, eleven, twelve at night, tired to death, as she said, and her dark beauty all marred and broken. Two or three times, in the course of the day, a neighbour from the floor below would come in and see if he wanted anything; but, except for these visits, he lay alone all the hours, and read in the few old books that they had in the room. It was a life of bewildered misery. There was not much to eat, and what there was seemed not to have the right taste or smell; and he could not understand why they should have to live in the horrible street, since his mother had told him that now his father was dead, he was the rightful master of Llantrisant Abbey and should be a very rich man. ‘Then why are we in this dreadful place?’ he asked her; and she only cried.

And then his mother died. And a few days after the funeral, people came and took him away; and he found himself once more at Llantrisant, master of it all, as his mother had told him he should be. He made up his mind to learn all about the lands and farms that he owned, and got them to bring him the books of the estate, and then Captain Vaughan began to come and see him, and tell him how things were going on, and how this farmer was the best tenant in the county, and how that man had nothing but bad luck, and John Williams would put gin in his cider, and drive breakneck down steep, stony lanes on market nights, standing up in the cart like a Roman charioteer. He learnt about all these works and ways, and how the land was farmed, and what was done and what was needed to be done in the farmhouses and farm-buildings, and asked the agent about all his visits of inspection and enquiry, till he felt that he knew every field and footpath on the Llantrisant estate, and could find his way to every farm-house and cottage chimney corner from the mountain to the sea. It was the absorbing interest and the great happiness of his life; and he was proud to think of all he had done for the land and for the people on it. They were excellent people, farmers, but apt to be too conservative, too much given to stick in the old ruts that their fathers and grandfathers had made, obstinately loyal to old methods in a new world. For example, there was Williams, Penyrhaul, who almost refused to grow roots, and Evan Thomas, Glascoed, who didn’t believe in drainpipes, and tried to convince Vaughan that bush drainage was better for the land, and half a dozen, at least, who were sure that all artificials exhausted the soil, and the silly fellow who had brought his black Castle Martins with him from Pembrokeshire, and turned up his nose at Shorthorns and Herefords. Still, Vaughan had a way with him, and made most of them see reason sooner or later; and they all knew that there was not another estate in England or Wales that was so ready to meet its tenants half-way, and do repairs and build new barns and cowsheds very often before they were asked. Teilo Morgan gave his agent all the credit he deserved, but at the same time he could not help feeling that in spite of his disabilities, of the weakness that kept him a prisoner to these four or five rooms, so that he had not once gone over the rest of the Abbey since his return to it; in spite of his invalid and stricken days, a great deal was owing to himself and to the fresh ideas that he had brought to the management of the estate. He took in the farming journals, and was thoroughly well read in the latest literature that dealt with the various branches of agriculture, and he knew in consequence that he was well in advance of his time, in advance even of the most forward agriculturalists of the day. There were methods and schemes and ideas in full course of practical and successful working on the Liantrisant property that were absolutely unheard of on any other estate in the country. He had wanted to discuss some of these ideas in the Press; but Vaughan had dissuaded him; he said that for the present the force of prejudice was too strong. Vaughan was possibly right; all the same Teilo Morgan knew that he was making agricultural history. In the meantime, he was jotting down careful and elaborate notes on the experiments that were being tried, and in a year or two he intended to put a book on the stocks: *The Llantrisant Estates: a New Era in Farming*.

He was pondering happily in this strain; when, in a flash, a brilliant, a dazzling notion came to him. He drew a long breath of delighted wonder; then rang his hand-bell, and told the man that he might now put in the third cushion— ‘and give me my writing things.’ A handy contraption, with paper, ink and the rest was adjusted before him, and as soon as the servant was gone, Teilo began a letter, his eyes bright with excitement.

DEAR VAUGHAN.I know you think I’m inclined to be rather too experimental in my farming; I believe that this time you will agree that I have hit on a great idea. Don’t say a word to anybody about it. I am astonished that it hasn’t been thought of long ago, and my only fear is that we may be forestalled. I suppose the fact is that it has been staring us all in the face so long that we haven’t noticed it!My idea is simply this; a plantation, or orchard, if you like, of the Arbor Vitæ; and 1 know the exact place for it. You have often told me how Jenkins of the Garth insists on having those fields of his by the Soar down in potatoes, a most unsuitable place for such a crop. I want you to go and see him as soon as you have time, and tell him we want the use of the fields — about five acres, if I remember. Of course, he must be compensated, and, within reason, you can be as liberal as you like. I have understood from you that the soil is a deep, rich loam, in very good heart; it should be an ideal position for the culture I intend. I believe that the Arbor Vitæ will flourish anywhere, and is practically indifferent to climatic conditions: ‘makes its own climate,’ as one writer rather poetically expresses it. Still, its culture in this county is an experiment; and I am sure Mharadwys — I think that’s the old name of those fields by the Soar — is the very spot.The land must be thoroughly trenched. Get this put in hand as soon as you can possibly manage it. Let them leave it in ridges, so that the winter frosts can break it up. Then, if we give it a good dressing of superphosphate of lime and bone meal in the spring, and plough in September, everything will be ready for the autumn planting. You know I always insist on shallow planting; don’t bury the roots in a hole; spread them out evenly within five or six inches of the surface; let them feel the sun. And when it comes to staking; mind that each tree has two stakes, crossed at the top, with the points driven into the ground at a good distance from the roots. I am sure that the single stake, close to the tree stem, with its point driven through the roots is very bad practice.Of course, you will appreciate the importance of this new culture. The twelve distinct kinds of fruit produced by this extraordinary tree, all of them of delicious flavour, render it absolutely unique. Whatever the cost of the experiment may be, I am sure it will be made good in a very short time. And it must be remembered that while the name, *Tous les mois*, given to a kind of strawberry cultivated on the continent, really only implies that the plants fruit all through the summer and early autumn, in the case of the Arbor Vitæ, the claim may be made with literal truth. As the old writers say: ‘The Arbor yielded her fruit every month.’ No other cropper, however heavy, can be compared with it. And in addition to all this, the leaves are said to possess the most valuable therapeutic qualities.Don’t you agree with me that this will prove by far the most important and far-reaching of all our experiments?I remain,Yours sincerely,TEILO MORGAN.

P.S. On consideration; I think it might be better to keep the dressing of super and bone meal till the autumn, just before ploughing.And you might as well begin to look up the Nurserymen’s Catalogues. As we shall be giving a large order, you may have to place it with two or three firms. I think you will find the Arbor Vitæ listed with the Coniferæ.

III

Long years after all this, two elderly men were talking together in a club smoking-room. They had the place almost to themselves; most of the members, having lunched and taken their coffee and cigarettes, had strolled away. There was a small knot of men with their heads close together over the table, chuckling and relating and hearing juicy gossip. Two or three others were dotted about the solemn, funebrous room, each apart with his paper, deep in his arm-chair. Our two were in a retired corner, which might have been called snug in any other place. They were old friends, it appeared, and one, the less elderly, had returned not long before from some far place, after an absence of many years.

‘I haven’t seen anything of Harry Morgan since I’ve been home,’ he remarked. ‘ I suppose he’s still in town.’

‘Still in Beresford Street. But he doesn’t get out so much now. He’s getting a bit stiff in the joints. A good ten years older than I am.’

‘I should like to see him again. I always thought him a very good fellow.’

‘A first-rate fellow. You know that story about Bartle Frere? Man was sent to meet him at the station, and asked how he should know him. They told him to look out for an old gentleman with grey whiskers helping somebody — and he found Frere helping an old woman with a big basket out of a third-class carriage. Harry Morgan was like that — except for the whickers.’

There was a pause; and then the man who had retold the old Sir Bartle Frere story began again.

‘I don’t suppose you ever heard the kindest thing Morgan ever did — one of the kindest things I’ve ever heard of. You know I come from his part of the country: my people used to have Plas Henoc, only a few miles from Llantrisant Abbey, the Morgans’ Place. My father told me all about it; Harry kept the thing very dark. Upon my word! What is it about a man not letting his left hand know what his right is about? Morgan has lived up to that if any man ever did. Well, it was like this:

‘Have you ever heard of old Teilo Morgan? He was a bit before our day. Not an old man, by the way; I don’t suppose he was much over forty when he died. Well, he went the pace in the old style. He was very well known in town, not in society, or rather in damned bad society, and not far from here either. They had a picture of him in some low print of the time, with those long whiskers that used to be worn then. They didn't give his name; just called it, "The Hero of the Haymarket." You wouldn't believe it, would you, but in those days the Haymarket was the great place for night-houses — Kate Hamilton and all that lot. Morgan was in the thick of it all; but that picture annoyed him; he had those whiskers of his cut off at Truefitt's the very next day. He was the sort of man they got the silver dinner service out for, when he entertained his friends at Cremorne. And "Judge and Jury," and the *poses plastiques*, and that place in Windmill Street where they fought without the gloves — and all the rest of it.

'And it was just as bad down in the country. He used to take his London friends, male and female, down there, and lead the sort of life he lived in town, as near as he could make it. They used to tell a story, true very likely, of how he and half a dozen rapscallions like himself were putting away the port after dinner, and making a devil of a noise, all talking and shouting and cursing at the top of their voices, when Teilo seemed to pull himself together and get very grave all in a minute. "Silence gentlemen!" he called out. The rest of them took no notice; one of them started a blackguard song, and the others got ready to join in the chorus. "Hold your damned tongues, damn you!" Morgan bawled at them, and smashed a big decanter on the table. "D'you think," he said, "that that's the sort of thing for youngsters to listen to? Have you no sense of decency? Didn't I tell you that the children were coming down to dessert?" With that, he rang a bell that was by him on the table and — so the story goes — six young fellows and six girls came trooping down the big staircase: without a single stitch on them, calling out in squeaky voices: "Oh, dear Papa, what have you done to dear Mamma?" And the rest of it.'

The phrase was evidently an inclusive, vague, but altogether damnatory clause with this teller of old tales.

'Well,' he continued, 'you can imagine what the county thought of all that sort of thing. Teilo Morgan made Llantrisant Abbey stink in their nostrils. Naturally, none of them would go near the place. The women, who were, perhaps, rather more particular about such matters than they are now, simply wouldn't have Morgan's name mentioned in their presence. The Duke cut him dead in the street. His subscription to the Hunt was returned. I don't think he cared. You know Garden Parties were beginning to get fashionable then, and they say Morgan sent out engraved invitation cards, with a picture of a Nymph and a Satyr on them that some artist fellow had done for him — not a nice picture at all according to county standards. And what d'ye think he had at the bottom of the card instead of R.S.V.P.?— "No clothes by request." He was a damned impudent fellow, if you like. I believe the party came off all right, with more friends from town, and most unusual games and sports on the lawn and in the shrubberies. It was said that Treowen, the Duke's son, was there; but he always swore through thick and thin that it was a lie. But it was brought up against him afterwards when he stood with Herbert for the county.

'And what d'ye think happened next? A most extraordinary thing. Nobody was prepared for it. Everyone said he would just drink and devil and wench himself to death, and a damned good riddance. Well, I'll tell you. There was one thing, you know, that everybody had to confess: in his very worst days Teilo Morgan always left the country girls alone. Never interfered with the farmers' daughters or cottage girls or anything in that way. And then, one fine day when he was up with a keeper looking after a few head of grouse he had on the mountain, what should he do but fall in love with a girl of fifteen, who lived with her mother or grandmother, I don't know which, in a cottage right up there. Mary Trevor, I believe her name was. My father had seen her once or twice afterwards driving with Morgan in his tandem: he said she was a most beautiful creature, a perfectly lovely woman. She was a type that you see sometimes in Wales: very dark, black eyes, black hair, oval face, skin a pale olive — not at all unlike those girls that used to prance up and down Arles in Southern France, with their hair done up in velvet ribbons; I don't know whether you've ever been there? There's something Oriental about that style of beauty; it doesn't last long.

'Anyhow, Teilo Morgan fell flat on the spot. He went straight down to the Abbey and packed the whole company back to town — told them they could go to hell, or bloody Jerusalem, or the Haymarket, for all he cared. As soon as they'd all gone, he was off to the mountain again. He wasn't seen at the Abbey for weeks. I am sure I don't know why he didn't marry the girl straight away; nobody knew. She said that he did marry her; but we shall come to that presently. In due course, the baby came along, and Morgan wanted to pension off the old lady and take the mother and child down to Liantrisant. But the doctors advised against it. I believe Morgan got some very good men down, and they were all inclined to shake their heads over the child. I don’t think they committed themselves or named any distinct disease or anything of that kind; but they were all agreed that there was a certain delicacy of constitution, and that the boy would have a much better chance if they kept him up in the mountain air for the first few years of his life. Llantrisant Abbey, I should tell you, is right down in the valley by the river, with woods and hills all round it; fine place, but rather damp and relaxing, I daresay. So, the long and short of it was that young Teilo stayed up with his mother and the old woman, and old Teilo used to come and see them for weekends, as they say now, till the boy was four or five years old; and then the old lady was looked after somewhere or other, and the mother and son went to live at the Abbey.

‘Everything went on all right — except that the county people kept away — for three or four years. The child seemed well and strong, and the tutor they got in for him said he was a tremendous fellow with his books, well in advance of his age, unusually interested in his work and all that. Then he got ill, very ill indeed. I don’t know what it was; some brain trouble, I should think, meningitis or something of that sort. It was touch and go for weeks, and it left the unfortunate little chap an absolute wreck at the end of it. For a long time they thought he was paralysed; all the strength had gone out of his limbs. And the worst of it was, the mind was affected. He seemed bright enough, mind you; nothing dull or heavy about him; and I’m told you might listen to him chattering away for half an hour on end, and go away thinking he was a perfect phenomenon of a child for intelligence. But if you listened long enough, you’d hear something that would pull you up with a jerk. Crazy? — yes, and worse than crazy — mixed up in a way with a kind of sense, so that you might begin to wonder which was queer, yourself or the boy. It was a dreadful grief to the parents, especially to his father. He used to talk about his sins finding him out. I don’t know, there may have been something in that. “Whips to scourge us” — perhaps so.

‘They got the tutor back after some time; the child begged so hard for him that they were afraid he’d worry himself into another brain fever if they didn’t give way. So he came along with instructions to make the lessons as much a farce as he liked, and the more the better; not on any account to press the boy over his work. And from what my father told me, young Teilo nearly drove the poor man off his head. He was far sharper in a way than he'd ever been before, with a memory like Macaulay's — once read, never forgotten — and an amazing appetite for learning. But then the twist in the brain would come out. Mathematics brilliant; and at the end of the lesson he'd frighten that tutor of his with a new theory of figures, some notion of the figures that we don't know of; the numbers that are between the others, something rather more than one and less than two, and so forth. It was the same with everything: there was the Secret Conquest of England a hundred years ago, that nobody was allowed to mention, and the squares that were always changing their shape in geometry, and the great continent that was hidden because Africa was on top of it, so that you couldn't see it. Then, when it came to the classics, there were fresh cases for the nouns and new moods for the verbs: and all the rest of it. Most extraordinary, and very sad for his father and mother. The poor little fellow took a tremendous interest in the family history and in the property; but I believe he hashed all that up in some infernal way. Well; it seemed there was nothing to be done.

'Then his father died. Of course, the question of the succession came up at once. Poor Mrs Morgan, as she called herself to the last, swore she was married to Teilo, but she couldn't produce any papers — any papers that were evidence of a legal marriage anyhow. I fancy the truth was that they were married in some forgotten little chapel up in the mountains by a hedge preacher or somebody of that kind, who didn't know enough to get in the registrar. Of course, Teilo ought to have known better, but probably he didn't bother at the time so long as he satisfied the girl. He may have meant to make it all right eventually, and left it too late: I don't know. Anyhow, Payne Llewellyn, the family solicitor, gave the poor woman to understand that she and the boy would have to leave Llantrisant Abbey, and off they went. They had one room in a miserable back street in Islington or Barnsbury or some such God-forsaken place and she earned a bare living in a sweater's workshop.

'Meanwhile, the property had passed to a cousin; Harry Morgan. And he hadn't been heard of; or barely heard of; for some years. He had gone off exploring Central Asia or the sources of the Amazon when Teilo Morgan was in his glory — if you can put it that way. He hadn't heard a word of Teilo's reformation or of Mary Trevor and her boy; and when old Llewellyn was able to get at him after considerable difficulty and delay, he never mentioned the woman or her son. When Morgan did come home at last, he found he didn’t fancy the old family place; called it a dismal hole, I believe. Anyhow, he let it on a longish lease to a mental specialist — mad doctors, they called them then — and he turned the Abbey into a lunatic asylum.

‘Then somebody told Harry about Mary Trevor, and the poor child, and the marriage or no-marriage. He was furious with Llewellyn. He had a search made, and when he found them, it was just too late so far as Mary Trevor was concerned. She had died, of grief and hard work and semi-starvation, no doubt. But Harry took the boy away, and finding how he was longing to go back to the Abbey — he was quite convinced, you see, that he was the owner of it and of all the Morgan estates — Harry got the doctor who was running the place to take Teilo as a patient. He was given a set of rooms to himself in a wing, right away from the other patients. Everything was done to encourage him in his notion that he was Teilo Morgan of Liantrisant Abbey. Going back to the old place had stirred up all his enthusiasm for the family, and the property, and the management of the estates, and it became the great interest of his life. He quite thought he was making it the best-managed estate in the county: inaugurating a new era in English farming, and all the rest of it. Harry Morgan instructed Captain Vaughan, the Estate Agent, to see Teilo once a week, and enter into all his schemes and pretend to carry them out, and I believe Vaughan played up extremely well, though he sometimes found it difficult to keep a straight face. You see, that twist in the brain wasn’t getting any better, and when it went to work on practical farming it produced some amazing results. Vaughan would be told to get this bit of land ready for pineapples, and somewhere else they were to grow olives; and what about zebras for haulage? But it kept him happy to the last. D’you know, the very day he died, he wrote a long letter of instructions to Vaughan. What d’you think it was about? You won’t guess. He told Vaughan to plant the Tree of Life in a potato patch by the Soar, and gave full cultural directions.’

‘God bless me ! You don’t say so?’

The Major, who had listened to the long story, ruminated awhile. He had been brought up in an old-fashioned Evangelical household, and had always loved ‘Revelations.’ The text burned and glowed into his memory, and he said in a strong voice:

'"In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." '

There was only one man besides our two friends left in the darkening room; and he had fallen fast asleep in his arm-chair, with his paper on the ground before him. The Major's clear intonation woke him with a crash, and when he heard the words that were being uttered, he was seized with unspeakable and panic terror, and ran out of the room, howling (more or less) for the Committee.

But the Major having ended his text, said:

'I always thought Harry Morgan was a good fellow. But I didn't know he was such a thundering good fellow as that.'

And that was his Amen.

Out of the Picture

I

IN THE OLD days — which means anything from ten to thirty years ago — there was a question which used to be asked now and then at studio parties and Chelsea pubs. The question was:

‘But who was the twisted man?’

And it was often followed by another:

‘But where did M’Calmont take himself off to?’

Neither interrogation ever got an answer; save that to the second query, a young man in very full dark green corduroy trousers is reported to have said once on a time:

‘Somebody told me he had been seen in Quito.’

But to this neither credit or attention was given. And it is probable from what follows that the double enigma is to be reckoned with that question as to what song the Sirens sang; if, indeed, it is not past all solution.

Going back, then, to those old days aforesaid, and rather to the earlier portion of them, when, as a journalist, I saw many strange things and people; I was once sent to view an exhibition of pictures at the Molyneux Galleries in Danby Place. Perhaps the event may be sufficiently dated by saying that the Exhibition was opened somewhere between the Battle of Sidney Street and the Coronation of King George V; and I have a feeling that it was a misty May morning when I went to see it. It was not a large exhibition: all the pictures were contained in two sizeable rooms, and as soon as I got into them I saw at once that I could make nothing of it — that is, from any serious standpoint. I cared nothing; my point of view in that instance, as in all others like it, was, that if the paper chose to send an outsider and an ignoramus to criticise works of art — especially the works of a new and tentative and experimental school — then, on the head of the paper let the just doom fall. And the school represented on this particular occasion at the Molyneux Galleries evidently represented a fierce revolt against the traditions and conventions of the elders. To begin with; my eye was caught by ‘The Old Harbour.’ There were buildings in vertical perspective, their walls appearing to incline together and to aspire to meet in the upper part of the canvas, and with a sense about them as if the whole mass were unstable, impermanent, void of true solidity and settlement on the earth. A mystic once told me that after he had finished his meditation and gone out into the street, he had seen the grey bulk of the houses opposite suddenly melt, evaporate, go up like smoke, leaving void nothingness in their place. And so the painter with his art had made these warehouses and Customs buildings, or whatever they were, in such a fashion that they seemed as if they also were on the very point to turn to mist, to float into the air, and to disappear. And then, for the rest, there was grey water, and segments, and portions, and particles of keels, sails, masts, ropes, decks, and deck furniture, not cohering, or fitting together, but dispersed and apart. Here, I could see, was choice matter on which the expert and art critic could exercise their knowledge and judgement. As I had neither, I made an experiment or two, and was able to inform the readers of the paper that if you walked briskly past the picture, winking both eyes as fast as possible, you really got a sort of impression of movement and activity, of ships and boats coming into harbour and sailing out of it, of sails lowered and hoisted, of an uncertain background, now obscured, now left visible as a ship in full sail passed before it. It struck me that, in my hands, art criticism was in a fair way to become a popular sport.

And then there was another picture that both attracted and distracted me. It was a big canvas, and the subject was a number of geometrical figures of all kinds, most ingeniously fitted into one another, and rainbow painted, no doubt on some occult principal of contrast and compliment and correspondence. It was called ‘King Solomon’s Cargoes.’ I murmured: ‘Gold and silver and ivory and apes and peacocks,’ and looked for them. I could not see any of them, and I thought I would go back to Fleet Street, relying on my impressions of ‘The Old Harbour,’ which would just fill the ‘two sticks’ that had been allotted to the story. It was, decidedly, a case of least said, soonest mended. In spite of the defence which, as I have mentioned, I had ready; I felt I was on unsafe and treacherous ground. Who was I to sit in judgement on the work of painters? No doubt, I might say that I had looked for apes and peacocks in that picture and had found none;

and, likely enough, that remark might merely serve to display my utter ignorance of the subject I was pretending to treat. But it was not written that I should escape 'King Solomon's Cargoes' so easily.

It was some years after the exhibition at the Molyneux Galleries that I found myself in a various company one evening. I saw a few people that I knew, and was talking to one of them, when the friend who had brought me along came and said:

'Do you mind if I introduce you to a man? It's M'Calmont, the painter, who says he's been wanting to meet you for years. Some criticism of yours that he read seems to have made a great impression on him.'

He took me up to a dark, slight man with a black moustache, and left me. M'Calmont made room on the settee, and began at once:

'I've been wanting to thank you for a long time for that notice you wrote in your paper about the Exhibition in the Molyneux Galleries. You'll remember? It was in Coronation year.

I told him I thought I did remember something about it. But I wondered, internally, what sort of thanks I was going to get from a painter for my vain ribaldry. He went on:

'I said to myself at the time: "This A.M., whoever he may be, has got an eye to detect the falsities and fallacies, and I'd like to have a talk with him." Then somebody told me your name, but I left town soon after, and this is the first chance I've had.'

And, finally, it came to this: that the falsities and fallacies were the picture of 'The Old Harbour,' by Frank Guildford, and M'Calmont had enjoyed the way I had stuck my knife into the fellow.

I explained. I said I knew nothing about painting, and had been afraid that I had been guilty of ill-placed and unmannerly humour. He wouldn't hear of this.

'It was just instinct, pure instinct. You may not have the technical knowledge, but you know a silly man when you see him.'

I asked what had become of this unhappy man.

‘He’s what they call a fashionable painter, and makes his eight thousand a year by painting grocers and their wives — damn him!’

And he went on:

‘I don’t know whether you happened to see a thing I had in that Exhibition? I called it ‘King Solomon’s Cargoes.’’

I lied. I dwelt again and more forcibly on the utter unscrupulousness of my character when simulating an art critic. I said I had not seen his canvas. I had just dashed into the galleries, invented my silly game with the ships in the harbour, and run out again as soon as I had got material for my two or three paragraphs. But, in fact, I remembered those purple squares, scarlet triangles, sky-blue circles very well.

M’Calmont nodded his head gloomily.

‘I’m glad it didn’t catch your eye. You might have had something to say to me too. You’d have been right, and you’d have been wrong. I was never a faker like Guildford. I never pretended that if you painted a bit of mast here and a scrap of a sail there and a deck in another part of the canvas you could call it painting a ship. But I did believe in abstract painting — and I do still in a way.’

I asked him to tell me all about it.

‘I’d like to explain what I was after in those days. You say you know nothing about the technical side of painting. You won’t want to know anything about it: it’s not a technical question. It’s behind all that and beyond it. But you can’t talk sense in the middle of all these havers. Come away.’

I followed him out, and by devious and obscure ways he led me to an obscure tavern, where we sat down together in a quiet corner of a bulging and old-fashioned bar. They spoke his language there, since his order for ‘two wee halfyins’ was fulfilled without comment. But I looked at the stuff in my glass, and remembered how the poet had said that the half is greater than the whole— ‘greater,’ I corrected mentally, ‘than the double.’ I added water.

‘Don’t kill good drink,’ M’Calmont said reproachfully. ‘*Scelus est jugulare Falernum*, and this is better. It’s the genuine Lagavulin, not the trash they sell in London for whiskey. But you were asking about abstract painting. It will be necessary to go back and away a little if we're to see what we're after. They say distance lends enchantment to the view; I'd put it myself, "lends vision," *theoria*. It may turn out, of course, that when you do see, you see enchantment, but that is just secondary; a kind of by-product, you might say, of the proposition. I'll ask you, then, if you know anything about the Kabbala of the Hebrews?'

Whatever I knew of that matter, I dissembled. I am a lover of the rich improbabilities, and I would not check this rare manifestation of them.

'Well, I don't want you to feel like a cow in a fremd loaming; so we won't go too deeply into those dark mysteries. But the Kabbalists tell us that at the Fall of Man, the Serpent did not ascend to Kether in the Tree of Life. It stopped at Daath. And that's their way of saying that the nature of man was not entirely corrupted. The Serpent poisoned and infected the logical understanding, but there was a pure, spiritual region above that which remained untouched.

'Very good. You see that? And there you have the reason why a man that's sunk deep in the blackest mud of materialism may very possibly be overcome with delight at the Fugues of Bach. You'll see how that may be? That's absolute music. It has nothing to do with Daath, the logical understanding. I'm speaking, you understand, of the pattern of sounds that reaches the ears of the hearer; just the ordered noise that he hears, if you like to put it that way. In the making of the music, no doubt, in the technical part of the creation, the understanding had its share, as the slave of the spirit. If you want to build Jerusalem with its Temple you must have your hewers of wood and stone and drawers of water. You're a writer yourself, and you know you can't do much in that way without calling in the aid of the pen-makers and the ink manufacturers and paper merchants; but you don't allow them to teach you how to turn the phrase.

'But the way the thing is fashioned is nothing to do with us. What we're concerned with is the thing we hear; and with that thing the logical understanding has just no concern at all. You'll note there's no tongue or language in which we can speak of it. There's no answer to the question: 'But what does it mean?' when that question is asked of pure music. Bach, you may say, had the gift of tongues; but in his case there's no legitimate gift of the interpretation of tongues. It’s impossible to translate the language of Kether into the speech of Daath. I remember well going to hear *Lohengrin*, and there was a manner of commentary attached to the bill of the opera. I just glanced at it and saw that when the overture began I was to picture to myself a blue sky, and then to watch the wee white clouds forming on it. There you have your music critic calling in nature, and I saw in the paper, there was another of them puzzling his head over Berlioz, and decided that he was a ‘pictural,’ not a ‘linear’ composer — calling in the terms of another art. And you’ll hear often enough of the ‘magnificent colour’ of this or that passage of music. And I don’t say they can do better. But it proves what I am telling you: that the understanding has nothing to do with absolute music, and nothing to say to it.

‘Aye, and what about painting? That’s the question I asked myself years ago. You know Aristotle says that all art is imitation. It’s a very questionable pronouncement. If I’m not mistaken he had the drama chiefly in his mind when he made it. But the drama is just an impure or mixed development of the dance. In its primitive, original form, the dance was not an imitation of anything. It was, like music, an expression of something; but that’s different. You may say that the drama of the Greeks was the dance set to words. And then, there’s architecture. You can’t say that the Parthenon is an imitation of anything, or that Rheims Cathedral is an imitation of anything. And literature. I shan’t need to tell you that all the things we value most in the finest literature are just the things that soar above the sense — that is the logical understanding of it. If you turn to the Book and read Second Samuel, one, seventeen, you’ll find a statement to the effect that David lamented the decease of Saul and Jonathan; but you’ll not tell me that the vital interest and value of that proposition is to be discovered in the logical sense of it. And if you read Coleridge’s *Kubla Khan*, I think you’ll be puzzled to find out the logical sense in it and to tell me what it is. But there you have literature almost becoming music.

‘And now you see what I’ve been getting at all the while.’

I did not; but I forbore to say so.

‘It was just this: that I asked myself why should there not be abstract or absolute painting, as well as absolute music and architecture? In the past, painting has been almost entirely Aristotelian, imitative. Why should it continue wholly on those lines? And you'll have gathered that I don't consider you solve the problem by cracking an object up into bits and scraps and pieces, and then painting the bits as they lie abroad. And if you paint a man's hands three times their natural size and draw a jackass with five legs, I'm not thinking you're any nearer to a solution. And that's how I came to paint the picture that I sent into those Galleries, that I'm glad now you didn't see. I was on the wrong track.'

He lapsed at last into silence. I broke it by making a proposition remote from pure aesthetics. He declined to accede to it.

'No, no,' said M'Calmont, 'I'll not hear of it. In the 'Crown and Thistle,' I'm in Scotland, and you're my guest. Where's the Macfarlane creature?'

When we parted soon after, he wrote his address on a scrap of paper torn from his note-book, and begged me to come and see him some evening.

'I'd like to show you the new track I've found,' he said, and vanished into the night, as we came out together.

II

It may be as well to make it clear at once that I am not the man to be daunted by the unusual. I have seen too much of it for that. I know that there are quarters, and very influential quarters, in which it is considered improper to mention such things. Every age has its conventions of propriety and impropriety: every age and every race. The missionary's wife in Africa shocked her two black servants horribly and unspeakably when she said that she was afraid the fruit was too green for a tart. Her husband's name was Green, and every (black) body knows that for a wife to utter her husband's name is both impious and obscene in the highest degree. We talk quite freely in the drawing-room in a style that would have made Dickens run out of the smoking-room, and when we write books we set down boldly words that were only forced out of the policeman of yesterday by the strict order of the Bench. It is all a matter of convention and taboo, and perhaps it is idle to ask for reasons. Mrs Green, I daresay, couldn't understand why on earth she shouldn't utter the word 'green'; and I suppose I am in much the same case when I say that I have no notion why I shouldn't mention the unusual, the odd, the extraordinary when I come across it. At any rate, I propose to defy this particular convention, here and elsewhere and always.

As I was saying, I have seen too much of it to affect disbelief in its existence. I heard from the brassfounders of Clerkenwell about a former member of their craft who had confuted Darwin by the Hebrew alphabet and by the stars, and had buried the pot of gold in a field, where it was found by the navvies who were making the cutting for the Midland Railway. I have discussed with a solicitor, in his London office, the affairs of the J.H.V.S. Syndicate, who were seeking for the Ark of the Covenant from the directions of a cypher contained in that chapter of the Prophet Ezekiel which is called Mercabah. I know all about Campo Tosto, of Burnt Green, near Reigate, who defended his treasures with the bow and arrow. Why, then, should I hush up M'Calmont the painter, who drew his artistic principles from the Hebrew Kabbala?

As a matter of fact, I thought him an interesting man, and determined that I would see more of him. And so, one windy night in October, a few weeks after our meeting, I set out from somewhere in the west and made up the Gray's Inn Road. I am not certain by which street I turned from it. I think, but I am not sure, that it was by Acton Street. I know that I had gone too far north, and that when I came to the bottom of the street, and traversed the King's Cross Road, I found out my mistake, and had to incline somewhat to the right in climbing the hill. It is a district both devious and obscure, and I suppose that its twisting streets and unexpected squares of dusty trees will all come to ruin before they are intelligently explored. I had trod these mazes before, and thought I knew them tolerably well, but it was some years since I had been in that region, and I found myself perplexed and at fault, while the great wind blew the leaves of shadowy trees about my head and at my feet. At last I entered a black passage at a venture, and came down a short flight of steps into an irregular open space; on which there abutted a chapel of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. I went round and about this square or triangle or trapezium, which was sparsely lit, till I found the green door in a wall to which I was directed, and rang the bell under the name M'Calmont. It was M'Calmont who opened the door and, taking hold of my arm, led me down a passage, past a house all lit up, where they were singing, and so to his studio, with trees all about it, bending and tossing and straining in the wind. Inside, there was a hanging lamp, and though it was not cold, the blaze of the fire was cheerful; and lamplight and firelight glittered on the carved and gilded frames of the pictures that hung on the walls. We sat down on a big settee at a comfortable distance from the fire; and he pressed on my attention what he called ‘Eela’ — which is spelt, I found, ‘Islay.’

And then there was more of it. Not of the spirit of the western isle, but of art, as he expounded it. It seemed that he had been forced to modify, one might say, to abandon his earlier views.

‘I found out, and I was not so long about it, that you can’t have absolute painting any more than you can have absolute literature. There are people, as you know, who are trying their hands at that — by writing gibberish without grammar. And *that* won’t do. And I discovered that my endeavours in the direction of pure painting wouldn’t do either. The principle of it is all right; but it’s not for pigments. If you would carry it out, you must turn Eastern carpet-maker. And I’ll maintain that there are Persian carpets as fine as any symphony of Beethoven’s. They are the very analogy in colour and form of pure music.

‘As it seemed that I couldn’t go forward, I went back. And there, as you’ll no doubt be well aware, I was in the height of the fashion. The sculptors and painters too have been trying back for the last quarter of a century. There are men who do their best to forget all the bare elements of their art, their drawing and their perspective and all the rest of it, that they may paint as if they were five years old. Another lot are off to Borrioboolah Gha, to learn the principles of sculpture from black savages. And I’ve no doubt there’s a weary band trying to tramp back all the way to the Stone Age to see what they can find there. It’s all very interesting. I’d like it fine — if they’d not call their imitations of barbarism Modern Art. And now I shall show you where I’ve gone back myself, so as to be in the movement.’

He barked derisively, and turning up the lamp a little, proceeded to guide me round the studio. And I felt as helpless and as futile as I had been in the old days, when I was an art critic *pour rire*.

For I was not at all sure where he had gone back, to use his own phrase. The pictures were all landscapes, painted, I conjecture, in the manner of the eighteenth century. There seemed to me, the uninstructed, as it were a dark shadow that hung over them all. Now and again there were patches of an intense and glowing blue in M’Calmont’s skies; but these were contrasted with purple cloud masses rimmed with fire, with huge white clouds blown up into the sky by gathering thunder, with cloudy walls of black streaked with coppery flame. The green of the trees and of the grass was dark and livid, and the water of the pools and streams reflected something of the threat of the skies. M'Calmont had depicted open spaces in the midst of mysterious woods, narrow valleys edged with grim rocks, paths that wound in and out by lonely lands to shattered walls on a far height, trees of strange growth hanging over a well, glades glooming with twilight and the coming storm. There was an enchantment; but the incantation was of oppression and terror. There were three things that I noticed as curious: the first was that in every picture M'Calmont had introduced fire: logs burning under a broken wall, flames breaking out of yellowish smoke in the forest clearing, a fire by the well, a fire on the far hill-side. Water, also, was represented in each canvas; well, or brook, or pool in the woods; and in every one of them there was the figure of a man, the same man, so far as I could judge. The figure was roughly dressed in the costume of an eighteenth-century countryman, in ragged clothes, with a scarlet cap on his head. He was depicted as tending the invariable fire, perhaps, or leaning on his staff, or half-hidden behind the trunk of a tree, or crouching among thorns on the border of a broken road. As I passed slowly from picture to picture, I noticed that the figure became more prominent. At first, it was barely seen in the background. Then it came forward into the middle distance, and at the end of the tour, the recently painted pictures, as M'Calmont told me, it was prominent in the foreground. In one picture he led a procession of torch-bearers into a wood as the night came on; but mostly he was alone in these desolate places that M'Calmont had made. And there was about this figure an impression of distortion. There was no specific deformity, as of hunched back or misshapen limbs; but yet a distinct sense of a form twisted and awry. And the face, where it could be clearly seen, was at once piteous and malignant, as of a stricken snake, wounded and dying.

Whatever my feelings about this odd gallery of paintings may have been, I kept it to myself. I reminded M'Calmont that I was an outsider and (perhaps exaggerating a little) that I could never be an admirer of the famous slaughterhouse, since it told no story.

'You're an awful liar,' he said with engaging directness as we sat down again, 'but let that flee stick to the wa'. I told you I was going back, like the rest, but not to the ignorance of childhood or savagery. I'm returning to a great art, and exploring its possibilities. You know that the Gothic architecture was the result of the builders, first of the dark ages and then of the middle ages, exploring the possibilities of the architecture of the Romans?'

'I have heard that theory advanced,' I said, 'but I don't know that it holds the field so decisively as you seem to think. I believe that some authorities would tell you that the gothicosity of the Gothic derives, to a great extent at least, from the East.'

'I wouldn't believe a word of that tale — not that it signifies one way or the other in the argument. But I've seen churches down on the Rhone where the Gothic seems growing out of the Classic before your very eyes. There's one such at Valence: a regular Classic pediment, and all the detail of it one would call Norman, if one saw it in England. And anyone who will cast an eye over a First Pointed capital will see in a moment that it's a Corinthian capital in disguise; especially if it's got the square abacus.'

'Very good, then,' I assented, 'let us grant your doctrine of Gothic. You're applying it to painting?'

'That is so. As I said; I'm exploring the possibilities of an old school of landscape. I don't know whether it's ever struck you; but there's no doubt that some of the painters of that age anticipated the word that came to Coleridge and Wordsworth. The eighteenth-century literature was Pope. It belonged to Daath, the region of the logical understanding. To the men of that age, the poetry of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century was just Egyptian hieroglyphics. They could not interpret a single word of it; they'd forgotten what it meant. And, naturally, they could not dream of what was to come after them. But if you look at some of their painting: you'll see the landscapes of *Kubla Khan* — the awe, and the terror, and the hidden mysteries of earth and air, water and fire. And I just meant to find out what's beyond the turn of those paths they made.'

He paused for a moment. 'But that's not painter's talk,' he went on. 'I mean, of course, that I've taken a certain school of landscape painting as my starting-point; and I will see if I can't develop it on its own lines. I hope to draw something new out of the old.'

'You have a figure, I notice, in all your pictures.'

‘You must have the human figure. Without that all your scenery would dissolve and melt away. It would be just nothing at all.’

I did not ask if it was necessary that this human figure should be abhorrent of aspect. For that, I was certain, would not be painter’s talk. And soon after, I went out into the labyrinth on the hill-side. It was late, and the night had grown misty, and the sound of the streets below came faintly, with strange voices.

III

I remember being told a good many years ago in the course of a cheerful evening that the one thing fatal to an actor was intelligence.

‘Or if you like it better,’ said the speaker, ‘I will say intellect. Or, better still, that something or other in a man that can pick a character to pieces, and analyse it, and find out why it does this, that, or the other, and relate it to the plot and the other parts in the cast; and then, continuing the process, build up by careful reasoning, the impersonation out of tones of the voice, facial expression, gesture, habit of body, and so forth.’

‘But,’ said a gentleman in the company, ‘isn’t that the way to act? I thought that was how it was done.’

‘That’s how I do it,’ replied the lecturer. ‘But I haven’t any illusions. The man who depicts by that method will never be a ‘feerst actor,’ as the German producer called it when I was in *Old Heidelberg* with Alexander. You know the story of Irving and poor Bill Terriss. Bill was ponging away for all he was worth as Henry VIII. Irving stopped him.

‘ “Very good, Terriss; very good indeed. I suppose you don’t understand the meaning of one single word that you have uttered?”

‘ “No, guv’nor,” said Terriss, not in the least put out. “But it’ll go all right on the night.”

‘That’s the way to act.’

‘But, excuse me,’ said the man who wanted to know, ‘I’m afraid I don’t quite grasp your meaning. *What* is the way to act?’

‘You begin by not being able to give a single reason for anything you do or for your particular style of doing it. The rest comes along by itself. And I think I will help myself to another drink ere I go to that bourne … I don't want to miss the twelve-forty.'

It was probable, I considered, that the old actor — a dignified Priest in *Hamlet* — was right in the main. Creative work, even such secondary creative work as the actor's, is not achieved by theories or by taking thought. A man must know the grammar of his business, whatever it is; the rest, if it is to be of the first order, must be the work of the hidden flame within. And, therefore, I had grave doubts of the validity of M'Calmont's art, when I thought of the elaboration of his theories. I remembered Claude Lantier in L'Œuvre. He made up his mind to be a stark realist, to paint bunches of carrots with sincerity. But he listened to theories, and ended by hanging himself before his symbolical picture of Paris as a nude woman, whose flesh glowed with jewels, like a Byzantine icon. It was some time before I went to see him again in that retired and secret studio. I met him in Holborn a few weeks after my visit, and he asked me in a very cheerful manner whether I was recovering from his pictures by degrees — giving his short bark of laughter. I told him that I had been allowed out for the last week.

'But,' said I, willing to continue the vein of mild facetiousness, 'you know art without a story is no good to me. Do tell me the story of that figure in all your paintings — the figure of the twisted man.'

He stared at me blankly as if he hadn't a notion what I was talking about. Then he caught sight of an east-bound 'bus in a slowly moving press of traffic, ran for it, and shook a jocular fist at me from the top of the stair. And that was the last I saw of M'Calmont for a considerable time.

I was occupied as a matter of fact all through that winter with affairs and interests of my own. What is generally and conveniently known as psychical research has always had a strong attraction for me, in spite, or perhaps because, of the obscurities, difficulties and drawbacks of the pursuit. I must say, that the usual demand of the men of physical science does not strike me as in the least rational. This demand is, I believe, that psychical phenomena should be made to conform to the laws of the laboratory experiment. The man of science says: 'I can make hydrogen by a simple process of mixing acid and water and zinc. If you don't believe me, come along now to my laboratory, and I will make hydrogen in three or four minutes, and show you how it is done, so that you can make it yourself and blow yourself up, too, if you don't follow the directions. Or, if you like, I will make hydrogen tomorrow morning at eleven, or tomorrow night at twelve, or on Saturday by written appointment.' You confess your belief in the validity and efficacy of the hydrogen process; and your scientific friend goes on: 'Very good; but you were telling me of a woman who looked in a crystal one morning, and saw and foretold correctly certain things that happened fifty miles away four hours later. Then, find that woman and bring her along to the laboratory, and let me see and hear her doing it again, and let her explain to me how she does it.' And here, I say, physical science strikes me as profoundly irrational. A great poet cannot guarantee a masterpiece to be written on demand, under the eye of an observer, by 6.50 p.m. Shillaker, the famous bat, would never undertake to reproduce his 250 not out and no chances given, against the Patagonians. He knows that when he next meets that famous eleven, he may be out for a duck in the first over. And what painter can explain how he does it? Can Dick, Tom, and Harry go to the Master, listen to a demonstration, and come away, fully prepared to equal his immortal works? Clearly, men are capable of all sorts of performances of body and spirit which are not in the least amenable to the law of the laboratory. Let us remember the historic case of one of whom it is recorded: 'at tip-cheese, or odd and even, his hand is out.' If Master Tommy Bardell had been required to demonstrate his skill at tip-cheese then and there in Court, under the immediate eye of Mr Justice Stareleigh, he would, very likely, have made a miserable fiasco.

So I have always ruled out the scientific demand and its implied conclusion as void and vain and foolish. The real difficulties in these enquiries are to be found, partly in the exquisite skill to which the art of the conjurer is sometimes brought, partly to the rarity of the faculty of keen and clear observation, partly to inaccurate and unreliable memory, a little to the commonness of lying: but most of all to the vast and bottomless credulity of the race of men. It is not a case of a plausible tale deceiving a simpleton; it is a case of homely strangers going to an hotel in a busy seaside town, telling the managing director of the concern that they are leaving him a couple of million in their wills, and living at the hotel free of payment for eight or nine months. What is to be expected when the managing director — the type is common — devotes his talents to psychical research?

Still, with all this in my mind, I persevered; perhaps not altogether displeased at the thought that, so far as clear and final and general conclusions were concerned, the quest was a hopeless one. After all, there is something eminently human in the desire of impossible things. To seek for possibilities is rather the business of the lower animals than of man. To be more specific: it had often struck me that from the singular phenomena grouped together under the heading of *poltergeist* there might, possibly or even probably, emerge a good deal of light on the doings and showings of modern spiritualism. In both cases, naturally, a huge discount has to be made. No doubt, the *poltergeist* was often a bad child, delighting in annoying, alarming, and humbugging its elders, delighting also in playing the leading part in the comedy. Sometimes, hysteria was to be expected; and hysteria is capable of anything. But it seems to me that there was a very considerable remanent of *poltergeist* cases in which mischief and trickery and ordinary hysteria were necessarily excluded from consideration. As to the other end of the enquiry, spiritualism; its history might, in a sense, be called a sad one. The last time I looked into the leading spiritualist journal I saw on one page a description of the unpleasing methods by which the medium had hidden the flowers that were to drop later from the spirit world on to the séance table; on another page was a brief announcement that an eminent spiritualist had declared the equally eminent Mr X, the spirit photographer, to be a highly fraudulent person. For the time, at all events, I decided on occupying myself with the manifestations of the simple *poltergeist*.

And, as it happened, a favourable opportunity came in my way. Soon after my encounter with M’Calmont in Holborn, I ran across an old acquaintance of mine, Manning, who was something in the British Museum. A few years before, when he had been a lodger in a Bloomsbury street, I had been accustomed to see a good deal of him; but he had married and gone to live with his wife on some remote heights up at Hornsey, and we had not encountered one another for some time. We found a nook in which we could exchange such news as we had, and I heard a good deal about the fine old garden, ‘above the London smoke,’ and of great success with roses. Then came something interesting.

‘Six months ago,’ Manning began, ‘we took a boarder. He’s a boy of fifteen, and his father, Richards, an old friend of mine, has got a job in the East, which will keep him there for some years. He asked me if my wife and I would take charge of the lad for the next year or two, anyhow. The mother is dead, and, as Richards put it, he didn't want to leave his son with strangers. The young fellow is a day boy at Westminster, so we don't see too much of him, in term-time at all events.

'Well, he came along and seemed a decent young chap enough, and didn't give any trouble — till the last week or so. And now we don't know what to do about him.'

'What's wrong?' I asked. 'Stays out late at night and comes home drunk? That sort of thing?'

'Not a bit of it. He sticks to his work all of the evening and goes to bed soon after ten. But, wherever he is, things go smash. It began with a stone coming through the dining-room window. I thought, naturally, some hooligan had thrown it from the street, and rushed out. The only people near enough to have done it were a couple of quiet old ladies walking along and chatting to each other about the vicar. Another night the clock jumped from the shelf on to the table. Then he went into the kitchen to get me a box of matches, and the plates on the dresser began falling about. It worries my wife — and it bothers me too. Young Richards says he doesn't do it. No doubt he does, all the same; but I haven't succeeded in catching him at it, so far. I suppose I shall have to write to his father, and that won't be pleasant.'

I saw my chance. I told Manning that young Richards must be regarded, not as an infernal nuisance, but as an interesting case. On my earnest petition, Mrs Manning being, I believe, rather glad to have another man on the premises, I became the second paying guest at the Hornsey house, promising myself important and first-hand evidence. And I had better say at once that I was disappointed. As young Richards pored over his home-work at a side table, I saw a small piece of Samian ware rise up from the table at the other end of the room, hover, or seem to hover, for an instant, and then fall to the floor, breaking into fragments. I could not see how Richards could possibly be the conscious agent in this event. There was, certainly, no apparatus of threads or wires concerned in the destruction of the Samian bowl. The boy looked frightened and furious; and I found out that he had been thrashed at his preparatory school for 'wilful destruction.' But, from the enquirer's point of view, 'what next?' It seemed that one was reduced to posit an unknown force, devoid of conscious or intelligent direction, and wholly outside and beyond the sphere of physical science. And yet; this was something.

Richards in himself was an entirely ordinary and normal boy; a very decent fellow, I should say, neither too stupid nor too intelligent. It was only in his appearance that there was something not quite ordinary. I do not know that he was short for his age, but his breadth of chest made him appear short, and gave a certain vague impression of deformity, and also of considerable strength.

I had been staying with the Mannings for six or seven weeks, and it was drawing towards the darkest and shortest days in the year. There was a succession of heavy fogs, and it was after one of these that the ‘Horrible Dwarf’ scare began its course in the papers. A small child, living with its parents in a back street of Westminster, had been sent on some errand to a shop round the corner. The fog was thick down there by the river, but the distance was short, the little girl went to the shop for her mother every other day, and there were no roads to be crossed. She came back crying, and evidently badly frightened, having dropped the sixpenn’orth of tea, or whatever it was. When she had been soothed into coherence, she told a tale of a ‘dreadful little man,’ who came out of a passage, and bent down with all his teeth showing, and put out his hands as if he would take her by the throat and kill her — and then disappeared into the fog, without saying a word. Of course the neighbours came swarming to hear all about it, and deafened each other with conjectures of an impossible kind, and proposed moves and measures which led nowhere. On the whole, it was to be gathered that the horrible little man must be a stranger, since no dwarfs were known to inhabit the neighbourhood. The police were called in, and made very little of the business, ranking the offender with those tiresome but not dangerous semi-lunatics who cut off girls’ hair on the bus, or slash their clothes in the street. The paragraphs in the press were brief, and some people were inclined to think that the small messenger had let the tea or sugar spill into the gutter and had invented the dwarf in order to escape punishment. But, then, in a couple of days, there was something more serious. Late on a dismal afternoon, a man who was taking a short cut through an unfrequented by-street off the Tottenham Court Road, felt, as he said, a violent punch in the back, and found himself at the bottom of a flight of area stairs. He was bruised and shaken, but conscious, and as he looked up, he saw an ugly little man grinning at him through the railings. He struggled to his feet, and ran up the steps, shouting: ‘Stop thief!’ There were two or three people about, who came running; but they had seen nothing. Then, on another evening, five or six days later, a girl looking into a shop window in Camden Town, became aware that there was a short man, ‘with a nasty look on his face,’ standing beside her, and the next moment she felt a piercing pain in her arm, screamed out in agony and fear, and fainted. There was hurry and bustle, shouting and confusion, running here and there from all quarters, but by the time the girl had come to herself and was able to say what had happened to her, the assailant had disappeared. A doctor came up and found a long needle almost buried in her arm. The newspaper paragraphs had become halfcolumns, and people began to be afraid. And the next outrage of the ‘Horrible Dwarf’ was again at Westminster; and close to the place where the small messenger had been frightened. Again there was a dense fog; rather a thick white mist, deadening to sound, so that in those narrow streets where there is little wheeled traffic on the brightest days, such noises as these were could hardly be heard, and seemed dull and muffled as if they came from a place far off. But through this thick, stilled silence there broke a lamentable complaint. A man, making his way homeward, cautiously, warily, and slowly, passed through one of these by-streets where, for some years, there had been a patch of wretched and wasted land. Four or five cottages had been pulled down, and for some reason or another the plans for re-building had fallen through, and the plot where the houses stood lay as the house-breakers had left it. There were cavernous remains of underground rooms or cellars, brickbat mountains, plaster valleys, all scattered over with fragments of mouldering beams and jagged with shattered slates; a very dismal and ruined place, separated from the pavement by a line of broken-down palings. As the homeward-bound man felt his way along the street, he thought he heard a noise of crying, a very faint, sad sound. He stopped and listened by a window, where the light from within was barely apparent through the thick, white folds of mist, and wondered whether the sound came from a child, shut up alone and frightened. He could not satisfy himself that this was so, and walked on a few paces, still listening, and thinking that he was drawing nearer to the noise of crying. He was now by the palings that hedged off the waste land, and he became sure that here was the scene of the trouble. He broke through the rotten fence, and went prowling and stumbling about, well aware, as he had often passed that way, that he might very well come to grief himself in the broken-down ruin and confusion of the place. But, with good fortune, he came without disaster to a wretched child lying on his back amidst the rubbish, sobbing and wailing most piteously. The man gave him a cheerful 'What's the matter, Tommy? Come along, and we'll make it all right,' and tried to lift the child to his feet. But the poor misery cried out in sharper anguish, and the man raised him as gently as he could and bore him away, dreadfully afraid all the while that he might stumble and fall and, as he said afterwards, do the poor little beggar in.

However, he brought his burden safely out of the horrible pits, and rang the bell at the first house he came to. The rescuer and the people of the house saw a terrible sight. It was a poor place, with a bed in the sitting-room, and on this they laid the wreckage. It was a boy of nine or ten. One leg seemed bent under him, and when they tried to straighten it the child screamed with pain. But it was the boy's face that frightened them. It was all swollen and bloody, and black with bruises, and the blood was still gushing from the nostrils, which were as if they had been stamped on by the hoof of a horse. One went out and shouted through the fog for the police; and in time the poor boy was taken in an ambulance to the hospital. In a day or two, a little mended and recovered, he told his tale of a twisted man that came out of the mist, and took him up as if he would have broken him, and carried him over the fence and threw him down, and then stamped with his feet on his face.

The newspapers altered their headline to 'Devilish Dwarf,' and cursed the police — and so forth.

And it was after this most detestable outrage that Manning horrified me one night, as we sat by the fire with the rest of the house abed. He told me that he was seriously afraid that young Richards was guilty of these abominations. He urged that they had all taken place at a time when the boy was on his way from Westminster to Hornsey, that he had certainly been late home on the occasions of the first and last of the outrages. He dwelt on his dwarfish appearance, on his great strength, but above all on those abnormal activities which had interested me in the first place.

'You know yourself there's something queer about the fellow. Upon my word, I'm afraid he's the man. And if we don't do something, it will come to murder.’

I was, indeed, horrified for a moment when he began, but at the end I laughed, I am glad to remember. I told him that the fog would amply account for Richards’s late return on the two occasions he had mentioned; that to the best of my recollection he had been back in good time on the other two evenings of outrage; and finally, and most conclusively, that he was talking nonsense. ‘Excepting only that singular faculty or fatality of his, he’s a very ordinary boy, and a good sort.’

In short, I laughed him out of it. Happily, there were no more horrors of the ‘Devilish Dwarf’ order for the rest of the winter. They stopped as suddenly as they had begun; and in the succeeding calm somebody found sense enough to write an article pointing out the helplessness of the police when confronted with the motiveless outrages of a maniac. The new generation heard all about the doings of Jack the Ripper, and the analogy seemed fair enough. And at the same time — it was, of course, pure coincidence — the *poltergeist* activity, or possession, or whatever it was, of young Richards dwindled and ceased. The house on the Hornsey heights was in all respects at peace with itself when I left it for the valley of London in the early spring.

IV

Extract from a letter received about eighteen months after ‘the early spring’ mentioned above.

… Now, as to this M’Calmont business. In your place, I should certainly go no farther — or ‘further’ — I never know which is right and which is wrong. There’s no question of bringing the story to its logical conclusion, because there isn’t one. Your theories and conjectures and the rest of it may be all right — and they may be all wrong. And just remember that for all we know M’Calmont may turn up any day, and that might be a nasty business for you. I remember Sandy M’Calmont very well, and he always struck me as a man who would be extremely (shall we say) tenacious, if he got in a temper.

I note what you say about your visit to his studio in the spring of last year. In the first place; as to the man himself. You say he struck you as very much changed: ‘silent, morose, and apparently not in the least glad to see me.’ And I gather that the Lagavulin touch was conspicuous by its absence. I don’t think there’s much significance in that. There are genial Scotchmen and frozen Scotchmen, and sometimes and naturally enough you have samples of both temperaments in one man. And, as I’ve just said, he always struck me as having a reserve of grimness. One of his race gave me a most cordial invitation to dine with him at his club, and when the evening came, I was going to say, he didn’t speak half a dozen words. That’s a figure of speech; but, to be strictly accurate, if he had been ‘measured up,’ I don’t think his remarks all through the evening would have exceeded a hundred words. He was all right the next time we met. Some of them are like that.

You say that all the pictures you had seen when you went to the studio the autumn before had been cleared away, and that there was a new lot on the walls. The change you noticed is certainly interesting: the reduction of the elaborate landscapes into mere backgrounds, the trees barely indicated, the detail shadowy, and so forth: the Twisted Man promoted from a sort of super to be the real subject of the picture— ‘a devilish figure,’ as you say, with, I gather, minor demons grouped about him, being instructed in strange traps and chases, in obscure employments, in pastimes that did not strike you as too agreeable. I was rather reminded of an old lacquer bureau I grew up with. I remember one of the drawers was decorated with a design of a golden garden of unearthly trees, in which Chinamen in golden robes tormented a porcupine with long wands of gold. All this was certainly very odd. You didn’t like M’Calmont’s manner when he said: ‘You asked me for the story of the Twisted Man and here it is’? I don’t see much in that. But that particular gesture in one of the pictures: the man pointing to an indistinct figure on the ground, and lifting up his foot above it: well … Still, as you can see for yourself, there’s nothing you can fasten on in that. You can’t charge a painter with the crimes he chooses to paint. And that’s the fatal flaw in the whole of your case; if you think you have a case.

Of course I remember that awful business of the poor girl in the July following. It was one of the most hideous and revolting things that have happened in my time; and I think that we should both agree that Fleet Street, with all its faults, rendered a public service by its suppression of most of the facts. I knew Selwyn of the *Gazette*, who was put on the country end of the story. He managed to see a sort of diary the girl had kept

— about her visits to London and all that. I don’t care to recall what he told me. But there again, when you try to put two and two together, you’ll find it can’t be done. There was nothing in those papers that Selwyn looked at to connect the unfortunate wretch with the studio. As you say, that square in Bloomsbury where the body was found is not a great distance off, but that’s nothing to go on.

And, after all, it seems to me that either way, you would be well advised to let it alone. The man has gone away, and it seems likely that he will stay away, so there’s no fear of any recurrence of these abominations. But, on the other hand, he *may* come back, and if he did, you might find yourself in the dock on a charge of criminal libel. And I don’t think that such evidence as you have is anything like strong enough for you to put up a good defence. I say again: drop it.

I took this advice, so far as making any representations to the police authorities was concerned. After some years — nine, getting on for ten — nothing has been heard of M’Calmont. A cousin of his eventually received authority to deal with the pictures in the studio. Some of the earlier canvases appeared in due course in the dealers’ shops round St James’s and Bond Street, and others went to the auction rooms, and realised very fair prices. There is a movement, I have gathered, in certain circles of art criticism, to appreciate M’Calmont’s work very highly. One critic wrote lately: ‘It is all old school, if you like, but there is something there that the old school never had; and I don’t think that any of us quite know what it is. And I am convinced that collectors, public and private, will do well to keep a very keen eye on M’Calmont. At the present prices they are undoubted bargains.’

And the studios are still asking where M’Calmont got his model for the wonderful Twisted Man.

There was one circumstance which I failed to mention, when I consulted the friend who wrote me the letter of advice. I am not sure why I left it out of my story; possibly from a whimsical dislike of making the case too complete, possibly from a feeling, equally whimsical, that it was as well to keep one card at least safe and secret in my own hand.

But, two nights after the discovery of the package in Irving Square, when horror was still black and raging, I felt that I must visit that secret studio on the hill-side. It was a clear night with a red moon, just past the full, rising out of a low band of clouds, and this time I found my way without any difficulty. And just as I came down the flight of steps that led into the open square, I saw the green door of M'Calmont's studio open; very cautiously at first, inch by inch, and then wider, and a figure, vague against the darkness behind it, seemed to peer about for a moment. Then, the door was opened wide, and as quickly shut, and I saw a man, all twisted and bent so as to be dwarf-like, go capering with fantastic and extravagant gestures across the scene of light, and vanish into a narrow passage which led down the hill between garden walls and the shadowy boughs of trees. I stood still, beaten back into the shelter of my steps, drawing a long breath. I had recognised very well that dancing and terrible figure, and I was quite overcome by the utter impossibility of that which I had certainly seen. I had been living for some time with gathering suspicions of some dreadful and mysterious connection between the work of the studio and the horror of the waste place in Westminster; but they had been vague surmises and unshapen fears. But this was delirium; nightmare walking visibly abroad. I shook myself out of my terror and went briskly up to the studio door and rang the bell.

The door was opened by M'Calmont's handy man whom I had seen pottering about on my last visit. I asked him if Mr M'Calmont were at home.

'Not at the moment, sir,' he replied. 'But please to step in. Mr M'Calmont told me he'd be back in a minute; he's only gone to post a letter — and I'm sure he'd be very sorry to miss you.'

I followed the man to the studio, which was all lit up. I stood there in a great bewilderment.

'But, William,' I said, 'I saw somebody come out by that door just as I was coming down the steps. But it was a twisted sort of man, like that man in all Mr M'Calmont's pictures. I thought it must be the model.' The notion had flashed into my mind that moment, as with a deep sigh of relief.

William looked puzzled.

‘It must have been Mr M’Calmont, sir. There’s nobody else been here tonight. He went out a couple of minutes ago.’

But the man I saw was twisted; crooked. And he was dancing about like a lunatic.’

‘Then, sir, I think that was Mr M’Calmont all right. I expect he was doing what he calls his Physical Jerks, thinking there would be nobody about to see him. He says it’s strongly recommended by the doctors. But do be seated, sir, if you please.’

I was staring at a great sheet of paper on an easel. It was covered with black charcoal outlines, to me significant and most awful. I had heard something of the contents of the package that had been found under the bushes of Irving Square.

I told the man I really could not wait. I hurried out of the place, and struck away up to the north, and made as quickly as I could for the broad and jangling streets, and so got home at last, avoiding dark narrows and short cuts all the way.

I do not know how long William waited for his master to return. But he waited vainly.

The Bright Boy

I

YOUNG JOSEPH LAST, having finally gone down from Oxford, wondered a good deal what he was to do next and for the years following next. He was an orphan from early boyhood, both his parents having died of typhoid within a few days of each other when Joseph was ten years old, and he remembered very little of Dunham, where his father ended a long line of solicitors, practising in the place since 1707. The Lasts had once been very comfortably off. They had intermarried now and again with the gentry of the neighbourhood and did a good deal of the county business, managing estates, collecting rents, officiating as stewards for several manors, living generally in a world of quiet but snug prosperity, rising to their greatest height, perhaps, during the Napoleonic Wars and afterwards. And then they began to decline, not violently at all, but very gently, so that it was many years before they were aware of the process that was going on, slowly, surely. Economists, no doubt, understand very well how the country and the country town gradually became less important soon after the Battle of Waterloo; and the causes of the decay and change which vexed Cobbett so sadly, as he saw, or thought he saw, the life and strength of the land being sucked up to nourish the monstrous excrescence of London. Anyhow, even before the railways came, the assembly rooms of the country towns grew dusty and desolate, the county families ceased to come to their “town houses” for the winter season, and the little theatres, where Mrs. Siddons and Grimaldi had appeared in their divers parts, rarely opened their doors, and the skilled craftsmen, the clock-makers and the furniture makers and the like began to drift away to the big towns and to the capital city. So it was with Dunham. Naturally the fortunes of the Lasts sank with the fortunes of the town; and there had been speculations which had not turned out well, and people spoke of a heavy loss in foreign bonds. When Joseph’s father died, it was found that there was enough to educate the boy and keep him in strictly modest comfort and not much more.

He had his home with an uncle who lived at Blackheath, and after a few years at Mr. Jones's well-known preparatory school, he went to Merchant Taylors and thence to Oxford. He took a decent degree (2nd in Greats) and then began that wondering process as to what he was to do with himself. His income would keep him in chops and steaks, with an occasional roast fowl, and three or four weeks on the Continent once a year. If he liked, he could do nothing, but the prospect seemed tame and boring. He was a very decent Classical scholar, with something more than the average schoolmaster's purely technical knowledge of Latin and Greek and professional interest in them: still, schoolmastering seemed his only clear and obvious way of employing himself. But it did not seem likely that he would get a post at any of the big public schools. In the first place, he had rather neglected his opportunities at Oxford. He had gone to one of the obscurer colleges, one of those colleges which you may read about in memoirs dealing with the first years of the nineteenth century as centres and fountains of intellectual life; which for some reason or no reason have fallen into the shadow. There is nothing against them in any way; but nobody speaks of them any more. In one of these places Joseph Last made friends with good fellows, quiet and cheeerful men like himself; but they were not, in the technical sense of the term, the "good friends" which a prudent young man makes at the University. One or two had the Bar in mind, and two or three the Civil Service; but most of them were bound for country curacies and country offices. Generally, and for practical purposes, they were "out of it": they were not the men whose whispers could lead to anything profitable in high quarters. And then, again, even in those days, games were getting important in the creditable schools; and there, young Last was very decidedly out of it. He wore spectacles with lenses divided in some queer manner: his athletic disability was final and complete.

He pondered, and thought at first of setting up a small preparatory school in one of the well-to-do London suburbs; a day-school where parents might have their boys well-grounded from the very beginning, for comparatively modest fees, and yet have their upbringing in their own hands. It had often struck Last that it was a barbarous business to send a little chap of seven or eight away from the comfortable and affectionate habit of his home to a strange place among cold strangers; to bare boards, an inky smell, and grammar on an empty stomach in the morning. But consulting with Jim Newman of his old college, he was warned by that sage to drop his scheme and leave it on the ground. Newman pointed out in the first place that there was no money in teaching unless it was combined with hotel-keeping. That, he said, was all right, and more than all right; and he surmised that many people who kept hotels in the ordinary way would give a good deal to practise their art and mystery under Housemaster's Rules. "You needn't pay so very much for your furniture, you know. You don't want to make the boys into young sybarites. Besides, there's nothing a healthy-minded boy hates more than stuffiness: what he likes is clean fresh air and plenty of it. And, you know, old chap, fresh air is cheap enough. And then with the food, there's apt to be trouble in the ordinary hotel if it's uneatable; but in the sort of hotel we're talking of, a little accident with the beef or mutton affords a very valuable opportunity for the exercise of the virtue of self-denial."

Last listened to all this with a mournful grin.

"You seem to know all about it," he said. "Why don't you go in for it yourself?"

"I couldn't keep my tongue in my cheek. Besides, I don't think it's fair sport. I'm going out to India in the autumn. What about pig-sticking?"

"And there's another thing," he went on after a meditative pause. "That notion of yours about a day prep. school is rotten. The parents wouldn't say thank you for letting them keep their kids at home when they're all small and young. Some people go so far as to say that the chief purpose of schools is to allow parents a good excuse for getting rid of their children. That's nonsense. Most fathers and mothers are very fond of their children and like to have them about the house; when they're young, at all events. But somehow or other, they've got it into their heads that strange schoolmasters know more about bringing up a small boy than his own people; and there it is. So, on all counts, drop that scheme of yours."

Last thought it over, and looked about him in the scholastic world, and came to the conclusion that Newman was right. For two or three years he took charge of reading parties in the long vacation. In the winter he found occupation in the coaching of backward boys, in preparing boys not so backward for scholarship examinations; and his little text-book, *Beginning Greek*, was found quite useful in Lower School. He did pretty well on the whole, though the work began to bore him sadly, and such money as he earned, added to his income, enabled him to live, in the way he liked, comfortably enough. He had a couple of rooms in one of the streets going down from the Strand to the river, for which he paid a pound a week, had bread and cheese and odds and ends for lunch, with beer from his own barrel in the cellar, and dined simply but sufficiently now in one, now in another of the snug taverns which then abounded in the quarter. And, now and again, once a month or so, perhaps, instead of the tavern dinners, there was the play at the Vaudeville or the Olympic, the Globe or the Strand, with supper and something hot to follow. The evening might turn into a little party: old Oxford friends would look him up in his rooms between six and seven; Zouch would gather from the Temple and Medwin from Buckingham Street, and possibly Garraway, taking the Yellow Albion ‘bus, would descend from his remote steep in the northern parts of London, would knock at 14, Mowbray Street, and demand pipes, porter, and the pit at a good play. And, on rare occasions, another member of the little society, Noel, would turn up. Noel lived at Turnham Green in a red brick house which was then thought merely old-fashioned, which would now — but it was pulled down long ago — be distinguished as choice Queen Anne or Early Georgian. He lived there with his father, a retired official of the British Museum, and through a man whom he had known at Oxford, he had made some way in literary journalism, contributing regularly to an important weekly paper. Hence the consequence of his occasional descents on Buckingham Street, Mowbray Street, and the Temple. Noel, as in some sort a man of letters, or, at least, a professional journalist, was a member of Blacks’ Club, which in those days had exiguous premises in Maiden Lane. Noel would go round the haunts of his friends, and gather them to stout and oysters, and guide them into some neighbouring theatre pit, whence they viewed excellent acting and a cheerful, nonsensical play, enjoyed both, and were ready for supper at the Tavistock. This done, Noel would lead the party to Blacks’, where they, very likely, saw some of the actors who had entertained them earlier in the evening, and Noel’s friends, the journalists and men-of-letters, with a painter and a black-and-white man here and there. Here, Last enjoyed himself very much, more especially among the actors, who seemed to him more genial than the literary men. He became especially friendly with one of the players, old Meredith Mandeville, who had talked with the elder Kean, was reliable in the smaller Shakespearean parts, and had engaging tales to tell of early days in county circuits. “You had nine shillings a week to begin with. When you got to fifteen shillings you gave your landlady eight or nine shillings, and had the rest to play with. You felt a prince. And the county families often used to come and see us in the Green Room: most agreeable."

With this friendly old gentleman, whose placid and genial serenity was not marred at all by incalculable quantities of gin, Last loved to converse, getting glimpses of a life strangely remote from his own: vagabondage, insecurity, hard times, and jollity; and against it all as a background, the lighted murmur of the stage, voices uttering tremendous things, and the sense of moving in two worlds. The old man, by his own account, had not been eminently prosperous or successful, and yet he had relished his life, and drew humours from its disadvantages, and made hard times seem an adventure. Last used to express his envy of the player's career, dwelling on the dull insignificance of his own labours, which, he said, were a matter of tinkering small boys' brains, teaching older boys the tricks of the examiners, and generally doing things that didn't matter.

"It's no more education than bricklaying is architecture," he said one night. "And there's no fun in it."

Old Mandeville, on his side, listened with interest to these revelations of a world as strange and unknown to him as the life of the floats was to the tutor. Broadly speaking, he knew nothing of any books but play books. He had heard, no doubt, of things called examinations, as most people have heard of Red Indian initiations; but to him one was as remote as the other. It was interesting and strange to him to be sitting at Blacks' and actually talking to a decent young fellow who was seriously engaged in this queer business. And there were — Last noted with amazement — points at which their two circles touched, or so it seemed. The tutor, wishing to be agreeable, began one night to talk about the origins of King Lear. The actor found himself listening to Celtic legends which to him sounded incomprehensible nonsense. And when it came to the Knight who fought the King of Fairyland for the hand of Cordelia till Doomsday, he broke in: "*Lear* is a pill; there's no doubt of that. You're too young to have seen Barry O'Brien's *Lear*: magnificent. The part has been attempted since his day. But it has never been played. I have depicted the Fool myself, and, I must say, not without some meed of applause. I remember once at Stafford… " and Last was content to let him tell his tale, which ended, oddly enough, with a bullock's heart for supper.

But one night when Last was grumbling, as he often did, about the fragmentary, desultory, and altogether unsatisfactory nature of his occupation, the old man interrupted him in a wholly unexpected vein.

"It is possible," he began, "mark you, I say possible, that I may be the means of alleviating the tedium of your lot. I was calling some days ago on a cousin of mine, a Miss Lucy Pilliner, a very agreeable woman. She has a considerable knowledge of the world, and, I hope you will forgive the liberty, but I mentioned in the course of our conversation that I had lately become acquainted with a young gentleman of considerable scholastic distinction, who was somewhat dissatisfied with the too abrupt and frequent entrances and exits of his present tutorial employment. It struck me that my cousin received these remarks with a certain reflective interest, but I was not prepared to receive this letter."

Mandeville handed Last the letter. It began: "My dear Ezekiel," and Last noted out of the corner of his eye a glance from the actor which pleaded for silence and secrecy on this point. The letter went on to say in a manner almost as dignified as Mandeville's, that the writer had been thinking over the circumstances of the young tutor, as related by her cousin in the course of their most agreeable conversation of Friday last, and she was inclined to think that she knew of an educational position shortly available in a private family, which would be of a more permanent and satisfactory nature. "Should your friend feel interested," Miss Pilliner ended, "I should be glad if he would communicate with me, with a view to a meeting being arranged, at which the matter could be discussed with more exact particulars.

"And what do you think of it?" said Mandeville, as Last returned Miss Pilliner's letter.

For a moment Last hesitated. There is an attraction and also a repulsion in the odd and the improbable, and Last doubted whether educational work obtained through an actor at Blacks' and a lady at Islington — he had seen the name at the top of the letter — could be altogether solid or desirable. But brighter thoughts prevailed, and he assured Mandeville that he would be only too glad to go thoroughly into the matter, thanking him very warmly for his interest. The old man nodded benignly, gave him the letter again that he might take down Miss Pilliner's address, and suggested an immediate note asking for an appointment.

"And now," he said, "despite the carping objections of the Moody Prince, I propose to drink your jocund health to-night."

And he wished Last all the good luck in the world with hearty kindliness.

In a couple of days Miss Pilliner presented her compliments to Mr. Joseph Last and begged him to do her the favour of calling on her on a date three days ahead, at noon, "if neither day nor hour were in any way incompatible with his convenience." They might then, she proceeded, take advantage of the occasion to discuss a certain proposal, the nature of which, she believed, had been indicated to Mr. Last by her good cousin, Mr. Meredith Mandeville.

Corunna Square, where Miss Pilliner lived, was a small, almost a tiny, square in the remoter parts of Islington. Its two-storied houses of dim, yellowish brick were fairly covered with vines and clematis and all manner of creepers. In front of the houses were small paled gardens, gaily flowering, and the square enclosure held little else besides a venerable, wide-spreading mulberry, far older than the buildings about it. Miss Pilliner lived in the quietest corner of the square. She welcomed Last with some sort of compromise between a bow and a curtsey, and begged him to be seated in an upright arm-chair, upholstered in horse-hair. Miss Pilliner, he noted, looked about sixty, and was, perhaps, a little older. She was spare, upright, and composed; and yet one might have suspected a lurking whimsicality. Then, while the weather was discussed, Miss Pilliner offered a choice of port or sherry, sweet biscuits or plum cake. And so to the business of the day.

"My cousin, Mr. Mandeville, informed me," she began, "of a young friend of great scholastic ability, who was, nevertheless, dissatisfied with the somewhat casual and occasional nature of his employment. By a singular coincidence, I had received a letter a day or two before from a friend of mine, a Mrs. Marsh. She is, in fact, a distant connection, some sort of cousin, I suppose, but not being a Highlander or a Welshwoman, I really cannot say how many times removed. She was a lovely creature; she is still a handsome woman. Her name was Manning, Arabella Manning, and what possessed her to marry Mr. Marsh I really cannot say. I only saw the man once, and I thought him her inferior in every respect, and considerably older. However, she declares that he is a devoted husband and an excellent person in every respect. They first met, odd as it must seem, in Pekin, where Arabella was governess in one of the Legation families. Mr. Marsh, I was given to understand, represented highly important commercial interests at the capital of the Flowery Land, and being introduced to my connection, a mutual attraction seems to have followed. Arabella Manning resigned her position in the attaché’s family, and the marriage was solemnised in due course. I received this intelligence nine years ago in a letter from Arabella, dated at Pekin, and my relative ended by saying that she feared it would be impossible to furnish an address for an immediate reply, as Mr. Marsh was about to set out on a mission of an extremely urgent nature on behalf of his firm, involving a great deal of travelling and frequent changes of address. I suffered a good deal of uneasiness on Arabella’s account; it seemed such an unsettled way of life, and so unhomelike. However, a friend of mine who is in the City assured me that there was nothing unusual in the circumstances, and that there was no cause for alarm. Still, as the years went on, and I received no further communication from my cousin, I made up my mind that she had probably contracted some tropical disease which had carried her off, and that Mr. Marsh had heartlessly neglected to communicate to me the intelligence of the sad event. But a month ago, almost to the day — Miss Pilliner referred to an almanac on the table beside her — I was astonished and delighted to receive a letter from Arabella. She wrote from one of the most luxurious and exclusive hotels in the West End of London, announcing the return of her husband and herself to their native land after many years of wandering. Mr. Marsh’s active concern in business had, it appeared, at length terminated in a highly prosperous and successful manner, and he was now in negotiation for the purchase of a small estate in the country, where he hoped to spend the remainder of his days in peaceful retirement.”

Miss Pilliner paused and replenished Last’s glass.

“I am so sorry,” she continued, “to trouble you with this long narrative, which, I am sure, must be a sad trial of your patience. But, as you will see presently, the circumstances are a little out of the common, and as you are, I trust, to have a particular interest in them, I think it is only right that you should be fully informed — fair and square, and all above board, as my poor father used to say in his bluff manner.

"Well, Mr. Last, I received, as I have said, this letter from Arabella with its extremely gratifying intelligence. As you may guess, I was very much relieved to hear that all had turned out so felicitously. At the end of her letter, Arabella begged me to come and see them at Billing's Hotel, saying that her husband was most anxious to have the pleasure of meeting me."

Miss Pilliner went to a drawer in a writing-table by the window and took out a letter.

"Arabella was always considerate. She says, 'I know that you have always lived very quietly, and are not accustomed to the turmoil of fashionable London. But you need not be alarmed. Billing's Hotel is no bustling modern caravanserai. Everything is very quiet, and, besides, we have our own small suite of apartments. Herbert — her husband, Mr. Last — positively insists on your paying us a visit, and you must not disappoint us. If next Thursday, the 22nd, suits you, a carriage shall be sent at four o'clock to bring you to the hotel, and will take you back to Corunna Square, after you have joined us in a little dinner.'

"Very kind, most considerate; don't you agree with me, Mr. Last? But look at the postscript."

Last took the letter, and read in a tight, neat script: "PS. We have a wonderful piece of news for you. It is too good to write, so I shall keep it for our meeting."

Last handed back Mrs. Marsh's letter. Miss Pilliner's long and ceremonious approach was lulling him into a mild stupor; he wondered faintly when she would come to the point, and what the point would be like when she came to it, and, chiefly, what on earth this rather dull family history could have to do with him.

Miss Pilliner proceeded.

"Naturally, I accepted so kindly and urgent an invitation. I was anxious to see Arabella once more after her long absence, and I was glad to have the opportunity of forming my own judgment as to her husband, of whom I knew absolutely nothing. And then, Mr. Last, I must confess that I am not deficient in that spirit of curiosity, which gentlemen have scarcely numbered with female virtues. I longed to be made partaker in the wonderful news which Arabella had promised to impart on our meeting, and I wasted many hours in speculating as to its nature.

“The day came. A neat brougham with its attendant footman arrived at the appointed hour, and I was driven in smooth luxury to Billing’s Hotel in Manners Street, Mayfair. There a major-domo led the way to the suite of apartments on the first floor occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Marsh. I will not waste your valuable time, Mr. Last, by expatiating on the rich but quiet luxury of their apartments; I will merely mention that my relative assured me that the Sèvres ornaments in their drawing-room had been valued at nine hundred guineas. I found Arabella still a beautiful woman, but I could not help seeing that the tropical countries in which she had lived for so many years had taken their toll of her once resplendent beauty; there was a weariness, a lassitude in her appearance and demeanour which I was distressed to observe. As to her husband, Mr. Marsh, I am aware that to form an unfavourable judgment after an acquaintance which has only lasted a few hours is both uncharitable and unwise; and I shall not soon forget the discourse which dear Mr. Venn delivered at Emmanuel Church on the very Sunday after my visit to my relative: it really seemed, and I confess it with shame, that Mr. Venn had my own case in mind, and felt it his bounden duty to warn me while it was yet time. Still, I must say that I did not take at all to Mr. Marsh. I really can’t say why. To me he was most polite; he could not have been more so. He remarked more than once on the extreme pleasure it gave him to meet at last one of whom he had heard so much from his dear Bella; he trusted that now his wandering days were over, the pleasure might be frequently repeated; he omitted nothing that the most genial courtesy might suggest. And yet, I cannot say that the impression I received was a favourable one. However; I dare say that I was mistaken.”

There was a pause. Last was resigned. The point of the long story seemed to recede into some far distance, into vanishing prospective.

“There was nothing definite?” he suggested.

“No; nothing definite. I may have thought that I detected a lack of candour, a hidden reserve behind all the generosity of Mr. Marsh’s expressions. Still; I hope I was mistaken.

“But I am forgetting in these trivial and I trust erroneous observations, the sole matter that is of consequence; to you, at least, Mr. Last. Soon after my arrival, before Mr. Marsh had appeared, Arabella confided to me her great piece of intelligence. Her marriage had been blessed by offspring. Two years after her union with Mr. Marsh, a child had been born, a boy. The birth took place at a town in South America, Santiago de Chile — I have verified the place in my atlas — where Mr. Marsh's visit had been more protracted than usual. Fortunately, an English doctor was available, and the little fellow throve from the first, and as Arabella, his proud mother, boasted, was now a beautiful little boy, both handsome and intelligent to a remarkable degree. Naturally, I asked to see the child, but Arabella said that he was not in the hotel with them. After a few days it was thought that the dense and humid air of London was not suiting little Henry very well; and he had been sent with a nurse to a resort in the Isle of Thanet, where he was reported to be in the best of health and spirits.

"And now, Mr. Last, after this tedious but necessary preamble, we arrive at that point where you, I trust, may be interested. In any case, as you may suppose, the life which the exigencies of business compelled the Marshes to lead, involving as it did almost continual travel, would have been little favourable to a course of systematic education for the child. But this obstacle apart, I gathered that Mr. Marsh holds very strong views as to the folly of premature instruction. He declared to me his conviction that many fine minds had been grievously injured by being forced to undergo the process of early stimulation; and he pointed out that, by the nature of the case, those placed in charge of very young children were not persons of the highest acquirements and the keenest intelligence. 'As you will readily agree, Miss Pilliner,' he remarked to me, 'great scholars are not employed to teach infants their alphabet, and it is not likely that the mysteries of the multiplication table will be imparted by a master of mathematics.' In consequence, he urged, the young and budding intelligence is brought into contact with dull and inferior minds, and the damage may well be irreparable."

There was much more, but gradually light began to dawn on the dazed man. Mr. Marsh had kept the virgin intelligence of his son Henry undisturbed and uncorrupted by inferior and incompetent culture. The boy, it was judged, was now ripe for true education, and Mr. and Mrs. Marsh had begged Miss Pilliner to make enquiries, and to find, if she could, a scholar who would undertake the whole charge of little Henry's mental upbringing. If both parties were satisfied, the engagement would be for seven years at least, and the appointments, as Miss Pilliner called the salary, would begin with five hundred pounds a year, rising by an annual increment of fifty pounds. References, particulars of University distinctions would be required: Mr. Marsh, long absent from England, was ready to proffer the names of his bankers. Miss Pilliner was quite sure, however, that Mr. Last might consider himself engaged, if the position appealed to him.

Last thanked Miss Pilliner profoundly. He told her that he would like a couple of days in which to think the matter over. He would then write to her, and she would put him into communication with Mr. Marsh. And so he went away from Corunna Square in a mood of great bewilderment and doubt. Unquestionably, the position had many advantages. The pay was very good. And he would be well lodged and well fed. The people were wealthy, and Miss Pilliner had assured him: “You will have no cause to complain of your entertainment.” And from the educational point of view, it would certainly be an improvement on the work he had been doing since he left the University. He had been an odd-job man, a tinker, a patcher, a cobbler of other people’s work; here was a chance to show that he was a master craftsman. Very few people, if any, in the teaching profession had ever enjoyed such an opportunity as this. Even the sixth-form masters in the big public schools must sometimes groan at having to underpin and relay the bad foundations of the Fifth and Fourth. He was to begin at the beginning, with no false work to hamper him: “from A B C to Plato, Æschylus, and Aristotle,” he murmured to himself. Undoubtedly it was a big chance.

And on the other side? Well, he would have to give up London, and he had grown fond of the homely, cheerful London that he knew; his comfortable rooms in Mowbray Street, quiet enough down by the unfrequented Embankment, and yet but a minute or two from the ringing Strand. Then there were the meetings with the old Oxford friends, the nights at the theatre, the snug taverns with their curtained boxes, and their good chops and steaks and stout, and chimes of midnight and after, heard in cordial company at Blacks’: all these would have to go. Miss Pilliner had spoken of Mr. Marsh as looking for some place a considerable distance from town, “in the real country.” He had his eye, she said, on a house on the Welsh border, which he thought of taking furnished, with the option of buying, if he eventually found it suited him. You couldn't look up old friends in London and get back the same night, if you lived somewhere on the Welsh border. Still, there would be the holidays, and a great deal might be done in the holidays.

And yet; there was still debate and doubt within his mind, as he sat eating his bread and cheese and potted meat, and drinking his beer in his sitting-room in peaceful Mowbray Street. He was influenced, he thought, by Miss Pilliner's evident dislike of Mr. Marsh, and though Miss Pilliner talked in the manner of Dr. Johnson, he had a feeling that, like a lady of the Doctor's own day, she had a bottom of good sense. Evidently she did not trust Mr. Marsh overmuch. Yet, what can the most cunning swindler do to his resident tutor? Give him cold mutton for dinner or forget to pay his salary? In either case, the remedy was simple: the resident tutor would swiftly cease to reside, and go back to London, and not be much the worse. After all, Last reflected, a man can't compel his son's tutor to invest in Uruguayan Silver or Java Spices or any other fallacious commercial undertaking, so what mattered the supposed trickiness of Marsh to him?

But again, when all had been summed up and considered, for and against; there was a vague objection remaining. To oppose this, Last could bring no argument, since it was without form of words, shapeless, and mutable as a cloud.

However, when the next morning came, there came with it a couple of letters inviting him to cram two young dunderheads with facts and figures and verbs in *mi*. The prospect was so terribly distasteful that he wrote to Miss Pilliner directly after breakfast, enclosing his College Testimonials and certain other commendatory letters he had in his desk. In due course, he had an interview with Mr. Marsh at Billing's Hotel. On the whole, each was well-enough pleased with the other. Last found Marsh a lean, keen, dark man in later middle age; there was a grizzle in his black hair above the ears, and wrinkles seamed his face about the eyes. His eyebrows were heavy, and there was a hint of a threat in his jaw, but the smile with which he welcomed Last lit up his grimmish features into a genial warmth. There was an oddity about his accent and his tone in speaking; something foreign, perhaps? Last remembered that he had journeyed about the world for many years, and supposed that the echoes of many languages sounded in his speech. His manner and address were certainly suave, but Last had no prejudice against suavity, rather, he cherished a liking for the decencies of common intercourse. Still, no doubt, Marsh was not the kind of man Miss Pilliner was accustomed to meet in Corunna Square society or among Mr. Venn's congregation. She probably suspected him of having been a pirate.

And Mr. Marsh on his side was delighted with Last. As appeared from a letter addressed by him to Miss Pilliner— "or, may I venture to say, Cousin Lucy?" — Mr. Last was exactly the type of man he and Arabella had hoped to secure through Miss Pilliner's recommendation. They did not want to give their boy into the charge of a flashy man of the world with a substratum of learning. Mr. Last was, it was evident, a quiet and unworldly scholar, more at home among books than among men; the very tutor Arabella and himself had desired for their little son. Mr. Marsh was profoundly grateful to Miss Pilliner for the great service she had rendered to Arabella, to himself, and to Henry.

And, indeed, as Mr. Meredith Mandeville would have said, Last looked the part. No doubt, the spectacles helped to create the remote, retired, Dominie Sampson impression.

In a week's time it was settled, he was to begin his duties. Mr. Marsh wrote a handsome cheque, "to defray any little matters of outfit, travelling expenses, and so forth; nothing to do with your salary." He was to take train to a certain large town in the west, and there he would be met and driven to the house, where Mrs. Marsh and his pupil were already established— "beautiful country, Mr. Last; I am sure you will appreciate it."

There was a famous farewell gathering of the old friends. Zouch and Medwin, Garraway and Noel came from near and far. There was grilled sole before the mighty steak, and a roast fowl after it. They had decided that as it was the last time, perhaps, they would not go to the play, but sit and talk about the mahogany. Zouch, who was understood to be the ruler of the feast, had conferred with the head waiter, and when the cloth was removed, a rare and curious port was solemnly set before them. They talked of the old days when they were up at Wells together, pretended — though they knew better — that the undergraduate who had cut his own father in Piccadilly was a friend of theirs, retold jokes that must have been older than the wine, related tales of Moll and Meg, and the famous history of Melcombe, who screwed up the Dean in his own rooms. And then there was the affair of the

Poses Plastiques. Certain lewd fellows, as one of the Dons of Wells College expressed it, had procured scandalous figures from the wax-work booth at the fair, and had disposed them by night about the fountain in the college garden in such a manner that their scandal was shamefully increased. The perpetrators of this infamy had never been discovered: the five friends looked knowingly at each other, pursed their lips, and passed the port.

The old wine and the old stories blended into a mood of gentle meditation; and then, at the right moment, Noel carried them off to Blacks' and new company. Last sought out old Mandeville and related, with warm gratitude, the happy issue of his intervention.

The chimes sounded, and they all went their several ways.

II

Though Joseph Last was by no means a miracle of observation and deduction, he was not altogether the simpleton among his books that Mr. Marsh had judged him. It was not so very long before a certain uneasiness beset him in his new employment.

At first everything had seemed very well. Mr. Marsh had been right in thinking that he would be charmed by the scene in which the White House was set. It stood, terraced on a hill-side, high above a grey and silver river winding in esses through a lonely, lovely valley. Above it, to the east, was a vast and shadowy and ancient wood, climbing to the high ridge of the hill, and descending by height and by depth of green to the level meadows and to the sea. And, standing on the highest point of the wood above the White House, Last looked westward between the boughs and saw the lands across the river, and saw the country rise and fall in billow upon billow to the huge dim wall of the mountain, blue in the distance, and white farms shining in the sun on its vast side. Here was a man in a new world. There had been no such country as this about Dunham in the Midlands, or in the surroundings of Blackheath or Oxford; and he had visited nothing like it on his reading parties. He stood amazed, enchanted under the green shade, beholding a great wonder. Close beside him the well bubbled from the grey rocks, rising out of the heart of the hill.

And in the White House, the conditions of life were altogether pleasant. He had been struck by the dark beauty of Mrs. Marsh, who was clearly, as Miss

Pilliner had told him, a great many years younger than her husband. And he noted also that effect which her cousin had ascribed to years of living in the tropics, though he would hardly have called it weariness or lassitude. It was something stranger than that; there was the mark of flame upon her, but Last did not know whether it were the flame of the sun, or the stranger fires of places that she had entered, perhaps long ago.

But the pupil, little Henry, was altogether a surprise and a delight. He looked rather older than seven, but Last judged that this impression was not so much due to his height or physical make as to the bright alertness and intelligence of his glance. The tutor had dealt with many little boys, though with none so young as Henry; and he had found them as a whole a stodgy and podgy race, with faces that recorded a fixed abhorrence of learning and a resolution to learn as little as possible. Last was never surprised at this customary expression. It struck him as eminently natural. He knew that all elements are damnably dull and difficult. He wondered why it was inexorably appointed that the unfortunate human creature should pass a great portion of its life from the very beginning in doing things that it detested; but so it was, and now for the syntax of the optative.

But there were no such obstinate entrenchments in the face or the manner of Henry Marsh. He was a handsome boy, who looked brightly and spoke brightly, and evidently did not regard his tutor as a hostile force that had been brought against him. He was what some people would have called, oddly enough, old-fashioned; child-like, but not at all childish, with now and then a whimsical turn of phrase more suggestive of a humorous man than a little boy. This older habit was no doubt to be put down partly to the education of travel, the spectacle of the changing scene and the changing looks of men and things, but very largely to the fact that he had always been with his father and mother, and knew nothing of the company of children of his own age.

“Henry has had no playmates,” his father explained. “He’s had to be content with his mother and myself. It couldn’t be helped. We’ve been on the move all the time; on shipboard or staying at cosmopolitan hotels for a few weeks, and then on the road again. The little chap had no chance of making any small friends.”

And the consequence was, no doubt, that lack of childishness that Last had noted. It was, probably, a pity that it was so. Childishness, after all, was a wonder world, and Henry seemed to know nothing of it: he had lost what might be, perhaps, as valuable as any other part of human experience, and he might find the lack of it as he grew older. Still, there it was; and Last ceased to think of these possibly fanciful deprivations, when he began to teach the boy, as he had promised himself, from the very beginning. Not quite from the beginning; the small boy confessed with a disarming grin that he had taught himself to read a little: "But please, sir, don't tell my father, as I know he wouldn't like it. You see, my father and mother had to leave me alone sometimes, and it was so dull, and I thought it would be such fun if I learnt to read books all by myself."

Here, thought Last, is a lesson for schoolmasters. Can learning be made a desirable secret, an excellent sport, instead of a horrible penance? He made a mental note, and set about the work before him. He found an extraordinary aptitude, a quickness in grasping his indications and explanations such as he had never known before— "not in boys twice his age, or three times his age, for the matter of that," as he reflected. This child, hardly removed from strict infancy, had something almost akin to genius — so the happy tutor was inclined to believe. Now and again, with his, "Yes, sir, I see. And then, of course… " he would veritably take the coming words out of Last's mouth, and anticipate what was, no doubt, logically the next step in the demonstration. But Last had not been accustomed to pupils who anticipated anything — save the hour for putting the books back on the shelf. And above all, the instructor was captured by the eager and intense curiosity of the instructed. He was like a man reading *The Moonstone*, or some such sensational novel, and unable to put the book down till he had read to the very last page and found out the secret. This small boy brought just this spirit of insatiable curiosity to every subject put before him. "I wish I had taught him to read," thought Last to himself. "I have no doubt he would have regarded the alphabet as we regard those entrancing and mysterious cyphers in Edgar Allan Poe's stories. And, after all, isn't that the right and rational way of looking at the alphabet?"

And then he went on to wonder whether curiosity, often regarded as a failing, almost a vice, is not, in fact, one of the greatest virtues of the spirit of man, the key to all knowledge and all the mysteries, the very sense of the secret that must be discovered.

With one thing and another: with this treasure of a pupil, with this enchantment of the strange and beautiful country about him, and with the extreme kindness and consideration shown him by Mr. and Mrs. Marsh, Last was in rich clover. He wrote to his friends in town, telling them of his happy experiences, and Zouch and Noel, meeting by chance at the Sun, the Dog, or the Triple Tun, discussed their friend's felicity.

"Proud of the pup," said Zouch.

"And pleased with the prospect," responded Noel, thinking of Last's lyrics about the woods and the waters, and the scene of the White House. "Still, *timeo Hesperides et dona ferentes*. I mistrust the west. As one of its own people said, it is a land of enchantment and illusion. You never know what may happen next. It is a fortunate thing that Shakespeare was born within the safety line. If Stratford had been twenty or thirty miles farther west… I don't like to think of it. I am quite sure that only fairy gold is dug from Welsh goldmines. And you know what happens to that."

Meanwhile, far from the lamps and rumours of the Strand, Last continued happy in his outland territory, under the great wood. But before long he received a shock. He was strolling in the terraced garden one afternoon between tea and dinner, his work done for the day; and feeling inclined for tobacco with repose, drifted towards the stone summer-house — or, perhaps, gazebo — that stood on the verge of the lawn in a coolness of dark ilex trees. Here one could sit and look down on the silver winding of the river, crossed by a grey bridge of ancient stone. Last was about to settle down when he noticed a book on the table before him. He took it up, and glanced into it, and drew in his breath, and turning over a few more pages, sank aghast upon the bench. Mr. Marsh had always deplored his ignorance of books. "I knew how to read and write and not much more," he would say, "when I was thrown into business — at the bottom of the stairs. And I've been so busy ever since that I'm afraid it's too late now to make up for lost time." Indeed, Last had noted that though Marsh usually spoke carefully enough, perhaps too carefully, he was apt to lapse in the warmth of conversation: he would talk of "fax," meaning "facts." And yet, it seemed, he had not only found time for reading, but had acquired sufficient scholarship to make out the Latin of a terrible Renaissance treatise, not generally known even to collectors of such things. Last had heard of the book; and the few pages he had glanced at showed him that it thoroughly deserved its very bad character.

It was a disagreeable surprise. He admitted freely to himself that his employer's morals were no business of his. But why should the man trouble to tell lies? Last remembered queer old Miss Pilliner's account of her impressions of him; she had detected "a lack of candour," something reserved behind a polite front of cordiality. Miss Pilliner was, certainly, an acute woman: there was an undoubted lack of candour about Marsh.

Last left the wretched volume on the summer-house table, and walked up and down the garden, feeling a good deal perturbed. He knew he was awkward at dinner, and said he felt a bit seedy, inclined to a headache. Marsh was bland and pleasant as usual, and Mrs. Marsh sympathised with Last. She had hardly slept at all last night, she complained, and felt heavy and tired. She thought there was thunder in the air. Last, admiring her beauty, confessed again that Miss Pilliner had been right. Apart from her fatigue of the moment, there was a certain tropical languor about her, something of still, burning nights and the odour of strange flowers.

Marsh brought out a very special brandy which he administered with the black coffee; he said it would do both the invalids good, and that he would keep them company. Indeed, Last confessed to himself that he felt considerably more at ease after the good dinner, the good wine, and the rare brandy. It was humiliating, perhaps, but it was impossible to deny the power of the stomach. He went to his room early and tried to convince himself that the duplicity of Marsh was no affair of his. He found an innocent, or almost innocent explanation of it before he had finished his last pipe, sitting at the open window, hearing faintly the wash of the river and gazing towards the dim lands beyond it.

"Here," he meditated, "we have a modified form of Bounderby's Disease. Bounderby said that he began life as a wretched, starved, neglected little outcast. Marsh says that he was made into an office boy or something of the sort before he had time to learn anything. Bounderby lied, and no doubt Marsh lies. It is the trick of wealthy men; to magnify their late achievements by magnifying their early disadvantages."

By the time he went to sleep he had almost decided that the young Marsh had been to a good grammar school, and had done well.

The next morning, Last awoke almost at ease again. It was no doubt a pity that Marsh indulged in a subtle and disingenuous form of boasting, and his taste in books was certainly deplorable: but he must look after that himself. And the boy made amends for all. He showed so clean a grasp of the English sentence, that Last thought he might well begin Latin before very long. He mentioned this one night at dinner, looking at Marsh with a certain humorous intention. But Marsh gave no sign that the dart had pricked him.

“That shows I was right,” he remarked. “I’ve always said there’s no greater mistake than forcing learning on children before they’re fit to take it in. People will do it, and in nine cases out of ten the children’s heads are muddled for the rest of their lives. You see how it is with Henry; I’ve kept him away from books up to now, and you see for yourself that I’ve lost him no time. He’s ripe for learning, and I shouldn’t wonder if he got ahead better in six months than the ordinary, early-crammed child would in six years.”

It might be so, Last thought, but on the whole he was inclined to put down the boy’s swift progress rather to his own exceptional intelligence than to his father’s system, or no system. And in any case, it was a great pleasure to teach such a boy. And his application to his books had certainly no injurious effect on his spirits. There was not much society within easy reach of the White House, and, besides, people did not know whether the Marshes were to settle down or whether they were transient visitors: they were chary of paying their calls while there was this uncertainty. However, the rector had called; first of all the rector and his wife, she cheery, good-humoured and chatty; he somewhat dim and vague. It was understood that the rector, a high wrangler in his day, divided his time between his garden and the invention of a flying machine. He had the character of being slightly eccentric. He came not again, but Mrs. Winslow would drive over by the forest road in the governess’s car with her two children; Nancy, a pretty fair girl of seventeen, and Ted, a boy of eleven or twelve, of that type which Last catalogued as “stodgy and podgy,” broad and thick set, with bulgy cheeks and eyss, and something of the determined expression of a young bulldog. After tea Nancy would organise games for the two boys in the garden and join in them herself with apparent relish. Henry, who had known few companions besides his parents, and had probably never played a game of any kind, squealed with delight, ran here and there and everywhere, hid behind the summer-house and popped out from the screen of the French beans with the greatest gusto, and Ted Winslow joined in with an air of protest. He was on his holidays, and his expression signified that all that sort of thing was only fit for girls and kids. Last was delighted to see Henry so ready and eager to be amused; after all he had something of the child in him. He seemed a little uncomfortable when Nancy Winslow took him on her knee after the sports were over; he was evidently fearful of Ted Winslow's scornful eye. Indeed, the young bulldog looked as if he feared that his character would be compromised by associating with so manifest and confessed a kid. The next time Mrs. Winslow took tea at the White House, Ted had a diplomatic headache and stayed at home. But Nancy found games that two could play, and she and Henry were heard screaming with joy all over the gardens. Henry wanted to show Nancy a wonderful well that he had discovered in the forest; it came, he said, from under the roots of a great yew tree. But Mrs. Marsh seemed to think that they might get lost.

Last had got over the uncomfortable incident of that villainous book in the summer-house. Writing to Noel, he had remarked that he feared his employer was a bit of an old rascal in some respects, but all right so far as he was concerned; and there it was. He got on with his job and minded his own business. Yet, now and again, his doubtful uneasiness about the man was renewed. There was a bad business at a hamlet a couple of miles away, where a girl of twelve or thirteen, coming home after dusk from a visit to a neighbour, had been set on in the wood and very vilely misused. The unfortunate child, it would appear, had been left by the scoundrel in the black dark of the forest, at some distance from the path she must have taken on her way home. A man who had been drinking late at the Fox and Hounds heard crying and screaming, "like someone in a fit," as he expressed it, and found the girl in a terrible state, and in a terrible state she had remained ever since. She was quite unable to describe the person who had so shamefully maltreated her; the shock had left her beside herself; she cried out once that something had come behind her in the dark, but she could say no more, and it was hopeless to try to get her to describe a person that, most likely, she had not even seen. Naturally, this very horrible story made something of a feature in the local paper, and one night, as Last and Marsh were sitting smoking after dinner, the tutor spoke of the affair; said something about the contrast between the peace and beauty and quiet of the scene and the villainous crime that had been done hard by. He was surprised to find that Marsh grew at once ill at ease. He rose from his chair and walked up and down the room muttering "horrible business, shameful business"; and when he sat down again, with the light full on him, Last saw the face of a frightened man. The hand that Marsh laid on the table was twitching uneasily; he beat with his foot on the floor as he tried to bring his lips to order, and there was a dreadful fear in his eyes.

Last was shocked and astonished at the effect he had produced with a few conventional phrases. Nervously, willing to tide over a painful situation, he began to utter something even more conventional to the effect that the loveliness of external nature had never conferred immunity from crime, or some stuff to the same inane purpose. But Marsh, it was clear, was not to be soothed by anything of the kind. He started again from his chair and struck his hand upon the table, with a fierce gesture of denial and refusal.

"Please, Mr. Last, let it be. Say no more about it. It has upset Mrs. Marsh and myself very much indeed. It horrifies us to think that we have brought our boy here, to this peaceful place as we thought, only to expose him to the contagion of this dreadful affair. Of course we have given the servants strict orders not to say a word about it in Henry's presence; but you know what servants are, and what very sharp ears children have. A chance word or two may take root in a child's mind and contaminate his whole nature. It is, really, a very terrible thought. You must have noticed how distressed Mrs. Marsh has been for the last few days. The only thing we can do is to try and forget it all, and hope no harm has been done."

Last murmured a word or two of apology and agreement, and the talk moved off into safer country. But when the tutor was alone, he considered what he had seen and heard very curiously. He thought that Marsh's looks did not match his words. He spoke as the devoted father, afraid that his little boy should overhear nauseous and offensive gossip and conjecture about a horrible and obscene crime. But he looked like a man who had caught sight of a gallows, and that, Last felt, was altogether a very different kind of fear. And, then, there was his reference to his wife. Last had noticed that since the crime in the forest there had been something amiss with her; but, again, he mistrusted Marsh's comment. Here was a woman whose usual habit was a rather lazy good humour; but of late there had been a look and an air of suppressed fury, the burning glance of a jealous woman, the rage of despised beauty. She spoke little, and then as briefly as possible; but one might suspect flames and fires within. Last had seen this and wondered, but not very much, being resolved to mind his own business. He had supposed there had been some difference of opinion between her and her husband; very likely about the re-arrangement of the drawing-room furniture and hiring a grand piano. He certainly had not thought of tracing Mrs. Marsh’s altered air to the villainous crime that had been committed. And now Marsh was telling him that these glances of concealed rage were the outward signs of tender maternal anxiety; and not one word of all that did he believe. He put Marsh’s half-hidden terror beside his wife’s half-hidden fury; he thought of the book in the summer-house and things that were being whispered about the horror in the wood: and loathing and dread possessed him. He had no proof, it was true; merely conjecture, but he felt no doubt. There could be no other explanation. And what could he do, but leave this terrible place?

Last could get no sleep. He undressed and went to bed, and tossed about in the half-dark of the summer night. Then he lit his lamp and dressed again, and wondered whether he had better not steal away without a word, and walk the eight miles to the station, and escape by the first train that went to London. It was not merely loathing for the man and his works; it was deadly fear, also, that urged him to fly from the White House. He felt sure that if Marsh guessed at his suspicions of the truth, his life might well be in danger. There was no mercy or scruple in that evil man. He might even now be at his door, listening, waiting. There was cold terror in his heart, and cold sweat pouring at the thought. He paced softly up and down his room in his bare feet, pausing now and again to listen for that other soft step outside. He locked the door as silently as he could, and felt safer. He would wait till the day came and people were stirring about the house, and then he might venture to come out and make his escape.

And yet when he heard the servants moving over their work, he hesitated. The light of the sun was shining in the valley, and the white mist over the silver river floated upward and vanished; the sweet breath of the wood entered the window of his room. The black horror and fear were raised from his spirit. He began to hesitate, to suspect his judgment, to enquire whether he had not rushed to his black conclusions in a panic of the night. His logical deductions at midnight seemed to smell of nightmare in the brightness of that valley; the song of the aspiring lark confuted him. He remembered Garraway's great argument after a famous supper at the Turk's Head: that it was always unsafe to make improbability the guide of life. He would delay a little, and keep a sharp look out, and be sure before taking sudden and violent action. And perhaps the truth was that Last was influenced very strongly by his aversion from leaving young Henry, whose extraordinary brilliance and intelligence amazed and delighted him more and more.

It was still early when at last he left his room, and went out into the fine morning air. It was an hour or more before breakfast-time, and he set out on the path that led past the wall of the kitchen garden up the hill and into the heart of the wood. He paused a moment at the upper corner, and turned round to look across the river at the happy country showing its morning magic and delight. As he dawdled and gazed, he heard soft steps approaching on the other side of the wall, and low voices murmuring. Then, as the steps drew near, one of the voices was raised a little, and Last heard Mrs. Marsh speaking:

"Too old, am I? And thirteen is too young. Is it to be seventeen next when you can get her into the wood? And after all I have done for you, and after what you have done to me."

Mrs. Marsh enumerated all these things without remission, and without any quiver of shame in her voice. She paused for a moment. Perhaps her rage was choking her; and there was a shrill piping cackle of derision, as if Marsh's voice had cracked in its contempt.

Very softly, but very swiftly, Last, the man with the grey face and the staring eyes, bolted for his life, down and away from the White House. Once in the road, free from the fields and brakes, he changed his run into a walk, and he never paused or stopped, till he came with a gulp of relief into the ugly streets of the big industrial town. He made his way to the station at once, and found that he was an hour too soon for the London Express. So there was plenty of time for breakfast; which consisted of brandy.

III

The tutor went back to his old life and his old ways, and did his best to forget the strange and horrible interlude of the White House. He gathered his podgy pups once more about him; crammed and coached, read with undergraduates during the long vacation, and was moderately satisfied with the course of things in general. Now and then, when he was endeavouring to persuade the podges against their deliberate judgment that Latin and Greek were languages once spoken by human beings, not senseless enigmas invented by demons, he would think with a sigh of regret of the boy who understood and longed to understand. And he wondered whether he had not been a coward to leave that enchanting child to the evil mercies of his hideous parents. But what could he have done? But it was dreadful to think of Henry, slowly or swiftly corrupted by his detestable father and mother, growing up with the fat slime of their abominations upon him.

He went into no detail with his old friends. He hinted that there had been grave unpleasantness, which made it impossible for him to remain in the west. They nodded, and perceiving that the subject was a sore one, asked no questions, and talked of old books and the new steak instead. They all agreed, in fact, that the steak was far too new, and William was summoned to explain this horror. Didn't he know that beefsteak, beefsteak meant for the consumption of Christian men, as distinguished from Hottentots, required hanging just as much as game? William the ponderous and benignant, tasted and tested, and agreed; with sorrowful regret. He apologised, and went on to say that as the gentlemen would not care to wait for a fowl, he would suggest a very special, tender, and juicy fillet of roast veal, then in cut. The suggestion was accepted, and found excellent. The conversation turned to Choric Metres and Florence St. John at the Strand. There was Port later.

It was many years afterwards, when this old life, after crumbling for a long while, had come down with a final crash, that Last heard the real story of his tutorial engagement at the White House. Three dreadful people were put in the dock at the Old Bailey. There was an old man, with the look of a deadly snake; a fat, sloppy, deplorable woman with pendulous cheeks and a faint hint of perished beauty in her eyes; and to the utter blank amazement of those who did not know the story, a wonderful little boy. The people who saw him in court said he might have been taken for a child of nine or ten; no more. But the evidence that was given showed that he must be between fifty and sixty at the least; perhaps more than that.

The indictment charged these three people with an unspeakable and hideous crime. They were charged under the name of Mailey, the name which they had borne at the time of their arrest; but it turned out at the end of the trial that they had been known by many names in the course of their career: Mailey, Despasse, Lartigan, Delarue, Falcon, Lecossic, Hammond, Marsh, Haringworth. It was established that the apparent boy, whom Last had known as Henry Marsh, was no relation of any kind to the elder prisoners. "Henry's" origins were deeply obscure. It was conjectured that he was the illegitimate son of a very high Englishman, a diplomatist, whose influence had counted for a great deal in the Far East. Nobody knew anything about the mother. The boy showed brilliant promise from very early years, and the father, a bachelor, and disliking what little he knew of his relations, left his very large fortune to his son. The diplomatist died when the boy was twelve years old; and he had been aged, and more than aged when the child was born. People remarked that Arthur Wesley, as he was then called, was very short for his years, and he remained short, and his face remained that of a boy of seven or eight. He could not be sent to a school, so he was privately educated. When he was of age, the trustees had the extraordinary experience of placing a very considerable property in the hands of a young man who looked like a little boy. Very soon afterwards, Arthur Wesley disappeared. Dubious rumours spoke of reappearances, now here, now there, in all quarters of the world. There were tales that he had "gone fantee" in what was then unknown Africa, when the Mountains of the Moon still lingered on the older maps. It was reported, again, that he had gone exploring in the higher waters of the Amazon, and had never come back; but a few years later a personage that must have been Arthur Wesley was displaying unpleasant activities in Macao. It was soon after this period, according to the prosecution, that — in the words of counsel — he realised the necessity of "taking cover." His extraordinary personality, naturally enough, drew attention to him and his doings, and these doings being generally or always of an infamous kind, such attention was both inconvenient and dangerous. Somewhere in the East, and in very bad company, he came upon the two people who were charged with him. Arabella Manning, who was said to have respectable connections in Wiltshire, had gone out to the East as a governess, but had soon found other occupations. Meers had been a clerk in a house of business at Shanghai. His very ingenious system of fraud obtained his discharge, but, for some reason or other, the firm refused to prosecute, and Meers went — where Arthur Wesley found him. Wesley thought of his great plan. Manning and Meers were to pretend to be Mr. and Mrs. Marsh — that seemed to have been their original style — and he was to be their little boy. He paid them well for their various services: Arabella was his mistress-in-chief, the companion of his milder moments, for some years. Occasionally, a tutor was engaged to make the situation more plausible. In this state, the horrible trio peregrinated over the earth.

The court heard all this, and much more, after the jury had found the three prisoners guilty of the particular offence with which they were charged. This last crime — which the Press had to enfold in paraphrase and periphrase — had been discovered, strange as it seemed, largely as a result of the woman's jealousy. Wesley's… affections, let us call them, were still apt to wander, and Arabella's jealous rage drove her beyond all caution and all control. She was the weak joint in Wesley's armour, the rent in his cover. People in court looked at the two; the debauched, deplorable woman with her flagging, sagging cheeks, and the dim fire still burning in her weary old eyes, and at Wesley, still, to all appearance, a bright and handsome little boy; they gasped with amazement at the grotesque, impossible horror of the scene. The judge raised his head from his notes, and gazed steadily at the convicted persons for some moments; his lips were tightly compressed.

The detective drew to the end of his portentous history. The track of these people, he said, had been marked by many terrible scandals, but till quite lately there had been no suspicion of their guilt. Two of these cases involved the capital charge: but formal evidence was lacking.

He drew to his close.

"In spite of his diminutive stature and juvenile appearance, the prisoner, Charles Mailey, *alias* Arthur Wesley, made a desperate resistance to his arrest. He is possessed of immense strength for his size, and almost choked one of the officers who arrested him."

The formulas of the court were uttered. The judge, without a word of comment, sentenced Mailey, or Wesley, to imprisonment for life, John

Meers to fifteen years' imprisonment, Arabella Manning to ten years' imprisonment.

The old world, it has been noted, had crashed down. Many, many years had passed since Last had been hunted out of Mowbray Street, that went down dingily, peacefully from the Strand. Mowbray Street was now all blazing office buildings. Later, he had been driven from one nook and corner and snug retreat after another as new London rose in majesty and splendour. But for a year or more he had lain hidden in a by-street that had the advantage of leading into a disused graveyard near the Gray's Inn Road. Medwin and Garraway were dead; but Last summoned the surviving Zouch and Noel to his abode one night; and then and there made punch, and good punch for them.

"It's so jolly it must be sinful," he said, as he pared his lemons, "but up to the present I believe it is not illegal. And I still have a few bottles of that port I bought in 'ninety-two."

And then he told them for the first time all the whole story of his engagement at the White House.

THE END

Uncollected Tales

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Candletime

A VERGE BETWEEN day and night, a short space half light half darkness, a time when the shadows deepen in the corners of the room, and the clouds clear a little while and then gather once more, when voices are hushed and the wind dies down; this is candletime. If it be in winter; the fire burns low; from the window can be seen a mysterious country stretching far away; hill and valley loom out in the mist, trees stand black and bare against the sky, the whole earth seems still, and in the west one pale bright star shines out above the green and gold and red that show the path where the sun has passed. The forest rises from a sea of silver mist like some strange island; there flows the river, and we can guess the great silence that lies on the wood as the night deepens. Here and there, miles and miles apart, may be seen an old grey cottage or farmhouse sending up a spire of pale blue smoke, but except for them a vast loneliness lies on the forest as it limbs up from the river, and mounts the hill, and stretches on and on over hill and valley and deep dell, till it comes to the long flat plain and the yellow sea. How silent now, in the winter twilight, are all those greeny paths and roads that mount upwards, and cross and diverge and wander beneath the great oaks and beeches. Once in summertide (it seems long ago) the sunlight crept through the thick leaves and shone on the ground, and danced to and fro in the soft breeze; then the whole way was a gown of gorgeous foxgloves; then the wild strawberries gleamed out from between the leaves, then the whinberries grew ripe and purple in the banks, then the bracken climbed high in the thicket, and the stream trickling from the rocks sounded pleasant in the heat of a summer noon. But now all is dark and silent, the leaves have withered and are lying thick and wet upon the ground; the oaks and beeches stand stark and green against the sky; a cold grey light shines dimly upon the path, and every flower and every pleasant scent of summer and every merry bee are gone, as if they never would return. Thus the darkness grows deeper, and the stars shine more brightly as we gaze from the window over the mysterious land of twilight, till the door opens and the lights are brought in — at candletime.

But there is another side to the picture. We have viewed it from within; let us see it from without. In the heart of the mysterious sunless land a man painfully picks his way along the sleepy and muddy lanes. Not in vain have the rains of October fallen on the earth; the wells and the streams are full and overflow into the road; the way is long and dark, slippery, and now only the faintest afterglow shines in the west. The sun has set an hour ago, and the wind stirs now and again through the bare boughs and whirls down to a few decaying leaves, though the sheltered beech is still all russet brown and will remain thus till March comes in. Clouds gather from the mountains to the north, the air is cold and chill, and almost the only sound is the distant barking of some farmhouse dog as he goes round with his master from shed to shed. Now and again the traveller can peep over the hedge of the lane and look down into deep, solitary glens, set all around with winter woods and rising mist.

These valleys seem as if enchanted, as if anyone passing into them must fall into a deep sleep and forget all things, hearing nothing but the noise of the brook as it pours from the hillside and falls down — down over stones and amid niches, through bare bushes, and by many windings down to the leafless wood. So dies the day, and upward climbs the weary man, stumbling over the wet rocks and slippery stones, ankle deep in red mud, till at last the lane can mount no higher, and he is at the very summit of the hill and can look far out onto the dark country, seeing hill follow hill like wave upon wave, till the great dark mountain bounds them all. And as he gazes into the night, suddenly a light leaps out from among the trees; there is home, and it is candletime.

But in summer the harsh deep note of the corncrake booms often out of the rich grass in the meadow, and from the brake comes the monotonous rattle of the fern owl. Through the open casement the wonderful scent of summertime streams in; the air is heavy with the smell of elder blossoms, and the last blackbird flies away from the cherry tree. The starlings have whirled round and round the tree tops and are asleep beneath the eaves, and the poplars are just stirring in the soft western breeze. The bat skims his strange flight in the dusky light, and from distant woods comes a wild noise as of men shouting to one another; the owl is abroad. Then above the old tithe-barn on the hill rises a great globe of fire that swims gently over thin lines of cloud and mounts towards the stars. It is candletime in the sky. Who that has passed across the fields at such a time can forget its sweetness; the splendid things all around, the song of the brook as it pours over the stones and swirls round a deep corner, pausing rather to make a greater silence in the air? It is candletime in the hedgerows also, as one by one tiny green-gold lamps are lighted on the grassy banks, reminding one of the ‘Night Piece to Julia’.

Her eyes the glow worm lend thee,The shooting stars attend thee;And the elves also,Whose little eyes glowLike the sparks of fire, befriend thee.

Our thoughts go back to the parson poet as he sits in his house at Dean Churchtown and watches the light fade over wild Dartmoor, and the darkness closing over the valley of Dean Bourne till Prewdence Baldwin brings in the candles and sets one on the mantel to shine amid the oaken boughs and one beside Master Herrick, dreaming over Julia and Perilla and Anthea, and the many mistresses of his fancy.

Candletime is too often spoiled in these days by our using glaring gas or evil-smelling paraffin instead of good candles. There is no light like candlelight, it illumines, and yet it leaves dark shadows and half tones between dark and light in the corners of a room, and so the eye is pleased with the islands of light, and can rest in the vague dimness beyond. This is the time whether it be in winter or summer, for a well-filled pipe, for a flagon of good cider, for listening to a good tale, and for weaving many a pleasant fancy. Day-dreams may be sweet, but for us the dreams of candletime are far sweeter.

Cidermas

WHEN SKIES GROW grey and winds blow cold, when the rain lies in the furrows and the acorns have fallen, when the noise of the hunter's horn rings through the woods and down the valleys, when hips and haws are at their reddest, and hollies begin to glow; then does the farmer prepare to celebrate this high and joyous festival. It has been a good year; the sweet-scented pink and white blossom that decked May so merrily, the increase of June suns and July showers, the hot August noons and the still warm airs of September have filled the dry loft with rich store of apples, red and gold and green, gathered in their ripest ere the October blasts began to blow and the orchards were bare, and now ready for the trough and the revolving wheel.

Every feast has its appropriate weather. Petertide is gay with roses and scented with the rich perfume of the elder flower; Christmas has its snow and holly-berries; Michaelmas its fields of stubble and garnered corn; St Luke his afterglow of summer; Allhallowmas its wild winds and driving rain. What, then, of Cidermas? A pale grey sky, with fleeting gleams of sunlight; red ploughed fields and meadows reeking with rain; lanes thick with fallen leaves; hedgerows black and bare, but hung with rich wreaths of briony berries; swollen brooks and withered bracken; and a cold wind sweeping from the mountains and sighing about the chimneys … these are the signs of Cidermas. Bring basket and barrow, old hamper and bucket, to the loft, fill up with apples and bear them to the mill. All the day from loft to mill; the procession of apple bearers goes and returns, while the old horse patiently turns round and round in his circle, and the stone wheel crushes the fruit, grinding rind and pulp and kernels all together. Then the horsehair cloths and the press receive the 'pomage,' as they call it, and the rich red-brown liquor runs into the tubs, even now sweet and pleasant to the taste. The cider festival can claim no associations of smiling vineyards, of warm southern suns, of olive orchards, or of picturesque peasants of France or Italy keeping the vintage feast in good classic sort; the frantic thyrsis, the vine tendrils, the leaping fauns, Silenus on his ass and Bacchus drawn by pards, are all unknown to the Muse that inspired John Philips to sing of Cider. But instead of these we have all the poetry of orchards encircling the old farms, the vision of the twisted trees green with the lichen and bent under the burden of many years — trees that recall the memories of ancient farmers, cunning graftsmen, who were curious in their choice of apples, and sought many a parish and crossed many a hill to procure a graft of some new or famous apple. We can think of the orchard stretching down from the barns to the wood, of the rich dark grass beneath the trees, of the faint scent of the blossom when May is closing, and of the sunlight that lingers in September afternoons bringing the fruit to its perfection. We may remember the good old custom of wassailing; when the farmer and the hands go out to the orchard on the eve of the Epiphany, and sprinkle a tree with cider, singing —

Here’s to thee, old apple tree!Whence thou mayest bud and whence thou mayest blow,And whence thou mayest bear apples enow.Hats full! Caps full!And my pockets full too! Huzza!

John Philips pronounced cider to be far better than wine; but we must perhaps take into account the fact that Philips was a Herefordshire man. Nevertheless, it would be hard to exaggerate the choice merits of a cup of cider sack, artfully enhance with marjoram and rosemary, and drunk by the fireside on a cold winter night when the wind and rain beat against the walls. And in summer too it is a pleasant thing, after the walk through the heather, the mountain-climb, and the dusty lanes, to sit in a cool farmhouse kitchen and watch the greenish-yellow liquor fall silently into the long funnel-shaped glass, with almost the oiliness of a liqueur. Mont-Beni has its wondrous wine; why should there not be cider too wherein lurks transformation. We may well imagine an old house, now a farm but once the home of a noble family, and before that a priory of black monks and before that — who knows what? We can fancy such a place lying deep down in a silent valley, a brook singing its strange song below it, and the old orchard sunning itself in the autumn glow. We can feel the silence that lies over the dark woods around, scarcely broken by the rushing of the wind amidst the trees on the hill top far above; the faint blue smoke is slowly winding up from the lozenge shaped chimneys and the soft sunlight shines upon the square stone mullioned windows. All the valley and all the house lie asleep in a dream that has lasted many a hundred years. We pass by the orchard hedge, and, peering through, mark the ring of stern grey rocks that stands amidst the grass: who shall say whether they are placed there by nature or art? We pass within the rose covered porch, knock at the massive door, and are shown through a long narrow passage into a low room where a fire blazes on the hearth and brings out strange glowing lights from the dark depths of the old oak settle. Here they serve us our cider in a quaint jug and long glasses; and, as we drink, the little light that comes through the deepset window seems to die away, and the fire burns low, and a long dim procession passes from door to door, ever vanishing yet never ending. Armed men with pikes and swords, monks bearing candles, ladies pressing forward to say farewell, gentlemen in their battle-armour, messengers who say the enemy is near, a priest in his vestments, a bugler blowing a soundless horn, men with drawn swords and with banners.

* * *

We have been dreaming over our cider in the low dark room; the fire leaps up again from its ashes, and the sunlight streams in through the window. Let us call our dream a Legend of Cidermas, and credit it to the mystic virtues of the good green cider. For in it are not only the suns and rains and dews of one summertide, but the memories, the tears, and laughter of many a bygone day, when the old trees were little grafts within the stock, when the stock grew great in the wild wood, and when its parent crab fell down one autumn night in a soft place and took root and sprouted up into a tree. So let us wish the farmer and his hinds a merry Cidermas and a plenteous harvest in the coming year.

The Town of Long Ago

IT WAS A fitting place for the wagon to rest after all its journeys, for like it the lane had long passed out of use, and now grass grew thickly from one end to the other. The lane led to nowhere in particular — it was mere waste land. Year by year the hedges had grown taller and thicker, and encroached by degrees on the turf. Wild rose and maple, hazel and elder, hawthorn and many another bush struggled in beautiful luxuriance in the hedgerows. And midway along the lane, as it sloped down the hill, lay the old wagon.

It was a very symbol of past uses and forgetfulness. The hood to keep off the rain from passengers was patched and torn to infinity, and the very patches stood in need of patching. The paint on the wood had faded to a sort of neutral tint, varied by the green of dampness and decay. One could see that the wood was mouldering to dust; it was soft to the touch, and full of wormholes. One of the shafts had broken long ago, and had been strengthened with two splints of wood and half a dozen nails; but the splints had broken too, and then there had been an operation performed with rope. About half the spokes had fallen out, and the rest had been put in at odd times, according to the fancy of various wheelwrights. The very bolts and nuts of iron were rapidly rusting, and the two long seats inside looked as if they would not have supported a sparrow. The whole wagon was quite hopeless.

And yet one more journey it may perform; a stranger journey than ever it made in the days when every inch of wood in it was sound to the core. Shadowy horses are harnessed to the shafts; a ghostly driver cracks his whip on a mouldering seat; and we sit behind him, and slowly pass down the lonely lane. It is a long lane, indeed; for while we make our way beneath the hedges, the hands of the clock fly back and suns long set return again, and the dim light (or is it haze?) of the old time shines out upon the land. It is market day, and the market town to which we are bound is the town of Long Ago.

Many a gable, many a quaint carved beam, many an overhanging porch, and quarried window do we see in the town of Long Ago. There in the shop in the covered way you can get good callenders. There is the place for horn lanterns; and over against the market-cross for horn books, and Criss-Cross Row. It is a pleasant place — this town of Long Ago, with its winding streets and narrow alleys, fair tangled gardens and deep orchards, abounding walks and quiet churchyard and bells chiming as the hours go by. There stands the Maypole upon the green, and hard by the stocks — the terror of vagabonds. The ale-conner goes from street to street with his little wooden measure; a quaint figure, his face tanned with beer, as Herrick says. At many an inn he stops and tastes, dealing out praise or blame and threats of the lord of the manor and the court-baron. The buck painted above the door is his lodestone and guide; he is a man who lives by and for good ale. Hautbois and bassoon, fiddle and bass-viol sound out in the still enchanted air, and the noise of an old carol with the melody in the tenor makes concert with the instruments of music. It is the choir of Long Ago making ready for the 'mumping.' A chord on the bass-viol and an answering blast from the bassoon, and the singers begin. 'First the flourish of music, and then they came to the carol.' Their music rolls through the church, by the pillars and the tombs, and against the storied windows — quaint, and yet solemn melodies full of long-drawn echoing notes. It is the music of Dowland and Wilbye.

As we have said, the town abounds in gardens and pleasant garths and closes. Down by the river there is a garden walled all round with a wall of gold, or so it would seem when the last light of the sun falls on it, and brings out the glories of good brick mellowed by the storms and suns of many, many years. Golden lichen grows on it in patches, delicate ferns and plants find places wherein to flourish, and on the top of the wall there is houseleek and grass, and wall flower, and pellitory, and even a young ash tree sown there by chance. Within the garden there seems always to be quiet sunshine; the apples and pears and plums blossom there, and grow ripe in autumn, and the flowers below are a very tangle of sweet colours. There is a bench beneath the wall whereon it is good to sit on a sunny afternoon, and a walk that was made for meditative men, as are most of the citizens. But the garden belongs to the poet of Long Ago. There on the bench beneath the wall he will sit and dream, or, maybe, will pace the walk to and fro, starting from the quince and going to the medlar, and back again. The poet thinks of his past life, of all his adversities, and wanderings. He sees the great city, pricked with spires, rise up before him; he sees a narrow street, a winding stair, a poor garret, and a sorry bed. There he sat while the hours of the night went by, and the cold of the morning fell upon the earth — there he sat at a mean table with paper and pen, and saw such glories that his heart grew still with joy. And then when the cock crew; and the streets turned from black to grey, and men's voices sounded from below, he would drop his pen and eat a little bread and take a little sleep. Night after night he wrote; and he remembered how the cold frosts and the east wind pierced to his very bones. And at last, when the work was done and his book in all men's hands, he remembered how the great and noble came to him and brought him out of the garret, and gave him good offices, and he became more wealthy every day.

And so he had returned to spend his days in his old home, to muse over the past, and to dream yet nobler visions, and to give one more good book to the world. His is the goodly house in the High-street, with so many pointed gables, and rich deep barge boards, and pargeted walls, the house with the rare iron scrolls on the oaken door, and the windows that overhang the road. The poet has a good room here where he sits and looks out upon his garden, and the river, and the wooded slope, and the mountains beyond all. Here he sits with his friends of evenings, every man in a good elbow chair, with a pipe of sweet tobacco. They sit silent and full of thought till it grows time to bring in the candles; then the poet throws a dry log on the fire in the wide hearth, and unlocks the door of that aumbry in the dark corner. From it he brings round bottles, and tall thin bottles, and bottles in wicker cases, and curious little jars, and green goblets from oversea, and then the high parley begins. Then, when the green fluid in some of those bottles glows and shimmers in the candle-light; then, when the flame leaps up the chimney and the books and pictures on the walls shine out for a moment, the poet and his friends draw close together and mingle romance and satire and legend and old rhyme in their talk, and pass good jests, and wish King Arthur would return again. So they carouse together in scholarly wise as the night goes on, and the moon shines out on the hills, and the wind sweeps through the streets as it passes from mountain to mountain. Then, maybe, the poet brings out his viol and makes them some music, or they sing a carol or a glee together, and so bid one another good night.

But as we linger in the streets and closes of this good town, the gabled roofs and galleried walls seem to fade away; a golden haze swims round its gardens and bowery alleys: the clouds float across the bowers, and the woods and orchards around it are hidden in the sweet mist. Alas! we must leave it all, and go back again across the river, and through the braes, past the woods that look black in the twilight, past that strange wreathing oak that stands upon the mount; on and on through the deep silent roads haunted with the scent of meadow-sweet; on by the broad, rich meadows and the wild marshland; on by the brake where the hazel thickets are; on past the bracken slopes and the alders by the brook; on, till at last we are in the soft-turfed lane again.

The shadowy horses and the ghostly driver melt away. The old wagon once more lies mouldering and desolate by the tangled hedgerow with the grass growing rank about the wheels. We have been to the town of Long Ago, and have returned again.

Over the Gate

THOUGH, PERHAPS, WE cannot quite agree with that rustic philosopher, whose highest good was to sit on a gate and eat fat bacon, yet who has not felt the charm of leaning pensively on gate or stile, shaded alike from wind and sun, surrounded by the sweet scents of opening summer, and free to gaze in quiet over the hills and valleys, over shine and shade, far away to the blue distance where earth and sky seem to meet and mingle? Let the day be chosen aright: a day that began with still grey skies flecked by no cloud, with the mists of the night still hanging over the brooks, with warm air unstirred by any wind, and with that peculiar morning sweetness which heralds a day in early summer; the sweetness of the dew upon the may, the sweetness of the flowers in the meadows, and of the myriad-leaved woods when the young beech leaves shine like silver and the oaks are gold and red. Let such be the days beginning: and then as it wears towards noon we shall see a gleam in the sky, and, looking over our gate, a gleam gives answer on the green hillside, a light breeze rustles softly through the hedge, a bird’s song sounds from a tree, the white may seems to grow whiter, the buttercups more golden, and suddenly, as if by magic, all that grey veil over the sky vanishes and rolls away, and leaves a vault of darkest blue, and in the midst of it the summer sun shining in his strength. We lean against our gate; and from the bluebells in the shadow of the hedge, the relics of the primroses, and the young bracken ferns curved and fretted like a Bishop’s crozier — from the yellow broom and gorse on the wild hillside, to the far distant outlined hills — all seems gladdened and rejoiced at the sunlight. Slowly the mists fade away from the valleys and the woods, where the quests are calling to one another in the sunshine; as it grows brighter and brighter the masses of hawthorn blossom glow a dazzling white, and the wind, increasing, makes a continuous, light rustle in the highest leaves of the beech-tree that spreads its branches above us and throws a shadow far beyond the gate. ‘It is sweet,’ says Lucretius, ‘to stand upon a cliff and watch the ships struggling with wind and water far below on the great deep.’ But surely it is sweeter to gaze from calm on calm, to stand by the gate where the roughest wind must first pass through the white cloud of fragrant may, and the hottest rays of noon are foiled by the interlaced shadow of the glimmering beech-leaves; and to look out from the gate on the brow of the hill, over peaceful woods, golden fields, the little brakes left by the farmer in mid meadow — over old houses gleaming white amidst deep green orchards — over the willows in the hollow, showing their grey-blue underleaf as the breeze gently stirs them — over the winding brook with its still pools and pebbly shallows — over all the glad country as it rejoices because the summer has come to its own again. Nor is there music lacking: blackbird and thrush, cuckoo and wood-dove, each has his song, his *Sursum Corda*, for the summer day; and from every flower at our feet sounds the deep rich note of the wild bee in splendid livery of black and orange, checked for a moment as he dives deep into a blossom and breaking out afresh as he flies out again, never weary of the search for honey. The wild bee is a merry fellow, a downright good companion, and sings (somewhat) as Doctor Luther sang,

Who loves not honey heath, and song,Remains a fool his whole life long.

He would lead us a long journey, could we follow him; for he flies fast over the close grass of the hillside, over the bracken opening out fronds of tender green, over tall wild hedge and gorse and broom, over many a meadow, many a brook, over bramble and briar — till at last the sun sets, and he hies to his home beneath the roots of the old oak in the dark wood, booming forth his song all his merry way. Here we may imagine him and his companions carousing, like the good Rabelaisians they are: there is something jovial in the very appearance of your prosperous wild bee, and his friends declare that he has never been known to sting.

We lift our eyes from the bee to the beech, stretching far and wide above us. A wise man pollarded it some hundred years ago, and hence, though it lost in height, it has gained in breadth and seems a whole world of green leaves in itself. Here and there the roots show above ground; they stretch below as wide as the branches above, and the trunk looks strong and solid like a Norman tower. The bark is a silvery grey; and quite close to the ground are clefts whence new branches have sprung forth, and these are the first to show the green and silver leaves in spring and the last resort of the red gold of autumn. Higher up, where the old tree was polled, the great main branches extend in every direction; and from them radiate other branches and smaller branches, all so covered with leaves that the depths of the tree are quite hidden. It were a pity to climb upon a journey of discovery and find out the bearings of every bough; it is far better to lean against our gate and look up and speculate, for we know not what marvels that multitude of leaves may conceal. Surely there is nothing more pleasant than a little mystery and uncertainty; a medieval *Mappa Mundi*, with its strange pictures of strange peoples, is far more entertaining than a modern map of the world.

Some persons may like to see the lines of latitude and longitude; we prefer the drawings of the Anthropophagi and the men with eyes in their breasts. So let us gaze at the great beech, and imagine, if we will, that a tree nymph guards a secret treasure in a possible chamber within the mighty trunk. The beech tree most surely has its secret for the initiate in such lore. To these it tells a tale of summers long past; and men dead and forgotten; and of autumn-tide and winter-tide of long ago, whose bitter driving rains shall wet no more, whose deep white snows are melted, whose roaring winds are still and utterly at rest.

Thus we muse at the gate beneath the shade of the beech; and a cloud passes across the sun and a gloom over the hillside and the sun shines out once more, a little breeze brings towards us the scent of the may, the song of the birds ceases and is renewed; and the bright day wears on until the shadows lengthen, and the wind is hushed again, and all is still and quiet as in the morning, and the blue mist draws a veil over woods and hills and valleys as we turn reluctantly from the gate.

Of the Isle of Shadows, and of the Strange Customs of the Men That Dwell There

By the Shade of Sir John Maundeville

◆

FROM THE ISLE of Merchants men go by sea, and come to the Isle of Shadows, anciently called the Green Island because the grass there is so green. And this is by reason of the great rains that fall there at all seasons of the year; and in this land there are no reptiles, nor venomous creatures that crawl upon the earth, as with us; yet there be many deadly beasts in that isle, but in place of creeping in the dust they stand upright and go in the form of men.

And you must understand that this Isle of Shadows is of right in the lordship of the Empress of the Isle of Merchants, and hath been of her lordship for many hundred years; but the people of that isle deny this, and say that it is not so. But they have a king who has authority over them, right as the Great Chan has over Cathay; but the King of the Shadowy Island may wear no crown, so that he is styled the Uncrowned King or Chan. And I inquired of certain religious men, great clerks in their law, why this should be; and they told me that it was by reason of the Bull, and more than this I might not have of them. And right as the Great Chan has petty kings and lords, who hold of him, so has the king of that isle; for he has four-score kings, whom they call his members, and they are all his liegemen and owe him fealty, but not one of them may wear a crown.

And although the people of that land be Christians, yet they vary from our faith, as do the men of Greece, of Ermony, of the realms of Prester John, and of divers other countries. For they say that murder is not a deadly sin, but a thing of nature; and they say that for a man to steal, as by witholding his quit-rent from his lord, is no sin at all, but rather laudable. And they are not obedient to the Church of Rome, nor to the Pope; for they say that their Uncrowned King hath as much power over the sea as the Pope hath on this side the sea. And therefore the Pope sent letters to them, how that they should cease from murdering their fellow men, and from defrauding them, and from bitterly persecuting them, and from profaning their churches and altars, and that they should be obedient to him. But they sent back answer, saying thus: ‘We believe well that thy power is great upon thy subjects. We may not hear thee on things temporal, but only upon things spiritual. We know well that such matters as murder, fraud, sacrilege, and the like, are of civil policy. Farewell.’ And no other answer might he have of them.

And the people of that land have a strange custom: as, when men are assembled together to hold feast and holiday, one shall doff his coat and trail it in the dust, and pray loudly and earnestly that it may be trodden under foot; and so it is done. And then he that traileth the coat and he that treadeth it under foot must fight very grievously together, so that it is a shameful thing to see. And in all their feasts and holidays men drink of the wine of the country, which they say is the dew from the mountains, and so they call it Mountain Dew; but I have tasted it, and it is not so.

And their Uncrowned King hath much treasure, which comes to him from oversea, as much as he will have; but before this may be there must be grievous storms and tempests, with a rain of blood, and men slain secretly; and this is a great marvel.

And the men of that land, though they be Christian men after their faith and law, and have abbeys where religious men live together as in our land, yet do they do worship to idols and simulacres: the which is a cursed thing in Christian men. And some of their bishops and doctors confessed to me that it was a piteous wickedness to do so; yet the most of the priests comforted the people in their trespasses and iniquity. And they chiefly worship a cursed idol, whom they call Omrul, though I conversed with divers clerks and doctors, who told me that the name of this image was of old time Rhepale; yet it is now named Omrul, as I have said. And for the love and the worship that they bear to this accursed phantom many fair and goodly towns and cities lie desolate, and lands are laid waste, and great lordships and realms ruined and destroyed, and Christian men and women are slain with knives and swords, and the dead lie unburied; and chiefly for this cause did the Holy Father write letters to the men of that isle as I have devised to you. And they also do worship to the moon at night, and offer sacrifice to that cursed goddess; and for her sake they will burn down barns and houses, and slay cattle, and most grievously maim and maltreat old men and little children and folk that are feeble; but such folk as are strong and have good castles they sacrifice not to the moon. And I desired to know the cause of this; but might not, for it is a mystery of their law. And besides these two gods they have an evil demon to whom they do great worship, and the name of this said demon is Bal Phoor; but whether he be the same as that Baal Peor whereof we learn in Holy Writ, I could not discover. And to the account of this demon they lay up all the plagues and heavy sorrows of the land; so that whether the harvest fail, the rivers overflow, or men's heads be bloody, they say that it is the act of Bal Phoor. And they say also that this evil angel is the cause of all the shadows that are in the land.

And men of that isle say that it is sin and shame if a man pay his quit-rent and do suit and service to his liege lord; and such an one they account recreant and caitiff, and the Uncrowned King and the petty kings speak of such an one very dolefully, and his days are mournful days, till before long men find him dead and bloody with many and grievous wounds. And the kings say that it is the act and vengeance of Bal Phoor, for the delight that the demon hath in the blood of men; but some told me that this was not so. But I could not discover the truth of this matter; but I know well that whensoever the kings spoke of a man dolefully his days were few and grievous.

And of all lands that I have seen, or whereof I have heard tell, the Isle of Shadows is furthest removed from Terrestrial Paradise.

A Further Account of The Academy of Lagado

A FRAGMENT

THE WARDEN THEN proposed that we should visit that part of the Academy which had been reserved for the projectors of schemes towards the reforming of polite letters and the correction of manners. I told him that I should like nothing better, not doubting that I should be well entertained in the company of men of wit and learning who had devoted their lives to the study of the best poets, orators, philosophers, and historians.

The first professor with whom I had the honour to be made acquainted told me he had conceived a plan which could not fail in vastly amending the present depraved state of letters. His scheme was to collect together all the works of the ancient writers of romances, poems, plays, ballads, tales, and the like, and to burn them in a huge furnace, this furnace to be built and fuelled at the charges of the State. He bade me observe how all of the books written in former times abound with lewd and lascivious imaginations, and moreover teach no useful art or science, such as cabbage-planting, the making of mouse-traps, tub-scouring, trencher washing, and so forth; 'and yet,' said he, 'such is the madness of the age, we give these very books to children, and boys are forced to learn their grammar from these corrupt poets and tale-tellers, and thus suck in the poison of idle fancy.' I asked him how he proposed to gather in the whole of the writings of the ancient authors; and he told me that he hoped to found a society, the members whereof by dint of prying in booksellers' shops, lurking about blind alleys, spying into the libraries of private persons, and scrutinising the public places of resort, would in no long time collect together all the poetry, romance, and fancy of all sorts that had been produced since the beginning of the world; and these destroyed, authors and men of learning would be free to start on a new basis, without the contamination of wit, humour, or genius.

I then proceeded to the cell of a most ingenious doctor, who showed me a scheme whereby the most worthless, pitiful, and contemptible books could be printed and sold both to the profit of the bookseller and the author. This project he called a select library; and he assured me that by his plan a young miss of fifteen or less could write a book which should give her a hundred guineas after all charges had been paid. I wrote down his scheme to the most minute particulars; but not thinking it proper to be made public, reserve the secret for the benefit of the corporation of Grub-Street, in my dear native country.

I saw a professor who taught a score of pupils a new method of writing romances. At his direction they ransacked a good library of ancient authors for a plot or a story, and when one was found fit for the purpose, they rewrote it in their native tongue as loosely as possible and in the meanest style they could compass. When this business was over, the professor dipped the manuscript sheets into a vessel containing a strong solution of blood and thunder, prepared *secundum artem*, and then drew out a score of new romances, ready for the printer. He assured us that several of these romances had been printed, and vastly relished by all persons of understanding; but I heard afterwards that the productions of this ingenious gentleman and his pupils but seldom endured the heat of more than one summer, as the blood in which they were dipped putrefied and turned stale.

I heard a warm debate between two professors about the best diet to preserve life, and to keep men temperate and their blood cool. The one doctor was all for a diet of fair water and nothing else; affirming that if a man would break his fast on a glass of cold water, dine on a tankard of warm water, and sup on a few spoonfuls of hot water, he would live to a good old age and die at last in the course of nature and not from disease. He also affirmed that if the King would make a decree that all his subjects should eat no meat, but only drink water, there would be an end of all evil in the body spiritual and temporal, that fevers and agues would disappear, thieves no longer steal, the sun no longer burn, ice be cold no more, liars speak the truth, and pigs fly. But as he urged the good results of his scheme of temperance (as he called it) he bawled and roared so vehemently that he broke a blood-vessel and fell down in a fit. The other professor with whom he had been debating was all for a regimen of grass, which he said would make men humble and meek-spirited, like cows and sheep; and thus there would be no wars, battles, revolutions, parricides, black eyes, or bloody noses. But shortly after my leaving the Academy I heard that this ingenious and pacific gentleman had in a debate with another professor so banged, kicked, butted, clapper-clawed, bit, and battered his opponent that the surgeons despaired of the poor man’s life.

I went into another room, where a professor of moral philosophy taught a large class. This gentleman’s aim was to mend the corruption of morals, and to restore the innocence and happiness of the golden age. To this intent he had propounded several instruments of reformation, of which he gave me some accounts. Firstly, he would lay by wedlock: for it is evident that if there were no matrimony there would neither be any adulteries, divorces, nor scandals of the like sort. Secondly, he would utterly abolish the Ten Laws, which in Laputa are answerable to our Ten Commandments; for if there were no law there could be no transgression. In the third place, he would have men taught to make puddings, and women to bear arms for the defence of the State, as by this means the vices peculiar to each sex would be corrected, the fierceness of men become gentle, and the cowardice of women courage. Fourthly, since all men are equal in themselves, he would place the supreme power and ruling of the State in the hands of the lowest of the people, for it is plain that a fellow who can make a hedge can also make a treaty. The professor told me that he hoped shortly to see these several articles enacted by the law, and assured me that if his counsels were taken the Laputans would become the happiest people upon earth.

Tales from Barataria

A CURIOUS ARTICLE might perhaps be written on the Imaginary Geography of Literature — an article that would give the bearings of the land of Tire-Lire, indicate the shortest route to the realm of Cocagne, and map out the various countries and regions passed by the ships in quest of the oracle of La Dive Bouteille. The subject is patient of a good deal of research; and in the hands of a worthy descendant of Sir John Mandeville might expand into a booklet, a modest little Murray of shoreless seas, mystic mountains, and enchanted cities, towering with 'spires incredible' to heaven.

Pending the production of an exhaustive work on the Ideal Topography it may not be amiss to jot down a few notes relating to a small but not unimportant province of this Other World — the island or city of Barataria. Two epochs in its eventful history are well known — the brief rule of rare Sancho Panza and the dual administration discovered by Mr Gilbert and set by Sir Arthur Sullivan. But, besides these national events, there are numerous little incidents of a more domestic nature, chronicled by more obscure historians, which are not so notorious, and are yet by no means deficient in humour. The following tale of a suit-at-law in Barataria may serve as a sample of a whole genus of stories of chicane. A smith of Barataria, Martin by name, had agreed to make an axe for a gentlemen, the axe to be fashioned according to the following terms. It was to be mighty enough to slay a devouring wild beast that had drunk men's blood, and yet small enough to go in a man's hatband. Yet, though so small, it was to be strong enough to cut through a bar of the finest steel, and yet, though so strong, it must be light enough to be over-weighted by a shilling; and if it satisfied these conditions, Martin was to be paid fifty crowns, but if it failed in any one particular he was to have nothing. Martin agreed to these conditions, and in due course took the axe to his customer, who laughed him and his axe to scorn, and turned the poor smith out of doors. However, Martin persisted that his axe was made according to the terms of the agreement, and carried the case before the Justice of Barataria, who, having heard the pleas, called on Martin to produce the instrument.

The good man immediately drew it from his pocket, and everybody burst out laughing, for axe and helve together were scarce as long as your little finger. ‘Ho, ho,’ quoth the judge, ‘and how would you slay a wild beast with that?’ ‘I will show your lordship,’ said Martin, and forthwith drew out a little box, and out of the little box a big flea, the which he held up, and then with the axe took off its head very easily. ‘Now, my lord,’ said Martin, ‘You have seen me slay the flea with my axe; and the flea is a beast (for it is not a man nor an angel), and it is a wild beast, for it is not tame; and it is a devouring beast, for so it lives, and it has drank the blood of me and of my son, who are arrant, natural men.’ The rest of the story may be imagined; Martin sticks the axe in his hatband, cuts through a bar of steel, the said bar being finer than the finest needle, weighs the axe against forty-eight farthings, and is awarded his fifty crowns by the Baratarian court.

The next story on our list is a sly cut at the priests. The Bishop of Barataria visited a country parish, and asked one of the principal persons in the church-town whether the maids of the parish were chaste, and all that maids should be. ‘I believe they be chased enough,’ answers the farmer, ‘I saw passon a-chasing two of ’em only yester-e’en.’ Truth to tell, the worthy ecclesiastics are hardly treated in Baratarian annals; witness the famous *conte drolatique* of the Merchant and the Archdeacon. ‘In the island of Barataria there dwells a certain rich mercer, commonly known as Master Philip, who had filled his chests and his cellars by tricking his neighbours. This mercer loved nothing so well as to see a merry company round the board, and to drink a bottle of good wine, of which he had a handsome store. In his cellars he had certain round-bellied flagons of the choicest wine, which he called archdeacons, on account of their shape, and when the bottle had gone round for an hour or two he would call out to his man:—‘Ho! Francis, bring us up an archdeacon,’ meaning one of these great flagons. But as it chanced he got him a new man, who understood nothing of the symbol, and one evening, when there was a great company at board, and everybody was drinking, laughing, jesting, and singing, Master Philip called out, ‘Now then, Jack, bring us up an archdeacon.’ The man stood gaping and motionless, not knowing what to think or do, and the master called out again, ‘Make haste about it, you can find the way to the cellar, I’ll warrant.’ So Jack went down, as slowly as if he were on his way to the gibbet, while Master Philip cursed him for an idle rascal; but presently was heard a great noise of struggling and stamping, and then in comes Jack dragging a poor little priest after him. ‘Here he is, master,’ cries the man. ‘I found him, as you said, in the cellar, drinking our best wine and kissing the maid; though to be sure, I should take him for a simple priest and no archdeacon at all.’

Most of the tales of Barataria recount some piece of trickery; barratry, whence Barataria, means the stirring up of litigation. There is a good story of the three clerks of Barataria, who entered a tavern by the roadside, and, after testing all the vintages in the cellar, proposed to the host that they should bless his house with all his casks and bottles. The host assents, the house is blessed, and the three clerks are quietly stealing off without paying anything, when Boniface stops them with, ‘stay gentleman, you have forgotten there was a matter of wine… .’ ‘Ay,’ quoth the first clerk, ‘and there was a matter of benediction, but what do you say we owe you for the wine?’ The landlord presents a bill for twenty crowns; to which retorts the second clerk: ‘Yea, but there is an account *per contra*; we have exercised our vocation in your behalf; we have used our clergy on your wine tubs; in fine, we have blessed. For this you owe us ten crowns apiece, but we will deal gently with you, and called it twenty-five crowns. *Ergo,* as the logicians say, you owe us five crowns.’ Of course, the landlord storms and raves, the clerks pelt him with mock logic and misquoted texts, and, finally, one of them comes forward in the character of mediator, and by a complicated piece of swindling, robs the wretched man of five crowns besides the value of the wine.

Another Baratarian sees a country lad mooning about the streets with a large hamper on his back; the cunning townsman asks if he can give any help, and the boy replies that he has been sent by his master with some rare wine for a certain canon, and he cannot find the way. The Baratarian offers to act as guide, takes the messenger through a maze of by-streets and alleys, and finally makes off with the wine, on pretence of its being too heavy a burden for a lad to carry. The ‘young man from the country’ is left in a dark court, weeping and crying: ‘Rogue, villain, deceiver, where is my wine? My wine, my wine, alack, my wine!’

Mumpers or beggars occupy a high place in Baratarian annals; they are said to practice the only true liberal art, ‘because begging costs nothing to learn, and gets a dinner for nothing.’

Thus the poet of Barataria sings : —

When the days do darken early, and the wind it bloweth cold.
When the pools are frozen over, and the snow is deep on the wold,
When the holly gleameth brightly, and the clerks are singing the Oes,
Then the Mumper laugheth gaily, and forgetteth all his woes.

But still the cans go marching, and the flagons trot around,
And the stars are shining from the loft upon the frosty ground.
But the mumper quaffeth gaily, and a joyous catch doth troll;
He vows ere he doth quit the can, the can shall do him dole.

Such is Barataria, a land of cheats, but not devoid of wit; a land of wine flagons, of rare, cool old taverns, whose cellars are well stocked with Beame and Marivaux; a land of odd tales and legends and a world of fantastic harlequin tricks.

Sir John's Chef

LADIES WHO HAVE known the delights of sitting on the box-seat of an Epsom drag will remember that on the return journey, as the horn was awakening the echoes of shady Fulham, their charioteer would point with his whip towards a high wall of ancient brick and would say, 'That's Sir John Peyton's Place. No, you can't see the house, elms grow too thick; very fine old place, though; been in the family since the time of Richard III; lot of passages, you know, twisting staircases, three or four doors in every room, steps everywhere, and all that sort of thing. No; Sir John ain't a sporting man, and I never saw him at a first night. Don't think he can be the Peyton that does "At the Keyhole" for *Peeping Tom*; but I'll tell you what — he gives a chap the best feed he can get in London, or in Paris either. Been there myself; fifteen courses; best dinner I ever had in my life. Disgusting? Not at all; felt as if I could begin all over again, don't you know.' Then the horn would sound again, and the conversation would pass on to the new burlesque or the latest 'society' novel, if the coachman chanced to be a student of these severer literary topics. But such was Sir John Peyton's fame in London. His dinners were admitted to be unapproachable; gentlemen who had devoted their lives (and incomes) to the physiology of dining, and had proclaimed that Brillat-Savarin was great, and that 'Francois' or 'Robert' was his prophet, according to the clubs or restaurants which they frequented, were forced to admit after dining with Sir John that, while François and Robert had talents, Sir John's chef was a genius. 'It isn't cookery,' said Winton, the great diner out, 'it's inspiration. I could order *Cailles sautées au vin de Mont Pulciano* at the Globe Trotter's or Granfiasco's, and they might send up a nice dish enough; but that fellow of Sir John's isn't a cook at all; he gives you a romance, and puts it on a silver dish.' And once, when that famous epicure, Field-Marshal Sir Patrick Fitzgerald, late of the H.E.I.C.S., dined with Sir John Peyton, he ate his meal in awed silence; though most hostesses in town had bowed in terror before his muttered, yet perfectly audible criticisms, renewed with every course. But at Sir John's he only spoke ten words. These were: 'Good gad!

I've never tasted pheasant before in my life.' And not only did Sir John's chef send up well known dishes transformed by the magic of his art; but he did more. He created, he invented hors d'oeuvres, soups, entrées, and sauces of which no chef or restaurateur had ever heard the names; he mingled various flavours which had never been associated, and made dishes in which sharp, sweet, and hot seemed to be contrasted like the colours on the panels of an old master; and each course appeared at first as if the artist had put in all his skill and all his best materials, and then as though it were merely designed to give an appetite for its successor. 'Have you ever dined at Peyton's?' said Swift, the critic to Scow, the dramatic author: 'No? Then by all means, by force or fraud, secure an invitation. A dinner there is an epic poem; it is not a dinner at all, it is thought in its highest form. Throughout it there surges a kind of fateful consistency; each course appears inevitably predestined to occupy its particular place.' The chef of the French Embassy came to Sir John on the morning after the Ambassador had dined at Fulham, and besought him with tears in his eyes to permit him the favour of an interview with his renowned chef; the Ambassador had given the poor man a severe scolding for representing himself as the best cook in Paris. But Sir John gave a firm though courteous denial to this and to all similar applications; his chef, he said, saw nobody. Winton had offered a cool five hundred for the recipe to make that wonderful hors d'oeuvre *Saumon marine aux herbes Espagnoles*; but in vain; and the Duchess of Brentford had written a dozen fruitless letters addressed to Monsieur le Chef, at first offering him the command of her kitchen with the salary of an Ambassador and the treatment of a prince, and finally imploring him to name his own terms for the recipe for his *Salmi d'ortolans à la Baratarienne*. But Sir John's chef was not to be won over, and remained as mysterious and unapproachable a figure as a seventeenth-century Rosicrucian or alchemist.

If Sir John had lived in Madrid in the last century, the Inquisition would have looked into the matter; but as he lived in Fulham in our own day, that duty naturally fell to the share of Lady St Polpry (of the famous old Cornish family), who combined the inquisitorial talents of a Torquemada with the grace of a Persian cat. No scandal had any secrets for her; indeed, she could detail circumstances unknown even to the principal actors therein; and, as may be imagined, the mere hint of a mystery was enough to put her on the scent. She had long endeavoured to discover the identity of Sir John

Peyton's chef: like the rest she had made the mysterious cook splendid offers, she had even sent him presents; she had pumped Sir John; she had fished with Lady Peyton; she had bribed the lady's maid: but with no result. Her husband, a grey old nobleman, fond of whist and the ways of peace, had been induced to lend himself to her plots, and had actually condescended to give Sir John's man a standing invitation to drink Burgundy with his butler; but the valet, as cautious as courteous, never came. Lady St Polpry waited, and at last her opportunity arrived. She was 'taking off her things' (a term which includes much pinching and tweaking of recalcitrant locks of hair and a good many efforts of the lady to see her own back in a glass, darkly) in one of the numerous bedrooms of Sir John Peyton's house at Fulham, preparatory to going down to the drawing room, when suddenly a brilliant idea struck her. There were three doors in the room besides the one by which she had entered. Why not try one of them and endeavour to make her way to the kitchen, and personally interview the famous chef? It were easy to say she had lost her way and mistaken the door, and so on; nobody could say anything; people often made mistakes in these queer old houses. With an unerring instinct Lady St Polpry chose the door by the bed, opened it, and descended a dark and winding stair. A subtle odour of rare sauces led her aright, and in a few minutes she was in the kitchen. There was the great chef with his back towards her; calm, with the certainty of victory, a Wellington of the kitchen, he stood by a stove, cunningly manipulating some wondrous dish. At the noise of the opening door he started and turned round; and then, clad in white jacket and apron, with spotless *bonnet de cuisine* on his head, Lady St Polpry saw before her — Sir John Peyton.

The house in Fulham is to let; and Sir John and Lady Peyton are said to be travelling in the Levant.

Rus in Urbe

THE LOVER OF a country life, shut up by circumstance in the stoney wilderness of London, has perhaps no greater grief to bear than the oft repeated Cockney question, ‘Why don’t you go into the park, if you are so fond of the country?’ The parks! As well might one ask a lover of vintages; ‘Why don’t you drink gin and bitters if you are so fond of Chateau Laffitte?’ The parks are invaluable in their way; to these air filters may probably be ascribed the comparatively low death-rate of London, and to the attractions of Kew the remarkable immunity from suicidal mania enjoyed by the upper classes during the season; but they know little of the peculiar esoteric charm of the true country who would liken it to a Dutch pleasure-garden on a large scale — for Hyde Park is nothing more nor less. And, with the exception of a few hidden nooks, to which access by rail is slow and inconvenient, the country all around London is liable to the same objections as the parks; it is not the true article, for Villadom has captured it and the speculative builder has utterly taken possession; and though fields and trees and hedges may survive, the spirit has left them, and here as elsewhere the great god Pan is dead. For the country cannot be computed and reckoned up like a bill of lading: so many oaks, ditto beeches, ditto elms; so many acres of valuable grassland, ditto arable land, ditto waste. In Wimbledon Common there is nothing in the least countrified; and though Finsbury Park have much grass and many poplars, it is, perhaps, more thoroughly in London and of London than the Strand itself. In fine, one cannot create the country with a dozen sacks of best grass-seed and a number of healthy young trees.

But the Country Mouse, pent in the midst of the city of the myriad walls, has at least one resource: his imagination, which can pierce through the long unlovely streets, the dark fogs, the grimey mists, the ever-hanging cloud of smoke, can silence all the noises of the town, the roar of traffic and the ceaseless patter of weary feet. For the exile from his native land, as he gazes on the grey grim walls and feels the hot close air come in upon him through the open window — for him there shapes a vision; and beyond the houses, above the chimney tops, there is built up the great mountain range, whose huge round bastions are clothed with green bracken, from whose stoney sides pour out so many streams of clear cold water, the sources of many a brook and rivulet; for him flame all the far glories of the evening sun sinking into the heart of the tumulus that crowns the summit of the mountain, the memorial of a forgotten people; for him rises the evensong of the river in the valley as the wind dies down and the trees are still. Or maybe he tracks once more a stream that rushes down from boulder to boulder in the midst of a glen in the great hills; tracks it by steep wild fields closing in and growing steeper, by overhanging gleaming birches, by thick woods of beech stunted by the winter winds and gnarled and twisted into all manner of fantastic shapes; tracks it higher and higher, till the green walls on each side narrow to a point and the mountaintop looms vast above him, and the stream has its source, gushing out from a hidden reservoir in the rock and a bed of deep thick moss where a drop of water sparkles like a diamond on every leaf of fair green. Then, turning, he may see as from a watch tower, the windings of the glen behind him, and hear the noise of water falling, and the wind about the hills as it sweeps from slope to slope, from deep to great deep. And he, though London surge and roar without, may still wander on the mountain tops — broad stretches of land, gleaming as the September sun shines upon the heather with a mystic purple light, and rising and falling like the waves of ocean into the dim distance. He may follow the narrow path trodden close by the sheep, a wall of tall bracken on either side, beneath the rocky peak the highest point of the chain, on through yellow fragrant gorse, and again through the purple heather, by great blocks of quartz-veined rock, by low boundary-walls of loose stone, slanting gently down the mountainside. He may cross the brook and climb another hill till he reach the old grey church, where the rood-screen carved so curiously by pious hands of old, still remains, and still shows flower and leaf and berry — all the magic of the hedgerows cut delicately in the silvery oak. And in the midst of a little glen not far from the church he sees the Holy Well, in the hollow of the rock, and ever brimming with still water that looks black in the shadow of the trees that droop above it; and, listening here, there comes from the distance a sound of strange singing, that grows louder and echoes amidst the hills, until he hears the wild wail of men’s voices, singing in an ancient unfamiliar tongue, and the long, deep drawn notes of an old Welsh hymn. It is a funeral procession bearing their dead many a mile over the mountains to rest in the church garth on the hill. And as these voices die away and another voice begins from the lych-gate, the mountains also fade into the mist, and in their place rises the great forest that climbs up from the river-bank, breasts the hill-top, and stretches onward over hill and valley till it meets the level land and the yellow waters of the Severn Sea. Here and there, amidst the dark undergrowth of ash and hazel, are clear spaces of grass, shadowed by some old oak or beech beneath whose boughs the Abbot of Tintern and the foresters may have held their speechcourt, and have decided the all-important questions of houseboute and haybote; and the highest ridge is threaded all along by a narrow green causeway, on whose banks grow wild strawberries and whinberries, and whence through a gap in the trees one can look out and see the yellow water, and the distant hills of Somerset, or the river winding in and out below, hill following hill and the blue mountains far in the north. This causeway is the ancient Roman road which led from Menevia to Aque Solia, and doubtless has echoed to the measured tramp of the legions, the word of command, and the sound of the trumpets; and the parent oak of that great tree, slowly wasting beneath the weight of years, may have seen the eagles and the standards, the sheen of swords and the gleam of serried spears, and all the stately pomp that followed those tremendous words, *Senatus Populusque Romanus*. And here rode the companies of valiant knights, Sir Drogo and Sir Bogo, in all the glory of glittering armour and broidered surcoats, at the head of their armed men; and the sun shone on their banners, on lions and flower de lucus, and the trees heard the old French ballads that they sang. But now the shrieking jay and chattering magpie make the only sounds beneath the leaves; the green causeway is deserted and the rustle of the breeze among the tree tops sounds like a voice whispering from far away. The great white clouds roll across the summer sky, and the sunlight falling here and there from between the boughs shines on the tall red spire of the foxglove instead of the Roman banners; the forest assizes of a later day, with their potations of old ale and their statues of Stable-stand, Dog drawl, Back, bearend, and Bloody-hand are set no more; and the forest castles and towers are now things ruinous and ivy-clad. All these legions of the Senate and the Roman people, foresters in session, presiding abbot, Sir Drogo and Sir Bogo, knights and men at arms — have vanished utterly away and the great forest, with its stillness and the voices of its winds, alone remains.

* * *

‘Why don’t you go to the park if you are so fond of the country?’

By the Brook

IN THE VERY midst of the brake, where the undergrowth of hazel, and oak, and alder is thickest; where tall foxgloves and taller thistles, bracken and bramble, and wild rose struggle together to the light, a spring of cold, clear water slowly trickles from a rock, and fills a hollowed well beneath; green lichens clothe the rock as if it were a fairy hall, and a brighter green seems to shimmer over them as the water slides down, drop by drop, into the well. Above, little delicate ferns grow in the crevices, and a frond of hartstongue dips down to the water in the well, ever cool in the shade of a hazel thicket growing on the overhanging bank. Thus our brook begins its course; for as a drop trickles out of the rock and falls into the well, another drop escapes on the other side; and so a little stream begins, at first scattered over a few yards of boggy ground, fertile in cresses, but soon flowing in a narrow, shallow channel beneath the thickets and the ferns down the hillside to the verge of the brake. There it issues forth from under a straggling hedge, and wanders down a sloping meadow, amidst deep rich grass. But though the grass be at its highest, yet we can plainly see every turning and returning of our brook from one tall hedge to another, for it makes a procession across the meadow. Like some glorious pageant of forgotten years, winding in and out along the dim and narrow streets of an ancient town — a pageant heralded by trumpets and banners, and glittering with broidered surcoats and tabards and shining helmets and slanting spears; thus across the meadow shine the towering foxgloves and bright ox-eye daisies, the tapering rushes with their tufts of blossom, the wild celery in its glossy green, clusters of yellow flowers, the mystic St John’s wort, with many others, and, loveliest of all, the feathery plumes of meadowsweet, filling all the air with its fragrance, the incense of this pageant.

Thus the brook marks its way, and above it the dragonflies (or snake servants, as they are sometimes called) flutter and skim swiftly through the air, shooting to left and right, but never straying far from the water whence they rose. At the farther hedge a little tributary stream flows into ours, and together they run beneath the bank, and make a Niagara fall four feet high on the other side, showing that the soil is of a softer sort. The brook leads us now through a thicket by the roadside, again through a meadow, and so into a valley that runs towards the south and the sea. At first the hills on each side slope gently upward, good hay meadows rise from the brook and lead to a farmhouse here and there, shining white in the sun; then woods of dense undergrowth — sycamore and ash predominating — that look so black and gloomy of winter afternoons, stretch upward to the cornfields; and then wild land, covered with gorse and broom and green bracken, begins to steepen and close in the valley. All the while our brook is growing, from this field and that little streams run down to mingle with it, and here pours forth a rivulet along a steep and stoney channel beneath an alley of intertwisting turns; and here gushes a tiny thread of water, gathered from a marshy field, where blue grass and sedge and rushes nourish and sheep and cattle fail.

So now a deeper, swifter stream runs along the valley between the alders, dark stemmed and dark-leaved, and the red banks are pierced with otter holes and the overhanging roots and stumps shelter the quiet abodes of trout, small but sweet. Steeper grow the hills and narrower the valley, till at last we come into the quietest of glens, and, looking up, see, as it were, a great fern-clad bastion to the left, crowned with the white walls of a farmstead, and on the right a sheer slope of grass, dotted with yellow gorse, and bounded at the top with a tall hedge of may. No wind here to stir the alders, though it may be swaying the hawthorn hedge above; no voice of man or bird to break the stillness; no open land to gaze upon, but only the closed-in valley with its narrow pathway beside the brook. But the brook is the voice of the glen, and makes its music; a music of two parts, as we may fancy, hearing the higher notes of the water speeding over the pebbles in shallow places, and the deeper sound with which it pours into a hollow in the bed of a stream. Now there is but little water to flow, but in the winter, when October and November have filled the wells after the drought, and every field has its turbid stream, then our brook is full to the brim with red water, swirling round its corners, loosening the trees, and sometimes flooding over bridge and bank; and making the valley into a rushing river.

But now only a finger’s depth of bright water flows over the smooth pebbles, lighting up their dull reds and yellows, and giving them all the glory of precious stones. The brook flows onward through the silent valley, and goes forth again amongst meadows of a gentler slope, meadows where the golden iris shines in June, where maids may fill their maunds with cowslips in the spring, and where the dainty orchid called ladies' tresses sends up its tiny sweet-scented spire in August and September.

Mark those dark green leaves, clustering thick beneath the hedge; there, in Lent bloom the daffodils, shaking on their stems before the rough north winds. So onwards through fields hallowed by the presence and the memory of flowers, runs on our brook, turning and winding in and out, leaving peninsulas of land behind it, and broadening as it goes. Our path leads us into a lane which the stream crosses. On each side is a steep hill, and so narrow is the road, that one may stand in the midst and touch a high, ferny bank with each hand. Horse and wagon must make their way through the stream, but for those that have picked their way amongst the loose boulders and firm rocks of the lane on foot, there is a little bridge from bank to bank. Who shall say how old it is? The wood is wrinkled with age and the floods of many winters; but it is of good oak, and so still stands above the waters as they issue forth from the fields and turn across the lane. Above the bridge there is some faint suggestion of Gothic design, indefinable and yet evident. There is no carving, of course, but something in the shaping of the wood and the finish of the posts at either end, that makes one think some dim tradition of the Gothic spirit may have lingered on amongst the carpenters of the countryside, and all unwittingly have guided their hands. It is pleasant on a summer evening to stand on the bridge and watch the water swirl under it, swim across the road, and fall over a kind of weir into the fields again. The sunlight shines through the trees and glimmers on the ground as the boughs move gently to and fro; the brook sings its song, which no man can fit with words; and the scent of the meadowsweet comes with the wind across the fields. The brook speeds on, winding to and fro by meadow and brake and ruined farm and rounded hill that stands up against the dreamy sky, and marks a camp of old forgotten warriors; speeds on towards the south and King Arthur's city — onward till it meets the rising tide, and mingles its clear stream with the yellow water of the river. Our journey by the brook is done.

The Autophone

IN A SMALL parlour — the pre-Ruskinite parlour of country lodgings — the Rev. Arthur Hammond was sitting before the rickety round table, his head upon his hands, and his eyes fixed upon an open book. For an hour or more he sat still, never turning a leaf of his volume, nor looking through the window as the sun slowly sank into a bank of clouds and the sea changed from blue to misty grey; and the far-away wash of water and the dull roar of the rising wind among the trees never reached his ears. The Rev. Arthur Hammond read on as the sun went down, but he read only one sentence over and over again, till his brain was in a whirl, and the types seemed to dance before his eyes. The sentence ran as follows:

Personality is not a permanent but a transient thing; it lives and dies, begins and ends continually; no one can remain one and the same person two moments together.

The day had been hot and close, with one of those burning suns that sometimes shine in June and the evening seemed still hotter. Hammond had felt all day as if a weight were pressing on his head, but still he had persevered in his reading, hardly stopping to eat or drink. The next day he was going to the cathedral city to undergo his examination for priest’s orders: for the last three months every moment of his spare time had been given to hard grinding study and for a week he had scarcely stirred from his books. His information on the Early Heresies was extensive and peculiar. He knew all about the Ebienites, and could explain the teachings of Basilides. He was prepared to defend St Peter from the charge of writing ‘Baboo Greek,’ he had a good working knowledge of the Canon Law, and the Fathers were at his fingers’ ends — if it be respectful to say so. The last day or two had been devoted to Butler’s *Analogy*. Hammond had grimly struggled for the third or fourth time through the crabbed style and involved argument, and at last read ‘Conclusion.’ He leant back in his chair, supremely happy that his work was at last done and he was free to rest or do what he would. Should he go for a sail, or take a brisk walk over the hills, or call at the rector's and have a pipe? He dallied and he hesitated, carelessly turning over the leaves of the book, and at last, in mere indecision, began to read the dissertation 'Of Personal Identity,' a kind of philosophical appendix to the Analogy. He read carelessly, half filled his pipe and looked round for a light. The matchbox was on the mantelpiece between two shell encrusted boxes, 'Presents from Baybeach,' and Hammond felt too lazy to get up, and so he turned again to his book and read on. The words and phrases made but little impression on his tired brain; he felt as if everything were slowly sinking into a haze; the four walls of the little parlour seemed to hover indistinctly around him and the hot air beat palpably, as in waves, upon his temples. Suddenly his eyes fell upon the words 'Personality is but a transient thing.' It was like a flash of lightning — bright and yet blinding. What personality was sitting in that chair, gazing on an open book? Was it a little boy roaming among the woods and meadows in summers long ago? Or whose joys and griefs were those that now surged up in his memory? Who was that, walking with other lads across the playground, or kneeling by a deathbed? And whose were those companions, singing songs and uttering jests that made him flush for very shame? He seemed to hear a voice, hard and toneless, like the crash of a falling bough, calling 'Ha ha! you have tasted the apple,' and a rough man with a flushed face and a strange light in his eyes came forth from a door in a dark narrow street and shut it behind him as a girl looked out from the window. Then he heard the words 'Lives and dies, begins and ends, lives and dies, begins and ends' repeated again and again, louder and louder, swelling tumultuously, and then an awful crash that burst in upon his brain.

Mr Hammond looked up; the room was growing dark; yet he could see the twinkle of the lustres on the mantle, and he could hear, quite distinctly, the noise of tapping at his door. 'Come in,' he cried; and the door opened and someone stood by the sofa and began speaking to him in a low voice, yet audibly enough.

'The Rev. Arthur Hammond, I believe? Pray excuse me for intruding at such an hour; I am well aware how scanty is the leisure of the clergy; but I hope that in my case I may plead… .'

‘Pray don’t apologise. I am afraid I was quite absorbed in my book and kept you waiting. What can I do for you, may I ask?’

‘I have ventured to call upon you to submit to your notice an invention of mine which I think I may call the great invention of the age. I have exhibited it before many of the bishops, deans, archdeacons, and canons of the church, including your reverend diocesan; and I should like to add your name — a name, I must say, second to none among the younger generation of the clergy.’

‘You are very kind indeed,’ said Mr Hammond dreamily. ‘Thank you very much; really very kind of you. By the way, you didn’t happen to notice a young fellow going out of the house as you came in — a fair complexioned young man, a little like myself, but younger and, well, rather odd looking?’

‘No, sir, I saw no one. Shall I now have the pleasure of exhibiting my invention?’

‘Ah, to be sure — your invention. What do you call it?’

‘I have named it the Autophone, the title was suggested to me by a beloved prelate and a distinguished scholar.’

‘Quite so; very good; the Autophone. What is the nature of the invention?’

‘Allow me. You see this disk of delicate yellow metal? Kindly pass the point of your forefinger (the right hand) lightly over it from north to south. Thank you; the polarity is now established. The next thing is to set the current in action. Do you happen to have such a thing as a musical box?’

‘Yes,’ said Hammond, growing interested and less dazed than at first, ‘there is an old one in that corner belonging to my landlady.’

‘It will answer our purpose admirably. You see I place it on the table thus. I next insert the polarised metal disk, so. Now, if you please, just give that little knob a turn; exactly!’

A babel, a tumult of voices, of voices that he knew and remembered; one striving with another, calling to him out of the deep past; and some the voices of the dead.

‘Ha ha! Do you hear that, you fellows? Hammond’s in luck. Didn’t you see him with her? The old rascal thought it was too dark under the tree, but

Davis spotted him. Didn’t you, old boy?’ ‘I should think I did. How’s Mary, Hammond?’ ‘Never you mind, Hammond. You couldn’t do better. I only wish I had your luck.’ ‘Now, then, old fellow, let’s have a song. Get out another bottle of whisky, Williams. Go ahead, Hammond.’

The song began, and Hammond heard it across the great bridge of years; heard his own voice singing those shameful lines, and heard the laughter and the voices joining in the chorus.

‘Curse you!’ he cried; ‘whoever you are, take your infernal machine away. It’s a lie; I never did this.’

But the man only laughed, and the song was singing all the while, and Hammond rushed forward headlong, and fell as the thunder burst at last above the house.

They found him lying full length upon the floor, his forehead cut and bleeding and the musical box upside down on the floor beside him. It was playing ‘Pop goes the weasel.’ When the doctor came his verdict was ‘Brain fever.’

The Marriage of Panurge

IT WAS A dim, hot night; all the great city smoked as with a mist, and a tawny moon rose through films of cloud far in the vista of the east. Ambrose thought with a sudden recollection that the moon, that world of splendour, was shining in a farther land, on the coast of the wild rocks, on the heaving sea, on the faery apple-garths in Avalon, where, though the apples are always golden, yet the blossoms of enchantment never fade, but hang for ever against the sky.

They were passing a half-lit street, and these dreams were broken by the sudden clanging, rattling music of a piano-organ. For a moment they saw the shadowy figures of the children as they flitted to and fro, dancing odd measures in the rhythm of the tune. Then they came into a long, narrow way with a church spire in the distance, and near the church they passed the "church-shop" — Roman, evidently, from the subjects and the treatment of the works of art on view. But it was strange! In the middle of the window was a crude, glaring statue of some saint. He was in bright red robes, sprinkled with golden stars; the blood rained down from a wound in his forehead, and with one hand he drew the scarlet vestment aside and pointed to the dreadful gash above his heart, and from this, again, the bloody drops fell thick. The colours stared and shrieked, and yet, through the bad, cheap art there seemed to shine a rapture that was very near to beauty; the thing expressed was so great that it had to a certain extent overcome the villainy of the expression.

They wandered vaguely, after their custom. Ambrose was silent; he was thinking of Avalon and "Red Martyrdom" and the Frenchman's parting salutation, of the vision in one of the old books, "the Man clothed in a robe redder and more shining than burning fire, and his feet and his hands and his face were of a like flame, and five angels in fiery vesture stood about him, and at the feet of the Man the ground was covered with a ruddy dew."

They passed under an old church tower that rose white in the moonlight above them. The air had cleared, the mist had floated away, and now the sky glowed violet, and the white stones of the classic spire shone on high. From it there came suddenly a tumult of glad sound, exultant bells in ever-changing order, pealing out as if to honour some great victory, so that the mirth of the street below became but a trivial restless noise. He thought of some passage that he had read but could not distinctly remember: a ship was coming back to its haven after a weary and tempestuous voyage over many dreadful seas, and those on board saw the tumult in the city as their sails were sighted; heard afar the shouts of gladness from the rejoicing people; heard the bells from all the spires and towers break suddenly into triumphant chorus, sounding high above the washing of the waves.

Ambrose roused himself from his dreams. They had been walking in a circle and had returned almost to the street of the Château, though, their knowledge of the district being of an unscientific character, they were under the impression that they were a mile or so away from that particular point. As it happened, they had not entered this street before, and they were charmed at the sudden appearance of stained glass lighted up from within. The colour was rich and good; there were flourished scrolls and grotesques in the Renaissance manner, many emblazoned shields in ruby and gold and azure; and the centre-piece showed the Court of the Beer King — a jovial and venerable figure attended by a host of dwarfs and kobolds, all holding on high enormous mugs of beer. They went in boldly and were glad. It was the famous “Three Kings” in its golden and unreformed days, but this they knew not. The room was of moderate size, very low, with great dark beams in the white ceiling. White were the walls; on the plaster, black-letter texts with vermilion initials praised the drinker’s art, and more kobolds, in black and red, loomed oddly in unsuspected corners. The lighting, presumably, was gas, but all that was visible were great antique lanterns depending from iron hooks, and through their dull green glass only a dim radiance fell upon the heavy oak tables and the drinkers. From the middle beam an enormous bouquet of fresh hops hung on high; there was a subdued murmur of talk, and now and then the clatter of the lid of a mug, as fresh beer was ordered. In one corner there was a kind of bar; behind it a couple of grim women — the kobolds apparently — performed their office; and above, on a sort of rack, hung mugs and tankards of all sizes and of all fantasies. There were plain mugs of creamy earthenware, mugs gaudily and oddly painted with garlanded goats, with hunting scenes, with towering castles, with flaming posies of flowers. Then some friend of the drunken, some sage who had pried curiously into the secrets of thirst, had made a series of wonders in glass, so shining and crystalline that to behold them was as if one looked into a well, for every glitter of the facets gave promise of satisfaction. There were the mugs, capacious and very deep, crowned for the most part not with mere plain lids of common use and make, but with tall spires in pewter, richly ornamented, evident survivals from the Middle Ages. Ambrose's eyes glistened; the place was altogether as he would have designed it. Nelly, too, was glad to sit down, for they had walked longer than usual. She was refreshed by a glass of some cool drink with a borage flower and a cherry floating in it, and Ambrose ordered a mug of beer.

It is not known how many of these *krugs* he emptied. It was, as has been noted, a sultry night, and the streets were dusty, and that glass of Benedictine after dinner rather evokes than dismisses the demon of thirst. Still, Munich beer is no hot and rebellious drink, so the causes of what followed must probably be sought for in other springs. Ambrose took a deep draught, gazed upward to the ceiling, and ordered another mug of beer for himself and some more of the cool and delicate and flowery beverage for Nelly. When the drink was set upon the board, he thus began, without title or preface:

"You must know, Nelly dear," he said, "that the marriage of Panurge, which fell out in due time (according to the oracle and advice of the Holy Bottle), was by no means a fortunate one. For, against all the counsel of Pantagruel and of Friar John, and indeed of all his friends, Panurge married in a fit of spleen and obstinacy the crooked and squinting daughter of the little old man who sold green sauce in the Rue Quincangrogne at Tours — you will see the very place in a few days, and then you will understand everything. You do not understand that? My child, that is impiety, since it accuses the Zeitgeist, who is certainly the only god that ever existed, as you will see more fully demonstrated in Huxley and Spencer and all the leading articles in all the leading newspapers. *Quod erat demonstrandum*. To be still more precise: You must know that when I am dead, and a very great man indeed, many thousands of people will come from all the quarters of the globe — not forgetting the United States — to Lupton. They will come and stare very hard at the Old Grange, which will have an inscription about me on the wall; they will spend hours in High School; they will walk all round Playing Fields; they will cut little bits off 'brooks' and 'quarries.' Then they will view the Sulphuric Acid works, the Chemical Manure factory and the Free Library, and whatever other stink-pots and cesspools Lupton town may contain; they will finally enjoy the view of the Midland Railway Goods Station. Then they will say: '*Now* we understand him; *now* that beautiful passage is quite clear; *now* one sees how he got all his inspiration in that lovely old school and the wonderful English country-side.' So you see that when I show you the Rue Quincangrogne you will perfectly understand this history. Let us drink; the world shall never be drowned again, so have no fear.

"Well, the fact remains that Panurge, having married this hideous wench aforesaid, was excessively unhappy. It was in vain that he argued with his wife in all known languages and in some that are unknown, for, as she said, she only knew two languages, the one of Touraine and the other of the Stick, and this second she taught Panurge *per modum passionis* — that is by beating him, and this so thoroughly that poor Pilgarlic was sore from head to foot. He was a worthy little fellow, but the greatest coward that ever breathed. Believe me, illustrious drinkers and most precious… . Nelly, never was man so wretched as this Panurge since Paradise fell from Adam. This is the true doctrine; I heard it when I was at Eleusis. You enquire what was the matter? Why, in the first place, this vile wretch whom they all called — so much did they hate her — La Vie Mortale, or Deadly Life, this vile wretch, I say: what do you think that she did when the last note of the fiddles had sounded and the wedding guests had gone off to the 'Three Lampreys' to kill a certain worm — the which worm is most certainly immortal, since it is not dead yet! Well, then, what did Madame Panurge? Nothing but this: She robbed her excellent and devoted husband of all that he had. Doubtless you remember how, in the old days, Panurge had played ducks and drakes with the money that Pantagrael had given him, so that he borrowed on his corn when it was still in the ear, and before it was sown, if we enquire a little more closely. In truth, the good little man never had a penny to bless himself withal, for the which cause Pantagruel loved him all the more dearly. So that when the Dive Bouteille gave its oracle, and Panurge chose his spouse, Pantagruel showed how preciously he esteemed a hearty spender by giving him such a treasure that the goldsmiths who live under the bell of St. Gatien still talk of it before they dine, because by doing so their mouths water, and these salivary secretions are of high benefit to the digestion: read on this, Galen. If you would know how great and glorious this treasure was, you must go to the Library of the Archevêché at Tours, where they will show you a vast volume bound in pigskin, the name of which I have forgotten. But this book is nothing else than the list of all the wonders and glories of Pantagruel's wedding present to Panurge; it contains surprising things, I can tell you, for, in good coin of the realm alone, never was gift that might compare with it; and besides the common money there were ancient pieces, the very names of which are now incomprehensible, and incomprehensible they will remain till the coming of the Coqcigrues. There was, for instance, a great gold Sol, a world in itself, as some said truly, and I know not how many myriad myriad of Etoiles, all of the finest silver that was ever minted, and Anges–Gardiens, which the learned think must have been first coined at Angers, though others will have it that they were the same as our Angels; and, as for Roses de Paradis and Couronnes Immortelles, I believe he had as many of them as ever he would. Beauties and joys he was to keep for pocket-money; small change is sometimes great gain. And, as I say, no sooner had Panurge married that accursed daughter of the Rue Quincangrogne than she robbed him of everything, down to the last brass farthing. The fact is that the woman was a witch; she was also something else which I leave out for the present. But, if you will believe me, she cast such a spell upon Panurge that he thought himself an absolute beggar. Thus he would look at his Sol d'Or and say: 'What is the use of that? It is only a great bright lump: I can see it every day.' Then when they said, 'But how about those Anges–Gardiens?' he would reply, 'Where are they? Have you seen them? *I* never see them. Show them to me,' and so with all else; and all the while that villain of a woman beat, thumped and belaboured him so that the tears were always in his eyes, and they say you could hear him howling all over the world. Everybody said that he had made a pretty mess of it, and would come to a bad end.

"Luckily for him, this… witch of a wife of his would sometimes doze off for a few minutes, and then he had a little peace, and he would wonder what had become of all the gay girls and gracious ladies that he had known in old times — for he had played the devil with the women in his day and could have taught Ovid lessons in *arte amoris*. Now, of course, it was as much as his life was worth to mention the very name of one of these ladies, and as for any little sly visits, stolen endearments, hidden embraces, or any small matters of that kind, it was *good-bye, I shall see you next Nevermas*. Nor was this all, but worse remains behind; and it is my belief that it is the thought of what I am going to tell you that makes the wind wail and cry of winter nights, and the clouds weep, and the sky look black; for in truth it is the greatest sorrow that ever was since the beginning of the world. I must out with it quick, or I shall never have done: in plain English, and as true as I sit here drinking good ale, not one drop or minim or drachm or pennyweight of drink had Panurge tasted since the day of his wedding! He had implored mercy, he had told her how he had served Gargantua and Pantagruel and had got into the habit of drinking in his sleep, and his wife merely advised him to go to the devil — she was not going to let him so much as look at the nasty stuff. '"Touch not, taste not, smell not," is my motto,' said she. She gave him a blue ribbon, which she said would make up for it. 'What do you want with Drink?' said she. 'Go and do business instead, it's much better for you.'

"Sad, then, and sorry enough was the estate of poor Panurge. At last, so wretched did he become, that he took advantage of one of his wife's dozes and stole away to the good Pantagrael, and told him the whole story — and a very bad one it was — so that the tears rolled down Pantagruel's cheeks from sheer grief, and each teardrop contained exactly one hundred and eighteen gallons of aqueous fluid, according to the calculations of the best geometers. The great man saw that the case was a desperate one, and Heaven knew, he said, whether it could be mended or not; but certain it was that a business such as this could not be settled in a hurry, since it was not like a game at shove-ha'penny to be got over between two gallons of wine. He therefore counselled Panurge to have patience and bear with his wife for a few thousand years, and in the meantime they would see what could be done. But, lest his patience should wear out, he gave him an odd drug or medicine, prepared by the great artist of the mountains of Cathay, and this he was to drop into his wife's glass — for, though he might have no drink, she was drunk three times a day, and she would sleep all the longer, and leave him awhile in peace. This Panurge very faithfully performed, and got a little rest now and again, and they say that while that devil of a woman snored and snorted he was able, by odd chances once or twice, to get hold of a drop of the right stuff — good old Stingo from the big barrel — which he lapped up as eagerly as a kitten laps cream. Others there be who declare that once or twice he got about his sad old tricks, while his ugly wife was sleeping in the sun; the women on the Maille make no secret of their opinion that his old mistress, Madame Sophia, was seen stealing in and out of the house as slyly as you please, and God knows what goes on when the door is shut. But the Tourainians were always sad gossips, and one must not believe all that one hears. I leave out the flat scandal-mongers who are bold enough to declare that he kept one mistress at Jerusalem, another at Eleusis, another in Egypt and about as many as are contained in the seraglio of the Grand Trunk, scattered up and down in the towns and villages of Asia; but I do believe there was some kissing in dark corners, and a curtain hung across one room in the house could tell odd tales. Nevertheless, La Vie Mortale (a pest on her!) was more often awake than asleep, and when she was awake Panurge's case was worse than ever. For, you see, the woman was no piece of a fool, and she saw sure enough that something was going on. The Stingo in the barrel was lower than of rights, and more than once she had caught her husband looking almost happy, at which she beat the house about his ears. Then, another time, Madame Sophia dropped her ring, and again this sweet lady came one morning so strongly perfumed that she scented the whole place, and when La Vie woke up it smelt like a church. There was fine work then, I promise you; the people heard the bangs and curses and shrieks and groans as far as Amboise on the one side and Luynes on the other; and that year the Loire rose ten feet higher than the banks on account of Panurge's tears. As a punishment, she made him go and be industrial, and he built ten thousand stink-pot factories with twenty thousand chimneys, and all the leaves and trees and green grass and flowers in the world were blackened, and died, and all the waters were poisoned so that there were no perch in the Loire, and salmon fetched forty sols the pound at Chinon market. As for the men and women, they became yellow apes and listened to a codger named Calvin, who told them they would all be damned eternally (except himself and his friends), and they found his doctrine very comforting, and probable too, since they had the sense to know that they were more than half damned already. I don't know whether Panurge's fate was worse on this occasion or on another when his wife found a book in his writing, full from end to end of poetry; some of it about the wonderful treasure that Pantagruel had given him, which he was supposed to have forgotten; some of it verses to those old light-o'-loves of his, with a whole epic in praise of his mistress-in-chief, Sophia. Then, indeed, there was the very deuce to pay; it was bread and water, stripes and torment, all day long, and La Vie swore a great oath that if he ever did it again he should be sent to spend the rest of his life in Manchester, whereupon he fell into a swoon from horrid fright and lay like a log, so that everybody thought he was dead.

"All this while the great Pantagruel was not idle. Perceiving how desperate the matter was, he summoned the Thousand and First Great Oecumenical Council of all the sages of the wide world, and when the fathers had come, and had heard High Mass at St. Gatien's, the session was opened in a pavilion in the meadows by the Loire just under the Lanterne of Roche Corbon, whence this Council is always styled the great and holy Council of the Lantern. If you want to know where the place is you can do so very easily, for there is a choice tavern on the spot where the pavilion stood, and there you may have *malelotte* and *friture* and amber wine of Vouvray, better than in any tavern in Touraine. As for the history of the acts of this great Council, it is still a-writing, and so far only two thousand volumes in elephant folio have been printed *sub signo Lucernæ cum permissu superiorum*. However, as it is necessary to be brief, it may be said that the holy fathers of the Lantern, after having heard the whole case as it was exposed to them by the great clerks of Pantagruel, having digested all the arguments, looked into the precedents, applied themselves to the doctrine, explored the hidden wisdom, consulted the Canons, searched the Scriptures, divided the dogma, distinguished the distinctions and answered the questions, resolved with one voice that there was no help in the world for Panurge, save only this: he must forthwith achieve the most high, noble and glorious quest of the Sangraal, for no other way was there under heaven by which he might rid himself of that pestilent wife of his, La Vie Mortale.

"And on some other occasion," said Ambrose, "you may hear of the last voyage of Panurge to the Glassy Isle of the Holy Graal, of the incredible adventures that he achieved, of the dread perils through which he passed, of the great wonders and marvels and compassions of the way, of the manner in which he received the title Plentyn y Tonau, which signifies 'Child of the Water-floods,' and how at last he gloriously attained the vision of the Sangraal, and was most happily translated out of the power of La Vie Mortale."

"And where is he now?" said Nelly, who had found the tale interesting but obscure.

“It is not precisely known — opinions vary. But there are two odd things: one is that he is exactly like that man in the red dress whose statue we saw in the shop window to-night; and the other is that from that day to this he has never been sober for a single minute.

“*Calix meus inebrians quam præclarus est!*”

The Brook Farm

ON THE SLOPE of the hillside, a little way above the brook, stands the old whitewashed house, between orchard and garden. The road, or rather lane, that leads one past the garden gate, diverges from the highway, and, after many windings, takes a sudden curve and a rapid descent. The bank on one side is a high wall of crumbling grey limestone, the paradise of many a dainty fern, and on the other side the hill falls away from the lane, and we look down through a plantation of tall straight larches, down to where the brook makes all the year a rippling song that sounds faintly and sweetly in the stillness of this valley, where no wind can come. Above the lane, above the limestone bank, stretches a long high slope of grass, glowing in early summer with blossom of the broom, in autumn with the rich, sweet-scented gorse; and as we stroll along, the larch plantation comes to an end, and in its place a meadow of deep rich grass lies between us and the brook which has taken a wide curve from one side of the valley to the other, and now flows beneath a steep, wild bank, covered with undergrowth, only to return again to cross the road beneath the Brook Farm.

Here, then, let us stand in this quiet valley, closed in on all sides by hills high enough to shut out the wind; though we may hear the leaves rustling on the tree tops, yet below not a leaf stirs in the hedge, and the only answer to the wind is the ceaseless voices of the brook as it speeds towards the river and the sea. Long ago was the old farm built, as we may see by the solid stone mullions in the windows, and the outward slope of the strong walls and the queer little windows, dotted here and there, as if the ancient builder found a beauty in irregularity. Many a costly volume treats learnedly of the history of our English castles and the seats of ‘county families;’ but would not the history of such an old farmhouse as this be as entertaining in its way? This Brook Farm, then, was once a mill, and a mill for many hundred years; it is mentioned in a kind of ecclesiastical Doomsday Book of the thirteenth century as part of the possessions of a Benedictine priory five miles away, the priory enjoying the parish tithes, and serving the parish church in return. The ‘gigantic burglar’ of Bluff King

Hal (one might as well say ‘Bluff Bill Sykes’) found the mill wheel turning and left it still tossing the water back to the brook whence it came, and for many a generation the farmers continued to bring their sacks of corn to be ground in the old primitive way; but now not so much as a trace of the wheel remains, and the tradition of such a thing has almost faded out.

Only a few old men who still cling to knee-breeches and gaiters, have ‘heard tell’ that a mill once stood there; and across the meadow from one bend of the brook to the other is a broad dry ditch, its banks rounded and quite covered with grass; this was the mill course. And in front of the farm gate lies a great round stone with a hole in the centre; this, may be, was the nether millstone. We may imagine, when the last sack of corn had been ground and the water sparkled for the last time on the wheel, how it stood still for year after year, black and silent; how, by slow degrees, the stout wood began to decay; and how grass, and dandelions, and house leek, and fern took up their abode in every crevice and cranny, till at last some utilitarian farmer had the wheel demolished and cut up for firewood. The same fate is overtaking most of the old mills; the improved machinery of the towns has proved too much for the country miller, and so, one by one, the merry mill-wheels have been silenced and the channels that supplied them dried up.

But though the wheel be still, and the water run swiftly no more along the mill-race, the pleasant old farmhouse still remains in the most peaceful corner of that peaceful valley. Here all day is the sound of running water from the brook below; here an eternal quiet whereon even roaring March and gusty October have no power; here the fresh scent of the larch woods all around; here the soft breath of the hills; and here in summer evenings, when meadowsweet and willow-herb mark the country calendar with white and red, comes the strange rattle of the fern owl from the bracken on the hill. And standing by the garden gate, under the blossom of the rose-tree that grows wild upon the wall, we can see the steep white path that climbs painfully the heavy slope of the hill opposite; a lane whose pavements is the limestone rock, its banks a hanging garden of red and yellow flowers; a lane that winds between deep woods of larch, broken here and there by patches of rough grass-land not yet planted. If we climb the steep lane and turn to one side through the wood we shall find an enchanted land; big walls of limestone, whose grey massy blocks the great ferns that grow so richly there can scarcely cover; bastions and bulwarks of weird shapes, covered with green turf; here the similitude of a ruined keep, and there as it were a huge hall between those stone walls. The whole place gives us a strange suggestion of having been designed by men’s hands; it might well have been a stronghold of that dim race whom the Celts found in possession of Britain when they came, as the bard says, ‘from the land of summer.’ Climbing one of those weird bastions, we look out and see our farm, hanging, as it seems, between hill and brook: we can see beyond it one wave of hill following another hill, the great hill to the west bounds all, and far to the south the sun shines upon Severn Sea, bright as upon a pane of glass at evening. From our high tower we can look down into many a quiet valley, girdled around by hills and woods, and more than one rivulet glitters in the sun; but nowhere is there a lovelier or a quieter corner of the earth than where the mill-wheel long ago threw the water in the sunlight, and whence now come towards us distant voices as the corn falls golden to the sickle.

Looking down from the hilltop through the golden air of summer we may well dream all the heavy years away, and see the channel in the meadow once more flushed with water, the wheel shining as the stream drops from it, and a grave, robed figure, the Cellarer of the Priory, casting his accounts and making reckonings with the busy miller. And for dream-music we hear a snatch of an old song:-

‘I’ll tell thee what, good vellowe,Before the Vriars went henceA bushel of the best wheateWas sold for vourteen pence;And vorty eggs a penny,— ‘

But the Cellarer vanishes, and the mill-wheel, and the music also; and, as we look our last upon the little farm, we see a costrel laid down beneath the shadow of a hedge to keep the cider cool, and the three sickles flash in the sunlight as the ears of corn quiver and fall upon the ground.

A Remarkable Coincidence

‘I REALLY BELIEVE, old fellow,’ said Mr James Marvell to Mr William Walters, ‘I really believe there are no real Bohemians left in London. Upon my word, I think we were the last of the race.’

‘I fancy you are right. Bohemians wear dress-clothes in these days. We didn’t. I have heard of Bohemians entertaining the Prince of Wales. In our time the Prince of Wales round the corner entertained us — for a consideration. It was good beer, though. Do remember the taste? A fine solid drink I used to think it.’

‘I don’t think I shall ever forget anything in Handel Street. I go through it sometimes on my way to the club; and, by Jove! it gives me quite a pang when I think how jolly we were at Number 20.’

‘How about your first romance? We didn’t feel very jolly when that letter came, eh?’

‘Ah, indeed! that was a blow.’ Mr Walters sighed and rang the bell, and a grave and decent butler appeared. ‘Johnson, I want you to bring us a pint of four-ale:’ Marvell burst into a roar of laughter, which he tried to smother in his napkin. The butler blushed; he drank burgundy himself. ‘I mean, of course, Johnson, that I want you to get a bottle of that old Chateau Margaux; I wish Mr Marvell to give me his opinion on it. Yes, as you were saying, Marvell, that was a most extraordinary thing about the romance; I never understood it, and I don’t suppose I ever shall.’

‘It was a wonderful coincidence certainly; still, it was a blow which made our fortunes. Here is the claret. Ah! a fine wine that — better than the Prince of Wales’s *ordinare,* eh?’

The two friends were never tired of recalling the old days in Handel Street. Handel Street is in the gloomy wilderness of Soho, and in all that queerest of London quarters there is no street shadier, either physically or morally. It was a *cul de sac*, entered under an archway, and bounded by what had once been a nobleman’s mansion and was now a warehouse; and the house in the darkest corner was Number 20. Its doorway, like other doorways, was decorated by innumerable bell-handles; within, mysterious trades were carried on in small rooms, where paint and paper had merged into a sort of neutral tint — in fact, the *couleur de Soho*. A stair as winding and narrow as the newel of a cathedral tower, lead from floor to floor; and above the third and highest flight dwelt ten years ago Mr James Marvell and Mr William Walters, who called each other in pastoral simplicity Jim and Bill. They had two rooms; and both were of that composite order of domestic architecture known to lodging-house keepers as 'sitting-room bed-room,' and both commanded a view of the street, where dirty children played loud games all day, and dirtier men and women swore loud oaths most part of the night. Here, then, did the two chums, who had somehow or other joined company in the wilderness of wretched London, live together cultivating literature, not on a little oatmeal, but on a good deal of shag tobacco and a moderate allowance of beer from the Prince of Wales. As to the manner of work they did, both history and the friends are entirely silent; it has been whispered that Marvell wrote wrappers, and Walters sub-edited the *Tanners' Gazette*; but this is mere rumour. At all events they both smoked all day, ate occasionally, and were generally supremely happy on next to nothing a year. It was a life of perpetual undress, of chins usually unshaven, of hours late both in the morning and at night; of occasional exultation when a chance article by one or the other was accepted; and certainly of a good deal of earnest practice in the art of literature.

This Handel Street experience had lasted for two or three years, when one morning, as Walters lounged according to custom into his friend's room, Marvell could not help noticing a strange light in his eyes and an unaccustomed restlessness in his movements.

'You seem rather queerish this morning, old chap,' he said at length; 'have some shag. What's happened? You look as if you hadn't slept a wink.'

'I haven't. I've been thinking.'

'What about?'

'I'll tell you. I believe our fortune's made. Last night after I left you and I went to bed I couldn't get to sleep; and all of a sudden I got an idea; and I really think that between us we shall be able to put together as good a novel as any one has seen lately.'

‘You don’t say so? Fill your pipe, Bill, my boy, and tell us all about it.’

Walters told his idea, waxing more and more enthusiastic as he unfolded the story: his eyes flashed, and the perspiration stood out upon his forehead, and his pipe dropped out of his hand; till at last, with something between a sob and a laugh, he asked his friend: —

‘Will it do?’

‘I should think it would. We’ll go to work at once. You shall write out the scheme of chapters, then I’ll go over it. We will take over each chapter one by one and discuss the points together. You had better do the dialogue and I will fill in the descriptions.’

‘All right. Go out and get some more paper, there’s a good fellow; I don’t feel as if I could walk a step.’

The romance was begun forthwith, and carried on day by day for three months. Walters had insisted on early hours; he pointed out that if they wrote at night they would be sure to be completely knocked up; so pens were laid down every night at ten. At last the book was finished, the last corrections made, the final touches given; and one morning it was sent to the publisher’s.

They waited a week, and there came a letter — and a parcel. The letter informed the collaborators that by an extraordinary coincidence — which he (the publisher) deeply regretted — he had concluded an agreement with an author (who desired strictly to preserve his anonymity) to publish a work which resembled almost to the smallest detail the MS they had so kindly sent him. He hoped, however, that Messrs. Walters and Marvell would call upon him, as he should be glad to treat for their next novel.

It was hard — so much toil and thought so utterly wasted; but the friends agreed to make the best of it, and the result was eminently successful. They soon migrated from Handel Street and the shadow of Soho.

At present Mr William Walters has almost forgotten how he sat up night after night recopying his story, making trifling variations here and there. He has almost forgotten also how large a cheque one Henry Smart, a young man vastly resembling William Walters, cashed at the bank. The temptation was probably too strong for him; it was a picturesque sin, certainly, to steal his own idea. But he has never done such a thing since.

An Underground Adventure

‘The lady dressed in deep mourning would like to thank the tall gentleman, who so kindly helped her in her distress at Victoria Station on the evening of the 15th inst. Will he oblige her by meeting her outside the booking-office of the Victoria Underground Station at 6 p.m., on Friday, the 21st.’

I am fond of looking through the agony columns of the leading daily organs, partly with the vague hope of seeing some day that if I call at such and such a place I shall hear of something to my advantage, and partly because I have an inherent, almost feminine, curiosity, and delight in anything in the shape of a mystery.

I saw the above about a week ago, and if you care to read further, you will see the result of my, rather to be deplored, little weakness.

A widowed lady who wished to meet a tall, kind gentleman at an underground station, suggested plots of shilling dreadfuls, and set me wondering what they had to say to each other. A brilliant idea came into my head. Tomorrow, being the 21st, I would go to Victoria Station, and satisfy my curiosity by watching this interesting couple.

My father has instilled many excellent morals and maxims into my head. One of them is to eschew all manner of wine, tobacco, play-houses, and ball-rooms.

Consequently, I depend upon my own imagination and my childish love of adventure for my amusement, in the intervals when I am not sitting at a high desk, with my nose nearly in the ink-bottle, adding up figures for bare life.

At 5.30 the next evening I turned my face towards Victoria Station, in light-hearted anticipation of an adventure.

The time of year was November, and as a matter of course, it was damp, dark, cold, and foggy, and the station looked drear enough, both inside and out. I took up my position not far from the ticket-office, in a dark corner, where I should not be much seen. The hand of the clock pointed to three minutes to six, so I pricked up my ears and opened my eyes. A few men were loitering about, some newspaper-boys and shoe-blacks were making a commotion near the door, and a little stream of people were taking their tickets in a silent, hurried manner.

Suddenly a smartly dressed young woman strolled in, and catching sight of one of the loitering men, rushed at him. The greetings were long and loud. She was so glad to see her ‘dear Dick’ again! What did he mean by not turning up last Sunday? and Dear Dick was pleased to see Dear Susie. Why it was ages since they’d met! It made no difference to their effusions they being in the middle of a noisy thoroughfare, quite half-a-dozen people looking on and listening.

I began to fear, with a sinking of my spirits, that this might be the beginning and the end of my adventure, when I felt a touch at my elbow, and looking round, I saw a tall, somewhat stout, well-dressed, mournful-looking, middle-aged widow lady at my side.

‘I knew you would see that advertisement I put in the paper and I knew that I could depend upon you to come to me.’

She spoke in clear, deliberate tones, with a slightly foreign accent. I confess my breath was completely taken away. I did not take in the situation at once. I gazed at her dumbly, and bowed, and raised my hat. Then I saw it all, and opened my mouth to try and explain the mistake, but no words came to my help.

She went on quite calmly without heeding my embarrassment —

‘I recognised you at once, I have a good memory for faces. You are not so quick. You did not see me coming down the steps. But you have changed a little since I saw you;’ and here she scrutinised my face with a pair of tortoise-shell-rimmed glasses. ‘There is a difference in you. What is it? Ah! I have it. You have shaved off your whiskers. Is that not so?’

I acquiesced.

Heaven knows, I never had any! I grew alternately hot and cold. I blushed and smiled nervously. I looked at the door, and thought desperately — can I make a rush for it? The next moment I boldly thought, I will tell her I am not the man. But she gave me no opportunity. She talked on without a pause, sometimes sighing, sometimes smiling. I was thinking too much of my dilemma to take in what she was saying.

‘Come into the waiting-room,’ she said, at last, in a business-like voice. ‘I have something of importance to say to you, which cannot be said in public.’ I was in for it now, and no mistake. I followed her down the long underground passage to the Great Junction waiting-room. Her quiet commanding manner made me quake in my shoes. She showed the way into the first-class waiting-room, which was quiet and deserted. There was a table in the middle of the room. She drew a chair to it, and sat down, and signed to me to take the other. An uncomfortable silence reigned for a minute or two. At last, the widow gave a deep sigh. I did the same, and wondered what was coming next.

‘I have told you enough of my history to show you what a lonely, disconsolate life mine has been. Some women might envy me my position; but they have no conception what I have suffered. I am the Marquise de B — . You know the name well, no doubt?’ (I did not, but no matter, I pretended I did). ‘Since my husband’s death I have been pestered with suitors — all idle, good-for-nothing fellows, the most persistent of whom is that young wretch out of whose hands you rescued me the other evening at the station. I have given him large sums of money two or three times, and entreated him to go away and torment me no longer, but he always comes back.’

I was growing intensely interested, and a little less alarmed. Perhaps I really had been at the station the other evening and rescued this stout marchioness, and for a few seconds I wondered vaguely and wildly whether I was myself or someone else. The Marquise went on talking. Her voice grew, little by little, louder and more excited. Now and then she brought down her fist on the table with a thump.

I said something intended to soothe her. She looked at me with a smile, and said:

‘Ah, you have a good face, and you have many noble qualities! Do not try to deny it. I am a good judge of faces, and I saw from the first that I could trust you, and that you would make me happy.’

What was all this leading to? I asked myself blankly. She was looking at me with great attention, and I began to shift uneasily about on my chair.

‘Are you married?’ she asked, abruptly.

‘No,’ I said, taken aback.

‘Engaged?’ she went on.

‘No, nor engaged,’ I replied.

‘Have you any prospect of being married?’

‘None, at all, at present,’ I said, a little nettled by this questioning.

She gave a deep sigh of satisfaction. ‘I have told you that I have had an unhappy life. I have been seeking since my husband’s death for someone — some kindred spirit — whom I may devote my life to making happy, and who, in his turn, will dispel the gloom of my life. I am wealthy. I am a marchioness. You are poor and lowly. I am willing to devote all to you, to lay all at your feet — to give— ‘

‘Good heavens! Do you want to marry me?’ I blurted out, jumping to my feet aghast.

‘Young man,’ she said, sternly, ‘think before you speak, do not rashly refuse my offer. You do not know what you are throwing away. Say yes, and you will be the happiest man on earth. Say no, and you will repent it all your life, and will make me the most miserable of women.’

I tried to make for the door, and signed wildly to her to stop, but she would not heed me. Her voice rose higher and higher.

‘Do not try to stop me. I will say all I have to say, for you are the only young man I have ever set my heart upon.’

I was growing desperate. ‘I will never marry you, not if I live to be a hundred!’ I shouted. ‘Ask me to do anything but that.’

I was in terror lest an official, hearing the commotion, might appear upon the scene. She gave a little scream, and turned crimson with fury, and I saw her totter to a chair, and sink on to it and glare at me with an expression which frightened me. It was only for a second; the next moment I had turned and bolted. I took to my heels as soon as I was fairly outside, and fled homewards; but I looked back every few seconds with a fearful nightmare-dread of seeing the widow marchioness pursuing me.

This is the first time a lady has proposed to me, and that I have had to refuse. Heaven grant that it may be the last!

The result has been an undermining and general collapse of my whole constitution.

The Young Man in the Blue Suit

I OFTEN WONDER whether people read *John Inglesant* in these days. In the early 'eighties this book had an extraordinary success; the talk of it was all over London, and across all the columns of the papers. I have not yet ceased wondering how it happened.

For *John Inglesant* does not exactly posses the lineaments of the 'best-seller.' To begin with, it is a tale of the seventeenth century and, saving some great and illustrious examples of historical fiction, I think even readers of literary tastes are apt to be 'put off' when they see that it is in costume.

Then Mr Shorthouse's masterpiece, considered from the point of view of tale-telling, is not a good tale; nowhere does it move with a rush, carrying the reader irresistibly onward in a flood of exciting incidents. And the style is grave and somewhat stiff; and above all, it is chiefly concerned with mystical religion.

Indeed, it has slight dashes and flavourings of the occult, and thirty years ago saw the beginnings of many odd doctrines: still, I would not have thought that an incident of judicial astrology and another of an incantation, or summoning of spirits, would have sufficed to sweeten this curious book in the popular nostrils.

I have mentioned *John Inglesant* as one of the literary curiosities of the early 'eighties, and also for a more personal reason. Looking over the book the other day I came upon the incident of the hero in search of the spiritual goal visiting a clergyman, a holy man, who was rumoured to have seen an angel. And I was reminded thereby of my own firm conviction that I had once held conversation with a member of the hierarchy which is above.

I know that this assertion must seem boastful; but since many men, who arrogate no especial honour for themselves, are ready to tell us how they were patted on the head by eminent politicians in their early years, why may I not tell the truth of my strange experience, as it has always appeared to me?

It is a story of Kew Gardens. In the year 1883 this was one of my most favoured resorts. Exasperated by the narrowness of my cell in Clarendon Road, I would trail down the highway and pass by Shepherd’s Bush, where a thatched and whitewashed cottage then stood on the site of the present Shepherd’s Bush Empire, or near it.

Then along the Goldhawk Road, where old-fashioned houses with their pleasant gardens always comforted me. And so to the Chiswick High Road. Here goodly Georgian red-brick houses stood amidst lawns and trees on one side, while on the other market gardens and orchards stretched away to Fulham, to the regions which are now called, I believe, West Kensington.

I would pass Turnham Green, giving a friendly glance to a tumbledown old tavern, standing back from the road, with its dial and motto: ‘So Flies Life Away’; and on through Gunnersbury, over the ancient high-vaulted Kew Bridge into the gardens.

Though I was infinitely lonely, though my loneliness oppressed and frightened me now and again, I never could gain any comfort or solace from the presence of people whom I did not know. The man of the world has the art of making easy and brief and sufficient acquaintance at a moment’s notice, and if he be a true man of the world will converse with equal cheerfulness on ecclesiology or skittles.

But this useful and agreeable art presupposes in most instances some age and flavour of experience, and I was young and shy and melancholy, and on the way to become morose. So while I longed in theory for the company of my fellow creatures, in practice I shrank from them, and I used to enter Kew Gardens by one of the river gates and make at once for the comparatively unfrequented parts that are to be found there.

The great majority of visitors to the Gardens keep near the glasshouses; I would often sit on a bench sheltered by a thicket of trees and shrubs and gaze across the river towards Syon House, enjoying the bitter sweets of solitude.

Here I would sometimes wonder why I found existence so disagreeable an affair, and sometimes I would pull out a notebook and write bad verses, knowing that they were bad as I wrote them. I have given some notion of the happier hours of a solitary's life in earlier sections of these wandering reminiscences: it is only just that I should indicate the black side of the adventure; the glooms and despairs of the young man who wants to write but doesn't know how to begin writing or what he is to write about.

I was sitting on the bench in Kew Gardens looking towards Syon one afternoon, and feeling futile and dismal enough, when — to use a phrase belonging to my friend Mr A.E. Waite — the grassy slope before me seemed to 'give up' a young man in a blue serge suit.

To this day I have no notion of whence he came or how he got there: but as if he had set out — from somewhere — on purpose to find me, he advanced to where I sat, and quite easily and naturally began to talk about some ordinary and indifferent topic. So we found, or thought we found, that we had interests in common, and when we parted that afternoon addresses were exchanged.

During that summer we often saw each other. Now and then Mr Stewart would visit me in Clarendon Road. I used to give him my chair and sit myself on the end of the bed; and the lodging-house servant would fetch, on my instructions, a quart of six ale.

Another time I would call on Mr Stewart in his lodging. It was in a dim, silent, deserted street in Kentish Town, and he had a parlour covered with a crimson flock paper, which was velvety to the touch, and here he would return my six ale hospitality.

I am afraid that I read him out bits from my latest 'poem' — a horrible imitation of the *Earthly Paradise* — and he said it was a 'splendid poem.'

That brings me to my point. Mr Stewart praised my horror, because in it there were certain violences — here I think we may trace Swinburne's *Songs Before Sunrise* — about kings and priests. Stewart was advanced. He was a Republican, he was an atheist, he took me to hear Bradlaugh at the Hall of Science; he was a Futurist long before the time of Futurism, since for him the world of thought began with Darwin, and before Darwin all was tohu bohu; without form and void.

So we talked over our six ale; and by the end of that summer all liberalisms, materialisms and republicanisms were drained and dredged and drenched out of my system as if they had never been there. Hearing these doctrines expressed by another man, I was convinced once for all that I had no part in them.

The summer drew to its close. The work of the young man in the blue suit was accomplished, and he was withdrawn as suddenly as he had been manifested. I could get no news of him, the people who owned the dingy parlour with the crimson flock paper did not seem to know that he had ever been there.

But some day I hope that I shall see him again, no longer disguised in blue serge, but clad in the proper vestments of his order. He will wear, perhaps a white alb with golden apparels, and a dalmatic of rose samite, and at first, I shall not dare to look upon his face for the shining and the glory of it.

The War Song of the Welsh

THE SOUTH WALES Rangers had been enjoying for some days a most welcome rest. They had done their spell in the trenches faithfully and steadily; they had passed the initiations by fire and by water. Drenching, pitiless rains had soaked them; they had been cramped in the sodden trenches, with sure death as the price of a change of posture; black smoke and blinding flame and rending shells had tried them and torn them. At last they had been relieved, and they were resting in certain inner huts and earthy shelters behind the lines.

It was not splendid, but it was better than the trenches, and here in these burrows they ate hot stew, smoked shag, talked Newport-Cardiff-Lanelly-Swansea football talk, and drank tea in large quantities. Some of them pulled out now and then, in a furtive manner, stiff photographs of beautiful girls who lived in various places between Caerwent and St. Govan’s Head. In short, they were in excellent spirits and their officers were pleased with them.

* * *

Late one afternoon, when they were in this happy state, great news came for the Rangers. In one burrow a loud game of cards was being played, in another four men from the Vale of Glamorgan were quarrelling about the Newport forwards, in a third a man of Usk had an interminable story of how the Llangibby hounds once killed in Kemys Churchyard, just as the fox was taking to the river. Further on someone had apparently exceeded the limits of the credible.

‘I tell you, mun, I did see it,’ a man kept repeating; and a voice answered him:

‘You wass never see no such thing in oll your days, William Williams.’

To this happy military family came tidings that desperate work was appointed to them. A strongly-held position, horrid with machine guns and well-trenched Prussians was to be taken at all risks and all losses and the Rangers were to begin the attack in the darkness just before the next dawn.

‘Well, well,’ said one man in a long, lazy drawl, ‘some of us will have a chance of finding out whether the world be round.’

‘Well, look you,’ said another; ‘I’ve been to Abergavenny, and it’s not round there, whatever.’

* * *

A little later, while a band was playing behind the German lines, a young lieutenant of the Rangers sought out Major Lewis in his burrow. The lieutenant, an Englishman, was uneasy. He explained that he couldn’t make out what the men were after.

‘I suppose they’re all right; they wouldn’t be funking things now. But there’s something up; I wish you’d come and have a look at them.’

The Major groaned, and put down a very old newspaper, in which he had been reading of ‘the scrap’ in the Bight, and went with Lieutenant Harben to the men’s quarters. They had swarmed out of their burrows, and an eager buzz of talk came from them; now and again a voice in higher singsong rising above the other voices.

Then, quite suddenly, a private got up on an old biscuit tin and lifted up his hand.

‘Yr oes heddwch?’ he cried. And Major Lewis interpreted this and that which followed to the young lieutenant.

‘Is there peace?’ the man on the biscuit tin asked. And three or four hundred voices answered that there was no peace. Then the leader drew from a scabbard at his side a sword that might have come out of an old curiosity shop or the property room of a theatre.

‘The sword of the Bards of the Isle of Britain is drawn against wrong and cruelty and oppression, against abomination and defilement, against treachery and abounding wickedness.’

* * *

The sword flashed in the light of the dying sun, and the assembly said that a strong sword was drawn against the oppressors.

‘Men of Britain,’ the speaker continued, ‘we will go up against the men of Belial. Who will go with us?’

‘A great multitude will go with us.’ answered a voice.

‘What is that multitude?’

‘The multitude of the Saints of the Isle of Britain.’

The second speaker was as it were, deacon to Evan Thomas’s priest. Evan Thomas was the name of the private on the biscuit-tin. And the two began to recite the names of the Welsh saints.

‘They are both strict Calvinistic Methodists,’ said the major in an undertone to the lieutenant. Nevertheless the dialogue between them was like this:

‘Dewi sant shall go with us’

‘Teilo sant shall go with us’

‘Iltyd sant shall go with us’

‘Cadoc sant shall go with us’

‘Henoc sant shall go with us’

‘All they that have won Red Martyrdom shall go with us.’

‘Cadwaladyr the Blessed shall be of our company.’

‘Mihangel, the principal warrior of the Most High, is our captain.’

‘By the power of the Offering we shall prevail.’

‘Evan Thomas’s father,’ whispered the major to the lieutenant, ‘is a small mountain farmer, and a great man at a chapel called Bethesda. He wouldn’t enter his parish church for any money you could offer him. But I may tell you that “offeren” is Welsh for Mass.’

* * *

Evan Thomas’s voice now changed its nature. It was no longer common speech; it was transmuted into a high chanting song, with cadences and wild trills that caused the short hair on the young lieutenant’s head to lift itself and shiver.

‘I see a great ship that sails forth from the island of the west,’ chanted Private Evan Thomas, ‘and the light of heaven shines upon it, and the blast of the wind of heaven is in its sails, and the glory of paradise is displayed about it. For the word has come unto the Isle of Avalon, and the warriors have waked, and they sail with power to the place of the great conflict.’

* * *

‘Thou dear God!’ said Hans to Fritz in the German trenches, ‘dost thou hear that song? It is terrible, it is ghostlike.’

‘Thou superstitious pig, this trench is not for neurasthenics constructed.’

* * *

The South Welsh Rangers crept up the hill in the darkness before the dawn. They crept till they could creep no longer, and then rose and rushed forward with a tremendous shout. They charged and overwhelmed and overthrew, and a thousand slew ten thousand, and there was scarce a hurt among the Welshmen.

For at the critical moment, when the roar of the Welsh voices smote upon the Prussian trenches, the machine guns were silent, hardly a man fired his musket; for those that fled and saved their lives said that they saw dreadful burning flames in the air, above the charging enemy, and their hearts failed them.

* * *

The professor at Heidelberg, who is more or less the world-authority on Collective Hallucinations, is investigating this point in a dispassionate and exhaustive manner. But it will be remembered that such fires were said to have appeared on lonely mountain sides during the great Welsh revival of ten years ago.

The Light That Can Never Be Put Out

ALL PUBLIC LIGHTS at Stratford-on-Avon have been extinguished by order of the Mayor — Daily Paper.

A friend of mine — whose name I shall, of course, be prepared to give, in confidence, to any serious enquirer — has just come back from the Midlands with an extraordinary story of adventures there. I pass it on to the readers of *The Evening News* with all reserve and all caution; it is theirs to make what they will of it.

My friend is a commercial traveller, and goes his rounds usually in the west and south-west of England. His ‘line’ is cheap blouses, and since the beginning of the war he has been doing extremely well. Working people have been making a lot of money — for them — and, strange to say, they like to see their women folk in pretty things. They cannot be induced to imitate the austere economies of their betters; and so they have been buying five shilling blouses eagerly enough. The firm which employs my friend saw that the great munition centres of the North and of the Midlands would be more profitable than the districts of the south and west, and so they arranged that their ‘star’ traveller should break new ground.

* * *

The plan turned out a great success. There was tremendous business to be done from Warwickshire to Yorkshire, from Lancashire to Lincolnshire; my friend, beaming, told me that he had never sent up such orders in the whole of his career. ‘And,’ said he, ‘I am going to give the small towns a chance after I’ve finished with the big ones. I believe there’s money there; everywhere.’

So a few days ago he found himself in a small town in Warwickshire. He had visited three or four of these little places in the course of the day and had done very well. It was nine o’clock at night, and he discovered that he would have to wait for two hours for the Birmingham train — unless he liked to send on his samples and walk to a certain junction, three miles off, where he could catch a good train to Birmingham. They told him the road was straight ahead; he couldn't miss the way. But he did miss the way.

It was a pitch-dark night: 'straight ahead' in the country is sometimes a loose phrase; roads often run into one another and slide off from one another in a queer fashion; a townsman is easily bewildered by black woods and dead silence. Anyhow, the traveller went on and on, but found no junction. He struck a match under a hedge and looked at his watch; it was eleven o'clock, and he was lost and hopeless in the darkness. There was not a light to be seen anywhere; there was nothing for it but to walk on and on till he came to the dawn or a town of some sort, where he could wake up a cross landlord or landlady.

* * *

It was midnight when he turned out of the deep shadow of a murmurous wood, and to his utter amazement saw the sky ablaze before him.

'Like the lights of London in the old days?' he said. 'Not a bit of it. Ten times brighter. It was more like getting out of the beastly black London streets that we're getting used to now into a music-hall or a restaurant, all lighted up. I was looking down into a valley with a river running through it, and a smallish town on the river. And I saw it all quite plainly, as if it had been in the daytime. I don't know how I saw it; there were no electric lamps or anything of the kind that I could see, but there it was, as if the stones were shining.

'I came to a big church with a spire by the river, and that was all light. Some sort of service seemed to be going on; the lights were shining through the stained glass, and the organ was rolling and thundering away, and the choir was singing; it sounded like Gregorians, which I don't like in a general way. I just peeped in at the door, and there were three clergyman before the Communion Table togged up to the nines, and the place all red and green and gold and full of images; so I went out. I wondered what was the matter.

'The streets were worse. I couldn't see a single lamp lighted; but everywhere was all alight. The houses were all old-looking, whitewash and black timbers, and leaning over the street, and I never saw such a crowd. It was like a fancy-dress ball turned out of Covent Garden. Everybody was dressed up; it was a splendid sight. All the Kings of England seemed to be there with their gold crowns on their heads, and men in bright armour riding with them, and men with spears, and men with bows and arrows. Then there was a wild-looking king walking with his queen, and she was holding up her hands all red with blood. Then there was a man got up like Hamlet all in black, and a girl in white with water dripping from her clothes came just behind him.

‘And then I did feel a bit funny. Just after the Hamlet and Ophelia couple, I could have sworn I saw old George Weir, who used to be with F.R. Benson, with the spade in his hand and everything, just as he used to do the gravedigger, and I knew he’d been dead five or six years.

‘But they came swarming on, one on the top of the other, a perfect host of them. There was a great big red-faced fellow, rolling in his walk, and leering all about him, and smelling like a wine-barrel, and a pack of awful cut-throats at his heels, sneaking and snarling; and then came along an old man with a white beard, with his hands up, and a fellow dressed like Jack Point, in red and yellow patches, follows him, with the tears streaming from his eyes. Then there was a kind of transformation scene, girls in green with silver wings; fairies I suppose they were meant to be.

* * *

‘And then they all began to sing. I wrote it down that night in my bedroom:—

To Holy Church now fare we all,
That we may keep high festival.
So Almand fiend shall not appal,
Neither by night nor day.

For we be come of earth and sea,
Of heaven and hell and of faerie,

Of high and low and each degree,

Both king and clown in this meinie,

So shall we hear with mirth and glee

Missam pro Anglia.

‘Then everything went black. I was staggering about, and saying “Where am I? Where am I?’ And then there was a policeman, steadying me by the shoulder, and saying, ‘I don’t wonder you’ve lost your way, sir. All public lights out by the Mayor’s orders, and Stratford’s a puzzling place in the dark for strangers.”’

* * *

I heard my friend’s story as a parable, and understood by it that there is a light at Stratford-on-Avon that shall never be put out.

Jocelyn’s Escape

‘Mr Mathews in?’

‘Yes, sir; just washing his hands.’

‘Ask him to come into my room before he goes out for his lunch, will you?’

‘Very good, sir.’

Harry Jocelyn left his two clerks to their German text and round-hand, and passed through to his own office by the door marked ‘Private.’ He sat down by the fire and held out his hands to the glow, for though it was a spring day and the trees were budding in the square of the Inn and bright sunshine shone through the windows, a bitter east wind blew along the streets and whistled up the narrow passage from the Strand by which he had come. So Jocelyn made the fire blaze cheerfully, and warmed himself as he waited for Mr Mathews.

‘Come in,’ he said, as the two knocks pounded on the door.

‘Davies told me you wanted to see me, sir.’

‘Yes, that’s right. I only wanted to say, Mathews, that I expect a client this afternoon — a lady, and I wish her to be shown into me directly she comes. She will be here about four o’clock, I fancy, and it’s now a quarter to two; so you will be in by then, won’t you?’

‘Certainly, sir.’

‘Very good. There’s nothing else, I think. You’ve been to Dickson’s, in Bedford Row, about that will? Then that will be all for today.’

Jocelyn wheeled round his chair to the desk, and looked out on to the square, watching the thin stream of people who passed up and down and the two or three loungers of the miscellaneous and mostly tattered kind that are to be found on sunny days in all quiet corners of London. Jocelyn was uneasy that April afternoon. He looked out a little while, and then rose from his chair and walked up and down the room for a few minutes, then stopped by his book-shelf, and, drawing out a volume of brighter yellow than that of law calf from behind Chitty and Chitty Junior on Torts, began to read it. But the French novel was soon slipped back into its hiding-place, and Jocelyn, though he expected a visit from a lady, took out a cigarette and began to smoke, now smiling and now frowning to himself over his thoughts. Jocelyn had been nervous and fidgety for some days past, and the clerks had noticed it, and entered into some speculation as to what was the matter with 'the governor.' Davies had seen him posting a letter with his own hands in the Strand, and when Jocelyn recognised his clerk he had looked foolish and ashamed; and Mr Mathews was surprised on coming into the private office to see quite a pile of minute scraps of paper burning on the hearth, though the waste-basket was nearly empty. However, Mr Mathews and the two clerks had not much time wherein to meditate whether on these or on other matters, for Jocelyn's practice was a good one — a wonderful practice, his friends said, for a man of thirty-seven to have made by his own hand, without much aid in the way of interest or connections. He had married young, before the appearance of Mr Mathews or of the two assistants, and it was possibly the necessity for exertion which had made Jocelyn a rising man at thirty-two, and a prosperous one at thirty-seven. Yet he looked exquisitely uncomfortable, this windy afternoon, as he sat in his chair watching the cigarette-end fuming on the tray; he looked at his watch again and again, opened the door and peered into the outer office to see if Mathews had returned, and then renewed again his pacing up and down the room, and his watch at the window, as the day wore on and the sun sank into a cold grey haze beyond the Inn walls and the chimney-tops. The loiterers had vanished from the square, and the foot-passengers walked rapidly, inclining their heads to the wind like so many poplars, and Jocelyn took out once more his watch, and felt his heart beat fast. It was a quarter to four. He leant back in his chair, and fixed his eyes on the glass door expectantly.

'Come in!'

'Mr James Dickson, sir.'

'You can spare me a few moments, can't you, Jocelyn? That's right. I was passing this way, and I thought I should like to have some conversation with you; I shan't keep you long. Thanks, I will take a chair. You don't look very well, though, Jocelyn.'

‘Rather busy time of late; I’ve had to take papers home for several nights running. It’s very good of you to come in, I’m sure; you know you have done me several good turns, Dickson, and I should be only too glad if I could be of any use to your people.’

‘Don’t mention it, pray don’t mention it. No, it’s not that; it’s about that man we sent over to you the other day; it struck me I might give you one or two hints which might be of service.’

The elder lawyer paused, and held out his hands before the fire; he was evidently enjoying the warmth of the room after the cold blast of the streets. ‘More like March, isn’t it?’ he said at length; ‘my garden is terribly backward. What the country wants, you know, is rain — a good warm rain for twenty-four hours. This wind is nipping everything.’

‘Yes, very bitter, very bitter indeed. You were speaking of Finch’s case, I suppose?’

‘Quite so, of Finch’s case. What I wanted to point out was this… .’

Mr Dickson became scientific, but as for Jocelyn he heard not a word. He was listening for the creak and swing of the outer office-door, and for Mathews’s tap on his own.

It came at last, and Jocelyn looked up.

‘Come in! Well, Mathews, what is it?’

Mr Mathews replied in a low murmur, not because he thought there was anything to conceal, but out of an inveterate habit.

‘That client you spoke of, sir …’

‘Excuse me a moment, Dickson. The lady I spoke of?’

Mr Jocelyn, possibly from habit also, spoke softly enough.

‘Yes, sir, she has just come. I told her I thought you were engaged.’

‘Quite right. Just wait a minute, will you?’

Mr Jocelyn walked to his desk, took a sheet of paper and wrote a few lines, and hastily put the note in an envelope.

‘Take this, Mathews. I shan’t be long.’

‘I dare say you are more accustomed to interruptions than I am,’ he said to Mr Dickson when the door was shut.

‘Yes, yes, we have a good many. But, as I was saying, one of the queerest features in this case of Finch’s is… .’

Mr Dickson resumed his observations with relish, and Jocelyn sat staring at him, shivering with impatience.

The end came in due course.

‘I don’t think that, bearing what I have said in mind, you can go far wrong. But it’s a matter that will require rather delicate handling. Good evening, Jocelyn, good evening. Don’t work too hard, you know; you should take a little relaxation now and then.’

‘Yes, I will, Dickson. Good night; it is very kind of you to take all this trouble.’

‘Not at all. Don’t mind the door. I can let myself out very well.’

Harry Jocelyn sat down with a vast sigh of relief. He was just going to poke up the fire and make a cheerful blaze in the dim room, when he heard the sound of voices talking in the outer office, and stopped to listen. As it happened, two or three people were racing up and down, with all the vehemence of men in a hurry on an office stair, and Jocelyn could not distinguish the voices. As the stamping ceased so also did the sound of talking, and there was a knock at his door.

It was fortunate for Jocelyn that he had not made the fire blaze, and that the room was growing dim and the light uncertain. He gripped the arm of his chair and shut his teeth together, drawing a long breath.

‘Well, my dear; here I am. I was telling Mr Dickson that this was the first time I had been to your office for all the years we have been married. I thought at first of sending one of the servants; but it was so fine that I felt the drive would do me good, so I took a hansom.’

‘Yes; of course — yes, very pleasant. Is there anything the matter?’

‘Mrs Elstree wrote to say that her husband had been suddenly attacked with severe bronchitis, and so, of course, they can’t come to dinner tonight. What do you think we had better do? It seems absurd to ask people to dinner to meet the Elstrees and then not to have them there. Don't you think we had better send telegrams? It isn't too late.'

'Not at all, not at all. We'll send them at once. Come along, there's an office close by.'

'But won't you send one of the clerks?'

'No, no; they're far too busy; I couldn't spare them for anything. Come on, Edith; quick! There's not a moment to lose.'

Jocelyn hurried his wife out of the office and down the stairs, scarcely stopping to tell Mathews that he would not return that night; and, taking her arm, the two fairly rushed along till they got into the Strand.

'Goodness, Harry! you will walk me off my legs. There can't be such a terrible hurry.'

Jocelyn slackened his pace a little and looked about him, as a man looks who has escaped a precipice but by a hair's breadth and sees from a safe place the black chasm and the sharp rocks far below. They walked on in silence, Jocelyn leaning on his wife's arm.

'Why, Harry, you are passing the telegraph office. There it is.'

'So it is; I was not keeping a proper look-out. I will send the telegrams.'

The telegrams were sent, and Jocelyn hailed a passing hansom, and the husband and wife drove home together. Jocelyn was very silent all the evening, and as they were sitting together by the drawing-room fire, Mrs Jocelyn said suddenly;

'I suppose that was Mr Mathews who showed me in?'

'Yes, that was Mathews.'

'He must be a sharp man. I have been wondering how he knew I was Mrs Jocelyn.'

'Ah! very sharp of Mr Mathews, as you say: really very acute of him.'

'Yes, and that reminds me; I have not had that cosy chat you promised me.'

'Cosy chat, did you say?'

‘Yes, you promised me in that funny little note you wrote me. Here it is, just as Mr Mathews gave it me.’

Jocelyn took the envelope and drew out the letter he had written in the afternoon.

‘MY DARLING DI, — Will you wait for me a little? I shall be alone in a few minutes, and then we can have a cosy little chat all to ourselves. Till then, dear, and ever — Your loving Harry J.’

Jocelyn looked at his wife, who smiled.

‘It’s just like the little letters you used to write me before we were married,’ she said. ‘But what made you call me Di? I never heard that Di was short for Edith. But it is a very pretty little note, and I shall keep it.’

‘There was a lady came here last night, sir, just after you were gone. She seemed to say she had an appointment, but had been delayed.’

‘Did she give any name, Mathews?’

‘No, sir; I asked her if she would leave her name, but she refused to do so.’

‘Ah, well, I dare say it isn’t a matter of any consequence. If she calls again at any time you can tell her that I am out.’

The Story of Sergt Richard Haughton and What Happened To Him on the Somme

WE WAKE SOMETIMES from dreams uttering strange phrases, murmuring incredible things. At the moment

The matter is simply thus. Extraordinary things are being told of the late Sergeant Richard Haughton of the Salford Rangers; of the last few days of his life and of his death. I knew him, as I have said, and I have written all that I knew of him, including certain experiences of his which may have been psychic or physiological; I do not say which, since I do not know.

‘That first gay leap from the trenches.’

‘Wounded like parties of beanfeasters — so gay they held themselves.’

‘The ecstasy of sacrifice in the survivors which transcended human effort.’

‘They went into furnace fires as into fair fields.’

‘There was something supernatural’

Thus the war correspondents, describing the first days of the Battle of the Somme. Like everybody else, I have read through all these wonderful stories, and again and again the phrases that I have quoted, and others to much the same effect, struck upon me, producing a very singular impression. Newspaper readers will be aware that the war correspondent struggles above all to be definite, clear as to his facts. He avoids vague generalities and flowery eloquence to the utmost, knowing that the one desire of his readers is to understand what has really happened, to be able to get some clear picture of the actualities of the battlefield. He can himself supply the apostrophes and ejaculations and admirations appropriate to the scene; he the reader, is as it were, the Chorus of the drama of battle, and will readily utter his comments on the awful pageantry set before him. But to his newspaper he looks for the hard actualities of the affair and so the correspondent is apt, perhaps, to be over hard, over actual, to dwell on the mud of the trench, on soldiers' grimed faces, on the squalors rather than on the glories of the fight. He is intent above all on making battle real, and so he is apt to make it somewhat dreary, almost commonplace.

Knowing all this, it was with a curious eye that I detected in the descriptions of the battle of the Somme something that broke through the calculated reserve of the correspondents. There are all the actualities; the mud and the grime and the ugly shell craters and the ground broken into ragged confusion, the cheerful commonplace of soldiers' talk, the bits of slang, the gossip about eggs and bacon for breakfast before battle. All the usual matter of such correspondence is there; but there is something more. These witnesses confess, in spite of themselves, that they have seen things incredible and have mingled with immortals. They have been for a while in a world of supernatural ecstasy, in which agony has been joy, and destroying flames have blossomed into festal flowers, and death itself has become the supreme delight and rapture. By the Somme, on those low hills and in the shadow of those dark woods the common fashion of this world was changed; for a moment a hidden glory was manifested to the witnesses.

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Now when there is a general manifestation of any potency in man, whether this potency be spiritual or physical, there will be instances in which such manifestation will be made, as it were in excess, and in a surpassing measure. Thus in the Elizabethan age there was a great and general outpouring of the literary spirit; but on Shakespeare this spirit flowed in a super-abundant and extravagant degree. So the eighteenth century was the age of commonsense; but in Dr Johnson commonsense became genius, became something higher than itself. So in an age of cricketers there will arise the supreme cricketer, the man who plays the game so superbly that it becomes necessary to put him in a class by himself. And so I think, with all human faculties. We had many great sailors in the period of the Napoleonic wars, but Nelson was somewhat more than great; he was the very genius and embodiment of victory on the sea. So perhaps it was in this affair of the Somme. Where all were exultant and found joy in anguish and delight in death there may have been one man to whom these graces were given in a measure surpassing all belief. ‘What’s the good of talking about the Baconians,’ said a friend to me the other day ‘when it’s so clearly impossible that *anybody* could have written Shakespeare’s works?’ So it is clearly impossible that anybody could have done what Richard Haughton, of the Salford Rangers, actually did a few days ago in France. And, the impossibility admitted, it may be well to tell the story of it.

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I am not quite sure, but I believe that I first met Haughton at one of those places in the City, where men go down-stairs and drink coffee and play draughts and dominoes in the middle of the day. I was, if I remember rightly, with a friend of mine, a man from Manchester, who introduced me to Haughton, and we often met at the draughts place and discussed a little literature, to which Haughton was mildly addicted. Not in the way of making it, nor of attempting anything of the kind; but of wondering how it was done: a harmless, nay, an amiable occupation. And being a sternly practical man in his daily business, he was somewhat inclined to the more fantastic side of letters; he loved Edgar Allan Poe and firmly rejected all the allurements of George Elliot.

A practical man, I say, for he was what is technically called a ‘pale clerk’, though he was, in fact, not at all pale, but of a wholesome hue, inclining to the ruddy. He had blue-grey eyes, a stubby moustache between light brown and sandy, and in his own phrase he was ‘cotton through and through’. He was born in Altrincham, and had been three or four years in the City. He did not pronounce ‘come’ as ‘coom’, but there was a certain tone in his voice which suggested that he might have done so a few years earlier. Altogether — his taste for the curiosities of literature excepted — a typical young man of business from the north; pleasant of address, but with that tinge of caution and slight reserve which is often found in northern men.

A typical business man, I say; and so he seemed to me for the first year or so of our acquaintance. It was a few months before the war when I discovered that Haughton was not altogether typical. We were smoking one afternoon in a corner of the underground room of the Teheran Café, in a corner as remote as possible from the thoughtful brows of the draught players and the clatter and slither of the dominoes, when he told me of an odd sensation to which he was sometimes, or often, subject.

‘I don’t know,’ he said, ‘whether I’m a bit out of sorts or nervy’ — he was perfectly well and his nerves were excellent— ‘but a queer sort of feeling comes over me some of these days. It always comes over me in the morning.’

I asked him to be a little more definite. ‘Well,’ he said. ‘It’s like this. I feel all right when I get up, and I can eat my breakfast with anyone: and that shows, I suppose, there can’t be much the matter with me. But when I start off for the Tube it comes on me suddenly.’

‘What comes on you?’

‘I don’t know how to put it. I give a sort of sudden start, and I feel as if I wasn’t really there at all. It’s only for a moment. You’ve seen these snapshot cameras with the shutter going up and down about five hundred times in a second? Well, for a moment like one of those I feel as if Shepherd’s Bush Green and the trams and the houses and the rest of it weren’t there at all. I’d almost say they were the tail-end of a dream I was just waking from. You know; when the knock comes on the bedroom door, and for one of those shutter-flashes you’re half in the dream and half awake, and you know the dream will be all gone from you in another flash and you won’t be able to remember it. Well, just for that little flash of time it seems as if all the houses and things would slide up and vanish, just as if I’d been dreaming them.’

‘But look here,’ I said ‘let’s get at it. You said at first that you felt as if you weren’t there, and now you say you feel as if Shepherd’s Bush wasn’t there. Which is it? Do you think you’re a ghost or that Shepherd’s Bush is a ghost?’

Haughton considered the question gravely and slowly.

‘I don’t exactly know which it is,’ he said at length. ‘I’ve puzzled over it and I can’t make it out. It’s different on different mornings. Sometimes it’s as if everything had gone from them, or I had gone from everything, I don’t know which, just for that flash of the shutter. Or the twinkling of an eye; that's better. You look at a picture and twinkle your eyelids up and down as fast as you can. You see the picture all the time, or you seem to; and yet there are really fractions of a second when everything is dark. It's in those fractions that I feel what I've been trying to tell you. And then there's another feeling that I have, and that's funny. I catch myself looking down at my coat or my trousers or my boots, and just for a moment I've got a sensation as if I'd been to a fancy dress ball and forgotten to change the costume or as if I'd strolled into the Tube station in my pyjamas. No: it's not quite that either.'

He was evidently struggling to express with something approaching to lucidity these odd sensations of his. He knit his sandy eyebrows and cocked his blue eye reflectively, and I viewed that rare spectacle, a man puzzling his head in trying to tell the exact truth about something.

'I know it's crazy,' he said after a pause, 'but suppose you dreamed of yourself as wearing some queer dress — some dress that, as a matter of fact, you don't wear, anyhow — and suddenly found yourself in the Tube train and said to yourself all of a sudden: 'Good lord! I'm wearing those clothes I had on in my dream!' No; that's not right either. Not exactly in my dream, but in some place that is not here; and you don't say it or even think it, you are just going to think it, when you see your brown boots, and wake up. Or fall asleep again,' he ended, smiling 'I don't quite know which.'

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Well, I asked a few question, but there seemed nothing more to tell. I gathered that these odd 'vanishings' were, like summer mists, only matter of the morning. Haughton would sally forth from his lodgings at a little after nine perfectly possessed and in the most ordinary good, sound health and spirits. By the time that he got to his office near the Mansion House he was ready and keen for the day's work and the great adventure of cotton. It was only in that intermediate time between lodgings and office that he was vexed — if 'vexed' be not too strong a word — by these queer tricks of consciousness that he had done his best to describe to me. I put it to him that these worlds unrealised were, in fact, his breakfast disagreeing with him, gently, it is true, but in a somewhat unusual manner. And he seemed to think that I was very likely in the right of it.

And, for all I know, I may have been right in my diagnosis. For, I would have it to be most distinctly understood that what has gone before has by no means been written with a view to explaining that which is to follow. I have not been ‘accounting’ for things; I know by bitter experience what happens to the man who *attempts* that task. He is abused in public and vilified in private; every morning for a few months he finds a batch of letters on his desk, some anonymous, some signed, most of them virulent in their indictment. He is accused of theft, of claiming credit that does not belong to him, of forgery, of imposture, of blasphemy. And good little books are written and published to show that he is a very bad man. I have had enough of that I say.

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Richard Haughton joined the Army in May, 1915. It was a long time before the duty became clear to him. He had to rid his bosom of cotton and Manchester and all such perilous stuff before he woke up and found himself in the new world — or rather in the old world, the world as it has always been, in spite of all the false, sordid, doctrine of ‘the Manchester school’ and of Mr. Norman Angell.

So as soon as Haughton saw the truth he got himself into the Army with the utmost speed; and I heard no more of him for many long months. He wrote me a brief note in the autumn that he was training near Salisbury Plain and that he liked the life immensely. In February he said he was as hard as nails, with a face ‘like an over-ripe tomato,’ and hoping to go out before long. Early in April he did go out, and in May I had a long letter, pencilled in the trenches, full of a joy that was to me quite incomprehensible. A duty to serve King and country; yes, we all understood that, saving always the miserable creatures called Conscientious Objectors; but Haughton spoke nothing of duty, but all of pleasure.

He wrote of the war as a lover with the gift of most eloquent and singing speech might write of his mistress, as a high mystical saint might write in the secret book of his devotion. The scarred soil of France, thick with unspeakable horrors, black with agonies, was to him a rose garden of delight, of joys so poignant that they were almost pains. He seemed to see in all the ugliest and most villainous aspects of the war necessary incidents of a great masterpiece, and preparations for the end that was to crown his work. All his northern reserve had gone from him; and he spoke of the deadly fight that could not be delayed much longer with an ecstasy of anticipation and a hope — as I thought when I read his letter — that would have borne him laughing and rejoicing through the furnace fires of martyrdom.

This was the last letter — but one — that Haughton wrote to me. It was vividly recalled to me, as I was writing of it, by a photograph in *The Daily Mail.* The reproduction showed a group of the Worcesters going into the battle, and mere rough snapshot that it was, it was also a wonderful picture. It recalled to my mind a phrase used by Coleridge, in speaking of a certain canto in 'Don Juan'; there was a 'festal abandonment' about those leaping, dancing, and exultant figures that was almost — if not altogether — miraculous. The picture, rough and unpremeditated, and a mere photograph, yet recalled to me classic masterpieces depicting the passion of ecstatic joy; it recalled too, antique dances of thanksgiving: it sang such psalms as *In exitu Israel*, and *In convertendo.* 'When the Lord turned again the captivity of Syon then were we like unto them that dream.' And above all, it recalled Haughton's letter.

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Richard Haughton was killed on July 1, the day of the great attack. The story of his life and death at the front was told me by his friend, a Liverpool Welshman named Roberts, who was wounded on the Monday, July 3, and sent home the day after with a shattered arm. Roberts had a brief note for me. It was written on a scrap of paper torn out of a penny account book, and dated 'Dawn before the battle'. It was just the few words: 'At last I am awake and dreams have come true.' But the letters and the words of this brief message seemed to dance with exultation; rapture exhaled from it like a sweet odour. When I had read the note, Corporal Roberts told me the story of Haughton.

'I got to know Haughton,' said Roberts, 'when we were in training on Salisbury Plain, and from the first day we met I thought he was the cheeriest chap I had ever seen. You couldn't tire him, you couldn't make him grouse, you couldn't put him out in any sort of way. It wasn't that he put up with the rough, and there's plenty of that, as there's got to be when you're breaking in a lot of men who are used to anything and everything but the Army; Haughton didn't put up with it, he loved it. The harder the work the more he enjoyed it, and the longer the marches, the happier he was. When he got wet through to the skin I thought he'd kill himself with laughing. He seemed like a man who'd got some tremendous joke up his sleeve, and as far as I could make out sore feet and a backache were the best part of the joke to him.

'But it was when we got to France that he was past belief. I never saw such outrageous spirits. Except that he was a first rate soldier and knew his duty backwards, and always did it, he was more like a man having a big drink and enjoying it than anything I've ever seen. You could see he had to hold himself in all the time; he wanted to dance and sing and shout all at once. I remember once a man in the trench was grumbling at the mud and the filth and the rain and the misery of it all. Sergeant Haughton laughed. 'You silly old fool,' he said, 'if you don't know golden water and jewels when you see them, shut up about it.' We all laughed at that, but we didn't know what to make of it. Some of the men tried to make out that Haughton was mad. But that wouldn't do. Everybody knew that he was the best non-com in the Army.

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Thus Corporal Roberts, at very considerable length, with many meanderings, windings and turnings; with so many indeed, that I condense him, and endeavour to tell a straight or a straighter story. It appears then, that while the suggestion that Haughton was a little crazy died down — not so much for want of evidence as because the evidence ran quite the other way — it was whispered that there was something 'queer' about him — not as to his mind, however. The men in the trench, it seems, began to talk to one another of an odd flickering of light that came and went, they did not know how. Whenever the sergeant was on duty, now one man and now another would turn his head round sharply and say 'What was that light flashing?'

Sometimes it was in the day, and then it would be like the sudden flash of a mirror held for a moment to the sun, 'just the dart of a light,' as one of the soldiers expressed it. Sometimes it was at night; and then for an instant the muddy, slithery revetments of the trench would gleam as if a light from far away had shone on them. A man who had worked in South Wales said it was like the glow on the mountain, when the blast-furnace shot up, six or seven miles away. It just glowed and flickered while you could count three and then it was gone. Nobody could make it out; but these lights only showed when Haughton was present.

One day, not long before the attack, a very singular thing happened. Haughton and his men were resting at a village some little distance from the front lines. Haughton with one or two others was sitting at a table in front of a wayside café, drinking red wine and smoking cigarettes. One of the officers of the regiment walking along the road called out sharply, while he was still some distance away:

‘Sergeant Haughton. Don’t you know the regulations? What the devil have you got on your uniform? What do you mean by it?

Haughton stepped forward briskly, saluted, and stood at attention in the roadway, saying:

‘Beg your pardon, sir?’

The officer came up, looking extremely irritated, and stopped dead opposite the non-commissioned officer, and stared at him; ‘stared him up and down’, as Roberts put it.

Then he gaped like a fool and said ‘Sorry, sergeant, sun must have been in my eyes, I suppose. Quite correct; but the fact is I thought you were hung all over with looking glasses. Optical illusion, no doubt.’

The officer went on his way, and Haughton strolled back to the tavern table and called for another bottle of red wine without saying anything about this odd incident. But the men ‘looked queer at one another’. It was a dull, cloudy day and there wasn’t any sun to get into the major’s eyes.

It was just after this singular circumstance that the Irishman met Haughton. The Irishman was named O’Hanrahan, and was known as a ‘wild man’; he would, no doubt, have been a Sinn Feiner if he had not happened to be a soldier. Haughton and Roberts were strolling along a village road together when O’Hanrahan met them, and he fell down flat on his face and began to pray ‘in Irish and English and Latin all at once’. He called out again and again ‘Holy Michael, remember me when I come before you and you shining in glory be to God!’ Haughton jerked the man to his feet and clapped him on the back and told him laughing, that there was a mistake somewhere; and the Irishman stared and goggled his eyes as the two went on and ‘looked as if he’d lost his way’.

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So the end came. The word sounded for that ‘gay leap from the trenches’, and if all were exultant and made a great festival, Haughton was as one who had risen to another world, where there is perpetual brightness and rejoicing and strong wine for ever and evermore. Those who went forward singing, dancing, shouting with him now knew the secret of the light that had ‘shone in the darkness and by day’ and themselves exalted, found little that was strange in that which they saw. Fires flashed above them, pillars of smoke rose before them, before them the earth was lifted and cast up to heaven, a cloud of black smoke went before them. All the thunders uttered their voices. The fashion of the whole world was changed; they did not marvel much at that changed form that moved in light beside them.

‘We moved up,’ said Corporal Roberts, ‘against Porcupine Wood. We called it that because the shells had left the tops of the trees without any leaves, and it looked bristly, like a porcupine. The Germans had made a fort there, full of machine-guns. They were sweeping our chaps down. He went up alone to that wood, and they shrieked, the Germans, and dropped their weapons and fell down flat before him and cried for mercy. He drove them all back; one man took a hundred and fifty men prisoners, and he saw them safe.

‘Then an officer said, “Who brought in that lot?”

‘“Sergeant Haughton brought them in, sir”,’ I said.

‘“Don’t tell me your damned lies!” he said. “Sergeant Haughton is dead. His right foot was blown off by a bit of shell, and he bled to death.”

‘That was true. I saw him hit just after we left our trench. But he went up and he took that strong place and he brought back his prisoners, and then he died.’

The Calvary of Azay

A FEW WEEKS ago, a French officer, Colonel Vincendeau was sent over to England on a special mission of some importance, connected, it is believed, with certain approaching developments in French artillery, which it was desirable to lay before the English authorities. Colonel Vincendeau had received part of his education at an English public school, and had friends of some influence in London.

When he had fulfilled his mission he asked me to show him the byways and *coulisses* of London.

I told him he would be terribly bored, that one grey street was very like every other grey street. Still if Vincendeau liked I would do my best to guide him.

I conducted him through the dark labyrinth of Soho: showed him alleys and narrow passages, Georgian houses once magnificent, now dreary, streets chocked with costers' barrows, dismal little restaurants, small wine-merchants' shops where the choicest vintages of France were for sale at prices which made the Frenchman laugh.

We came out of the maze somewhere near the Palace Theatre, and turned up Charing Cross-Road. As we walked on the eastern side Vincendeau caught sight of the crucifix which hangs high above the pavement on the wall of St Mary's Church. He started, and paused, looking up intently at the Figure, and crossed himself.

'Though, of course, it is much smaller,' he said 'it is exactly like the Calvary of Azay, where I was born.'

We went on our way and we saw something of the grey immensities of London, and in the evening Colonel Vincendeau told me the story of the Calvary of Azay.

Colonel Vincendeau's Story

‘You know,’ he began ‘after I had done my service I became a priest. I received the sacred order four years ago on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. A Christian priest is not superstitious: he leaves all those antique fooleries very gladly to the Freethinkers. Still I think you will find something of a coincidence between the title of the festival on which I received the order of the priesthood and what I am about to tell you.

‘My relations had some interest with the Monseigneur, and I became *vicaire* — or curate as you say here so oddly — to M. l’Abbé Ménard, the curé of Azay. I was thus enabled to continue amongst my own people: I ministered to a flock which I had known since my boyhood. In that part of France the people have remained pious: the mayor and the municipal council were good Christians and interposed no obstacles in the path of the Church and its pastors.

‘It was a beautiful and peaceful land: gentle valleys and gentle hills and woods where one gathered violets, and a stream where the people fished all day long. One ate a most excellent *friturs* at Azay: life went there very easily and very pleasantly. M. l’Abbé Ménard was growing old, and I hoped to succeed him at the end of his days, and so pass the rest of my life ministering to those excellent parishioners. Then came the war. It was off with the cassock and on with uniform. I was lieutenant when we fought round Nancy in those early days, and they made me Captain in February 1915. We were moved here, we were moved there. We held hard: we had resolved that there must not be another 1870.

In The Old Parish

‘Well, early this summer my regiment was moved up north, and I found myself quartered in my old parish of Azay. M. l’Abbé Ménard was dead: they said it was grief that killed him¯grief at the sight of his church in ruins and the village like a rubbish heap, and his poor sheep slaughtered. For the Boches had come over Azay like a flood in the first days of the war. It is impossible to describe the infamies they had perpetrated; it is a horror to think of it, of the little children that they offered up in sacrifice to their gods, like the heathen of old.

‘And it was terrible to me to see this land of my childhood laid waste in a manner that cannot be described. I have said that the church where I had so often offered the Holy Sacrifice was now in ruins; the very altars had been blown to pieces, and the statues of the saints were lying in fragments on the broken pavement. And the land itself, once so peaceable, so charming, so smiling, it had become a great sepulchre, a place of yawning graves, of hollows of corruption, of pits where the dead lay unburied.

‘My regiment was stationed a little in advance of what was left of Azay, towards the German lines. Our foremost trenches were on the eastern bank of the river by the bridge, and from this point the road goes gently winding up the slope of the hill, where it branches off to Melincourt to the left and to Sombrois on the right. Our guns commanded the summit of the hill and the level beyond, and further on were the German trenches. And I must tell you that at the top the hill, where the road divided, was the Calvary of Azay, high on a mound of earth. The figure was looking eastward; it was as I said, exactly like the crucifix outside the church in Charing Cross-road, only it was lifesized. It was there that we had the principal *repanoir* on the Féte Dieu. I venerated this symbol of our most holy faith; I had venerated it from my childhood.

‘But when we came marching into the ruins of Azay I had no hope of seeing the Calvary in its old place. From the ruin and desolation on every side I was quite assured the cross must have been long broken into fragments by the fire of the two armies. I was astonished when we took up our position by the river to see it still standing there, high over the land of that most horrible desolation. It was as if one had gone down into the abyss of hell and seen that there was also God. The Calvary of Azay was like the crosses of Albert and Arras of which I had been told: it stood untouched and unburnt in the midst of the furnace.

The Colonel’s Plan

‘One day my colonel sent for me and told me that he had a piece of work for me to do. He said:

‘“You have doubtless remarked that the Calvary of Azay is still standing on the summit of the hill, by Burnt Wood?”

‘I told him I had seen this not without astonishment. He went on:

‘“A plan has been conceived. The cross, as you know, looks towards the enemy lines. It is plain anyone occupying that position would be able to survey the German trenches and to gain the most valuable information as to the effect of our artillery. But there is this objection: anyone occupying that position would be shot to pieces immediately: his discoveries would die with him. This is the plan, then. We have prepared a figure similar in all respects to that of the Calvary. But it is hollow: it opens at the back with hinges: there is room inside it for a man: placed inside this figure it would be possible for a man to make these observations which would be of such value to the cause of France.”

‘He paused and looked at me steadfastedly. Then he said:

‘“Captain” — that was my rank then— “the affair is in your hands: the time is tomorrow, or perhaps I should say tonight. You are a skilled observer: you have very special knowledge in the matter of artillery: and if the Calvary should enjoy its good fortune for another day I should have no doubt you will be able to provide us with knowledge of the utmost consequence some time after next sunset.” ‘

‘And the colonel proceeded to give me minute instructions as to the precise hour of the night at which I was to set out, with a file of half a dozen men to carry the sham figure that was to be substituted for the real one.

‘I was horribly perturbed. I was not afraid of being killed, for in most cases a solider soon learns to be a soldier. He thinks more of his soup than of his death. But it seemed to me that I was ordered to commit sacrilege. And I was a priest: I was to lay profane hands on the image of Christ. The sweat poured down my face, and I told the Colonel what was in my heart.

‘“Yes” said he “but it is for France, Should a soldier know anything but the cause of France?”

Obeying Orders

‘“Colonel,” said I, “your orders shall be executed.” I saluted and went out.

‘My heart was filled with horror at the thought of what I was about to do. I could not sleep. I chose half a dozen men: they were all of Azay: and two hours before dawn we found ourselves at the top of the road, close to the Calvary. The men bore the figure with them. I had examined it before we set out, and in truth it was an exact and perfect copy.

‘I gave the order to detach the Christ from the cross. The men knew I uttered the command with loathing, and I heard one whisper to another that such an impiety would bring evil fortune upon us; still they obeyed orders, as I was obeying orders. The figure was taken down and laid in sacking a little way down the slope of the hill, where it would be invisible to the Germans. It was now my business to place myself in the counterfeit Christ, and the men were to hoist the image with me inside it, and fasten it to the cross. We had for this purpose certain fine and very strong cords with us; they had been painted so as not to show anything against the flesh-colour of the wrists or the brown of the cross. This done, the men were to steal back to their own lines, leaving me within the hollow Christ.

‘Everything was ready. But I did not stir. I was in agony. How could I, a priest of the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church, commit such an abomination? How should I dare minister again at the altar? It was for France: yes; but one could not serve France by blaspheming God. Yet if I disobeyed the order that had been given to me — it was not that I would be shot: that was nothing — my memory would be execrated as that of a traitor to the sacred cause of France. I trembled from head to foot; I prayed for death as the only deliverance.

‘Then the night began to grow pale: the dawn was approaching. I heard a faint sound, a kind of stirring or rustling that seemed to come from the German trenches eastward. I still crouched beneath the empty cross with my men: the counterfeit figure was there ready for me. I did nothing. I perceived that the men looked at one another, wondering, no doubt, what was going to happen. Still I hesitated in my anguish. Which was I to serve, God or France?

The Attack in the Dawn

‘The dawn came up, such a dawn as I had never seen. There were shining mists and patches of thick darkness, and the mist moved and drifted, and every object as it became visible seemed to bear an incredible shape. It was as if one were in a world of phantoms and monsters. It was not like the earth that God has made.

‘Then I heard again that sound of men stirring in the enemy lines; I crawled up to the summit of the hill and saw the Germans swarming out of the trenches, far away there in the east. And then I knew that I had sinned against God and against France also. I had desecrated the Calvary by ordering the Christ to be taken down: and it was now too late to carry out the rest of the order I had received. The Germans would take our forces by surprise: I had betrayed to the foe the blood of my comrades and the honour of France. I could see men by hundreds, by thousands, creeping out of the trenches before me, and to right and to left they were already advanced to some distance. They were going to enclose Azay, to surround it. Our position there would be enfiladed and untenable, and I was convinced my disobedience had brought about an irreparable disaster.

‘Then something — I know not what — possessed me. A moment before I had felt that I could move neither hand nor foot, I had tried to rise, but I could not stir. I tried to speak, but my throat was parched by the agony I had undergone, and no sound came from my lips. And then it was as if a flame passed through me, and I leapt to my feet.

‘I put my arms about the figure that was lying on the ground beside me, and I raised it up on high, I called out in a ringing voice to my men: ‘Follow me, my children!’ and then I set forth toward the enemy, who were swarming from every side. I have spoken of the strangeness of the mist, and so now I saw the German soldiers, here as if they were floating on clouds towards me, there as they waded through a white sea, only a part of their bodies being visible, and then again the fog would drift, and whole companies would be blotted out: one would have said a curtain had been lowered before them. I marched against this army of phantoms, holding the Christ exalted before me. And in a great voice that seemed to me to fill the whole world I began to intone the hymn:

Vexilla Regis prodeunt:
Fulget Crucis mysterium,
Qua vita mortem pertulil,

Et morte vitam protulit.

The royal banners forward go,
the cross shines forth in mystic glow;
where he in flesh, our flesh who made,
our sentence bore, our ransom paid.

‘My men joined with me, and so I say we went in procession against the enemy among the lists of the dawn.

Conclusion

‘I saw nothing. I heard nothing but the sonorous plainsong of the hymn. But the men told me afterwards that cries of terror came from the enemy. No doubt this procession of ours had an extraordinary and terrible appearance. It is likely enough my body was invisible in the sea of mist: that only the figure I held appeared to the Germans, coming towards them as it were in the clouds. Doubtless the figure would seem to appear and then disappear; it would be visible to one man and be concealed from another. One of my soldiers who understood a little German said he heard a Prussian bawl out that the Lord Christus was coming terribly against them. As I say, I heard nothing of all this, I still sang,

Arbor decora et fulgida.
Oh Tree of glory, Tree most fair,
Ordain’d those holy limbs to bear,
How bright in purple robe it stood,
The purple of a Saviour’s blood!

‘When I came to myself we had advanced far over the plateau. The Germans were no longer advancing; they were running away in all directions. It seemed that the panic had spread; one company had infected another, terror began to run through a regiment, this regiment taking to flight broke up that regiment which was advancing in support; and so at last the whole centre was in disorder and retreat, though perhaps not one man in ten knew why he was retreating. And then the wings, seeing the centre fell back for some unknown cause, retreated also. In brief: there was no attack, no surprise.

‘I told my colonel everything. And then I gave him my sword. I looked for no mercy. But the tears coursed down his cheeks as he gave back my sword.

‘“After all, captain,” he said, “one must confess that God rules the world.” ‘

7b Coney Court

A GOOD MANY years ago the late Stephen Phillips, the poet and dramatist, got himself into a very queer piece of trouble. He had just left his house somewhere on the South Coast, I think at Littlehampton or near it, and rumours had got abroad that he had done so because the place was haunted. The rumours penetrated to Fleet Street, and some paper sent down a reporter to interview the poet. Stephen Phillips told the newspaper man his experiences in his late residence, and they were, indeed, most remarkable. I have forgotten the detail, and cannot recall the manner of the noises or voices or apparitions that had vexed the late tenant; but there was no doubt that the house was haunted, and haunted very badly. A sensational 'story' appeared in the paper — and then the landlord of the house sued everybody concerned for heavy damages. It had not occurred to Phillips or the newspaper that you could libel a house; but the owner of it pointed out that to call a house haunted made it unlettable, and that in consequence of the statements in the interview the place once occupied by the poet had been empty on his hands for the last eighteen months. How the matter ended has escaped my memory, but I believe somebody, the poet or the paper, had to pay, and I should think it was the paper. However, I am taking the affair as a warning, and so I declare that all names and places in the following history are fictitious. There is no such Inn of Court or Chancery as Curzon's Inn; there is no such square as Coney Court, though South Square, Gray's Inn, once bore that name. And therefore: no action will lie.

But assuming for the moment that names and places are as true as the tale, it may be said that Curzon's Inn lies somewhere between Fleet Street and Holborn. It is approached by a maze of crooked courts and paved alleys, guarded by iron posts, and it consists of a small hall — note the very odd and elaborate 'sham Gothic' work about the principal doorway, date 1755 — a huge and ancient and flourishing mulberry tree in a railed enclosure, a quadrangle called Assay Square, and another which is Coney Court. In Coney Court there are nine entrances in the buildings, which were rebuilt in 1670. All is of a dim red of ancient brickwork; the entrances are enriched with Corinthian pilasters, in the manner of the older doorways in King's Bench Walk in the Temple; and the carved wooden penthouses over these doorways have been attributed to Grinling Gibbons; somewhat doubtfully, as I am told, and on a misreading of an allusion in a contemporary diary. But, at all events, there are nine doors in Coney Court, and no more than nine, and hence the perplexity of Mr Hemmings, the Steward, when he received a cheque for £20, with a note to this effect:

DEAR SIR

Please receive the enclosed cheque for Twenty Pounds (£20 0 0), being the quarter's rent due to you for my chambers at 7B Coney Court, Curzon's Inn.I remain,

Yours faithfully,

MICHAEL CARVER.

That was all. There was no address. There was no date. The postmark bore the letter N. The letter was delivered by the first post of November 11th, 1913, and by immemorial custom, of unknown origin, rents in Curzon's Inn are payable not on the English, but on the Scottish quarter days. Now, November 11th is Martinmas, and so far everything was in order, But there is no such entrance in Coney Court as 7B, and there was no such name as Michael Carver on the books of the Inn. Mr Hemmings was bothered, and nobody seemed to have heard of Mr Carver. The porter, who had been employed at the Inn for upwards of forty years, was quite positive that no such name had been on the doorposts during the time of his service. Of course, the Steward made all possible enquiries. He went round to the various tenants at 6, 7, and 8, but could get no information whatever. As is usual in the old Inns, the tenants were miscellaneous. The main substratum — also as usual — was legal. There was a publisher in a very small and young way of business, who thought that poetry could be made to pay. There were the offices of a few shy and queer companies and syndicates, with names such as 'Trexel Development Company, Ltd.,' 'J.H.V.N. Syndicate,' 'Sargasso Salvage: G. Nash, Secretary,' and so forth, and so forth. Then the private residents; some of these were initials on the doorposts, ‘A.D.S.,’ ‘F.X.S.,’ one ‘Mr and Mrs Eugene Sheldon,’ and names that were little more than names to the inhabitants of the Inn, since the owners of them were never seen during the day, but crept out at night, after the gates were shut, and prowled from Assay Square to Coney Court and back again, stealthily, silently, not looking at one another, never speaking a word. Among all these folk the Steward made his quest, but not one of them had heard of such a person as Michael Carver, and one or two had occupied their chambers for thirty years. The next day, ‘St Martin’s Morrow,’ being the day appointed for the quarterly meeting of the Society, the ‘Pension,’ as they called it, the puzzled Hemmings laid the matter before the President and the Ancients, with the result that they decided that there was nothing to be done.

And from that date onward, quarter after quarter came the cheque for twenty pounds, with the formal note accompanying it. No date, no address, and the postmark still bearing the N. of the northern district, The matter was regularly laid before the Society: the Society as regularly decided that there was nothing to be done.

This went on till the Martinmas of November, 1918. The usual cheque was received; but the formal letter varied. It ran thus:

DEAR SIR —

Please receive the enclosed cheque for Twenty Pounds (£20 0 0), being the quarter’s rent due to you for my Chambers at 7B Coney Court, Curzon’s Inn.There is a bad patch of damp on the ceiling of my sitting room; arising, I should think, from a defective tile.I shall be obliged if you will have this seen to at once.I remain, Yours faithfully

MICHAEL CARVER.

The Steward was stupefied. There was no such number in Coney Court, or the Inn, as 7B; how, then, could there be a leak in the roof? How could the Society see to a roof which did not exist? Next day, Mr Hemmings laid the letter before the Pension in silence: there was nothing to say. The President read it attentively; the ten Ancients read it attentively. Then one of them, who happened to be a solicitor, suggested that enquiries should be made at

Mr Carver's bank. 'Sometimes you can bluff a bank,' he said hopefully. But Mr Carver banked at Tellson's, and the ancient should have known better. Hemmings received the curtest of letters from the House, informing him that Messrs. Tellson were not in the habit of discussing their client's affairs with outsiders; and so, for the time being, the matter dropped. Next quarter day, the usual Carver cheque was received, and with it an extremely stiff letter, pointing out that no notice had been taken of the writer's request, and that, in consequence the damp had spread all over the ceiling, and threatened to drip on the carpet. 'I shall be obliged if you will remedy the defect immediately,' the letter ended. The President and the Ancients again considered the matter. One suggested that the whole thing was the work of a practical joker, another uttered the word 'Mad,' but these explanations were considered unsatisfactory, and the Society, in the circumstances, resolved that there was nothing to be done.

The next quarter day brought no cheque. There was a letter, declaring that the tenant's furniture was covered with mould, and that in wet weather he was obliged to put a bowl on the floor to catch the water. Mr Carver said finally that he had determined to cease all payment of rent until the necessary repairs were seen to. And then something still queerer happened, and this is the point at which the history would have become libellous — if there were such a place as Curzon's Inn, or if there were such a court as Coney Court. The third pair chambers (right) of No. 7, Coney Court, had just been vacated by the tenants, solicitors or agents, and a widow lady and her daughter had moved in— 'dingy, but so quiet,' as the lady told her friends. And now she found her chambers very far from quiet. Night after night, at twelve, one, two, or three o'clock, she and her daughter were awoke by thunderous piano music, always the same music, which rendered sleep out of the question. The widow complained to the Steward, and he came round, with the Inn carpenter, and said he couldn't understand it at all.

'We never had any complaints from Jackson and Dowling,' he declared, and the lady pointed out that Jackson and Dowling left the Inn every night at six.

The Steward went over the set carefully. He noticed a sort of crazy flight of steps, leading out of one of the rooms.

‘What’s that?’ he asked the carpenter, and the man said it was a sort of lumber place, used by tenants for odds and ends.

They went up, and found themselves in a garret, lighted by one pane of glass in the roof. Here was a broken-down old piano with hardly a dozen notes sounding, a mouldy Gladstone bag, two odd men’s socks, a pair of trousers, and some ragged copies of Bach’s Fugues, in paper wrappers. There was a leak in the roof, and all reeked with damp.

The rubbish was removed, the place was turned out and whitewashed. There were no more disturbances. But a year later, the widow lady, being at a concert with a friend, suddenly gasped and choked, and whispered to the friend:

‘That is the awful music I told you about.’

The distinguished pianist had just sounded the opening notes of John Sebastian Bach’s Fugue in C Major.

Neither the Principal, the Ancients, nor the Steward heard any more of the tenant of 7B, Coney Court.

Ritual

ONCE UPON A time, as we say in English, or olim, as the Latins said in their more austere and briefer way, I was sent forth on a May Monday to watch London being happy on their Whitsun holiday. This is the sort of appointment that used to be known in newspaper offices as an annual; and the difficulty for the men engaged in this business is to avoid seeing the same sights as those witnessed a year before and saying much the same things about them as were said on Whit-Monday twelvemonth. Queuing up for Madame Tussaud's waxworks, giving buns to diverse creatures in the Zoo, gazing at those Easter Island gods in the portico of the British Museum, waiting for all sorts of early doors to open; all these are spectacles of the day. And the patient man who boards the buses from suburbs may chance to hear a lady from Hornsey expounding to her neighbour on the seat, an inhabitant of Enfield Wash, the terrible gaieties that Piccadilly Circus witnesses when the electric signs are fairly lit.

On the Whit-Monday in question I saw and recorded some of these matters; and then strolled westward along Piccadilly, by the palings of the Green Park. The conventional business of the day had been more or less attended to: now for the unsystematic prowl: one never knows where one may find one's goods. And then and there, I came across some boys, half-a-dozen or so of them, playing what struck me as a very queer game on the fresh turf of the Park, under the tender and piercing green of the young leaves. I have forgotten the preliminary elaborations of the sport; but there seemed to be some sort of dramatic action, perhaps with dialogue, but this I could not hear. Then one boy stood alone, with the five or six others about him. They pretended to hit the solitary boy, and he fell to the ground and lay motionless, as if dead. Then the others covered him up with their coats, and ran away. And then, if I remember, the boy who had been ritually smitten, slaughtered, and buried, rose to his feet, and the very odd game began all over again.

Here, I thought, was something a little out of the way of the accustomed doings and pleasures of the holiday crowds, and I returned to my office and embodied an account of this Green Park sport in my tale of Whit-Monday in London; with some allusion to the curious analogy between the boys' game and certain matters of a more serious nature. But it would not do. A spectacled Reader came down out of his glass cage, and held up a strip of proof.

'Hiram Abiff?' he queried in a low voice, as he placed the galley-slip on my desk, and pointed to the words with his pen. 'It's not usual to mention these things in print.'

I assured the Reader that I was not one of the Widow's offspring, but he still shook his head gravely, and I let him have his way, willing to avoid all *admiratio*. It was, I thought, a curious little incident, and to this day I have never heard an explanation of the coincidence — mere chance, very likely — between the pastime in the Park and those matters which it is not usual to mention in print.

But a good many years later, this business of the Green Park was recalled to me by a stranger experience in a very different part of London. A friend of mine, an American, who had travelled in many outland territories of the earth, asked me to show him some of the less known quarters of London.

'Do not misunderstand me, sir,' he said, in his measured, almost Johnsonian manner, 'I do not wish to see your great city in its alleged sensational aspects. I am not yearning to probe the London underworld, nor do I wish to view any opium joints or blind-pigs for cocaine addicts. In such matters I have already accumulated more than sufficient experience in other quarters of the world. But if you would just show me those aspects which are so ordinary that nobody ever sees them, I shall be greatly indebted to you.'

I remember how I had once awed two fellow-citizens of his by taking them to a street not very far from King's Cross Station, and showing them how each house was guarded by twin plaster sphinxes of a deadly chocolate-red, which crouched on either side of the flights of steps leading to the doorways. I remembered how the late Arnold Bennett had come exploring in this region, and seen the sphinxes and had noted them in his diary with a kind of dumb surmise, venturing no comment. So I said that I thought I understood. We set out, and soon we were deep in that unknown London which is at our very doors.

‘Dickens had been here,’ I said in my part as Guide and Interpreter. ‘You know ‘Little Dorrit’? Then this might be Mr Casby’s very street, which set out meaning to run down into the valley and up again to the top of the hill, but got out of breath and stopped still after twenty yards.’

The American gentleman relished the reference and his surroundings. He pointed out to me curious work in some of the iron balconies before the first floor windows in the grey houses, making a rough sketch of the design of one of them in his note-book. We wandered here and there, and up and down at haphazard, by strange wastes and devious ways, till I, in spite of my fancied knowledge, found myself in a part that I did not remember to have seen before. There were timber yards with high walls about them. There were cottages that seemed to have strayed from the outskirts of some quiet provincial town, off the main road. One of these lay deep in the shadow of an old mulberry, and ripening grapes hung from a vine on a neighbouring wall. The hollyhocks in the neat little front gardens were almost over; there were still brave displays of snapdragons and marigolds. But round the corner, barrows piled with pale bananas and flaming oranges filled the roadway, and the street market resounded with raucous voices, praise of fruit and fish, and loud bargainings, and gossip at its highest pitch. We pushed our way through the crowd, and left the street of the market, and presently came into the ghostly quiet of a square: high, severe houses, built of whitish bricks, complete in 1840 Gothic, all neat and well-kept, and for all sign of life or movement, uninhabited.

And then, when we had barely rested our ears from the market jangle, there came what I suppose was an overflow from that region. A gang of small boys surged into the square and broke its peace. There were about a dozen of them, more or less, and I took it that they were playing soldiers. They marched, two and two, in their dirty and shabby order, apparently under the command of a young ruffian somewhat bigger and taller than the rest. Two of them banged incessantly with bits of broken wood on an old meat tin and a battered iron tea tray, and all of them howled as barbarously as any crooner, but much louder. They went about and about, and then diverged into an empty road that looked as if it led nowhere in particular, and there drew up, and formed themselves into a sort of hollow square, their captain in the middle. The tin pan music went on steadily, but less noisily; it had become a succession of slow beats, and the howls had turned into a sort of whining chant.

But it remained a very horrible row, and I was moving on to get away from the noise, when my American interposed.

‘If you wouldn’t mind our tarrying here for a few moments,’ he said apologetically. ‘This pastime of your London boys interests me very much. You may think it strange, but I find it more essentially exciting than the Eton and Harrow Cricket Match of which I witnessed some part a few weeks ago.’

So we looked on from an unobtrusive corner. The boys, evidently, agreed with my friend, and found their game absorbing. I don’t think that they had noticed us or knew that we were there.

They went through their queer performance. The bangs or beats on the tin and the tray grew softer and slower, and the yells had died into a monotonous drone. The leader went inside the square, from boy to boy, and seemed to whisper into the ear of each one. Then he passed round a second time, standing before each, and making a sort of summoning or beckoning gesture with his hand. Nothing happened. I did not find the sport essentially exciting; but looking at the American, I observed that he was watching it with an expression of the most acute interest and amazement. Again the big boy went around the square. He stopped dead before a little fellow in a torn jacket. He threw out his arms wide, with a gesture of embrace, and then drew them in. He did this three times, and at the third repetition of the ceremony, the little chap in the torn jacket cried out with a piercing scream and fell forward as if dead.

The banging of the tins and the howl of the voices went up to heaven with a hideous dissonance.

My American friend was gasping with astonishment as we passed on our way.

‘This is an amazing city,’ he said. ‘Do you know, sir, that those boys were acting all as if they’d been Asiki doing their Njoru ritual. I’ve seen it in East Africa. But there the black man that falls down stays down. He’s dead.’

A week or two later, I was telling the tale to some friends. One of them pulled an evening paper out of his pocket.

‘Look at that,’ said he, pointing with his finger. I read the headlines:

MYSTERY DEATH IN NORTH LONDON SQUARE
HOME OFFICE DOCTOR PUZZLED
HEART VESSELS RUPTURED
‘PLAYING SOLDIERS’
BOY FALLS DEAD
CORONER DIRECTS OPEN VERDICT

Johnny Double

I

THE WORST OF it was that Johnny Marchant had nothing particular to complain of. He did not live in a slum in the most miserable part of London. He lived in a beautiful old house in the country. His father did not beat him when he came home drunk, because his father very rarely left his house and therefore he couldn’t come home. And besides, his father never got drunk. His old grandmother never thought of shutting him up in dark cupboards. All the cupboards at Johnny’s home were full of books and of curious and beautiful things, so there was no room for Johnny. Besides, his grandmother, who came on visits about twice a year, would never have dreamt of doing such a silly thing. In first place she was as kind as kind could be; and then she was not the sort of woman to take a lot of rare china out of a cupboard for the sake of putting a little boy into it; in fact, as I say, Johnny Marchant had nothing whatever to complain of, and that’s a pity. People are not interested in a child who isn’t shut up in the dark, starved, or beaten. It is true that Johnny’s mother had died when he was a year old. But he never remembered her, and his nurse Mary knew what a boy’s feelings are, and generally had gooseberry jam for tea. Or if not, blackberry jelly in the blue Chinese pot with the yellow dragons.

II

So, since we cannot pretend that Johnny Marchant had a rough time, we may as well make the best of the smooth things that he enjoyed. To begin with, the house that he lived in was old and odd and beautiful. It was in a hollow looking over a quiet bay of a calm blue sea. About it were groves of dark ilex trees, green all the year round; and then there were huge old laurels of a brighter green that blossomed and bore a crimson-purple fruit. There was a lawn in front of the house with fuchsia hedges twenty feet high. On one side was the kitchen garden, where the peaches grew from pale green to yellow, and from yellow to pink, and from pink to crimson all through the spring and summer. On the other side were the dessert apples and pears in an orchard sloping to the south and the sea. Then from the first lawn steps went down to the second lawn, called Johnny Summerhouse Lawn, for here was a summer house that had tried to look like a Chinese temple, before the white roses had grown all over it. And then another flight of steps went down to Well Lawn, where a tall pine tree grew off a red rock, and all manner of green boughs shaded a bubbling well, with white sand always stirring at the bottom of it, as the water rose clear and cold out of the heart of the hill. And, after that, below again was the wild place where all the trees grew thick together and the ground was rich with ferns, and a steep path twisted in and out of the wildness down to the sea.

III

As for the house; it was about a hundred and twenty years old. There was a ground floor and a first floor, and that was all, and then a thatched roof. The walls were painted white, and the veranda was painted green, and purple clematis covered it. And on the path, in front of the house, were six great green tubs, and in the six great green tubs there were six great green bushes of box, as old as the house. The man who had built it was a captain in the Navy, who had fought in all the fights against Napoleon and had sailed all over the world besides. He had made the builders paint the walls white, and had called his house Casabianca, or White House. But when the box trees in the tubs grew big and round, as they soon did, the country people called the place ‘The Bunches,’ and at last it was known as Casabianca Bunches, and Johnny never heard the last of it when he went to school and told his best friend where he lived. In fact he was called ‘Bunches’ at Oxford; and for all I know his fellow-judges call him ‘Brother Bunches’ to this day — except when they are all dressed in scarlet and white and wear great wigs.

IV

So there were all sorts of nice things outside the house, and one could always get lost in the wild place. And when it rained, there were all sorts of nice things inside the house. There were Chinese monsters and junks and temples made of ivory and lacquer cabinets, rich red and gold and mother-of-pearl, and Japanese pictures in deep fine colours, with people making horrible faces in the front, and blue mountains and rivers and bridges in the distance, and Indian gods with too many arms, and elephants’ heads, and serpents and everything a boy can want. As for books, there were plenty everywhere: Baxter's *Saints' Rest, The Arabian Nights,* Jeremy Taylor, *Roderick Random,* the Poetical Works of Akenside, the Waverley Novels*, Gil Blas, Gulliver's Travels*, all Dickens', Jortin's *Sermons,* and *Don Quixote*. In due time Johnny tried them all — very small bits of some of them, and, as his father said, gave himself a liberal education. And yet his father and his grandmother and his Aunt Letitia were sometimes 'quite uneasy' about him. He was so very odd at times. The old doctor came over from Nantgaron and heard all about it, and looked at Johnny's tongue, and punched him in the proper places, and sent powders; and that was no good. Then Johnny was taken to the doctor at Bristol, who said he must live on cream and mutton chops done pink; and that was no good. Then Johnny was taken to the doctor in London, and he said that raw carrots, finely sliced, with plenty of nuts, would make an immense change for the better; but that did no good. Though this doctor spoke of 'irritability of the nervous system,' 'marked psychological cachexia,' 'idiosyncrasy,' and 'pathogenic' at considerable length.

V

Johnny's trouble was a very odd one, and for some time his relations didn't think much about it. It began by his telling long stories about where he had been and what he had seen, all the most wonderful things that he hadn't seen and couldn't have seen. Mary, the nurse, heard most of these tales in the morning and at tea-time and at bed-time, and she only said 'Yes, dear'; 'Of course, darling'; 'I see, Master Johnny'; and 'Well, I'm sure!' not heeding a word of it. So she heard how Johnny had been a long way off to a big town, ever so much bigger than Nantgaron, and there were houses and houses, and then a sort of country in the middle of the houses, full of trees and grass, and there all the wild beasts in the picture-books came alive, elephants and everything. And Mary cut more bread-and-butter, for this was at tea, and said, 'Beautiful, I'm sure.' Another time there was a story of a great place, full of lights, and seats rising one behind another; and then something dark went away, and there was a wood beyond, and people in queer dresses talking and singing. 'That's the way,' said Mary, 'and here's your nightshirt, Master Johnny, nice and warm, as I've aired it myself by the kitchen fire.' Then it was a tale about another country in the middle of the big town, not the country where the beasts in the picture-book came to life, but a different one, and big soldiers in scarlet and gold with bright swords in their hands riding through the country, and a band playing. And Mary went on cutting the bread-and-butter and helping the jam and brushing Johnny's hair, and not putting herself out a bit. Sometimes Johnny would tell his adventures to his father, who let him run on as he liked. Imaginative children, he said to himself, will always 'make up' and 'make believe,' and it is absurd to punish them for lying. So he would listen almost as quietly as Mary; and one night Johnny told him a long and confused story of one of the bright places with rows of seats rising one above another and the dark place getting bright, and then all sorts of wonderful things happening: a man all white and misty, who talked in a deep voice and seemed to frighten everybody very much, and a king and a queen sat on thrones, and a man in a black cloak, who seemed very miserable, talked to them, and at last they all killed each other, and so everybody was dead, and it got dark again, and there was a great noise. Mr Marchant went on reading his paper, and said 'I see', and 'Very good, and what did they do then?' 'Did you say a churchyard and a rather cross clergyman with a bald head? Dear me! About your bedtime isn't it?' He thought nothing about it, and he didn't think anything about it when his cousin Anna — one of the 'Dawson girls,' aged fifty-five — wrote to him from London and said amongst many other things: 'Do you think *Hamlet* quite a suitable play for Johnny? He is surely very young for all the horrors. I must say he seemed to be enjoying himself when I saw him two or three weeks ago at the Lyceum. Irving is certainly very fine. Was Johnny staying with the Gascoignes? I did not recognise the lady next to him.' Mr Marchant simply said, 'Tut, tut, tut: Anna talking nonsense as usual,' and paid no more attention to the matter. He had not listened to half Johnny's story of the misty man and the miserable man and the king and queen and the cross clergyman, and he had forgotten all about the rest. And, anyhow, he knew that Johnny had been at Casabianca Bunches all the summer, and Anna had always been a muddlehead.

VI

Mr Marchant only began to get seriously disturbed about the boy one hot day in August, when Johnny was about nine. There was some business to be done at Nantgaron, the market town, eight miles away, and Mr Marchant drove over in the dogcart. As he was lunching in the coffee-room of The Three Salmons, his friend, Captain Lloyd, came in and sat down at another table and began to munch bread and cheese and to drink beer out of a great silver tankard with a lid. At first he talked of the harvest, which, as he said, was the earliest for twenty years, and then he remarked:

‘What have you done with Johnny? Turned him loose in the tuck shop?’

‘Johnny?’ said Mr Marchant. ‘What d’you mean? I left him at home. Nothing to amuse him at Nantgaron.’

‘Nonsense, I saw him in the High Street ten minutes ago. He was staring at those steeplejacks mending the weathercock on the spire of St Mary’s.’

‘I left Johnny reading on the veranda at home an hour and a half ago, and I’ve only just come. He could hardly have walked the distance in the time. You must have mistaken some other boy for him.’

‘Well, that’s very strange. I was quite close to him. He was wearing a straw hat with a green ribbon and a pheasant’s feather stuck in it.’

Mr Marchant looked very oddly at Captain Lloyd.

‘Queer things boys will wear,’ was all he said, and that was not much to the point. But the fact was that he had noticed the pheasant’s feather in the straw hat with the green ribbon on Johnny’s head when he said good-bye to him on the veranda, and had told Johnny that that style of hat was very little worn in town just now. Clearly Johnny had managed to get a lift into Nantgaron, and the only thing to do was to ask him what he meant by it. And so when Mr Marchant got home about tea-time, the first thing he did was to ask Mary, the nurse, whether Master Johnny had come back.

‘He’s not been away, sir. He’s been reading in the Rose Bower, and I’m just going to call him for his tea.’

‘Not been away, Mary? Do you mean he was in to dinner?’

‘As usual, sir, at one o’clock. Roast chicken and raspberry tart. And I thought to myself how children can eat so well and the weather so hot.’

Mr Marchant looked hard at the nurse and then said:

‘Oh, I see. Thank you, Mary. That’s all right, then.’

He didn’t see at all. But he thought the matter over, and decided that it was quite possible that some other little boy might have a straw hat with a green ribbon and stick a pheasant’s tail feather in it. Soon after tea Mr Marchant was enjoying his hollyhocks and his pipe on the Summerhouse Lawn, and Johnny was helping, and putting in a word about the Templar in *Ivanhoe.* And then he said: ‘Daddy! Weren’t those men wonderful today, right up on the very top of the church?’

And Mr Marchant’s pipe dropped out of his mouth.

VII

It was no good to try to get Johnny to explain. He didn’t seem to think that there was anything to explain. He said he wondered what his father was doing at Nantgaron, so he thought he would go and see; and that was all, and that was how his relations got ‘quite uneasy,’ as they said. And the doctors’ medicines and chopped carrots and nuts made no difference whatever. Till at last the parson said there was nothing for it but school, and the boy was ‘packed off,’ first of all to a big preparatory school, and then to a bigger public school. Odd things happened once or twice at both places. He began to tell the other boys one of his queer stories and was promptly kicked and clouted as a young liar. Then he got into trouble for being about the town at midnight, and things looked extremely serious. But as he was able to prove that he was fast asleep in the dormitory at the time, his house-master only gave him lines on general principles. Johnny was cured, or so his father and the people at home thought.

VIII

But many years afterwards, only three years ago as a matter of fact, and some time after Johnny had become Mr Justice Marchant, it was appointed that he should try Henry Farmer, who was accused of the dreadful Hetton murder. When the court was opened, and the judge and the prisoner faced each other, a few people noticed that the two men in their different places ‘looked as if they had seen a ghost.’ The prisoner in the dock gasped and shuddered, and muttered something about ‘the man in scarlet,’ and the judge on the bench turned ghastly white, and his head almost fell on the desk before him. Mr Justice Marchant said in a faint voice that he feared a somewhat severe indisposition would prevent him trying the case. The prisoner was put back: it was another judge who sentenced Farmer to death a few days later. Mr Justice Marchant never told anyone that he had seen the man in the dock before — and with the red knife in his hand.

N

I

THEY WERE TALKING about old days and old ways and all the changes that have come on London in the last weary years; a little party of three of them, gathered for a rare meeting in Perrott's rooms.

One man, the youngest of the three, a lad of fifty-five or so, had begun to say:

"I know every inch of that neighbourhood, and I tell you there's no such place."

His name was Harliss; and he was supposed to have something to do with chemicals and carboys and crystals.

They had been recalling many London vicissitudes, these three; and it must be noted that the boy of the party, Harliss, could remember very well the Strand as it used to be, before they spoilt it all. Indeed, if he could not have gone as far back as the years of those doings, it is doubtful whether Perrott would have let him into the meeting in Mitre Place, an alley which was an entrance of the inn by day, but was blind after nine o'clock at night, when the iron gates were shut, and the pavement grew silent. The rooms were on the second floor, and from the front windows could be seen the elms in the inn garden, where the rooks used to build before the war. Within, the large, low room was softly, deeply carpeted from wall to wall; the winter night, with a bitter dry wind rising, and moaning even in the heart of London, was shut out by thick crimson curtains, and the three then sat about a blazing fire in an old fireplace, a fireplace that stood high from the hearth, with hobs on each side of it, and a big kettle beginning to murmur on one of them. The armchairs on which the three sat were of the sort that Mr. Pickwick sits on for ever in his frontispiece. The round table of dark mahogany stood on one leg, very deeply and profusely carved, and Perrott said it was a George IV table, though the third friend, Arnold, held that William IV, or even very early Victoria, would have been nearer the mark.

On the dark red wall-paper there were eighteenth-century engravings of Durham Cathedral and Peterborough Cathedral, which showed that, in spite of Horace Walpole and his friend Mr. Gray, the eighteenth century couldn't draw a Gothic building when its towers and traceries were before its eyes: "because they couldn't see it," Arnold had insisted, late one night, when the gliding signs were far on in their course, and the punch in the jar had begun to thicken a little on its spices. There were other engravings of a later date about the walls, things of the thirties and forties by forgotten artists, known well enough in their day; landscapes of the Valley of the Usk, and the Holy Mountain, and Llanthony: all with a certain enchantment and vision about them, as if their domed hills and solemn woods were more of grace than of nature. Over the hearth was *Bolton Abbey in the Olden Time*.

Perrott would apologize for it.

"I know," he would say. "I know all about it. It is a pig, and a goat, and a dog, and a damned nonsense" — he was quoting a Welsh story— "but it used to hang over the fire in the dining-room at home. And I often wish I had brought along *Te Deum Laudamus* as well."

"What's that?" Harliss asked.

"Ah, you're too young to have lived with it. It depicts three choir-boys in surplices; one singing for his life, and the other two looking about them — just like choir-boys. And we were always told that the busy boy was hanged at last. The companion picture showed three charity girls, also singing. This was called *Te Dominum Confitemur*. I never heard their story."

"I know." Harliss brightened. "I came upon them both in lodgings near the station at Brighton, in Mafeking year. And, a year or two later, I saw *Sherry, Sir* in an hotel at Tenby."

"The finest wax fruit I ever saw," Arnold joined in, "was in a window in the King's Cross Road."

So they would maunder along, about the old-fashioned rather than the old. And so on this winter night of the cold wind they lingered about the London streets of forty, forty-five, fifty-five years ago.

One of them dilated on Bloomsbury, in the days when the bars were up, and the Duke's porters had boxes beside the gates, and all was peace, not to say profound dullness, within those solemn boundaries. Here was the high vaulted church of a strange sect, where, they said, while the smoke of incense fumed about a solemn rite, a wailing voice would suddenly rise up with the sound of an incantation in magic. Here, another church, where Christina Rossetti bowed her head; all about, dim squares where no one walked, and the leaves of the trees were dark with smoke and soot.

“I remember one spring,” said Arnold, “when they were the brightest green I ever saw. In Bloomsbury Square. Long ago.”

“That wonderful little lion stood on the iron posts in the pavement in front of the British Museum,” Perrott put in. “I believe they have kept a few and hidden them in museums. That’s one of the reasons why the streets grow duller and duller. If there is anything curious, anything beautiful in a street, they take it away and stick it in a museum. I wonder what has become of that odd little figure, I think it was in a cocked hat, that stood by the bar-parlour door in the courtyard of the bell in Holborn.”

They worked their way down by Fetter Lane, and lamented Dryden’s house — “I think it was in 87 that they pulled it down” — and lingered on the site of Clifford’s Inn— “you could walk into the seventeenth century” — and so at last into the Strand.

“Someone said it was the finest street in Europe.”

“Yes, no doubt — in a sense. Not at all in the obvious sense; it wasn’t *belle architecture de ville*. It was of all ages and all sizes and heights and styles: a unique enchantment of a street; an incantation, full of words that meant nothing to the uninitiated.”

A sort of Litany followed.

“The Shop of the Pale Puddings, where little David Copperfield might have bought his dinner.”

“That was close to Bookseller’s Row — sixteenth-century houses.”

“And ‘Chocolate as in Spain’; opposite Charing Cross.”

“The *Globe* office, where one sent one’s early turnovers.”

“The narrow alleys with steps going down to the river.”

“The smell of making soap from the scent shop.”

“Nutt’s bookshop, near the Welsh mutton butcher’s, where the street was narrow.”

“The *Family Herald* office; with a picture in the window of an early typesetting machine, showing the operator working a contraption with long arms, that hovered over the case.”

“And Garden House in the middle of a lawn, in Clement’s Inn.”

“And the flicker of those old yellow gas-lamps, when the wind blew up the street, and the people were packing into that passage that led to the Lyceum pit.”

One of them, his ear caught by a phrase that another had used, began to murmur verses from “Oh, plump head waiter at the Cock.”

“What chops they were!” sighed Perrott. And he began to make the punch, grating first of all the lumps of sugar against the lemons; drawing forth thereby the delicate, aromatic oils from the rind of the Mediterranean fruit. Matters were brought forth from cupboards at the dark end of the room: rum from the Jamaica Coffee House in the City, spices in blue china boxes, one or two old bottles containing secret essences. The kettle boiled, the ingredients were dusted in and poured into the red-brown jar, which was then muffled and set to digest on the hearth, in the heat of the fire.

“*Misce, fiat mistura*,” said Harliss.

“Very well,” answered Arnold. “But remember that all the true matters of the work are invisible.”

Nobody minded him or his alchemy; and after a due interval, the glasses were held over the fragrant steam of the jar, and then filled. The three sat round the fire, drinking and sipping with grateful hearts.

II

Let it be noted that the glasses in question held no great quantity of the hot liquor. Indeed, they were what used to be called rummers; round, and of a bloated aspect, but of comparatively small capacity. Therefore, nothing injurious to the clearness of those old heads is to be inferred, when it is said that between the third and fourth filling, the talk drew away from central London and the lost, beloved Strand and began to go farther afield, into stranger, less-known territories. Perrott began it, by tracing a curious passage he had once made northward, dodging by the Globe and the Olympic theatres into the dark labyrinth of Clare Market, under arches and by alleys, till he came into Great Queen Street, near the Freemason's Tavern and Inigo Jones's red pilasters. Another took up the tale, and drifting into Holborn by Whetstone's Park, and going astray a little to visit Kingsgate Street— "just like Phiz's plate: mean, low, deplorable; but I wish they hadn't pulled it down" — finally reached Theobald's Road. There, they delayed a little, to consider curiously decorated leaden water-cisterns that were once to be seen in the areas of a few of the older houses, and also to speculate on the legend that an ancient galleried inn, now used as a warehouse, had survived till quite lately at the back of Tibbles Road — for so they called it. And thence, northward and eastward, up the Gray's Inn Road, crossing the King's Cross Road, and going up the hill.

"And here," said Arnold, "we begin to touch on the conjectured. We have left the known world behind us."

Indeed, it was he who now had the party in charge.

"Do you know," said Perrott, "that sounds awful rot, but it's true; at least so far as I am concerned. I don't think I ever went beyond Holborn Town Hall, as it used to be — I mean walking. Of course, I've driven in a hansom to King's Cross Railway Station, and I went once or twice to the Military Tournament, when it was at the Agricultural Hall, in Islington; but I don't remember how I got there."

Harliss said he had been brought up in North London, but much farther north — Stoke Newington way.

"I once knew a man," said Perrott, "who knew all about Stoke Newington; at least he ought to have known about it. He was a Poe enthusiast, and he wanted to find out whether the school where Poe boarded when he was a little boy was still standing. He went again and again; and the odd thing is that, in spite of his interest in the matter, he didn't seem to know whether the school was still there, or whether he had seen it. He spoke of certain survivals of the Stoke Newington that Poe indicates in a phrase or two in 'William Wilson': the dreamy village, the misty trees, the old rambling red-brick houses, standing in their gardens, with high walls all about them. But though he declared that he had gone so far as to interview the vicar, and could describe the old church with the dormer windows, he could never make up his mind whether he had seen Poe's school."

"I never heard of it when I lived there," said Harliss. "But I came of business stock. We didn't gossip much about authors. I have a vague sort of notion that I once heard somebody speak of Poe as a notorious drunkard — and that's about all I ever heard of him till a good deal later."

"It is queer, but it's true," Arnold broke in, "that there's a general tendency to seize on the accidental, and ignore the essential. You may be vague enough about the treble works, the vast designs of the laboured rampart lines; but at least you knew that the Duke of Wellington had a very big nose. I remember it on the tins of knife polish."

"But that fellow I was speaking of," said Perrott, going back to his topic, "I couldn't make him out. I put it to him; 'Surely you know one way or the other: this old school is still standing — or was still standing — or not: you either saw it or you didn't: there can't be any doubt about the matter.' But we couldn't get to negative or positive. He confessed that it was strange; 'But upon my word I don't know. I went once, I think, about 95, and then, again, in 99 — that was the time I called on the vicar; and I have never been since.' He talked like a man who had gone into a mist, and could not speak with any certainty of the shapes he had seen in it.

"And that reminds me. Long after my talk with Hare — that was the man who was interested in Poe — a distant cousin of mine from the country came up to town to see about the affairs of an old aunt of his who had lived all her life somewhere Stoke Newington way, and had just died. He came in here one evening to look me up — we had not met for many years — and he was saying, truly enough, I am sure, how little the average Londoner knew of London, when you once took him off his beaten track. For example,' he said to me, 'have you ever been in Stoke Newington?' I confessed that I hadn't, that I had never had any reason to go there. 'Exactly; and I don't suppose you've ever even heard of Canon's Park?' I confessed ignorance again. He said it was an extraordinary thing that such a beautiful place as this, within four or five miles of the centre of London, seemed absolutely unknown and unheard of by nine Londoners out of ten."

"I know every inch of that neighbourhood," broke in Harliss. "I was born there and lived there till I was sixteen. There's no such place anywhere near

Stoke Newington.”

“But, look here, Harliss,” said Arnold. “I don’t know that you’re really an authority.”

“Not an authority on a place I knew backwards for sixteen years? Besides, I represented Crosbies in that district later, soon after I went into business.”

“Yes, of course. But — I suppose you know the Haymarket pretty well, don’t you?”

“Of course I do; both for business and pleasure. Everybody knows the Haymarket.”

“Very good. Then tell me the way to St. James’s Market.”

“There’s no such market.”

“We have him,” said Arnold, with bland triumph. “Literally, he is correct: I believe it’s all pulled down now. But it was standing during the war: a small open space with old, low buildings in it, a stone’s throw from the back of the tube station. You turned to the right, as you walked down the Haymarket.”

“Quite right,” confirmed Perrott. “I went there, only once, on the business of an odd magazine that was published in one of those low buildings. But I was talking of Canon’s Park, Stoke Newington— “

“I beg your pardon,” said Harliss. “I remember now. There is a part in Stoke Newington or near it called Canon’s Park. But it isn’t a park at all; nothing like a park. That’s only a builder’s name. It’s just a lot of streets. I think there’s a Canon’s Square, and a Park Crescent, and an Esplanade: there are some decent shops there. But it’s all quite ordinary; there’s nothing beautiful about it.”

“But my cousin said it was an amazing place. Not a bit like the ordinary London parks or anything of the kind he’d seen abroad. You go in through a gateway, and he said it was like finding yourself in another country. Such trees, that must have been brought from the end of the world: there were none like them in England, though one or two reminded him of trees in Kew Gardens; deep hollows with streams running from the rocks; lawns all purple and gold with flowers, and golden lilies too, towering up into the trees, and mixing with the crimson of the flowers that hung from the boughs. And here and there, there were little summer-houses and temples, shining white in the sun, like a view in China, as he put it.”

Harliss did not fail with his response, “I tell you there’s no such place.”

And he added:

“And, anyhow, it all sounds a bit too flowery. But perhaps your cousin was that sort of man: ready to be enthusiastic over a patch of dandelions in a back-garden. A friend of mine once sent me a wire to ‘come at once: most important: meet me St. John’s Wood Station.’ Of course I went, thinking it must be really important; ‘and what he wanted was to show me the garden of a house to let in Grove End Road, which was a blaze of dandelions.”

“And a very beautiful sight,” said Arnold, with fervour.

“It was a fine sight; but hardly a thing to wire a man about. And I should think that’s the secret of all this stuff your cousin told you, Perrott. There used to be one or two big well-kept gardens at Stoke Newington; and I suppose he strolled into one of them by mistake, and then got rather wildly enthusiastic about what he saw.”

“It’s possible, of course,” said Perrott, “but in a general way he wasn’t that sort of man. He had an experimental farm, not far from Wells, and bred new kinds of wheat, and improved grasses. I have heard him called stodgy, though I always found him pleasant enough when we met.”

“Well, I tell you there’s no such place in Stoke Newington or anywhere near it. I ought to know.”

“How about St. James’s Market?” asked Arnold.

Then, they “left it at that.” Indeed, they had felt for some time that they had gone too far away from their known world, and from the friendly tavern fires of the Strand, into the wild no man’s land of the north. To Harliss, of course, those regions had once been familiar, common, and uninteresting: he could not revisit them in talk with any glow of feeling. The other two held them unfriendly and remote; as if one were to discourse of Arctic explorations, and lands of everlasting darkness.

They all returned with relief to their familiar hunting-grounds, and saw the play in theatres that had been pulled down for thirty-five years or more, and had steaks and strong ale afterwards, in the box by the fire, by the fire that had been finally raked out soon after the new law courts were opened.

III

So, at least, it appeared at the time; but there was something in the tale of this suburban park that remained with Arnold and beset him, and sent him at last to the remote north of the story. For, as he was meditating on this vague attraction, he chanced to light on a shabby brown book on his untidy shelves; a book gathered from a stall in Farringdon Street, where the manuscript of Traherne's *Centuries of Meditations* had been found. So far, Arnold had scarcely glanced at it. It was called, A London Walk: Meditations in the Streets of the Metropolis. The author was the Reverend Thomas Hampole, and the book was dated 1853. It consisted for the most part of moral and obvious reflections, such as might be expected from a pious and amiable clergyman of the day. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the relish of moralizing which flourished so in the age of Addison and Pope and Johnson, which made the *Rambler* a popular book, and gave fortunes to the publishers of sermons, had still a great deal of vigour. People liked to be warned of the consequences of their actions, to have lessons in punctuality, to learn about the importance of little things, to hear sermons from stones, and to be taught that there were gloomy reflections to be drawn from almost everything. So then, the Reverend Thomas Hampole stalked the London streets with a moral and monitory glance in his eye: saw Regent Street in its early splendour and thought of the ruins of mighty Rome, preached on the text of solitude in a multitude as he viewed what he called the teeming myriads, and allowed a desolate, half-ruinous house "in Chancery" to suggest thoughts of the happy Christmas parties that had once thoughtlessly revelled behind the crumbling walls and broken windows.

But here and there, Mr. Hampole became less obvious, and perhaps more really profitable. For example, there is a passage — it has already been quoted, I think, by some modern author — which seems curious enough.

Has it ever been your fortune, courteous reader [Mr. Hampole inquired] to rise in the earliest dawning of a summer day, ere yet the radiant beams of the sun have done more than touch with light the domes and spires of the great city?…If this has been your lot, have you not observed that magic powers have apparently been at work? The accustomed scene has lost its familiar appearance. The houses which you have passed daily, it may be for years, as you have issued forth on your business or on your pleasure, now seem as if you beheld them for the first time. They have suffered a mysterious change, into something rich and strange. Though they may have been designed with no extraordinary exertion of the art of architecture…yet you have been ready to admit that they now “stand in glory, shine like stars, apparelled in a light serene.” They have become magical habitations, supernal dwellings, more desirable to the eye than the fabled pleasure dome of the Eastern potentate, or the bejewelled hall built by the Genie for Aladdin in the Arabian tale.

A good deal in this vein; and then, when one expected the obvious warning against putting trust in appearances, both transitory and delusory, there came a very odd passage:

Some have declared that it lies within our own choice to gaze continually upon a world of equal or even greater wonder and beauty. It is said by these that the experiments of the alchemists of the Dark Ages…are, in fact, related, not to the transmutation’ of metals, but to the transmutation of the entire Universe…This method, or art, or science, or whatever we choose to call it (supposing it to exist, or to have ever existed), is simply concerned to restore the delights of the primal Paradise; to enable men, if they will, to inhabit a world of joy and splendour. It is perhaps possible that there is such an experiment, and that there are some who have made it.

The reader was referred to a note — one of several — at the end of the volume, and Arnold, already a good deal interested by this unexpected vein in the Reverend Thomas, looked it up. And thus it ran:

I am aware that these speculations may strike the reader as both singular and (I may, perhaps, add) chimerical; and, indeed, I may have been somewhat rash and ill-advised in committing them to the printed page. If I have done wrong, I hope for pardon; and, indeed, I am far from advising anyone who may read these lines to engage in the doubtful and difficult experiment which they adumbrate. Still; we are bidden to be seekers of the truth: *veritas contra mundum*.

I am strengthened in my belief that there is at least some foundation for the strange theories at which I have hinted, by an experience that befell me in the early days of my ministry. Soon after the termination of my first curacy, and after I had been admitted to Priest's Orders, I spent some months in London, living with relations in Kensington. A college friend of mine, whom I will call the Reverend Mr. S —— , was, I was aware, a curate in a suburb of the north of London, S.N. I wrote to him, and afterwards called at his lodgings at his invitation. I found S —— in a state of some perturbation. He was threatened, it seemed, with an affection of the lungs and his medical adviser was insistent that he should leave London for awhile, and spend the four months of the winter in the more genial climate of Devonshire. Unless this were done, the doctor declared, the consequences to my friend's health might be of a very serious kind. S —— was very willing to act on this advice, and indeed, anxious to do so; but, on the other hand, he did not wish to resign his curacy, in which, as he said, he was both happy and, he trusted, useful. On hearing this, I at once proffered my services, telling him that if his Vicar approved, I should be happy to do his duty till the end of the ensuing March; or even later, if the physicians considered a longer stay in the south would be advisable. S —— was overjoyed. He took me at once to see the Vicar; the fitting inquiries were made, and I entered on my temporary duties in the course of a fortnight.

It was during this brief ministry in the environs of London, that I became acquainted with a very singular person, whom I shall call Glanville. He was a regular attendant at our services, and, in the course of my duty, I called on him, and expressed my gratification at his evident attachment to the Liturgy of the Church of England. He replied with due politeness, asked me to sit down and partake with him of the soothing cup, and we soon found ourselves engaged in conversation. I discovered early in our association that he was conversant with the reveries of the German Theosophist, Behmen, and the later works of his English disciple, William Law; and it was clear to me that he looked on these labyrinths of mystical theology with a friendly eye. He was a middle-aged man, spare of habit, and of a dark complexion; and his face was illuminated in a very impressive manner, as he discussed the speculations which had evidently occupied his thoughts for many years. Based as these theories were on the doctrines (if we may call them by that name) of Law and Behmen, they struck me as of an extremely fantastic, I would even say fabulous, nature, but I confess that I listened with a considerable degree of interest, while making it evident that as a Minister of the Church of England I was far from giving my free assent to the propositions that were placed before me. They were not, it is true, manifestly and certainly opposed to orthodox belief, but they were assuredly strange, and as such to be received with salutary caution. As an example of the ideas which beset a mind which was ingenious, and I may say, devout, I may mention that Mr. Glanville often dwelt on a consequence, not generally acknowledged, of the Fall of Man. “When man yielded,” he would say, “to the mysterious temptation intimated by the figurative language of Holy Writ, the universe, originally fluid and the servant of his spirit, became solid, and crashed down upon him overwhelming him beneath its weight and its dead mass.” I requested him to furnish me with more light on this remarkable belief; and I found that in his opinion that which we now regard as stubborn matter was, primally, to use his singular phraseology, the Heavenly Chaos, a soft and ductile substance, which could be moulded by the imagination of uncorrupted man into whatever forms he chose it to assume. “Strange as it may seem,” he added, “the wild inventions (as we consider them) of the Arabian Tales give us some notion of the powers of the *homo protoplastus*. The prosperous city becomes a lake, the carpet transports us in an instant of time, or rather without time, from one end of the earth to another, the palace rises at a word from nothingness. Magic, we call all this, while we deride the possibility of any such feats; but this magic of the East is but a confused and fragmentary recollection of operations which were of the first nature of man, and of the fiat which was then entrusted to him.”

I listened to this and other similar expositions of Mr. Glanville’s extraordinary beliefs with some interest, as I have remarked. I could not but feel that such opinions were in many respects more in accordance with the doctrine I had undertaken to expound than much of the teaching of the philosophers of the day, who seemed to exalt rationalism at the expense of Reason, as that divine faculty was exhibited by Coleridge. Still, when I assented, I made it clear to Glanville that my assent was qualified by my firm adherence to the principles which I had solemnly professed at my ordination.

The months went by in the peaceful performance of the pastoral duties of my office. Early in March, I received a letter from my friend Mr. S —— , who informed me that he had greatly benefited by the air of Torquay, and that his medical adviser had assured him that he need no longer hesitate to resume his duties in London. Consequently, S —— proposed to return at once, and, after warmly expressed thanks for my extreme kindness, as he called it, he announced his wish to perform his part in the Church services on the following Sunday. Accordingly, I paid my final visits to those of the parishioners with whom I had more particularly associated, reserving my call on Mr. Glanville for the last day of my residence at S.N. He was sorry, I think, to hear of my impending departure, and told me that he would always recollect our conversational exchanges with much pleasure.

"I, too, am leaving S.N.," he added. "Early next week I sail for the East, where my stay may be prolonged for a considerable period."

After mutual expressions of polite regret, I rose from my chair, and was about to make my farewells, when I observed that Glanville was gazing at me with a fixed and singular regard.

"One moment," he said, beckoning me to the window, where he was standing. "I want to show you the view. I don't think you have seen it."

The suggestion struck me as peculiar, to say the least of it. I was, of course, familiar with the street in which Glanville resided, as with most of the S.N. streets; and he on his side must have been well aware that no prospect that his window might command could show me anything that I had not seen many times during my four months' stay in the parish. In addition to this, the streets of our London suburbs do not often offer a spectacle to engage the amateur of landscape and the picturesque. I was hesitating, hardly knowing whether to comply with Glanville's request, or to treat it as a piece of pleasantry, when it struck me that it was possible that his first-floor window might afford a distant view of St. Paul's Cathedral; I accordingly stepped to his side, and waited for him to indicate the scene which he, presumably, wished me to admire.

His features still wore the odd expression which I have already remarked.

"Now," said he, "look out and tell me what you see."

Still bewildered, I looked through the window, and saw exactly that which I had expected to see: a row or terrace of neatly designed residences, separated from the highway by a parterre or miniature park, adorned with trees and shrubs. A road, passing to the right of the terrace, gave a view of streets and crescents of more recent construction, and of some degree of elegance. Still, in the whole of the familiar spectacle I saw nothing to warrant any particular attention; and, in a more or less jocular manner, I said as much to Glanville.

By way of reply, he touched me lightly with his finger-tips on the shoulder, and said:

“Look again.”

I did so. For a moment, my heart stood still, and I gasped for breath. Before me, in place of the familiar structures, there was disclosed a panorama of unearthly, of astounding beauty. In deep dells, bowered by overhanging trees, there bloomed flowers such as only dreams can show; such deep purples that yet seemed to glow like precious stones with a hidden but ever-present radiance, roses whose hues outshone any that are to be seen in our gardens, tall lilies alive with light, and blossoms that were as beaten gold. I saw well-shaded walks that went down to green hollows bordered with thyme; and here and there the grassy eminence above, and the bubbling well below, were crowned with architecture of fantastic and unaccustomed beauty, which seemed to speak of fairyland itself. I might almost say that my soul was ravished by the spectacle displayed before me. I was possessed by a degree of rapture and delight such as I had never experienced. A sense of beatitude pervaded my whole being; my bliss was such as cannot be expressed by words. I uttered an inarticulate cry of joy and wonder. And then, under the influence of a swift revulsion of terror, which even now I cannot explain, I turned and rushed from the room and from the house, without one word of comment or farewell to the extraordinary man who had done — I knew not what.

In great perturbation and confusion of mind, I made my way into the street. Needless to say, no trace of the phantasmagoria that had been displayed before me remained. The familiar street had resumed its usual aspect, the terrace stood as I had always seen it, and the newer buildings beyond, where I had seen oh! what dells of delight, what blossoms of glory, stood as before in their neat, though unostentatious order. Where I had seen valleys embowered in green leafage, waving gently in the sunshine and the summer breeze, there were now boughs bare and black, scarce showing so much as a single bud. As I have mentioned, the season was early in March, and a black frost which had set in ten days or a fortnight before still constrained the earth and its vegetation.

I walked hurriedly away to my lodgings, which were some distance from the abode of Glanville. I was sincerely glad to think that I was leaving the neighbourhood on the following day. I may say that up to the present moment I have never revisited S.N.

Some months later I encountered my friend Mr. S —— , and under cover of asking about the affairs of the parish in which he still ministered, I inquired after Glanville, with whom (I said) I had made acquaintance. It seemed he had fulfilled his intention of leaving the neighbourhood within a few days of my own departure. He had not confided his destination or his plans for the future to anyone in the parish.

“My acquaintance with him,” said S —— , “was of the slightest, and I do not think that he made any friends in the locality, though he had resided in S.N. for more than five years.”

It is now some fifteen years since this most strange experience befell me; and during that period I have heard nothing of Glanville. Whether he is still alive in the distant Orient, or whether he is dead, I am completely ignorant.

IV

Arnold was generally known as an idle man; and, as he said himself, he hardly knew what the inside of an office was like. But he was laborious in his idleness, and always ready to take any amount of pains, over anything in which he was interested. And he was very much interested in this Canon’s Park business. He felt sure that there was a link between Mr. Hampole’s odd story— “more than odd,” he meditated — and the experience of Perrott’s cousin, the wheat-breeder from the west country. He made his way to Stoke Newington, and strolled up and down it, looking about him with an inquisitive eye. He found Canon’s Park, or what remained of it, without any trouble. It was pretty well as Harliss had described it: a neighbourhood laid out in the twenties or thirties of the last century for City men of comfortable down to tolerable incomes.

Some of these houses remained, and there was an attractive row of old-fashioned shops still surviving. Again, in one place there was the modest cot of late Georgian or early Victorian design, with its trellised porch of faded blue-green paint, its patterned iron balcony, not displeasing, its little garden in the front, and its walled garden at the back; a small coach-house, a small stable. In another, something more exuberant and on a much larger scale: ambitious pilasters and stucco, broad lawns and sweeping drives, towering shrubs, and grass in the back premises. But on all the territory modernism had delivered its assault. The big houses remaining had been made into maisonettes, the small ones were down-at-heel, no longer objects of love; and everywhere there were blocks of flats in wicked red brick, as if Mrs. Todgers had given Mr. Pecksniff her notion of an up-to-date gaol, and he had worked out her design. Opposite Canon's Park, and occupying the site on which Mr. Glanville's house must have stood, was a technical college; next to it a school of economics. Both buildings curdled the blood: in their purpose and in their architecture. They looked as if Mr. H. G. Wells's bad dreams had come true.

In none of this, whether moderately ancient or grossly modern, could Arnold see anything to his purpose. In the period of which Mr. Hampole wrote, Canon's Park may have been tolerably pleasant; it was now becoming intolerably unpleasant. But at its best, there could not have been anything in its aspect to suggest the wonderful vision which the clergyman thought he had seen from Glanville's window. And suburban gardens, however well kept, could not explain the farmer's rhapsodies. Arnold repeated the sacred words of the explanation formula: telepathy, hallucination, hypnotism; but felt very little easier. Hypnotism, for example: that was commonly used to explain the Indian rope trick. There was no such trick, and in any case, hypnotism could not explain that or any other marvel seen by a number of people at once, since hypnotism could only be applied to individuals, and with their full knowledge, consent, and conscious attention. Telepathy might have taken place between Glanville and Hampole; but whence did Perrott's cousin receive the impression that he not only saw a sort of Kubla Khan, or Old Man of the Mountain paradise, but actually walked abroad in it? The S.P.R. had, one might say, discovered telepathy, and had devoted no small part of their energies for the last forty-five years or more to a minute and thoroughgoing investigation of it; but, to the best of his belief, their recorded cases gave no instance of anything so elaborate as this business of Canon's Park. And again; so far as he could remember, the appearances ascribed to a telepathic agency were all personal; visions of people, not of places: there were no telepathic landscapes. And as for hallucination: that did not carry one far. That stated a fact, but offered no explanation of it. Arnold had suffered from liver trouble: he had come down to breakfast one morning and had been vexed to see the air all dancing with black specks. Though he did not smell the nauseous odour of a smoky chimney, he made no doubt at first that the chimney had been smoking, or that the black specks were floating soot. It was some time before he realized that, objectively, there were no black specks, that they were optical illusions, and that he had been hallucinated. And no doubt the parson and the farmer had been hallucinated: but the cause, the motive power, was to seek. Dickens told how, waking one morning, he saw his father sitting by his bedside, and wondered what he was doing there. He addressed the old man, and got no answer, put out his hand to touch him: and there was no such thing. Dickens was hallucinated; but since his father was perfectly well at the time, and in no sort of trouble, the mystery remained insoluble, unaccountable. You had to accept it; but there was no rationale of it. It was a problem that had to be given up.

But Arnold did not like giving problems up. He beat the coverts of Stoke Newington, and dived into pubs of promising aspect, hoping to meet talkative old men, who might remember their fathers' stories and repeat them. He found a few, for though London has always been a place of restless, migratory tribes, and shifting populations; and now more than ever before; yet there still remains in many places, and above all in the remoter northern suburbs, an old fixed element, which can go back in memory sometimes for a hundred, even a hundred and fifty years. So in a venerable tavern — it would have been injurious and misleading to call it a pub — on the borders of Canon's Park he found an ancient circle that gathered nightly for an hour or two in a snug, if dingy, parlour. They drank little and that slowly, and went early home. They were small tradesmen of the neighbourhood, and talked their business and the changes they had seen, the curse of multiple shops, the poor stuff sold in them, and the cutting of prices and profits. Arnold edged into the conversation by degrees, after one or two visits— "Well, sir, I am very much obliged to you, and I won't refuse" — and said that he thought of settling in the neighbourhood: it seemed quiet. "Best wishes, I'm sure. Quiet; well it was, once; but not much of that now in Stoke Newington. All pride and dress and bustle now; and the people that had the money and spent it, they're gone, long ago."

"There were well-to-do people here?" asked Arnold, treading cautiously, feeling his way, inch by inch.

“There were, I assure you. Sound men — warm men, my father used to call them. There was Mr. Tredegar, head of Tredegar’s Bank. That was amalgamated with the City and National many years ago: nearer fifty than forty, I suppose. He was a fine gentleman, and grew beautiful pineapples. I remember his sending us one, when my wife was poorly all one summer. You can’t buy pineapples like that now.”

“You’re right, Mr. Reynolds, perfectly right. I have to stock what they call pineapples, but I wouldn’t touch them myself. No scent, no flavour. Tough and hard; you can’t compare a crabapple with a Cox’s pippin.”

There was a general assent to this proposition; and Arnold felt that it was slow work.

And even when he got to his point, there was not much gained. He said he had heard that Canon’s Park was a quiet part; off the main track.

“Well, there’s something in that,” said the ancient who had accepted the half-pint. “You don’t get very much traffic there, it’s true: no trams or buses or motor coaches. But they’re pulling it all to pieces; building new blocks of flats every few months. Of course, that might suit your views. Very popular these flats are, no doubt, with many people; most economical, they tell me. But I always liked a house of my own, myself.”

“I’ll tell you one way a flat is economical,” the greengrocer said with a preparatory chuckle. “If you’re fond of the wireless, you can save the price and the licence. You’ll hear the wireless on the floor above, and the wireless on the floor below, and one or two more besides when they’ve got their windows open on summer evenings.”

“Very true, Mr. Batts, very true. Still, I must say, I’m rather partial to the wireless myself. I like to listen to a cheerful tune, you know, at tea time.”

“You don’t tell me, Mr. Potter, that you like that horrible jazz, as they call it ?”

“Well, Mr. Dickson, I must confess…” and so forth, and so forth. It became evident that there were modernists even here: Arnold thought that he heard the term “hot blues” distinctly uttered. He forced another half-pint— “very kind of you; mild this time, if you don’t mind” — on his neighbour, who turned out to be Mr. Reynolds, the pharmaceutical chemist, and tried back.

“So you wouldn’t recommend Canon’s Park as a desirable residence.”

“Well, no, sir; not to a gentleman who wants quiet, I should not. You can’t have quiet when a place is being pulled down about your ears, as you may say. It certainly was quiet enough in former days. Wouldn’t you say so, Mr. Batts?” — breaking in on the musical discussion— “Canon’s Park was quiet enough in our young days, wasn’t it? It would have suited this gentleman then, I’m sure.”

“Perhaps so,” said Mr. Batts. “Perhaps so, and perhaps not. There’s quiet, and quiet.”

And a certain stillness fell upon the little party of old men. They seemed to ruminate, to drink their beer in slower sips.

“There was always something about the place I didn’t altogether like,” said one of them at last. “But I’m sure I don’t know why.”

“Wasn’t there some tale of a murder there, a long time ago? Or was it a man that killed himself, and was buried at the crossroads by the green, with a stake through his heart?”

“I never heard of that, but I’ve heard my father say that there was a lot of fever about there formerly.”

“I think you’re all wide of the mark, gentlemen, if you’ll excuse my saying so” — this from an elderly man in a corner, who had said very little hitherto. “I wouldn’t say Canon’s Park had a bad name, far from it. But there certainly was something about it that many people didn’t like; fought shy of, you may say. And it’s my belief that it was all on account of the lunatic asylum that used to be there, awhile ago.”

“A lunatic asylum was there?” Arnold’s particular friend asked. “Well, I think I remember hearing something to that effect in my very young days, now you recall the circumstances. I know we boys used to be very shy of going through Canon’s Park after dark. My father used to send me on errands that way now and again, and I always got another boy to come along with me if I could. But I don’t remember that we were particularly afraid of the lunatics either. In fact, I hardly know what we were afraid of, now I come to think of it.”

"Well, Mr. Reynolds, it's a long time ago; but I do think it was that madhouse put people off Canon's Park in the first place. You know where it was, don't you?"

"I can't say I do."

"Well, it was that big house right in the middle of the park, that had been empty years and years — forty years, I dare say, and going to ruin."

"You mean the place where Empress Mansions are now? Oh, yes, of course. Why they pulled it down more than twenty years ago, and then the land was lying idle all through the war and long after. A dismal-looking old place it was; I remember it well: the ivy growing over the chimney-pots, and the windows smashed, and the `To Let' boards smothered in creepers. Was that house an asylum in its day?"

"That was the very house, sir. Himalaya House, it was called. In the first place it was built on to an old farmhouse by a rich gentleman from India, and when he died, having no children, his relations sold the property to a doctor. And he turned it into a madhouse. And as I was saying, I think people didn't much like the idea of it. You know, those places weren't so well looked after as they say they are now, and some very unpleasant stories got about; I'm not sure if the doctor didn't get mixed up in a lawsuit over a gentleman, of good family, I believe, who had been shut up in Himalaya House by his relations for years, and as sensible as you or me all the time. And then there was that young fellow that managed to escape: that was a queer business. Though there was no doubt that he was mad enough for anything."

"One of them got away, did he?" Arnold inquired, wishing to break the silence that again fell on the circle.

"That was so. I don't know how he managed it, as they were said to be very strictly kept, but he contrived to climb out or creep out somehow or other, one evening about tea time, and walked as quietly as you please up the road, and took lodgings close by here, in that row of old red-brick houses that stood where the technical college is now. I remember well hearing Mrs. Wilson that kept the lodgings — she lived to be a very old woman — telling my mother that she never saw a nice-looking, better-spoken young man than this Mr. Valiance — I think he called himself: not his real name, of course. He told her a proper story enough about coming from Norwich, and having to be very quiet on account of his studies and all that. He had his carpetbag in his hand, and said the heavy luggage was coming later, and paid a fortnight in advance, quite regular. Of course, the doctor's men were after him directly and making inquiries in all directions, but Mrs. Wilson never thought for a moment that this quiet young lodger of hers was the missing madman. Not for some time, that is."

Arnold took advantage of a rhetorical pause in the story. He leaned forward to the landlord, who was leaning over the bar, and listening like the rest. Presently orders round were solicited, and each of the circle voted for a small drop of gin, feeling "mild" or even "bitter" to be inadequate to the crisis of such a tale. And then, with courteous expressions, they drank the health of "our friend sitting by our friend Mr. Reynolds." And one of them said:

"So she found out, did she?"

"I believe," the narrator continued, "that it was a week or thereabouts before Mrs. Wilson saw there was something wrong. It was when she was clearing away his tea, he suddenly spoke up, and says:

"'What I like about these apartments of yours, Mrs. Wilson, is the amazing view you have from your windows.'

"Well, you know, that was enough to startle her. We all of us know what there was to see from the windows of Rodman's Row: Fothergill Terrace, and Chatham Street, and Canon's Park: very nice properties, no doubt, all of them, but nothing to write home about, as the young people say. So Mrs. Wilson didn't know how to take it quite, and thought it might be a joke. She put down the tea-tray, and looked the lodger straight in the face.

"'What is it, sir, you particularly admire, if I might ask?'

"'What do I admire?' said he. 'Everything.' And then, it seems, he began to talk the most outrageous nonsense about golden and silver and purple flowers, and the bubbling well, and the walk that went under the trees right into the wood, and the fairy house on the hill; and I don't know what. He wanted Mrs. Wilson to come to the window and look at it all. She was frightened, and took up her tray, and got out of the room as quick as she could; and I don't wonder at it. And that night, when she was going up to bed, she passed her lodger's door, and heard him talking out loud, and she stopped to listen. Mind you, I don't think you can blame the woman for listening. I dare say she wanted to know who and what she had got in her house. At first she couldn't make out what he was saying. He was jabbering in what sounded like a foreign language; and then he cried out in plain English as if he were talking to a young lady, and making use of very affectionate expressions.

"That was too much for Mrs. Wilson, and she went off to bed with her heart in her boots, and hardly got to sleep all through the night. The next morning the gentleman seemed quiet enough, but Mrs. Wilson knew he wasn't to be trusted, and directly after breakfast she went round to the neighbours, and began to ask questions. Then, of course, it came out who her lodger must be, and she sent word round to Himalaya House. And the doctor's men took the young fellow back. And, bless my soul, gentlemen; it's close on ten o'clock."

The meeting broke up in a kind of cordial bustle. The old man who had told the story of the escaped lunatic had remarked, it appeared, the very close attention that Arnold had given to the tale. He was evidently gratified. He shook Arnold warmly by the hand, remarking: "So you see, sir, the grounds I have for my opinion that it was that madhouse that gave Canon's Park rather a bad name in our neighbourhood."

And Arnold, revolving many things, set out on the way back to London. Much seemed heavily obscure, but he wondered whether Mrs. Wilson's lodger was a madman at all; any madder than Mr. Hampole, or the farmer from Somerset or Charles Dickens, when he saw the appearance of his father by his bed.

V

Arnold told the story of his researches and perplexities at the next meeting of the three old friends in the quiet court leading into the inn. The scene had changed into a night in June, with the trees in the inn garden fluttering in a cool breeze, that wafted a vague odour of hayfields far away into the very heart of London. The liquor in the brown jar smelt of Gascon vineyards and herb-gardens, and ice had been laid about it, but not for too long a time.

Harliss's word all through Arnold's tale was:

“I know every inch of that neighbourhood, and I told you there was no such place.”

Perrott was judicial. He allowed that the history was a remarkable one: “You have three witnesses,” Arnold had pointed out.

“Yes,” said Perrott, “but have you allowed for the marvellous operation of the law of coincidences? There’s a case, trivial enough, perhaps you may think, that made a deep impression on me when I read it, a few years ago. Forty years before, a man had bought a watch in Singapore — or Hong Kong, perhaps. The watch went wrong, and he took it to a shop in Holborn to be seen to. The man who took it from him over the counter was the man who had sold him the watch in the East all those years before. You can never put coincidence out of court, and dismiss it as an impossible solution. Its possibilities are infinite.”

Then Arnold told the last broken, imperfect chapter of the story.

“After that night at the King of Jamaica,” he began, “I went home and thought it all over. There seemed no more to be done. Still, I felt as if I would like to have another look at this singular park, and I went up there one dark afternoon. And then and there I came upon the young man who had lost his way, and had lost — as he said — the one who lived in the white house on the hill. And I am not going to tell you about her, or her house, or her enchanted gardens. But I am sure that the young man was lost also — and for ever.”

And after a pause, he added:

“I believe that there is a perichoresis, an interpenetration. It is possible, indeed, that we three are now sitting among desolate rocks, by bitter streams…And with what companions?”

The Happy Children

A DAY AFTER the Christmas of 1915, my professional duties took me up north; or to be as precise as our present conventions allow, to "the North–Eastern district." There was some singular talk; mad gossip of the Germans having a "dug-out" somewhere by Malton Head. Nobody seemed to be quite clear as to what they were doing there or what they hoped to do there; but the report ran like wildfire from one foolish mouth to another, and it was thought desirable that the whole silly tale should be tracked down to its source and exposed or denied once and for all.

I went up, then, to that north-eastern district on Sunday, December 26th, 1915, and pursued my investigations from Helmsdale Bay, which is a small watering-place within a couple of miles of Malton Head. The people of the dales and the moors had just heard of the fable, I found, and regarded it all with supreme and sour contempt. So far as I could make out, it originated from the games of some children who had stayed at Helmsdale Bay in the summer. They had acted a rude drama of German spies and their capture, and had used Helby Cavern, between Helmsdale and Malton Head, as the scene of their play. That was all; the fools apparently had done the rest; the fools who believed with all their hearts in "the Russians," and got cross with anyone who expressed a doubt as to "the Angels of Mons."

"Gang oop to beasten and tell them sike a tale and they'll not believe it," said one dalesman to me; and I have a suspicion that he thought that I, who had come so many hundred miles to investigate the story, was but little wiser than those who credited it. He could not be expected to understand that a journalist has two offices — to proclaim the truth and to denounce the lie.

I had finished with "the Germans" and their dug-out early in the afternoon of Monday, and I decided to break the journey home at Banwick, which I had often heard of as a beautiful and curious old place. So I took the one-thirty train, and went wandering inland, and stopped at many unknown stations in the midst of great levels, and changed at Marishes Ambo, and went on again through a strange land in the dimness of the winter afternoon. Somehow the train left the level and glided down into a deep and narrow dell, dark with winter woods, brown with withered bracken, solemn in its loneliness. The only thing that moved was the swift and rushing stream that foamed over the boulders and then lay still in brown pools under the bank.

The dark woods scattered and thinned into groups of stunted, ancient thorns; great grey rocks, strangely shaped, rose out of the ground; crenellated rocks rose on the heights on either side. The brooklet swelled and became a river, and always following this river we came to Banwick soon after the setting of the sun.

I saw the wonder of the town in the light of the afterglow that was red in the west. The clouds blossomed into rose-gardens; there were seas of fairy green that swam about isles of crimson light; there were clouds like spears of flame, like dragons of fire. And under the mingling lights and colours of such a sky Banwick went down to the pools of its land-locked harbour and climbed again across the bridge towards the ruined abbey and the great church on the hill.

I came from the station by an ancient street, winding and narrow, with cavernous closes and yards opening from it on either side, and flights of uneven steps going upward to high terraced houses, or downward to the harbour and the incoming tide. I saw there many gabled houses, sunken with age far beneath the level of the pavement, with dipping roof-trees and bowed doorways, with traces of grotesque carving on their walls. And when I stood on the quay, there on the other side of the harbour was the most amazing confusion of red-tiled roofs that I had ever seen, and the great grey Norman church high on the bare hill above them; and below them the boats swinging in the swaying tide and the water burning in the fires of the sunset. It was the town of a magic dream. I stood on the quay till the shining had gone from the sky and the waterpools, and the winter night came down dark upon Banwick.

I found an old snug inn just by the harbour, where I had been standing. The walls of the rooms met each other at odd and unexpected angles; there were strange projections and juttings of masonry, as if one room were trying to force its way into another; there were indications as of unthinkable staircases in the corners of the ceilings. But there was a bar where Tom

Smart would have loved to sit, with a roaring fire and snug, old elbow chairs about it and pleasant indications that if “something warm” were wanted after supper it could be generously supplied.

I sat in this pleasant place for an hour or two and talked to the pleasant people of the town who came in and out. They told me of the old adventures and industries of the town. It had once been, they said, a great whaling port, and then there had been a lot of shipbuilding, and later Banwick had been famous for its amber-cutting. “And now there’s nowt,” said one of the men in the bar; “but we get on none so badly.”

I went out for a stroll before my supper. Banwick was now black, in thick darkness. For good reasons not a single lamp was lighted in the streets, hardly a gleam showed from behind the closely curtained windows. It was as if one walked a town of the Middle Ages, and with the ancient overhanging shapes of the houses dimly visible I was reminded of those strange, cavernous pictures of mediæval Paris and Tours that Doré drew.

Hardly anyone was abroad in the streets; but all the courts and alleys seemed alive with children. I could just see little white forms fluttering to and fro as they ran in and out. And I never heard such happy children’s voices. Some were singing, some were laughing; and peering into one black cavern, I made out a ring of children dancing round and round and chanting in clear voices a wonderful melody; some old tune of local tradition, as I supposed, for its modulations were such as I had never heard before.

I went back to my tavern and spoke to the landlord about the number of children who were playing about the dark streets and courts, and how delightfully happy they all seemed to be.

He looked at me steadily for a moment, and then said:

“Well, you see, sir, the children have got a bit out of hand of late; their fathers are out at the front, and their mothers can’t keep them in order. So they’re running a bit wild.”

There was something odd about his manner. I could not make out exactly what the oddity was, or what it meant. I could see that my remark had somehow made him uncomfortable; but I was at a loss to know what I had done. I had my supper, and then sat down for a couple of hours to settle “the Germans” of Malton Head.

I finished my account of the German myth, and instead of going to bed, I determined that I would have one more look at Banwick in its wonderful darkness. So I went out and crossed the bridge, and began to climb up the street on the other side, where there was that strange huddle of red roofs mounting one above the other that I had seen in the afterglow. And to my amazement I found that these extraordinary Banwick children were still about and abroad, still revelling and carolling, dancing and singing, standing, as I supposed, on the top of the flights of steps that climbed from the courts up the hillside, and so having the appearance of floating in mid-air. And their happy laughter rang out like bells on the night.

It was a quarter past eleven when I had left my inn, and I was just thinking that the Banwick mothers had indeed allowed indulgence to go too far, when the children began again to sing that old melody that I had heard in the evening. And now the sweet, clear voices swelled out into the night, and, I thought, must be numbered by hundreds. I was standing in a dark alley-way, and I saw with amazement that the children were passing me in a long procession that wound up the hill towards the abbey. Whether a faint moon now rose, or whether clouds passed from before the stars, I do not know; but the air lightened, and I could see the children plainly as they went by singing, with the rapture and exultation of them that sing in the woods in springtime.

They were all in white, but some of them had strange marks upon them which, I supposed, were of significance in this fragment of some traditional mystery-play that I was beholding. Many of them had wreaths of dripping seaweed about their brows; one showed a painted scar on her throat; a tiny boy held open his white robe, and pointed to a dreadful wound above his heart, from which the blood seemed to flow; another child held out his hands wide apart and the palms looked torn and bleeding, as if they had been pierced. One of the children held up a little baby in her arms, and even the infant showed the appearance of a wound on its face.

The procession passed me by, and I heard it still singing as if in the sky as it went on its steep way up the hill to the ancient church. I went back to my inn, and as I crossed the bridge it suddenly struck me that this was the eve of the Holy Innocents’. No doubt I had seen a confused relic of some mediæval observance, and when I got back to the inn I asked the landlord about it.

Then I understood the meaning of the strange expression I had seen on the man's face. He was sick and shuddering with terror; he drew away from me as though I were a messenger from the dead.

Some weeks after this I was reading in a book called *The Ancient Rites of Banwick*. It was written in the reign of Queen Elizabeth by some anonymous person who had seen the glory of the old abbey, and then the desolation that had come to it. I found this passage:

“And on Childermas Day, at midnight, there was done there a marvellous solemn service. For when the monks had ended their singing of Te Deum at their Mattins, there came unto the altar the lord abbot, gloriously arrayed in a vestment of cloth of gold, so that it was a great marvel to behold him. And there came also into the church all the children that were of tender years of Banwick, and they were all clothed in white robes. And then began the lord abbot to sing the Mass of the Holy Innocents. And when the sacring of the Mass was ended, then there came up from the church into the quire the youngest child that there was present that might hold himself aright. And this child was borne up to the high altar, and the lord abbot set the little child upon a golden and glistering throne afore the high altar, and bowed down and worshipped him, singing, ‘Talium Regnum Coelorum, Alleluya. Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. Alleluya,’ and all the quire answered singing, ‘Amicti sunt stolis albis, Alleluya, Alleluya; They are clad in white robes, Alleluya, Alleluya.’ And then the prior and all the monks in their order did like worship and reverence to the little child that was upon the throne.”

I had seen the White Order of the Innocents. I had seen those who came singing from the deep waters that are about the *Lusitania*; I had seen the innocent martyrs of the fields of Flanders and France rejoicing as they went up to hear their Mass in the spiritual place.

The Dover Road

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF Sir Halliday Stuart, the well-known antiquary, was really a very puzzling affair. And even the solution of it is in itself something of a puzzle.

Some of the circumstances that surrounded and involved this singular business were recalled by the painstaking though futile attempt undertaken by the B.B.C. to pin down a ghost that was supposed to haunt an old manor house in an out-of-the-way part of Kent. The B.B.C. people, it will be remembered, put themselves in the hands of a recognised expert. This gentleman took the precautions which considerable experience of sprites, some of them exceedingly tricky, suggested as necessary. He sealed the doors with a special seal, he established microphones at critical points. In that quarter which was supposed to be afflicted now and again by icy draughts of air he set up an automatic temperature registering instrument. A watch went on guard outside the house, and patrolled the ground from eight o'clock to a quarter to twelve. Then the expert and four or five others sat down to watch and listen.

Everything, in short, that could be done was done. And nothing, or next to nothing, happened. The instrument that registered the temperature showed some odd alterations, moving up and down within four or five degrees Fahrenheit, but there was no indication of the blasts of ice-cold air of which the legends spoke. Beyond this, there was nothing, and the expert and his assessors broke off the inquiry, observing very sensibly that the local ghost in particular and ghosts in general had neither been proved nor disproved by the proceedings of the night.

Very much the same kind of thing happened at an earlier investigation of a supposed case of haunting, which was conducted without the aid or countenance of Broadcasting House. In this case, the building supposed to be haunted was an old manor house called Morton Grange, situated in Essex, fourteen or fifteen miles from London, to the north-east. In those days, it might fairly be said to be in the country, but now it stands, if it does stand at all, in the very middle of the Morton Grange Estate, a sad grey rock in a red suburban sea. At the time of the experiment in ghost-detection, the Grange was not only in the country, but lonely — for a house within reasonable distance from Liverpool Street. Following the main road, dotted here and there with pleasant old cottages, and not unpleasant oldish villas — the sort of villa that has a trellised porch, a verandah, and a curving penthouse over a window here and there — one came to the hamlet of Morton; a whole row of cottages, a Queen Anne house for a doctor, a public-house with dim green seats and tables before it, the rectory, with a drive, behind shrubs and elms, and a small, unrestored church. At the end of all this, a yellow-washed farmhouse, with famous barns, red brick, half-timber, and dipping roof-trees; and a bare quarter of a mile farther, on the other side of the road, and some way from it, where the land rose up in a slope, Morton Grange, a confused appearance of buildings, part stucco and part stone, and altogether of a neglected aspect.

It was approached, in spite of what must have been its former dignity, by a lane that could hardly have been a formal drive in its best days, since it had rough high banks with old timber growing on them. Then, a stone wall with good iron-work gates, beginning to rust away, and a grove of dark ilexes. Before the front of the house, a lawn sloped down to a sunken fence or ha-ha: there were remnants of flower beds, their edges vague and overgrown with grass and weeds, remnants of a rosary, in which the suckers of the wild stock had overpowered the cultivated flowers, and grown into matted and thorny thickets. A leaden statue, with one arm missing, stood in the midst of a stagnant pool; some grey stone urns on pillars showed vague and mouldering indications of stone garlands.

Where the stucco had begun to peel away on the right, as you faced the house, the architecture looked early Georgian; the left, the grey stone portion, was a good deal older, though the mullions had been knocked out of most of the windows. At the back; kitchens, pantries, butteries, brew-house and the rest smacked of the sixteenth century; low, solid, cavernous places. The living-rooms were dank and damp; the gorgeous Chinese paper of the drawing-room was smeared with grey shapes of rising wet, the heavy crimson flock paper of the dining-room was beginning to peel and rip from the sweating wall. In three or four of the rooms there was a skeleton furnishing: cheap modern stuff, shabby after forty, fifty years of little use and long neglect. And the usual story was told about the house. It was empty because no one could live in it. It was haunted.

Of course, there was a legend; and here again it was the usual legend; more or less. I believe there was a monk who was looking for treasure, and might have had some difficulty explaining his *locus standi,* if he could have been brought to book, since the Grange had never been a religious house. There was a Priest, who had been stifled in his hiding-hole, contrived in the hall chimney. And there was a Cavalier, who perished in some very unhappy manner. These three stock phantoms hovered about the legend of the Grange; now one troubled the peace of its inhabitants, now another. There was every reason to suppose that all three of them were invented some time in the ‘thirties or ‘forties of the last century, together with the Mysterious Terror of Glamis Castle, and the *chère reine* derivation of Charing.

Yet, though the Monk and the Priest and the Cavalier were, doubtless, idle and late inventions; there was a certain remnant of strangeness about Morton Grange, which, it seemed, could not be explained as the result of natural and normal causes. Andrew Lang, if I remember, was taken into counsel over the place, and on hearing of some of the alleged abnormal phenomena, was inclined to suggest rats and defective waterpipes. There was also a singular moaning sound, distinct and different from the whine of the wind in the chimneys; and Lang advised a close structural examination of the other parts of the house; it was possible, he thought, that there might be a tunnel or vent in the thickness of the walls, which might catch the wind blowing from a particular quarter.

This surmise, I believe, was justified on examination, such a tunnel was found in the old brew-house at the back of the Grange. But, beyond the moans and whines and sighs, there were other manifestations of a more difficult order. There was a cellar door which persisted in staying open, whatever you did with it. A new lock was affixed, the bolt turned, and the other two keys taken away in the occupant’s pocket; but when he came back from London in the evening, the door was wide open. The man, not to be beaten, had another and a very special mechanism, with a alphabetical combination, affixed but again the door was opened — somehow. Lang confessed that he could not account for this circumstance; and there the matter rested until Professor Warburton took the Grange in hand ten or a dozen years ago.

Warburton was a distinguished man of science, and a strong exponent of the purely materialistic theory of the universe; he was even reckoned by some of his own school as a little old-fashioned in this respect. I am not sure that the particular instance applied in his case; but he was certainly with the older men who held that the stigmata — for example — were lies and impostures and didn't happen, rather than on the side of the younger scientists, who would discuss cases of the stigmata that they had observed in the hospital wards, and show that they had no more spiritual significance than carbuncles.

Somehow, this very valiant and determined man heard of the Morton Grange puzzle, and felt certain that either trickery or a purely mechanical cause was the only agent. He made up his mind to investigate, not without hesitation, since he held that the man of science should hardly partake so far of the evil thing — which he sometimes called Mysticism and sometimes Spiritualism — as to admit that it required investigation. However, in this case, the end seemed to justify the means; and the Professor began to make his arrangements. The then occupant of the Grange, who seldom occupied it, made no difficulties; and Professor Warburton chose as assistants three or four friends and acquaintances: Rodney, the biologist, W.K. Forster, a Chancery barrister, Sir Charles Lemon, the throat specialist, and Ian Tallent, who was supposed to have inherited a good share of the Andrew Lang mantle, and had a very ingenious hypothesis as to the fire-walking problem.

The night of the inquest was fixed, the caretaker and his wife were warned to get in sufficient fuel and have a fire burning all day in the room nearest to the cellar stairs, and to await the party at eight o'clock, thereafter to betake themselves to the village inn, where a room had been ordered for them. On the morning of the appointed day, Professor Warburton was sitting in his study at his house in Philpot Crescent, Kensington, contemplating the campaign of Morton Grange, when his servant announced a caller. The Professor knew the name, Sir Halliday Stuart, the famous antiquary, very well, though he had never met the man. Sir Halliday was asked to come up, and the two eminent personages met with grave courtesy. After a phrase of apology, the caller came directly to his point.

'I understand,' he said, 'that you are going down this evening to investigate certain phenomena which are alleged to take place at Morton Grange, in Essex. Well, if I may venture, I would put it that you would do me a very great favour, if you would allow me to be of your party. Do you think you could stretch a point?'

Warburton was agreeably impressed by the antiquary. He was of a dark, agreeable presence, and his face lit up with a very engaging smile, as he made his apology and petition.

'We shall all be most pleased, I am sure,' he said, 'and honoured too by your company. But I didn't know that Spiritualism was much in your line.'

'It's not, not a bit of it,' said Sir Halliday. 'And if you'll forgive me, I've always understood that it was still less in yours.'

The Professor explained.

'You're perfectly right. Thirty years ago I shouldn't have dreamed of having anything to do with such unmitigated nonsense. There were exceptions, of course — there was Crookes — but men of science wouldn't hear of such stuff or of any approach to it. They didn't refute it. They didn't know it was there. And any scientist who was suspected of having any kind of interest in all this mystical humbug would have forfeited the respect of his colleagues.

'But the War had changed everything. It was, no doubt, a very severe national shock. It has had all sorts of bad effects and repercussions; and one of the worst, in my opinion, is this hysterical credulity that one sees everywhere. There's no tale too monstrous to be believed. We're threatened with the return of the most childish superstitions of the Middle Ages. Here's an instance; this tale of a door that can't be kept shut whatever locks you put on it. And there are people of supposed intelligence who are ready to discuss this nonsense seriously! I feel it's my duty to expose the trick, whatever it is. It will be "doing my bit," as the men used to say in the War.'

'I quite understand,' said Sir Halliday, 'and I may as well explain my interest in the matter. I made a study of Morton Grange some years ago and included it in my 'Essex Manor Houses and Halls.' There are some extremely interesting features in the building. The vaulting in the cellar is, in my opinion, unquestionably Roman, though Markham won't admit it. I think there is a very strong evidence that the Grange cellar, was, originally, a Mithrian temple. I should like the opportunity of making a re-examination.

‘And it also occurred to me that my knowledge of the structure of the place might possibly be of some service to you in your investigation.’

Sir Halliday Stuart was cordially included in the party of ghost-hunters. He refused with thanks the offer of a seat in Warburton’s car: he was going down earlier, he explained, as he wished to have another look at the very singular squint in the Grange brew-house: an undoubted thirteenth-century building, he explained, the original lancets having been replaced by square headed windows of 1530-40.

‘And for this I shall want daylight. So you will find me at the Grange when you arrive. It is extremely kind of you to let me join your party.’

Warburton was pleased with this addition to his committee of investigation. There was a genial gravity about the antiquary that won favour; and he was evidently a man of an accurate habit of mind, accustomed to careful observation, a minute weighing of evidence, the very man for the occasion. The Professor told the others about the inclusion of Stuart, when they all met at his house in the late afternoon, and they agreed that he would be valuable. They all knew him by reputation, and Tallent had read his revised edition of ‘Isca Siluram’ with very great interest. When the cars drew up before the door of Morton Grange that evening, Stuart was waiting on the steps. He was mildly excited.

‘I’ve examined that squint very minutely,’ he said to Warburton. ‘I have Markham at my mercy.’

The introductions were made, and the party entered the house. Warburton had brought down flasks of strong coffee, and the caretaker having set cups and saucers on the table, departed with his wife. Warburton locked the front door, the back door, and the door communicating with the brew-house, and put the keys in his pocket. A systematic tour and search of the mouldering and desolate house was made. The cellar came last in the inspection, and Professor Warburton pointed out the bolts he had added to the alphabet lock.

‘One top, one bottom,’ he said. ‘The best steel, fitted under my supervision.’

The door stood open; a powerful lamp was fixed above it, and another on the other side, within the cellar. Sir Halliday Stuart went in eagerly, and peered about him.

‘Look at the entablatures,’ he said. ‘There’s no room for doubt.’

Warburton called him out, adjusted the lock, and shot the bolts. The party went up the steps of the winding stair, and sat down to their hot coffee, while Warburton explained his plan.

‘One of us,’ he said, ‘is to be on guard at the bottom of the cellar stair, by the door, the whole evening from eight to twelve-fifteen. The watch will be for an hour; I will take the first watch, and Rodney will relieve me at nine. The door at the top of the stairs will be open, and the door of this room will be open. The instruction to the man on guard is: to call out at the top of his voice if he sees or hears anything in the least out of the way. That is understood? Very good. It is now half-past seven; perhaps Sir Halliday will tell us something about the history of Morton Grange while we are drinking our coffee?’

Sir Halliday cordially assented, and proceeded to deliver a bristling lecture. He merely touched on the evidences for Stone and Bronze Age occupation, was diffused and elaborate on the Roman period; thinning again with the Saxon invasion; but becoming merciless from Doomsday Book to the end of the seventeenth century. Strange terms and allusions were heard; *inquisitis post mortem,* Fine and Recovery, *diem clausit extremum, mortuus sine prole*, Pipe Rolls, vert, a chevron or. Some of these terms awoke memories in Forster, the barrister; to the rest they were as the hooting of owls. The Monk, the Priest, and the Cavalier were mentioned only to be puffed away like thistledown.

‘So you see,’ said the antiquary, ‘the place has a very ordinary history; the typical history, in fact, of the East Anglian manor house. So far as I know, apart from certain remarkable features in construction, which I have explained to you as well as I can, the only point of interest I can recall in the history of the Grange is the discovery, a few years ago, of a hiding-place in the chimney of the great hall, used from 1690 onwards as a brew-house. A workman employed in putting right some loose bricks, found a small oak chest in a place contrived in the thickness of the chimney. The contents were legal documents, of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, relating to the passing of the manor and estate from the Mullins Moleyno family to the Roches.’

At eight o'clock, punctually, the watch was set, Warburton went down, impressing on the others that they were to join him at top speed if he called out. The two doors: the sitting-room door, and the door at the top of the stairs, were left open as arranged. The party in the room broached another flask of coffee, smoked a little, and talked a little in low tones. Some of them thought they were making fools of themselves, and were sorry they had come.

The hours went by without event. The antiquary, having delivered his lecture, seemed to sink into a gentle abstraction, from which he roused himself now and again to make remarks which seemed to be dictated by a sense of conversational duty, rather than by interest in the (possible) ghost. He pulled out his watch, looked at it and observed with bland satisfaction, 'We are keeping good time, I think.' Warburton, who had just come up from his turn at the door, assured him that the time-table was being strictly adhered to. Sir Halliday nodded, and again became quiescent.

Nothing happened. Rodney had crept like a snail down the stairs on hearing Warburton's summons. The barrister, Forster, succeeded the biologist. Sir Halliday, brightening once more, said it was a calm night, at all events, 'and that's in our favour.' People were puzzled for a moment, and then concluded that he meant that their observations were not to be confused by the noises of high wind and restless trees. Sir Charles Lemon took up his position at the bottom of the stairs at eleven. The low-voiced conversation flagged. Most of the men looked tired and bored to the extreme. Sir Halliday's head shook and nodded, not with sleep, but rather as if he were following a train of reasoning, an argument with an imaginary opponent, dissenting, and agreeing by turns. Finally, as Lemon's watch drew on, and midnight was at hand, the antiquary, feeling, perhaps, that he had cultivated silence at the expense of courtesy, remarked in a very amiable manner:

'Well, I suppose Dover *is* rather a hole. But I must say I've always liked it; Strond Street and the old harbour; all that part, you know.'

The company in general, who were longing to make an end of a tiresome and futile sitting, as they considered it, looked up crossly, and wondered what on earth Stuart thought he was talking about. Tallent chuckled quietly; the key word of Sir Halliday's sentence, and its lack of precise relevance to the business in hand had reminded him of a certain immortal axiom relating to milestones on the Dover Road, but he speculated also as to whether Sir Halliday's intellect was quite the keen instrument of their belief.

It was on the first stroke of twelve that at last something happened. Lemon, who had by this time quite made up his mind that he had wasted the evening, was just calling on Ian Tallent to take his place, when the summons changed to a dismal sound, something inarticulate, between a croak and a cry. The whole company in the sitting-room jumped up and pelted out of the door, and jammed in the narrow stair. Sir Charles, gasping, with a grey-white face, was hauled up, on the verge of a fainting fit, to the higher region. Brandy was administered, and he was soon able to say, rather tartly, that beyond damned foul air, he had nothing to report. They were all yawning and looking at their watches and agreeing that there was nothing to be done but to go home, when Warburton, glancing from one to another, said with a jerk:

'Where's Stuart?'

And, in a second or two, it was evident that he had asked a question that nobody could answer. Sir Halliday Stuart was not there, nowhere in the room at all. They bustled into the passage, went again, not quite so madly, down the stair to the cellar; presently, explored every room in the house with the aid of electric torches, returned, looking helpless, to the room where they had held their session. They had not found a trace of the antiquary. And Warburton, who had the keys of every exit in his pocket, knew perfectly well that he must be in the house — somewhere. Then a notion struck him.

'Will you all stay in this room?' he said. 'I should think it would be as well if you sat down. It has just struck me as possible that Sir Halliday is in the cellar, examining those accursed entablatures of his. I can't think how he can have got there, if he is there, without knowing the lock combination — but perhaps there is some trickery about that door which circumstances have prevented us from detecting so far. At any rate, I am going to make sure that Sir Halliday has not been caught in some sort of trap. May I ask you again to keep your positions exactly as you are at present?'

Warburton was absent for seven or eight minutes. His face was blank when he returned.

‘I’ve been over every inch of the cellar,’ he said. ‘There’s no one there. I’ve put out the lights and refastened the door. We mustn’t leave a bolt-hole. Not that I would suggest for a moment that Stuart could or would desire to bolt; of course that’s absurd. Still … what on earth can have become of the man? I was standing just behind him when the doctor gave the alarm, and we all ran down. Did anybody else notice him, then or afterwards?’

Nobody had. They were all staring at Sir Charles Lemon. They saw nothing else during the critical moments.

‘There is nothing to be done,’ concluded Professor Warburton after some minutes of perplexed meditation, ‘but to make a thorough and systematic search of the whole house. Perhaps we were a little haphazard before. I will take Forster with me, and we will go over every room in the house.’

The two went off with their torches. They were away for half an hour. They had failed to discover Sir Halliday, or any trace or hint of his presence. It was evident that there was nothing more to be done. Tallent put the position of affairs to himself that Sir Halliday was both in the Grange and not in the Grange at the same time; he remembered having seen something of the kind in Eastern Philosophy. But he kept the contradiction to himself, not thinking it suitable for the company. He substituted the sagacious and commonsensical remark:

‘A difficult thing to be sure you’ve gone into every nook and cupboard of an old place like this. A little chap of Stuart’s build could pack himself away in a very small space.’

‘Little chap?’ said Forster. ‘I should have said that Sir Halliday was above the average height.’

Finally, they all returned to town in a condition of stupefied bewilderment.

The first thing, the next morning, Professor Warburton found out Sir Halliday Stuart’s address. He had a place in Oxfordshire, it appeared, but when in town he occupied a suite of rooms in service chambers near St James’s. Warburton went there at once and saw the management. Sir Halliday had been in residence for five or six weeks, the manager told him.

‘Yesterday morning, soon after twelve he came round to the offices and handed in his key. He said he might be away for some little time. I was not at all surprised; there was nothing unusual in the proceeding. Sir Halliday often went away without giving us notice in advance. He would be out of town for a week, a month, even three months. Sometimes he would send a postcard announcing his return; but as a rule he merely walked in and asked for his key.'

'And there is no address to which I could write?'

'You might try Sir Halliday Stuart's Oxfordshire address. I can give you that: 'Campden House, High Street — the name of the village, I understand — Oxfordshire.' It is possible that Sir Halliday is there.'

The Professor went home and wrote two letters. One to Sir Halliday, politely begging to be reassured as to his safety, asking no questions, going into no detail. This letter he put into a small envelope, which was enclosed in a large envelope, addressed 'Occupant,' with a letter begging for Sir Halliday's present address. The large envelope, marked 'Urgent Immediate,' was dispatched by registered post. There was an answer by return. M. Timpson begged to say that Sir Halliday Stuart was at present residing in his London chambers, the address of which was enclosed.

Meanwhile, Professor Warburton had taken counsel with the friends who had been with him in the strange adventure of Morton Grange. They had all agreed together that it would be well to keep the whole affair in strict secrecy. It was clear, they decided, that in some way or another, Sir Halliday Stuart had contrived to get out of the house in the midst of the confusion over Lemon's collapse. Nobody could suggest how he made his exit or why he made it; but it was evident that he *had* made it. One of them, given on the quiet to the reading of very old-fashioned fiction, babbled of sliding panels and secret passages. But Warburton, who had reluctantly thought of this, had paid another visit to the Grange, going there in broad daylight, and taking with him an expert with a foot-rule, who tapped and measured and surveyed within and without, and gave it as his technical and considered opinion that in this case, at all events, the notion of sliding panels, hidden doors, and secret passages was bunkum. There was nothing to be said: they all felt that they had come to a blank and intolerable wall. And if, by some unconjectured way and dark passage, Sir Halliday had got out of Morton Grange, where was he?

No doubt they all tried their best to keep the secret, but Sir Halliday, it seemed, had an aunt, very old and energetic, and this lady, hearing that her nephew was not to be found, went to the police, and the constables of Essex called in Scotland Yard, which was interested by the peculiar circumstances of the disappearance.

Now, there is nothing illegal about disappearing. Hundreds, or dozens at any rate, of people disappear every year, and nobody bothers about them. Night by night, ‘Time, Weather, and News,’ on the Wireless is prefaced by one, two or three S O S’s: ‘S O S Lawkins. Will Thomas Lawkins, last heard of about five years ago in Dulverton, go to Hampstead Heath Hospital, Hampstead, London, where his father, Albert Lawkins, is dangerously ill.’ Clearly, Thomas Lawkins disappeared five years ago or more, and did so in perfect peace. A few years since, a man was found murdered in a car on the highway; and even the violent notoriety of his death did not suffice to identify him, he also must have disappeared, leaving neither trace nor inquiry behind him. But, presumably, Lawkins and the murdered man and men like them have been undistinguished and obscure people, who for one reason and another have shed relations and connections, and have left no great curiosity as to their whereabouts behind them. But Sir Halliday Stuart was none such: he was highly distinguished, a figure in his own world, a man of many friends and colleagues.

Moreover, there were the peculiar circumstances, and other people, also well-known, were, one must not say involved, but at any rate present on the occasion when Sir Halliday, as it appeared, was last seen by his fellow-men. Ten days after this event, Professor Warburton received a call from a high official of Scotland Yard, purely in search of exact information. The Professor gave it, told the whole story, gave the names of the men who were associated with him in the affair, and at the end said very frankly:

‘And I should be very much obliged to you, sir, if you would tell me what has happened to Sir Halliday Stuart.’

The Scotland Yard man said that that was a question which could not be answered off-hand. Inquiries of the most searching nature would be made: there must be a flaw somewhere, a weak spot, in the statement he had just heard, and, no doubt, a trained man would be able to put his finger on it — in time. They would send their own experts to make a special examination of Morton Grange; they might find something.

‘Here’s a possibility, now, that has just occurred to me. It’s not uncommon to come across old, disused wells in such houses as Morton Grange. They are sometimes in the most unexpected places; at the end of dark passages, in a corner at the bottom of a staircase: you never know where to look for them. And the covering, the trap at the top, has sometimes gone rotten. The solution may lie in that direction; though I sincerely hope it doesn’t. And in the meantime would you give me the addresses of your friends who were involved with you in this business? They may give us some help; you never know. And would you let me have the best description you can manage of Sir Halliday Stuart’s personal appearance? height, fair or dark, colour of hair and eyes, fat or thin, any peculiarities, facial or otherwise; scars; you know the sort of thing?’

The four men were run down at once; they were all Londoners. Each had been asked to give the best description he could of the missing man, together with his account of what had happened, as each had observed the events of that singular night. By the evening, the shorthand notes had been transcribed, and were laid before the personage at the Yard.

‘Now, look here,’ he said to his Lieutenant. ‘This is going to be a very complicated business. For the moment we won’t bother about the accounts of the proceedings at this dam’ silly business of theirs. I’ve run through them and compared them with what I got from Professor Warburton this morning, and as far as I can make out they all agree as to the main facts. There are no important discrepancies, anyhow. It’s these descriptions of Sir Halliday’s personal appearance that are bothering me. Here, you see, is the stuff we got from two of his most intimate friends: Dr Manning, of Brasenose, and Lord John Ashley of Queen’s Row, You see they agree practically in every particular: height, about 5 ft. 7 ins; hair; dark brown, thinning; eyes, grey; — Lord John Asley says, blue — nose aquiline; short upper lip — Manning doesn’t mention that — thin; white scar on forefinger of right hand; chestnut eyebrows; and so forth and so forth. As I say, the two descriptions agree.’

‘By the way,’ said the lieutenant, ‘no photographs?’

‘He hasn’t been photographed for twenty years. There’s a sketch in black and white; but I don’t think it’s going to be of much use. But here’s the important point. Look at these descriptions of Sir Halliday by Professor

Warburton and his four friends: you see, they don't agree. One man says short, another tall; the Professor says, hair black; Forster, light brown. They're all at odds. Yet by their own account they were sitting with Sir Halliday and talking to him for four hours on end. What do you make of it?'

The other man studied the documents carefully.

'It's a pity,' he said, 'that detective fiction is so seldom of much use to detectives. You remember, 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' the witnesses differing about the language which they had heard the unseen murderer speaking? The Frenchman thought it was English — he didn't know any English. The overwrought Dutchman held it to be Russian; the Englishman, who was ignorant of French, was sure it was French. The deduction to be drawn was that the murderer wasn't speaking any language at all; that he was an ape, and merely gibbering. But I don't see how we can apply Poe's invention to our difficulty.'

'No, I don't think we can,' said the chief with some dryness and a touch of impatience.

'Unless,' said the lieutenant, 'we argue that there was nobody there — no Sir Charles Halliday, I mean. That seems to be the legitimate conclusion; and, obviously, it won't do.'

Then the chief said that it was a serious business, and they must go about it seriously. He had put a man who knew his job into the Grange, and had told him to go over every inch of it. And if he wanted to do any digging outside, he was to telephone for help.

'You don't think so?'

'No; I don't; but it may perhaps be as well to make sure.'

The problem remained the secret of Scotland Yard, and of a circle that was moderately small, considering all things. It was kept out of the Press; and the inquiries went on without result for a month, less three or four days, when a solution was given in a very singular manner. The scene returns to Professor Warburton's study. The Professor is discovered at his bureau, trying hard to occupy himself with his proper business, but wondering at intervals when he would be arrested for the murder of Sir Halliday Stuart. That was what he told his friends later, as a matter of fact he was not beset at all by any such nonsensical fears; but he was still intensely puzzled by the antiquary's disappearance, and intensely curious to know what had really happened. And while he was in this state of mind, his man brought in a card. Warburton took it impatiently; he didn't want to be bothered by anybody. He read: *Sir Halliday Stuart.*

He stared at the servant with an expression that the man found dreadful in its sheer amazement. He gave the necessary order with difficulty, and got up from his chair and stood waiting, in such surprise and confusion of mind as made him realise for the first time that he had never thought to see Sir Halliday again amongst living men.

The door opened, and the servant announced the visitor. A middle- aged, baldish man with a beaky nose entered the room, and, smiling, confronted the bewildered Professor.

'I gather that you wish to see me, Professor Warburton,' he began. 'When I got back to High Street yesterday, my housekeeper handed me this envelope, with the enclosure addressed to me. You ask' — he took out his glasses— 'to be reassured as to my safety. I hope you will excuse me: but I assure you that I haven't the remotest notion of what you mean.'

Warburton feebly motioned the visitor to a chair, and sat down himself, so far incapable of coherent speech.

'You see,' Sir Halliday went on, 'I don't think I've had the pleasure of meeting you till the present moment, and I, naturally, feel a little puzzled. Is it possible that there has been some mistake, some confusion possibly on the part of your secretary? Were you by any chance mixing me up with Mackinlay Stuart, the Science Don? You know him, no doubt?'

Warburton felt that he was sinking into yet deeper and dimmer depths of confusion. 'Not had the pleasure of meeting you till the present moment,' he quoted helplessly to himself, and though not deeply versed in Holy Writ, he thought of somebody who could have roared for the very disquietness of his heart. He gaped at the man sitting before him; amazed at his barefaced denial of their former encounter, and of the hours they had spent together at the Grange. 'Is it possible,' he asked himself, 'that he doesn't recognise me as I recognise him?'

He scrutinised Sir Halliday's features more intently, and then realised, astonished, that the Sir Halliday of a month ago compared with the Sir

Halliday now in presence, was rather like an old, yellowed, and blurred photograph in an ancient album, put beside a clean, recent likeness; or, one might say, a first sketch contrasted with the finished drawing. One saw the resemblance, of course, but the Sir Halliday of the Grange had been, as it were, faint.

But how did that help? Not in the least. It rather added confusion to a business that was already utterly confounded. But after a long silence, Warburton struggled from his morass of dazed perplexity and climbed his way into speech. On the whole, he did not do badly; he told Sir Halliday the story of his morning call and evening's occupation, finishing with his mysterious disappearance from Morton Grange.

'And at the present moment,' he ended, 'Scotland Yard are looking for you. Unless, of course, they have heard of your return.'

And it was hard to say which of the two men were the more astounded. Warburton, by telling it, had revived all his first amazement, when Sir Halliday could not be found. Sir Halliday could not control himself as he heard an account of his movements on a particular day in October which he knew to be at total variance with the facts. He looked hard at Warburton. There is always a certain way of escape open, when a man is confronted with an incredible and intolerable statement. That is, to hold the person who makes the statement to be a liar. And, undoubtedly, this is often the right solution of such problems. But the antiquary, scanning the visage of the man of exact science, measuring the manner of his utterance, felt that, in this case, mere lying was not the required answer to the riddle. And besides …

'There were four men with you, you said. Who were they?'

Professor Warburton gave the names.

'They're responsible men,' he said. 'All of them of a certain distinction.'

'And they all share your impressions of what happened that night?'

'Absolutely. We are all agreed; I think I may say in every detail.'

He suppressed the fact that there had been some discussion and divergence in the party as to Sir Halliday's build and appearance; firstly, because it seemed personal, and then, because he thought very few men were capable of exact observation and subsequent description, and lastly, because he was still puzzled by the difference he had just observed between the look and show of Sir Halliday on his former and his latter visits, and didn't know what to say or think about it.

Sir Halliday pondered. He knew the names of the people who had been associated with Warburton, and, as the professor had observed, they were responsible men. None of them was at all likely to conspire in the concoction of an aimless and preposterous fiction. To believe that would be simply to substitute one incredible story for another. He would take it, then, that the whole five of them supposed that they were telling the truth. He broke his silence.

'I really don't know what to say. The absolute antinomy between your statement and what I know to be the facts as to my doings on the day in question is quite overwhelming. But I'll tell you what really happened, so far as I am concerned, and I hope you'll forgive the small quantity of shop I may have to introduce.

'Well, then. You may be aware that a few years ago there was a good deal of discussion in the Press as to certain discoveries in Central France of objects in baked clay which were said to belong to a very remote period. There were considerable names in favour of their antiquity. However, in the long run, evidence of a destructive character was produced, and in spite of a very spirited defence, the verdict was that the supposed prehistoric pottery was nothing more or less than a modern forgery. Naturally, therefore, we were inclined to treat reports of similar finds with a good deal of distrust, and it was some time before I paid any attention to accounts of discoveries of very early pottery at a place near Loches, in the department of Indre-et-Loire. However, on the morning of October 13th last — your date, I think, Professor — there was an article in *The Times*, which seemed to leave no room for suspicion. I felt I must see for myself: the occurrence of the maze of labyrinth pattern on Neolithic objects struck me as of very great significance and importance.

I left my chambers late in the morning, took a long walk out into the country, dined in some strange place in Soho, and left London by the night service. I got to Paris the next morning, caught the *Rapide* to Tours, and stayed the night at Loches. Next day, I walked through the forest to the village of Genille, and through the courtesy of M. Pic-Paris, the distinguished French antiquary, whom I had met before, I was able to make a thorough examination of the objects discovered in the rock caves, a short distance from the village. In this case, I may say, I am convinced of the entire genuiness of the find — but that doesn't concern our present purpose. After a week of very close study and of conferences with M Pic-Paris and other French colleagues, I went on to Tours; a most agreeable city. I left Tours for England a couple of days ago. I should be glad to show you my hotel bills.'

There was a pause. Very evidently and certainly Professor Warburton considered within himself, the man was telling the truth. Then Sir Halliday began talking again, with a sudden plunge.

'But here's a very odd thing, which has just struck me. It is the case that some years ago Morton Grange engaged a good deal of my attention. I made a special study of it for a book of mine, called, *Essex Manor Houses and Halls*.'

Warburton interrupted. 'You told me that before — the last time you were here.'

Sir Halliday choked down an inarticulate noise in his throat.

'And you were a good deal interested in something you called a squint in the brew-house at the Grange. Also in the vaulting of the cellar. You said, I think, that you were convinced that the cellar had been originally a temple of Mithras.'

The effect of this utterance on the two men was tremendous. It was the great name of Mithras that produced this effect. Sir Halliday had been shaken by Warburton's, 'You told me that before.' He took his host for a truthful man; his familiarity with *Essex Manor Houses* title was, therefore, not a feigned one. And it might be taken as certain that this psychologist, or physicist, or whatever he was, had never so much as seen the publication in question — a subscription book issued to the members of a learned society — and yet he talked of the cellar vaulting and the brew-house squint. But the matter of Mithras! That was a secret, held in reserve, not breathed to his nearest associates. The evidence for the Mithraic origin and use of that Morton Grange cellar, drawn from many sources and accumulating for years, was almost ready to be welded into a demonstration. Other affairs had pressed on Stuart, and he had not been able to bring this matter to an absolute conclusion; he had been waiting for time and opportunity to make one more visit to the Grange, to satisfy himself by a final and meticulous examination of certain details that his theory was well-founded and assured. And here was this man speaking as easily of the great secret of Mithras as of cucumbers in June. He was astounded and confounded: and he looked it.

And Warburton on his side, marked the effect he had produced. He did not altogether understand the full force of his own words, but he noted the shock, and interrupted it in his own manner. He thought that the antiquary must be one of those unfortunate people who suffer from lapses of memory; that he had honestly forgotten his call of a month ago, and his subsequent visit to the Grange; and that the mention of his researches and theories had suddenly recalled the lost memories. The next thing would be that he would explain how he got away, unobserved, from the Grange; very likely it would turn out to be quite simple. Very possibly, he had really been to France on the business he had specified; he had merely antedated his journey by a day. Warburton was going to hint, very gently, something of all this to Sir Halliday, but his guest forestalled him.

‘You will excuse me, I am sure,’ he said, ‘but I think I had better leave you. I do not think we can do any good by discussing this subject further. I do not know how you feel, but to me it is intolerable. Something very awful must have happened. I do not dare to think what it can have been. I am afraid — I am afraid that I must have been on the other side of death.’

He stumbled out of the room. Warburton, going to the window, saw the unfortunate man swaying and staggering like a drunkard, as he picked his blind way along the pavement.

The Professor went down thoughtfully to his lunch. He felt sure that he had been right in his theory. Loss of memory, or perhaps, it might be a case of double personality. He had heard, somewhat doubtfully, of such cases. It had struck him as rather fanciful, but men of good scientific repute were said to have been convinced, and to have undoubted evidence in favour of the doctrine. Well, one or the other, at all events he was afraid that Sir Halliday had been very much upset.

Warburton, on the other hand, was immensely relieved by the solution he had propounded to himself. He was an extremely worthy man, but a materialist and a rationalist to the core; the determined and unrelenting foe of all mysteries. if you had told him that a man of sense passes his whole life in wondering awe and amazement before the mysteries which perpetually confront him, he would have thought you either a madman, or else an intolerable and pretentious humbug. He dismissed the whole affair from his mind, and lived in extreme comfort for the remainder of his days.

It was Ian Tallent who provided an hypothesis, extravagant and improbable in the highest degree, no doubt, and yet the only tolerable solution of a most difficult problem. He conferred with Professor Warburton, and had the story of his conferences with Sir Halliday out of him, noting his point of view, the loss of memory or if you like — double personality — theory, and leaving him to enjoy it. He had more trouble with Sir Halliday Stuart, who had gone down to his retreat in Oxfordshire in sorry condition, and was making a slow recovery there, restoring himself to a normal state by degrees as he found that the common processes of life still continued in their usual order. At first, Sir Halliday refused Tallent’s petitions for an audience with the driest negative; he said that he wished to dismiss ‘the wretched business’ entirely from his thoughts. But Tallent persisted. He had got from Warburton an account of the shattered condition in which Sir Halliday had left him; but, naturally, Warburton had given his own reasons, as he had conceived them, for the shock which the antiquary had very evidently received.

‘You see,’ Warburton had explained, ‘my reference to the conversation we had had together on his former visit brought the whole thing back to him. It made him aware that for a whole month there had been a lapse in his personality; the transactions of a day and a night had been blotted out as if they had never existed. He was prepared to deny, as he did deny, that he had ever seen me before, that he had visited Morton Grange in our company, and had somehow or other succeeded in avoiding our observation and getting away from the place. And it was then, in my opinion, that the break in consciousness occurred. He got home to his chambers, I don’t pretend to say how, in a dazed, confused state, went to bed, and woke up next morning — with the whole of the previous day missing from his memory. And it was no doubt a very startling and a very painful shock when he realised from my remarks the true state of our case.'

Tallent heard all this and seemed to accept Warburton's theory. Indeed, it might be true; but he did not think so. He had a dim glimmering in his mind of possibilities far stranger than this; but he felt that he must talk to the antiquary, with whom the secret must rest. He saw that Warburton, pleased with his solution of the problem, was willing to treat the manner in which Sir Halliday had withdrawn himself inexplicably from their midst as an affair of secondary importance. But to Tallent, this appeared of vital moment: he could not let it go by as a trifle. And if it had happened as he began to dream it might have happened: then, by all means he must see Sir Halliday. But he let him rest a little, and gather his broken forces together, and refit. Then, in a couple of weeks, he wrote again, urging a meeting which might do a great deal, he said, to clear up a very obscure business.

After a few days, he got a letter of reluctant consent, and Tallent went down to High Street, and found Sir Halliday obviously in much better condition than that described by Warburton. And Warburton, it should be said, had not mentioned the odd impression he had received on the antiquary's last visit; the feeling that his visitor's aspect was more fully defined, more sharply 'bitten in' than before. This circumstance had become negligible; indeed it was dismissed as a passing fancy — since it did not minister to the master theory of the loss of memory and the consequent annihilation of a day. But Tallent in his turn was impressed in much the same fashion. Sir Halliday looked worn and anxious; but he was distinct and present, as he had not been at the Grange. As Tallent put it to himself: a faint mist seemed to have cleared away from before him.

There was something of a nervous air in Sir Halliday's welcome; a suggestion of disquiet and almost of fear, as if he dreaded a renewal of the very painful and terrifying sensations that had sent him trembling from Warburton's presence a few weeks before. Tallent moved tactfully; he had come prepared to avoid any rough-and-ready handling of this very delicate and difficult case. He made no secret of his interest in the affair, he admitted that there were extraordinary complications and obstacles in the way of a clear issue.

‘But before we go down into the deep waters,’ he added, ‘there are one or two trifling matters that I believe you would be able to clear up without any trouble. I don’t know that they’re of much consequence: still, it’s as well to start fair. Now, Warburton tells me that on the night of October 13th you went to Paris?’

‘I most certainly did,’ said Sir Halliday, with the strongest emphasis.

‘By what route? Dover-Calais?’

‘By Dover-Calais. I’m an extremely bad sailor, and I always shorten my discomfort as much as possible. Luckily, it was a calm night. I remember remarking on that fact with considerable satisfaction to a fellow-traveller.’

Tallent all but smacked his lips. He remembered the sentence: ‘It’s a calm night, at all events; and that’s in our favour.’

‘Well,’ he said, ‘you’re meeting me half-way. All these little impressions and recollections of the journey down to Dover: that’s exactly what I want you to tell me, if you will. They’re trifles, no doubt, but we may possibly find a use for them. Go ahead, sir.’

‘Really, there’s very little to tell. London-Dover isn’t generally very eventful. There were two other people in the carriage with me; a middle-aged man and a youngish man. For a good part of the way, I was reading some papers that I had brought with me. And that does remind me of something: I found myself distracted to a certain extent in my reading — somewhat technical matter, I may say — by what struck me as a hum of low-voiced conversation. An odd effect; as if one were listening at one end of a very large room to three or four men talking quietly together at the other end. I could just distinguish, as I thought, one man speaking and then another; but I couldn’t make out a word they were saying. It quite worried me at last. So far as I’ve observed, I don’t think one hears one’s neighbours in the next compartment talking; but I supposed that that was where the sound came from. So, at last I got up from my place and strolled up and down the corridor for a few minutes; and the queer thing was that one of the compartments next to us ws empty, and in the other there were two men fast asleep. So I went back to my place and shut the door after me. I took up my papers again, but the hum of talk went on, and it bothered me so much that I gave up the attempt, and began to talk myself to the young man opposite me — the youngish fellow.'

Tallent heard Sir Halliday intently.

'And where were these people talking, do you think?' he asked.

'I haven't a notion. I know nothing whatever about acoustics, and I may be talking great nonsense; but I wondered whether by any possibility the sound may have been somehow transmitted from a remote carriage to my own. Sound does play very odd tricks sometimes.'

'Whispering galleries? Echoes? That kind of thing, you mean? Well, I don't know. But … did you distinguish one voice from another? Do you think you could recognise them if you heard them again?'

'I don't know about that,' said Sir Halliday, doubtfully. 'But as you ask me I must say that your own voice reminds me a good deal of one of these unseen conversationalists. One of them spoke on a slightly higher pitch than the others; and really, the tone was very like yours.'

'That's odd indeed. So you gave up trying to read, and began talking to one of the men in the carriage. Just about the weather and the news, I suppose; things in general?'

'That sort of thing. Then, if I remember, he propounded his solution for the unemployment problem; he would provide work for the workless by pulling down all the old buildings in the country and running up new ones, constructed on purely functional lines, and adapted to the needs of the age. As you may imagine, I don't often hear that sort of talk at the Antiquaries, and I was a good deal amused. I tried to argue with him. I asked him if he didn't take a certain pleasure in looking at an old church or an old house.

'"No more pleasure than you would take," he replied, "if you were speeding and saw a heap of old stones and rubbish in the middle of the road, right in front of your car. Old churches, old houses, old castles; they're obstructive rubbish, nothing more or less."

'Well, he went on at a great rate in this style, and I put in an objection now and again, without an effect, I must confess.

We were getting near Dover by this time, and the young iconoclast began to abuse that harmless old place; he said it was a hole. I stuck up for it; and told him that I liked Dover; especially Strond Street and the old harbour.'

Tallent remembered this utterance very well.

'And that's all, I suppose. You got out of the train and got on board the boat — and I hope you had a good crossing?'

'Perfectly calm, I am glad to say. But since you mention it, getting on board was not quite so quiet a business as usual. There seemed a good deal of pushing and excitement; I am sure I don't know what about. There was plenty of time, of course; but people positively plunged down the gangway; it was almost an ugly rush. But I am afraid I have bored you terribly with all these trivial details. Still, I warned you that you can hardly expect very exciting adventures on the Dover boat-train.'

Then the wild hypothesis stood fully confirmed; so Tallent murmured in his mind. 'And now,' he said to himself, 'for the deep waters.' He had not only obtained matter of extraordinary value and significance from Sir Halliday's recital of his traveller's trivialities — as he thought them — but the simple story of the Dover boat-train had been soothing to the teller of it. Tallent put his question:

'Professor Warburton,' he began, 'gave me to understand that you seemed a good deal put out when you left him, after your talk together a few weeks ago. Now, we want to clear things up; and I feel quite sure that it would help very much if you would tell me the exact reason of the distress which I am afraid you experienced.'

Sir Halliday Stuart rose from his chair and began to pace slowly up and down the room; evidently in deep and perplexed consideration. At the end of a few minutes, he stopped and faced Tallent.

'I think you are right. Apart from any questions of clearing or elucidating a most perplexing business, which I am sure is most desirable, I feel that I shall be better for plain talk. At the moment I certainly received a hideous shock.'

Tallent perceived that the hour of the forceps had come.

'Tell me exactly what it was.'

'It was this. I knew and I know exactly how I had spent that particular day. I knew and I know how every hour of it had been occupied. I knew and I know that I had never set eyes on Professor Warburton before the visit I paid him a few weeks ago. But … from certain things that he said, I also knew and know that I had seen him before and told him my most reserved secrets.’

He sat down, and covered his face with his hands, bowing his head.

Then Tallent said:

‘Do you know that your casual remark about your liking for Dover was heard that night in a room in Morton Grange, where Warburton and the rest of us were sitting? And do you know that you, to all appearance, were sitting also in that room, and that we saw you as you spoke? So it was.’

He was met by a blank stare; uncomprehending, utterly incredulous.

‘That is quite impossible,’ said Sir Halliday, quietly and finally.

‘There are very few things that are impossible,’ Tallent replied. ‘In pure mathematics, perhaps, there may be; though I believe that of late even these eternal canons — as we used to think them — have begun to admit of doubts and uncertainties. Still, I hope we shall not be required to admit the possibility of three-sided squares and two-sided triangles. But, once outside these regions, can we dare to talk of impossibility at all? We can use the word, of course, and I have no doubt that we shall continue to use it; but I think we shall all have to recognise the fact that when we say any event is impossible, we merely mean that we’ve never heard of such a thing before, and that we don’t begin to understand how it can happen so. That is very well, and very applicable to your own case, for I don’t think I have ever heard of anything quite on all fours with the extraordinary manifestation in which you were concerned. And I certainly don’t begin to understand how it could happen so.

‘But look here; I’ve just remembered something. I mentioned mathematics just now: I take it you believe there are such things as lines, don’t you? Well, have you ever seen one? If so, I should be interested to hear how *that* happened; how length without breadth became visible to the human eye. If you think it over, I believe you will recognise that there are more evident impossibilities lurking in this elementary axiom of geometry than in your own — adventure, shall we call it?’

Sir Halliday was dazed and amazed, and yet attentive. Tallent thought he could hold him, and went on:

‘As I said, I think that there are circumstances in your case that are unique; but in the main outlines it falls under a well-ascertained category. There have been many instances of what used to be called Doubles, but are now generally known as Apparitions of Phantasms of the Living. In its early years the Society for Psychical Research published a thick volume of such cases, all carefully examined and well attested. If I remember, a number of these appearances were of people at the point of death, and the large majority of them were, so far as can be seen, purposeless.

‘I remember one case, which might be called typical. A Berkshire farmer, coming down to breakfast one morning, sees on the stairs a Buckinghamshire miller, a market acquaintance, no more, coming up to meet him. The farmer is astonished to see him; and as he stares, the miller is not there. The miller, it was found, was dying at the time, but nobody could guess why he had projected this image of himself into the consciousness of a man with whom he had been barely on nodding terms.’

‘But, you see,’ broke in Sir Halliday, ‘I wasn’t dying, or anything like it. I was perfectly well at the time, and that must be seven weeks ago.’

‘Quite so, but these appearances are by no means invariably the images of the moribund. Indeed, I think that the most remarkable case I know of is a man who was perfectly well and at ease when he became apparent — can we say? — where he was not. This is not one of the Psychical Researchers’ cases, it is recorded by Charles Dickens. I have it in my notebook and here it is —

‘“I once saw the apparition of my father at this hour (the early morning). He was alive and well, and nothing ever came of it, but I saw him in the daylight, sitting with his back towards me, on a seat that stood beside my bed. His head was resting on his hand, and whether he was slumbering or grieving, I could not discern. Amazed to see him there, I sat up, moved my position, leaned out of bed, and watched him. As he did not move then, I became alarmed and laid my hand upon his shoulder — as I thought — and there was no such thing.”

‘You see? There you have the apparently purposeless projection of the image of a man in good health. And I think I may say that in the Psychical Research records, there is hardly a single case — if there is such a case — where the apparition was anything but purposeless. To quote a passage from one of the publications of the S.P.R.: “One has to admit a total absence of any apparent aim or of any intelligent action on the part of the phantoms.” We may venture, then, to say that this is the rule: that the apparition or projection of the image is not (in our modern jargon) a “wish-fulfilment” on the part of the projector. The miller did not want to see the farmer; old Mr Dickens did not want to see his son.

‘Here is where your case parts company from all the others on record. We know that you had made a special study of Morton Grange, and I gathered from Warburton that for some time you had wished to revisit the place, to make a further examination of certain details of importance. That is so, isn’t it?’

‘Yes, that is quite true. There were points on which I wished to satisfy myself by a second inspection, before finishing some work I had in hand.’

‘Exactly; and there, I believe, we have the distinction between your particular case and all the others that we have been considering. You say you had a fixed purpose to revisit Morton Grange, in order that you might satisfy yourself finally on certain matters which to you were of the first importance? Good. Then, I think, having established that distinction — the purpose behind the projection, we come, not unnaturally, to the other distinction or difference — the superior intensity of the image projected. The normal phantasy of the living manifests and vanishes. It does not speak, it does not abide our question, its visibility is its only energy, and that is rapidly exhausted and dispersed. In your case, on the other hand, the phantasm was in all respects like an ordinary human being; it was both persistent and energetic; to all apparent intents and purposes it was yourself as you sit before me.

‘Beyond the extraordinary character of the whole manifestation, there are one or two very curious points. For instance. While the phantasm was with us, we saw nothing, as I have just intimated, at all peculiar or out of the way about it. But when it had disappeared, and we were wondering what on earth had happened, it came out accidentally that the figure — I was going to say, “you” — had not impressed us all in the same way. One man thought Sir Halliday was short and small, and another described him as above the average height. And another thing: when I came into this room about an hour ago, I noticed at once the difference between Sir Halliday of Campden House and the Sir Halliday of Morton Grange; the former figure was by far more definite and vivid than the latter. You know in the old Christmas Ghost stories, the apparition is often described as a “shadowy figure.” A traditional phrase, no doubt, and an instance, as I think, of the fact that tradition often tells the truth under the form of a picturesque symbolism. We couldn’t see the furniture through the phantasm of Sir Halliday; but, in a sense, the image was certainly shadowy, indeterminate.

‘And again: here is a puzzle. As you sat in the train on the way to Dover, you heard the murmur of the conversation in the room at Morton Grange. You recognised my voice just now. And, on the other hand, we heard some — not all — of your remarks to your fellow-travellers in the carriage. Of course we thought you were speaking to us. These are difficulties which I do not attempt to explain. But I hope that on the whole you are relieved.’

Sir Halliday Stuart had listened in a deep, meditative silence; assenting, now and again, with a nod of the head, when Tallent appealed to him.

‘“Journeying very far, I found what I had not sought,” ‘ he murmured to himself, sighing, in great wonder.

‘Well, yes,’ he said aloud. ‘In a way, I suppose you have relieved me — of the sense of an intolerable contradiction.’

‘Well, I am glad,’ said Tallent, rising. ‘Though I believe it may be held at last that true wisdom consists in accepting contradictions and rejoicing in them greatly.’

The Short Stories

The Old Rectory at Llanddewi Fach — Machen's childhood home

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AN UNDERGROUND ADVENTURE

THE YOUNG MAN IN THE BLUE SUIT

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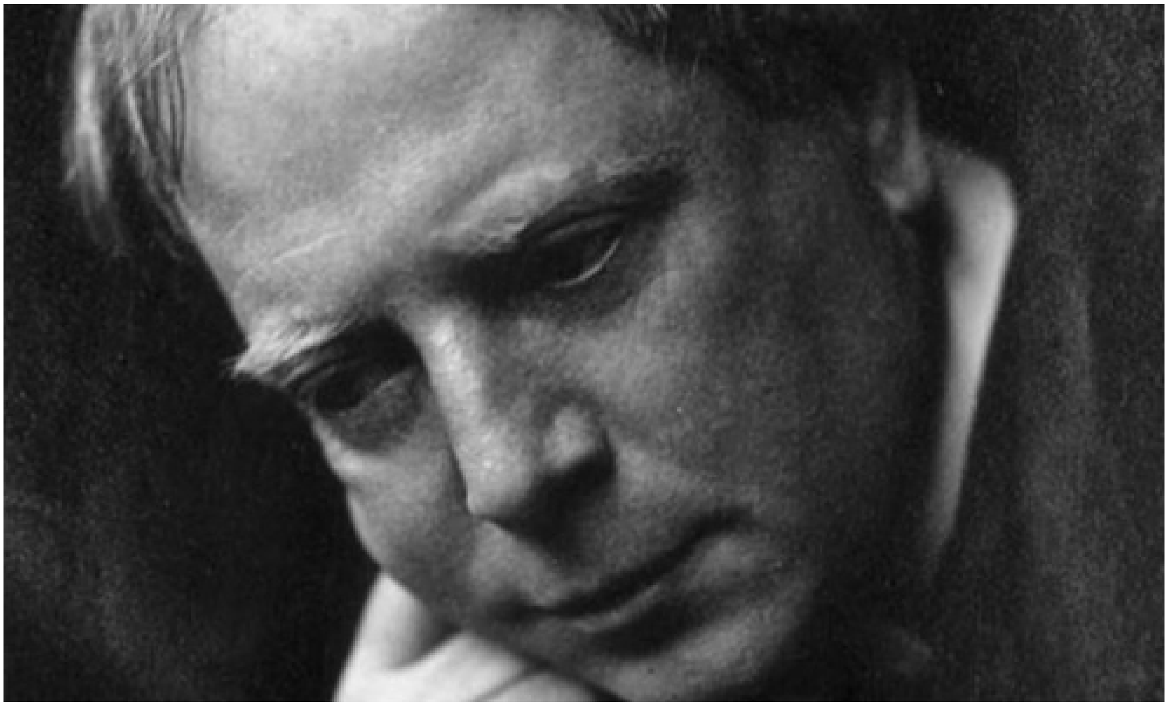
The Poems



Machen, c. 1905

Collected Poems

ELEUSINIA
THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE BARD
THE PRAISE OF MYFANWY

ELEUSINIA

THE ASSEMBLING.

The day is dawning. Whither shall we bend
Our steps, and whither send
The herald on before us; mighty clouds
That have been thick about the path of night,
Now parting all asunder, let the rays
Of mighty Paean glance upon the hills,
And shew us here and there a marble tower,
With minarets that climb aloft, and gleam
Like silver crowns upon the hills of time.
Let us then climb those hill-tops, if with pain
And patient limbs we may attain thereto.

We then at last have come unto the brow,
And gloried with the rays of the young sun,
May look upon the valley underneath.
It is a plain far stretching to the sea,
Which rocks and tumbles on the distant shore.
While close beneath the hill on which we stand
There is a city shining like a bride,
Whose birth-place was in old Pen telicus.
And all the roads which lead into the town
Are crowded with the hurrying steps of men,
Who have been coming from the north and south,
And east and west;
That they may see the city on this day,
And celebrate the praise of Demeter.

Are they not weary toiling through the night?
Is it not long before the dawn is breaking?
Shall not the pilgrims gladden in the light?
When God shall burst forth, the powers of darkness shaking.

No, we are not weary, if the night is long;
Nay, it is not long before the dawn is breaking.
For there rises oft the solemn swelling song
While our holy priest his offering is making.

Demeter all holy, see we toil to meet thee.
From the distant parts of thy beloved land;
Demeter all holy, shall we ever see thee
Standing in thy majesty, while countless as the sand
On yonder shore, the multitude adore thee
As thou blessest all men with thy loving hand?

Athens is thy dwelling place:
Holy mother, give us grace.
In the town thy temple stands
Bright, all marble from thine hands.
While the gathering people kneel, journeying from many lands.

Is that thy priest who stands within the town?
Is that thy choir whose thunders roll and swell?
Hail to thee most mighty, great be thy renown,
While minstrels sing, and priests thy glory tell.
And now the glory of the rising sun.
Poured forth upon the city marble-built;
And all the crowd of worshippers was come

Unto the temple of the Goddess Queen.
And there they hymn her with resounding songs.
Which rise and fall like thunders, or the noise
Of mighty waters rolling on the shore.
And so the day goes on in worshipping,
Until the sun has hid himself behind
The purple hills that compass Athens round.
And the moon glitters in the pale blue sky
Upon the pilgrims, who have laid their limbs
Weary, but glad at heart, upon the beds
Of herbs, which all the city strews for them.
Such was the ending of the opening day.

THE SEA-SHORE

Now to the sea the mystai bend their steps,
To purge all stain of guilt from off their souls;
And as they go, in pure white vestment clad,
Each one and all implore the goddess queen
To pardon all the sins of the past life.
And wash them pure, and free from every fault.
Down from the temple through the narrow streets,
And gardens smelling sweet, and cool with leaves.
Till they have passed out of the city gates,
And come unto the plain beyond the town,
All through its levels in a mighty band,
Singing in praise of Demeter the Queen.
And then the shore — for every one must wash
His limbs therein, and have it for a sign,
That, as the flesh is pure and tree from stain,
The soul within is in like manner cleansed.
So, the cool water sweeps away the stain,
And all have been absolved — the priest has said.

THE FAST

The dawn again is breaking o'er the deep:
Shall we still journey or yet keep
The fast in Athens? The sea heaves
And murmurs, as the yellow autumn leaves
At eastern winds, and nought relieves
The masses of grey clouds, but ever dark
They stand; and on this day no song
Save of the lark.

For is not now this day a day of tears,
Kept through the long-past years?
Kept and is keeping,
In fast and in weeping.
Now in the city where they stand,
Sorrowing in dark attire,
Wailing at the priest's command

A dirge, while with a lamp of fire
Slowly he lights the sacred pyre
With sad desire.
See, for thy sake is weariness;
Queen for thy sake is great distress.
Let us not perish, kind earth mother,
Sister by sister, brother by brother:
But heavy with thy heaviness.
Mourning and weeping on the temple floor,
Let there be pity for our great complaint.
And as by the sea shore,
We, washing, all were freed from taint
Turn to us, mighty Queen, and weep no more.

So passed the day in mourning and in fast.

THE PROCESSION

The day is dawning. Whither shall we bend
Our steps, or whither send
The herald on before us; the great plain
Pours forth a shout of praise and many songs;
Thunders which roll and sweep the summer air,
Rising and falling like the swelling sea,
And striking all the soul with solemn awe.
Into the heart they rushed like sweet dark wine,
And all the rocks were ringing with the sound
All through the plain in which fair Athens stands,
Until the sailors seaward heard the noise
Of many thunders, and their hearts were stirred.
And worshipping they too took up the chant:
So it rolled along
Over the clean sweet waves till Thetis heard,
Deep in her palaces beneath the sea.
So sweet a song they made, the music yet
Is not all silenced, some clear notes remain
Though many waves of centuries have passed
Upon those pleasant days: but hark awhile

Unto the chorus, though the years have sped,
And the dim twilight of the word is come.

Goddess most fair,
Loving the gracious land
Of Greece, and the golden sand
Of all its shores, ruling with thy hand
Thy dear Athenian town, but present everywhere.

Are we not pleasing to thee?
Goddess and queen of the corn:
Holiest mother divine,
Grant us thy glory to see,
Bright as the coming of morn:
See how we kneel, and are present, and worship thy shrine.

Hail! thou most sweet
And gracious one,
Is it not meet
To praise thee when the sun
Pours forth strong far-reaching heat,
And then at evening when his race is run.
Ah! like a summer sea
At eventide

Thy beauty is to me,
I care for nought beside,
Save only thee;
Let thine anthems be upraised, let no chorus be denied.

Ah! soft and sweet
The maidens' voices raise
Thy hymn of praise,
As through the winding street
With eager feet
They pass, crowned with roses and with bays.

If in the holy place
   Men worship thee;

And pray to see thy face,
  Se we.

If in the inmost fane
  Thy glory stands;
Grant us to touch, being without stain,
  Thine hands.

If the priest veils his head
And boweth low;
Make us too, pure, as thou hast said,
As snow.

Keep us, who worship thee,
  Within thy sight;
Let us, though in the darkness, see
  Thy light.

So the whole city burst into a song
That reached us where we stood upon the hill;
And all the altars smoked with frankincense,
Which sailors, toiling in the eastern seas,
With many weary furrows of the deep,
Had brought unto the praise of Demeter.
And all the day the seven-stringed harp rejoiced.
And the procession passed along the streets.
Even until the darkness covered all.
And wearied with great joy the city slept.

THE DAY OF TORCHES

The sun has slowly sought his resting place,
And the dim twilight of the day has come:
The worshippers assemble in the streets,
Coming from all the by-ways of the town.
The priest is present; every one a torch
Carries on high, and joins the line of light
Moving towards the temple: let us go.
For there is neither song nor choral chant,
Only the solemn sound of many feet

Moving with one accord; and at the head
Slow walks the priest, holding a torch on high.
At length the long procession reached the place,
Holy to Demeter: then passing on
Through gates and dimly lighted passages,
Until they came unto the central hill.
All set with marble columns, dimly seen,
And here and there a lamp with rosy light
Burning before a statue or a shrine,
Lighting the dimness of the painted walls:
Until the place is full.
All through the night never a voice is heard
In all the echoing passages and halls.
All through the watches of the silent night
The lurid light of many torches shines,
On altar, statue, dimly painted frieze,
Of which the figures flicker, hardly seen
In the dim light of torches borne on high.
Still not a word! the watches of the night
Are passing swiftly: and the day is near.

Still must they stand,
Waiting and longing for the dawn to come;
For every light burns dimly; and the soul,
Weary of anguish, sickened with the watch.
Paler and paler grows the torch's light,
More and yet more uncertain shew the walls,
And still no sign,
Not from the priest, or from the weary crowd,
But very silence.
See! the rosy dawn
Is come at last: the priest has given the sign,
"Depart in peace, thy vigil has been watched."

IACCHUS

The day is dawning. Whither shall we bend
Our steps, or whither send
The herald on before us? many strings

Are swept, and many echoings of song
Sound and resound throughout the city streets.
Is there a minstrel left?
Or any music which is still unthrilled
Among their choirs? ah! the voices rush
Up like a trumpet through the summer air.
Was ever song like this? the birds rejoice
And sing for gladness; but let us be still,
We are not worshippers; the years are fled,
And hushed the music, if a lingering voice
And echo of their gladness be revealed,
It is enough. Ah! that in early years,
Before the greyness of the world has come,
I could have worshipped also, but enough.
Perchance across the waste, and strain to hear,
What music then was made for weary hearts.
Hark! the chant sweeps and thrills,
Falling and rising like a mighty voice
Of many waters.

Through the city gates,
Unto the plain they pass a mighty throng,
For it is near the end, and a great joy
Fills every heart with praise and loud acclaim.

Sweet, we are thine, thy vision is not far,
But close the temple stair
And marble altars; faint not by the way
And fall not, for the fair
Queen shineth like a star
At close of day.
Press on yet faster, lest there be delay.

The maidens are not silent: what a strain
Of love and sweet desire floats along
Their clean sweet voicéd chorus: is there any song
Like to their music, pleasure and sweet pain
Are met together, mingled in a chain,
There is no failing; e’en the weak are strong.

The sweet soft scent of roses fills the air
With silent music, even as a dream
The lilies anguish and the censors stream.
Sweet sounds and scents are mingled everywhere;
Far in the clear blue distance climbs the mountain stair.

Thus with their offering of solemn song
The glad procession sweeps along the road,
With dances and with music, till afar
They see the temple: with renewed acclaim
The waves of song burst forth as each one sees
The goal of his desire.
Clear in the summer air it stands and shines
Like music carved in marble, and a song.
What can we say or sing
Of such a moment, for the swelling chords
Are broken of the old resounding harp;
Let there be silence and a solemn awe.
And as we strain across the blinding storm
Of many ages: only semitones
Half broken, half resounding, echo yet,
Heard by a few who love the former time,
And dim remembrance of the far-off years.
Now peace awhile, the night is drawing near;
Peace, and let silence fall
Upon the temple, peace and solemn fair.

THE INITIATION

The night has come, a cloud of darkness falls
Upon the temple, save a lonely torch
Lighting at intervals the silent throng,
Who still are waiting there until the time
When all its glories shall be seen by them;
And still a silence…
The heart is sick with waiting, half afraid
And half expectant, is not yet the time?
But ever silence. — ..

Hark the trumpet sounds!
Upon the steps the holy herald stands,
And bids the worshippers prepare to see
The glory of the goddess.
How awful darkness broods, and one by one
They pass within; but what is seen by them
Within the temple; who of men shall tell,
Only dim legends handed down and told
From age to age; but no man knows the truth,
Only they tell that sudden light was seen,
And then the darkness covered all again.
Anon the thunder rolls and breaks along,
Crashing and thrilling all the halls among,
And then the silence covered all again.

Sweet and fearful sounds,
Following in alternation till the soul
Was melted all within, the heart was still
And almost life departed, then at last
The glory of the goddess was revealed.

FINIS.

THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE BARD

In the darkness of old age let not my memory
fail:
Let me not forget to celebrate the beloved land
of Gwent.
If they imprison me in a deep place, in a house
of pestilence,
Still shall I be free, remembering the sunshine
upon Mynydd Maen.
There have I listened to the song of the lark,
my soul has ascended with the song of the
little bird:
The great white clouds were the ships of my
spirit, sailing to the haven of the Almighty.
Equally to be held in honour is the site of the
Great Mountain.
Adorned with the gushing of many waters —
sweet is the shade of its hazel thickets.
There a treasure is preserved which I will not
celebrate;
It is glorious and deeply concealed.
If Teils should return, if happiness were restored
to the Cymri,
Dewi and Dyfrig should serve his Mass; then a
great marvel would be made visible.
O blessed and miraculous work! then should my
bliss be as the joy of angels.
I had rather behold this offering than kiss the
twin lips of dark Gwenllian.
Dear my land of Gwent: *O quam dilecta tabernacula*.
Thy rivers are like precious golden streams of
Paradise, thy hills are as the Mount Syon.

Better a grave on Twyn Barlwm than a throne
in the palace of the Saxons at Caer-Ludd.

THE PRAISE OF MYFANWY

O gift of the everlasting:
O wonderful and hidden mystery.
Many secrets have been vouchsafed to me,
I have been long acquainted with the wisdom of the trees;
Ash and oak and elm have communicated to me from my boyhood,
The birch and the hazel and all the trees of the greenwood have not been dumb.
There is a caldron rimmed with pearls of whose gifts I am not ignorant;
I will speak little of it; its treasures are known to the Bards.
Many went on the search of Caer-Pedryfan,
Seven alone returned with Arthur, but my spirit was present.
Seven are the apple-trees in a beautiful orchard;
I have eaten of their fruit which is not bestowed on Saxons.
I am not ignorant of a Head which is glorious and venerable;
It made perpetual entertainment for the warriors, their joys would have been immortal;
If they had not opened the door of the south, they would have feasted for ever,
Listening to the song of the fairy Birds of Rhiannon.
Let not anyone instruct me concerning the Glassy Isle;
In the garments of the saints who returned from it were rich odours of Paradise.
All this I knew, and yet my knowledge was

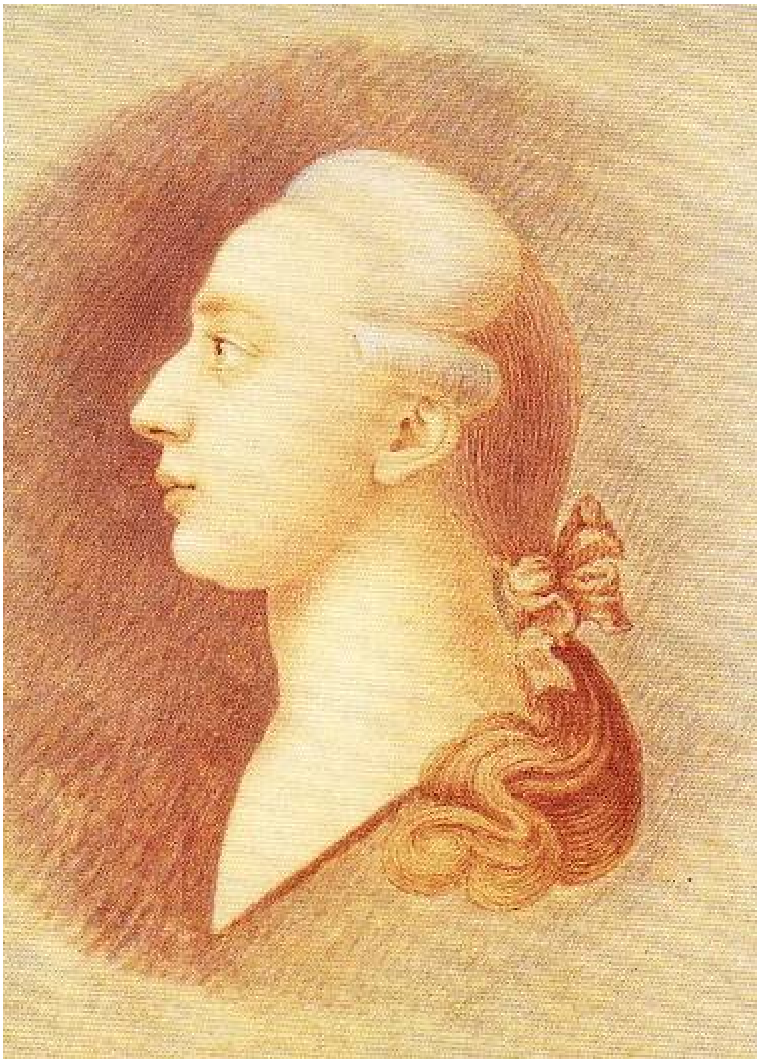
ignorance.
For one day, as I walked by Caer-rhiu in the principal forest of Gwent,
I saw golden Myfanwy as she bathed in the brook Tarogi,
Her hair flowed about her; Arthur’s crown had dissolved into a shining mist.
I gazed into her blue eyes as it were into twin heavens,
All the parts of her body were adornments and miracles.
O gift of the everlasting:
O wonderful and hidden mystery:
When I embraced Myfanwy a moment became immortality.

The Non-Fiction

The High Street, Amersham, Buckinghamshire — where Machen spent his final years

The Memoirs of Jacques Casanova de Seingalt, 1725-1798

Giacomo Girolamo Casanova (1725-1798) was an Italian adventurer from the Republic of Venice, whose revealing and scandalous autobiography, *Histoire de ma vie* (Story of My Life), is regarded as one of the most authentic sources of the customs and norms of European social life during the 18th century. As was not uncommon at the time, Casanova often used pseudonyms, the most frequent being Chevalier de Seingalt and he also published abundantly in French under the name Jacques Casanova de Seingalt. His name has now become famous for his complicated and elaborate affairs with high-stationed women, and the name ‘Casanova’ is now synonymous with a “womaniser”. Machen published this rare and unabridged translation of Casanova’s memoir in 1894.



Giacomo Casanova

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CASANOVA AT DUX

An Unpublished Chapter of History, By Arthur Symons

I

The Memoirs of Casanova, though they have enjoyed the popularity of a bad reputation, have never had justice done to them by serious students of literature, of life, and of history. One English writer, indeed, Mr. Havelock Ellis, has realised that ‘there are few more delightful books in the world,’ and he has analysed them in an essay on Casanova, published in Affirmations, with extreme care and remarkable subtlety. But this essay stands alone, at all events in English, as an attempt to take Casanova seriously, to show him in his relation to his time, and in his relation to human problems. And yet these Memoirs are perhaps the most valuable document which we possess on the society of the eighteenth century; they are the history of a unique life, a unique personality, one of the greatest of autobiographies; as a record of adventures, they are more entertaining than Gil Blas, or Monte Cristo, or any of the imaginary travels, and escapes, and masquerades in life, which have been written in imitation of them. They tell the story of a man who loved life passionately for its own sake: one to whom woman was, indeed, the most important thing in the world, but to whom nothing in the world was indifferent. The bust which gives us the most lively notion of him shows us a great, vivid, intellectual face, full of fiery energy and calm resource, the face of a thinker and a fighter in one. A scholar, an adventurer, perhaps a Cabalist, a busy stirrer in politics, a gamester, one ‘born for the fairer sex,’ as he tells us, and born also to be a vagabond; this man, who is remembered now for his written account of his own life, was that rarest kind of autobiographer, one who did not live to write, but wrote because he had lived, and when he could live no longer.

And his Memoirs take one all over Europe, giving sidelights, all the more valuable in being almost accidental, upon many of the affairs and people most interesting to us during two-thirds of the eighteenth century. Giacomo Casanova was born in Venice, of Spanish and Italian parentage, on April 2, 1725; he died at the Chateau of Dux, in Bohemia, on June 4, 1798. In that lifetime of seventy-three years he travelled, as his Memoirs show us, in Italy, France, Germany, Austria, England, Switzerland, Belgium, Russia, Poland, Spain, Holland, Turkey; he met Voltaire at Ferney, Rousseau at Montmorency, Fontenelle, d'Alembert and Crebillon at Paris, George III. in London, Louis XV. at Fontainebleau, Catherine the Great at St. Petersburg, Benedict XII. at Rome, Joseph II. at Vienna, Frederick the Great at Sans-Souci. Imprisoned by the Inquisitors of State in the Piombi at Venice, he made, in 1755, the most famous escape in history. His Memoirs, as we have them, break off abruptly at the moment when he is expecting a safe conduct, and the permission to return to Venice after twenty years' wanderings. He did return, as we know from documents in the Venetian archives; he returned as secret agent of the Inquisitors, and remained in their service from 1774 until 1782. At the end of 1782 he left Venice; and next year we find him in Paris, where, in 1784, he met Count Waldstein at the Venetian Ambassador's, and was invited by him to become his librarian at Dux. He accepted, and for the fourteen remaining years of his life lived at Dux, where he wrote his Memoirs.

Casanova died in 1798, but nothing was heard of the Memoirs (which the Prince de Ligne, in his own Memoirs, tells us that Casanova had read to him, and in which he found 'du dyamatique, de la rapidite, du comique, de la philosophie, des choses neuves, sublimes, inimitables meme') until the year 1820, when a certain Carlo Angiolini brought to the publishing house of Brockhaus, in Leipzig, a manuscript entitled Histoire de ma vie jusqu a l'an 1797, in the handwriting of Casanova. This manuscript, which I have examined at Leipzig, is written on foolscap paper, rather rough and yellow; it is written on both sides of the page, and in sheets or quires; here and there the paging shows that some pages have been omitted, and in their place are smaller sheets of thinner and whiter paper, all in Casanova's handsome, unmistakable handwriting. The manuscript is done up in twelve bundles, corresponding with the twelve volumes of the original edition; and only in one place is there a gap. The fourth and fifth chapters of the twelfth volume are missing, as the editor of the original edition points out, adding: 'It is not probable that these two chapters have been withdrawn from the manuscript of Casanova by a strange hand; everything leads us to believe that the author himself suppressed them, in the intention, no doubt, of re-writing them, but without having found time to do so.' The manuscript ends abruptly with the year 1774, and not with the year 1797, as the title would lead us to suppose.

This manuscript, in its original state, has never been printed. Herr Brockhaus, on obtaining possession of the manuscript, had it translated into German by Wilhelm Schutz, but with many omissions and alterations, and published this translation, volume by volume, from 1822 to 1828, under the title, ‘Aus den Memoiren des Venetianers Jacob Casanova de Seingalt.’ While the German edition was in course of publication, Herr Brockhaus employed a certain Jean Laforgue, a professor of the French language at Dresden, to revise the original manuscript, correcting Casanova’s vigorous, but at times incorrect, and often somewhat Italian, French according to his own notions of elegant writing, suppressing passages which seemed too free-spoken from the point of view of morals and of politics, and altering the names of some of the persons referred to, or replacing those names by initials. This revised text was published in twelve volumes, the first two in 1826, the third and fourth in 1828, the fifth to the eighth in 1832, and the ninth to the twelfth in 1837; the first four bearing the imprint of Brockhaus at Leipzig and Ponthieu et Cie at Paris; the next four the imprint of Heideloff et Campe at Paris; and the last four nothing but ‘A Bruxelles.’ The volumes are all uniform, and were all really printed for the firm of Brockhaus. This, however far from representing the real text, is the only authoritative edition, and my references throughout this article will always be to this edition.

In turning over the manuscript at Leipzig, I read some of the suppressed passages, and regretted their suppression; but Herr Brockhaus, the present head of the firm, assured me that they are not really very considerable in number. The damage, however, to the vivacity of the whole narrative, by the persistent alterations of M. Laforgue, is incalculable. I compared many passages, and found scarcely three consecutive sentences untouched. Herr Brockhaus (whose courtesy I cannot sufficiently acknowledge) was kind enough to have a passage copied out for me, which I afterwards read over, and checked word by word. In this passage Casanova says, for instance: ‘Elle venoit presque tous les jours lui faire une belle visite.’ This is altered into: ‘Cependant chaque jour Therese venait lui faire une visite.’ Casanova says that some one ‘avoit, comme de raison, forme le projet d’allier Dieu avec le diable.’ This is made to read: ‘Qui, comme de raison, avait saintement forme le projet d'allier les interets du ciel aux oeuvres de ce monde.' Casanova tells us that Therese would not commit a mortal sin 'pour devenir reine du monde;' pour une couronne,' corrects the indefatigable Laforgue. 'Il ne savoit que lui dire' becomes 'Dans cet etat de perplexite;' and so forth. It must, therefore, be realized that the Memoirs, as we have them, are only a kind of pale tracing of the vivid colours of the original.

When Casanova's Memoirs were first published, doubts were expressed as to their authenticity, first by Ugo Foscolo (in the Westminster Review, 1827), then by Querard, supposed to be an authority in regard to anonymous and pseudonymous writings, finally by Paul Lacroix, 'le bibliophile Jacob', who suggested, or rather expressed his 'certainty,' that the real author of the Memoirs was Stendhal, whose 'mind, character, ideas and style' he seemed to recognise on every page. This theory, as foolish and as unsupported as the Baconian theory of Shakespeare, has been carelessly accepted, or at all events accepted as possible, by many good scholars who have never taken the trouble to look into the matter for themselves. It was finally disproved by a series of articles of Armand Baschet, entitled 'Preuves curieuses de l'authenticite des Memoires de Jacques Casanova de Seingalt,' in 'Le Livre,' January, February, April and May, 1881; and these proofs were further corroborated by two articles of Alessandro d'Ancona, entitled 'Un Avventuriere del Secolo XVIII., in the 'Nuovo Antologia,' February 1 and August 1, 1882. Baschet had never himself seen the manuscript of the Memoirs, but he had learnt all the facts about it from Messrs. Brockhaus, and he had himself examined the numerous papers relating to Casanova in the Venetian archives. A similar examination was made at the Frari at about the same time by the Abbe Fulin; and I myself, in 1894, not knowing at the time that the discovery had been already made, made it over again for myself. There the arrest of Casanova, his imprisonment in the Piombi, the exact date of his escape, the name of the monk who accompanied him, are all authenticated by documents contained in the 'riferte' of the Inquisition of State; there are the bills for the repairs of the roof and walls of the cell from which he escaped; there are the reports of the spies on whose information he was arrested, for his too dangerous free-spokenness in matters of religion and morality. The same archives contain forty-eight letters of Casanova to the Inquisitors of State, dating from 1763 to 1782, among the Riferte dei Confidenti, or reports of secret agents; the earliest asking permission to return to Venice, the rest giving information in regard to the immoralities of the city, after his return there; all in the same handwriting as the Memoirs. Further proof could scarcely be needed, but Baschet has done more than prove the authenticity, he has proved the extraordinary veracity, of the Memoirs. F. W. Barthold, in ‘Die Geschichtlichen Personlichkeiten in J. Casanova’s Memoiren,’ 2 vols., 1846, had already examined about a hundred of Casanova’s allusions to well known people, showing the perfect exactitude of all but six or seven, and out of these six or seven inexactitudes ascribing only a single one to the author’s intention. Baschet and d’Ancona both carry on what Barthold had begun; other investigators, in France, Italy and Germany, have followed them; and two things are now certain, first, that Casanova himself wrote the Memoirs published under his name, though not textually in the precise form in which we have them; and, second, that as their veracity becomes more and more evident as they are confronted with more and more independent witnesses, it is only fair to suppose that they are equally truthful where the facts are such as could only have been known to Casanova himself.

II

For more than two-thirds of a century it has been known that Casanova spent the last fourteen years of his life at Dux, that he wrote his Memoirs there, and that he died there. During all this time people have been discussing the authenticity and the truthfulness of the Memoirs, they have been searching for information about Casanova in various directions, and yet hardly any one has ever taken the trouble, or obtained the permission, to make a careful examination in precisely the one place where information was most likely to be found. The very existence of the manuscripts at Dux was known only to a few, and to most of these only on hearsay; and thus the singular good fortune was reserved for me, on my visit to Count Waldstein in September 1899, to be the first to discover the most interesting things contained in these manuscripts. M. Octave Uzanne, though he had not himself visited Dux, had indeed procured copies of some of the manuscripts, a few of which were published by him in Le Livre, in 1887 and 1889. But with the death of Le Livre in 1889 the ‘Casanova inedit’ came to an end, and has never, so far as I know, been continued elsewhere. Beyond the publication of these fragments, nothing has been done with the manuscripts at Dux, nor has an account of them ever been given by any one who has been allowed to examine them.

For five years, ever since I had discovered the documents in the Venetian archives, I had wanted to go to Dux; and in 1899, when I was staying with Count Lutzow at Zampach, in Bohemia, I found the way kindly opened for me. Count Waldstein, the present head of the family, with extreme courtesy, put all his manuscripts at my disposal, and invited me to stay with him. Unluckily, he was called away on the morning of the day that I reached Dux. He had left everything ready for me, and I was shown over the castle by a friend of his, Dr. Kittel, whose courtesy I should like also to acknowledge. After a hurried visit to the castle we started on the long drive to Oberleutensdorf, a smaller Schloss near Komotau, where the Waldstein family was then staying. The air was sharp and bracing; the two Russian horses flew like the wind; I was whirled along in an unfamiliar darkness, through a strange country, black with coal mines, through dark pine woods, where a wild peasantry dwelt in little mining towns. Here and there, a few men and women passed us on the road, in their Sunday finery; then a long space of silence, and we were in the open country, galloping between broad fields; and always in a haze of lovely hills, which I saw more distinctly as we drove back next morning.

The return to Dux was like a triumphal entry, as we dashed through the market-place filled with people come for the Monday market, pots and pans and vegetables strewn in heaps all over the ground, on the rough paving stones, up to the great gateway of the castle, leaving but just room for us to drive through their midst. I had the sensation of an enormous building: all Bohemian castles are big, but this one was like a royal palace. Set there in the midst of the town, after the Bohemian fashion, it opens at the back upon great gardens, as if it were in the midst of the country. I walked through room after room, along corridor after corridor; everywhere there were pictures, everywhere portraits of Wallenstein, and battle-scenes in which he led on his troops. The library, which was formed, or at least arranged, by Casanova, and which remains as he left it, contains some 25,000 volumes, some of them of considerable value; one of the most famous books in Bohemian literature, Skala’s History of the Church, exists in manuscript at Dux, and it is from this manuscript that the two published volumes of it were printed. The library forms part of the Museum, which occupies a ground-floor wing of the castle. The first room is an armoury, in which all kinds of arms are arranged, in a decorative way, covering the ceiling and the walls with strange patterns. The second room contains pottery, collected by Casanova's Waldstein on his Eastern travels. The third room is full of curious mechanical toys, and cabinets, and carvings in ivory. Finally, we come to the library, contained in the two innermost rooms. The bookshelves are painted white, and reach to the low-vaulted ceilings, which are whitewashed. At the end of a bookcase, in the corner of one of the windows, hangs a fine engraved portrait of Casanova.

After I had been all over the castle, so long Casanova's home, I was taken to Count Waldstein's study, and left there with the manuscripts. I found six huge cardboard cases, large enough to contain foolscap paper, lettered on the back: 'Grafl. Waldstein-Wartenberg'sches Real Fideicommiss. Dux-Oberleutensdorf: Handschriftlicher Nachlass Casanova.' The cases were arranged so as to stand like books; they opened at the side; and on opening them, one after another, I found series after series of manuscripts roughly thrown together, after some pretence at arrangement, and lettered with a very generalised description of contents. The greater part of the manuscripts were in Casanova's handwriting, which I could see gradually beginning to get shaky with years. Most were written in French, a certain number in Italian. The beginning of a catalogue in the library, though said to be by him, was not in his handwriting. Perhaps it was taken down at his dictation. There were also some copies of Italian and Latin poems not written by him. Then there were many big bundles of letters addressed to him, dating over more than thirty years. Almost all the rest was in his own handwriting.

I came first upon the smaller manuscripts, among which I, found, jumbled together on the same and on separate scraps of paper, washing-bills, accounts, hotel bills, lists of letters written, first drafts of letters with many erasures, notes on books, theological and mathematical notes, sums, Latin quotations, French and Italian verses, with variants, a long list of classical names which have and have not been 'francises,' with reasons for and against; 'what I must wear at Dresden'; headings without anything to follow, such as: 'Reflexions on respiration, on the true cause of youth-the crows'; a new method of winning the lottery at Rome; recipes, among which is a long printed list of perfumes sold at Spa; a newspaper cutting, dated Prague, 25th October 1790, on the thirty-seventh balloon ascent of

Blanchard; thanks to some ‘noble donor’ for the gift of a dog called ‘Finette’; a passport for ‘Monsieur de Casanova, Venitien, allant d’ici en Hollande, October 13, 1758 (Ce Passeport bon pour quinze jours)’, together with an order for post-horses, gratis, from Paris to Bordeaux and Bayonne.’

Occasionally, one gets a glimpse into his daily life at Dux, as in this note, scribbled on a fragment of paper (here and always I translate the French literally): ‘I beg you to tell my servant what the biscuits are that I like to eat; dipped in wine, to fortify my stomach. I believe that they can all be found at Roman’s.’ Usually, however, these notes, though often suggested by something closely personal, branch off into more general considerations; or else begin with general considerations, and end with a case in point. Thus, for instance, a fragment of three pages begins: ‘A compliment which is only made to gild the pill is a positive impertinence, and Monsieur Bailli is nothing but a charlatan; the monarch ought to have spit in his face, but the monarch trembled with fear.’ A manuscript entitled ‘Essai d’Egoisme,’ dated, ‘Dux, this 27th June, 1769,’ contains, in the midst of various reflections, an offer to let his ‘appartement’ in return for enough money to ‘tranquillise for six months two Jew creditors at Prague.’ Another manuscript is headed ‘Pride and Folly,’ and begins with a long series of antitheses, such as: ‘All fools are not proud, and all proud men are fools. Many fools are happy, all proud men are unhappy.’ On the same sheet follows this instance or application:

Whether it is possible to compose a Latin distich of the greatest beauty without knowing either the Latin language or prosody. We must examine the possibility and the impossibility, and afterwards see who is the man who says he is the author of the distich, for there are extraordinary people in the world. My brother, in short, ought to have composed the distich, because he says so, and because he confided it to me tete-’a-tete. I had, it is true, difficulty in believing him; but what is one to do! Either one must believe, or suppose him capable of telling a lie which could only be told by a fool; and that is impossible, for all Europe knows that my brother is not a fool.

Here, as so often in these manuscripts, we seem to see Casanova thinking on paper. He uses scraps of paper (sometimes the blank page of a letter, on the other side of which we see the address) as a kind of informal diary; and it is characteristic of him, of the man of infinitely curious mind, which this adventurer really was, that there are so few merely personal notes among these casual jottings. Often, they are purely abstract; at times, metaphysical ‘jeux d’esprit,’ like the sheet of fourteen ‘Different Wagers,’ which begins:

I wager that it is not true that a man who weighs a hundred pounds will weigh more if you kill him. I wager that if there is any difference, he will weigh less. I wager that diamond powder has not sufficient force to kill a man.

Side by side with these fanciful excursions into science, come more serious ones, as in the note on Algebra, which traces its progress since the year 1494, before which ‘it had only arrived at the solution of problems of the second degree, inclusive.’ A scrap of paper tells us that Casanova ‘did not like regular towns.’ ‘I like,’ he says, ‘Venice, Rome, Florence, Milan, Constantinople, Genoa.’ Then he becomes abstract and inquisitive again, and writes two pages, full of curious, out-of-the-way learning, on the name of Paradise:

The name of Paradise is a name in Genesis which indicates a place of pleasure (lieu voluptueux): this term is Persian. This place of pleasure was made by God before he had created man.

It may be remembered that Casanova quarrelled with Voltaire, because Voltaire had told him frankly that his translation of L’Ecossaise was a bad translation. It is piquant to read another note written in this style of righteous indignation:

Voltaire, the hardy Voltaire, whose pen is without bit or bridle; Voltaire, who devoured the Bible, and ridiculed our dogmas, doubts, and after having made proselytes to impiety, is not ashamed, being reduced to the extremity of life, to ask for the sacraments, and to cover his body with more relics than St. Louis had at Amboise.

Here is an argument more in keeping with the tone of the Memoirs:

A girl who is pretty and good, and as virtuous as you please, ought not to take it ill that a man, carried away by her charms, should set himself to the task of making their conquest. If this man cannot please her by any means, even if his passion be criminal, she ought never to take offence at it, nor treat him unkindly; she ought to be gentle, and pity him, if she does not love him, and think it enough to keep invincibly hold upon her own duty.

Occasionally he touches upon aesthetical matters, as in a fragment which begins with this liberal definition of beauty:

Harmony makes beauty, says M. de S. P. (Bernardin de St. Pierre), but the definition is too short, if he thinks he has said everything. Here is mine. Remember that the subject is metaphysical. An object really beautiful ought to seem beautiful to all whose eyes fall upon it. That is all; there is nothing more to be said.

At times we have an anecdote and its commentary, perhaps jotted down for use in that latter part of the Memoirs which was never written, or which has been lost. Here is a single sheet, dated 'this 2nd September, 1791,' and headed Souvenir:

The Prince de Rosenberg said to me, as we went down stairs, that Madame de Rosenberg was dead, and asked me if the Comte de Waldstein had in the library the illustration of the Villa d'Altichiero, which the Emperor had asked for in vain at the city library of Prague, and when I answered 'yes,' he gave an equivocal laugh. A moment afterwards, he asked me if he might tell the Emperor. 'Why not, monseigneur? It is not a secret, 'Is His Majesty coming to Dux?' 'If he goes to Oberlaitensdorf (sic) he will go to Dux, too; and he may ask you for it, for there is a monument there which relates to him when he was Grand Duke.' 'In that case, His Majesty can also see my critical remarks on the Egyptian prints.'

The Emperor asked me this morning, 6th October, how I employed my time at Dux, and I told him that I was making an Italian anthology. 'You have all the Italians, then?' 'All, sire.' See what a lie leads to. If I had not lied in saying that I was making an anthology, I should not have found myself obliged to lie again in saying that we have all the Italian poets. If the Emperor comes to Dux, I shall kill myself.

'They say that this Dux is a delightful spot,' says Casanova in one of the most personal of his notes, 'and I see that it might be for many; but not for me, for what delights me in my old age is independent of the place which I inhabit. When I do not sleep I dream, and when I am tired of dreaming I blacken paper, then I read, and most often reject all that my pen has vomited.' Here we see him blackening paper, on every occasion, and for every purpose. In one bundle I found an unfinished story about Roland, and some adventure with women in a cave; then a 'Meditation on arising from sleep, 19th May 1789'; then a 'Short Reflection of a Philosopher who finds himself thinking of procuring his own death. At Dux, on getting out of bed on 13th October 1793, day dedicated to St. Lucy, memorable in my too long life.' A big budget, containing cryptograms, is headed 'Grammatical Lottery'; and there is the title-page of a treatise on The Duplication of the Hexahedron, demonstrated geometrically to all the Universities and all the Academies of Europe.' [See Charles Henry, Les Connaissances Mathimatiques de Casanova. Rome, 1883.] There are innumerable verses, French and Italian, in all stages, occasionally attaining the finality of these lines, which appear in half a dozen tentative forms:

'Sans mystere point de plaisirs,
Sans silence point de mystere.
Charme divin de mes loisirs,
Solitude! que tu mes chere!

Then there are a number of more or less complete manuscripts of some extent. There is the manuscript of the translation of Homer's 'Iliad, in ottava rima (published in Venice, 1775-8); of the 'Histoire de Venise,' of the 'Icosameron,' a curious book published in 1787, purporting to be 'translated from English,' but really an original work of Casanova; 'Philocalies sur les Sottises des Mortels,' a long manuscript never published; the sketch and beginning of 'Le Pollmarque, ou la Calomnie demasquee par la presence d'esprit. Tragicomedie en trois actes, composed a Dux dans le mois de Juin de l'Annee, 1791,' which recurs again under the form of the 'Polemoscope: La Lorgnette menteuse ou la Calomnie demasquge,' acted before the Princess de Ligne, at her chateau at Teplitz, 1791. There is a treatise in Italian, 'Delle Passioni'; there are long dialogues, such as 'Le Philosophe et le Theologien', and 'Reve': 'Dieu-Moi'; there is the 'Songe d'un Quart d'Heure', divided into minutes; there is the very lengthy criticism of 'Bernardin de Saint-Pierre'; there is the 'Confutation d'une Censure indiscrate qu'on lit dans la Gazette de Iena, 19 Juin 1789'; with another large manuscript, unfortunately imperfect, first called 'L'Insulte', and then 'Placet au Public', dated 'Dux, this 2nd March, 1790,' referring to the same criticism on the ‘Icosameron’ and the ‘Fuite des Prisons. L’Histoire de ma Fuite des Prisons de la Republique de Venise, qu’on appelle les Plombs’, which is the first draft of the most famous part of the Memoirs, was published at Leipzig in 1788; and, having read it in the Marcian Library at Venice, I am not surprised to learn from this indignant document that it was printed ‘under the care of a young Swiss, who had the talent to commit a hundred faults of orthography.’

III.

We come now to the documents directly relating to the Memoirs, and among these are several attempts at a preface, in which we see the actual preface coming gradually into form. One is entitled ‘Casanova au Lecteur’, another ‘Histoire de mon Existence’, and a third Preface. There is also a brief and characteristic ‘Precis de ma vie’, dated November 17, 1797. Some of these have been printed in Le Livre, 1887. But by far the most important manuscript that I discovered, one which, apparently, I am the first to discover, is a manuscript entitled ‘Extrait du Chapitre 4 et 5. It is written on paper similar to that on which the Memoirs are written; the pages are numbered 104-148; and though it is described as Extrait, it seems to contain, at all events, the greater part of the missing chapters to which I have already referred, Chapters IV. and V. of the last volume of the Memoirs. In this manuscript we find Armeline and Scolastica, whose story is interrupted by the abrupt ending of Chapter III.; we find Mariuccia of Vol. VII, Chapter IX., who married a hairdresser; and we find also Jaconine, whom Casanova recognises as his daughter, ‘much prettier than Sophia, the daughter of Therese Pompeati, whom I had left at London.’ It is curious that this very important manuscript, which supplies the one missing link in the Memoirs, should never have been discovered by any of the few people who have had the opportunity of looking over the Dux manuscripts. I am inclined to explain it by the fact that the case in which I found this manuscript contains some papers not relating to Casanova. Probably, those who looked into this case looked no further. I have told Herr Brockhaus of my discovery, and I hope to see Chapters IV. and V. in their places when the long-looked-for edition of the complete text is at length given to the world.

Another manuscript which I found tells with great piquancy the whole story of the Abbe de Brosses’ ointment, the curing of the Princess de Conti’s pimples, and the birth of the Duc de Montpensier, which is told very briefly, and with much less point, in the Memoirs (vol. iii., p. 327). Readers of the Memoirs will remember the duel at Warsaw with Count Branicki in 1766 (vol. X., pp. 274-320), an affair which attracted a good deal of attention at the time, and of which there is an account in a letter from the Abbe Taruffi to the dramatist, Francesco Albergati, dated Warsaw, March 19, 1766, quoted in Ernesto Masi's Life of Albergati, Bologna, 1878. A manuscript at Dux in Casanova's handwriting gives an account of this duel in the third person; it is entitled, 'Description de l'affaire arrivee a Varsovie le 5 Mars, 1766'. D'Ancona, in the Nuova Antologia (vol. lxvii., p. 412), referring to the Abbe Taruffi's account, mentions what he considers to be a slight discrepancy: that Taruffi refers to the danseuse, about whom the duel was fought, as La Casacci, while Casanova refers to her as La Catai. In this manuscript Casanova always refers to her as La Casacci; La Catai is evidently one of M. Laforgue's arbitrary alterations of the text.

In turning over another manuscript, I was caught by the name Charpillon, which every reader of the Memoirs will remember as the name of the harpy by whom Casanova suffered so much in London, in 1763-4. This manuscript begins by saying: 'I have been in London for six months and have been to see them (that is, the mother and daughter) in their own house,' where he finds nothing but 'swindlers, who cause all who go there to lose their money in gambling.' This manuscript adds some details to the story told in the ninth and tenth volumes of the Memoirs, and refers to the meeting with the Charpillons four and a half years before, described in Volume V., pages 428-485. It is written in a tone of great indignation. Elsewhere, I found a letter written by Casanova, but not signed, referring to an anonymous letter which he had received in reference to the Charpillons, and ending: 'My handwriting is known.' It was not until the last that I came upon great bundles of letters addressed to Casanova, and so carefully preserved that little scraps of paper, on which postscripts are written, are still in their places. One still sees the seals on the backs of many of the letters, on paper which has slightly yellowed with age, leaving the ink, however, almost always fresh. They come from Venice, Paris, Rome, Prague, Bayreuth, The Hague, Genoa, Fiume, Trieste, etc., and are addressed to as many places, often poste restante. Many are letters from women, some in beautiful handwriting, on thick paper; others on scraps of paper, in painful hands, ill-spelt. A Countess writes pitifully, imploring help; one protests her love, in spite of the 'many chagrins' he has caused her;

another asks ‘how they are to live together’; another laments that a report has gone about that she is secretly living with him, which may harm his reputation. Some are in French, more in Italian. ‘Mon cher Giacometto’, writes one woman, in French; ‘Carissimo a Amatissimo’, writes another, in Italian. These letters from women are in some confusion, and are in need of a good deal of sorting over and rearranging before their full extent can be realised. Thus I found letters in the same handwriting separated by letters in other handwritings; many are unsigned, or signed only by a single initial; many are undated, or dated only with the day of the week or month. There are a great many letters, dating from 1779 to 1786, signed ‘Francesca Buschini,’ a name which I cannot identify; they are written in Italian, and one of them begins: ‘Unico Mio vero Amico’ (‘my only true friend’). Others are signed ‘Virginia B.’; one of these is dated, ‘Forli, October 15, 1773.’ There is also a ‘Theresa B.,’ who writes from Genoa. I was at first unable to identify the writer of a whole series of letters in French, very affectionate and intimate letters, usually unsigned, occasionally signed ‘B.’ She calls herself votre petite amie; or she ends with a half-smiling, half-reproachful ‘goodnight, and sleep better than I’ In one letter, sent from Paris in 1759, she writes: ‘Never believe me, but when I tell you that I love you, and that I shall love you always: In another letter, ill-spelt, as her letters often are, she writes: ‘Be assured that evil tongues, vapours, calumny, nothing can change my heart, which is yours entirely, and has no will to change its master.’ Now, it seems to me that these letters must be from Manon Baletti, and that they are the letters referred to in the sixth volume of the Memoirs. We read there (page 60) how on Christmas Day, 1759, Casanova receives a letter from Manon in Paris, announcing her marriage with ‘M. Blondel, architect to the King, and member of his Academy’; she returns him his letters, and begs him to return hers, or burn them. Instead of doing so he allows Esther to read them, intending to burn them afterwards. Esther begs to be allowed to keep the letters, promising to ‘preserve them religiously all her life.’ ‘These letters,’ he says, ‘numbered more than two hundred, and the shortest were of four pages: Certainly there are not two hundred of them at Dux, but it seems to me highly probable that Casanova made a final selection from Manon’s letters, and that it is these which I have found.

But, however this may be, I was fortunate enough to find the set of letters which I was most anxious to find the letters from Henriette, whose loss every writer on Casanova has lamented. Henriette, it will be remembered, makes her first appearance at Cesena, in the year 1748; after their meeting at Geneva, she reappears, romantically ‘a propos’, twenty-two years later, at Aix in Provence; and she writes to Casanova proposing ‘un commerce epistolaire’, asking him what he has done since his escape from prison, and promising to do her best to tell him all that has happened to her during the long interval. After quoting her letter, he adds: ‘I replied to her, accepting the correspondence that she offered me, and telling her briefly all my vicissitudes. She related to me in turn, in some forty letters, all the history of her life. If she dies before me, I shall add these letters to these Memoirs; but to-day she is still alive, and always happy, though now old.’ It has never been known what became of these letters, and why they were not added to the Memoirs. I have found a great quantity of them, some signed with her married name in full, ‘Henriette de Schnetzmann,’ and I am inclined to think that she survived Casanova, for one of the letters is dated Bayreuth, 1798, the year of Casanova’s death. They are remarkably charming, written with a mixture of piquancy and distinction; and I will quote the characteristic beginning and end of the last letter I was able to find. It begins: ‘No, it is impossible to be sulky with you!’ and ends: ‘If I become vicious, it is you, my Mentor, who make me so, and I cast my sins upon you. Even if I were damned I should still be your most devoted friend, Henriette de Schnetzmann.’ Casanova was twenty-three when he met Henriette; now, herself an old woman, she writes to him when he is seventy-three, as if the fifty years that had passed were blotted out in the faithful affection of her memory. How many more discreet and less changing lovers have had the quality of constancy in change, to which this life-long correspondence bears witness? Does it not suggest a view of Casanova not quite the view of all the world? To me it shows the real man, who perhaps of all others best understood what Shelley meant when he said:

True love in this differs from gold or clay

That to divide is not to take away.

But, though the letters from women naturally interested me the most, they were only a certain proportion of the great mass of correspondence which I turned over. There were letters from Carlo Angiolini, who was afterwards to bring the manuscript of the Memoirs to Brockhaus; from Balbi, the monk with whom Casanova escaped from the Piombi; from the Marquis Albergati, playwright, actor, and eccentric, of whom there is some account in the Memoirs; from the Marquis Mosca, ‘a distinguished man of letters whom I was anxious to see,’ Casanova tells us in the same volume in which he describes his visit to the Moscas at Pesaro; from Zulian, brother of the Duchess of Fiano; from Richard Lorrain, ‘bel homme, ayant de l’esprit, le ton et le gout de la bonne societe’, who came to settle at Gorizia in 1773, while Casanova was there; from the Procurator Morosini, whom he speaks of in the Memoirs as his ‘protector,’ and as one of those through whom he obtained permission to return to Venice. His other ‘protector,’ the ‘avogador’ Zaguri, had, says Casanova, ‘since the affair of the Marquis Albergati, carried on a most interesting correspondence with me’; and in fact I found a bundle of no less than a hundred and thirty-eight letters from him, dating from 1784 to 1798. Another bundle contains one hundred and seventy-two letters from Count Lamberg. In the Memoirs Casanova says, referring to his visit to Augsburg at the end of 1761:

> I used to spend my evenings in a very agreeable manner at the house of Count Max de Lamberg, who resided at the court of the Prince-Bishop with the title of Grand Marshal. What particularly attached me to Count Lamberg was his literary talent. A first-rate scholar, learned to a degree, he has published several much esteemed works. I carried on an exchange of letters with him which ended only with his death four years ago in 1792.

Casanova tells us that, at his second visit to Augsburg in the early part of 1767, he ‘supped with Count Lamberg two or three times a week,’ during the four months he was there. It is with this year that the letters I have found begin: they end with the year of his death, 1792. In his ‘Memorial d’un Mondain’ Lamberg refers to Casanova as ‘a man known in literature, a man of profound knowledge.’ In the first edition of 1774, he laments that ‘a man such as M. de S. Galt’ should not yet have been taken back into favour by the Venetian government, and in the second edition, 1775, rejoices over Casanova’s return to Venice. Then there are letters from Da Ponte, who tells the story of Casanova’s curious relations with Mme. d’Urfe, in his ‘Memorie scritte da esso’, 1829; from Pittoni, Bono, and others mentioned in different parts of the Memoirs, and from some dozen others who are not mentioned in them. The only letters in the whole collection that have been published are those from the Prince de Ligne and from Count Koenig.

IV.

Casanova tells us in his Memoirs that, during his later years at Dux, he had only been able to ‘hinder black melancholy from devouring his poor existence, or sending him out of his mind,’ by writing ten or twelve hours a day. The copious manuscripts at Dux show us how persistently he was at work on a singular variety of subjects, in addition to the Memoirs, and to the various books which he published during those years. We see him jotting down everything that comes into his head, for his own amusement, and certainly without any thought of publication; engaging in learned controversies, writing treatises on abstruse mathematical problems, composing comedies to be acted before Count Waldstein’s neighbours, practising verse-writing in two languages, indeed with more patience than success, writing philosophical dialogues in which God and himself are the speakers, and keeping up an extensive correspondence, both with distinguished men and with delightful women. His mental activity, up to the age of seventy-three, is as prodigious as the activity which he had expended in living a multiform and incalculable life. As in life everything living had interested him so in his retirement from life every idea makes its separate appeal to him; and he welcomes ideas with the same impartiality with which he had welcomed adventures. Passion has intellectualised itself, and remains not less passionate. He wishes to do everything, to compete with every one; and it is only after having spent seven years in heaping up miscellaneous learning, and exercising his faculties in many directions, that he turns to look back over his own past life, and to live it over again in memory, as he writes down the narrative of what had interested him most in it. ‘I write in the hope that my history will never see the broad day light of publication,’ he tells us, scarcely meaning it, we may be sure, even in the moment of hesitancy which may naturally come to him. But if ever a book was written for the pleasure of writing it, it was this one; and an autobiography written for oneself is not likely to be anything but frank.

‘Truth is the only God I have ever adored,’ he tells us: and we now know how truthful he was in saying so. I have only summarised in this article the most important confirmations of his exact accuracy in facts and dates; the number could be extended indefinitely. In the manuscripts we find innumerable further confirmations; and their chief value as testimony is that they tell us nothing which we should not have already known, if we had merely taken Casanova at his word. But it is not always easy to take people at their own word, when they are writing about themselves; and the world has been very loth to believe in Casanova as he represents himself. It has been specially loth to believe that he is telling the truth when he tells us about his adventures with women. But the letters contained among these manuscripts shows us the women of Casanova writing to him with all the fervour and all the fidelity which he attributes to them; and they show him to us in the character of as fervid and faithful a lover. In every fact, every detail, and in the whole mental impression which they convey, these manuscripts bring before us the Casanova of the Memoirs. As I seemed to come upon Casanova at home, it was as if I came upon old friend, already perfectly known to me, before I had made my pilgrimage to Dux.

1902

TRANSLATOR’S PREFACE

A SERIES OF adventures wilder and more fantastic than the wildest of romances, written down with the exactitude of a business diary; a view of men and cities from Naples to Berlin, from Madrid and London to Constantinople and St. Petersburg; the ‘vie intime’ of the eighteenth century depicted by a man, who to-day sat with cardinals and saluted crowned heads, and to morrow lurked in dens of profligacy and crime; a book of confessions penned without reticence and without penitence; a record of forty years of “occult” charlatanism; a collection of tales of successful imposture, of ‘bonnes fortunes’, of marvellous escapes, of transcendent audacity, told with the humour of Smollett and the delicate wit of Voltaire. Who is there interested in men and letters, and in the life of the past, who would not cry, “Where can such a book as this be found?”

Yet the above catalogue is but a brief outline, a bare and meagre summary, of the book known as “THE MEMOIRS OF CASANOVA”; a work absolutely unique in literature. He who opens these wonderful pages is as one who sits in a theatre and looks across the gloom, not on a stage-play, but on another and a vanished world. The curtain draws up, and suddenly a hundred and fifty years are rolled away, and in bright light stands out before us the whole life of the past; the gay dresses, the polished wit, the careless morals, and all the revel and dancing of those merry years before the mighty deluge of the Revolution. The palaces and marble stairs of old Venice are no longer desolate, but thronged with scarlet-robed senators, prisoners with the doom of the Ten upon their heads cross the Bridge of Sighs, at dead of night the nun slips out of the convent gate to the dark canal where a gondola is waiting, we assist at the ‘parties fines’ of cardinals, and we see the bank made at faro. Venice gives place to the assembly rooms of Mrs. Cornely and the fast taverns of the London of 1760; we pass from Versailles to the Winter Palace of St. Petersburg in the days of Catherine, from the policy of the Great Frederick to the lewd mirth of strolling-players, and the presence-chamber of the Vatican is succeeded by an intrigue in a garret. It is indeed a new experience to read this history of a man who, refraining from nothing, has concealed nothing; of one who stood in the courts of Louis the Magnificent before Madame de Pompadour and the nobles of the Ancien Regime, and had an affair with an adventuress of Denmark Street, Soho; who was bound over to keep the peace by Fielding, and knew Cagliostro. The friend of popes and kings and noblemen, and of all the male and female ruffians and vagabonds of Europe, abbe, soldier, charlatan, gamester, financier, diplomatist, viveur, philosopher, virtuoso, "chemist, fiddler, and buffoon," each of these, and all of these was Giacomo Casanova, Chevalier de Seingalt, Knight of the Golden Spur.

And not only are the Memoirs a literary curiosity; they are almost equally curious from a bibliographical point of view. The manuscript was written in French and came into the possession of the publisher Brockhaus, of Leipzig, who had it translated into German, and printed. From this German edition, M. Aubert de Vitry re-translated the work into French, but omitted about a fourth of the matter, and this mutilated and worthless version is frequently purchased by unwary bibliophiles. In the year 1826, however, Brockhaus, in order presumably to protect his property, printed the entire text of the original MS. in French, for the first time, and in this complete form, containing a large number of anecdotes and incidents not to be found in the spurious version, the work was not acceptable to the authorities, and was consequently rigorously suppressed. Only a few copies sent out for presentation or for review are known to have escaped, and from one of these rare copies the present translation has been made and solely for private circulation.

In conclusion, both translator and 'editeur' have done their utmost to present the English Casanova in a dress worthy of the wonderful and witty original.

AUTHOR’S PREFACE

I WILL BEGIN with this confession: whatever I have done in the course of my life, whether it be good or evil, has been done freely; I am a free agent.

The doctrine of the Stoics or of any other sect as to the force of Destiny is a bubble engendered by the imagination of man, and is near akin to Atheism. I not only believe in one God, but my faith as a Christian is also grafted upon that tree of philosophy which has never spoiled anything.

I believe in the existence of an immaterial God, the Author and Master of all beings and all things, and I feel that I never had any doubt of His existence, from the fact that I have always relied upon His providence, prayed to Him in my distress, and that He has always granted my prayers. Despair brings death, but prayer does away with despair; and when a man has prayed he feels himself supported by new confidence and endowed with power to act. As to the means employed by the Sovereign Master of human beings to avert impending dangers from those who beseech His assistance, I confess that the knowledge of them is above the intelligence of man, who can but wonder and adore. Our ignorance becomes our only resource, and happy, truly happy; are those who cherish their ignorance! Therefore must we pray to God, and believe that He has granted the favour we have been praying for, even when in appearance it seems the reverse. As to the position which our body ought to assume when we address ourselves to the Creator, a line of Petrarch settles it:

‘Con le ginocchia della mente inchine.’

Man is free, but his freedom ceases when he has no faith in it; and the greater power he ascribes to faith, the more he deprives himself of that power which God has given to him when He endowed him with the gift of reason. Reason is a particle of the Creator’s divinity. When we use it with a spirit of humility and justice we are certain to please the Giver of that precious gift. God ceases to be God only for those who can admit the possibility of His non-existence, and that conception is in itself the most severe punishment they can suffer.

Man is free; yet we must not suppose that he is at liberty to do everything he pleases, for he becomes a slave the moment he allows his actions to be ruled by passion. The man who has sufficient power over himself to wait until his nature has recovered its even balance is the truly wise man, but such beings are seldom met with.

The reader of these Memoirs will discover that I never had any fixed aim before my eyes, and that my system, if it can be called a system, has been to glide away unconcernedly on the stream of life, trusting to the wind wherever it led. How many changes arise from such an independent mode of life! My success and my misfortunes, the bright and the dark days I have gone through, everything has proved to me that in this world, either physical or moral, good comes out of evil just as well as evil comes out of good. My errors will point to thinking men the various roads, and will teach them the great art of treading on the brink of the precipice without falling into it. It is only necessary to have courage, for strength without self-confidence is useless. I have often met with happiness after some imprudent step which ought to have brought ruin upon me, and although passing a vote of censure upon myself I would thank God for his mercy. But, by way of compensation, dire misfortune has befallen me in consequence of actions prompted by the most cautious wisdom. This would humble me; yet conscious that I had acted rightly I would easily derive comfort from that conviction.

In spite of a good foundation of sound morals, the natural offspring of the Divine principles which had been early rooted in my heart, I have been throughout my life the victim of my senses; I have found delight in losing the right path, I have constantly lived in the midst of error, with no consolation but the consciousness of my being mistaken. Therefore, dear reader, I trust that, far from attaching to my history the character of impudent boasting, you will find in my Memoirs only the characteristic proper to a general confession, and that my narratory style will be the manner neither of a repenting sinner, nor of a man ashamed to acknowledge his frolics. They are the follies inherent to youth; I make sport of them, and, if you are kind, you will not yourself refuse them a good-natured smile. You will be amused when you see that I have more than once deceived without the slightest qualm of conscience, both knaves and fools. As to the deceit perpetrated upon women, let it pass, for, when love is in the way, men and women as a general rule dupe each other. But on the score of fools it is a very different matter. I always feel the greatest bliss when I recollect those I have caught in my snares, for they generally are insolent, and so self-conceited that they challenge wit. We avenge intellect when we dupe a fool, and it is a victory not to be despised for a fool is covered with steel and it is often very hard to find his vulnerable part. In fact, to gull a fool seems to me an exploit worthy of a witty man. I have felt in my very blood, ever since I was born, a most unconquerable hatred towards the whole tribe of fools, and it arises from the fact that I feel myself a blockhead whenever I am in their company. I am very far from placing them in the same class with those men whom we call stupid, for the latter are stupid only from deficient education, and I rather like them. I have met with some of them — very honest fellows, who, with all their stupidity, had a kind of intelligence and an upright good sense, which cannot be the characteristics of fools. They are like eyes veiled with the cataract, which, if the disease could be removed, would be very beautiful.

Dear reader, examine the spirit of this preface, and you will at once guess at my purpose. I have written a preface because I wish you to know me thoroughly before you begin the reading of my Memoirs. It is only in a coffee-room or at a table d'hote that we like to converse with strangers.

I have written the history of my life, and I have a perfect right to do so; but am I wise in throwing it before a public of which I know nothing but evil? No, I am aware it is sheer folly, but I want to be busy, I want to laugh, and why should I deny myself this gratification?

'Expulit elleboro morbum bilemque mero.'

An ancient author tells us somewhere, with the tone of a pedagogue, if you have not done anything worthy of being recorded, at least write something worthy of being read. It is a precept as beautiful as a diamond of the first water cut in England, but it cannot be applied to me, because I have not written either a novel, or the life of an illustrious character. Worthy or not, my life is my subject, and my subject is my life. I have lived without dreaming that I should ever take a fancy to write the history of my life, and, for that very reason, my Memoirs may claim from the reader an interest and a sympathy which they would not have obtained, had I always entertained the design to write them in my old age, and, still more, to publish them.

I have reached, in 1797, the age of three-score years and twelve; I can not say, Vixi, and I could not procure a more agreeable pastime than to relate my own adventures, and to cause pleasant laughter amongst the good company listening to me, from which I have received so many tokens of friendship, and in the midst of which I have ever lived. To enable me to write well, I have only to think that my readers will belong to that polite society:

‘Quoecunque dixi, si placuerint, dictavit auditor.’

Should there be a few intruders whom I can not prevent from perusing my Memoirs, I must find comfort in the idea that my history was not written for them.

By recollecting the pleasures I have had formerly, I renew them, I enjoy them a second time, while I laugh at the remembrance of troubles now past, and which I no longer feel. A member of this great universe, I speak to the air, and I fancy myself rendering an account of my administration, as a steward is wont to do before leaving his situation. For my future I have no concern, and as a true philosopher, I never would have any, for I know not what it may be: as a Christian, on the other hand, faith must believe without discussion, and the stronger it is, the more it keeps silent. I know that I have lived because I have felt, and, feeling giving me the knowledge of my existence, I know likewise that I shall exist no more when I shall have ceased to feel.

Should I perchance still feel after my death, I would no longer have any doubt, but I would most certainly give the lie to anyone asserting before me that I was dead.

The history of my life must begin by the earliest circumstance which my memory can evoke; it will therefore commence when I had attained the age of eight years and four months. Before that time, if to think is to live be a true axiom, I did not live, I could only lay claim to a state of vegetation. The mind of a human being is formed only of comparisons made in order to examine analogies, and therefore cannot precede the existence of memory. The mnemonic organ was developed in my head only eight years and four months after my birth; it is then that my soul began to be susceptible of receiving impressions. How is it possible for an immaterial substance, which can neither touch nor be touched to receive impressions? It is a mystery which man cannot unravel.

A certain philosophy, full of consolation, and in perfect accord with religion, pretends that the state of dependence in which the soul stands in relation to the senses and to the organs, is only incidental and transient, and that it will reach a condition of freedom and happiness when the death of the body shall have delivered it from that state of tyrannic subjection. This is very fine, but, apart from religion, where is the proof of it all? Therefore, as I cannot, from my own information, have a perfect certainty of my being immortal until the dissolution of my body has actually taken place, people must kindly bear with me, if I am in no hurry to obtain that certain knowledge, for, in my estimation, a knowledge to be gained at the cost of life is a rather expensive piece of information. In the mean time I worship God, laying every wrong action under an interdict which I endeavour to respect, and I loathe the wicked without doing them any injury. I only abstain from doing them any good, in the full belief that we ought not to cherish serpents.

As I must likewise say a few words respecting my nature and my temperament, I premise that the most indulgent of my readers is not likely to be the most dishonest or the least gifted with intelligence.

I have had in turn every temperament; phlegmatic in my infancy; sanguine in my youth; later on, bilious; and now I have a disposition which engenders melancholy, and most likely will never change. I always made my food congenial to my constitution, and my health was always excellent. I learned very early that our health is always impaired by some excess either of food or abstinence, and I never had any physician except myself. I am bound to add that the excess in too little has ever proved in me more dangerous than the excess in too much; the last may cause indigestion, but the first causes death.

Now, old as I am, and although enjoying good digestive organs, I must have only one meal every day; but I find a set-off to that privation in my delightful sleep, and in the ease which I experience in writing down my thoughts without having recourse to paradox or sophism, which would be calculated to deceive myself even more than my readers, for I never could make up my mind to palm counterfeit coin upon them if I knew it to be such.

The sanguine temperament rendered me very sensible to the attractions of voluptuousness: I was always cheerful and ever ready to pass from one enjoyment to another, and I was at the same time very skillful in inventing new pleasures. Thence, I suppose, my natural disposition to make fresh acquaintances, and to break with them so readily, although always for a good reason, and never through mere fickleness. The errors caused by temperament are not to be corrected, because our temperament is perfectly independent of our strength: it is not the case with our character. Heart and head are the constituent parts of character; temperament has almost nothing to do with it, and, therefore, character is dependent upon education, and is susceptible of being corrected and improved.

I leave to others the decision as to the good or evil tendencies of my character, but such as it is it shines upon my countenance, and there it can easily be detected by any physiognomist. It is only on the fact that character can be read; there it lies exposed to the view. It is worthy of remark that men who have no peculiar cast of countenance, and there are a great many such men, are likewise totally deficient in peculiar characteristics, and we may establish the rule that the varieties in physiognomy are equal to the differences in character. I am aware that throughout my life my actions have received their impulse more from the force of feeling than from the wisdom of reason, and this has led me to acknowledge that my conduct has been dependent upon my nature more than upon my mind; both are generally at war, and in the midst of their continual collisions I have never found in me sufficient mind to balance my nature, or enough strength in my nature to counteract the power of my mind. But enough of this, for there is truth in the old saying: ‘Si brevis esse volo, obscurus fio’, and I believe that, without offending against modesty, I can apply to myself the following words of my dear Virgil:

‘Nec sum adeo informis: nuper me in littore vidi

Cum placidum ventis staret mare.’

The chief business of my life has always been to indulge my senses; I never knew anything of greater importance. I felt myself born for the fair sex, I have ever loved it dearly, and I have been loved by it as often and as much as I could. I have likewise always had a great weakness for good living, and I ever felt passionately fond of every object which excited my curiosity.

I have had friends who have acted kindly towards me, and it has been my good fortune to have it in my power to give them substantial proofs of my gratitude. I have had also bitter enemies who have persecuted me, and whom I have not crushed simply because I could not do it. I never would have forgiven them, had I not lost the memory of all the injuries they had heaped upon me. The man who forgets does not forgive, he only loses the remembrance of the harm inflicted on him; forgiveness is the offspring of a feeling of heroism, of a noble heart, of a generous mind, whilst forgetfulness is only the result of a weak memory, or of an easy carelessness, and still oftener of a natural desire for calm and quietness. Hatred, in the course of time, kills the unhappy wretch who delights in nursing it in his bosom.

Should anyone bring against me an accusation of sensuality he would be wrong, for all the fierceness of my senses never caused me to neglect any of my duties. For the same excellent reason, the accusation of drunkenness ought not to have been brought against Homer:

‘Laudibus arguitur vini vinosus Homerus.’

I have always been fond of highly-seasoned, rich dishes, such as macaroni prepared by a skilful Neapolitan cook, the olla-podrida of the Spaniards, the glutinous codfish from Newfoundland, game with a strong flavour, and cheese the perfect state of which is attained when the tiny animaculae formed from its very essence begin to shew signs of life. As for women, I have always found the odour of my beloved ones exceeding pleasant.

What depraved tastes! some people will exclaim. Are you not ashamed to confess such inclinations without blushing! Dear critics, you make me laugh heartily. Thanks to my coarse tastes, I believe myself happier than other men, because I am convinced that they enhance my enjoyment. Happy are those who know how to obtain pleasures without injury to anyone; insane are those who fancy that the Almighty can enjoy the sufferings, the pains, the fasts and abstinences which they offer to Him as a sacrifice, and that His love is granted only to those who tax themselves so foolishly. God can only demand from His creatures the practice of virtues the seed of which He has sown in their soul, and all He has given unto us has been intended for our happiness; self-love, thirst for praise, emulation, strength, courage, and a power of which nothing can deprive us — the power of self-destruction, if, after due calculation, whether false or just, we unfortunately reckon death to be advantageous. This is the strongest proof of our moral freedom so much attacked by sophists. Yet this power of self-destruction is repugnant to nature, and has been rightly opposed by every religion.

A so-called free-thinker told me at one time that I could not consider myself a philosopher if I placed any faith in revelation. But when we accept it readily in physics, why should we reject it in religious matters? The form alone is the point in question. The spirit speaks to the spirit, and not to the ears. The principles of everything we are acquainted with must necessarily have been revealed to those from whom we have received them by the great, supreme principle, which contains them all. The bee erecting its hive, the swallow building its nest, the ant constructing its cave, and the spider warping its web, would never have done anything but for a previous and everlasting revelation. We must either believe that it is so, or admit that matter is endowed with thought. But as we dare not pay such a compliment to matter, let us stand by revelation.

The great philosopher, who having deeply studied nature, thought he had found the truth because he acknowledged nature as God, died too soon. Had he lived a little while longer, he would have gone much farther, and yet his journey would have been but a short one, for finding himself in his Author, he could not have denied Him: In Him we move and have our being. He would have found Him inscrutable, and thus would have ended his journey.

God, great principle of all minor principles, God, who is Himself without a principle, could not conceive Himself, if, in order to do it, He required to know His own principle.

Oh, blissful ignorance! Spinosa, the virtuous Spinosa, died before he could possess it. He would have died a learned man and with a right to the reward his virtue deserved, if he had only supposed his soul to be immortal!

It is not true that a wish for reward is unworthy of real virtue, and throws a blemish upon its purity. Such a pretension, on the contrary, helps to sustain virtue, man being himself too weak to consent to be virtuous only for his own ‘gratification. I hold as a myth that Amphiaraus who preferred to be good than to seem good. In fact, I do not believe there is an honest man alive without some pretension, and here is mine.

I pretend to the friendship, to the esteem, to the gratitude of my readers. I claim their gratitude, if my Memoirs can give them instruction and pleasure; I claim their esteem if, rendering me justice, they find more good qualities in me than faults, and I claim their friendship as soon as they deem me worthy of it by the candour and the good faith with which I abandon myself to their judgment, without disguise and exactly as I am in reality. They will find that I have always had such sincere love for truth, that I have often begun by telling stories for the purpose of getting truth to enter the heads of those who could not appreciate its charms. They will not form a wrong opinion of me when they see one emptying the purse of my friends to satisfy my fancies, for those friends entertained idle schemes, and by giving them the hope of success I trusted to disappointment to cure them. I would deceive them to make them wiser, and I did not consider myself guilty, for I applied to my own enjoyment sums of money which would have been lost in the vain pursuit of possessions denied by nature; therefore I was not actuated by any avaricious rapacity. I might think myself guilty if I were rich now, but I have nothing. I have squandered everything; it is my comfort and my justification. The money was intended for extravagant follies, and by applying it to my own frolics I did not turn it into a very different, channel.

If I were deceived in my hope to please, I candidly confess I would regret it, but not sufficiently so to repent having written my Memoirs, for, after all, writing them has given me pleasure. Oh, cruel ennui! It must be by mistake that those who have invented the torments of hell have forgotten to ascribe thee the first place among them. Yet I am bound to own that I entertain a great fear of hisses; it is too natural a fear for me to boast of being insensible to them, and I cannot find any solace in the idea that, when these Memoirs are published, I shall be no more. I cannot think without a shudder of contracting any obligation towards death: I hate death; for, happy or miserable, life is the only blessing which man possesses, and those who do not love it are unworthy of it. If we prefer honour to life, it is because life is blighted by infamy; and if, in the alternative, man sometimes throws away his life, philosophy must remain silent.

Oh, death, cruel death! Fatal law which nature necessarily rejects because thy very office is to destroy nature! Cicero says that death frees us from all pains and sorrows, but this great philosopher books all the expense without taking the receipts into account. I do not recollect if, when he wrote his ‘Tusculan Disputations’, his own Tullia was dead. Death is a monster which turns away from the great theatre an attentive hearer before the end of the play which deeply interests him, and this is reason enough to hate it.

All my adventures are not to be found in these Memoirs; I have left out those which might have offended the persons who have played a sorry part therein. In spite of this reserve, my readers will perhaps often think me indiscreet, and I am sorry for it. Should I perchance become wiser before I give up the ghost, I might burn every one of these sheets, but now I have not courage enough to do it.

It may be that certain love scenes will be considered too explicit, but let no one blame me, unless it be for lack of skill, for I ought not to be scolded because, in my old age, I can find no other enjoyment but that which recollections of the past afford to me. After all, virtuous and prudish readers are at liberty to skip over any offensive pictures, and I think it my duty to give them this piece of advice; so much the worse for those who may not read my preface; it is no fault of mine if they do not, for everyone ought to know that a preface is to a book what the play-bill is to a comedy; both must be read.

My Memoirs are not written for young persons who, in order to avoid false steps and slippery roads, ought to spend their youth in blissful ignorance, but for those who, having thorough experience of life, are no longer exposed to temptation, and who, having but too often gone through the fire, are like salamanders, and can be scorched by it no more. True virtue is but a habit, and I have no hesitation in saying that the really virtuous are those persons who can practice virtue without the slightest trouble; such persons are always full of toleration, and it is to them that my Memoirs are addressed.

I have written in French, and not in Italian, because the French language is more universal than mine, and the purists, who may criticise in my style some Italian turns will be quite right, but only in case it should prevent them from understanding me clearly. The Greeks admired Theophrastus in spite of his Eresian style, and the Romans delighted in their Livy in spite of his Patavinity. Provided I amuse my readers, it seems to me that I can claim the same indulgence. After all, every Italian reads Algarotti with pleasure, although his works are full of French idioms.

There is one thing worthy of notice: of all the living languages belonging to the republic of letters, the French tongue is the only one which has been condemned by its masters never to borrow in order to become richer, whilst all other languages, although richer in words than the French, plunder from it words and constructions of sentences, whenever they find that by such robbery they add something to their own beauty. Yet those who borrow the most from the French, are the most forward in trumpeting the poverty of that language, very likely thinking that such an accusation justifies their depredations. It is said that the French language has attained the apogee of its beauty, and that the smallest foreign loan would spoil it, but I make bold to assert that this is prejudice, for, although it certainly is the most clear, the most logical of all languages, it would be great temerity to affirm that it can never go farther or higher than it has gone. We all recollect that, in the days of Lulli, there was but one opinion of his music, yet Rameau came and everything was changed. The new impulse given to the French nation may open new and unexpected horizons, and new beauties, fresh perfections, may spring up from new combinations and from new wants.

The motto I have adopted justifies my digressions, and all the commentaries, perhaps too numerous, in which I indulge upon my various exploits: ‘Nequidquam sapit qui sibi non sapit’. For the same reason I have always felt a great desire to receive praise and applause from polite society:

‘Excitat auditor stadium, laudataque virtus

Crescit, et immensum gloria calcar habet.

I would willingly have displayed here the proud axiom: ‘Nemo laeditur nisi a se ipso’, had I not feared to offend the immense number of persons who, whenever anything goes wrong with them, are wont to exclaim, “It is no fault of mine!” I cannot deprive them of that small particle of comfort, for, were it not for it, they would soon feel hatred for themselves, and self-hatred often leads to the fatal idea of self-destruction.

As for myself I always willingly acknowledge my own self as the principal cause of every good or of every evil which may befall me; therefore I have always found myself capable of being my own pupil, and ready to love my teacher.

VENETIAN YEARS

EPISODE 1 — CHILDHOOD

CHAPTER I

My Family Pedigree — My Childhood

Don Jacob Casanova, the illegitimate son of Don Francisco Casanova, was a native of Saragosa, the capital of Aragon, and in the year of 1428 he carried off Dona Anna Palofax from her convent, on the day after she had taken the veil. He was secretary to King Alfonso. He ran away with her to Rome, where, after one year of imprisonment, the pope, Martin III., released Anna from her vows, and gave them the nuptial blessing at the instance of Don Juan Casanova, majordomo of the Vatican, and uncle of Don Jacob. All the children born from that marriage died in their infancy, with the exception of Don Juan, who, in 1475, married Donna Eleonora Albini, by whom he had a son, Marco Antonio.

In 1481, Don Juan, having killed an officer of the king of Naples, was compelled to leave Rome, and escaped to Como with his wife and his son; but having left that city to seek his fortune, he died while traveling with Christopher Columbus in the year 1493.

Marco Antonio became a noted poet of the school of Martial, and was secretary to Cardinal Pompeo Colonna.

The satire against Giulio de Medicis, which we find in his works, having made it necessary for him to leave Rome, he returned to Como, where he married Abondia Rezzonica. The same Giulio de Medicis, having become pope under the name of Clement VII, pardoned him and called him back to Rome with his wife. The city having been taken and ransacked by the Imperialists in 1526, Marco Antonio died there from an attack of the plague; otherwise he would have died of misery, the soldiers of Charles V. having taken all he possessed. Pierre Valerien speaks of him in his work ‘de infelicitate litteratorum’.

Three months after his death, his wife gave birth to Jacques Casanova, who died in France at a great age, colonel in the army commanded by Farnese against Henri, king of Navarre, afterwards king of France. He had left in the city of Parma a son who married Theresa Conti, from whom he had Jacques, who, in the year 1681, married Anna Roli. Jacques had two sons, Jean-Baptiste and Gaetan-Joseph-Jacques. The eldest left Parma in 1712, and was never heard of; the other also went away in 1715, being only nineteen years old.

This is all I have found in my father's diary: from my mother's lips I have heard the following particulars:

Gaetan-Joseph-Jacques left his family, madly in love with an actress named Fragoletta, who performed the chambermaids. In his poverty, he determined to earn a living by making the most of his own person. At first he gave himself up to dancing, and five years afterwards became an actor, making himself conspicuous by his conduct still more than by his talent.

Whether from fickleness or from jealousy, he abandoned the Fragoletta, and joined in Venice a troop of comedians then giving performances at the Saint-Samuel Theatre. Opposite the house in which he had taken his lodging resided a shoemaker, by name Jerome Farusi, with his wife Marzia, and Zanetta, their only daughter — a perfect beauty sixteen years of age. The young actor fell in love with this girl, succeeded in gaining her affection, and in obtaining her consent to a runaway match. It was the only way to win her, for, being an actor, he never could have had Marzia's consent, still less Jerome's, as in their eyes a player was a most awful individual. The young lovers, provided with the necessary certificates and accompanied by two witnesses, presented themselves before the Patriarch of Venice, who performed over them the marriage ceremony. Marzia, Zanetta's mother, indulged in a good deal of exclamation, and the father died broken-hearted.

I was born nine months afterwards, on the 2nd of April, 1725.

The following April my mother left me under the care of her own mother, who had forgiven her as soon as she had heard that my father had promised never to compel her to appear on the stage. This is a promise which all actors make to the young girls they marry, and which they never fulfil, simply because their wives never care much about claiming from them the performance of it. Moreover, it turned out a very fortunate thing for my mother that she had studied for the stage, for nine years later, having been left a widow with six children, she could not have brought them up if it had not been for the resources she found in that profession.

I was only one year old when my father left me to go to London, where he had an engagement. It was in that great city that my mother made her first appearance on the stage, and in that city likewise that she gave birth to my brother Francois, a celebrated painter of battles, now residing in Vienna, where he has followed his profession since 1783.

Towards the end of the year 1728 my mother returned to Venice with her husband, and as she had become an actress she continued her artistic life. In 1730 she was delivered of my brother Jean, who became Director of the Academy of painting at Dresden, and died there in 1795; and during the three following years she became the mother of two daughters, one of whom died at an early age, while the other married in Dresden, where she still lived in 1798. I had also a posthumous brother, who became a priest; he died in Rome fifteen years ago.

Let us now come to the dawn of my existence in the character of a thinking being.

The organ of memory began to develop itself in me at the beginning of August, 1733. I had at that time reached the age of eight years and four months. Of what may have happened to me before that period I have not the faintest recollection. This is the circumstance.

I was standing in the corner of a room bending towards the wall, supporting my head, and my eyes fixed upon a stream of blood flowing from my nose to the ground. My grandmother, Marzia, whose pet I was, came to me, bathed my face with cold water, and, unknown to everyone in the house, took me with her in a gondola as far as Muran, a thickly-populated island only half a league distant from Venice.

Alighting from the gondola, we enter a wretched hole, where we find an old woman sitting on a rickety bed, holding a black cat in her arms, with five or six more purring around her. The two old cronies held together a long discourse of which, most likely, I was the subject. At the end of the dialogue, which was carried on in the patois of Forli, the witch having received a silver ducat from my grandmother, opened a box, took me in her arms, placed me in the box and locked me in it, telling me not to be frightened — a piece of advice which would certainly have had the contrary effect, if I had had any wits about me, but I was stupefied. I kept myself quiet in a corner of the box, holding a handkerchief to my nose because it was still bleeding, and otherwise very indifferent to the uproar going on outside. I could hear in turn, laughter, weeping, singing, screams, shrieks, and knocking against the box, but for all that I cared nought. At last I am taken out of the box; the blood stops flowing. The wonderful old witch, after lavishing caresses upon me, takes off my clothes, lays me on the bed, burns some drugs, gathers the smoke in a sheet which she wraps around me, pronounces incantations, takes the sheet off me, and gives me five sugar-plums of a very agreeable taste. Then she immediately rubs my temples and the nape of my neck with an ointment exhaling a delightful perfume, and puts my clothes on me again. She told me that my haemorrhage would little by little leave me, provided I should never disclose to any one what she had done to cure me, and she threatened me, on the other hand, with the loss of all my blood and with death, should I ever breathe a word concerning those mysteries. After having thus taught me my lesson, she informed me that a beautiful lady would pay me a visit during the following night, and that she would make me happy, on condition that I should have sufficient control over myself never to mention to anyone my having received such a visit. Upon this we left and returned home.

I fell asleep almost as soon as I was in bed, without giving a thought to the beautiful visitor I was to receive; but, waking up a few hours afterwards, I saw, or fancied I saw, coming down the chimney, a dazzling woman, with immense hoops, splendidly attired, and wearing on her head a crown set with precious stones, which seemed to me sparkling with fire. With slow steps, but with a majestic and sweet countenance, she came forward and sat on my bed; then taking several small boxes from her pocket, she emptied their contents over my head, softly whispering a few words, and after giving utterance to a long speech, not a single word of which I understood, she kissed me and disappeared the same way she had come. I soon went again to sleep.

The next morning, my grandmother came to dress me, and the moment she was near my bed, she cautioned me to be silent, threatening me with death if I dared to say anything respecting my night's adventures. This command, laid upon me by the only woman who had complete authority over me, and whose orders I was accustomed to obey blindly, caused me to remember the vision, and to store it, with the seal of secrecy, in the inmost corner of my dawning memory. I had not, however, the slightest inclination to mention the circumstances to anyone; in the first place, because I did not suppose it would interest anybody, and in the second because I would not have known whom to make a confidant of. My disease had rendered me dull and retired; everybody pitied me and left me to myself; my life was considered likely to be but a short one, and as to my parents, they never spoke to me.

After the journey to Muran, and the nocturnal visit of the fairy, I continued to have bleeding at the nose, but less from day to day, and my memory slowly developed itself. I learned to read in less than a month.

It would be ridiculous, of course, to attribute this cure to such follies, but at the same time I think it would be wrong to assert that they did not in any way contribute to it. As far as the apparition of the beautiful queen is concerned, I have always deemed it to be a dream, unless it should have been some masquerade got up for the occasion, but it is not always in the druggist's shop that are found the best remedies for severe diseases. Our ignorance is every day proved by some wonderful phenomenon, and I believe this to be the reason why it is so difficult to meet with a learned man entirely untainted with superstition. We know, as a matter of course, that there never have been any sorcerers in this world, yet it is true that their power has always existed in the estimation of those to whom crafty knaves have passed themselves off as such. 'Somnio nocturnos lemures portentaque Thessalia vides'.

Many things become real which, at first, had no existence but in our imagination, and, as a natural consequence, many facts which have been attributed to Faith may not always have been miraculous, although they are true miracles for those who lend to Faith a boundless power.

The next circumstance of any importance to myself which I recollect happened three months after my trip to Muran, and six weeks before my father's death. I give it to my readers only to convey some idea of the manner in which my nature was expanding.

One day, about the middle of November, I was with my brother Francois, two years younger than I, in my father's room, watching him attentively as he was working at optics. A large lump of crystal, round and cut into facets, attracted my attention. I took it up, and having brought it near my eyes I was delighted to see that it multiplied objects. The wish to possess myself of it at once got hold of me, and seeing myself unobserved I took my opportunity and hid it in my pocket.

A few minutes after this my father looked about for his crystal, and unable to find it, he concluded that one of us must have taken it. My brother asserted that he had not touched it, and I, although guilty, said the same; but my father, satisfied that he could not be mistaken, threatened to search us and to thrash the one who had told him a story. I pretended to look for the crystal in every corner of the room, and, watching my opportunity I slyly slipped it in the pocket of my brother's jacket. At first I was sorry for what I had done, for I might as well have feigned to find the crystal somewhere about the room; but the evil deed was past recall. My father, seeing that we were looking in vain, lost patience, searched us, found the unlucky ball of crystal in the pocket of the innocent boy, and inflicted upon him the promised thrashing. Three or four years later I was foolish enough to boast before my brother of the trick I had then played on him; he never forgave me, and has never failed to take his revenge whenever the opportunity offered.

However, having at a later period gone to confession, and accused myself to the priest of the sin with every circumstance surrounding it, I gained some knowledge which afforded me great satisfaction. My confessor, who was a Jesuit, told me that by that deed I had verified the meaning of my first name, Jacques, which, he said, meant, in Hebrew, "supplanter," and that God had changed for that reason the name of the ancient patriarch into that of Israel, which meant "knowing." He had deceived his brother Esau.

Six weeks after the above adventure my father was attacked with an abscess in the head which carried him off in a week. Dr. Zambelli first gave him oppilative remedies, and, seeing his mistake, he tried to mend it by administering castoreum, which sent his patient into convulsions and killed him. The abscess broke out through the ear one minute after his death, taking its leave after killing him, as if it had no longer any business with him. My father departed this life in the very prime of his manhood. He was only thirty-six years of age, but he was followed to his grave by the regrets of the public, and more particularly of all the patricians amongst whom he was held as above his profession, not less on account of his gentlemanly behaviour than on account of his extensive knowledge in mechanics.

Two days before his death, feeling that his end was at hand, my father expressed a wish to see us all around his bed, in the presence of his wife and of the Messieurs Grimani, three Venetian noblemen whose protection he wished to entreat in our favour. After giving us his blessing, he requested our mother, who was drowned in tears, to give her sacred promise that she would not educate any of us for the stage, on which he never would have appeared himself had he not been led to it by an unfortunate attachment. My mother gave her promise, and the three noblemen said that they would see to its being faithfully kept. Circumstances helped our mother to fulfill her word.

At that time my mother had been pregnant for six months, and she was allowed to remain away from the stage until after Easter. Beautiful and young as she was, she declined all the offers of marriage which were made to her, and, placing her trust in Providence, she courageously devoted herself to the task of bringing up her young family.

She considered it a duty to think of me before the others, not so much from a feeling of preference as in consequence of my disease, which had such an effect upon me that it was difficult to know what to do with me. I was very weak, without any appetite, unable to apply myself to anything, and I had all the appearance of an idiot. Physicians disagreed as to the cause of the disease. He loses, they would say, two pounds of blood every week; yet there cannot be more than sixteen or eighteen pounds in his body. What, then, can cause so abundant a bleeding? One asserted that in me all the chyle turned into blood; another was of opinion that the air I was breathing must, at each inhalation, increase the quantity of blood in my lungs, and contended that this was the reason for which I always kept my mouth open. I heard of it all six years afterward from M. Baffo, a great friend of my late father.

This M. Baffo consulted the celebrated Doctor Macop, of Padua, who sent him his opinion by writing. This consultation, which I have still in my possession, says that our blood is an elastic fluid which is liable to diminish or to increase in thickness, but never in quantity, and that my haemorrhage could only proceed from the thickness of the mass of my blood, which relieved itself in a natural way in order to facilitate circulation. The doctor added that I would have died long before, had not nature, in its wish for life, assisted itself, and he concluded by stating that the cause of the thickness of my blood could only be ascribed to the air I was breathing and that consequently I must have a change of air, or every hope of cure be abandoned. He thought likewise, that the stupidity so apparent on my countenance was caused by nothing else but the thickness of my blood.

M. Baffo, a man of sublime genius, a most lascivious, yet a great and original poet, was therefore instrumental in bringing about the decision which was then taken to send me to Padua, and to him I am indebted for my life. He died twenty years after, the last of his ancient patrician family, but his poems, although obscene, will give everlasting fame to his name. The state-inquisitors of Venice have contributed to his celebrity by their mistaken strictness. Their persecutions caused his manuscript works to become precious. They ought to have been aware that despised things are forgotten.

As soon as the verdict given by Professor Macop had been approved of, the Abbe Grimani undertook to find a good boarding-house in Padua for me, through a chemist of his acquaintance who resided in that city. His name was Ottaviani, and he was also an antiquarian of some repute. In a few days the boarding-house was found, and on the 2nd day of April, 1734, on the very day I had accomplished my ninth year, I was taken to Padua in a ‘burchiello’, along the Brenta Canal. We embarked at ten o’clock in the evening, immediately after supper.

The ‘burchiello’ may be considered a small floating house. There is a large saloon with a smaller cabin at each end, and rooms for servants fore and aft. It is a long square with a roof, and cut on each side by glazed windows with shutters. The voyage takes eight hours. M. Grimani, M. Baffo, and my mother accompanied me. I slept with her in the saloon, and the two friends passed the night in one of the cabins. My mother rose at day break, opened one of the windows facing the bed, and the rays of the rising sun, falling on my eyes, caused me to open them. The bed was too low for me to see the land; I could see through the window only the tops of the trees along the river. The boat was sailing with such an even movement that I could not realize the fact of our moving, so that the trees, which, one after the other, were rapidly disappearing from my sight, caused me an extreme surprise.

“Ah, dear mother!” I exclaimed, “what is this? the trees are walking!” At that very moment the two noblemen came in, and reading astonishment on my countenance, they asked me what my thoughts were so busy about. “How is it,” I answered, “that the trees are walking.”

They all laughed, but my mother, heaving a great sigh, told me, in a tone of deep pity, “The boat is moving, the trees are not. Now dress yourself.”

I understood at once the reason of the phenomenon. “Then it may be,” said I, “that the sun does not move, and that we, on the contrary, are revolving from west to east.” At these words my good mother fairly screamed. M. Grimani pitied my foolishness, and I remained dismayed, grieved, and ready to cry. M. Baffo brought me life again. He rushed to me, embraced me tenderly, and said, “Thou are right, my child. The sun does not move; take courage, give heed to your reasoning powers and let others laugh.”

My mother, greatly surprised, asked him whether he had taken leave of his senses to give me such lessons; but the philosopher, not even condescending to answer her, went on sketching a theory in harmony with my young and simple intelligence. This was the first real pleasure I enjoyed in my life. Had it not been for M. Baffo, this circumstance might have been enough to degrade my understanding; the weakness of credulity would have become part of my mind. The ignorance of the two others would certainly have blunted in me the edge of a faculty which, perhaps, has not carried me very far in my after life, but to which alone I feel that I am indebted for every particle of happiness I enjoy when I look into myself.

We reached Padua at an early hour and went to Ottaviani’s house; his wife loaded me with caresses. I found there five or six children, amongst them a girl of eight years, named Marie, and another of seven, Rose, beautiful as a seraph. Ten years later Marie became the wife of the broker Colonda, and Rose, a few years afterwards, married a nobleman, Pierre Marcello, and had one son and two daughters, one of whom was wedded to M. Pierre Moncenigo, and the other to a nobleman of the Carrero family. This last marriage was afterwards nullified. I shall have, in the course of events, to speak of all these persons, and that is my reason for mentioning their names here.

Ottaviani took us at once to the house where I was to board. It was only a few yards from his own residence, at Sainte-Marie d’Advance, in the parish of Saint-Michel, in the house of an old Sclavonian woman, who let the first floor to Signora Mida, wife of a Sclavonian colonel. My small trunk was laid open before the old woman, to whom was handed an inventory of all its contents, together with six sequins for six months paid in advance. For this small sum she undertook to feed me, to keep me clean, and to send me to a day-school. Protesting that it was not enough, she accepted these terms. I was kissed and strongly commanded to be always obedient and docile, and I was left with her.

In this way did my family get rid of me.

CHAPTER II

My Grandmother Comes to Padua, and Takes Me to Dr. Gozzi's

School — My First Love Affair

As soon as I was left alone with the Sclavonian woman, she took me up to the garret, where she pointed out my bed in a row with four others, three of which belonged to three young boys of my age, who at that moment were at school, and the fourth to a servant girl whose province it was to watch us and to prevent the many peccadilloes in which school-boys are wont to indulge. After this visit we came downstairs, and I was taken to the garden with permission to walk about until dinner-time.

I felt neither happy nor unhappy; I had nothing to say. I had neither fear nor hope, nor even a feeling of curiosity; I was neither cheerful nor sad. The only thing which grated upon me was the face of the mistress of the house. Although I had not the faintest idea either of beauty or of ugliness, her face, her countenance, her tone of voice, her language, everything in that woman was repulsive to me. Her masculine features repelled me every time I lifted my eyes towards her face to listen to what she said to me. She was tall and coarse like a trooper; her complexion was yellow, her hair black, her eyebrows long and thick, and her chin gloried in a respectable bristly beard: to complete the picture, her hideous, half-naked bosom was hanging half-way down her long chest; she may have been about fifty. The servant was a stout country girl, who did all the work of the house; the garden was a square of some thirty feet, which had no other beauty than its green appearance.

Towards noon my three companions came back from school, and they at once spoke to me as if we had been old acquaintances, naturally giving me credit for such intelligence as belonged to my age, but which I did not possess. I did not answer them, but they were not baffled, and they at last prevailed upon me to share their innocent pleasures. I had to run, to carry and be carried, to turn head over heels, and I allowed myself to be initiated into those arts with a pretty good grace until we were summoned to dinner. I sat down to the table; but seeing before me a wooden spoon, I pushed it back, asking for my silver spoon and fork to which I was much attached, because they were a gift from my good old granny. The servant answered that the mistress wished to maintain equality between the boys, and I had to submit, much to my disgust. Having thus learned that equality in everything was the rule of the house, I went to work like the others and began to eat the soup out of the common dish, and if I did not complain of the rapidity with which my companions made it disappear, I could not help wondering at such inequality being allowed. To follow this very poor soup, we had a small portion of dried cod and one apple each, and dinner was over: it was in Lent. We had neither glasses nor cups, and we all helped ourselves out of the same earthen pitcher to a miserable drink called graspia, which is made by boiling in water the stems of grapes stripped of their fruit. From the following day I drank nothing but water. This way of living surprised me, for I did not know whether I had a right to complain of it. After dinner the servant took me to the school, kept by a young priest, Doctor Gozzi, with whom the Sclavonian woman had bargained for my schooling at the rate of forty sous a month, or the eleventh part of a sequin.

The first thing to do was to teach me writing, and I was placed amongst children of five and six years, who did not fail to turn me into ridicule on account of my age.

On my return to the boarding-house I had my supper, which, as a matter of course, was worse than the dinner, and I could not make out why the right of complaint should be denied me. I was then put to bed, but there three well-known species of vermin kept me awake all night, besides the rats, which, running all over the garret, jumped on my bed and fairly made my blood run cold with fright. This is the way in which I began to feel misery, and to learn how to suffer it patiently. The vermin, which feasted upon me, lessened my fear of the rats, and by a very lucky system of compensation, the dread of the rats made me less sensitive to the bites of the vermin. My mind was reaping benefit from the very struggle fought between the evils which surrounded me. The servant was perfectly deaf to my screaming.

As soon as it was daylight I ran out of the wretched garret, and, after complaining to the girl of all I had endured during the night, I asked her to give me a Clean shirt, the one I had on being disgusting to look at, but she answered that I could only change my linen on a Sunday, and laughed at me when I threatened to complain to the mistress. For the first time in my life I shed tears of sorrow and of anger, when I heard my companions scoffing at me. The poor wretches shared my unhappy condition, but they were used to it, and that makes all the difference.

Sorely depressed, I went to school, but only to sleep soundly through the morning. One of my comrades, in the hope of turning the affair into ridicule at my expense, told the doctor the reason of my being so sleepy. The good priest, however, to whom without doubt Providence had guided me, called me into his private room, listened to all I had to say, saw with his own eyes the proofs of my misery, and moved by the sight of the blisters which disfigured my innocent skin, he took up his cloak, went with me to my boarding-house, and shewed the woman the state I was in. She put on a look of great astonishment, and threw all the blame upon the servant. The doctor being curious to see my bed, I was, as much as he was, surprised at the filthy state of the sheets in which I had passed the night. The accursed woman went on blaming the servant, and said that she would discharge her; but the girl, happening to be close by, and not relishing the accusation, told her boldly that the fault was her own, and she then threw open the beds of my companions to shew us that they did not experience any better treatment. The mistress, raving, slapped her on the face, and the servant, to be even with her, returned the compliment and ran away. The doctor left me there, saying that I could not enter his school unless I was sent to him as clean as the other boys. The result for me was a very sharp rebuke, with the threat, as a finishing stroke, that if I ever caused such a broil again, I would be ignominiously turned out of the house.

I could not make it out; I had just entered life, and I had no knowledge of any other place but the house in which I had been born, in which I had been brought up, and in which I had always seen cleanliness and honest comfort. Here I found myself ill-treated, scolded, although it did not seem possible that any blame could be attached to me. At last the old shrew tossed a shirt in my face, and an hour later I saw a new servant changing the sheets, after which we had our dinner.

My schoolmaster took particular care in instructing me. He gave me a seat at his own desk, and in order to shew my proper appreciation of such a favour, I gave myself up to my studies; at the end of the first month I could write so well that I was promoted to the grammar class.

The new life I was leading, the half-starvation system to which I was condemned, and most likely more than everything else, the air of Padua, brought me health such as I had never enjoyed before, but that very state of blooming health made it still more difficult for me to bear the hunger which I was compelled to endure; it became unbearable. I was growing rapidly; I enjoyed nine hours of deep sleep, unbroken by any dreams, save that I always fancied myself sitting at a well-spread table, and gratifying my cruel appetite, but every morning I could realize in full the vanity and the unpleasant disappointment of flattering dreams! This ravenous appetite would at last have weakened me to death, had I not made up my mind to pounce upon, and to swallow, every kind of eatables I could find, whenever I was certain of not being seen.

Necessity begets ingenuity. I had spied in a cupboard of the kitchen some fifty red herrings; I devoured them all one after the other, as well as all the sausages which were hanging in the chimney to be smoked; and in order to accomplish those feats without being detected, I was in the habit of getting up at night and of undertaking my foraging expeditions under the friendly veil of darkness. Every new-laid egg I could discover in the poultry-yard, quite warm and scarcely dropped by the hen, was a most delicious treat. I would even go as far as the kitchen of the schoolmaster in the hope of pilfering something to eat.

The Sclavonian woman, in despair at being unable to catch the thieves, turned away servant after servant. But, in spite of all my expeditions, as I could not always find something to steal, I was as thin as a walking skeleton.

My progress at school was so rapid during four or five months that the master promoted me to the rank of dux. My province was to examine the lessons of my thirty school-fellows, to correct their mistakes and report to the master with whatever note of blame or of approval I thought they deserved; but my strictness did not last long, for idle boys soon found out the way to enlist my sympathy. When their Latin lesson was full of mistakes, they would buy me off with cutlets and roast chickens; they even gave me money. These proceedings excited my covetousness, or, rather, my gluttony, and, not satisfied with levying a tax upon the ignorant, I became a tyrant, and I refused well-merited approbation to all those who declined paying the contribution I demanded. At last, unable to bear my injustice any longer, the boys accused me, and the master, seeing me convicted of extortion, removed me from my exalted position. I would very likely have fared badly after my dismissal, had not Fate decided to put an end to my cruel apprenticeship.

Doctor Gozzi, who was attached to me, called me privately one day into his study, and asked me whether I would feel disposed to carry out the advice he would give me in order to bring about my removal from the house of the Sclavonian woman, and my admission in his own family. Finding me delighted at such an offer, he caused me to copy three letters which I sent, one to the Abbe Grimani, another to my friend Baffo, and the last to my excellent grandam. The half-year was nearly out, and my mother not being in Venice at that period there was no time to lose.

In my letters I gave a description of all my sufferings, and I prognosticated my death were I not immediately removed from my boarding-house and placed under the care of my school-master, who was disposed to receive me; but he wanted two sequins a month.

M. Grimani did not answer me, and commissioned his friend Ottaviani to scold me for allowing myself to be ensnared by the doctor; but M. Baffo went to consult with my grandmother, who could not write, and in a letter which he addressed to me he informed me that I would soon find myself in a happier situation. And, truly, within a week the excellent old woman, who loved me until her death, made her appearance as I was sitting down to my dinner. She came in with the mistress of the house, and the moment I saw her I threw my arms around her neck, crying bitterly, in which luxury the old lady soon joined me. She sat down and took me on her knees; my courage rose again. In the presence of the Sclavonian woman I enumerated all my grievances, and after calling her attention to the food, fit only for beggars, which I was compelled to swallow, I took her upstairs to shew her my bed. I begged her to take me out and give me a good dinner after six months of such starvation. The boarding-house keeper boldly asserted that she could not afford better for the amount she had received, and there was truth in that, but she had no business to keep house and to become the tormentor of poor children who were thrown on her hands by stinginess, and who required to be properly fed.

My grandmother very quietly intimated her intention to take me away forthwith, and asked her to put all my things in my trunk. I cannot express my joy during these preparations. For the first time I felt that kind of happiness which makes forgiveness compulsory upon the being who enjoys it, and causes him to forget all previous unpleasantness. My grandmother took me to the inn, and dinner was served, but she could hardly eat anything in her astonishment at the voracity with which I was swallowing my food. In the meantime Doctor Gozzi, to whom she had sent notice of her arrival, came in, and his appearance soon prepossessed her in his favour. He was then a fine-looking priest, twenty-six years of age, chubby, modest, and respectful. In less than a quarter of an hour everything was satisfactorily arranged between them. The good old lady counted out twenty-four sequins for one year of my schooling, and took a receipt for the same, but she kept me with her for three days in order to have me clothed like a priest, and to get me a wig, as the filthy state of my hair made it necessary to have it all cut off.

At the end of the three days she took me to the doctor's house, so as to see herself to my installation and to recommend me to the doctor's mother, who desired her to send or to buy in Padua a bedstead and bedding; but the doctor having remarked that, his own bed being very wide, I might sleep with him, my grandmother expressed her gratitude for all his kindness, and we accompanied her as far as the burchiello she had engaged to return to Venice.

The family of Doctor Gozzi was composed of his mother, who had great reverence for him, because, a peasant by birth, she did not think herself worthy of having a son who was a priest, and still more a doctor in divinity; she was plain, old, and cross; and of his father, a shoemaker by trade, working all day long and never addressing a word to anyone, not even during the meals. He only became a sociable being on holidays, on which occasions he would spend his time with his friends in some tavern, coming home at midnight as drunk as a lord and singing verses from Tasso. When in this blissful state the good man could not make up his mind to go to bed, and became violent if anyone attempted to compel him to lie down. Wine alone gave him sense and spirit, for when sober he was incapable of attending to the simplest family matter, and his wife often said that he never would have married her had not his friends taken care to give him a good breakfast before he went to the church.

But Doctor Gozzi had also a sister, called Bettina, who at the age of thirteen was pretty, lively, and a great reader of romances. Her father and mother scolded her constantly because she was too often looking out of the window, and the doctor did the same on account of her love for reading. This girl took at once my fancy without my knowing why, and little by little she kindled in my heart the first spark of a passion which, afterwards became in me the ruling one.

Six months after I had been an inmate in the house, the doctor found himself without scholars; they all went away because I had become the sole object of his affection. He then determined to establish a college, and to receive young boys as boarders; but two years passed before he met with any success. During that period he taught me everything he knew; true, it was not much; yet it was enough to open to me the high road to all sciences. He likewise taught me the violin, an accomplishment which proved very useful to me in a peculiar circumstance, the particulars of which I will give in good time. The excellent doctor, who was in no way a philosopher, made me study the logic of the Peripatetics, and the cosmography of the ancient system of Ptolemy, at which I would laugh, teasing the poor doctor with theorems to which he could find no answer. His habits, moreover, were irreproachable, and in all things connected with religion, although no bigot, he was of the greatest strictness, and, admitting everything as an article of faith, nothing appeared difficult to his conception. He believed the deluge to have been universal, and he thought that, before that great cataclysm, men lived a thousand years and conversed with God, that Noah took one hundred years to build the ark, and that the earth, suspended in the air, is firmly held in the very centre of the universe which God had created from nothing. When I would say and prove that it was absurd to believe in the existence of nothingness, he would stop me short and call me a fool.

He could enjoy a good bed, a glass of wine, and cheerfulness at home. He did not admire fine wits, good jests or criticism, because it easily turns to slander, and he would laugh at the folly of men reading newspapers which, in his opinion, always lied and constantly repeated the same things. He asserted that nothing was more troublesome than incertitude, and therefore he condemned thought because it gives birth to doubt.

His ruling passion was preaching, for which his face and his voice qualified him; his congregation was almost entirely composed of women of whom, however, he was the sworn enemy; so much so, that he would not look them in the face even when he spoke to them. Weakness of the flesh and fornication appeared to him the most monstrous of sins, and he would be very angry if I dared to assert that, in my estimation, they were the most venial of faults. His sermons were crammed with passages from the Greek authors, which he translated into Latin. One day I ventured to remark that those passages ought to be translated into Italian because women did not understand Latin any more than Greek, but he took offence, and I never had afterwards the courage to allude any more to the matter. Moreover he praised me to his friends as a wonder, because I had learned to read Greek alone, without any assistance but a grammar.

During Lent, in the year 1736, my mother, wrote to the doctor; and, as she was on the point of her departure for St. Petersburg, she wished to see me, and requested him to accompany me to Venice for three or four days. This invitation set him thinking, for he had never seen Venice, never frequented good company, and yet he did not wish to appear a novice in anything. We were soon ready to leave Padua, and all the family escorted us to the ‘burchiello’.

My mother received the doctor with a most friendly welcome; but she was strikingly beautiful, and my poor master felt very uncomfortable, not daring to look her in the face, and yet called upon to converse with her. She saw the dilemma he was in, and thought she would have some amusing sport about it should opportunity present itself. I, in the meantime, drew the attention of everyone in her circle; everybody had known me as a fool, and was amazed at my improvement in the short space of two years. The doctor was overjoyed, because he saw that the full credit of my transformation was given to him.

The first thing which struck my mother unpleasantly was my light-coloured wig, which was not in harmony with my dark complexion, and contrasted most woefully with my black eyes and eyebrows. She inquired from the doctor why I did not wear my own hair, and he answered that, with a wig, it was easier for his sister to keep me clean. Everyone smiled at the simplicity of the answer, but the merriment increased when, to the question made by my mother whether his sister was married, I took the answer upon myself, and said that Bettina was the prettiest girl of Padua, and was only fourteen years of age. My mother promised the doctor a splendid present for his sister on condition that she would let me wear my own hair, and he promised that her wishes would be complied with. The peruke-maker was then called, and I had a wig which matched my complexion.

Soon afterwards all the guests began to play cards, with the exception of my master, and I went to see my brothers in my grandmother's room. Francois shewed me some architectural designs which I pretended to admire; Jean had nothing to skew me, and I thought him a rather insignificant boy. The others were still very young.

At the supper-table, the doctor, seated next to my mother, was very awkward. He would very likely not have said one word, had not an Englishman, a writer of talent, addressed him in Latin; but the doctor, being unable to make him out, modestly answered that he did not understand English, which caused much hilarity. M. Baffo, however, explained the puzzle by telling us that Englishmen read and pronounced Latin in the same way that they read and spoke their own language, and I remarked that Englishmen were wrong as much as we would be, if we pretended to read and to pronounce their language according to Latin rules. The Englishman, pleased with my reasoning, wrote down the following old couplet, and gave it to me to read:

'Dicite, grammatici, cur mascula nomina cunnus,

Et cur femineum mentula nomen habet.'

After reading it aloud, I exclaimed, "This is Latin indeed."

"We know that," said my mother, "but can you explain it?"

"To explain it is not enough," I answered; "it is a question which is worthy of an answer." And after considering for a moment, I wrote the following pentameter:

'Disce quod a domino nomina servus habet.'

This was my first literary exploit, and I may say that in that very instant the seed of my love for literary fame was sown in my breast, for the applause lavished upon me exalted me to the very pinnacle of happiness. The Englishman, quite amazed at my answer, said that no boy of eleven years had ever accomplished such a feat, embraced me repeatedly, and presented me with his watch. My mother, inquisitive like a woman, asked M. Grimani to tell her the meaning of the lines, but as the abbe was not any wiser than she was M. Baffo translated it in a whisper. Surprised at my knowledge, she rose from her chair to get a valuable gold watch and presented to my master, who, not knowing how to express his deep gratitude, treated us to the most comic scene. My mother, in order to save him from the difficulty of paying her a compliment, offered him her cheek. He had only to give her a couple of kisses, the easiest and the most innocent thing in good company; but the poor man was on burning coals, and so completely out of countenance that he would, I truly believe, rather have died than give the kisses. He drew back with his head down, and he was allowed to remain in peace until we retired for the night.

When we found ourselves alone in our room, he poured out his heart, and exclaimed that it was a pity he could not publish in Padua the distich and my answer.

“And why not?” I said.

“Because both are obscene.”

“But they are sublime.”

“Let us go to bed and speak no more on the subject. Your answer was wonderful, because you cannot possibly know anything of the subject in question, or of the manner in which verses ought to be written.”

As far as the subject was concerned, I knew it by theory; for, unknown to the doctor, and because he had forbidden it, I had read Meursius, but it was natural that he should be amazed at my being able to write verses, when he, who had taught me prosody, never could compose a single line. ‘Nemo dat quod non habet’ is a false axiom when applied to mental acquirements.

Four days afterwards, as we were preparing for our departure, my mother gave me a parcel for Bettina, and M. Grimani presented me with four sequins to buy books. A week later my mother left for St. Petersburg.

After our return to Padua, my good master for three or four months never ceased to speak of my mother, and Bettina, having found in the parcel five yards of black silk and twelve pairs of gloves, became singularly attached to me, and took such good care of my hair that in less than six months I was able to give up wearing the wig. She used to comb my hair every morning, often before I was out of bed, saying that she had not time to wait until I was dressed. She washed my face, my neck, my chest; lavished on me childish caresses which I thought innocent, but which caused me to, be angry with myself, because I felt that they excited me. Three years younger than she was, it seemed to me that she could not love me with any idea of mischief, and the consciousness of my own vicious excitement put me out of temper with myself. When, seated on my bed, she would say that I was getting stouter, and would have the proof of it with her own hands, she caused me the most intense emotion; but I said nothing, for fear she would remark my sensitiveness, and when she would go on saying that my skin was soft, the tickling sensation made me draw back, angry with myself that I did not dare to do the same to her, but delighted at her not guessing how I longed to do it. When I was dressed, she often gave me the sweetest kisses, calling me her darling child, but whatever wish I had to follow her example, I was not yet bold enough. After some time, however, Bettina laughing at my timidity, I became more daring and returned her kisses with interest, but I always gave way the moment I felt a wish to go further; I then would turn my head, pretending to look for something, and she would go away. She was scarcely out of the room before I was in despair at not having followed the inclination of my nature, and, astonished at the fact that Bettina could do to me all she was in the habit of doing without feeling any excitement from it, while I could hardly refrain from pushing my attacks further, I would every day determine to change my way of acting.

In the early part of autumn, the doctor received three new boarders; and one of them, who was fifteen years old, appeared to me in less than a month on very friendly terms with Bettina.

This circumstance caused me a feeling of which until then I had no idea, and which I only analyzed a few years afterwards. It was neither jealousy nor indignation, but a noble contempt which I thought ought not to be repressed, because Cordiani, an ignorant, coarse boy, without talent or polite education, the son of a simple farmer, and incapable of competing with me in anything, having over me but the advantage of dawning manhood, did not appear to me a fit person to be preferred to me; my young self-esteem whispered that I was above him. I began to nurse a feeling of pride mixed with contempt which told against Bettina, whom I loved unknown to myself. She soon guessed it from the way I would receive her caresses, when she came to comb my hair while I was in bed; I would repulse her hands, and no longer return her kisses. One day, vexed at my answering her question as to the reason of my change towards her by stating that I had no cause for it, she, told me in a tone of commiseration that I was jealous of Cordiani. This reproach sounded to me like a debasing slander. I answered that Cordiani was, in my estimation, as worthy of her as she was worthy of him. She went away smiling, but, revolving in her mind the only way by which she could be revenged, she thought herself bound to render me jealous. However, as she could not attain such an end without making me fall in love with her, this is the policy she adopted.

One morning she came to me as I was in bed and brought me a pair of white stockings of her own knitting. After dressing my hair, she asked my permission to try the stockings on herself, in order to correct any deficiency in the other pairs she intended to knit for me. The doctor had gone out to say his mass. As she was putting on the stocking, she remarked that my legs were not clean, and without any more ado she immediately began to wash them. I would have been ashamed to let her see my bashfulness; I let her do as she liked, not foreseeing what would happen. Bettina, seated on my bed, carried too far her love for cleanliness, and her curiosity caused me such intense voluptuousness that the feeling did not stop until it could be carried no further. Having recovered my calm, I bethought myself that I was guilty and begged her forgiveness. She did not expect this, and, after considering for a few moments, she told me kindly that the fault was entirely her own, but that she never would again be guilty of it. And she went out of the room, leaving me to my own thoughts.

They were of a cruel character. It seemed to me that I had brought dishonour upon Bettina, that I had betrayed the confidence of her family, offended against the sacred laws of hospitality, that I was guilty of a most wicked crime, which I could only atone for by marrying her, in case Bettina could make up her mind to accept for her husband a wretch unworthy of her.

These thoughts led to a deep melancholy which went on increasing from day to day, Bettina having entirely ceased her morning visits by my bedside. During the first week, I could easily account for the girl's reserve, and my sadness would soon have taken the character of the warmest love, had not her manner towards Cordiani inoculated in my veins the poison of jealousy, although I never dreamed of accusing her of the same crime towards him that she had committed upon me.

I felt convinced, after due consideration, that the act she had been guilty of with me had been deliberately done, and that her feelings of repentance kept her away from me. This conviction was rather flattering to my vanity, as it gave me the hope of being loved, and the end of all my communings was that I made up my mind to write to her, and thus to give her courage.

I composed a letter, short but calculated to restore peace to her mind, whether she thought herself guilty, or suspected me of feelings contrary to those which her dignity might expect from me. My letter was, in my own estimation, a perfect masterpiece, and just the kind of epistle by which I was certain to conquer her very adoration, and to sink for ever the sun of Cordiani, whom I could not accept as the sort of being likely to make her hesitate for one instant in her choice between him and me. Half-an-hour after the receipt of my letter, she told me herself that the next morning she would pay me her usual visit, but I waited in vain. This conduct provoked me almost to madness, but my surprise was indeed great when, at the breakfast table, she asked me whether I would let her dress me up as a girl to accompany her five or six days later to a ball for which a neighbour of ours, Doctor Olivo, had sent letters of invitation. Everybody having seconded the motion, I gave my consent. I thought this arrangement would afford a favourable opportunity for an explanation, for mutual vindication, and would open a door for the most complete reconciliation, without fear of any surprise arising from the proverbial weakness of the flesh. But a most unexpected circumstance prevented our attending the ball, and brought forth a comedy with a truly tragic turn.

Doctor Gozzi's godfather, a man advanced in age, and in easy circumstances, residing in the country, thought himself, after a severe illness, very near his end, and sent to the doctor a carriage with a request to come to him at once with his father, as he wished them to be present at his death, and to pray for his departing soul. The old shoemaker drained a bottle, donned his Sunday clothes, and went off with his son.

I thought this a favourable opportunity and determined to improve it, considering that the night of the ball was too remote to suit my impatience. I therefore managed to tell Bettina that I would leave ajar the door of my room, and that I would wait for her as soon as everyone in the house had gone to bed. She promised to come. She slept on the ground floor in a small closet divided only by a partition from her father's chamber; the doctor being away, I was alone in the large room. The three boarders had their apartment in a different part of the house, and I had therefore no mishap to fear. I was delighted at the idea that I had at last reached the moment so ardently desired.

The instant I was in my room I bolted my door and opened the one leading to the passage, so that Bettina should have only to push it in order to come in; I then put my light out, but did not undress. When we read of such situations in a romance we think they are exaggerated; they are not so, and the passage in which Ariosto represents Roger waiting for Alcine is a beautiful picture painted from nature.

Until midnight I waited without feeling much anxiety; but I heard the clock strike two, three, four o'clock in the morning without seeing Bettina; my blood began to boil, and I was soon in a state of furious rage. It was snowing hard, but I shook from passion more than from cold. One hour before day-break, unable to master any longer my impatience, I made up my mind to go downstairs with bare feet, so as not to wake the dog, and to place myself at the bottom of the stairs within a yard of Bettina's door, which ought to have been opened if she had gone out of her room. I reached the door; it was closed, and as it could be locked only from inside I imagined that Bettina had fallen asleep. I was on the point of knocking at the door, but was prevented by fear of rousing the dog, as from that door to that of her closet there was a distance of three or four yards. Overwhelmed with grief, and unable to take a decision, I sat down on the last step of the stairs; but at day-break, chilled, benumbed, shivering with cold, afraid that the servant would see me and would think I was mad, I determined to go back to my room. I arise, but at that very moment I hear some noise in Bettina's room. Certain that I am going to see her, and hope lending me new strength, I draw nearer to the door. It opens; but instead of Bettina coming out I see Cordiani, who gives me such a furious kick in the stomach that I am thrown at a distance deep in the snow. Without stopping a single instant Cordiani is off, and locks himself up in the room which he shared with the brothers Feltrini.

I pick myself up quickly with the intention of taking my revenge upon Bettina, whom nothing could have saved from the effects of my rage at that moment. But I find her door locked; I kick vigorously against it, the dog starts a loud barking, and I make a hurried retreat to my room, in which I lock myself up, throwing myself in bed to compose and heal up my mind and body, for I was half dead.

Deceived, humbled, ill-treated, an object of contempt to the happy and triumphant Cordiani, I spent three hours ruminating the darkest schemes of revenge. To poison them both seemed to me but a trifle in that terrible moment of bitter misery. This project gave way to another as extravagant, as cowardly-namely, to go at once to her brother and disclose everything to him. I was twelve years of age, and my mind had not yet acquired sufficient coolness to mature schemes of heroic revenge, which are produced by false feelings of honour; this was only my apprenticeship in such adventures.

I was in that state of mind when suddenly I heard outside of my door the gruff voice of Bettina’s mother, who begged me to come down, adding that her daughter was dying. As I would have been very sorry if she had departed this life before she could feel the effects of my revenge, I got up hurriedly and went downstairs. I found Bettina lying in her father’s bed writhing with fearful convulsions, and surrounded by the whole family. Half dressed, nearly bent in two, she was throwing her body now to the right, now to the left, striking at random with her feet and with her fists, and extricating herself by violent shaking from the hands of those who endeavoured to keep her down.

With this sight before me, and the night’s adventure still in my mind, I hardly knew what to think. I had no knowledge of human nature, no knowledge of artifice and tricks, and I could not understand how I found myself coolly witnessing such a scene, and composedly calm in the presence of two beings, one of whom I intended to kill and the other to dishonour. At the end of an hour Bettina fell asleep.

A nurse and Doctor Olivo came soon after. The first said that the convulsions were caused by hysterics, but the doctor said no, and prescribed rest and cold baths. I said nothing, but I could not refrain from laughing at them, for I knew, or rather guessed, that Bettina's sickness was the result of her nocturnal employment, or of the fright which she must have felt at my meeting with Cordiani. At all events, I determined to postpone my revenge until the return of her brother, although I had not the slightest suspicion that her illness was all sham, for I did not give her credit for so much cleverness.

To return to my room I had to pass through Bettina's closet, and seeing her dress handy on the bed I took it into my head to search her pockets. I found a small note, and recognizing Cordiani's handwriting, I took possession of it to read it in my room. I marvelled at the girl's imprudence, for her mother might have discovered it, and being unable to read would very likely have given it to the doctor, her son. I thought she must have taken leave of her senses, but my feelings may be appreciated when I read the following words: "As your father is away it is not necessary to leave your door ajar as usual. When we leave the supper-table I will go to your closet; you will find me there."

When I recovered from my stupor I gave way to an irresistible fit of laughter, and seeing how completely I had been duped I thought I was cured of my love. Cordiani appeared to me deserving of forgiveness, and Bettina of contempt. I congratulated myself upon having received a lesson of such importance for the remainder of my life. I even went so far as to acknowledge to myself that Bettina had been quite right in giving the preference to Cordiani, who was fifteen years old, while I was only a child. Yet, in spite of my good disposition to forgiveness, the kick administered by Cordiani was still heavy upon my memory, and I could not help keeping a grudge against him.

At noon, as we were at dinner in the kitchen, where we took our meals on account of the cold weather, Bettina began again to raise piercing screams. Everybody rushed to her room, but I quietly kept my seat and finished my dinner, after which I went to my studies. In the evening when I came down to supper I found that Bettina's bed had been brought to the kitchen close by her mother's; but it was no concern of mine, and I remained likewise perfectly indifferent to the noise made during the night, and to the confusion which took place in the morning, when she had a fresh fit of convulsions.

Doctor Gozzi and his father returned in the evening. Cordiani, who felt uneasy, came to inquire from me what my intentions were, but I rushed towards him with an open penknife in my hand, and he beat a hasty retreat. I had entirely abandoned the idea of relating the night's scandalous adventure to the doctor, for such a project I could only entertain in a moment of excitement and rage. The next day the mother came in while we were at our lesson, and told the doctor, after a lengthened preamble, that she had discovered the character of her daughter's illness; that it was caused by a spell thrown over her by a witch, and that she knew the witch well.

"It may be, my dear mother, but we must be careful not to make a mistake. Who is the witch?"

"Our old servant, and I have just had a proof of it."

"How so?"

"I have barred the door of my room with two broomsticks placed in the shape of a cross, which she must have undone to go in; but when she saw them she drew back, and she went round by the other door. It is evident that, were she not a witch, she would not be afraid of touching them."

"It is not complete evidence, dear mother; send the woman to me."

The servant made her appearance.

"Why," said the doctor, "did you not enter my mother's room this morning through the usual door?"

"I do not know what you mean."

"Did you not see the St. Andrew's cross on the door?"

"What cross is that?"

"It is useless to plead ignorance," said the mother; "where did you sleep last Thursday night?"

"At my niece's, who had just been confined."

"Nothing of the sort. You were at the witches' Sabbath; you are a witch, and have bewitched my daughter."

The poor woman, indignant at such an accusation, spits at her mistress's face; the mistress, enraged, gets hold of a stick to give the servant a drubbing; the doctor endeavours to keep his mother back, but he is compelled to let her loose and to run after the servant, who was hurrying down the stairs, screaming and howling in order to rouse the neighbours; he catches her, and finally succeeds in pacifying her with some money.

After this comical but rather scandalous exhibition, the doctor donned his vestments for the purpose of exorcising his sister and of ascertaining whether she was truly possessed of an unclean spirit. The novelty of this mystery attracted the whole of my attention. All the inmates of the house appeared to me either mad or stupid, for I could not, for the life of me, imagine that diabolical spirits were dwelling in Bettina's body. When we drew near her bed, her breathing had, to all appearance, stopped, and the exorcisms of her brother did not restore it. Doctor Olivo happened to come in at that moment, and inquired whether he would be in the way; he was answered in the negative, provided he had faith.

Upon which he left, saying that he had no faith in any miracles except in those of the Gospel.

Soon after Doctor Gozzi went to his room, and finding myself alone with Bettina I bent down over her bed and whispered in her ear.

"Take courage, get well again, and rely upon my discretion."

She turned her head towards the wall and did not answer me, but the day passed off without any more convulsions. I thought I had cured her, but on the following day the frenzy went up to the brain, and in her delirium she pronounced at random Greek and Latin words without any meaning, and then no doubt whatever was entertained of her being possessed of the evil spirit. Her mother went out and returned soon, accompanied by the most renowned exorcist of Padua, a very ill-featured Capuchin, called Friar Prospero da Bovolenta.

The moment Bettina saw the exorcist, she burst into loud laughter, and addressed to him the most offensive insults, which fairly delighted everybody, as the devil alone could be bold enough to address a Capuchin in such a manner; but the holy man, hearing himself called an obtrusive ignoramus and a stinkard, went on striking Bettina with a heavy crucifix, saying that he was beating the devil. He stopped only when he saw her on the point of hurling at him the chamber utensil which she had just seized. "If it is the devil who has offended thee with his words," she said, "resent the insult with words likewise, jackass that thou art, but if I have offended thee myself, learn, stupid booby, that thou must respect me, and be off at once."

I could see poor Doctor Gozzi blushing; the friar, however, held his ground, and, armed at all points, began to read a terrible exorcism, at the end of which he commanded the devil to state his name.

"My name is Bettina."

"It cannot be, for it is the name of a baptized girl."

"Then thou art of opinion that a devil must rejoice in a masculine name? Learn, ignorant friar, that a devil is a spirit, and does not belong to either sex. But as thou believest that a devil is speaking to thee through my lips, promise to answer me with truth, and I will engage to give way before thy incantations."

"Very well, I agree to this."

"Tell me, then, art thou thinking that thy knowledge is greater than mine?"

"No, but I believe myself more powerful in the name of the holy Trinity, and by my sacred character."

"If thou art more powerful than I, then prevent me from telling thee unpalatable truths. Thou art very vain of thy beard, thou art combing and dressing it ten times a day, and thou would'st not shave half of it to get me out of this body. Cut off thy beard, and I promise to come out."

"Father of lies, I will increase thy punishment a hundred fold."

"I dare thee to do it."

After saying these words, Bettina broke into such a loud peal of laughter, that I could not refrain from joining in it. The Capuchin, turning towards Doctor Gozzi, told him that I was wanting in faith, and that I ought to leave the room; which I did, remarking that he had guessed rightly. I was not yet out of the room when the friar offered his hand to Bettina for her to kiss, and I had the pleasure of seeing her spit upon it.

This strange girl, full of extraordinary talent, made rare sport of the friar, without causing any surprise to anyone, as all her answers were attributed to the devil. I could not conceive what her purpose was in playing such a part.

The Capuchin dined with us, and during the meal he uttered a good deal of nonsense. After dinner, he returned to Bettina's chamber, with the intention of blessing her, but as soon as she caught sight of him, she took up a glass full of some black mixture sent from the apothecary, and threw it at his head. Cordiani, being close by the friar, came in for a good share of the liquid-an accident which afforded me the greatest delight. Bettina was quite right to improve her opportunity, as everything she did was, of course, put to the account of the unfortunate devil. Not overmuch pleased, Friar Prospero, as he left the house, told the doctor that there was no doubt of the girl being possessed, but that another exorcist must be sent for, since he had not, himself, obtained God's grace to eject the evil spirit.

After he had gone, Bettina kept very calm for six hours, and in the evening, to our great surprise, she joined us at the supper table. She told her parents that she felt quite well, spoke to her brother, and then, addressing me, she remarked that, the ball taking place on the morrow, she would come to my room in the morning to dress my hair like a girl's. I thanked her, and said that, as she had been so ill, she ought to nurse herself. She soon retired to bed, and we remained at the table, talking of her.

When I was undressing for the night, I took up my night-cap, and found in it a small note with these words: "You must accompany me to the ball, disguised as a girl, or I will give you a sight which will cause you to weep."

I waited until the doctor was asleep, and I wrote the following answer: "I cannot go to the ball, because I have fully made up my mind to avoid every opportunity of being alone with you. As for the painful sight with which you threaten to entertain me, I believe you capable of keeping your word, but I entreat you to spare my heart, for I love you as if you were my sister. I have forgiven you, dear Bettina, and I wish to forget everything. I enclose a note which you must be delighted to have again in your possession. You see what risk you were running when you left it in your pocket. This restitution must convince you of my friendship."

CHAPTER III

Bettina Is Supposed to Go Mad — Father Mancia — The Small-pox —

I Leave Padua

Bettina must have been in despair, not knowing into whose hands her letter had fallen; to return it to her and thus to allay her anxiety, was therefore a great proof of friendship; but my generosity, at the same time that it freed her from a keen sorrow, must have caused her another quite as dreadful, for she knew that I was master of her secret. Cordiani's letter was perfectly explicit; it gave the strongest evidence that she was in the habit of receiving him every night, and therefore the story she had prepared to deceive me was useless. I felt it was so, and, being disposed to calm her anxiety as far as I could, I went to her bedside in the morning, and I placed in her hands Cordiani's note and my answer to her letter.

The girl's spirit and talent had won my esteem; I could no longer despise her; I saw in her only a poor creature seduced by her natural temperament. She loved man, and was to be pitied only on account of the consequences. Believing that the view I took of the situation was a right one, I had resigned myself like a reasonable being, and not like a disappointed lover. The shame was for her and not for me. I had only one wish, namely, to find out whether the two brothers Feltrini, Cordiani's companions, had likewise shared Bettina's favours.

Bettina put on throughout the day a cheerful and happy look. In the evening she dressed herself for the ball; but suddenly an attack of sickness, whether feigned or real I did not know, compelled her to go to bed, and frightened everybody in the house. As for myself, knowing the whole affair, I was prepared for new scenes, and indeed for sad ones, for I felt that I had obtained over her a power repugnant to her vanity and self-love. I must, however, confess that, in spite of the excellent school in which I found myself before I had attained manhood, and which ought to have given me experience as a shield for the future, I have through the whole of my life been the dupe of women. Twelve years ago, if it had not been for my guardian angel, I would have foolishly married a young, thoughtless girl, with whom I had fallen in love: Now that I am seventy-two years old I believe myself no longer susceptible of such follies; but, alas! that is the very thing which causes me to be miserable.

The next day the whole family was deeply grieved because the devil of whom Bettina was possessed had made himself master of her reason. Doctor Gozzi told me that there could not be the shadow of a doubt that his unfortunate sister was possessed, as, if she had only been mad, she never would have so cruelly ill-treated the Capuchin, Prospero, and he determined to place her under the care of Father Mancia.

This Mancia was a celebrated Jacobin (or Dominican) exorcist, who enjoyed the reputation of never having failed to cure a girl possessed of the demon.

Sunday had come; Bettina had made a good dinner, but she had been frantic all through the day. Towards midnight her father came home, singing Tasso as usual, and so drunk that he could not stand. He went up to Bettina's bed, and after kissing her affectionately he said to her: "Thou art not mad, my girl."

Her answer was that he was not drunk.

"Thou art possessed of the devil, my dear child."

"Yes, father, and you alone can cure me."

"Well, I am ready."

Upon this our shoemaker begins a theological discourse, expatiating upon the power of faith and upon the virtue of the paternal blessing. He throws off his cloak, takes a crucifix with one hand, places the other over the head of his daughter, and addresses the devil in such an amusing way that even his wife, always a stupid, dull, cross-grained old woman, had to laugh till the tears came down her cheeks. The two performers in the comedy alone were not laughing, and their serious countenance added to the fun of the performance. I marvelled at Bettina (who was always ready to enjoy a good laugh) having sufficient control over herself to remain calm and grave. Doctor Gozzi had also given way to merriment; but begged that the farce should come to an end, for he deemed that his father's eccentricities were as many profanations against the sacredness of exorcism. At last the exorcist, doubtless tired out, went to bed saying that he was certain that the devil would not disturb his daughter during the night.

On the morrow, just as we had finished our breakfast, Father Mancia made his appearance. Doctor Gozzi, followed by the whole family, escorted him to his sister's bedside. As for me, I was entirely taken up by the face of the monk. Here is his portrait. His figure was tall and majestic, his age about thirty; he had light hair and blue eyes; his features were those of Apollo, but without his pride and assuming haughtiness; his complexion, dazzling white, was pale, but that paleness seemed to have been given for the very purpose of showing off the red coral of his lips, through which could be seen, when they opened, two rows of pearls. He was neither thin nor stout, and the habitual sadness of his countenance enhanced its sweetness. His gait was slow, his air timid, an indication of the great modesty of his mind.

When we entered the room Bettina was asleep, or pretended to be so. Father Mancia took a sprinkler and threw over her a few drops of holy water; she opened her eyes, looked at the monk, and closed them immediately; a little while after she opened them again, had a better look at him, laid herself on her back, let her arms droop down gently, and with her head prettily bent on one side she fell into the sweetest of slumbers.

The exorcist, standing by the bed, took out his pocket ritual and the stole which he put round his neck, then a reliquary, which he placed on the bosom of the sleeping girl, and with the air of a saint he begged all of us to fall on our knees and to pray, so that God should let him know whether the patient was possessed or only labouring under a natural disease. He kept us kneeling for half an hour, reading all the time in a low tone of voice. Bettina did not stir.

Tired, I suppose, of the performance, he desired to speak privately with Doctor Gozzi. They passed into the next room, out of which they emerged after a quarter of an hour, brought back by a loud peal of laughter from the mad girl, who, when she saw them, turned her back on them. Father Mancia smiled, dipped the sprinkler over and over in the holy water, gave us all a generous shower, and took his leave.

Doctor Gozzi told us that the exorcist would come again on the morrow, and that he had promised to deliver Bettina within three hours if she were truly possessed of the demon, but that he made no promise if it should turn out to be a case of madness. The mother exclaimed that he would surely deliver her, and she poured out her thanks to God for having allowed her the grace of beholding a saint before her death.

The following day Bettina was in a fine frenzy. She began to utter the most extravagant speeches that a poet could imagine, and did not stop when the charming exorcist came into her room; he seemed to enjoy her foolish talk for a few minutes, after which, having armed himself ‘cap-a-pie’, he begged us to withdraw. His order was obeyed instantly; we left the chamber, and the door remained open. But what did it matter? Who would have been bold enough to go in?

During three long hours we heard nothing; the stillness was unbroken. At noon the monk called us in. Bettina was there sad and very quiet while the exorcist packed up his things. He took his departure, saying he had very good hopes of the case, and requesting that the doctor would send him news of the patient. Bettina partook of dinner in her bed, got up for supper, and the next day behaved herself rationally; but the following circumstance strengthened my opinion that she had been neither insane nor possessed.

It was two days before the Purification of the Holy Virgin. Doctor Gozzi was in the habit of giving us the sacrament in his own church, but he always sent us for our confession to the church of Saint-Augustin, in which the Jacobins of Padua officiated. At the supper table, he told us to prepare ourselves for the next day, and his mother, addressing us, said: “You ought, all of you, to confess to Father Mancia, so as to obtain absolution from that holy man. I intend to go to him myself.” Cordiani and the two Feltrini agreed to the proposal; I remained silent, but as the idea was unpleasant to me, I concealed the feeling, with a full determination to prevent the execution of the project.

I had entire confidence in the secrecy of confession, and I was incapable of making a false one, but knowing that I had a right to choose my confessor, I most certainly never would have been so simple as to confess to Father Mancia what had taken place between me and a girl, because he would have easily guessed that the girl could be no other but Bettina. Besides, I was satisfied that Cordiani would confess everything to the monk, and I was deeply sorry.

Early the next morning, Bettina brought me a band for my neck, and gave me the following letter: "Spurn me, but respect my honour and the shadow of peace to which I aspire. No one from this house must confess to Father Mancia; you alone can prevent the execution of that project, and I need not suggest the way to succeed. It will prove whether you have some friendship for me."

I could not express the pity I felt for the poor girl, as I read that note. In spite of that feeling, this is what I answered: "I can well understand that, notwithstanding the inviolability of confession, your mother's proposal should cause you great anxiety; but I cannot see why, in order to prevent its execution, you should depend upon me rather than upon Cordiani who has expressed his acceptance of it. All I can promise you is that I will not be one of those who may go to Father Mancia; but I have no influence over your lover; you alone can speak to him."

She replied: "I have never addressed a word to Cordiani since the fatal night which has sealed my misery, and I never will speak to him again, even if I could by so doing recover my lost happiness. To you alone I wish to be indebted for my life and for my honour."

This girl appeared to me more wonderful than all the heroines of whom I had read in novels. It seemed to me that she was making sport of me with the most barefaced effrontery. I thought she was trying to fetter me again with her chains; and although I had no inclination for them, I made up my mind to render her the service she claimed at my hands, and which she believed I alone could compass. She felt certain of her success, but in what school had she obtained her experience of the human heart? Was it in reading novels? Most likely the reading of a certain class of novels causes the ruin of a great many young girls, but I am of opinion that from good romances they acquire graceful manners and a knowledge of society.

Having made up my mind to shew her every kindness in my power, I took an opportunity, as we were undressing for the night, of telling Doctor Gozzi that, for conscientious motives, I could not confess to Father Mancia, and yet that I did not wish to be an exception in that matter. He kindly answered that he understood my reasons, and that he would take us all to the church of Saint-Antoine. I kissed his hand in token of my gratitude.

On the following day, everything having gone according to her wishes, I saw Bettina sit down to the table with a face beaming with satisfaction. In the afternoon I had to go to bed in consequence of a wound in my foot; the doctor accompanied his pupils to church; and Bettina being alone, availed herself of the opportunity, came to my room and sat down on my bed. I had expected her visit, and I received it with pleasure, as it heralded an explanation for which I was positively longing.

She began by expressing a hope that I would not be angry with her for seizing the first opportunity she had of some conversation with me.

“No,” I answered, “for you thus afford me an occasion of assuring you that, my feelings towards you being those of a friend only, you need not have any fear of my causing you any anxiety or displeasure. Therefore Bettina, you may do whatever suits you; my love is no more. You have at one blow given the death-stroke to the intense passion which was blossoming in my heart. When I reached my room, after the ill-treatment I had experienced at Cordiani’s hands, I felt for you nothing but hatred; that feeling soon merged into utter contempt, but that sensation itself was in time, when my mind recovered its balance, changed for a feeling of the deepest indifference, which again has given way when I saw what power there is in your mind. I have now become your friend; I have conceived the greatest esteem for your cleverness. I have been the dupe of it, but no matter; that talent of yours does exist, it is wonderful, divine, I admire it, I love it, and the highest homage I can render to it is, in my estimation, to foster for the possessor of it the purest feelings of friendship. Reciprocate that friendship, be true, sincere, and plain dealing. Give up all nonsense, for you have already obtained from me all I can give you. The very thought of love is repugnant to me; I can bestow my love only where I feel certain of being the only one loved. You are at liberty to lay my foolish delicacy to the account of my youthful age, but I feel so, and I cannot help it. You have written to me that you never speak to Cordiani; if I am the cause of that rupture between you, I regret it, and I think that, in the interest of your honour, you would do well to make it up with him; for the future I must be careful never to give him any grounds for umbrage or suspicion. Recollect also that, if you have tempted him by the same manoeuvres which you have employed towards me, you are doubly wrong, for it may be that, if he truly loves you, you have caused him to be miserable.”

“All you have just said to me,” answered Bettina, “is grounded upon false impressions and deceptive appearances. I do not love Cordiani, and I never had any love for him; on the contrary, I have felt, and I do feel, for him a hatred which he has richly deserved, and I hope to convince you, in spite of every appearance which seems to convict me. As to the reproach of seduction, I entreat you to spare me such an accusation. On our side, consider that, if you had not yourself thrown temptation in my way, I never would have committed towards you an action of which I have deeply repented, for reasons which you do not know, but which you must learn from me. The fault I have been guilty of is a serious one only because I did not foresee the injury it would do me in the inexperienced mind of the ingrate who dares to reproach me with it.”

Bettina was shedding tears: all she had said was not unlikely and rather complimentary to my vanity, but I had seen too much. Besides, I knew the extent of her cleverness, and it was very natural to lend her a wish to deceive me; how could I help thinking that her visit to me was prompted only by her self-love being too deeply wounded to let me enjoy a victory so humiliating to herself? Therefore, unshaken in my preconceived opinion, I told her that I placed implicit confidence in all she had just said respecting the state of her heart previous to the playful nonsense which had been the origin of my love for her, and that I promised never in the future to allude again to my accusation of seduction. “But,” I continued, “confess that the fire at that time burning in your bosom was only of short duration, and that the slightest breath of wind had been enough to extinguish it. Your virtue, which went astray for only one instant, and which has so suddenly recovered its mastery over your senses, deserves some praise. You, with all your deep adoring love for me, became all at once blind to my sorrow, whatever care I took to make it clear to your sight. It remains for me to learn how that virtue could be so very dear to you, at the very time that Cordiani took care to wreck it every night.”

Bettina eyed me with the air of triumph which perfect confidence in victory gives to a person, and said: “You have just reached the point where I wished you to be. You shall now be made aware of things which I could not explain before, owing to your refusing the appointment which I then gave you for no other purpose than to tell you all the truth. Cordiani declared his love for me a week after he became an inmate in our house; he begged my consent to a marriage, if his father made the demand of my hand as soon as he should have completed his studies. My answer was that I did not know him sufficiently, that I could form no idea on the subject, and I requested him not to allude to it any more. He appeared to have quietly given up the matter, but soon after, I found out that it was not the case; he begged me one day to come to his room now and then to dress his hair; I told him I had no time to spare, and he remarked that you were more fortunate. I laughed at this reproach, as everyone here knew that I had the care of you. It was a fortnight after my refusal to Cordiani, that I unfortunately spent an hour with you in that loving nonsense which has naturally given you ideas until then unknown to your senses. That hour made me very happy: I loved you, and having given way to very natural desires, I revelled in my enjoyment without the slightest remorse of conscience. I was longing to be again with you the next morning, but after supper, misfortune laid for the first time its hand upon me. Cordiani slipped in my hands this note and this letter which I have since hidden in a hole in the wall, with the intention of shewing them to you at the first opportunity."

Saying this, Bettina handed me the note and the letter; the first ran as follows: "Admit me this evening in your closet, the door of which, leading to the yard, can be left ajar, or prepare yourself to make the best of it with the doctor, to whom I intend to deliver, if you should refuse my request, the letter of which I enclose a copy."

The letter contained the statement of a cowardly and enraged informer, and would certainly have caused the most unpleasant results. In that letter Cordiani informed the doctor that his sister spent her mornings with me in criminal connection while he was saying his mass, and he pledged himself to enter into particulars which would leave him no doubt.

"After giving to the case the consideration it required," continued Bettina, "I made up my mind to hear that monster; but my determination being fixed, I put in my pocket my father's stilletto, and holding my door ajar I waited for him there, unwilling to let him come in, as my closet is divided only by a thin partition from the room of my father, whom the slightest noise might have roused up. My first question to Cordiani was in reference to the slander contained in the letter he threatened to deliver to my brother: he answered that it was no slander, for he had been a witness to everything that had taken place in the morning through a hole he had bored in the garret just above your bed, and to which he would apply his eye the moment he knew that I was in your room. He wound up by threatening to discover everything to my brother and to my mother, unless I granted him the same favours I had bestowed upon you. In my just indignation I loaded him with the most bitter insults, I called him a cowardly spy and slanderer, for he could not have seen anything but childish playfulness, and I declared to him that he need not flatter himself that any threat would compel me to give the slightest compliance to his wishes. He then begged and begged my pardon a thousand times, and went on assuring me that I must lay to my rigour the odium of the step he had taken, the only excuse for it being in the fervent love I had kindled in his heart, and which made him miserable. He acknowledged that his letter might be a slander, that he had acted treacherously, and he pledged his honour never to attempt obtaining from me by violence favours which he desired to merit only by the constancy of his love. I then thought myself to some extent compelled to say that I might love him at some future time, and to promise that I would not again come near your bed during the absence of my brother. In this way I dismissed him satisfied, without his daring to beg for so much as a kiss, but with the promise that we might now and then have some conversation in the same place. As soon as he left me I went to bed, deeply grieved that I could no longer see you in the absence of my brother, and that I was unable, for fear of consequences, to let you know the reason of my change. Three weeks passed off in that position, and I cannot express what have been my sufferings, for you, of course, urged me to come, and I was always under the painful necessity of disappointing you. I even feared to find myself alone with you, for I felt certain that I could not have refrained from telling you the cause of the change in my conduct. To crown my misery, add that I found myself compelled, at least once a week, to receive the vile Cordiani outside of my room, and to speak to him, in order to check his impatience with a few words. At last, unable to bear up any longer under such misery, threatened likewise by you, I determined to end my agony. I wished to disclose to you all this intrigue, leaving to you the care of bringing a change for the better, and for that purpose I proposed that you should accompany me to the ball disguised as a girl, although I knew it would enrage Cordiani; but my mind was made up. You know how my scheme fell to the ground. The unexpected departure of my brother with my father suggested to both of you the same idea, and it was before receiving Cordiani's letter that I promised to come to you. Cordiani did not ask for an appointment; he only stated that he would be waiting for me in my closet, and I had no opportunity of telling him that I could not allow him to come, any more than I could find time to let you know that I would be with you only after midnight, as I intended to do, for I reckoned that after an hour's talk I would dismiss the wretch to his room. But my reckoning was wrong; Cordiani had conceived a scheme, and I could not help listening to all he had to say about it. His whining and exaggerated complaints had no end. He upbraided me for refusing to further the plan he had concocted, and which he thought I would accept with rapture if I loved him. The scheme was for me to elope with him during holy week, and to run away to Ferrara, where he had an uncle who would have given us a kind welcome, and would soon have brought his father to forgive him and to insure our happiness for life. The objections I made, his answers, the details to be entered into, the explanations and the ways and means to be examined to obviate the difficulties of the project, took up the whole night. My heart was bleeding as I thought of you; but my conscience is at rest, and I did nothing that could render me unworthy of your esteem. You cannot refuse it to me, unless you believe that the confession I have just made is untrue; but you would be both mistaken and unjust. Had I made up my mind to sacrifice myself and to grant favours which love alone ought to obtain, I might have got rid of the treacherous wretch within one hour, but death seemed preferable to such a dreadful expedient. Could I in any way suppose that you were outside of my door, exposed to the wind and to the snow? Both of us were deserving of pity, but my misery was still greater than yours. All these fearful circumstances were written in the book of fate, to make me lose my reason, which now returns only at intervals, and I am in constant dread of a fresh attack of those awful convulsions. They say I am bewitched, and possessed of the demon; I do not know anything about it, but if it should be true I am the most miserable creature in existence." Bettina ceased speaking, and burst into a violent storm of tears, sobs, and groans. I was deeply moved, although I felt that all she had said might be true, and yet was scarcely worthy of belief:

'Forse era ver, ma non pero credibile

A chi del senso suo fosse signor.'

But she was weeping, and her tears, which at all events were not deceptive, took away from me the faculty of doubt. Yet I put her tears to the account of her wounded self-love; to give way entirely I needed a thorough conviction, and to obtain it evidence was necessary, probability was not enough. I could not admit either Cordiani's moderation or Bettina's patience, or the fact of seven hours employed in innocent conversation. In spite of all these considerations, I felt a sort of pleasure in accepting for ready cash all the counterfeit coins that she had spread out before me.

After drying her tears, Bettina fixed her beautiful eyes upon mine, thinking that she could discern in them evident signs of her victory; but I surprised her much by alluding to one point which, with all her cunning, she had neglected to mention in her defence. Rhetoric makes use of nature's secrets in the same way as painters who try to imitate it: their most beautiful work is false. This young girl, whose mind had not been refined by study, aimed at being considered innocent and artless, and she did her best to succeed, but I had seen too good a specimen of her cleverness.

"Well, my dear Bettina," I said, "your story has affected me; but how do you think I am going to accept your convulsions as natural, and to believe in the demoniac symptoms which came on so seasonably during the exorcisms, although you very properly expressed your doubts on the matter?"

Hearing this, Bettina stared at me, remaining silent for a few minutes, then casting her eyes down she gave way to fresh tears, exclaiming now and then: "Poor me! oh, poor me!" This situation, however, becoming most painful to me, I asked what I could do for her. She answered in a sad tone that if my heart did not suggest to me what to do, she did not herself see what she could demand of me.

"I thought," said she, "that I would reconquer my lost influence over your heart, but, I see it too plainly, you no longer feel an interest in me. Go on treating me harshly; go on taking for mere fictions sufferings which are but too real, which you have caused, and which you will now increase. Some day, but too late, you will be sorry, and your repentance will be bitter indeed."

As she pronounced these words she rose to take her leave; but judging her capable of anything I felt afraid, and I detained her to say that the only way to regain my affection was to remain one month without convulsions and without handsome Father Mancia’s presence being required.

“I cannot help being convulsed,” she answered, “but what do you mean by applying to the Jacobin that epithet of handsome? Could you suppose — ?”

“Not at all, not at all — I suppose nothing; to do so would be necessary for me to be jealous. But I cannot help saying that the preference given by your devils to the exorcism of that handsome monk over the incantations of the ugly Capuchin is likely to give birth to remarks rather detrimental to your honour. Moreover, you are free to do whatever pleases you.”

Thereupon she left my room, and a few minutes later everybody came home.

After supper the servant, without any question on my part, informed me that Bettina had gone to bed with violent feverish chills, having previously had her bed carried into the kitchen beside her mother’s. This attack of fever might be real, but I had my doubts. I felt certain that she would never make up her mind to be well, for her good health would have supplied me with too strong an argument against her pretended innocence, even in the case of Cordiani; I likewise considered her idea of having her bed placed near her mother’s nothing but artful contrivance.

The next day Doctor Olivo found her very feverish, and told her brother that she would most likely be excited and delirious, but that it would be the effect of the fever and not the work of the devil. And truly, Bettina was raving all day, but Dr. Gozzi, placing implicit confidence in the physician, would not listen to his mother, and did not send for the Jacobin friar. The fever increased in violence, and on the fourth day the small-pox broke out. Cordiani and the two brothers Feitrini, who had so far escaped that disease, were immediately sent away, but as I had had it before I remained at home.

The poor girl was so fearfully covered with the loathsome eruption, that on the sixth day her skin could not be seen on any part of her body. Her eyes closed, and her life was despaired of, when it was found that her mouth and throat were obstructed to such a degree that she could swallow nothing but a few drops of honey. She was perfectly motionless; she breathed and that was all. Her mother never left her bedside, and I was thought a saint when I carried my table and my books into the patient’s room. The unfortunate girl had become a fearful sight to look upon; her head was dreadfully swollen, the nose could no longer be seen, and much fear was entertained for her eyes, in case her life should be spared. The odour of her perspiration was most offensive, but I persisted in keeping my watch by her.

On the ninth day, the vicar gave her absolution, and after administering extreme unction, he left her, as he said, in the hands of God. In the midst of so much sadness, the conversation of the mother with her son, would, in spite of myself, cause me some amount of merriment. The good woman wanted to know whether the demon who was dwelling in her child could still influence her to perform extravagant follies, and what would become of the demon in the case of her daughter's death, for, as she expressed it, she could not think of his being so stupid as to remain in so loathsome a body. She particularly wanted to ascertain whether the demon had power to carry off the soul of her child. Doctor Gozzi, who was an ubiquitarian, made to all those questions answers which had not even the shadow of good sense, and which of course had no other effect than to increase a hundred-fold the perplexity of his poor mother.

During the tenth and eleventh days, Bettina was so bad that we thought every moment likely to be her last. The disease had reached its worst period; the smell was unbearable; I alone would not leave her, so sorely did I pity her. The heart of man is indeed an unfathomable abyss, for, however incredible it may appear, it was while in that fearful state that Bettina inspired me with the fondness which I showed her after her recovery.

On the thirteenth day the fever abated, but the patient began to experience great irritation, owing to a dreadful itching, which no remedy could have allayed as effectually as these powerful words which I kept constantly pouring into her ear: "Bettina, you are getting better; but if you dare to scratch yourself, you will become such a fright that nobody will ever love you." All the physicians in the universe might be challenged to prescribe a more potent remedy against itching for a girl who, aware that she has been pretty, finds herself exposed to the loss of her beauty through her own fault, if she scratches herself.

At last her fine eyes opened again to the light of heaven; she was moved to her own room, but she had to keep her bed until Easter. She inoculated me with a few pocks, three of which have left upon my face everlasting marks;

but in her eyes they gave me credit for great devotedness, for they were a proof of my constant care, and she felt that I indeed deserved her whole love. And she truly loved me, and I returned her love, although I never plucked a flower which fate and prejudice kept in store for a husband. But what a contemptible husband!

Two years later she married a shoemaker, by name Pigozzo — a base, arrant knave who beggared and ill-treated her to such an extent that her brother had to take her home and to provide for her. Fifteen years afterwards, having been appointed arch-priest at Saint-George de la Vallee, he took her there with him, and when I went to pay him a visit eighteen years ago, I found Bettina old, ill, and dying. She breathed her last in my arms in 1776, twenty-four hours after my arrival. I will speak of her death in good time.

About that period, my mother returned from St. Petersburg, where the Empress Anne Iwanowa had not approved of the Italian comedy. The whole of the troop had already returned to Italy, and my mother had travelled with Carlin Bertinazzi, the harlequin, who died in Paris in the year 1783. As soon as she had reached Padua, she informed Doctor Gozzi of her arrival, and he lost no time in accompanying me to the inn where she had put up. We dined with her, and before bidding us adieu, she presented the doctor with a splendid fur, and gave me the skin of a lynx for Bettina. Six months afterwards she summoned me to Venice, as she wished to see me before leaving for Dresden, where she had contracted an engagement for life in the service of the Elector of Saxony, Augustus III., King of Poland. She took with her my brother Jean, then eight years old, who was weeping bitterly when he left; I thought him very foolish, for there was nothing very tragic in that departure. He is the only one in the family who was wholly indebted to our mother for his fortune, although he was not her favourite child.

I spent another year in Padua, studying law in which I took the degree of Doctor in my sixteenth year, the subject of my thesis being in the civil law, ‘de testamentis’, and in the canon law, ‘utrum Hebraei possint construere novas synagogas’.

My vocation was to study medicine, and to practice it, for I felt a great inclination for that profession, but no heed was given to my wishes, and I was compelled to apply myself to the study of the law, for which I had an invincible repugnance. My friends were of opinion that I could not make my fortune in any profession but that of an advocate, and, what is still worse, of an ecclesiastical advocate. If they had given the matter proper consideration, they would have given me leave to follow my own inclinations, and I would have been a physician — a profession in which quackery is of still greater avail than in the legal business. I never became either a physician or an advocate, and I never would apply to a lawyer, when I had any legal business, nor call in a physician when I happened to be ill. Lawsuits and pettifoggery may support a good many families, but a greater proportion is ruined by them, and those who perish in the hands, of physicians are more numerous by far than those who get cured strong evidence in my opinion, that mankind would be much less miserable without either lawyers or doctors.

To attend the lectures of the professors, I had to go to the university called the Bo, and it became necessary for me to go out alone. This was a matter of great wonder to me, for until then I had never considered myself a free man; and in my wish to enjoy fully the liberty I thought I had just conquered, it was not long before I had made the very worst acquaintances amongst the most renowned students. As a matter of course, the most renowned were the most worthless, dissolute fellows, gamblers, frequenters of disorderly houses, hard drinkers, debauchees, tormentors and suborners of honest girls, liars, and wholly incapable of any good or virtuous feeling. In the company of such men did I begin my apprenticeship of the world, learning my lesson from the book of experience.

The theory of morals and its usefulness through the life of man can be compared to the advantage derived by running over the index of a book before reading it when we have perused that index we know nothing but the subject of the work. This is like the school for morals offered by the sermons, the precepts, and the tales which our instructors recite for our especial benefit. We lend our whole attention to those lessons, but when an opportunity offers of profiting by the advice thus bestowed upon us, we feel inclined to ascertain for ourselves whether the result will turn out as predicted; we give way to that very natural inclination, and punishment speedily follows with concomitant repentance. Our only consolation lies in the fact that in such moments we are conscious of our own knowledge, and consider ourselves as having earned the right to instruct others; but those to whom we wish to impart our experience act exactly as we have acted before them, and, as a matter of course, the world remains in statu quo, or grows worse and worse.

When Doctor Gozzi granted me the privilege of going out alone, he gave me an opportunity for the discovery of several truths which, until then, were not only unknown to me, but the very existence of which I had never suspected. On my first appearance, the boldest scholars got hold of me and sounded my depth. Finding that I was a thorough freshman, they undertook my education, and with that worthy purpose in view they allowed me to fall blindly into every trap. They taught me gambling, won the little I possessed, and then they made me play upon trust, and put me up to dishonest practices in order to procure the means of paying my gambling debts; but I acquired at the same time the sad experience of sorrow! Yet these hard lessons proved useful, for they taught me to mistrust the impudent sycophants who openly flatter their dupes, and never to rely upon the offers made by fawning flatterers. They taught me likewise how to behave in the company of quarrelsome duellists, the society of whom ought to be avoided, unless we make up our mind to be constantly in the very teeth of danger. I was not caught in the snares of professional lewd women, because not one of them was in my eyes as pretty as Bettina, but I did not resist so well the desire for that species of vain glory which is the reward of holding life at a cheap price.

In those days the students in Padua enjoyed very great privileges, which were in reality abuses made legal through prescription, the primitive characteristic of privileges, which differ essentially from prerogatives. In fact, in order to maintain the legality of their privileges, the students often committed crimes. The guilty were dealt with tenderly, because the interest of the city demanded that severity should not diminish the great influx of scholars who flocked to that renowned university from every part of Europe. The practice of the Venetian government was to secure at a high salary the most celebrated professors, and to grant the utmost freedom to the young men attending their lessons. The students acknowledged no authority but that of a chief, chosen among themselves, and called syndic. He was usually a foreign nobleman, who could keep a large establishment, and who was responsible to the government for the behaviour of the scholars. It was his duty to give them up to justice when they transgressed the laws, and the students never disputed his sentence, because he always defended them to the utmost, when they had the slightest shadow of right on their side.

The students, amongst other privileges, would not suffer their trunks to be searched by customhouse authorities, and no ordinary policeman would have dared to arrest one of them. They carried about them forbidden weapons, seduced helpless girls, and often disturbed the public peace by their nocturnal broils and impudent practical jokes; in one word, they were a body of young fellows, whom nothing could restrain, who would gratify every whim, and enjoy their sport without regard or consideration for any human being.

It was about that time that a policeman entered a coffee-room, in which were seated two students. One of them ordered him out, but the man taking no notice of it, the student fired a pistol at him, and missed his aim. The policeman returned the fire, wounded the aggressor, and ran away. The students immediately mustered together at the Bo, divided into bands, and went over the city, hunting the policemen to murder them, and avenge the insult they had received. In one of the encounters two of the students were killed, and all the others, assembling in one troop, swore never to lay their arms down as long as there should be one policeman alive in Padua. The authorities had to interfere, and the syndic of the students undertook to put a stop to hostilities provided proper satisfaction was given, as the police were in the wrong. The man who had shot the student in the coffee-room was hanged, and peace was restored; but during the eight days of agitation, as I was anxious not to appear less brave than my comrades who were patrolling the city, I followed them in spite of Doctor Gozzi's remonstrances. Armed with a carbine and a pair of pistols, I ran about the town with the others, in quest of the enemy, and I recollect how disappointed I was because the troop to which I belonged did not meet one policeman. When the war was over, the doctor laughed at me, but Bettina admired my valour. Unfortunately, I indulged in expenses far above my means, owing to my unwillingness to seem poorer than my new friends. I sold or pledged everything I possessed, and I contracted debts which I could not possibly pay. This state of things caused my first sorrows, and they are the most poignant sorrows under which a young man can smart. Not knowing which way to turn, I wrote to my excellent grandmother, begging her assistance, but instead of sending me some money, she came to Padua on the 1st of

October, 1739, and, after thanking the doctor and Bettina for all their affectionate care, she bought me back to Venice. As he took leave of me, the doctor, who was shedding tears, gave me what he prized most on earth; a relic of some saint, which perhaps I might have kept to this very day, had not the setting been of gold. It performed only one miracle, that of being of service to me in a moment of great need. Whenever I visited Padua, to complete my study of the law, I stayed at the house of the kind doctor, but I was always grieved at seeing near Bettina the brute to whom she was engaged, and who did not appear to me deserving of such a wife. I have always regretted that a prejudice, of which I soon got rid, should have made me preserve for that man a flower which I could have plucked so easily.

CHAPTER IV

I receive the minor orders from the patriarch of Venice —
I get acquainted with Senator Malipiero, with Therese Imer,
with the niece of the Curate, with Madame Orio, with Nanette
and Marton, and with the Cavamacchia — I become a preacher —
My adventure with Lucie at Pasean A rendezvous on the third
story.

“He comes from Padua, where he has completed his studies.” Such were the words by which I was everywhere introduced, and which, the moment they were uttered, called upon me the silent observation of every young man of my age and condition, the compliments of all fathers, and the caresses of old women, as well as the kisses of a few who, although not old, were not sorry to be considered so for the sake of embracing a young man without impropriety. The curate of Saint-Samuel, the Abbe Josello, presented me to Monsignor Correre, Patriarch of Venice, who gave me the tonsure, and who, four months afterwards, by special favour, admitted me to the four minor orders. No words could express the joy and the pride of my grandmother. Excellent masters were given to me to continue my studies, and M. Baffo chose the Abbe Schiavo to teach me a pure Italian style, especially poetry, for which I had a decided talent. I was very comfortably lodged with my brother Francois, who was studying theatrical architecture. My sister and my youngest brother were living with our grandam in a house of her own, in which it was her wish to die, because her husband had there breathed his last. The house in which I dwelt was the same in which my father had died, and the rent of which my mother continued to pay. It was large and well furnished.

Although Abbe Grimani was my chief protector, I seldom saw him, and I particularly attached myself to M. de Malipiero, to whom I had been presented by the Curate Josello. M. de Malipiero was a senator, who was unwilling at seventy years of age to attend any more to State affairs, and enjoyed a happy, sumptuous life in his mansion, surrounded every evening by a well-chosen party of ladies who had all known how to make the best of their younger days, and of gentlemen who were always acquainted with the news of the town. He was a bachelor and wealthy, but, unfortunately, he had three or four times every year severe attacks of gout, which always left him crippled in some part or other of his body, so that all his person was disabled. His head, his lungs, and his stomach had alone escaped this cruel havoc. He was still a fine man, a great epicure, and a good judge of wine; his wit was keen, his knowledge of the world extensive, his eloquence worthy of a son of Venice, and he had that wisdom which must naturally belong to a senator who for forty years has had the management of public affairs, and to a man who has bid farewell to women after having possessed twenty mistresses, and only when he felt himself compelled to acknowledge that he could no longer be accepted by any woman. Although almost entirely crippled, he did not appear to be so when he was seated, when he talked, or when he was at table. He had only one meal a day, and always took it alone because, being toothless and unable to eat otherwise than very slowly, he did not wish to hurry himself out of compliment to his guests, and would have been sorry to see them waiting for him. This feeling deprived him of the pleasure he would have enjoyed in entertaining at his board friendly and agreeable guests, and caused great sorrow to his excellent cook.

The first time I had the honour of being introduced to him by the curate, I opposed earnestly the reason which made him eat his meals in solitude, and I said that his excellency had only to invite guests whose appetite was good enough to enable them to eat a double share.

“But where can I find such table companions?” he asked.

“It is rather a delicate matter,” I answered; “but you must take your guests on trial, and after they have been found such as you wish them to be, the only difficulty will be to keep them as your guests without their being aware of the real cause of your preference, for no respectable man could acknowledge that he enjoys the honour of sitting at your excellency’s table only because he eats twice as much as any other man.”

The senator understood the truth of my argument, and asked the curate to bring me to dinner on the following day. He found my practice even better than my theory, and I became his daily guest.

This man, who had given up everything in life except his own self, fostered an amorous inclination, in spite of his age and of his gout. He loved a young girl named Therese Imer, the daughter of an actor residing near his mansion, her bedroom window being opposite to his own. This young girl, then in her seventeenth year, was pretty, whimsical, and a regular coquette. She was practising music with a view to entering the theatrical profession, and by showing herself constantly at the window she had intoxicated the old senator, and was playing with him cruelly. She paid him a daily visit, but always escorted by her mother, a former actress, who had retired from the stage in order to work out her salvation, and who, as a matter of course, had made up her mind to combine the interests of heaven with the works of this world. She took her daughter to mass every day and compelled her to go to confession every week; but every afternoon she accompanied her in a visit to the amorous old man, the rage of whom frightened me when she refused him a kiss under the plea that she had performed her devotions in the morning, and that she could not reconcile herself to the idea of offending the God who was still dwelling in her.

What a sight for a young man of fifteen like me, whom the old man admitted as the only and silent witness of these erotic scenes! The miserable mother applauded her daughter's reserve, and went so far as to lecture the elderly lover, who, in his turn, dared not refute her maxims, which savoured either too much or too little of Christianity, and resisted a very strong inclination to hurl at her head any object he had at hand. Anger would then take the place of lewd desires, and after they had retired he would comfort himself by exchanging with me philosophical considerations.

Compelled to answer him, and not knowing well what to say, I ventured one day upon advising a marriage. He struck me with amazement when he answered that she refused to marry him from fear of drawing upon herself the hatred of his relatives.

"Then make her the offer of a large sum of money, or a position."

"She says that she would not, even for a crown, commit a deadly sin."

"In that case, you must either take her by storm, or banish her for ever from your presence."

"I can do neither one nor the other; physical as well as moral strength is deficient in me."

"Kill her, then."

"That will very likely be the case unless I die first."

"Indeed I pity your excellency."

"Do you sometimes visit her?"

"No, for I might fall in love with her, and I would be miserable."

"You are right."

Witnessing many such scenes, and taking part in many similar conversations, I became an especial favourite with the old nobleman. I was invited to his evening assemblies which were, as I have stated before, frequented by superannuated women and witty men. He told me that in this circle I would learn a science of greater import than Gassendi's philosophy, which I was then studying by his advice instead of Aristotle's, which he turned into ridicule. He laid down some precepts for my conduct in those assemblies, explaining the necessity of my observing them, as there would be some wonder at a young man of my age being received at such parties. He ordered me never to open my lips except to answer direct questions, and particularly enjoined me never to pass an opinion on any subject, because at my age I could not be allowed to have any opinions.

I faithfully followed his precepts, and obeyed his orders so well, that in a few days I had gained his esteem, and become the child of the house, as well as the favourite of all the ladies who visited him. In my character of a young and innocent ecclesiastic, they would ask me to accompany them in their visits to the convents where their daughters or their nieces were educated; I was at all hours received at their houses without even being announced; I was scolded if a week elapsed without my calling upon them, and when I went to the apartments reserved for the young ladies, they would run away, but the moment they saw that the intruder was only I, they would return at once, and their confidence was very charming to me.

Before dinner, M. de Malipiero would often inquire from me what advantages were accruing to me from the welcome I received at the hands of the respectable ladies I had become acquainted with at his house, taking care to tell me, before I could have time to answer, that they were all endowed with the greatest virtue, and that I would give everybody a bad opinion of myself, if I ever breathed one word of disparagement to the high reputation they all enjoyed. In this way he would inculcate in me the wise precept of reserve and discretion.

It was at the senator's house that I made the acquaintance of Madame Manzoni, the wife of a notary public, of whom I shall have to speak very often. This worthy lady inspired me with the deepest attachment, and she gave me the wisest advice. Had I followed it, and profited by it, my life would not have been exposed to so many storms; it is true that in that case, my life would not be worth writing.

All these fine acquaintances amongst women who enjoyed the reputation of being high-bred ladies, gave me a very natural desire to shine by my good looks and by the elegance of my dress; but my father confessor, as well as my grandmother, objected very strongly to this feeling of vanity. On one occasion, taking me apart, the curate told me, with honeyed words, that in the profession to which I had devoted myself my thoughts ought to dwell upon the best means of being agreeable to God, and not on pleasing the world by my fine appearance. He condemned my elaborate curls, and the exquisite perfume of my pomatum. He said that the devil had got hold of me by the hair, that I would be excommunicated if I continued to take such care of it, and concluded by quoting for my benefit these words from an oecumenical council: ‘clericus qui nutrit coman, anathema sit’. I answered him with the names of several fashionable perfumed abbots, who were not threatened with excommunication, who were not interfered with, although they wore four times as much powder as I did — for I only used a slight sprinkling — who perfumed their hair with a certain amber-scented pomatum which brought women to the very point of fainting, while mine, a jessamine pomade, called forth the compliment of every circle in which I was received. I added that I could not, much to my regret, obey him, and that if I had meant to live in slovenliness, I would have become a Capuchin and not an abbe.

My answer made him so angry that, three or four days afterwards, he contrived to obtain leave from my grandmother to enter my chamber early in the morning, before I was awake, and, approaching my bed on tiptoe with a sharp pair of scissors, he cut off unmercifully all my front hair, from one ear to the other. My brother Francois was in the adjoining room and saw him, but he did not interfere as he was delighted at my misfortune. He wore a wig, and was very jealous of my beautiful head of hair. Francois was envious through the whole of his life; yet he combined this feeling of envy with friendship; I never could understand him; but this vice of his, like my own vices, must by this time have died of old age.

After his great operation, the abbe left my room quietly, but when I woke up shortly afterwards, and realized all the horror of this unheard-of execution, my rage and indignation were indeed wrought to the highest pitch.

What wild schemes of revenge my brain engendered while, with a looking-glass in my hand, I was groaning over the shameful havoc performed by this audacious priest! At the noise I made my grandmother hastened to my room, and amidst my brother's laughter the kind old woman assured me that the priest would never have been allowed to enter my room if she could have foreseen his intention, and she managed to soothe my passion to some extent by confessing that he had over-stepped the limits of his right to administer a reproof.

But I was determined upon revenge, and I went on dressing myself and revolving in my mind the darkest plots. It seemed to me that I was entitled to the most cruel revenge, without having anything to dread from the terrors of the law. The theatres being open at that time I put on a mask to go out, and I, went to the advocate Carrare, with whom I had become acquainted at the senator's house, to inquire from him whether I could bring a suit against the priest. He told me that, but a short time since, a family had been ruined for having sheared the moustache of a Sclavonian — a crime not nearly so atrocious as the shearing of all my front locks, and that I had only to give him my instructions to begin a criminal suit against the abbe, which would make him tremble. I gave my consent, and begged that he would tell M. de Malipiero in the evening the reason for which I could not go to his house, for I did not feel any inclination to show myself anywhere until my hair had grown again.

I went home and partook with my brother of a repast which appeared rather scanty in comparison to the dinners I had with the old senator. The privation of the delicate and plentiful fare to which his excellency had accustomed me was most painful, besides all the enjoyments from which I was excluded through the atrocious conduct of the virulent priest, who was my godfather. I wept from sheer vexation; and my rage was increased by the consciousness that there was in this insult a certain dash of comical fun which threw over me a ridicule more disgraceful in my estimation than the greatest crime.

I went to bed early, and, refreshed by ten hours of profound slumber, I felt in the morning somewhat less angry, but quite as determined to summon the priest before a court. I dressed myself with the intention of calling upon my advocate, when I received the visit of a skilful hair-dresser whom I had seen at Madame Cantarini's house. He told me that he was sent by M. de Malipiero to arrange my hair so that I could go out, as the senator wished me to dine with him on that very day. He examined the damage done to my head, and said, with a smile, that if I would trust to his art, he would undertake to send me out with an appearance of even greater elegance than I could boast of before; and truly, when he had done, I found myself so good-looking that I considered my thirst for revenge entirely satisfied.

Having thus forgotten the injury, I called upon the lawyer to tell him to stay all proceedings, and I hastened to M. de Malipiero's palace, where, as chance would have it, I met the abbe. Notwithstanding all my joy, I could not help casting upon him rather unfriendly looks, but not a word was said about what had taken place. The senator noticed everything, and the priest took his leave, most likely with feelings of mortified repentance, for this time I most verily deserved excommunication by the extreme studied elegance of my curling hair.

When my cruel godfather had left us, I did not dissemble with M. de Malipiero; I candidly told him that I would look out for another church, and that nothing would induce me to remain under a priest who, in his wrath, could go the length of such proceedings. The wise old man agreed with me, and said that I was quite right: it was the best way to make me do ultimately whatever he liked. In the evening everyone in our circle, being well aware of what had happened, complimented me, and assured me that nothing could be handsomer than my new head-dress. I was delighted, and was still more gratified when, after a fortnight had elapsed, I found that M. de Malipiero did not broach the subject of my returning to my godfather's church. My grandmother alone constantly urged me to return. But this calm was the harbinger of a storm. When my mind was thoroughly at rest on that subject, M. de Malipiero threw me into the greatest astonishment by suddenly telling me that an excellent opportunity offered itself for me to reappear in the church and to secure ample satisfaction from the abbe.

"It is my province," added the senator, "as president of the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament, to choose the preacher who is to deliver the sermon on the fourth Sunday of this month, which happens to be the second Christmas holiday. I mean to appoint you, and I am certain that the abbe will not dare to reject my choice. What say you to such a triumphant reappearance? Does it satisfy you?"

This offer caused me the greatest surprise, for I had never dreamt of becoming a preacher, and I had never been vain enough to suppose that I could write a sermon and deliver it in the church. I told M. de Malipiero that he must surely be enjoying a joke at my expense, but he answered that he had spoken in earnest, and he soon contrived to persuade me and to make me believe that I was born to become the most renowned preacher of our age as soon as I should have grown fat — a quality which I certainly could not boast of, for at that time I was extremely thin. I had not the shadow of a fear as to my voice or to my elocution, and for the matter of composing my sermon I felt myself equal to the production of a masterpiece.

I told M. de Malipiero that I was ready, and anxious to be at home in order to go to work; that, although no theologian, I was acquainted with my subject, and would compose a sermon which would take everyone by surprise on account of its novelty.

On the following day, when I called upon him, he informed me that the abbe had expressed unqualified delight at the choice made by him, and at my readiness in accepting the appointment; but he likewise desired that I should submit my sermon to him as soon as it was written, because the subject belonging to the most sublime theology he could not allow me to enter the pulpit without being satisfied that I would not utter any heresies. I agreed to this demand, and during the week I gave birth to my masterpiece. I have now that first sermon in my possession, and I cannot help saying that, considering my tender years, I think it a very good one.

I could not give an idea of my grandmother’s joy; she wept tears of happiness at having a grandson who had become an apostle. She insisted upon my reading my sermon to her, listened to it with her beads in her hands, and pronounced it very beautiful. M. de Malipiero, who had no rosary when I read it to him, was of opinion that it would not prove acceptable to the parson. My text was from Horace: ‘Ploravere suis non respondere favorem sperdtum meritis’; and I deplored the wickedness and ingratitude of men, through which had failed the design adopted by Divine wisdom for the redemption of humankind. But M. de Malipiero was sorry that I had taken my text from any heretical poet, although he was pleased that my sermon was not interlarded with Latin quotations.

I called upon the priest to read my production; but as he was out I had to wait for his return, and during that time I fell in love with his niece, Angela. She was busy upon some tambour work; I sat down close by her, and telling me that she had long desired to make my acquaintance, she begged me to relate the history of the locks of hair sheared by her venerable uncle.

My love for Angela proved fatal to me, because from it sprang two other love affairs which, in their turn, gave birth to a great many others, and caused me finally to renounce the Church as a profession. But let us proceed quietly, and not encroach upon future events.

On his return home the abbe found me with his niece, who was about my age, and he did not appear to be angry. I gave him my sermon: he read it over, and told me that it was a beautiful academical dissertation, but unfit for a sermon from the pulpit, and he added,

"I will give you a sermon written by myself, which I have never delivered; you will commit it to memory, and I promise to let everybody suppose that it is of your own composition."

"I thank you, very reverend father, but I will preach my own sermon, or none at all."

"At all events, you shall not preach such a sermon as this in my church."

"You can talk the matter over with M. de Malipiero. In the meantime I will take my work to the censorship, and to His Eminence the Patriarch, and if it is not accepted I shall have it printed."

"All very well, young man. The patriarch will coincide with me."

In the evening I related my discussion with the parson before all the guests of M. de Malipiero. The reading of my sermon was called for, and it was praised by all. They lauded me for having with proper modesty refrained from quoting the holy fathers of the Church, whom at my age I could not be supposed to have sufficiently studied, and the ladies particularly admired me because there was no Latin in it but the Text from Horace, who, although a great libertine himself, has written very good things. A niece of the patriarch, who was present that evening, promised to prepare her uncle in my favour, as I had expressed my intention to appeal to him; but M. de Malipiero desired me not to take any steps in the matter until I had seen him on the following day, and I submissively bowed to his wishes.

When I called at his mansion the next day he sent for the priest, who soon made his appearance. As he knew well what he had been sent for, he immediately launched out into a very long discourse, which I did not interrupt, but the moment he had concluded his list of objections I told him that there could not be two ways to decide the question; that the patriarch would either approve or disapprove my sermon.

"In the first case," I added, "I can pronounce it in your church, and no responsibility can possibly fall upon your shoulders; in the second, I must, of course, give way."

The abbe was struck by my determination and he said,

"Do not go to the patriarch; I accept your sermon; I only request you to change your text. Horace was a villain."

"Why do you quote Seneca, Tertullian, Origen, and Boethius? They were all heretics, and must, consequently, be considered by you as worse wretches than Horace, who, after all, never had the chance of becoming a Christian!"

However, as I saw it would please M. de Malipiero, I finally consented to accept, as a substitute for mine, a text offered by the abbe, although it did not suit in any way the spirit of my production; and in order to get an opportunity for a visit to his niece, I gave him my manuscript, saying that I would call for it the next day. My vanity prompted me to send a copy to Doctor Gozzi, but the good man caused me much amusement by returning it and writing that I must have gone mad, and that if I were allowed to deliver such a sermon from the pulpit I would bring dishonour upon myself as well as upon the man who had educated me.

I cared but little for his opinion, and on the appointed day I delivered my sermon in the Church of the Holy Sacrament in the presence of the best society of Venice. I received much applause, and every one predicted that I would certainly become the first preacher of our century, as no young ecclesiastic of fifteen had ever been known to preach as well as I had done. It is customary for the faithful to deposit their offerings for the preacher in a purse which is handed to them for that purpose.

The sexton who emptied it of its contents found in it more than fifty sequins, and several billets-doux, to the great scandal of the weaker brethren. An anonymous note amongst them, the writer of which I thought I had guessed, let me into a mistake which I think better not to relate. This rich harvest, in my great penury, caused me to entertain serious thoughts of becoming a preacher, and I confided my intention to the parson, requesting his assistance to carry it into execution. This gave me the privilege of visiting at his house every day, and I improved the opportunity of conversing with Angela, for whom my love was daily increasing. But Angela was virtuous. She did not object to my love, but she wished me to renounce the Church and to marry her. In spite of my infatuation for her, I could not make up my mind to such a step, and I went on seeing her and courting her in the hope that she would alter her decision.

The priest, who had at last confessed his admiration for my first sermon, asked me, some time afterwards, to prepare another for St. Joseph's Day, with an invitation to deliver it on the 19th of March, 1741. I composed it, and the abbe spoke of it with enthusiasm, but fate had decided that I should never preach but once in my life. It is a sad tale, unfortunately for me very true, which some persons are cruel enough to consider very amusing.

Young and rather self-conceited, I fancied that it was not necessary for me to spend much time in committing my sermon to memory. Being the author, I had all the ideas contained in my work classified in my mind, and it did not seem to me within the range of possibilities that I could forget what I had written. Perhaps I might not remember the exact words of a sentence, but I was at liberty to replace them by other expressions as good, and as I never happened to be at a loss, or to be struck dumb, when I spoke in society, it was not likely that such an untoward accident would befall me before an audience amongst whom I did not know anyone who could intimidate me and cause me suddenly to lose the faculty of reason or of speech. I therefore took my pleasure as usual, being satisfied with reading my sermon morning and evening, in order to impress it upon my memory which until then had never betrayed me.

The 19th of March came, and on that eventful day at four o'clock in the afternoon I was to ascend the pulpit; but, believing myself quite secure and thoroughly master of my subject, I had not the moral courage to deny myself the pleasure of dining with Count Mont-Real, who was then residing with me, and who had invited the patrician Barozzi, engaged to be married to his daughter after the Easter holidays.

I was still enjoying myself with my fine company, when the sexton of the church came in to tell me that they were waiting for me in the vestry. With a full stomach and my head rather heated, I took my leave, ran to the church, and entered the pulpit. I went through the exordium with credit to myself, and I took breathing time; but scarcely had I pronounced the first sentences of the narration, before I forgot what I was saying, what I had to say, and in my endeavours to proceed, I fairly wandered from my subject and I lost myself entirely. I was still more discomforted by a half-repressed murmur of the audience, as my deficiency appeared evident. Several persons left the church, others began to smile, I lost all presence of mind and every hope of getting out of the scrape.

I could not say whether I feigned a fainting fit, or whether I truly swooned; all I know is that I fell down on the floor of the pulpit, striking my head against the wall, with an inward prayer for annihilation.

Two of the parish clerks carried me to the vestry, and after a few moments, without addressing a word to anyone, I took my cloak and my hat, and went home to lock myself in my room. I immediately dressed myself in a short coat, after the fashion of travelling priests, I packed a few things in a trunk, obtained some money from my grandmother, and took my departure for Padua, where I intended to pass my third examination. I reached Padua at midnight, and went to Doctor Gozzi's house, but I did not feel the slightest temptation to mention to him my unlucky adventure.

I remained in Padua long enough to prepare myself for the doctor's degree, which I intended to take the following year, and after Easter I returned to Venice, where my misfortune was already forgotten; but preaching was out of the question, and when any attempt was made to induce me to renew my efforts, I manfully kept to my determination never to ascend the pulpit again.

On the eve of Ascension Day M. Manzoni introduced me to a young courtesan, who was at that time in great repute at Venice, and was nicknamed Cavamacchia, because her father had been a scourer. This named vexed her a great deal, she wished to be called Preati, which was her family name, but it was all in vain, and the only concession her friends would make was to call her by her Christian name of Juliette. She had been introduced to fashionable notice by the Marquis de Sanvitali, a nobleman from Parma, who had given her one hundred thousand ducats for her favours. Her beauty was then the talk of everybody in Venice, and it was fashionable to call upon her. To converse with her, and especially to be admitted into her circle, was considered a great boon.

As I shall have to mention her several times in the course of my history, my readers will, I trust, allow me to enter into some particulars about her previous life.

Juliette was only fourteen years of age when her father sent her one day to the house of a Venetian nobleman, Marco Muazzo, with a coat which he had cleaned for him. He thought her very beautiful in spite of the dirty rags in which she was dressed, and he called to see her at her father's shop, with a friend of his, the celebrated advocate, Bastien Uccelli, who; struck by the romantic and cheerful nature of Juliette still more than by her beauty and fine figure, gave her an apartment, made her study music, and kept her as his mistress. At the time of the fair, Bastien took her with him to various public places of resort; everywhere she attracted general attention, and secured the admiration of every lover of the sex. She made rapid progress in music, and at the end of six months she felt sufficient confidence in herself to sign an engagement with a theatrical manager who took her to Vienna to give her a 'castrato' part in one of Metastasio's operas.

The advocate had previously ceded her to a wealthy Jew who, after giving her splendid diamonds, left her also.

In Vienna, Juliette appeared on the stage, and her beauty gained for her an admiration which she would never have conquered by her very inferior talent. But the constant crowd of adorers who went to worship the goddess, having sounded her exploits rather too loudly, the august Maria-Theresa objected to this new creed being sanctioned in her capital, and the beautiful actress received an order to quit Vienna forthwith.

Count Spada offered her his protection, and brought her back to Venice, but she soon left for Padua where she had an engagement. In that city she kindled the fire of love in the breast of Marquis Sanvitali, but the marchioness having caught her once in her own box, and Juliette having acted disrespectfully to her, she slapped her face, and the affair having caused a good deal of noise, Juliette gave up the stage altogether. She came back to Venice, where, made conspicuous by her banishment from Vienna, she could not fail to make her fortune. Expulsion from Vienna, for this class of women, had become a title to fashionable favour, and when there was a wish to depreciate a singer or a dancer, it was said of her that she had not been sufficiently prized to be expelled from Vienna.

After her return, her first lover was Steffano Querini de Papozzes, but in the spring of 1740, the Marquis de Sanvitali came to Venice and soon carried her off. It was indeed difficult to resist this delightful marquis! His first present to the fair lady was a sum of one hundred thousand ducats, and, to prevent his being accused of weakness or of lavish prodigality, he loudly proclaimed that the present could scarcely make up for the insult Juliette had received from his wife — an insult, however, which the courtesan never admitted, as she felt that there would be humiliation in such an acknowledgment, and she always professed to admire with gratitude her lover's generosity. She was right; the admission of the blow received would have left a stain upon her charms, and how much more to her taste to allow those charms to be prized at such a high figure!

It was in the year 1741 that M. Manzoni introduced me to this new Phryne as a young ecclesiastic who was beginning to make a reputation. I found her surrounded by seven or eight well-seasoned admirers, who were burning at her feet the incense of their flattery. She was carelessly reclining on a sofa near Querini. I was much struck with her appearance. She eyed me from head to foot, as if I had been exposed for sale, and telling me, with the air of a princess, that she was not sorry to make my acquaintance, she invited me to take a seat. I began then, in my turn, to examine her closely and deliberately, and it was an easy matter, as the room, although small, was lighted with at least twenty wax candles.

Juliette was then in her eighteenth year; the freshness of her complexion was dazzling, but the carnation tint of her cheeks, the vermilion of her lips, and the dark, very narrow curve of her eyebrows, impressed me as being produced by art rather than nature. Her teeth — two rows of magnificent pearls — made one overlook the fact that her mouth was somewhat too large, and whether from habit, or because she could not help it, she seemed to be ever smiling. Her bosom, hid under a light gauze, invited the desires of love; yet I did not surrender to her charms. Her bracelets and the rings which covered her fingers did not prevent me from noticing that her hand was too large and too fleshy, and in spite of her carefully hiding her feet, I judged, by a telltale slipper lying close by her dress, that they were well proportioned to the height of her figure — a proportion which is unpleasant not only to the Chinese and Spaniards, but likewise to every man of refined taste. We want a tall women to have a small foot, and certainly it is not a modern taste, for Holofernes of old was of the same opinion; otherwise he would not have thought Judith so charming: ‘et sandalid ejus rapuerunt oculos ejus’. Altogether I found her beautiful, but when I compared her beauty and the price of one hundred thousand ducats paid for it, I marvelled at my remaining so cold, and at my not being tempted to give even one sequin for the privilege of making from nature a study of the charms which her dress concealed from my eyes.

I had scarcely been there a quarter of an hour when the noise made by the oars of a gondola striking the water heralded the prodigal marquis. We all rose from our seats, and M. Querini hastened, somewhat blushing, to quit his place on the sofa. M. de Sanvitali, a man of middle age, who had travelled much, took a seat near Juliette, but not on the sofa, so she was compelled to turn round. It gave me the opportunity of seeing her full front, while I had before only a side view of her face.

After my introduction to Juliette, I paid her four or five visits, and I thought myself justified, by the care I had given to the examination of her beauty, in saying in M. de Malipiero’s draw-room, one evening, when my opinion about her was asked, that she could please only a glutton with depraved tastes; that she had neither the fascination of simple nature nor any knowledge of society, that she was deficient in well-bred, easy manners as well as in striking talents and that those were the qualities which a thorough gentleman liked to find in a woman. This opinion met the general approbation of his friends, but M. de Malipiero kindly whispered to me that Juliette would certainly be informed of the portrait I had drawn of her, and that she would become my sworn enemy. He had guessed rightly.

I thought Juliette very singular, for she seldom spoke to me, and whenever she looked at me she made use of an eye-glass, or she contracted her eye-lids, as if she wished to deny me the honour of seeing her eyes, which were beyond all dispute very beautiful. They were blue, wondrously large and full, and tinted with that unfathomable variegated iris which nature only gives to youth, and which generally disappears, after having worked miracles, when the owner reaches the shady side of forty. Frederick the Great preserved it until his death.

Juliette was informed of the portrait I had given of her to M. de Malipiero's friends by the indiscreet pensioner, Xavier Cortantini. One evening I called upon her with M. Manzoni, and she told him that a wonderful judge of beauty had found flaws in hers, but she took good care not to specify them. It was not difficult to make out that she was indirectly firing at me, and I prepared myself for the ostracism which I was expecting, but which, however, she kept in abeyance fully for an hour. At last, our conversation falling upon a concert given a few days before by Imer, the actor, and in which his daughter, Therese, had taken a brilliant part, Juliette turned round to me and inquired what M. de Malipiero did for Therese. I said that he was educating her. "He can well do it," she answered, "for he is a man of talent; but I should like to know what he can do with you?"

"Whatever he can."

"I am told that he thinks you rather stupid."

As a matter of course, she had the laugh on her side, and I, confused, uncomfortable and not knowing what to say, took leave after having cut a very sorry figure, and determined never again to darken her door. The next day at dinner the account of my adventure caused much amusement to the old senator.

Throughout the summer, I carried on a course of Platonic love with my charming Angela at the house of her teacher of embroidery, but her extreme reserve excited me, and my love had almost become a torment to myself. With my ardent nature, I required a mistress like Bettina, who knew how to satisfy my love without wearing it out. I still retained some feelings of purity, and I entertained the deepest veneration for Angela. She was in my eyes the very palladium of Cecrops. Still very innocent, I felt some disinclination towards women, and I was simple enough to be jealous of even their husbands.

Angela would not grant me the slightest favour, yet she was no flirt; but the fire beginning in me parched and withered me. The pathetic entreaties which I poured out of my heart had less effect upon her than upon two young sisters, her companions and friends: had I not concentrated every look of mine upon the heartless girl, I might have discovered that her friends excelled her in beauty and in feeling, but my prejudiced eyes saw no one but Angela. To every outpouring of my love she answered that she was quite ready to become my wife, and that such was to be the limit of my wishes; when she condescended to add that she suffered as much as I did myself, she thought she had bestowed upon me the greatest of favours.

Such was the state of my mind, when, in the first days of autumn, I received a letter from the Countess de Mont-Real with an invitation to spend some time at her beautiful estate at Pasean. She expected many guests, and among them her own daughter, who had married a Venetian nobleman, and who had a great reputation for wit and beauty, although she had but one eye; but it was so beautiful that it made up for the loss of the other. I accepted the invitation, and Pasean offering me a constant round of pleasures, it was easy enough for me to enjoy myself, and to forget for the time the rigours of the cruel Angela.

I was given a pretty room on the ground floor, opening upon the gardens of Pasean, and I enjoyed its comforts without caring to know who my neighbours were.

The morning after my arrival, at the very moment I awoke, my eyes were delighted with the sight of the charming creature who brought me my coffee. She was a very young girl, but as well formed as a young person of seventeen; yet she had scarcely completed her fourteenth year. The snow of her complexion, her hair as dark as the raven's wing, her black eyes beaming with fire and innocence, her dress composed only of a chemise and a short petticoat which exposed a well-turned leg and the prettiest tiny foot, every detail I gathered in one instant presented to my looks the most original and the most perfect beauty I had ever beheld. I looked at her with the greatest pleasure, and her eyes rested upon me as if we had been old acquaintances.

“How did you find your bed?” she asked.

“Very comfortable; I am sure you made it. Pray, who are you?”

“I am Lucie, the daughter of the gate-keeper: I have neither brothers nor sisters, and I am fourteen years old. I am very glad you have no servant with you; I will be your little maid, and I am sure you will be pleased with me.”

Delighted at this beginning, I sat up in my bed and she helped me to put on my dressing-gown, saying a hundred things which I did not understand. I began to drink my coffee, quite amazed at her easy freedom, and struck with her beauty, to which it would have been impossible to remain indifferent. She had seated herself on my bed, giving no other apology for that liberty than the most delightful smile.

I was still sipping my coffee, when Lucie's parents came into my room. She did not move from her place on the bed, but she looked at them, appearing very proud of such a seat. The good people kindly scolded her, begged my forgiveness in her favour, and Lucie left the room to attend to her other duties. The moment she had gone her father and mother began to praise their daughter.

"She is," they said, "our only child, our darling pet, the hope of our old age. She loves and obeys us, and fears God; she is as clean as a new pin, and has but one fault."

"What is that?"

"She is too young."

"That is a charming fault which time will mend."

I was not long in ascertaining that they were living specimens of honesty, of truth, of homely virtues, and of real happiness. I was delighted at this discovery, when Lucie returned as gay as a lark, prettily dressed, her hair done in a peculiar way of her own, and with well-fitting shoes. She dropped a simple courtesy before me, gave a couple of hearty kisses to both her parents, and jumped on her father's knees. I asked her to come and sit on my bed, but she answered that she could not take such a liberty now that she was dressed, The simplicity, artlessness, and innocence of the answer seemed to me very enchanting, and brought a smile on my lips. I examined her to see whether she was prettier in her new dress or in the morning's negligee, and I decided in favour of the latter. To speak the truth, Lucie was, I thought, superior in everything, not only to Angela, but even to Bettina.

The hair-dresser made his appearance, and the honest family left my room. When I was dressed I went to meet the countess and her amiable daughter. The day passed off very pleasantly, as is generally the case in the country, when you are amongst agreeable people.

In the morning, the moment my eyes were opened, I rang the bell, and pretty Lucie came in, simple and natural as before, with her easy manners and wonderful remarks. Her candour, her innocence shone brilliantly all over her person. I could not conceive how, with her goodness, her virtue and her intelligence, she could run the risk of exciting me by coming into my room alone, and with so much familiarity. I fancied that she would not attach much importance to certain slight liberties, and would not prove over-scrupulous, and with that idea I made up my mind to shew her that I fully understood her. I felt no remorse of conscience on the score of her parents, who, in my estimation, were as careless as herself; I had no dread of being the first to give the alarm to her innocence, or to enlighten her mind with the gloomy light of malice, but, unwilling either to be the dupe of feeling or to act against it, I resolved to reconnoitre the ground. I extend a daring hand towards her person, and by an involuntary movement she withdraws, blushes, her cheerfulness disappears, and, turning her head aside as if she were in search of something, she waits until her agitation has subsided. The whole affair had not lasted one minute. She came back, abashed at the idea that she had proved herself rather knowing, and at the dread of having perhaps given a wrong interpretation to an action which might have been, on my part, perfectly innocent, or the result of politeness. Her natural laugh soon returned, and, having rapidly read in her mind all I have just described, I lost no time in restoring her confidence, and, judging that I would venture too much by active operations, I resolved to employ the following morning in a friendly chat during which I could make her out better.

In pursuance of that plan, the next morning, as we were talking, I told her that it was cold, but that she would not feel it if she would lie down near me.

“Shall I disturb you?” she said.

“No; but I am thinking that if your mother happened to come in, she would be angry.”

“Mother would not think of any harm.”

“Come, then. But Lucie, do you know what danger you are exposing yourself to?”

“Certainly I do; but you are good, and, what is more, you are a priest.”

“Come; only lock the door.”

“No, no, for people might think…. I do not know what.” She laid down close by me, and kept on her chatting, although I did not understand a word of what she said, for in that singular position, and unwilling to give way to my ardent desires, I remained as still as a log.

Her confidence in her safety, confidence which was certainly not feigned, worked upon my feelings to such an extent that I would have been ashamed to take any advantage of it. At last she told me that nine o’clock had struck, and that if old Count Antonio found us as we were, he would tease her with his jokes. “When I see that man,” she said, “I am afraid and I run away.” Saying these words, she rose from the bed and left the room.

I remained motionless for a long while, stupefied, benumbed, and mastered by the agitation of my excited senses as well as by my thoughts. The next morning, as I wished to keep calm, I only let her sit down on my bed, and the conversation I had with her proved without the shadow of a doubt that her parents had every reason to idolize her, and that the easy freedom of her mind as well as of her behaviour with me was entirely owing to her innocence and to her purity. Her artlessness, her vivacity, her eager curiosity, and the bashful blushes which spread over her face whenever her innocent or jesting remarks caused me to laugh, everything, in fact, convinced me that she was an angel destined to become the victim of the first libertine who would undertake to seduce her. I felt sufficient control over my own feelings to resist any attempt against her virtue which my conscience might afterwards reproach me with. The mere thought of taking advantage of her innocence made me shudder, and my self-esteem was a guarantee to her parents, who abandoned her to me on the strength of the good opinion they entertained of me, that Lucie’s honour was safe in my hands. I thought I would have despised myself if I had betrayed the trust they reposed in me. I therefore determined to conquer my feelings, and, with perfect confidence in the victory, I made up my mind to wage war against myself, and to be satisfied with her presence as the only reward of my heroic efforts. I was not yet acquainted with the axiom that “as long as the fighting lasts, victory remains uncertain.”

As I enjoyed her conversation much, a natural instinct prompted me to tell her that she would afford me great pleasure if she could come earlier in the morning, and even wake me up if I happened to be asleep, adding, in order to give more weight to my request, that the less I slept the better I felt in health. In this manner I contrived to spend three hours instead of two in her society, although this cunning contrivance of mine did not prevent the hours flying, at least in my opinion, as swift as lightning.

Her mother would often come in as we were talking, and when the good woman found her sitting on my bed she would say nothing, only wondering at my kindness. Lucie would then cover her with kisses, and the kind old soul would entreat me to give her child lessons of goodness, and to cultivate her mind; but when she had left us Lucie did not think herself more unrestrained, and whether in or out of her mother's presence, she was always the same without the slightest change.

If the society of this angelic child afforded me the sweetest delight, it also caused me the most cruel suffering. Often, very often, when her face was close to my lips, I felt the most ardent temptation to smother her with kisses, and my blood was at fever heat when she wished that she had been a sister of mine. But I kept sufficient command over myself to avoid the slightest contact, for I was conscious that even one kiss would have been the spark which would have blown up all the edifice of my reserve. Every time she left me I remained astounded at my own victory, but, always eager to win fresh laurels, I longed for the following morning, panting for a renewal of this sweet yet very dangerous contest.

At the end of ten or twelve days, I felt that there was no alternative but to put a stop to this state of things, or to become a monster in my own eyes; and I decided for the moral side of the question all the more easily that nothing insured me success, if I chose the second alternative. The moment I placed her under the obligation to defend herself Lucie would become a heroine, and the door of my room being open, I might have been exposed to shame and to a very useless repentance. This rather frightened me. Yet, to put an end to my torture, I did not know what to decide. I could no longer resist the effect made upon my senses by this beautiful girl, who, at the break of day and scarcely dressed, ran gaily into my room, came to my bed enquiring how I had slept, bent familiarly her head towards me, and, so to speak, dropped her words on my lips. In those dangerous moments I would turn my head aside; but in her innocence she would reproach me for being afraid when she felt herself so safe, and if I answered that I could not possibly fear a child, she would reply that a difference of two years was of no account.

Standing at bay, exhausted, conscious that every instant increased the ardour which was devouring me, I resolved to entreat from herself the discontinuance of her visits, and this resolution appeared to me sublime and infallible; but having postponed its execution until the following morning, I passed a dreadful night, tortured by the image of Lucie, and by the idea that I would see her in the morning for the last time. I fancied that Lucie would not only grant my prayer, but that she would conceive for me the highest esteem. In the morning, it was barely day-light, Lucie beaming, radiant with beauty, a happy smile brightening her pretty mouth, and her splendid hair in the most fascinating disorder, bursts into my room, and rushes with open arms towards my bed; but when she sees my pale, dejected, and unhappy countenance, she stops short, and her beautiful face taking an expression of sadness and anxiety:

“What ails you?” she asks, with deep sympathy.

“I have had no sleep through the night:”

“And why?”

“Because I have made up my mind to impart to you a project which, although fraught with misery to myself, will at least secure me your esteem.”

“But if your project is to insure my esteem it ought to make you very cheerful. Only tell me, reverend sir, why, after calling me ‘thou’ yesterday, you treat me today respectfully, like a lady? What have I done? I will get your coffee, and you must tell me everything after you have drunk it; I long to hear you.”

She goes and returns, I drink the coffee, and seeing that my countenance remains grave she tries to enliven me, contrives to make me smile, and claps her hands for joy. After putting everything in order, she closes the door because the wind is high, and in her anxiety not to lose one word of what I have to say, she entreats artlessly a little place near me. I cannot refuse her, for I feel almost lifeless.

I then begin a faithful recital of the fearful state in which her beauty has thrown me, and a vivid picture of all the suffering I have experienced in trying to master my ardent wish to give her some proof of my love; I explain to her that, unable to endure such torture any longer, I see no other safety but in entreating her not to see me any more. The importance of the subject, the truth of my love, my wish to present my expedient in the light of the heroic effort of a deep and virtuous passion, lend me a peculiar eloquence. I endeavour above all to make her realize the fearful consequences which might follow a course different to the one I was proposing, and how miserable we might be.

At the close of my long discourse Lucie, seeing my eyes wet with tears, throws off the bed-clothes to wipe them, without thinking that in so doing she uncovers two globes, the beauty of which might have caused the wreck of the most experienced pilot. After a short silence, the charming child tells me that my tears make her very unhappy, and that she had never supposed that she could cause them.

"All you have just told me," she added, "proves the sincerity of your great love for me, but I cannot imagine why you should be in such dread of a feeling which affords me the most intense pleasure. You wish to banish me from your presence because you stand in fear of your love, but what would you do if you hated me? Am I guilty because I have pleased you? If it is a crime to have won your affection, I can assure you that I did not think I was committing a criminal action, and therefore you cannot conscientiously punish me. Yet I cannot conceal the truth; I am very happy to be loved by you. As for the danger we run, when we love, danger which I can understand, we can set it at defiance, if we choose, and I wonder at my not fearing it, ignorant as I am, while you, a learned man, think it so terrible. I am astonished that love, which is not a disease, should have made you ill, and that it should have exactly the opposite effect upon me. Is it possible that I am mistaken, and that my feeling towards you should not be love? You saw me very cheerful when I came in this morning; it is because I have been dreaming all night, but my dreams did not keep me awake; only several times I woke up to ascertain whether my dream was true, for I thought I was near you; and every time, finding that it was not so, I quickly went to sleep again in the hope of continuing my happy dream, and every time I succeeded. After such a night, was it not natural for me to be cheerful this morning? My dear abbe, if love is a torment for you I am very sorry, but would it be possible for you to live without love? I will do anything you order me to do, but, even if your cure depended upon it, I would not cease to love you, for that would be impossible. Yet if to heal your sufferings it should be necessary for you to love me no more, you must do your utmost to succeed, for I would much rather see you alive without love, than dead for having loved too much. Only try to find some other plan, for the one you have proposed makes me very miserable. Think of it, there may be some other way which will be less painful. Suggest one more practicable, and depend upon Lucie's obedience."

These words, so true, so artless, so innocent, made me realize the immense superiority of nature's eloquence over that of philosophical intellect. For the first time I folded this angelic being in my arms, exclaiming, "Yes, dearest Lucie, yes, thou hast it in thy power to afford the sweetest relief to my devouring pain; abandon to my ardent kisses thy divine lips which have just assured me of thy love."

An hour passed in the most delightful silence, which nothing interrupted except these words murmured now and then by Lucie, "Oh, God! is it true? is it not a dream?" Yet I respected her innocence, and the more readily that she abandoned herself entirely and without the slightest resistance. At last, extricating herself gently from my arms, she said, with some uneasiness, "My heart begins to speak, I must go;" and she instantly rose. Having somewhat rearranged her dress she sat down, and her mother, coming in at that moment, complimented me upon my good looks and my bright countenance, and told Lucie to dress herself to attend mass. Lucie came back an hour later, and expressed her joy and her pride at the wonderful cure she thought she had performed upon me, for the healthy appearance I was then shewing convinced her of my love much better than the pitiful state in which she had found me in the morning. "If your complete happiness," she said, "rests in my power, be happy; there is nothing that I can refuse you."

The moment she left me, still wavering between happiness and fear, I understood that I was standing on the very brink of the abyss, and that nothing but a most extraordinary determination could prevent me from falling headlong into it.

I remained at Pasean until the end of September, and the last eleven nights of my stay were passed in the undisturbed possession of Lucie, who, secure in her mother’s profound sleep, came to my room to enjoy in my arms the most delicious hours. The burning ardour of my love was increased by the abstinence to which I condemned myself, although Lucie did everything in her power to make me break through my determination. She could not fully enjoy the sweetness of the forbidden fruit unless I plucked it without reserve, and the effect produced by our constantly lying in each other’s arms was too strong for a young girl to resist. She tried everything she could to deceive me, and to make me believe that I had already, and in reality, gathered the whole flower, but Bettina’s lessons had been too efficient to allow me to go on a wrong scent, and I reached the end of my stay without yielding entirely to the temptation she so fondly threw in my way. I promised her to return in the spring; our farewell was tender and very sad, and I left her in a state of mind and of body which must have been the cause of her misfortunes, which, twenty years after, I had occasion to reproach myself with in Holland, and which will ever remain upon my conscience.

A few days after my return to Venice, I had fallen back into all my old habits, and resumed my courtship of Angela in the hope that I would obtain from her, at least, as much as Lucie had granted to me. A certain dread which to-day I can no longer trace in my nature, a sort of terror of the consequences which might have a blighting influence upon my future, prevented me from giving myself up to complete enjoyment. I do not know whether I have ever been a truly honest man, but I am fully aware that the feelings I fostered in my youth were by far more upright than those I have, as I lived on, forced myself to accept. A wicked philosophy throws down too many of these barriers which we call prejudices.

The two sisters who were sharing Angela’s embroidery lessons were her intimate friends and the confidantes of all her secrets. I made their acquaintance, and found that they disapproved of her extreme reserve towards me. As I usually saw them with Angela and knew their intimacy with her, I would, when I happened to meet them alone, tell them all my sorrows, and, thinking only of my cruel sweetheart, I never was conceited enough to propose that these young girls might fall in love with me; but I often ventured to speak to them with all the blazing inspiration which was burning in me — a liberty I would not have dared to take in the presence of her whom I loved. True love always begets reserve; we fear to be accused of exaggeration if we should give utterance to feelings inspired, by passion, and the modest lover, in his dread of saying too much, very often says too little.

The teacher of embroidery, an old bigot, who at first appeared not to mind the attachment I skewed for Angela, got tired at last of my too frequent visits, and mentioned them to the abbe, the uncle of my fair lady. He told me kindly one day that I ought not to call at that house so often, as my constant visits might be wrongly construed, and prove detrimental to the reputation of his niece. His words fell upon me like a thunder-bolt, but I mastered my feelings sufficiently to leave him without incurring any suspicion, and I promised to follow his good advice.

Three or four days afterwards, I paid a visit to the teacher of embroidery, and, to make her believe that my visit was only intended for her, I did not stop one instant near the young girls; yet I contrived to slip in the hand of the eldest of the two sisters a note enclosing another for my dear Angela, in which I explained why I had been compelled to discontinue my visits, entreating her to devise some means by which I could enjoy the happiness of seeing her and of conversing with her. In my note to Nanette, I only begged her to give my letter to her friend, adding that I would see them again the day after the morrow, and that I trusted to her to find an opportunity for delivering me the answer. She managed it all very cleverly, and, when I renewed my visit two days afterwards, she gave me a letter without attracting the attention of anyone. Nanette's letter enclosed a very short note from Angela, who, disliking letter-writing, merely advised me to follow, if I could, the plan proposed by her friend. Here is the copy of the letter written by Nanette, which I have always kept, as well as all other letters which I give in these Memoirs:

"There is nothing in the world, reverend sir, that I would not readily do for my friend. She visits at our house every holiday, has supper with us, and sleeps under our roof. I will suggest the best way for you to make the acquaintance of Madame Orio, our aunt; but, if you obtain an introduction to her, you must be very careful not to let her suspect your preference for Angela, for our aunt would certainly object to her house being made a place of rendezvous to facilitate your interviews with a stranger to her family. Now for the plan I propose, and in the execution of which I will give you every assistance in my power. Madame Orio, although a woman of good station in life, is not wealthy, and she wishes to have her name entered on the list of noble widows who receive the bounties bestowed by the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament, of which M. de Malipiero is president. Last Sunday, Angela mentioned that you are in the good graces of that nobleman, and that the best way to obtain his patronage would be to ask you to entreat it in her behalf. The foolish girl added that you were smitten with me, that all your visits to our mistress of embroidery were made for my special benefit and for the sake of entertaining me, and that I would find it a very easy task to interest you in her favour. My aunt answered that, as you are a priest, there was no fear of any harm, and she told me to write to you with an invitation to call on her; I refused. The procurator Rosa, who is a great favourite of my aunt's, was present; he approved of my refusal, saying that the letter ought to be written by her and not by me, that it was for my aunt to beg the honour of your visit on business of real importance, and that, if there was any truth in the report of your love for me, you would not fail to come. My aunt, by his advice, has therefore written the letter which you will find at your house. If you wish to meet Angela, postpone your visit to us until next Sunday. Should you succeed in obtaining M. de Malipiero's good will in favour of my aunt, you will become the pet of the household, but you must forgive me if I appear to treat you with coolness, for I have said that I do not like you. I would advise you to make love to my aunt, who is sixty years of age; M. Rosa will not be jealous, and you will become dear to everyone. For my part, I will manage for you an opportunity for some private conversation with Angela, and I will do anything to convince you of my friendship. Adieu."

This plan appeared to me very well conceived, and, having the same evening received Madame Orio's letter, I called upon her on the following day, Sunday. I was welcomed in a very friendly manner, and the lady, entreating me to exert in her behalf my influence with M. de Malipiero, entrusted me with all the papers which I might require to succeed. I undertook to do my utmost, and I took care to address only a few words to Angela, but I directed all my gallant attentions to Nanette, who treated me as coolly as could be. Finally, I won the friendship of the old procurator Rosa, who, in after years, was of some service to me.

I had so much at stake in the success of Madame Orio's petition, that I thought of nothing else, and knowing all the power of the beautiful Therese

Imer over our amorous senator, who would be but too happy to please her in anything, I determined to call upon her the next day, and I went straight to her room without being announced. I found her alone with the physician Doro, who, feigning to be on a professional visit, wrote a prescription, felt her pulse, and went off. This Doro was suspected of being in love with Therese; M. de Malipiero, who was jealous, had forbidden Therese to receive his visits, and she had promised to obey him. She knew that I was acquainted with those circumstances, and my presence was evidently unpleasant to her, for she had certainly no wish that the old man should hear how she kept her promise. I thought that no better opportunity could be found of obtaining from her everything I wished.

I told her in a few words the object of my visit, and I took care to add that she could rely upon my discretion, and that I would not for the world do her any injury. Therese, grateful for this assurance, answered that she rejoiced at finding an occasion to oblige me, and, asking me to give her the papers of my protege, she shewed me the certificates and testimonials of another lady in favour of whom she had undertaken to speak, and whom, she said, she would sacrifice to the person in whose behalf I felt interested. She kept her word, for the very next day she placed in my hands the brevet, signed by his excellency as president of the confraternity. For the present, and with the expectation of further favours, Madame Orio's name was put down to share the bounties which were distributed twice a year.

Nanette and her sister Marton were the orphan daughters of a sister of Madame Orio. All the fortune of the good lady consisted in the house which was her dwelling, the first floor being let, and in a pension given to her by her brother, member of the council of ten. She lived alone with her two charming nieces, the eldest sixteen, and the youngest fifteen years of age. She kept no servant, and only employed an old woman, who, for one crown a month, fetched water, and did the rough work. Her only friend was the procurator Rosa; he had, like her, reached his sixtieth year, and expected to marry her as soon as he should become a widower.

The two sisters slept together on the third floor in a large bed, which was likewise shared by Angela every Sunday.

As soon as I found myself in possession of the deed for Madame Orio, I hastened to pay a visit to the mistress of embroidery, in order to find an opportunity of acquainting Nanette with my success, and in a short note which I prepared, I informed her that in two days I would call to give the brevet to Madame Orio, and I begged her earnestly not to forget her promise to contrive a private interview with my dear Angela.

When I arrived, on the appointed day, at Madame Orio's house, Nanette, who had watched for my coming, dexterously conveyed to my hand a billet, requesting me to find a moment to read it before leaving the house. I found Madame Orio, Angela, the old procurator, and Marton in the room. Longing to read the note, I refused the seat offered to me, and presenting to Madame Orio the deed she had so long desired, I asked, as my only reward, the pleasure of kissing her hand, giving her to understand that I wanted to leave the room immediately.

"Oh, my dear abbe!" said the lady, "you shall have a kiss, but not on my hand, and no one can object to it, as I am thirty years older than you."

She might have said forty-five without going much astray. I gave her two kisses, which evidently satisfied her, for she desired me to perform the same ceremony with her nieces, but they both ran away, and Angela alone stood the brunt of my hardihood. After this the widow asked me to sit down.

"I cannot, Madame."

"Why, I beg?"

"I have — ."

"I understand. Nanette, shew the way."

"Dear aunt, excuse me."

"Well, then, Marton."

"Oh! dear aunt, why do you not insist upon my sister obeying your orders?"

"Alas! madame, these young ladies are quite right. Allow me to retire."

"No, my dear abbe, my nieces are very foolish; M. Rosa, I am sure, will kindly."

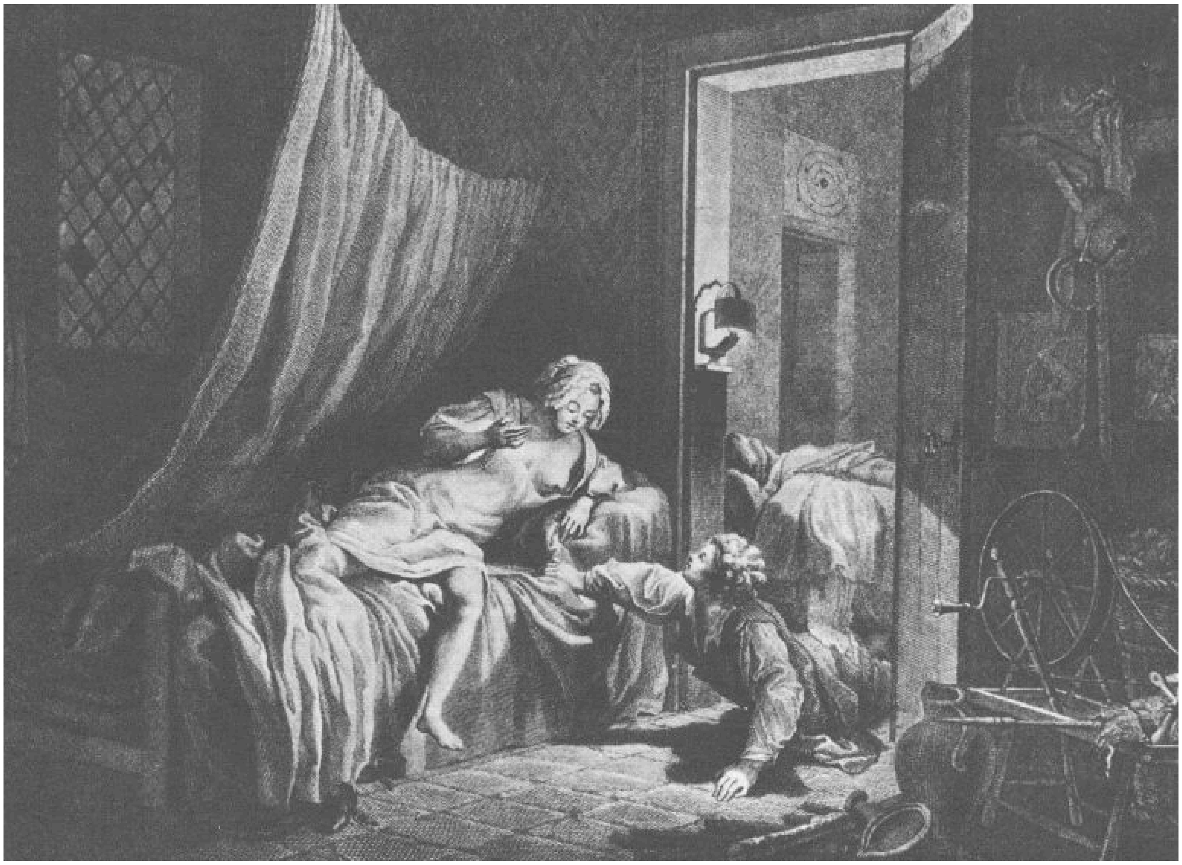
The good procurator takes me affectionately by the hand, and leads me to the third story, where he leaves me. The moment I am alone I open my letter, and I read the following:

“My aunt will invite you to supper; do not accept. Go away as soon as we sit down to table, and Marton will escort you as far as the street door, but do not leave the house. When the street door is closed again, everyone thinking you are gone, go upstairs in the dark as far as the third floor, where you must wait for us. We will come up the moment M. Rosa has left the house, and our aunt has gone to bed. Angela will be at liberty to grant you throughout the night a tete-a-tete which, I trust, will prove a happy one.”

Oh! what joy-what gratitude for the lucky chance which allowed me to read this letter on the very spot where I was to expect the dear abject of my love! Certain of finding my way without the slightest difficulty, I returned to Madame Orio’s sitting-room, overwhelmed with happiness.

CHAPTER V

An Unlucky Night I Fall in Love with the Two Sisters, and
Forget Angela — A Ball at My House — Juliette's Humiliation —
My Return to Pasian — Lucie's Misfortune — A Propitious Storm



On my reappearance, Madame Orio told me, with many heart-felt thanks, that I must for the future consider myself as a privileged and welcome friend, and the evening passed off very pleasantly. As the hour for supper drew near, I excused myself so well that Madame Orio could not insist upon my accepting her invitation to stay. Marton rose to light me out of the room, but her aunt, believing Nanette to be my favourite, gave her such an imperative order to accompany me that she was compelled to obey. She went down the stairs rapidly, opened and closed the street door very noisily, and putting her light out, she reentered the sitting room, leaving me in darkness. I went upstairs softly: when I reached the third landing I found the chamber of the two sisters, and, throwing myself upon a sofa, I waited patiently for the rising of the star of my happiness. An hour passed amidst the sweetest dreams of my imagination; at last I hear the noise of the street door opening and closing, and, a few minutes after, the two sisters come in with my Angela. I draw her towards me, and caring for nobody else, I keep up for two full hours my conversation with her. The clock strikes midnight; I am pitied for having gone so late supperless, but I am shocked at such an idea; I answer that, with such happiness as I am enjoying, I can suffer from no human want. I am told that I am a prisoner, that the key of the house door is under the aunt's pillow, and that it is opened only by herself as she goes in the morning to the first mass. I wonder at my young friends imagining that such news can be anything but delightful to me. I express all my joy at the certainty of passing the next five hours with the beloved mistress of my heart. Another hour is spent, when suddenly Nanette begins to laugh, Angela wants to know the reason, and Marton whispering a few words to her, they both laugh likewise. This puzzles me. In my turn, I want to know what causes this general laughter, and at last Nanette, putting on an air of anxiety, tells me that they have no more candle, and that in a few minutes we shall be in the dark. This is a piece of news particularly agreeable to me, but I do not let my satisfaction appear on my countenance, and saying how truly I am sorry for their sake, I propose that they should go to bed and sleep quietly under my respectful guardianship. My proposal increases their merriment.

"What can we do in the dark?"

"We can talk."

We were four; for the last three hours we had been talking, and I was the hero of the romance. Love is a great poet, its resources are inexhaustible, but if the end it has in view is not obtained, it feels weary and remains silent. My Angela listened willingly, but little disposed to talk herself, she seldom answered, and she displayed good sense rather than wit. To weaken the force of my arguments, she was often satisfied with hurling at me a proverb, somewhat in the fashion of the Romans throwing the catapult. Every time that my poor hands came to the assistance of love, she drew herself back or repulsed me. Yet, in spite of all, I went on talking and using my hands without losing courage, but I gave myself up to despair when I found that my rather artful arguing astounded her without bringing conviction to her heart, which was only disquieted, never softened. On the other hand, I could see with astonishment upon their countenances the impression made upon the two sisters by the ardent speeches I poured out to Angela. This metaphysical curve struck me as unnatural, it ought to have been an angle; I was then, unhappily for myself, studying geometry. I was in such a state that, notwithstanding the cold, I was perspiring profusely. At last the light was nearly out, and Nanette took it away.

The moment we were in the dark, I very naturally extended my arms to seize her whom I loved; but I only met with empty space, and I could not help laughing at the rapidity with which Angela had availed herself of the opportunity of escaping me. For one full hour I poured out all the tender, cheerful words that love inspired me with, to persuade her to come back to me; I could only suppose that it was a joke to tease me. But I became impatient.

“The joke,” I said, “has lasted long enough; it is foolish, as I could not run after you, and I am surprised to hear you laugh, for your strange conduct leads me to suppose that you are making fun of me. Come and take your seat near me, and if I must speak to you without seeing you let my hands assure me that I am not addressing my words to the empty air. To continue this game would be an insult to me, and my love does not deserve such a return.”

“Well, be calm. I will listen to every word you may say, but you must feel that it would not be decent for me to place myself near you in this dark room.”

“Do you want me to stand where I am until morning?”

“Lie down on the bed, and go to sleep.”

“In wonder, indeed, at your thinking me capable of doing so in the state I am in. Well, I suppose we must play at blind man’s buff.”

Thereupon, I began to feel right and left, everywhere, but in vain. Whenever I caught anyone it always turned out to be Nanette or Marton, who at once discovered themselves, and I, stupid Don Quixote, instantly would let them go! Love and prejudice blinded me, I could not see how ridiculous I was with my respectful reserve. I had not yet read the anecdotes of Louis XIII, king of France, but I had read Boccacio. I kept on seeking in vain, reproaching her with her cruelty, and entreating her to let me catch her; but she would only answer that the difficulty of meeting each other was mutual. The room was not large, and I was enraged at my want of success.

Tired and still more vexed, I sat down, and for the next hour I told the history of Roger, when Angelica disappears through the power of the magic ring which the loving knight had so imprudently given her:

‘Cosi dicendo, intorno a la fortuna

Brancolando n’andava come cieco.

O quante volte abbraccio l’aria vana

Speyando la donzella abbracciar seco’.

Angela had not read Ariosto, but Nanette had done so several times. She undertook the defence of Angelica, and blamed the simplicity of Roger, who, if he had been wise, would never have trusted the ring to a coquette. I was delighted with Nanette, but I was yet too much of a novice to apply her remarks to myself.

Only one more hour remained, and I was to leave before the break of day, for Madame Orio would have died rather than give way to the temptation of missing the early mass. During that hour I spoke to Angela, trying to convince her that she ought to come and sit by me. My soul went through every gradation of hope and despair, and the reader cannot possibly realize it unless he has been placed in a similar position. I exhausted the most convincing arguments; then I had recourse to prayers, and even to tears; but, seeing all was useless, I gave way to that feeling of noble indignation which lends dignity to anger. Had I not been in the dark, I might, I truly believe, have struck the proud monster, the cruel girl, who had thus for five hours condemned me to the most distressing suffering. I poured out all the abuse, all the insulting words that despised love can suggest to an infuriated mind; I loaded her with the deepest curses; I swore that my love had entirely turned into hatred, and, as a finale, I advised her to be careful, as I would kill her the moment I would set my eyes on her.

My invectives came to an end with the darkness. At the first break of day, and as soon as I heard the noise made by the bolt and the key of the street door, which Madame Orio was opening to let herself out, that she might seek in the church the repose of which her pious soul was in need, I got myself ready and looked for my cloak and for my hat. But how can I ever portray the consternation in which I was thrown when, casting a sly glance upon the young friends, I found the three bathed in tears! In my shame and despair I thought of committing suicide, and sitting down again, I recollected my brutal speeches, and upbraided myself for having wantonly caused them to weep. I could not say one word; I felt choking; at last tears came to my assistance, and I gave way to a fit of crying which relieved me. Nanette then remarked that her aunt would soon return home; I dried my eyes, and, not venturing another look at Angela or at her friends, I ran away without uttering a word, and threw myself on my bed, where sleep would not visit my troubled mind.

At noon, M. de Malipiero, noticing the change in my countenance, enquired what ailed me, and longing to unburden my heart, I told him all that had happened. The wise old man did not laugh at my sorrow, but by his sensible advice he managed to console me and to give me courage. He was in the same predicament with the beautiful Therese. Yet he could not help giving way to his merriment when at dinner he saw me, in spite of my grief, eat with increased appetite; I had gone without my supper the night before; he complimented me upon my happy constitution.

I was determined never to visit Madame Orio's house, and on that very day I held an argument in metaphysics, in which I contended that any being of whom we had only an abstract idea, could only exist abstractedly, and I was right; but it was a very easy task to give to my thesis an irreligious turn, and I was obliged to recant. A few days afterwards I went to Padua, where I took my degree of doctor 'utroque jure'.

When I returned to Venice, I received a note from M. Rosa, who entreated me to call upon Madame Orio; she wished to see me, and, feeling certain of not meeting Angela, I paid her a visit the same evening. The two graceful sisters were so kind, so pleasant, that they scattered to the winds the shame I felt at seeing them after the fearful night I had passed in their room two months before. The labours of writing my thesis and passing my examination were of course sufficient excuses for Madame Orio, who only wanted to reproach me for having remained so long away from her house.

As I left, Nanette gave me a letter containing a note from Angela, the contents of which ran as follows:

“If you are not afraid of passing another night with me you shall have no reason to complain of me, for I love you, and I wish to hear from your own lips whether you would still have loved me if I had consented to become contemptible in your eyes.”

This is the letter of Nanette, who alone had her wits about her:

“M. Rosa having undertaken to bring you back to our house, I prepare these few lines to let you know that Angela is in despair at having lost you. I confess that the night you spent with us was a cruel one, but I do not think that you did rightly in giving up your visits to Madame Orio. If you still feel any love for Angela, I advise you to take your chances once more. Accept a rendezvous for another night; she may vindicate herself, and you will be happy. Believe me; come. Farewell!”

Those two letters afforded me much gratification, for I had it in my power to enjoy my revenge by shewing to Angela the coldest contempt. Therefore, on the following Sunday I went to Madame Orio’s house, having provided myself with a smoked tongue and a couple of bottles of Cyprus wine; but to my great surprise my cruel mistress was not there. Nanette told me that she had met her at church in the morning, and that she would not be able to come before supper-time. Trusting to that promise I declined Madam Orio’s invitation, and before the family sat down to supper I left the room as I had done on the former occasion, and slipped upstairs. I longed to represent the character I had prepared myself for, and feeling assured that Angela, even if she should prove less cruel, would only grant me insignificant favours, I despised them in anticipation, and resolved to be avenged.

After waiting three quarters of an hour the street door was locked, and a moment later Nanette and Marton entered the room.

“Where is Angela?” I enquired.

“She must have been unable to come, or to send a message. Yet she knows you are here.”

“She thinks she has made a fool of me; but I suspected she would act in this way. You know her now. She is trifling with me, and very likely she is now revelling in her triumph. She has made use of you to allure me in the snare, and it is all the better for her; had she come, I meant to have had my turn, and to have laughed at her."

"Ah! you must allow me to have my doubts as to that."

"Doubt me not, beautiful Nanette; the pleasant night we are going to spend without her must convince you."

"That is to say that, as a man of sense, you can accept us as a makeshift; but you can sleep here, and my sister can lie with me on the sofa in the next room."

"I cannot hinder you, but it would be great unkindness on your part. At all events, I do not intend to go to bed."

"What! you would have the courage to spend seven hours alone with us? Why, I am certain that in a short time you will be at a loss what to say, and you will fall asleep."

"Well, we shall see. In the mean-time here are provisions. You will not be so cruel as to let me eat alone? Can you get any bread?"

"Yes, and to please you we must have a second supper."

"I ought to be in love with you. Tell me, beautiful Nanette, if I were as much attached to you as I was to Angela, would you follow her example and make me unhappy?"

"How can you ask such a question? It is worthy of a conceited man. All I can answer is, that I do not know what I would do."

They laid the cloth, brought some bread, some Parmesan cheese and water, laughing all the while, and then we went to work. The wine, to which they were not accustomed, went to their heads, and their gaiety was soon delightful. I wondered, as I looked at them, at my having been blind enough not to see their merit.

After our supper, which was delicious, I sat between them, holding their hands, which I pressed to my lips, asking them whether they were truly my friends, and whether they approved of Angela's conduct towards me. They both answered that it had made them shed many tears. "Then let me," I said, "have for you the tender feelings of a brother, and share those feelings yourselves as if you were my sisters; let us exchange, in all innocence, proofs of our mutual affection, and swear to each other an eternal fidelity."

The first kiss I gave them was prompted by entirely harmless motives, and they returned the kiss, as they assured me a few days afterwards only to prove to me that they reciprocated my brotherly feelings; but those innocent kisses, as we repeated them, very soon became ardent ones, and kindled a flame which certainly took us by surprise, for we stopped, as by common consent, after a short time, looking at each other very much astonished and rather serious. They both left me without affectation, and I remained alone with my thoughts. Indeed, it was natural that the burning kisses I had given and received should have sent through me the fire of passion, and that I should suddenly have fallen madly in love with the two amiable sisters. Both were handsomer than Angela, and they were superior to her — Nanette by her charming wit, Marton by her sweet and simple nature; I could not understand how I had been so long in rendering them the justice they deserved, but they were the innocent daughters of a noble family, and the lucky chance which had thrown them in my way ought not to prove a calamity for them. I was not vain enough to suppose that they loved me, but I could well enough admit that my kisses had influenced them in the same manner that their kisses had influenced me, and, believing this to be the case, it was evident that, with a little cunning on my part, and of sly practices of which they were ignorant, I could easily, during the long night I was going to spend with them, obtain favours, the consequences of which might be very positive. The very thought made me shudder, and I firmly resolved to respect their virtue, never dreaming that circumstances might prove too strong for me.

When they returned, I read upon their countenances perfect security and satisfaction, and I quickly put on the same appearance, with a full determination not to expose myself again to the danger of their kisses.

For one hour we spoke of Angela, and I expressed my determination never to see her again, as I had every proof that she did not care for me. "She loves you," said the artless Marton; "I know she does, but if you do not mean to marry her, you will do well to give up all intercourse with her, for she is quite determined not to grant you even a kiss as long as you are not her acknowledged suitor. You must therefore either give up the acquaintance altogether, or make up your mind that she will refuse you everything."

"You argue very well, but how do you know that she loves me?"

"I am quite sure of it, and as you have promised to be our brother, I can tell you why I have that conviction. When Angela is in bed with me, she embraces me lovingly and calls me her dear abbe."

The words were scarcely spoken when Nanette, laughing heartily, placed her hand on her sister's lips, but the innocent confession had such an effect upon me that I could hardly control myself.

Marton told Nanette that I could not possibly be ignorant of what takes place between young girls sleeping together.

"There is no doubt," I said, "that everybody knows those trifles, and I do not think, dear Nanette, that you ought to reproach your sister with indiscretion for her friendly confidence."

"It cannot be helped now, but such things ought not to be mentioned. If Angela knew it!"

"She would be vexed, of course; but Marton has given me a mark of her friendship which I never can forget. But it is all over; I hate Angela, and I do not mean to speak to her any more! she is false, and she wishes my ruin."

"Yet, loving you, is she wrong to think of having you for her husband?"

"Granted that she is not; but she thinks only of her own self, for she knows what I suffer, and her conduct would be very different if she loved me. In the mean time, thanks to her imagination, she finds the means of satisfying her senses with the charming Marton who kindly performs the part of her husband."

Nanette laughed louder, but I kept very serious, and I went on talking to her sister, and praising her sincerity. I said that very likely, and to reciprocate her kindness, Angela must likewise have been her husband, but she answered, with a smile, that Angela played husband only to Nanette, and Nanette could not deny it.

"But," said I, "what name did Nanette, in her rapture, give to her husband?"

"Nobody knows."

"Do you love anyone, Nanette?"

"I do; but my secret is my own."

This reserve gave me the suspicion that I had something to do with her secret, and that Nanette was the rival of Angela. Such a delightful conversation caused me to lose the wish of passing an idle night with two girls so well made for love.

"It is very lucky," I exclaimed, "that I have for you only feelings of friendship; otherwise it would be very hard to pass the night without giving way to the temptation of bestowing upon you proofs of my affection, for you are both so lovely, so bewitching, that you would turn the brains of any man."

As I went on talking, I pretended to be somewhat sleepy; Nanette being the first to notice it, said, "Go to bed without any ceremony, we will lie down on the sofa in the adjoining room."

"I would be a very poor-spirited fellow indeed, if I agreed to this; let us talk; my sleepiness will soon pass off, but I am anxious about you. Go to bed yourselves, my charming friends, and I will go into the next room. If you are afraid of me, lock the door, but you would do me an injustice, for I feel only a brother's yearnings towards you."

"We cannot accept such an arrangement," said Nanette, "but let me persuade you; take this bed."

"I cannot sleep with my clothes on."

"Undress yourself; we will not look at you."

"I have no fear of it, but how could I find the heart to sleep, while on my account you are compelled to sit up?"

"Well," said Marton, "we can lie down, too, without undressing."

"If you shew me such distrust, you will offend me. Tell me, Nanette, do you think I am an honest man?"

"Most certainly."

“Well, then, give me a proof of your good opinion; lie down near me in the bed, undressed, and rely on my word of honour that I will not even lay a finger upon you. Besides, you are two against one, what can you fear? Will you not be free to get out of the bed in case I should not keep quiet? In short, unless you consent to give me this mark of your confidence in me, at least when I have fallen asleep, I cannot go to bed.”

I said no more, and pretended to be very sleepy. They exchanged a few words, whispering to each other, and Marton told me to go to bed, that they would follow me as soon as I was asleep. Nanette made me the same promise, I turned my back to them, undressed myself quickly, and wishing them good night, I went to bed. I immediately pretended to fall asleep, but soon I dozed in good earnest, and only woke when they came to bed. Then, turning round as if I wished to resume my slumbers, I remained very quiet until I could suppose them fast asleep; at all events, if they did not sleep, they were at liberty to pretend to do so. Their backs were towards me, and the light was out; therefore I could only act at random, and I paid my first compliments to the one who was lying on my right, not knowing whether she was Nanette or Marton. I find her bent in two, and wrapped up in the only garment she had kept on. Taking my time, and sparing her modesty, I compel her by degrees to acknowledge her defeat, and convince her that it is better to feign sleep and to let me proceed. Her natural instincts soon working in concert with mine, I reach the goal; and my efforts, crowned with the most complete success, leave me not the shadow of a doubt that I have gathered those first-fruits to which our prejudice makes us attach so great an importance. Enraptured at having enjoyed my manhood completely and for the first time, I quietly leave my beauty in order to do homage to the other sister. I find her motionless, lying on her back like a person wrapped in profound and undisturbed slumber. Carefully managing my advance, as if I were afraid of waking her up, I begin by gently gratifying her senses, and I ascertain the delightful fact that, like her sister, she is still in possession of her maidenhood. As soon as a natural movement proves to me that love accepts the offering, I take my measures to consummate the sacrifice. At that moment, giving way suddenly to the violence of her feelings, and tired of her assumed dissimulation, she warmly locks me in her arms at the very instant of the voluptuous crisis, smothers me with kisses, shares my raptures, and love blends our souls in the most ecstatic enjoyment.

Guessing her to be Nanette, I whisper her name.

“Yes, I am Nanette,” she answers; “and I declare myself happy, as well as my sister, if you prove yourself true and faithful.”

“Until death, my beloved ones, and as everything we have done is the work of love, do not let us ever mention the name of Angela.”

After this, I begged that she would give us a light; but Marton, always kind and obliging, got out of bed leaving us alone. When I saw Nanette in my arms, beaming with love, and Marton near the bed, holding a candle, with her eyes reproaching us with ingratitude because we did not speak to her, who, by accepting my first caresses, had encouraged her sister to follow her example, I realized all my happiness.

“Let us get up, my darlings,” said I, “and swear to each other eternal affection.”

When we had risen we performed, all three together, ablutions which made them laugh a good deal, and which gave a new impetus to the ardour of our feelings. Sitting up in the simple costume of nature, we ate the remains of our supper, exchanging those thousand trifling words which love alone can understand, and we again retired to our bed, where we spent a most delightful night giving each other mutual and oft-repeated proofs of our passionate ardour. Nanette was the recipient of my last bounties, for Madame Orio having left the house to go to church, I had to hasten my departure, after assuring the two lovely sisters that they had effectually extinguished whatever flame might still have flickered in my heart for Angela. I went home and slept soundly until dinner-time.

M. de Malipiero passed a remark upon my cheerful looks and the dark circles around my eyes, but I kept my own counsel, and I allowed him to think whatever he pleased. On the following day I paid a visit to Madame Orio, and Angela not being of the party, I remained to supper and retired with M. Rosa. During the evening Nanette contrived to give me a letter and a small parcel. The parcel contained a small lump of wax with the stamp of a key, and the letter told me to have a key made, and to use it to enter the house whenever I wished to spend the night with them. She informed me at the same time that Angela had slept with them the night following our adventures, and that, thanks to their mutual and usual practices, she had guessed the real state of things, that they had not denied it, adding that it was all her fault, and that Angela, after abusing them most vehemently, had sworn never again to darken their doors; but they did not care a jot.

A few days afterwards our good fortune delivered us from Angela; she was taken to Vicenza by her father, who had removed there for a couple of years, having been engaged to paint frescoes in some houses in that city. Thanks to her absence, I found myself undisturbed possessor of the two charming sisters, with whom I spent at least two nights every week, finding no difficulty in entering the house with the key which I had speedily procured.

Carnival was nearly over, when M. Manzoni informed me one day that the celebrated Juliette wished to see me, and regretted much that I had ceased to visit her. I felt curious as to what she had to say to me, and accompanied him to her house. She received me very politely, and remarking that she had heard of a large hall I had in my house, she said she would like to give a ball there, if I would give her the use of it. I readily consented, and she handed me twenty-four sequins for the supper and for the band, undertaking to send people to place chandeliers in the hall and in my other rooms.

M. de Sanvitali had left Venice, and the Parmesan government had placed his estates in chancery in consequence of his extravagant expenditure. I met him at Versailles ten years afterwards. He wore the insignia of the king's order of knighthood, and was grand equerry to the eldest daughter of Louis XV., Duchess of Parma, who, like all the French princesses, could not be reconciled to the climate of Italy.

The ball took place, and went off splendidly. All the guests belonged to Juliette's set, with the exception of Madame Orio, her nieces, and the procurator Rosa, who sat together in the room adjoining the hall, and whom I had been permitted to introduce as persons of no consequence whatever.

While the after-supper minuets were being danced Juliette took me apart, and said, "Take me to your bedroom; I have just got an amusing idea."

My room was on the third story; I shewed her the way. The moment we entered she bolted the door, much to my surprise. "I wish you," she said, "to dress me up in your ecclesiastical clothes, and I will disguise you as a woman with my own things. We will go down and dance together. Come, let us first dress our hair."

Feeling sure of something pleasant to come, and delighted with such an unusual adventure, I lose no time in arranging her hair, and I let her afterwards dress mine. She applies rouge and a few beauty spots to my face; I humour her in everything, and to prove her satisfaction, she gives me with the best of grace a very loving kiss, on condition that I do not ask for anything else.

"As you please, beautiful Juliette, but I give you due notice that I adore you!"

I place upon my bed a shirt, an abbe's neckband, a pair of drawers, black silk stockings — in fact, a complete fit-out. Coming near the bed, Juliette drops her skirt, and cleverly gets into the drawers, which were not a bad fit, but when she comes to the breeches there is some difficulty; the waistband is too narrow, and the only remedy is to rip it behind or to cut it, if necessary. I undertake to make everything right, and, as I sit on the foot of my bed, she places herself in front of me, with her back towards me. I begin my work, but she thinks that I want to see too much, that I am not skilful enough, and that my fingers wander in unnecessary places; she gets fidgety, leaves me, tears the breeches, and manages in her own way. Then I help her to put her shoes on, and I pass the shirt over her head, but as I am disposing the ruffle and the neck-band, she complains of my hands being too curious; and in truth, her bosom was rather scanty. She calls me a knave and rascal, but I take no notice of her. I was not going to be duped, and I thought that a woman who had been paid one hundred thousand ducats was well worth some study. At last, her toilet being completed, my turn comes. In spite of her objections I quickly get rid of my breeches, and she must put on me the chemise, then a skirt, in a word she has to dress me up. But all at once, playing the coquette, she gets angry because I do not conceal from her looks the very apparent proof that her charms have some effect on a particular part of my being, and she refuses to grant me the favour which would soon afford both relief and calm. I try to kiss her, and she repulses me, whereupon I lose patience, and in spite of herself she has to witness the last stage of my excitement. At the sight of this, she pours out every insulting word she can think of; I endeavour to prove that she is to blame, but it is all in vain.

However, she is compelled to complete my disguise. There is no doubt that an honest woman would not have exposed herself to such an adventure, unless she had intended to prove her tender feelings, and that she would not have drawn back at the very moment she saw them shared by her companion; but women like Juliette are often guided by a spirit of contradiction which causes them to act against their own interests. Besides, she felt disappointed when she found out that I was not timid, and my want of restraint appeared to her a want of respect. She would not have objected to my stealing a few light favours which she would have allowed me to take, as being of no importance, but, by doing that, I should have flattered her vanity too highly.

Our disguise being complete, we went together to the dancing-hall, where the enthusiastic applause of the guests soon restored our good temper. Everybody gave me credit for a piece of fortune which I had not enjoyed, but I was not ill-pleased with the rumour, and went on dancing with the false abbe, who was only too charming. Juliette treated me so well during the night that I construed her manners towards me into some sort of repentance, and I almost regretted what had taken place between us; it was a momentary weakness for which I was sorely punished.

At the end of the quadrille all the men thought they had a right to take liberties with the abbe, and I became myself rather free with the young girls, who would have been afraid of exposing themselves to ridicule had they offered any opposition to my caresses.

M. Querini was foolish enough to enquire from me whether I had kept on my breeches, and as I answered that I had been compelled to lend them to Juliette, he looked very unhappy, sat down in a corner of the room, and refused to dance.

Every one of the guests soon remarked that I had on a woman’s chemise, and nobody entertained a doubt of the sacrifice having been consummated, with the exception of Nanette and Marton, who could not imagine the possibility of my being unfaithful to them. Juliette perceived that she had been guilty of great imprudence, but it was too late to remedy the evil.

When we returned to my chamber upstairs, thinking that she had repented of her previous behaviour, and feeling some desire to possess her, I thought I would kiss her, and I took hold of her hand, saying I was disposed to give her every satisfaction, but she quickly slapped my face in so violent a manner that, in my indignation, I was very near returning the compliment. I undressed myself rapidly without looking at her, she did the same, and we came downstairs; but, in spite of the cold water I had applied to my cheek, everyone could easily see the stamp of the large hand which had come in contact with my face.

Before leaving the house, Juliette took me apart, and told me, in the most decided and impressive manner, that if I had any fancy for being thrown out of the window, I could enjoy that pleasure whenever I liked to enter her dwelling, and that she would have me murdered if this night's adventure ever became publicly known. I took care not to give her any cause for the execution of either of her threats, but I could not prevent the fact of our having exchanged shirts being rather notorious. As I was not seen at her house, it was generally supposed that she had been compelled by M. Querini to keep me at a distance. The reader will see how, six years later, this extraordinary woman thought proper to feign entire forgetfulness of this adventure.

I passed Lent, partly in the company of my loved ones, partly in the study of experimental physics at the Convent of the Salutation. My evenings were always given to M. de Malipiero's assemblies. At Easter, in order to keep the promise I had made to the Countess of Mont-Real, and longing to see again my beautiful Lucie, I went to Pasean. I found the guests entirely different to the set I had met the previous autumn. Count Daniel, the eldest of the family, had married a Countess Gozzi, and a young and wealthy government official, who had married a god-daughter of the old countess, was there with his wife and his sister-in-law. I thought the supper very long. The same room had been given to me, and I was burning to see Lucie, whom I did not intend to treat any more like a child. I did not see her before going to bed, but I expected her early the next morning, when lo! instead of her pretty face brightening my eyes, I see standing before me a fat, ugly servant-girl! I enquire after the gatekeeper's family, but her answer is given in the peculiar dialect of the place, and is, of course, unintelligible to me.

I wonder what has become of Lucie; I fancy that our intimacy has been found out, I fancy that she is ill — dead, perhaps. I dress myself with the intention of looking for her. If she has been forbidden to see me, I think to myself, I will be even with them all, for somehow or other I will contrive the means of speaking to her, and out of spite I will do with her that which honour prevented love from accomplishing. As I was revolving such thoughts, the gate-keeper comes in with a sorrowful countenance. I enquire after his wife's health, and after his daughter, but at the name of Lucie his eyes are filled with tears.

"What! is she dead?"

"Would to God she were!"

"What has she done?"

"She has run away with Count Daniel's courier, and we have been unable to trace her anywhere."

His wife comes in at the moment he replies, and at these words, which renewed her grief, the poor woman faints away. The keeper, seeing how sincerely I felt for his misery, tells me that this great misfortune befell them only a week before my arrival.

"I know that man l'Aigle," I say; "he is a scoundrel. Did he ask to marry Lucie?"

"No; he knew well enough that our consent would have been refused!"

"I wonder at Lucie acting in such a way."

"He seduced her, and her running away made us suspect the truth, for she had become very stout."

"Had he known her long?"

"About a month after your last visit she saw him for the first time. He must have thrown a spell over her, for our Lucie was as pure as a dove, and you can, I believe, bear testimony to her goodness."

"And no one knows where they are?"

"No one. God alone knows what this villain will do with her."

I grieved as much as the unfortunate parents; I went out and took a long ramble in the woods to give way to my sad feelings. During two hours I cogitated over considerations, some true, some false, which were all prefaced by an if. If I had paid this visit, as I might have done, a week sooner, loving Lucie would have confided in me, and I would have prevented that self-murder. If I had acted with her as with Nanette and Marton, she would not have been left by me in that state of ardent excitement which must have proved the principal cause of her fault, and she would not have fallen a prey to that scoundrel. If she had not known me before meeting the courier, her innocent soul would never have listened to such a man. I was in despair, for in my conscience I acknowledged myself the primary agent of this infamous seduction; I had prepared the way for the villain.

Had I known where to find Lucie, I would certainly have gone forth on the instant to seek for her, but no trace whatever of her whereabouts had been discovered.

Before I had been made acquainted with Lucie's misfortune I felt great pride at having had sufficient power over myself to respect her innocence; but after hearing what had happened I was ashamed of my own reserve, and I promised myself that for the future I would on that score act more wisely. I felt truly miserable when my imagination painted the probability of the unfortunate girl being left to poverty and shame, cursing the remembrance of me, and hating me as the first cause of her misery. This fatal event caused me to adopt a new system, which in after years I carried sometimes rather too far.

I joined the cheerful guests of the countess in the gardens, and received such a welcome that I was soon again in my usual spirits, and at dinner I delighted everyone.

My sorrow was so great that it was necessary either to drive it away at once or to leave Pasean. But a new life crept into my being as I examined the face and the disposition of the newly-married lady. Her sister was prettier, but I was beginning to feel afraid of a novice; I thought the work too great.

This newly-married lady, who was between nineteen and twenty years of age, drew upon herself everybody's attention by her over-strained and unnatural manners. A great talker, with a memory crammed with maxims and precepts often without sense, but of which she loved to make a show, very devout, and so jealous of her husband that she did not conceal her vexation when he expressed his satisfaction at being seated at table opposite her sister, she laid herself open to much ridicule. Her husband was a giddy young fellow, who perhaps felt very deep affection for his wife, but who imagined that, through good breeding, he ought to appear very indifferent, and whose vanity found pleasure in giving her constant causes for jealousy. She, in her turn, had a great dread of passing for an idiot if she did not shew her appreciation of, and her resentment for, his conduct. She felt uneasy in the midst of good company, precisely because she wished to appear thoroughly at home. If I prattled away with some of my trilling nonsense, she would stare at me, and in her anxiety not to be thought stupid, she would laugh out of season. Her oddity, her awkwardness, and her self-conceit gave me the desire to know her better, and I began to dance attendance upon her.

My attentions, important and unimportant, my constant care, ever my fopperies, let everybody know that I meditated conquest. The husband was duly warned, but, with a great show of intrepidity, he answered with a joke every time he was told that I was a formidable rival. On my side I assumed a modest, and even sometimes a careless appearance, when, to shew his freedom from jealousy, he excited me to make love to his wife, who, on her part, understood but little how to perform the part of fancy free.

I had been paying my address to her for five or six days with great constancy, when, taking a walk with her in the garden, she imprudently confided to me the reason of her anxiety respecting her husband, and how wrong he was to give her any cause for jealousy. I told her, speaking as an old friend, that the best way to punish him would be to take no apparent notice of her, husband’s preference for her sister, and to feign to be herself in love with me. In order to entice her more easily to follow my advice, I added that I was well aware of my plan being a very difficult one to carry out, and that to play successfully such a character a woman must be particularly witty. I had touched her weak point, and she exclaimed that she would play the part to perfection; but in spite of her self-confidence she acquitted herself so badly that everybody understood that the plan was of my own scheming.

If I happened to be alone with her in the dark paths of the garden, and tried to make her play her part in real earnest, she would take the dangerous step of running away, and rejoining the other guests; the result being that, on my reappearance, I was called a bad sportsman who frightened the bird away. I would not fail at the first opportunity to reproach her for her flight, and to represent the triumph she had thus prepared for her spouse. I praised her mind, but lamented over the shortcomings of her education; I said that the tone, the manners I adopted towards her, were those of good society, and proved the great esteem I entertained for her intelligence, but in the middle of all my fine speeches, towards the eleventh or twelfth day of my courtship, she suddenly put me out of all conceit by telling me that, being a priest, I ought to know that every amorous connection was a deadly sin, that God could see every action of His creatures, and that she would neither damn her soul nor place herself under the necessity of saying to her confessor that she had so far forgotten herself as to commit such a sin with a priest. I objected that I was not yet a priest, but she foiled me by enquiring point-blank whether or not the act I had in view was to be numbered amongst the cardinal sins, for, not feeling the courage to deny it, I felt that I must give up the argument and put an end to the adventure.

A little consideration having considerably calmed my feelings, everybody remarked my new countenance during dinner; and the old count, who was very fond of a joke, expressed loudly his opinion that such quiet demeanour on my part announced the complete success of my campaign. Considering such a remark to be favourable to me, I took care to spew my cruel devotee that such was the way the world would judge, but all this was lost labour. Luck, however, stood me in good stead, and my efforts were crowned with success in the following manner.

On Ascension Day, we all went to pay a visit to Madame Bergali, a celebrated Italian poetess. On my return to Pasean the same evening, my pretty mistress wished to get into a carriage for four persons in which her husband and sister were already seated, while I was alone in a two-wheeled chaise. I exclaimed at this, saying that such a mark of distrust was indeed too pointed, and everybody remonstrated with her, saying that she ought not to insult me so cruelly. She was compelled to come with me, and having told the postillion that I wanted to go by the nearest road, he left the other carriages, and took the way through the forest of Cequini. The sky was clear and cloudless when we left, but in less than half-an-hour we were visited by one of those storms so frequent in the south, which appear likely to overthrow heaven and earth, and which end rapidly, leaving behind them a bright sky and a cool atmosphere, so that they do more good than harm.

“Oh, heavens!” exclaimed my companion, “we shall have a storm.”

“Yes,” I say, “and although the chaise is covered, the rain will spoil your pretty dress. I am very sorry.”

“I do not mind the dress; but the thunder frightens me so!”

“Close your ears.”

“And the lightning?”

“Postillion, let us go somewhere for shelter.”

“There is not a house, sir, for a league, and before we come to it, the storm will have passed off.”

He quietly keeps on his way, and the lightning flashes, the thunder sends forth its mighty voice, and the lady shudders with fright. The rain comes down in torrents, I take off my cloak to shelter us in front, at the same moment we are blinded by a flash of lightning, and the electric fluid strikes the earth within one hundred yards of us. The horses plunge and prance with fear, and my companion falls in spasmodic convulsions. She throws herself upon me, and folds me in her arms. The cloak had gone down, I stoop to place it around us, and improving my opportunity I take up her clothes. She tries to pull them down, but another clap of thunder deprives her of every particle of strength. Covering her with the cloak, I draw her towards me, and the motion of the chaise coming to my assistance, she falls over me in the most favourable position. I lose no time, and under pretence of arranging my watch in my fob, I prepare myself for the assault. On her side, conscious that, unless she stops me at once, all is lost, she makes a great effort; but I hold her tightly, saying that if she does not feign a fainting fit, the post-boy will turn round and see everything; I let her enjoy the pleasure of calling me an infidel, a monster, anything she likes, but my victory is the most complete that ever a champion achieved.

The rain, however, was falling, the wind, which was very high, blew in our faces, and, compelled to stay where she was, she said I would ruin her reputation, as the postillion could see everything.

“I keep my eye upon him,” I answered, “he is not thinking of us, and even if he should turn his head, the cloak shelters us from him. Be quiet, and pretend to have fainted, for I will not let you go.”

She seems resigned, and asks how I can thus set the storm at defiance.

"The storm, dear one, is my best friend to-day."

She almost seems to believe me, her fear vanishes, and feeling my rapture, she enquires whether I have done. I smile and answer in the negative, stating that I cannot let her go till the storm is over. "Consent to everything, or I let the cloak drop," I say to her.

"Well, you dreadful man, are you satisfied, now that you have insured my misery for the remainder of my life?"

"No, not yet."

"What more do you want?"

"A shower of kisses."

"How unhappy I am! Well! here they are."

"Tell me you forgive me, and confess that you have shared all my pleasure."

"You know I did. Yes, I forgive you."

Then I give her her liberty, and treating her to some very pleasant caresses, I ask her to have the same kindness for me, and she goes to work with a smile on her pretty lips.

"Tell me you love me," I say to her.

"No, I do not, for you are an atheist, and hell awaits you."

The weather was fine again, and the elements calm; I kissed her hands and told her that the postillion had certainly not seen anything, and that I was sure I had cured her of her dread of thunder, but that she was not likely to reveal the secret of my remedy. She answered that one thing at least was certain, namely that no other woman had ever been cured by the same prescription.

"Why," I said, "the same remedy has very likely been applied a million of times within the last thousand years. To tell you the truth, I had somewhat depended upon it, when we entered the chaise together, for I did not know any other way of obtaining the happiness of possessing you. But console yourself with the belief that, placed in the same position, no frightened woman could have resisted."

“I believe you; but for the future I will travel only with my husband.”

“You would be wrong, for your husband would not have been clever enough to cure your fright in the way I have done.”

“True, again. One learns some curious things in your company; but we shall not travel tete-a-tete again.”

We reached Pasean an hour before our friends. We get out of the chaise, and my fair mistress ran off to her chamber, while I was looking for a crown for the postillion. I saw that he was grinning.

“What are you laughing at?”

“Oh! you know.”

“Here, take this ducat and keep a quiet tongue in your head.”

CHAPTER VI

My Grandmother's Death and Its Consequences I Lose M. de

Malipiero's Friendship — I Have No Longer a Home —

La Tintoretta — I Am Sent to a Clerical Seminary — I Am Expelled

From It, and Confined in a Fortress

During supper the conversation turned altogether upon the storm, and the official, who knew the weakness of his wife, told me that he was quite certain I would never travel with her again. "Nor I with him," his wife remarked, "for, in his fearful impiety, he exorcised the lightning with jokes."

Henceforth she avoided me so skilfully that I never could contrive another interview with her.

When I returned to Venice I found my grandmother ill, and I had to change all my habits, for I loved her too dearly not to surround her with every care and attention; I never left her until she had breathed her last. She was unable to leave me anything, for during her life she had given me all she could, and her death compelled me to adopt an entirely different mode of life.

A month after her death, I received a letter from my mother informing me that, as there was no probability of her return to Venice, she had determined to give up the house, the rent of which she was still paying, that she had communicated her intention to the Abbe Grimani, and that I was to be guided entirely by his advice.

He was instructed to sell the furniture, and to place me, as well as my brothers and my sister, in a good boarding-house. I called upon Grimani to assure him of my perfect disposition to obey his commands.

The rent of the house had been paid until the end of the year; but, as I was aware that the furniture would be sold on the expiration of the term, I placed my wants under no restraint. I had already sold some linen, most of the china, and several tapestries; I now began to dispose of the mirrors, beds, etc. I had no doubt that my conduct would be severely blamed, but I knew likewise that it was my father's inheritance, to which my mother had no claim whatever, and, as to my brothers, there was plenty of time before any explanation could take place between us.

Four months afterwards I had a second letter from my mother, dated from Warsaw, and enclosing another. Here is the translation of my mother's letter:

"My dear son, I have made here the acquaintance of a learned Minim friar, a Calabrian by birth, whose great qualities have made me think of you every time he has honoured me with a visit. A year ago I told him that I had a son who was preparing himself for the Church, but that I had not the means of keeping him during his studies, and he promised that my son would become his own child, if I could obtain for him from the queen a bishopric in his native country, and he added that it would be very easy to succeed if I could induce the sovereign to recommend him to her daughter, the queen of Naples.

"Full of trust in the Almighty, I threw myself at the feet of her majesty, who granted me her gracious protection. She wrote to her daughter, and the worthy friar has been appointed by the Pope to the bishopric of Monterano. Faithful to his promise, the good bishop will take you with him about the middle of next year, as he passes through Venice to reach Calabria. He informs you himself of his intentions in the enclosed letter. Answer him immediately, my dear son, and forward your letter to me; I will deliver it to the bishop. He will pave your way to the highest dignities of the Church, and you may imagine my consolation if, in some twenty or thirty years, I had the happiness of seeing you a bishop, at least! Until his arrival, M. Grimani will take care of you. I give you my blessing, and I am, my dear child, etc., etc."

The bishop's letter was written in Latin, and was only a repetition of my mother's. It was full of unction, and informed me that he would tarry but three days in Venice.

I answered according to my mother's wishes, but those two letters had turned my brain. I looked upon my fortune as made. I longed to enter the road which was to lead me to it, and I congratulated myself that I could leave my country without any regret. Farewell, Venice, I exclaimed; the days for vanity are gone by, and in the future I will only think of a great, of a substantial career! M. Grimani congratulated me warmly on my good luck, and promised all his friendly care to secure a good boarding-house, to which I would go at the beginning of the year, and where I would wait for the bishop's arrival.

M. de Malipiero, who in his own way had great wisdom, and who saw that in Venice I was plunging headlong into pleasures and dissipation, and was only wasting a precious time, was delighted to see me on the eve of going somewhere else to fulfil my destiny, and much pleased with my ready acceptance of those new circumstances in my life. He read me a lesson which I have never forgotten. "The famous precept of the Stoic philosophers," he said to me, "'Sequere Deum', can be perfectly explained by these words: 'Give yourself up to whatever fate offers to you, provided you do not feel an invincible repugnance to accept it.'" He added that it was the genius of Socrates, 'saepe revocans, raro impellens'; and that it was the origin of the 'fata viam inveniunt' of the same philosophers.

M. de Malipiero's science was embodied in that very lesson, for he had obtained his knowledge by the study of only one book — the book of man. However, as if it were to give me the proof that perfection does not exist, and that there is a bad side as well as a good one to everything, a certain adventure happened to me a month afterwards which, although I was following his own maxims, cost me the loss of his friendship, and which certainly did not teach me anything.

The senator fancied that he could trace upon the physiognomy of young people certain signs which marked them out as the special favourites of fortune. When he imagined that he had discovered those signs upon any individual, he would take him in hand and instruct him how to assist fortune by good and wise principles; and he used to say, with a great deal of truth, that a good remedy would turn into poison in the hands of a fool, but that poison is a good remedy when administered by a learned man. He had, in my time, three favourites in whose education he took great pains. They were, besides myself, Therese Imer, with whom the reader has a slight acquaintance already, and the third was the daughter of the boatman Gardela, a girl three years younger than I, who had the prettiest and most fascinating countenance. The speculative old man, in order to assist fortune in her particular case, made her learn dancing, for, he would say, the ball cannot reach the pocket unless someone pushes it. This girl made a great reputation at Stuttgard under the name of Augusta. She was the favourite mistress of the Duke of Wurtemburg in 1757. She was a most charming woman. The last time I saw her she was in Venice, and she died two years afterwards. Her husband, Michel de l'Agata, poisoned himself a short time after her death.

One day we had all three dined with him, and after dinner the senator left us, as was his wont, to enjoy his siesta; the little Gardela, having a dancing lesson to take, went away soon after him, and I found myself alone with Therese, whom I rather admired, although I had never made love to her. We were sitting down at a table very near each other, with our backs to the door of the room in which we thought our patron fast asleep, and somehow or other we took a fancy to examine into the difference of conformation between a girl and a boy; but at the most interesting part of our study a violent blow on my shoulders from a stick, followed by another, and which would have been itself followed by many more if I had not ran away, compelled us to abandon our interesting investigation unfinished. I got off without hat or cloak, and went home; but in less than a quarter of an hour the old housekeeper of the senator brought my clothes with a letter which contained a command never to present myself again at the mansion of his excellency. I immediately wrote him an answer in the following terms: "You have struck me while you were the slave of your anger; you cannot therefore boast of having given me a lesson, and I have not learned anything. To forgive you I must forget that you are a man of great wisdom, and I can never forget it."

This nobleman was perhaps quite right not to be pleased with the sight we gave him; yet, with all his prudence, he proved himself very unwise, for all the servants were acquainted with the cause of my exile, and, of course, the adventure was soon known through the city, and was received with great merriment. He dared not address any reproaches to Therese, as I heard from her soon after, but she could not venture to entreat him to pardon me.

The time to leave my father's house was drawing near, and one fine morning I received the visit of a man about forty years old, with a black wig, a scarlet cloak, and a very swarthy complexion, who handed me a letter from M. Grimani, ordering me to consign to the bearer all the furniture of the house according to the inventory, a copy of which was in my possession. Taking the inventory in my hand, I pointed out every article marked down, except when the said article, having through my instrumentality taken an airing out of the house, happened to be missing, and whenever any article was absent I said that I had not the slightest idea where it might be. But the uncouth fellow, taking a very high tone, said loudly that he must know what I had done with the furniture. His manner being very disagreeable to me, I answered that I had nothing to do with him, and as he still raised his voice I advised him to take himself off as quickly as possible, and I gave him that piece of advice in such a way as to prove to him that, at home, I knew I was the more powerful of the two.

Feeling it my duty to give information to M. Grimani of what had just taken place, I called upon him as soon as he was up, but I found that my man was already there, and that he had given his own account of the affair. The abbe, after a very severe lecture to which I had to listen in silence, ordered me to render an account of all the missing articles. I answered that I had found myself under the necessity of selling them to avoid running into debt. This confession threw him in a violent passion; he called me a rascal, said that those things did not belong to me, that he knew what he had to do, and he commanded me to leave his house on the very instant.

Mad with rage, I ran for a Jew, to whom I wanted to sell what remained of the furniture, but when I returned to my house I found a bailiff waiting at the door, and he handed me a summons. I looked over it and perceived that it was issued at the instance of Antonio Razetta. It was the name of the fellow with the swarthy countenance. The seals were already affixed on all the doors, and I was not even allowed to go to my room, for a keeper had been left there by the bailiff. I lost no time, and called upon M. Rosa, to whom I related all the circumstances. After reading the summons he said,

“The seals shall be removed to-morrow morning, and in the meantime I shall summon Razetta before the avogador. But to-night, my dear friend,” he added, “you must beg the hospitality of some one of your acquaintances. It has been a violent proceeding, but you shall be paid handsomely for it; the man is evidently acting under M. Grimani’s orders.”

“Well, that is their business.”

I spent the night with Nanette and Marton, and on the following morning, the seals having been taken off, I took possession of my dwelling. Razetta did not appear before the ‘avogador’, and M. Rosa summoned him in my name before the criminal court, and obtained against him a writ of ‘capias’ in case he should not obey the second summons. On the third day M. Grimani wrote to me, commanding me to call upon him. I went immediately. As soon as I was in his presence he enquired abruptly what my intentions were.

“I intend to shield myself from your violent proceedings under the protection of the law, and to defend myself against a man with whom I ought never to have had any connection, and who has compelled me to pass the night in a disreputable place.”

“In a disreputable place?”

“Of course. Why was I, against all right and justice, prevented from entering my own dwelling?”

“You have possession of it now. But you must go to your lawyer and tell him to suspend all proceedings against Razetta, who has done nothing but under my instructions. I suspected that your intention was to sell the rest of the furniture; I have prevented it. There is a room at your disposal at St. Chrysostom’s, in a house of mine, the first floor of which is occupied by La Tintoretta, our first opera dancer. Send all your things there, and come and dine with me every day. Your sister and your brothers have been provided with a comfortable home; therefore, everything is now arranged for the best.”

I called at once upon M. Rosa, to whom I explained all that had taken place, and his advice being to give way to M. Grimani’s wishes, I determined to follow it. Besides, the arrangement offered the best satisfaction I could obtain, as to be a guest at his dinner table was an honour for me. I was likewise full of curiosity respecting my new lodging under the same roof with La Tintoretta, who was much talked of, owing to a certain Prince of Waldeck who was extravagantly generous with her.

The bishop was expected in the course of the summer; I had, therefore, only six months more to wait in Venice before taking the road which would lead me, perhaps, to the throne of Saint Peter: everything in the future assumed in my eyes the brightest hue, and my imagination revelled amongst the most radiant beams of sunshine; my castles in the air were indeed most beautiful.

I dined the same day with M. Grimani, and I found myself seated next to Razetta — an unpleasant neighbour, but I took no notice of him. When the meal was over, I paid a last visit to my beautiful house in Saint-Samuel's parish, and sent all I possessed in a gondola to my new lodging.

I did not know Signora Tintoretta, but I was well acquainted with her reputation, character and manners. She was but a poor dancer, neither handsome nor plain, but a woman of wit and intellect. Prince Waldeck spent a great deal for her, and yet he did not prevent her from retaining the titulary protection of a noble Venetian of the Lin family, now extinct, a man about sixty years of age, who was her visitor at every hour of the day. This nobleman, who knew me, came to my room towards the evening, with the compliments of the lady, who, he added, was delighted to have me in her house, and would be pleased to receive me in her intimate circle.

To excuse myself for not having been the first to pay my respects to the signora, I told M. Lin that I did not know she was my neighbour, that M. Grimani had not mentioned the circumstance, otherwise I would have paid my duties to her before taking possession of my lodging. After this apology I followed the ambassador, he presented me to his mistress, and the acquaintance was made.

She received me like a princess, took off her glove before giving me her hand to kiss, mentioned my name before five or six strangers who were present, and whose names she gave me, and invited me to take a seat near her. As she was a native of Venice, I thought it was absurd for her to speak French to me, and I told her that I was not acquainted with that language, and would feel grateful if she would converse in Italian. She was surprised at my not speaking French, and said I would cut but a poor figure in her drawing-room, as they seldom spoke any other language there, because she received a great many foreigners. I promised to learn French. Prince Waldeck came in during the evening; I was introduced to him, and he gave me a very friendly welcome. He could speak Italian very well, and during the carnival he shewed me great kindness. He presented me with a gold snuffbox as a reward for a very poor sonnet which I had written for his dear

Grizellini. This was her family name; she was called Tintoretta because her father had been a dyer.

The Tintoretta had greater claims than Juliette to the admiration of sensible men. She loved poetry, and if it had not been that I was expecting the bishop, I would have fallen in love with her. She was herself smitten with a young physician of great merit, named Righelini, who died in the prime of life, and whom I still regret. I shall have to mention him in another part of my Memoirs.

Towards the end of the carnival, my mother wrote to M. Grimani that it would be a great shame if the bishop found me under the roof of an opera dancer, and he made up his mind to lodge me in a respectable and decent place. He took the Abbe Tosello into consultation, and the two gentlemen thought that the best thing they could do for me would be to send me to a clerical seminary. They arranged everything unknown to me, and the abbe undertook to inform me of their plan and to obtain from me a gracious consent. But when I heard him speak with beautiful flowers of rhetoric for the purpose of gilding the bitter pill, I could not help bursting into a joyous laughter, and I astounded his reverence when I expressed my readiness to go anywhere he might think right to send me.

The plan of the two worthy gentlemen was absurd, for at the age of seventeen, and with a nature like mine, the idea of placing me in a seminary ought never to have been entertained, but ever a faithful disciple of Socrates, feeling no unconquerable reluctance, and the plan, on the contrary, appearing to me rather a good joke, I not only gave a ready consent, but I even longed to enter the seminary. I told M. Grimani I was prepared to accept anything, provided Razetta had nothing to do with it. He gave me his promise, but he did not keep it when I left the seminary. I have never been able to decide whether this Grimani was kind because he was a fool, or whether his stupidity was the result of his kindness, but all his brothers were the same. The worst trick that Dame Fortune can play upon an intelligent young man is to place him under the dependence of a fool. A few days afterwards, having been dressed as a pupil of a clerical seminary by the care of the abbe, I was taken to Saint-Cyprian de Muran and introduced to the rector.

The patriarchal church of Saint-Cyprian is served by an order of the monks, founded by the blessed Jerome Miani, a nobleman of Venice. The rector received me with tender affection and great kindness. But in his address (which was full of unction) I thought I could perceive a suspicion on his part that my being sent to the seminary was a punishment, or at least a way to put a stop to an irregular life, and, feeling hurt in my dignity, I told him at once, “Reverend father, I do not think that any one has the right of punishing me.”

“No, no, my son,” he answered, “I only meant that you would be very happy with us.”

We were then shewn three halls, in which we found at least one hundred and fifty seminarists, ten or twelve schoolrooms, the refectory, the dormitory, the gardens for play hours, and every pain was taken to make me imagine life in such a place the happiest that could fall to the lot of a young man, and to make me suppose that I would even regret the arrival of the bishop. Yet they all tried to cheer me up by saying that I would only remain there five or six months. Their eloquence amused me greatly.

I entered the seminary at the beginning of March, and prepared myself for my new life by passing the night between my two young friends, Nanette and Marton, who bathed their pillows with tears; they could not understand, and this was likewise the feeling of their aunt and of the good M. Rosa, how a young man like myself could shew such obedience.

The day before going to the seminary, I had taken care to entrust all my papers to Madame Manzoni. They made a large parcel, and I left it in her hands for fifteen years. The worthy old lady is still alive, and with her ninety years she enjoys good health and a cheerful temper. She received me with a smile, and told me that I would not remain one month in the seminary.

“I beg your pardon, madam, but I am very glad to go there, and intend to remain until the arrival of the bishop.”

“You do not know your own nature, and you do not know your bishop, with whom you will not remain very long either.”

The abbe accompanied me to the seminary in a gondola, but at Saint-Michel he had to stop in consequence of a violent attack of vomiting which seized me suddenly; the apothecary cured me with some mint-water.

I was indebted for this attack to the too frequent sacrifices which I had been offering on the altar of love. Any lover who knows what his feelings were when he found himself with the woman he adored and with the fear that it was for the last time, will easily imagine my feelings during the last hours that I expected ever to spend with my two charming mistresses. I could not be induced to let the last offering be the last, and I went on offering until there was no more incense left.

The priest committed me to the care of the rector, and my luggage was carried to the dormitory, where I went myself to deposit my cloak and my hat. I was not placed amongst the adults, because, notwithstanding my size, I was not old enough. Besides, I would not shave myself, through vanity, because I thought that the down on my face left no doubt of my youth. It was ridiculous, of course; but when does man cease to be so? We get rid of our vices more easily than of our follies. Tyranny has not had sufficient power over me to compel me to shave myself; it is only in that respect that I have found tyranny to be tolerant.

“To which school do you wish to belong?” asked the rector.

“To the dogmatic, reverend father; I wish to study the history of the Church.”

“I will introduce you to the father examiner.”

“I am doctor in divinity, most reverend father, and do not want to be examined.”

“It is necessary, my dear son; come with me.”

This necessity appeared to me an insult, and I felt very angry; but a spirit of revenge quickly whispered to me the best way to mystify them, and the idea made me very joyful. I answered so badly all the questions propounded in Latin by the examiner, I made so many solecisms, that he felt it his duty to send me to an inferior class of grammar, in which, to my great delight, I found myself the companion of some twenty young urchins of about ten years, who, hearing that I was doctor in divinity, kept on saying: ‘Accipiamus pecuniam, et mittamus asinum in patriam suam’.

Our play hours afforded me great amusement; my companions of the dormitory, who were all in the class of philosophy at least, looked down upon me with great contempt, and when they spoke of their own sublime discourses, they laughed if I appeared to be listening attentively to their discussions which, as they thought, must have been perfect enigmas to me. I did not intend to betray myself, but an accident, which I could not avoid, forced me to throw off the mask.

Father Barbarigo, belonging to the Convent of the Salutation at Venice, whose pupil I had been in physics, came to pay a visit to the rector, and seeing me as we were coming from mass paid me his friendly compliments. His first question was to enquire what science I was studying, and he thought I was joking when I answered that I was learning the grammar. The rector having joined us, I left them together, and went to my class. An hour later, the rector sent for me.

“Why did you feign such ignorance at the examination?” he asked.

“Why,” I answered, “were you unjust enough to compel me to the degradation of an examination?”

He looked annoyed, and escorted me to the dogmatic school, where my comrades of the dormitory received me with great astonishment, and in the afternoon, at play time, they gathered around me and made me very happy with their professions of friendship.

One of them, about fifteen years old, and who at the present time must, if still alive, be a bishop, attracted my notice by his features as much as by his talents. He inspired me with a very warm friendship, and during recess, instead of playing skittles with the others, we always walked together. We conversed upon poetry, and we both delighted in the beautiful odes of Horace. We liked Ariosto better than Tasso, and Petrarch had our whole admiration, while Tassoni and Muratori, who had been his critics, were the special objects of our contempt. We were such fast friends, after four days of acquaintance, that we were actually jealous of each other, and to such an extent that if either of us walked about with any seminarist, the other would be angry and sulk like a disappointed lover.

The dormitory was placed under the supervision of a lay friar, and it was his province to keep us in good order. After supper, accompanied by this lay friar, who had the title of prefect, we all proceeded to the dormitory. There, everyone had to go to his own bed, and to undress quietly after having said his prayers in a low voice. When all the pupils were in bed, the prefect would go to his own. A large lantern lighted up the dormitory, which had the shape of a parallelogram eighty yards by ten. The beds were placed at equal distances, and to each bed there were a fold-stool, a chair, and room for the trunk of the Seminarist. At one end was the washing place, and at the other the bed of the prefect. The bed of my friend was opposite mine, and the lantern was between us.

The principal duty of the prefect was to take care that no pupil should go and sleep with one of his comrades, for such a visit was never supposed an innocent one. It was a cardinal sin, and, bed being accounted the place for sleep and not for conversation, it was admitted that a pupil who slept out of his own bed, did so only for immoral purposes. So long as he stopped in his own bed, he could do what he liked; so much the worse for him if he gave himself up to bad practices. It has been remarked in Germany that it is precisely in those institutions for young men in which the directors have taken most pains to prevent onanism that this vice is most prevalent.

Those who had framed the regulations in our seminary were stupid fools, who had not the slightest knowledge of either morals or human nature. Nature has wants which must be administered to, and Tissot is right only as far as the abuse of nature is concerned, but this abuse would very seldom occur if the directors exercised proper wisdom and prudence, and if they did not make a point of forbidding it in a special and peculiar manner; young people give way to dangerous excesses from a sheer delight in disobedience, — a disposition very natural to humankind, since it began with Adam and Eve.

I had been in the seminary for nine or ten days, when one night I felt someone stealing very quietly in my bed; my hand was at once clutched, and my name whispered. I could hardly restrain my laughter. It was my friend, who, having chanced to wake up and finding that the lantern was out, had taken a sudden fancy to pay me a visit. I very soon begged him to go away for fear the prefect should be awake, for in such a case we should have found ourselves in a very unpleasant dilemma, and most likely would have been accused of some abominable offence. As I was giving him that good advice we heard someone moving, and my friend made his escape; but immediately after he had left me I heard the fall of some person, and at the same time the hoarse voice of the prefect exclaiming:

“Ah, villain! wait until to-morrow — until to-morrow!”

After which threat he lighted the lantern and retired to his couch.

The next morning, before the ringing of the bell for rising, the rector, followed by the prefect, entered the dormitory, and said to us:

“Listen to me, all of you. You are aware of what has taken place this last night. Two amongst you must be guilty; but I wish to forgive them, and to save their honour I promise that their names shall not be made public. I expect every one of you to come to me for confession before recess.”

He left the dormitory, and we dressed ourselves. In the afternoon, in obedience to his orders, we all went to him and confessed, after which ceremony we repaired to the garden, where my friend told me that, having unfortunately met the prefect after he left me, he had thought that the best way was to knock him down, in order to get time to reach his own bed without being known.

“And now,” I said, “you are certain of being forgiven, for, of course, you have wisely confessed your error?”

“You are joking,” answered my friend; “why, the good rector would not have known any more than he knows at present, even if my visit to you had been paid with a criminal intent.”

“Then you must have made a false confession: you are at all events guilty of disobedience?”

“That may be, but the rector is responsible for the guilt, as he used compulsion.”

“My dear friend, you argue in a very forcible way, and the very reverend rector must by this time be satisfied that the inmates of our dormitory are more learned than he is himself.”

No more would have been said about the adventure if, a few nights after, I had not in my turn taken a fancy to return the visit paid by my friend. Towards midnight, having had occasion to get out of bed, and hearing the loud snoring of the prefect, I quickly put out the lantern and went to lie beside my friend. He knew me at once, and gladly received me; but we both listened attentively to the snoring of our keeper, and when it ceased, understanding our danger, I got up and reached my own bed without losing a second, but the moment I got to it I had a double surprise. In the first place I felt somebody lying in my bed, and in the second I saw the prefect, with a candle in his hand, coming along slowly and taking a survey of all the beds right and left. I could understand the prefect suddenly lighting a candle, but how could I realize what I saw — namely, one of my comrades sleeping soundly in my bed, with his back turned to me? I immediately made up my mind to feign sleep. After two or three shakings given by the prefect, I pretended to wake up, and my bed-companion woke up in earnest. Astonished at finding himself in my bed, he offered me an apology:

“I have made a mistake,” he said, “as I returned from a certain place in the dark, I found your bed empty, and mistook it for mine.”

“Very likely,” I answered; “I had to get up, too.”

“Yes,” remarked the prefect; “but how does it happen that you went to bed without making any remark when, on your return, you found your bed already tenanted? And how is it that, being in the dark, you did not suppose that you were mistaken yourself?”

“I could not be mistaken, for I felt the pedestal of this crucifix of mine, and I knew I was right; as to my companion here, I did not feel him.”

“It is all very unlikely,” answered our Argus; and he went to the lantern, the wick of which he found crushed down.

“The wick has been forced into the oil, gentlemen; it has not gone out of itself; it has been the handiwork of one of you, but it will be seen to in the morning.”

My stupid companion went to his own bed, the prefect lighted the lamp and retired to his rest, and after this scene, which had broken the repose of every pupil, I quietly slept until the appearance of the rector, who, at the dawn of day, came in great fury, escorted by his satellite, the prefect.

The rector, after examining the localities and submitting to a lengthy interrogatory first my accomplice, who very naturally was considered as the most guilty, and then myself, whom nothing could convict of the offence, ordered us to get up and go to church to attend mass. As soon as we were dressed, he came back, and addressing us both, he said, kindly:

"You stand both convicted of a scandalous connivance, and it is proved by the fact of the lantern having been wilfully extinguished. I am disposed to believe that the cause of all this disorder is, if not entirely innocent, at least due only to extreme thoughtlessness; but the scandal given to all your comrades, the outrage offered to the discipline and to the established rules of the seminary, call loudly for punishment. Leave the room."

We obeyed; but hardly were we between the double doors of the dormitory than we were seized by four servants, who tied our hands behind us, and led us to the class room, where they compelled us to kneel down before the great crucifix. The rector told them to execute his orders, and, as we were in that position, the wretches administered to each of us seven or eight blows with a stick, or with a rope, which I received, as well as my companion, without a murmur. But the moment my hands were free, I asked the rector whether I could write two lines at the very foot of the cross. He gave orders to bring ink and paper, and I traced the following words:

"I solemnly swear by this God that I have never spoken to the seminarist who was found in my bed. As an innocent person I must protest against this shameful violence. I shall appeal to the justice of his lordship the patriarch."

My comrade in misery signed this protest with me; after which, addressing myself to all the pupils, I read it aloud, calling upon them to speak the truth if any one could say the contrary of what I had written. They, with one voice, immediately declared that we had never been seen conversing together, and that no one knew who had put the lamp out. The rector left the room in the midst of hisses and curses, but he sent us to prison all the same at the top of the house and in separate cells. An hour afterwards, I had my bed, my trunk and all my things, and my meals were brought to me every day. On the fourth day, the Abbe Tosello came for me with instructions to bring me to Venice. I asked him whether he had sifted this unpleasant affair; he told me that he had enquired into it, that he had seen the other seminarist, and that he believed we were both innocent; but the rector would not confess himself in the wrong, and he did not see what could be done.

I threw off my seminarist's habit, and dressed myself in the clothes I used to wear in Venice, and, while my luggage was carried to a boat, I accompanied the abbe to M. Grimani's gondola in which he had come, and we took our departure. On our way, the abbe ordered the boatman to leave my things at the Palace Grimani, adding that he was instructed by M. Grimani to tell me that, if I had the audacity to present myself at his mansion, his servants had received orders to turn me away.

He landed me near the convent of the Jesuits, without any money, and with nothing but what I had on my back.

I went to beg a dinner from Madame Manzoni, who laughed heartily at the realization of her prediction. After dinner I called upon M. Rosa to see whether the law could protect me against the tyranny of my enemies, and after he had been made acquainted with the circumstances of the case, he promised to bring me the same evening, at Madame Orio's house, an extra-judicial act. I repaired to the place of appointment to wait for him, and to enjoy the pleasure of my two charming friends at my sudden reappearance. It was indeed very great, and the recital of my adventures did not astonish them less than my unexpected presence. M. Rosa came and made me read the act which he had prepared; he had not had time to have it engrossed by the notary, but he undertook to have it ready the next day.

I left Madame Orio to take supper with my brother Francois, who resided with a painter called Guardi; he was, like me, much oppressed by the tyranny of Grimani, and I promised to deliver him. Towards midnight I returned to the two amiable sisters who were expecting me with their usual loving impatience, but, I am bound to confess it with all humility, my sorrows were prejudicial to love in spite of the fortnight of absence and of abstinence. They were themselves deeply affected to see me so unhappy, and pitied me with all their hearts. I endeavoured to console them, and assured them that all my misery would soon come to an end, and that we would make up for lost time.

In the morning, having no money, and not knowing where to go, I went to St. Mark's Library, where I remained until noon. I left it with the intention of dining with Madame Manzoni, but I was suddenly accosted by a soldier who informed me that someone wanted to speak to me in a gondola to which he pointed. I answered that the person might as well come out, but he quietly remarked that he had a friend at hand to conduct me forcibly to the gondola, if necessary, and without any more hesitation I went towards it. I had a great dislike to noise or to anything like a public exhibition. I might have resisted, for the soldiers were unarmed, and I would not have been taken up, this sort of arrest not being legal in Venice, but I did not think of it. The ‘sequere deum’ was playing its part; I felt no reluctance. Besides, there are moments in which a courageous man has no courage, or disdains to shew it.

I enter the gondola, the curtain is drawn aside, and I see my evil genius, Razetta, with an officer. The two soldiers sit down at the prow; I recognize M. Grimani’s own gondola, it leaves the landing and takes the direction of the Lido. No one spoke to me, and I remained silent. After half-an-hour’s sailing, the gondola stopped before the small entrance of the Fortress St. Andre, at the mouth of the Adriatic, on the very spot where the Bucentaur stands, when, on Ascension Day, the doge comes to espouse the sea.

The sentinel calls the corporal; we alight, the officer who accompanied me introduces me to the major, and presents a letter to him. The major, after reading its contents, gives orders to M. Zen, his adjutant, to consign me to the guard-house. In another quarter of an hour my conductors take their departure, and M. Zen brings me three livres and a half, stating that I would receive the same amount every week. It was exactly the pay of a private.

I did not give way to any burst of passion, but I felt the most intense indignation. Late in the evening I expressed a wish to have some food bought, for I could not starve; then, stretching myself upon a hard camp bed, I passed the night amongst the soldiers without closing my eyes, for these Sclavonians were singing, eating garlic, smoking a bad tobacco which was most noxious, and drinking a wine of their own country, as black as ink, which nobody else could swallow.

Early next morning Major Pelodoro (the governor of the fortress) called me up to his room, and told me that, in compelling me to spend the night in the guard-house, he had only obeyed the orders he had received from Venice from the secretary of war. “Now, reverend sir,” he added, “my further orders are only to keep you a prisoner in the fort, and I am responsible for your remaining here. I give you the whole of the fortress for your prison. You shall have a good room in which you will find your bed and all your luggage. Walk anywhere you please; but recollect that, if you should escape, you would cause my ruin. I am sorry that my instructions are to give you only ten sous a day, but if you have any friends in Venice able to send you some money, write to them, and trust to me for the security of your letters. Now you may go to bed, if you need rest."

I was taken to my room; it was large and on the first story, with two windows from which I had a very fine view. I found my bed, and I ascertained with great satisfaction that my trunk, of which I had the keys, had not been forced open. The major had kindly supplied my table with all the implements necessary for writing. A Sclavonian soldier informed me very politely that he would attend upon me, and that I would pay him for his services whenever I could, for everyone knew that I had only ten sous a day. I began by ordering some soup, and, when I had dispatched it, I went to bed and slept for nine hours. When I woke, I received an invitation to supper from the major, and I began to imagine that things, after all, would not be so very bad.

I went to the honest governor, whom I found in numerous company. He presented me to his wife and to every person present. I met there several officers, the chaplain of the fortress, a certain Paoli Vida, one of the singers of St. Mark's Church, and his wife, a pretty woman, sister-in-law of the major, whom the husband chose to confine in the fort because he was very jealous (jealous men are not comfortable at Venice), together with several other ladies, not very young, but whom I thought very agreeable, owing to their kind welcome.

Cheerful as I was by nature, those pleasant guests easily managed to put me in the best of humours. Everyone expressed a wish to know the reasons which could have induced M. Grimani to send me to the fortress, so I gave a faithful account of all my adventures since my grandmother's death. I spoke for three hours without any bitterness, and even in a pleasant tone, upon things which, said in a different manner, might have displeased my audience; all expressed their satisfaction, and shewed so much sympathy that, as we parted for the night, I received from all an assurance of friendship and the offer of their services. This is a piece of good fortune which has never failed me whenever I have been the victim of oppression, until I reached the age of fifty. Whenever I met with honest persons expressing a curiosity to know the history of the misfortune under which I was labouring, and whenever I satisfied their curiosity, I have inspired them with friendship, and with that sympathy which was necessary to render them favourable and useful to me.

That success was owing to a very simple artifice; it was only to tell my story in a quiet and truthful manner, without even avoiding the facts which told against me. It is simple secret that many men do not know, because the larger portion of humankind is composed of cowards; a man who always tells the truth must be possessed of great moral courage. Experience has taught me that truth is a talisman, the charm of which never fails in its effect, provided it is not wasted upon unworthy people, and I believe that a guilty man, who candidly speaks the truth to his judge, has a better chance of being acquitted, than the innocent man who hesitates and evades true statements. Of course the speaker must be young, or at least in the prime of manhood; for an old man finds the whole of nature combined against him.

The major had his joke respecting the visit paid and returned to the seminarist's bed, but the chaplain and the ladies scolded him. The major advised me to write out my story and send it to the secretary of war, undertaking that he should receive it, and he assured me that he would become my protector. All the ladies tried to induce me to follow the major's advice.

CHAPTER VII

My Short Stay in Fort St. Andre — My First Repentance in Love

Affairs I Enjoy the Sweets of Revenge, and Prove a Clever

Alibi — Arrest of Count Bonafede — My Release — Arrival of the

Bishop — Farewell to Venice

The fort, in which the Republic usually kept only a garrison of one hundred half-pay Sclavonians, happened to contain at that time two thousand Albanian soldiers, who were called Cimariotes.

The secretary of war, who was generally known under the title of 'sage a l'ecriture', had summoned these men from the East in consequence of some impending promotion, as he wanted the officers to be on the spot in order to prove their merits before being rewarded. They all came from the part of Epirus called Albania, which belongs to the Republic of Venice, and they had distinguished themselves in the last war against the Turks. It was for me a new and extraordinary sight to examine some eighteen or twenty officers, all of an advanced age, yet strong and healthy, shewing the scars which covered their face and their chest, the last naked and entirely exposed through military pride. The lieutenant-colonel was particularly conspicuous by his wounds, for, without exaggeration, he had lost one-fourth of his head. He had but one eye, but one ear, and no jaw to speak of. Yet he could eat very well, speak without difficulty, and was very cheerful. He had with him all his family, composed of two pretty daughters, who looked all the prettier in their national costume, and of seven sons, every one of them a soldier. This lieutenant-colonel stood six feet high, and his figure was magnificent, but his scars so completely deformed his features that his face was truly horrid to look at. Yet I found so much attraction in him that I liked him the moment I saw him, and I would have been much pleased to converse with him if his breath had not sent forth such a strong smell of garlic. All the Albanians had their pockets full of it, and they enjoyed a piece of garlic with as much relish as we do a sugar-plum. After this none can maintain it to be a poison, though the only medicinal virtue it possesses is to excite the appetite, because it acts like a tonic upon a weak stomach.

The lieutenant-colonel could not read, but he was not ashamed of his ignorance, because not one amongst his men, except the priest and the surgeon, could boast greater learning. Every man, officer or private, had his purse full of gold; half of them, at least, were married, and we had in the fortress a colony of five or six hundred women, with God knows how many children! I felt greatly interested in them all. Happy idleness! I often regret thee because thou hast often offered me new sights, and for the same reason I hate old age which never offers but what I know already, unless I should take up a gazette, but I cared nothing for them in my young days.

Alone in my room I made an inventory of my trunk, and having put aside everything of an ecclesiastical character, I sent for a Jew, and sold the whole parcel unmercifully. Then I wrote to M. Rosa, enclosing all the tickets of the articles I had pledged, requesting him to have them sold without any exception, and to forward me the surplus raised by the sale. Thanks to that double operation, I was enabled to give my Sclavonian servant the ten sous allowed to me every day. Another soldier, who had been a hair-dresser, took care of my hair which I had been compelled to neglect, in consequence of the rules of the seminary. I spent my time in walking about the fort and through the barracks, and my two places of resort were the major’s apartment for some intellectual enjoyment, and the rooms of the Albanian lieutenant-colonel for a sprinkling of love. The Albanian feeling certain that his colonel would be appointed brigadier, solicited the command of the regiment, but he had a rival and he feared his success. I wrote him a petition, short, but so well composed that the secretary of war, having enquired the name of the author, gave the Albanian his colonelcy. On his return to the fort, the brave fellow, overjoyed at his success, hugged me in his arms, saying that he owed it all to me; he invited me to a family dinner, in which my very soul was parched by his garlic, and he presented me with twelve botargoes and two pounds of excellent Turkish tobacco.

The result of my petition made all the other officers think that they could not succeed without the assistance of my pen, and I willingly gave it to everybody; this entailed many quarrels upon me, for I served all interests, but, finding myself the lucky possessor of some forty sequins, I was no longer in dread of poverty, and laughed at everything. However, I met with an accident which made me pass six weeks in a very unpleasant condition.

On the 2nd of April, the fatal anniversary of my first appearance in this world, as I was getting up in the morning, I received in my room the visit of a very handsome Greek woman, who told me that her husband, then ensign in the regiment, had every right to claim the rank of lieutenant, and that he would certainly be appointed, if it were not for the opposition of his captain who was against him, because she had refused him certain favours which she could bestow only upon her husband. She handed me some certificates, and begged me to write a petition which she would present herself to the secretary of war, adding that she could only offer me her heart in payment. I answered that her heart ought not to go alone; I acted as I had spoken, and I met with no other resistance than the objection which a pretty woman is always sure to feign for the sake of appearance. After that, I told her to come back at noon, and that the petition would be ready. She was exact to the appointment, and very kindly rewarded me a second time; and in the evening, under pretence of some alterations to be made in the petition, she afforded an excellent opportunity of reaping a third recompense.

But, alas! the path of pleasure is not strewn only with roses! On the third day, I found out, much to my dismay, that a serpent had been hid under the flowers. Six weeks of care and of rigid diet re-established my health.

When I met the handsome Greek again, I was foolish enough to reproach her for the present she had bestowed upon me, but she baffled me by laughing, and saying that she had only offered me what she possessed, and that it was my own fault if I had not been sufficiently careful. The reader cannot imagine how much this first misfortune grieved me, and what deep shame I felt. I looked upon myself as a dishonoured man, and while I am on that subject I may as well relate an incident which will give some idea of my thoughtlessness.

Madame Vida, the major’s sister-in-law, being alone with me one morning, confided in me in a moment of unreserved confidence what she had to suffer from the jealous disposition of her husband, and his cruelty in having allowed her to sleep alone for the last four years, when she was in the very flower of her age.

"I trust to God," she added, "that my husband will not find out that you have spent an hour alone with me, for I should never hear the end of it."

Feeling deeply for her grief, and confidence begetting confidence, I was stupid enough to tell her the sad state to which I had been reduced by the cruel Greek woman, assuring her that I felt my misery all the more deeply, because I should have been delighted to console her, and to give her the opportunity of a revenge for her jealous husband's coldness. At this speech, in which my simplicity and good faith could easily be traced, she rose from her chair, and upbraided me with every insult which an outraged honest woman might hurl at the head of a bold libertine who has presumed too far. Astounded, but understanding perfectly well the nature of my crime, I bowed myself out of her room; but as I was leaving it she told me in the same angry tone that my visits would not be welcome for the future, as I was a conceited puppy, unworthy of the society of good and respectable women. I took care to answer that a respectable woman would have been rather more reserved than she had been in her confidences. On reflection I felt pretty sure that, if I had been in good health, or had said nothing about my mishap, she would have been but too happy to receive my consolations.

A few days after that incident I had a much greater cause to regret my acquaintance with the Greek woman. On Ascension Day, as the ceremony of the Bucentaur was celebrated near the fort, M. Rosa brought Madame Orio and her two nieces to witness it, and I had the pleasure of treating them all to a good dinner in my room. I found myself, during the day, alone with my young friends in one of the casements, and they both loaded me with the most loving caresses and kisses. I felt that they expected some substantial proof of my love; but, to conceal the real state, of things, I pretended to be afraid of being surprised, and they had to be satisfied with my shallow excuse.

I had informed my mother by letter of all I had suffered from Grimani's treatment; she answered that she had written to him on the subject, that she had no doubt he would immediately set me at liberty, and that an arrangement had been entered into by which M. Grimani would devote the money raised by Razetta from the sale of the furniture to the settlement of a small patrimony on my youngest brother. But in this matter Grimani did not act honestly, for the patrimony was only settled thirteen years afterwards, and even then only in a fictitious manner. I shall have an opportunity later on of mentioning this unfortunate brother, who died very poor in Rome twenty years ago.

Towards the middle of June the Cimariotes were sent back to the East, and after their departure the garrison of the fort was reduced to its usual number. I began to feel weary in this comparative solitude, and I gave way to terrible fits of passion.

The heat was intense, and so disagreeable to me that I wrote to M. Grimani, asking for two summer suits of clothes, and telling him where they would be found, if Razetta had not sold them. A week afterwards I was in the major's apartment when I saw the wretch Razetta come in, accompanied by a man whom he introduced as Petrillo, the celebrated favourite of the Empress of Russia, just arrived from St. Petersburg. He ought to have said infamous instead of celebrated, and clown instead of favourite.

The major invited them to take a seat, and Razetta, receiving a parcel from Grimani's gondolier, handed it to me, saying,

"I have brought you your rags; take them."

I answered:

"Some day I will bring you a 'rigano':"

At these words the scoundrel dared to raise his cane, but the indignant major compelled him to lower his tone by asking him whether he had any wish to pass the night in the guard-house. Petrillo, who had not yet opened his lips, told me then that he was sorry not to have found me in Venice, as I might have shewn him round certain places which must be well known to me.

"Very likely we should have met your wife in such places," I answered.

"I am a good judge of faces," he said, "and I can see that you are a true gallows-bird."

I was trembling with rage, and the major, who shared my utter disgust, told them that he had business to transact, and they took their leave. The major assured me that on the following day he would go to the war office to complain of Razetta, and that he would have him punished for his insolence.

I remained alone, a prey to feelings of the deepest indignation, and to a most ardent thirst for revenge.

The fortress was entirely surrounded by water, and my windows were not overlooked by any of the sentinels. A boat coming under my windows could therefore easily take me to Venice during the night and bring me back to the fortress before day-break. All that was necessary was to find a boatman who, for a certain amount, would risk the galleys in case of discovery. Amongst several who brought provisions to the fort, I chose a boatman whose countenance pleased me, and I offered him one sequin; he promised to let me know his decision on the following day. He was true to his time, and declared himself ready to take me. He informed me that, before deciding to serve me, he had wished to know whether I was kept in the fort for any great crime, but as the wife of the major had told him that my imprisonment had been caused by very trifling frolics, I could rely upon him. We arranged that he should be under my window at the beginning of the night, and that his boat should be provided with a mast long enough to enable me to slide along it from the window to the boat.

The appointed hour came, and everything being ready I got safely into the boat, landed at the Sclavonian quay, ordered the boatman to wait for me, and wrapped up in a mariner's cloak I took my way straight to the gate of Saint-Sauveur, and engaged the waiter of a coffee-room to take me to Razetta's house.

Being quite certain that he would not be at home at that time, I rang the bell, and I heard my sister's voice telling me that if I wanted to see him I must call in the morning. Satisfied with this, I went to the foot of the bridge and sat down, waiting there to see which way he would come, and a few minutes before midnight I saw him advancing from the square of Saint-Paul. It was all I wanted to know; I went back to my boat and returned to the fort without any difficulty. At five o'clock in the morning everyone in the garrison could see me enjoying my walk on the platform.

Taking all the time necessary to mature my plans, I made the following arrangements to secure my revenge with perfect safety, and to prove an alibi in case I should kill my rascally enemy, as it was my intention to do. The day preceding the night fixed for my expedition, I walked about with the son of the Adjutant Zen, who was only twelve years old, but who amused me much by his shrewdness. The reader will meet him again in the year 1771. As I was walking with him, I jumped down from one of the bastions, and feigned to sprain my ankle. Two soldiers carried me to my room, and the surgeon of the fort, thinking that I was suffering from a luxation, ordered me to keep to bed, and wrapped up the ankle in towels saturated with camphorated spirits of wine. Everybody came to see me, and I requested the soldier who served me to remain and to sleep in my room. I knew that a glass of brandy was enough to stupefy the man, and to make him sleep soundly. As soon as I saw him fast asleep, I begged the surgeon and the chaplain, who had his room over mine, to leave me, and at half-past ten I lowered myself in the boat.

As soon as I reached Venice, I bought a stout cudgel, and I sat myself down on a door-step, at the corner of the street near Saint-Paul's Square. A narrow canal at the end of the street, was, I thought, the very place to throw my enemy in. That canal has now disappeared.

At a quarter before twelve I see Razetta, walking along leisurely. I come out of the street with rapid strides, keeping near the wall to compel him to make room for me, and I strike a first blow on the head, and a second on his arm; the third blow sends him tumbling in the canal, howling and screaming my name. At the same instant a Forlan, or citizen of Forli, comes out of a house on my left side with a lantern in his hand. A blow from my cudgel knocks the lantern out of his grasp, and the man, frightened out of his wits, takes to his heels. I throw away my stick, I run at full speed through the square and over the bridge, and while people are hastening towards the spot where the disturbance had taken place, I jump into the boat, and, thanks to a strong breeze swelling our sail, I get back to the fortress. Twelve o'clock was striking as I re-entered my room through the window. I quickly undress myself, and the moment I am in my bed I wake up the soldier by my loud screams, telling him to go for the surgeon, as I am dying of the colic.

The chaplain, roused by my screaming, comes down and finds me in convulsions. In the hope that some diascordium would relieve me, the good old man runs to his room and brings it, but while he has gone for some water I hide the medicine. After half an hour of wry faces, I say that I feel much better, and thanking all my friends, I beg them to retire, which everyone does, wishing me a quiet sleep.

The next morning I could not get up in consequence of my sprained ankle, although I had slept very well; the major was kind enough to call upon me before going to Venice, and he said that very likely my colic had been caused by the melon I had eaten for my dinner the day before.

The major returned at one o'clock in the afternoon. "I have good news to give you," he said to me, with a joyful laugh. "Razetta was soundly cudgelled last night and thrown into a canal."

"Has he been killed?"

"No; but I am glad of it for your sake, for his death would make your position much more serious. You are accused of having done it."

"I am very glad people think me guilty; it is something of a revenge, but it will be rather difficult to bring it home to me."

"Very difficult! All the same, Razetta swears he recognized you, and the same declaration is made by the Forlan who says that you struck his hand to make him drop his lantern. Razetta's nose is broken, three of his teeth are gone, and his right arm is severely hurt. You have been accused before the avogador, and M. Grimani has written to the war office to complain of your release from the fortress without his knowledge. I arrived at the office just in time. The secretary was reading Grimani's letter, and I assured his excellency that it was a false report, for I left you in bed this morning, suffering from a sprained ankle. I told him likewise that at twelve o'clock last night you were very near death from a severe attack of colic."

"Was it at midnight that Razetta was so well treated?"

"So says the official report. The war secretary wrote at once to M. Grimani and informed him that you have not left the fort, and that you are even now detained in it, and that the plaintiff is at liberty, if he chooses, to send commissaries to ascertain the fact. Therefore, my dear abbe, you must prepare yourself for an interrogatory."

"I expect it, and I will answer that I am very sorry to be innocent."

Three days afterwards, a commissary came to the fort with a clerk of the court, and the proceedings were soon over. Everybody knew that I had sprained my ankle; the chaplain, the surgeon, my body-servant, and several others swore that at midnight I was in bed suffering from colic. My alibi being thoroughly proved, the avogador sentenced Razetta and the Forlan to pay all expenses without prejudice to my rights of action.

After this judgment, the major advised me to address to the secretary of war a petition which he undertook to deliver himself, and to claim my release from the fort. I gave notice of my proceedings to M. Grimani, and a week afterwards the major told me that I was free, and that he would himself take me to the abbe. It was at dinnertime, and in the middle of some amusing conversation, that he imparted that piece of information. Not supposing him to be in earnest, and in order to keep up the joke, I told him very politely that I preferred his house to Venice, and that, to prove it, I would be happy to remain a week longer, if he would grant me permission to do so. I was taken at my word, and everybody seemed very pleased. But when, two hours later, the news was confirmed, and I could no longer doubt the truth of my release, I repented the week which I had so foolishly thrown away as a present to the major; yet I had not the courage to break my word, for everybody, and particularly his wife, had shown such unaffected pleasure, it would have been contemptible of me to change my mind. The good woman knew that I owed her every kindness which I had enjoyed, and she might have thought me ungrateful.

But I met in the fort with a last adventure, which I must not forget to relate.

On the following day, an officer dressed in the national uniform called upon the major, accompanied by an elderly man of about sixty years of age, wearing a sword, and, presenting to the major a dispatch with the seal of the war office, he waited for an answer, and went away as soon as he had received one from the governor.

After the officer had taken leave, the major, addressing himself to the elderly gentleman, to whom he gave the title of count, told him that his orders were to keep him a prisoner, and that he gave him the whole of the fort for his prison. The count offered him his sword, but the major nobly refused to take it, and escorted him to the room he was to occupy. Soon after, a servant in livery brought a bed and a trunk, and the next morning the same servant, knocking at my door, told me that his master begged the honour of my company to breakfast. I accepted the invitation, and he received me with these words:

“Dear sir, there has been so much talk in Venice about the skill with which you proved your incredible alibi, that I could not help asking for the honour of your acquaintance.”

“But, count, the alibi being a true one, there can be no skill required to prove it. Allow me to say that those who doubt its truth are paying me a very poor compliment, for— “

“Never mind; do not let us talk any more of that, and forgive me. But as we happen to be companions in misfortune, I trust you will not refuse me your friendship. Now for breakfast.”

After our meal, the count, who had heard from me some portion of my history, thought that my confidence called for a return on his part, and he began: “I am the Count de Bonafede. In my early days I served under Prince Eugene, but I gave up the army, and entered on a civil career in Austria. I had to fly from Austria and take refuge in Bavaria in consequence of an unfortunate duel. In Munich I made the acquaintance of a young lady belonging to a noble family; I eloped with her and brought her to Venice, where we were married. I have now been twenty years in Venice. I have six children, and everybody knows me. About a week ago I sent my servant to the postoffice for my letters, but they were refused him because he had not any money to pay the postage. I went myself, but the clerk would not deliver me my letters, although I assured him that I would pay for them the next time. This made me angry, and I called upon the Baron de Taxis, the postmaster, and complained of the clerk, but he answered very rudely that the clerk had simply obeyed his orders, and that my letters would only be delivered on payment of the postage. I felt very indignant, but as I was in his house I controlled my anger, went home, and wrote a note to him asking him to give me satisfaction for his rudeness, telling him that I would never go out without my sword, and that I would force him to fight whenever and wherever I should meet him. I never came across him, but yesterday I was accosted by the secretary of the inquisitors, who told me that I must forget the baron’s rude conduct, and go under the guidance of an officer whom he pointed out to me, to imprison myself for a week in this fortress. I shall thus have the pleasure of spending that time with you.”

I told him that I had been free for the last twenty-four hours, but that to shew my gratitude for his friendly confidence I would feel honoured if he would allow me to keep him company. As I had already engaged myself with the major, this was only a polite falsehood.

In the afternoon I happened to be with him on the tower of the fort, and pointed out a gondola advancing towards the lower gate; he took his spy-glass and told me that it was his wife and daughter coming to see him. We went to meet the ladies, one of whom might once have been worth the trouble of an elopement; the other, a young person between fourteen and sixteen, struck me as a beauty of a new style. Her hair was of a beautiful light auburn, her eyes were blue and very fine, her nose a Roman, and her pretty mouth, half-open and laughing, exposed a set of teeth as white as her complexion, although a beautiful rosy tint somewhat veiled the whiteness of the last. Her figure was so slight that it seemed out of nature, but her perfectly-formed breast appeared an altar on which the god of love would have delighted to breathe the sweetest incense. This splendid chest was, however, not yet well furnished, but in my imagination I gave her all the embonpoint which might have been desired, and I was so pleased that I could not take my looks from her. I met her eyes, and her laughing countenance seemed to say to me: “Only wait for two years, at the utmost, and all that your imagination is now creating will then exist in reality.”

She was elegantly dressed in the prevalent fashion, with large hoops, and like the daughters of the nobility who have not yet attained the age of puberty, although the young countess was marriageable. I had never dared to stare so openly at the bosom of a young lady of quality, but I thought there was no harm in fixing my eyes on a spot where there was nothing yet but in expectation.

The count, after having exchanged a few words in German with his wife, presented me in the most flattering manner, and I was received with great politeness. The major joined us, deeming it his duty to escort the countess all over the fortress, and I improved the excellent opportunity thrown in my way by the inferiority of my position; I offered my arm to the young lady, and the count left us to go to his room.

I was still an adept in the old Venetian fashion of attending upon ladies, and the young countess thought me rather awkward, though I believed myself very fashionable when I placed my hand under her arm, but she drew it back in high merriment. Her mother turned round to enquire what she was laughing at, and I was terribly confused when I heard her answer that I had tickled her.

“This is the way to offer your arm to a lady,” she said, and she passed her hand through my arm, which I rounded in the most clumsy manner, feeling it a very difficult task to resume a dignified countenance. Thinking me a novice of the most innocent species, she very likely determined to make sport of me. She began by remarking that by rounding my arm as I had done I placed it too far from her waist, and that I was consequently out of drawing. I told her I did not know how to draw, and inquired whether it was one of her accomplishments.

“I am learning,” she answered, “and when you call upon us I will shew you Adam and Eve, after the Chevalier Liberi; I have made a copy which has been found very fine by some professors, although they did not know it was my work.”

“Why did you not tell them?”

“Because those two figures are too naked.”

“I am not curious to see your Adam, but I will look at your Eve with pleasure, and keep your secret.”

This answer made her laugh again, and again her mother turned round. I put on the look of a simpleton, for, seeing the advantage I could derive from her opinion of me, I had formed my plan at the very moment she tried to teach me how to offer my arm to a lady.

She was so convinced of my simplicity that she ventured to say that she considered her Adam by far more beautiful than her Eve, because in her drawing of the man she had omitted nothing, every muscle being visible, while there was none conspicuous in Eve. “It is,” she added, “a figure with nothing in it.”

“Yet it is the one which I shall like best.”

“No; believe me, Adam will please you most.”

This conversation had greatly excited me. I had on a pair of linen breeches, the weather being very warm…. I was afraid of the major and the countess, who were a few yards in front of us, turning round …. I was on thorns. To make matters worse, the young lady stumbled, one of her shoes slipped off, and presenting me her pretty foot she asked me to put the shoe right. I knelt on the ground, and, very likely without thinking, she lifted up her skirt…. she had very wide hoops and no petticoat…. what I saw was enough to strike me dead on the spot…. When I rose, she asked if anything was the matter with me.

A moment after, coming out of one of the casemates, her head-dress got slightly out of order, and she begged that I would remedy the accident, but, having to bend her head down, the state in which I was could no longer remain a secret for her. In order to avoid greater confusion to both of us, she enquired who had made my watch ribbon; I told her it was a present from my sister, and she desired to examine it, but when I answered her that it was fastened to the fob-pocket, and found that she disbelieved me, I added that she could see for herself. She put her hand to it, and a natural but involuntary excitement caused me to be very indiscreet. She must have felt vexed, for she saw that she had made a mistake in her estimate of my character; she became more timid, she would not laugh any more, and we joined her mother and the major who was shewing her, in a sentry-box, the body of Marshal de Schulenburg which had been deposited there until the mausoleum erected for him was completed. As for myself, I felt deeply ashamed. I thought myself the first man who had alarmed her innocence, and I felt ready to do anything to atone for the insult.

Such was my delicacy of feeling in those days. I used to credit people with exalted sentiments, which often existed only in my imagination. I must confess that time has entirely destroyed that delicacy; yet I do not believe myself worse than other men, my equals in age and inexperience.

We returned to the count’s apartment, and the day passed off rather gloomily. Towards evening the ladies went away, but the countess gave me a pressing invitation to call upon them in Venice.

The young lady, whom I thought I had insulted, had made such a deep impression upon me that the seven following days seemed very long; yet I was impatient to see her again only that I might entreat her forgiveness, and convince her of my repentance.

The following day the count was visited by his son; he was plain-featured, but a thorough gentleman, and modest withal. Twenty-five years afterwards I met him in Spain, a cadet in the king’s body-guard. He had served as a private twenty years before obtaining this poor promotion. The reader will hear of him in good time; I will only mention here that when I met him in Spain, he stood me out that I had never known him; his self-love prompted this very contemptible lie.

Early on the eighth day the count left the fortress, and I took my departure the same evening, having made an appointment at a coffee-house in St. Mark's Square with the major who was to accompany me to M. Grimani's house. I took leave of his wife, whose memory will always be dear to me, and she said, "I thank you for your skill in proving your alibi, but you have also to thank me for having understood you so well. My husband never heard anything about it until it was all over."

As soon as I reached Venice, I went to pay a visit to Madame Orio, where I was made welcome. I remained to supper, and my two charming sweethearts who were praying for the death of the bishop, gave me the most delightful hospitality for the night.

At noon the next day I met the major according to our appointment, and we called upon the Abbe Grimani. He received me with the air of a guilty man begging for mercy, and I was astounded at his stupidity when he entreated me to forgive Razetta and his companion. He told me that the bishop was expected very soon, and that he had ordered a room to be ready for me, and that I could take my meals with him. Then he introduced me to M. Valavero, a man of talent, who had just left the ministry of war, his term of office having lasted the usual six months. I paid my duty to him, and we kept up a kind of desultory conversation until the departure of the major. When he had left us M. Valavero entreated me to confess that I had been the guilty party in the attack upon Razetta. I candidly told him that the thrashing had been my handiwork, and I gave him all the particulars, which amused him immensely. He remarked that, as I had perpetrated the affair before midnight, the fools had made a mistake in their accusation; but that, after all, the mistake had not materially helped me in proving the alibi, because my sprained ankle, which everybody had supposed a real accident, would of itself have been sufficient.

But I trust that my kind reader has not forgotten that I had a very heavy weight upon my conscience, of which I longed to get rid. I had to see the goddess of my fancy, to obtain my pardon, or die at her feet.

I found the house without difficulty; the count was not at home. The countess received me very kindly, but her appearance caused me so great a surprise that I did not know what to say to her. I had fancied that I was going to visit an angel, that I would find her in a lovely paradise, and I found myself in a large sitting-room furnished with four rickety chairs and a dirty old table. There was hardly any light in the room because the shutters were nearly closed. It might have been a precaution against the heat, but I judged that it was more probably for the purpose of concealing the windows, the glass of which was all broken. But this visible darkness did not prevent me from remarking that the countess was wrapped up in an old tattered gown, and that her chemise did not shine by its cleanliness. Seeing that I was ill at ease, she left the room, saying that she would send her daughter, who, a few minutes afterwards, came in with an easy and noble appearance, and told me that she had expected me with great impatience, but that I had surprised her at a time at which she was not in the habit of receiving any visits.

I did not know what to answer, for she did not seem to me to be the same person. Her miserable dishabille made her look almost ugly, and I wondered at the impression she had produced upon me at the fortress. She saw my surprise, and partly guessed my thoughts, for she put on a look, not of vexation, but of sorrow which called forth all my pity. If she had been a philosopher she might have rightly despised me as a man whose sympathy was enlisted only by her fine dress, her nobility, or her apparent wealth; but she endeavoured to bring me round by her sincerity. She felt that if she could call a little sentiment into play, it would certainly plead in her favour.

“I see that you are astonished, reverend sir, and I know the reason of your surprise. You expected to see great splendour here, and you find only misery. The government allows my father but a small salary, and there are nine of us. As we must attend church on Sundays and holidays in a style proper to our condition, we are often compelled to go without our dinner, in order to get out of pledge the clothes which urgent need too often obliges us to part with, and which we pledge anew on the following day. If we did not attend mass, the curate would strike our names off the list of those who share the alms of the Confraternity of the Poor, and those alms alone keep us afloat.”

What a sad tale! She had guessed rightly. I was touched, but rather with shame than true emotion. I was not rich myself, and, as I was no longer in love, I only heaved a deep sigh, and remained as cold as ice. Nevertheless, her position was painful, and I answered politely, speaking with kindness and assuring her of my sympathy. “Were I wealthy,” I said, “I would soon shew you that your tale of woe has not fallen on unfeeling ears; but I am poor, and, being at the eve of my departure from Venice, even my friendship would be useless to you.” Then, after some desultory talk, I expressed a hope that her beauty would yet win happiness for her. She seemed to consider for a few minutes, and said, “That may happen some day, provided that the man who feels the power of my charms understands that they can be bestowed only with my heart, and is willing to render me the justice I deserve; I am only looking for a lawful marriage, without dreaming of rank or fortune; I no longer believe in the first, and I know how to live without the second; for I have been accustomed to poverty, and even to abject need; but you cannot realize that. Come and see my drawings.”

“You are very good, mademoiselle.”

Alas! I was not thinking of her drawings, and I could no longer feel interested in her Eve, but I followed her.

We came to a chamber in which I saw a table, a chair, a small toilet-glass and a bed with the straw palliasse turned over, very likely for the purpose of allowing the looker-on to suppose that there were sheets underneath, but I was particularly disgusted by a certain smell, the cause of which was recent; I was thunderstruck, and if I had been still in love, this antidote would have been sufficiently powerful to cure me instanter. I wished for nothing but to make my escape, never to return, and I regretted that I could not throw on the table a handful of ducats, which I should have considered the price of my ransom.

The poor girl shewed me her drawings; they were fine, and I praised them, without alluding particularly to Eve, and without venturing a joke upon Adam. I asked her, for the sake of saying something, why she did not try to render her talent remunerative by learning pastel drawing.

“I wish I could,” she answered, “but the box of chalks alone costs two sequins.”

"Will you forgive me if I am bold enough to offer you six?"

"Alas! I accept them gratefully, and to be indebted to you for such a service makes me truly happy."

Unable to keep back her tears, she turned her head round to conceal them from me, and I took that opportunity of laying the money on the table, and out of politeness, wishing to spare her every unnecessary humiliation, I saluted her lips with a kiss which she was at liberty to consider a loving one, as I wanted her to ascribe my reserve to the respect I felt for her. I then left her with a promise to call another day to see her father. I never kept my promise. The reader will see how I met her again after ten years.

How many thoughts crowded upon my mind as I left that house! What a lesson! I compared reality with the imagination, and I had to give the preference to the last, as reality is always dependent on it. I then began to forsee a truth which has been clearly proved to me in my after life, namely, that love is only a feeling of curiosity more or less intense, grafted upon the inclination placed in us by nature that the species may be preserved. And truly, woman is like a book, which, good or bad, must at first please us by the frontispiece. If this is not interesting, we do not feel any wish to read the book, and our wish is in direct proportion to the interest we feel. The frontispiece of woman runs from top to bottom like that of a book, and her feet, which are most important to every man who shares my taste, offer the same interest as the edition of the work. If it is true that most amateurs bestow little or no attention upon the feet of a woman, it is likewise a fact that most readers care little or nothing whether a book is of the first edition or the tenth. At all events, women are quite right to take the greatest care of their face, of their dress, of their general appearance; for it is only by that part of the frontispiece that they can call forth a wish to read them in those men who have not been endowed by nature with the privilege of blindness. And just in the same manner that men, who have read a great many books, are certain to feel at last a desire for perusing new works even if they are bad, a man who has known many women, and all handsome women, feels at last a curiosity for ugly specimens when he meets with entirely new ones. It is all very well for his eye to discover the paint which conceals the reality, but his passion has become a vice, and suggests some argument in favour of the lying frontispiece. It is possible, at least he thinks so, that the work may prove better than the title-page, and the reality more acceptable than the paint which hides it. He then tries to peruse the book, but the leaves have not been opened; he meets with some resistance, the living book must be read according to established rules, and the book-worm falls a victim to a coquetry, the monster which persecutes all those who make a business of love. As for thee, intelligent man, who hast read the few preceding lines, let me tell thee that, if they do not assist in opening thy eyes, thou art lost; I mean that thou art certain of being a victim to the fair sex to the very last moment of thy life. If my candour does not displease thee, accept my congratulations. In the evening I called upon Madame Orio, as I wanted to inform her charming nieces that, being an inmate of Grimani's house, I could not sleep out for the first night. I found there the faithful Rosa, who told me that the affair of the alibi was in every mouth, and that, as such celebrity was evidently caused by a very decided belief in the untruth of the alibi itself, I ought to fear a retaliation of the same sort on the part of Razetta, and to keep on my guard, particularly at night. I felt all the importance of this advice, and I took care never to go out in the evening otherwise than in a gondola, or accompanied by some friends. Madame Manzoni told me that I was acting wisely, because, although the judges could not do otherwise than acquit me, everybody knew the real truth of the matter, and Razetta could not fail to be my deadly foe.

Three or four days afterwards M. Grimani announced the arrival of the bishop, who had put up at the convent of his order, at Saint-Francois de Paul. He presented me himself to the prelate as a jewel highly prized by himself, and as if he had been the only person worthy of descanting upon its beauty.

I saw a fine monk wearing his pectoral cross. He would have reminded me of Father Mancia if he had not looked stouter and less reserved. He was about thirty-four, and had been made a bishop by the grace of God, the Holy See, and my mother. After pronouncing over me a blessing, which I received kneeling, and giving me his hand to kiss, he embraced me warmly, calling me his dear son in the Latin language, in which he continued to address me. I thought that, being a Calabrian, he might feel ashamed of his Italian, but he undeceived me by speaking in that language to M. Grimani. He told me that, as he could not take me with him from Venice, I should have to proceed to Rome, where Grimani would take care to send me, and that I would procure his address at Ancona from one of his friends, called

Lazari, a Minim monk, who would likewise supply me with the means of continuing my journey.

“When we meet in Rome,” he added, “we can go together to Martorano by way of Naples. Call upon me to-morrow morning, and have your breakfast with me. I intend to leave the day after.”

As we were on our way back to his house, M. Grimani treated me to a long lecture on morals, which nearly caused me to burst into loud laughter. Amongst other things, he informed me that I ought not to study too hard, because the air in Calabria was very heavy, and I might become consumptive from too close application to my books.

The next morning at day-break I went to the bishop. After saying his mass, we took some chocolate, and for three hours he laid me under examination. I saw clearly that he was not pleased with me, but I was well enough pleased with him. He seemed to me a worthy man, and as he was to lead me along the great highway of the Church, I felt attracted towards him, for, at the time, although I entertained a good opinion of my personal appearance, I had no confidence whatever in my talents.

After the departure of the good bishop, M. Grimani gave me a letter left by him, which I was to deliver to Father Lazari, at the Convent of the Minims, in Ancona. M. Grimani informed me that he would send me to that city with the ambassador from Venice, who was on the point of sailing. I had therefore to keep myself in readiness, and, as I was anxious to be out of his hands, I approved all his arrangements. As soon as I had notice of the day on which the suite of the ambassador would embark, I went to pay my last farewell to all my acquaintances. I left my brother Francois in the school of M. Joli, a celebrated decorative painter. As the peotta in which I was to sail would not leave before daybreak, I spent the short night in the arms of the two sisters, who, this time, entertained no hope of ever seeing me again. On my side I could not forsee what would happen, for I was abandoning myself to fate, and I thought it would be useless to think of the future. The night was therefore spent between joy and sadness, between pleasures and tears. As I bade them adieu, I returned the key which had opened so often for me the road to happiness.

This, my first love affair, did not give me any experience of the world, for our intercourse was always a happy one, and was never disturbed by any quarrel or stained by any interested motive. We often felt, all three of us, as if we must raise our souls towards the eternal Providence of God, to thank Him for having, by His particular protection, kept from us all the accidents which might have disturbed the sweet peace we were enjoying.

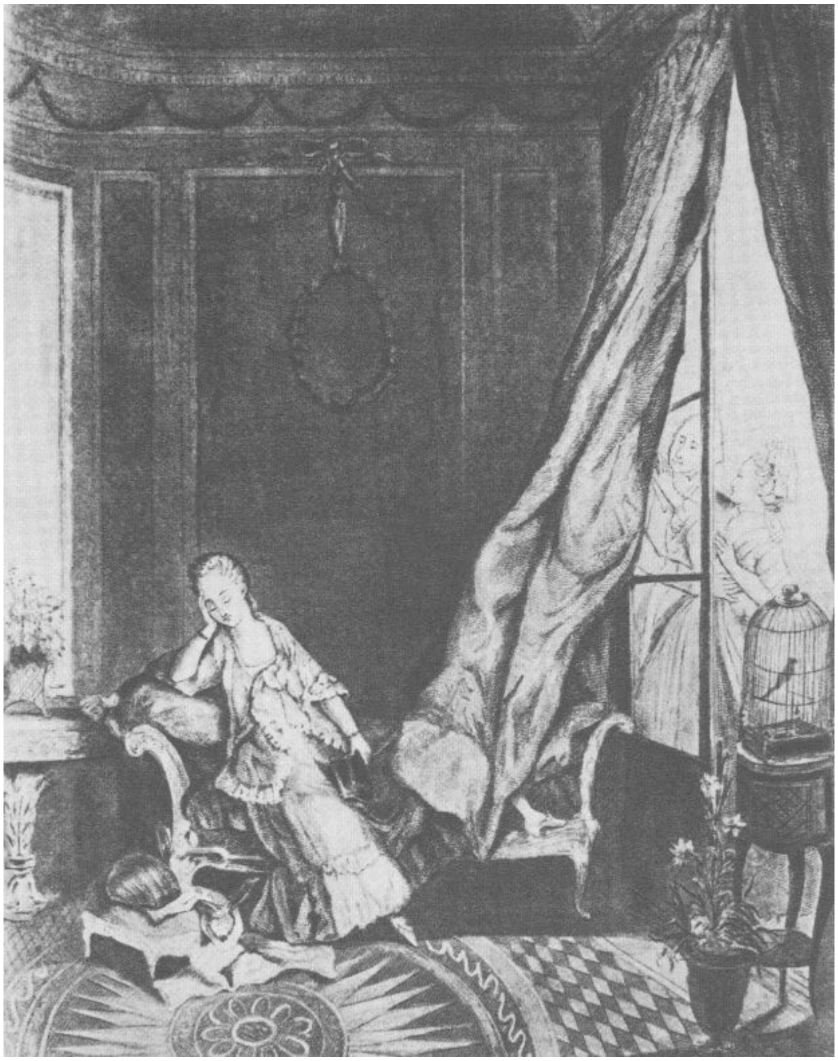
I left in the hands of Madame Manzoni all my papers, and all the forbidden books I possessed. The good woman, who was twenty years older than I, and who, believing in an immutable destiny, took pleasure in turning the leaves of the great book of fate, told me that she was certain of restoring to me all I left with her, before the end of the following year, at the latest. Her prediction caused me both surprise and pleasure, and feeling deep reverence for her, I thought myself bound to assist the realization of her foresight. After all, if she predicted the future, it was not through superstition, or in consequence of some vain foreboding which reason must condemn, but through her knowledge of the world, and of the nature of the person she was addressing. She used to laugh because she never made a mistake.

I embarked from St. Mark’s landing. M. Grimani had given me ten sequins, which he thought would keep me during my stay in the lazzaretto of Ancona for the necessary quarantine, after which it was not to be supposed that I could want any money. I shared Grimani’s certainty on the subject, and with my natural thoughtlessness I cared nothing about it. Yet I must say that, unknown to everybody, I had in my purse forty bright sequins, which powerfully contributed to increase my cheerfulness, and I left Venice full of joy and without one regret.

EPISODE 2 — CLERIC IN NAPLES

CHAPTER VIII

My Misfortunes in Chiozza — Father Stephano — The Lazzaretto at Ancona — The Greek Slave — My Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Loretto — I Go to Rome on Foot, and From Rome to Naples to Meet the Bishop — I Cannot Join Him — Good Luck Offers Me the Means of Reaching Martorano, Which Place I Very Quickly Leave to Return to Naples



The retinue of the ambassador, which was styled “grand,” appeared to me very small. It was composed of a Milanese steward, named Carcinelli, of a priest who fulfilled the duties of secretary because he could not write, of an old woman acting as housekeeper, of a man cook with his ugly wife, and eight or ten servants.

We reached Chiozza about noon. Immediately after landing, I politely asked the steward where I should put up, and his answer was:

“Wherever you please, provided you let this man know where it is, so that he can give you notice when the peotta is ready to sail. My duty,” he added, “is to leave you at the lazzaretto of Ancona free of expense from the moment we leave this place. Until then enjoy yourself as well as you can.”

The man to whom I was to give my address was the captain of the peotta. I asked him to recommend me a lodging.

“You can come to my house,” he said, “if you have no objection to share a large bed with the cook, whose wife remains on board.”

Unable to devise any better plan, I accepted the offer, and a sailor, carrying my trunk, accompanied me to the dwelling of the honest captain. My trunk had to be placed under the bed which filled up the room. I was amused at this, for I was not in a position to be over-fastidious, and, after partaking of some dinner at the inn, I went about the town. Chiozza is a peninsula, a sea-port belonging to Venice, with a population of ten thousand inhabitants, seamen, fishermen, merchants, lawyers, and government clerks.

I entered a coffee-room, and I had scarcely taken a seat when a young doctor-at-law, with whom I had studied in Padua, came up to me, and introduced me to a druggist whose shop was near by, saying that his house was the rendezvous of all the literary men of the place. A few minutes afterwards, a tall Jacobin friar, blind of one eye, called Corsini, whom I had known in Venice, came in and paid me many compliments. He told me that I had arrived just in time to go to a picnic got up by the Macaronic academicians for the next day, after a sitting of the academy in which every member was to recite something of his composition. He invited me to join them, and to gratify the meeting with the delivery of one of my productions. I accepted the invitation, and, after the reading of ten stanzas which I had written for the occasion, I was unanimously elected a member. My success at the picnic was still greater, for I disposed of such a quantity of macaroni that I was found worthy of the title of prince of the academy.

The young doctor, himself one of the academicians, introduced me to his family. His parents, who were in easy circumstances, received me very kindly. One of his sisters was very amiable, but the other, a professed nun, appeared to me a prodigy of beauty. I might have enjoyed myself in a very agreeable way in the midst of that charming family during my stay in Chiozza, but I suppose that it was my destiny to meet in that place with nothing but sorrows. The young doctor forewarned me that the monk Corsini was a very worthless fellow, despised by everybody, and advised me to avoid him. I thanked him for the information, but my thoughtlessness prevented me from profiting by it. Of a very easy disposition, and too giddy to fear any snares, I was foolish enough to believe that the monk would, on the contrary, be the very man to throw plenty of amusement in my way.

On the third day the worthless dog took me to a house of ill-fame, where I might have gone without his introduction, and, in order to shew my mettle, I obliged a low creature whose ugliness ought to have been a sufficient antidote against any fleshly desire. On leaving the place, he brought me for supper to an inn where we met four scoundrels of his own stamp. After supper one of them began a bank of faro, and I was invited to join in the game. I gave way to that feeling of false pride which so often causes the ruin of young men, and after losing four sequins I expressed a wish to retire, but my honest friend, the Jacobin contrived to make me risk four more sequins in partnership with him. He held the bank, and it was broken. I did not wish to play any more, but Corsini, feigning to pity me and to feel great sorrow at being the cause of my loss, induced me to try myself a bank of twenty-five sequins; my bank was likewise broken. The hope of winning back my money made me keep up the game, and I lost everything I had.

Deeply grieved, I went away and laid myself down near the cook, who woke up and said I was a libertine.

“You are right,” was all I could answer.

I was worn out with fatigue and sorrow, and I slept soundly. My vile tormentor, the monk, woke me at noon, and informed me with a triumphant joy that a very rich young man had been invited by his friends to supper, that he would be sure to play and to lose, and that it would be a good opportunity for me to retrieve my losses.

“I have lost all my money. Lend me twenty sequins.”

“When I lend money I am sure to lose; you may call it superstition, but I have tried it too often. Try to find money somewhere else, and come. Farewell.”

I felt ashamed to confess my position to my friend, and sending for, a money-lender I emptied my trunk before him. We made an inventory of my clothes, and the honest broker gave me thirty sequins, with the understanding that if I did not redeem them within three days all my things would become his property. I am bound to call him an honest man, for he advised me to keep three shirts, a few pairs of stockings, and a few handkerchiefs; I was disposed to let him take everything, having a presentiment that I would win back all I had lost; a very common error. A few years later I took my revenge by writing a diatribe against presentiments. I am of opinion that the only foreboding in which man can have any sort of faith is the one which forbodes evil, because it comes from the mind, while a presentiment of happiness has its origin in the heart, and the heart is a fool worthy of reckoning foolishly upon fickle fortune.

I did not lose any time in joining the honest company, which was alarmed at the thought of not seeing me. Supper went off without any allusion to gambling, but my admirable qualities were highly praised, and it was decided that a brilliant fortune awaited me in Rome. After supper there was no talk of play, but giving way to my evil genius I loudly asked for my revenge. I was told that if I would take the bank everyone would punt. I took the bank, lost every sequin I had, and retired, begging the monk to pay what I owed to the landlord, which he promised to do.

I was in despair, and to crown my misery I found out as I was going home that I had met the day before with another living specimen of the Greek woman, less beautiful but as perfidious. I went to bed stunned by my grief, and I believe that I must have fainted into a heavy sleep, which lasted eleven hours; my awaking was that of a miserable being, hating the light of heaven, of which he felt himself unworthy, and I closed my eyes again, trying to sleep for a little while longer. I dreaded to rouse myself up entirely, knowing that I would then have to take some decision; but I never once thought of returning to Venice, which would have been the very best thing to do, and I would have destroyed myself rather than confide my sad position to the young doctor. I was weary of my existence, and I entertained vaguely some hope of starving where I was, without leaving my bed. It is certain that I should not have got up if M. Alban, the master of the peotta, had not roused me by calling upon me and informing me that the boat was ready to sail.

The man who is delivered from great perplexity, no matter by what means, feels himself relieved. It seemed to me that Captain Alban had come to point out the only thing I could possibly do; I dressed myself in haste, and tying all my worldly possessions in a handkerchief I went on board. Soon afterwards we left the shore, and in the morning we cast anchor in Orsara, a seaport of Istria. We all landed to visit the city, which would more properly be called a village. It belongs to the Pope, the Republic of Venice having abandoned it to the Holy See.

A young monk of the order of the Recollects who called himself Friar Stephano of Belun, and had obtained a free passage from the devout Captain Alban, joined me as we landed and enquired whether I felt sick.

“Reverend father, I am unhappy.”

“You will forget all your sorrow, if you will come and dine with me at the house of one of our devout friends.”

I had not broken my fast for thirty-six hours, and having suffered much from sea-sickness during the night, my stomach was quite empty. My erotic inconvenience made me very uncomfortable, my mind felt deeply the consciousness of my degradation, and I did not possess a groat! I was in such a miserable state that I had no strength to accept or to refuse anything. I was thoroughly torpid, and I followed the monk mechanically.

He presented me to a lady, saying that he was accompanying me to Rome, where I intend to become a Franciscan. This untruth disgusted me, and under any other circumstances I would not have let it pass without protest, but in my actual position it struck me as rather comical. The good lady gave us a good dinner of fish cooked in oil, which in Orsara is delicious, and we drank some exquisite refosco. During our meal, a priest happened to drop in, and, after a short conversation, he told me that I ought not to pass the night on board the tartan, and pressed me to accept a bed in his house and a good dinner for the next day in case the wind should not allow us to sail; I accepted without hesitation. I offered my most sincere thanks to the good old lady, and the priest took me all over the town. In the evening, he brought me to his house where we partook of an excellent supper prepared by his housekeeper, who sat down to the table with us, and with whom I was much pleased. The refosco, still better than that which I had drunk at dinner, scattered all my misery to the wind, and I conversed gaily with the priest. He offered to read to me a poem of his own composition, but, feeling that my eyes would not keep open, I begged he would excuse me and postpone the reading until the following day.

I went to bed, and in the morning, after ten hours of the most profound sleep, the housekeeper, who had been watching for my awakening, brought me some coffee. I thought her a charming woman, but, alas! I was not in a fit state to prove to her the high estimation in which I held her beauty.

Entertaining feelings of gratitude for my kind host, and disposed to listen attentively to his poem, I dismissed all sadness, and I paid his poetry such compliments that he was delighted, and, finding me much more talented than he had judged me to be at first, he insisted upon treating me to a reading of his idylls, and I had to swallow them, bearing the infliction cheerfully. The day passed off very agreeably; the housekeeper surrounded me with the kindest attentions — a proof that she was smitten with me; and, giving way to that pleasing idea, I felt that, by a very natural system of reciprocity, she had made my conquest. The good priest thought that the day had passed like lightning, thanks to all the beauties I had discovered in his poetry, which, to speak the truth, was below mediocrity, but time seemed to me to drag along very slowly, because the friendly glances of the housekeeper made me long for bedtime, in spite of the miserable condition in which I felt myself morally and physically. But such was my nature; I abandoned myself to joy and happiness, when, had I been more reasonable, I ought to have sunk under my grief and sadness.

But the golden time came at last. I found the pretty housekeeper full of compliance, but only up to a certain point, and as she offered some resistance when I shewed myself disposed to pay a full homage to her charms, I quietly gave up the undertaking, very well pleased for both of us that it had not been carried any further, and I sought my couch in peace. But

I had not seen the end of the adventure, for the next morning, when she brought my coffee, her pretty, enticing manners allured me to bestow a few loving caresses upon her, and if she did not abandon herself entirely, it was only, as she said, because she was afraid of some surprise. The day passed off very pleasantly with the good priest, and at night, the house-keeper no longer fearing detection, and I having on my side taken every precaution necessary in the state in which I was, we passed two most delicious hours. I left Orsara the next morning.

Friar Stephano amused me all day with his talk, which plainly showed me his ignorance combined with knavery under the veil of simplicity. He made me look at the alms he had received in Orsara — bread, wine, cheese, sausages, preserves, and chocolate; every nook and cranny of his holy garment was full of provisions.

“Have you received money likewise?” I enquired.

“God forbid! In the first place, our glorious order does not permit me to touch money, and, in the second place, were I to be foolish enough to receive any when I am begging, people would think themselves quit of me with one or two sous, whilst they give me ten times as much in eatables. Believe me Saint-Francis, was a very judicious man.”

I bethought myself that what this monk called wealth would be poverty to me. He offered to share with me, and seemed very proud at my consenting to honour him so far.

The tartan touched at the harbour of Pola, called Veruda, and we landed. After a walk up hill of nearly a quarter of an hour, we entered the city, and I devoted a couple of hours to visiting the Roman antiquities, which are numerous, the town having been the metropolis of the empire. Yet I saw no other trace of grand buildings except the ruins of the arena. We returned to Veruda, and went again to sea. On the following day we sighted Ancona, but the wind being against us we were compelled to tack about, and we did not reach the port till the second day. The harbour of Ancona, although considered one of the great works of Trajan, would be very unsafe if it were not for a causeway which has cost a great deal of money, and which makes it some what better. I observed a fact worthy of notice, namely, that, in the Adriatic, the northern coast has many harbours, while the opposite coast can only boast of one or two. It is evident that the sea is retiring by degrees towards the east, and that in three or four more centuries Venice must be joined to the land. We landed at the old lazzaretto, where we received the pleasant information that we would go through a quarantine of twenty-eight days, because Venice had admitted, after a quarantine of three months, the crew of two ships from Messina, where the plague had recently been raging. I requested a room for myself and for Brother Stephano, who thanked me very heartily. I hired from a Jew a bed, a table and a few chairs, promising to pay for the hire at the expiration of our quarantine. The monk would have nothing but straw. If he had guessed that without him I might have starved, he would most likely not have felt so much vanity at sharing my room. A sailor, expecting to find in me a generous customer, came to enquire where my trunk was, and, hearing from me that I did not know, he, as well as Captain Alban, went to a great deal of trouble to find it, and I could hardly keep down my merriment when the captain called, begging to be excused for having left it behind, and assuring me that he would take care to forward it to me in less than three weeks.

The friar, who had to remain with me four weeks, expected to live at my expense, while, on the contrary, he had been sent by Providence to keep me. He had provisions enough for one week, but it was necessary to think of the future.

After supper, I drew a most affecting picture of my position, shewing that I should be in need of everything until my arrival at Rome, where I was going, I said, to fill the post of secretary of memorials, and my astonishment may be imagined when I saw the blockhead delighted at the recital of my misfortunes.

“I undertake to take care of you until we reach Rome; only tell me whether you can write.”

“What a question! Are you joking?”

“Why should I? Look at me; I cannot write anything but my name. True, I can write it with either hand; and what else do I want to know?”

“You astonish me greatly, for I thought you were a priest.”

“I am a monk; I say the mass, and, as a matter of course, I must know how to read. Saint-Francis, whose unworthy son I am, could not read, and that is the reason why he never said a mass. But as you can write, you will to-morrow pen a letter in my name to the persons whose names I will give you, and I warrant you we shall have enough sent here to live like fighting cocks all through our quarantine."

The next day he made me write eight letters, because, in the oral tradition of his order, it is said that, when a monk has knocked at seven doors and has met with a refusal at every one of them, he must apply to the eighth with perfect confidence, because there he is certain of receiving alms. As he had already performed the pilgrimage to Rome, he knew every person in Ancona devoted to the cult of Saint-Francis, and was acquainted with the superiors of all the rich convents. I had to write to every person he named, and to set down all the lies he dictated to me. He likewise made me sign the letters for him, saying, that, if he signed himself, his correspondents would see that the letters had not been written by him, which would injure him, for, he added, in this age of corruption, people will esteem only learned men. He compelled me to fill the letters with Latin passages and quotations, even those addressed to ladies, and I remonstrated in vain, for, when I raised any objection, he threatened to leave me without anything to eat. I made up my mind to do exactly as he wished. He desired me to write to the superior of the Jesuits that he would not apply to the Capuchins, because they were no better than atheists, and that that was the reason of the great dislike of Saint-Francis for them. It was in vain that I reminded him of the fact that, in the time of Saint-Francis, there were neither Capuchins nor Recollets. His answer was that I had proved myself an ignoramus. I firmly believed that he would be thought a madman, and that we should not receive anything, but I was mistaken, for such a quantity of provisions came pouring in that I was amazed. Wine was sent from three or four different quarters, more than enough for us during all our stay, and yet I drank nothing but water, so great was my wish to recover my health. As for eatables, enough was sent in every day for six persons; we gave all our surplus to our keeper, who had a large family. But the monk felt no gratitude for the kind souls who bestowed their charity upon him; all his thanks were reserved for Saint-Francis.

He undertook to have my linen washed by the keeper; I would not have dared to give it myself, and he said that he had nothing to fear, as everybody was well aware that the monks of his order never wear any kind of linen.

I kept myself in bed nearly all day, and thus avoided shewing myself to visitors. The persons who did not come wrote letters full of incongruities cleverly worded, which I took good care not to point out to him. It was with great difficulty that I tried to persuade him that those letters did not require any answer.

A fortnight of repose and severe diet brought me round towards complete recovery, and I began to walk in the yard of the lazzaretto from morning till night; but the arrival of a Turk from Thessalonia with his family compelled me to suspend my walks, the ground-floor having been given to him. The only pleasure left me was to spend my time on the balcony overlooking the yard. I soon saw a Greek slave, a girl of dazzling beauty, for whom I felt the deepest interest. She was in the habit of spending the whole day sitting near the door with a book or some embroidery in her hand. If she happened to raise her eyes and to meet mine, she modestly bent her head down, and sometimes she rose and went in slowly, as if she meant to say, "I did not know that somebody was looking at me." Her figure was tall and slender, her features proclaimed her to be very young; she had a very fair complexion, with beautiful black hair and eyes. She wore the Greek costume, which gave her person a certain air of very exciting voluptuousness.

I was perfectly idle, and with the temperament which nature and habit had given me, was it likely that I could feast my eyes constantly upon such a charming object without falling desperately in love? I had heard her conversing in Lingua Franca with her master, a fine old man, who, like her, felt very weary of the quarantine, and used to come out but seldom, smoking his pipe, and remaining in the yard only a short time. I felt a great temptation to address a few words to the beautiful girl, but I was afraid she might run away and never come out again; however, unable to control myself any longer, I determined to write to her; I had no difficulty in conveying the letter, as I had only to let it fall from my balcony. But she might have refused to pick it up, and this is the plan I adopted in order not to risk any unpleasant result.

Availing myself of a moment during which she was alone in the yard, I dropped from my balcony a small piece of paper folded like a letter, but I had taken care not to write anything on it, and held the true letter in my hand. As soon as I saw her stooping down to pick up the first, I quickly let the second drop at her feet, and she put both into her pocket. A few minutes afterwards she left the yard. My letter was somewhat to this effect:

“Beautiful angel from the East, I worship you. I will remain all night on this balcony in the hope that you will come to me for a quarter of an hour, and listen to my voice through the hole under my feet. We can speak softly, and in order to hear me you can climb up to the top of the bale of goods which lies beneath the same hole.”

I begged from my keeper not to lock me in as he did every night, and he consented on condition that he would watch me, for if I had jumped down in the yard his life might have been the penalty, and he promised not to disturb me on the balcony.

At midnight, as I was beginning to give her up, she came forward. I then laid myself flat on the floor of the balcony, and I placed my head against the hole, about six inches square. I saw her jump on the bale, and her head reached within a foot from the balcony. She was compelled to steady herself with one hand against the wall for fear of falling, and in that position we talked of love, of ardent desires, of obstacles, of impossibilities, and of cunning artifices. I told her the reason for which I dared not jump down in the yard, and she observed that, even without that reason, it would bring ruin upon us, as it would be impossible to come up again, and that, besides, God alone knew what her master would do if he were to find us together. Then, promising to visit me in this way every night, she passed her hand through the hole. Alas! I could not leave off kissing it, for I thought that I had never in my life touched so soft, so delicate a hand. But what bliss when she begged for mine! I quickly thrust my arm through the hole, so that she could fasten her lips to the bend of the elbow. How many sweet liberties my hand ventured to take! But we were at last compelled by prudence to separate, and when I returned to my room I saw with great pleasure that the keeper was fast asleep.

Although I was delighted at having obtained every favour I could possibly wish for in the uncomfortable position we had been in, I racked my brain to contrive the means of securing more complete enjoyment for the following night, but I found during the afternoon that the feminine cunning of my beautiful Greek was more fertile than mine.

Being alone in the yard with her master, she said a few words to him in Turkish, to which he seemed to give his approval, and soon after a servant, assisted by the keeper, brought under the balcony a large basket of goods. She overlooked the arrangement, and in order to secure the basket better, she made the servant place a bale of cotton across two others. Guessing at her purpose, I fairly leaped for joy, for she had found the way of raising herself two feet higher; but I thought that she would then find herself in the most inconvenient position, and that, forced to bend double, she would not be able to resist the fatigue. The hole was not wide enough for her head to pass through, otherwise she might have stood erect and been comfortable. It was necessary at all events to guard against that difficulty; the only way was to tear out one of the planks of the floor of the balcony, but it was not an easy undertaking. Yet I decided upon attempting it, regardless of consequences; and I went to my room to provide myself with a large pair of pincers. Luckily the keeper was absent, and availing myself of the opportunity, I succeeded in dragging out carefully the four large nails which fastened the plank. Finding that I could lift it at my will, I replaced the pincers, and waited for the night with amorous impatience.

The darling girl came exactly at midnight, noticing the difficulty she experienced in climbing up, and in getting a footing upon the third bale of cotton, I lifted the plank, and, extending my arm as far as I could, I offered her a steady point of support. She stood straight, and found herself agreeably surprised, for she could pass her head and her arms through the hole. We wasted no time in empty compliments; we only congratulated each other upon having both worked for the same purpose.

If, the night before, I had found myself master of her person more than she was of mine, this time the position was entirely reversed. Her hand roamed freely over every part of my body, but I had to stop half-way down hers. She cursed the man who had packed the bale for not having made it half a foot bigger, so as to get nearer to me. Very likely even that would not have satisfied us, but she would have felt happier.

Our pleasures were barren, yet we kept up our enjoyment until the first streak of light. I put back the plank carefully, and I lay down in my bed in great need of recruiting my strength.

My dear mistress had informed me that the Turkish Bairam began that very morning, and would last three days during which it would be impossible for her to see me.

The night after Bairam, she did not fail to make her appearance, and, saying that she could not be happy without me, she told me that, as she was a Christian woman, I could buy her, if I waited for her after leaving the lazzaretto. I was compelled to tell her that I did not possess the means of doing so, and my confession made her sigh. On the following night, she informed me that her master would sell her for two thousand piasters, that she would give me the amount, that she was yet a virgin, and that I would be pleased with my bargain. She added that she would give me a casket full of diamonds, one of which was alone worth two thousand piasters, and that the sale of the others would place us beyond the reach of poverty for the remainder of our life. She assured me that her master would not notice the loss of the casket, and that, if he did, he would never think of accusing her.

I was in love with this girl; and her proposal made me uncomfortable, but when I woke in the morning I did not hesitate any longer. She brought the casket in the evening, but I told her that I never could make up my mind to be accessory to a robbery; she was very unhappy, and said that my love was not as deep as her own, but that she could not help admiring me for being so good a Christian.

This was the last night; probably we should never meet again. The flame of passion consumed us. She proposed that I should lift her up to the balcony through the open space. Where is the lover who would have objected to so attractive a proposal? I rose, and without being a Milo, I placed my hands under her arms, I drew her up towards me, and my desires are on the point of being fulfilled. Suddenly I feel two hands upon my shoulders, and the voice of the keeper exclaims, “What are you about?” I let my precious burden drop; she regains her chamber, and I, giving vent to my rage, throw myself flat on the floor of the balcony, and remain there without a movement, in spite of the shaking of the keeper whom I was sorely tempted to strangle. At last I rose from the floor and went to bed without uttering one word, and not even caring to replace the plank.

In the morning, the governor informed us that we were free. As I left the lazzaretto, with a breaking heart, I caught a glimpse of the Greek slave drowned in tears.

I agreed to meet Friar Stephano at the exchange, and I took the Jew from whom I had hired the furniture, to the convent of the Minims, where I received from Father Lazari ten sequins and the address of the bishop, who, after performing quarantine on the frontiers of Tuscany, had proceeded to Rome, where he would expect me to meet him.

I paid the Jew, and made a poor dinner at an inn. As I was leaving it to join the monk, I was so unlucky as to meet Captain Alban, who reproached me bitterly for having led him to believe that my trunk had been left behind. I contrived to appease his anger by telling him all my misfortunes, and I signed a paper in which I declared that I had no claim whatever upon him. I then purchased a pair of shoes and an overcoat, and met Stephano, whom I informed of my decision to make a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Loretto. I said I would await there for him, and that we would afterwards travel together as far as Rome. He answered that he did not wish to go through Loretto, and that I would repent of my contempt for the grace of Saint-Francis. I did not alter my mind, and I left for Loretto the next day in the enjoyment of perfect health.

I reached the Holy City, tired almost to death, for it was the first time in my life that I had walked fifteen miles, drinking nothing but water, although the weather was very warm, because the dry wine used in that part of the country parched me too much. I must observe that, in spite of my poverty, I did not look like a beggar.

As I was entering the city, I saw coming towards me an elderly priest of very respectable appearance, and, as he was evidently taking notice of me, as soon as he drew near, I saluted him, and enquired where I could find a comfortable inn. “I cannot doubt,” he said, “that a person like you, travelling on foot, must come here from devout motives; come with me.” He turned back, I followed him, and he took me to a fine-looking house. After whispering a few words to a man who appeared to be a steward, he left me saying, very affably, “You shall be well attended to.”

My first impression was that I had been mistaken for some other person, but I said nothing.

I was led to a suite of three rooms; the chamber was decorated with damask hangings, the bedstead had a canopy, and the table was supplied with all materials necessary for writing. A servant brought me a light dressing-gown, and another came in with linen and a large tub full of water, which he placed before me; my shoes and stockings were taken off, and my feet washed. A very decent-looking woman, followed by a servant girl, came in a few minutes after, and curtsying very low, she proceeded to make my bed. At that moment the Angelus bell was heard; everyone knelt down, and I followed their example. After the prayer, a small table was neatly laid out, I was asked what sort of wine I wished to drink, and I was provided with newspapers and two silver candlesticks. An hour afterwards I had a delicious fish supper, and, before I retired to bed, a servant came to enquire whether I would take chocolate in the morning before or after mass.

As soon as I was in bed, the servant brought me a night-lamp with a dial, and I remained alone. Except in France I have never had such a good bed as I had that night. It would have cured the most chronic insomnia, but I was not labouring under such a disease, and I slept for ten hours.

This sort of treatment easily led me to believe that I was not in any kind of hostelry; but where was I? How was I to suppose that I was in a hospital?

When I had taken my chocolate, a hair-dresser — quite a fashionable, dapper fellow — made his appearance, dying to give vent to his chattering propensities. Guessing that I did not wish to be shaved, he offered to clip my soft down with the scissors, saying that I would look younger.

“Why do you suppose that I want to conceal my age?”

“It is very natural, because, if your lordship did not wish to do so, your lordship would have shaved long ago. Countess Marcolini is here; does your lordship know her? I must go to her at noon to dress her hair.”

I did not feel interested in the Countess Marcolini, and, seeing it, the gossip changed the subject.

“Is this your lordship’s first visit to this house? It is the finest hospital throughout the papal states.”

“I quite agree with you, and I shall compliment His Holiness on the establishment.”

“Oh! His Holiness knows all about it, he resided here before he became pope. If Monsignor Caraffa had not been well acquainted with you, he would not have introduced you here.”

Such is the use of barbers throughout Europe; but you must not put any questions to them, for, if you do, they are sure to treat you to an impudent mixture of truth and falsehood, and instead of you pumping them, they will worm everything out of you.

Thinking that it was my duty to present my respectful compliments to Monsignor Caraffa, I desired to be taken to his apartment. He gave me a pleasant welcome, shewed me his library, and entrusted me to the care of one of his abbes, a man of parts, who acted as my cicerone every where. Twenty years afterwards, this same abbe was of great service to me in Rome, and, if still alive, he is a canon of St. John Lateran.

On the following day, I took the communion in the Santa-Casa. The third day was entirely employed in examining the exterior of this truly wonderful sanctuary, and early the next day I resumed my journey, having spent nothing except three paoli for the barber. Halfway to Macerata, I overtook Brother Stephano walking on at a very slow rate. He was delighted to see me again, and told me that he had left Ancona two hours after me, but that he never walked more than three miles a day, being quite satisfied to take two months for a journey which, even on foot, can easily be accomplished in a week. “I want,” he said, “to reach Rome without fatigue and in good health. I am in no hurry, and if you feel disposed to travel with me and in the same quiet way, Saint-Francis will not find it difficult to keep us both during the journey.”

This lazy fellow was a man about thirty, red-haired, very strong and healthy; a true peasant who had turned himself into a monk only for the sake of living in idle comfort. I answered that, as I was in a hurry to reach Rome, I could not be his travelling companion.

“I undertake to walk six miles, instead of three, today,” he said, “if you will carry my cloak, which I find very heavy.”

The proposal struck me as a rather funny one; I put on his cloak, and he took my great-coat, but, after the exchange, we cut such a comical figure that every peasant we met laughed at us. His cloak would truly have proved a load for a mule. There were twelve pockets quite full, without taken into account a pocket behind, which he called ‘il batticulo’, and which contained alone twice as much as all the others. Bread, wine, fresh and salt meat, fowls, eggs, cheese, ham, sausages — everything was to be found in those pockets, which contained provisions enough for a fortnight.

I told him how well I had been treated in Loretto, and he assured me that I might have asked Monsignor Caraffa to give me letters for all the hospitals on my road to Rome, and that everywhere I would have met with the same reception. “The hospitals,” he added, “are all under the curse of Saint-Francis, because the mendicant friars are not admitted in them; but we do not mind their gates being shut against us, because they are too far apart from each other. We prefer the homes of the persons attached to our order; these we find everywhere.”

“Why do you not ask hospitality in the convents of your order?”

“I am not so foolish. In the first place, I should not be admitted, because, being a fugitive, I have not the written obedience which must be shown at every convent, and I should even run the risk of being thrown into prison; your monks are a cursed bad lot. In the second place, I should not be half so comfortable in the convents as I am with our devout benefactors.”

“Why and how are you a fugitive?”

He answered my question by the narrative of his imprisonment and flight, the whole story being a tissue of absurdities and lies. The fugitive Recollet friar was a fool, with something of the wit of harlequin, and he thought that every man listening to him was a greater fool than himself. Yet with all his folly he was not wanting in a certain species of cunning. His religious principles were singular. As he did not wish to be taken for a bigoted man, he was scandalous, and for the sake of making people laugh he would often make use of the most disgusting expressions. He had no taste whatever for women, and no inclination towards the pleasures of the flesh; but this was only owing to a deficiency in his natural temperament, and yet he claimed for himself the virtue of continence. On that score, everything appeared to him food for merriment, and when he had drunk rather too much, he would ask questions of such an indecent character that they would bring blushes on everybody’s countenance. Yet the brute would only laugh.

As we were getting within one hundred yards from the house of the devout friend whom he intended to honour with his visit, he took back his heavy cloak. On entering the house he gave his blessing to everybody, and everyone in the family came to kiss his hand. The mistress of the house requested him to say mass for them, and the compliant monk asked to be taken to the vestry, but when I whispered in his ear, —

“Have you forgotten that we have already broken our fast to-day?” he answered, dryly, —

“Mind your own business.”

I dared not make any further remark, but during the mass I was indeed surprised, for I saw that he did not understand what he was doing. I could not help being amused at his awkwardness, but I had not yet seen the best part of the comedy. As soon as he had somehow or other finished his mass he went to the confessional, and after hearing in confession every member of the family he took it into his head to refuse absolution to the daughter of his hostess, a girl of twelve or thirteen, pretty and quite charming. He gave his refusal publicly, scolding her and threatening her with the torments of hell. The poor girl, overwhelmed with shame, left the church crying bitterly, and I, feeling real sympathy for her, could not help saying aloud to Stephano that he was a madman. I ran after the girl to offer her my consolations, but she had disappeared, and could not be induced to join us at dinner. This piece of extravagance on the part of the monk exasperated me to such an extent that I felt a very strong inclination to thrash him. In the presence of all the family I told him that he was an impostor, and the infamous destroyer of the poor child’s honour; I challenged him to explain his reasons for refusing to give her absolution, but he closed my lips by answering very coolly that he could not betray the secrets of the confessional. I could eat nothing, and was fully determined to leave the scoundrel. As we left the house I was compelled to accept one paolo as the price of the mock mass he had said. I had to fulfil the sorry duty of his treasurer.

The moment we were on the road, I told him that I was going to part company, because I was afraid of being sent as a felon to the galleys if I continued my journey with him. We exchanged high words; I called him an ignorant scoundrel, he styled me beggar. I struck him a violent slap on the face, which he returned with a blow from his stick, but I quickly snatched it from him, and, leaving him, I hastened towards Macerata. A carrier who was going to Tolentino took me with him for two paoli, and for six more I might have reached Foligno in a waggon, but unfortunately a wish for economy made me refuse the offer. I felt well, and I thought I could easily walk as far as Valcimare, but I arrived there only after five hours of hard walking, and thoroughly beaten with fatigue. I was strong and healthy, but a walk of five hours was more than I could bear, because in my infancy I had never gone a league on foot. Young people cannot practise too much the art of walking.

The next day, refreshed by a good night's rest, and ready to resume my journey, I wanted to pay the innkeeper, but, alas! a new misfortune was in store for me! Let the reader imagine my sad position! I recollected that I had forgotten my purse, containing seven sequins, on the table of the inn at Tolentino. What a thunderbolt! I was in despair, but I gave up the idea of going back, as it was very doubtful whether I would find my money. Yet it contained all I possessed, save a few copper coins I had in my pocket. I paid my small bill, and, deeply grieved at my loss, continued my journey towards Seraval. I was within three miles of that place when, in jumping over a ditch, I sprained my ankle, and was compelled to sit down on one side of the road, and to wait until someone should come to my assistance.

In the course of an hour a peasant happened to pass with his donkey, and he agreed to carry me to Seraval for one paolo. As I wanted to spend as little as possible, the peasant took me to an ill-looking fellow who, for two paoli paid in advance, consented to give me a lodging. I asked him to send for a surgeon, but I did not obtain one until the following morning. I had a wretched supper, after which I lay down in a filthy bed. I was in hope that sleep would bring me some relief, but my evil genius was preparing for me a night of torments.

Three men, armed with guns and looking like banditti, came in shortly after I had gone to bed, speaking a kind of slang which I could not make out, swearing, raging, and paying no attention to me. They drank and sang until midnight, after which they threw themselves down on bundles of straw brought for them, and my host, who was drunk, came, greatly to my dismay, to lie down near me. Disgusted at the idea of having such a fellow for my bed companion, I refused to let him come, but he answered, with fearful blasphemies, that all the devils in hell could not prevent him from taking possession of his own bed. I was forced to make room for him, and exclaimed "Heavens, where am I?" He told me that I was in the house of the most honest constable in all the papal states.

Could I possibly have supposed that the peasant would have brought me amongst those accursed enemies of humankind!

He laid himself down near me, but the filthy scoundrel soon compelled me to give him, for certain reasons, such a blow in his chest that he rolled out of bed. He picked himself up, and renewed his beastly attempt. Being well aware that I could not master him without great danger, I got out of bed, thinking myself lucky that he did not oppose my wish, and crawling along as well as I could, I found a chair on which I passed the night. At day-break, my tormentor, called up by his honest comrades, joined them in drinking and shouting, and the three strangers, taking their guns, departed. Left alone by the departure of the vile rabble, I passed another unpleasant hour, calling in vain for someone. At last a young boy came in, I gave him some money and he went for a surgeon. The doctor examined my foot, and assured me that three or four days would set me to rights. He advised me to be removed to an inn, and I most willingly followed his counsel. As soon as I was brought to the inn, I went to bed, and was well cared for, but my position was such that I dreaded the moment of my recovery. I feared that I should be compelled to sell my coat to pay the inn-keeper, and the very thought made me feel ashamed. I began to consider that if I had controlled my sympathy for the young girl so ill-treated by Stephano, I should not have fallen into this sad predicament, and I felt conscious that my sympathy had been a mistake. If I had put up with the faults of the friar, if this and if that, and every other if was conjured up to torment my restless and wretched brain. Yet I must confess that the thoughts which have their origin in misfortune are not without advantage to a young man, for they give him the habit of thinking, and the man who does not think never does anything right.

The morning of the fourth day came, and I was able to walk, as the surgeon had predicted; I made up my mind, although reluctantly, to beg the worthy man to sell my great coat for me — a most unpleasant necessity, for rain had begun to fall. I owed fifteen paoli to the inn-keeper and four to the surgeon. Just as I was going to proffer my painful request, Brother Stephano made his appearance in my room, and burst into loud laughter enquiring whether I had forgotten the blow from his stick!

I was struck with amazement! I begged the surgeon to leave me with the monk, and he immediately complied.

I must ask my readers whether it is possible, in the face of such extraordinary circumstances, not to feel superstitious! What is truly miraculous in this case is the precise minute at which the event took place, for the friar entered the room as the word was hanging on my lips. What surprised me most was the force of Providence, of fortune, of chance, whatever name is given to it, of that very necessary combination which compelled me to find no hope but in that fatal monk, who had begun to be my protective genius in Chiozza at the moment my distress had likewise commenced. And yet, a singular guardian angel, this Stephano! I felt that the mysterious force which threw me in his hands was a punishment rather than a favour.

Nevertheless he was welcome, because I had no doubt of his relieving me from my difficulties, — and whatever might be the power that sent him to me, I felt that I could not do better than to submit to its influence; the destiny of that monk was to escort me to Rome.

“Chi va piano va sano,” said the friar as soon as we were alone. He had taken five days to traverse the road over which I had travelled in one day, but he was in good health, and he had met with no misfortune. He told me that, as he was passing, he heard that an abbe, secretary to the Venetian ambassador at Rome, was lying ill at the inn, after having been robbed in Valcimara. “I came to see you,” he added, “and as I find you recovered from your illness, we can start again together; I agree to walk six miles every day to please you. Come, let us forget the past, and let us be at once on our way.”

“I cannot go; I have lost my purse, and I owe twenty paoli.”

“I will go and find the amount in the name of Saint-Francis.”

He returned within an hour, but he was accompanied by the infamous constable who told me that, if I had let him know who I was, he would have been happy to keep me in his house. “I will give you,” he continued, “forty paoli, if you will promise me the protection of your ambassador; but if you do not succeed in obtaining it for me in Rome, you will undertake to repay me. Therefore you must give me an acknowledgement of the debt.”

“I have no objection.” Every arrangement was speedily completed; I received the money, paid my debts, and left Seraval with Stephano.

About one o’clock in the afternoon, we saw a wretched-looking house at a short distance from the road, and the friar said, “It is a good distance from here to Collefiorito; we had better put up there for the night.” It was in vain that I objected, remonstrating that we were certain of having very poor accommodation! I had to submit to his will. We found a decrepit old man lying on a pallet, two ugly women of thirty or forty, three children entirely naked, a cow, and a cursed dog which barked continually. It was a picture of squalid misery; but the niggardly monk, instead of giving alms to the poor people, asked them to entertain us to supper in the name of Saint-Francis.

“You must boil the hen,” said the dying man to the females, “and bring out of the cellar the bottle of wine which I have kept now for twenty years.” As he uttered those few words, he was seized with such a fit of coughing that I thought he would die. The friar went near him, and promised him that, by the grace of Saint-Francis, he would get young and well. Moved by the sight of so much misery, I wanted to continue my journey as far as Collefiorito, and to wait there for Stephano, but the women would not let me go, and I remained. After boiling for four hours the hen set the strongest teeth at defiance, and the bottle which I uncorked proved to be nothing but sour vinegar. Losing patience, I got hold of the monk’s batticaslo, and took out of it enough for a plentiful supper, and I saw the two women opening their eyes very wide at the sight of our provisions.

We all ate with good appetite, and, after our supper the women made for us two large beds of fresh straw, and we lay down in the dark, as the last bit of candle to be found in the miserable dwelling was burnt out. We had not been lying on the straw five minutes, when Stephano called out to me that one of the women had just placed herself near him, and at the same instant the other one takes me in her arms and kisses me. I push her away, and the monk defends himself against the other; but mine, nothing daunted, insists upon laying herself near me; I get up, the dog springs at my neck, and fear compels me to remain quiet on my straw bed; the monk screams, swears, struggles, the dog barks furiously, the old man coughs; all is noise and confusion. At last Stephano, protected by his heavy garments, shakes off the too loving shrew, and, braving the dog, manages to find his stick. Then he lays about to right and left, striking in every direction; one of the women exclaims, “Oh, God!” the friar answers, “She has her quietus.” Calm reigns again in the house, the dog, most likely dead, is silent; the old man, who perhaps has received his death-blow, coughs no more; the children sleep, and the women, afraid of the singular caresses of the monk, sheer off into a corner; the remainder of the night passed off quietly.

At day-break I rose; Stephano was likewise soon up. I looked all round, and my surprise was great when I found that the women had gone out, and seeing that the old man gave no sign of life, and had a bruise on his forehead, I shewed it to Stephano, remarking that very likely he had killed him.

“It is possible,” he answered, “but I have not done it intentionally.”

Then taking up his batticulo and finding it empty he flew into a violent passion; but I was much pleased, for I had been afraid that the women had gone out to get assistance and to have us arrested, and the robbery of our provisions reassured me, as I felt certain that the poor wretches had gone out of the way so as to secure impunity for their theft. But I laid great stress upon the danger we should run by remaining any longer, and I succeeded in frightening the friar out of the house. We soon met a waggoner going to Folligno; I persuaded Stephano to take the opportunity of putting a good distance between us and the scene of our last adventures; and, as we were eating our breakfast at Folligno, we saw another waggon, quite empty, got a lift in it for a trifle, and thus rode to Pisignano, where a devout person gave us a charitable welcome, and I slept soundly through the night without the dread of being arrested.

Early the next day we reached Spoleti, where Brother Stephano had two benefactors, and, careful not to give either of them a cause of jealousy, he favoured both; we dined with the first, who entertained us like princes, and we had supper and lodging in the house of the second, a wealthy wine merchant, and the father of a large and delightful family. He gave us a delicious supper, and everything would have gone on pleasantly had not the friar, already excited by his good dinner, made himself quite drunk. In that state, thinking to please his new host, he began to abuse the other, greatly to my annoyance; he said the wine he had given us to drink was adulterated, and that the man was a thief. I gave him the lie to his face, and called him a scoundrel. The host and his wife pacified me, saying that they were well acquainted with their neighbour, and knew what to think of him; but the monk threw his napkin at my face, and the host took him very quietly by the arm and put him to bed in a room in which he locked him up. I slept in another room.

In the morning I rose early, and was considering whether it would not be better to go alone, when the friar, who had slept himself sober, made his appearance and told me that we ought for the future to live together like good friends, and not give way to angry feelings; I followed my destiny once more. We resumed our journey, and at Soma, the inn-keeper, a woman of rare beauty, gave us a good dinner, and some excellent Cyprus wine which the Venetian couriers exchanged with her against delicious truffles found in the vicinity of Soma, which sold for a good price in Venice. I did not leave the handsome inn-keeper without losing a part of my heart.

It would be difficult to draw a picture of the indignation which overpowered me when, as we were about two miles from Terni, the infamous friar shewed me a small bag full of truffles which the scoundrel had stolen from the amiable woman by way of thanks for her generous hospitality. The truffles were worth two sequins at least. In my indignation I snatched the bag from him, saying that I would certainly return it to its lawful owner. But, as he had not committed the robbery to give himself the pleasure of making restitution, he threw himself upon me, and we came to a regular fight. But victory did not remain long in abeyance; I forced his stick out of his hands, knocked him into a ditch, and went off. On reaching Terni, I wrote a letter of apology to our beautiful hostess of Soma, and sent back the truffles.

From Terni I went on foot to Otricoli, where I only stayed long enough to examine the fine old bridge, and from there I paid four paoli to a waggoner who carried me to Castel-Nuovo, from which place I walked to Rome. I reached the celebrated city on the 1st of September, at nine in the morning.

I must not forget to mention here a rather peculiar circumstance, which, however ridiculous it may be in reality, will please many of my readers.

An hour after I had left Castel-Nuovo, the atmosphere being calm and the sky clear, I perceived on my right, and within ten paces of me, a pyramidal flame about two feet long and four or five feet above the ground. This apparition surprised me, because it seemed to accompany me. Anxious to examine it, I endeavoured to get nearer to it, but the more I advanced towards it the further it went from me. It would stop when I stood still, and when the road along which I was travelling happened to be lined with trees, I no longer saw it, but it was sure to reappear as soon as I reached a portion of the road without trees. I several times retraced my steps purposely, but, every time I did so, the flame disappeared, and would not shew itself again until I proceeded towards Rome. This extraordinary beacon left me when daylight chased darkness from the sky.

What a splendid field for ignorant superstition, if there had been any witnesses to that phenomenon, and if I had chanced to make a great name in Rome! History is full of such trifles, and the world is full of people who attach great importance to them in spite of the so-called light of science. I must candidly confess that, although somewhat versed in physics, the sight of that small meteor gave me singular ideas. But I was prudent enough not to mention the circumstance to any one.

When I reached the ancient capital of the world, I possessed only seven paoli, and consequently I did not loiter about. I paid no attention to the splendid entrance through the gate of the polar trees, which is by mistake pompously called of the people, or to the beautiful square of the same name, or to the portals of the magnificent churches, or to all the stately buildings which generally strike the traveller as he enters the city. I went straight towards Monte-Magnanopoli, where, according to the address given to me, I was to find the bishop. There I was informed that he had left Rome ten days before, leaving instructions to send me to Naples free of expense. A coach was to start for Naples the next day; not caring to see Rome, I went to bed until the time for the departure of the coach. I travelled with three low fellows to whom I did not address one word through the whole of the journey. I entered Naples on the 6th day of September.

I went immediately to the address which had been given to me in Rome; the bishop was not there. I called at the Convent of the Minims, and I found that he had left Naples to proceed to Martorano. I enquired whether he had left any instructions for me, but all in vain, no one could give me any information. And there I was, alone in a large city, without a friend, with eight carlini in my pocket, and not knowing what to do! But never mind; fate calls me to Martorano, and to Martorano I must go. The distance, after all, is only two hundred miles.

I found several drivers starting for Cosenza, but when they heard that I had no luggage, they refused to take me, unless I paid in advance. They were quite right, but their prudence placed me under the necessity of going on foot. Yet I felt I must reach Martorano, and I made up my mind to walk the distance, begging food and lodging like the very reverend Brother Stephano.

First of all I made a light meal for one fourth of my money, and, having been informed that I had to follow the Salerno road, I went towards Portici where I arrived in an hour and a half. I already felt rather fatigued; my legs, if not my head, took me to an inn, where I ordered a room and some supper. I was served in good style, my appetite was excellent, and I passed a quiet night in a comfortable bed. In the morning I told the inn-keeper that I would return for my dinner, and I went out to visit the royal palace. As I passed through the gate, I was met by a man of prepossessing appearance, dressed in the eastern fashion, who offered to shew me all over the palace, saying that I would thus save my money. I was in a position to accept any offer; I thanked him for his kindness.

Happening during the conversation to state that I was a Venetian, he told me that he was my subject, since he came from Zante. I acknowledged his polite compliment with a reverence.

“I have,” he said, “some very excellent muscatel wine ‘grown in the East, which I could sell you cheap.”

“I might buy some, but I warn you I am a good judge.”

“So much the better. Which do you prefer?”

“The Cerigo wine.”

“You are right. I have some rare Cerigo muscatel, and we can taste it if you have no objection to dine with me.”

“None whatever.”

“I can likewise give you the wines of Samos and Cephalonia. I have also a quantity of minerals, plenty of vitriol, cinnabar, antimony, and one hundred quintals of mercury.”

“Are all these goods here?”

“No, they are in Naples. Here I have only the muscatel wine and the mercury.”

It is quite naturally and without any intention to deceive, that a young man accustomed to poverty, and ashamed of it when he speaks to a rich stranger, boasts of his means — of his fortune. As I was talking with my new acquaintance, I recollected an amalgam of mercury with lead and bismuth, by which the mercury increases one-fourth in weight. I said nothing, but I bethought myself that if the mystery should be unknown to the Greek I might profit by it. I felt that some cunning was necessary, and that he would not care for my secret if I proposed to sell it to him without preparing the way. The best plan was to astonish my man with the miracle of the augmentation of the mercury, treat it as a jest, and see what his intentions would be. Cheating is a crime, but honest cunning may be considered as a species of prudence. True, it is a quality which is near akin to roguery; but that cannot be helped, and the man who, in time of need, does not know how to exercise his cunning nobly is a fool. The Greeks call this sort of wisdom Cerdaleophyon from the word cerdo; fox, and it might be translated by foxdom if there were such a word in English.

After we had visited the palace we returned to the inn, and the Greek took me to his room, in which he ordered the table to be laid for two. In the next room I saw several large vessels of muscatel wine and four flagons of mercury, each containing about ten pounds.

My plans were laid, and I asked him to let me have one of the flagons of mercury at the current price, and took it to my room. The Greek went out to attend to his business, reminding me that he expected me to dinner. I went out likewise, and bought two pounds and a half of lead and an equal quantity of bismuth; the druggist had no more. I came back to the inn, asked for some large empty bottles, and made the amalgam.

We dined very pleasantly, and the Greek was delighted because I pronounced his Cerigo excellent. In the course of conversation he inquired laughingly why I had bought one of his flagons of mercury.

“You can find out if you come to my room,” I said.

After dinner we repaired to my room, and he found his mercury divided in two vessels. I asked for a piece of chamois, strained the liquid through it, filled his own flagon, and the Greek stood astonished at the sight of the fine mercury, about one-fourth of a flagon, which remained over, with an equal quantity of a powder unknown to him; it was the bismuth. My merry laugh kept company with his astonishment, and calling one of the servants of the inn I sent him to the druggist to sell the mercury that was left. He returned in a few minutes and handed me fifteen carlini.

The Greek, whose surprise was complete, asked me to give him back his own flagon, which was there quite full, and worth sixty carlini. I handed it to him with a smile, thanking him for the opportunity he had afforded me of earning fifteen carlini, and took care to add that I should leave for Salerno early the next morning.

“Then we must have supper together this evening,” he said.

During the afternoon we took a walk towards Mount Vesuvius. Our conversation went from one subject to another, but no allusion was made to the mercury, though I could see that the Greek had something on his mind. At supper he told me, jestingly, that I ought to stop in Portici the next day to make forty-five carlini out of the three other flagons of mercury. I answered gravely that I did not want the money, and that I had augmented the first flagon only for the sake of procuring him an agreeable surprise.

“But,” said he, “you must be very wealthy.”

“No, I am not, because I am in search of the secret of the augmentation of gold, and it is a very expensive study for us.”

“How many are there in your company?”

“Only my uncle and myself.”

“What do you want to augment gold for? The augmentation of mercury ought to be enough for you. Pray, tell me whether the mercury augmented by you to-day is again susceptible of a similar increase.”

“No, if it were so, it would be an immense source of wealth for us.”

“I am much pleased with your sincerity.”

Supper over I paid my bill, and asked the landlord to get me a carriage and pair of horses to take me to Salerno early the next morning. I thanked the Greek for his delicious muscatel wine, and, requesting his address in Naples, I assured him that he would see me within a fortnight, as I was determined to secure a cask of his Cerigo.

We embraced each other, and I retired to bed well pleased with my day’s work, and in no way astonished at the Greek’s not offering to purchase my secret, for I was certain that he would not sleep for anxiety, and that I should see him early in the morning. At all events, I had enough money to reach the Tour-du-Grec, and there Providence would take care of me. Yet it seemed to me very difficult to travel as far as Martorano, begging like a mendicant-friar, because my outward appearance did not excite pity; people would feel interested in me only from a conviction that I needed nothing — a very unfortunate conviction, when the object of it is truly poor.

As I had forseen, the Greek was in my room at daybreak. I received him in a friendly way, saying that we could take coffee together.

“Willingly; but tell me, reverend abbe, whether you would feel disposed to sell me your secret?”

“Why not? When we meet in Naples— “

“But why not now?”

“I am expected in Salerno; besides, I would only sell the secret for a large sum of money, and I am not acquainted with you.”

“That does not matter, as I am sufficiently known here to pay you in cash. How much would you want?”

“Two thousand ounces.”

“I agree to pay you that sum provided that I succeed in making the augmentation myself with such matter as you name to me, which I will purchase.”

“It is impossible, because the necessary ingredients cannot be got here; but they are common enough in Naples.”

"If it is any sort of metal, we can get it at the Tour-du-Grec. We could go there together. Can you tell me what is the expense of the augmentation?"

"One and a half per cent. but are you likewise known at the Tour-du-Grec, for I should not like to lose my time?"

"Your doubts grieve me."

Saying which, he took a pen, wrote a few words, and handed to me this order:

"At sight, pay to bearer the sum of fifty gold ounces, on account of Panagiotti."

He told me that the banker resided within two hundred yards of the inn, and he pressed me to go there myself. I did not stand upon ceremony, but went to the banker who paid me the amount. I returned to my room in which he was waiting for me, and placed the gold on the table, saying that we could now proceed together to the Tour-du-Grec, where we would complete our arrangements after the signature of a deed of agreement. The Greek had his own carriage and horses; he gave orders for them to be got ready, and we left the inn; but he had nobly insisted upon my taking possession of the fifty ounces.

When we arrived at the Tour-du-Grec, he signed a document by which he promised to pay me two thousand ounces as soon as I should have discovered to him the process of augmenting mercury by one-fourth without injuring its quality, the amalgam to be equal to the mercury which I had sold in his presence at Portici.

He then gave me a bill of exchange payable at sight in eight days on M. Genaro de Carlo. I told him that the ingredients were lead and bismuth; the first, combining with mercury, and the second giving to the whole the perfect fluidity necessary to strain it through the chamois leather. The Greek went out to try the amalgam — I do not know where, and I dined alone, but toward evening he came back, looking very disconsolate, as I had expected.

"I have made the amalgam," he said, "but the mercury is not perfect."

"It is equal to that which I have sold in Portici, and that is the very letter of your engagement."

“But my engagement says likewise without injury to the quality. You must agree that the quality is injured, because it is no longer susceptible of further augmentation.”

“You knew that to be the case; the point is its equality with the mercury I sold in Portici. But we shall have to go to law, and you will lose. I am sorry the secret should become public. Congratulate yourself, sir, for, if you should gain the lawsuit, you will have obtained my secret for nothing. I would never have believed you capable of deceiving me in such a manner.”

“Reverend sir, I can assure you that I would not willingly deceive any one.”

“Do you know the secret, or do you not? Do you suppose I would have given it to you without the agreement we entered into? Well, there will be some fun over this affair in Naples, and the lawyers will make money out of it. But I am much grieved at this turn of affairs, and I am very sorry that I allowed myself to be so easily deceived by your fine talk. In the mean time, here are your fifty ounces.”

As I was taking the money out of my pocket, frightened to death lest he should accept it, he left the room, saying that he would not have it. He soon returned; we had supper in the same room, but at separate tables; war had been openly declared, but I felt certain that a treaty of peace would soon be signed. We did not exchange one word during the evening, but in the morning he came to me as I was getting ready to go. I again offered to return the money I received, but he told me to keep it, and proposed to give me fifty ounces more if I would give him back his bill of exchange for two thousand. We began to argue the matter quietly, and after two hours of discussion I gave in. I received fifty ounces more, we dined together like old friends, and embraced each other cordially. As I was bidding him adieu, he gave me an order on his house at Naples for a barrel of muscatel wine, and he presented me with a splendid box containing twelve razors with silver handles, manufactured in the Tour-du-Grec. We parted the best friends in the world and well pleased with each other.

I remained two days in Salerno to provide myself with linen and other necessaries. Possessing about one hundred sequins, and enjoying good health, I was very proud of my success, in which I could not see any cause of reproach to myself, for the cunning I had brought into play to insure the sale of my secret could not be found fault with except by the most intolerant of moralists, and such men have no authority to speak on matters of business. At all events, free, rich, and certain of presenting myself before the bishop with a respectable appearance, and not like a beggar, I soon recovered my natural spirits, and congratulated myself upon having bought sufficient experience to insure me against falling a second time an easy prey to a Father Corsini, to thieving gamblers, to mercenary women, and particularly to the impudent scoundrels who barefacedly praise so well those they intend to dupe — a species of knaves very common in the world, even amongst people who form what is called good society.

I left Salerno with two priests who were going to Cosenza on business, and we traversed the distance of one hundred and forty-two miles in twenty-two hours. The day after my arrival in the capital of Calabria, I took a small carriage and drove to Martorano. During the journey, fixing my eyes upon the famous mare Ausonaum, I felt delighted at finding myself in the middle of Magna Grecia, rendered so celebrated for twenty-four centuries by its connection with Pythagoras. I looked with astonishment upon a country renowned for its fertility, and in which, in spite of nature's prodigality, my eyes met everywhere the aspect of terrible misery, the complete absence of that pleasant superfluity which helps man to enjoy life, and the degradation of the inhabitants sparsely scattered on a soil where they ought to be so numerous; I felt ashamed to acknowledge them as originating from the same stock as myself. Such is, however the Terra di Lavoro where labour seems to be execrated, where everything is cheap, where the miserable inhabitants consider that they have made a good bargain when they have found anyone disposed to take care of the fruit which the ground supplies almost spontaneously in too great abundance, and for which there is no market. I felt compelled to admit the justice of the Romans who had called them Brutes instead of Byutians. The good priests with whom I had been travelling laughed at my dread of the tarantula and of the crasydra, for the disease brought on by the bite of those insects appeared to me more fearful even than a certain disease with which I was already too well acquainted. They assured me that all the stories relating to those creatures were fables; they laughed at the lines which Virgil has devoted to them in the Georgics as well as at all those I quoted to justify my fears.

I found Bishop Bernard de Bernardis occupying a hard chair near an old table on which he was writing. I fell on my knees, as it is customary to do before a prelate, but, instead of giving me his blessing, he raised me up from the floor, and, folding me in his arms, embraced me tenderly. He expressed his deep sorrow when I told him that in Naples I had not been able to find any instructions to enable me to join him, but his face lighted up again when I added that I was indebted to no one for money, and that I was in good health. He bade me take a seat, and with a heavy sigh he began to talk of his poverty, and ordered a servant to lay the cloth for three persons. Besides this servant, his lordship's suite consisted of a most devout-looking housekeeper, and of a priest whom I judged to be very ignorant from the few words he uttered during our meal. The house inhabited by his lordship was large, but badly built and poorly kept. The furniture was so miserable that, in order to make up a bed for me in the room adjoining his chamber, the poor bishop had to give up one of his two mattresses! His dinner, not to say any more about it, frightened me, for he was very strict in keeping the rules of his order, and this being a fast day, he did not eat any meat, and the oil was very bad. Nevertheless, monsignor was an intelligent man, and, what is still better, an honest man. He told me, much to my surprise, that his bishopric, although not one of little importance, brought him in only five hundred ducat-diregno yearly, and that, unfortunately, he had contracted debts to the amount of six hundred. He added, with a sigh, that his only happiness was to feel himself out of the clutches of the monks, who had persecuted him, and made his life a perfect purgatory for fifteen years. All these confidences caused me sorrow and mortification, because they proved to me, not only that I was not in the promised land where a mitre could be picked up, but also that I would be a heavy charge for him. I felt that he was grieved himself at the sorry present his patronage seemed likely to prove.

I enquired whether he had a good library, whether there were any literary men, or any good society in which one could spend a few agreeable hours. He smiled and answered that throughout his diocese there was not one man who could boast of writing decently, and still less of any taste or knowledge in literature; that there was not a single bookseller, nor any person caring even for the newspapers. But he promised me that we would follow our literary tastes together, as soon as he received the books he had ordered from Naples.

That was all very well, but was this the place for a young man of eighteen to live in, without a good library, without good society, without emulation and literary intercourse? The good bishop, seeing me full of sad thoughts, and almost astounded at the prospect of the miserable life I should have to lead with him, tried to give me courage by promising to do everything in his power to secure my happiness.

The next day, the bishop having to officiate in his pontifical robes, I had an opportunity of seeing all the clergy, and all the faithful of the diocese, men and women, of whom the cathedral was full; the sight made me resolve at once to leave Martorano. I thought I was gazing upon a troop of brutes for whom my external appearance was a cause of scandal. How ugly were the women! What a look of stupidity and coarseness in the men! When I returned to the bishop's house I told the prelate that I did not feel in me the vocation to die within a few months a martyr in this miserable city.

"Give me your blessing," I added, "and let me go; or, rather, come with me. I promise you that we shall make a fortune somewhere else."

The proposal made him laugh repeatedly during the day. Had he agreed to it he would not have died two years afterwards in the prime of manhood. The worthy man, feeling how natural was my repugnance, begged me to forgive him for having summoned me to him, and, considering it his duty to send me back to Venice, having no money himself and not being aware that I had any, he told me that he would give me an introduction to a worthy citizen of Naples who would lend me sixty ducati-di-regno to enable me to reach my native city. I accepted his offer with gratitude, and going to my room I took out of my trunk the case of fine razors which the Greek had given me, and I begged his acceptance of it as a souvenir of me. I had great difficulty in forcing it upon him, for it was worth the sixty ducats, and to conquer his resistance I had to threaten to remain with him if he refused my present. He gave me a very flattering letter of recommendation for the Archbishop of Cosenza, in which he requested him to forward me as far as Naples without any expense to myself. It was thus I left Martorano sixty hours after my arrival, pitying the bishop whom I was leaving behind, and who wept as he was pouring heartfelt blessings upon me.

The Archbishop of Cosenza, a man of wealth and of intelligence, offered me a room in his palace. During the dinner I made, with an overflowing heart, the eulogy of the Bishop of Martorano; but I railed mercilessly at his diocese and at the whole of Calabria in so cutting a manner that I greatly amused the archbishop and all his guests, amongst whom were two ladies, his relatives, who did the honours of the dinner-table. The youngest, however, objected to the satirical style in which I had depicted her country, and declared war against me; but I contrived to obtain peace again by telling her that Calabria would be a delightful country if one-fourth only of its inhabitants were like her. Perhaps it was with the idea of proving to me that I had been wrong in my opinion that the archbishop gave on the following day a splendid supper.

Cosenza is a city in which a gentleman can find plenty of amusement; the nobility are wealthy, the women are pretty, and men generally well-informed, because they have been educated in Naples or in Rome. I left Cosenza on the third day with a letter from the archbishop for the far-famed Genovesi.

I had five travelling companions, whom I judged, from their appearance, to be either pirates or banditti, and I took very good care not to let them see or guess that I had a well-filled purse. I likewise thought it prudent to go to bed without undressing during the whole journey — an excellent measure of prudence for a young man travelling in that part of the country.

I reached Naples on the 16th of September, 1743, and I lost no time in presenting the letter of the Bishop of Martorano. It was addressed to a M. Gennaro Polo at St. Anne’s. This excellent man, whose duty was only to give me the sum of sixty ducats, insisted, after perusing the bishop’s letter, upon receiving me in his house, because he wished me to make the acquaintance of his son, who was a poet like myself. The bishop had represented my poetry as sublime. After the usual ceremonies, I accepted his kind invitation, my trunk was sent for, and I was a guest in the house of M. Gennaro Polo.

CHAPTER IX

My Stay in Naples; It Is Short but Happy — Don Antonio Casanova — Don Lelio Caraffa — I Go to Rome in Very Agreeable Company, and Enter the Service of Cardinal Acquaviva — Barbara — Testaccio — Frascati

I had no difficulty in answering the various questions which Doctor Gennaro addressed to me, but I was surprised, and even displeased, at the constant peals of laughter with which he received my answers. The piteous description of miserable Calabria, and the picture of the sad situation of the Bishop of Martorano, appeared to me more likely to call forth tears than to excite hilarity, and, suspecting that some mystification was being played upon me, I was very near getting angry when, becoming more composed, he told me with feeling that I must kindly excuse him; that his laughter was a disease which seemed to be endemic in his family, for one of his uncles died of it.

“What!” I exclaimed, “died of laughing!”

“Yes. This disease, which was not known to Hippocrates, is called li flati.”

“What do you mean? Does an hypochondriac affection, which causes sadness and lowness in all those who suffer from it, render you cheerful?”

“Yes, because, most likely, my flati, instead of influencing the hypochondrium, affects my spleen, which my physician asserts to be the organ of laughter. It is quite a discovery.”

“You are mistaken; it is a very ancient notion, and it is the only function which is ascribed to the spleen in our animal organization.”

“Well, we must discuss the matter at length, for I hope you will remain with us a few weeks.”

“I wish I could, but I must leave Naples to-morrow or the day after.”

“Have you got any money?”

“I rely upon the sixty ducats you have to give me.”

At these words, his peals of laughter began again, and as he could see that I was annoyed, he said, “I am amused at the idea that I can keep you here as long as I like. But be good enough to see my son; he writes pretty verses enough.”

And truly his son, although only fourteen, was already a great poet.

A servant took me to the apartment of the young man whom I found possessed of a pleasing countenance and engaging manners. He gave me a polite welcome, and begged to be excused if he could not attend to me altogether for the present, as he had to finish a song which he was composing for a relative of the Duchess de Rovino, who was taking the veil at the Convent of St. Claire, and the printer was waiting for the manuscript. I told him that his excuse was a very good one, and I offered to assist him. He then read his song, and I found it so full of enthusiasm, and so truly in the style of Guidi, that I advised him to call it an ode; but as I had praised all the truly beautiful passages, I thought I could venture to point out the weak ones, and I replaced them by verses of my own composition. He was delighted, and thanked me warmly, inquiring whether I was Apollo. As he was writing his ode, I composed a sonnet on the same subject, and, expressing his admiration for it he begged me to sign it, and to allow him to send it with his poetry.

While I was correcting and recopying my manuscript, he went to his father to find out who I was, which made the old man laugh until supper-time. In the evening, I had the pleasure of seeing that my bed had been prepared in the young man's chamber.

Doctor Gennaro's family was composed of this son and of a daughter unfortunately very plain, of his wife and of two elderly, devout sisters. Amongst the guests at the supper-table I met several literary men, and the Marquis Galiani, who was at that time annotating Vitruvius. He had a brother, an abbe whose acquaintance I made twenty years after, in Paris, when he was secretary of embassy to Count Cantillana. The next day, at supper, I was presented to the celebrated Genovesi; I had already sent him the letter of the Archbishop of Cosenza. He spoke to me of Apostolo Zeno and of the Abbe Conti. He remarked that it was considered a very venial sin for a regular priest to say two masses in one day for the sake of earning two carlini more, but that for the same sin a secular priest would deserve to be burnt at the stake.

The nun took the veil on the following day, and Gennaro's ode and my sonnet had the greatest success. A Neapolitan gentleman, whose name was the same as mine, expressed a wish to know me, and, hearing that I resided at the doctor's, he called to congratulate him on the occasion of his feast-day, which happened to fall on the day following the ceremony at Sainte-Claire.

Don Antonio Casanova, informing me of his name, enquired whether my family was originally from Venice.

"I am, sir," I answered modestly, "the great-grandson of the unfortunate Marco Antonio Casanova, secretary to Cardinal Pompeo Colonna, who died of the plague in Rome, in the year 1528, under the pontificate of Clement VII." The words were scarcely out of my lips when he embraced me, calling me his cousin, but we all thought that Doctor Gennaro would actually die with laughter, for it seemed impossible to laugh so immoderately without risk of life. Madame Gennaro was very angry and told my newly-found cousin that he might have avoided enacting such a scene before her husband, knowing his disease, but he answered that he never thought the circumstance likely to provoke mirth. I said nothing, for, in reality, I felt that the recognition was very comic. Our poor laugher having recovered his composure, Casanova, who had remained very serious, invited me to dinner for the next day with my young friend Paul Gennaro, who had already become my alter ego.

When we called at his house, my worthy cousin showed me his family tree, beginning with a Don Francisco, brother of Don Juan. In my pedigree, which I knew by heart, Don Juan, my direct ancestor, was a posthumous child. It was possible that there might have been a brother of Marco Antonio's; but when he heard that my genealogy began with Don Francisco, from Aragon, who had lived in the fourteenth century, and that consequently all the pedigree of the illustrious house of the Casanovas of Saragossa belonged to him, his joy knew no bounds; he did not know what to do to convince me that the same blood was flowing in his veins and in mine.

He expressed some curiosity to know what lucky accident had brought me to Naples; I told him that, having embraced the ecclesiastical profession, I was going to Rome to seek my fortune. He then presented me to his family, and I thought that I could read on the countenance of my cousin, his dearly beloved wife, that she was not much pleased with the newly-found relationship, but his pretty daughter, and a still prettier niece of his, might very easily have given me faith in the doctrine that blood is thicker than water, however fabulous it may be.

After dinner, Don Antonio informed me that the Duchess de Bovino had expressed a wish to know the Abbe Casanova who had written the sonnet in honour of her relative, and that he would be very happy to introduce me to her as his own cousin. As we were alone at that moment, I begged he would not insist on presenting me, as I was only provided with travelling suits, and had to be careful of my purse so as not to arrive in Rome without money. Delighted at my confidence, and approving my economy, he said, “I am rich, and you must not scruple to come with me to my tailor;” and he accompanied his offer with an assurance that the circumstance would not be known to anyone, and that he would feel deeply mortified if I denied him the pleasure of serving me. I shook him warmly by the hand, and answered that I was ready to do anything he pleased. We went to a tailor who took my measure, and who brought me on the following day everything necessary to the toilet of the most elegant abbe. Don Antonio called on me, and remained to dine with Don Gennaro, after which he took me and my friend Paul to the duchess. This lady, according to the Neapolitan fashion, called me thou in her very first compliment of welcome. Her daughter, then only ten or twelve years old, was very handsome, and a few years later became Duchess de Matalona. The duchess presented me with a snuff-box in pale tortoise-shell with arabesque incrustations in gold, and she invited us to dine with her on the morrow, promising to take us after dinner to the Convent of St. Claire to pay a visit to the new nun.

As we came out of the palace of the duchess, I left my friends and went alone to Panagiotti’s to claim the barrel of muscatel wine. The manager was kind enough to have the barrel divided into two smaller casks of equal capacity, and I sent one to Don Antonio, and the other to Don Gennaro. As I was leaving the shop I met the worthy Panagiotti, who was glad to see me. Was I to blush at the sight of the good man I had at first deceived? No, for in his opinion I had acted very nobly towards him.

Don Gennaro, as I returned home, managed to thank me for my handsome present without laughing, and the next day Don Antonio, to make up for the muscatel wine I had sent him, offered me a gold-headed cane, worth at least fifteen ounces, and his tailor brought me a travelling suit and a blue great coat, with the buttonholes in gold lace. I therefore found myself splendidly equipped.

At the Duchess de Bovino’s dinner I made the acquaintance of the wisest and most learned man in Naples, the illustrious Don Lelio Caraffa, who belonged to the ducal family of Matalona, and whom King Carlos honoured with the title of friend.

I spent two delightful hours in the convent parlour, coping successfully with the curiosity of all the nuns who were pressing against the grating. Had destiny allowed me to remain in Naples my fortune would have been made; but, although I had no fixed plan, the voice of fate summoned me to Rome, and therefore I resisted all the entreaties of my cousin Antonio to accept the honourable position of tutor in several houses of the highest order.

Don Antonio gave a splendid dinner in my honour, but he was annoyed and angry because he saw that his wife looked daggers at her new cousin. I thought that, more than once, she cast a glance at my new costume, and then whispered to the guest next to her. Very likely she knew what had taken place. There are some positions in life to which I could never be reconciled. If, in the most brilliant circle, there is one person who affects to stare at me I lose all presence of mind. Self-dignity feels outraged, my wit dies away, and I play the part of a dolt. It is a weakness on my part, but a weakness I cannot overcome.

Don Lelio Caraffa offered me a very liberal salary if I would undertake the education of his nephew, the Duke de Matalona, then ten years of age. I expressed my gratitude, and begged him to be my true benefactor in a different manner — namely, by giving me a few good letters of introduction for Rome, a favour which he granted at once. He gave me one for Cardinal Acquaviva, and another for Father Georgi.

I found out that the interest felt towards me by my friends had induced them to obtain for me the honour of kissing the hand of Her Majesty the Queen, and I hastened my preparations to leave Naples, for the queen would certainly have asked me some questions, and I could not have avoided telling her that I had just left Martorano and the poor bishop whom she had sent there. The queen likewise knew my mother; she would very likely have alluded to my mother’s profession in Dresden; it would have mortified Don Antonio, and my pedigree would have been covered with ridicule. I knew the force of prejudice! I should have been ruined, and I felt I should do well to withdraw in good time. As I took leave of him, Don Antonio presented me with a fine gold watch and gave me a letter for Don Gaspar Vidaldi, whom he called his best friend. Don Gennaro paid me the sixty ducats, and his son, swearing eternal friendship, asked me to write to him. They all accompanied me to the coach, blending their tears with mine, and loading me with good wishes and blessings.

From my landing in Chiozza up to my arrival in Naples, fortune had seemed bent upon frowning on me; in Naples it began to shew itself less adverse, and on my return to that city it entirely smiled upon me. Naples has always been a fortunate place for me, as the reader of my memoirs will discover. My readers must not forget that in Portici I was on the point of disgracing myself, and there is no remedy against the degradation of the mind, for nothing can restore it to its former standard. It is a case of disheartening atony for which there is no possible cure.

I was not ungrateful to the good Bishop of Martorano, for, if he had unwittingly injured me by summoning me to his diocese, I felt that to his letter for M. Gennaro I was indebted for all the good fortune which had just befallen me. I wrote to him from Rome.

I was wholly engaged in drying my tears as we were driving through the beautiful street of Toledo, and it was only after we had left Naples that I could find time to examine the countenance of my travelling companions. Next to me, I saw a man of from forty to fifty, with a pleasing face and a lively air, but, opposite to me, two charming faces delighted my eyes. They belonged to two ladies, young and pretty, very well dressed, with a look of candour and modesty. This discovery was most agreeable, but I felt sad and I wanted calm and silence. We reached Avessa without one word being exchanged, and as the vetturino stopped there only to water his mules, we did not get out of the coach. From Avessa to Capua my companions conversed almost without interruption, and, wonderful to relate! I did not open my lips once. I was amused by the Neapolitan jargon of the gentleman, and by the pretty accent of the ladies, who were evidently Romans. It was a most wonderful feat for me to remain five hours before two charming women without addressing one word to them, without paying them one compliment.

At Capua, where we were to spend the night, we put up at an inn, and were shown into a room with two beds — a very usual thing in Italy. The Neapolitan, addressing himself to me, said,

“Am I to have the honour of sleeping with the reverend gentleman?”

I answered in a very serious tone that it was for him to choose or to arrange it otherwise, if he liked. The answer made the two ladies smile, particularly the one whom I preferred, and it seemed to me a good omen.

We were five at supper, for it is usual for the vetturino to supply his travellers with their meals, unless some private agreement is made otherwise, and to sit down at table with them. In the desultory talk which went on during the supper, I found in my travelling companions decorum, propriety, wit, and the manners of persons accustomed to good society. I became curious to know who they were, and going down with the driver after supper, I asked him.

“The gentleman,” he told me, “is an advocate, and one of the ladies is his wife, but I do not know which of the two.”

I went back to our room, and I was polite enough to go to bed first, in order to make it easier for the ladies to undress themselves with freedom; I likewise got up first in the morning, left the room, and only returned when I was called for breakfast. The coffee was delicious. I praised it highly, and the lady, the one who was my favourite, promised that I should have the same every morning during our journey. The barber came in after breakfast; the advocate was shaved, and the barber offered me his services, which I declined, but the rogue declared that it was slovenly to wear one’s beard.

When we had resumed our seats in the coach, the advocate made some remark upon the impudence of barbers in general.

“But we ought to decide first,” said the lady, “whether or not it is slovenly to go bearded.”

“Of course it is,” said the advocate. “Beard is nothing but a dirty excrescence.”

“You may think so,” I answered, “but everybody does not share your opinion. Do we consider as a dirty excrescence the hair of which we take so much care, and which is of the same nature as the beard? Far from it; we admire the length and the beauty of the hair.”

“Then,” remarked the lady, “the barber is a fool.”

“But after all,” I asked, “have I any beard?”

“I thought you had,” she answered.

“In that case, I will begin to shave as soon as I reach Rome, for this is the first time that I have been convicted of having a beard.”

“My dear wife,” exclaimed the advocate, “you should have held your tongue; perhaps the reverend abbe is going to Rome with the intention of becoming a Capuchin friar.”

The pleasantry made me laugh, but, unwilling that he should have the last word, I answered that he had guessed rightly, that such had been my intention, but that I had entirely altered my mind since I had seen his wife.

“Oh! you are wrong,” said the joyous Neapolitan, “for my wife is very fond of Capuchins, and if you wish to please her, you had better follow your original vocation.” Our conversation continued in the same tone of pleasantry, and the day passed off in an agreeable manner; in the evening we had a very poor supper at Garillan, but we made up for it by cheerfulness and witty conversation. My dawning inclination for the advocate’s wife borrowed strength from the affectionate manner she displayed towards me.

The next day she asked me, after we had resumed our journey, whether I intended to make a long stay in Rome before returning to Venice. I answered that, having no acquaintances in Rome, I was afraid my life there would be very dull.

“Strangers are liked in Rome,” she said, “I feel certain that you will be pleased with your residence in that city.”

“May I hope, madam, that you will allow me to pay you my respects?”

“We shall be honoured by your calling on us,” said the advocate.

My eyes were fixed upon his charming wife. She blushed, but I did not appear to notice it. I kept up the conversation, and the day passed as pleasantly as the previous one. We stopped at Terracina, where they gave us a room with three beds, two single beds and a large one between the two others. It was natural that the two sisters should take the large bed; they did so, and undressed themselves while the advocate and I went on talking at the table, with our backs turned to them. As soon as they had gone to rest, the advocate took the bed on which he found his nightcap, and I the other, which was only about one foot distant from the large bed. I remarked that the lady by whom I was captivated was on the side nearest my couch, and, without much vanity, I could suppose that it was not owing only to chance.

I put the light out and laid down, revolving in my mind a project which I could not abandon, and yet durst not execute. In vain did I court sleep. A very faint light enabled me to perceive the bed in which the pretty woman was lying, and my eyes would, in spite of myself, remain open. It would be difficult to guess what I might have done at last (I had already fought a hard battle with myself for more than an hour), when I saw her rise, get out of her bed, and go and lay herself down near her husband, who, most likely, did not wake up, and continued to sleep in peace, for I did not hear any noise.

Vexed, disgusted…. I tried to compose myself to sleep, and I woke only at day-break. Seeing the beautiful wandering star in her own bed, I got up, dressed myself in haste, and went out, leaving all my companions fast asleep. I returned to the inn only at the time fixed for our departure, and I found the advocate and the two ladies already in the coach, waiting for me.

The lady complained, in a very obliging manner, of my not having cared for her coffee; I pleaded as an excuse a desire for an early walk, and I took care not to honour her even with a look; I feigned to be suffering from the toothache, and remained in my corner dull and silent. At Piperno she managed to whisper to me that my toothache was all sham; I was pleased with the reproach, because it heralded an explanation which I craved for, in spite of my vexation.

During the afternoon I continued my policy of the morning. I was morose and silent until we reached Serinonetta, where we were to pass the night. We arrived early, and the weather being fine, the lady said that she could enjoy a walk, and asked me politely to offer her my arm. I did so, for it would have been rude to refuse; besides I had had enough of my sulking fit. An explanation could alone bring matters back to their original standing, but I did not know how to force it upon the lady. Her husband followed us at some distance with the sister.

When we were far enough in advance, I ventured to ask her why she had supposed my toothache to have been feigned.

“I am very candid,” she said; “it is because the difference in your manner was so marked, and because you were so careful to avoid looking at me through the whole day. A toothache would not have prevented you from being polite, and therefore I thought it had been feigned for some purpose.

But I am certain that not one of us can possibly have given you any grounds for such a rapid change in your manner."

"Yet something must have caused the change, and you, madam, are only half sincere."

"You are mistaken, sir, I am entirely sincere; and if I have given you any motive for anger, I am, and must remain, ignorant of it. Be good enough to tell me what I have done."

"Nothing, for I have no right to complain."

"Yes, you have; you have a right, the same that I have myself; the right which good society grants to every one of its members. Speak, and shew yourself as sincere as I am."

"You are certainly bound not to know, or to pretend not to know the real cause, but you must acknowledge that my duty is to remain silent."

"Very well; now it is all over; but if your duty bids you to conceal the cause of your bad humour, it also bids you not to shew it. Delicacy sometimes enforces upon a polite gentleman the necessity of concealing certain feelings which might implicate either himself or others; it is a restraint for the mind, I confess, but it has some advantage when its effect is to render more amiable the man who forces himself to accept that restraint." Her close argument made me blush for shame, and carrying her beautiful hand to my lips, I confessed my self in the wrong.

"You would see me at your feet," I exclaimed, "in token of my repentance, were I not afraid of injuring you— "

"Do not let us allude to the matter any more," she answered.

And, pleased with my repentance, she gave me a look so expressive of forgiveness that, without being afraid of augmenting my guilt, I took my lips off her hand and I raised them to her half-open, smiling mouth. Intoxicated with rapture, I passed so rapidly from a state of sadness to one of overwhelming cheerfulness that during our supper the advocate enjoyed a thousand jokes upon my toothache, so quickly cured by the simple remedy of a walk. On the following day we dined at Velletri and slept in Marino, where, although the town was full of troops, we had two small rooms and a good supper. I could not have been on better terms with my charming Roman; for, although I had received but a rapid proof of her regard, it had been such a true one — such a tender one! In the coach our eyes could not say much; but I was opposite to her, and our feet spoke a very eloquent language.

The advocate had told me that he was going to Rome on some ecclesiastical business, and that he intended to reside in the house of his mother-in-law, whom his wife had not seen since her marriage, two years ago, and her sister hoped to remain in Rome, where she expected to marry a clerk at the Spirito Santo Bank. He gave me their address, with a pressing invitation to call upon them, and I promised to devote all my spare time to them.

We were enjoying our dessert, when my beautiful lady-love, admiring my snuff-box, told her husband that she wished she had one like it.

“I will buy you one, dear.”

“Then buy mine,” I said; “I will let you have it for twenty ounces, and you can give me a note of hand payable to bearer in payment. I owe that amount to an Englishman, and I will give it him to redeem my debt.”

“Your snuff-box, my dear abbe, is worth twenty ounces, but I cannot buy it unless you agree to receive payment in cash; I should be delighted to see it in my wife’s possession, and she would keep it as a remembrance of you.”

His wife, thinking that I would not accept his offer, said that she had no objection to give me the note of hand.

“But,” exclaimed the advocate, “can you not guess the Englishman exists only in our friend’s imagination? He would never enter an appearance, and we would have the snuff-box for nothing. Do not trust the abbe, my dear, he is a great cheat.”

“I had no idea,” answered his wife, looking at me, “that the world contained rogues of this species.”

I affected a melancholy air, and said that I only wished myself rich enough to be often guilty of such cheating.

When a man is in love very little is enough to throw him into despair, and as little to enhance his joy to the utmost. There was but one bed in the room where supper had been served, and another in a small closet leading out of the room, but without a door. The ladies chose the closet, and the advocate retired to rest before me. I bid the ladies good night as soon as they had gone to bed; I looked at my dear mistress, and after undressing myself I went to bed, intending not to sleep through the night. But the reader may imagine my rage when I found, as I got into the bed, that it creaked loud enough to wake the dead. I waited, however, quite motionless, until my companion should be fast asleep, and as soon as his snoring told me that he was entirely under the influence of Morpheus, I tried to slip out of the bed; but the infernal creaking which took place whenever I moved, woke my companion, who felt about with his hand, and, finding me near him, went to sleep again. Half an hour after, I tried a second time, but with the same result. I had to give it up in despair.

Love is the most cunning of gods; in the midst of obstacles he seems to be in his own element, but as his very existence depends upon the enjoyment of those who ardently worship him, the shrewd, all-seeing, little blind god contrives to bring success out of the most desperate case.

I had given up all hope for the night, and had nearly gone to sleep, when suddenly we hear a dreadful noise. Guns are fired in the street, people, screaming and howling, are running up and down the stairs; at last there is a loud knocking at our door. The advocate, frightened out of his slumbers, asks me what it can all mean; I pretend to be very indifferent, and beg to be allowed to sleep. But the ladies are trembling with fear, and loudly calling for a light. I remain very quiet, the advocate jumps out of bed, and runs out of the room to obtain a candle; I rise at once, I follow him to shut the door, but I slam it rather too hard, the double spring of the lock gives way, and the door cannot be reopened without the key.

I approach the ladies in order to calm their anxiety, telling them that the advocate would soon return with a light, and that we should then know the cause of the tumult, but I am not losing my time, and am at work while I am speaking. I meet with very little opposition, but, leaning rather too heavily upon my fair lady, I break through the bottom of the bedstead, and we suddenly find ourselves, the two ladies and myself, all together in a heap on the floor. The advocate comes back and knocks at the door; the sister gets up, I obey the prayers of my charming friend, and, feeling my way, reach the door, and tell the advocate that I cannot open it, and that he must get the key. The two sisters are behind me. I extend my hand; but I am abruptly repulsed, and judge that I have addressed myself to the wrong quarter; I go to the other side, and there I am better received. But the husband returns, the noise of the key in the lock announces that the door is going to be opened, and we return to our respective beds.

The advocate hurries to the bed of the two frightened ladies, thinking of relieving their anxiety, but, when he sees them buried in their broken-down bedstead, he bursts into a loud laugh. He tells me to come and have a look at them, but I am very modest, and decline the invitation. He then tells us that the alarm has been caused by a German detachment attacking suddenly the Spanish troops in the city, and that the Spaniards are running away. In a quarter of an hour the noise has ceased, and quiet is entirely re-established.

The advocate complimented me upon my coolness, got into bed again, and was soon asleep. As for me, I was careful not to close my eyes, and as soon as I saw daylight I got up in order to perform certain ablutions and to change my shirt; it was an absolute necessity.

I returned for breakfast, and while we were drinking the delicious coffee which Donna Lucrezia had made, as I thought, better than ever, I remarked that her sister frowned on me. But how little I cared for her anger when I saw the cheerful, happy countenance, and the approving looks of my adored Lucrezia! I felt a delightful sensation run through the whole of my body.

We reached Rome very early. We had taken breakfast at the Tour, and the advocate being in a very gay mood I assumed the same tone, loading him with compliments, and predicting that a son would be born to him, I compelled his wife to promise it should be so. I did not forget the sister of my charming Lucrezia, and to make her change her hostile attitude towards me I addressed to her so many pretty compliments, and behaved in such a friendly manner, that she was compelled to forgive the fall of the bed. As I took leave of them, I promised to give them a call on the following day.

I was in Rome! with a good wardrobe, pretty well supplied with money and jewellery, not wanting in experience, and with excellent letters of introduction. I was free, my own master, and just reaching the age in which a man can have faith in his own fortune, provided he is not deficient in courage, and is blessed with a face likely to attract the sympathy of those he mixes with. I was not handsome, but I had something better than beauty — a striking expression which almost compelled a kind interest in my favour, and I felt myself ready for anything. I knew that Rome is the one city in which a man can begin from the lowest rung, and reach the very top of the social ladder. This knowledge increased my courage, and I must confess that a most inveterate feeling of self-esteem which, on account of my inexperience, I could not distrust, enhanced wonderfully my confidence in myself.

The man who intends to make his fortune in this ancient capital of the world must be a chameleon susceptible of reflecting all the colours of the atmosphere that surrounds him — a Proteus apt to assume every form, every shape. He must be supple, flexible, insinuating; close, inscrutable, often base, sometimes sincere, some times perfidious, always concealing a part of his knowledge, indulging in one tone of voice, patient, a perfect master of his own countenance as cold as ice when any other man would be all fire; and if unfortunately he is not religious at heart — a very common occurrence for a soul possessing the above requisites — he must have religion in his mind, that is to say, on his face, on his lips, in his manners; he must suffer quietly, if he be an honest man the necessity of knowing himself an arrant hypocrite. The man whose soul would loathe such a life should leave Rome and seek his fortune elsewhere. I do not know whether I am praising or excusing myself, but of all those qualities I possessed but one — namely, flexibility; for the rest, I was only an interesting, heedless young fellow, a pretty good blood horse, but not broken, or rather badly broken; and that is much worse.

I began by delivering the letter I had received from Don Lelio for Father Georgi. The learned monk enjoyed the esteem of everyone in Rome, and the Pope himself had a great consideration for him, because he disliked the Jesuits, and did not put a mask on to tear the mask from their faces, although they deemed themselves powerful enough to despise him.

He read the letter with great attention, and expressed himself disposed to be my adviser; and that consequently I might make him responsible for any evil which might befall me, as misfortune is not to be feared by a man who acts rightly. He asked me what I intended to do in Rome, and I answered that I wished him to tell me what to do.

“Perhaps I may; but in that case you must come and see me often, and never conceal from me anything, you understand, not anything, of what interests you, or of what happens to you.”

"Don Lelio has likewise given me a letter for the Cardinal Acquaviva."

"I congratulate you; the cardinal's influence in Rome is greater even than that of the Pope."

"Must I deliver the letter at once?"

"No; I will see him this evening, and prepare him for your visit. Call on me to-morrow morning, and I will then tell you where and when you are to deliver your letter to the cardinal. Have you any money?"

"Enough for all my wants during one year."

"That is well. Have you any acquaintances?"

"Not one."

"Do not make any without first consulting me, and, above all, avoid coffee-houses and ordinaries, but if you should happen to frequent such places, listen and never speak. Be careful to form your judgment upon those who ask any questions from you, and if common civility obliges you to give an answer, give only an evasive one, if any other is likely to commit you. Do you speak French?"

"Not one word."

"I am sorry for that; you must learn French. Have you been a student?"

"A poor one, but I have a sufficient smattering to converse with ordinary company."

"That is enough; but be very prudent, for Rome is the city in which smatterers unmask each other, and are always at war amongst themselves. I hope you will take your letter to the cardinal, dressed like a modest abbe, and not in this elegant costume which is not likely to conjure fortune. Adieu, let me see you to-morrow."

Highly pleased with the welcome I had received at his hands, and with all he had said to me, I left his house and proceeded towards Campo-di-Fiore to deliver the letter of my cousin Antonio to Don Gaspar Vivaldi, who received me in his library, where I met two respectable-looking priests. He gave me the most friendly welcome, asked for my address, and invited me to dinner for the next day. He praised Father Georgi most highly, and, accompanying me as far as the stairs, he told me that he would give me on the morrow the amount his friend Don Antonio requested him to hand me.

More money which my generous cousin was bestowing on me! It is easy enough to give away when one possesses sufficient means to do it, but it is not every man who knows how to give. I found the proceeding of Don Antonio more delicate even than generous; I could not refuse his present; it was my duty to prove my gratitude by accepting it.

Just after I had left M. Vivaldi's house I found myself face to face with Stephano, and this extraordinary original loaded me with friendly caresses. I inwardly despised him, yet I could not feel hatred for him; I looked upon him as the instrument which Providence had been pleased to employ in order to save me from ruin. After telling me that he had obtained from the Pope all he wished, he advised me to avoid meeting the fatal constable who had advanced me two sequins in Seraval, because he had found out that I had deceived him, and had sworn revenge against me. I asked Stephano to induce the man to leave my acknowledgement of the debt in the hands of a certain merchant whom we both knew, and that I would call there to discharge the amount. This was done, and it ended the affair.

That evening I dined at the ordinary, which was frequented by Romans and foreigners; but I carefully followed the advice of Father Georgi. I heard a great deal of harsh language used against the Pope and against the Cardinal Minister, who had caused the Papal States to be inundated by eighty thousand men, Germans as well as Spaniards. But I was much surprised when I saw that everybody was eating meat, although it was Saturday. But a stranger during the first few days after his arrival in Rome is surrounded with many things which at first cause surprise, and to which he soon gets accustomed. There is not a Catholic city in the world in which a man is half so free on religious matters as in Rome. The inhabitants of Rome are like the men employed at the Government tobacco works, who are allowed to take gratis as much tobacco as they want for their own use. One can live in Rome with the most complete freedom, except that the 'ordini santissimi' are as much to be dreaded as the famous Lettres-de-cachet before the Revolution came and destroyed them, and shewed the whole world the general character of the French nation.

The next day, the 1st of October, 1743, I made up my mind to be shaved. The down on my chin had become a beard, and I judged that it was time to renounce some of the privileges enjoyed by adolescence. I dressed myself completely in the Roman fashion, and Father Georgi was highly pleased when he saw me in that costume, which had been made by the tailor of my dear cousin, Don Antonio.

Father Georgi invited me to take a cup of chocolate with him, and informed me that the cardinal had been apprised of my arrival by a letter from Don Lelio, and that his eminence would receive me at noon at the Villa Negroni, where he would be taking a walk. I told Father Georgi that I had been invited to dinner by M. Vivaldi, and he advised me to cultivate his acquaintance.

I proceeded to the Villa Negroni; the moment he saw me the cardinal stopped to receive my letter, allowing two persons who accompanied him to walk forward. He put the letter in his pocket without reading it, examined me for one or two minutes, and enquired whether I felt any taste for politics. I answered that, until now, I had not felt in me any but frivolous tastes, but that I would make bold to answer for my readiness to execute all the orders which his eminence might be pleased to lay upon me, if he should judge me worthy of entering his service.

“Come to my office to-morrow morning,” said the cardinal, “and ask for the Abbe Gama, to whom I will give my instructions. You must apply yourself diligently to the study of the French language; it is indispensable.” He then enquired after Don Leilo’s health, and after kissing his hand I took my leave.

I hastened to the house of M. Gaspar Vivaldi, where I dined amongst a well-chosen party of guests. M. Vivaldi was not married; literature was his only passion. He loved Latin poetry even better than Italian, and Horace, whom I knew by heart, was his favourite poet. After dinner, we repaired to his study, and he handed me one hundred Roman crowns, and Don Antonio’s present, and assured me that I would be most welcome whenever I would call to take a cup of chocolate with him.

After I had taken leave of Don Gaspar, I proceeded towards the Minerva, for I longed to enjoy the surprise of my dear Lucrezia and of her sister; I inquired for Donna Cecilia Monti, their mother, and I saw, to my great astonishment, a young widow who looked like the sister of her two charming daughters. There was no need for me to give her my name; I had been announced, and she expected me. Her daughters soon came in, and their greeting caused me some amusement, for I did not appear to them to be the same individual. Donna Lucrezia presented me to her youngest sister, only eleven years of age, and to her brother, an abbe of fifteen, of charming appearance. I took care to behave so as to please the mother; I was modest, respectful, and shewed a deep interest in everything I saw. The good advocate arrived, and was surprised at the change in my appearance. He launched out in his usual jokes, and I followed him on that ground, yet I was careful not to give to my conversation the tone of levity which used to cause so much mirth in our travelling coach; so that, to, pay me a compliment, he told me that, if I had had the sign of manhood shaved from my face, I had certainly transferred it to my mind. Donna Lucrezia did not know what to think of the change in my manners.

Towards evening I saw, coming in rapid succession, five or six ordinary-looking ladies, and as many abbes, who appeared to me some of the volumes with which I was to begin my Roman education. They all listened attentively to the most insignificant word I uttered, and I was very careful to let them enjoy their conjectures about me. Donna Cecilia told the advocate that he was but a poor painter, and that his portraits were not like the originals; he answered that she could not judge, because the original was shewing under a mask, and I pretended to be mortified by his answer. Donna Lucrezia said that she found me exactly the same, and her sister was of opinion that the air of Rome gave strangers a peculiar appearance. Everybody applauded, and Angelique turned red with satisfaction. After a visit of four hours I bowed myself out, and the advocate, following me, told me that his mother-in-law begged me to consider myself as a friend of the family, and to be certain of a welcome at any hour I liked to call. I thanked him gratefully and took my leave, trusting that I had pleased this amiable society as much as it had pleased me.

The next day I presented myself to the Abbe Gama. He was a Portuguese, about forty years old, handsome, and with a countenance full of candour, wit, and good temper. His affability claimed and obtained confidence. His manners and accent were quite Roman. He informed me, in the blandest manner, that his eminence had himself given his instructions about me to his majordomo, that I would have a lodging in the cardinal’s palace, that I would have my meals at the secretaries’ table, and that, until I learned French, I would have nothing to do but make extracts from letters that he would supply me with. He then gave me the address of the French teacher to whom he had already spoken in my behalf. He was a Roman advocate, Dalacqua by name, residing precisely opposite the palace.

After this short explanation, and an assurance that I could at all times rely upon his friendship, he had me taken to the major-domo, who made me sign my name at the bottom of a page in a large book, already filled with other names, and counted out sixty Roman crowns which he paid me for three months salary in advance. After this he accompanied me, followed by a ‘staffiere’ to my apartment on the third floor, which I found very comfortably furnished. The servant handed me the key, saying that he would come every morning to attend upon me, and the major-domo accompanied me to the gate to make me known to the gate-keeper. I immediately repaired to my inn, sent my luggage to the palace, and found myself established in a place in which a great fortune awaited me, if I had only been able to lead a wise and prudent life, but unfortunately it was not in my nature. ‘Volentem ducit, nolentem trahit.’

I naturally felt it my duty to call upon my mentor, Father Georgi, to whom I gave all my good news. He said I was on the right road, and that my fortune was in my hands.

“Recollect,” added the good father, “that to lead a blameless life you must curb your passions, and that whatever misfortune may befall you it cannot be ascribed by any one to a want of good luck, or attributed to fate; those words are devoid of sense, and all the fault will rightly fall on your own head.”

“I foresee, reverend father, that my youth and my want of experience will often make it necessary for me to disturb you. I am afraid of proving myself too heavy a charge for you, but you will find me docile and obedient.”

“I suppose you will often think me rather too severe; but you are not likely to confide everything to me.”

“Everything, without any exception.”

“Allow me to feel somewhat doubtful; you have not told me where you spent four hours yesterday.”

“Because I did not think it was worth mentioning. I made the acquaintance of those persons during my journey; I believe them to be worthy and respectable, and the right sort of people for me to visit, unless you should be of a different opinion.”

“God forbid! It is a very respectable house, frequented by honest people. They are delighted at having made your acquaintance; you are much liked by everybody, and they hope to retain you as a friend; I have heard all about it this morning; but you must not go there too often and as a regular guest.”

“Must I cease my visits at once, and without cause?”

“No, it would be a want of politeness on your part. You may go there once or twice every week, but do not be a constant visitor. You are sighing, my son?”

“No, I assure you not. I will obey you.”

“I hope it may not be only a matter of obedience, and I trust your heart will not feel it a hardship, but, if necessary, your heart must be conquered. Recollect that the heart is the greatest enemy of reason.”

“Yet they can be made to agree.”

“We often imagine so; but distrust the animism of your dear Horace. You know that there is no middle course with it: ‘nisi paret, imperat’.”

“I know it, but in the family of which we were speaking there is no danger for my heart.”

“I am glad of it, because in that case it will be all the easier for you to abstain from frequent visits. Remember that I shall trust you.”

“And I, reverend father; will listen to and follow your good advice. I will visit Donna Cecilia only now and then.” Feeling most unhappy, I took his hand to press it against my lips, but he folded me in his arms as a father might have done, and turned himself round so as not to let me see that he was weeping.

I dined at the cardinal’s palace and sat near the Abbe Gama; the table was laid for twelve persons, who all wore the costume of priests, for in Rome everyone is a priest or wishes to be thought a priest and as there is no law to forbid anyone to dress like an ecclesiastic that dress is adopted by all those who wish to be respected (noblemen excepted) even if they are not in the ecclesiastical profession.

I felt very miserable, and did not utter a word during the dinner; my silence was construed into a proof of my sagacity. As we rose from the table, the Abbe Gama invited me to spend the day with him, but I declined under pretence of letters to be written, and I truly did so for seven hours. I wrote to Don Lelio, to Don Antonio, to my young friend Paul, and to the worthy Bishop of Martorano, who answered that he heartily wished himself in my place.

Deeply enamoured of Lucrezia and happy in my love, to give her up appeared to me a shameful action. In order to insure the happiness of my future life, I was beginning to be the executioner of my present felicity, and the tormentor of my heart. I revolted against such a necessity which I judged fictitious, and which I could not admit unless I stood guilty of vileness before the tribunal of my own reason. I thought that Father Georgi, if he wished to forbid my visiting that family, ought not to have said that it was worthy of respect; my sorrow would not have been so intense. The day and the whole of the night were spent in painful thoughts.

In the morning the Abbe Gama brought me a great book filled with ministerial letters from which I was to compile for my amusement. After a short time devoted to that occupation, I went out to take my first French lesson, after which I walked towards the Strada-Condotta. I intended to take a long walk, when I heard myself called by my name. I saw the Abbe Gama in front of a coffee-house. I whispered to him that Minerva had forbidden me the coffee-rooms of Rome. “Minerva,” he answered, “desires you to form some idea of such places. Sit down by me.”

I heard a young abbe telling aloud, but without bitterness, a story, which attacked in a most direct manner the justice of His Holiness. Everybody was laughing and echoing the story. Another, being asked why he had left the services of Cardinal B., answered that it was because his eminence did not think himself called upon to pay him apart for certain private services, and everybody laughed outright. Another came to the Abbe Gama, and told him that, if he felt any inclination to spend the afternoon at the Villa Medicis, he would find him there with two young Roman girls who were satisfied with a ‘quartino’, a gold coin worth one-fourth of a sequin. Another abbe read an incendiary sonnet against the government, and several took a copy of it. Another read a satire of his own composition, in which he tore to pieces the honour of a family. In the middle of all that confusion, I saw a priest with a very attractive countenance come in. The size of his hips made me take him for a woman dressed in men’s clothes, and I said so to Gama, who told me that he was the celebrated castrato, Bepino delta Mamana. The abbe called him to us, and told him with a laugh that I had taken him for a girl. The impudent fellow looked me full in the face, and said that, if I liked, he would shew me whether I had been right or wrong.

At the dinner-table everyone spoke to me, and I fancied I had given proper answers to all, but, when the repast was over, the Abbe Gama invited me to take coffee in his own apartment. The moment we were alone, he told me that all the guests I had met were worthy and honest men, and he asked me whether I believed that I had succeeded in pleasing the company.

“I flatter myself I have,” I answered.

“You are wrong,” said the abbe, “you are flattering yourself. You have so conspicuously avoided the questions put to you that everybody in the room noticed your extreme reserve. In the future no one will ask you any questions.”

“I should be sorry if it should turn out so, but was I to expose my own concerns?”

“No, but there is a medium in all things.”

“Yes, the medium of Horace, but it is often a matter of great difficulty to hit it exactly.”

“A man ought to know how to obtain affection and esteem at the same time.”

“That is the very wish nearest to my heart.”

“To-day you have tried for the esteem much more than for the affection of your fellow-creatures. It may be a noble aspiration, but you must prepare yourself to fight jealousy and her daughter, calumny; if those two monsters do not succeed in destroying you, the victory must be yours. Now, for instance, you thoroughly refuted Salicetti to-day. Well, he is a physician, and what is more a Corsican; he must feel badly towards you."

"Could I grant that the longings of women during their pregnancy have no influence whatever on the skin of the foetus, when I know the reverse to be the case? Are you not of my opinion?"

"I am for neither party; I have seen many children with some such marks, but I have no means of knowing with certainty whether those marks have their origin in some longing experienced by the mother while she was pregnant."

"But I can swear it is so."

"All the better for you if your conviction is based upon such evidence, and all the worse for Salicetti if he denies the possibility of the thing without certain authority. But let him remain in error; it is better thus than to prove him in the wrong and to make a bitter enemy of him."

In the evening I called upon Lucrezia. The family knew my success, and warmly congratulated me. Lucrezia told me that I looked sad, and I answered that I was assisting at the funeral of my liberty, for I was no longer my own master. Her husband, always fond of a joke, told her that I was in love with her, and his mother-in-law advised him not to show so much intrepidity. I only remained an hour with those charming persons, and then took leave of them, but the very air around me was heated by the flame within my breast. When I reached my room I began to write, and spent the night in composing an ode which I sent the next day to the advocate. I was certain that he would shew it to his wife, who loved poetry, and who did not yet know that I was a poet. I abstained from seeing her again for three or four days. I was learning French, and making extracts from ministerial letters.

His eminence was in the habit of receiving every evening, and his rooms were thronged with the highest nobility of Rome; I had never attended these receptions. The Abbe Gama told me that I ought to do so as well as he did, without any pretension. I followed his advice and went; nobody spoke to me, but as I was unknown everyone looked at me and enquired who I was. The Abbe Gama asked me which was the lady who appeared to me the most amiable, and I shewed one to him; but I regretted having done so, for the courtier went to her, and of course informed her of what I had said. Soon afterwards I saw her look at me through her eye-glass and smile kindly upon me. She was the Marchioness G —— , whose ‘cicisbeo’ was Cardinal S —— C —— .

On the very day I had fixed to spend the evening with Donna Lucrezia the worthy advocate called upon me. He told me that if I thought I was going to prove I was not in love with his wife by staying away I was very much mistaken, and he invited me to accompany all the family to Testaccio, where they intended to have luncheon on the following Thursday. He added that his wife knew my ode by heart, and that she had read it to the intended husband of Angelique, who had a great wish to make my acquaintance. That gentleman was likewise a poet, and would be one of the party to Testaccio. I promised the advocate I would come to his house on the Thursday with a carriage for two.

At that time every Thursday in the month of October was a festival day in Rome. I went to see Donna Cecilia in the evening, and we talked about the excursion the whole time. I felt certain that Donna Lucrezia looked forward to it with as much pleasure as I did myself. We had no fixed plan, we could not have any, but we trusted to the god of love, and tacitly placed our confidence in his protection.

I took care that Father Georgi should not hear of that excursion before I mentioned it to him myself, and I hastened to him in order to obtain his permission to go. I confess that, to obtain his leave, I professed the most complete indifference about it, and the consequence was that the good man insisted upon my going, saying that it was a family party, and that it was quite right for me to visit the environs of Rome and to enjoy myself in a respectable way.

I went to Donna Cecilia’s in a carriage which I hired from a certain Roland, a native of Avignon, and if I insist here upon his name it is because my readers will meet him again in eighteen years, his acquaintance with me having had very important results. The charming widow introduced me to Don Francisco, her intended son-in-law, whom she represented as a great friend of literary men, and very deeply learned himself. I accepted it as gospel, and behaved accordingly; yet I thought he looked rather heavy and not sufficiently elated for a young man on the point of marrying such a pretty girl as Angelique. But he had plenty of good-nature and plenty of money, and these are better than learning and gallantry.

As we were ready to get into the carriages, the advocate told me that he would ride with me in my carriage, and that the three ladies would go with Don Francisco in the other. I answered at once that he ought to keep Don Francisco company, and that I claimed the privilege of taking care of Donna Cecilia, adding that I should feel dishonoured if things were arranged differently. Thereupon I offered my arm to the handsome widow, who thought the arrangement according to the rules of etiquette and good breeding, and an approving look of my Lucrezia gave me the most agreeable sensation. Yet the proposal of the advocate struck me somewhat unpleasantly, because it was in contradiction with his former behaviour, and especially with what he had said to me in my room a few days before. “Has he become jealous?” I said to myself; that would have made me almost angry, but the hope of bringing him round during our stay at Testaccio cleared away the dark cloud on my mind, and I was very amiable to Donna Cecilia. What with lunching and walking we contrived to pass the afternoon very pleasantly; I was very gay, and my love for Lucrezia was not once mentioned; I was all attention to her mother. I occasionally addressed myself to Lucrezia, but not once to the advocate, feeling this the best way to shew him that he had insulted me.

As we prepared to return, the advocate carried off Donna Cecilia and went with her to the carriage in which were already seated Angelique and Don Francisco. Scarcely able to control my delight, I offered my arm to Donna Lucrezia, paying her some absurd compliment, while the advocate laughed outright, and seemed to enjoy the trick he imagined he had played me.

How many things we might have said to each other before giving ourselves up to the material enjoyment of our love, had not the instants been so precious! But, aware that we had only half an hour before us, we were sparing of the minutes. We were absorbed in voluptuous pleasure when suddenly Lucrezia exclaims, —

“Oh! dear, how unhappy we are!”

She pushes me back, composes herself, the carriage stops, and the servant opens the door. “What is the matter?” I enquire. “We are at home.” Whenever I recollect the circumstance, it seems to me fabulous, for it is not possible to annihilate time, and the horses were regular old screws. But we were lucky all through. The night was dark, and my beloved angel happened to be on the right side to get out of the carriage first, so that, although the advocate was at the door of the brougham as soon as the footman, everything went right, owing to the slow manner in which Lucrezia alighted. I remained at Donna Cecilia's until midnight.

When I got home again, I went to bed; but how could I sleep? I felt burning in me the flame which I had not been able to restore to its original source in the too short distance from Testaccio to Rome. It was consuming me. Oh! unhappy are those who believe that the pleasures of Cythera are worth having, unless they are enjoyed in the most perfect accord by two hearts overflowing with love!

I only rose in time for my French lesson. My teacher had a pretty daughter, named Barbara, who was always present during my lessons, and who sometimes taught me herself with even more exactitude than her father. A good-looking young man, who likewise took lessons, was courting her, and I soon perceived that she loved him. This young man called often upon me, and I liked him, especially on account of his reserve, for, although I made him confess his love for Barbara, he always changed the subject, if I mentioned it in our conversation.

I had made up my mind to respect his reserve, and had not alluded to his affection for several days. But all at once I remarked that he had ceased his visits both to me and to his teacher, and at the same time I observed that the young girl was no longer present at my lessons; I felt some curiosity to know what had happened, although it was not, after all, any concern of mine.

A few days after, as I was returning from church, I met the young man, and reproached him for keeping away from us all. He told me that great sorrow had befallen him, which had fairly turned his brain, and that he was a prey to the most intense despair. His eyes were wet with tears. As I was leaving him, he held me back, and I told him that I would no longer be his friend unless he opened his heart to me. He took me to one of the cloisters, and he spoke thus:

"I have loved Barbara for the last six months, and for three months she has given me indisputable proofs of her affection. Five days ago, we were betrayed by the servant, and the father caught us in a rather delicate position. He left the room without saying one word, and I followed him, thinking of throwing myself at his feet; but, as I appeared before him, he took hold of me by the arm, pushed me roughly to the door, and forbade me ever to present myself again at his house. I cannot claim her hand in marriage, because one of my brothers is married, and my father is not rich; I have no profession, and my mistress has nothing. Alas, now that I have confessed all to you, tell me, I entreat you, how she is. I am certain that she is as miserable as I am myself. I cannot manage to get a letter delivered to her, for she does not leave the house, even to attend church. Unhappy wretch! What shall I do?"

I could but pity him, for, as a man of honour, it was impossible for me to interfere in such a business. I told him that I had not seen Barbara for five days, and, not knowing what to say, I gave him the advice which is tendered by all fools under similar circumstances; I advised him to forget his mistress.

We had then reached the quay of Ripetta, and, observing that he was casting dark looks towards the Tiber, I feared his despair might lead him to commit some foolish attempt against his own life, and, in order to calm his excited feelings, I promised to make some enquiries from the father about his mistress, and to inform him of all I heard. He felt quieted by my promise, and entreated me not to forget him.

In spite of the fire which had been raging through my veins ever since the excursion to Testaccio, I had not seen my Lucrezia for four days. I dreaded Father Georgi's suave manner, and I was still more afraid of finding he had made up his mind to give me no more advice. But, unable to resist my desires, I called upon Lucrezia after my French lesson, and found her alone, sad and dispirited.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, as soon as I was by her side, "I think you might find time to come and see me!"

"My beloved one, it is not that I cannot find time, but I am so jealous of my love that I would rather die than let it be known publicly. I have been thinking of inviting you all to dine with me at Frascati. I will send you a phaeton, and I trust that some lucky accident will smile upon our love."

“Oh! yes, do, dearest! I am sure your invitation will be accepted:”

In a quarter of an hour the rest of the family came in, and I proffered my invitation for the following Sunday, which happened to be the Festival of St. Ursula, patroness of Lucrezia’s youngest sister. I begged Donna Cecilia to bring her as well as her son. My proposal being readily accepted, I gave notice that the phaeton would be at Donna Cecilia’s door at seven o’clock, and that I would come myself with a carriage for two persons.

The next day I went to M. Dalacqua, and, after my lesson, I saw Barbara who, passing from one room to another, dropped a paper and earnestly looked at me. I felt bound to pick it up, because a servant, who was at hand, might have seen it and taken it. It was a letter, enclosing another addressed to her lover. The note for me ran thus: “If you think it to be a sin to deliver the enclosed to your friend, burn it. Have pity on an unfortunate girl, and be discreet.”

The enclosed letter which was unsealed, ran as follows: “If you love me as deeply as ‘I love you, you cannot hope to be happy without me; we cannot correspond in any other way than the one I am bold enough to adopt. I am ready to do anything to unite our lives until death. Consider and decide.”

The cruel situation of the poor girl moved me almost to tears; yet I determined to return her letter the next day, and I enclosed it in a note in which I begged her to excuse me if I could not render her the service she required at my hands. I put it in my pocket ready for delivery. The next day I went for my lesson as usual, but, not seeing Barbara, I had no opportunity of returning her letter, and postponed its delivery to the following day. Unfortunately, just after I had returned to my room, the unhappy lover made his appearance. His eyes were red from weeping, his voice hoarse; he drew such a vivid picture of his misery, that, dreading some mad action counselled by despair, I could not withhold from him the consolation which I knew it was in my power to give. This was my first error in this fatal business; I was the victim of my own kindness.

The poor fellow read the letter over and over; he kissed it with transports of joy; he wept, hugged me, and thanked me for saving his life, and finally entreated me to take charge of his answer, as his beloved mistress must be longing for consolation as much as he had been himself, assuring me that his letter could not in any way implicate me, and that I was at liberty to read it.

And truly, although very long, his letter contained nothing but the assurance of everlasting love, and hopes which could not be realized. Yet I was wrong to accept the character of Mercury to the two young lovers. To refuse, I had only to recollect that Father Georgi would certainly have disapproved of my easy compliance.

The next day I found M. Dalacqua ill in bed; his daughter gave me my lesson in his room, and I thought that perhaps she had obtained her pardon. I contrived to give her her lover's letter, which she dextrously conveyed to her pocket, but her blushes would have easily betrayed her if her father had been looking that way. After the lesson I gave M. Dalacqua notice that I would not come on the morrow, as it was the Festival of St. Ursula, one of the eleven thousand princesses and martyr-virgins.

In the evening, at the reception of his eminence, which I attended regularly, although persons of distinction seldom spoke to me, the cardinal beckoned to me. He was speaking to the beautiful Marchioness G—— , to whom Gama had indiscreetly confided that I thought her the handsomest woman amongst his eminence's guests.

"Her grace," said the Cardinal, "wishes to know whether you are making rapid progress in the French language, which she speaks admirably."

I answered in Italian that I had learned a great deal, but that I was not yet bold enough to speak.

"You should be bold," said the marchioness, "but without showing any pretension. It is the best way to disarm criticism."

My mind having almost unwittingly lent to the words "You should be bold" a meaning which had very likely been far from the idea of the marchioness, I turned very red, and the handsome speaker, observing it, changed the conversation and dismissed me.

The next morning, at seven o'clock, I was at Donna Cecilia's door. The phaeton was there as well as the carriage for two persons, which this time was an elegant vis-a-vis, so light and well-hung that Donna Cecilia praised it highly when she took her seat.

“I shall have my turn as we return to Rome,” said Lucrezia; and I bowed to her as if in acceptance of her promise.

Lucrezia thus set suspicion at defiance in order to prevent suspicion arising. My happiness was assured, and I gave way to my natural flow of spirits. I ordered a splendid dinner, and we all set out towards the Villa Ludovisi. As we might have missed each other during our ramblings, we agreed to meet again at the inn at one o’clock. The discreet widow took the arm of her son-in-law, Angelique remained with her sister, and Lucrezia was my delightful share; Ursula and her brother were running about together, and in less than a quarter of an hour I had Lucrezia entirely to myself.

“Did you remark,” she said, “with what candour I secured for us two hours of delightful ‘tete-a-tete’, and a ‘tete-a-tete’ in a ‘vis-a-vis’, too! How clever Love is!”

“Yes, darling, Love has made but one of our two souls. I adore you, and if I have the courage to pass so many days without seeing you it is in order to be rewarded by the freedom of one single day like this.”

“I did not think it possible. But you have managed it all very well. You know too much for your age, dearest.”

“A month ago, my beloved, I was but an ignorant child, and you are the first woman who has initiated me into the mysteries of love. Your departure will kill me, for I could not find another woman like you in all Italy.”

“What! am I your first love? Alas! you will never be cured of it. Oh! why am I not entirely your own? You are also the first true love of my heart, and you will be the last. How great will be the happiness of my successor! I should not be jealous of her, but what suffering would be mine if I thought that her heart was not like mine!”

Lucrezia, seeing my eyes wet with tears, began to give way to her own, and, seating ourselves on the grass, our lips drank our tears amidst the sweetest kisses. How sweet is the nectar of the tears shed by love, when that nectar is relished amidst the raptures of mutual ardour! I have often tasted them — those delicious tears, and I can say knowingly that the ancient physicians were right, and that the modern are wrong.

In a moment of calm, seeing the disorder in which we both were, I told her that we might be surprised.

"Do not fear, my best beloved," she said, "we are under the guardianship of our good angels."

We were resting and reviving our strength by gazing into one another's eyes, when suddenly Lucrezia, casting a glance to the right, exclaimed,

"Look there! idol of my heart, have I not told you so? Yes, the angels are watching over us! Ah! how he stares at us! He seems to try to give us confidence. Look at that little demon; admire him! He must certainly be your guardian spirit or mine."

I thought she was delirious.

"What are you saying, dearest? I do not understand you. What am I to admire?"

"Do you not see that beautiful serpent with the blazing skin, which lifts its head and seems to worship us?"

I looked in the direction she indicated, and saw a serpent with changeable colours about three feet in length, which did seem to be looking at us. I was not particularly pleased at the sight, but I could not show myself less courageous than she was.

"What!" said I, "are you not afraid?"

"I tell you, again, that the sight is delightful to me, and I feel certain that it is a spirit with nothing but the shape, or rather the appearance, of a serpent."

"And if the spirit came gliding along the grass and hissed at you?"

"I would hold you tighter against my bosom, and set him at defiance. In your arms Lucrezia is safe. Look! the spirit is going away. Quick, quick! He is warning us of the approach of some profane person, and tells us to seek some other retreat to renew our pleasures. Let us go."

We rose and slowly advanced towards Donna Cecilia and the advocate, who were just emerging from a neighbouring alley. Without avoiding them, and without hurrying, just as if to meet one another was a very natural occurrence, I enquired of Donna Cecilia whether her daughter had any fear of serpents.

"In spite of all her strength of mind," she answered, "she is dreadfully afraid of thunder, and she will scream with terror at the sight of the smallest snake. There are some here, but she need not be frightened, for they are not venomous.”

I was speechless with astonishment, for I discovered that I had just witnessed a wonderful love miracle. At that moment the children came up, and, without ceremony, we again parted company.

“Tell me, wonderful being, bewitching woman, what would you have done if, instead of your pretty serpent, you had seen your husband and your mother?”

“Nothing. Do you not know that, in moments of such rapture, lovers see and feel nothing but love? Do you doubt having possessed me wholly, entirely?”

Lucrezia, in speaking thus, was not composing a poetical ode; she was not feigning fictitious sentiments; her looks, the sound of her voice, were truth itself!

“Are you certain,” I enquired, “that we are not suspected?”

“My husband does not believe us to be in love with each other, or else he does not mind such trifling pleasures as youth is generally wont to indulge in. My mother is a clever woman, and perhaps she suspects the truth, but she is aware that it is no longer any concern of hers. As to my sister, she must know everything, for she cannot have forgotten the broken-down bed; but she is prudent, and besides, she has taken it into her head to pity me. She has no conception of the nature of my feelings towards you. If I had not met you, my beloved, I should probably have gone through life without realizing such feelings myself; for what I feel for my husband…. well, I have for him the obedience which my position as a wife imposes upon me.”

“And yet he is most happy, and I envy him! He can clasp in his arms all your lovely person whenever he likes! There is no hateful veil to hide any of your charms from his gaze.”

“Oh! where art thou, my dear serpent? Come to us, come and protect us against the surprise of the uninitiated, and this very instant I fulfil all the wishes of him I adore!”

We passed the morning in repeating that we loved each other, and in exchanging over and over again substantial proofs of our mutual passion.

We had a delicious dinner, during which I was all attention for the amiable Donna Cecilia. My pretty tortoise-shell box, filled with excellent snuff, went more than once round the table. As it happened to be in the hands of Lucrezia who was sitting on my left, her husband told her that, if I had no objection, she might give me her ring and keep the snuff-box in exchange. Thinking that the ring was not of as much value as my box, I immediately accepted, but I found the ring of greater value. Lucrezia would not, however, listen to anything on that subject. She put the box in her pocket, and thus compelled me to keep her ring.

Dessert was nearly over, the conversation was very animated, when suddenly the intended husband of Angelique claimed our attention for the reading of a sonnet which he had composed and dedicated to me. I thanked him, and placing the sonnet in my pocket promised to write one for him. This was not, however, what he wished; he expected that, stimulated by emulation, I would call for paper and pen, and sacrifice to Apollo hours which it was much more to my taste to employ in worshipping another god whom his cold nature knew only by name. We drank coffee, I paid the bill, and we went about rambling through the labyrinthine alleys of the Villa Aldobrandini.

What sweet recollections that villa has left in my memory! It seemed as if I saw my divine Lucrezia for the first time. Our looks were full of ardent love, our hearts were beating in concert with the most tender impatience, and a natural instinct was leading us towards a solitary asylum which the hand of Love seemed to have prepared on purpose for the mysteries of its secret worship. There, in the middle of a long avenue, and under a canopy of thick foliage, we found a wide sofa made of grass, and sheltered by a deep thicket; from that place our eyes could range over an immense plain, and view the avenue to such a distance right and left that we were perfectly secure against any surprise. We did not require to exchange one word at the sight of this beautiful temple so favourable to our love; our hearts spoke the same language.

Without a word being spoken, our ready hands soon managed to get rid of all obstacles, and to expose in a state of nature all the beauties which are generally veiled by troublesome wearing apparel. Two whole hours were devoted to the most delightful, loving ecstasies. At last we exclaimed together in mutual ecstasy, “O Love, we thank thee!”

We slowly retraced our steps towards the carriages, revelling in our intense happiness. Lucrezia informed me that Angelique's suitor was wealthy, that he owned a splendid villa at Tivoli, and that most likely he would invite us all to dine and pass the night there. "I pray the god of love," she added, "to grant us a night as beautiful as this day has been." Then, looking sad, she said, "But alas! the ecclesiastical lawsuit which has brought my husband to Rome is progressing so favourably that I am mortally afraid he will obtain judgment all too soon."

The journey back to the city lasted two hours; we were alone in my vis-a-vis and we overtaxed nature, exacting more than it can possibly give. As we were getting near Rome we were compelled to let the curtain fall before the denouement of the drama which we had performed to the complete satisfaction of the actors.

I returned home rather fatigued, but the sound sleep which was so natural at my age restored my full vigour, and in the morning I took my French lesson at the usual hour.

CHAPTER X

Benedict XIV — Excursion to Tivoli — Departure of Lucrezia —

The Marchioness G. — Barbara Dalacqua — My Misfortunes —

I Leave Rome

M. Dalacqua being very ill, his daughter Barbara gave me my lesson. When it was over, she seized an opportunity of slipping a letter into my pocket, and immediately disappeared, so that I had no chance of refusing. The letter was addressed to me, and expressed feelings of the warmest gratitude. She only desired me to inform her lover that her father had spoken to her again, and that most likely he would engage a new servant as soon as he had recovered from his illness, and she concluded her letter by assuring me that she never would implicate me in this business.

Her father was compelled to keep his bed for a fortnight, and Barbara continued to give me my lesson every day. I felt for her an interest which, from me towards a young and pretty girl, was, indeed, quite a new sentiment. It was a feeling of pity, and I was proud of being able to help and comfort her. Her eyes never rested upon mine, her hand never met mine, I never saw in her toilet the slightest wish to please me. She was very pretty, and I knew she had a tender, loving nature; but nothing interfered with the respect and the regard which I was bound in honour and in good faith to feel towards her, and I was proud to remark that she never thought me capable of taking advantage of her weakness or of her position.

When the father had recovered he dismissed his servant and engaged another. Barbara entreated me to inform her friend of the circumstance, and likewise of her hope to gain the new servant to their interests, at least sufficiently to secure the possibility of carrying on some correspondence. I promised to do so, and as a mark of her gratitude she took my hand to carry it to her lips, but quickly withdrawing it I tried to kiss her; she turned her face away, blushing deeply. I was much pleased with her modesty.

Barbara having succeeded in gaining the new servant over, I had nothing more to do with the intrigue, and I was very glad of it, for I knew my interference might have brought evil on my own head. Unfortunately, it was already too late.

I seldom visited Don Gaspar; the study of the French language took up all my mornings, and it was only in the morning that I could see him; but I called every evening upon Father Georgi, and, although I went to him only as one of his ‘proteges’, it gave me some reputation. I seldom spoke before his guests, yet I never felt weary, for in his circle his friends would criticise without slandering, discuss politics without stubbornness, literature without passion, and I profited by all. After my visit to the sagacious monk, I used to attend the assembly of the cardinal, my master, as a matter of duty. Almost every evening, when she happened to see me at her card-table, the beautiful marchioness would address to me a few gracious words in French, and I always answered in Italian, not caring to make her laugh before so many persons. My feelings for her were of a singular kind. I must leave them to the analysis of the reader. I thought that woman charming, yet I avoided her; it was not because I was afraid of falling in love with her; I loved Lucrezia, and I firmly believed that such an affection was a shield against any other attachment, but it was because I feared that she might love me or have a passing fancy for me. Was it self-conceit or modesty, vice or virtue? Perhaps neither one nor the other.

One evening she desired the Abbe Gama to call me to her; she was standing near the cardinal, my patron, and the moment I approached her she caused me a strange feeling of surprise by asking me in Italian a question which I was far from anticipating:

“How did you like Frascati?”

“Very much, madam; I have never seen such a beautiful place.”

“But your company was still more beautiful, and your vis-a-vis was very smart.”

I only bowed low to the marchioness, and a moment after Cardinal Acquaviva said to me, kindly,

“You are astonished at your adventure being known?”

“No, my lord; but I am surprised that people should talk of it. I could not have believed Rome to be so much like a small village.”

“The longer you live in Rome,” said his eminence, “the more you will find it so. You have not yet presented yourself to kiss the foot of our Holy Father?”

“Not yet, my lord.”

“Then you must do so.”

I bowed in compliance to his wishes.

The Abbe Gama told me to present myself to the Pope on the morrow, and he added,

“Of course you have already shewn yourself in the Marchioness G.’s palace?”

“No, I have never been there.”

“You astonish me; but she often speaks to you!”

“I have no objection to go with you.”

“I never visit at her palace.”

“Yet she speaks to you likewise.”

“Yes, but…. You do not know Rome; go alone; believe me, you ought to go.”

“Will she receive me?”

“You are joking, I suppose. Of course it is out of the question for you to be announced. You will call when the doors are wide open to everybody. You will meet there all those who pay homage to her.”

“Will she see me?”

“No doubt of it.”

On the following day I proceeded to Monte-Cavallo, and I was at once led into the room where the Pope was alone. I threw myself on my knees and kissed the holy cross on his most holy slipper. The Pope enquiring who I was, I told him, and he answered that he knew me, congratulating me upon my being in the service of so eminent a cardinal. He asked me how I had succeeded in gaining the cardinal’s favour; I answered with a faithful recital of my adventures from my arrival at Martorano. He laughed heartily at all I said respecting the poor and worthy bishop, and remarked that, instead of trying to address him in Tuscan, I could speak in the Venetian dialect, as he was himself speaking to me in the dialect of Bologna. I felt quite at my ease with him, and I told him so much news and amused him so well that the Holy Father kindly said that he would be glad to see me whenever I presented myself at Monte-Cavallo. I begged his permission to read all forbidden books, and he granted it with his blessing, saying that I should have the permission in writing, but he forgot it.

Benedict XIV, was a learned man, very amiable, and fond of a joke. I saw him for the second time at the Villa Medicis. He called me to him, and continued his walk, speaking of trifling things. He was then accompanied by Cardinal Albani and the ambassador from Venice. A man of modest appearance approached His Holiness, who asked what he required; the man said a few words in a low voice, and, after listening to him, the Pope answered, “You are right, place your trust in God;” and he gave him his blessing. The poor fellow went away very dejected, and the Holy Father continued his walk.

“This man,” I said, “most Holy Father, has not been pleased with the answer of Your Holiness.”

“Why?”

“Because most likely he had already addressed himself to God before he ventured to apply to you; and when Your Holiness sends him to God again, he finds himself sent back, as the proverb says, from Herod to Pilate.”

The Pope, as well as his two companions, laughed heartily; but I kept a serious countenance.

“I cannot,” continued the Pope, “do any good without God’s assistance.”

“Very true, Holy Father; but the man is aware that you are God’s prime minister, and it is easy to imagine his trouble now that the minister sends him again to the master. His only resource is to give money to the beggars of Rome, who for one ‘bajocco’ will pray for him. They boast of their influence before the throne of the Almighty, but as I have faith only in your credit, I entreat Your Holiness to deliver me of the heat which inflames my eyes by granting me permission to eat meat.”

“Eat meat, my son.”

“Holy Father, give me your blessing.”

He blessed me, adding that I was not dispensed from fasting.

That very evening, at the cardinal’s assembly, I found that the news of my dialogue with the Pope was already known. Everybody was anxious to speak to me. I felt flattered, but I was much more delighted at the joy which Cardinal Acquaviva tried in vain to conceal.

As I wished not to neglect Gama’s advice, I presented myself at the mansion of the beautiful marchioness at the hour at which everyone had free access to her ladyship. I saw her, I saw the cardinal and a great many abbes; but I might have supposed myself invisible, for no one honoured me with a look, and no one spoke to me. I left after having performed for half an hour the character of a mute. Five or six days afterwards, the marchioness told me graciously that she had caught a sight of me in her reception-rooms.

“I was there, it is true, madam; but I had no idea that I had had the honour to be seen by your ladyship.”

“Oh! I see everybody. They tell me that you have wit.”

“If it is not a mistake on the part of your informants, your ladyship gives me very good news.”

“Oh! they are excellent judges.”

“Then, madam, those persons must have honoured me with their conversation; otherwise, it is not likely that they would have been able to express such an opinion.”

“No doubt; but let me see you often at my receptions.”

Our conversation had been overheard by those who were around; his excellency the cardinal told me that, when the marchioness addressed herself particularly to me in French, my duty was to answer her in the same language, good or bad. The cunning politician Gama took me apart, and remarked that my repartees were too smart, too cutting, and that, after a time, I would be sure to displease. I had made considerable progress in French; I had given up my lessons, and practice was all I required. I was then in the habit of calling sometimes upon Lucrezia in the morning, and of visiting in the evening Father Georgi, who was acquainted with the excursion to Frascati, and had not expressed any dissatisfaction.

Two days after the sort of command laid upon me by the marchioness, I presented myself at her reception. As soon as she saw me, she favoured me with a smile which I acknowledged by a deep reverence; that was all. In a quarter of an hour afterwards I left the mansion. The marchioness was beautiful, but she was powerful, and I could not make up my mind to crawl at the feet of power, and, on that head, I felt disgusted with the manners of the Romans.

One morning towards the end of November the advocate, accompanied by Angelique’s intended, called on me. The latter gave me a pressing invitation to spend twenty-four hours at Tivoli with the friends I had entertained at Frascati. I accepted with great pleasure, for I had found no opportunity of being alone with Lucrezia since the Festival of St. Ursula. I promised to be at Donna Cecilia’s house at day-break with the same ‘vis-a-vis’. It was necessary to start very early, because Tivoli is sixteen miles from Rome, and has so many objects of interest that it requires many hours to see them all. As I had to sleep out that night, I craved permission to do so from the cardinal himself, who, hearing with whom I was going, told me that I was quite right not to lose such an opportunity of visiting that splendid place in such good society.

The first dawn of day found me with my ‘vis-a-vis’ and four at the door of Donna Cecilia, who came with me as before. The charming widow, notwithstanding her strict morality, was delighted at my love for her daughter. The family rode in a large phaeton hired by Don Francisco, which gave room for six persons.

At half-past seven in the morning we made a halt at a small place where had been prepared, by Don Franciso’s orders, an excellent breakfast, which was intended to replace the dinner, and we all made a hearty meal, as we were not likely to find time for anything but supper at Tivoli. I wore on my finger the beautiful ring which Lucrezia had given me. At the back of the ring I had had a piece of enamel placed, on it was delineated a saduceus, with one serpent between the letters Alpha and Omega. This ring was the subject of conversation during breakfast, and Don Francisco, as well as the advocate, exerted himself in vain to guess the meaning of the hieroglyphs; much to the amusement of Lucrezia, who understood the mysterious secret so well. We continued our road, and reached Tivoli at ten o'clock.

We began by visiting Don Francisco's villa. It was a beautiful little house, and we spent the following six hours in examining together the antiquities of Tivoli. Lucrezia having occasion to whisper a few words to Don Francisco, I seized the opportunity of telling Angelique that after her marriage I should be happy to spend a few days of the fine season with her.

"Sir," she answered, "I give you fair notice that the moment I become mistress in this house you will be the very first person to be excluded."

"I feel greatly obliged to you, signora, for your timely notice."

But the most amusing part of the affair was that I construed Angelique's wanton insult into a declaration of love. I was astounded. Lucrezia, remarking the state I was in, touched my arm, enquiring what ailed me. I told her, and she said at once,

"My darling, my happiness cannot last long; the cruel moment of our separation is drawing near. When I have gone, pray undertake the task of compelling her to acknowledge her error. Angelique pities me, be sure to avenge me."

I have forgotten to mention that at Don Francisco's villa I happened to praise a very pretty room opening upon the orange-house, and the amiable host, having heard me, came obligingly to me, and said that it should be my room that night. Lucrezia feigned not to hear, but it was to her Ariadne's clue, for, as we were to remain altogether during our visit to the beauties of Tivoli, we had no chance of a tete-a-tete through the day.

I have said that we devoted six hours to an examination of the antiquities of Tivoli, but I am bound to confess here that I saw, for my part, very little of them, and it was only twenty-eight years later that I made a thorough acquaintance with the beautiful spot.

We returned to the villa towards evening, fatigued and very hungry, but an hour's rest before supper — a repast which lasted two hours, the most delicious dishes, the most exquisite wines, and particularly the excellent wine of Tivoli — restored us so well that everybody wanted nothing more than a good bed and the freedom to enjoy the bed according to his own taste.

As everybody objected to sleep alone, Lucrezia said that she would sleep with Angelique in one of the rooms leading to the orange-house, and proposed that her husband should share a room with the young abbe, his brother-in-law, and that Donna Cecilia should take her youngest daughter with her.

The arrangement met with general approbation, and Don Francisco, taking a candle, escorted me to my pretty little room adjoining the one in which the two sisters were to sleep, and, after shewing me how I could lock myself in, he wished me good night and left me alone.

Angelique had no idea that I was her near neighbour, but Lucrezia and I, without exchanging a single word on the subject, had perfectly understood each other.

I watched through the key-hole and saw the two sisters come into their room, preceded by the polite Don Francisco, who carried a taper, and, after lighting a night-lamp, bade them good night and retired. Then my two beauties, their door once locked, sat down on the sofa and completed their night toilet, which, in that fortunate climate, is similar to the costume of our first mother. Lucrezia, knowing that I was waiting to come in, told her sister to lie down on the side towards the window, and the virgin, having no idea that she was exposing her most secret beauties to my profane eyes, crossed the room in a state of complete nakedness. Lucrezia put out the lamp and lay down near her innocent sister.

Happy moments which I can no longer enjoy, but the sweet remembrance of which death alone can make me lose! I believe I never undressed myself as quickly as I did that evening.

I open the door and fall into the arms of my Lucrezia, who says to her sister, “It is my angel, my love; never mind him, and go to sleep.”

What a delightful picture I could offer to my readers if it were possible for me to paint voluptuousness in its most enchanting colours! What ecstasies of love from the very onset! What delicious raptures succeed each other until the sweetest fatigue made us give way to the soothing influence of Morpheus!

The first rays of the sun, piercing through the crevices of the shutters, wake us out of our refreshing slumbers, and like two valorous knights who have ceased fighting only to renew the contest with increased ardour, we lose no time in giving ourselves up to all the intensity of the flame which consumes us.

“Oh, my beloved Lucrezia! how supremely happy I am! But, my darling, mind your sister; she might turn round and see us.”

“Fear nothing, my life; my sister is kind, she loves me, she pities me; do you not love me, my dear Angelique? Oh! turn round, see how happy your sister is, and know what felicity awaits you when you own the sway of love.”

Angelique, a young maiden of seventeen summers, who must have suffered the torments of Tantalus during the night, and who only wishes for a pretext to shew that she has forgiven her sister, turns round, and covering her sister with kisses, confesses that she has not closed her eyes through the night.

“Then forgive likewise, darling Angelique, forgive him who loves me, and whom I adore,” says Lucrezia.

Unfathomable power of the god who conquers all human beings!

“Angelique hates me,” I say, “I dare not….”

“No, I do not hate you!” answers the charming girl.

“Kiss her, dearest,” says Lucrezia, pushing me towards her sister, and pleased to see her in my arms motionless and languid.

But sentiment, still more than love, forbids me to deprive Lucrezia of the proof of my gratitude, and I turn to her with all the rapture of a beginner, feeling that my ardour is increased by Angelique’s ecstasy, as for the first time she witnesses the amorous contest. Lucrezia, dying of enjoyment, entreats me to stop, but, as I do not listen to her prayer, she tricks me, and the sweet Angelique makes her first sacrifice to the mother of love. It is thus, very likely, that when the gods inhabited this earth, the voluptuous Arcadia, in love with the soft and pleasing breath of Zephyrus, one day opened her arms, and was fecundated.

Lucrezia was astonished and delighted, and covered us both with kisses. Angelique, as happy as her sister, expired deliciously in my arms for the third time, and she seconded me with so much loving ardour, that it seemed to me I was tasting happiness for the first time.

Phoebus had left the nuptial couch, and his rays were already diffusing light over the universe; and that light, reaching us through the closed shutters, gave me warning to quit the place; we exchanged the most loving adieus, I left my two divinities and retired to my own room. A few minutes afterwards, the cheerful voice of the advocate was heard in the chamber of the sisters; he was reproaching them for sleeping too long! Then he knocked at my door, threatening to bring the ladies to me, and went away, saying that he would send me the hair-dresser.

After many ablutions and a careful toilet, I thought I could skew my face, and I presented myself coolly in the drawing-room. The two sisters were there with the other members of our society, and I was delighted with their rosy cheeks. Lucrezia was frank and gay, and beamed with happiness; Angelique, as fresh as the morning dew, was more radiant than usual, but fidgety, and carefully avoided looking me in the face. I saw that my useless attempts to catch her eyes made her smile, and I remarked to her mother, rather mischievously, that it was a pity Angelique used paint for her face. She was duped by this stratagem, and compelled me to pass a handkerchief over her face, and was then obliged to look at me. I offered her my apologies, and Don Francisco appeared highly pleased that the complexion of his intended had met with such triumph.

After breakfast we took a walk through the garden, and, finding myself alone with Lucrezia, I expostulated tenderly with her for having almost thrown her sister in my arms.

“Do not reproach me,” she said, “when I deserve praise. I have brought light into the darkness of my charming sister’s soul; I have initiated her in the sweetest of mysteries, and now, instead of pitying me, she must envy me. Far from having hatred for you, she must love you dearly, and as I am so unhappy as to have to part from you very soon, my beloved, I leave her to you; she will replace me.”

“Ah, Lucrezia! how can I love her?”

"Is she not a charming girl?"

"No doubt of it; but my adoration for you is a shield against any other love. Besides Don Francisco must, of course, entirely monopolize her, and I do not wish to cause coolness between them, or to ruin the peace of their home. I am certain your sister is not like you, and I would bet that, even now, she upbraids herself for having given way to the ardour of her temperament:"

"Most likely; but, dearest, I am sorry to say my husband expects to obtain judgment in the course of this week, and then the short instants of happiness will for ever be lost to me."

This was sad news indeed, and to cause a diversion at the breakfast-table I took much notice of the generous Don Francisco, and promised to compose a nuptial song for his wedding-day, which had been fixed for the early part of January.

We returned to Rome, and for the three hours that she was with me in my vis-a-vis, Lucrezia had no reason to think that my ardour was at all abated. But when we reached the city I was rather fatigued, and proceeded at once to the palace.

Lucrezia had guessed rightly; her husband obtained his judgment three or four days afterwards, and called upon me to announce their departure for the day after the morrow; he expressed his warm friendship for me, and by his invitation I spent the two last evenings with Lucrezia, but we were always surrounded by the family. The day of her departure, wishing to cause her an agreeable surprise, I left Rome before them and waited for them at the place where I thought they would put up for the night, but the advocate, having been detained by several engagements, was detained in Rome, and they only reached the place next day for dinner. We dined together, we exchanged a sad, painful farewell, and they continued their journey while I returned to Rome.

After the departure of this charming woman, I found myself in sort of solitude very natural to a young man whose heart is not full of hope.

I passed whole days in my room, making extracts from the French letters written by the cardinal, and his eminence was kind enough to tell me that my extracts were judiciously made, but that he insisted upon my not working so hard. The beautiful marchioness was present when he paid me that compliment.

Since my second visit to her, I had not presented myself at her house; she was consequently rather cool to me, and, glad of an opportunity of making me feel her displeasure, she remarked to his eminence that very likely work was a consolation to me in the great void caused by the departure of Donna Lucrezia.

“I candidly confess, madam, that I have felt her loss deeply. She was kind and generous; above all, she was indulgent when I did not call often upon her. My friendship for her was innocent.”

“I have no doubt of it, although your ode was the work of a poet deeply in love.”

“Oh!” said the kindly cardinal, “a poet cannot possibly write without professing to be in love.”

“But,” replied the marchioness, “if the poet is really in love, he has no need of professing a feeling which he possesses.”

As she was speaking, the marchioness drew out of her pocket a paper which she offered to his eminence.

“This is the ode,” she said, “it does great honour to the poet, for it is admitted to be a masterpiece by all the literati in Rome, and Donna Lucrezia knows it by heart.”

The cardinal read it over and returned it, smiling, and remarking that, as he had no taste for Italian poetry, she must give herself the pleasure of translating it into French rhyme if she wished him to admire it.

“I only write French prose,” answered the marchioness, “and a prose translation destroys half the beauty of poetry. I am satisfied with writing occasionally a little Italian poetry without any pretension to poetical fame.”

Those words were accompanied by a very significant glance in my direction.

“I should consider myself fortunate, madam, if I could obtain the happiness of admiring some of your poetry.”

“Here is a sonnet of her ladyship’s,” said Cardinal S. C.

I took it respectfully, and I prepared to read it, but the amiable marchioness told me to put it in my pocket and return it to the cardinal the next day, although she did not think the sonnet worth so much trouble. “If you should happen to go out in the morning,” said Cardinal S. C., “you could bring it back, and dine with me.” Cardinal Aquaviva immediately answered for me: “He will be sure to go out purposely.”

With a deep reverence, which expressed my thanks, I left the room quietly and returned to my apartment, very impatient to read the sonnet. Yet, before satisfying my wish, I could not help making some reflections on the situation. I began to think myself somebody since the gigantic stride I had made this evening at the cardinal’s assembly. The Marchioness de G. had shewn in the most open way the interest she felt in me, and, under cover of her grandeur, had not hesitated to compromise herself publicly by the most flattering advances. But who would have thought of disapproving? A young abbe like me, without any importance whatever, who could scarcely pretend to her high protection! True, but she was precisely the woman to grant it to those who, feeling themselves unworthy of it, dared not shew any pretensions to her patronage. On that head, my modesty must be evident to everyone, and the marchioness would certainly have insulted me had she supposed me capable of sufficient vanity to fancy that she felt the slightest inclination for me. No, such a piece of self-conceit was not in accordance with my nature. Her cardinal himself had invited me to dinner. Would he have done so if he had admitted the possibility of the beautiful marchioness feeling anything for me? Of course not, and he gave me an invitation to dine with him only because he had understood, from the very words of the lady, that I was just the sort of person with whom they could converse for a few hours without any risk; to be sure, without any risk whatever. Oh, Master Casanova! do you really think so?

Well, why should I put on a mask before my readers? They may think me conceited if they please, but the fact of the matter is that I felt sure of having made a conquest of the marchioness. I congratulated myself because she had taken the first, most difficult, and most important step. Had she not done so, I should never have dared to lay siege to her even in the most approved fashion; I should never have even ventured to dream of winning her. It was only this evening that I thought she might replace Lucrezia. She was beautiful, young, full of wit and talent; she was fond of literary pursuits, and very powerful in Rome; what more was necessary? Yet I thought it would be good policy to appear ignorant of her inclination for me, and to let her suppose from the very next day that I was in love with her, but that my love appeared to me hopeless. I knew that such a plan was infallible, because it saved her dignity. It seemed to me that Father Georgi himself would be compelled to approve such an undertaking, and I had remarked with great satisfaction that Cardinal Acquaviva had expressed his delight at Cardinal S. C.'s invitation — an honour which he had never yet bestowed on me himself. This affair might have very important results for me.

I read the marchioness's sonnet, and found it easy, flowing, and well written. It was composed in praise of the King of Prussia, who had just conquered Silesia by a masterly stroke. As I was copying it, the idea struck me to personify Silesia, and to make her, in answer to the sonnet, bewail that Love (supposed to be the author of the sonnet of the marchioness) could applaud the man who had conquered her, when that conqueror was the sworn enemy of Love.

It is impossible for a man accustomed to write poetry to abstain when a happy subject smiles upon his delighted imagination. If he attempted to smother the poetical flame running through his veins it would consume him. I composed my sonnet, keeping the same rhymes as in the original, and, well pleased with my muse, I went to bed.

The next morning the Abbe Gama came in just as I had finished recopying my sonnet, and said he would breakfast with me. He complimented me upon the honour conferred on me by the invitation of Cardinal S. C.

"But be prudent," he added, "for his eminence has the reputation of being jealous:"

I thanked him for his friendly advice, taking care to assure him that I had nothing to fear, because I did not feel the slightest inclination for the handsome marchioness.

Cardinal S. C. received me with great kindness mingled with dignity, to make me realize the importance of the favour he was bestowing upon me.

"What do you think," he enquired, "of the sonnet?"

“Monsignor, it is perfectly written, and, what is more, it is a charming composition. Allow me to return it to you with my thanks.”

“She has much talent. I wish to shew you ten stanzas of her composition, my dear abbe, but you must promise to be very discreet about it.”

“Your eminence may rely on me.”

He opened his bureau and brought forth the stanzas of which he was the subject. I read them, found them well written, but devoid of enthusiasm; they were the work of a poet, and expressed love in the words of passion, but were not pervaded by that peculiar feeling by which true love is so easily discovered. The worthy cardinal was doubtless guilty of a very great indiscretion, but self-love is the cause of so many injudicious steps! I asked his eminence whether he had answered the stanzas.

“No,” he replied, “I have not; but would you feel disposed to lend me your poetical pen, always under the seal of secrecy?”

“As to secrecy, monsignor, I promise it faithfully; but I am afraid the marchioness will remark the difference between your style and mine.”

“She has nothing of my composition,” said the cardinal; “I do not think she supposes me a fine poet, and for that reason your stanzas must be written in such a manner that she will not esteem them above my abilities.”

“I will write them with pleasure, monsignor, and your eminence can form an opinion; if they do not seem good enough to be worthy of you, they need not be given to the marchioness.”

“That is well said. Will you write them at once?”

“What! now, monsignor? It is not like prose.”

“Well, well! try to let me have them to-morrow.”

We dined alone, and his eminence complimented me upon my excellent appetite, which he remarked was as good as his own; but I was beginning to understand my eccentric host, and, to flatter him, I answered that he praised me more than I deserved, and that my appetite was inferior to his. The singular compliment delighted him, and I saw all the use I could make of his eminence.

Towards the end of the dinner, as we were conversing, the marchioness made her appearance, and, as a matter of course, without being announced. Her looks threw me into raptures; I thought her a perfect beauty. She did not give the cardinal time to meet her, but sat down near him, while I remained standing, according to etiquette.

Without appearing to notice me, the marchioness ran wittily over various topics until coffee was brought in. Then, addressing herself to me, she told me to sit down, just as if she was bestowing charity upon me.

"By-the-by, abbe," she said, a minute after, "have you read my sonnet?"

"Yes, madam, and I have had the honour to return it to his eminence. I have found it so perfect that I am certain it must have cost you a great deal of time."

"Time?" exclaimed the cardinal; "Oh! you do not know the marchioness."

"Monsignor," I replied, "nothing can be done well without time, and that is why I have not dared to shew to your eminence an answer to the sonnet which I have written in half an hour."

"Let us see it, abbe," said the marchioness; "I want to read it."

"Answer of Silesia to Love." This title brought the most fascinating blushes on her countenance. "But Love is not mentioned in the sonnet," exclaimed the cardinal. "Wait," said the marchioness, "we must respect the idea of the poet:"

She read the sonnet over and over, and thought that the reproaches addressed by Silesia to Love were very just. She explained my idea to the cardinal, making him understand why Silesia was offended at having been conquered by the King of Prussia.

"Ah, I see, I see!" exclaimed the cardinal, full of joy; "Silesia is a woman…. and the King of Prussia…. Oh! oh! that is really a fine idea!" And the good cardinal laughed heartily for more than a quarter of an hour. "I must copy that sonnet," he added, "indeed I must have it."

"The abbe," said the obliging marchioness, "will save you the trouble: I will dictate it to him."

I prepared to write, but his eminence suddenly exclaimed, “My dear marchioness, this is wonderful; he has kept the same rhymes as in your own sonnet: did you observe it?”

The beautiful marchioness gave me then a look of such expression that she completed her conquest. I understood that she wanted me to know the cardinal as well as she knew him; it was a kind of partnership in which I was quite ready to play my part.

As soon as I had written the sonnet under the charming woman’s dictation, I took my leave, but not before the cardinal had told me that he expected me to dinner the next day.

I had plenty of work before me, for the ten stanzas I had to compose were of the most singular character, and I lost no time in shutting myself up in my room to think of them. I had to keep my balance between two points of equal difficulty, and I felt that great care was indispensable. I had to place the marchioness in such a position that she could pretend to believe the cardinal the author of the stanzas, and, at the same time, compel her to find out that I had written them, and that I was aware of her knowing it. It was necessary to speak so carefully that not one expression should breathe even the faintest hope on my part, and yet to make my stanzas blaze with the ardent fire of my love under the thin veil of poetry. As for the cardinal, I knew well enough that the better the stanzas were written, the more disposed he would be to sign them. All I wanted was clearness, so difficult to obtain in poetry, while a little doubtful darkness would have been accounted sublime by my new Midas. But, although I wanted to please him, the cardinal was only a secondary consideration, and the handsome marchioness the principal object.

As the marchioness in her verses had made a pompous enumeration of every physical and moral quality of his eminence, it was of course natural that he should return the compliment, and here my task was easy. At last having mastered my subject well, I began my work, and giving full career to my imagination and to my feelings I composed the ten stanzas, and gave the finishing stroke with these two beautiful lines from Ariosto:

Le angelicche bellezze nate al cielo

Non si ponno celar sotto alcum velo.

Rather pleased with my production, I presented it the next day to the cardinal, modestly saying that I doubted whether he would accept the authorship of so ordinary a composition. He read the stanzas twice over without taste or expression, and said at last that they were indeed not much, but exactly what he wanted. He thanked me particularly for the two lines from Ariosto, saying that they would assist in throwing the authorship upon himself, as they would prove to the lady for whom they were intended that he had not been able to write them without borrowing. And, as to offer me some consolation, he told me that, in recopying the lines, he would take care to make a few mistakes in the rhythm to complete the illusion.

We dined earlier than the day before, and I withdrew immediately after dinner so as to give him leisure to make a copy of the stanzas before the arrival of the lady.

The next evening I met the marchioness at the entrance of the palace, and offered her my arm to come out of her carriage. The instant she alighted, she said to me,

“If ever your stanzas and mine become known in Rome, you may be sure of my enmity.”

“Madam, I do not understand what you mean.”

“I expected you to answer me in this manner,” replied the marchioness, “but recollect what I have said.”

I left her at the door of the reception-room, and thinking that she was really angry with me, I went away in despair. “My stanzas,” I said to myself, “are too fiery; they compromise her dignity, and her pride is offended at my knowing the secret of her intrigue with Cardinal S. C. Yet, I feel certain that the dread she expresses of my want of discretion is only feigned, it is but a pretext to turn me out of her favour. She has not understood my reserve! What would she have done, if I had painted her in the simple apparel of the golden age, without any of those veils which modesty imposes upon her sex!” I was sorry I had not done so. I undressed and went to bed. My head was scarcely on the pillow when the Abbe Gama knocked at my door. I pulled the door-string, and coming in, he said,

“My dear sir, the cardinal wishes to see you, and I am sent by the beautiful marchioness and Cardinal S. C., who desire you to come down.”

“I am very sorry, but I cannot go; tell them the truth; I am ill in bed.”

As the abbe did not return, I judged that he had faithfully acquitted himself of the commission, and I spent a quiet night. I was not yet dressed in the morning, when I received a note from Cardinal S. C. inviting me to dinner, saying that he had just been bled, and that he wanted to speak to me: he concluded by entreating me to come to him early, even if I did not feel well.

The invitation was pressing; I could not guess what had caused it, but the tone of the letter did not forebode anything unpleasant. I went to church, where I was sure that Cardinal Acquaviva would see me, and he did. After mass, his eminence beckoned to me.

“Are you truly ill?” he enquired.

“No, monsignor, I was only sleepy.”

“I am very glad to hear it; but you are wrong, for you are loved. Cardinal S. C. has been bled this morning.”

“I know it, monsignor. The cardinal tells me so in this note, in which he invites me to dine with him, with your excellency’s permission.”

“Certainly. But this is amusing! I did not know that he wanted a third person.”

“Will there be a third person?”

“I do not know, and I have no curiosity about it.”

The cardinal left me, and everybody imagined that his eminence had spoken to me of state affairs.

I went to my new Maecenas, whom I found in bed.

“I am compelled to observe strict diet,” he said to me; “I shall have to let you dine alone, but you will not lose by it as my cook does not know it. What I wanted to tell you is that your stanzas are, I am afraid, too pretty, for the marchioness adores them. If you had read them to me in the same way that she does, I could never have made up my mind to offer them.” “But she believes them to be written by your eminence?”

“Of course.”

“That is the essential point, monsignor.”

"Yes; but what should I do if she took it into her head to compose some new stanzas for me?"

"You would answer through the same pen, for you can dispose of me night and day, and rely upon the utmost secrecy."

"I beg of you to accept this small present; it is some negrillo snuff from Habana, which Cardinal Acquaviva has given me."

The snuff was excellent, but the object which contained it was still better. It was a splendid gold-enamelled box. I received it with respect, and with the expression of the deepest gratitude.

If his eminence did not know how to write poetry, at least he knew how to be generous, and in a delicate manner, and that science is, at least in my estimation, superior to the other for a great nobleman.

At noon, and much to my surprise, the beautiful marchioness made her appearance in the most elegant morning toilet.

"If I had known you were in good company," she said to the cardinal, "I would not have come."

"I am sure, dear marchioness, you will not find our dear abbe in the way."

"No, for I believe him to be honest and true."

I kept at a respectful distance, ready to go away with my splendid snuff-box at the first jest she might hurl at me.

The cardinal asked her if she intended to remain to dinner.

"Yes," she answered; "but I shall not enjoy my dinner, for I hate to eat alone."

"If you would honour him so far, the abbe would keep you company."

She gave me a gracious look, but without uttering one word.

This was the first time I had anything to do with a woman of quality, and that air of patronage, whatever kindness might accompany it, always put me out of temper, for I thought it made love out of the question. However, as we were in the presence of the cardinal, I fancied that she might be right in treating me in that fashion.

The table was laid out near the cardinal's bed, and the marchioness, who ate hardly anything, encouraged me in my good appetite.

"I have told you that the abbe is equal to me in that respect," said S. C.

"I truly believe," answered the marchioness, "that he does not remain far behind you; but," added she with flattery, "you are more dainty in your tastes."

"Would her ladyship be so good as to tell me in what I have appeared to her to be a mere glutton? For in all things I like only dainty and exquisite morsels."

"Explain what you mean by saying in all things," said the cardinal. Taking the liberty of laughing, I composed a few impromptu verses in which I named all I thought dainty and exquisite. The marchioness applauded, saying that she admired my courage.

"My courage, madam, is due to you, for I am as timid as a hare when I am not encouraged; you are the author of my impromptu."

"I admire you. As for myself, were I encouraged by Apollo himself, I could not compose four lines without paper and ink."

"Only give way boldly to your genius, madam, and you will produce poetry worthy of heaven."

"That is my opinion, too," said the cardinal. "I entreat you to give me permission to shew your ten stanzas to the abbe."

"They are not very good, but I have no objection provided it remains between us."

The cardinal gave me, then, the stanzas composed by the marchioness, and I read them aloud with all the expression, all the feeling necessary to such reading.

"How well you have read those stanzas!" said the marchioness; "I can hardly believe them to be my own composition; I thank you very much. But have the goodness to give the benefit of your reading to the stanzas which his eminence has written in answer to mine. They surpass them much."

"Do not believe it, my dear abbe," said the cardinal, handing them to me. "Yet try not to let them lose anything through your reading."

There was certainly no need of his eminence enforcing upon me such a recommendation; it was my own poetry. I could not have read it otherwise than in my best style, especially when I had before me the beautiful woman who had inspired them, and when, besides, Bacchus was in me giving courage to Apollo as much as the beautiful eyes of the marchioness were fanning into an ardent blaze the fire already burning through my whole being.

I read the stanzas with so much expression that the cardinal was enraptured, but I brought a deep carnation tint upon the cheeks of the lovely marchioness when I came to the description of those beauties which the imagination of the poet is allowed to guess at, but which I could not, of course, have gazed upon. She snatched the paper from my hands with passion, saying that I was adding verses of my own; it was true, but I did not confess it. I was all aflame, and the fire was scorching her as well as me.

The cardinal having fallen asleep, she rose and went to take a seat on the balcony; I followed her. She had a rather high seat; I stood opposite to her, so that her knee touched the fob-pocket in which was my watch. What a position! Taking hold gently of one of her hands, I told her that she had ignited in my soul a devouring flame, that I adored her, and that, unless some hope was left to me of finding her sensible to my sufferings, I was determined to fly away from her for ever.

“Yes, beautiful marchioness, pronounce my sentence.”

“I fear you are a libertine and an unfaithful lover.”

“I am neither one nor the other.”

With these words I folded her in my arms, and I pressed upon her lovely lips, as pure as a rose, an ardent kiss which she received with the best possible grace. This kiss, the forerunner of the most delicious pleasures, had imparted to my hands the greatest boldness; I was on the point of…. but the marchioness, changing her position, entreated me so sweetly to respect her, that, enjoying new voluptuousness through my very obedience, I not only abandoned an easy victory, but I even begged her pardon, which I soon read in the most loving look.

She spoke of Lucrezia, and was pleased with my discretion. She then alluded to the cardinal, doing her best to make me believe that there was nothing between them but a feeling of innocent friendship. Of course I had my opinion on that subject, but it was my interest to appear to believe every word she uttered. We recited together lines from our best poets, and all the time she was still sitting down and I standing before her, with my looks rapt in the contemplation of the most lovely charms, to which I remained insensible in appearance, for I had made up my mind not to press her that evening for greater favours than those I had already received.

The cardinal, waking from his long and peaceful siesta, got up and joined us in his night-cap, and good-naturedly enquired whether we had not felt impatient at his protracted sleep. I remained until dark and went home highly pleased with my day's work, but determined to keep my ardent desires in check until the opportunity for complete victory offered itself.

From that day, the charming marchioness never ceased to give me the marks of her particular esteem, without the slightest constraint; I was reckoning upon the carnival, which was close at hand, feeling certain that the more I should spare her delicacy, the more she would endeavour to find the opportunity of rewarding my loyalty, and of crowning with happiness my loving constancy. But fate ordained otherwise; Dame Fortune turned her back upon me at the very moment when the Pope and Cardinal Acquaviva were thinking of giving me a really good position.

The Holy Father had congratulated me upon the beautiful snuff-box presented to me by Cardinal S. C., but he had been careful never to name the marchioness. Cardinal Acquaviva expressed openly his delight at his brother-cardinal having given me a taste of his negrillo snuff in so splendid an envelope; the Abbe Gama, finding me so forward on the road to success, did not venture to counsel me any more, and the virtuous Father Georgi gave me but one piece of advice-namely, to cling to the lovely marchioness and not to make any other acquaintances.

Such was my position-truly a brilliant one, when, on Christmas Day, the lover of Barbara Dalacqua entered my room, locked the door, and threw himself on the sofa, exclaiming that I saw him for the last time.

“I only come to beg of you some good advice.”

"On what subject can I advise you?"

"Take this and read it; it will explain everything."

It was a letter from his mistress; the contents were these:

"I am pregnant of a child, the pledge of our mutual love; I can no longer have any doubt of it, my beloved, and I forewarn you that I have made up my mind to quit Rome alone, and to go away to die where it may please God, if you refuse to take care of me and save me. I would suffer anything, do anything, rather than let my father discover the truth."

"If you are a man of honour," I said, "you cannot abandon the poor girl. Marry her in spite of your father, in spite of her own, and live together honestly. The eternal Providence of God will watch over you and help you in your difficulties:"

My advice seemed to bring calm to his mind, and he left me more composed.

At the beginning of January, 1744, he called again, looking very cheerful. "I have hired," he said, "the top floor of the house next to Barbara's dwelling; she knows it, and to-night I will gain her apartment through one of the windows of the garret, and we will make all our arrangements to enable me to carry her off. I have made up my mind; I have decided upon taking her to Naples, and I will take with us the servant who, sleeping in the garret, had to be made a confidante of."

"God speed you, my friend!"

A week afterwards, towards eleven o'clock at night, he entered my room accompanied by an abbe.

"What do you want so late?"

"I wish to introduce you to this handsome abbe."

I looked up, and to my consternation I recognized Barbara.

"Has anyone seen you enter the house?" I enquired.

"No; and if we had been seen, what of it? It is only an abbe. We now pass every night together."

"I congratulate you."

“The servant is our friend; she has consented to follow us, and all our arrangements are completed.”

“I wish you every happiness. Adieu. I beg you to leave me.”

Three or four days after that visit, as I was walking with the Abbe Gama towards the Villa Medicis, he told me deliberately that there would be an execution during the night in the Piazza di Spagna.

“What kind of execution?”

“The bargello or his lieutenant will come to execute some ‘ordine santissimo’, or to visit some suspicious dwelling in order to arrest and carry off some person who does not expect anything of the sort.”

“How do you know it?”

“His eminence has to know it, for the Pope would not venture to encroach upon his jurisdiction without asking his permission.”

“And his eminence has given it?”

“Yes, one of the Holy Father’s auditors came for that purpose this morning.”

“But the cardinal might have refused?”

“Of course; but such a permission is never denied.”

“And if the person to be arrested happened to be under the protection of the cardinal — what then?”

“His eminence would give timely warning to that person.”

We changed the conversation, but the news had disturbed me. I fancied that the execution threatened Barbara and her lover, for her father’s house was under the Spanish jurisdiction. I tried to see the young man but I could not succeed in meeting him, and I was afraid lest a visit at his home or at M. Dalacqua’s dwelling might implicate me. Yet it is certain that this last consideration would not have stopped me if I had been positively sure that they were threatened; had I felt satisfied of their danger, I would have braved everything.

About midnight, as I was ready to go to bed, and just as I was opening my door to take the key from outside, an abbe rushed panting into my room and threw himself on a chair. It was Barbara; I guessed what had taken place, and, foreseeing all the evil consequences her visit might have for me, deeply annoyed and very anxious, I upbraided her for having taken refuge in my room, and entreated her to go away.

Fool that I was! Knowing that I was only ruining myself without any chance of saving her, I ought to have compelled her to leave my room, I ought to have called for the servants if she had refused to withdraw. But I had not courage enough, or rather I voluntarily obeyed the decrees of destiny.

When she heard my order to go away, she threw herself on her knees, and melting into tears, she begged, she entreated my pity!

Where is the heart of steel which is not softened by the tears, by the prayers of a pretty and unfortunate woman? I gave way, but I told her that it was ruin for both of us.

“No one,” she replied, “has seen me, I am certain, when I entered the mansion and came up to your room, and I consider my visit here a week ago as most fortunate; otherwise, I never could have known which was your room.”

“Alas! how much better if you had never come! But what has become of your lover?”

“The ‘sbirri’ have carried him off, as well as the servant. I will tell you all about it. My lover had informed me that a carriage would wait to-night at the foot of the flight of steps before the Church of Trinita del Monte, and that he would be there himself. I entered his room through the garret window an hour ago. There I put on this disguise, and, accompanied by the servant, proceeded to meet him. The servant walked a few yards before me, and carried a parcel of my things. At the corner of the street, one of the buckles of my shoes being unfastened, I stopped an instant, and the servant went on, thinking that I was following her. She reached the carriage, got into it, and, as I was getting nearer, the light from a lantern disclosed to me some thirty sbirri; at the same instant, one of them got on the driver’s box and drove off at full speed, carrying off the servant, whom they must have mistaken for me, and my lover who was in the coach awaiting me. What could I do at such a fearful moment? I could not go back to my father’s house, and I followed my first impulse which brought me here. And here I am! You tell me that my presence will cause your ruin; if it is so, tell me what to do; I feel I am dying; but find some expedient and I am ready to do anything, even to lay my life down, rather than be the cause of your ruin."

But she wept more bitterly than ever.

Her position was so sad that I thought it worse even than mine, although I could almost fancy I saw ruin before me despite my innocence.

"Let me," I said, "conduct you to your father; I feel sure of obtaining your pardon."

But my proposal only enhanced her fears.

"I am lost," she exclaimed; "I know my father. Ah! reverend sir, turn me out into the street, and abandon me to my miserable fate."

No doubt I ought to have done so, and I would have done it if the consciousness of what was due to my own interest had been stronger than my feeling of pity. But her tears! I have often said it, and those amongst my readers who have experienced it, must be of the same opinion; there is nothing on earth more irresistible than two beautiful eyes shedding tears, when the owner of those eyes is handsome, honest, and unhappy. I found myself physically unable to send her away.

"My poor girl," I said at last, "when daylight comes, and that will not be long, for it is past midnight, what do you intend to do?"

"I must leave the palace," she replied, sobbing. "In this disguise no one can recognize me; I will leave Rome, and I will walk straight before me until I fall on the ground, dying with grief and fatigue."

With these words she fell on the floor. She was choking; I could see her face turn blue; I was in the greatest distress.

I took off her neck-band, unlaced her stays under the abbe's dress, I threw cold water in her face, and I finally succeeded in bringing her back to consciousness.

The night was extremely cold, and there was no fire in my room. I advised her to get into my bed, promising to respect her.

“Alas! reverend sir, pity is the only feeling with which I can now inspire anyone.”

And, to speak the truth I was too deeply moved, and, at the same time, too full of anxiety, to leave room in me for any desire. Having induced her to go to bed, and her extreme weakness preventing her from doing anything for herself, I undressed her and put her to bed, thus proving once more that compassion will silence the most imperious requirements of nature, in spite of all the charms which would, under other circumstances, excite to the highest degree the senses of a man. I lay down near her in my clothes, and woke her at day-break. Her strength was somewhat restored, she dressed herself alone, and I left my room, telling her to keep quiet until my return. I intended to proceed to her father’s house, and to solicit her pardon, but, having perceived some suspicious-looking men loitering about the palace, I thought it wise to alter my mind, and went to a coffeehouse.

I soon ascertained that a spy was watching my movements at a distance; but I did not appear to notice him, and having taken some chocolate and stored a few biscuits in my pocket, I returned towards the palace, apparently without any anxiety or hurry, always followed by the same individual. I judged that the bargello, having failed in his project, was now reduced to guesswork, and I was strengthened in that view of the case when the gate-keeper of the palace told me, without my asking any question, as I came in, that an arrest had been attempted during the night, and had not succeeded. While he was speaking, one of the auditors of the Vicar-General called to enquire when he could see the Abby Gama. I saw that no time was to be lost, and went up to my room to decide upon what was to be done.

I began by making the poor girl eat a couple of biscuits soaked in some Canary wine, and I took her afterwards to the top story of the palace, where, leaving her in a not very decent closet which was not used by anyone, I told her to wait for me.

My servant came soon after, and I ordered him to lock the door of my room as soon as he finished cleaning it, and to bring me the key at the Abbe Gama’s apartment, where I was going. I found Gama in conversation with the auditor sent by the Vicar-General. As soon as he had dismissed him, he came to me, and ordered his servant to serve the chocolate. When we were left alone he gave me an account of his interview with the auditor, who had come to entreat his eminence to give orders to turn out of his palace a person who was supposed to have taken refuge in it about midnight. “We must wait,” said the abbe, “until the cardinal is visible, but I am quite certain that, if anyone has taken refuge here unknown to him, his eminence will compel that person to leave the palace.” We then spoke of the weather and other trifles until my servant brought my key. Judging that I had at least an hour to spare, I bethought myself of a plan which alone could save Barbara from shame and misery.

Feeling certain that I was unobserved, I went up to my poor prisoner and made her write the following words in French:

“I am an honest girl, monsignor, though I am disguised in the dress of an abbe. I entreat your eminence to allow me to give my name only to you and in person. I hope that, prompted by the great goodness of your soul, your eminence will save me from dishonour.” I gave her the necessary instructions, as to sending the note to the cardinal, assuring her that he would have her brought to him as soon as he read it.

“When you are in his presence,” I added, “throw yourself on your knees, tell him everything without any concealment, except as regards your having passed the night in my room. You must be sure not to mention that circumstance, for the cardinal must remain in complete ignorance of my knowing anything whatever of this intrigue. Tell him that, seeing your lover carried off, you rushed to his palace and ran upstairs as far as you could go, and that after a most painful night Heaven inspired you with the idea of writing to him to entreat his pity. I feel certain that, one way or the other, his eminence will save you from dishonour, and it certainly is the only chance you have of being united to the man you love so dearly.”

She promised to follow ‘my instructions faithfully, and, coming down, I had my hair dressed and went to church, where the cardinal saw me. I then went out and returned only for dinner, during which the only subject of conversation was the adventure of the night. Gama alone said nothing, and I followed his example, but I understood from all the talk going on round the table that the cardinal had taken my poor Barbara under his protection. That was all I wanted, and thinking that I had nothing more to fear I congratulated myself, in petto, upon my stratagem, which had, I thought, proved a master-stroke. After dinner, finding myself alone with Gama, I asked him what was the meaning of it all, and this is what he told me:

“A father, whose name I do not know yet, had requested the assistance of the Vicar-General to prevent his son from carrying off a young girl, with whom he intended to leave the States of the Church; the pair had arranged to meet at midnight in this very square, and the Vicar, having previously obtained the consent of our cardinal, as I told you yesterday, gave orders to the bargello to dispose his men in such a way as to catch the young people in the very act of running away, and to arrest them. The orders were executed, but the ‘sbirri’ found out, when they returned to the bargello, that they had met with only a half success, the woman who got out of the carriage with the young man not belonging to that species likely to be carried off. Soon afterwards a spy informed the bargello that, at the very moment the arrest was executed, he had seen a young abbe run away very rapidly and take refuge in this palace, and the suspicion immediately arose that it might be the missing young lady in the disguise of an ecclesiastic. The bargello reported to the Vicar-General the failure of his men, as well as the account given by the spy, and the Prelate, sharing the suspicion of the police, sent to his eminence, our master, requesting him to have the person in question, man or woman, turned out of the palace, unless such persons should happen to be known to his excellency, and therefore above suspicion. Cardinal Acquaviva was made acquainted with these circumstances at nine this morning through the auditor you met in my room, and he promised to have the person sent away unless she belonged to his household.

“According to his promise, the cardinal ordered the palace to be searched, but, in less than a quarter of an hour, the major-domo received orders to stop, and the only reason for these new instructions must be this:

“I am told by the major-domo that at nine o’clock exactly a very handsome, young abbe, whom he immediately judged to be a girl in disguise, asked him to deliver a note to his eminence, and that the cardinal, after reading it, had desired the said abbe be brought to his apartment, which he has not left since. As the order to stop searching the palace was given immediately after the introduction of the abbe to the cardinal, it is easy enough to suppose that this ecclesiastic is no other than the young girl missed by the police, who took refuge in the palace in which she must have passed the whole night.”

"I suppose," said I, "that his eminence will give her up to-day, if not to the bargello, at least to the Vicar-General."

"No, not even to the Pope himself," answered Gama. "You have not yet a right idea of the protection of our cardinal, and that protection is evidently granted to her, since the young person is not only in the palace of his eminence, but also in his own apartment and under his own guardianship."

The whole affair being in itself very interesting, my attention could not appear extraordinary to Gama, however suspicious he might be naturally, and I was certain that he would not have told me anything if he had guessed the share I had taken in the adventure, and the interest I must have felt in it.

The next day, Gama came to my room with a radiant countenance, and informed me that the Cardinal-Vicar was aware of the ravisher being my friend, and supposed that I was likewise the friend of the girl, as she was the daughter of my French teacher. "Everybody," he added, "is satisfied that you knew the whole affair, and it is natural to suspect that the poor girl spent the night in your room. I admire your prudent reserve during our conversation of yesterday. You kept so well on your guard that I would have sworn you knew nothing whatever of the affair."

"And it is the truth," I answered, very seriously; "I have only learned all the circumstances from you this moment. I know the girl, but I have not seen her for six weeks, since I gave up my French lessons; I am much better acquainted with the young man, but he never confided his project to me. However, people may believe whatever they please. You say that it is natural for the girl to have passed the night in my room, but you will not mind my laughing in the face of those who accept their own suppositions as realities."

"That, my dear friend," said the abbe, "is one of the vices of the Romans; happy those who can afford to laugh at it; but this slander may do you harm, even in the mind of our cardinal."

As there was no performance at the Opera that night, I went to the cardinal's reception; I found no difference towards me either in the cardinal's manners, or in those of any other person, and the marchioness was even more gracious than usual.

After dinner, on the following day, Gama informed me that the cardinal had sent the young girl to a convent in which she would be well treated at his eminence's expense, and that he was certain that she would leave it only to become the wife of the young doctor.

"I should be very happy if it should turn out so," I replied; "for they are both most estimable people."

Two days afterwards, I called upon Father Georgi, and he told me, with an air of sorrow, that the great news of the day in Rome was the failure of the attempt to carry off Dalacqua's daughter, and that all the honour of the intrigue was given to me, which displeased him much. I told him what I had already told Gama, and he appeared to believe me, but he added that in Rome people did not want to know things as they truly were, but only as they wished them to be.

"It is known, that you have been in the habit of going every morning to Dalacqua's house; it is known that the young man often called on you; that is quite enough. People do not care, to know the circumstances which might counteract the slander, but only those, likely to give it new force for slander is vastly relished in the Holy City. Your innocence will not prevent the whole adventure being booked to your account, if, in forty years time you were proposed as pope in the conclave."

During the following days the fatal adventure began to cause me more annoyance than I could express, for everyone mentioned it to me, and I could see clearly that people pretended to believe what I said only because they did not dare to do otherwise. The marchioness told me jeeringly that the Signora Dalacqua had contracted peculiar obligations towards me, but my sorrow was very great when, during the last days of the carnival, I remarked that Cardinal Acquaviva's manner had become constrained, although I was the only person who observed the change.

The noise made by the affair was, however, beginning to subside, when, in the first days of Lent, the cardinal desired me to come to his private room, and spoke as follows:

"The affair of the girl Dalacqua is now over; it is no longer spoken of, but the verdict of the public is that you and I have profited by the clumsiness of the young man who intended to carry her off. In reality I care little for such a verdict, for, under similar circumstances, I should always act in a similar manner, and I do not wish to know that which no one can compel you to confess, and which, as a man of honour, you must not admit. If you had no previous knowledge of the intrigue, and had actually turned the girl out of your room (supposing she did come to you), you would have been guilty of a wrong and cowardly action, because you would have sealed her misery for the remainder of her days, and it would not have caused you to escape the suspicion of being an accomplice, while at the same time it would have attached to you the odium of dastardly treachery. Notwithstanding all I have just said, you can easily imagine that, in spite of my utter contempt for all gossiping fools, I cannot openly defy them. I therefore feel myself compelled to ask you not only to quit my service, but even to leave Rome. I undertake to supply you with an honourable pretext for your departure, so as to insure you the continuation of the respect which you may have secured through the marks of esteem I have bestowed upon you. I promise you to whisper in the ear of any person you may choose, and even to inform everybody, that you are going on an important mission which I have entrusted to you. You have only to name the country where you want to go; I have friends everywhere, and can recommend you to such purpose that you will be sure to find employment. My letters of recommendation will be in my own handwriting, and nobody need know where you are going. Meet me to-morrow at the Villa Negroni, and let me know where my letters are to be addressed. You must be ready to start within a week. Believe me, I am sorry to lose you; but the sacrifice is forced upon me by the most absurd prejudice. Go now, and do not let me witness your grief."

He spoke the last words because he saw my eyes filling with tears, and he did not give me time to answer. Before leaving his room, I had the strength of mind to compose myself, and I put on such an air of cheerfulness that the Abbe Gama, who took me to his room to drink some coffee, complimented me upon my happy looks.

"I am sure," he said, "that they are caused by the conversation you have had with his eminence."

"You are right; but you do not know the sorrow at my heart which I try not to shew outwardly."

"What sorrow?"

“I am afraid of failing in a difficult mission which the cardinal has entrusted me with this morning. I am compelled to conceal how little confidence I feel in myself in order not to lessen the good opinion his eminence is pleased to entertain of me.”

“If my advice can be of any service to you, pray dispose of me; but you are quite right to shew yourself calm and cheerful. Is it any business to transact in Rome?”

“No; it is a journey I shall have to undertake in a week or ten days.”

“Which way?”

“Towards the west.”

“Oh! I am not curious to know.”

I went out alone and took a walk in the Villa Borghese, where I spent two hours wrapped in dark despair. I liked Rome, I was on the high road to fortune, and suddenly I found myself in the abyss, without knowing where to go, and with all my hopes scattered to the winds. I examined my conduct, I judged myself severely, I could not find myself guilty of any crime save of too much kindness, but I perceived how right the good Father Georgi had been. My duty was not only to take no part in the intrigue of the two love, but also to change my French teacher the moment I beard of it; but this was like calling in a doctor after death has struck the patient. Besides, young as I was, having no experience yet of misfortune, and still less of the wickedness of society, it was very difficult for me to have that prudence which a man gains only by long intercourse with the world.

“Where shall I go?” This was the question which seemed to me impossible of solution. I thought of it all through the night, and through the morning, but I thought in vain; after Rome, I was indifferent where I went to!

In the evening, not caring for any supper, I had gone to my room; the Abbe Gama came to me with a request from the cardinal not to accept any invitation to dinner for the next day, as he wanted to speak to me. I therefore waited upon his eminence the next day at the Villa Negroni; he was walking with his secretary, whom he dismissed the moment he saw me. As soon as we were alone, I gave him all the particulars of the intrigue of the two lovers, and I expressed in the most vivid manner the sorrow I felt at leaving his service.

"I have no hope of success," I added, "for I am certain that Fortune will smile upon me only as long as I am near your eminence."

For nearly an hour I told him all the grief with which my heart was bursting, weeping bitterly; yet I could not move him from his decision. Kindly, but firmly he pressed me to tell him to what part of Europe I wanted to go, and despair as much as vexation made me name Constantinople.

"Constantinople!" he exclaimed, moving back a step or two.

"Yes, monsignor, Constantinople," I repeated, wiping away my tears.

The prelate, a man of great wit, but a Spaniard to the very back-bone, after remaining silent a few minutes, said, with a smile,

"I am glad you have not chosen Ispahan, as I should have felt rather embarrassed. When do you wish to go?"

"This day week, as your eminence has ordered me."

"Do you intend to sail from Naples or from Venice?"

"From Venice."

"I will give you such a passport as will be needed, for you will find two armies in winter-quarters in the Romagna. It strikes me that you may tell everybody that I sent you to Constantinople, for nobody will believe you."

This diplomatic suggestion nearly made me smile. The cardinal told me that I should dine with him, and he left me to join his secretary.

When I returned to the palace, thinking of the choice I had made, I said to myself, "Either I am mad, or I am obeying the impulse of a mysterious genius which sends me to Constantinople to work out my fate." I was only astonished that the cardinal had so readily accepted my choice. "Without any doubt," I thought, "he did not wish me to believe that he had boasted of more than he could achieve, in telling me that he had friends everywhere. But to whom can he recommend me in Constantinople? I have not the slightest idea, but to Constantinople I must go."

I dined alone with his eminence; he made a great show of peculiar kindness and I of great satisfaction, for my self-pride, stronger even than my sorrow, forbade me to let anyone guess that I was in disgrace. My deepest grief was, however, to leave the marchioness, with whom I was in love, and from whom I had not obtained any important favour.

Two days afterwards, the cardinal gave me a passport for Venice, and a sealed letter addressed to Osman Bonneval, Pacha of Caramania, in Constantinople. There was no need of my saying anything to anyone, but, as the cardinal had not forbidden me to do it, I shewed the address on the letter to all my acquaintances.

The Chevalier de Lezze, the Venetian Ambassador, gave me a letter for a wealthy Turk, a very worthy man who had been his friend; Don Gaspar and Father Georgi asked me to write to them, but the Abbe Gams, laughed, and said he was quite sure I was not going to Constantinople.

I went to take my farewell of Donna Cecilia, who had just received a letter from Lucrezia, imparting the news that she would soon be a mother. I also called upon Angelique and Don Francisco, who had lately been married and had not invited me to the wedding.

When I called to take Cardinal Acquaviva’s final instructions he gave me a purse containing one hundred ounces, worth seven hundred sequins. I had three hundred more, so that my fortune amounted to one thousand sequins; I kept two hundred, and for the rest I took a letter of exchange upon a Ragusan who was established in Ancona. I left Rome in the coach with a lady going to Our Lady of Loretto, to fulfil a vow made during a severe illness of her daughter, who accompanied her. The young lady was ugly; my journey was a rather tedious one.

CHAPTER XI

My Short But Rather Too Gay Visit To Ancona — Cecilia,

Marina, Bellino — the Greek Slave of the Lazzaretto — Bellino

Discovers Himself

I arrived in Ancona on the 25th of February, 1744, and put up at the best inn. Pleased with my room, I told mine host to prepare for me a good meat dinner; but he answered that during Lent all good Catholics eat nothing but fish.

“The Holy Father has granted me permission to eat meat.”

“Let me see your permission.”

“He gave it to me by word of mouth.”

“Reverend sir, I am not obliged to believe you.”

“You are a fool.”

“I am master in my own house, and I beg you will go to some other inn.”

Such an answer, coupled to a most unexpected notice to quit, threw me into a violent passion. I was swearing, raving, screaming, when suddenly a grave-looking individual made his appearance in my room, and said to me:

“Sir, you are wrong in calling for meat, when in Ancona fish is much better; you are wrong in expecting the landlord to believe you on your bare word; and if you have obtained the permission from the Pope, you have been wrong in soliciting it at your age; you have been wrong in not asking for such permission in writing; you are wrong in calling the host a fool, because it is a compliment that no man is likely to accept in his own house; and, finally, you are wrong in making such an uproar.”

Far from increasing my bad temper, this individual, who had entered my room only to treat me to a sermon, made me laugh.

"I willingly plead guilty, sir," I answered, "to all the counts which you allege against me; but it is raining, it is getting late, I am tired and hungry, and therefore you will easily understand that I do not feel disposed to change my quarters. Will you give me some supper, as the landlord refuses to do so?"

"No," he replied, with great composure, "because I am a good Catholic and fast. But I will undertake to make it all right for you with the landlord, who will give you a good supper."

Thereupon he went downstairs, and I, comparing my hastiness to his calm, acknowledged the man worthy of teaching me some lessons. He soon came up again, informed me that peace was signed, and that I would be served immediately.

"Will you not take supper with me?"

"No, but I will keep you company."

I accepted his offer, and to learn who he was, I told him my name, giving myself the title of secretary to Cardinal Acquaviva.

"My name is Sancio Pico," he said; "I am a Castilian, and the 'proveditore' of the army of H. C. M., which is commanded by Count de Gages under the orders of the generalissimo, the Duke of Modem."

My excellent appetite astonished him, and he enquired whether I had dined. "No," said I; and I saw his countenance assume an air of satisfaction.

"Are you not afraid such a supper will hurt you?" he said.

"On the contrary, I hope it will do me a great deal of good."

"Then you have deceived the Pope?"

"No, for I did not tell him that I had no appetite, but only that I liked meat better than fish."

"If you feel disposed to hear some good music," he said a moment after, "follow me to the next room; the prima donna of Ancona lives there."

The words prima donna interested me at once, and I followed him. I saw, sitting before a table, a woman already somewhat advanced in age, with two young girls and two boys, but I looked in vain for the actress, whom

Don Sancio Pico at last presented to me in the shape of one of the two boys, who was remarkably handsome and might have been seventeen. I thought he was a 'castrato' who, as is the custom in Rome, performed all the parts of a prima donna. The mother presented to, me her other son, likewise very good-looking, but more manly than the 'castrato', although younger. His name was Petronio, and, keeping up the transformations of the family, he was the first female dancer at the opera. The eldest girl, who was also introduced to me, was named Cecilia, and studied music; she was twelve years old; the youngest, called Marina, was only eleven, and like her brother Petronio was consecrated to the worship of Terpsichore. Both the girls were very pretty.

The family came from Bologna and lived upon the talent of its members; cheerfulness and amiability replaced wealth with them. Bellino, such was the name of the castrato, yielding to the entreaties of Don Sancio, rose from the table, went to the harpsicord, and sang with the voice of an angel and with delightful grace. The Castilian listened with his eyes closed in an ecstasy of enjoyment, but I, far from closing my eyes, gazed into Bellino's, which seemed to dart amorous lightnings upon me. I could discover in him some of the features of Lucrezia and the graceful manner of the marchioness, and everything betrayed a beautiful woman, for his dress concealed but imperfectly the most splendid bosom. The consequence was that, in spite of his having been introduced as a man, I fancied that the so-called Bellino was a disguised beauty, and, my imagination taking at once the highest flight, I became thoroughly enamoured.

We spent two very pleasant hours, and I returned to my room accompanied by the Castilian. "I intend to leave very early to-morrow morning," he said, "for Sinigaglia, with the Abbe Vilmarcati, but I expect to return for supper the day after to-morrow." I wished him a happy journey, saying that we would most 'likely meet on the road, as I should probably leave Ancona myself on the same day, after paying a visit to my banker.

I went to bed thinking of Bellino and of the impression he had made upon me; I was sorry to go away without having proved to him that I was not the dupe of his disguise. Accordingly, I was well pleased to see him enter my room in the morning as soon as I had opened my door. He came to offer me the services of his young brother Petronio during my stay in Ancona, instead of my engaging a valet de place. I willingly agreed to the proposal, and sent Petronio to get coffee for all the family.

I asked Bellino to sit on my bed with the intention of making love to him, and of treating him like a girl, but the two young sisters ran into my room and disturbed my plans. Yet the trio formed before me a very pleasing sight; they represented natural beauty and artless cheerfulness of three different kinds; unobtrusive familiarity, theatrical wit, pleasing playfulness, and pretty Bolognese manners which I witnessed for the first time; all this would have sufficed to cheer me if I had been downcast. Cecilia and Marina were two sweet rosebuds, which, to bloom in all their beauty, required only the inspiration of love, and they would certainly have had the preference over Bellino if I had seen in him only the miserable outcast of mankind, or rather the pitiful victim of sacerdotal cruelty, for, in spite of their youth, the two amiable girls offered on their dawning bosom the precious image of womanhood.

Petronio came with the coffee which he poured out, and I sent some to the mother, who never left her room. Petronio was a true male harlot by taste and by profession. The species is not scare in Italy, where the offence is not regarded with the wild and ferocious intolerance of England and Spain. I had given him one sequin to pay for the coffee, and told him to keep the change, and, to shew me his gratitude, he gave me a voluptuous kiss with half-open lips, supposing in me a taste which I was very far from entertaining. I disabused him, but he did not seem the least ashamed. I told him to order dinner for six persons, but he remarked that he would order it only for four, as he had to keep his dear mother company; she always took her dinner in bed. Everyone to his taste, I thought, and I let him do as he pleased.

Two minutes after he had gone, the landlord came to my room and said, “Reverend sir, the persons you have invited here have each the appetite of two men at least; I give you notice of it, because I must charge accordingly.” “All right,” I replied, “but let us have a good dinner.”

When I was dressed, I thought I ought to pay my compliments to the compliant mother. I went to her room, and congratulated her upon her children. She thanked me for the present I had given to Petronio, and began to make me the confidant of her distress. “The manager of the theatre,” she said, “is a miser who has given us only fifty Roman crowns for the whole carnival. We have spent them for our living, and, to return to Bologna, we shall have to walk and beg our way.” Her confidence moved my pity, so I took a gold quadruple from my purse and offered it to her; she wept for joy and gratitude.

“I promise you another gold quadruple, madam,” I said, “if you will confide in me entirely. Confess that Bellino is a pretty woman in disguise.”

“I can assure you it is not so, although he has the appearance of a woman.”

“Not only the appearance, madam, but the tone, the manners; I am a good judge.”

“Nevertheless, he is a boy, for he has had to be examined before he could sing on the stage here.”

“And who examined him?”

“My lord bishop’s chaplain.”

“A chaplain?”

“Yes, and you may satisfy yourself by enquiring from him.”

“The only way to clear my doubts would be to examine him myself.”

“You may, if he has no objection, but truly I cannot interfere, as I do not know what your intentions are.”

“They are quite natural.”

I returned to my room and sent Petronio for a bottle of Cyprus wine. He brought the wine and seven sequins, the change for the doubloon I had given him. I divided them between Bellino, Cecilia and Marina, and begged the two young girls to leave me alone with their brother.

“Bellino, I am certain that your natural conformation is different from mine; my dear, you are a girl.”

“I am a man, but a castrato; I have been examined.”

“Allow me to examine you likewise, and I will give you a doubloon.”

“I cannot, for it is evident that you love me, and such love is condemned by religion.”

"You did not raise these objections with the bishop's chaplain."

"He was an elderly priest, and besides, he only just glanced at me."

"I will know the truth," said I, extending my hand boldly.

But he repulsed me and rose from his chair. His obstinacy vexed me, for I had already spent fifteen or sixteen sequins to satisfy my curiosity.

I began my dinner with a very bad humour, but the excellent appetite of my pretty guests brought me round, and I soon thought that, after all, cheerfulness was better than sulking, and I resolved to make up for my disappointment with the two charming sisters, who seemed well disposed to enjoy a frolic.

I began by distributing a few innocent kisses right and left, as I sat between them near a good fire, eating chestnuts which we wetted with Cyprus wine. But very soon my greedy hands touched every part which my lips could not kiss, and Cecilia, as well as Marina, delighted in the game. Seeing that Bellino was smiling, I kissed him likewise, and his half-open ruffle attracting my hand, I ventured and went in without resistance. The chisel of Praxiteles had never carved a finer bosom!

"Oh! this is enough," I exclaimed; "I can no longer doubt that you are a beautifully-formed woman!"

"It is," he replied, "the defect of all castrati."

"No, it is the perfection of all handsome women. Bellino, believe me, I am enough of a good judge to distinguish between the deformed breast of a castrato, and that of a beautiful woman; and your alabaster bosom belongs to a young beauty of seventeen summers."

Who does not know that love, inflamed by all that can excite it, never stops in young people until it is satisfied, and that one favour granted kindles the wish for a greater one? I had begun well, I tried to go further and to smother with burning kisses that which my hand was pressing so ardently, but the false Bellino, as if he had only just been aware of the illicit pleasure I was enjoying, rose and ran away. Anger increased in me the ardour of love, and feeling the necessity of calming myself either by satisfying my ardent desires or by evaporating them, I begged Cecilia, Bellino's pupil, to sing a few Neapolitan airs.

I then went out to call upon the banker, from whom I took a letter of exchange at sight upon Bologna, for the amount I had to receive from him, and on my return, after a light supper with the two young sisters, I prepared to go to bed, having previously instructed Petronio to order a carriage for the morning.

I was just locking my door when Cecilia, half undressed, came in to say that Bellino begged me to take him to Rimini, where he was engaged to sing in an opera to be performed after Easter.

“Go and tell him, my dear little seraph, that I am ready to do what he wishes, if he will only grant me in your presence what I desire; I want to know for a certainty whether he is a man or a woman.”

She left me and returned soon, saying that Bellino had gone to bed, but that if I would postpone my departure for one day only he promised to satisfy me on the morrow.

“Tell me the truth, Cecilia, and I will give you six sequins.”

“I cannot earn them, for I have never seen him naked, and I cannot swear to his being a girl. But he must be a man, otherwise he would not have been allowed to perform here.”

“Well, I will remain until the day after to-morrow, provided you keep me company tonight.”

“Do you love me very much?”

“Very much indeed, if you shew yourself very kind.”

“I will be very kind, for I love you dearly likewise. I will go and tell my mother.”

“Of course you have a lover?”

“I never had one.”

She left my room, and in a short time came back full of joy, saying that her mother believed me an honest man; she of course meant a generous one. Cecilia locked the door, and throwing herself in my arms covered me with kisses. She was pretty, charming, but I was not in love with her, and I was not able to say to her as to Lucrezia: “You have made me so happy!” But she said it herself, and I did not feel much flattered, although I pretended to believe her. When I woke up in the morning I gave her a tender salutation, and presenting her with three doubloons, which must have particularly delighted the mother, I sent her away without losing my time in promising everlasting constancy — a promise as absurd as it is trifling, and which the most virtuous man ought never to make even to the most beautiful of women.

After breakfast I sent for mine host and ordered an excellent supper for five persons, feeling certain that Don Sancio, whom I expected in the evening, would not refuse to honour me by accepting my invitation, and with that idea I made up my mind to go without my dinner. The Bolognese family did not require to imitate my diet to insure a good appetite for the evening.

I then summoned Bellino to my room, and claimed the performance of his promise but he laughed, remarked that the day was not passed yet, and said that he was certain of traveling with me.

“I fairly warn you that you cannot accompany me unless I am fully satisfied.”

“Well, I will satisfy you.”

“Shall we go and take a walk together?”

“Willingly; I will dress myself.”

While I was waiting for him, Marina came in with a dejected countenance, enquiring how she had deserved my contempt.

“Cecilia has passed the night with you, Bellino will go with you to-morrow, I am the most unfortunate of us all.”

“Do you want money?”

“No, for I love you.”

“But, Marinetta, you are too young.”

“I am much stronger than my sister.”

“Perhaps you have a lover.”

“Oh! no.”

“Very well, we can try this evening.”

“Good! Then I will tell mother to prepare clean sheets for to-morrow morning; otherwise everybody here would know that I slept with you.”

I could not help admiring the fruits of a theatrical education, and was much amused.

Bellino came back, we went out together, and we took our walk towards the harbour. There were several vessels at anchor, and amongst them a Venetian ship and a Turkish tartan. We went on board the first which we visited with interest, but not seeing anyone of my acquaintance, we rowed towards the Turkish tartan, where the most romantic surprise awaited me. The first person I met on board was the beautiful Greek woman I had left in Ancona, seven months before, when I went away from the lazzaretto. She was seated near the old captain, of whom I enquired, without appearing to notice his handsome slave, whether he had any fine goods to sell. He took us to his cabin, but as I cast a glance towards the charming Greek, she expressed by her looks all her delight at such an unexpected meeting.

I pretended not to be pleased with the goods shewn by the Turk, and under the impulse of inspiration I told him that I would willingly buy something pretty which would take the fancy of his better-half. He smiled, and the Greek slave-having whispered a few words to him, he left the cabin. The moment he was out of sight, this new Aspasia threw herself in my arms, saying, “Now is your time!” I would not be found wanting in courage, and taking the most convenient position in such a place, I did to her in one instant that which her old master had not done in five years. I had not yet reached the goal of my wishes, when the unfortunate girl, hearing her master, tore herself from my arms with a deep sigh, and placing herself cunningly in front of me, gave me time to repair the disorder of my dress, which might have cost me my life, or at least all I possessed to compromise the affair. In that curious situation, I was highly amused at the surprise of Bellino, who stood there trembling like an aspen leaf.

The trifles chosen by the handsome slave cost me only thirty sequins. ‘Spolaitis’, she said to me in her own language, and the Turk telling her that she ought to kiss me, she covered her face with her hands, and ran away. I left the ship more sad than pleased, for I regretted that, in spite of her courage, she should have enjoyed only an incomplete pleasure. As soon as we were in our row boat, Bellino, who had recovered from his fright, told me that I had just made him acquainted with a phenomenon, the reality of which he could not admit, and which gave him a very strange idea of my nature; that, as far as the Greek girl was concerned, he could not make her out, unless I should assure him that every woman in her country was like her. “How unhappy they must be!” he added.

“Do you think,” I asked, “that coquettes are happier?”

“No, but I think that when a woman yields to love, she should not be conquered before she has fought with her own desires; she should not give way to the first impulse of a lustful desire and abandon herself to the first man who takes her fancy, like an animal — the slave of sense. You must confess that the Greek woman has given you an evident proof that you had taken her fancy, but that she has at the same time given you a proof not less certain of her beastly lust, and of an effrontery which exposed her to the shame of being repulsed, for she could not possibly know whether you would feel as well disposed for her as she felt for you. She is very handsome, and it all turned out well, but the adventure has thrown me into a whirlpool of agitation which I cannot yet control.”

I might easily have put a stop to Bellino’s perplexity, and rectified the mistake he was labouring under; but such a confession would not have ministered to my self-love, and I held my peace, for, if Bellino happened to be a girl, as I suspected, I wanted her to be convinced that I attached, after all, but very little importance to the great affair, and that it was not worth while employing cunning expedients to obtain it.

We returned to the inn, and, towards evening, hearing Don Sancio’s travelling carriage roll into the yard, I hastened to meet him, and told him that I hoped he would excuse me if I had felt certain that he would not refuse me the honour of his company to supper with Bellino. He thanked me politely for the pleasure I was so delicately offering him, and accepted my invitation.

The most exquisite dishes, the most delicious wines of Spain, and, more than everything else, the cheerfulness and the charming voices of Bellino and of Cecilia, gave the Castilian five delightful hours. He left me at midnight, saying that he could not declare himself thoroughly pleased unless I promised to sup with him the next evening with the same guests. It would compel me to postpone my departure for another day, but I accepted.

As soon as Don Sancio had gone, I called upon Bellino to fulfil his promise, but he answered that Marinetta was waiting for me, and that, as I was not going away the next day, he would find an opportunity of satisfying my doubts; and wishing me a good night, he left the room.

Marinetta, as cheerful as a lark, ran to lock the door and came back to me, her eyes beaming with ardour. She was more formed than Cecilia, although one year younger, and seemed anxious to convince me of her superiority, but, thinking that the fatigue of the preceding night might have exhausted my strength, she unfolded all the amorous ideas of her mind, explained at length all she knew of the great mystery she was going to enact with me, and of all the contrivances she had had recourse to in order to acquire her imperfect knowledge, the whole interlarded with the foolish talk natural to her age. I made out that she was afraid of my not finding her a maiden, and of my reproaching her about it. Her anxiety pleased me, and I gave her a new confidence by telling her that nature had refused to many young girls what is called maidenhood, and that only a fool could be angry with a girl for such a reason.

My science gave her courage and confidence, and I was compelled to acknowledge that she was very superior to her sister.

“I am delighted you find me so,” she said; “we must not sleep at all throughout the night.”

“Sleep, my darling, will prove our friend, and our strength renewed by repose will reward you in the morning for what you may suppose lost time.”

And truly, after a quiet sleep, the morning was for her a succession of fresh triumphs, and I crowned her happiness by sending her away with three doubloons, which she took to her mother, and which gave the good woman an insatiable desire to contract new obligations towards Providence.

I went out to get some money from the banker, as I did not know what might happen during my journey. I had enjoyed myself, but I had spent too much: yet there was Bellino who, if a girl, was not to find me less generous than I had been with the two young sisters. It was to be decided during the day, and I fancied that I was sure of the result.

There are some persons who pretend that life is only a succession of misfortunes, which is as much as to say that life itself is a misfortune; but if life is a misfortune, death must be exactly the reverse and therefore death must be happiness, since death is the very reverse of life. That deduction may appear too finely drawn. But those who say that life is a succession of misfortunes are certainly either ill or poor; for, if they enjoyed good health, if they had cheerfulness in their heart and money in their purse, if they had for their enjoyment a Cecilia, a Marinetta, and even a more lovely beauty in perspective, they would soon entertain a very different opinion of life! I hold them to be a race of pessimists, recruited amongst beggarly philosophers and knavish, atrabilious theologians. If pleasure does exist, and if life is necessary to enjoy pleasure, then life is happiness. There are misfortunes, as I know by experience; but the very existence of such misfortunes proves that the sum-total of happiness is greater. Because a few thorns are to be found in a basket full of roses, is the existence of those beautiful flowers to be denied? No; it is a slander to deny that life is happiness. When I am in a dark room, it pleases me greatly to see through a window an immense horizon before me.

As supper-time was drawing near, I went to Don Sancio, whom I found in magnificently-furnished apartments. The table was loaded with silver plate, and his servants were in livery. He was alone, but all his guests arrived soon after me — Cecilia, Marina, and Bellino, who, either by caprice or from taste, was dressed as a woman. The two young sisters, prettily arranged, looked charming, but Bellino, in his female costume, so completely threw them into the shade, that my last doubt vanished.

“Are you satisfied,” I said to Don Sancio, “that Bellino is a woman?”

“Woman or man, what do I care! I think he is a very pretty ‘castrato’, and ‘I have seen many as good-looking as he is.”

“But are you sure he is a ‘castrato’?”

“‘Valgame Dios’!” answered the grave Castilian, “I have not the slightest wish to ascertain the truth.”

Oh, how widely different our thoughts were! I admired in him the wisdom of which I was so much in need, and did not venture upon any more indiscreet questions. During the supper, however, my greedy eyes could not leave that charming being; my vicious nature caused me to feel intense voluptuousness in believing him to be of that sex to which I wanted him to belong.

Don Sancio's supper was excellent, and, as a matter of course, superior to mine; otherwise the pride of the Castilian would have felt humbled. As a general rule, men are not satisfied with what is good; they want the best, or, to speak more to the point, the most. He gave us white truffles, several sorts of shell-fish, the best fish of the Adriatic, dry champagne, peralta, sherry and pedroximenes wines.

After that supper worthy of Lucullus, Bellino sang with a voice of such beauty that it deprived us of the small amount of reason left in us by the excellent wine. His movements, the expression of his looks, his gait, his walk, his countenance, his voice, and, above all, my own instinct, which told me that I could not possibly feel for a castrato what I felt for Bellino, confirmed me in my hopes; yet it was necessary that my eyes should ascertain the truth.

After many compliments and a thousand thanks, we took leave of the grand Spaniard, and went to my room, where the mystery was at last to be unravelled. I called upon Bellino to keep his word, or I threatened to leave him alone the next morning at day-break.

I took him by the hand, and we seated ourselves near the fire. I dismissed Cecilia and Marina, and I said to him,

"Bellino, everything must have an end; you have promised: it will soon be over. If you are what you represent yourself to be, I will let you go back to your own room; if you are what I believe you to be, and if you consent to remain with me to-night, I will give you one hundred sequins, and we will start together tomorrow morning."

"You must go alone, and forgive me if I cannot fulfil my promise. I am what I told you, and I can neither reconcile myself to the idea of exposing my shame before you, nor lay myself open to the terrible consequences that might follow the solution of your doubts."

"There can be no consequences, since there will be an end to it at the moment I have assured myself that you are unfortunate enough to be what you say, and without ever mentioning the circumstances again, I promise to take you with me to-morrow and to leave you at Rimini.”

“No, my mind is made up; I cannot satisfy your curiosity.”

Driven to madness by his words, I was very near using violence, but subduing my angry feelings, I endeavored to succeed by gentle means and by going straight to the spot where the mystery could be solved. I was very near it, when his hand opposed a very strong resistance. I repeated my efforts, but Bellino, rising suddenly, repulsed me, and I found myself undone. After a few moments of calm, thinking I should take him by surprise, I extended my hand, but I drew back terrified, for I fancied that I had recognized in him a man, and a degraded man, contemptible less on account of his degradation than for the want of feeling I thought I could read on his countenance. Disgusted, confused, and almost blushing for myself, I sent him away.

His sisters came to my room, but I dismissed them, sending word to their brother that he might go with me, without any fear of further indiscretion on my part. Yet, in spite of the conviction I thought I had acquired, Bellino, even such as I believe him to be, filled my thoughts; I could not make it out.

Early the next morning I left Ancona with him, distracted by the tears of the two charming sisters and loaded with the blessings of the mother who, with beads in hand, mumbled her ‘paternoster’, and repeated her constant theme: ‘Dio provedera’.

The trust placed in Providence by most of those persons who earn their living by some profession forbidden by religion is neither absurd, nor false, nor deceitful; it is real and even godly, for it flows from an excellent source. Whatever may be the ways of Providence, human beings must always acknowledge it in its action, and those who call upon Providence independently of all external consideration must, at the bottom, be worthy, although guilty of transgressing its laws.

‘Pulchra Laverna,

Da mihi fallere; da justo sanctoque videri;

Noctem peccatis, et fraudibus objice nubem.’

Such was the way in which, in the days of Horace, robbers addressed their goddess, and I recollect a Jesuit who told me once that Horace would not have known his own language, if he had said justo sanctoque: but there were ignorant men even amongst the Jesuits, and robbers most likely have but little respect for the rules of grammar.

The next morning I started with Bellino, who, believing me to be undeceived, could suppose that I would not shew any more curiosity about him, but we had not been a quarter of an hour together when he found out his mistake, for I could not let my looks fall upon his splendid eyes without feeling in me a fire which the sight of a man could not have ignited. I told him that all his features were those of a woman, and that I wanted the testimony of my eyes before I could feel perfectly satisfied, because the protuberance I had felt in a certain place might be only a freak of nature. "Should it be the case," I added, "I should have no difficulty in passing over a deformity which, in reality, is only laughable. Bellino, the impression you produce upon me, this sort of magnetism, your bosom worthy of Venus herself, which you have once abandoned to my eager hand, the sound of your voice, every movement of yours, assure me that you do not belong to my sex. Let me see for myself, and, if my conjectures are right, depend upon my faithful love; if, on the contrary, I find that I have been mistaken, you can rely upon my friendship. If you refuse me, I shall be compelled to believe that you are cruelly enjoying my misery, and that you have learned in the most accursed school that the best way of preventing a young man from curing himself of an amorous passion is to excite it constantly; but you must agree with me that, to put such tyranny in practice, it is necessary to hate the person it is practised upon, and, if that be so, I ought to call upon my reason to give me the strength necessary to hate you likewise."

I went on speaking for a long time; Bellino did not answer, but he seemed deeply moved. At last I told him that, in the fearful state to which I was reduced by his resistance, I should be compelled to treat him without any regard for his feelings, and find out the truth by force. He answered with much warmth and dignity: "Recollect that you are not my master, that I am in your hands, because I had faith in your promise, and that, if you use violence, you will be guilty of murder. Order the postillion to stop, I will get out of the carriage, and you may rely upon my not complaining of your treatment."

Those few words were followed by a torrent of tears, a sight which I never could resist. I felt myself moved in the inmost recesses of my soul, and I almost thought that I had been wrong. I say almost, because, had I been convinced of it, I would have thrown myself at his feet entreating pardon; but, not feeling myself competent to stand in judgment in my own cause, I satisfied myself by remaining dull and silent, and I never uttered one word until we were only half a mile from Sinigaglia, where I intended to take supper and to remain for the night. Having fought long enough with my own feelings, I said to him;

“We might have spent a little time in Rimini like good friends, if you had felt any friendship for me, for, with a little kind compliance, you could have easily cured me of my passion.”

“It would not cure you,” answered Bellino, courageously, but with a sweetness of tone which surprised me; “no, you would not be cured, whether you found me to be man or woman, for you are in love with me independently of my sex, and the certainty you would acquire would make you furious. In such a state, should you find me inexorable, you would very likely give way to excesses which would afterwards cause you deep sorrow.”

“You expect to make me admit that you are right, but you are completely mistaken, for I feel that I should remain perfectly calm, and that by complying with my wishes you would gain my friendship.”

“I tell you again that you would become furious.”

“Bellino, that which has made me furious is the sight of your charms, either too real or too completely deceiving, the power of which you cannot affect to ignore. You have not been afraid to ignite my amorous fury, how can you expect me to believe you now, when you pretend to fear it, and when I am only asking you to let me touch a thing, which, if it be as you say, will only disgust me?”

“Ah! disgust you; I am quite certain of the contrary. Listen to me. Were I a girl, I feel I could not resist loving you, but, being a man, it is my duty not to grant what you desire, for your passion, now very natural, would then become monstrous. Your ardent nature would be stronger than your reason, and your reason itself would easily come to the assistance of your senses and of your nature. That violent clearing-up of the mystery, were you to obtain it, would leave you deprived of all control over yourself. Disappointed in not finding what you had expected, you would satisfy your passion upon that which you would find, and the result would, of course, be an abomination. How can you, intelligent as you are, flatter yourself that, finding me to be a man, you could all at once cease to love me? Would the charms which you now see in me cease to exist then? Perhaps their power would, on the contrary, be enhanced, and your passion, becoming brutal, would lead you to take any means your imagination suggested to gratify it. You would persuade yourself that you might change me into a woman, or, what is worse, that you might change yourself into one. Your passion would invent a thousand sophisms to justify your love, decorated with the fine appellation of friendship, and you would not fail to allege hundreds of similarly disgusting cases in order to excuse your conduct. You would certainly never find me compliant; and how am I to know that you would not threaten me with death?"

"Nothing of the sort would happen, Bellino," I answered, rather tired of the length of his argument, "positively nothing, and I am sure you are exaggerating your fears. Yet I am bound to tell you that, even if all you say should happen, it seems to me that to allow what can strictly be considered only as a temporary fit of insanity, would prove a less evil than to render incurable a disease of the mind which reason would soon cut short."

Thus does a poor philosopher reason when he takes it into his head to argue at those periods during which a passion raging in his soul makes all its faculties wander. To reason well, we must be under the sway neither of love nor of anger, for those two passions have one thing in common which is that, in their excess, they lower us to the condition of brutes acting only under the influence of their predominating instinct, and, unfortunately, we are never more disposed to argue than when we feel ourselves under the influence of either of those two powerful human passions.

We arrived at Sinigaglia late at night, and I went to the best inn, and, after choosing a comfortable room, ordered supper. As there was but one bed in the room, I asked Bellino, in as calm a tone as I could assume, whether he would have a fire lighted in another chamber, and my surprise may be imagined when he answered quietly that he had no objection to sleep in the same bed with me. Such an answer, however, unexpected, was necessary to dispel the angry feelings under which I was labouring. I guessed that I was near the denouement of the romance, but I was very far from congratulating myself, for I did not know whether the denouement would prove agreeable or not. I felt, however, a real satisfaction at having conquered, and was sure of my self-control, in case the senses, my natural instinct, led me astray. But if I found myself in the right, I thought I could expect the most precious favours.

We sat down to supper opposite each other, and during the meal, his words, his countenance, the expression of his beautiful eyes, his sweet and voluptuous smile, everything seemed to announce that he had had enough of playing a part which must have proved as painful to him as to me.

A weight was lifted off my mind, and I managed to shorten the supper as much as possible. As soon as we had left the table, my amiable companion called for a night-lamp, undressed himself, and went to bed. I was not long in following him, and the reader will soon know the nature of a denouement so long and so ardently desired; in the mean time I beg to wish him as happy a night as the one which was then awaiting me.

CHAPTER XII

Bellino's History — I Am Put Under Arrest — I Run Away Against My Will — My Return To Rimini, and My Arrival In Bologna

Dear reader, I said enough at the end of the last chapter to make you guess what happened, but no language would be powerful enough to make you realize all the voluptuousness which that charming being had in store for me. She came close to me the moment I was in bed. Without uttering one word our lips met, and I found myself in the ecstasy of enjoyment before I had had time to seek for it. After so complete a victory, what would my eyes and my fingers have gained from investigations which could not give me more certainty than I had already obtained? I could not take my gaze off that beautiful face, which was all aflame with the ardour of love.

After a moment of quiet rapture, a spark lighted up in our veins a fresh conflagration which we drowned in a sea of new delights. Bellino felt bound to make me forget my sufferings, and to reward me by an ardour equal to the fire kindled by her charms.

The happiness I gave her increased mine twofold, for it has always been my weakness to compose the four-fifths of my enjoyment from the sum-total of the happiness which I gave the charming being from whom I derived it. But such a feeling must necessarily cause hatred for old age which can still receive pleasure, but can no longer give enjoyment to another. And youth runs away from old age, because it is its most cruel enemy.

An interval of repose became necessary, in consequence of the activity of our enjoyment. Our senses were not tired out, but they required the rest which renews their sensitiveness and restores the buoyancy necessary to active service.

Bellino was the first to break our silence.

“Dearest,” she said, “are you satisfied now? Have you found me truly loving?”

"Truly loving? Ah! traitress that you are! Do you, then, confess that I was not mistaken when I guessed that you were a charming woman? And if you truly loved me, tell me how you could contrive to defer your happiness and mine so long? But is it quite certain that I did not make a mistake?"

"I am yours all over; see for yourself."

Oh, what delightful survey! what charming beauties! what an ocean of enjoyment! But I could not find any trace of the protuberance which had so much terrified and disgusted me.

"What has become," I said, "of that dreadful monstrosity?"

"Listen to me," she replied, "and I will tell you everything.

"My name is Therese. My father, a poor clerk in the Institute of Bologna, had let an apartment in his house to the celebrated Salimberi, a castrato, and a delightful musician. He was young and handsome, he became attached to me, and I felt flattered by his affection and by the praise he lavished upon me. I was only twelve years of age; he proposed to teach me music, and finding that I had a fine voice, he cultivated it carefully, and in less than a year I could accompany myself on the harpsichord. His reward was that which his love for me induced him to ask, and I granted the reward without feeling any humiliation, for I worshipped him. Of course, men like yourself are much above men of his species, but Salimberi was an exception. His beauty, his manners, his talent, and the rare qualities of his soul, made him superior in my eyes to all the men I had seen until then. He was modest and reserved, rich and generous, and I doubt whether he could have found a woman able to resist him; yet I never heard him boast of having seduced any. The mutilation practised upon his body had made him a monster, but he was an angel by his rare qualities and endowments.

"Salimberi was at that time educating a boy of the same age as myself, who was in Rimini with a music teacher. The father of the boy, who was poor and had a large family, seeing himself near death, had thought of having his unfortunate son maimed so that he should become the support of his brothers with his voice. The name of the boy was Bellino; the good woman whom you have just seen in Ancona was his mother, and everybody believes that she is mine.

“I had belonged to Salimberi for about a year, when he announced to me one day, weeping bitterly, that he was compelled to leave me to go to Rome, but he promised to see me again. The news threw me into despair. He had arranged everything for the continuation of my musical education, but, as he was preparing himself for his departure, my father died very suddenly, after a short illness, and I was left an orphan.

“Salimberi had not courage enough to resist my tears and my entreaties; he made up his mind to take me to Rimini, and to place me in the same house where his young ‘protege’ was educated. We reached Rimini, and put up at an inn; after a short rest, Salimberi left me to call upon the teacher of music, and to make all necessary arrangements respecting me with him; but he soon returned, looking sad and unhappy; Bellino had died the day before.

“As he was thinking of the grief which the loss of the young man would cause his mother, he was struck with the idea of bringing me back to Bologna under the name of Bellino, where he could arrange for my board with the mother of the deceased Bellino, who, being very poor, would find it to her advantage to keep the secret. ‘I will give her,’ he said, ‘everything necessary for the completion of your musical education, and in four years, I will take you to Dresden (he was in the service of the Elector of Saxony, King of Poland), not as a girl, but as a castrato. There we will live together without giving anyone cause for scandal, and you will remain with me and minister to my happiness until I die. All we have to do is to represent you as Bellino, and it is very easy, as nobody knows you in Bologna. Bellino’s mother will alone know the secret; her other children have seen their brother only when he was very young, and can have no suspicion. But if you love me you must renounce your sex, lose even the remembrance of it, and leave immediately for Bologna, dressed as a boy, and under the name of Bellino. You must be very careful lest anyone should find out that you are a girl; you must sleep alone, dress yourself in private, and when your bosom is formed, as it will be in a year or two, it will only be thought a deformity not uncommon amongst ‘castrati’. Besides, before leaving you, I will give you a small instrument, and teach how to fix it in such manner that, if you had at any time to submit to an examination, you would easily be mistaken for a man. If you accept my plan, I feel certain that we can live together in Dresden without losing the good graces of the queen, who is very religious. Tell me, now, whether you will accept my proposal?

“He could not entertain any doubt of my consent, for I adored him. As soon as he had made a boy of me we left Rimini for Bologna, where we arrived late in the evening. A little gold made everything right with Bellino’s mother; I gave her the name of mother, and she kissed me, calling me her dear son. Salimberi left us, and returned a short time afterwards with the instrument which would complete my transformation. He taught me, in the presence of my new mother, how to fix it with some tragacanth gum, and I found myself exactly like my friend. I would have laughed at it, had not my heart been deeply grieved at the departure of my beloved Salimberi, for he bade me farewell as soon as the curious operation was completed. People laugh at forebodings; I do not believe in them myself, but the foreboding of evil, which almost broke my heart as he gave me his farewell kiss, did not deceive me. I felt the cold shivering of death run through me; I felt I was looking at him for the last time, and I fainted away. Alas! my fears proved only too prophetic. Salimberi died a year ago in the Tyrol in the prime of life, with the calmness of a true philosopher. His death compelled me to earn my living with the assistance of my musical talent. My mother advised me to continue to give myself out as a castrato, in the hope of being able to take me to Rome. I agreed to do so, for I did not feel sufficient energy to decide upon any other plan. In the meantime she accepted an offer for the Ancona Theatre, and Petronio took the part of first female dancer; in this way we played the comedy of ‘The World Turned Upside Down.’

“After Salimberi, you are the only man I have known, and, if you like, you can restore me to my original state, and make me give up the name of Bellino, which I hate since the death of my protector, and which begins to inconvenience me. I have only appeared at two theatres, and each time I have been compelled to submit to the scandalous, degrading examination, because everywhere I am thought to have too much the appearance of a girl, and I am admitted only after the shameful test has brought conviction. Until now, fortunately, I have had to deal only with old priests who, in their good faith, have been satisfied with a very slight examination, and have made a favourable report to the bishop; but I might fall into the hands of some young abbe, and the test would then become a more severe one. Besides, I find myself exposed to the daily persecutions of two sorts of beings: those who, like you, cannot and will not believe me to be a man, and those who, for the satisfaction of their disgusting propensities, are delighted at my being so, or find it advantageous to suppose me so. The last particularly annoy me! Their tastes are so infamous, their habits so low, that I fear I shall murder one of them some day, when I can no longer control the rage in which their obscene language throws me. Out of pity, my beloved angel, be generous; and, if you love me, oh! free me from this state of shame and degradation! Take me with you. I do not ask to become your wife, that would be too much happiness; I will only be your friend, your mistress, as I would have been Salimberi's; my heart is pure and innocent, I feel that I can remain faithful to my lover through my whole life. Do not abandon me. The love I have for you is sincere; my affection for Salimberi was innocent; it was born of my inexperience and of my gratitude, and it is only with you that I have felt myself truly a woman."

Her emotion, an inexpressible charm which seemed to flow from her lips and to enforce conviction, made me shed tears of love and sympathy. I blended my tears with those falling from her beautiful eyes, and deeply moved, I promised not to abandon her and to make her the sharer of my fate. Interested in the history, as singular as extraordinary, that she had just narrated, and having seen nothing in it that did not bear the stamp of truth, I felt really disposed to make her happy but I could not believe that I had inspired her with a very deep passion during my short stay in Ancona, many circumstances of which might, on the contrary, have had an opposite effect upon her heart.

"If you loved me truly," I said, "how could you let me sleep with your sisters, out of spite at your resistance?"

"Alas, dearest! think of our great poverty, and how difficult it was for me to discover myself. I loved you; but was it not natural that I should suppose your inclination for me only a passing caprice? When I saw you go so easily from Cecilia to Marinetta, I thought that you would treat me in the same manner as soon as your desires were satisfied, I was likewise confirmed in my opinion of your want of constancy and of the little importance you attached to the delicacy of the sentiment of love, when I witnessed what you did on board the Turkish vessel without being hindered by my presence; had you loved me, I thought my being present would have made you uncomfortable. I feared to be soon despised, and God knows how much I suffered! You have insulted me, darling, in many different ways, but my heart pleaded in your favour, because I knew you were excited, angry, and thirsting for revenge. Did you not threaten me this very day in your carriage? I confess you greatly frightened me, but do not fancy that I gave myself to you out of fear. No, I had made up my mind to be yours from the moment you sent me word by Cecilia that you would take me to Rimini, and your control over your own feelings during a part of our journey confirmed me in my resolution, for I thought I could trust myself to your honour, to your delicacy."

"Throw up," I said, "the engagement you have in Rimini; let us proceed on our journey, and, after remaining a couple of days in Bologna, you will go with me to Venice; dressed as a woman, and with another name, I would challenge the manager here to find you out."

"I accept. Your will shall always be my law. I am my own mistress, and I give myself to you without any reserve or restriction; my heart belongs to you, and I trust to keep yours."

Man has in himself a moral force of action which always makes him overstep the line on which he is standing. I had obtained everything, I wanted more. "Shew me," I said, "how you were when I mistook you for a man." She got out of bed, opened her trunk, took out the instrument and fixed it with the gum: I was compelled to admire the ingenuity of the contrivance. My curiosity was satisfied, and I passed a most delightful night in her arms.

When I woke up in the morning, I admired her lovely face while she was sleeping: all I knew of her came back to my mind; the words which had been spoken by her bewitching mouth, her rare talent, her candour, her feelings so full of delicacy, and her misfortunes, the heaviest of which must have been the false character she had been compelled to assume, and which exposed her to humiliation and shame, everything strengthened my resolution to make her the companion of my destiny, whatever it might be, or to follow her fate, for our positions were very nearly the same; and wishing truly to attach myself seriously to that interesting being, I determined to give to our union the sanction of religion and of law, and to take her legally for my wife. Such a step, as I then thought, could but strengthen our love, increase our mutual esteem, and insure the approbation of society which could not accept our union unless it was sanctioned in the usual manner.

The talents of Therese precluded the fear of our being ever in want of the necessaries of life, and, although I did not know in what way my own talents might be made available, I had faith in myself. Our love might have been lessened, she would have enjoyed too great advantages over me, and my self-dignity would have too deeply suffered if I had allowed myself to be supported by her earnings only. It might, after a time, have altered the nature of our feelings; my wife, no longer thinking herself under any obligation to me, might have fancied herself the protecting, instead of the protected party, and I felt that my love would soon have turned into utter contempt, if it had been my misfortune to find her harbouring such thoughts. Although I trusted it would not be so, I wanted, before taking the important step of marriage, to probe her heart, and I resolved to try an experiment which would at once enable me to judge the real feelings of her inmost soul. As soon as she was awake, I spoke to her thus:

"Dearest Therese, all you have told me leaves me no doubt of your love for me, and the consciousness you feel of being the mistress of my heart enhances my love for you to such a degree, that I am ready to do everything to convince you that you were not mistaken in thinking that you had entirely conquered me. I wish to prove to you that I am worthy of the noble confidence you have reposed in me by trusting you with equal sincerity.

"Our hearts must be on a footing of perfect equality. I know you, my dearest Therese, but you do not know me yet. I can read in your eyes that you do not mind it, and it proves our great love, but that feeling places me too much below you, and I do not wish you to have so great an advantage over me. I feel certain that my confidence is not necessary to your love; that you only care to be mine, that your only wish is to possess my heart, and I admire you, my Therese; but I should feel humiliated if I found myself either too much above or too much below you. You have entrusted your secrets to me, now listen to mine; but before I begin, promise me that, when you know everything that concerns me, you will tell me candidly if any change has taken place either in your feelings or in your hopes."

"I promise it faithfully; I promise not to conceal anything from you; but be upright enough not to tell me anything that is not perfectly true, for I warn you that it would be useless. If you tried any artifice in order to find me less worthy of you than I am in reality, you would only succeed in lowering yourself in my estimation. I should be very sorry to see you guilty of any cunning towards me. Have no more suspicion of me than I have of you; tell me the whole truth."

"Here it is. You suppose me wealthy, and I am not so; as soon as what there is now in my purse is spent I shall have nothing left. You may fancy that I was born a patrician, but my social condition is really inferior to your own. I have no lucrative talents, no profession, nothing to give me the assurance that I am able to earn my living. I have neither relatives nor friends, nor claims upon anyone, and I have no serious plan or purpose before me. All I possess is youth, health, courage, some intelligence, honour, honesty, and some tincture of letters. My greatest treasure consists in being my own master, perfectly independent, and not afraid of misfortune. With all that, I am naturally inclined to extravagance. Lovely Therese, you have my portrait. What is your answer?"

"In the first place, dearest, let me assure you that I believe every word you have just uttered, as I would believe in the Gospel; in the second, allow me to tell you that several times in Ancona I have judged you such as you have just described yourself, but far from being displeased at such a knowledge of your nature, I was only afraid of some illusion on my part, for I could hope to win you if you were what I thought you to be. In one word, dear one, if it is true that you are poor and a very bad hand at economy, allow me to tell you that I feel delighted, because, if you love me, you will not refuse a present from me, or despise me for offering it. The present consists of myself, such as I am, and with all my faculties. I give myself to you without any condition, with no restriction; I am yours, I will take care of you. For the future think only of your love for me, but love me exclusively. From this moment I am no longer Bellino. Let us go to Venice, where my talent will keep us both comfortably; if you wish to go anywhere else, let us go where you please."

"I must go to Constantinople."

"Then let us proceed to Constantinople. If you are afraid to lose me through want of constancy, marry me, and your right over me will be strengthened by law. I should not love you better than I do now, but I should be happy to be your wife."

"It is my intention to marry you, and I am delighted that we agree in that respect. The day after to-morrow, in Bologna, you shall be made my legal-wife before the altar of God; I swear it to you here in the presence of Love. I want you to be mine, I want to be yours, I want us to be united by the most holy ties."

"I am the happiest of women! We have nothing to do in Rimini; suppose we do not get up; we can have our dinner in bed, and go away to-morrow well rested after our fatigues."

We left Rimini the next day, and stayed for breakfast at Pesaro. As we were getting into the carriage to leave that place, an officer, accompanied by two soldiers, presented himself, enquired for our names, and demanded our passports. Bellino had one and gave it, but I looked in vain for mine; I could not find it.

The officer, a corporal, orders the postillion to wait and goes to make his report. Half an hour afterwards, he returns, gives Bellino his passport, saying that he can continue his journey, but tells me that his orders are to escort me to the commanding officer, and I follow him.

"What have you done with your passport?" enquires that officer.

"I have lost it."

"A passport is not so easily lost."

"Well, I have lost mine."

"You cannot proceed any further."

"I come from Rome, and I am going to Constantinople, bearing a letter from Cardinal Acquaviva. Here is the letter stamped with his seal."

"All I can do for you is to send you to M. de Gages."

I found the famous general standing, surrounded by his staff. I told him all I had already explained to the officer, and begged him to let me continue my journey.

"The only favour I can grant you is to put you under arrest till you receive another passport from Rome delivered under the same name as the one you have given here. To lose a passport is a misfortune which befalls only a thoughtless, giddy man, and the cardinal will for the future know better than to put his confidence in a giddy fellow like you."

With these words, he gave orders to take me to the guard-house at St. Mary's Gate, outside the city, as soon as I should have written to the cardinal for a new passport. His orders were executed. I was brought back to the inn, where I wrote my letter, and I sent it by express to his eminence, entreating him to forward the document, without loss of time, direct to the war office. Then I embraced Therese who was weeping, and, telling her to go to Rimini and to wait there for my return, I made her take one hundred sequins. She wished to remain in Pesaro, but I would not hear of it; I had my trunk brought out, I saw Therese go away from the inn, and was taken to the place appointed by the general.

It is undoubtedly under such circumstances that the most determined optimist finds himself at a loss; but an easy stoicism can blunt the too sharp edge of misfortune.

My greatest sorrow was the heart-grief of Therese who, seeing me torn from her arms at the very moment of our union, was suffocated by the tears which she tried to repress. She would not have left me if I had not made her understand that she could not remain in Pesaro, and if I had not promised to join her within ten days, never to be parted again. But fate had decided otherwise.

When we reached the gate, the officer confined me immediately in the guard-house, and I sat down on my trunk. The officer was a taciturn Spaniard who did not even condescend to honour me with an answer, when I told him that I had money and would like to have someone to wait on me. I had to pass the night on a little straw, and without food, in the midst of the Spanish soldiers. It was the second night of the sort that my destiny had condemned me to, immediately after two delightful nights. My good angel doubtless found some pleasure in bringing such conjunctions before my mind for the benefit of my instruction. At all events, teachings of that description have an infallible effect upon natures of a peculiar stamp.

If you should wish to close the lips of a logician calling himself a philosopher, who dares to argue that in this life grief overbalances pleasure, ask him whether he would accept a life entirely without sorrow and happiness. Be certain that he will not answer you, or he will shuffle, because, if he says no, he proves that he likes life such as it is, and if he likes it, he must find it agreeable, which is an utter impossibility, if life is painful; should he, on the contrary, answer in the affirmative, he would declare himself a fool, for it would be as much as to say that he can conceive pleasure arising from indifference, which is absurd nonsense.

Suffering is inherent in human nature; but we never suffer without entertaining the hope of recovery, or, at least, very seldom without such hope, and hope itself is a pleasure. If it happens sometimes that man suffers without any expectation of a cure, he necessarily finds pleasure in the complete certainty of the end of his life; for the worst, in all cases, must be either a sleep arising from extreme dejection, during which we have the consolation of happy dreams or the loss of all sensitiveness. But when we are happy, our happiness is never disturbed by the thought that it will be followed by grief. Therefore pleasure, during its active period, is always complete, without alloy; grief is always soothed by hope.

I suppose you, dear reader, at the age of twenty, and devoting yourself to the task of making a man of yourself by furnishing your mind with all the knowledge necessary to render you a useful being through the activity of your brain. Someone comes in and tells you, “I bring you thirty years of existence; it is the immutable decree of fate; fifteen consecutive years must be happy, and fifteen years unhappy. You are at liberty to choose the half by which you wish to begin.”

Confess it candidly, dear reader, you will not require much more consideration to decide, and you will certainly begin by the unhappy series of years, because you will feel that the expectation of fifteen delightful years cannot fail to brace you up with the courage necessary to bear the unfortunate years you have to go through, and we can even surmise, with every probability of being right, that the certainty of future happiness will soothe to a considerable extent the misery of the first period.

You have already guessed, I have no doubt, the purpose of this lengthy argument. The sagacious man, believe me, can never be utterly miserable, and I most willingly agree with my friend Horace, who says that, on the contrary, such a man is always happy.

‘Nisi quum pituita molesta est.’

But, pray where is the man who is always suffering from a rheum?

The fact is that the fearful night I passed in the guardhouse of St. Mary resulted for me in a slight loss and in a great gain. The small loss was to be away from my dear Therese, but, being certain of seeing her within ten days, the misfortune was not very great: as to the gain, it was in experience the true school for a man. I gained a complete system against thoughtlessness, a system of foresight. You may safely bet a hundred to one that a young man who has once lost his purse or his passport, will not lose either a second time. Each of those misfortunes has befallen me once only, and I might have been very often the victim of them, if experience had not taught me how much they were to be dreaded. A thoughtless fellow is a man who has not yet found the word dread in the dictionary of his life.

The officer who relieved my cross-grained Castilian on the following day seemed of a different nature altogether; his prepossessing countenance pleased me much. He was a Frenchman, and I must say that I have always liked the French, and never the Spaniards; there is in the manners of the first something so engaging, so obliging, that you feel attracted towards them as towards a friend, whilst an air of unbecoming haughtiness gives to the second a dark, forbidding countenance which certainly does not prepossess in their favour. Yet I have often been duped by Frenchmen, and never by Spaniards — a proof that we ought to mistrust our tastes.

The new officer, approaching me very politely, said to me, —

“To what chance, reverend sir, am I indebted for the honour of having you in my custody?”

Ah! here was a way of speaking which restored to my lungs all their elasticity! I gave him all the particulars of my misfortune, and he found the mishap very amusing. But a man disposed to laugh at my disappointment could not be disagreeable to me, for it proved that the turn of his mind had more than one point of resemblance with mine. He gave me at once a soldier to serve me, and I had very quickly a bed, a table, and a few chairs. He was kind enough to have my bed placed in his own room, and I felt very grateful to him for that delicate attention.

He gave me an invitation to share his dinner, and proposed a game of piquet afterwards, but from the very beginning he saw that I was no match for him; he told me so, and he warned me that the officer who would relieve him the next day was a better player even than he was himself; I lost three or four ducats. He advised me to abstain from playing on the following day, and I followed his advice. He told me also that he would have company to supper, that there would be a game of faro, but that the banker being a Greek and a crafty player, I ought not to play. I thought his advice very considerate, particularly when I saw that all the punters lost, and that the Greek, very calm in the midst of the insulting treatment of those he had duped, was pocketing his money, after handing a share to the officer who had taken an interest in the bank. The name of the banker was Don Pepe il Cadetto, and by his accent I knew he was a Neapolitan. I communicated my discovery to the officer, asking him why he had told me that the man was a Greek. He explained to me the meaning of the word greek applied to a gambler, and the lesson which followed his explanation proved very useful to me in after years.

During the five following days, my life was uniform and rather dull, but on the sixth day the same French officer was on guard, and I was very glad to see him. He told me, with a hearty laugh, that he was delighted to find me still in the guard-house, and I accepted the compliment for what it was worth. In the evening, we had the same bank at faro, with the same result as the first time, except a violent blow from the stick of one of the punters upon the back of the banker, of which the Greek stoically feigned to take no notice. I saw the same man again nine years afterwards in Vienna, captain in the service of Maria Theresa; he then called himself d'Afflisso. Ten years later, I found him a colonel, and some time after worth a million; but the last time I saw him, some thirteen or fourteen years ago, he was a galley slave. He was handsome, but (rather a singular thing) in spite of his beauty, he had a gallows look. I have seen others with the same stamp — Cagliostro, for instance, and another who has not yet been sent to the galleys, but who cannot fail to pay them a visit. Should the reader feel any curiosity about it, I can whisper the name in his ear.

Towards the ninth or tenth day everyone in the army knew and liked me, and I was expecting the passport, which could not be delayed much longer. I was almost free, and I would often walk about even out of sight of the sentinel. They were quite right not to fear my running away, and I should have been wrong if I had thought of escaping, but the most singular adventure of my life happened to me then, and most unexpectedly.

It was about six in the morning. I was taking a walk within one hundred yards of the sentinel, when an officer arrived and alighted from his horse, threw the bridle on the neck of his steed, and walked off. Admiring the docility of the horse, standing there like a faithful servant to whom his master has given orders to wait for him I got up to him, and without any purpose I get hold of the bridle, put my foot in the stirrup, and find myself in the saddle. I was on horseback for the first time in my life. I do not know whether I touched the horse with my cane or with my heels, but suddenly the animal starts at full speed. My right foot having slipped out of the stirrup, I press against the horse with my heels, and, feeling the pressure, it gallops faster and faster, for I did not know how to check it. At the last advanced post the sentinels call out to me to stop; but I cannot obey the order, and the horse carrying me away faster than ever, I hear the whizzing of a few musket balls, the natural consequence of my involuntary disobedience. At last, when I reach the first advanced picket of the Austrians, the horse is stopped, and I get off his back thanking God.

An officer of Hussars asks where I am running so fast, and my tongue, quicker than my thought, answers without any privity on my part, that I can render no account but to Prince Lobkowitz, commander-in-chief of the army, whose headquarters were at Rimini. Hearing my answer, the officer gave orders for two Hussars to get on horseback, a fresh one is given me, and I am taken at full gallop to Rimini, where the officer on guard has me escorted at once to the prince.

I find his highness alone, and I tell him candidly what has just happened to me. My story makes him laugh, although he observes that it is hardly credible.

“I ought,” he says, “to put you under arrest, but I am willing to save you that unpleasantness.” With that he called one of his officers and ordered him to escort me through the Cesena Gate. “Then you can go wherever you please,” he added, turning round to me; “but take care not to again enter the lines of my army without a passport, or you might fare badly.”

I asked him to let me have the horse again, but he answered that the animal did not belong to me. I forgot to ask him to send me back to the place I had come from, and I regretted it; but after all perhaps I did for the best.

The officer who accompanied me asked me, as we were passing a coffee-house, whether I would like to take some chocolate, and we went in. At that moment I saw Petronio going by, and availing myself of a moment when the officer was talking to someone, I told him not to appear to be acquainted with me, but to tell me where he lived. When we had taken our chocolate the officer paid and we went out. Along the road we kept up the conversation; he told me his name, I gave him mine, and I explained how I found myself in Rimini. He asked me whether I had not remained some time in Ancona; I answered in the affirmative, and he smiled and said I could get a passport in Bologna, return to Rimini and to Pesaro without any fear, and recover my trunk by paying the officer for the horse he had lost. We reached the gate, he wished me a pleasant journey, and we parted company.

I found myself free, with gold and jewels, but without my trunk. Therese was in Rimini, and I could not enter that city. I made up my mind to go to Bologna as quickly as possible in order to get a passport, and to return to Pesaro, where I should find my passport from Rome, for I could not make up my mind to lose my trunk, and I did not want to be separated from Therese until the end of her engagement with the manager of the Rimini Theatre.

It was raining; I had silk stockings on, and I longed for a carriage. I took shelter under the portal of a church, and turned my fine overcoat inside out, so as not to look like an abbe. At that moment a peasant happened to come along, and I asked him if a carriage could be had to drive me to Cesena. “I have one, sir,” he said, “but I live half a league from here.”

“Go and get it, I will wait for you here.”

While I was waiting for the return of the peasant with his vehicle, some forty mules laden with provisions came along the road towards Rimini. It was still raining fast, and the mules passing close by me, I placed my hand mechanically upon the neck of one of them, and following the slow pace of the animals I re-entered Rimini without the slightest notice being taken of me, even by the drivers of the mules. I gave some money to the first street urchin I met, and he took me to Therese’s house.

With my hair fastened under a night-cap, my hat pulled down over my face, and my fine cane concealed under my coat, I did not look a very elegant figure. I enquired for Bellino's mother, and the mistress of the house took me to a room where I found all the family, and Therese in a woman's dress. I had reckoned upon surprising them, but Petronio had told them of our meeting, and they were expecting me. I gave a full account of my adventures, but Therese, frightened at the danger that threatened me, and in spite of her love, told me that it was absolutely necessary for me to go to Bologna, as I had been advised by M. Vais, the officer.

"I know him," she said, "and he is a worthy man, but he comes here every evening, and you must conceal yourself."

It was only eight o'clock in the morning; we had the whole day before us, and everyone promised to be discreet. I allayed Therese's anxiety by telling her that I could easily contrive to leave the city without being observed.

Therese took me to her own room, where she told me that she had met the manager of the theatre on her arrival in Rimini, and that he had taken her at once to the apartments engaged for the family. She had informed him that she was a woman, and that she had made up her mind not to appear as a castrato any more; he had expressed himself delighted at such news, because women could appear on the stage at Rimini, which was not under the same legate as Ancona. She added that her engagement would be at an end by the 1st of May, and that she would meet me wherever it would be agreeable to me to wait for her.

"As soon as I can get a passport," I said, "there is nothing to hinder me from remaining near you until the end of your engagement. But as M. Vais calls upon you, tell me whether you have informed him of my having spent a few days in Ancona?"

"I did, and I even told him that you had been arrested because you had lost your passport."

I understood why the officer had smiled as he was talking with me. After my conversation with Therese, I received the compliments of the mother and of the young sisters who appeared to me less cheerful and less free than they had been in Ancona. They felt that Bellino, transformed into Therese, was too formidable a rival. I listened patiently to all the complaints of the mother who maintained that, in giving up the character of castrato, Therese had bidden adieu to fortune, because she might have earned a thousand sequins a year in Rome.

“In Rome, my good woman,” I said, “the false Bellino would have been found out, and Therese would have been consigned to a miserable convent for which she was never made.”

Notwithstanding the danger of my position, I spent the whole of the day alone with my beloved mistress, and it seemed that every moment gave her fresh beauties and increased my love. At eight o’clock in the evening, hearing someone coming in, she left me, and I remained in the dark, but in such a position that I could see everything and hear every word. The Baron Vais came in, and Therese gave him her hand with the grace of a pretty woman and the dignity of a princess. The first thing he told her was the news about me; she appeared to be pleased, and listened with well-feigned indifference, when he said that he had advised me to return with a passport. He spent an hour with her, and I was thoroughly well pleased with her manners and behaviour, which had been such as to leave me no room for the slightest feeling of jealousy. Marina lighted him out and Therese returned to me. We had a joyous supper together, and, as we were getting ready to go to bed, Petronio came to inform me that ten muleteers would start for Cesena two hours before day-break, and that he was sure I could leave the city with them if I would go and meet them a quarter of an hour before their departure, and treat them to something to drink. I was of the same opinion, and made up my mind to make the attempt. I asked Petronio to sit up and to wake me in good time. It proved an unnecessary precaution, for I was ready before the time, and left Therese satisfied with my love, without any doubt of my constancy, but rather anxious as to my success in attempting to leave Rimini. She had sixty sequins which she wanted to force back upon me, but I asked her what opinion she would have of me if I accepted them, and we said no more about it.

I went to the stable, and having treated one of the muleteers to some drink I told him that I would willingly ride one of his mules as far as Sarignan.

“You are welcome to the ride,” said the good fellow, “but I would advise you not to get on the mule till we are outside the city, and to pass through the gate on foot as if you were one of the drivers.”

It was exactly what I wanted. Petronio accompanied me as far as the gate, where I gave him a substantial proof of my gratitude. I got out of the city without the slightest difficulty, and left the muleteers at Sarignan, whence I posted to Bologna.

I found out that I could not obtain a passport, for the simple reason that the authorities of the city persisted that it was not necessary; but I knew better, and it was not for me to tell them why. I resolved to write to the French officer who had treated me so well at the guardhouse. I begged him to enquire at the war office whether my passport had arrived from Rome, and, if so, to forward it to me. I also asked him to find out the owner of the horse who had run away with me, offering to pay for it. I made up my mind to wait for Therese in Bologna, and I informed her of my decision, entreating her to write very often. The reader will soon know the new resolution I took on the very same day.

EPISODE 3 — MILITARY CAREER

CHAPTER XIII

I Renounce the Clerical Profession, and Enter the Military Service — Therese Leaves for Naples, and I Go to Venice — I Am Appointed Ensign in the Army of My Native Country — I Embark for Corfu, and Land at Orsera to Take a Walk

I had been careful, on my arrival in Bologna, to take up my quarters at a small inn, so as not to attract any notice, and as soon as I had dispatched my letters to Therese and the French officer, I thought of purchasing some linen, as it was at least doubtful whether I should ever get my trunk. I deemed it expedient to order some clothes likewise. I was thus ruminating, when it suddenly struck me that I was not likely now to succeed in the Church, but feeling great uncertainty as to the profession I ought to adopt, I took a fancy to transform myself into an officer, as it was evident that I had not to account to anyone for my actions. It was a very natural fancy at my age, for I had just passed through two armies in which I had seen no respect paid to any garb but to the military uniform, and I did not see why I should not cause myself to be respected likewise. Besides, I was thinking of returning to Venice, and felt great delight at the idea of shewing myself there in the garb of honour, for I had been rather ill-treated in that of religion.

I enquired for a good tailor: death was brought to me, for the tailor sent to me was named Morte. I explained to him how I wanted my uniform made, I chose the cloth, he took my measure, and the next day I was transformed into a follower of Mars. I procured a long sword, and with my fine cane in hand, with a well-brushed hat ornamented with a black cockade, and wearing a long false pigtail, I sallied forth and walked all over the city.

I bethought myself that the importance of my new calling required a better and more showy lodging than the one I had secured on my arrival, and I moved to the best inn. I like even now to recollect the pleasing impression I felt when I was able to admire myself full length in a large mirror. I was highly pleased with my own person! I thought myself made by nature to wear and to honour the military costume, which I had adopted through the most fortunate impulse. Certain that nobody knew me, I enjoyed by anticipation all the conjectures which people would indulge in respecting me, when I made my first appearance in the most fashionable cafe of the town.

My uniform was white, the vest blue, a gold and silver shoulder-knot, and a sword-knot of the same material. Very well pleased with my grand appearance, I went to the coffee-room, and, taking some chocolate, began to read the newspapers, quite at my ease, and delighted to see that everybody was puzzled. A bold individual, in the hope of getting me into conversation, came to me and addressed me; I answered him with a monosyllable, and I observed that everyone was at a loss what to make of me. When I had sufficiently enjoyed public admiration in the coffee-room, I promenaded in the busiest thoroughfares of the city, and returned to the inn, where I had dinner by myself.

I had just concluded my repast when my landlord presented himself with the travellers' book, in which he wanted to register my name.

"Casanova."

"Your profession, if you please, sir?"

"Officer."

"In which service?"

"None."

"Your native place?"

"Venice."

"Where do you come from?"

"That is no business of yours."

This answer, which I thought was in keeping with my external appearance, had the desired effect: the landlord bowed himself out, and I felt highly pleased with myself, for I knew that I should enjoy perfect freedom in Bologna, and I was certain that mine host had visited me at the instance of some curious person eager to know who I was.

The next day I called on M. Orsi, the banker, to cash my bill of exchange, and took another for six hundred sequins on Venice, and one hundred sequins in gold after which I again exhibited myself in the public places. Two days afterwards, whilst I was taking my coffee after dinner, the banker Orsi was announced. I desired him to be shewn in, and he made his appearance accompanied my Monsignor Cornaro, whom I feigned not to know. M. Orsi remarked that he had called to offer me his services for my letters of exchange, and introduced the prelate. I rose and expressed my gratification at making his acquaintance. “But we have met before,” he replied, “at Venice and Rome.” Assuming an air of blank surprise, I told him he must certainly be mistaken. The prelate, thinking he could guess the reason of my reserve, did not insist, and apologized. I offered him a cup of coffee, which he accepted, and, on leaving me, he begged the honour of my company to breakfast the next day.

I made up my mind to persist in my denials, and called upon the prelate, who gave me a polite welcome. He was then apostolic prothonotary in Bologna. Breakfast was served, and as we were sipping our chocolate, he told me that I had most likely some good reasons to warrant my reserve, but that I was wrong not to trust him, the more so that the affair in question did me great honour. “I do not know,” said I, “what affair you are alluding to.” He then handed me a newspaper, telling me to read a paragraph which he pointed out. My astonishment may be imagined when I read the following correspondence from Pesaro: “M. de Casanova, an officer in the service of the queen, has deserted after having killed his captain in a duel; the circumstances of the duel are not known; all that has been ascertained is that M. de Casanova has taken the road to Rimini, riding the horse belonging to the captain, who was killed on the spot.”

In spite of my surprise, and of the difficulty I had in keeping my gravity at the reading of the paragraph, in which so much untruth was blended with so little that was real, I managed to keep a serious countenance, and I told the prelate that the Casanova spoken of in the newspaper must be another man.

“That may be, but you are certainly the Casanova I knew a month ago at Cardinal Acquaviva’s, and two years ago at the house of my sister, Madame Lovedan, in Venice. Besides the Ancona banker speaks of you as an ecclesiastic in his letter of advice to M. Orsi:”

“Very well, monsignor; your excellency compels me to agree to my being the same Casanova, but I entreat you not to ask me any more questions as I am bound in honour to observe the strictest reserve.”

“That is enough for me, and I am satisfied. Let us talk of something else.”

I was amused at the false reports which were being circulated about me, and, I became from that moment a thorough sceptic on the subject of historical truth. I enjoyed, however, very great pleasure in thinking that my reserve had fed the belief of my being the Casanova mentioned in the newspaper. I felt certain that the prelate would write the whole affair to Venice, where it would do me great honour, at least until the truth should be known, and in that case my reserve would be justified, besides, I should then most likely be far away. I made up my mind to go to Venice as soon as I heard from Therese, as I thought that I could wait for her there more comfortably than in Bologna, and in my native place there was nothing to hinder me from marrying her openly. In the mean time the fable from Pesaro amused me a good deal, and I expected every day to see it denied in some newspaper. The real officer Casanova must have laughed at the accusation brought against him of having run away with the horse, as much as I laughed at the caprice which had metamorphosed me into an officer in Bologna, just as if I had done it for the very purpose of giving to the affair every appearance of truth.

On the fourth day of my stay in Bologna, I received by express a long letter from Therese. She informed me that, on the day after my escape from Rimini, Baron Vais had presented to her the Duke de Castropignano, who, having heard her sing, had offered her one thousand ounces a year, and all travelling expenses paid, if she would accept an engagement as prima-donna at the San Carlo Theatre, at Naples, where she would have to go immediately after her Rimini engagement. She had requested and obtained a week to come to a decision. She enclosed two documents, the first was the written memorandum of the duke’s proposals, which she sent in order that I should peruse it, as she did not wish to sign it without my consent; the second was a formal engagement, written by herself, to remain all her life devoted to me and at my service. She added in her letter that, if I wished to accompany her to Naples, she would meet me anywhere I might appoint, but that, if I had any objection to return to that city, she would immediately refuse the brilliant offer, for her only happiness was to please me in all things.

For the first time in my life I found myself in need of thoughtful consideration before I could make up my mind. Therese's letter had entirely upset all my ideas, and, feeling that I could not answer it at once, I told the messenger to call the next day.

Two motives of equal weight kept the balance wavering; self-love and love for Therese. I felt that I ought not to require Therese to give up such prospects of fortune; but I could not take upon myself either to let her go to Naples without me, or to accompany her there. On one side, I shuddered at the idea that my love might ruin Therese's prospects; on the other side, the idea of the blow inflicted on my self-love, on my pride, if I went to Naples with her, sickened me.

How could I make up my mind to reappear in that city, in the guise of a cowardly fellow living at the expense of his mistress or his wife? What would my cousin Antonio, Don Polo and his dear son, Don Lelio Caraffa, and all the patricians who knew me, have said? The thought of Lucrezia and of her husband sent a cold shiver through me. I considered that, in spite of my love for Therese, I should become very miserable if everyone despised me. Linked to her destiny as a lover or as a husband, I would be a degraded, humbled, and mean sycophant. Then came the thought, Is this to be the end of all my hopes? The die was cast, my head had conquered my heart. I fancied that I had hit upon an excellent expedient, which at all events made me gain time, and I resolved to act upon it. I wrote to Therese, advising her to accept the engagement for Naples, where she might expect me to join her in the month of July, or after my return from Constantinople. I cautioned her to engage an honest-looking waiting-woman, so as to appear respectably in the world, and, to lead such a life as would permit me to make her my wife, on my return, without being ashamed of myself. I foresaw that her success would be insured by her beauty even more than by her talent, and, with my nature, I knew that I could never assume the character of an easy-going lover or of a compliant husband.

Had I received Therese's letter one week sooner, it is certain that she would not have gone to Naples, for my love would then have proved stronger than my reason; but in matters of love, as well as in all others, Time is a great teacher.

I told Therese to direct her answer to Bologna, and, three days after, I received from her a letter loving, and at the same time sad, in which she informed me that she had signed the engagement. She had secured the services of a woman whom she could present as her mother; she would reach Naples towards the middle of May, and she would wait for me there till she heard from me that I no longer wanted her.

Four days after the receipt of that letter, the last but one that Therese wrote me, I left Bologna for Venice. Before my departure I had received an answer from the French officer, advising me that my passport had reached Pesaro, and that he was ready to forward it to me with my trunk, if I would pay M. Marcello Birna, the proveditore of the Spanish army, whose address he enclosed, the sum of fifty doubloons for the horse which I had run away with, or which had run away with me. I repaired at once to the house of the proveditore, well pleased to settle that affair, and I received my trunk and my passport a few hours before leaving Bologna. But as my paying for the horse was known all over the town, Monsignor Cornaro was confirmed in his belief that I had killed my captain in a duel.

To go to Venice, it was necessary to submit to a quarantine, which had been adhered to only because the two governments had fallen out. The Venetians wanted the Pope to be the first in giving free passage through his frontiers, and the Pope insisted that the Venetians should take the initiative. The result of this trifling pique between the two governments was great hindrance to commerce, but very often that which bears only upon the private interest of the people is lightly treated by the rulers. I did not wish to be quarantined, and determined on evading it. It was rather a delicate undertaking, for in Venice the sanitary laws are very strict, but in those days I delighted in doing, if not everything that was forbidden, at least everything which offered real difficulties.

I knew that between the state of Mantua and that of Venice the passage was free, and I knew likewise that there was no restriction in the communication between Mantua and Modena; if I could therefore penetrate into the state of Mantua by stating that I was coming from Modena, my success would be certain, because I could then cross the Po and go straight to Venice. I got a carrier to drive me to Revero, a city situated on the river Po, and belonging to the state of Mantua.

The driver told me that, if he took the crossroads, he could go to Revero, and say that we came from Mantua, and that the only difficulty would be in the absence of the sanitary certificate which is delivered in Mantua, and which was certain to be asked for in Revero. I suggested that the best way to manage would be for him to say that he had lost it, and a little money removed every objection on his part.

When we reached the gates of Revero, I represented myself as a Spanish officer going to Venice to meet the Duke of Modena (whom I knew to be there) on business of the greatest importance. The sanitary certificate was not even demanded, military honours were duly paid to me, and I was most civilly treated. A certificate was immediately delivered to me, setting forth that I was travelling from Revero, and with it I crossed the Po, without any difficulty, at Ostiglia, from which place I proceeded to Legnago. There I left my carrier as much pleased with my generosity as with the good luck which had attended our journey, and, taking post-horses, I reached Venice in the evening. I remarked that it was the end of April, 1744, the anniversary of my birth, which, ten times during my life, has been marked by some important event.

The very next morning I went to the exchange in order to procure a passage to Constantinople, but I could not find any passenger ship sailing before two or three months, and I engaged a berth in a Venetian ship called, Our Lady of the Rosary, Commander Zane, which was to sail for Corfu in the course of the month.

Having thus prepared myself to obey my destiny, which, according to my superstitious feelings, called me imperiously to Constantinople, I went to St: Mark’s Square in order to see and to be seen, enjoying by anticipation the surprise of my acquaintances at not finding me any longer an abbe. I must not forget to state that at Revero I had decorated my hat with a red cockade.

I thought that my first visit was, by right, due to the Abbe Grimani. The moment he saw me he raised a perfect shriek of astonishment, for he thought I was still with Cardinal Acquaviva, on the road to a political career, and he saw standing before him a son of Mars. He had just left the dinner-table as I entered, and he had company. I observed amongst the guests an officer wearing the Spanish uniform, but I was not put out of countenance. I told the Abbe Grimani that I was only passing through Venice, and that I had felt it a duty and a pleasure to pay my respects to him.

“I did not expect to see you in such a costume.”

“I have resolved to throw off the garb which could not procure me a fortune likely to satisfy my ambition.”

“Where are you going?”

“To Constantinople; and I hope to find a quick passage to Corfu, as I have dispatches from Cardinal Acquaviva.”

“Where do you come from now?”

“From the Spanish army, which I left ten days ago.”

These words were hardly spoken, when I heard the voice of a young nobleman exclaiming;

“That is not true.”

“The profession to which I belong,” I said to him with great animation, “does not permit me to let anyone give me the lie.”

And upon that, bowing all round, I went away, without taking any notice of those who were calling me back.

I wore an uniform; it seemed to me that I was right in showing that sensitive and haughty pride which forms one of the characteristics of military men. I was no longer a priest: I could not bear being given the lie, especially when it had been given to me in so public a manner.

I called upon Madame Manzoni, whom I was longing to see. She was very happy to see me, and did not fail to remind me of her prediction. I told her my history, which amused her much; but she said that if I went to Constantinople I should most likely never see her again.

After my visit to Madame Manzoni I went to the house of Madame Orio, where I found worthy M. Rosa, Nanette, and Marton. They were all greatly surprised, indeed petrified at seeing me. The two lovely sisters looked more beautiful than ever, but I did not think it necessary to tell them the history of my nine months absence, for it would not have edified the aunt or pleased the nieces. I satisfied myself with telling them as much as I thought fit, and amused them for three hours. Seeing that the good old lady was carried away by her enthusiasm, I told her that I should be very happy to pass under her roof the four or five weeks of my stay in Venice, if she could give me a room and supper, but on condition that I should not prove a burden to her or to her charming nieces.

“I should be only too happy,” she answered, “to have you so long, but I have no room to offer you.”

“Yes, you have one, my dear,” exclaimed M. Rosa, “and I undertake to put it to rights within two hours.”

It was the room adjoining the chamber of the two sisters. Nanette said immediately that she would come downstairs with her sister, but Madame Orio answered that it was unnecessary, as they could lock themselves in their room.

“There would be no need for them to do that, madam,” I said, with a serious and modest air; “and if I am likely to occasion the slightest disturbance, I can remain at the inn.”

“There will be no disturbance whatever; but forgive my nieces, they are young prudes, and have a very high opinion of themselves:”

Everything being satisfactorily arranged, I forced upon Madame Orio a payment of fifteen sequins in advance, assuring her that I was rich, and that I had made a very good bargain, as I should spend a great deal more if I kept my room at the inn. I added that I would send my luggage, and take up my quarters in her house on the following day. During the whole of the conversation, I could see the eyes of my two dear little wives sparkling with pleasure, and they reconquered all their influence over my heart in spite of my love for Therese, whose image was, all the same, brilliant in my soul: this was a passing infidelity, but not inconstancy.

On the following day I called at the war office, but, to avoid every chance of unpleasantness, I took care to remove my cockade. I found in the office Major Pelodoro, who could not control his joy when he saw me in a military uniform, and hugged me with delight. As soon as I had explained to him that I wanted to go to Constantinople, and that, although in uniform, I was free, he advised me earnestly to seek the favour of going to Turkey with the bailo, who intended to leave within two months, and even to try to obtain service in the Venetian army.

His advice suited me exactly, and the secretary of war, who had known me the year before, happening to see me, summoned me to him. He told me that he had received letters from Bologna which had informed him of a certain adventure entirely to my honour, adding that he knew that I would not acknowledge it. He then asked me if I had received my discharge before leaving the Spanish army.

“I could not receive my discharge, as I was never in the service.”

“And how did you manage to come to Venice without performing quarantine?”

“Persons coming from Mantua are not subject to it.”

“True; but I advise you to enter the Venetian service like Major Pelodoro.”

As I was leaving the ducal palace, I met the Abbe Grimani who told me that the abrupt manner in which I had left his house had displeased everybody.

“Even the Spanish officer?”

“No, for he remarked that, if you had truly been with the army, you could not act differently, and he has himself assured me that you were there, and to prove what he asserted he made me read an article in the newspaper, in which it is stated that you killed your captain in a duel. Of course it is only a fable?”

“How do you know that it is not a fact?”

“Is it true, then?”

“I do not say so, but it may be true, quite as true as my having been with the Spanish army ten days ago.”

“But that is impossible, unless you have broken through the quarantine.”

“I have broken nothing. I have openly crossed the Po at Revero, and here I am. I am sorry not to be able to present myself at your excellency’s palace, but I cannot do so until I have received the most complete satisfaction from the person who has given me the lie. I could put up with an insult when I wore the livery of humility, but I cannot bear one now that I wear the garb of honour."

"You are wrong to take it in such a high tone. The person who attacked your veracity is M. Valmarana, the proveditore of the sanitary department, and he contends that, as nobody can pass through the cordon, it would be impossible for you to be here. Satisfaction, indeed! Have you forgotten who you are?"

"No, I know who I am; and I know likewise that, if I was taken for a coward before leaving Venice, now that I have returned no one shall insult me without repenting it."

"Come and dine with me."

"No, because the Spanish officer would know it."

"He would even see you, for he dines with me every day."

"Very well, then I will go, and I will let him be the judge of my quarrel with M. Valmarana."

I dined that day with Major Pelodoro and several other officers, who agreed in advising me to enter the service of the Republic, and I resolved to do so. "I am acquainted," said the major, "with a young lieutenant whose health is not sufficiently strong to allow him to go to the East, and who would be glad to sell his commission, for which he wants one hundred sequins. But it would be necessary to obtain the consent of the secretary of war." "Mention the matter to him," I replied, "the one hundred sequins are ready." The major undertook the commission.

In the evening I went to Madame Orio, and I found myself very comfortably lodged. After supper, the aunt told her nieces to shew me, to my room, and, as may well be supposed, we spent a most delightful night. After that they took the agreeable duty by turns, and in order to avoid any surprise in case the aunt should take it into her head to pay them a visit, we skilfully displaced a part of the partition, which allowed them to come in and out of my room without opening the door. But the good lady believed us three living specimens of virtue, and never thought of putting us to the test.

Two or three days afterwards, M. Grimani contrived an interview between me and M. Valmarana, who told me that, if he had been aware that the sanitary line could be eluded, he would never have impugned my veracity, and thanked me for the information I had given him. The affair was thus agreeably arranged, and until my departure I honoured M. Grimani's excellent dinner with my presence every day.

Towards the end of the month I entered the service of the Republic in the capacity of ensign in the Bala regiment, then at Corfu; the young man who had left the regiment through the magical virtue of my one hundred sequins was lieutenant, but the secretary of war objected to my having that rank for reasons to which I had to submit, if I wished to enter the army; but he promised me that, at the end of the year, I would be promoted to the grade of lieutenant, and he granted me a furlough to go to Constantinople. I accepted, for I was determined to serve in the army.

M. Pierre Vendramin, an illustrious senator, obtained me the favour of a passage to Constantinople with the Chevalier Venier, who was proceeding to that city in the quality of bailo, but as he would arrive in Corfu a month after me, the chevalier very kindly promised to take me as he called at Corfu.

A few days before my departure, I received a letter from Therese, who informed me that the Duke de Castropignano escorted her everywhere. "The duke is old," she wrote, "but even if he were young, you would have no cause for uneasiness on my account. Should you ever want any money, draw upon me from any place where you may happen to be, and be quite certain that your letters of exchange will be paid, even if I had to sell everything I possess to honour your signature."

There was to be another passenger on board the ship of the line on which I had engaged my passage, namely, a noble Venetian, who was going to Zante in the quality of counsellor, with a numerous and brilliant retinue. The captain of the ship told me that, if I was obliged to take my meals alone, I was not likely to fare very well, and he advised me to obtain an introduction to the nobleman, who would not fail to invite me to share his table. His name was Antonio Dolfin, and he had been nicknamed Bucentoro, in consequence of his air of grandeur and the elegance of his toilet. Fortunately I did not require to beg an introduction, for M. Grimani offered, of his own accord, to present me to the magnificent councillor, who received me in the kindest manner, and invited me at once to take my meals at his table. He expressed a desire that I should make the acquaintance of his wife, who was to accompany him in the journey. I called upon her the next day, and I found a lady perfect in manners, but already of a certain age and completely deaf. I had therefore but little pleasure to expect from her conversation. She had a very charming young daughter whom she left in a convent. She became celebrated afterwards, and she is still alive, I believe, the widow of Procurator Iron, whose family is extinct.

I have seldom seen a finer-looking man, or a man of more imposing appearance than M. Dolfin. He was eminently distinguished for his wit and politeness. He was eloquent, always cheerful when he lost at cards, the favourite of ladies, whom he endeavoured to please in everything, always courageous, and of an equal temper, whether in good or in adverse fortune.

He had ventured on travelling without permission, and had entered a foreign service, which had brought him into disgrace with the government, for a noble son of Venice cannot be guilty of a greater crime. For this offence he had been imprisoned in the Leads — a favour which destiny kept also in reserve for me.

Highly gifted, generous, but not wealthy, M. Dolfin had been compelled to solicit from the Grand Council a lucrative governorship, and had been appointed to Zante; but he started with such a splendid suite that he was not likely to save much out of his salary. Such a man as I have just portrayed could not make a fortune in Venice, because an aristocratic government can not obtain a state of lasting, steady peace at home unless equality is maintained amongst the nobility, and equality, either moral or physical, cannot be appreciated in any other way than by appearances. The result is that the man who does not want to lay himself open to persecution, and who happens to be superior or inferior to the others, must endeavour to conceal it by all possible means. If he is ambitious, he must feign great contempt for dignities; if he seeks employment, he must not appear to want any; if his features are handsome, he must be careless of his physical appearance; he must dress badly, wear nothing in good taste, ridicule every foreign importation, make his bow without grace, be careless in his manner; care nothing for the fine arts, conceal his good breeding, have no foreign cook, wear an uncombed wig, and look rather dirty. M. Dolfin was not endowed with any of those eminent qualities, and therefore he had no hope of a great fortune in his native country.

The day before my departure from Venice I did not go out; I devoted the whole of the day to friendship. Madame Orio and her lovely nieces shed many tears, and I joined them in that delightful employment. During the last night that I spent with both of them, the sisters repeated over and over, in the midst of the raptures of love, that they never would see me again. They guessed rightly; but if they had happened to see me again they would have guessed wrongly. Observe how wonderful prophets are!

I went on board, on the 5th of May, with a good supply of clothing, jewels, and ready cash. Our ship carried twenty-four guns and two hundred Sclavonian soldiers. We sailed from Malamacca to the shores of Istria during the night, and we came to anchor in the harbour of Orsera to take ballast. I landed with several others to take a stroll through the wretched place where I had spent three days nine months before, a recollection which caused me a pleasant sensation when I compared my present position to what it was at that time. What a difference in everything — health, social condition, and money! I felt quite certain that in the splendid uniform I was now wearing nobody would recognize the miserable-looking abbe who, but for Friar Stephano, would have become — God knows what!

CHAPTER XIV

An Amusing Meeting in Orsera — Journey to Corfu — My Stay in Constantinople — Bonneval — My Return to Corfu — Madame F. — The False Prince — I Run Away from Corfu — My Frolics at Casopo — I Surrender My self a Prisoner — My Speedy Release and Triumph — My Success with Madame F.

I affirm that a stupid servant is more dangerous than a bad one, and a much greater plague, for one can be on one's guard against a wicked person, but never against a fool. You can punish wickedness but not stupidity, unless you send away the fool, male or female, who is guilty of it, and if you do so you generally find out that the change has only thrown you out of the frying-pan into the fire.

This chapter and the two following ones were written; they gave at full length all the particulars which I must now abridge, for my silly servant has taken the three chapters for her own purposes. She pleaded as an excuse that the sheets of paper were old, written upon, covered with scribbling and erasures, and that she had taken them in preference to nice, clean paper, thinking that I would care much more for the last than for the first. I flew into a violent passion, but I was wrong, for the poor girl had acted with a good intent; her judgment alone had misled her. It is well known that the first result of anger is to deprive the angry man of the faculty of reason, for anger and reason do not belong to the same family. Luckily, passion does not keep me long under its sway: 'Irasci, celerem tamen et placabilem esse'. After I had wasted my time in hurling at her bitter reproaches, the force of which did not strike her, and in proving to her that she was a stupid fool, she refuted all my arguments by the most complete silence. There was nothing to do but to resign myself, and, although not yet in the best of tempers, I went to work. What I am going to write will probably not be so good as what I had composed when I felt in the proper humour, but my readers must be satisfied with it they will, like the engineer, gain in time what they lose in strength.

I landed at Orsera while our ship was taking ballast, as a ship cannot sail well when she is too light, and I was walking about when I remarked a man who was looking at me very attentively. As I had no dread of any creditor, I thought that he was interested by my fine appearance; I could not find fault with such a feeling, and kept walking on, but as I passed him, he addressed me:

"Might I presume to enquire whether this is your first visit to Orsera, captain?"

"No, sir, it is my second visit to this city."

"Were you not here last year?"

"I was."

"But you were not in uniform then?"

"True again; but your questions begin to sound rather indiscreet."

"Be good enough to forgive me, sir, for my curiosity is the offspring of gratitude. I am indebted to you for the greatest benefits, and I trust that Providence has brought you here again only to give me the opportunity of making greater still my debt of gratitude to you."

"What on earth have I done, and what can I do for you? I am at a loss to guess your meaning."

"Will you be so kind as to come and breakfast with me? My house is near at hand; my refosco is delicious, please to taste it, and I will convince you in a few words that you are truly my benefactor, and that I have a right to expect that you have returned Orsera to load me with fresh benefits."

I could not suspect the man of insanity; but, as I could not make him out, I fancied that he wanted to make me purchase some of his refosco, and I accepted his invitation. We went up to his room, and he left me for a few moments to order breakfast. I observed several surgical instruments, which made me suppose that he was a surgeon, and I asked him when he returned.

"Yes, captain; I have been practising surgery in this place for twenty years, and in a very poor way, for I had nothing to do, except a few cases of bleeding, of cupping, and occasionally some slight excoriation to dress or a sprained ankle to put to rights. I did not earn even the poorest living. But since last year a great change has taken place; I have made a good deal of money, I have laid it out advantageously, and it is to you, captain, to you (may God bless you!) that I am indebted for my present comforts."

"But how so?"

"In this way, captain. You had a connection with Don Jerome's housekeeper, and you left her, when you went away, a certain souvenir which she communicated to a friend of hers, who, in perfect good faith, made a present of it to his wife. This lady did not wish, I suppose, to be selfish, and she gave the souvenir to a libertine who, in his turn, was so generous with it that, in less than a month, I had about fifty clients. The following months were not less fruitful, and I gave the benefit of my attendance to everybody, of course, for a consideration. There are a few patients still under my care, but in a short time there will be no more, as the souvenir left by you has now lost all its virtue. You can easily realize now the joy I felt when I saw you; you are a bird of good omen. May I hope that your visit will last long enough to enable you to renew the source of my fortune?"

I laughed heartily, but he was grieved to hear that I was in excellent health. He remarked, however, that I was not likely to be so well off on my return, because, in the country to which I was going, there was abundance of damaged goods, but that no one knew better than he did how to root out the venom left by the use of such bad merchandise. He begged that I would depend upon him, and not trust myself in the hands of quacks, who would be sure to palm their remedies upon me. I promised him everything, and, taking leave of him with many thanks, I returned to the ship. I related the whole affair to M. Dolfin, who was highly amused. We sailed on the following day, but on the fourth day, on the other side of Curzola, we were visited by a storm which very nearly cost me my life. This is how it happened:

The chaplain of the ship was a Sclavonian priest, very ignorant, insolent and coarse-mannered, and, as I turned him into ridicule whenever the opportunity offered, he had naturally become my sworn enemy. 'Tant de fiel entre-t-il dans l'ame d'un devot!' When the storm was at its height, he posted himself on the quarter-deck, and, with book in hand, proceeded to exorcise all the spirits of hell whom he thought he could see in the clouds, and to whom he pointed for the benefit of the sailors who, believing themselves lost, were crying, howling, and giving way to despair, instead of attending to the working of the ship, then in great danger on account of the rocks and of the breakers which surrounded us.

Seeing the peril of our position, and the evil effect of his stupid, incantations upon the minds of the sailors whom the ignorant priest was throwing into the apathy of despair, instead of keeping up their courage, I thought it prudent to interfere. I went up the rigging, calling upon the sailors to do their duty cheerfully, telling them that there were no devils, and that the priest who pretended to see them was a fool. But it was in vain that I spoke in the most forcible manner, in vain that I went to work myself, and shewed that safety was only to be insured by active means, I could not prevent the priest declaring that I was an Atheist, and he managed to rouse against me the anger of the greatest part of the crew. The wind continued to lash the sea into fury for the two following days, and the knave contrived to persuade the sailors who listened to him that the hurricane would not abate as long as I was on board. Imbued with that conviction, one of the men, thinking he had found a good opportunity of fulfilling the wishes of the priest, came up to me as I was standing at the extreme end of the forecastle, and pushed me so roughly that I was thrown over. I should have been irretrievably lost, but the sharp point of an anchor, hanging along the side of the ship, catching in my clothes, prevented me from falling in the sea, and proved truly my sheet-anchor. Some men came to my assistance, and I was saved. A corporal then pointed out to me the sailor who had tried to murder me, and taking a stout stick I treated the scoundrel to a sound thrashing; but the sailors, headed by the furious priest, rushed towards us when they heard his screams, and I should have been killed if the soldiers had not taken my part. The commander and M. Dolfin then came on deck, but they were compelled to listen to the chaplain, and to promise, in order to pacify the vile rabble, that they would land me at the first opportunity. But even this was not enough; the priest demanded that I should give up to him a certain parchment that I had purchased from a Greek at Malamocco just before sailing. I had no recollection of it, but it was true. I laughed, and gave it to M. Dolfin; he handed it to the fanatic chaplain, who, exulting in his victory, called for a large pan of live coals from the cook's galley, and made an auto-da-fe of the document. The unlucky parchment, before it was entirely consumed, kept writhing on the fire for half an hour, and the priest did not fail to represent those contortions as a miracle, and all the sailors were sure that it was an infernal manuscript given to me by the devil. The virtue claimed for that piece of parchment by the man who had sold it to me was that it insured its lucky possessor the love of all women, but I trust my readers will do me the justice to believe that I had no faith whatever in amorous philtres, talismans, or amulets of any kind: I had purchased it only for a joke.

You can find throughout Italy, in Greece, and generally in every country the inhabitants of which are yet wrapped up in primitive ignorance, a tribe of Greeks, of Jews, of astronomers, and of exorcists, who sell their dupes rags and toys to which they boastingly attach wonderful virtues and properties; amulets which render invulnerable, scraps of cloth which defend from witchcraft, small bags filled with drugs to keep away goblins, and a thousand gewgaws of the same description. These wonderful goods have no marketable value whatever in France, in England, in Germany, and throughout the north of Europe generally, but, in revenge, the inhabitants of those countries indulge in knavish practices of a much worse kind.

The storm abated just as the innocent parchment was writhing on the fire, and the sailors, believing that the spirits of hell had been exorcised, thought no more of getting rid of my person, and after a prosperous voyage of a week we cast anchor at Corfu. As soon as I had found a comfortable lodging I took my letters to his eminence the proveditore-generale, and to all the naval commanders to whom I was recommended; and after paying my respects to my colonel, and making the acquaintance of the officers of my regiment, I prepared to enjoy myself until the arrival of the Chevalier Venier, who had promised to take me to Constantinople. He arrived towards the middle of June, but in the mean time I had been playing basset, and had lost all my money, and sold or pledged all my jewellery.

Such must be the fate awaiting every man who has a taste for gambling, unless he should know how to fix fickle fortune by playing with a real advantage derived from calculation or from adroitness, which defies chance. I think that a cool and prudent player can manage both without exposing himself to censure, or deserving to be called a cheat.

During the month that I spent in Corfu, waiting for the arrival of M. Venier, I did not devote any time to the study, either moral or physical, of the country, for, excepting the days on which I was on duty, I passed my life at the coffee-house, intent upon the game, and sinking, as a matter of course, under the adverse fortune which I braved with obstinacy. I never won, and I had not the moral strength to stop till all my means were gone. The only comfort I had, and a sorry one truly, was to hear the banker himself call me — perhaps sarcastically — a fine player, every time I lost a large stake. My misery was at its height, when new life was infused in me by the booming of the guns fired in honour of the arrival of the bailo. He was on board the Europa, a frigate of seventy-two guns, and he had taken only eight days to sail from Venice to Corfu. The moment he cast anchor, the bailo hoisted his flag of captain-general of the Venetian navy, and the proveditore hauled down his own colours. The Republic of Venice has not on the sea any authority greater than that of Bailo to the Porte. The Chevalier Venier had with him a distinguished and brilliant suite; Count Annibal Gambera, Count Charles Zenobio, both Venetian noblemen of the first class, and the Marquis d'Anchotti of Bressan, accompanied him to Constantinople for their own amusement. The bailo remained a week in Corfu, and all the naval authorities entertained him and his suite in turn, so that there was a constant succession of balls and suppers. When I presented myself to his excellency, he informed me that he had already spoken to the proveditore, who had granted me a furlough of six months to enable me to accompany him to Constantinople as his adjutant; and as soon as the official document for my furlough had been delivered to me, I sent my small stock of worldly goods on board the Europa, and we weighed anchor early the next day.

We sailed with a favourable wind which remained steady and brought us in six days to Cerigo, where we stopped to take in some water. Feeling some curiosity to visit the ancient Cythera, I went on shore with the sailors on duty, but it would have been better for me if I had remained on board, for in Cerigo I made a bad acquaintance. I was accompanied by the captain of marines.

The moment we set foot on shore, two men, very poorly dressed and of unprepossessing appearance, came to us and begged for assistance. I asked them who they were, and one, quicker than the other, answered;

"We are sentenced to live, and perhaps to die, in this island by the despotism of the Council of Ten. There are forty others as unfortunate as ourselves, and we are all born subjects of the Republic.

"The crime of which we have been accused, which is not considered a crime anywhere, is that we were in the habit of living with our mistresses, without being jealous of our friends, when, finding our ladies handsome, they obtained their favours with our ready consent. As we were not rich, we felt no remorse in availing ourselves of the generosity of our friends in such cases, but it was said that we were carrying on an illicit trade, and we have been sent to this place, where we receive every day ten sous in 'moneta lunga'. We are called 'mangia-mayroni', and are worse off than galley slaves, for we are dying of ennui, and we are often starving without knowing how to stay our hunger. My name is Don Antonio Pocchini, I am of a noble Paduan family, and my mother belongs to the illustrious family of Campo San-Piero."

We gave them some money, and went about the island, returning to the ship after we had visited the fortress. I shall have to speak of that Pocchini in a few years.

The wind continued in our favour, and we reached the Dardanelles in eight or ten days; the Turkish barges met us there to carry us to Constantinople. The sight offered by that city at the distance of a league is truly wonderful; and I believe that a more magnificent panorama cannot be found in any part of the world. It was that splendid view which was the cause of the fall of the Roman, and of the rise of the Greek empire. Constantine the Great, arriving at Byzantium by sea, was so much struck with the wonderful beauty of its position, that he exclaimed, “Here is the proper seat of the empire of the whole world!” and in order to secure the fulfilment of his prediction, he left Rome for Byzantium. If he had known the prophecy of Horace, or rather if he had believed in it, he would not have been guilty of such folly. The poet had said that the downfall of the Roman empire would begin only when one of the successors of Augustus bethought him removing the capital of the empire to where it had originated. The road is not far distant from Thrace.

We arrived at the Venetian Embassy in Pera towards the middle of July, and, for a wonder, there was no talk of the plague in Constantinople just then. We were all provided with very comfortable lodgings, but the intensity of the heat induced the baili to seek for a little coolness in a country mansion which had been hired by the Bailo Dona. It was situated at Bouyoudere. The very first order laid upon me was never to go out unknown to the bailo, and without being escorted by a janissary, and this order I obeyed to the letter. In those days the Russians had not tamed the insolence of the Turkish people. I am told that foreigners can now go about as much as they please in perfect security.

The day after our arrival, I took a janissary to accompany me to Osman Pacha, of Caramania, the name assumed by Count de Bonneval ever since he had adopted the turban. I sent in my letter, and was immediately shewn into an apartment on the ground floor, furnished in the French fashion, where I saw a stout elderly gentleman, dressed like a Frenchman, who, as I entered the room, rose, came to meet me with a smiling countenance, and asked me how he could serve the ‘protege’ of a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church, which he could no longer call his mother. I gave him all the particulars of the circumstances which, in a moment of despair, had induced me to ask the cardinal for letters of introduction for Constantinople, and I added that, the letters once in my possession, my superstitious feelings had made me believe that I was bound to deliver them in person.

“Then, without this letter,” he said, “you never would have come to Constantinople, and you have no need of me?”

“True, but I consider myself fortunate in having thus made the acquaintance of a man who has attracted the attention of the whole of Europe, and who still commands that attention.”

His excellency made some remark respecting the happiness of young men who, like me, without care, without any fixed purpose, abandon themselves to fortune with that confidence which knows no fear, and telling me that the cardinal’s letter made it desirable that he should do something for me, he promised to introduce me to three or four of his Turkish friends who deserved to be known. He invited me to dine with him every Thursday, and undertook to send me a janissary who would protect me from the insults of the rabble and shew me everything worth seeing.

The cardinal’s letter representing me as a literary man, the pacha observed that I ought to see his library. I followed him through the garden, and we entered a room furnished with grated cupboards; curtains could be seen behind the wirework; the books were most likely behind the curtains.

Taking a key out of his pocket, he opened one of the cupboards, and, instead of folios, I saw long rows of bottles of the finest wines. We both laughed heartily.

“Here are,” said the pacha, “my library and my harem. I am old, women would only shorten my life but good wine will prolong it, or at least, make it more agreeable.

“I imagine your excellency has obtained a dispensation from the mufti?”

“You are mistaken, for the Pope of the Turks is very far from enjoying as great a power as the Christian Pope. He cannot in any case permit what is forbidden by the Koran; but everyone is at liberty to work out his own damnation if he likes. The Turkish devotees pity the libertines, but they do not persecute them; there is no inquisition in Turkey. Those who do not know the precepts of religion, say the Turks, will suffer enough in the life to come; there is no need to make them suffer in this life. The only dispensation I have asked and obtained, has been respecting circumcision, although it can hardly be called so, because, at my age, it might have proved dangerous. That ceremony is generally performed, but it is not compulsory."

During the two hours that we spent together, the pacha enquired after several of his friends in Venice, and particularly after Marc Antonio Dieto. I told him that his friends were still faithful to their affection for him, and did not find fault with his apostasy. He answered that he was a Mahometan as he had been a Christian, and that he was not better acquainted with the Koran than he had been with the Gospel. "I am certain," he added, "that I shall die-calmer and much happier than Prince Eugene. I have had to say that God is God, and that Mahomet is the prophet. I have said it, and the Turks care very little whether I believe it or not. I wear the turban as the soldier wears the uniform. I was nothing but a military man; I could not have turned my hand to any other profession, and I made up my mind to become lieutenant-general of the Grand Turk only when I found myself entirely at a loss how to earn my living. When I left Venice, the pitcher had gone too often to the well, it was broken at last, and if the Jews had offered me the command of an army of fifty thousand men, I would have gone and besieged Jerusalem."

Bonneval was handsome, but too stout. He had received a sabre-cut in the lower part of the abdomen, which compelled him to wear constantly a bandage supported by a silver plate. He had been exiled to Asia, but only for a short time, for, as he told me, the cabals are not so tenacious in Turkey as they are in Europe, and particularly at the court of Vienna. As I was taking leave of him, he was kind enough to say that, since his arrival in Turkey, he had never passed two hours as pleasantly as those he had just spent with me, and that he would compliment the bailo about me.

The Bailo Dona, who had known him intimately in Venice, desired me to be the bearer of all his friendly compliments for him, and M. Venier expressed his deep regret at not being able to make his acquaintance.

The second day after my first visit to him being a Thursday, the pacha did not forget to send a janissary according to his promise. It was about eleven in the morning when the janissary called for me, I followed him, and this time I found Bonneval dressed in the Turkish style. His guests soon arrived, and we sat down to dinner, eight of us, all well disposed to be cheerful and happy. The dinner was entirely French, in cooking and service; his steward and his cook were both worthy French renegades.

He had taken care to introduce me to all his guests and at the same time to let me know who they were, but he did not give me an opportunity of speaking before dinner was nearly over. The conversation was entirely kept up in Italian, and I remarked that the Turks did not utter a single word in their own language, even to say the most ordinary thing. Each guest had near him a bottle which might have contained either white wine or hydromel; all I know is that I drank, as well as M. de Bonneval, next to whom I was seated, some excellent white Burgundy.

The guests got me on the subject of Venice, and particularly of Rome, and the conversation very naturally fell upon religion, but not upon dogmatic questions; the discipline of religion and liturgical questions were alone discussed.

One of the guests, who was addressed as effendi, because he had been secretary for foreign affairs, said that the ambassador from Venice to Rome was a friend of his, and he spoke of him in the highest manner. I told him that I shared his admiration for that ambassador, who had given me a letter of introduction for a Turkish nobleman, whom he had represented as an intimate friend. He enquired for the name of the person to whom the letter was addressed, but I could not recollect it, and took the letter out of my pocket-book. The effendi was delighted when he found that the letter was for himself. He begged leave to read it at once, and after he had perused it, he kissed the signature and came to embrace me. This scene pleased M. de Bonneval and all his friends. The effendi, whose name was Ismail, entreated the pacha to come to dine with him, and to bring me; Bonneval accepted, and fixed a day.

Notwithstanding all the politeness of the effendi, I was particularly interested during our charming dinner in a fine elderly man of about sixty, whose countenance breathed at the same time the greatest sagacity and the most perfect kindness. Two years afterwards I found again the same features on the handsome face of M. de Bragadin, a Venetian senator of whom I shall have to speak at length when we come to that period of my life. That elderly gentleman had listened to me with the greatest attention, but without uttering one word. In society, a man whose face and general appearance excite your interest, stimulates strongly your curiosity if he remains silent. When we left the dining-room I enquired from de Bonneval who he was; he answered that he was wealthy, a philosopher, a man of acknowledged merit, of great purity of morals, and strongly attached to his religion. He advised me to cultivate his acquaintance if he made any advances to me.

I was pleased with his advice, and when, after a walk under the shady trees of the garden, we returned to a drawing-room furnished in the Turkish fashion, I purposely took a seat near Yusuf Ali. Such was the name of the Turk for whom I felt so much sympathy. He offered me his pipe in a very graceful manner; I refused it politely, and took one brought to me by one of M. de Bonneval's servants. Whenever I have been amongst smokers I have smoked or left the room; otherwise I would have fancied that I was swallowing the smoke of the others, and that idea which is true and unpleasant, disgusted me. I have never been able to understand how in Germany the ladies, otherwise so polite and delicate, could inhale the suffocating fumes of a crowd of smokers.

Yusuf, pleased to have me near him, at once led the conversation to subjects similar to those which had been discussed at table, and particularly to the reasons which had induced me to give up the peaceful profession of the Church and to choose a military life; and in order to gratify his curiosity without losing his good opinion, I gave him, but with proper caution, some of the particulars of my life, for I wanted him to be satisfied that, if I had at first entered the career of the holy priesthood, it had not been through any vocation of mine. He seemed pleased with my recital, spoke of natural vocations as a Stoic philosopher, and I saw that he was a fatalist; but as I was careful not to attack his system openly, he did not dislike my objections, most likely because he thought himself strong enough to overthrow them.

I must have inspired the honest Mussulman with very great esteem, for he thought me worthy of becoming his disciple; it was not likely that he could entertain the idea of becoming himself the disciple of a young man of nineteen, lost, as he thought, in a false religion.

After spending an hour in examining me, in listening to my principles, he said that he believed me fit to know the real truth, because he saw that I was seeking for it, and that I was not certain of having obtained it so far. He invited me to come and spend a whole day with him, naming the days when I would be certain to find him at home, but he advised me to consult the Pacha Osman before accepting his invitation. I told him that the pacha had already mentioned him to me and had spoken very highly of his character; he seemed much pleased. I fixed a day for my visit, and left him.

I informed M. de Bonneval of all that had occurred; he was delighted, and promised that his janissary would be every day at the Venetian palace, ready to execute my orders.

I received the congratulations of the baili upon the excellent acquaintances I had already made, and M. Venier advised me not to neglect such friends in a country where weariness of life was more deadly to foreigners than the plague.

On the day appointed, I went early to Yusuf's palace, but he was out. His gardener, who had received his instructions, shewed me every attention, and entertained me very agreeably for two hours in doing the honours of his master's splendid garden, where I found the most beautiful flowers. This gardener was a Neapolitan, and had belonged to Yusuf for thirty years. His manners made me suspect that he was well born and well educated, but he told me frankly that he had never been taught even to read, that he was a sailor when he, was taken in slavery, and that he was so happy in the service of Yusuf that liberty would be a punishment to him. Of course I did not venture to address him any questions about his master, for his reserve might have put my curiosity to the blush.

Yusuf had gone out on horseback; he returned, and, after the usual compliments, we dined alone in a summerhouse, from which we had a fine view of the sea, and in which the heat was cooled by a delightful breeze, which blows regularly at the same hour every day from the north-west; and is called the mistral. We had a good dinner; there was no prepared dish except the cauroman, a peculiar delicacy of the Turks. I drank water and hydromel, and I told Yusuf that I preferred the last to wine, of which I never took much at that time. "Your hydromel," I said, "is very good, and the Mussulmans who offend against the law by drinking wine do not deserve any indulgence; I believe they drink wine only because it is forbidden." "Many of the true believers," he answered, "think that they can take it as a medicine. The Grand Turk's physician has brought it into vogue as a medicine, and it has been the cause of his fortune, for he has captivated the favour of his master who is in reality constantly ill, because he is always in a state of intoxication." I told Yusuf that in my country drunkards were scarce, and that drunkenness was a vice to be found only among the lowest people; he was much astonished. "I cannot understand," he said, "why wine is allowed by all religions, when its use deprives man of his reason."— "All religions," I answered, "forbid excess in drinking wine, and the crime is only in the abuse." I proved him the truth of what I had said by telling him that opium produced the same results as wine, but more powerfully, and consequently Mahomet ought to have forbidden the use of it. He observed that he had never taken either wine or opium in the course of his life.

After dinner, pipes were brought in and we filled them ourselves. I was smoking with pleasure, but, at the same time, was expectorating. Yusuf, who smoked like a Turk, that is to say, without spitting, said, —

"The tobacco you are now smoking is of a very fine quality, and you ought to swallow its balsam which is mixed with the saliva."

"I suppose you are right; smoking cannot be truly enjoyed without the best tobacco."

"That is true to a certain extent, but the enjoyment found in smoking good tobacco is not the principal pleasure, because it only pleases our senses; true enjoyment is that which works upon the soul, and is completely independent of the senses."

"I cannot realize pleasures enjoyed by the soul without the instrumentality of the senses."

"Listen to me. When you fill your pipe do you feel any pleasure?"

"Yes."

"Whence does that pleasure arise, if it is not from your soul? Let us go further. Do you not feel pleased when you give up your pipe after having smoked all the tobacco in it — when you see that nothing is left but some ashes?"

“It is true.”

“Well, there are two pleasures in which your senses have certainly nothing to do, but I want you to guess the third, and the most essential.”

“The most essential? It is the perfume.”

“No; that is a pleasure of the organ of smelling — a sensual pleasure.”

“Then I do not know.”

“Listen. The principal pleasure derived from tobacco smoking is the sight of a smoke itself. You must never see it go out of the bowl of your pipe, — but only from the corner of your mouth, at regular intervals which must not be too frequent. It is so truly the greatest pleasure connected with the pipe, that you cannot find anywhere a blind man who smokes. Try yourself the experiment of smoking a pipe in your room, at night and without a light; you will soon lay the pipe down.”

“It is all perfectly true; yet you must forgive me if I give the preference to several pleasures, in which my senses are interested, over those which afford enjoyment only to my soul.”

“Forty years ago I was of the same opinion, and in forty years, if you succeed in acquiring wisdom, you will think like me. Pleasures which give activity to our senses, my dear son, disturb the repose of our soul — a proof that they do not deserve the name of real enjoyments.”

“But if I feel them to be real enjoyments, it is enough to prove that they are truly so.”

“Granted; but if you would take the trouble of analyzing them after you have tasted them, you would not find them unalloyed.”

“It may be so, but why should I take a trouble which would only lessen my enjoyment.”

“A time will come when you will feel pleasure in that very trouble.”

“It strikes me, dear father, that you prefer mature age to youth.”

“You may boldly say old age.”

“You surprise me. Must I believe that your early life has been unhappy?”

“Far from it. I was always fortunate in good health, and the master of my own passions; but all I saw in my equals was for me a good school in which I have acquired the knowledge of man, and learned the real road to happiness. The happiest of men is not the most voluptuous, but the one who knows how to choose the highest standards of voluptuousness, which can be found, I say again, not in the pleasures which excite our senses, but in those which give greater repose to the soul.”

“That is the voluptuousness which you consider unalloyed.”

“Yes, and such is the sight of a vast prairie all covered with grass. The green colour, so strongly recommended by our divine prophet, strikes my eyes, and at the same moment I feel that my soul is wrapped up in a calm so delightful that I fancy myself nearer the Creator. I enjoy the same peace, the same repose, when I am seated on the banks of a river, when I look upon the water so quiet, yet always moving, which flows constantly, yet never disappears from my sight, never loses any of its clearness in spite of its constant motion. It strikes me as the image of my own existence, and of the calm which I require for my life in order to reach, like the water I am gazing upon, the goal which I do not see, and which can only be found at the other end of the journey.”

Thus did the Turk reason, and we passed four hours in this sort of conversation. He had buried two wives, and he had two sons and one daughter. The eldest son, having received his patrimony, had established himself in the city of Salonica, where he was a wealthy merchant; the other was in the seraglio, in the service of the Grand Turk and his fortune was in the hands of a trustee. His daughter, Zelmi, then fifteen years of age, was to inherit all his remaining property. He had given her all the accomplishments which could minister to the happiness of the man whom heaven had destined for her husband. We shall hear more of that daughter anon. The mother of the three children was dead, and five years previous to the time of my visit, Yusuf had taken another wife, a native of Scio, young and very beautiful, but he told me himself that he was now too old, and could not hope to have any child by her. Yet he was only sixty years of age. Before I left, he made me promise to spend at least one day every week with him.

At supper, I told the baili how pleasantly the day had passed.

"We envy you," they said, "the prospect you have before you of spending agreeably three or four months in this country, while, in our quality of ministers, we must pine away with melancholy."

A few days afterwards, M. de Bonneval took me with him to dine at Ismail's house, where I saw Asiatic luxury on a grand scale, but there were a great many guests, and the conversation was held almost entirely in the Turkish language — a circumstance which annoyed me and M. de Bonneval also. Ismail saw it, and he invited me to breakfast whenever I felt disposed, assuring me that he would have much pleasure in receiving me. I accepted the invitation, and I went ten or twelve days afterwards. When we reach that period my readers must kindly accompany me to the breakfast. For the present I must return to Yusuf who, during my second visit, displayed a character which inspired, me with the greatest esteem and the warmest affection.

We had dined alone as before, and, conversation happening to turn upon the fine arts, I gave my opinion upon one of the precepts in the Koran, by which the Mahometans are deprived of the innocent enjoyment of paintings and statues. He told me that Mahomet, a very sagacious legislator, had been right in removing all images from the sight of the followers of Islam.

"Recollect, my son, that the nations to which the prophet brought the knowledge of the true God were all idolators. Men are weak; if the disciples of the prophet had continued to see the same objects, they might have fallen back into their former errors."

"No one ever worshipped an image as an image; the deity of which the image is a representation is what is worshipped."

"I may grant that, but God cannot be matter, and it is right to remove from the thoughts of the vulgar the idea of a material divinity. You are the only men, you Christians, who believe that you see God."

"It is true, we are sure of it, but observe that faith alone gives us that certainty."

"I know it; but you are idolators, for you see nothing but a material representation, and yet you have a complete certainty that you see God, unless you should tell me that faith disaffirms it."

"God forbid I should tell you such a thing! Faith, on the contrary, affirms our certainty."

"We thank God that we have no need of such self-delusion, and there is not one philosopher in the world who could prove to me that you require it."

"That would not be the province of philosophy, dear father, but of theology — a very superior science."

"You are now speaking the language of our theologians, who differ from yours only in this; they use their science to make clearer the truths we ought to know, whilst your theologians try to render those truths more obscure."

"Recollect, dear father, that they are mysteries."

"The existence of God is a sufficiently important mystery to prevent men from daring to add anything to it. God can only be simple; any kind of combination would destroy His essence; such is the God announced by our prophet, who must be the same for all men and in all times. Agree with me that we can add nothing to the simplicity of God. We say that God is one; that is the image of simplicity. You say that He is one and three at the same time, and such a definition strikes us as contradictory, absurd, and impious."

"It is a mystery."

"Do you mean God or the definition? I am speaking only of the definition, which ought not to be a mystery or absurd. Common sense, my son, must consider as absurd an assertion which is substantially nonsensical. Prove to me that three is not a compound, that it cannot be a compound and I will become a Christian at once."

"My religion tells me to believe without arguing, and I shudder, my dear Yusuf, when I think that, through some specious reasoning, I might be led to renounce the creed of my fathers. I first must be convinced that they lived in error. Tell me whether, respecting my father's memory, I ought to have such a good opinion of myself as to sit in judgement over him, with the intention of giving my sentence against him?"

My lively remonstrance moved Yusuf deeply, but after a few instants of silence he said to me, —

"With such feelings, my son, you are sure to find grace in the eyes of God, and you are, therefore, one of the elect. If you are in error, God alone can convince you of it, for no just man on earth can refute the sentiment you have just given expression to."

We spoke of many other things in a friendly manner, and in the evening we parted with the often repeated assurance of the warmest affection and of the most perfect devotion.

But my mind was full of our conversation, and as I went on pondering over the matter, I thought that Yusuf might be right in his opinion as to the essence of God, for it seemed evident that the Creator of all beings ought to be perfectly simple; but I thought at the same time how impossible it would be for me, because the Christian religion had made a mistake, to accept the Turkish creed, which might perhaps have just a conception of God, but which caused me to smile when I recollected that the man who had given birth to it had been an arrant imposter. I had not the slightest idea, however, that Yusuf wished to make a convert of me.

The third time I dined with him religion was again the subject of conversation.

"Do you believe, dear father, that the religion of Mahomet is the only one in which salvation can be secured?"

"No, my dear son, I am not certain of it, and no man can have such a certainty; but I am sure that the Christian religion is not the true one, because it cannot be universal."

"Why not?"

"Because there is neither bread nor wine to be found in three-fourths of the world. Observe that the precepts of the Koran can be followed everywhere."

I did not know how to answer, and I would not equivocate.

"If God cannot be matter," I said, "then He must be a spirit?"

"We know what He is not but we do not know what He is: man cannot affirm that God is a spirit, because he can only realize the idea in an abstract manner. God is immaterial; that is the extent of our knowledge and it can never be greater."

I was reminded of Plato, who had said exactly the same and most certainly Yusuf never read Plato.

He added that the existence of God could be useful only to those who did not entertain a doubt of that existence, and that, as a natural consequence, Atheists must be the most miserable of men. God has made in man His own image in order that, amongst all the animals created by Him, there should be one that can understand and confess the existence of the Creator. Without man, God would have no witness of His own glory, and man must therefore understand that his first and highest duty is to glorify God by practising justice and trusting to His providence.

"Observe, my son, that God never abandons the man who, in the midst of misfortunes, falls down in prayer before Him, and that He often allows the wretch who has no faith in prayer to die miserably."

"Yet we meet with Atheists who are fortunate and happy."

"True; but, in spite of their tranquillity, I pity them because they have no hope beyond this life, and are on a level with animals. Besides, if they are philosophers, they must linger in dark ignorance, and, if they never think, they have no consolation, no resource, when adversity reaches them. God has made man in such a manner that he cannot be happy unless he entertains no doubt of the existence of his Divine Creator; in all stations of life man is naturally prone to believe in that existence, otherwise man would never have admitted one God, Creator of all beings and of all things."

"I should like to know why Atheism has only existed in the systems of the learned, and never as a national creed."

"Because the poor feel their wants much more than the rich, There are amongst us a great many impious men who deride the true believers because they have faith in the pilgrimage to Mecca. Wretches that they are, they ought to respect the ancient customs which, exciting the devotion of fervent souls, feed religious principles, and impart courage under all misfortunes. Without such consolation, people would give way to all the excess of despair."

Much pleased with the attention I gave to all he said, Yusuf would thus yield to the inclination he felt to instruct me, and, on my side, feeling myself drawn towards him by the charm which amiable goodness exerts upon all hearts, I would often go and spend the day with him, even without any previous invitation, and Yusuf's friendship soon became one of my most precious treasures.

One morning, I told my janissary to take me to the palace of Ismail Effendi, in order to fulfil my promise to breakfast with him. He gave me the most friendly welcome, and after an excellent breakfast he invited me to take a walk in his garden. We found there a pretty summer-house which we entered, and Ismail attempted some liberties which were not at all to my taste, and which I resented by rising in a very abrupt manner. Seeing that I was angry, the Turk affected to approve my reserve, and said that he had only been joking. I left him after a few minutes, with the intention of not visiting him again, but I was compelled to do so, as I will explain by-and-by.

When I saw M. de Bonneval I told him what had happened and he said that, according to Turkish manners, Ismail had intended to give me a great proof of his friendship, but that I need not be afraid of the offence being repeated. He added that politeness required that I should visit him again, and that Ismail was, in spite of his failing, a perfect gentleman, who had at his disposal the most beautiful female slaves in Turkey.

Five or six weeks after the commencement of our intimacy, Yusuf asked me one day whether I was married. I answered that I was not; the conversation turned upon several moral questions, and at last fell upon chastity, which, in his opinion, could be accounted a virtue only if considered from one point of view, namely, that of total abstinence, but he added that it could not be acceptable to God; because it transgressed against the very first precept He had given to man.

"I would like to know, for instance," he said, "what name can be given to the chastity of your knights of Malta. They take a vow of chastity, but it does not mean that they will renounce women altogether, they renounce marriage only. Their chastity, and therefore chastity in general, is violated only by marriage; yet I observe that marriage is one of your sacraments. Therefore, those knights of Malta promise not to give way to lustful incontinence in the only case in which God might forgive it, but they reserve the license of being lustful unlawfully as often as they please, and whenever an opportunity may offer itself; and that immoral, illicit license is granted to them to such an extent, that they are allowed to acknowledge legally a child which can be born to them only through a double crime! The most revolting part of it all is that these children of crime, who are of course perfectly innocent themselves, are called natural children, as if children born in wedlock came into the world in an unnatural manner! In one word, my dear son, the vow of chastity is so much opposed to Divine precepts and to human nature that it can be agreeable neither to God nor to society, nor to those who pledge themselves to keep it, and being in such opposition to every divine and human law, it must be a crime."

He enquired for the second time whether I was married; I replied in the negative, and added that I had no idea of ever getting married.

"What!" he exclaimed; "I must then believe that you are not a perfect man, or that you intend to work out your own damnation; unless you should tell me that you are a Christian only outwardly."

"I am a man in the very strongest sense of the word, and I am a true Christian. I must even confess that I adore women, and that I have not the slightest idea of depriving myself of the most delightful of all pleasures."

"According to your religion, damnation awaits you."

"I feel certain of the contrary, because, when we confess our sins, our priests are compelled to give us absolution."

"I know it, but you must agree with me that it is absurd to suppose that God will forgive a crime which you would, perhaps, not commit, if you did not think that, after confession, a priest, a man like you, will give you absolution. God forgives only the repenting sinner."

"No doubt of it, and confession supposes repentance; without it, absolution has no effect."

"Is onanism a crime amongst you?"

"Yes, even greater than lustful and illegitimate copulation."

"I was aware of it, and it has always caused me great surprise, for the legislator who enacts a law, the execution of which is impossible, is a fool. A man in good health, if he cannot have a woman, must necessarily have recourse to onanism, whenever imperious nature demands it, and the man who, from fear of polluting his soul, would abstain from it, would only draw upon himself a mortal disease."

"We believe exactly the reverse; we think that young people destroy their constitutions, and shorten their lives through self-abuse. In several communities they are closely watched, and are as much as possible deprived of every opportunity of indulging in that crime."

"Those who watch them are ignorant fools, and those who pay the watchers for such a service are even more stupid, because prohibition must excite the wish to break through such a tyrannical law, to set at nought an interdiction so contrary to nature."

"Yet it seems to me that self-abuse in excess must be injurious to health, for it must weaken and enervate."

"Certainly, because excess in everything is prejudicial and pernicious; but all such excess is the result of our severe prohibition. If girls are not interfered with in the matter of self-abuse, I do not see why boys should be."

"Because girls are very far from running the same risk; they do not lose a great deal in the action of self-abuse, and what they lose does not come from the same source whence flows the germinal liquid in men."

"I do not know, but we have some physicians who say that chlorosis in girls is the result of that pleasure indulged in to excess."

After many such conversations, in which he seemed to consider me as endowed with reason and talent, even when I was not of his opinion, Yusuf Ali surprised me greatly one day by the following proposition:

"I have two sons and a daughter. I no longer think of my sons, because they have received their share of my fortune. As far as my daughter is concerned she will, after my death, inherit all my possessions, and I am, besides, in a position while I am alive to promote the fortune of the man who may marry her. Five years ago I took a young wife, but she has not given me any progeny, and I know to a certainty that no offspring will bless our union. My daughter, whose name is Zelmi, is now fifteen; she is handsome, her eyes are black and lovely like her mother's, her hair is of the colour of the raven's wing, her complexion is animated alabaster; she is tall, well made, and of a sweet disposition; I have given her an education which would make her worthy of our master, the Sultan. She speaks Greek and Italian fluently, she sings delightfully, and accompanies herself on the harp; she can draw and embroider, and is always contented and cheerful. No living man can boast of having seen her features, and she loves me so dearly that my will is hers. My daughter is a treasure, and I offer her to you if you will consent to go for one year to Adrianople to reside with a relative of mine, who will teach you our religion, our language, and our manners. You will return at the end of one year, and as soon as you have become a Mussulman my daughter shall be your wife. You will find a house ready furnished, slaves of your own, and an income which will enable you to live in comfort. I have no more to say at present. I do not wish you to answer me either to-day, or to-morrow, or on any fixed day. You will give me your decision whenever you feel yourself called upon by your genius to give it, and you need not give me any answer unless you accept my offer, for, should you refuse it, it is not necessary that the subject should be again mentioned. I do not ask you to give full consideration to my proposal, for now that I have thrown the seed in your soul it must fructify. Without hurry, without delay, without anxiety, you can but obey the decrees of God and follow the immutable decision of fate. Such as I know you, I believe that you only require the possession of Zelmi to be completely happy, and that you will become one of the pillars of the Ottoman Empire."

Saying those words, Yusuf pressed me affectionately in his arms, and left me by myself to avoid any answer I might be inclined to make. I went away in such wonder at all I had just heard, that I found myself at the Venetian Embassy without knowing how I had reached it. The baili thought me very pensive, and asked whether anything was the matter with me, but I did not feel disposed to gratify their curiosity. I found that Yusuf had indeed spoken truly: his proposal was of such importance that it was my duty, not only not to mention it to anyone, but even to abstain from thinking it over, until my mind had recovered its calm sufficiently to give me the assurance that no external consideration would weigh in the balance and influence my decision. I had to silence all my passions; prejudices, principles already formed, love, and even self-interest were to remain in a state of complete inaction.

When I awoke the next morning I began to think the matter over, and I soon discovered that, if I wanted to come to a decision, I ought not to ponder over it, as the more I considered the less likely I should be to decide. This was truly a case for the 'sequere Deum' of the Stoics.

I did not visit Yusuf for four days, and when I called on him on the fifth day, we talked cheerfully without once mentioning his proposal, although it was very evident that we were both thinking of it. We remained thus for a fortnight, without ever alluding to the matter which engrossed all our thoughts, but our silence was not caused by dissimulation, or by any feeling contrary to our mutual esteem and friendship; and one day Yusuf suggested that very likely I had communicated his proposal to some wise friend, in order to obtain good advice. I immediately assured him it was not so, and that in a matter of so delicate a nature I thought I ought not to ask anybody's advice.

"I have abandoned myself to God, dear Yusuf, and, full of confidence in Him, I feel certain that I shall decide for the best, whether I make up my mind to become your son, or believe that I ought to remain what I am now. In the mean time, my mind ponders over it day and night, whenever I am quiet and feel myself composed and collected. When I come to a decision, I will impart it to you alone, and from that moment you shall have over me the authority of a father."

At these words the worthy Yusuf, his eyes wet with tears, placed his left hand over my head, and the first two fingers of the right hand on my forehead, saying:

"Continue to act in that way, my dear son, and be certain that you can never act wrongly."

"But," I said to him, "one thing might happen, Zelmi might not accept me."

"Have no anxiety about that. My daughter loves you; she, as well as my wife and her nurse, sees you every time that we dine together, and she listens to you with pleasure."

"Does she know that you are thinking of giving her to me as my wife?"

"She knows that I ardently wish you to become a true believer, so as to enable me to link her destiny to yours."

"I am glad that your habits do not permit you to let me see her, because she might dazzle me with her beauty, and then passion would soon have too much weight in the scale; I could no longer flatter myself that my decision had been taken in all the unbiased, purity of my soul."

Yusuf was highly delighted at hearing me speak in that manner, and I spoke in perfect good faith. The mere idea of seeing Zelmi caused me to shudder. I felt that, if I had fallen in love with her, I would have become a Mussulman in order to possess her, and that I might soon have repented such a step, for the religion of Mahomet presented to my eyes and to my mind nothing but a disagreeable picture, as well for this life as for a future one. As for wealth, I did not think it deserved the immense sacrifice demanded from me. I could find equal wealth in Europe, without stamping my forehead with the shameful brand of apostasy. I cared deeply for the esteem of the persons of distinction who knew me, and did not want to render myself unworthy of it. Besides, I felt an immense desire to obtain fame amongst civilized and polite nations, either in the fine arts or in literature, or in any other honourable profession, and I could not reconcile myself to the idea of abandoning to my equals the triumph which I might win if I lived amongst them. It seemed to me, and I am still of the same opinion, that the decision of wearing the turban befits only a Christian despairing of himself and at the end of his wits, and fortunately I was lost not in that predicament. My greatest objection was to spend a year in Adrianople to learn a language for which I did not feel any liking, and which I should therefore have learned but imperfectly. How could I, at my age, renounce the prerogative, so pleasant to my vanity, of being reputed a fine talker? and I had secured that reputation wherever I was known. Then I would often think that Zelmi, the eighth wonder of creation in the eyes of her father might not appear such in my eyes, and it would have been enough to make me miserable, for Yusuf was likely to live twenty years longer, and I felt that gratitude, as well as respect, would never have permitted me to give that excellent man any cause for unhappiness by ceasing to shew myself a devoted and faithful husband to his daughter. Such were my thoughts, and, as Yusuf could not guess them, it was useless to make a confidant of him.

A few days afterwards, I dined with the Pacha Osman and met my Effendi Ismail. He was very friendly to me, and I reciprocated his attentions, though I paid no attention to the reproaches he addressed to me for not having come to breakfast with him for such a long time. I could not refuse to dine at his house with Bonneval, and he treated me to a very pleasing sight; Neapolitan slaves, men and women, performed a pantomime and some Calabrian dances. M. de Bonneval happened to mention the dance called forlana, and Ismail expressing a great wish to know it, I told him that I could give him that pleasure if I had a Venetian woman to dance with and a fiddler who knew the time. I took a violin, and played the forlana, but, even if the partner had been found, I could not play and dance at the same time.

Ismail whispered a few words to one of his eunuchs, who went out of the room and returned soon with some message that he delivered to him. The effendi told me that he had found the partner I wanted, and I answered that the musician could be had easily, if he would send a note to the Venetian Embassy, which was done at once. The Bailo Dona sent one of his men who played the violin well enough for dancing purposes. As soon as the musician was ready, a door was thrown open, and a fine looking woman came in, her face covered with a black velvet mask, such as we call moretta in Venice. The appearance of that beautiful masked woman surprised and delighted every one of the guests, for it was impossible to imagine a more interesting object, not only on account of the beauty of that part of the face which the mask left exposed, but also for the elegance of her shape, the perfection of her figure, and the exquisite taste displayed in her costume. The nymph took her place, I did the same, and we danced the forlana six times without stopping.

I was in perspiration and out of breath, for the forlana is the most violent of our national dances; but my beautiful partner stood near me without betraying the slightest fatigue, and seemed to challenge me to a new performance. At the round of the dance, which is the most difficult step, she seemed to have wings. I was astounded, for I had never seen anyone, even in Venice, dance the forlana so splendidly. After a few minutes rest, rather ashamed of my feeling tired, I went up to her, and said, ‘Ancora sei, a poi basta, se non volete vedermi a morire.’ She would have answered me if she had been able, but she wore one of those cruel masks which forbid speech. But a pressure of her hand which nobody could see made me guess all I wanted to know. The moment we finished dancing the eunuch opened the door, and my lovely partner disappeared.

Ismail could not thank me enough, but it was I who owed him my thanks, for it was the only real pleasure which I enjoyed in Constantinople. I asked him whether the lady was from Venice, but he only answered by a significant smile.

“The worthy Ismail,” said M. de Bonneval to me, as we were leaving the house late in the evening, “has been to-day the dupe of his vanity, and I have no doubt that he is sorry already for what he has done. To bring out his beautiful slave to dance with you! According to the prejudices of this country it is injurious to his dignity, for you are sure to have kindled an amorous flame in the poor girl’s breast. I would advise you to be careful and to keep on your guard, because she will try to get up some intrigue with you; but be prudent, for intrigues are always dangerous in Turkey.”

I promised to be prudent, but I did not keep my promise; for, three or four days afterwards, an old slave woman met me in the street, and offered to sell me for one piaster a tobacco-bag embroidered in gold; and as she put it in my hand she contrived to make me feel that there was a letter in the bag.

I observed that she tried to avoid the eyes of the janissary who was walking behind me; I gave her one piaster, she left me, and I proceeded toward Yusuf’s house. He was not at home, and I went to his garden to read the letter with perfect freedom. It was sealed and without any address, and the slave might have made a mistake; but my curiosity was excited to the highest pitch; I broke the seal, and found the following note written in good enough Italian:

“Should you wish to see the person with whom you danced the forlana, take a walk towards evening in the garden beyond the fountain, and contrive to become acquainted with the old servant of the gardener by asking her for some lemonade. You may perchance manage to see your partner in the forlana without running any risk, even if you should happen to meet Ismail; she is a native of Venice. Be careful not to mention this invitation to any human being.”

“I am not such a fool, my lovely countrywoman,” I exclaimed, as if she had been present, and put the letter in my pocket. But at that very moment, a fine-looking elderly woman came out of a thicket, pronounced my name, and enquired what I wanted and how I had seen her. I answered that I had been speaking to the wind, not supposing that anyone could hear me, and without any more preparation, she abruptly told me that she was very glad of the opportunity of speaking with me, that she was from Rome, that she had brought up Zelmi, and had taught her to sing and to play the harp. She then praised highly the beauty and the excellent qualities of her pupil, saying that, if I saw her, I would certainly fall in love with her, and expressing how much she regretted that the law should not allow it.

“She sees us at this very moment,” she added, “from behind that green window-blind, and we love you ever since Yusuf has informed us that you may, perhaps, become Zelmi’s husband.”

“May I mention our conversation to Yusuf?” I enquired.

“No.”

Her answering in the negative made me understand that, if I had pressed her a little, she would have allowed me to see her lovely pupil, and perhaps it was with that intention that she had contrived to speak to me, but I felt great reluctance to do anything to displease my worthy host. I had another reason of even greater importance: I was afraid of entering an intricate maze in which the sight of a turban hovering over me made me shudder.

Yusuf came home, and far from being angry when he saw me with the woman, he remarked that I must have found much pleasure in conversing with a native of Rome, and he congratulated me upon the delight I must have felt in dancing with one of the beauties from the harem of the voluptuous Ismail.

“Then it must be a pleasure seldom enjoyed, if it is so much talked of?”

“Very seldom indeed, for there is amongst us an invincible prejudice against exposing our lovely women to the eyes of other men; but everyone may do as he pleases in his own house: Ismail is a very worthy and a very intelligent man.”

“Is the lady with whom I danced known?”

“I believe not. She wore a mask, and everybody knows that Ismail possesses half a dozen slaves of surpassing beauty.”

I spent a pleasant day with Yusuf, and when I left him, I ordered my janissary to take me to Ismail’s. As I was known by his servants, they allowed me to go in, and I proceeded to the spot described in the letter. The eunuch came to me, informed me that his master was out, but that he would be delighted to hear of my having taken a walk in the garden. I told him that I would like a glass of lemonade, and he took me to the summerhouse, where I recognized the old woman who had sold me the tobacco-pouch.

The eunuch told her to give me a glass of some liquid which I found delicious, and would not allow me to give her any money. We then walked together towards the fountain, but he told me abruptly that we were to go back, as he saw three ladies to whom he pointed, adding that, for the sake of decency, it was necessary to avoid them. I thanked him for his attentions, left my compliments for Ismail, and went away not dissatisfied with my first attempt, and with the hope of being more fortunate another time.

The next morning I received a letter from Ismail inviting me to go fishing with him on the following day, and stating that he intended to enjoy the sport by moonlight. I immediately gave way to my suppositions, and I went so far as to fancy that Ismail might be capable of arranging an interview between me and the lovely Venetian. I did not mind his being present. I begged permission of Chevalier Venier to stop out of the palace for one night, but he granted it with the greatest difficulty, because he was afraid of some love affair and of the results it might have. I took care to calm his anxiety as much as I could, but without acquainting him with all the circumstances of the case, for I thought I was wise in being discreet.

I was exact to the appointed time, and Ismail received me with the utmost cordiality, but I was surprised when I found myself alone with him in the boat. We had two rowers and a man to steer; we took some fish, fried in oil, and ate it in the summer-house. The moon shone brightly, and the night was delightful. Alone with Ismail, and knowing his unnatural tastes, I did not feel very comfortable for, in spite of what M. de Bonneval had told me, I was afraid lest the Turk should take a fancy to give me too great a proof of his friendship, and I did not relish our tete-a-tete. But my fears were groundless.

“Let us leave this place quietly,” said Ismail, “I have just heard a slight noise which heralds something that will amuse us.”

He dismissed his attendants, and took my hand, saying,

“Let us go to a small room, the key of which I luckily have with me, but let us be careful not to make any noise. That room has a window overlooking the fountain where I think that two or three of my beauties have just gone to bathe. We will see them and enjoy a very pleasing sight, for they do not imagine that anyone is looking at them. They know that the place is forbidden to everybody except me.”

We entered the room, we went to the window, and, the moon shining right over the basin of the fountain, we saw three nymphs who, now swimming, now standing or sitting on the marble steps, offered themselves to our eyes in every possible position, and in all the attitudes of graceful voluptuousness. Dear reader, I must not paint in too vivid colours the details of that beautiful picture, but if nature has endowed you with an ardent imagination and with equally ardent senses, you will easily imagine the fearful havoc which that unique, wonderful, and enchanting sight must have made upon my poor body.

A few days after that delightful fishing and bathing party by moonlight, I called upon Yusuf early in the morning; as it was raining, I could not go to the garden, and I went into the dining-room, in which I had never seen anyone. The moment I entered the room, a charming female form rose, covering her features with a thick veil which fell to the feet. A slave was sitting near the window, doing some tambour-work, but she did not move. I apologized, and turned to leave the room, but the lady stopped me, observing, with a sweet voice, that Yusuf had commanded her to entertain me before going out. She invited me to be seated, pointing to a rich cushion placed upon two larger ones, and I obeyed, while, crossing her legs, she sat down upon another cushion opposite to me. I thought I was looking upon Zelmi, and fancied that Yusuf had made up his mind to shew me that he was not less courageous than Ismail. Yet I was surprised, for, by such a proceeding, he strongly contradicted his maxims, and ran the risk of impairing the unbiased purity of my consent by throwing love in the balance. But I had no fear of that, because, to become enamoured, I should have required to see her face.

“I suppose,” said the veiled beauty, “that you do not know who I am?”

“I could not guess, if I tried.”

“I have been for the last five years the wife of your friend, and I am a native of Scio. I was thirteen years of age when I became his wife.”

I was greatly astonished to find that my Mussulman philosopher had gone so far as to allow me to converse with his wife, but I felt more at ease after I had received that information, and fancied that I might carry the adventure further, but it would be necessary to see the lady’s face, for a finely-dressed body, the head of which is not seen, excites but feeble desires. The fire lighted by amorous desires is like a fire of straw; the moment it burns up it is near its end. I had before me a magnificent appearance, but I could not see the soul of the image, for a thick gauze concealed it from my hungry gaze. I could see arms as white as alabaster, and hands like those of Alcina, 'dove ne nodo appasisce ne vena accede', and my active imagination fancied that all the rest was in harmony with those beautiful specimens, for the graceful folds of the muslin, leaving the outline all its perfection, hid from me only the living satin of the surface; there was no doubt that everything was lovely, but I wanted to see, in the expression of her eyes, that all that my imagination created had life and was endowed with feeling. The Oriental costume is a beautiful varnish placed upon a porcelain vase to protect from the touch the colours of the flowers and of the design, without lessening the pleasure of the eyes. Yusuf's wife was not dressed like a sultana; she wore the costume of Scio, with a short skirt which concealed neither the perfection of the leg nor the round form of the thigh, nor the voluptuous plump fall of the hips, nor the slender, well-made waist encompassed in a splendid band embroidered in silver and covered with arabesques. Above all those beauties, I could see the shape of two globes which Apelles would have taken for the model of those of his lovely Venus, and the rapid, inequal movement of which proved to me that those ravishing hillocks were animated. The small valley left between them, and which my eyes greedily feasted upon, seemed to me a lake of nectar, in which my burning lips longed to quench their thirst with more ardour than they would have drunk from the cup of the gods.

Enraptured, unable to control myself, I thrust my arm forward by a movement almost independent of my will, and my hand, too audacious, was on the point of lifting the hateful veil, but she prevented me by raising herself quickly on tiptoe, upbraiding me at the same time for my perfidious boldness, with a voice as commanding as her attitude.

"Dost thou deserve," she said, "Yusuf's friendship, when thou abusest the sacred laws of hospitality by insulting his wife?"

"Madam, you must kindly forgive me, for I never had any intention to insult you. In my country the lowest of men may fix his eyes upon the face of a queen."

"Yes, but he cannot tear off her veil, if she chooses to wear it. Yusuf shall avenge me."

The threat, and the tone in which it was pronounced, frightened me. I threw myself at her feet, and succeeded in calming her anger.

"Take a seat," she said.

And she sat down herself, crossing her legs with so much freedom that I caught a glimpse of charms which would have caused me to lose all control over myself if the delightful sight had remained one moment longer exposed to my eyes. I then saw that I had gone the wrong way to work, and I felt vexed with myself; but it was too late.

"Art thou excited?" she said.

"How could I be otherwise," I answered, "when thou art scorching me with an ardent fire?"

I had become more prudent, and I seized her hand without thinking any more of her face.

"Here is my husband," she said, and Yusuf came into the room. We rose, Yusuf embraced me, I complimented him, the slave left the room. Yusuf thanked his wife for having entertained me, and offered her his arm to take her to her own apartment. She took it, but when she reached the door, she raised her veil, and kissing her husband she allowed me to see her lovely face as if it had been done unwittingly. I followed her with my eyes as long as I could, and Yusuf, coming back to me, said with a laugh that his wife had offered to dine with us.

"I thought," I said to him, "that I had Zelmi before me."

"That would have been too much against our established rules. What I have done is not much, but I do not know an honest man who would be bold enough to bring his daughter into the presence of a stranger."

"I think your wife must be handsome; is she more beautiful than Zelmi?"

"My daughter's beauty is cheerful, sweet, and gentle; that of Sophia is proud and haughty. She will be happy after my death. The man who will marry her will find her a virgin."

I gave an account of my adventure to M. de Bonneval, somewhat exaggerating the danger I had run in trying to raise the veil of the handsome daughter of Scio.

“She was laughing at you,” said the count, “and you ran no danger. She felt very sorry, believe me, to have to deal with a novice like you. You have been playing the comedy in the French fashion, when you ought to have gone straight to the point. What on earth did you want to see her nose for? She knew very well that she would have gained nothing by allowing you to see her. You ought to have secured the essential point. If I were young I would perhaps manage to give her a revenge, and to punish my friend Yusuf. You have given that lovely woman a poor opinion of Italian valour. The most reserved of Turkish women has no modesty except on her face, and, with her veil over it, she knows to a certainty that she will not blush at anything. I am certain that your beauty keeps her face covered whenever our friend Yusuf wishes to joke with her.”

“She is yet a virgin.”

“Rather a difficult thing to admit, my good friend; but I know the daughters of Scio; they have a talent for counterfeiting virginity.”

Yusuf never paid me a similar compliment again, and he was quite right.

A few days after, I happened to be in the shop of an Armenian merchant, looking at some beautiful goods, when Yusuf entered the shop and praised my taste; but, although I had admired a great many things, I did not buy, because I thought they were too dear. I said so to Yusuf, but he remarked that they were, on the contrary, very cheap, and he purchased them all. We parted company at the door, and the next morning I received all the beautiful things he had bought; it was a delicate attention of my friend, and to prevent my refusal of such a splendid present, he had enclosed a note stating that, on my arrival in Corfu, he would let me know to whom the goods were to be delivered. He had thus sent me gold and silver filigrees from Damascus, portfolios, scarfs, belts, handkerchiefs and pipes, the whole worth four or five hundred piasters. When I called to thank him, I compelled him to confess that it was a present offered by his friendship.

The day before my departure from Constantinople, the excellent man burst into tears as I bade him adieu, and my grief was as great as his own. He told me that, by not accepting the offer of his daughter's hand, I had so strongly captivated his esteem that his feelings for me could not have been warmer if I had become his son. When I went on board ship with the Bailo Jean Dona, I found another case given to me by him, containing two quintals of the best Mocha coffee, one hundred pounds of tobacco leaves, two large flagons filled, one with Zabandi tobacco, the other with camussa, and a magnificent pipe tube of jessamine wood, covered with gold filigrane, which I sold in Corfu for one hundred sequins. I had not it in my power to give my generous Turk any mark of my gratitude until I reached Corfu, but there I did not fail to do so. I sold all his beautiful presents, which made me the possessor of a small fortune.

Ismail gave me a letter for the Chevalier de Lezze, but I could not forward it to him because I unfortunately lost it; he presented me with a barrel of hydromel, which I turned likewise into money. M. de Bonneval gave me a letter for Cardinal Acquaviva, which I sent to Rome with an account of my journey, but his eminence did not think fit to acknowledge the receipt of either. Bonneval made me a present of twelve bottles of malmsey from Ragusa, and of twelve bottles of genuine scopolo — a great rarity, with which I made a present in Corfu which proved very useful to me, as the reader will discover.

The only foreign minister I saw much in Constantinople was the lord marshal of Scotland, the celebrated Keith, who represented the King of Prussia, and who, six years later was of great service to me in Paris.

We sailed from Constantinople in the beginning of September in the same man-of-war which had brought us, and we reached Corfu in fourteen days. The Bailo Dona did not land. He had with him eight splendid Turkish horses; I saw two of them still alive in Gorizia in the year 1773.

As soon as I had landed with my luggage, and had engaged a rather mean lodging, I presented myself to M. Andre Dolfin, the proveditore-generale, who promised me again that I should soon be promoted to a lieutenancy. After my visit to him, I called upon M. Camporese, my captain, and was well received by him. My third visit was to the commander of galleases, M. D —— R —— , to whom M. Antonio Dolfin, with whom I had travelled from Venice to Corfu, had kindly recommended me. After a short conversation, he asked me if I would remain with him with the title of adjutant. I did not hesitate one instant, but accepted, saying how deeply honoured I felt by his offer, and assuring him that he would always find me ready to carry out his orders. He immediately had me taken to my room, and, the next day, I found myself established in his house. I obtained from my captain a French soldier to serve me, and I was well pleased when I found that the man was a hairdresser by trade, and a great talker by nature, for he could take care of my beautiful head of hair, and I wanted to practise French conversation. He was a good-for-nothing fellow, a drunkard and a debauchee, a peasant from Picardy, and he could hardly read or write, but I did not mind all that; all I wanted from him was to serve me, and to talk to me, and his French was pretty good. He was an amusing rogue, knowing by heart a quantity of erotic songs and of smutty stories which he could tell in the most laughable manner.

When I had sold my stock of goods from Constantinople (except the wines), I found myself the owner of nearly five hundred sequins. I redeemed all the articles which I had pledged in the hands of Jews, and turned into money everything of which I had no need. I was determined not to play any longer as a dupe, but to secure in gambling all the advantages which a prudent young man could obtain without sullying his honour.

I must now make my readers acquainted with the sort of life we were at that time leading in Corfu. As to the city itself, I will not describe it, because there are already many descriptions better than the one I could offer in these pages.

We had then in Corfu the ‘proveditore-generale’ who had sovereign authority, and lived in a style of great magnificence. That post was then filled by M. Andre Dolfin, a man sixty years of age, strict, headstrong, and ignorant. He no longer cared for women, but liked to be courted by them. He received every evening, and the supper-table was always laid for twenty-four persons.

We had three field-officers of the marines who did duty on the galleys, and three field-officers for the troops of the line on board the men-of-war. Each galeass had a captain called ‘sopracomito’, and we had ten of those captains; we had likewise ten commanders, one for each man-of-war, including three ‘capi di mare’, or admirals. They all belonged to the nobility of Venice. Ten young Venetian noblemen, from twenty to twenty-two years of age, were at Corfu as midshipmen in the navy. We had, besides, about a dozen civil clerks in the police of the island, or in the administration of justice, entitled ‘grandi offciali di terra’. Those who were blessed with handsome wives had the pleasure of seeing their houses very much frequented by admirers who aspired to win the favours of the ladies, but there was not much heroic love-making, perhaps for the reason that there were then in Corfu many Aspasias whose favours could be had for money. Gambling was allowed everywhere, and that all absorbing passion was very prejudicial to the emotions of the heart.

The lady who was then most eminent for beauty and gallantry was Madame F —— . Her husband, captain of a galley, had come to Corfu with her the year before, and madam had greatly astonished all the naval officers. Thinking that she had the privilege of the choice, she had given the preference to M. D —— R —— , and had dismissed all the suitors who presented themselves. M. F —— had married her on the very day she had left the convent; she was only seventeen years of age then, and he had brought her on board his galley immediately after the marriage ceremony.

I saw her for the first time at the dinner-table on the very day of my installation at M. D —— R — — ‘s, and she made a great impression upon me. I thought I was gazing at a supernatural being, so infinitely above all the women I had ever seen, that it seemed impossible to fall in love with her She appeared to me of a nature different and so greatly superior to mine that I did not see the possibility of rising up to her. I even went so far as to persuade myself that nothing but a Platonic friendship could exist between her and M. D —— R —— , and that M. F —— was quite right now not to shew any jealousy. Yet, that M. F —— was a perfect fool, and certainly not worthy of such a woman. The impression made upon me by Madame F —— was too ridiculous to last long, and the nature of it soon changed, but in a novel manner, at least as far as I was concerned.

My position as adjutant procured me the honour of dining at M. D —— R — — ‘s table, but nothing more. The other adjutant, like me, an ensign in the army, but the greatest fool I had ever seen, shared that honour with me. We were not, however, considered as guests, for nobody ever spoke to us, and, what is more, no one ever honoured us with a look. It used to put me in a rage. I knew very well that people acted in that manner through no real contempt for us, but it went very hard with me. I could very well understand that my colleague, Sanzonio, should not complain of such treatment, because he was a blockhead, but I did not feel disposed to allow myself to be put on a par with him. At the end of eight or ten days, Madame F —— , not having condescended to cast one glance upon my person, began to appear disagreeable to me. I felt piqued, vexed, provoked, and the more so because I could not suppose that the lady acted in that manner wilfully and purposely; I would have been highly pleased if there had been premeditation on her part. I felt satisfied that I was a nobody in her estimation, and as I was conscious of being somebody, I wanted her to know it. At last a circumstance offered itself in which, thinking that she could address me, she was compelled to look at me.

M. D —— R —— having observed that a very, very fine turkey had been placed before me, told me to carve it, and I immediately went to work. I was not a skilful carver, and Madame F —— , laughing at my want of dexterity, told me that, if I had not been certain of performing my task with credit to myself, I ought not to have undertaken it. Full of confusion, and unable to answer her as my anger prompted, I sat down, with my heart overflowing with spite and hatred against her. To crown my rage, having one day to address me, she asked me what was my name. She had seen me every day for a fortnight, ever since I had been the adjutant of M. D —— R —— ; therefore she ought to have known my name. Besides, I had been very lucky at the gaming-table, and I had become rather famous in Corfu. My anger against Madame F was at its height.

I had placed my money in the hands of a certain Maroli, a major in the army and a gamester by profession, who held the faro bank at the coffee-house. We were partners; I helped him when he dealt, and he rendered me the same office when I held the cards, which was often the case, because he was not generally liked. He used to hold the cards in a way which frightened the punters; my manners were very different, and I was very lucky. Besides I was easy and smiling when my bank was losing, and I won without shewing any avidity, and that is a manner which always pleases the punters.

This Maroli was the man who had won all my money during my first stay in Corfu, and finding, when I returned, that I was resolved not to be duped any more, he judged me worthy of sharing the wise maxims without which gambling must necessarily ruin all those who meddle with it. But as Maroli had won my confidence only to a very slight extent, I was very careful. We made up our accounts every night, as soon as playing was over; the cashier kept the capital of the bank, the winnings were divided, and each took his share away. Lucky at play, enjoying good health and the friendship of my comrades, who, whenever the opportunity offered, always found me generous and ready to serve them, I would have been well pleased with my position if I had been a little more considered at the table of M. D —— R —— , and treated with less haughtiness by his lady who, without any reason, seemed disposed to humiliate me. My self-love was deeply hurt, I hated her, and, with such a disposition of mind, the more I admired the perfection of her charms, the more I found her deficient in wit and intelligence. She might have made the conquest of my heart without bestowing hers upon me, for all I wanted was not to be compelled to hate her, and I could not understand what pleasure it could be for her to be detested, while with only a little kindness she could have been adored. I could not ascribe her manner to a spirit of coquetry, for I had never given her the slightest proof of the opinion I entertained of her beauty, and I could not therefore attribute her behaviour to a passion which might have rendered me disagreeable in her eyes; M. D —— R —— seemed to interest her only in a very slight manner, and as to her husband, she cared nothing for him. In short, that charming woman made me very unhappy, and I was angry with myself because I felt that, if it had not been for the manner in which she treated me, I would not have thought of her, and my vexation was increased by the feeling of hatred entertained by my heart against her, a feeling which until then I had never known to exist in me, and the discovery of which overwhelmed me with confusion.

One day a gentleman handed me, as we were leaving the dinner-table, a roll of gold that he had lost upon trust; Madame F —— saw it, and she said to me very abruptly, —

“What do you do with your money?”

“I keep it, madam, as a provision against possible losses.”

“But as you do not indulge in any expense it would be better for you not to play; it is time wasted.”

“Time given to pleasure is never time lost, madam; the only time which a young man wastes is that which is consumed in weariness, because when he is a prey to ennui he is likely to fall a prey to love, and to be despised by the object of his affection."

"Very likely; but you amuse yourself with hoarding up your money, and shew yourself to be a miser, and a miser is not less contemptible than a man in love. Why do you not buy yourself a pair of gloves?"

You may be sure that at these words the laughter was all on her side, and my vexation was all the greater because I could not deny that she was quite right. It was the adjutant's business to give the ladies an arm to their carriages, and it was not proper to fulfil that duty without gloves. I felt mortified, and the reproach of avarice hurt me deeply. I would a thousand times rather that she had laid my error to a want of education; and yet, so full of contradictions is the human heart, instead of making amends by adopting an appearance of elegance which the state of my finances enabled me to keep up, I did not purchase any gloves, and I resolved to avoid her and to abandon her to the insipid and dull gallantry of Sanzonio, who sported gloves, but whose teeth were rotten, whose breath was putrid, who wore a wig, and whose face seemed to be covered with shrivelled yellow parchment.

I spent my days in a continual state of rage and spite, and the most absurd part of it all was that I felt unhappy because I could not control my hatred for that woman whom, in good conscience, I could not find guilty of anything. She had for me neither love nor dislike, which was quite natural; but being young and disposed to enjoy myself I had become, without any wilful malice on her part, an eye-sore to her and the butt of her bantering jokes, which my sensitiveness exaggerated greatly. For all that I had an ardent wish to punish her and to make her repent. I thought of nothing else. At one time I would think of devoting all my intelligence and all my money to kindling an amorous passion in her heart, and then to revenge myself by treating her with contempt. But I soon realized the impracticability of such a plan, for even supposing that I should succeed in finding my way to her heart, was I the man to resist my own success with such a woman? I certainly could not flatter myself that I was so strong-minded. But I was the pet child of fortune, and my position was suddenly altered.

M. D —— R —— having sent me with dispatches to M. de Condulmer, captain of a 'galeazza', I had to wait until midnight to deliver them, and when I returned I found that M. D —— R —— had retired to his apartment for the night. As soon as he was visible in the morning I went to him to render an account of my mission. I had been with him only a few minutes when his valet brought a letter saying that Madame F — — 's adjutant was waiting for an answer. M. D —— R —— read the note, tore it to pieces, and in his excitement stamped with his foot upon the fragments. He walked up and down the room for a little time, then wrote an answer and rang for the adjutant, to whom he delivered it. He then recovered his usual composure, concluded the perusal of the dispatch sent by M. de Condulmer, and told me to write a letter. He was looking it over when the valet came in, telling me that Madame F —— desired to see me. M. D —— R —— told me that he did not require my services any more for the present, and that I might go. I left the room, but I had not gone ten yards when he called me back to remind me that my duty was to know nothing; I begged to assure him that I was well aware of that. I ran to Madame F — — 's house, very eager to know what she wanted with me. I was introduced immediately, and I was greatly surprised to find her sitting up in bed, her countenance flushed and excited, and her eyes red from the tears she had evidently just been shedding. My heart was beating quickly, yet I did not know why.

“Pray be seated,” she said, “I wish to speak with you.”

“Madam,” I answered, “I am not worthy of so great a favour, and I have not yet done anything to deserve it; allow me to remain standing.”

She very likely recollected that she had never been so polite before, and dared not press me any further. She collected her thoughts for an instant or two, and said to me:

“Last evening my husband lost two hundred sequins upon trust at your faro bank; he believed that amount to be in my hands, and I must therefore give it to him immediately, as he is bound in honour to pay his losses to-day. Unfortunately I have disposed of the money, and I am in great trouble. I thought you might tell Maroli that I have paid you the amount lost by my husband. Here is a ring of some value; keep it until the 1st of January, when I will return the two hundred sequins for which I am ready to give you my note of hand.”

“I accept the note of hand, madam, but I cannot consent to deprive you of your ring. I must also tell you that M. F —— must go himself to the bank, or send some one there, to redeem his debt. Within ten minutes you shall have the amount you require."

I left her without waiting for an answer, and I returned within a few minutes with the two hundred ducats, which I handed to her, and putting in my pocket her note of hand which she had just written, I bowed to take my leave, but she addressed to me these precious words:

"I believe, sir, that if I had known that you were so well disposed to oblige me, I could not have made up my mind to beg that service from you."

"Well, madam, for the future be quite certain that there is not a man in the world capable of refusing you such an insignificant service whenever you will condescend to ask for it in person."

"What you say is very complimentary, but I trust never to find myself again under the necessity of making such a cruel experiment."

I left Madame F —— , thinking of the shrewdness of her answer. She had not told me that I was mistaken, as I had expected she would, for that would have caused her some humiliation: she knew that I was with M. D —— R —— when the adjutant had brought her letter, and she could not doubt that I was aware of the refusal she had met with. The fact of her not mentioning it proved to me that she was jealous of her own dignity; it afforded me great gratification, and I thought her worthy of adoration. I saw clearly that she could have no love for M. D —— R —— , and that she was not loved by him, and the discovery made me leap for joy. From that moment I felt I was in love with her, and I conceived the hope that she might return my ardent affection.

The first thing I did, when I returned to my room, was to cross out with ink every word of her note of hand, except her name, in such a manner that it was impossible to guess at the contents, and putting it in an envelope carefully sealed, I deposited it in the hands of a public notary who stated, in the receipt he gave me of the envelope, that he would deliver it only to Madame F —— , whenever she should request its delivery.

The same evening M. F —— came to the bank, paid me, played with cash in hand, and won some fifty ducats. What caused me the greatest surprise was that M. D —— R —— continued to be very gracious to Madame F —— , and that she remained exactly the same towards him as she used to be before. He did not even enquire what she wanted when she had sent for me. But if she did not seem to change her manner towards my master, it was a very different case with me, for whenever she was opposite to me at dinner, she often addressed herself to me, and she thus gave me many opportunities of shewing my education and my wit in amusing stories or in remarks, in which I took care to blend instruction with witty jests. At that time F —— had the great talent of making others laugh while I kept a serious countenance myself. I had learnt that accomplishment from M. de Malipiero, my first master in the art of good breeding, who used to say to me, —

"If you wish your audience to cry, you must shed tears yourself, but if you wish to make them laugh you must contrive to look as serious as a judge."

In everything I did, in every word I uttered, in the presence of Madame F —— , the only aim I had was to please her, but I did not wish her to suppose so, and I never looked at her unless she spoke to me. I wanted to force her curiosity, to compel her to suspect nay, to guess my secret, but without giving her any advantage over me: it was necessary for me to proceed by slow degrees. In the mean time, and until I should have a greater happiness, I was glad to see that my money, that magic talisman, and my good conduct, obtained me a consideration much greater than I could have hoped to obtain either through my position, or from my age, or in consequence of any talent I might have shewn in the profession I had adopted.

Towards the middle of November, the soldier who acted as my servant was attacked with inflammation of the chest; I gave notice of it to the captain of his company, and he was carried to the hospital. On the fourth day I was told that he would not recover, and that he had received the last sacraments; in the evening I happened to be at his captain's when the priest who had attended him came to announce his death, and to deliver a small parcel which the dying man had entrusted to him to be given up to his captain only after his death. The parcel contained a brass seal engraved with ducal arms, a certificate of baptism, and a sheet of paper covered with writing in French. Captain Camporese, who only spoke Italian, begged me to translate the paper, the contents of which were as follows:

“My will is that this paper, which I have written and signed with my own hand, shall be delivered to my captain only after I have breathed my last: until then, my confessor shall not make any use of it, for I entrust it to his hands only under the seal of confession. I entreat my captain to have me buried in a vault from which my body can be exhumed in case the duke, my father, should request its exhumation. I entreat him likewise to forward my certificate of baptism, the seal with the armorial bearings of my family, and a legal certificate of my birth to the French ambassador in Venice, who will send the whole to the duke, my father, my rights of primogeniture belonging, after my demise, to the prince, my brother. In faith of which I have signed and sealed these presents: Francois VI. Charles Philippe Louis Foucaud, Prince de la Rochefoucault.”

The certificate of baptism, delivered at St. Sulpice gave the same names, and the title of the father was Francois V. The name of the mother was Gabrielle du Plessis.

As I was concluding my translation I could not help bursting into loud laughter; but the foolish captain, who thought my mirth out of place, hurried out to render an account of the affair to the proveditore-generale, and I went to the coffee-house, not doubting for one moment that his excellency would laugh at the captain, and that the post-mortem buffoonery would greatly amuse the whole of Corfu.

I had known in Rome, at Cardinal Acquaviva’s, the Abbe de Liancourt, great-grandson of Charles, whose sister, Gabrielle du Plessis, had been the wife of Francois V., but that dated from the beginning of the last century. I had made a copy from the records of the cardinal of the account of certain circumstances which the Abbe de Liancourt wanted to communicate to the court of Spain, and in which there were a great many particulars respecting the house of Du Plessis. I thought at the same time that the singular imposture of La Valeur (such was the name by which my soldier generally went) was absurd and without a motive, since it was to be known only after his death, and could not therefore prove of any advantage to him.

Half an hour afterwards, as I was opening a fresh pack of cards, the Adjutant Sanzonio came in, and told the important news in the most serious manner. He had just come from the office of the proveditore, where Captain Camporese had run in the utmost hurry to deposit in the hands of his excellency the seal and the papers of the deceased prince. His excellency had immediately issued his orders for the burial of the prince in a vault with all the honours due to his exalted rank. Another half hour passed, and M. Minolto, adjutant of the proveditore-generale, came to inform me that his excellency wanted to see me. I passed the cards to Major Maroli, and went to his excellency's house. I found him at supper with several ladies, three or four naval commanders, Madame F—— , and M. D—— R—— .

"So, your servant was a prince!" said the old general to me.

"Your excellency, I never would have suspected it, and even now that he is dead I do not believe it."

"Why? He is dead, but he was not insane. You have seen his armorial bearings, his certificate of baptism, as well as what he wrote with his own hand. When a man is so near death, he does not fancy practical jokes."

"If your excellency is satisfied of the truth of the story, my duty is to remain silent."

"The story cannot be anything but true, and your doubts surprise me."

"I doubt, monsignor, because I happen to have positive information respecting the families of La Rochefoucault and Du Plessis. Besides, I have seen too much of the man. He was not a madman, but he certainly was an extravagant jester. I have never seen him write, and he has told me himself a score of times that he had never learned."

"The paper he has written proves the contrary. His arms have the ducal bearings; but perhaps you are not aware that M. de la Rochefoucault is a duke and peer of the French realm?"

"I beg your eminence's pardon; I know all about it; I know even more, for I know that Francois VI. married a daughter of the house of Vivonne."

"You know nothing."

When I heard this remark, as foolish as it was rude, I resolved on remaining silent, and it was with some pleasure that I observed the joy felt by all the male guests at what they thought an insult and a blow to my vanity. An officer remarked that the deceased was a fine man, a witty man, and had shewn wonderful cleverness in keeping up his assumed character so well that no one ever had the faintest suspicion of what he really was. A lady said that, if she had known him, she would have been certain to find him out. Another flatterer, belonging to that mean, contemptible race always to be found near the great and wealthy of the earth, assured us that the late prince had always shewn himself cheerful, amiable, obliging, devoid of haughtiness towards his comrades, and that he used to sing beautifully. "He was only twenty-five years of age," said Madame Sagredo, looking me full in the face, "and if he was endowed with all those qualities, you must have discovered them."

"I can only give you, madam, a true likeness of the man, such as I have seen him. Always gay, often even to folly, for he could throw a somersault beautifully; singing songs of a very erotic kind, full of stories and of popular tales of magic, miracles, and ghosts, and a thousand marvellous feats which common-sense refused to believe, and which, for that very reason, provoked the mirth of his hearers. His faults were that he was drunken, dirty, quarrelsome, dissolute, and somewhat of a cheat. I put up with all his deficiences, because he dressed my hair to my taste, and his constant chattering offered me the opportunity of practising the colloquial French which cannot be acquired from books. He has always assured me that he was born in Picardy, the son of a common peasant, and that he had deserted from the French army. He may have deceived me when he said that he could not write."

Just then Camporese rushed into the room, and announced that La Veleur was yet breathing. The general, looking at me significantly, said that he would be delighted if the man could be saved.

"And I likewise, monsignor, but his confessor will certainly kill him to-night."

"Why should the father confessor kill him?"

"To escape the galleys to which your excellency would not fail to send him for having violated the secrecy of the confessional."

Everybody burst out laughing, but the foolish old general knitted his brows. The guests retired soon afterwards, and Madame F —— , whom I had preceded to the carriage, M. D —— R —— having offered her his arm, invited me to get in with her, saying that it was raining. It was the first time that she had bestowed such an honour upon me.

“I am of your opinion about that prince,” she said, “but you have incurred the displeasure of the proveditore.”

“I am very sorry, madam, but it could not have been avoided, for I cannot help speaking the truth openly.”

“You might have spared him,” remarked M. D —— R —— , “the cutting jest of the confessor killing the false prince.”

“You are right, sir, but I thought it would make him laugh as well as it made madam and your excellency. In conversation people generally do not object to a witty jest causing merriment and laughter.”

“True; only those who have not wit enough to laugh do not like the jest.”

“I bet a hundred sequins that the madman will recover, and that, having the general on his side, he will reap all the advantages of his imposture. I long to see him treated as a prince, and making love to Madame Sagredo.”

Hearing the last words, Madame F —— , who did not like Madame Sagredo, laughed heartily, and, as we were getting out of the carriage, M. D —— R —— invited me to accompany them upstairs. He was in the habit of spending half an hour alone with her at her own house when they had taken supper together with the general, for her husband never shewed himself. It was the first time that the happy couple admitted a third person to their tete-a-tete. I felt very proud of the compliment thus paid to me, and I thought it might have important results for me. My satisfaction, which I concealed as well as I could, did not prevent me from being very gay and from giving a comic turn to every subject brought forward by the lady or by her lord.

We kept up our pleasant trio for four hours; and returned to the mansion of M. D —— R —— only at two o’clock in the morning. It was during that night that Madame F —— and M. D —— R —— really made my acquaintance. Madame F —— told him that she had never laughed so much, and that she had never imagined that a conversation, in appearance so simple, could afford so much pleasure and merriment. On my side, I discovered in her so much wit and cheerfulness, that I became deeply enamoured, and went to bed fully satisfied that, in the future, I could not keep up the show of indifference which I had so far assumed towards her.

When I woke up the next morning, I heard from the new soldier who served me that La Valeur was better, and had been pronounced out of danger by the physician. At dinner the conversation fell upon him, but I did not open my lips. Two days afterwards, the general gave orders to have him removed to a comfortable apartment, sent him a servant, clothed him, and the over-credulous proveditore having paid him a visit, all the naval commanders and officers thought it their duty to imitate him, and to follow his example: the general curiosity was excited, there was a rush to see the new prince. M. D —— R —— followed his leaders, and Madame Sagredo, having set the ladies in motion, they all called upon him, with the exception of Madame F —— , who told me laughingly that she would not pay him a visit unless I would consent to introduce her. I begged to be excused. The knave was called your highness, and the wonderful prince styled Madame Sagredo his princess. M. D —— R —— tried to persuade me to call upon the rogue, but I told him that I had said too much, and that I was neither courageous nor mean enough to retract my words. The whole imposture would soon have been discovered if anyone had possessed a peerage, but it just happened that there was not a copy in Corfu, and the French consul, a fat blockhead, like many other consuls, knew nothing of family trees. The madcap La Valeur began to walk out a week after his metamorphosis into a prince. He dined and had supper every day with the general, and every evening he was present at the reception, during which, owing to his intemperance, he always went fast asleep. Yet, there were two reasons which kept up the belief of his being a prince: the first was that he did not seem afraid of the news expected from Venice, where the proveditore had written immediately after the discovery; the second was that he solicited from the bishop the punishment of the priest who had betrayed his secret by violating the seal of confession. The poor priest had already been sent to prison, and the proveditore had not the courage to defend him. The new prince had been invited to dinner by all the naval officers, but M. D —— R —— had not made up his mind to imitate them so far, because Madame F —— had clearly warned him that she would dine at her own house on the day he was invited. I had likewise respectfully intimated that, on the same occasion, I would take the liberty of dining somewhere else.

I met the prince one day as I was coming out of the old fortress leading to the esplanade. He stopped, and reproached me for not having called upon him. I laughed, and advised him to think of his safety before the arrival of the news which would expose all the imposture, in which case the proveditore was certain to treat him very severely. I offered to help him in his flight from Corfu, and to get a Neapolitan captain, whose ship was ready to sail, to conceal him on board; but the fool, instead of accepting my offer, loaded me with insults.

He was courting Madame Sagredo, who treated him very well, feeling proud that a French prince should have given her the preference over all the other ladies. One day that she was dining in great ceremony at M. D —— R — — ‘s house, she asked me why I had advised the prince to run away.

“I have it from his own lips,” she added, “and he cannot make out your obstinacy in believing him an impostor.”

“I have given him that advice, madam, because my heart is good, and my judgment sane.”

“Then we are all of us as many fools, the proveditore included?”

“That deduction would not be right, madam. An opinion contrary to that of another does not necessarily make a fool of the person who entertains it. It might possibly turn out, in ten or twelve days, that I have been entirely mistaken myself, but I should not consider myself a fool in consequence. In the mean time, a lady of your intelligence must have discovered whether that man is a peasant or a prince by his education and manners. For instance, does he dance well?”

“He does not know one step, but he is the first to laugh about it; he says he never would learn dancing.”

“Does he behave well at table?”

“Well, he doesn’t stand on ceremony. He does not want his plate to be changed, he helps himself with his spoon out of the dishes; he does not know how to check an eructation or a yawn, and if he feels tired he leaves the table. It is evident that he has been very badly brought up.”

“And yet he is very pleasant, I suppose. Is he clean and neat?”

“No, but then he is not yet well provided with linen.”

“I am told that he is very sober.”

“You are joking. He leaves the table intoxicated twice a day, but he ought to be pitied, for he cannot drink wine and keep his head clear. Then he swears like a trooper, and we all laugh, but he never takes offence.”

"Is he witty?"

"He has a wonderful memory, for he tells us new stories every day."

"Does he speak of his family?"

"Very often of his mother, whom he loved tenderly. She was a Du Plessis."

"If his mother is still alive she must be a hundred and fifty years old."

"What nonsense!"

"Not at all; she was married in the days of Marie de Medicis."

"But the certificate of baptism names the prince's mother, and his seal— "

"Does he know what armorial bearings he has on that seal?"

"Do you doubt it?"

"Very strongly, or rather I am certain that he knows nothing about it."

We left the table, and the prince was announced. He came in, and Madame Sagredo lost no time in saying to him, "Prince, here is M. Casanova; he pretends that you do not know your own armorial bearings." Hearing these words, he came up to me, sneering, called me a coward, and gave me a smack on the face which almost stunned me. I left the room very slowly, not forgetting my hat and my cane, and went downstairs, while M. D —— R —— was loudly ordering the servants to throw the madman out of the window.

I left the palace and went to the esplanade in order to wait for him. The moment I saw him, I ran to meet him, and I beat him so violently with my cane that one blow alone ought to have killed him. He drew back, and found himself brought to a stand between two walls, where, to avoid being beaten to death, his only resource was to draw his sword, but the cowardly scoundrel did not even think of his weapon, and I left him, on the ground, covered with blood. The crowd formed a line for me to pass, and I went to the coffee-house, where I drank a glass of lemonade, without sugar to precipitate the bitter saliva which rage had brought up from my stomach. In a few minutes, I found myself surrounded by all the young officers of the garrison, who joined in the general opinion that I ought to have killed him, and they at last annoyed me, for it was not my fault if I had not done so, and I would certainly have taken his life if he had drawn his sword.

I had been in the coffee-house for half an hour when the general's adjutant came to tell me that his excellency ordered me to put myself under arrest on board the bastarda, a galley on which the prisoners had their legs in irons like galley slaves. The dose was rather too strong to be swallowed, and I did not feel disposed to submit to it. "Very good, adjutant," I replied, "it shall be done." He went away, and I left the coffee-house a moment after him, but when I reached the end of the street, instead of going towards the esplanade, I proceeded quickly towards the sea. I walked along the beach for a quarter of an hour, and finding a boat empty, but with a pair of oars, I got in her, and unfastening her, I rowed as hard as I could towards a large caicco, sailing against the wind with six oars. As soon as I had come up to her, I went on board and asked the carabouchiri to sail before the wind and to take me to a large wherry which could be seen at some distance, going towards Vido Rock. I abandoned the row-boat, and, after paying the master of the caicco generously, I got into the wherry, made a bargain with the skipper who unfurled three sails, and in less than two hours we were fifteen miles away from Corfu. The wind having died away, I made the men row against the current, but towards midnight they told me that they could not row any longer, they were worn out with fatigue. They advised me to sleep until day-break, but I refused to do so, and for a trifle I got them to put me on shore, without asking where I was, in order not to raise their suspicions. It was enough for me to know that I was at a distance of twenty miles from Corfu, and in a place where nobody could imagine me to be. The moon was shining, and I saw a church with a house adjoining, a long barn opened on both sides, a plain of about one hundred yards confined by hills, and nothing more. I found some straw in the barn, and laying myself down, I slept until day-break in spite of the cold. It was the 1st of December, and although the climate is very mild in Corfu I felt benumbed when I awoke, as I had no cloak over my thin uniform.

The bells begin to toll, and I proceed towards the church. The long-bearded papa, surprised at my sudden apparition, enquires whether I am Romeo (a Greek); I tell him that I am Fragico (Italian), but he turns his back upon me and goes into his house, the door of which he shuts without condescending to listen to me.

I then turned towards the sea, and saw a boat leaving a tartan lying at anchor within one hundred yards of the island; the boat had four oars and landed her passengers. I come up to them and meet a good-looking Greek, a woman and a young boy ten or twelve years old. Addressing myself to the Greek, I ask him whether he has had a pleasant passage, and where he comes from. He answers in Italian that he has sailed from Cephalonia with his wife and his son, and that he is bound for Venice; he had landed to hear mass at the Church of Our Lady of Casopo, in order to ascertain whether his father-in-law was still alive, and whether he would pay the amount he had promised him for the dowry of his wife.

“But how can you find it out?”

“The Papa Deldimopulo will tell me; he will communicate faithfully the oracle of the Holy Virgin.” I say nothing and follow him into the church; he speaks to the priest, and gives him some money. The papa says the mass, enters the sanctum sanctorum, comes out again in a quarter of an hour, ascends the steps of the altar, turns towards his audience, and, after meditating for a minute and stroking his long beard, he delivers his oracle in a dozen words. The Greek of Cephalonia, who certainly could not boast of being as wise as Ulysses, appears very well pleased, and gives more money to the impostor. We leave the church, and I ask him whether he feels satisfied with the oracle.

“Oh! quite satisfied. I know now that my father-in-law is alive, and that he will pay me the dowry, if I consent to leave my child with him. I am aware that it is his fancy and I will give him the boy.”

“Does the papa know you?”

“No; he is not even acquainted with my name.”

“Have you any fine goods on board your tartan?”

“Yes; come and breakfast with me; you can see all I have.”

“Very willingly.”

Delighted at hearing that oracles were not yet defunct, and satisfied that they will endure as long as there are in this world simple-minded men and deceitful, cunning priests, I follow the good man, who took me to his tartan and treated me to an excellent breakfast. His cargo consisted of cotton, linen, currants, oil, and excellent wines. He had also a stock of night-caps, stockings, cloaks in the Eastern fashion, umbrellas, and sea biscuits, of which I was very fond; in those days I had thirty teeth, and it would have been difficult to find a finer set. Alas! I have but two left now, the other twenty-eight are gone with other tools quite as precious; but ‘dum vita super est, bene est.’ I bought a small stock of everything he had except cotton, for which I had no use, and without discussing his price I paid him the thirty-five or forty sequins he demanded, and seeing my generosity he made me a present of six beautiful botargoes.

I happened during our conversation to praise the wine of Xante, which he called generoydes, and he told me that if I would accompany him to Venice he would give me a bottle of that wine every day including the quarantine. Always superstitious, I was on the point of accepting, and that for the most foolish reason-namely, that there would be no premeditation in that strange resolution, and it might be the impulse of fate. Such was my nature in those days; alas; it is very different now. They say that it is because wisdom comes with old age, but I cannot reconcile myself to cherish the effect of a most unpleasant cause.

Just as I was going to accept his offer he proposes to sell me a very fine gun for ten sequins, saying that in Corfu anyone would be glad of it for twelve. The word Corfu upsets all my ideas on the spot! I fancy I hear the voice of my genius telling me to go back to that city. I purchase the gun for the ten sequins, and my honest Cephalonian, admiring my fair dealing, gives me, over and above our bargain, a beautiful Turkish pouch well filled with powder and shot. Carrying my gun, with a good warm cloak over my uniform and with a large bag containing all my purchases, I take leave of the worthy Greek, and am landed on the shore, determined on obtaining a lodging from the cheating papa, by fair means or foul. The good wine of my friend the Cephalonian had excited me just enough to make me carry my determination into immediate execution. I had in my pockets four or five hundred copper gazzette, which were very heavy, but which I had procured from the Greek, foreseeing that I might want them during my stay on the island.

I store my bag away in the barn and I proceed, gun in hand, towards the house of the priest; the church was closed.

I must give my readers some idea of the state I was in at that moment. I was quietly hopeless. The three or four hundred sequins I had with me did not prevent me from thinking that I was not in very great security on the island; I could not remain long, I would soon be found out, and, being guilty of desertion, I should be treated accordingly. I did not know what to do, and that is always an unpleasant predicament. It would be absurd for me to return to Corfu of my own accord; my flight would then be useless, and I should be thought a fool, for my return would be a proof of cowardice or stupidity; yet I did not feel the courage to desert altogether. The chief cause of my decision was not that I had a thousand sequins in the hands of the faro banker, or my well-stocked wardrobe, or the fear of not getting a living somewhere else, but the unpleasant recollection that I should leave behind me a woman whom I loved to adoration, and from whom I had not yet obtained any favour, not even that of kissing her hand. In such distress of mind I could not do anything else but abandon myself to chance, whatever the result might be, and the most essential thing for the present was to secure a lodging and my daily food.

I knock at the door of the priest's dwelling. He looks out of a window and shuts it without listening to me, I knock again, I swear, I call out loudly, all in vain, Giving way to my rage, I take aim at a poor sheep grazing with several others at a short distance, and kill it. The herdsman begins to scream, the papa shows himself at the window, calling out, "Thieves! Murder!" and orders the alarm-bell to be rung. Three bells are immediately set in motion, I foresee a general gathering: what is going to happen? I do not know, but happen what will, I load my gun and await coming events.

In less than eight or ten minutes, I see a crowd of peasants coming down the hills, armed with guns, pitchforks, or cudgels: I withdraw inside of the barn, but without the slightest fear, for I cannot suppose that, seeing me alone, these men will murder me without listening to me.

The first ten or twelve peasants come forward, gun in hand and ready to fire: I stop them by throwing down my gazzette, which they lose no time in picking up from the ground, and I keep on throwing money down as the men come forward, until I had no more left. The clowns were looking at each other in great astonishment, not knowing what to make out of a well-dressed young man, looking very peaceful, and throwing his money to them with such generosity. I could not speak to them until the deafening noise of the bells should cease. I quietly sit down on my large bag, and keep still, but as soon as I can be heard I begin to address the men. The priest, however, assisted by his beadle and by the herdsman, interrupts me, and all the more easily that I was speaking Italian. My three enemies, who talked all at once, were trying to excite the crowd against me.

One of the peasants, an elderly and reasonable-looking man, comes up to me and asks me in Italian why I have killed the sheep.

“To eat it, my good fellow, but not before I have paid for it.”

“But his holiness, the papa, might choose to charge one sequin for it.”

“Here is one sequin.”

The priest takes the money and goes away: war is over. The peasant tells me that he has served in the campaign of 1716, and that he was at the defence of Corfu. I compliment him, and ask him to find me a lodging and a man able to prepare my meals. He answers that he will procure me a whole house, that he will be my cook himself, but I must go up the hill. No matter! He calls two stout fellows, one takes my bag, the other shoulders my sheep, and forward! As we are walking along, I tell him, —

“My good man, I would like to have in my service twenty-four fellows like these under military discipline. I would give each man twenty gazzette a day, and you would have forty as my lieutenant.”

“I will,” says the old soldier, “raise for you this very day a body-guard of which you will be proud.”

We reach a very convenient house, containing on the ground floor three rooms and a stable, which I immediately turned into a guard-room.

My lieutenant went to get what I wanted, and particularly a needlewoman to make me some shirts. In the course of the day I had furniture, bedding, kitchen utensils, a good dinner, twenty-four well-equipped soldiers, a superannuated sempstress and several young girls to make my shirts. After supper, I found my position highly pleasant, being surrounded with some thirty persons who looked upon me as their sovereign, although they could not make out what had brought me to their island. The only thing which struck me as disagreeable was that the young girls could not speak Italian, and I did not know Greek enough to enable me to make love to them.

The next morning my lieutenant had the guard relieved, and I could not help bursting into a merry laugh. They were like a flock of sheep: all fine men, well-made and strong; but without uniform and without discipline the finest band is but a herd. However, they quickly learned how to present arms and to obey the orders of their officer. I caused three sentinels to be placed, one before the guardroom, one at my door, and the third where he could have a good view of the sea. This sentinel was to give me warning of the approach of any armed boat or vessel. For the first two or three days I considered all this as mere amusement, but, thinking that I might really want the men to repel force by force, I had some idea of making my army take an oath of allegiance. I did not do so, however, although my lieutenant assured me that I had only to express my wishes, for my generosity had captivated the love of all the islanders.

My sempstress, who had procured some young needlewomen to sew my shirts, had expected that I would fall in love with one and not with all, but my amorous zeal overstepped her hopes, and all the pretty ones had their turn; they were all well satisfied with me, and the sempstress was rewarded for her good offices. I was leading a delightful life, for my table was supplied with excellent dishes, juicy mutton, and snipe so delicious that I have never tasted their like except in St. Petersburg. I drank scopolo wine or the best muscatel of the Archipelago. My lieutenant was my only table companion. I never took a walk without him and two of my body-guard, in order to defend myself against the attacks of a few young men who had a spite against me because they fancied, not without some reason, that my needlewomen, their mistresses, had left them on my account. I often thought while I was rambling about the island, that without money I should have been unhappy, and that I was indebted to my gold for all the happiness I was enjoying; but it was right to suppose at the same time that, if I had not felt my purse pretty heavy, I would not have been likely to leave Corfu.

I had thus been playing the petty king with success for a week or ten days, when, towards ten o’clock at night I heard the sentinel’s challenge. My lieutenant went out, and returned announcing that an honest-looking man, who spoke Italian, wished to see me on important business. I had him brought in, and, in the presence of my lieutenant, he told me in Italian:

“Next Sunday, the Papa Deldimopulo will fulminate against you the ‘cataramonachia’. If you do not prevent him, a slow fever will send you into the next world in six weeks.”

“I have never heard of such a drug.”

“It is not a drug. It is a curse pronounced by a priest with the Host in his hands, and it is sure to be fulfilled.”

“What reason can that priest have to murder me?”

“You disturb the peace and discipline of his parish. You have seduced several young girls, and now their lovers refuse to marry them.”

I made him drink, and thanking him heartily, wished him good night. His warning struck me as deserving my attention, for, if I had no fear of the ‘cataramonachia’, in which I had not the slightest faith, I feared certain poisons which might be by far more efficient. I passed a very quiet night, but at day-break I got up, and without saying anything to my lieutenant, I went straight to the church where I found the priest, and addressed him in the following words, uttered in a tone likely to enforce conviction:

“On the first symptom of fever, I will shoot you like a dog. Throw over me a curse which will kill me instantly, or make your will. Farewell!”

Having thus warned him, I returned to my royal palace. Early on the following Monday, the papa called on me. I had a slight headache; he enquired after my health, and when I told him that my head felt rather heavy, he made me laugh by the air of anxiety with which he assured me that it could be caused by nothing else than the heavy atmosphere of the island of Casopo.

Three days after his visit, the advanced sentinel gave the war-cry. The lieutenant went out to reconnoitre, and after a short absence he gave me notice that the long boat of an armed vessel had just landed an officer. Danger was at hand.

I go out myself, I call my men to arms, and, advancing a few steps, I see an officer, accompanied by a guide, who was walking towards my dwelling. As he was alone, I had nothing to fear. I return to my room, giving orders to my lieutenant to receive him with all military honours and to introduce him. Then, girding my sword, I wait for my visitor.

In a few minutes, Adjutant Minolto, the same who had brought me the order to put myself under arrest, makes his appearance.

"You are alone," I say to him, "and therefore you come as a friend. Let us embrace."

"I must come as a friend, for, as an enemy, I should not have enough men. But what I see seems a dream."

"Take a seat, and dine with me. I will treat you splendidly."

"Most willingly, and after dinner we will leave the island together."

"You may go alone, if you like; but I will not leave this place until I have the certainty, not only that I shall not be sent to the 'bastarda', but also that I shall have every satisfaction from the knave whom the general ought to send to the galleys."

"Be reasonable, and come with me of your own accord. My orders are to take you by force, but as I have not enough men to do so, I shall make my report, and the general will, of course, send a force sufficient to arrest you."

"Never; I will not be taken alive."

"You must be mad; believe me, you are in the wrong. You have disobeyed the order I brought you to go to the 'bastarda; in that you have acted wrongly, and in that alone, for in every other respect you were perfectly right, the general himself says so."

"Then I ought to have put myself under arrest?"

"Certainly; obedience is necessary in our profession."

"Would you have obeyed, if you had been in my place?"

"I cannot and will not tell you what I would have done, but I know that if I had disobeyed orders I should have been guilty of a crime:"

"But if I surrendered now I should be treated like a criminal, and much more severely than if I had obeyed that unjust order."

"I think not. Come with me, and you will know everything."

"What! Go without knowing what fate may be in store for me? Do not expect it. Let us have dinner. If I am guilty of such a dreadful crime that violence must be used against me, I will surrender only to irresistible force. I cannot be worse off, but there may be blood spilled."

"You are mistaken, such conduct would only make you more guilty. But I say like you, let us have dinner. A good meal will very likely render you more disposed to listen to reason."

Our dinner was nearly over, when we heard some noise outside. The lieutenant came in, and informed me that the peasants were gathering in the neighbourhood of my house to defend me, because a rumour had spread through the island that the felucca had been sent with orders to arrest me and take me to Corfu. I told him to undeceive the good fellows, and to send them away, but to give them first a barrel of wine.

The peasants went away satisfied, but, to shew their devotion to me, they all fired their guns.

"It is all very amusing," said the adjutant, "but it will turn out very serious if you let me go away alone, for my duty compels me to give an exact account of all I have witnessed."

"I will follow you, if you will give me your word of honour to land me free in Corfu."

"I have orders to deliver your person to M. Foscari, on board the bastarda."

"Well, you shall not execute your orders this time."

"If you do not obey the commands of the general, his honour will compel him to use violence against you, and of course he can do it. But tell me, what would you do if the general should leave you in this island for the sake of the joke? There is no fear of that, however, and, after the report which I must give, the general will certainly make up his mind to stop the affair without shedding blood."

"Without a fight it will be difficult to arrest me, for with five hundred peasants in such a place as this I would not be afraid of three thousand men."

"One man will prove enough; you will be treated as a leader of rebels. All these peasants may be devoted to you, but they cannot protect you against one man who will shoot you for the sake of earning a few pieces of gold. I can tell you more than that: amongst all those men who surround you there is not one who would not murder you for twenty sequins. Believe me, go with me. Come to enjoy the triumph which is awaiting you in Corfu. You will be courted and applauded. You will narrate yourself all your mad frolics, people will laugh, and at the same time will admire you for having listened to reason the moment I came here. Everybody feels esteem for you, and M. D —— R —— thinks a great deal of you. He praises very highly the command you have shewn over your passion in refraining from thrusting your sword through that insolent fool, in order not to forget the respect you owed to his house. The general himself must esteem you, for he cannot forget what you told him of that knave."

"What has become of him?"

"Four days ago Major Sardina's frigate arrived with dispatches, in which the general must have found all the proof of the imposture, for he has caused the false duke or prince to disappear very suddenly. Nobody knows where he has been sent to, and nobody ventures to mention the fellow before the general, for he made the most egregious blunder respecting him."

"But was the man received in society after the thrashing I gave him?"

"God forbid! Do you not recollect that he wore a sword? From that moment no one would receive him. His arm was broken and his jaw shattered to pieces.

"But in spite of the state he was in, in spite of what he must have suffered, his excellency had him removed a week after you had treated him so severely. But your flight is what everyone has been wondering over. It was thought for three days that M. D —— R —— had concealed you in his house, and he was openly blamed for doing so. He had to declare loudly at the general's table that he was in the most complete ignorance of your whereabouts. His excellency even expressed his anxiety about your escape, and it was only yesterday that your place of refuge was made known by a letter addressed by the priest of this island to the Proto-Papa Bulgari, in which he complained that an Italian officer had invaded the island of Casopo a week before, and had committed unheard-of violence. He accused you of seducing all the girls, and of threatening to shoot him if he dared to pronounce 'cataramonachia' against you. This letter, which was read publicly at the evening reception, made the general laugh, but he ordered me to arrest you all the same."

"Madame Sagredo is the cause of it all."

"True, but she is well punished for it. You ought to call upon her with me to-morrow."

"To-morrow? Are you then certain that I shall not be placed under arrest?"

"Yes, for I know that the general is a man of honour."

"I am of the same opinion. Well, let us go on board your felucca. We will embark together after midnight."

"Why not now?"

"Because I will not run the risk of spending the night on board M. Foscari's bastarda. I want to reach Corfu by daylight, so as to make your victory more brilliant."

"But what shall we do for the next eight hours?"

"We will pay a visit to some beauties of a species unknown in Corfu, and have a good supper."

I ordered my lieutenant to send plenty to eat and to drink to the men on board the felucca, to prepare a splendid supper, and to spare nothing, as I should leave the island at midnight. I made him a present of all my provisions, except such as I wanted to take with me; these I sent on board. My janissaries, to whom I gave a week's pay, insisted upon escorting me, fully equipped, as far as the boat, which made the adjutant laugh all the way.

We reached Corfu by eight o'clock in the morning, and we went alongside the 'bastarda. The adjutant consigned me to M. Foscari, assuring me that he would immediately give notice of my arrival to M. D —— R —— , send my luggage to his house, and report the success of his expedition to the general.

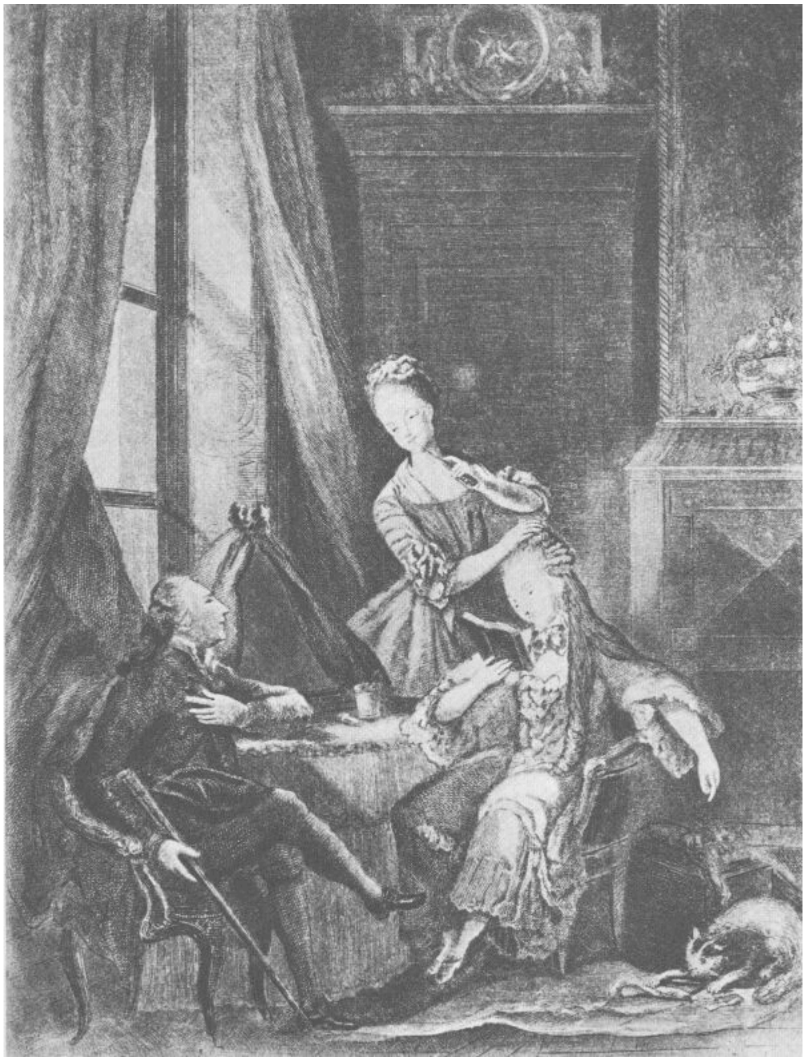
M. Foscari, the commander of the bastarda, treated me very badly. If he had been blessed with any delicacy of feeling, he would not have been in such a hurry to have me put in irons. He might have talked to me, and have thus delayed for a quarter of an hour that operation which greatly vexed me. But, without uttering a single word, he sent me to the 'capo di scalo' who made me sit down, and told me to put my foot forward to receive the irons, which, however, do not dishonour anyone in that country, not even the galley slaves, for they are better treated than soldiers.

My right leg was already in irons, and the left one was in the hands of the man for the completion of that unpleasant ceremony, when the adjutant of his excellency came to tell the executioner to set me at liberty and to return me my sword. I wanted to present my compliments to the noble M. Foscari, but the adjutant, rather ashamed, assured me that his excellency did not expect me to do so. The first thing I did was to pay my respects to the general, without saying one word to him, but he told me with a serious countenance to be more prudent for the future, and to learn that a soldier's first duty was to obey, and above all to be modest and discreet. I understood perfectly the meaning of the two last words, and acted accordingly.

When I made my appearance at M. D —— R — — 's, I could see pleasure on everybody's face. Those moments have always been so dear to me that I have never forgotten them, they have afforded me consolation in the time of adversity. If you would relish pleasure you must endure pain, and delights are in proportion to the privations we have suffered. M. D —— R —— was so glad to see me that he came up to me and warmly embraced me. He presented me with a beautiful ring which he took from his own finger, and told me that I had acted quite rightly in not letting anyone, and particularly himself, know where I had taken refuge.

"You can't think," he added, frankly, "how interested Madame F —— was in your fate. She would be really delighted if you called on her immediately."

How delightful to receive such advice from his own lips! But the word "immediately" annoyed me, because, having passed the night on board the felucca, I was afraid that the disorder of my toilet might injure me in her eyes. Yet I could neither refuse M. D —— R —— , nor tell him the reason of my refusal, and I bethought myself that I could make a merit of it in the eyes of Madame F —— I therefore went at once to her house; the goddess was not yet visible, but her attendant told me to come in, assuring me that her mistress's bell would soon be heard, and that she would be very sorry if I did not wait to see her. I spent half an hour with that young and indiscreet person, who was a very charming girl, and learned from her many things which caused me great pleasure, and particularly all that had been said respecting my escape. I found that throughout the affair my conduct had met with general approbation.



As soon as Madame F —— had seen her maid, she desired me to be shewn in. The curtains were drawn aside, and I thought I saw Aurora surrounded with the roses and the pearls of morning. I told her that, if it had not been for the order I received from M. D —— R —— I would not have presumed to present myself before her in my travelling costume; and in the most friendly tone she answered that M. D —— R —— , knowing all the interest she felt in me, had been quite right to tell me to come, and she assured me that M. D —— R —— had the greatest esteem for me.

“I do not know, madam, how I have deserved such great happiness, for all I dared aim at was toleration.”

“We all admired the control you kept over your feelings when you refrained from killing that insolent madman on the spot; he would have been thrown out of the window if he had not beat a hurried retreat.”

“I should certainly have killed him, madam, if you had not been present.”

“A very pretty compliment, but I can hardly believe that you thought of me in such a moment.”

I did not answer, but cast my eyes down, and gave a deep sigh. She observed my new ring, and in order to change the subject of conversation she praised M. D —— R —— very highly, as soon as I had told her how he had offered it to me. She desired me to give her an account of my life on the island, and I did so, but allowed my pretty needlewomen to remain under a veil, for I had already learnt that in this world the truth must often remain untold.

All my adventures amused her much, and she greatly admired my conduct.

“Would you have the courage,” she said, “to repeat all you have just told me, and exactly in the same terms, before the proveditore-generale?”

“Most certainly, madam, provided he asked me himself.”

“Well, then, prepare to redeem your promise. I want our excellent general to love you and to become your warmest protector, so as to shield you against every injustice and to promote your advancement. Leave it all to me.”

Her reception fairly overwhelmed me with happiness, and on leaving her house I went to Major Maroli to find out the state of my finances. I was glad to hear that after my escape he had no longer considered me a partner in the faro bank. I took four hundred sequins from the cashier, reserving the right to become again a partner, should circumstances prove at any time favourable.

In the evening I made a careful toilet, and called for the Adjutant Minolto in order to pay with him a visit to Madame Sagredo, the general’s favourite. With the exception of Madame F —— she was the greatest beauty of Corfu. My visit surprised her, because, as she had been the cause of all that had happened, she was very far from expecting it. She imagined that I had a spite against her. I undeceived her, speaking to her very candidly, and she treated me most kindly, inviting me to come now and then to spend the evening at her house.

But I neither accepted nor refused her amiable invitation, knowing that Madame F —— disliked her; and how could I be a frequent guest at her house with such a knowledge! Besides, Madame Sagredo was very fond of gambling, and, to please her, it was necessary either to lose or make her win, but to accept such conditions one must be in love with the lady or wish to make her conquest, and I had not the slightest idea of either. The Adjutant Minolto never played, but he had captivated the lady's good graces by his services in the character of Mercury.

When I returned to the palace I found Madame F—— alone, M. D—— R—— being engaged with his correspondence. She asked me to sit near her, and to tell her all my adventures in Constantinople. I did so, and I had no occasion to repent it. My meeting with Yusuf's wife pleased her extremely, but the bathing scene by moonlight made her blush with excitement. I veiled as much as I could the too brilliant colours of my picture, but, if she did not find me clear, she would oblige me to be more explicit, and if I made myself better understood by giving to my recital a touch of voluptuousness which I borrowed from her looks more than from my recollection, she would scold me and tell me that I might have disguised a little more. I felt that the way she was talking would give her a liking for me, and I was satisfied that the man who can give birth to amorous desires is easily called upon to gratify them. It was the reward I was ardently longing for, and I dared to hope it would be mine, although I could see it only looming in the distance.

It happened that, on that day, M. D—— R—— had invited a large company to supper. I had, as a matter of course, to engross all conversation, and to give the fullest particulars of all that had taken place from the moment I received the order to place myself under arrest up to the time of my release from the 'bastarda'. M. Foscari was seated next to me, and the last part of my narrative was not, I suppose, particularly agreeable to him.

The account I gave of my adventures pleased everybody, and it was decided that the proveditore-generale must have the pleasure of hearing my tale from my own lips. I mentioned that hay was very plentiful in Casopo, and as that article was very scarce in Corfu, M. D—— R—— told me that I ought to seize the opportunity of making myself agreeable to the general by informing him of that circumstance without delay. I followed his advice the very next day, and was very well received, for his excellency immediately ordered a squad of men to go to the island and bring large quantities of hay to Corfu.

A few days later the Adjutant Minolto came to me in the coffee-house, and told me that the general wished to see me: this time I promptly obeyed his commands.

CHAPTER XV

Progress of My Amour — My Journey to Otranto — I Enter the

Service of Madame F. — A Fortunate Excoriation

The room I entered was full of people. His excellency, seeing me, smiled and drew upon me the attention of all his guests by saying aloud, “Here comes the young man who is a good judge of princes.”

“My lord, I have become a judge of nobility by frequenting the society of men like you.”

“The ladies are curious to know all you have done from the time of your escape from Corfu up to your return.”

“Then you sentence me, monsignor, to make a public confession?”

“Exactly; but, as it is to be a confession, be careful not to omit the most insignificant circumstance, and suppose that I am not in the room.”

“On the contrary, I wish to receive absolution only from your excellency. But my history will be a long one.”

“If such is the case, your confessor gives you permission to be seated.”

I gave all the particulars of my adventures, with the exception of my dalliance with the nymphs of the island.

“Your story is a very instructive one,” observed the general.

“Yes, my lord, for the adventures shew that a young man is never so near his utter ruin than when, excited by some great passion, he finds himself able to minister to it, thanks to the gold in his purse.”

I was preparing to take my leave, when the majordomo came to inform me that his excellency desired me to remain to supper. I had therefore the honour of a seat at his table, but not the pleasure of eating, for I was obliged to answer the questions addressed to me from all quarters, and I could not contrive to swallow a single mouthful. I was seated next to the Proto-Papa

Bulgari, and I entreated his pardon for having ridiculed Deldimopulo's oracle. "It is nothing else but regular cheating," he said, "but it is very difficult to put a stop to it; it is an old custom."

A short time afterwards, Madame F —— whispered a few words to the general, who turned to me and said that he would be glad to hear me relate what had occurred to me in Constantinople with the wife of the Turk Yusuf, and at another friend's house, where I had seen bathing by moonlight. I was rather surprised at such an invitation, and told him that such frolics were not worth listening to, and the general not pressing me no more was said about it. But I was astonished at Madame F — — 's indiscretion; she had no business to make my confidences public. I wanted her to be jealous of her own dignity, which I loved even more than her person.

Two or three days later, she said to me,

"Why did you refuse to tell your adventures in Constantinople before the general?"

"Because I do not wish everybody to know that you allow me to tell you such things. What I may dare, madam, to say to you when we are alone, I would certainly not say to you in public."

"And why not? It seems to me, on the contrary, that if you are silent in public out of respect for me, you ought to be all the more silent when we are alone."

"I wanted to amuse you, and have exposed myself to the danger of displeasing you, but I can assure you, madam, that I will not run such a risk again."

"I have no wish to pry into your intentions, but it strikes me that if your wish was to please me, you ought not to have run the risk of obtaining the opposite result. We take supper with the general this evening, and M. D —— R —— has been asked to bring you. I feel certain that the general will ask you again for your adventures in Constantinople, and this time you cannot refuse him."

M. D —— R —— came in and we went to the general's. I thought as we were driving along that, although Madame F —— seemed to have intended to humiliate me, I ought to accept it all as a favour of fortune, because, by compelling me to explain my refusal to the general; Madame F —— had, at the same time, compelled me to a declaration of my feelings, which was not without importance.

The 'proveditore-generale' gave me a friendly welcome, and kindly handed me a letter which had come with the official dispatches from Constantinople. I bowed my thanks, and put the letter in my pocket: but he told me that he was himself a great lover of news, and that I could read my letter. I opened it; it was from Yusuf, who announced the death of Count de Bonneval. Hearing the name of the worthy Yusuf, the general asked me to tell him my adventure with his wife. I could not now refuse, and I began a story which amused and interested the general and his friends for an hour or so, but which was from beginning to end the work of my imagination.

Thus I continued to respect the privacy of Yusuf, to avoid implicating the good fame of Madame F —— , and to shew myself in a light which was tolerably advantageous to me. My story, which was full of sentiment, did me a great deal of honour, and I felt very happy when I saw from the expression of Madame F — — 's face that she was pleased with me, although somewhat surprised.

When we found ourselves again in her house she told me, in the presence of M. D —— R —— , that the story I had related to the general was certainly very pretty, although purely imaginary, that she was not angry with me, because I had amused her, but that she could not help remarking my obstinacy in refusing compliance with her wishes. Then, turning to M. D —— R —— , she said,

"M. Casanova pretends that if he had given an account of his meeting with Yusuf's wife without changing anything everybody would think that I allowed him to entertain me with indecent stories. I want you to give your opinion about it. Will you," she added, speaking to me, "be so good as to relate immediately the adventure in the same words which you have used when you told me of it?"

"Yes, madam, if you wish me to do so."

Stung to the quick by an indiscretion which, as I did not yet know women thoroughly, seemed to me without example, I cast all fears of displeasing to the winds, related the adventure with all the warmth of an impassioned poet, and without disguising or attenuating in the least the desires which the charms of the Greek beauty had inspired me with.

“Do you think,” said M. D —— R —— to Madame F —— , “that he ought to have related that adventure before all our friends as he has just related it to us?”

“If it be wrong for him to tell it in public, it is also wrong to tell it to me in private.”

“You are the only judge of that: yes, if he has displeased you; no, if he has amused you. As for my own opinion, here it is: He has just now amused me very much, but he would have greatly displeased me if he had related the same adventure in public.”

“Then,” exclaimed Madame F —— , “I must request you never to tell me in private anything that you cannot repeat in public.”

“I promise, madam, to act always according to your wishes.”

“It being understood,” added M. D —— R —— , smiling, “that madam reserves all rights of repealing that order whenever she may think fit.”

I was vexed, but I contrived not to show it. A few minutes more, and we took leave of Madame F —— .

I was beginning to understand that charming woman, and to dread the ordeal to which she would subject me. But love was stronger than fear, and, fortified with hope, I had the courage to endure the thorns, so as to gather the rose at the end of my sufferings. I was particularly pleased to find that M. D —— R —— was not jealous of me, even when she seemed to dare him to it. This was a point of the greatest importance.

A few days afterwards, as I was entertaining her on various subjects, she remarked how unfortunate it had been for me to enter the lazzaretto at Ancona without any money.

“In spite of my distress,” I said, “I fell in love with a young and beautiful Greek slave, who very nearly contrived to make me break through all the sanitary laws.”

“How so?”

“You are alone, madam, and I have not forgotten your orders.”

“Is it a very improper story?”

“No: yet I would not relate it to you in public.”

“Well,” she said, laughing, “I repeal my order, as M. D —— R —— said I would. Tell me all about it.”

I told my story, and, seeing that she was pensive, I exaggerated the misery I had felt at not being able to complete my conquest.

“What do you mean by your misery? I think that the poor girl was more to be pitied than you. You have never seen her since?”

“I beg your pardon, madam; I met her again, but I dare not tell you when or how.”

“Now you must go on; it is all nonsense for you to stop. Tell me all; I expect you have been guilty of some black deed.”

“Very far from it, madam, for it was a very sweet, although incomplete, enjoyment.”

“Go on! But do not call things exactly by their names. It is not necessary to go into details.”

Emboldened by the renewal of her order, I told her, without looking her in the face, of my meeting with the Greek slave in the presence of Bellino, and of the act which was cut short by the appearance of her master. When I had finished my story, Madame F —— remained silent, and I turned the conversation into a different channel, for though I felt myself on an excellent footing with her, I knew likewise that I had to proceed with great prudence. She was too young to have lowered herself before, and she would certainly look upon a connection with me as a lowering of her dignity.

Fortune which had always smiled upon me in the most hopeless cases, did not intend to ill-treat me on this occasion, and procured me, on that very same day, a favour of a very peculiar nature. My charming ladylove having pricked her finger rather severely, screamed loudly, and stretched her hand towards me, entreating me to suck the blood flowing from the wound. You may judge, dear reader, whether I was long in seizing that beautiful hand, and if you are, or if you have ever been in love, you will easily guess the manner in which I performed my delightful work. What is a kiss? Is it not an ardent desire to inhale a portion of the being we love? Was not the blood

I was sucking from that charming wound a portion of the woman I worshipped? When I had completed my work, she thanked me affectionately, and told me to spit out the blood I had sucked.

“It is here,” I said, placing my hand on my heart, “and God alone knows what happiness it has given me.”

“You have drunk my blood with happiness! Are you then a cannibal?”

“I believe not, madam; but it would have been sacrilege in my eyes if I had suffered one single drop of your blood to be lost.”

One evening, there was an unusually large attendance at M. D —— R — —‘s assembly, and we were talking of the carnival which was near at hand. Everybody was regretting the lack of actors, and the impossibility of enjoying the pleasures of the theatre. I immediately offered to procure a good company at my expense, if the boxes were at once subscribed for, and the monopoly of the faro bank granted to me. No time was to be lost, for the carnival was approaching, and I had to go to Otranto to engage a troop. My proposal was accepted with great joy, and the proveditore-generale placed a felucca at my disposal. The boxes were all taken in three days, and a Jew took the pit, two nights a week excepted, which I reserved for my own profit.

The carnival being very long that year, I had every chance of success. It is said generally that the profession of theatrical manager is difficult, but, if that is the case, I have not found it so by experience, and am bound to affirm the contrary.

I left Corfu in the evening, and having a good breeze in my favour, I reached Otranto by day-break the following morning, without the oarsmen having had to row a stroke. The distance from Corfu to Otranto is only about fifteen leagues.

I had no idea of landing, owing to the quarantine which is always enforced for any ship or boat coming to Italy from the east. I only went to the parlour of the lazaretto, where, placed behind a grating, you can speak to any person who calls, and who must stand behind another grating placed opposite, at a distance of six feet.

As soon as I announced that I had come for the purpose of engaging a troupe of actors to perform in Corfu, the managers of the two companies then in Otranto came to the parlour to speak to me. I told them at once that I wished to see all the performers, one company at a time.

The two rival managers gave me then a very comic scene, each manager wanting the other to bring his troupe first. The harbour-master told me that the only way to settle the matter was to say myself which of the two companies I would see first: one was from Naples, the other from Sicily. Not knowing either I gave the preference to the first. Don Fastidio, the manager, was very vexed, while Battipaglia, the director of the second, was delighted because he hoped that, after seeing the Neapolitan troupe, I would engage his own.

An hour afterwards, Fastidio returned with all his performers, and my surprise may be imagined when amongst them I recognized Petronio and his sister Marina, who, the moment she saw me, screamed for joy, jumped over the grating, and threw herself in my arms. A terrible hubbub followed, and high words passed between Fastidio and the harbour-master. Marina being in the service of Fastidio, the captain compelled him to confine her to the lazaretto, where she would have to perform quarantine at his expense. The poor girl cried bitterly, but I could not remedy her imprudence.

I put a stop to the quarrel by telling Fastidio to shew me all his people, one after the other. Petronio belonged to his company, and performed the lovers. He told me that he had a letter for me from Therese. I was also glad to see a Venetian of my acquaintance who played the pantaloon in the pantomime, three tolerably pretty actresses, a pulcinella, and a scaramouch. Altogether, the troupe was a decent one.

I told Fastidio to name the lowest salary he wanted for all his company, assuring him that I would give the preference to his rival, if he should ask me too much.

“Sir,” he answered, “we are twenty, and shall require six rooms with ten beds, one sitting-room for all of us, and thirty Neapolitan ducats a day, all travelling expenses paid. Here is my stock of plays, and we will perform those that you may choose.”

Thinking of poor Marina who would have to remain in the lazaretto before she could reappear on the stage at Otranto, I told Fastidio to get the contract ready, as I wanted to go away immediately.

I had scarcely pronounced these words than war broke out again between the manager-elect and his unfortunate competitor. Battipaglia, in his rage, called Marina a harlot, and said that she had arranged beforehand with Fastidio to violate the rules of the lazaretto in order to compel me to choose their troupe. Petronio, taking his sister's part, joined Fastidio, and the unlucky Battipaglia was dragged outside and treated to a generous dose of blows and fisticuffs, which was not exactly the thing to console him for a lost engagement.

Soon afterwards, Petronio brought me Therese's letter. She was ruining the duke, getting rich accordingly, and waiting for me in Naples.

Everything being ready towards evening, I left Otranto with twenty actors, and six large trunks containing their complete wardrobes. A light breeze which was blowing from the south might have carried us to Corfu in ten hours, but when we had sailed about one hour my cayabouchiri informed me that he could see by the moonlight a ship which might prove to be a corsair, and get hold of us. I was unwilling to risk anything, so I ordered them to lower the sails and return to Otranto. At day-break we sailed again with a good westerly wind, which would also have taken us to Corfu; but after we had gone two or three hours, the captain pointed out to me a brigantine, evidently a pirate, for she was shaping her course so as to get to windward of us. I told him to change the course, and to go by starboard, to see if the brigantine would follow us, but she immediately imitated our manoeuvre. I could not go back to Otranto, and I had no wish to go to Africa, so I ordered the men to shape our course, so as to land on the coast of Calabria, by hard rowing and at the nearest point. The sailors, who were frightened to death, communicated their fears to my comedians, and soon I heard nothing but weeping and sobbing. Every one of them was calling earnestly upon some saint, but not one single prayer to God did I hear. The bewailings of scaramouch, the dull and spiritless despair of Fastidio, offered a picture which would have made me laugh heartily if the danger had been imaginary and not real. Marina alone was cheerful and happy, because she did not realize the danger we were running, and she laughed at the terror of the crew and of her companions.

A strong breeze sprang up towards evening, so I ordered them to clap on all sail and scud before the wind, even if it should get stronger. In order to escape the pirate, I had made up my mind to cross the gulf. We took the wind through the night, and in the morning we were eighty miles from Corfu, which I determined to reach by rowing. We were in the middle of the gulf, and the sailors were worn out with fatigue, but I had no longer any fear. A gale began to blow from the north, and in less than an hour it was blowing so hard that we were compelled to sail close to the wind in a fearful manner. The felucca looked every moment as if it must capsize. Every one looked terrified but kept complete silence, for I had enjoined it on penalty of death. In spite of our dangerous position, I could not help laughing when I heard the sobs of the cowardly scaramouch. The helmsman was a man of great nerve, and the gale being steady I felt we would reach Corfu without mishap. At day-break we sighted the town, and at nine in the morning we landed at Mandrachia. Everybody was surprised to see us arrive that way.

As soon as my company was landed, the young officers naturally came to inspect the actresses, but they did not find them very desirable, with the exception of Marina, who received uncomplainingly the news that I could not renew my acquaintance with her. I felt certain that she would not lack admirers. But my actresses, who had appeared ugly at the landing, produced a very different effect on the stage, and particularly the pantaloon's wife. M. Duodo, commander of a man-of-war, called upon her, and, finding master pantaloon intolerant on the subject of his better-half, gave him a few blows with his cane. Fastidio informed me the next day that the pantaloon and his wife refused to perform any more, but I made them alter their mind by giving them a benefit night.

The pantaloon's wife was much applauded, but she felt insulted because, in the midst of the applause, the pit called out, "Bravo, Duodo!" She presented herself to the general in his own box, in which I was generally, and complained of the manner in which she was treated. The general promised her, in my name, another benefit night for the close of the carnival, and I was of course compelled to ratify his promise. The fact is, that, to satisfy the greedy actors, I abandoned to my comedians, one by one, the seventeen nights I had reserved for myself. The benefit I gave to Marina was at the special request of Madame F—— , who had taken her into great favour since she had had the honour of breakfasting alone with M. D—— R—— in a villa outside of the city.

My generosity cost me four hundred sequins, but the faro bank brought me a thousand and more, although I never held the cards, my management of the theatre taking up all my time. My manner with the actresses gained me great kindness; it was clearly seen that I carried on no intrigue with any of them, although I had every facility for doing so. Madame F —— complimented me, saying that she had not entertained such a good opinion of my discretion. I was too busy through the carnival to think of love, even of the passion which filled my heart. It was only at the beginning of Lent, and after the departure of the comedians, that I could give rein to my feelings.

One morning Madame F —— sent, a messenger who, summoned me to her presence. It was eleven o'clock; I immediately went to her, and enquired what I could do for her service.

"I wanted to see you," she said, "to return the two hundred sequins which you lent me so nobly. Here they are; be good enough to give me back my note of hand."

"Your note of hand, madam, is no longer in my possession. I have deposited it in a sealed envelope with the notary who, according to this receipt of his, can return it only to you."

"Why did you not keep it yourself?"

"Because I was afraid of losing it, or of having it stolen. And in the event of my death I did not want such a document to fall into any other hands but yours."

"A great proof of your extreme delicacy, certainly, but I think you ought to have reserved the right of taking it out of the notary's custody yourself."

"I did not forsee the possibility of calling for it myself."

"Yet it was a very likely thing. Then I can send word to the notary to transmit it to me?"

"Certainly, madam; you alone can claim it."

She sent to the notary, who brought the note himself.

She tore the envelope open, and found only a piece of paper besmeared with ink, quite illegible, except her own name, which had not been touched.

“You have acted,” she said, “most nobly; but you must agree with me that I cannot be certain that this piece of paper is really my note of hand, although I see my name on it.”

“True, madam; and if you are not certain of it, I confess myself in the wrong.”

“I must be certain of it, and I am so; but you must grant that I could not swear to it.”

“Granted, madam.”

During the following days it struck me that her manner towards me was singularly altered. She never received me in her dishabille, and I had to wait with great patience until her maid had entirely dressed her before being admitted into her presence.

If I related any story, any adventure, she pretended not to understand, and affected not to see the point of an anecdote or a jest; very often she would purposely not look at me, and then I was sure to relate badly. If M. D —— R —— laughed at something I had just said, she would ask what he was laughing for, and when he had told her, she would say it was insipid or dull. If one of her bracelets became unfastened, I offered to fasten it again, but either she would not give me so much trouble, or I did not understand the fastening, and the maid was called to do it. I could not help shewing my vexation, but she did not seem to take the slightest notice of it. If M. D —— R —— excited me to say something amusing or witty, and I did not speak immediately, she would say that my budget was empty, laughing, and adding that the wit of poor M. Casanova was worn out. Full of rage, I would plead guilty by my silence to her taunting accusation, but I was thoroughly miserable, for I did not see any cause for that extraordinary change in her feelings, being conscious that I had not given her any motive for it. I wanted to shew her openly my indifference and contempt, but whenever an opportunity offered, my courage would forsake me, and I would let it escape.

One evening M. D —— R —— asking me whether I had often been in love, I answered,

“Three times, my lord.”

“And always happily, of course.”

"Always unhappily. The first time, perhaps, because, being an ecclesiastic, I durst not speak openly of my love. The second, because a cruel, unexpected event compelled me to leave the woman I loved at the very moment in which my happiness would have been complete. The third time, because the feeling of pity, with which I inspired the beloved object, induced her to cure me of my passion, instead of crowning my felicity."

"But what specific remedies did she use to effect your cure?"

"She has ceased to be kind."

"I understand she has treated you cruelly, and you call that pity, do you? You are mistaken."

"Certainly," said Madame F —— , "a woman may pity the man she loves, but she would not think of ill-treating him to cure him of his passion. That woman has never felt any love for you."

"I cannot, I will not believe it, madam."

"But are you cured?"

"Oh! thoroughly; for when I happen to think of her, I feel nothing but indifference and coldness. But my recovery was long."

"Your convalescence lasted, I suppose, until you fell in love with another."

"With another, madam? I thought I had just told you that the third time I loved was the last."

A few days after that conversation, M. D —— R —— told me that Madame F —— was not well, that he could not keep her company, and that I ought to go to her, as he was sure she would be glad to see me. I obeyed, and told Madame F —— what M. D —— R —— had said. She was lying on a sofa. Without looking at me, she told me she was feverish, and would not ask me to remain with her, because I would feel weary.

"I could not experience any weariness in your society, madam; at all events, I can leave you only by your express command, and, in that case, I must spend the next four hours in your ante-room, for M. D — R —— has told me to wait for him here."

"If so, you may take a seat."

Her cold and distant manner repelled me, but I loved her, and I had never seen her so beautiful, a slight fever animating her complexion which was then truly dazzling in its beauty. I kept where I was, dumb and as motionless as a statue, for a quarter of an hour. Then she rang for her maid, and asked me to leave her alone for a moment. I was called back soon after, and she said to me,

“What has become of your cheerfulness?”

“If it has disappeared, madam, it can only be by your will. Call it back, and you will see it return in full force.”

“What must I do to obtain that result?”

“Only be towards me as you were when I returned from Casopo. I have been disagreeable to you for the last four months, and as I do not know why, I feel deeply grieved.”

“I am always the same: in what do you find me changed?”

“Good heavens! In everything, except in beauty. But I have taken my decision.”

“And what is it?”

“To suffer in silence, without allowing any circumstance to alter the feelings with which you have inspired me; to wish ardently to convince you of my perfect obedience to your commands; to be ever ready to give you fresh proofs of my devotion.”

“I thank you, but I cannot imagine what you can have to suffer in silence on my account. I take an interest in you, and I always listen with pleasure to your adventures. As a proof of it, I am extremely curious to hear the history of your three loves.”

I invented on the spot three purely imaginary stories, making a great display of tender sentiments and of ardent love, but without alluding to amorous enjoyment, particularly when she seemed to expect me to do so. Sometimes delicacy, sometimes respect or duty, interfered to prevent the crowning pleasure, and I took care to observe, at such moments of disappointment, that a true lover does not require that all important item to feel perfectly happy. I could easily see that her imagination was travelling farther than my narrative, and that my reserve was agreeable to her. I believed I knew her nature well enough to be certain that I was taking the best road to induce her to follow me where I wished to lead her. She expressed a sentiment which moved me deeply, but I was careful not to shew it. We were talking of my third love, of the woman who, out of pity, had undertaken to cure me, and she remarked,

“If she truly loved you, she may have wished not to cure you, but to cure herself.”

On the day following this partial reconciliation, M. F —— , her husband, begged my commanding officer, D —— R —— , to let me go with him to Butintro for an excursion of three days, his own adjutant being seriously ill.

Butintro is seven miles from Corfu, almost opposite to that city; it is the nearest point to the island from the mainland. It is not a fortress, but only a small village of Epirus, or Albania, as it is now called, and belonging to the Venetians. Acting on the political axiom that “neglected right is lost right,” the Republic sends every year four galleys to Butintro with a gang of galley slaves to fell trees, cut them, and load them on the galleys, while the military keep a sharp look-out to prevent them from escaping to Turkey and becoming Mussulmans. One of the four galleys was commanded by M. F —— who, wanting an adjutant for the occasion, chose me.

I went with him, and on the fourth day we came back to Corfu with a large provision of wood. I found M. D —— R —— alone on the terrace of his palace. It was Good Friday. He seemed thoughtful, and, after a silence of a few minutes, he spoke the following words, which I can never forget:

“M. F —— , whose adjutant died yesterday, has just been entreating me to give you to him until he can find another officer. I have told him that I had no right to dispose of your person, and that he, ought to apply to you, assuring him that, if you asked me leave to go with him, I would not raise any objection, although I require two adjutants. Has he not mentioned the matter to you?”

“No, monsignor, he has only tendered me his thanks for having accompanied him to Butintro, nothing else.”

“He is sure to speak to you about it. What do you intend to say?”

“Simply that I will never leave the service of your excellency without your express command to do so.”

"I never will give you such an order."

As M. D —— R —— was saying the last word, M. and Madame F —— came in. Knowing that the conversation would most likely turn upon the subject which had just been broached, I hurried out of the room. In less than a quarter of an hour I was sent for, and M. F —— said to me, confidentially,

"Well, M. Casanova, would you not be willing to live with me as my adjutant?"

"Does his excellency dismiss me from his service?"

"Not at all," observed M. D —— R —— , "but I leave you the choice."

"My lord, I could not be guilty of ingratitude."

And I remained there standing, uneasy, keeping my eyes on the ground, not even striving to conceal my mortification, which was, after all, very natural in such a position. I dreaded looking at Madame F —— , for I knew that she could easily guess all my feelings. An instant after, her foolish husband coldly remarked that I should certainly have a more fatiguing service with him than with M. D —— R —— , and that, of course, it was more honourable to serve the general governor of the galeazze than a simple sopra-committo. I was on the point of answering, when Madame F —— said, in a graceful and easy manner, "M. Casanova is right," and she changed the subject. I left the room, revolving in my mind all that had just taken place.

My conclusion was that M. F —— had asked M. D —— R —— to let me go with him at the suggestion of his wife, or, at least with her consent, and it was highly flattering to my love and to my vanity. But I was bound in honour not to accept the post, unless I had a perfect assurance that it would not be disagreeable to my present patron. "I will accept," I said to myself, "if M. D —— R —— tells me positively that I shall please him by doing so. It is for M. F to make him say it."

On the same night I had the honour of offering my arm to Madame F — during the procession which takes place in commemoration of the death of our Lord and Saviour, which was then attended on foot by all the nobility. I expected she would mention the matter, but she did not. My love was in despair, and through the night I could not close my eyes. I feared she had been offended by my refusal, and was overwhelmed with grief. I passed the whole of the next day without breaking my fast, and did not utter a single word during the evening reception. I felt very unwell, and I had an attack of fever which kept me in bed on Easter Sunday. I was very weak on the Monday, and intended to remain in my room, when a messenger from Madame F —— came to inform me that she wished to see me. I told the messenger not to say that he had found me in bed, and dressing myself rapidly I hurried to her house. I entered her room, pale, looking very ill: yet she did not enquire after my health, and kept silent a minute or two, as if she had been trying to recollect what she had to say to me.

"Ah! yes, you are aware that our adjutant is dead, and that we want to replace him. My husband, who has a great esteem for you, and feels that M. D —— R —— leaves you perfectly free to make your choice, has taken the singular fancy that you will come, if I ask you myself to do us that pleasure. Is he mistaken? If you would come to us, you would have that room."

She was pointing to a room adjoining the chamber in which she slept, and so situated that, to see her in every part of her room, I should not even require to place myself at the window.

"M. D —— R —— ," she continued, "will not love you less, and as he will see you here every day, he will not be likely to forget his interest in your welfare. Now, tell me, will you come or not?"

"I wish I could, madam, but indeed I cannot."

"You cannot? That is singular. Take a seat, and tell me what there is to prevent you, when, in accepting my offer, you are sure to please M. D —— R —— as well as us."

"If I were certain of it, I would accept immediately; but all I have heard from his lips was that he left me free to make a choice."

"Then you are afraid to grieve him, if you come to us?"

"It might be, and for nothing on earth…."

"I am certain of the contrary."

"Will you be so good as to obtain that he says so to me himself?"

"And then you will come?"

"Oh, madam! that very minute!"

But the warmth of my exclamation might mean a great deal, and I turned my head round so as not to embarrass her. She asked me to give her her mantle to go to church, and we went out. As we were going down the stairs, she placed her ungloved hand upon mine. It was the first time that she had granted me such a favour, and it seemed to me a good omen. She took off her hand, asking me whether I was feverish. “Your hand,” she said, “is burning.”

When we left the church, M. D —— R — — ‘s carriage happened to pass, and I assisted her to get in, and as soon as she had gone, hurried to my room in order to breathe freely and to enjoy all the felicity which filled my soul; for I no longer doubted her love for me, and I knew that, in this case, M. D —— R —— was not likely to refuse her anything.

What is love? I have read plenty of ancient verbiage on that subject, I have read likewise most of what has been said by modern writers, but neither all that has been said, nor what I have thought about it, when I was young and now that I am no longer so, nothing, in fact, can make me agree that love is a trifling vanity. It is a sort of madness, I grant that, but a madness over which philosophy is entirely powerless; it is a disease to which man is exposed at all times, no matter at what age, and which cannot be cured, if he is attacked by it in his old age. Love being sentiment which cannot be explained! God of all nature! — bitter and sweet feeling! Love! — charming monster which cannot be fathomed! God who, in the midst of all the thorns with which thou plaguest us, strewest so many roses on our path that, without thee, existence and death would be united and blended together!

Two days afterwards, M. D —— R —— , told me to go and take orders from M. F —— on board his galley, which was ready for a five or six days’ voyage. I quickly packed a few things, and called for my new patron who received me with great joy. We took our departure without seeing madam, who was not yet visible. We returned on the sixth day, and I went to establish myself in my new home, for, as I was preparing to go to M. D —— R —— , to take his orders, after our landing, he came himself, and after asking M. F —— and me whether we were pleased with each other, he said to me, “Casanova, as you suit each other so well, you may be certain that you will greatly please me by remaining in the service of M. F.”

I obeyed respectfully, and in less than one hour I had taken possession of my new quarters. Madame F —— told me how delighted she was to see that great affair ended according to her wishes, and I answered with a deep reverence.

I found myself like the salamander, in the very heart of the fire for which I had been longing so ardently.

Almost constantly in the presence of Madame F —— , dining often alone with her, accompanying her in her walks, even when M. D —— R —— was not with us, seeing her from my room, or conversing with her in her chamber, always reserved and attentive without pretension, the first night passed by without any change being brought about by that constant intercourse. Yet I was full of hope, and to keep up my courage I imagined that love was not yet powerful enough to conquer her pride. I expected everything from some lucky chance, which I promised myself to improve as soon as it should present itself, for I was persuaded that a lover is lost if he does not catch fortune by the forelock.

But there was one circumstance which annoyed me. In public, she seized every opportunity of treating me with distinction, while, when we were alone, it was exactly the reverse. In the eyes of the world I had all the appearance of a happy lover, but I would rather have had less of the appearance of happiness and more of the reality. My love for her was disinterested; vanity had no share in my feelings.

One day, being alone with me, she said,

“You have enemies, but I silenced them last night.”

“They are envious, madam, and they would pity me if they could read the secret pages of my heart. You could easily deliver me from those enemies.”

“How can you be an object of pity for them, and how could I deliver you from them?”

“They believe me happy, and I am miserable; you would deliver me from them by ill-treating me in their presence.”

“Then you would feel my bad treatment less than the envy of the wicked?”

"Yes, madam, provided your bad treatment in public were compensated by your kindness when we are alone, for there is no vanity in the happiness I feel in belonging to you. Let others pity me, I will be happy on condition that others are mistaken."

"That's a part that I can never play."

I would often be indiscreet enough to remain behind the curtain of the window in my room, looking at her when she thought herself perfectly certain that nobody saw her; but the liberty I was thus guilty of never proved of great advantage to me. Whether it was because she doubted my discretion or from habitual reserve, she was so particular that, even when I saw her in bed, my longing eyes never could obtain a sight of anything but her head.

One day, being present in her room while her maid was cutting off the points of her long and beautiful hair, I amused myself in picking up all those pretty bits, and put them all, one after the other, on her toilet-table, with the exception of one small lock which I slipped into my pocket, thinking that she had not taken any notice of my keeping it; but the moment we were alone she told me quietly, but rather too seriously, to take out of my pocket the hair I had picked up from the floor. Thinking she was going too far, and such rigour appearing to me as cruel as it was unjust and absurd, I obeyed, but threw the hair on the toilet-table with an air of supreme contempt.

"Sir, you forget yourself."

"No, madam, I do not, for you might have feigned not to have observed such an innocent theft."

"Feigning is tiresome."

"Was such petty larceny a very great crime?"

"No crime, but it was an indication of feelings which you have no right to entertain for me."

"Feelings which you are at liberty not to return, madam, but which hatred or pride can alone forbid my heart to experience. If you had a heart you would not be the victim of either of those two fearful passions, but you have only head, and it must be a very wicked head, judging by the care it takes to heap humiliation upon me. You have surprised my secret, madam, you may use it as you think proper, but in the meantime I have learned to know you thoroughly. That knowledge will prove more useful than your discovery, for perhaps it will help me to become wiser."

After this violent tirade I left her, and as she did not call me back retired to my room. In the hope that sleep would bring calm, I undressed and went to bed. In such moments a lover hates the object of his love, and his heart distils only contempt and hatred. I could not go to sleep, and when I was sent for at supper-time I answered that I was ill. The night passed off without my eyes being visited by sleep, and feeling weak and low I thought I would wait to see what ailed me, and refused to have my dinner, sending word that I was still very unwell. Towards evening I felt my heart leap for joy when I heard my beautiful lady-love enter my room. Anxiety, want of food and sleep, gave me truly the appearance of being ill, and I was delighted that it should be so. I sent her away very soon, by telling her with perfect indifference that it was nothing but a bad headache, to which I was subject, and that repose and diet would effect a speedy cure.

But at eleven o'clock she came back with her friend, M. D —— R —— , and coming to my bed she said, affectionately,

"What ails you, my poor Casanova?"

"A very bad headache, madam, which will be cured to-morrow."

"Why should you wait until to-morrow? You must get better at once. I have ordered a basin of broth and two new-laid eggs for you."

"Nothing, madam; complete abstinence can alone cure me."

"He is right," said M. D —— R —— , "I know those attacks."

I shook my head slightly. M. D —— R —— having just then turned round to examine an engraving, she took my hand, saying that she would like me to drink some broth, and I felt that she was giving me a small parcel. She went to look at the engraving with M. D —— R —— .

I opened the parcel, but feeling that it contained hair, I hurriedly concealed it under the bed-clothes: at the same moment the blood rushed to my head with such violence that it actually frightened me. I begged for some water, she came to me, with M. D —— R —— , and then were both frightened to see me so red, when they had seen me pale and weak only one minute before.

Madame F —— gave me a glass of water in which she put some Eau des carmes which instantly acted as a violent emetic. Two or three minutes after I felt better, and asked for something to eat. Madame F —— smiled. The servant came in with the broth and the eggs, and while I was eating I told the history of Pandolfin. M. D —— R —— thought it was all a miracle, and I could read, on the countenance of the charming woman, love, affection, and repentance. If M. D —— R —— had not been present, it would have been the moment of my happiness, but I felt certain that I should not have long to wait. M. D —— R —— told Madame F —— that, if he had not seen me so sick, he would have believed my illness to be all sham, for he did not think it possible for anyone to rally so rapidly.

“It is all owing to my Eau des carmes,” said Madame F —— , looking at me, “and I will leave you my bottle.”

“No, madam, be kind enough to take it with you, for the water would have no virtue without your presence.”

“I am sure of that,” said M. D —— R —— , “so I will leave you here with your patient.”

“No, no, he must go to sleep now.”

I slept all night, but in my happy dreams I was with her, and the reality itself would hardly have procured me greater enjoyment than I had during my happy slumbers. I saw I had taken a very long stride forward, for twenty-four hours of abstinence gave me the right to speak to her openly of my love, and the gift of her hair was an irrefutable confession of her own feelings.

On the following day, after presenting myself before M. F —— , I went to have a little chat with the maid, to wait until her mistress was visible, which was not long, and I had the pleasure of hearing her laugh when the maid told her I was there. As soon as I went in, without giving me time to say a single word, she told me how delighted she was to see me looking so well, and advised me to call upon M. D —— R —— .

It is not only in the eyes of a lover, but also in those of every man of taste, that a woman is a thousand times more lovely at the moment she comes out of the arms of Morpheus than when she has completed her toilet. Around Madame F —— more brilliant beams were blazing than around the sun when he leaves the embrace of Aurora. Yet the most beautiful woman thinks as much of her toilet as the one who cannot do without it — very likely because more human creatures possess the more they want.

In the order given to me by Madame F —— to call on M. D —— R —— , I saw another reason to be certain of approaching happiness, for I thought that, by dismissing me so quickly, she had only tried to postpone the consummation which I might have pressed upon her, and which she could not have refused.

Rich in the possession of her hair, I held a consultation with my love to decide what I ought to do with it, for Madame F —— , very likely in her wish to atone for the miserly sentiment which had refused me a small bit, had given me a splendid lock, full a yard and a half long. Having thought it over, I called upon a Jewish confectioner whose daughter was a skilful embroiderer, and I made her embroider before me, on a bracelet of green satin, the four initial letters of our names, and make a very thin chain with the remainder. I had a piece of black ribbon added to one end of the chain, in the shape of a sliding noose, with which I could easily strangle myself if ever love should reduce me to despair, and I passed it round my neck. As I did not want to lose even the smallest particle of so precious a treasure, I cut with a pair of scissors all the small bits which were left, and devoutly gathered them together. Then I reduced them into a fine powder, and ordered the Jewish confectioner to mix the powder in my presence with a paste made of amber, sugar, vanilla, angelica, alkermes and storax, and I waited until the comfits prepared with that mixture were ready. I had some more made with the same composition, but without any hair; I put the first in a beautiful sweetmeat box of fine crystal, and the second in a tortoise-shell box.

From the day when, by giving me her hair, Madame F —— had betrayed the secret feelings of her heart, I no longer lost my time in relating stories or adventures; I only spoke to her of my cove, of my ardent desires; I told her that she must either banish me from her presence, or crown my happiness, but the cruel, charming woman would not accept that alternative. She answered that happiness could not be obtained by offending every moral law, and by swerving from our duties. If I threw myself at her feet to obtain by anticipation her forgiveness for the loving violence I intended to use against her, she would repulse me more powerfully than if she had had the strength of a female Hercules, for she would say, in a voice full of sweetness and affection,

“My friend, I do not entreat you to respect my weakness, but be generous enough to spare me for the sake of all the love I feel for you.”

“What! you love me, and you refuse to make me happy! It is impossible! it is unnatural. You compel me to believe that you do not love me. Only allow me to press my lips one moment upon your lips, and I ask no more.”

“No, dearest, no; it would only excite the ardour of your desires, shake my resolution, and we should then find ourselves more miserable than we are now.”

Thus did she every day plunge me in despair, and yet she complained that my wit was no longer brilliant in society, that I had lost that elasticity of spirits which had pleased her so much after my arrival from Constantinople. M. D —— R —— , who often jestingly waged war against me, used to say that I was getting thinner and thinner every day. Madame F —— told me one day that my sickly looks were very disagreeable to her, because wicked tongues would not fail to say that she treated me with cruelty. Strange, almost unnatural thought! On it I composed an idyll which I cannot read, even now, without feeling tears in my eyes.

“What!” I answered, “you acknowledge your cruelty towards me? You are afraid of the world guessing all your heartless rigour, and yet you continue to enjoy it! You condemn me unmercifully to the torments of Tantalus! You would be delighted to see me gay, cheerful, happy, even at the expense of a judgment by which the world would find you guilty of a supposed but false kindness towards me, and yet you refuse me even the slightest favours!”

“I do not mind people believing anything, provided it is not true.”

“What a contrast! Would it be possible for me not to love you, for you to feel nothing for me? Such contradictions strike me as unnatural. But you are growing thinner yourself, and I am dying. It must be so; we shall both die before long, you of consumption, I of exhausting decline; for I am now reduced to enjoying your shadow during the day, during the night, always, everywhere, except when I am in your presence.”

At that passionate declaration, delivered with all the ardour of an excited lover, she was surprised, deeply moved, and I thought that the happy hour had struck. I folded her in my arms, and was already tasting the first fruits of enjoyment… . The sentinel knocked twice! … Oh! fatal mischance! I recovered my composure and stood in front of her… . M. D —— R —— made his appearance, and this time he found me in so cheerful a mood that he remained with us until one o'clock in the morning.

My comfits were beginning to be the talk of our society. M. D —— R —— , Madame F —— , and I were the only ones who had a box full of them. I was stingy with them, and no one durst beg any from me, because I had said that they were very expensive, and that in all Corfu there was no confectioner who could make or physician who could analyse them. I never gave one out of my crystal box, and Madame F. remarked it. I certainly did not believe them to be amorous philtre, and I was very far from supposing that the addition of the hair made them taste more delicious; but a superstition, the offspring of my love, caused me to cherish them, and it made me happy to think that a small portion of the woman I worshipped was thus becoming a part of my being.

Influenced perhaps by some secret sympathy, Madame F. was exceedingly fond of the comfits. She asserted before all her friends that they were the universal panacea, and knowing herself perfect mistress of the inventor, she did not enquire after the secret of the composition. But having observed that I gave away only the comfits which I kept in my tortoise-shell box, and that I never eat any but those from the crystal box, she one day asked me what reason I had for that. Without taking time to think, I told her that in those I kept for myself there was a certain ingredient which made the partaker love her.

"I do not believe it," she answered; "but are they different from those I eat myself?"

"They are exactly the same, with the exception of the ingredient I have just mentioned, which has been put only in mine."

"Tell me what the ingredient is."

"It is a secret which I cannot reveal to you."

"Then I will never eat any of your comfits."

Saying which, she rose, emptied her box, and filled it again with chocolate drops; and for the next few days she was angry with me, and avoided my company. I felt grieved, I became low-spirited, but I could not make up my mind to tell her that I was eating her hair!

She enquired why I looked so sad.

“Because you refuse to take my comfits.”

“You are master of your secret, and I am mistress of my diet.”

“That is my reward for having taken you into my confidence.”

And I opened my box, emptied its contents in my hand, and swallowed the whole of them, saying, “Two more doses like this, and I shall die mad with love for you. Then you will be revenged for my reserve. Farewell, madam.”

She called me back, made me take a seat near her, and told me not to commit follies which would make her unhappy; that I knew how much she loved me, and that it was not owing to the effect of any drug. “To prove to you,” she added, “that you do not require anything of the sort to be loved, here is a token of my affection.” And she offered me her lovely lips, and upon them mine remained pressed until I was compelled to draw a breath. I threw myself at her feet, with tears of love and gratitude blinding my eyes, and told her that I would confess my crime, if she would promise to forgive me.

“Your crime! You frighten me. Yes, I forgive you, but speak quickly, and tell me all.”

“Yes, everything. My comfits contain your hair reduced to a powder. Here on my arm, see this bracelet on which our names are written with your hair, and round my neck this chain of the same material, which will help me to destroy my own life when your love fails me. Such is my crime, but I would not have been guilty of it, if I had not loved you.”

She smiled, and, bidding me rise from my kneeling position, she told me that I was indeed the most criminal of men, and she wiped away my tears, assuring me that I should never have any reason to strangle myself with the chain.

After that conversation, in which I had enjoyed the sweet nectar of my divinity’s first kiss, I had the courage to behave in a very different manner.

She could see the ardour which consumed me; perhaps the same fire burned in her veins, but I abstained from any attack.

"What gives you," she said one day, "the strength to control yourself?"

"After the kiss which you granted to me of your own accord, I felt that I ought not to wish any favour unless your heart gave it as freely. You cannot imagine the happiness that kiss has given me."

"I not imagine it, you ungrateful man! Which of us has given that happiness?"

"Neither you nor I, angel of my soul! That kiss so tender, so sweet, was the child of love!"

"Yes, dearest, of love, the treasures of which are inexhaustible."

The words were scarcely spoken, when our lips were engaged in happy concert. She held me so tight against her bosom that I could not use my hands to secure other pleasures, but I felt myself perfectly happy. After that delightful skirmish, I asked her whether we were never to go any further.

"Never, dearest friend, never. Love is a child which must be amused with trifles; too substantial food would kill it."

"I know love better than you; it requires that substantial food, and unless it can obtain it, love dies of exhaustion. Do not refuse me the consolation of hope."

"Hope as much as you please, if it makes you happy."

"What should I do, if I had no hope? I hope, because I know you have a heart."

"Ah! yes. Do you recollect the day, when, in your anger, you told me that I had only a head, but no heart, thinking you were insulting me grossly!"

"Oh! yes, I recollect it."

"How heartily I laughed, when I had time to think! Yes, dearest, I have a heart, or I should not feel as happy as I feel now. Let us keep our happiness, and be satisfied with it, as it is, without wishing for anything more."

Obedient to her wishes, but every day more deeply enamoured, I was in hope that nature at last would prove stronger than prejudice, and would cause a fortunate crisis. But, besides nature, fortune was my friend, and I owed my happiness to an accident.

Madame F. was walking one day in the garden, leaning on M. D —— R —— ‘s arm, and was caught by a large rose-bush, and the prickly thorns left a deep cut on her leg. M. D —— R —— bandaged the wound with his handkerchief, so as to stop the blood which was flowing abundantly, and she had to be carried home in a palanquin.

In Corfu, wounds on the legs are dangerous when they are not well attended to, and very often the wounded are compelled to leave the city to be cured.

Madame F —— was confined to her bed, and my lucky position in the house condemned me to remain constantly at her orders. I saw her every minute; but, during the first three days, visitors succeeded each other without intermission, and I never was alone with her. In the evening, after everybody had gone, and her husband had retired to his own apartment, M. D —— R —— remained another hour, and for the sake of propriety I had to take my leave at the same time that he did. I had much more liberty before the accident, and I told her so half seriously, half jestingly. The next day, to make up for my disappointment, she contrived a moment of happiness for me.

An elderly surgeon came every morning to dress her wound, during which operation her maid only was present, but I used to go, in my morning dishabille, to the girl’s room, and to wait there, so as to be the first to hear how my dear one was.

That morning, the girl came to tell me to go in as the surgeon was dressing the wound.

“See, whether my leg is less inflamed.”

“To give an opinion, madam, I ought to have seen it yesterday.”

“True. I feel great pain, and I am afraid of erysipelas.”

“Do not be afraid, madam,” said the surgeon, “keep your bed, and I answer for your complete recovery.”

The surgeon being busy preparing a poultice at the other end of the room, and the maid out, I enquired whether she felt any hardness in the calf of the leg, and whether the inflammation went up the limb; and naturally, my eyes and my hands kept pace with my questions…. I saw no inflammation, I felt no hardness, but… and the lovely patient hurriedly let the curtain fall, smiling, and allowing me to take a sweet kiss, the perfume of which I had not enjoyed for many days. It was a sweet moment; a delicious ecstacy. From her mouth my lips descended to her wound, and satisfied in that moment that my kisses were the best of medicines, I would have kept my lips there, if the noise made by the maid coming back had not compelled me to give up my delightful occupation.

When we were left alone, burning with intense desires, I entreated her to grant happiness at least to my eyes.

"I feel humiliated," I said to her, "by the thought that the felicity I have just enjoyed was only a theft."

"But supposing you were mistaken?"

The next day I was again present at the dressing of the wound, and as soon as the surgeon had left, she asked me to arrange her pillows, which I did at once. As if to make that pleasant office easier, she raised the bedclothes to support herself, and she thus gave me a sight of beauties which intoxicated my eyes, and I protracted the easy operation without her complaining of my being too slow.

When I had done I was in a fearful state, and I threw myself in an arm-chair opposite her bed, half dead, in a sort of trance. I was looking at that lovely being who, almost artless, was continually granting me greater and still greater favours, and yet never allowed me to reach the goal for which I was so ardently longing.

"What are you thinking of?" she said.

"Of the supreme felicity I have just been enjoying."

"You are a cruel man."

"No, I am not cruel, for, if you love me, you must not blush for your indulgence. You must know, too, that, loving you passionately, I must not suppose that it is to be a surprise that I am indebted for my happiness in the enjoyment of the most ravishing sights, for if I owed it only to mere chance I should be compelled to believe that any other man in my position might have had the same happiness, and such an idea would be misery to me. Let me be indebted to you for having proved to me this morning how much enjoyment I can derive from one of my senses. Can you be angry with my eyes?”

“Yes.”

“They belong to you; tear them out.”

The next day, the moment the doctor had gone, she sent her maid out to make some purchases.

“Ah!” she said a few minutes after, “my maid has forgotten to change my chemise.”

“Allow me to take her place.”

“Very well, but recollect that I give permission only to your eyes to take a share in the proceedings.”

“Agreed!”

She unlaced herself, took off her stays and her chemise, and told me to be quick and put on the clean one, but I was not speedy enough, being too much engaged by all I could see.

“Give me my chemise,” she exclaimed; “it is there on that small table.”

“Where?”

“There, near the bed. Well, I will take it myself.”

She leaned over towards the table, and exposed almost everything I was longing for, and, turning slowly round, she handed me the chemise which I could hardly hold, trembling all over with fearful excitement. She took pity on me, my hands shared the happiness of my eyes; I fell in her arms, our lips fastened together, and, in a voluptuous, ardent pressure, we enjoyed an amorous exhaustion not sufficient to allay our desires, but delightful enough to deceive them for the moment.

With greater control over herself than women have generally under similar circumstances, she took care to let me reach only the porch of the temple, without granting me yet a free entrance to the sanctuary.

EPISODE 4 — RETURN TO VENICE

CHAPTER XVI

A Fearful Misfortune Befalls Me — Love Cools Down — Leave Corfu and Return to Venice — Give Up the Army and Become a Fiddler

The wound was rapidly healing up, and I saw near at hand the moment when Madame F —— would leave her bed, and resume her usual avocations.

The governor of the galeasses having issued orders for a general review at Gouyn, M. F —— , left for that place in his galley, telling me to join him there early on the following day with the felucca. I took supper alone with Madame F —— , and I told her how unhappy it made me to remain one day away from her.

“Let us make up to-night for to-morrow’s disappointment,” she said, “and let us spend it together in conversation. Here are the keys; when you know that my maid has left me, come to me through my husband’s room.”

I did not fail to follow her instructions to the letter, and we found ourselves alone with five hours before us. It was the month of June, and the heat was intense. She had gone to bed; I folded her in my arms, she pressed me to her bosom, but, condemning herself to the most cruel torture, she thought I had no right to complain, if I was subjected to the same privation which she imposed upon herself. My remonstrances, my prayers, my entreaties were of no avail.

“Love,” she said, “must be kept in check with a tight hand, and we can laugh at him, since, in spite of the tyranny which we force him to obey, we succeed all the same in gratifying our desires.”

After the first ecstacy, our eyes and lips unclosed together, and a little apart from each other we take delight in seeing the mutual satisfaction beaming on our features.

Our desires revive; she casts a look upon my state of innocence entirely exposed to her sight. She seems vexed at my want of excitement, and, throwing off everything which makes the heat unpleasant and interferes with our pleasure, she bounds upon me. It is more than amorous fury, it is desperate lust. I share her frenzy, I hug her with a sort of delirium, I enjoy a felicity which is on the point of carrying me to the regions of bliss…. but, at the very moment of completing the offering, she fails me, moves off, slips away, and comes back to work off my excitement with a hand which strikes me as cold as ice.

“Ah, thou cruel, beloved woman! Thou art burning with the fire of love, and thou deprivest thyself of the only remedy which could bring calm to thy senses! Thy lovely hand is more humane than thou art, but thou has not enjoyed the felicity that thy hand has given me. My hand must owe nothing to thine. Come, darling light of my heart, come! Love doubles my existence in the hope that I will die again, but only in that charming retreat from which you have ejected me in the very moment of my greatest enjoyment.”

While I was speaking thus, her very soul was breathing forth the most tender sighs of happiness, and as she pressed me tightly in her arms I felt that she was weltering in an ocean of bliss.

Silence lasted rather a long time, but that unnatural felicity was imperfect, and increased my excitement.

“How canst thou complain,” she said tenderly, “when it is to that very imperfection of our enjoyment that we are indebted for its continuance? I loved thee a few minutes since, now I love thee a thousand times more, and perhaps I should love thee less if thou hadst carried my enjoyment to its highest limit.”

“Oh! how much art thou mistaken, lovely one! How great is thy error! Thou art feeding upon sophisms, and thou leavest reality aside; I mean nature which alone can give real felicity. Desires constantly renewed and never fully satisfied are more terrible than the torments of hell.”

“But are not these desires happiness when they are always accompanied by hope?”

“No, if that hope is always disappointed. It becomes hell itself, because there is no hope, and hope must die when it is killed by constant deception.”

“Dearest, if hope does not exist in hell, desires cannot be found there either; for to imagine desires without hopes would be more than madness.”

“Well, answer me. If you desire to be mine entirely, and if you feel the hope of it, which, according to your way of reasoning, is a natural consequence, why do you always raise an impediment to your own hope? Cease, dearest, cease to deceive yourself by absurd sophisms. Let us be as happy as it is in nature to be, and be quite certain that the reality of happiness will increase our love, and that love will find a new life in our very enjoyment.”

“What I see proves the contrary; you are alive with excitement now, but if your desires had been entirely satisfied, you would be dead, benumbed, motionless. I know it by experience: if you had breathed the full ecstacy of enjoyment, as you desired, you would have found a weak ardour only at long intervals.”

“Ah! charming creature, your experience is but very small; do not trust to it. I see that you have never known love. That which you call love’s grave is the sanctuary in which it receives life, the abode which makes it immortal. Give way to my prayers, my lovely friend, and then you shall know the difference between Love and Hymen. You shall see that, if Hymen likes to die in order to get rid of life, Love on the contrary expires only to spring up again into existence, and hastens to revive, so as to savour new enjoyment. Let me undeceive you, and believe me when I say that the full gratification of desires can only increase a hundredfold the mutual ardour of two beings who adore each other.”

“Well, I must believe you; but let us wait. In the meantime let us enjoy all the trifles, all the sweet preliminaries of love. Devour thy mistress, dearest, but abandon to me all thy being. If this night is too short we must console ourselves to-morrow by making arrangements for another one.”

“And if our intercourse should be discovered?”

“Do we make a mystery of it? Everybody can see that we love each other, and those who think that we do not enjoy the happiness of lovers are precisely the only persons we have to fear. We must only be careful to guard against being surprised in the very act of proving our love. Heaven and nature must protect our affection, for there is no crime when two hearts are blended in true love. Since I have been conscious of my own existence, Love has always seemed to me the god of my being, for every time I saw a man I was delighted; I thought that I was looking upon one-half of myself, because I felt I was made for him and he for me. I longed to be married. It was that uncertain longing of the heart which occupies exclusively a young girl of fifteen. I had no conception of love, but I fancied that it naturally accompanied marriage. You can therefore imagine my surprise when my husband, in the very act of making a woman of me, gave me a great deal of pain without giving me the slightest idea of pleasure! My imagination in the convent was much better than the reality I had been condemned to by my husband! The result has naturally been that we have become very good friends, but a very indifferent husband and wife, without any desires for each other. He has every reason to be pleased with me, for I always shew myself docile to his wishes, but enjoyment not being in those cases seasoned by love, he must find it without flavour, and he seldom comes to me for it.

"When I found out that you were in love with me, I felt delighted, and gave you every opportunity of becoming every day more deeply enamoured of me, thinking myself certain of never loving you myself. As soon as I felt that love had likewise attacked my heart, I ill-treated you to punish you for having made my heart sensible. Your patience and constancy have astonished me, and have caused me to be guilty, for after the first kiss I gave you I had no longer any control over myself. I was indeed astounded when I saw the havoc made by one single kiss, and I felt that my happiness was wrapped up in yours. That discovery flattered and delighted me, and I have found out, particularly to-night, that I cannot be happy unless you are so yourself."

"That is, my beloved, the most refined of all sentiments experienced by love, but it is impossible for you to render me completely happy without following in everything the laws and the wishes of nature."

The night was spent in tender discussions and in exquisite voluptuousness, and it was not without some grief that at day-break I tore myself from her arms to go to Gouyn. She wept for joy when she saw that I left her without having lost a particle of my vigour, for she did not imagine such a thing possible.

After that night, so rich in delights, ten or twelve days passed without giving us any opportunity of quenching even a small particle of the amorous thirst which devoured us, and it was then that a fearful misfortune befell me.

One evening after supper, M. D —— R —— having retired, M. F —— used no ceremony, and, although I was present, told his wife that he intended to pay her a visit after writing two letters which he had to dispatch early the next morning. The moment he had left the room we looked at each other, and with one accord fell into each other's arms. A torrent of delights rushed through our souls without restraint, without reserve, but when the first ardour had been appeased, without giving me time to think or to enjoy the most complete, the most delicious victory, she drew back, repulsed me, and threw herself, panting, distracted, upon a chair near her bed. Rooted to the spot, astonished, almost mad, I tremblingly looked at her, trying to understand what had caused such an extraordinary action. She turned round towards me and said, her eyes flashing with the fire of love,

"My darling, we were on the brink of the precipice."

"The precipice! Ah! cruel woman, you have killed me, I feel myself dying, and perhaps you will never see me again."

I left her in a state of frenzy, and rushed out, towards the esplanade, to cool myself, for I was choking. Any man who has not experienced the cruelty of an action like that of Madame F —— , and especially in the situation I found myself in at that moment, mentally and bodily, can hardly realize what I suffered, and, although I have felt that suffering, I could not give an idea of it.

I was in that fearful state, when I heard my name called from a window, and unfortunately I condescended to answer. I went near the window, and I saw, thanks to the moonlight, the famous Melulla standing on her balcony.

"What are you doing there at this time of night?" I enquired.

"I am enjoying the cool evening breeze. Come up for a little while."

This Melulla, of fatal memory, was a courtezan from Zamte, of rare beauty, who for the last four months had been the delight and the rage of all the young men in Corfu. Those who had known her agreed in extolling her charms: she was the talk of all the city. I had seen her often, but, although she was very beautiful, I was very far from thinking her as lovely as Madame F —— , putting my affection for the latter on one side. I recollect seeing in Dresden, in the year 1790, a very handsome woman who was the image of Melulla.

I went upstairs mechanically, and she took me to a voluptuous boudoir; she complained of my being the only one who had never paid her a visit, when I was the man she would have preferred to all others, and I had the infamy to give way…. I became the most criminal of men.

It was neither desire, nor imagination, nor the merit of the woman which caused me to yield, for Melulla was in no way worthy of me; no, it was weakness, indolence, and the state of bodily and mental irritation in which I then found myself: it was a sort of spite, because the angel whom I adored had displeased me by a caprice, which, had I not been unworthy of her, would only have caused me to be still more attached to her.

Melulla, highly pleased with her success, refused the gold I wanted to give her, and allowed me to go after I had spent two hours with her.

When I recovered my composure, I had but one feeling — hatred for myself and for the contemptible creature who had allured me to be guilty of so vile an insult to the loveliest of her sex. I went home the prey to fearful remorse, and went to bed, but sleep never closed my eyes throughout that cruel night.

In the morning, worn out with fatigue and sorrow, I got up, and as soon as I was dressed I went to M. F —— , who had sent for me to give me some orders. After I had returned, and had given him an account of my mission, I called upon Madame F —— , and finding her at her toilet I wished her good morning, observing that her lovely face was breathing the cheerfulness and the calm of happiness; but, suddenly, her eyes meeting mine, I saw her countenance change, and an expression of sadness replace her looks of satisfaction. She cast her eyes down as if she was deep in thought, raised them again as if to read my very soul, and breaking our painful silence, as soon as she had dismissed her maid, she said to me, with an accent full of tenderness and of solemnity,

“Dear one, let there be no concealment either on my part or on yours. I felt deeply grieved when I saw you leave me last night, and a little consideration made me understand all the evil which might accrue to you in consequence of what I had done. With a nature like yours, such scenes might cause very dangerous disorders, and I have resolved not to do again anything by halves. I thought that you went out to breathe the fresh air, and I hoped it would do you good. I placed myself at my window, where I remained more than an hour without seeing a light in your room. Sorry for what I had done, loving you more than ever, I was compelled, when my husband came to my room, to go to bed with the sad conviction that you had not come home. This morning, M. F. sent an officer to tell you that he wanted to see you, and I heard the messenger inform him that you were not yet up, and that you had come home very late. I felt my heart swell with sorrow. I am not jealous, dearest, for I know that you cannot love anyone but me; I only felt afraid of some misfortune. At last, this morning, when I heard you coming, I was happy, because I was ready to skew my repentance, but I looked at you, and you seemed a different man. Now, I am still looking at you, and, in spite of myself, my soul reads upon your countenance that you are guilty, that you have outraged my love. Tell me at once, dearest, if I am mistaken; if you have deceived me, say so openly. Do not be unfaithful to love and to truth. Knowing that I was the cause of it, I should never forgive my self, but there is an excuse for you in my heart, in my whole being."

More than once, in the course of my life, I have found myself under the painful necessity of telling falsehoods to the woman I loved; but in this case, after so true, so touching an appeal, how could I be otherwise than sincere? I felt myself sufficiently debased by my crime, and I could not degrade myself still more by falsehood. I was so far from being disposed to such a line of conduct that I could not speak, and I burst out crying.

"What, my darling! you are weeping! Your tears make me miserable. You ought not to have shed any with me but tears of happiness and love. Quick, my beloved, tell me whether you have made me wretched. Tell me what fearful revenge you have taken on me, who would rather die than offend you. If I have caused you any sorrow, it has been in the innocence of a loving and devoted heart."

"My own darling angel, I never thought of revenge, for my heart, which can never cease to adore you, could never conceive such a dreadful idea. It is against my own heart that my cowardly weakness has allured me to the commission of a crime which, for the remainder of my life, makes me unworthy of you."

"Have you, then, given yourself to some wretched woman?"

"Yes, I have spent two hours in the vilest debauchery, and my soul was present only to be the witness of my sadness, of my remorse, of my unworthiness."

"Sadness and remorse! Oh, my poor friend! I believe it. But it is my fault; I alone ought to suffer; it is I who must beg you to forgive me."

Her tears made mine flow again.

"Divine soul," I said, "the reproaches you are addressing to yourself increase twofold the gravity of my crime. You would never have been guilty of any wrong against me if I had been really worthy of your love."

I felt deeply the truth of my words.

We spent the remainder of the day apparently quiet and composed, concealing our sadness in the depths of our hearts. She was curious to know all the circumstances of my miserable adventure, and, accepting it as an expiation, I related them to her. Full of kindness, she assured me that we were bound to ascribe that accident to fate, and that the same thing might have happened to the best of men. She added that I was more to be pitied than condemned, and that she did not love me less. We both were certain that we would seize the first favourable opportunity, she of obtaining her pardon, I of atoning for my crime, by giving each other new and complete proofs of our mutual ardour. But Heaven in its justice had ordered differently, and I was cruelly punished for my disgusting debauchery.

On the third day, as I got up in the morning, an awful pricking announced the horrid state into which the wretched Melulla had thrown me. I was thunderstruck! And when I came to think of the misery which I might have caused if, during the last three days, I had obtained some new favour from my lovely mistress, I was on the point of going mad. What would have been her feelings if I had made her unhappy for the remainder of her life! Would anyone, then, knowing the whole case, have condemned me if I had destroyed my own life in order to deliver myself from everlasting remorse? No, for the man who kills himself from sheer despair, thus performing upon himself the execution of the sentence he would have deserved at the hands of justice cannot be blamed either by a virtuous philosopher or by a tolerant Christian. But of one thing I am quite certain: if such a misfortune had happened, I should have committed suicide.

Overwhelmed with grief by the discovery I had just made, but thinking that I should get rid of the inconvenience as I had done three times before, I prepared myself for a strict diet, which would restore my health in six weeks without anyone having any suspicion of my illness, but I soon found out that I had not seen the end of my troubles; Melulla had communicated to my system all the poisons which corrupt the source of life. I was acquainted with an elderly doctor of great experience in those matters; I consulted him, and he promised to set me to rights in two months; he proved as good as his word. At the beginning of September I found myself in good health, and it was about that time that I returned to Venice.

The first thing I resolved on, as soon as I discovered the state I was in, was to confess everything to Madame F —— . I did not wish to wait for the time when a compulsory confession would have made her blush for her weakness, and given her cause to think of the fearful consequences which might have been the result of her passion for me. Her affection was too dear to me to run the risk of losing it through a want of confidence in her. Knowing her heart, her candour, and the generosity which had prompted her to say that I was more to be pitied than blamed, I thought myself bound to prove by my sincerity that I deserved her esteem.

I told her candidly my position and the state I had been thrown in, when I thought of the dreadful consequences it might have had for her. I saw her shudder and tremble, and she turned pale with fear when I added that I would have avenged her by killing myself.

“Villainous, infamous Melulla!” she exclaimed.

And I repeated those words, but turning them against myself when I realized all I had sacrificed through the most disgusting weakness.

Everyone in Corfu knew of my visit to the wretched Melulla, and everyone seemed surprised to see the appearance of health on my countenance; for many were the victims that she had treated like me.

My illness was not my only sorrow; I had others which, although of a different nature, were not less serious. It was written in the book of fate that

I should return to Venice a simple ensign as when I left: the general did not keep his word, and the bastard son of a nobleman was promoted to the lieutenancy instead of myself. From that moment the military profession, the one most subject to arbitrary despotism, inspired me with disgust, and I determined to give it up. But I had another still more important motive for sorrow in the fickleness of fortune which had completely turned against me. I remarked that, from the time of my degradation with Melulla, every kind of misfortune befell me. The greatest of all — that which I felt most, but which I had the good sense to try and consider a favour — was that a week before the departure of the army M. D —— R —— took me again for his adjutant, and M. F —— had to engage another in my place. On the occasion of that change Madame F told me, with an appearance of regret, that in Venice we could not, for many reasons, continue our intimacy. I begged her to spare me the reasons, as I foresaw that they would only throw humiliation upon me. I began to discover that the goddess I had worshipped was, after all, a poor human being like all other women, and to think that I should have been very foolish to give up my life for her. I probed in one day the real worth of her heart, for she told me, I cannot recollect in reference to what, that I excited her pity. I saw clearly that she no longer loved me; pity is a debasing feeling which cannot find a home in a heart full of love, for that dreary sentiment is too near a relative of contempt. Since that time I never found myself alone with Madame F —— . I loved her still; I could easily have made her blush, but I did not do it.

As soon as we reached Venice she became attached to M. F —— R —— , whom she loved until death took him from her. She was unhappy enough to lose her sight twenty years after. I believe she is still alive.

During the last two months of my stay in Corfu, I learned the most bitter and important lessons. In after years I often derived useful hints from the experience I acquired at that time.

Before my adventure with the worthless Melulla, I enjoyed good health, I was rich, lucky at play, liked by everybody, beloved by the most lovely woman of Corfu. When I spoke, everybody would listen and admire my wit; my words were taken for oracles, and everyone coincided with me in everything. After my fatal meeting with the courtezan I rapidly lost my health, my money, my credit; cheerfulness, consideration, wit, everything, even the faculty of eloquence vanished with fortune. I would talk, but people knew that I was unfortunate, and I no longer interested or convinced my hearers. The influence I had over Madame F —— faded away little by little, and, almost without her knowing it, the lovely woman became completely indifferent to me.

I left Corfu without money, although I had sold or pledged everything I had of any value. Twice I had reached Corfu rich and happy, twice I left it poor and miserable. But this time I had contracted debts which I have never paid, not through want of will but through carelessness.

Rich and in good health, everyone received me with open arms; poor and looking sick, no one shewed me any consideration. With a full purse and the tone of a conqueror, I was thought witty, amusing; with an empty purse and a modest air, all I said appeared dull and insipid. If I had become rich again, how soon I would have been again accounted the eighth wonder of the world! Oh, men! oh, fortune! Everyone avoided me as if the ill luck which crushed me down was infectious.

We left Corfu towards the end of September, with five galleys, two galeasses, and several smaller vessels, under the command of M. Renier. We sailed along the shores of the Adriatic, towards the north of the gulf, where there are a great many harbours, and we put in one of them every night. I saw Madame F —— every evening; she always came with her husband to take supper on board our galeass. We had a fortunate voyage, and cast anchor in the harbour of Venice on the 14th of October, 1745, and after having performed quarantine on board our ships, we landed on the 25th of November. Two months afterwards, the galeasses were set aside altogether. The use of these vessels could be traced very far back in ancient times; their maintenance was very expensive, and they were useless. A galeass had the frame of a frigate with the rowing apparatus of the galley, and when there was no wind, five hundred slaves had to row.

Before simple good sense managed to prevail and to enforce the suppression of these useless carcasses, there were long discussions in the senate, and those who opposed the measure took their principal ground of opposition in the necessity of respecting and conserving all the institutions of olden times. That is the disease of persons who can never identify themselves with the successive improvements born of reason and experience; worthy persons who ought to be sent to China, or to the dominions of the Grand Lama, where they would certainly be more at home than in Europe.

That ground of opposition to all improvements, however absurd it may be, is a very powerful one in a republic, which must tremble at the mere idea of novelty either in important or in trifling things. Superstition has likewise a great part to play in these conservative views.

There is one thing that the Republic of Venice will never alter: I mean the galleys, because the Venetians truly require such vessels to ply, in all weathers and in spite of the frequent calms, in a narrow sea, and because they would not know what to do with the men sentenced to hard labour.

I have observed a singular thing in Corfu, where there are often as many as three thousand galley slaves; it is that the men who row on the galleys, in consequence of a sentence passed upon them for some crime, are held in a kind of opprobrium, whilst those who are there voluntarily are, to some extent, respected. I have always thought it ought to be the reverse, because misfortune, whatever it may be, ought to inspire some sort of respect; but the vile fellow who condemns himself voluntarily and as a trade to the position of a slave seems to me contemptible in the highest degree. The convicts of the Republic, however, enjoy many privileges, and are, in every way, better treated than the soldiers. It very often occurs that soldiers desert and give themselves up to a ‘sopracomito’ to become galley slaves. In those cases, the captain who loses a soldier has nothing to do but to submit patiently, for he would claim the man in vain. The reason of it is that the Republic has always believed galley slaves more necessary than soldiers. The Venetians may perhaps now (I am writing these lines in the year 1797) begin to realize their mistake.

A galley slave, for instance, has the privilege of stealing with impunity. It is considered that stealing is the least crime they can be guilty of, and that they ought to be forgiven for it.

“Keep on your guard,” says the master of the galley slave; “and if you catch him in the act of stealing, thrash him, but be careful not to cripple him; otherwise you must pay me the one hundred ducats the man has cost me.”

A court of justice could not have a galley slave taken from a galley, without paying the master the amount he has disbursed for the man.

As soon as I had landed in Venice, I called upon Madame Orio, but I found the house empty. A neighbour told me that she had married the Procurator Rosa, and had removed to his house. I went immediately to M. Rosa and was well received. Madame Orio informed me that Nanette had become Countess R., and was living in Guastalla with her husband.

Twenty-four years afterwards, I met her eldest son, then a distinguished officer in the service of the Infante of Parma.

As for Marton, the grace of Heaven had touched her, and she had become a nun in the convent at Muran. Two years afterwards, I received from her a letter full of unction, in which she adjured me, in the name of Our Saviour and of the Holy Virgin, never to present myself before her eyes. She added that she was bound by Christian charity to forgive me for the crime I had committed in seducing her, and she felt certain of the reward of the elect, and she assured me that she would ever pray earnestly for my conversion.

I never saw her again, but she saw me in 1754, as I will mention when we reach that year.

I found Madame Manzoni still the same. She had predicted that I would not remain in the military profession, and when I told her that I had made up my mind to give it up, because I could not be reconciled to the injustice I had experienced, she burst out laughing. She enquired about the profession I intended to follow after giving up the army, and I answered that I wished to become an advocate. She laughed again, saying that it was too late. Yet I was only twenty years old.

When I called upon M. Grimani I had a friendly welcome from him, but, having enquired after my brother Francois, he told me that he had had him confined in Fort Saint Andre, the same to which I had been sent before the arrival of the Bishop of Martorano.

“He works for the major there,” he said; “he copies Simonetti’s battle-pieces, and the major pays him for them; in that manner he earns his living, and is becoming a good painter.”

“But he is not a prisoner?”

“Well, very much like it, for he cannot leave the fort. The major, whose name is Spiridion, is a friend of Razetta, who could not refuse him the pleasure of taking care of your brother.”

I felt it a dreadful curse that the fatal Razetta should be the tormentor of all my family, but I concealed my anger.

“Is my sister,” I enquired, “still with him?”

“No, she has gone to your mother in Dresden.”

This was good news.

I took a cordial leave of the Abbe Grimani, and I proceeded to Fort Saint Andre. I found my brother hard at work, neither pleased nor displeased with his position, and enjoying good health. After embracing him affectionately, I enquired what crime he had committed to be thus a prisoner.

“Ask the major,” he said, “for I have not the faintest idea.”

The major came in just then, so I gave him the military salute, and asked by what authority he kept my brother under arrest.

“I am not accountable to you for my actions.”

“That remains to be seen.”

I then told my brother to take his hat, and to come and dine with me. The major laughed, and said that he had no objection provided the sentinel allowed him to pass.

I saw that I should only waste my time in discussion, and I left the fort fully bent on obtaining justice.

The next day I went to the war office, where I had the pleasure of meeting my dear Major Pelodoro, who was then commander of the Fortress of Chiozza. I informed him of the complaint I wanted to prefer before the secretary of war respecting my brother’s arrest, and of the resolution I had taken to leave the army. He promised me that, as soon as the consent of the secretary for war could be obtained, he would find a purchaser for my commission at the same price I had paid for it.

I had not long to wait. The war secretary came to the office, and everything was settled in half an hour. He promised his consent to the sale of my commission as soon as he ascertained the abilities of the purchaser, and Major Spiridion happening to make his appearance in the office while I was still there, the secretary ordered him rather angrily, to set my brother at liberty immediately, and cautioned him not to be guilty again of such reprehensible and arbitrary acts.

I went at once for my brother, and we lived together in furnished lodgings.

A few days afterwards, having received my discharge and one hundred sequins, I threw off my uniform, and found myself once more my own master.

I had to earn my living in one way or another, and I decided for the profession of gamester. But Dame Fortune was not of the same opinion, for she refused to smile upon me from the very first step I took in the career, and in less than a week I did not possess a groat. What was to become of me? One must live, and I turned fiddler. Doctor Gozzi had taught me well enough to enable me to scrape on the violin in the orchestra of a theatre, and having mentioned my wishes to M. Grimani he procured me an engagement at his own theatre of Saint Samuel, where I earned a crown a day, and supported myself while I awaited better things.

Fully aware of my real position, I never shewed myself in the fashionable circles which I used to frequent before my fortune had sunk so low. I knew that I was considered as a worthless fellow, but I did not care. People despised me, as a matter of course; but I found comfort in the consciousness that I was worthy of contempt. I felt humiliated by the position to which I was reduced after having played so brilliant a part in society; but as I kept the secret to myself I was not degraded, even if I felt some shame. I had not exchanged my last word with Dame Fortune, and was still in hope of reckoning with her some day, because I was young, and youth is dear to Fortune.

CHAPTER XVII

I Turn Out A Worthless Fellow — My Good Fortune — I Become A Rich Nobleman

With an education which ought to have ensured me an honourable standing in the world, with some intelligence, wit, good literary and scientific knowledge, and endowed with those accidental physical qualities which are such a good passport into society, I found myself, at the age of twenty, the mean follower of a sublime art, in which, if great talent is rightly admired, mediocrity is as rightly despised. I was compelled by poverty to become a member of a musical band, in which I could expect neither esteem nor consideration, and I was well aware that I should be the laughing-stock of the persons who had known me as a doctor in divinity, as an ecclesiastic, and as an officer in the army, and had welcomed me in the highest society.

I knew all that, for I was not blind to my position; but contempt, the only thing to which I could not have remained indifferent, never shewed itself anywhere under a form tangible enough for me to have no doubt of my being despised, and I set it at defiance, because I was satisfied that contempt is due only to cowardly, mean actions, and I was conscious that I had never been guilty of any. As to public esteem, which I had ever been anxious to secure, my ambition was slumbering, and satisfied with being my own master I enjoyed my independence without puzzling my head about the future. I felt that in my first profession, as I was not blessed with the vocation necessary to it, I should have succeeded only by dint of hypocrisy, and I should have been despicable in my own estimation, even if I had seen the purple mantle on my shoulders, for the greatest dignities cannot silence a man's own conscience. If, on the other hand, I had continued to seek fortune in a military career, which is surrounded by a halo of glory, but is otherwise the worst of professions for the constant self-abnegation, for the complete surrender of one's will which passive obedience demands, I should have required a patience to which I could not lay any claim, as every kind of injustice was revolting to me, and as I could not bear to feel myself dependent. Besides, I was of opinion that a man's profession, whatever it might be, ought to supply him with enough money to satisfy all his wants; and the very poor pay of an officer would never have been sufficient to cover my expenses, because my education had given me greater wants than those of officers in general. By scraping my violin I earned enough to keep myself without requiring anybody's assistance, and I have always thought that the man who can support himself is happy. I grant that my profession was not a brilliant one, but I did not mind it, and, calling prejudices all the feelings which rose in my breast against myself, I was not long in sharing all the habits of my degraded comrades. When the play was over, I went with them to the drinking-booth, which we often left intoxicated to spend the night in houses of ill-fame. When we happened to find those places already tenanted by other men, we forced them by violence to quit the premises, and defrauded the miserable victims of prostitution of the mean salary the law allows them, after compelling them to yield to our brutality. Our scandalous proceedings often exposed us to the greatest danger.

We would very often spend the whole night rambling about the city, inventing and carrying into execution the most impertinent, practical jokes. One of our favourite pleasures was to unmoor the patricians' gondolas, and to let them float at random along the canals, enjoying by anticipation all the curses that gondoliers would not fail to indulge in. We would rouse up hurriedly, in the middle of the night, an honest midwife, telling her to hasten to Madame So-and-so, who, not being even pregnant, was sure to tell her she was a fool when she called at the house. We did the same with physicians, whom we often sent half dressed to some nobleman who was enjoying excellent health. The priests fared no better; we would send them to carry the last sacraments to married men who were peacefully slumbering near their wives, and not thinking of extreme unction.

We were in the habit of cutting the wires of the bells in every house, and if we chanced to find a gate open we would go up the stairs in the dark, and frighten the sleeping inmates by telling them very loudly that the house door was not closed, after which we would go down, making as much noise as we could, and leave the house with the gate wide open.

During a very dark night we formed a plot to overturn the large marble table of St. Angelo's Square, on which it was said that in the days of the League of Cambray the commissaries of the Republic were in the habit of paying the bounty to the recruits who engaged to fight under the standard of St. Mark — a circumstance which secured for the table a sort of public veneration.

Whenever we could contrive to get into a church tower we thought it great fun to frighten all the parish by ringing the alarm bell, as if some fire had broken out; but that was not all, we always cut the bell ropes, so that in the morning the churchwardens had no means of summoning the faithful to early mass. Sometimes we would cross the canal, each of us in a different gondola, and take to our heels without paying as soon as we landed on the opposite side, in order to make the gondoliers run after us.

The city was alive with complaints, and we laughed at the useless search made by the police to find out those who disturbed the peace of the inhabitants. We took good care to be careful, for if we had been discovered we stood a very fair chance of being sent to practice rowing at the expense of the Council of Ten.

We were seven, and sometimes eight, because, being much attached to my brother Francois, I gave him a share now and then in our nocturnal orgies. But at last fear put a stop to our criminal jokes, which in those days I used to call only the frolics of young men. This is the amusing adventure which closed our exploits.

In every one of the seventy-two parishes of the city of Venice, there is a large public-house called ‘magazzino’. It remains open all night, and wine is retailed there at a cheaper price than in all the other drinking houses. People can likewise eat in the ‘magazzino’, but they must obtain what they want from the pork butcher near by, who has the exclusive sale of eatables, and likewise keeps his shop open throughout the night. The pork butcher is usually a very poor cook, but as he is cheap, poor people are willingly satisfied with him, and these resorts are considered very useful to the lower class. The nobility, the merchants, even workmen in good circumstances, are never seen in the ‘magazzino’, for cleanliness is not exactly worshipped in such places. Yet there are a few private rooms which contain a table surrounded with benches, in which a respectable family or a few friends can enjoy themselves in a decent way.

It was during the Carnival of 1745, after midnight; we were, all the eight of us, rambling about together with our masks on, in quest of some new sort of mischief to amuse us, and we went into the magazzino of the parish of the Holy Cross to get something to drink. We found the public room empty, but in one of the private chambers we discovered three men quietly conversing with a young and pretty woman, and enjoying their wine.

Our chief, a noble Venetian belonging to the Balbi family, said to us, “It would be a good joke to carry off those three blockheads, and to keep the pretty woman in our possession.” He immediately explained his plan, and under cover of our masks we entered their room, Balbi at the head of us. Our sudden appearance rather surprised the good people, but you may fancy their astonishment when they heard Balbi say to them: “Under penalty of death, and by order of the Council of Ten, I command you to follow us immediately, without making the slightest noise; as to you, my good woman, you need not be frightened, you will be escorted to your house." When he had finished his speech, two of us got hold of the woman to take her where our chief had arranged beforehand, and the others seized the three poor fellows, who were trembling all over, and had not the slightest idea of opposing any resistance.

The waiter of the magazzino came to be paid, and our chief gave him what was due, enjoining silence under penalty of death. We took our three prisoners to a large boat. Balbi went to the stern, ordered the boatman to stand at the bow, and told him that he need not enquire where we were going, that he would steer himself whichever way he thought fit. Not one of us knew where Balbi wanted to take the three poor devils.

He sails all along the canal, gets out of it, takes several turnings, and in a quarter of an hour, we reach Saint George where Balbi lands our prisoners, who are delighted to find themselves at liberty. After this, the boatman is ordered to take us to Saint Genevieve, where we land, after paying for the boat.

We proceed at once to Palombo Square, where my brother and another of our band were waiting for us with our lovely prisoner, who was crying.

"Do not weep, my beauty," says Balbi to her, "we will not hurt you. We intend only to take some refreshment at the Rialto, and then we will take you home in safety."

"Where is my husband?"

"Never fear; you shall see him again to-morrow."

Comforted by that promise, and as gentle as a lamb, she follows us to the "Two Swords." We ordered a good fire in a private room, and, everything we wanted to eat and to drink having been brought in, we send the waiter away, and remain alone. We take off our masks, and the sight of eight young, healthy faces seems to please the beauty we had so unceremoniously carried off. We soon manage to reconcile her to her fate by the gallantry of our proceedings; encouraged by a good supper and by the stimulus of wine, prepared by our compliments and by a few kisses, she realizes what is in store for her, and does not seem to have any unconquerable objection. Our chief, as a matter of right, claims the privilege of opening the ball; and by dint of sweet words he overcomes the very natural repugnance she feels at consummating the sacrifice in so numerous company. She, doubtless, thinks the offering agreeable, for, when I present myself as the priest appointed to sacrifice a second time to the god of love, she receives me almost with gratitude, and she cannot conceal her joy when she finds out that she is destined to make us all happy. My brother Francois alone exempted himself from paying the tribute, saying that he was ill, the only excuse which could render his refusal valid, for we had established as a law that every member of our society was bound to do whatever was done by the others.

After that fine exploit, we put on our masks, and, the bill being paid, escorted the happy victim to Saint Job, where she lived, and did not leave her till we had seen her safe in her house, and the street door closed.

My readers may imagine whether we felt inclined to laugh when the charming creature bade us good night, thanking us all with perfect good faith!

Two days afterwards, our nocturnal orgy began to be talked of. The young woman's husband was a weaver by trade, and so were his two friends. They joined together to address a complaint to the Council of Ten. The complaint was candidly written and contained nothing but the truth, but the criminal portion of the truth was veiled by a circumstance which must have brought a smile on the grave countenances of the judges, and highly amused the public at large: the complaint setting forth that the eight masked men had not rendered themselves guilty of any act disagreeable to the wife. It went on to say that the two men who had carried her off had taken her to such a place, where they had, an hour later, been met by the other six, and that they had all repaired to the "Two Swords," where they had spent an hour in drinking. The said lady having been handsomely entertained by the eight masked men, had been escorted to her house, where she had been politely requested to excuse the joke perpetrated upon her husband. The three plaintiffs had not been able to leave the island of Saint George until day-break, and the husband, on reaching his house, had found his wife quietly asleep in her bed. She had informed him of all that had happened; she complained of nothing but of the great fright she had experienced on account of her husband, and on that count she entreated justice and the punishment of the guilty parties.

That complaint was comic throughout, for the three rogues shewed themselves very brave in writing, stating that they would certainly not have given way so easily if the dread authority of the council had not been put forth by the leader of the band. The document produced three different results; in the first place, it amused the town; in the second, all the idlers of Venice went to Saint Job to hear the account of the adventure from the lips of the heroine herself, and she got many presents from her numerous visitors; in the third place, the Council of Ten offered a reward of five hundred ducats to any person giving such information as would lead to the arrest of the perpetrators of the practical joke, even if the informer belonged to the band, provided he was not the leader.

The offer of that reward would have made us tremble if our leader, precisely the one who alone had no interest in turning informer, had not been a patrician. The rank of Balbi quieted my anxiety at once, because I knew that, even supposing one of us were vile enough to betray our secret for the sake of the reward, the tribunal would have done nothing in order not to implicate a patrician. There was no cowardly traitor amongst us, although we were all poor; but fear had its effect, and our nocturnal pranks were not renewed.

Three or four months afterwards the chevalier Nicolas Iron, then one of the inquisitors, astonished me greatly by telling me the whole story, giving the names of all the actors. He did not tell me whether any one of the band had betrayed the secret, and I did not care to know; but I could clearly see the characteristic spirit of the aristocracy, for which the ‘solo mihi’ is the supreme law.

Towards the middle of April of the year 1746 M. Girolamo Cornaro, the eldest son of the family Cornaro de la Reine, married a daughter of the house of Soranzo de St. Pol, and I had the honour of being present at the wedding — as a fiddler. I played the violin in one of the numerous bands engaged for the balls which were given for three consecutive days in the Soranzo Palace.

On the third day, towards the end of the dancing, an hour before day-break, feeling tired, I left the orchestra abruptly; and as I was going down the stairs I observed a senator, wearing his red robes, on the point of getting into a gondola. In taking his handkerchief out of his pocket he let a letter drop on the ground. I picked it up, and coming up to him just as he was going down the steps I handed it to him. He received it with many thanks, and enquired where I lived. I told him, and he insisted upon my coming with him in the gondola saying that he would leave me at my house. I accepted gratefully, and sat down near him. A few minutes afterwards he asked me to rub his left arm, which, he said, was so benumbed that he could not feel it. I rubbed it with all my strength, but he told me in a sort of indistinct whisper that the numbness was spreading all along the left side, and that he was dying.

I was greatly frightened; I opened the curtain, took the lantern, and found him almost insensible, and the mouth drawn on one side. I understood that he was seized with an apoplectic stroke, and called out to the gondoliers to land me at once, in order to procure a surgeon to bleed the patient.

I jumped out of the gondola, and found myself on the very spot where three years before I had taught Razetta such a forcible lesson; I enquired for a surgeon at the first coffee-house, and ran to the house that was pointed out to me. I knocked as hard as I could; the door was at last opened, and I made the surgeon follow me in his dressing-gown as far as the gondola, which was waiting; he bled the senator while I was tearing my shirt to make the compress and the bandage.

The operation being performed, I ordered the gondoliers to row as fast as possible, and we soon reached St. Marina; the servants were roused up, and taking the sick man out of the gondola we carried him to his bed almost dead.

Taking everything upon myself, I ordered a servant to hurry out for a physician, who came in a short time, and ordered the patient to be bled again, thus approving the first bleeding prescribed by me. Thinking I had a right to watch the sick man, I settled myself near his bed to give him every care he required.

An hour later, two noblemen, friends of the senator, came in, one a few minutes after the other. They were in despair; they had enquired about the accident from the gondoliers, and having been told that I knew more than they did, they loaded me with questions which I answered. They did not know who I was, and did not like to ask me; whilst I thought it better to preserve a modest silence.

The patient did not move; his breathing alone shewed that he was still alive; fomentations were constantly applied, and the priest who had been sent for, and was of very little use under such circumstances, seemed to be there only to see him die. All visitors were sent away by my advice, and the two noblemen and myself were the only persons in the sick man's room. At noon we partook silently of some dinner which was served in the sick room.

In the evening one of the two friends told me that if I had any business to attend to I could go, because they would both pass the night on a mattress near the patient.

"And I, sir," I said, "will remain near his bed in this arm-chair, for if I went away the patient would die, and he will live as long as I am near him."

This sententious answer struck them with astonishment, as I expected it would, and they looked at each other in great surprise.

We had supper, and in the little conversation we had I gathered the information that the senator, their friend, was M. de Bragadin, the only brother of the procurator of that name. He was celebrated in Venice not only for his eloquence and his great talents as a statesman, but also for the gallantries of his youth. He had been very extravagant with women, and more than one of them had committed many follies for him. He had gambled and lost a great deal, and his brother was his most bitter enemy, because he was infatuated with the idea that he had tried to poison him. He had accused him of that crime before the Council of Ten, which, after an investigation of eight months, had brought in a verdict of not guilty: but that just sentence, although given unanimously by that high tribunal, had not had the effect of destroying his brother's prejudices against him.

M. de Bragadin, who was perfectly innocent of such a crime and oppressed by an unjust brother who deprived him of half of his income, spent his days like an amiable philosopher, surrounded by his friends, amongst whom were the two noblemen who were then watching him; one belonged to the Dandolo family, the other was a Barbaro, and both were excellent men. M. de Bragadin was handsome, learned, cheerful, and most kindly disposed; he was then about fifty years old.

The physician who attended him was named Terro; he thought, by some peculiar train of reasoning, that he could cure him by applying a mercurial ointment to the chest, to which no one raised any objection. The rapid effect of the remedy delighted the two friends, but it frightened me, for in less than twenty-four hours the patient was labouring under great excitement of the brain. The physician said that he had expected that effect, but that on the following day the remedy would act less on the brain, and diffuse its beneficial action through the whole of the system, which required to be invigorated by a proper equilibrium in the circulation of the fluids.

At midnight the patient was in a state of high fever, and in a fearful state of irritation. I examined him closely, and found him hardly able to breathe. I roused up his two friends; and declared that in my opinion the patient would soon die unless the fatal ointment was at once removed. And without waiting for their answer, I bared his chest, took off the plaster, washed the skin carefully with lukewarm water, and in less than three minutes he breathed freely and fell into a quiet sleep. Delighted with such a fortunate result, we lay down again.

The physician came very early in the morning, and was much pleased to see his patient so much better, but when M. Dandolo informed him of what had been done, he was angry, said it was enough to kill his patient, and asked who had been so audacious as to destroy the effect of his prescription. M. de Bragadin, speaking for the first time, said to him —

“Doctor, the person who has delivered me from your mercury, which was killing me, is a more skilful physician than you;” and, saying these words, he pointed to me.

It would be hard to say who was the more astonished: the doctor, when he saw an unknown young man, whom he must have taken for an impostor, declared more learned than himself; or I, when I saw myself transformed into a physician, at a moment’s notice. I kept silent, looking very modest, but hardly able to control my mirth, whilst the doctor was staring at me with a mixture of astonishment and of spite, evidently thinking me some bold quack who had tried to supplant him. At last, turning towards M. de Bragadin, he told him coldly that he would leave him in my hands; he was taken at his word, he went away, and behold! I had become the physician of one of the most illustrious members of the Venetian Senate! I must confess that I was very glad of it, and I told my patient that a proper diet was all he needed, and that nature, assisted by the approaching fine season, would do the rest.

The dismissed physician related the affair through the town, and, as M. de Bragadin was rapidly improving, one of his relations, who came to see him, told him that everybody was astonished at his having chosen for his physician a fiddler from the theatre; but the senator put a stop to his remarks by answering that a fiddler could know more than all the doctors in Venice, and that he owed his life to me.

The worthy nobleman considered me as his oracle, and his two friends listened to me with the deepest attention. Their infatuation encouraging me, I spoke like a learned physician, I dogmatized, I quoted authors whom I had never read.

M. de Bragadin, who had the weakness to believe in the occult sciences, told me one day that, for a young man of my age, he thought my learning too extensive, and that he was certain I was the possessor of some supernatural endowment. He entreated me to tell him the truth.

What extraordinary things will sometimes occur from mere chance, or from the force of circumstances! Unwilling to hurt his vanity by telling him that he was mistaken, I took the wild resolution of informing him, in the presence of his two friends, that I possessed a certain numeral calculus which gave answers (also in numbers), to any questions I liked to put.

M. de Bragadin said that it was Solomon’s key, vulgarly called cabalistic science, and he asked me from whom I learnt it.

“From an old hermit,” I answered, “who lives on the Carpegna Mountain, and whose acquaintance I made quite by chance when I was a prisoner in the Spanish army.”

“The hermit,” remarked the senator, “has without informing you of it, linked an invisible spirit to the calculus he has taught you, for simple numbers can not have the power of reason. You possess a real treasure, and you may derive great advantages from it.”

“I do not know,” I said, “in what way I could make my science useful, because the answers given by the numerical figures are often so obscure that I have felt discouraged, and I very seldom tried to make any use of my calculus. Yet, it is very true that, if I had not formed my pyramid, I never should have had the happiness of knowing your excellency."

"How so?"

"On the second day, during the festivities at the Soranzo Palace, I enquired of my oracle whether I would meet at the ball anyone whom I should not care to see. The answer I obtained was this: 'Leave the ball-room precisely at four o'clock.' I obeyed implicitly, and met your excellency."

The three friends were astounded. M. Dandolo asked me whether I would answer a question he would ask, the interpretation of which would belong only to him, as he was the only person acquainted with the subject of the question.

I declared myself quite willing, for it was necessary to brazen it out, after having ventured as far as I had done. He wrote the question, and gave it to me; I read it, I could not understand either the subject or the meaning of the words, but it did not matter, I had to give an answer. If the question was so obscure that I could not make out the sense of it, it was natural that I should not understand the answer. I therefore answered, in ordinary figures, four lines of which he alone could be the interpreter, not caring much, at least in appearance, how they would be understood. M. Dandolo read them twice over, seemed astonished, said that it was all very plain to him; it was Divine, it was unique, it was a gift from Heaven, the numbers being only the vehicle, but the answer emanating evidently from an immortal spirit.

M. Dandolo was so well pleased that his two friends very naturally wanted also to make an experiment. They asked questions on all sorts of subjects, and my answers, perfectly unintelligible to myself, were all held as Divine by them. I congratulated them on their success, and congratulated myself in their presence upon being the possessor of a thing to which I had until then attached no importance whatever, but which I promised to cultivate carefully, knowing that I could thus be of some service to their excellencies.

They all asked me how long I would require to teach them the rules of my sublime calculus. "Not very long," I answered, "and I will teach you as you wish, although the hermit assured me that I would die suddenly within three days if I communicated my science to anyone, but I have no faith whatever in that prediction." M. de Bragadin who believed in it more than I did, told me in a serious tone that I was bound to have faith in it, and from that day they never asked me again to teach them. They very likely thought that, if they could attach me to them, it would answer the purpose as well as if they possessed the science themselves. Thus I became the hierophant of those three worthy and talented men, who, in spite of their literary accomplishments, were not wise, since they were infatuated with occult and fabulous sciences, and believed in the existence of phenomena impossible in the moral as well as in the physical order of things. They believed that through me they possessed the philosopher's stone, the universal panacea, the intercourse with all the elementary, heavenly, and infernal spirits; they had no doubt whatever that, thanks to my sublime science, they could find out the secrets of every government in Europe.

After they had assured themselves of the reality of my cabalistic science by questions respecting the past, they decided to turn it to some use by consulting it upon the present and upon the future. I had no difficulty in skewing myself a good guesser, because I always gave answers with a double meaning, one of the meanings being carefully arranged by me, so as not to be understood until after the event; in that manner, my cabalistic science, like the oracle of Delphi, could never be found in fault. I saw how easy it must have been for the ancient heathen priests to impose upon ignorant, and therefore credulous mankind. I saw how easy it will always be for impostors to find dupes, and I realized, even better than the Roman orator, why two augurs could never look at each other without laughing; it was because they had both an equal interest in giving importance to the deceit they perpetrated, and from which they derived such immense profits. But what I could not, and probably never shall, understand, was the reason for which the Fathers, who were not so simple or so ignorant as our Evangelists, did not feel able to deny the divinity of oracles, and, in order to get out of the difficulty, ascribed them to the devil. They never would have entertained such a strange idea if they had been acquainted with cabalistic science. My three worthy friends were like the holy Fathers; they had intelligence and wit, but they were superstitious, and no philosophers. But, although believing fully in my oracles, they were too kind-hearted to think them the work of the devil, and it suited their natural goodness better to believe my answers inspired by some heavenly spirit. They were not only good Christians and faithful to the Church, but even real devotees and full of scruples. They were not married, and, after having renounced all commerce with women, they had become the enemies of the female sex; perhaps a strong proof of the weakness of their minds. They imagined that chastity was the condition ‘sine qua non’ exacted by the spirits from those who wished to have intimate communication or intercourse with them: they fancied that spirits excluded women, and ‘vice versa’.

With all these oddities, the three friends were truly intelligent and even witty, and, at the beginning of my acquaintance with them, I could not reconcile these antagonistic points. But a prejudiced mind cannot reason well, and the faculty of reasoning is the most important of all. I often laughed when I heard them talk on religious matters; they would ridicule those whose intellectual faculties were so limited that they could not understand the mysteries of religion. The incarnation of the Word, they would say, was a trifle for God, and therefore easy to understand, and the resurrection was so comprehensible that it did not appear to them wonderful, because, as God cannot die, Jesus Christ was naturally certain to rise again. As for the Eucharist, transubstantiation, the real presence, it was all no mystery to them, but palpable evidence, and yet they were not Jesuits. They were in the habit of going to confession every week, without feeling the slightest trouble about their confessors, whose ignorance they kindly regretted. They thought themselves bound to confess only what was a sin in their own opinion, and in that, at least, they reasoned with good sense.

With those three extraordinary characters, worthy of esteem and respect for their moral qualities, their honesty, their reputation, and their age, as well as for their noble birth, I spent my days in a very pleasant manner: although, in their thirst for knowledge, they often kept me hard at work for ten hours running, all four of us being locked up together in a room, and unapproachable to everybody, even to friends or relatives.

I completed the conquest of their friendship by relating to them the whole of my life, only with some proper reserve, so as not to lead them into any capital sins. I confess candidly that I deceived them, as the Papa Deldimopulo used to deceive the Greeks who applied to him for the oracles of the Virgin. I certainly did not act towards them with a true sense of honesty, but if the reader to whom I confess myself is acquainted with the world and with the spirit of society, I entreat him to think before judging me, and perhaps I may meet with some indulgence at his hands.

I might be told that if I had wished to follow the rules of pure morality I ought either to have declined intimate intercourse with them or to have undeceived them. I cannot deny these premises, but I will answer that I was only twenty years of age, I was intelligent, talented, and had just been a poor fiddler. I should have lost my time in trying to cure them of their weakness; I should not have succeeded, for they would have laughed in my face, deplored my ignorance, and the result of it all would have been my dismissal. Besides, I had no mission, no right, to constitute myself an apostle, and if I had heroically resolved on leaving them as soon as I knew them to be foolish visionaries, I should have shewn myself a misanthrope, the enemy of those worthy men for whom I could procure innocent pleasures, and my own enemy at the same time; because, as a young man, I liked to live well, to enjoy all the pleasures natural to youth and to a good constitution.

By acting in that manner I should have failed in common politeness, I should perhaps have caused or allowed M. de Bragadin’s death, and I should have exposed those three honest men to becoming the victims of the first bold cheat who, ministering to their monomania, might have won their favour, and would have ruined them by inducing them to undertake the chemical operations of the Great Work. There is also another consideration, dear reader, and as I love you I will tell you what it is. An invincible self-love would have prevented me from declaring myself unworthy of their friendship either by my ignorance or by my pride; and I should have been guilty of great rudeness if I had ceased to visit them.

I took, at least it seems to me so, the best, the most natural, and the noblest decision, if we consider the disposition of their mind, when I decided upon the plan of conduct which insured me the necessaries of life and of those necessaries who could be a better judge than your very humble servant?

Through the friendship of those three men, I was certain of obtaining consideration and influence in my own country. Besides, I found it very flattering to my vanity to become the subject of the speculative chattering of empty fools who, having nothing else to do, are always trying to find out the cause of every moral phenomenon they meet with, which their narrow intellect cannot understand.

People racked their brain in Venice to find out how my intimacy with three men of that high character could possibly exist; they were wrapped up in heavenly aspirations, I was a world's devotee; they were very strict in their morals, I was thirsty of all pleasures! At the beginning of summer, M. de Bragadin was once, more able to take his seat in the senate, and, the day before he went out for the first time, he spoke to me thus:

"Whoever you may be, I am indebted to you for my life. Your first protectors wanted to make you a priest, a doctor, an advocate, a soldier, and ended by making a fiddler of you; those persons did not know you. God had evidently instructed your guardian angel to bring you to me. I know you and appreciate you. If you will be my son, you have only to acknowledge me for your father, and, for the future, until my death, I will treat you as my own child. Your apartment is ready, you may send your clothes: you shall have a servant, a gondola at your orders, my own table, and ten sequins a month. It is the sum I used to receive from my father when I was your age. You need not think of the future; think only of enjoying yourself, and take me as your adviser in everything that may happen to you, in everything you may wish to undertake, and you may be certain of always finding me your friend."

I threw myself at his feet to assure him of my gratitude, and embraced him calling him my father. He folded me in his arms, called me his dear son; I promised to love and to obey him; his two friends, who lived in the same palace, embraced me affectionately, and we swore eternal fraternity.

Such is the history of my metamorphosis, and of the lucky stroke which, taking me from the vile profession of a fiddler, raised me to the rank of a grandee.

CHAPTER XVIII

I lead a dissolute life — Zawoiski — Rinaldi — L'Abbadie — the young countess — the Capuchin friar Z. Steffani — Ancilla — La Ramor — I take a gondola at St. Job to go to Mestra.

Fortune, which had taken pleasure in giving me a specimen of its despotic caprice, and had insured my happiness through means which sages would disavow, had not the power to make me adopt a system of moderation and prudence which alone could establish my future welfare on a firm basis.

My ardent nature, my irresistible love of pleasure, my unconquerable independence, would not allow me to submit to the reserve which my new position in life demanded from me. I began to lead a life of complete freedom, caring for nothing but what ministered to my tastes, and I thought that, as long as I respected the laws, I could trample all prejudices under my feet. I fancied that I could live free and independent in a country ruled entirely by an aristocratic government, but this was not the case, and would not have been so even if fortune had raised me to a seat in that same government, for the Republic of Venice, considering that its primary duty is to preserve its own integrity, finds itself the slave of its own policy, and is bound to sacrifice everything to self-preservation, before which the laws themselves cease to be inviolable.

But let us abandon the discussion of a principle now too trite, for humankind, at least in Europe, is satisfied that unlimited liberty is nowhere consistent with a properly-regulated state of society. I have touched lightly on the matter, only to give to my readers some idea of my conduct in my own country, where I began to tread a path which was to lead me to a state prison as inscrutable as it was unconstitutional.

With enough money, endowed by nature with a pleasing and commanding physical appearance, a confirmed gambler, a true spendthrift, a great talker, very far from modest, intrepid, always running after pretty women, supplanting my rivals, and acknowledging no good company but that which ministered to my enjoyment, I was certain to be disliked; but, ever ready to expose myself to any danger, and to take the responsibility of all my actions, I thought I had a right to do anything I pleased, for I always broke down abruptly every obstacle I found in my way.

Such conduct could not but be disagreeable to the three worthy men whose oracle I had become, but they did not like to complain. The excellent M. de Bragadin would only tell me that I was giving him a repetition of the foolish life he had himself led at my age, but that I must prepare to pay the penalty of my follies, and to feel the punishment when I should reach his time of life. Without wanting in the respect I owed him, I would turn his terrible forebodings into jest, and continue my course of extravagance.

However, I must mention here the first proof he gave me of his true wisdom.

At the house of Madame Avogadro, a woman full of wit in spite of her sixty years, I had made the acquaintance of a young Polish nobleman called Zawoiski. He was expecting money from Poland, but in the mean time the Venetian ladies did not let him want for any, being all very much in love with his handsome face and his Polish manners. We soon became good friends, my purse was his, but, twenty years later, he assisted me to a far greater extent in Munich. Zawoiski was honest, he had only a small dose of intelligence, but it was enough for his happiness. He died in Trieste five or six years ago, the ambassador of the Elector of Treves. I will speak of him in another part of these Memoirs.

This amiable young man, who was a favourite with everybody and was thought a free-thinker because he frequented the society of Angelo Querini and Lunardo Venier, presented me one day, as we were out walking, to an unknown countess who took my fancy very strongly. We called on her in the evening, and, after introducing me to her husband, Count Rinaldi, she invited us to remain and have supper.

The count made a faro bank in the course of the evening, I punted with his wife as a partner, and won some fifty ducats.

Very much pleased with my new acquaintance, I called alone on the countess the next morning. The count, apologizing for his wife who was not up yet, took me to her room. She received me with graceful ease, and, her husband having left us alone, she had the art to let me hope for every favour, yet without committing herself; when I took leave of her, she invited me to supper for the evening. After supper I played, still in partnership with her, won again, and went away very much in love. I did not fail to pay her another visit the next morning, but when I presented myself at the house I was told that she had gone out.

I called again in the evening, and, after she had excused herself for not having been at home in the morning, the faro bank began, and I lost all my money, still having the countess for my partner. After supper, and when the other guests had retired, I remained with Zawoiski, Count Rinaldi having offered to give us our revenge. As I had no more money, I played upon trust, and the count threw down the cards after I had lost five hundred sequins. I went away in great sorrow. I was bound in honour to pay the next morning, and I did not possess a groat. Love increased my despair, for I saw myself on the point of losing the esteem of a woman by whom I was smitten, and the anxiety I felt did not escape M. de Bragadin when we met in the morning. He kindly encouraged me to confess my troubles to him. I was conscious that it was my only chance, and candidly related the whole affair, and I ended by saying that I should not survive my disgrace. He consoled me by promising that my debt would be cancelled in the course of the day, if I would swear never to play again upon trust. I took an oath to that effect, and kissing his hand, I went out for a walk, relieved from a great load. I had no doubt that my excellent father would give me five hundred sequins during the day, and I enjoyed my anticipation the honour I would derive, in the opinion of the lovely countess, by my exactitude and prompt discharge of my debt. I felt that it gave new strength to my hopes, and that feeling prevented me from regretting my heavy loss, but grateful for the great generosity of my benefactor I was fully determined on keeping my promise.

I dined with the three friends, and the matter was not even alluded to; but, as we were rising from the table, a servant brought M. de Bragadin a letter and a parcel.

He read the letter, asked me to follow him into his study, and the moment we were alone, he said;

“Here is a parcel for you.”

I opened it, and found some forty sequins. Seeing my surprise, M. de Bragadin laughed merrily and handed me the letter, the contents of which ran thus:

“M. de Casanova may be sure that our playing last night was only a joke: he owes me nothing. My wife begs to send him half of the gold which he has lost in cash. “COUNT RINALDI.”

I looked at M. de Bragadin, perfectly amazed, and he burst out laughing. I guessed the truth, thanked him, and embracing him tenderly I promised to be wiser for the future. The mist I had before my eyes was dispelled, I felt that my love was defunct, and I remained rather ashamed, when I realized that I had been the dupe of the wife as well as of the husband.

“This evening,” said my clever physician, “you can have a gay supper with the charming countess.”

“This evening, my dear, respected benefactor, I will have supper with you. You have given me a masterly lesson.”

“The next time you lose money upon trust, you had better not pay it.”

“But I should be dishonoured.”

“Never mind. The sooner you dishonour yourself, the more you will save, for you will always be compelled to accept your dishonour whenever you find yourself utterly unable to pay your losses. It is therefore more prudent not to wait until then.”

“It is much better still to avoid that fatal impossibility by never playing otherwise than with money in hand.”

“No doubt of it, for then you will save both your honour and your purse. But, as you are fond of games of chance, I advise you never to punt. Make the bank, and the advantage must be on your side.”

“Yes, but only a slight advantage.”

“As slight as you please, but it will be on your side, and when the game is over you will find yourself a winner and not a loser. The punter is excited, the banker is calm. The last says, ‘I bet you do not guess,’ while the first says, ‘I bet I can guess.’ Which is the fool, and which is the wise man? The question is easily answered. I adjure you to be prudent, but if you should punt and win, recollect that you are only an idiot if at the end you lose.”

“Why an idiot? Fortune is very fickle.”

“It must necessarily be so; it is a natural consequence. Leave off playing, believe me, the very moment you see luck turning, even if you should, at that moment, win but one groat.”

I had read Plato, and I was astonished at finding a man who could reason like Socrates.

The next day, Zawoiski called on me very early to tell me that I had been expected to supper, and that Count Rinaldi had praised my promptness in paying my debts of honour. I did not think it necessary to undeceive him, but I did not go again to Count Rinaldi’s, whom I saw sixteen years afterwards in Milan. As to Zawoiski, I did not tell him the story till I met him in Carlsbad, old and deaf, forty years later.

Three or four months later, M. de Bragadin taught me another of his masterly lessons. I had become acquainted, through Zawoiski, with a Frenchman called L'Abbadie, who was then soliciting from the Venetian Government the appointment of inspector of the armies of the Republic. The senate appointed, and I presented him to my protector, who promised him his vote; but the circumstance I am going to relate prevented him from fulfilling his promise.

I was in need of one hundred sequins to discharge a few debts, and I begged M. de Bragadin to give them to me.

"Why, my dear son, do you not ask M. de l'Abbadie to render you that service?"

"I should not dare to do so, dear father."

"Try him; I am certain that he will be glad to lend you that sum."

"I doubt it, but I will try."

I called upon L'Abbadie on the following day, and after a short exchange of compliments I told him the service I expected from his friendship. He excused himself in a very polite manner, drowning his refusal in that sea of commonplaces which people are sure to repeat when they cannot or will not oblige a friend. Zawoiski came in as he was still apologizing, and I left them together. I hurried at once to M. de Bragadin, and told him my want of success. He merely remarked that the Frenchman was deficient in intelligence.

It just happened that it was the very day on which the appointment of the inspectorship was to be brought before the senate. I went out to attend to my business (I ought to say to my pleasure), and as I did not return home till after midnight I went to bed without seeing my father. In the morning I said in his presence that I intended to call upon L'Abbadie to congratulate him upon his appointment.

"You may spare yourself that trouble; the senate has rejected his nomination."

"How so? Three days ago L'Abbadie felt sure of his success."

“He was right then, for he would have been appointed if I had not made up my mind to speak against him. I have proved to the senate that a right policy forbade the government to trust such an important post to a foreigner.”

“I am much surprised, for your excellency was not of that opinion the day before yesterday.”

“Very true, but then I did not know M. de l’Abbadie. I found out only yesterday that the man was not sufficiently intelligent to fill the position he was soliciting. Is he likely to possess a sane judgment when he refuses to lend you one hundred sequins? That refusal has cost him an important appointment and an income of three thousand crowns, which would now be his.”

When I was taking my walk on the same day I met Zawoiski with L’Abbadie, and did not try to avoid them. L’Abbadie was furious, and he had some reason to be so.

“If you had told me,” he said angrily, “that the one hundred sequins were intended as a gag to stop M. de Bragadin’s mouth, I would have contrived to procure them for you.”

“If you had had an inspector’s brains you would have easily guessed it.”

The Frenchman’s resentment proved very useful to me, because he related the circumstance to everybody. The result was that from that time those who wanted the patronage of the senator applied to me. Comment is needless; this sort of thing has long been in existence, and will long remain so, because very often, to obtain the highest of favours, all that is necessary is to obtain the good-will of a minister’s favourite or even of his valet. My debts were soon paid.

It was about that time that my brother Jean came to Venice with Guarienti, a converted Jew, a great judge of paintings, who was travelling at the expense of His Majesty the King of Poland, and Elector of Saxony. It was the converted Jew who had purchased for His Majesty the gallery of the Duke of Modena for one hundred thousand sequins. Guarienti and my brother left Venice for Rome, where Jean remained in the studio of the celebrated painter Raphael Mengs, whom we shall meet again hereafter.

Now, as a faithful historian, I must give my readers the story of a certain adventure in which were involved the honour and happiness of one of the most charming women in Italy, who would have been unhappy if I had not been a thoughtless fellow.

In the early part of October, 1746, the theatres being opened, I was walking about with my mask on when I perceived a woman, whose head was well enveloped in the hood of her mantle, getting out of the Ferrara barge which had just arrived. Seeing her alone, and observing her uncertain walk, I felt myself drawn towards her as if an unseen hand had guided me.

I come up to her, and offer my services if I can be of any use to her. She answers timidly that she only wants to make some enquiries.

"We are not here in the right place for conversation," I say to her; "but if you would be kind enough to come with me to a cafe, you would be able to speak and to explain your wishes."

She hesitates, I insist, and she gives way. The tavern was close at hand; we go in, and are alone in a private room. I take off my mask, and out of politeness she must put down the hood of her mantle. A large muslin head-dress conceals half of her face, but her eyes, her nose, and her pretty mouth are enough to let me see on her features beauty, nobleness, sorrow, and that candour which gives youth such an undefinable charm. I need not say that, with such a good letter of introduction, the unknown at once captivated my warmest interest. After wiping away a few tears which are flowing, in spite of all her efforts, she tells me that she belongs to a noble family, that she has run away from her father's house, alone, trusting in God, to meet a Venetian nobleman who had seduced her and then deceived her, thus sealing her everlasting misery.

"You have then some hope of recalling him to the path of duty? I suppose he has promised you marriage?"

"He has engaged his faith to me in writing. The only favour I claim from your kindness is to take me to his house, to leave me there, and to keep my secret."

"You may trust, madam, to the feelings of a man of honour. I am worthy of your trust. Have entire confidence in me, for I already take a deep interest in all your concerns. Tell me his name."

"Alas! sir, I give way to fate."

With these words, she takes out of her bosom a paper which she gives me; I recognize the handwriting of Zanetto Steffani. It was a promise of marriage by which he engaged his word of honour to marry within a week, in Venice, the young countess A —— S —— . When I have read the paper, I return it to her, saying that I knew the writer quite well, that he was connected with the chancellor's office, known as a great libertine, and deeply in debt, but that he would be rich after his mother's death.

"For God's sake take me to his house."

"I will do anything you wish; but have entire confidence in me, and be good enough to hear me. I advise you not to go to his house. He has already done you great injury, and, even supposing that you should happen to find him at home, he might be capable of receiving you badly; if he should not be at home, it is most likely that his mother would not exactly welcome you, if you should tell her who you are and what is your errand. Trust to me, and be quite certain that God has sent me on your way to assist you. I promise you that to-morrow at the latest you shall know whether Steffani is in Venice, what he intends to do with you, and what we may compel him to do. Until then my advice is not to let him know your arrival in Venice."

"Good God! where shall I go to-night?"

"To a respectable house, of course."

"I will go to yours, if you are married."

"I am a bachelor."

I knew an honest widow who resided in a lane, and who had two furnished rooms. I persuade the young countess to follow me, and we take a gondola. As we are gliding along, she tells me that, one month before, Steffani had stopped in her neighbourhood for necessary repairs to his travelling-carriage, and that, on the same day he had made her acquaintance at a house where she had gone with her mother for the purpose of offering their congratulations to a newly-married lady.

"I was unfortunate enough," she continued, "to inspire him with love, and he postponed his departure. He remained one month in C —— , never going out but in the evening, and spending every night under my windows conversing with me. He swore a thousand times that he adored me, that his intentions were honourable. I entreated him to present himself to my parents to ask me in marriage, but he always excused himself by alleging some reason, good or bad, assuring me that he could not be happy unless I shewed him entire confidence. He would beg of me to make up my mind to run away with him, unknown to everybody, promising that my honour should not suffer from such a step, because, three days after my departure, everybody should receive notice of my being his wife, and he assured me that he would bring me back on a visit to my native place shortly after our marriage. Alas, sir! what shall I say now? Love blinded me; I fell into the abyss; I believed him; I agreed to everything. He gave me the paper which you have read, and the following night I allowed him to come into my room through the window under which he was in the habit of conversing with me.

"I consented to be guilty of a crime which I believed would be atoned for within three days, and he left me, promising that the next night he would be again under my window, ready to receive me in his arms. Could I possibly entertain any doubt after the fearful crime I had committed for him? I prepared a small parcel, and waited for his coming, but in vain. Oh! what a cruel long night it was! In the morning I heard that the monster had gone away with his servant one hour after sealing my shame. You may imagine my despair! I adopted the only plan that despair could suggest, and that, of course, was not the right one. One hour before midnight I left my father's roof, alone, thus completing my dishonour, but resolved on death, if the man who has cruelly robbed me of my most precious treasure, and whom a natural instinct told me I could find here, does not restore me the honour which he alone can give me back. I walked all night and nearly the whole day, without taking any food, until I got into the barge, which brought me here in twenty-four hours. I travelled in the boat with five men and two women, but no one saw my face or heard my voice, I kept constantly sitting down in a corner, holding my head down, half asleep, and with this prayer-book in my hands. I was left alone, no one spoke to me, and I thanked God for it. When I landed on the wharf, you did not give me time to think how I could find out the dwelling of my perfidious seducer, but you may imagine the impression produced upon me by the sudden apparition of a masked man who, abruptly, and as if placed there purposely by Providence, offered me his services; it seemed to me that you had guessed my distress, and, far from experiencing any repugnance, I felt that I was acting rightly in trusting myself in your hands, in spite of all prudence which, perhaps, ought to have made me turn a deaf ear to your words, and refuse the invitation to enter alone with you the house to which you took me.

"You know all now, sir; but I entreat you not to judge me too severely; I have been virtuous all through my life; one month ago I had never committed a fault which could call a blush upon my face, and the bitter tears which I shed every day will, I hope, wash out my crime in the eyes of God. I have been carefully brought up, but love and the want of experience have thrown me into the abyss. I am in your hands, and I feel certain that I shall have no cause to repent it."

I needed all she had just told' me to confirm me in the interest which I had felt in her from the first moment. I told her unsparingly that Steffani had seduced and abandoned her of malice aforethought, and that she ought to think of him only to be revenged of his perfidy. My words made her shudder, and she buried her beautiful face in her hands.

We reached the widow's house. I established her in a pretty, comfortable room, and ordered some supper for her, desiring the good landlady to skew her every attention and to let her want for nothing. I then took an affectionate leave of her, promising to see her early in the morning.

On leaving this interesting but hapless girl, I proceeded to the house of Steffani. I heard from one of his mother's gondoliers that he had returned to Venice three days before, but that, twenty-four hours after his return, he had gone away again without any servant, and nobody knew his whereabouts, not even his mother. The same evening, happening to be seated next to an abbe from Bologna at the theatre, I asked him several questions respecting the family of my unfortunate protegee.

The abbe being intimately acquainted with them, I gathered from him all the information I required, and, amongst other things, I heard that the young countess had a brother, then an officer in the papal service.

Very early the next morning I called upon her. She was still asleep. The widow told me that she had made a pretty good supper, but without speaking a single word, and that she had locked herself up in her room immediately afterwards. As soon as she had opened her door, I entered her room, and, cutting short her apologies for having kept me waiting, I informed her of all I had heard.

Her features bore the stamp of deep sorrow, but she looked calmer, and her complexion was no longer pale. She thought it unlikely that Steffani would have left for any other place but for C —— . Admitting the possibility that she might be right, I immediately offered to go to C —— myself, and to return without loss of time to fetch her, in case Steffani should be there. Without giving her time to answer I told her all the particulars I had learned concerning her honourable family, which caused her real satisfaction.

“I have no objection,” she said, “to your going to C —— , and I thank you for the generosity of your offer, but I beg you will postpone your journey. I still hope that Steffani will return, and then I can take a decision.”

“I think you are quite right,” I said. “Will you allow me to have some breakfast with you?”

“Do you suppose I could refuse you?”

“I should be very sorry to disturb you in any way. How did you use to amuse yourself at home?”

“I am very fond of books and music; my harpsichord was my delight.”

I left her after breakfast, and in the evening I came back with a basket full of good books and music, and I sent her an excellent harpsichord. My kindness confused her, but I surprised her much more when I took out of my pocket three pairs of slippers. She blushed, and thanked me with great feeling. She had walked a long distance, her shoes were evidently worn out, her feet sore, and she appreciated the delicacy of my present. As I had no improper design with regard to her, I enjoyed her gratitude, and felt pleased at the idea she evidently entertained of my kind attentions. I had no other purpose in view but to restore calm to her mind, and to obliterate the bad opinion which the unworthy Steffani had given her of men in general. I never thought of inspiring her with love for me, and I had not the slightest idea that I could fall in love with her. She was unhappy, and her unhappiness — a sacred thing in my eyes — called all the more for my most honourable sympathy, because, without knowing me, she had given me her entire confidence. Situated as she was, I could not suppose her heart susceptible of harbouring a new affection, and I would have despised myself if I had tried to seduce her by any means in my power.

I remained with her only a quarter of an hour, being unwilling that my presence should trouble her at such a moment, as she seemed to be at a loss how to thank me and to express all her gratitude.

I was thus engaged in a rather delicate adventure, the end of which I could not possibly foresee, but my warmth for my protegee did not cool down, and having no difficulty in procuring the means to keep her I had no wish to see the last scene of the romance. That singular meeting, which gave me the useful opportunity of finding myself endowed with generous dispositions, stronger even than my love for pleasure, flattered my self-love more than I could express. I was then trying a great experiment, and conscious that I wanted sadly to study myself, I gave up all my energies to acquire the great science of the ‘xxxxxxxxxxxx’.

On the third day, in the midst of expressions of gratitude which I could not succeed in stopping she told me that she could not conceive why I shewed her so much sympathy, because I ought to have formed but a poor opinion of her in consequence of the readiness with which she had followed me into the cafe. She smiled when I answered that I could not understand how I had succeeded in giving her so great a confidence in my virtue, when I appeared before her with a mask on my face, in a costume which did not indicate a very virtuous character.

“It was easy for me, madam,” I continued, “to guess that you were a beauty in distress, when I observed your youth, the nobleness of your countenance, and, more than all, your candour. The stamp of truth was so well affixed to the first words you uttered that I could not have the shadow of a doubt left in me as to your being the unhappy victim of the most natural of all feelings, and as to your having abandoned your home through a sentiment of honour. Your fault was that of a warm heart seduced by love, over which reason could have no sway, and your flight — the action of a soul crying for reparation or for revenge-fully justifies you. Your cowardly seducer must pay with his life the penalty due to his crime, and he ought never to receive, by marrying you, an unjust reward, for he is not worthy of possessing you after degrading himself by the vilest conduct.”

“Everything you say is true. My brother, I hope, will avenge me.”

"You are greatly mistaken if you imagine that Steffani will fight your brother; Steffani is a coward who will never expose himself to an honourable death."

As I was speaking, she put her hand in her pocket and drew forth, after a few moments' consideration, a stiletto six inches long, which she placed on the table.

"What is this?" I exclaimed.

"It is a weapon upon which I reckoned until now to use against myself in case I should not succeed in obtaining reparation for the crime I have committed. But you have opened my eyes. Take away, I entreat you, this stiletto, which henceforth is useless to me. I trust in your friendship, and I have an inward certainty that I shall be indebted to you for my honour as well as for my life."

I was struck by the words she had just uttered, and I felt that those words, as well as her looks, had found their way to my heart, besides enlisting my generous sympathy. I took the stiletto, and left her with so much agitation that I had to acknowledge the weakness of my heroism, which I was very near turning into ridicule; yet I had the wonderful strength to perform, at least by halves, the character of a Cato until the seventh day.

I must explain how a certain suspicion of the young lady arose in my mind. That doubt was heavy on my heart, for, if it had proved true, I should have been a dupe, and the idea was humiliating. She had told me that she was a musician; I had immediately sent her a harpsichord, and, yet, although the instrument had been at her disposal for three days, she had not opened it once, for the widow had told me so. It seemed to me that the best way to thank me for my attentive kindness would have been to give me a specimen of her musical talent. Had she deceived me? If so, she would lose my esteem. But, unwilling to form a hasty judgment, I kept on my guard, with a firm determination to make good use of the first opportunity that might present itself to clear up my doubts.

I called upon her the next day after dinner, which was not my usual time, having resolved on creating the opportunity myself. I caught her seated before a toilet-glass, while the widow dressed the most beautiful auburn hair I had ever seen. I tendered my apologies for my sudden appearance at an unusual hour; she excused herself for not having completed her toilet, and the widow went on with her work. It was the first time I had seen the whole of her face, her neck, and half of her arms, which the graces themselves had moulded. I remained in silent contemplation. I praised, quite by chance, the perfume of the pomatum, and the widow took the opportunity of telling her that she had spent in combs, powder, and pomatum the three livres she had received from her. I recollected then that she had told me the first day that she had left C —— with ten paoli.

I blushed for very shame, for I ought to have thought of that.

As soon as the widow had dressed her hair, she left the room to prepare some coffee for us. I took up a ring which had been laid by her on the toilet-table, and I saw that it contained a portrait exactly like her; I was amused at the singular fancy she had had of having her likeness taken in a man's costume, with black hair. "You are mistaken," she said, "it is a portrait of my brother. He is two years older than I, and is an officer in the papal army."

I begged her permission to put the ring on her finger; she consented, and when I tried, out of mere gallantry, to kiss her hand, she drew it back, blushing. I feared she might be offended, and I assured her of my respect.

"Ah, sir!" she answered, "in the situation in which I am placed, I must think of defending myself against my own self much more than against you."

The compliment struck me as so fine, and so complimentary to me, that I thought it better not to take it up, but she could easily read in my eyes that she would never find me ungrateful for whatever feelings she might entertain in my favour. Yet I felt my love taking such proportions that I did not know how to keep it a mystery any longer.

Soon after that, as she was again thanking me for the books — I had given her, saying that I had guessed her taste exactly, because she did not like novels, she added, "I owe you an apology for not having sung to you yet, knowing that you are fond of music." These words made me breathe freely; without waiting for any answer, she sat down before the instrument and played several pieces with a facility, with a precision, with an expression of which no words could convey any idea. I was in ecstacy. I entreated her to sing; after some little ceremony, she took one of the music books I had given her, and she sang at sight in a manner which fairly ravished me. I begged that she would allow me to kiss her hand, and she did not say yes, but when I took it and pressed my lips on it, she did not oppose any resistance; I had the courage to smother my ardent desires, and the kiss I imprinted on her lovely hand was a mixture of tenderness, respect, and admiration.

I took leave of her, smitten, full of love, and almost determined on declaring my passion. Reserve becomes silliness when we know that our affection is returned by the woman we love, but as yet I was not quite sure.

The disappearance of Steffani was the talk of Venice, but I did not inform the charming countess of that circumstance. It was generally supposed that his mother had refused to pay his debts, and that he had run away to avoid his creditors. It was very possible. But, whether he returned or not, I could not make up my mind to lose the precious treasure I had in my hands. Yet I did not see in what manner, in what quality, I could enjoy that treasure, and I found myself in a regular maze. Sometimes I had an idea of consulting my kind father, but I would soon abandon it with fear, for I had made a trial of his empiric treatment in the Rinaldi affair, and still more in the case of l’Abbadie. His remedies frightened me to that extent that I would rather remain ill than be cured by their means.

One morning I was foolish enough to enquire from the widow whether the lady had asked her who I was. What an egregious blunder! I saw it when the good woman, instead of answering me, said,

“Does she not know who you are?”

“Answer me, and do not ask questions,” I said, in order to hide my confusion.

The worthy woman was right; through my stupidity she would now feel curious; the tittle-tattle of the neighbourhood would of course take up the affair and discuss it; and all through my thoughtlessness! It was an unpardonable blunder. One ought never to be more careful than in addressing questions to half-educated persons. During the fortnight that she had passed under my protection, the countess had shewn me no curiosity whatever to know anything about me, but it did not prove that she was not curious on the subject. If I had been wise, I should have told her the very first day who I was, but I made up for my mistake that evening better than anybody else could have done it, and, after having told her all about myself, I entreated her forgiveness for not having done so sooner. Thanking me for my confidence, she confessed how curious she had been to know me better, and she assured me that she would never have been imprudent enough to ask any questions about me from her landlady. Women have a more delicate, a surer tact than men, and her last words were a home-thrust for me.

Our conversation having turned to the extraordinary absence of Steffani, she said that her father must necessarily believe her to be hiding with him somewhere. “He must have found out,” she added, “that I was in the habit of conversing with him every night from my window, and he must have heard of my having embarked for Venice on board the Ferrara barge. I feel certain that my father is now in Venice, making secretly every effort to discover me. When he visits this city he always puts up at Boncousin; will you ascertain whether he is there?”

She never pronounced Steffani’s name without disgust and hatred, and she said she would bury herself in a convent, far away from her native place, where no one could be acquainted with her shameful history.

I intended to make some enquiries the next day, but it was not necessary for me to do so, for in the evening, at supper-time, M. Barbaro said to us,

“A nobleman, a subject of the Pope, has been recommended to me, and wishes me to assist him with my influence in a rather delicate and intricate matter. One of our citizens has, it appears, carried off his daughter, and has been hiding somewhere with her for the last fortnight, but nobody knows where. The affair ought to be brought before the Council of Ten, but the mother of the ravisher claims to be a relative of mine, and I do not intend to interfere.”

I pretended to take no interest in M. Barbaro’s words, and early the next morning I went to the young countess to tell her the interesting news. She was still asleep; but, being in a hurry, I sent the widow to say that I wanted to see her only for two minutes in order to communicate something of great importance. She received me, covering herself up to the chin with the bed-clothes.

As soon as I had informed her of all I knew, she entreated me to enlist M. Barbaro as a mediator between herself and her father, assuring me that she would rather die than become the wife of the monster who had dishonoured her. I undertook to do it, and she gave me the promise of marriage used by the deceiver to seduce her, so that it could be shewn to her father.

In order to obtain M. Barbaro's mediation in favour of the young countess, it would have been necessary to tell him that she was under my protection, and I felt it would injure my protegee. I took no determination at first, and most likely one of the reasons for my hesitation was that I saw myself on the point of losing her, which was particularly repugnant to my feelings.

After dinner Count A —— S —— was announced as wishing to see M. Barbaro. He came in with his son, the living portrait of his sister. M. Barbaro took them to his study to talk the matter over, and within an hour they had taken leave. As soon as they had gone, the excellent M. Barbaro asked me, as I had expected, to consult my heavenly spirit, and to ascertain whether he would be right in interfering in favour of Count A — S — . He wrote the question himself, and I gave the following answer with the utmost coolness:

"You ought to interfere, but only to advise the father to forgive his daughter and to give up all idea of compelling her to marry her ravisher, for Steffani has been sentenced to death by the will of God."

The answer seemed wonderful to the three friends, and I was myself surprised at my boldness, but I had a foreboding that Steffani was to meet his death at the hands of somebody; love might have given birth to that presentiment. M. de Bragadin, who believed my oracle infallible, observed that it had never given such a clear answer, and that Steffani was certainly dead. He said to M. de Barbaro,

"You had better invite the count and his son to dinner hereto-morrow. You must act slowly and prudently; it would be necessary to know where the daughter is before you endeavour to make the father forgive her."

M. Barbaro very nearly made me drop my serious countenance by telling me that if I would try my oracle I could let them know at once where the girl was. I answered that I would certainly ask my spirit on the morrow, thus gaining time in order to ascertain before hand the disposition of the father and of his son. But I could not help laughing, for I had placed myself under the necessity of sending Steffani to the next world, if the reputation of my oracle was to be maintained.

I spent the evening with the young countess, who entertained no doubt either of her father's indulgence or of the entire confidence she could repose in me.

What delight the charming girl experienced when she heard that I would dine the next day with her father and brother, and that I would tell her every word that would be said about her! But what happiness it was for me to see her convinced that she was right in loving me, and that, without me, she would certainly have been lost in a town where the policy of the government tolerates debauchery as a solitary species of individual freedom. We congratulated each other upon our fortuitous meeting and upon the conformity in our tastes, which we thought truly wonderful. We were greatly pleased that her easy acceptance of my invitation, or my promptness in persuading her to follow and to trust me, could not be ascribed to the mutual attraction of our features, for I was masked, and her hood was then as good as a mask. We entertained no doubt that everything had been arranged by Heaven to get us acquainted, and to fire us both, even unknown to ourselves, with love for each other.

"Confess," I said to her, in a moment of enthusiasm, and as I was covering her hand with kisses, "confess that if you found me to be in love with you you would fear me."

"Alas! my only fear is to lose you."

That confession, the truth of which was made evident by her voice and by her looks, proved the electric spark which ignited the latent fire. Folding her rapidly in my arms, pressing my mouth on her lips, reading in her beautiful eyes neither a proud indignation nor the cold compliance which might have been the result of a fear of losing me, I gave way entirely to the sweet inclination of love, and swimming already in a sea of delights I felt my enjoyment increased a hundredfold when I saw, on the countenance of the beloved creature who shared it, the expression of happiness, of love, of modesty, and of sensibility, which enhances the charm of the greatest triumph.

She had scarcely recovered her composure when she cast her eyes down and sighed deeply. Thinking that I knew the cause of it, I threw myself on my knees before her, and speaking to her words of the warmest affection I begged, I entreated her, to forgive me.

"What offence have I to forgive you for, dear friend? You have not rightly interpreted my thoughts. Your love caused me to think of my happiness, and in that moment a cruel recollection drew that sigh from me. Pray rise from your knees."

Midnight had struck already; I told her that her good fame made it necessary for me to go away; I put my mask on and left the house. I was so surprised, so amazed at having obtained a felicity of which I did not think myself worthy, that my departure must have appeared rather abrupt to her. I could not sleep. I passed one of those disturbed nights during which the imagination of an amorous young man is unceasingly running after the shadows of reality. I had tasted, but not savoured, that happy reality, and all my being was longing for her who alone could make my enjoyment complete. In that nocturnal drama love and imagination were the two principal actors; hope, in the background, performed only a dumb part. People may say what they please on that subject but hope is in fact nothing but a deceitful flatterer accepted by reason only because it is often in need of palliatives. Happy are those men who, to enjoy life to the fullest extent, require neither hope nor foresight.

In the morning, recollecting the sentence of death which I had passed on Steffani, I felt somewhat embarrassed about it. I wished I could have recalled it, as well for the honour of my oracle, which was seriously implicated by it, as for the sake of Steffani himself, whom I did not hate half so much since I was indebted to him for the treasure in my possession.

The count and his son came to dinner. The father was simple, artless, and unceremonious. It was easy to read on his countenance the grief he felt at the unpleasant adventure of his daughter, and his anxiety to settle the affair honourably, but no anger could be traced on his features or in his manners. The son, as handsome as the god of love, had wit and great nobility of manner. His easy, unaffected carriage pleased me, and wishing to win his friendship I shewed him every attention.

After the dessert, M. Barbaro contrived to persuade the count that we were four persons with but one head and one heart, and the worthy nobleman spoke to us without any reserve. He praised his daughter very highly. He assured us that Steffani had never entered his house, and therefore he could not conceive by what spell, speaking to his daughter only at night and from the street under the window, he had succeeded in seducing her to such an extent as to make her leave her home alone, on foot, two days after he had left himself in his post-chaise.

“Then,” observed M. Barbaro, “it is impossible to be certain that he actually seduced her, or to prove that she went off with him.”

“Very true, sir, but although it cannot be proved, there is no doubt of it, and now that no one knows where Steffani is, he can be nowhere but with her. I only want him to marry her.”

“It strikes me that it would be better not to insist upon a compulsory marriage which would seal your daughter’s misery, for Steffani is, in every respect, one of the most worthless young men we have amongst our government clerks.”

“Were I in your place,” said M. de Bragadin, “I would let my daughter’s repentance disarm my anger, and I would forgive her.”

“Where is she? I am ready to fold her in my arms, but how can I believe in her repentance when it is evident that she is still with him.”

“Is it quite certain that in leaving C —— she proceeded to this city?”

“I have it from the master of the barge himself, and she landed within twenty yards of the Roman gate. An individual wearing a mask was waiting for her, joined her at once, and they both disappeared without leaving any trace of their whereabouts.”

“Very likely it was Steffani waiting there for her.”

“No, for he is short, and the man with the mask was tall. Besides, I have heard that Steffani had left Venice two days before the arrival of my daughter. The man must have been some friend of Steffani, and he has taken her to him.”

“But, my dear count, all this is mere supposition.”

"There are four persons who have seen the man with the mask, and pretend to know him, only they do not agree. Here is a list of four names, and I will accuse these four persons before the Council of Ten, if Steffani should deny having my daughter in his possession."

The list, which he handed to M. Barbaro, gave not only the names of the four accused persons, but likewise those of their accusers. The last name, which M. Barbaro read, was mine. When I heard it, I shrugged my shoulders in a manner which caused the three friends to laugh heartily.

M. de Bragadin, seeing the surprise of the count at such uncalled-for mirth, said to him,

"This is Casanova my son, and I give you my word of honour that, if your daughter is in his hands, she is perfectly safe, although he may not look exactly the sort of man to whom young girls should be trusted."

The surprise, the amazement, and the perplexity of the count and his son were an amusing picture. The loving father begged me to excuse him, with tears in his eyes, telling me to place myself in his position. My only answer was to embrace him most affectionately.

The man who had recognized me was a noted pimp whom I had thrashed some time before for having deceived me. If I had not been there just in time to take care of the young countess, she would not have escaped him, and he would have ruined her for ever by taking her to some house of ill-fame.

The result of the meeting was that the count agreed to postpone his application to the Council of Ten until Steffani's place of refuge should be discovered.

"I have not seen Steffani for six months, sir," I said to the count, "but I promise you to kill him in a duel as soon as he returns."

"You shall not do it," answered the young count, very coolly, "unless he kills me first."

"Gentlemen," exclaimed M. de Bragadin, "I can assure you that you will neither of you fight a duel with him, for Steffani is dead."

"Dead!" said the count.

“We must not,” observed the prudent Barbaro, “take that word in its literal sense, but the wretched man is dead to all honour and self-respect.”

After that truly dramatic scene, during which I could guess that the denouement of the play was near at hand, I went to my charming countess, taking care to change my gondola three times — a necessary precaution to baffle spies.

I gave my anxious mistress an exact account of all the conversation. She was very impatient for my coming, and wept tears of joy when I repeated her father’s words of forgiveness; but when I told her that nobody knew of Steffani having entered her chamber, she fell on her knees and thanked God. I then repeated her brother’s words, imitating his coolness: “You shall not kill him, unless he kills me first.” She kissed me tenderly, calling me her guardian angel, her saviour, and weeping in my arms. I promised to bring her brother on the following day, or the day after that at the latest. We had our supper, but we did not talk of Steffani, or of revenge, and after that pleasant meal we devoted two hours to the worship of the god of love.

I left her at midnight, promising to return early in the morning — my reason for not remaining all night with her was that the landlady might, if necessary, swear without scruple that I had never spent a night with the young girl. It proved a very lucky inspiration of mine, for, when I arrived home, I found the three friends waiting impatiently for me in order to impart to me wonderful news which M. de Bragadin had heard at the sitting of the senate.

“Steffani,” said M. de Bragadin to me, “is dead, as our angel Paralis revealed it to us; he is dead to the world, for he has become a Capuchin friar. The senate, as a matter of course, has been informed of it. We alone are aware that it is a punishment which God has visited upon him. Let us worship the Author of all things, and the heavenly hierarchy which renders us worthy of knowing what remains a mystery to all men. Now we must achieve our undertaking, and console the poor father. We must enquire from Paralis where the girl is. She cannot now be with Steffani. Of course, God has not condemned her to become a Capuchin nun.”

“I need not consult my angel, dearest father, for it is by his express orders that I have been compelled until now to make a mystery of the refuge found by the young countess.”

I related the whole story, except what they had no business to know, for, in the opinion of the worthy men, who had paid heavy tribute to Love, all intrigues were fearful crimes. M. Dandolo and M. Barbaro expressed their surprise when they heard that the young girl had been under my protection for a fortnight, but M. de Bragadin said that he was not astonished, that it was according to cabalistic science, and that he knew it.

“We must only,” he added, “keep up the mystery of his daughter’s place of refuge for the count, until we know for a certainty that he will forgive her, and that he will take her with him to C —— , or to any other place where he may wish to live hereafter.”

“He cannot refuse to forgive her,” I said, “when he finds that the amiable girl would never have left C —— if her seducer had not given her this promise of marriage in his own handwriting. She walked as far as the barge, and she landed at the very moment I was passing the Roman gate. An inspiration from above told me to accost her and to invite her to follow me. She obeyed, as if she was fulfilling the decree of Heaven, I took her to a refuge impossible to discover, and placed her under the care of a God-fearing woman.”

My three friends listened to me so attentively that they looked like three statues. I advised them to invite the count to dinner for the day after next, because I needed some time to consult ‘Paralis de modo tenendi’. I then told M. Barbaro to let the count know in what sense he was to understand Steffani’s death. He undertook to do it, and we retired to rest.

I slept only four or five hours, and, dressing myself quickly, hurried to my beloved mistress. I told the widow not to serve the coffee until we called for it, because we wanted to remain quiet and undisturbed for some hours, having several important letters to write.

I found the lovely countess in bed, but awake, and her eyes beaming with happiness and contentment. For a fortnight I had only seen her sad, melancholy, and thoughtful. Her pleased countenance, which I naturally ascribed to my influence, filled me with joy. We commenced as all happy lovers always do, and we were both unsparing of the mutual proofs of our love, tenderness, and gratitude.

After our delightful amorous sport, I told her the news, but love had so completely taken possession of her pure and sensitive soul, that what had been important was now only an accessory. But the news of her seducer having turned a Capuchin friar filled her with amazement, and, passing very sensible remarks on the extraordinary event, she pitied Steffani. When we can feel pity, we love no longer, but a feeling of pity succeeding love is the characteristic only of a great and generous mind. She was much pleased with me for having informed my three friends of her being under my protection, and she left to my care all the necessary arrangements for obtaining a reconciliation with her father.

Now and then we recollected that the time of our separation was near at hand, our grief was bitter, but we contrived to forget it in the ecstacy of our amorous enjoyment.

“Ah! why can we not belong for ever to each other?” the charming girl would exclaim. “It is not my acquaintance with Steffani, it is your loss which will seal my eternal misery.”

But it was necessary to bring our delightful interview to a close, for the hours were flying with fearful rapidity. I left her happy, her eyes wet with tears of intense felicity.

At the dinner-table M. Barbaro told me that he had paid a visit to his relative, Steffani’s mother, and that she had not appeared sorry at the decision taken by her son, although he was her only child.

“He had the choice,” she said, “between killing himself and turning friar, and he took the wiser course.”

The woman spoke like a good Christian, and she professed to be one; but she spoke like an unfeeling mother, and she was truly one, for she was wealthy, and if she had not been cruelly avaricious her son would not have been reduced to the fearful alternative of committing suicide or of becoming a Capuchin friar.

The last and most serious motive which caused the despair of Steffani, who is still alive, remained a mystery for everybody. My Memoirs will raise the veil when no one will care anything about it.

The count and his son were, of course, greatly surprised, and the event made them still more desirous of discovering the young lady. In order to obtain a clue to her place of refuge, the count had resolved on summoning before the Council of Ten all the parties, accused and accusing, whose names he had on his list, with the exception of myself. His determination made it necessary for us to inform him that his daughter was in my hands, and M. de Bragadin undertook to let him know the truth.

We were all invited to supper by the count, and we went to his hostelry, with the exception of M. de Bragadin, who had declined the invitation. I was thus prevented from seeing my divinity that evening, but early the next morning I made up for lost time, and as it had been decided that her father would on that very day be informed of her being under my care, we remained together until noon. We had no hope of contriving another meeting, for I had promised to bring her brother in the afternoon.

The count and his son dined with us, and after dinner M. de Bragadin said,

“I have joyful news for you, count; your beloved daughter has been found!”

What an agreeable surprise for the father and son! M. de Bragadin handed them the promise of marriage written by Steffani, and said,

“This, gentlemen, evidently brought your lovely young lady to the verge of madness when she found that he had gone from C —— without her. She left your house alone on foot, and as she landed in Venice Providence threw her in the way of this young man, who induced her to follow him, and has placed her under the care of an honest woman, whom she has not left since, whom she will leave only to fall in your arms as soon as she is certain of your forgiveness for the folly she has committed.”

“Oh! let her have no doubt of my forgiving her,” exclaimed the father, in the ecstacy of joy, and turning to me, “Dear sir, I beg of you not to delay the fortunate moment on which the whole happiness of my life depends.”

I embraced him warmly, saying that his daughter would be restored to him on the following day, and that I would let his son see her that very afternoon, so as to give him an opportunity of preparing her by degrees for that happy reconciliation. M. Barbaro desired to accompany us, and the young man, approving all my arrangements, embraced me, swearing everlasting friendship and gratitude.

We went out all three together, and a gondola carried us in a few minutes to the place where I was guarding a treasure more precious than the golden apples of the Hesperides. But, alas! I was on the point of losing that treasure, the remembrance of which causes me, even now, a delicious trembling.

I preceded my two companions in order to prepare my lovely young friend for the visit, and when I told her that, according to my arrangements, her father would not see her till on the following day:

“Ah!” she exclaimed with the accent of true happiness, “then we can spend a few more hours together! Go, dearest, go and bring my brother.”

I returned with my companions, but how can I paint that truly dramatic situation? Oh! how inferior art must ever be to nature! The fraternal love, the delight beaming upon those two beautiful faces, with a slight shade of confusion on that of the sister, the pure joy shining in the midst of their tender caresses, the most eloquent exclamations followed by a still more eloquent silence, their loving looks which seem like flashes of lightning in the midst of a dew of tears, a thought of politeness which brings blushes on her countenance, when she recollects that she has forgotten her duty towards a nobleman whom she sees for the first time, and finally there was my part, not a speaking one, but yet the most important of all. The whole formed a living picture to which the most skilful painter could not have rendered full justice.

We sat down at last, the young countess between her brother and M. Barbaro, on the sofa, I, opposite to her, on a low foot-stool.

“To whom, dear sister, are we indebted for the happiness of having found you again?”

“To my guardian angel,” she answered, giving me her hand, “to this generous man who was waiting for me, as if Heaven had sent him with the special mission of watching over your sister; it is he who has saved me, who has prevented me from falling into the gulf which yawned under my feet, who has rescued me from the shame threatening me, of which I had then no conception; it is to him I am indebted for all, to him who, as you see, kisses my hand now for the first time.”

And she pressed her handkerchief to her beautiful eyes to dry her tears, but ours were flowing at the same time.

Such is true virtue, which never loses its nobleness, even when modesty compels it to utter some innocent falsehood. But the charming girl had no idea of being guilty of an untruth. It was a pure, virtuous soul which was then speaking through her lips, and she allowed it to speak. Her virtue seemed to whisper to her that, in spite of her errors, it had never deserted her. A young girl who gives way to a real feeling of love cannot be guilty of a crime, or be exposed to remorse.

Towards the end of our friendly visit, she said that she longed to throw herself at her father's feet, but that she wished to see him only in the evening, so as not to give any opportunity to the gossips of the place, and it was agreed that the meeting, which was to be the last scene of the drama, should take place the next day towards the evening.

We returned to the count's hostelry for supper, and the excellent man, fully persuaded that he was indebted to me for his honour as well as for his daughter's, looked at me with admiration, and spoke to me with gratitude. Yet he was not sorry to have ascertained himself, and before I had said so, that I had been the first man who had spoken to her after landing. Before parting in the evening, M. Barbaro invited them to dinner for the next day.

I went to my charming mistress very early the following morning, and, although there was some danger in protracting our interview, we did not give it a thought, or, if we did, it only caused us to make good use of the short time that we could still devote to love.

After having enjoyed, until our strength was almost expiring, the most delightful, the most intense voluptuousness in which mutual ardour can enfold two young, vigorous, and passionate lovers, the young countess dressed herself, and, kissing her slippers, said she would never part with them as long as she lived. I asked her to give me a lock of her hair, which she did at once. I meant to have it made into a chain like the one woven with the hair of Madame F —— , which I still wore round my neck.

Towards dusk, the count and his son, M. Dandolo, M. Barbaro, and myself, proceeded together to the abode of the young countess. The moment she saw her father, she threw herself on her knees before him, but the count, bursting into tears, took her in his arms, covered her with kisses, and breathed over her words of forgiveness, of love and blessing. What a scene for a man of sensibility! An hour later we escorted the family to the inn, and, after wishing them a pleasant journey, I went back with my two friends to M. de Bragadin, to whom I gave a faithful account of what had taken place.

We thought that they had left Venice, but the next morning they called at the place in a peotta with six rowers. The count said that they could not leave the city without seeing us once more; without thanking us again, and me particularly, for all we had done for them. M. de Bragadin, who had not seen the young countess before, was struck by her extraordinary likeness to her brother.

They partook of some refreshments, and embarked in their peotta, which was to carry them, in twenty-four hours, to Ponte di Lago Oscuro, on the River Po, near the frontiers of the papal states. It was only with my eyes that I could express to the lovely girl all the feelings which filled my heart, but she understood the language, and I had no difficulty in interpreting the meaning of her looks.

Never did an introduction occur in better season than that of the count to M. Barbaro. It saved the honour of a respectable family; and it saved me from the unpleasant consequences of an interrogatory in the presence of the Council of Ten, during which I should have been convicted of having taken the young girl with me, and compelled to say what I had done with her.

A few days afterwards we all proceeded to Padua to remain in that city until the end of autumn. I was grieved not to find Doctor Gozzi in Padua; he had been appointed to a benefice in the country, and he was living there with Bettina; she had not been able to remain with the scoundrel who had married her only for the sake of her small dowry, and had treated her very ill.

I did not like the quiet life of Padua, and to avoid dying from ennui I fell in love with a celebrated Venetian courtesan. Her name was Ancilla; sometime after, the well-known dancer, Campioni, married her and took her to London, where she caused the death of a very worthy Englishman. I shall have to mention her again in four years; now I have only to speak of a certain circumstance which brought my love adventure with her to a close after three or four weeks.

Count Medini, a young, thoughtless fellow like myself, and with inclinations of much the same cast, had introduced me to Ancilla. The count was a confirmed gambler and a thorough enemy of fortune. There was a good deal of gambling going on at Ancilla's, whose favourite lover he was, and the fellow had presented me to his mistress only to give her the opportunity of making a dupe of me at the card-table.

And, to tell the truth, I was a dupe at first; not thinking of any foul play, I accepted ill luck without complaining; but one day I caught them cheating. I took a pistol out of my pocket, and, aiming at Medini's breast, I threatened to kill him on the spot unless he refunded at once all the gold they had won from me. Ancilla fainted away, and the count, after refunding the money, challenged me to follow him out and measure swords. I placed my pistols on the table, and we went out. Reaching a convenient spot, we fought by the bright light of the moon, and I was fortunate enough to give him a gash across the shoulder. He could not move his arm, and he had to cry for mercy.

After that meeting, I went to bed and slept quietly, but in the morning I related the whole affair to my father, and he advised me to leave Padua immediately, which I did.

Count Medini remained my enemy through all his life. I shall have occasion to speak of him again when I reach Naples.

The remainder of the year 1746 passed off quietly, without any events of importance. Fortune was now favourable to me and now adverse.

Towards the end of January, 1747, I received a letter from the young countess A—— S—— , who had married the Marquis of—— . She entreated me not to appear to know her, if by chance I visited the town in which she resided, for she had the happiness of having linked her destiny to that of a man who had won her heart after he had obtained her hand.

I had already heard from her brother that, after their return to C—— , her mother had taken her to the city from which her letter was written, and there, in the house of a relative with whom she was residing, she had made the acquaintance of the man who had taken upon himself the charge of her future welfare and happiness. I saw her one year afterwards, and if it had not been for her letter, I should certainly have solicited an introduction to her husband. Yet, peace of mind has greater charms even than love; but, when love is in the way, we do not think so.

For a fortnight I was the lover of a young Venetian girl, very handsome, whom her father, a certain Ramon, exposed to public admiration as a dancer at the theatre. I might have remained longer her captive, if marriage had not forcibly broken my chains. Her protectress, Madame Cecilia Valmarano, found her a very proper husband in the person of a French dancer, called Binet, who had assumed the name of Binetti, and thus his young wife had not to become a French woman; she soon won great fame in more ways than one. She was strangely privileged; time with its heavy hand seemed to have no power over her. She always appeared young, even in the eyes of the best judges of faded, bygone female beauty. Men, as a general rule, do not ask for anything more, and they are right in not racking their brain for the sake of being convinced that they are the dupes of external appearance. The last lover that the wonderful Binetti killed by excess of amorous enjoyment was a certain Mosciuski, a Pole, whom fate brought to Venice seven or eight years ago; she had then reached her sixty-third year!

My life in Venice would have been pleasant and happy, if I could have abstained from punting at basset. The ridotti were only open to noblemen who had to appear without masks, in their patrician robes, and wearing the immense wig which had become indispensable since the beginning of the century. I would play, and I was wrong, for I had neither prudence enough to leave off when fortune was adverse, nor sufficient control over myself to stop when I had won. I was then gambling through a feeling of avarice. I was extravagant by taste, and I always regretted the money I had spent, unless it had been won at the gaming-table, for it was only in that case that the money had, in my opinion, cost me nothing.

At the end of January, finding myself under the necessity of procuring two hundred sequins, Madame Manzoni contrived to obtain for me from another woman the loan of a diamond ring worth five hundred. I made up my mind to go to Treviso, fifteen miles distant from Venice, to pawn the ring at the Mont-de-piete, which there lends money upon valuables at the rate of five per cent. That useful establishment does not exist in Venice, where the Jews have always managed to keep the monopoly in their hands.

I got up early one morning, and walked to the end of the canale regio, intending to engage a gondola to take me as far as Mestra, where I could take post horses, reach Treviso in less than two hours, pledge my diamond ring, and return to Venice the same evening.

As I passed along St. Job’s Quay, I saw in a two-oared gondola a country girl beautifully dressed. I stopped to look at her; the gondoliers, supposing that I wanted an opportunity of reaching Mestra at a cheap rate, rowed back to the shore.

Observing the lovely face of the young girl, I do not hesitate, but jump into the gondola, and pay double fare, on condition that no more passengers are taken. An elderly priest was seated near the young girl, he rises to let me take his place, but I politely insist upon his keeping it.

CHAPTER XIX

I Fall in Love with Christine, and Find a Husband Worthy of

Her — Christine’s Wedding

“Those gondoliers,” said the elderly priest, ad dressing me in order to begin the conversation, “are very fortunate. They took us up at the Rialto for thirty soldi, on condition that they would be allowed to embark other passengers, and here is one already; they will certainly find more.”

“When I am in a gondola, reverend sir, there is no room left for any more passengers.”

So saying, I give forty more soldi to the gondoliers, who, highly pleased with my generosity, thank me and call me excellency. The good priest, accepting that title as truly belonging to me, entreats my pardon for not having addressed me as such.

“I am not a Venetian nobleman, reverend sir, and I have no right to the title of Excellenza.”

“Ah!” says the young lady, “I am very glad of it.”

“Why so, signora?”

“Because when I find myself near a nobleman I am afraid. But I suppose that you are an illustrissimo.”

“Not even that, signora; I am only an advocate’s clerk.”

“So much the better, for I like to be in the company of persons who do not think themselves above me. My father was a farmer, brother of my uncle here, rector of P —— , where I was born and bred. As I am an only daughter I inherited my father’s property after his death, and I shall likewise be heiress to my mother, who has been ill a long time and cannot live much longer, which causes me a great deal of sorrow; but it is the doctor who says it. Now, to return to my subject, I do not suppose that there is much difference between an advocate’s clerk and the daughter of a rich farmer. I only say so for the sake of saying something, for I know very well that, in travelling, one must accept all sorts of companions: is it not so, uncle?”

“Yes, my dear Christine, and as a proof you see that this gentleman has accepted our company without knowing who or what we are.”

“But do you think I would have come if I had not been attracted by the beauty of your lovely niece?”

At these words the good people burst out laughing. As I did not think that there was anything very comic in what I had said, I judged that my travelling companions were rather simple, and I was not sorry to find them so.

“Why do you laugh so heartily, beautiful ‘demigella’? Is it to shew me your fine teeth? I confess that I have never seen such a splendid set in Venice.”

“Oh! it is not for that, sir, although everyone in Venice has paid me the same compliment. I can assure you that in P —— all the ‘girls have teeth as fine as mine. Is it not a fact, uncle?”

“Yes, my dear niece.”

“I was laughing, sir, at a thing which I will never tell you.”

“Oh! tell me, I entreat you.”

“Oh! certainly not, never.”

“I will tell you myself,” says the curate.

“You will not,” she exclaims, knitting her beautiful eyebrows. “If you do I will go away.”

“I defy you to do it, my dear. Do you know what she said, sir, when she saw you on the wharf? ‘Here is a very handsome young man who is looking at me, and would not be sorry to be with us.’ And when she saw that the gondoliers were putting back for you to embark she was delighted.”

While the uncle was speaking to me, the indignant niece was slapping him on the shoulder.

“Why are you angry, lovely Christine, at my hearing that you liked my appearance, when I am so glad to let you know how truly charming I think you?”

"You are glad for a moment. Oh! I know the Venetians thoroughly now. They have all told me that they were charmed with me, and not one of those I would have liked ever made a declaration to me."

"What sort of declaration did you want?"

"There's only one sort for me, sir; the declaration leading to a good marriage in church, in the sight of all men. Yet we remained a fortnight in Venice; did we not, uncle?"

"This girl," said the uncle, "is a good match, for she possesses three thousand crowns. She has always said that she would marry only a Venetian, and I have accompanied her to Venice to give her an opportunity of being known. A worthy woman gave us hospitality for a fortnight, and has presented my niece in several houses where she made the acquaintance of marriageable young men, but those who pleased her would not hear of marriage, and those who would have been glad to marry her did not take her fancy."

"But do you imagine, reverend sir, that marriages can be made like omelets? A fortnight in Venice, that is nothing; you ought to live there at least six months. Now, for instance, I think your niece sweetly pretty, and I should consider myself fortunate if the wife whom God intends for me were like her, but, even if she offered me now a dowry of fifty thousand crowns on condition that our wedding takes place immediately, I would refuse her. A prudent young man wants to know the character of a girl before he marries her, for it is neither money nor beauty which can ensure happiness in married life."

"What do you mean by character?" asked Christine; "is it a beautiful hand-writing?"

"No, my dear. I mean the qualities of the mind and the heart. I shall most likely get married sometime, and I have been looking for a wife for the last three years, but I am still looking in vain. I have known several young girls almost as lovely as you are, and all with a good marriage portion, but after an acquaintance of two or three months I found out that they could not make me happy."

"In what were they deficient?"

“Well, I will tell you, because you are not acquainted with them, and there can be no indiscretion on my part. One whom I certainly would have married, for I loved her dearly, was extremely vain. She would have ruined me in fashionable clothes and by her love for luxuries. Fancy! she was in the habit of paying one sequin every month to the hair-dresser, and as much at least for pomatum and perfumes.”

“She was a giddy, foolish girl. Now, I spend only ten soldi in one year on wax which I mix with goat’s grease, and there I have an excellent pomatum.”

“Another, whom I would have married two years ago, laboured under a disease which would have made me unhappy; as soon as I knew of it, I ceased my visits.”

“What disease was it?”

“A disease which would have prevented her from being a mother, and, if I get married, I wish to have children.”

“All that is in God’s hands, but I know that my health is excellent. Is it not, uncle?”

“Another was too devout, and that does not suit me. She was so over-scrupulous that she was in the habit of going to her confessor twice a week, and every time her confession lasted at least one hour. I want my wife to be a good Christian, but not bigoted.”

“She must have been a great sinner, or else she was very foolish. I confess only once a month, and get through everything in two minutes. Is it not true, uncle? and if you were to ask me any questions, uncle, I should not know what more to say.”

“One young lady thought herself more learned than I, although she would, every minute, utter some absurdity. Another was always low-spirited, and my wife must be cheerful.”

“Hark to that, uncle! You and my mother are always chiding me for my cheerfulness.”

“Another, whom I did not court long, was always afraid of being alone with me, and if I gave her a kiss she would run and tell her mother.”

"How silly she must have been! I have never yet listened to a lover, for we have only rude peasants in P —— , but I know very well that there are some things which I would not tell my mother."

"One had a rank breath; another painted her face, and, indeed, almost every young girl is guilty of that fault. I am afraid marriage is out of the question for me, because I want, for instance, my wife to have black eyes, and in our days almost every woman colours them by art; but I cannot be deceived, for I am a good judge."

"Are mine black?"

"You are laughing?"

"I laugh because your eyes certainly appear to be black, but they are not so in reality. Never mind, you are very charming in spite of that."

"Now, that is amusing. You pretend to be a good judge, yet you say that my eyes are dyed black. My eyes, sir, whether beautiful or ugly, are now the same as God made them. Is it not so, uncle?"

"I never had any doubt of it, my dear niece."

"And you do not believe me, sir?"

"No, they are too beautiful for me to believe them natural."

"Oh, dear me! I cannot bear it."

"Excuse me, my lovely damigella, I am afraid I have been too sincere."

After that quarrel we remained silent. The good curate smiled now and then, but his niece found it very hard to keep down her sorrow.

At intervals I stole a look at her face, and could see that she was very near crying. I felt sorry, for she was a charming girl. In her hair, dressed in the fashion of wealthy countrywomen, she had more than one hundred sequins' worth of gold pins and arrows which fastened the plaits of her long locks as dark as ebony. Heavy gold ear-rings, and a long chain, which was wound twenty times round her snowy neck, made a fine contrast to her complexion, on which the lilies and the roses were admirably blended. It was the first time that I had seen a country beauty in such splendid apparel. Six years before, Lucie at Pasean had captivated me, but in a different manner.

Christine did not utter a single word, she was in despair, for her eyes were truly of the greatest beauty, and I was cruel enough to attack them. She evidently hated me, and her anger alone kept back her tears. Yet I would not undeceive her, for I wanted her to bring matters to a climax.

When the gondola had entered the long canal of Marghera, I asked the clergyman whether he had a carriage to go to Treviso, through which place he had to pass to reach P —— .

“I intended to walk,” said the worthy man, “for my parish is poor and I am the same, but I will try to obtain a place for Christine in some carriage travelling that way.”

“You would confer a real kindness on me if you would both accept a seat in my chaise; it holds four persons, and there is plenty of room.”

“It is a good fortune which we were far from expecting”

“Not at all, uncle; I will not go with this gentleman.”

“Why not, my dear niece?”

“Because I will not.”

“Such is the way,” I remarked, without looking at her, “that sincerity is generally rewarded.”

“Sincerity, sir! nothing of the sort,” she exclaimed, angrily, “it is sheer wickedness. There can be no true black eyes now for you in the world, but, as you like them, I am very glad of it.”

“You are mistaken, lovely Christine, for I have the means of ascertaining the truth.”

“What means?”

“Only to wash the eyes with a little lukewarm rose-water; or if the lady cries, the artificial colour is certain to be washed off.”

At those words, the scene changed as if by the wand of a conjuror. The face of the charming girl, which had expressed nothing but indignation, spite and disdain, took an air of contentment and of placidity delightful to witness. She smiled at her uncle who was much pleased with the change in her countenance, for the offer of the carriage had gone to his heart.

"Now you had better cry a little, my dear niece, and 'il signore' will render full justice to your eyes."

Christine cried in reality, but it was immoderate laughter that made her tears flow.

That species of natural originality pleased me greatly, and as we were going up the steps at the landing-place, I offered her my full apologies; she accepted the carriage. I ordered breakfast, and told a 'vetturino' to get a very handsome chaise ready while we had our meal, but the curate said that he must first of all go and say his mass.

"Very well, reverend sir, we will hear it, and you must say it for my intention."

I put a silver ducat in his hand.

"It is what I am in the habit of giving," I observed.

My generosity surprised him so much that he wanted to kiss my hand. We proceeded towards the church, and I offered my arm to the niece who, not knowing whether she ought to accept it or not, said to me,

"Do you suppose that I cannot walk alone?"

"I have no such idea, but if I do not give you my arm, people will think me wanting in politeness."

"Well, I will take it. But now that I have your arm, what will people think?"

"Perhaps that we love each other and that we make a very nice couple."

"And if anyone should inform your mistress that we are in love with each other, or even that you have given your arm to a young girl?"

"I have no mistress, and I shall have none in future, because I could not find a girl as pretty as you in all Venice."

"I am very sorry for you, for we cannot go again to Venice; and even if we could, how could we remain there six months? You said that six months were necessary to know a girl well."

"I would willingly defray all your expenses."

"Indeed? Then say so to my uncle, and he will think it over, for I could not go alone."

"In six months you would know me likewise."

"Oh! I know-you very well already."

"Could you accept a man like me?"

"Why not?"

"And will you love me?"

"Yes, very much, when you are my husband."

I looked at the young girl with astonishment. She seemed to me a princess in the disguise of a peasant girl. Her dress, made of 'gros de Tours' and all embroidered in gold, was very handsome, and cost certainly twice as much as the finest dress of a Venetian lady. Her bracelets, matching the neckchain, completed her rich toilet. She had the figure of a nymph, and the new fashion of wearing a mantle not having yet reached her village, I could see the most magnificent bosom, although her dress was fastened up to the neck. The end of the richly-embroidered skirt did not go lower than the ankles, which allowed me to admire the neatest little foot and the lower part of an exquisitely moulded leg. Her firm and easy walk, the natural freedom of all her movements, a charming look which seemed to say, "I am very glad that you think me pretty," everything, in short, caused the ardent fire of amorous desires to circulate through my veins. I could not conceive how such a lovely girl could have spent a fortnight in Venice without finding a man to marry or to deceive her. I was particularly delighted with her simple, artless way of talking, which in the city might have been taken for silliness.

Absorbed in my thoughts, and having resolved in my own mind on rendering brilliant homage to her charms, I waited impatiently for the end of the mass.

After breakfast I had great difficulty in convincing the curate that my seat in the carriage was the last one, but I found it easier to persuade him on our arrival in Treviso to remain for dinner and for supper at a small, unfrequented inn, as I took all the expense upon myself. He accepted very willingly when I added that immediately after supper a carriage would be in readiness to convey him to P —— , where he would arrive in an hour after a peasant journey by moonlight. He had nothing to hurry him on, except his wish to say mass in his own church the next morning.

I ordered a fire and a good dinner, and the idea struck me that the curate himself might pledge the ring for me, and thus give me the opportunity of a short interview with his niece. I proposed it to him, saying that I could not very well go myself, as I did not wish to be known. He undertook the commission at once, expressing his pleasure at doing something to oblige me.

He left us, and I remained alone with Christine. I spent an hour with her without trying to give her even a kiss, although I was dying to do so, but I prepared her heart to burn with the same desires which were already burning in me by those words which so easily inflame the imagination of a young ‘girl.

The curate came back and returned me the ring, saying that it could not be pledged until the day after the morrow, in consequence of the Festival of the Holy Virgin. He had spoken to the cashier, who had stated that if I liked the bank would lend double the sum I had asked.

“My dear sir,” I said, “you would greatly oblige me if you would come back here from P —— to pledge the ring yourself. Now that it has been offered once by you, it might look very strange if it were brought by another person. Of course I will pay all your expenses.”

“I promise you to come back.”

I hoped he would bring his niece with him.

I was seated opposite to Christine during the dinner, and discovered fresh charms in her every minute, but, fearing I might lose her confidence if I tried to obtain some slight favour, I made up my mind not to go to work too quickly, and to contrive that the curate should take her again to Venice. I thought that there only I could manage to bring love into play and to give it the food it requires.

“Reverend sir,” I said, “let me advise you to take your niece again to Venice. I undertake to defray all expenses, and to find an honest woman with whom your Christine will be as safe as with her own mother. I want to know her well in order to make her my wife, and if she comes to Venice our marriage is certain.”

“Sir, I will bring my niece myself to Venice as soon as you inform me that you have found a worthy woman with whom I can leave her in safety.”

While we were talking I kept looking at Christine, and I could see her smile with contentment.

“My dear Christine,” I said, “within a week I shall have arranged the affair. In the meantime, I will write to you. I hope that you have no objection to correspond with me.”

“My uncle will write for me, for I have never been taught writing.”

“What, my dear child! you wish to become the wife of a Venetian, and you cannot write.”

“Is it then necessary to know how to write in order to become a wife? I can read well.”

“That is not enough, and although a girl can be a wife and a mother without knowing how to trace one letter, it is generally admitted that a young girl ought to be able to write. I wonder you never learned.”

“There is no wonder in that, for not one girl in our village can do it. Ask my uncle.”

“It is perfectly true, but there is not one who thinks of getting married in Venice, and as you wish for a Venetian husband you must learn.”

“Certainly,” I said, “and before you come to Venice, for everybody would laugh at you, if you could not write. I see that it makes you sad, my dear, but it cannot be helped.”

“I am sad, because I cannot learn writing in a week.”

“I undertake,” said her uncle, “to teach you in a fortnight, if you will only practice diligently. You will then know enough to be able to improve by your own exertions.”

“It is a great undertaking, but I accept it; I promise you to work night and day, and to begin to-morrow.”

After dinner, I advised the priest not to leave that evening, to rest during the night, and I observed that, by going away before day-break, he would reach P —— in good time, and feel all the better for it. I made the same proposal to him in the evening, and when he saw that his niece was sleepy, he was easily persuaded to remain. I called for the innkeeper, ordered a carriage for the clergyman, and desired that a fire might be lit for me in the next room where I would sleep, but the good priest said that it was unnecessary, because there were two large beds in our room, that one would be for me and the other for him and his niece.

“We need not undress,” he added, “as we mean to leave very early, but you can take off your clothes, sir, because you are not going with us, and you will like to remain in bed to-morrow morning.”

“Oh!” remarked Christine, “I must undress myself, otherwise I could not sleep, but I only want a few minutes to get ready in the morning.”

I said nothing, but I was amazed. Christine then, lovely and charming enough to wreck the chastity of a Xenocrates, would sleep naked with her uncle! True, he was old, devout, and without any of the ideas which might render such a position dangerous, yet the priest was a man, he had evidently felt like all men, and he ought to have known the danger he was exposing himself to. My carnal-mindedness could not realize such a state of innocence. But it was truly innocent, so much so that he did it openly, and did not suppose that anyone could see anything wrong in it. I saw it all plainly, but I was not accustomed to such things, and felt lost in wonderment. As I advanced in age and in experience, I have seen the same custom established in many countries amongst honest people whose good morals were in no way debased by it, but it was amongst good people, and I do not pretend to belong to that worthy class.

We had had no meat for dinner, and my delicate palate was not over-satisfied. I went down to the kitchen myself, and I told the landlady that I wanted the best that could be procured in Treviso for supper, particularly in wines.

“If you do not mind the expense, sir, trust to me, and I undertake to please you. I will give you some Gatta wine.”

“All right, but let us have supper early.”

When I returned to our room, I found Christine caressing the cheeks of her old uncle, who was laughing; the good man was seventy-five years old.

“Do you know what is the matter?” he said to me; “my niece is caressing me because she wants me to leave her here until my return. She tells me that you were like brother and sister during the hour you have spent alone together this morning, and I believe it, but she does not consider that she would be a great trouble to you."

"Not at all, quite the reverse, she will afford me great pleasure, for I think her very charming. As to our mutual behaviour, I believe you can trust us both to do our duty."

"I have no doubt of it. Well, I will leave her under your care until the day after to-morrow. I will come back early in the morning so as to attend to your business."

This extraordinary and unexpected arrangement caused the blood to rush to my head with such violence that my nose bled profusely for a quarter of an hour. It did not frighten me, because I was used to such accidents, but the good priest was in a great fright, thinking that it was a serious haemorrhage.

When I had allayed his anxiety, he left us on some business of his own, saying that he would return at night-fall. I remained alone with the charming, artless Christine, and lost no time in thanking her for the confidence she placed in me.

"I can assure you," she said, "that I wish you to have a thorough knowledge of me; you will see that I have none of the faults which have displeased you so much in the young ladies you have known in Venice, and I promise to learn writing immediately."

"You are charming and true; but you must be discreet in P —— , and confide to no one that we have entered into an agreement with each other. You must act according to your uncle's instructions, for it is to him that I intend to write to make all arrangements."

"You may rely upon my discretion. I will not say anything even to my mother, until you give me permission to do so."

I passed the afternoon, in denying myself even the slightest liberties with my lovely companion, but falling every minute deeper in love with her. I told her a few love stories which I veiled sufficiently not to shock her modesty. She felt interested, and I could see that, although she did not always understand, she pretended to do so, in order not to appear ignorant.

When her uncle returned, I had arranged everything in my mind to make her my wife, and I resolved on placing her, during her stay in Venice, in the house of the same honest widow with whom I had found a lodging for my beautiful Countess A —— S —— .

We had a delicious supper. I had to teach Christine how to eat oysters and truffles, which she then saw for the first time. Gatta wine is like champagne, it causes merriment without intoxicating, but it cannot be kept for more than one year. We went to bed before midnight, and it was broad daylight when I awoke. The curate had left the room so quietly that I had not heard him.

I looked towards the other bed, Christine was asleep. I wished her good morning, she opened her eyes, and leaning on her elbow, she smiled sweetly.

“My uncle has gone. I did not hear him.”

“Dearest Christine, you are as lovely as one of God’s angels. I have a great longing to give you a kiss.”

“If you long for a kiss, my dear friend, come and give me one.”

I jump out of my bed, decency makes her hide her face. It was cold, and I was in love. I find myself in her arms by one of those spontaneous movements which sentiment alone can cause, and we belong to each other without having thought of it, she happy and rather confused, I delighted, yet unable to realize the truth of a victory won without any contest.

An hour passed in the midst of happiness, during which we forgot the whole world. Calm followed the stormy gusts of passionate love, and we gazed at each other without speaking.

Christine was the first to break the silence

“What have we done?” she said, softly and lovingly.

“We have become husband and wife.”

“What will my uncle say to-morrow?”

“He need not know anything about it until he gives us the nuptial benediction in his own church.”

“And when will he do so?”

“As soon as we have completed all the arrangements necessary for a public marriage.”

“How long will that be?”

“About a month.”

“We cannot be married during Lent.”

“I will obtain permission.”

“You are not deceiving me?”

“No, for I adore you.”

“Then, you no longer want to know me better?”

“No; I know you thoroughly now, and I feel certain that you will make me happy.”

“And will you make me happy, too?”

“I hope so.”

“Let us get up and go to church. Who could have believed that, to get a husband, it was necessary not to go to Venice, but to come back from that city!”

We got up, and, after partaking of some breakfast, we went to hear mass. The morning passed off quickly, but towards dinner-time I thought that Christine looked different to what she did the day before, and I asked her the reason of that change.

“It must be,” she said, “the same reason which causes you to be thoughtful.”

“An air of thoughtfulness, my dear, is proper to love when it finds itself in consultation with honour. This affair has become serious, and love is now compelled to think and consider. We want to be married in the church, and we cannot do it before Lent, now that we are in the last days of carnival; yet we cannot wait until Easter, it would be too long. We must therefore obtain a dispensation in order to be married. Have I not reason to be thoughtful?”

Her only answer was to come and kiss me tenderly. I had spoken the truth, yet I had not told her all my reasons for being so pensive. I found myself drawn into an engagement which was not disagreeable to me, but I wished it had not been so very pressing. I could not conceal from myself that repentance was beginning to creep into my amorous and well-disposed mind, and I was grieved at it. I felt certain, however, that the charming girl would never have any cause to reproach me for her misery.

We had the whole evening before us, and as she had told me that she had never gone to a theatre, I resolved on affording her that pleasure. I sent for a Jew from whom I procured everything necessary to disguise her, and we went to the theatre. A man in love enjoys no pleasure but that which he gives to the woman he loves. After the performance was over, I took her to the Casino, and her astonishment made me laugh when she saw for the first time a faro bank. I had not money enough to play myself, but I had more than enough to amuse her and to let her play a reasonable game. I gave her ten sequins, and explained what she had to do. She did not even know the cards, yet in less than an hour she had won one hundred sequins. I made her leave off playing, and we returned to the inn. When we were in our room, I told her to see how much money she had, and when I assured her that all that gold belonged to her, she thought it was a dream.

“Oh! what will my uncle say?” she exclaimed.

We had a light supper, and spent a delightful night, taking good care to part by day-break, so as not to be caught in the same bed by the worthy ecclesiastic. He arrived early and found us sleeping soundly in our respective beds. He woke me, and I gave him the ring which he went to pledge immediately. When he returned two hours later, he saw us dressed and talking quietly near the fire. As soon as he came in, Christine rushed to embrace him, and she shewed him all the gold she had in her possession. What a pleasant surprise for the good old priest! He did not know how to express his wonder! He thanked God for what he called a miracle, and he concluded by saying that we were made to insure each other’s happiness.

The time to part had come. I promised to pay them a visit in the first days of Lent, but on condition that on my arrival in P —— I would not find anyone informed of my name or of my concerns. The curate gave me the certificate of birth of his niece and the account of her possessions. As soon as they had gone I took my departure for Venice, full of love for the charming girl, and determined on keeping my engagement with her. I knew how easy it would be for me to convince my three friends that my marriage had been irrevocably written in the great book of fate.

My return caused the greatest joy to the three excellent men, because, not being accustomed to see me three days absent, M. Dandolo and M. Barbaro were afraid of some accident having befallen me; but M. de Bragadin's faith was stronger, and he allayed their fears, saying to them that, with Paralis watching over me, I could not be in any danger.

The very next day I resolved on insuring Christine's happiness without making her my wife. I had thought of marrying her when I loved her better than myself, but after obtaining possession the balance was so much on my side that my self-love proved stronger than my love for Christine. I could not make up my mind to renounce the advantages, the hopes which I thought were attached to my happy independence. Yet I was the slave of sentiment. To abandon the artless, innocent girl seemed to me an awful crime of which I could not be guilty, and the mere idea of it made me shudder. I was aware that she was, perhaps, bearing in her womb a living token of our mutual love, and I shivered at the bare possibility that her confidence in me might be repaid by shame and everlasting misery.

I bethought myself of finding her a husband in every way better than myself; a husband so good that she would not only forgive me for the insult I should thus be guilty of towards her, but also thank me at the end, and like me all the better for my deceit.

To find such a husband could not be very difficult, for Christine was not only blessed with wonderful beauty, and with a well-established reputation for virtue, but she was also the possessor of a fortune amounting to four thousand Venetian ducats.

Shut up in a room with the three worshippers of my oracle, I consulted Paralis upon the affair which I had so much at heart. The answer was:

"Serenus must attend to it."

Serenus was the cabalistic name of M. de Bragadin, and the excellent man immediately expressed himself ready to execute all the orders of Paralis. It was my duty to inform him of those orders.

"You must," I said to him, "obtain from the Holy Father a dispensation for a worthy and virtuous girl, so as to give her the privilege of marrying during Lent in the church of her village; she is a young country girl. Here is her certificate of birth. The husband is not yet known; but it does not matter, Paralis undertakes to find one."

"Trust to me," said my father, "I will write at once to our ambassador in Rome, and I will contrive to have my letter sent by special express. You need not be anxious, leave it all to me, I will make it a business of state, and I must obey Paralis all the more readily that I foresee that the intended husband is one of us four. Indeed, we must prepare ourselves to obey."

I had some trouble in keeping my laughter down, for it was in my power to metamorphose Christine into a grand Venetian lady, the wife of a senator; but that was not my intention. I again consulted the oracle in order to ascertain who would be the husband of the young girl, and the answer was that M. Dandolo was entrusted with the care of finding one, young, handsome, virtuous, and able to serve the Republic, either at home or abroad. M. Dandolo was to consult me before concluding any arrangements. I gave him courage for his task by informing him that the girl had a dowry of four thousand ducats, but I added that his choice was to be made within a fortnight. M. de Bragadin, delighted at not being entrusted with the commission, laughed heartily.

Those arrangements made me feel at peace with myself. I was certain that the husband I wanted would be found, and I only thought of finishing the carnival gaily, and of contriving to find my purse ready for a case of emergency.

Fortune soon rendered me possessor of a thousand sequins. I paid my debts, and the licence for the marriage having arrived from Rome ten days after M. de Bragadin had applied for it, I gave him one hundred ducats, that being the sum it had cost. The dispensation gave Christine the right of being married in any church in Christendom, she would only have to obtain the seal of the episcopal court of the diocese in which the marriage was to take place, and no publication of banns was required. We wanted, therefore, but one thing — a trifling one, namely, the husband. M. Dandolo had already proposed three or four to me, but I had refused them for excellent reasons. At last he offered one who suited me exactly.

I had to take the diamond ring out of pledge, and not wishing to do it myself, I wrote to the priest making an appointment in Treviso. I was not, of course, surprised when I found that he was accompanied by his lovely niece, who, thinking that I had come to complete all arrangements for our marriage, embraced me without ceremony, and I did the same. If the uncle had not been present, I am afraid that those kisses would have caused all my heroism to vanish. I gave the curate the dispensation, and the handsome features of Christine shone with joy. She certainly could not imagine that I had been working so actively for others, and, as I was not yet certain of anything, I did not undeceive her then. I promised to be in P —— within eight or ten days, when we would complete all necessary arrangements. After dinner, I gave the curate the ticket for the ring and the money to take it out of pledge, and we retired to rest. This time, very fortunately, there was but one bed in the room, and I had to take another chamber for myself.

The next morning, I went into Christine's room, and found her in bed. Her uncle had gone out for my diamond ring, and alone with that lovely girl, I found that I had, when necessary, complete control over my passions. Thinking that she was not to be my wife, and that she would belong to another, I considered it my duty to silence my desires. I kissed her, but nothing more.

I spent one hour with her, fighting like Saint Anthony against the carnal desires of my nature. I could see the charming girl full of love and of wonder at my reserve, and I admired her virtue in the natural modesty which prevented her from making the first advances. She got out of bed and dressed herself without shewing any disappointment. She would, of course, have felt mortified if she had had the slightest idea that I despised her, or that I did not value her charms.

Her uncle returned, gave me the ring, and we had dinner, after which he treated me to a wonderful exhibition. Christine had learned how to write, and, to give me a proof of her talent, she wrote very fluently and very prettily in my presence.

We parted, after my promising to come back again within ten days, and I returned to Venice.

On the second Sunday in Lent, M. Dandolo told me with an air of triumph that the fortunate husband had been found, and that there was no doubt of my approval of the new candidate. He named Charles —— whom I knew by sight — very handsome young man, of irreproachable conduct, and about twenty-two years of age. He was clerk to M. Ragionato and god-son of Count Algarotti, a sister of whom had married M. Dandolo's brother.

"Charles," said M. Dandolo to me, "has lost his father and his mother, and I feel satisfied that his godfather will guarantee the dowry brought by his wife. I have spoken to him, and I believe him disposed to marry an honest girl whose dowry would enable him to purchase M. Ragionato's office."

"It seems to promise very well, but I cannot decide until I have seen him."

"I have invited him to dine with us to-morrow."

The young man came, and I found him worthy of all M. Dandolo's praise. We became friends at once; he had some taste for poetry, I read some of my productions to him, and having paid him a visit the following day, he shewed me several pieces of his own composition which were well written. He introduced me to his aunt, in whose house he lived with his sister, and I was much pleased with their friendly welcome. Being alone with him in his room, I asked him what he thought of love.

"I do not care for love," he answered: "but I should like to get married in order to have a house of my own."

When I returned to the palace, I told M. Dandolo that he might open the affair with Count Algarotti, and the count mentioned it to Charles, who said that he could not give any answer, either one way or the other, until he should have seen the young girl, talked with her, and enquired about her reputation. As for Count Algarotti, he was ready to be answerable for his god-son, that is to guarantee four thousand ducats to the wife, provided her dowry was worth that amount. Those were only the preliminaries; the rest belonged to my province.

Dandolo having informed Charles that the matter was entirely in my hands, he called on me and enquired when I would be kind enough to introduce him to the young person. I named the day, adding that it was necessary to devote a whole day to the visit, as she resided at a distance of twenty miles from Venice, that we would dine with her and return the same evening. He promised to be ready for me by day-break. I immediately sent an express to the curate to inform him of the day on which I would call with a friend of mine whom I wished to introduce to his niece.

On the appointed day, Charles was punctual. I took care to let him know along the road that I had made the acquaintance of the young girl and of her uncle as travelling companions from Venice to Mestra about one month before, and that I would have offered myself as a husband, if I had been in a position to guarantee the dowry of four thousand ducats. I did not think it necessary to go any further in my confidences.

We arrived at the good priest's house two hours before mid-day, and soon after our arrival, Christine came in with an air of great ease, expressing all her pleasure at seeing me. She only bowed to Charles, enquiring from me whether he was likewise a clerk.

Charles answered that he was clerk at Ragionato.

She pretended to understand, in order not to appear ignorant.

"I want you to look at my writing," she said to me, "and afterwards we will go and see my mother."

Delighted at the praise bestowed upon her writing by Charles, when he heard that she had learned only one month, she invited us to follow her. Charles asked her why she had waited until the age of nineteen to study writing.

"Well, sir, what does it matter to you? Besides, I must tell you that I am seventeen, and not nineteen years of age."

Charles entreated her to excuse him, smiling at the quickness of her answer.

She was dressed like a simple country girl, yet very neatly, and she wore her handsome gold chains round her neck and on her arms. I told her to take my arm and that of Charles, which she did, casting towards me a look of loving obedience. We went to her mother's house; the good woman was compelled to keep her bed owing to sciatica. As we entered the room, a respectable-looking man, who was seated near the patient, rose at the sight of Charles, and embraced him affectionately. I heard that he was the family physician, and the circumstance pleased me much.

After we had paid our compliments to the good woman, the doctor enquired after Charles's aunt and sister; and alluding to the sister who was suffering from a secret disease, Charles desired to say a few words to him in private; they left the room together. Being alone with the mother and Christine, I praised Charles, his excellent conduct, his high character, his business abilities, and extolled the happiness of the woman who would be his wife. They both confirmed my praises by saying that everything I said of him could be read on his features. I had no time to lose, so I told Christine to be on her guard during dinner, as Charles might possibly be the husband whom God had intended for her.

“For me?”

“Yes, for you. Charles is one of a thousand; you would be much happier with him than you could be with me; the doctor knows him, and you could ascertain from him everything which I cannot find time to tell you now about my friend.”

The reader can imagine all I suffered in making this declaration, and my surprise when I saw the young girl calm and perfectly composed! Her composure dried the tears already gathering in my eyes. After a short silence, she asked me whether I was certain that such a handsome young man would have her. That question gave me an insight into Christine’s heart and feelings, and quieted all my sorrow, for I saw that I had not known her well. I answered that, beautiful as she was, there was no doubt of her being loved by everybody.

“It will be at dinner, my dear Christine, that my friend will examine and study you; do not fail to shew all the charms and qualities with which God has endowed you, but do not let him suspect our intimacy.”

“It is all very strange. Is my uncle informed of this wonderful change?”

“No.”

“If your friend should feel pleased with me, when would he marry me?”

“Within ten days. I will take care of everything, and you will see me again in the course of the week:”

Charles came back with the doctor, and Christine, leaving her mother’s bedside, took a chair opposite to us. She answered very sensibly all the questions addressed to her by Charles, often exciting his mirth by her artlessness, but not shewing any silliness.

Oh! charming simplicity! offspring of wit and of ignorance! thy charm is delightful, and thou alone hast the privilege of saying anything without ever giving offence! But how unpleasant thou art when thou art not natural! and thou art the masterpiece of art when thou art imitated with perfection!

We dined rather late, and I took care not to speak to Christine, not even to look at her, so as not to engross her attention, which she devoted entirely to Charles, and I was delighted to see with what ease and interest she kept up the conversation. After dinner, and as we were taking leave, I heard the following words uttered by Charles, which went to my very heart:

“You are made, lovely Christine, to minister to the happiness of a prince.”

And Christine? This was her answer:

“I should esteem myself fortunate, sir, if you should judge me worthy of ministering to yours.”

These words excited Charles so much that he embraced me!

Christine was simple, but her artlessness did not come from her mind, only from her heart. The simplicity of mind is nothing but silliness, that of the heart is only ignorance and innocence; it is a quality which subsists even when the cause has ceased to be. This young girl, almost a child of nature, was simple in her manners, but graceful in a thousand trifling ways which cannot be described. She was sincere, because she did not know that to conceal some of our impressions is one of the precepts of propriety, and as her intentions were pure, she was a stranger to that false shame and mock modesty which cause pretended innocence to blush at a word, or at a movement said or made very often without any wicked purpose.

During our journey back to Venice Charles spoke of nothing but of his happiness. He had decidedly fallen in love.

“I will call to-morrow morning upon Count Algarotti,” he said to me, “and you may write to the priest to come with all the necessary documents to make the contract of marriage which I long to sign.”

His delight and his surprise were intense when I told him that my wedding present to Christine was a dispensation from the Pope for her to be married in Lent.

“Then,” he exclaimed, “we must go full speed ahead!”

In the conference which was held the next day between my young substitute, his god-father, and M. Dandolo, it was decided that the parson should be invited to come with his niece. I undertook to carry the message, and leaving Venice two hours before morning I reached P —— early. The priest said he would be ready to start immediately after mass. I then called on Christine, and I treated her to a fatherly and sentimental sermon, every word of which was intended to point out to her the true road to happiness in the new condition which she was on the point of adopting. I told her how she ought to behave towards her husband, towards his aunt and his sister, in order to captivate their esteem and their love. The last part of my discourse was pathetic and rather disparaging to myself, for, as I enforced upon her the necessity of being faithful to her husband, I was necessarily led to entreat her pardon for having seduced her. "When you promised to marry me, after we had both been weak enough to give way to our love, did you intend to deceive me?"

"Certainly not."

"Then you have not deceived me. On the contrary, I owe you some gratitude for having thought that, if our union should prove unhappy, it was better to find another husband for me, and I thank God that you have succeeded so well. Tell me, now, what I can answer to your friend in case he should ask me, during the first night, why I am so different to what a virgin ought to be?"

"It is not likely that Charles, who is full of reserve and propriety, would ask you such a thing, but if he should, tell him positively that you never had a lover, and that you do not suppose yourself to be different to any other girl."

"Will he believe me?"

"He would deserve your contempt, and entail punishment on himself if he did not. But dismiss all anxiety; that will not occur. A sensible man, my dear Christine, when he has been rightly brought up, never ventures upon such a question, because he is not only certain to displease, but also sure that he will never know the truth, for if the truth is likely to injure a woman in the opinion of her husband, she would be very foolish, indeed, to confess it."

"I understand your meaning perfectly, my dear friend; let us, then, embrace each other for the last time."

"No, for we are alone and I am very weak. I adore thee as much as ever."

"Do not cry, dear friend, for, truly speaking, I have no wish for it."

That simple and candid answer changed my disposition suddenly, and, instead of crying, I began to laugh. Christine dressed herself splendidly, and after breakfast we left P —— . We reached Venice in four hours. I lodged them at a good inn, and going to the palace, I told M. Dandolo that our people had arrived, that it would be his province to bring them and Charles together on the following day, and to attend to the matter altogether, because the honour of the future husband and wife, the respect due to their parents and to propriety, forbade any further interference on my part.

He understood my reasons, and acted accordingly. He brought Charles to me, I presented both of them to the curate and his niece, and then left them to complete their business.

I heard afterwards from M. Dandolo that they all called upon Count Algarotti, and at the office of a notary, where the contract of marriage was signed, and that, after fixing a day for the wedding, Charles had escorted his intended back to P —— .

On his return, Charles paid me a visit. He told me that Christine had won by her beauty and pleasing manners the affection of his aunt, of his sister, and of his god-father, and that they had taken upon themselves all the expense of the wedding.

"We intend to be married," he added, "on such a day at P —— , and I trust that you will crown your work of kindness by being present at the ceremony."

I tried to excuse myself, but he insisted with such a feeling of gratitude, and with so much earnestness, that I was compelled to accept. I listened with real pleasure to the account he gave me of the impression produced upon all his family and upon Count Algarotti by the beauty, the artlessness, the rich toilet, and especially by the simple talk of the lovely country girl.

"I am deeply in love with her," Charles said to me, "and I feel that it is to you that I shall be indebted for the happiness I am sure to enjoy with my charming wife. She will soon get rid of her country way of talking in Venice, because here envy and slander will but too easily shew her the absurdity of it."

His enthusiasm and happiness delighted me, and I congratulated myself upon my own work. Yet I felt inwardly some jealousy, and I could not help envying a lot which I might have kept for myself.

M. Daridolo and M. Barbaro having been also invited by Charles, I went with them to P —— . We found the dinner-table laid out in the rector's house by the servants of Count Algarotti, who was acting as Charles's father, and having taken upon himself all the expense of the wedding, had sent his cook and his major-domo to P —— .

When I saw Christine, the tears filled my eyes, and I had to leave the room. She was dressed as a country girl, but looked as lovely as a nymph. Her husband, her uncle, and Count Algarotti had vainly tried to make her adopt the Venetian costume, but she had very wisely refused.

"As soon as I am your wife," she had said to Charles, "I will dress as you please, but here I will not appear before my young companions in any other costume than the one in which they have always seen me. I shall thus avoid being laughed at, and accused of pride, by the girls among whom I have been brought up."

There was in these words something so noble, so just, and so generous, that Charles thought his sweetheart a supernatural being. He told me that he had enquired, from the woman with whom Christine had spent a fortnight, about the offers of marriage she had refused at that time, and that he had been much surprised, for two of those offers were excellent ones.

"Christine," he added, "was evidently destined by Heaven for my happiness, and to you I am indebted for the precious possession of that treasure."

His gratitude pleased me, and I must render myself the justice of saying that I entertained no thought of abusing it. I felt happy in the happiness I had thus given.

We repaired to the church towards eleven o'clock, and were very much astonished at the difficulty we experienced in getting in. A large number of the nobility of Treviso, curious to ascertain whether it was true that the marriage ceremony of a country girl would be publicly performed during Lent when, by waiting only one month, a dispensation would have been useless, had come to P —— . Everyone wondered at the permission having been obtained from the Pope, everyone imagined that there was some extraordinary reason for it, and was in despair because it was impossible to guess that reason. In spite of all feelings of envy, every face beamed with pleasure and satisfaction when the young couple made their appearance, and no one could deny that they deserved that extraordinary distinction, that exception to all established rules.

A certain Countess of Tos,… from Treviso, Christine's god-mother, went up to her after the ceremony, and embraced her most tenderly, complaining that the happy event had not been communicated to her in Treviso. Christine, in her artless way, answered with as much modesty as sweetness, that the countess ought to forgive her if she had failed in her duty towards her, on account of the marriage having been decided on so hastily. She presented her husband, and begged Count Algarotti to atone for her error towards her god-mother by inviting her to join the wedding repast, an invitation which the countess accepted with great pleasure. That behaviour, which is usually the result of a good education and a long experience of society, was in the lovely peasant-girl due only to a candid and well-balanced mind which shone all the more because it was all nature and not art.

As they returned from the church, Charles and Christine knelt down before the young wife's mother, who gave them her blessing with tears of joy.

Dinner was served, and, of course, Christine and her happy spouse took the seats of honour. Mine was the last, and I was very glad of it, but although everything was delicious, I ate very little, and scarcely opened my lips.

Christine was constantly busy, saying pretty things to every one of her guests, and looking at her husband to make sure that he was pleased with her.

Once or twice she addressed his aunt and sister in such a gracious manner that they could not help leaving their places and kissing her tenderly, congratulating Charles upon his good fortune. I was seated not very far from Count Algarotti, and I heard him say several times to Christine's god-mother that he had never felt so delighted in his life.

When four o'clock struck, Charles whispered a few words to his lovely wife, she bowed to her god-mother, and everybody rose from the table. After the usual compliments — and in this case they bore the stamp of sincerity — the bride distributed among all the girls of the village, who were in the adjoining room, packets full of sugar-plums which had been prepared before hand, and she took leave of them, kissing them all without any pride. Count Algarotti invited all the guests to sleep at a house he had in Treviso, and to partake there of the dinner usually given the day after the wedding. The uncle alone excused himself, and the mother could not come, owing to her disease which prevented her from moving. The good woman died three months after Christine's marriage.

Christine therefore left her village to follow her husband, and for the remainder of their lives they lived together in mutual happiness.

Count Algarotti, Christine's god-mother and my two noble friends, went away together. The bride and bridegroom had, of course, a carriage to themselves, and I kept the aunt and the sister of Charles company in another. I could not help envying the happy man somewhat, although in my inmost heart I felt pleased with his happiness.

The sister was not without merit. She was a young widow of twenty-five, and still deserved the homage of men, but I gave the preference to the aunt, who told me that her new niece was a treasure, a jewel which was worthy of everybody's admiration, but that she would not let her go into society until she could speak the Venetian dialect well.

"Her cheerful spirits," she added, "her artless simplicity, her natural wit, are like her beauty, they must be dressed in the Venetian fashion. We are highly pleased with my nephew's choice, and he has incurred everlasting obligations towards you. I hope that for the future you will consider our house as your own."

The invitation was polite, perhaps it was sincere, yet I did not avail myself of it, and they were glad of it. At the end of one year Christine presented her husband with a living token of their mutual love, and that circumstance increased their conjugal felicity.

We all found comfortable quarters in the count's house in Treviso, where, after partaking of some refreshments, the guests retired to rest.

The next morning I was with Count Algarotti and my two friends when Charles came in, handsome, bright, and radiant. While he was answering with much wit some jokes of the count, I kept looking at him with some anxiety, but he came up to me and embraced me warmly. I confess that a kiss never made me happier.

People wonder at the devout scoundrels who call upon their saint when they think themselves in need of heavenly assistance, or who thank him when they imagine that they have obtained some favour from him, but people are wrong, for it is a good and right feeling, which preaches against Atheism.

At the invitation of Charles, his aunt and his sister had gone to pay a morning visit to the young wife, and they returned with her. Happiness never shone on a more lovely face!

M. Algarotti, going towards her, enquired from her affectionately whether she had had a good night. Her only answer was to rush to her husband's arms. It was the most artless, and at the same time the most eloquent, answer she could possible give. Then turning her beautiful eyes towards me, and offering me her hand, she said,

"M. Casanova, I am happy, and I love to be indebted to you for my happiness."

The tears which were flowing from my eyes, as I kissed her hand, told her better than words how truly happy I was myself.

The dinner passed off delightfully. We then left for Mestra and Venice. We escorted the married couple to their house, and returned home to amuse M. Bragadin with the relation of our expedition. This worthy and particularly learned man said a thousand things about the marriage, some of great profundity and others of great absurdity.

I laughed inwardly. I was the only one who had the key to the mystery, and could realize the secret of the comedy.

EPISODE 5 — MILAN AND MANTUA

CHAPTER XX

Slight Misfortunes Compel Me to Leave Venice — My Adventures in Milan and Mantua

On Low Sunday Charles paid us a visit with his lovely wife, who seemed totally indifferent to what Christine used to be. Her hair dressed with powder did not please me as well as the raven black of her beautiful locks, and her fashionable town attire did not, in my eyes, suit her as well as her rich country dress. But the countenances of husband and wife bore the stamp of happiness. Charles reproached me in a friendly manner because I had not called once upon them, and, in order to atone for my apparent negligence, I went to see them the next day with M. Dandolo. Charles told me that his wife was idolized by his aunt and his sister who had become her bosom friend; that she was kind, affectionate, unassuming, and of a disposition which enforced affection. I was no less pleased with this favourable state of things than with the facility with which Christine was learning the Venetian dialect.

When M. Dandolo and I called at their house, Charles was not at home; Christine was alone with his two relatives. The most friendly welcome was proffered to us, and in the course of conversation the aunt praised the progress made by Christine in her writing very highly, and asked her to let me see her copy-book. I followed her to the next room, where she told me that she was very happy; that every day she discovered new virtues in her husband. He had told her, without the slightest appearance of suspicion of displeasure, that he knew that we had spent two days together in Treviso, and that he had laughed at the well-meaning fool who had given him that piece of information in the hope of raising a cloud in the heaven of their felicity.

Charles was truly endowed with all the virtues, with all the noble qualities of an honest and distinguished man. Twenty-six years afterwards I happened to require the assistance of his purse, and found him my true friend. I never was a frequent visitor at his house, and he appreciated my delicacy. He died a few months before my last departure from Venice, leaving his widow in easy circumstances, and three well-educated sons, all with good positions, who may, for what I know, be still living with their mother.

In June I went to the fair at Padua, and made the acquaintance of a young man of my own age, who was then studying mathematics under the celebrated Professor Succi. His name was Tognolo, but thinking it did not sound well, he changed it for that of Fabris. He became, in after years, Comte de Fabris, lieutenant-general under Joseph II., and died Governor of Transylvania. This man, who owed his high fortune to his talents, would, perhaps, have lived and died unknown if he had kept his name of Tognolo, a truly vulgar one. He was from Uderzo, a large village of the Venetian Friuli. He had a brother in the Church, a man of parts, and a great gamester, who, having a deep knowledge of the world, had taken the name of Fabris, and the younger brother had to assume it likewise. Soon afterwards he bought an estate with the title of count, became a Venetian nobleman, and his origin as a country bumpkin was forgotten. If he had kept his name of Tognolo it would have injured him, for he could not have pronounced it without reminding his hearers of what is called, by the most contemptible of prejudices, low extraction, and the privileged class, through an absurd error, does not admit the possibility of a peasant having talent or genius. No doubt a time will come when society, more enlightened, and therefore more reasonable, will acknowledge that noble feelings, honour, and heroism can be found in every condition of life as easily as in a class, the blood of which is not always exempt from the taint of a misalliance.

The new count, while he allowed others to forget his origin, was too wise to forget it himself, and in legal documents he always signed his family name as well as the one he had adopted. His brother had offered him two ways to win fortune in the world, leaving him perfectly free in his choice. Both required an expenditure of one thousand sequins, but the abbe had put the amount aside for that purpose. My friend had to choose between the sword of Mars and the bird of Minerva. The abbe knew that he could purchase for his brother a company in the army of his Imperial and Apostolic Majesty, or obtain for him a professorship at the University of Padua; for money can do everything. But my friend, who was gifted with noble feelings and good sense, knew that in either profession talents and knowledge were essentials, and before making a choice he was applying himself with great success to the study of mathematics. He ultimately decided upon the military profession, thus imitating Achilles, who preferred the sword to the distaff, and he paid for it with his life like the son of Peleus; though not so young, and not through a wound inflicted by an arrow, but from the plague, which he caught in the unhappy country in which the indolence of Europe allows the Turks to perpetuate that fearful disease.

The distinguished appearance, the noble sentiments, the great knowledge, and the talents of Fabris would have been turned into ridicule in a man called Tognolo, for such is the force of prejudices, particularly of those which have no ground to rest upon, that an ill-sounding name is degrading in this our stupid society. My opinion is that men who have an ill-sounding name, or one which presents an indecent or ridiculous idea, are right in changing it if they intend to win honour, fame, and fortune either in arts or sciences. No one can reasonably deny them that right, provided the name they assume belongs to nobody. The alphabet is general property, and everyone has the right to use it for the creation of a word forming an appellative sound. But he must truly create it. Voltaire, in spite of his genius, would not perhaps have reached posterity under his name of Arouet, especially amongst the French, who always give way so easily to their keen sense of ridicule and equivocation. How could they have imagined that a writer 'a rouet' could be a man of genius? And D'Alembert, would he have attained his high fame, his universal reputation, if he had been satisfied with his name of M. Le Rond, or Mr. Allround? What would have become of Metastasio under his true name of Trapasso? What impression would Melanchthon have made with his name of Schwarzerd? Would he then have dared to raise the voice of a moralist philosopher, of a reformer of the Eucharist, and so many other holy things? Would not M. de Beauharnais have caused some persons to laugh and others to blush if he had kept his name of Beauvit, even if the first founder of his family had been indebted for his fortune to the fine quality expressed by that name?

Would the Bourbeux have made as good a figure on the throne as the Bourbons? I think that King Poniatowski ought to have abdicated the name of Augustus, which he had taken at the time of his accession to the throne, when he abdicated royalty. The Coleoni of Bergamo, however, would find it rather difficult to change their name, because they would be compelled at the same time to change their coat of arms (the two generative glands), and thus to annihilate the glory of their ancestor, the hero Bartholomeo.

Towards the end of autumn my friend Fabris introduced me to a family in the midst of which the mind and the heart could find delicious food. That family resided in the country on the road to Zero. Card-playing, lovemaking, and practical jokes were the order of the day. Some of those jokes were rather severe ones, but the order of the day was never to get angry and to laugh at everything, for one was to take every jest pleasantly or be thought a bore. Bedsteads would at night tumble down under their occupants, ghosts were personated, diuretic pills or sugar-plums were given to young ladies, as well as comfits who produced certain winds rising from the netherlands, and impossible to keep under control. These jokes would sometimes go rather too far, but such was the spirit animating all the members of that circle; they would laugh. I was not less inured than the others to the war of offence and defence, but at last there was such a bitter joke played upon me that it suggested to me another, the fatal consequences of which put a stop to the mania by which we were all possessed.

We were in the habit of walking to a farm which was about half a league distant by the road, but the distance could be reduced by half by going over a deep and miry ditch across which a narrow plank was thrown, and I always insisted upon going that way, in spite of the fright of the ladies who always trembled on the narrow bridge, although I never failed to cross the first, and to offer my hand to help them over. One fine day, I crossed first so as to give them courage, but suddenly, when I reached the middle of the plank, it gave way under me, and there I was in the ditch, up to the chin in stinking mud, and, in spite of my inward rage, obliged, according to the general understanding, to join in the merry laughter of all my companions. But the merriment did not last long, for the joke was too bad, and everyone declared it to be so. Some peasants were called to the rescue, and with much difficulty they dragged me out in the most awful state. An entirely new dress, embroidered with spangles, my silk stockings, my lace, everything, was of course spoiled, but not minding it, I laughed more heartily that anybody else, although I had already made an inward vow to have the most cruel revenge. In order to know the author of that bitter joke I had only to appear calm and indifferent about it. It was evident that the plank had been purposely sawn. I was taken back to the house, a shirt, a coat, a complete costume, were lent me, for I had come that time only for twenty-four hours, and had not brought anything with me. I went to the city the next morning, and towards the evening I returned to the gay company. Fabris, who had been as angry as myself, observed to me that the perpetrator of the joke evidently felt his guilt, because he took good care not to discover himself. But I unveiled the mystery by promising one sequin to a peasant woman if she could find out who had sawn the plank. She contrived to discover the young man who had done the work. I called on him, and the offer of a sequin, together with my threats, compelled him to confess that he had been paid for his work by Signor Demetrio, a Greek, dealer in spices, a good and amiable man of between forty-five and fifty years, on whom I never played any trick, except in the case of a pretty, young servant girl whom he was courting, and whom I had juggled from him.

Satisfied with my discovery, I was racking my brain to invent a good practical joke, but to obtain complete revenge it was necessary that my trick should prove worse than the one he had played upon me. Unfortunately my imagination was at bay. I could not find anything. A funeral put an end to my difficulties.

Armed with my hunting-knife, I went alone to the cemetery a little after midnight, and opening the grave of the dead man who had been buried that very day, I cut off one of the arms near the shoulder, not without some trouble, and after I had re-buried the corpse, I returned to my room with the arm of the defunct. The next day, when supper was over, I left the table and retired to my chamber as if I intended to go to bed, but taking the arm with me I hid myself under Demetrio’s bed. A short time after, the Greek comes in, undresses himself, put his light out, and lies down. I give him time to fall nearly asleep; then, placing myself at the foot of the bed, I pull away the clothes little by little until he is half naked. He laughs and calls out,

“Whoever you may be, go away and let me sleep quietly, for I do not believe in ghosts;” he covers himself again and composes himself to sleep.

I wait five or six minutes, and pull again at the bedclothes; but when he tries to draw up the sheet, saying that he does not care for ghosts, I oppose some resistance. He sits up so as to catch the hand which is pulling at the clothes, and I take care that he should get hold of the dead hand. Confident that he has caught the man or the woman who was playing the trick, he pulls it towards him, laughing all the time; I keep tight hold of the arm for a few instants, and then let it go suddenly; the Greek falls back on his pillow without uttering a single word.

The trick was played, I leave the room without any noise, and, reaching my chamber, go to bed.

I was fast asleep, when towards morning I was awoke by persons going about, and not understanding why they should be up so early, I got up. The first person I met — the mistress of the house — told me that I had played an abominable joke.

“I? What have I done?”

“M. Demetrio is dying.”

“Have I killed him?”

She went away without answering me. I dressed myself, rather frightened, I confess, but determined upon pleading complete ignorance of everything, and I proceeded to Demetrio’s room; and I was confronted with horror-stricken countenances and bitter reproaches. I found all the guests around him. I protested my innocence, but everyone smiled. The archpriest and the beadle, who had just arrived, would not bury the arm which was lying there, and they told me that I had been guilty of a great crime.

“I am astonished, reverend sir,” I said to the priest, “at the hasty judgment which is thus passed upon me, when there is no proof to condemn me.”

“You have done it,” exclaimed all the guests, “you alone are capable of such an abomination; it is just like you. No one but you would have dared to do such a thing!”

“I am compelled,” said the archpriest, “to draw up an official report.”

“As you please, I have not the slightest objection,” I answered, “I have nothing to fear.”

And I left the room.

I continued to take it coolly, and at the dinner-table I was informed that M. Demetrio had been bled, that he had recovered the use of his eyes, but not of his tongue or of his limbs. The next day he could speak, and I heard, after

I had taken leave of the family, that he was stupid and spasmodic. The poor man remained in that painful state for the rest of his life. I felt deeply grieved, but I had not intended to injure him so badly. I thought that the trick he had played upon me might have cost my life, and I could not help deriving consolation from that idea.

On the same day, the archpriest made up his mind to have the arm buried, and to send a formal denunciation against me to the episcopal chancellorship of Treviso.

Annoyed at the reproaches which I received on all sides, I returned to Venice. A fortnight afterwards I was summoned to appear before the 'magistrato alla blasfemia'. I begged M. Barbaro to enquire the cause of the aforesaid summons, for it was a formidable court. I was surprised at the proceedings being taken against me, as if there had been a certainty of my having desecrated a grave, whilst there could be nothing but suspicion. But I was mistaken, the summons was not relating to that affair. M. Barbaro informed me in the evening that a woman had brought a complaint against me for having violated her daughter. She stated in her complaint that, having decoyed her child to the Zuecca, I had abused her by violence, and she adduced as a proof that her daughter was confined to her bed, owing to the bad treatment she had received from me in my endeavours to ravish her. It was one of those complaints which are often made, in order to give trouble and to cause expense, even against innocent persons. I was innocent of violation, but it was quite true that I had given the girl a sound thrashing. I prepared my defence, and begged M. Barbaro to deliver it to the magistrate's secretary.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that, on such a day, having met the woman with her daughter, I accosted them and offered to give them some refreshments at a coffee-house near by; that the daughter refused to accept my caresses, and that the mother said to me, —

"My daughter is yet a virgin, and she is quite right not to lose her maidenhood without making a good profit by it."

"If so," I answered, "I will give you ten sequins for her virginity."

"You may judge for yourself," said the mother.

Having assured myself of the fact by the assistance of the sense of feeling, and having ascertained that it might be true, I told the mother to bring the girl in the afternoon to the Zuecca, and that I would give her the ten sequins. My offer was joyfully accepted, the mother brought her daughter to me, she received the money, and leaving us together in the Garden of the Cross, she went away. When I tried to avail myself of the right for which I had paid, the girl, most likely trained to the business by her mother, contrived to prevent me. At first the game amused me, but at last, being tired of it, I told her to have done. She answered quietly that it was not her fault if I was not able to do what I wanted. Vexed and annoyed, I placed her in such a position that she found herself at bay, but, making a violent effort, she managed to change her position and debarred me from making any further attempts.

"Why," I said to her, "did you move?"

"Because I would not have it in that position."

"You would not?"

"No."

Without more ado, I got hold of a broomstick, and gave her a good lesson, in order to get something for the ten sequins which I had been foolish enough to pay in advance. But I have broken none of her limbs, and I took care to apply my blows only on her posteriors, on which spot I have no doubt that all the marks may be seen. In the evening I made her dress herself again, and sent her back in a boat which chanced to pass, and she was landed in safety. The mother received ten sequins, the daughter has kept her hateful maidenhood, and, if I am guilty of anything, it is only of having given a thrashing to an infamous girl, the pupil of a still more infamous mother.

My declaration had no effect. The magistrate was acquainted with the girl, and the mother laughed at having duped me so easily. I was summoned, but did not appear before the court, and a writ was on the point of being issued against my body, when the complaint of the profanation of a grave was filed against me before the same magistrate. It would have been less serious for me if the second affair had been carried before the Council of Ten, because one court might have saved me from the other.

The second crime, which, after all, was only a joke, was high felony in the eyes of the clergy, and a great deal was made of it. I was summoned to appear within twenty-four hours, and it was evident that I would be arrested immediately afterwards. M. de Bragadin, who always gave good advice, told me that the best way to avoid the threatening storm was to run away. The advice was certainly wise, and I lost no time in getting ready.

I have never left Venice with so much regret as I did then, for I had some pleasant intrigues on hand, and I was very lucky at cards. My three friends assured me that, within one year at the furthest, the cases against me would be forgotten, and in Venice, when public opinion has forgotten anything, it can be easily arranged.

I left Venice in the evening and the next day I slept at Verona. Two days afterwards I reached Mantua. I was alone, with plenty of clothes and jewels, without letters of introduction, but with a well-filled purse, enjoying excellent health and my twenty-three years.

In Mantua I ordered an excellent dinner, the very first thing one ought to do at a large hotel, and after dinner I went out for a walk. In the evening, after I had seen the coffee-houses and the places of resort, I went to the theatre, and I was delighted to see Marina appear on the stage as a comic dancer, amid the greatest applause, which she deserved, for she danced beautifully. She was tall, handsome, very well made and very graceful. I immediately resolved on renewing my acquaintance with her, if she happened to be free, and after the opera I engaged a boy to take me to her house. She had just sat down to supper with someone, but the moment she saw me she threw her napkin down and flew to my arms. I returned her kisses, judging by her warmth that her guest was a man of no consequence.

The servant, without waiting for orders, had already laid a plate for me, and Marina invited me to sit down near her. I felt vexed, because the aforesaid individual had not risen to salute me, and before I accepted Marina’s invitation I asked her who the gentleman was, begging her to introduce me.

“This gentleman,” she said, “is Count Celi, of Rome; he is my lover.”

“I congratulate you,” I said to her, and turning towards the so-called count, “Sir,” I added, “do not be angry at our mutual affection, Marina is my daughter.”

"She is a prostitute."

"True," said Marina, "and you can believe the count, for he is my procurer."

At those words, the brute threw his knife at her face, but she avoided it by running away. The scoundrel followed her, but I drew my sword, and said,

"Stop, or you are a dead man."

I immediately asked Marina to order her servant to light me out, but she hastily put a cloak on, and taking my arm she entreated me to take her with me.

"With pleasure," I said.

The count then invited me to meet him alone, on the following day, at the Casino of Pomi, to hear what he had to say.

"Very well, sir, at four in the afternoon," I answered.

I took Marina to my inn, where I lodged her in the room adjoining mine, and we sat down to supper.

Marina, seeing that I was thoughtful, said,

"Are you sorry to have saved me from the rage of that brute?"

"No, I am glad to have done so, but tell me truly who and what he is."

"He is a gambler by profession, and gives himself out as Count Celi. I made his acquaintance here. He courted me, invited me to supper, played after supper, and, having won a large sum from an Englishman whom he had decoyed to his supper by telling him that I would be present, he gave me fifty guineas, saying that he had given me an interest in his bank. As soon as I had become his mistress, he insisted upon my being compliant with all the men he wanted to make his dupes, and at last he took up his quarters at my lodgings. The welcome I gave you very likely vexed him, and you know the rest. Here I am, and here I will remain until my departure for Mantua where I have an engagement as first dancer. My servant will bring me all I need for to-night, and I will give him orders to move all my luggage to-morrow. I will not see that scoundrel any more. I will be only yours, if you are free as in Corfu, and if you love me still."

"Yes, my dear Marina, I do love you, but if you wish to be my mistress, you must be only mine."

"Oh! of course. I have three hundred sequins, and I will give them to you to-morrow if you will take me as your mistress."

"I do not want any money; all I want is yourself. Well, it is all arranged; to-morrow evening we shall feel more comfortable."

"Perhaps you are thinking of a duel for to-morrow? But do not imagine such a thing, dearest. I know that man; he is an arrant coward."

"I must keep my engagement with him."

"I know that, but he will not keep his, and I am very glad of it."

Changing the conversation and speaking of our old acquaintances, she informed me that she had quarreled with her brother Petronio, that her sister was primadonna in Genoa, and that Bellino Therese was still in Naples, where she continued to ruin dukes. She concluded by saying;

"I am the most unhappy of the family."

"How so? You are beautiful, and you have become an excellent dancer. Do not be so prodigal of your favours, and you cannot fail to meet with a man who will take care of your fortune."

"To be sparing of my favours is very difficult; when I love, I am no longer mine, but when I do not love, I cannot be amiable. Well, dearest, I could be very happy with you."

"Dear Marina, I am not wealthy, and my honour would not allow me…."

"Hold your tongue; I understand you."

"Why have you not a lady's maid with you instead of a male servant?"

"You are right. A maid would look more respectable, but my servant is so clever and so faithful!"

"I can guess all his qualities, but he is not a fit servant for you."

The next day after dinner I left Marina getting ready for the theatre, and having put everything of value I possessed in my pocket, I took a carriage and proceeded to the Casino of Pomi. I felt confident of disabling the false count, and sent the carriage away. I was conscious of being guilty of great folly in exposing my life with such an adversary. I might have broken my engagement with him without implicating my honour, but, the fact is that I felt well disposed for a fight, and as I was certainly in the right I thought the prospect of a duel very delightful. A visit to a dancer, a brute professing to be a nobleman, who insults her in my presence, who wants to kill her, who allows her to be carried off in his very teeth, and whose only opposition is to give me an appointment! It seemed to me that if I had failed to come, I should have given him the right to call me a coward.

The count had not yet arrived. I entered the coffee-room to wait for him. I met a good-looking Frenchman there, and I addressed him. Being pleased with his conversation, I told him that I expected the arrival of a man, and that as my honour required that he should find me alone I would feel grateful if he would go away as soon as I saw the man approaching. A short time afterwards I saw my adversary coming along, but with a second. I then told the Frenchman that he would oblige me by remaining, and he accepted as readily as if I had invited him to a party of pleasure. The count came in with his follower, who was sporting a sword at least forty inches long, and had all the look of a cut-throat. I advanced towards the count, and said to him dryly, —

“You told me that you would come alone.”

“My friend will not be in the way, as I only want to speak to you.”

“If I had known that, I would not have gone out of my way. But do not let us be noisy, and let us go to some place where we can exchange a few words without being seen. Follow me.”

I left the coffee-room with the young Frenchman, who, being well acquainted with the place, took me to the most favourable spot, and we waited there for the two other champions, who were walking slowly and talking together. When they were within ten paces I drew my sword and called upon my adversary to get ready. My Frenchman had already taken out his sword, but he kept it under his arm.

“Two to one!” exclaimed Celi.

“Send your friend away, and this gentleman will go likewise; at all events, your friend wears a sword, therefore we are two against two.”

“Yes,” said the Frenchman, “let us have a four-handed game.”

“I do not cross swords with a dancer,” said the cutthroat.

He had scarcely uttered those words when my friend, going up to him, told him that a dancer was certainly as good as a blackleg, and gave him a violent bow with the flat of his sword on the face. I followed his example with Celi, who began to beat a retreat, and said that he only wanted to tell me something, and that he would fight afterwards.

“Well, speak.”

“You know me and I do not know you. Tell me who you are.”

My only answer was to resume laying my sword upon the scoundrel, while the Frenchman was shewing the same dexterity upon the back of his companion, but the two cowards took to their heels, and there was nothing for us to do but to sheathe our weapons. Thus did the duel end in a manner even more amusing than Marina herself had anticipated.

My brave Frenchman was expecting someone at the casino. I left him after inviting him to supper for that evening after the opera. I gave him; the name which I had assumed for my journey and the address of my hotel.

I gave Marina a full description of the adventure.

“I will,” she said, “amuse everybody at the theatre this evening with the story of your meeting. But that which pleases me most is that, if your second is really a dancer, he can be no other than M. Baletti, who is engaged with me for the Mantua Theatre.”

I stored all my valuables in my trunk again, and went to the opera, where I saw Baletti, who recognized me, and pointed me out to all his friends, to whom he was relating the adventure. He joined me after the performance, and accompanied me to the inn. Marina, who had already returned, came to my room as soon as she heard my voice, and I was amused at the surprise of the amiable Frenchman, when he saw the young artist with whom he had engaged to dance the comic parts. Marina, although an excellent dancer, did not like the serious style. Those two handsome adepts of Terpsichore had never met before, and they began an amorous warfare which made me enjoy my supper immensely, because, as he was a fellow artist, Marina assumed towards Baletti a tone well adapted to the circumstances, and very different to her usual manner with other men. She shone with wit and beauty that evening, and was in an excellent temper, for she had been much applauded by the public, the true version of the Celi business being already well known.

The theatre was to be open only for ten more nights, and as Marina wished to leave Milan immediately after the last performance, we decided on travelling together. In the mean time, I invited Baletti (it was an Italian name which he had adopted for the stage) to be our guest during the remainder of our stay in Milan. The friendship between us had a great influence upon all the subsequent events of my life, as the reader will see in these Memoirs. He had great talent as a dancer, but that was the least of his excellent qualities. He was honest, his feelings were noble, he had studied much, and he had received the best education that could be given in those days in France to a nobleman.

On the third day I saw plainly that Marina wished to make a conquest of her colleague, and feeling what great advantage might accrue to her from it I resolved on helping her. She had a post-chaise for two persons, and I easily persuaded her to take Baletti with her, saying that I wished to arrive alone in Mantua for several reasons which I could not confide to her. The fact was that if I had arrived with her, people would have naturally supposed that I was her lover, and I wished to avoid that. Baletti was delighted with the proposal; he insisted upon paying his share of the expenses, but Marina would not hear of it. The reasons alleged by the young man for paying his own expenses were excellent ones, and it was with great difficulty that I prevailed upon him to accept Marina’s offer, but I ultimately succeeded. I promised to wait for them on the road, so as to take dinner and supper together, and on the day appointed for our departure I left Milan one hour before them.

Reaching the city of Cremona very early, where we intended to sleep, I took a walk about the streets, and, finding a coffee-house, I went in. I made there the acquaintance of a French officer, and we left the coffee-room together to take a short ramble. A very pretty woman happened to pass in a carriage, and my companion stopped her to say a few words. Their conversation was soon over, and the officer joined me again.

“Who is that lovely lady?” I enquired.

“She is a truly charming woman, and I can tell you an anecdote about her worthy of being transmitted to posterity. You need not suppose that I am going to exaggerate, for the adventure is known to everybody in Cremona. The charming woman whom you have just seen is gifted with wit greater even than her beauty, and here is a specimen of it. A young officer, one amongst many military men who were courting her, when Marshal de Richelieu was commanding in Genoa, boasted of being treated by her with more favour than all the others, and one day, in the very coffee-room where we met, he advised a brother officer not to lose his time in courting her, because he had no chance whatever of obtaining any favour.

"'My dear fellow,' said the other officer, 'I have a much better right to give you that piece of advice; for I have already obtained from her everything which can be granted to a lover.'

"'I am certain that you are telling a lie,' exclaimed the young man, 'and I request you to follow me out.'

"'Most willingly,' said the indiscreet swain, 'but what is the good of ascertaining the truth through a duel and of cutting our throats, when I can make the lady herself certify the fact in your presence.'

"'I bet twenty-five louis that it is all untrue,' said the incredulous officer.

"'I accept your bet. Let us go.'

"The two contending parties proceeded together towards the dwelling of the lady whom you saw just now, who was to name the winner of the twenty-five louis.

"They found her in her dressing-room. 'Well gentlemen,' she said, 'what lucky wind has brought you here together at this hour?

"'It is a bet, madam,' answered the unbelieving officer, 'and you alone can be the umpire in our quarrel. This gentleman has been boasting of having obtained from you everything a woman can grant to the most favoured lover. I have given him the lie in the most impressive manner, and a duel was to ensue, when he offered to have the truth of his boast certified by you. I have bet twenty-five Louis that you would not admit it, and he has taken my bet. Now, madam, you can say which of us two is right.'

"You have lost, sir," she said to him; 'but now I beg both of you to quit my house, and I give you fair warning that if you ever dare to shew your faces here again, you will be sorry for it.'

"The two heedless fellows went away dreadfully mortified. The unbeliever paid the bet, but he was deeply vexed, called the other a coxcomb, and a week afterwards killed him in a duel.

"Since that time the lady goes to the casino, and continues to mix in society, but does not see company at her own house, and lives in perfect accord with her husband."

"How did the husband take it all?"

"Quite well, and like an intelligent, sensible man. He said that, if his wife had acted differently, he would have applied for a divorce, because in that case no one would have entertained a doubt of her being guilty."

"That husband is indeed a sensible fellow. It is certain that, if his wife had given the lie to the indiscreet officer, he would have paid the bet, but he would have stood by what he had said, and everybody would have believed him. By declaring him the winner of the bet she has cut the matter short, and she has avoided a judgment by which she would have been dishonoured. The inconsiderate boaster was guilty of a double mistake for which he paid the penalty of his life, but his adversary was as much wanting in delicacy, for in such matters rightly-minded men do not venture upon betting. If the one who says yes is imprudent, the one who says no is a dupe. I like the lady's presence of mind."

"But what sentence would you pass on her. Guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty."

"I am of the same opinion, and it has been the verdict of the public likewise, for she has since been treated even better than before the affair. You will see, if you go to the casino, and I shall be happy to introduce you to her."

I invited the officer to sup with us, and we spent a very pleasant evening. After he had gone, I remarked with pleasure that Marina was capable of observing the rules of propriety. She had taken a bedroom to herself, so as not to hurt the feelings of her respectable fellow-dancer.

When I arrived in Mantua, I put up at St. Mark's hotel. Marina, to whom I had given a notice that my intention was to call on her but seldom, took up her abode in the house assigned to her by the theatrical manager.

In the afternoon of the same day, as I was walking about, I went into a bookseller's shop to ascertain whether there was any new work out. I remained there without perceiving that the night had come, and on being told that the shop was going to be closed, I went out. I had only gone a few yards when I was arrested by a patrol, the officer of which told me that, as I had no lantern and as eight o'clock had struck, his duty was to take me to the guardhouse. It was in vain that I observed that, having arrived only in the afternoon, I could not know that order of the police. I was compelled to follow him.

When we reached the guardhouse, the officer of the patrol introduced me to his captain, a tall, fine-looking young man who received me in the most cheerful manner. I begged him to let me return to my hotel as I needed rest after my journey. He laughed and answered, "No, indeed, I want you to spend a joyous night with me, and in good company." He told the officer to give me back my sword, and, addressing me again, he said, "I only consider you, my dear sir, as my friend and guest."

I could not help being amused at such a novel mode of invitation, and I accepted it. He gave some orders to a German soldier, and soon afterwards the table was laid out for four persons. The two other officers joined us, and we had a very gay supper. When the desert had been served the company was increased by the arrival of two disgusting, dissolute females. A green cloth was spread over the table, and one of the officers began a faro bank. I punted so as not to appear unwilling to join the game, and after losing a few sequins I went out to breathe the fresh air, for we had drunk freely. One of the two females followed me, teased me, and finally contrived, in spite of myself, to make me a present which condemned me to a regimen of six weeks. After that fine exploit, I went in again.

A young and pleasant officer, who had lost some fifteen or twenty sequins, was swearing like a trooper because the banker had pocketed his money and was going. The young officer had a great deal of gold before him on the table, and he contended that the banker ought to have warned him that it would be the last game.

"Sir," I said to him, politely, "you are in the wrong, for faro is the freest of games. Why do you not take the bank yourself?"

“It would be too much trouble, and these gentlemen do not punt high enough for me, but if that sort of thing amuses you, take the bank and I will punt.”

“Captain,” I said, “will you take a fourth share in my bank?”

“Willingly.”

“Gentlemen, I beg you to give notice that I will lay the cards down after six games.”

I asked for new packs of cards, and put three hundred sequins on the table. The captain wrote on the back of a card, “Good for a hundred sequins, O’Neilan,” and placing it with my gold I began my bank.

The young officer was delighted, and said to me,

“Your bank might be defunct before the end of the sixth game.”

I did not answer, and the play went on.

At the beginning of the fifth game, my bank was in the pangs of death; the young officer was in high glee. I rather astonished him by telling him that I was glad to lose, for I thought him a much more agreeable companion when he was winning.

There are some civilities which very likely prove unlucky for those to whom they are addressed, and it turned out so in this case, for my compliment turned his brain. During the fifth game, a run of adverse cards made him lose all he had won, and as he tried to do violence to Dame Fortune in the sixth round, he lost every sequin he had.

“Sir,” he said to me, “you have been very lucky, but I hope you will give me my revenge to-morrow.”

“It would be with the greatest pleasure, sir, but I never play except when I am under arrest.”

I counted my money, and found that I had wan two hundred and fifty sequins, besides a debt of fifty sequins due by an officer who played on trust which Captain O’Neilan took on his own account. I completed his share, and at day-break he allowed me to go away.

As soon as I got to my hotel, I went to bed, and when I awoke, I had a visit from Captain Laurent, the officer who had played on trust. Thinking that his object was to pay me what he had lost, I told him that O’Neilan had taken his debt on himself, but he answered than he had only called for the purpose of begging of me a loan of six sequins on his note of hand, by which he would pledge his honour to repay me within one week. I gave him the money, and he begged that the matter, might remain between us.

“I promise it,” I said to him, “but do not break your word.”

The next day I was ill, and the reader is aware of the nature of my illness. I immediately placed myself under a proper course of diet, however unpleasant it was at my age; but I kept to my system, and it cured me rapidly.

Three or four days afterwards Captain O’Neilan called on me, and when I told him the nature of my sickness he laughed, much to my surprise.

“Then you were all right before that night?” he enquired.

“Yes, my health was excellent.”

“I am sorry that you should have lost your health in such an ugly place. I would have warned you if I had thought you had any intentions in that quarter.”

“Did you know of the woman having … ?”

“Zounds! Did I not? It is only a week since I paid a visit to the very same place myself, and I believe the creature was all right before my visit.”

“Then I have to thank you for the present she has bestowed upon me.”

“Most likely; but it is only a trifle, and you can easily get cured if you care to take the trouble.”

“What! Do you not try to cure yourself?”

“Faith, no. It would be too much trouble to follow a regular diet, and what is the use of curing such a trifling inconvenience when I am certain of getting it again in a fortnight. Ten times in my life I have had that patience, but I got tired of it, and for the last two years I have resigned myself, and now I put up with it.”

"I pity you, for a man like you would have great success in love."

"I do not care a fig for love; it requires cares which would bother me much more than the slight inconvenience to which we were alluding, and to which I am used now."

"I am not of your opinion, for the amorous pleasure is insipid when love does not throw a little spice in it. Do you think, for instance, that the ugly wretch I met at the guard-room is worth what I now suffer on her account?"

"Of course not, and that is why I am sorry for you. If I had known, I could have introduced you to something better."

"The very best in that line is not worth my health, and health ought to be sacrificed only for love."

"Oh! you want women worthy of love? There are a few here; stop with us for some time, and when you are cured there is nothing to prevent you from making conquests."

O'Neilan was only twenty-three years old; his father, who was dead, had been a general, and the beautiful Countess Borsati was his sister. He presented me to the Countess Zanardi Nerli, still more lovely than his sister, but I was prudent enough not to burn my incense before either of them, for it seemed to me that everybody could guess the state of my health.

I have never met a young man more addicted to debauchery than O'Neilan. I have often spent the night rambling about with him, and I was amazed at his cynical boldness and impudence. Yet he was noble, generous, brave, and honourable. If in those days young officers were often guilty of so much immorality, of so many vile actions, it was not so much their fault as the fault of the privileges which they enjoyed through custom, indulgence, or party spirit. Here is an example:

One day O'Neilan, having drunk rather freely, rides through the city at full speed. A poor old woman who was crossing the street has no time to avoid him, she falls, and her head is cut open by the horse's feet. O'Neilan places himself under arrest, but the next day he is set at liberty. He had, only to plead that it was an accident.

The officer Laurent not having called upon me to redeem his promisory note of six sequins during the week, I told him in the street that I would no longer consider myself bound to keep the affair secret. Instead of excusing himself, he said,

“I do not care!”

The answer was insulting, and I intended to compel him to give me reparation, but the next day O’Neilan told me that Captain Laurent had gone mad and had been locked up in a mad-house. He subsequently recovered his reason, but his conduct was so infamous that he was cashiered.

O’Neilan, who was as brave as Bayard, was killed a few years afterwards at the battle of Prague. A man of his complexion was certain to fall the victim of Mars or of Venus. He might be alive now if he had been endowed only with the courage of the fox, but he had the courage of the lion. It is a virtue in a soldier, but almost a fault in an officer. Those who brave danger with a full knowledge of it are worthy of praise, but those who do not realize it escape only by a miracle, and without any merit attaching itself to them. Yet we must respect those great warriors, for their unconquerable courage is the offspring of a strong soul, of a virtue which places them above ordinary mortals.

Whenever I think of Prince Charles de Ligne I cannot restrain my tears. He was as brave as Achilles, but Achilles was invulnerable. He would be alive now if he had remembered during the fight that he was mortal. Who are they that, having known him, have not shed tears in his memory? He was handsome, kind, polished, learned, a lover of the arts, cheerful, witty in his conversation, a pleasant companion, and a man of perfect equability. Fatal, terrible revolution! A cannon ball took him from his friends, from his family, from the happiness which surrounded him.

The Prince de Waldeck has also paid the penalty of his intrepidity with the loss of one arm. It is said that he consoles himself for that loss with the consciousness that with the remaining one he can yet command an army.

O you who despise life, tell me whether that contempt of life renders you worthy of it?

The opera opened immediately after Easter, and I was present at every performance. I was then entirely cured, and had resumed my usual life. I was pleased to see that Baletti shewed off Marina to the best advantage. I never visited her, but Baletti was in the habit of breakfasting with me almost every morning.

He had often mentioned an old actress who had left the stage for more than twenty years, and pretended to have been my father's friend. One day I took a fancy to call upon her, and he accompanied me to her house.

I saw an old, broken-down crone whose toilet astonished me as much as her person. In spite of her wrinkles, her face was plastered with red and white, and her eyebrows were indebted to India ink for their black appearance. She exposed one-half of her flabby, disgusting bosom, and there could be no doubt as to her false set of teeth. She wore a wig which fitted very badly, and allowed the intrusion of a few gray hairs which had survived the havoc of time. Her shaking hands made mine quiver when she pressed them. She diffused a perfume of amber at a distance of twenty yards, and her affected, mincing manner amused and sickened me at the same time. Her dress might possibly have been the fashion twenty years before. I was looking with dread at the fearful havoc of old age upon a face which, before merciless time had blighted it, had evidently been handsome, but what amazed me was the childish effrontery with which this time-withered specimen of womankind was still waging war with the help of her blasted charms.

Baletti, who feared lest my too visible astonishment should vex her, told her that I was amazed at the fact that the beautiful strawberry which bloomed upon her chest had not been withered by the hand of Time. It was a birth-mark which was really very much like a strawberry. "It is that mark," said the old woman, simpering, "which gave me the name of 'La Fragoletta.'"

Those words made me shudder.

I had before my eyes the fatal phantom which was the cause of my existence. I saw the woman who had thirty years before, seduced my father: if it had not been for her, he would never have thought of leaving his father's house, and would never have engendered me in the womb of a Venetian woman. I have never been of the opinion of the old author who says, 'Nemo vitam vellet si daretur scientibus'.

Seeing how thoughtful I was, she politely enquired my name from Baletti, for he had presented me only as a friend, and without having given her notice of my visit. When he told her that my name was Casanova, she was extremely surprised.

“Yes, madam,” I said, “I am the son of Gaetan Casanova, of Parma.”

“Heavens and earth! what is this? Ah! my friend, I adored your father! He was jealous without cause, and abandoned me. Had he not done so, you would have been my son! Allow me to embrace you with the feelings of a loving mother.”

I expected as much, and, for fear she should fall, I went to her, received her kiss, and abandoned myself to her tender recollections. Still an actress, she pressed her handkerchief to her eyes, pretending to weep, and assuring me that I was not to doubt the truth of what she said.

“Although,” she added, “I do not look an old woman yet.”

“The only fault of your dear father,” she continued, “was a want of gratitude.”

I have no doubt that she passed the same sentence upon the son, for, in spite of her kind invitation, I never paid her another visit.

My purse was well filled, and as I did not care for Mantua, I resolved on going to Naples, to see again my dear Therese, Donna Lucrezia, Palo father and son, Don Antonio Casanova, and all my former acquaintances. However, my good genius did not approve of that decision, for I was not allowed to carry it into execution. I should have left Mantua three days later, had I not gone to the opera that night.

I lived like an anchorite during my two months’ stay in Mantua, owing to the folly. I committed on the night of my arrival. I played only that time, and then I had been lucky. My slight erotic inconvenience, by compelling me to follow the diet necessary to my cure, most likely saved me from greater misfortunes which, perhaps, I should not have been able to avoid.

CHAPTER XXI

My Journey to Cesena in Search of Treasure — I Take Up My

Quarters in Franzia's House — His Daughter Javotte

The opera was nearly over when I was accosted by a young man who, abruptly, and without any introduction, told me that as a stranger — I had been very wrong in spending two months in Mantua without paying a visit to the natural history collection belonging to his father, Don Antonio Capitani, commissary and prebendal president.

"Sir," I answered, "I have been guilty only through ignorance, and if you would be so good as to call for me at my hotel to-morrow morning, before the evening I shall have atoned for my error, and you will no longer have the right to address me the same reproach."

The son of the prebendal commissary called for me, and I found in his father a most eccentric, whimsical sort of man. The curiosities of his collection consisted of his family tree, of books of magic, relics, coins which he believed to be antediluvian, a model of the ark taken from nature at the time when Noah arrived in that extraordinary harbour, Mount Ararat, in Armenia. He load several medals, one of Sesostris, another of Semiramis, and an old knife of a queer shape, covered with rust. Besides all those wonderful treasures, he possessed, but under lock and key, all the paraphernalia of freemasonry.

"Pray, tell me," I said to him, "what relation there is between this collection and natural history? I see nothing here representing the three kingdoms."

"What! You do not see the antediluvian kingdom, that of Sesostris and that of Semiramis? Are not those the three kingdoms?"

When I heard that answer I embraced him with an exclamation of delight, which was sarcastic in its intent, but which he took for admiration, and he at once unfolded all the treasures of his whimsical knowledge respecting his possessions, ending with the rusty blade which he said was the very knife with which Saint Peter cut off the ear of Malek.

“What!” I exclaimed, “you are the possessor of this knife, and you are not as rich as Croesus?”

“How could I be so through the possession of the knife?”

“In two ways. In the first place, you could obtain possession of all the treasures hidden under ground in the States of the Church.”

“Yes, that is a natural consequence, because St. Peter has the keys.”

“In the second place, you might sell the knife to the Pope, if you happen to possess proof of its authenticity.”

“You mean the parchment. Of course I have it; do you think I would have bought one without the other?”

“All right, then. In order to get possession of that knife, the Pope would, I have no doubt, make a cardinal of your son, but you must have the sheath too.”

“I have not got it, but it is unnecessary. At all events I can have one made.”

“That would not do, you must have the very one in which Saint Peter himself sheathed the knife when God said, ‘Mitte gladium tuum in vaginam’. That very sheath does exist, and it is now in the hands of a person who might sell it to you at a reasonable price, or you might sell him your knife, for the sheath without the knife is of no use to him, just as the knife is useless to you without the sheath.”

“How much would it cost me?”

“One thousand sequins.”

“And how much would that person give me for the knife?”

“One thousand sequins, for one has as much value as the other.”

The commissary, greatly astonished, looked at his son, and said, with the voice of a judge on the bench,

“Well, son, would you ever have thought that I would be offered one thousand sequins for this knife?”

He then opened a drawer and took out of it an old piece of paper, which he placed before me. It was written in Hebrew, and a facsimile of the knife was drawn on it. I pretended to be lost in admiration, and advised him very strongly to purchase the sheath.

"It is not necessary for me to buy it, or for your friend to purchase the knife. We can find out and dig up the treasures together."

"Not at all. The rubric says in the most forcible manner that the owner of the blade, 'in vaginam', shall be one. If the Pope were in possession of it he would be able, through a magical operation known to me, to cut off one of the ears of every Christian king who might be thinking of encroaching upon the rights of the Church."

"Wonderful, indeed! But it is very true, for it is said in the Gospel that Saint Peter did cut off the ear of somebody."

"Yes, of a king."

"Oh, no! not of a king."

"Of a king, I tell you. Enquire whether Malek or Melek does not mean king."

"Well! in case I should make up my mind to sell the knife, who would give me the thousand sequins?"

"I would; one half to-morrow, cash down; the balance of five hundred in a letter of exchange payable one month after date."

"Ah! that is like business. Be good enough, to accept a dish of macaroni with us to-morrow, and under a solemn pledge of secrecy we will discuss this important affair."

I accepted and took my leave, firmly resolved on keeping up the joke. I came back on the following day, and the very first thing he told me was that, to his certain knowledge, there was an immense treasure hidden somewhere in the Papal States, and that he would make up his mind to purchase the sheath. This satisfied me that there was no fear of his taking me at my word, so I produced a purse full of gold, saying I was quite ready to complete our bargain for the purchase of the knife.

“The Treasure,” he said, “is worth millions; but let us have dinner. You are not going to be served in silver plates and dishes, but in real Raphael mosaic.”

“My dear commissary, your magnificence astonishes me; mosaic is, indeed, by far superior to silver plate, although an ignorant fool would only consider it ugly earthen ware.”

The compliment delighted him.

After dinner, he spoke as follows:

“A man in very good circumstances, residing in the Papal States, and owner of the country house in which he lives with all his family, is certain that there is a treasure in his cellar. He has written to my son, declaring himself ready to undertake all expenses necessary to possess himself of that treasure, if we could procure a magician powerful enough to unearth it.”

The son then took a letter out of his pocket, read me some passages, and begged me to excuse him if, in consequence of his having pledged himself to keep the secret, he could not communicate all the contents of the letter; but I had, unperceived by him, read the word Cesena, the name of the village, and that was enough for me.

“Therefore all that is necessary is to give me the possibility of purchasing the sheath on credit, for I have no ready cash at present. You need not be afraid of endorsing my letters of exchange, and if you should know the magician you might go halves with him.”

“The magician is ready; it is I, but unless you give me five hundred sequins cash down we cannot agree.”

“I have no money.”

“Then sell me the knife:”

“No.”

“You are wrong, for now that I have seen it I can easily take it from you. But I am honest enough not to wish to play such a trick upon you.”

“You could take my knife from me? I should like to be convinced of that, but I do not believe it.”

"You do not? Very well, to-morrow the knife will be in my possession, but when it is once in my hands you need not hope to see it again. A spirit which is under my orders will bring it to me at midnight, and the same spirit will tell me where the treasure is buried:"

"Let the spirit tell you that, and I shall be convinced."

"Give me a pen, ink and paper."

I asked a question from my oracle, and the answer I had was that the treasure was to be found not far from the Rubicon.

"That is," I said, "a torrent which was once a river:"

They consulted a dictionary, and found that the Rubicon flowed through Cesena. They were amazed, and, as I wished them to have full scope for wrong reasoning, I left them.

I had taken a fancy, not to purloin five hundred sequins from those poor fools, but to go and unearth the amount at their expense in the house of another fool, and to laugh at them all into the bargain. I longed to play the part of a magician. With that idea, when I left the house of the ridiculous antiquarian, I proceeded to the public library, where, with the assistance of a dictionary, I wrote the following specimen of facetious erudition:

"The treasure is buried in the earth at a depth of seventeen and a half fathoms, and has been there for six centuries. Its value amounts to two millions of sequins, enclosed in a casket, the same which was taken by Godfrey de Bouillon from Mathilda, Countess of Tuscany, in the year 1081, when he endeavoured to assist Henry IV, against that princess. He buried the box himself in the very spot where it now is, before he went to lay siege to Jerusalem. Gregory VII, who was a great magician, having been informed of the place where it had been hidden, had resolved on getting possession of it himself, but death prevented him from carrying out his intentions. After the death of the Countess Mathilda, in the year 1116, the genius presiding over all hidden treasures appointed seven spirits to guard the box. During a night with a full moon, a learned magician can raise the treasure to the surface of the earth by placing himself in the middle of the magical ring called maximus:"

I expected to see the father and son, and they came early in the morning. After some rambling conversation, I gave them what I had composed at the library, namely, the history of the treasure taken from the Countess Mathilda.

I told them that I had made up my mind to recover the treasure, and I promised them the fourth part of it, provided they would purchase the sheath; I concluded by threatening again to possess myself of their knife.

“I cannot decide,” said the commissary, “before I have seen the sheath.”

“I pledge my word to shew it to you to-morrow,” I answered.

We parted company, highly pleased with each other.

In order to manufacture a sheath, such as the wonderful knife required, it was necessary to combine the most whimsical idea with the oddest shape. I recollected very well the form of the blade, and, as I was revolving in my mind the best way to produce something very extravagant but well adapted to the purpose I had in view, I spied in the yard of the hotel an old piece of leather, the remnant of what had been a fine gentleman’s boot; it was exactly what I wanted.

I took that old sole, boiled it, and made in it a slit in which I was certain that the knife would go easily. Then I pared it carefully on all sides to prevent the possibility of its former use being found out; I rubbed it with pumice stone, sand, and ochre, and finally I succeeded in imparting to my production such a queer, old-fashioned shape that I could not help laughing in looking at my work.

When I presented it to the commissary, and he had found it an exact fit for the knife, the good man remained astounded. We dined together, and after dinner it was decided that his son should accompany me, and introduce me to the master of the house in which the treasure was buried, that I was to receive a letter of exchange for one thousand Roman crowns, drawn by the son on Bologna, which would be made payable to my name only after I should have found the treasure, and that the knife with the sheath would be delivered into my hands only when I should require it for the great operation; until then the son was to retain possession of it.

Those conditions having been agreed upon, we made an agreement in writing, binding upon all parties, and our departure was fixed for the day after the morrow.

As we left Mantua, the father pronounced a fervent blessing over his son's head, and told me that he was count palatine, shewing me the diploma which he had received from the Pope. I embraced him, giving him his title of count, and pocketed his letter of exchange.

After bidding adieu to Marina, who was then the acknowledged mistress of Count Arcorati, and to Baletti whom I was sure of meeting again in Venice before the end of the year, I went to sup with my friend O'Neilan.

We started early in the morning, travelled through Ferrara and Bologna, and reached Cesena, where we put up at the posting-house. We got up early the next day and walked quietly to the house of George Franzia, a wealthy peasant, who was owner of the treasure. It was only a quarter of a mile from the city, and the good man was agreeably surprised by our arrival. He embraced Capitani, whom he knew already, and leaving me with his family he went out with my companion to talk business.

Observant as usual, I passed the family in review, and fixed my choice upon the eldest daughter. The youngest girl was ugly, and the son looked a regular fool. The mother seemed to be the real master of the household, and there were three or four servants going about the premises.

The eldest daughter was called Genevieve, or Javotte, a very common name among the girls of Cesena. I told her that I thought her eighteen; but she answered, in a tone half serious, half vexed, that I was very much mistaken, for she had only just completed her fourteenth year.

"I am very glad it is so, my pretty child."

These words brought back her smile.

The house was well situated, and there was not another dwelling around it for at least four hundred yards. I was glad to see that I should have comfortable quarters, but I was annoyed by a very unpleasant stink which tainted the air, and which could certainly not be agreeable to the spirits I had to evoke.

"Madame Franzia," said I, to the mistress of the house, "what is the cause of that bad smell?"

"Sir, it arises from the hemp which we are macerating."

I concluded that if the cause were removed, I should get rid of the effect.

“What is that hemp worth, madam?” I enquired.

“About forty crowns.”

“Here they are; the hemp belongs to me now, and I must beg your husband to have it removed immediately.”

Capitani called me, and I joined him. Franzia shewed me all the respect due to a great magician, although I had not much the appearance of one.

We agreed that he should receive one-fourth of the treasure, Capitani another fourth, and that the remainder should belong to me. We certainly did not shew much respect for the rights of Saint Peter.

I told Franzia that I should require a room with two beds for myself alone, and an ante-room with bathing apparatus. Capitani’s room was to be in a different part of the house, and my room was to be provided with three tables, two of them small and one large. I added that he must at once procure me a sewing-girl between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, she was to be a virgin, and it was necessary that she should, as well as every person in the house, keep the secret faithfully, in order that no suspicion of our proceedings should reach the Inquisition, or all would be lost.

“I intend to take up my quarters here to-morrow,” I added; “I require two meals every day, and the only wine I can drink is jevese. For my breakfast I drink a peculiar kind of chocolate which I make myself, and which I have brought with me. I promise to pay my own expenses in case we do not succeed. Please remove the hemp to a place sufficiently distant from the house, so that its bad smell may not annoy the spirits to be evoked by me, and let the air be purified by the discharge of gunpowder. Besides, you must send a trusty servant to-morrow to convey our luggage from the hotel here, and keep constantly in the house and at my disposal one hundred new wax candles and three torches.”

After I had given those instructions to Franzia, I left him, and went towards Cesena with Capitani, but we had not gone a hundred yards when we heard the good man running after us.

“Sir,” he said to me, “be kind enough to take back the forty crowns which you paid to my wife for the hemp.”

"No, I will not do anything of the sort, for I do not want you to sustain any loss."

"Take them back, I beg. I can sell the hemp in the course of the day for forty crowns without difficulty."

"In that case I will, for I have confidence in what you say."

Such proceedings on my part impressed the excellent man very favourably, and he entertained the deepest veneration for me, which was increased, when, against Capitani's advice, I resolutely refused one hundred sequins which he wanted to force upon me for my travelling expenses. I threw him into raptures by telling him that on the eve of possessing an immense treasure, it was unnecessary to think of such trifles.

The next morning our luggage was sent for, and we found ourselves comfortably located in the house of the wealthy and simple Franzia.

He gave us a good dinner, but with too many dishes, and I told him to be more economical, and to give only some good fish for our supper, which he did. After supper he told me that, as far as the young maiden was concerned, he thought he could recommend his daughter Javotte, as he had consulted his wife, and had found I could rely upon the girl being a virgin.

"Very good," I said; "now tell me what grounds you have for supposing that there is a treasure in your house?"

"In the first place, the oral tradition transmitted from father to son for the last eight generations; in the second, the heavy sounds which are heard under ground during the night. Besides, the door of the cellar opens and shuts of itself every three or four minutes; which must certainly be the work of the devils seen every night wandering through the country in the shape of pyramidal flames."

"If it is as you say, it is evident that you have a treasure hidden somewhere in your house; it is as certain as the fact that two and two are four. Be very careful not to put a lock to the door of the cellar to prevent its opening and shutting of itself; otherwise you would have an earthquake, which would destroy everything here. Spirits will enjoy perfect freedom, and they break through every obstacle raised against them."

"God be praised for having sent here, forty years ago, a learned man who told my father exactly the same thing! That great magician required only three days more to unearth the treasure when my father heard that the Inquisition had given orders to arrest him, and he lost no time in insuring his escape. Can you tell me how it is that magicians are not more powerful than the Inquisitors?"

"Because the monks have a greater number of devils under their command than we have. But I feel certain that your father had already expended a great deal of money with that learned man."

"About two thousand crowns."

"Oh! more, more."

I told Franzia to follow me, and, in order to accomplish something in the magic line, I dipped a towel in some water, and uttering fearful words which belonged to no human language, I washed the eyes, the temples, and the chest of every person in the family, including Javotte, who might have objected to it if I had not begun with her father, mother, and brother. I made them swear upon my pocket-book that they were not labouring under any impure disease, and I concluded the ceremony by compelling Javotte to swear likewise that she had her maidenhood. As I saw that she was blushing to the very roots of her hair in taking the oath, I was cruel enough to explain to her what it meant; I then asked her to swear again, but she answered that there was no need of it now that she knew what it was. I ordered all the family to kiss me, and finding that Javotte had eaten garlic I forbade the use of it entirely, which order Franzia promised should be complied with.

Genevieve was not a beauty as far as her features were concerned; her complexion was too much sunburnt, and her mouth was too large, but her teeth were splendid, and her under lip projected slightly as if it had been formed to receive kisses. Her bosom was well made and as firm as a rock, but her hair was too light, and her hands too fleshy. The defects, however, had to be overlooked, and altogether she was not an unpleasant morsel. I did not purpose to make her fall in love with me; with a peasant girl that task might have been a long one; all I wanted was to train her to perfect obedience, which, in default of love, has always appeared to me the essential point. True that in such a case one does not enjoy the ecstatic raptures of love, but one finds a compensation in the complete control obtained over the woman.

I gave notice to the father, to Capitani, and to Javotte, that each would, in turn and in the order of their age, take supper with me, and that Javotte would sleep every night in my ante-room, where was to be placed a bath in which I would bathe my guest one half hour before sitting down to supper, and the guest was not to have broken his fast throughout the day.

I prepared a list of all the articles of which I pretended to be in need, and giving it to Franzia I told him to go to Cesena himself the next day, and to purchase everything without bargaining to obtain a lower price. Among other things, I ordered a piece, from twenty to thirty yards long, of white linen, thread, scissors, needles, storax, myrrh, sulphur, olive oil, camphor, one ream of paper, pens and ink, twelve sheets of parchment, brushes, and a branch of olive tree to make a stick of eighteen inches in length.

After I had given all my orders very seriously and without any wish to laugh, I went to bed highly pleased with my personification of a magician, in which I was astonished to find myself so completely successful.

The next morning, as soon as I was dressed, I sent for Capitani, and commanded him to proceed every day to Cesena, to go to the best coffee-house, to learn carefully every piece of news and every rumour, and to report them to me.

Franzia, who had faithfully obeyed my orders, returned before noon from the city with all the articles I had asked for.

“I have not bargained for anything,” he said to me, “and the merchants must, I have no doubt, have taken me for a fool, for I have certainly paid one-third more than the things are worth.”

“So much the worse for them if they have deceived you, but you would have spoilt everything if you had beaten them down in their price. Now, send me your daughter and let me be alone with her.”

As soon as Javotte was in my room, I made her cut the linen in seven pieces, four of five feet long, two of two feet, and one of two feet and a half; the last one was intended to form the hood of the robe I was to wear for the great operation. Then I said to Javotte:

"Sit down near my bed and begin sewing. You will dine here and remain at work until the evening. When your father comes, you must let us be alone, but as soon as he leaves me, come back and go to bed."

She dined in my room, where her mother waited on her without speaking, and gave her nothing to drink except St. Jevese wine. Towards evening her father came, and she left us.

I had the patience to wash the good man while he was in the bath, after which he had supper with me; he ate voraciously, telling me that it was the first time in his life that he had remained twenty-four hours without breaking his fast. Intoxicated with the St. Jevese wine he had drunk, he went to bed and slept soundly until morning, when his wife brought me my chocolate. Javotte was kept sewing as on the day before; she left the room in the evening when Capitani came in, and I treated him in the same manner as Franzia; on the third day, it was Javotte's turn, and that had been the object I had kept in view all the time.

When the hour came, I said to her,

"Go, Javotte, get into the bath and call me when you are ready, for I must purify you as I have purified your father and Capitani."

She obeyed, and within a quarter of an hour she called me. I performed a great many ablutions on every part of her body, making her assume all sorts of positions, for she was perfectly docile, but, as I was afraid of betraying myself, I felt more suffering than enjoyment, and my indiscreet hands, running over every part of her person, and remaining longer and more willingly on a certain spot, the sensitiveness of which is extreme, the poor girl was excited by an ardent fire which was at last quenched by the natural result of that excitement. I made her get out of the bath soon after that, and as I was drying her I was very near forgetting magic to follow the impulse of nature, but, quicker than I, nature relieved itself, and I was thus enabled to reach the end of the scene without anticipating the denouement. I told Javotte to dress herself, and to come back to me as soon as she was ready.

She had been fasting all day, and her toilet did not take a long time. She ate with a ferocious appetite, and the St. Jevese wine, which she drank like water, imparted so much animation to her complexion that it was no longer possible to see how sunburnt she was. Being alone with her after supper, I said to her,

“My dear Javotte, have you been displeased at all I have compelled you to submit to this evening?”

“Not at all; I liked it very much.”

“Then I hope that you will have no objection to get in the bath with me to-morrow, and to wash me as I have washed you.”

“Most willingly, but shall I know how to do it well?”

“I will teach you, and for the future I wish you to sleep every night in my room, because I must have a complete certainty that on the night of the great operation I shall find you such as you ought to be.”

From that time Javotte was at her ease with me, all her restraint disappeared, she would look at me and smile with entire confidence. Nature had operated, and the mind of a young girl soon enlarges its sphere when pleasure is her teacher. She went to bed, and as she knew that she had no longer anything to conceal from me, her modesty was not alarmed when she undressed herself in my presence. It was very warm, any kind of covering is unpleasant in the hot weather, so she stripped to the skin and soon fell asleep. I did the same, but I could not help feeling some regret at having engaged myself not to take advantage of the position before the night of the great incantation. I knew that the operation to unearth the treasure would be a complete failure, but I knew likewise that it would not fail because Javotte’s virginity was gone.

At day-break the girl rose and began sewing. As soon as she had finished the robe, I told her to make a crown of parchment with seven long points, on which I painted some fearful figures and hieroglyphs.

In the evening, one hour before supper, I got into the bath, and Javotte joined me as soon as I called her. She performed upon me with great zeal the same ceremonies that I had done for her the day before, and she was as gentle and docile as possible. I spent a delicious hour in that bath, enjoying everything, but respecting the essential point.

My kisses making her happy, and seeing that I had no objection to her caresses, she loaded me with them. I was so pleased at all the amorous enjoyment her senses were evidently experiencing, that I made her easy by telling her that the success of the great magic operation depended upon the amount of pleasure she enjoyed. She then made extraordinary efforts to persuade me that she was happy, and without overstepping the limits where I had made up my mind to stop, we got out of the bath highly pleased with each other.

As we were on the point of going to bed, she said to me,

“Would it injure the success of your operation if we were to sleep together?”

“No, my dear girl; provided you are a virgin on the day of the great incantation, it is all I require.”

She threw herself in my arms, and we spent a delightful night, during which I had full opportunity of admiring the strength of her constitution as well as my own restraint, for I had sufficient control over myself not to break through the last obstacle.

I passed a great part of the following night with Franzia and Capitani in order to see with my own eyes the wonderful things which the worthy peasant had mentioned to me. Standing in the yard, I heard distinctly heavy blows struck under the ground at intervals of three or four minutes. It was like the noise which would be made by a heavy pestle falling in a large copper mortar. I took my pistols and placed myself near the self-moving door of the cellar, holding a dark lantern in my hand. I saw the door open slowly, and in about thirty seconds closing with violence. I opened and closed it myself several times, and, unable to discover any hidden physical cause for the phenomenon, I felt satisfied that there was some unknown roguery at work, but I did not care much to find it out.

We went upstairs again, and, placing myself on the balcony, I saw in the yard several shadows moving about. They were evidently caused by the heavy and damp atmosphere, and as to the pyramidal flames which I could see hovering over the fields, it was a phenomenon well known to me. But I allowed my two companions to remain persuaded that they were the spirits keeping watch over the treasure.

That phenomenon is very common throughout southern Italy where the country is often at night illuminated by those meteors which the people believe to be devils, and ignorance has called night spirits, or will-o'-the-wisps.

Dear reader, the next chapter will tell you how my magic undertaking ended, and perhaps you will enjoy a good laugh at my expense, but you need not be afraid of hurting my feelings.

CHAPTER XXII

The Incantation — A Terrible Storm — My Fright — Javotte's Virginity Is Saved — I Give Up the Undertaking, and Sell the Sheath to Capitani — I Meet Juliette and Count Alfani, Alias Count Celi — I Make Up My Mind to Go to Naples — Why I Take a Different Road

My great operation had to be performed on the following day; otherwise, according to all established rules, I would have had to wait until the next full moon. I had to make the gnomes raise the treasure to the surface of the earth at the very spot on which my incantations would be performed. Of course, I knew well enough that I should not succeed, but I knew likewise that I could easily reconcile Franzia and Capitani to a failure, by inventing some excellent reasons for our want of success. In the mean time I had to play my part of a magician, in which I took a real delight. I kept Javotte at work all day, sewing together, in the shape of a ring, some thirty sheets of paper on which I painted the most wonderful designs. That ring, which I called maximus, had a diameter of three geometric paces. I had manufactured a sort of sceptre or magic wand with the branch of olive brought by Franzia from Cesena. Thus prepared, I told Javotte that, at twelve o'clock at night, when I came out of the magic ring, she was to be ready for everything. The order did not seem repugnant to her; she longed to give me that proof of her obedience, and, on my side, considering myself as her debtor, I was in a hurry to pay my debt and to give her every satisfaction.

The hour having struck, I ordered Franzia and Capitani to stand on the balcony, so as to be ready to come to me if I called for them, and also to prevent anyone in the house seeing my proceedings. I then threw off all profane garments. I clothe myself in the long white robe, the work of a virgin's innocent hands. I allow my long hair to fall loosely. I place the extraordinary crown on my head, the circle maximus on my shoulders, and, seizing the sceptre with one hand, the wonderful knife with the other, I go down into the yard. There I spread my circle on the ground, uttering the most barbarous words, and after going round it three times I jump into the middle.

Squatting down there, I remain a few minutes motionless, then I rise, and I fix my eyes upon a heavy, dark cloud coming from the west, whilst from the same quarter the thunder is rumbling loudly. What a sublime genius I should have appeared in the eyes of my two fools, if, having a short time before taken notice of the sky in that part of the horizon, I had announced to them that my operation would be attended by that phenomenon.

The cloud spreads with fearful rapidity, and soon the sky seems covered with a funeral pall, on which the most vivid flashes of lightning keep blazing every moment.

Such a storm was a very natural occurrence, and I had no reason to be astonished at it, but somehow, fear was beginning to creep into me, and I wished myself in my room. My fright soon increased at the sight of the lightning, and on hearing the claps of thunder which succeeded each other with fearful rapidity and seemed to roar over my very head. I then realized what extraordinary effect fear can have on the mind, for I fancied that, if I was not annihilated by the fires of heaven which were flashing all around me, it was only because they could not enter my magic ring. Thus was I admiring my own deceitful work! That foolish reason prevented me from leaving the circle in spite of the fear which caused me to shudder. If it had not been for that belief, the result of a cowardly fright, I would not have remained one minute where I was, and my hurried flight would no doubt have opened the eyes of my two dupes, who could not have failed to see that, far from being a magician, I was only a poltroon. The violence of the wind, the claps of thunder, the piercing cold, and above all, fear, made me tremble all over like an aspen leaf. My system, which I thought proof against every accident, had vanished: I acknowledged an avenging God who had waited for this opportunity of punishing me at one blow for all my sins, and of annihilating me, in order to put an end to my want of faith. The complete immobility which paralyzed all my limbs seemed to me a proof of the uselessness of my repentance, and that conviction only increased my consternation.

But the roaring of the thunder dies away, the rain begins to fall heavily, danger vanishes, and I feel my courage reviving. Such is man! or at all events, such was I at that moment. It was raining so fast that, if it had continued pouring with the same violence for a quarter of an hour, the country would have been inundated. As soon as the rain had ceased, the wind abated, the clouds were dispersed, and the moon shone in all its splendour, like silver in the pure, blue sky. I take up my magic ring, and telling the two friends to retire to their beds without speaking to me, I hurry to my room. I still felt rather shaken, and, casting my eyes on Javotte, I thought her so pretty that I felt positively frightened. I allowed her to dry me, and after that necessary operation I told her piteously to go to bed. The next morning she told me that, when she saw me come in, shaking all over in spite of the heat, she had herself shuddered with fear.

After eight hours of sound sleep I felt all right, but I had had enough of the comedy, and to my great surprise the sight of Genevieve did not move me in any way. The obedient Javotte had certainly not changed, but I was not the same. I was for the first time in my life reduced to a state of apathy, and in consequence of the superstitious ideas which had crowded in my mind the previous night I imagined that the innocence of that young girl was under the special protection of Heaven, and that if I had dared to rob her of her virginity the most rapid and terrible death would have been my punishment.

At all events, thanks to my youth and my exalted ideas, I fancied that through my self-denying resolutions the father would not be so great a dupe, and the daughter not so unhappy, unless the result should prove as unfortunate for her as it had been for poor Lucy, of Pasean.

The moment that Javotte became in my eyes an object of holy horror, my departure was decided. The resolution was all the more irrevocable because I fancied some old peasant might have witnessed all my tricks in the middle of the magic ring, in which case the most Holy, or, if you like, the most infernal, Inquisition, receiving information from him, might very well have caught me and enhanced my fame by some splendid ‘auto-da-fe’ in which I had not the slightest wish to be the principal actor. It struck me as so entirely within the limits of probability that I sent at once for Franzia and Capitani, and in the presence of the unpolluted virgin I told them that I had obtained from the seven spirits watching over the treasure all the necessary particulars, but that I had been compelled to enter into an agreement with them to delay the extraction of the treasure placed under their guardianship. I told Franzia that I would hand to him in writing all the information which I had compelled the spirits to give me. I produced, in reality, a few minutes afterwards, a document similar to the one I had concocted at the public library in Mantua, adding that the treasure consisted of diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and one hundred thousand pounds of gold dust. I made him take an oath on my pocket-book to wait for me, and not to have faith in any magician unless he gave him an account of the treasure in every way similar to the one which, as a great favor, I was leaving in his hands. I ordered him to burn the crown and the ring, but to keep the other things carefully until my return.

"As for you, Capitani," I said to my companion, "proceed at once to Cesena, and remain at the inn until our luggage has been brought by the man whom Franzia is going to send with it."

Seeing that poor Javotte looked miserable, I went up to her, and, speaking to her very tenderly, I promised to see her again before long. I told her at the same time that, the great operation having been performed successfully, her virginity was no longer necessary, and that she was at liberty to marry as soon as she pleased, or whenever a good opportunity offered itself.

I at once returned to the city, where I found Capitani making his preparations to go to the fair of Lugo, and then to Mantua. He told me, crying like a child, that his father would be in despair when he saw him come back without the knife of Saint Peter.

"You may have it," I said, "with the sheath, if you will let me have the one thousand Roman crowns, the amount of the letter of exchange:"

He thought it an excellent bargain, and accepted it joyfully. I gave him back the letter of exchange, and made him sign a paper by which he undertook to return the sheath whenever I brought the same amount, but he is still waiting for it.

I did not know what to do with the wonderful sheath, and I was not in want of money, but I should have considered myself dishonoured if I had given it to him for nothing; besides, I thought it a good joke to levy a contribution upon the ignorant credulity of a count palatine created by the grace of the

Pope. In after days, however, I would willingly have refunded his money, but, as fate would have it, we did not see each other for a long time, and when I met him again I was not in a position to return the amount. It is, therefore, only to chance that I was indebted for the sum, and certainly Capitani never dreamed of complaining, for being the possessor of ‘gladium cum vagina’ he truly believed himself the master of every treasure concealed in the Papal States.

Capitani took leave of me on the following day, and I intended to proceed at once to Naples, but I was again prevented; this is how it happened.

As I returned to the inn after a short walk, mine host handed me the bill of the play announcing four performances of the Didone of Metastasio at the Spada. Seeing no acquaintance of mine among the actors or actresses, I made up my mind to go to the play in the evening, and to start early the next day with post-horses. A remnant of my fear of the Inquisition urged me on, and I could not help fancying that spies were at my heels.

Before entering the house I went into the actresses dressing-room, and the leading lady struck me as rather good-looking. Her name was Narici, and she was from Bologna. I bowed to her, and after the common-place conversation usual in such cases, I asked her whether she was free.

“I am only engaged with the manager,” she answered.

“Have you any lover?”

“No.”

“I offer myself for the post, if you have no objection.”

She smiled jeeringly, and said,

“Will you take four tickets for the four performances?”

I took two sequins out of my purse, taking care to let her see that it was well filled, and when she gave me the four tickets, presented them to the maid who was dressing her and was prettier than the mistress, and so left the room without uttering a single word. She called me back; I pretended not to hear her, and took a ticket for the pit. After the first ballet, finding the whole performance very poor, I was thinking of going away, when, happening to look towards the chief box, I saw to my astonishment that it was tenanted by the Venetian Manzoni and the celebrated Juliette. The reader will doubtless remember the ball she gave at my house in Venice, and the smack with which she saluted my cheek on that occasion.

They had not yet noticed me, and I enquired from the person seated next to me who was that beautiful lady wearing so many diamonds. He told me that she was Madame Querini, from Venice, whom Count Spada, the owner of the theatre, who was sitting near her, had brought with him from Faenza. I was glad to hear that M. Querini had married her at last, but I did not think of renewing the acquaintance, for reasons which my reader cannot have forgotten if he recollects our quarrel when I had to dress her as an abbe. I was on the point of going away when she happened to see me and called me. I went up to her, and, not wishing to be known by anyone, I whispered to her that my name was Farusi. Manzoni informed me that I was speaking to her excellency, Madame Querini. "I know it," I said, "through a letter which I have received from Venice, and I beg to offer my most sincere congratulations to Madame." She heard me and introduced me to Count Spada, creating me a baron on the spot. He invited me most kindly to come to his box, asked me where I came from, where I was going to, etc., and begged the pleasure of my company at supper for the same evening.

Ten years before, he had been Juliette's friend in Vienna, when Maria Theresa, having been informed of the pernicious influence of her beauty, gave her notice to quit the city. She had renewed her acquaintance with him in Venice, and had contrived to make him take her to Bologna on a pleasure trip. M. Manzoni, her old follower, who gave me all this information, accompanied her in order to bear witness of her good conduct before M. Querini. I must say that Manzoni was not a well-chosen chaperon.

In Venice she wanted everybody to believe that Querini had married her secretly, but at a distance of fifty leagues she did not think such a formality necessary, and she had already been presented by the general to all the nobility of Cesena as Madame Querini Papozzes. M. Querini would have been wrong in being jealous of the count, for he was an old acquaintance who would do no harm. Besides, it is admitted amongst certain women that the reigning lover who is jealous of an old acquaintance is nothing but a fool, and ought to be treated as such. Juliette, most likely afraid of my being indiscreet, had lost no time in making the first advances, but, seeing that I had likewise some reason to fear her want of discretion, she felt reassured.

From the first moment I treated her politely, and with every consideration due to her position.

I found numerous company at the general's, and some pretty women. Not seeing Juliette, I enquired for her from M. Manzoni, who told me that she was at the faro table, losing her money. I saw her seated next to the banker, who turned pale at the sight of my face. He was no other than the so-called Count Celi. He offered me a card, which I refused politely, but I accepted Juliette's offer to be her partner. She had about fifty sequins, I handed her the same sum, and took a seat near her. After the first round, she asked me if I knew the banker; Celi had heard the question; I answered negatively. A lady on my left told me that the banker was Count Alfani. Half an hour later, Madame Querini went seven and lost, she increased her stake of ten sequins; it was the last deal of the game, and therefore the decisive one. I rose from my chair, and fixed my eyes on the banker's hands. But in spite of that, he cheated before me, and Madame lost.

Just at that moment the general offered her his arm to go to supper; she left the remainder of her gold on the table, and after supper, having played again, she lost every sequin.

I enlivened the supper by my stories and witty jests. I captivated everybody's friendship, and particularly the general's, who, having heard me say that I was going to Naples only to gratify an amorous fancy, entreated me to spend a month with him and to sacrifice my whim. But it was all in vain. My heart was unoccupied; I longed to see Lucrezia and Therese, whose charms after five years I could scarcely recollect. I only consented to remain in Cesena the four days during which the general intended to stay.

The next morning as I was dressing I had a call from the cowardly Alfani-Celi; I received him with a jeering smile, saying that I had expected him.

The hair-dresser being in the room Celi did not answer, but as soon as we were alone he said,

"How could you possibly expect my visit?"

"I will tell you my reason as soon as you have handed me one hundred sequins, and you are going to do so at once.'

"Here are fifty which I brought for you; you cannot demand more from me."

"Thank you, I take them on account, but as I am good-natured I advise you not to shew yourself this evening in Count Spada's drawing-rooms, for you would not be admitted, and it would be owing to me."

"I hope that you will think twice before you are guilty of such an ungenerous act."

"I have made up my mind; but now leave me."

There was a knock at my door, and the self-styled Count Alfani went away without giving me the trouble of repeating my order. My new visitor proved to be the first castrato of the theatre, who brought an invitation to dinner from Narici. The invitation was curious, and I accepted it with a smile. The castrato was named Nicolas Peritti; he pretended to be the grandson of a natural child of Sixtus V.; it might have been so I shall have to mention him again in fifteen years.

When I made my appearance at Narici's house I saw Count Alfani, who certainly did not expect me, and must have taken me for his evil genius. He bowed to me with great politeness, and begged that I would listen to a few words in private.

"Here are fifty sequins more," he said; "but as an honest man you can take them only to give them to Madame Querini. But how can you hand the amount to her without letting her know that you have forced me to refund it? You understand what consequences such a confession might have for me."

"I shall give her the money only when you have left this place; in the mean time I promise to be discreet, but be careful not to assist fortune in my presence, or I must act in a manner that will not be agreeable to you."

"Double the capital of my bank, and we can be partners."

"Your proposal is an insult."

He gave me fifty sequins, and I promised to keep his secret.

There was a numerous attendance in Narici's rooms, especially of young men, who after dinner lost all their money. I did not play, and it was a disappointment for my pretty hostess, who had invited me only because she had judged me as simple as the others. I remained an indifferent witness of the play, and it gave me an opportunity of realizing how wise Mahomet had been in forbidding all games of chance.

In the evening after the opera Count Celi had the faro bank, and I lose two hundred sequins, but I could only accuse ill luck. Madame Querini won. The next day before supper I broke the bank, and after supper, feeling tired and well pleased with what I had won, I returned to the inn.

The following morning, which was the third day, and therefore the last but one of my stay in Cesena, I called at the general's. I heard that his adjutant had thrown the cards in Alfani's face, and that a meeting had been arranged between them for twelve o'clock. I went to the adjutant's room and offered to be his second, assuring him that there would be no blood spilt. He declined my offer with many thanks, and at dinner-time he told me that I had guessed rightly, for Count Alfani had left for Rome.

"In that case," I said to the guests, "I will take the bank tonight."

After dinner, being alone with Madame Querini, I told her all about Alfani, alias Celi, and handed her the fifty sequins of which I was the depositary.

"I suppose," she said, "that by means of this fable you hope to make me accept fifty sequins, but I thank you, I am not in want of money."

"I give you my word that I have compelled the thief to refund this money, together with the fifty sequins of which he had likewise cheated me."

"That may be, but I do not wish to believe you. I beg to inform you that I am not simple enough to allow myself to be duped, and, what is worse, cheated in such a manner."

Philosophy forbids a man to feel repentance for a good deed, but he must certainly have a right to regret such a deed when it is malevolently misconstrued, and turned against him as a reproach.

In the evening, after the performance, which was to be the last, I took the bank according to my promise: I lost a few sequins, but was caressed by everybody, and that is much more pleasant than winning, when we are not labouring under the hard necessity of making money.

Count Spada, who had got quite fond of me, wanted me to accompany him to Brisighetta, but I resisted his entreaties because I had firmly resolved on going to Naples.

The next morning I was awoke by a terrible noise in the passage, almost at the door of my room.

Getting out of my bed, I open my door to ascertain the cause of the uproar. I see a troop of ‘sbirri’ at the door of a chamber, and in that chamber, sitting up in bed, a fine-looking man who was making himself hoarse by screaming in Latin against that rabble, the plague of Italy, and against the inn-keeper who had been rascally enough to open the door.

I enquire of the inn-keeper what it all means.

“This gentleman,” answers the scoundrel, “who, it appears, can only speak Latin, is in bed with a girl, and the ‘sbirri’ of the bishop have been sent to know whether she is truly his wife; all perfectly regular. If she is his wife, he has only to convince them by shewing a certificate of marriage, but if she is not, of course he must go to prison with her. Yet it need not happen, for I undertake to arrange everything in a friendly manner for a few sequins. I have only to exchange a few words with the chief of the ‘sbirri’, and they will all go away. If you can speak Latin, you had better go in, and make him listen to reason.”

“Who has broken open the door of his room?”

“Nobody; I have opened it myself with the key, as is my duty.”

“Yes, the duty of a highway robber, but not of an honest inn-keeper.”

Such infamous dealing aroused my indignation, and I made up my mind to interfere. I enter the room, although I had still my nightcap on, and inform the gentleman of the cause of the disturbance. He answers with a laugh that, in the first place, it was impossible to say whether the person who was in bed with him was a woman, for that person had only been seen in the costume of a military officer, and that, in the second place, he did not think that any human being had a right to compel him to say whether his bed-fellow was his wife or his mistress, even supposing that his companion was truly a woman.

“At all events,” he added, “I am determined not to give one crown to arrange the affair, and to remain in bed until my door is shut. The moment I am dressed, I will treat you to an amusing denouement of the comedy. I will drive away all those scoundrels at the point of my sword.”

I then see in a corner a broad sword, and a Hungarian costume looking like a military uniform. I ask whether he is an officer.

“I have written my name and profession,” he answers, “in the hotel book.”

Astonished at the absurdity of the inn-keeper, I ask him whether it is so; he confesses it, but adds that the clergy have the right to prevent scandal.

“The insult you have offered to that officer, Mr. Landlord, will cost you very dear.”

His only answer is to laugh in my face. Highly enraged at seeing such a scoundrel laugh at me, I take up the officer’s quarrel warmly, and asked him to entrust his passport to me for a few minutes.

“I have two,” he says; “therefore I can let you have one.” And taking the document out of his pocket-book, he hands it to me. The passport was signed by Cardinal Albani. The officer was a captain in a Hungarian regiment belonging to the empress and queen. He was from Rome, on his way to Parma with dispatches from Cardinal Albani Alexander to M. Dutillot, prime minister of the Infante of Parma.

At the same moment, a man burst into the room, speaking very loudly, and asked me to tell the officer that the affair must be settled at once, because he wanted to leave Cesena immediately.

“Who are you?” I asked the man.

He answered that he was the ‘vetturino’ whom the captain had engaged. I saw that it was a regular put-up thing, and begged the captain to let me attend to the business, assuring him that I would settle it to his honour and advantage.

“Do exactly as you please,” he said.

Then turning towards the ‘vetturino’, I ordered him to bring up the captain’s luggage, saying that he would be paid at once. When he had done so, I handed him eight sequins out of my own purse, and made him give me a receipt in the name of the captain, who could only speak German, Hungarian, and Latin. The vetturino went away, and the ‘sbirri’ followed him in the greatest consternation, except two who remained.

“Captain,” I said to the Hungarian, “keep your bed until I return. I am going now to the bishop to give him an account of these proceedings, and make him understand that he owes you some reparation. Besides, General Spada is here, and….”

“I know him,” interrupted the captain, “and if I had been aware of his being in Cesena, I would have shot the landlord when he opened my door to those scoundrels.”

I hurried over my toilet, and without waiting for my hair to be dressed I proceeded to the bishop’s palace, and making a great deal of noise I almost compelled the servants to take me to his room. A lackey who was at the door informed me that his lordship was still in bed.

“Never mind, I cannot wait.”

I pushed him aside and entered the room. I related the whole affair to the bishop, exaggerating the uproar, making much of the injustice of such proceedings, and railing at a vexatious police daring to molest travellers and to insult the sacred rights of individuals and nations.

The bishop without answering me referred me to his chancellor, to whom I repeated all I had said to the bishop, but with words calculated to irritate rather than to soften, and certainly not likely to obtain the release of the captain. I even went so far as to threaten, and I said that if I were in the place of the officer I would demand a public reparation. The priest laughed at my threats; it was just what I wanted, and after asking me whether I had taken leave of my senses, the chancellor told me to apply to the captain of the ‘sbirri’.

“I shall go to somebody else,” I said, “reverend sir, besides the captain of the ‘sbirri’.”

Delighted at having made matters worse, I left him and proceeded straight to the house of General Spada, but being told that he could not be seen before eight o’clock, I returned to the inn.

The state of excitement in which I was, the ardour with which I had made the affair mine, might have led anyone to suppose that my indignation had been roused only by disgust at seeing an odious persecution perpetrated upon a stranger by an unrestrained, immoral, and vexatious police; but why should I deceive the kind reader, to whom I have promised to tell the truth; I must therefore say that my indignation was real, but my ardour was excited by another feeling of a more personal nature. I fancied that the woman concealed under the bed-clothes was a beauty. I longed to see her face, which shame, most likely, had prevented her from shewing. She had heard me speak, and the good opinion that I had of myself did not leave the shadow of a doubt in my mind that she would prefer me to her captain.

The door of the room being still open, I went in and related to the captain all I had done, assuring him that in the course of the day he would be at liberty to continue his journey at the bishop's expense, for the general would not fail to obtain complete satisfaction for him. He thanked me warmly, gave back the eight ducats I had paid for him, and said that he would not leave the city till the next day.

"From what country," I asked him, "is your travelling companion?"

"From France, and he only speaks his native language."

"Then you speak French?"

"Not one word."

"That is amusing! Then you converse in pantomime?"

"Exactly."

"I pity you, for it is a difficult language."

"Yes, to express the various shades of thought, but in the material part of our intercourse we understand each other quite well."

"May I invite myself to breakfast with you?"

"Ask my friend whether he has any objection."

"Amiable companion of the captain," I said in French, "will you kindly accept me as a third guest at the breakfast-table?"

At these words I saw coming out of the bed-clothes a lovely head, with dishevelled hair, and a blooming, laughing face which, although it was crowned with a man's cap, left no doubt that the captain's friend belonged to that sex without which man would be the most miserable animal on earth.

Delighted with the graceful creature, I told her that I had been happy enough to feel interested in her even before I had seen her, and that now that I had the pleasure of seeing her, I could but renew with greater zeal all my efforts to serve her.

She answered me with the grace and the animation which are the exclusive privilege of her native country, and retorted my argument in the most witty manner; I was already under the charm. My request was granted; I went out to order breakfast, and to give them an opportunity of making themselves comfortable in bed, for they were determined not to get up until the door of their room was closed again.

The waiter came, and I went in with him. I found my lovely Frenchwoman wearing a blue frock-coat, with her hair badly arranged like a man's, but very charming even in that strange costume. I longed to see her up. She ate her breakfast without once interrupting the officer speaking to me, but to whom I was not listening, or listening with very little attention, for I was in a sort of ecstatic trance.

Immediately after breakfast, I called on the general, and related the affair to him, enlarging upon it in such a manner as to pique his martial pride. I told him that, unless he settled the matter himself, the Hungarian captain was determined to send an express to the cardinal immediately. But my eloquence was unnecessary, for the general liked to see priests attend to the business of Heaven, but he could not bear them to meddle in temporal affairs.

"I shall," he said, "immediately put a stop to this ridiculous comedy, and treat it in a very serious manner."

"Go at once to the inn," he said to his aide-de-camp, "invite that officer and his companion to dine with me to-day, and repair afterwards to the bishop's palace. Give him notice that the officer who has been so grossly insulted by his 'sbirri' shall not leave the city before he has received a complete apology, and whatever sum of money he may claim as damages. Tell him that the notice comes from me, and that all the expenses incurred by the officer shall be paid by him."

What pleasure it was for me to listen to these words! In my vanity, I fancied I had almost prompted them to the general. I accompanied the aide-de-camp, and introduced him to the captain who received him with the joy of a soldier meeting a comrade. The adjutant gave him the general's invitation for him and his companion, and asked him to write down what satisfaction he wanted, as well as the amount of damages he claimed. At the sight of the general's adjutant, the 'sbirri' had quickly vanished. I handed to the captain pen, paper and ink, and he wrote his claim in pretty good Latin for a native of Hungary. The excellent fellow absolutely refused to ask for more than thirty sequins, in spite of all I said to make him claim one hundred. He was likewise a great deal too easy as to the satisfaction he demanded, for all he asked was to see the landlord and the 'sbirri' beg his pardon on their knees in the presence of the general's adjutant. He threatened the bishop to send an express to Rome to Cardinal Alexander, unless his demands were complied with within two hours, and to remain in Cesena at the rate of ten sequins a day at the bishop's expense.

The officer left us, and a moment afterwards the landlord came in respectfully, to inform the captain that he was free, but the captain having begged me to tell the scoundrel that he owed him a sound thrashing, he lost no time in gaining the door.

I left my friends alone to get dressed, and to attend to my own toilet, as I dined with them at the general's. An hour afterwards I found them ready in their military costumes. The uniform of the Frenchwoman was of course a fancy one, but very elegant. The moment I saw her, I gave up all idea of Naples, and decided upon accompanying the two friends to Parma. The beauty of the lovely Frenchwoman had already captivated me. The captain was certainly on the threshold of sixty, and, as a matter of course, I thought such a union very badly assorted. I imagined that the affair which I was already concocting in my brain could be arranged amicably.

The adjutant came back with a priest sent by the bishop, who told the captain that he should have the satisfaction as well as the damages he had claimed, but that he must be content with fifteen sequins.

“Thirty or nothing,” dryly answered the Hungarian.

They were at last given to him, and thus the matter ended. The victory was due to my exertions, and I had won the friendship of the captain and his lovely companion.

In order to guess, even at first sight, that the friend of the worthy captain was not a man, it was enough to look at the hips. She was too well made as a woman ever to pass for a man, and the women who disguise themselves in male attire, and boast of being like men, are very wrong, for by such a boast they confess themselves deficient in one of the greatest perfections appertaining to woman.

A little before dinner-time we repaired to General Spada’s mansion, and the general presented the two officers to all the ladies. Not one of them was deceived in the young officer, but, being already acquainted with the adventure, they were all delighted to dine with the hero of the comedy, and treated the handsome officer exactly as if he had truly been a man, but I am bound to confess that the male guests offered the Frenchwoman homages more worthy of her sex.

Madame Querini alone did not seem pleased, because the lovely stranger monopolized the general attention, and it was a blow to her vanity to see herself neglected. She never spoke to her, except to shew off her French, which she could speak well. The poor captain scarcely opened his lips, for no one cared to speak Latin, and the general had not much to say in German.

An elderly priest, who was one of the guests, tried to justify the conduct of the bishop by assuring us that the inn-keeper and the ‘sbirri’ had acted only under the orders of the Holy Office.

“That is the reason,” he said, “for which no bolts are allowed in the rooms of the hotels, so that strangers may not shut themselves up in their chambers. The Holy Inquisition does not allow a man to sleep with any woman but his wife.”

Twenty years later I found all the doors in Spain with a bolt outside, so that travellers were, as if they had been in prison, exposed to the outrageous molestation of nocturnal visits from the police. That disease is so chronic in Spain that it threatens to overthrow the monarchy some day, and I should not be astonished if one fine morning the Grand Inquisitor was to have the king shaved, and to take his place.

CHAPTER XXIII

I Purchase a Handsome Carriage, and Proceed to Parma With the Old Captain and the Young Frenchwoman — I Pay a Visit to Javotte, and Present Her With a Beautiful Pair of Gold Bracelets — My Perplexities Respecting My Lovely Travelling Companion — A Monologue — Conversation with the Captain — Tete-a-Tete with Henriette

The conversation was animated, and the young female officer was entertaining everybody, even Madame Querini, although she hardly took the trouble of concealing her spleen.

“It seems strange,” she remarked, “that you and the captain should live together without ever speaking to each other.”

“Why, madam? We understand one another perfectly, for speech is of very little consequence in the kind of business we do together.”

That answer, given with graceful liveliness, made everybody laugh, except Madame Querini-Juliette, who, foolishly assuming the air of a prude, thought that its meaning was too clearly expressed.

“I do not know any kind of business,” she said, “that can be transacted without the assistance of the voice or the pen.”

“Excuse me, madam, there are some: playing at cards, for instance, is a business of that sort.”

“Are you always playing?”

“We do nothing else. We play the game of the Pharaoh (faro), and I hold the bank.”

Everybody, understanding the shrewdness of this evasive answer, laughed again, and Juliette herself could not help joining in the general merriment.

"But tell me," said Count Spada, "does the bank receive much?"

"As for the deposits, they are of so little importance, that they are hardly worth mentioning."

No one ventured upon translating that sentence for the benefit of the worthy captain. The conversation continued in the same amusing style, and all the guests were delighted with the graceful wit of the charming officer.

Late in the evening I took leave of the general, and wished him a pleasant journey.

"Adieu," he said, "I wish you a pleasant journey to Naples, and hope you will enjoy yourself there."

"Well, general, I am not going to Naples immediately; I have changed my mind and intend to proceed to Parma, where I wish to see the Infante. I also wish to constitute myself the interpreter of these two officers who know nothing of Italian:"

"Ah, young man! opportunity makes a thief, does it not? Well, if I were in your place, I would do the same."

I also bade farewell to Madame Querini, who asked me to write to her from Bologna. I gave her a promise to do so, but without meaning to fulfil it.

I had felt interested in the young Frenchwoman when she was hiding under the bed-clothes: she had taken my fancy the moment she had shewn her features, and still more when I had seen her dressed. She completed her conquest at the dinner-table by the display of a wit which I greatly admired. It is rare in Italy, and seems to belong generally to the daughters of France. I did not think it would be very difficult to win her love, and I resolved on trying. Putting my self-esteem on one side, I fancied I would suit her much better than the old Hungarian, a very pleasant man for his age, but who, after all, carried his sixty years on his face, while my twenty-three were blooming on my countenance. It seemed to me that the captain himself would not raise any great objection, for he seemed one of those men who, treating love as a matter of pure fancy, accept all circumstances easily, and give way good-naturedly to all the freaks of fortune. By becoming the travelling companion of this ill-matched couple, I should probably succeed in my aims. I never dreamed of experiencing a refusal at their hands, my company would certainly be agreeable to them, as they could not exchange a single word by themselves.

With this idea I asked the captain, as we reached our inn, whether he intended to proceed to Parma by the public coach or otherwise.

“As I have no carriage of my own,” he answered, “we shall have to take the coach.”

“I have a very comfortable carriage, and I offer you the two back seats if you have no objection to my society.”

“That is a piece of good fortune. Be kind enough to propose it to Henriette.”

“Will you, madam, grant me the favour of accompanying you to Parma?”

“I should be delighted, for we could have some conversation, but take care, sir, your task will not be an easy one, you will often find yourself obliged to translate for both of us.”

“I shall do so with great pleasure; I am only sorry that the journey is not longer. We can arrange everything at supper-time; allow me to leave you now as I have some business to settle.”

My business was in reference to a carriage, for the one I had boasted of existed only in my imagination. I went to the most fashionable coffee-house, and, as good luck would have it, heard that there was a travelling carriage for sale, which no one would buy because it was too expensive. Two hundred sequins were asked for it, although it had but two seats and a bracket-stool for a third person. It was just what I wanted. I called at the place where it would be seen. I found a very fine English carriage which could not have cost less than two hundred guineas. Its noble proprietor was then at supper, so I sent him my name, requesting him not to dispose of his carriage until the next morning, and I went back to the hotel well pleased with my discovery. At supper I arranged with the captain that we would not leave Cesena till after dinner on the following day, and the conversation was almost entirely a dialogue between Henriette and myself; it was my first talk with a French woman. I thought this young creature more and more charming, yet I could not suppose her to be anything else but an adventurers, and I was astonished at discovering in her those noble and delicate feelings which denote a good education. However, as such an idea would not have suited the views I had about her, I rejected it whenever it presented itself to my mind. Whenever I tried to make her talk about the captain she would change the subject of conversation, or evade my insinuations with a tact and a shrewdness which astonished and delighted me at the same time, for everything she said bore the impress of grace and wit. Yet she did not elude this question:

“At least tell me, madam, whether the captain is your husband or your father.”

“Neither one nor the other,” she answered, with a smile.

That was enough for me, and in reality what more did I want to know? The worthy captain had fallen asleep. When he awoke I wished them both good night, and retired to my room with a heart full of love and a mind full of projects. I saw that everything had taken a good turn, and I felt certain of success, for I was young, I enjoyed excellent health, I had money and plenty of daring. I liked the affair all the better because it must come to a conclusion in a few days.

Early the next morning I called upon Count Dandini, the owner of the carriage, and as I passed a jeweller’s shop I bought a pair of gold bracelets in Venetian filigree, each five yards long and of rare fineness. I intended them as a present for Javotte.

The moment Count Dandini saw me he recognized me. He had seen me in Padua at the house of his father, who was professor of civil law at the time I was a student there. I bought his carriage on condition that he would send it to me in good repair at one o’clock in the afternoon.

Having completed the purchase, I went to my friend, Franzia, and my present of the bracelets made Javotte perfectly happy. There was not one girl in Cesena who could boast of possessing a finer pair, and with that present my conscience felt at ease, for it paid the expense I had occasioned during my stay of ten or twelve days at her father’s house four times over. But this was not the most important present I offered the family. I made the father take an oath to wait for me, and never to trust in any pretended magician for the necessary operation to obtain the treasure, even if I did not return or give any news of myself for ten years.

“Because,” I said to him, “in consequence of the agreement in which I have entered with the spirits watching the treasure, at the first attempt made by any other person, the casket containing the treasure will sink to twice its present depth, that is to say as deep as thirty-five fathoms, and then I shall have myself ten times more difficulty in raising it to the surface. I cannot state precisely the time of my return, for it depends upon certain combinations which are not under my control, but recollect that the treasure cannot be obtained by anyone but I.”

I accompanied my advice with threats of utter ruin to his family if he should ever break his oath. And in this manner I atoned for all I had done, for, far from deceiving the worthy man, I became his benefactor by guarding against the deceit of some cheat who would have cared for his money more than for his daughter. I never saw him again, and most likely he is dead, but knowing the deep impression I left on his mind I am certain that his descendants are even now waiting for me, for the name of Farusi must have remained immortal in that family.

Javotte accompanied me as far as the gate of the city, where I kissed her affectionately, which made me feel that the thunder and lightning had had but a momentary effect upon me; yet I kept control over my senses, and I congratulate myself on doing so to this day. I told her, before bidding her adieu, that, her virginity being no longer necessary for my magic operations, I advised her to get married as soon as possible, if I did not return within three months. She shed a few tears, but promised to follow my advice.

I trust that my readers will approve of the noble manner in which I concluded my magic business. I hardly dare to boast of it, but I think I deserve some praise for my behaviour. Perhaps, I might have ruined poor Franzia with a light heart, had I not possessed a well-filled purse. I do not wish to enquire whether any young man, having intelligence, loving pleasure, and placed in the same position, would not have done the same, but I beg my readers to address that question to themselves.

As for Capitani, to whom I sold the sheath of St. Peter’s knife for rather more than it was worth, I confess that I have not yet repented on his account, for Capitani thought he had duped me in accepting it as security for the amount he gave me, and the count, his father, valued it until his death as more precious than the finest diamond in the world. Dying with such a firm belief, he died rich, and I shall die a poor man. Let the reader judge which of the two made the best bargain. But I must return now to my future travelling companions.

As soon as I had reached the inn, I prepared everything for our departure for which I was now longing. Henriette could not open her lips without my discovering some fresh perfection, for her wit delighted me even more than her beauty. It struck me that the old captain was pleased with all the attention I shewed her, and it seemed evident to me that she would not be sorry to exchange her elderly lover for me. I had all the better right to think so, inasmuch as I was perfection from a physical point of view, and I appeared to be wealthy, although I had no servant. I told Henriette that, for the sake of having none, I spent twice as much as a servant would have cost me, that, by my being my own servant, I was certain of being served according to my taste, and I had the satisfaction of having no spy at my heels and no privileged thief to fear. She agreed with everything I said, and it increased my love.

The honest Hungarian insisted upon giving me in advance the amount to be paid for the post-horses at the different stages as far as Parma. We left Cesena after dinner, but not without a contest of politeness respecting the seats. The captain wanted me to occupy the back seat-near Henriette, but the reader will understand how much better the seat opposite to her suited me; therefore I insisted upon taking the bracket-seat, and had the double advantage of shewing my politeness, and of having constantly and without difficulty before my eyes the lovely woman whom I adored.

My happiness would have been too great if there had been no drawback to it. But where can we find roses without thorns? When the charming Frenchwoman uttered some of those witty sayings which proceed so naturally from the lips of her countrywomen, I could not help pitying the sorry face of the poor Hungarian, and, wishing to make him share my mirth, I would undertake to translate in Latin Henriette’s sallies; but far from making him merry, I often saw his face bear a look of astonishment, as if what I had said seemed to him rather flat. I had to acknowledge to myself that I could not speak Latin as well as she spoke French, and this was indeed the case. The last thing which we learn in all languages is wit, and wit never shines so well as in jests. I was thirty years of age before I began to laugh in reading Terence, Plautus and Martial.

Something being the matter with the carriage, we stopped at Forli to have it repaired. After a very cheerful supper, I retired to my room to go to bed, thinking of nothing else but the charming woman by whom I was so completely captivated. Along the road, Henriette had struck me as so strange that I would not sleep in the second bed in their room. I was afraid lest she should leave her old comrade to come to my bed and sleep with me, and I did not know how far the worthy captain would have put up with such a joke. I wished, of course, to possess that lovely creature, but I wanted everything to be settled amicably, for I felt some respect for the brave officer.

Henriette had nothing but the military costume in which she stood, not any woman's linen, not even one chemise. For a change she took the captain's shirt. Such a state of things was so new to me that the situation seemed to me a complete enigma.

In Bologna, excited by an excellent supper and by the amorous passion which was every hour burning more fiercely in me, I asked her by what singular adventure she had become the friend of the honest fellow who looked her father rather than her lover.

"If you wish to know," she answered, with a smile, "ask him to relate the whole story himself, only you must request him not to omit any of the particulars."

Of course I applied at once to the captain, and, having first ascertained by signs that the charming Frenchwoman had no objection, the good man spoke to me thus:

"A friend of mine, an officer in the army, having occasion to go to Rome, I solicited a furlough of six months, and accompanied him. I seized with great delight the opportunity of visiting a city, the name of which has a powerful influence on the imagination, owing to the memories of the past attached to it. I did not entertain any doubt that the Latin language was spoken there in good society, at least as generally as in Hungary. But I was indeed greatly mistaken, for nobody can speak it, not even the priests, who only pretend to write it, and it is true that some of them do so with great purity. I was therefore rather uncomfortable during my stay in Rome, and with the exception of my eyes my senses remained perfectly inactive. I had spent a very tedious month in that city, the ancient queen of the world, when Cardinal Albani gave my friend dispatches for Naples. Before leaving Rome, he introduced me to his eminence, and his recommendation had so much influence that the cardinal promised to send me very soon with dispatches for the Duke of Parma, Piacenza, and Guastalla, assuring me that all my travelling expenses would be defrayed. As I wished to see the harbour called in former times Centum cellae and now Civita-Vecchia, I gave up the remainder of my time to that visit, and I proceeded there with a cicerone who spoke Latin.

“I was loitering about the harbour when I saw, coming out of a tartan, an elderly officer and this young woman dressed as she is now. Her beauty struck me, but I should not have thought any more about it, if the officer had not put up at my inn, and in an apartment over which I had a complete view whenever I opened my window. In the evening I saw the couple taking supper at the same table, but I remarked that the elderly officer never addressed a word to the young one. When the supper was over, the disguised girl left the room, and her companion did not lift his eyes from a letter which he was reading, as it seemed to me, with the deepest attention. Soon afterwards the officer closed the windows, the light was put out, and I suppose my neighbors went to bed. The next morning, being up early as is my habit, I saw the officer go out, and the girl remained alone in the room.

“I sent my cicerone, who was also my servant, to tell the girl in the garb of an officer that I would give her ten sequins for an hour’s conversation. He fulfilled my instructions, and on his return he informed me that her answer, given in French, had been to the effect that she would leave for Rome immediately after breakfast, and that, once in that city, I should easily find some opportunity of speaking to her.

“‘I can find out from the vetturino,’ said my cicerone, ‘where they put up in Rome, and I promise you to enquire of him.’

“She left Civita-Vecchia with the elderly officer, and I returned home on the following day.

“Two days afterwards, the cardinal gave me the dispatches, which were addressed to M. Dutillot, the French minister, with a passport and the money necessary for the journey. He told me, with great kindness, that I need not hurry on the road.

“I had almost forgotten the handsome adventuress, when, two days before my departure, my cicerone gave me the information that he had found out where she lived, and that she was with the same officer. I told him to try to see her, and to let her know that my departure was fixed for the day after the morrow. She sent me word by him that, if I would inform her of the hour of my departure, she would meet me outside of the gate, and get into the coach with me to accompany me on my way. I thought the arrangement very ingenious and during the day I sent the cicerone to tell her the hour at which I intended to leave, and where I would wait for her outside of the Porto del Popolo. She came at the appointed time, and we have remained together ever since. As soon as she was seated near me, she made me understand by signs that she wanted to dine with me. You may imagine what difficulty we had in understanding one another, but we guessed somehow the meaning expressed by our pantomime, and I accepted the adventure with delight.

“We dined gaily together, speaking without understanding, but after the dessert we comprehended each other very well. I fancied that I had seen the end of it, and you may imagine how surprised I was when, upon my offering her the ten sequins, she refused most positively to take any money, making me understand that she would rather go with me to Parma, because she had some business in that city, and did not want to return to Rome.

“The proposal was, after all, rather agreeable to me; I consented to her wishes. I only regretted my inability to make her understand that, if she was followed by anyone from Rome, and if that person wanted to take her back, I was not in a position to defend her against violence. I was also sorry that, with our mutual ignorance of the language spoken by each of us, we had no opportunity of conversation, for I should have been greatly pleased to hear her adventures, which, I think, must be interesting. You can, of course, guess that I have no idea of who she can be. I only know that she calls herself Henriette, that she must be a Frenchwoman, that she is as gentle as a turtledove, that she has evidently received a good education, and that she enjoys good health. She is witty and courageous, as we have both seen, I in Rome and you in Cesena at General Spada’s table. If she would tell you her history, and allow you to translate it for me in Latin she would indeed please me much, for I am sincerely her friend, and I can assure you that it will grieve me to part from her in Parma. Please to tell her that I intend to give her the thirty sequins I received from the Bishop of Cesena, and that if

I were rich I would give her more substantial proofs of my tender affection. Now, sir, I shall feel obliged to you if you will explain it all to her in French."

I asked her whether she would feel offended if I gave her an exact translation. She assured me that, on the contrary, she wished me to speak openly, and I told her literally what the captain had related to me.

With a noble frankness which a slight shade of-shame rendered more interesting, Henriette confirmed the truth of her friend's narrative, but she begged me to tell him that she could not grant his wish respecting the adventures of her life.

"Be good enough to inform him," she added, "that the same principle which forbids me to utter a falsehood, does not allow me to tell the truth. As for the thirty sequins which he intends to give me, I will not accept even one of them, and he would deeply grieve me by pressing them upon me. The moment we reach Parma I wish him to allow me to lodge wherever I may please, to make no enquiries whatever about me, and, in case he should happen to meet me, to crown his great kindness to me by not appearing to have ever known me."

As she uttered the last words of this short speech, which she had delivered very seriously and with a mixture of modesty and resolution, she kissed her elderly friend in a manner which indicated esteem and gratitude rather than love. The captain, who did not know why she was kissing him, was deeply grieved when I translated what Henriette had said. He begged me to tell her that, if he was to obey her with an easy conscience, he must know whether she would have everything she required in Parma.

"You can assure him," she answered, "that he need not entertain any anxiety about me."

This conversation had made us all very sad; we remained for a long time thoughtful and silent, until, feeling the situation to be painful, I rose, wishing them good night, and I saw that Henriette's face wore a look of great excitement.

As soon as I found myself alone in my room, deeply moved by conflicting feelings of love, surprise, and uncertainty, I began to give vent to my feelings in a kind of soliloquy, as I always do when I am strongly excited by anything; thinking is not, in those cases, enough for me; I must speak aloud, and I throw so much action, so much animation into these monologues that I forget I am alone. What I knew now of Henriette had upset me altogether.

“Who can she be,” I said, speaking to the walls; “this girl who seems to have the most elevated feelings under the veil of the most cynical libertinism? She says that in Parma she wishes to remain perfectly unknown, her own mistress, and I cannot, of course, flatter myself that she will not place me under the same restrictions as the captain to whom she has already abandoned herself. Goodbye to my expectations, to my money, and my illusions! But who is she — what is she? She must have either a lover or a husband in Parma, or she must belong to a respectable family; or, perhaps, thanks to a boundless love for debauchery and to her confidence in her own charms, she intends to set fortune, misery, and degradation at defiance, and to try to enslave some wealthy nobleman! But that would be the plan of a mad woman or of a person reduced to utter despair, and it does not seem to be the case with Henriette. Yet she possesses nothing. True, but she refused, as if she had been provided with all she needed, the kind assistance of a man who has the right to offer it, and from whom, in sooth, she can accept without blushing, since she has not been ashamed to grant him favours with which love had nothing to do. Does she think that it is less shameful for a woman to abandon herself to the desires of a man unknown and unloved than to receive a present from an esteemed friend, and particularly at the eve of finding herself in the street, entirely destitute in the middle of a foreign city, amongst people whose language she cannot even speak? Perhaps she thinks that such conduct will justify the ‘faux pas’ of which she has been guilty with the captain, and give him to understand that she had abandoned herself to him only for the sake of escaping from the officer with whom she was in Rome. But she ought to be quite certain that the captain does not entertain any other idea; he shews himself so reasonable that it is impossible to suppose that he ever admitted the possibility of having inspired her with a violent passion, because she had seen him once through a window in Civita-Vecchia. She might possibly be right, and feel herself justified in her conduct towards the captain, but it is not the same with me, for with her intelligence she must be aware that I would not have travelled with them if she had been indifferent to me, and she must know that there is but one way in which she can obtain my pardon. She may be endowed with many virtues, but she has not the only one which could prevent me from wishing the reward which every man expects to receive at the hands of the woman he loves. If she wants to assume prudish manners towards me and to make a dupe of me, I am bound in honour to shew her how much she is mistaken."

After this monologue, which had made me still more angry, I made up my mind to have an explanation in the morning before our departure.

"I shall ask her," said I to myself, "to grant me the same favours which she has so easily granted to her old captain, and if I meet with a refusal the best revenge will be to shew her a cold and profound contempt until our arrival in Parma."

I felt sure that she could not refuse me some marks of real or of pretended affection, unless she wished to make a show of a modesty which certainly did not belong to her, and, knowing that her modesty would only be all pretence, I was determined not to be a mere toy in her hands.

As for the captain, I felt certain, from what he had told me, that he would not be angry with me if I risked a declaration, for as a sensible man he could only assume a neutral position.

Satisfied with my wise reasoning, and with my mind fully made up, I fell asleep. My thoughts were too completely absorbed by Henriette for her not to haunt my dreams, but the dream which I had throughout the night was so much like reality that, on awaking, I looked for her in my bed, and my imagination was so deeply struck with the delights of that night that, if my door had not been fastened with a bolt, I should have believed that she had left me during my sleep to resume her place near the worthy Hungarian.

When I was awake I found that the happy dream of the night had turned my love for the lovely creature into a perfect amorous frenzy, and it could not be other wise. Let the reader imagine a poor devil going to bed broken down with fatigue and starvation; he succumbs to sleep, that most imperative of all human wants, but in his dream he finds himself before a table covered with every delicacy; what will then happen? Why, a very natural result. His appetite, much more lively than on the previous day, does not give him a minute's rest he must satisfy it or die of sheer hunger.

I dressed myself, resolved on making sure of the possession of the woman who had inflamed all my senses, even before resuming our journey.

“If I do not succeed,” I said to myself, “I will not go one step further.”

But, in order not to offend against propriety, and not to deserve the reproaches of an honest man, I felt that it was my duty to have an explanation with the captain in the first place.

I fancy that I hear one of those sensible, calm, passionless readers, who have had the advantage of what is called a youth without storms, or one of those whom old age has forced to become virtuous, exclaim,

“Can anyone attach so much importance to such nonsense?”

Age has calmed my passions down by rendering them powerless, but my heart has not grown old, and my memory has kept all the freshness of youth; and far from considering that sort of thing a mere trifle, my only sorrow, dear reader, arises from the fact that I have not the power to practise, to the day of my death, that which has been the principal affair of my life!

When I was ready I repaired to the chamber occupied by my two travelling companions, and after paying each of them the usual morning compliments I told the officer that I was deeply in love with Henriette, and I asked him whether he would object to my trying to obtain her as my mistress.

“The reason for which she begs you,” I added, “to leave her in Parma and not to take any further notice of her, must be that she hopes to meet some lover of hers there. Let me have half an hour’s conversation with her, and I flatter myself I can persuade her to sacrifice that lover for me. If she refuses me, I remain here; you will go with her to Parma, where you will leave my carriage at the post, only sending me a receipt, so that I can claim it whenever I please.”

“As soon as breakfast is over,” said the excellent man, “I shall go and visit the institute, and leave you alone with Henriette. I hope you may succeed, for I should be delighted to see her under your protection when I part with her. Should she persist in her first resolution, I could easily find a ‘vetturino’ here, and you could keep your carriage. I thank you for your proposal, and it will grieve me to leave you.”

Highly pleased at having accomplished half of my task, and at seeing myself near the denouement, I asked the lovely Frenchwoman whether she would like to see the sights of Bologna.

“I should like it very much,” she said, “if I had some other clothes; but with such a costume as this I do not care to shew myself about the city.”

“Then you do not want to go out?”

“No.”

“Can I keep you company?”

“That would be delightful:”

The captain went out immediately after breakfast. The moment he had gone I told Henriette that her friend had left us alone purposely, so as to give me the opportunity of a private interview with her.

“Tell me now whether you intended the order which you gave him yesterday to forget you, never to enquire after you; and even not to know you if he happened to meet you, from the time of our arrival in Parma, for me as well as for him.”

“It is not an order that I gave him; I have no right to do so, and I could not so far forget myself; it is only a prayer I addressed to him, a service which circumstances have compelled me to claim at his hands, and as he has no right to refuse me, I never entertained any doubt of his granting my command. As far as you are concerned, it is certain that I should have addressed the same prayer to you, if I had thought that you had any views about me. You have given me some marks of your friendship, but you must understand that if, under the circumstances, I am likely to be injured by the kind attentions of the captain, yours would injure me much more. If you have any friendship for me, you would have felt all that.”

“As you know that I entertain great friendship for you, you cannot possibly suppose that I would leave you alone, without money, without resources in the middle of a city where you cannot even make yourself understood. Do you think that a man who feels for you the most tender affection can abandon you when he has been fortunate enough to make your acquaintance, when he is aware of the sad position in which you are placed? If you think such a thing possible, you must have a very false idea of friendship, and should such a man grant your request, he would only prove that he is not your friend.”

“I am certain that the captain is my friend; yet you have heard him, he will obey me, and forget me.”

“I do not know what sort of affection that honest man feels for you, or how far he can rely upon the control he may have over himself, but I know that if he can grant you what you have asked from him, his friendship must be of a nature very different from mine, for I am bound to tell you it is not only impossible for me to afford you willingly the strange gratification of abandoning you in your position, but even that, if I go to Parma, you could not possibly carry out your wishes, because I love you so passionately that you must promise to be mine, or I must remain here. In that case you must go to Parma alone with the captain, for I feel that, if I accompanied you any further, I should soon be the most wretched of men. I could not bear to see you with another lover, with a husband, not even in the midst of your family; in fact, I would fain see you and live with you forever. Let me tell you, lovely Henriette, that if it is possible for a Frenchman to forget, an Italian cannot do it, at least if I judge from my own feelings. I have made up my mind, you must be good enough to decide now, and to tell me whether I am to accompany you or to remain here. Answer yes or no; if I remain here it is all over. I shall leave for Naples to-morrow, and I know I shall be cured in time of the mad passion I feel for you, but if you tell me that I can accompany you to Parma, you must promise me that your heart will forever belong to me alone. I must be the only one to possess you, but I am ready to accept as a condition, if you like, that you shall not crown my happiness until you have judged me worthy of it by my attentions and by my loving care. Now, be kind enough to decide before the return of the too happy captain. He knows all, for I have told him what I feel.”

“And what did he answer?”

“That he would be happy to see you under my protection. But what is the meaning of that smile playing on your lips?”

“Pray, allow me to laugh, for I have never in my life realized the idea of a furious declaration of love. Do you understand what it is to say to a woman in a declaration which ought to be passionate, but at the same time tender and gentle, the following terrible words:

“‘Madam, make your choice, either one or the other, and decide instanter!’ Ha! ha! ha!”

"Yes, I understand perfectly. It is neither gentle, nor gallant, nor pathetic, but it is passionate. Remember that this is a serious matter, and that I have never yet found myself so much pressed by time. Can you, on your side, realize the painful position of a man, who, being deeply in love, finds himself compelled to take a decision which may perhaps decide issues of life and death? Be good enough to remark that, in spite of the passion raging in me, I do not fail in the respect I owe you; that the resolution I intend to take, if you should persist in your original decision, is not a threat, but an effort worthy of a hero, which ought to call for your esteem. I beg of you to consider that we cannot afford to lose time. The word choose must not sound harshly in your ears, since it leaves my fate as well as yours entirely in your hands. To feel certain of my love, do you want to see me kneeling before you like a simpleton, crying and entreating you to take pity on me? No, madam, that would certainly displease you, and it would not help me. I am conscious of being worthy of your love, I therefore ask for that feeling and not for pity. Leave me, if I displease you, but let me go away; for if you are humane enough to wish that I should forget you, allow me to go far away from you so as to make my sorrow less immense. Should I follow you to Parma, I would not answer for myself, for I might give way to my despair. Consider everything well, I beseech you; you would indeed be guilty of great cruelty, were you to answer now: 'Come to Parma, although I must beg of you not to see me in that city.' Confess that you cannot, in all fairness, give me such an answer; am I not right?"

"Certainly, if you truly love me."

"Good God! if I love you? Oh, yes! believe me, my love is immense, sincere! Now, decide my fate."

"What! always the same song?"

"Yes."

"But are you aware that you look very angry?"

"No, for it is not so. I am only in a state of uncontrollable excitement, in one of the decisive hours of my life, a prey to the most fearful anxiety. I ought to curse my whimsical destiny and the 'sbirri' of Cesena (may God curse them, too!), for, without them, I should never have known you."

"Are you, then, so very sorry to have made my acquaintance?"

“Have I not some reason to be so?”

“No, for I have not given you my decision yet.”

“Now I breathe more freely, for I am sure you will tell me to accompany you to Parma.”

“Yes, come to Parma.”

TO PARIS AND PRISON

EPISODE 6 — PARIS

CHAPTER I

Leave Bologna a Happy Man — The Captain Parts from Us in Reggio, where I Spend a Delightful Night with Henriette — Our Arrival in Parma — Henriette Resumes the Costume of a Woman; Our Mutual Felicity — I Meet Some Relatives of Mine, but Do not Discover Myself

The reader can easily guess that there was a change as sudden as a transformation in a pantomime, and that the short but magic sentence, “Come to Parma,” proved a very fortunate catastrophe, thanks to which I rapidly changed, passing from the tragic to the gentle mood, from the serious to the tender tone. Sooth to say, I fell at her feet, and lovingly pressing her knees I kissed them repeatedly with raptures of gratitude. No more ‘furore’, no more bitter words; they do not suit the sweetest of all human feelings! Loving, docile, grateful, I swear never to beg for any favour, not even to kiss her hand, until I have shewn myself worthy of her precious love! The heavenly creature, delighted to see me pass so rapidly from despair to the most lively tenderness, tells me, with a voice the tone of which breathes of love, to get up from my knees.

“I am sure that you love me,” says she, “and be quite certain that I shall leave nothing undone to secure the constancy of your feelings.” Even if she had said that she loved me as much as I adored her, she would not have been more eloquent, for her words expressed all that can be felt. My lips were pressed to her beautiful hands as the captain entered the room. He complimented us with perfect good faith, and I told him, my face beaming with happiness, that I was going to order the carriage. I left them together, and in a short time we were on our road, cheerful, pleased, and merry.

Before reaching Reggio the honest captain told me that in his opinion it would be better for him to proceed to Parma alone, as, if we arrived in that city all together, it might cause some remarks, and people would talk about us much less if we were without him. We both thought him quite right, and we immediately made up our minds to pass the night in Reggio, while the captain would take a post-chaise and go alone to Parma. According to that arrangement his trunk was transferred to the vehicle which he hired in Reggio, he bade us farewell and went away, after having promised to dine with us on the following day in Parma.

The decision taken by the worthy Hungarian was, doubtless, as agreeable to my lovely friend as to me, for our delicacy would have condemned us to a great reserve in his presence. And truly, under the new circumstances, how were we to arrange for our lodgings in Reggio? Henriette could not, of course, share the bed of the captain any more, and she could not have slept with me as long as he was with us, without being guilty of great immodesty. We should all three have laughed at that compulsory reserve which we would have felt to be ridiculous, but we should, for all that, have submitted to it. Love is the little impudent god, the enemy of bashfulness, although he may very often enjoy darkness and mystery, but if he gives way to it he feels disgraced; he loses three-fourths of his dignity and the greatest portion of his charms.

Evidently there could be no happiness for Henriette or for me unless we parted with the person and even with the remembrance of the excellent captain.

We supped alone. I was intoxicated with a felicity which seemed too immense, and yet I felt melancholy, but Henriette, who looked sad likewise, had no reproach to address to me. Our sadness was in reality nothing but shyness; we loved each other, but we had had no time to become acquainted. We exchanged only a few words, there was nothing witty, nothing interesting in our conversation, which struck us both as insipid, and we found more pleasure in the thoughts which filled our minds. We knew that we were going to pass the night together, but we could not have spoken of it openly. What a night! what a delightful creature was that Henriette whom I have loved so deeply, who has made me so supremely happy!

It was only three or four days later that I ventured on asking her what she would have done, without a groat in her possession, having not one acquaintance in Parma, if I had been afraid to declare my love, and if I had gone to Naples. She answered that she would doubtless have found herself in very great difficulties, but that she had all along felt certain of my love, and that she had foreseen what had happened. She added that, being impatient to know what I thought of her, she had asked me to translate to the captain what she had expressed respecting her resolution, knowing that he could neither oppose that resolution nor continue to live with her, and that, as she had taken care not to include me in the prayer which she had addressed to him through me, she had thought it impossible that I should fail to ask whether I could be of some service to her, waiting to take a decision until she could have ascertained the nature of my feelings towards her. She concluded by telling me that if she had fallen it was the fault of her husband and of her father-in-law, both of whom she characterized as monsters rather than men.

When we reached Parma, I gave the police the name of Farusi, the same that I had assumed in Cesena; it was the family name of my mother; while Henriette wrote down, “Anne D’Arci, from France.” While we were answering the questions of the officer, a young Frenchman, smart and intelligent-looking, offered me his services, and advised me not to put up at the posting-inn, but to take lodgings at D’Andremorit’s. hotel, where I should find good apartments, French cooking, and the best French wines.

Seeing that Henriette was pleased with the proposal, I told the young man to take us there, and we were soon very comfortably lodged. I engaged the Frenchman by the day, and carefully settled all my arrangements with D’Andremont. After that I attended to the housing of my carriage.

Coming in again for a few minutes, I told Henriette that I would return in time for dinner, and, ordering the servant to remain in the ante-room, I went out alone.

Parma was then groaning under a new government. I had every reason to suppose that there were spies everywhere and under every form. I therefore did not want to have at my heels a valet who might have injured rather than served me. Though I was in my father’s native city, I had no acquaintances there, but I knew that I should soon find my way.

When I found myself in the streets, I scarcely could believe that I was in Italy, for everything had a tramontane appearance. I heard nothing but French and Spanish, and those who did not speak one of those languages seemed to be whispering to one another. I was going about at random, looking for a hosier, yet unwilling to enquire where I could find one; at last I saw what I wanted.

I entered the shop, and addressing myself to a stout, good-looking woman seated behind the counter, I said,

“Madam, I wish to make some purchases.”

“Sir, shall I send for someone speaking French?”

“You need not do so, I am an Italian.”

“God be praised! Italians are scarce in these days.”

“Why scarce?”

“Do you not know that Don Philip has arrived, and that his wife, Madame de France, is on the road?”

“I congratulate you, for it must make trade very good. I suppose that money is plentiful, and that there is abundance of all commodities.”

“That is true, but everything is high in price, and we cannot get reconciled to these new fashions. They are a bad mixture of French freedom and Spanish haughtiness which addles our brains. But, sir, what sort of linen do you require?”

“In the first place, I must tell you that I never try to drive a hard bargain, therefore be careful. If you charge me too much, I shall not come again. I want some fine linen for twenty-four chemises, some dimity for stays and petticoats, some muslin, some cambric for pocket-handkerchiefs, and many other articles which I should be very glad to find in your shop, for I am a stranger here, and God knows in what hands I am going to trust myself!”

“You will be in honest ones, if you will give me your confidence.”

“I am sure that you deserve it, and I abandon my interests to you. I want likewise to find some needlewomen willing to work in the lady’s room, because she requires everything to be made very rapidly.”

“And dresses?”

“Yes, dresses, caps, mantles-in fact, everything, for she is naked.”

“With money she will soon have all she wants. Is she young?”

“She is four years younger than I. She is my wife.”

“Ah! may God bless you! Any children?”

“Not yet, my good lady; but they will come, for we do all that is necessary to have them.”

“I have no doubt of it. How pleased I am! Well, sir, I shall send for the very phoenix of all dressmakers. In the mean time, choose what you require, it will amuse you.”

I took the best of everything and paid, and the dressmaker making her appearance at that moment I gave my address, requesting that various sorts of stuff might be sent at once. I told the dressmaker and her daughter, who had come with her, to follow me and to carry the linen. On my way to the hotel I bought several pairs of silk stockings, and took with me a bootmaker who lived close by.

Oh, what a delightful moment! Henriette, who had not the slightest idea of what I had gone out for, looked at everything with great pleasure, yet without any of those demonstrations which announce a selfish or interested disposition. She shewed her gratitude only by the delicate praise which she bestowed upon my taste and upon the quality of the articles I had purchased. She was not more cheerful on account of my presents, but the tender affection with which she looked at me was the best proof of her grateful feelings.

The valet I had hired had entered the room with the shoemaker. Henriette told him quietly to withdraw, and not to come unless he was called. The dressmaker set to work, the shoemaker took her measure, and I told him to bring some slippers. He returned in a short time, and the valet came in again with him without having been called. The shoemaker, who spoke French, was talking the usual nonsense of dealers, when she interrupted him to ask the valet, who was standing familiarly in the room, what he wanted.

“Nothing, madam, I am only waiting for your orders.”

“Have I not told you that you would be called when your services were required?”

“I should like to know who is my master, you or the gentleman?”

“Neither,” I replied, laughing. “Here are your day’s wages. Be off at once.”

The shoemaker, seeing that Henriette spoke only French, begged to recommend a teacher of languages.

“What country does he belong to?” she enquired.

“To Flanders, madam,” answered Crispin, “he is a very learned man, about fifty years old. He is said to be a good man. He charges three libbre for each lesson of one hour, and six for two hours, but he requires to be paid each time.”

“My dear,” said Henriette to me, “do you wish me to engage that master?”

“Yes, dearest, it will amuse you.”

The shoemaker promised to send the Flemish professor the next morning.

The dressmakers were hard at work, the mother cutting and the daughter sewing, but, as progress could not be too rapid, I told the mother that she would oblige us if she could procure another seamstress who spoke French.

“You shall have one this very day, sir,” she answered, and she offered me the services of her own son as a servant, saying that if I took him I should be certain to have neither a thief nor a spy about me, and that he spoke French pretty well. Henriette thought we could not do better than take the young man. Of course that was enough to make me consent at once, for the slightest wish of the woman we love is our supreme law. The mother went for him, and she brought back at the same time the half-French dressmaker. It all amused my goddess, who looked very happy.

The young man was about eighteen, pleasant, gentle and modest. I enquired his name, and he answered that it was Caudagna.

The reader may very likely recollect that my father’s native place had been Parma, and that one of his sisters had married a Caudagna. “It would be a curious coincidence,” I thought, “if that dressmaker should be my aunt, and my valet my cousin!” but I did not say it aloud.

Henriette asked me if I had any objection to the first dressmaker dining at our table.

“I entreat you, my darling,” I answered, “never, for the future, to ask my consent in such trifling matters. Be quite certain, my beloved, that I shall always approve everything you may do.”

She smiled and thanked me. I took out my purse, and said to her;

"Take these fifty sequins, dearest, to pay for all your small expenses, and to buy the many trifles which I should be sure to forget."

She took the money, assuring me that she was vastly obliged to me.

A short time before dinner the worthy captain made his appearance. Henriette ran to meet him and kissed him, calling him her dear father, and I followed her example by calling him my friend. My beloved little wife invited him to dine with us every day. The excellent fellow, seeing all the women working busily for Henriette, was highly pleased at having procured such a good position for his young adventuress, and I crowned his happiness by telling him that I was indebted to him for my felicity.

Our dinner was delicious, and it proved a cheerful meal. I found out that Henriette was dainty, and my old friend a lover of good wines. I was both, and felt that I was a match for them. We tasted several excellent wines which D'Andremont had recommended, and altogether we had a very good dinner.

The young valet pleased me in consequence of the respectful manner in which he served everyone, his mother as well as his masters. His sister and the other seamstress had dined apart.

We were enjoying our dessert when the hosier was announced, accompanied by another woman and a milliner who could speak French. The other woman had brought patterns of all sorts of dresses. I let Henriette order caps, head-dresses, etc., as she pleased, but I would interfere in the dress department although I complied with the excellent taste of my charming friend. I made her choose four dresses, and I was indeed grateful for her ready acceptance of them, for my own happiness was increased in proportion to the pleasure I gave her and the influence I was obtaining over her heart.

Thus did we spend the first day, and we could certainly not have accomplished more.

In the evening, as we were alone at supper, I fancied that her lovely face looked sad. I told her so.

"My darling," she answered, with a voice which went to my heart, "you are spending a great deal of money on me, and if you do so in the hope of my loving you more dearly I must tell you it is money lost, for I do not love you now more than I did yesterday, but I do love you with my whole heart. All you may do that is not strictly necessary pleases me only because I see more and more how worthy you are of me, but it is not needed to make me feel all the deep love which you deserve."

"I believe you, dearest, and my happiness is indeed great if you feel that your love for me cannot be increased. But learn also, delight of my heart, that I have done it all only to try to love you even more than I do, if possible. I wish to see you beautiful and brilliant in the attire of your sex, and if there is one drop of bitterness in the fragrant cup of my felicity, it is a regret at not being able to surround you with the halo which you deserve. Can I be otherwise than delighted, my love, if you are pleased?"

"You cannot for one moment doubt my being pleased, and as you have called me your wife you are right in one way, but if you are not very rich I leave it to you to judge how deeply I ought to reproach myself."

"Ah, my beloved angel! let me, I beg of you, believe myself wealthy, and be quite certain that you cannot possibly be the cause of my ruin. You were born only for my happiness. All I wish is that you may never leave me. Tell me whether I can entertain such a hope."

"I wish it myself, dearest, but who can be sure of the future? Are you free? Are you dependent on anyone?"

"I am free in the broadest meaning of that word, I am dependent on no one but you, and I love to be so."

"I congratulate you, and I am very glad of it, for no one can tear you from my arms, but, alas! you know that I cannot say the same as you. I am certain that some persons are, even now, seeking for me, and they will not find it very difficult to secure me if they ever discover where I am. Alas! I feel how miserable I should be if they ever succeeded in dragging me away from you!"

"You make me tremble. Are you afraid of such a dreadful misfortune here?"

"No, unless I should happen to be seen by someone knowing me."

"Are any such persons likely to be here at present?"

"I think not."

"Then do not let our love take alarm, I trust your fears will never be verified. Only, my darling one, you must be as cheerful as you were in Cesena."

"I shall be more truly so now, dear friend. In Cesena I was miserable; while now I am happy. Do not be afraid of my being sad, for I am of a naturally cheerful disposition."

"I suppose that in Cesena you were afraid of being caught by the officer whom you had left in Rome?"

"Not at all; that officer was my father-in-law, and I am quite certain that he never tried to ascertain where I had gone. He was only too glad to get rid of me. I felt unhappy because I could not bear to be a charge on a man whom I could not love, and with whom I could not even exchange one thought. Recollect also that I could not find consolation in the idea that I was ministering to his happiness, for I had only inspired him with a passing fancy which he had himself valued at ten sequins. I could not help feeling that his fancy, once gratified, was not likely at his time of life to become a more lasting sentiment, and I could therefore only be a burden to him, for he was not wealthy. Besides, there was a miserable consideration which increased my secret sorrow. I thought myself bound in duty to caress him, and on his side, as he thought that he ought to pay me in the same money, I was afraid of his ruining his health for me, and that idea made me very unhappy. Having no love for each other, we allowed a foolish feeling of regard to make both of us uncomfortable. We lavished, for the sake of a well-meaning but false decorum, that which belongs to love alone. Another thing troubled me greatly. I was afraid lest people might suppose that I was a source of profit to him. That idea made me feel the deepest shame, yet, whenever I thought of it, I could not help admitting that such a supposition, however false, was not wanting in probability. It is owing to that feeling that you found me so reserved towards you, for I was afraid that you might harbour that fearful idea if I allowed, you to read in my looks the favourable impression which you had made on my heart."

"Then it was not owing to a feeling of self-love?"

“No, I confess it, for you could but judge me as I deserved. I had been guilty of the folly now known to you because my father-in-law intended to bury me in a convent, and that did not suit my taste. But, dearest friend, you must forgive me if, I cannot confide even to you the history of my life.”

“I respect your secret, darling; you need not fear any intrusion from me on that subject. All we have to do is to love one another, and not to allow any dread of the future to mar our actual felicity.”

The next day, after a night of intense enjoyment, I found myself more deeply in love than before, and the next three months were spent by us in an intoxication of delight.

At nine o’clock the next morning the teacher of Italian was announced. I saw a man of respectable appearance, polite, modest, speaking little but well, reserved in his answers, and with the manners of olden times. We conversed, and I could not help laughing when he said, with an air of perfect good faith, that a Christian could only admit the system of Copernicus as a clever hypothesis. I answered that it was the system of God Himself because it was that of nature, and that it was not in Holy Scripture that the laws of science could be learned.

The teacher smiled in a manner which betrayed the Tartufe, and if I had consulted only my own feelings I should have dismissed the poor man, but I thought that he might amuse Henriette and teach her Italian; after all it was what I wanted from him. My dear wife told him that she would give him six libbre for a lesson of two hours: the libbra of Parma being worth only about threepence, his lessons were not very expensive. She took her first lesson immediately and gave him two sequins, asking him to purchase her some good novels.

Whilst my dear Henriette was taking her lesson, I had some conversation with the dressmaker, in order to ascertain whether she was a relative of mine.

“What does your husband do?” I asked her.

“He is steward to the Marquis of Sissa.”

“Is your father still alive?”

“No, sir, he is dead.”

“What was his family name?”

“Scotti.”

“Are your husband’s parents still alive?”

“His father is dead, but his mother is still alive, and resides with her uncle, Canon Casanova.”

That was enough. The good woman was my Welsh cousin, and her children were my Welsh nephews. My niece Jeanneton was not pretty; but she appeared to be a good girl. I continued my conversation with the mother, but I changed the topic.

“Are the Parmesans satisfied with being the subjects of a Spanish prince?”

“Satisfied? Well, in that case, we should be easily pleased, for we are now in a regular maze. Everything is upset, we do not know where we are. Oh! happy times of the house of Farnese, whither have you departed? The day before yesterday I went to the theatre, and Harlequin made everybody roar with laughter. Well, now, fancy, Don Philipo, our new duke, did all he could to remain serious, and when he could not manage it, he would hide his face in his hat so that people should not see that he was laughing, for it is said that laughter ought never to disturb the grave and stiff countenance of an Infante of Spain, and that he would be dishonoured in Madrid if he did not conceal his mirth. What do you think of that? Can such manners suit us? Here we laugh willingly and heartily! Oh! the good Duke Antonio (God rest his soul!) was certainly as great a prince as Duke Philipo, but he did not hide himself from his subjects when he was pleased, and he would sometimes laugh so heartily that he could be heard in the streets. Now we are all in the most fearful confusion, and for the last three months no one in Parma knows what’s o’clock.”

“Have all the clocks been destroyed?”

“No, but ever since God created the world, the sun has always gone down at half-past five, and at six the bells have always been tolled for the Angelus. All respectable people knew that at that time the candle had to be lit. Now, it is very strange, the sun has gone mad, for he sets every day at a different hour. Our peasants do not know when they are to come to market. All that is called a regulation but do you know why? Because now everybody knows that dinner is to be eaten at twelve o’clock. A fine regulation, indeed! Under the Farnese we used to eat when we were hungry, and that was much better."

That way of reasoning was certainly singular, but I did not think it sounded foolish in the mouth of a woman of humble rank. It seems to me that a government ought never to destroy ancient customs abruptly, and that innocent errors ought to be corrected only by degrees.

Henriette had no watch. I felt delighted at the idea of offering her such a present, and I went out to purchase one, but after I had bought a very fine watch, I thought of ear-rings, of a fan, and of many other pretty nicknacks. Of course I bought them all at once. She received all those gifts offered by love with a tender delicacy which overjoyed me. She was still with the teacher when I came back.

"I should have been able," he said to me, "to teach your lady heraldry, geography, history, and the use of the globes, but she knows that already. She has received an excellent education."

The teacher's name was Valentin de la Haye. He told me that he was an engineer and professor of mathematics. I shall have to speak of him very often in these Memoirs, and my readers will make his acquaintance by his deeds better than by any portrait I could give of him, so I will merely say that he was a true Tartufe, a worthy pupil of Escobar.

We had a pleasant dinner with our Hungarian friend. Henriette was still wearing the uniform, and I longed to see her dressed as a woman. She expected a dress to be ready for the next day, and she was already supplied with petticoats and chemises.

Henriette was full of wit and a mistress of repartee. The milliner, who was a native of Lyons, came in one morning, and said in French:

"Madame et Monsieur, j'ai l'honneur de vous souhaiter le bonjour."

"Why," said my friend, "do you not say Monsieur et madame?"

"I have always heard that in society the precedence is given to the ladies."

"But from whom do we wish to receive that honour?"

"From gentlemen, of course."

"And do you not see that women would render themselves ridiculous if they did not grant to men the same that they expect from them. If we wish them never to fail in politeness towards us, we must shew them the example."

"Madam," answered the shrewd milliner, "you have taught me an excellent lesson, and I will profit by it. Monsieur et madame, je suis votre servante."

This feminine controversy greatly amused me.

Those who do not believe that a woman can make a man happy through the twenty-four hours of the day have never possessed a woman like Henriette. The happiness which filled me, if I can express it in that manner, was much greater when I conversed with her even than when I held her in my arms. She had read much, she had great tact, and her taste was naturally excellent; her judgment was sane, and, without being learned, she could argue like a mathematician, easily and without pretension, and in everything she had that natural grace which is so charming. She never tried to be witty when she said something of importance, but accompanied her words with a smile which imparted to them an appearance of trifling, and brought them within the understanding of all. In that way she would give intelligence even to those who had none, and she won every heart. Beauty without wit offers love nothing but the material enjoyment of its physical charms, whilst witty ugliness captivates by the charms of the mind, and at last fulfils all the desires of the man it has captivated.

Then what was my position during all the time that I possessed my beautiful and witty Henriette? That of a man so supremely happy that I could scarcely realize my felicity!

Let anyone ask a beautiful woman without wit whether she would be willing to exchange a small portion of her beauty for a sufficient dose of wit. If she speaks the truth, she will say, "No, I am satisfied to be as I am." But why is she satisfied? Because she is not aware of her own deficiency. Let an ugly but witty woman be asked if she would change her wit against beauty, and she will not hesitate in saying no. Why? Because, knowing the value of her wit, she is well aware that it is sufficient by itself to make her a queen in any society.

But a learned woman, a blue-stocking, is not the creature to minister to a man's happiness. Positive knowledge is not a woman's province. It is antipathetic to the gentleness of her nature, to the amenity, to the sweet timidity which are the greatest charms of the fair sex, besides, women never carry their learning beyond certain limits, and the tittle-tattle of blue-stockings can dazzle no one but fools. There has never been one great discovery due to a woman. The fair sex is deficient in that vigorous power which the body lends to the mind, but women are evidently superior to men in simple reasoning, in delicacy of feelings, and in that species of merit which appertains to the heart rather than to the mind.

Hurl some idle sophism at a woman of intelligence. She will not unravel it, but she will not be deceived by it, and, though she may not say so, she will let you guess that she does not accept it. A man, on the contrary, if he cannot unravel the sophism, takes it in a literal sense, and in that respect the learned woman is exactly the same as man. What a burden a Madame Dacier must be to a man! May God save every honest man from such!

When the new dress was brought, Henriette told me that she did not want me to witness the process of her metamorphosis, and she desired me to go out for a walk until she had resumed her original form. I obeyed cheerfully, for the slightest wish of the woman we love is a law, and our very obedience increases our happiness.

As I had nothing particular to do, I went to a French bookseller in whose shop I made the acquaintance of a witty hunchback, and I must say that a hunchback without wit is a raga avis; I have found it so in all countries. Of course it is not wit which gives the hump, for, thank God, all witty men are not humpbacked, but we may well say that as a general rule the hump gives wit, for the very small number of hunchbacks who have little or no wit only confirms the rule: The one I was alluding to just now was called Dubois-Chateleraux. He was a skilful engraver, and director of the Mint of Parma for the Infante, although that prince could not boast of such an institution.

I spent an hour with the witty hunchback, who shewed me several of his engravings, and I returned to the hotel where I found the Hungarian waiting to see Henriette. He did not know that she would that morning receive us in the attire of her sex. The door was thrown open, and a beautiful, charming woman met us with a courtesy full of grace, which no longer reminded us of the stiffness or of the too great freedom which belong to the military costume. Her sudden appearance certainly astonished us, and we did not know what to say or what to do. She invited us to be seated, looked at the captain in a friendly manner, and pressed my hand with the warmest affection, but without giving way any more to that outward familiarity which a young officer can assume, but which does not suit a well-educated lady. Her noble and modest bearing soon compelled me to put myself in unison with her, and I did so without difficulty, for she was not acting a part, and the way in which she had resumed her natural character made it easy for me to follow her on that ground.

I was gazing at her with admiration, and, urged by a feeling which I did not take time to analyze, I took her hand to kiss it with respect, but, without giving me an opportunity of raising it to my lips, she offered me her lovely mouth. Never did a kiss taste so delicious.

“Am I not then always the same?” said she to me, with deep feeling.

“No, heavenly creature, and it is so true that you are no longer the same in my eyes that I could not now use any familiarity towards you. You are no longer the witty, free young officer who told Madame Querini about the game of Pharaoh, end about the deposits made to your bank by the captain in so niggardly a manner that they were hardly worth mentioning.”

“It is very true that, wearing the costume of my sex, I should never dare to utter such words. Yet, dearest friend, it does not prevent my being your Henriette — that Henriette who has in her life been guilty of three escapades, the last of which would have utterly ruined me if it had not been for you, but which I call a delightful error, since it has been the cause of my knowing you.”

Those words moved me so deeply that I was on the point of throwing myself at her feet, to entreat her to forgive me for not having shewn her more respect, but Henriette, who saw the state in which I was, and who wanted to put an end to the pathetic scene, began to shake our poor captain, who sat as motionless as a statue, and as if he had been petrified. He felt ashamed at having treated such a woman as an adventuress, for he knew that what he now saw was not an illusion. He kept looking at her with great confusion, and bowing most respectfully, as if he wanted to atone for his past conduct towards her. As for Henriette, she seemed to say to him, but without the shadow of a reproach;

“I am glad that you think me worth more than ten sequins.”

We sat down to dinner, and from that moment she did the honours of the table with the perfect ease of a person who is accustomed to fulfil that difficult duty. She treated me like a beloved husband, and the captain like a respected friend. The poor Hungarian begged me to tell her that if he had seen her, as she was now, in Civita Vecchia, when she came out of the tartan, he should never have dreamed of dispatching his cicerone to her room.

“Oh! tell him that I do not doubt it. But is it not strange that a poor little female dress should command more respect than the garb of an officer?”

“Pray do not abuse the officer’s costume, for it is to it that I am indebted for my happiness.”

“Yes,” she said, with a loving smile, “as I owe mine to the sbirri of Cesena.”

We remained for a long time at the table, and our delightful conversation turned upon no other topic than our mutual felicity. If it had not been for the uneasiness of the poor captain, which at last struck us, we should never have put a stop either to the dinner or to, our charming prattle.

CHAPTER II

I Engage a Box at the Opera, in Spite of Henriette's

Reluctance — M. Dubois Pays Us a Visit and Dines with Us;

My Darling Plays Him a Trick — Henriette Argues on Happiness —

We Call on Dubois, and My Wife Displays Her Marvellous Talent —

M. Dutillot The Court gives a Splendid Entertainment in the

Ducal Gardens — A Fatal Meeting — I Have an Interview with

M. D'Antoine, the Favourite of the Infante of Spain

The happiness I was enjoying was too complete to last long. I was fated to lose it, but I must not anticipate events. Madame de France, wife of the Infante Don Philip, having arrived in Parma, the opera house was opened, and I engaged a private box, telling Henriette that I intended to take her to the theatre every night. She had several times confessed that she had a great passion for music, and I had no doubt that she would be pleased with my proposal. She had never yet seen an Italian opera, and I felt certain that she wished to ascertain whether the Italian music deserved its universal fame. But I was indeed surprised when she exclaimed,

"What, dearest! You wish to go every evening to the opera?"

"I think, my love, that, if we did not go, we should give some excuse for scandal-mongers to gossip. Yet, should you not like it, you know that there is no need for us to go. Do not think of me, for I prefer our pleasant chat in this room to the heavenly concert of the seraphs."

"I am passionately fond of music, darling, but I cannot help trembling at the idea of going out."

"If you tremble, I must shudder, but we ought to go to the opera or leave Parma. Let us go to London or to any other place. Give your orders, I am ready to do anything you like."

“Well, take a private box as little exposed as possible.”

“How kind you are!”

The box I had engaged was in the second tier, but the theatre being small it was difficult for a pretty woman to escape observation.

I told her so.

“I do not think there is any danger,” she answered; “for I have not seen the name of any person of my acquaintance in the list of foreigners which you gave me to read.”

Thus did Henriette go to the opera. I had taken care that our box should not be lighted up. It was an opera-buffa, the music of Burellano was excellent, and the singers were very good.

Henriette made no use of her opera-glass except to look on the stage, and nobody paid any attention to us. As she had been greatly pleased with the finale of the second act, I promised to get it for her, and I asked Dubois to procure it for me. Thinking that she could play the harpsichord, I offered to get one, but she told me that she had never touched that instrument.

On the night of the fourth or fifth performance M. Dubois came to our box, and as I did not wish to introduce him to my friend, I only asked what I could do for him. He then handed me the music I had begged him to purchase for me, and I paid him what it had cost, offering him my best thanks. As we were just opposite the ducal box, I asked him, for the sake of saying something, whether he had engraved the portraits of their highnesses. He answered that he had already engraved two medals, and I gave him an order for both, in gold. He promised to let me have them, and left the box. Henriette had not even looked at him, and that was according to all established rules, as I had not introduced him, but the next morning he was announced as we were at dinner. M. de la Haye, who was dining with us, complimented us upon having made the acquaintance of Dubois, and introduced him to his pupil the moment he came into the room. It was then right for Henriette to welcome him, which she did most gracefully.

After she had thanked him for the ‘partizione’, she begged he would get her some other music, and the artist accepted her request as a favour granted to him.

“Sir,” said Dubois to me, “I have taken the liberty of bringing the medals you wished to have; here they are.”

On one were the portraits of the Infante and his wife, on the other was engraved only the head of Don Philip. They were both beautifully engraved, and we expressed our just admiration. “The workmanship is beyond all price,” said Henriette, “but the gold can be bartered for other gold.” “Madam,” answered the modest artist, “the medals weight sixteen sequins.” She gave him the amount immediately, and invited him to call again at dinner-time. Coffee was just brought in at that moment, and she asked him to take it with us. Before sweetening his cup, she enquired whether he liked his coffee very sweet.

“Your taste, madam,” answered the hunchback, gallantly, “is sure to be mine.”

“Then you have guessed that I always drink coffee without sugar. I am glad we have that taste in common.”

And she gracefully offered him the cup of coffee without sugar. She then helped De la Haye and me, not forgetting to put plenty of sugar in our cups, and she poured out one for herself exactly like the one she handed to Dubois. It was much ado for me not to laugh, for my mischievous Frenchwoman, who liked her coffee in the Parisian fashion, that is to say very sweet, was sipping the bitter beverage with an air of delight which compelled the director of the Mint to smile under the infliction. But the cunning hunchback was even with her; accepting the penalty of his foolish compliment, and praising the good quality of the coffee, he boldly declared that it was the only way to taste the delicious aroma of the precious berry.

When Dubois and De la Haye had left us, we both laughed at the trick.

“But,” said I to Henriette, “you will be the first victim of your mischief, for whenever he dines with us, you must keep up the joke, in order not to betray yourself.”

“Oh! I can easily contrive to drink my coffee well sweetened, and to make him drain the bitter cup.”

At the end of one month, Henriette could speak Italian fluently, and it was owing more to the constant practice she had every day with my cousin Jeanneton, who acted as her maid, than to the lessons of Professor de la

Haye. The lessons only taught her the rules, and practice is necessary to acquire a language. I have experienced it myself. I learned more French during the too short period that I spent so happily with my charming Henriette than in all the lessons I had taken from Dalacqua.

We had attended the opera twenty times without making any acquaintance, and our life was indeed supremely happy. I never went out without Henriette, and always in a carriage; we never received anyone, and nobody knew us. Dubois was the only person, since the departure of the good Hungarian, who sometimes dined with us; I do not reckon De la Haye, who was a daily guest at our table. Dubois felt great curiosity about us, but he was cunning and did not shew his curiosity; we were reserved without affectation, and his inquisitiveness was at fault. One day he mentioned to us that the court of the Infante of Parma was very brilliant since the arrival of Madame de France, and that there were many foreigners of both sexes in the city. Then, turning towards Henriette, he said to her;

“Most of the foreign ladies whom we have here are unknown to us.”

“Very likely, many of them would not shew themselves if they were known.”

“Very likely, madam, as you say, but I can assure you that, even if their beauty and the richness of their toilet made them conspicuous, our sovereigns wish for freedom. I still hope, madam, that we shall have the happiness of seeing you at the court of the duke.”

“I do not think so, for, in my opinion, it is superlatively ridiculous for a lady to go to the court without being presented, particularly if she has a right to be so.”

The last words, on which Henriette had laid a little more stress than upon the first part of her answer, struck our little hunchback dumb, and my friend, improving her opportunity, changed the subject of conversation.

When he had gone we enjoyed the check she had thus given to the inquisitiveness of our guest, but I told Henriette that, in good conscience, she ought to forgive all those whom she rendered curious, because…. she cut my words short by covering me with loving kisses.

Thus supremely happy, and finding in one another constant satisfaction, we would laugh at those morose philosophers who deny that complete happiness can be found on earth.

“What do they mean, darling — those crazy fools — by saying that happiness is not lasting, and how do they understand that word? If they mean everlasting, immortal, unintermitting, of course they are right, but the life of man not being such, happiness, as a natural consequence, cannot be such either. Otherwise, every happiness is lasting for the very reason that it does exist, and to be lasting it requires only to exist. But if by complete felicity they understand a series of varied and never-interrupted pleasures, they are wrong, because, by allowing after each pleasure the calm which ought to follow the enjoyment of it, we have time to realize happiness in its reality. In other words those necessary periods of repose are a source of true enjoyment, because, thanks to them, we enjoy the delight of recollection which increases twofold the reality of happiness. Man can be happy only when in his own mind he realizes his happiness, and calm is necessary to give full play to his mind; therefore without calm man would truly never be completely happy, and pleasure, in order to be felt, must cease to be active. Then what do they mean by that word lasting?

“Every day we reach a moment when we long for sleep, and, although it be the very likeness of non-existence, can anyone deny that sleep is a pleasure? No, at least it seems to me that it cannot be denied with consistency, for, the moment it comes to us, we give it the preference over all other pleasures, and we are grateful to it only after it has left us.

“Those who say that no one can be happy throughout life speak likewise frivolously. Philosophy teaches the secret of securing that happiness, provided one is free from bodily sufferings. A felicity which would thus last throughout life could be compared to a nosegay formed of a thousand flowers so beautifully, so skillfully blended together, that it would look one single flower. Why should it be impossible for us to spend here the whole of our life as we have spent the last month, always in good health, always loving one another, without ever feeling any other want or any weariness? Then, to crown that happiness, which would certainly be immense, all that would be wanted would be to die together, in an advanced age, speaking to the last moment of our pleasant recollections. Surely that felicity would have been lasting. Death would not interrupt it, for death would end it. We could not, even then, suppose ourselves unhappy unless we dreaded unhappiness after death, and such an idea strikes me as absurd, for it is a contradiction of the idea of an almighty and fatherly tenderness."

It was thus that my beloved Henriette would often make me spend delightful hours, talking philosophic sentiment. Her logic was better than that of Cicero in his Tusculan Disputations, but she admitted that such lasting felicity could exist only between two beings who lived together, and loved each other with constant affection, healthy in mind and in body, enlightened, sufficiently rich, similar in tastes, in disposition, and in temperament. Happy are those lovers who, when their senses require rest, can fall back upon the intellectual enjoyments afforded by the mind! Sweet sleep then comes, and lasts until the body has recovered its general harmony. On awaking, the senses are again active and always ready to resume their action.

The conditions of existence are exactly the same for man as for the universe, I might almost say that between them there is perfect identity, for if we take the universe away, mankind no longer exists, and if we take mankind away, there is no longer an universe; who could realize the idea of the existence of inorganic matter? Now, without that idea, 'nihil est', since the idea is the essence of everything, and since man alone has ideas. Besides, if we abstract the species, we can no longer imagine the existence of matter, and vice versa.

I derived from Henriette as great happiness as that charming woman derived from me. We loved one another with all the strength of our faculties, and we were everything to each other. She would often repeat those pretty lines of the good La, Fontaine:

'Soyez-vous l'un a l'autre un monde toujours beau,

Toujours divers, toujours nouveau;

Tenez-vous lieu de tout; comptez pour rien le reste.'

And we did not fail to put the advice into practice, for never did a minute of ennui or of weariness, never did the slightest trouble, disturb our bliss.

The day after the close of the opera, Dubois, who was dining with us, said that on the following day he was entertaining the two first artists, 'primo cantatore' and 'prima cantatrice', and added that, if we liked to come, we would hear some of their best pieces, which they were to sing in a lofty hall of his country-house particularly adapted to the display of the human voice. Henriette thanked him warmly, but she said that, her health being very delicate, she could not engage herself beforehand, and she spoke of other things.

When we were alone, I asked her why she had refused the pleasure offered by Dubois.

“I should accept his invitation,” she answered, “and with delight, if I were not afraid of meeting at his house some person who might know me, and would destroy the happiness I am now enjoying with you.”

“If you have any fresh motive for dreading such an occurrence, you are quite right, but if it is only a vague, groundless fear, my love, why should you deprive yourself of a real and innocent pleasure? If you knew how pleased I am when I see you enjoy yourself, and particularly when I witness your ecstacy in listening to fine music!”

“Well, darling, I do not want to shew myself less brave than you. We will go immediately after dinner. The artists will not sing before. Besides, as he does not expect us, he is not likely to have invited any person curious to speak to me. We will go without giving him notice of our coming, without being expected, and as if we wanted to pay him a friendly visit. He told us that he would be at his country-house, and Caudagna knows where it is.”

Her reasons were a mixture of prudence and of love, two feelings which are seldom blended together. My answer was to kiss her with as much admiration as tenderness, and the next day at four o’clock in the afternoon we paid our visit to M. Dubois. We were much surprised, for we found him alone with a very pretty girl, whom he presented to us as his niece.

“I am delighted to see you,” he said, “but as I did not expect to see you I altered my arrangements, and instead of the dinner I had intended to give I have invited my friends to supper. I hope you will not refuse me the honour of your company. The two virtuosi will soon be here.”

We were compelled to accept his invitation.

“Will there be many guests?” I enquired.

“You will find yourselves in the midst of people worthy of you,” he answered, triumphantly. “I am only sorry that I have not invited any ladies.”

This polite remark, which was intended for Henriette, made her drop him a curtsy, which she accompanied with a smile. I was pleased to read contentment on her countenance, but, alas! she was concealing the painful anxiety which she felt acutely. Her noble mind refused to shew any uneasiness, and I could not guess her inmost thoughts because I had no idea that she had anything to fear.

I should have thought and acted differently if I had known all her history. Instead of remaining in Parma I should have gone with her to London, and I know now that she would have been delighted to go there.

The two artists arrived soon afterwards; they were the ‘primo cantatore’ Laschi, and the ‘prima donna’ Baglioni, then a very pretty woman. The other guests soon followed; all of them were Frenchmen and Spaniards of a certain age. No introductions took place, and I read the tact of the witty hunchback in the omission, but as all the guests were men used to the manners of the court, that neglect of etiquette did not prevent them from paying every honour to my lovely friend, who received their compliments with that ease and good breeding which are known only in France, and even there only in the highest society, with the exception, however, of a few French provinces in which the nobility, wrongly called good society, shew rather too openly the haughtiness which is characteristic of that class.

The concert began by a magnificent symphony, after which Laschi and Baglioni sang a duet with great talent and much taste. They were followed by a pupil of the celebrated Vandini, who played a concerto on the violoncello, and was warmly applauded.

The applause had not yet ceased when Henriette, leaving her seat, went up to the young artist, and told him, with modest confidence, as she took the violoncello from him, that she could bring out the beautiful tone of the instrument still better. I was struck with amazement. She took the young man’s seat, placed the violoncello between her knees, and begged the leader of the orchestra to begin the concerto again. The deepest silence prevailed. I was trembling all over, and almost fainting. Fortunately every look was fixed upon Henriette, and nobody thought of me. Nor was she looking towards me, she would not have then ventured even one glance, for she would have lost courage, if she had raised her beautiful eyes to my face. However, not seeing her disposing herself to play, I was beginning to imagine that she had only been indulging in a jest, when she suddenly made the strings resound. My heart was beating with such force that I thought I should drop down dead.

But let the reader imagine my situation when, the concerto being over, well-merited applause burst from every part of the room! The rapid change from extreme fear to excessive pleasure brought on an excitement which was like a violent fever. The applause did not seem to have any effect upon Henriette, who, without raising her eyes from the notes which she saw for the first time, played six pieces with the greatest perfection. As she rose from her seat, she did not thank the guests for their applause, but, addressing the young artist with affability, she told him, with a sweet smile, that she had never played on a finer instrument. Then, curtsying to the audience, she said,

"I entreat your forgiveness for a movement of vanity which has made me encroach on your patience for half an hour."

The nobility and grace of this remark completely upset me, and I ran out to weep like a child, in the garden where no one could see me.

"Who is she, this Henriette?" I said to myself, my heart beating, and my eyes swimming with tears of emotion, "what is this treasure I have in my possession?"

My happiness was so immense that I felt myself unworthy of it.

Lost in these thoughts which enhanced the pleasure of any tears, I should have stayed for a long tune in the garden if Dubois had not come out to look for me. He felt anxious about me, owing to my sudden disappearance, and I quieted him by saying that a slight giddiness had compelled me to come out to breathe the fresh air.

Before re-entering the room, I had time to dry my tears, but my eyelids were still red. Henriette, however, was the only one to take notice of it, and she said to me,

"I know, my darling, why you went into the garden"

She knew me so well that she could easily guess the impression made on my heart by the evening's occurrence.

Dubois had invited the most amiable noblemen of the court, and his supper was dainty and well arranged. I was seated opposite Henriette who was, as a matter of course, monopolizing the general attention, but she would have met with the same success if she had been surrounded by a circle of ladies whom she would certainly have thrown into the shade by her beauty, her wit, and the distinction of her manners. She was the charm of that supper by the animation she imparted to the conversation. M. Dubois said nothing, but he was proud to have such a lovely guest in his house. She contrived to say a few gracious words to everyone, and was shrewd enough never to utter something witty without making me take a share in it. On my side, I openly shewed my submissiveness, my deference, and my respect for that divinity, but it was all in vain. She wanted everybody to know that I was her lord and master. She might have been taken for my wife, but my behaviour to her rendered such a supposition improbable.

The conversation having fallen on the respective merits of the French and Spanish nations, Dubois was foolish enough to ask Henriette to which she gave preference.

It would have been difficult to ask a more indiscreet question, considering that the company was composed almost entirely of Frenchmen and Spaniards in about equal proportion. Yet my Henriette turned the difficulty so cleverly that the Frenchmen would have liked to be Spaniards, and 'vice versa'. Dubois, nothing daunted, begged her to say what she thought of the Italians. The question made me tremble. A certain M. de la Combe, who was seated near me, shook his head in token of disapprobation, but Henriette did not try to elude the question.

"What can I say about the Italians," she answered, "I know only one? If I am to judge them all from that one my judgment must certainly be most favourable to them, but one single example is not sufficient to establish the rule."

It was impossible to give a better answer, but as my readers may well imagine, I did not appear to have heard it, and being anxious to prevent any more indiscreet questions from Dubois I turned the conversation into a different channel.

The subject of music was discussed, and a Spaniard asked Henriette whether she could play any other instrument besides the violoncello.

“No,” she answered, “I never felt any inclination for any other. I learned the violoncello at the convent to please my mother, who can play it pretty well, and without an order from my father, sanctioned by the bishop, the abbess would never have given me permission to practise it.”

“What objection could the abbess make?”

“That devout spouse of our Lord pretended that I could not play that instrument without assuming an indecent position.”

At this the Spanish guests bit their lips, but the Frenchmen laughed heartily, and did not spare their epigrams against the over-particular abbess.

After a short silence, Henriette rose, and we all followed her example. It was the signal for breaking up the party, and we soon took our leave.

I longed to find myself alone with the idol of my soul. I asked her a hundred questions without waiting for the answers.

“Ah! you were right, my own Henriette, when you refused to go to that concert, for you knew that you would raise many enemies against me. I am certain that all those men hate me, but what do I care? You are my universe! Cruel darling, you almost killed me with your violoncello, because, having no idea of your being a musician, I thought you had gone mad, and when I heard you I was compelled to leave the room in order to weep undisturbed. My tears relieved my fearful oppression. Oh! I entreat you to tell me what other talents you possess. Tell me candidly, for you might kill me if you brought them out unexpectedly, as you have done this evening.”

“I have no other accomplishments, my best beloved. I have emptied my bag all at once. Now you know your Henriette entirely. Had you not chanced to tell me about a month ago that you had no taste for music, I would have told you that I could play the violoncello remarkably well, but if I had mentioned such a thing, I know you well enough to be certain that you would have bought an instrument immediately, and I could not, dearest, find pleasure in anything that would weary you.”

The very next morning she had an excellent violoncello, and, far from wearying me, each time she played she caused me a new and greater pleasure. I believe that it would be impossible even to a man disliking music not to become passionately fond of it, if that art were practised to perfection by the woman he adores.

The ‘vox humana’ of the violoncello; the king of instruments, went to my heart every time that my beloved Henriette performed upon it. She knew I loved to hear her play, and every day she afforded me that pleasure. Her talent delighted me so much that I proposed to her to give some concerts, but she was prudent enough to refuse my proposal. But in spite of all her prudence we had no power to hinder the decrees of fate.

The fatal hunchback came the day after his fine supper to thank us and to receive our well-merited praises of his concert, his supper, and the distinction of his guests.

“I foresee, madam,” he said to Henriette, “all the difficulty I shall have in defending myself against the prayers of all my friends, who will beg of me to introduce them to you.”

“You need not have much trouble on that score: you know that I never, receive anyone.”

Dubois did not again venture upon speaking of introducing any friend.

On the same day I received a letter from young Capitani, in which he informed me that, being the owner of St. Peter’s knife and sheath, he had called on Franzia with two learned magicians who had promised to raise the treasure out of the earth, and that to his great surprise Franzia had refused to receive him: He entreated me to write to the worthy fellow, and to go to him myself if I wanted to have my share of the treasure. I need not say that I did not comply with his wishes, but I can vouch for the real pleasure I felt in finding that I had succeeded in saving that honest and simple farmer from the impostors who would have ruined him.

One month was gone since the great supper given by Dubois. We had passed it in all the enjoyment which can be derived both from the senses and the mind, and never had one single instant of weariness caused either of us to be guilty of that sad symptom of misery which is called a yawn. The only pleasure we took out of doors was a drive outside of the city when the weather was fine. As we never walked in the streets, and never frequented any public place, no one had sought to make our acquaintance, or at least no one had found an opportunity of doing so, in spite of all the curiosity excited by Henriette amongst the persons whom we had chanced to meet, particularly at the house of Dubois. Henriette had become more courageous, and I more confident, when we found that she had not been recognized by any one either at that supper or at the theatre. She only dreaded persons belonging to the high nobility.

One day as we were driving outside the Gate of Colorno, we met the duke and duchess who were returning to Parma. Immediately after their carriage another vehicle drove along, in which was Dubois with a nobleman unknown to us. Our carriage had only gone a few yards from theirs when one of our horses broke down. The companion of Dubois immediately ordered his coachman to stop in order to send to our assistance. Whilst the horse was raised again, he came politely to our carriage, and paid some civil compliment to Henriette. M. Dubois, always a shrewd courtier and anxious to shew off at the expense of others, lost no time in introducing him as M. Dutillot, the French ambassador. My sweetheart gave the conventional bow. The horse being all right again, we proceeded on our road after thanking the gentlemen for their courtesy. Such an every-day occurrence could not be expected to have any serious consequences, but alas! the most important events are often the result of very trifling circumstances!

The next day, Dubois breakfasted with us. He told us frankly that M. Dutillot had been delighted at the fortunate chance which had afforded him an opportunity of making our acquaintance, and that he had entreated him to ask our permission to call on us.

“On madam or on me?” I asked at once.

“On both.”

“Very well, but one at a time. Madam, as you know, has her own room and I have mine.”

“Yes, but they are so near each other!”

“Granted, yet I must tell you that, as far as I am concerned, I should have much pleasure in waiting upon his excellency if he should ever wish to communicate with me, and you will oblige me by letting him know it. As for madam, she is here, speak to her, my dear M. Dubois, for I am only her very humble servant.”

Henriette assumed an air of cheerful politeness, and said to him, "Sir, I beg you will offer my thanks to M. Dutillot, and enquire from him whether he knows me."

"I am certain, madam," said the hunchback, "that he does not."

"You see he does not know me, and yet he wishes to call on me. You must agree with me that if I accepted his visits I should give him a singular opinion of my character. Be good enough to tell him that, although known to no one and knowing no one, I am not an adventuress, and therefore I must decline the honour of his visits."

Dubois felt that he had taken a false step, and remained silent. We never asked him how the ambassador had received our refusal.

Three weeks after the last occurrence, the ducal court residing then at Colorno, a great entertainment was given in the gardens which were to be illuminated all night. Everybody had permission to walk about the gardens. Dubois, the fatal hunchback appointed by destiny, spoke so much of that festival, that we took a fancy to see it. Always the same story of Adam's apple. Dubois accompanied us. We went to Colorno the day before the entertainment, and put up at an inn.

In the evening we walked through the gardens, in which we happened to meet the ducal family and suite. According to the etiquette of the French court, Madame de France was the first to curtsy to Henriette, without stopping. My eyes fell upon a gentleman walking by the side of Don Louis, who was looking at my friend very attentively. A few minutes after, as we were retracing our steps, we came across the same gentleman who, after bowing respectfully to us, took Dubois aside. They conversed together for a quarter of an hour, following us all the time, and we were passing out of the gardens, when the gentleman, coming forward, and politely apologizing to me, asked Henriette whether he had the honour to be known to her.

"I do not recollect having ever had the honour of seeing you before."

"That is enough, madam, and I entreat you to forgive me."

Dubois informed us that the gentleman was the intimate friend of the Infante Don Louis, and that, believing he knew madam, he had begged to be introduced. Dubois had answered that her name was D'Arci, and that, if he was known to the lady, he required no introduction. M. d'Antoine said that the name of D'Arci was unknown to him, and that he was afraid of making a mistake. “In that state of doubt,” added Dubois, “and wishing to clear it, he introduced himself, but now he must see that he was mistaken.”

After supper, Henriette appeared anxious. I asked her whether she had only pretended not to know M. d’Antoine.

“No, dearest, I can assure you. I know his name which belongs to an illustrious family of Provence, but I have never seen him before.”

“Perhaps he may know you?”

“He might have seen me, but I am certain that he never spoke to me, or I would have recollected him.”

“That meeting causes me great anxiety, and it seems to have troubled you.”

“I confess it has disturbed my mind.”

“Let us leave Parma at once and proceed to Genoa. We will go to Venice as soon as my affairs there are settled.”

“Yes, my dear friend, we shall then feel more comfortable. But I do not think we need be in any hurry.”

We returned to Parma, and two days afterwards my servant handed me a letter, saying that the footman who had brought it was waiting in the anteroom.

“This letter,” I said to Henriette, “troubles me.”

She took it, and after she had read it — she gave it back to me, saying,

“I think M. d’Antoine is a man of honour, and I hope that we may have nothing to fear.”

The letter ran as, follows:

“Either at your hotel or at my residence, or at any other place you may wish to appoint, I entreat you, sir, to give me an opportunity of conversing with you on a subject which must be of the greatest importance to you.

“I have the honour to be, etc.

“D’ANTOINE.”

It was addressed M. Farusi.

"I think I must see him," I said, "but where?"

"Neither here nor at his residence, but in the ducal gardens. Your answer must name only the place and the hour of the meeting."

I wrote to M. d'Antoine that I would see him at half-past eleven in the ducal gardens, only requesting him to appoint another hour in case mine was not convenient to him.

I dressed myself at once in order to be in good time, and meanwhile we both endeavoured, Henriette and I, to keep a cheerful countenance, but we could not silence our sad forebodings. I was exact to my appointment and found M. d'Antoine waiting for me. As soon as we were together, he said to me,

"I have been compelled, sir, to beg from you the favour of an interview, because I could not imagine any surer way to get this letter to Madame d'Arci's hands. I entreat you to deliver it to her, and to excuse me if I give it you sealed. Should I be mistaken, my letter will not even require an answer, but should I be right, Madame d'Arci alone can judge whether she ought to communicate it to you. That is my reason for giving it to you sealed. If you are truly her friend, the contents of that letter must be as interesting to you as to her. May I hope, sir, that you will be good enough to deliver it to her?"

"Sir, on my honour I will do it."

We bowed respectfully to each other, and parted company. I hurried back to the hotel.

CHAPTER III

Henriette Receives the Visit of M. d'Antoine I Accompany Her as Far as Geneva and Then I Lose Her — I Cross the St. Bernard, and Return to Parma — A Letter from Hensiette — My Despair — De La Haye Becomes Attached to Me — Unpleasant Adventure with an Actress and Its Consequences — I Turn a Thorough Bigot — Bavois — I Mystify a Bragging Officer.

As soon as I had reached our apartment, my heart bursting with anxiety, I repeated to Henriette every word spoken by M. d'Antoine, and delivered his letter which contained four pages of writing. She read it attentively with visible emotion, and then she said,

"Dearest friend, do not be offended, but the honour of two families does not allow of my imparting to you the contents of this letter. I am compelled to receive M. d'Antoine, who represents himself as being one of my relatives."

"Ah!" I exclaimed, "this is the beginning of the end! What a dreadful thought! I am near the end of a felicity which was too great to last! Wretch that I have been! Why did I tarry so long in Parma? What fatal blindness! Of all the cities in the whole world, except France, Parma was the only one I had to fear, and it is here that I have brought you, when I could have taken you anywhere else, for you had no will but mine! I am all the more guilty that you never concealed your fears from me. Why did I introduce that fatal Dubois here? Ought I not to have guessed that his curiosity would sooner or later prove injurious to us? And yet I cannot condemn that curiosity, for it is, alas! a natural feeling. I can only accuse all the perfections which Heaven has bestowed upon you! — perfections which have caused my happiness, and which will plunge me in an abyss of despair, for, alas! I foresee a future of fearful misery."

"I entreat you, dearest, to foresee nothing, and to calm yourself. Let us avail ourselves of all our reason in order to prove ourselves superior to circumstances, whatever they may be. I cannot answer this letter, but you must write to M. d'Antoine to call here tomorrow and to send up his name."

"Alas! you compel me to perform a painful task."

"You are my best, my only friend; I demand nothing, I impose no task upon you, but can you refuse me?"

"No, never, no matter what you ask. Dispose of me, I am yours in life and death."

"I knew what you would answer. You must be with me when M. d'Antoine calls, but after a few minutes given to etiquette, will you find some pretext to go to your room, and leave us alone? M. d'Antoine knows all my history; he knows in what I have done wrong, in what I have been right; as a man of honour, as my relative, he must shelter me from all affront. He shall not do anything against my will, and if he attempts to deviate from the conditions I will dictate to him, I will refuse to go to France, I will follow you anywhere, and devote to you the remainder of my life. Yet, my darling, recollect that some fatal circumstances may compel us to consider our separation as the wisest course to adopt, that we must husband all our courage to adopt it, if necessary, and to endeavour not to be too unhappy.

"Have confidence in me, and be quite certain that I shall take care to reserve for myself the small portion of happiness which I can be allowed to enjoy without the man who alone has won all my devoted love. You will have, I trust, and I expect it from your generous soul, the same care of your future, and I feel certain that you must succeed. In the mean time, let us drive away all the sad forebodings which might darken the hours we have yet before us."

"Ah! why did we not go away immediately after we had met that accursed favourite of the Infante!"

"We might have made matters much worse; for in that case M. d'Antoine might have made up his mind to give my family a proof of his zeal by instituting a search to discover our place of residence, and I should then have been exposed to violent proceedings which you would not have endured. It would have been fatal to both of us."

I did everything she asked me. From that moment our love became sad, and sadness is a disease which gives the death-blow to affection. We would often remain a whole hour opposite each other without exchanging a single word, and our sighs would be heard whatever we did to hush them.

The next day, when M. d'Antoine called, I followed exactly the instructions she had given me, and for six mortal hours I remained alone, pretending to write.

The door of my room was open, and a large looking-glass allowed us to see each other. They spent those six hours in writing, occasionally stopping to talk of I do not know what, but their conversation was evidently a decisive one. The reader can easily realize how much I suffered during that long torture, for I could expect nothing but the total wreck of my happiness.

As soon as the terrible M. d'Antoine had taken leave of her, Henriette came to me, and observing that her eyes were red I heaved a deep sigh, but she tried to smile.

"Shall we go away to-morrow, dearest?"

"Oh! yes, I am ready. Where do you wish me to take you?"

"Anywhere you like, but we must be here in a fortnight."

"Here! Oh, fatal illusion!"

"Alas! it is so. I have promised to be here to receive the answer to a letter I have just written. We have no violent proceedings to fear, but I cannot bear to remain in Parma."

"Ah! I curse the hour which brought us to this city. Would you like to go to Milan?"

"Yes."

"As we are unfortunately compelled to come back, we may as well take with us Caudagna and his sister."

"As you please."

"Let me arrange everything. I will order a carriage for them, and they will take charge of your violoncello. Do you not think that you ought to let M. d'Antoine know where we are going?"

“No, it seems to me, on the contrary, that I need not account to him for any of my proceedings. So much the worse for him if he should, even for one moment, doubt my word.”

The next morning, we left Parma, taking only what we wanted for an absence of a fortnight. We arrived in Milan without accident, but both very sad, and we spent the following fifteen days in constant tete-a-tete, without speaking to anyone, except the landlord of the hotel and to a dressmaker. I presented my beloved Henriette with a magnificent pelisse made of lynx fur — a present which she prized highly.

Out of delicacy, she had never enquired about my means, and I felt grateful to her for that reserve. I was very careful to conceal from her the fact that my purse was getting very light. When we came back to Parma I had only three or four hundred sequins.

The day after our return M. d’Antoine invited himself to dine with us, and after we had drunk coffee, I left him alone with Henriette. Their interview was as long as the first, and our separation was decided. She informed me of it, immediately after the departure of M. d’Antoine, and for a long time we remained folded in each other’s arms, silent, and blending our bitter tears.

“When shall I have to part from you, my beloved, alas! too much beloved one?”

“Be calm, dearest, only when we reach Geneva, whither you are going to accompany me. Will you try to find me a respectable maid by to-morrow? She will accompany me from Geneva to the place where I am bound to go.”

“Oh! then, we shall spend a few days more together! I know no one but Dubois whom I could trust to procure a good femme-de-chambre; only I do not want him to learn from her what you might not wish him to know.”

“That will not be the case, for I will take another maid as soon as I am in France.”

Three days afterwards, Dubois, who had gladly undertaken the commission, presented to Henriette a woman already somewhat advanced in years, pretty well dressed and respectable-looking, who, being poor, was glad of an opportunity of going back to France, her native country. Her husband, an old military officer, had died a few months before, leaving her totally unprovided for. Henriette engaged her, and told her to keep herself ready to start whenever M. Dubois should give her notice. The day before the one fixed for our departure, M. d'Antoine dined with us, and, before taking leave of us, he gave Henriette a sealed letter for Geneva.

We left Parma late in the evening, and stopped only two hours in Turin, in order to engage a manservant whose services we required as far as Geneva. The next day we ascended Mont Cenis in sedan-chairs, and we descended to the Novalaise in mountain-sledges. On the fifth day we reached Geneva, and we put up at the Hotel des Balances. The next morning, Henriette gave me a letter for the banker Tronchin, who, when he had read it, told me that he would call himself at the hotel, and bring me one thousand louis d'or.

I came back and we sat down to dinner. We had not finished our meal when the banker was announced. He had brought the thousand louis d'or, and told Henriette that he would give her two men whom he could recommend in every way.

She answered that she would leave Geneva as soon as she had the carriage which he was to provide for her, according to the letter I had delivered to him. He promised that everything would be ready for the following day, and he left us. It was indeed a terrible moment! Grief almost benumbed us both. We remained motionless, speechless, wrapped up in the most profound despair.

I broke that sad silence to tell her that the carriage which M. Tronchin would provide could not possibly be as comfortable and as safe as mine, and I entreated her to take it, assuring her that by accepting it she would give me a last proof of her affection.

"I will take in exchange, my dearest love, the carriage sent by the banker."

"I accept the change, darling," she answered, "it will be a great consolation to possess something which has belonged to you."

As she said these words, she slipped in my pocket five rolls containing each one hundred louis d'or — a slight consolation for my heart, which was almost broken by our cruel separation! During the last twenty-four hours we could boast of no other eloquence but that which finds expression in tears, in sobs, and in those hackneyed but energetic exclamations, which two happy lovers are sure to address to reason, when in its sternness it compels them to part from one another in the very height of their felicity. Henriette did not endeavour to lure me with any hope for the future, in order to allay my sorrow! Far from that, she said to me,

“Once we are parted by fate, my best and only friend, never enquire after me, and, should chance throw you in my way, do not appear to know me.”

She gave me a letter for M. d’Antoine, without asking me whether I intended to go back to Parma, but, even if such had not been my intention, I should have determined at once upon returning to that city. She likewise entreated me not to leave Geneva until I had received a letter which she promised to, write to me from the first stage on her journey. She started at day-break, having with her a maid, a footman on the box of the carriage, and being preceded by a courier on horseback. I followed her with my eyes as long as I could, see her carriage, and I was still standing on the same spot long after my eyes had lost sight of it. All my thoughts were wrapped up in the beloved object I had lost for ever. The world was a blank!

I went back to my room, ordered the waiter not to disturb me until the return of the horses which had drawn Henriette’s carriage, and I lay down on my bed in the hope that sleep would for a time silence a grief which tears could not drown.

The postillion who had driven Henriette did not return till the next day; he had gone as far as Chatillon. He brought me a letter in which I found one single word: Adieu! He told me that they had reached Chatillon without accident, and that the lady had immediately continued her journey towards Lyons. As I could not leave Geneva until the following day, I spent alone in my room some of the most melancholy hours of my life. I saw on one of the panes of glass of a window these words which she had traced with the point of a diamond I had given her: “You will forget Henriette.” That prophecy was not likely to afford me any consolation. But had she attached its full meaning to the word “forget?” No; she could only mean that time would at last heal the deep wounds of my heart, and she ought not to have made it deeper by leaving behind her those words which sounded like a reproach. No, I have not forgotten her, for even now, when my head is covered with white hair, the recollection of her is still a source of happiness for my heart! When I think that in my old age I derive happiness only from my recollections of the past, I find that my long life must have counted more bright than dark days, and offering my thanks to God, the Giver of all, I congratulate myself, and confess that life is a great blessing.

The next day I set off again for Italy with a servant recommended by M. Tronchin, and although the season was not favourable I took the road over Mont St. Bernard, which I crossed in three days, with seven mules carrying me, my servant, my luggage, and the carriage sent by the banker to the beloved woman now for ever lost to me. One of the advantages of a great sorrow is that nothing else seems painful. It is a sort of despair which is not without some sweetness. During that journey I never felt either hunger or thirst, or the cold which is so intense in that part of the Alps that the whole of nature seems to turn to ice, or the fatigue inseparable from such a difficult and dangerous journey.

I arrived in Parma in pretty good health, and took up my quarters at a small inn, in the hope that in such a place I should not meet any acquaintance of mine. But I was much disappointed, for I found in that inn M. de la Haye, who had a room next to mine. Surprised at seeing me, he paid me a long compliment, trying to make me speak, but I eluded his curiosity by telling him that I was tired, and that we would see each other again.

On the following day I called upon M. d'Antoine, and delivered the letter which Henriette had written to him. He opened it in my presence, and finding another to my address enclosed in his, he handed it to me without reading it, although it was not sealed. Thinking, however, that it might have been Henriette's intention that he should read it because it was open, he asked my permission to do so, which I granted with pleasure as soon as I had myself perused it. He handed it back to me after he had read it, telling me very feelingly that I could in everything rely upon him and upon his influence and credit.

Here is Henriette's letter

"It is I, dearest and best friend, who have been compelled to abandon you, but do not let your grief be increased by any thought of my sorrow. Let us be wise enough to suppose that we have had a happy dream, and not to complain of destiny, for never did so beautiful a dream last so long! Let us be proud of the consciousness that for three months we gave one another the most perfect felicity. Few human beings can boast of so much! Let us swear never to forget one another, and to often remember the happy hours of our love, in order to renew them in our souls, which, although divided, will enjoy them as acutely as if our hearts were beating one against the other. Do not make any enquiries about me, and if chance should let you know who I am, forget it for ever. I feel certain that you will be glad to hear that I have arranged my affairs so well that I shall, for the remainder of my life, be as happy as I can possibly be without you, dear friend, by my side. I do not know who you are, but I am certain that no one in the world knows you better than I do. I shall not have another lover as long as I live, but I do not wish you to imitate me. On the contrary I hope that you will love again, and I trust that a good fairy will bring along your path another Henriette. Farewell … farewell."

…………………

I met that adorable woman fifteen years later; the reader will see where and how, when we come to that period of my life.

…………………

I went back to my room, careless of the future, broken down by the deepest of sorrows, I locked myself in, and went to bed. I felt so low in spirits that I was stunned. Life was not a burden, but only because I did not give a thought to life. In fact I was in a state of complete apathy, moral and physical. Six years later I found myself in a similar predicament, but that time love was not the cause of my sorrow; it was the horrible and too famous prison of The Leads, in Venice.

I was not much better either in 1768, when I was lodged in the prison of Buen Retiro, in Madrid, but I must not anticipate events. At the end of twenty-four hours, my exhaustion was very great, but I did not find the sensation disagreeable, and, in the state of mind in which I was then, I was pleased with the idea that, by increasing, that weakness would at last kill me. I was delighted to see that no one disturbed me to offer me some food, and I congratulated myself upon having dismissed my servant. Twenty-four more hours passed by, and my weakness became complete inanition.

I was in that state when De la Haye knocked at my door. I would not have answered if he had not said that someone insisted upon seeing me. I got out of bed, and, scarcely able to stand, I opened my door, after which I got into bed again.

“There is a stranger here,” he said, “who, being in want of a carriage, offers to buy yours”

“I do not want to sell it.”

“Excuse me if I have disturbed you, but you look ill.”

“Yes, I wish to be left alone.”

“What is the matter with you?”

Coming nearer my bed, he took my hand, and found my pulse extremely low and weak.

“What did you eat yesterday?”

“I have eaten nothing, thank God I for two days.”

Guessing the real state of things, De la Haye became anxious, and entreated me to take some broth. He threw so much kindness, so much unction, into his entreaties that, through weakness and weariness, I allowed myself to be persuaded. Then, without ever mentioning the name of Henriette, he treated me to a sermon upon the life to come, upon the vanity of the things of this life which we are foolish enough to prefer, and upon the necessity of respecting our existence, which does not belong to us.

I was listening without answering one word, but, after all, I was listening, and De la Haye, perceiving his advantage, would not leave me, and ordered dinner. I had neither the will nor the strength to resist, and when the dinner was served, I ate something. Then De la Have saw that he had conquered, and for the remainder of the day devoted himself to amusing me by his cheerful conversation.

The next day the tables were turned, for it was I who invited him to keep me company and to dine with me. It seemed to me that I had not lost a particle of my sadness, but life appeared to me once more preferable to death, and, thinking that I was indebted to him for the preservation of my life, I made a great friend of him. My readers will see presently that my affection for him went very far, and they will, like me, marvel at the cause of that friendship, and at the means through which it was brought about.

Three or four days afterwards, Dubois, who had been informed of everything by De la Haye, called on me, and persuaded me to go out. I went to the theatre, where I made the acquaintance of several Corsican officers, who had served in France, in the Royal Italian regiment. I also met a young man from Sicily, named Paterno, the wildest and most heedless fellow it was possible to see. He was in love with an actress who made a fool of him. He amused me with the enumeration of all her adorable qualities, and of all the cruelties she was practising upon him, for, although she received him at all hours, she repulsed him harshly whenever he tried to steal the slightest favour. In the mean time, she ruined him by making him pay constantly for excellent dinners and suppers, which were eaten by her family, but which did not advance him one inch towards the fulfilment of his wishes.

He succeeded at last in exciting my curiosity. I examined the actress on the stage, and finding that she was not without beauty I expressed a wish to know her. Paterno was delighted to introduce me to her.

I found that she was of tolerably easy virtue, and, knowing that she was very far from rolling in riches, I had no doubt that fifteen or twenty sequins would be quite sufficient to make her compliant. I communicated my thoughts to Paterno, but he laughed and told me that, if I dared to make such a proposition to her, she would certainly shut her door against me. He named several officers whom she had refused to receive again, because they had made similar offers.

“Yet,” added the young man, “I wish you would make the attempt, and tell me the result candidly.”

I felt piqued, and promised to do it.

I paid her a visit in her dressing-room at the theatre, and as she happened during our conversation to praise the beauty of my watch, I told her that she could easily obtain possession of it, and I said at what price. She answered, according to the catechism of her profession, that an honourable man had no right to make such an offer to a respectable girl.

“I offer only one ducat,” said I, “to those who are not respectable.”

And I left her.

When I told Paterno what had occurred, he fairly jumped for joy, but I knew what to think of it all, for ‘cosi sono tutte’, and in spite of all his entreaties, I declined to be present at his suppers, which were far from amusing, and gave the family of the actress an opportunity of laughing at the poor fool who was paying for them.

Seven or eight days afterwards, Paterno told me that the actress had related the affair to him exactly in the same words which I had used, and she had added that, if I had ceased my visits, it was only because I was afraid of her taking me at my word in case I should renew my proposal. I commissioned him to tell her that I would pay her another visit, not to renew my offer, but to shew my contempt for any proposal she might make me herself.

The heedless fellow fulfilled his commission so well that the actress, feeling insulted, told him that she dared me to call on her. Perfectly determined to shew that I despised her, I went to her dressing-room the same evening, after the second act of a play in which she had not to appear again. She dismissed those who were with her, saying that she wanted to speak with me, and, after she had bolted the door, she sat down gracefully on my knees, asking me whether it was true that I despised her so much.

In such a position a man has not the courage to insult a woman, and, instead of answering, I set to work at once, without meeting even with that show of resistance which sharpens the appetite. In spite of that, dupe as I always was of a feeling truly absurd when an intelligent man has to deal with such creatures, I gave her twenty sequins, and I confess that it was paying dearly for very smarting regrets. We both laughed at the stupidity of Paterno, who did not seem to know how such challenges generally end.

I saw the unlucky son of Sicily the next morning, and I told him that, having found the actress very dull, I would not see her again. Such was truly my intention, but a very important reason, which nature took care to explain to me three days afterwards, compelled me to keep my word through a much more serious motive than a simple dislike for the woman.

However, although I was deeply grieved to find myself in such a disgraceful position, I did not think I had any right to complain. On the contrary, I considered that my misfortune to be a just and well-deserved punishment for having abandoned myself to a Lais, after I had enjoyed the felicity of possessing a woman like Henriette.

My disease was not a case within the province of empirics, and I bethought myself of confiding in M. de is Haye who was then dining every day with me, and made no mystery of his poverty. He placed me in the hands of a skilful surgeon, who was at the same time a dentist. He recognized certain symptoms which made it a necessity to sacrifice me to the god Mercury, and that treatment, owing to the season of the year, compelled me to keep my room for six weeks. It was during the winter of 1749.

While I was thus curing myself of an ugly disease, De la Haye inoculated me with another as bad, perhaps even worse, which I should never have thought myself susceptible of catching. This Fleming, who left me only for one hour in the morning, to go — at least he said so — to church to perform his devotions, made a bigot of me! And to such an extent, that I agreed with him that I was indeed fortunate to have caught a disease which was the origin of the faith now taking possession of my soul. I would thank God fervently and with the most complete conviction for having employed Mercury to lead my mind, until then wrapped in darkness, to the pure light of holy truth! There is no doubt that such an extraordinary change in my reasoning system was the result of the exhaustion brought on by the mercury. That impure and always injurious metal had weakened my mind to such an extent that I had become almost besotted, and I fancied that until then my judgment had been insane. The result was that, in my newly acquired wisdom, I took the resolution of leading a totally different sort of life in future. De la Haye would often cry for joy when he saw me shedding tears caused by the contrition which he had had the wonderful cleverness to sow in my poor sickly soul. He would talk to me of paradise and the other world, just as if he had visited them in person, and I never laughed at him! He had accustomed me to renounce my reason; now to renounce that divine faculty a man must no longer be conscious of its value, he must have become an idiot. The reader may judge of the state to which I was reduced by the following specimen. One day, De la Haye said to me:

“It is not known whether God created the world during the vernal equinox or during the autumnal one.”

“Creation being granted,” I replied, in spite of the mercury, “such a question is childish, for the seasons are relative, and differ in the different quarters of the globe.”

De la Haye reproached me with the heathenism of my ideas, told me that I must abandon such impious reasonings…. and I gave way!

That man had been a Jesuit. He not only, however, refused to admit it, but he would not even suffer anyone to mention it to him. This is how he completed his work of seduction by telling me the history of his life.

“After I had been educated in a good school,” he said, “and had devoted myself with some success to the arts and sciences, I was for twenty years employed at the University of Paris. Afterwards I served as an engineer in the army, and since that time I have published several works anonymously, which are now in use in every boys’ school. Having given up the military service, and being poor, I undertook and completed the education of several young men, some of whom shine now in the world even more by their excellent conduct than by their talents. My last pupil was the Marquis Botta. Now being without employment I live, as you see, trusting in God’s providence. Four years ago, I made the acquaintance of Baron Bavois, from Lausanne, son of General Bavois who commanded a regiment in the service of the Duke of Modem, and afterwards was unfortunate enough to make himself too conspicuous. The young baron, a Calvinist like his father, did not like the idle life he was leading at home, and he solicited me to undertake his education in order to fit him for a military career. Delighted at the opportunity of cultivating his fine natural disposition, I gave up everything to devote myself entirely to my task. I soon discovered that, in the question of faith, he knew himself to be in error, and that he remained a Calvinist only out of respect to his family. When I had found out his secret feelings on that head, I had no difficulty in proving to him that his most important interests were involved in that question, as his eternal salvation was at stake. Struck by the truth of my words, he abandoned himself to my affection, and I took him to Rome, where I presented him to the Pope, Benedict XIV., who, immediately after the abjuration of my pupil got him a lieutenancy in the army of the Duke of Modena. But the dear proselyte, who is only twenty-five years of age, cannot live upon his pay of seven sequins a month, and since his abjuration he has received nothing from his parents, who are highly incensed at what they call his apostacy. He would find himself compelled to go back to Lausanne, if I did not assist him. But, alas! I am poor, and without employment, so I can only send him the trifling sums which I can obtain from the few good Christians with whom I am acquainted.

“My pupil, whose heart is full of gratitude, would be very glad to know his benefactors, but they refuse to acquaint him with their names, and they are right, because charity, in order to be meritorious, must not partake of any feeling of vanity. Thank God, I have no cause for such a feeling! I am but too happy to act as a father towards a young saint, and to have had a share, as the humble instrument of the Almighty, in the salvation of his soul. That handsome and good young man trusts no one but me, and writes to me regularly twice a week. I am too discreet to communicate his letters to you, but, if you were to read them, they would make you weep for sympathy. It is to him that I have sent the three gold pieces which you gave me yesterday.”

As he said the last words my converter rose, and went to the window to dry his tears, I felt deeply moved, anal full of admiration for the virtue of De la Haye and of his pupil, who, to save his soul, had placed himself under the hard necessity of accepting alms. I cried as well as the apostle, and in my dawning piety I told him that I insisted not only upon remaining unknown to his pupil, but also upon ignoring the amount of the sums he might take out of my purse to forward to him, and I therefore begged that he would help himself without rendering me any account. De la Haye embraced me warmly, saying that, by following the precepts of the Gospel so well, I should certainly win the kingdom of heaven.

The mind is sure to follow the body; it is a privilege enjoyed by matter. With an empty stomach, I became a fanatic; and the hollow made in my brain by the mercury became the home of enthusiasm. Without mentioning it to De la Haye, I wrote to my three friends, Messrs. Bragadin and company, several letters full of pathos concerning my Tartufe and his pupil, and I managed to communicate my fanaticism to them. You are aware, dear reader, that nothing is so catching as the plague; now, fanaticism, no matter of what nature, is only the plague of the human mind.

I made my friends to understand that the good of our society depended upon the admission of these two virtuous individuals. I allowed them to guess it, but, having myself became a Jesuit, I took care not to say it openly. It would of course be better if such an idea appeared to have emanated from those men, so simple, and at the same time so truly virtuous. “It is God’s will,” I wrote to them (for deceit must always take refuge under the protection of that sacred name), “that you employ all your influence in Venice to find an honourable position for M. de la Haye, and to promote the interests of young M. Bavois in his profession."

M. de Bragadin answered that De la Haye could take up his quarters with us in his palace, and that Bavois was to write to his protector, the Pope, entreating His Holiness to recommend him to the ambassador of Venice, who would then forward that recommendation to the Senate, and that Bavois could, in that way, feel sure of good employment.

The affair of the Patriarchate of Aquileia was at that time under discussion; the Republic of Venice was in possession of it as well as the Emperor of Austria, who claimed the 'jus eligendi': the Pope Benedict XIV. had been chosen as arbitrator, and as he had not yet given his decision it was evident that the Republic would shew very great deference to his recommendation.

While that important affair was enlisting all our sympathies, and while they were expecting in Venice a letter stating the effect of the Pope's recommendation, I was the hero of a comic adventure which, for the sake of my readers, must not pass unnoticed.

At the beginning of April I was entirely cured of my last misfortune. I had recovered all my usual vigour, and I accompanied my converter to church every day, never missing a sermon. We likewise spent the evening together at the cafe, where we generally met a great many officers. There was among them a Provencal who amused everybody with his boasting and with the recital of the military exploits by which he pretended to have distinguished himself in the service of several countries, and principally in Spain. As he was truly a source of amusement, everybody pretended to believe him in order to keep up the game. One day as I was staring at him, he asked me whether I knew him.

"By George, sir!" — I exclaimed, "know you! Why, did we not fight side by side at the battle of Arbela?"

At those words everybody burst out laughing, but the boaster, nothing daunted, said, with animation,

"Well, gentlemen, I do not see anything so very laughable in that. I was at that battle, and therefore this gentleman might very well have remarked me; in fact, I think I can recollect him."

And, continuing to speak to me, he named the regiment in which we were brother officers. Of course we embraced one another, congratulating each other upon the pleasure we both felt in meeting again in Parma. After that truly comic joke I left the coffee-room in the company of my inseparable preacher.

The next morning, as I was at breakfast with De la Haye, the boasting Provencal entered my room without taking off his hat, and said,

“M. d’Arbela, I have something of importance to tell you; make haste and follow me. If you are afraid, you may take anyone you please with you. I am good for half a dozen men.”

I left my chair, seized my pistols, and aimed at him.

“No one,” I said, with decision, “has the right to come and disturb me in my room; be off this minute, or I blow your brains out.”

The fellow, drawing his sword, dared me to murder him, but at the same moment De la Haye threw himself between us, stamping violently on the floor. The landlord came up, and threatened the officer to send for the police if he did not withdraw immediately.

He went away, saying that I had insulted him in public, and that he would take care that the reparation I owed him should be as public as the insult.

When he had gone, seeing that the affair might take a tragic turn, I began to examine with De la Haye how it could be avoided, but we had not long to puzzle our imagination, for in less than half an hour an officer of the Infante of Parma presented himself, and requested me to repair immediately to head-quarters, where M. de Bertolan, Commander of Parma, wanted to speak to me.

I asked De la Haye to accompany me as a witness of what I had said in the coffee-room as well as of what had taken place in my apartment.

I presented myself before the commander, whom I found surrounded by several officers, and, among them, the bragging Provencal.

M. de Bertolan, who was a witty man, smiled when he saw me; then, with a very serious countenance, he said to me, "Sir, as you have made a laughing-stock of this officer in a public place, it is but right that you should give him publicly the satisfaction which he claims, and as commander of this city I find myself bound in duty to ask you for that satisfaction in order to settle the affair amicably."

"Commander," I answered, "I do not see why a satisfaction should be offered to this gentleman, for it is not true that I have insulted him by turning him into ridicule. I told him that I had seen him at the battle of Arbela, and I could not have any doubt about it when he said that he had been present at that battle, and that he knew me again."

"Yes," interrupted the officer, "but I heard Rodela and not Arbela, and everybody knows that I fought at Rodela. But you said Arbela, and certainly with the intention of laughing at me, since that battle has been fought more than two thousand years ago, while the battle of Rodela in Africa took place in our time, and I was there under the orders of the Duke de Mortemar."

"In the first place, sir, you have no right to judge of my intentions, but I do not dispute your having been present at Rodela, since you say so; but in that case the tables are turned, and now I demand a reparation from you if you dare discredit my having been at Arbela. I certainly did not serve under the Duke de Mortemar, because he was not there, at least to my knowledge, but I was aid-de-camp of Parmenion, and I was wounded under his eyes. If you were to ask me to shew you the scar, I could not satisfy you, for you must understand that the body I had at that time does not exist any longer, and in my present bodily envelope I am only twenty-three years old."

"All this seems to me sheer madness, but, at all events, I have witnesses to prove that you have been laughing at me, for you stated that you had seen me at that battle, and, by the powers! it is not possible, because I was not there. At all events, I demand satisfaction."

"So do I, and we have equal rights, if mine are not even better than yours, for your witnesses are likewise mine, and these gentlemen will assert that you said that you had seen me at Rodela, and, by the powers! it is not possible, for I was not there."

"Well, I may have made a mistake."

"So may I, and therefore we have no longer any claim against one another."

The commander, who was biting his lips to restrain his mirth, said to him, “My dear sir, I do not see that you have the slightest right to demand satisfaction, since this gentleman confesses, like you, that he might have been mistaken.”

“But,” remarked the officer, “is it credible that he was at the battle of Arbela?”

“This gentleman leaves you free to believe or not to believe, and he is at liberty to assert that he was there until you can prove the contrary. Do you wish to deny it to make him draw his sword?”

“God forbid! I would rather consider the affair ended.”

“Well, gentlemen,” said the commander, “I have but one more duty to perform, and it is to advise you to embrace one another like two honest men.”

We followed the advice with great pleasure.

The next day, the Provencal, rather crestfallen, came to share my dinner, and I gave him a friendly welcome. Thus was ended that comic adventure, to the great satisfaction of M. de la Haye.

CHAPTER IV

I Receive Good News From Venice, to Which City I Return with De la Haye and Bavois — My Three Friends Give Me a Warm Welcome; Their Surprise at Finding Me a Model of Devotion — Bavois Lures Me Back to My Former Way of Living — De la Haye a Thorough Hypocrite — Adventure with the Girl Marchetti — I Win a Prize in the Lottery — I Meet Baletti — De la Haye Leaves M. de Bragadin's Palace — My Departure for Paris

Whilst De la Haye was every day gaining greater influence over my weakened mind, whilst I was every day devoutly attending mass, sermons, and every office of the Church, I received from Venice a letter containing the pleasant information that my affair had followed its natural course, namely, that it was entirely forgotten; and in another letter M. de Bragadin informed me that the minister had written to the Venetian ambassador in Rome with instructions to assure the Holy Father that Baron Bavois would, immediately after his arrival in Venice, receive in the army of the Republic an appointment which would enable him to live honourably and to gain a high position by his talents.

That letter overcame M. de la Haye with joy, and I completed his happiness by telling him that nothing hindered me from going back to my native city.

He immediately made up his mind to go to Modena in order to explain to his pupil how he was to act in Venice to open for himself the way to a brilliant fortune. De la Haye depended on me in every way; he saw my fanaticism, and he was well aware that it is a disease which rages as long as the causes from which it has sprung are in existence. As he was going with me to Venice, he flattered himself that he could easily feed the fire he had lighted. Therefore he wrote to Bavois that he would join him immediately, and two days after he took leave of me, weeping abundantly, praising highly the virtues of my soul, calling me his son, his dear son, and assuring me that his great affection for me had been caused by the mark of election which he had seen on my countenance. After that, I felt my calling and election were sure.

A few days after the departure of De la Haye, I left Parma in my carriage with which I parted in Fusina, and from there I proceeded to Venice. After an absence of a year, my three friends received me as if I had been their guardian angel. They expressed their impatience to welcome the two saints announced by my letters. An apartment was ready for De la Haye in the palace of M. de Bragadin, and as state reasons did not allow my father to receive in his own house a foreigner who had not yet entered the service of the Republic, two rooms had been engaged for Bavois in the neighbourhood.

They were thoroughly amazed at the wonderful change which had taken place in my morals. Every day attending mass, often present at the preaching and at the other services, never shewing myself at the casino, frequenting only a certain cafe which was the place of meeting for all men of acknowledged piety and reserve, and always studying when I was not in their company. When they compared my actual mode of living with the former one, they marvelled, and they could not sufficiently thank the eternal providence of God whose inconceivable ways they admired. They blessed the criminal actions which had compelled me to remain one year away from my native place. I crowned their delight by paying all my debts without asking any money from M. de Bragadin, who, not having given me anything for one year, had religiously put together every month the sum he had allowed me. I need not say how pleased the worthy friends were, when they saw that I had entirely given up gambling.

I had a letter from De la Haye in the beginning of May. He announced that he was on the eve of starting with the son so dear to his heart, and that he would soon place himself at the disposition of the respectable men to whom I had announced him.

Knowing the hour at which the barge arrived from Modena, we all went to meet them, except M. de Bragadin, who was engaged at the senate. We returned to the palace before him, and when he came back, finding us all together, he gave his new guests the most friendly welcome. De la Haye spoke to me of a hundred things, but I scarcely heard what he said, so much was my attention taken up by Bavois. He was so different to what I had fancied him to be from the impression I had received from De la Haye, that my ideas were altogether upset. I had to study him; for three days before I could make up my mind to like him. I must give his portrait to my readers.

Baron Bavois was a young man of about twenty-five, of middle size, handsome in features, well made, fair, of an equable temper, speaking well and with intelligence, and uttering his words with a tone of modesty which suited him exactly. His features were regular and pleasing, his teeth were beautiful, his hair was long and fine, always well taken care of, and exhaling the perfume of the pomatum with which it was dressed. That individual, who was the exact opposite of the man that De la Haye had led me to imagine, surprised my friends greatly, but their welcome did not in any way betray their astonishment, for their pure and candid minds would not admit a judgment contrary to the good opinion they had formed of his morals. As soon as we had established De la Haye in his beautiful apartment, I accompanied Bavois to the rooms engaged for him, where his luggage had been sent by my orders. He found himself in very comfortable quarters, and being received with distinction by his worthy host, who was already greatly prejudiced in his favour, the young baron embraced me warmly, pouring out all his gratitude, and assuring me that he felt deeply all I had done for him without knowing him, as De la Haye had informed him of all that had occurred. I pretended not to understand what he was alluding to, and to change the subject of conversation I asked him how he intended to occupy his time in Venice until his military appointment gave him serious duties to perform. “I trust,” he answered, “that we shall enjoy ourselves in an agreeable way, for I have no doubt that our inclinations are the same.”

Mercury and De la Haye had so completely besotted me that I should have found some difficulty in understanding these words, however intelligible they were; but if I did not go any further than the outward signification of his answer, I could not help remarking that he had already taken the fancy of the two daughters of the house. They were neither pretty nor ugly, but he shewed himself gracious towards them like a man who understands his business. I had, however, already made such great progress in my mystical education, that I considered the compliments he addressed to the girls as mere forms of politeness.

For the first day, I took my young baron only to the St. Mark's Square and to the cafe, where we remained until supper-time, as it had been arranged that he would take his meals with us. At the supper-table he shewed himself very witty, and M. Dandolo named an hour for the next day, when he intended to present him to the secretary for war. In the evening I accompanied him to his lodging, where I found that the two young girls were delighted because the young Swiss nobleman had no servant, and because they hoped to convince him that he would not require one.

The next day, a little earlier than the time appointed, I called upon him with M. Dandolo and M. Barbaro, who were both to present him at the war office. We found him at his toilet under the delicate hands of the eldest girl, who was dressing his hair. His room, was fragrant with the perfumes of his pomatums and scents. This did not indicate a sainted man; yet my two friends did not feel scandalized, although their astonishment was very evident, for they had not expected that show of gallantry from a young neophyte. I was nearly bursting into a loud laugh, when I heard M. Dandolo remark that, unless we hurried, we would not have time to hear mass, whereupon Bavois enquired whether it was a festival. M. Dandolo, without passing any remark, answered negatively, and after that, mass was not again mentioned. When Bavois was ready, I left them and went a different way. I met them again at dinner-time, during which the reception given to the young baron by the secretary was discussed, and in the evening my friends introduced him to several ladies who were much pleased with him. In less than a week he was so well known that there was no fear of his time hanging wearily on his hands, but that week was likewise enough to give me a perfect insight into his nature and way of thinking. I should not have required such a long study, if I had not at first begun on a wrong scent, or rather if my intelligence had not been stultified by my fanaticism. Bavois was particularly fond of women, of gambling, of every luxury, and, as he was poor, women supplied him with the best part of his resources. As to religious faith he had none, and as he was no hypocrite he confessed as much to me.

“How have you contrived,” I said to him one day, “such as you are, to deceive De la Haye?”

“God forbid I should deceive anyone. De la Haye is perfectly well aware of my system, and of my way of thinking on religious matters, but, being himself very devout, he entertains a holy sympathy for my soul, and I do not object to it. He has bestowed many kindnesses upon me, and I feel grateful to him; my affection for him is all the greater because he never teases me with his dogmatic lessons or with sermons respecting my salvation, of which I have no doubt that God, in His fatherly goodness, will take care. All this is settled between De la Haye and me, and we live on the best of terms:”

The best part of the joke is that, while I was studying him, Bavois, without knowing it, restored my mind to its original state, and I was ashamed of myself when I realized that I had been the dupe of a Jesuit who was an arrant hypocrite, in spite of the character of holiness which he assumed, and which he could play with such marvellous ability. From that moment I fell again into all my former practices. But let us return to De la Haye.

That late Jesuit, who in his inmost heart loved nothing but his own comfort, already advanced in years, and therefore no longer caring for the fair sex, was exactly the sort of man to please my simpleminded trio of friends. As he never spoke to them but of God, of His angels, and of everlasting glory, and as he was always accompanying them to church, they found him a delightful companion. They longed for the time when he would discover himself, for they imagined he was at the very least a Rosicrucian, or perhaps the hermit of Courpegna, who had taught me the cabalistic science and made me a present of the immortal Paralis. They felt grieved because the oracle had forbidden them, through my cabalistic lips, ever to mention my science in the presence of Tartufe.

As I had foreseen, that interdiction left me to enjoy as I pleased all the time that I would have been called upon to devote to their devout credulity, and besides, I was naturally afraid lest De la Haye, such as I truly believed him to be, would never lend himself to that trifling nonsense, and would, for the sake of deserving greater favour at their hands, endeavour to undeceive them and to take my place in their confidence.

I soon found out that I had acted with prudence, for in less than three weeks the cunning fox had obtained so great an influence over the mind of my three friends that he was foolish enough, not only to believe that he did not want me any more to support his credit with them, but likewise that he could supplant me whenever he chose. I could see it clearly in his way of addressing me, as well as in the change in his proceedings.

He was beginning to hold with my friends frequent conversations to which I was not summoned, and he had contrived to make them introduce him to several families which I was not in the habit of visiting. He assumed his grand jesuitic airs, and, although with honeyed word he would take the liberty of censuring me because I sometimes spent a night out, and, as he would say, "God knows where!"

I was particularly vexed at his seeming to accuse me of leading his pupil astray. He then would assume the tone of a man speaking jestingly, but I was not deceived. I thought it was time to put an end to his game, and with that intention I paid him a visit in his bedroom. When I was seated, I said,

"I come, as a true worshipper of the Gospel, to tell you in private something that, another time, I would say in public."

"What is it, my dear friend?"

"I advise you for the future not to hurl at me the slightest taunt respecting the life I am leading with Bavois, when we are in the presence of my three worthy friends. I do not object to listen to you when we are alone."

"You are wrong in taking my innocent jests seriously."

"Wrong or right, that does not matter. Why do you never attack your proselyte? Be careful for the future, or I might on my side, and only in jest like you, throw at your head some repartee which you have every reason to fear, and thus repay you with interest."

And bowing to him I left his room.

A few days afterwards I spent a few hours with my friends and Paralis, and the oracle enjoined them never to accomplish without my advice anything that might be recommended or even insinuated by Valentine; that was the cabalistic name of the disciple of Escobar. I knew I could rely upon their obedience to that order.

De la Haye soon took notice of some slight change; he became more reserved, and Bavois, whom I informed of what I had done, gave me his full approbation. He felt convinced, as I was, that De la Haye had been useful to him only through weak or selfish reasons, that is, that he would have cared little for his soul if his face had not been handsome, and if he had not known that he would derive important advantages from having caused his so-called conversion.

Finding that the Venetian government was postponing his appointment from day to day, Bavois entered the service of the French ambassador. The decision made it necessary for him not only to cease his visits to M. de Bragadin, but even to give up his intercourse with De la Haye, who was the guest of that senator.

It is one of the strictest laws of the Republic that the patricians and their families shall not hold any intercourse with the foreign ambassadors and their suites. But the decision taken by Bavois did not prevent my friends speaking in his favour, and they succeeded in obtaining employment for him, as will be seen further on.

The husband of Christine, whom I never visited, invited me to go to the casino which he was in the habit of frequenting with his aunt and his wife, who had already presented him with a token of their mutual affection. I accepted his invitation, and I found Christine as lovely as ever, and speaking the Venetian dialect like her husband. I made in that casino the acquaintance of a chemist, who inspired me with the wish to follow a course of chemistry. I went to his house, where I found a young girl who greatly pleased me. She was a neighbour, and came every evening to keep the chemist's elderly wife company, and at a regular hour a servant called to take her home. I had never made love to her but once in a trifling sort of way, and in the presence of the old lady, but I was surprised not to see her after that for several days, and I expressed my astonishment. The good lady told me that very likely the girl's cousin, an abbe, with whom she was residing, had heard of my seeing her every evening, had become jealous, and would not allow her to come again.

"An abbe jealous?"

"Why not? He never allows her to go out except on Sundays to attend the first mass at the Church of Santa Maria Mater Domini, close by his dwelling. He did not object to her coming here, because he knew that we never had any visitors, and very likely he has heard through the servant of your being here every evening."

A great enemy to all jealous persons, and a greater friend to my amorous fancies, I wrote to the young girl that, if she would leave her cousin for me, I would give her a house in which she should be the mistress, and that I would surround her with good society and with every luxury to be found in Venice. I added that I would be in the church on the following Sunday to receive her answer.

I did not forget my appointment, and her answer was that the abbe being her tyrant, she would consider herself happy to escape out of his clutches, but that she could not make up her mind to follow me unless I consented to marry her. She concluded her letter by saying that, in case I entertained honest intentions towards her, I had only to speak to her mother, Jeanne Marchetti, who resided in Lusia, a city thirty miles distant from Venice.

This letter piqued my curiosity, and I even imagined that she had written it in concert with the abbe. Thinking that they wanted to dupe me, and besides, finding the proposal of marriage ridiculous, I determined on having my revenge. But I wanted to get to the bottom of it, and I made up my mind to see the girl's mother. She felt honoured by my visit, and greatly pleased when, after I had shewn her her daughter's letter, I told her that I wished to marry her, but that I should never think of it as long as she resided with the abbe.

"That abbe," she said, "is a distant relative. He used to live alone in his house in Venice, and two years ago he told me that he was in want of a housekeeper. He asked me to let my daughter go to him in that capacity, assuring me that in Venice she would have good opportunities of getting married. He offered to give me a deed in writing stating that, on the day of her marriage, he would give her all his furniture valued at about one thousand ducats, and the inheritance of a small estate, bringing one hundred ducats a year, which lie possesses here. It seemed to me a good bargain, and, my daughter being pleased with the offer, I accepted. He gave me the deed duly drawn by a notary, and my daughter went with him. I know that he makes a regular slave of her, but she chose to go. Nevertheless, I need not tell you that my most ardent wish is to see her married, for, as long as a girl is without a husband, she is too much exposed to temptation, and the poor mother cannot rest in peace."

"Then come to Venice with me. You will take your daughter out of the abbe's house, and I will make her my wife. Unless that is done I cannot marry her, for I should dishonour myself if I received my wife from his hands."

"Oh, no! for he is my cousin, although only in the fourth degree, and, what is more, he is a priest and says the mass every day."

"You make me laugh, my good woman. Everybody knows that a priest says the mass without depriving himself of certain trifling enjoyments. Take your daughter with you, or give up all hope of ever seeing her married."

"But if I take her with me, he will not give her his furniture, and perhaps he will sell his small estate here."

"I undertake to look to that part of the business. I promise to take her out of his hands, and to make her come back to you with all the furniture, and to obtain the estate when she is my wife. If you knew me better, you would not doubt what I say. Come to Venice, and I assure you that you shall return here in four or five days with your daughter."

She read the letter which had been written to me by her daughter again, and told me that, being a poor widow, she had not the money necessary to pay the expenses of her journey to Venice, or of her return to Louisa.

"In Venice you shall not want for anything," I said; "in the mean time, here are ten sequins."

"Ten sequins! Then I can go with my sister-in-law?"

"Come with anyone you like, but let us go soon so as to reach Chiozza, where we must sleep. To-morrow we shall dine in Venice, and I undertake to defray all expenses."

We arrived in Venice the next day at ten o'clock, and I took the two women to Castello, to a house the first floor of which was empty. I left them there, and provided with the deed signed by the abbe I went to dine with my three friends, to whom I said that I had been to Chiozza on important business. After dinner, I called upon the lawyer, Marco de Lesse, who told me that if the mother presented a petition to the President of the Council of Ten, she would immediately be invested with power to take her daughter away with all the furniture in the house, which she could send wherever she pleased. I instructed him to have the petition ready, saying that I would come the next morning with the mother, who would sign it in his presence.

I brought the mother early in the morning, and after she had signed the petition we went to the Boussole, where she presented it to the President of the Council. In less than a quarter of an hour a bailiff was ordered to repair to the house of the priest with the mother, and to put her in possession of her daughter, and of all the furniture, which she would immediately take away.

The order was carried into execution to the very letter. I was with the mother in a gondola as near as possible to the house, and I had provided a large boat in which the sbirri stowed all the furniture found on the premises. When it was all done, the daughter was brought to the gondola, and she was extremely surprised to see me. Her mother kissed her, and told her that I would be her husband the very next day. She answered that she was delighted, and that nothing had been left in her tyrant's house except his bed and his clothes.

When we reached Castello, I ordered the furniture to be brought out of the boat; we had dinner, and I told the three women that they must go back to Lusia, where I would join them as soon as I had settled all my affairs. I spent the afternoon gaily with my intended. She told us that the abbe was dressing when the bailiff presented the order of the Council of Ten, with injunctions to allow its free execution under penalty of death; that the abbe finished his toilet, went out to say his mass, and that everything had been done without the slightest opposition. "I was told," she added, "that my mother was waiting for me in the gondola, but I did not expect to find you, and I never suspected that you were at the bottom of the whole affair."

"It is the first proof I give you of my love."

These words made her smile very pleasantly.

I took care to have a good supper and some excellent wines, and after we had spent two hours at table in the midst of the joys of Bacchus, I devoted four more to a pleasant tete-a-tete with my intended bride.

The next morning, after breakfast, I had the whole of the furniture stowed in a peotta, which I had engaged for the purpose and paid for beforehand. I gave ten more sequins to the mother, and sent them away all three in great delight. The affair was completed to my honour as well as to my entire satisfaction, and I returned home.

The case had made so much noise that my friends could not have remained ignorant of it; the consequence was that, when they saw me, they shewed their surprise and sorrow. De la Haye embraced me with an air of profound grief, but it was a feigned feeling — a harlequin's dress, which he had the talent of assuming with the greatest facility. M. de Bragadin alone laughed heartily, saying to the others that they did not understand the affair, and that it was the forerunner of something great which was known only to heavenly spirits. On my side, being ignorant of the opinion they entertained of the matter, and certain that they were not informed of all the circumstances, I laughed like M. de Bragadin, but said nothing. I had nothing to fear, and I wanted to amuse myself with all that would be said.

We sat down to table, and M. Barbaro was the first to tell me in a friendly manner that he hoped at least that this was not the day after my wedding.

"Then people say that I am married?"

"It is said everywhere and by everybody. The members of the Council themselves believe it, and they have good reason to believe that they are right."

"To be right in believing such a thing, they ought to be certain of it, and those gentlemen have no such certainty. As they are not infallible any more than any one, except God, I tell you that they are mistaken. I like to perform good actions and to get pleasure for my money, but not at the expense of my liberty: Whenever you want to know my affairs, recollect that you can receive information about them only from me, and public rumour is only good to amuse fools."

"But," said M. Dandolo, "you spent the night with the person who is represented as your wife?"

"Quite true, but I have no account to give to anyone respecting what I have done last night. Are you not of my opinion, M. de la Haye?"

"I wish you would not ask my opinion, for I do not know. But I must say that public rumour ought not to be despised. The deep affection I have for you causes me to grieve for what the public voice says about you."

"How is it that those reports do not grieve M. de Bragadin, who has certainly greater affection for me than you have?"

"I respect you, but I have learned at my own expense that slander is to be feared. It is said that, in order to get hold of a young girl who was residing with her uncle — a worthy priest, you suborned a woman who declared herself to be the girl's mother, and thus deceived the Supreme Council, through the authority of which she obtained possession of the girl for you. The bailiff sent by the Council swears that you were in the gondola with the false mother when the young girl joined her. It is said that the deed, in virtue of which you caused the worthy ecclesiastic's furniture to be carried off, is false, and you are blamed for having made the highest body of the State a stepping-stone to crime. In fine, it is said that, even if you have married the girl, and no doubt of it is entertained, the members of the Council will not be silent as to the fraudulent means you have had recourse to in order to carry out your intentions successfully."

"That is a very long speech," I said to him, coldly, "but learn from me that a wise man who has heard a criminal accusation related with so many absurd particulars ceases to be wise when he makes himself the echo of what he has heard, for if the accusation should turn out to be a calumny, he would himself become the accomplice of the slanderer."

After that sentence, which brought the blood to the face of the Jesuit, but which my friends thought very wise, I entreated him, in a meaning voice, to spare his anxiety about me, and to be quite certain that I knew the laws of honour, and that I had judgment enough to take care of myself, and to let foul tongues say what they liked about me, just as I did when I heard them speak ill of him.

The adventure was the talk of the city for five or six days, after which it was soon forgotten.

But three months having elapsed without my having paid any visit to Lusia, or having answered the letters written to me by the damigella Marchetti, and without sending her the money she claimed of me, she made up her mind to take certain proceedings which might have had serious consequences, although they had none whatever in the end.

One day, Ignacio, the bailiff of the dreaded tribunal of the State inquisitors, presented himself as I was sitting at table with my friends, De la Haye, and two other guests. He informed me that the Cavaliere Cantarini dal Zoffo wished to see me, and would wait for me the next morning at such an hour at the Madonna de l'Orto. I rose from the table and answered, with a bow, that I would not fail to obey the wishes of his excellency. The bailiff then left us.

I could not possibly guess what such a high dignitary of State could want with my humble person, yet the message made us rather anxious, for Cantarini dal Zoffo was one of the Inquisitors, that is to say, a bird of very ill omen. M. de Bragadin, who had been Inquisitor while he was Councillor, and therefore knew the habits of the tribunal, told me that I had nothing to fear.

"Ignacio was dressed in private clothes," he added, "and therefore he did not come as the official messenger of the dread tribunal. M. Cantarini wishes to speak to you only as a private citizen, as he sends you word to call at his palace and not at the court-house. He is an elderly man, strict but just, to whom you must speak frankly and without equivocating, otherwise you would make matters worse."

I was pleased with M. de Bragadin's advice, which was of great use to me. I called at the appointed time.

I was immediately announced, and I had not long to wait. I entered the room, and his excellency, seated at a table, examined me from head to foot for one minute without speaking to me; he then rang the bell, and ordered his servant to introduce the two ladies who were waiting in the next room. I guessed at once what was the matter, and felt no surprise when I saw the woman Marchetti and her daughter. His excellency asked me if I knew them.

"I must know them, monsignor, as one of them will become my wife when she has convinced me by her good conduct that she is worthy of that honour."

"Her conduct is good, she lives with her mother at Lusia; you have deceived her. Why do you postpone your marriage with her? Why do you not visit her? You never answer her letters, and you let her be in want."

“I cannot marry her, your excellency, before I have enough to support her. That will come in three or four years, thanks to a situation which M. de Bragadin, my only protector, promises to obtain for me. Until then she must live honestly, and support herself by working. I will only marry her when I am convinced of her honesty, and particularly when I am certain that she has given up all intercourse with the abbe, her cousin in the fourth degree. I do not visit her because my confessor and my conscience forbid me to go to her house.”

“She wishes you to give her a legal promise of marriage, and sustentation.”

“Monsignor, I am under no obligation to give her a promise of marriage, and having no means whatever I cannot support her. She must earn her own living with her mother”

“When she lived with her cousin,” said her mother, “she never wanted anything, and she shall go back to him.”

“If she returns to his house I shall not take the trouble of taking her out of his hands a second time, and your excellency will then see that I was right to defer my marriage with her until I was convinced of her honesty.”

The judge told me that my presence, was no longer necessary. It was the end of the affair, and I never heard any more about it. The recital of the dialogue greatly amused my friends.

At the beginning of the Carnival of 1750 I won a prize of three thousand ducats at the lottery. Fortune made me that present when I did not require it, for I had held the bank during the autumn, and had won. It was at a casino where no nobleman dared to present himself, because one of the partners was an officer in the service of the Duke de Montalegre, the Spanish Ambassador. The citizens of Venice felt ill at ease with the patricians, and that is always the case under an aristocratic government, because equality exists in reality only between the members of such a government.

As I intended to take a trip to Paris, I placed one thousand sequins in M. de Bragadin’s hands, and with that project in view I had the courage to pass the carnival without risking my money at the faro-table. I had taken a share of one-fourth in the bank of an honest patrician, and early in Lent he handed me a large sum.

Towards mid-Lent my friend Baletti returned from Mantua to Venice. He was engaged at the St. Moses Theatre as ballet-master during the Fair of the Assumption. He was with Marina, but they did not live together. She made the conquest of an English Jew, called Mendez, who spent a great deal of money for her. That Jew gave me good news of Therese, whom he had known in Naples, and in whose hands he had left some of his spoils. The information pleased me, and I was very glad to have been prevented by Henriette from joining Therese in Naples, as I had intended, for I should certainly have fallen in love with her again, and God knows what the consequences might have been.

It was at that time that Bavois was appointed captain in the service of the Republic; he rose rapidly in his profession, as I shall mention hereafter.

De la Haye undertook the education of a young nobleman called Felix Calvi, and a short time afterwards he accompanied him to Poland. I met him again in Vienna three years later.

I was making my preparations to go to the Fair of Reggio, then to Turin, where the whole of Italy was congregating for the marriage of the Duke of Savoy with a princess of Spain, daughter of Philip V., and lastly to Paris, where, Madame la Dauphine being pregnant, magnificent preparations were made in the expectation of the birth of a prince. Baletti was likewise on the point of undertaking the same journey. He was recalled by his parents, who were dramatic artists: his mother was the celebrated Silvia.

Baletti was engaged at the Italian Theatre in Paris as dancer and first gentleman. I could not choose a companion more to my taste, more agreeable, or in a better position to procure me numerous advantageous acquaintances in Paris.

I bade farewell to my three excellent friends, promising to return within two years.

I left my brother Francois in the studio of Simonetti, the painter of battle pieces, known as the Parmesan. I gave him a promise to think of him in Paris, where, at that time particularly, great talent was always certain of a high fortune. My readers will see how I kept my word.

I likewise left in Venice my brother Jean, who had returned to that city after having travelled through Italy with Guarienti. He was on the point of going to Rome, where he remained fourteen years in the studio of Raphael Mengs. He left Rome for Dresden in 1764, where he died in the year 1795.

Baletti started before me, and I left Venice, to meet him in Reggio, on the 1st of June, 1750. I was well fitted out, well supplied with money, and sure not to want for any, if I led a proper life. We shall soon see, dear reader, what judgment you will pass on my conduct, or rather I shall not see it, for I know that when you are able to judge, I shall no longer care for your sentence.

CHAPTER V

I Stop at Ferrara, Where I Have a Comic Adventure —

My Arrival in Paris

Precisely at twelve o'clock the peotta landed me at Ponte di Lago Oscuro, and I immediately took a post-chaise to reach Ferrara in time for dinner. I put up at St. Mark's Hotel. I was following the waiter up the stairs, when a joyful uproar, which suddenly burst from a room the door of which was open, made me curious to ascertain the cause of so much mirth. I peeped into the room, and saw some twelve persons, men and women, seated round a well-supplied table. It was a very natural thing, and I was moving on, when I was stopped by the exclamation, "Ah, here he is!" uttered by the pretty voice of a woman, and at the same moment, the speaker, leaving the table, came to me with open arms and embraced me, saying,

"Quick, quick, a seat for him near me; take his luggage to his room."

A young man came up, and she said to him, "Well, I told you he would arrive to-day?"

She made me sit near her at the table, after I had been saluted by all the guests who had risen to do me honour.

"My dear cousin," she said, addressing me, "you must be hungry;" and as she spoke she squeezed my foot under the table. "Here is my intended husband whom I beg to introduce to you, as well as my father and mother-in-law. The other guests round the table are friends of the family. But, my dear cousin, tell me why my mother has not come with you?"

At last I had to open my lips!

"Your mother, my dear cousin, will be here in three or four days, at the latest."

I thought that my newly-found cousin was unknown to me, but when I looked at her with more attention, I fancied I recollected her features. She was the Catinella, a dancer of reputation, but I had never spoken to her before. I easily guessed that she was giving me an impromptu part in a play of her own composition, and I was to be a ‘deux ex machina’. Whatever is singular and unexpected has always attracted me, and as my cousin was pretty, I lent myself most willingly to the joke, entertaining no doubt that she would reward me in an agreeable manner. All I had to do was to play my part well, but without implicating myself. Therefore, pretending to be very hungry, I gave her the opportunity of speaking and of informing me by hints of what I had to know, in order not to make blunders. Understanding the reason of my reserve, she afforded me the proof of her quick intelligence by saying sometimes to one person, sometimes to the other, everything it was necessary for me to know. Thus I learnt that the wedding could not take place until the arrival of her mother, who was to bring the wardrobe and the diamonds of my cousin. I was the precentor going to Turin to compose the music of the opera which was to be represented at the marriage of the Duke of Savoy. This last discovery pleased me greatly, because I saw that I should have no difficulty in taking my departure the next morning, and I began to enjoy the part I had to play. Yet, if I had not reckoned upon the reward, I might very well have informed the honourable company that my false cousin was mad, but, although Catinella was very near thirty, she was very pretty and celebrated for her intrigues; that was enough, and she could turn me round her little finger.

The future mother-in-law was seated opposite, and to do me honour she filled a glass and offered it to me. Already identified with my part in the comedy, I put forth my hand to take the glass, but seeing that my hand was somewhat bent, she said to me,

“What is the matter with your hand, sir?”

“Nothing serious, madam; only a slight sprain which a little rest will soon cure.”

At these words, Catinella, laughing heartily, said that she regretted the accident because it would deprive her friends of the pleasure they would have enjoyed in hearing me play the harpsichord.

“I am glad to find it a laughing matter, cousin.”

"I laugh, because it reminds me of a sprained ankle which I once feigned to have in order not to dance."

After coffee, the mother-in-law, who evidently understood what was proper, said that most likely my cousin wanted to talk with me on family matters, and that we ought to be left alone.

Every one of the guests left the room.

As soon as I was alone with her in my room, which was next to her own she threw herself on a sofa, and gave way to a most immoderate fit of laughter.

"Although I only know you by name," she said to me, "I have entire confidence in you, but you will do well to go away to-morrow. I have been here for two months without any money. I have nothing but a few dresses and some linen, which I should have been compelled to sell to defray my expenses if I had not been lucky enough to inspire the son of the landlord with the deepest love. I have flattered his passion by promising to become his wife, and to bring him as a marriage portion twenty thousand crowns' worth of diamonds which I am supposed to have in Venice, and which my mother is expected to bring with her. But my mother has nothing and knows nothing of the affair, therefore she is not likely to leave Venice."

"But, tell me, lovely madcap, what will be the end of this extravaganza? I am afraid it will take a tragic turn at the last."

"You are mistaken; it will remain a comedy, and a very amusing one, too. I am expecting every hour the arrival of Count Holstein, brother of the Elector of Mainz. He has written to me from Frankfort; he has left that city, and must by this time have reached Venice. He will take me to the Fair of Reggio, and if my intended takes it into his head to be angry, the count will thrash him and pay my bill, but I am determined that he shall be neither thrashed nor paid. As I go away, I have only to whisper in his ear that I will certainly return, and it will be all right. I know my promise to become his wife as soon as I come back will make him happy."

"That's all very well! You are as witty as a cousin of Satan, but I shall not wait your return to marry you; our wedding must take place at once."

"What folly! Well, wait until this evening."

"Not a bit of it, for I can almost fancy I hear the count's carriage. If he should not arrive, we can continue the sport during the night."

"Do you love me?"

"To distraction! but what does it matter? However, your excellent comedy renders you worthy of adoration. Now, suppose we do not waste our time."

"You are right: it is an episode, and all the more agreeable for being impromptu."

I can well recollect that I found it a delightful episode. Towards evening all the family joined us again, a walk was proposed, and we were on the point of going out, when a carriage drawn by six post-horses noisily entered the yard. Catinella looked through the window, and desired to be left alone, saying that it was a prince who had come to see her. Everybody went away, she pushed me into my room and locked me in. I went to the window, and saw a nobleman four times as big as myself getting out of the carriage. He came upstairs, entered the room of the intended bride, and all that was left to me was the consolation of having seized fortune by the forelock, the pleasure of hearing their conversation, and a convenient view, through a crevice in the partition, of what Catinella contrived to do with that heavy lump of flesh. But at last the stupid amusement wearied me, for it lasted five hours, which were employed in amorous caresses, in packing Catinella's rags, in loading them on the carriage, in taking supper, and in drinking numerous bumpers of Rhenish wine. At midnight the count left the hotel, carrying away with him the beloved mistress of the landlord's son.

No one during those long hours had come to my room, and I had not called. I was afraid of being discovered, and I did not know how far the German prince would have been pleased if he had found out that he had an indiscreet witness of the heavy and powerless demonstrations of his tenderness, which were a credit to neither of the actors, and which supplied me with ample food for thoughts upon the miseries of mankind.

After the departure of the heroine, catching through the crevice a glimpse of the abandoned lover, I called out to him to unlock my door. The poor silly fellow told me piteously that, Catinella having taken the key with her, it would be necessary to break the door open. I begged him to have it done at once, because I was hungry. As soon as I was out of my prison I had my supper, and the unfortunate lover kept me company. He told me that Catinella had found a moment to promise him that she would return within six weeks, that she was shedding tears in giving him that assurance, and that she had kissed him with great tenderness.

"Has the prince paid her expenses?"

"Not at all. We would not have allowed him to do it, even if he had offered. My future wife would have felt offended, for you can have no idea of the delicacy of her feelings."

"What does your father say of her departure?"

"My father always sees the worst side of everything; he says that she will never come back, and my mother shares his opinion rather than mine. But you, signor maestro, what do you think?"

"That if she has promised to return, she will be sure to keep her word."

"Of course; for if she did not mean to come back, she would not have given me her promise."

"Precisely; I call that a good argument."

I had for my supper what was left of the meal prepared by the count's cook, and I drank a bottle of excellent Rhenish wine which Catinella had juggled away to treat her intended husband, and which the worthy fellow thought could not have a better destination than to treat his future cousin. After supper I took post-horses and continued my journey, assuring the unhappy, forlorn lover that I would do all I could to persuade my cousin to come back very soon. I wanted to pay my bill, but he refused to receive any money. I reached Bologna a few minutes after Catinella, and put up at the same hotel, where I found an opportunity of telling her all her lover had said. I arrived in Reggio before her, but I could not speak to her in that city, for she was always in the company of her potent and impotent lord. After the fair, during which nothing of importance occurred to me, I left Reggio with my friend Baletti and we proceeded to Turin, which I wanted to see, for the first time I had gone to that city with Henriette I had stopped only long enough to change horses.

I found everything beautiful in Turin, the city, the court, the theatre, and the women, including the Duchess of Savoy, but I could not help laughing when I was told that the police of the city was very efficient, for the streets were full of beggars. That police, however, was the special care of the king, who was very intelligent; if we are to believe history, but I confess that I laughed when I saw the ridiculous face of that sovereign.

I had never seen a king before in my life, and a foolish idea made me suppose that a king must be preeminent — a very rare being — by his beauty and the majesty of his appearance, and in everything superior to the rest of men. For a young Republican endowed with reason, my idea was not, after all, so very foolish, but I very soon got rid of it when I saw that King of Sardinia, ugly, hump-backed, morose and vulgar even in his manners. I then realized that it was possible to be a king without being entirely a man.

I saw L'Astrua and Gafarello, those two magnificent singers on the stage, and I admired the dancing of La Geofroi, who married at that time a worthy dancer named Bodin.

During my stay in Turin, no amorous fancy disturbed the peace of my soul, except an accident which happened to me with the daughter of my washerwoman, and which increased my knowledge in physics in a singular manner. That girl was very pretty, and, without being what might be called in love with her, I wished to obtain her favours. Piqued at my not being able to obtain an appointment from her, I contrived one day to catch her at the bottom of a back staircase by which she used to come to my room, and, I must confess, with the intention of using a little violence, if necessary.

Having concealed myself for that purpose at the time I expected her, I got hold of her by surprise, and, half by persuasion, half by the rapidity of my attack, she was brought to a right position, and I lost no time in engaging in action. But at the first movement of the connection a loud explosion somewhat cooled my ardour, the more so that the young girl covered her face with her hands as if she wished to hide her shame. However, encouraging her with a loving kiss, I began again. But, a report, louder even than the first, strikes at the same moment my ear and my nose. I continue; a third, a fourth report, and, to make a long matter short, each movement gives an explosion with as much regularity as a conductor making the time for a piece of music!

This extraordinary phenomenon, the confusion of the poor girl, our position — everything, in fact, struck me as so comical, that I burst into the most immoderate laughter, which compelled me to give up the undertaking. Ashamed and confused, the young girl ran away, and I did nothing to hinder her. After that she never had the courage to present herself before me. I remained seated on the stairs for a quarter of an hour after she had left me, amused at the funny character of a scene which even now excites my mirth. I suppose that the young girl was indebted for her virtue to that singular disease, and most likely, if it were common to all the fair sex, there would be fewer gallant women, unless we had different organs; for to pay for one moment of enjoyment at the expense both of the hearing and of the smell is to give too high a price.

Baletti, being in a hurry to reach Paris, where great preparations were being made for the birth of a Duke of Burgundy — for the duchess was near the time of her delivery — easily persuaded me to shorten my stay in Turin. We therefore left that city, and in five days we arrived at Lyons, where I stayed about a week.

Lyons is a very fine city in which at that time there were scarcely three or four noble houses opened to strangers; but, in compensation, there were more than a hundred hospitable ones belonging to merchants, manufacturers, and commission agents, amongst whom was to be found an excellent society remarkable for easy manners, politeness, frankness, and good style, without the absurd pride to be met with amongst the nobility in the provinces, with very few honourable exceptions. It is true that the standard of good manners is below that of Paris, but one soon gets accustomed to it. The wealth of Lyons arises from good taste and low prices, and Fashion is the goddess to whom that city owes its prosperity. Fashion alters every year, and the stuff, to which the fashion of the day gives a value equal, say to thirty, is the next year reduced to fifteen or twenty, and then it is sent to foreign countries where it is bought up as a novelty.

The manufacturers of Lyons give high salaries to designers of talent; in that lies the secret of their success. Low prices come from Competition — a fruitful source of wealth, and a daughter of Liberty. Therefore, a government wishing to establish on a firm basis the prosperity of trade must give commerce full liberty; only being careful to prevent the frauds which private interests, often wrongly understood, might invent at the expense of public and general interests. In fact, the government must hold the scales, and allow the citizens to load them as they please.

In Lyons I met the most famous courtezan of Venice. It was generally admitted that her equal had never been seen. Her name was Ancilla. Every man who saw her coveted her, and she was so kindly disposed that she could not refuse her favours to anyone; for if all men loved her one after the other, she returned the compliment by loving them all at once, and with her pecuniary advantages were only a very secondary consideration.

Venice has always been blessed with courtezans more celebrated by their beauty than their wit. Those who were most famous in my younger days were Ancilla and another called Spina, both the daughters of gondoliers, and both killed very young by the excesses of a profession which, in their eyes, was a noble one. At the age of twenty-two, Ancilla turned a dancer and Spina became a singer. Campioni, a celebrated Venetian dancer, imparted to the lovely Ancilla all the graces and the talents of which her physical perfections were susceptible, and married her. Spina had for her master a castrato who succeeded in making of her only a very ordinary singer, and in the absence of talent she was compelled, in order to get a living, to make the most of the beauty she had received from nature.

I shall have occasion to speak again of Ancilla before her death. She was then in Lyons with her husband; they had just returned from England, where they had been greatly applauded at the Haymarket Theatre. She had stopped in Lyons only for her pleasure, and, the moment she shewed herself, she had at her feet the most brilliant young men of the town, who were the slaves of her slightest caprice. Every day parties of pleasure, every evening magnificent suppers, and every night a great faro bank. The banker at the gaming table was a certain Don Joseph Marratti, the same man whom I had known in the Spanish army under the name of Don Pepe il Cadetto, and a few years afterwards assumed the name of Afflisio, and came to such a bad end. That faro bank won in a few days three hundred thousand francs. In a capital that would not have been considered a large sum, but in a commercial and industrial city like Lyons it raised the alarm amongst the merchants, and the Ultramontanes thought of taking their leave.

It was in Lyons that a respectable individual, whose acquaintance I made at the house of M. de Rochebaron, obtained for me the favour of being initiated in the sublime trifles of Freemasonry. I arrived in Paris a simple apprentice; a few months after my arrival I became companion and master; the last is certainly the highest degree in Freemasonry, for all the other degrees which I took afterwards are only pleasing inventions, which, although symbolical, add nothing to the dignity of master.

No one in this world can obtain a knowledge of everything, but every man who feels himself endowed with faculties, and can realize the extent of his moral strength, should endeavour to obtain the greatest possible amount of knowledge. A well-born young man who wishes to travel and know not only the world, but also what is called good society, who does not want to find himself, under certain circumstances, inferior to his equals, and excluded from participating in all their pleasures, must get himself initiated in what is called Freemasonry, even if it is only to know superficially what Freemasonry is. It is a charitable institution, which, at certain times and in certain places, may have been a pretext for criminal underplots got up for the overthrow of public order, but is there anything under heaven that has not been abused? Have we not seen the Jesuits, under the cloak of our holy religion, thrust into the parricidal hand of blind enthusiasts the dagger with which kings were to be assassinated! All men of importance, I mean those whose social existence is marked by intelligence and merit, by learning or by wealth, can be (and many of them are) Freemasons: is it possible to suppose that such meetings, in which the initiated, making it a law never to speak, ‘intra muros’, either of politics, or of religions, or of governments, converse only concerning emblems which are either moral or trifling; is it possible to suppose, I repeat, that those meetings, in which the governments may have their own creatures, can offer dangers sufficiently serious to warrant the proscriptions of kings or the excommunications of Popes?

In reality such proceedings miss the end for which they are undertaken, and the Pope, in spite of his infallibility, will not prevent his persecutions from giving Freemasonry an importance which it would perhaps have never obtained if it had been left alone. Mystery is the essence of man’s nature, and whatever presents itself to mankind under a mysterious appearance will always excite curiosity and be sought, even when men are satisfied that the veil covers nothing but a cypher.

Upon the whole, I would advise all well-born young men, who intend to travel, to become Freemasons; but I would likewise advise them to be careful in selecting a lodge, because, although bad company cannot have any influence while inside of the lodge, the candidate must guard against bad acquaintances.

Those who become Freemasons only for the sake of finding out the secret of the order, run a very great risk of growing old under the trowel without ever realizing their purpose. Yet there is a secret, but it is so inviolable that it has never been confided or whispered to anyone. Those who stop at the outward crust of things imagine that the secret consists in words, in signs, or that the main point of it is to be found only in reaching the highest degree. This is a mistaken view: the man who guesses the secret of Freemasonry, and to know it you must guess it, reaches that point only through long attendance in the lodges, through deep thinking, comparison, and deduction. He would not trust that secret to his best friend in Freemasonry, because he is aware that if his friend has not found it out, he could not make any use of it after it had been whispered in his ear. No, he keeps his peace, and the secret remains a secret.

Everything done in a lodge must be secret; but those who have unscrupulously revealed what is done in the lodge, have been unable to reveal that which is essential; they had no knowledge of it, and had they known it, they certainly would not have unveiled the mystery of the ceremonies.

The impression felt in our days by the non-initiated is of the same nature as that felt in former times by those who were not initiated in the mysteries enacted at Eleusis in honour of Ceres. But the mysteries of Eleusis interested the whole of Greece, and whoever had attained some eminence in the society of those days had an ardent wish to take a part in those mysterious ceremonies, while Freemasonry, in the midst of many men of the highest merit, reckons a crowd of scoundrels whom no society ought to acknowledge, because they are the refuse of mankind as far as morality is concerned.

In the mysteries of Ceres, an inscrutable silence was long kept, owing to the veneration in which they were held. Besides, what was there in them that could be revealed? The three words which the hierophant said to the initiated? But what would that revelation have come to? Only to dishonour the indiscreet initiate, for they were barbarous words unknown to the vulgar. I have read somewhere that the three sacred words of the mysteries of Eleusis meant: Watch, and do no evil. The sacred words and the secrets of the various masonic degrees are about as criminal.

The initiation in the mysteries of Eleusis lasted nine days. The ceremonies were very imposing, and the company of the highest. Plutarch informs us that Alcibiades was sentenced to death and his property confiscated, because he had dared to turn the mysteries into ridicule in his house. He was even sentenced to be cursed by the priests and priestesses, but the curse was not pronounced because one of the priestesses opposed it, saying:

“I am a priestess to bless and not to curse!”

Sublime words! Lessons of wisdom and of morality which the Pope despises, but which the Gospel teaches and which the Saviour prescribes.

In our days nothing is important, and nothing is sacred, for our cosmopolitan philosophers.

Botarelli publishes in a pamphlet all the ceremonies of the Freemasons, and the only sentence passed on him is:

“He is a scoundrel. We knew that before!”

A prince in Naples, and M. Hamilton in his own house, perform the miracle of St. Januarius; they are, most likely, very merry over their performance, and many more with them. Yet the king wears on his royal breast a star with the following device around the image of St. Januarius: ‘In sanguine foedus’. In our days everything is inconsistent, and nothing has any meaning. Yet it is right to go ahead, for to stop on the road would be to go from bad to worse.

We left Lyons in the public diligence, and were five days on our road to Paris. Baletti had given notice of his departure to his family; they therefore knew when to expect him. We were eight in the coach and our seats were very uncomfortable, for it was a large oval in shape, so that no one had a corner. If that vehicle had been built in a country where equality was a principle hallowed by the laws, it would not have been a bad illustration. I thought it was absurd, but I was in a foreign country, and I said nothing. Besides, being an Italian, would it have been right for me not to admire everything which was French, and particularly in France? — Example, an oval diligence: I respected the fashion, but I found it detestable, and the singular motion of that vehicle had the same effect upon me as the rolling of a ship in a heavy sea. Yet it was well hung, but the worst jolting would have disturbed me less.

As the diligence undulates in the rapidity of its pace, it has been called a gondola, but I was a judge of gondolas, and I thought that there was no family likeness between the coach and the Venetian boats which, with two hearty rowers, glide along so swiftly and smoothly. The effect of the movement was that I had to throw up whatever was on my stomach. My travelling companions thought me bad company, but they did not say so. I was in France and among Frenchmen, who know what politeness is. They only remarked that very likely I had eaten too much at my supper, and a Parisian abbe, in order to excuse me, observed that my stomach was weak. A discussion arose.

“Gentlemen,” I said, in my vexation, and rather angrily, “you are all wrong, for my stomach is excellent, and I have not had any supper.”

Thereupon an elderly man told me, with a voice full of sweetness, that I ought not to say that the gentlemen were wrong, though I might say that they were not right, thus imitating Cicero, who, instead of declaring to the Romans that Catilina and the other conspirators were dead, only said that they had lived.

“Is it not the same thing?”

“I beg your pardon, sir, one way of speaking is polite, the other is not.” And after treating me to a long dissection on politeness, he concluded by saying, with a smile, “I suppose you are an Italian?”

“Yes, I am, but would you oblige me by telling me how you have found it out?”

“Oh! I guessed it from the attention with which you have listened to my long prattle.”

Everybody laughed, and, I, much pleased with his eccentricity, began to coax him. He was the tutor of a young boy of twelve or thirteen years who was seated near him. I made him give me during the journey lessons in

French politeness, and when we parted he took me apart in a friendly manner, saying that he wished to make me a small present.

“What is it?”

“You must abandon, and, if I may say so, forget, the particle ‘non’, which you use frequently at random. ‘Non’ is not a French word; instead of that unpleasant monosyllable, say, ‘Pardon’. ‘Non’ is equal to giving the lie: never say it, or prepare yourself to give and to receive sword-stabs every moment.”

“I thank you, monsieur, your present is very precious, and I promise you never to say non again.”

During the first fortnight of my stay in Paris, it seemed to me that I had become the most faulty man alive, for I never ceased begging pardon. I even thought, one evening at the theatre, that I should have a quarrel for having begged somebody’s pardon in the wrong place. A young fop, coming to the pit, trod on my foot, and I hastened to say,

“Your pardon, sir.”

“Sir, pardon me yourself.”

“No, yourself.”

“Yourself!”

“Well, sir, let us pardon and embrace one another!” The embrace put a stop to the discussion.

One day during the journey, having fallen asleep from fatigue in the inconvenient gondola, someone pushed my arm.

“Ah, sir! look at that mansion!”

“I see it; what of it?”

“Ah! I pray you, do you not find it….”

“I find nothing particular; and you?”

“Nothing wonderful, if it were not situated at a distance of forty leagues from Paris. But here! Ah! would my ‘badauds’ of Parisians believe that such a beautiful mansion can be found forty leagues distant from the metropolis? How ignorant a man is when he has never travelled!”

“You are quite right.”

That man was a Parisian and a ‘badaud’ to the backbone, like a Gaul in the days of Caesar.

But if the Parisians are lounging about from morning till night, enjoying everything around them, a foreigner like myself ought to have been a greater ‘badaud’ than they! The difference between us was that, being accustomed to see things such as they are, I was astonished at seeing them often covered with a mask which changed their nature, while their surprise often arose from their suspecting what the mask concealed.

What delighted me, on my arrival in Paris, was the magnificent road made by Louis XV., the cleanliness of the hotels, the excellent fare they give, the quickness of the service, the excellent beds, the modest appearance of the attendant, who generally is the most accomplished girl of the house, and whose decency, modest manners, and neatness, inspire the most shameless libertine with respect. Where is the Italian who is pleased with the effrontery and the insolence of the hotel-waiters in Italy? In my days, people did not know in France what it was to overcharge; it was truly the home of foreigners. True, they had the unpleasantness of often witnessing acts of odious despotism, ‘lettres de cachet’, etc.; it was the despotism of a king. Since that time the French have the despotism of the people. Is it less obnoxious?

We dined at Fontainebleau, a name derived from Fontaine-belle-eau; and when we were only two leagues from Paris we saw a berlin advancing towards us. As it came near the diligence, my friend Baletti called out to the postillions to stop. In the berlin was his mother, who offered me the welcome given to an expected friend. His mother was the celebrated actress Silvia, and when I had been introduced to her she said to me;

“I hope, sir, that my son’s friend will accept a share of our family supper this evening.”

I accepted gratefully, sat down again in the gondola, Baletti got into the berlin with his mother, and we continued our journey.

On reaching Paris, I found a servant of Silvia’s waiting for me with a coach; he accompanied me to my lodging to leave my luggage, and we repaired to Baletti’s house, which was only fifty yards distant from my dwelling.

Baletti presented me to his father, who was known under the name of Mario. Silvia and Mario were the stage names assumed by M. and Madame Baletti, and at that time it was the custom in France to call the Italian actors by the names they had on the stage. ‘Bon jour’, Monsieur Arlequin; ‘bon jour’, Monsieur Pantalon: such was the manner in which the French used to address the actors who personified those characters on the stage.

CHAPTER VI

My Apprenticeship in Paris — Portraits — Oddities — All Sorts of Things

To celebrate the arrival of her son, Silvia gave a splendid supper to which she had invited all her relatives, and it was a good opportunity for me to make their acquaintance. Baletti's father, who had just recovered from a long illness, was not with us, but we had his father's sister, who was older than Mario. She was known, under her theatrical name of Flaminia, in the literary world by several translations, but I had a great wish to make her acquaintance less on that account than in consequence of the story, known throughout Italy, of the stay that three literary men of great fame had made in Paris. Those three literati were the Marquis Maffei, the Abbe Conti, and Pierre Jacques Martelli, who became enemies, according to public rumour, owing to the belief entertained by each of them that he possessed the favours of the actress, and, being men of learning, they fought with the pen. Martelli composed a satire against Maffei, in which he designated him by the anagram of Femia.

I had been announced to Flaminia as a candidate for literary fame, and she thought she honoured me by addressing me at all, but she was wrong, for she displeased me greatly by her face, her manners, her style, even by the sound of her voice. Without saying it positively, she made me understand that, being herself an illustrious member of the republic of letters, she was well aware that she was speaking to an insect. She seemed as if she wanted to dictate to everybody around her, and she very likely thought that she had the right to do so at the age of sixty, particularly towards a young novice only twenty-five years old, who had not yet contributed anything to the literary treasury. In order to please her, I spoke to her of the Abbe Conti, and I had occasion to quote two lines of that profound writer. Madam corrected me with a patronizing air for my pronunciation of the word 'scevra', which means divided, saying that it ought to be pronounced 'sceura', and she added that I ought to be very glad to have learned so much on the first day of my arrival in Paris, telling me that it would be an important day in my life.

“Madam, I came here to learn and not to unlearn. You will kindly allow me to tell you that the pronunciation of that word ‘scevra’ with a v, and not ‘sceura’ with a u, because it is a contraction of ‘sceverra’.”

“It remains to be seen which of us is wrong.”

“You, madam, according to Ariosto, who makes ‘scevra’ rhyme with ‘persevra’, and the rhyme would be false with ‘sceura’, which is not an Italian word.”

She would have kept up the discussion, but her husband, a man eighty years of age, told her that she was wrong. She held her tongue, but from that time she told everybody that I was an impostor.

Her husband, Louis Riccoboni, better known as Lelio, was the same who had brought the Italian company to Paris in 1716, and placed it at the service of the regent: he was a man of great merit. He had been very handsome, and justly enjoyed the esteem of the public, in consequence not only of his talent but also of the purity of his life.

During supper my principal occupation was to study Silvia, who then enjoyed the greatest reputation, and I judged her to be even above it. She was then about fifty years old, her figure was elegant, her air noble, her manners graceful and easy; she was affable, witty, kind to everybody, simple and unpretending. Her face was an enigma, for it inspired everyone with the warmest sympathy, and yet if you examined it attentively there was not one beautiful feature; she could not be called handsome, but no one could have thought her ugly. Yet she was not one of those women who are neither handsome nor ugly, for she possessed a certain something which struck one at first sight and captivated the interest. Then what was she?

Beautiful, certainly, but owing to charms unknown to all those who, not being attracted towards her by an irresistible feeling which compelled them to love her, had not the courage to study her, or the constancy to obtain a thorough knowledge of her.

Silvia was the adoration of France, and her talent was the real support of all the comedies which the greatest authors wrote for her, especially of, the plays of Marivaux, for without her his comedies would never have gone to posterity. Never was an actress found who could replace her, and to find one it would be necessary that she should unite in herself all the perfections which Silvia possessed for the difficult profession of the stage: action, voice, intelligence, wit, countenance, manners, and a deep knowledge of the human heart. In Silvia every quality was from nature, and the art which gave the last touch of perfection to her qualities was never seen.

To the qualities which I have just mentioned, Silvia added another which surrounded her with a brilliant halo, and the absence of which would not have prevented her from being the shining star of the stage: she led a virtuous life. She had been anxious to have friends, but she had dismissed all lovers, refusing to avail herself of a privilege which she could easily have enjoyed, but which would have rendered her contemptible in her own estimation. The irreproachable conduct obtained for her a reputation of respectability which, at her age, would have been held as ridiculous and even insulting by any other woman belonging to the same profession, and many ladies of the highest rank honoured her with her friendship more even than with their patronage. Never did the capricious audience of a Parisian pit dare to hiss Silvia, not even in her performance of characters which the public disliked, and it was the general opinion that she was in every way above her profession.

Silvia did not think that her good conduct was a merit, for she knew that she was virtuous only because her self-love compelled her to be so, and she never exhibited any pride or assumed any superiority towards her theatrical sisters, although, satisfied to shine by their talent or their beauty, they cared little about rendering themselves conspicuous by their virtue. Silvia loved them all, and they all loved her; she always was the first to praise, openly and with good faith, the talent of her rivals; but she lost nothing by it, because, being their superior in talent and enjoying a spotless reputation, her rivals could not rise above her.

Nature deprived that charming woman of ten year of life; she became consumptive at the age of sixty, ten years after I had made her acquaintance. The climate of Paris often proves fatal to our Italian actresses. Two years before her death I saw her perform the character of Marianne in the comedy of Marivaux, and in spite of her age and declining health the illusion was complete. She died in my presence, holding her daughter in her arms, and she was giving her the advice of a tender mother five minutes before she breathed her last. She was honourably buried in the church of St. Sauveur, without the slightest opposition from the venerable priest, who, far from sharing the anti-christain intolerancy of the clergy in general, said that her profession as an actress had not hindered her from being a good Christian, and that the earth was the common mother of all human beings, as Jesus Christ had been the Saviour of all mankind.

You will forgive me, dear reader, if I have made you attend the funeral of Silvia ten years before her death; believe me I have no intention of performing a miracle; you may console yourself with the idea that I shall spare you that unpleasant task when poor Silvia dies.

Her only daughter, the object of her adoration, was seated next to her at the supper-table. She was then only nine years old, and being entirely taken up by her mother I paid no attention to her; my interest in her was to come.

After the supper, which was protracted to a late hour, I repaired to the house of Madame Quinson, my landlady, where I found myself very comfortable. When I woke in the morning, the said Madame Quinson came to my room to tell me that a servant was outside and wished to offer me his services. I asked her to send him in, and I saw a man of very small stature; that did not please me, and I told him so.

“My small stature, your honour, will be a guarantee that I shall never borrow your clothes to go to some amorous rendezvous.”

“Your name?”

“Any name you please.”

“What do you mean? I want the name by which you are known.”

“I have none. Every master I serve calls me according to his fancy, and I have served more than fifty in my life. You may call me what you like.”

“But you must have a family name.”

“I never had any family. I had a name, I believe, in my young days, but I have forgotten it since I have been in service. My name has changed with every new master.”

“Well! I shall call you Esprit.”

“You do me a great honour.”

“Here, go and get me change for a Louis.”

“I have it, sir.”

“I see you are rich.”

“At your service, sir.”

“Where can I enquire about you?”

“At the agency for servants. Madame Quinson, besides, can answer your enquiries. Everybody in Paris knows me.”

“That is enough. I shall give you thirty sous a day; you must find your own clothes: you will sleep where you like, and you must be here at seven o’clock every morning.”

Baletti called on me and entreated me to take my meals every day at his house. After his visit I told Esprit to take me to the Palais-Royal, and I left him at the gates. I felt the greatest curiosity about that renowned garden, and at first I examined everything. I see a rather fine garden, walks lined with big trees, fountains, high houses all round the garden, a great many men and women walking about, benches here and there forming shops for the sale of newspapers, perfumes, tooth-picks, and other trifles. I see a quantity of chairs for hire at the rate of one sou, men reading the newspaper under the shade of the trees, girls and men breakfasting either alone or in company, waiters who were rapidly going up and down a narrow staircase hidden under the foliage.

I sit down at a small table: a waiter comes immediately to enquire my wishes. I ask for some chocolate made with water; he brings me some, but very bad, although served in a splendid silver-gilt cup. I tell him to give me some coffee, if it is good.

“Excellent, I made it myself yesterday.”

“Yesterday! I do not want it.”

“The milk is very good.”

“Milk! I never drink any. Make me a cup of fresh coffee without milk.”

“Without milk! Well, sir, we never make coffee but in the afternoon. Would you like a good bavaroise, or a decanter of orgeat?”

“Yes, give me the orgeat.”

I find that beverage delicious, and make up my mind to have it daily for my breakfast. I enquire from the waiter whether there is any news; he answers that the dauphine has been delivered of a prince. An abbe, seated at a table close by, says to him, —

“You are mad, she has given birth to a princess.”

A third man comes forward and exclaims, —

“I have just returned from Versailles, and the dauphine has not been delivered either of a prince or of a princess.”

Then, turning towards me, he says that I look like a foreigner, and when I say that I am an Italian he begins to speak to me of the court, of the city, of the theatres, and at last he offers to accompany me everywhere. I thank him and take my leave. The abbe rises at the same time, walks with me, and tells me the names of all the women we meet in the garden.

A young man comes up to him, they embrace one another, and the abbe presents him to me as a learned Italian scholar. I address him in Italian, and he answers very wittily, but his way of speaking makes me smile, and I tell him why. He expressed himself exactly in the style of Boccacio. My remark pleases him, but I soon prove to him that it is not the right way to speak, however perfect may have been the language of that ancient writer. In less than a quarter of an hour we are excellent friends, for we find that our tastes are the same.

My new friend was a poet as I was; he was an admirer of Italian literature, while I admired the French.

We exchanged addresses, and promise to see one another very often.

I see a crowd in one corner of the garden, everybody standing still and looking up. I enquire from my friend whether there is anything wonderful going on.

“These persons are watching the meridian; everyone holds his watch in his hand in order to regulate it exactly at noon.”

“Is there not a meridian everywhere?”

“Yes, but the meridian of the Palais-Royal is the most exact.”

I laugh heartily.

“Why do you laugh?”

“Because it is impossible for all meridians not to be the same. That is true ‘badauderie’.”

My friend looks at me for a moment, then he laughs likewise, and supplies me with ample food to ridicule the worthy Parisians. We leave the Palais-Royal through the main gate, and I observe another crowd of people before a shop, on the sign-board of which I read “At the Sign of the Civet Cat.”

“What is the matter here?”

“Now, indeed, you are going to laugh. All these honest persons are waiting their turn to get their snuff-boxes filled.”

“Is there no other dealer in snuff?”

“It is sold everywhere, but for the last three weeks nobody will use any snuff but that sold at the ‘Civet Cat.’”

“Is it better than anywhere else?”

“Perhaps it is not as good, but since it has been brought into fashion by the Duchesse de Chartres, nobody will have any other.”

“But how did she manage to render it so fashionable?”

“Simply by stopping her carriage two or three times before the shop to have her snuff-box filled, and by saying aloud to the young girl who handed back the box that her snuff was the very best in Paris. The ‘badauds’, who never fail to congregate near the carriage of princes, no matter if they have seen them a hundred times, or if they know them to be as ugly as monkeys, repeated the words of the duchess everywhere, and that was enough to send here all the snuff-takers of the capital in a hurry. This woman will make a fortune, for she sells at least one hundred crowns’ worth of snuff every day.”

“Very likely the duchess has no idea of the good she has done.”

“Quite the reverse, for it was a cunning artifice on her part. The duchess, feeling interested in the newly-married young woman, and wishing to serve her in a delicate manner, thought of that expedient which has met with complete success. You cannot imagine how kind Parisians are. You are now in the only country in the world where wit can make a fortune by selling either a genuine or a false article: in the first case, it receives the welcome of intelligent and talented people, and in the second, fools are always ready to reward it, for silliness is truly a characteristic of the people here, and, however wonderful it may appear, silliness is the daughter of wit. Therefore it is not a paradox to say that the French would be wiser if they were less witty.

“The gods worshipped here although no altars are raised for them — are Novelty and Fashion. Let a man run, and everybody will run after him. The crowd will not stop, unless the man is proved to be mad; but to prove it is indeed a difficult task, because we have a crowd of men who, mad from their birth, are still considered wise.

“The snuff of the ‘Civet Cat’ is but one example of the facility with which the crowd can be attracted to one particular spot. The king was one day hunting, and found himself at the Neuilly Bridge; being thirsty, he wanted a glass of ratafia. He stopped at the door of a drinking-booth, and by the most lucky chance the poor keeper of the place happened to have a bottle of that liquor. The king, after he had drunk a small glass, fancied a second one, and said that he had never tasted such delicious ratafia in his life. That was enough to give the ratafia of the good man of Neuilly the reputation of being the best in Europe: the king had said so. The consequence was that the most brilliant society frequented the tavern of the delighted publican, who is now a very wealthy man, and has built on the very spot a splendid house on which can be read the following rather comic motto: ‘Ex liquidis solidum,’ which certainly came out of the head of one of the forty immortals. Which gods must the worthy tavern-keeper worship? Silliness, frivolity, and mirth.”

“It seems to me,” I replied, “that such approval, such ratification of the opinion expressed by the king, the princes of the blood, etc., is rather a proof of the affection felt for them by the nation, for the French carry that affection to such an extent that they believe them infallible.”

“It is certain that everything here causes foreigners to believe that the French people adore the king, but all thinking men here know well enough that there is more show than reality in that adoration, and the court has no confidence in it. When the king comes to Paris, everybody calls out, ‘Vive le Roi!’ because some idle fellow begins, or because some policeman has given the signal from the midst of the crowd, but it is really a cry which has no importance, a cry given out of cheerfulness, sometimes out of fear, and which the king himself does not accept as gospel. He does not feel comfortable in Paris, and he prefers being in Versailles, surrounded by twenty-five thousand men who protect him against the fury of that same people of Paris, who, if ever they became wiser, might very well one day call out, ‘Death to the King!’ instead of, ‘Long life to the King!’ Louis XIV. was well aware of it, and several councillors of the upper chamber lost their lives for having advised the assembling of the states-general in order to find some remedy for the misfortunes of the country. France never had any love for any kings, with the exception of St. Louis, of Louis XII, and of the great and good Henry IV.; and even in the last case the love of the nation was not sufficient to defend the king against the dagger of the Jesuits, an accursed race, the enemy of nations as well as of kings. The present king, who is weak and entirely led by his ministers, said candidly at the time he was just recovering from illness, ‘I am surprised at the rejoicings of the people in consequence of my health being restored, for I cannot imagine why they should love me so dearly.’ Many kings might repeat the same words, at least if love is to be measured according to the amount of good actually done. That candid remark of Louis XV. has been highly praised, but some philosopher of the court ought to have informed him that he was so much loved because he had been surnamed ‘le bien aime’.”

“Surname or nickname; but are there any philosophers at the court of France?”

“No, for philosophers and courtiers are as widely different as light and darkness; but there are some men of intelligence who champ the bit from motives of ambition and interest.”

As we were thus conversing, M. Patu (such was the name of my new acquaintance) escorted me as far as the door of Silvia’s house; he congratulated me upon being one of her friends, and we parted company.

I found the amiable actress in good company. She introduced me to all her guests, and gave me some particulars respecting every one of them. The name of Crebillon struck my ear.

“What, sir!” I said to him, “am I fortunate enough to see you? For eight years you have charmed me, for eight years I have longed to know you. Listen, I beg ‘of you.”

I then recited the finest passage of his ‘Zenobie et Rhadamiste’, which I had translated into blank verse. Silvia was delighted to see the pleasure enjoyed by Crebillon in hearing, at the age of eighty, his own lines in a language which he knew thoroughly and loved as much as his own. He himself recited the same passage in French, and politely pointed out the parts in which he thought that I had improved on the original. I thanked him, but I was not deceived by his compliment.

We sat down to supper, and, being asked what I had already seen in Paris, I related everything I had done, omitting only my conversation with Patu. After I had spoken for a long time, Crebillon, who had evidently observed better than anyone else the road I had chosen in order to learn the good as well as the bad qualities by his countrymen, said to me,

“For the first day, sir, I think that what you have done gives great hopes of you, and without any doubt you will make rapid progress. You tell your story well, and you speak French in such a way as to be perfectly understood; yet all you say is only Italian dressed in French. That is a novelty which causes you to be listened to with interest, and which captivates the attention of your audience; I must even add that your Franco-Italian language is just the thing to enlist in your favour the sympathy of those who listen to you, because it is singular, new, and because you are in a country where everybody worships those two divinities — novelty and singularity. Nevertheless, you must begin to-morrow and apply yourself in good earnest, in order to acquire a thorough knowledge of our language, for the same persons who warmly applaud you now, will, in two or three months, laugh at you.”

“I believe it, sir, and that is what I fear; therefore the principal object of my visit here is to devote myself entirely to the study of the French language. But, sir, how shall I find a teacher? I am a very unpleasant pupil, always asking questions, curious, troublesome, insatiable, and even supposing that I could meet with the teacher I require, I am afraid I am not rich enough to pay him.”

"For fifty years, sir, I have been looking out for a pupil such as you have just described yourself, and I would willingly pay you myself if you would come to my house and receive my lessons. I reside in the Marais, Rue de Douze Portes. I have the best Italian poets. I will make you translate them into French, and you need not be afraid of my finding you insatiable."

I accepted with joy. I did not know how to express my gratitude, but both his offer and the few words of my answer bore the stamp of truth and frankness.

Crebillon was a giant; he was six feet high, and three inches taller than I. He had a good appetite, could tell a good story without laughing, was celebrated for his witty repartees and his sociable manners, but he spent his life at home, seldom going out, and seeing hardly anyone because he always had a pipe in his mouth and was surrounded by at least twenty cats, with which he would amuse himself all day. He had an old housekeeper, a cook, and a man-servant. His housekeeper had the management of everything; she never allowed him to be in need of anything, and she gave no account of his money, which she kept altogether, because he never asked her to render any accounts. The expression of Crebillon's face was that of the lion's or of the cat's, which is the same thing. He was one of the royal censors, and he told me that it was an amusement for him. His housekeeper was in the habit of reading him the works brought for his examination, and she would stop reading when she came to a passage which, in her opinion, deserved his censure, but sometimes they were of a different opinion, and then their discussions were truly amusing. I once heard the housekeeper send away an author with these words:

"Come again next week; we have had no time to examine your manuscript."

During a whole year I paid M. Crebillon three visits every week, and from him I learned all I know of the French language, but I found it impossible to get rid of my Italian idioms. I remark that turn easily enough when I meet with it in other people, but it flows naturally from my pen without my being aware of it. I am satisfied that, whatever I may do, I shall never be able to recognize it any more than I can find out in what consists the bad Latin style so constantly alleged against Livy.

I composed a stanza of eight verses on some subject which I do not recollect, and I gave it to Crebillon, asking him to correct it. He read it attentively, and said to me,

“These eight verses are good and regular, the thought is fine and truly poetical, the style is perfect, and yet the stanza is bad.”

“How so?”

“I do not know. I cannot tell you what is wanting. Imagine that you see a man handsome, well made, amiable, witty-in fact, perfect, according to your most severe judgment. A woman comes in, sees him, looks at him, and goes away telling you that the man does not please her. ‘But what fault do you find in him, madam?’ ‘None, only he does not please me.’ You look again at the man, you examine him a second time, and you find that, in order to give him a heavenly voice, he has been deprived of that which constitutes a man, and you are compelled to acknowledge that a spontaneous feeling has stood the woman in good stead.”

It was by that comparison that Crebillon explained to me a thing almost inexplicable, for taste and feeling alone can account for a thing which is subject to no rule whatever.

We spoke a great deal of Louis XIV., whom Crebillon had known well for fifteen years, and he related several very curious anecdotes which were generally unknown. Amongst other things he assured me that the Siamese ambassadors were cheats paid by Madame de Maintenon. He told us likewise that he had never finished his tragedy of Cromwell, because the king had told him one day not to wear out his pen on a scoundrel.

Crebillon mentioned likewise his tragedy of Catilina, and he told me that, in his opinion, it was the most deficient of his works, but that he never would have consented, even to make a good tragedy, to represent Caesar as a young man, because he would in that case have made the public laugh, as they would do if Madea were to appear previous to her acquaintances with Jason.

He praised the talent of Voltaire very highly, but he accused him of having stolen from him, Crebillon, the scene of the senate. He, however, rendered him full justice, saying that he was a true historian, and able to write history as well as tragedies, but that he unfortunately adulterated history by mixing with it such a number of light anecdotes and tales for the sake of rendering it more attractive. According to Crebillon, the Man with the Iron Mask was nothing but an idle tale, and he had been assured of it by Louis XIV. himself.

On the day of my first meeting with Crebillon at Silvia's, 'Cenie', a play by Madame de Graffigny, was performed at the Italian Theatre, and I went away early in order to get a good seat in the pit.

The ladies all covered with diamonds, who were taking possession of the private boxes, engrossed all my interest and all my attention. I wore a very fine suit, but my open ruffles and the buttons all along my coat shewed at once that I was a foreigner, for the fashion was not the same in Paris. I was gaping in the air and listlessly looking round, when a gentleman, splendidly dressed, and three times stouter than I, came up and enquired whether I was a foreigner. I answered affirmatively, and he politely asked me how I liked Paris. I praised Paris very warmly. But at that moment a very stout lady, brilliant with diamonds, entered the box near us. Her enormous size astonished me, and, like a fool, I said to the gentleman:

"Who is that fat sow?"

"She is the wife of this fat pig."

"Ah! I beg your pardon a thousand times!"

But my stout gentleman cared nothing for my apologies, and very far from being angry he almost choked with laughter. This was the happy result of the practical and natural philosophy which Frenchmen cultivate so well, and which insures the happiness of their existence under an appearance of frivolity!

I was confused, I was in despair, but the stout gentleman continued to laugh heartily. At last he left the pit, and a minute afterwards I saw him enter the box and speak to his wife. I was keeping an eye on them without daring to look at them openly, and suddenly the lady, following the example of her husband, burst into a loud laugh. Their mirth making me more uncomfortable, I was leaving the pit, when the husband called out to me, "Sir! Sir!"

"I could not go away without being guilty of impoliteness, and I went up to their box. Then, with a serious countenance and with great affability, he begged my pardon for having laughed so much, and very graciously invited me to come to his house and sup with them that same evening. I thanked him politely, saying that I had a previous engagement. But he renewed his entreaties, and his wife pressing me in the most engaging manner I told them, in order to prove that I was not trying to elude their invitation, that I was expected to sup at Silvia's house.

"In that case I am certain," said the gentleman, "of obtaining your release if you do not object. Allow me to go myself to Silvia."

It would have been uncourteous on my part to resist any longer. He left the box and returned almost immediately with my friend Baletti, who told me that his mother was delighted to see me making such excellent acquaintances, and that she would expect to see me at dinner the next day. He whispered to me that my new acquaintance was M. de Beauchamp, Receiver-General of Taxes.

As soon as the performance was over, I offered my hand to madame, and we drove to their mansion in a magnificent carriage. There I found the abundance or rather the profusion which in Paris is exhibited by the men of finance; numerous society, high play, good cheer, and open cheerfulness. The supper was not over till one o'clock in the morning. Madame's private carriage drove me to my lodgings. That house offered me a kind welcome during the whole of my stay in Paris, and I must add that my new friends proved very useful to me. Some persons assert that foreigners find the first fortnight in Paris very dull, because a little time is necessary to get introduced, but I was fortunate enough to find myself established on as good a footing as I could desire within twenty-four hours, and the consequence was that I felt delighted with Paris, and certain that my stay would prove an agreeable one.

The next morning Patu called and made me a present of his prose panegyric on the Marechal de Saxe. We went out together and took a walk in the Tuileries, where he introduced me to Madame du Boccage, who made a good jest in speaking of the Marechal de Saxe.

"It is singular," she said, "that we cannot have a 'De profundis' for a man who makes us sing the 'Te Deum' so often."

As we left the Tuileries, Patu took me to the house of a celebrated actress of the opera, Mademoiselle Le Fel, the favourite of all Paris, and member of the Royal Academy of Music. She had three very young and charming children, who were fluttering around her like butterflies.

“I adore them,” she said to me.

“They deserve adoration for their beauty,” I answered, “although they have all a different cast of countenance.”

“No wonder! The eldest is the son of the Duke d’Anneci, the second of Count d’Egmont, and the youngest is the offspring of Maison-Rouge, who has just married the Romainville.”

“Ah! pray excuse me, I thought you were the mother of the three.”

“You were not mistaken, I am their mother.”

As she said these words she looked at Patu, and both burst into hearty laughter which did not make me blush, but which shewed me my blunder.

I was a, novice in Paris, and I had not been accustomed to see women encroach upon the privilege which men alone generally enjoy. Yet mademoiselle Le Fel was not a bold-faced woman; she was even rather ladylike, but she was what is called above prejudices. If I had known the manners of the time better, I should have been aware that such things were every-day occurrences, and that the noblemen who thus sprinkled their progeny everywhere were in the habit of leaving their children in the hands of their mothers, who were well paid. The more fruitful, therefore, these ladies were, the greater was their income.

My want of experience often led me into serious blunders, and Mademoiselle Le Fel would, I have no doubt, have laughed at anyone telling her that I had some wit, after the stupid mistake of which I had been guilty.

Another day, being at the house of Lani, ballet-master of the opera, I saw five or six young girls of thirteen or fourteen years of age accompanied by their mothers, and all exhibiting that air of modesty which is the characteristic of a good education. I addressed a few gallant words to them, and they answered me with down-cast eyes. One of them having complained of the headache, I offered her my smelling-bottle, and one of her companions said to her,

“Very likely you did not sleep well last night.”

"Oh! it is not that," answered the modest-looking Agnes, "I think I am in the family-way."

On receiving this unexpected reply from a girl I had taken for a maiden, I said to her,

"I should never have supposed that you were married, madam."

She looked at me with evident surprise for a moment, then she turned towards her friend, and both began to laugh immoderately. Ashamed, but for them more than myself, I left the house with a firm resolution never again to take virtue for granted in a class of women amongst whom it is so scarce. To look for, even to suppose, modesty, amongst the nymphs of the green room, is, indeed, to be very foolish; they pride themselves upon having none, and laugh at those who are simple enough to suppose them better than they are.

Thanks to my friend Patu, I made the acquaintance of all the women who enjoyed some reputation in Paris. He was fond of the fair sex, but unfortunately for him he had not a constitution like mine, and his love of pleasure killed him very early. If he had lived, he would have gone down to posterity in the wake of Voltaire, but he paid the debt of nature at the age of thirty.

I learned from him the secret which several young French literati employ in order to make certain of the perfection of their prose, when they want to write anything requiring as perfect a style as they can obtain, such as panegyrics, funeral orations, eulogies, dedications, etc. It was by surprise that I wrested that secret from Patu.

Being at his house one morning, I observed on his table several sheets of paper covered with dode-casyllabic blank verse.

I read a dozen of them, and I told him that, although the verses were very fine, the reading caused me more pain than pleasure.

"They express the same ideas as the panegyric of the Marechal de Saxe, but I confess that your prose pleases me a great deal more."

"My prose would not have pleased you so much, if it had not been at first composed in blank verse."

"Then you take very great trouble for nothing."

"No trouble at all, for I have not the slightest difficulty in writing that sort of poetry. I write it as easily as prose."

"Do you think that your prose is better when you compose it from your own poetry?"

"No doubt of it, it is much better, and I also secure the advantage that my prose is not full of half verses which flow from the pen of the writer without his being aware of it."

"Is that a fault?"

"A great one and not to be forgiven. Prose intermixed with occasional verses is worse than prosaic poetry."

"Is it true that the verses which, like parasites, steal into a funeral oration, must be sadly out of place?"

"Certainly. Take the example of Tacitus, who begins his history of Rome by these words: 'Urbem Roman a principio reges habuere'. They form a very poor Latin hexameter, which the great historian certainly never made on purpose, and which he never remarked when he revised his work, for there is no doubt that, if he had observed it, he would have altered that sentence. Are not such verses considered a blemish in Italian prose?"

"Decidedly. But I must say that a great many poor writers have purposely inserted such verses into their prose, believing that they would make it more euphonious. Hence the tawdriness which is justly alleged against much Italian literature. But I suppose you are the only writer who takes so much pains."

"The only one? Certainly not. All the authors who can compose blank verses very easily, as I can, employ them when they intend to make a fair copy of their prose. Ask Crebillon, the Abby de Voisenon, La Harpe, anyone you like, and they will all tell you the same thing. Voltaire was the first to have recourse to that art in the small pieces in which his prose is truly charming. For instance, the epistle to Madame du Chatelet, which is magnificent. Read it, and if you find a single hemistich in it I will confess myself in the wrong."

I felt some curiosity about the matter, and I asked Crebillon about it. He told me that Fatu was right, but he added that he had never practised that art himself.

Patu wished very much to take me to the opera in order to witness the effect produced upon me by the performance, which must truly astonish an Italian. ‘Les Fetes Venitiennes’ was the title of the opera which was in vogue just then — a title full of interest for me. We went for our forty sous to the pit, in which, although the audience was standing, the company was excellent, for the opera was the favourite amusement of the Parisians.

After a symphony, very fine in its way and executed by an excellent orchestra, the curtain rises, and I see a beautiful scene representing the small St. Mark’s Square in Venice, taken from the Island of St. George, but I am shocked to see the ducal palace on my left, and the tall steeple on my right, that is to say the very reverse of reality. I laugh at this ridiculous mistake, and Patu, to whom I say why I am laughing, cannot help joining me. The music, very fine although in the ancient style, at first amused me on account of its novelty, but it soon wearied me. The melopaeia fatigued me by its constant and tedious monotony, and by the shrieks given out of season. That melopaeia, of the French replaces — at least they think so — the Greek melapaeia and our recitative which they dislike, but which they would admire if they understood Italian.

The action of the opera was limited to a day in the carnival, when the Venetians are in the habit of promenading masked in St. Mark’s Square. The stage was animated by gallants, procuresses, and women amusing themselves with all sorts of intrigues. The costumes were whimsical and erroneous, but the whole was amusing. I laughed very heartily, and it was truly a curious sight for a Venetian, when I saw the Doge followed by twelve Councillors appear on the stage, all dressed in the most ludicrous style, and dancing a ‘pas d’ensemble’. Suddenly the whole of the pit burst into loud applause at the appearance of a tall, well-made dancer, wearing a mask and an enormous black wig, the hair of which went half-way down his back, and dressed in a robe open in front and reaching to his heels. Patu said, almost reverently, “It is the inimitable Dupres.” I had heard of him before, and became attentive. I saw that fine figure coming forward with measured steps, and when the dancer had arrived in front of the stage, he raised slowly his rounded arms, stretched them gracefully backward and forward, moved his feet with precision and lightness, took a few small steps, made some battements and pirouettes, and disappeared like a butterfly. The whole had not lasted half a minute. The applause burst from every part of the house. I was astonished, and asked my friend the cause of all those bravos.

“We applaud the grace of Dupres and, the divine harmony of his movements. He is now sixty years of age, and those who saw him forty years ago say that he is always the same.”

“What! Has he never danced in a different style?”

“He could not have danced in a better one, for his style is perfect, and what can you want above perfection?”

“Nothing, unless it be a relative perfection.”

“But here it is absolute. Dupres always does the same thing, and everyday we fancy we see it for the first time. Such is the power of the good and beautiful, of the true and sublime, which speak to the soul. His dance is true harmony, the real dance, of which you have no idea in Italy.”

At the end of the second act, Dupres appeared again, still with a mask, and danced to a different tune, but in my opinion doing exactly the same as before. He advanced to the very footlights, and stopped one instant in a graceful attitude. Patu wanted to force my admiration, and I gave way. Suddenly everyone round me exclaimed, —

“Look! look! he is developing himself!”

And in reality he was like an elastic body which, in developing itself, would get larger. I made Patu very happy by telling him that Dupres was truly very graceful in all his movements. Immediately after him we had a female dancer, who jumped about like a fury, cutting to right and left, but heavily, yet she was applauded ‘con furore’.

“This is,” said Patu, “the famous Camargo. I congratulate you, my friend, upon having arrived in Paris in time to see her, for she has accomplished her twelfth lustre.”

I confessed that she was a wonderful dancer.

“She is the first artist,” continued my friend, “who has dared to spring and jump on a French stage. None ventured upon doing it before her, and, what is more extraordinary, she does not wear any drawers.”

“I beg your pardon, but I saw….”

“What? Nothing but her skin which, to speak the truth, is not made of lilies and roses.”

“The Camargo,” I said, with an air of repentance, “does not please me. I like Dupres much better.”

An elderly admirer of Camargo, seated on my left, told me that in her youth she could perform the ‘saut de basque’ and even the ‘gargouillade’, and that nobody had ever seen her thighs, although she always danced without drawers.

“But if you never saw her thighs, how do you know that she does not wear silk tights?”

“Oh! that is one of those things which can easily be ascertained. I see you are a foreigner, sir.”

“You are right.”

But I was delighted at the French opera, with the rapidity of the scenic changes which are done like lightning, at the signal of a whistle — a thing entirely unknown in Italy. I likewise admired the start given to the orchestra by the baton of the leader, but he disgusted me with the movements of his sceptre right and left, as if he thought that he could give life to all the instruments by the mere motion of his arm. I admired also the silence of the audience, a thing truly wonderful to an Italian, for it is with great reason that people complain of the noise made in Italy while the artists are singing, and ridicule the silence which prevails through the house as soon as the dancers make their appearance on the stage. One would imagine that all the intelligence of the Italians is in their eyes. At the same time I must observe that there is not one country in the world in which extravagance and whimsicalness cannot be found, because the foreigner can make comparisons with what he has seen elsewhere, whilst the natives are not conscious of their errors. Altogether the opera pleased me, but the French comedy captivated me. There the French are truly in their element; they perform splendidly, in a masterly manner, and other nations cannot refuse them the palm which good taste and justice must award to their superiority. I was in the habit of going there every day, and although sometimes the audience was not composed of two hundred persons, the actors were perfect. I have seen ‘Le Misanthrope’, ‘L’Avare’, ‘Tartufe’, ‘Le Joueur’, ‘Le Glorieux’, and many other comedies; and, no matter how often I saw them. I always fancied it was the first time. I arrived in Paris to admire Sarrazin, La Dangeville, La Dumesnil, La Gaussin, La Clairon, Preville, and several actresses who, having retired from the stage, were living upon their pension, and delighting their circle of friends. I made, amongst others, the acquaintance of the celebrated Le Vasseur. I visited them all with pleasure, and they related to me several very curious anecdotes. They were generally most kindly disposed in every way.

One evening, being in the box of Le Vasseur, the performance was composed of a tragedy in which a very handsome actress had the part of a dumb priestess.

“How pretty she is!” I said.

“Yes, charming,” answered Le Vasseur, “She is the daughter of the actor who plays the confidant. She is very pleasant in company, and is an actress of good promise.”

“I should be very happy to make her acquaintance.”

“Oh! well; that is not difficult. Her father and mother are very worthy people, and they will be delighted if you ask them to invite you to supper. They will not disturb you; they will go to bed early, and will let you talk with their daughter as long as you please. You are in France, sir; here we know the value of life, and try to make the best of it. We love pleasure, and esteem ourselves fortunate when we can find the opportunity of enjoying life.”

“That is truly charming, madam; but how could I be so bold as to invite myself to supper with worthy persons whom I do not know, and who have not the slightest knowledge of me?”

“Oh, dear me! What are you saying? We know everybody. You see how I treat you myself. After the performance, I shall be happy to introduce you, and the acquaintance will be made at once.”

“I certainly must ask you to do me that honour, but another time.”

“Whenever you like.”

CHAPTER VII

My Blunders in the French Language, My Success, My Numerous

Acquaintances — Louis XV. — My Brother Arrives in Paris.

All the Italian actors in Paris insisted upon entertaining me, in order to shew me their magnificence, and they all did it in a sumptuous style. Carlin Bertinazzi who played Harlequin, and was a great favourite of the Parisians, reminded me that he had already seen me thirteen years before in Padua, at the time of his return from St. Petersburg with my mother. He offered me an excellent dinner at the house of Madame de la Caillerie, where he lodged. That lady was in love with him. I complimented her upon four charming children whom I saw in the house. Her husband, who was present, said to me;

“They are M. Carlin’s children.”

“That may be, sir, but you take care of them, and as they go by your name, of course they will acknowledge you as their father.”

“Yes, I should be so legally; but M. Carlin is too honest a man not to assume the care of his children whenever I may wish to get rid of them. He is well aware that they belong to him, and my wife would be the first to complain if he ever denied it.”

The man was not what is called a good, easy fellow, far from it; but he took the matter in a philosophical way, and spoke of it with calm, and even with a sort of dignity. He was attached to Carlin by a warm friendship, and such things were then very common in Paris amongst people of a certain class. Two noblemen, Boufflers and Luxembourg, had made a friendly exchange of each other’s wives, and each had children by the other’s wife. The young Boufflers were called Luxembourg, and the young Luxembourg were called Boufflers. The descendants of those tiercelets are even now known in France under those names. Well, those who were in the secret of that domestic comedy laughed, as a matter of course, and it did not prevent the earth from moving according to the laws of gravitation.

The most wealthy of the Italian comedians in Paris was Pantaloon, the father of Coraline and Camille, and a well-known usurer. He also invited me to dine with his family, and I was delighted with his two daughters. The eldest, Coraline, was kept by the Prince of Monaco, son of the Duke of Valentinois, who was still alive; and Camille was enamoured of the Count of Melfort, the favourite of the Duchess of Chartres, who had just become Duchess of Orleans by the death of her father-in-law.

Coraline was not so sprightly as Camille, but she was prettier. I began to make love to her as a young man of no consequence, and at hours which I thought would not attract attention: but all hours belong by right to the established lover, and I therefore found myself sometimes with her when the Prince of Monaco called to see her. At first I would bow to the prince and withdraw, but afterwards I was asked to remain, for as a general thing princes find a tete-a-tete with their mistresses rather wearisome. Therefore we used to sup together, and they both listened, while it was my province to eat, and to relate stories.

I bethought myself of paying my court to the prince, and he received my advances very well. One morning, as I called on Coraline, he said to me,

“Ah! I am very glad to see you, for I have promised the Duchess of Rufe to present you to her, and we can go to her immediately.”

Again a duchess! My star is decidedly in the ascendant. Well, let us go! We got into a ‘diable’, a sort of vehicle then very fashionable, and at eleven o’clock in the morning we were introduced to the duchess.

Dear reader, if I were to paint it with a faithful pen, my portrait of that lustful vixen would frighten you. Imagine sixty winters heaped upon a face plastered with rouge, a blotched and pimpled complexion, emaciated and gaunt features, all the ugliness of libertinism stamped upon the countenance of that creature relining upon the sofa. As soon as she sees me, she exclaims with rapid joy,

“Ah! this is a good-looking man! Prince, it is very amiable on your part to bring him to me. Come and sit near me, my fine fellow!”

I obeyed respectfully, but a noxious smell of musk, which seemed to me almost corpse-like, nearly upset me. The infamous duchess had raised herself on the sofa and exposed all the nakedness of the most disgusting bosom, which would have caused the most courageous man to draw back. The prince, pretending to have some engagement, left us, saying that he would send his carriage for me in a short time.

As soon as we were alone, the plastered skeleton thrust its arms forward, and, without giving me time to know what I was about, the creature gave me a horrible kiss, and then one of her hands began to stray with the most bare-faced indecency.

“Let me see, my fine cock,” she said, “if you have a fine …”

I was shuddering, and resisted the attempt.

“Well, well! What a baby you are!” said the disgusting Messaline; “are you such a novice?”

“No, madam; but….”

“But what?”

“I have….”

“Oh, the villain!” she exclaimed, loosing her hold; “what was I going to expose myself to!”

I availed myself of the opportunity, snatched my hat, and took to my heels, afraid lest the door-keeper should stop me.

I took a coach and drove to Coraline’s, where I related the adventure. She laughed heartily, and agreed with me that the prince had played me a nasty trick. She praised the presence of mind with which I had invented an impediment, but she did not give me an opportunity of proving to her that I had deceived the duchess.

Yet I was not without hope, and suspected that she did not think me sufficiently enamoured of her.

Three or four days afterwards, however, as we had supper together and alone, I told her so many things, and I asked her so clearly to make me happy or else to dismiss me, that she gave me an appointment for the next day.

“To-morrow,” she said, “the prince goes to Versailles, and he will not return until the day after; we will go together to the warren to hunt ferrets, and have no doubt we shall come back to Paris pleased with one another."

"That is right."

The next day at ten o'clock we took a coach, but as we were nearing the gate of the city a vis-a-vis, with servants in a foreign livery came tip to us, and the person who was in it called out, "Stop! Stop!"

The person was the Chevalier de Wurtemburg, who, without deigning to cast even one glance on me, began to say sweet words to Coraline, and thrusting his head entirely out of his carriage he whispered to her. She answered him likewise in a whisper; then taking my hand, she said to me, laughingly,

"I have some important business with this prince; go to the warren alone, my dear friend, enjoy the hunt, and come to me to-morrow."

And saying those words she got out, took her seat in the vis-a-vis, and I found myself very much in the position of Lot's wife, but not motionless.

Dear reader, if you have ever been in such a predicament you will easily realize the rage with which I was possessed: if you have never been served in that way, so much the better for you, but it is useless for me to try to give you an idea of my anger; you would not understand me.

I was disgusted with the coach, and I jumped out of it, telling the driver to go to the devil. I took the first hack which happened to pass, and drove straight to Patu's house, to whom I related my adventure, almost foaming with rage. But very far from pitying me or sharing my anger, Patu, much wiser, laughed and said,

"I wish with all my heart that the same thing might happen to me; for you are certain of possessing our beautiful Coraline the very first time you are with her."

"I would not have her, for now I despise her heartily." "Your contempt ought to have come sooner. But, now that is too late to discuss the matter, I offer you, as a compensation, a dinner at the Hotel du Roule."

"Most decidedly yes; it is an excellent idea. Let us go."

The Hotel du Roule was famous in Paris, and I had not been there yet. The woman who kept it had furnished the place with great elegance, and she always had twelve or fourteen well-chosen nymphs, with all the conveniences that could be desired. Good cooking, good beds, cleanliness, solitary and beautiful groves. Her cook was an artist, and her wine-cellar excellent. Her name was Madame Paris; probably an assumed name, but it was good enough for the purpose. Protected by the police, she was far enough from Paris to be certain that those who visited her liberally appointed establishment were above the middle class. Everything was strictly regulated in her house and every pleasure was taxed at a reasonable tariff. The prices were six francs for a breakfast with a nymph, twelve for dinner, and twice that sum to spend a whole night. I found the house even better than its reputation, and by far superior to the warren.

We took a coach, and Patu said to the driver,

"To Chaillot."

"I understand, your honour."

After a drive of half an hour, we stopped before a gate on which could be read, "Hotel du Roule."

The gate was closed. A porter, sporting long mustachioes, came out through a side-door and gravely examined us. He was most likely pleased with our appearance, for the gate was opened and we went in. A woman, blind of one eye, about forty years old, but with a remnant of beauty, came up, saluted us politely, and enquired whether we wished to have dinner. Our answer being affirmative, she took us to a fine room in which we found fourteen young women, all very handsome, and dressed alike in muslin. As we entered the room, they rose and made us a graceful reverence; they were all about the same age, some with light hair, some with dark; every taste could be satisfied. We passed them in review, addressing a few words to each, and made our choice. The two we chose screamed for joy, kissed us with a voluptuousness which a novice might have mistaken for love, and took us to the garden until dinner would be ready. That garden was very large and artistically arranged to minister to the pleasures of love. Madame Paris said to us,

"Go, gentlemen, enjoy the fresh air with perfect security in every way; my house is the temple of peace and of good health."

The girl I had chosen was something like Coraline, and that made me find her delightful. But in the midst of our amorous occupations we were called to dinner. We were well served, and the dinner had given us new strength, when our single-eyed hostess came, watch in hand, to announce that time was up. Pleasure at the "Hotel du Roule" was measured by the hour.

I whispered to Patu, and, after a few philosophical considerations, addressing himself to madame la gouvernante, he said to her,

"We will have a double dose, and of course pay double."

"You are quite welcome, gentlemen."

We went upstairs, and after we had made our choice a second time, we renewed our promenade in the garden. But once more we were disagreeably surprised by the strict punctuality of the lady of the house. "Indeed! this is too much of a good thing, madam."

"Let us go up for the third time, make a third choice, and pass the whole night here."

"A delightful idea which I accept with all my heart."

"Does Madame Paris approve our plan?"

"I could not have devised a better one, gentlemen; it is a masterpiece."

When we were in the room, and after we had made a new choice, the girls laughed at the first ones who had not contrived to captivate us, and by way of revenge these girls told their companions that we were lanky fellows.

This time I was indeed astonished at my own choice. I had taken a true Aspasia, and I thanked my stars that I had passed her by the first two times, as I had now the certainty of possessing her for fourteen hours. That beauty's name was Saint Hilaire; and under that name she became famous in England, where she followed a rich lord the year after. At first, vexed because I had not remarked her before, she was proud and disdainful; but I soon proved to her that it was fortunate that my first or second choice had not fallen on her, as she would now remain longer with me. She then began to laugh, and shewed herself very agreeable.

That girl had wit, education and talent-everything, in fact, that is needful to succeed in the profession she had adopted. During the supper Patu told me in Italian that he was on the point of taking her at the very moment I chose her, and the next morning he informed me that he had slept quietly all night. The Saint Hilaire was highly pleased with me, and she boasted of it before her companions. She was the cause of my paying several visits to the Hotel du Roule, and all for her; she was very proud of my constancy.

Those visits very naturally cooled my ardour for Coraline. A singer from Venice, called Guadani, handsome, a thorough musician, and very witty, contrived to captivate her affections three weeks after my quarrel with her. The handsome fellow, who was a man only in appearance, inflamed her with curiosity if not with love, and caused a rupture with the prince, who caught her in the very act. But Coraline managed to coax him back, and, a short time after, a reconciliation took place between them, and such a good one, that a babe was the consequence of it; a girl, whom the prince named Adelaide, and to whom he gave a dowry. After the death of his father, the Duke of Valentinois, the prince left her altogether and married Mlle. de Brignole, from Genoa. Coraline became the mistress of Count de la Marche, now Prince de Conti. Coraline is now dead, as well as a son whom she had by the count, and whom his father named Count de Monreal.

Madame la Dauphine was delivered of a princess, who received the title of Madame de France.

In the month of August the Royal Academy had an exhibition at the Louvre, and as there was not a single battle piece I conceived the idea of summoning my brother to Paris. He was then in Venice, and he had great talent in that particular style. Passorelli, the only painter of battles known in France, was dead, and I thought that Francois might succeed and make a fortune. I therefore wrote to M. Grimani and to my brother; I persuaded them both, but Francois did not come to Paris till the beginning of the following year.

Louis XV., who was passionately fond of hunting, was in the habit of spending six weeks every year at the Chateau of Fontainebleau. He always returned to Versailles towards the middle of November. That trip cost him, or rather cost France, five millions of francs. He always took with him all that could contribute to the amusement of the foreign ambassadors and of his numerous court. He was followed by the French and the Italian comedians, and by the actors and actresses of the opera.

During those six weeks Fontainebleau was more brilliant than Versailles; nevertheless, the artists attached to the theatres were so numerous that the Opera, the French and Italian Comedies, remained open in Paris.

Baletti's father, who had recovered his health, was to go to Fontainebleau with Silvia and all his family. They invited me to accompany them, and to accept a lodging in a house hired by them.

It was a splendid opportunity; they were my friends, and I accepted, for I could not have met with a better occasion to see the court and all the foreign ministers. I presented myself to M. de Morosini, now Procurator at St. Mark's, and then ambassador from the Republic to the French court.

The first night of the opera he gave me permission to accompany him; the music was by Lulli. I had a seat in the pit precisely under the private box of Madame de Pompadour, whom I did not know. During the first scene the celebrated Le Maur gave a scream so shrill and so unexpected that I thought she had gone mad. I burst into a genuine laugh, not supposing that any one could possibly find fault with it. But a knight of the Order of the Holy Ghost, who was near the Marquise de Pompadour, dryly asked me what country I came from. I answered, in the same tone,

"From Venice."

"I have been there, and have laughed heartily at the recitative in your operas."

"I believe you, sir, and I feel certain that no one ever thought of objecting to your laughing."

My answer, rather a sharp one, made Madame de Pompadour laugh, and she asked me whether I truly came from down there.

"What do you mean by down there?"

"I mean Venice."

"Venice, madam, is not down there, but up there."

That answer was found more singular than the first, and everybody in the box held a consultation in order to ascertain whether Venice was down or up. Most likely they thought I was right, for I was left alone. Nevertheless, I listened to the opera without laughing; but as I had a very bad cold I blew my nose often. The same gentleman addressing himself again to me, remarked that very likely the windows of my room did not close well. That gentleman, who was unknown to me was the Marechal de Richelieu. I told him he was mistaken, for my windows were well ‘calfoutrees’. Everyone in the box burst into a loud laugh, and I felt mortified, for I knew my mistake; I ought to have said ‘calfeutrees’. But these ‘eus’ and ‘ous’ cause dire misery to all foreigners.

Half an hour afterwards M. de Richelieu asked me which of the two actresses pleased me most by her beauty.

“That one, sir.”

“But she has ugly legs.”

“They are not seen, sir; besides, whenever I examine the beauty of a woman, ‘la premiere chose que j’ecarte, ce sont les jambes’.”

That word said quite by chance, and the double meaning of which I did not understand, made at once an important personage of me, and everybody in the box of Madame de Pompadour was curious to know me. The marshal learned who I was from M. de Morosini, who told me that the duke would be happy to receive me. My ‘jeu de mots’ became celebrated, and the marshal honoured me with a very gracious welcome. Among the foreign ministers, the one to whom I attached myself most was Lord Keith, Marshal of Scotland and ambassador of the King of Prussia. I shall have occasion to speak of him.

The day after my arrival in Fontainebleau I went alone to the court, and I saw Louis XV., the handsome king, go to the chapel with the royal family and all the ladies of the court, who surprised me by their ugliness as much as the ladies of the court of Turin had astonished me by their beauty. Yet in the midst of so many ugly ones I found out a regular beauty. I enquired who she was.

“She is,” answered one of my neighbours, “Madame de Brionne, more remarkable by her virtue even than by her beauty. Not only is there no scandalous story told about her, but she has never given any opportunity to scandal-mongers of inventing any adventure of which she was the heroine.”

“Perhaps her adventures are not known.”

“Ah, monsieur! at the court everything is known.”

I went about alone, sauntering through the apartments, when suddenly I met a dozen ugly ladies who seemed to be running rather than walking; they were standing so badly upon their legs that they appeared as if they would fall forward on their faces. Some gentleman happened to be near me, curiosity impelled me to enquire where they were coming from, and where they were going in such haste.

“They are coming from the apartment of the queen who is going to dine, and the reason why they walk so badly is that their shoes have heels six inches high, which compel them to walk on their toes and with bent knees in order to avoid falling on their faces.”

“But why do they not wear lower heels?”

“It is the fashion.”

“What a stupid fashion!”

I took a gallery at random, and saw the king passing along, leaning with one arm on the shoulder of M. d’Argenson. “Oh, base servility!” I thought to myself. “How can a man make up his mind thus to bear the yoke, and how can a man believe himself so much above all others as to take such unwarrantable liberties!”

Louis XV. had the most magnificent head it was possible to see, and he carried it with as much grace as majesty. Never did even the most skilful painter succeed in rendering justice to the expression of that beautiful head, when the king turned it on one side to look with kindness at anyone. His beauty and grace compelled love at once. As I saw him, I thought I had found the ideal majesty which I had been so surprised not to find in the king of Sardinia, and I could not entertain a doubt of Madame de Pompadour having been in love with the king when she sued for his royal attention. I was greatly mistaken, perhaps, but such a thought was natural in looking at the countenance of Louis XV.

I reached a splendid room in which I saw several courtiers walking about, and a table large enough for twelve persons, but laid out only for one.

“For whom is this table?”

“For the queen. Her majesty is now coming in.”

It was the queen of France, without rouge, and very simply dressed; her head was covered with a large cap; she looked old and devout. When she was near the table, she graciously thanked two nuns who were placing a plate with fresh butter on it. She sat down, and immediately the courtiers formed a semicircle within five yards of the table; I remained near them, imitating their respectful silence.

Her majesty began to eat without looking at anyone, keeping her eyes on her plate. One of the dishes being to her taste, she desired to be helped to it a second time, and she then cast her eyes round the circle of courtiers, probably in order to see if among them there was anyone to whom she owed an account of her daintiness. She found that person, I suppose, for she said,

“Monsieur de Lowendal!”

At that name, a fine-looking man came forward with respectful inclination, and said,

“Your majesty?”

“I believe this is a fricassee of chickens.”

“I am of the same opinion, madam.”

After this answer, given in the most serious tone, the queen continued eating, and the marshal retreated backward to his original place. The queen finished her dinner without uttering a single word, and retired to her apartments the same way as she had come. I thought that if such was the way the queen of France took all her meals, I would not sue for the honour of being her guest.

I was delighted to have seen the famous captain who had conquered Bergen-op-Zoom, but I regretted that such a man should be compelled to give an answer about a fricassee of chickens in the serious tone of a judge pronouncing a sentence of death.

I made good use of this anecdote at the excellent dinner Silvia gave to the elite of polite and agreeable society.

A few days afterwards, as I was forming a line with a crowd of courtiers to enjoy the ever new pleasure of seeing the king go to mass, a pleasure to which must be added the advantage of looking at the naked and entirely exposed arms and bosoms of Mesdames de France, his daughters, I suddenly perceived the Cavamacchia, whom I had left in Cesena under the name of Madame Querini. If I was astonished to see her, she was as much so in meeting me in such a place. The Marquis of Saint Simon, premier 'gentilhomme' of the Prince de Conde, escorted her.

"Madame Querini in Fontainebleau?"

"You here? It reminds me of Queen Elizabeth saying,

"'Pauper ubique facet.'"

"An excellent comparison, madam."

"I am only joking, my dear friend; I am here to see the king, who does not know me; but to-morrow the ambassador will present me to his majesty."

She placed herself in the line within a yard or two from me, beside the door by which the king was to come. His majesty entered the gallery with M. de Richelieu, and looked at the so-called Madame Querini. But she very likely did not take his fancy, for, continuing to walk on, he addressed to the marshal these remarkable words, which Juliette must have overheard,

"We have handsomer women here."

In the afternoon I called upon the Venetian ambassador. I found him in numerous company, with Madame Querini sitting on his right. She addressed me in the most flattering and friendly manner; it was extraordinary conduct on the part of a giddy woman who had no cause to like me, for she was aware that I knew her thoroughly, and that I had mastered her vanity; but as I understood her manoeuvring I made up my mind not to disoblige her, and even to render her all the good offices I could; it was a noble revenge.

As she was speaking of M. Querini, the ambassador congratulated her upon her marriage with him, saying that he was glad M. Querini had rendered justice to her merit, and adding,

"I was not aware of your marriage."

"Yet it took place more than two years since," said Juliette.

"I know it for a fact," I said, in my turn; "for, two years ago, the lady was introduced as Madame Querini and with the title of excellency by General

Spada to all the nobility in Cesena, where I was at that time."

"I have no doubt of it," answered the ambassador, fixing his eyes upon me, "for Querini has himself written to me on the subject."

A few minutes afterwards, as I was preparing to take my leave, the ambassador, under pretense of some letters the contents of which he wished to communicate to me, invited me to come into his private room, and he asked me what people generally thought of the marriage in Venice.

"Nobody knows it, and it is even rumoured that the heir of the house of Querini is on the point of marrying a daughter of the Grimani family; but I shall certainly send the news to Venice."

"What news?"

"That Juliette is truly Madame Querini, since your excellency will present her as such to Louis XV."

"Who told you so?"

"She did."

"Perhaps she has altered her mind."

I repeated to the ambassador the words which the king had said to M. de Richelieu after looking at Juliette.

"Then I can guess," remarked the ambassador, "why Juliette does not wish to be presented to the king."

I was informed some time afterwards that M. de Saint Quentin, the king's confidential minister, had called after mass on the handsome Venetian, and had told her that the king of France had most certainly very bad taste, because he had not thought her beauty superior to that of several ladies of his court. Juliette left Fontainebleau the next morning.

In the first part of my Memoirs I have spoken of Juliette's beauty; she had a wonderful charm in her countenance, but she had already used her advantages too long, and her beauty was beginning to fade when she arrived in Fontainebleau.

I met her again in Paris at the ambassador's, and she told me with a laugh that she had only been in jest when she called herself Madame Querini, and that I should oblige her if for the future I would call her by her real name of Countess Preati. She invited me to visit her at the Hotel de Luxembourg, where she was staying. I often called on her, for her intrigues amused me, but I was wise enough not to meddle with them.

She remained in Paris four months, and contrived to infatuate M. Ranchi, secretary of the Venetian Embassy, an amiable and learned man. He was so deeply in love that he had made up his mind to marry her; but through a caprice which she, perhaps, regretted afterwards, she ill-treated him, and the fool died of grief. Count de Canes. ambassador of Maria Theresa, had some inclination for her, as well as the Count of Zinzendorf. The person who arranged these transient and short-lived intrigues was a certain Guasco, an abbe not over-favoured with the gifts of Plutus. He was particularly ugly, and had to purchase small favours with great services.

But the man whom she really wished to marry was Count Saint Simon. He would have married her if she had not given him false addresses to make enquiries respecting her birth. The Preati family of Verona denied all knowledge of her, as a matter of course, and M. de Saint Simon, who, in spite of all his love, had not entirely lost his senses, had the courage to abandon her. Altogether, Paris did not prove an ‘el dorado’ for my handsome countrywoman, for she was obliged to pledge her diamonds, and to leave them behind her. After her return to Venice she married the son of the Uccelli, who sixteen years before had taken her out of her poverty. She died ten years ago.

I was still taking my French lessons with my good old Crebillon; yet my style, which was full of Italianisms, often expressed the very reverse of what I meant to say. But generally my ‘quid pro quos’ only resulted in curious jokes which made my fortune; and the best of it is that my gibberish did me no harm on the score of wit: on the contrary, it procured me fine acquaintances.

Several ladies of the best society begged me to teach them Italian, saying that it would afford them the opportunity of teaching me French; in such an exchange I always won more than they did.

Madame Preodot, who was one of my pupils, received me one morning; she was still in bed, and told me that she did not feel disposed to have a lesson, because she had taken medicine the night previous. Foolishly translating an

Italian idiom, I asked her, with an air of deep interest, whether she had well ‘decharge’?

“Sir, what a question! You are unbearable.”

I repeated my question; she broke out angrily again.

“Never utter that dreadful word.”

“You are wrong in getting angry; it is the proper word.”

“A very dirty word, sir, but enough about it. Will you have some breakfast?”

“No, I thank you. I have taken a ‘cafe’ and two ‘Savoyards’.”

“Dear me! What a ferocious breakfast! Pray, explain yourself.”

“I say that I have drunk a cafe and eaten two Savoyards soaked in it, and that is what I do every morning.”

“You are stupid, my good friend. A cafe is the establishment in which coffee is sold, and you ought to say that you have drunk ‘use tasse de cafe’”

“Good indeed! Do you drink the cup? In Italy we say a ‘caffs’, and we are not foolish enough to suppose that it means the coffee-house.”

“He will have the best of it! And the two ‘Savoyards’, how did you swallow them?”

“Soaked in my coffee, for they were not larger than these on your table.”

“And you call these ‘Savoyards’? Say biscuits.”

“In Italy, we call them ‘Savoyards’ because they were first invented in Savoy; and it is not my fault if you imagined that I had swallowed two of the porters to be found at the corner of the streets — big fellows whom you call in Paris Savoyards, although very often they have never been in Savoy.”

Her husband came in at that moment, and she lost no time in relating the whole of our conversation. He laughed heartily, but he said I was right. Her niece arrived a few minutes after; she was a young girl about fourteen years of age, reserved, modest, and very intelligent. I had given her five or six lessons in Italian, and as she was very fond of that language and studied diligently she was beginning to speak.

Wishing to pay me her compliments in Italian, she said to me,

"'Signore, sono in cantata di vi Vader in bona salute'."

"I thank you, mademoiselle; but to translate 'I am enchanted', you must say 'ho pacer', and for to see you, you must say 'di vedervi'."

"I thought, sir, that the 'vi' was to be placed before."

"No, mademoiselle, we always put it behind."

Monsieur and Madame Preodot were dying with laughter; the young lady was confused, and I in despair at having uttered such a gross absurdity; but it could not be helped. I took a book sulkily, in the hope of putting a stop to their mirth, but it was of no use: it lasted a week. That uncouth blunder soon got known throughout Paris, and gave me a sort of reputation which I lost little by little, but only when I understood the double meanings of words better. Crebillon was much amused with my blunder, and he told me that I ought to have said after instead of behind. Ah! why have not all languages the same genius! But if the French laughed at my mistakes in speaking their language, I took my revenge amply by turning some of their idioms into ridicule.

"Sir," I once said to a gentleman, "how is your wife?"

"You do her great honour, sir."

"Pray tell me, sir, what her honour has to do with her health?"

I meet in the Bois de Boulogne a young man riding a horse which he cannot master, and at last he is thrown. I stop the horse, run to the assistance of the young man and help him up.

"Did you hurt yourself, sir?"

"Oh, many thanks, sir, au contraire."

"Why au contraire! The deuce! It has done you good? Then begin again, sir."

And a thousand similar expressions entirely the reverse of good sense. But it is the genius of the language.

I was one day paying my first visit to the wife of President de N —— , when her nephew, a brilliant butterfly, came in, and she introduced me to him, mentioning my name and my country.

“Indeed, sir, you are Italian?” said the young man. “Upon my word, you present yourself so gracefully that I would have betted you were French.”

“Sir, when I saw you, I was near making the same mistake; I would have betted you were Italian.”

Another time, I was dining at Lady Lambert’s in numerous and brilliant company. Someone remarked on my finger a cornelian ring on which was engraved very beautifully the head of Louis XV. My ring went round the table, and everybody thought that the likeness was striking.

A young marquise, who had the reputation of being a great wit, said to me in the most serious tone,

“It is truly an antique?”

“The stone, madam, undoubtedly.”

Everyone laughed except the thoughtless young beauty, who did not take any notice of it. Towards the end of the dinner, someone spoke of the rhinoceros, which was then shewn for twenty-four sous at the St. Germain’s Fair.

“Let us go and see it!” was the cry.

We got into the carriages, and reached the fair. We took several turns before we could find the place. I was the only gentleman; I was taking care of two ladies in the midst of the crowd, and the witty marquise was walking in front of us. At the end of the alley where we had been told that we would find the animal, there was a man placed to receive the money of the visitors. It is true that the man, dressed in the African fashion, was very dark and enormously stout, yet he had a human and very masculine form, and the beautiful marquise had no business to make a mistake. Nevertheless, the thoughtless young creature went up straight to him and said,

“Are you the rhinoceros, sir?”

“Go in, madam, go in.”

We were dying with laughing; and the marquise, when she had seen the animal, thought herself bound to apologize to the master; assuring him that she had never seen a rhinoceros in her life, and therefore he could not feel offended if she had made a mistake.

One evening I was in the foyer of the Italian Comedy, where between the acts the highest noblemen were in the habit of coming, in order to converse and joke with the actresses who used to sit there waiting for their turn to appear on the stage, and I was seated near Camille, Coraline's sister, whom I amused by making love to her. A young councillor, who objected to my occupying Camille's attention, being a very conceited fellow, attacked me upon some remark I made respecting an Italian play, and took the liberty of shewing his bad temper by criticizing my native country. I was answering him in an indirect way, looking all the time at Camille, who was laughing. Everybody had congregated around us and was attentive to the discussion, which, being carried on as an assault of wit, had nothing to make it unpleasant.

But it seemed to take a serious turn when the young fop, turning the conversation on the police of the city, said that for some time it had been dangerous to walk alone at night through the streets of Paris.

"During the last month," he added, "the Place de Greve has seen the hanging of seven men, among whom there were five Italians. An extraordinary circumstance."

"Nothing extraordinary in that," I answered; "honest men generally contrive to be hung far away from their native country; and as a proof of it, sixty Frenchmen have been hung in the course of last year between Naples, Rome, and Venice. Five times twelve are sixty; so you see that it is only a fair exchange."

The laughter was all on my side, and the fine councillor went away rather crestfallen. One of the gentlemen present at the discussion, finding my answer to his taste, came up to Camille, and asked her in a whisper who I was. We got acquainted at once.

It was M. de Marigni, whom I was delighted to know for the sake of my brother whose arrival in Paris I was expecting every day. M. de Marigni was superintendent of the royal buildings, and the Academy of Painting was under his jurisdiction. I mentioned my brother to him, and he graciously promised to protect him. Another young nobleman, who conversed with me, invited me to visit him. It was the Duke de Matalona.

I told him that I had seen him, then only a child, eight years before in Naples, and that I was under great obligations to his uncle, Don Lelio. The young duke was delighted, and we became intimate friends.

My brother arrived in Paris in the spring of 1751, and he lodged with me at Madame Quinson's. He began at once to work with success for private individuals; but his main idea being to compose a picture to be submitted to the judgment of the Academy, I introduced him to M. de Marigni, who received him with great distinction, and encouraged him by assuring him of his protection. He immediately set to work with great diligence.

M. de Morosini had been recalled, and M. de Mocenigo had succeeded him as ambassador of the Republic. M. de Bragadin had recommended me to him, and he tendered a friendly welcome both to me and to my brother, in whose favour he felt interested as a Venetian, and as a young artist seeking to build up a position by his talent.

M. de Mocenigo was of a very pleasant nature; he liked gambling although he was always unlucky at cards; he loved women, and he was not more fortunate with them because he did not know how to manage them. Two years after his arrival in Paris he fell in love with Madame de Colande, and, finding it impossible to win her affections, he killed himself.

Madame la Dauphine was delivered of a prince, the Duke of Burgundy, and the rejoicings indulged in at the birth of that child seem to me incredible now, when I see what the same nation is doing against the king. The people want to be free; it is a noble ambition, for mankind are not made to be the slaves of one man; but with a nation populous, great, witty, and giddy, what will be the end of that revolution? Time alone can tell us.

The Duke de Matalona procured me the acquaintance of the two princes, Don Marc Antoine and Don Jean Baptiste Borghese, from Rome, who were enjoying themselves in Paris, yet living without display. I had occasion to remark that when those Roman princes were presented at the court of France they were only styled "marquis:" It was the same with the Russian princes, to whom the title of prince was refused when they wanted to be presented; they were called "knees," but they did not mind it, because that word meant prince. The court of France has always been foolishly particular on the question of titles, and is even now sparing of the title of monsieur, although it is common enough everywhere every man who was not titled was called Sieur. I have remarked that the king never addressed his bishops otherwise than as abbes, although they were generally very proud of their titles. The king likewise affected to know a nobleman only when his name was inscribed amongst those who served him.

Yet the haughtiness of Louis XV. had been innoculated into him by education; it was not in his nature. When an ambassador presented someone to him, the person thus presented withdrew with the certainty of having been seen by the king, but that was all. Nevertheless, Louis XV. was very polite, particularly with ladies, even with his mistresses, when in public. Whoever failed in respect towards them in the slightest manner was sure of disgrace, and no king ever possessed to a greater extent the grand royal virtue which is called dissimulation. He kept a secret faithfully, and he was delighted when he knew that no one but himself possessed it.

The Chevalier d'Eon is a proof of this, for the king alone knew and had always known that the chevalier was a woman, and all the long discussions which the false chevalier had with the office for foreign affairs was a comedy which the king allowed to go on, only because it amused him.

Louis XV. was great in all things, and he would have had no faults if flattery had not forced them upon him. But how could he possibly have supposed himself faulty in anything when everyone around him repeated constantly that he was the best of kings? A king, in the opinion of which he was imbued respecting his own person, was a being of a nature by far too superior to ordinary men for him not to have the right to consider himself akin to a god. Sad destiny of kings! Vile flatterers are constantly doing everything necessary to reduce them below the condition of man.

The Princess of Ardore was delivered about that time of a young prince. Her husband, the Neapolitan ambassador, entreated Louis XV. to be god-father to the child; the king consented and presented his god-son with a regiment; but the mother, who did not like the military career for her son, refused it. The Marshal de Richelieu told me that he had never known the king laugh so heartily as when he heard of that singular refusal.

At the Duchess de Fulvie's I made the acquaintance of Mdlle. Gaussin, who was called Lolotte. She was the mistress of Lord Albemarle, the English ambassador, a witty and very generous nobleman. One evening he complained of his mistress praising the beauty of the stars which were shining brightly over her head, saying that she ought to know he could not give them to her. If Lord Albemarle had been ambassador to the court of France at the time of the rupture between France and England, he would have arranged all difficulties amicably, and the unfortunate war by which France lost Canada would not have taken place. There is no doubt that the harmony between two nations depends very often upon their respective ambassadors, when there is any danger of a rupture.

As to the noble lord's mistress, there was but one opinion respecting her. She was fit in every way to become his wife, and the highest families of France did not think that she needed the title of Lady Albemarle to be received with distinction; no lady considered it debasing to sit near her, although she was well known as the mistress of the English lord. She had passed from her mother's arms to those of Lord Albemarle at the age of thirteen, and her conduct was always of the highest respectability. She bore children whom the ambassador acknowledged legally, and she died Countess d'Erouville. I shall have to mention her again in my Memoirs.

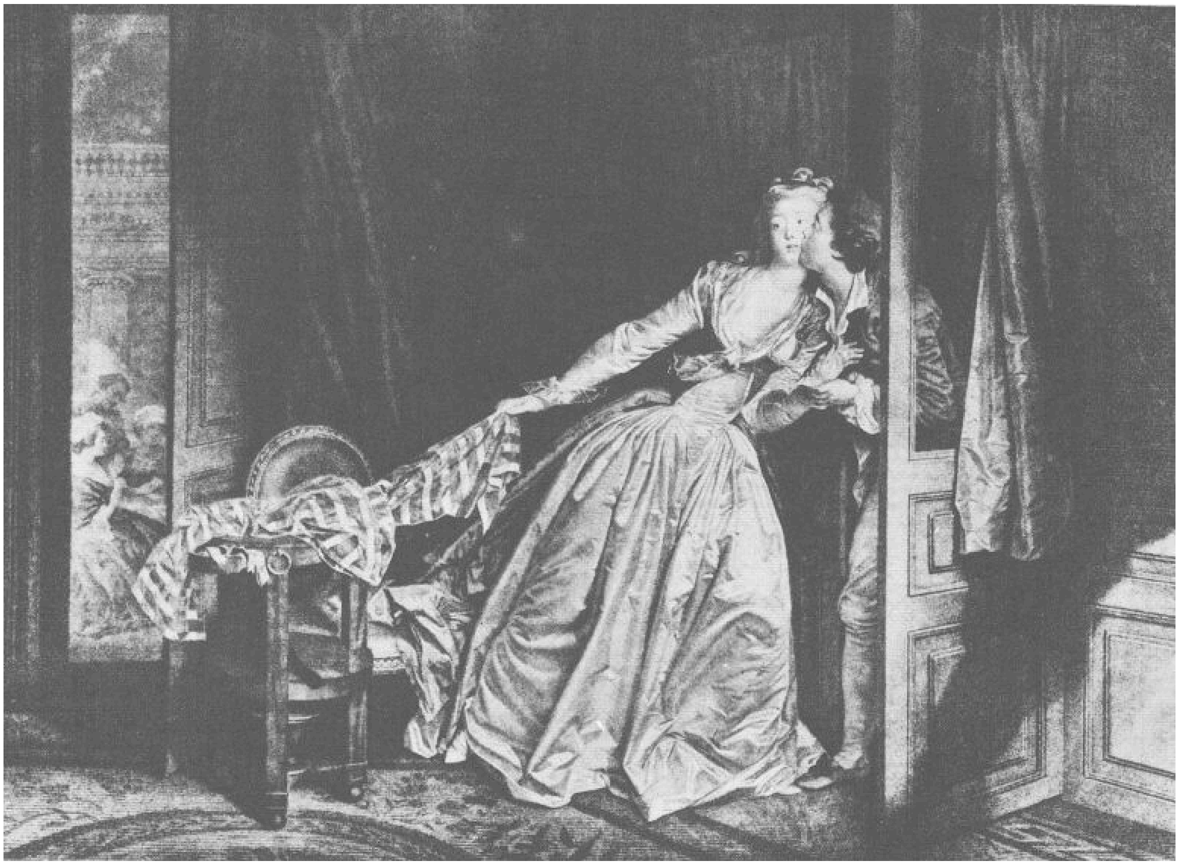
I had likewise occasion to become acquainted at the Venetian Embassy with a lady from Venice, the widow of an English baronet named Wynne. She was then coming from London with her children, where she had been compelled to go in order to insure them the inheritance of their late father, which they would have lost if they had not declared themselves members of the Church of England. She was on her way back to Venice, much pleased with her journey. She was accompanied by her eldest daughter — a young girl of twelve years, who, notwithstanding her youth, carried on her beautiful face all the signs of perfection.

She is now living in Venice, the widow of Count de Rosenberg, who died in Venice ambassador of the Empress-Queen Maria Theresa. She is surrounded by the brilliant halo of her excellent conduct and of all her social virtues. No one can accuse her of any fault, except that of being poor, but she feels it only because it does not allow her to be as charitable as she might wish.

The reader will see in the next chapter how I managed to embroil myself with the French police.

CHAPTER VIII

My Broil With Parisian Justice — Mdlle. Vesian



The youngest daughter of my landlady, Mdlle. Quinson, a young girl between fifteen and sixteen years of age, was in the habit of often coming to my room without being called. It was not long before I discovered that she was in love with me, and I should have thought myself ridiculous if I had been cruel to a young brunette who was piquant, lively, amiable, and had a most delightful voice.

During the first four or five months nothing but childish trifles took place between us; but one night, coming home very late and finding her fast asleep on my bed, I did not see the necessity of waking her up, and undressing myself I lay down beside her…. She left me at daybreak.

Mimi had not been gone three hours when a milliner came with a charming young girl, to invite herself and her friend to breakfast; I thought the young girl well worth a breakfast, but I was tired and wanted rest, and I begged them both to withdraw. Soon after they had left me, Madame Quinson came with her daughter to make my bed. I put my dressing-gown on, and began to write.

"Ah! the nasty hussies!" exclaims the mother.

"What is the matter, madam?"

"The riddle is clear enough, sir; these sheets are spoiled."

"I am very sorry, my dear madam, but change them, and the evil will be remedied at once."

She went out of the room, threatening and grumbling,

"Let them come again, and see if I don't take care of them!"

Mimi remained alone with me, and I addressed her some reproaches for her imprudence. But she laughed, and answered that Love had sent those women on purpose to protect Innocence! After that, Mimi was no longer under any restraint, she would come and share my bed whenever she had a fancy to do so, unless I sent her back to her own room, and in the morning she always left me in good time. But at the end of four months my beauty informed me that our secret would soon be discovered.

"I am very sorry," I said to her, "but I cannot help it."

"We ought to think of something."

"Well, do so."

"What can I think of? Well, come what will; the best thing I can do is not to think of it."

Towards the sixth month she had become so large, that her mother, no longer doubting the truth, got into a violent passion, and by dint of blows compelled her to name the father. Mimi said I was the guilty swain, and perhaps it was not an untruth.

With that great discovery Madame Quinson burst into my room in high dudgeon. She threw herself on a chair, and when she had recovered her breath she loaded me with insulting words, and ended by telling me that I must marry her daughter. At this intimation, understanding her object and wishing to cut the matter short, I told her that I was already married in Italy.

“Then why did you come here and get my daughter with child?”

“I can assure you that I did not mean to do so. Besides, how do you know that I am the father of the child?”

“Mimi says so, and she is certain of it.”

“I congratulate her; but I warn you, madam, that I am ready to swear that I have not any certainty about it.”

“What then?”

“Then nothing. If she is pregnant, she will be confined.”

She went downstairs, uttering curses and threats: the next day I was summoned before the commissary of the district. I obeyed the summons, and found Madame Quinson fully equipped for the battle. The commissary, after the preliminary questions usual in all legal cases, asked me whether I admitted myself guilty towards the girl Quinson of the injury of which the mother, there present personally, complained.

“Monsieur le Commissaire, I beg of you to write word by word the answer which I am going to give you.”

“Very well.”

“I have caused no injury whatever to Mimi, the plaintiff’s daughter, and I refer you to the girl herself, who has always had as much friendship for me as I have had for her.”

“But she declares that she is pregnant from your doings.”

“That may be, but it is not certain.”

“She says it is certain, and she swears that she has never known any other man.”

“If it is so, she is unfortunate; for in such a question a man cannot trust any woman but his own wife.”

“What did you give her in order to seduce her?”

“Nothing; for very far from having seduced her, she has seduced me, and we agreed perfectly in one moment; a pretty woman does not find it very hard to seduce me.”

“Was she a virgin?”

“I never felt any curiosity about it either before or after; therefore, sir, I do not know.”

“Her mother claims reparation, and the law is against you.”

“I can give no reparation to the mother; and as for the law I will obey it when it has been explained to me, and when I am convinced that I have been guilty against it.”

“You are already convinced. Do you imagine that a man who gets an honest girl with child in a house of which he is an inmate does not transgress the laws of society?”

“I admit that to be the case when the mother is deceived; but when that same mother sends her daughter to the room of a young man, are we not right in supposing that she is disposed to accept peacefully all the accidents which may result from such conduct?”

“She sent her daughter to your room only to wait on you.”

“And she has waited on me as I have waited on her if she sends her to my room this evening, and if it is agreeable to Mimi, I will certainly serve her as well as I can; but I will have nothing to do with her against her will or out of my room, the rent of which I have always paid punctually.”

“You may say what you like, but you must pay the fine.”

“I will say what I believe to be just, and I will pay nothing; for there can be no fine where there is no law transgressed. If I am sentenced to pay I shall appeal even to the last jurisdiction and until I obtain justice, for believe me, sir, I know that I am not such an awkward and cowardly fellow as to refuse my caresses to a pretty woman who pleases me, and comes to provoke them in my own room, especially when I feel myself certain of the mother’s agreement.”

I signed the interrogatory after I had read it carefully, and went away. The next day the lieutenant of police sent for me, and after he had heard me, as well as the mother and the daughter, he acquitted me and condemned Madame Quinson in costs. But I could not after all resist the tears of Mimi, and her entreaties for me to defray the expenses of her confinement. She was delivered of a boy, who was sent to the Hotel Dieu to be brought up at the nation’s expense. Soon afterwards Mimi ran away from her mother’s house, and she appeared on the stage at St. Laurent’s Fair. Being unknown, she had no difficulty in finding a lover who took her for a maiden. I found her very pretty on the stage.

“I did not know,” I said to her, “that you were a musician.”

“I am a musician about as much as all my companions, not one of whom knows a note of music. The girls at the opera are not much more clever, and in spite of that, with a good voice and some taste, one can sing delightfully.”

I advised her to invite Patu to supper, and he was charmed with her. Some time afterwards, however, she came to a bad end, and disappeared.

The Italian comedians obtained at that time permission to perform parodies of operas and of tragedies. I made the acquaintance at that theatre of the celebrated Chantilly, who had been the mistress of the Marechal de Saxe, and was called Favart because the poet of that name had married her. She sang in the parody of ‘Thetis et Pelee’, by M. de Fontelle, the part of Tonton, amidst deafening applause. Her grace and talent won the love of a man of the greatest merit, the Abbe de Voisenon, with whom I was as intimate as with Crebillon. All the plays performed at the Italian Comedy, under the name of Madame Favart, were written by the abbe, who became member of the Academie after my departure from Paris. I cultivated an acquaintance the value of which I could appreciate, and he honoured me with his friendship. It was at my suggestions that the Abbe de Voisenon conceived the idea of composing oratorios in poetry; they were sung for the first time at the Tuileries, when the theatres were closed in consequence of some religious festival. That amiable abbe, who had written several comedies in secret, had very poor health and a very small body; he was all wit and gracefulness, famous for his shrewd repartees which, although very cutting, never offended anyone. It was impossible for him to have any enemies, for his criticism only grazed the skin and never wounded deeply.

One day, as he was returning from Versailles, I asked him the news of the court.

“The king is yawning,” he answered, “because he must come to the parliament to-morrow to hold a bed of justice.”

“Why is it called a bed of justice?”

“I do not know, unless it is because justice is asleep during the proceedings.”

I afterwards met in Prague the living portrait of that eminent writer in Count Francois Hardig, now plenipotentiary of the emperor at the court of Saxony.

The Abbe de Voisenon introduced me to Fontenelle, who was then ninety-three years of age. A fine wit, an amiable and learned man, celebrated for his quick repartees, Fontenelle could not pay a compliment without throwing kindness and wit into it. I told him that I had come from Italy on purpose to see him.

“Confess, sir,” he said to me, “that you have kept me waiting a very long time.”

This repartee was obliging and critical at the same time, and pointed out in a delicate and witty manner the untruth of my compliment. He made me a present of his works, and asked me if I liked the French plays; I told him that I had seen ‘Thetis et Pelee’ at the opera. That play was his own composition, and when I had praised it, he told me that it was a ‘tete pelee’.

“I was at the Theatre Francais last night,” I said, “and saw Athalie.”

“It is the masterpiece of Racine; Voltaire, has been wrong in accusing me of having criticized that tragedy, and in attributing to me an epigram, the author of which has never been known, and which ends with two very poor lines:

“Pour avoir fait pis qu’Esther,

Comment diable as-to pu faire”

I have been told that M. de Fontenelle had been the tender friend of Madame du Tencin, that M. d’Alembert was the offspring of their intimacy, and that Le Rond had only been his foster-father. I knew d’Alembert at Madame de Graffigny’s. That great philosopher had the talent of never appearing to be a learned man when he was in the company of amiable persons who had no pretension to learning or the sciences, and he always seemed to endow with intelligence those who conversed with him.

When I went to Paris for the second time, after my escape from The Leads of Venice, I was delighted at the idea of seeing again the amiable, venerable Fontenelle, but he died a fortnight after my arrival, at the beginning of the year 1757.

When I paid my third visit to Paris with the intention of ending my days in that capital, I reckoned upon the friendship of M. d'Alembert, but he died, like Fontenelle, a fortnight after my arrival, towards the end of 1783. Now I feel that I have seen Paris and France for the last time. The popular effervescence has disgusted me, and I am too old to hope to see the end of it.

Count de Looz, Polish ambassador at the French court, invited me in 1751 to translate into Italian a French opera susceptible of great transformations, and of having a grand ballet annexed to the subject of the opera itself. I chose 'Zoroastre', by M. de Cahusac. I had to adapt words to the music of the choruses, always a difficult task. The music remained very beautiful, of course, but my Italian poetry was very poor. In spite of that the generous sovereign sent me a splendid gold snuff-box, and I thus contrived at the same time to please my mother very highly.

It was about that time that Mdlle. Vesian arrived in Paris with her brother. She was quite young, well educated, beautiful, most amiable, and a novice; her brother accompanied her. Her father, formerly an officer in the French army, had died at Parma, his native city. Left an orphan without any means of support, she followed the advice given by her friends; she sold the furniture left by her father, with the intention of going to Versailles to obtain from the justice and from the generosity of the king a small pension to enable her to live. As she got out of the diligence, she took a coach, and desired to be taken to some hotel close by the Italian Theatre; by the greatest chance she was brought to the Hotel de Bourgogne, where I was then staying myself.

In the morning I was told that there were two young Italians, brother and sister, who did not appear very wealthy, in the next room to mine. Italians, young, poor and newly arrived, my curiosity was excited. I went to the door of their room, I knocked, and a young man came to open it in his shirt.

“I beg you to excuse me, sir,” he said to me, “if I receive you in such a state.”

“I have to ask your pardon myself. I only come to offer you my services, as a countryman and as a neighbour.”

A mattress on the floor told me where the young man had slept; a bed standing in a recess and hid by curtains made me guess where the sister was. I begged of her to excuse me if I had presented myself without enquiring whether she was up.

She answered without seeing me, that the journey having greatly tried her she had slept a little later than usual, but that she would get up immediately if I would excuse her for a short time.

“I am going to my room, mademoiselle, and I will come back when you send for me; my room is next door to your own.”

A quarter of an hour after, instead of being sent for, I saw a young and beautiful person enter my room; she made a modest bow, saying that she had come herself to return my visit, and that her brother would follow her immediately.

I thanked her for her visit, begged her to be seated, and I expressed all the interest I felt for her. Her gratitude shewed itself more by the tone of her voice than by her words, and her confidence being already captivated she told me artlessly, but not without some dignity, her short history or rather her situation, and she concluded by these words:

“I must in the course of the day find a less expensive lodging, for I only possess six francs.”

I asked her whether she had any letters of recommendation, and she drew out of her pocket a parcel of papers containing seven or eight testimonials of good conduct and honesty, and a passport.

“Is this all you have, my dear countrywoman?”

“Yes. I intend to call with my brother upon the secretary of war, and I hope he will take pity on me.”

"You do not know anybody here?"

"Not one person, sir; you are the first man in France to whom I have exposed my situation."

"I am a countryman of yours, and you are recommended to me by your position as well as by your age; I wish to be your adviser, if you will permit me."

"Ah, sir! how grateful I would be!"

"Do not mention it. Give me your papers, I will see what is to be done with them. Do not relate your history to anyone, and do not say one word about your position. You had better remain at this hotel. Here are two Louis which I will lend you until you are in a position to return them to me."

She accepted, expressing her heart-felt gratitude.

Mademoiselle Vesian was an interesting brunette of sixteen. She had a good knowledge of French and Italian, graceful manners, and a dignity which endowed her with a very noble appearance. She informed me of her affairs without meanness, yet without that timidity which seems to arise from a fear of the person who listens being disposed to take advantage of the distressing position confided to his honour. She seemed neither humiliated nor bold; she had hope, and she did not boast of her courage. Her virtue was by no means ostentatious, but there was in her an air of modesty which would certainly have put a restraint upon anyone disposed to fail in respect towards her. I felt the effect of it myself, for in spite of her beautiful eyes, her fine figure, of the freshness of her complexion, her transparent skin, her negligee — in one word, all that can tempt a man and which filled me with burning desires, I did not for one instant lose control over myself; she had inspired me with a feeling of respect which helped me to master my senses, and I promised myself not only to attempt nothing against her virtue, but also not to be the first man to make her deviate from the right path. I even thought it better to postpone to another interview a little speech on that subject, the result of which might be to make me follow a different course.

"You are now in a city," I said to her, "in which your destiny must unfold itself, and in which all the fine qualities which nature has so bountifully bestowed upon you, and which may ultimately cause your fortune, may likewise cause your ruin; for here, by dear countrywoman, wealthy men despise all libertine women except those who have offered them the sacrifice of their virtue. If you are virtuous, and are determined upon remaining so, prepare yourself to bear a great deal of misery; if you feel yourself sufficiently above what is called prejudice, if, in one word, you feel disposed to consent to everything, in order to secure a comfortable position, be very careful not to make a mistake. Distrust altogether the sweet words which every passionate man will address to you for the sake of obtaining your favours, for, his passion once satisfied, his ardour will cool down, and you will find yourself deceived. Be wary of your adorers; they will give you abundance of counterfeit coin, but do not trust them far. As far as I am concerned, I feel certain that I shall never injure you, and I hope to be of some use to you. To reassure you entirely on my account, I will treat you as if you were my sister, for I am too young to play the part of your father, and I would not tell you all this if I did not think you a very charming person."

Her brother joined us as we were talking together. He was a good-looking young man of eighteen, well made, but without any style about him; he spoke little, and his expression was devoid of individuality. We breakfasted together, and having asked him as we were at table for what profession he felt an inclination, he answered that he was disposed to do anything to earn an honourable living.

"Have you any peculiar talent?"

"I write pretty well."

"That is something. When you go out, mistrust everybody; do not enter any cafe, and never speak to anyone in the streets. Eat your meals in your room with your sister, and tell the landlady to give you a small closet to sleep in. Write something in French to-day, let me have it to-morrow morning, and we will see what can be done. As for you, mademoiselle, my books are at your disposal, I have your papers; to-morrow I may have some news to tell you; we shall not see each other again to-day, for I generally come home very late." She took a few books, made a modest reverence, and told me with a charming voice that she had every confidence in me.

Feeling disposed to be useful to her, wherever I went during that day I spoke of nothing but of her and of her affairs; and everywhere men and women told me that if she was pretty she could not fail, but that at all events it would be right for her to take all necessary steps. I received a promise that the brother should be employed in some office. I thought that the best plan would be to find some influential lady who would consent to present Mdlle. Vesian to M. d'Argenson, and I knew that in the mean time I could support her. I begged Silvia to mention the matter to Madame de Montconseil, who had very great influence with the secretary of war. She promised to do so, but she wished to be acquainted with the young girl.

I returned to the hotel towards eleven o'clock, and seeing that there was a light still burning in the room of Mdlle. Vesian I knocked at her door. She opened it, and told me that she had sat up in the hope of seeing me. I gave her an account of what I had done. I found her disposed to undertake all that was necessary, and most grateful for my assistance. She spoke of her position with an air of noble indifference which she assumed in order to restrain her tears; she succeeded in keeping them back, but the moisture in her eyes proved all the efforts she was making to prevent them from falling. We had talked for two hours, and going from one subject to another I learned that she had never loved, and that she was therefore worthy of a lover who would reward her in a proper manner for the sacrifice of her virtue. It would have been absurd to think that marriage was to be the reward of that sacrifice; the young girl had not yet made what is called a false step, but she had none of the prudish feelings of those girls who say that they would not take such a step for all the gold in the universe, and usually give way before the slightest attack; all my young friend wanted was to dispose of herself in a proper and advantageous manner.

I could not help sighing as I listened to her very sensible remarks, considering the position in which she was placed by an adverse destiny. Her sincerity was charming to me; I was burning with desire. Lucie of Pasean came back to my memory; I recollected how deeply I had repented the injury I had done in neglecting a sweet flower, which another man, and a less worthy one, had hastened to pluck; I felt myself near a lamb which would perhaps become the prey of some greedy wolf; and she, with her noble feelings, her careful education, and a candour which an impure breath would perhaps destroy for ever, was surely not destined for a lot of shame. I regretted I was not rich enough to make her fortune, and to save her honour and her virtue. I felt that I could neither make her mine in an illegitimate way nor be her guardian angel, and that by becoming her protector I should do her more harm than good; in one word, instead of helping her out of the unfortunate position in which she was, I should, perhaps, only contribute to her entire ruin. During that time I had her near me, speaking to her in a sentimental way, and not uttering one single word of love; but I kissed her hand and her arms too often without coming to a resolution, without beginning a thing which would have too rapidly come to an end, and which would have compelled me to keep her for myself; in that case, there would have been no longer any hope of a fortune for her, and for me no means of getting rid of her. I have loved women even to madness, but I have always loved liberty better; and whenever I have been in danger of losing it fate has come to my rescue.

I had remained about four hours with Mdlle. Vesian, consumed by the most intense desires, and I had had strength enough to conquer them. She could not attribute my reserve to a feeling of modesty, and not knowing why I did not shew more boldness she must have supposed that I was either ill or impotent. I left her, after inviting her to dinner for the next day.

We had a pleasant dinner, and her brother having gone out for a walk after our meal we looked together out of the window from which we could see all the carriages going to the Italian Comedy. I asked her whether she would like to go; she answered me with a smile of delight, and we started at once.

I placed her in the amphitheatre where I left her, telling her that we would meet at the hotel at eleven o'clock. I would not remain with her, in order to avoid the questions which would have been addressed to me, for the simpler her toilet was the more interesting she looked.

After I had left the theatre, I went to sup at Silvia's and returned to the hotel. I was surprised at the sight of an elegant carriage; I enquired to whom it belonged, and I was told that it was the carriage of a young nobleman who had supped with Mdlle. Vesian. She was getting on.

The first thing next morning, as I was putting my head out of the window, I saw a hackney coach stop at the door of the hotel; a young man, well dressed in a morning costume, came out of it, and a minute after I heard him enter the room of Mdlle. Vesian. Courage! I had made up my mind; I affected a feeling of complete indifference in order to deceive myself.

I dressed myself to go out, and while I was at my toilet Vesian came in and told me that he did not like to go into his sister's room because the gentleman who had supped with her had just arrived.

"That's a matter of course," I said.

"He is rich and very handsome. He wishes to take us himself to Versailles, and promises to procure some employment for me."

"I congratulate you. Who is he?"

"I do not know."

I placed in an envelope the papers she had entrusted to me, and I handed them to him to return to his sister. I then went out. When I came home towards three o'clock, the landlady gave me a letter which had been left for me by Mdlle. Vesian, who had left the hotel.

I went to my room, opened the letter, and read the following lines:

"I return the money you have lent me with my best thanks. The Count de Narbonne feels interested in me, and wishes to assist me and my brother. I shall inform you of everything, of the house in which he wishes me to go and live, where he promises to supply me all I want. Your friendship is very dear to me, and I entreat you not to forget me. My brother remains at the hotel, and my room belongs to me for the month. I have paid everything."

"Here is," said I to myself, "a second Lucie de Pasean, and I am a second time the dupe of my foolish delicacy, for I feel certain that the count will not make her happy. But I wash my hands of it all."

I went to the Theatre Francais in the evening, and enquired about Narbonne. The first person I spoke to told me,

"He is the son of a wealthy man, but a great libertine and up to his neck in debts."

Nice references, indeed! For a week I went to all the theatres and public places in the hope of making the acquaintance of the count, but I could not succeed, and I was beginning to forget the adventure when one morning, towards eight o'clock Vesian calling on me, told me that his sister was in her room and wished to speak to me. I followed him immediately. I found her looking unhappy and with eyes red from crying. She told her brother to go out for a walk, and when he had gone she spoke to me thus:

"M. de Narbonne, whom I thought an honest man, because I wanted him to be such, came to sit by me where you had left me at the theatre; he told me that my face had interested him, and he asked me who I was. I told him what I had told you. You had promised to think of me, but Narbonne told me that he did not want your assistance, as he could act by himself. I believed him, and I have been the dupe of my confidence in him; he has deceived me; he is a villain."

The tears were choking her: I went to the window so as to let her cry without restraint: a few minutes after, I came back and I sat down by her.

"Tell me all, my dear Vesian, unburden your heart freely, and do not think yourself guilty towards me; in reality I have been wrong more than you. Your heart would not now be a prey to sorrow if I had not been so imprudent as to leave you alone at the theatre."

"Alas, sir! do not say so; ought I to reproach you because you thought me so virtuous? Well, in a few words, the monster promised to shew me every care, every attention, on condition of my giving him an undeniable, proof of my affection and confidence — namely, to take a lodging without my brother in the house of a woman whom he represented as respectable. He insisted upon my brother not living with me, saying that evil-minded persons might suppose him to be my lover. I allowed myself to be persuaded. Unhappy creature! How could I give way without consulting you? He told me that the respectable woman to whom he would take me would accompany me to Versailles, and that he would send my brother there so that we should be both presented to the war secretary. After our first supper he told me that he would come and fetch me in a hackney coach the next morning. He presented me with two louis and a gold watch, and I thought I could accept those presents from a young nobleman who shewed so much interest in me. The woman to whom he introduced me did not seem to me as respectable as he had represented her to be. I have passed one week with her without his doing anything to benefit my position. He would come, go out, return as he pleased, telling me every day that it would be the morrow, and when the morrow came there was always some impediment. At last, at seven o'clock this morning, the woman told me that the count was obliged to go into the country, that a hackney coach would bring me back to his hotel, and that he would come and see me on his return. Then, affecting an air of sadness, she told me that I must give her back the watch because the count had forgotten to pay the watchmaker for it. I handed it to her immediately without saying a word, and wrapping the little I possessed in my handkerchief I came back here, where I arrived half an hour since."

"Do you hope to see him on his return from the country?"

"To see him again! Oh, Lord! why have I ever seen him?"

She was crying bitterly, and I must confess that no young girl ever moved me so deeply as she did by the expression of her grief. Pity replaced in my heart the tenderness I had felt for her a week before. The infamous proceedings of Narbonne disgusted me to that extent that, if I had known where to find him alone, I would immediately have compelled him to give me reparation. Of course, I took good care not to ask the poor girl to give me a detailed account of her stay in the house of Narbonne's respectable procurers; I could guess even more than I wanted to know, and to insist upon that recital would have humiliated Mdlle. Vesian. I could see all the infamy of the count in the taking back of the watch which belonged to her as a gift, and which the unhappy girl had earned but too well. I did all I could to dry her tears, and she begged me to be a father to her, assuring me that she would never again do anything to render her unworthy of my friendship, and that she would always be guided by my advice.

"Well, my dear young friend, what you must do now is not only to forget the unworthy count and his criminal conduct towards you, but also the fault of which you have been guilty. What is done cannot be undone, and the past is beyond remedy; but compose yourself, and recall the air of cheerfulness which shone on your countenance a week ago. Then I could read on your face honesty, candour, good faith, and the noble assurance which arouses sentiment in those who can appreciate its charm. You must let all those feelings shine again on your features; for they alone can interest honest people, and you require the general sympathy more than ever. My friendship is of little importance to you, but you may rely upon it all the more because I fancy that you have now a claim upon it which you had not a week ago: Be quite certain, I beg, that I will not abandon you until your position is properly settled. I cannot at present tell you more; but be sure that I will think of you."

"Ah, my friend! if you promise to think of me, I ask for no more. Oh! unhappy creature that I am; there is not a soul in the world who thinks of me."

She was: so deeply moved that she fainted away. I came to her assistance without calling anyone, and when she had recovered her consciousness and some calm, I told her a hundred stories, true or purely imaginary, of the knavish tricks played in Paris by men who think of nothing but of deceiving young girls. I told her a few amusing instances in order to make her more cheerful, and at last I told her that she ought to be thankful for what had happened to her with Narbonne, because that misfortune would give her prudence for the future.

During that long tete-a-tete I had no difficulty in abstaining from bestowing any caresses upon her; I did not even take her hand, for what I felt for her was a tender pity; and I was very happy when at the end of two hours I saw her calm and determined upon bearing misfortune like a heroine.

She suddenly rose from her seat, and, looking at me with an air of modest trustfulness, she said to me,

"Are, you particularly engaged in any way to-day?"

"No, my dear:"

"Well, then, be good enough to take me somewhere out of Paris; to some place where I can breathe the fresh air freely; I shall then recover that appearance which you think I must have to interest in my favour those who will see me; and if I can enjoy a quiet sleep throughout the next night I feel I shall be happy again."

"I am grateful to you for your confidence in me. We will go out as soon as I am dressed. Your brother will return in the mean time."

"Oh, never mind my brother!"

"His presence is, on the contrary, of great importance. Recollect, my dear Vesian, you must make Narbonne ashamed of his own conduct. You must consider that if he should happen to hear that, on the very day he abandoned you, you went into the country alone with me, he would triumph, and would certainly say that he has only treated you as you deserved. But if you go with your brother and me your countryman, you give no occasion for slander."

"I blush not to have made that remark myself. We will wait for my brother's return."

He was not long in coming back, and having sent for a coach we were on the point of going, when Baletti called on me. I introduced him to the young lady, and invited him to join our party. He accepted, and we started. As my only purpose was to amuse Mdlle. Vesian, I told the coachman to drive us to the Gros Caillou, where we made an excellent impromptu dinner, the cheerfulness of the guests making up for the deficiencies of the servants.

Vesian, feeling his head rather heavy, went out for a walk after dinner, and I remained alone with his sister and my friend Baletti. I observed with pleasure that Baletti thought her an agreeable girl, and it gave me the idea of asking him to teach her dancing. I informed him of her position, of the reason which had brought her to Paris, of the little hope there was of her obtaining a pension from the king, and of the necessity there was for her to do something to earn a living. Baletti answered that he would be happy to do anything, and when he had examined the figure and the general conformation of the young girl he said to her,

"I will get Lani to take you for the ballet at the opera."

"Then," I said, "you must begin your lessons tomorrow. Mdlle. Vesian stops at my hotel."

The young girl, full of wonder at my plan, began to laugh heartily, and said,

"But can an opera dancer be extemporized like a minister of state? I can dance the minuet, and my ear is good enough to enable me to go through a quadrille; but with the exception of that I cannot dance one step."

"Most of the ballet girls," said Baletti, "know no more than you do."

"And how much must I ask from M. Lani? I do not think I can expect much."

"Nothing. The ballet girls are not paid."

“Then where is the advantage for me?” she said, with a sigh; “how shall I live?”

“Do not think of that. Such as you are, you will soon find ten wealthy noblemen who will dispute amongst themselves for the honour of making up for the absence of salary. You have only to make a good choice, and I am certain that it will not be long before we see you covered with diamonds.”

“Now I understand you. You suppose some great lord will keep me?”

“Precisely; and that will be much better than a pension of four hundred francs, which you would, perhaps, not obtain without making the same sacrifice.”

Very much surprised, she looked at me to ascertain whether I was serious or only jesting.

Baletti having left us, I told her it was truly the best thing she could do, unless she preferred the sad position of waiting-maid to some grand lady.

“I would not be the ‘femme de chambre’ even of the queen.”

“And ‘figurante’ at the opera?”

“Much rather.”

“You are smiling?”

“Yes, for it is enough to make me laugh. I the mistress of a rich nobleman, who will cover me with diamonds! Well, I mean to choose the oldest.”

“Quite right, my dear; only do not make him jealous.”

“I promise you to be faithful to him. But shall he find a situation for my brother? However, until I am at the opera, until I have met with my elderly lover, who will give me the means to support myself?”

“I, my dear girl, my friend Baletti, and all my friends, without other interest than the pleasure of serving you, but with the hope that you will live quietly, and that we shall contribute to your happiness. Are you satisfied?”

“Quite so; I have promised myself to be guided entirely by your advice, and I entreat you to remain always my best friend.”

We returned to Paris at night, I left Mdlle. Vesian at the hotel, and accompanied Baletti to his mother’s. At supper-time, my friend begged

Silvia to speak to M. Lani in favour of our ‘protegee’, Silvia said that it was a much better plan than to solicit a miserable pension which, perhaps, would not be granted. Then we talked of a project which was then spoken of, namely to sell all the appointments of ballet girls and of chorus singers at the opera. There was even some idea of asking a high price for them, for it was argued that the higher the price the more the girls would be esteemed. Such a project, in the midst of the scandalous habits and manners of the time, had a sort of apparent wisdom; for it would have ennobled in a way a class of women who with very few exceptions seem to glory in being contemptible.

There were, at that time at the opera, several figurantes, singers and dancers, ugly rather than plain, without any talent, who, in spite of it all, lived in great comfort; for it is admitted that at the opera a girl must needs renounce all modesty or starve. But if a girl, newly arrived there, is clever enough to remain virtuous only for one month, her fortune is certainly made, because then the noblemen enjoying a reputation of wisdom and virtue are the only ones who seek to get hold of her. Those men are delighted to hear their names mentioned in connection with the newly-arrived beauty; they even go so far as to allow her a few frolics, provided she takes pride in what they give her, and provided her infidelities are not too public. Besides, it is the fashion never to go to sup with one’s mistress without giving her notice of the intended visit, and everyone must admit that it is a very wise custom.

I came back to the hotel towards eleven o’clock, and seeing that Mdlle. Vesian’s room was still open I went in. She was in bed.

“Let me get up,” she said, “for I want to speak to you.”

“Do not disturb yourself; we can talk all the same, and I think you much prettier as you are.”

“I am very glad of it.”

“What have you got to tell me?”

“Nothing, except to speak of the profession I am going to adopt. I am going to practice virtue in order to find a man who loves it only to destroy it.”

“Quite true; but almost everything is like that in this life. Man always refers everything to himself, and everyone is a tyrant in his own way. I am pleased to see you becoming a philosopher."

"How can one become a philosopher?"

"By thinking."

"Must one think a long while?"

"Throughout life."

"Then it is never over?"

"Never; but one improves as much as possible, and obtains the sum of happiness which one is susceptible of enjoying."

"And how can that happiness be felt?"

"By all the pleasure which the philosopher can procure when he is conscious of having obtained them by his own exertions, and especially by getting rid of the many prejudices which make of the majority of men a troop of grown-up children."

"What is pleasure? What is meant by prejudices?"

"Pleasure is the actual enjoyment of our senses; it is a complete satisfaction given to all our natural and sensual appetites; and, when our worn-out senses want repose, either to have breathing time, or to recover strength, pleasure comes from the imagination, which finds enjoyment in thinking of the happiness afforded by rest. The philosopher is a person who refuses no pleasures which do not produce greater sorrows, and who knows how to create new ones."

"And you say that it is done by getting rid of prejudices? Then tell me what prejudices are, and what must be done to get rid of them."

"Your question, my dear girl, is not an easy one to answer, for moral philosophy does not know a more important one, or a more difficult one to decide; it is a lesson which lasts throughout life. I will tell you in a few words that we call prejudice every so-called duty for the existence of which we find no reason in nature."

"Then nature must be the philosopher's principal study?"

"Indeed it is; the most learned of philosophers is the one who commits the fewest errors."

“What philosopher, in your opinion, has committed the smallest quantity of errors?”

“Socrates.”

“Yet he was in error sometimes?”

“Yes, in metaphysics.”

“Oh! never mind that, for I think he could very well manage without that study.”

“You are mistaken; morals are only the metaphysics of physics; nature is everything, and I give you leave to consider as a madman whoever tells you that he has made a new discovery in metaphysics. But if I went on, my dear, I might appear rather obscure to you. Proceed slowly, think; let your maxims be the consequence of just reasoning, and keep your happiness in view; in the end you must be happy.”

“I prefer the lesson you have just taught me to the one which M. Baletti will give me to-morrow; for I have an idea that it will weary me, and now I am much interested.”

“How do you know that you are interested?”

“Because I wish you not to leave me.”

“Truly, my dear Vesian, never has a philosopher described sympathy better than you have just done. How happy I feel! How is it that I wish to prove it by kissing you?”

“No doubt because, to be happy, the soul must agree with the senses.”

“Indeed, my divine Vesian? Your intelligence is charming.”

“It is your work, dear friend; and I am so grateful to you that I share your desires.”

“What is there to prevent us from satisfying such natural desires? Let us embrace one another tenderly.”

What a lesson in philosophy! It seemed to us such a sweet one, our happiness was so complete, that at daybreak we were still kissing one another, and it was only when we parted in the morning that we discovered that the door of the room had remained open all night.

Baletti gave her a few lessons, and she was received at the opera; but she did not remain there more than two or three months, regulating her conduct carefully according to the precepts I had laid out for her. She never received Narbonne again, and at last accepted a nobleman who proved himself very different from all others, for the first thing he did was to make her give up the stage, although it was not a thing according to the fashion of those days. I do not recollect his name exactly; it was Count of Tressan or Trean. She behaved in a respectable way, and remained with him until his death. No one speaks of her now, although she is living in very easy circumstances; but she is fifty-six, and in Paris a woman of that age is no longer considered as being among the living.

After she left the Hotel de Bourgogne, I never spoke to her. Whenever I met her covered with jewels and diamonds, our souls saluted each other with joy, but her happiness was too precious for me to make any attempt against it. Her brother found a situation, but I lost sight of him.

CHAPTER IX

The Beautiful O-Morphi — The Deceitful Painter — I Practice Cabalism for the Duchess de Chartres I Leave Paris — My Stay in Dresden and My Departure from that City

I went to St. Lawrence's Fair with my friend Patu, who, taking it into his head to sup with a Flemish actress known by the name of Morphi, invited me to go with him. I felt no inclination for the girl, but what can we refuse to a friend? I did as he wished. After we had supped with the actress, Patu fancied a night devoted to a more agreeable occupation, and as I did not want to leave him I asked for a sofa on which I could sleep quietly during the night.

Morphi had a sister, a slovenly girl of thirteen, who told me that if I would give her a crown she would abandon her bed to me. I agreed to her proposal, and she took me to a small closet where I found a straw palliasse on four pieces of wood.

“Do you call this a bed, my child?”

“I have no other, sir.”

“Then I do not want it, and you shall not have the crown.”

“Did you intend undressing yourself?”

“Of course.”

“What an idea! There are no sheets.”

“Do you sleep with your clothes on?”

“Oh, no!”

“Well, then, go to bed as usual, and you shall have the crown.”

“Why?”

“I want to see you undressed.”

“But you won’t do anything to me?”

“Not the slightest thing.”

She undressed, laid herself on her miserable straw bed, and covered herself with an old curtain. In that state, the impression made by her dirty tatters disappeared, and I only saw a perfect beauty. But I wanted to see her entirely. I tried to satisfy my wishes, she opposed some resistance, but a double crown of six francs made her obedient, and finding that her only fault was a complete absence of cleanliness, I began to wash her with my own hands.

You will allow me, dear reader, to suppose that you possess a simple and natural knowledge, namely, that admiration under such circumstances is inseparable from another kind of approbation; luckily, I found the young Morphi disposed to let me do all I pleased, except the only thing for which I did not care! She told me candidly that she would not allow me to do that one thing, because in her sister's estimation it was worth twenty-five louis. I answered that we would bargain on that capital point another time, but that we would not touch it for the present. Satisfied with what I said, all the rest was at my disposal, and I found in her a talent which had attained great perfection in spite of her precocity.

The young Helene faithfully handed to her sister the six francs I had given her, and she told her the way in which she had earned them. Before I left the house she told me that, as she was in want of money, she felt disposed to make some abatement on the price of twenty-five louis. I answered with a laugh that I would see her about it the next day. I related the whole affair to Patu, who accused me of exaggeration; and wishing to prove to him that I was a real connoisseur of female beauty I insisted upon his seeing Helene as I had seen her. He agreed with me that the chisel of Praxiteles had never carved anything more perfect. As white as a lily, Helene possessed all the beauties which nature and the art of the painter can possibly combine. The loveliness of her features was so heavenly that it carried to the soul an indefinable sentiment of ecstacy, a delightful calm. She was fair, but her beautiful blue eyes equalled the finest black eyes in brilliance.

I went to see her the next evening, and, not agreeing about the price, I made a bargain with her sister to give her twelve francs every time I paid her a visit, and it was agreed that we would occupy her room until I should make up my mind to pay six hundred francs. It was regular usury, but the Morphi came from a Greek race, and was above prejudices. I had no idea of giving such a large sum, because I felt no wish to obtain what it would have procured me; what I obtained was all I cared for.

The elder sister thought I was duped, for in two months I had paid three hundred francs without having done anything, and she attributed my reserve to avarice. Avarice, indeed! I took a fancy to possess a painting of that beautiful body, and a German artist painted it for me splendidly for six louis. The position in which he painted it was delightful. She was lying on her stomach, her arms and her bosom leaning on a pillow, and holding her head sideways as if she were partly on the back. The clever and tasteful artist had painted her nether parts with so much skill and truth that no one could have wished for anything more beautiful; I was delighted with that portrait; it was a speaking likeness, and I wrote under it, “O-Morphi,” not a Homeric word, but a Greek one after all, and meaning beautiful.

But who can anticipate the wonderful and secret decrees of destiny! My friend Patu wished to have a copy of that portrait; one cannot refuse such a slight service to a friend, and I gave an order for it to the same painter. But the artist, having been summoned to Versailles, shewed that delightful painting with several others, and M. de St. Quentin found it so beautiful that he lost no time in shewing it the king. His Most Christian Majesty, a great connoisseur in that line, wished to ascertain with his own eyes if the artist had made a faithful copy; and in case the original should prove as beautiful as the copy, the son of St. Louis knew very well what to do with it.

M. de St. Quentin, the king’s trusty friend, had the charge of that important affair; it was his province: He enquired from the painter whether the original could be brought to Versailles, and the artist, not supposing there would be any difficulty, promised to attend to it.

He therefore called on me to communicate the proposal; I thought it was delightful, and I immediately told the sister, who jumped for joy. She set to work cleaning, washing and clothing the young beauty, and two or three days after they went to Versailles with the painter to see what could be done. M. de St. Quentin’s valet, having received his instructions from his master, took the two females to a pavilion in the park, and the painter went to the hotel to await the result of his negotiation. Half an hour afterwards the king entered the pavilion alone, asked the young O-Morphi if she was a Greek woman, took the portrait out of his pocket, and after a careful examination exclaimed,

“I have never seen a better likeness.”

His majesty then sat down, took the young girl on his knees, bestowed a few caresses on her, and having ascertained with his royal hand that the fruit had not yet been plucked, he gave her a kiss.

O-Morphi was looking attentively at her master, and smiled.

“What are you laughing at?” said the king.

“I laugh because you and a crown of six francs are as like as two peas.”

That naivete made the king laugh heartily, and he asked her whether she would like to remain in Versailles.

“That depends upon my sister,” answered the child.

But the sister hastened to tell the king that she could not aspire to a greater honour. The king locked them up again in the pavilion and went away, but in less than a quarter of an hour St. Quentin came to fetch them, placed the young girl in an apartment under the care of a female attendant, and with the sister he went to meet at the hotel the German artist to whom he gave fifty Louis for the portrait, and nothing to Morphi. He only took her address, promising her that she would soon hear from him; the next day she received one thousand Louis. The worthy German gave me twenty-five louis for my portrait, with a promise to make a careful copy of the one I had given to Patu, and he offered to paint for me gratuitously the likeness of every girl of whom I might wish to keep a portrait.

I enjoyed heartily the pleasure of the good Fleeting, when she found herself in possession of the thousand gold pieces which she had received. Seeing herself rich, and considering me as the author of her fortune, she did not know how to shew me her gratitude.

The young and lovely O-Morphi — for the king always called her by that name — pleased the sovereign by her simplicity and her pretty ways more even than by her rare beauty — the most perfect, the most regular, I recollect to have ever seen. He placed her in one of the apartments of his Parc-dux-cerfs — the voluptuous monarch’s harem, in which no one could get admittance except the ladies presented at the court. At the end of one year she gave birth to a son who went, like so many others, God knows where! for as long as Queen Mary lived no one ever knew what became of the natural children of Louis XV.

O-Morphi fell into disgrace at the end of three years, but the king, as he sent her away, ordered her to receive a sum of four hundred thousand francs which she brought as a dowry to an officer from Britanny. In 1783, happening to be in Fontainebleau, I made the acquaintance of a charming young man of twenty-five, the offspring of that marriage and the living portrait of his mother, of the history of whom he had not the slightest knowledge, and I thought it my duty not to enlighten him. I wrote my name on his tablets, and I begged him to present my compliments to his mother.

A wicked trick of Madame de Valentinois, sister-in-law of the Prince of Monaco, was the cause of O-Morphi's disgrace. That lady, who was well known in Paris, told her one day that, if she wished to make the king very merry, she had only to ask him how he treated his old wife. Too simple to guess the snare thus laid out for her, O-Morphi actually asked that impertinent question; but Louis XV. gave her a look of fury, and exclaimed,

"Miserable wretch! who taught you to address me that question?"

The poor O-Morphi, almost dead with fright, threw herself on her knees, and confessed the truth.

The king left her and never would see her again. The Countess de Valentinois was exiled for two years from the court. Louis XV., who knew how wrongly he was behaving towards his wife as a husband, would not deserve any reproach at her hands as a king, and woe to anyone who forgot the respect due to the queen!

The French are undoubtedly the most witty people in Europe, and perhaps in the whole world, but Paris is, all the same, the city for impostors and quacks to make a fortune. When their knavery is found out people turn it into a joke and laugh, but in the midst of the merriment another mountebank makes his appearance, who does something more wonderful than those who preceded him, and he makes his fortune, whilst the scoffing of the people is in abeyance. It is the unquestionable effects of the power which fashion has over that amiable, clever, and lively nation. If anything is astonishing, no matter how extravagant it may be, the crowd is sure to welcome it greedily, for anyone would be afraid of being taken for a fool if he should exclaim, "It is impossible!" Physicians are, perhaps, the only men in France who know that an infinite gulf yawns between the will and the deed, whilst in Italy it is an axiom known to everybody; but I do not mean to say that the Italians are superior to the French.

A certain painter met with great success for some time by announcing a thing which was an impossibility — namely, by pretending that he could take a portrait of a person without seeing the individual, and only from the description given. But he wanted the description to be thoroughly accurate. The result of it was that the portrait did greater honour to the person who gave the description than — to the painter himself, but at the same time the informer found himself under the obligation of finding the likeness very good; otherwise the artist alleged the most legitimate excuse, and said that if the likeness was not perfect the fault was to be ascribed to the person who had given an imperfect description.

One evening I was taking supper at Silvia's when one of the guests spoke of that wonderful new artist, without laughing, and with every appearance of believing the whole affair.

"That painter," added he, "has already painted more than one hundred portraits, and they are all perfect likenesses."

Everybody was of the same opinion; it was splendid. I was the only one who, laughing heartily, took the liberty of saying it was absurd and impossible. The gentleman who had brought the wonderful news, feeling angry, proposed a wager of one hundred louis. I laughed all the more because his offer could not be accepted unless I exposed myself to being made a dupe.

"But the portraits are all admirable likenesses."

"I do not believe it, or if they are then there must be cheating somewhere."

But the gentleman, being bent upon convincing Silvia and me — for she had taken my part proposed to make us dine with the artist; and we accepted.

The next day we called upon the painter, where we saw a quantity of portraits, all of which the artist claimed to be speaking likenesses; as we did not know the persons whom they represented we could not deny his claim.

"Sir," said Silvia to the artist, "could you paint the likeness of my daughter without seeing her?"

"Yes, madam, if you are certain of giving me an exact description of the expression of her features."

We exchanged a glance, and no more was said about it. The painter told us that supper was his favourite meal, and that he would be delighted if we would often give him the pleasure of our company. Like all quacks, he possessed an immense quantity of letters and testimonials from Bordeaux, Toulouse, Lyons, Rouen, etc., which paid the highest compliments to the perfection of his portraits, or gave descriptions for new pictures ordered from him. His portraits, by the way, had to be paid for in advance.

Two or three days afterwards I met his pretty niece, who obligingly upbraided me for not having yet availed myself of her uncle's invitation to supper; the niece was a dainty morsel worthy of a king, and, her reproaches being very flattering to my vanity I promised I would come the next day. In less than a week it turned out a serious engagement. I fell in love with the interesting niece, who, being full of wit and well disposed to enjoy herself, had no love for me, and granted me no favour. I hoped, and, feeling that I was caught, I felt it was the only thing I could do.

One day that I was alone in my room, drinking my coffee and thinking of her, the door was suddenly opened without anyone being announced, and a young man came in. I did not recollect him, but, without giving me time to ask any questions, he said to me,

"Sir, I have had the honour of meeting you at the supper-table of M. Samson, the painter."

"Ah! yes; I beg you to excuse me, sir, I did not at first recollect you."

"It is natural, for your eyes are always on Mdlle. Samson."

"Very likely, but you must admit that she is a charming creature."

"I have no difficulty whatever in agreeing with you; to my misery, I know it but too well."

"You are in love with her?"

"Alas, yes! and I say, again, to my misery."

"To your misery? But why, do not you gain her love?"

"That is the very thing I have been striving for since last year, and I was beginning to have some hope when your arrival has reduced me to despair."

"I have reduced you to despair?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am very sorry, but I cannot help it."

"You could easily help it; and, if you would allow me, I could suggest to you the way in which you could greatly oblige me."

"Speak candidly."

"You might never put your foot in the house again."

"That is a rather singular proposal, but I agree that it is truly the only thing I can do if I have a real wish to oblige you. Do you think, however, that in that case you would succeed in gaining her affection?"

"Then it will be my business to succeed. Do not go there again, and I will take care of the rest."

"I might render you that very great service; but you must confess that you must have a singular opinion of me to suppose that I am a man to do such a thing."

"Yes, sir, I admit that it may appear singular; but I take you for a man of great sense and sound intellect, and after considering the subject deeply I have thought that you would put yourself in my place; that you would not wish to make me miserable, or to expose your own life for a young girl who can have inspired you with but a passing fancy, whilst my only wish is to secure the happiness or the misery of my life, whichever it may prove, by uniting her existence with mine."

"But suppose that I should intend, like you, to ask her in marriage?"

"Then we should both be worthy of pity, and one of us would have ceased to exist before the other obtained her, for as long as I shall live Mdlle. Samson shall not be the wife of another."

This young man, well-made, pale, grave, as cold as a piece of marble, madly in love, who, in his reason mixed with utter despair, came to speak to me in such a manner with the most surprising calm, made me pause and consider. Undoubtedly I was not afraid, but although in love with Mdlle. Samson I did not feel my passion sufficiently strong to cut the throat of a man for the sake of her beautiful eyes, or to lose my own life to defend my budding affection. Without answering the young man, I began to pace up and down my room, and for a quarter of an hour I weighed the following question which I put to myself: Which decision will appear more manly in the eyes of my rival and will win my own esteem to the deeper degree, namely-to accept coolly his offer to cut one another's throats, or to allay his anxiety by withdrawing from the field with dignity?

Pride whispered, Fight; Reason said, Compel thy rival to acknowledge thee a wiser man than he is.

"What would you think of me, sir," I said to him, with an air of decision, "if I consented to give up my visits to Mdlle. Samson?"

"I would think that you had pity on a miserable man, and I say that in that case you will ever find me ready to shed the last drop of my blood to prove my deep gratitude."

"Who are you?"

"My name is Garnier, I am the only son of M. Garnier, wine merchant in the Rue de Seine."

"Well, M. Gamier, I will never again call on Mdlle. Samson. Let us be friends."

"Until death. Farewell, sir."

"Adieu, be happy!"

Patu came in five minutes after Garnier had left me: I related the adventure to him, and he thought I was a hero.

"I would have acted as you have done," he observed, "but I would not have acted like Garnier."

It was about that time that the Count de Melfort, colonel of the Orleans regiment, entreated me through Camille, Coraline's sister, to answer two questions by means of my cabalism. I gave two answers very vague, yet meaning a great deal; I put them under a sealed envelope and gave them to Camille, who asked me the next day to accompany her to a place which she said she could not name to me. I followed her; she took me to the Palais-Royal, and then, through a narrow staircase, to the apartments of the Duchess de Chartres. I waited about a quarter of an hour, at the end of which time the duchess came in and loaded Camille with caresses for having brought me. Then addressing herself to me, she told me, with dignity yet very graciously, the difficulty she experienced in understanding the answers I had sent and which she was holding in her hand. At first I expressed some perplexity at the questions having emanated from her royal highness, and I told her afterwards that I understood cabalism, but that I could not interpret the meaning of the answers obtained through it, and that her highness must ask new questions likely to render the answers easier to be understood. She wrote down all she could not make out and all she wanted to know.

“Madam, you must be kind enough to divide the questions, for the cabalistic oracle never answers two questions at the same time.”

“Well, then, prepare the questions yourself.”

“Your highness will excuse me, but every word must be written with your own hand. Recollect, madam, that you will address yourself to a superior intelligence knowing all your secrets”

She began to write, and asked seven or eight questions. She read them over carefully, and said, with a face beaming with noble confidence,

“Sir, I wish to be certain that no one shall ever know what I have just written.”

“Your highness may rely on my honour.”

I read attentively, and I saw that her wish for secrecy was reasonable, and that if I put the questions in my pocket I should run the risk of losing them and implicating myself.

“I only require three hours to complete my task,” I said to the duchess, “and I wish your highness to feel no anxiety. If you have any other engagement you can leave me here alone, provided I am not disturbed by anybody. When it is completed, I will put it all in a sealed envelope; I only want your highness to tell me to whom I must deliver the parcel.”

“Either to me or to Madame de Polignac, if you know her.”

“Yes, madam, I have the honour to know her.”

The duchess handed me a small tinder-box to enable me to light a wax-candle, and she went away with Camille. I remained alone locked up in the room, and at the end of three hours, just as I had completed my task, Madame de Polignac came for the parcel and I left the palace.

The Duchess de Chartres, daughter of the Prince of Conti, was twenty-six years of age. She was endowed with that particular sort of wit which renders a woman adorable. She was lively, above the prejudices of rank, cheerful, full of jest, a lover of pleasure, which she preferred to a long life. “Short and sweet,” were the words she had constantly on her lips. She was pretty but she stood badly, and used to laugh at Marcel, the teacher of graceful deportment, who wanted to correct her awkward bearing. She kept her head bent forward and her feet turned inside when dancing; yet she was a charming dancer. Unfortunately her face was covered with pimples, which injured her beauty very greatly. Her physicians thought that they were caused by a disease of the liver, but they came from impurity of the blood, which at last killed her, and from which she suffered throughout her life.

The questions she had asked from my oracle related to affairs connected with her heart, and she wished likewise to know how she could get rid of the blotches which disfigured her. My answers were rather obscure in such matters as I was not specially acquainted with, but they were very clear concerning her disease, and my oracle became precious and necessary to her highness.

The next day, after dinner, Camille wrote me a note, as I expected, requesting me to give up all other engagements in order to present myself at five o'clock at the Palais-Royal, in the same room in which the duchess had already received me the day before. I was punctual.

An elderly valet de chambre, who was waiting for me, immediately went to give notice of my arrival, and five minutes after the charming princess made her appearance. After addressing me in a very complimentary manner, she drew all my answers from her pocket, and enquired whether I had any pressing engagements.

“Your highness may be certain that I shall never have any more important business than to attend to your wishes.”

“Very well; I do not intend to go out, and we can work.”

She then shewed me all the questions which she had already prepared on different subjects, and particularly those relating to the cure of her pimples. One circumstance had contributed to render my oracle precious to her, because nobody could possibly know it, and I had guessed it. Had I not done so, I daresay it would have been all the same. I had laboured myself under the same disease, and I was enough of a physician to be aware that to attempt the cure of a cutaneous disease by active remedies might kill the patient.

I had already answered that she could not get rid of the pimples on her face in less than a week, but that a year of diet would be necessary to effect a radical cure.

We spent three hours in ascertaining what she was to do, and, believing implicitly in the power and in the science of the oracle, she undertook to follow faithfully everything ordered. Within one week all the ugly pimples had entirely disappeared.

I took care to purge her slightly; I prescribed every day what she was to eat, and forbade the use of all cosmetics; I only advised her to wash herself morning and evening with plantain water. The modest oracle told the princess to make use of the same water for her ablutions of every part of her body where she desired to obtain the same result, and she obeyed the prescription religiously.

I went to the opera on purpose on the day when the duchess shewed herself there with a smooth and rosy shin. After the opera, she took a walk in the great alley of the Palais-Royal, followed by the ladies of her suite and flattered by everybody. She saw me, and honoured me with a smile. I was truly happy. Camille, Madame de Polignac, and M. de Melfort were the only persons who knew that I was the oracle of the duchess, and I enjoyed my success. But the next day a few pimples reappeared on her beautiful complexion, and I received an order to repair at once to the Palais-Royal.

The valet, who did not know me, shewed me into a delightful boudoir near a closet in which there was a bath. The duchess came in; she looked sad, for she had several small pimples on the forehead and the chin. She held in her hand a question for the oracle, and as it was only a short one I thought it would give her the pleasure of finding the answer by herself. The numbers translated by the princess reproached her with having transgressed the regimen prescribed; she confessed to having drunk some liquors and eaten some ham; but she was astounded at having found that answer herself, and she could not understand how such an answer could result from an agglomeration of numbers. At that moment, one of her women came in to whisper a few words to her; she told her to wait outside, and turning towards me, she said,

“Have you any objection to seeing one of your friends who is as delicate as discreet?”

With these words, she hastily concealed in her pocket all the papers which did not relate to her disease; then she called out.

A man entered the room, whom I took for a stableboy; it was M. de Melfort.

“See,” said the princess to him, “M. Casanova has taught me the cabalistic science.”

And she shewed him the answer she had obtained herself. The count could not believe it.

“Well,” said the duchess to me, “we must convince him. What shall I ask?”

“Anything your highness chooses.”

She considered for one instant, and, drawing from her pocket a small ivory box, she wrote, “Tell me why this pomatum has no longer any effect”

She formed the pyramid, the columns, and the key, as I had taught her, and as she was ready to get the answer, I told her how to make the additions and subtractions which seem to come from the numbers, but which in reality are only arbitrary; then I told her to interpret the numbers in letters, and I left the room under some pretext. I came back when I thought that she had completed her translation, and I found her wrapped in amazement.

“Ah, sir!” she exclaimed, “what an answer!”

“Perhaps it is not the right one; but that will sometimes happen, madam.”

“Not the right one, sir? It is divine! Here it is: That pomatum has no effect upon the skin of a woman who has been a mother.”

“I do not see anything extraordinary in that answer, madam.”

“Very likely, sir, but it is because you do not know that the pomatum in question was given to me five years ago by the Abbe de Brosses; it cured me at that time, but it was ten months before the birth of the Duke de Montpensier. I would give anything in the world to be thoroughly acquainted with that sublime cabalistic science.”

“What!” said the count, “is it the pomatum the history of which I know?”

“Precisely.”

“It is astonishing.”

“I wish to ask one more question concerning a woman the name of whom I would rather not give.”

“Say the woman whom I have in my thoughts.”

She then asked this question: “What disease is that woman suffering from?” She made the calculation, and the answer which I made her bring forth was this: “She wants to deceive her husband.” This time the duchess fairly screamed with astonishment.

It was getting very late, and I was preparing to take leave, when M. de Melfort, who was speaking to her highness, told me that we might go together. When we were out, he told me that the cabalistic answer concerning the pomatum was truly wonderful. This was the history of it:

“The duchess, pretty as you see her now, had her face so fearfully covered with pimples that the duke, thoroughly disgusted, had not the courage to come near her to enjoy his rights as a husband, and the poor princess was pining with useless longing to become a mother. The Abbe de Brosses cured her with that pomatum, and her beautiful face having entirely recovered it original bloom she made her appearance at the Theatre Francais, in the queen’s box. The Duke de Chartres, not knowing that his wife had gone to the theatre, where she went but very seldom, was in the king’s box. He did not recognize the duchess, but thinking her very handsome he enquired who she was, and when he was told he would not believe it; he left the royal box, went to his wife, complimented her, and announced his visit for the very same night. The result of that visit was, nine months afterwards, the birth of the Duke of Montpensier, who is now five years old and enjoys excellent health. During the whole of her pregnancy the duchess kept her face smooth and blooming, but immediately after her delivery the pimples reappeared, and the pomatum remained without any effect.”

As he concluded his explanation, the count offered me a tortoise-shell box with a very good likeness of her royal highness, and said,

“The duchess begs your acceptance of this portrait, and, in case you would like to have it set she wishes you to make use of this for that purpose.”

It was a purse of one hundred Louis. I accepted both, and entreated the count to offer the expressions of my profound gratitude to her highness. I never had the portrait mounted, for I was then in want of money for some other purpose.

After that, the duchess did me the honour of sending for me several times; but her cure remained altogether out of the question; she could not make up her mind to follow a regular diet. She would sometimes keep me at work for five or six hours, now in one corner, now in another, going in and out herself all the time, and having either dinner or supper brought to me by the old valet, who never uttered a word.

Her questions to the oracle alluded only to secret affairs which she was curious to know, and she often found truths with which I was not myself acquainted, through the answers. She wished me to teach her the cabalistic science, but she never pressed her wish upon me. She, however, commissioned M. de Melfort to tell me that, if I would teach her, she would get me an appointment with an income of twenty-five thousand francs. Alas! it was impossible! I was madly in love with her, but I would not for the world have allowed her to guess my feelings. My pride was the corrective of my love. I was afraid of her haughtiness humiliating me, and perhaps I was wrong. All I know is that I even now repent of having listened to a foolish pride. It is true that I enjoyed certain privileges which she might have refused me if she had known my love.

One day she wished my oracle to tell her whether it was possible to cure a cancer which Madame de la Popeliniere had in the breast; I took it in my head to answer that the lady alluded to had no cancer, and was enjoying excellent health.

“How is that?” said the duchess; “everyone in Paris believes her to be suffering from a cancer, and she has consultation upon consultation. Yet I have faith in the oracle.”

Soon afterwards, seeing the Duke de Richelieu at the court, she told him she was certain that Madame de la Popeliniere was not ill. The marshal, who knew the secret, told her that she was mistaken; but she proposed a wager of a hundred thousand francs. I trembled when the duchess related the conversation to me.

“Has he accepted your wages?” I enquired, anxiously.

“No; he seemed surprised; you are aware that he ought to know the truth.”

Three or four days after that conversation, the duchess told me triumphantly that M. de Richelieu had confessed to her that the cancer was only a ruse to excite the pity of her husband, with whom Madame de la Popeliniere wanted to live again on good terms; she added that the marshal had expressed his willingness to pay one thousand Louis to know how she had discovered the truth.

“If you wish to earn that sum,” said the duchess to me, “I will tell him all about it.”

But I was afraid of a snare; I knew the temper of the marshal, and the story of the hole in the wall through which he introduced himself into that lady’s apartment, was the talk of all Paris. M. de la Popeliniere himself had made the adventure more public by refusing to live with his wife, to whom he paid an income of twelve thousand francs.

The Duchess de Chartres had written some charming poetry on that amusing affair; but out of her own coterie no one knew it except the king, who was fond of the princess, although she was in the habit of scoffing at him. One day, for instance, she asked him whether it was true that the king of Prussia was expected in Paris. Louis XV. having answered that it was an idle rumour,

“I am very sorry,” she said, “for I am longing to see a king.”

My brother had completed several pictures and having decided on presenting one to M. de Marigny, we repaired one morning to the apartment of that nobleman, who lived in the Louvre, where all the artists were in the habit of paying their court to him. We were shewn into a hall adjoining his private apartment, and having arrived early we waited for M. de Marigny. My brother’s picture was exposed there; it was a battle piece in the style of Bourguignon.

The first person who passed through the room stopped before the picture, examined it attentively, and moved on, evidently thinking that it was a poor painting; a moment afterwards two more persons came in, looked at the picture, smiled, and said,

“That’s the work of a beginner.”

I glanced at my brother, who was seated near me; he was in a fever. In less than a quarter of an hour the room was full of people, and the unfortunate picture was the butt of everybody's laughter. My poor brother felt almost dying, and thanked his stars that no one knew him personally.

The state of his mind was such that I heartily pitied him; I rose with the intention of going to some other room, and to console him I told him that M. de Marigny would soon come, and that his approbation of the picture would avenge him for the insults of the crowd. Fortunately, this was not my brother's opinion; we left the room hurriedly, took a coach, went home, and sent our servant to fetch back the painting. As soon as it had been brought back my brother made a battle of it in real earnest, for he cut it up with a sword into twenty pieces. He made up his mind to settle his affairs in Paris immediately, and to go somewhere else to study an art which he loved to idolatry; we resolved on going to Dresden together.

Two or three days before leaving the delightful city of Paris I dined alone at the house of the gate-keeper of the Tuileries; his name was Conde. After dinner his wife, a rather pretty woman, presented me the bill, on which every item was reckoned at double its value. I pointed it out to her, but she answered very curtly that she could not abate one sou. I paid, and as the bill was receipted with the words 'femme Conde', I took the pen and to the word 'Conde' I added 'labre', and I went away leaving the bill on the table.

I was taking a walk in the Tuileries, not thinking any more of my female extortioner, when a small man, with his hat cocked on one side of his head and a large nosegay in his button-hole, and sporting a long sword, swaggered up to me and informed me, without any further explanation, that he had a fancy to cut my throat.

"But, my small specimen of humanity," I said, "you would require to jump on a chair to reach my throat. I will cut your ears."

"Sacre bleu, monsieur!"

"No vulgar passion, my dear sir; follow me; you shall soon be satisfied."

I walked rapidly towards the Porte de l'Etoile, where, seeing that the place was deserted, I abruptly asked the fellow what he wanted, and why he had attacked me.

"I am the Chevalier de Talvis," he answered. "You have insulted an honest woman who is under my protection; unsheath!"

With these words he drew his long sword; I unsheathed mine; after a minute or two I lunged rapidly, and wounded him in the breast. He jumped backward, exclaiming that I had wounded him treacherously.

“You lie, you rascally mannikin! acknowledge it, or I thrust my sword through your miserable body.”

“You will not do it, for I am wounded; but I insist upon having my revenge, and we will leave the decision of this to competent judges.”

“Miserable wrangler, wretched fighter, if you are not satisfied, I will cut off your ears!”

I left him there, satisfied that I had acted according to the laws of the duello, for he had drawn his sword before me, and if he had not been skilful enough to cover himself in good time, it was not, of course, my business to teach him. Towards the middle of August I left Paris with my brother. I had made a stay of two years in that city, the best in the world. I had enjoyed myself greatly, and had met with no unpleasantness except that I had been now and then short of money. We went through Metz, Mayence, and Frankfort, and arrived in Dresden at the end of the same month. My mother offered us the most affectionate welcome, and was delighted to see us again. My brother remained four years in that pleasant city, constantly engaged in the study of his art, and copying all the fine paintings of battles by the great masters in the celebrated Electoral Gallery.

He went back to Paris only when he felt certain that he could set criticism at defiance; I shall say hereafter how it was that we both reached that city about the same time. But before that period, dear, reader, you will see what good and adverse fortune did for or against me.

My life in Dresden until the end of the carnival in 1753 does not offer any extraordinary adventure. To please the actors, and especially my mother, I wrote a kind of melodrama, in which I brought out two harlequins. It was a parody of the ‘Freres Ennemis’, by Racine. The king was highly amused at the comic fancies which filled my play, and he made me a beautiful present. The king was grand and generous, and these qualities found a ready echo in the breast of the famous Count de Bruhl. I left Dresden soon after that, bidding adieu to my mother, to my brother Francois, and to my sister, then the wife of Pierre Auguste, chief player of the harpsichord at the Court, who died two years ago, leaving his widow and family in comfortable circumstances.

My stay in Dresden was marked by an amorous souvenir of which I got rid, as in previous similar circumstances, by a diet of six weeks. I have often remarked that the greatest part of my life was spent in trying to make myself ill, and when I had succeeded, in trying to recover my health. I have met with equal success in both things; and now that I enjoy excellent health in that line, I am very sorry to be physically unable to make myself ill again; but age, that cruel and unavoidable disease, compels me to be in good health in spite of myself. The illness I allude to, which the Italians call ‘mal francais’, although we might claim the honour of its first importation, does not shorten life, but it leaves indelible marks on the face. Those scars, less honourable perhaps than those which are won in the service of Mars, being obtained through pleasure, ought not to leave any regret behind.

In Dresden I had frequent opportunities of seeing the king, who was very fond of the Count de Bruhl, his minister, because that favourite possessed the double secret of shewing himself more extravagant even than his master, and of indulging all his whims.

Never was a monarch a greater enemy to economy; he laughed heartily when he was plundered and he spent a great deal in order to have occasion to laugh often. As he had not sufficient wit to amuse himself with the follies of other kings and with the absurdities of humankind, he kept four buffoons, who are called fools in Germany, although these degraded beings are generally more witty than their masters. The province of those jesters is to make their owner laugh by all sorts of jokes which are usually nothing but disgusting tricks, or low, impertinent jests.

Yet these professional buffoons sometimes captivate the mind of their master to such an extent that they obtain from him very important favours in behalf of the persons they protect, and the consequence is that they are often courted by the highest families. Where is the man who will not debase himself if he be in want? Does not Agamemnon say, in Homer, that in such a case man must necessarily be guilty of meanness? And Agamemnon and Homer lived long before our time! It evidently proves that men are at all times moved by the same motive-namely, self-interest.

It is wrong to say that the Count de Bruhl was the ruin of Saxony, for he was only the faithful minister of his royal master's inclinations. His children are poor, and justify their father's conduct.

The court at Dresden was at that time the most brilliant in Europe; the fine arts flourished, but there was no gallantry, for King Augustus had no inclination for the fair sex, and the Saxons were not of a nature to be thus inclined unless the example was set by their sovereign.

At my arrival in Prague, where I did not intend to stop, I delivered a letter I had for Locatelli, manager of the opera, and went to pay a visit to Madame Morelli, an old acquaintance, for whom I had great affection, and for two or three days she supplied all the wants of my heart.

As I was on the point of leaving Prague, I met in the street my friend Fabris, who had become a colonel, and he insisted upon my dining with him. After 'embracing him, I represented to him, but in vain, that I had made all my arrangements to go away immediately.

"You will go this evening," he said, "with a friend of mine, and you will catch the coach."

I had to give way, and I was delighted to have done so, for the remainder of the day passed in the most agreeable manner. Fabris was longing for war, and his wishes were gratified two years afterwards; he covered himself with glory.

I must say one word about Locatelli, who was an original character well worthy to be known. He took his meals every day at a table laid out for thirty persons, and the guests were his actors, actresses, dancers of both sexes, and a few friends. He did the honours of his well-supplied board nobly, and his real passion was good living. I shall have occasion to mention him again at the time of my journey to St. Petersburg, where I met him, and where he died only lately at the age of ninety.

EPISODE 7 — VENICE

CHAPTER X

My Stay in Vienna — Joseph II — My Departure for Venice

Arrived, for the first time, in the capital of Austria, at the age of eight-and-twenty, well provided with clothes, but rather short of money — a circumstance which made it necessary for me to curtail my expenses until the arrival of the proceeds of a letter of exchange which I had drawn upon M. de Bragadin. The only letter of recommendation I had was from the poet Migliavacca, of Dresden, addressed to the illustrious Abbe Metastasio, whom I wished ardently to know. I delivered the letter the day after my arrival, and in one hour of conversation I found him more learned than I should have supposed from his works. Besides, Metastasio was so modest that at first I did not think that modesty natural, but it was not long before I discovered that it was genuine, for when he recited something of his own composition, he was the first to call the attention of his hearers to the important parts or to the fine passages with as much simplicity as he would remark the weak ones. I spoke to him of his tutor Gravina, and as we were on that subject he recited to me five or six stanzas which he had written on his death, and which had not been printed. Moved by the remembrance of his friend, and by the sad beauty of his own poetry, his eyes were filled with tears, and when he had done reciting the stanzas he said, in a tone of touching simplicity,'Ditemi il vero, si puo air meglio'?

I answered that he alone had the right to believe it impossible. I then asked him whether he had to work a great deal to compose his beautiful poetry; he shewed me four or five pages which he had covered with erasures and words crossed and scratched out only because he had wished to bring fourteen lines to perfection, and he assured me that he had never been able to compose more than that number in one day. He confirmed my knowledge of a truth which I had found out before, namely, that the very lines which most readers believe to have flowed easily from the poet's pen are generally those which he has had the greatest difficulty in composing.

“Which of your operas,” I enquired, “do you like best?”

"'Attilio Regolo; ma questo non vuol gia dire che sia il megliore'."

"All your works have been translated in Paris into French prose, but the publisher was ruined, for it is not possible to read them, and it proves the elevation and the power of your poetry."

"Several years ago, another foolish publisher ruined himself by a translation into French prose of the splendid poetry of Ariosto. I laugh at those who maintain that poetry can be translated into prose."

"I am of your opinion."

"And you are right."

He told me that he had never written an arietta without composing the music of it himself, but that as a general rule he never shewed his music to anyone.

"The French," he added, "entertain the very strange belief that it is possible to adapt poetry to music already composed."

And he made on that subject this very philosophical remark:

"You might just as well say to a sculptor, 'Here is a piece of marble, make a Venus, and let her expression be shewn before the features are chiselled.'"

I went to the Imperial Library, and was much surprised to meet De la Haye in the company of two Poles, and a young Venetian whom his father had entrusted to him to complete his education. I believed him to be in Poland, and as the meeting recalled interesting recollections I was pleased to see him. I embraced him repeatedly with real pleasure.

He told me that he was in Vienna on business, and that he would go to Venice during the summer. We paid one another several visits, and hearing that I was rather short of money he lent me fifty ducats, which I returned a short time after. He told me that Bavois was already lieutenant-colonel in the Venetian army, and the news afforded me great pleasure. He had been fortunate enough to be appointed adjutant-general by M. Morosini, who, after his return from his embassy in France, had made him Commissary of the Borders. I was delighted to hear of the happiness and success of two men who certainly could not help acknowledging me as the original cause of their good fortune. In Vienna I acquired the certainty of De la Haye being a Jesuit, but he would not let anyone allude to the subject.

Not knowing where to go, and longing for some recreation, I went to the rehearsal of the opera which was to be performed after Easter, and met Bodin, the first dancer, who had married the handsome Jeoffroi, whom I had seen in Turin. I likewise met in the same place Campioni, the husband of the beautiful Ancilla. He told me that he had been compelled to apply for a divorce because she dishonoured him too publicly. Campioni was at the same time a great dancer and a great gambler. I took up my lodgings with him.

In Vienna everything is beautiful; money was then very plentiful, and luxury very great; but the severity of the empress made the worship of Venus difficult, particularly for strangers. A legion of vile spies, who were decorated with the fine title of Commissaries of Chastity, were the merciless tormentors of all the girls. The empress did not practise the sublime virtue of tolerance for what is called illegitimate love, and in her excessive devotion she thought that her persecutions of the most natural inclinations in man and woman were very agreeable to God. Holding in her imperial hands the register of cardinal sins, she fancied that she could be indulgent for six of them, and keep all her severity for the seventh, lewdness, which in her estimation could not be forgiven.

"One can ignore pride," she would say, "for dignity wears the same garb. Avarice is fearful, it is true; but one might be mistaken about it, because it is often very like economy. As for anger, it is a murderous disease in its excess, but murder is punishable with death. Gluttony is sometimes nothing but epicurism, and religion does not forbid that sin; for in good company it is held a valuable quality; besides, it blends itself with appetite, and so much the worse for those who die of indigestion. Envy is a low passion which no one ever avows; to punish it in any other way than by its own corroding venom, I would have to torture everybody at Court; and weariness is the punishment of sloth. But lust is a different thing altogether; my chaste soul could not forgive such a sin, and I declare open war against it. My subjects are at liberty to think women handsome as much as they please; women may do all in their power to appear beautiful; people may entertain each other as they like, because I cannot forbid conversation; but they shall not gratify desires on which the preservation of the human race depends, unless it is in the holy state of legal marriage. Therefore, all the miserable creatures who live by the barter of their caresses and of the charms given to them by nature shall be sent to Temeswar. I am aware that in Rome people are very indulgent on that point, and that, in order to prevent another greater crime (which is not prevented), every cardinal has one or more mistresses, but in Rome the climate requires certain concessions which are not necessary here, where the bottle and the pipe replace all pleasures. (She might have added, and the table, for the Austrians are known to be terrible eaters.)

"I will have no indulgence either for domestic disorders, for the moment I hear that a wife is unfaithful to her husband, I will have her locked up, in spite of all, in spite of the generally received opinion that the husband is the real judge and master of his wife; that privilege cannot be granted in my kingdom where husbands are by far too indifferent on that subject. Fanatic husbands may complain as much as they please that I dishonour them by punishing their wives; they are dishonoured already by the fact of the woman's infidelity."

"But, madam, dishonour rises in reality only from the fact of infidelity being made public; besides, you might be deceived, although you are empress."

"I know that, but that is no business of yours, and I do not grant you the right of contradicting me."

Such is the way in which Maria Teresa would have argued, and notwithstanding the principle of virtue from which her argument had originated, it had ultimately given birth to all the infamous deeds which her executioners, the Commissaries of Chastity, committed with impunity under her name. At every hour of the day, in all the streets of Vienna, they carried off and took to prison the poor girls who happened to live alone, and very often went out only to earn an honest living. I should like to know how it was possible to know that a girl was going to some man to get from him consolations for her miserable position, or that she was in search of someone disposed to offer her those consolations? Indeed, it was difficult. A spy would follow them at a distance. The police department kept a crowd of those spies, and as the scoundrels wore no particular uniform, it was impossible to know them; as a natural consequence, there was a general distrust of all strangers. If a girl entered a house, the spy who had followed her, waited for her, stopped her as she came out, and subjected her to an interrogatory. If the poor creature looked uneasy, if she hesitated in answering in such a way as to satisfy the spy, the fellow would take her to prison; in all cases beginning by plundering her of whatever money or jewellery she carried about her person, and the restitution of which could never be obtained. Vienna was, in that respect a true den of privileged thieves. It happened to me one day in Leopoldstadt that in the midst of some tumult a girl slipped in my hand a gold watch to secure it from the clutches of a police-spy who was pressing upon her to take her up. I did not know the poor girl, whom I was fortunate enough to see again one month afterwards. She was pretty, and she had been compelled to more than one sacrifice in order to obtain her liberty. I was glad to be able to hand her watch back to her, and although she was well worthy of a man's attention I did not ask her for anything to reward my faithfulness. The only way in which girls could walk unmolested in the streets was to go about with their head bent down with beads in hand, for in that case the disgusting brood of spies dared not arrest them, because they might be on their way to church, and Maria Teresa would certainly have sent to the gallows the spy guilty of such a mistake.

Those low villains rendered a stay in Vienna very unpleasant to foreigners, and it was a matter of the greatest difficulty to gratify the slightest natural want without running the risk of being annoyed. One day as I was standing close to the wall in a narrow street, I was much astonished at hearing myself rudely addressed by a scoundrel with a round wig, who told me that, if I did not go somewhere else to finish what I had begun, he would have me arrested!

"And why, if you please?"

"Because, on your left, there is a woman who can see you."

I lifted up my head, and I saw on the fourth story, a woman who, with the telescope she had applied to her eye, could have told whether I was a Jew or a Christian. I obeyed, laughing heartily, and related the adventure everywhere; but no one was astonished, because the same thing happened over and over again every day.

In order to study the manners and habits of the people, I took my meals in all sorts of places. One day, having gone with Campioni to dine at "The Crawfish," I found, to my great surprise, sitting at the table d'hote, that

Pepe il Cadetto, whose acquaintance I had made at the time of my arrest in the Spanish army, and whom I had met afterwards in Venice and in Lyons, under the name of Don Joseph Marcati. Campioni, who had been his partner in Lyons, embraced him, talked with him in private, and informed me that the man had resumed his real name, and that he was now called Count Afflisio. He told me that after dinner there would be a faro bank in which I would have an interest, and he therefore requested me not to play. I accepted the offer. Afflisio won: a captain of the name of Beccaxia threw the cards at his face — a trifle to which the self-styled count was accustomed, and which did not elicit any remark from him. When the game was over, we repaired to the coffee-room, where an officer of gentlemanly appearance, staring at me, began to smile, but not in an offensive manner.

“Sir,” I asked him, politely, “may I ask why you are laughing?”

“It makes me laugh to see that you do not recognize me.”

“I have some idea that I have seen you somewhere, but I could not say where or when I had that honour.”

“Nine years ago, by the orders of the Prince de Lobkowitz, I escorted you to the Gate of Rimini.”

“You are Baron Vais:”

“Precisely.”

We embraced one another; he offered me his friendly services, promising to procure me all the pleasure he could in Vienna. I accepted gratefully, and the same evening he presented me to a countess, at whose house I made the acquaintance of the Abbe Testagrossa, who was called Grosse-Tete by everybody. He was minister of the Duke of Modem, and great at Court because he had negotiated the marriage of the arch-duke with Beatrice d’Este. I also became acquainted there with the Count of Roquendorf and Count Sarotin, and with several noble young ladies who are called in Germany frauleins, and with a baroness who had led a pretty wild life, but who could yet captivate a man. We had supper, and I was created baron. It was in vain that I observed that I had no title whatever: “You must be something,” I was told, “and you cannot be less than baron. You must confess yourself to be at least that, if you wish to be received anywhere in Vienna.”

“Well, I will be a baron, since it is of no importance.”

The baroness was not long before she gave me to understand that she felt kindly disposed towards me, and that she would receive my attentions with pleasure; I paid her a visit the very next day. “If you are fond of cards,” she said, “come in the evening.” At her house I made the acquaintance of several gamblers, and of three or four frauleins who, without any dread of the Commissaries of Chastity, were devoted to the worship of Venus, and were so kindly disposed that they were not afraid of lowering their nobility by accepting some reward for their kindness — a circumstance which proved to me that the Commissaries were in the habit of troubling only the girls who did not frequent good houses.

The baroness invited me to introduce, all my friends, so I brought to her house Vais, Campioni, and Afflisio. The last one played, held the bank, won; and Tramontini, with whom I had become acquainted, presented him to his wife, who was called Madame Tasi. It was through her that Afflisio made the useful acquaintance of the Prince of Saxe-Hildburghausen. This introduction was the origin of the great fortune made by that contrabrand count, because Tramontini, who had become his partner in all important gambling transactions, contrived to obtain for him from the prince the rank of captain in the service of their imperial and royal majesties, and in less than three weeks Afflisio wore the uniform and the insignia of his grade. When I left Vienna he possessed one: hundred thousand florins. Their majesties were fond of gambling but not of punting. The emperor had a creature of his own to hold the bank. He was a kind, magnificent, but not extravagant, prince. I saw him in his grand imperial costume, and I was surprised to see him dressed in the Spanish fashion. I almost fancied I had before my eyes Charles V. of Spain, who had established that etiquette which was still in existence, although after him no emperor had been a Spaniard, and although Francis I. had nothing in common with that nation.

In Poland, some years afterwards, I saw the same caprice at the coronation of Stanislas Augustus Poniatowski, and the old palatine noblemen almost broke their hearts at the sight of that costume; but they had to shew as good a countenance as they could, for under Russian despotism the only privilege they enjoyed was that of resignation.

The Emperor Francis I. was, handsome, and would have looked so under the hood of a monk as well as under an imperial crown. He had every possible consideration for his wife, and allowed her to get the state into debt, because he possessed the art of becoming himself the creditor of the state. He favoured commerce because it filled his coffers. He was rather addicted to gallantry, and the empress, who always called him master feigned not to notice it, because she did not want the world to know that her charms could no longer captivate her royal spouse, and the more so that the beauty of her numerous family was generally admired. All the archduchesses except the eldest seemed to me very handsome; but amongst the sons I had the opportunity of seeing only the eldest, and I thought the expression of his face bad and unpleasant, in spite of the contrary opinion of Abbe Grosse-Tete, who prided himself upon being a good physiognomist.

"What do you see," he asked me one day, "on the countenance of that prince?"

"Self-conceit and suicide."

It was a prophecy, for Joseph II. positively killed himself, although not wilfully, and it was his self-conceit which prevented him from knowing it. He was not wanting in learning, but the knowledge which he believed himself to possess destroyed the learning which he had in reality. He delighted in speaking to those who did not know how to answer him, whether because they were amazed at his arguments, or because they pretended to be so; but he called pedants, and avoided all persons, who by true reasoning pulled down the weak scaffolding of his arguments. Seven years ago I happened to meet him at Luxemburg, and he spoke to me with just contempt of a man who had exchanged immense sums of money, and a great deal of debasing meanness against some miserable parchments, and he added, —

"I despise men who purchase nobility."

"Your majesty is right, but what are we to think of those who sell it?"

After that question he turned his back upon me, and hence forth he thought me unworthy of being spoken to.

The great passion of that king was to see those who listened to him laugh, whether with sincerity or with affectation, when he related something; he could narrate well and amplify in a very amusing manner all the particulars of an anecdote; but he called anyone who did not laugh at his jests a fool, and that was always the person who understood him best. He gave the preference to the opinion of Brambilla, who encouraged his suicide, over that of the physicians who were directing him according to reason. Nevertheless, no one ever denied his claim to great courage; but he had no idea whatever of the art of government, for he had not the slightest knowledge of the human heart, and he could neither dissemble nor keep a secret; he had so little control over his own countenance that he could not even conceal the pleasure he felt in punishing, and when he saw anyone whose features did not please him, he could not help making a wry face which disfigured him greatly.

Joseph II. sank under a truly cruel disease, which left him until the last moment the faculty of arguing upon everything, at the same time that he knew his death to be certain. This prince must have felt the misery of repenting everything he had done and of seeing the impossibility of undoing it, partly because it was irreparable, partly because if he had undone through reason what he had done through senselessness, he would have thought himself dishonoured, for he must have clung to the last to the belief of the infallibility attached to his high birth, in spite of the state of languor of his soul which ought to have proved to him the weakness and the fallibility of his nature. He had the greatest esteem for his brother, who has now succeeded him, but he had not the courage to follow the advice which that brother gave him. An impulse worthy of a great soul made him bestow a large reward upon the physician, a man of intelligence, who pronounced his sentence of death, but a completely opposite weakness had prompted him, a few months before, to load with benefits the doctors and the quack who made him believe that they had cured him. He must likewise have felt the misery of knowing that he would not be regretted after his death — a grievous thought, especially for a sovereign. His niece, whom he loved dearly, died before him, and, if he had had the affection of those who surrounded him, they would have spared him that fearful information, for it was evident that his end was near at hand, and no one could dread his anger for having kept that event from him.

Although very much pleased with Vienna and with the pleasures I enjoyed with the beautiful frauleins, whose acquaintance I had made at the house of the baroness, I was thinking of leaving that agreeable city, when Baron Vais, meeting me at Count Durazzo's wedding, invited me to join a picnic at Schoenbrunn. I went, and I failed to observe the laws of temperance; the consequence was that I returned to Vienna with such a severe indigestion that in twenty-four hours I was at the point of death.

I made use of the last particle of intelligence left in me by the disease to save my own life. Campioni, Roquendorf and Sarotin were by my bedside. M. Sarotin, who felt great friendship for me, had brought a physician, although I had almost positively declared that I would not see one. That disciple of Sangrado, thinking that he could allow full sway to the despotism of science, had sent for a surgeon, and they were going to bleed me against my will. I was half-dead; I do not know by what strange inspiration I opened my eyes, and I saw a man, standing lancet in hand and preparing to open the vein.

"No, no!" I said.

And I languidly withdrew my arm; but the tormentor wishing, as the physician expressed it, to restore me to life in spite of myself, got hold of my arm again. I suddenly felt my strength returning. I put my hand forward, seized one of my pistols, fired, and the ball cut off one of the locks of his hair. That was enough; everybody ran away, with the exception of my servant, who did not abandon me, and gave me as much water as I wanted to drink. On the fourth day I had recovered my usual good health.

That adventure amused all the idlers of Vienna for several days, and Abbe Grosse-Tete assured me that if I had killed the poor surgeon, it would not have gone any further, because all the witnesses present in my room at the time would have declared that he wanted to use violence to bleed me, which made it a case of legitimate self-defence. I was likewise told by several persons that all the physicians in Vienna were of opinion that if I had been bled I should have been a dead man; but if drinking water had not saved me, those gentlemen would certainly not have expressed the same opinion. I felt, however, that I had to be careful, and not to fall ill in the capital of Austria, for it was likely that I should not have found a physician without difficulty. At the opera, a great many persons wished after that to make my acquaintance, and I was looked upon as a man who had fought, pistol in hand, against death. A miniature-painter named Morol, who was subject to indigestions and who was at last killed by one, had taught me his system which was that, to cure those attacks, all that was necessary was to drink plenty of water and to be patient. He died because he was bled once when he could not oppose any resistance.

My indigestion reminded me of a witty saying of a man who was not much in the habit of uttering many of them; I mean M. de Maisonrouge, who was taken home one day almost dying from a severe attack of indigestion: his carriage having been stopped opposite the Quinze-Vingts by some obstruction, a poor man came up and begged alms, saying,

“Sir, I am starving.”

“Eh! what are you complaining of?” answered Maisonrouge, sighing deeply; “I wish I was in your place, you rogue!”

At that time I made the acquaintance of a Milanese dancer, who had wit, excellent manners, a literary education, and what is more — great beauty. She received very good society, and did the honours of her drawing-room marvellously well. I became acquainted at her house with Count Christopher Erdodi, an amiable, wealthy and generous man; and with a certain Prince Kinski who had all the grace of a harlequin. That girl inspired me with love, but it was in vain, for she was herself enamoured of a dancer from Florence, called Argiolini. I courted her, but she only laughed at me, for an actress, if in love with someone, is a fortress which cannot be taken, unless you build a bridge of gold, and I was not rich. Yet I did not despair, and kept on burning my incense at her feet. She liked my society because she used to shew me the letters she wrote, and I was very careful to admire her style. She had her own portrait in miniature, which was an excellent likeness. The day before my departure, vexed at having lost my time and my amorous compliments, I made up my mind to steal that portrait — a slight compensation for not having won the original. As I was taking leave of her, I saw the portrait within my reach, seized it, and left Vienna for Presburg, where Baron Vais had invited me to accompany him and several lovely frauleins on a party of pleasure.

When we got out of the carriages, the first person I tumbled upon was the Chevalier de Talvis, the protector of Madame Conde-Labre, whom I had treated so well in Paris. The moment he saw me, he came up and told me that I owed him his revenge.

“I promise to give it to you, but I never leave one pleasure for another,” I answered; “we shall see one another again.”

“That is enough. Will you do me the honour to introduce me to these ladies?”

“Very willingly, but not in the street.”

We went inside of the hotel and he followed us. Thinking that the man, who after all was as brave as a French chevalier, might amuse us, I presented him to my friends. He had been staying at the same hotel for a couple of days, and he was in mourning. He asked us if we intended to go to the prince-bishop’s ball; it was the first news we had of it. Vais answered affirmatively.

“One can attend it,” said Talvis, “without being presented, and that is why we intend to go, for I am not known to anybody here.”

He left us, and the landlord, having come in to receive our orders, gave us some particulars respecting the ball. Our lovely frauleins expressing a wish to attend it, we made up our minds to gratify them.

We were not known to anyone, and were rambling through the apartments, when we arrived before a large table at which the prince-bishop was holding a faro bank. The pile of gold that the noble prelate had before him could not have been less than thirteen or fourteen thousand florins. The Chevalier de Talvis was standing between two ladies to whom he was whispering sweet words, while the prelate was shuffling the cards.

The prince, looking at the chevalier, took it into his head to ask him, in a most engaging manner to risk a card.

“Willingly, my lord,” said Talvis; “the whole of the bank upon this card.”

“Very well,” answered the prelate, to shew that he was not afraid.

He dealt, Talvis won, and my lucky Frenchman, with the greatest coolness, filled his pockets with the prince’s gold. The bishop, astonished, and seeing but rather late how foolish he had been, said to the chevalier,

“Sir, if you had lost, how would you have managed to pay me?”

“My lord, that is my business.”

“You are more lucky than wise.”

“Most likely, my lord; but that is my business.”

Seeing that the chevalier was on the point of leaving, I followed him, and at the bottom of the stairs, after congratulating him, I asked him to lend me a hundred sovereigns. He gave them to me at once, assuring me that he was delighted to have it in his power to oblige me.

“I will give you my bill.”

“Nothing of the sort.”

I put the gold into my pocket, caring very little for the crowd of masked persons whom curiosity had brought around the lucky winner, and who had witnessed the transaction. Talvis went away, and I returned to the ball-room.

Roquendorf and Sarotin, who were amongst the guests, having heard that the chevalier had handed me some gold, asked me who he was. I gave them an answer half true and half false, and I told them that the gold I had just received was the payment of a sum I had lent him in Paris. Of course they could not help believing me, or at least pretending to do so.

When we returned to the inn, the landlord informed us that the chevalier had left the city on horseback, as fast as he could gallop, and that a small traveling-bag was all his luggage. We sat down to supper, and in order to make our meal more cheerful, I told Vais and our charming frauleins the manner in which I had known Talvis, and how I had contrived to have my share of what he had won.

On our arrival in Vienna, the adventure was already known; people admired the Frenchman and laughed at the bishop. I was not spared by public rumour, but I took no notice of it, for I did not think it necessary to defend myself. No one knew the Chevalier de Talvis, and the French ambassador was not even acquainted with his name. I do not know whether he was ever heard of again.

I left Vienna in a post-chaise, after I had said farewell to my friends, ladies and gentlemen, and on the fourth day I slept in Trieste. The next day I sailed for Venice, which I reached in the afternoon, two days before Ascension Day. After an absence of three years I had the happiness of embracing my beloved protector, M. de Bragadin, and his two inseparable friends, who were delighted to see me in good health and well equipped.

CHAPTER XI

I Return the Portrait I Had Stolen in Vienna I Proceed to

Padua; An Adventure on My Way Back, and Its Consequences —

I Meet Therese Imer Again — My Acquaintance With Mademoiselle

C. C.

I found myself again in my native country with that feeling of delight which is experienced by all true-hearted men, when they see again the place in which they have received the first lasting impressions. I had acquired some experience; I knew the laws of honour and politeness; in one word, I felt myself superior to most of my equals, and I longed to resume my old habits and pursuits; but I intended to adopt a more regular and more reserved line of conduct.

I saw with great pleasure, as I entered my study, the perfect ‘statu quo’ which had been preserved there. My papers, covered with a thick layer of dust, testified well enough that no strange hand had ever meddled with them.

Two days after my arrival, as I was getting ready to accompany the Bucentoro, on which the Doge was going, as usual, to wed the Adriatic, the widow of so many husbands, and yet as young as on the first day of her creation, a gondolier brought me a letter. It was from M. Giovanni Grimani, a young nobleman, who, well aware that he had no right to command me, begged me in the most polite manner to call at his house to receive a letter which had been entrusted to him for delivery in my own hands. I went to him immediately, and after the usual compliments he handed me a letter with a flying seal, which he had received the day before.

Here are the contents:

“Sir, having made a useless search for my portrait after you left, and not being in the habit of receiving thieves in my apartment, I feel satisfied that it must be in your possession. I request you to deliver it to the person who will hand you this letter.

“FOGLIAZZI.”

Happening to have the portrait with me, I took it out of my pocket, and gave it at once to M. Grimani, who received it with a mixture of satisfaction and surprise for he had evidently thought that the commission entrusted to him would be more difficult to fulfil, and he remarked,

“Love has most likely made a thief of you but I congratulate you, for your passion cannot be a very ardent one.”

“How can you judge of that?”

“From the readiness with which you give up this portrait.”

“I would not have given it up so easily to anybody else.”

“I thank you; and as a compensation I beg you to accept my friendship.”

“I place it in my estimation infinitely above the portrait, and even above the original. May I ask you to forward my answer?”

“I promise you to send it. Here is some paper, write your letter; you need not seal it.”

I wrote the following words:

“In getting rid of the portrait, Casanova experiences a satisfaction by far superior to that which he felt when, owing to a stupid fancy, he was foolish enough to put it in his pocket.”

Bad weather having compelled the authorities to postpone the wonderful wedding until the following Sunday, I accompanied M. de Bragadin, who was going to Padua. The amiable old man ran away from, the noisy pleasures which no longer suited his age, and he was going to spend in peace the few days which the public rejoicings would have rendered unpleasant for him in Venice. On the following Saturday, after dinner, I bade him farewell, and got into the post-chaise to return to Venice. If I had left Padua two minutes sooner or later, the whole course of my life would have been altered, and my destiny, if destiny is truly shaped by fatal combinations, would have been very different. But the reader can judge for himself.

Having, therefore, left Padua at the very instant marked by fatality, I met at Oriago a cabriolet, drawn at full speed by two post-horses, containing a very pretty woman and a man wearing a German uniform. Within a few yards from me the vehicle was suddenly upset on the side of the river, and the woman, falling over the officer, was in great danger of rolling into the Brenta. I jumped out of my chaise without even stopping my postillion, and rushing to the assistance of the lady I remedied with a chaste hand the disorder caused to her toilet by her fall.

Her companion, who had picked himself up without any injury, hastened towards us, and there was the lovely creature sitting on the ground thoroughly amazed, and less confused from her fall than from the indiscretion of her petticoats, which had exposed in all their nakedness certain parts which an honest woman never shews to a stranger. In the warmth of her thanks, which lasted until her postillion and mine had righted the cabriolet, she often called me her saviour, her guardian angel.

The vehicle being all right, the lady continued her journey towards Padua, and I resumed mine towards Venice, which I reached just in time to dress for the opera.

The next day I masked myself early to accompany the Bucentoro, which, favoured by fine weather, was to be taken to the Lido for the great and ridiculous ceremony. The whole affair is under the responsibility of the admiral of the arsenal, who answers for the weather remaining fine, under penalty of his head, for the slightest contrary wind might capsize the ship and drown the Doge, with all the most serene noblemen, the ambassadors, and the Pope’s nuncio, who is the sponsor of that burlesque wedding which the Venetians respect even to superstition. To crown the misfortune of such an accident it would make the whole of Europe laugh, and people would not fail to say that the Doge of Venice had gone at last to consummate his marriage.

I had removed my mask, and was drinking some coffee under the ‘procuraties’ of St. Mark’s Square, when a fine-looking female mask struck me gallantly on the shoulder with her fan. As I did not know who she was I did not take much notice of it, and after I had finished my coffee I put on my mask and walked towards the Spiaggia del Sepulcro, where M. de Bragadin’s gondola was waiting for me. As I was getting near the Ponte del

Paglia I saw the same masked woman attentively looking at some wonderful monster shewn for a few pence. I went up to her; and asked her why she had struck me with her fan.

“To punish you for not knowing me again after having saved my life.” I guessed that she was the person I had rescued the day before on the banks of the Brenta, and after paying her some compliments I enquired whether she intended to follow the Bucentoro.

“I should like it,” she said, “if I had a safe gondola.”

I offered her mine, which was one of the largest, and, after consulting a masked person who accompanied her, she accepted. Before stepping in I invited them to take off their masks, but they told me that they wished to remain unknown. I then begged them to tell me if they belonged to the suite of some ambassador, because in that case I should be compelled, much to my regret, to withdraw my invitation; but they assured me that they were both Venetians. The gondola belonging to a patrician, I might have committed myself with the State Inquisitors-a thing which I wished particularly to avoid. We were following the Bucentoro, and seated near the lady I allowed myself a few slight liberties, but she foiled my intentions by changing her seat. After the ceremony we returned to Venice, and the officer who accompanied the lady told me that I would oblige them by dining in their company at “The Savage.” I accepted, for I felt somewhat curious about the woman. What I had seen of her at the time of her fall warranted my curiosity. The officer left me alone with her, and went before us to order dinner.

As soon as I was alone with her, emboldened by the mask, I told her that I was in love with her, that I had a box at the opera, which I placed entirely at her disposal, and that, if she would only give me the hope that I was not wasting my time and my attentions, I would remain her humble servant during the carnival.

“If you mean to be cruel,” I added, “pray say so candidly.”

“I must ask you to tell me what sort of a woman you take me for?”

“For a very charming one, whether a princess or a maid of low degree. Therefore, I hope that you will give me, this very day, some marks of your kindness, or I must part with you immediately after dinner.”

“You will do as you please; but I trust that after dinner you will have changed your opinion and your language, for your way of speaking is not pleasant. It seems to me that, before venturing upon such an explanation, it is necessary to know one another. Do you not think so?”

“Yes, I do; but I am afraid of being deceived.”

“How very strange! And that fear makes you begin by what ought to be the end?”

“I only beg to-day for one encouraging word. Give it to me and I will at once be modest, obedient and discreet.”

“Pray calm yourself.”

We found the officer waiting for us before the door of “The Savage,” and went upstairs. The moment we were in the room, she took off her mask, and I thought her more beautiful than the day before. I wanted only to ascertain, for the sake of form and etiquette, whether the officer was her husband, her lover, a relative or a protector, because, used as I was to gallant adventures, I wished to know the nature of the one in which I was embarking.

We sat down to dinner, and the manners of the gentleman and of the lady made it necessary for me to be careful. It was to him that I offered my box, and it was accepted; but as I had none, I went out after dinner under pretence of some engagement, in order to get one at the opera-buffa, where Petrici and Lasqui were then the shining stars. After the opera I gave them a good supper at an inn, and I took them to their house in my gondola. Thanks to the darkness of the night, I obtained from the pretty woman all the favours which can be granted by the side of a third person who has to be treated with caution. As we parted company, the officer said,

“You shall hear from me to-morrow.”

“Where, and how?”

“Never mind that.”

The next morning the servant announced an officer; it was my man. After we had exchanged the usual compliments, after I had thanked him for the honour he had done me the day before, I asked him to tell me his name. He answered me in the following manner, speaking with great fluency, but without looking at me:

“My name is P —— C —— . My father is rich, and enjoys great consideration at the exchange; but we are not on friendly terms at present. I reside in St. Mark’s Square. The lady you saw with me was a Mdlle. O —— ; she is the wife of the broker C —— , and her sister married the patrician P —— M —— . But Madame C —— is at variance with her husband on my account, as she is the cause of my quarrel with my father.

“I wear this uniform in virtue of a captaincy in the Austrian service, but I have never served in reality. I have the contract for the supply of oxen to the City of Venice, and I get the cattle from Styria and Hungary. This contract gives me a net profit of ten thousand florins a year; but an unforeseen embarrassment, which I must remedy; a fraudulent bankruptcy, and some extraordinary expenditure, place me for the present in monetary difficulties. Four years ago I heard a great deal about you, and wished very much to make your acquaintance; I firmly believe that it was through the interference of Heaven that we became acquainted the day before yesterday. I have no hesitation in claiming from you an important service which will unite us by the ties of the warmest friendship. Come to my assistance without running any risk yourself; back these three bills of exchange. You need not be afraid of having to pay them, for I will leave in your hands these three other bills which fall due before the first. Besides, I will give you a mortgage upon the proceeds of my contract during the whole year, so that, should I fail to take up these bills, you could seize my cattle in Trieste, which is the only road through which they can come.”

Astonished at his speech and at his proposal, which seemed to me a lure and made me fear a world of trouble which I always abhorred, struck by the strange idea of that man who, thinking that I would easily fall into the snare, gave me the preference over so many other persons whom he certainly knew better than me, I did not hesitate to tell him that I would never accept his offer. He then had recourse to all his eloquence to persuade me, but I embarrassed him greatly by telling him how surprised I was at his giving me the preference over all his other acquaintances, when I had had the honour to know him only for two days.

“Sir” he said, with barefaced impudence, “having recognised in you a man of great intelligence, I felt certain that you would at once see the advantages of my offer, and that you would not raise any objection.”

"You must see your mistake by this time, and most likely you will take me for a fool now you see that I should believe myself a dupe if I accepted."

He left me with an apology for having troubled me, and saying that he hoped to see me in the evening at St. Mark's Square, where he would be with Madame C—— , he gave me his address, telling me that he had retained possession of his apartment unknown to his father. This was as much as to say that he expected me to return his visit, but if I had been prudent I should not have done so.

Disgusted at the manner in which that man had attempted to get hold of me, I no longer felt any inclination to try my fortune with his mistress, for it seemed evident that they were conspiring together to make a dupe of me, and as I had no wish to afford them that gratification I avoided them in the evening. It would have been wise to keep to that line of conduct; but the next day, obeying my evil genius, and thinking that a polite call could not have any consequences, I called upon him.

A servant having taken me to his room, he gave me the most friendly welcome, and reproached me in a friendly manner for not having shewn myself the evening before. After that, he spoke again of his affairs, and made me look at a heap of papers and documents; I found it very wearisome.

"If you make up your mind to sign the three bills of exchange," he said, "I will take you as a partner in my contract."

By this extraordinary mark of friendship, he was offering me — at least he said so — an income of five thousand florins a year; but my only answer was to beg that the matter should never be mentioned again. I was going to take leave of him, when he said that he wished to introduce me to his mother and sister.

He left the room, and came back with them. The mother was a respectable, simple-looking woman, but the daughter was a perfect beauty; she literally dazzled me. After a few minutes, the over-trustful mother begged leave to retire, and her daughter remained. In less than half an hour I was captivated; her perfection delighted me; her lively wit, her artless reasoning, her candour, her ingenuousness, her natural and noble feelings, her cheerful and innocent quickness, that harmony which arises from beauty, wit, and innocence, and which had always the most powerful influence over me — everything in fact conspired to make me the slave of the most perfect woman that the wildest dreams could imagine.

Mdlle. C —— C —— never went out without her mother who, although very pious, was full of kind indulgence. She read no books but her father's — a serious man who had no novels in his library, and she was longing to read some tales of romance. She had likewise a great wish to know Venice, and as no one visited the family she had never been told that she was truly a prodigy of beauty. Her brother was writing while I conversed with her, or rather answered all the questions which she addressed to me, and which I could only satisfy by developing the ideas that she already had, and that she was herself amazed to find in her own mind, for her soul had until then been unconscious of its own powers. Yet I did not tell her that she was lovely and that she interested me in the highest degree, because I had so often said the same to other women, and without truth, that I was afraid of raising her suspicions.

I left the house with a sensation of dreamy sadness; feeling deeply moved by the rare qualities I had discovered in that charming girl, I promised myself not to see her again, for I hardly thought myself the man to sacrifice my liberty entirely and to ask her in marriage, although I certainly believed her endowed with all the qualities necessary to minister to my happiness.

I had not seen Madame Manzoni since my return to Venice, and I went to pay her a visit. I found the worthy woman the same as she had always been towards me, and she gave me the most affectionate welcome. She told me that Therese Imer, that pretty girl who had caused M. de Malipiero to strike me thirteen years before, had just returned from Bayreuth, where the margrave had made her fortune. As she lived in the house opposite, Madame Manzoni, who wanted to enjoy her surprise, sent her word to come over. She came almost immediately, holding by the hand a little boy of eight years — a lovely child — and the only one she had given to her husband, who was a dancer in Bayreuth. Our surprise at seeing one another again was equal to the pleasure we experienced in recollecting what had occurred in our young days; it is true that we had but trifles to recollect. I congratulated her upon her good fortune, and judging of my position from external appearances, she thought it right to congratulate me, but her fortune would have been established on a firmer basis than mine if she had followed a prudent line of conduct. She unfortunately indulged in numerous caprices with which my readers will become acquainted. She was an excellent musician, but her fortune was not altogether owing to her talent; her charms had done more for her than anything else. She told me her adventures, very likely with some restrictions, and we parted after a conversation of two hours. She invited me to breakfast for the following day. She told me that the margrave had her narrowly watched, but being an old acquaintance I was not likely to give rise to any suspicion; that is the aphorism of all women addicted to gallantry. She added that I could, if I liked, see her that same evening in her box, and that M. Papafava, who was her god-father, would be glad to see me. I called at her house early the next morning, and I found her in bed with her son, who, thanks to the principles in which he had been educated, got up and left the room as soon as he saw me seated near his mother's bed. I spent three hours with her, and I recollect that the last was delightful; the reader will know the consequence of that pleasant hour later. I saw her a second time during the fortnight she passed in Venice, and when she left I promised to pay her a visit in Bayreuth, but I never kept my promise.

I had at that time to attend to the affairs of my posthumous brother, who had, as he said, a call from Heaven to the priesthood, but he wanted a patrimony. Although he was ignorant and devoid of any merit save a handsome face, he thought that an ecclesiastical career would insure his happiness, and he depended a great deal upon his preaching, for which, according to the opinion of the women with whom he was acquainted, he had a decided talent. I took everything into my hands, and I succeeded in obtaining for him a patrimony from M. Grimani, who still owed us the value of the furniture in my father's house, of which he had never rendered any account. He transferred to him a life-interest in a house in Venice, and two years afterwards my brother was ordained. But the patrimony was only fictitious, the house being already mortgaged; the Abbe Grimani was, however, a kind Jesuit, and those sainted servants of God think that all is well that ends well and profitably to themselves. I shall speak again of my unhappy brother whose destiny became involved with mine.

Two days had passed since I had paid my visit to P—— C—— , when I met him in the street. He told me that his sister was constantly speaking of me, that she quoted a great many things which I had told her, and that his mother was much pleased at her daughter having made my acquaintance. “She would be a good match for you,” he added, “for she will have a dowry of ten thousand ducats. If you will call on me to-morrow, we will take coffee with my mother and sister.”

I had promised myself never again to enter his house, but I broke my word. It is easy enough for a man to forget his promises under such circumstances.

I spent three hours in conversation with the charming girl and when I left her I was deeply in love. As I went away, I told her that I envied the destiny of the man who would have her for his wife, and my compliment, the first she had ever received, made her blush.

After I had left her I began to examine the nature of my feelings towards her, and they frightened me, for I could neither behave towards Mdlle. C —— C —— as an honest man nor as a libertine. I could not hope to obtain her hand, and I almost fancied I would stab anyone who advised me to seduce her. I felt that I wanted some diversion: I went to the gaming-table. Playing is sometimes an excellent lenitive to calm the mind, and to smother the ardent fire of love. I played with wonderful luck, and I was going home with plenty of gold, when in a solitary narrow street I met a man bent down less by age than by the heavy weight of misery. As I came near him I recognized Count Bonafede, the sight of whom moved me with pity. He recognized me likewise. We talked for some time, and at last he told me the state of abject poverty to which he was reduced, and the great difficulty he had to keep his numerous family. “I do not blush,” he added, “in begging from you one sequin which will keep us alive for five or six days.” I immediately gave him ten, trying to prevent him from lowering himself in his anxiety to express his gratitude, but I could not prevent him from shedding tears. As we parted, he told me that what made him most miserable was to see the position of his daughter, who had become a great beauty, and would rather die than make a sacrifice of her virtue. “I can neither support her in those feelings,” he said, with a sigh, “nor reward her for them.”

Thinking that I understood the wishes with which misery had inspired him, I took his address, and promised to pay him a visit. I was curious to see what had become of a virtue of which I did not entertain a very high opinion. I called the next day. I found a house almost bare of furniture, and the daughter alone — a circumstance which did not astonish me. The young countess had seen me arrive, and received me on the stairs in the most amiable manner. She was pretty well dressed, and I thought her handsome, agreeable, and lively, as she had been when I made her acquaintance in Fort St. Andre. Her father having announced my visit, she was in high spirits, and she kissed me with as much tenderness as if I had been a beloved lover. She took me to her own room, and after she had informed me that her mother was ill in bed and unable to see me, she gave way again to the transport of joy which, as she said, she felt in seeing me again. The ardour of our mutual kisses, given at first under the auspices of friendship, was not long in exciting our senses to such an extent that in less than a quarter of an hour I had nothing more to desire. When it was all over, it became us both, of course, to be, or at least to appear to be, surprised at what had taken place, and I could not honestly hesitate to assure the poor countess that it was only the first token of a constant and true love. She believed it, or she feigned to believe it, and perhaps I myself fancied it was true — for the moment. When we had become calm again, she told me the fearful state to which they were reduced, her brothers walking barefooted in the streets, and her father having positively no bread to give them.

“Then you have not any lover?”

“What? a lover! Where could I find a man courageous enough to be my lover in such a house as this? Am I a woman to sell myself to the first comer for the sum of thirty sous? There is not a man in Venice who would think me worth more than that, seeing me in such a place as this. Besides, I was not born for prostitution.”

Such a conversation was not very cheerful; she was weeping, and the spectacle of her sadness, joined to the picture of misery which surrounded me, was not at all the thing to excite love. I left her with a promise to call again, and I put twelve sequins in her hand. She was surprised at the amount; she had never known herself so rich before. I have always regretted I did not give her twice as much.

The next day P —— C —— called on me, and said cheerfully that his mother had given permission to her daughter to go to the opera with him, that the young girl was delighted because she had never been there before, and that, if I liked, I could wait for them at some place where they would meet me.

"But does your sister know that you intend me to join you?"

"She considers it a great pleasure."

"Does your mother know it?"

"No; but when she knows it she will not be angry, for she has a great esteem for you."

"In that case I will try to find a private box."

"Very well; wait for us at such a place."

The scoundrel did not speak of his letters of exchange again, and as he saw that I was no longer paying my attentions to his mistress, and that I was in love with his sister, he had formed the fine project of selling her to me. I pitied the mother and the daughter who had confidence in such a man; but I had not the courage to resist the temptation. I even went so far as to persuade myself that as I loved her it was my duty to accept the offer, in order to save her from other snares; for if I had declined her brother might have found some other man less scrupulous, and I could not bear the idea. I thought that in my company her innocence ran no risk.

I took a box at the St. Samuel Opera, and I was waiting for them at the appointed place long before the time. They came at last, and the sight of my young friend delighted me. She was elegantly masked, and her brother wore his uniform. In order not to expose the lovely girl to being recognized on account of her brother, I made them get into my gondola. He insisted upon being landed near the house of his mistress, who was ill, he said, and he added that he would soon join us in our box. I was astonished that C —— C —— did not shew any surprise or repugnance at remaining alone with me in the gondola; but I did not think the conduct of her brother extraordinary, for it was evident that it was all arranged beforehand in his mind.

I told C —— C —— that we would remain in the gondola until the opening of the theatre, and that as the heat was intense she would do well to take off her mask, which she did at once. The law I had laid upon myself to respect her, the noble confidence which was beaming on her countenance and in her looks, her innocent joy — everything increased the ardour of my love.

Not knowing what to say to her, for I could speak to her of nothing but love — and it was a delicate subject — I kept looking at her charming face, not daring to let my eyes rest upon two budding globes shaped by the Graces, for fear of giving the alarm to her modesty. "Speak to me," she said at last; "you only look at me without uttering a single word. You have sacrificed yourself for me, because my brother would have taken you with him to his lady-love, who, to judge from what he says, must be as beautiful as an angel."

"I have seen that lady."

"I suppose she is very witty."

"She may be so; but I have no opportunity of knowing, for I have never visited her, and I do not intend ever to call upon her. Do not therefore imagine, beautiful C —— C —— , that I have made the slightest sacrifice for your sake."

"I was afraid you had, because as you did not speak I thought you were sad."

"If I do not speak to you it is because I am too deeply moved by your angelic confidence in me."

"I am very glad it is so; but how could I not trust you? I feel much more free, much more confident with you than with my brother himself. My mother says it is impossible to be mistaken, and that you are certainly an honest man. Besides, you are not married; that is the first thing I asked my brother. Do you recollect telling me that you envied the fate of the man who would have me for his wife? Well, at that very moment I was thinking that your wife would be the happiest woman in Venice."

These words, uttered with the most candid artlessness, and with that tone of sincerity which comes from the heart, had upon me an effect which it would be difficult to describe; I suffered because I could not imprint the most loving kiss upon the sweet lips which had just pronounced them, but at the same time it caused me the most delicious felicity to see that such an angel loved me.

"With such conformity of feelings," I said, "we would, lovely C —— , be perfectly happy, if we could be united for ever. But I am old enough to be your father."

"You my father? You are joking! Do you know that I am fourteen?"

"Do you know that I am twenty-eight?"

"Well, where can you see a man of your age having a daughter of mine? If my father were like you, he would certainly never frighten me; I could not keep anything from him."

The hour to go to the theatre had come; we landed, and the performance engrossed all her attention. Her brother joined us only when it was nearly over; it had certainly been a part of his calculation. I took them to an inn for supper, and the pleasure I experienced in seeing the charming girl eat with a good appetite made me forget that I had had no dinner. I hardly spoke during the supper, for love made me sick, and I was in a state of excitement which could not last long. In order to excuse my silence, I feigned to be suffering from the toothache.

After supper, P —— C —— told his sister that I was in love with her, and that I should certainly feel better if she would allow me to kiss her. The only answer of the innocent girl was to offer me her laughing lips, which seemed to call for kisses. I was burning; but my respect for that innocent and naive young creature was such that I only kissed her cheek, and even that in a manner very cold in appearance.

"What a kiss!" exclaimed P —— C —— . "Come, come, a good lover's kiss!"

I did not move; the impudent fellow annoyed me; but his sister, turning her head aside sadly, said,

"Do not press him; I am not so happy as to please him."

That remark gave the alarm to my love; I could no longer master my feelings.

"What!" I exclaimed warmly, "what! beautiful C —— , you do not condescend to ascribe my reserve to the feeling which you have inspired me with? You suppose that you do not please me? If a kiss is all that is needed to prove the contrary to you, oh! receive it now with all the sentiment that is burning in my heart!"

Then folding her in my arms, and pressing her lovingly against my breast, I imprinted on her mouth the long and ardent kiss which I had so much wished to give her; but the nature of that kiss made the timid dove feel that she had fallen into the vulture’s claws. She escaped from my arms, amazed at having discovered my love in such a manner. Her brother expressed his approval, while she replaced her mask over her face, in order to conceal her confusion. I asked her whether she had any longer any doubts as to my love.

“You have convinced me,” she answered, “but, because you have undeceived me, you must not punish me.”

I thought that this was a very delicate answer, dictated by true sentiment; but her brother was not pleased with it, and said it was foolish.

We put on our masks, left the inn, and after I had escorted them to their house I went home deeply in love, happy in my inmost soul, yet very sad.

The reader will learn in the following chapters the progress of my love and the adventures in which I found myself engaged.

CHAPTER XII

Progress of My Intrigue with the Beautiful C. C.

The next morning P —— C —— called on me with an air of triumph; he told me that his sister had confessed to her mother that we loved one another, and that if she was ever to be married she would be unhappy with any other husband.

“I adore your sister,” I said to him; “but do you think that your father will be willing to give her to me?”

“I think not; but he is old. In the mean time, love one another. My mother has given her permission to go to the opera this evening with us.”

“Very well, my dear friend, we must go.”

“I find myself under the necessity of claiming a slight service at your hands.”

“Dispose of me.”

“There is some excellent Cyprus wine to be sold very cheap, and I can obtain a cask of it against my bill at six months. I am certain of selling it again immediately with a good profit; but the merchant requires a guarantee, and he is disposed to accept yours, if you will give it. Will you be kind enough to endorse my note of hand?”

“With pleasure.”

I signed my name without hesitation, for where is the man in love who in such a case would have refused that service to a person who to revenge himself might have made him miserable? We made an appointment for the evening, and parted highly pleased with each other.

After I had dressed myself, I went out and bought a dozen pairs of gloves, as many pairs of silk stockings, and a pair of garters embroidered in gold and with gold clasps, promising myself much pleasure in offering that first present to my young friend.

I need not say that I was exact in reaching the appointed place, but they were there already, waiting for me. Had I not suspected the intentions of P —— C —— , their coming so early would have been very flattering to my vanity. The moment I had joined them, P —— C —— told me that, having other engagements to fulfil, he would leave his sister with me, and meet us at the theatre in the evening. When he had gone, I told C —— C —— that we would sail in a gondola until the opening of the theatre.

"No," she answered, "let us rather go to the Zuecca Garden."

"With all my heart."

I hired a gondola and we went to St. Blaze, where I knew a very pretty garden which, for one sequin, was placed at my disposal for the remainder of the day, with the express condition that no one else would be allowed admittance. We had not had any dinner, and after I had ordered a good meal we went up to a room where we took off our disguises and masks, after which we went to the garden.

My lovely C —— C —— had nothing on but a bodice made of light silk and a skirt of the same description, but she was charming in that simple costume! My amorous looks went through those light veils, and in my imagination I saw her entirely naked! I sighed with burning desires, with a mixture of discreet reserve and voluptuous love.

The moment we had reached the long avenue, my young companion, as lively as a fawn, finding herself at liberty on the green sward, and enjoying that happy freedom for the first time in her life, began to run about and to give way to the spirit of cheerfulness which was natural to her. When she was compelled to stop for want of breath, she burst out laughing at seeing me gazing at her in a sort of ecstatic silence. She then challenged me to run a race; the game was very agreeable to me. I accepted, but I proposed to make it interesting by a wager.

"Whoever loses the race," I said, "shall have to do whatever the winner asks."

"Agreed!"

We marked the winning-post, and made a fair start. I was certain to win, but I lost on purpose, so as to see what she would ask me to do. At first she ran with all her might while I reserved my strength, and she was the first to reach the goal. As she was trying to recover her breath, she thought of sentencing me to a good penance: she hid herself behind a tree and told me, a minute afterwards, that I had to find her ring. She had concealed it about her, and that was putting me in possession of all her person. I thought it was a delightful forfeit, for I could easily see that she had chosen it with intentional mischief; but I felt that I ought not to take too much advantage of her, because her artless confidence required to be encouraged. We sat on the grass, I visited her pockets, the folds of her stays, of her petticoat; then I looked in her shoes, and even at her garters which were fastened below the knees. Not finding anything, I kept on my search, and as the ring was about her, I was of course bound to discover it. My reader has most likely guessed that I had some suspicion of the charming hiding-place in which the young beauty had concealed the ring, but before coming to it I wanted to enjoy myself. The ring was at last found between the two most beautiful keepers that nature had ever rounded, but I felt such emotion as I drew it out that my hand was trembling.

“What are you trembling for?” she asked.

“Only for joy at having found the ring; you had concealed it so well! But you owe me a revenge, and this time you shall not beat me.”

“We shall see.”

We began a new race, and seeing that she was not running very fast, I thought I could easily distance her whenever I liked. I was mistaken. She had husbanded her strength, and when we had run about two-thirds of the race she suddenly sprang forward at full speed, left me behind, and I saw that I had lost. I then thought of a trick, the effect of which never fails; I feigned a heavy fall, and I uttered a shriek of pain. The poor child stopped at once, ran back to me in great fright, and, pitying me, she assisted me to raise myself from the ground. The moment I was on my feet again, I laughed heartily and, taking a spring forward, I had reached the goal long before her.

The charming runner, thoroughly amazed, said to me,

“Then you did not hurt yourself?”

“No, for I fell purposely.”

"Purposely? Oh, to deceive me! I would never have believed you capable of that. It is not fair to win by fraud; therefore I have not lost the race."

"Oh! yes, you have, for I reached the goal before you."

"Trick for trick; confess that you tried to deceive me at the start."

"But that is fair, and your trick is a very different thing."

"Yet it has given me the victory, and

"Vincasi per fortund o per ingano,

Il vincer sempre fu laudabil cosa"…

"I have often heard those words from my brother, but never from my father. Well, never mind, I have lost. Give your judgment now, I will obey."

"Wait a little. Let me see. Ah! my sentence is that you shall exchange your garters for mine."

"Exchange our garters! But you have seen mine, they are ugly and worth nothing."

"Never mind. Twice every day I shall think of the person I love, and as nearly as possible at the same hours you will have to think of me."

"It is a very pretty idea, and I like it. Now I forgive you for having deceived me. Here are my ugly garters! Ah! my dear deceiver, how beautiful yours are! What a handsome present! How they will please my mother! They must be a present which you have just received, for they are quite new."

"No, they have not been given to me. I bought them for you, and I have been racking my brain to find how I could make you accept them. Love suggested to me the idea of making them the prize of the race. You may now imagine my sorrow when I saw that you would win. Vexation inspired me with a deceitful stratagem which arose from a feeling you had caused yourself, and which turned entirely to your honour, for you must admit that you would have shewn a very hard heart if you had not come to my assistance."

"And I feel certain that you would not have had recourse to that stratagem, if you could have guessed how deeply it would pain me."

"Do you then feel much interest in me?"

“I would do anything in the world to convince you of it. I like my pretty garters exceedingly; I will never have another pair, and I promise you that my brother shall not steal them from me.”

“Can you suppose him capable of such an action?”

“Oh! certainly, especially if the fastenings are in gold.”

“Yes, they are in gold; but let him believe that they are in gilt brass.”

“Will you teach me how to fasten my beautiful garters?”

“Of course I will.”

We went upstairs, and after our dinner which we both enjoyed with a good appetite, she became more lively and I more excited by love, but at the same time more to be pitied in consequence of the restraint to which I had condemned myself. Very anxious to try her garters, she begged me to help her, and that request was made in good faith, without mischievous coquetry. An innocent young girl, who, in spite of her fifteen years, has not loved yet, who has not frequented the society of other girls, does not know the violence of amorous desires or what is likely to excite them. She has no idea of the danger of a tete-a-tete. When a natural instinct makes her love for the first time, she believes the object of her love worthy of her confidence, and she thinks that to be loved herself she must shew the most boundless trust.

Seeing that her stockings were too short to fasten the garter above the knee, she told me that she would in future use longer ones, and I immediately offered her those that I had purchased. Full of gratitude she sat on my knees, and in the effusion of her satisfaction she bestowed upon me all the kisses that she would have given to her father if he had made her such a present. I returned her kisses, forcibly keeping down the violence of my feelings. I only told her that one of her kisses was worth a kingdom. My charming C —— C —— took off her shoes and stockings, and put on one of the pairs I had given her, which went halfway up her thigh. The more innocent I found her to be, the less I could make up my mind to possess myself of that ravishing prey.

We returned to the garden, and after walking about until the evening we went to the opera, taking care to keep on our masks, because, the theatre being small, we might easily have been recognized, and my lovely friend was certain that her father would not allow her to come out again, if he found out that she had gone to the opera.

We were rather surprised not to see her brother. On our left we had the Marquis of Montalegre, the Spanish ambassador, with his acknowledged mistress, Mdlle. Bola, and in the box on our right a man and a woman who had not taken off their masks. Those two persons kept their eyes constantly fixed upon us, but my young friend did not remark it as her back was turned towards them. During the ballet, C —— C —— having left the libretto of the opera on the ledge of the box, the man with the mask stretched forth his hand and took it. That proved to me that we were known to him, and I said so to my companion, who turned round and recognized her brother. The lady who was with him could be no other than Madame C —— . As P —— C —— knew the number of our box, he had taken the next one; he could not have done so without some intention, and I foresaw that he meant to make his sister have supper with that woman. I was much annoyed, but I could not prevent it without breaking off with him, altogether, and I was in love.

After the second ballet, he came into our box with his lady, and after the usual exchange of compliments the acquaintance was made, and we had to accept supper at his casino. As soon as the two ladies had thrown off their masks, they embraced one another, and the mistress of P —— C —— overwhelmed my young friend with compliments and attentions. At table she affected to treat her with extreme affability, and C —— C —— not having any experience of the world behaved towards her with the greatest respect. I could, however, see that C —— , in spite of all her art, could hardly hide the vexation she felt at the sight of the superior beauty which I had preferred to her own charms. P —— C —— , who was of an extravagant gaiety, launched forth in stupid jokes at which his mistress alone laughed; in my anger, I shrugged my shoulders, and his sister, not understanding his jests, took no notice of them. Altogether our ‘partie caree’ was not formed of congenial spirits, and was rather a dull affair.

As the dessert was placed on the table, P —— C —— , somewhat excited by the wine he had drunk, kissed his lady-love, and challenged me to follow his example with his sister. I told him that I loved Mdlle. C —— C —— truly, and that I would not take such liberties with her until I should have acquired a legal right to her favours. P —— C —— began to scoff at what I had said, but C —— stopped him. Grateful for that mark of propriety, I took out of my pocket the twelve pairs of gloves which I had bought in the morning, and after I had begged her acceptance of half a dozen pairs I gave the other six to my young friend. P —— C —— rose from the table with a sneer, dragging along with him his mistress, who had likewise drunk rather freely, and he threw himself on a sofa with her. The scene taking a lewd turn, I placed myself in such a manner as to hide them from the view of my young friend, whom I led into the recess of a window. But I had not been able to prevent C —— C —— from seeing in a looking-glass the position of the two impudent wretches, and her face was suffused with blushes; I, however, spoke to her quietly of indifferent things, and recovering her composure she answered me, speaking of her gloves, which she was folding on the pier-table. After his brutal exploit, P —— C —— came impudently to me and embraced me; his dissolute companion, imitating his example, kissed my young friend, saying she was certain that she had seen nothing. C —— C —— answered modestly that she did not know what she could have seen, but the look she cast towards me made me understand all she felt. If the reader has any knowledge of the human heart, he must guess what my feelings were. How was it possible to endure such a scene going on in the presence of an innocent girl whom I adored, when I had to fight hard myself with my own burning desires so as not to abuse her innocence! I was on a bed of thorns! Anger and indignation, restrained by the reserve I was compelled to adopt for fear of losing the object of my ardent love, made me tremble all over. The inventors of hell would not have failed to place that suffering among its torments, if they had known it. The lustful P —— C —— had thought of giving me a great proof of his friendship by the disgusting action he had been guilty of, and he had reckoned as nothing the dishonour of his mistress, and the delicacy of his sister whom he had thus exposed to prostitution. I do not know how I contrived not to strangle him. The next day, when he called on me, I overwhelmed him with the most bitter reproaches, and he tried to excuse himself by saying that he never would have acted in that manner if he had not felt satisfied that I had already treated his sister in the tete-a-tete in the same way that he treated his mistress before us.

My love for C —— C —— became every instant more intense, and I had made up my mind to undertake everything necessary to save her from the fearful position in which her unworthy brother might throw her by selling her for his own profit to some man less scrupulous than I was. It seemed to me urgent. What a disgusting state of things! What an unheard-of species of seduction! What a strange way to gain my friendship! And I found myself under the dire necessity of dissembling with the man whom I despised most in the world! I had been told that he was deeply in debt, that he had been a bankrupt in Vienna, where he had a wife and a family of children, that in Venice he had compromised his father who had been obliged to turn him out of his house, and who, out of pity, pretended not to know that he had kept his room in it. He had seduced his wife, or rather his mistress, who had been driven away by her husband, and after he had squandered everything she possessed, and he found himself at the end of his wits, he had tried to turn her prostitution to advantage. His poor mother who idolized him had given him everything she had, even her own clothes, and I expected him to plague me again for some loan or security, but I was firmly resolved on refusing. I could not bear the idea of C —— C —— being the innocent cause of my ruin, and used as a tool by her brother to keep up his disgusting life.

Moved by an irresistible feeling, by what is called perfect love, I called upon P —— C —— on the following day, and, after I had told him that I adored his sister with the most honourable intentions, I tried to make him realize how deeply he had grieved me by forgetting all respect, and that modesty which the most inveterate libertine ought never to insult if he has any pretension to be worthy of respectable society.

“Even if I had to give up,” I added, “the pleasure of seeing your angelic sister, I have taken the firm resolution of not keeping company with you; but I candidly warn you that I will do everything in my power to prevent her from going out with you, and from being the victim of some infamous bargain in your hands.”

He excused himself again by saying that he had drunk too much, and that he did not believe that my love for his sister was such as to despise the gratification of my senses. He begged my pardon, he embraced me with tears in his eyes, and I would, perhaps have given way to my own emotion, when his mother and sister entered the room. They offered me their heartfelt thanks for the handsome present I had given to the young lady. I told the mother that I loved her daughter, and that my fondest hope was to obtain her for my wife.

“In the hope of securing that happiness, madam,” I added, “I shall get a friend to speak to your husband as soon as I shall have secured a position giving me sufficient means to keep her comfortably, and to assure her happiness.”

So saying I kissed her hand, and I felt so deeply moved that the tears ran down my cheeks. Those tears were sympathetic, and the excellent woman was soon crying like me. She thanked me affectionately, and left me with her daughter and her son, who looked as if he had been changed into a statue.

There are a great many mothers of that kind in the world, and very often they are women who have led a virtuous life; they do not suppose that deceit can exist, because their own nature understands only what is upright and true; but they are almost always the victims of their good faith, and of their trust in those who seem to them to be patterns of honesty. What I had told the mother surprised the daughter, but her astonishment was much greater when she heard of what I had said to her brother. After one moment of consideration, she told him that, with any other man but me, she would have been ruined; and that, if she had been in the place of Madame C —— , she would never have forgiven him, because the way he had treated her was as debasing for her as for himself. P —— C —— was weeping, but the traitor could command tears whenever he pleased.

It was Whit Sunday, and as the theatres were closed he told me that, if I would be at the same place of Appointment as before, the next day, he would leave his sister with me, and go by himself with Madame C —— , whom he could not honourably leave alone.

“I will give you my key,” he added, “and you can bring back my sister here as soon as you have supper together wherever you like.”

And he handed me his key, which I had not the courage to refuse. After that he left us. I went away myself a few minutes afterwards, having previously agreed with C —— C —— that we would go to the Zuecca Garden on the following day.

I was punctual, and love exciting me to the highest degree I foresaw what would happen on that day. I had engaged a box at the opera, and we went to our garden until the evening. As it was a holiday there were several small parties of friends sitting at various tables, and being unwilling to mix with other people we made up our minds to remain in the apartment which was given to us, and to go to the opera only towards the end of the performance. I therefore ordered a good supper. We had seven hours to spend together, and my charming young friend remarked that the time would certainly not seem long to us. She threw off her disguise and sat on my knees, telling me that I had completed the conquest of her heart by my reserve towards her during the supper with her brother; but all our conversation was accompanied by kisses which, little by little, were becoming more and more ardent.

"Did you see," she said to me, "what my brother did to Madame C —— when she placed herself astride on his knees? I only saw it in the looking-glass, but I could guess what it was."

"Were you not afraid of my treating you in the same manner?"

"No, I can assure you. How could I possibly fear such a thing, knowing how much you love me? You would have humiliated me so deeply that I should no longer have loved you. We will wait until we are married, will we not, dear? You cannot realize the extent of the joy I felt when I heard you speak to my mother as you did! We will love each other for ever. But will you explain to me, dearest, the meaning of the words embroidered upon my garters?"

"Is there any motto upon them? I was not aware of it."

"Oh, yes! it is in French; pray read it."

Seated on my knees, she took off one of her garters while I was unclasping the other, and here are the two lines which I found embroidered on them, and which I ought to have read before offering them to her:

'En voyant chaque jour le bijou de ma belle,

Vous lui direz qu'Amour veut qu'il lui soit fidele.'

Those verses, rather free I must confess, struck me as very comic. I burst out laughing, and my mirth increased when, to please her, I had to translate their meaning. As it was an idea entirely new to her, I found it necessary to enter into particulars which lighted an ardent fire in our veins.

"Now," she observed, "I shall not dare to shew my garters to anybody, and I am very sorry for it."

As I was rather thoughtful, she added,

"Tell me what you are thinking of?"

"I am thinking that those lucky garters have a privilege which perhaps I shall never enjoy. How I wish myself in their place: I may die of that wish, and die miserable."

"No, dearest, for I am in the same position as you, and I am certain to live. Besides, we can hasten our marriage. As far as I am concerned, I am ready to become your wife to-morrow if you wish it. We are both free, and my father cannot refuse his consent."

"You are right, for he would be bound to consent for the sake of his honour. But I wish to give him a mark of my respect by asking for your hand, and after that everything will soon be ready. It might be in a week or ten days."

"So soon? You will see that my father will say that I am too young."

"Perhaps he is right."

"No; I am young, but not too young, and I am certain that I can be your wife."

I was on burning coals, and I felt that it was impossible for me to resist any longer the ardent fire which was consuming me.

"Oh, my best beloved!" I exclaimed, "do you feel certain of my love? Do you think me capable of deceiving you? Are you sure that you will never repent being my wife?"

"More than certain, darling; for you could not wish to make me unhappy."

"Well, then, let our marriage take place now. Let God alone receive our mutual pledges; we cannot have a better witness, for He knows the purity of our intentions. Let us mutually engage our faith, let us unite our destinies and be happy. We will afterwards legalize our tender love with your father's consent and with the ceremonies of the Church; in the mean time be mine, entirely mine."

“Dispose of me, dearest. I promise to God, I promise to you that, from this very moment and for ever, I will be your faithful wife; I will say the same to my father, to the priest who will bless our union — in fact, to everybody.”

“I take the same oath towards you, darling, and I can assure you that we are now truly married. Come to my arms! Oh, dearest, complete my felicity!”

“Oh, dear! am I indeed so near happiness!”

After kissing her tenderly, I went down to tell the mistress of the house not to disturb us, and not to bring up our dinner until we called for it. During my short absence, my charming C —— C —— had thrown herself dressed on the bed, but I told her that the god of love disapproved of unnecessary veils, and in less than a minute I made of her a new Eve, beautiful in her nakedness as if she had just come out of the hands of the Supreme Artist. Her skin, as soft as satin, was dazzlingly white, and seemed still more so beside her splendid black hair which I had spread over her alabaster shoulders. Her slender figure, her prominent hips, her beautifully-modelled bosom, her large eyes, from which flashed the sparkle of amorous desire, everything about her was strikingly beautiful, and presented to my hungry looks the perfection of the mother of love, adorned by all the charms which modesty throws over the attractions of a lovely woman.

Beside myself, I almost feared lest my felicity should not prove real, or lest it should not be made perfect by complete enjoyment, when mischievous love contrived, in so serious a moment, to supply me with a reason for mirth.

“Is there by any chance a law to prevent the husband from undressing himself?” enquired beautiful C —— C —— .

“No, darling angel, no; and even if there were such a barbarous law, I would not submit to it.”

In one instant, I had thrown off all my garments, and my mistress, in her turn, gave herself up to all the impulse of natural instinct and curiosity, for every part of my body was an entirely new thing to her. At last, as if she had had enough of the pleasure her eyes were enjoying, she pressed me against her bosom, and exclaimed,

“Oh! dearest, what a difference between you and my pillow!”

"Your pillow, darling? You are laughing; what do you mean?"

"Oh! it is nothing but a childish fancy; I am afraid you will be angry."

"Angry! How could I be angry with you, my love, in the happiest moment of my life?"

"Well, for several days past, I could not go to sleep without holding my pillow in my arms; I caressed it, I called it my dear husband; I fancied it was you, and when a delightful enjoyment had left me without movement, I would go to sleep, and in the morning find my pillow still between my arms."

My dear C —— C —— became my wife with the courage of a true heroine, for her intense love caused her to delight even in bodily pain. After three hours spent in delicious enjoyment, I got up and called for our supper. The repast was simple, but very good. We looked at one another without speaking, for how could we find words to express our feelings? We thought that our felicity was extreme, and we enjoyed it with the certainty that we could renew it at will.

The hostess came up to enquire whether we wanted anything, and she asked if we were not going to the opera, which everybody said was so beautiful.

"Have you never been to the opera?"

"Never, because it is too dear for people in our position. My daughter has such a wish to go, that, God forgive me for saying it! she would give herself, I truly believe, to the man who would take her there once."

"That would be paying very dear for it," said my little wife, laughing. "Dearest, we could make her happy at less cost, for that hurts very much."

"I was thinking of it, my love. Here is the key of the box, you can make them a present of it."

"Here is the key of a box at the St. Moses Theatre," she said to the hostess; "it costs two sequins; go instead of us, and tell your daughter to keep her rose-bud for something better."

"To enable you to amuse yourself, my good woman; take these two sequins," I added. "Let your daughter enjoy herself well."

The good hostess, thoroughly amazed at the generosity of her guests, ran in a great hurry to her daughter, while we were delighted at having laid ourselves under the pleasant necessity of again going to bed. She came up with her daughter, a handsome, tempting blonde, who insisted upon kissing the hands of her benefactors.

“She is going this minute with her lover,” said the mother. “He is waiting for her; but I will not let her go alone with him, for he is not to be trusted; I am going with them.”

“That is right, my good woman; but when you come back this evening, let the gondola wait for us; it will take us to Venice.”

“What! Do you mean to remain here until we return?”

“Yes, for this is our wedding-day.”

“To-day? God bless you!”

She then went to the bed, to put it to rights, and seeing the marks of my wife’s virginity she came to my dear C —— C —— and, in her joy, kissed her, and immediately began a sermon for the special benefit of her daughter, shewing her those marks which, in her opinion, did infinite honour to the young bride: respectable marks, she said, which in our days the god of Hymen sees but seldom on his altar.

The daughter, casting down her beautiful blue eyes, answered that the same would certainly be seen on her wedding-day.

“I am certain of it,” said the mother, “for I never lose sight of thee. Go and get some water in this basin, and bring it here. This charming bride must be in need of it.”

The girl obeyed. The two women having left us, we went to bed, and four hours of ecstatic delights passed off with wonderful rapidity. Our last engagement would have lasted longer, if my charming sweetheart had not taken a fancy to take my place and to reverse the position. Worn out with happiness and enjoyment, we were going to sleep, when the hostess came to tell us that the gondola was waiting for us. I immediately got up to open the door, in the hope that she would amuse us with her description of the opera; but she left that task to her daughter, who had come up with her, and she went down again to prepare some coffee for us. The young girl assisted my sweetheart to dress, but now and then she would wink at me in a manner which made me think that she had more experience than her mother imagined.

Nothing could be more indiscreet than the eyes of my beloved mistress; they wore the irrefutable marks of her first exploits. It is true that she had just been fighting a battle which had positively made her a different being to what she was before the engagement.

We took some hot coffee, and I told our hostess to get us a nice dinner for the next day; we then left in the gondola. The dawn of day was breaking when we landed at St. Sophia's Square, in order to set the curiosity of the gondoliers at fault, and we parted happy, delighted, and certain that we were thoroughly married. I went to bed, having made up my mind to compel M. de Bragadin, through the power of the oracle, to obtain legally for me the hand of my beloved C —— C —— . I remained in bed until noon, and spent the rest of the day in playing with ill luck, as if Dame Fortune had wished to warn me that she did not approve of my love.

CHAPTER XIII

Continuation of My Intrigues with C. C. — M. de Bragadin Asks the Hand of That Young Person for Me — Her Father Refuses, and Sends Her to a Convent — De la Haye — I Lose All my Money at the Faso-table — My Partnership with Croce Replenishes My Purse — Various Incidents

The happiness derived from my love had prevented me from attaching any importance to my losses, and being entirely engrossed with the thought of my sweetheart my mind did not seem to care for whatever did not relate to her.

I was thinking of her the next morning when her brother called on me with a beaming countenance, and said,

“I am certain that you have slept with my sister, and I am very glad of it. She does not confess as much, but her confession is not necessary. I will bring her to you to-day.”

“You will oblige me, for I adore her, and I will get a friend of mine to ask her in marriage from your father in such a manner that he will not be able to refuse.”

“I wish it may be so, but I doubt it. In the mean time, I find myself compelled to beg another service from your kindness. I can obtain, against a note of hand payable in six months, a ring of the value of two hundred sequins, and I am certain to sell it again this very day for the same amount. That sum, is very necessary to me just now, but the jeweller, who knows you, will not let me have it without your security. Will you oblige me in this instance? I know that you lost a great deal last night; if you want some money I will give you one hundred sequins, which you will return when the note of hand falls due.”

How could I refuse him? I knew very well that I would be duped, but I loved his sister so much:

“I am ready,” said I to him, “to sign the note of hand, but you are wrong in abusing my love for your sister in such a manner.”

We went out, and the jeweller having accepted my security the bargain was completed. The merchant, who knew me only by name, thinking of paying me a great compliment, told P —— C —— that with my guarantee all his goods were at his service. I did not feel flattered by the compliment, but I thought I could see in it the knavery of P —— C —— , who was clever enough to find out, out of a hundred, the fool who without any reason placed confidence in me when I possessed nothing. It was thus that my angelic C —— C —— , who seemed made to insure my happiness, was the innocent cause of my ruin.

At noon P —— C —— brought his sister; and wishing most likely to prove its honesty — for a cheat always tries hard to do that — he gave me back the letter of exchange which I had endorsed for the Cyprus wine, assuring me likewise that at our next meeting he would hand me the one hundred sequins which he had promised me.

I took my mistress as usual to Zuecca; I agreed for the garden to be kept closed, and we dined under a vine-arbour. My dear C —— C —— seemed to me more beautiful since she was mine, and, friendship being united to love we felt a delightful sensation of happiness which shone on our features. The hostess, who had found me generous, gave us some excellent game and some very fine fish; her daughter served us. She also came to undress my little wife as soon as we had gone upstairs to give ourselves up to the sweet pleasures natural to a young married couple.

When we were alone my loved asked me what was the meaning of the one hundred sequins which her brother had promised to bring me, and I told her all that had taken place between him and me.

“I entreat you, darling,” she said to me, “to refuse all the demands of my brother in future; he is, unfortunately, in such difficulties that he would at the end drag you down to the abyss into which he must fall”

This time our enjoyment seemed to us more substantial; we relished it with a more refined delight, and, so to speak, we reasoned over it.

“Oh, my best beloved!” she said to me, “do all in your power to render me pregnant; for in that case my father could no longer refuse his consent to my marriage, under the pretext of my being too young.”

It was with great difficulty that I made her understand that the fulfilment of that wish, however much I shared it myself, was not entirely in our power; but that, under the circumstances, it would most probably be fulfilled sooner or later.

After working with all our might at the completion of that great undertaking, we gave several hours to a profound and delightful repose. As soon as we were awake I called for candles and coffee, and we set to work again in the hope of obtaining the mutual harmony of ecstatic enjoyment which was necessary to insure our future happiness. It was in the midst of our loving sport that the too early dawn surprised us, and we hurried back to Venice to avoid inquisitive eyes.

We renewed our pleasures on the Friday, but, whatever delight I may feel now in the remembrance of those happy moments, I will spare my readers the description of my new enjoyment, because they might not feel interested in such repetitions. I must therefore only say that, before parting on that day, we fixed for the following Monday, the last day of the carnival, our last meeting in the Garden of Zuecca. Death alone could have hindered me from keeping that appointment, for it was to be the last opportunity of enjoying our amorous sport.

On the Monday morning I saw P —— C —— , who confirmed the appointment for the same hour, and at the place previously agreed upon, and I was there in good time. In spite of the impatience of a lover, the first hour of expectation passes rapidly, but the second is mortally long. Yet the third and the fourth passed without my seeing my beloved mistress. I was in a state of fearful anxiety; I imagined the most terrible disasters. It seemed to me that if C —— C —— had been unable to go out her brother ought to have come to let me know it.

But some unexpected mishap might have detained him, and I could not go and fetch her myself at her house, even if I had feared nothing else than to miss them on the road. At last, as the church bells were tolling the Angelus, C —— C —— came alone, and masked.

“I was certain,” she said, “that you were here, and here I am in spite of all my mother could say. You must be starving. My brother has not put in an appearance through the whole of this day. Let us go quickly to our garden, for I am very hungry too, and love will console us for all we have suffered today.”

She had spoken very rapidly, and without giving me time to utter a single word; I had nothing more to ask her. We went off, and took a gondola to our garden. The wind was very high, it blew almost a hurricane, and the gondola having only one rower the danger was great. C —— C —— , who had no idea of it, was playing with me to make up for the restraint under which she had been all day; but her movements exposed the gondolier to danger; if he had fallen into the water, nothing could have saved us, and we would have found death on our way to pleasure. I told her to keep quiet, but, being anxious not to frighten her, I dared not acquaint her with the danger we were running. The gondolier, however, had not the same reasons for sparing her feelings, and he called out to us in a stentorian voice that, if we did not keep quiet, we were all lost. His threat had the desired effect, and we reached the landing without mishap. I paid the man generously, and he laughed for joy when he saw the money for which he was indebted to the bad weather.

We spent six delightful hours in our casino; this time sleep was not allowed to visit us. The only thought which threw a cloud over our felicity was that, the carnival being over, we did not know how to contrive our future meetings. We agreed, however, that on the following Wednesday morning I should pay a visit to her brother, and that she would come to his room as usual.

We took leave of our worthy hostess, who, entertaining no hope of seeing us again, expressed her sorrow and overwhelmed us with blessings. I escorted my darling, without any accident, as far as the door of her house, and went home.

I had just risen at noon, when to my great surprise I had a visit from De la Haye with his pupil Calvi, a handsome young man, but the very copy of his master in everything. He walked, spoke, laughed exactly like him; it was the same language as that of the Jesuits correct but rather harsh French. I thought that excess of imitation perfectly scandalous, and I could not help telling De la Haye that he ought to change his pupil's deportment, because such servile mimicry would only expose him to bitter raillery. As I was giving him my opinion on that subject, Bavois made his appearance, and when he had spent an hour in the company of the young man he was entirely of the same mind. Calvi died two or three years later. De la Haye, who was bent upon forming pupils, became, two or three months after Calvi's death, the tutor of the young Chevalier de Morosini, the nephew of the nobleman to whom Bavois was indebted for his rapid fortune, who was then the Commissioner of the Republic to settle its boundaries with the Austrian Government represented by Count Christiani.

I was in love beyond all measure, and I would not postpone an application on which my happiness depended any longer. After dinner, and as soon as everybody had retired, I begged M. de Bragadin and his two friends to grant me an audience of two hours in the room in which we were always inaccessible. There, without any preamble, I told them that I was in love with C —— C —— , and determined on carrying her off if they could not contrive to obtain her from her father for my wife. "The question at issue," I said to M. de Bragadin, "is how to give me a respectable position, and to guarantee a dowry of ten thousand ducats which the young lady would bring me." They answered that, if Paralis gave them the necessary instructions, they were ready to fulfil them. That was all I wanted. I spent two hours in forming all the pyramids they wished, and the result was that M. de Bragadin himself would demand in my name the hand of the young lady; the oracle explaining the reason of that choice by stating that it must be the same person who would guarantee the dowry with his own fortune. The father of my mistress being then at his country-house, I told my friends that they would have due notice of his return, and that they were to be all three together when M. de Bragadin demanded the young lady's hand.

Well pleased with what I had done, I called on P —— C —— the next morning. An old woman, who opened the door for me, told me that he was not at home, but that his mother would see me. She came immediately with her daughter, and they both looked very sad, which at once struck me as a bad sign. C —— C —— told me that her brother was in prison for debt, and that it would be difficult to get him out of it because his debts amounted to a very large sum. The mother, crying bitterly, told me how deeply grieved she was at not being able to support him in the prison, and she shewed me the letter he had written to her, in which he requested her to deliver an enclosure to his sister. I asked C —— C —— whether I could read it; she handed it to me, and I saw that he begged her to speak to me in his behalf. As I returned it to her, I told her to write to him that I was not in a position to do anything for him, but I entreated the mother to accept twenty-five sequins, which would enable her to assist him by sending him one or two at a time. She made up her mind to take them only when her daughter joined her entreaties to mine.

After this painful scene I gave them an account of what I had done in order to obtain the hand of my young sweetheart. Madame C — thanked me, expressed her appreciation of my honourable conduct, but she told me not to entertain any hope, because her husband, who was very stubborn in his ideas, had decided that his daughter should marry a merchant, and not before the age of eighteen. He was expected home that very day. As I was taking leave of them, my mistress contrived to slip in my hand a letter in which she told me that I could safely make use of the key which I had in my possession, to enter the house at midnight, and that I would find her in her brother's room. This news made me very happy, for, notwithstanding all the doubts of her mother, I hoped for success in obtaining her hand.

When I returned home, I told M. de Bragadin of the expected arrival of the father of my charming C —— C —— , and the kind old man wrote to him immediately in my presence. He requested him to name at what time he might call on him on important business. I asked M. de Bragadin not to send his letter until the following day.

The reader can very well guess that C —— C —— had not to wait for me long after midnight. I gained admittance without any difficulty, and I found my darling, who received me with open arms.

"You have nothing to fear," she said to me; "my father has arrived in excellent health, and everyone in the house is fast asleep."

"Except Love," I answered, "which is now inviting us to enjoy ourselves. Love will protect us, dearest, and to-morrow your father will receive a letter from my worthy protector."

At those words C —— C —— shuddered. It was a presentiment of the future.

She said to me,

“My father thinks of me now as if I were nothing but a child; but his eyes are going to be opened respecting me; he will examine my conduct, and God knows what will happen! Now, we are happy, even more than we were during our visits to Zuecca, for we can see each other every night without restraint. But what will my father do when he hears that I have a lover?”

“What can he do? If he refuses me your hand, I will carry you off, and the patriarch would certainly marry us. We shall be one another’s for life”

“It is my most ardent wish, and to realize it I am ready to do anything; but, dearest, I know my father.”

We remained two hours together, thinking less of our pleasures than of our sorrow; I went away promising to see her again the next night. The whole of the morning passed off very heavily for me, and at noon M. de Bragadin informed me that he had sent his letter to the father, who had answered that he would call himself on the following day to ascertain M. de Bragadin’s wishes. At midnight I saw my beloved mistress again, and I gave her an account of all that had transpired. C —— C —— told me that the message of the senator had greatly puzzled her father, because, as he had never had any intercourse with that nobleman, he could not imagine what he wanted with him. Uncertainty, a sort of anxious dread, and a confused hope, rendered our enjoyment much less lively during the two hours which we spent together. I had no doubt that M. Ch. C —— the father of my young friend, would ‘go home immediately after his interview with M. de Bragadin, that he would ask his daughter a great many questions, and I feared lest C —— C —— , in her trouble and confusion, should betray herself. She felt herself that it might be so, and I could see how painfully anxious she was. I was extremely uneasy myself, and I suffered much because, not knowing how her father would look at the matter, I could not give her any advice. As a matter of course, it was necessary for her to conceal certain circumstances which would have prejudiced his mind against us; yet it was urgent to tell him the truth and to shew herself entirely submissive to his will. I found myself placed in a strange position, and above all, I regretted having made the all-important application, precisely because it was certain to have too decisive a result. I longed to get out of the state of indecision in which I was, and I was surprised to see my young mistress less anxious than I was. We parted with heavy hearts, but with the hope that the next night would again bring us together, for the contrary did not seem to us possible.

The next day, after dinner, M. Ch. C —— called upon M. de Bragadin, but I did not shew myself. He remained a couple of hours with my three friends, and as soon as he had gone I heard that his answer had been what the mother had told me, but with the addition of a circumstance most painful to me — namely, that his daughter would pass the four years which were to elapse, before she could think of marriage, in a convent. As a palliative to his refusal he had added, that, if by that time I had a well-established position in the world, he might consent to our wedding.

That answer struck me as most cruel, and in the despair in which it threw me I was not astonished when the same night I found the door by which I used to gain admittance to C —— C —— closed and locked inside.

I returned home more dead than alive, and lost twenty-four hours in that fearful perplexity in which a man is often thrown when he feels himself bound to take a decision without knowing what to decide. I thought of carrying her off, but a thousand difficulties combined to prevent the execution of that scheme, and her brother was in prison. I saw how difficult it would be to contrive a correspondence with my wife, for I considered C —— C —— as such, much more than if our marriage had received the sanction of the priest's blessing or of the notary's legal contract.

Tortured by a thousand distressing ideas, I made up my mind at last to pay a visit to Madame C —— . A servant opened the door, and informed me that madame had gone to the country; she could not tell me when she was expected to return to Venice. This news was a terrible thunder-bolt to me; I remained as motionless as a statue; for now that I had lost that last resource I had no means of procuring the slightest information.

I tried to look calm in the presence of my three friends, but in reality I was in a state truly worthy of pity, and the reader will perhaps realize it if I tell him that in my despair I made up my mind to call on P —— C —— in his prison, in the hope that he might give me some information.

My visit proved useless; he knew nothing, and I did not enlighten his ignorance. He told me a great many lies which I pretended to accept as gospel, and giving him two sequins I went away, wishing him a prompt release.

I was racking my brain to contrive some way to know the position of my mistress — for I felt certain it was a fearful one — and believing her to be unhappy I reproached myself most bitterly as the cause of her misery. I had reached such a state of anxiety that I could neither eat nor sleep.

Two days after the refusal of the father, M. de Bragadin and his two friends went to Padua for a month. I had not had the heart to go with them, and I was alone in the house. I needed consolation and I went to the gaming-table, but I played without attention and lost a great deal. I had already sold whatever I possessed of any value, and I owed money everywhere. I could expect no assistance except from my three kind friends, but shame prevented me from confessing my position to them. I was in that disposition which leads easily to self-destruction, and I was thinking of it as I was shaving myself before a toilet-glass, when the servant brought to my room a woman who had a letter for me. The woman came up to me, and, handing me the letter, she said,

“Are you the person to whom it is addressed?”

I recognized at once a seal which I had given to C —— C —— ; I thought I would drop down dead. In order to recover my composure, I told the woman to wait, and tried to shave myself, but my hand refused to perform its office. I put the razor down, turned my back on the messenger, and opening the letter I read the following lines,

“Before I can write all I have to say, I must be sure of my messenger. I am boarding in a convent, and am very well treated, and I enjoy excellent health in spite of the anxiety of my mind. The superior has been instructed to forbid me all visitors and correspondence. I am, however, already certain of being able to write to you, notwithstanding these very strict orders. I entertain no doubt of your good faith, my beloved husband, and I feel sure that you will never doubt a heart which is wholly yours. Trust to me for the execution of whatever you may wish me to do, for I am yours and only yours. Answer only a few words until we are quite certain of our messenger.

“Muran, June 12th.”

In less than three weeks my young friend had become a clever moralist; it is true that Love had been her teacher, and Love alone can work miracles. As I concluded the reading of her letter, I was in the state of a criminal pardoned at the foot of the scaffold. I required several minutes before I recovered the exercise of my will and my presence of mind.

I turned towards the messenger, and asked her if she could read.

“Ah, sir! if I could not read, it would be a great misfortune for me. There are seven women appointed for the service of the nuns of Muran. One of us comes in turn to Venice once a week; I come every Wednesday, and this day week I shall be able to bring you an answer to the letter which, if you like, you can write now.”

“Then you can take charge of the letters entrusted to you by the nuns?”

“That is not supposed to be one of our duties but the faithful delivery of letters being the most important of the commissions committed to our care, we should not be trusted if we could not read the address of the letters placed in our hands. The nuns wanted to be sure that we shall not give to Peter the letter addressed to Paul. The good mothers are always afraid of our being guilty of such blunders. Therefore I shall be here again, without fail, this day week at the same hour, but please to order your servant to wake you in case you should be asleep, for our time is measured as if it were gold. Above all, rely entirely upon my discretion as long as you employ me; for if I did not know how to keep a silent tongue in my head I should lose my bread, and then what would become of me — a widow with four children, a boy eight years old, and three pretty girls, the eldest of whom is only sixteen? You can see them when you come to Muran. I live near the church, on the garden side, and I am always at home when I am not engaged in the service of the nuns, who are always sending me on one commission or another. The young lady — I do not know her name yet, for she has only been one week with us — gave me this letter, but so cleverly! Oh! she must be as witty as she is pretty, for three nuns who were there were completely bamboozled. She gave it to me with this other letter for myself, which I likewise leave in your hands. Poor child! she tells me to be discreet! She need not be afraid. Write to her, I entreat you, sir, that she can trust me, and answer boldly. I would not tell you to act in the same manner with all the other messengers of the convent, although I believe them to be honest — and God forbid I should speak ill of my fellow-creature — but they are all ignorant, you see; and it is certain that they babble, at least, with their confessors, if with nobody else. As for me, thank God! I know very well that I need not confess anything but my sins, and surely to carry a letter from a Christian woman to her brother in Christ is not a sin. Besides, my confessor is a good old monk, quite deaf, I believe, for the worthy man never answers me; but that is his business, not mine!"

I had not intended to ask her any questions, but if such had been my intention she would not have given me time to carry it into execution; and without my asking her anything, she was telling me everything I cared to know, and she did so in her anxiety for me to avail myself of her services exclusively.

I immediately sat down to write to my dear recluse, intending at first to write only a few lines, as she had requested me; but my time was too short to write so little. My letter was a screed of four pages, and very likely it said less than her note of one short page. I told her her letter had saved my life, and asked her whether I could hope to see her. I informed her that I had given a sequin to the messenger, that she would find another for herself under the seal of my letter, and that I would send her all the money she might want. I entreated her not to fail writing every Wednesday, to be certain that her letters would never be long enough to give me full particulars, not only of all she did, of all she was allowed to do, but also of all her thoughts respecting her release from imprisonment, and the overcoming of all the obstacles which were in the way of our mutual happiness; for I was as much hers as she was mine. I hinted to her the necessity of gaining the love of all the nuns and boarders, but without taking them into her confidence, and of shewing no dislike of her convent life. After praising her for the clever manner in which she had contrived to write to me, in spite of superior orders, I made her understand how careful she was to be to avoid being surprised while she was writing, because in such a case her room would certainly be searched and all her papers seized.

"Burn all my letters, darling," I added, "and recollect that you must go to confession often, but without implicating our love. Share with me all your sorrows, which interest me even more than your joys."

I sealed my letter in such a manner that no one could possibly guess that there was a sequin hidden under the sealing wax, and I rewarded the woman, promising her that I would give her the same reward every time that she brought me a letter from my friend. When she saw the sequin which I had put in her hand the good woman cried for joy, and she told me that, as the gates of the convent were never closed for her, she would deliver my letter the moment she found the young lady alone.

Here is the note which C —— C —— had given to the woman, with the letter addressed to me:

“God Himself, my good woman, prompts me to have confidence in you rather than in anybody else. Take this letter to Venice, and should the person to whom it is addressed not be in the city, bring it back to me. You must deliver it to that person himself, and if you find him you will most likely have an answer, which you must give me, but only when you are certain that nobody can see you.”

If Love is imprudent, it is only in the hope of enjoyment; but when it is necessary to bring back happiness destroyed by some untoward accident, Love foresees all that the keenest perspicacity could possibly find out. The letter of my charming wife overwhelmed me with joy, and in one moment I passed from a state of despair to that of extreme felicity. I felt certain that I should succeed in carrying her off even if the walls of the convent could boast of artillery, and after the departure of the messenger my first thought was to endeavour to spend the seven days, before I could receive the second letter, pleasantly. Gambling alone could do it, but everybody had gone to Padua. I got my trunk ready, and immediately sent it to the burchiello then ready to start, and I left for Frusina. From that place I posted, and in less than three hours I arrived at the door of the Bragadin Palace, where I found my dear protector on the point of sitting down to dinner. He embraced me affectionately, and seeing me covered with perspiration he said to me,

“I am certain that you are in no hurry.”

“No,” I answered, “but I am starving.”

I brought joy to the brotherly trio, and I enhanced their happiness when I told my friends that I would remain six days with them. De la Haye dined with us on that day; as soon as dinner was over he closeted himself with M.

Dandoio, and for two hours they remained together. I had gone to bed during that time, but M. Dandolo came up to me and told me that I had arrived just in time to consult the oracle respecting an important affair entirely private to himself. He gave me the questions, and requested me to find the answers. He wanted to know whether he would act rightly if he accepted a project proposed to him by De la Haye.

The oracle answered negatively.

M. Dandolo, rather surprised, asked a second question: he wished Paralis to give his reasons for the denial.

I formed the cabalistic pile, and brought out this answer:

“I asked Casanova’s opinion, and as I find it opposed to the proposal made by De la Haye, I do not wish to hear any more about it.”

Oh! wonderful power of self-delusion! This worthy man, pleased at being able to throw the odium of a refusal on me, left me perfectly satisfied. I had no idea of the nature of the affair to which he had been alluding, and I felt no curiosity about it; but it annoyed me that a Jesuit should interfere and try to make my friends do anything otherwise than through my instrumentality, and I wanted that intriguer to know that my influence was greater than his own.

After that, I dressed, masked myself, and went to the opera, where I sat down to a faro-table and lost all my money. Fortune was determined to shew me that it does not always agree with love. My heart was heavy, I felt miserable; I went to bed. When I woke in the morning, I saw De la Haye come into my room with a beaming countenance, and, assuming an air of devoted friendship, he made a great show of his feelings towards me. I knew what to think of it all, and I waited for the ‘denouement’.

“My dear friend,” he said to me at last, “why did you dissuade M. Dandolo from doing what I had insinuated to him?”

“What had you insinuated to him?”

“You know well enough.”

“If I knew it, I would not ask you”

“M. Dandolo himself told me that you had advised him against it.”

“Advised against, that may be, but certainly not dissuaded, for if he had been persuaded in his own mind he would not have asked my advice.”

“As you please; but may I enquire your reasons?”

“Tell me first what your proposal was.”

“Has he not told you?”

“Perhaps he has; but if you wish to know my reasons, I must hear the whole affair from your own lips, because M. Dandolo spoke to me under a promise of secrecy.”

“Of what good is all this reserve?”

“Everyone has his own principles and his own way of thinking: I have a sufficiently good opinion of you to believe that you would act exactly as I do, for I have heard you say that in all secret matters one ought to guard against surprise.”

“I am incapable of taking such an advantage of a friend; but as a general rule your maxim is a right one; I like prudence. I will tell you the whole affair. You are aware that Madame Tripolo has been left a widow, and that M. Dandolo is courting her assiduously, after having done the same for fourteen years during the life of the husband. The lady, who is still young, beautiful and lovely, and also is very respectable, wishes to become his wife. It is to me that she has confided her wishes, and as I saw nothing that was not praiseworthy, either in a temporal or in a spiritual point of view, in that union, for after all we are all men, I took the affair in hand with real pleasure. I fancied even that M. Dandolo felt some inclination for that marriage when he told me that he would give me his decision this morning. I am not astonished at his having asked your advice in such an important affair, for a prudent man is right in asking the opinion of a wise friend before taking a decisive step; but I must tell you candidly that I am astonished at your disapproval of such a marriage. Pray excuse me if, in order to improve by the information, I ask why your opinion is exactly the reverse of mine.”

Delighted at having discovered the whole affair, at having arrived in time to prevent my friend who was goodness itself contracting an absurd marriage, I answered the hypocrite that I loved M. Dandolo, that I knew his temperament, and that I was certain that a marriage with a woman like Madame Tripolo would shorten his life.

“That being my opinion,” I added, “you must admit that as a true friend I was right in advising him against your proposal. Do you recollect having told me that you never married for the very same reason? Do you recollect your strong arguments in favour of celibacy while we were at Parma? Consider also, I beg, that every man has a certain small stock of selfishness, and that I may be allowed to have mine when I think that if M. Dandolo took a wife the influence of that wife would of course have some weight, and that the more she gained in influence over him the more I should lose. So you see it would not be natural for me to advise him to take a step which would ultimately prove very detrimental to my interests. If you can prove that my reasons are either trifling or sophistical, speak openly: I will tell M. Dandolo that my mind has changed; Madame Tripolo will become his wife when we return to Venice. But let me warn you that thorough conviction can alone move me.”

“I do not believe myself clever enough to convince you. I shall write to Madame Tripolo that she must apply to you.”

“Do not write anything of the sort to that lady, or she will think that you are laughing at her. Do you suppose her foolish enough to expect that I will give way to her wishes? She knows that I do not like her.”

“How can she possibly know that?”

“She must have remarked that I have never cared to accompany M. Dandolo to her house. Learn from me once for all, that as long as I live with my three friends they shall have no wife but me. You may get married as soon as you please; I promise not to throw any obstacle in your way; but if you wish to remain on friendly terms with me give up all idea of leading my three friends astray.”

“You are very caustic this morning.”

“I lost all my money last night.

“Then I have chosen a bad time. Farewell.”

From that day, De la Haye became my secret enemy, and to him I was in a great measure indebted, two years later, for my imprisonment under The

Leads of Venice; not owing to his slanders, for I do not believe he was capable of that, Jesuit though he was — and even amongst such people there is sometimes some honourable feeling — but through the mystical insinuations which he made in the presence of bigoted persons. I must give fair notice to my readers that, if they are fond of such people, they must not read these Memoirs, for they belong to a tribe which I have good reason to attack unmercifully.

The fine marriage was never again alluded to. M. Dandolo continued to visit his beautiful widow every day, and I took care to elicit from Paralis a strong interdiction ever to put my foot in her house.

Don Antonio Croce, a young Milanese whom I had known in Reggio, a confirmed gambler, and a downright clever hand in securing the favours of Dame Fortune, called on me a few minutes after De la Haye had retired. He told me that, having seen me lose all my money the night before, he had come to offer me the means of retrieving my losses, if I would take an equal interest with him in a faro bank that he meant to hold at his house, and in which he would have as punters seven or eight rich foreigners who were courting his wife.

“If you will put three hundred sequins in my bank,” he added, “you shall be my partner. I have three hundred sequins myself, but that is not enough because the punters play high. Come and dine at my house, and you will make their acquaintance. We can play next Friday as there will be no opera, and you may rely upon our winning plenty of gold, for a certain Gilenspetz, a Swede, may lose twenty thousand sequins.”

I was without any resources, or at all events I could expect no assistance except from M. de Bragadin upon whom I felt ashamed of encroaching. I was well aware that the proposal made by Croce was not strictly moral, and that I might have chosen a more honourable society; but if I had refused, the purse of Madame Croce’s admirers would not have been more mercifully treated; another would have profited by that stroke of good fortune. I was therefore not rigid enough to refuse my assistance as adjutant and my share of the pie; I accepted Croce’s invitation.

CHAPTER XIV

I Get Rich Again — My Adventure At Dolo — Analysis of a Long Letter From C. C. — Mischievous Trick Played Upon Me By P. C. — At Vincenza — A Tragi-comedy At the Inn

Necessity, that imperious law and my only excuse, having made me almost the partner of a cheat, there was still the difficulty of finding the three hundred sequins required; but I postponed the task of finding them until after I should have made the acquaintance of the dupes of the goddess to whom they addressed their worship. Croce took me to the Prato delta Valle, where we found madame surrounded with foreigners. She was pretty; and as a secretary of the imperial ambassador, Count Rosemberg, had attached himself to her, not one of the Venetian nobles dared court her. Those who interested me among the satellites gravitating around that star were the Swede Gilenspetz, a Hamburger, the Englishman Mendez, who has already been mentioned, and three or four others to whore Croce called my attention.

We dined all together, and after dinner there was a general call for a faro bank; but Croce did not accept. His refusal surprised me, because with three hundred sequins, being a very skilful player, he had enough to try his fortune. He did not, however, allow my suspicions to last long, for he took me to his own room and shewed me fifty pieces of eight, which were equal to three hundred sequins. When I saw that the professional gambler had not chosen me as his partner with the intention of making a dupe of me, I told him that I would certainly procure the amount, and upon that promise he invited everybody to supper for the following day. We agreed that we would divide the spoils before parting in the evening, and that no one should be allowed to play on trust.

I had to procure the amount, but to whom could I apply? I could ask no one but M. de Bragadin. The excellent man had not that sum in his possession, for his purse was generally empty; but he found a usurer — a species of animal too numerous unfortunately for young men — who, upon a note of hand endorsed by him, gave me a thousand ducats, at five per cent. for one month, the said interest being deducted by anticipation from the capital. It was exactly the amount I required. I went to the supper; Croce held the bank until daylight, and we divided sixteen hundred sequins between us. The game continued the next evening, and Gilenspetz alone lost two thousand sequins; the Jew Mendez lost about one thousand. Sunday was sanctified by rest, but on Monday the bank won four thousand sequins. On the Tuesday we all dined together, and the play was resumed; but we had scarcely begun when an officer of the podesta made his appearance and informed Croce that he wanted a little private conversation with him. They left the room together, and after a short absence Croce came back rather crestfallen; he announced that by superior orders he was forbidden to hold a bank at his house. Madame fainted away, the punters hurried out, and I followed their example, as soon as I had secured one-half of the gold which was on the table. I was glad enough it was not worse. As I left, Croce told me that we would meet again in Venice, for he had been ordered to quit Padua within twenty-four hours. I expected it would be so, because he was to well known; but his greatest crime, in the opinion of the podesta, was that he attracted the players to his own house, whilst the authorities wanted all the lovers of play to lose their money at the opera, where the bankers were mostly noblemen from Venice.

I left the city on horseback in the evening and in very bad weather, but nothing could have kept me back, because early the next morning I expected a letter from my dear prisoner. I had only travelled six miles from Padua when my horse fell, and I found my left leg caught under it. My boots were soft ones, and I feared I had hurt myself. The postillion was ahead of me, but hearing the noise made by the fall he came up and disengaged me; I was not hurt, but my horse was lame. I immediately took the horse of the postillion, to which I was entitled, but the insolent fellow getting hold of the bit refused to let me proceed. I tried to make him understand that he was wrong; but, far from giving way to my arguments, he persisted in stopping me, and being in a great hurry to continue my journey I fired one of my pistols in his face, but without touching him. Frightened out of his wits, the man let go, and I galloped off. When I reached the Dolo, I went straight to the stables, and I myself saddled a horse which a postillion, to whom I gave a crown, pointed out to me as being excellent. No one thought of being astonished at my other postillion having remained behind, and we started at full speed. It was then one o'clock in the morning; the storm had broken up the road, and the night was so dark that I could not see anything within a yard ahead of me; the day was breaking when we arrived in Fusina.

The boatmen threatened me with a fresh storm; but setting everything at defiance I took a four-oared boat, and reached my dwelling quite safe but shivering with cold and wet to the skin. I had scarcely been in my room for a quarter of an hour when the messenger from Muran presented herself and gave me a letter, telling me that she would call for the answer in two hours. That letter was a journal of seven pages, the faithful translation of which might weary my readers, but here is the substance of it:

After the interview with M. de Bragadin, the father of C —— C —— had gone home, had his wife and daughter to his room, and enquired kindly from the last where she had made my acquaintance. She answered that she had seen me five or six times in her brother's room, that I had asked her whether she would consent to be my wife, and that she had told me that she was dependent upon her father and mother. The father had then said that she was too young to think of marriage, and besides, I had not yet conquered a position in society. After that decision he repaired to his son's room, and locked the small door inside as well as the one communicating with the apartment of the mother, who was instructed by him to let me believe that she had gone to the country, in case I should call on her.

Two days afterwards he came to C —— C —— , who was beside her sick mother, and told her that her aunt would take her to a convent, where she was to remain until a husband had been provided for her by her parents. She answered that, being perfectly disposed to submit to his will, she would gladly obey him. Pleased with her ready obedience he promised to go and see her, and to let his mother visit her likewise, as soon as her health was better. Immediately after that conversation the aunt had called for her, and a gondola had taken them to the convent, where she had been ever since. Her bed and her clothes had been brought to her; she was well pleased with her room and with the nun to whom she had been entrusted, and under whose supervision she was. It was by her that she had been forbidden to receive either letters or visits, or to write to anybody, under penalty of excommunication from the Holy Father, of everlasting damnation, and of other similar trifles; yet the same nun had supplied her with paper, ink and books, and it was at night that my young friend transgressed the laws of the convent in order to write all these particulars to me. She expressed her conviction respecting the discretion and the faithfulness of the messenger, and she thought that she would remain devoted, because, being poor, our sequins were a little fortune for her.

She related to me in the most assuring manner that the handsomest of all the nuns in the convent loved her to distraction, gave her a French lesson twice a-day, and had amicably forbidden her to become acquainted with the other boarders. That nun was only twenty-two years of age; she was beautiful, rich and generous; all the other nuns shewed her great respect. “When we are alone,” wrote my friend, “she kisses me so tenderly that you would be jealous if she were not a woman.” As to our project of running away, she did not think it would be very difficult to carry it into execution, but that it would be better to wait until she knew the locality better. She told me to remain faithful and constant, and asked me to send her my portrait hidden in a ring by a secret spring known only to us. She added that I might send it to her by her mother, who had recovered her usual health, and was in the habit of attending early mass at her parish church every day by herself. She assured me that the excellent woman would be delighted to see me, and to do anything I might ask her. “At all events,” she concluded, “I hope to find myself in a few months in a position which will scandalize the convent if they are obstinately bent upon keeping me here.”

I was just finishing my answer when Laura, the messenger, returned for it. After I had paid the sequin I had promised her, I gave her a parcel containing sealing-wax, paper, pens, and a tinder-box, which she promised to deliver to C —— C —— . My darling had told her that I was her cousin, and Laura feigned to believe it.

Not knowing what to do in Venice, and believing that I ought for the sake of my honour to shew myself in Padua, or else people might suppose that I had received the same order as Croce, I hurried my breakfast, and procured a ‘bolletta’ from the booking-office for Rome; because I foresaw that the firing of my pistol and the lame horse might not have improved the temper of the post-masters; but by shewing them what is called in Italy a ‘bolletta’, I knew that they could not refuse to supply me with horses whenever they had any in their stables. As far as the pistol-shot was concerned I had no fear, for I had purposely missed the insolent postillion; and even if I had killed him on the spot it would not have been of much importance.

In Fusina I took a two-wheeled chaise, for I was so tired that I could not have performed the journey on horseback, and I reached the Dolo, where I was recognized and horses were refused me.

I made a good deal of noise, and the post-master, coming out, threatened to have me arrested if I did not pay him for his dead horse. I answered that if the horse were dead I would account for it to the postmaster in Padua, but what I wanted was fresh horses without delay.

And I shewed him the dread ‘bolletta’, the sight of which made him lower his tone; but he told me that, even if he supplied me with horses, I had treated the postillion so badly that not one of his men would drive me. “If that is the case,” I answered, “you shall accompany me yourself.” The fellow laughed in my face, turned his back upon me, and went away. I took two witnesses, and I called with them at the office of a public notary, who drew up a properly-worded document, by which I gave notice to the post-master that I should expect an indemnity of ten sequins for each hour of delay until I had horses supplied to me.

As soon as he had been made acquainted with the contents of this, he gave orders to bring out two restive horses. I saw at once that his intention was to have me upset along the road, and perhaps thrown into the river; but I calmly told the postillion that at the very moment my chaise was upset I would blow his brains out with a pistol-shot; this threat frightened the man; he took his horses back to the stables, and declared to his master that he would not drive me. At that very moment a courier arrived, who called for six carriage horses and two saddle ones. I warned the post-master that no one should leave the place before me, and that if he opposed my will there would be a sanguinary contest; in order to prove that I was in earnest I took out my pistols. The fellow began to swear, but, everyone saying that he was in the wrong, he disappeared.

Five minutes afterwards whom should I see, arriving in a beautiful berlin drawn by six horses, but Croce with his wife, a lady’s maid, and two lackeys in grand livery. He alighted, we embraced one another, and I told him, assuming an air of sadness, that he could not leave before me. I explained how the case stood; he said I was right, scolded loudly, as if he had been a great lord, and made everybody tremble. The postmaster had disappeared; his wife came and ordered the postillions to attend to my wants. During that time Croce said to me that I was quite right in going back to Padua, where the public rumour had spread the report of my having left the city in consequence of an order from the police. He informed me that the podesta had likewise expelled M. de Gondoin, a colonel in the service of the Duke of Modena, because he held a faro bank at his house. I promised him to pay him a visit in Venice in the ensuing week. Croce, who had dropped from the sky to assist me in a moment of great distress, had won ten thousand sequins in four evenings: I had received five thousand for my share; and lost no time in paying my debts and in redeeming all the articles which I had been compelled to pledge. That scamp brought me back the smiles of Fortune, and from that moment I got rid of the ill luck which had seemed to fasten on me.

I reached Padua in safety, and the postillion, who very likely out of fear had driven me in good style, was well pleased with my liberality; it was the best way of making peace with the tribe. My arrival caused great joy to my three friends, whom my sudden departure had alarmed, with the exception of M. de Bragadin, in whose hands I had placed my cash-box the day before. His two friends had given credence to the general report, stating that the podesta had ordered me to leave Padua. They forgot that I was a citizen of Venice, and that the podesta could not pass such a sentence upon me without exposing himself to legal proceedings. I was tired, but instead of going to bed I dressed myself in my best attire in order to go to the opera without a mask. I told my friends that it was necessary for me to shew myself, so as to give the lie to all that had been reported about me by slandering tongues. De la Haye said to me,

“I shall be delighted if all those reports are false; but you have no one to blame but yourself, for your hurried departure gave sufficient cause for all sorts of surmises.”

“And for slander.”

“That may be; but people want to know everything, and they invent when they cannot guess the truth.”

“And evil-minded fools lose no time in repeating those inventions everywhere.”

“But there can be no doubt that you wanted to kill the postillion. Is that a calumny likewise?”

“The greatest of all. Do you think that a good shot can miss a man when he is firing in his very face, unless he does it purposely?”

“It seems difficult; but at all events it is certain that the horse is dead, and you must pay for it.”

“No, sir, not even if the horse belonged to you, for the postillion preceded me. You know a great many things; do you happen to know the posting regulations? Besides, I was in a great hurry because I had promised a pretty woman to breakfast with her, and such engagements, as you are well aware, cannot be broken.”

Master de la Haye looked angry at the rather caustic irony with which I had sprinkled the dialogue; but he was still more vexed when, taking some gold out of my pocket, I returned to him the sum he had lent me in Vienna. A man never argues well except when his purse is well filled; then his spirits are pitched in a high key, unless he should happen to be stupefied by some passion raging in his soul.

M. de Bragadin thought I was quite right to shew myself at the opera without a mask.

The moment I made my appearance in the pit everybody seemed quite astonished, and I was overwhelmed with compliments, sincere or not. After the first ballet I went to the card-room, and in four deals I won five hundred sequins. Starving, and almost dead for want of sleep, I returned to my friends to boast of my victory. My friend Bavois was there, and he seized the opportunity to borrow from me fifty sequins, which he never returned; true, I never asked him for them.

My thoughts being constantly absorbed in my dear C —— C —— , I spent the whole of the next day in having my likeness painted in miniature by a skilful Piedmontese, who had come for the Fair of Padua, and who in after times made a great deal of money in Venice. When he had completed my portrait he painted for me a beautiful St. Catherine of the same size, and a clever Venetian jeweller made the ring, the bezel of which shewed only the sainted virgin; but a blue spot, hardly visible on the white enamel which surrounded it, corresponded with the secret spring which brought out my portrait, and the change was obtained by pressing on the blue spot with the point of a pin.

On the following Friday, as we were rising from the dinner-table, a letter was handed to me. It was with great surprise that I recognized the writing of P—— C—— . He asked me to pay him a visit at the "Star Hotel," where he would give me some interesting information. Thinking that he might have something to say concerning his sister, I went to him at once.

I found him with Madame C—— , and after congratulating him upon his release from prison I asked him for the news he had to communicate.

"I am certain," he said, "that my sister is in a convent, and I shall be able to tell you the name of it when I return to Venice."

"You will oblige me," I answered, pretending not to know anything.

But his news had only been a pretext to make me come to him, and his eagerness to communicate it had a very different object in view than the gratification of my curiosity.

"I have sold," he said to me, "my privileged contract for three years for a sum of fifteen thousand florins, and the man with whom I have made the bargain took me out of prison by giving security for me, and advanced me six thousand florins in four letters of exchange."

He shewed me the letters of exchange, endorsed by a name which I did not know, but which he said was a very good one, and he continued,

"I intend to buy six thousand florins worth of silk goods from the looms of Vicenza, and to give in payment to the merchants these letters of exchange. I am certain of selling those goods rapidly with a profit of ten per cent. Come with us to Vicenza; I will give you some of my goods to the amount of two hundred sequins, and thus you will find yourself covered for the guarantee which you have been kind enough to give to the jeweller for the ring. We shall complete the transaction within twenty-four hours."

I did not feel much inclination for the trip, but I allowed myself to be blinded by the wish to cover the amount which I had guaranteed, and which I had no doubt I would be called upon to pay some day or other.

"If I do not go with him," I said to myself "he will sell the goods at a loss of twenty-five per cent., and I shall get nothing."

I promised to accompany him. He shewed me several letters of recommendation for the best houses in Vicenza, and our departure was fixed for early the next morning. I was at the “Star Hotel” by daybreak. A carriage and four was ready; the hotel-keeper came up with his bill, and P —— C —— begged me to pay it. The bill amounted to five sequins; four of which had been advanced in cash by the landlord to pay the driver who had brought them from Fusina. I saw that it was a put-up thing, yet I paid with pretty good grace, for I guessed that the scoundrel had left Venice without a penny. We reached Vicenza in three hours, and we put up at the “Cappello,” where P —— C —— ordered a good dinner before leaving me with the lady to call upon the manufacturers.

When the beauty found herself alone with me, she began by addressing friendly reproaches to me.

“I have loved you,” she said, “for eighteen years; the first time that I saw you we were in Padua, and we were then only nine years old.”

I certainly had no recollection of it. She was the daughter of the antiquarian friend of M. Grimani, who had placed me as a boarder with the accursed Sclavonian woman. I could not help smiling, for I recollected that her mother had loved me.

Shop-boys soon began to make their appearance, bringing pieces of goods, and the face of Madame C —— brightened up. In less than two hours the room was filled with them, and P —— C —— came back with two merchants, whom he had invited to dinner. Madame allured them by her pretty manners; we dined, and exquisite wines were drunk in profusion. In the afternoon fresh goods were brought in; P —— C —— made a list of them with the prices; but he wanted more, and the merchants promised to send them the next day, although it was Sunday. Towards the evening several counts arrived, for in Vicenza every nobleman is a count. P —— C —— had left his letters of recommendation at their houses. We had a Count Velo, a Count Sesso, a Count Trento — all very amiable companions. They invited us to accompany them to the casino, where Madame C —— shone by her charms and her coquettish manners. After we had spent two hours in that place, P —— C —— invited all his new friends to supper, and it was a scene of gaiety and profusion. The whole affair annoyed me greatly, and therefore I was not amiable; the consequence was that no one spoke to me. I rose from my seat and went to bed, leaving the joyous company still round the festive board. In the morning I came downstairs, had my breakfast, and looked about me. The room was so full of goods that I did not see how P —— C —— could possibly pay for all with his six thousand florins. He told me, however, that his business would be completed on the morrow, and that we were invited to a ball where all the nobility would be present. The merchants with whom he had dealt came to dine with us, and the dinner was remarkable for its extreme profusion.

We went to the ball; but I soon got very weary of it, for every body was speaking to Madame C —— and to P —— C —— , who never uttered a word with any meaning, but whenever I opened my lips people would pretend not to hear me. I invited a lady to dance a minuet; she accepted, but she looked constantly to the right or to the left, and seemed to consider me as a mere dancing machine. A quadrille was formed, but the thing was contrived in such a manner as to leave me out of it, and the very lady who had refused me as a partner danced with another gentleman. Had I been in good spirits I should certainly have resented such conduct, but I preferred to leave the ball-room. I went to bed, unable to understand why the nobility of Vicenza treated me in such a way. Perhaps they neglected me because I was not named in the letters of introduction given to P —— C —— , but I thought that they might have known the laws of common politeness. I bore the evil patiently, however, as we were to leave the city the next day.

On Monday, the worthy pair being tired, they slept until noon, and after dinner P —— C —— went out to pay for the goods.

We were to go away early on the Tuesday, and I instinctively longed for that moment. The counts whom P —— C —— had invited were delighted with his mistress, and they came to supper; but I avoided meeting them.

On the Tuesday morning I was duly informed that breakfast was ready, but as I did not answer the summons quickly enough the servant came up again, and told me that my wife requested me to make haste. Scarcely had the word “wife” escaped his lips than I visited the cheek of the poor fellow with a tremendous smack, and in my rage kicked him downstairs, the bottom of which he reached in four springs, to the imminent risk of his neck. Maddened with rage I entered the breakfast-room, and addressing myself to P —— C —— , I asked him who was the scoundrel who had announced me in the hotel as the husband of Madame C —— . He answered that he did not know; but at the same moment the landlord came into the room with a big knife in his hand, and asked me why I had kicked his servant down the stairs. I quickly drew a pistol, and threatening him with it I demanded imperatively from him the name of the person who had represented me as the husband of that woman.

"Captain P —— C —— ," answered the landlord, "gave the names, profession, etc., of your party."

At this I seized the impudent villain by the throat, and pinning him against the wall with a strong hand I would have broken his head with the butt of my pistol, if the landlord had not prevented me. Madame had pretended to swoon, for those women can always command tears or fainting fits, and the cowardly P —— C —— kept on saying,

"It is not true, it is not true!"

The landlord ran out to get the hotel register, and he angrily thrust it under the nose of the coward, daring him to deny his having dictated: Captain P —— C —— , with M. and Madame Casanova. The scoundrel answered that his words had certainly not been heard rightly, and the incensed landlord slapped the book in his face with such force that he sent him rolling, almost stunned, against the wall.

When I saw that the wretched poltroon was receiving such degrading treatment without remembering that he had a sword hanging by his side, I left the room, and asked the landlord to order me a carriage to take me to Padua.

Beside myself with rage, blushing for very shame, seeing but too late the fault I had committed by accepting the society of a scoundrel, I went up to my room, and hurriedly packed up my carpet-bag. I was just going out when Madame C —— presented herself before me.

"Begone, madam," I said to her, "or, in my rage, I might forget the respect due to your sex."

She threw herself, crying bitterly, on a chair, entreated me to forgive her, assuring me that she was innocent, and that she was not present when the knave had given the names. The landlady, coming in at that moment, vouched for the truth of her assertion. My anger began to abate, and as I passed near the window I saw the carriage I had ordered waiting for me with a pair of good horses. I called for the landlord in order to pay whatever my share of the expense might come to, but he told me that as I had ordered nothing myself I had nothing to pay. Just at that juncture Count Velo came in.

"I daresay, count," I said, "that you believe this woman to be my wife."

"That is a fact known to everybody in the city."

"Damnation! And you have believed such a thing, knowing that I occupy this room alone, and seeing me leave the ball-room and the supper-table yesterday alone, leaving her with you all!"

"Some husbands are blessed with such easy dispositions!"

"I do not think I look like one of that species, and you are not a judge of men of honour, let us go out, and I undertake to prove it to you."

The count rushed down the stairs and out of the hotel. The miserable C —— was choking, and I could not help pitying her; for a woman has in her tears a weapon which through my life I have never known to resist. I considered that if I left the hotel without paying anything, people might laugh at my anger and suppose that I had a share in the swindle; I requested the landlord to bring me the account, intending to pay half of it. He went for it, but another scene awaited me. Madame C —— , bathed in tears, fell on her knees, and told me that if I abandoned her she was lost, for she had no money and nothing to leave as security for her hotel bill.

"What, madam! Have you not letters of exchange to the amount of six thousand florins, or the goods bought with them?"

"The goods are no longer here; they have all been taken away, because the letters of exchange, which you saw, and which we considered as good as cash, only made the merchants laugh; they have sent for everything. Oh! who could have supposed it?"

"The scoundrel! He knew it well enough, and that is why he was so anxious to bring me here. Well, it is right that I should pay the penalty of my own folly."

The bill brought by the landlord amounted to forty sequins, a very high figure for three days; but a large portion of that sum was cash advanced by the landlord, I immediately felt that my honour demanded that I should pay the bill in full; and I paid without any hesitation, taking care to get a receipt given in the presence of two witnesses. I then made a present of two sequins to the nephew of the landlord to console him for the thrashing he had received, and I refused the same sum to the wretched C —— , who had sent the landlady to beg it for her.

Thus ended that unpleasant adventure, which taught me a lesson, and a lesson which I ought not to have required. Two or three weeks later, I heard that Count Trento had given those two miserable beings some money to enable them to leave the city; as far as I was concerned, I would not have anything to do with them. A month afterwards P —— C —— was again arrested for debt, the man who had been security for him having become a bankrupt. He had the audacity to write a long letter to me, entreating me to go and see him, but I did not answer him. I was quite as inflexible towards Madame C —— , whom I always refused to see. She was reduced to great poverty.

I returned to Padua, where I stopped only long enough to take my ring and to dine with M. de Bragadin, who went back to Venice a few days afterwards.

The messenger from the convent brought me a letter very early in the morning; I devoured its contents; it was very loving, but gave no news. In my answer I gave my dear C —— C —— the particulars of the infamous trick played upon me by her villainous brother, and mentioned the ring, with the secret of which I acquainted her.

According to the information I had received from C —— C —— , I placed myself, one morning, so as to see her mother enter the church, into which I followed her. Kneeling close to her, I told her that I wished to speak with her, and she followed me to the cloister. I began by speaking a few consoling words; then I told her that I would remain faithful to her daughter, and I asked her whether she visited her.

“I intend,” she said, “to go and kiss my dear child next Sunday, and I shall of course speak of you with her, for I know well enough that she will be delighted to have news of you; but to my great regret I am not at liberty to tell you where she is.”

"I do not wish you to tell me, my good mother, but allow me to send her this ring by you. It is the picture of her patroness, and I wish you to entreat her to wear it always on her finger; tell her to look at the image during her daily prayers, for without that protection she can never become my wife. Tell her that, on my side, I address every day a credo to St. James."

Delighted with the piety of my feelings and with the prospect of recommending this new devotion to her daughter, the good woman promised to fulfil my commission. I left her, but not before I had placed in her hand ten sequins which I begged her to force upon her daughter's acceptance to supply herself with the trifles she might require. She accepted, but at the same time she assured me that her father had taken care to provide her with all necessaries. The letter which I received from C —— C —— , on the following Wednesday, was the expression of the most tender affection and the most lively gratitude. She said that the moment she was alone nothing could be more rapid than the point of the pin which made St. Catherine cut a somersault, and presented to her eager eyes the beloved features of the being who was the whole world to her. "I am constantly kissing you," she added, "even when some of the nuns are looking at me, for whenever they come near me I have only to let the top part of the ring fall back and my dear patroness takes care to conceal everything. All the nuns are highly pleased with my devotion and with the confidence I have in the protection of my blessed patroness, whom they think very much like me in the face." It was nothing but a beautiful face created by the fancy of the painter, but my dear little wife was so lovely that beauty was sure to be like her.

She said, likewise, that the nun who taught her French had offered her fifty sequins for the ring on account of the likeness between her and the portrait of the saint, but not out of veneration for her patroness, whom she turned into ridicule as she read her life. She thanked me for the ten sequins I had sent her, because, her mother having given them to her in the presence of several of the sisters, she was thus enabled to spend a little money without raising the suspicions of those curious and inquisitive nuns. She liked to offer trifling presents to the other boarders, and the money allowed her to gratify that innocent taste.

"My mother," added she, "praised your piety very highly; she is delighted with your feelings of devotion. Never mention again, I beg, the name of my unworthy brother."

For five or six weeks her letters were full of the blessed St. Catherine, who caused her to tremble with fear every time she found herself compelled to trust the ring to the mystic curiosity of the elderly nuns, who, in order to see the likeness better through their spectacles, brought it close to their eyes, and rubbed the enamel. "I am in constant fear," C —— C —— wrote, "of their pressing the invisible blue spot by chance. What would become of me, if my patroness, jumping up, discovered to their eyes a face — very divine, it is true, but which is not at all like that of a saint? Tell me, what could I do in such a case?"

One month after the second arrest of P —— C —— , the jeweller, who had taken my security for the ring, called on me for payment of the bill. I made an arrangement with him; and on condition of my giving him twenty sequins, and leaving him every right over the debtor, he exonerated me. From his prison the impudent P —— C —— harassed me with his cowardly entreaties for alms and assistance.

Croce was in Venice, and engrossed a great share of the general attention. He kept a fine house, an excellent table, and a faro bank with which he emptied the pockets of his dupes. Foreseeing what would happen sooner or later, I had abstained from visiting him at his house, but we were friendly whenever we met. His wife having been delivered of a boy, Croce asked me to stand as god-father, a favour which I thought I could grant; but after the ceremony and the supper which was the consequence of it, I never entered the house of my former partner, and I acted rightly. I wish I had always been as prudent in my conduct.

CHAPTER XV

Croce Is Expelled From Venice — Sgombro — His Infamy and Death — Misfortune Which Befalls My Dear C. C. — I Receive An Anonymous Letter From a Nun, and Answer It — An Amorous Intrigue

My former partner was, as I have said before, a skilful and experienced hand at securing the favours of Fortune; he was driving a good trade in Venice, and as he was amiable, and what is called in society a gentleman, he might have held that excellent footing for a long time, if he had been satisfied with gambling; for the State Inquisitors would have too much to attend to if they wished to compel fools to spare their fortunes, dupes to be prudent, and cheats not to dupe the fools; but, whether through the folly of youth or through a vicious disposition, the cause of his exile was of an extraordinary and disgusting nature.

A Venetian nobleman, noble by birth, but very ignoble in his propensities, called Sgombro, and belonging to the Gritti family, fell deeply in love with him, and Croce, either for fun or from taste, shewed himself very compliant. Unfortunately the reserve commanded by common decency was not a guest at their amorous feats, and the scandal became so notorious that the Government was compelled to notify to Croce the order to quit the city, and to seek his fortune in some other place.

Some time afterwards the infamous Sgombro seduced his own two sons, who were both very young, and, unfortunately for him, he put the youngest in such a state as to render necessary an application to a surgeon. The infamous deed became publicly known, and the poor child confessed that he had not had the courage to refuse obedience to his father. Such obedience was, as a matter of course, not considered as forming a part of the duties which a son owes to his father, and the State Inquisitors sent the disgusting wretch to the citadel of Cataro, where he died after one year of confinement.

It is well known that the air of Cataro is deadly, and that the Tribunal sentences to inhale it only such criminals as are not judged publicly for fear of exciting too deeply the general horror by the publication of the trial.

It was to Cataro that the Council of Ten sent, fifteen years ago, the celebrated advocate Cantarini, a Venetian nobleman, who by his eloquence had made himself master of the great Council, and was on the point of changing the constitution of the State. He died there at the end of the year. As for his accomplices, the Tribunal thought that it was enough to punish the four or five leaders, and to pretend not to know the others, who through fear of punishment returned silently to their allegiance.

That Sgombro, of whom I spoke before, had a charming wife who is still alive, I believe. Her name was Cornelia Gitti; she was as celebrated by her wit as by her beauty, which she kept in spite of her years. Having recovered her liberty through the death of her husband, she knew better than to make herself a second time the prisoner of the Hymenean god; she loved her independence too much; but as she loved pleasure too, she accepted the homage of the lovers who pleased her taste.

One Monday, towards the end of July, my servant woke me at day-break to tell me that Laura wished to speak to me. I foresaw some misfortune, and ordered the servant to shew her in immediately. These are the contents of the letter which she handed to me:

“My dearest, a misfortune has befallen me last evening, and it makes me very miserable because I must keep it a secret from everyone in the convent. I am suffering from a very severe loss of blood, and I do not know what to do, having but very little linen. Laura tells me I shall require a great deal of it if the flow of blood continues. I can take no one into my confidence but you, and I entreat you to send me as much linen as you can. You see that I have been compelled to make a confidante of Laura, who is the only person allowed to enter my room at all times. If I should die, my dear husband, everybody in the convent would, of course, know the cause of my death; but I think of you, and I shudder. What will you do in your grief? Ah, darling love! what a pity!”

I dressed myself hurriedly, plying Laura with questions all the time. She told me plainly that it was a miscarriage, and that it was necessary to act with great discretion in order to save the reputation of my young friend; that after all she required nothing but plenty of linen, and that it would be nothing. Commonplace words of consolation, which did not allay the fearful anxiety under which I was labouring. I went out with Laura, called on a Jew from whom I bought a quantity of sheets and two hundred napkins, and, putting it all in a large bag, I repaired with her to Muran. On our way there I wrote in pencil to my sweetheart, telling her to have entire confidence in Laura, and assuring her that I would not leave Muran until all danger had passed. Before we landed, Laura told me that, in order not to be remarked, I had better conceal myself in her house. At any other time it would have been shutting up the wolf in the sheep-fold. She left me in a miserable-looking small room on the ground floor, and concealing about herself as much linen as she could she hurried to her patient, whom she had not seen since the previous evening. I was in hopes that she would find her out of danger, and I longed to see her come back with that good news.

She was absent about one hour, and when she returned her looks were sad. She told me that my poor friend, having lost a great deal of blood during the night, was in bed in a very weak state, and that all we could do was to pray to God for her, because, if the flooding of the blood did not stop soon, she could not possibly live twenty-four hours.

When I saw the linen which she had concealed under her clothes to bring it out, I could not disguise my horror, and I thought the sight would kill me. I fancied myself in a slaughter-house! Laura, thinking of consoling me, told me that I could rely upon the secret being well kept.

“Ah! what do I care!” I exclaimed. “Provided she lives, let the whole world know that she is my wife!”

At any other time, the foolishness of poor Laura would have made me laugh; but in such a sad moment I had neither the inclination nor the courage to be merry.

“Our dear patient,” added Laura, “smiled as she was reading your letter, and she said that, with you so near her, she was certain not to die.”

Those words did me good, but a man needs so little to console him or to soothe his grief.

“When the nuns are at their dinner,” said Laura, “I will go back to the convent with as much linen as I can conceal about me, and in the mean time

I am going to wash all this."

"Has she had any visitors?"

"Oh, yes! all the convent; but no one has any suspicion of the truth."

"But in such hot weather as this she can have only a very light blanket over her, and her visitors must remark the great bulk of the napkins."

"There is no fear of that, because she is sitting up in her bed."

"What does she eat?"

"Nothing, for she must not eat."

Soon afterwards Laura went out, and I followed her. I called upon a physician, where I wasted my time and my money, in order to get from him a long prescription which was useless, for it would have put all the convent in possession of the secret, or, to speak more truly, her secret would have been known to the whole world, for a secret known to a nun soon escapes out of the convent's walls. Besides, the physician of the convent himself would most likely have betrayed it through a spirit of revenge.

I returned sadly to my miserable hole in Laura's house. Half an hour afterwards she came to me, crying bitterly, and she placed in my hands this letter, which was scarcely legible:

"I have not strength enough to write to you, my darling; I am getting weaker and weaker; I am losing all my blood, and I am afraid there is no remedy. I abandon myself to the will of God, and I thank Him for having saved me from dishonour. Do not make yourself unhappy. My only consolation is to know that you are near me. Alas! if I could see you but for one moment I would die happy."

The sight of a dozen napkins brought by Laura made me shudder, and the good woman imagined that she afforded me some consolation by telling me that as much linen could be soaked with a bottle of blood. My mind was not disposed to taste such consolation; I was in despair, and I addressed to myself the fiercest reproaches, upbraiding myself as the cause of the death of that adorable creature. I threw myself on the bed, and remained there, almost stunned, for more than six hours, until Laura's return from the convent with twenty napkins entirely soaked. Night had come on, and she could not go back to her patient until morning. I passed a fearful night without food, without sleep, looking upon myself with horror, and refusing all the kind attentions that Laura's daughters tried to shew me.

It was barely daylight when Laura same to announce to me, in the saddest tone, that my poor friend did not bleed any more. I thought she was dead, and I screamed loudly,

"Oh! she is no more!"

"She is still breathing, sir; but I fear she will not outlive this day, for she is worn out. She can hardly open her eyes, and her pulse is scarcely to be felt."

A weight was taken off me; I was instinctively certain that my darling was saved.

"Laura," I said, "this is not bad news; provided the flooding has ceased entirely, all that is necessary is to give her some light food."

"A physician has been sent for. He will prescribe whatever is right, but to tell you the truth I have not much hope."

"Only give me the assurance that she is still alive."

"Yes, she is, I assure you; but you understand very well that she will not tell the truth to the doctor, and God knows what he will order. I whispered to her not to take anything, and she understood me."

"You are the best of women. Yes, if she does not die from weakness before to-morrow, she is saved; nature and love will have been her doctors."

"May God hear you! I shall be back by twelve."

"Why not before?"

"Because her room will be full of people."

Feeling the need of hope, and almost dead for want of food, I ordered some dinner, and prepared a long letter for my beloved mistress, to be delivered to her when she was well enough to read it. The instants given to repentance are very sad, and I was truly a fit subject for pity. I longed to see Laura again, so as to hear what the doctor had said. I had very good cause for laughing at all sorts of oracles, yet through some unaccountable weakness I longed for that of the doctor; I wanted, before all, to find it a propitious one.

Laura's young daughters waited upon me at dinner; I could not manage to swallow a mouthful, but it amused me to see the three sisters devour my dinner at the first invitation I gave them. The eldest sister, a very fine girl, never raised her large eyes once towards me. The two younger ones seemed to me disposed to be amiable, but if I looked at them it was only to feed my despair and the cruel pangs of repentance.

At last Laura, whom I expected anxiously, came back; she told me that the dear patient remained in the same state of debility; the doctor had been greatly puzzled by her extreme weakness because he did not know to what cause to attribute it. Laura added,

"He has ordered some restoratives and a small quantity of light broth; if she can sleep, he answers for her life. He has likewise desired her to have someone to watch her at night, and she immediately pointed her finger at me, as if she wished me to undertake that office. Now, I promise you never to leave her either night or day, except to bring you news."

I thanked her, assuring her that I would reward her generously. I heard with great pleasure that her mother had paid her a visit, and that she had no suspicion of the real state of things, for she had lavished on her the most tender caresses.

Feeling more at ease I gave six sequins to Laura, one to each of her daughters, and ate something for my supper: I then laid myself down on one of the wretched beds in the room. As soon as the two younger sisters saw me in bed, they undressed themselves without ceremony, and took possession of the second bed which was close by mine. Their innocent confidence pleased me. The eldest sister, who most likely had more practical experience, retired to the adjoining room; she had a lover to whom she was soon to be married. This time, however, I was not possessed with the evil spirit of concupiscence, and I allowed innocence to sleep peacefully without attempting anything against it.

Early the next morning Laura was the bearer of good news. She came in with a cheerful air to announce that the beloved patient had slept well, and that she was going back soon to give her some soup. I felt an almost maddening joy in listening to her, and I thought the oracle of AEsculapius a thousand times more reliable than that of Apollo. But it was not yet time to exult in our victory, for my poor little friend had to recover her strength and to make up for all the blood she had lost; that could be done only by time and careful nursing. I remained another week at Laura's house, which I left only after my dear C —— C —— had requested me to do so in a letter of four pages. Laura, when I left, wept for joy in seeing herself rewarded by the gift of all the fine linen I had bought for my C —— C —— , and her daughters were weeping likewise, most probably because, during the ten days I had spent near them, they had not obtained a single kiss from me.

After my return to Venice, I resumed my usual habits; but with a nature like mine how could I possibly remain satisfied without positive love? My only pleasure was to receive a letter from my dear recluse every Wednesday, who advised me to wait patiently rather than to attempt carrying her off. Laura assured me that she had become more lovely than ever, and I longed to see her. An opportunity of gratifying my wishes soon offered itself, and I did not allow it to escape. There was to be a taking of the veil — a ceremony which always attracts a large number of persons. On those occasions the nuns always received a great many visitors, and I thought that the boarders were likely to be in the parlour on such an occasion. I ran no risk of being remarked any more than any other person, for I would mingle with the crowd. I therefore went without saying anything about it to Laura, and without acquainting my dear little wife of my intentions. I thought I would fall, so great was my emotion, when I saw her within four yards from me, and looking at me as if she had been in an ecstatic state. I thought her taller and more womanly, and she certainly seemed to me more beautiful than before. I saw no one but her; she never took her eyes off me, and I was the last to leave that place which on that day struck me as being the temple of happiness.

Three days afterwards I received a letter from her. She painted with such vivid colours the happiness she had felt in seeing me, that I made up my mind to give her that pleasure as often as I could. I answered at once that I would attend mass every Sunday at the church of her convent. It cost me nothing: I could not see her, but I knew that she saw me herself, and her happiness made me perfectly happy. I had nothing to fear, for it was almost impossible that anyone could recognize me in the church which was attended only by the people of Muran.

After hearing two or three masses, I used to take a gondola, the gondolier of which could not feel any curiosity about me. Yet I kept on my guard, for I knew that the father of C —— C —— wanted her to forget me, and I had no doubt he would have taken her away, God knew where if he had had the slightest suspicion of my being acquainted with the place where he had confined her.

Thus I was reasoning in my fear to lose all opportunity of corresponding with my dear C —— C —— , but I did not yet know the disposition and the shrewdness of the sainted daughters of the Lord. I did not suppose that there was anything remarkable in my person, at least for the inmates of a convent; but I was yet a novice respecting the curiosity of women, and particularly of unoccupied hearts; I had soon occasion to be convinced.

I had executed my Sunday manoeuvering only for a month or five weeks, when my dear C —— C —— wrote me jestingly that I had become a living enigma for all the convent, boarders and nuns, not even excepting the old ones. They all expected me anxiously; they warned each other of my arrival, and watched me taking the holy water. They remarked that I never cast a glance toward the grating, behind which were all the inmates of the convent; that I never looked at any of the women coming in or going out of the church. The old nuns said that I was certainly labouring under some deep sorrow, of which I had no hope to be cured except through the protection of the Holy Virgin, and the young ones asserted that I was either melancholy or misanthropic.

My dear wife, who knew better than the others, and had no occasion to lose herself in suppositions, was much amused, and she entertained me by sending me a faithful report of it all. I wrote to her that, if she had any fear of my being recognized I would cease my Sunday visits to the church. She answered that I could not impose upon her a more cruel privation, and she entreated me to continue my visits. I thought it would be prudent, however, to abstain from calling at Laura’s house, for fear of the chattering nuns contriving to know it, and discovering in that manner a great deal more than I wished them to find out. But that existence was literally consuming me by slow degrees, and could not last long. Besides, I was made to have a mistress, and to live happily with her. Not knowing what to do with myself, I would gamble, and I almost invariably won; but, in spite of that, weariness had got hold of me and I was getting thinner every day.

With the five thousand sequins which my partner Croce had won for me in Padua I had followed M. Bragadin's advice. I had hired a casino where I held a faro bank in partnership with a matador, who secured me against the frauds of certain noblemen — tyrants, with whom a private citizen is always sure to be in the wrong in my dear country.

On All Saints' Day, in the year 1753, just as, after hearing mass, I was going to step into a gondola to return to Venice, I saw a woman, somewhat in Laura's style who, passing near me, looked at me and dropped a letter. I picked it up, and the woman, seeing me in possession of the epistle, quietly went on. The letter had no address, and the seal represented a running knot. I stepped hurriedly into the gondola, and as soon as we were in the offing I broke the seal. I read the following words.

"A nun, who for the last two months and a half has seen you every Sunday in the church of her convent, wishes to become acquainted with you. A pamphlet which you have lost, and which chance has thrown into her hands, makes her believe that you speak French; but, if you like it better, you can answer in Italian, because what she wants above all is a clear and precise answer. She does not invite you to call for her at the parlour of the convent, because, before you place yourself under the necessity of speaking to her, she wishes you to see her, and for that purpose she will name a lady whom you can accompany to the parlour. That lady shall not know you and need not therefore introduce you, in case you should not wish to be known.

"Should you not approve of that way to become acquainted, the nun will appoint a certain casino in Muran, in which you will find her alone, in the evening, any night you may choose. You will then be at liberty either to sup with her, or to retire after an interview of a quarter of an hour, if you have any other engagements.

"Would you rather offer her a supper in Venice? Name the night, the hour, the place of appointment, and you will see her come out of a gondola. Only be careful to be there alone, masked and with a lantern.

"I feel certain that you will answer me, and that you will guess how impatiently I am waiting for your letter. I entreat you, therefore, to give it to-morrow to the same woman through whom you will receive mine! you will find her one hour before noon in the church of St. Cancian, near the first altar on the right.

"Recollect that, if I did not suppose you endowed with a noble soul and a high mind, I could never have resolved on taking a step which might give you an unfavorable opinion of my character"

The tone of that letter, which I have copied word by word, surprised me even more than the offer it contained. I had business to attend to, but I gave up all engagements to lock myself in my room in order to answer it. Such an application betokened an extravagant mind, but there was in it a certain dignity, a singularity, which attracted me. I had an idea that the writer might be the same nun who taught French to C —— C —— . She had represented her friend in her letters as handsome, rich, gallant, and generous. My dear wife had, perhaps, been guilty of some indiscretion. A thousand fancies whirled through my brain, but I would entertain only those which were favourable to a scheme highly pleasing to me. Besides, my young friend had informed me that the nun who had given her French lessons was not the only one in the convent who spoke that language. I had no reason to suppose that, if C —— C —— had made a confidante of her friend, she would have made a mystery of it to me. But, for all that, the nun who had written to me might be the beautiful friend of my dear little wife, and she might also turn out to be a different person; I felt somewhat puzzled. Here is, however, the letter which I thought I could write without implicating myself:

"I answer in French, madam, in the hope that my letter will have the clearness and the precision of which you give me the example in yours.

"The subject is highly interesting and of the highest importance, considering all the circumstances. As I must answer without knowing the person to whom I am writing, you must feel, madam, that, unless I should possess a large dose of vanity, I must fear some mystification, and my honour requires that I should keep on my guard.

"If it is true that the person who has penned that letter is a respectable woman, who renders me justice in supposing me endowed with feeling as noble as her own, she will find, I trust, that I could not answer in any other way than I am doing now.

"If you have judged me worthy, madam, of the honour which you do me by offering me your acquaintance, although your good opinion can have been formed only from my personal appearance, I feel it my duty to obey you, even if the result be to undeceive you by proving that I had unwittingly led you into a mistaken appreciation of my person.

“Of the three proposals which you so kindly made in your letter, I dare not accept any but the first, with the restriction suggested by your penetrating mind. I will accompany to the parlour of your convent a lady who shall not know who I am, and, consequently, shall have no occasion to introduce me.

“Do not judge too severely, madam, the specious reasons which compel me not to give you my name, and receive my word of honour that I shall learn yours only to render you homage. If you choose to speak to me, I will answer with the most profound respect. Permit me to hope that you will come to the parlour alone. I may mention that I am a Venetian, and perfectly free.

“The only reason which prevents me from choosing one of the two other arrangements proposed by you, either of which would have suited me better because they greatly honour me, is, allow me to repeat it, a fear of being the victim of a mystification; but these modes of meeting will not be lost when you know me and when I have seen you. I entreat you to have faith in my honour, and to measure my patience by your own. Tomorrow, at the same place and at the same hour, I shall be anxiously expecting your answer.”

I went to the place appointed, and having met the female Mercury I gave her my letter with a sequin, and I told her that I would come the next day for the answer. We were both punctual. As soon as she saw me, she handed me back the sequin which I had given her the day before, and a letter, requesting me to read it and to let her know whether she was to wait for an answer. Here is the exact copy of the letter:

“I believe, sir, that I have not been mistaken in anything. Like you, I detest untruth when it can lead to important consequences, but I think it a mere trifle when it can do no injury to anyone. Of my three proposals you have chosen the one which does the greatest honour to your intelligence, and, respecting the reasons which induce you to keep your incognito, I have written the enclosed to the Countess of S —— , which I request you to read. Be kind enough to seal it before delivery of it to her. You may call upon her whenever convenient to yourself. She will name her own hour, and you will accompany her here in her gondola. The countess will not ask you any questions, and you need not give her any explanation. There will be no presentation; but as you will be made acquainted with my name, you can afterwards call on me here, masked, whenever you please, and by using the name of the countess. In that way we shall become acquainted without the necessity of disturbing you, or of your losing at night some hours which may be precious to you. I have instructed my servant to wait for your answer in case you should be known to the countess and object to her. If you approve of the choice I have made of her, tell the messenger that there is no answer."

As I was an entire stranger to the countess, I told the woman that I had no answer to give, and she left me.

Here are the contents of the note addressed by the nun to the countess, and which I had to deliver to her:

"I beg of you, my dear friend, to pay me a visit when you are at leisure, and to let the masked gentleman-bearer of this note know the hour, so that he can accompany you. He will be punctual. Farewell. You will much oblige your friend."

That letter seemed to me informed by a sublime spirit of intrigue; there was in it an appearance of dignity which captivated me, although I felt conscious that I was playing the character of a man on whom a favour seemed to be bestowed.

In her last letter, my nun, pretending not to be anxious to know who I was, approved of my choice, and feigned indifference for nocturnal meetings; but she seemed certain that after seeing her I would visit her. I knew very well what to think of it all, for the intrigue was sure to have an amorous issue. Nevertheless, her assurance, or rather confidence, increased my curiosity, and I felt that she had every reason to hope, if she were young and handsome. I might very well have delayed the affair for a few days, and have learned from C —— C —— who that nun could be; but, besides the baseness of such a proceeding, I was afraid of spoiling the game and repenting it afterwards. I was told to call on the countess at my convenience, but it was because the dignity of my nun would not allow her to shew herself too impatient; and she certainly thought that I would myself hasten the adventure. She seemed to me too deeply learned in gallantry to admit the possibility of her being an inexperienced novice, and I was afraid of wasting my time; but I made up my mind to laugh at my own expense if I happened to meet a superannuated female. It is very certain that if I had not been actuated by curiosity I should not have gone one step further, but I wanted to see the countenance of a nun who had offered to come to Venice to sup with me. Besides, I was much surprised at the liberty enjoyed by those sainted virgins, and at the facility with which they could escape out of their walls.

At three o'clock I presented myself before the countess and delivered the note, and she expressed a wish to see me the next day at the same hour. We dropped a beautiful reverence to one another, and parted. She was a superior woman, already going down the hill, but still very handsome.

The next morning, being Sunday, I need not say that I took care to attend mass at the convent, elegantly dressed, and already unfaithful — at least in idea — to my dear C —— C —— , for I was thinking of being seen by the nun, young or old, rather than of shewing myself to my charming wife.

In the afternoon I masked myself again, and at the appointed time I repaired to the house of the countess who was waiting for me. We went in a two-oared gondola, and reached the convent without having spoken of anything but the weather. When we arrived at the gate, the countess asked for M —— M —— . I was surprised by that name, for the woman to whom it belonged was celebrated. We were shewn into a small parlour, and a few minutes afterwards a nun came in, went straight to the grating, touched a spring, and made four squares of the grating revolve, which left an opening sufficiently large to enable the two friends to embrace the ingenious window was afterwards carefully closed. The opening was at least eighteen inches wide, and a man of my size could easily have got through it. The countess sat opposite the nun, and I took my seat a little on one side so as to be able to observe quietly and at my ease one of the most beautiful women that it was possible to see. I had no doubt whatever of her being the person mentioned by my dear C —— C —— as teaching her French. Admiration kept me in a sort of ecstacy, and I never heard one word of their conversation; the beautiful nun, far from speaking to me, did not even condescend to honour me with one look. She was about twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, and the shape of her face was most beautiful. Her figure was much above the ordinary height, her complexion rather pale, her appearance noble, full of energy, but at the same time reserved and modest; her eyes, large and full, were of a lovely blue; her countenance was soft and cheerful; her fine lips seemed to breathe the most heavenly voluptuousness, and her teeth were two rows of the most brilliant enamel. Her head-dress did not allow me to see her hair, but if she had any I knew by the colour of her eyebrows that it was of a beautiful light brown. Her hand and her arm, which I could see as far as the elbow, were magnificent; the chisel of Praxiteles never carved anything more grace fully rounded and plump, I was not sorry to have refused the two rendezvous which had been offered to me by the beauty, for I was sure of possessing her in a few days, and it was a pleasure for me to lay my desires at her feet. I longed to find myself alone with her near that grating, and I would have considered it an insult to her if, the very next day, I had not come to tell her how fully I rendered to her charms the justice they deserved. She was faithful to her determination not to look at me once, but after all I was pleased with her reserve. All at once the two friends lowered their voices, and out of delicacy I withdrew further. Their private conversation lasted about a quarter of an hour, during which I pretended to be intently looking at a painting; then they kissed one another again by the same process as at the beginning of the interview; the nun closed the opening, turned her back on us, and disappeared without casting one glance in my direction.

As we were on our way back to Venice, the countess, tired perhaps of our silence, said to me, with a smile,

“M —— M —— is beautiful and very witty.”

“I have seen her beauty, and I believe in her wit.”

“She did not address one word to you.”

“I had refused to be introduced to her, and she punished me by pretending not to know that I was present.”

The countess made no answer, and we reached her house without exchanging another word. At her door a very ceremonious curtesy, with these words, “Adieu, sir!” warned me that I was not to go any further. I had no wish to do so, and went away dreaming and wondering at the singularity of the adventure, the end of which I longed to see.

EPISODE 8 — CONVENT AFFAIRS

CHAPTER XVI

Countess Coronini — A Lover's Pique — Reconciliation — The First Meeting — A Philosophical Parenthesis

My beautiful nun had not spoken to me, and I was glad of it, for I was so astonished, so completely under the spell of her beauty, that I might have given her a very poor opinion of my intelligence by the rambling answers which I should very likely have given to her questions. I knew her to be certain that she had not to fear the humiliation of a refusal from me, but I admired her courage in running the risk of it in her position. I could hardly understand her boldness, and I could not conceive how she contrived to enjoy so much liberty. A casino at Muran! the possibility of going to Venice to sup with a young man! It was all very surprising, and I decided in my own mind that she had an acknowledged lover whose pleasure it was to make her happy by satisfying her caprices. It is true that such a thought was rather unpleasant to my pride, but there was too much piquancy in the adventure, the heroine of it was too attractive, for me to be stopped by any considerations. I saw very well that I was taking the high road to become unfaithful to my dear C —— C —— , or rather that I was already so in thought and will, but I must confess that, in spite of all my love for that charming child, I felt no qualms of conscience. It seemed to me that an infidelity of that sort, if she ever heard of it, would not displease her, for that short excursion on strange ground would only keep me alive and in good condition for her, because it would save me from the weariness which was surely killing me.

I had been presented to the celebrated Countess Coronini by a nun, a relative of M. Dandolo. That countess, who had been very handsome and was very witty, having made up her mind to renounce the political intrigues which had been the study of her whole life, had sought a retreat in the Convent of St. Justine, in the hope of finding in that refuge the calm which she wanted, and which her disgust of society had rendered necessary to her. As she had enjoyed a very great reputation, she was still visited at the convent by all the foreign ambassadors and by the first noblemen of Venice; inside of the walls of her convent the countess was acquainted with everything that happened in the city. She always received me very kindly, and, treating me as a young man, she took pleasure in giving me, every time I called on her, very agreeable lessons in morals. Being quite certain to find out from her, with a little manoeuvering, something concerning M —— M —— , I decided on paying her a visit the day after I had seen the beautiful nun.

The countess gave me her usual welcome, and, after the thousand nothings which it is the custom to utter in society before anything worth saying is spoken, I led the conversation up to the convents of Venice. We spoke of the wit and influence of a nun called Celsi, who, although ugly, had an immense credit everywhere and in everything. We mentioned afterwards the young and lovely Sister Michali, who had taken the veil to prove to her mother that she was superior to her in intelligence and wit. After speaking of several other nuns who had the reputation of being addicted to gallantry, I named M —— M —— , remarking that most likely she deserved that reputation likewise, but that she was an enigma. The countess answered with a smile that she was not an enigma for everybody, although she was necessarily so for most people.

“What is incomprehensible,” she said, “is the caprice that she took suddenly to become a nun, being handsome, rich, free, well-educated, full of wit, and, to my knowledge, a Free-thinker. She took the veil without any reason, physical or moral; it was a mere caprice.”

“Do you believe her to be happy, madam?”

“Yes, unless she has repented her decision, or if she does not repent it some day. But if ever she does, I think she will be wise enough never to say so to anyone.”

Satisfied by the mysterious air of the countess that M —— M —— had a lover, I made up my mind not to trouble myself about it, and having put on my mask I went to Muran in the afternoon. When I reached the gate of the convent I rang the bell, and with an anxious heart I asked for M —— M —— in the name of Madame de S —— . The small parlour being closed, the attendant pointed out to me the one in which I had to go. I went in, took off my mask, and sat down waiting for my divinity.

My heart was beating furiously; I was waiting with great impatience; yet that expectation was not without charm, for I dreaded the beginning of the interview. An hour passed pretty rapidly, but I began then to find the time rather long, and thinking that, perhaps, the attendant had not rightly understood me, I rang the bell, and enquired whether notice of my visit had being given to Sister M —— M —— . A voice answered affirmatively. I took my seat again, and a few minutes afterwards an old, toothless nun came in and informed me that Sister M —— M —— was engaged for the whole day. Without giving me time to utter a single word, the woman left the parlour. This was one of those terrible moments to which the man who worships at the shrine of the god of love is exposed! They are indeed cruel moments; they bring fearful sorrow, they may cause death.

Feeling myself disgraced, my first sensation was utter contempt for myself, an inward despair which was akin to rage; the second was disdainful indignation against the nun, upon whom I passed the severe judgment which I thought she deserved, and which was the only way I had to soothe my grief. Such behaviour proclaimed her to be the most impudent of women, and entirely wanting in good sense; for the two letters she had written to me were quite enough to ruin her character if I had wished to revenge myself, and she evidently could not expect anything else from me. She must have been mad to set at defiance my revengeful feelings, and I should certainly have thought that she was insane if I had not heard her converse with the countess.

Time, they say, brings good counsel; it certainly brings calm, and cool reflection gives lucidity to the mind. At last I persuaded myself that what had occurred was after all in no way extraordinary, and that I would certainly have considered it at first a very common occurrence if I had not been dazzled by the wonderful beauty of the nun, and blinded by my own vanity. As a very natural result I felt that I was at liberty to laugh at my mishap, and that nobody could possibly guess whether my mirth was genuine or only counterfeit. Sophism is so officious!

But, in spite of all my fine arguments, I still cherished the thought of revenge; no debasing element, however, was to form part of it, and being determined not to leave the person who had been guilty of such a bad practical joke the slightest cause of triumph, I had the courage not to shew any vexation. She had sent word to me that she was engaged; nothing more natural; the part I had to play was to appear indifferent. “Most likely she will not be engaged another time,” I said to myself, “but I defy her to catch me in the snare again. I mean to shew her that I only laugh at her uncivil behaviour.” Of course I intended to send back her letters, but not without the accompaniment of a billet-doux, the gallantry of which was not likely to please her.

The worse part of the affair for me was to be compelled to go to her church; because, supposing her not to be aware of my going there for C —— C —— , she might imagine that the only object of my visits was to give her the opportunity of apologizing for her conduct and of appointing a new meeting. I wanted her to entertain no doubt of my utter contempt for her person, and I felt certain that she had proposed the other meetings in Venice and at the casino of Muran only to deceive me more easily.

I went to bed with a great thirst for revenge, I fell asleep thinking of it, and I awoke with the resolution of quenching it. I began to write, but, as I wished particularly that my letter should not show the pique of the disappointed lover, I left it on my table with the intention of reading it again the next day. It proved a useful precaution, for when I read it over, twenty-four hours afterwards, I found it unworthy of me, and tore it to pieces. It contained some sentences which savoured too much of my weakness, my love, and my spite, and which, far from humiliating her, would only have given her occasion to laugh at me.

On the Wednesday after I had written to C —— C —— that very serious reasons compelled me to give up my visits to the church of her convent, I wrote another letter to the nun, but on Thursday it had the same fate as the first, because upon a second perusal I found the same deficiencies. It seemed to me that I had lost the faculty of writing. Ten days afterwards I found out that I was too deeply in love to have the power of expressing myself in any other way than through the feelings of my heart.

‘Sincerium est nisi vas, quodcunque infundis acescit.’

The face of M —— M —— had made too deep an impression on me; nothing could possibly obliterate it except the all-powerful influence of time.

In my ridiculous position I was sorely tempted to complain to Countess S —— ; but I am happy to say I was prudent enough not to cross the threshold of her door. At last I bethought myself that the giddy nun was certainly labouring under constant dread, knowing that I had in my possession her two letters, with which I could ruin her reputation and cause the greatest injury to the convent, and I sent them back to her with the following note, after I had kept them ten days:

"I can assure you, madam, that it was owing only to forgetfulness that I did not return your two letters which you will find enclosed. I have never thought of belying my own nature by taking a cowardly revenge upon you, and I forgive you most willingly the two giddy acts of which you have been guilty, whether they were committed thoughtlessly or because you wanted to enjoy a joke at my expense. Nevertheless, you will allow me to advise you not to treat any other man in the same way, for you might meet with one endowed with less delicacy. I know your name, I know who you are, but you need not be anxious; it is exactly as if I did not know it. You may, perhaps, care but little for my discretion, but if it should be so I should greatly pity you.

"You may be aware that I shall not shew myself again at your church; but let me assure you that it is not a sacrifice on my part, and that I can attend mass anywhere else. Yet I must tell you why I shall abstain from frequenting the church of your convent. It is very natural for me to suppose that to the two thoughtless acts of which you have been guilty, you have added another not less serious, namely, that of having boasted of your exploits with the other nuns, and I do not want to be the butt of your jokes in cell or parlour. Do not think me too ridiculous if, in spite of being five or six years older than you, I have not thrown off all feelings of self-respect, or trodden under, my feet all reserve and propriety; in one word, if I have kept some prejudices, there are a few which in my opinion ought never to be forgotten. Do not disdain, madam, the lesson which I take the liberty to teach you, as I receive in the kindest spirit the one which you have given me, most likely only for the sake of fun, but by which I promise you to profit as long as I live."

I thought that, considering all circumstances, my letter was a very genial one; I made up my parcel, put on my mask, and looked out for a porter who could have no knowledge of me; I gave him half a sequin, and I promised him as much more when he could assure me that he had faithfully delivered my letter at the convent of Muran. I gave him all the necessary instructions, and cautioned him to go away the very moment he had delivered the letter at the gate of the convent, even if he were told to wait. I must say here that my messenger was a man from Forli, and that the Forlanese were then the most trustworthy men in Venice; for one of them to be guilty of a breach of trust was an unheard-of thing. Such men were formerly the Savoyards, in Paris; but everything is getting worse in this world.

I was beginning to forget the adventure, probably because I thought, rightly or wrongly, that I had put an insurmountable barrier between the nun and myself, when, ten days after I had sent my letter, as I was coming out of the opera, I met my messenger, lantern in hand. I called him, and without taking off my mask I asked him whether he knew me. He looked at me, eyed me from head to foot, and finally answered that he did not.

“Did you faithfully carry the message to Muran?”

“Ah, sir! God be praised! I am very happy to see you again, for I have an important communication to make to you. I took your letter, delivered it according to your instructions, and I went away as soon as it was in the hands of the attendant, although she requested me to wait. When I returned from Muran I did not see you, but that did not matter. On the following day, one of my companions, who happened to be at the gate of the convent when I delivered your letter, came early in the morning to tell me to go to Muran, because the attendant wanted particularly to speak to me. I went there, and after waiting for a few minutes I was shewn into the parlour, where I was kept for more than an hour by a nun as beautiful as the light of day, who asked me a thousand questions for the purpose of ascertaining, if not who you are, at least where I should be likely to find you. You know that I could not give her any satisfactory information. She then left the parlour, ordering me to wait, and at the end of two hours she came back with a letter which she entrusted to my hands, telling me that, if I succeeded in finding you out and in bringing her an answer, she would give me two sequins. In the mean time I was to call at the convent every day, shew her the letter, and receive forty sons every time. Until now I have earned twenty crowns, but I am afraid the lady will get tired of it, and you can make me earn two sequins by answering a line.”

“Where is the letter?”

“In my room under lock and key, for I am always afraid of losing it.”

“Then how can I answer?”

“If you will wait for me here, you shall have the letter in less than a quarter of an hour.”

“I will not wait, because I do not care about the letter. But tell me how you could flatter the nun with the hope of finding me out? You are a rogue, for it is not likely that she would have trusted you with the letter if you had not promised her to find me.”

“I am not a rogue, for I have done faithfully what you told me; but it is true that I gave her a description of your coat, your buckles, and your figure, and I can assure you that for the last ten days I have examined all the masks who are about your size, but in vain. Now I recognize your buckles, but I do not think you have the same coat. Alas, sir! it will not cost you much to write only one line. Be kind enough to wait for me in the coffee-house close by.”

I could not resist my curiosity any longer, and I made up my mind not to wait for him but to accompany him as far as his house. I had only to write, “I have received the letter,” and my curiosity was gratified and the Forlanese earned his two sequins. I could afterwards change my buckles and my mask, and thus set all enquiries at defiance.

I therefore followed him to his door; he went in and brought me the letter. I took him to an inn, where I asked for a room with a good fire, and I told my man to wait. I broke the seal of the parcel — a rather large one, and the first papers that I saw were the two letters which I had sent back to her in order to allay her anxiety as to the possible consequences of her giddiness.

The sight of these letters caused me such a palpitation of the heart that I was compelled to sit down: it was a most evident sign of my defeat. Besides these two letters I found a third one signed “S.” and addressed to M —— M —— . I read the following lines:

“The mask who accompanied me back to my house would not, I believe, have uttered a single word, if I had not told him that the charms of your witty mind were even more bewitching than those of your person; and his answer was, ‘I have seen the one, and I believe in the other.’ I added that I did not understand why you had not spoken to him, and he said, with a smile, ‘I refused to be presented to her, and she punished me for it by not appearing to know that I was present.’ These few words were all our dialogue. I intended to send you this note this morning, but found it impossible. Adieu.”

After reading this note, which stated the exact truth, and which could be considered as proof, my heart began to beat less quickly. Delighted at seeing myself on the point of being convicted of injustice, I took courage, and I read the following letter:

“Owing to an excusable weakness, feeling curious to know what you would say about me to the countess after you had seen me, I took an opportunity of asking her to let me know all you said to her on the following day at latest, for I foresaw that you would pay me a visit in the afternoon. Her letter, which I enclose, and which I beg you to read, did not reach me till half an hour after you had left the convent.

“This was the first fatality.

“Not having received that letter when you called, I had not the courage to see you. This absurd weakness on my part was the second fatality, but the weakness you will; I hope; forgive. I gave orders to the lay-sister to tell you that I was ill for the whole day; a very legitimate excuse; whether true or false, for it was an officious untruth, the correction of which, was to be found in the words: for the whole day. You had already left the convent, and I could not possibly send anyone to run after you, when the old fool informed me of her having told you that I was engaged.

“This was the third fatality.

“You cannot imagine what I had a mind to do and to say to that foolish sister; but here one must say or do nothing; one must be patient and dissemble, thanking God when mistakes are the result of ignorance and not of wickedness — a very common thing in convents. I foresaw at once, at least partly; what would happen; and what has actually, happened; for no reasonable being could, I believe, have foreseen it all. I guessed that, thinking yourself the victim of a joke, you would be incensed, and I felt miserable, for I did not see any way of letting you know the truth before the following Sunday. My heart longed ardently for that day. Could I possibly imagine that you, would take a resolution not to come again to our church! I tried to be patient until that Sunday; but when I found myself disappointed in my hope, my misery became unbearable, and it will cause my death if you refuse to listen to my justification. Your letter has made me completely unhappy, and I shall not resist my despair if you persist in the cruel resolve expressed by your unfeeling letter. You have considered yourself trifled with; that is all you can say; but will this letter convince you of your error? And even believing yourself deceived in the most scandalous manner, you must admit that to write such an awful letter you must have supposed me an abominable wretch — a monster, such as a woman of noble birth and of refined education cannot possibly be. I enclose the two letters you sent back to me, with the idea of allaying my fears which you cruelly supposed very different to what they are in reality. I am a better physiognomist than you, and you must be quite certain that I have not acted thoughtlessly, for I never thought you capable, I will not say of crime, but even of an indelicate action. You must have read on my features the signs only of giddy impudence, and that is not my nature. You may be the cause of my death, you will certainly make me miserable for the remainder of my life, if you do not justify yourself; on my side I think the justification is complete.

"I hope that, even if you feel no interest in my life, you will think that you are bound in honour to come and speak to me. Come yourself to recall all you have written; it is your duty, and I deserve it. If you do not realize the fatal effect produced upon me by your letter, I must indeed pity you, in spite of my misery, for it proves that you have not the slightest knowledge of the human heart. But I feel certain that you will come back, provided the man to whom I trust this letter contrives to find you. Adieu! I expect life or death from you."

I did not require to read that letter twice; I was ashamed and in despair. M —— M —— was right. I called the Forlanese, enquired from him whether he had spoken to her in the morning, and whether she looked ill. He answered that he had found her looking more unhappy every day, and that her eyes were red from weeping.

"Go down again and wait," I said to him.

I began to write, and I had not concluded my long screed before the dawn of day; here are, word by word, the contents of the letter which I wrote to the noblest of women, whom in my unreasonable spite I had judged so wrongly.

“I plead guilty, madam; I cannot possibly justify myself, and I am perfectly convinced of your innocence. I should be disconsolate if I did not hope to obtain pardon, and you will not refuse to forgive me if you are kind enough to recollect the cause of my guilt. I saw you; I was dazzled, and I could not realize a happiness which seemed to me a dream; I thought myself the prey of one of those delightful illusions which vanish when we wake up. The doubt under which I was labouring could not be cleared up for twenty-four hours, and how could I express my feverish impatience as I was longing for that happy moment! It came at last! and my heart, throbbing with desire and hope, was flying towards you while I was in the parlour counting the minutes! Yet an hour passed almost rapidly, and not unnaturally, considering my impatience and the deep impression I felt at the idea of seeing you. But then, precisely at the very moment when I believed myself certain that I was going to gaze upon the beloved features which had been in one interview indelibly engraved upon my heart, I saw the most disagreeable face appear, and a creature announced that you were engaged for the whole day, and without giving me time to utter one word she disappeared! You may imagine my astonishment and… the rest. The lightning would not have produced upon me a more rapid, a more terrible effect! If you had sent me a line by that sister — a line from your hand — I would have gone away, if not pleased, at least submissive and resigned.

“But that was a fourth fatality which you have forgotten to add to your delightful and witty justification. Thinking myself scoffed at, my self-love rebelled, and indignation for the moment silenced love. Shame overwhelmed me! I thought that everybody could read on my face all the horror in my heart, and I saw in you, under the outward appearance of an angel, nothing but a fearful daughter of the Prince of Darkness. My mind was thoroughly upset, and at the end of eleven days I lost the small portion of good sense that was left in me — at least I must suppose so, as it is then that I wrote to you the letter of which you have so good a right to complain, and which at that time seemed to me a masterpiece of moderation.

"But I hope it is all over now, and this very day at eleven o'clock you will see me at your feet — tender, submissive and repentant. You will forgive me, divine woman, or I will myself avenge you for the insult I have hurled at you. The only thing which I dare to ask from you as a great favour is to burn my first letter, and never to mention it again. I sent it only after I had written four, which I destroyed one after the other: you may therefore imagine the state of my heart.

"I have given orders to my messenger to go to your convent at once, so that my letter can be delivered to you as soon as you wake in the morning. He would never have discovered me, if my good angel had not made me go up to him at the door of the opera-house. But I shall not require his services any more; do not answer me, and receive all the devotion of a heart which adores you."

When my letter was finished, I called my Forlanese, gave him one sequin, and I made him promise me to go to Muran immediately, and to deliver my letter only to the nun herself. As soon as he had gone I threw myself on my bed, but anxiety and burning impatience would not allow me to sleep.

I need not tell the reader who knows the state of excitement under which I was labouring, that I was punctual in presenting myself at the convent. I was shewn into the small parlour where I had seen her for the first time, and she almost immediately made her entrance. As soon as I saw her near the grating I fell on my knees, but she entreated me to rise at once as I might be seen. Her face was flushed with excitement, and her looks seemed to me heavenly. She sat down, and I took a seat opposite to her. We remained several minutes motionless, gazing at each other without speaking, but I broke the silence by asking her, in a voice full of love and anxiety, whether I could hope to obtain my pardon. She gave me her beautiful hand through the grating, and I covered it with tears and kisses.

"Our acquaintance," she said, "has begun with a violent storm; let us hope that we shall now enjoy it long in perfect and lasting calm. This is the first time that we speak to one another, but what has occurred must be enough to give us a thorough knowledge of each other. I trust that our intimacy will be as tender as sincere, and that we shall know how to have a mutual indulgence for our faults."

"Can such an angel as you have any?"

"Ah, my friend! who is without them?"

"When shall I have the happiness of convincing you of my devotion with complete freedom and in all the joy of my heart?"

"We will take supper together at my casino whenever you please, provided you give me notice two days beforehand; or I will go and sup with you in Venice, if it will not disturb your arrangements."

"It would only increase my happiness. I think it right to tell you that I am in very easy circumstances, and that, far from fearing expense, I delight in it: all I possess belongs to the woman I love."

"That confidence, my dear friend, is very agreeable to me, the more so that I have likewise to tell you that I am very rich, and that I could not refuse anything to my lover."

"But you must have a lover?"

"Yes; it is through him that I am rich, and he is entirely my master. I never conceal anything from him. The day after to-morrow, when I am alone with you, I will tell you more."

"But I hope that your lover…."

"Will not be there? Certainly not. Have you a mistress?"

"I had one, but, alas! she has been taken from me by violent means, and for the last six months I have led a life of complete celibacy."

"Do you love her still?"

"I cannot think of her without loving her. She has almost as great charms, as great beauty, as you have; but I foresee that you will make me forget her."

"If your happiness with her was complete, I pity you. She has been violently taken from you, and you shun society in order to feed your sorrow. I have guessed right, have I not? But if I happen to take possession of her place in your heart, no one, my sweet friend, shall turn me out of it."

"But what will your lover say?"

"He will be delighted to see me happy with such a lover as you. It is in his nature."

"What an admirable nature! Such heroism is quite beyond me!"

"What sort of a life do you lead in Venice?"

"I live at the theatres, in society, in the casinos, where I fight against fortune sometimes with good sometimes with bad success."

"Do you visit the foreign ambassadors?"

"No, because I am too much acquainted with the nobility; but I know them all."

"How can you know them if you do not see them?"

"I have known them abroad. In Parma the Duke de Montalegre, the Spanish ambassador; in Vienna I knew Count Rosemberg; in Paris, about two years ago, the French ambassador."

"It is near twelve o'clock, my dear friend; it is time for us to part. Come at the same hour the day after tomorrow, and I will give you all the instructions which you will require to enable you to come and sup with me."

"Alone?"

"Of course."

"May I venture to ask you for a pledge? The happiness which you promise me is so immense!"

"What pledge do you want?"

"To see you standing before that small window in the grating with permission for me to occupy the same place as Madame de S —— ."

She rose at once, and, with the most gracious smile, touched the spring; after a most expressive kiss, I took leave of her. She followed me with her eyes as far as the door, and her loving gaze would have rooted me to the spot if she had not left the room.

I spent the two days of expectation in a whirl of impatient joy, which prevented me from eating and sleeping; for it seemed to me that no other love had ever given me such happiness, or rather that I was going to be happy for the first time.

Irrespective of birth, beauty, and wit, which was the principal merit of my new conquest, prejudice was there to enhance a hundredfold my felicity, for she was a vestal: it was forbidden fruit, and who does not know that, from Eve down to our days, it was that fruit which has always appeared the most delicious! I was on the point of encroaching upon the rights of an all-powerful husband; in my eyes M —— M —— was above all the queens of the earth.

If my reason had not been the slave of passion, I should have known that my nun could not be a different creature from all the pretty women whom I had loved for the thirteen years that I had been labouring in the fields of love. But where is the man in love who can harbour such a thought? If it presents itself too often to his mind, he expels it disdainfully! M —— M —— could not by any means be otherwise than superior to all other women in the wide world.

Animal nature, which chemists call the animal kingdom, obtains through instinct the three various means necessary for the perpetuation of its species.

There are three real wants which nature has implanted in all human creatures. They must feed themselves, and to prevent that task from being insipid and tedious they have the agreeable sensation of appetite, which they feel pleasure in satisfying. They must propagate their respective species; an absolute necessity which proves the wisdom of the Creator, since without reproduction all would, be annihilated — by the constant law of degradation, decay and death. And, whatever St. Augustine may say, human creatures would not perform the work of generation if they did not find pleasure in it, and if there was not in that great work an irresistible attraction for them. In the third place, all creatures have a determined and invincible propensity to destroy their enemies; and it is certainly a very wise ordination, for that feeling of self-preservation makes it a duty for them to do their best for the destruction of whatever can injure them.

Each species obeys these laws in its own way. The three sensations: hunger, desire, and hatred — are in animals the satisfaction of habitual instinct, and cannot be called pleasures, for they can be so only in proportion to the intelligence of the individual. Man alone is gifted with the perfect organs which render real pleasure peculiar to him; because, being, endowed with the sublime faculty of reason, he foresees enjoyment, looks for it, composes, improves, and increases it by thought and recollection. I entreat you, dear reader, not to get weary of following me in my ramblings; for now that I am but the shadow of the once brilliant Casanova, I love to chatter; and if you were to give me the slip, you would be neither polite nor obliging.

Man comes down to the level of beasts whenever he gives himself up to the three natural propensities without calling reason and judgment to his assistance; but when the mind gives perfect equilibrium to those propensities, the sensations derived from them become true enjoyment, an unaccountable feeling which gives us what is called happiness, and which we experience without being able to describe it.

The voluptuous man who reasons, disdains greediness, rejects with contempt lust and lewdness, and spurns the brutal revenge which is caused by a first movement of anger: but he is dainty, and satisfies his appetite only in a manner in harmony with his nature and his tastes; he is amorous, but he enjoys himself with the object of his love only when he is certain that she will share his enjoyment, which can never be the case unless their love is mutual; if he is offended, he does not care for revenge until he has calmly considered the best means to enjoy it fully. If he is sometimes more cruel than necessary, he consoles himself with the idea that he has acted under the empire of reason; and his revenge is sometimes so noble that he finds it in forgiveness. Those three operations are the work of the soul which, to procure enjoyment for itself, becomes the agent of our passions. We sometimes suffer from hunger in order to enjoy better the food which will allay it; we delay the amorous enjoyment for the sake of making it more intense, and we put off the moment of our revenge in order to mike it more certain. It is true, however, that one may die from indigestion, that we allow ourselves to be often deceived in love, and that the creature we want to annihilate often escapes our revenge; but perfection cannot be attained in anything, and those are risks which we run most willingly.

CHAPTER XVII

Continuation of the Last Chapter — My First Assignation With

M. M. — Letter From C. C. — My Second Meeting With the Nun At

My Splendid Casino In Venice I Am Happy

There is nothing, there can be nothing, dearer to a thinking being than life; yet the voluptuous men, those who try to enjoy it in the best manner, are the men who practise with the greatest perfection the difficult art of shortening life, of driving it fast. They do not mean to make it shorter, for they would like to perpetuate it in the midst of pleasure, but they wish enjoyment to render its course insensible; and they are right, provided they do not fail in fulfilling their duties. Man must not, however, imagine that he has no other duties but those which gratify his senses; he would be greatly mistaken, and he might fall the victim of his own error. I think that my friend Horace made a mistake when he said to Florus:

‘Nec metuam quid de me judicet heres, Quod non plura datis inveniet.’

The happiest man is the one who knows how to obtain the greatest sum of happiness without ever failing in the discharge of his duties, and the most unhappy is the man who has adopted a profession in which he finds himself constantly under the sad necessity of foreseeing the future.

Perfectly certain that M —— M —— would keep her word, I went to the convent at ten o’clock in the morning, and she joined me in the parlour as soon as I was announced.

“Good heavens!” she exclaimed, “are you ill?”

“No, but I may well look so, for the expectation of happiness wears me out. I have lost sleep and appetite, and if my felicity were to be deferred my life would be the forfeit.”

“There shall be no delay, dearest; but how impatient you are! Let us sit down. Here is the key of my casino. You will find some persons in it, because we must be served; but nobody will speak to you, and you need not speak to anyone. You must be masked, and you must not go there till two hours after sunset; mind, not before. Then go up the stairs opposite the street-door, and at the top of those stairs you will see, by the light of a lamp, a green door which you will open to enter the apartment which you will find lighted. You will find me in the second room, and in case I should not be there you will wait for me a few minutes; you may rely upon my being punctual. You can take off your mask in that room, and make yourself comfortable; you will find some books and a good fire."

The description could not be clearer; I kissed the hand which was giving me the key of that mysterious temple, and I enquired from the charming woman whether I should see her in her conventual garb.

"I always leave the convent with it," she said, "but I have at the casino a complete wardrobe to transform myself into an elegant woman of the world, and even to disguise myself."

"I hope you will do me the favour to remain in the dress of a nun."

"Why so, I beg?"

"I love to see you in that dress."

"Ah! ah! I understand. You fancy that my head is shaved, and you are afraid. But comfort yourself, dear friend, my wig is so beautifully made that it defies detection; it is nature itself."

"Oh, dear! what are you saying? The very name of wig is awful. But no, you may be certain that I will find you lovely under all circumstances. I only entreat you not to put on that cruel wig in my presence. Do I offend you? Forgive me; I am very sorry to have mentioned that subject. Are you sure that no one can see you leave the convent?"

"You will be sure of it yourself when you have gone round the island and seen the small door on the shore. I have the key of a room opening on the shore, and I have every confidence in the sister who serves me."

"And the gondola?"

"My lover himself answers for the fidelity of the gondoliers."

"What a man that lover is! I fancy he must be an old man."

“You are mistaken; if he were old, I should be ashamed. He is not forty, and he has everything necessary to be loved — beauty, wit, sweet temper, and noble behaviour.”

“And he forgives your amorous caprices?”

“What do you mean by caprices? A year ago he obtained possession of me, and before him I had never belonged to a man; you are the first who inspired me with a fancy. When I confessed it to him he was rather surprised, then he laughed, and read me a short lecture upon the risk I was running in trusting a man who might prove indiscreet. He wanted me to know at least who you were before going any further, but it was too late. I answered for your discretion, and of course I made him laugh by my being so positively the guarantee of a man whom I did not know.”

“When did you confide in him?”

“The day before yesterday, and without concealing anything from him. I have shewn him my letters and yours; he thinks you are a Frenchman, although you represent yourself as a Venetian. He is very curious to know who you are, but you need not be afraid; I promise you faithfully never to take any steps to find it out myself.”

“And I promise you likewise not to try to find out who is this wonderful man as wonderful as you are yourself. I am very miserable when I think of the sorrow I have caused you.”

“Do not mention that subject any more; when I consider the matter, I see that only a conceited man would have acted differently.”

Before leaving her, she granted me another token of her affection through the little window, and her gaze followed me as far as the door.

In the evening, at the time named by her, I repaired to the casino, and obeying all her instructions I reached a sitting-room in which I found my new conquest dressed in a most elegant costume. The room was lighted up by girandoles, which were reflected by the looking-glasses, and by four splendid candlesticks placed on a table covered with books. M —— M —— struck me as entirely different in her beauty to what she had seemed in the garb of a nun. She wore no cap, and her hair was fastened behind in a thick twist; but I passed rapidly over that part of her person, because I could not bear the idea of a wig, and I could not compliment her about it. I threw myself at her feet to shew her my deep gratitude, and I kissed with rapture her beautiful hands, waiting impatiently for the amorous contest which I was longing for; but M —— M —— thought fit to oppose some resistance. Oh, how sweet they are! those denials of a loving mistress, who delays the happy moment only for the sake of enjoying its delights better! As a lover respectful, tender, but bold, enterprising, certain of victory, I blended delicately the gentleness of my proceedings with the ardent fire which was consuming me; and stealing the most voluptuous kisses from the most beautiful mouth I felt as if my soul would burst from my body. We spent two hours in the preliminary contest, at the end of which we congratulated one another, on her part for having contrived to resist, on mine for having controlled my impatience.

Wanting a little rest, and understanding each other as if by a natural instinct, she said to me,

“My friend, I have an appetite which promises to do honour to the supper; are you able to keep me good company?”

“Yes,” I said, knowing well what I could do in that line, “yes, I can; and afterwards you shall judge whether I am able to sacrifice to Love as well as to Comus.”

She rang the bell, and a woman, middle-aged but well-dressed and respectable-looking, laid out a table for two persons; she then placed on another table close by all that was necessary to enable us to do without attendance, and she brought, one after the other, eight different dishes in Sevres porcelain placed on silver heaters. It was a delicate and plentiful supper.

When I tasted the first dish I at once recognized the French style of cooking, and she did not deny it. We drank nothing but Burgundy and Champagne. She dressed the salad cleverly and quickly, and in everything she did I had to admire the graceful ease of her manners. It was evident that she owed her education to a lover who was a first-rate connoisseur. I was curious to know him, and as we were drinking some punch I told her that if she would gratify my curiosity in that respect I was ready to tell her my name.

“Let time, dearest,” she answered, “satisfy our mutual curiosity.”

M —— M —— had, amongst the charms and trinkets fastened to the chain of her watch, a small crystal bottle exactly similar to one that I wore myself. I called her attention to that fact, and as mine was filled with cotton soaked in otto of roses I made her smell it.

“I have the same,” she observed.

And she made me inhale its fragrance.

“It is a very scarce perfume,” I said, “and very expensive.”

“Yes; in fact it cannot be bought.”

“Very true; the inventor of that essence wears a crown; it is the King of France; his majesty made a pound of it, which cost him thirty thousand crowns.”

“Mine was a gift presented to my lover, and he gave it to me:”

“Madame de Pompadour sent a small phial of it to M. de Mocenigo, the Venetian ambassador in Paris, through M. de B —— , now French ambassador here.”

“Do you know him?”

“I have had the honour to dine with him on the very day he came to take leave of the ambassador by whom I had been invited. M. de B —— is a man whom fortune has smiled upon, but he has captivated it by his merit; he is not less distinguished by his ‘talents than by his birth; he is, I believe, Count de Lyon. I recollect that he was nicknamed ‘Belle Babet,’ on account of his handsome face. There is a small collection of poetry written by him which does him great honour.”

It was near midnight; we had made an excellent supper, and we were near a good fire. Besides, I was in love with a beautiful woman, and thinking that time was precious — I became very pressing; but she resisted.

“Cruel darling, have you promised me happiness only to make me suffer the tortures of Tantalus? If you will not give way to love, at least obey the laws of nature after such a delicious supper, go to bed.”

“Are you sleepy?”

"Of course I am not; but it is late enough to go to bed. Allow me to undress you; I will remain by your bedside, or even go away if you wish it."

"If you were to leave me, you would grieve me."

"My grief would be as great as yours, believe me, but if I remain what shall we do?"

"We can lie down in our clothes on this sofa."

"With our clothes! Well, let it be so; I will let you sleep, if you wish it; but you must forgive me if I do not sleep myself; for to sleep near you and without undressing would be impossible."

"Wait a little."

She rose from her seat, turned the sofa crosswise, opened it, took out pillows, sheets, blankets, and in one minute we had a splendid bed, wide and convenient. She took a large handkerchief, which she wrapped round my head, and she gave me another, asking me to render her the same service. I began my task, dissembling my disgust for the wig, but a precious discovery caused me the most agreeable surprise; for, instead of the wig, my, hands found the most magnificent hair I had ever seen. I uttered a scream of delight and admiration which made her laugh, and she told me that a nun was under no other obligation than to conceal her hair, from the uninitiated. Thereupon she pushed me adroitly, and made me fall' an the sofa. I got up again, and, having thrown off my clothes as quick as lightning I threw myself on her rather than near her. She was very strong; and folding me in her arms she thought that I ought to forgive her for all the torture she was condemning me to. I had not obtained any essential favour; I was burning, but I was trying to master my impatience, for I did not think that I had yet the right to be exacting. I contrived to undo five or six bows of ribbons, and satisfied, with her not opposing any resistance in that quarter my heart throbbed with pleasure, and I possessed myself of the most beautiful bosom, which I smothered under my kisses. But her favours went no further; and my excitement increasing in proportion to the new perfections I discovered in her, I doubled my efforts; all in vain. At last, compelled to give way to fatigue, I fell asleep in her arms, holding her tightly, against me. A noisy chime of bells woke us.

"What is the matter?" I exclaimed.

“Let us get up, dearest; it is time for me to return to the convent.”

“Dress yourself, and let me have the pleasure of seeing you in the garb of a saint, since you are going away a virgin.”

“Be satisfied for this time, dearest, and learn from me how to practice abstinence; we shall be happier another time. When I have gone, if you have nothing to hurry you, you can rest here.”

She rang the bell, and the same woman who had appeared in the evening, and was most likely the secret minister and the confidante of her amorous mysteries, came in. After her hair had been dressed, she took off her gown, locked up her jewellery in her bureau, put on the stays of a nun, in which she hid the two magnificent globes which had been during that fatiguing night the principal agents of my happiness, and assumed her monastic robes. The woman having gone out to call the gondoliers, M —— M —— kissed me warmly and tenderly, and said to me,

“I expect to see you the day after to-morrow, so as to hear from you which night I am to meet you in Venice; and then, my beloved lover, you shall be happy and I too. Farewell.”

Pleased without being satisfied, I went to bed and slept soundly until noon.

I left the casino without seeing anyone, and being well masked I repaired to the house of Laura, who gave me a letter from my dear C —— C —— . Here is a copy of it:

“I am going to give you, my best beloved, a specimen of my way of thinking; and I trust that, far from lowering me in your estimation, you will judge me, in spite of my youth, capable of keeping a secret and worthy of being your wife. Certain that your heart is mine, I do not blame you for having made a mystery of certain things, and not being jealous of what can divert your mind and help you to bear patiently our cruel separation, I can only delight in whatever procures you some pleasure. Listen now. Yesterday, as I was going along one of the halls, I dropped a tooth-pick which I held in my hand, and to get it again, I was compelled to displace a stool which happened to be in front of a crack in the partition. I have already become as curious as a nun — a fault very natural to idle people — I placed my eye against the small opening, and whom did I see? You in person, my darling, conversing in the most lively manner with my charming friend, Sister M —— M —— . It would be difficult for you to imagine my surprise and joy. But those two feelings gave way soon to the fear of being seen and of exciting the curiosity of some inquisitive nun. I quickly replaced the stool, and I went away. Tell me all, dearest friend, you will make me happy. How could I cherish you with all my soul, and not be anxious to know the history of your adventure? Tell me if she knows you, and how you have made her acquaintance. She is my best friend, the one of whom I have spoken so often to you in my letters, without thinking it necessary to tell you her name. She is the friend who teaches me French, and has lent me books which gave me a great deal of information on a matter generally little known to women. If it had not been for her, the cause of the accident which has been so near costing me my life, would have been discovered. She gave me sheets and linen immediately; to her I owe my honour; but she has necessarily learned in that way that I have a lover, as I know that she has one; but neither of us has shewn any anxiety to know the secrets of the other. Sister M —— M —— is a rare woman. I feel certain, dearest, that you love one another; it cannot be otherwise since you are acquainted; but as I am not jealous of that affection, I deserve that you should tell me all. I pity you both, however; for all you may do will, I fear, only irritate your passion. Everyone in the convent thinks that you are ill, and I am longing to see you. Come, at least, once. Adieu!”

The letter of C —— C —— inspired me with the deepest esteem for her, but it caused me great anxiety, because, although I felt every confidence in my dear little wife, the small crack in the wall might expose M —— M —— and myself to the inquisitive looks of other persons. Besides, I found myself compelled to deceive that amiable, trusting friend, and to tell a falsehood, for delicacy and honour forbade me to tell her the truth. I wrote to her immediately that her friendship for M —— M —— made it her duty to warn her friend at once that she had seen her in the parlour with a masked gentleman. I added that, having heard a great deal of M —— M —— ‘s merit, and wishing to make her acquaintance, I had called on her under an assumed name; that I entreated her not to tell her friend who I was, but she might say that she had recognized in me the gentleman who attended their church. I assured her with barefaced impudence that there was no love between M —— M —— and me, but without concealing that I thought her a superior woman.

On St. Catherine’s Day, the patroness of my dear C —— C —— , I bethought myself of affording that lovely prisoner the pleasure of seeing me. As I was leaving the church after mass, and just as I was going to take a gondola, I observed that a man was following me. It looked suspicious, and I determined to ascertain whether I was right. The man took a gondola and followed mine. It might have been purely accidental; but, keeping on my guard for fear of surprise, I alighted in Venice at the Morosini Palace; the fellow alighted at the same place; his intentions were evident. I left the palace, and turning towards the Flanders Gate I stopped in a narrow street, took my knife in my hand, waited for the spy, seized him by the collar, and pushing him against the wall with the knife at his throat I commanded him to tell me what business he had with me. Trembling all over he would have confessed everything, but unluckily someone entered the street. The spy escaped and I was no wiser, but I had no doubt that for the future that fellow at least would keep at a respectful distance. It shewed me how easy it would be for an obstinate spy to discover my identity, and I made up my mind never to go to Muran but with a mask, or at night.

The next day I had to see my beautiful nun in order to ascertain which day she would sup with me in Venice, and I went early to the convent. She did not keep me waiting, and her face was radiant with joy. She complimented me upon my having resumed my attendance at their church; all the nuns had been delighted to see me again after an absence of three weeks.

“The abbess,” she said, “told me how glad she was to see you, and that she was certain to find out who you are.”

I then related to her the adventure of the spy, and we both thought that it was most likely the means taken by the sainted woman to gratify her curiosity about me.

“I have resolved not to attend your church any more.”

“That will be a great deprivation to me, but in our common interest I can but approve your resolution.”

She related the affair of the treacherous crack in the partition, and added,

“It is already repaired, and there is no longer any fear in that quarter. I heard of it from a young boarder whom I love dearly, and who is much attached to me. I am not curious to know her name, and she has never mentioned it to me."

"Now, darling angel, tell me whether my happiness will be postponed."

"Yes, but only for twenty-four hours; the new professed sister has invited me to supper in her room, and you must understand I cannot invent any plausible excuse for refusing her invitation."

"You would not, then, tell her in confidence the very legitimate obstacle which makes me wish that the new sisters never take supper?"

"Certainly not: we never trust anyone so far in a convent. Besides, dearest, such an invitation cannot be declined unless I wish to gain a most bitter enemy."

"Could you not say that you are ill?"

"Yes; but then the visits!"

"I understand; if you should refuse, the escape might be suspected."

"The escape! impossible; here no one admits the possibility of breaking out of the convent."

"Then you are the only one able to perform that miracle?"

"You may be sure of that; but, as is always the case, it is gold which performs that miracle."

"And many others, perhaps."

"Oh! the time has gone by for them! But tell me, my love, where will you wait for me to-morrow, two hours after the setting of the sun?"

"Could I not wait for you at your casino?"

"No, because my lover will take me himself to Venice."

"Your lover?"

"Yes, himself."

"It is not possible."

"Yet it is true."

"I can wait for you in St. John and St. Paul's Square behind the pedestal of the statue of Bartholomew of Bergamo."

"I have never seen either the square or the statue except in engravings; it is enough, however, and I will not fail. Nothing but very stormy weather could prevent me from coming to a rendezvous for which my heart is panting."

"And if the weather were bad?"

"Then, dearest, there would be nothing lost; and you would come here again in order to appoint another day."

I had no time to lose, for I had no casino. I took a second rower so as to reach St. Mark's Square more rapidly, and I immediately set to work looking for what I wanted. When a mortal is so lucky as to be in the good graces of the god Plutus, and is not crackbrained, he is pretty sure to succeed in everything: I had not to search very long before I found a casino suiting my purpose exactly. It was the finest in the neighbourhood of Venice, but, as a natural consequence, it was likewise the most expensive. It had belonged to the English ambassador, who had sold it cheap to his cook before leaving Venice. The owner let it to me until Easter for one hundred sequins, which I paid in advance on condition that he would himself cook the dinners and the suppers I might order.

I had five rooms furnished in the most elegant style, and everything seemed to be calculated for love, pleasure, and good cheer. The service of the dining-room was made through a sham window in the wall, provided with a dumb-waiter revolving upon itself, and fitting the window so exactly that master and servants could not see each other. The drawing-room was decorated with magnificent looking-glasses, crystal chandeliers, girandoles in gilt, bronze, and with a splendid pier-glass placed on a chimney of white marble; the walls were covered with small squares of real china, representing little Cupids and naked amorous couples in all sorts of positions, well calculated to excite the imagination; elegant and very comfortable sofas were placed on every side. Next to it was an octagonal room, the walls, the ceiling, and the floor of which were entirely covered with splendid Venetian glass, arranged in such a manner as to reflect on all sides every position of the amorous couple enjoying the pleasures of love. Close by was a beautiful alcove with two secret outlets; on the right, an elegant dressing-room, on the left, a boudoir which seemed to have been arranged by the mother of Love, with a bath in Carrara marble. Everywhere the wainscots were embossed in ormolu or painted with flowers and arabesques.

After I had given my orders for all the chandeliers to be filled with wax candles, and the finest linen to be provided wherever necessary, I ordered a most delicate and sumptuous supper for two, without regard to expense, and especially the most exquisite wines. I then took possession of the key of the principal entrance, and warned the master that I did not want to be seen by anyone when I came in or went out.

I observed with pleasure that the clock in the alcove had an alarum, for I was beginning, in spite of love, to be easily influenced by the power of sleep.

Everything being arranged according to my wishes, I went, as a careful and delicate lover, to purchase the finest slippers I could find, and a cap in Alencon point.

I trust my reader does not think me too particular; let him recollect that I was to receive the most accomplished of the sultanas of the master of the universe, and I told that fourth Grace that I had a casino. Was I to begin by giving her a bad idea of my truthfulness? At the appointed time, that is two hours after sunset, I repaired to my palace; and it would be difficult to imagine the surprise of his honour the French cook, when he saw me arrive alone. Not finding all the chandeliers lighted-up as I had ordered, I scolded him well, giving him notice that I did not like to repeat an order.

“I shall not fail; sir, another time, to execute your commands.”

“Let the supper be served.”

“Your honour ordered it for two.”

“Yes, for two; and, this time, be present during my supper, so that I can tell you which dishes I find good or bad.”

The supper came through the revolving: dumb-waiter in very good order, two dishes at a tune. I passed some remarks upon everything; but, to tell the truth, everything was excellent: game, fish, oysters, truffles, wine, dessert, and the whole served in very fine Dresden china and silver-gilt plate.

I told him that he had forgotten hard eggs, anchovies, and prepared vinegar to dress a salad. He lifted his eyes towards heaven, as if to plead guilty, to a very heinous crime.

After a supper which lasted two hours, and during which I must certainly have won the admiration of my host, I asked him to bring me the bill. He presented it to me shortly afterwards, and I found it reasonable. I then dismissed him, and lay down in the splendid bed in the alcove; my excellent supper brought on very soon the most delicious sleep which, without the Burgundy and the Champagne, might very likely not have visited me, if I had thought that the following night would see me in the same place, and in possession of a lovely divinity. It was broad day-light when I awoke, and after ordering the finest fruit and some ices for the evening I left the casino. In order to shorten a day which my impatient desires would have caused me to find very long, I went to the faro-table, and I saw with pleasure that I was as great a favourite with fortune as with love. Everything proceeded according to my wishes, and I delighted in ascribing my happy success to the influence of my nun.

I was at the place of meeting one hour before the time appointed, and although the night was cold I did not feel it. Precisely as the hour struck I saw a two-oared gondola reach the shore and a mask come out of it, speak a few words to the gondolier, and take the direction of the statue. My heart was beating quickly, but seeing that it was a man I avoided him, and regretted not having brought my pistols. The mask, however, turning round the statue, came up to me with outstretched hands; I then recognized my angel, who was amused at my surprise and took my arm. Without speaking we went towards St. Mark's Square, and reached my casino, which was only one hundred yards from the St. Moses Theatre.

I found everything in good order; we went upstairs and I threw off my mask and my disguise; but M —— M —— took delight in walking about the rooms and in examining every nook of the charming place in which she was received. Highly gratified to see me admire the grace of her person, she wanted me likewise to admire in her attire the taste and generosity of her lover. She was surprised at the almost magic spell which, although she remained motionless, shewed her lovely person in a thousand different manners. Her multiplied portraits, reproduced by the looking-glasses, and the numerous wax candles disposed to that effect, offered to her sight a spectacle entirely new to her, and from which she could not withdraw her eyes. Sitting down on a stool I contemplated her elegant person with rapture. A coat of rosy velvet, embroidered with gold spangles, a vest to match, embroidered likewise in the richest fashion, breeches of black satin, diamond buckles, a solitaire of great value on her little finger, and on the other hand a ring: such was her toilet. Her black lace mask was remarkable for its fineness and the beauty of the design. To enable me to see her better she stood before me. I looked in her pockets, in which I found a gold snuff-box, a sweetmeat-box adorned with pearls, a gold case, a splendid opera-glass, handkerchiefs of the finest cambric, soaked rather than perfumed with the most precious essences. I examined attentively the richness and the workmanship of her two watches, of her chains, of her trinkets, brilliant with diamonds. The last article I found was a pistol; it was an English weapon of fine steel, and of the most beautiful finish.

“All I see, my divine angel, is not worthy of you; yet I cannot refrain from expressing my admiration for the wonderful, I might almost say adorable, being who wants to convince you that you are truly his mistress.”

“That is what he said when I asked him to bring me to Venice, and to leave me. ‘Amuse yourself,’ he said, ‘and I hope that the man whom you are going to make happy will convince you that he is worthy of it.’”

“He is indeed an extraordinary man, and I do not think there is another like him. Such a lover is a unique being; and I feel that I could not be like him, as deeply as I fear to be unworthy of a happiness which dazzles me.”

“Allow me to leave you, and to take off these clothes alone.”

“Do anything you please.”

A quarter of an hour afterwards my mistress came back to me. Her hair was dressed like a man’s; the front locks came down her cheeks, and the black hair, fastened with a knot of blue ribbon, reached the bend of her legs; her form was that of Antinous; her clothes alone, being cut in the French style, prevented the illusion from being complete. I was in a state of ecstatic delight, and I could not realize my happiness.

“No, adorable woman,” I exclaimed, “you are not made for a mortal, and I do not believe that you will ever be mine. At the very moment of possessing you some miracle will wrest you from my arms. Your divine spouse, perhaps, jealous of a simple mortal, will annihilate all my hope. It is possible that in a few minutes I shall no longer exist."

"Are you mad, dearest? I am yours this very instant, if you wish it."

"Ah! if I wish it! Although fasting, come! Love and happiness will be my food!"

She felt cold, we sat near the fire; and unable to master my impatience I unfastened a diamond brooch which pinned her ruffle. Dear reader, there are some sensations so powerful and so sweet that years cannot weaken the remembrance of them. My mouth had already covered with kisses that ravishing bosom; but then the troublesome corset had not allowed me to admire all its perfection. Now I felt it free from all restraint and from all unnecessary support; I have never seen, never touched, anything more beautiful, and the two magnificent globes of the Venus de Medicis, even if they had been animated by the spark of life given by Prometheus, would have yielded the palm to hose of my divine nun.

I was burning with ardent desires, and I would have satisfied them on the spot, if my adorable mistress had not calmed my impatience by these simple words:

"Wait until after supper."

I rang the bell; she shuddered.

"Do not be anxious, dearest."

And I shewed her the secret of the sham window.

"You will be able to tell your lover that no one saw you."

"He will appreciate your delicate attention, and that will prove to him that you are not a novice in the art of love. But it is evident that I am not the only one who enjoys with you the delights of this charming residence."

"You are wrong, believe me: you are the first woman I have seen here. You are not, adorable creature, my first love, but you shall be the last."

"I shall be happy if you are faithful. My lover is constant, kind, gentle and amiable; yet my heart has ever been fancy-free with him."

"Then his own heart must be the same; for if his love was of the same nature as mine you would never have made me happy."

"He loves me as I love you; do you believe in my love for you?"

"Yes, I want to believe in it; but you would not allow me to…."

"Do not say any more; for I feel that I could forgive you in anything, provided you told me all. The joy I experience at this moment is caused more by the hope I have of gratifying your desires than by the idea that I am going to pass a delightful night with you. It will be the first in my life."

"What! Have you never passed such a night with your lover?"

"Several; but friendship, compliance, and gratitude, perhaps, were then the only contributors to our pleasures; the most essential — love — was never present. In spite of that, my lover is like you; his wit is lively, very much the same as yours, and, as far as his features are concerned, he is very handsome; yet it is not you. I believe him more wealthy than you, although this casino almost convinces me that I am mistaken, but what does love care for riches? Do not imagine that I consider you endowed with less merit than he, because you confess yourself incapable of his heroism in allowing me to enjoy another love. Quite the contrary; I know that you would not love me as you do, if you told me that you could be as indulgent as he is for one of my caprices."

"Will he be curious to hear the particulars of this night?"

"Most likely he will think that he will please me by asking what has taken place, and I will tell him everything, except such particulars as might humiliate him."

After the supper, which she found excellent, she made some punch, and she was a very good hand at it. But I felt my impatience growing stronger every moment, and I said,

"Recollect that we have only seven hours before us, and that we should be very foolish to waste them in this room."

"You reason better than Socrates," she answered, "and your eloquence has convinced me. Come!"

She led me to the elegant dressing-room, and I offered her the fine night-cap which I had bought for her, asking her at the same time to dress her hair like a woman. She took it with great pleasure, and begged me to go and undress myself in the drawing-room, promising to call me as soon as she was in bed.

I had not long to wait: when pleasure is waiting for us, we all go quickly to work. I fell into her arms, intoxicated with love and happiness, and during seven hours I gave her the most positive proofs of my ardour and of the feelings I entertained for her. It is true that she taught me nothing new, materially speaking, but a great deal in sighs, in ecstasies, in enjoyments which can have their full development only in a sensitive soul in the sweetest of all moments. I varied our pleasures in a thousand different ways, and I astonished her by making her feel that she was susceptible of greater enjoyment than she had any idea of. At last the fatal alarum was heard: we had to stop our amorous transports; but before she left my arms she raised her eyes towards heaven as if to thank her Divine Master for having given her the courage to declare her passion to me.

We dressed ourselves, and observing that I put the lace night-cap in her pocket she assured me that she would keep it all her life as a witness of the happiness which overwhelmed her. After drinking a cup of coffee we went out, and I left her at St. John and St. Paul’s Square, promising to call on her the day after the morrow; I watched her until I saw her safe in her gondola, and I then went to bed. Ten hours of profound sleep restored me to my usual state of vigour.

CHAPTER XVIII

Visit to the Convent and Conversation With M. M. — A Letter

from Her, and My Answer — Another Interview At the Casino of

Muran In the Presence of Her Lover

According to my promise, I went to see M —— M —— two days afterwards, but as soon as she came to the parlour she told me that her lover had said he was coming, and that she expected him every minute, and that she would be glad to see me the next day. I took leave of her, but near the bridge I saw a man, rather badly masked, coming out of a gondola. I looked at the gondolier, and I recognized him as being in the service of the French ambassador. "It is he," I said to myself, and without appearing to observe him I watched him enter the convent. I had no longer any doubt as to his identity, and I returned to Venice delighted at having made the discovery, but I made up my mind not to say anything to my mistress.

I saw her on the following day, and we, had a long conversation together, which I am now going to relate.

"My friend," she said to me, "came yesterday in order to bid farewell to me until the Christmas holidays. He is going to Padua, but everything has been arranged so that we can sup at his casino whenever we wish."

"Why not in Venice?"

"He has begged me not to go there during his absence. He is wise and prudent; I could not refuse his request."

"You are quite right. When shall we sup together?"

"Next Sunday, if you like."

"If I like is not the right expression, for I always like. On Sunday, then, I will go to the casino towards nightfall, and wait for you with a book. Have you told your friend that you were not very uncomfortable in my small palace?"

“He knows all about it, but, dearest, he is afraid of one thing — he fears a certain fatal plumpness….”

“On my life, I never thought of that! But, my darling, do you not run the same risk with him?”

“No, it is impossible.”

“I understand you. Then we must be very prudent for the future. I believe that, nine days before Christmas, the mask is no longer allowed, and then I shall have to go to your casino by water, otherwise, I might easily be recognized by the same spy who has already followed me once.”

“Yes, that idea proves your prudence, and I can easily, shew you the place. I hope you will be able to come also during Lent, although we are told that at that time God wishes us to mortify our senses. Is it not strange that there is a time during which God wants us to amuse ourselves almost to frenzy, and another during which, in order to please Him, we must live in complete abstinence? What is there in common between a yearly observance and the Deity, and how can the action of the creature have any influence over the Creator, whom my reason cannot conceive otherwise than independent? It seems to me that if God had created man with the power of offending Him, man would be right in doing everything that is forbidden to him, because the deficiencies of his organization would be the work of the Creator Himself. How can we imagine God grieved during Lent?”

“My beloved one, you reason beautifully, but will you tell me where you have managed, in a convent, to pass the Rubicon?”

“Yes. My friend has given me some good books which I have read with deep attention, and the light of truth has dispelled the darkness which blinded my eyes. I can assure you that, when I look in my own heart, I find myself more fortunate in having met with a person who has brought light to my mind than miserable at having taken the veil; for the greatest happiness must certainly consist in living and in dying peacefully — a happiness which can hardly be obtained by listening to all the idle talk with which the priests puzzle our brains.”

“I am of your opinion, but I admire you, for it ought to be the work of more than a few months to bring light to a mind prejudiced as yours was.”

"There is no doubt that I should have seen light much sooner if I had not laboured under so many prejudices. There was in my mind a curtain dividing truth from error, and reason alone could draw it aside, but that poor reason — I had been taught to fear it, to repulse it, as if its bright flame would have devoured, instead of enlightening me. The moment it was proved to me that a reasonable being ought to be guided only by his own inductions I acknowledged the sway of reason, and the mist which hid truth from me was dispelled. The evidence of truth shone before my eyes, nonsensical trifles disappeared, and I have no fear of their resuming their influence over my mind, for every day it is getting stronger; and I may say that I only began to love God when my mind was disabused of priestly superstitions concerning Him."

"I congratulate you; you have been more fortunate than I, for you have made more progress in one year than I have made in ten."

"Then you did not begin by reading the writings of Lord Bolingbroke? Five or six months ago, I was reading La Sagesse, by Charron, and somehow or other my confessor heard of it; when I went to him for confession, he took upon himself to tell me to give up reading that book. I answered that my conscience did not reproach me, and that I could not obey him. 'In that case,' replied he, 'I will not give you absolution.' 'That will not prevent me from taking the communion,' I said. This made him angry, and, in order to know what he ought to do, he applied to Bishop Diedo. His eminence came to see me, and told me that I ought to be guided by my confessor. I answered that we had mutual duties to perform, and that the mission of a priest in the confessional was to listen to me, to impose a reasonable penance, and to give me absolution; that he had not even the right of offering me any advice if I did not ask for it. I added that the confessor being bound to avoid scandal, if he dared to refuse me the absolution, which, of course, he could do, I would all the same go to the altar with the other nuns. The bishop, seeing that he was at his wit's end, told the priest to abandon me to my conscience. But that was not satisfactory to me, and my lover obtained a brief from the Pope authorizing me to go to confession to any priest I like. All the sisters are jealous of the privilege, but I have availed myself of it only once, for the sake of establishing a precedent and of strengthening the right by the fact, for it is not worth the trouble. I always confess to the same priest, and he has no difficulty in giving me absolution, for I only tell him what I like."

"And for the rest you absolve yourself?"

"I confess to God, who alone can know my thoughts and judge the degree of merit or of demerit to be attached to my actions."

Our conversation shewed me that my lovely friend was what is called a Free-thinker; but I was not astonished at it, because she felt a greater need of peace for her conscience than of gratification for her senses.

On the Sunday, after dinner, I took a two-oared gondola, and went round the island of Muran to reconnoitre the shore, and to discover the small door through which my mistress escaped from the convent. I lost my trouble and my time, for I did not become acquainted with the shore till the octave of Christmas, and with the small door six months afterwards. I shall mention the circumstance in its proper place.

As soon as it was time, I repaired to the temple, and while I was waiting for the idol I amused myself in examining the books of a small library in the boudoir. They were not numerous, but they were well chosen and worthy of the place. I found there everything that has been written against religion, and all the works of the most voluptuous writers on pleasure; attractive books, the incendiary style of which compels the reader to seek the reality of the image they represent. Several folios, richly bound, contained nothing but erotic engravings. Their principal merit consisted much more in the beauty of the designs, in the finish of the work, than in the lubricity of the positions. I found amongst them the prints of the Portier des Chartreux, published in England; the engravings of Meursius, of Aloysia Sigea Toletana, and others, all very beautifully done. A great many small pictures covered the walls of the boudoir, and they were all masterpieces in the same style as the engravings.

I had spent an hour in examining all these works of art, the sight of which had excited me in the most irresistible manner, when I saw my beautiful mistress enter the room, dressed as a nun. Her appearance was not likely to act as a sedative, and therefore, without losing any time in compliments, I said to her, “You arrive most opportunely. All these erotic pictures have fired my imagination, and it is in your garb of a saint that you must administer the remedy that my love requires.”

“Let me put on another dress, darling, it will not take more than five minutes.”

“Five minutes will complete my happiness, and then you can attend to your metamorphosis.”

“But let me take off these woollen robes, which I dislike.”

“No; I want you to receive the homage of my love in the same dress which you had on when you gave birth to it.”

She uttered in the humblest manner a ‘fiat voluntas tua’, accompanied by the most voluptuous smile, and sank on the sofa. For one instant we forgot all the world besides. After that delightful ecstacy I assisted her to undress, and a simple gown of Indian muslin soon metamorphosed my lovely nun into a beautiful nymph.

After an excellent supper, we agreed not to meet again till the first day of the octave. She gave me the key of the gate on the shore, and told me that a blue ribbon attached to the window over the door would point it out by day, so as to prevent my making a mistake at night. I made her very happy by telling her that I would come and reside in her casino until the return of her friend. During the ten days that I remained there, I saw her four times, and I convinced her that I lived only for her.

During my stay in the casino I amused myself in reading, in writing to C —— C —— , but my love for her had become a calm affection. The lines which interested me most in her letters were those in which she mentioned her friend. She often blamed me for not having cultivated the acquaintance of M —— M —— , and my answer was that I had not done so for fear of being known. I always insisted upon the necessity of discretion.

I do not believe in the possibility of equal love being bestowed upon two persons at the same time, nor do I believe it possible to keep love to a high degree of intensity if you give it either too much food or none at all. That which maintained my passion for M —— M —— in a state of great vigour was that I could never possess her without running the risk of losing her.

“It is impossible,” I said to her once, “that some time or other one of the nuns should not want to speak to you when you are absent?”

“No,” she answered, “that cannot happen, because there is nothing more religiously respected in a convent than the right of a nun to deny herself, even to the abbess. A fire is the only circumstance I have to fear, because in that case there would be general uproar and confusion, and it would not appear natural that a nun should remain quietly locked up in her cell in the midst of such danger; my escape would then be discovered. I have contrived to gain over the lay-sister and the gardener, as well as another nun, and that miracle was performed by my cunning assisted by my lover’s gold.

“He answers for the fidelity of the cook and his wife who take care of the casino. He has likewise every confidence in the two gondoliers, although one of them is sure to be a spy of the State Inquisitors.”

On Christmas Eve she announced the return of her lover, and she told him that on St. Stephen’s Day she would go with him to the opera, and that they would afterwards spend the night together.

“I shall expect you, my beloved one,” she added, “on the last day of the year, and here is a letter which I beg you not to read till you get home.”

As I had to move in order to make room for her lover, I packed my things early in the morning, and, bidding farewell to a place in which during ten days I had enjoyed so many delights, I returned to the Bragadin Palace, where I read the following letter:

“You have somewhat offended me, my own darling, by telling me, respecting the mystery which I am bound to keep on the subject of my lover, that, satisfied to possess my heart, you left me mistress of my mind. That division of the heart and of the mind appears to me a pure sophism, and if it does not strike you as such you must admit that you do not love me wholly, for I cannot exist without mind, and you cannot cherish my heart if it does not agree with my mind. If your love cannot accept a different state of things it does not excel in delicacy. However, as some circumstance might occur in which you might accuse me of not having acted towards you with all the sincerity that true love inspires, and that it has a right to demand, I have made up my mind to confide to you a secret which concerns my friend, although I am aware that he relies entirely upon my discretion. I shall certainly be guilty of a breach of confidence, but you will not love me less for it, because, compelled to choose between you two, and to deceive either one or the other, love has conquered friendship; do not punish me for it, for it has not been done blindly, and you will, I trust, consider the reasons which have caused the scale to weigh down in your favour.

"When I found myself incapable of resisting my wish to know you and to become intimate with you, I could not gratify that wish without taking my friend into my confidence, and I had no doubt of his compliance. He conceived a very favourable opinion of your character from your first letter, not only because you had chosen the parlour of the convent for our first interview, but also because you appointed his casino at Muran instead of your own. But he likewise begged of me to allow him to be present at our first meeting-place, in a small closet — a true hiding-place, from which one can see and hear everything without being suspected by those in the drawing-room. You have not yet seen that mysterious closet, but I will shew it to you on the last day of the year. Tell me, dearest, whether I could refuse that singular request to the man who was shewing me such compliant kindness? I consented, and it was natural for me not to let you know it. You are therefore aware now that my friend was a witness of all we did and said during the first night that we spent together, but do not let that annoy you, for you pleased him in everything, in your behaviour towards me as well as in the witty sayings which you uttered to make me laugh. I was in great fear, when the conversation turned upon him, lest you would say something which might hurt his self-love, but, very fortunately, he heard only the most flattering compliments. Such is, dearest love, the sincere confession of my treason, but as a wise lover you will forgive me because it has not done you the slightest harm. My friend is extremely curious to ascertain who you are. But listen to me, that night you were natural and thoroughly amiable, would you have been the same, if you had known that there was a witness? It is not likely, and if I had acquainted you with the truth, you might have refused your consent, and perhaps you would have been right.

"Now that we know each other, and that you entertain no doubt, I trust, of my devoted love, I wish to ease my conscience and to venture all. Learn then, dearest, that on the last day of the year, my friend will be at the casino, which he will leave only the next morning. You will not see him, but he will see us. As you are supposed not to know anything about it, you must feel that you will have to be natural in everything, otherwise, he might guess that I have betrayed the secret. It is especially in your conversation that you must be careful. My friend possesses every virtue except the theological one called faith, and on that subject you can say anything you like. You will be at liberty to talk literature, travels, politics, anything you please, and you need not refrain from anecdotes. In fact you are certain of his approbation.

"Now, dearest, I have only this to say. Do you feel disposed to allow yourself to be seen by another man while you are abandoning yourself to the sweet voluptuousness of your senses? That doubt causes all my anxiety, and I entreat from you an answer, yes or no. Do you understand how painful the doubt is for me? I expect not to close my eyes throughout the night, and I shall not rest until I have your decision. In case you should object to shew your tenderness in the presence of a third person, I will take whatever determination love may suggest to me. But I hope you will consent, and even if you were not to perform the character of an ardent lover in a masterly manner, it would not be of any consequence. I will let my friend believe that your love has not reached its apogee"

That letter certainly took me by surprise, but all things considered, thinking that my part was better than the one accepted by the lover, I laughed heartily at the proposal. I confess, however, that I should not have laughed if I had not known the nature of the individual who was to be the witness of my amorous exploits. Understanding all the anxiety of my friend, and wishing to allay it, I immediately wrote to her the following lines:

"You wish me, heavenly creature, to answer you yes or no, and I, full of love for you, want my answer to reach you before noon, so that you may dine in perfect peace.

"I will spend the last night of the year with you, and I can assure you that the friend, to whom we will give a spectacle worthy of Paphos and Amathos, shall see or hear nothing likely to make him suppose that I am acquainted with his secret. You may be certain that I will play my part not as a novice but as a master. If it is man's duty to be always the slave of his reason; if, as long as he has control over himself, he ought not to act without taking it for his guide, I cannot understand why a man should be ashamed to shew himself to a friend at the very moment that he is most favoured by love and nature.

“Yet I confess that you would have been wrong if you had confided the secret to me the first time, and that most likely I should then have refused to grant you that mark of my compliance, not because I loved you less then than I do now, but there are such strange tastes in nature that I might have imagined that your lover’s ruling taste was to enjoy the sight of an ardent and frantic couple in the midst of amorous connection, and in that case, conceiving an unfavourable opinion of you, vexation might have frozen the love you had just sent through my being. Now, however, the case is very different. I know all I possess in you, and, from all you have told me of your lover, I am well disposed towards him, and I believe him to be my friend. If a feeling of modesty does not deter you from shewing yourself tender, loving, and full of amorous ardour with me in his presence, how could I be ashamed, when, on the contrary, I ought to feel proud of myself? I have no reason to blush at having made a conquest of you, or at shewing myself in those moments during which I prove the liberality with which nature has bestowed upon me the shape and the strength which assure such immense enjoyment to me, besides the certainty that I can make the woman I love share it with me. I am aware that, owing to a feeling which is called natural, but which is perhaps only the result of civilization and the effect of the prejudices inherent in youth, most men object to any witness in those moments, but those who cannot give any good reasons for their repugnance must have in their nature something of the cat. At the same time, they might have some excellent reasons, without their thinking themselves bound to give them, except to the woman, who is easily deceived. I excuse with all my heart those who know that they would only excite the pity of the witnesses, but we both have no fear of that sort. All you have told me of your friend proves that he will enjoy our pleasures. But do you know what will be the result of it? The intensity of our ardour will excite his own, and he will throw himself at my feet, begging and entreating me to give up to him the only object likely to calm his amorous excitement. What could I do in that case? Give you up? I could hardly refuse to do so with good grace, but I would go away, for I could not remain a quiet spectator.

“Farewell, my darling love; all will be well, I have no doubt. Prepare yourself for the athletic contest, and rely upon the fortunate being who adores you."

I spent the six following days with my three worthy friends, and at the 'ridotto', which at that time was opened on St. Stephen's Day. As I could not hold the cards there, the patricians alone having the privilege of holding the bank, I played morning and evening, and I constantly lost; for whoever punts must lose. But the loss of the four or five thousand sequins I possessed, far from cooling my love, seemed only to increase its ardour.

At the end of the year 1774 the Great Council promulgated a law forbidding all games of chance, the first effect of which was to close the 'ridotto'. This law was a real phenomenon, and when the votes were taken out of the urn the senators looked at each other with stupefaction. They had made the law unwittingly, for three-fourths of the voters objected to it, and yet three-fourths of the votes were in favour of it. People said that it was a miracle of St. Mark's, who had answered the prayers of Monsignor Flangini, then censor-in-chief, now cardinal, and one of the three State Inquisitors.

On the day appointed I was punctual at the place of rendezvous, and I had not to wait for my mistress. She was in the dressing-room, where she had had time to attend to her toilet, and as soon as she heard me she came to me dressed with the greatest elegance.

"My friend is not yet at his post," she said to me, "but the moment he is there I will give you a wink."

"Where is the mysterious closet?"

"There it is. Look at the back of this sofa against the wall. All those flowers in relief have a hole in the centre which communicates with the closet behind that wall. There is a bed, a table, and everything necessary to a person who wants to spend the night in amusing himself by looking at what is going on in this room. I will skew it to you whenever you like."

"Was it arranged by your lover's orders?"

"No, for he could not foresee that he would use it."

"I understand that he may find great pleasure in such a sight, but being unable to possess you at the very moment nature will make you most necessary to him, what will he do?"

"That is his business. Besides, he is at liberty to go away when he has had enough of it, or to sleep if he has a mind to, but if you play your part naturally he will not feel any weariness."

"I will be most natural, but I must be more polite."

"No, no politeness, I beg, for if you are polite, goodbye to nature. Where have you ever seen, I should like to know, two lovers, excited by all the fury of love, think of politeness?"

"You are right, darling, but I must be more delicate."

"Very well, delicacy can do no harm, but no more than usual. Your letter greatly pleased me, you have treated the subject like a man of experience."

I have already stated that my mistress was dressed most elegantly, but I ought to have added that it was the elegance of the Graces, and that it did not in any way prevent ease and simplicity. I only wondered at her having used some paint for the face, but it rather pleased me because she had applied it according to the fashion of the ladies of Versailles. The charm of that style consists in the negligence with which the paint is applied. The rouge must not appear natural; it is used to please the eyes which see in it the marks of an intoxication heralding the most amorous fury. She told me that she had put some on her face to please her inquisitive friend, who was very fond of it.

"That taste," I said, "proves him to be a Frenchman."

As I was uttering these words, she made a sign to me; the friend was at his post, and now the play began.

"The more I look at you, beloved angel, the more I think you worthy of my adoration."

"But are you not certain that you do not worship a cruel divinity?"

"Yes, and therefore I do not offer my sacrifices to appease you, but to excite you. You shall feel all through the night the ardour of my devotion."

"You will not find me insensible to your offerings."

"I would begin them at once, but I think that, in order to insure their efficiency, we ought to have supper first. I have taken nothing to-day but a cup of chocolate and a salad of whites of eggs dressed with oil from Lucca and Marseilles vinegar."

"But, dearest, it is folly! you must be ill?"

"Yes, I am just now, but I shall be all right when I have distilled the whites of eggs, one by one, into your amorous soul."

"I did not think you required any such stimulants."

"Who could want any with you? But I have a rational fear, for if I happened to prime without being able to fire, I would blow my brains out."

"My dear browny, it would certainly be a misfortune, but there would be no occasion to be in despair on that account."

"You think that I would only have to prime again."

"Of course."

While we were bantering in this edifying fashion, the table had been laid, and we sat down to supper. She ate for two and I for four, our excellent appetite being excited by the delicate cheer. A sumptuous dessert was served in splendid silver-gilt plate, similar to the two candlesticks which held four wax candles each. Seeing that I admired them, she said:

"They are a present from my friend."

"It is a magnificent present, has he given you the snuffers likewise?"

"No"

"It is a proof that your friend is a great nobleman."

"How so?"

"Because great lords have no idea of snuffing the candle."

"Our candles have wicks which never require that operation."

"Good! Tell me who has taught you French."

"Old La Forest. I have been his pupil for six years. He has also taught me to write poetry, but you know a great many words which I never heard from him, such as 'a gogo, frustratoire, rater, dorloter'. Who taught you these words?"

“The good company in Paris, and women particularly.”

We made some punch, and amused ourselves in eating oysters after the voluptuous fashion of lovers. We sucked them in, one by one, after placing them on the other’s tongue. Voluptuous reader, try it, and tell me whether it is not the nectar of the gods!

At last, joking was over, and I reminded her that we had to think of more substantial pleasures. “Wait here,” she said, “I am going to change my dress. I shall be back in one minute.” Left alone, and not knowing what to do, I looked in the drawers of her writing-table. I did not touch the letters, but finding a box full of certain preservative sheaths against the fatal and dreaded plumpness, I emptied it, and I placed in it the following lines instead of the stolen goods:

‘Enfants de L’Amitie, ministres de la Peur, Je suis l’Amour, tremblez, respectez le voleur! Et toi, femme de Dieu, ne crains pas d’etre mere; Car si to le deviens, Dieu seal sera le pere. S’iL est dit cependant que tu veux le barren, Parle; je suis tout pret, je me ferai chatrer.’

My mistress soon returned, dressed like a nymph. A gown of Indian muslin, embroidered with gold lilies, spewed to admiration the outline of her voluptuous form, and her fine lace-cap was worthy of a queen. I threw myself at her feet, entreating her not to delay my happiness any longer.

“Control your ardour a few moments,” she said, “here is the altar, and in a few minutes the victim will be in your arms.”

“You will see,” she added, going to her writing-table, “how far the delicacy and the kind attention of my friend can extend.”

She took the box and opened it, but instead of the pretty sheaths that she expected to see, she found my poetry. After reading it aloud, she called me a thief, and smothering me with kisses she entreated me to give her back what I had stolen, but I pretended not to understand. She then read the lines again, considered for one moment, and under pretence of getting a better pen, she left the room, saying,

“I am going to pay you in your own coin.”

She came back after a few minutes and wrote the following six lines:

‘Sans rien oter au plaisir amoureux, L’objet de ton larcin sert a combier nos voeux. A l’abri du danger, mon ame satisfaite Savoure en surete parfaite; Et si tu veux jauer avec securite, Rends-moi mon doux ami, ces dons de l’amitie.

After this I could not resist any longer, and I gave her back those objects so precious to a nun who wants to sacrifice on the altar of Venus.

The clock striking twelve, I shewed her the principal actor who was longing to perform, and she arranged the sofa, saying that the alcove being too cold we had better sleep on it. But the true reason was that, to satisfy the curious lover, it was necessary for us to be seen.

Dear reader, a picture must have shades, and there is nothing, no matter how beautiful in one point of view, that does not require to be sometimes veiled if you look at it from a different one. In order to paint the diversified scene which took place between me and my lovely mistress until the dawn of day, I should have to use all the colours of Aretino’s palette. I was ardent and full of vigour, but I had to deal with a strong partner, and in the morning, after the last exploit, we were positively worn out; so much so that my charming nun felt some anxiety on my account. It is true that she had seen my blood spurt out and cover her bosom during my last offering; and as she did not suspect the true cause of that phenomenon, she turned pale with fright. I allayed her anxiety by a thousand follies which made her laugh heartily. I washed her splendid bosom with rosewater, so as to purify it from the blood by which it had been dyed for the first time. She expressed a fear that she had swallowed a few drops, but I told her that it was of no consequence, even if were the case. She resumed the costume of a nun, and entreating me to lie down and to write to her before returning to Venice, so as to let her know how I was, she left the casino.

I had no difficulty in obeying her, for I was truly in great need of rest. I slept until evening. As soon as I awoke, I wrote to her that my health was excellent, and that I felt quite inclined to begin our delightful contest all over again. I asked her to let me know how she was herself, and after I had dispatched my letter I returned to Venice.

CHAPTER XIX

I Give My Portrait to M. M. — A Present From Her — I Go to the Opera With Her — She Plays At the Faro Table and Replenishes My Empty Purse — Philosophical Conversation With M. M. — A Letter From C. C. — She Knows All — A Ball At the Convent; My Exploits In the Character of Pierrot — C. C. Comes to the Casino Instead of M. M. — I Spend the Night With Her In A Very Silly Way.

My dear M —— M —— had expressed a wish to have my portrait, something like the one I had given to C —— C —— , only larger, to wear it as a locket. The outside was to represent some saint, and an invisible spring was to remove the sainted picture and expose my likeness. I called upon the artist who had painted the other miniature for me, and in three sittings I had what I wanted. He afterwards made me an Annunciation, in which the angel Gabriel was transformed into a dark-haired saint, and the Holy Virgin into a beautiful, light-complexioned woman holding her arms towards the angel. The celebrated painter Mengs imitated that idea in the picture of the Annunciation which he painted in Madrid twelve years afterwards, but I do not know whether he had the same reasons for it as my painter. That allegory was exactly of the same size as my portrait, and the jeweller who made the locket arranged it in such a manner that no one could suppose the sacred image to be there only for the sake of hiding a profane likeness.

The end of January, 1754, before going to the casino, I called upon Laura to give her a letter for C —— C —— , and she handed me one from her which amused me. My beautiful nun had initiated that young girl, not only into the mysteries of Sappho, but also in high metaphysics, and C —— C —— had consequently become a Freethinker. She wrote to me that, objecting to give an account of her affairs to her confessor, and yet not wishing to tell him falsehoods, she had made up her mind to tell him nothing.

"He has remarked," she added, "that perhaps I do not confess anything to him because I did not examine my conscience sufficiently, and I answered him that I had nothing to say, but that if he liked I would commit a few sins for the purpose of having something to tell him in confession."

I thought this reply worthy of a thorough sophist, and laughed heartily.

On the same day I received the following letter from my adorable nun "I write to you from my bed, dearest browny, because I cannot remain standing on my feet. I am almost dead. But I am not anxious about it; a little rest will make me all right, for I eat well and sleep soundly. You have made me very happy by writing to me that your bleeding has not had any evil consequences, and I give you fair notice that I shall have the proof of it on Twelfth Night, at least if you like; that is understood, and you will let me know. In case you should feel disposed to grant me that favour, my darling, I wish to go to the opera. At all events, recollect that I positively forbid the whites of eggs for the future, for I would rather have a little less enjoyment and more security respecting your health. In future, when you go to the casino of Muran, please to enquire whether there is anybody there, and if you receive an affirmative answer, go away. My friend will do the same. In that manner you will not run the risk of meeting one another, but you need not observe these precautions for long, if you wish, for my friend is extremely fond of you, and has a great desire to make your acquaintance. He has told me that, if he had not seen it with his own eyes, he never would have believed that a man could run the race that you ran so splendidly the other night, but he says that, by making love in that manner, you bid defiance to death, for he is certain that the blood you lost comes from the brain. But what will he say when he hears that you only laugh at the occurrence? I am going to make you very merry: he wants to eat the salad of whites of eggs, and he wants me to ask you for some of your vinegar, because there is none in Venice. He said that he spent a delightful night, in spite of his fear of the evil consequences of our amorous sport, and he has found my own efforts superior to the usual weakness of my sex. That may be the case, dearest browny, but I am delighted to have done such wonders, and to have made such trial of my strength. Without you, darling of my heart, I should have lived without knowing myself, and I wonder whether it is possible for nature to create a woman who could remain insensible in your arms, or rather one who would not receive new life by your side. It is more than love that I feel for you, it is idolatry; and my mouth, longing to meet yours, sends forth thousands of kisses which are wasted in the air. I am panting for your divine portrait, so as to quench by a sweet illusion the fire which devours my amorous lips. I trust my likeness will prove equally dear to you, for it seems to me that nature has created us for one another, and I curse the fatal instant in which I raised an invincible barrier between us. You will find enclosed the key of my bureau. Open it, and take a parcel on which you will see written, 'For my darling.' It is a small present which my friend wishes me to offer you in exchange for the beautiful night-cap that you gave me. Adieu."

The small key enclosed in the letter belonged to a bureau in the boudoir. Anxious to know the nature of the present that she could offer me at the instance of her friend, I opened the bureau, and found a parcel containing a letter and a morocco-leather case.

The letter was as follows:

"That which will, I hope, render this present dear to you is the portrait of a woman who adores you. Our friend had two of them, but the great friendship he entertains towards you has given him the happy idea of disposing of one in your favour. This box contains two portraits of me, which are to be seen in two different ways: if you take off the bottom part, of the case in its length, you will see me as a nun; and if you press on the corner, the top will open and expose me to your sight in a state of nature. It is not possible, dearest, that a woman can ever have loved you as I do. Our friend excites my passion by the flattering opinion that he entertains of you. I cannot decide whether I am more fortunate in my friend or in my lover, for I could not imagine any being superior to either one or the other."

The case contained a gold snuff-box, and a small quantity of Spanish snuff which had been left in it proved that it had been used. I followed the instructions given in the letter, and I first saw my mistress in the costume of a nun, standing and in half profile. The second secret spring brought her before my eyes, entirely naked, lying on a mattress of black satin, in the position of the Madeleine of Coreggio. She was looking at Love, who had the quiver at his feet, and was gracefully sitting on the nun's robes. It was such a beautiful present that I did not think myself worthy of it. I wrote to M —— M —— a letter in which the deepest gratitude was blended with the most exalted love. The drawers of the bureau contained all her diamonds and four purses full of sequins. I admired her noble confidence in me. I locked the bureau, leaving everything undisturbed, and returned to Venice. If I had been able to escape out of the capricious clutches of fortune by giving up gambling, my happiness would have been complete.

My own portrait was set with rare perfection, and as it was arranged to be worn round the neck I attached it to six yards of Venetian chain, which made it a very handsome present. The secret was in the ring to which it was suspended, and it was very difficult to discover it. To make the spring work and expose my likeness it was necessary to pull the ring with some force and in a peculiar manner. Otherwise, nothing could be seen but the Annunciation; and it was then a beautiful ornament for a nun.

On Twelfth Night, having the locket and chain in my pocket, I went early in the evening to watch near the fine statue erected to the hero Colleoni after he had been poisoned, if history does not deceive us. ‘Sit divus, modo non vivus’, is a sentence from the enlightened monarch, which will last as long as there are monarchs on earth.

At six o’clock precisely my mistress alighted from the gondola, well dressed and well masked, but this time in the garb of a woman. We went to the Saint Samuel opera, and after the second ballet we repaired to the ‘ridotto’, where she amused herself by looking at all the ladies of the nobility who alone had the right to walk about without masks. After rambling about for half an hour, we entered the hall where the bank was held. She stopped before the table of M. Mocenigo, who at that time was the best amongst all the noble gamblers. As nobody was playing, he was carelessly whispering to a masked lady, whom I recognized as Madame Marina Pitani, whose adorer he was.

M —— M —— enquired whether I wanted to play, and as I answered in the negative she said to me,

“I take you for my partner.”

And without waiting for my answer she took a purse, and placed a pile of gold on a card. The banker without disturbing himself shuffled the cards, turned them up, and my friend won the paroli. The banker paid, took another pack of cards, and continued his conversation with his lady, shewing complete indifference for four hundred sequins which my friend had already placed on the same card. The banker continuing his conversations, M —— M —— said to me, in excellent French,

“Our stakes are not high enough to interest this gentleman; let us go.”

I took up the gold, which I put in my pocket, without answering M. de Mocenigo, who said to me:

“Your mask is too exacting.”

I rejoined my lovely gambler, who was surrounded. We stopped soon afterwards before the bank of M. Pierre Marcello, a charming young man, who had near him Madame Venier, sister of the patrician Momolo. My mistress began to play, and lost five rouleaux of gold one after the other. Having no more money, she took handfuls of gold from my pocket, and in four or five deals she broke the bank. She went away, and the noble banker, bowing, complimented her upon her good fortune. After I had taken care of all the gold she had won, I gave her my arm, and we left the ‘ridotto’, but remarking that a few inquisitive persons were following us, I took a gondola which landed us according to my instructions. One can always escape prying eyes in this way in Venice.

After supper I counted our winnings, and I found myself in possession of one thousand sequins as my share. I rolled the remainder in paper, and my friend asked me to put it in her bureau. I then took my locket and threw it over her neck; it gave her the greatest delight, and she tried for a long time to discover the secret. At last I showed it her, and she pronounced my portrait an excellent likeness.

Recollecting that we had but three hours to devote to the pleasures of love, I entreated her to allow me to turn them to good account.

“Yes,” she said, “but be prudent, for our friend pretends that you might die on the spot.”

“And why does he not fear the same danger for you, when your ecstasies are in reality much more frequent than mine?”

“He says that the liquor distilled by us women does not come from the brain, as is the case with men, and that the generating parts of woman have no contact with her intellect. The consequence of it, he says, is that the child is not the offspring of the mother as far as the brain, the seat of reason, is concerned, but of the father, and it seems to me very true. In that important act the woman has scarcely the amount of reason that she is in need of, and she cannot have any left to enable her to give a dose to the being she is generating." "Your friend is a very learned man. But do you know that such a way of arguing opens my eyes singularly? It is evident that, if that system be true, women ought to be forgiven for all the follies which they commit on account of love, whilst man is inexcusable, and I should be in despair if I happened to place you in a position to become a mother."

"I shall know before long, and if it should be the case so much the better. My mind is made up, and my decision taken."

"And what is that decision?"

"To abandon my destiny entirely to you both. I am quite certain that neither one nor the other would let me remain at the convent."

"It would be a fatal event which would decide our future destinies. I would carry you off, and take you to England to marry you."

"My friend thinks that a physician might be bought, who, under the pretext of some disease of his own invention, would prescribe to me to go somewhere to drink the waters — a permission which the bishop might grant. At the watering-place I would get cured, and come back here, but I would much rather unite our destinies for ever. Tell me, dearest, could you manage to live anywhere as comfortably as you do here?"

"Alas! my love, no, but with you how could I be unhappy? But we will resume that subject whenever it may be necessary. Let us go to bed."

"Yes. If I have a son my friend wishes to act towards him as a father."

"Would he believe himself to be the father?"

"You might both of you believe it, but some likeness would soon enlighten me as to which of you two was the true father."

"Yes. If, for instance, the child composed poetry, then you would suppose that he was the son of your friend."

"How do you know that my friend can write poetry?"

“Admit that he is the author of the six lines which you wrote in answer to mine.”

“I cannot possibly admit such a falsehood, because, good or bad, they were of my own making, and so as to leave you no doubt let me convince you of it at once.”

“Oh, never mind! I believe you, and let us go to bed, or Love will call out the god of Parnassus.”

“Let him do it, but take this pencil and write; I am Apollo, you may be Love:”

‘Je ne me battrai pas; je te cede la place. Si Venus est ma soeur, L’Amour est de ma race. Je sais faire des vers. Un instant de perdu N’offense pas L’Amour, si je l’ai convaincu.

“It is on my knees that I entreat your pardon, my heavenly friend, but how could I expect so much talent in a young daughter of Venice, only twenty-two years of age, and, above all, brought up in a convent?”

“I have a most insatiate desire to prove myself more and more worthy of you. Did you think I was prudent at the gaming-table?”

“Prudent enough to make the most intrepid banker tremble.”

“I do not always play so well, but I had taken you as a partner, and I felt I could set fortune at defiance. Why would you not play?”

“Because I had lost four thousand sequins last week and I was without money, but I shall play to-morrow, and fortune will smile upon me. In the mean time, here is a small book which I have brought from your boudoir: the postures of Pietro Aretino; I want to try some of them.”

“The thought is worthy of you, but some of these positions could not be executed, and others are insipid.”

“True, but I have chosen four very interesting ones.”

These delightful labours occupied the remainder of the night until the alarum warned us that it was time to part. I accompanied my lovely nun as far as her gondola, and then went to bed; but I could not sleep. I got up in order to go and pay a few small debts, for one of the greatest pleasures that a spendthrift can enjoy is, in my opinion, to discharge certain liabilities. The gold won by my mistress proved lucky for me, for I did not pass a single day of the carnival without winning.

Three days after Twelfth Night, having paid a visit to the casino of Muran for the purpose of placing some gold in M —— M — — 's bureau, the door-keeper handed me a letter from my nun. Laura had, a few minutes before, delivered me one from C —— C —— .

My new mistress, after giving me an account of her health, requested me to enquire from my jeweller whether he had not by chance made a ring having on its bezel a St. Catherine which, without a doubt, concealed another portrait; she wished to know the secret of that ring. "A young boarder," she added, "a lovely girl, and my friend, is the owner of that ring. There must be a secret, but she does not know it." I answered that I would do what she wished. But here is the letter of C —— C —— . It was rather amusing, because it placed me in a regular dilemma; it bore a late date, but the letter of M —— M —— had been written two days before it.

"Ali! how truly happy I am, my beloved husband! You love Sister M —— M —— , my dear friend. She has a locket as big as a ring, and she cannot have received it from anyone but you. I am certain that your dear likeness is to be found under the Annunciation. I recognized the style of the artist, and it is certainly the same who painted the locket and my ring. I am satisfied that Sister M — M — has received that present from you. I am so pleased to know all that I would not run the risk of grieving her by telling her that I knew her secret, but my dear friend, either more open or more curious, has not imitated my reserve. She told me that she had no doubt of my St. Catherine concealing the portrait of my lover. Unable to say anything better, I told her that the ring was in reality a gift from my lover, but that I had no idea of his portrait being concealed inside of it. 'If it is as you say,' observed M —— M —— , 'and if you have no objection, I will try to find out the secret, and afterwards I will let you know mine.' Being quite certain that she would not discover it, I gave her my ring, saying that, if she could find out the secret, I should be very much pleased.

"Just as that moment my aunt paid me a visit, and I left my ring in the hands of M —— M —— , who returned it to me after dinner, assuring me that, although she had not been able to find out the secret, she was certain there was one. I promise you that she shall never hear anything about it from me, because if she saw your portrait, she would guess everything, and then I should have to tell her who you are. I am sorry to be compelled to conceal anything from her, but I am very glad you love one another. I pity you both, however, with all my heart, because I know that you are obliged to make love through a grating in that horrid parlour. How I wish, dearest, I could give you my place! I would make two persons happy at the same time! Adieu!"

I answered that she had guessed rightly, that the locket of her friend was a present from me and contained my likeness, but that she was to keep the secret, and to be certain that my friendship for M —— M —— interfered in no way with the feeling which bound me to her for ever. I certainly was well aware that I was not behaving in a straightforward manner, but I endeavoured to deceive myself, so true it is that a woman, weak as she is, has more influence by the feeling she inspires than man can possibly have with all his strength. At all events, I was foolishly trying to keep up an intrigue which I knew to be near its denouement through the intimacy that had sprung up between these two friendly rivals.

Laura having informed me that there was to be on a certain day a ball in the large parlour of the convent, I made up my mind to attend it in such a disguise that my two friends could not recognize me. I decided upon the costume of a Pierrot, because it conceals the form and the gait better than any other. I was certain that my two friends would be behind the grating, and that it would afford me the pleasant opportunity of seeing them together and of comparing them. In Venice, during the carnival, that innocent pleasure is allowed in convents. The guests dance in the parlour, and the sisters remain behind the grating, enjoying the sight of the ball, which is over by sunset. Then all the guests retire, and the poor nuns are for a long time happy in the recollection of the pleasure enjoyed by their eyes. The ball was to take place in the afternoon of the day appointed for my meeting with M —— M —— , in the evening at the casino of Muran, but that could not prevent me from going to the ball; besides, I wanted to see my dear C —— C —— .

I have said before that the dress of a Pierrot is the costume which disguises the figure and the gait most completely. It has also the advantage, through a large cap, of concealing the hair, and the white gauze which covers the face does not allow the colour of the eyes or of the eyebrows to be seen, but in order to prevent the costume from hindering the movements of the mask, he must not wear anything underneath, and in winter a dress made of light calico is not particularly agreeable. I did not, however, pay any attention to that, and taking only a plate of soup I went to Muran in a gondola. I had no cloak, and — in my pockets I had nothing but my handkerchief, my purse, and the key of the casino.

I went at once to the convent. The parlour was full, but thanks to my costume of Pierrot, which was seen in Venice but very seldom, everybody made room for me. I walked on, assuming the gait of a booby, the true characteristic of my costume, and I stopped near the dancers. After I had examined the Pantaloons, Punches, Harlequins, and Merry Andrews, I went near the grating, where I saw all the nuns and boarders, some seated, some standing, and, without appearing to, notice any of them in particular, I remarked my two friends together, and very intent upon the dancers. I then walked round the room, eyeing everybody from head to foot, and calling the general attention upon myself.

I chose for my partner in the minuet a pretty girl dressed as a Columbine, and I took her hand in so awkward a manner and with such an air of stupidity that everybody laughed and made room for us. My partner danced very well according to her costume, and I kept my character with such perfection that the laughter was general. After the minuet I danced twelve forlanas with the greatest vigour. Out of breath, I threw myself on a sofa, pretending to go to sleep, and the moment I began to snore everybody respected the slumbers of Pierrot. The quadrille lasted one hour, and I took no part in it, but immediately after it, a Harlequin approached me with the impertinence which belongs to his costume, and flogged me with his wand. It is Harlequin’s weapon. In my quality of Pierrot I had no weapons. I seized him round the waist and carried him round the parlour, running all the time, while he kept on flogging me. I then put him down. Adroitly snatching his wand out of his hand, I lifted his Columbine on my shoulders, and pursued him, striking him with the wand, to the great delight and mirth of the company. The Columbine was screaming because she was afraid of my tumbling down and of shewing her centre of gravity to everybody in the fall. She had good reason to fear, for suddenly a foolish Merry Andrew came behind me, tripped me up, and down I tumbled. Everybody hooted Master Punch. I quickly picked myself up, and rather vexed I began a regular fight with the insolent fellow. He was of my size, but awkward, and he had nothing but strength. I threw him, and shaking him vigorously on all sides I contrived to deprive him of his hump and false stomach. The nuns, who had never seen such a merry sight, clapped their hands, everybody laughed loudly, and improving my opportunity I ran through the crowd and disappeared.

I was in a perspiration, and the weather was cold; I threw myself into a gondola, and in order not to get chilled I landed at the ‘ridotto’. I had two hours to spare before going to the casino of Muran, and I longed to enjoy the astonishment of my beautiful nun when she saw M. Pierrot standing before her. I spent those two hours in playing at all the banks, winning, losing, and performing all sorts of antics with complete freedom, being satisfied that no one could recognize me; enjoying the present, bidding defiance to the future, and laughing at all those reasonable beings who exercise their reason to avoid the misfortunes which they fear, destroying at the same time the pleasure that they might enjoy.

But two o’clock struck and gave me warning that Love and Comus were calling me to bestow new delights upon me. With my pockets full of gold and silver, I left the ridotto, hurried to Muran, entered the sanctuary, and saw my divinity leaning against the mantelpiece. She wore her convent dress. I come near her by stealth, in order to enjoy her surprise. I look at her, and I remain petrified, astounded.

The person I see is not M —— M ——

It is C —— C —— , dressed as a nun, who, more astonished even than myself, does not utter one word or make a movement. I throw myself in an arm-chair in order to breathe and to recover from my surprise. The sight of C —— C —— had annihilated me, and my mind was as much stupefied as my body. I found myself in an inextricable maze.

It is M —— M —— , I said to myself, who has played that trick upon me, but how has she contrived to know that I am the lover of C —— C —— ? Has C —— C —— betrayed my secret? But if she has betrayed it, how could M —— M —— deprive herself of the pleasure of seeing me, and consent to her place being taken by her friend and rival? That cannot be a mark of kind compliance, for a woman never carries it to such an extreme. I see in it only a mark of contempt — a gratuitous insult.

My self-love tried hard to imagine some reason likely to disprove the possibility of that contempt, but in vain. Absorbed in that dark discontent, I believed myself wantonly trifled with, deceived, despised, and I spent half an hour silent and gloomy, staring at C —— C —— , who scarcely dared to breathe, perplexed, confused, and not knowing in whose presence she was, for she could only know me as the Pierrot whom she had seen at the ball.

Deeply in love with M —— M —— , and having come to the casino only for her, I did not feel disposed to accept the exchange, although I was very far from despising C —— C —— , whose charms were as great, at least, as those of M —— M —— . I loved her tenderly, I adored her, but at that moment it was not her whom I wanted, because at first her presence had struck me as a mystification. It seemed to me that if I celebrated the return of C —— C —— in an amorous manner, I would fail in what I owed to myself, and I thought that I was bound in honour not to lend myself to the imposition. Besides, without exactly realizing that feeling, I was not sorry to have it in my power to reproach M —— M —— with an indifference very strange in a woman in love, and I wanted to act in such a manner that she should not be able to say that she had procured me a pleasure. I must add that I suspected M —— M —— to be hiding in the secret closet, perhaps with her friend.

I had to take a decision, for I could not pass the whole night in my costume of Pierrot, and without speaking. At first I thought of going away, the more so that both C —— C —— and her friend could not be certain that I and Pierrot were the same individual, but I soon abandoned the idea with horror, thinking of the deep sorrow which would fill the loving soul of C —— C —— if she ever heard I was the Pierrot. I almost fancied that she knew it already, and I shared the grief which she evidently would feel in that case. I had seduced her. I had given her the right to call me her husband. These thoughts broke my heart.

If M —— M —— is in the closet, said I to myself, she will shew herself in good time. With that idea, I took off the gauze which covered my features. My lovely C —— C —— gave a deep sigh, and said:

“I breathe again! it could not be anyone but you, my heart felt it. You seemed surprised when you saw me, dearest; did you not know that I was waiting for you?”

"I had not the faintest idea of it."

"If you are angry, I regret it deeply, but I am innocent."

"My adored friend, come to my arms, and never suppose that I can be angry with you. I am delighted to see you; you are always my dear wife: but I entreat you to clear up a cruel doubt, for you could never have betrayed my secret."

"I! I would never have been guilty of such a thing, even if death had stared me in the face."

"Then, how did you come here? How did your friend contrive to discover everything? No one but you could tell her that I am your husband. Laura perhaps….'

"No, Laura is faithful, dearest, and I cannot guess how it was."

"But how could you be persuaded to assume that disguise, and to come here? You can leave the convent, and you have never apprised me of that important circumstance."

"Can you suppose that I would not have told you all about it, if I had ever left the convent, even once? I came out of it two hours ago, for the first time, and I was induced to take that step in the simplest, the most natural manner."

"Tell me all about it, my love. I feel extremely curious."

"I am glad of it, and I would conceal nothing from you. You know how dearly M —— M —— and I love each other. No intimacy could be more tender than ours; you can judge of it by what I told you in my letters. Well, two days ago, my dear friend begged the abbess and my aunt to allow me to sleep in her room in the place of the lay-sister, who, having a very bad cold, had carried her cough to the infirmary. The permission was granted, and you cannot imagine our pleasure in seeing ourselves at liberty, for the first time, to sleep in the same bed. To-day, shortly after you had left the parlour, where you so much amused us, without our discovering that the delightful Pierrot was our friend, my dear M —— M —— retired to her room and I followed her. The moment we were alone she told me that she wanted me to render her a service from which depended our happiness. I need not tell you how readily I answered that she had only to name it. Then she opened a drawer, and much to my surprise she dressed me in this costume. She was laughing; and I did the same without suspecting the end of the joke. When she saw me entirely metamorphosed into a nun, she told me that she was going to trust me with a great secret, but that she entertained no fear of my discretion. ‘Let me tell you, clearest friend,’ she said to me, ‘that I was on the point of going out of the convent, to return only tomorrow morning. I have, however, just decided that you shall go instead. You have nothing to fear and you do not require any instructions, because I know that you will meet with no difficulty. In an hour, a lay-sister will come here, I will speak a few words apart to her, and she will tell you to follow her. You will go out with her through the small gate and across the garden as far as the room leading out to the low shore. There you will get into the gondola, and say to the gondolier these words: ‘To the casino.’ You will reach it in five minutes; you will step out and enter a small apartment, where you will find a good fire; you will be alone, and you will wait.’ ‘For whom? I enquired. ‘For nobody. You need not know any more: you may only be certain that nothing unpleasant will happen to you; trust me for that. You will sup at the casino, and sleep, if you like, without being disturbed. Do not ask any questions, for I cannot answer them. Such is, my dear husband, the whole truth. Tell me now what I could do after that speech of my friend, and after she had received my promise to do whatever she wished. Do not distrust what I tell you, for my lips cannot utter a falsehood. I laughed, and not expecting anything else but an agreeable adventure, I followed the lay-sister and soon found myself here. After a tedious hour of expectation, Pierrot made his appearance. Be quite certain that the very moment I saw you my heart knew who it was, but a minute after I felt as if the lightning had struck me when I saw you step back, for I saw clearly enough that you did not expect to find me. Your gloomy silence frightened me, and I would never have dared to be the first in breaking it; the more so that, in spite of the feelings of my heart, I might have been mistaken. The dress of Pierrot might conceal some other man, but certainly no one that I could have seen in this place without horror. Recollect that for the last eight months I have been deprived of the happiness of kissing you, and now that you must be certain of my innocence, allow me to congratulate you upon knowing this casino. You are happy, and I congratulate you with all my heart. M —— M —— is, after me, the only woman worthy of your love, the only one with whom I could consent to share it. I used to pity you, but I do so no longer, and your happiness makes me happy. Kiss me now."

I should have been very ungrateful, I should, even have been cruel, if I had not then folded in my arms with the warmth of true love the angel of goodness and beauty who was before me, thanks to the most wonderful effort of friendship.

After assuring her that I no longer entertained any doubt of her innocence, I told her that I thought the behaviour of her friend very ambiguous. I said that, notwithstanding the pleasure I felt in seeing her, the trick played upon me by her friend was a very bad one, that it could not do otherwise than displease me greatly, because it was an insult to me.

"I am not of your opinion," replied C —— C —— .

"My dear M —— M —— has evidently contrived, somehow or other, to discover that, before you were acquainted with her, you were my lover. She thought very likely that you still loved me, and she imagined, for I know her well, that she could not give us a greater proof of her love than by procuring us, without forewarning us, that which two lovers fond of each other must wish for so ardently. She wished to make us happy, and I cannot be angry with her for it."

"You are right to think so, dearest, but my position is very different from yours. You have not another lover; you could not have another; but I being free and unable to see you, have not found it possible to resist the charms of M —— M —— . I love her madly; she knows it, and, intelligent as she is, she must have meant to shew her contempt for me by doing what she has done. I candidly confess that I feel hurt in the highest degree. If she loved me as I love her, she never could have sent you here instead of coming herself."

"I do not think so, my beloved friend. Her soul is as noble as her heart is generous; and just in the same manner that I am not sorry to know that you love one another and that you make each other happy, as this beautiful casino proves to me, she does not regret our love, and she is, on the contrary, delighted to shew us that she approves of it. Most likely she meant to prove that she loved you for your own sake, that your happiness makes her happy, and that she is not jealous of her best friend being her rival. To convince you that you ought not to be angry with her for having discovered our secret, she proves, by sending me here in her place, that she is pleased to see your heart divided between her and me. You know very well that she loves me, and that I am often either her wife or her husband, and as you do not object to my being your rival and making her often as happy as I can, she does not want you either to suppose that her love is like hatred, for the love of a jealous heart is very much like it."

"You plead the cause of your friend with the eloquence of an angel, but, dear little wife, you do not see the affair in its proper light. You have intelligence and a pure soul, but you have not my experience. M —— M —— 's love for me has been nothing but a passing fancy, and she knows that I am not such an idiot as to be deceived by all this affair. I am miserable, and it is her doing."

"Then I should be right if I complained of her also, because she makes me feel that she is the mistress of my lover, and she shews me that, after seducing him from me, she gives him back to me without difficulty. Then she wishes me to understand that she despises also my tender affection for her, since she places me in a position to shew that affection for another person."

"Now, dearest, you speak without reason, for the relations between you two are of an entirely different nature. Your mutual love is nothing but trifling nonsense, mere illusion of the senses. The pleasures which you enjoy together are not exclusive. To become jealous of one another it would be necessary that one of you two should feel a similar affection for another woman but M —— M —— could no more be angry at your having a lover than you could be so yourself if she had one; provided, however, that the lover should not belong to the other"

"But that is precisely our case, and you are mistaken. We are not angry at your loving us both equally. Have I not written to you that I would most willingly give you my place near M —— M —— ? Then you must believe that I despise you likewise?"

"My darling, that wish of yours to give me up your place, when you did not know that I was happy with M —— M —— , arose from your friendship rather than from your love, and for the present I must be glad to see that your friendship is stronger than your love, but I have every reason to be sorry when M —— M —— feels the same. I love her without any possibility of marrying her. Do you understand me, dearest? As for you, knowing that you must be my wife, I am certain of our love, which practice will animate with new life. It is not the same with M —— M —— ; that love cannot spring up again into existence. Is it not humiliating for me to have inspired her with nothing but a passing fancy? I understand your adoration for her very well. She has initiated you into all her mysteries, and you owe her eternal friendship and everlasting gratitude."

It was midnight, and we went on wasting our time in this desultory conversation, when the prudent and careful servant brought us an excellent supper. I could not touch anything, my heart was too full, but my dear little wife supped with a good appetite. I could not help laughing when I saw a salad of whites of eggs, and C —— C —— thought it extraordinary because all the yolks had been removed. In her innocence, she could not understand the intention of the person who had ordered the supper. As I looked at her, I was compelled to acknowledge that she had improved in beauty; in fact C —— C —— was remarkably beautiful, yet I remained cold by her side. I have always thought that there is no merit in being faithful to the person we truly love.

Two hours before day-light we resumed our seats near the fire, and C —— C —— , seeing how dull I was, was delicately attentive to me. She attempted no allurement, all her movements wore the stamp of the most decent reserve, and her conversation, tender in its expressions and perfectly easy, never conveyed the shadow of a reproach for my coolness.

Towards the end of our long conversation, she asked me what she should say to her friend on her return to the convent.

"My dear M —— M —— expects to see me full of joy and gratitude for the generous present she thought she was making me by giving me this night, but what shall I tell her?"

"The whole truth. Do not keep from her a single word of our conversation, as far as your memory will serve you, and tell her especially that she has made me miserable for a long time."

"No, for I should cause her too great a sorrow; she loves you dearly, and cherishes the locket which contains your likeness. I mean, on the contrary, to do all I can to bring peace between you two, and I must succeed before long, because my friend is not guilty of any wrong, and you only feel some spite, although with no cause. I will send you my letter by Laura, unless you promise me to go and fetch it yourself at her house."

"Your letters will always be dear to me, but, mark my words, M —— M —— will not enter into any explanation. She will believe you in everything, except in one."

"I suppose you mean our passing a whole night together as innocently as if we were brother and sister. If she knows you as well as I do, she will indeed think it most wonderful."

"In that case, you may tell her the contrary, if you like."

"Nothing of the sort. I hate falsehoods, and I will certainly never utter one in such a case as this; it would be very wrong. I do not love you less on that account, my darling, although, during this long night, you have not condescended to give me the slightest proof of your love."

"Believe me, dearest, I am sick from unhappiness. I love you with my whole soul, but I am in such a situation that…."

"What! you are weeping, my love! Oh! I entreat you, spare my heart! I am so sorry to have told you such a thing, but I can assure you I never meant to make you unhappy. I am sure that in a quarter of an hour M —— M —— will be crying likewise."

The alarum struck, and, having no longer any hope of seeing M —— M —— come to justify herself, I kissed C —— C —— . I gave her the key of the casino, requesting her to return it for me to M —— M —— , and my young friend having gone back to the convent, I put on my mask and left the casino.

CHAPTER XX

I Am in Danger of Perishing in the Lagunes — Illness — Letters from C. C. and M. M. — The Quarrel is Made Up — Meeting at the Casino of Muran I Learn the Name of M. M.'s Friend, and Consent to Give Him A Supper at My Casino in the Company of Our Common Mistress

The weather was fearful. The wind was blowing fiercely, and it was bitterly cold. When I reached the shore, I looked for a gondola, I called the gondoliers, but, in contravention to the police regulations, there was neither gondola nor gondolier. What was I to do? Dressed in light linen, I was hardly in a fit state to walk along the wharf for an hour in such weather. I should most likely have gone back to the casino if I had had the key, but I was paying the penalty of the foolish spite which had made me give it up. The wind almost carried me off my feet, and there was no house that I could enter to get a shelter.

I had in my pockets three hundred philippes that I had won in the evening, and a purse full of gold. I had therefore every reason to fear the thieves of Muran — a very dangerous class of cutthroats, determined murderers who enjoyed and abused a certain impunity, because they had some privileges granted to them by the Government on account of the services they rendered in the manufactories of looking-glasses and in the glassworks which are numerous on the island. In order to prevent their emigration, the Government had granted them the freedom of Venice. I dreaded meeting a pair of them, who would have stripped me of everything, at least. I had not, by chance, with me the knife which all honest men must carry to defend their lives in my dear country. I was truly in an unpleasant predicament.

I was thus painfully situated when I thought I could see a light through the crevices of a small house. I knocked modestly against the shutter. A voice called out:

“Who is knocking?”

And at the same moment the shutter was pushed open.

“What do you want?” asked a man, rather astonished at my costume.

I explained my predicament in a few words, and giving him one sequin I begged his permission to shelter myself under his roof. Convinced by my sequin rather than my words, he opened the door, I went in, and promising him another sequin for his trouble I requested him to get me a gondola to take me to Venice. He dressed himself hurriedly, thanking God for that piece of good fortune, and went out assuring me that he would soon get me a gondola. I remained alone in a miserable room in which all his family, sleeping together in a large, ill-looking bed, were staring at me in consequence of my extraordinary costume. In half an hour the good man returned to announce that the gondoliers were at the wharf, but that they wanted to be paid in advance. I raised no objection, gave a sequin to the man for his trouble, and went to the wharf.

The sight of two strong gondoliers made me get into the gondola without anxiety, and we left the shore without being much disturbed by the wind, but when we had gone beyond the island, the storm attacked us with such fury that I thought myself lost, for, although a good swimmer, I was not sure I had strength enough to resist the violence of the waves and swim to the shore. I ordered the men to go back to the island, but they answered that I had not to deal with a couple of cowards, and that I had no occasion to be afraid. I knew the disposition of our gondoliers, and I made up my mind to say no more.

But the wind increased in violence, the foaming waves rushed into the gondola, and my two rowers, in spite of their vigour and of their courage, could no longer guide it. We were only within one hundred yards of the mouth of the Jesuits’ Canal, when a terrible gust of wind threw one of the ‘barcarols’ into the sea; most fortunately he contrived to hold by the gondola and to get in again, but he had lost his oar, and while he was securing another the gondola had tacked, and had already gone a considerable distance abreast. The position called for immediate decision, and I had no wish to take my supper with Neptune. I threw a handful of philippes into the gondola, and ordered the gondoliers to throw overboard the ‘felce’ which covered the boat. The ringing of money, as much as the imminent danger, ensured instant obedience, and then, the wind having less hold upon us, my brave boatmen shewed AEolus that their efforts could conquer him, for in less than five minutes we shot into the Beggars' Canal, and I reached the Bragadin Palace. I went to bed at once, covering myself heavily in order to regain my natural heat, but sleep, which alone could have restored me to health, would not visit me.

Five or six hours afterwards, M. de Bragadin and his two inseparable friends paid me a visit, and found me raving with fever. That did not prevent my respectable protector from laughing at the sight of the costume of Pierrot lying on the sofa. After congratulating me upon having escaped with my life out of such a bad predicament, they left me alone. In the evening I perspired so profusely that my bed had to be changed. The next day my fever and delirium increased, and two days after, the fever having abated, I found myself almost crippled and suffering fearfully with lumbago. I felt that nothing could relieve me but a strict regimen, and I bore the evil patiently.

Early on the Wednesday morning, Laura, the faithful messenger, called on me; I was still in my bed: I told her that I could neither read nor write, and I asked her to come again the next day. She placed on the table, near my bed, the parcel she had for me, and she left me, knowing what had occurred to me sufficiently to enable her to inform C —— C —— of the state in which I was.

Feeling a little better towards the evening, I ordered my servant to lock me in my room, and I opened C —— C — — 's letter. The first thing I found in the parcel, and which caused me great pleasure, was the key of the casino which she returned to me. I had already repented having given it up, and I was beginning to feel that I had been in the wrong. It acted like a refreshing balm upon me. The second thing, not less dear after the return of the precious key, was a letter from M —— M —— , the seal of which I was not long in breaking, and I read the following lines:

"The particulars which you have read, or which you are going to read, in the letter of my friend, will cause you, I hope, to forget the fault which I have committed so innocently, for I trusted, on the contrary, that you would be very happy. I saw all and heard all, and you would not have gone away without the key if I had not, most unfortunately, fallen asleep an hour before your departure. Take back the key and come to the casino to-morrow night, since Heaven has saved you from the storm. Your love may, perhaps, give you the right to complain, but not to ill-treat a woman who certainly has not given you any mark of contempt."

I afterwards read the letter of my dear C —— C —— , and I will give a copy of it here, because I think it will prove interesting:

"I entreat you, dear husband, not to send back this key, unless you have become the most cruel of men, unless you find pleasure in tormenting two women who, love you ardently, and who love you for yourself only. Knowing your excellent heart, I trust you will go to the casino to-morrow evening and make it up with M —— M —— , who cannot go there to-night. You will see that you are in the wrong, dearest, and that, far from despising you, my dear friend loves you only. In the mean time, let me tell you what you are not acquainted with, and what you must be anxious to know.

"Immediately after you had gone away in that fearful storm which caused me such anguish, and just as I was preparing to return to the convent, I was much surprised to see standing before me my dear M —— M —— , who from some hiding-place had heard all you had said. She had several times been on the point of shewing herself, but she had always been prevented by the fear of coming out of season, and thus stopping a reconciliation which she thought was inevitable between two fond lovers. Unfortunately, sleep had conquered her before your departure, and she only woke when the alarum struck, too late to detain you, for you had rushed with the haste of a man who is flying from some terrible danger. As soon as I saw her, I gave her the key, although I did not know what it meant, and my friend, heaving a deep sigh, told me that she would explain everything as soon as we were safe in her room. We left the casino in a dreadful storm, trembling for your safety, and not thinking of our own danger. As soon as we were in the convent I resumed my usual costume, and M —— M —— went to bed. I took a seat near her, and this is what she told me. 'When you left your ring in my hands to go to your aunt, who had sent for you, I examined it with so much attention that at last I suspected the small blue spot to be connected with the secret spring; I took a pin, succeeded in removing the top part, and I cannot express the joy I felt when I saw that we both loved the same man, but no more can I give you an idea of my sorrow when I thought that I was encroaching upon your rights. Delighted, however, with my discovery, I immediately conceived a plan which would procure you the pleasure of supping with him. I closed the ring again and returned it to you, telling you at the same time that I had not been able to discover anything. I was then truly the happiest of women. Knowing your heart, knowing that you were aware of the love of your lover for me, since I had innocently shewed you his portrait, and happy in the idea that you were not jealous of me, I would have despised myself if I had entertained any feelings different from your own, the more so that your rights over him were by far stronger than mine. As for the mysterious manner in which you always kept from me the name of your husband, I easily guessed that you were only obeying his orders, and I admired your noble sentiments and the goodness of your heart. In my opinion your lover was afraid of losing us both, if we found out that neither the one nor the other of us possessed his whole heart. I could not express my deep sorrow when I thought that, after you had seen me in possession of his portrait, you continued to act in the same manner towards me, although you could not any longer hope to be the sole object of his love. Then I had but one idea; to prove to both of you that M —— M —— is worthy of your affection, of your friendship, of your esteem. I was indeed thoroughly happy when I thought that the felicity of our trio would be increased a hundredfold, for is it not an unbearable misery to keep a secret from the being we adore? I made you take my place, and I thought that proceeding a masterpiece. You allowed me to dress you as a nun, and with a compliance which proves your confidence in me you went to my casino without knowing where you were going. As soon as you had landed, the gondola came back, and I went to a place well known to our friend from which, without being seen, I could follow all your movements and hear everything you said. I was the author of the play; it was natural that I should witness it, the more so that I felt certain of seeing and hearing nothing that would not be very agreeable to me. I reached the casino a quarter of an hour after you, and I cannot tell you my delightful surprise when I saw that dear Pierrot who had amused us so much, and whom we had not recognized. But I was fated to feel no other pleasure than that of his appearance. Fear, surprise, and anxiety overwhelmed me at once when I saw the effect produced upon him by the disappointment of his expectation, and I felt unhappy. Our lover took the thing wrongly, and he went away in despair; he loves me still, but if he thinks of me it is only to try to forget me. Alas! he will succeed but too soon! By sending back that key he proves that he will never again go to the casino. Fatal night! When my only wish was to minister to the happiness of three persons, how is it that the very reverse of my wish has occurred? It will kill me, dear friend, unless you contrive to make him understand reason, for I feel that without him I cannot live. You must have the means of writing to him, you know him, you know his name. In the name of all goodness, send back this key to him with a letter to persuade him to come to the casino to-morrow or on the following day, if it is only to speak to me; and I hope to convince him of my love and my innocence. Rest to-day, dearest, but to-morrow write to him, tell him the whole truth; take pity on your poor friend, and forgive her for loving your lover. I shall write a few lines myself; you will enclose them in your letter. It is my fault if he no longer loves you; you ought to hate me, and yet you are generous enough to love me. I adore you; I have seen his tears, I have seen how well his soul can love; I know him now. I could not have believed that men were able to love so much. I have passed a terrible night. Do not think I am angry, dear friend, because you confided to him that we love one another like two lovers; it does not displease me, and with him it was no indiscretion, because his mind is as free of prejudices as his heart is good.'

"Tears were choking her. I tried to console her, and I most willingly promised her to write to you. She never closed her eyes throughout that day, but I slept soundly for four hours.

"When we got up we found the convent full of bad news, which interested us a great deal more than people imagined. It was reported that, an hour before daybreak, a fishing-boat had been lost in the lagune, that two gondolas had been capsized, and that the people in them had perished. You may imagine our anguish! We dared not ask any questions, but it was just the hour at which you had left me, and we entertained the darkest forebodings. We returned to our room, where M —— M —— fainted away. More courageous than she is, I told her that you were a good swimmer, but I could not allay her anxiety, and she went to bed with a feverish chill. Just at that moment, my aunt, who is of a very cheerful disposition, came in, laughing, to tell us that during the storm the Pierrot who had made us laugh so much had had a narrow escape of being drowned. 'Ah! the poor Pierrot!' I exclaimed, 'tell us all about him, dear aunt. I am very glad he was saved. Who is he? Do you know?' 'Oh! yes,' she answered, 'everything is known, for he was taken home by our gondoliers. One of them has just told me that Pierrot, having spent the night at the Briati ball, did not find any gondola to return to Venice, and that our gondoliers took him for a sequin. One of the men fell into the sea, but then the brave Pierrot, throwing handfuls of silver upon the 'Zenia' pitched the 'felce' over board, and the wind having less hold they reached Venice safely through the Beggars' Canal. This morning the lucky gondoliers divided thirty philippes which they found in the gondola, and they have been fortunate enough to pick up their 'felce'. Pierrot will remember Muran and the ball at Briati. The man says that he is the son of M. de Bragadin, the procurator's brother. He was taken to the palace of that nobleman nearly dead from cold, for he was dressed in light calico, and had no cloak.'

"When my aunt had left us, we looked at one another for several minutes without uttering a word, but we felt that the good news had brought back life to us. M —— M —— asked me whether you were really the son of M, de Bragadin. 'It might be so,' I said to her, 'but his name does not shew my lover to be the bastard of that nobleman, and still less his legitimate child, for M. de Bragadin was never married.' 'I should be very sorry,' said M —— M —— , 'if he were his son.' I thought it right, then, to tell her your true name, and of the application made to my father by M. de Bragadin for my hand, the consequence of which was that I had been shut up in the convent. Therefore, my own darling, your little wife has no longer any secret to keep from M —— M —— , and I hope you will not accuse me of indiscretion, for it is better that our dear friend should know all the truth than only half of it. We have been greatly amused, as you may well suppose, by the certainty with which people say that you spent all the night at the Briati ball. When people do not know everything, they invent, and what might be is often accepted in the place of what is in reality; sometimes it proves very fortunate. At all events the news did a great deal of good to my friend, who is now much better. She has had an excellent night, and the hope of seeing you at the casino has restored all her beauty. She has read this letter three or four times, and has smothered me with kisses. I long to give her the letter which you are going to write to her. The messenger will wait for it. Perhaps I shall see you again at the casino, and in a better temper, I hope. Adieu."

It did not require much argument to conquer me. When I had finished the letter, I was at once the admirer of C —— C —— and the ardent lover of M —— M —— . But, alas! although the fever had left me, I was crippled. Certain that Laura would come again early the next morning, I could not refrain from writing to both of them a short letter, it is true, but long enough to assure them that reason had again taken possession of my poor brain. I wrote to C —— C —— that she had done right in telling her friend my name, the more so that, as I did not attend their church any longer, I had no reason to make a mystery of it. In everything else I freely acknowledged myself in the wrong, and I promised her that I would atone by giving M — M —— the strongest possible proofs of my repentance as soon as I could go again to her casino.

This is the letter that I wrote to my adorable nun:

“I gave C —— C —— the key of your casino, to be returned to you, my own charming friend, because I believed myself trifled with and despised, of malice aforethought, by the woman I worship. In my error I thought myself unworthy of presenting myself before your eyes, and, in spite of love, horror made me shudder. Such was the effect produced upon me by an act which would have appeared to me admirable, if my self-love had not blinded me and upset my reason. But, dearest, to admire it it would have been necessary for my mind to be as noble as yours, and I have proved how far it is from being so. I am inferior to you in all things, except in passionate love, and I will prove it to you at our next meeting, when I will beg on my knees a generous pardon. Believe me, beloved creature, if I wish ardently to recover my health, it is only to have it in my power to prove by my love a thousand times increased, how ashamed I am of my errors. My painful lumbago has alone prevented me from answering your short note yesterday, to express to you my regrets, and the love which has been enhanced in me by your generosity, alas! so badly rewarded. I can assure you that in the lagunes, with death staring me in the face, I regretted no one but you, nothing but having outraged you. But in the fearful danger then threatening me I only saw a punishment from Heaven. If I had not cruelly sent back to you the key of the casino, I should most likely have returned there, and should have avoided the sorrow as well as the physical pains which I am now suffering as an expiation. I thank you a thousand times for having recalled me to myself, and you may be certain that for the future I will keep better control over myself; nothing shall make me doubt your love. But, darling, what do you say of C —— C —— ? Is she not an incarnate angel who can be compared to no one but you? You love us both equally. I am the only one weak and faulty, and you make me ashamed of myself. Yet I feel that I would give my life for her as well as for you. I feel curious about one thing, but I cannot trust it to paper. You will satisfy that curiosity the first time I shall be able to go to the casino before two days at the earliest. I will let you know two days beforehand. In the mean time, I entreat you to think a little of me, and to be certain of my devoted love. Adieu."

The next morning Laura found me sitting up in bed, and in a fair way to recover my health. I requested her to tell C —— C —— that I felt much better, and I gave her the letter I had written. She had brought me one from my dear little wife, in which I found enclosed a note from M —— M —— . Those two letter were full of tender expressions of love, anxiety for my health, and ardent prayers for my recovery.

Six days afterwards, feeling much stronger, I went to Muran, where the keeper of the casino handed me a letter from M —— M —— . She wrote to me how impatient she was for my complete recovery, and how desirous she was to see me in possession of her casino, with all the privileges which she hoped I would retain for ever.

"Let me know, I entreat you," she added, "when we are likely to meet again, either at Muran or in Venice, as you please. Be quite certain that whenever we meet we shall be alone and without a witness."

I answered at once, telling her that we would meet the day after the morrow at her casino, because I wanted to receive her loving absolution in the very spot where I had outraged the most generous of women.

I was longing to see her again, for I was ashamed of my cruel injustice towards her, and panting to atone for my wrongs. Knowing her disposition, and reflecting calmly upon what had taken place, it was now evident to me that what she had done, very far from being a mark of contempt, was the refined effort of a love wholly devoted to me. Since she had found out that I was the lover of her young friend, could she imagine that my heart belonged only to herself? In the same way that her love for me did not prevent her from being compliant with the ambassador, she admitted the possibility of my being the same with C —— C —— . She overlooked the difference of constitution between the two sexes, and the privileges enjoyed by women.

Now that age has whitened my hair and deadened the ardour of my senses, my imagination does not take such a high flight, and I think differently. I am conscious that my beautiful nun sinned against womanly reserve and modesty, the two most beautiful appanages of the fair sex, but if that unique, or at least rare, woman was guilty of an eccentricity which I then thought a virtue, she was at all events exempt from that fearful venom called jealousy — an unhappy passion which devours the miserable being who is labouring under it, and destroys the love that gave it birth.

Two days afterwards, on the 4th of February, 1754, I had the supreme felicity of finding myself again alone with my beloved mistress. She wore the dress of a nun. As we both felt guilty, the moment we saw each other, by a spontaneous movement, we fell both on our knees, folded in each other's arms. We had both ill-treated Love; she had treated him like a child, I had adored him after the fashion of a Jansenist. But where could we have found the proper language for the excuses we had to address to each other for the mutual forgiveness we had to entreat and to grant? Kisses — that mute, yet expressive language, that delicate, voluptuous contact which sends sentiment coursing rapidly through the veins, which expresses at the same time the feeling of the heart and the impressions of the mind — that language was the only one we had recourse to, and without having uttered one syllable, dear reader, oh, how well we agreed!

Both overwhelmed with emotion, longing to give one another some proofs of the sincerity of our reconciliation and of the ardent fire which was consuming us, we rose without unclasping our arms, and falling (a most amorous group!) on the nearest sofa, we remained there until the heaving of a deep sigh which we would not have stopped, even if we had known that it was to be the last!

Thus was completed our happy reconciliation, and the calm infused into the soul by contentment, burst into a hearty laugh when we noticed that I had kept on my cloak and my mask. After we had enjoyed our mirth, I unmasked myself, and I asked her whether it was quite true that no one had witnessed our reconciliation.

She took up one of the candlesticks, and seizing my hand:

“Come,” she said.

She led me to the other end of the room, before a large cupboard which I had already suspected of containing the secret. She opened it, and when she had moved a sliding plank I saw a door through which we entered a pretty closet furnished with everything necessary to a person wishing to pass a few hours there. Near the sofa was a sliding panel. M —— M —— removed it, and through twenty holes placed at a distance from each other I saw every part of the room in which nature and love had performed for our curious friend a play in six acts, during which I did not think he had occasion to be dissatisfied with the actors.

“Now,” said M —— M —— , “I am going to satisfy the curiosity which you were prudent enough not to trust to paper.”

“But you cannot guess….”

“Silence, dearest! Love would not be of divine origin did he not possess the faculty of divination. He knows all, and here is the proof. Do you not wish to know whether my friend was with me during the fatal night which has cost me so many tears?”

“You have guessed rightly.”

“Well, then, he was with me, and you must not be angry, for you then completed your conquest of him. He admired your character, your love, your sentiments, your honesty. He could not help expressing his astonishment at the rectitude of my instinct, or his approval of the passion I felt for you. It was he who consoled me in the morning assuring me that you would certainly come back to me as soon as you knew my real feelings, the loyalty of my intentions and my good faith.”

“But you must often have fallen asleep, for unless excited by some powerful interest, it is impossible to pass eight hours in darkness and in silence.”

“We were moved by the deepest interest: besides, we were in darkness only when we kept these holes open. The plank was on during our supper, and we were listening in religious silence to your slightest whisper. The interest which kept my friend awake was perhaps greater than mine. He told me that he never had had before a better opportunity of studying the human heart, and that you must have passed the most painful night. He truly pitied you.

We were delighted with C —— C —— , for it is indeed wonderful that a young girl of fifteen should reason as she did to justify my conduct, without any other weapons but those given her by nature and truth; she must have the soul of an angel. If you ever marry her, you will have the most heavenly wife. I shall of course feel miserable if I lose her, but your happiness will make amends for all. Do you know, dearest, that I cannot understand how you could fall in love with me after having known her, any more than I can conceive how she does not hate me ever since she has discovered that I have robbed her of your heart. My dear C —— C —— has truly something divine in her disposition. Do you know why she confided to you her barren loves with me? Because, as she told me herself, she wished to ease her conscience, thinking that she was in some measure unfaithful to you."

"Does she think herself bound to be entirely faithful to me, with the knowledge she has now of my own unfaithfulness?"

"She is particularly delicate and conscientious, and though she believes herself truly your wife, she does not think that she has any right to control your actions, but she believes herself bound to give you an account of all she does."

"Noble girl!"

The prudent wife of the door-keeper having brought the supper, we sat down to the well-supplied table. M —— M —— remarked that I had become much thinner.

"The pains of the body do not fatten a man," I said, "and the sufferings of the mind emaciate him. But we have suffered sufficiently, and we must be wise enough never to recall anything which can be painful to us."

"You are quite right, my love; the instants that man is compelled to give up to misfortune or to suffering are as many moments stolen from his life, but he doubles his existence when he has the talent of multiplying his pleasures, no matter of what nature they may be."

We amused ourselves in talking over past dangers, Pierrot's disguise, and the ball at Briati, where she had been told that another Pierrot had made his appearance.

M —— M —— wondered at the extraordinary effect of a disguise, for, said she to me:

"The Pierrot in the parlour of the convent seemed to me taller and thinner than you. If chance had not made you take the convent gondola, if you had not had the strange idea of assuming the disguise of Pierrot, I should not have known who you were, for my friends in the convent would not have been interested in you. I was delighted when I heard that you were not a patrician, as I feared, because, had you been one, I might in time have run some great danger."

I knew very well what she had to fear, but pretending complete ignorance:

"I cannot conceive," I said, "what danger you might run on account of my being a patrician."

"My darling, I cannot speak to you openly, unless you give me your word to do what I am going to ask you."

"How could I hesitate, my love, in doing anything to please you, provided my honour is not implicated? Have we not now everything in common? Speak, idol of my heart, tell me your reasons, and rely upon my love; it is the guarantee of my ready compliance in everything that can give you pleasure:"

"Very well. I want you to give a supper in your casino to me and my friend, who is dying to make your acquaintance."

"And I foresee that after supper you will leave me to go with him."

"You must feel that propriety compels me to do so."

"Your friend already knows, I suppose, who I am?"

"I thought it was right to tell him, because if I had not told him he could not have entertained the hope of supping with you, and especially at your house."

"I understand. I guess your friend is one of the foreign ambassadors."

"Precisely."

"But may I hope that he will so far honour me as to throw up his incognito?"

"That is understood. I shall introduce him to you according to accepted forms, telling his name and his political position."

“Then it is all for the best, darling. How could you suppose that I would have any difficulty in procuring you that pleasure, when on the contrary, nothing could please me more myself? Name the day, and be quite certain that I shall anxiously look for it.”

“I should have been sure of your compliance, if you had not given me cause to doubt it.”

“It is a home-thrust, but I deserve it.”

“And I hope it will not make you angry. Now I am happy. Our friend is M. de Bernis, the French ambassador. He will come masked, and as soon as he shews his features I shall present him to you. Recollect that you must treat him as my lover, but you must not appear to know that he is aware of our intimacy.”

“I understand that very well, and you shall have every reason to be pleased with my urbanity. The idea of that supper is delightful to me, and I hope that the reality will be as agreeable. You were quite right, my love, to dread my being a patrician, for in that case the State-Inquisitors, who very often think of nothing but of making a show of their zeal, would not have failed to meddle with us, and the mere idea of the possible consequences makes me shudder. I under The Leads — you dishonoured — the abbess — the convent! Good God! Yes, if you had told me what you thought, I would have given you my name, and I could have done so all the more easily that my reserve was only caused by the fear of being known, and of C —— C —— being taken to another convent by her father. But can you appoint a day for the supper? I long to have it all arranged.”

“To-day is the fourth; well, then, in four days.”

“That will be the eighth?”

“Exactly so. We will go to your casino after the second ballet. Give me all necessary particulars to enable us to find the house without enquiring from anyone.”

I sat down and I wrote down the most exact particulars to find the casino either by land or by water. Delighted with the prospect of such a party of pleasure, I asked my mistress to go to bed, but I remarked to her that, being convalescent and having made a hearty supper, I should be very likely to pay my first homages to Morpheus. Yielding to the circumstances, she set the alarum for ten o’clock, and we went to bed in the alcove. As soon as we woke up, Love claimed our attention and he had no cause of complaint, but towards midnight we fell asleep, our lips fastened together, and we found ourselves in that position in the morning when we opened our eyes. Although there was no time to lose, we could not make up our minds to part without making one more offering to Venus.

I remained in the casino after the departure of my divinity, and slept until noon. As soon as I had dressed myself, I returned to Venice, and my first care was to give notice to my cook, so that the supper of the 8th of February should be worthy of the guests and worthy of me.

EPISODE 9 — THE FALSE NUN

CHAPTER XXI

Supper at My Casino With M. M. and M. de Bernis, the French Ambassador — A Proposal from M. M.; I Accept It — Consequences — C. C. is Unfaithful to Me, and I Cannot Complain

I felt highly pleased with the supper-party I had arranged with M —— M —— , and I ought to have been happy. Yet I was not so; but whence came the anxiety which was a torment to me? Whence? From my fatal habit of gambling. That passion was rooted in me; to live and to play were to me two identical things, and as I could not hold the bank I would go and punt at the ridotto, where I lost my money morning and night. That state of things made me miserable. Perhaps someone will say to me:

“Why did you play, when there was no need of it, when you were in want of nothing, when you had all the money you could wish to satisfy your fancies?”

That would be a troublesome question if I had not made it a law to tell the truth. Well, then, dear inquisitive reader, if I played with almost the certainty of losing, although no one, perhaps, was more sensible than I was to the losses made in gambling, it is because I had in me the evil spirit of avarice; it is because I loved prodigality, and because my heart bled when I found myself compelled to spend any money that I had not won at the gaming-table. It is an ugly vice, dear reader, I do not deny it. However, all I can say is that, during the four days previous to the supper, I lost all the gold won for me by M —— M ——

On the anxiously-expected day I went to my casino, where at the appointed hour M —— M —— came with her friend, whom she introduced to me as soon as he had taken off his mask.

“I had an ardent wish, sir,” said M. de Bernis to me, “to renew acquaintance with you, since I heard from madame that we had known each other in

Paris.”

With these words he looked at me attentively, as people will do when they are trying to recollect a person whom they have lost sight of. I then told him that we had never spoken to one another, and that he had not seen enough of me to recollect my features now.

“I had the honour,” I added, “to dine with your excellency at M. de Mocenigo’s house, but you talked all the time with Marshal Keith, the Prussian ambassador, and I was not fortunate enough to attract your attention. As you were on the point of leaving Paris to return to Venice, you went away almost immediately after dinner, and I have never had the honour of seeing you since that time.”

“Now I recollect you,” he answered, “and I remember asking whether you were not the secretary of the embassy. But from this day we shall not forget each other again, for the mysteries which unite us are of a nature likely to establish a lasting intimacy between us.”

The amiable couple were not long before they felt thoroughly at ease, and we sat down to supper, of which, of course, I did the honours. The ambassador, a fine connoisseur in wines, found mine excellent, and was delighted to hear that I had them from Count Algarotti, who was reputed as having the best cellar in Venice.

My supper was delicate and abundant, and my manners towards my handsome guests were those of a private individual receiving his sovereign and his mistress. I saw that M —— M —— was charmed with the respect with which I treated her, and with my conversation, which evidently interested the ambassador highly. The serious character of a first meeting did not prevent the utterance of witty jests, for in that respect M. de Bernis was a true Frenchman. I have travelled much, I have deeply studied men, individually and in a body, but I have never met with true sociability except in Frenchmen; they alone know how to jest, and it is rare, delicate, refined jesting, which animates conversation and makes society charming.

During our delightful supper wit was never wanting, and the amiable M —— M —— led the conversation to the romantic combination which had given her occasion to know me. Naturally, she proceeded to speak of my passion for C —— C —— , and she gave such an interesting description of that young girl that the ambassador listened with as much attention as if he had never seen the object of it. But that was his part, for he was not aware that I had been informed of his having witnessed from his hiding-place my silly interview with C —— C —— . He told M —— M —— that he would have been delighted if she had brought her young friend to sup with us.

“That would be running too great a risk,” answered the cunning nun, “but if you approve of it,” she added, looking at me, “I can make you sup with her at my casino, for we sleep in the same room.”

That offer surprised me much, but it was not the moment to shew it, so I replied:

“It is impossible, madam, to add anything to the pleasure of your society, yet I confess I should be pleased if you could contrive to do us that great favour:”

“Well, I will think of it.”

“But,” observed the ambassador, “if I am to be one of the party, I think it would be right to apprize the young lady of it.”

“It is not necessary, for I will write to her to agree to whatever madam may propose to her. I will do so to-morrow.”

I begged the ambassador to prepare himself with a good stock of indulgence for a girl of fifteen who had no experience of the world. In the course of the evening I related the history of O-Morphi, which greatly amused him. He entreated me to let him see her portrait. He informed me that she was still an inmate of the ‘Parc-aux-cerfs’, where she continued to be the delight of Louis XV., to whom she had given a child. My guests left me after midnight, highly pleased, and I remained alone.

The next morning, faithful to the promise I had made to my beautiful nun, I wrote to C —— C —— without informing her that there would be a fourth person at the projected supper, and having given my note to Laura I repaired to Muran, where I found the following letter from M —— M —— :

“I could not sleep soundly, my love, if I did not ease my conscience of an unpleasant weight. Perhaps you did not approve of the ‘partie carree’ with our young friend, and you may not have objected out of mere politeness.

Tell me the truth, dearest, for, should you not look forward to that meeting with pleasure, I can contrive to undo it without implicating you in any way; trust me for that. If, however, you have no objection to the party, it will take place as agreed. Believe me, I love your soul more than your heart — I mean than your person. Adieu."

Her fear was very natural, but out of shamefacedness I did not like to retract. M —— M —— knew me well, and as a skilful tactician she attacked my weak side.

Here is my answer:

"I expected your letter, my best beloved, and you cannot doubt it, because, as you know me thoroughly, you must be aware that I know you as well. Yes, I know your mind, and I know what idea you must entertain of mine, because I have exposed to you all my weakness and irritability by my sophisms. I do penance for it, dearest, when I think that having raised your suspicions your tenderness for me must have been weakened. Forget my visions, I beg, and be quite certain that for the future my soul will be in unison with yours. The supper must take place, it will be a pleasure for me, but let me confess that in accepting it I have shewn myself more grateful than polite. C —— C —— is a novice, and I am not sorry to give her an opportunity of seeing the world. In what school could she learn better than yours? Therefore I recommend her to you, and you will please me much by continuing to shew your care and friendship towards her, and by increasing, if possible, the sum of your goodness. I fear that you may entice her to take the veil, and if she did I would never console myself. Your friend has quite captivated me; he is a superior man, and truly charming."

Thus did I wittingly deprive myself of the power of drawing back, but I was able to realize the full force of the situation. I had no difficulty in guessing that the ambassador was in love with C —— C ——, and that he had confessed as much to M —— M ——, who, not being in a position to object to it, was compelled to shew herself compliant, and to assist him in everything that could render his passion successful. She could certainly not do anything without my consent, and she had evidently considered the affair too delicate to venture upon proposing the party point-blank to me. They had, no doubt, put their heads together, so that by bringing the conversation on that subject I should find myself compelled, for the sake of politeness and perhaps of my inward feelings, to fall into the snare. The ambassador, whose profession it was to carry on intrigues skilfully, had succeeded well, and I had taken the bait as he wished. There was nothing left for me but to put a good face on the matter, not only so as not to shew myself a very silly being, but also in order not to prove myself shamefully ungrateful towards a man who had granted me unheard-of privileges. Nevertheless, the consequence of it all was likely to be some coolness in my feelings towards both my mistresses. M —— M —— had become conscious of this after she had returned to the convent, and wishing to screen herself from all responsibility she had lost no time in writing to me that she would cause the projected supper to be abandoned, in case I should disapprove of it, but she knew very well that I would not accept her offer. Self-love is a stronger passion even than jealousy; it does not allow a man who has some pretension to wit to shew himself jealous, particularly towards a person who is not tainted by that base passion, and has proved it.

The next day, having gone early to the casino, I found the ambassador already there, and he welcomed me in the most friendly manner. He told me that, if he had known me in Paris he would have introduced me at the court, where I should certainly have made my fortune. Now, when I think of that, I say to myself, "That might have been the case, but of what good would it have been to me?" Perhaps I should have fallen a victim of the Revolution, like so many others. M. de Bernis himself would have been one of those victims if Fate had not allowed him to die in Rome in 1794. He died there unhappy, although wealthy, unless his feelings had undergone a complete change before his death, and I do not believe it.

I asked him whether he liked Venice, and he answered that he could not do otherwise than like that city, in which he enjoyed excellent health, and in which, with plenty of money, life could be enjoyed better than anywhere else.

"But I do not expect," he added, "to be allowed to keep this embassy very long. Be kind enough to let that remain between us. I do not wish to make M —— M —— unhappy."

We were conversing in all confidence when M —— M —— arrived with her young friend, who showed her surprise at seeing another man with me, but I encouraged her by the most tender welcome; and she recovered all her composure when she saw the delight of the stranger at being answered by her in good French. It gave us both an opportunity of paying the warmest compliments to the mistress who had taught her so well.

C —— C —— was truly charming; her looks, bright and modest at the same time, seemed to say to me, “You must belong to me:” I wished to see her shine before our friends; and I contrived to conquer a cowardly feeling of jealousy which, in spite of myself, was beginning to get hold of me. I took care to make her talk on such subjects as I knew to be familiar to her. I developed her natural intelligence, and had the satisfaction of seeing her admired.

Applauded, flattered, animated by the satisfaction she could read in my eyes, C —— C —— appeared a prodigy to M. de Bernis, and, oh! what a contradiction of the human heart! I was pleased, yet I trembled lest he should fall in love with her! What an enigma! I was intent myself upon a work which would have caused me to murder any man who dared to undertake it.

During the supper, which was worthy of a king, the ambassador treated C —— C —— with the most delicate attentions. Wit, cheerfulness, decent manners, attended our delightful party, and did not expel the gaiety and the merry jests with which a Frenchman knows how to season every conversation.

An observing critic who, without being acquainted with us, wished to guess whether love was present at our happy party, might have suspected, perhaps, but he certainly could not have affirmed, that it was there. M —— M —— treated the ambassador as a friend. She shewed no other feeling towards me than that of deep esteem, and she behaved to C —— C —— with the tender affection of a sister. M. de Bernis was kind, polite, and amiable with M —— M —— , but he never ceased to take the greatest interest in every word uttered by C —— C —— , who played her part to perfection, because she had only to follow her own nature, and, that nature being beautiful, C —— C —— could not fail to be most charming.

We had passed five delightful hours, and the ambassador seemed more pleased even than any of us. M —— M —— had the air of a person satisfied with her own work, and I was playing the part of an approving spectator. C —— C —— looked highly pleased at having secured the general approbation, and there was, perhaps, a slight feeling of vanity in her arising from the special attention which the ambassador had bestowed on her. She looked at me, smiling, and I could easily understand the language of her soul, by which she wished to tell me that she felt perfectly well the difference between the society in which she was then, and that in which her brother had given us such a disgusting specimen of his depravity.

After midnight it was time to think of our departure, and M. de Bernis undertook all the complimentary part. Thanking M —— M —— for the most agreeable supper he had ever made in his life, he contrived to make her offer a repetition of it for two days afterwards, and he asked me, for the sake of appearance, whether I should not find as much delight in that second meeting as himself. Could he have any doubt of my answering affirmatively? I believe not, for I had placed myself under the necessity of being compliant. All being agreed, we parted company.

The next day, when I thought of that exemplary supper, I had no difficulty in guessing what the ultimate result would be. The ambassador owed his great fortune entirely to the fair sex, because he possessed to the highest degree the art of coddling love; and as his nature was eminently voluptuous he found his advantage in it, because he knew how to call desires into existence, and this procured him enjoyments worthy of his delicate taste. I saw that he was deeply in love with C —— C —— , and I was far from supposing him the man to be satisfied with looking at her lovely eyes. He certainly had some plan arranged, and M —— M —— , in spite of all her honesty, was the prime manager of it. I knew that she would carry it on with such delicate skill that I should not see any evidence of it. Although I did not feel disposed to shew more compliance than was strictly just, I foresaw that in the end I should be the dupe, and my poor C —— C —— the victim, of a cunningly-contrived trick. I could not make up my mind either to consent with a good grace, or to throw obstacles in the way, and, believing my dear little wife incapable of abandoning herself to anything likely to displease me, I allowed myself to be taken off my guard, and to rely upon the difficulty of seducing her. Stupid calculation! Self-love and shamefacedness prevented me from using my common sense. At all events, that intrigue kept me in a state of fever because I was afraid of its consequences, and yet curiosity mastered me to such an extent that I was longing for the result. I knew very well that a second edition of the supper did not imply that the same play would be performed a second time, and I foresaw that the changes would be strongly marked. But I thought myself bound in honour not to retract. I could not lead the intrigue, but I believed myself sufficiently skilful to baffle all their manoeuvrings.

After all those considerations, however, considerations which enabled me to assume the countenance of false bravery, the inexperience of C —— C —— , who, in spite of all the knowledge she had lately acquired, was only a novice, caused me great anxiety. It was easy to abuse her natural wish to be polite, but that fear gave way very soon before the confidence I had in M —— M —— s delicacy. I thought that, having seen how I had spent six hours with that young girl, knowing for a certainty that I intended to marry her, M —— M —— would never be guilty of such base treason. All these thoughts, worthy only of a weak and bashful jealousy, brought no conclusive decision. I had to follow the current and watch events.

At the appointed time I repaired to the casino, where I found my two lovely friends sitting by the fire.

“Good evening, my two divinities, where is our charming Frenchman?”

“He has not arrived yet,” answered M —— M —— , “but he will doubtless soon be here.”

I took off my mask, and sitting between them, I gave them a thousand kisses, taking good care not to shew any preference, and although I knew that they were aware of the unquestionable right I had upon both of them, I kept within the limits of the utmost decency. I congratulated them upon the mutual inclination they felt for each other, and I saw that they were pleased not to have to blush on that account.

More than one hour was spent in gallant and friendly conversation, without my giving any satisfaction to my burning desires. M — M —— attracted me more than C —— C —— , but I would not for the world have offended the charming girl. M —— M —— was beginning to shew some anxiety about the absence of M. de Bernis, when the door-keeper brought her a note from him.

“A courier,” he wrote, “who arrived two hours ago, prevents my being happy to-night, for I am compelled to pass it in answering the dispatches I have received. I trust that you will forgive and pity me. May I hope that you will kindly grant me on Friday the pleasure of which I am so unfortunately deprived to-day? Let me know your answer by to-morrow. I wish ardently, in that case, to find you with the same guests, to whom I beg you will present my affectionate compliments."

"Well," said M —— M —— , "it is not his fault. We will sup without him. Will you come on Friday?"

"Yes, with the greatest pleasure. But what is the matter with you, dear C —— C —— ? You look sad."

"Sad, no, unless it should be for the sake of my friend, for I have never seen a more polite and more obliging gentleman."

"Very well, dear, I am glad he has rendered you so sensible."

"What do you mean? Could anyone be insensible to his merit?"

"Better still, but I agree with you. Only tell me if you love him?"

"Well, even if I loved him, do you think I would go and tell him? Besides, I am certain that he loves my friend."

So saying, she sat down on M —— M — — 's knee, calling her her own little wife, and my two beauties began to bestow on one another caresses which made me laugh heartily. Far from troubling their sport, I excited them, in order to enjoy a spectacle with which I had long been acquainted.

M —— M —— took up a book full of the most lascivious engravings, and said, with a significant glance in my direction:

"Do you wish me to have a fire lighted in the alcove?"

I understood her, and replied:

"You would oblige me, for the bed being large we can all three sleep comfortably in it."

I guessed that she feared my suspecting the ambassador of enjoying from the mysterious closet the sight of our amorous trio, and she wished to destroy that suspicion by her proposal.

The table having been laid in front of the alcove, supper was served, and we all did honour to it. We were all blessed with a devouring appetite. While M

—— M —— was teaching her friend how to mix punch, I was admiring with delight the progress made in beauty by C —— C —— .

“Your bosom,” I said to her, “must have become perfect during the last nine months.”

“It is like mine,” answered M —— M —— , “would you like to see for yourself?”

Of course I did not refuse. M —— M —— unlaced her friend, who made no resistance, and performing afterwards the same office upon herself, in less than two minutes I was admiring four rivals contending for the golden apple like the three goddesses, and which would have set at defiance the handsome Paris himself to adjudge the prize without injustice. Need I say what an ardent fire that ravishing sight sent coursing through my veins? I placed immediately an the table the Academie des Dames, and pointed out a certain position to M —— M —— , who, understanding my wishes, said to C —— C —— :

“Will you, darling, represent that group with me?”

A look of compliance was C —— C — — ‘s only answer; she was not yet inured to amorous pleasures as much as her lovely teacher. While I was laughing with delight, the two friends were getting ready, and in a few minutes we were all three in bed, and in a state of nature. At first, satisfied with enjoying the sight of the barren contest of my two bacchanalians, I was amused by their efforts and by the contrast of colours, for one was dark and the other fair, but soon, excited myself, and consumed by all the fire of voluptuousness, I threw myself upon them, and I made them, one after the other, almost faint away from the excess of love and enjoyment.

Worn out and satiated with pleasure, I invited them to take some rest. We slept until we were awakened by the alarum, which I had taken care to set at four o’clock. We were certain of turning to good account the two hours we had then to spare before parting company, which we did at the dawn of day, humiliated at having to confess our exhaustion, but highly pleased with each other, and longing for a renewal of our delightful pleasures.

The next day, however, when I came to think of that rather too lively night, during which, as is generally the case, Love had routed Reason, I felt some remorse. M —— M —— wanted to convince me of her love, and for that purpose she had combined all the virtues which I attached to my own affection — namely, honour, delicacy, and truth, but her temperament, of which her mind was the slave, carried her towards excess, and she prepared everything in order to give way to it, while she awaited the opportunity of making me her accomplice. She was coaxing love to make it compliant, and to succeed in mastering it, because her heart, enslaved by her senses, never reproached her. She likewise tried to deceive herself by endeavouring to forget that I might complain of having been surprised. She knew that to utter such a complaint I would have to acknowledge myself weaker or less courageous than she was, and she relied upon my being ashamed to make such a confession. I had no doubt whatever that the absence of the ambassador had been arranged and concerted beforehand. I could see still further, for it seemed evident to me that the two conspirators had foreseen that I would guess the artifice, and that, feeling stung to the quick, in spite of all my regrets, I would not shew myself less generous than they had been themselves. The ambassador having first procured me a delightful night, how could I refuse to let him enjoy as pleasant a one? My friends had argued very well, for, in spite of all the objections of my mind, I saw that I could not on my side put any obstacle in their way. C —— C —— was no impediment to them. They were certain of conquering her the moment she was not hindered by my presence. It rested entirely with M —— M —— , who had perfect control over her. Poor girl! I saw her on the high road to debauchery, and it was my own doing! I sighed when I thought how little I had spared them in our last orgie, and what would become of me if both of them should happen to be, by my doing, in such a position as to be compelled to run away from the convent? I could imagine both of them thrown upon my hands, and the prospect was not particularly agreeable. It would be an ‘embarras de richesse’. In this miserable contest between reason and prejudice, between nature and sentiment, I could not make up my mind either to go to the supper or to remain absent from it. “If I go,” said I to myself, “that night will pass with perfect decency, but I shall prove myself very ridiculous, jealous, ungrateful, and even wanting in common politeness: if I remain absent, C —— C —— is lost, at least, in my estimation, for I feel that my love will no longer exist, and then good-bye to all idea of a marriage with her.” In the perplexity of mind in which I found myself, I felt a want of something more certain than mere probabilities to base my decision upon. I put on my mask, and repaired to the mansion of the French ambassador. I addressed myself to the gate-keeper, saying that I had a letter for Versailles, and that I would thank him to deliver it to the courier when he went back to France with his excellency's dispatches.

"But, sir," answered the man, "we have not had a special courier for the last two months:"

"What? Did not a special cabinet messenger arrive here last night?"

"Then he must have come in through the garret window or down the chimney, for, on the word of an honest man, none entered through the gate."

"But the ambassador worked all night?"

"That may be, sir, but not here, for his excellency dined with the Spanish ambassador, and did not return till very late:"

I had guessed rightly. I could no longer entertain any doubt. It was all over; I could not draw back without shame. C —— C —— must resist, if the game was distasteful to her; no violence would of course be offered to her. The die was cast!

Towards evening I went to the casino of Muran, and wrote a short note to M —— M —— , requesting her to excuse me if some important business of M. de Bragadin's prevented me from spending the night with her and with our two friends, to whom I sent my compliments as well as my apologies. After that I returned to Venice, but in rather an unpleasant mood; to divert myself I went to the gaming table, and lost all night.

Two days afterwards, being certain that a letter from M —— M —— awaited me at Muran, I went over, and the door-keeper handed me a parcel in which I found a note from my nun and a letter from C —— C —— , for everything was now in common between them.

Here is C —— C — — 's letter"

"We were very sorry, dearest friend, when we heard that we should not have the happiness of seeing you. My dear M —— M — — 's friend came shortly afterwards, and when he read your note he likewise expressed his deep regret. We expected to have a very dull supper, but the witty sayings of that gentleman enlivened us and you cannot imagine of what follies we were guilty after partaking of some champagne punch. Our friend had become as gay as ourselves, and we spent the night in trios, not very fatiguing, but very pleasant. I can assure you that that man deserves to be loved, but he must acknowledge himself inferior to you in everything. Believe me, dearest, I shall ever love you, and you must for ever remain the master of my heart."

In spite of all my vexation, that letter made me laugh, but the note of M —— M —— was much more singular. Here are the contents of it:

"I am certain, my own beloved, that you told a story out of pure politeness, but you had guessed that I expected you to do so. You have made our friend a splendid present in exchange for the one he made you when he did not object to his M —— M —— bestowing her heart upon you. You possess that heart entirely, dearest, and you would possess it under all circumstances, but how sweet it is to flavour the pleasures of love with the charms of friendship! I was sorry not to see you, but I knew that if you had come we would not have had much enjoyment; for our friend, notwithstanding all his wit, is not exempt from some natural prejudices. As for C —— C —— , her mind is now quite as free of them as our own, and I am glad she owes it to me. You must feel thankful to me for having completed her education, and for rendering her in every way worthy of you. I wish you had been hiding in the closet, where I am certain you would have spent some delightful hours. On Wednesday next I shall be yours, and all alone with you in your casino in Venice; let me know whether you will be at the usual hour near the statue of the hero Colleoni. In case you should be prevented, name any other day."

I had to answer those two letters in the same spirit in which they had been written, and in spite of all the bitter feelings which were then raging in my heart, my answers were to be as sweet as honey. I was in need of great courage, but I said to myself: "George Dandin, tu las voulu!" I could not refuse to pay the penalty of my own deeds, and I have never been able to ascertain whether the shame I felt was what is called shamefacedness. It is a problem which I leave to others.

In my letter to C —— C —— I had the courage, or the effrontery, to congratulate her, and to encourage her to imitate M —— M —— , the best model, I said, I could propose to her.

I wrote to my nun that I would be punctual at the appointment near the statue, and amidst many false compliments, which ought to have betrayed the true state of my heart, I told her that I admired the perfect education she had given to C —— C —— , but that I congratulated myself upon having escaped the torture I should have suffered in the mysterious observatory, for I felt that I could not have borne it.

On the Wednesday I was punctual at the rendezvous, and I had not to wait long for M —— M —— , who came disguised in male attire. “No theatre to-night,” she said to me; “let us go to the ‘ridotto’, to lose or double our money.” She had six hundred sequins. I had about one hundred. Fortune turned her back upon us, and we lost all. I expected that we would then leave that cutthroat place, but M —— M —— , having left me for a minute, came back with three hundred sequins which had been given to her by her friend, whom she knew where to find. That money given by love or by friendship brought her luck for a short time, and she soon won back all we had lost, but in our greediness or imprudence we continued to play, and finally we lost our last sequin.

When we could play no longer, M —— M —— said to me,

“Now that we need not fear thieves, let us go to our supper.”

That woman, religious and a Free-thinker, a libertine and gambler, was wonderful in all she did. She had just lost five hundred pounds, and she was as completely at her ease as if she had won a very large sum. It is true that the money she had just lost had not cost her much.

As soon as we were alone, she found me sad and low-spirited, although I tried hard not to appear so, but, as for her, always the same, she was handsome, brilliant, cheerful, and amorous.

She thought she would bring back my spirits by giving me the fullest particulars of the night she had passed with C —— C —— and her friend, but she ought to have guessed that she was going the wrong way. That is a very common error, it comes from the mind, because people imagine that what they feel themselves others must feel likewise.

I was on thorns, and I tried everything to avoid that subject, and to lead the conversation into a different channel, for the amorous particulars, on which she was dwelling with apparent delight, vexed me greatly, and spite causing coldness, I was afraid of not playing my part very warmly in the amorous contest which was at hand. When a lover doubts his own strength, he may almost always be sure that he will fail in his efforts.

After supper we went to bed in the alcove, where the beauty, the mental and physical charms, the grace and the ardour of my lovely nun, cast all my bad temper to the winds, and soon restored me to my usual good-spirits. The nights being shorter we spent two hours in the most delightful pleasures, and then parted, satisfied and full of love.

Before leaving, M —— M —— asked me to go to her casino, to take some money and to play, taking her for my partner. I did so. I took all the gold I found, and playing the martingale, and doubling my stakes continuously, I won every day during the remainder of the carnival. I was fortunate enough never to lose the sixth card, and, if I had lost it, I should have been without money to play, for I had two thousand sequins on that card. I congratulated myself upon having increased the treasure of my dear mistress, who wrote to me that, for the sake of civility, we ought to have a supper 'en partie carree' on Shrove Monday. I consented.

That supper was the last I ever had in my life with C —— C —— . She was in excellent spirits, but I had made up my mind, and as I paid all my attentions to M —— M —— , C —— C —— imitated my example without difficulty, and she devoted herself wholly to her new lover.

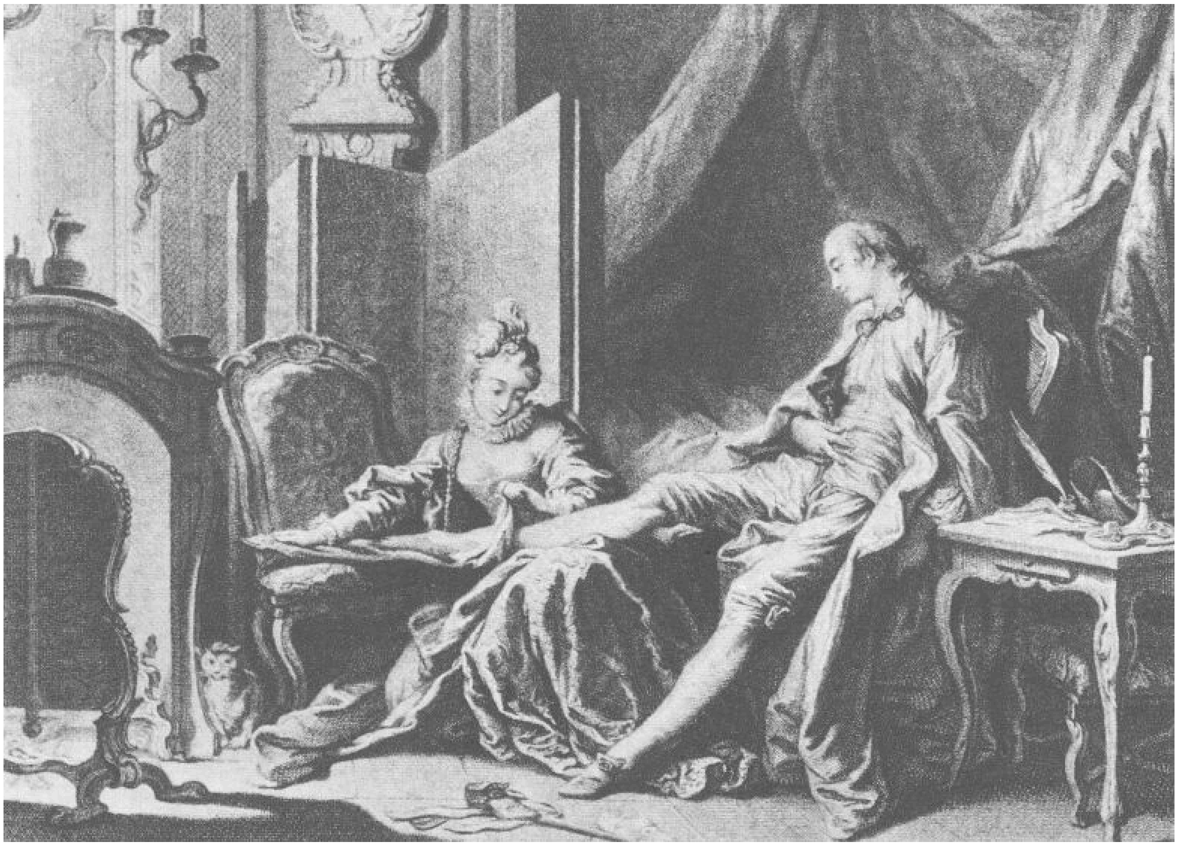
Foreseeing that we would, a little later, be all of us in each other's way, I begged M —— M —— to arrange everything so that we could be apart, and she contrived it marvellously well.

After supper, the ambassador proposed a game of faro, which our beauties did not know; he called for cards, and placed one hundred Louis on the table before him; he dealt, and took care to make C —— C —— win the whole of that sum. It was the best way to make her accept it as pin-money. The young girl, dazzled by so much gold, and not knowing what to do with it, asked her friend to take care of it for her until such time as she should leave the convent to get married.

When the game was over, M —— M —— complained of a headache, and said that she would go to bed in the alcove: she asked me to come and lull her to sleep. We thus left the new lovers free to be as gay as they chose. Six hours afterwards, when the alarum warned us that it was time to part, we found them asleep in each other’s embrace. I had myself passed an amorous and quiet night, pleased with M —— M —— , and with out giving one thought to C —— C —— .

CHAPTER XXII

M. De Bernis Goes Away Leaving Me the Use of His Casino — His Good Advice: How I Follow It — Peril of M. M. and Myself — Mr. Murray, the English Ambassador — Sale of the Casino and End of Our Meetings — Serious Illness of M. M. — Zorzi and Condulmer — Tonnie



Though the infidelities of C —— C —— made me look at her with other eyes than before, and I had now no intention of making her the companion of my life, I could not help feeling that it had rested with me to stop her on the brink of the stream, and I therefore considered it my duty always to be her friend.

If I had been more logical, the resolution I took with respect to her would doubtless have been of another kind. I should have said to myself: After seducing her, I myself have set the example of infidelity; I have bidden her to follow blindly the advice of her friend, although I knew that the advice and the example of M — M —— would end in her ruin; I had insulted, in the most grievous manner, the delicacy of my mistress, and that before her very eyes, and after all this how could I ask a weak woman to do what a man, priding himself on his strength, would shrink from at tempting? I should have stood self-condemned, and have felt that it was my duty to remain the same to her, but flattering myself that I was overcoming mere prejudices, I was in fact that most degraded of slaves, he who uses his strength to crush the weak.

The day after Shrove Tuesday, going to the casino of Muran, I found there a letter from M —— M —— , who gave me two pieces of bad news: that C —— C —— had lost her mother, and that the poor girl was in despair; and that the lay-sister, whose rheum was cured, had returned to take her place. Thus C —— C —— was deprived of her friend at a time when she would have given her consolation, of which she stood in great need. C —— C —— , it seemed, had gone to share the rooms of her aunt, who, being very fond of her, had obtained permission from the superior. This circumstance would prevent the ambassador taking any more suppers with her, and I should have been delighted if chance had put this obstacle in his path a few days sooner.

All these misfortunes seemed of small account com pared with what I was afraid of, for C —— C —— might have to pay the price for her pleasures, and I so far regarded myself as the origin of her unhappiness as to feel bound never to abandon her, and this might have involved me in terrible complications.

M —— M —— asked me to sup with her and her lover on the following Monday. I went and found them both sad — he for the loss of his new mistress, and she because she had no longer a friend to make the seclusion of the convent pleasant.

About midnight M. de Bemis left us, saying in a melancholy manner that he feared he should be obliged to pass several months in Vienna on important diplomatic business. Before parting we agreed to sup together every Friday.

When we were alone M —— M —— told me that the ambassador would be obliged to me if in the future I would come to the casino two hours later. I understood that the good-natured and witty profligate had a very natural prejudice against indulging his amorous feelings except when he was certain of being alone.

M. de Bemis came to all our suppers till he left for Vienna, and always went away at midnight. He no longer made use of his hiding-place, partly because we now only lay in the recess, and partly because, having had time to make love before my arrival, his desires were appeased. M —— M —— always found me amorous. My love, indeed, was even hotter than it had been, since, only seeing her once a week and remaining faithful to her, I had always an abundant harvest to gather in. C —— C — — 's letters which she brought to me softened me to tears, for she said that after the loss of her mother she could not count upon the friendship of any of her relations. She called me her sole friend, her only protector, and in speaking of her grief in not being able to see me any more whilst she remained in the convent, she begged me to remain faithful to her dear friend.

On Good Friday, when I got to the casino, I found the lovers over-whelmed with grief. Supper was served, but the ambassador, downcast and absent, neither ate nor spoke; and M —— M —— was like a statue that moves at intervals by some mechanism. Good sense and ordinary politeness prevented me from asking any questions, but on M —— M —— leaving us together, M. de Bemis told me that she was distressed, and with reason, since he was obliged to set out for Vienna fifteen days after Easter. "I may tell you confidentially," he added, "that I believe I shall scarcely be able to return, but she must not be told, as she would be in despair." M —— M —— came back in a few minutes, but it was easy to see that she had been weeping.

After some commonplace conversation, M. de Bernis, seeing M —— M —— still low-spirited, said,

"Do not grieve thus, sweetheart, go I must, but my return is a matter of equal certainty when I have finished the important business which summons me to Vienna. You will still have the casino, but, dearest, both friendship and prudence make me advise you not to come here in my absence, for after I have left Venice I cannot depend upon the faith of the gondoliers in my service, and I suspect our friend here cannot flatter himself on his ability to get reliable ones. I may also tell you that I have strong reasons for suspecting that our intercourse is known to the State Inquisitors, who conceal their knowledge for political reasons, but I fancy the secret would soon come to light when I am no longer here, and when the nun who connives at your departure from the convent knows that it is no longer for me that you leave it. The only people whom I would trust are the housekeeper and his wife. I shall order them, before I go, to look upon our friend here as myself, and you can make your arrangements with them. I trust all will go well till my return, if you will only behave discreetly. I will write to you under cover of the housekeeper, his wife will give you my letters as before, and in the same way you may reply. I must needs go, dearest one, but my heart is with you, and I leave you, till my return, in the hands of a friend, whom I rejoice to have known. He loves you, he has a heart and knowledge of the world, and he will not let you make any mistakes."

M —— M —— was so affected by what the ambassador had said that she entreated us to let her go, as she wished to be alone and to lie down. As she went we agreed to sup together on the following Thursday.

As soon as we were alone the ambassador impressed me with the absolute necessity of concealing from her that he was going to return no more. "I am going," said he, "to work in concert with the Austrian cabinet on a treaty which will be the talk of Europe. I entreat you to write to me unreservedly, and as a friend, and if you love our common mistress, have a care for her honour, and above all have the strength of mind to resist all projects which are certain to involve you in misfortune, and which will be equally fatal to both. You know what happened to Madame de Riva, a nun in the convent of St. —— . She had to disappear after it became known that she was with child, and M. de Frulai, my predecessor, went mad, and died shortly after. J. J. Rousseau told me that he died of poison, but he is a visionary who sees the black side of everything. For my part, I believe that he died of grief at not being able to do anything for the unfortunate woman, who afterwards procured a dispensation from her vows from the Pope, and having got married is now living at Padua without any position in society.

"Let the prudent and loyal friend master the lover: go and see M —— M —— sometimes in the parlour of the convent, but not here, or the boatmen will betray you. The knowledge which we both have that the girls are in a satisfactory condition is a great alleviation to my distress, but you must confess that you have been very imprudent. You have risked a terrible misfortune; consider the position you would have been in, for I am sure you would not have abandoned her. She had an idea that the danger might be overcome by means of drugs but I convinced her that she was mistaken. In God's name, be discreet in the future, and write to me fully, for I shall always be interested in her fate, both from duty and sentiment."

We returned together to Venice, where we separated, and I passed the rest of the night in great distress. In the morning I wrote to the fair afflicted, and whilst endeavouring to console her to the best of my ability, I tried to impress on her the necessity for prudence and the avoidance of such escapades as might eventually ruin us.

Next day I received her reply, every word of which spelt despair. Nature had given her a disposition which had become so intensified by indulgence that the cloister was unbearable to her, and I foresaw the hard fights I should have to undergo.

We saw each other the Thursday after Easter, and I told her that I should not come to the casino before midnight. She had had four hours to pass with her lover in tears and regrets, amongst which she had often cursed her cruel fate and the foolish resolution which made her take the veil. We supped together, and although the meal was a rich and delicate one we did it little honour. When we had finished, the ambassador left, entreating me to remain, which I did, without thinking at all of the pleasures of a party of two, for Love lighteth not his torch at the hearts of two lovers who are full of grief and sorrow. M —— M —— had grown thin, and her condition excited my pity and shut out all other feelings. I held her a long time in my arms, covering her with tender and affectionate kisses, but I shewed no intention of consoling her by amusements in which her spirit could not have taken part. She said, before we parted, that I had shewn myself a true lover, and she asked me to consider myself from henceforth as her only friend and protector.

Next week, when we were together as usual, M. de Bemis called the housekeeper just before supper, and in his presence executed a deed in my behalf, which he made him sign. In this document he transferred to me all rights over the contents of the casino, and charged him to consider me in all things as his master.

We arranged to sup together two days after, to make our farewells, but on my arrival I found by herself, standing up, and pale as death, or rather as white as a statue of Carrara marble.

“He is gone,” she said, “and he leaves me to your care. Fatal being, whom perchance I shall see no more, whom I thought I loved but as a friend, now you are lost to me I see my mistake. Before I knew him I was not happy, but neither was I unhappy as I now am.”

I passed the whole night beside her, striving by the most delicate attentions to soften her grief, but with out success. Her character, as abandoned to sorrow as to pleasure, was displayed to me during that long and weary night. She told me at what hour I should come to the convent parlour, the next day, and on my arrival I was delighted to find her not quite so sad. She shewed me a letter which her lover had written to her from Trevisa, and she then told me that I must come and see her twice a week, warning me that she would be accompanied sometimes by one nun and sometimes by another, for she foresaw that my visits would become the talk of the convent, when it became known that I was the individual who used to go to mass at their church. She therefore told me to give in another name, to prevent C —— C — — ‘s aunt from becoming suspicious.

“Nevertheless,” she added, “this will not prevent my coming alone when I have any matter of importance to communicate to you. Promise me, sweetheart, to sup and sleep at the casino at least once a week, and write me a note each time by the housekeeper’s wife.”

I made no difficulty in promising her that much.

We thus passed a fortnight quietly enough, as she was happy again, and her amorous inclinations had returned in full force. About this time she gave me a piece of news which delighted me — namely, that C —— C —— had no longer anything to fear.

Full of amorous wishes and having to be content with the teasing pleasure of seeing one another through a wretched grating, we racked our brains to find out some way to be alone together to do what we liked, without any risk.

“I am assured,” she said, “of the good faith of the gardener’s sister. I can go out and come in without fear of being seen, for the little door leading to the convent is not overlooked by any window — indeed it is thought to be walled up. Nobody can see me crossing the garden to the little stream, which is considered unnavigable. All we want is a one-oared gondola, and I cannot believe that with the help of money you will be unable to find a boatman on whom we may rely.”

I understood from these expressions that she suspected me of becoming cold towards her, and this suspicion pierced me to the heart.

“Listen,” said I, “I will be the boatman myself. I will come to the quay, pass by the little door, and you shall lead me to your room where I will pass the whole night with you, and the day, too, if you think you can hide me.”

“That plan,” said she, “makes me shudder. I tremble at the danger to which you might be exposed. No, I should be too unfortunate if I were to be the cause of your misfortune, but, as you can row, come in the boat, let me know the time as closely as possible; the trusty woman will be on the watch, and I will not keep you four minutes waiting. I will get into the boat, we will go to our beloved casino, and then we shall be happy without fearing anything.”

“I will think it over”

The way I took to satisfy her was as follows: I bought a small boat, and without telling her I went one night all by myself round the island to inspect the walls of the convent on the side of the lagune. With some difficulty I made out a little door, which I judged to be the only one by which she could pass, but to go from there to the casino was no small matter, since one was obliged to fetch a wide course, and with one oar I could not do the passage in less than a quarter of an hour, and that with much toil. Nevertheless, feeling sure of success, I told my pretty nun of the plan, and never was news received with so much pleasure. We set our watches together, and fixed our meeting for the Friday following.

On the day appointed, an hour before sunset, I betook myself to St. Francis de la Vigne, where I kept my boat, and having set it in order and dressed myself as a boatman, I got upon the poop and held a straight course for the little door, which opened the moment I arrived. M —— M —— came out wrapped in a cloak, and someone shutting the door after her she got on board my frail bark, and in a quarter of an hour we were at the casino. M —— M —— made haste to go in, but I stayed to belay my boat with a lock and chain against thieves, who pass the night pleasantly by stealing whatever they can lay hands on.

Though I had rowed easily enough, I was in a bath of perspiration, which, however, by no means hindered my charming mistress from falling on my neck; the pleasure of meeting seemed to challenge her love, and, proud of what I had done, I enjoyed her transports.

Not dreaming that I should have any occasion for a change of linen, I had brought none with me, but she soon found a cure for this defect; for after having undressed me she dried me lovingly, gave me one of her smocks, and I found myself dressed to admiration.

We had been too long deprived of our amorous pleasures to think of taking supper before we had offered a plenteous sacrifice to love. We spent two hours in the sweetest of intoxications, our bliss seeming more acute than at our first meeting. In spite of the fire which consumed me, in spite of the ardour of my mistress, I was sufficiently master of myself to disappoint her at the critical moment, for the picture which our friend had drawn was always before my eyes. M —— M —— , joyous and wanton, having me for the first time in the character of boatman, augmented our delights by her amorous caprices, but it was useless for her to try to add fuel to my flame, since I loved her better than myself.

The night was short, for she was obliged to return at three in the morning, and it struck one as we sat down to table. As the climax of ill luck a storm came on whilst we were at supper. Our hair stood on end; our only hope was founded in the nature of these squalls, which seldom last more than an hour. We were in hopes, also, that it would not leave behind it too strong a wind, as is sometimes the case, for though I was strong and sturdy I was far from having the skill or experience of a professional boatman.

In less than half an hour the storm became violent, one flash of lightning followed another, the thunder roared, and the wind grew to a gale. Yet after a heavy rain, in less than an hour, the sky cleared, but there was no moon, it being the day after the Ascension. Two o’clock stuck. I put my head out at the window, but perceive that a contrary gale is blowing.

‘Ma tiranno del mar Libecchio resta.’

This Libecchio which Ariosto calls — and with good reason — the tyrant of the sea, is the southwesterly wind, which is commonly called ‘Garbin’ at Venice. I said nothing, but I was frightened. I told my sweetheart that we must needs sacrifice an hour of pleasure, since prudence would have it so.

“Let us set out forthwith, for if the gale gets stronger I shall not be able to double the island.”

She saw my advice was not to be questioned, and taking the key of her strong box, whence she desired to get some money, she was delighted to find her store increased fourfold. She thanked me for having told her nothing about it, assuring me she would have of me nothing but my heart, and following me she got into my boat and lay down at full length so as not to hinder its motion, I got upon the poop, as full of fear as courage, and in five minutes I had the good luck to double the point. But there it was that the tyrant was waiting for me, and it was not long before I felt that my strength would not outlast that of the winds. I rowed with all my strength, but all I could do was to prevent my boat from going back. For half an hour I was in this pitiful state, and I felt my strength failing without daring to say a word. I was out of breath, but could not rest a moment, since the least relaxation would have let the boat slip a far way back, and this would have been a distance hard to recover. M —— M —— lay still and silent, for she perceived I had no breath wherewith to answer her. I began to give ourselves up as lost.

At that instant I saw in the distance a barque coming swiftly towards us. What a piece of luck! I waited till she caught us up, for if I had not done so I should not have been able to make myself heard, but as soon as I saw her at my left hand, twelve feet off, I shouted, “Help! I will give two sequins!”

They lowered sail and came towards me, and on their hailing me I asked for a man to take us to the opposite point of the island. They asked a sequin in advance, I gave it them, and promised the other to the man who would get on my poop and help me to make the point. In less than ten minutes we were opposite to the little stream leading to the convent, but the secret of it was too dear to be hazarded, so as soon as we reached the point I paid my preserver and sent him back. Henceforth the wind was in our favour, and we soon got to the little door, where M —— M —— landed, saying to me, “Go and sleep in the casino." I thought her advice wise, and I followed it, and having the wind behind me I got to the casino without trouble, and slept till broad day. As soon as I had risen I wrote to my dear mistress that I was well, and that we should see each other at the grating. Having taken my boat back to St. Francis, I put on my mask and went to Liston.

In the morning M —— M —— came to the grating by herself, and we made all such observations as our adventures of the night would be likely to suggest, but in place of deciding to follow the advice which prudence should have given us-namely, not to expose ourselves to danger for the future, we thought ourselves extremely prudent in resolving that if we were again threatened by a storm we would set out as soon as we saw it rising. All the same we had to confess that if chance had not thrown the barque in our way we should have been obliged to return to the casino, for M —— M —— could not have got to the convent, and how could she ever have entered its walls again? I should have been forced to leave Venice with her, and that for ever. My life would have been finally and irretrievably linked with hers, and, without doubt, the various adventures which at the age of seventy-two years impel me to write these Memoirs, would never have taken place.

For the next three months we continued to meet each other once a week, always amorous, and never disturbed by the slightest accidents.

M —— M —— could not resist giving the ambassador a full account of our adventures, and I had promised to write to him, and always to write the whole truth. He replied by congratulating us on our good fortune, but he prophesied inevitable disaster if we had not the prudence to stop our intercourse.

Mr. Murray, the English ambassador, a witty and handsome man, and a great amateur of the fair sex, wine, and good cheer, then kept the fair Ancilla, who introduced me to him. This fine fellow became my friend in much the same way as M. de Bernis, the only difference being that the Frenchman liked to look on while the Englishman preferred to give the show. I was never unwelcome at their amorous battles, and the voluptuous Ancilla was delighted to have me for a witness. I never gave them the pleasure of mingling in the strife. I loved M —— M ——, but I should avow that my fidelity to her was not entirely dependent on my love. Though

Ancilla was handsome she inspired me with repugnance, for she was always hoarse, and complained of a sharp pain in the throat, and though her lover kept well, I was afraid of her, and not without cause, for the disease which ended the days of Francis I. of France brought her to the grave in the following autumn. A quarter of an hour before she died, her brave Briton, yielding to the lascivious requests of this new Messalina, offered in my presence the last sacrifice, in spite of a large sore on her face which made her look hideous.

This truly heroic action was known all over the town, and it was Murray himself who made it known, citing me as his witness.

This famous courtezan, whose beauty was justly celebrated, feeling herself eaten away by an internal disease, promised to give a hundred louis to a doctor named Lucchesi, who by dint of mercury undertook to cure her, but Ancilla specified on the agreement that she was not to pay the aforesaid sum till Lucchesi had offered with her an amorous sacrifice.

The doctor having done his business as well as he could wished to be paid without submitting to the conditions of the treaty, but Ancilla held her ground, and the matter was brought before a magistrate.

In England, where all agreements are binding, Ancilla would have won her case, but at Venice she lost it.

The judge, in giving sentence, said a condition, criminal per se, not fulfilled, did not invalidate an agreement — a sentence abounding in wisdom, especially in this instance.

Two months before this woman had become disgusting, my friend M. Memmo, afterwards procurator, asked me to take him to her house. In the height of the conversation, what should come but a gondola, and we saw Count Rosemberg, the ambassador from Vienna, getting out of it. M. Memmo was thunderstruck (for a Venetian noble conversing with a foreign ambassador becomes guilty of treason to the state), and ran in hot haste from Ancilla’s room, I after him, but on the stair he met the ambassador, who, seeing his distress, burst into a laugh, and passed on. I got directly into M. Memmo’s gondola, and we went forthwith to M. Cavalli, secretary to the State Inquisitors. M. Memmo could have taken no better course to avoid the troublesome consequences which this fatal meeting might have had, and he was very glad that I was with him to testify to his innocence and to the harmlessness of the occurrence.

M. Cavalli received M. Memmo with a smile, and told him he did well to come to confession without wasting any time. M. Memmo, much astonished at this reception, told him the brief history of the meeting, and the secretary replied with a grave air that he had no doubt as to the truth of his story, as the circumstances were in perfect correspondence with what he knew of the matter.

We came away extremely puzzled at the secretary's reply, and discussed the subject for some time, but then we came to the conclusion that M. Cavalli could have had no positive knowledge of the matter before we came, and that he only spoke as he did from the instinct of an Inquisitor, who likes it to be understood that nothing is hid from him for a moment.

After the death of Ancilla, Mr. Murray remained without a titular mistress, but, fluttering about like a butterfly, he had, one after another, the prettiest girls in Venice. This good-natured Epicurean set out for Constantinople two years later, and was for twenty years the ambassador of the Court of St. James at the Sublime Porte. He returned to Venice in 1778 with the intention of ending his days there, far from affairs of state, but he died in the lazaretto eight days before the completion of his quarantine.

At play fortune continued to favour me; my commerce with M —— M —— could not be discovered now that I was my own waterman; and the nuns who were in the secret were too deeply involved not to keep it. I led them a merry life, but I foresaw that as soon as M. de Bernis decided to let M —— M —— know that he would not return to Venice, he would recall his people, and we should then have the casino no longer. I knew, besides, that when the rough season came on it would be impossible for me by myself to continue our voyages.

The first Monday in October, when the theatres are opened and masks may be worn, I went to St. Francis to get my boat, and thence to Muran for my mistress, afterwards making for the casino. The nights were now long enough for us to have ample time for enjoyment, so we began by making an excellent supper, and then devoted ourselves to the worship of Love and Sleep. Suddenly, in the midst of a moment of ecstasy, I heard a noise in the direction of the canal, which aroused my suspicions, and I rushed to the window. What was my astonishment and anger to see a large boat taking mine in tow! Nevertheless, without giving way to my passion, I shouted to the robbers that I would give them ten sequins if they would be kind enough to return me my boat.

A shout of laughter was all the reply they made, and not believing what I said they continued their course. What was I to do? I dared not cry, “Stop thief!” and not being endued with the power of walking on the water dry-footed, I could not give chase to the robbers. I was in the utmost distress, and for the moment M —— M —— shewed signs of terror, for she did not see how I could remedy this disaster.

I dressed myself hastily, giving no more thoughts to love, my only comfort being that I had still two hours to get the indispensable boat, should it cost me a hundred sequins. I should have been in no perplexity if I had been able to take one, but the gondoliers would infallibly make proclamation over the whole of Muran that they had taken a nun to such a convent, and all would have been lost.

The only way, then, that was open to me was either to buy a boat or to steal one. I put my pistols and dagger in my pocket, took some money, and with an oar on my shoulder set out.

The robbers had filed the chain of my boat with a silent file; this I could not do, and I could only reckon on having the good luck to find a boat moored with cords.

Coming to the large bridge I saw boats and to spare, but there were people on the quay, and I would not risk taking one. Seeing a tavern open at the end of the quay I ran like a madman, and asked if there were any boatmen there; the drawer told me there were two, but that they were drunk. I came up to them, and said, “Who will take me to Venice for eighty sous?”

“I,” and “I”; and they began to quarrel as to who should go. I quieted them by giving forty sous to the more drunken of the two, and I went out with the other.

As soon as we were on our way, I said,

“You are too drunk to take me, lend me your boat, and I will give it you back to-morrow.”

"I don't know you."

"I will deposit ten sequins, but your boat is not worth that. Who will be your surety?"

He took me back to the tavern, and the drawer went bail for him. Well pleased, I took my man to the boat, and having furnished it with a second oar and two poles he went away, chuckling at having made a good bargain, while I was as glad to have had the worst of it. I had been an hour away, and on entering the casino found my dear M —— M —— in an agony, but as soon as she saw my beaming face all the laughter came back on hers. I took her to the convent, and then went to St. Francis, where the keeper of the boathouse looked as if he thought me a fool, when I told him that I had trucked away my boat for the one I had with me. I put on my mask, and went forthwith to my lodging and to bed, for these annoyances had been too much for me.

About this time my destiny made me acquainted with a nobleman called Mark Antony Zorzi, a man of parts and famous for his skill in writing verses in the Venetian dialect. Zorzi, who was very fond of the play, and desired to offer a sacrifice to Thalia, wrote a comedy which the audience took the liberty of hissing; but having persuaded himself that his piece only failed through the conspiracies of the Abbe Chiari, who wrote for the Theatre of St. Angelo, he declared open war against all the abbe's plays.

I felt no reluctance whatever to visit M. Zorzi, for he possessed an excellent cook and a charming wife. He knew that I did not care for Chiari as an author, and M. Zorzi had in his pay people who, without pity, rhyme, or reason, hissed all the compositions of the ecclesiastical playwright. My part was to criticise them in hammer verses — a kind of doggerel then much in fashion, and Zorzi took care to distribute my lucubrations far and wide. These manoeuvres made me a powerful enemy in the person of M. Condulmer, who liked me none the better for having all the appearance of being in high favour with Madame Zorzi, to whom before my appearance he had paid diligent court. This M. Condulmer was to be excused for not caring for me, for, having a large share in the St. Angelo Theatre, the failure of the abbe's pieces was a loss to him, as the boxes had to be let at a very low rent, and all men are governed by interested motives.

This M. Condulmer was sixty years old, but with all the greenness of youth he was still fond of women, gaming, and money, and he was, in fact, a money-lender, but he knew how to pass for a saint, as he took care to go to mass every morning at St. Mark's, and never omitted to shed tears before the crucifix. The following year he was made a councillor, and in that capacity he was for eight months a State Inquisitor. Having thus attained this diabolically-eminent, or eminently-diabolical, position, he had not much difficulty in shewing his colleagues the necessity of putting me under The Leads as a disturber of the peace of the Republic. In the beginning of the winter the astounding news of the treaty between France and Austria was divulged — a treaty by which the political balance was entirely readjusted, and which was received with incredulity by the Powers. The whole of Italy had reason to rejoice, for the treaty guarded that fair land from becoming the theatre of war on the slightest difference which might arise between the two Powers. What astonished the most acute was that this wonderful treaty was conceived and carried out by a young ambassador who had hitherto been famed only as a wit. The first foundations had been laid in 1750 by Madame de Pompadour, Count Canes (who was created a prince), and M. l'Abbe de Bernis, who was not known till the following year, when the king made him ambassador to Venice. The House of Bourbon and the House of Hapsburg had been foes for two hundred and forty years when this famous treaty was concluded, but it only lasted for forty years, and it is not likely that any treaty will last longer between two courts so essentially opposed to one another.

The Abbe de Bernis was created minister for foreign affairs some time after the ratification of the treaty; three years after he re-established the parliament, became a cardinal, was disgraced, and finally sent to Rome, where he died. 'Mors ultimo linea rerum est'.

Affairs fell out as I had foreseen, for nine months after he left Venice he conveyed to M —— M —— the news of his recall, though he did it in the most delicate manner. Nevertheless, M —— M —— felt the blow so severely that she would very possibly have succumbed, had I not been preparing her for it in every way I could think of M. de Bernis sent me all instructions.

He directed that all the contents of the casino should be sold and the proceeds given to M —— M —— , with the exception of the books and prints which the housekeeper was ordered to bring to Paris. It was a nice breviary for a cardinal, but would to God they had nothing worse!

Whilst M —— M —— abandoned herself to grief I carried out the orders of M. de Bernis, and by the middle of January we had no longer a casino. She kept by her two thousand sequins and her pearls, intending to sell them later on to buy herself an annuity.

We were now only able to see each other at the grating; and soon, worn with grief, she fell dangerously ill, and on the 2nd of February I recognized in her features the symptoms of approaching death. She sent me her jewel-case, with all her diamonds and nearly all her money, all the scandalous books she possessed, and all her letters, telling me that if she did not die I was to return her the whole, but that all belonged to me if, as she thought, she should succumb to the disease. She also told me that C —— C —— was aware of her state, and asked me to take pity on her and write to her, as my letters were her only comfort, and that she hoped to have strength to read them till her latest breath.

I burst into tears, for I loved her passionately, and I promised her to come and live in Muran until she recovered her health.

Having placed the property in a gondola, I went to the Bragadin Palace to deposit it, and then returned to Muran to get Laura to find me a furnished room where I could live as I liked. “I know of a good room, with meals provided,” she said; “you will be quite comfortable and will get it cheaply, and if you like to pay in advance, you need not even say who you are. The old man to whom the house belongs lives on the ground floor; he will give you all the keys and if you like you need see no one.”

She gave me the address, and I went there on the spot, and having found everything to my liking I paid a month in advance and the thing was done. It was a little house at the end of a blind alley abutting on the canal. I returned to Laura’s house to tell her that I wanted a servant to get my food and to make my bed, and she promised to get me one by the next day.

Having set all in order for my new lodging, I returned to Venice and packed my mails as if I were about to make a long journey. After supper I took leave of M. de Bragadin and of his two friends, telling them that I was going to be away for several weeks on important business.

Next day, going to my new room, I was surprised to find there Tonine, Laura's daughter, a pretty girl not more than fifteen years old, who told me with a blush, but with more spirit than I gave her credit for, that she would serve me as well as her mother would have done.

I was in too much distress to thank Laura for this pretty present, and I even determined that her daughter should not stay in my service. We know how much such resolutions are commonly worth. In the meanwhile I was kind to the girl: "I am sure," I said, "of your goodwill, but I must talk to your mother. I must be alone," I added, "as I have to write all day, and I shall not take anything till the evening." She then gave me a letter, begging pardon for not having given it me sooner. "You must never forget to deliver messages," I said, "for if you had waited any longer before bringing me this letter, it might have had the most serious consequences." She blushed, begged pardon, and went out of the room. The letter was from C —— C —— , who told me that her friend was in bed, and that the doctor had pronounced her illness to be fever. I passed the rest of the day in putting my room in order, and in writing to C —— C —— and her suffering friend.

Towards evening Tonine brought in the candles, and told me that my supper was ready. "Follow me," I said. Seeing that she had only laid supper for one — a pleasing proof of her modesty, I told her to get another knife and fork, as I wished her always to take her meals with me. I can give no account of my motives. I only wished to be kind to her, and I did everything in good faith. By and by, reader, we shall see whether this is not one of the devices by which the devil compasses his ends.

Not having any appetite, I ate little, but I thought everything good with the exception of the wine; but Tonine promised to get some better by the next day, and when supper was over she went to sleep in the ante-room.

After sealing my letters, wishing to know whether the outer door was locked, I went out and saw Tonine in bed, sleeping peacefully, or pretending to do so. I might have suspected her thoughts, but I had never been in a similar situation, and I measured the extremity of my grief by the indifference with which I looked at this girl; she was pretty, but for all that I felt that neither she nor I ran any risk.

Next day, waking very early, I called her, and she came in neatly dressed. I gave her my letter to C —— C —— , which enclosed the letter to M ——

M —— , telling her to take it to her mother and then to return to make my coffee.

“I shall dine at noon, Tonine,” I said, “take care to get what is necessary in good time.”

“Sir, I prepared yesterday’s supper myself, and if you like I can cook all your meals.”

“I am satisfied with your abilities, go on, and here is a sequin for expenses.”

“I still have a hundred and twenty sous remaining from the one you gave me yesterday, and that will be enough.”

“No, they are for yourself, and I shall give you as much every day.”

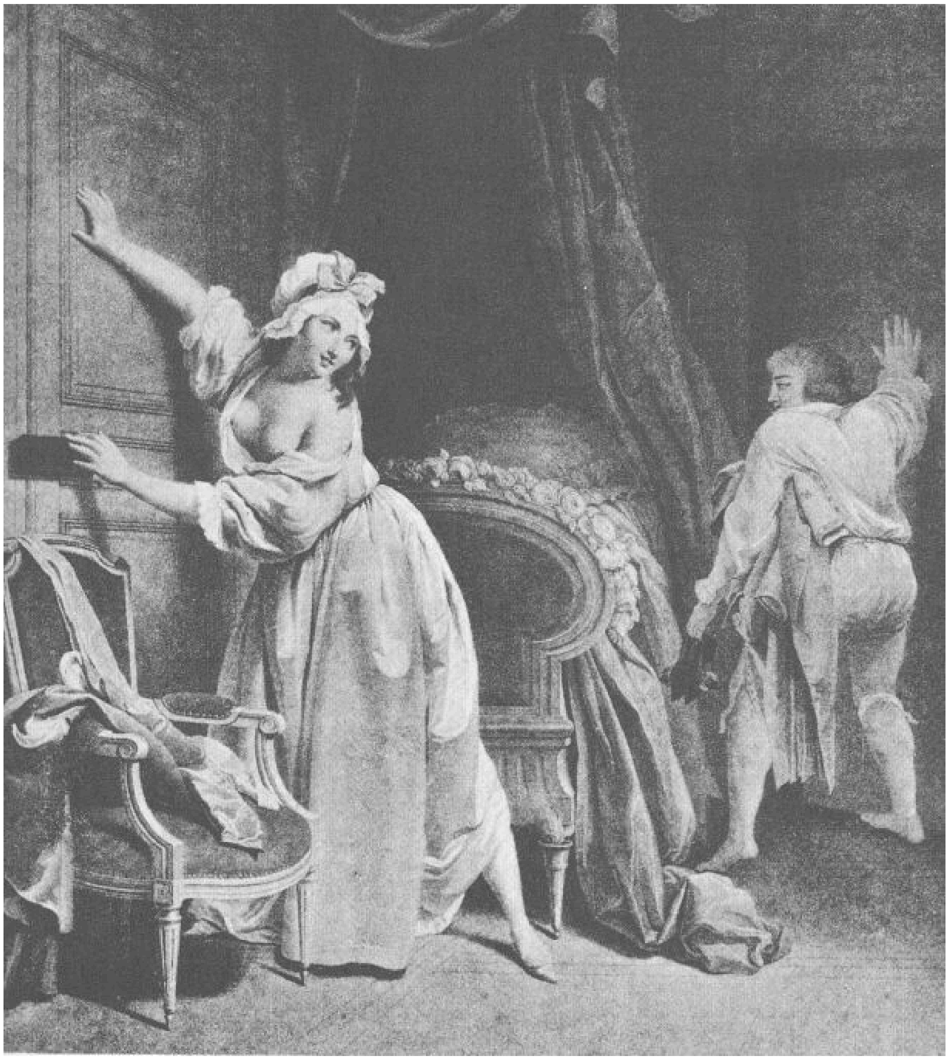
Her delight was so great that I could not prevent her covering my hand with kisses. I took care to draw it back and not to kiss her in return, for I felt as if I should be obliged to laugh, and this would have dishonoured my grief.

The second day passed like the first. Tonine was glad that I said no more about speaking to her mother, and drew the conclusion that her services were agreeable to me. Feeling tired and weak, and fearing that I should not wake early enough to send the letter to the convent, but not wishing to rouse Tonine if she were asleep, I called her softly. She rose immediately and came into my room with nothing on but a slight petticoat. Pretending to see nothing, I gave her my letter, and told her to take it to her mother in the morning before she came into my room. She went out, saying that my instructions should be carried out, but as soon as she was gone I could not resist saying to myself that she was very pretty; and I felt both sad and ashamed at the reflection that this girl could very easily console me. I hugged my grief, and I determined to separate myself from a being who made me forget it.

“In the morning,” I said, “I will tell Laura to get me something less seducing;” but the night brought counsel, and in the morning I put on the armour of sophism, telling myself that my weakness was no fault of the girl’s, and that it would therefore be unjust to punish her for it. We shall see, dear reader, how all this ended.

CHAPTER XXIII

Continues the Preceding Chapter — M. M. Recovers — I Return to Venice — Tonine Consoles Me — Decrease of My Love For M. M. — Doctor Righelini — Curious Conversation With Him — How This Conversation Affected M. M. — Mr. Murray Undeceived and Avenged



Tontine had what is called tact and common sense, and thinking these qualities were required in our economy she behaved with great delicacy, not going to bed before receiving my letters, and never coming into my room except in a proper dress, and all this pleased me. For a fortnight M —— M —— was so ill that I expected every moment to hear the news of her death. On Shrove Tuesday C —— C —— wrote that her friend was not strong enough to read my letter, and that she was going to receive ‘extreme unction’. This news so shocked me that I could not rise, and passed the whole day in weeping and writing, Tonine not leaving me till midnight. I could not sleep. On Ash Wednesday I got a letter, in which C —— C —— told me that the doctor had no hopes for her friend, and that he only gave her a fortnight to live. A low fever was wasting her away, her weakness was extreme, and she could scarcely swallow a little broth. She had also the misfortune to be harassed by her confessor, who made her foretaste all the terrors of death. I could only solace my grief by writing, and Tonine now and again made bold to observe that I was cherishing my grief, and that it would be the death of me. I knew myself that I was making my anguish more poignant, and that keeping to my bed, continued writing, and no food, would finally drive me mad. I had told my grief to poor Tonine, whose chief duty was to wipe away my tears. She had compassion on me.

A few days later, after assuring C —— C —— that if our friend died I should not survive her, I asked her to tell M —— M —— that if she wanted me to take care of my life she must promise to let me carry her off on her recovery.

“I have,” I said, “four thousand sequins and her diamonds, which are worth six thousand; we should, therefore, have a sufficient sum to enable us to live honourably in any part of Europe.”

C —— C —— wrote to me on the following day, and said that my mistress, after hearing my letter read, had fallen into a kind of convulsion, and, becoming delirious, she talked incessantly in French for three whole hours in a fashion which would have made all the nuns take to their heels, if they had understood her. I was in despair, and was nearly raving as wildly as my poor nun. Her delirium lasted three days, and as soon as she got back her reason she charged her young friend to tell me that she was sure to get well if I promised to keep to my word, and to carry her off as soon as her health would allow. I hastened to reply that if I lived she might be sure my promise would be fulfilled.

Thus continuing to deceive each other in all good faith, we got better, for every letter from C —— C —— , telling me how the convalescence of her friend was progressing, was to me as balm. And as my mind grew more composed my appetite also grew better, and my health improving day by day, I soon, though quite unconsciously, began to take pleasure in the simple ways of Tonine, who now never left me at night before she saw that I was asleep.

Towards the end of March M —— M —— wrote to me herself, saying that she believed herself out of danger, and that by taking care she hoped to be able to leave her room after Easter. I replied that I should not leave Muran till I had the pleasure of seeing her at the grating, where, without hurrying ourselves, we could plan the execution of our scheme.

It was now seven weeks since M. de Bragadin had seen me, and thinking that he would be getting anxious I resolved to go and see him that very day. Telling Tonine that I should not be back till the evening, I started for Venice without a cloak, for having gone to Muran masked I had forgotten to take one. I had spent forty-eight days without going out of my room, chiefly in tears and distress, and without taking any food. I had just gone through an experience which flattered my self-esteem. I had been served by a girl who would have passed for a beauty anywhere in Europe. She was gentle, thoughtful, and delicate, and without being taxed with foppishness I think I may say that, if she was not in love with me, she was at all events inclined to please me to the utmost of her ability; for all that I had been able to withstand her youthful charms, and I now scarcely dreaded them. Seeing her every day, I had dispersed my amorous fancies, and friendship and gratitude seemed to have vanquished all other feelings, for I was obliged to confess that this charming girl had lavished on me the most tender and assiduous care.

She had passed whole nights on a chair by my bedside, tending me like a mother, and never giving me the slightest cause for complaint.

Never had I given her a kiss, never had I allowed myself to undress in her presence, and never (with one exception) had she come into my room without being properly dressed. For all that, I knew that I had fought a battle, and I felt inclined to boast at having won the victory. There was only one circumstance that vexed me — namely, that I was nearly certain that neither M. M. nor C. C. would consider such continence to be within the bounds of possibility, if they heard of it, and that Laura herself, to whom her daughter would tell the whole story, would be sceptical, though she might out of kindness pretend to believe it all.

I got to M. de Bragadin's just as the soup was being served. He welcomed me heartily, and was delighted at having foreseen that I should thus surprise them. Besides my two other old friends, there were De la Haye, Bavois, and Dr. Righelini at table.

"What! you without a cloak!" said M. Dandolo.

"Yes," said I; "for having gone out with my mask on I forgot to bring one:"

At this they laughed, and, without putting myself out, I sat down. No one asked where I had been so long, for it was understood that that question should be left to me to answer or not. Nevertheless, De la Haye, who was bursting with curiosity, could not refrain from breaking some jests on me.

"You have got so thin," said he, "that uncharitable people will be rather hard on you."

"I trust they will not say that I have been passing my time with the Jesuits."

"You are sarcastic. They may say, perhaps, that you have passed your time in a hot-house under the influence of Mercury."

"Don't be afraid, sir, for to escape this hasty judgment I shall go back this evening."

"No, no, I am quite sure you will not."

"Believe me, sir," said I, with a bantering tone, "that I deem your opinion of too much consequence not to be governed by it."

Seeing that I was in earnest, my friends were angry with him; and the Aristarchus was in some confusion.

Righelini, who was one of Murray's intimate friends, said to me in a friendly way that he had been longing to tell Murray of my re-appearance, and of the falsity of all the reports about me.

“We will go to sup with him,” said I, “and I will return after supper.”

Seeing that M. de Bragadin and his two friends were uneasy about me, I promised to dine with them on April 25th, St. Mark’s Day.

As soon as Mr. Murray saw me, he fell on my neck and embraced me. He introduced me to his wife, who asked me to supper with great politeness. After Murray had told me the innumerable stories which had been made about my disappearance, he asked me if I knew a little story by the Abbe Chiari, which had come out at the end of the carnival. As I said that I knew nothing about it, he gave me a copy, telling me that I should like it. He was right. It was a satire in which the Zorzi clique was pulled to pieces, and in which I played a very poor part. I did not read it till some time after, and in the mean time put it in my pocket. After a very good supper I took a gondola to return to Muran.

It was midnight and very dark, so that I did not perceive the gondola to be ill covered and in wretched order. A fine rain was falling when I got in, and the drops getting larger I was soon wet to the skin. No great harm was done, as I was close to my quarters. I groped my way upstairs and knocked at the door of the ante-room, where Tonine, who had not waited for me, was sleeping. Awake in a moment she came to open the door in her smock, and without a light. As I wanted one, I told her to get the flint and steel, which she did, warning me in a modest voice that she was not dressed. “That’s of no consequence,” said I, “provided you are covered.” She said no more, and soon lighted a candle, but she could not help laughing when she saw me dripping wet.

“I only want you, my dear,” said I, “to dry my hair.” She quickly set to work with powder and powder-puff in hand, but her smock was short and loose at the top, and I repented, rather too late, that I had not given her time to dress. I felt that all was lost, all the more as having to use both her hands she could not hold her smock and conceal two swelling spheres more seductive than the apples of the Hesperides. How could I help seeing them? I shut my eyes and, said “For shame!” but I gave in at last, and fixed such a hungry gaze upon poor Tonine that she blushed. “Come,” said I, “take your smock between your teeth and then I shall see no more.” But it was worse than before, and I had only added fuel to the fire; for, as the veil was short, I could see the bases and almost the frieze of two marble columns; and at this sight I gave a voluptuous cry. Not knowing how to conceal everything from my gaze, Tonine let herself fall on the sofa, and I, my passions at fever-heat, stood beside her, not knowing what to do.

“Well,” she said, “shall I go and dress myself and then do your hair?”

“No, come and sit on my knee, and cover my eyes with your hands.” She came obediently, but the die was cast, and my resistance overcome. I clasped her between my arms, and without any more thoughts of playing at blind man’s buff I threw her on the bed and covered her with kisses. And as I swore that I would always love her, she opened her arms to receive me in a way that shewed how long she had been waiting for this moment.

I plucked the rose, and then, as ever, I thought it the rarest I had ever gathered since I had laboured in the harvest of the fruitful fields of love.

When I awoke in the morning I found myself more deeply in love with Tonine than I had been with any other woman. She had got up without waking me, but as soon as she heard me stirring she came, and I tenderly chid her for not waiting for me to give her good morrow. Without answering she gave me M —— M — — ‘s letter. I thanked her, but putting the letter on one side I took her in my arms, and set her by my side. “What a wonder!” cried Tonine. “You are not in a hurry to read that letter! Faithless man, why did you not let me cure you six weeks ago. How lucky I am; thanks to the rain! I do not blame you, dear, but love me as you love her who writes to you every day, and I shall be satisfied.”

“Do you know who she is?”

“She lives in a boarding-house, and is as beautiful as an angel; but she is there, and I am here. You are my master, and I will be your servant as long as you like.”

I was glad to leave her in error, and swore an ever-lasting love; but during our conversation she had let herself drop down in the bottom of the bed, and I entreated her to lie down again; but she said that on the contrary it was time for me to get up for dinner, for she wanted to give me a dainty meal cooked in the Venetian manner.

“Who is the cook?” said I.

“I am, and I have been using all my skill on it since five, when I got up.”

“What time is it now, then?”

“Past one.”

The girl astonished me. She was no longer the shy Tonine of last night; she had that exultant air which happiness bestows, and the look of pleasure which the delights of love give to a young beauty. I could not understand how I had escaped from doing homage to her beauty when I first saw her at her mother’s house. But I was then too deeply in love with C —— C —— ; I was in too great distress; and, moreover, Tonine was then unformed. I got up, and making her bring me a cup of coffee I asked her to keep the dinner back for a couple of hours.

I found M —— M — — ‘s letter affectionate, but not so interesting as it would have been the day before. I set myself to answer it, and was almost thunderstruck to find the task, for the first time, a painful one. However, my short journey to Venice supplied me with talk which covered four pages.

I had an exquisite dinner with my charming Tonine. Looking at her as at the same time my wife, my mistress, and my housekeeper, I was delighted to find myself made happy at such a cheap rate. We spent the whole day at the table talking of our love, and giving each other a thousand little marks of it; for there is no such rich and pleasant matter for conversation as when they who talk are parties to an amorous suit. She told with charming simplicity that she knew perfectly well that she could not make me amorous of her, because I loved another, and that her only hope was therefore in a surprise, and that she had foreseen the happy moment when I told her that she need not dress herself to light a candle.

Tonine was naturally quick-witted, but she did not know either how to read or to write. She was enchanted to see herself become rich (for she thought herself so) without a soul at Muran being able to breathe a word against her honour. I passed three weeks in the company of this delightful girl — weeks which I still reckon among the happiest of my life; and what embitters my old age is that, having a heart as warm as ever, I have no longer the strength necessary to secure a single day as blissful as those which I owed to this charming girl.

Towards the end of April I saw M. M. at the grating, looking thin and much changed, but out of danger. I therefore returned to Venice. In my interview, calling my attachment and tender feelings to my aid, I succeeded in behaving myself in such wise that she could not possibly detect the change which a new love had worked in my heart. I shall be, I trust, easily believed when I say that I was not imprudent enough to let her suspect that I had given up the idea of escaping with her, upon which she counted more than ever. I was afraid lest she should fall ill again, if I took this hope away from her. I kept my casino, which cost me little, and as I went to see M. M. twice a week I slept there on those occasions, and made love with my dashing Tonine.

Having kept my word with my friends by dining with them on St. Mark's Day, I went with Dr. Righelini to the parlour of the Vierges to see the taking of the veil.

The Convent of the Vierges is within the jurisdiction of the Doge, whom the nuns style "Most Serene Father." They all belong to the first families in Venice.

While I was praising the beauty of Mother M —— E —— to Dr. Righelini, he whispered to me that he could get her me for a money payment, if I were curious in the matter. A hundred sequins for her and ten sequins for the go-between was the price fixed on. He assured me that Murray had had her, and could have her again. Seeing my surprise, he added that there was not a nun whom one could not have by paying for her: that Murray had the courage to disburse five hundred sequins for a nun of Muran — a rare beauty, who was afterwards the mistress of the French ambassador.

Though my passion for M —— M —— was on the wane, I felt my heart gripped as by a hand of ice, and it was with the greatest difficulty that I made no sign. Notwithstanding, I took the story for an atrocious calumny, but yet the matter was too near my heart for me to delay in bringing it to light at the earliest opportunity. I therefore replied to Righelini in the calmest manner possible, that one or two nuns might be had for money, but that it could happen very rarely on account of the difficulties in most convents.

"As for the nun of Muran, justly famous for her beauty, if she be M —— M —— , nun of the convent…, I not only disbelieve that Murray ever had her, but I am sure she was never the French ambassador's mistress. If he knew her it could only have been at the grating, where I really cannot say what happens."

Righelini, who was an honourable and spirited man, answered me coldly that the English ambassador was a man of his word, and that he had the story from his own lips.

"If Mr. Murray," he continued, "had not told it me under the seal of secrecy I would make him tell it you himself. I shall be obliged if you will take care that he never knows I told you of it."

"You may rely on my discretion."

The same evening, supping at Murray's casino with Righelini, having the matter at heart, and seeing before me the two men who could clear up everything to my satisfaction, I began to speak with enthusiasm of the beauty of M —— E —— , whom I had seen at the Vierges.

Here the ambassador struck in, taking the ball on the hop:

"Between friends," said he, "you can get yourself the enjoyment of those charms, if you are willing to sacrifice a sum of money — not too much, either, but you must have the key."

"Do you think you have it?"

"No, I am sure; and had less trouble than you might suppose."

"If you are sure; I congratulate you, and doubt no more. I envy your fortune, for I don't believe a more perfect beauty could be found in all the convents of Venice."

"There you are wrong. Mother M —— M —— , at —— in Muran, is certainly handsomer."

"I have heard her talked of and I have seen her once, but I do not think it possible that she can be procured for money."

"I think so," said he, laughing, "and when I think I mostly have good reasons."

"You surprise me; but all the same I don't mind betting you are deceived."

"You would lose. As you have only seen her once, I suppose you would not recognize her portrait?"

“I should, indeed, as her face left a strong impression on my mind.”

“Wait a minute.”

He got up from the table, went out, and returned a minute after with a box containing eight or ten miniatures, all in the same style, namely, with hair in disorder and bare necks.

“These,” said I, “are rare charms, with which you have doubtless a near acquaintance?”

“Yes, and if you recognize any of them be discreet.”

“You need not be afraid. Here are three I recognize, and this looks like M —— M —— ; but confess that you may have been deceived — at least, that you did not have her in the convent or here, for there are women like her.”

“Why do you think I have been deceived? I have had her here in her religious habit, and I have spent a whole night with her; and it was to her individually that I sent a purse containing five hundred sequins. I gave fifty to the good procurer.”

“You have, I suppose, visited her in the parlour, after having her here?”

“No, never, as she was afraid her titular lover might hear of it. You know that was the French ambassador.”

“But she only saw him in the parlour.”

“She used to go to his house in secular dress whenever he wanted her. I was told that by the man who brought her here.”

“Have you had her several times?”

“Only once and that was enough, but I can have her whenever I like for a hundred sequins.”

“All that may be the truth, but I would wager five hundred sequins that you have been deceived.”

“You shall have your answer in three days.”

I was perfectly certain, I repeat, that the whole affair was a piece of knavery; but it was necessary to have it proved, and I shuddered when the thought came into my head that after all it might be a true story. In this case

I should have been freed from a good many obligations, but I was strongly persuaded of her innocence. At all events, if I were to find her guilty (which was amongst possible occurrences), I resigned myself to lose five hundred sequins as the price of this horrible discovery and addition to my experience of life. I was full of restless anguish — the worst, perhaps, of the torments of the mind. If the honest Englishman had been the victim of a mystification, or rather knavery, my regard for M —— M — — ‘s honour compelled me to find a way to undeceive him without compromising her; and such was my plan, and thus fortune favoured me. Three or four days after, Mr. Murray told the doctor that he wished to see me. We went to him, and he greeted me thus:

“I have won; for a hundred sequins I can have the fair nun!

“Alas!” said I, “there go my five hundred sequins.”

“No, not five hundred, my dear fellow, for I should be ashamed to win so much of you, but the hundred she would cost me. If I win, you shall pay for my pleasure, and if I lose I shall give her nothing.”

“How is the problem to be solved?” “My Mercury tells me that we must wait for a day when masks are worn. He is endeavouring at present to find out a way to convince both of us; for otherwise neither you nor I would feel compelled to pay the wager, and if I really have M. M. my honour would not allow me to let her suspect that I had betrayed the secret.”

“No, that would be an unpardonable crime. Hear my plan, which will satisfy us both; for after it has been carried out each of us will be sure that he has fairly won or fairly lost.

“As soon as you have possessed yourself of the real or pretended nun, leave her on some pretext, and meet me in a place to be agreed upon. We will then go together to the convent, and I will ask for M. M.

“Will seeing her and speaking to her convince you that the woman you have left at home is a mere impostor?”

“Perfectly, and I shall pay my wager with the greatest willingness.”

“I may say the same. If, when I summon M. M. to the parlour, the lay-sister tells us she is ill or busy, we will go, and the wager will be yours; you will sup with the fair, and I will go elsewhere.”

"So be it; but since all this will be at nighttime, it is possible that when you ask for her, the sister will tell you that no one can be seen at such an hour."

"Then I shall lose."

"You are quite sure, then, that if she be in the convent she will come down?"

"That's my business. I repeat, if you don't speak to her, I shall hold myself to have lost a hundred sequins, or a thousand if you like."

"One can't speak plainer than that, my dear fellow, and I thank you beforehand."

"The only thing I ask you is to come sharp to time; and not to come too late for a convent."

"Will an hour after sunset suit you?"

"Admirably."

"I shall also make it my business to compel my masked mistress to stop where she is, even though it be M. M. herself."

"Some won't have long to wait, if you will take her to a casino which I myself possess at Muran, and where I secretly keep a girl of whom I am amorous. I will take care that she shall not be there on the appointed day, and I will give you the key of the casino. I shall also see that you find a delicate cold supper ready."

"That is admirable, but I must be able to point out the place to my Mercury."

"True! I will give you a supper to-morrow, the greatest secrecy to be observed between us. We will go to my casino in a gondola, and after supper we will go out by the street door; thus you will know the way by land and water. You will only have to tell the procurer the name of the canal and of the house, and on the day fixed you shall have the key. You will only find there an old man who lives on the ground floor, and he will see neither those who go out nor those who come in. My sweetheart will see nothing and will not be seen; and all, trust me, will turn out well."

"I begin to think that I have lost my bet," said the Englishman, who was delighted with the plan; "but it matters not, I can gaily encounter either loss or gain.” We made our appointment for the next day, and separated.

On the following morning I went to Muran to warn Tonine that I was going to sup with her, and to bring two of my friends; and as my English friend paid as great court to Bacchus as to Cupid, I took care to send my little housekeeper several bottles of excellent wine.

Charmed with the prospect of doing the honours of the table, Tonine only asked me if my friends would go away after supper. I said yes, and this reply made her happy; she only cared for the dessert.

After leaving her I went to the convent and passed an hour with M. M. in the parlour. I was glad to see that she was getting back her health and her beauty every day, and having complimented her upon it I returned to Venice. In the evening my two friends kept their appointments to the minute, and we went to my little casino at two hours after sunset.

Our supper was delicious, and my Tonine charmed me with the gracefulness of her carriage. I was delighted to see Righelini enchanted, and the ambassador dumb with admiration. When I was in love I did not encourage my friends to cajole my sweetheart, but I became full of complaisance when time had cooled the heat of my passion.

We parted about midnight, and having taken Mr. Murray to the spot where I was to wait for him on the day of trial, I returned to compliment my charming Tonine as she deserved. She praised my two friends, and could not express her surprise at seeing our English friend going away, fresh and nimble on his feet, notwithstanding his having emptied by himself six bottles of my best wine. Murray looked like a fine Bacchus after Rubens.

On Whit Sunday Righelini came to tell me that the English ambassador had made all arrangements with the pretended procurer of M. M. for Whit Tuesday. I gave him the keys of my abode at Muran, and told him to assure Murray that I would keep the appointment at the exact time arranged upon.

My impatience brought on palpitation of the heart, which was extremely painful, and I passed the two nights without closing an eye; for although I was convinced of M —— M — — ‘s innocence, my agitation was extreme. But whence all this anxiety? Merely from a desire to see the ambassador undeceived. M. M. must in his eyes have seemed a common prostitute, and the moment in which he would be obliged to confess himself the victim of roguery would re-establish the honour of the nun.

Mr. Murray was as impatient as myself, with this difference, that whereas he, looking upon the adventure as a comic one, only laughed, I who found it too tragic shuddered with indignation.

On Tuesday morning I went to Muran to tell Tonine to get a cold supper after my instruction, to lay the table for two, to get wax lights ready, and having sent in several bottles of wine I bade her keep to the room occupied by the old landlord, and not to come out till the people who were coming in the evening were gone. She promised to do so, and asked no questions. After leaving her I went to the convent parlour, and asked to see M —— M —— . Not expecting to see me, she asked me why I had not gone to the pageant of the Bucentaur, which, the weather being favourable, would set out on this day. I do not know what I answered, but I know that she found my words little to the purpose. I came at last to the important point, and told her I was going to ask a favour of her, on which my peace of mind depended, but which she must grant blindly without asking any questions.

“Tell me what I am to do, sweetheart,” said she, “and be sure I will refuse nothing which may be in my power.”

“I shall be here this evening an hour after sunset, and ask for you at this grating; come. I shall be with another man, to whom I beg of you to say a few words of politeness; you can then leave us. Let us find some pretext to justify the unseasonable hour.”

“I will do what you ask, but you cannot imagine how troublesome it is in a convent, for at six o’clock the parlours are shut up and the keys are taken to the abbess’ room. However, as you only want me for five minutes, I will tell the abbess that I am expecting a letter from my brother, and that it can be sent to me on this evening only. You must give me a letter that the nun who will be with me may be able to say that I have not been guilty of deception.”

“You will not come alone, then?”

“I should not dare even to ask for such a privilege.”

“Very good, but try to come with some old nun who is short-sighted.”

“I will keep the light in the background.”

“Pray do not do so, my beloved; on the contrary, place it so that you may be distinctly seen.”

“All this is very strange, but I have promised passive obedience, and I will come down with two lights. May I hope that you will explain this riddle to me at your next interview?”

“By to-morrow, at latest, you shall know the whole story.”

“My curiosity will prevent me from sleeping.”

“Not so, dear heart; sleep peacefully, and be sure of my gratitude.”

The reader will think that after this conversation my heart was perfectly at rest; but how far was I from resting! I returned to Venice, tortured lest I should be told in the evening at the door of the cathedral, where we were to meet, that the nun had been obliged to put off her appointment. If that had happened, I should not have exactly suspected M —— M —— , but the ambassador would have thought that I had caused the scheme to miscarry. It is certain that in that case I should not have taken my man to the parlour, but should have gone there sadly by myself.

I passed the whole day in these torments, thinking it would never come to an end, and in the evening I put a letter in my pocket, and went to my post at the hour agreed upon.

Fortunately, Murray kept the appointment exactly.

“Is the nun there?” said I, as soon as he was near me.

“Yes, my dear fellow. We will go, if you like, to the parlour; but you will find that we shall be told she is ill or engaged. If you like, the bet shall be off.”

“God forbid, my dear fellow! I cling to that hundred ducats. Let us be gone.”

We presented ourselves at the wicket, and I asked for M —— M —— , and the doorkeeper made me breathe again by saying that I was expected. I entered the parlour with my English friend, and saw that it was lighted by four candles. I cannot recall these moments without being in love with life. I take note not only of my noble mistress’s innocence, but also of the quickness of her wit. Murray remained serious, without a smile on his face. Full of grace and beauty, M —— M —— came into the room with a lay-sister, each of them holding a candlestick. She paid me a compliment in good French; I gave her the letter, and looking at the address and the seal she put it in her pocket. After thanking me and saying she would reply in due course, she turned towards my companion:

“I shall, perhaps, make you lose the first act of the opera,” said she.

“The pleasure of seeing you, madam, is worth all the operas in the world.”

“You are English, I think?”

“Yes, madam.”

“The English are now the greatest people in the world, because they are free and powerful. Gentlemen, I wish you a very good evening.”

I had never seen M —— M —— looking so beautiful as then, and I went out of the parlour ablaze with love, and glad as I had never been before. I walked with long strides towards my casino, without taking notice of the ambassador, who did not hurry himself in following me; I waited for him at my door.

“Well,” said I, “are you convinced now that you have been cheated?”

“Be quiet, we have time enough to talk about that. Let us go upstairs.”

“Shall I come?”

“Do. What do you think I could do by myself for four hours with that creature who is waiting for me? We will amuse ourselves with her.”

“Had we not better turn her out?”

“No; her master is coming for her at two o’clock in the morning. She would go and warn him, and he would escape my vengeance. We will throw them both out of the window.”

“Be moderate, for M —— M —— s honour depends on the secrecy we observe. Let us go upstairs. We shall have some fun. I should like to see the hussy.”

Murray was the first to enter the room. As soon as the girl saw me, she threw her handkerchief over her face, and told the ambassador that such behaviour was unworthy of him. He made no answer. She was not so tall as M —— M —— , and she spoke bad French.

Her cloak and mask were on the bed, but she was dressed as a nun. As I wanted to see her face, I politely asked her to do me the favour of shewing it.

“I don’t know you,” said she; “who are you?”

“You are in my house, and don’t know who I am?”

“I am in your house because I have been betrayed. I did not think that I should have to do with a scoundrel.”

At this word Murray commanded her to be silent, calling her by the name of her honourable business; and the slut got up to take her cloak, saying she would go. Murray pushed her back, and told her that she would have to wait for her worthy friend, warning her to make no noise if she wanted to keep out of prison.

“Put me in prison!”

With this she directed her hand towards her dress, but I rushed forward and seized one hand while Murray mastered the other. We pushed her back on a chair while we possessed ourselves of the pistols she carried in her pockets.

Murray tore away the front of her holy habit, and I extracted a stiletto eight inches long, the false nun weeping bitterly all the time.

“Will you hold your tongue, and keep quiet till Capsucefalo comes,” said the ambassador, “or go to prison?”

“If I keep quiet what will become of me?”

“I promise to let you go.”

“With him?”

“Perhaps.”

“Very well, then, I will keep quiet.”

“Have you got any more weapons?”

Hereupon the slut took off her habit and her petticoat, and if we had allowed her she would have soon been in a state of nature, no doubt in the expectation of our passions granting what our reason refused. I was much astonished to find in her only a false resemblance to M.M. I remarked as much to the ambassador, who agreed with me, but made me confess that most men, prepossessed with the idea that they were going to see M. M., would have fallen into the same trap. In fact, the longing to possess one's self of a nun who has renounced all the pleasures of the world, and especially that of cohabitation with the other sex, is the very apple of Eve, and is more delightful from the very difficulty of penetrating the convent grating.

Few of my readers will fail to testify that the sweetest pleasures are those which are hardest to be won, and that the prize, to obtain which one would risk one's life, would often pass unnoticed if it were freely offered without difficulty or hazard.

In the following chapter, dear reader, you will see the end of this farcical adventure. In the mean time, let us take a little breath.

CHAPTER XXIV

Pleasant Ending of the Adventure of the False Nun — M. M. Finds Out That I Have d Mistress — She is Avenged on the Wretch Capsucefalo — I Ruin Myself at Play, and at the Suggestion of M. M. I Sell all Her Diamonds, One After Another — I Hand Over Tonine to Murray, Who Makes Provision for Her — Her Sister Barberine Takes Her Place.

“How did you make this nice acquaintance?” I asked the ambassador.

“Six months ago,” he replied, “while standing at the convent gate with Mr. Smith, our consul, in whose company I had been to see some ceremony or other, I remarked to him, as we were talking over some nuns we had noticed, ‘I would gladly give five hundred sequins for a few hours of Sister M —— M —— s company.’ Count Capsucefalo heard what I said, but made no remark. Mr. Smith answered that one could only see her at the grating as did the ambassador of France, who often came to visit her. Capsucefalo called on me the next morning, and said that if I had spoken in good faith he was sure he could get me a night with the nun in whatever place I liked, if she could count on my secrecy. ‘I have just been speaking to her,’ said he, ‘and on my mentioning your name she said she had noticed you with Mr. Smith, and vowed she would sup with you more for love than money. ‘I,’ said the rascal, ‘am the only man she trusts, and I take her to the French ambassador’s casino in Venice whenever she wants to go there. You need not be afraid of being cheated, as you will give the money to her personally when you have possessed yourself of her.’ With this he took her portrait from his pocket and shewed it me; and here it is. I bought it of him two days after I believed myself to have spent a night with the charming nun, and a fortnight after our conversation. This beauty here came masked in a nun’s habit, and I was fool enough to think I had got a treasure. I am vexed with myself for not having suspected the cheat — at all events, when

I saw her hair, as I know that nuns' hair should be cut short. But when I said something about it to the hussy, she told me they were allowed to keep their hair under their caps, and I was weak enough to believe her."

I knew that on this particular Murray had not been deceived, but I did not feel compelled to tell him so then and there.

I held the portrait Murray had given me in my hand, and compared it with the face before me. In the portrait the breast was bare, and as I was remarking that painters did those parts as best they could, the impudent wench seized the opportunity to shew me that the miniature was faithful to nature. I turned my back upon her with an expression of contempt which would have mortified her, if these creatures were ever capable of shame. As we talked things over, I could not help laughing at the axiom, Things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another, for the miniature was like M. M. and like the courtezan, and yet the two women were not like each other. Murray agreed with me, and we spent an hour in a philosophical discussion on the matter. As the false M. M. was named Innocente, we expressed a wish to know how her name agreed with her profession, and how the knave had induced her to play the part she had taken; and she told us the following story:

"I have known Count Capsucefalo for two years, and have found him useful, for, though he has given me no money, he has made me profit largely through the people he has introduced to me. About the end of last autumn he came to me one day, and said that if I could make up as a nun with some clothes he would get me, and in that character pass a night with an Englishman, I should be the better by five hundred sequins. 'You need not be afraid of anything,' said he, 'as I myself will take you to the casino where the dupe will be awaiting you, and I will come and take you back to your imaginary convent towards the end of the night. He shewed me how I must behave, and told me what to reply if my lover asked any questions about the discipline of the convent.

"I liked the plot, gentlemen, and I told him I was ready to carry it out. And be pleased to consider that there are not many women of my profession who would hesitate over a chance of getting five hundred sequins. Finding the scheme both agreeable and profitable, I promised to play my part with the greatest skill. The bargain was struck, and he gave me full instructions as to my dialogue. He told me that the Englishman could only talk about my convent and any lovers I might have had; that on the latter point I was to cut him short, and to answer with a laugh that I did not know what he was talking about, and even to tell him that I was a nun in appearance only, and that in the course of toying I might let him see my hair. ‘That,’ said Capsucefalo, ‘won’t prevent him from thinking you a nun — yes! and the very nun he is amorous of, for he will have made up his mind that you cannot possibly be anyone else.’ Seizing the point of the jest, I did not take the trouble to find out the name of the nun I was to represent, nor the convent whence I was to come; the only thing in my head was the five hundred sequins. So little have I troubled about aught else that, though I passed a delicious night with you, and found you rather worthy of being paid for than paying, I have not ascertained who and what you are, and I don’t know at this moment to whom I am speaking. You know what a night I had; I have told you it was delicious, and I was happy in the idea that I was going to have another. You have found everything out. I am sorry, but I am not afraid of anything, since I can put on any disguise I like, and can’t prevent my lovers taking me for a saint if they like to do so. You have found weapons in my possession, but everyone is allowed to bear arms in self-defence. I plead not guilty on all counts.”

“Do you know me?” said I.

“No, but I have often seen you passing under my window. I live at St. Roch, near the bridge.”

The way in which the woman told her yarn convinced us that she was an adept in the science of prostitution, but we thought Capsucefalo, in spite of the count, worthy of the pillory. The girl was about ten years older than M. M., she was pretty, but light-complexioned, while my beautiful nun had fine dark brown hair and was at least three inches taller.

After twelve o’clock we sat down to supper, and did honour to the excellent meal which my dear Antoinette had prepared for us. We were cruel enough to leave the poor wretch without offering her so much as a glass of wine, but we thought it our duty.

While we were talking, the jolly Englishman made some witty comments on my eagerness to convince him that he had not enjoyed M. M.’s favours.

"I can't believe," said he, "that you have shewn so much interest without being in love with the divine nun."

I answered by saying that if I were her lover I was much to be pitied in being condemned to go to the parlour, and no farther.

"I would gladly give a hundred guineas a month," said he, "to have the privilege of visiting her at the grating."

So saying he gave me my hundred sequins, complimenting me on my success, and I slipped them forthwith into my pocket.

At two o'clock in the morning we heard a soft knock on the street door.

"Here is our friend," I said, "be discreet, and you will see that he will make a full confession."

He came in and saw Murray and the lady, but did not discover that a third party was present till he heard the ante-room door being locked. He turned round and saw me, and as he knew me, merely said, without losing countenance:

"Ah, you are here; you know, of course, that the secret must be kept?"

Murray laughed and calmly asked him to be seated, and he enquired, with the lady's pistols in his hands, where he was going to take her before day-break.

"Home."

"I think you may be mistaken, as it is very possible that when you leave this place you will both of you be provided with a bed in prison."

"No, I am not afraid of that happening; the thing would make too much noise, and the laugh would not be on your side. Come," said he to his mate, "put on your cloak and let us be off."

The ambassador, who like an Englishman kept quite cool the whole time, poured him out a glass of Chambertin, and the blackguard drank his health. Murray seeing he had on a fine ring set with brilliants, praised it, and shewing some curiosity to see it more closely he drew it off the fellow's finger, examined it, found it without flaw, and asked how much it was worth. Capsucefalo, a little taken aback, said it cost him four hundred sequins.

“I will hold it as a pledge for that sum,” said the ambassador, putting the ring into his pocket. The other looked chop-fallen, and Murray laughing at his retiring manners told the girl to put on her cloak and to pack off with her worthy acolyte. She did so directly, and with a low bow they disappeared.

“Farewell, nun procurer!” said the ambassador, but the count made no answer.

As soon as they were gone I thanked Murray warmly for the moderation he had shewn, as a scandal would have only injured three innocent people.

“Be sure,” said he, “that the guilty parties shall be punished without anyone’s knowing the reason”

I then made Tonine come upstairs, and my English friend offered her a glass of wine, which she declined with much modesty and politeness. Murray looked at her with flaming glances, and left after giving me his heartiest thanks.

Poor little Tonine had been resigned, and obedient for many hours, and she had good cause to think I had been unfaithful to her; however, I gave her the most unmistakable proofs of my fidelity. We stayed in bed for six hours, and rose happy in the morning.

After dinner I hurried off to my noble M —— M —— , and told her the whole story. She listened eagerly, her various feelings flitting across her face. Fear, anger, wrath, approval of my method of clearing up my natural suspicions, joy at discovering me still her lover — all were depicted in succession in her glance, and in the play of her features, and in the red and white which followed one another on her cheeks and forehead. She was delighted to hear that the masker who was with me in the parlour was the English ambassador, but she became nobly disdainful when I told her that he would gladly give a hundred guineas a month for the pleasure of visiting her in the parlour. She was angry with him for fancying that she had been in his power, and for finding a likeness between her and a portrait, when, so she said, there was no likeness at all; I had given her the portrait. She added, with a shrewd smile, that she was sure I had not let my little maid see the false nun, as she might have been mistaken.

“You know, do you, that I have a young servant?”

"Yes, and a pretty one, too. She is Laura's daughter, and if you love her I am very glad, and so is C —— C —— . I hope you will let me have a sight of her. C —— C —— has seen her before."

As I saw that she knew too much for me to be able to deceive her, I took my cue directly and told her in detail the history of my amours. She shewed her satisfaction too openly not to be sincere. Before I left her she said her honour obliged her to get Capsucefalo assassinated, for the wretch had wronged her beyond pardon. By way of quieting her I promised that if the ambassador did not rid us of him within the week I would charge myself with the execution of our common vengeance.

About this time died Bragadin the procurator, brother of my patron, leaving M. de Bragadin sufficiently well off. However, as the family threatened to become extinct, he desired a woman who had been his mistress, and of whom he had had a natural son, to become his wife. By this marriage the son would have become legitimate, and the family renewed again. The College of Cardinals would have recognized the wife for a small fee, and all would have gone admirably.

The woman wrote to me, asking me to call on her; and I was going to, curious to know what a woman, whom I did not know from Adam, could want with me, when I received a summons from M. de Bragadin. He begged me to ask Paralis if he ought to follow De la Haye's advice in a matter he had promised not to confide to me, but of which the oracle must be informed. The oracle, naturally opposed to the Jesuit, told him to consult his own feelings and nothing else. After this I went to the lady.

She began by telling me the whole story. She introduced her son to me, and told me that if the marriage could be performed, a deed would be delivered in my favour by which, at the death of M. de Bragadin, I should become entitled to an estate worth five thousand crowns per annum.

As I guessed without much trouble that this was the same matter which De la Haye had proposed to M. de Bragadin, I answered without hesitation that since De la Haye was before me I could do nothing, and thereupon made her my bow.

I could not help wondering at this Jesuit's continually intriguing to marry my old friends without my knowledge. Two years ago, if I had not set my face against it, he would have married M. Dandolo. I cared not a whit whether the family of Bragadin became extinct or not, but I did care for the life of my benefactor, and was quite sure that marriage would shorten it by many years; he was already sixty-three, and had recovered from a serious apoplectic stroke.

I went to dine with Lady Murray (English-women who are daughters of lords keep the title), and after dinner the ambassador told me that he had told M. Cavalli the whole story of the false nun, and that the secretary had informed him, the evening before, that everything had been done to his liking. Count Capsucefalo had been sent to Cephalonia, his native country, with the order never to return to Venice, and the courtezan had disappeared.

The fine part, or rather the fearful part, about these sentences is that no one ever knows the reason why or wherefore, and that the lot may fall on the innocent as well as the guilty. M. M. was delighted with the event, and I was more pleased than she, for I should have been sorry to have been obliged to soil my hands with the blood of that rascally count.

There are seasons in the life of men which may be called ‘fasti’ and ‘nefasti’; I have proved this often in my long career, and on the strength of the rubs and struggles I have had to encounter. I am able, as well as any man, to verify the truth of this axiom. I had just experienced a run of luck. Fortune had befriended me at play, I had been happy in the society of men, and from love I had nothing to ask; but now the reverse of the medal began to appear. Love was still kind, but Fortune had quite left me, and you will soon see, reader, that men used me no better than the blind goddess. Nevertheless, since one’s fate has phases as well as the moon, good follows evil as disasters succeed to happiness.

I still played on the martingale, but with such bad luck that I was soon left without a sequin. As I shared my property with M. M. I was obliged to tell her of my losses, and it was at her request that I sold all her diamonds, losing what I got for them; she had now only five hundred sequins by her. There was no more talk of her escaping from the convent, for we had nothing to live on! I still gamed, but for small stakes, waiting for the slow return of good luck.

One day the English ambassador, after giving me a supper at his casino with the celebrated Fanny Murray, asked me to let him sup at my casino at

Muran, which I now only kept up for the sake of Tonine. I granted him the favour, but did not imitate his generosity. He found my little mistress smiling and polite, but always keeping within the bounds of decency, from which he would have very willingly excused her. The next morning he wrote to me as follows:

"I am madly in love with Tonine. If you like to hand her over to me I will make the following provision for her: I will set her up in a suitable lodging which I will furnish throughout, and which I will give to her with all its contents, provided that I may visit her whenever I please, and that she gives me all the rights of a fortunate lover. I will give her a maid, a cook, and thirty sequins a month as provision for two people, without reckoning the wine, which I will procure myself. Besides this I will give her a life income of two hundred crowns per annum, over which she will have full control after living with me for a year. I give you a week to send your answer."

I replied immediately that I would let him know in three days whether his proposal were accepted, for Tonine had a mother of whom she was fond, and she would possibly not care to do anything without her consent. I also informed him that in all appearance the girl was with child.

The business was an important one for Tonine. I loved her, but I knew perfectly well that we could not pass the rest of our lives together, and I saw no prospect of being able to make her as good a provision as that offered by the ambassador. Consequently I had no doubts on the question, and the very same day I went to Muran and told her all.

"You wish to leave me, then," said she, in tears.

"I love you, dearest, and what I propose ought to convince you of my love."

"Not so; I cannot serve two masters."

"You will only serve your new lover, sweetheart. I beg of you to reflect that you will have a fine dowry, on the strength of which you may marry well; and that however much I love you I cannot possibly make so good a provision for you."

"Leave me to-day for tears and reflection, and come to supper with me to-morrow."

I did not fail to keep the appointment.

“I think your English friend is a very pretty man,” she said, “and when he speaks in the Venetian dialect it makes me die with laughter. If my mother agrees, I might, perhaps, force myself to love him. Supposing we did not agree we could part at the end of a year, and I should be the richer by an income of two hundred crowns.”

“I am charmed with the sense of your arguments; speak about it to your mother.”

“I daren’t, sweetheart; this kind of thing is too delicate to be discussed between a mother and her daughter speak to her yourself.”

“I will, indeed.”

Laura, whom I had not seen since she had given me her daughter, asked for no time to think it over, but full of glee told me that now her daughter would be able to soothe her declining years, and that she would leave Muran of which she was tired. She shewed me a hundred and thirty sequins which Tonine had gained in my service, and which she had placed in her hands.

Barberine, Tonine’s younger sister, came to kiss my hand. I thought her charming, and I gave her all the silver in my pocket. I then left, telling Laura that I should expect her at my house. She soon followed me, and gave her child a mother’s blessing, telling her that she and her family could go and live in Venice for sixty sous a day. Tonine embraced her, and told her that she should have it.

This important affair having been managed to everybody’s satisfaction, I went to see M —— M —— , who came into the parlour with C —— C —— , whom I found looking sad, though prettier than ever. She was melancholy, but none the less tender. She could not stay for more than a quarter of an hour for fear of being seen, as she was forbidden ever to go into the parlour. I told M. M. the story of Tonine, who was going to live with Murray in Venice; she was sorry to hear it, “for,” said she, “now that you have no longer any attraction at Muran, I shall see you less than ever.” I promised to come and see her often, but vain promises! The time was near which parted us for ever.

The same evening I went to tell the good news to my friend Murray. He was in a transport of joy, and begged me to come and sup with him at his casino the day after next, and to bring the girl with me, that the surrender might be made in form. I did not fail him, for once the matter was decided, I longed to bring it to an end. In my presence he assigned to her the yearly income for her life of two hundred Venetian ducats, and by a second deed he gave her all the contents of the house with which he was going to provide her, provided always that she lived with him for a year. He allowed her to receive me as a friend, also to receive her mother and sisters, and she was free to go and see them when she would. Tonine threw her arms about his neck, and assured him that she would endeavour to please him to the utmost of her ability. “I will see him,” said she, pointing to me, “but as his friend he shall have nothing more from me.” Throughout this truly affecting scene she kept back her tears, but I could not conceal mine. Murray was happy, but I was not long a witness of his good fortune, the reason of which I will explain a little later.

Three days afterwards Laura came to me, told me that she was living in Venice, and asked me to take her to her daughter’s. I owed this woman too much to refuse her, and I took her there forthwith. Tonine gave thanks to God, and also to me, and her mother took up the song, for they were not quite sure whether they were more indebted to God or to me. Tonine was eloquent in her praise of Murray, and made no complaint at my not having come to see her, at which I was glad. As I was going Laura asked me to take her back in my gondola, and as we had to pass by the house in which she lived she begged me to come in for a moment, and I could not hurt her feelings by refusing. I owe it to my honour to remark here that I was thus polite without thinking that I should see Barberine again.

This girl, as pretty as her sister, though in another style, began by awakening my curiosity — a weakness which usually renders the profligate man inconstant. If all women were to have the same features, the same disposition, and the same manners, men would not only never be inconstant, but would never be in love. Under that state of things one would choose a wife by instinct and keep to her till death, but our world would then be under a different system to the present. Novelty is the master of the soul. We know that what we do not see is very nearly the same as what we have seen, but we are curious, we like to be quite sure, and to attain our ends we give ourselves as much trouble as if we were certain of finding some prize beyond compare.

Barberine, who looked upon me as an old friend — for her mother had accustomed her to kiss my hand whenever I went there, who had undressed more than once in my presence without troubling about me, who knew I had made her sister's fortune and the family fortune as well, and thought herself prettier than Tonine because her skin was fairer, and because she had fine black eyes, desiring to take her sister's place, knew that to succeed she must take me by storm. Her common sense told her that as I hardly ever came to the house, I should not be likely to become amorous of her unless she won me by storm; and to this end she shewed the utmost complaisance when she had the chance, so that I won her without any difficulty. All this reasoning came from her own head, for I am sure her mother gave her no instructions. Laura was a mother of a kind common the world over, but especially in Italy. She was willing to take advantage of the earnings of her daughters, but she would never have induced them to take the path of evil. There her virtue stopped short.

After I had inspected her two rooms and her little kitchen, and had admired the cleanness which shone all around, Barberine asked me if I would like to see their small garden.

"With pleasure," I replied, "for a garden is a rarity in Venice."

Her mother told her to give me some figs if there were any ripe ones. The garden consisted of about thirty square feet, and grew only salad herbs and a fine fig tree. It had not a good crop, and I told her that I could not see any figs.

"I can see some at the top," said Barberine, "and I will gather them if you will hold me the ladder."

"Yes, climb away; I will hold it quite firmly."

She stepped up lightly, and stretching out an arm to get at some figs to one side of her, she put her body off its balance, holding on to the ladder with the other hand.

"My dear Barberine, what do you think I can see?"

"What you have often seen with my sister."

"That's true! but you are prettier than she is."

The girl made no reply, but, as if she could not reach the fruit, she put her foot on a high branch, and spewed me the most seductive picture. I was in an ecstasy, and Barberine, who saw it, did not hurry herself. At last I helped her to come down, and letting my hand wander indiscreetly, I asked her if the fruit I held had been plucked, and she kept me a long time telling me it was quite fresh. I took her within my arms, and already her captive, I pressed her amorously to my heart, printing on her lips a fiery kiss, which she gave me back with as much ardour.

“Will you give me what I have caught, dearest?”

“My mother is going to Muran to-morrow, and she will stay there all the day; if you come, there is nothing I will refuse you.”

When speech like this proceeds from a mouth still innocent, the man to whom it is addressed ought to be happy, for desires are but pain and torment, and enjoyment is sweet because it delivers us from them. This shews that those who prefer a little resistance to an easy conquest are in the wrong; but a too easy conquest often points to a depraved nature, and this men do not like, however depraved they themselves may be.

We returned to the house, and I gave Barberine a tender kiss before Laura’s eyes, telling her that she had a very jewel in her daughter — a compliment which made her face light up with pleasure. I gave the dear girl ten sequins, and I went away congratulating myself, but cursing my luck at not being able to make as good provision for Barberine as Murray had made for her sister.

Tonine had told me that for manners’ sake I should sup once with her. I went the same evening and found Righelini and Murray there. The supper was delicious, and I was delighted with the excellent understanding the two lovers had already come to. I complimented the ambassador on the loss of one of his tastes, and he told me he should be very sorry at such a loss, as it would warn him of his declining powers.

“But,” said I, “you used to like to perform the mysterious sacrifice of Love without a veil.”

“It was not I but Ancilla who liked it, and as I preferred pleasing her to pleasing myself, I gave in to her taste without any difficulty.”

"I am delighted with your answer, as I confess it would cost me something to be the witness of your exploits with Tonine."

Having casually remarked that I had no longer a house in Muran, Righelini told me that if I liked he could get me a delightful house at a low rent on the Tondamente Nuovo.

As this quarter facing north, and as agreeable in summer as disagreeable in winter, was opposite to Muran, where I should have to go twice a week, I told the doctor I should be glad to look at the house.

I took leave of the rich and fortunate ambassador at midnight, and before passing the day with my new prize I went to sleep so as to be fresh and capable of running a good course.

I went to Barberine at an early hour, and as soon as she saw me she said,

"My mother will not be back till the evening, and my brother will take his dinner at the school. Here is a fowl, a ham, some cheese, and two bottles of Scopolo wine. We will take our mess whenever you like:"

"You astonish me, sweetheart, for how did you manage to get such a good dinner?"

"We owe it to my mother, so to her be the praise."

"You have told her, then, what we are going to do?"

"No, not I, for I know nothing about it; but I told her you were coming to see me, and at the same time I gave her the ten sequins."

"And what did your mother say?"

"She said she wouldn't be sorry if you were to love me as you loved my sister."

"I love you better, though I love her well."

"You love her? Why have you left her, then?"

"I have not left her, for we supped together yesterday evening; but we no longer live together as lovers, that is all. I have yielded her up to a rich friend of mine, who has made her fortune."

"That is well, though I don't understand much about these affairs. I hope you will tell Tonine that I have taken her place, and I should be very pleased if you would let her know that you are quite sure you are my first lover."

"And supposing the news vexes her?"

"So much the better. Will you do it for me? it's the first favour I have asked of you."

"I promise to do so."

After this rapid dialogue we took breakfast, and then, perfectly agreed, we went to bed, rather as if we were about to sacrifice to Hymen than to love.

The game was new to Barberine, and her transports, her green notions — which she told me openly — her inexperience, or rather her awkwardness, enchanted me. I seemed for the first time to pluck the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and never had I tasted fruit so delicious. My little maid would have been ashamed to let me see how the first thorn hurt her, and to convince me that she only smelt the rose, she strove to make me think she experienced more pleasure than is possible in a first trial, always more or less painful. She was not yet a big girl, the roses on her swelling breasts were as yet but buds, and she was a woman only in her heart.

After more than one assault delivered and sustained with spirit, we got up for dinner, and after we had refreshed ourselves we mounted once more the altar of love, where we remained till the evening. Laura found us dressed and well pleased with each other on her return. I made Barberine another present of twenty sequins, I swore to love her always, and went on my way. At the time I certainly meant to keep to my oath, but that which destiny had in store for me could not be reconciled with these promises which welled forth from my soul in a moment of excitement.

The next morning Righelini took me to see the lodging he had spoken to me about. I liked it and took it on the spot, paying the first quarter in advance. The house belonged to a widow with two daughters, the elder of whom had just been blooded. Righelini was her doctor, and had treated her for nine months without success. As he was going to pay her a visit I went in with him, and found myself in the presence of a fine waxen statue. Surprise drew from me these words:

"She is pretty, but the sculptor should give her some colour."

On which the statue smiled in a manner which would have been charming if her lips had but been red.

“Her pallor,” said Righelini, “will not astonish you when I tell you she has just been blooded for the hundred and fourth time.”

I gave a very natural gesture of surprise.

This fine girl had attained the age of eighteen years without experiencing the monthly relief afforded by nature, the result being that she felt a deathly faintness three or four times a week, and the only relief was to open the vein.

“I want to send her to the country,” said the doctor, “where pure and wholesome air, and, above all, more exercise, will do her more good than all the drugs in the world.”

After I had been told that my bed should be made ready by the evening, I went away with Righelini, who told me that the only cure for the girl would be a good strong lover.

“But my dear doctor,” said I, “can’t you make your own prescription?”

“That would be too risky a game, for I might find myself compelled to marry her, and I hate marriage like the devil.”

Though I was no better inclined towards marriage than the doctor, I was too near the fire not to get burnt, and the reader will see in the next chapter how I performed the miraculous cure of bringing the colours of health into the cheeks of this pallid beauty.

CHAPTER XXV

The Fair Invalid I Cure Her — A Plot Formed to Ruin Me — What Happened at the House of the Young Countess Bonafede — The Erberia — Domiciliary Visit — My Conversation with M. de Bragadin — I Am Arrested by Order of the State Inquisitors.

After leaving Dr. Righelini I went to sup with M. de Bragadin, and gave the generous and worthy old man a happy evening. This was always the case; I made him and his two good friends happy whenever I took meals with them.

Leaving them at an early hour, I went to my lodging and was greatly surprised to find my bedroom balcony occupied. A young lady of an exquisite figure rose as soon as she saw me, and gracefully asked me pardon for the liberty she had taken.

“I am,” she said, “the statue you saw this morning. We do not light the candles in the evening for fear of attracting the gnats, but when you want to go to bed we will shut the door and go away. I beg to introduce you to my younger sister, my mother has gone to bed.”

I answered her to the effect that the balcony was always at her service, and that since it was still early I begged their permission to put on my dressing-gown and to keep them company. Her conversation was charming; she made me spend two most delightful hours, and did not leave me till twelve o’clock. Her younger sister lighted me a candle, and as they went they wished me a good night.

I lay down full of this pretty girl, and I could not believe that she was really ill. She spoke to the point, she was cheerful, clever, and full of spirits. I could not understand how it came to pass that she had not been already cured in a town like Venice, if her cure was really only to be effected in the manner described by Dr. Righelini; for in spite of her pallor she seemed to me quite fair enough to charm a lover, and I believed her to be spirited enough to determine to take the most agreeable medicine a doctor can prescribe.

In the morning I rang the bell as I was getting up, and the younger sister came into my room, and said that as they kept no servant she had come to do what I wanted. I did not care to have a servant when I was not at M. de Bragadin's, as I found myself more at liberty to do what I liked. After she had done me some small services, I asked her how her sister was.

"Very well," said she, "for her pale complexion is not an illness, and she only suffers when her breath fails her. She has a very good appetite, and sleeps as well as I do."

"Whom do I hear playing the violin?"

"It's the dancing master giving my sister a lesson."

I hurried over my dressing that I might see her; and I found her charming, though her old dancing master allowed her to turn in her toes. All that this young and beautiful girl wanted was the Promethean spark, the colour of life; her whiteness was too like snow, and was distressing to look at.

The dancing master begged me to dance a minuet with his pupil, and I assented, asking him to play larghissimo. "The signorina would find it too tiring," said he; but she hastened to answer that she did not feel weak, and would like to dance thus. She danced very well, but when we had done she was obliged to throw herself in a chair. "In future, my dear master," said she, "I will only dance like that, for I think the rapid motion will do me good."

When the master was gone, I told her that her lessons were too short, and that her master was letting her get into bad habits. I then set her feet, her shoulders, and her arms in the proper manner. I taught her how to give her hand gracefully, to bend her knees in time; in fine, I gave her a regular lesson for an hour, and seeing that she was getting rather tired I begged her to sit down, and I went out to pay a visit to M. M.

I found her very sad, for C —— C — — 's father was dead, and they had taken her out of the convent to marry her to a lawyer. Before leaving C —— C —— had left a letter for me, in which she said that if I would promise to marry her at some time suitable to myself, she would wait for me, and refuse all other offers. I answered her straightforwardly that I had no property and no prospects, that I left her free, advising her not to refuse any offer which might be to her advantage.

In spite of this dismissal C —— C —— did not marry N —— till after my flight from The Leads, when nobody expected to see me again in Venice. I did not see her for nineteen years, and then I was grieved to find her a widow, and poorly off. If I went to Venice now I should not marry her, for at my age marriage is an absurdity, but I would share with her my little all, and live with her as with a dear sister.

When I hear women talking about the bad faith and inconstancy of men, and maintaining that when men make promises of eternal constancy they are always deceivers, I confess that they are right, and join in their complaints. Still it cannot be helped, for the promises of lovers are dictated by the heart, and consequently the lamentations of women only make me want to laugh. Alas! we love without heeding reason, and cease to love in the same manner.

About this time I received a letter from the Abbe de Bernis, who wrote also to M —— M —— . He told me that I ought to do my utmost to make our nun take a reasonable view of things, dwelling on the risks I should run in carrying her off and bringing her to Paris, where all his influence would be of no avail to obtain for us that safety so indispensable to happiness. I saw M —— M —— ; we shewed each other our letters, she had some bitter tears, and her grief pierced me to the heart. I still had a great love for her in spite of my daily infidelities, and when I thought of those moments in which I had seen her given over to voluptuousness I could not help pitying her fate as I thought of the days of despair in store for her. But soon after this an event happened which gave rise to some wholesome reflections. One day, when I had come to see her, she said,

“They have just been burying a nun who died of consumption the day before yesterday in the odour of sanctity. She was called ‘Maria Concetta.’ She knew you, and told C —— C —— your name when you used to come to mass on feast days. C —— C —— begged her to be discreet, but the nun told her that you were a dangerous man, whose presence should be shunned by a young girl. C —— C —— told me all this after the mask of Pierrot.”

“What was this saint’s name when she was in the world?”

“Martha.”

“I know her.”

I then told M —— M —— the whole history of my loves with Nanette and Marton, ending with the letter she wrote me, in which she said that she owed me, indirectly, that eternal salvation to which she hoped to attain.

In eight or ten days my conversation with my hostess’ daughter — conversation which took place on the balcony, and which generally lasted till midnight — and the lesson I gave her every morning, produced the inevitable and natural results; firstly, that she no longer complained of her breath failing, and, secondly, that I fell in love with her. Nature’s cure had not yet relieved her, but she no longer needed to be let blood. Righelini came to visit her as usual, and seeing that she was better he prophesied that nature’s remedy, without which only art could keep her alive, would make all right before the autumn. Her mother looked upon me as an angel sent by God to cure her daughter, who for her part shewed me that gratitude which with women is the first step towards love. I had made her dismiss her old dancing master, and I had taught her to dance with extreme grace.

At the end of these ten or twelve days, just as I was going to give her her lesson, her breath failed instantaneously, and she fell back into my arms like a dead woman. I was alarmed, but her mother, who had become accustomed to see her thus, sent for the surgeon, and her sister unlaced her. I was enchanted with her exquisite bosom, which needed no colouring to make it more beautiful. I covered it up, saying that the surgeon would make a false stroke if he were to see her thus uncovered; but feeling that I laid my hand upon her with delight, she gently repulsed me, looking at me with a languishing gaze which made the deepest impression on me.

The surgeon came and bled her in the arm, and almost instantaneously she recovered full consciousness. At most only four ounces of blood were taken from her, and her mother telling me that this was the utmost extent to which she was blooded, I saw it was no such matter for wonder as Righelini represented it, for being blooded twice a week she lost three pounds of blood a month, which she would have done naturally if the vessels had not been obstructed.

The surgeon had hardly gone out of the door when to my astonishment she told me that if I would wait for her a moment she would come back and begin her dancing. This she did, and danced as if there had been nothing the matter.

Her bosom, on which two of my senses were qualified to give evidence, was the last stroke, and made me madly in love with her. I returned to the house in the evening, and found her in her room with the sister. She told me that she was expecting her god-father, who was an intimate friend of her father's, and had come every evening to spend an hour with her for the last eighteen years.

"How old is he?"

"He is over fifty."

"Is he a married man?"

"Yes, his name is Count S —— . He is as fond of me as a father would be, and his affection has continued the same since my childhood. Even his wife comes to see me sometimes, and to ask me to dinner. Neat autumn I am going into the country with her, and I hope the fresh air will do me good. My god-father knows you are staying with us and is satisfied. He does not know you, but if you like you can make his acquaintance."

I was glad to hear all this, as I gained a good deal of useful information without having to ask any awkward questions. The friendship of this Greek looked very like love. He was the husband of Countess S —— , who had taken me to the convent at Muran two years before.

I found the count a very polite man. He thanked me in a paternal manner for my kindness to his daughter, and begged me to do him the honour of dining with him on the following day, telling me that he would introduce me to his wife. I accepted his invitation with pleasure, for I was fond of dramatic situations, and my meeting with the countess promised to be an exciting one. This invitation bespoke the courteous gentleman, and I charmed my pretty pupil by singing his praises after he had gone.

"My god-father," said she, "is in possession of all the necessary documents for withdrawing from the house of Persico our family fortune, which amounts to forty thousand crowns. A quarter of this sum belongs to me, and my mother has promised my sister and myself to share her dowry between us.”

I concluded from this that she would bring her husband fifteen thousand Venetian ducats.

I guessed that she was appealing to me with her fortune, and wished to make me in love with her by shewing herself chary of her favours; for whenever I allowed myself any small liberties, she checked me with words, of remonstrance to which I could find no answer. I determined to make her pursue another course.

Next day I took her with me to her god-father’s without telling her that I knew the countess. I fancied the lady would pretend not to know me, but I was wrong, as she welcomed me in the handsomest manner as if I were an old friend. This, no doubt, was a surprise for the count, but he was too much a man of the world to, shew any astonishment. He asked her when she had made my acquaintance, and she, like a woman of experience, answered without the slightest hesitation that we had seen each other two years ago at Mira. The matter was settled, and we spent a very pleasant day.

Towards evening I took the young lady in my gondola back to the house, but wishing to shorten the journey I allowed myself to indulge in a few caresses. I was hurt at being responded to by reproaches, and for that reason, as soon as she had set foot on her own doorstep, instead of getting out I went to Tonine’s house, and spent nearly the whole night there with the ambassador, who came a little after me. Next day, as I did not get up till quite late, there was no dancing lesson, and when I excused myself she told me not to trouble any more about it. In the evening I sat on the balcony far into the night, but she did not come. Vexed at this air of indifference I rose early in the morning and went out, not returning till nightfall. She was on the balcony, but as she kept me at a respectful distance I only talked to her on commonplace subjects. In the morning I was roused by a tremendous noise. I got up, and hurriedly putting on my dressing-gown ran into her room to see what was the matter, only to find her dying. I had no need to feign an interest in her, for I felt the most tender concern. As it was at the beginning of July it was extremely hot, and my fair invalid was only covered by a thin sheet. She could only speak to me with her eyes, but though the lids were lowered she looked upon me so lovingly! I asked her if she suffered from palpitations, and laying my hand upon her heart I pressed a fiery kiss upon her breast. This was the electric spark, for she gave a sigh which did her good. She had not strength to repulse the hand which I pressed amorously upon her heart, and becoming bolder I fastened my burning lips upon her languid mouth. I warmed her with my breath, and my audacious hand penetrated to the very sanctuary of bliss. She made an effort to push me back, and told me with her eyes, since she could not speak, how insulted she felt. I drew back my hand, and at that moment the surgeon came. Hardly was the vein opened when she drew a long breath, and by the time the operation was over she wished to get up. I entreated her to stay in bed, and her mother added her voice to mine; at last I persuaded her, telling her that I would not leave her for a second, and that I would have my dinner by her bedside. She then put on a corset and asked her sister to draw a sarcenet coverlet over her, as her limbs could be seen as plainly as through a crape veil.

Having given orders for my dinner, I sat down by her bedside, burning with love, and taking her hand and covering it with kisses I told her that I was sure she would get better if she would let herself love.

“Alas!” she said, “whom shall I love, not knowing whether I shall be loved in return?”

I did not leave this question unanswered, and continuing the amorous discourse with animation I won a sigh and a lovelorn glance. I put my hand on her knee, begging her to let me leave it there, and promising to go no farther, but little by little I attained the center, and strove to give her some pleasant sensations.

“Let me alone,” said she, in a sentimental voice, drawing away, “’tis perchance the cause of my illness.”

“No, sweetheart,” I replied, “that cannot be.” And my mouth stopped all her objections upon her lips.

I was enchanted, for I was now in a fair way, and I saw the moment of bliss in the distance, feeling certain that I could effect a cure if the doctor was not mistaken. I spared her all indiscreet questions out of regard for her modesty; but I declared myself her lover, promising to ask nothing of her but what was necessary to feed the fire of my love. They sent me up a very good dinner, and she did justice to it; afterwards saying that she was quite well she got up, and I went away to dress myself for going out. I came back early in the evening, and found her on my balcony. There, as I sat close to her looking into her face, speaking by turns the language of the eyes and that of sighs, fixing my amorous gaze upon those charms which the moonlight rendered sweeter, I made her share in the fire which consumed me; and as I pressed her amorously to my bosom she completed my bliss with such warmth that I could easily see that she thought she was receiving a favour and not granting one. I sacrificed the victim without staining the altar with blood.

Her sister came to tell her that it grew late.

“Do you go to bed,” she answered; “the fresh air is doing me good, and I want to enjoy it a little longer.”

As soon as we were alone we went to bed together as if we had been doing it for a whole year, and we passed a glorious night, I full of love and the desire of curing her, and she of tender and ardent voluptuousness. At day-break she embraced me, her eyes dewy with bliss, and went to lie down in her own bed. I, like her, stood in need of a rest, and on that day there was no talk of a dancing lesson. In spite of the fierce pleasure of enjoyment and the transports of this delightful girl, I did not for a moment lay prudence aside. We continued to pass such nights as these for three weeks, and I had the pleasure of seeing her thoroughly cured. I should doubtless have married her, if an event had not happened to me towards the end of the month, of which I shall speak lower down.

You will remember, dear reader, about a romance by the Abbe Chiari, a satirical romance which Mr. Murray had given me, and in which I fared badly enough at the author’s hands I had small reason to be pleased with him, and I let him know my opinion in such wise that the abbe who dreaded a caning, kept upon his guard. About the same time I received an anonymous letter, the writer of which told me that I should be better occupied in taking care of myself than in thoughts of chastising the abbe, for I was threatened by an imminent danger. Anonymous letter-writers should be held in contempt, but one ought to know how, on occasion, to make the best of advice given in that way. I did nothing, and made a great mistake.

About the same time a man named Manuzzi, a stone setter for his first trade, and also a spy, a vile agent of the State Inquisitors — a man of whom I knew nothing — found a way to make my acquaintance by offering to let me have diamonds on credit, and by this means he got the entry of my house. As he was looking at some books scattered here and there about the room, he stopped short at the manuscripts which were on magic. Enjoying foolishly enough, his look of astonishment, I shewed him the books which teach one how to summon the elementary spirits. My readers will, I hope, do me the favour to believe that I put no faith in these conjuring books, but I had them by me and used to amuse myself with them as one does amuse one's self with the multitudinous follies which proceed from the heads of visionaries. A few days after, the traitor came to see me and told me that a collector, whose name he might not tell me, was ready to give me a thousand sequins for my five books, but that he would like to examine them first to see if they were genuine. As he promised to let me have them back in twenty-four hours, and not thinking much about the matter, I let him have them. He did not fail to bring them back the next day, telling me that the collector thought them forgeries. I found out, some years after, that he had taken them to the State Inquisitors, who thus discovered that I was a notable magician.

Everything that happened throughout this fatal month tended to my ruin, for Madame Memmo, mother of Andre, Bernard, and Laurent Memmo, had taken it into her head that I had inclined her sons to atheistic opinions, and took counsel with the old knight Antony Mocenigo, M. de Bragadin's uncle, who was angry with me, because, as he said, I had conspired to seduce his nephew. The matter was a serious one, and an auto-da-fe was very possible, as it came under the jurisdiction of the Holy Office — a kind of wild beast, with which it is not good to quarrel. Nevertheless, as there would be some difficulty in shutting me up in the ecclesiastical prisons of the Holy Office, it was determined to carry my case before the State Inquisitors, who took upon themselves the provisional duty of putting a watch upon my manner of living.

M. Antony Condulmer, who as a friend of Abbe Chiari's was an enemy of mine, was then an Inquisitor of State, and he took the opportunity of looking upon me in the light of a disturber of the peace of the commonwealth. A secretary of an embassy, whom I knew some years after, told me that a paid informer, with two other witnesses, also, doubtless, in the pay of this grand tribunal, had declared that I was guilty of only believing in the devil, as if this absurd belief, if it were possible, did not necessarily connote a belief in God! These three honest fellows testified with an oath that when I lost money at play, on which occasion all the faithful are wont to blaspheme, I was never heard to curse the devil. I was further accused of eating meat all the year round, of only going to hear fine masses, and I was vehemently suspected of being a Freemason. It was added that I frequented the society of foreign ministers, and that living as I did with three noblemen, it was certain that I revealed, for the large sums which I was seen to lose, as many state secrets as I could worm out of them.

All these accusations, none of which had any foundation in fact, served the Tribunal as a pretext to treat me as an enemy of the commonwealth and as a prime conspirator. For several weeks I was counselled by persons whom I might have trusted to go abroad whilst the Tribunal was engaged on my case. This should have been enough, for the only people who can live in peace at Venice are those whose existence the Tribunal is ignorant of, but I obstinately despised all these hints. If I had listened to the indirect advice which was given me, I should have become anxious, and I was the sworn foe of all anxiety. I kept saying to myself, “I feel remorse for nothing and I am therefore guilty of nothing, and the innocent have nothing to fear.” I was a fool, for I argued as if I had been a free man in a free country. I must also confess that what to a great extent kept me from thinking of possible misfortune was the actual misfortune which oppressed me from morning to night. I lost every day, I owed money everywhere, I had pawned all my jewels, and even my portrait cases, taking the precaution, however, of removing the portraits, which with my important papers and my amorous letters I had placed in the hands of Madame Manzoni. I found myself avoided in society. An old senator told me, one day, that it was known that the young Countess Bonafede had become mad in consequence of the love philtres I had given her. She was still at the asylum, and in her moments of delirium she did nothing but utter my name with curses. I must let my readers into the secret of this small history.

This young Countess Bonafede, to whom I had given some sequins a few days after my return to Venice, thought herself capable of making me continue my visits, from which she had profited largely. Worried by her letters I went to see her several times, and always left her a few sequins, but with the exception of my first visit I was never polite enough to give her any proofs of my affection. My coldness had baulked all her endeavours for a year, when she played a criminal part, of which, though I was never able absolutely to convict her, I had every reason to believe her guilty.

She wrote me a letter, in which she importuned me to come and see her at a certain hour on important business.

My curiosity, as well as a desire to be of service to her, took me there at the appointed time; but as soon as she saw me she flung her arms round my neck, and told me that the important business was love. This made me laugh heartily, and I was pleased to find her looking neater than usual, which, doubtless, made me find her looking prettier. She reminded me of St. Andre, and succeeded so well in her efforts that I was on the point of satisfying her desires. I took off my cloak, and asked her if her father were in. She told me he had gone out. Being obliged to go out for a minute, in coming back I mistook the door, and I found myself in the next room, where I was much astonished to see the count and two villainous-looking fellows with him.

"My dear count," I said, "your daughter has just told me that you were out."

"I myself told her to do so, as I have some business with these gentlemen, which, however, can wait for another day."

I would have gone, but he stopped me, and having dismissed the two men he told me that he was delighted to see me, and forthwith began the tale of his troubles, which were of more than one kind. The State Inquisitors had stopped his slender pension, and he was on the eve of seeing himself driven out with his family into the streets to beg his bread. He said that he had not been able to pay his landlord anything for three years, but if he could pay only a quarter's rent, he would obtain a respite, or if he persisted in turning him out, he could make a night-flitting of it, and take up his abode somewhere else. As he only wanted twenty ducats, I took out six sequins and gave them to him. He embraced me, and shed tears of joy; then, taking his poor cloak, he called his daughter, told her to keep me company, and went out.

Alone with the countess, I examined the door of communication between the two rooms and found it slightly open.

"Your father," I said, "would have surprised me, and it is easy to guess what he would have done with the two sbirri who were with him. The plot is clear, and I have only escaped from it by the happiest of chances."

She denied, wept, called God to witness, threw herself on her knees; but I turned my head away, and taking my cloak went away without a word. She kept on writing to me, but her letters remained unanswered, and I saw her no more.

It was summer-time, and between the heat, her passions, hunger, and wretchedness, her head was turned, and she became so mad that she went out of the house stark naked, and ran up and down St. Peter's Place, asking those who stopped her to take her to my house. This sad story went all over the town and caused me a great deal of annoyance. The poor wretch was sent to an asylum, and did not recover her reason for five years. When she came out she found herself reduced to beg her bread in the streets, like all her brothers, except one, whom I found a cadet in the guards of the King of Spain twelve years afterwards.

At the time of which I am speaking all this had happened a year ago, but the story was dug up against me, and dressed out in the attire of fiction, and thus formed part of those clouds which were to discharge their thunder upon me to my destruction.

In the July of 1755 the hateful court gave Messer-Grande instructions to secure me, alive or dead. In this furious style all orders for arrests proceeding from the Three were issued, for the least of their commands carried with it the penalty of death.

Three or four days before the Feast of St. James, my patron saint, M —— M —— made me a present of several ells of silver lace to trim a sarcenet dress which I was going to wear on the eve of the feast. I went to see her, dressed in my fine suit, and I told her that I should come again on the day following to ask her to lend me some money, as I did not know where to turn to find some. She was still in possession of the five hundred sequins which she had put aside when I had sold her diamonds.

As I was sure of getting the money in the morning I passed the night at play, and I lost the five hundred sequins in advance. At day-break, being in need of a little quiet, I went to the Erberia, a space of ground on the quay of the Grand Canal. Here is held the herb, fruit, and flower market.

People in good society who come to walk in the Erberia at a rather early hour usually say that they come to see the hundreds of boats laden with vegetables, fruit and flowers, which hail from the numerous islands near the town; but everyone knows that they are men and women who have been spending the night in the excesses of Venus or Bacchus, or who have lost all hope at the gaming-table, and come here to breath a purer air and to calm their minds. The fashion of walking in this place shews how the character of a nation changes. The Venetians of old time who made as great a mystery of love as of state affairs, have been replaced by the modern Venetians, whose most prominent characteristic is to make a mystery of nothing. Those who come to the Erberia with women wish to excite the envy of their friends by thus publishing their good fortune. Those who come alone are on the watch for discoveries, or on the look-out for materials to make wives or husbands jealous, the women only come to be seen, glad to let everybody know that they are without any restraint upon their actions. There was certainly no question of smartness there, considering the disordered style of dress worn. The women seemed to have agreed to shew all the signs of disorder imaginable, to give those who saw them something to talk about. As for the men, on whose arms they leaned, their careless and lounging airs were intended to give the idea of a surfeit of pleasure, and to make one think that the disordered appearance of their companions was a sure triumph they had enjoyed. In short it was the correct thing to look tired out, and as if one stood in need of sleep.

This veracious description, reader, will not give you a very high opinion of the morals of my dear fellow citizens; but what object should I have at my age for deceiving? Venice is not at the world’s end, but is well enough known to those whose curiosity brings them into Italy; and everyone can see for himself if my pictures are overdrawn.

After walking up and down for half an hour, I came away, and thinking the whole house still a-bed I drew my key out to open the door, but what was my astonishment to find it useless, as the door was open, and what is more, the lock burst off. I ran upstairs, and found them all up, and my landlady uttering bitter lamentations.

“Messer-Grande,” she told me, “has entered my house forcibly, accompanied by a band of sbirri. He turned everything upside down, on the pretext that he was in search of a portmanteau full of salt — a highly contraband article. He said he knew that a portmanteau had been landed there the evening before, which was quite true; but it belonged to Count S —— , and only contained linen and clothes. Messer-Grande, after inspecting it, went out without saying a word.”

He had also paid my room a visit. She told me that she must have some reparation made her, and thinking she was in the right I promised to speak to M. de Bragadin on the matter the same day. Needing rest above all things, I lay down, but my nervous excitement, which I attributed to my heavy losses at play, made me rise after three or four hours, and I went to see M. de Bragadin, to whom I told the whole story begging him to press for some signal amends. I made a lively representation to him of all the grounds on which my landlady required proportionate amends to be made, since the laws guaranteed the peace of all law-abiding people.

I saw that the three friends were greatly saddened by what I said, and the wise old man, quietly but sadly, told me that I should have my answer after dinner.

De la Haye dined with us, but all through the meal, which was a melancholy one, he spoke not a word. His silence should have told me all, if I had not been under the influence of some malevolent genii who would not allow me to exercise my common sense: as to the sorrow of my three friends, I put that down to their friendship for me. My connection with these worthy men had always been the talk of the town, and as all were agreed that it could not be explained on natural grounds, it was deemed to be the effect of some sorcery exercised by me. These three men were thoroughly religious and virtuous citizens; I was nothing if not irreligious, and Venice did not contain a greater libertine. Virtue, it was said, may have compassion on vice, but cannot become its friend.

After dinner M. de Bragadin took me into his closet with his two friends, from whom he had no secrets. He told me with wonderful calmness that instead of meditating vengeance on Messer-Grande I should be thinking of putting myself in a place of safety. “The portmanteau,” said he, “was a mere pretext; it was you they wanted and thought to find. Since your good genius has made them miss you, look out for yourself; perhaps by to-morrow it may be too late. I have been a State Inquisitor for eight months, and I know the way in which the arrests ordered by the court are carried out. They would not break open a door to look for a box of salt. Indeed, it is possible that they knew you were out, and sought to warn you to escape in this manner. Take my advice, my dear son, and set out directly for Fusina, and thence as quickly as you can make your way to Florence, where you can remain till I write to you that you may return with safety. If you have no money I will give you a hundred sequins for present expenses. Believe me that prudence bids you go.”

Blinded by my folly, I answered him that being guilty of nothing I had nothing to fear, and that consequently, although I knew his advice was good, I could not follow it.

“The high court,” said he, “may deem you guilty of crimes real or imaginary; but in any case it will give you no account of the accusations against you. Ask your oracle if you shall follow my advice or not.” I refused because I knew the folly of such a proceeding, but by way of excuse I said that I only consulted it when I was in doubt. Finally, I reasoned that if I fled I should be shewing fear, and thus confessing my guilt, for an innocent man, feeling no remorse, cannot reasonably be afraid of anything.

“If secrecy,” said I, “is of the essence of the Court, you cannot possibly judge, after my escape, whether I have done so rightly or wrongly. The same reasons, which, according to your excellence, bid me go, would forbid my return. Must I then say good-bye for ever to my country, and all that is dear to me?” As a last resource he tried to persuade me to pass the following day and night, at least, at the palace. I am still ashamed of having refused the worthy old man to whom I owed so much this favour; for the palace of a noble is sacred to the police who dare not cross its threshold without a special order from the Tribunal, which is practically never given; by yielding to his request I should have avoided a grievous misfortune, and spared the worthy old man some acute grief.

I was moved to see M. de Bragadin weeping, and perhaps I might have granted to his tears that which I had obstinately refused to his arguments and entreaties. “For Heaven’s sake!” said I, “spare me the harrowing sight of your tears.” In an instant he summoned all his strength to his assistance, made some indifferent remarks, and then, with a smile full of good nature, he embraced me, saying, “Perhaps I may be fated never to see you again, but ‘Fata viam invenient’.”

I embraced him affectionately, and went away, but his prediction was verified, for I never saw him again; he died eleven years afterwards. I found myself in the street without feeling the slightest fear, but I was in a good deal of trouble about my debts. I had not the heart to go to Muran to take away from M. M. her last five hundred sequins, which sum I owed to the man who won it from me in the night; I preferred asking him to wait eight days, and I did so. After performing this unpleasant piece of business I returned home, and, having consoled my landlady to the utmost of my power, I kissed the daughter, and lay down to sleep. The date was July 25th, 1755.

Next morning at day-break who should enter my room but the awful Messer-Grande. To awake, to see him, and to hear him asking if I were Jacques Casanova, was the work of a moment. At my “yes, I am Casanova,” he told me to rise, to put on my clothes, to give him all the papers and manuscripts in my possession, and to follow him.

“On whose authority do you order me to do this?”

“By the authority of the Tribunal.”

EPISODE 10 — UNDER THE LEADS

CHAPTER XXVI

Under The Leads — The Earthquake

What a strange and unexplained power certain words exercise upon the soul! I, who the evening before so bravely fortified myself with my innocence and courage, by the word tribunal was turned to a stone, with merely the faculty of passive obedience left to me.

My desk was open, and all my papers were on a table where I was accustomed to write.

“Take them,” said I, to the agent of the dreadful Tribunal, pointing to the papers which covered the table. He filled a bag with them, and gave it to one of the sbirri, and then told me that I must also give up the bound manuscripts which I had in my possession. I shewed him where they were, and this incident opened my eyes. I saw now, clearly enough, that I had been betrayed by the wretch Manuzzi. The books were, “The Key of Solomon the King,” “The Zecorben,” a “Picatrix,” a book of “Instructions on the Planetary Hours,” and the necessary incantations for conversing with demons of all sorts. Those who were aware that I possessed these books took me for an expert magician, and I was not sorry to have such a reputation.

Messer-Grande took also the books on the table by my bed, such as Petrarch, Ariosto, Horace. “The Military’ Philosopher” (a manuscript which Mathilde had given me), “The Porter of Chartreux,” and “The Aretin,” which Manuzzi had also denounced, for Messer-Grande asked me for it by name. This spy, Manuzzi, had all the appearance of an honest man — a very necessary qualification for his profession. His son made his fortune in Poland by marrying a lady named Opeska, whom, as they say, he killed, though I have never had any positive proof on the matter, and am willing to stretch Christian charity to the extent of believing he was innocent, although he was quite capable of such a crime.

While Messer-Grande was thus rummaging among my manuscripts, books and letters, I was dressing myself in an absent-minded manner, neither hurrying myself nor the reverse. I made my toilette, shaved myself, and combed my hair; putting on mechanically a laced shirt and my holiday suit without saying a word, and without Messer-Grande — who did not let me escape his sight for an instant — complaining that I was dressing myself as if I were going to a wedding.

As I went out I was surprised to see a band of forty men-at-arms in the ante-room. They had done me the honour of thinking all these men necessary for my arrest, though, according to the axiom ‘Ne Hercules quidem contra duos’, two would have been enough. It is curious that in London, where everyone is brave, only one man is needed to arrest another, whereas in my dear native land, where cowardice prevails, thirty are required. The reason is, perhaps, that the coward on the offensive is more afraid than the coward on the defensive, and thus a man usually cowardly is transformed for the moment into a man of courage. It is certain that at Venice one often sees a man defending himself against twenty sbirri, and finally escaping after beating them soundly. I remember once helping a friend of mine at Paris to escape from the hands of forty bum-bailiffs, and we put the whole vile rout of them to flight.

Messer-Grande made me get into a gondola, and sat down near me with an escort of four men. When we came to our destination he offered me coffee, which I refused; and he then shut me up in a room. I passed these four hours in sleep, waking up every quarter of an hour to pass water — an extraordinary occurrence, as I was not at all subject to stranguary; the heat was great, and I had not supped the evening before. I have noticed at other times that surprise at a deed of oppression acts on me as a powerful narcotic, but I found out at the time I speak of that great surprise is also a diuretic. I make this discovery over to the doctors, it is possible that some learned man may make use of it to solace the ills of humanity. I remember laughing very heartily at Prague six years ago, on learning that some thin-skinned ladies, on reading my flight from The Leads, which was published at that date, took great offence at the above account, which they thought I should have done well to leave out. I should have left it out, perhaps, in speaking to a lady, but the public is not a pretty woman whom I am intent on cajoling, my only aim is to be instructive. Indeed, I see no impropriety in the circumstance I have narrated, which is as common to men and women as eating and drinking; and if there is anything in it to shock too sensitive nerves, it is that we resemble in this respect the cows and pigs.

It is probable that just as my overwhelmed soul gave signs of its failing strength by the loss of the thinking faculty, so my body distilled a great part of those fluids which by their continual circulation set the thinking faculty in motion. Thus a sudden shock might cause instantaneous death, and send one to Paradise by a cut much too short.

In course of time the captain of the men-at-arms came to tell me that he was under orders to take me under the Leads. Without a word I followed him. We went by gondola, and after a thousand turnings among the small canals we got into the Grand Canal, and landed at the prison quay. After climbing several flights of stairs we crossed a closed bridge which forms the communication between the prisons and the Doge's palace, crossing the canal called Rio di Palazzo. On the other side of this bridge there is a gallery which we traversed. We then crossed one room, and entered another, where sat an individual in the dress of a noble, who, after looking fixedly at me, said, "E quello, mettetelo in deposito:"

This man was the secretary of the Inquisitors, the prudent Dominic Cavalli, who was apparently ashamed to speak Venetian in my presence as he pronounced my doom in the Tuscan language.

Messer-Grande then made me over to the warden of The Leads, who stood by with an enormous bunch of keys, and accompanied by two guards, made me climb two short flights of stairs, at the top of which followed a passage and then another gallery, at the end of which he opened a door, and I found myself in a dirty garret, thirty-six feet long by twelve broad, badly lighted by a window high up in the roof. I thought this garret was my prison, but I was mistaken; for, taking an enormous key, the gaoler opened a thick door lined with iron, three and a half feet high, with a round hole in the middle, eight inches in diameter, just as I was looking intently at an iron machine. This machine was like a horse shoe, an inch thick and about five inches across from one end to the other. I was thinking what could be the use to which this horrible instrument was put, when the gaoler said, with a smile,

"I see, sir, that you wish to know what that is for, and as it happens I can satisfy your curiosity. When their excellencies give orders that anyone is to be strangled, he is made to sit down on a stool, the back turned to this collar, and his head is so placed that the collar goes round one half of the neck. A silk band, which goes round the other half, passes through this hole, and the two ends are connected with the axle of a wheel which is turned by someone until the prisoner gives up the ghost, for the confessor, God be thanked! never leaves him till he is dead."

"All this sounds very ingenious, and I should think that it is you who have the honour of turning the wheel."

He made no answer, and signing to me to enter, which I did by bending double, he shut me up, and afterwards asked me through the grated hole what I would like to eat.

"I haven't thought anything about it yet," I answered. And he went away, locking all the doors carefully behind him.

Stunned with grief, I leant my elbows on the top of the grating. It was crossed, by six iron bars an inch thick, which formed sixteen square holes. This opening would have lighted my cell, if a square beam supporting the roof which joined the wall below the window had not intercepted what little light came into that horrid garret. After making the tour of my sad abode, my head lowered, as the cell was not more than five and a half feet high, I found by groping along that it formed three-quarters of a square of twelve feet. The fourth quarter was a kind of recess, which would have held a bed; but there was neither bed, nor table, nor chair, nor any furniture whatever, except a bucket — the use of which may be guessed, and a bench fixed in the wall a foot wide and four feet from the ground. On it I placed my cloak, my fine suit, and my hat trimmed with Spanish paint and adorned with a beautiful white feather. The heat was great, and my instinct made me go mechanically to the grating, the only place where I could lean on my elbows. I could not see the window, but I saw the light in the garret, and rats of a fearful size, which walked unconcernedly about it; these horrible creatures coming close under my grating without shewing the slightest fear. At the sight of these I hastened to close up the round hole in the middle of the door with an inside shutter, for a visit from one of the rats would have frozen my blood. I passed eight hours in silence and without stirring, my arms all the time crossed on the top of the grating.

At last the clock roused me from my reverie, and I began to feel restless that no one came to give me anything to eat or to bring me a bed whereon to sleep. I thought they might at least let me have a chair and some bread and water. I had no appetite, certainly; but were my gaolers to guess as much? And never in my life had I been so thirsty. I was quite sure, however, that somebody would come before the close of the day; but when I heard eight o'clock strike I became furious, knocking at the door, stamping my feet, fretting and fuming, and accompanying this useless hubbub with loud cries. After more than an hour of this wild exercise, seeing no one, without the slightest reason to think I could be heard, and shrouded in darkness, I shut the grating for fear of the rats, and threw myself at full length upon the floor. So cruel a desertion seemed to me unnatural, and I came to the conclusion that the Inquisitors had sworn my death. My investigation as to what I had done to deserve such a fate was not a long one, for in the most scrupulous examination of my conduct I could find no crimes. I was, it is true, a profligate, a gambler, a bold talker, a man who thought of little besides enjoying this present life, but in all that there was no offence against the state. Nevertheless, finding myself treated as a criminal, rage and despair made me express myself against the horrible despotism which oppressed me in a manner which I will leave my readers to guess, but which I will not repeat here. But notwithstanding my brief and anxiety, the hunger which began to make itself felt, and the thirst which tormented me, and the hardness of the boards on which I lay, did not prevent exhausted nature from reasserting her rights; I fell asleep.

My strong constitution was in need of sleep; and in a young and healthy subject this imperious necessity silences all others, and in this way above all is sleep rightly termed the benefactor of man.

The clock striking midnight awoke me. How sad is the awaking when it makes one regret one's empty dreams. I could scarcely believe that I had spent three painless hours. As I lay on my left side, I stretched out my right hand to get my handkerchief, which I remembered putting on that side. I felt about for it, when — heavens! what was my surprise to feel another hand as cold as ice. The fright sent an electric shock through me, and my hair began to stand on end.

Never had I been so alarmed, nor should I have previously thought myself capable of experiencing such terror. I passed three or four minutes in a kind of swoon, not only motionless but incapable of thinking. As I got back my senses by degrees, I tried to make myself believe that the hand I fancied I had touched was a mere creature of my disordered imagination; and with this idea I stretched out my hand again, and again with the same result. Benumbed with fright, I uttered a piercing cry, and, dropping the hand I held, I drew back my arm, trembling all over:

Soon, as I got a little calmer and more capable of reasoning, I concluded that a corpse had been placed beside me whilst I slept, for I was certain it was not there when I lay down.

"This," said I, "is the body of some strangled wretch, and they would thus warn me of the fate which is in store for me."

The thought maddened me; and my fear giving place to rage, for the third time I stretched my arm towards the icy hand, seizing it to make certain of the fact in all its atrocity, and wishing to get up, I rose upon my left elbow, and found that I had got hold of my other hand. Deadened by the weight of my body and the hardness of the boards, it had lost warmth, motion, and all sensation.

In spite of the humorous features in this incident, it did not cheer me up, but, on the contrary, inspired me with the darkest fancies. I saw that I was in a place where, if the false appeared true, the truth might appear false, where understanding was bereaved of half its prerogatives, where the imagination becoming affected would either make the reason a victim to empty hopes or to dark despair. I resolved to be on my guard; and for the first time in my life, at the age of thirty, I called philosophy to my assistance. I had within me all the seeds of philosophy, but so far I had had no need for it.

I am convinced that most men die without ever having thought, in the proper sense of the word, not so much for want of wit or of good sense, but rather because the shock necessary to the reasoning faculty in its inception has never occurred to them to lift them out of their daily habits.

After what I had experienced, I could think of sleep no more, and to get up would have been useless as I could not stand upright, so I took the only sensible course and remained seated. I sat thus till four o'clock in the morning, the sun would rise at five, and I longed to see the day, for a presentiment which I held infallible told me that it would set me again at liberty. I was consumed with a desire for revenge, nor did I conceal it from myself. I saw myself at the head of the people, about to exterminate the Government which had oppressed me; I massacred all the aristocrats without pity; all must be shattered and brought to the dust. I was delirious; I knew the authors of my misfortune, and in my fancy I destroyed them. I restored the natural right common to all men of being obedient only to the law, and of being tried only by their peers and by laws to which they have agreed-in short, I built castles in Spain. Such is man when he has become the prey of a devouring passion. He does not suspect that the principle which moves him is not reason but wrath, its greatest enemy.

I waited for a less time than I had expected, and thus I became a little more quiet. At half-past four the deadly silence of the place — this hell of the living — was broken by the shriek of bolts being shot back in the passages leading to my cell.

“Have you had time yet to think about what you will take to eat?” said the harsh voice of my gaoler from the wicket.

One is lucky when the insolence of a wretch like this only shews itself in the guise of jesting. I answered that I should like some rice soup, a piece of boiled beef, a roast, bread, wine, and water. I saw that the lout was astonished not to hear the lamentations he expected. He went away and came back again in a quarter of an hour to say that he was astonished I did not require a bed and the necessary pieces of furniture, “for” said he, “if you flatter yourself that you are only here for a night, you are very much mistaken.”

“Then bring me whatever you think necessary.”

“Where shall I go for it? Here is a pencil and paper; write it down.”

I skewed him by writing where to go for my shirts, stockings, and clothes of all sorts, a bed, table, chair, the books which Messer-Grande had confiscated, paper, pens, and so forth. On my reading out the list to him (the lout did not know how to read) he cried, “Scratch out,” said he, “scratch out books, paper, pens, looking-glass and razors, for all that is forbidden fruit here, and then give me some money to get your dinner.” I had three sequins so I gave him one, and he went off. He spent an hour in the passages engaged, as I learnt afterwards, in attending on seven other prisoners who were imprisoned in cells placed far apart from each other to prevent all communication.

About noon the gaoler reappeared followed by five guards, whose duty it was to serve the state prisoners. He opened: the cell door to bring in my dinner and the furniture I had asked for. The bed was placed in the recess; my dinner was laid out on a small table, and I had to eat with an ivory spoon he had procured out of the money I had given him; all forks, knives, and edged tools being forbidden.

“Tell me what you would like for to-morrow,” said he, “for I can only come here once a day at sunrise. The Lord High Secretary has told me to inform you that he will send you some suitable books, but those you wish for are forbidden.”

“Thank him for his kindness in putting me by myself.”

“I will do so, but you make a mistake in jesting thus.”

“I don’t jest at all, for I think truly that it is much better to be alone than to mingle with the scoundrels who are doubtless here.”

“What, sir! scoundrels? Not at all, not at all. They are only respectable people here, who, for reasons known to their excellencies alone, have to be sequestered from society. You have been put by yourself as an additional punishment, and you want me to thank the secretary on that account?”

“I was not aware of that.”

The fool was right, and I soon found it out. I discovered that a man imprisoned by himself can have no occupations. Alone in a gloomy cell where he only sees the fellow who brings his food once a day, where he cannot walk upright, he is the most wretched of men. He would like to be in hell, if he believes in it, for the sake of the company. So strong a feeling is this that I got to desire the company of a murderer, of one stricken with the plague, or of a bear. The loneliness behind the prison bars is terrible, but it must be learnt by experience to be understood, and such an experience I would not wish even to my enemies. To a man of letters in my situation, paper and ink would take away nine-tenths of the torture, but the wretches who persecuted me did not dream of granting me such an alleviation of my misery.

After the gaoler had gone, I set my table near the grating for the sake of the light, and sat down to dinner, but I could only swallow a few spoonfuls of soup. Having fasted for nearly forty-eight hours, it was not surprising that I felt ill. I passed the day quietly enough seated on my sofa, and proposing myself to read the "suitable books" which they had been good enough to promise me. I did not shut my eyes the whole night, kept awake by the hideous noise made by the rats, and by the deafening chime of the clock of St. Mark's, which seemed to be striking in my room. This double vexation was not my chief trouble, and I daresay many of my readers will guess what I am going to speak of-namely, the myriads of fleas which held high holiday over me. These small insects drank my blood with unutterable voracity, their incessant bites gave me spasmodic convulsions and poisoned my blood.

At day-break, Lawrence (such was the gaoler's name) came to my cell and had my bed made, and the room swept and cleansed, and one of the guards gave me water wherewith to wash myself. I wanted to take a walk in the garret, but Lawrence told me that was forbidden. He gave me two thick books which I forbore to open, not being quite sure of repressing the wrath with which they might inspire me, and which the spy would have infallibly reported to his masters. After leaving me my fodder and two cut lemons he went away.

As soon as I was alone I ate my soup in a hurry, so as to take it hot, and then I drew as near as I could to the light with one of the books, and was delighted to find that I could see to read. I looked at the title, and read, "The Mystical City of Sister Mary of Jesus, of Agrada." I had never heard of it. The other book was by a Jesuit named Caravita. This fellow, a hypocrite like the rest of them, had invented a new cult of the "Adoration of the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ." This, according to the author, was the part of our Divine Redeemer, which above all others should be adored a curious idea of a besotted ignoramus, with which I got disgusted at the first page, for to my thinking the heart is no more worthy a part than the lungs, stomach; or any other of the inwards. The "Mystical City" rather interested me.

I read in it the wild conceptions of a Spanish nun, devout to superstition, melancholy, shut in by convent walls, and swayed by the ignorance and bigotry of her confessors. All these grotesque, monstrous, and fantastic visions of hers were dignified with the name of revelations. The lover and bosom-friend of the Holy Virgin, she had received instructions from God Himself to write the life of His divine mother; the necessary information was furnished her by the Holy Ghost.

This life of Mary began, not with the day of her birth, but with her immaculate conception in the womb of Anne, her mother. This Sister Mary of Agrada was the head of a Franciscan convent founded by herself in her own house. After telling in detail all the deeds of her divine heroine whilst in her mother's womb, she informs us that at the age of three she swept and cleansed the house with the assistance of nine hundred servants, all of whom were angels whom God had placed at her disposal, under the command of Michael, who came and went between God and herself to conduct their mutual correspondence.

What strikes the judicious reader of the book is the evident belief of the more than fanatical writer that nothing is due to her invention; everything is told in good faith and with full belief. The work contains the dreams of a visionary, who, without vanity but inebriated with the idea of God, thinks to reveal only the inspirations of the Divine Spirit.

The book was published with the permission of the very holy and very horrible Inquisition. I could not recover from my astonishment! Far from its stirring up in my breast a holy and simple zeal of religion, it inclined me to treat all the mystical dogmas of the Faith as fabulous.

Such works may have dangerous results; for example, a more susceptible reader than myself, or one more inclined to believe in the marvellous, runs the risk of becoming as great a visionary as the poor nun herself.

The need of doing something made me spend a week over this masterpiece of madness, the product of a hyper-exalted brain. I took care to say nothing to the gaoler about this fine work, but I began to feel the effects of reading it. As soon as I went off to sleep I experienced the disease which Sister Mary of Agrada had communicated to my mind weakened by melancholy, want of proper nourishment and exercise, bad air, and the horrible uncertainty of my fate. The wildness of my dreams made me laugh when I recalled them in my waking moments. If I had possessed the necessary materials I would have written my visions down, and I might possibly have produced in my cell a still madder work than the one chosen with such insight by Cavalli.

This set me thinking how mistaken is the opinion which makes human intellect an absolute force; it is merely relative, and he who studies himself carefully will find only weakness. I perceived that though men rarely become mad, still such an event is well within the bounds of possibility, for our reasoning faculties are like powder, which, though it catches fire easily, will never catch fire at all without a spark. The book of the Spanish nun has all the properties necessary to make a man crack-brained; but for the poison to take effect he must be isolated, put under the Leads, and deprived of all other employments.

In November, 1767, as I was going from Pampeluna to Madrid, my coachman, Andrea Capello, stopped for us to dine in a town of Old Castille. So dismal and dreary a place did I find it that I asked its name. How I laughed when I was told that it was Agrada!

"Here, then," I said to myself, "did that saintly lunatic produce that masterpiece which but for M. Cavalli I should never have known."

An old priest, who had the highest possible opinion of me the moment I began to ask him about this truthful historian of the mother of Christ, shewed me the very place where she had written it, and assured me that the father, mother, sister, and in short all the kindred of the blessed biographer, had been great saints in their generation. He told me, and spoke truly, that the Spaniards had solicited her canonization at Rome, with that of the venerable Palafox. This "Mystical City," perhaps, gave Father Malagrida the idea of writing the life of St. Anne, written, also, at the dictation of the Holy Ghost, but the poor devil of a Jesuit had to suffer martyrdom for it — an additional reason for his canonization, if the horrible society ever comes to life again, and attains the universal power which is its secret aim.

At the end of eight or nine days I found myself moneyless. Lawrence asked me for some, but I had not got it.

"Where can I get some?"

"Nowhere."

What displeased this ignorant and gossiping fellow about me was my silence and my laconic manner of talking.

Next day he told me that the Tribunal had assigned me fifty sous per diem of which he would have to take charge, but that he would give me an account of his expenditure every month, and that he would spend the surplus on what I liked.

“Get me the Leyden Gazette twice a week.”

“I can’t do that, because it is not allowed by the authorities.”

Sixty-five livres a month was more than I wanted, since I could not eat more than I did: the great heat and the want of proper nourishment had weakened me. It was in the dog-days; the strength of the sun’s rays upon the lead of the roof made my cell like a stove, so that the streams of perspiration which rolled off my poor body as I sat quite naked on my sofa-chair wetted the floor to right and left of me.

I had been in this hell-on-earth for fifteen days without any secretion from the bowels. At the end of this almost incredible time nature re-asserted herself, and I thought my last hour was come. The haemorrhoidal veins were swollen to such an extent that the pressure on them gave me almost unbearable agony. To this fatal time I owe the inception of that sad infirmity of which I have never been able to completely cure myself. The recurrence of the same pains, though not so acute, remind me of the cause, and do not make my remembrance of it any the more agreeable. This disease got me compliments in Russia when I was there ten years later, and I found it in such esteem that I did not dare to complain. The same kind of thing happened to me at Constantinople, when I was complaining of a cold in the head in the presence of a Turk, who was thinking, I could see, that a dog of a Christian was not worthy of such a blessing.

The same day I sickened with a high fever and kept my bed. I said nothing to Lawrence about it, but the day after, on finding my dinner untouched, he asked me how I was.

“Very well.”

“That can’t be, sir, as you have eaten nothing. You are ill, and you will experience the generosity of the Tribunal who will provide you, without fee or charge, with a physician, surgeon, and all necessary medicines.”

He went out, returning after three hours without guards, holding a candle in his hand, and followed by a grave-looking personage; this was the doctor. I was in the height of the fever, which had not left me for three days. He came up to me and began to ask me questions, but I told him that with my confessor and my doctor I would only speak apart. The doctor told Lawrence to leave the room, but on the refusal of that Argus to do so, he went away saying that I was dangerously ill, possibly unto death. For this I hoped, for my life as it had become was no longer my chiefest good. I was somewhat glad also to think that my pitiless persecutors might, on hearing of my condition, be forced to reflect on the cruelty of the treatment to which they had subjected me.

Four hours afterwards I heard the noise of bolts once more, and the doctor came in holding the candle himself. Lawrence remained outside. I had become so weak that I experienced a grateful restfulness. Kindly nature does not suffer a man seriously ill to feel weary. I was delighted to hear that my infamous turnkey was outside, for since his explanation of the iron collar I had looked an him with loathing.

In a quarter of an hour I had told the doctor all.

“If we want to get well,” said he, “we must not be melancholy.”

“Write me the prescription, and take it to the only apothecary who can make it up. M. Cavalli is the bad doctor who exhibited ‘The Heart of Jesus,’ and ‘Tire Mystical City.’”

“Those two preparations are quite capable of having brought on the fever and the haemorrhoids. I will not forsake you”

After making me a large jug of lemonade, and telling the to drink frequently, he went away. I slept soundly, dreaming fantastic dreams.

In he morning the doctor came again with Lawrence and a surgeon, who bled me. The doctor left me some medicine which he told me to take in the evening, and a bottle of soap. “I have obtained leave,” said he, “for you to move into the garret where the heat is less, and the air better than here.”

“I decline the favour, as I abominate the rats, which you know nothing about, and which would certainly get into my bed.”

“What a pity! I told M. Cavalli that he had almost killed you with his books, and he has commissioned me to take them back, and to give you Boethius; and here it is.”

“I am much obliged to you. I like it better than Seneca, and I am sure it will do me good.”

“I am leaving you a very necessary instrument, and some barley water for you to refresh yourself with.”

He visited me four times, and pulled me through; my constitution did the rest, and my appetite returned. At the beginning of September I found myself, on the whole, very well, suffering from no actual ills except the heat, the vermin, and weariness, for I could not be always reading Boethius.

One day Lawrence told me that I might go out of my cell to wash myself whilst the bed was being made and the room swept. I took advantage of the favour to walk up and down for the ten minutes taken by these operations, and as I walked hard the rats were alarmed and dared not shew themselves. On the same day Lawrence gave me an account of my money, and brought himself in as my debtor to the amount of thirty livres, which however, I could not put into my pocket. I left the money in his hands, telling him to lay it out on masses on my behalf, feeling sure that he would make quite a different use of it, and he thanked me in a tone that persuaded me he would be his own priest. I gave him the money every month, and I never saw a priest’s receipt. Lawrence was wise to celebrate the sacrifice at the tavern; the money was useful to someone at all events.

I lived from day to day, persuading myself every night that the next day I should be at liberty; but as I was each day deceived, I decided in my poor brain that I should be set free without fail on the 1st of October, on which day the new Inquisitors begin their term of office. According to this theory, my imprisonment would last as long as the authority of the present Inquisitors, and thus was explained the fact that I had seen nothing of the secretary, who would otherwise have undoubtedly come to interrogate, examine, and convict me of my crimes, and finally to announce my doom. All this appeared to me unanswerable, because it seemed natural, but it was fallacious under the Leads, where nothing is done after the natural order. I imagined the Inquisitors must have discovered my innocence and the wrong they had done me, and that they only kept me in prison for form’s sake, and to protect their repute from the stain of committing injustice; hence I concluded that they would give me my freedom when they laid down their tyrannical authority. My mind was so composed and quiet that I felt as if I could forgive them, and forget the wrong that they had done me. "How can they leave me here to the mercy of their successors," I thought, "to whom they cannot leave any evidence capable of condemning me?" I could not believe that my sentence had been pronounced and confirmed, without my being told of it, or of the reasons by which my judges had been actuated. I was so certain that I had right on my side, that I reasoned accordingly; but this was not the attitude I should have assumed towards a court which stands aloof from all the courts in the world for its unbounded absolutism. To prove anyone guilty, it is only necessary for the Inquisitors to proceed against him; so there is no need to speak to him, and when he is condemned it would be useless to announce to the prisoner his sentence, as his consent is not required, and they prefer to leave the poor wretch the feeling of hope; and certainly, if he were told the whole process, imprisonment would not be shortened by an hour. The wise man tells no one of his business, and the business of the Tribunal of Venice is only to judge and to doom. The guilty party is not required to have any share in the matter; he is like a nail, which to be driven into a wall needs only to be struck.

To a certain extent I was acquainted with the ways of the Colossus which was crushing me under foot, but there are things on earth which one can only truly understand by experience. If amongst my readers there are any who think such laws unjust, I forgive them, as I know they have a strong likeness to injustice; but let me tell them that they are also necessary, as a tribunal like the Venetian could not subsist without them. Those who maintain these laws in full vigour are senators, chosen from amongst the fittest for that office, and with a reputation for honour and virtue.

The last day of September I passed a sleepless night, and was on thorns to see the dawn appear, so sure was I that that day would make me free. The reign of those villains who had made me a captive drew to a close; but the dawn appeared, Lawrence came as usual, and told me nothing new. For five or six days I hovered between rage and despair, and then I imagined that for some reasons which to me were unfathomable they had decided to keep me prisoner for the remainder of my days. This awful idea only made me laugh, for I knew that it was in my power to remain a slave for no long time, but only till I should take it into my own hands to break my prison. I knew that I should escape or die: 'Deliberata morte ferocior'.

In the beginning of November I seriously formed the plan of forcibly escaping from a place where I was forcibly kept. I began to rack my brains to find a way of carrying the idea into execution, and I conceived a hundred schemes, each one bolder than the other, but a new plan always made me give up the one I was on the point of accepting.

While I was immersed in this toilsome sea of thought, an event happened which brought home to me the sad state of mind I was in.

I was standing up in the garret looking towards the top, and my glance fell on the great beam, not shaking but turning on its right side, and then, by slow and interrupted movement in the opposite direction, turning again and replacing itself in its original position. As I lost my balance at the same time, I knew it was the shock of an earthquake. Lawrence and the guards, who just then came out of my room, said that they too, had felt the earth tremble. In such despair was I that this incident made me feel a joy which I kept to myself, saying nothing. Four or five seconds after the same movement occurred, and I could not refrain from saying,

“Another, O my God! but stronger.”

The guards, terrified with what they thought the impious ravings of a desperate madman, fled in horror.

After they were gone, as I was pondering the matter over, I found that I looked upon the overthrow of the Doge’s palace as one of the events which might lead to liberty; the mighty pile, as it fell, might throw me safe and sound, and consequently free, on St. Mark’s Place, or at the worst it could only crush me beneath its ruins. Situated as I was, liberty reckons for all, and life for nothing, or rather for very little. Thus in the depths of my soul I began to grow mad.

This earthquake shock was the result of those which at the same time destroyed Lisbon.

CHAPTER XXVII

Various Adventures — My Companions — I Prepare to Escape —

Change of Cell

To make the reader understand how I managed to escape from a place like the Leads, I must explain the nature of the locality.

The Leads, used for the confinement of state prisoners, are in fact the lofts of the ducal palace, and take their name from the large plates of lead with which the roof is covered. One can only reach them through the gates of the palace, the prison buildings, or by the bridge of which I have spoken called the Bridge of Sighs. It is impossible to reach the cells without passing through the hall where the State Inquisitors hold their meetings, and their secretary has the sole charge of the key, which he only gives to the gaoler for a short time in the early morning whilst he is attending to the prisoners. This is done at day-break, because otherwise the guards as they came and went would be in the way of those who have to do with the Council of Ten, as the Council meets every day in a hall called The Bussola, which the guards have to cross every time they go to the Leads.

The prisons are under the roof on two sides of the palace; three to the west (mine being among the number) and four to the east. On the west the roof looks into the court of the palace, and on the east straight on to the canal called Rio di Palazzo. On this side the cells are well lighted, and one can stand up straight, which is not the case in the prison where I was, which was distinguished by the name of 'Trave', on account of the enormous beam which deprived me of light. The floor of my cell was directly over the ceiling of the Inquisitors' hall, where they commonly met only at night after the sitting of the Council of Ten of which the whole three are members.

As I knew my ground and the habits of the Inquisitors perfectly well, the only way to escape — the only way at least which I deemed likely to succeed — was to make a hole in the floor of my cell; but to do this tools must be obtained — a difficult task in a place where all communication with the outside world was forbidden, where neither letters nor visits were allowed. To bribe a guard a good deal of money would be necessary, and I had none. And supposing that the gaoler and his two guards allowed themselves to be strangled — for my hands were my only weapons — there was always a third guard on duty at the door of the passage, which he locked and would not open till his fellow who wished to pass through gave him the password. In spite of all these difficulties my only thought was how to escape, and as Boethius gave me no hints on this point I read him no more, and as I was certain that the difficulty was only to be solved by stress of thinking I centered all my thoughts on this one object.

It has always been my opinion that when a man sets himself determinedly to do something, and thinks of nought but his design, he must succeed despite all difficulties in his path: such an one may make himself Pope or Grand Vizier, he may overturn an ancient line of kings — provided that he knows how to seize on his opportunity, and be a man of wit and pertinacity. To succeed one must count on being fortunate and despise all ill success, but it is a most difficult operation.

Towards the middle of November, Lawrence told me that Messer-Grande had a prisoner in his hands whom the new secretary, Businello, had ordered to be placed in the worst cell, and who consequently was going to share mine. He told me that on the secretary's reminding him that I looked upon it as a favour to be left alone, he answered that I had grown wiser in the four months of my imprisonment. I was not sorry to hear the news or that there was a new secretary. This M. Pierre Businello was a worthy man whom I knew at Paris. He afterwards went to London as ambassador of the Republic.

In the afternoon I heard the noise of the bolts, and presently Lawrence and two guards entered leading in a young man who was weeping bitterly; and after taking off his handcuffs they shut him up with me, and went out without saying a word. I was lying on my bed, and he could not see me. I was amused at his astonishment. Being, fortunately for himself, seven or eight inches shorter than I, he was able to stand upright, and he began to inspect my arm-chair, which he doubtless thought was meant for his own use. Glancing at the ledge above the grating he saw Boethius, took it up, opened it, and put it down with a kind of passion, probably because being in Latin it was of no use to him. Continuing his inspection of the cell he went to the left, and groping about was much surprised to find clothes. He approached the recess, and stretching out his hand he touched me, and immediately begged my pardon in a respectful manner. I asked him to sit down and we were friends.

“Who are you?” said I.

“I am Maggiorin, of Vicenza. My father, who was a coachman, kept me at school till I was eleven, by which time I had learnt to read and write; I was afterwards apprenticed to a barber, where I learnt my business thoroughly. After that I became valet to the Count of X — . I had been in the service of the nobleman for two years when his daughter came from the convent. It was my duty to do her hair, and by degrees I fell in love with her, and inspired her with a reciprocal passion. After having sworn a thousand times to exist only for one another, we gave ourselves up to the task of shewing each other marks of our affection, the result of which was that the state of the young countess discovered all. An old and devoted servant was the first to find out our connection and the condition of my mistress, and she told her that she felt in duty bound to tell her father, but my sweetheart succeeded in making her promise to be silent, saying that in the course of the week she herself would tell him through her confessor. She informed me of all this, and instead of going to confession we prepared for flight. She had laid hands on a good sum of money and some diamonds which had belonged to her mother, and we were to set out for Milan to-night. But to-day the count called me after dinner, and giving me a letter, he told me to start at once and to deliver it with my own hand to the person to whom it was addressed at Venice. He spoke to me so kindly and quietly that I had not the slightest suspicion of the fate in store for me. I went to get my cloak, said good-bye to my little wife, telling her that I should soon return. Seeing deeper below the surface than I, and perchance having a presentiment of my misfortune, she was sick at heart. I came here in hot haste, and took care to deliver the fatal letter. They made me wait for an answer, and in the mean time I went to an inn; but as I came out I was arrested and put in the guard-room, where I was kept till they brought me here. I suppose, sir, I might consider the young countess as my wife?”

“You make a mistake.”

“But nature — — “

“Nature, when a man listens to her and nothing else, takes him from one folly to another, till she puts him under the Leads.”

“I am under the Leads, then, am I?”

“As I am.”

The poor young man shed some bitter tears. He was a well-made lad, open, honest, and amorous beyond words. I secretly pardoned the countess, and condemned the count for exposing his daughter to such temptation. A shepherd who shuts up the wolf in the fold should not complain if his flock be devoured. In all his tears and lamentations he thought not of himself but always of his sweetheart. He thought that the gaoler would return and bring him some food and a bed; but I undeceived him, and offered him a share of what I had. His heart, however, was too full for him to eat. In the evening I gave him my mattress, on which he passed the night, for though he looked neat and clean enough I did not care to have him to sleep with me, dreading the results of a lover’s dreams. He neither understood how wrongly he had acted, nor how the count was constrained to punish him publicly as a cloak to the honour of his daughter and his house. The next day he was given a mattress and a dinner to the value of fifteen sous, which the Tribunal had assigned to him, either as a favour or a charity, for the word justice would not be appropriate in speaking of this terrible body. I told the gaoler that my dinner would suffice for the two of us, and that he could employ the young man’s allowance in saying masses in his usual manner. He agreed willingly, and having told him that he was lucky to be in my company, he said that we could walk in the garret for half an hour. I found this walk an excellent thing for my health and my plan of escape, which, however, I could not carry out for eleven months afterwards. At the end of this resort of rats, I saw a number of old pieces of furniture thrown on the ground to the right and left of two great chests, and in front of a large pile of papers sewn up into separate volumes. I helped myself to a dozen of them for the sake of the reading, and I found them to be accounts of trials, and very diverting; for I was allowed to read these papers, which had once contained such secrets. I found some curious replies to the judges’ questions respecting the seduction of maidens, gallantries carried a little too far by persons employed in girls’ schools, facts relating to confessors who had abused their penitents, schoolmasters convicted of pederasty with their pupils, and guardians who had seduced their wards. Some of the papers dating two or three centuries back, in which the style and the manners illustrated gave me considerable entertainment. Among the pieces of furniture on the floor I saw a warming-pan, a kettle, a fire-shovel, a pair of tongs, some old candle-sticks, some earthenware pots, and even a syringe. From this I concluded that some prisoner of distinction had been allowed to make use of these articles. But what interested me most was a straight iron bar as thick as my thumb, and about a foot and a half long. However, I left everything as it was, as my plans had not been sufficiently ripened by time for me to appropriate any object in particular.

One day towards the end of the month my companion was taken away, and Lawrence told me that he had been condemned to the prisons known as The Fours, which are within the same walls as the ordinary prisons, but belong to the State Inquisitors. Those confined in them have the privilege of being able to call the gaoler when they like. The prisons are gloomy, but there is an oil lamp in the midst which gives the necessary light, and there is no fear of fire as everything is made of marble. I heard, a long time after, that the unfortunate Maggiorin was there for five years, and was afterwards sent to Cerigo for ten. I do not know whether he ever came from there. He had kept me good company, and this I discovered as soon as he was gone, for in a few days I became as melancholy as before. Fortunately, I was still allowed my walk in the garret, and I began to examine its contents with more minuteness. One of the chests was full of fine paper, pieces of cardboard, uncut pens, and clews of pack thread; the other was fastened down. A piece of polished black marble, an inch thick, six inches long, and three broad, attracted my attention, and I possessed myself of it without knowing what I was going to do with it, and I secreted it in my cell, covering it up with my shirts.

A week after Maggiorin had gone, Lawrence told me that in all probability I should soon get another companion. This fellow Lawrence, who at bottom was a mere gabbling fool, began to get uneasy at my never asking him any questions. This fondness for gossip was not altogether appropriate to his office, but where is one to find beings absolutely vile? There are such persons, but happily they are few and far between, and are not to be sought for in the lower orders. Thus my gaoler found himself unable to hold his tongue, and thought that the reason I asked no questions must be that I thought him incapable of answering them; and feeling hurt at this, and wishing to prove to me that I made a mistake, he began to gossip without being solicited.

“I believe you will often have visitors,” said he, “as the other six cells have each two prisoners, who are not likely to be sent to the Fours.” I made him no reply, but he went on, in a few seconds, “They send to the Fours all sorts of people after they have been sentenced, though they know nothing of that. The prisoners whom I have charge of under the Leads are like yourself, persons of note, and are only guilty of deeds of which the inquisitive must know nothing. If you knew, sir, what sort of people shared your fate, you would be astonished, It’s true that you are called a man of parts; but you will pardon me…. You know that all men of parts are treated well here. You take me, I see. Fifty sous a day, that’s something. They give three livres to a citizen, four to a gentleman, and eight to a foreign count. I ought to know, I think, as everything goes through my hands.”

He then commenced to sing his own praises, which consisted of negative clauses.

“I’m no thief, nor traitor, nor greedy, nor malicious, nor brutal, as all my predecessors were, and when I have drunk a pint over and above I am all the better for it. If my father had sent me to school I should have learnt to read and write, and I might be Messer-Grande to-day, but that’s not my fault. M. Andre Diedo has a high opinion of me. My wife, who cooks for you every day, and is only twenty-four, goes to see him when she will, and he will have her come in without ceremony, even if he be in bed, and that’s more than he’ll do for a senator. I promise you you will be always having the new-comers in your cell, but never for any length of time, for as soon as the secretary has got what he wants to know from them, he sends them to their place — to the Fours, to some fort, or to the Levant; and if they be foreigners they are sent across the frontier, for our Government does not hold itself master of the subjects of other princes, if they be not in its service. The clemency of the Court is beyond compare; there’s not another in the world that treats its prisoners so well. They say it’s cruel to disallow writing and visitors; but that’s foolish, for what are writing and company but waste of time? You will tell me that you have nothing to do, but we can’t say as much.”

Such was, almost word for word, the first harangue with which the fellow honoured me, and I must say I found it amusing. I saw that if the man had been less of a fool he would most certainly have been more of a scoundrel.

The next day brought me a new messmate, who was treated as Maggiorin had been, and I thus found it necessary to buy another ivory spoon, for as the newcomers were given nothing on the first day of their imprisonment I had to do all the honours of the cell.

My new mate made me a low bow, for my beard, now four inches long, was still more imposing than my figure. Lawrence often lent me scissors to cut my nails, but he was forbidden, under pain of very heavy punishment, to let me touch my beard. I knew not the reason of this order, but I ended by becoming used to my beard as one gets used to everything.

The new-comer was a man of about fifty, approaching my size, a little bent, thin, with a large mouth, and very bad teeth. He had small grey eyes hidden under thick eyebrows of a red colour, which made him look like an owl; and this picture was set off by a small black wig, which exhaled a disagreeable odour of oil, and by a dress of coarse grey cloth. He accepted my offer of dinner, but was reserved, and said not a word the whole day, and I was also silent, thinking he would soon recover the use of his tongue, as he did the next day.

Early in the morning he was given a bed and a bag full of linen. The gaoler asked him, as he had asked me, what he would have for dinner, and for money to pay for it.

“I have no money.”

“What! a moneyed man like you have no money?”

“I haven’t a sou.”

“Very good; in that case I will get you some army biscuit and water, according to instructions.”

He went out, and returned directly afterwards with a pound and a half of biscuit, and a pitcher, which he set before the prisoner, and then went away.

Left alone with this phantom I heard a sigh, and my pity made me break the silence.

“Don’t sigh, sir, you shall share my dinner. But I think you have made a great mistake in coming here without money.”

“I have some, but it does not do to let those harpies know of it:”

“And so you condemn yourself to bread and water. Truly a wise proceeding! Do you know the reason of your imprisonment?”

“Yes, sir, and I will endeavour in a few words to inform you of it.”

“My name is Squaldo Nobili. My father was a countryman who had me taught reading and writing, and at his death left me his cottage and the small patch of ground belonging to it. I lived in Friuli, about a day’s journey from the Marshes of Udine. As a torrent called Corno often damaged my little property, I determined to sell it and to set up in Venice, which I did ten years ago. I brought with me eight thousand livres in fair sequins, and knowing that in this happy commonwealth all men enjoyed the blessings of liberty, I believed that by utilizing my capital I might make a little income, and I began to lend money, on security. Relying on my thrift, my judgment, and my, knowledge of the world, I chose this business in preference to all others. I rented a small house in the neighbourhood of the Royal Canal, and having furnished it I lived there in comfort by myself; and in the course of two years I found I had made a profit of ten thousand livres, though I had expended two thousand on household expenses as I wished to live in comfort. In this fashion I saw myself in a fair way of making a respectable fortune in time; but one, day, having lent a Jew two sequins upon some books, I found one amongst them called ‘La Sagesse,’ by Charron. It was then I found out how good a thing it is to be able to read, for this book, which you, sir, may not have read, contains all that a man need know — purging him of all the prejudices of his childhood. With Charron good-bye to hell and all the empty terrors of a future life; one’s eyes are opened, one knows the way to bliss, one becomes wise indeed. Do you, sir, get this book, and pay no heed to those foolish persons who would tell you this treasure is not to be approached.”

This curious discourse made me know my man. As to Charron, I had read the book though I did not know it had been translated into Italian. The author who was a great admirer of Montaigne thought to surpass his model, but toiled in vain. He is not much read despite the prohibition to read his works, which should have given them some popularity. He had the impudence to give his book the title of one of Solomon's treatises — a circumstance which does not say much for his modesty. My companion went on as follows:

"Set free by Charron from any scruples I still might have, and from those false ideas so hard to rid one's self of, I pushed my business in such sort, that at the end of six years I could lay my hand on ten thousand sequins. There is no need for you to be astonished at that, as in this wealthy city gambling, debauchery, and idleness set all the world awry and in continual need of money; so do the wise gather what the fool drops.

"Three years ago a certain Count Seriman came and asked me to take from him five hundred sequins, to put them in my business, and to give him half profits. All he asked for was an obligation in which I promised to return him the whole sum on demand. At the end of a year I sent him seventy-five sequins, which made fifteen per cent. on his money; he gave me a receipt for it, but was ill pleased. He was wrong, for I was in no need of money, and had not used his for business purposes. At the end of the second year, out of pure generosity, I sent him the same amount; but we came to a quarrel and he demanded the return of the five hundred sequins. 'Certainly,' I said, 'but I must deduct the hundred and fifty you have already received.' Enraged at this he served me with a writ for the payment of the whole sum. A clever lawyer undertook my defence and was able to gain me two years. Three months ago I was spoken to as to an agreement, and I refused to hear of it, but fearing violence I went to the Abbe Justiniani, the Spanish ambassador's secretary, and for a small sum he let me a house in the precincts of the Embassy, where one is safe from surprises. I was quite willing to let Count Seriman have his money, but I claimed a reduction of a hundred sequins on account of the costs of the lawsuit. A week ago the lawyers on both sides came to me. I shewed them a purse of two hundred and fifty sequins, and told them they might take it, but not a penny more. They went away without saying a word, both wearing an ill-pleased air, of which I took no notice. Three days ago the Abbe Justiniani told me that the ambassador had thought fit to give permission to the State Inquisitors to send their men at once to my house to make search therein. I thought the thing impossible under the shelter of a foreign ambassador, and instead of taking the usual precautions, I waited the approach of the men-at-arms, only putting my money in a place of safety. At daybreak Messer-Grande came to the house, and asked me for three hundred and fifty sequins, and on my telling him that I hadn't a farthing he seized me, and here I am."

I shuddered, less at having such an infamous companion than at his evidently considering me as his equal, for if he had thought of me in any other light he would certainly not have told me this long tale, doubtless in the belief that I should take his part. In all the folly about Charron with which he tormented me in the three days we were together, I found by bitter experience the truth of the Italian proverb: 'Guardati da colui che non ha letto che un libro solo'. By reading the work of the misguided priest he had become an Atheist, and of this he made his boast all the day long. In the afternoon Lawrence came to tell him to come and speak with the secretary. He dressed himself hastily, and instead of his own shoes he took mine without my seeing him. He came back in half an hour in tears, and took out of his shoes two purses containing three hundred and fifty sequins, and, the gaoler going before, he went to take them to the secretary. A few moments afterwards he returned, and taking his cloak went away. Lawrence told me that he had been set at liberty. I thought, and with good reason, that, to make him acknowledge his debt and pay it, the secretary had threatened him with the torture; and if it were only used in similar cases, I, who detest the principle of torture, would be the first to proclaim its utility.

On New Year's Day, 1733, I received my presents. Lawrence brought me a dressing-gown lined with foxskin, a coverlet of wadded silk, and a bear-skin bag for me to put my legs in, which I welcomed gladly, for the coldness was unbearable as the heat in August. Lawrence told me that I might spend to the amount of six sequins a month, that I might have what books I liked, and take in the newspaper, and that this present came from M. de Bragadin. I asked him for a pencil, and I wrote upon a scrap of paper: "I am grateful for the kindness of the Tribunal and the goodness of M. de Bragadin."

The man who would know what were my feelings at all this must have been in a similar situation to my own. In the first gush of feeling I forgave my oppressors, and was on the point of giving up the idea of escape; so easily shall you move a man that you have brought low and overwhelmed with misfortune. Lawrence told me that M. de Bragadin had come before the three Inquisitors, and that on his knees, and with tears in his eyes, he had entreated them to let him give me this mark of his affection if I were still in the land of the living; the Inquisitors were moved, and were not able to refuse his request.

I wrote down without delay the names of the books I wanted.

One fine morning, as I was walking in the garret, my eyes fell on the iron bar I have mentioned, and I saw that it might very easily be made into a defensive or offensive weapon. I took possession of it, and having hidden it under my dressing-gown I conveyed it into my cell. As soon as I was alone, I took the piece of black marble, and I found that I had to my hand an excellent whetstone; for by rubbing the bar with the stone I obtained a very good edge.

My interest roused in this work in which I was but an apprentice, and in the fashion in which I seemed likely to become possessed of an instrument totally prohibited under the Leads, impelled, perhaps, also by my vanity to make a weapon without any of the necessary tools, and incited by my very difficulties (for I worked away till dark without anything to hold my whetstone except my left hand, and without a drop of oil to soften the iron), I made up my mind to persevere in my difficult task. My saliva served me in the stead of oil, and I toiled eight days to produce eight edges terminating in a sharp point, the edges being an inch and a half in length. My bar thus sharpened formed an eight-sided dagger, and would have done justice to a first-rate cutler. No one can imagine the toil and trouble I had to bear, nor the patience required to finish this difficult task without any other tools than a loose piece of stone. I put myself, in fact, to a kind of torture unknown to the tyrants of all ages. My right arm had become so stiff that I could hardly move it; the palm of my hand was covered with a large scar, the result of the numerous blisters caused by the hardness and the length of the work. No one would guess the sufferings I underwent to bring my work to completion.

Proud of what I had done, without thinking what use I could make of my weapon, my first care was to hide it in such a manner as would defy a minute search. After thinking over a thousand plans, to all of which there was some objection, I cast my eyes on my arm-chair, and there I contrived to hide it so as to be secure from all suspicion. Thus did Providence aid me to contrive a wonderful and almost inconceivable plan of escape. I confess to a feeling of vanity, not because I eventually succeeded — for I owed something to good luck — but because I was brave enough to undertake such a scheme in spite of the difficulties which might have ruined my plans and prevented my ever attaining liberty.

After thinking for three or four days as to what I should do with the bar I had made into an edged tool, as thick as a walking-stick and twenty inches long, I determined that the best plan would be to make a hole in the floor under my bed.

I was sure that the room below my cell was no other than the one in which I had seen M. Cavalli. I knew that this room was opened every morning, and I felt persuaded that, after I had made my hole, I could easily let myself down with my sheets, which I would make into a rope and fasten to my bed. Once there, I would hide under the table of the court, and in the morning, when the door was opened, I could escape and get to a place of safety before anyone could follow me. I thought it possible that a sentry might be placed in the hall, but my short pike ought to soon rid me of him. The floor might be of double or even of triple thickness, and this thought puzzled me; for in that case how was I to prevent the guard sweeping out the room throughout the two months my work might last. If I forbade them to do so, I might rouse suspicion; all the more as, to free myself of the fleas, I had requested them to sweep out the cell every day, and in sweeping they would soon discover what I was about. I must find some way out of this difficulty.

I began by forbidding them to sweep, without giving any reason. A week after, Lawrence asked me why I did so. I told him because of the dust which might make me cough violently and give me some fatal injury.

“I will make them water the floor,” said he.

“That would be worse, Lawrence, for the damp might cause a plethora.”

In this manner I obtained a week’s respite, but at the end of that time the lout gave orders that my cell should be swept. He had the bed carried out into the garret, and on pretence of having the sweeping done with greater care, he lighted a candle. This let me know that the rascal was suspicious of something; but I was crafty enough to take no notice of him, and so far from giving up my plea, I only thought how I could put it on good train. Next morning I pricked my finger and covered my handkerchief with the blood, and then awaited Lawrence in bed. As soon as he came I told him that I had coughed so violently as to break a blood-vessel, which had made me bring up all the blood he saw. “Get me a doctor.” The doctor came, ordered me to be bled, and wrote me a prescription. I told him it was Lawrence’s fault, as he had persisted in having the room swept. The doctor blamed him for doing so, and just as if I had asked him he told us of a young man who had died from the same cause, and said that there was nothing more dangerous than breathing in dust. Lawrence called all the gods to witness that he had only had the room swept for my sake, and promised it should not happen again. I laughed to myself, for the doctor could not have played his part better if I had given him the word. The guards who were there were delighted, and said they would take care only to sweep the cells of those prisoners who had angered them.

When the doctor was gone, Lawrence begged my pardon, and assured me that all the other prisoners were in good health although their cells were swept out regularly.

“But what the doctor says is worth considering,” said he, “and I shall tell them all about it, for I look upon them as my children.”

The blood-letting did me good, as it made me sleep, and relieved me of the spasms with which I was sometimes troubled. I had regained my appetite and was getting back my strength every day, but the time to set about my work was not yet come; it was still too cold, and I could not hold the bar for any length of time without my hand becoming stiff. My scheme required much thought. I had to exercise boldness and foresight to rid myself of troubles which chance might bring to pass or which I could foresee. The situation of a man who had to act as I had, is an unhappy one, but in risking all for all half its bitterness vanishes.

The long nights of winter distressed me, for I had to pass nineteen mortal hours in darkness; and on the cloudy days, which are common enough at Venice, the light I had was not sufficient for me to be able to read. Without any distractions I fell back on the idea of my escape, and a man who always thinks on one subject is in danger of becoming a monomaniac. A wretched kitchen-lamp would have made me happy, but how am I to get such a thing? O blessed prerogative of thought! how happy was I when I thought I had found a way to possess myself of such a treasure! To make such a lamp I required a vase, wicks, oil, a flint and steel, tinder, and matches. A porringer would do for the vase, and I had one which was used for cooking eggs in butter. Pretending that the common oil did not agree with me, I got them to buy me Lucca oil for my salad, and my cotton counterpane would furnish me with wicks. I then said I had the toothache, and asked Lawrence to get me a pumice-stone, but as he did not know what I meant I told him that a musket-flint would do as well if it were soaked in vinegar for a day, and, then being applied to the tooth the pain would be eased. Lawrence told me that the vinegar I had was excellent, and that I could soak the stone myself, and he gave me three or four flints he had in his pocket. All I had to do was to get some sulphur and tinder, and the procuring of these two articles set all my wits to work. At last fortune came to my assistance.

I had suffered from a kind of rash, which as it came off had left some red spots on my arms, and occasionally caused me some irritation. I told Lawrence to ask the doctor for a cure, and the next day he brought me a piece of paper which the secretary had seen, and on which the doctor had written, “Regulate the food for a day, and the skin will be cured by four ounces of oil of sweet almonds or an ointment of flour of sulphur, but this local application is hazardous.”

“Never mind the danger,” said I to Lawrence; “buy me the ointment, or rather get me the sulphur, as I have some butter by me, and I can make it up myself. Have you any matches? Give me a few.”

He found some in his pockets, and he gave me them.

What a small thing brings comfort in distress! But in my place these matches were no small thing, but rather a great treasure.

I had puzzled my head for several hours as to what substitute I could find for tinder — the only thing I still lacked, and which I could not ask for under any pretense whatsoever — when I remembered that I had told the tailor to put some under the armpits of my coat to prevent the perspiration spoiling the stuff. The coat, quite new, was before me, and my heart began to beat, but supposing the tailor had not put it in! Thus I hung between hope and fear. I had only to take a step to know all; but such a step would have been decisive, and I dared not take it. At last I drew nigh, and feeling myself unworthy of such mercies I fell on my knees and fervently prayed of God that the tailor might not have forgotten the tinder. After this heartfelt prayer I took my coat, unsewed it, and found-the tinder! My joy knew no bounds. I naturally gave thanks to God, since it was with confidence in Him that I took courage and searched my coat, and I returned thanks to Him with all my heart.

I now had all the necessary materials, and I soon made myself a lamp. Let the reader imagine my joy at having in a manner made light in the midst of darkness, and it was no less sweet because against the orders of my infamous oppressors. Now there was no more night for me, and also no more salad, for though I was very fond of it the need of keeping the oil to give light caused me to make this sacrifice without it costing me many pangs. I fixed upon the first Monday in Lent to begin the difficult work of breaking through the floor, for I suspected that in the tumult of the carnival I might have some visitors, and I was in the right.

At noon, on Quinquagesima Sunday, I heard the noise of the bolts, and presently Lawrence entered, followed by a thick-set man whom I recognized as the Jew, Gabriel Schalon, known for lending money to young men.

We knew each other, so exchanged compliments. His company was by no means agreeable to me, but my opinion was not asked. He began by congratulating me on having the pleasure of his society; and by way of answer I offered him to share my dinner, but he refused, saying he would only take a little soup, and would keep his appetite for a better supper at his own house.

“When?”

“This evening. You heard when I asked for my bed he told me that we would talk about that to-morrow. That means plainly that I shall have no need of it. And do you think it likely that a man like me would be left without anything to eat?”

“That was my experience.”

“Possibly, but between ourselves our cases are somewhat different; and without going any farther into that question, the Inquisitors have made a mistake in arresting me, and they will be in some trouble, I am certain, as to how to atone for doing so.”

“They will possibly give you a pension. A man of your importance has to be conciliated.”

"True, there's not a broker on the exchange more useful than myself, and the five sages have often profited by the advice I have given them. My detention is a curious incident, which, perchance, will be of service to you."

"Indeed. How, may I ask?"

"I will get you out of here in a month's time. I know to whom to speak and what way to do it:"

"I reckon on you, then."

"You may do so."

This knave and fool together believed himself to be somebody. He volunteered to inform me as to what was being said of me in the town, but as he only related the idle tales of men as ignorant as himself, he wearied me, and to escape listening to him I took up a book. The fellow had the impudence to ask me not to read, as he was very fond of talking, but henceforth he talked only to himself. I did not dare to light my lamp before this creature, and as night drew on he decided on accepting some bread and Cyprus wine, and he was afterwards obliged to do as best he could with my mattress, which was now the common bed of all new-comers.

In the morning he had a bed and some food from his own house. I was burdened with this wretched fellow for two months, for before condemning him to the Fours the secretary had several interviews with him to bring to light his knaveries, and to oblige him to cancel a goodly number of illegal agreements. He confessed to me himself that he had bought of M. Domenico Micheli the right to moneys which could not belong to the buyer till after the father of the seller was dead. "It's true," said he, "that he agreed to give me fifty per cent., but you must consider that if he died before his father I should lose all." At last, seeing that my cursed fellow did not go, I determined to light my lamp again after having made him promise to observe secrecy. He only kept his promise while he was with me, as Lawrence knew all about it, but luckily he attached no importance to the fact.

This unwelcome guest was a true burden to me, as he not only prevented me from working for my escape but also from reading. He was troublesome, ignorant, superstitious, a braggart, cowardly, and sometimes like a madman. He would have had me cry, since fear made him weep, and he said over and over again that this imprisonment would ruin his reputation. On this count I reassured him with a sarcasm he did not understand. I told him that his reputation was too well known to suffer anything from this little misfortune, and he took that for a compliment. He would not confess to being a miser, but I made him admit that if the Inquisitors would give him a hundred sequins for every day of his imprisonment he would gladly pass the rest of his life under the Leads.

He was a Talmudist, like all modern Jews, and he tried to make me believe that he was very devout; but I once extracted a smile of approbation from him by telling him that he would forswear Moses if the Pope would make him a cardinal. As the son of a rabbi he was learned in all the ceremonies of his religion, but like most men he considered the essence of a religion to lie in its discipline and outward forms.

This Jew, who was extremely fat, passed three-quarters of his life in bed; and though he often dozed in the daytime, he was annoyed at not being able to sleep at night — all the more as he saw that I slept excellently. He once took it into his head to wake me up as I was enjoying my sleep.

“What do you want?” said I; “waking me up with a start like this.”

“My dear fellow, I can’t sleep a wink. Have compassion on me and let us have a little talk.”

“You scoundrel! You act thus and you dare to call yourself my friend! I know your lack of sleep torments you, but if you again deprive me of the only blessing I enjoy I will arise and strangle you.”

I uttered these words in a kind of transport.

“Forgive me, for mercy’s sake! and be sure that I will not trouble you again.”

It is possible that I should not have strangled him, but I was very much tempted to do so. A prisoner who is happy enough to sleep soundly, all the while he sleeps is no longer a captive, and feels no more the weight of his chains. He ought to look upon the wretch who awakens him as a guard who deprives him of his liberty, and makes him feel his misery once more, since, awakening, he feels all his former woes. Furthermore, the sleeping prisoner often dreams that he is free again, in like manner as the wretch dying of hunger sees himself in dreams seated at a sumptuous feast.

I congratulated myself on not having commenced my great work before he came, especially as he required that the room should be swept out. The first time he asked for it to be dote, the guards made me laugh by saying that it would kill me. However, he insisted; and I had my revenge by pretending to be ill, but from interested motives I made no further opposition.

On the Wednesday in Holy Week Lawrence told us that the secretary would make us the customary visit in the afternoon, the object being to give peace to them that would receive the sacrament at Easter, and also to know if they had anything to say against the gaoler. "So, gentlemen," said Lawrence, "if you have any complaints to make of me make them. Dress yourselves fully, as is customary." I told Lawrence to get me a confessor for the day.

I put myself into full dress, and the Jew followed my example, taking leave of me in advance, so sure was he that the secretary would set him free on hearing what he had to say. "My presentiment," said he, "is of the same kind as I have had before, and I have never been deceived."

"I congratulate you, but don't reckon without your host." He did not understand what I meant.

In course of time the secretary came, and as soon as the cell-door was opened the Jew ran out and threw himself at his feet on both knees, I heard for five minutes nothing but his tears and complaints, for the secretary said not one word. He came back, and Lawrence told me to go out. With a beard of eight months' growth, and a dress made for love-making in August, I must have presented a somewhat curious appearance. Much to my disgust I shivered with cold, and was afraid that the secretary would think I was trembling with fear. As I was obliged to bend low to come out of my hole, my bow was ready made, and drawing myself up, I looked at him calmly without affecting any unseasonable hardihood, and waited for him to speak. The secretary also kept silence, so that we stood facing each other like a pair of statues. At the end of two minutes, the secretary, seeing that I said nothing, gave me a slight bow, and went away. I re-entered my cell, and taking off my clothes in haste, got into bed to get warm again. The Jew was astonished at my not having spoken to the secretary, although my silence had cried more loudly than his cowardly complaints. A prisoner of my kind has no business to open his mouth before his judge, except to answer questions. On Maundy Thursday a Jesuit came to confess me, and on Holy

Saturday a priest of St. Mark's came to administer to me the Holy Communion. My confession appearing rather too laconic to the sweet son of Ignatius he thought good to remonstrate with me before giving me his absolution.

"Do you pray to God?" he said.

"From the morning unto the evening, and from the evening unto the morning, for, placed as I am, all that I feel — my anxiety, my grief, all the wanderings of my mind — can be but a prayer in the eyes of the Divine Wisdom which alone sees my heart."

The Jesuit smiled slightly and replied by a discourse rather metaphysical than moral, which did not at all tally with my views. I should have confuted him on every point if he had not astonished me by a prophecy he made. "Since it is from us," said he, "that you learnt what you know of religion, practise it in our fashion, pray like us, and know that you will only come out of this place on the day of the saint whose name you bear." So saying he gave me absolution, and left me. This man left the strongest possible impression on my mind. I did my best, but I could not rid myself of it. I proceeded to pass in review all the saints in the calendar.

The Jesuit was the director of M. Flaminio Corner, an old senator, and then a State Inquisitor. This statesman was a famous man of letters, a great politician, highly religious, and author of several pious and ascetic works written in Latin. His reputation was spotless.

On being informed that I should be set free on the feast-day of my patron saint, and thinking that my informant ought to know for certain what he told me, I felt glad to have a patron-saint. "But which is it?" I asked myself. "It cannot be St. James of Compostella, whose name I bear, for it was on the feast-day of that saint that Messer-Grande burst open my door." I took the almanac and looking for the saints' days nearest at hand I found St. George — a saint of some note, but of whom I had never thought. I then devoted myself to St. Mark, whose feast fell on the twenty-fifth of the month, and whose protection as a Venetian I might justly claim. To him, then, I addressed my vows, but all in vain, for his feast came round and still I was in prison. Then I took myself to St. James, the brother of Christ, who comes before St. Philip, but again in the wrong. I tried St. Anthony, who, if the tale told at Padua be true, worked thirteen miracles a day. He worked none for me. Thus I passed from one to the other, and by degrees I got to hope in the protection of the saints just as one hopes for anything one desires, but does not expect to come to pass; and I finished up by hoping only in my Saint Bar, and in the strength of my arms. Nevertheless the promise of the Jesuit came to pass, since I escaped from The Leads on All Hallows Day; and it is certain that if I had a patron-saint, he must be looked for in their number since they are all honoured on that day.

A fortnight after Easter I was delivered from my troublesome Israelite, and the poor devil instead of being sent back to his home had to spend two years in The Fours, and on his gaining his freedom he went and set up in Trieste, where he ended his days.

No sooner was I again alone than I set zealously about my work. I had to make haste for fear of some new visitor, who, like the Jew, might insist on the cell being swept. I began by drawing back my bed, and after lighting my lamp I lay down on my belly, my pike in my hand, with a napkin close by in which to gather the fragments of board as I scooped them out. My task was to destroy the board by dint of driving into it the point of my tool. At first the pieces I got away were not much larger than grains of wheat, but they soon increased in size.

The board was made of deal, and was sixteen inches broad. I began to pierce it at its juncture with another board, and as there were no nails or clamps my work was simple. After six hours' toil I tied up the napkin, and put it on one side to empty it the following day behind the pile of papers in the garret. The fragments were four or five times larger in bulk than the hole from whence they came. I put back my bed in its place, and on emptying the napkin the next morning I took care so to dispose the fragments that they should not be seen.

Having broken through the first board, which I found to be two inches thick, I was stopped by a second which I judged to be as thick as the first. Tormented by the fear of new visitors I redoubled my efforts, and in three weeks I had pierced the three boards of which the floor was composed; and then I thought that all was lost, for I found I had to pierce a bed of small pieces of marble known at Venice as terrazzo marmorin. This forms the usual floor of venetian houses of all kinds, except the cottages, for even the high nobility prefer the terrazzo to the finest boarded floor. I was thunderstruck to find that my bar made no impression on this composition; but, nevertheless, I was not altogether discouraged and cast down. I remembered Hannibal, who, according to Livy, opened up a passage through the Alps by breaking the rocks with axes and other instruments, having previously softened them with vinegar. I thought that Hannibal had succeeded not by aceto, but aceta, which in the Latin of Padua might well be the same as ascia; and who can guarantee the text to be free from the blunders of the copyist? All the same, I poured into the hole a bottle of strong vinegar I had by me, and in the morning, either because of the vinegar or because I, refreshed and rested, put more strength and patience into the work, I saw that I should overcome this new difficulty; for I had not to break the pieces of marble, but only to pulverize with the end of my bar the cement which kept them together. I soon perceived that the greatest difficulty was on the surface, and in four days the whole mosaic was destroyed without the point of my pike being at all damaged.

Below the pavement I found another plank, but I had expected as much. I concluded that this would be the last; that is the first to be put down when the rooms below were being ceiled. I pierced it with some difficulty, as, the hole being ten inches deep, it had become troublesome to work the pike. A thousand times I commended myself to the mercy of God. Those Free-thinkers who say that praying is no good do not know what they are talking about; for I know by experience that, having prayed to God, I always felt myself grow stronger, which fact amply proves the usefulness of prayer, whether the renewal of strength come straight from God, or whether it comes only from the trust one has in Him.

On the 25th of June, on which day the Republic celebrates the wonderful appearance of St. Mark under the form of a winged lion in the ducal church, about three o'clock in the afternoon, as I was labouring on my belly at the hole, stark naked, covered with sweat, my lamp beside me. I heard with mortal fear the shriek of a bolt and the noise of the door of the first passage. It was a fearful moment! I blew out my lamp, and leaving my bar in the hole I threw into it the napkin with the shavings it contained, and as swift as lightning I replaced my bed as best I could, and threw myself on it just as the door of my cell opened. If Lawrence had come in two seconds sooner he would have caught me. He was about to walk over me, but crying out dolefully I stopped him, and he fell back, saying, "Truly, sir, I pity you, for the air here is as hot as a furnace. Get up, and thank God for giving you such good company."

"Come in, my lord, come in," said he to the poor wretch who followed him. Then, without heeding my nakedness, the fellow made the noble gentleman enter, and he seeing me to be naked, sought to avoid me while I vainly tried to find my shirt.

The new-comer thought he was in hell, and cried out,

"Where am I? My God! where have I been put? What heat! What a stench! With whom am I?"

Lawrence made him go out, and asked me to put on my shirt to go into the garret for a moment. Addressing himself to the new prisoner, he said that, having to get a bed and other necessaries, he would leave us in the garret till he came back, and that, in the mean time, the cell would be freed from the bad smell, which was only oil. What a start it gave me as I heard him utter the word "oil." In my hurry I had forgotten to snuff the wick after blowing it out. As Lawrence asked me no questions about it, I concluded that he knew all, and the accursed Jew must have betrayed me. I thought myself lucky that he was not able to tell him any more.

From that time the repulsion which I had felt for Lawrence disappeared.

After putting on my shirt and dressing-gown, I went out and found my new companion engaged in writing a list of what he wanted the gaoler to get him. As soon as he saw me, he exclaimed, "Ah! it's Casanova." I, too, recognised him as the Abbe and Count Fenarolo, a man of fifty, amiable, rich, and a favourite in society. He embraced me, and when I told him that I should have expected to see anybody in that place rather than him, he could not keep back his tears, which made me weep also.

When we were alone I told him that, as soon as his bed came, I should offer him the recess, begging him at the same time not to accept it. I asked him, also, not to ask to have the cell swept, saying that I would tell him the reason another time. He promised to keep all secrecy in the matter, and said he thought himself fortunate to be placed with me. He said that as no one knew why I was imprisoned, everyone was guessing at it. Some said that I was the heresiarch of a new sect; others that Madame Memmo had persuaded the Inquisitors that I had made her sons Atheists, and others that

Antony Condulmer, the State Inquisitor, had me imprisoned as a disturber of the peace, because I hissed Abbe Chiari's plays, and had formed a design to go to Padua for the express purpose of killing him.

All these accusations had a certain foundation in fact which gave them an air of truth, but in reality they were all wholly false. I cared too little for religion to trouble myself to found a new one. The sons of Madame Memmo were full of wit, and more likely to seduce than to be seduced; and Master Condulmer would have had too much on his hands if he had imprisoned all those who hissed the Abbe Chiari; and as for this abbe, once a Jesuit, I had forgiven him, as the famous Father Origo, himself formerly a Jesuit, had taught me to take my revenge by praising him everywhere, which incited the malicious to vent their satire on the abbe; and thus I was avenged without any trouble to myself.

In the evening they brought a good bed, fine linen, perfumes, an excellent supper, and choice wines. The abbe ate nothing, but I supped for two. When Lawrence had wished us good night and had shut us up till the next day, I got out my lamp, which I found to be empty, the napkin having sucked up all the oil. This made me laugh, for as the napkin might very well have caught and set the room on fire, the idea of the confusion which would have ensued excited my hilarity. I imparted the cause of my mirth to my companion, who laughed himself, and then, lighting the lamp, we spent the night in pleasant talk. The history of his imprisonment was as follows:

"Yesterday, at three o'clock in the afternoon, Madame Alessandria, Count Martinengo, and myself, got into a gondola. We went to Padua to see the opera, intending to return to Venice afterwards. In the second act my evil genius led me to the gaming-table, where I unfortunately saw Count Rosenberg, the Austrian ambassador, without his mask, and about ten paces from him was Madame Ruzzini, whose husband is going to Vienna to represent the Republic. I greeted them both, and was just going away, when the ambassador called out to me, so as to be heard by everyone, 'You are very fortunate in being able to pay your court to so sweet a lady. At present the personage I represent makes the fairest land in the world no better for me than a galley. Tell the lady, I beseech you, that the laws which now prevent me speaking to her will be without force at Venice, where I shall go next year, and then I shall declare war against her.' Madame Ruzzini, who saw that she was being spoken of, asked me what the count had said, and I told her, word for word. ‘Tell him,’ said she, ‘that I accept his declaration of war, and that we shall see who will wage it best.’ I did not think I had committed a crime in reporting her reply, which was after all a mere compliment. After the opera we set out, and got here at midnight. I was going to sleep when a messenger brought me a note ordering me to go to the Bussola at one o’clock, Signor Bussinello, Secretary of the Council of Ten, having something to say to me. Astonished at such an order — always of bad omen, and vexed at being obliged to obey, I went at the time appointed, and my lord secretary, without giving me a word, ordered me to be taken here.”

Certainly no fault could be less criminal than that which Count Fenarolo had committed, but one can break certain laws in all innocence without being any the less punishable. I congratulated him on knowing what his crime had been, and told him that he would be set free in a week, and would be requested to spend six months in the Bressian. “I can’t think,” said he, “that they will leave me here for a week.” I determined to keep him good company, and to soften the bitterness of his imprisonment, and so well did I sympathize with his position that I forgot all about my own.

The next morning at day-break, Lawrence brought coffee and a basket filled with all the requisites for a good dinner. The abbe was astonished, for he could not conceive how anyone could eat at such an early hour. They let us walk for an hour in the garret and then shut us up again, and we saw no more of them throughout the day. The fleas which tormented us made the abbe ask why I did not have the cell swept out. I could not let him think that dirt and untidiness was agreeable to me, or that my skin was any harder than his own, so I told him the whole story, and shewed him what I had done. He was vexed at having as it were forced me to make him my confidant, but he encouraged me to go on, and if possible to finish what I was about that day, as he said he would help me to descend and then would draw up the rope, not wishing to complicate his own difficulties by an escape. I shewed him the model of a contrivance by means of which I could certainly get possession of the sheets which were to be my rope; it was a short stick attached by one end to a long piece of thread. By this stick I intended to attach my rope to the bed, and as the thread hung down to the floor of the room below, as soon as I got there I should pull the thread and the rope would fall down. He tried it, and congratulated me on my invention, as this was a necessary part of my scheme, as otherwise the rope hanging down would have immediately discovered me. My noble companion was convinced that I ought to stop my work, for I might be surprised, having to do several days' work before finishing the hole which would cost Lawrence his life. Should the thought of gaining my liberty at the expense of a fellow-creature have made me desist? I should have still persisted if my escape had meant death to the whole body of Venetian guards, and even to the Inquisitors themselves. Can the love of country, all holy though it be, prevail in the heart of the man whose country is oppressing him?

My good humour did not prevent my companion having some bad quarters of an hour. He was in love with Madame Alessandria, who had been a singer, and was either the mistress or the wife of his friend Martinengo; and he should have deemed himself happy, but the happier a lover is, so much the more his unhappiness when he is snatched from the beloved object. He sighed, wept, and declared that he loved a woman in whom all the noble virtues were contained. I compassionated him, and took care not to comfort him by saying that love is a mere trifle — a cold piece of comfort given to lovers by fools, and, moreover, it is not true that love is a mere trifle.

The week I had mentioned as the probable term of his imprisonment passed quickly enough, and I lost my friend, but did not waste my time by mourning for him; he was set free, and I was content. I did not beg him to be discreet, for the least doubt on that score would have wounded his noble spirit. During the week he was with me he only ate soup and fruit, taking a little Canary wine. It was I who made good cheer in his stead and greatly to his delight. Before he left we swore eternal friendship.

The next day Lawrence gave me an account of my money, and on finding that I had a balance of four sequins I gave them to him, telling him it was a present from me to his wife. I did not tell him that it was for the rent of my lamp, but he was free to think so if he chose. Again betaking myself to my work, and toiling without cessation, on the 23rd of August I saw it finished. This delay was caused by an inevitable accident. As I was hollowing out the last plank, I put my eye to a little hole, through which I ought to have seen the hall of the Inquisitors-in fact, I did see it, but I saw also at one side of the hole a surface about eight inches thick. It was, as I had feared all the time it would be, one of the beams which kept up the ceiling. I was thus compelled to enlarge my hole on the other side, for the beam would have made it so narrow that a man of my size could never have got through. I increased the hole, therefore, by a fourth, working — between fear and hope, for it was possible that the space between two of the beams would not be large enough. After I had finished, a second little hole assured me that God had blessed my labour. I then carefully stopped up the two small holes to prevent anything falling down into the hall, and also lest a ray from my lamp should be perceived, for this would have discovered all and ruined me.

I fixed my escape for the eve of St. Augustine's Day, because I knew that the Grand Council assembled on that feast, and there would consequently be nobody near the room through which I must pass in getting away. This would have been on the twenty-seventh of the month, but a misfortune happened to me on the twenty-fifth which makes me still shudder when I think of it, notwithstanding the years which have passed since then.

Precisely at noon I heard the noise of bolts, and I thought I should die; for a violent beating of the heart made me imagine my last hour was come. I fell into my easy chair, and waited. Lawrence came into the garret and put his head at the grating, and said, "I give you joy, sir, for the good news I am bringing you." At first, not being able to think of any other news which could be good to me, I fancied I had been set at liberty, and I trembled, for I knew that the discovery of the hole I had made would have caused my pardon to be recalled.

Lawrence came in and told me to follow him.

"Wait till I put on my clothes."

"It's of no consequence, as you only have to walk from this abominable cell to another, well lighted and quite fresh, with two windows whence you can see half Venice, and you can stand upright too." —— I could bear no more, I felt that I was fainting. "Give me the vinegar," said I, "and go and tell the secretary that I thank the Court for this favour, and entreat it to leave me where I am."

"You make me laugh, sir. Have you gone mad? They would take you from hell to put you in heaven, and you would refuse to stir? Come, come, the Court must be obeyed, pray rise, sir. I will give you my arm, and will have your clothes and your books brought for you." Seeing that resistance was of no avail, I got up, and was much comforted at hearing him give orders for my arm-chair to be brought, for my pike was to follow me, and with it hope. I should have much liked to have been able to take the hole — the object of so much wasted trouble and hope — with me. I may say with truth that, as I came forth from that horrible and doleful place, my spirit remained there.

Leaning on Lawrence's shoulder, while he, thinking to cheer me up, cracked his foolish jokes, I passed through two narrow passages, and going down three steps I found myself in a well-lighted hall, at the end of which, on the left-hand side, was a door leading into another passage two feet broad by about twelve long, and in the corner was my new cell. It had a barred window which was opposite to two windows, also barred, which lighted the passage, and thus one had a fine view as far as Lido. At that trying moment I did not care much for the view; but later on I found that a sweet and pleasant wind came through the window when it was opened, and tempered the insufferable heat; and this was a true blessing for the poor wretch who had to breathe the sultry prison air, especially in the hot season.

As soon as I got into my new cell Lawrence had my arm-chair brought in, and went away, saying that he would have the remainder of my effects brought to me. I sat on my arm-chair as motionless as a statue, waiting for the storm, but not fearing it. What overwhelmed me was the distressing idea that all my pains and contrivances were of no use, nevertheless I felt neither sorry nor repentant for what I had done, and I made myself abstain from thinking of what was going to happen, and thus kept myself calm.

Lifting up my soul to God I could not help thinking that this misfortune was a Divine punishment for neglecting to escape when all was ready. Nevertheless, though I could have escaped three days sooner, I thought my punishment too severe, all the more as I had put off my escape from motives of prudence, which seemed to me worthy of reward, for if I had only consulted my own impatience to be gone I should have risked everything. To controvert the reasons which made me postpone my flight to the 27th of August, a special revelation would have been requisite; and though I had read "Mary of Agrada" I was not mad enough for that.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Subterranean Prisons Known as the Wells — Lawrence's Vengeance — I Enter into a Correspondence With Another Prisoner, Father Balbi: His Character — I Plan With Him a Means of Escape — How I Contrived to Let Him Have My Pike I Am Given a Scoundrelly Companion: His Portrait.

I was thus anxious and despairing when two of the guards brought me my bed. They went back to fetch the rest of my belongings, and for two hours I saw no one, although the door of my cell remained open. This unnatural delay engendered many thoughts, but I could not fix exactly on the reason of it. I only knew that I had everything to fear, and this knowledge made me brace up my mind so that I should be able to meet calmly all possible misfortunes.

Besides The Leads and The Fours the State Inquisitors also possess certain horrible subterranean cells beneath the ducal palace, where are sent men whom they do not wish to put to death, though they be thought worthy of it.

These subterranean prisons are precisely like tombs, but they call them "wells," because they always contain two feet of water, which penetrates from the sea by the same grating by which light is given, this grating being only a square foot in size. If the unfortunates condemned to live in these sewers do not wish to take a bath of filthy water, they have to remain all day seated on a trestle, which serves them both for bed and cupboard. In the morning they are given a pitcher of water, some thin soup, and a ration of army bread which they have to eat immediately, or it becomes the prey of the enormous water rats who swarm in those dreadful abodes. Usually the wretches condemned to The Wells are imprisoned there for life, and there have been prisoners who have attained a great age. A villain who died whilst I was under the Leads had passed thirty-seven years in The Wells, and he was forty-four when sentenced. Knowing that he deserved death, it is possible that he took his imprisonment as a favour, for there are men who fear nought save death. His name was Beguelin. A Frenchman by birth, he had served in the Venetian army during the last war against the Turks in 1716, under the command of Field-Marshal the Count of Schulenbourg, who made the Grand Vizier raise the siege of Corfu. This Beguelin was the marshal's spy. He disguised himself as a Turk, and penetrated into the Mussulman quarters, but at the same time he was also in the service of the Grand Vizier, and being detected in this course he certainly had reason to be thankful for being allowed to die in The Wells. The rest of his life must have been divided between weariness and hunger, but no doubt he often said, 'Dum vita superest, bene est'.

I have seen at Spiegelberg, in Moravia, prisons fearful in another way. There mercy sends the prisoners under sentence of death, and not one of them ever survives a year of imprisonment. What mercy!

During the two mortal hours of suspense, full of sombre thoughts and the most melancholy ideas, I could not help fancying that I was going to be plunged in one of these horrible dens, where the wretched inhabitants feed on idle hopes or become the prey of panic fears. The Tribunal might well send him to hell who had endeavoured to escape from purgatory.

At last I heard hurried steps, and I soon saw Lawrence standing before me, transformed with rage, foaming at the mouth, and blaspheming God and His saints. He began by ordering me to give him the hatchet and the tools I had used to pierce the floor, and to tell him from which of the guards I had got the tools. Without moving, and quite calmly, I told him that I did not know what he was talking about. At this reply he gave orders that I should be searched, but rising with a determined air I shook my fist at the knaves, and having taken off my clothes I said to them, "Do your duty, but let no one touch me."

They searched my mattress, turned my bed inside out, felt the cushions of my arm-chair, and found nothing.

"You won't tell me, then, where are the instruments with which you made the hole. It's of no matter, as we shall find a way to make you speak."

"If it be true that I have made a hole at all, I shall say that you gave me the tools, and that I have returned them to you."

At this threat, which made his followers smile with glee, probably because he had been abusing them, he stamped his feet, tore his hair, and went out like one possessed. The guards returned and brought me all my properties, the whetstone and lamp excepted. After locking up my cell he shut the two windows which gave me a little air. I thus found myself confined in a narrow space without the possibility of receiving the least breath of air from any quarter. Nevertheless, my situation did not disturb me to any great extent, as I must confess I thought I had got off cheaply. In spite of his training, Lawrence had not thought of turning the armchair over; and thus, finding myself still possessor of the iron bar, I thanked Providence, and thought myself still at liberty to regard the bar as means by which, sooner or later, I should make my escape.

I passed a sleepless night, as much from the heat as the change in my prospects. At day-break Lawrence came and brought some insufferable wine, and some water I should not have cared to drink. All the rest was of a piece; dry salad, putrid meat, and bread harder than English biscuit. He cleaned nothing, and when I asked him to open the windows he seemed not to hear me; but a guard armed with an iron bar began to sound all over my room, against the wall, on the floor, and above all under my bed. I looked on with an unmoved expression, but it did not escape my notice that the guard did not sound the ceiling. “That way,” said I to myself, “will lead me out of this place of torments.” But for any such project to succeed I should have to depend purely on chance, for all my operations would leave visible traces. The cell was quite new, and the least scratch would have attracted the notice of my keepers.

I passed a terrible day, for the heat was like that of a furnace, and I was quite unable to make any use of the food with which I had been provided. The perspiration and the lack of nourishment made me so weak that I could neither walk nor read. Next day my dinner was the same; the horrible smell of the veal the rascal brought me made me draw back from it instantly. “Have you received orders,” said I, “to kill me with hunger and heat?”

He locked the door, and went out without a word. On the third day I was treated in the same manner. I asked for a pencil and paper to write to the secretary. Still no answer.

In despair, I eat my soup, and then soaking my bread in a little Cyprus wine I resolved to get strength to avenge myself on Lawrence by plunging my pike into his throat. My rage told me that I had no other course, but I grew calmer in the night, and in the morning, when the scoundrel appeared, I contented myself with saying that I would kill him as soon as I was at liberty. He only laughed at my threat, and again went out without opening his lips.

I began to think that he was acting under orders from the secretary, to whom he must have told all. I knew not what to do. I strove between patience and despair, and felt as if I were dying for want of food. At last on the eighth day, with rage in my heart and in a voice of thunder, I bade him, under the name of "hangman," and in the presence of the archers, give me an account of my money. He answered drily that I should have it the next day. Then as he was about to go I took my bucket, and made as if I would go and empty it in the passage. Foreseeing my design, he told a guard to take it, and during the disgusting operation opened a window, which he shut as soon as the affair was done, so that in spite of my remonstrances I was left in the plague-stricken atmosphere. I determined to speak to him still worse the next day; but as soon as he appeared my anger cooled, for before giving me the account of my money he presented me with a basket of lemons which M. de Bragadin had sent me, also a large bottle of water, which seemed drinkable, and a nice roasted fowl; and, besides this, one of the guards opened the two windows. When he gave me the account I only looked at the sum total, and I told him to give the balance to his wife with the exception of a sequin, which I told him to give the guards who were with him. I thus made friends with these fellows, who thanked me heartily.

Lawrence, who remained alone with me on purpose, spoke as follows:

"You have already told me, sir, that I myself furnished you with the tools to make that enormous hole, and I will ask no more about it; but would you kindly tell me where you got the materials to make a lamp?"

"From you."

"Well, for the moment, sir, I'm dashed, for I did not think that wit meant impudence."

"I am not telling you any lies. You it was who with your own hands gave me all the requisites — oil, flint, and matches; the rest I had by me."

"You are right; but can you shew me as simply that I gave you the tools to make that hole?"

"Certainly, for you are the only person who has given me anything."

"Lord have mercy upon me! what do I hear? Tell me, then, how I gave you a hatchet?"

"I will tell you the whole story and I will speak the truth, but only in the presence of the secretary."

"I don't wish to know any more, and I believe everything you say. I only ask you to say nothing about it, as I am a poor man with a family to provide for." He went out with his head between his hands.

I congratulated myself heartily on having found a way to make the rascal afraid of me; he thought that I knew enough to hang him. I saw that his own interest would keep him from saying anything to his superiors about the matter.

I had told Lawrence to bring me the works of Maffei, but the expense displeased him though he did not dare to say so. He asked me what I could want with books with so many to my hand.

"I have read them all," I said, "and want some fresh ones."

"I will get someone who is here to lend you his books, if you will lend yours in return; thus you will save your money."

"Perhaps the books are romances, for which I do not care."

"They are scientific works; and if you think yours is the only long head here, you are very much mistaken."

"Very good, we shall see. I will lend this book to the 'long head,' and do you bring me one from him."

I had given him Petau's Rationarium, and in four minutes he brought me the first volume of Wolff's works. Well pleased with it I told him, much to his delight, that I would do without Maffei.

Less pleased with the learned reading than at the opportunity to begin a correspondence with someone who might help me in my plan of escape (which I had already sketched out in my head), I opened the book as soon as Lawrence was gone, and was overjoyed to find on one of the leaves the maxim of Seneca, ‘Calamitosus est animus futuri anxius’, paraphrased in six elegant verses. I made another six on the spot, and this is the way in which I contrived to write them, I had let the nail of my little finger grow long to serve as an earpick; I out it to a point, and made a pen of it. I had no ink, and I was going to prick myself and write in my blood, when I bethought me that the juice of some mulberries I had by me would be an excellent substitute for ink. Besides the six verses I wrote out a list of my books, and put it in the back of the same book. It must be understood that Italian books are generally bound in parchment, and in such a way that when the book is opened the back becomes a kind of pocket. On the title page I wrote, ‘latet’. I was anxious to get an answer, so the next day I told Lawrence that I had read the book and wanted another; and in a few minutes the second volume was in my hands.

As soon as I was alone I opened the book, and found a loose leaf with the following communication in Latin:

“Both of us are in the same prison, and to both of us it must be pleasant to find how the ignorance of our gaoler procures us a privilege before unknown to such a place. I, Marin Balbi, who write to you, am a Venetian of high birth, and a regular cleric, and my companion is Count Andre Asquin, of Udine, the capital of Friuli. He begs me to inform you that all the books in his possession, of which you will find a list at the back of this volume, are at your service; but we warn you that we must use all possible care to prevent our correspondence being discovered by Lawrence.”

In our position there was nothing wonderful in our both pitching on the idea of sending each other the catalogues of our small libraries, or in our choosing the same hiding-place — the back of the books; all this was plain common sense; but the advice to be careful contained on the loose leaf struck me with some astonishment. It seemed next to impossible that Lawrence should leave the book unopened, but if he had opened it he would have seen the leaf, and not knowing how to read he would have kept it in his pocket till he could get someone to tell him the contents, and thus all would have been strangled at its birth. This made me think that my correspondent was an arrant block-head.

After reading through the list, I wrote who I was, how I had been arrested, my ignorance as to what crime I had committed, and my hope of soon becoming free. Balbi then wrote me a letter of sixteen pages, in which he gave me the history of all his misfortunes. He had been four years in prison, and the reason was that he had enjoyed the good graces of three girls, of whom he had three children, all of whom he baptized under his own name.

The first time his superior had let him off with an admonition, the second time he was threatened with punishment, and on the third and last occasion he was imprisoned. The father-superior of his convent brought him his dinner every day. He told me in his letter that both the superior and the Tribunal were tyrants, since they had no lawful authority over his conscience: that being sure that the three children were his, he thought himself constrained as a man of honour not to deprive them of the advantage of bearing his name. He finished by telling me that he had found himself obliged to recognize his children to prevent slander attributing them to others, which would have injured the reputation of the three honest girls who bore them; and besides he could not stifle the voice of nature, which spoke so well on behalf of these little ones. His last words were, “There is no danger of the superior falling into the same fault, as he confines his attention to the boys.”

This letter made me know my man. Eccentric, sensual, a bad logician, vicious, a fool, indiscreet, and ungrateful, all this appeared in his letter, for after telling me that he should be badly off without Count Asquin who was seventy years old, and had books and money, he devoted two pages to abusing him, telling me of his faults and follies. In society I should have had nothing more to do with a man of his character, but under the Leads I was obliged to put everything to some use. I found in the back of the book a pencil, pens, and paper, and I was thus enabled to write at my ease.

He told me also the history of the prisoners who were under the Leads, and of those who had been there since his imprisonment. He said that the guard who secretly brought him whatever he wanted was called Nicolas, he also told me the names of the prisoners, and what he knew about them, and to convince me he gave me the history of the hole I had made. It seems I had been taken from my cell to make room for the patrician Priuli, and that Lawrence had taken two hours to repair the damage I had done, and that he had imparted the secret to the carpenter, the blacksmith, and all the guards under pain of death if they revealed it. “In another day,” the guard had said, “Casanova would have escaped, and Lawrence would have swung, for though he pretended great astonishment when he saw the hole, there can be no doubt that he and no other provided the tools.” “Nicolas has told me,” added my correspondent, “that M. de Bragadin has promised him a thousand sequins if he will aid you to make your escape but that Lawrence, who knows of it, hopes to get the money without risking his neck, his plan being to obtain your liberty by means of the influence of his wife with M. Diedo. None of the guards dare to speak of what happened for fear Lawrence might get himself out of the difficulty, and take his revenge by having them dismissed.” He begged me to tell him all the details, and how I got the tools, and to count upon his keeping the secret.

I had no doubts as to his curiosity, but many as to his discretion, and this very request shewed him to be the most indiscreet of men. Nevertheless, I concluded that I must make use of him, for he seemed to me the kind of man to assist me in my escape. I began to write an answer to him, but a sudden suspicion made me keep back what I had written. I fancied that the correspondence might be a mere artifice of Lawrence’s to find out who had given me the tools, and what I had done with them. To satisfy him without compromising myself I told him that I had made the hole with a strong knife in my possession, which I had placed on the window-ledge in the passage. In less than three days this false confidence of mine made me feel secure, as Lawrence did not go to the window, as he would certainly have done if the letter had been intercepted. Furthermore, Father Balbi told me that he could understand how I might have a knife, as Lawrence had told him that I had not been searched previous to my imprisonment. Lawrence himself had received no orders to search me, and this circumstance might have stood him in good stead if I had succeeded in escaping, as all prisoners handed over to him by the captain of the guard were supposed to have been searched already. On the other hand, Messer-Grande might have said that, having seen me get out of my bed, he was sure that I had no weapons about me, and thus both of them would have got out of trouble. The monk ended by begging me to send him my knife by Nicolas, on whom I might rely.

The monk's thoughtlessness seemed to me almost incredible. I wrote and told him that I was not at all inclined to put my trust in Nicolas, and that my secret was one not to be imparted in writing. However, I was amused by his letters. In one of them he told me why Count Asquin was kept under the Leads, in spite of his helplessness, for he was enormously fat, and as he had a broken leg which had been badly set he could hardly put one foot before another. It seems that the count, not being a very wealthy man, followed the profession of a barrister at Udine, and in that capacity defended the country-folk against the nobility, who wished to deprive the peasants of their vote in the assembly of the province. The claims of the farmers disturbed the public peace, and by way of bringing them to reason the nobles had recourse to the State Inquisitors, who ordered the count-barrister to abandon his clients. The count replied that the municipal law authorized him to defend the constitution, and would not give in; whereon the Inquisitors arrested him, law or no law, and for the last five years he had breathed the invigorating air of The Leads. Like myself he had fifty sous a day, but he could do what he liked with the money. The monk, who was always penniless, told me a good deal to the disadvantage of the count, whom he represented as very miserly. He informed me that in the cell on the other side of the hall there were two gentlemen of the "Seven Townships," who were likewise imprisoned for disobedience, but one of them had become mad, and was in chains; in another cell, he said, there were two lawyers.

My suspicions quieted, I reasoned as follows:

I wish to regain my liberty at all hazards. My pike is an admirable instrument, but I can make no use of it as my cell is sounded all over (except the ceiling) every day. If I would escape, it is by the ceiling, therefore, that way I must go, but to do that I must make a hole through it, and that I cannot do from my side, for it would not be the work of a day. I must have someone to help me; and not having much choice I had to pick out the monk. He was thirty-eight, and though not rich in common sense I judged that the love of liberty — the first need of man — would give him sufficient courage to carry out any orders I might give. I must begin by telling him my plan in its entirety, and then I shall have to find a way to give him the bar. I had, then, two difficult problems before me.

My first step was to ask him if he wished to be free, and if he were disposed to hazard all in attempting his escape in my company. He replied that his mate and he would do anything to break their chains, but, added he, “it is of no use to break one’s head against a stone wall.” He filled four pages with the impossibilities which presented themselves to his feeble intellect, for the fellow saw no chance of success on any quarter. I replied that I did not trouble myself with general difficulties, and that in forming my plan I had only thought of special difficulties, which I would find means to overcome, and I finished by giving him my word of honour to set him free, if he would promise to carry out exactly whatever orders I might give.

He gave me his promise to do so. I told him that I had a pike twenty inches long, and with this tool he must pierce the ceiling of his cell next the wall which separated us, and he would then be above my head; his next step would be to make a hole in the ceiling of my cell and aid me to escape by it. “Here your task will end and mine will begin, and I will undertake to set both you and Count Asquin at liberty.”

He answered that when I had got out of my cell I should be still in prison, and our position would be the same as now, as we should only be in the garrets which were secured by three strong doors.

“I know that, reverend father,” I replied, “but we are not going to escape by the doors. My plan is complete, and I will guarantee its success. All I ask of you is to carry out my directions, and to make no difficulties. Do you busy yourself to find out some way of getting my bar without the knowledge of the gaoler. In the meanwhile, make him get you about forty pictures of saints, large enough to cover all the walls of your cell. Lawrence will suspect nothing, and they will do to conceal the opening you are to make in the ceiling. To do this will be the work of some days, and of mornings Lawrence will not see what you have done the day before, as you will have covered it up with one of the pictures. If you ask me why I do not undertake the work myself, I can only say that the gaoler suspects me, and the objection will doubtless seem to you a weighty one.”

Although I had told him to think of a plan to get hold of the pike, I thought of nothing else myself, and had a happy thought which I hastened to put into execution. I told Lawrence to buy me a folio Bible, which had been published recently; it was the Vulgate with the Septuagint. I hoped to be able to put the pike in the back of the binding of this large volume, and thus to convey it to the monk, but when I saw the book I found the tool to be two inches longer.

My correspondent had written to tell me that his cell was covered with pictures, and I had communicated him my idea about the Bible and the difficulty presented by its want of length. Happy at being able to display his genius, he rallied me on the poverty of my imagination, telling me that I had only to send him the pike wrapped up in my fox-skin cloak.

“Lawrence,” said he, “had often talked about your cloak, and Count Asquin would arouse no suspicion by asking to see it in order to buy one of the same kind. All you have to do is to send it folded up. Lawrence would never dream of unfolding it.”

I, on the other hand, was sure that he would. In the first place, because a cloak folded up is more troublesome to carry than when it is unfolded. However, not to rebuff him and at the same time to shew him that I was the wiser, I wrote that he had only to send for the cloak. The next day Lawrence asked me for it, and I gave it folded up, but without the bar, and in a quarter of an hour he brought it back to me, saying that the gentleman had admired it very much.

The monk wrote me a doleful letter, in which he confessed he had given me a piece of bad advice, adding that I was wrong to follow it. According to him the pike was lost, as Lawrence had brought in the cloak all unfolded. After this, all hope was gone. I undeceived him, and begged him for the future to be a little more sparing of his advice. It was necessary to bring the matter to a head, and I determined to send him the bar under cover of my Bible, taking measures to prevent the gaoler from seeing the ends of the great volume. My scheme was as follows:

I told Lawrence that I wanted to celebrate St. Michael’s Day with a macaroni cheese; but wishing to shew my gratitude to the person who had kindly lent me his books, I should like to make him a large dish of it, and to prepare it with my own hands. Lawrence told me (as had been arranged between the monk and myself) that the gentleman in question wished to read the large book which cost three sequins.

“Very good,” said I, “I will send it him with the macaroni; but get me the largest dish you have, as I wish to do the thing on a grand scale.”

He promised to do what I asked him. I wrapped up the pike in paper and put it in the back of the Bible, taking care that it projected an equal distance at each end. Now, if I placed on the Bible a great dish of macaroni full of melted butter I was quite sure that Lawrence would not examine the ends. All his gaze would be concentrated upon the plate, to avoid spilling the grease on the book. I told Father Balbi of my plan, charging him to take care how he took the dish, and above all to take dish and Bible together, and not one by one. On the day appointed Lawrence came earlier than usual, carrying a saucepan full of boiling macaroni, and all the necessary ingredients for seasoning the dish. I melted a quantity of butter, and after putting the macaroni into the dish I poured the butter over it till it was full to the brim. The dish was a huge one, and was much larger than the book on which I placed it. I did all this at the door of my cell, Lawrence being outside.

When all was ready I carefully took up the Bible and dish, placing the back of the book next to the bearer, and told Lawrence to stretch out his arms and take it, to be careful not to spill the grease over the book, and to carry the whole to its destination immediately. As I gave him this weighty load I kept my eyes fixed on his, and I saw to my joy that he did not take his gaze off the butter, which he was afraid of spilling. He said it would be better to take the dish first, and then to come back for the book; but I told him that this would spoil the present, and that both must go together. He then complained that I had put in too much butter, and said, jokingly, that if it were spilt he would not be responsible for the loss. As soon as I saw the Bible in the lout’s arms I was certain of success, as he could not see the ends of the pike without twisting his head, and I saw no reason why he should divert his gaze from the plate, which he had enough to do to carry evenly. I followed him with my eyes till he disappeared into the ante-chamber of the monk’s cell, and he, blowing his nose three times, gave me the pre-arranged signal that all was right, which was confirmed by the appearance of Lawrence in a few moments afterwards.

Father Balbi lost no time in setting about the work, and in eight days he succeeded in making a large enough opening in the ceiling, which he covered with a picture pasted to the ceiling with breadcrumbs. On the 8th of October he wrote to say that he had passed the whole night in working at the partition wall, and had only succeeded in loosening one brick. He told me the difficulty of separating the bricks joined to one another by a strong cement was enormous, but he promised to persevere, “though,” he said, “we shall only make our position worse than it is now.” I told him that I was certain of success; that he must believe in me and persevere. Alas! I was certain of nothing, but I had to speak thus or to give up all. I was fain to escape from this hell on earth, where I was imprisoned by a most detestable tyranny, and I thought only of forwarding this end, with the resolve to succeed, or at all events not to stop before I came to a difficulty which was insurmountable. I had read in the great book of experience that in important schemes action is the grand requisite, and that the rest must be left to fortune. If I had entrusted Father Balbi with these deep mysteries of moral philosophy he would have pronounced me a madman. His work was only toilsome on the first night, for the more he worked the easier it became, and when he had finished he found he had taken out thirty-six bricks.

On the 16th of October, as I was engaged in translating an ode of Horace, I heard a trampling noise above my head, and then three light blows were struck. This was the signal agreed upon to assure us that our calculations were correct. He worked till the evening, and the next day he wrote that if the roof of my cell was only two boards thick his work would be finished that day. He assured me that he was carefully making the hole round as I had charged him, and that he would not pierce the ceiling. This was a vital point, as the slightest mark would have led to discovery. “The final touch,” he said, “will only take a quarter of an hour.” I had fixed on the day after the next to escape from my cell at night-time to enter no more, for with a mate I was quite sure that I could make in two or three hours a hole in the roof of the ducal palace, and once on the outside of the roof I would trust to chance for the means of getting to the ground.

I had not yet got so far as this, for my bad luck had more than one obstacle in store for me. On the same day (it was a Monday) at two o’clock in the afternoon, whilst Father Balbi was at work, I heard the door of the hall being opened. My blood ran cold, but I had sufficient presence of mind to knock twice-the signal of alarm — at which it had been agreed that Father Balbi was to make haste back to his cell and set all in order. In less than a minute afterwards Lawrence opened the door, and begged my pardon for giving me a very unpleasant companion. This was a man between forty and fifty, short, thin, ugly, and badly dressed, wearing a black wig; while I was looking at him he was unbound by two guards. I had no reason to doubt that he was a knave, since Lawrence told me so before his face without his displaying the slightest emotion. “The Court,” I said, “can do what seems good to it.” After Lawrence had brought him a bed he told him that the Court allowed him ten sous a day, and then locked us up together.

Overwhelmed by this disaster, I glanced at the fellow, whom his every feature proclaimed rogue. I was about to speak to him when he began by thanking me for having got him a bed. Wishing to gain him over, I invited him to take his meals with me. He kissed my hand, and asked me if he would still be able to claim the ten sous which the Court had allowed him. On my answering in the affirmative he fell on his knees, and drawing an enormous rosary from his pocket he cast his gaze all round the cell.

“What do you want?”

“You will pardon me, sir, but I am looking for some statue of the Holy Virgin, for I am a Christian; if there were even a small crucifix it would be something, for I have never been in so much need of the protection of St. Francis d’Assisi, whose name I bear, though all unworthy.”

I could scarcely help laughing, not at his Christian piety, since faith and conscience are beyond control, but at the curious turn he gave his remonstrance. I concluded he took me for a Jew; and to disabuse him of this notion I made haste to give him the “Hours of the Holy Virgin,” whose picture he kissed, and then gave me the book back, telling me in a modest voice that his father — a, galley officer — had neglected to have him taught to read. “I am,” said he, “a devotee of the Holy Rosary,” and he told me a host of miracles, to which I listened with the patience of an angel. When he had come to an end I asked him if he had had his dinner, and he replied that he was dying of hunger. I gave him everything I had, which he devoured rather than ate; drinking all my wine, and then becoming maudlin he began to weep, and finally to talk without rhyme or reason. I asked him how he got into trouble, and he told me the following story:

“My aim and my only aim has always been the glory of God, and of the holy Republic of Venice, and that its laws may be exactly obeyed. Always lending an attentive ear to the plots of the wicked, whose end is to deceive, to deprive their prince of his just dues, and to conspire secretly, I have over and again unveiled their secret plans, and have not failed to report to

Messer-Grande all I know. It is true that I am always paid, but the money has never given me so much pleasure as the thought that I have been able to serve the blessed St. Mark. I have always despised those who think there is something dishonourable in the business of a spy. The word sounds ill only to the ill-affected; for a spy is a lover of the state, the scourge of the guilty, and faithful subject of his prince. When I have been put to the test, the feeling of friendship, which might count for something with other men, has never had the slightest influence over me, and still less the sentiment which is called gratitude. I have often, in order to worm out a secret, sworn to be as silent as the grave, and have never failed to reveal it. Indeed, I am able to do so with full confidence, as my director who is a good Jesuit has told me that I may lawfully reveal such secrets, not only because my intention was to do so, but because, when the safety of the state is at stake, there is no such thing as a binding oath. I must confess that in my zeal I have betrayed my own father, and that in me the promptings of our weak nature have been quite mortified. Three weeks ago I observed that there was a kind of cabal between four or five notables of the town of Isola, where I live. I knew them to be disaffected to the Government on account of certain contraband articles which had been confiscated. The first chaplain — a subject of Austria by birth — was in the plot. They gathered together of evenings in an inn, in a room where there was a bed; there they drank and talked, and afterwards went their ways. As I was determined to discover the conspiracy, I was brave enough to hide under the bed on a day on which I was sure I would not be seen. Towards the evening my gentlemen came, and began to talk; amongst other things, they said that the town of Isola was not within the jurisdiction of St. Mark, but rather in the principality of Trieste, as it could not possibly be considered to form part of the Venetian territory. The chaplain said to the chief of the plot, a man named Pietro Paolo, that if he and the others would sign a document to that effect, he himself would go to the imperial ambassador, and that the Empress would not only take possession of the island, but would reward them for what they had done. They all professed themselves ready to go on, and the chaplain promised to bring the document the next day, and afterwards to take it to the ambassadors.

"I determined to frustrate this detestable project, although one of the conspirators was my gossip — a spiritual relationship which gave him a greater claim on me than if he had been my own brother.

"After they were gone, I came out of my hiding-place and did not think it necessary to expose myself to danger by hiding again as I had found out sufficient for my purpose. I set out the same night in a boat, and reached here the next day before noon. I had the names of the six rebels written down, and I took the paper to the secretary of the Tribunal, telling him all I had heard. He ordered me to appear, the day following, at the palace, and an agent of the Government should go back with me to Isola that I might point the chaplain out to him, as he had probably not yet gone to the Austrian ambassador's. 'That done,' said the lord secretary, 'you will no longer meddle in the matter.' I executed his orders, and after having shewn the chaplain to the agent, I was at leisure for my own affairs.

"After dinner my gossip called me in to shave him (for I am a barber by profession), and after I had done so he gave me a capital glass of refosco with some slices of sausages, and we ate together in all good fellowship. My love for him had still possession of my soul, so I took his hand, and, shedding some heartfelt tears, I advised him to have no more to do with the canon, and above all, not to sign the document he knew of. He protested that he was no particular friend of the chaplain's, and swore he did not know what document I was talking about. I burst into a laugh, telling him it was only my joke, and went forth very sorry at having yielded to a sentiment of affection which had made me commit so grievous a fault. The next day I saw neither the man nor the chaplain. A week after, having paid a visit to the palace, I was promptly imprisoned, and here I am with you, my dear sir. I thank St. Francis for having given me the company of a good Christian, who is here for reasons of which I desire to know nothing, for I am not curious. My name is Soradaci, and my wife is a Legrenzi, daughter of a secretary to the Council of Ten, who, in spite of all prejudice to the contrary, determined to marry me. She will be in despair at not knowing what has become of me, but I hope to be here only for a few days, since the only reason of my imprisonment is that the secretary wishes to be able to examine me more conveniently."

I shuddered to think of the monster who was with me, but feeling that the situation was a risky one, And that I should have to make use of him, I compassionated him, praised his patriotism, and predicted that he would be set at liberty in a few days. A few moments after he fell asleep, and I took the opportunity of telling the whole story to Father Balbi, shewing him that we should be obliged to put off our work to a more convenient season. Next day I told Lawrence to buy me a wooden crucifix, a statue of Our Lady, a portrait of St. Francis, and two bottles of holy water. Soradaci asked for his ten sous, and Lawrence, with an air of contempt, gave him twenty. I asked Lawrence to buy me four times the usual amount of garlic, wine, and salt — a diet in which my hateful companion delighted. After the gaoler was gone I deftly drew out the letter Balbi had written me, and in which he drew a vivid picture of his alarm. He thought all was lost, and over and over again thanked Heaven that Lawrence had put Soradaci in my cell, "for," said he, "if he had come into mine, he would not have found me there, and we should possibly have shared a cell in The Wells as a reward for our endeavours."

Soradaci's tale had satisfied me that he was only imprisoned to be examined, as it seemed plain that the secretary had arrested him on suspicion of bearing false witness. I thereupon resolved to entrust him with two letters which would do me neither good nor harm if they were delivered at their addresses, but which would be beneficial to me if the traitor gave them to the secretary as a proof of his loyalty, as I had not the slightest doubt he would do.

I spent two hours in writing these two letters in pencil. Next day Lawrence brought me the crucifix, the two pictures, and the holy water, and having worked the rascal well up to the point, I said, "I reckon upon your friendship and your courage. Here are two letters I want you to deliver when you recover your liberty. My happiness depends on your loyality, but you must hide the letters, as they were found upon you we should both of us be undone. You must swear by the crucifix and these holy pictures not to betray me."

"I am ready, dear master, to swear to anything you like, and I owe you too much to betray you."

This speech was followed by much weeping and lamentation. He called himself unhappy wretch at being suspected of treason towards a man for whom he would have given his life. I knew my man, but I played out the comedy. Having given him a shirt and a cap, I stood up bare-headed, and then having sprinkled the cell with holy water, and plentifully bedewed him with the same liquid, I made him swear a dreadful oath, stuffed with senseless imprecations, which for that very reason were the better fitted to strike terror to his soul. After his having sworn the oath to deliver my letters to their addresses, I gave him them, and he himself proposed to sew them up at the back of his waistcoat, between the stuff and the lining, to which proceedings I assented.

I was morally sure that he would deliver my letters to the secretary in the first opportunity, so I took the utmost care that my style of writing should not discover the trick. They could only gain me the esteem of the Court, and possibly its mercy. One of the letters was addressed to M. de Bragadin and the other to the Abbe Grimani, and I told them not to be anxious about me as I was in good hopes of soon being set at liberty, that they would find when I came out that my imprisonment had done me more good than harm, as there was no one in Venice who stood in need of reform more than I.

I begged M. de Bragadin to be kind enough to send me a pair of fur boots for the winter, as my cell was high enough for me to stand upright and to walk up and down.

I took care that Soradaci should not suspect the innocent nature of these letters, as he might then have been seized with the temptation to do an honest thing for me, and have delivered them, which was not what I was aiming at. You will see, dear reader, in the following chapter, the power of oaths over the vile soul of my odious companion, and also if I have not verified the saying ‘In vino veritas’, for in the story he told me the wretch had shewn himself in his true colours.

CHAPTER XXIX

Treason of Soradaci — How I Get the Best of Him — Father Balbi

Ends His Work — I Escape from My Cell — Unseasonable

Observations of Count Asquin The Critical Moment

Soradaci had had my letters for two or three days when Lawrence came one afternoon to take him to the secretary. As he was several hours away, I hoped to see his face no more; but to my great astonishment he was brought back in the evening. As soon as Lawrence had gone, he told me that the secretary suspected him of having warned the chaplain, since that individual had never been near the ambassador's and no document of any kind was found upon him. He added that after a long examination he had been confined in a very small cell, and was then bound and brought again before the secretary, who wanted him to confess that he told someone at Isola that the priest would never return, but that he had not done so as he had said no such thing. At last the secretary got tired, called the guards, and had him brought back to my cell.

I was distressed to hear his account, as I saw that the wretch would probably remain a long time in my company. Having to inform Father Balbi of this fatal misadventure, I wrote to him during the night, and being obliged to do so more than once, I got accustomed to write correctly enough in the dark.

On the next day, to assure myself that my suspicions were well founded, I told the spy to give me the letter I had written to M. de Bragadin as I wanted to add something to it. "You can sew it up afterwards," said I.

"It would be dangerous," he replied, "as the gaoler might come in in the mean time, and then we should be both ruined."

"No matter. Give me my letters:"

Thereupon the hound threw himself at my feet, and swore that on his appearing for a second time before the dreaded secretary, he had been seized with a severe trembling; and that he had felt in his back, especially in the place where the letters were, so intolerable an oppression, that the secretary had asked him the cause, and that he had not been able to conceal the truth. Then the secretary rang his bell, and Lawrence came in, unbound him, and took off his waist-coat and unsewed the lining. The secretary then read the letters and put them in a drawer of his bureau, telling him that if he had taken the letters he would have been discovered and have lost his life.

I pretended to be overwhelmed, and covering my face with my hands I knelt down at the bedside before the picture of the Virgin, and asked, her to avenge me on the wretch who had broken the most sacred oaths. I afterwards lay down on the bed, my face to the wall, and remained there the whole day without moving, without speaking a word, and pretending not to hear the tears, cries, and protestations of repentance uttered by the villain. I played my part in the comedy I had sketched out to perfection. In the night I wrote to Father Balbi to come at two o'clock in the afternoon, not a minute sooner or later, to work for four hours, and not a minute more. "On this precision," I wrote, "our liberty depends and if you observe it all will be well."

It was the 25th of October, and the time for me to carry out my design or to give it up for ever drew near. The State Inquisitors and their secretary went every year to a village on the mainland, and passed there the first three days of November. Lawrence, taking advantage of his masters' absence, did not fail to get drunk every evening, and did not appear at The Leads in the morning till a late hour.

Advised of these circumstances, I chose this time to make my escape, as I was certain that my flight would not be noticed till late in the morning. Another reason for my determination to hurry my escape, when I could no longer doubt the villainy of my detestable companion, seems to me to be worthy of record.

The greatest relief of a man in the midst of misfortune is the hope of escaping from it. He sighs for the hour when his sorrows are to end; he thinks he can hasten it by his prayers; he will do anything to know when his torments shall cease. The sufferer, impatient and enfeebled, is mostly inclined to superstition. "God," says he, "knows the time, and God may reveal it to me, it matters not how." Whilst he is in this state he is ready to trust in divination in any manner his fancy leads him, and is more or less disposed to believe in the oracle of which he makes choice.

I then was in this state of mind; but not knowing how to make use of the Bible to inform me of the moment in which I should recover my liberty, I determined to consult the divine Orlando Furioso, which I had read a hundred times, which I knew by heart, and which was my delight under the Leads. I idolized the genius of Ariosto, and considered him a far better fortune-teller than Virgil.

With this idea I wrote a question addressed to the supposed Intelligence, in which I ask in what canto of Ariosto I should find the day of my deliverance. I then made a reversed pyramid composed of the number formed from the words of the question, and by subtracting the number nine I obtained, finally, nine. This told me that I should find my fate in the ninth canto. I followed the same method to find out the exact stanza and verse, and got seven for the stanza and one for the verse.

I took up the poem, and my heart beating as if I trusted wholly in the oracle, I opened it, turned down the leaf, and read;

‘Fra il fin d’ottobre, a il capo di novembre’.

The precision of the line and its appropriateness to my circumstances appeared so wonderful to me, that I will not confess that I placed my faith entirely in it; but the reader will pardon me if I say that I did all in my power to make the prediction a correct one. The most singular circumstance is that between the end of October and the beginning of November, there is only the instant midnight, and it was just as the clock was striking midnight on the 31st of October that I escaped from my cell, as the reader will soon see.

The following is the manner in which I passed the morning to strike awe into the soul of that vicious brute, to confound his feeble intellect, and to render him harmless to me.

As soon as Lawrence had left us I told Soradaci to come and take some soup. The scoundrel was in bed, and he had told Lawrence that he was ill. He would not have dared to approach me if I had not called him. However, he rose from his bed, and threw himself flat upon the ground at my feet, and said, weeping violently, that if I would not forgive him he would die before the day was done, as he already felt the curse and the vengeance of the Holy Virgin which I had denounced against him. He felt devouring pains in his bowels, and his mouth was covered with sores. He shewed it me, and I saw it was full of ulcers, but I cannot say whether it was thus the night before. I did not much care to examine him to see if he were telling me the truth. My cue was to pretend to believe him, and to make him hope for mercy. I began by making him eat and drink. The traitor most likely intended to deceive me, but as I was myself determined to deceive him it remained to be seen which was the a cuter. I had planned an attack against which it was improbable that he could defend himself.

Assuming an inspired air, I said, "Be seated and take this soup, and afterwards I will tell you of your good fortune, for know that the Virgin of the Rosary appeared to me at day-break, and bids me pardon you. Thou shalt not die but live, and shalt come out of this place with me." In great wonderment, and kneeling on the ground for want of a chair, he ate the soup with me, and afterwards seated himself on the bed to hear what I had to say. Thus I spoke to him:

"The grief I experienced at your dreadful treason made me pass a sleepless night, as the letters might condemn me to spend here the remnant of my days. My only consolation, I confess, was the certainty that you would die here also before my eyes within three days. Full of this thought not worthy of a Christian (for God bids us forgive our enemies) my weariness made me sleep, and in my sleep I had a vision. I saw that Holy Virgin, Mother of God, whose likeness you behold — I saw her before me, and opening her lips she spoke thus:

"'Soradaci is a devotee of my Holy Rosary. I protect him, and I will that you forgive him, and then the curse he has drawn on himself will cease. In return for your generosity, I will order one of my angels to take the form of man, to come down from heaven, to break open the roof of your prison, and set you free within five or six days. The angel will begin his task this day at two o'clock precisely, and he will work till half an hour before sunset, since he must ascend again into heaven while the daylight lasts. When you come out of this place, take Soradaci with you, and have a care for him if he will renounce his business of spying. Tell him all.'

"With these words the Holy Virgin vanished out of my sight, and I awoke."

I spoke all the while with a serious face and the air of one inspired, and I saw that the traitor was petrified. I then took my Book of Hours, sprinkled the cell with holy water, and pretended to pray, kissing from time to time the picture of the Virgin. An hour afterwards the brute, who so far had not opened his mouth, asked me bluntly at what time the angel would come down from heaven, and if we should hear him breaking in the cell.

"I am certain that he will begin at two o'clock, that we shall hear him at his work, and that he will depart at the hour named by the Holy Virgin."

"You may have dreamt it all."

"Nay, not so. Will you swear to me to spy no more?"

Instead of answering he went off to sleep, and did not awake for two hours after, when he asked if he could put off taking the oath. I asked of him,

"You can put off taking it," I said, "till the angel enters to set me free; but if you do not then renounce by an oath the infamous trade which has brought you here, and which will end by bringing you to the gallows, I shall leave you in the cell, for so the Mother of God commands, and if you do not obey you will lose her protection."

As I had expected, I saw an expression of satisfaction on his hideous features, for he was quite certain that the angel would not come. He looked at me with a pitying air. I longed to hear the hour strike. The play amused me intensely, for I was persuaded that the approach of the angel would set his miserable wits a-reeling. I was sure, also, that the plan would succeed if Lawrence had not forgotten to give the monk the books, and this was not likely.

An hour before the time appointed I was fain to dine. I only drank water, and Soradaci drank all the wine and consumed all the garlic I had, and thus made himself worse.

As soon as I heard the first stroke of two I fell on my knees, ordering him, in an awful voice, to do the like. He obeyed, looking at me in a dazed way. When I heard the first slight noise I examined, "Lo! the angel cometh!" and fell down on my face, and with a hearty fisticuff forced him into the same position. The noise of breaking was plainly heard, and for a quarter of an hour I kept in that troublesome position, and if the circumstances had been different I should have laughed to see how motionless the creature was; but

I restrained myself, remembering my design of completely turning the fellow's head, or at least of obsessing him for a time. As soon as I got up I knelt and allowed him to imitate me, and I spent three hours in saying the rosary to him. From time to time he dozed off, wearied rather by his position than by the monotony of the prayer, but during the whole time he never interrupted me. Now and again he dared to raise a furtive glance towards the ceiling. With a sort of stupor on his face, he turned his head in the direction of the Virgin, and the whole of his behaviour was for me the highest comedy. When I heard the clock strike the hour for the work to cease, I said to him,

"Prostrate thyself, for the angel departeth."

Balbi returned to his cell, and we heard him no more. As I rose to my feet, fixing my gaze on the wretched fellow, I read fright on every feature, and was delighted. I addressed a few words to him that I might see in what state of mind he was. He shed tears in abundance, and what he said was mostly extravagant, his ideas having no sequence or connection. He spoke of his sins, of his acts of devotion, of his zeal in the service of St. Mark, and of the work he had done for the Commonwealth, and to this attributed the special favours Mary had shewn him. I had to put up with a long story about the miracles of the Rosary which his wife, whose confessor was a young Dominican, had told him. He said that he did not know what use I could make of an ignorant fellow like him.

"I will take you into my service, and you shall have all that you need without being obliged to pursue the hazardous trade of a spy."

"Shall we not be able to remain at Venice?"

"Certainly not. The angel will take us to a land which does not belong to St. Mark. Will you swear to me that you will spy no more? And if you swear, will you become a perjurer a second time?"

"If I take the oath, I will surely keep it, of that there can be no doubt; but you must confess that if I had not perjured myself you would never have received such favour at the hands of the Virgin. My broken faith is the cause of your bliss. You ought, therefore, to love me and to be content with my treason."

"Dost love Judas who betrayed Jesus Christ?"

“No.”

“You perceive, then, that one detests the traitor and at the same time adores the Divine Providence, which knows how to bring good out of evil. Up to the present time you have done wickedly. You have offended God and the Virgin His Mother, and I will not receive your oath till you have expiated your sins.”

“What sin have I done?”

“You have sinned by pride, Soradaci, in thinking that I was under an obligation to you for betraying me and giving my letters to the secretary.”

“How shall I expiate this sin?”

“Thus. To-morrow, when Lawrence comes, you must lie on your bed, your face towards the wall, and without the slightest motion or a single glance at Lawrence. If he address you, you must answer, without looking at him, that you could not sleep, and need rest. Do you promise me entirely to do this thing?”

“I will do whatsoever you tell me.”

“Quick, then, take your oath before this holy picture.”

“I promise, Holy Mother of God, that when Lawrence comes I will not look at him, nor stir from my bed.”

“And I, Most Holy Virgin, swear by the bowels of your Divine Son that if I see Soradici move in the least or look towards Lawrence, I will throw myself straightway upon him and strangle him without mercy, to your honour and glory.”

I counted on my threat having at least as much effect upon him as his oath. Nevertheless, as I was anxious to make sure, I asked him if he had anything to say against the oath, and after thinking for a moment he answered that he was quite content with it. Well pleased myself, I gave him something to eat, and told him to go to bed as I needed sleep.

As soon as he was asleep I began to write, and wrote on for two hours. I told Balbi all that had happened, and said that if the work was far enough advanced he need only come above my cell to put the final stroke to it and break through. I made him note that we should set out on the night of the

31st of October, and that we should be four in all, counting his companion and mine. It was now the twenty-eighth of the month.

In the morning the monk wrote me that the passage was made, and that he should only require to work at the ceiling of my cell to break through the last board and this would be done in four minutes. Soradaci observed his oath, pretending to sleep, and Lawrence said nothing to him. I kept my eyes upon him the whole time, and I verily believe I should have strangled him if he had made the slightest motion towards Lawrence, for a wink would have been enough to betray me.

The rest of the day was devoted to high discourses and exalted expressions, which I uttered as solemnly as I could, and I enjoyed the sight of seeing him become more and more fanatical. To heighten the effect of my mystic exhortation I dosed him heavily with wine, and did not let him go till he had fallen into a drunken sleep.

Though a stranger to all metaphysical speculations, and a man who had never exercised his reasoning faculties except in devising some piece of spy-craft, the fellow confused me for a moment by saying that he could not conceive how an angel should have to take so much trouble to break open our cell. But after lifting my eyes to heaven, or rather to the roof of my dungeon-cell, I said,

“The ways of God are inscrutable; and since the messenger of Heaven works not as an angel (for then a slight single blow would be enough), he works like a man, whose form he has doubtless taken, as we are not worthy to look upon his celestial body. And, furthermore,” said I, like a true Jesuit, who knows how to draw advantage from everything, “I foresee that the angel, to punish us for your evil thought, which has offended the Holy Virgin, will not come to-day. Wretch, your thoughts are not those of an honest, pious, and religious man, but those of a sinner who thinks he has to do with Messer-Grande and his myrmidons.”

I wanted to drive him to despair, and I had succeeded. He began to weep bitterly, and his sobs almost choked him, when two o’clock struck and not sign of the angel was heard. Instead of calming him I endeavoured to augment his misery by my complaints. The next morning he was obedient to my orders, for when Lawrence asked him how he was, he replied without moving his head. He behaved in the same manner on the day following, and until I saw Lawrence for the last time on the morning of the 31st October. I gave him the book for Barbi, and told the monk to come at noon to break through the ceiling. I feared nothing, as Lawrence had told me that the Inquisitors and the secretary had already set out for the country. I had no reason to dread the arrival of a new companion, and all I had to do was to manage my knave.

After Lawrence was gone I told Soradaci that the angel would come and make an opening in the ceiling about noon.

“He will bring a pair of scissors with him,” I said, “and you will have to cut the angel’s beard and mine.”

“Has the angel a beard?”

“Yes, you shall see it for yourself. Afterwards we will get out of the cell and proceed to break the roof of the palace, whence we shall descend into St. Mark’s Place and set out for Germany.”

He answered nothing. He had to eat by himself, for my mind was too much occupied to think about dinner — indeed, I had been unable to sleep.

The appointed hour struck — and the angel came, Soradaci was going to fall down on his face, but I told him it was not necessary. In three minutes the passage was completed, the piece of board fell at my feet, and Father Balbi into my arms. “Your work is ended and mine begun,” said I to him. We embraced each other, and he gave me the pike and a pair of scissors. I told Soradaci to cut our beards, but I could not help laughing to see the creature — his mouth all agape-staring at the angel, who was more like a devil. However, though quite beside himself, he cut our beards admirably.

Anxious to see how the land lay, I told the monk to stay with Soradaci, as I did not care to leave him alone, and I went out. I found the hole in the wall narrow, but I succeeded in getting through it. I was above the count’s cell, and I came in and greeted the worthy old man. The man before me was not fitted to encounter such difficulties as would be involved in an escape by a steep roof covered with plates of lead. He asked me what my plan was, and told me that he thought I had acted rather inconsiderately. “I only ask to go forward,” said I, “till I find death or freedom.” “If you intend,” he answered, “to pierce the roof and to descend from thence, I see no prospect of success, unless you have wings; and I at all events have not the courage to accompany you. I will remain here, and pray to God on your behalf."

I went out again to look at the roof, getting as close as I could to the sides of the loft. Touching the lower part of the roof, I took up a position between the beams, and feeling the wood with the end of the bar I luckily found them to be half rotten. At every blow of the bar they fell to dust, so feeling certain of my ability to make a large enough hole in less than a hour I returned to my cell, and for four hours employed myself in cutting up sheets, coverlets, and bedding, to make ropes. I took care to make the knots myself and to be assured of their strength, for a single weak knot might cost us our lives. At last I had ready a hundred fathoms of rope.

In great undertakings there are certain critical points which the leader who deserves to succeed trusts to no one but himself. When the rope was ready I made a parcel of my suit, my cloak, a few shirts, stockings, and handkerchiefs, and the three of us went into the count's cell. The first thing the count did was to congratulate Soradaci on having been placed in the same cell as myself, and on being so soon about to regain his liberty. His air of speechless confusion made me want to laugh. I took no more trouble about him, for I had thrown off the mask of Tartuffe which I had found terribly inconvenient all the time I had worn it for the rascal's sake. He knew, I could see, that he had been deceived, but he understood nothing else, as he could not make out how I could have arranged with the supposed angel to come and go at certain fixed times. He listened attentively to the count, who told us we were going to our destruction, and like the coward that he was, he began to plan how to escape from the dangerous journey. I told the monk to put his bundle together while I was making the hole in the roof by the side of the loft.

At eight o'clock, without needing any help, my opening was made. I had broken up the beams, and the space was twice the size required. I got the plate of lead off in one piece. I could not do it by myself, because it was riveted. The monk came to my aid, and by dint of driving the bar between the gutter and the lead I succeeded in loosening it, and then, heaving at it with our shoulders, we beat it up till the opening was wide enough. On putting my head out through the hole I was distressed to see the brilliant light of the crescent moon then entering in its first quarter. This was a piece of bad luck which must be borne patiently, and we should have to wait till midnight, when the moon would have gone to light up the Antipodes. On such a fine night as this everybody would be walking in St. Mark's Place, and I dared not shew myself on the roof as the moonlight would have thrown a huge shadow of me on the place, and have drawn towards me all eyes, especially those of Messer-Grande and his myrmidons, and our fine scheme would have been brought to nothing by their detestable activity. I immediately decided that we could not escape till after the moon set; in the mean time I prayed for the help of God, but did not ask Him to work any miracles for me. I was at the mercy of Fortune, and I had to take care not to give her any advantages; and if my scheme ended in failure I should be consoled by the thought that I had not made a single mistake. The moon would set at eleven and sunrise was at six, so we had seven hours of perfect darkness at our service; and though we had a hard task, I considered that in seven hours it would be accomplished.

I told Father Balbi that we could pass the three hours in talking to Count Asquin. I requested him to go first and ask the count to lend me thirty sequins, which would be as necessary to me as my pike had been hitherto. He carried my message, and a few minutes after came and asked me to go myself, as the count wished to talk to me alone. The poor old man began by saying with great politeness that I really stood in no need of money to escape, that he had none, that he had a large family, that if I was killed the money would be lost, with a thousand other futilities of the same kind to disguise his avarice, or the dislike he felt to parting with his money. My reply lasted for half an hour, and contained some excellent arguments, which never have had and never will have any force, as the finest weapons of oratory are blunted when used against one of the strongest of the passions. It was a matter of a 'nolenti baculus'; not that I was cruel enough to use force towards an unhappy old man like the count. I ended my speech by saying that if he would flee with us I would carry him upon my back like AEneas carried Anchises; but if he was going to stay in prison to offer up prayers for our success, his prayers would be observed, as it would be a case of praying God to give success when he himself had refused to contribute the most ordinary aid.

He replied by a flood of tears, which affected me. He then asked if two sequins would be enough, and I answered in the affirmative. He then gave them to me begging me to return them to him if after getting on the roof I saw my wisest course would be to come back. I promised to do so, feeling somewhat astonished that he should deem me capable of a retreat. He little knew me, for I would have preferred death to an imprisonment which would have been life-long.

I called my companions, and we set all our baggage near the hole. I divided the hundred fathoms of rope into two packets, and we spent two hours in talking over the chances of our undertaking. The first proof which Father Balbi gave me of his fine character was to tell me, ten times over, that I had broken my word with him, since I had assured him that my scheme was complete and certain, while it was really nothing of the kind. He went so far as to tell me that if he had known as much he would not have taken me from my cell. The count also, with all the weight of his seventy years, told me that I should do well to give up so hazardous an undertaking, in which success was impossible and death probable. As he was a barrister he made me a speech as follows, and I had not much difficulty in guessing that he was inspired by the thought of the two sequins which I should have had to give him back, if he had succeeded in persuading me to stay where I was:

“The incline of the roof covered with lead plates,” said he, “will render it impossible for you to walk, indeed you will scarcely be able to stand on your feet. It is true that the roof has seven or eight windows, but they are all barred with iron, and you could not keep your footing near them since they are far from the sides. Your ropes are useless, as you will find nothing whereon to fasten them; and even if you did, a man descending from such a height cannot reach the ground by himself. One of you will therefore have to lower the two others one at a time as one lowers a bucket or a bundle of wood, and he who does so will have to stay behind and go back to his cell. Which of you three has a vocation for this dangerous work of charity? And supposing that one of you is heroic enough to do so, can you tell me on which side you are going to descend? Not by the side towards the palace, for you would be seen; not by the church, as you would find yourselves still shut up, and as to the court side you surely would not think of it, for you would fall into the hands of the ‘arsenalotti’ who are always going their rounds there. You have only the canal side left, and where is your gondola to take you off? Not having any such thing, you will be obliged to throw yourself in and escape by swimming towards St. Appollonia, which you will reach in a wretched condition, not knowing where to turn to next. You must remember that the leads are slippery, and that if you were to fall into the canal, considering the height of the fall and the shallowness of the water, you would most certainly be killed if you could swim like sharks. You would be crushed to death, for three or four feet of water are not sufficient to counteract the effect of a fall from such a height. In short, the best fate you can expect is to find yourselves on the ground with broken arms and legs."

The effect of this discourse — a very unseasonable one, under the circumstances — was to make my blood boil, but I listened with a patience wholly foreign to my nature. The rough reproaches of the monk enraged me, and inclined me to answer him in his own way; but I felt that my position was a difficult one, and that unless I was careful I might ruin all, for I had to do with a coward quite capable of saying that he was not going to risk his life, and by myself I could not hope to succeed. I constrained myself, therefore, and as politely as I could I told them that I was sure of success, though I could not as yet communicate the details of my plan. "I shall profit by your wise counsels," said I to Count Asquin, "and be very prudent, but my trust in God and in my own strength will carry me through all difficulties."

From time to time I stretched out my hand to assure myself that Soradaci was there, for he did not speak a word. I laughed to myself to think what he might be turning in his head now that he was convinced that I had deceived him. At half-past ten I told him to go and see what was the position of the moon. He obeyed and returned, saying that in an hour and a-half it would have disappeared, and that there was a thick fog which would make the leads very dangerous.

"All I ask," I said, "is that the fog be not made of oil. Put your cloak in a packet with some of the rope which must be divided equally between us."

At this I was astonished to find him at my knees kissing my hands, and entreating me not to kill him. "I should be sure," said he, "to fall over into the canal, and I should not be of any use to you. Ah! leave me here, and all the night I will pray to St. Francis for you. You can kill me or save me alive; but of this I am determined, never to follow you."

The fool never thought how he had responded to my prayers.

"You are right," I said, "you may stop here on the condition that you will pray to St. Francis; and that you go forthwith and fetch my books, which I wish to leave to the count."

He did so without answering me, doubtless with much joy. My books were worth at least a hundred crowns. The count told me that he would give them back on my return.

"You may be sure," I said, "that you will never see me here again. The books will cover your expenditure of two sequins. As to this rascal, I am delighted, as he cannot muster sufficient courage to come with me. He would be in the way, and the fellow is not worthy of sharing with Father Balbi and myself the honours of so brave a flight."

"That's true," said the count, "provided that he does not congratulate himself to-morrow."

I asked the count to give me pens, ink, and paper, which he possessed in spite of the regulations to the contrary, for such prohibitions were nothing to Lawrence, who would have sold St. Mark himself for a crown. I then wrote the following letter, which I gave to Soradaci, not being able to read it over, as I had written it in the dark. I began by a fine heading, which I wrote in Latin, and which in English would run thus:

"'I shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord.'"

"Our lords of state are bound to do all in their power to keep a prisoner under the Leads, and on the other hand the prisoner, who is fortunately not on parole, is bound also to make his escape. Their right to act thus is founded on justice, while the prisoner follows the voice of nature; and since they have not asked him whether he will be put in prison, so he ought not to ask them leave to escape.

"Jacques Casanova, writing in the bitterness of his heart, knows that he may have the ill luck to be recaptured before he succeeds in leaving the Venetian territory and escaping to a friendly state; but if so, he appeals to the humanity of the judges not to add to the misery of the condition from which, yielding to the voice of nature, he is endeavouring to escape. He begs them, if he be taken, to return him whatever may be in his cell, but if he succeed he gives the whole to Francis Soradaci, who is still a captive for want of courage to escape, not like me preferring liberty to life. Casanova entreats their excellencies not to refuse the poor wretch this gift. Dated an hour before midnight, in the cell of Count Asquin, on October 31st, 1756."

I warned Soradaci not to give this letter to Lawrence, but to the secretary in person, who, no doubt, would interrogate him if he did not go himself to the cell, which was the more likely course. The count said my letter was perfect, but that he would give me back all my books if I returned. The fool said he wished to see me again to prove that he would return everything gladly.

But our time was come. The moon had set. I hung the half of the ropes by Father Balbi's neck on one side and his clothes on the other. I did the same to myself, and with our hats on and our coats off we went to the opening.

E quindi uscimmo a rimirar le stelle. — DANTE.

CHAPTER XXX

The Escape I Nearly Lose My Life on the Roof I Get out of the Ducal Palace, Take a Boat, and Reach the Mainland — Danger to Which I Am Exposed by Father Balbi — My Scheme for Ridding Myself of Him

I got out the first, and Father Balbi followed me. Soradaci who had come as far as the opening, had orders to put the plate of lead back in its place, and then to go and pray to St. Francis for us. Keeping on my hands and knees, and grasping my pike firmly I pushed it obliquely between the joining of the plates of lead, and then holding the side of the plate which I had lifted I succeeded in drawing myself up to the summit of the roof. The monk had taken hold of my waistband to follow me, and thus I was like a beast of burden who has to carry and draw along at the same time; and this on a steep and slippery roof.

When we were half-way up the monk asked me to stop, as one of his packets had slipped off, and he hoped it had not gone further than the gutter. My first thought was to give him a kick and to send him after his packet, but, praised be to God! I had sufficient self-control not to yield to it, and indeed the punishment would have been too heavy for both of us, as I should have had no chance of escaping by myself. I asked him if it were the bundle of rope, and on his replying that it was a small packet of his own containing manuscript he had found in one of the garrets under the Leads, I told him he must bear it patiently, as a single step might be our destruction. The poor monk gave a sigh, and he still clinging to my waist we continued climbing.

After having surmounted with the greatest difficulty fifteen or sixteen plates we got to the top, on which I sat astride, Father Balbi imitating my example. Our backs were towards the little island of St. George the Greater, and about two hundred paces in front of us were the numerous cupolas of St. Mark's Church, which forms part of the ducal palace, for St. Mark's is really the Doge’s private chapel, and no monarch in the world can boast of having a finer. My first step was to take off my bundle, and I told my companion to do the same. He put the rope as best he could upon his thighs, but wishing to take off his hat, which was in his way, he took hold of it awkwardly, and it was soon dancing from plate to plate to join the packet of linen in the gutter. My poor companion was in despair.

“A bad omen,” he exclaimed; “our task is but begun and here am I deprived of shirt, hat, and a precious manuscript, containing a curious account of the festivals of the palace.”

I felt calmer now that I was no longer crawling on hands and knees, and I told him quietly that the two accidents which had happened to him had nothing extraordinary in them, and that not even a superstitious person would call them omens, that I did not consider them in that light, and that they were far from damping my spirits.

“They ought rather,” said I, “to warn you to be prudent, and to remind you that God is certainly watching over us, for if your hat had fallen to the left instead of to the right, we should have been undone; as in that case it would have fallen into the palace court, where it would have caught the attention of the guards, and have let them know that there was someone on the roof; and in a few minutes we should have been retaken.”

After looking about me for some time I told the monk to stay still till I came back, and I set out, my pike in my hand, sitting astride the roof and moving along without any difficulty. For nearly an hour I went to this side and that, keeping a sharp look-out, but in vain; for I could see nothing to which the rope could be fastened, and I was in the greatest perplexity as to what was to be done. It was of no use thinking of getting down on the canal side or by the court of the palace, and the church offered only precipices which led to nothing. To get to the other side of the church towards the Canonica, I should have had to climb roofs so steep that I saw no prospect of success. The situation called for hardihood, but not the smallest piece of rashness.

It was necessary, however, either to escape, or to reenter the prison, perhaps never again to leave it, or to throw myself into the canal. In such a dilemma it was necessary to leave a good deal to chance, and to make a start of some kind. My eye caught a window on the canal sides, and two-thirds of the distance from the gutter to the summit of the roof. It was a good distance from the spot I had set out from, so I concluded that the garret lighted by it did not form part of the prison I had just broken. It could only light a loft, inhabited or uninhabited, above some rooms in the palace, the doors of which would probably be opened by day-break. I was morally sure that if the palace servants saw us they would help us to escape, and not deliver us over to the Inquisitors, even if they recognized us as criminals of the deepest dye; so heartily was the State Inquisition hated by everyone.

It was thus necessary for me to get in front of the window, and letting myself slide softly down in a straight line I soon found myself astride on top of the dormer-roof. Then grasping the sides I stretched my head over, and succeeded in seeing and touching a small grating, behind which was a window of square panes of glass joined with thin strips of lead. I did not trouble myself about the window, but the grating, small as it was, appeared an insurmountable difficulty, failing a file, and I had only my pike.

I was thoroughly perplexed, and was beginning to lose courage, when an incident of the simplest and most natural kind came to my aid and fortified my resolution.

Philosophic reader, if you will place yourself for a moment in my position, if you will share the sufferings which for fifteen months had been my lot, if you think of my danger on the top of a roof, where the slightest step in a wrong direction would have cost me my life, if you consider the few hours at my disposal to overcome difficulties which might spring up at any moment, the candid confession I am about to make will not lower me in your esteem; at any rate, if you do not forget that a man in an anxious and dangerous position is in reality only half himself.

It was the clock of St. Mark’s striking midnight, which, by a violent shock, drew me out of the state of perplexity I had fallen into. The clock reminded me that the day just beginning was All Saints’ Day — the day of my patron saint (at least if I had one) — and the prophecy of my confessor came into my mind. But I confess that what chiefly strengthened me, both bodily and mentally, was the profane oracle of my beloved Ariosto: ‘Fra il fin d’ottobre, a il capo di novembre’.

The chime seemed to me a speaking talisman, commanding me to be up and doing, — and — promising me the victory. Lying on my belly I stretched my head down towards the grating, and pushing my pike into the sash which held it I resolved to take it out in a piece. In a quarter of an hour I succeeded, and held the whole grate in my hands, — and putting it on one side I easily broke the glass window, though wounding my left hand.

With the aid of my pike, using it as I had done before, I regained the ridge of the roof, and went back to the spot where I had left Balbi. I found him enraged and despairing, and he abused me heartily for having left him for so long. He assured me that he was only waiting for it to get light to return to the prison.

“What did you think had become of me?”

“I thought you must have fallen over.”

“And you can find no better way than abuse to express the joy you ought to feel at seeing me again?”

“What have you been doing all this time?”

“Follow me, and you shall see.”

I took up my packets again and made my way towards the window. As soon as were opposite to it I told Balbi what I had done, and asked him if he could think of any way of getting into the loft. For one it was easy enough, for the other could lower him by the rope; but I could not discover how the second of us was to get down afterwards, as there was nothing to which the rope could be fastened. If I let myself fall I might break my arms and legs, for I did not know the distance between the window and the floor of the room. To this chain of reasoning uttered in the friendliest possible tone, the brute replied thus:

“You let me down, and when I have got to the bottom you will have plenty of time to think how you are going to follow me.”

I confess that my first indignant impulse was to drive my pike into his throat. My good genius stayed my arm, and I uttered not a word in reproach of his base selfishness. On the contrary, I straightway untied my bundle of rope and bound him strongly under the elbows, and making him lie flat down I lowered him feet foremost on to the roof of the dormer-window. When he got there I told him to lower himself into the window as far as his hips, supporting himself by holding his elbows against the sides of the window. As soon as he had done so, I slid down the roof as before, and lying down on the dormer-roof with a firm grasp of the rope I told the monk not to be afraid but to let himself go. When he reached the floor of the loft he untied himself, and on drawing the rope back I found the fall was one of fifty feet-too dangerous a jump to be risked. The monk who for two hours had been a prey to terror; seated in a position which I confess was not a very reassuring one, was not quite cool, and called out to me to throw him the ropes for him to take care of — a piece of advice you may be sure I took care not to follow.

Not knowing what to do next, and waiting for some fortunate idea, I made my way back to the ridge of the roof, and from there spied out a corner near a cupola; which I had not visited. I went towards it and found a flat roof, with a large window closed with two shutters. At hand was a tubful of plaster, a trowel, and ladder which I thought long enough for my purpose. This was enough, and tying my rope to the first round I dragged this troublesome burden after me to the window. My next task was to get the end of the ladder (which was twelve fathoms long) into the opening, and the difficulties I encountered made me sorry that I had deprived myself of the aid of the monk. [The unit of measure:'fathoms' describing the ladder and earlier the 100 fathoms of rope, is likely a translation error: Casanova might have manufactured 100 feet of rope and might have dragged a 12 foot ladder up the steep roof, but not a longer. D.W.]

I had set the ladder in such a way that one end touched the window, and the other went below the gutter. I next slid down to the roof of the window, and drawing the ladder towards me I fastened the end of my rope to the eighth round, and then let it go again till it was parallel with the window. I then strove to get it in, but I could not insert it farther than the fifth round, for the end of the ladder being stopped by the inside roof of the window no force on earth could have pushed it any further without breaking either the ladder or the ceiling. There was nothing to be done but to lift it by the other end; it would then slip down by its own weight. I might, it is true, have placed the ladder across the window, and have fastened the rope to it, in which manner I might have let myself down into the loft without any risk; but the ladder would have been left outside to shew Lawrence and the guards where to look for us and possibly to find us in the morning.

I did not care to risk by a piece of imprudence the fruit of so much toil and danger, and to destroy all traces of our whereabouts the ladder must be drawn in. Having no one to give me a helping hand, I resolved to go myself to the parapet to lift the ladder and attain the end I had in view. I did so, but at such a hazard as had almost cost me my life. I could let go the ladder while I slackened the rope without any fear of its falling over, as it had caught to the parapet by the third rung. Then, my pike in my hand, I slid down beside the ladder to the parapet, which held up the points of my feet, as I was lying on my belly. In this position I pushed the ladder forward, and was able to get it into the window to the length of a foot, and that diminished by a good deal its weight. I now only had to push it in another two feet, as I was sure that I could get it in altogether by means of the rope from the roof of the window. To impel the ladder to the extent required I got on my knees, but the effort I had to use made me slip, and in an instant I was over the parapet as far as my chest, sustained by my elbows.

I shudder still when I think of this awful moment, which cannot be conceived in all its horror. My natural instinct made me almost unconsciously strain every nerve to regain the parapet, and — I had nearly said miraculously — I succeeded. Taking care not to let myself slip back an inch I struggled upwards with my hands and arms, while my belly was resting on the edge of the parapet. Fortunately the ladder was safe, for with that unlucky effort which had nearly cost me so dearly I had pushed it in more than three feet, and there it remained.

Finding myself resting on my groin on the parapet, I saw that I had only to lift up my right leg and to put up first one knee and then the other to be absolutely out of danger; but I had not yet got to the end of my trouble. The effort I made gave me so severe a spasm that I became cramped and unable to use my limbs. However, I did not lose my head, but kept quiet till the pain had gone off, knowing by experience that keeping still is the best cure for the false cramp. It was a dreadful moment! In two minutes I made another effort, and had the good fortune to get my two knees on to the parapet, and as soon as I had taken breath I cautiously hoisted the ladder and pushed it half-way through the window. I then took my pike, and crawling up as I had done before I reached the window, where my knowledge of the laws of equilibrium and leverage aided me to insert the ladder to its full length, my companion receiving the end of it. I then threw into the loft the bundles and the fragments that I had broken off the window, and I stepped down to the monk, who welcomed me heartily and drew in the ladder. Arm in arm, we proceeded to inspect the gloomy retreat in which we found ourselves, and judged it to be about thirty paces long by twenty wide.

At one end were folding-doors barred with iron. This looked bad, but putting my hand to the latch in the middle it yielded to the pressure, and the door opened. The first thing we did was to make the tour of the room, and crossing it we stumbled against a large table surrounded by stools and armchairs. Returning to the part where we had seen windows, we opened the shutters of one of them, and the light of the stars only shewed us: the cupolas and the depths beneath them. I did not think for a moment of lowering myself down, as I wished to know where I was going, and I did not recognize our surroundings. I shut the window up, and we returned to the place where we had left our packages. Quite exhausted I let myself fall on the floor, and placing a bundle of rope under my head a sweet sleep came to my, relief. I abandoned myself to it without resistance, and indeed, I believe if death were to have been the result, I should have slept all the same, and I still remember how I enjoyed that sleep.

It lasted for three and a half hours, and I was awakened by the monk's calling out and shaking me. He told me that it had just struck five. He said it was inconceivable to him how I could sleep in the situation we were in. But that which was inconceivable to him was not so to me. I had not fallen asleep on purpose, but had only yielded to the demands of exhausted nature, and, if I may say so, to the extremity of my need. In my exhaustion there was nothing to wonder at, since I had neither eaten nor slept for two days, and the efforts I had made — efforts almost beyond the limits of mortal endurance — might well have exhausted any man. In my sleep my activity had come back to me, and I was delighted to see the darkness disappearing, so that we should be able to proceed with more certainty and quickness.

Casting a rapid glance around, I said to myself, “This is not a prison, there ought, therefore, be some easy exit from it.” We addressed ourselves to the end opposite to the folding-doors, and in a narrow recess I thought I made out a doorway. I felt it over and touched a lock, into which I thrust my pike, and opened it with three or four heaves. We then found ourselves in a small room, and I discovered a key on a table, which I tried on a door opposite to us, which, however, proved to be unlocked. I told the monk to go for our bundles, and replacing the key we passed out and came into a gallery containing presses full of papers. They were the state archives. I came across a short flight of stone stairs, which I descended, then another, which I descended also, and found a glass door at the end, on opening which I entered a hall well known to me: we were in the ducal chancery. I opened a window and could have got down easily, but the result would have been that we should have been trapped in the maze of little courts around St. Mark’s Church. I saw on a desk an iron instrument, of which I took possession; it had a rounded point and a wooden handle, being used by the clerks of the chancery to pierce parchments for the purpose of affixing the leaden seals. On opening the desk I saw the copy of a letter advising the Proveditore of Corfu of a grant of three thousand sequins for the restoration of the old fortress. I searched for the sequins but they were not there. God knows how gladly I would have taken them, and how I would have laughed the monk to scorn if he had accused me of theft! I should have received the money as a gift from Heaven, and should have regarded myself as its master by conquest.

Going to the door of the chancery, I put my bar in the keyhole, but finding immediately that I could not break it open, I resolved on making a hole in the door. I took care to choose the side where the wood had fewest knots, and working with all speed I struck as hard and as cleaving strokes as I was able. The monk, who helped me as well as he could with the punch I had taken from the desk, trembled at the echoing clamour of my pike which must have been audible at some distance. I felt the danger myself, but it had to be risked.

In half an hour the hole was large enough — a fortunate circumstance, for I should have had much trouble in making it any larger without the aid of a saw. I was afraid when I looked at the edges of the hole, for they bristled with jagged pieces of wood which seemed made for tearing clothes and flesh together. The hole was at a height of five feet from the ground. We placed beneath it two stools, one beside the other, and when we had stepped upon them the monk with arms crossed and head foremost began to make his way through the hole, and taking him by the thighs, and afterwards by the legs, I succeeded in pushing him through, and though it was dark I felt quite secure, as I knew the surroundings. As soon as my companion had reached the other side I threw him my belongings, with the exception of the ropes, which I left behind, and placing a third stool on the two others, I climbed up, and got through as far as my middle, though with much difficulty, owing to the extreme narrowness of the hole. Then, having nothing to grasp with my hands, nor anyone to push me as I had pushed the monk, I asked him to take me, and draw me gently and by slow degrees towards him. He did so, and I endured silently the fearful torture I had to undergo, as my thighs and legs were torn by the splinters of wood.

As soon as I got through I made haste to pick up my bundle of linen, and going down two flights of stairs I opened without difficulty the door leading into the passage whence opens the chief door to the grand staircase, and in another the door of the closet of the ‘Savio alla scrittura’. The chief door was locked, and I saw at once that, failing a catapult or a mine of gunpowder, I could not possibly get through. The bar I still held seemed to say, “Hic fines posuit. My use is ended and you can lay me down.” It was dear to me as the instrument of freedom, and was worthy of being hung as an ‘ex voto’ on the altar of liberty.

I sat down with the utmost tranquillity, and told the monk to do the same.

“My work is done,” I said, “the rest must be left to God and fortune.

“Abbia chi regge il ciel cura del resto, O la fortuna se non tocca a lui.

“I do not know whether those who sweep out the palace will come here to-day, which is All Saints’ Day, or tomorrow, All Souls’ Day. If anyone comes, I shall run out as soon as the door opens, and do you follow after me; but if nobody comes, I do not budge a step, and if I die of hunger so much the worse for me.”

At this speech of mine he became beside himself. He called me a madman, seducer, deceiver, and a liar. I let him talk, and took no notice. It struck six; only an hour had passed since I had my awakening in the loft.

My first task was to change my clothes. Father Balbi looked like a peasant, but he was in better condition than I, his clothes were not torn to shreds or covered with blood, his red flannel waistcoat and purple breeches were intact, while my figure could only inspire pity or terror, so bloodstained and tattered was I. I took off my stockings, and the blood gushed out of two wounds I had given myself on the parapet, while the splinters in the hole in the door had torn my waistcoat, shirt, breeches, legs and thighs. I was dreadfully wounded all over my body. I made bandages of handkerchiefs, and dressed my wounds as best I could, and then put on my fine suit, which on a winter's day would look odd enough. Having tied up my hair, I put on white stockings, a laced shirt, failing any other, and two others over it, and then stowing away some stockings and handkerchiefs in my pockets, I threw everything else into a corner of the room. I flung my fine cloak over the monk, and the fellow looked as if he had stolen it. I must have looked like a man who has been to a dance and has spent the rest of the night in a disorderly house, though the only foil to my reasonable elegance of attire was the bandages round my knees.

In this guise, with my exquisite hat trimmed with Spanish lace and adorned with a white feather on my head, I opened a window. I was immediately remarked by some lounger in the palace court, who, not understanding what anyone of my appearance was doing there at such an early hour, went to tell the door-keeper of the circumstance. He, thinking he must have locked somebody in the night before, went for his keys and came towards us. I was sorry to have let myself be seen at the window, not knowing that therein chance was working for our escape, and was sitting down listening to the idle talk of the monk, when I heard the jingling of keys. Much perturbed I got up and put my eye to a chink in the door, and saw a man with a great bunch of keys in his hand mounting leisurely up the stairs. I told the monk not to open his mouth, to keep well behind me, and to follow my steps. I took my pike, and concealing it in my right sleeve I got into a corner by the door, whence I could get out as soon as it was opened and run down the stairs. I prayed that the man might make no resistance, as if he did I should be obliged to fell him to the earth, and I determined to do so.

The door opened; and the poor man as soon as he saw me seemed turned to a stone. Without an instant's delay and in dead silence, I made haste to descend the stairs, the monk following me. Avoiding the appearance of a fugitive, but walking fast, I went by the giants' Stairs, taking no notice of Father Balbi, who kept cabling: out "To the church! to the church!"

The church door was only about twenty paces from the stairs, but the churches were no longer sanctuaries in Venice; and no one ever took refuge in them. The monk knew this, but fright had deprived him of his faculties. He told me afterwards that the motive which impelled him to go to the church was the voice of religion bidding him seek the horns of the altar.

“Why didn’t you go by yourself?” said I.

“I did not, like to abandon you,” but he should rather have said, “I did not like to lose the comfort of your company.”

The safety I sought was beyond the borders of the Republic, and thitherward I began to bend my steps. Already there in spirit, I must needs be there in body also. I went straight towards the chief door of the palace, and looking at no one that might be tempted to look at me I got to the canal and entered the first gondola that I came across, shouting to the boatman on the poop,

“I want to go to Fusina; be quick and, call another gondolier.”

This was soon done, and while the gondola was being got off I sat down on the seat in the middle, and Balbi at the side. The odd appearance of the monk, without a hat and with a fine cloak on his shoulders, with my unseasonable attire, was enough to make people take us for an astrologer and his man.

As soon as we had passed the custom-house, the gondoliers began to row with a will along the Giudecca Canal, by which we must pass to go to Fusina or to Mestre, which latter place was really our destination. When we had traversed half the length of the canal I put my head out, and said to the waterman on the poop,

“When do you think we shall get to Mestre?”

“But you told me to go to Fusina.”

“You must be mad; I said Mestre.”

The other boatman said that I was mistaken, and the fool of a monk, in his capacity of zealous Christian and friend of truth, took care to tell me that I was wrong. I wanted to give him a hearty kick as a punishment for his stupidity, but reflecting that common sense comes not by wishing for it I burst into a peal of laughter, and agreed that I might have made a mistake, but that my real intention was to go to Mestre. To that they answered nothing, but a minute after the master boatman said he was ready to take me to England if I liked.

“Bravely spoken,” said I, “and now for Mestre, ho!” “We shall be there in three quarters of an hour, as the wind and tide are in our favour.”

Well pleased I looked at the canal behind us, and thought it had never seemed so fair, especially as there was not a single boat coming our way. It was a glorious morning, the air was clear and glowing with the first rays of the sun, and my two young watermen rowed easily and well; and as I thought over the night of sorrow, the dangers I had escaped, the abode where I had been fast bound the day before, all the chances which had been in my favour, and the liberty of which I now began to taste the sweets, I was so moved in my heart and grateful to my God that, well nigh choked with emotion, I burst into tears.

My nice companion who had hitherto only spoken to back up the gondoliers, thought himself bound to offer me his consolations. He did not understand why I was weeping, and the tone he took made me pass from sweet affliction to a strange mirthfulness which made him go astray once more, as he thought I had got mad. The poor monk, as I have said, was a fool, and whatever was bad about him was the result of his folly. I had been under the sad necessity of turning him to account, but though without intending to do so he had almost been my ruin. It was no use trying to make him believe that I had told the gondoliers to go to Fusina whilst I intended to go to Mestre; he said I could not have thought of that till I got on to the Grand Canal.

In due course we reached Mestre. There were no horses to ride post, but I found men with coaches who did as well, and I agreed with one of them to take me to Trevisa in an hour and a quarter. The horses were put in in three minutes, and with the idea that Father Balbi was behind me I turned round to say "Get up," but he was not there. I told an ostler to go and look for him, with the intention of reprimanding him sharply, even if he had gone for a necessary occasion, for we had no time to waste, not even thus. The man came back saying he could not find' him, to my great rage and indignation. I was tempted to abandon him, but a feeling of humanity restrained me. I made enquiries all round; everybody had seen him, but not a soul knew where he was. I walked along the High Street, and some instinct prompting me to put my head in at the window of a cafe. I saw the wretched man standing at the bar drinking chocolate and making love to the girl. Catching sight of me, he pointed to the girl and said —

"She's charming," and then invited me to take a cup of chocolate, saying that I must pay, as he hadn't a penny. I kept back my wrath and answered, "I don't want any, and do you make haste!" and caught hold of his arm in such sort that he turned white with pain. I paid the money and we went out. I trembled with anger. We got into our coach, but we had scarcely gone ten paces before I recognised: an inhabitant, of Mestre named Balbi Tommasi, a good sort of man; but reported to be one of the familiars of the Holy Office. He knew me, too, and coming up called out,

"I am delighted to see you here. I suppose you have just escaped. How did you do it?"

"I have not escaped, but have been set at liberty."

"No, no, that's not possible, as I was at M. Grimani's yesterday evening, and I should have heard of it."

It will be easier for the reader to imagine my state of mind than for me to describe it. I was discovered by a man whom I believed to be a hired agent of the Government, who only had to give a glance to one of the sbirri with whom Mestre swarmed to have me arrested. I told him to speak softly, and getting down I asked him to come to one side. I took him behind a house, and seeing that there was nobody in sight, a ditch in front, beyond which the open country extended, I grasped my pike and took him by the neck. At this: he gave a struggle, slipped out of my hands, leapt over the ditch, and without turning round set off to run at, full speed. As soon as he was some way off he slackened his course, turned round and kissed his hand to me, in token of wishing me a prosperous journey. And as soon; as he was out of my sight I gave thanks to God that, this man by his quickness had preserved me from the commission of a crime, for I would have killed him; and he, as it turned out, bore me no ill will.

I was in a terrible position. In open war with all the powers of-the Republic, everything had to give way to my safety, which made me neglect no means of attaining my ends.

With the gloom of a man who has passed through a great peril, I gave a glance of contempt towards the monk, who now saw to what danger he had exposed us, and then got up again into the carriage. We reached Trevisa without further adventure, and I told the posting-master to get me a carriage and two horses ready by ten o'clock; though I had no intention of continuing my journey along the highway, both because. I lacked means;

and because I feared pursuit. The inn-keeper asked me, if I would take any breakfast, of which I stood in great need, for I was dying with hunger, but I did not dare to, accept his offer, as a quarter of an hour's delay might, prove fatal. I was afraid of being retaken, and of being ashamed of it for the rest of my life; for a man of sense ought to be able to snap his fingers at four hundred thousand men in the open country, and if he cannot escape capture he must be a fool.

I went out by St. Thomas's Gate as if I was going for a short walk, and after walking for a mile on the highway I struck into the fields, resolving not to leave them as long as I should be within the borders of the Republic. The shortest way was by Bassano, but I took the longer path, thinking I might possibly be expected on the more direct road, while they would never think of my leaving the Venetian territory by way of Feltre, which is the longest way of getting into the state subject to the Bishop of Trent.

After walking for three hours I let myself drop to the ground, for I could not move a step further. I must either take some food or die there, so I told the monk to leave the cloak with me and go to a farm I saw, there to buy something to eat. I gave him the money, and he set off, telling me that he thought I had more courage. The miserable man did not know what courage was, but he was more robust than myself, and he had, doubtless, taken in provisions before leaving the prison. Besides he had had some chocolate; he was thin and wiry, and a monk, and mental anxieties were unknown to him.

Although the house was not an inn, the good farmer's wife sent me a sufficient meal which only cost me thirty Venetian sous. After satisfying my appetite, feeling that sleep was creeping on me, I set out again on the tramp, well braced up. In four hours' time I stopped at a hamlet, and found that I was twenty-four miles from Trevisa. I was done up, my ankles were swollen, and my shoes were in holes. There was only another hour of daylight before us. Stretching myself out beneath a grove of trees I made Father Balbi sit by me, and discoursed to him in the manner following:

"We must make for Borgo di Valsugano, it is the first town beyond the borders of the Republic. We shall be as safe there as if we were in London, and we can take our ease for awhile; but to get there we must go carefully to work, and the first thing we must do is to separate. You must go by Mantello Woods, and I by the mountains; you by the easiest and shortest way, and I by the longest and most difficult; you with money and I without a penny. I will make you a present of my cloak, which you must exchange for a great coat and a hat, and everybody will take you for a countryman, as you are luckily rather like one in the face. Take these seventeen livres, which is all that remains to me of the two sequins Count Asquin gave me. You will reach Borgo by the day after to-morrow, and I shall be twenty-four hours later. Wait for me in the first inn on the left-hand side of the street, and be sure I shall come in due season. I require a good night's rest in a good bed; and Providence will get me one somewhere, but I must sleep without fear of being disturbed, and in your company that would be out of the question. I am certain that we are being sought for on all sides, and that our descriptions have been so correctly given that if we went into any inn together we should be certain to be arrested. You see the state I am in, and my urgent necessity for a ten hours' rest. Farewell, then, do you go that way and I will take this, and I will find somewhere near here a rest for the sole of my foot."

"I have been expecting you to say as much," said Father Balbi, "and for answer I will remind you of the promise you gave me when I let myself be persuaded to break into your cell. You promised me that we should always keep company; and so don't flatter yourself that I shall leave you, your fate and mine are linked together. We shall be able to get a good refuge for our money, we won't go to the inns, and no one will arrest us."

"You are determined, are you, not to follow the good advice I have given you?"

"I am."

"We shall see about that."

I rose to my feet, though with some difficulty, and taking the measure of his height I marked it out upon the ground, then drawing my pike from my pocket, I proceeded with the utmost coolness to excavate the earth, taking no notice of the questions the monk asked me. After working: for a quarter of an hour I set myself to gaze sadly upon him, and I told him that I felt obliged as a Christian to warn him to commend his soul to God, "since I am about to bury you here, alive or dead; and if you prove the stronger, you will bury me. You can escape if you wish to, as I shall not pursue you."

He made no reply, and I betook myself to my work again, but I confess that I began to be afraid of being rushed to extremities by this brute, of whom I was determined to rid myself.

At last, whether convinced by my arguments or afraid Of my pike, he came towards me. Not guessing. What he was about, I presented the point of my pike towards him, but I had nothing to fear.

“I will do what you want,” said he.

I straightway gave him all the money I had, and promising to rejoin him at Borgo I bade him farewell. Although I had not a penny in my pocket and had two rivers to cross over, I congratulated myself on having got rid of a man of his character, for by myself I felt confident of being able to cross the bounds of the Republic.

CHAPTER XXXI

I Find a Lodging in the House of the Chief of the Sbirri — I

Pass a Good Night There and Recover My Strength — I Go to

Mass — A Disagreeable Meeting I Am Obliged to Take Six

Sequins by Force — Out of Danger — Arrived at Munich — Balbi I

Set Out for Paris — My Arrival — Attempt on the Life of Louis

XV

As soon as I saw Father Balbi far enough off I got up, and seeing at a little distance a shepherd keeping his flock on the hill-side, I made my way-towards him to obtain such information as I needed. “What is the name of this village, my friend?” said I.

“Valde Piadene, signor,” he answered, to my surprise, for I found I was much farther on my way that I thought. I next asked him the owners of five or six houses which I saw scattered around, and the persons he mentioned chanced to be all known to me, but were not the kind of men I should have cared to trouble with my presence. On my asking him the name of a palace before me, he said it belonged to the Grimanis, the chief of whom was a State Inquisitor, and then resident at the palace, so I had to take care not to let him see me. Finally, an my enquiring the owner of a red house in the distance, he told me, much to my surprise, that it belonged to the chief of the sbirri. Bidding farewell to the kindly shepherd I began to go down the hill mechanically, and I am still puzzled to know what instinct directed my steps towards that house, which common sense and fear also should have made me shun. I steered my course for it in a straight line, and I can say with truth that I did so quite unwittingly. If it be true that we have all of us an invisible intelligence — a beneficent genius who guides our steps aright — as was the case with Socrates, to that alone I should attribute the irresistible attraction which drew me towards the house where I had most to dread. However that may be, it was the boldest stroke I have played in my whole life.

I entered with an easy and unconstrained air, and asked a child who was playing at top in the court-yard where his father was. Instead of replying, the child went to call his mother, and directly afterwards appeared a pretty woman in the family way, who politely asked me my business with her husband, apologizing for his absence.

“I am sorry,” I said, “to hear that my gossip is not in, though at the same time I am delighted to make the acquaintance of his charming wife.”

“Your gossip? You will be M. Vetturi, then? My husband told me that you had kindly promised to be the god-father of our next child. I am delighted to know you, but my husband will be very vexed to have been away:

“I hope he will soon return, as I wanted to ask him for a night’s lodging. I dare not go anywhere in the state you see me.”

“You shall have the best bed in the house, and I will get you a good supper. My husband when he comes back will thank your excellence for doing us so much honour. He went away with all his people an hour ago, and I don’t expect him back for three or four days.”

“Why is he away for such a long time, my dear madam?”

“You have not heard, then, that two prisoners have escaped from The Leads? One is a noble and the other a private individual named Casanova. My husband has received a letter from Messer-Grande ordering him to make a search for them; if he find them he will take them back to Venice, and if not he will return here, but he will be on the look-out for three days at least.”

“I am sorry for this accident, my dear madam, but I should not like to put you out, and indeed I should be glad to lie down immediately.”

“You shall do so, and my mother shall attend to your wants. But what is the matter with your knees?”

“I fell down whilst hunting on the mountains, and gave myself some severe wounds, and am much weakened by loss of blood.”

“Oh! my poor gentleman, my poor gentleman! But my mother will cure you.”

She called her mother, and having told her of my necessities she went out. This pretty sbirress had not the wit of her profession, for the story I had told her sounded like a fairy-tale. On horseback with white silk stockings! Hunting in sarcenet, without cloak and without a man! Her husband would make fine game of her when he came back; but God bless her for her kind heart and benevolent stupidity. Her mother tended me with all the politeness I should have met with in the best families. The worthy woman treated me like a mother, and called me “son” as she attended to my wounds. The name sounded pleasantly in my ears, and did no little towards my cure by the sentiments it awoke in my breast. If I had been less taken up with the position I was in I should have repaid her care with some evident marks of the gratitude I felt, but the place I was in and the part I was playing made the situation too serious a one for me to think of anything else.

This kindly woman, after looking at my knees and my thighs, told me that I must make my mind to suffer a little pain, but I might be sure of being cured by the morning. All I had to do was to bear the application of medicated linen to my wounds, and not to stir till the next day. I promised to bear the pain patiently, and to do exactly as she told me.

I was given an excellent supper, and I ate and drank with good appetite. I then gave myself up to treatment, and fell asleep whilst my nurse was attending to me. I suppose she undressed me as she would a child, but I remembered nothing about it when I woke up — I was, in fact, totally unconscious. Though I had made a good supper I had only done so to satisfy my craving for food and to regain my strength, and sleep came to me with an irresistible force, as my physical exhaustion did not leave me the power of arguing myself out of it. I took my supper at six o’clock in the evening, and I heard six striking as I awoke. I seemed to have been enchanted. Rousing myself up and gathering my wits together, I first took off the linen bandages, and I was astonished to find my wounds healed and quite free from pain. I did my hair, dressed myself in less than five minutes, and finding the door of my room open I went downstairs, crossed the court, and left the house behind me, without appearing to notice two individuals who were standing outside, and must have been sbirri. I made haste to lengthen the distance between me and the place where I had found the kindliest hospitality, the utmost politeness, the most tender care, and best of all, new health and strength, and as I walked I could not help feeling terrified at the danger I had been in. I shuddered involuntarily; and at the present moment, after so many years, I still shudder when I think of the peril to which I had so heedlessly exposed myself. I wondered how I managed to go in, and still more how I came out; it seemed absurd that I should not be followed. For five hours I tramped on, keeping to the woods and mountains, not meeting a soul besides a few countryfolk, and turning neither to the right nor left.

It was not yet noon, when, as I went along my way, I stopped short at the sound of a bell. I was on high ground, and looking in the direction from which the sound came I saw, a little church in the valley, and many, people going towards it to hear mass. My heart desired to express thankfulness for the protection of Providence, and, though all nature was a temple worthy of its Creator, custom drew me to the church. When men are in trouble, every passing thought seems an inspiration. It was All Souls' Day. I went down the hill, and came into the church, and saw, to my astonishment, M. Marc Antoine Grimani, the nephew of the State Inquisitor, with Madame Marie Visani, his wife. I made my bow; which was returned, and after I had heard mass I left the church. M. Grimani followed me by himself, and when he had got near me, called me by name, saying, "What are you doing here, Casanova, and what has become of your friend?"

"I have given him what little money I had for him to escape by another road, whilst I, without a penny in my pocket, am endeavouring to reach a place of safety by this way. If your excellence would kindly give me some help, it would speed my journey for me."

"I can't give you anything, but you will find recluses on your way who won't let you die of hunger. But tell me how you contrived to pierce the roof of The Leads."

"The story is an interesting one, but it would take up too much time, and in the meanwhile the recluses might eat up the food which is to keep me from dying of hunger."

With this sarcasm I made him a profound bow, and went upon my way. In spite of my great want, his refusal pleased me, as it made me think myself a better gentleman than the "excellence" who had referred me to the charity of recluses. I heard at Paris afterwards that when his wife heard of it she reproached him for his hard-hearted behaviour. There can be no doubt that kindly and generous feelings are more often to be found in the hearts of women than of men.

I continued my journey till sunset. Weary and faint with hunger I stopped at a good-looking house, which stood by itself. I asked to speak to the master, and the porter told me that he was not in as he had gone to a wedding on the other side of the river, and would be away for two days, but that he had bidden him to welcome all his friends while he was away. Providence! luck! chance! whichever you like.

I went in and was treated to a good supper and a good bed. I found by the addresses of some letters which were lying about that I was being entertained in the house of M. Rombenchi — a consul, of what nation I know not. I wrote a letter to him and sealed it to await his return. After making an excellent supper and having had a good sleep, I rose, and dressing myself carefully set out again without being able to leave the porter any mark of my gratitude, and shortly afterwards crossed the river, promising to pay when I came back. After walking for five hours I dined in a monastery of Capuchins, who are very useful to people in my position. I then set out again, feeling fresh and strong, and walked along at a good pace till three o'clock. I halted at a house which I found from a countryman belonged to a friend of mine. I walked in, asked if the master was at home, and was shewn into a room where he was writing by himself. I stepped forward to greet him, but as soon as he saw me he seemed horrified and bid me be gone forthwith, giving me idle and insulting reasons for his behaviour. I explained to him how I was situated, and asked him to let me have sixty sequins on my note of hand, drawn on M. de Bragadin. He replied that he could not so much as give me a glass of water, since he dreaded the wrath of the Tribunal for my very presence in his house. He was a stockbroker, about sixty years old, and was under great obligations to me. His inhuman refusal produced quite a different effect on me than that of M. Grimani. Whether from rage, indignation, or nature, I took him by the collar, I shewed him my pike, and raising my voice threatened to kill him. Trembling all over, he took a key from his pocket and shewing me a bureau told me he kept money there, and I had only to open it and take what I wanted; I told him to open it himself. He did so, and on his opening a drawer containing gold, I told him to count me out six sequins.

“You asked me for sixty.”

“Yes, that was when I was asking a loan of you as a friend; but since I owe the money to force, I require six only, and I will give you no note of hand. You shall be repaid at Venice, where I shall write of the pass to which you forced me, you cowardly wretch!”

“I beg your pardon! take the sixty sequins, I entreat you.”

“No, no more. I am going on my way, and I advise you not to hinder me, lest in my despair I come back and burn your house about your ears.”

I went out and walked for two hours, until the approach of night and weariness made me stop short at the house of a farmer, where I had a bad supper and a bed of straw. In the morning, I bought an old overcoat, and hired an ass to journey on, and near Feltre I bought a pair of boots. In this guise I passed the hut called the Scala. There was a guard there who, much to my delight, as the reader will guess, did not even honour me by asking my name. I then took a two-horse carriage and got to Borgo de Valsugano in good time, and found Father Balbi at the inn I had told him of. If he had not greeted me first I should not have known him. A great overcoat, a low hat over a thick cotton cap, disguised him to admiration. He told me that a farmer had given him these articles in exchange for my cloak, that he had arrived without difficulty, and was faring well. He was kind enough to tell me that he did not expect to see me, as he did not believe my promise to rejoin him was made in good faith. Possibly I should have been wise not to undeceive him on this account.

I passed the following day in the inn, where, without getting out of my bed, I wrote more than twenty letters to Venice, in many of which I explained what I had been obliged to do to get the six sequins.

The monk wrote impudent letters to his superior, Father Barbarigo, and to his brother nobles, and love-letters to the servant girls who had been his ruin. I took the lace off my dress, and sold my hat, and thus got rid of a gay appearance unsuitable to my position, as it made me too much an object of notice.

The next day I went to Pergina and lay there, and was visited by a young Count d'Alberg, who had discovered, in some way or another, that we had escaped from the state-prisons of Venice. From Pergina I went to Trent and from there to Bolzan, where, needing money for my dress, linen, and the continuation of my journey, I introduced myself to an old banker named Mensch, who gave me a man to send to Venice with a letter to M. de Bragadin. In the mean time the old banker put me in a good inn where I spent the six days the messenger was away in bed. He brought me the sum of a hundred sequins, and my first care was to clothe my companion, and afterwards myself. Every day I found the society of the wretched Balbi more intolerable. "Without me you would never have escaped" was continually in his mouth, and he kept reminding me that I had promised him half of whatever money I got. He made love to all the servant girls, and as he had neither the figure nor the manners to please them, his attentions were returned with good hearty slaps, which he bore patiently, but was as outrageous as ever in the course of twenty-four hours. I was amused, but at the same time vexed to be coupled to a man of so low a nature.

We travelled post, and in three days we got to Munich, where I went to lodge at the sign of the "Stag." There I found two young Venetians of the Cantarini family, who had been there some time in company with Count Pompei, a Veronese; but not knowing them, and having no longer any need of depending on recluses for my daily bread, I did not care to pay my respects to them. It was otherwise with Countess Coronini, whom I knew at St. Justine's Convent at Venice, and who stood very well with the Bavarian Court.

This illustrious lady, then seventy years old, gave me a good reception and promised to speak on my behalf to the Elector, with a view to his granting me an asylum in his country. The next day, having fulfilled her promise, she told me that his highness had nothing to say against me, but as for Balbi there was no safety for him in Bavaria, for as a fugitive monk he might be claimed by the monks at Munich, and his highness had no wish to meddle with the monks. The countess advised me therefore to get him out of the town as soon as possible, for him to fly to some other quarter, and thus to avoid the bad turn which his beloved brethren the monks were certain to do him.

Feeling in duty bound to look after the interests of the wretched fellow, I went to the Elector's confessor to ask him to give Balbi letters of introduction to some town in Swabia. The confessor, a Jesuit, did not give the lie to the fine reputation of his brethren of the order; his reception of me was as discourteous as it well could be. He told me in a careless way that at Munich I was well known. I asked him without flinching if I was to take this as a piece of good or bad news; but he made no answer, and left me standing. Another priest told me that he had gone out to verify the truth of a miracle of which the whole town was talking.

"What miracle is that, reverend father?" I said.

"The empress, the widow of Charles VII, whose body is still exposed to the public gaze, has warm feet, although she is dead."

"Perhaps something keeps them warm."

"You can assure yourself personally of the truth of this wonderful circumstance."

To neglect such an opportunity would have been to lose the chance of mirth or edification, and I was as desirous of the one as of the other. Wishing to be able to boast that I had seen a miracle — and one, moreover, of a peculiar interest for myself, who have always had the misfortune to suffer from cold feet — I went to see the mighty dead. It was quite true that her feet were warm, but the matter was capable of a simple explanation, as the feet of her defunct majesty were turned towards a burning lamp at a little distance off. A dancer of my acquaintance, whom curiosity had brought there with the rest, came up to me, complimented me upon my fortunate escape, and told me everybody was talking about it. His news pleased me, as it is always a good thing to interest the public. This son of Terpsichore asked me to dinner, and I was glad to accept his invitation. His name was Michel de l'Agata, and his wife was the pretty Gandela, whom I had known sixteen years ago at the old Malipiero's. The Gandela was enchanted to see me, and to hear from my own lips the story of my wondrous escape. She interested herself on behalf of the monk, and offered me to give him a letter of introduction for Augsburg Canon Bassi, of Bologna, who was Dean of St. Maurice's Chapter, and a friend of hers. I took advantage of the offer, and she forthwith wrote me the letter, telling me that I need not trouble myself any more about the monk, as she was sure that the dean would take care of him, and even make it all right at Venice.

Delighted at getting rid of him in so honourable a manner, I ran to the inn, told him what I had done, gave him the letter, and promised not to abandon him in the case of the dean's not giving him a warm welcome. I got him a good carriage, and started him off the next day at daybreak. Four days after, Balbi wrote that the dean had received him with great kindness, that he had given him a room in the deanery, that he had dressed him as an abbe, that he had introduced him to the Prince-Bishop of Armstadt, and that he had received assurances of his safety from the civil magistrates. Furthermore, the dean had promised to keep him till he obtained his secularization from Rome, and with it freedom to return to Venice, for as soon as he ceased to be a monk the Tribunal would have no lien upon him. Father Balbi finished by asking me to send him a few sequins for pocket-money, as he was too much of a gentleman to ask the dean who, quoth the ungrateful fellow, "is not gentleman enough to offer to give me anything." I gave him no answer.

As I was now alone in peace and quietness, I thought seriously of regaining my health, for my sufferings had given me nervous spasms which might become dangerous. I put myself on diet, and in three weeks I was perfectly well. In the meanwhile Madame Riviere came from Dresden with her son and two daughters. She was going to Paris to marry the elder. The son had been diligent, and would have passed for a young man of culture. The elder daughter, who was going to marry an actor, was extremely beautiful, an accomplished dancer, and played on the clavichord like a professional, and was altogether most charming and graceful. This pleasant family was delighted to see me again, and I thought myself fortunate when Madame Riviere, anticipating my wishes, intimated to me that my company as far as Paris would give them great pleasure. I had nothing to say respecting the expenses of the journey. I had to accept their offer in its entirety. My design was to settle in Paris, and I took this stroke of fortune as an omen of success in the only town where the blind goddess freely dispenses her favours to those who leave themselves to be guided by her, and know how to take advantage of her gifts. And, as the reader will see by and by, I was not mistaken; but all the gifts of fortune were of no avail, since I abused them all by my folly. Fifteen months under the Leads should have made me aware of my weak points, but in point of fact I needed a little longer stay to learn how to cure myself of my failings.

Madame Riviere wished to take me with her, but she could not put off her departure, and I required a week's delay to get money and letters from Venice. She promised to wait a week in Strassburg, and we agreed that if possible I would join her there. She left Munich on the 18th of December.

Two days afterwards I got from Venice the bill of exchange for which I was waiting. I made haste to pay my debts, and immediately afterwards I started for Augsburg, not so much for the sake of seeing Father Balbi, as because I wanted to make the acquaintance of the kindly dean who had rid me of him. I reached Augsburg in seven hours after leaving Munich, and I went immediately to the house of the good ecclesiastic. He was not in, but I found Balbi in an abbe's dress, with his hair covered with white powder, which set off in a new but not a pleasing manner the beauties of his complexion of about the same colour as a horse chestnut. Balbi was under forty, but he was decidedly ugly, having one of those faces in which baseness, cowardice, impudence, and malice are plainly expressed, joining to this advantage a tone of voice and manners admirably calculated to repulse anyone inclined to do him a service. I found him comfortably housed, well looked after, and well clad; he had books and all the requisites for writing. I complimented him upon his situation, calling him a fortunate fellow, and applying the same epithet to myself for having gained him all the advantages he enjoyed, and the hope of one day becoming a secular priest. But the ungrateful hound, instead of thanking me, reproached me for having craftily rid myself of him, and added that, as I was going to Paris, I might as well take him with me, as the dullness of Augsburg was almost killing him.

"What do you want at Paris?"

"What do you want yourself?"

"To put my talents to account."

"So do I."

"Well, then, you don't require me, and can fly on your own wings. The people who are taking me to Paris would probably not care for me if I had you for a companion."

"You promised not to abandon me."

"Can a man who leaves another well provided for and an assured future be said to abandon him?"

"Well provided! I have not got a penny."

"What do you want with money? You have a good table, a good lodging, clothes, linen, attendance, and so forth. And if you want pocket-money, why don't you ask your brethren the monks?"

"Ask monks for money? They take it, but they don't give it."

"Ask your friends, then."

"I have no friends."

"You are to be pitied, but the reason probably is that you have never been a friend to anyone. You ought to say masses, that is a good way of getting money."

"I am unknown."

"You must wait, then, till you are known, and then you can make up for lost time."

"Your suggestions are idle; you will surely give me a few sequins."

"I can't spare any."

"Wait for the dean. He will be back to-morrow. You can talk to him and persuade him to lend me some money. You can tell him that I will pay it back."

"I cannot wait, for I am setting out on my journey directly, and were he here this moment I should not have the face to tell him to lend you money after all his generous treatment of you, and when he or anyone can see that you have all you need."

After this sharp dialogue I left him, and travelling post I set out, displeased with myself for having given such advantages to a man wholly unworthy of them. In the March following I had a letter from the good Dean Bassi, in which he told me how Balbi had run away, taking with him one of his servant girls, a sum of money, a gold watch, and a dozen silver spoons and forks. He did not know where he was gone.

Towards the end of the same year I learnt at Paris that the wretched man had taken refuge at Coire, the capital of the Grisons, where he asked to be made a member of the Calvinistic Church, and to be recognized as lawful husband of the woman with him; but in a short time the community discovered that the new convert was no good, and expelled him from the bosom of the Church of Calvin. Our ne’er-do-well having no more money, his wife left him, and he, not knowing what to do next, took the desperate step of going to Bressa, a town within the Venetian territory, where he sought the governor, telling him his name, the story of his flight, and his repentance, begging the governor to take him under his protection and to obtain his pardon.

The first effect of the podesta’s protection was that the penitent was imprisoned, and he then wrote to the Tribunal to know what to do with him. The Tribunal told him to send Father Balbi in chains to Venice, and on his arrival Messer-Grande gave him over to the Tribunal, which put him once more under the Leads. He did not find Count Asquin there, as the Tribunal, out of consideration for his great age, had moved him to The Fours a couple of months after our escape.

Five or six years later, I heard that the Tribunal, after keeping the unlucky monk for two years under the Leads, had sent him to his convent. There, his superior fearing lest his flock should take contagion from this scabby sheep, sent him to their original monastery near Feltre, a lonely building on a height. However, Balbi did not stop there six months. Having got the key of the fields, he went to Rome, and threw himself at the feet of Pope Rezzonico, who absolved him of his sins, and released him from his monastic vows. Balbi, now a secular priest, returned to Venice, where he lived a dissolute and wretched life. In 1783 he died the death of Diogenes, minus the wit of the cynic.

At Strassburg I rejoined Madame Riviere and her delightful family, from whom I received a sincere and hearty welcome. We were staying at the “Hotel de l’Esprit,” and we passed a few days there most pleasurably, afterwards setting out in an excellent travelling carriage for Paris the Only, Paris the Universal. During the journey I thought myself bound to the expense of making it a pleasant one, as I had not to put my hand in my pocket for other expenses. The charms of Mdlle. Riviere enchanted me, but I should have esteemed myself wanting in gratitude and respect to this worthy family if I had darted at her a single amorous glance, or if I had let her suspect my feelings for her by a single word. In fact I thought myself obliged to play the heavy father, though my age did not fit me for the part, and I lavished on this agreeable family all the care which can be given in return for pleasant society, a seat in a comfortable travelling carriage, an excellent table, and a good bed.

We reached Paris on the 5th of January, 1757, and I went to the house of my friend Baletti, who received me with open arms, and assured me that though I had not written he had been expecting me, since he judged that I would strive to put the greatest possible distance between myself and Venice, and he could think of no other retreat for me than Paris. The whole house kept holiday when my arrival became known, and I have never met with more sincere regard than in that delightful family. I greeted with enthusiasm the father and mother, whom I found exactly the same as when I had seen them last in 1752, but I was struck with astonishment at the daughter whom I had left a child, for she was now a tall and well-shaped girl. Mdlle. Baletti was fifteen years old, and her mother had brought her up with care, had given her the best masters, virtue, grace, talents, a good manner, tact, a knowledge of society-in short, all that a clever mother can give to a dear daughter.

After finding a pleasant lodging near the Baletti's, I took a coach and went to the "Hotel de Bourbon" with the intention of calling on M. de Bernis, who was then chief secretary for foreign affairs. I had good reasons for relying on his assistance. He was out; he had gone to Versailles. At Paris one must go sharply to work, and, as it is vulgarly but forcibly said, "strike while the iron's hot." As I was impatient to see what kind of a reception I should get from the liberal-minded lover of my fair M —— M —— , I went to the Pont-Royal, took a hackney coach, and went to Versailles. Again bad luck!

Our coaches crossed each other on the way, and my humble equipage had not caught his excellency's eye. M. de Bernis had returned to Paris with Count de Castillana, the ambassador from Naples, and I determined to return also; but when I got to the gate I saw a mob of people running here and there in the greatest confusion, and from all sides I heard the cry, "The king is assassinated! The king is assassinated!"

My frightened coachman only thought of getting on his way, but the coach was stopped. I was made to get out and taken to the guard-room, where there were several people already, and in less than three minutes there were twenty of us, all under arrest, all astonished at the situation, and all as much guilty as I was. We sat glum and silent, looking at each other without daring to speak. I knew not what to think, and not believing in enchantment I began to think I must be dreaming. Every face expressed surprise, as everyone, though innocent, was more or less afraid.

We were not left in this disagreeable position for long, as in five minutes an officer came in, and after some polite apologies told us we were free.

“The king is wounded,” he said, “and he has been taken to his room. The assassin, whom nobody knows, is under arrest. M. de la Martiniere is being looked for everywhere.”

As soon as I had got back to my coach, and was thinking myself lucky for being there, a gentlemanly-looking young man came up to me and besought me to give him a seat in my coach, and he would gladly pay half the fare; but in spite of the laws of politeness I refused his request. I may possibly have been wrong. On any other occasion I should have been most happy to give him a place, but there are times when prudence does not allow one to be polite. I was about three hours on the way, and in this short time I was overtaken every minute by at least two hundred couriers riding at a breakneck pace. Every minute brought a new courier, and every courier shouted his news to the winds. The first told me what I already knew; then I heard that the king had been bled, that the wound was not mortal, and finally, that the wound was trifling, and that his majesty could go to the Trianon if he liked.

Fortified with this good news, I went to Silvia’s and found the family at table. I told them I had just come from Versailles.

“The king has been assassinated.”

“Not at all; he is able to go to the Trianon, or the Parc-aux-cerfs, if he likes. M. de la Martiniere has bled him, and found him to be in no danger. The assassin has been arrested, and the wretched man will be burnt, drawn with red-hot pincers, and quartered.”

This news was soon spread abroad by Silvia's servants, and a crowd of the neighbours came to hear what I had to say, and I had to repeat the same thing ten times over. At this period the Parisians fancied that they loved the king. They certainly acted the part of loyal subjects to admiration. At the present day they are more enlightened, and would only love the sovereign whose sole desire is the happiness of his people, and such a king — the first citizens of a great nation — not Paris and its suburbs, but all France, will be eager to love and obey. As for kings like Louis XV., they have become totally impracticable; but if there are any such, however much they may be supported by interested parties, in the eyes of public opinion they will be dishonoured and disgraced before their bodies are in a grave and their names are written in the book of history.

CHAPTER XXXII

The Minister of Foreign Affairs M. de Boulogne, the

Comptroller — M. le Duc de Choiseul — M. Paris du Vernai —

Establishment of the Lottery — My Brother's Arrival at Paris;

His Reception by the Academy

Once more, then, I was in Paris, which I ought to regard as my fatherland, since I could return no more to that land which gave me birth: an unworthy country, yet, in spite of all, ever dear to me, possibly on account of early impressions and early prejudices, or possibly because the beauties of Venice are really unmatched in the world. But mighty Paris is a place of good luck or ill, as one takes it, and it was my part to catch the favouring gale.

Paris was not wholly new to me, as my readers know I had spent two years there, but I must confess that, having then no other aim than to pass the time pleasantly, I had merely devoted myself to pleasure and enjoyment. Fortune, to whom I had paid no court, had not opened to me her golden doors; but I now felt that I must treat her more reverently, and attach myself to the throng of her favoured sons whom she loads with her gifts. I understood now that the nearer one draws to the sun the more one feels the warmth of its rays. I saw that to attain my end I should have to employ all my mental and physical talents, that I must make friends of the great, and take cue from all whom I found it to be my interest to please. To follow the plans suggested by these thoughts, I saw that I must avoid what is called bad company, that I must give up my old habits and pretensions, which would be sure to make me enemies, who would have no scruple in representing me as a trifler, and not fit to be trusted with affairs of any importance.

I think I thought wisely, and the reader, I hope, will be of the same opinion. "I will be reserved," said I, "in what I say and what I do, and thus I shall get a reputation for discretion which will bring its reward."

I was in no anxiety on the score of present needs, as I could reckon on a monthly allowance of a hundred crowns, which my adopted father, the good and generous M. de Bragadin, sent me, and I found this sum sufficient in the meanwhile, for with a little self-restraint one can live cheaply at Paris, and cut a good figure at the same time. I was obliged to wear a good suit of clothes, and to have a decent lodging; for in all large towns the most important thing is outward show, by which at the beginning one is always judged. My anxiety was only for the pressing needs of the moment, for to speak the truth I had neither clothes nor linen — in a word, nothing.

If my relations with the French ambassador are recalled, it will be found natural that my first idea was to address myself to him, as I knew him sufficiently well to reckon on his serving me.

Being perfectly certain that the porter would tell me that my lord was engaged, I took care to have a letter, and in the morning I went to the Palais Bourbon. The porter took my letter, and I gave him my address and returned home.

Wherever I went I had to tell the story of my escape from The Leads. This became a service almost as tiring as the flight itself had been, as it took me two hours to tell my tale, without the slightest bit of fancy-work; but I had to be polite to the curious enquirers, and to pretend that I believed them moved by the most affectionate interest in my welfare. In general, the best way to please is to take the benevolence of all with whom one has relation for granted.

I supped at Silvia’s, and as the evening was quieter than the night before, I had time to congratulate myself on all the friendship they shewed me. The girl was, as I had said, fifteen years old, and I was in every way charmed with her. I complimented the mother on the good results of her education, and I did not even think of guarding myself from falling a victim to her charms. I had taken so lately such well-founded and philosophical resolutions, and I was not yet sufficiently at my ease to value the pain of being tempted. I left at an early hour, impatient to see what kind of an answer the minister had sent me. I had not long to wait, and I received a short letter appointing a meeting for two o’clock in the afternoon. It may be guessed that I was punctual, and my reception by his excellence was most flattering. M. de Bernis expressed his pleasure at seeing me after my fortunate escape, and at being able to be of service to me. He told me that M —— M —— had informed him of my escape, and he had flattered himself that the first person I should go and see in Paris would be himself. He shewed me the letters from M —— M —— relating to my arrest and escape, but all the details in the latter were purely imaginary and had no foundation in fact. M —— M —— was not to blame, as she could only write what she had heard, and it was not easy for anyone besides myself to know the real circumstances of my escape. The charming nun said that, no longer buoyed up by the hope of seeing either of the men who alone had made her in love with life, her existence had become a burden to her, and she was unfortunate in not being able to take any comfort in religion. "C — C —— often comes to see me," she said, "but I grieve to say she is not happy with her husband."

I told M. de Bernis that the account of my flight from The Leads, as told by our friend, was wholly inaccurate, and I would therefore take the liberty of writing out the whole story with the minutest details. He challenged me to keep my word, assuring me that he would send a copy to M —— M —— , and at the same time, with the utmost courtesy, he put a packet of a hundred Louis in my hand, telling me that he would think what he could do for me, and would advise me as soon as he had any communication to make.

Thus furnished with ample funds, my first care was for my dress; and this done I went to work, and in a week sent my generous protector the result, giving him permission to have as many copies printed as he liked, and to make any use he pleased of it to interest in my behalf such persons as might be of service to me.

Three weeks after, the minister summoned me to say that he had spoken of me to M. Erizzo, the Venetian ambassador, who had nothing to say against me, but for fear of embroiling himself with the State Inquisitors declined to receive me. Not wanting anything from him — his refusal did me no harm. M. de Bernis then told me that he had given a copy of my history to Madame la Marquise de Pompadour, and he promised to take the first opportunity of presenting me to this all-powerful lady. "You can present yourself, my dear Casanova," added his excellence, "to the Duc de Choiseul, and M. de Boulogne, the comptroller. You will be well received, and with a little wit you ought to be able to make good use of the letter. He himself will give you the cue, and you will see that he who listens obtains.

Try to invent some useful plan for the royal exchequer; don’t let it be complicated or chimerical, and if you don’t write it out at too great length I will give you my opinion on it.”

I left the minister in a pleased and grateful mood, but extremely puzzled to find a way of increasing the royal revenue. I knew nothing of finance, and after racking my brains all that I could think of was new methods of taxation; but all my plans were either absurd or certain to be unpopular, and I rejected them all on consideration.

As soon as I found out that M. de Choiseul was in Paris I called on him. He received me in his dressing-room, where he was writing while his valet did his hair. He stretched his politeness so far as to interrupt himself several times to ask me questions, but as soon as I began to reply his grace began to write again, and I suspect did not hear what I was saying; and though now and again he seemed to be looking at me, it was plain that his eyes and his thoughts were occupied on different objects. In spite of this way of receiving visitors — or me, at all events, M. de Choiseul was a man of wit.

When he had finished writing he said in Italian that M. de Bernis had told him of some circumstances of my escape, and he added,

“Tell me how you succeeded.”

“My lord, it would be too long a story; it would take me at least two hours, and your grace seems busy.”

“Tell me briefly about it.”

“However much I speak to the point, I shall take two hours.”

“You can keep the details for another time.”

“The story is devoid of interest without the details”

“Well, well, you can tell me the whole story in brief, without losing much of the interest:”

“Very good; after that I can say no more. I must tell your lordship, then, that, the State Inquisitors shut me up under the Leads; that after fifteen months and five days of imprisonment I succeeded in piercing the roof; that after many difficulties I reached the chancery by a window, and broke open the door; afterwards I got to St. Mark’s Place, whence, taking a gondola which bore me to the mainland, I arrived at Paris, and have had the honour to pay my duty to your lordship."

"But…. what are The Leads?"

"My lord, I should take a quarter of an hour, at least, to explain."

"How did you pierce the roof?"

"I could not tell your lordship in less than half an hour:"

"Why were you shut up?"

"It would be a long tale, my lord."

"I think you are right. The interest of the story lies chiefly in the details."

"I took the liberty of saying as much to your grace."

"Well, I must go to Versailles, but I shall be delighted if you will come and see me sometimes. In the meanwhile, M. Casanova, think what I can do for you."

I had been almost offended at the way in which M. de Choiseul had received me, and I was inclined to resent it; but the end of our conversation, and above all the kindly tone of his last words, quieted me, and I left him, if not satisfied, at least without bitterness in my heart.

From him I went to M. de Boulogne's, and found him a man of quite a different stamp to the duke — in manners, dress, and appearance. He received me with great politeness, and began by complimenting me on the high place I enjoyed in the opinion of M. de Bernis, and on my skill in matters of finance.

I felt that no compliment had been so ill deserved, and I could hardly help bursting into laughter. My good angel, however, made me keep my countenance.

M. de Boulogne had an old man with him, every feature bore the imprint of genius, and who inspired me with respect.

"Give me your views;" said the comptroller, "either on paper or 'viva voce'. You will find me willing to learn and ready to grasp your ideas. Here is M. Paris du Vernai, who wants twenty millions for his military school; and he wishes to get this sum without a charge on the state or emptying the treasury."

"It is God alone, sir, who has the creative power."

"I am not a god," said M. du Vernai, "but for all that I have now and then created but the times have changed."

"Everything," I said, "is more difficult than it used to be; but in spite of difficulties I have a plan which would give the king the interest of a hundred millions."

"What expense would there be to the Crown?"

"Merely the cost of receiving."

"The nation, then, would furnish the sum in question?"

"Undoubtedly, but voluntarily."

"I know what you are thinking of."

"You astonish me, sir, as I have told nobody of my plan."

"If you have no other engagement, do me the honour of dining with me to-morrow, and I will tell you what your project is. It is a good one, but surrounded, I believe, with insuperable difficulties. Nevertheless, we will talk it over and see what can be done. Will you come?"

"I will do myself that honour."

"Very good, I will expect you at Plaisance."

After he had gone, M. de Boulogne praised his talents and honesty. He was the brother of M. de Montmartel, whom secret history makes the father of Madame de Pompadour, for he was the lover of Madame Poisson at the same time as M. le Normand.

I left the comptroller's and went to walk in the Tuileries, thinking over the strange stroke of luck which had happened to me. I had been told that twenty millions were wanted, and I had boasted of being able to get a hundred, without the slightest idea of how it was to be done; and on that a well-known man experienced in the public business had asked me to dinner to convince me that he knew what my scheme was. There was something odd and comic about the whole affair; but that corresponded very well with my modes of thought and action. “If he thinks he is going to pump me,” said I, “he will find himself mistaken. When he tells me what the plan is, it will rest with me to say he has guessed it or he is wrong as the inspiration of the moment suggests. If the question lies within my comprehension I may, perhaps, be able to suggest something new; and if I understand nothing I will wrap myself up in a mysterious silence, which sometimes produces a good effect. At all events, I will not repulse Fortune when she appears to be favourable to me.”

M. de Bernis had only told M. de Boulogne that I was a financier to get me a hearing, as otherwise he might have declined to see me. I was sorry not to be master, at least, of the jargon of the business, as in that way men have got out of a similar difficulty, and by knowing the technical terms, and nothing more, have made their mark. No matter, I was bound to the engagement. I must put a good face on a bad game, and if necessary pay with the currency of assurance. The next morning I took a carriage, and in a pensive mood I told the coachman to take me to M. du Vernai’s, at Plaisance — a place a little beyond Vincennes.

I was set down at the door of the famous man who, forty years ago, had rescued France on the brink of the precipice down which Law had almost precipitated her. I went in and saw a great fire burning on the hearth, which was surrounded by seven or eight persons, to whom I was introduced as a friend of the minister for foreign affairs and of the comptroller; afterwards he introduced these gentlemen to me, giving to each his proper title, and I noted that four of them were treasury officials. After making my bow to each, I gave myself over to the worship of Harpocrates, and without too great an air of listening was all ears and eyes.

The conversation at first was of no special interest as they were talking of the Seine being frozen over, the ice being a foot thick. Then came the recent death of M. de Fontenelle, then the case of Damien, who would confess nothing, and of the five millions his trial would cost the Crown. Then coming to war they praised M. de Soubise, who had been chosen by the king to command the army. Hence the transition was easy to the expenses of the war, and how they were to be defrayed.

I listened and was weary, for all they said was so full of technicalities that I could not follow the meaning; and if silence can ever be imposing, my determined silence of an hour and a half's duration ought to have made me seem a very important personage in the eyes of these gentlemen. At last, just as I was beginning to yawn, dinner was announced, and I was another hour and a half without opening my mouth, except to do honour to an excellent repast. Directly the dessert had been served, M. du Vernai asked me to follow him into a neighbouring apartment, and to leave the other guests at the table. I followed him, and we crossed a hall where we found a man of good aspect, about fifty years old, who followed us into a closet and was introduced to me by M. du Vernai under the name of Calsabigi. Directly after, two superintendents of the treasury came in, and M. du Vernai smilingly gave me a folio book, saying,

"That, I think, M. Casanova, is your plan."

I took the book and read, Lottery consisting of ninety tickets, to be drawn every month, only one in eighteen to be a winning number. I gave him back the book and said, with the utmost calmness,

"I confess, sir, that is exactly my idea."

"You have been anticipated, then; the project is by M. de Calsabigi here."

"I am delighted, not at being anticipated, but to find that we think alike; but may I ask you why you have not carried out the plan?"

"Several very plausible reasons have been given against it, which have had no decisive answers."

"I can only conceive one reason against it," said I, coolly; "perhaps the king would not allow his subjects to gamble."

"Never mind that, the king will let his subjects gamble as much as they like: the question is, will they gamble?"

"I wonder how anyone can have any doubt on that score, as the winners are certain of being paid."

"Let us grant, then, that they will gamble: how is the money to be found?"

"How is the money to be found? The simplest thing in the world. All you want is a decree in council authorizing you to draw on the treasury. All I want is for the nation to believe that the king can afford to pay a hundred millions."

“A hundred millions!”

“Yes, a hundred millions, sir. We must dazzle people.”

“But if France is to believe that the Crown can afford to pay a hundred millions, it must believe that the Crown can afford to lose a hundred millions, and who is going to believe that? Do you?”

“To be sure I do, for the Crown, before it could lose a hundred millions, would have received at least a hundred and fifty millions, and so there need be no anxiety on that score.”

“I am not the only person who has doubts on the subject. You must grant the possibility of the Crown losing an enormous sum at the first drawing?”

“Certainly, sir, but between possibility and reality is all the region of the infinite. Indeed, I may say that it would be a great piece of good fortune if the Crown were to lose largely on the first drawing.”

“A piece of bad fortune, you mean, surely?”

“A bad fortune to be desired. You know that all the insurance companies are rich. I will undertake to prove before all the mathematicians in Europe that the king is bound to gain one in five in this lottery. That is the secret. You will confess that the reason ought to yield to a mathematical proof?”

“Yes, of course; but how is it that the Castelletto cannot guarantee the Crown a certain gain?”

“Neither the Castelletto nor anybody in the world can guarantee absolutely that the king shall always win. What guarantees us against any suspicion of sharp practice is the drawing once a month, as then the public is sure that the holder of the lottery may lose.”

“Will you be good enough to express your sentiments on the subject before the council?”

“I will do so with much pleasure.”

“You will answer all objections?”

“I think I can promise as much.”

“Will you give me your plan?”

“Not before it is accepted, and I am guaranteed a reasonable profit.”

"But your plan may possibly be the same as the one before us."

"I think not. I see M. de Calsabigi for the first time, and as he has not shewn me his scheme, and I have not communicated mine to him, it is improbable, not to say impossible, that we should agree in all respects. Besides, in my plan I clearly shew how much profit the Crown ought to get per annum."

"It might, therefore, be formed by a company who would pay the Crown a fixed sum?"

"I think not."

"Why?"

"For this reason. The only thing which would make the lottery pay, would be an irresistible current of public opinion in its favour. I should not care to have anything to do with it in the service of a company, who, thinking to increase their profits, might extend their operations — a course which would entail certain loss."

"I don't see how."

"In a thousand ways which I will explain to you another time, and which I am sure you can guess for yourself. In short, if I am to have any voice in the matter, it must be a Government lottery or nothing."

"M. de Calsabigi thinks so, too."

"I am delighted to hear it, but not at all surprised; for, thinking on the same lines, we are bound to arrive at the same results."

"Have you anybody ready for the Castelletto?"

"I shall only want intelligent machines, of whom there are plenty in France."

I went out for a moment and found them in groups on my return, discussing my project with great earnestness.

M. Calsabigi after asking me a few questions took my hand, which he shook heartily, saying he should like to have some further conversation with me; and returning the friendly pressure, I told him that I should esteem it as an honour to be numbered amongst his friends. Thereupon I left my address with M. du Vernai and took my leave, satisfied, by my inspection of the faces before me, that they all had a high opinion of my talents.

Three days after, M. de Calsabigi called on me; and after receiving him in my best style I said that if I had not called on him it was only because I did not wish to be troublesome. He told me that my decisive way of speaking had made a great impression, and he was certain that if I cared to make interest with the comptroller we could set up the lottery and make a large profit.

“I think so, too,” said I, “but the financiers will make a much larger profit, and yet they do not seem anxious about it. They have not communicated with me, but it is their look-out, as I shall not make it my chief aim.”

“You will undoubtedly hear something about it today, for I know for a fact that M. de Boulogne has spoken of you to M. de Courteuil.”

“Very good, but I assure you I did not ask him to do so.”

After some further conversation he asked me, in the most friendly manner possible, to come and dine with him, and I accepted his invitation with a great pleasure; and just as we were starting I received a note from M. de Bernis, in which he said that if I could come to Versailles the next day he would present me to Madame de Pompadour, and that I should have an opportunity of seeing M. de Boulogne.

In high glee at this happy chance, less from vanity than policy I made M. de Calsabigi read the letter, and I was pleased to see him opening his eyes as he read it.

“You can force Du Vernai himself to accept the lottery,” he said, “and your fortune is made if you are not too rich already to care about such matters.”

“Nobody is ever rich enough to despise good fortune, especially when it is not due to favour.”

“Very true. We have been doing our utmost for two years to get the plan accepted, and have met with nothing beyond foolish objections which you have crushed to pieces. Nevertheless, our plans must be very similar. Believe me it will be best for us to work in concert, for by yourself you would find insuperable difficulties in the working, and you will find no ‘intelligent machines’ in Paris. My brother will do all the work, and you will be able to reap the advantages at your ease.”

“Are you, then, not the inventor of the scheme which has been shewn me?”

“No, it is the work of my brother.”

“Shall I have the pleasure or seeing him?”

“Certainly. His body is feeble, but his mind is in all its vigour. We shall see him directly.”

The brother was not a man of a very pleasing appearance, as he was covered with a kind of leprosy; but that did not prevent him having a good appetite, writing, and enjoying all his bodily and intellectual faculties; he talked well and amusingly. He never went into society, as, besides his personal disfigurement, he was tormented with an irresistible and frequent desire of scratching himself, now in one place, and now in another; and as all scratching is accounted an abominable thing in Paris, he preferred to be able to use his fingernails to the pleasures of society. He was pleased to say that, believing in God and His works, he was persuaded his nails had been given him to procure the only solace he was capable of in the kind of fury with which he was tormented.

“You are a believer, then, in final causes? I think you are right, but still I believe you would have scratched yourself if God had forgotten to give you any nails.”

My remarks made him laugh, and he then began to speak of our common business, and I soon found him to be a man of intellect. He was the elder of the two brothers, and a bachelor. He was expert in all kinds of calculations, an accomplished financier, with a universal knowledge of commerce, a good historian, a wit, a poet, and a man of gallantry. His birthplace was Leghorn, he had been in a Government office at Naples, and had come to Paris with M. de l’Hopital. His brother was also a man of learning and talent, but in every respect his inferior.

He shewed me the pile of papers, on which he had worked out all the problems referring to the lottery.

“If you think you can do without me,” said he, “I must compliment you on your abilities; but I think you will find yourself mistaken, for if you have no practical knowledge of the matter and no business men to help you, your theories will not carry you far. What will you do after you have obtained the decree? When you speak before the council, if you take my advice, you will fix a date after which you are not to be held responsible — that is to say, after which you will have nothing more to do with it. Unless you do so, you will be certain to encounter trifling and procrastination which will defer your plan to the Greek Kalends. On the other hand, I can assure you that M. du Vernai would be very glad to see us join hands:"

Very much inclined to take these gentlemen into partnership, for the good reason that I could not do without them, but taking care that they should suspect nothing, I went down with the younger brother, who introduced me to his wife before dinner. I found present an old lady well known at Paris under the name of General La Mothe, famous for her former beauty and her gout, another lady somewhat advanced in years, who was called Baroness Blanche, and was still the mistress of M. de Vaux, another styled the President's lady, and a fourth, fair as the dawn, Madame Razzetti, from Piedmont, the wife of one of the violin players at the opera, and said to be courted by M. de Fondpertuis, the superintendent of the opera.

We sat down to dinner, but I was silent and absorbed, all my thoughts being monopolized by the lottery. In the evening, at Silvia's, I was pronounced absent and pensive, and so I was in spite of the sentiment with which Mademoiselle Baletti inspired me — a sentiment which every day grew in strength.

I set out for Versailles next morning two hours before day-break, and was welcomed by M. de Bernis, who said he would bet that but for him I should never have discovered my talent for finance.

"M. de Boulogne tells me you astonished M. du Vernai, who is generally esteemed one of the acutest men in France. If you will take my advice, Casanova, you will keep up that acquaintance and pay him assiduous court. I may tell you that the lottery is certain to be established, that it will be your doing, and that you ought to make something considerable out of it. As soon as the king goes out to hunt, be at hand in the private apartments, and I will seize a favourable moment for introducing you to the famous marquise. Afterwards go to the Office for Foreign Affairs, and introduce yourself in my name to the Abbe de la Ville. He is the chief official there, and will give you a good reception."

M. de Boulogne told me that, as soon as the council of the military school had given their consent, he would have the decree for the establishment of the lottery published, and he urged me to communicate to him any ideas which I might have on the subject of finance.

At noon Madame de Pompadour passed through the private apartments with the Prince de Soubise, and my patron hastened to point me out to the illustrious lady. She made me a graceful curtsy, and told me that she had been much interested in the subject of my flight.

"Do you go," said she, "to see your ambassador?"

"I shew my respect to him, madam, by keeping away."

"I hope you mean to settle in France."

"It would be my dearest wish to do so, madam, but I stand in need of patronage, and I know that in France patronage is only given to men of talent, which is for me a discouraging circumstance."

"On the contrary, I think you have reason to be hopeful, as you have some good friends. I myself shall be delighted if I can be of any assistance to you."

As the fair marquise moved on, I could only stammer forth my gratitude.

I next went to the Abbe de la Ville, who received me with the utmost courtesy, and told me that he would remember me at the earliest opportunity.

Versailles was a beautiful spot, but I had only compliments and not invitations to expect there, so after leaving M. de la Ville I went to an inn to get some dinner. As I was sitting down, an abbe of excellent appearance, just like dozens of other French abbes, accosted me politely, and asked me if I objected to our dining together. I always thought the company of a pleasant man a thing to be desired, so I granted his request; and as soon as he sat down he complimented me on the distinguished manner in which I had been treated by M. de la Ville. "I was there writing a letter," said he, "and I could hear all the obliging things the abbe said to you. May I ask, sir, how you obtained access to him?"

"If you really wish to know, I may be able to tell you."

"It is pure curiosity on my part."

"Well, then, I will say nothing, from pure prudence."

"I beg your pardon."

"Certainly, with pleasure."

Having thus shut the mouth of the curious impertinent, he confined his conversation to ordinary and more agreeable topics. After dinner, having no further business at Versailles, I made preparations for leaving, on which the abbe begged to be of my company. Although a man who frequents the society of abbes is not thought much more of than one who frequents the society of girls. I told him that as I was going to Paris in a public conveyance — far from its being a question of permission — I should be only too happy to have the pleasure of his company. On reaching Paris we parted, after promising to call on each other, and I went to Silvia's and took supper there. The agreeable mistress of the house complimented me on my noble acquaintances, and made me promise to cultivate their society.

As soon as I got back to my own lodging, I found a note from M. du Vernai, who requested me to come to the military school at eleven o'clock on the next day, and later in the evening Calsabigi came to me from his brother, with a large sheet of paper containing all the calculations pertaining to the lottery.

Fortune seemed to be in my favour, for this tabular statement came to me like a blessing from on high. Resolving, therefore, to follow the instructions which I pretended to receive indifferently. I went to the military school, and as soon as I arrived the conference began. M. d'Alembert had been requested to be present as an expert in arithmetical calculations. If M. du Vernai had been the only person to be consulted, this step would not have been necessary; but the council contained some obstinate heads who were unwilling to give in. The conference lasted three hours.

After my speech, which only lasted half an hour, M. de Courteuil summed up my arguments, and an hour was passed in stating objections which I refuted with the greatest ease. I finally told them that no man of honour and learning would volunteer to conduct the lottery on the understanding that it was to win every time, and that if anyone had the impudence to give such an undertaking they should turn him out of the room forthwith, for it was impossible that such an agreement could be maintained except by some roguery.

This had its effect, for nobody replied; and M. du Vernai remarked that if the worst came to the worst the lottery could be suppressed. At this I knew my business was done, and all present, after signing a document which M. du Vernai gave them, took their leave, and I myself left directly afterwards with a friendly leave-taking from M. du Vernal.

M. Calsabigi came to see me the next day, bringing the agreeable news that the affair was settled, and that all that was wanting was the publication of the decree.

“I am delighted to hear it,” I said, “and I will go to M. de Boulogne’s every day, and get you appointed chief administrator as soon as I know what I have got for myself.”

I took care not to leave a stone unturned in this direction, as I knew that, with the great, promising and keeping a promise are two different things. The decree appeared a week after. Calsabigi was made superintendent, with an allowance of three thousand francs for every drawing, a yearly pension of four thousand francs for us both, and the chief of the lottery. His share was a much larger one than mine, but I was not jealous as I knew he had a greater claim than I. I sold five of the six offices that had been allotted to me for two thousand francs each, and opened the sixth with great style in the Rue St. Denis, putting my valet there as a clerk. He was a bright young Italian, who had been valet to the Prince de la Catolica, the ambassador from Naples.

The day for the first drawing was fixed, and notice was given that the winning numbers would be paid in a week from the time of drawing at the chief office.

With the idea of drawing custom to my office, I gave notice that all winning tickets bearing my signature would be paid at my office in twenty-four hours after the drawing. This drew crowds to my office and considerably increased my profits, as I had six per cent. on the receipts. A number of the clerks in the other offices were foolish enough to complain to Calsabigi that I had spoilt their gains, but he sent them about their business telling them that to get the better of me they had only to do as I did — if they had the money.

My first taking amounted to forty thousand francs. An hour after the drawing my clerk brought me the numbers, and shewed me that we had from seventeen to eighteen thousand francs to pay, for which I gave him the necessary funds.

Without my thinking of it I thus made the fortune of my clerk, for every winner gave him something, and all this I let him keep for himself.

The total receipts amounted to two millions, and the administration made a profit of six hundred thousand francs, of which Paris alone had contributed a hundred thousand francs. This was well enough for a first attempt.

On the day after the drawing I dined with Calsabigi at M. du Vernai's, and I had the pleasure of hearing him complain that he had made too much money. Paris had eighteen or twenty ternes, and although they were small they increased the reputation of the lottery, and it was easy to see that the receipts at the next drawing would be doubled. The mock assaults that were made upon me put me in a good humour, and Calsabigi said that my idea had insured me an income of a hundred thousand francs a year, though it would ruin the other receivers.

"I have played similar strokes myself," said M. du Vernai, "and have mostly succeeded; and as for the other receivers they are at perfect liberty to follow M. Casanova's example, and it all tends to increase the repute of an institution which we owe to him and to you."

At the second drawing a terne of forty thousand francs obliged me to borrow money. My receipts amounted to sixty thousand, but being obliged to deliver over my chest on the evening before the drawing, I had to pay out of my own funds, and was not repaid for a week.

In all the great houses I went to, and at the theatres, as soon as I was seen, everybody gave me money, asking me to lay it out as I liked and to send them the tickets, as, so far, the lottery was strange to most people. I thus got into the way of carrying about me tickets of all sorts, or rather of all prices, which I gave to people to choose from, going home in the evening with my pockets full of gold. This was an immense advantage to me, as kind of privilege which I enjoyed to the exclusion of the other receivers who were not in society, and did not drive a carriage like myself — no small point in one's favour, in a large town where men are judged by the state they keep. I found I was thus able to go into any society, and to get credit everywhere.

I had hardly been a month in Paris when my brother Francis, with whom I had parted in 1752, arrived from Dresden with Madame Sylvestre. He had been at Dresden for four years, taken up with the pursuit of his art, having copied all the battle pieces in the Elector's Galley. We were both of us glad to meet once more, but on my offering to see what my great friends could do for him with the Academicians, he replied with all an artist's pride that he was much obliged to me, but would rather not have any other patrons than his talents. "The French," said he, "have rejected me once, and I am far from bearing them ill-will on that account, for I would reject myself now if I were what I was then; but with their love of genius I reckon on a better reception this time."

His confidence pleased me, and I complimented him upon it, for I have always been of the opinion that true merit begins by doing justice to itself.

Francis painted a fine picture, which on being exhibited at the Louvre, was received with applause. The Academy bought the picture for twelve thousand francs, my brother became famous, and in twenty-six years he made almost a million of money; but in spite of that, foolish expenditure, his luxurious style of living, and two bad marriages, were the ruin of him.

VOLUME 3 — THE ETERNAL QUEST

EPISODE 11 — PARIS AND HOLLAND

CHAPTER I

Count Tiretta of Trevisa Abbe Coste — Lambertini, the Pope's

Niece Her Nick — Name for Tiretta The Aunt and Niece —

Our Talk by the Fireside — Punishment of Damien — Tiretta's

Mistake Anger of Madame*** — Their Reconciliation —

My Happiness with Mdlle. de la Meure Silvia's Daughter — Mdlle.

de la Meure Marries — My Despair and Jealousy — A Change far

the Better

In the beginning of March, 1757, I received a letter from my friend Madame Manzoni, which she sent to me by a young man of good appearance, with a frank and high-born air, whom I recognized as a Venetian by his accent. He was young Count Tiretta de Trevisa, recommended to my care by Madame Manzoni, who said that he would tell me his story, which I might be sure would be a true one. The kind woman sent to me by him a small box in which she told me I should find all my manuscripts, as she did not think she would ever see me again.

I gave Tiretta the heartiest of welcomes, telling him that he could not have found a better way to my favour than through a woman to whom I was under the greatest obligations.

"And now, that you may be at your ease with me, I should like to know in what manner I can be of service to you?"

"I have need of your friendship, perhaps of your purse, but at any rate of your protection."

"You have my friendship and my protection already, and my purse is at your service."

After expressing his gratitude to me, Tiretta said, "A year ago the Supreme Council of my country entrusted me with an employment dangerous to one of my years. I was made, with some other young gentlemen of my own age, a keeper of the Mont de Piete. The pleasures of the carnival having put us to a good deal of expense, we were short of money, and borrowed from the till hoping to be able to make up the money before balancing-day, but hoping all in vain.

"The fathers of my two companions, richer than mine, paid the sums they had taken, and I, not being able to pay, took the part of escaping by flight from the shame and the punishment I should have undergone.

"Madame Manzoni advised me to throw myself on your mercy, and she gave me a little box which you shall have to-day. I only got to Paris yesterday, and have only two louis, a little linen, and the clothes on my back. I am twenty-five, have an iron constitution, and a determination to do all in my power to make an honest living; but I can do nothing. I have not cultivated any one talent in a manner to make use of it now. I can play on the flute, but only as an amateur. I only know my own language, and I have no taste for literature. So what can you make of me? I must add that I have not a single expectation, least of all from my father, for to save the honour of the family he will be obliged to sell my portion of the estate, to which I shall have to bid an eternal farewell."

If the count's story had surprised me, the simplicity with which he told it had given me pleasure; and I was resolved to do honour to Madame Manzoni's introduction, feeling that it was my duty to serve a fellow-countryman, who was really guilty of nothing worse than gross thoughtlessness.

"Begin," said I, "by bringing your small belongings to the room next to mine, and get your meals there. I will pay for everything while I am looking out for something which may do for you.

"We will talk of business to-morrow, for as I never dine here I rarely if ever come home till late, and I do not expect to have the honour of seeing you again today. Leave me for the present, as I have got some work to do; and if you go out to walk, beware of bad company, and whatever you do keep your own counsel. You are fond of gaming, I suppose?"

"I hate it, as it has been the cause of half my troubles."

“And the other half, I’ll wager, was caused by women.”

“You have guessed aright — oh, those women!”

“Well, don’t be angry with them, but make them pay for the ill they have done you.”

“I will, with the greatest pleasure, if I can.”

“If you are not too particular in your goods, you will find Paris rich in such commodities.”

“What do you mean by particular? I would never be a prince’s pathic.”

“No, no, I was not thinking of that. I mean by ‘particular’ a man who cannot be affectionate unless he is in love. The man who … .”

“I see what you mean, and I can lay no claim to such a character. Any hag with golden eyes will always find me as affectionate as a Celadon.”

“Well said! I shall soon be able to arrange matters for you.”

“I hope you will.”

“Are you going to the ambassador’s?”

“Good God! — no! What should I do when I got there? Tell him my story? He might make things unpleasant for me.”

“Not without your going to see him, but I expect he is not concerning himself with your case.”

“That’s all I ask him.”

“Everybody, my dear count, is in mourning in Paris, so go to my tailor’s and get yourself a black suit. Tell him you come from me, and say you want it by tomorrow. Good bye.”

I went out soon after, and did not come back till midnight. I found the box which Madame Manzoni had sent me in my room, and in it my manuscripts and my beloved portraits, for I never pawned a snuff-box without taking the portrait out.

Next day Tiretta made his appearance all in black, and thanked me for his transformation.

“They are quick, you see, at Paris. It would have taken a week at Trevisa.”

"Trevisa, my dear fellow, is not Paris."

As I said this, the Abbe de la Coste was announced. I did not know the name, but I gave orders for him to be admitted; and there presently appeared the same little priest with whom I had dined at Versailles after leaving the Abbe de la Ville.

After the customary greetings he began by complimenting me on the success of my lottery, and then remarked that I had distributed tickets for more than six thousand francs.

"Yes," I said, "and I have tickets left for several thousands more."

"Very good, then I will invest a thousand crowns in it."

"Whenever you please. If you call at my office you can choose the numbers."

"No, I don't think I'll trouble to do so; give me any numbers just as they come."

"Very good; here is the list you can choose from."

He chose numbers to the amount of three thousand francs, and then asked me for a piece of paper to write an acknowledgment.

"Why so? I can't do business that way, as I only dispose of my tickets for cash."

"But you may be certain that you will have the money to-morrow."

"I am quite sure I should, but you ought to be certain that you will have the tickets to-morrow. They are registered at my office, and I can dispose of them in no other manner."

"Give me some which are not registered."

"Impossible; I could not do it."

"Why not?"

"Because if they proved to be winning numbers I should have to pay out of my own pocket an honour I do not desire."

"Well, I think you might run the risk."

"I think not, if I wish to remain an honest man, at all events."

The abbe, who saw he could get nothing out of me, turned to Tiretta, and began to speak to him in bad Italian, and at last offered to introduce him to Madame de Lambertini, the widow of one of the Pope's nephews. Her name, her relationship to the Pope, and the abbe's spontaneous offer, made me curious to know more, so I said that my friend would accept his offer, and that I would have the honour to be of the party; whereupon we set out.

We got down at the door of the supposed niece of the Holy Father in the Rue Christine, and we proceeded to go upstairs. We saw a woman who, despite her youthful air, was, I am sure, not a day under forty. She was rather thin, had fine black eyes, a good complexion, lively but giddy manners, was a great laugher, and still capable of exciting a passing fancy. I soon made myself at home with her, and found out, when she began to talk, that she was neither a widow nor the niece of the Pope. She came from Modena, and was a mere adventuress. This discovery shewed me what sort of a man the abbe was.

I thought from his expression that the count had taken a fancy to her, and when she asked us to dinner I refused on the plea of an engagement; but Tiretta, who took my meaning, accepted. Soon after I went away with the abbe, whom I dropped at the Quai de la Ferraille, and I then went to beg a dinner at Calsabigi's.

After dinner Calsabigi took me on one side, and told me that M. du Vernai had commissioned him to warn me that I could not dispose of tickets on account.

"Does M. du Vernai take me for a fool or a knave? As I am neither, I shall complain to M. de Boulogne."

"You will be wrong; he merely wanted to warn you and not offend you."

"You offend me very much yourself, sir, in talking to me in that fashion; and you may make up your mind that no one shall talk to me thus a second time."

Calsabigi did all in his power to quiet me down, and at last persuaded me to go with him to M. du Vernai's. The worthy old gentleman seeing the rage I was in apologized to me for what he had said, and told me that a certain Abbe de la Coste had informed him that I did so. At this I was highly indignant, and I told him what had happened that morning, which let M. du

Vernai know what kind of a man the abbe was. I never saw him again, either because he got wind of my discovery, or because a happy chance kept him out of my way; but I heard, three years after, that he had been condemned to the hulks for selling tickets of a Trevaux lottery which was non-existent, and in the hulks he died.

Next day Tiretta came in, and said he had only just returned.

“You have been sleeping out, have you, master profligate?”

“Yes, I was so charmed with the she-pope that I kept her company all the night.”

“You were not afraid of being in the way?”

“On the contrary, I think she was thoroughly satisfied with my conversation.”

“As far as I can see, you had to bring into play all your powers of eloquence.”

“She is so well pleased with my fluency that she has begged me to accept a room in her house, and to allow her to introduce me as a cousin to M. le Noir, who, I suppose, is her lover.”

“You will be a trio, then; and how do you think you will get on together?”

“That’s her business. She says this gentleman will give me a good situation in the Inland Revenue.”

“Have you accepted her offer?”

“I did not refuse it, but I told her that I could do nothing without your advice. She entreated me to get you to come to dinner with her on Sunday.”

“I shall be happy to go.”

I went with my friend, and as soon as the harebrain saw us she fell on Tiretta’s neck, calling him dear Count “Six-times” — a name which stuck to him all the time he was at Paris.

“What has gained my friend so fine a title, madam?”

“His erotic achievements. He is lord of an honour of which little is known in France, and I am desirous of being the lady.”

“I commend you for so noble an ambition.”

After telling me of his feats with a freedom which chewed her exemption from vulgar prejudice, she informed me that she wished her cousin to live in the same house, and had already obtained M. le Noir’s permission, which was given freely.

“M. le Noir,” added the fair Lambertini, “will drop in after dinner, and I am dying to introduce Count ‘Sixtimes’ to him.”

After dinner she kept on speaking of the mighty deeds of my countryman, and began to stir him up, while he, no doubt, pleased to have a witness to his exploits, reduced her to silence. I confess that I witnessed the scene without excitement, but as I could not help seeing the athletic person of the count, I concluded that he might fare well everywhere with the ladies.

About three o’clock two elderly women arrived, to whom the Lambertini eagerly introduced Count “Six-times.” In great astonishment they enquired the origin of his title, and the heroine of the story having whispered it to them, my friend became an object of interest.

“I can’t believe it,” said one of these ladies, ogling the count, while his face seemed to say,

“Would you like to try?”

Shortly after, a coach stopped at the door, and a fat woman of middle-aged appearance and a very pretty girl were ushered in; after them came a pale man in a black suit and a long wig. After greeting them in a manner which implied intimacy, the Pope’s niece introduced her cousin Count “Six-strokes”. The elderly woman seemed to be astonished at such a name, but the Lambertini gave no explanation. Nevertheless, people seemed to think it rather curious that a man who did not know a word of French should be living in Paris, and that in spite of his ignorance he continued to jabber away in an easy manner, though nobody could understand what he was talking about.

After some foolish conversation, the Pope’s niece proposed a game at Loo. She asked me to play but on my refusing did not make a point of it, but she insisted on her cousin being her partner.

“He knows nothing about cards,” said she; “but that’s no matter, he will learn, and I will undertake to instruct him.”

As the girl, by whose beauty I was struck, did not understand the game, I offered her a seat by the fire, asking her to grant me the honour of keeping her company, whereupon the elderly woman who had brought her began to laugh, and said I should have some difficulty in getting her niece to talk about anything, adding, in a polite manner, that she hoped I would be lenient with her as she had only just left a convent. I assured her that I should have no difficulty in amusing myself with one so amiable, and the game having begun I took up my position near the pretty niece.

I had been near her for several minutes, and solely occupied in mute admiration of her beauty, when she asked me who was that handsome gentleman who talked so oddly.

“He is a nobleman, and a fellow-countryman of mine, whom an affair of honour has banished from his country.”

“He speaks a curious dialect.”

“Yes, but the fact is that French is very little spoken in Italy; he will soon pick it up in Paris, and then he will be laughed at no longer. I am sorry to have brought him here, for in less than twenty-four hours he was spoiled.”

“How spoiled?”

“I daren’t tell you as, perhaps, your aunt would not like it.”

“I don’t think I should tell her, but, perhaps, I should not have asked.”

“Oh, yes! you should; and as you wish to know I will make no mystery of it. Madame Lambertini took a fancy to him; they passed the night together, and in token of the satisfaction he gave her she has given him the ridiculous nickname of ‘Count Sixtimes.’ That’s all. I am vexed about it, as my friend was no profligate.”

Astonishment — and very reasonable astonishment — will be expressed that I dared to talk in this way to a girl fresh from a convent; but I should have been astonished myself at the bare idea of any respectable girl coming to Lambertini’s house. I fixed my gaze on my fair companion, and saw the blush of shame mounting over her pretty face; but I thought that might have more than one meaning.

Judge of my surprise when, two minutes afterwards, I heard this question:

“But what has ‘Sixtimes’ got to do with sleeping with Madame Lambertini?”

“My dear young lady, the explanation is perfectly simple: my friend in a single night did what a husband often takes six weeks to do.”

“And you think me silly enough to tell my aunt of what we have been talking? Don’t believe it.”

“But there’s another thing I am sorry about.”

“You shall tell me what that is directly.”

The reason which obliged the charming niece to retire for a few minutes may be guessed without our going into explanations. When she came back she went behind her aunt’s chair, her eyes fixed on Tiretta, and then came up to me, and taking her seat again, said:

“Now, what else is it that you are sorry about?” her eyes sparkling as she asked the question.

“May I tell you, do you think?”

“You have said so much already, that I don’t think you need have any scruples in telling me the rest.”

“Very good: you must know, then, that this very day and in my presence he —— -her.”

“If that displeased you, you must be jealous.”

“Possibly, but the fact is that I was humbled by a circumstance I dare not tell you.”

“I think you are laughing at me with your ‘dare not tell you.’”

“God forbid, mademoiselle! I will confess, then, that I was humbled because Madame Lambertini made me see that my friend was taller than myself by two inches.”

“Then she imposed on you, for you are taller than your friend.”

“I am not speaking of that kind of tallness, but another; you know what I mean, and there my friend is really monstrous.”

“Monstrous! then what have you to be sorry about? Isn’t it better not to be monstrous?”

“Certainly; but in the article we are discussing, some women, unlike you, prefer monstrosity.”

“I think that’s absurd of them, or rather mad; or perhaps, I have not sufficiently clear ideas on the subject to imagine what size it would be to be called monstrous; and I think it is odd that such a thing should humble you.”

“You would not have thought it of me, to see me?”

“Certainly not, for when I came into the room I thought you looked a well-proportioned man, but if you are not I am sorry for you.”

“I won’t leave you in doubt on the subject; look for yourself, and tell me what you think.”

“Why, it’s you who are the monster! I declare you make me feel quite afraid.”

At this she began to perspire violently, and went behind her aunt’s chair. I did not stir, as I was sure she would soon come back, putting her down in my own mind as very far removed from silliness or innocence either. I supposed she wished to affect what she did not possess. I was, moreover, delighted at having taken the opportunity so well. I had punished her for having tried to impose on me; and as I had taken a great fancy to her, I was pleased that she seemed to like her punishment. As for her possession of wit, there could be no doubt on that point, for it was she who had sustained the chief part in our dialogue, and my sayings and doings were all prompted by her questions, and the persevering way in which she kept to the subject.

She had not been behind her aunt’s chair for five minutes when the latter was looed. She, not knowing whom to attack, turned on her niece and said, “Get you gone, little silly, you are bringing me bad luck! Besides, it is bad manners to leave the gentleman who so kindly offered to keep you company all by himself.”

The amiable niece made not answer, and came back to me smiling. “If my aunt knew,” said she, “what you had done to me, she would not have accused me of bad manners.”

"I can't tell you how sorry I am. I want you to have some evidence of my repentance, but all that I can do is to go. Will you be offended if I do?"

"If you leave me, my aunt will call me a dreadful stupid, and will say that I have tired you out."

"Would you like me to stay, then?"

"You can't go."

"Had you no idea what I shewed you was like till just now?"

"My ideas on the subject were inaccurate. My aunt only took me out of the convent a month ago, and I had been there since I was seven."

"How old are you now?"

"Seventeen. They tried to make me take the veil, but not having any relish for the fooleries of the cloister I refused."

"Are you vexed with me?"

"I ought to be very angry with you, but I know it was my fault, so I will only ask you to be discreet."

"Don't be afraid, if I were indiscreet I should be the first to suffer."

"You have given me a lesson which will come in useful. Stop! stop! or I will go away."

"No, keep quiet; it's done now."

I had taken her pretty hand, with which she let me do as I liked, and at last when she drew it back she was astonished to find it wanted wiping.

"What is that?"

"The most pleasant of substances, which renovates the world."

"I see you are an excellent master. Your pupils make rapid progress, and you give your lessons with such a learned air."

"Now don't be angry with me for what has happened. I should never have dared to go so far if your beauty had not inspired me."

"Am I to take that speech as a declaration of love?"

"Yes, it is bold, sweetheart, but it is sincere. If it were not, I should be unworthy both of you and of myself."

"Can I believe you?"

"Yes, with all your heart. But tell me if I may hope for your love?"

"I don't know. All I know at present is that I ought to hate you, for in the space of a quarter of an hour you have taught me what I thought I should never know till I was married."

"Are you sorry?"

"I ought to be, although I feel that I have nothing more to learn on a matter which I never dared to think about. But how is it that you have got so quiet?"

"Because we are talking reasonably and after the rapture love requires some repose. But look at this!"

"What! again? Is that the rest of the lesson?"

"It is the natural result of it."

"How is it that you don't frighten me now?"

"The soldier gets used to fire."

"I see our fire is going out."

With these words she took up a stick to poke the fire, and as she was stooping down in a favourable position my rash hand dared to approach the porch of the temple, and found the door closed in such sort that it would be necessary to break it open if one wished to enter the sanctuary. She got up in a dignified way, and told me in a polite and feeling manner that she was a well-born girl and worthy of respect. Pretending to be confused I made a thousand excuses, and I soon saw the amiable expression return to the face which it became so well. I said that in spite of my repentance I was glad to know that she had never made another man happy.

"Believe me," she said, "that if I make anyone happy it will be my husband, to whom I have given my hand and heart."

I took her hand, which she abandoned to my rapturous kisses. I had reached this pleasant stage in the proceedings when M. le Noir was announced, he having come to enquire what the Pope's niece had to say to him.

M. le Noir, a man of a certain age and of a simple appearance, begged the company to remain seated. The Lambertini introduced me to him, and he asked if I were the artist; but on being informed that I was his elder brother, he congratulated me on my lottery and the esteem in which M. du Vernai held me. But what interested him most was the cousin whom the fair niece of the Pope introduced to him under his real name of Tiretta, thinking, doubtless, that his new title would not carry much weight with M. le Noir. Taking up the discourse, I told him that the count was commanded to me by a lady whom I greatly esteemed, and that he had been obliged to leave his country for the present on account of an affair of honour. The Lambertini added that she wished to accommodate him, but had not liked to do so till she had consulted M. le Noir. "Madam," said the worthy man, "you have sovereign power in your house, and I shall be delighted to see the count in your society."

As M. le Noir spoke Italian very well, Tiretta left the table, and we sat down all four of us by the fire, where my fresh conquest had an opportunity of shewing her wit. M. le Noir was a man of much intelligence and great experience. He made her talk of the convent where she had been, and as soon as he knew her name he began to speak of her father, with whom he had been well acquainted. He was a councillor of the Parliament of Rouen, and had enjoyed a great reputation during his lifetime.

My sweetheart was above the ordinary height, her hair was a fine golden colour, and her regular features, despite the brilliance of her eyes, expressed candour and modesty. Her dress allowed me to follow all the lines of her figure, and the eyes dwelt pleasantly on the beauty of her form, and on the two spheres which seemed to lament their too close confinement. Although M. le Noir said nothing of all this, it was easy to see that in his own way he admired her perfections no less than I. He left us at eight o'clock, and half an hour afterwards the fat aunt went away followed by her charming niece and the pale man who had come with them. I lost no time in taking leave with Tiretta, who promised the Pope's niece to join her on the morrow, which he did.

Three or four days later I received at my office a letter from Mdlle. de la Meure — the pretty niece. It ran as follows: "Madame, my aunt, my late mother's sister, is a devotee, fond of gaming, rich, stingy, and unjust. She does not like me, and not having succeeded in persuading me to take the veil, she wants to marry me to a wealthy Dunkirk merchant, whom I do not know, but (mark this) whom she does not know any more than I do. The matrimonial agent has praised him very much, and very naturally, as a man must praise his own goods. This gentleman is satisfied with an income of twelve hundred francs per annum, but he promises to leave me in his will no less than a hundred and fifty thousand francs. You must know that by my mother's will my aunt is obliged to pay me on my wedding day twenty-five thousand crowns.

"If what has taken place between us has not made me contemptible in your sight, I offer you my hand and heart with sixty-five thousand francs, and as much more on my aunt's death.

"Don't send me any answer, as I don't know how or by whom to receive your letter. You can answer me in your own person next Sunday at Madame Lambertini's. You will thus have four days whereon to consider this most important question. I do not exactly know whether I love you, but I am quite sure that I prefer you to any other man. I know that each of us has still to gain the other's esteem, but I am sure you would make my life a happy one, and that I should be a faithful wife. If you think that the happiness I seek can add to your own, I must warn you that you will need the aid of a lawyer, as my aunt is miserly, and will stick at trifles.

"If you decide in the affirmative you must find a convent for me to take refuge in before I commit myself to anything, as otherwise I should be exposed to the harsh treatment I wish to avoid. If, on the other hand, my proposal does not meet your views, I have one favour to ask by granting which you will earn my everlasting gratitude. This is that you will endeavour to see me no more, and will take care not to be present in any company in which you think I am to be found. Thus you will help me to forget you, and this is the least you can do for me. You may guess that I shall never be happy till I have become your wife or have forgotten you. Farewell! I reckon upon seeing you on Sunday."

This letter affected me. I felt that it was dictated by prudent, virtuous, and honourable feelings, and I found even more merit in the intellectual endowments of the girl than in her beauty. I blushed at having in a manner led her astray, and I should have thought myself worthy of punishment if I had been capable of refusing the hand offered to me with so much nobility of feeling. And a second but still a powerful consideration made me look complacently upon a fortune larger than I could reasonably expect to win. Nevertheless, the idea of the marriage state, for which I felt I had no vocation, made me tremble.

I knew myself too well not to be aware that as a married man I should be unhappy, and, consequently, with the best intentions I should fail in making the woman's life a happy one. My uncertainty in the four days which she had wisely left me convinced me that I was not in love with her. In spite of that, so weak was I that I could not summon up courage to reject her offer — still less to tell her so frankly, which would have made her esteem me.

During these four days I was entirely absorbed in this one subject. I bitterly repented of having outraged her modesty, for I now esteemed and respected her, but yet I could not make up my mind to repair the wrong I had done her. I could not bear to incur her dislike, but the idea of tying myself down was dreadful to me; and such is the condition of a man who has to choose between two alternatives, and cannot make up his mind.

Fearing lest my evil genius should take me to the opera or elsewhere, and in spite of myself make me miss my appointment, I resolved to dine with the Lambertini without having come to any decision. The pious niece of the Pope was at mass when I reached her house. I found Tiretta engaged in playing on the flute, but as soon as he saw me he dropped the instrument, ran up to me, embraced me, and gave me back the money his suit had cost me.

"I see you are in cash, old fellow; I congratulate you."

"It's a grievous piece of luck to me, for the money is stolen, and I am sorry I have got it though I was an accomplice in the theft."

"What! the money is stolen?"

"Yes, sharping is done here, and I have been taught to help. I share in their ill-gotten gains because I have not the strength of mind to refuse. My landlady and two or three women of the same sort pluck the pigeons. The business does not suit me, and I am thinking of leaving it. Sooner or later I shall kill or be killed, and either event will be the death of me, so I am thinking of leaving this cutthroat place as soon as possible."

"I advise you — nay, I bid you do so by all means, and I should think you had better be gone to-day than to-morrow."

"I don't want to do anything suddenly, as M. le Noir is a gentleman and my friend, and he thinks me a cousin to this wretched woman. As he knows nothing of the infamous trade she carries on, he would suspect something, and perhaps would leave her after learning the reason of my departure. I shall find some excuse or other in the course of the next five or six days, and then I will make haste and return to you."

The Lambertini thanked me for coming to dinner in a friendly manner, and told me that we should have the company of Mdlle. de la Meure and her aunt. I asked her if she was still satisfied with my friend "Sixtimes," and she told me that though the count did not always reside on his manor, she was for all that delighted with him; and said she,

"I am too good a monarch to ask too much of my vassals."

I congratulated her, and we continued to jest till the arrival of the two other guests.

As soon as Mdlle. de la Meure saw me she could scarcely conceal her pleasure. She was in half mourning, and looked so pretty in this costume, which threw up the whiteness of her skin, that I still wonder why that instant did not determine my fate.

Tiretta, who had been making his toilette, rejoined us, and as nothing prevented me from shewing the liking I had taken for the amiable girl I paid her all possible attention. I told the aunt that I found her niece so pretty that I would renounce my bachelorhood if I could find such a mate.

"My niece is a virtuous and sweet-tempered 'girl, sir, but she is utterly devoid either of intelligence or piety."

"Never mind the intelligence," said the niece, "but I was never found wanting in piety at the convent."

"I dare say the nuns are of the jesuitical party."

"What has that got to do with it, aunt?"

"Very much, child; the Jesuits and their adherents are well known to have no vital religion. But let us talk of something else. All that I want you to do is to know how to please your future husband."

"Is mademoiselle about to marry, then?"

"Her intended will probably arrive at the beginning of next month."

"Is he a lawyer?"

"No, sir; he is a well-to-do merchant."

"M. le Noir told me that your niece was the daughter of a councillor, and I did not imagine that you would sanction her marrying beneath her."

"There will be no question of such a thing in this instance, sir; and, after all, what is marrying beneath one? My niece's intended is an honest, and therefore a noble, man, and I am sure it will be her fault if she does not lead a life of perfect happiness with him."

"Quite so, supposing she loves him."

"Oh! love and all that kind of thing will come in good time, you know."

As these remarks could only give pain to the young lady, who listened in silence, I changed the conversation to the enormous crowd which would be present at the execution of Damien, and finding them extremely desirous of witnessing this horrible sight I offered them a large window with an excellent view. The ladies accepted with great pleasure, and I promised to escort them in good time.

I had no such thing as a window, but I knew that in Paris, as everywhere, money will procure anything. After dinner I went out on the plea of business, and, taking the first coach I came across, in a quarter of an hour I succeeded in renting a first floor window in excellent position for three louis. I paid in advance, taking care to have a receipt.

My business over, I hastened to rejoin the company, and found them engaged in piquet. Mdlle. de la Meure, who knew nothing about it, was tired of looking on. I came up to her, and having something to say we went to the other end of the room.

"Your letter, dearest, has made me the happiest of men. You have displayed in it such intelligence and such admirable characteristics as would win you the fervent adoration of every man of good sense."

"I only want one man's love. I will be content with the esteem of the rest."

"My angel, I will make you my wife, and I shall bless till my latest breath the lucky audacity to which I owe my being chosen before other men who would not have refused your hand, even without the fifty thousand crowns, which are nothing in comparison with your beauty and your wit."

"I am very glad you like me so much."

"Could I do otherwise? And now that you know my heart, do nothing hastily, but trust in me."

"You will not forget how I am placed."

"I will bear it in mind. Let me have time to take a house, to furnish it and to put myself in a position in which I shall be worthy of your hand. You must remember that I am only in furnished apartments; that you are well connected, and that I should not like to be regarded as a fortune-hunter."

"You know that my intended husband will soon arrive?"

"Yes, I will take care of that."

"When he does come, you know, matters will be pushed on rapidly."

"Not too rapidly for me to be able to set you free in twenty-four hours, and without letting your aunt know that the blow comes from me. You may rest assured, dearest, that the minister for foreign affairs, on being assured that you wish to marry me, and me only, will get you an inviolable asylum in the best convent in Paris. He will also retain counsel on your behalf, and if your mother's will is properly drawn out your aunt will soon be obliged to hand over your dowry, and to give security for the rest of the property. Do not trouble yourself about the matter, but let the Dunkirk merchant come when he likes. At all hazards, you may reckon upon me, and you may be sure you will not be in your aunt's house on the day fixed for the wedding."

"I confide in you entirely, but for goodness' sake say no more on a circumstance which wounds my sense of modesty. You said that I offered you marriage because you took liberties with me?"

"Was I wrong?"

“Yes, partly, at all events; and you ought to know that if I had not good reasons I should have done a very foolish thing in offering to marry you, but I may as well tell you that, liberties or no liberties, I should always have liked you better than anyone.”

I was beside myself with joy, and seizing her hand I covered it with tender and respectful kisses; and I feel certain that if a notary and priest had been then and there available, I should have married her without the smallest hesitation.

Full of each other, like all lovers, we paid no attention to the horrible racket that was going on at the other end of the room. At last I thought it my duty to see what was happening, and leaving my intended I rejoined the company to quiet Tiretta.

I saw on the table a casket, its lid open, and full of all sorts of jewels; close by were two men who were disputing with Tiretta, who held a book in one hand. I saw at once that they were talking about a lottery, but why were they disputing? Tiretta told me they were a pair of knaves who had won thirty or forty louis of him by means of the book, which he handed to me.

“Sir,” said one of the gamesters, “this book treats of a lottery in which all the calculations are made in the fairest manner possible. It contains twelve hundred leaves, two hundred being winning leaves, while the rest are blanks. Anyone who wants to play has only to pay a crown, and then to put a pin’s point at random between two leaves of the closed book. The book is then opened at the place where the pin is, and if the leaf is blank the player loses; but if, on the other hand, the leaf bears a number, he is given the corresponding ticket, and an article of the value indicated on the ticket is then handed to him. Please to observe, sir, that the lowest prize is twelve francs, and there are some numbers worth as much as six hundred francs, and even one to the value of twelve hundred. We have been playing for an hour, and have lost several costly articles, and madam,” pointing to my sweetheart’s aunt, “has won a ring worth six louis, but as she preferred cash, she continued playing and lost the money she had gained.”

“Yes,” said the aunt, “and these gentlemen have won everybody’s money with their accursed game; which proves it is all a mere cheat.”

“It proves they are rogues,” said Tiretta.

"But gentlemen," answered one of them, "in that case the receivers of the Government lottery are rogues too"; whereon Tiretta gave him a box on the ear. I threw myself between the two combatants, and told them not to speak a word.

"All lotteries," said I, "are advantageous to the holders, but the king is at the head of the Government lottery, and I am the principal receiver, in which character I shall proceed to confiscate this casket, and give you the choice of the following alternatives: You can, if you like, return to the persons present the money you have unlawfully won from them, whereupon I will let you go with your box. If you refuse to do so, I shall send for a policeman, who will take you to prison, and to-morrow you will be tried by M. Berier, to whom I shall take this book in the morning. We shall soon see whether we are rogues as well as they."

Seeing that they had to do with a man of determination, and that resistance would only result in their losing all, they resolved with as good a grace as they could muster to return all their winnings, and for all I know double the sum, for they were forced to return forty louis, though they swore they had only won twenty. The company was too select for me to venture to decide between them. In point of fact I was rather inclined to believe the rascals, but I was angry with them, and I wanted them to pay a good price for having made a comparison, quite right in the main, but odious to me in the extreme. The same reason, doubtless, prevented me from giving them back their book, which I had no earthly right to keep, and which they asked me in vain to return to them. My firmness and my threats, and perhaps also the fear of the police, made them think themselves lucky to get off with their jewel-box. As soon as they were gone the ladies, like the kindly creatures they were, began to pity them. "You might have given them back their book," they said to me.

"And you, ladies, might have let them keep their money."

"But they cheated us of it."

"Did they? Well, their cheating was done with the book, and I have done them a kindness by taking it from them."

They felt the force of my remarks, and the conversation took another turn.

Early next morning the two gamesters paid me a visit bringing with them as a bribe a beautiful casket containing twenty-four lovely pieces of Dresden china. I found this argument irresistible, and I felt obliged to return them the book, threatening them at the same time with imprisonment if they dared to carry on their business in Paris for the future. They promised me to abstain from doing so — no doubt with a mental reservation, but I cared nothing about that.

I resolved to offer this beautiful gift to Mdlle. de la Meure, and I took it to her the same day. I had a hearty welcome, and the aunt loaded me with thanks.

On March the 28th, the day of Damien's martyrdom, I went to fetch the ladies in good time; and as the carriage would scarcely hold us all, no objection was made to my taking my sweetheart on my knee, and in this order we reached the Place de Greve. The three ladies packing themselves together as tightly as possible took up their positions at the window, leaning forward on their elbows, so as to prevent us seeing from behind. The window had two steps to it, and they stood on the second; and in order to see we had to stand on the same step, for if we had stood on the first we should not have been able to see over their heads. I have my reasons for giving these minutiae, as otherwise the reader would have some difficulty in guessing at the details which I am obliged to pass over in silence.

We had the courage to watch the dreadful sight for four hours. The circumstances of Damien's execution are too well known to render it necessary for me to speak of them; indeed, the account would be too long a one, and in my opinion such horrors are an offence to our common humanity.

Damien was a fanatic, who, with the idea of doing a good work and obtaining a heavenly reward, had tried to assassinate Louis XV.; and though the attempt was a failure, and he only gave the king a slight wound, he was torn to pieces as if his crime had been consummated.

While this victim of the Jesuits was being executed, I was several times obliged to turn away my face and to stop my ears as I heard his piercing shrieks, half of his body having been torn from him, but the Lambertini and the fat aunt did not budge an inch. Was it because their hearts were hardened? They told me, and I pretended to believe them, that their horror at the wretch's wickedness prevented Them feeling that compassion which his unheard-of torments should have excited. The fact was that Tiretta kept the pious aunt curiously engaged during the whole time of the execution, and this, perhaps, was what prevented the virtuous lady from moving or even turning her head round.

Finding himself behind her, he had taken the precaution to lift up her dress to avoid treading on it. That, no doubt, was according to the rule; but soon after, on giving an involuntary glance in their direction, I found that Tiretta had carried his precautions rather far, and, not wishing to interrupt my friend or to make the lady feel awkward, I turned my head and stood in such a way that my sweetheart could see nothing of what was going on; this put the good lady at her ease. For two hours after I heard a continuous rustling, and relishing the joke I kept quiet the whole time. I admired Tiretta's hearty appetite still more than his courage, but what pleased me most was the touching resignation with which the pious aunt bore it all.

At the end of this long session I saw Madame turn round, and doing the same I fixed my gaze on Tiretta, and found him looking as fresh and cool as if nothing had happened, but the aunt seemed to me to have a rather pensive appearance. She had been under the fatal necessity of keeping quiet and letting Tiretta do what he liked for fear of the Lambertini's jests, and lest her niece might be scandalized by the revelation of mysteries of which she was supposed to know nothing.

We set out, and having dropped the Pope's niece at her door, I begged her to lend me Tiretta for a few hours, and I then took Madame to her house in the Rue St. Andre-des-Arts. She asked me to come and see her the following day as she had something to tell me, and I remarked that she took no notice of my friend as she left us. We went to the "Hotel de Russie," where they gave you an excellent dinner for six francs a head, and I thought my mad friend stood in need of recruiting his strength.

"What were you doing behind Madame — ?" said I.

"I am sure you saw nothing, or anybody else either."

"No, because when I saw the beginning of your manoeuvres, and guessed what was coming, I stood in such a way that neither the Lambertini or the pretty niece could see you. I can guess what your goal was, and I must say I admire your hearty appetite. But your wretched victim appears to be rather angry.”

“Oh! my dear fellow, that’s all the affectation of an old maid. She may pretend to be put out, but as she kept quiet the whole time I am certain she would be glad to begin all over again.”

“I think so, too, in her heart of hearts; but her pride might suggest that you had been lacking in respect, and the suggestion would be by no means groundless.”

“Respect, you say; but must one not always be lacking in respect to women when one wants to come to the point?”

“Quite so, but there’s a distinction between what lovers may do when they are together, and what is proper in the presence of a mixed company.”

“Yes, but I snatched four distinct favours from her, without the least opposition; had I not therefore good reasons for taking her consent for granted?”

“You reason well, but you see she is out of humour with you. She wants to speak to me to-morrow, and I have no doubt that you will be the subject of our conversation.”

“Possibly, but still I should think she would not speak to you of the comic piece of business; it would be very silly of her.”

“Why so? You don’t know these pious women. They are brought up by Jesuits, who often give them some good lessons on the subject, and they are delighted to confess to a third party; and these confessions with a seasoning of tears gives them in their own eyes quite a halo of saintliness.”

“Well, let her tell you if she likes. We shall see what comes of it.”

“Possibly she may demand satisfaction; in which case I shall be glad to do my best for her.”

“You make me laugh! I can’t imagine what sort of satisfaction she could claim, unless she wants to punish me by the ‘Lex talionis’, which would be hardly practicable without a repetition of the original offence. If she had not liked the game, all she had to do was to give me a push which would have sent me backwards.”

"Yes, but that would have let us know what you had been trying to do."

"Well, if it comes to that, the slightest movement would have rendered the whole process null and void; but as it was she stood in the proper position as quiet as a lamb; nothing could be easier."

"It's an amusing business altogether. But did you notice that the Lambertini was angry with you, too? She, perhaps, saw what you were doing, and felt hurt."

"Oh! she has got another cause of complaint against me. We have fallen out, and I am leaving her this evening."

"Really?"

"Yes, I will tell you all about it. Yesterday evening, a young fellow in the Inland Revenue who had been seduced to sup with us by a hussy of Genoa, after losing forty louis, threw, the cards in the face of my landlady and called her a thief. On the impulse of the moment I took a candle and put it out on his face. I might have destroyed one of his eyes, but I fortunately hit him on the cheek. He immediately ran for his sword, mine was ready, and if the Genoese had not thrown herself between us murder might have been committed. When the poor wretch saw his cheek in the glass, he became so furious that nothing short of the return of all his money would appease him. They gave it him back, in spite of my advice, for in doing so they admitted, tacitly at all events, that it had been won by cheating. This caused a sharp dispute between the Lambertini and myself after he had gone. She said we should have kept the forty louis, and nothing would have happened except for my interference, that it was her and not me whom the young man had insulted. The Genoese added that if we had kept cool we should have had the plucking of him, but that God alone knew what he would do now with the mark of the burn on his face. Tired of the talk of these infamous women, I was about to leave them, but my landlady began to ride the high horse, and went so far as to call me a beggar.

"If M. le Noir had not come in just then, she would have had a bad time of it, as my stick was already in my hand. As soon as they saw him they told me to hold my tongue, but my blood was up; and turning towards the worthy man I told him that his mistress had called me a beggar, that she was a common prostitute, that I was not her cousin, nor in any way related to her, and that I should leave her that very day. As soon as I had come to the end of this short and swift discourse, I went out and shut myself up in my room. In the course of the next two hours I shall go and fetch my linen, and I hope to breakfast with you to-morrow."

Tiretta did well. His heart was in the right place, and he was wise not to allow the foolish impulses of youth to plunge him in the sink of corruption. As long as a man has not committed a dishonourable action, as long as his heart is sound, though his head may go astray, the path of duty is still open to him. I should say the same of women if prejudice were not so strong in their case, and if they were not much more under the influence of the heart than the head.

After a good dinner washed down by some delicious Sillery we parted, and I spent the evening in writing. Next morning I did some business, and at noon went to see the distressed devotee, whom I found at home with her charming niece. We talked a few minutes about the weather, and she then told my sweetheart to leave us as she wanted to speak to me. I was prepared for what was coming and I waited for her to break the silence which all women of her position observe. "You will be surprised, sir, at what I am going to tell you, for I have determined to bring before you a complaint of an unheard-of character. The case is really of the most delicate nature, and I am impelled to make a confidant of you by the impression you made on me when I first saw you. I consider you to be a man of discretion, of honour, and above all a moral man; in short, I believe you have experienced religion, and if I am making a mistake it will be a pity, for though I have been insulted I don't lack means of avenging myself, and as you are his friend you will be sorry for him."

"Is Tiretta the guilty party, madam?"

"The same."

"And what is his crime?"

"He is a villain; he has insulted me in the most monstrous manner."

"I should not have thought him capable of doing so."

"I daresay not, but then you are a moral man."

"But what was the nature of his offence? You may confide in my secrecy."

“I really couldn’t tell you, it’s quite out of the question; but I trust you will be able to guess it. Yesterday, during the execution of the wretched Damien, he strongly abused the position in which he found himself behind me.”

“I see; I understand what you mean; you need say no more. You have cause for anger, and he is to blame for acting in such a manner. But allow me to say that the case is not unexampled or even uncommon, and I think you might make some allowance for the strength of love, the close quarters, and above all for the youth and passion of the sinner. Moreover, the offence is one which may be expiated in a number of ways, provided the parties come to an agreement. Tiretta is young and a perfect gentleman, he is handsome and at bottom a good fellow; could not a marriage be arranged?”

I waited for a reply, but perceiving that the injured party kept silence (a circumstance which seemed to me a good omen) I went on.

“If marriage should not meet your views, we might try a lasting friendship, in which he could shew his repentance and prove himself deserving of pardon. Remember, madam, that Tiretta is only a man, and therefore subject to all the weaknesses of our poor human nature; and even you have your share of the blame.”

“I, sir?”

“Involuntarily, madam, involuntarily; not you but your charms led him astray. Nevertheless, without this incentive the circumstance would never have taken place, and I think you should consider your beauty as a mitigation of the offence.”

“You plead your cause well, sir, but I will do you justice and confess that all your remarks have been characterized by much Christian feeling. However, you are reasoning on false premises; you are ignorant of his real crime, yet how should you guess it?”

With this she burst into tears, leading me completely off the scent, and not knowing what to think.

“He can’t have stolen her purse,” said I to myself, “as I don’t think him capable of such an action; and if I did I’d blow his brains out.”

The afflicted lady soon dried her tears, and went on as follows:

"You are thinking of a deed which one might possibly succeed in reconciling with reason, and in making amends for; but the crime of which that brute has been guilty I dare scarcely imagine, as it is almost enough to drive me mad."

"Good heavens! you can't mean it? This is dreadful; do I hear you aright?"

"Yes. You are moved, I see, but such are the circumstances of the case. Pardon my tears, which flow from anger and the shame with which I am covered."

"Yes, and from outraged religion, too."

"Certainly, certainly. That is the chief source of my grief, and I should have mentioned it if I had not feared you were not so strongly attached to religion as myself."

"Nobody, God be praised! could be more strongly attached to religion than I, and nothing can ever unloose the ties which bind me to it:"

"You will be grieved, then, to hear that I am destined to suffer eternal punishment, for I must and will be avenged."

"Not so, madam, perish the thought, as I could not become your accomplice in such a design, and if you will not abandon it at least say nothing to me on the subject. I will promise you to tell him nothing, although as he lives with me the sacred laws of hospitality oblige me to give him due warning."

"I thought he lived with the Lambertini"

"He left her yesterday. The connection between them was a criminal one, and I have drawn him back from the brink of the precipice."

"You don't mean to say so!"

"Yes, upon my word of honour:"

"You astonish one. This is very edifying. I don't wish the young man's death, but you must confess he owes me some reparation."

"He does indeed. A charming Frenchwoman is not to be handled in the Italian manner without signal amends, but I can think of nothing at all commensurate with the offence. There is only one plan, which I will endeavour to carry out if you will agree to it."

“What is that?”

“I will put the guilty party in your power without his knowing what is to happen, and I will leave you alone, so that you can wreak all your wrath upon him, provided you will allow me to be, unknown to him, in the next room, as I shall regard myself as responsible for his safety.”

“I consent. You will stay in this room, and he must be left in the other where I shall receive you, but take care he has no suspicion of your presence.”

“He shan’t dream of it. He will not even know where I am taking him, for he must not think that I have been informed of his misdoings. As soon as we be there, and the conversation becomes general, I shall leave the room, pretending to be going away.”

“When will you bring him? I long to cover him with confusion. I will make him tremble. I am curious to hear how he will justify himself for such an offence.”

“I can’t say, but I think and hope that your presence will make him eloquent, as I should like to see your differences adjusted.”

At one o’clock the Abbe des Forges arrived, and she made me sit down to dinner with them. This abbe was a pupil of the famous Bishop of Auxerre, who was still living. I talked so well on the subject of grace, and made so many quotations from St. Augustine, that the abbe and the devotee took me for a zealous Jansenista character with which my dress and appearance did not at all correspond. My sweetheart did not give me a single glance while the meal was going on, and thinking she had some motives I abstained from speaking to her.

After dinner, which, by the way, was a very good one, I promised the offended lady to bring her the culprit bound hand and foot next day, after the play was over. To put her at her ease I said I should walk, as I was certain that he would not recognize the house in the dark.

As soon as I saw Tiretta, I began with a seriocomic air to reproach him for the dreadful crime he had committed on the body of a lady in every way virtuous and respectable, but the mad fellow began to laugh, and it would have been waste of time for me to try to stop him.

“What!” said he, “she has had the courage to tell you all?”

"You don't deny the fact, then?"

"If she says it is so, I don't think I can give her the lie, but I am ready to swear that I don't know how the land lay. In the position I was in it was impossible for me to say where I took up my dwelling. However, I will quiet her indignation, as I shall come to the point quickly, and not let her wait."

"You will ruin the business if you don't take care; be as long as you can; she will like that best, and it will be to your interest. Don't hurry yourself, and never mind me, as I am sure to get on all right while you are changing anger into a softer passion. Remember not to know that I am in the house, and if you only stay with her a short time (which I don't think will be the case) take a coach and be off. You know the least a pious woman like her can do will be to provide me with fire and company. Don't forget that she is well-born like yourself. These women of quality are, no doubt, as immoral as any other women, since they are constructed of the same material, but they like to have their pride flattered by certain attentions. She is rich, a devote, and, what is more, inclined to pleasure; strive to gain her friendship 'faciem ad faciem', as the King of Prussia says. You may, perhaps, make your fortune."

"If she asks you why you have left the Pope's niece, take care not to tell her the reason. She will be pleased with your discretion. In short, do your best to expiate the enormity of your offence."

"I have only to speak the truth. I went in in the dark."

"That's an odd reason, but it may seem convincing to a Frenchwoman."

I need not tell the reader that I gave Tiretta a full account of my conversation with the lady. If any complain of this breach of honour, I must tell them that I had made a mental reservation not to keep my promise, and those who are acquainted with the morality of the children of Ignatius will understand that I was completely at my ease.

Next day we went to the opera, and afterwards, our plans made out, we walked to the house of the insulted and virtuous lady. She received us with great dignity, but yet there was an agreeable undercurrent in her voice and manner which I thought very promising.

"I never take supper," she said, "but if you had forewarned me of your visit I should have got something for you:"

After telling her all the news I had heard in the theatre, I pretended to be obliged to go, and begged her to let me leave the count with her for a few minutes.

"If I am more than a quarter of an hour," said I to the count, "don't wait. Take a coach home and we shall see each other to-morrow."

Instead of going downstairs I went into the next room, and two minutes after who should enter but my sweetheart, who looked charmed and yet puzzled at my appearance.

"I think I must be dreaming," said she, "but my aunt has charged me not to leave you alone, and to tell her woman not to come upstairs unless she rings the bell. Your friend is with her, and she told me to speak low as he is not to know that you are here. What does it all mean?"

"You are curious, are you?"

"I confess I am in this instance, for all this mystery seems designed to excite curiosity."

"Dearest, you shall know all; but how cold it is."

"My aunt has told me to make a good fire, she has become liberal or rather lavish all of a sudden; look at the wax candles."

"That's a new thing, is it?"

"Oh, quite new."

As soon as we were seated in front of the fire I began to tell her the story, to which she listened with all the attention a young girl can give to such a matter; but as I had thought it well to pass over some of the details, she could not properly understand what crime it was that Tiretta had committed. I was not sorry to be obliged to tell her the story in plain language, and to give more expression I employed the language of gesture, which made her blush and laugh at the same time. I then told her that, having taken up the question of the reparation that was due to her aunt, I had so arranged matters that I was certain of being alone with her all the time my friend was engaged. Thereupon I began to cover her pretty face with kisses, and as I allowed myself no other liberties she received my caresses as a proof of the greatness of my love and the purity of my feelings.

“Dearest,” she said, “what you say puzzles me; there are two things which I can’t understand. How could Tiretta succeed in committing this crime with my aunt, which I think would only be possible with the consent of the party attacked, but quite impossible without it; and this makes me believe that if the thing was done it was done with her hearty good will.”

“Very true, for if she did not like it she had only to change her position.”

“Not so much as that; she need only have kept the door shut.”

“There, sweetheart, you are wrong, for a properly-made man only asks you to keep still and he will overcome all obstacles. Moreover, I don’t expect that your aunt’s door is so well shut as yours.”

“I believe that I could defy all the Tirettas in the world.

“There’s another thing I don’t understand, and that is how my blessed aunt came to tell you all about it; for if she had any sense she might have known that it would only make you laugh. And what satisfaction does she expect to get from a brute like that, who possibly thinks the affair a matter of no consequence. I should think he would do the same to any woman who occupied the same position as my aunt.”

“You are right, for he told me he went in like a blind man, not knowing where he was going.”

“Your friend is a queer fellow, and if other men are like him I am sure I should have no feeling but contempt for them.”

“She has told me nothing about the satisfaction she is thinking of, and which she possibly feels quite sure of attaining; but I think I can guess what it will be namely, a formal declaration of love; and I suppose he will expiate his crime by becoming her lover, and doubtless this will be their wedding night.”

“The affair is getting amusing. I can’t believe it. My dear aunt is too anxious about her salvation; and how do you imagine the young man can ever fall in love with her, or play the part with such a face as hers before his eyes. Have you ever seen a countenance as disgusting as my aunt’s? Her skin is covered with pimples, her eyes distil humours, and her teeth and breath are enough to discourage any man. She's hideous."

"All that is nothing to a young spark of twenty-five; one is always ready for an assault at that age; not like me who only feel myself a man in presence of charms like yours, of which I long to be the lawful possessor."

"You will find me the most affectionate of wives, and I feel quite sure that I shall have your heart in such good keeping that I shall never be afraid of losing it."

We had talked thus pleasantly for an hour, and Tiretta was still with the aunt. I thought things pointed towards a reconciliation, and judged the matter was getting serious. I told my sweetheart my opinion, and asked her to give me something to eat.

"I can only give you," said she, "some bread and cheese, a slice of ham, and some wine which my aunt pronounces excellent."

"Bring them quick, then; I am fainting with hunger."

She soon laid the table for two, and put on it all the food she had. The cheese was Roquefort, and the ham had been covered with jelly. About ten persons with reasonable appetites should have been able to sup on what there was; but (how I know not) the whole disappeared, and also two bottles of Chambertin, which I seem to taste now. My sweetheart's eyes gleamed with pleasure: truly Chambertin and Roquefort are excellent thinks to restore an old love and to ripen a young one.

"Don't you want to know what your aunt has been doing the last two hours with M. Sixtimes?"

"They are playing, perhaps; but there is a small hole in the wall, and I will look and see. I can only see the two candles, and the wicks are an inch long."

"Didn't I say so? Give me a coverlet and I will sleep on the sofa here, and do you go to bed. But let me look at it first:"

She made me come into her little room, where I saw a pretty bed, a prayer desk, and a large crucifix.

"Your bed is too small for you, dear heart."

"Oh, not at all! I am very comfortable"; and so saying she laid down at full length.

"What a beautiful wife I shall have! Nay, don't move, let me look at you so." My hand began to press the bosom of her dress, where were imprisoned two spheres which seemed to lament their captivity. I went farther, I began to untie strings … for where does desire stop short?

"Sweetheart, I cannot resist, but you will not love me afterwards."

"I will always love you:"

Soon her beautiful breasts were exposed to my burning kisses. The flame of my love lit another in her heart, and forgetting her former self she opened her arms to me, making me promise not to despise her, and what would one not promise! The modesty inherent in the sex, the fear of results, perhaps a kind of instinct which reveals to them the natural faithlessness of men make women ask for such promises, but what mistress, if really amorous, would even think of asking her lover to respect her in the moment of delirious ecstacy, when all one's being is centred on the fulfilment of desire?

After we had passed an hour in these amorous toyings, which set my sweetheart on fire, her charms having never before been exposed to the burning lips or the free caresses of a man, I said to her,

"I grieve to leave you without having rendered to your beauty the greatest homage which it deserves so well."

A sigh was her only answer.

It was cold, the fire was out, and I had to spend the night on the sofa.

"Give me a coverlet, dearest, that I may go away from you, for I should die here between love and cold if you made me abstain."

"Lie where I have been, sweetheart. I will get up and rekindle the fire."

She got up in all her naked charms, and as she put a stick to the fire the flame leapt up; I rose, I found her standing so as to display all her beauties, and I could refrain no longer. I pressed her to my heart, she returned my caresses, and till day-break we gave ourselves up to an ecstacy of pleasure.

We had spent four or five delicious hours on the sofa. She then left me, and after making a good fire she went to her room, and I remained on the sofa and slept till noon. I was awakened by Madame, who wore a graceful undress.

“Still asleep, M. Casanova?”

“Ah! good morning, madam, good morning. And what has become of my friend?”

“He has become mine, I have forgiven him.”

“What has he done to be worthy of so generous a pardon?”

“He proved to me that he made a mistake.”

“I am delighted to hear it; where is he?”

“He has gone home, where you will find him; but don’t say anything about your spending the night here, or he will think it was spent with my niece. I am very much obliged to you for what you have done, and I have only to ask you to be discreet.”

“You can count on me entirely, for I am grateful to you for having forgiven my friend.”

“Who would not do so? The dear young man is something more than mortal. If you knew how he loved me! I am grateful to him, and I have taken him to board for a year; he will be well lodged, well fed, and so on.”

“What a delightful plan! You have arranged the terms, I suppose.”

“All that will be settled in a friendly way, and we shall not need to have recourse to arbitration. We shall set out to-day for Villette, where I have a nice little house; for you know that it is necessary, at first, to act in such a way as to give no opportunity to slanderers. My lover will have all he wants, and whenever you, sir, honour us with your presence you will find a pretty room and a good bed at your disposal. All I am sorry for is that you will find it tedious; my poor niece is so dull.”

“Madam, your niece is delightful; she gave me yesterday evening an excellent supper and kept me company till three o’clock this morning.”

“Really? I can’t make it out how she gave you anything, as there was nothing in the house.”

“At any rate, madam, she gave me an excellent supper, of which there are no remains, and after keeping me company she went to bed, and I have had a good night on this comfortable sofa.”

“I am glad that you, like myself, were pleased with everything, but I did not think my niece so clever.”

“She is very clever, madam — in my eyes, at all events:”

“Oh, sir! you are a judge of wit, let us go and see her. She has locked her door. Come open the door, why have you shut yourself up, you little prude? what are you afraid of. My Casanova is incapable of hurting you.”

The niece opened her door and apologized for the disorder of her dress, but what costume could have suited her better? Her costume was dazzling.”

“There she is,” said the aunt, “and she is not so bad looking after all, but it is a pity she is so stupid. You were very right to give this gentleman a supper. I am much obliged to you for doing so. I have been playing all night, and when one is playing one only thinks of the game. I have determined on taking young Tiretta to board with us. He is an excellent and clever young man, and I am sure he will learn to speak French before long. Get dressed, my dear, as we must begin to pack. We shall set out this afternoon for Villette, and shall spend there the whole of the spring. There is no need, you know, to say anything about this to my sister:”

“I, aunt? Certainly not. Did I ever tell her anything on the other occasions?”

“Other occasions! You see what a silly girl it is. Do you mean by ‘other occasions,’ that I have been circumstanced like this before?”

“No, aunt. I only meant to say that I had never told her anything of what you did.”

“That’s right, my dear, but you must learn to express yourself properly. We dine at two, and I hope to have the pleasure of M. Casanova’s company at dinner; we will start immediately after the meal. Tiretta promised to bring his small portmanteau with him, and it will go with our luggage.”

After promising to dine with them, I bade the ladies good-bye; and I went home as fast as I could walk, for I was as curious as a woman to know what arrangements had been made.

“Well,” said I to Tiretta, “I find you have got a place. Tell me all about it.”

“My dear fellow, I have sold myself for a year. My pay is to be twenty-five louis a month, a good table, good lodging, etc., etc.”

“I congratulate you.”

“Do you think it is worth the trouble?”

“There’s no rose without a thorn. She told me you were something more than mortal.”

“I worked hard all night to prove it to her; but I am quite sure your time was better employed than mine.”

“I slept like a king. Dress yourself, as I am coming to dinner, and I want to see you set out for Villette. I shall come and see you there now and then, as your sweetheart has told me that a room shall be set apart for my convenience.”

We arrived at two o’clock. Madame dressed in a girlish style presented a singular appearance, but Mdlle. de la Meure’s beauty shone like a star. Love and pleasure had given her a new life, a new being. We had a capital dinner, as the good lady had made the repast dainty like herself; but in the dishes there was nothing absurd, while her whole appearance was comic in the highest degree. At four they all set out, and I spent my evening at the Italian comedy.

I was in love with Mdlle. de la Meure, but Silvia’s daughter, whose company at supper was all I had of her, weakened a love which now left nothing more to desire.

We complain of women who, though loving us and sure of our love, refuse us their favours; but we are wrong in doing so, for if they love they have good reason to fear lest they lose us in the moment of satisfying our desires. Naturally they should do all in their power to retain our hearts, and the best way to do so is to cherish our desire of possessing them; but desire is only kept alive by being denied: enjoyment kills it, since one cannot desire what one has got. I am, therefore, of opinion that women are quite right to refuse us. But if it be granted that the passions of the two sexes are of equal strength, how comes it that a man never refuses to gratify a woman who loves him and entreats him to be kind?

We cannot receive the argument founded on the fear of results, as that is a particular and not a general consideration. Our conclusion, then, will be that the reason lies in the fact that a man thinks more of the pleasure he imparts than that which he receives, and is therefore eager to impart his bliss to another. We know, also, that, as a general rule, women, when once enjoyed, double their love and affection. On the other hand, women think more of the pleasure they receive than of that which they impart, and therefore put off enjoyment as long as possible, since they fear that in giving themselves up they lose their chief good — their own pleasure. This feeling is peculiar to the sex, and is the only cause of coquetry, pardonable in a woman, detestable in a man.

Silvia's daughter loved me, and she knew I loved her, although I had never said so, but women's wit is keen. At the same time she endeavoured not to let me know her feelings, as she was afraid of encouraging me to ask favours of her, and she did not feel sure of her strength to refuse them; and she knew my inconstant nature. Her relations intended her for Clement, who had been teaching her the clavichord for the last three years. She knew of the arrangement and had no objection, for though she did not love him she liked him very well. Most girls are wedded without love, and they are not sorry for it afterwards. They know that by marriage they become of some consequence in the world, and they marry to have a house of their own and a good position in society. They seem to know that a husband and a lover need not be synonymous terms. At Paris men are actuated by the same views, and most marriages are matters of convenience. The French are jealous of their mistresses, but never of their wives.

There could be no doubt that M. Clement was very much in love, and Mdlle. Baletti was delighted that I noticed it, as she thought this would bring me to a declaration, and she was quite right. The departure of Mdlle. de la Meure had a good deal to do with my determination to declare myself; and I was very sorry to have done so afterwards, for after I had told her I loved her Clement was dismissed, and my position was worse than before. The man who declares his love for a woman in words wants to be sent to school again.

Three days after the departure of Tiretta, I took him what small belongings he had, and Madame seemed very glad to see me. The Abbe des Forges arrived just as we were sitting down to dinner, and though he had been very friendly to me at Paris he did not so much as look at me all through the meal, and treated Tiretta in the same way. I, for my part, took no notice of him, but Tiretta, not so patient as I, at last lost his temper and got up, begging Madame to tell him when she was going to have that fellow to dine with her. We rose from table without saying a word, and the silent abbe went with madam into another room.

Tiretta took me to see his room, which was handsomely furnished, and, as was right, adjoined his sweetheart's. Whilst he was putting his things in order, Mdlle. de la Meure made me come and see my apartment. It was a very nice room on the ground floor, and facing hers. I took care to point out to her how easily I could pay her a visit after everyone was in bed, but she said we should not be comfortable in her room, and that she would consequently save me the trouble of getting out of bed. It will be guessed that I had no objections to make to this arrangement.

She then told me of her aunt's folly about Tiretta.

"She believes," said she, "that we do not know he sleeps with her."

"Believes, or pretends to believe."

"Possibly. She rang for me at eleven o'clock this morning and told me to go and ask him what kind of night he had passed. I did so, but seeing his bed had not been slept in I asked him if he had not been to sleep.

"'No,' said he, 'I have been writing all night, but please don't say anything about it to your aunt: I promised with all my heart to be as silent as the grave."

"Does he make sheep's eyes at you?"

"No, but if he did it would be all the same. Though he is not over sharp he knows, I think, what I think of him."

"Why have you such a poor opinion of him?"

"Why? My aunt pays him. I think selling one's self is a dreadful idea."

"But you pay me."

"Yes, but in the same coin as you give me."

The old aunt was always calling her niece stupid, but on the contrary I thought her very clever, and as virtuous as clever. I should never have seduced her if she had not been brought up in a convent.

I went back to Tiretta, and had some pleasant conversation with him. I asked him how he liked his place.

“I don’t like it much, but as it costs me nothing I am not absolutely wretched.”

“But her face!”

“I don’t look at it, and there’s one thing I like about her — she is so clean.”

“Does she take good care of you?”

“O yes, she is full of feeling for me. This morning she refused the greeting I offered her. ‘I am sure,’ said she, ‘that my refusal will pain you, but your health is so dear to me that I feel bound to look after it.”

As soon as the gloomy Abbe des Forges was gone and Madame was alone, we rejoined her. She treated me as her gossip, and played the timid child for Tiretta’s benefit, and he played up to her admirably, much to my admiration.

“I shall see no more of that foolish priest,” said she; “for after telling me that I was lost both in this world and the next he threatened to abandon me, and I took him at his word.”

An actress named Quinault, who had left the stage and lived close by, came to call, and soon after Madame Favart and the Abbe de Voisenon arrived, followed by Madame Amelin with a handsome lad named Calabre, whom she called her nephew. He was as like her as two peas, but she did not seem to think that a sufficient reason for confessing she was his mother. M. Patron, a Piedmontese, who also came with her, made a bank at faro and in a couple of hours won everybody’s money with the exception of mine, as I knew better than to play. My time was better occupied in the company of my sweet mistress. I saw through the Piedmontese, and had put him down as a knave; but Tiretta was not so sharp, and consequently lost all the money he had in his pockets and a hundred louis besides. The banker having reaped a good harvest put down the cards, and Tiretta told him in good Italian that he was a cheat, to which the Piedmontese replied with the greatest coolness that he lied. Thinking that the quarrel might have an unpleasant ending, I told him that Tiretta was only jesting, and I made my friend say so, too. He then left the company and went to his room.

Eight years afterwards I saw this Patron at St. Petersburg, and in the year 1767 he was assassinated in Poland.

The same evening I preached Tiretta a severe yet friendly sermon. I pointed out to him that when he played he was at the mercy of the banker, who might be a rogue but a man of courage too, and so in calling him a cheat he was risking his life.

“Am I to let myself be robbed, then?”

“Yes, you have a free choice in the matter; nobody will make you play.”

“I certainly will not pay him that hundred louis.”

“I advise you to do so, and to do so before you are asked.”

“You have a knack of persuading one to do what you will, even though one be disposed to take no notice of your advice.”

“That’s because I speak from heart and head at once, and have some experience in these affairs as well.”

Three quarters of an hour afterwards I went to bed and my mistress came to me before long. We spent a sweeter night than before, for it is often a matter of some difficulty to pluck the first flower; and the price which most men put on this little trifle is founded more on egotism than any feeling of pleasure.

Next day, after dining with the family and admiring the roses on my sweetheart’s cheeks, I returned to Paris. Three or four days later Tiretta came to tell me that the Dunkirk merchant had arrived, that he was coming to dine at Madame’s, and that she requested me to make one of the party. I was prepared for the news, but the blood rushed into my face. Tiretta saw it, and to a certain extent divined my feelings. “You are in love with the niece,” said he.

“Why do you think so?”

“By the mystery you make about her; but love betrays itself even by its silence.”

“You are a knowing fellow, Tiretta. I will come to dinner, but don’t say a word to anybody.”

My heart was rent in twain. Possibly if the merchant had put off his arrival for a month I should have welcomed it; but to have only just lifted the nectar to my lips, and to see the precious vessel escape from my hands! To this day I can recall my feelings, and the very recollection is not devoid of bitterness.

I was in a fearful state of perplexity, as I always was whenever it was necessary for me to resolve, and I felt that I could not do so. If the reader has been placed in the same position he will understand my feelings. I could not make up my mind to consent to her marrying, nor could I resolve to wed her myself and gain certain happiness.

I went to Villette and was a little surprised to find Mdlle. de la Meure more elaborately dressed than usual.

“Your intended,” I said, “would have pronounced you charming without all that.”

“My aunt doesn’t think so”

“You have not seen him yet?”

“No, but I should like to, although I trust with your help never to become his wife.”

Soon after, she arrived with Corneman, the banker, who had been the agent in this business transaction. The merchant was a fine man, about forty, with a frank and open face. His dress was good though not elaborate. He introduced himself simply but in a polite manner to Madame, and he did not look at his future wife till the aunt presented her to him. His manner immediately became more pleasing; and without making use of flowers of speech he said in a very feeling way that he trusted the impression he had made on her was equal to that which she had made on him. Her only answer was a low curtsy, but she studied him carefully.

Dinner was served, and in the course of the meal we talked of almost everything — except marriage. The happy pair only caught each other’s eyes by chance, and did not speak to one another. After dinner Mdlle. de la Meure went to her room, and the aunt went into her closet with the banker and the merchant, and they were in close conversation for two hours. At the end of that time the gentlemen were obliged to return to Paris, and Madame, after summoning her niece, told the merchant she would expect him to dinner on the day following, and that she was sure that her niece would be glad to see him again.

“Won’t you, my dear?”

“Yes, aunt, I shall be very glad to see the gentleman again.”

If she had not answered thus, the merchant would have gone away without hearing his future bride speak.

“Well,” said the aunt, “what do you think of your husband?”

“Allow me to put off my answer till to-morrow; but be good enough, when we are at table, to draw me into the conversation, for it is very possible that my face has not repelled him, but so far he knows nothing of my mental powers; possibly my want of wit may destroy any slight impression my face may have made.”

“Yes, I am afraid you will begin to talk nonsense, and make him lose the good opinion he seems to have formed of you.”

“It is not right to deceive anybody. If he is disabused of his fictitious ideas by the appearance of the truth, so much the better for him; and so much the worse for both of us, if we decide on marrying without the slightest knowledge of each other’s habits and ways of thought.”

“What do you think of him?”

“I think he is rather nice-looking, and his manners are kind and polite; but let us wait till to-morrow.”

“Perhaps he will have nothing more to say to me; I am so stupid.”

“I know very well that you think yourself very clever, and that’s where your fault lies; it’s your self-conceit which makes you stupid, although M. Casanova takes you for a wit.”

“Perhaps he may know what he is talking about.”

“My poor dear, he is only laughing at you.”

“I have good reasons for thinking otherwise, aunt.”

"There you go; you will never get any sense."

"Pardon me, madam, if I cannot be of your opinion. Mademoiselle is quite right in saying that I do not laugh at her. I dare to say that to-morrow she will shine in the conversation."

"You think so? I am glad to hear it. Now let us have a game at piquet, and I will play against you and my niece, for she must learn the game."

Tiretta asked leave of his darling to go to the play, and we played on till supper-time. On his return, Tiretta made us almost die of laughing with his attempts to tell us in his broken French the plot of the play he had seen.

I had been in my bedroom for a quarter of an hour, expecting to see my sweetheart in some pretty kind of undress, when all of a sudden I saw her come in with all her clothes on. I was surprised at this circumstance, and it seemed to me of evil omen.

"You are astonished to see me thus," said she, "but I want to speak to you for a moment, and then I will take off my clothes. Tell me plainly whether I am to consent to this marriage or no?"

"How do you like him?"

"Fairly well."

"Consent, then!"

"Very good; farewell! From this moment our love ends, and our friendship begins. Get you to bed, and I will go and do the same. Farewell!"

"No, stay, and let our friendship begin to-morrow."

"Not so, were my refusal to cost the lives of both of us. You know what it must cost me to speak thus, but it is my irrevocable determination. If I am to become another's wife, I must take care to be worthy of him; perhaps I may be happy. Do not hold me, let me go. You know how well I love you."

"At least, let us have one final embrace."

"Alas! no."

"You are weeping."

"No, I am not. In God's name let me go."

"Dear heart, you go but to weep in your chamber; stay here. I will marry you."

"Nay, no more of that."

With these words she made an effort, escaped from my hands, and fled from the room. I was covered with shame and regret, and could not sleep. I hated myself, for I knew not whether I had sinned most grievously in seducing her or in abandoning her to another.

I stayed to dinner next day in spite of my heartbreak and my sadness. Mdlle. de la Meure talked so brilliantly and sensibly to her intended that one could easily see he was enchanted with her. As for me, feeling that I had nothing pleasant to say, I pretended to have the toothache as an excuse for not talking. Sick at heart, absent-minded, and feeling the effects of a sleepless night, I was well-nigh mad with love, jealousy, and despair. Mdlle. de la Meure did not speak to me once, did not so much as look at me. She was quite right, but I did not think so then. I thought the dinner would never come to an end, and I do not think I was ever present at so painful a meal.

As we rose from the table, Madame went into her closet with her niece and nephew that was to be, and the niece came out in the course of an hour and bade us congratulate her, as she was to be married in a week, and after the wedding she would accompany her husband to Dunkirk. "To-morrow," she added, "we are all to dine with M. Corneman, where the deed of settlement will be signed."

I cannot imagine how it was I did not fall dead on the spot. My anguish cannot be expressed.

Before long it was proposed that we should go to the play, but excusing myself on the plea of business I returned to Paris. As I got to my door I seemed to be in a fever, and I lay down on my bed, but instead of the rest I needed I experienced only remorse and fruitless repentance-the torments of the damned. I began to think it was my duty to stop the marriage or die. I was sure that Mdlle. de la Meure loved me, and I fancied she would not say no if I told her that her refusal to marry me would cost me my life. Full of that idea I rose and wrote her a letter, strong with all the strength of tumultuous passion. This was some relief, and getting into bed I slept till morning. As soon as I was awake I summoned a messenger and promised him twelve francs if he would deliver my letter, and report its receipt in an hour and a half. My letter was under cover of a note addressed to Tiretta, in which I told him that I should not leave the house till I had got an answer. I had my answer four hours after; it ran as follows: "Dearest, it is too late; you have decided on my destiny, and I cannot go back from my word. Come to dinner at M. Corneman's, and be sure that in a few weeks we shall be congratulating ourselves on having won a great victory. Our love, crowned all too soon, will soon live only in our memories. I beg of you to write to me no more."

Such was my fate. Her refusal, with the still more cruel charge not to write to her again, made me furious. In it I only saw inconstancy. I thought she had fallen in love with the merchant. My state of mind may be judged from the fact that I determined to kill my rival. The most savage plans, the most cruel designs, ran a race through my bewildered brain. I was jealous, in love, a different being from my ordinary self; anger, vanity, and shame had destroyed my powers of reasoning. The charming girl whom I was forced to admire, whom I should have esteemed all the more for the course she had taken, whom I had regarded as an angel, became in my eyes a hateful monster, a meet object for punishment. At last I determined on a sure method of revenge, which I knew to be both dishonourable and cowardly, but in my blind passion I did not hesitate for a moment. I resolved to go to the merchant at M. Corneman's, where he was staying, to tell him all that had passed between the lady and myself, and if that did not make him renounce the idea of marrying her I would tell him that one of us must die, and if he refused my challenge I determined to assassinate him.

With this terrible plan in my brain, which makes me shudder now when I think of it, I ate with the appetite of a wild beast, lay down and slept till day. I was in the same mind when I awoke, and dressed myself hastily yet carefully, put two good pistols in my pocket and went to M. Corneman's. My rival was still asleep; I waited for him, and for a quarter of an hour my thoughts only grew more bitter and my determination more fixed. All at once he came into the room, in his dressing-gown, and received me with open arms, telling me in the kindest of voices that he had been expecting me to call, as he could guess what feelings I, a friend of his future wife's, could have for him, and saying that his friendship for me should always be as warm as hers. His honest open face, his straightforward words, overwhelmed me, and I was silent for a few minutes — in fact I did not know what to say. Luckily he gave me enough time to recollect myself, as he talked on for a quarter of an hour without noticing that I did not open my lips.

M. Corneman then came in; coffee was served, and my speech returned to me; but I am happy to say I refrained from playing the dishonourable part I had intended; the crisis was passed.

It may be remarked that the fiercest spirits are like a cord stretched too tight, which either breaks or relaxes. I have known several persons of that temperament — the Chevalier L —— , amongst others, who in a fit of passion used to feel his soul escaping by every pore. If at the moment when his anger burst forth he was able to break something and make a great noise, he calmed down in a moment; reason resumed her sway, and the raging lion became as mild as a lamb.

After I had taken a cup of coffee, I felt myself calmed but yet dizzy in the head, so I bade them good morning and went out. I was astonished but delighted that I had not carried my detestable scheme into effect. I was humbled by being forced to confess to myself that chance and chance alone had saved me from becoming a villain. As I was reflecting on what had happened I met my brother, and he completed my cure. I took him to dine at Silvia's and stayed there till midnight. I saw that Mdlle. Baletti would make me forget the fair inconstant, whom I wisely determined not to see again before the wedding. To make sure I set out the next day for Versailles, to look after my interests with the Government.

CHAPTER II

The Abby de la Ville — The Abby Galiani — The Neapolitan

Dialect — I Set Out for Dunkirk on a Secret Mission —

I Succeed — I Return to Paris by Amiens — My Adventure by the

Way — M. de la Bretonniere — My Report Gives Satisfaction —

I Am Paid Five Hundred Louis — Reflections.

A new career was opening before me. Fortune was still my friend, and I had all the necessary qualities to second the efforts of the blind goddess on my behalf save one — perseverance. My immoderate life of pleasure annulled the effect of all my other qualities.

M. de Bernis received me in his usual manner, that is more like a friend than a minister. He asked me if I had any inclination for a secret mission.

“Have I the necessary talents?”

“I think so.”

“I have an inclination for all honest means of earning a livelihood, and as for my talents I will take your excellency’s opinion for granted.”

This last observation made him smile, as I had intended.

After a few words spoken at random on the memories of bygone years which time had not entirely defaced, the minister told me to go to the Abbe de la Ville and use his name.

This abbe, the chief permanent official of the foreign office, was a man of cold temperament, a profound diplomatist, and the soul of the department, and high in favour with his excellency the minister. He had served the state well as an agent at The Hague, and his grateful king rewarded him by giving him a bishopric on the day of his death. It was a little late, but kings have not always sufficient leisure to remember things. His heir was a wealthy man named Gamier, who had formerly been chief cook at M.

d'Argenson's, and had become rich by profiting by the friendship the Abbe de la Ville had always had for him. These two friends, who were nearly of the same age, had deposited their wills in the hands of the same attorney, and each had made the other his residuary legatee.

After the abbe had delivered a brief discourse on the nature of secret missions and the discretion necessary to those charged with them, he told me that he would let me know when anything suitable for me presented itself.

I made the acquaintance of the Abbe Galiani, the secretary of the Neapolitan Embassy. He was a brother to the Marquis de Galiani, of whom I shall speak when we come to my Italian travels. The Abbe Galiani was a man of wit. He had a knack of making the most serious subjects appear comic; and being a good talker, speaking French with the ineradicable Neapolitan accent, he was a favourite in every circle he cared to enter. The Abbe de la Ville told him that Voltaire had complained that his Henriade had been translated into Neapolitan verse in such sort that it excited laughter.

"Voltaire is wrong," said Galiani, "for the Neapolitan dialect is of such a nature that it is impossible to write verses in it that are not laughable. And why should he be vexed; he who makes people laugh is sure of being beloved. The Neapolitan dialect is truly a singular one; we have it in translations of the Bible and of the Iliad, and both are comic."

"I can imagine that the Bible would be, but I should not have thought that would have been the case with the Iliad."

"It is, nevertheless."

I did not return to Paris till the day before the departure of Mdlle. de la Meure, now Madame P—— . I felt in duty bound to go and see her, to give her my congratulations, and to wish her a pleasant journey. I found her in good spirits and quite at her ease, and, far from being vexed at this, I was pleased, a certain sign that I was cured. We talked without the slightest constraint, and I thought her husband a perfect gentleman. He invited us to visit him at Dunkirk, and I promised to go without intending to do so, but the fates willed otherwise.

Tiretta was now left alone with his darling, who grew more infatuated with her Strephon every day, so well did he prove his love for her.

With a mind at ease, I now set myself to sentimentalize with Mdlle. Baletti, who gave me every day some new mark of the progress I was making.

The friendship and respect I bore her family made the idea of seduction out of the question, but as I grew more and more in love with her, and had no thoughts of marriage, I should have been puzzled to say at what end I was aiming, so I let myself glide along the stream without thinking where I was going.

In the beginning of May the Abbe de Bernis told me to come and call on him at Versailles, but first to see the Abbe de la Ville. The first question the abbe asked me was whether I thought myself capable of paying a visit to eight or ten men-of-war in the roads at Dunkirk, of making the acquaintance of the officers, and of completing a minute and circumstantial report on the victualling, the number of seamen, the guns, ammunition, discipline, etc., etc.

“I will make the attempt,” I said, “and will hand you in my report on my return, and it will be for you to say if I have succeeded or not.”

“As this is a secret mission, I cannot give you a letter of commendation; I can only give you some money and wish you a pleasant journey.”

“I do not wish to be paid in advance — on my return you can give me what you think fit. I shall want three or four days before setting out, as I must procure some letters of introduction.”

“Very good. Try to come back before the end of the month. I have no further instructions to give you.”

On the same day I had some conversation at the Palais Bourbon with my patron, who could not admire sufficiently my delicacy in refusing payment in advance; and taking advantage of my having done so he made me accept a packet of a hundred Louis. This was the last occasion on which I made use of his purse; I did not borrow from him at Rome fourteen years afterwards.

“As you are on a secret mission, my dear Casanova, I cannot give you a passport. I am sorry for it, but if I did so your object would be suspected.

However, you will easily be able to get one from the first gentleman of the chamber, on some pretext or other. Silvia will be more useful to you in that way than anybody else. You quite understand how discreet your behaviour must be. Above all, do not get into any trouble; for I suppose you know that, if anything happened to you, it would be of no use to talk of your mission. We should be obliged to know nothing about you, for ambassadors are the only avowed spies. Remember that you must be even more careful and reserved than they, and yet, if you wish to succeed, all this must be concealed, and you must have an air of freedom from constraint that you may inspire confidence. If, on your return, you like to shew me your report before handing it in, I will tell you what may require to be left out or added."

Full of this affair, the importance of which I exaggerated in proportion to my inexperience, I told Silvia that I wanted to accompany some English friends as far as Calais, and that she would oblige me by getting me a passport from the Duc de Gesvres. Always ready to oblige me, she sat down directly and wrote the duke a letter, telling me to deliver it myself since my personal description was necessary. These passports carry legal weight in the Isle de France only, but they procure one respect in all the northern parts of the kingdom.

Fortified with Silvia's letter, and accompanied by her husband, I went to the duke who was at his estate at St. Toro, and he had scarcely read the letter through before he gave me the passport. Satisfied on this point I went to Villette, and asked Madame if she had anything I could take to her niece. "You can take her the box of china statuettes," said she, "if M. Corneman has not sent them already." I called on the banker who gave me the box, and in return for a hundred Louis a letter of credit on a Dunkirk house. I begged him to name me in the letter in a special manner, as I was going for the sake of pleasure. He seemed glad to oblige me, and I started the same evening, and three days later I was at the "Hotel de la Conciergerie," in Dunkirk.

An hour after my arrival I gave the charming Madame P —— an agreeable surprise by handing her the box, and giving her her aunt's messages. Just as she was praising her husband, and telling me how happy she was, he came in, saying he was delighted to see me and asked me to stay in his house, without enquiring whether my stay in Dunkirk would be a long or short one. I of course thanked him, and after promising to dine now and again at his house I begged him to take me to the banker on whom I had a letter.

The banker read my letter, and gave me the hundred louis, and asked me to wait for him at my inn where he would come for me with the governor, a M. de Barail. This gentleman who, like most Frenchmen, was very polite, after making some ordinary enquiries, asked me to sup with him and his wife who was still at the play. The lady gave me as kind a reception as I had received from her husband. After we had partaken of an excellent supper several persons arrived, and play commenced in which I did not join, as I wished to study the society of the place, and above all certain officers of both services who were present. By means of speaking with an air of authority about naval matters, and by saying that I had served in the navy of the Venetian Republic, in three days I not only knew but was intimate with all the captains of the Dunkirk fleet. I talked at random about naval architecture, on the Venetian system of manoeuvres, and I noticed that the jolly sailors were better pleased at my blunders than at my sensible remarks.

Four days after I had been at Dunkirk, one of the captains asked me to dinner on his ship, and after that all the others did the same; and on every occasion I stayed in the ship for the rest of the day. I was curious about everything — and Jack is so trustful! I went into the hold, I asked questions innumerable, and I found plenty of young officers delighted to shew their own importance, who gossipped without needing any encouragement from me. I took care, however, to learn everything which would be of service to me, and in the evenings I put down on paper all the mental notes I had made during the day. Four or five hours was all I allowed myself for sleep, and in fifteen days I had learnt enough.

Pleasure, gaming, and idleness — my usual companions — had no part in this expedition, and I devoted all my energies to the object of my mission. I dined once with the banker, once with Madame P—— , in the town, and once in a pretty country house which her husband had, at about a league's distance from Dunkirk. She took me there herself, and on finding myself alone with the woman I had loved so well I delighted her by the delicacy of my behaviour, which was marked only by respect and friendship. As I still thought her charming, and as our connection had only ended six weeks ago, I was astonished to see myself so quiet, knowing my disposition too well to attribute my restraint to virtue. What, then, was the reason? An Italian proverb, speaking for nature, gives the true solution of the riddle.

‘La Mona non vuol pensieri’, and my head was full of thought.

My task was done, and bidding good-bye to all my friends, I set out in my post-chaise for Paris, going by another way for the sake of the change. About midnight, on my asking for horses at some stage, the name of which I forget, they told me that the next stage was the fortified town of Aire, which we should not be allowed to pass through at midnight.

“Get me the horses,” said I, “I will make them open the gates.”

I was obeyed, and in due time we reached the gates.

The postillion cracked his whip and the sentry called out, “Who goes there?”

“Express messenger.”

After making me wait for an hour the gate was opened, and I was told that I must go and speak to the governor. I did so, fretting and fuming on my way as if I were some great person, and I was taken to a room where a man in an elegant nightcap was lying beside a very pretty woman.

“Whose messenger are you?”

“Nobody’s, but as I am in a hurry.”

“That will do. We will talk the matter over tomorrow. In the meanwhile you will accept the hospitality of the guard-room.”

“But, sir …”

“But me no buts, if you please; leave the room.”

I was taken to the guard-room where I spent the night seated on the ground. The daylight appeared. I shouted, swore, made all the racket I could, said I wanted to go on, but nobody took any notice of me.

Ten o’clock struck. More impatient than I can say, I raised my voice and spoke to the officer, telling him that the governor might assassinate me if he liked, but had no right to deny me pen and paper, or to deprive me of the power of sending a messenger to Paris.

“Your name, sir?”

"Here is my passport."

He told me that he would take it to the governor, but I snatched it away from him.

"Would you like to see the governor?"

"Yes, I should."

We started for the governor's apartments. The officer was the first to enter, and in two minutes came out again and brought me in. I gave up my passport in proud silence. The governor read it through, examining me all the while to see if I was the person described; he then gave it me back, telling me that I was free to go where I liked.

"Not so fast, sir, I am not in such a hurry now. I shall send a messenger to Paris and wait his return; for by stopping me on my journey you have violated all the rights of the subject."

"You violated them yourself in calling yourself a messenger."

"Not at all; I told you that I was not one."

"Yes, but you told your postillion that you were, and that comes to the same thing."

"The postillion is a liar, I told him nothing of the kind."

"Why didn't you shew your passport?"

"Why didn't you give me time to do so? In the course of the next few days we shall see who is right."

"Just as you please."

I went out with the officer who took me to the posting-place, and a minute afterwards my carriage drew up. The posting-place was also an inn, and I told the landlord to have a special messenger ready to carry out my orders, to give me a good room and a good bed, and to serve me some rich soup immediately; and I warned him that I was accustomed to good fare. I had my portmanteau and all my belongings taken into my room, and having washed and put on my dressing-gown I sat down to write, to whom I did not know, for I was quite wrong in my contention. However, I had begun by playing the great man, and I thought myself bound in honour to sustain the part, without thinking whether I stood to have to back out of it or no. All the same I was vexed at having to wait in Aire till the return of the messenger, whom I was about to send to the-moon! In the meanwhile, not having closed an eye all night, I determined to take a rest. I was sitting in my shirt-sleeves and eating the soup which had been served to me, when the governor came in unaccompanied. I was both surprised and delighted to see him.

"I am sorry for what has happened, sir, and above all that you think you have good reason for complaint, inasmuch as I only did my duty, for how was I to imagine that your postillion had called you a messenger on his own responsibility."

"That's all very well, sir, but your sense of duty need not have made you drive me from your room."

"I was in need of sleep."

"I am in the same position at the present moment, but a feeling of politeness prevents me from imitating your example."

"May I ask if you have ever been in the service?"

"I have served by land and sea, and have left off when most people are only beginning."

"In that case you will be aware that the gates of a fortified town are only opened by night to the king's messengers or to military superiors."

"Yes, I know; but since they were opened the thing was done, and you might as well have been polite."

"Will you not put on your clothes, and walk a short distance with me!"

His invitation pleased me as well as his pride had displeased me. I had been thinking of a duel as a possible solution of the difficulty, but the present course took all trouble out of my hands. I answered quietly and politely that the honour of walking with him would be enough to make me put off all other calls, and I asked him to be seated while I made haste to dress myself.

I drew on my breeches, throwing the splendid pistols in my pockets on to the bed, called up the barber, and in ten minutes was ready. I put on my sword, and we went out.

We walked silently enough along two or three streets, passed through a gate, up a court, till we got to a door where my guide stopped short. He asked me to come in, and I found myself in a fine room full of people. I did not think of going back, but behaved as if I had been in my own house.

“Sir-my wife,” said the governor; and turning to her without pausing, “here is M. de Casanova, who has come to dinner with us.”

“I am delighted to hear it, sir, as otherwise I should have had no chance of forgiving you for waking me up the other night.”

“I paid dearly for my fault, madam, but after the purgatory I had endured I am sure you will allow me to be happy in this paradise.”

She answered with a charming smile, and after asking me to sit beside her she continued whatever conversation was possible in the midst of a game at cards.

I found myself completely outwitted, but the thing was done so pleasantly that all I could do was to put a good face on it — a feat which I found sufficiently easy from the relief I felt at no longer being bound to send a messenger to I did not know whom.

The governor well satisfied with his victory, got all at once into high spirits, and began to talk about military matters, the Court, and on general topics, often addressing me with that friendly ease which good French society knows so well how to reconcile with the rules of politeness; no one could have guessed that there had ever been the slightest difference between us. He had made himself the hero of the piece by the dexterous manner in which he had led up to the situation, but I had a fair claim to the second place, for I had made an experienced officer high in command give me the most flattering kind of satisfaction, which bore witness to the esteem with which I had inspired him.

The dinner was served. The success of my part depended on the manner in which it was played, and my wit has seldom been keener than during this meal. The whole conversation was in a pleasant vein, and I took great care to give the governor’s wife opportunities for shining in it. She was a charming and pretty woman, still quite youthful, for she was at least thirty years younger than the governor. Nothing was said about my six hours’ stay in the guard-room, but at dessert the governor escaped speaking plainly by a joke that was not worth the trouble of making.

“You’re a nice man,” said he, “to think I was going to fight you. Ah! ha! I have caught you, haven’t I?”

“Who told you that I was meditating a duel?”

“Confess that such was the case?”

“I protest; there is a great difference between believing and supposing; the one is positive, the other merely hypothetical. I must confess, however, that your invitation to take a walk roused my curiosity as to what was to come next, and I admire your wit. But you must believe me that I do not regard myself as caught in a trap — far from that, I am so well pleased that I feel grateful to you.”

In the afternoon we all took a walk, and I gave my arm to the charming mistress of the house. In the evening I took my leave, and set out early the next day having made a fair copy of my report.

At five o’clock in the morning I was fast asleep in my carriage, when I was suddenly awakened. We were at the gate of Amiens. The fellow at the door was an exciseman — a race everywhere detested and with good cause, for besides the insolence of their manners nothing makes a man feel more like a slave than the inquisitorial search they are accustomed to make through one’s clothes and most secret possessions. He asked me if I had anything contraband; and being in a bad temper at being deprived of my sleep to answer such a question I replied with an oath that I had nothing of the sort, and that he would have done better to let me sleep.

“As you talk in that style,” said the creature, “we will see what we can see.”

He ordered the postillion to pass on with the carriage. He had my luggage hauled down, and not being able to hinder him I fumed in silence.

I saw my mistake, but there was nothing to be done; and having no contraband goods I had nothing to fear, but my bad temper cost me two weary hours of delay. The joys of vengeance were depicted on the features of the exciseman. At the time of which I am writing these gaugers were the dregs of the people, but would become tractable on being treated with a little politeness. The sum of twenty-four sous given with good grace would make them as supple as a pair of gloves; they would bow to the travellers, wish them a pleasant journey, and give no trouble. I knew all this, but there are times when a man acts mechanically as I had done, unfortunately.

The scoundrels emptied my boxes and unfolded everything even to my shirts, between which they said I might have concealed English lace.

After searching everything they gave me back my keys, but they had not yet done with us; they began to search my carriage. The rascal who was at the head of them began to shout "victory," he had discovered the remainder of a pound of snuff which I had bought at St. Omer on my way to Dunkirk.

With a voice of triumph the chief exciseman gave orders that my carriage should be seized, and warned me that I would have to pay a fine of twelve hundred francs.

For the nonce my patience was exhausted, and I leave the names I called them to the imagination of the reader; but they were proof against words. I told them to take me to the superintendent's.

"You can go if you like," said they, "we are not your servants."

Surrounded by a curious crowd, whom the noise had drawn together, I began to walk hurriedly towards the town, and entering the first open shop I came to, I begged the shopkeeper to take me to the superintendent's. As I was telling the circumstances of the case, a man of good appearance, who happened to be in the shop, said that he would be glad to show me the way himself, though he did not think I should find the superintendent in, as he would doubtless be warned of my coming.

"Without your paying either the fine or caution money," said he, "you will find it a hard matter to get yourself out of the difficulty."

I entreated him to shew me the way to the superintendent's, and not to trouble about anything else. He advised me to give the rabble a louis to buy drink, and thus to rid myself of them, on which I gave him the louis, begging him to see to it himself, and the bargain was soon struck. He was a worthy attorney, and knew his men.

We got to the superintendent's; but, as my guide had warned me, my gentleman was not to be seen. The porter told us that he had gone out alone, that he would not be back before night, and that he did not know where he had gone.

“There’s a whole day lost, then,” said the attorney.

“Let us go and hunt him up; he must have well-known resorts and friends, and we will find them out. I will give you a louis for the day’s work; will that be enough?”

“Ample.”

We spent in vain four hours in looking for the superintendent in ten or twelve houses. I spoke to the masters of all of them, exaggerating considerably the injury that had been done to me. I was listened to, condoled with, and comforted with the remark that he would certainly be obliged to return to his house at night, and then he could not help hearing what I had to say. That would not suit me, so I continued the chase.

At one o’clock the attorney took me to an old lady, who was thought a great deal of in the town. She was dining all by herself. After giving great attention to my story, she said that she did not think she could be doing wrong in telling a stranger the whereabouts of an individual who, in virtue of his office, ought never to be inaccessible.

“And so, sir, I may reveal to you what after all is no secret. My daughter told me yesterday evening that she was going to dine at Madame N — — ‘s, and that the superintendent was to be there. Do you go after him now, and you will find him at table in the best society in Amiens, but,” said she, with a smile, “I advise you not to give your name at the door. The numerous servants will shew you the way without asking for your name. You can then speak to him whether he likes it or not, and though you don’t know him he will hear all you say. I am sorry that I cannot be present at so fine a situation.”

I gratefully took leave of the worthy lady, and I set off in all haste to the house I had been told of, the attorney, who was almost tired out, accompanying me. Without the least difficulty he and I slipped in between the crowds of servants till we got to a hall where there were more than twenty people sitting down to a rich and delicate repast.

“Ladies and gentlemen, you will excuse my troubling your quiet on this festive occasion with a tale of terror.”

At these words, uttered in the voice of Jupiter Tonans, everybody rose. The surprise of the high-born company of knights and ladies at my apparition can easily be imagined.

"Since seven o'clock this morning I have been searching from door to door and from street to street for his honour the superintendent, whom I have at last been fortunate enough to find here, for I know perfectly well that he is present, and that if he have ears he hears me now. I am come to request him to order his scoundrelly myrmidons who have seized my carriage to give it up, so that I may continue my journey. If the laws bid me pay twelve hundred francs for seven ounces of snuff for my own private use, I renounce those laws and declare that I will not pay a farthing. I shall stay here and send a messenger to my ambassador, who will complain that the 'jus gentium' has been violated in the Ile-de-France in my person, and I will have reparation. Louis XV. is great enough to refuse to become an accomplice in this strange onslaught. And if that satisfaction which is my lawful right is not granted me, I will make the thing an affair of state, and my Republic will not revenge itself by assaulting Frenchmen for a few pinches of snuff, but will expel them all root and branch. If you want to know whom I am, read this."

Foaming with rage, I threw my passport on the table.

A man picked it up and read it, and I knew him to be the superintendent. While my papers were being handed round I saw expressed on every face surprise and indignation, but the superintendent replied haughtily that he was at Amiens to administer justice, and that I could not leave the town unless I paid the fine or gave surety.

"If you are here to do justice, you will look upon my passport as a positive command to speed me on my way, and I bid you yourself be my surety if you are a gentleman."

"Does high birth go bail for breaches of the law in your country?"

"In my country men of high birth do not condescend to take dishonourable employments."

"No service under the king can be dishonourable."

"The hangman would say the same thing."

"Take care what you say."

"Take care what you do. Know, sir, that I am a free man who has been grievously outraged, and know, too, that I fear no one. Throw me out of the window, if you dare."

"Sir," said a lady to me in the voice of the mistress of the house, "in my house there is no throwing out of windows."

"Madam, an angry man makes use of terms which his better reason disowns. I am wronged by a most cruel act of injustice, and I humbly crave your pardon for having offended you. Please to reflect that for the first time in my life I have been oppressed and insulted, and that in a kingdom where I thought myself safe from all but highway robbers. For them I have my pistols, and for the worthy superintendents I have a passport, but I find the latter useless. For the sake of seven ounces of snuff which I bought at St. Omer three weeks ago, this gentleman robs me and interrupts my journey, though the king's majesty is my surety that no one shall interfere with me; he calls on me to pay fifty louis, he delivers me to the rage of his impudent menials and to the derision of the mob, from whom I had to rid myself by my money and the aid of this worthy man beside me. I am treated like a scoundrel, and the man who should have been my defender and deliverer slinks away and hides himself, and adds to the insults I have received. His myrmidons have turned my clothes upside down, and pitchforked my linen at the foot of the town gates, to revenge themselves on me for not giving them twenty, four sous. To-morrow the manner in which I have been treated will be known to the diplomatic bodies at Versailles and Paris, and in a few days it will be in all the newspapers. I will pay not a farthing because I owe not a farthing. Now, sir, am I to send a courier to the Duc de Gesvres?"

"What you have got to do is to pay, and if you do not care to pay, you may do whatever you like."

"Then, ladies and gentlemen, good-bye. As for you, sir, we shall meet again."

As I was rushing out of the room like a madman, I heard somebody calling out to me in good Italian to wait a minute. I turned round, and saw the voice had proceeded from a man past middle age, who addressed the superintendent thus: —

"Let this gentleman proceed on his journey; I will go bail for him. Do you understand me, superintendent? I will be his surety. You don't know these Italians. I went through the whole of the last war in Italy, and I understand the national character. Besides, I think the gentleman is in the right."

"Very good," said the official, turning to me. "All you have to do is to pay a matter of thirty or forty francs at the customs' office as the affair is already booked."

"I thought I told you that I would not pay a single farthing, and I tell it you again. But who are you, sir," said I, turning to the worthy old man, "who are good enough to become surety for me without knowing me?"

"I am a commissary of musters, sir, and my name is de la Bretonniere. I live in Paris at the 'Hotel de Saxe,' Rue Colombien, where I shall be glad to see you after to-morrow. We will go together to M. Britard, who, after hearing your case, will discharge my bail."

After I had expressed my gratitude, and told him that I would wait upon him without fail, I made my excuses to the mistress of the house and the guests, and left them.

I took my worthy attorney to dinner at the best inn in the place, and I gave him two louis for his trouble. Without his help and that of the commissary I should have been in great difficulty; it would have been a case of the earthen pot and the iron pot over again; for with jacks-in-office reason is of no use, and though I had plenty of money I would never have let the wretches rob me of fifty louis.

My carriage was drawn up at the door of the tavern; and just as I was getting in, one of the excisemen who had searched my luggage came and told me that I should find everything just as I left it: —

"I wonder at that since it has been left in the hands of men of your stamp; shall I find the snuff?"

"The snuff has been confiscated, my lord."

"I am sorry for you, then; for if it had been there I would have given you a louis."

"I will go and look for it directly."

"I have no time to wait for it. Drive on, postillion."

I got to Paris the next day, and four days after I waited on M. de la Bretonniere, who gave me a hearty welcome, and took me to M. Britard, the fermier-general, who discharged his bail. This M. Britard was a pleasant young man. He blushed when he heard all I had gone through.

I took my report to M. de Bernis, at the "Hotel Bourbon," and his excellence spent two hours over it, making me take out all unnecessary matter. I spent the time in making a fair copy, and the next day I took it to M. de la Ville, who read it through in silence, and told me that he would let me know the result. A month after I received five hundred louis, and I had the pleasure of hearing that M. de Cremille, the first lord of the admiralty, had pronounced my report to be not only perfectly accurate but very suggestive. Certain reasonable apprehensions prevented me from making myself known to him — an honour which M. de Bernis wished to procure for me.

When I told him my adventures on the way back, he laughed, but said that the highest merit of a secret agent was to keep out of difficulties; for though he might have the tact to extricate himself from them, yet he got talked of, which it should be his chief care to avoid.

This mission cost the admiralty twelve thousand francs, and the minister might easily have procured all the information I gave him without spending a penny. Any intelligent young naval officer would have done it just as well, and would have acquitted himself with zeal and discretion, to gain the good opinion of the ministers. But all the French ministers are the same. They lavished money which came out of other people's pockets to enrich their creatures, and they were absolute; the downtrodden people counted for nothing, and of this course the indebtedness of the state and the confusion of the finances were the inevitable results. It is quite true that the Revolution was a necessity, but it should have been marked with patriotism and right feeling, not with blood. However, the nobility and clergy were not men of sufficient generosity to make the necessary sacrifices to the king, the state, and to themselves.

Silvia was much amused at my adventures at Aire and Amiens, and her charming daughter shewed much pity for the bad night I had passed in the guard-room. I told her that the hardship would have been much less if I had

had a wife beside me. She replied that a wife, if a good one, would have been only too happy to alleviate my troubles by sharing in them, but her mother observed that a woman of parts, after seeing to the safety of my baggage and my coach, would have busied herself in taking the necessary steps for setting me at liberty, and I supported this opinion as best indicating the real duty of a good wife.

CHAPTER III

The Count de la Tour D'Auvergne and Madame D'Urfe — Camille —
My Passion for the Count's Mistress — The Ridiculous Incident
Which Cured Me — The Count de St. Germain

In spite of my love for Mdlle. Baletti, I did not omit to pay my court to the most noted ladies of the pavement; but I was chiefly interested in kept women, and those who consider themselves as belonging to the public only in playing before them night by night, queens or chamber-maids.

In spite of this affection, they enjoy what they call their independence, either by devoting themselves to Cupid or to Plutus, and more frequently to both together. As it is not very difficult to make the acquaintance of these priestesses of pleasure and dissipation, I soon got to know several of them.

The halls of the theatres are capital places for amateurs to exercise their talents in intriguing, and I had profited tolerably well by the lessons I had learnt in this fine school.

I began by becoming the friend of their lovers, and I often succeeded by pretending to be a man of whom nobody need be afraid.

Camille, an actress and dancer at the Italian play, with whom I had fallen in love at Fontainebleu seven years ago, was one of those of whom I was most fond, liking the society at her pretty little house, where she lived with the Count d'Eigreville, who was a friend of mine, and fond of my company. He was a brother of the Marquis de Gamache and of the Countess du Rumain, and was a fine young fellow of an excellent disposition. He was never so well pleased as when he saw his mistress surrounded by people — a taste which is rarely found, but which is very convenient, and the sign of a temperament not afflicted by jealousy. Camille had no other lovers — an astonishing thing in an actress of the kind, but being full of tact and wit she drove none of her admirers to despair. She was neither over sparing nor over generous in the distribution of her favours, and knew how to make the whole town rave about her without fearing the results of indiscretion or sorrows of being abandoned.

The gentleman of whom, after her lover, she took most notice, was the Count de la Tour d'Auvergne, a nobleman of an old family, who idolized her, and, not being rich enough to possess her entirely, had to be content with what she gave him. Camille had given him a young girl, for whose keep she paid, who lived with Tour d'Auvergne in furnished apartments in the Rue de Taranne, and whom he said he loved as one loves a portrait, because she came from Camille. The count often took her with him to Camille's to supper. She was fifteen, simple in her manners, and quite devoid of ambition. She told her lover that she would never forgive him an act of infidelity except with Camille, to whom she felt bound to yield all since to her she owed all.

I became so much in love with her that I often went to Camille's solely to see her and to enjoy those artless speeches with which she delighted the company. I strove as best I could to conceal my flame, but often I found myself looking quite sad at the thought of the impossibility of my love being crowned with success. If I had let my passion be suspected I should have been laughed at, and should have made myself a mark for the pitiless sarcasms of Camille. However, I got my cure in the following ridiculous manner: —

Camille lived at the Barriere Blanche, and on leaving her house, one rainy evening, I sought in vain for a coach to take me home.

“My dear Casanova,” said Tour d'Auvergne, “I can drop you at your own door without giving myself the slightest inconvenience, though my carriage is only seated for two; however, my sweetheart can sit on our knees.”

I accepted his offer with pleasure, and we seated ourselves in the carriage, the count on my left hand and Babet on both our knees.

Burning with amorous passion I thought I would take the opportunity, and, to lose no time, as the coachman was driving fast, I took her hand and pressed it softly. The pressure was returned. Joy! I carried the hand to my lips, and covered it with affectionate though noiseless kisses. Longing to convince her of the ardour of my passion, and thinking that her hand would not refuse to do me a sweet service, I … but just at critical moment, “I am really very much obliged to you, my dear fellow,” said the Count de la Tour d’Auvergne, “for a piece of politeness thoroughly Italian, of which, however, I do not feel worthy; at least, I hope it’s meant as politeness and not as a sign of contempt.”

At these dreadful words I stretched out my hand and felt the sleeve of his coat. Presence of mind was no good in a situation like this, when his words were followed by a peal of loud laughter which would have confounded the hardiest spirit. As for me, I could neither join in his laughter nor deny his accusation; the situation was a fearful one, or would have been if the friendly shades of night had not covered my confusion. Babet did her best to find out from the count why he laughed so much, but he could not tell her for laughing, for which I gave thanks with all my heart. At last the carriage stopped at my house, and as soon as my servant had opened the door of my carriage I got down as fast as I could, and wished them good night — a compliment which Tour d’Auvergne returned with fresh peals of laughter. I entered my house in a state of stupefaction, and half an hour elapsed before I, too, began to laugh at the adventure. What vexed me most was the expectation of having malicious jests passed upon me, for I had not the least right to reckon on the count’s discretion. However, I had enough sense to determine to join in the laughter if I could, and if not, to take it well, for this is, and always will be, the best way to get the laughers on one’s own side at Paris.

For three days I saw nothing of the delightful count, and on the fourth I resolved to ask him to take breakfast with me, as Camille had sent to my house to enquire how I was. My adventure would not prevent me visiting her house, but I was anxious to know how it had been taken.

As soon as Tour d’Auvergne saw me he began to roar with laughter, and I joined in, and we greeted each other in the friendliest manner possible. “My dear count,” said I, “let us forget this foolish story. You have no business to attack me, as I do not know how to defend myself.”

“Why should you defend yourself, my dear fellow. We like you all the better for it, and this humorous adventure makes us merry every evening.”

“Everybody knows it, then?”

“Of course, why not? It makes Camille choke with laughter. Come this evening; I will bring Babet, and she will amuse you as she maintains that you were not mistaken.”

“She is right.”

“Eh? what? You do me too much honour, and I don’t believe you; but have it as you like.”

“I can’t do better, but I must confess when all’s said that you were not the person to whom my fevered imagination offered such ardent homage.”

At supper I jested, pretended to be astonished at the count’s indiscretion, and boasted of being cured of my passion. Babet called me a villain, and maintained that I was far from cured; but she was wrong, as the incident had disgusted me with her, and had attached me to the count, who, indeed, was a man of the most amiable character. Nevertheless, our friendship might have been a fatal one, as the reader will see presently.

One evening, when I was at the Italian theatre, Tour d’Auvergne came up to me and asked me to lend him a hundred louis, promising to repay me next Saturday.

“I haven’t got the money,” I said, “but my purse and all it contains is at your service.”

“I want a hundred louis, my dear fellow, and immediately, as I lost them at play yesterday evening at the Princess of Anhalt’s.”

“But I haven’t got them.”

“The receiver of the lottery ought always to be able to put his hand on a hundred louis.”

“Yes, but I can’t touch my cash-box; I have to give it up this day week.”

“So you can; as I will repay you on Saturday. Take a hundred louis from the box, and put in my word of honour instead; don’t you think that is worth a hundred Louis?”

“I have nothing to say to that, wait for me a minute.”

I ran to my office, took out the money and gave it to him. Saturday came but no count, and as I had no money I pawned my diamond ring and replaced the hundred louis I owed the till. Three or four days afterwards, as I was at the Comedie Francaise, the Count de la Tour d'Auvergne came up to me and began to apologize. I replied by shewing my hand, and telling him that I had pawned my ring to save my honour. He said, with a melancholy air, that a man had failed to keep his word with him, but he would be sure to give me the hundred louis on the Saturday following, adding, "I give you my word of honour."

"Your word of honour is in my box, so let's say nothing about that. You can repay me when you like."

The count grew as pale as death.

"My word of honour, my dear Casanova, is more precious to me than my life; and I will give you the hundred louis at nine o'clock to-morrow morning at a hundred paces from the cafe at the end of the Champs-Elysees. I will give you them in person, and nobody will see us. I hope you will not fail to be there, and that you will bring your sword. I shall have mine."

"Faith, count! that's making me pay rather dear for my jest. You certainly do me a great honour, but I would rather beg your pardon, if that would prevent this troublesome affair from going any further."

"No, I am more to blame than you, and the blame can only be removed by the sword's point. Will you meet me?

"I do not see how I can refuse you, although I am very much averse to the affair."

I left him and went to Silvia's, and took my supper sadly, for I really liked this amiable nobleman, and in my opinion the game we were going to play was not worth the candle. I would not have fought if I could have convinced myself that I was in the wrong, but after turning the matter well-over, and looking at it from every point of view, I could not help seeing that the fault lay in the count's excessive touchiness, and I resolved to give him satisfaction. At all hazards I would not fail to keep the appointment.

I reached the cafe a moment after him. We took breakfast together and he payed. We then went out and walked towards the Etoile. When we got to a sheltered place he drew a bundle of a hundred louis from his pocket, gave it to me with the greatest courtesy, and said that one stroke of the sword would be sufficient. I could not reply.

He went off four paces and drew his sword. I did the same without saying a word, and stepping forward almost as soon as our blades crossed I thrust and hit him. I drew back my sword and summoned him to keep his word, feeling sure that I had wounded him in his chest.

He gently kissed his sword, and putting his hand into his breast he drew it out covered with blood, and said pleasantly to me, “I am satisfied.”

I said to him all that I could, and all that it was my duty to say in the way of compliment, while he was stanching the blood with his handkerchief, and on looking at the point of my sword I was delighted to find that the wound was of the slightest. I told him so offering to see him home. He thanked me and begged me to keep my own counsel, and to reckon him henceforth amongst my truest friends. After I had embraced him, mingling my tears with my embraces, I returned home, sad at heart but having learnt a most useful lesson. No one ever knew of our meeting, and a week afterwards we supped together at Camille’s.

A few days after, I received from M. de la Ville the five hundred louis for my Dunkirk mission. On my going to see Camille she told me that Tour d’Auvergne was kept in bed by an attack of sciatica, and that if I liked we could pay him a visit the next day. I agreed, and we went. After breakfast was over I told him in a serious voice that if he would give me a free hand I could cure him, as he was not suffering from sciatica but from a moist and windy humour which I could disperse my means of the Talisman of Solomon and five mystic words. He began to laugh, but told me to do what I liked.

“Very good, then I will go out and buy a brush.”

“I will send a servant.”

“No, I must get it myself, as I want some drugs as well.” I bought some nitre, mercury, flower of sulphur, and a small brush, and on my return said, “I must have a little of your —— , this liquid is indispensable, and it must be quite fresh.”

Camille and he began to laugh, but I succeeded in keeping the serious face suitable to my office. I handed him a mug and modestly lowered the curtains, and he then did what I wanted.

I made a mixture of the various ingredients, and I told Camille that she must rub his thigh whilst I spoke the charm, but I warned her that if she laughed while she was about it it would spoil all. This threat only increased their good humour, and they laughed without cessation; for as soon as they thought they had got over it, they would look at one another, and after repressing themselves as long as they could would burst out afresh, till I began to think that I had bound them to an impossible condition. At last, after holding their sides for half an hour, they set themselves to be serious in real earnest, taking my imperturbable gravity for their example. De la Tour d'Auvergne was the first to regain a serious face, and he then offered Camille his thigh, and she, fancying herself on the boards, began to rub the sick man, whilst I mumbled in an undertone words which they would not have understood however clearly I had spoken, seeing that I did not understand them myself.

I was nearly spoiling the efficacy of the operation when I saw the grimaces they made in trying to keep serious. Nothing could be more amusing than the expression on Camille's face. At last I told her that she had rubbed enough, and dipping the brush into the mixture I drew on his thigh the five-pointed star called Solomon's seal. I then wrapped up the thigh in three napkins, and I told him that if he would keep quiet for twenty-four hours without taking off — his napkins, I would guarantee a cure.

The most amusing part of it all was, that by the time I had done the count and Camille laughed no more, their faces wore a bewildered look, and as for me … I could have sworn I had performed the most wonderful work in the world. If one tells a lie a sufficient number of times, one ends by believing it.

A few minutes after this operation, which I had performed as if by instinct and on the spur of the moment, Camille and I went away in a coach, and I told her so many wonderful tales that when she got out at her door she looked quite mazed.

Four or five days after, when I had almost forgotten the farce, I heard a carriage stopping at my door, and looking out of my window saw M. de la Tour d'Auvergne skipping nimbly out of the carriage.

"You were sure of success, then," said he, "as you did not come to see me the day after your astounding operation."

"Of course I was sure, but if I had not been too busy you would have seen me, for all that."

"May I take a bath?"

"No, don't bathe till you feel quite well."

"Very good. Everybody is in a state of astonishment at your feat, as I could not help telling the miracle to all my acquaintances. There are certainly some sceptics who laugh at me, but I let them talk."

"You should have kept your own counsel; you know what Paris is like. Everybody will be considering me as a master-quack."

"Not at all, not at all. I have come to ask a favour of you."

"What's that?"

"I have an aunt who enjoys a great reputation for her skill in the occult sciences, especially in alchemy. She is a woman of wit, very, rich, and sole mistress of her fortune; in short, knowing her will do you no harm. She longs to see you, for she pretends to know you, and says that you are not what you seem. She has entreated me to take you to dine with her, and I hope you will accept the invitation. Her name is the Marchioness d'Urfe."

I did not know this lady, but the name of d'Urfe caught my attention directly, as I knew all about the famous Anne d'Urfe who flourished towards the end of the seventeenth century. The lady was the widow of his great-grandson, and on marrying into the family became a believer in the mystical doctrines of a science in which I was much interested, though I gave it little credit. I therefore replied that I should be glad to go, but on the condition that the party should not exceed the count, his aunt, and myself.

"She has twelve people every day to dinner, and you will find yourself in the company of the best society in Paris."

"My dear fellow, that's exactly what I don't want; for I hate to be thought a magician, which must have been the effect of the tales you have told."

"Oh, no! not at all; your character is well known, and you will find yourself in the society of people who have the greatest regard for you."

"Are you sure of that?"

“The Duchess de l’Oragnais told me, that, four or five years ago, you were often to be seen at the Palais Royal, and that you used to spend whole days with the Duchess d’Orleans; Madame de Bouffers, Madame de Blots, and Madame de Melfort have also talked to me about you. You are wrong not to keep up your old acquaintances. I know at least a hundred people of the first rank who are suffering from the same malady as that of which you cured me, and would give the half of their goods to be cured.”

De la Tour d’Auvergne had reason on his side, but as I knew his wonderful cure had been due to a singular coincidence, I had no desire to expose myself to public ridicule. I therefore told him that I did not wish to become a public character, and that he must tell Madame d’Urfe that I would have the honour of calling on her in strict privacy only, and that she might tell me the day and hour on which I should kneel before her.

The same evening I had a letter from the count making an appointment at the Tuileries for the morrow; he was to meet me there, and take me to his aunt’s to dinner. No one else was to be present.

The next day we met each other as had been arranged, and went to see Madame d’Urfe, who lived on the Quai des Theatins, on the same side as the “Hotel Bouillon.”

Madame d’Urfe, a woman advanced in years, but still handsome, received me with all the courtly grace of the Court of the Regency. We spent an hour and a half in indifferent conversation, occupied in studying each other’s character. Each was trying to get at the bottom of the other.

I had not much trouble in playing the part of the unenlightened, for such, in point of fact, was my state of mind, and Madame d’Urfe unconsciously betrayed the desire of shewing her learning; this put me at my ease, for I felt sure I could make her pleased with me if I succeeded in making her pleased with herself.

At two o’clock the same dinner that was prepared every day for twelve was served for us three. Nothing worthy of note (so far as conversation went) was done at dinner, as we talked commonplace after the manner of people of fashion.

After the dessert Tour d’Auvergne left us to go and see the Prince de Turenne, who was in a high fever, and after he was gone Madame d’Urfe began to discuss alchemy and magic, and all the other branches of her beloved science, or rather infatuation. When we got on to the magnum opus, and I asked her if she knew the nature of the first matter, it was only her politeness which prevented her from laughing; but controlling herself, she replied graciously that she already possessed the philosopher's stone, and that she was acquainted with all the operations of the work. She then shewed me a collection of books which had belonged to the great d'Urfe, and Renee of Savoy, his wife; but she had added to it manuscripts which had cost her more than a hundred thousand francs. Paracelsus was her favourite author, and according to her he was neither man, woman, nor hermaphrodite, and had the misfortune to poison himself with an overdose of his panacea, or universal medicine. She shewed me a short manuscript in French, where the great work was clearly explained. She told me that she did not keep it under lock and key, because it was written in a cypher, the secret of which was known only to herself.

"You do not believe, then, in steganography."

"No, sir, and if you would like it, I will give you this which has been copied from the original."

"I accept it, madam, with all the more gratitude in that I know its worth."

From the library we went into the laboratory, at which I was truly astonished. She shewed me matter that had been in the furnace for fifteen years, and was to be there for four or five years more. It was a powder of projection which was to transform instantaneously all metals into the finest gold. She shewed me a pipe by which the coal descended to the furnace, keeping it always at the same heat. The lumps of coal were impelled by their own weight at proper intervals and in equal quantities, so that she was often three months without looking at the furnace, the temperature remaining the same the whole time. The cinders were removed by another pipe, most ingeniously contrived, which also answered the purpose of a ventilator.

The calcination of mercury was mere child's play to this wonderful woman. She shewed me the calcined matter, and said that whenever I liked she would instruct me as to the process. I next saw the Tree of Diana of the famous Taliamed, whose pupil she was. His real name was Maillot, and according to Madame d'Urfe he had not, as was supposed, died at

Marseilles, but was still alive; "and," added she, with a slight smile, "I often get letters from him. If the Regent of France," said she, "had listened to me he would be alive now. He was my first friend; he gave me the name of Egeria, and he married me to M. d'Urfe."

She possessed a commentary on Raymond Lully, which cleared up all difficult points in the comments of Arnold de Villanova on the works of Roger Bacon and Heber, who, according to her, were still alive. This precious manuscript was in an ivory casket, the key of which she kept religiously; indeed her laboratory was a closed room to all but myself. I saw a small cask full of 'platina del Pinto', which she told me she could transmute into gold when she pleased. It had been given her by M. Vood himself in 1743. She shewed me the same metal in four phials. In the first three the platinum remained intact in sulphuric, nitric, and muriatic acid, but in the fourth, which contained 'aqua regia', the metal had not been able to resist the action of the acid. She melted it with the burning-glass, and said it could be melted in no other way, which proved, in her opinion, its superiority to gold. She shewed me some precipitated by sal ammoniac, which would not precipitate gold.

Her athanor had been alight for fifteen years. The top was full of black coal, which made me conclude that she had been in the laboratory two or three days before. Stopping before the Tree of Diana, I asked her, in a respectful voice, if she agreed with those who said it was only fit to amuse children. She replied, in a dignified manner, that she had made it to divert herself with the crystallization of the silver, spirit of nitre, and mercury, and that she looked upon it as a piece of metallic vegetation, representing in little what nature performed on a larger scale; but she added, very seriously, that she could make a Tree of Diana which should be a very Tree of the Sun, which would produce golden fruit, which might be gathered, and which would continue to be produced till no more remained of a certain ingredient. I said modestly that I could not believe the thing possible without the powder of projection, but her only answer was a pleased smile.

She then pointed out a china basin containing nitre, mercury, and sulphur, and a fixed salt on a plate.

"You know the ingredients, I suppose?" said she.

"Yes; this fixed salt is a salt of urine."

"You are right."

"I admire your sagacity, madam. You have made an analysis of the mixture with which I traced the pentacle on your nephew's thigh, but in what way can you discover the words which give the pentacle its efficacy?"

"In the manuscript of an adept, which I will shew you, and where you will find the very words you used."

I bowed my head in reply, and we left this curious laboratory.

We had scarcely arrived in her room before Madame d'Urfe drew from a handsome casket a little book, bound in black, which she put on the table while she searched for a match. While she was looking about, I opened the book behind her back, and found it to be full of pentacles, and by good luck found the pentacle I had traced on the count's thigh. It was surrounded by the names of the spirits of the planets, with the exception of those of Saturn and Mars. I shut up the book quickly. The spirits named were the same as those in the works of Agrippa, with which I was acquainted. With an unmoved countenance I drew near her, and she soon found the match, and her appearance surprised me a good deal; but I will speak of that another time.

The marchioness sat down on her sofa, and making me to do the like she asked me if I was acquainted with the talismans of the Count de Treves?

"I have never heard of them, madam, but I know those of Poliphilus:"

"It is said they are the same."

"I don't believe it."

"We shall see. If you will write the words you uttered, as you drew the pentacle on my nephew's thigh, and if I find the same talisman with the same words around it, the identity will be proved."

"It will, I confess. I will write the words immediately."

I wrote out the names of the spirits. Madame d'Urfe found the pentacle and read out the names, while I pretending astonishment, gave her the paper, and much to her delight she found the names to be the same.

"You see," said she, "that Poliphilus and the Count de Treves possessed the same art."

"I shall be convinced that it is so, if your book contains the manner of pronouncing the ineffable names. Do you know the theory of the planetary hours?"

"I think so, but they are not needed in this operation."

"They are indispensable, madam, for without them one cannot work with any certainty. I drew Solomon's pentacle on the thigh of Count de la Tour d'Auvergne in the hour of Venus, and if I had not begun with Arael, the spirit of Venus, the operation would have had no effect."

"I did not know that. And after Arael?"

"Next comes Mercury, then the Moon, then Jupiter, and then the Sun. It is, you see, the magic cycle of Zoroaster, in which Saturn and Mars are omitted."

"And how would you have proceeded if you had gone to work in the hour of the Moon?"

"I should have begun with Jupiter, passed to the Sun, then to Arael or Venus, and I should have finished at Mercury."

"I see sir, that you are most apt in the calculation of the planetary hours."

"Without it one can do nothing in magic, as one would have no proper data; however, it is an easy matter to learn. Anyone could pick it up in a month's time. The practical use, however, is much more difficult than the theory; this, indeed, is a complicated affair. I never leave my house without ascertaining the exact number of minutes in the day, and take care that my watch is exact to the time, for a minute more or less would make all the difference in the world."

"Would you have the goodness to explain the theory to me."

"You will find it in Artephius and more clearly in Sandivogius."

"I have both works, but they are in Latin."

"I will make you a translation of them."

"You are very kind; I shall be extremely obliged to you."

"I have seen such things here, madam, that I could not refuse, for reasons which I may, perhaps, tell you to-morrow."

"Why not to-day?"

"Because I ought to know the name of your familiar spirit before I tell you."

"You know, then, that I have a familiar? You should have one, if it is true that you possess the powder of projection."

"I have one."

"Give me the oath of the order."

"I dare not, and you know why."

"Perhaps I shall be able to remove your fears by tomorrow."

This absurd oath was none other than that of the princes of the Rosy Cross, who never pronounce it without being certain that each party is a Rosicrucian, so Madame d'Urfe was quite right in her caution, and as for me I had to pretend to be afraid myself. The fact is I wanted to gain time, for I knew perfectly well the nature of the oath. It may be given between men without any indecency, but a woman like Madame d'Urfe would probably not relish giving it to a man whom she saw for the first time.

"When we find this oath alluded to in the Holy Scriptures," she said, "it is indicated by the words 'he swore to him by laying his hand on his thigh.'"

"But the thigh is not really what is meant; and consequently we never find any notice of a man taking this oath to a woman, as a woman has no 'verbum'."

The Count de la Tour d'Auvergne came back at nine o'clock in the evening, and he skewed no little astonishment at seeing me still with his aunt. He told us that his cousin's fever had increased, and that small-pox had declared itself; "and I am going to take leave of you, my dear aunt, at least for a month, as I intend to shut myself up with the sick man."

Madame d'Urfe praised his zeal, and gave him a little bag on his promising to return it to her after the cure of the prince.

"Hang it round his neck and the eruption will come out well, and he will be perfectly cured."

He promised to do so, and having wished us good evening he went out.

"I do not know, madam, what your bag contains, but if it have aught to do with magic, I have no confidence in its efficacy, as you have neglected to observe the planetary hour."

"It is an electrum, and magic and the observance of the hour have nothing to do with it."

"I beg your pardon."

She then said that she thought my desire for privacy praiseworthy, but she was sure I should not be ill pleased with her small circle, if I would but enter it.

"I will introduce you to all my friends," said she, "by asking them one at a time, and you will then be able to enjoy the company of them all."

I accepted her proposition.

In consequence of this arrangement I dined the next day with M. Grin and his niece, but neither of them took my fancy. The day after, I dined with an Irishman named Macartney, a physician of the old school, who bored me terribly. The next day the guest was a monk who talked literature, and spoke a thousand follies against Voltaire, whom I then much admired, and against the "Esprit des Lois," a favourite work of mine, which the cowled idiot refused to attribute to Montesquieu, maintaining it had been written by a monk. He might as well have said that a Capuchin created the heavens and the earth.

On the day following Madame d'Urfe asked me to dine with the Chevalier d'Arzigny, a man upwards of eighty, vain, foppish, and consequently ridiculous, known as "The Last of the Beaus." However, as he had moved in the court of Louis XIV., he was interesting enough, speaking with all the courtesy of the school, and having a fund of anecdote relating to the Court of that despotic and luxurious monarch.

His follies amused me greatly. He used rouge, his clothes were cut in the style which obtained in the days of Madame de Sevigne, he professed himself still the devoted lover of his mistress, with whom he supped every night in the company of his lady friends, who were all young and all delightful, and preferred his society to all others; however, in spite of these seductions, he remained faithful to his mistress.

The Chevalier d'Arzigny had an amiability of character which gave whatever he said an appearance of truth, although in his capacity of courtier truth was probably quite unknown to him. He always wore a bouquet of the most strongly-smelling flowers, such as tuberoses, jonquils, and Spanish jasmine; his wig was plastered down with amber-scented pomade, his teeth were made of ivory, and his eyebrows dyed and perfumed, and his whole person exhaled an odour to which Madame d'Urfe did not object, but which I could scarcely bear. If it had not been for this drawback I should probably have cultivated his society. He was a professed Epicurean, and carried out the system with an amazing tranquillity. He said that he would undertake to receive twenty-four blows with the stick every morning on the condition that he should not die within the twenty-four hours, and that the older he grew the more blows he would gladly submit to. This was being in love with life with a vengeance.

Another day I dined with M. Charon, who was a counsellor, and in charge of a suit between Madame d'Urfe and her daughter Madame du Chatelet, whom she disliked heartily. The old counsellor had been the favoured lover of the marchioness forty years before, and he thought himself bound by the remembrance of their love-passages to support the cause of his old sweetheart. In those days French magistrates thought they had a right to take the side of their friends, or of persons in whom they had an interest, sometimes for friendship's sake, and sometimes for a monetary consideration; they thought, in fact, that they were justified in selling justice.

M. Charon bored me like the others, as was natural, considering we had no two tastes in common.

The scene was changed the next day when I was amused with the company of M. de Viarme, a young counsellor, a nephew of Madame d'Urfe's, and his pretty and charming wife. He was the author of the "Remonstrances to the King," a work which got him a great reputation, and had been read eagerly by the whole town. He told me that the business of a counsellor was to oppose everything done by the crown, good and bad. His reasons for this theory were those given by all minorities, and I do not think I need trouble my readers with them.

The most enjoyable dinner I had was with Madame de Gergi, who came with the famous adventurer, known by the name of the Count de St. Germain. This individual, instead of eating, talked from the beginning of the meal to the end, and I followed his example in one respect as I did not eat, but listened to him with the greatest attention. It may safely be said that as a conversationalist he was unequalled.

St. Germain gave himself out for a marvel and always aimed at exciting amazement, which he often succeeded in doing. He was scholar, linguist, musician, and chemist, good-looking, and a perfect ladies' man. For awhile he gave them paints and cosmetics; he flattered them, not that he would make them young again (which he modestly confessed was beyond him) but that their beauty would be preserved by means of a wash which, he said, cost him a lot of money, but which he gave away freely.

He had contrived to gain the favour of Madame de Pompadour, who had spoken about him to the king, for whom he had made a laboratory, in which the monarch — a martyr to boredom — tried to find a little pleasure or distraction, at all events, by making dyes. The king had given him a suite of rooms at Chambord, and a hundred thousand francs for the construction of a laboratory, and according to St. Germain the dyes discovered by the king would have a materially beneficial influence on the quality of French fabrics.

This extraordinary man, intended by nature to be the king of impostors and quacks, would say in an easy, assured manner that he was three hundred years old, that he knew the secret of the Universal Medicine, that he possessed a mastery over nature, that he could melt diamonds, professing himself capable of forming, out of ten or twelve small diamonds, one large one of the finest water without any loss of weight. All this, he said, was a mere trifle to him. Notwithstanding his boastings, his bare-faced lies, and his manifold eccentricities, I cannot say I thought him offensive. In spite of my knowledge of what he was and in spite of my own feelings, I thought him an astonishing man as he was always astonishing me. I shall have something more to say of this character further on.

When Madame d'Urfe had introduced me to all her friends, I told her that I would dine with her whenever she wished, but that with the exception of her relations and St. Germain, whose wild talk amused me, I should prefer her to invite no company. St. Germain often dined with the best society in the capital, but he never ate anything, saying that he was kept alive by mysterious food known only to himself. One soon got used to his eccentricities, but not to his wonderful flow of words which made him the soul of whatever company he was in.

By this time I had fathomed all the depths of Madame d'Urfe's character. She firmly believed me to be an adept of the first order, making use of another name for purposes of my own; and five or six weeks later she was confirmed in this wild idea on her asking me if I had diciphered the manuscript which pretended to explain the Magnum Opus.

"Yes," said I, "I have deciphered it, and consequently read it, and I now beg to return it you with my word of honour that I have not made a copy; in fact, I found nothing in it that I did not know before."

"Without the key you mean, but of course you could never find out that."

"Shall I tell you the key?"

"Pray do so."

I gave her the word, which belonged to no language that I know of, and the marchioness was quite thunderstruck.

"This is too amazing," said she; "I thought myself the sole possessor of that mysterious word — for I had never written it down, laying it up in my memory — and I am sure I have never told anyone of it."

I might have informed her that the calculation which enabled me to decipher the manuscript furnished me also with the key, but the whim took me to tell her that a spirit had revealed it to me. This foolish tale completed my mastery over this truly learned and sensible woman on everything but her hobby. This false confidence gave me an immense ascendancy over Madame d'Urfe, and I often abused my power over her. Now that I am no longer the victim of those illusions which pursued me throughout my life, I blush at the remembrance of my conduct, and the penance I impose on myself is to tell the whole truth, and to extenuate nothing in these Memoirs.

The wildest notion in the good marchioness's brain was a firm belief in the possibility of communication between mortals and elementary spirits. She would have given all her goods to attain to such communication, and she had several times been deceived by impostors who made her believe that she attained her aim.

“I did not think,” said she, sadly, “that your spirit would have been able to force mine to reveal my secrets.”

“There was no need to force your spirit, madam, as mine knows all things of his own power.”

“Does he know the inmost secrets of my soul?”

“Certainly, and if I ask him he is forced to disclose all to me.”

“Can you ask him when you like?”

“Oh, yes! provided I have paper and ink. I can even ask him questions through you by telling you his name.”

“And will you tell it me?”

“I can do what I say; and, to convince you, his name is Paralis. Ask him a simple question in writing, as you would ask a common mortal. Ask him, for instance, how I deciphered your manuscript, and you shall see I will compel him to answer you.”

Trembling with joy, Madame d’Urfe put her question, expressed it in numbers, then following my method in pyramid shape; and I made her extract the answer, which she wrote down in letters. At first she only obtained consonants, but by a second process which supplied the vowels she received a clear and sufficient answer. Her every feature expressed astonishment, for she had drawn from the pyramid the word which was the key to her manuscript. I left her, carrying with me her heart, her soul, her mind, and all the common sense which she had left.

CHAPTER IV

Absurd Ideas of Madame D’Urfe on My Supernatural Powers — Marriage of My Brother — I Conceive a Plan on His Wedding Day — I Go to Holland on a Financial Mission — The Jew Boaz Gives Me a Lesson — M. d’Afri — Esther — Another Casanova — I Find Therese Imer Again

By the time that the Prince du Turenne had recovered from the small-pox and the Count de la Tour d’Auvergne had left him, the latter, knowing his aunt’s taste for the occult sciences, was not surprised to find me become her confident and most intimate friend.

I was glad so see him and all the relations of the marchioness at dinner, as I was delighted with the courtesy with which they treated me. I am referring more especially to her brothers MM. de Pont-Carre and de Viarme who had lately been chosen head of the trade companies, and his son. I have already spoken of Madame du Chatelet, the marchioness’s daughter, but an unlucky lawsuit separated them, and she no longer formed one of the family circle.

De la Tour d’Auvergne having been obliged to rejoin his regiment which was in garrison in Brittany, the marchioness and I dined together almost every day and people looked upon me as her husband, and despite the improbability of the supposition this was the only way in which they could account for the long hours we spent together. Madame d’Urfe thought that I was rich and looked upon my position at the lottery as a mere device for preserving my incognito.

I was the possessor in her estimation, not only of the philosopher’s stone, but also of the power of speaking with the whole host of elementary spirits; from which premises she drew the very logical deduction that I could turn the world upside down if I liked, and be the blessing or the plague of France; and she thought my object in remaining incognito was to guard myself from arrest and imprisonment; which according to her would be the inevitable result of the minister’s discovering my real character. These wild notions were the fruit of the nocturnal revelations of her genius, that is, of the dreams of her disordered spirit, which seemed to her realities. She did not seem to think that if I was endowed as she supposed no one would have been able to arrest me, in the first place, because I should have had foreknowledge of the attempt, and in the second place because my power would have been too strong for all bolts and bars. All this was clear enough, but strong passion and prejudice cannot reason.

One day, in the course of conversation, she said, with the utmost seriousness, that her genius had advised her that not even I had power to give her speech with the spirits, since she was a woman, and the genii only communicated with men, whose nature is more perfect. Nevertheless, by a process which was well known to me, I might make her soul pass into the body of a male child born of the mystic connection between a mortal and an immortal, or, in other words, between an ordinary man and a woman of a divine nature.

If I had thought it possible to lead back Madame d’Urfe to the right use of her senses I would have made the attempt, but I felt sure that her disease was without remedy, and the only course before me seemed to abet her in her ravings and to profit by them.

If I had spoken out like an honest man and told her that her theories were nonsensical, she would not have believed me; she would have thought me jealous of her knowledge, and I should have lost her favour without any gain to her or to myself. I thus let things take their course, and to speak the truth I was flattered to see myself treated as one of the most profound brothers of the Rosy Cross, as the most powerful of men by so distinguished a lady, who was in high repute for her learning, who entertained and was related to the first families of France, and had an income of eighty thousand francs, a splendid estate, and several magnificent houses in Paris. I was quite sure that she would refuse me nothing, and though I had no definite plan of profiting by her wealth I experienced a certain pleasure at the thought that I could do so if I would.

In spite of her immense fortune and her belief in her ability to make gold, Madame d’Urfe was miserly in her habits, for she never spent more than thirty thousand francs in a year, and she invested her savings in the exchange, and in this way had nearly doubled them. A brother used to buy her in Government securities at their lowest rate and sell at their rise, and in this manner, being able to wait for their rise, and fall, she had amassed a considerable sum.

She had told me more than once that she would give all she possessed to become a man, and that she knew I could do this for her if I would. One day, as she was speaking to me on this subject in a tone of persuasion almost irresistible, I told her that I must confess I had the power to do what she wanted, but that I could not make up my mind to perform the operation upon her as I should have to kill her first. I thought this would effectually check her wish to go any further, but what was my surprise to hear her say,

"I know that, and what is more I know the death I shall have to die; but for all that I am ready."

"What, then, is that death, madam?"

"It is by the same poison which killed Paracelsus."

"Do you think that Paracelsus obtained the hypostasis?"

"No, but I know the reason of his not doing so."

"What is the reason?"

"It is that he was neither man or woman, and a composite nature is incapable of the hypostasis, to obtain which one must be either the one or the other."

"Very true, but do you know how to make the poison, and that the thing is impossible without the aid of a salamander?"

"That may or may not be! I beseech you to enquire of the oracle whether there be anyone in Paris in possession of this potion."

It was easy to see that she thought herself in possession of it, so I had no hesitation in extracting her name from the oracular pyramid. I pretended to be astonished at the answer, but she said boastfully,

"You see that all we want is a male child born of an immortal. This, I am advised, will be provided by you; and I do not think you will be found wanting out of a foolish pity for this poor old body of mine."

At these words I rose and went to the window, where I stayed for more than a quarter of an hour reflecting on her infatuation. When I returned to the table where she was seated she scanned my features attentively, and said, with much emotion, “Can it be done, my dear friend? I see that you have been weeping.”

I did not try to undeceive her, and, taking my sword and hat, I took leave of her sadly. Her carriage, which was always at my disposal, was at the door, and I drove to the Boulevards, where I walked till the evening, wondering all the while at the extraordinary fantasies of the marchioness.

My brother had been made a member of the Academy, on the exhibition of a battle piece which had taken all the critics by storm. The picture was purchased by the Academy for five hundred louis.

He had fallen in love with Caroline, and would have married her but for a piece of infidelity on her part, which so enraged him that in a week after he married an Italian dancer. M. de Sanci, the ecclesiastical commissioner, gave the wedding party. He was fond of the girl, and out of gratitude to my brother for marrying her he got him numerous orders among his friends, which paved the way to the large fortune and high repute which my brother afterwards attained.

M. Corneman, the banker, who was at my brother’s wedding, spoke to me at considerable length on the great dearth of money, and asked me to discuss the matter with the comptroller-general.

He told me that one might dispose of Government securities to an association of brokers at Amsterdam, and take in exchange the securities of any other country whose credit was higher than that of France, and that these securities could easily be realized. I begged him to say no more about it, and promised to see what I could do.

The plan pleased me, and I turned it over all night; and the next day I went to the Palais Bourbon to discuss the question with M. de Bernis. He thought the whole idea an excellent one, and advised me to go to Holland with a letter from M. de Choiseul for M. d’Afri, the ambassador at the Hague. He thought that the first person I should consult with M. de Boulogne, with whom he warned me to appear as if I was sure of my ground.

"As you do not require money in advance," said he, "you will be able to get as many letters of recommendation as you like."

The same day I went to the comptroller-general, who approved of my plan, and told me that M. le Duc de Choiseul would be at the Invalides the next day, and that I should speak to him at once, and take a letter he would write for me.

"For my part," said he, "I will credit our ambassador with twenty millions, and if, contrary to my hopes, you do not succeed, the paper can be sent back to France."

I answered that there would be no question of the paper being returned, if they would be content with a fair price.

"The margin will be a small one; however, you will hear about that from the ambassador, who will have full instructions."

I felt so flattered by this mission that I passed the night in thinking it over. The next day I went to the Invalides, and M. de Choiseul, so famous for taking decisive action, had no sooner read M. de Boulogne's letter and spoken a few words to me on the subject, than he got me to write a letter for M. d'Afri, which he signed, sealed, returned to me, and wished me a prosperous journey.

I immediately got a passport from M. de Berkenrode, and the same day took leave of Madame Baletti and all my friends except Madame d'Urfe, with whom I was to spend the whole of the next day. I gave my clerk at the lottery office full authority to sign all tickets.

About a month before, a girl from Brussels, as excellent as she was pretty, had been married under my auspices to an Italian named Gaetan, by trade a broker. This fellow, in his fit of jealousy, used to ill-treat her shamefully; I had reconciled them several times already, and they regarded me as a kind of go-between. They came to see me on the day on which I was making my preparations for going to Holland. My brother and Tiretta were with me, and as I was still living in furnished apartments I took them all to Laudel's, where they gave one an excellent dinner. Tiretta, drove his coach-and-four; he was ruining his ex-methodist, who was still desperately in love with him.

In the course of dinner Tiretta, who was always in high spirits and loved a jest, began to flirt with the girl, whom he saw for the first time. She, who neither meant nor suspected any ill, was quite at her ease, and we should have enjoyed the joke, and everything would have gone on pleasantly, if her husband had possessed some modicum of manners and common sense, but he began to get into a perfect fury of jealousy. He ate nothing, changed colour ten times in a minute, and looked daggers at his wife, as much as to say he did not see the joke. To crown all, Tiretta began to crack jests at the poor wretch's expense, and I, foreseeing unpleasantness, endeavoured, though all in vain, to moderate his high spirits and his sallies. An oyster chanced to fall on Madame Gaetan's beautiful breast; and Tiretta, who was sitting near her, took it up with his lips as quick as lightning. Gaetan was mad with rage and gave his wife such a furious box on the ear that his hand passed on from her cheek to that of her neighbour. Tiretta now as enraged as Gaetan took him by his middle and threw him down, where, having no arms, he defended himself with kicks and fisticuffs, till the waiter came, and we put him out of the room.

The poor wife in tears, and, like Tiretta, bleeding at the nose, besought me to take her away somewhere, as she feared her husband would kill her if she returned to him. So, leaving Tiretta with my brother, I got into a carriage with her and I took her, according to her request, to her kinsman, an old attorney who lived in the fourth story of a house in the Quai de Gevres. He received us politely, and after having heard the tale, he said,

“I am a poor man, and I can do nothing for this unfortunate girl; while if I had a hundred crowns I could do everything.”

“Don't let that stand in your way,” said I, and drawing three hundred francs from my pockets I gave him the money.

“Now, sir,” said he, “I will be the ruin of her husband, who shall never know where his wife is.”

She thanked me and I left her there; the reader shall hear what became of her when I return from my journey.

On my informing Madame d'Urfe that I was going to Holland for the good of France, and that I should be coming back at the beginning of February, she begged me to take charge of some shares of hers and to sell them for her. They amounted in value to sixty thousand francs, but she could not dispose of them on the Paris Exchange owing to the tightness in the money market. In addition, she could not obtain the interest due to her, which had mounted up considerably, as she had not had a dividend for three years.

I agreed to sell the shares for her, but it was necessary for me to be constituted depositary and owner of the property by a deed, which was executed the same day before a notary, to whose office we both went.

On returning to her house I wished to give her an I O U for the moneys, but she would not hear of such a thing, and I let her remain satisfied of my honesty.

I called on M. Corneman who gave me a bill of exchange for three hundred florins on M. Boaz, a Jewish banker at the Hague, and I then set out on my journey. I reached Anvers in two days, and finding a yacht ready to start I got on board and arrived at Rotterdam the next day. I got to the Hague on the day following, and after depositing my effects at the "Hotel d'Angleterre" I proceeded to M. d'Afri's, and found him reading M. de Choiseul's letter, which informed him of my business. He asked me to dine in his company and in that of the ambassador of the King of Poland, who encouraged me to proceed in my undertaking though he had not much opinion of my chances of success.

Leaving the ambassador I went to see Boaz, whom I found at table in the midst of a numerous and ugly family. He read my letter and told me he had just received a letter from M. Corneman in which I was highly commended to him. By way of a joke he said that as it was Christmas Eve he supposed I should be going to rock the infant Jesus asleep, but I answered that I was come to keep the Feast of the Maccabees with him — a reply which gained me the applause of the whole family and an invitation to stay with them. I accepted the offer without hesitation, and I told my servant to fetch my baggage from the hotel. Before leaving the banker I asked him to shew me some way of making twenty thousand florins in the short time I was going to stay in Holland.

Taking me quite seriously he replied that the thing might easily be done and that he would think it over.

The next morning after breakfast, Boaz said,

"I have solved your problem, sir; come in here and I will tell you about it."

He took me into his private office, and, after counting out three thousand florins in notes and gold, he told me that if I liked I could undoubtedly make the twenty thousand florins I had spoken of.

Much surprised at the ease with which money may be got in Holland, as I had been merely jesting in the remarks I had made, I thanked him for his kindness, and listened to his explanation.

"Look at this note," said he, "which I received this morning from the Mint. It informs me that an issue of four hundred thousand ducats is about to be made which will be disposed of at the current rate of gold, which is fortunately not high just now. Each ducat will fetch five florins, two stivers and three-fifths. This is the rate of exchange with Frankfort. Buy in four hundred thousand ducats; take them or send them to Frankfort, with bills of exchange on Amsterdam, and your business is done. On every ducat you will make a stiver and one-ninth, which comes to twenty-two thousand, two hundred and twenty-two of our florins. Get hold of the gold to-day, and in a week you will have your clear profit. That's my idea."

"But," said I, "will the clerks of the Mint trust me with such a sum?"

"Certainly not, unless you pay them in current money or in good paper."

"My dear sir, I have neither money nor credit to that amount."

"Then you will certainly never make twenty thousand florins in a week. By the way you talked yesterday I took you for a millionaire."

"I am very sorry you were so mistaken."

"I shall get one of my sons to transact the business to-day."

After giving me this rather sharp lesson, M. Boaz went into his office, and I went to dress.

M. d'Afri had paid his call on me at the "Hotel d'Angleterre," and not finding me there he had written me a letter asking me to come and see him. I did so, and he kept me to dinner, shewing me a letter he had received from M. de Boulogne, in which he was instructed not to let me dispose of the twenty millions at a greater loss than eight per cent., as peace was imminent. We both of us laughed at this calm confidence of the Parisian minister, while we who were in a country where people saw deeper into affairs knew that the truth was quite otherwise.

On M. d’Afri’s hearing that I was staying with a Jew, he advised me to keep my own counsel when with Jews, “because,” said he, “in business, most honest and least knavish mean pretty much the same thing. If you like,” he added, “I will give you a letter of introduction to M. Pels, of Amsterdam.” I accepted his offer with gratitude, and in the hope of being useful to me in the matter of my foreign shares he introduced me to the Swedish ambassador, who sent me to M. d’O —— .

Wanting to be present at a great festival of Freemasons on St. John’s Day, I remained at the Hague till the day after the celebration. The Comte de Tot, brother of the baron, who lost all his money at the seraglio, and whom I had met again at the Hague, introduced me. I was not sorry to be in company with all the best society in Holland.

M. d’Afri introduced me to the mother of the stadtholder, who was only twelve, and whom I thought too grave for his years. His mother was a worthy, patient kind of woman, who fell asleep every minute, even while she was speaking. She died shortly after, and it was discovered at the postmortem examination that she had a disease of the brain which caused her extreme propensity to sleep. Beside her I saw Count Philip de Zinzendorf, who was looking for twelve millions for the empress — a task which was not very difficult, as he offered five per cent. interest.

At the play I found myself sitting next to the Turkish minister, and I thought he would die with laughter before my eyes. It happened thus:

They were playing Iphigenia, that masterpiece of Racine’s. The statue of Diana stood in the midst of the stage, and at the end of one act Iphigenia and her train of priestesses, while passing before it, all made a profound bow to the goddess. The candlesnuffer, who perhaps may have been a bad wit, crossed the stage just after wards, and likewise bowed to the goddess. This put pit and boxes in a good humour, and peals of laughter sounded from all parts of the house. All this had to be explained to the Turk, and he fell into such a fit of laughter that I thought he would burst. At last he was carried to his inn still laughing but almost senseless.

To have taken no notice of the Dutchman’s heavy wit would have been, I confess, a mark of stupidity, but no one but a Turk could have laughed like that. It may be said that a great Greek philosopher died of laughter at seeing a toothless old woman trying to eat figs. But there is a great difference between a Turk and a Greek, especially an ancient Greek.

Those who laugh a good deal are more fortunate than those who do not laugh at all, as laughter is good for the digestion; but there is a just mean in everything.

When I had gone two leagues from Amsterdam in my posting-chaise on two wheels, my servant sitting beside me, I met a carriage on four wheels, drawn like mine by two horses, and containing a fine-looking young man and his servant. His coachman called out to mine to make way for him. My coachman answered that if he did he might turn me into the ditch, but the other insisted on it. I spoke to the master, begging him to tell his coachman to make way for me.

“I am posting, sir,” said I; “and, moreover, I am a foreigner.”

“Sir,” answered he, “in Holland we take no notice of posting or not posting; and if you are foreigner, as you say, you must confess that you have fewer rights than I who am in my own country.”

The blood rushed to my face. I flung open the door with one hand and took my sword with the other; and leaping into the snow, which was up to my knees, I drew my sword, and summoned the Dutchman to give way or defend himself. He was cooler than I, and replied, smiling, that he was not going to fight for so foolish a cause, and that I might get into my carriage again, as he would make way for me. I was somewhat interested in his cool but pleasant manner. I got back into my chaise, and the next night reached Amsterdam.

I put up at the excellent inn “L’Etoile d’Orient,” and in the morning I went on ’Change and found M. Pels. He told me he would think my business over, and finding M, d’O —— directly afterwards he offered to do me my sixty bills and give me twelve per cent. M. Pels told me to wait, as he said he could get me fifteen per cent. He asked me to dinner, and, on my admiring his Cape wine, he told me with a laugh that he had made it himself by mixing Bordeaux and Malaga.

M. d’O —— asked me to dinner on the day following; and on calling I found him with his daughter Esther, a young lady of fourteen, well developed for her age, and exquisite in all respects except her teeth, which were somewhat irregular. M. d'O was a widower, and had this only child; consequently, Esther was heiress to a large fortune. Her excellent father loved her blindly, and she deserved his love. Her skin was snow white, delicately tinted with red; her hair was black as ebony, and she had the most beautiful eyes I have ever seen. She made an impression on me. Her father had given her an excellent education; she spoke French perfectly, played the piano admirably, and was passionately fond of reading.

After dinner M. d'O —— shewed me the uninhabited part of the house, for since the death of his wife, whose memory was dear to him, he lived on the ground floor only. He shewed me a set of rooms where he kept a treasure in the way of old pottery. The walls and windows were covered with plates of marble, each room a different colour, and the floors were of mosaic, with Persian carpets. The dining-hall was cased in alabaster, and the table and the cupboards were of cedar wood. The whole house looked like a block of solid marble, for it was covered with marble without as well as within, and must have cost immense sums. Every Saturday half-a-dozen servant girls, perched on ladders, washed down these splendid walls. These girls wore wide hoops, being obliged to put on breeches, as otherwise they would have interested the passers by in an unseemly manner. After looking at the house we went down again, and M. d'O —— left me alone with Esther in the antechamber, where he worked with his clerks. As it was New Year's Day there was not business going on.

After playing a sonata, Mdlle. d'O —— asked me if I would go to a concert. I replied that, being in her company, nothing could make me stir. "But would you, mademoiselle, like to go?"

"Yes, I should like to go very well, but I cannot go by myself."

"If I might presume to offer to escort you … but I dare not think you would accept."

"I should be delighted, and if you were to ask my father I am sure he would not refuse his permission."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Quite sure, for otherwise he would be guilty of impoliteness, and my father would not do such a thing. But I see you don't know the manners of the country."

"I confess I do not:"

"Young ladies enjoy great liberty here — liberty which they lose only by marrying. Go and ask, and you will see:"

I went to M. d'O —— and made my request, trembling lest I should meet with a refusal.

"Have you a carriage?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I need not give orders to get mine ready. Esther!"

"Yes, father."

"Go and dress, my dear; M. Casanova has been kind enough to offer to take you to the concert."

"How good of him! Thank you, papa, for letting me go."

She threw her arms around his neck, ran to dress, and reappeared an hour after, as fair as the joy which was expressed on her every feature. I could have wished she had used a little powder, but Esther was jealous of her ebon tresses, which displayed the whiteness of her skin to admiration. The chief aim of women in making their toilette is to please men, but how poor is the judgment of most men in such matters compared to the unerring instinct of the generality of women!

A beautiful lace kerchief veiled her bosom, whose glories made my heart beat faster.

We went down the stair, I helped her into the carriage, and stopped, thinking she would be accompanied by one of her women; but seeing nobody I got in myself. The door was shut, and we were off. I was overwhelmed with astonishment. A treasure like this in my keeping I could hardly think. I asked myself whether I was to remember that I was a free-lance of love, or whether honour bade me forget it. Esther, in the highest spirits, told me that we were going to hear an Italian singer whose voice was exquisite, and noticing my confusion she asked what was the matter. I did not know what to say, and began to stammer out something, but at last succeeded in saying that she was a treasure of whom I was not worthy to be the keeper.

"I know that in other countries a young girl would not be trusted alone with a gentleman, but here they teach us discretion and how to look after ourselves."

"Happy the man who is charged with your welfare, and happier still he on whom your choice has fallen!"

"That choice is not for me to make; 'tis my father's business."

"But supposing your father's choice is not pleasing to you, or supposing you love another?"

"We are not allowed to love a man until we know he is to be our husband."

"Then you are not in love with anyone?"

"No, and I have never felt the desire to love."

"Then I may kiss your hand?"

"Why should you kiss my hand?"

She drew away her hand and offered me her lovely lips. I took a kiss, which she gave modestly enough, but which went to my heart. My delight was a little alloyed when she said that she would give me another kiss before her father whenever I liked.

We reached the concert-room, where Esther found many of her young friends — all daughters of rich merchants, some pretty, some plain, and all curious to know who I was. The fair Esther, who knew no more than my name, could not satisfy them. All at once seeing a fair young girl a little way off she pointed her out to me and asked me my opinion of her. Naturally enough I replied that I did not care for fair girls.

"All the same, I must introduce you to her, for she may be a relation of yours. Her name is the same; that is her father over there:"

"M. Casanova," said she, speaking to a gentleman, "I beg to introduce to you M. Casanova, a friend of my father's."

"Really? The same name; I wish, sir, you were my friend, as we are, perhaps, related. I belong to the Naples branch."

"Then we are related, though distantly, as my father came from Parma. Have you your pedigree?"

“I ought to have such a thing, but to tell you the truth, I don’t think much of such matters. Besants d’or and such heraldic moneys are not currency in a mercantile republic.”

“Pedigree-hunting is certainly a somewhat foolish pursuit; but it may nevertheless afford us a few minutes’ amusement without our making any parade of our ancestry.”

“With all my heart.”

“I shall have the honour of calling on you to-morrow, and I will bring my family-tree with me. Will you be vexed if you find the root of your family also?”

“Not at all; I shall be delighted. I will call on you myself to-morrow. May I ask if you are a business man?”

“No, I am a financial agent in the employ of the French ministry. I am staying with M. Pels.”

M. Casanova made a sign to his daughter and introduced me to her. She was Esther’s dearest friend, and I sat down between them, and the concert began.

After a fine symphony, a concerto for the violin, another for the hautbois, the Italian singer whose repute was so great and who was styled Madame Trend made her appearance. What was my surprise when I recognized in her Therese Imer, wife of the dancer Pompeati, whose name the reader may remember. I had made her acquaintance eighteen years ago, when the old senator Malipiero had struck me because we were playing together. I had seen her again at Venice in 1753, and then our pastime had been of a more serious nature. She had gone to Bayreuth, where she had been the margrave’s mistress. I had promised to go and see her, but C —— C —— and my fair nun M —— M —— had left me neither the time nor the wish to do so. Soon after I was put under the Leads, and then I had other things to think about. I was sufficiently self-controlled not to shew my astonishment, and listened to an aria which she was singing, with her exquisite voice, beginning “Eccoti giunta al fin, donna infelice,” words which seemed made for the case.

The applause seemed as if it would never come to an end. Esther told me that it was not known who she was, but that she was said to be a woman with a history, and to be very badly off. “She goes from one town to another, singing at all the public concerts, and all she receives is what those present choose to give her on a plate which she takes round.”

“Does she find that pay?”

“I should suspect not, as everyone has paid already at coming in. She cannot get more than thirty or forty florins. The day after to-morrow she will go to the Hague, then to Rotterdam, then back here again. She had been performing for six months, and she is always well received.”

“Has she a lover?”

“She is said to have lovers in every town, but instead of enriching her they make her poorer. She always wears black, not only because she is a widow, but also on account of a great grief she is reported to have gone through. She will soon be coming round.” I took out my purse; and counted out twelve ducats, which I wrapped in paper; my heart beating all the while in a ridiculous manner, for I had really nothing to be excited about.

When Therese was going along the seats in front of me, I glanced at her for an instant, and I saw that she looked surprised. I turned my head to speak to Esther, and when she was directly in front of me I put my little packet on the plate without looking at her, and she passed on. A little girl, four or five years old, followed her, and when she got to the end of the bench she came back to kiss my hand. I could not help recognizing in her a facsimile of myself, but I concealed my emotion. The child stood still, and gazed at me fixedly, to my no small confusion. “Would you like some sweets, my dear?” said I, giving her my box, which I should have been glad to turn into gold. The little girl took it smilingly, made me a curtsy, and went on.

“Does it strike you, M. Casanova,” said Esther, with a laugh, “that you and that little girl are as like each other as two peas?”

“Yes, indeed,” added Mdlle. Casanova, “there is a striking likeness.”

“These resemblances are often the work of chance.”

“Just so,” said Esther, with a wicked smile, “but you admit a likeness, don’t you?”

“I confess I was struck with it, though of course I cannot judge so well as you.”

After the concert M. d'O —— arrived, and giving back his daughter to his care I betook myself to my lodging. I was just sitting down to a dish of oysters, before going to bed, when Therese made her appearance, holding her child by the hand. Although I had not expected her to visit me that evening, I was nevertheless not much surprised to see her. I, of course, rose to greet her, when all at once she fell fainting on the sofa, though whether the fainting fit was real or assumed I cannot say. Thinking that she might be really ill I played my part properly, and brought her to herself by sprinkling her with cold water and putting my vinaigrette to her nose. As soon as she came to herself she began to gaze at me without saying a word. At last, tired of her silence, I asked her if she would take any supper; and on her replying in the affirmative, I rang the bell and ordered a good supper for three, which kept us at the table till seven o'clock in the morning, talking over our various fortunes and misfortunes. She was already acquainted with most of my recent adventures, but I knew nothing at all about hers, and she entertained me with a recital of them for five or six hours.

Sophie, the little girl, slept in my bed till day, and her mother, keeping the best of her tale to the last, told me that she was my daughter, and shewed me her baptismal certificate. The birth of the child fell in with the period at which I had been intimate with Therese, and her perfect likeness to myself left no room for doubt. I therefore raised no objections, but told the mother that I was persuaded of my paternity, and that, being in a position to give the child a good education, I was ready to be a father to her.

"She is too precious a treasure in my sight; if we were separated I should die."

"You are wrong; for if I took charge of the little girl I should see that she was well provided for."

"I have a son of twelve to whom I cannot give a proper education; take charge of him instead of Sophie."

"Where is he?"

"He is boarding, or rather in pawn, at Rotterdam."

"What do you mean by in pawn?"

"I mean that he will not be returned to me until I pay the person who has got him all my debts."

"How much do you owe?"

"Eighty florins. You have already given me sixty-two, give me four ducats more; you can then take my son, and I shall be the happiest of mothers. I will send my son to you at the Hague next week, as I think you will be there."

"Yes, my dear Therese; and instead of four ducats, here are twenty."

"We shall see each other again at the Hague."

She was grateful to excess, but I only felt pity for her and a sort of friendly interest, and kept quite cool, despite the ardour of her embraces. Seeing that her trouble was of no avail, she sighed, shed some tears, and, taking her daughter, she bid me adieu, promising once more to send me her son.

Therese was two years older than I. She was still pretty, and even handsome, but her charms no longer retained their first beauty, and my passion for her, having been a merely physical one, it was no wonder that she had no longer any attraction for me. Her adventures during the six years in which I had lost her would certainly interest my readers, and form a pleasing episode in my book, and I would tell the tale if it were a true one; but not being a romance writer, I am anxious that this work shall contain the truth and nothing but the truth. Convicted by her amorous and jealous margarve of infidelity, she had been sent about her business. She was separated from her husband Pompeati, had followed a new lover to Brussels, and there had caught the fancy of Prince Charles de Lorraine, who had obtained her the direction of all the theatres in the Austrian Low Countries. She had then undertaken this vast responsibility, entailing heavy expenditure, till at last, after selling all her diamonds and lace, she had fled to Holland to avoid arrest. Her husband killed himself at Vienna in a paroxysm caused by internal pain — he had cut open his stomach with a razor, and died tearing at his entrails.

My business left me no time for sleep. M. Casanova came and asked me to dinner, telling me to meet him on the Exchange — a place well worth seeing. Millionaires are as plentiful as blackberries, and anyone who is not worth more than a hundred thousand florins is considered a poor man. I found M. d'O —— there, and was asked by him to dinner the following day at a small house he had on the Amstel. M. Casanova treated me with the greatest courtesy. After reading my pedigree he went for his own, and found it exactly the same; but he merely laughed, and seemed to care little about it, differing in that respect from Don Antonio of Naples, who set such store by my pedigree, and treated me with such politeness on that account. Nevertheless, he bade me make use of him in anything relating to business if I did anything in that way. I thought his daughter pretty, but neither her charms nor her wit made any impression on me. My thoughts were taken up with Esther, and I talked so much about her at dinner that at last my cousin declared that she did not consider her pretty. Oh, you women! beauty is the only unpardonable offence in your eyes. Mdlle. Casanova was Esther's friend, and yet she could not bear to hear her praised.

On my seeing M. d'O —— again after dinner, he told me that if I cared to take fifteen per cent. on my shares, he would take them from me and save broker's expenses. I thought the offer a good one, and I accepted it, taking a bill of exchange on Tourton & Baur. At the rate of exchange at Hamburg I found I should have seventy-two thousand francs, although at five per cent. I had only expected sixty-nine thousand. This transaction won me high favour with Madame d'Urfe, who, perhaps, had not expected me to be so honest.

In the evening I went with M. Pels to Zaandam, in a boat placed on a sleigh and impelled by a sail. It was an extraordinary, but at the same time an amusing and agreeable, mode of travelling. The wind was strong, and we did fifteen miles an hour; we seemed to pass through the air as swiftly as an arrow. A safer and more convenient method of travelling cannot be imagined; it would be an ideal way of journeying round the world if there were such a thing as a frozen sea all round. The wind, however, must be behind, as one cannot sail on a side wind, there being no rudder. I was pleased and astonished at the skill of our two sailors in lowering sail exactly at the proper time; for the sleigh ran a good way, from the impetus it had already received, and we stopped just at the bank of the river, whereas if the sail had been lowered a moment later the sleigh might have been broken to pieces. We had some excellent perch for dinner, but the strength of the wind prevented us from walking about. I went there again, but as Zaandam is well known as the haunt of the millionaire merchants who retire and enjoy life there in their own way, I will say no more about it. We returned in a fine sleigh drawn by two horses, belonging to M. Pels, and he kept me to supper.

This worthy man, whose face bore witness to his entire honesty, told me that as I was now the friend of M. d'O —— and himself, I should have nothing whatever to do with the Jews, but should address myself to them alone. I was pleased with this proposal, which made a good many of my difficulties disappear, and the reader will see the results of this course.

Next day snow fell in large flakes, and I went early to M. d'O — — 's, where I found Esther in the highest of spirits. She gave me a warm welcome, and began to rally me on having spent the whole night with Madame Trenti.

I might possibly have shewn some slight confusion, but her father said an honest man had nothing to be ashamed of in admiring talent. Then, turning to me, he said,

"Tell me, M. Casanova, who this woman is?"

"She is a Venetian whose husband died recently; I knew her when I was a lad, and it was six years since I had seen her last."

"You were agreeably surprised, then, to see your daughter?" said Esther.

"Why do you think the child is my daughter? Madame Trenti was married then."

"The likeness is really too strong. And how about your falling asleep yesterday when you were supping with M. Pels?"

"It was no wonder that I went asleep, as I had not closed an eye the night before."

"I am envious of anyone who possesses the secret of getting a good sleep, for I have always to wait long hours before sleep comes to me, and when I awake, instead of being refreshed, I feel heavy and languid from fatigue."

"Try passing the night in listening to one in whom you take an interest, telling the story of her life, and I promise you that you will sleep well the night after."

"There is no such person for me."

"No, because you have as yet only seen fourteen summers; but afterwards there will be someone."

"Maybe, but what I want just now is books, and the help of someone who will guide my reading."

"That would be an easy matter for anyone who knew your tastes."

"I like history and travels, but for a book to please me it must be all true, as I lay it down at the slightest suspicion of its veracity."

"Now I think I may venture to offer my services, and if you will accept them I believe I shall be able to give satisfaction."

"I accept your offer, and shall keep you to your word."

"You need not be afraid of my breaking it, and before I leave for the Hague I will prove that I am reliable."

She then began to rally me on the pleasure I should have at the Hague, where I should see Madame Trenti again. Her freedom, mirth, and extreme beauty set my blood on fire, and M. d'O —— laughed heartily at the war his charming daughter waged on me. At eleven o'clock we got into a well-appointed sleigh and we set out for his small house, where she told me I should find Mdlle. Casanova and her betrothed.

"Nevertheless," said I, "you will continue to be my only attraction."

She made no answer, but it was easy to perceive that my avowal had not displeased her.

When we had gone some distance we saw the lovers, who had come out, in spite of the snow, to meet us. We got down, and after taking off our furs we entered the house. I gazed at the young gentleman, who looked at me a moment in return and then whispered in Mdlle. Casanova's ear. She smiled and whispered something to Esther. Esther stepped up to her father and said a few words to him in a low voice, and everybody began to laugh at once. They all looked at me and I felt certain that I was somehow the point of the joke, but I put on an indifferent air.

"There may be a mistake," said M. d'O —— ; "at any rate we should ascertain the truth of the matter."

"M. Casanova, had you any adventures on your journey from the Hague to Amsterdam?"

At this I looked again at the young gentleman, and I guessed what they were talking about.

“No adventure to speak of,” I answered, “except a meeting with a fine fellow who desired to see my carriage turn upside down into the ditch, and who I think is present now.”

At these words the laughter broke out afresh, and the gentleman and I embraced each other; but after he had given the true account of the adventure his mistress pretended to be angry, and told him that he ought to have fought. Esther observed that he had shewn more true courage in listening to reason, and M. d’O —— said he was strongly of his daughter’s opinion; however, Mdlle. Casanova, after airing her high-flown ideas, began to sulk with her lover.

To restore the general mirth, Esther said, gaily, “Come, come, let us put on our skates, and try the Amstel, for I am afraid that unless we go forthwith the ice will have melted.” I was ashamed to ask her to let me off, though I would gladly have done so! but what will not love do! M. d’O —— left us to our own devices. Mdlle. Casanova’s intended put on my skates, and the ladies put on their short petticoats with black velvet drawers to guard against certain accidents. We reached the river, and as I was a perfect neophyte in this sport the figure I cut may be imagined. However, I resolutely determined to conquer my awkwardness, and twenty times, to the peril of my spine, did I fall down upon the ice. I should have been wiser to have left off, but I was ashamed to do so, and I did not stop till, to my huge delight, we were summoned in to dinner. But I paid dear for my obstinacy, for when I tried to rise from the table I felt as if I had lost the use of my limbs. Esther pitied me, and said she would cure me. There was a good deal of laughter at my expense, and I let them laugh, as I felt certain that the whole thing had been contrived to turn me into derision, and wishing to make Esther love me I thought it best to stimulate a good temper. I passed the afternoon with M. d’O —— , letting the young people go by themselves on the Amstel, where they stopped till dusk.

Next morning when I awoke I thought I was a lost man. I suffered a martyrdom of pain. The last of my vertebral bones, called by doctors the os sacrum, felt as if it had been crushed to atoms, although I had used almost the whole of a pot of ointment which Esther had given me for that purpose.

In spite of my torments I did not forget my promise, and I had myself taken to a bookseller's where I bought all the books I thought likely to interest her. She was very grateful, and told me to come and embrace her before I started if I wanted a pretty present.

It was not likely that I was going to refuse such an invitation as that, so I went early in the morning, leaving my post-chaise at the door Her governess took me to her bed, where she was lying as fair and gay as Venus herself.

"I am quite sure," said she, "that you would not have come at all unless I had asked you to come and embrace me."

At this my lips were fastened on her mouth, her eyes, and on every spot of her lovely face. But seeing my eyes straying towards her bosom, and guessing that I should make myself master of it, she stopped laughing and put herself on the defensive.

"Go away," said she, slyly, "go away and enjoy yourself at the Hague with the fair Trenti, who possesses so pretty a token of your love."

"My dear Esther, I am going to the Hague to talk business with the ambassador, and for no other reason, and in six days at latest you will see me back again, as much your lover as before, and desiring nothing better than to please you."

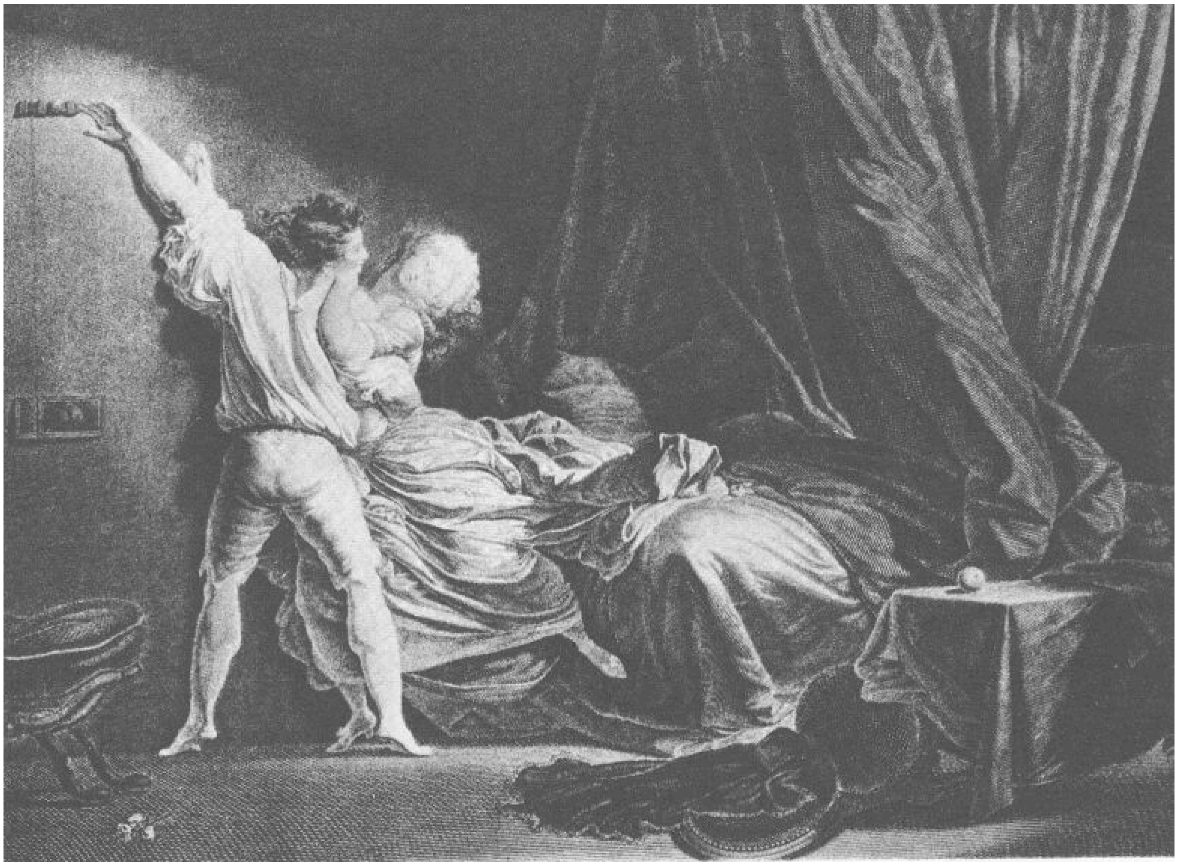
"I rely upon your word of honour, but mind you do not deceive me."

With these words she put up her mouth and gave me so tender and passionate a kiss that I went away feeling certain of my bliss being crowned on my return. That evening, at supper-time, I reached Boaz's house.

EPISODE 12 — RETURN TO PARIS

CHAPTER V

My Fortune in Holland — My Return to Paris with Young Pompeati



Amongst the letters which were waiting for me was one from the comptroller-general, which advised me that twenty millions in Government securities had been placed in the hands of M. d'Afri, who was not to go beyond a loss of eight per cent.; and another letter from my good patron, M. de Bernis, telling me to do the best I could, and to be assured that the ambassador would be instructed to consent to whatever bargain might be made, provided the rate was not more disadvantageous than that of the exchange at Paris. Boaz, who was astonished at the bargain I had made with my shares, wanted to discount the Government securities for me, and I should very likely have agreed to his terms if he had not required me to give him three months, and the promise that the agreement should hold even in the case of peace being concluded in the meanwhile. It was not long before I saw that I should do well to get back to Amsterdam, but I did not care to break my word to Therese, whom I had promised to meet at the Hague. I received a letter from her while I was at the play, and the servant who brought it told me he was waiting to conduct me to her. I sent my own servant home, and set out on my quest.

My guide made me climb to the fourth floor of a somewhat wretched house, and there I found this strange woman in a small room, attended by her son and daughter. The table stood in the midst of the room, and was covered with a black cloth, and the two candles standing upon it made it look like some sort of sepulchral altar. The Hague was a Court town. I was richly dressed; my elaborate attire made the saddest possible contrast with the gloom of my surroundings. Therese, dressed in black and seated between her children at that black table, reminded me of Medea. To see these two fair young creatures vowed to a lot of misery and disgrace was a sad and touching sight. I took the boy between my arms, and pressing him to my breast called him my son. His mother told him to look upon me as his father from henceforth. The lad recognized me; he remembered, much to my delight, seeing me in the May of 1753, in Venice, at Madame Manzoni's. He was slight but strong; his limbs were well proportioned, and his features intellectual. He was thirteen years old.

His sister sat perfectly still, apparently waiting for her turn to come. I took her on my knee, and as I embraced her, nature herself seemed to tell me that she was my daughter. She took my kisses in silence, but it was easy to see that she thought herself preferred to her brother, and was charmed with the idea. All her clothing was a slight frock, and I was able to feel every limb and to kiss her pretty little body all over, delighted that so sweet a being owed her existence to me.

“Mamma, dear,” said she, “is not this fine gentleman the same we saw at Amsterdam, and who was taken for my papa because I am like him? But that cannot be, for my papa is dead.”

“So he is, sweetheart; but I may be your dear friend, mayn't I? Would you like to have me for a friend?”

"Yes, yes!" she cried, and throwing her arms about my neck gave me a thousand kisses, which I returned with delight.

After we had talked and laughed together we sat down at table, and the heroine Therese gave me a delicate supper accompanied by exquisite wines. "I have never given the margrave better fare," said she, "at those nice little suppers we used to take together."

Wishing to probe the disposition of her son, whom I had engaged to take away with me, I addressed several remarks to him, and soon discovered that he was of a false and deceitful nature, always on his guard, taking care of what he said, and consequently speaking only from his head and not from his heart. Every word was delivered with a quiet politeness which, no doubt, was intended to please me.

I told him that this sort of thing was all very well on occasion; but that there were times when a man's happiness depended on his freedom from constraint; then and only then was his amiability, if he had any, displayed. His mother, thinking to praise him, told me that reserve was his chief characteristic, that she had trained him to keep his counsel at all times and places, and that she was thus used to his being reserved with her as with everyone else.

"All I can say is," said I, "your system is an abominable one. You may have strangled in their infancy all the finer qualities with which nature has endowed your son, and have fairly set him on the way to become a monster instead of an angel. I don't see how the most devoted father can possibly have any affection for a son who keeps all his emotions under lock and key."

This outburst, which proceeded from the tenderness I would fain have felt for the boy, seemed to strike his mother dumb.

"Tell me, my dear, if you feel yourself capable of shewing me that confidence which a father has a right to expect of a good son, and if you can promise to be perfectly open and unreserved towards me?"

"I promise that I will die rather than tell you a falsehood."

"That's just like him," said the mother. "I have succeeded in inspiring him with the utmost horror of untruthfulness."

"That's all very well, my dear madam, but you might have pursued a still better course, and one which would have been still more conducive to his happiness."

"What is that?"

"I will tell you. It was necessary to make him detest a lie; you should have rather endeavoured to make him a lover of the truth by displaying it to him in all its native beauty. This is the only way to make him lovable, and love is the sole bestower of happiness in this world."

"But isn't it the same thing not to lie and to tell the truth," said the boy, with a smile which charmed his mother and displeased me.

"Certainly not; there is a great difference — for to avoid lying you have only to hold your tongue; and do you think that comes to the same thing as speaking the truth? You must open your mind to me, my son, and tell me all your thoughts, even if you blush in the recital. I will teach you how to blush, and soon you will have nothing to fear in laying open all your thoughts and deeds. When we know each other a little longer we shall see how we agree together. You must understand that I cannot look upon you as my son until I see cause to love you, and I cannot have you call me father till you treat me as the best friend you have. You may be quite sure that I shall find a way to discover your thoughts, however cleverly you try to hide them. If I find you deceitful and suspicious I shall certainly entertain no regard for you. As soon as I have finished my business at Amsterdam we will set out for Paris. I am leaving the Hague to-morrow, and on my return I hope to find you instructed by your mother in a system of morality more consonant with my views, and more likely to lead to your happiness."

On glancing at my little daughter, who had been listening to me with the greatest attention, I saw that her eyes were swimming with tears, which she could hardly retain.

"Why are you crying?" said the mother; "it is silly to cry." And with that the child ran to her mother and threw her arms round her neck.

"Would you like to come to Paris, too?" said I to her.

"Oh, yes! But mamma must come too, as she would die without me."

"What would you do if I told you to go?" said the mother.

"I would obey you, mamma, but how could I exist away from you?"

Thereupon my little daughter pretended to cry. I say pretended, as it was quite evident that the child did not mean what she said, and I am sure that her mother knew it as well as I.

It was really a melancholy thing to see the effects of a bad education on this young child, to whom nature had given intelligence and feeling. I took the mother on one side, and said that if she had intended to make actors of her children she had succeeded to admiration; but if she wished them to become useful members of society her system had failed lamentably, as they were in a fair way to become monsters of deceit. I continued making her the most pointed remonstrances until, in spite of her efforts to control herself, she burst into tears. However, she soon recovered her composure, and begged me to stay at the Hague a day longer, but I told her it was out of the question, and left the room. I came in again a few minutes after, and Sophie came up to me and said, in a loving little voice,

"If you are really my friend, you will give me some proof of your friendship."

"And what proof do you want, my dear?"

"I want you to come and sup with me to-morrow."

"I can't, Sophie dear, for I have just said no to your mother, and she would be offended if I granted you what I had refused her."

"Oh, no! she wouldn't; it was she who told me to ask you just now."

I naturally began to laugh, but on her mother calling the girl a little fool, and the brother adding that he had never committed such an indiscretion, the poor child began to tremble all over, and looked abashed. I reassured her as best I could, not caring whether what I said displeased her mother or not, and I endeavoured to instill into her principles of a very different nature to those in which she had been reared, while she listened with an eagerness which proved that her heart was still ready to learn the right way. Little by little her face cleared, and I saw that I had made an impression, and though I could not flatter myself that any good I might do her would be lasting in its effects as long as she remained under the bad influence of her mother, I promised to come and sup with her next evening, "but on the condition," I said, “that you give me a plain meal, and one bottle of chambertin only, for you are not too well off.”

“I know that, but mamma says that you pay for everything.”

This reply made me go off into a roar of laughter; and in spite of her vexation the mother was obliged to follow my example. The poor woman, hardened by the life she led, took the child’s simplicity for stupidity, but I saw in her a rough diamond which only wanted polishing.

Therese told me that the wine did not cost her anything, as the son of the Rotterdam burgomaster furnished her with it, and that he would sup with us the next day if I would allow him to be present. I answered smilingly that I should be delighted to see him, and I went away after giving my daughter, of whom I felt fond, a tender embrace. I would have done anything to be entrusted with her, but I saw it would be no good trying to get possession of her, as the mother was evidently keeping her as a resource for her old age. This is a common way for adventuresses to look upon their daughters, and Therese was an adventuress in the widest acceptation of the term. I gave her twenty ducats to get clothes for my adopted son and Sophie, who, with spontaneous gratitude, and her eyes filled with tears, came and gave me a kiss. Joseph was going to kiss my hand, but I told him that it was degrading for one man to kiss another’s hand, and that for the future he was to shew his gratitude by embracing me as a son embraces his father.

Just as I was leaving, Therese took me to the closet where the two children were sleeping. I knew what she was thinking of; but all that was over long ago; I could think of no one but Esther.

The next day I found the burgomaster’s son at my actress’s house. He was a fine young fellow of twenty or twenty-one, but totally devoid of manner. He was Therese’s lover, but he should have regulated his behaviour in my presence. Therese, seeing that he was posing as master of the field, and that his manners disgusted me, began to snub him, much to his displeasure, and after sneering at the poorness of the dishes, and praising the wine which he had supplied, he went out leaving us to finish our dessert by ourselves. I left myself at eleven, telling Therese that I should see her again before I went away. The Princesse de Galitzin, a Cantimir by birth, had asked me to dinner, and this made me lose another day.

Next day I heard from Madame d'Urfe, who enclosed a bill of exchange on Boaz for twelve thousand francs. She said that she had bought her shares for sixty thousand, that she did not wish to make anything of them, and that she hoped I would accept the overplus as my broker's fee. She worded her offer with too much courtesy for me to refuse it. The remainder of the letter was devoted to the wildest fancies. She said that her genius had revealed to her that I should bring back to Paris a boy born of the Mystical Marriage, and she hoped I would take pity on her. It was a strange coincidence, and seemed likely to attach the woman still more closely to her visionary theories. I laughed when I though how she would be impressed by Therese's son, who was certainly not born of the Mystical Marriage.

Boaz paid me my twelve thousand francs in ducats, and I made him my friend, as he thanked me for receiving the moneys in ducats, and he doubtless made a profit on the transaction, gold being a commodity in Holland, and all payments being made in silver or paper money.

At that time gold was at a low rate, and nobody would take ducats.

After having an excellent dinner with the Princesse de Galitzin, I put on my cloak and went to the cafe. I found there the burgomaster's son, who was just beginning a game of billiards. He whispered to me that I might back him with advantage, and thinking he was sure of his stroke I thanked him and followed his advice. However, after losing three games one after the other, I took his measure and began to lay against him without his knowledge. After playing for three hours and losing all the time, he stopped play and came to condole with me on my heavy loss. It is impossible to describe his amazed expression when I shewed him a handful of ducats, and assured him that I had spent a very profitable evening in laying against him. Everybody in the room began to laugh at him, but he was the sort of young man who doesn't understand a joke, and he went out in a rage. Soon after I left the billiard-room myself, and, according to my promise went to see Therese, as I was leaving for Amsterdam the next day.

Therese was waiting for her young wine merchant, but on my recounting his adventures she expected him no longer. I took my little daughter on my knee and lavished my caresses on her, and so left them, telling them that we should see each other again in the course of three weeks or a month at latest.

As I was going home in the moonlight by myself, my sword under my arm, I was encountered all of a sudden by the poor dupe of a burgomaster's son.

"I want to know," said he, "if your sword has as sharp a point as your tongue."

I tried to quiet him by speaking common sense, and I kept my sword wrapped in my cloak, though his was bared and directed against me.

"You are wrong to take my jests in such bad part," said I; "however, I apologize to you."

"No apologies; look to yourself."

"Wait till to-morrow, you will be cooler then, but if you still wish it I will give you satisfaction in the midst of the billiard-room."

"The only satisfaction you can give me is to fight; I want to kill you."

As evidence of his determination, and to provoke me beyond recall, he struck me with the flat of his sword, the first and last time in my life in which I have received such and insult. I drew my sword, but still hoping to bring him to his senses I kept strictly on the defensive and endeavoured to make him leave off. This conduct the Dutchman mistook for fear, and pushed hard on me, lunging in a manner that made me look to myself. His sword passed through my necktie; a quarter of an inch farther in would have done my business.

I leapt to one side, and, my danger no longer admitting of my fighting on the defensive, I lunged out and wounded him in the chest. I thought this would have been enough for him, so I proposed we should terminate our engagement.

"I'm not dead yet," said he; "I want to kill you."

This was his watchword; and, as he leapt on me in a paroxysm of rage, more like a madman than a sensible being, I hit him four times. At the fourth wound he stepped back, and, saying he had had enough, begged me to leave him.

I went off as fast as I could, and was very glad to see from the look of my sword that his wounds were slight. I found Boaz still up, and on hearing what had taken place he advised me to go to Amsterdam at once, though I assured him that the wounds were not mortal. I gave in to his advice, and as my carriage was at the saddler's he lent me his, and I set out, bidding my servant to come on the next day with my luggage, and to rejoin me at the "Old Bible," in Amsterdam. I reached Amsterdam at noon and my man arrived in the evening.

I was curious to hear if my duel had made any noise, but as my servant had left at an early hour he had heard nothing about it. Fortunately for me nothing whatever was known about it at Amsterdam for a week after; otherwise, things might not have gone well with me, as the reputation of being a duellist is not a recommendation to financiers with whom one is about to transact business of importance.

The reader will not be surprised when I tell him that my first call was on M. d'O, or rather on his charming daughter Esther, for she it was on whom I waited. It will be remembered that the way in which we parted did a good deal towards augmenting the warmth of my affection for her. On entering the room I found Esther writing at a table.

"What are you doing Esther, dear?"

"An arithmetical problem."

"Do you like problems?"

"I am passionately fond of anything which contains difficulties and offers curious results."

"I will give you something which will please you."

I made her, by way of jest, two magic squares, which delighted her. In return, she spewed me some trifles with which I was well acquainted, but which I pretended to think very astonishing. My good genius then inspired me with the idea of trying divination by the cabala. I told her to ask a question in writing, and assured her that by a certain kind of calculation a satisfactory answer would be obtained. She smiled, and asked why I had returned to Amsterdam so soon. I shewed her how to make the pyramid with the proper numbers and the other ceremonies, then I made her extract the answer in numbers, translating it into French, and greatly was she surprised to find that the cause which had made me return to Amsterdam so soon was — love.

Quite confounded, she said it was very wonderful, even though the answer might not be true, and she wished to know what masters could teach this mode of calculation.

“Those who know it cannot teach it to anyone.”

“How did you learn it, then?”

“From a precious manuscript I inherited from my father.”

“Sell it me.”

“I have burnt it; and I am not empowered to communicate the secret to anyone before I reach the age of fifty.”

“Why fifty?”

“I don’t know; but I do know that if I communicated it to anyone before that age I should run the risk of losing it myself. The elementary spirit who is attached to the oracle would leave it.”

“How do you know that?”

“I saw it so stated in the manuscript I have spoken of.”

“Then you are able to discover all secrets?”

“Yes, or I should be if the replies were not sometimes too obscure to be understood.”

“As it does not take much time, will you be kind enough to get me an answer to another question?”

“With pleasure; you can command me in anything not forbidden by my familiar spirit.”

She asked what her destiny would be, and the oracle replied that she had not yet taken the first step towards it. Esther was astonished and called her governess to see the two answers, but the good woman saw nothing wonderful in them whatever. Esther impatiently called her a blockhead, and entreated me to let her ask another question. I begged her to do so, and she asked,

“Who loves me most in Amsterdam?” The oracle replied that no one loved her as well as he who had given her being: Poor Esther then told me that I had made her miserable, and that she would die of grief if she could not succeed in learning the method of calculation. I gave no answer, and pretended to feel sad at heart. She began to write down another question, putting her hand in front so as to screen the paper. I rose as if to get out of her way, but while she was arranging the pyramid I cast my eyes on the paper whilst walking up and down the room, and read her question. After she had gone as far as I had taught her, she asked me to extract the answer, saying that I could do so without reading the question. I agreed to do so on the condition that she would not ask a second time.

As I had seen her question, it was easy for me to answer it. She had asked the oracle if she might shew the questions she had propounded to her father, and the answer was that she would be happy as long as she had no secrets from her father.

When she read these words she gave a cry of surprise, and could find no words wherewith to express her gratitude to me. I left her for the Exchange, where I had a long business conversation with M. Pels.

Next morning a handsome and gentlemanly man came with a letter of introduction from Therese, who told me that he would be useful in case I wanted any assistance in business. His name was Rigerboos. She informed me that the burgomaster's son was only slightly wounded, and that I had nothing to fear as the matter was not generally known, and that if I had business at the Hague I might return there in perfect safety. She said that my little Sophie talked of me all day, and that I should find my son much improved on my return. I asked M. Rigerboos to give me his address, assuring him that at the proper time I should rely on his services.

A moment after Rigerboos had gone, I got a short note from Esther, who begged me, in her father's name, to spend the day with her — at least, if I had no important engagement. I answered that, excepting a certain matter of which her father knew, I had no chiefer aim than to convince her that I desired a place in her heart, and that she might be quite sure that I would not refuse her invitation.

I went to M. d'O —— at dinner time. I found Esther and her father puzzling over the method which drew reasonable answers out of a pyramid of numbers. As soon as her father saw me, he embraced me, saying how happy he was to possess a daughter capable of attracting me.

“She will attract any man who has sufficient sense to appreciate her.”

“You appreciate her, then?”

“I worship her.”

“Then embrace her.”

Esther opened her arms, and with a cry of delight threw them round my neck, and gave the back all my caresses, kiss for kiss.

“I have got through all my business,” said M. d’O —— , “and the rest of my day is at your disposal. I have known from my childhood that there is such a science as the one you profess, and I was acquainted with a Jew who by its aid made an immense fortune. He, like you, said that, under pain of losing the secret, it could only be communicated to one person, but he put off doing so so long that at last it was too late, for a high fever carried him off in a few days. I hope you will not do as the Jew did; but in the meanwhile allow me to say that if You do not draw a profit from this treasure, you do not know what it really is.”

“You call this knowledge of mine a treasure, and yet you possess one far more excellent,” looking at Esther as I spoke.

“We will discuss that again. Yes, sir, I call your science a treasure.”

“But the answers of the oracle are often very obscure.”

“Obscure! The answers my daughter received are as clear as day.”

“Apparently, she is fortunate in the way she frames her questions; for on this the reply depends.”

“After dinner we will try if I am so fortunate — at least, if you will be so kind as to help me.”

“I can refuse you nothing, as I consider father and daughter as one being.”

At table we discussed other subjects, as the chief clerks were present — notably the manager, a vulgar-looking fellow, who had very evident aspirations in the direction of my fair Esther. After dinner we went into M. d’O ‘s private closet, and thereupon he drew two long questions out of his pocket. In the first he desired to know how to obtain a favourable decision from the States-General in an important matter, the details of which he explained. I replied in terms, the obscurity of which would have done credit to a professed Pythoness, and I left Esther to translate the answer into common sense, and find a meaning in it.

With regard to the second answer I acted in a different manner; I was impelled to answer clearly, and did so. M. d'O asked what had become of a vessel belonging to the India Company of which nothing had been heard. It was known to have started on the return voyage, and should have arrived two months ago, and this delay gave rise to the supposition that it had gone down. M. d'O —— wished to know if it were still above water, or whether it were lost, etc. As no tidings of it had come to hand, the company were on the look-out for someone to insure it, and offered ten per cent., but nobody cared to run so great a risk, especially as a letter had been received from an English sea captain who said he had seen her sink.

I may confess to my readers, though I did not do so to M. d'O —— . that with inexplicable folly I composed an answer that left no doubt as to the safety of the vessel, pronouncing it safe and sound, and that we should hear of it in a few days. No doubt I felt the need of exalting my oracle, but this method was likely to destroy its credit for ever. In truth, if I had guessed M. d'O — — 's design, I would have curbed my vanity, for I had no wish to make him lose a large sum without profiting myself.

The answer made him turn pale, and tremble with joy. He told us that secrecy in the matter was of the last importance, as he had determined to insure the vessel and drive a good bargain. At this, dreading the consequences, I hastened to tell him that for all I knew there might not be a word of truth in the oracle's reply, and that I should die of grief if I were the involuntary cause of his losing an enormous sum of money through relying on an oracle, the hidden sense of which might be completely opposed to the literal translation.

"Have you ever been deceived by it?"

"Often."

Seeing my distress, Esther begged her father to take no further steps in the matter. For some moments nobody spoke.

M. d'O —— looked thoughtful and full of the project which his fancy had painted in such gay colours. He said a good deal about it, dwelling on the mystic virtues of numbers, and told his daughter to read out all the questions she had addressed to the oracle with the answers she had received. There were six or seven of them, all briefly worded, some direct and some equivocal. Esther, who had constructed the pyramids, had shone, with my potent assistance, in extracting the answers, which I had really invented, and her father, in the joy of his heart, seeing her so clever, imagined that she would become an adept in the science by the force of intelligence. The lovely Esther, who was much taken with the trifle; was quite ready to be of the same opinion.

After passing several hours in the discussion of the answers, which my host thought divine, we had supper, and at parting M. d'O —— said that as Sunday was a day for pleasure and not business he hoped I would honour them by passing the day at their pretty house on the Amstel, and they were delighted at my accepting their invitation.

I could not help pondering over the mysteries of the commercial mind, which narrows itself down to considerations of profit and loss. M. d'O —— was decidedly an honest man; but although he was rich, he was by no means devoid of the greed incident to his profession. I asked myself the question, how a man, who would consider it dishonourable to steal a ducat, or to pick one up in the street and keep it, knowing to whom it belonged, could reconcile it with his conscience to make an enormous profit by insuring a vessel of the safety of which he was perfectly certain, as he believed the oracle infallible. Such a transaction was certainly fraudulent, as it is dishonest to play when one is certain of winning.

As I was going home I passed a tea-garden, and seeing a good many people going in and coming out I went in curious to know how these places were managed in Holland. Great heavens! I found myself the witness of an orgy, the scene a sort of cellar, a perfect cesspool of vice and debauchery. The discordant noise of the two or three instruments which formed the orchestra struck gloom to the soul and added to the horrors of the cavern. The air was dense with the fumes of bad tobacco, and vapours reeking of beer and garlic issued from every mouth. The company consisted of sailors, men of the lowest-class, and a number of vile women. The sailors and the dregs of the people thought this den a garden of delight, and considered its pleasures compensation for the toils of the sea and the miseries of daily labour. There was not a single woman there whose aspect had anything redeeming about it. I was looking at the repulsive sight in silence, when a great hulking fellow, whose appearance suggested the blacksmith, and his voice the blackguard, came up to me and asked me in bad Italian if I would like to dance. I answered in the negative, but before leaving me he pointed out a Venetian woman who, he said, would oblige me if I gave her some drink.

Wishing to discover if she was anyone I knew I looked at her attentively, and seemed to recollect her features, although I could not decide who she could be. Feeling rather curious on the subject I sat down next to her, and asked if she came from Venice, and if she had left that country some time ago.

“Nearly eighteen years,” she replied.

I ordered a bottle of wine, and asked if she would take any; she said yes, and added, if I liked, she would oblige me.

“I haven’t time,” I said; and I gave the poor wretch the change I received from the waiter. She was full of gratitude, and would have embraced me if I had allowed her.

“Do you like being at Amsterdam better than Venice?” I asked.

“Alas, no! for if I were in my own country I should not be following this dreadful trade.”

“How old were you when you left Venice.”

“I was only fourteen and lived happily with my father and mother, who now may have died of grief.”

“Who seduced you?”

“A rascally footman.”

“In what part of Venice did you live?”

“I did not live in Venice, but at Friuli, not far off.”

Friuli … eighteen years ago … a footman … I felt moved, and looking at the wretched woman more closely I soon recognized in her Lucie of Pasean. I cannot describe my sorrow, which I concealed as best I could, and tried hard to keep up my indifferent air. A life of debauchery rather than the flight of time had tarnished her beauty, and ruined the once exquisite outlines of her form. Lucie, that innocent and pretty maiden, grown ugly, vile, a common prostitute! It was a dreadful thought. She drank like a sailor, without looking at me, and without caring who I was. I took a few ducats from my purse, and slipped them into her hand, and without waiting for her to find out how much I had given her I left that horrible den.

I went to bed full of saddening thoughts. Not even under the Leads did I pass so wretched a day. I thought I must have risen under some unhappy star! I loathed myself. With regard to Lucie I felt the sting of remorse, but at the thought of M. d'O —— I hated myself. I considered that I should cause him a loss of three or four hundred thousand florins; and the thought was a bitter drop in the cup of my affection for Esther. I fancied, she, as well as her father, would become my implacable foe; and love that is not returned is no love at all.

I spent a dreadful night. Lucie, Esther, her father, their hatred of me, and my hatred of myself, were the groundwork of my dreams. I saw Esther and her father, if not ruined, at all events impoverished by my fault, and Lucie only thirty-two years old, and already deep in the abyss of vice, with an infinite prospect of misery and shame before her. The dawn was welcome indeed, for with its appearance a calm came to my spirit; it is, the darkness which is terrible to a heart full of remorse.

I got up and dressed myself in my best, and went in a coach to do my suit to the Princesse de Galitzin, who, was staying at the "Etoile d'Orient." I found her out; she had gone to the Admiralty. I went there, and found her accompanied by M. de Reissak and the Count de Tot, who had just received news of my friend Pesselier, at whose house I made his acquaintance, and who was dangerously ill when I left Paris.

I sent away my coach and began to walk towards M. d'O — — 's house on the Amsel. The extreme elegance of my costume was displeasing in the eyes of the Dutch populace, and they hissed and hooted me, after the manner of the mob all the world over, Esther saw me coming from the window, drew the rope, and opened the door. I ran in, shut the door behind me, and as I was going up the wooden staircase, on the fourth or fifth step my foot struck against some yielding substance. I looked down and saw a green pocket-book. I stooped down to pick it up, but was awkward enough to send it through an opening in the stairs, which had been doubtless made for the purpose of giving light to a stair below. I did not stop, but went up the steps and was received with the usual hospitality, and on their expressing some wonder as to the unusual brilliance of my attire I explained the circumstances of the case. Esther smiled and said I looked quite another person, but I saw that both father and daughter were sad at heart. Esther's governess came in and said something to her in Dutch, at which, in evident distress, she ran and embraced her father.

"I see, my friends, that something has happened to you. If my presence is a restraint, treat me without ceremony, and bid me go."

"It's not so great an ill-hap after all; I have enough money left to bear the loss patiently."

"If I may ask the question, what is the nature of your loss?"

"I have lost a green pocket-book containing a good deal of money, which if I had been wise I would have left behind, as I did not require it till to-morrow."

"And you don't know where you lost it?"

"It must have been in the street, but I can't imagine how it can have happened. It contained bills of exchange for large amounts, and of course they don't matter, as I can stop payment of them, but there were also notes of the Bank of England for heavy sums, and they are gone, as they are payable to the bearer. Let us give thanks to God, my dear child, that it is no worse, and pray to Him to preserve to us what remains, and above all to keep us in good health. I have had much heavier losses than this, and I have been enabled not only to bear the misfortune but to make up the loss. Let us say no more about the matter."

While he was speaking my heart was full of joy, but I kept up the sadness befitting the scene. I had not the slightest doubt that the pocket-book in question was the one I had unluckily sent through the staircase, but which could not be lost irretrievably. My first point was how to make capital of my grand discovery in the interests of my cabalistic science. It was too fine an opportunity to be lost, especially as I still felt the sting of having been the cause of an enormous loss to the worthy man. I would give them a grand proof of the infallibility of my oracle: how many miracles are done in the same way! The thought put me into a good humour. I began to crack jokes, and my jests drew peals of laughter from Esther.

We had an excellent dinner and choice wine. After we had taken coffee I said that if they liked we would have a game of cards, but Esther said that this would be a waste of time, as she would much prefer making the oracular pyramids. This was exactly what I wanted.

“With all my heart,” I said.

“We will do as you suggest.”

“Shall I ask where my father lost his pocket-book?”

“Why not? It’s a plain question: write it down.”

She made the pyramid, and the reply was that the pocket-book had not been found by anyone. She leapt up from her seat, danced for joy, and threw her arms round her father’s neck, saying,

“We shall find it, we shall find it, papa!”

“I hope so, too, my dear, that answer is really very consoling.”

Wherewith Esther gave her father one kiss after another.

“Yes,” said I, “there is certainly ground for hope, but the oracle will be dumb to all questions.”

“Dumb! Why?”

“I was going to say it will be dumb if you do not give me as many kisses as you have given your father.”

“Oh, then I will soon make it speak!” said she, laughing; and throwing her arms about my neck she began to kiss me, and I to give her kisses in return.

Ah! what happy days they seem when I recall them; and still I like dwelling on these days despite my sad old age, the foe of love. When I recall these events I grow young again and feel once more the delights of youth, despite the long years which separate me from that happy time.

At last Esther sat down again, and asked, “Where is the pocket-book?” And the pyramid told her that the pocket-book had fallen through the opening in the fifth step of the staircase.

M. d’O —— said to his daughter,

“Come, my dear Esther, let us go and test the truth of the oracle.” And full of joy and hope they went to the staircase, I following them, and M. d’O shewed her the hole through which the pocket-book must have fallen. He lighted a candle and we went down to the cellar, and before long he picked up the book, which had fallen into some water. We went up again in high spirits, and there we talked for over an hour as seriously as you please on the divine powers of the oracle, which, according to them, should render its possessor the happiest of mortals.

He opened the pocket-book and shewed us the four thousand pound notes. He gave two to his daughter, and made me take the two remaining; but I took them with one hand and with the other gave them to Esther begging her to keep them for me; but before she would agree to do so I had to threaten her with the stoppage of the famous cabalistic oracle. I told M. d’O that all I asked was his friendship, and thereon he embraced me, and swore to be my friend to the death.

By making the fair Esther the depositary of my two thousand pounds, I was sure of winning her affection by an appeal, not to her interest, but to her truthfulness. This charming girl had about her so powerful an attraction that I felt as if my life was wound up with hers.

I told M. d’O that my chief object was to negotiate the twenty millions at a small loss.

“I hope to be of service to you in the matter,” he said, “but as I. shall often want to speak to you, you must come and live in our house, which you must look upon as your own.”

“My presence will be a restraint on you. I shall be a trouble.”

“Ask Esther.”

Esther joined her entreaties to her father’s and I gave in, taking good care not to let them see how pleased I was. I contented myself with expressing my gratitude, to which they answered that it was I who conferred a favour.

M. d’O went into his closet, and as soon as I found myself alone with Esther I kissed her tenderly, saying that I should not be happy till I had won her heart.

"Do you love me?"

"Dearly, and I will do all in my power to shew how well I love you, if you will love me in return."

She gave me her hand, which I covered with kisses, and she went on to say, "As soon as you come and live with us, you must look out for a good opportunity for asking my hand of my father. You need not be afraid he will refuse you, but the first thing for you to do is to move into our house."

"My dear little wife! I will come to-morrow."

We said many sweet things to one another, talked about the future, and told each other our inmost thoughts; and I was undoubtedly truly in love, for not a single improper fancy rose in my mind in the presence of my dear who loved me so well.

The first thing that M. d'O said on his return was, that there would be a piece of news on the Exchange the next day.

"What is that, papa dear?"

"I have decided to take the whole risk — amounting to three hundred thousand florins-of the ship which is thought to have gone down. They will call me mad, but they themselves will be the madmen; which is what I should be if, after the proof we have had, I doubted the oracle any more."

"My dear sir, you make me frightened. I have told you that I have been often deceived by the oracle."

"That must have been, my dear fellow, when the reply was obscure, and you did not get at the real sense of it; but in the present case there is no room, for doubt. I shall make three million florins, or, if the worst comes to the worse, my loss won't ruin me."

Esther, whom the finding of the pocket-book had made enthusiastic, told her father to lose no time. As for me, I could not recall what I had done, but I was again overwhelmed with sadness. M. d'O —— saw it, and taking my hand said, "If the oracle does lie this time, I shall be none the less your friend."

"I am glad to hear it," I answered; "but as this is a matter of the utmost importance, let me consult the oracle a second time before you risk your three hundred thousand florins." This proposition pleased the father and daughter highly; they could not express their gratitude to me for being so careful of their interests.

What followed was truly surprising — enough to make one believe in fatality. My readers probably will not believe it; but as these Memoirs will not be published till I have left this world, it would be of no use for me to disguise the truth in any way, especially as the writing of them is only the amusement of my leisure hours. Well, let him who will believe it; this is absolutely what happened. I wrote down the question myself, erected the pyramid, and carried out all the magical ceremonies without letting Esther have a hand in it. I was delighted to be able to check an act of extreme imprudence, and I was determined to do so. A double meaning, which I knew how to get, would abate M. d'O — — 's courage and annihilate his plans. I had thought over what I wanted to say, and I thought I had expressed it properly in the numbers. With that idea, as Esther knew the alphabet perfectly well, I let her extract the answer, and transfer it into letters. What was my surprise when I heard her read these words:

"In a matter of this kind neither fear nor hesitate. Your repentance would be too hard for you to bear."

That was enough. Father and daughter ran to embrace me, and M. d'O-said that when the vessel was sighted a tithe of the profits should be mine. My surprise prevented me giving any answer; I had intended to write trust and hazard, and I had written fear and hesitate. But thanks to his prejudice, M. d'O —— only saw in my silence confirmation of the infallibility of the oracle. In short, I could do nothing more, and I took my leave leaving everything to the care of chance, who sometimes is kind to us in spite of ourselves.

The next morning I took up my abode in a splendid suite of rooms in Esther's house, and the day after I took her to a concert, where she joked with me on the grief I should endure on account of the absence of Madame Trend and my daughter. Esther was the only mistress of my soul. I lived but to adore her, and I should have satisfied my love had not Esther been a girl of good principles. I could not gain possession of her, and was full of longing and desire.

Four or five days after my installation in my new quarters, M. d'O — communicated to me the result of a conference which he had had with M. Pels and six other bankers on the twenty millions. They offered ten millions in hard cash and seven millions in paper money, bearing interest at five or six per cent. with a deduction of one per cent. brokerage. Furthermore, they would forgive a sum of twelve hundred thousand florins owed by the French India Company to the Dutch Company.

With such conditions I could not venture to decide on my own responsibility, although, personally, I thought them reasonable enough, the impoverished state of the French treasury being taken into consideration. I sent copies of the proposal to M. de Boulogne and M. d'Afri, begging from them an immediate reply. At the end of a week I received an answer in the writing of M. de Courteil, acting for M. de Boulogne, instructing me to refuse absolutely any such proposal, and to report myself at Paris if I saw no chance of making a better bargain. I was again informed that peace was imminent, though the Dutch were quite of another opinion.

In all probability I should have immediately left for Paris, but for a circumstance which astonished nobody but myself in the family of which I had become a member. The confidence of M. d'O —— increased every day, and as if chance was determined to make me a prophet in spite of myself, news was received of the ship which was believed to be lost, and which, on the faith of my oracle, M. d'O had bought for three hundred thousand florins. The vessel was at Madeira. The joy of Esther, and still more my own, may be imagined when we saw the worthy man enter the house triumphantly with confirmation of the good news.

"I have insured the vessel from Madeira to the mouth of the Texel for a trifle," said he, "and so," turning to me, "you may count from this moment on the tenth part of the profit, which I owe entirely to you."

The reader may imagine my delight; but there is one thing he will not imagine, unless he knows my character better than I do myself, the confusion into which I was thrown by the following remarks:

"You are now rich enough," said M. d'O —— , "to set up for yourself amongst us, and you are positively certain to make an enormous fortune in a short time merely by making use of your cabala. I will be your agent; let us live together, and if you like my daughter as she likes you, you can call yourself my son as soon as you please."

In Esther's face shone forth joy and happiness, and in mine, though I adored her, there was to be seen, alas! nothing but surprise. I was stupid with happiness and the constraint in which I held myself. I did not analyze my feelings, but, though I knew it not, there can be no doubt that my insuperable objection to the marriage tie was working within my soul. A long silence followed; and last, recovering my powers of speech, I succeeded, with an effort, in speaking to them of my gratitude, my happiness, my love, and I ended by saying that, in spite of my affection for Esther, I must, before settling in Holland, return to Paris, and discharge the confidential and responsible duty which the Government had placed in my hands. I would then return to Amsterdam perfectly independent.

This long peroration won their approval. Esther was quite pleased, and we spent the rest of the day in good spirits. Next day M. d'O — gave a splendid dinner to several of his friends, who congratulated him on his good fortune, being persuaded that his courageous action was to be explained by his having had secret information of the safety of the vessel, though none of them could see from what source he, and he only, had obtained it.

A week after this lucky event he gave me an ultimatum on the matter of the twenty millions, in which he guaranteed that France should not lose more than nine per cent. in the transaction.

I immediately sent a copy of his proposal to M. d'Afri, begging him to be as prompt as possible, and another copy to the comptroller-general, with a letter in which I warned him that the thing would certainly fall through if he delayed a single day in sending full powers to M. d'Afri to give me the necessary authority to act.

I wrote to the same effect to M. de Courteil and the Duc de Choiseul, telling them that I was to receive no brokerage; but that I should all the same accept a proposal which I thought a profitable one, and saying that I had no doubt of obtaining my expenses from the French Government.

As it was a time of rejoicing with us, M. d'O —— thought it would be a good plan to give a ball. All the most distinguished people in Amsterdam were invited to it. The ball and supper were of the most splendid description, and Esther, who was a blaze of diamonds, danced all the quadrilles with me, and charmed every beholder by her grace and beauty.

I spent all my time with Esther, and every day we grew more and more in love, and more unhappy, for we were tormented by abstinence, which irritated while it increased our desires.

Esther was an affectionate mistress, but discreet rather by training than disposition the favours she accorded me were of the most insignificant description. She was lavish of nothing but her kisses, but kisses are rather irritating than soothing. I used to be nearly wild with love. She told me, like other virtuous women, that if she agreed to make me happy she was sure I would not marry her, and that as soon as I made her my wife she would be mine and mine only. She did not think I was married, for I had given her too many assurances to the contrary, but she thought I had a strong attachment to someone in Paris. I confessed that she was right, and said that I was going there to put an end to it that I might be bound to her alone. Alas! I lied when I said so, for Esther was inseparable from her father, a man of forty, and I could not make up my mind to pass the remainder of my days in Holland.

Ten or twelve days after sending the ultimatum, I received a letter from M. de Boulogne informing me that M. d'Afri had all necessary instructions for effecting the exchange of the twenty millions, and another letter from the ambassador was to the same effect. He warned me to take care that everything was right, as he should not part with the securities before receiving 18,200,000 francs in current money.

The sad time of parting at last drew near, amid many regrets and tears from all of us. Esther gave me the two thousand pounds I had won so easily, and her father at my request gave me bills of exchange to the amount of a hundred thousand florins, with a note of two hundred thousand florins authorizing me to draw upon him till the whole sum was exhausted. Just as I was going, Esther gave me fifty shirts and fifty handkerchiefs of the finest quality.

It was not my love for Manon Baletti, but a foolish vanity and a desire to cut a figure in the luxurious city of Paris, which made me leave Holland. But such was the disposition that Mother Nature had given me that fifteen months under The Leads had not been enough to cure this mental malady of mine. But when I reflect upon after events of my life I am not astonished that The Leads proved ineffectual, for the numberless vicissitudes which I have gone through since have not cured me — my disorder, indeed, being of the incurable kind. There is no such thing as destiny. We ourselves shape our lives, notwithstanding that saying of the Stoics, ‘Volentem ducit, nolentem trahit’.

After promising Esther to return before the end of the year, I set out with a clerk of the company who had brought the French securities, and I reached the Hague, where Boaz received me with a mingled air of wonder and admiration. He told me that I had worked a miracle; “but,” he added, “to succeed thus you must have persuaded them that peace was on the point of being concluded.”

“By no means,” I answered; “so far from my persuading them, they are of the opposite opinion; but all the same I may tell you that peace is really imminent.”

“If you like to give me that assurance in writing,” said he, “I will make you a present of fifty thousand florins’ worth of diamonds.”

“Well,” I answered, “the French ambassador is of the same opinion as myself; but I don’t think the certainty is sufficiently great as yet for you to risk your diamonds upon it.”

Next day I finished my business with the ambassador, and the clerk returned to Amsterdam.

I went to supper at Therese’s, and found her children very well dressed. I told her to go on to Rotterdam the next day and wait for me there with her son, as I had no wish to give scandal at the Hague.

At Rotterdam, Therese told me that she knew I had won half a million at Amsterdam, and that her fortune would be made if she could leave Holland for London. She had instructed Sophie to tell me that my good luck was the effect of the prayers she had addressed to Heaven on my behalf. I saw where the land lay, and I enjoyed a good laugh at the mother’s craft and the child’s piety, and gave her a hundred ducats, telling her that she should have another hundred when she wrote to me from London. It was very evident that she thought the sum a very moderate one, but I would not give her any more. She waited for the moment when I was getting into my carriage to beg me to give her another hundred ducats, and I said, in a low tone, that she should have a thousand if she would give me her daughter. She thought it over for a minute, and then said that she could not part with her.

"I know very well why," I answered; and drawing a watch from my fob I gave it to Sophie, embraced her, and went on my way. I arrived at Paris on February 10th, and took sumptuous apartments near the Rue Montorgueil.

CHAPTER VI

I Meet With a Flattering Reception From My Patron — Madame D'Urfe's Infatuation — Madame X. C. V. And Her Family — Madame du Rumain

During my journey from the Hague to Paris, short as it was, I had plenty of opportunities for seeing that the mental qualities of my adopted son were by no means equal to his physical ones.

As I had said, the chief point which his mother had impressed on him was reserve, which she had instilled into him out of regard for her own interests. My readers will understand what I mean, but the child, in following his mother's instructions, had gone beyond the bounds of moderation; he possessed reserve, it is true, but he was also full of dissimulation, suspicion, and hypocrisy — a fine trio of deceit in one who was still a boy. He not only concealed what he knew, but he pretended to know that which he did not. His idea of the one quality necessary to success in life was an impenetrable reserve, and to obtain this he had accustomed himself to silence the dictates of his heart, and to say no word that had not been carefully weighed. Giving other people wrong impressions passed with him for discretion, and his soul being incapable of a generous thought, he seemed likely to pass through life without knowing what friendship meant.

Knowing that Madame d'Urfe counted on the boy for the accomplishment of her absurd hypostasis, and that the more mystery I made of his birth the more extravagant would be her fancies about it, I told the lad that if I introduced him to a lady who questioned him by himself about his birth, he was to be perfectly open with her.

On my arrival at Paris my first visit was to my patron, whom I found in grand company amongst whom I recognized the Venetian ambassador, who pretended not to know me.

"How long have you been in Paris?" said the minister, taking me by the hand.

"I have only just stepped out of my chaise."

"Then go to Versailles. You will find the Duc de Choiseul and the comptroller-general there. You have been wonderfully successful, go and get your meed of praise and come and see me afterwards. Tell the duke that Voltaire's appointment to be a gentleman-in-ordinary to the king is ready."

I was not going to start for Versailles at midday, but ministers in Paris are always talking in this style, as if Versailles were at the end of the street. Instead of going there, I went to see Madame d'Urfe.

She received me with the words that her genius had informed her that I should come to-day, and that she was delighted with the fulfilment of the prophecy.

"Corneman tells me that you have been doing wonders in Holland; but I see more in the matter than he does, as I am quite certain that you have taken over the twenty millions yourself. The funds have risen, and a hundred millions at least will be in circulation in the course of the next week. You must not be offended at my shabby present, for, of course, twelve thousand francs are nothing to you. You must look upon them as a little token of friendship."

"I am going to tell my servants to close all the doors, for I am too glad to see you not to want to have you all to myself."

A profound bow was the only reply I made to this flattering speech, and I saw her tremble with joy when I told her that I had brought a lad of twelve with me, whom I intended to place in the best school I could find that he might have a good education.

"I will send him myself to Viar, where my nephews are. What is his name? Where is he? I know well what this boy is, I long to see him. Why did you not alight from your journey at my house?"

Her questions and replies followed one another in rapid succession. I should have found it impossible to get in a word edgeways, even if I had wanted to, but I was very glad to let her expend her enthusiasm, and took good care not to interrupt her. On the first opportunity, I told her that I should have the pleasure of presenting the young gentleman to her the day after tomorrow, as on the morrow I had an engagement at Versailles.

"Does the dear lad speak French? While I am arranging for his going to school you must really let him come and live with me."

"We will discuss that question on the day after tomorrow, madam."

"Oh, how I wish the day after to-morrow was here!"

On leaving Madame d'Urfe I went to my lottery office and found everything in perfect order. I then went to the Italian play, and found Silvia and her daughter in their dressing-room.

"My dear friend," said she when she saw me, "I know that you have achieved a wonderful success in Holland, and I congratulate you."

I gave her an agreeable surprise by saying that I had been working for her daughter, and Marion herself blushed, and lowered her eyes in a very suggestive manner. “I will be with you at supper,” I added, “and then we can talk at our ease.” On leaving them I went to the amphitheatre, and what was my surprise to see in one of the first boxes Madame X —— C —— V —— , with all her family. My readers will be glad to hear their history.

Madame X —— C —— V —— , by birth a Greek, was the widow of an Englishman, by whom she had six children, four of whom were girls. On his death-bed he became a Catholic out of deference to the tears of his wife; but as his children could not inherit his forty thousand pounds invested in England, without conforming to the Church of England, the family returned to London, where the widow complied with all the obligations of the law of England. What will people not do when their interests are at stake! though in a case like this there is no need to blame a person for yielding, to prejudices which had the sanction of the law.

It was now the beginning of the year 1758, and five years before, when I was at Padua, I fell in love with the eldest daughter, but a few months after, when we were at Venice, Madame X. C. V. thought good to exclude me from her family circle. The insult which the mother put upon me was softened by the daughter, who wrote me a charming letter, which I love to read even now. I may as well confess that my grief was the easier to bear as my time was taken up by my fair nun, M —— M —— , and my dear C —— C —— . Nevertheless, Mdlle. X. C. V., though only fifteen, was of a perfect beauty, and was all the more charming in that to her physical advantages she joined those of a cultured mind.

Count Algarotti, the King of Prussia’s chamberlain, gave her lessons, and several young nobles were among her suitors, her preference apparently being given to the heir of the family of Memmo de St. Marcuola. He died a year afterwards, while he was procurator.

My surprise at seeing this family at such a time and place may be imagined. Mdlle. X. C. V. saw me directly, and pointed me out to her mother, who made a sign to me with her fan to come to their box.

She received me in the friendliest manner possible, telling me that we were not at Venice now, and that she hoped I would often come and see them at the “Hotel de Bretagne,” in the Rue St. Andre des Arts. I told them that I did not wish to recall any events which might have happened at Venice, and her daughter having joined her entreaties to those of her mother, I promised to accept their invitation.

Mdlle. X. C. V. struck me as prettier than ever; and my love, after sleeping for five years, awoke to fresh strength and vigour. They told me that they were going to pass six months at Paris before returning to Venice. In return I informed them that I intended making Paris my home, that I had just left Holland, that I was going to Versailles the next day, so that I could not pay my respects to them till the day after. I also begged them to accept my services, in a manner which let them know I was a person of some importance.

Mdlle. X. C. V. said that she was aware that the results of my Dutch mission should render me dear to France, that she had always lived in hopes of seeing me once more, that my famous flight from The Leads had delighted them; “for,” she added, “we have always been fond of you.”

“I fancy your mother has kept her fondness for me very much to herself,” I whispered to her.

“We won’t say anything about that,” said she in the same tone. “We learnt all the circumstances of your wonderful flight from a letter of sixteen pages you wrote to M. Memmo. We trembled with joy and shuddered with fear as we read it.”

“How did you know I have been in Holland?”

“M. de la Popeliniere told us about it yesterday.”

M. de la Popeliniere, the fermier-general, whom I had known seven years ago at Passi, came into the box just as his name was spoken. After complimenting me he said that if I could carry through the same operation for the India Company my fortune would be made.

“My advice to you is,” he said, “to get yourself naturalized before it becomes generally known that you have made half a million of money.”

“Half a million! I only wish I had!”

“You must have made that at the lowest calculation.”

“On the contrary, I give you my assurance, that if my claim for brokerage is not allowed, the transaction will prove absolutely ruinous to me.”

“Ah! no doubt you are right to take that tone. Meanwhile, everyone wants to make your acquaintance, for France is deeply indebted to you. You have caused the funds to recover in a very marked degree.”

After the play was over I went to Silvia’s, where I was received as if I had been the favourite child of the family; but on the other hand I gave them certain proofs that I wished to be regarded in that light. I was impressed with the idea that to their unshaken friendship I owed all my good luck, and I made the father, mother, the daughter, and the two sons, receive the presents I had got for them. The best was for the mother, who handed it on to her daughter. It was a pair of diamond ear-rings of great beauty, for which I had given fifteen thousand francs. Three days after I sent her a box containing fine linen from Holland, and choice Mechlin and Alencon lace. Mario, who liked smoking, got a gold pipe; the father a choice gold and enamelled snuff-box, and I gave a repeater to the younger son, of whom I was very fond. I shall have occasion later on to speak of this lad, whose natural qualities were far superior to his position in life. But, you will ask, was I rich enough to make such presents? No, I was not, and I knew it perfectly well; but I gave these presents because I was afraid of not being able to do so if I waited.

I set out for Versailles at day-break, and M. de Choiseul received me as before, his hair was being dressed, but for a moment he laid down his pen, which shewed that I had become a person of greater importance in his eyes. After a slight but grateful compliment, he told me that if I thought myself capable of negotiating a loan of a hundred millions to bear interest at four per cent., he would do all in his power to help me. My answer was that I would think it over when I heard how much I was to have for what I had done already.

“But everybody says that you have made two hundred thousand florins by it.”

“That would not be so bad; half a million of francs would be a fair foundation on which to build a fortune; but I can assure your excellence that there is not a word of truth in the report. I defy anyone to prove it; and till some substantial proof is offered, I think I can lay claim to brokerage.”

“True, true. Go to the comptroller-general and state your views to him.”

M. de Boulogne stopped the occupation on which he was engaged to give me a most friendly greeting, but when I said that he owed me a hundred thousand florins he smiled sardonically.

"I happen to know," he said, "that you have bills of exchange to the amount of a hundred thousand crowns payable to yourself."

"Certainly, but that money has no connection with my mission, as I can prove to you by referring you to M. d'Afri. I have in my head an infallible project for increasing the revenue by twenty millions, in a manner which will cause no irritation."

"You don't say so! Communicate your plan, and I promise to get you a pension of a hundred thousand francs, and letters of nobility as well, if you like to become a Frenchman."

"I will think it over."

On leaving M. de Boulogne I went to the Palace, where a ballet was going on before the Marquise de Pompadour.

She bowed to me as soon as she saw me, and on my approaching her she told me that I was an able financier, and that the "gentlemen below" could not appreciate my merits. She had not forgotten what I had said to her eight years before in the theatre at Fontainebleau. I replied that all good gifts were from above, whither, with her help, I hoped to attain.

On my return to Paris I went to the "Hotel Bourbon" to inform my patron of the result of my journey. His advice to me was to continue to serve the Government well, as its good fortune would come to be mine. On my telling him of my meeting with the X. C. V.'s, he said that M. de la Popeliniere was going to marry the elder daughter.

When I got to my house my son was nowhere to be found. My landlady told me that a great lady had come to call on my lord, and that she had taken him away with her. Guessing that this was Madame d'Urfe, I went to bed without troubling myself any further. Early next morning my clerk brought me a letter. It came from the old attorney, uncle to Gaetan's wife, whom I had helped to escape from the jealous fury of her brutal husband. The attorney begged me to come and speak to him at the courts, or to make an appointment at some place where he could see me. I went to the courts and found him there.

“My niece,” he began, “found herself obliged to go into a convent; and from this vantage ground she is pleading against her husband, with the aid of a barrister, who will be responsible for the costs. However, to win our case, we require the evidence of yourself, Count Tiretta, and other servants who witnessed the scene at the inn.”

I did all I could, and four months afterwards Gaetan simplified matters by a fraudulent bankruptcy, which obliged him to leave France: in due time and place, I shall have something more to say about him. As for his wife, who was young and pretty, she paid her counsel in love’s money, and was very happy with him, and may be happy still for all I know, but I have entirely lost sight of her.

After my interview with the old attorney I went to Madame —— to see Tiretta, who was out. Madame was still in love with him, and he continued to make a virtue of necessity. I left my address, and went to the “Hotel de Bretagne” to pay my first call on Madame X. C. V. The lady, though she was not over fond of me, received me with great politeness. I possibly cut a better figure in her eyes when rich, and at Paris, then when we were in Venice. We all know that diamonds have the strange power of fascination, and that they form an excellent substitute for virtue!

Madame X. C. V. had with her an old Greek named Zandiri, brother to M. de Bragadin’s major-domo, who was just dead. I uttered some expressions of sympathy, and the boor did not take the trouble to answer me, but I was avenged for his foolish stiffness by the enthusiasm with which I was welcomed by everyone else. The eldest girl, her sisters, and the two sons, almost overwhelmed me with friendliness. The eldest son was only fourteen, and was a young fellow of charming manners, but evidently extremely independent, and sighed for the time when he would be able to devote himself to a career of profligacy for which he was well fitted. Mdlle. X. C. V. was both beautiful and charming in her manner, and had received an excellent education of which, however, she made no parade. One could not stay in her presence without loving her, but she was no flirt, and I soon saw that she held out no vain hopes to those who had the misfortune not to please her. Without being rude she knew how to be cold, and it was all the worse for those whom her coldness did not shew that their quest was useless.

The first hour I passed in her company chained me a captive to her triumphant car. I told her as much, and she replied that she was glad to have such a captive. She took the place in my heart where Esther had reigned a week before, but I freely confess that Esther yielded only because she was away. As to my attachment to Sylvia's daughter, it was of such a nature as not to hinder me falling in love with any other woman who chanced to take my fancy. In the libertine's heart love cannot exist without substantial food, and women who have had some experience of the world are well aware of this fact. The youthful Baletti was a beginner, and so knew nothing of these things.

M. Farsetti, a Venetian of noble birth, a knight of Malta, a great student of the occult sciences, and a good Latin versifier, came in at one o'clock. Dinner was just ready and Madame X. C. V. begged him to stay. She asked me also to dine with them, but wishing to dine with Madame d'Urfe I refused the invitation for the nonce.

M. Farsetti, who had known me very well at Venice, only noticed me by a side-glance, and without shewing any vexation I paid him back in the same coin. He smiled at Mdlle. X. C. V.'s praise of my courage. She noticed his expression, and as if to punish him for it went on to say that I had now the admiration of every Venetian, and that the French were anxious to have the honour of calling me a fellow-citizen. M. Farsetti asked me if my post at the lottery paid well. I replied, coolly,

"Oh, yes, well enough for me to pay my clerks' salaries."

He understood the drift of my reply, and Mdlle. X. C. V. smiled.

I found my supposed son with Madame d'Urfe, or rather in that amiable visionary's arms. She hastened to apologize for carrying him off, and I turned it off with a jest, having no other course to take.

"I made him sleep with me," she said, "but I shall be obliged to deprive myself of this privilege for the future, unless he promises to be more discreet."

I thought the idea a grand one, and the little fellow, in spite of his blushes, begged her to say how he had offended.

"We shall have the Comte de St. Germain," said Madame d'Urfe, "to dinner. I know he amuses you, and I like you to enjoy yourself in my house.”

“For that, madam, your presence is all I need; nevertheless, I thank you for considering me.”

In due course St. Germain arrived, and in his usual manner sat himself down, not to eat but to talk. With a face of imperturbable gravity he told the most incredible stories, which one had to pretend to believe, as he was always either the hero of the tale or an eye witness of the event. All the same, I could not help bursting into laughter when he told us of something that happened as he was dining with the Fathers of the Council of Trent.

Madame d’Urfe wore on her neck a large magnet. She said that it would one day happen that this magnet would attract the lightning, and that she would consequently soar into the sun. I longed to tell her that when, she got there she could be no higher up than on the earth, but I restrained myself; and the great charlatan hastened to say that there could be no doubt about it, and that he, and he only, could increase the force of the magnet a thousand times. I said, dryly, that I would wager twenty thousand crowns he would not so much as double its force, but Madame d’Urfe would not let us bet, and after dinner she told me in private that I should have lost, as St. Germain was a magician. Of course I agreed with her.

A few days later, the magician set out for Chambord, where the king had given him a suite of rooms and a hundred thousand francs, that he might be at liberty to work on the dyes which were to assure the superiority of French materials over those of any other country. St. Germain had got over the king by arranging a laboratory where he occasionally tried to amuse himself, though he knew little about chemistry, but the king was the victim of an almost universal weariness. To enjoy a harem recruited from amongst the most ravishing beauties, and often from the ranks of neophytes, with whom pleasure had its difficulties, one would have needed to be a god, and Louis XV. was only a man after all.

It was the famous marquise who had introduced the adept to the king in the hope of his distracting the monarch’s weariness, by giving him a taste for chemistry. Indeed Madame de Pompadour was under the impression that St. Germain had given her the water of perpetual youth, and therefore felt obliged to make the chemist a good return. This wondrous water, taken according to the charlatan’s directions, could not indeed make old age retire and give way to youth, but according to the marquise it would preserve one in statu quo for several centuries.

As a matter of fact, the water, or the giver of it, had worked wonders, if not on her body, at least on her mind; she assured the king that she was not getting older. The king was as much deluded by this grand impostor as she was, for one day he shewed the Duc des Deux-Ponts a diamond of the first water, weighing twelve carats, which he fancied he had made himself. "I melted down," said Louis XV., "small diamonds weighing twenty-four carats, and obtained this one large one weighing twelve." Thus it came to pass that the infatuated monarch gave the impostor the suite formerly occupied by Marshal Saxe. The Duc des Deux-Ponts told me this story with his own lips, one evening, when I was supping with him and a Swede, the Comte de Levenhoop, at Metz.

Before I left Madame d'Urfe, I told her that the lad might be he who should make her to be born again, but that she would spoil all if she did not wait for him to attain the age of puberty. After what she had said about his misbehavior, the reader will guess what made me say this. She sent him to board with Viar, gave him masters on everything, and disguised him under the name of the Comte d'Aranda, although he was born at Bayreuth, and though his mother never had anything to do with a Spaniard of that name. It was three or four months before I went to see him, as I was afraid of being insulted on account of the name which the visionary Madame d'Urfe had given him.

One day Tiretta came to see me in a fine coach. He told me that his elderly mistress wanted to become his wife, but that he would not hear of it, though she offered to endow him with all her worldly goods. I told him that if he gave in he might pay his debts, return to Trevisa, and live pleasantly there; but his destiny would not allow him to take my advice.

I had resolved on taking a country house, and fixed on one called "Little Poland," which pleased me better than all the others I had seen. It was well furnished, and was a hundred paces distant from the Madeleine Gate. It was situated on slightly elevated ground near the royal park, behind the Duc de Grammont's garden, and its owner had given it the name of "Pleasant Warsaw." It had two gardens, one of which was on a level with the first floor, three reception rooms, large stables, coach houses, baths, a good cellar, and a splendid kitchen. The master was called “The Butter King,” and always wrote himself down so; the name had been given to him by Louis XV. on the monarch’s stopping at the house and liking the butter. The “Butter King” let me his house for a hundred Louis per annum, and he gave me an excellent cook called “The Pearl,” a true blue-ribbon of the order of cooks, and to her he gave charge of all his furniture and the plate I should want for a dinner of six persons, engaging to get me as much plate as I wanted at the hire of a sous an ounce. He also promised to let me have what wine I wanted, and said all he had was of the best, and, moreover, cheaper than I could get it at Paris, as he had no gate-money to pay on it.

Matters having been arranged on these terms, in the course of a week I got a good coachman, two fine carriages, five horses, a groom, and two footmen. Madame d’Urfe, who was my first guest, was delighted with my new abode, and as she imagined that I had done it all for her, I left her in that flattering opinion. I never could believe in the morality of snatching from poor mortal man the delusions which make them happy. I also let her retain the notion that young d’Aranda, the count of her own making, was a scion of the nobility, that he was born for a mysterious operation unknown to the rest of mankind, that I was only his caretaker (here I spoke the truth), and that he must die and yet not cease to live. All these whimsical ideas were the products of her brain, which was only occupied with the impossible, and I thought the best thing I could do was to agree with everything. If I had tried to undeceive her, she would have accused me of want of trust in her, for she was convinced that all her knowledge was revealed to her by her genius, who spoke to her only by night. After she had dined with me I took her back to her house, full of happiness.

Camille sent me a lottery ticket, which she had invested in at my office, and which proved to be a winning one, I think, for a thousand crowns or thereabouts. She asked me to come and sup with her, and bring the money with me. I accepted her invitation, and found her surrounded by all the girls she knew and their lovers. After supper I was asked to go to the opera with them, but we had scarcely got there when I lost my party in the crowd. I had no mask on, and I soon found myself attacked by a black domino, whom I knew to be a woman, and as she told me a hundred truths about myself in a falsetto voice, I was interested, and determined on finding out who she was. At last I succeeded in persuading her to come with me into a box, and as soon as we were in and I had taken off her mask I was astonished to find she was Mdlle. X. C. V.

“I have come to the ball,” said she, “with one of my sisters, my elder brother, and M. Farsetti. I left them to go into a box and change my domino:

“They must feel very uneasy.”

“I dare say they do, but I am not going to take pity on them till the end of the ball.”

Finding myself alone with her, and certain of having her in my company for the rest of the night, I began to talk of our old love-making; and I took care to say that I was more in love with her than ever. She listened to me kindly, did not oppose my embraces, and by the few obstacles she placed in my way I judged that the happy moment was not far off. Nevertheless I felt that I must practice restraint that evening, and she let me see that she was obliged to me.

“I heard at Versailles, my dear mademoiselle, that you are going to marry M. de la Popeliniere.”

“So they say. My mother wishes me to do so, and the old financier fancies he has got me in his talons already; but he makes a mistake, as I will never consent to such a thing.”

“He is old, but he is very rich.”

“He is very rich and very generous, for he promises me a dowry of a million if I become a widow without children; and if I had a son he would leave me all his property.”

“You wouldn’t have much difficulty in complying with the second alternative.”

“I shall never have anything to do with his money, for I should never make my life miserable by a marriage with a man whom I do not love, while I do love another.”

“Another! Who is the fortunate mortal to whom you have given your heart’s treasure?”

“I do not know if my loved one is fortunate. My lover is a Venetian, and my mother knows of it; but she says that I should not be happy, that he is not worthy of me."

"Your mother is a strange woman, always crossing your affections."

"I cannot be angry with her. She may possibly be wrong, but she certainly loves me. She would rather that I should marry M. Farsetti, who would be very glad to have me, but I detest him."

"Has he made a declaration in terms?"

"He has, and all the marks of contempt I have given him seem to have no effect."

"He clings hard to hope; but the truth is you have fascinated him."

"Possibly, but I do not think him susceptible of any tender or generous feeling. He is a visionary; surly, jealous, and envious in his disposition. When he heard me expressing myself about you in the manner you deserve, he had the impudence to say to my mother before my face that she ought not to receive you."

"He deserves that I should give him a lesson in manners, but there are other ways in which he may be punished. I shall be delighted to serve you in any way I can."

"Alas! if I could only count on your friendship I should be happy."

The sigh with which she uttered these words sent fire through my veins, and I told her that I was her devoted slave; that I had fifty thousand crowns which were at her service, and that I would risk my life to win her favours. She replied that she was truly grateful to me, and as she threw her arms about my neck our lips met, but I saw that she was weeping, so I took care that the fire which her kisses raised should be kept within bounds. She begged me to come and see her often, promising that as often as she could manage it we should be alone. I could ask no more, and after I had promised to come and dine with them on the morrow, we parted.

I passed an hour in walking behind her, enjoying my new position of intimate friend, and I then returned to my Little Poland. It was a short distance, for though I lived in the country I could get to any part of Paris in a quarter of an hour. I had a clever coachman, and capital horses not used to being spared. I got them from the royal stables, and as soon as I lost one I got another from the same place, having to pay two hundred francs. This happened to me several times, for, to my mind, going fast is one of the greatest pleasures which Paris offers.

Having accepted an invitation to dinner at the X. C. V.'s, I did not give myself much time for sleep, and I went out on foot with a cloak on. The snow was falling in large flakes, and when I got to madame's I was as white as a sheet from head to foot. She gave me a hearty welcome, laughing, and saying that her daughter had been telling her how she had puzzled me, and that she was delighted to see me come to dinner without ceremony. "But," added she, "it's Friday today, and you will have to fast, though, after all, the fish is very good. Dinner is not ready yet. You had better go and see my daughter, who is still a-bed."

As may be imagined, this invitation had not to be repeated, for a pretty woman looks better in bed than anywhere else. I found Mdlle. X. C. V. sitting up in bed writing, but she stopped as soon as she saw me.

"How is this, sweet lie-a-bed, not up yet?"

"Yes, I am staying in bed partly because I feel lazy, and partly because I am freer here."

"I was afraid you were not quite well."

"Nor am I. However, we will say no more about that now. I am just going to take some soup, as those who foolishly establish the institution of fasting were not polite enough to ask my opinion on the subject. It does not agree with my health, and I don't like it, so I am not going to get up even to sit at table, though I shall thus deprive myself of your society."

I naturally told her that in her absence dinner would have no savour; and I spoke the truth.

As the presence of her sister did not disturb us, she took out of her pocket-book an epistle in verse which I had addressed to her when her mother had forbidden me the house. "This fatal letter," said she, "which you called 'The Phoenix,' has shaped my life and may prove the cause of my death."

I had called it the Phoenix because, after bewailing my unhappy lot, I proceeded to predict how she would afterwards give her heart to a mortal whose qualities would make him deserve the name of Phoenix. A hundred lines were taken up in the description of these imaginary mental and moral characteristics, and certainly the being who should have them all would be right worthy of worship, for he would be rather a god than a man.

“Alas!” said Mdlle. X. C. V., “I fell in love with this imaginary being, and feeling certain that such an one must exist I set myself to look for him. After six months I thought I had found him. I gave him my heart, I received his, we loved each other fondly. But for the last four months we have been separated, and during the whole time I have only had one letter from him. Yet I must not blame him, for I know he cannot help it. Such, is my sorry fate: I can neither hear from him nor write to him:”

This story was a confirmation of a theory of mine namely, that the most important events in our lives proceed often from the most trifling causes. My epistle was nothing better than a number of lines of poetry more or less well written, and the being I had delineated was certainly not to be found, as he surpassed by far all human perfections, but a woman’s heart travels so quickly and so far! Mdlle. X. C. V. took the thing literally, and fell in love with a chimera of goodness, and then was fain to turn this into a real lover, not thinking of the vast difference between the ideal and the real. For all that, when she thought that she had found the original of my fancy portrait, she had no difficulty in endowing him with all the good qualities I had pictured. Of course Mdlle. X. C. V. would have fallen in love if I had never written her a letter in verse, but she would have done so in a different manner, and probably with different results.

As soon as dinner was served we were summoned to do justice to the choice fish which M. de la Popeliniere had provided. Madame X. C. V. a narrowminded Greek, was naturally bigoted and superstitious. In the mind of a silly woman the idea of an alliance between the most opposite of beings, God and the Devil, seems quite natural. A priest had told her that, since she had converted her husband, her salvation was secure, for the Scriptures solemnly promised a soul for a soul to every one who would lead a heretic or a heathen within the fold of the church. And as Madame X. C. V. had converted her husband, she felt no anxiety about the life of the world to come, as she had done all that was necessary. However, she ate fish on the days appointed; the reason being that she preferred it to flesh.

Dinner over, I returned to the lady’s bedside, and there stayed till nearly nine o’clock, keeping my passions well under control all the time. I was foppish enough to think that her feelings were as lively as mine, and I did not care to shew myself less self-restrained than she, though I knew then, as I know now, that this was a false line of argument. It is the same with opportunity as with fortune; one must seize them when they come to us, or else they go by, often to return no more.

Not seeing Farsetti at the table, I suspected there had been a quarrel, and I asked my sweetheart about it; but she told me I was mistaken in supposing they had quarreled with him, and that the reason of his absence was that he would never leave his house on a Friday. The deluded man had had his horoscope drawn, and learning by it that he would be assassinated on a Friday he resolved always to shut himself up on that day. He was laughed at, but persisted in the same course till he died four years ago at the age of seventy. He thought to prove by the success of his precautions that a man's destiny depends on his discretion, and on the precautions he takes to avoid the misfortunes of which he has had warning. The line of argument holds good in all cases except when the misfortunes are predicted in a horoscope; for either the ills predicted are avoidable, in which case the horoscope is a useless piece of folly, or else the horoscope is the interpreter of destiny, in which case all the precautions in the world are of no avail. The Chevalier Farsetti was therefore a fool to imagine he had proved anything at all. He would have proved a good deal for many people if he had gone out on a Friday, and had chanced to have been assassinated. Picas de la Mirandola, who believed in astrology, says, "I have no doubt truly, 'Astra influunt, non cogunt.'" But would it have been a real proof of the truth of astrology, if Farsetti had been assassinated on a Friday? In my opinion, certainly not.

The Comte d'Eigreville had introduced me to his sister, the Comtesse du Remain, who had been wanting to make my acquaintance ever since she had heard of my oracle. It was not long before I made friends with her husband and her two daughters, the elder of whom, nicknamed "Cotenfau," married M. de Polignac later on. Madame du Remain was handsome rather than pretty, but she won the love of all by her kindness, her frank courtesy, and her eagerness to be of service to her friends. She had a magnificent figure, and would have awed the whole bench of judges if she had pleaded before them.

At her house I got to know Mesdames de Valbelle and de Rancerolles, the Princess de Chimai, and many others who were then in the best society of

Paris. Although Madame du Remain was not a proficient in the occult sciences, she had nevertheless consulted my oracle more frequently than Madame d'Urfe. She was of the utmost service to me in connection with an unhappy circumstance of which I shall speak presently.

The day after my long conversation with Mdlle. X. C. V., my servant told me that there was a young man waiting who wanted to give me a letter with his own hands. I had him in, and on my asking him from whom the letter came, he replied that I should find all particulars in the letter, and that he had orders to wait for an answer. The epistle ran as follows:

"I am writing this at two o'clock in the morning. I am weary and in need of rest, but a burden on my soul deprives me of sleep. The secret I am about to tell you will no longer be so grievous when I have confided in you; I shall feel eased by placing it in your breast. I am with child, and my situation drives me to despair. I was obliged to write to you because I felt I could not say it. Give me a word in reply."

My feelings on reading the above may be guessed. I was petrified with astonishment and could only write, "I will be with you at eleven o'clock."

No one should say that he has passed through great misfortunes unless they have proved too great for his mind to bear. The confidence of Mdlle. X. C. V. shewed me that she was in need of support. I congratulated myself on having the preference, and I vowed to do my best for her did it cost me my life. These were the thoughts of a lover, but for all that I could not conceal from myself the imprudence of the step she had taken. In such cases as these there is always the choice between speaking or writing, and the only feeling which can give the preference to writing is false shame, at bottom mere cowardice. If I had not been in love with her, I should have found it easier to have refused my aid in writing than if she had spoken to me, but I loved her to distraction.

"Yes," said I to myself, "she can count on me. Her mishap makes her all the dearer to me."

And below this there was another voice, a voice which whispered to me that if I succeeded in saving her my reward was sure. I am well aware that more than one grave moralist will fling stones at me for this avowal, but my answer is that such men cannot be in love as I was.

I was punctual to my appointment, and found the fair unfortunate at the door of the hotel.

“You are going out, are you? Where are you going?”

“I am going to mass at the Church of the Augustinians.”

“Is this a saint’s day?”

“No; but my mother makes me go every day.”

“I will come with you.”

“Yes do, give me your arm; we will go into the cloisters and talk there.”

Mdlle. X. C. V. was accompanied by her maid, but she knew better than to be in the way, so we left her in the cloisters. As soon as we were alone she said to me,

“Have you read my letter?”

“Yes, of course; here it is, burn it yourself.”

“No, keep it, and do so with your own hands.”

“I see you trust in me, and I assure you I will not abuse your trust.”

“I am sure you will not. I am four months with child; I can doubt it no longer, and the thought maddens me!”

“Comfort yourself, we will find some way to get over it.”

“Yes; I leave all to you. You must procure an abortion.”

“Never, dearest! that is a crime!”

“Alas! I know that well; but it is not a greater crime than suicide, and there lies my choice: either to destroy the wretched witness of my shame, or to poison myself. For the latter alternative I have everything ready. You are my only friend, and it is for you to decide which it shall be. Speak to me! Are you angry that I have not gone to the Chevalier Farsetti before you?”

She saw my astonishment, and stopped short, and tried to wipe away the tears which escaped from her eyes. My heart bled for her.

“Laying the question of crime on one side,” said I, “abortion is out of our power. If the means employed are not violent they are uncertain, and if they are violent they are dangerous to the mother. I will never risk becoming your executioner; but reckon on me, I will not forsake you. Your honour is as dear to me as your life. Becalm, and henceforth think that the peril is mine, not yours. Make up your mind that I shall find some way of escape, and that there will be no need to cut short that life, to preserve which I would gladly die. And allow me to say that when I read your note I felt glad, I could not help it, that at such an emergency you chose me before all others to be your helper. You will find that your trust was not given in vain, for no one loves you as well as I, and no one is so fain to help you. Later you shall begin to take the remedies I will get for you, but I warn you to be on your guard, for this is a serious matter — one of life and death. Possibly you have already told somebody about it — your maid or one of your sisters?"

"I have not told anybody but you, not even the author of my shame. I tremble when I think what my mother would do and say if she found out my situation. I am afraid she will draw her conclusions from my shape."

"So far there is nothing to be observed in that direction, the beauty of the outline still remains intact."

"But every day increases its size, and for that reason we must be quick in what we do. You must find a surgeon who does not know my name and take me to him to be bled."

"I will not run the risk, it might lead to the discovery of the whole affair. I will bleed you myself; it is a simple operation."

"How grateful I am to you! I feel as if you had already brought me from death to life. What I should like you to do would be to take me to a midwife's. We can easily go without attracting any notice at the first ball at the opera."

"Yes, sweetheart, but that step is not necessary, and it might lead to our betrayal."

"No, no, in this great town there are midwives in every quarter, and we should never be known; we might keep our masks on all the time. Do me this kindness. A midwife's opinion is certainly worth having."

I could not refuse her request, but I made her agree to wait till the last ball, as the crowd was always greater, and we had a better chance of going out free from observation. I promised to be there in a black domino with a white mask in the Venetian fashion, and a rose painted beside the left eye. As soon as she saw me go out she was to follow me into a carriage. All this was carried out, but more of it anon.

I returned with her, and dined with them without taking any notice of Farsetti, who was also at the table, and had seen me come back from mass with her. We did not speak a word to one another; he did not like me and I despised him.

I must here relate a grievous mistake of which I was guilty, and which I have not yet forgiven myself.

I had promised to take Mdlle. X. C. V. to a midwife, but I certainly ought to have taken her to a respectable woman's, for all we wanted to know was how a pregnant woman should regulate her diet and manner of living. But my evil genius took me by the Rue St. Louis, and there I saw the Montigni entering her house with a pretty girl whom I did not know, and so out of curiosity I went in after them. After amusing myself there, with Mdlle. X. C. V. running in my head all the time, I asked the woman to give me the address of a midwife, as I wanted to consult one. She told me of a house in the Marais, where according to her dwelt the pearl of midwives, and began telling me some stories of her exploits, which all went to prove that the woman was an infamous character. I took her address, however, and as I should have to go there by night, I went the next day to see where the house was.

Mdlle. X. C. V. began to take the remedies which I brought her, which ought to have weakened and destroyed the result of love, but as she did not experience any benefit, she was impatient to consult a midwife. On the night of the last ball she recognized me as we had agreed, and followed me out into the coach she saw me enter, and in less than a quarter of an hour we reached the house of shame.

A woman of about fifty received us with great politeness, and asked what she could do.

Mdlle. X. C. V. told her that she believed herself pregnant, and that she desired some means of concealing her misfortune. The wretch answered with a smile that she might as well tell her plainly that it would be easy to procure abortion. “I will do your business,” said she, “for fifty Louis, half to be paid in advance on account of drugs, and the rest when it’s all over. I will trust in your honesty, and you will have to trust in mine. Give me the twenty-five Louis down, and come or send to-morrow for the drugs, and instructions for using them.”

So saying she turned up her clothes without any ceremony, and as I, at Mdlle. X. C. V.’s request, looked away, she felt her and pronounced, as she let down her dress, that she was not beyond the fourth month.

“If my drugs,” said she, “contrary to my expectation, do not do any good, we will try some other ways, and, in any case, if I do not succeed in obliging you I will return you your money.”

“I don’t doubt it for a moment,” said I, “but would you tell me what are those other ways!”

“I should tell the lady how to destroy the foetus.”

I might have told her that to kill the child meant giving a mortal wound to the mother, but I did not feel inclined to enter into a argument with this vile creature.

“If madame decides on taking your advice,” said I, “I will bring you the money for drugs to-morrow.”

I gave her two Louis and left. Mdlle. X. C. V. told me that she had no doubt of the infamy of this woman, as she was sure it was impossible to destroy the offspring without the risk of killing the mother also. “My only trust,” said she, “is in you.” I encouraged her in this idea, dissuading her from any criminal attempts, and assured her over and over again that she should not find her trust in me misplaced. All at once she complained of feeling cold, and asked if we had not time to warm ourselves in Little Poland, saying that she longed to see my pretty house. I was surprised and delighted with the idea. The night was too dark for her to see the exterior charms of my abode, she would have to satisfy herself with the inside, and leave the rest to her imagination. I thought my hour had come. I made the coach stop and we got down and walked some way, and then took another at the corner of the Rue de la Ferannerie. I promised the coachman six francs beyond his fare, and in a quarter of an hour he put us down at my door.

I rang with the touch of the master, the Pearl opened the door, and told me that there was nobody within, as I very well knew, but it was her habit to do so.

"Quick!" said I, "light us a fire, and bring some glasses and a bottle of champagne."

"Would you like an omelette?"

"Very well."

"Oh, I should like an omelette so much!" said Mdlle. X. C. V. She was ravishing, and her laughing air seemed to promise me a moment of bliss. I sat down before the blazing fire and made her sit on my knee, covering her with kisses which she gave me back as lovingly. I had almost won what I wanted when she asked me in a sweet voice to stop. I obeyed, thinking it would please her, feeling sure that she only delayed my victory to make it more complete, and that she would surrender after the champagne. I saw love, kindness, trust, and gratitude shining in her face, and I should have been sorry for her to think that I claimed her as a mere reward. No, I wanted her love, and nothing but her love.

At last we got to our last glass of champagne, we rose from the table, and sentimentally but with gentle force I laid her on a couch and held her amorously in my arms. But instead of giving herself up to my embraces she resisted them, at first by those prayers which usually make lovers more enterprising, then by serious remonstrances, and at last by force. This was too much, the mere idea of using violence has always shocked me, and I am still of opinion that the only pleasure in the amorous embrace springs from perfect union and agreement. I pleaded my cause in every way, I painted myself as the lover flattered, deceived, despised! At last I told her that I had had a cruel awakening, and I saw that the shaft went home. I fell on my knees and begged her to forgive me. "Alas!" said she, in a voice full of sadness, "I am no longer mistress of my heart, and have far greater cause for grief than you." The tears flowed fast down her cheeks, her head rested on my shoulder, and our lips met; but for all that the piece was over. The idea of renewing the attack never came into my head, and if it had I should have scornfully rejected it. After a long silence, of which we both stood in need, she to conquer her shame, and I to repress my anger, we put on our masks and returned to the opera. On our way she dared to tell me that she should be obliged to decline my friendship if she had to pay for it so dearly.

“The emotions of love,” I replied, “should yield to those of honour, and your honour as well as mine require us to continue friends. What I would have done for love I will now do for devoted friendship, and for the future I will die rather than make another attempt to gain those favours of which I thought you deemed me worthy.”

We separated at the opera, and the vast crowd made me lose sight of her in an instant. Next day she told me that she had danced all night. She possibly hoped to find in that exercise the cure which no medicine seemed likely to give her.

I returned to my house in a bad humour, trying in vain to justify a refusal which seemed humiliating and almost incredible. My good sense shewed me, in spite of all sophisms, that I had been grievously insulted. I recollected the witty saying of Populia, who was never unfaithful to her husband except when she was with child; “Non tollo vectorem,” said she, “nisi navi plena.”

I felt certain that I was not loved, and the thought grieved me; and I considered that it would be unworthy of me to love one whom I could no longer hope to possess. I resolved to avenge myself by leaving her to her fate, feeling that I could not allow myself to be duped as I had been.

The night brought wisdom with it, and when I awoke in the morning my mind was calm and I was still in love. I determined to act generously by the unfortunate girl. Without my aid she would be ruined; my course, then, would be to continue my services and to shew myself indifferent to her favours. The part was no easy one, but I played it right well, and at last my reward came of itself.

CHAPTER VII

I Continue My Relations With Mdlle. X. C. V. — Vain Attempts

to Procure Abortion — The Aroph — She Flies From Home and

Takes Refuge in a Convent

The difficulties I encountered only served to increase my love for my charming Englishwoman. I went to see her every morning, and as my interest in her condition was genuine, she could have no suspicion that I was acting a part, or attribute my care of her to anything but the most delicate feelings. For her part she seemed well pleased in the alteration of my behaviour, though her satisfaction may very probably have been assumed. I understood women well enough to know that though she did not love me she was probably annoyed at seeing my new character sit upon me so easily.

One morning in the midst of an unimportant and disconnected conversation, she complimented me upon my strength of mind in subduing my passion, adding, with a smile, that my desire could not have pricked me very sharply, seeing that I had cured myself so well in the course of a week. I quietly replied that I owed my cure not to the weakness of my passion but to my self-respect.

“I know my own character,” I said, “and without undue presumption, I think I may say that I am worthy of a woman’s love. Naturally, after your convincing me that you think differently, I feel humiliated and indignant. Do you know what effect such feelings have on the heart?”

“Alas!” said she, “I know too well. Their effect is to inspire one with contempt for her who gave rise to them.”

“That is going too far, at least in my case. My indignation was merely succeeded by a renewed confidence in myself, and a determination to be revenged.”

“To be revenged! In what way?”

"I wish to compel you to esteem me, by proving to you that I am lord of myself, and can pass by with indifference what I once so ardently desired. I do not know whether I have succeeded yet, but I may say that I can now contemplate your charms without desiring to possess them."

"You are making a mistake, for I never ceased to esteem you, and I esteemed you as much a week ago as I do to-day. Nor for a moment I did think you capable of leaving me to my fate as a punishment for having refused to give way to your transports, and I am glad that I read your character rightly."

We went on to speak of the opiate I made her take, and as she saw no change in her condition she wanted me to increase the dose — a request I took care not to grant, as I knew that more than half a drachm might kill her. I also forbade her to bleed herself again, as she might do herself a serious injury without gaining anything by it. Her maid, of whom she had been obliged to make a confidante, had had her bled by a student, her lover. I told Mdlle. X. C. V. that if she wanted these people to keep her counsel she must be liberal with them, and she replied that she had no money. I offered her money and she accepted fifty louis, assuring me that she would repay me that sum which she needed for her brother Richard. I had not as much money about me, but I sent her the same day a packet of twelve hundred francs with a note in which I begged her to have recourse to me in all her necessities. Her brother got the money, and thought himself authorized to apply to me for aid in a much more important matter.

He was a young man and a profligate, and had got into a house of ill-fame, from which he came out in sorry plight. He complained bitterly that M. Farsetti had refused to lend him four louis, and he asked me to speak to his mother that she might pay for his cure. I consented, but when his mother heard what was the matter with him, she said it would be much better to leave him as he was, as this was the third time he had been in this condition, and that to have him cured was a waste of money, as no sooner was he well than he began his dissipated life afresh. She was quite right, for I had him cured at my expense by an able surgeon, and he was in the same way a month after. This young man seemed intended by nature for shameful excesses, for at the age of fourteen he was an accomplished profligate.

His sister was now six months with child, and as her figure grew great so did her despair. She resolved not to leave her bed, and it grieved me to see her thus cast down. Thinking me perfectly cured of my passion for her, she treated me purely as a friend, making me touch her all over to convince me that she dare not shew herself any longer. I played in short the part of a midwife, but with what a struggle! I had to pretend to be calm and unconcerned when I was consumed with passion. She spoke of killing herself in a manner that made me shudder, as I saw that she had reflected on what she was saying. I was in a difficult position when fortune came to my assistance in a strange and amusing manner.

One day, as I was dining with Madame d'Urfe, I asked her if she knew of any way by which a girl, who had allowed her lover to go too far, might be protected from shame. "I know of an infallible method," she replied, "the aroph of Paracelsus to wit, and it is easy of application. Do you wish to know more about it?" she added; and without waiting for me to answer she brought a manuscript, and put it in my hands. This powerful emmenagogue was a kind of unguent composed of several drugs, such as saffron, myrrh, etc., compounded with virgin honey. To obtain the necessary result one had to employ a cylindrical machine covered with extremely soft skin, thick enough to fill the opening of the vagina, and long enough to reach the opening of the reservoir or case containing the foetus. The end of this apparatus was to be well anointed with aroph, and as it only acted at a moment of uterine excitement it was necessary to apply it with the same movement as that of coition. The dose had to be repeated five or six times a day for a whole week.

This nostrum, and the manner of administering it, struck me in so laughable a light that I could not keep my countenance. I laughed with all my heart, but for all that I spent the next two hours in reading the dreams of Paracelsus, in which Madame d'Urfe put more trust than in the truths of the Gospel; I afterwards referred to Boerhaave, who speaks of the aroph in more reasonable terms.

Seeing, as I have remarked, the charming X. C. V. several hours a day without any kind of constraint, feeling in love with her all the time, and always restraining my feelings, it is no wonder if the hidden fire threatened at every moment to leap up from the ashes of its concealment. Her image pursued me unceasingly, of her I always thought, and every day made it more evident that I should know rest no more till I succeeded in extinguishing my passion by obtaining possession of all her charms.

As I was thinking of her by myself I resolved to tell her of my discovery, hoping she would need my help in the introduction of the cylinder. I went to see her at ten o'clock, and found her, as usual, in bed; she was weeping because the opiate I gave her did not take effect. I thought the time a good one for introducing the aroph of Paracelsus, which I assured her was an infallible means of attaining the end she desired; but whilst I was singing the praises of this application the idea came into my head to say that, to be absolutely certain, it was necessary for the aroph to be mingled with semen which had not lost its natural heat.

“This mixture,” said I, “moistening several times a day the opening of the womb, weakens it to such a degree that the foetus is expelled by its own weight:”

To these details I added lengthy arguments to persuade her of the efficacy of this cure, and then, seeing that she was absorbed in thought, I said that as her lover was away she would want a sure friend to live in the same house with her, and give her the dose according to the directions of Paracelsus.

All at once she burst into a peal of laughter, and asked me if I had been jesting all the time.

I thought the game was up. The remedy was an absurd one, on the face of it; and if her common sense told her as much it would also make her guess my motive. But what limits are there to the credulity of a woman in her condition?

“If you wish,” said I, persuasively, “I will give you the manuscript where all that I have said is set down plainly. I will also shew you what Boerhaeve thinks about it.”

I saw that these words convinced her; they had acted on her as if by magic, and I went on while the iron was hot.

“The aroph,” said I, “is the most powerful agent for bringing on menstruation.”

“And that is incompatible with the state I am now in; so the aroph should procure me a secret deliverance. Do you know its composition?”

"Certainly; it is quite a simple preparation composed of certain ingredients which are well known to me, and which have to be made into a paste with butter or virgin honey. But this composition must touch the orifice of the uterus at a moment of extreme excitement."

"But in that case it seems to me that the person who gives the dose must be in love."

"Certainly, unless he is a mere animal requiring only physical incentives."

She was silent for some time, for though she was quick-witted enough, a woman's natural modesty and her own frankness, prevented her from guessing at my artifice. I, too, astonished at my success in making her believe this fable, remained silent.

At last, breaking the silence, she said, sadly,

"The method seems to me an excellent one, but I do not think I ought to make use of it."

Then she asked me if the aroph took much time to make.

"Two hours at most," I answered, "if I succeed in procuring English saffron, which Paracelsus prefers to the Oriental saffron."

At that moment her mother and the Chevalier Farsetti came in, and after some talk of no consequence she asked me to stay to dinner. I was going to decline, when Mdlle. X. C. V. said she would sit at table, on which I accepted; and we all left the room to give her time to dress. She was not long in dressing, and when she appeared her figure seemed to me quite nymph-like. I was astonished, and could scarcely believe my eyes, and I was on the point of thinking that I had been imposed on, for I could not imagine how she could manage to conceal the fulness I had felt with my own hands.

M. Farsetti sat by her, and I by the mother. Mdlle. X. C. V., whose head was full of the aroph, asked her neighbour, who gave himself out for a great chemist, if he knew it.

"I fancy I know it better than anyone," answered Farsetti, in a self-satisfied manner.

"What is it good for?"

"That is too vague a question."

"What does the word mean?"

"It is an Arabic word, of which I do not know the meaning; but no doubt Paracelsus would tell us."

"The word," said I, "is neither Arabic nor Hebrew, nor, indeed, of any language at all. It is a contraction which conceals two other words."

"Can you tell us what they are?" said the chevalier.

"Certainly; aro comes from aroma, and ph is the initial of philosophorum:"

"Did you get that out of Paracelsus?" said Farsetti, evidently annoyed.

"No, sir; I saw it in Boerhaave."

"That's good," said he, sarcastically; "Boerhaave says nothing of the sort, but I like a man who quotes readily."

"Laugh, sir, if you like," said I, proudly, "but here is the test of what I say; accept the wager if you dare. I don't quote falsely, like persons who talk of words being Arabic."

So saying I flung a purse of gold on the table, but Farsetti, who was by no means sure of what he was saying, answered disdainfully that he never betted.

However, Mdlle. X. C. V., enjoying his confusion, told him that was the best way never to lose, and began to joke him on his Arabic derivation. But, for my part, I replaced my purse in my pocket, and on some trifling pretext went out and sent my servant to Madame d'Urfe's to get me Boerhaave.

On my return to the room I sat down again at table, and joined gaily in the conversation till the return of my messenger with the book. I opened it, and as I had been reading it the evening before I soon found the place I wanted, and giving it to him begged him to satisfy himself that I had quoted not readily but exactly. Instead of taking the book, he got up and went out without saying a word.

"He has gone away in a rage," said the mother; "and I would wager anything that he will not come back again."

"I wager he will," said the daughter, "he will honour us with his agreeable company before to-morrow's sun has set."

She was right. From that day Farsetti became my determined enemy, and let no opportunity slip of convincing me of his hatred.

After dinner we all went to Passy to be present at a concert given by M. de la Popeliniere, who made us stay to supper. I found there Silvia and her charming daughter, who pouted at me and not without cause, as I had neglected her. The famous adept, St. Germain, enlivened the table with his wild tirades so finely delivered. I have never seen a more intellectual or amusing charlatan than he.

Next day I shut myself up to answer a host of questions that Esther had sent me. I took care to answer all those bearing on business matters as obscurely as possible, not only for the credit of the oracle, but also for fear of misleading the father and making him lose money. The worthy man was the most honest of Dutch millionaires, but he might easily make a large hole in his fortune, if he did not absolutely ruin himself, by putting an implicit trust in my infallibility. As for Esther, I confess that she was now no more to me than a pleasant memory.

In spite of my pretence of indifference, my whole heart was given to Mdlle. X. C. V., and I dreaded the moment when she would be no longer able to hide her condition from her family. I was sorry for having spoken about the aroph, as three days had gone by without her mentioning it, and I could not very well reopen the question myself. I was afraid that she suspected my motives, and that the esteem she professed for me had been replaced by a much less friendly sentiment. I felt that her scorn would be too much for me to bear. So humiliated was I that I could not visit her, and I doubt if I should have seen her again if she had not intervened. She wrote me a note, in which she said I was her only friend, and that the only mark of friendship she wanted was that I should come and see her every day, if it were but for a moment. I hasted to take her my reply in my own person, and promised not to neglect her, assuring her that at all hazards she might rely on me. I flattered myself that she would mention the aroph, but she did not do so. I concluded that, after thinking it over, she had resolved to think no more about it.

“Would you like me,” I said, “to invite your mother and the rest of you to dine with me?”

“I shall be delighted,” she replied. “It will be a forbidden pleasure to me before long.”

I gave them a dinner both sumptuous and delicate. I had spared no expense to have everything of the best. I had asked Silvia, her charming daughter, an Italian musician named Magali, with whom a sister of Mdlle. X. C. V.’s was taken, and the famous bass La Garde. Mdlle. X. C. V. was in the highest spirits all the time. Sallies of wit, jests, good stories and enjoyment, were the soul of the banquet. We did not separate till midnight, and before leaving Mdlle. X. C. V. found a moment to whisper to me to come and see her early next morning, as she wanted to speak to me on matters of importance.

It will be guessed that I accepted the invitation. I waited on her before eight o’clock. She was very melancholy, and told me that she was in despair, that la Popeliniere pressed on the marriage, and that her mother persecuted her.

“She tells me that I must sign the contract, and that the dressmaker will soon be coming to take my measure for my wedding dress. To that I cannot consent, for a dressmaker would certainly see my situation. I will die rather than confide in my mother, or marry before I am delivered.”

“There is always time enough to talk about dying,” said I, “when all other means have failed. I think you could easily get rid of la Popeliniere, who is a man of honour. Tell him how you are situated, and he will act without compromising you, as his own interest is sufficiently involved to make him keep the secret.”

“But should I be much better off then? And how about my mother?”

“Your mother? Oh! I will make her listen to reason.”

“You know not what she is like. The honour of the family would oblige her to get me out of the way, but before that she would make me suffer torments to which death is preferable by far. But why have you said no more about the aroph? Is it not all a jest? It would be a very cruel one.”

“On the contrary, I believe it to be infallible, though I have never been a witness of its effects; but what good is it for me to speak to you? You can guess that a delicacy of feeling has made me keep silence. Confide in your lover, who is at Venice; write him a letter, and I will take care that it is given into his hands, in five or six days, by a sure messenger. If he is not well off I will give you whatever money may be needed for him to come without delay, and save your honour and life by giving you the aroph."

"This idea is a good one and the offer generous on your part, but it is not feasible, as you would see if you knew more about my circumstances. Do not think any more of my lover; but supposing I made up my mind to receive the aroph from another, tell me how it could be done. Even if my lover were in Paris, how could he spend an entire week with me, as he would have to? And how could he give me the dose five or six times a day for a week? You see yourself that this remedy is out of the question."

"So you would give yourself to another, if you thought that would save your honour?"

"Certainly, if I were sure that the thing would be kept secret. But where shall I find such a person? Do you think he would be easy to find, or that I can go and look for him?"

I did not know what to make of this speech; for she knew I loved her, and I did not see why she should put herself to the trouble of going far when what she wanted was to her hand. I was inclined to think that she wanted me to ask her to make choice of myself as the administrator of the remedy, either to spare her modesty, or to have the merit of yielding to my love and thus obliging me to be grateful; but I might be wrong, and I did not care to expose myself to the humiliation of a refusal. On the other hand I could hardly think she wanted to insult me. Not knowing what to say or which way to turn, and wanting to draw an explanation from her, I sighed profoundly, took up my hat, and made as if I were going, exclaiming, "Cruel girl, my lot is more wretched than yours."

She raised herself in the bed and begged me with tears in her eyes to remain, and asked me how I could call myself more wretched than her. Pretending to be annoyed and yet full of love for her, I told her that the contempt in which she held me had affected me deeply, since in her necessity she preferred the offices of one who was unknown to her rather than make use of me.

“You are cruel and unjust,” she said, weeping. “I see, for my part, that you love me no longer since you wish to take advantage of my cruel necessity to gain a triumph over me. This is an act of revenge not worthy of a man of feeling.”

Her tears softened me, and I fell on my knees before her.

“Since you know, dearest, that I worship you, how can you think me capable of revenging myself on you? Do you think that I can bear to hear you say that since your lover cannot help you you do not know where to look for help?”

“But after refusing you my favours, could I ask this office of you with any decency? Have I not good reason to be afraid that as I refused to take pity on your love so you would refuse to take pity on my necessity?”

“Do you think that a passionate lover ceases to love on account of a refusal which may be dictated by virtue? Let me tell you all I think. I confess I once thought you did not love me, but now I am sure of the contrary; and that your heart would have led you to satisfy my love, even if you had not been thus situated. I may add that you no doubt feel vexed at my having any doubts of your love.”

“You have interpreted my feelings admirably. But how we are to be together with the necessary freedom from observation remains to be seen.”

“Do not be afraid. Now I am sure of your consent, it will not be long before I contrive some plan. In the meanwhile I will go and make the aroph.”

I had resolved that if ever I succeeded in persuading Mdlle. X. C. V. to make use of my specific I would use nothing but honey, so the composition of the aroph would not be a very complicated process. But if one point was then plain and simple, another remained to be solved, and its solution gave me some difficulty. I should have to pass several nights in continual toils. I feared I had promised more than I could perform, and I should not be able to make any abatement without hazarding, not the success of the aroph, but the bliss I had taken such pains to win. Again, as her younger sister slept in the same room with her and close to her, the operation could not be performed there. At last chance — a divinity which often helps lovers — came to my aid.

I was obliged to climb up to the fourth floor and met the scullion on my way, who guessed where I was going, and begged me not to go any farther as the place was taken.

"But," said I, "you have just come out of it."

"Yes, but I only went in and came out again."

"Then I will wait till the coast is clear."

"For goodness' sake, sir, do not wait!"

"Ah, you rascal! I see what is going on. Well I will say nothing about it, but I must see her."

"She won't come out, for she heard your steps and shut herself in."

"She knows me, does she?"

"Yes, and you know her."

"All right, get along with you! I won't say anything about it."

He went down, and the idea immediately struck me that the adventure might be useful to me. I went up to the top, and through a chink I saw Madelaine, Mdlle. X. C. V.'s maid. I reassured her, and promised to keep the secret, whereon she opened the door, and after I had given her a louis, fled in some confusion. Soon after, I came down, and the scullion who was waiting for me on the landing begged me to make Madelaine give him half the louis.

"I will give you one all to yourself," said I, "if you will tell me the story" — an offer which pleased the rogue well enough. He told me the tale of his loves, and said he always spent the night with her in the garret, but that for three days they had been deprived of their pleasures, as madam had locked the door and taken away the key. I made him shew me the place, and looking through the keyhole I saw that there was plenty of room for a mattress. I gave the scullion a Louis, and went away to ripen my plans.

It seemed to me that there was no reason why the mistress should not sleep in the garret as well as the maid. I got a picklock and several skeleton keys, I put in a tin box several doses of the aroph-that is, some honey mixed with pounded stag's horn to make it thick enough, and the next morning I went to the "Hotel de Bretagne," and immediately tried my picklock. I could have done without it, as the first skeleton key I tried opened the wornout lock.

Proud of my idea, I went down to see Mdlle. X. C. V., and in a few words told her the plan.

“But,” said she, “I should have to go through Madelaine’s room to get to the garret.”

“In that case, dearest, we must win the girl over.”

“Tell her my secret?”

“Just so.”

“Oh, I couldn’t!”

“I will see to it; the golden key opens all doors.”

The girl consented to all I asked her, but the scullion troubled me, for if he found us out he might be dangerous. I thought, however, that I might trust to Madelaine, who was a girl of wit, to look after him.

Before going I told the girl that I wanted to discuss some important matters with her, and I told her to meet me in the cloisters of the Augustinian Church. She came at the appointed time and I explained to her the whole plan in all its details. She soon understood me, and after telling me that she would take care to put her own bed in the new kind of boudoir, she added that, to be quite safe, we must make sure of the scullion.

“He is a sharp lad,” said Madelaine, “and I think I can answer for him. However, you may leave that to me.”

I gave her the key and six louis, bidding her inform her mistress of what we had agreed upon, and get the garret ready to receive us. She went away quite merry. A maid who is in love is never so happy as when she can make her mistress protect her intrigues.

Next morning the scullion called on me at my house. The first thing I told him was to take care not to betray himself to my servants, and never to come and see me except in a case of necessity. He promised discretion, and assured me of his devotion to my service. He gave me the key of the garret and told me that he had got another. I admired his forethought, and gave him a present of six louis, which had more effect on him than the finest words.

Next morning I only saw Mdlle. X. C. V. for a moment to warn her that I should be at the appointed place at ten that evening. I went there early without being seen by anybody. I was in a cloak, and carried in my pocket the aroph, flint and steel, and a candle. I found a good bed, pillows, and a thick coverlet — a very useful provision, as the nights were cold, and we should require some sleep in the intervals of the operation.

At eleven a slight noise made my heart begin to beat — always a good sign. I went out, and found my mistress by feeling for her, and reassured her by a tender kiss. I brought her in, barricaded the door, and took care to cover up the keyhole to baffle the curious, and, if the worse happened, to avoid a surprise.

On my lighting the candle she seemed uneasy, and said that the light might discover us if anybody came up to the fourth floor.

“That’s not likely,” I said; “and besides, we can’t do without it, for how am I to give you the aroph in the dark?”

“Very good,” she replied, “we can put it out afterwards.”

Without staying for those preliminary dallyings which are so sweet when one is at ease, we undressed ourselves, and began with all seriousness to play our part, which we did to perfection. We looked like a medical student about to perform an operation, and she like a patient, with this difference that it was the patient who arranged the dressing. When she was ready — that is, when she had placed the aroph as neatly as a skull-cap fits a parson — she put herself in the proper position for the preparation to mix with the semen.

The most laughable part of it all was that we were both as serious as two doctors of divinity.

When the introduction of the aroph was perfect the timid lady put out the candle, but a few minutes after it had to be lighted again. I told her politely that I was delighted to begin again, and the voice in which I paid her this compliment made us both burst into laughter.

I didn't take so short a time over my second operation as my first, and my sweetheart, who had been a little put out, was now quite at her ease.

Her modesty had now been replaced by confidence, and as she was looking at the aroph fitted in its place, she shewed me with her pretty finger very evident signs of her co-operation in the work. Then with an affectionate air, she asked me if I would not like to rest, as we had still a good deal to do before our work was at an end.

"You see," said I, "that I do not need rest, and I think we had better set to again."

No doubt she found my reason a good one, for, without saying anything, she put herself ready to begin again, and afterwards we took a good long sleep. When I woke up, feeling as fresh as ever, I asked her to try another operation; and after carrying this through successfully, I determined to be guided by her and take care of myself, for we had to reserve our energies for the following nights. So, about four o'clock in the morning she left me, and softly made her way to her room, and at daybreak I left the hotel under the protection of the scullion, who took me by a private door I did not know of.

About noon, after taking an aromatic bath, I went to call on Mdlle. X. C. V., whom I found sitting up in bed as usual, elegantly attired, and with a happy smile on her lips. She spoke at such length on her gratitude, and thanked me so often, that, believing myself, and with good cause, to be her debtor, I began to get impatient.

"Is it possible," I said, "that you do not see how degrading your thanks are to me? They prove that you do not love me, or that if you love me, you think my love less strong than yours."

Our conversation then took a tender turn, and we were about to seal our mutual ardours without troubling about the aroph, when prudence bade us beware. It would not have been safe, and we had plenty of time before us. We contented ourselves with a tender embrace till the night should come.

My situation was a peculiar one, for though I was in love with this charming girl I did not feel in the least ashamed of having deceived her, especially as what I did could have no effect, the place being taken. It was my self-esteem which made me congratulate myself on the sharp practice which had procured me such pleasures. She told me that she was sorry she had denied me when I had asked her before, and said that she felt now that I had good reason to suspect the reality of her love. I did my best to reassure her, and indeed all suspicions on my part would have been but idle thoughts, as I had succeeded beyond all expectation. However, there is one point upon which I congratulate myself to this day — namely, that during those nightly toils of mine, which did so little towards the object of her desires, I succeeded in inspiring her with such a feeling of resignation that she promised, of her own accord, not to despair any more, but to trust in and be guided by me. She often told me during our nocturnal conversations that she was happy and would continue to be so, even though the aroph had no effect. Not that she had ceased to believe in it, for she continued the application of the harmless preparation till our last assaults, in which we wanted in those sweet combats to exhaust all the gifts of pleasure.

“Sweetheart,” said she, just before we parted finally, “it seems to me that what we have been about is much more likely to create than to destroy, and if the aperture had not been hermetically closed we should doubtless have given the little prisoner a companion.”

A doctor of the Sorbonne could not have reasoned better.

Three or four days afterwards I found her thoughtful but quiet. She told me that she had lost all hope of getting rid of her burden before the proper time. All the while, however, her mother persecuted her, and she would have to choose in a few days between making a declaration as to her state and signing the marriage contract. She would accept neither of these alternatives, and had decided on escaping from her home, and asked me to help her in doing so.

I had determined to help her, but I desired to save my reputation, for it might have been troublesome if it had been absolutely known that I had carried her off or furnished her with the means to escape. And as for any other alternative, neither of us had any idea of matrimony.

I left her and went to the Tuileries, where a sacred concert was being given. The piece was a motet composed by Moudonville, the words by the Abbe de Voisenon, whom I had furnished with the idea, “The Israelites on Mount Horeb.”

As I was getting out of my carriage, I saw Madame du Remain descending alone from hers. I ran up to her, and received a hearty welcome. “I am delighted,” said she, “to find you here, it is quite a piece of luck. I am going to hear this novel composition, and have two reserved seats. Will you do me the honour of accepting one?”

Although I had my ticket in my pocket I could not refuse so honourable an offer, so, giving her my arm, we walked up to two of the best places in the house.

At Paris no talking is allowed during the performance of sacred music, especially when the piece is heard for the first time; so Madame du Remain could draw no conclusions from my silence throughout the performance, but she guessed that something was the matter from the troubled and absent expression of my face, which was by no means natural to me.

“M. Casanova,” said she, “be good enough to give me your company for an hour. I want to ask you-two or three questions which can only be solved by your cabala. I hope you will oblige me, as I am, very anxious to know the answers, but we must be quick as I have an engagement to sup in Paris.”

It may be imagined that I did not wait to be asked twice, and as soon as we got to her house I went to work on the questions, and solved them all in less than half an hour.

When I had finished, “M. Casanova;” said she, in the kindest manner possible, “what is the matter with you? You are not in your usual state of equanimity, and if I am not mistaken you are dreading some dire event. Or perhaps you are on the eve of taking some important resolution? I am not inquisitive, but if I can be of any service to you at Court, make use of me, and be sure that I will do my best. If necessary, I will go to Versailles to-morrow morning. I know all the ministers. Confide in me your troubles, if I cannot lighten them I can at least share them, and be sure I will keep your counsel.”

Her words seemed to me a voice from heaven, a warning from my good genius to open my heart to this lady, who had almost read my thoughts, and had so plainly expressed her interest in my welfare.

After gazing at her for some seconds without speaking, but with a manner that shewed her how grateful I was, “Yes madam,” I said, “I am indeed critically situated, may be on the serge of ruin, but your kindness has calmed my soul and made me once more acquainted with hope. You shall hear how I am placed. I am going to trust you with a secret of the most delicate description, but I can rely on your being as discreet as you are good. And if after hearing my story you deign to give me your advice, I promise to follow it and never to divulge its author."

After this beginning, which gained her close attention, I told her all the circumstances of the case, neither concealing the young lady's name nor any of the circumstances which made it my duty to watch over her welfare. All the same I said nothing about the aroph or the share I had taken in its exhibition. The incident appeared to me too farcical for a serious drama, but I confessed that I had procured the girl drugs in the hope of relieving her of her burden.

After this weighty communication I stopped, and Madame du Rumain remained silent, as if lost in thought, for nearly a quarter of an hour. At last she rose, saying,

"I am expected at Madame de la Marque's, and I must go, as I am to meet the Bishop of Montrouge, to whom I want to speak, but I hope I shall eventually be able to help you. Come here the day after tomorrow, you will find me alone; above all, do nothing before you see me. Farewell."

I left her full of hope, and resolved to follow her advice and hers only in the troublesome affair in which I was involved.

The Bishop of Montrouge whom she was going to address on an important matter, the nature of which was well known to me, was the Abbe de Voisenon, who was thus named because he often went there. Montrouge is an estate near Paris, belonging to the Duc de la Valiere.

I saw Mdlle. X. C. V. the following day, and contented myself with telling her that in a couple of days I hope to give her some good news. I was pleased with her manner, which was full of resignation and trust in my endeavours.

The day after, I went to Madame du Rumain's punctually at eight. The porter told me that I should find the doctor with my lady, but I went upstairs all the same, and as soon as the doctor saw me he took his leave. His name was Herrenschwand, and all the ladies in Paris ran after him. Poor Poinsinet put him in a little one-act play called Le Cercle, which, though of very ordinary merit, was a great success.

"My dear sir," said Madame du Rumain, as soon as we were alone, "I have succeeded in my endeavours on your behalf, and it is now for you to keep secret my share in the matter. After I had pondered over the case of conscience you submitted to me, I went to the convent of C — where the abbess is a friend of mine, and I entrusted her with the secret, relying on her discretion. We agreed that she should receive the young lady in her convent, and give her a good lay-sister to nurse her through her confinement. Now you will not deny," said she, with a smile, "that the cloisters are of some use. Your young friend must go by herself to the convent with a letter for the abbess, which I will give her, and which she must deliver to the porter. She will then be admitted and lodged in a suitable chamber. She will receive no visitors nor any letters that have not passed through my hands. The abbess will bring her answers to me, and I will pass them on to you. You must see that her only correspondent must be yourself, and you must receive news of her welfare only through me. On your hand in writing to her you must leave the address to be filled in by me. I had to tell the abbess the lady's name, but not yours as she did not require it.

"Tell your young friend all about our plans, and when she is ready come and tell me, and I will give you the letter to the abbess. Tell her to bring nothing but what is strictly necessary, above all no diamonds or trinkets of any value. You may assure her that the abbess will be friendly, will come and see her every now and then, will give her proper books — in a word, that she will be well looked after. Warn her not to confide in the laysister who will attend on her. I have no doubt she is an excellent woman, but she is a nun, and the secret might leak out. After she is safely delivered, she must go to confession and perform her Easter duties, and the abbess will give her a certificate of good behaviour; and she can then return to her mother, who will be too happy to see her to say anything more about the marriage, which, of course, she ought to give as her reason of her leaving home."

After many expressions of my gratitude to her, and of my admiration of her plan, I begged her to give me the letter on the spot, as there was no time to be lost. She was good enough to go at once to her desk, where she wrote as follows:

"My dear abbess — The young lady who will give you this letter is the same of whom we have spoken. She wishes to spend three of four months under your protection, to recover her peace of mind, to perform her devotions, and to make sure that when she returns to her mother nothing more will be said about the marriage, which is partly the cause of her temporary separation from her family."

After reading it to me, she put it into my hands unsealed that Mdlle. X. C. V. might be able to read it. The abbess in question was a princess, and her convent was consequently a place above all suspicion. As Madame du Rumain gave me the letter, I felt such an impulse of gratitude that I fell on my knees before her. This generous woman was useful to me on another occasion, of which I shall speak later on.

After leaving Madame du Rumain I went straight to the "Hotel de Bretagne," where I saw Mdlle. X. C. V., who had only time to tell me that she was engaged for the rest of the day, but that she would come to the garret at eleven o'clock that night, and that then we could talk matters over. I was overjoyed at this arrangement, as I foresaw that after this would come the awakening from a happy dream, and that I should be alone with her no more.

Before leaving the hotel I gave the word to Madelaine, who in turn got the scullion to have everything in readiness.

I kept the appointment, and had not long to wait for my mistress. After making her read the letter written by Madame du Rumain (whose name I withheld from her without her taking offence thereat) I put out the candle, and without troubling about the aroph, we set ourselves to the pleasant task of proving that we truly loved each other.

In the morning, before we separated, I gave her all the instructions I had received from Madame du Rumain; and we agreed that she should leave the house at eight o'clock with such things as she absolutely required, that she should take a coach to the Place Maubert, then send it away, and take another to the Place Antoine, and again, farther on, a third coach, in which she was to go to the convent named. I begged her not to forget to burn all the letters she had received from me, and to write to me from the convent as often as she could, to seal her letters but to leave the address blank. She promised to carry out my instructions, and I then made her accept a packet of two hundred louis, of which she might chance to be in need. She wept, more for my situation than her own, but I consoled her by saying that I had plenty of money and powerful patrons.

“I will set out,” said she, “the day after to-morrow, at the hour agreed on.” And thereupon, I having promised to come to the house the day after her departure, as if I knew nothing about it, and to let her know what passed, we embraced each other tenderly, and I left her.

I was troubled in thinking about her fate. She had wit and courage, but when experience is wanting wit often leads men to commit acts of great folly.

The day after the morrow I took a coach, and posted myself in a corner of the street by which she had to pass. I saw her come, get out of the coach, pay the coachman, go down a narrow street, and a few minutes after reappear again, veiled and hooded, carrying a small parcel in her hand. She then took another conveyance which went off in the direction we had agreed upon.

The day following being Low Sunday, I felt that I must present myself at the “Hotel de Bretagne,” for as I went there every day before the daughter’s flight I could not stop going there without strengthening any suspicions which might be entertained about me. But it was a painful task. I had to appear at my ease and cheerful in a place where I was quite sure all would be sadness and confusion. I must say that it was an affair requiring higher powers of impudence than fall to the lot of most men.

I chose a time when all the family would be together at table, and I walked straight into the dining-room. I entered with my usual cheerful manner, and sat down by madame, a little behind her, pretending not to see her surprise, which, however, was plainly to be seen, her whole face being flushed with rage and astonishment. I had not been long in the room before I asked where her daughter was. She turned round, looked me through and through, and said not a word.

“Is she ill?” said I.

“I know nothing about her.”

This remark, which was pronounced in a dry manner, put me at my ease, as I now felt at liberty to look concerned. I sat there for a quarter of an hour, playing the part of grave and astonished silence, and then, rising, I asked if I could do anything, for which all my reward was a cold expression of thanks. I then left the room and went to Mdlle. X. C. V.'s chamber as if I had thought she was there, but found only Madelaine. I asked her with a meaning look where her mistress was. She replied by begging me to tell her, if I knew.

"Has she gone by herself?"

"I know nothing at all about it, sir, but they say you know all. I beg of you to leave me."

Pretending to be in the greatest astonishment, I slowly walked away and took a coach, glad to have accomplished this painful duty. After the reception I had met with I could without affectation pose as offended, and visit the family no more, for whether I were guilty or innocent, Madame X. C. V. must see that her manner had been plain enough for me to know what it meant.

I was looking out of my window at an early hour two or three days afterwards, when a coach stopped before my door, and Madame X C V-, escorted by M. Farsetti got out. I made haste to meet them on the stair, and welcomed them, saying I was glad they had done me the honour to come and take breakfast with me, pretending not to know of any other reason. I asked them to sit down before the fire, and enquired after the lady's health; but without noticing my question she said that she had not come to take breakfast, but to have some serious conversation.

"Madam," said I, "I am your humble servant; but first of all pray be seated."

She sat down, while Farsetti continued standing. I did not press him, but turning towards the lady begged her to command me.

"I am come here," she said, "to ask you to give me my daughter if she be in your power, or to tell me where she is."

"Your daughter, madam? I know nothing about her! Do you think me capable of a crime?"

"I do not accuse you of abducting her; I have not come here to reproach you nor to utter threats, I have only come to ask you to shew yourself my friend. Help me to get my daughter again this very day; you will give me my life. I am certain that you know all. You were her only confidant and her only friend; you passed hours with her every day; she must have told you of her secret. Pity a bereaved mother! So far no one knows of the facts; give her back to me and all shall be forgotten, and her honour saved."

"Madam, I feel for you acutely, but I repeat that I know nothing of your daughter."

The poor woman, whose grief touched me, fell at my feet and burst into tears. I was going to lift her from the ground, when Farsetti told her, in a voice full of indignation, that she should blush to humble herself in such a manner before a man of my description. I drew myself up, and looking at him scornfully said,

"You insolent scoundrel! What do you mean by talking of me like that?"

"Everybody is certain that you know all about it."

"Then they are impudent fools, like you. Get out of my house this instant and wait for me, I will be with you in a quarter of an hour."

So saying, I took the poor chevalier by the shoulders, and giving him sundry shakes I turned him out of the room. He came back and called to the lady to come, too, but she rose and tried to quiet me.

"You ought to be more considerate towards a lover," said she, "for he would marry my daughter now, even after what she has done."

"I am aware of the fact, madam, and I have no doubt that his courtship was one of the chief reasons which made your daughter resolve to leave her home, for she hated him even more than she hated the fermier-general."

"She has behaved very badly, but I promise not to say anything more about marrying her. But I am sure you know all about it, as you gave her fifty louis, without which she could not have done anything."

"Nay, not so."

"Do not deny it, sir; here is the evidence — a small piece of your letter to her."

She gave me a scrap of the letter I had sent the daughter, with the fifty louis for her brother. It contained the following lines, "I hope that these wretched louis will convince you that I am ready to sacrifice everything, my life if need be, to assure you of my affection."

"I am far from disavowing this evidence of my esteem for your daughter, but to justify myself I am obliged to tell you a fact which I should have otherwise kept secret — namely, that I furnished your daughter with this sum to enable her to pay your son's debts, for which he thanked me in a letter which I can shew you."

"My son?"

"Your son, madam."

"I will make you an ample atonement for my suspicions."

Before I had time to make any objection, she ran down to fetch Farsetti, who was waiting in the courtyard, and made him come up and hear what I had just told her.

"That's not a likely tale," said the insolent fellow.

I looked at him contemptuously, and told him he was not worth convincing, but that I would beg the lady to ask her son and see whether I told the truth.

"I assure you," I added, "that I always urged your daughter to marry M. de la Popeliniere."

"How can you have the face to say that," said Farsetti, "when you talk in the letter of your affection?"

"I do not deny it," said I. "I loved her, and I was proud of my affection for her. This affection, of whatever sort it may have been (and that is not this gentleman's business), was the ordinary topic of conversation between us. If she had told me that she was going to leave her home, I should either have dissuaded her or gone with her, for I loved her as I do at this moment; but I would never have given her money to go alone."

"My dear Casanova," said the mother, "if you will help me to find her I shall believe in your innocence."

"I shall be delighted to aid you, and I promise to commence the quest to-day."

"As soon as you have any news, come and tell me."

"You may trust me to do so," said I, and we parted.

I had to play my part carefully; especially it was essential that I should behave in public in a manner consistent with my professions. Accordingly, the next day I went to M. Chaban, first commissary of police, requesting him to institute enquiries respecting the flight of Mdlle. X. C. V. I was sure that in this way the real part I had taken in the matter would be the better concealed; but the commissary, who had the true spirit of his profession, and had liked me when he first saw me six years before, began to laugh when he heard what I wanted him to do.

"Do you really want the police to discover," said he, "where the pretty Englishwoman is to be found?"

"Certainly."

It then struck me that he was trying to make me talk and to catch me tripping, and I had no doubt of it when I met Farsetti going in as I was coming out.

Next day I went to acquaint Madame X. C. V. with the steps I had taken, though as yet my efforts had not been crowned with success.

"I have been more fortunate than you," said she, "and if you will come with me to the place where my daughter has gone, and will join me in persuading her to return, all will be well."

"Certainly," said I, "I shall be most happy to accompany you."

Taking me at my word, she put on her cloak, and leaning on my arm walked along till we came to a coach. She then gave me a slip of paper, begging me to tell the coachman to drive us to the address thereon.

I was on thorns, and my heart beat fast, for I thought I should have to read out the address of the convent. I do not know what I should have done if my fears had been well grounded, but I should certainly not have gone to the convent. At last I read what was written; it was "Place Maubert," and I grew calm once more.

I told the coachman to drive us to the Place Maubert. We set off, and in a short time stopped at the opening of an obscure back street before a dirty-looking house, which did not give one a high idea of the character of its occupants. I gave Madame X. C. V. my arm, and she had the satisfaction of looking into every room in the five floors of the house, but what she sought for was not there, and I expected to see her overwhelmed with grief. I was mistaken, however. She looked distressed but satisfied, and her eyes seemed to ask pardon of me. She had found out from the coachman, who had taken her daughter on the first stage of her journey, that she had alighted in front of the house in question, and had gone down the back street. She told me that the scullion had confessed that he had taken me letters twice from his young mistress, and that Madelaine said all the time that she was sure her mistress and I were in love with each other. They played their parts well.

As soon as I had seen Madame X. C. V. safely home, I went to Madame du Rumain to tell her what had happened; and I then wrote to my fair recluse, telling her what had gone on in the world since her disappearance.

Three or four days after this date, Madame du Rumain gave me the first letter I received from Mdlle. X. C. V. She spoke in it of the quiet life she was leading, and her gratitude to me, praised the abbess and the lay-sister, and gave me the titles of the books they lent her, which she liked reading. She also informed me what money she had spent, and said she was happy in everything, almost in being forbidden to leave her room.

I was delighted with her letter, but much more with the abbess's epistle to Madame du Rumain. She was evidently fond of the girl, and could not say too much in her praise, saying how sweet-tempered, clever, and lady-like she was; winding up by assuring her friend that she went to see her every day.

I was charmed to see the pleasure this letter afforded Madame du Rumain — pleasure which was increased by the perusal of the letter I had received. The only persons who were displeased were the poor mother, the frightful Farsetti, and the old fermier, whose misfortune was talked about in the clubs, the Palais-Royal, and the coffee-houses. Everybody put me down for some share in the business, but I laughed at their gossip, believing that I was quite safe.

All the same, la Popeliniere took the adventure philosophically and made a one-act play out of it, which he had acted at his little theatre in Paris. Three months afterwards he got married to a very pretty girl, the daughter of a Bordeaux alderman. He died in the course of two years, leaving his widow pregnant with a son, who came into the world six months after the father's death. The unworthy heir to the rich man had the face to accuse the widow of adultery, and got the child declared illegitimate to the eternal shame of the court which gave this iniquitous judgment and to the grief of every honest Frenchman. The iniquitous nature of the judgment was afterwards more clearly demonstrated — putting aside the fact that nothing could be said against the mother's character — by the same court having the face to declare a child born eleven months after the father's death legitimate.

I continued for ten days to call upon Madame X. C. V., but finding myself coldly welcomed, decided to go there no more.

CHAPTER VIII

Fresh Adventures — J. J. Rousseau — I set Up A Business — Castel — Bajac — A Lawsuit is Commenced Against Me — M. de Sartin

Mdlle. X. C. V. had now been in the convent for a month, and her affair had ceased to be a common topic of conversation. I thought I should hear no more of it, but I was mistaken. I continued, however, to amuse myself, and my pleasure in spending freely quite prevented me from thinking about the future. The Abbe de Bernis, whom I went to see regularly once a week, told me one day that the comptroller-general often enquired how I was getting on. “You are wrong,” said the abbe, “to neglect him.” He advised me to say no more about my claims, but to communicate to him the means I had spoken of for increasing the revenues of the state. I laid too great store by the advice of the man who had made my fortune not to follow it. I went to the comptroller, and trusting in his probity I explained my scheme to him. This was to pass a law by which every estate, except that left by father to son, should furnish the treasury with one year’s income; every deed of gift formally drawn up being subject to the same provision. It seemed to me that the law could not give offence to anyone; the heir had only to imagine that he had inherited a year later than was actually the case. The minister was of the same opinion as myself, told me that there would not be the slightest difficulty involved, and assured me that my fortune was made. In a week afterwards his place was taken by M. de Silhouette, and when I called on the new minister he told me coldly that when my scheme became law he would tell me. It became law two years afterwards, and when, as the originator of the scheme, I attempted to get my just reward, they laughed in my face.

Shortly after, the Pope died, and he was succeeded by the Venetian Rezzonico, who created my patron, the Abby de Bernis, a cardinal. However, he had to go into exile by order of the king two days after his gracious majesty had presented him with the red cap: so good a thing it is to be the friend of kings!

The disgrace of my delightful abbe left me without a patron, but I had plenty of money, and so was enabled to bear this misfortune with resignation.

For having undone all the work of Cardinal Richelieu, for having changed the old enmity between France and Austria into friendship, for delivering Italy from the horrors of war which befell her whenever these countries had a bone to pick, although he was the first cardinal made by a pope who had had plenty of opportunities for discovering his character, merely because, on being asked, he had given it as his opinion that the Prince de Soubise was not a fit person to command the French armies, this great ecclesiastic was driven into exile. The moment the Pompadour heard of this opinion of his, she decreed his banishment — a sentence which was unpopular with all classes of society; but they consoled themselves with epigrams, and the new cardinal was soon forgotten. Such is the character of the French people; it cares neither for its own misfortunes nor for those of others, if only it can extract laughter from them.

In my time epigrammatists and poetasters who assailed ministers or even the king's mistresses were sent to the Bastille, but the wits still persisted in being amusing, and there were some who considered a jest incomplete that was not followed by a prosecution. A man whose name I have forgotten — a great lover of notoriety — appropriated the following verses by the younger Crebellon and went to the Bastille rather than disown them.

"All the world's upside down!

Jupiter has donned the gown — the King.

Venus mounts the council stair — the Pompadour.

Plutus trifles with the fair — M. de Boulogne.

Mercury in mail is drest — Marechal de Richelieu.

Mighty Mars has turned a priest — the Duc de Clermont, abbe of

St. Germain-des-pres."

Crebillon, who was not the sort of man to conceal his writings, told the Duc de Choiseul that he had written some verses exactly like these, but that it was possible the prisoner had been inspired with precisely the same ideas. This jest was applauded, and the author of “The Sofa” was let alone.

Cardinal de Bernis passed ten years in exile, ‘procul negotiis’, but he was not happy, as he told me himself when I knew him in Rome fifteen years afterwards. It is said that it is better to be a minister than a king — an opinion which seems ridiculous when it is analyzed. The question is, which is the better, independence or its contrary. The axiom may possibly be verified in a despotic government under an absurd, weak, or careless king who serves as a mere mask for his master the minister; but in all other cases it is an absurdity.

Cardinal de Bernis was never recalled; there is no instance of Louis XV. having ever recalled a minister whom he had disgraced; but on the death of Rezzonico he had to go to Rome to be present at the conclave, and there he remained as French ambassador.

About this time Madame d’Urfe conceived a wish to make the acquaintance of J. J. Rousseau, and we went to call upon him at Montmorenci, on the pretext of giving him music to copy — an occupation in which he was very skilled. He was paid twice the sum given to any other copyist, but he guaranteed that the work should be faultlessly done. At that period of his life copying music was the great writer’s sole means of subsistence.

We found him to be a man of a simple and modest demeanour, who talked well, but who was not otherwise distinguished either intellectually or physically. We did not think him what would be called a good-natured man, and as he was far from having the manners of good society Madame d’Urfe did not hesitate to pronounce him vulgar. We saw the woman with whom he lived, and of whom we had heard, but she scarcely looked at us. On our way home we amused ourselves by talking about Rousseau’s eccentric habits.

I will here note down the visit of the Prince of Conti (father of the gentleman who is now known as the Comte de la March) to Rousseau.

The prince — a good-natured man-went by himself to Montmorenci, on purpose to spend a day in conversation with the philosopher, who was even then famous. He found him in the park, accosted him, and said that he had come to dine with him and to talk without restraint.

“Your highness will fare but badly,” said Rousseau: “however, I will tell them to lay another knife and fork.”

The philosopher gave his instructions, and came out and rejoined the prince, with whom he walked up and down for two or three hours. When it was dinner-time he took the prince into his dining-room, where the table was laid for three.

“Who is going to dine with us?” said the prince. “I thought we were to be alone.”

“The third party,” said Rousseau, “is my other self — a being who is neither my wife, nor my mistress, nor my servant-maid, nor my mother, nor my daughter, but yet personates all these characters at once.”

“I daresay, my dear fellow, I daresay; but as I came to dine with you alone, I will not dine with your — other self, but will leave you with all the rest of you to keep your company.”

So saying the prince bade him farewell and went out. Rousseau did not try to keep him.

About this time I witnessed the failure of a play called ‘Aristides’ Daughter’, written by the ingenious Madame de Graffini, who died of vexation five days after her play was damned. The Abbe de Voisenon was horrified, as he had advised the lady to produce it, and was thought to have had some hand in its composition, as well as in that of the ‘Lettres Peruviennes’ and ‘Cenie’. By a curious coincidence, just about the same date, Rezzonico’s mother died of joy because her son had become pope. Grief and joy kill many more women than men, which proves that if women have mere feeling than men they have also less strength.

When Madame d’Urfe thought that my adopted son was comfortably settled in Viar’s house, she made me go with her and pay him a visit. I found him lodged like a prince, well dressed, made much of, and almost looked up to. I was astonished, for this was more than I had bargained for. Madame d’Urfe had given him masters of all sorts, and a pretty little pony for him to learn riding on. He was styled M. le Comte d’Aranda. A girl of sixteen, Viar’s daughter, a fine-looking young woman, was appointed to look after him, and she was quite proud to call herself my lord's governess. She assured Madame d'Urfe that she took special care of him; that as soon as he woke she brought him his breakfast in bed; that she then dressed him, and did not leave his side the whole day. Madame d'Urfe approved of everything, told the girl to take even greater care of the count, and promised that she should not go unrewarded. As for the young gentleman, he was evidently quite happy, as he told me himself again and again, but I suspected a mystery somewhere, and determined that I would go and see him by myself another time and solve it.

On our journey home I told Madame d'Urfe how grateful I was for all her goodness to the boy, and that I approved of all the arrangements that had been made with the exception of the name Aranda, "which," said I, "may some day prove a thorn in his side." She answered that the lad had said enough to convince her that he had a right to bear that name. "I had," she said, "in my desk a seal with the arms of the house of Aranda, and happening to take it up I shewed it him as we shew trinkets to children to amuse them, but as soon as he saw it he burst out,

"'How came you to have my arms?'

"Your arms!" I answered. "I got this seal from the Comte d'Aranda; how can you prove that you are a scion of that race?"

"'Do not ask me, madam; my birth is a secret I can reveal to no one.'"

The imposition and above all the impudence of the young knave astounded me. I should not have thought him capable of it, and a week after I went to see him by myself to get at the bottom of all this mystery.

I found my young count with Viar, who, judging by the awe the child shewed of me, must have thought he belonged to me. He was unsparing in his praises of his pupil, saying that he played the flute capitally, danced and fenced admirably, rode well, and wrote a good hand. He shewed me the pens he had cut himself with three, five, and even nine points, and begged to be examined on heraldry, which, as the master observed, was so necessary a science for a young nobleman.

The young gentleman then commenced in the jargon of heraldry to blazon his own pretended arms, and I felt much inclined to burst into laughter, partly because I did not understand a word he said, and partly because he seemed to think the matter as important as would a country squire with his thirty-two quarters. However, I was delighted to see his dexterity in penmanship, which was undoubtedly very great, and I expressed my satisfaction to Viar, who soon left us to ourselves. We proceeded into the garden.

“Will you kindly inform me,” I said, “how you can be so foolish as to call yourself the Comte d’Aranda?”

He replied, with the utmost calmness, “I know it is foolish, but leave me my title; it is of service to me here and gains me respect.”

“It is an imposition I cannot wink at, as it may be fraught with serious results, and may do harm to both of us. I should not have thought that at your age you would be capable of such a knavish trick. I know you did it out of stupidity, but after a certain limit stupidity becomes criminal; and I cannot see how I am to remedy your fault without disgracing you in the eyes of Madame d’Urfe.”

I kept on scolding him till he burst into tears, saying,

“I had rather the shame of being sent back to my mother than the shame of confessing to Madame d’Urfe that I had imposed on her; and I could not bear to stay here if I had to give up my name.”

Seeing that I could do nothing with him, unless, indeed, I sent him to some place far removed from Paris under his proper name, I told him to take comfort as I would try and do the best I could for both of us.

“And now tell me — and take care to tell the truth — what sort of feelings does Viar’s daughter entertain for you?”

“I think, papa, that this is a case in which the reserve commended by yourself, as well as by mother, would be appropriate.”

“Yes, that sort of answer tells me a good deal, but I think you are rather too knowing for your age. And you may as well observe that when you are called upon for a confession, reserve is out of place, and it’s a confession I require from you.”

“Well, papa, Viar’s daughter is very fond of me, and she shews her love in all sorts of ways.”

"And do you love her?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Is she much with you in the morning?"

"She is with me the whole day."

"She is present when you go to bed?"

"Yes, she helps me to undress."

"Nothing else?"

"I do not care to tell you."

I was astonished at the measured way in which he answered me, and as I had heard enough to guess that the boy and girl were very good friends indeed, I contented myself with warning him to take care of his health, and with this I left him.

Some time after, my thoughts were occupied with a business speculation which all my calculations assured me would be extremely profitable. The plan was to produce on silks, by means of printing, the exquisite designs which are produced at Lyons by the tedious process of weaving, and thus to give customers excellent value at much lower prices. I had the requisite knowledge of chemistry, and enough capital to make the thing a success. I obtained the assistance of a man with the necessary technical skill and knowledge, intending to make him my manager.

I told my plan to the Prince de Conti, who encouraged me to persevere, promising me his patronage, and all the privileges I could wish for. That decided me to begin.

I rented a very large house near the Temple for a thousand crowns per annum. The house contained a spacious hall, in which I meant to put my workmen; another hall which was to be the shop; numerous rooms for my workpeople to live in; and a nice room for myself in case I cared to live on the premises.

I made the scheme into a company with thirty shares, of which I gave five to my designer, keeping the remaining twenty-five to distribute to those who were inclined to join the company. I gave one to a doctor who, on giving surety, became the storekeeper, and came to live in the house with his whole family; and I engaged four servants, a waiting-maid, and a porter. I had to give another share to an accountant, who furnished me with two clerks, who also took up their abode in the house. The carpenters, blacksmiths, and painters worked hard from morning to night, and in less than three weeks the place was ready. I told the manager to engage twenty girls to paint, who were to be paid every Saturday. I stocked the warehouse with three hundred pieces of sarcenet and camlet of different shades and colours to receive the designs, and I paid for everything in ready money.

I had made an approximate calculation with my manager that I should have to spend three hundred thousand francs, and that would not break me. If the worst happened I could fall back on my shares, which produced a good income, but I hoped I should not be compelled to do so, as I wanted to have an income of two hundred thousand francs a year.

All the while I did not conceal from myself that the speculation might be my ruin, if custom did not come in, but on looking at my beautiful materials these fears were dispelled, especially as I heard everybody saying that I sold them much too cheap.

To set up the business I spent in the course of a month about sixty thousand francs, and my weekly expenses amounted to twelve hundred francs.

As for Madame d'Urfe she laughed every time she saw me, for she was quite certain that this business was only meant to put the curious off the scent and to preserve my incognito: so persuaded was she of my omnipotence.

The sight of twenty girls, all more or less pretty, the eldest of whom was not twenty-five, far from making me tremble as it ought, delighted me. I fancied myself in the midst of a seraglio, and I amused myself by watching their meek and modest looks as they did their work under the direction of the foreman. The best paid did not get more than twenty-four sous a day, and all of them had excellent reputations, for they had been selected at her own request by the manager's wife, a devout woman of ripe age, whom I hoped to find obliging if the fancy seized me to test her choice. Manon Baletti did not share my satisfaction in them. She trembled to see me the owner of a harem, well knowing that sooner or later the barque of my virtue would run on the rocks. She scolded me well about these girls, though I assured her that none of them slept in the house.

This business increased my own ideas of my importance; partly from the thought that I was on the high road to fortune, and partly because I furnished so many people with the means of subsistence. Alas! I was too fortunate; and my evil genius soon crossed my career.

It was now three months since Mdlle. X. C. V. had gone into the convent, and the time of her delivery drew near. We wrote to each other twice a week, and I considered the matter happily settled; M. de la Popeliniere had married, and when Mdlle. X. C. V. returned to her mother there would be nothing more to be said But just at this period, when my happiness seemed assured, the hidden fire leapt forth and threatened to consume me; how, the reader will see.

One day after leaving Madame d'Urfe's I went to walk in the Tuileries. I had taken a couple of turns in the chief walk when I saw that an old woman, accompanied by a man dressed in black, was looking at me closely and communicating her observations to her companion. There was nothing very astonishing in this in a public place, and I continued my walk, and on turning again saw the same couple still watching me. In my turn I looked at them, and remembered seeing the man in a gaming-house, where he was known by the name of Castel-Bajac. On scrutinizing the features of the hag, I at last succeeded in recollecting who she was; she was the woman to whom I had taken Mdlle. X. C. V. I felt certain that she had recognized me, but not troubling myself about the matter I left the gardens to walk elsewhere. The day after next, just as I was going to get into my carriage, a man of evil aspect gave me a paper and asked me to read it. I opened it, but finding it covered with an illegible scrawl I gave it him back, telling him to read it himself. He did so, and I found myself summoned to appear before the commissary of police to answer to the plea which the midwife (whose name I forget) brought against me.

Although I could guess what the charge would be, and was certain that the midwife could furnish no proofs of her accusation, I went to an attorney I knew and told him to appear for me. I instructed him that I did not know any midwife in Paris whatsoever. The attorney waited on the commissary, and on the day after brought me a copy of the pleas.

The midwife said that I came to her one night, accompanied by a young lady about five months with child, and that, holding a pistol in one hand and a packet of fifty Louis in the other, I made her promise to procure abortion. We both of us (so she said) had masks on, thus shewing that we had been at the opera ball. Fear, said she, had prevented her from flatly refusing to grant my request; but she had enough presence of mind to say that the necessary drugs were not ready, that she would have all in order by the next night; whereupon we left, promising to return. In the belief that we would not fail to keep the appointment, she went in to M. Castel-Bajac to ask him to hide in the next room that she might be protected from my fury, and that he might be a witness of what I said, but she had not seen me again. She added that she would have given information the day after the event if she had known who I was, but since M. Castel-Bajac had told her my name on her recognizing me in the Tuileries, she had thought it her bounden duty to deliver me to the law that she might be compensated for the violence I had used to her. And this document was signed by the said Castel-Bajac as a witness.

“This is an evident case of libel,” said my attorney, “at least, if she can’t prove the truth of her allegations. My advice to you is to take the matter before the criminal lieutenant, who will be able to give you the satisfaction you require.”

I authorized him to do what he thought advisable, and three or four days after he told me that the lieutenant wished to speak to me in private, and would expect me the same day at three o’clock in the afternoon.

As will be expected, I was punctual to the appointment. I found the magistrate to be a polite and good-hearted gentleman. He was, in fact, the well-known M. de Sartine, who was the chief of police two years later. His office of criminal lieutenant was saleable, and M. de Sartine sold it when he was appointed head of the police.

As soon as I had made my bow, he asked me to sit down by him, and addressed me as follows:

“I have asked you to call upon me in the interests of both of us, as in your position our interests are inseparable. If you are innocent of the charge which has been brought against you, you are quite right to appeal to me; but before proceedings begin, you should tell me the whole truth. I am ready to forget my position as judge, and to give you my help, but you must see yourself that to prove the other side guilty of slander, you must prove yourself innocent. What I want from you is an informal and strictly confidential declaration, for the case against you is a serious one, and of such a kind as to require all your efforts to wipe off this blot upon your honour. Your enemies will not respect your delicacy of feeling. They will press you so hard that you will either be obliged to submit to a shameful sentence, or to wound your feelings of honour in proving your innocence. You see I am confiding in you, for in certain cases honour seems so precious a thing to me that I am ready to defend it with all the power of the law. Pay me back, then, in the same coin, trust in me entirely, tell me the whole story without any reserves, and you may rely upon my good offices. All will be well if you are innocent, for I shall not be the less a judge because I am your friend; but if you are guilty I am sorry for you, for I warn you that I shall be just."

After doing my best to express my gratitude to him, I said that my position did not oblige me to make any reservations on account of honour, and that I had, consequently, no informal statement to make him.

"The midwife," I added, "is absolutely unknown to me. She is most likely an abandoned woman, who with her worthy companion wants to cheat me of my money."

"I should be delighted to think so," he answered, "but admitting the fact, see how chance favours her, and makes it a most difficult thing for you to prove your innocence.

"The young lady disappeared three months ago. She was known to be your intimate friend, you called upon her at all hours; you spent a considerable time with her the day before she disappeared, and no one knows what has become of her; but everyone's suspicions point at you, and paid spies are continually dogging your steps. The midwife sent me a requisition yesterday by her counsel, Vauversin. She says that the pregnant lady you brought to her house is the same whom Madame X. C. V. is searching for. She also says that you both wore black dominoes, and the police have ascertained that you were both at the ball in black dominoes on the same night as that on which the midwife says you came to her house; you are also known to have left the ball-room together. All this, it is true, does not constitute full proof of your guilt, but it makes one tremble for your innocence."

“What cause have I to tremble?”

“What cause! Why a false witness, easily enough hired for a little money, might swear with impunity that he saw you come from the opera together; and a coachman in the same way might swear he had taken you to the midwife’s. In that case I should be compelled to order your arrest and examination, with a view to ascertain the name of the person whom you took with you. Do you realize that you are accused of procuring abortion; that three months have gone by without the lady’s retreat having been discovered; that she is said to be dead. Do you realize, in short, what a very serious charge murder is?”

“Certainly; but if I die innocent, you will have condemned me wrongly, and will be more to be pitied than I.”

“Yes, yes, but that wouldn’t make your case any better. You may be sure, however, that I will not condemn an innocent man; but I am afraid that you will be a long time in prison before you succeed in proving your innocence. To be brief, you see that in twenty-four hours the case looks very bad, and in the course of a week it might look very much worse. My interest was aroused in your favour by the evident absurdity of the accusations, but it is the other circumstances about the case which make it a serious one for you. I can partly understand the circumstances, and the feelings of love and honour which bid you be silent. I have spoken to you, and I hope you will have no reserves with me. I will spare you all the unpleasant circumstances which threaten you, believing, as I do, that you are innocent. Tell me all, and be sure that the lady’s honour will not suffer; but if, on the other hand, you are unfortunately guilty of the crimes laid to your charge, I advise you to be prudent, and to take steps which it is not my business to suggest. I warn you that in three or four days I shall cite you to the bar of the court, and that you will then find in me only the judge — just, certainly, but severe and impartial.”

I was petrified; for these words shewed me my danger in all its nakedness. I saw how I should esteem this worthy man’s good offices, and said to him in quite another tone, that innocent as I was, I saw that my best course was to throw myself on his kindness respecting Mdlle. X. C. V., who had committed no crime, but would lose her reputation by this unhappy business.

"I know where she is," I added, "and I may tell you that she would never have left her mother if she had not endeavoured to force her into a marriage she abhorred."

"Well, but the man is now married; let her return to her mother's house, and you will be safe, unless the midwife persists in maintaining that you incited her to procure abortion."

"There is no abortion in the matter; but other reasons prevent her returning to her family. I can tell you no more without obtaining the consent of another party. If I succeed in doing so I shall be able to throw the desired light on the question. Be kind enough to give me a second hearing on the day after to-morrow."

"I understand. I shall be delighted to hear what you have to say. I thank and congratulate you. Farewell!"

I was on the brink of the precipice, but I was determined to leave the kingdom rather than betray the honour of my poor dear sweetheart. If it had been possible, I would gladly have put an end to the case with money; but it was too late. I was sure that Farsetti had the chief hand in all this trouble, that he was continually on my track, and that he paid the spies mentioned by M. de Sartine. He it was who had set Vauversin, the barrister, after me, and I had no doubt that he would do all in his power to ruin me.

I felt that my only course was to tell the whole story to M. de Sartine, but to do that I required Madame du Rumain's permission.

CHAPTER IX

My Examination I Give the Clerk Three Hundred Louis — The Midwife and Cartel-Bajac Imprisoned — Mdlle. X. C. V. Is Brought to Bed of a Son and Obliges Her Mother to Make Me Amends — The Suit Against Me Is Quashed — Mdlle. X. C. V. Goes With Her Mother to Brussels and From Thence to Venice, Where She Becomes a Great Lady — My Work-girls — Madame Baret — I Am Robbed, Put in Prison, and Set at Liberty Again — I Go to Holland — Helvetius' "Esprit" — Piccolomini

The day after my interview with M. de Sartine I waited on Madame du Rumain at an early hour. Considering the urgency of the case I took the liberty of rousing her from her slumbers, and as soon as she was ready to receive me I told her all.

"There can be no hesitation in the matter," said this delightful woman. "We must make a confidant of M. de Sartine, and I will speak to him myself to-day without fail."

Forthwith she went to her desk and wrote to the criminal lieutenant asking him to see her at three o'clock in the afternoon. In less than an hour the servant returned with a note in which he said he would expect her. We agreed that I should come again in the evening, when she would tell me the result of her interview.

I went to the house at five o'clock, and had only a few minutes to wait.

"I have concealed nothing," said she; "he knows that she is on the eve of her confinement, and that you are not the father, which speaks highly for your generosity. I told him that as soon as the confinement was over, and the young lady had recovered her health, she would return to her mother, though she would make no confession, and that the child should be well looked after. You have now nothing to fear, and can calm yourself; but as the case must go on you will be cited before the court the day after to-morrow. I advise you to see the clerk of the court on some pretext or other, and to make him accept a sum of money."

I was summoned to appear, and I appeared. I saw M. de Sartine, 'sedentem pro tribunali'. At the end of the sitting he told me that he was obliged to remand me, and that during my remand I must not leave Paris or get married, as all my civil rights were in suspense pending the decision. I promised to follow his commands.

I acknowledged in my examination that I was at the ball in a black domino on the night named in my accusation, but I denied everything else. As for Mdlle. X. C. V., I said that neither I nor anyone of her family had any suspicion that she was with child.

Recollecting that I was an alien, and that this circumstance might make Vauversin call for my arrest, on the plea that I might fly the kingdom, I thought the moment opportune for making interest with the clerk of the court, and I accordingly paid him a visit. After telling him of my fears, I slipped into his hand a packet of three hundred louis, for which I did not ask for a receipt, saying that they were to defray expenses if I were mulcted in costs. He advised me to require the midwife to give bail for her appearance, and I told my attorney to do so; but, four days after, the following incident took place:

I was walking in the Temple Gardens, when I was accosted by a Savoyard, who gave me a note in which I was informed that somebody in an alley, fifty paces off, wanted to speak to me. "Either a love affair or a challenge," I said to myself, "let's see." I stopped my carriage, which was following me, and went to the place.

I cannot say how surprised I was to see the wretched Cartel-Bajac standing before me. "I have only a word to say," said he, when he saw me. "We will not be overheard here. The midwife is quite sure that you are the man who brought a pregnant lady to her, but she is vexed that you are accused of making away with her. Give her a hundred louis; she will then declare to the court that she has been mistaken, and your trouble will be ended. You need not pay the money till she has made her declaration; we will take your word for it. Come with me and talk it over with Vauversin. I am sure he will persuade you to do as I suggest. I know where to find him, follow me at some distance."

I had listened to him in silence, and I was delighted to see that the rascals were betraying themselves. "Very good," said I to the fellow, "you go on, and I will follow." I went after him to the third floor of a house in the Rue aux Ours, where I found Vauversin the barrister. No sooner had I arrived than he went to business without any prefatory remarks.

"The midwife," he said, "will call on you with a witness apparently with the intention of maintaining to your face that you are her man; but she won't be able to recognize you. She will then proceed with the witness to the court, and will declare that she has made a mistake, and the criminal lieutenant will forthwith put an end to the proceedings. You will thus be certain of gaining your case against the lady's mother."

I thought the plan well conceived, and said that they would find me at the Temple any day up to noon.

"But the midwife wants a hundred louis badly."

"You mean that the worthy woman rates her perjury at that price. Well, never mind, I will pay the money, and you may trust to my word; but I can't do so before she has taken oath to her mistake before the court."

"Very good, but you must first give me twenty-five louis to reimburse me for my costs and fees."

"Certainly, if you will give me a formal receipt for the money."

He hesitated at first, but after talking it over the money proved too strong a bait, and he wrote out the receipt and I gave him the twenty-five louis. He thanked me, and said that though Madame X. C. V. was his client, he would let me know confidentially how best to put a stop to the proceedings. I thanked him with as much gratitude as if I had really intended to make use of his services, and I left to write and tell M. de Sartine what had taken place.

Three days afterwards I was told that a man and woman wanted to see me. I went down and asked the woman what she wanted.

"I want to speak to M. Casanova."

"I am he."

"Then I have made a mistake, for which I hope you will forgive me."

Her companion smiled, and they went off.

The same day Madame du Rumain had a letter from the abbess telling her that her young friend had given birth to a fine boy, who had been sent away to a place where he would be well looked after. She stated that the young lady could not leave the convent for the next six weeks, at the end of which time she could return to her mother with a certificate which would protect her from all annoyance.

Soon after the midwife was put in solitary confinement, Castel-Bajac was sent to The Bicetre, and Vauversin's name was struck off the rolls. The suit instituted against me by Madame X. C. V. went on till her daughter reappeared, but I knew that I had nothing to fear. The girl returned to her mother about the end of August armed with a certificate from the abbess, who said she had been under her protection for four months, during which time she had never left the convent or seen any persons from outside. This was perfectly true, but the abbess added that her only reason for her going back to her family was that she had nothing more to dread from the attentions of M. de la Popeliniere, and in this the abbess lied.

Mdlle. X. C. V. profited by the delight of her mother in seeing her again safe and sound, and made her wait on M. de Sartine with the abbess's certificate, stop all proceedings against me, and withdraw all the charges she had made. Her daughter told her that if I liked I might claim damages for libel, and that if she did not wish to injure her reputation she would say nothing more about what had happened.

The mother wrote me a letter of the most satisfactory character, which I had registered in court, thus putting an end to the prosecution. In my turn I wrote to congratulate her on the recovery of her daughter, but I never set foot in her house again, to avoid any disagreeable scenes with Farsetti.

Mdlle. X. C. V. could not stay any longer in Paris, where her tale was known to everyone, and Farsetti took her to Brussels with her sister Madelaine. Some time after, her mother followed her, and they then went on to Venice, and there in three years' time she became a great lady. Fifteen years afterwards I saw her again, and she was a widow, happy enough apparently, and enjoying a great reputation on account of her rank, wit, and social qualities, but our connection was never renewed.

In four years the reader will hear more of Castel-Bajac. Towards the end of the same year (1759), before I went to Holland, I spent several hundred francs to obtain the release of the midwife.

I lived like a prince, and men might have thought me happy, but I was not. The enormous expenses I incurred, my love of spending money, and magnificent pleasures, warned me, in spite of myself, that there were rocks ahead. My business would have kept me going for a long time, if custom had not been paralyzed by the war; but as it was, I, like everybody else, experienced the effect of bad times. My warehouse contained four hundred pieces of stuffs with designs on them, but as I could not hope to dispose of them before the peace, and as peace seemed a long way off, I was threatened with ruin.

With this fear I wrote to Esther to get her father to give me the remainder of my money, to send me a sharp clerk, and to join in my speculation. M. d'O —— said that if I would set up in Holland he would become responsible for everything and give me half profits, but I liked Paris too well to agree to so good an offer. I was sorry for it afterwards.

I spent a good deal of money at my private house, but the chief expense of my life, which was unknown to others but which was ruining me, was incurred in connection with the girls who worked in my establishment. With my complexion and my pronounced liking for variety, a score of girls, nearly all of them pretty and seductive, as most Paris girls are, was a reef on which my virtue made shipwreck every day. Curiosity had a good deal to do with it, and they profited by my impatience to take possession by selling their favours dearly. They all followed the example of the first favourite, and everyone claimed in turn an establishment, furniture, money, and jewels; and I knew too little of the value of money to care how much they asked. My fancy never lasted longer than a week, and often waned in three or four days, and the last comer always appeared the most worthy of my attentions.

As soon as I had made a new choice I saw no more of my old loves, but I continued to provide for them, and that with a good deal of money. Madame d'Urfe, who thought I was rich, gave me no trouble. I made her happy by using my oracle to second the magical ceremonies of which she grew fonder every day, although she never attained her aim. Manon Baletti, however, grieved me sorely by her jealousy and her well-founded reproaches. She would not understand — and I did not wonder at it — how I could put off marrying her if I really loved her. She accused me of deceiving her. Her mother died of consumption in our arms. Silvia had won my true friendship. I looked upon her as a most worthy woman, whose kindness of heart and purity of life deserved the esteem of all. I stayed in the family for three days after her death, sincerely sympathizing with them in their affliction.

A few days afterwards, my friend Tiretta lost his mistress through a grievous illness. Four days before her death, perceiving that she was near her end, she willed to consecrate to God that which man could have no longer, and dismissed her lover with the gift of a valuable jewel and a purse of two hundred louis. Tiretta marched off and came and told me the sad news. I got him a lodging near the Temple, and a month after, approving his idea to try his fortune in India, I gave him a letter of introduction to M. d'O —— , of Amsterdam; and in the course of a week this gentleman got him a post as clerk, and shipped him aboard one of the company's ships which was bound for Batavia. If he had behaved well he might have become a rich man, but he got involved in some conspiracy and had to fly, and afterwards experienced many vicissitudes of fortune. I heard from one of his relations that he was in Bengal in 1788, in good circumstances, but unable to realize his property and so return to his native country. I do not know what became of him eventually.

In the beginning of November an official belonging to the Duc d'Elbeuf's household came to my establishment to buy a wedding dress for his daughter. I was dazzled with her beauty. She chose a fine satin, and her pretty face lighted up when she heard her father say he did not think it was too much; but she looked quite piteous when she heard the clerk tell her father that he would have to buy the whole piece, as they could not cut it. I felt that I must give in, and to avoid making an exception in her favour I beat a hasty retreat into my private room. I wish I had gone out of the house, as I should have saved a good deal of money; but what pleasure should I have also lost! In her despair the charming girl begged the manager to take her to me, and he dared not refuse to do so. She came in; two big tears falling down her cheeks and dimming the ardour of her gaze.

“Oh, sir!” she began, “you are rich, do you buy the piece and let me have enough for a dress, which will make me happy.”

I looked at her father and saw he wore an apologetic air, as if deprecating the boldness of his child.

“I like your simplicity,” I said to her, “and since it will make you happy, you shall have the dress.”

She ran up to me, threw her arms round my neck and kissed me, while her worthy father was dying with laughter. Her kisses put the last stroke to my bewitchment. After he had paid for the dress, her father said,

“I am going to get this little madcap married next Sunday; there will be a supper and a ball, and we shall be delighted if you will honour us with your presence. My name is Gilbert. I am comptroller of the Duc d’Elbeuf’s household.”

I promised to be at the wedding, and the young lady gave a skip of joy which made me think her prettier than ever.

On Sunday I repaired to the house, but I could neither eat nor drink. The fair Mdlle. Gilbert kept me in a kind of enchantment which lasted while I was in company with her friends, for whom I did not care. They were all officials in noblemen’s houses, with their wives and daughters, who all aped the manners of their betters in the most ridiculous way; nobody knew me and I was known to nobody, and I cut a sorry figure amongst them all, for in a company of this sort the wittiest man is the greatest fool. Everybody cracked his joke to the bride, she answered everybody, and people laughed at nothing.

Her husband, a thin and melancholy man, with a rather foolish expression, was delighted at his wife’s keeping everybody amused. Although I was in love with her, I pitied rather than envied him. I guessed that he had married for monetary considerations, and I knew pretty well what kind of a head-dress his handsome, fiery wife would give her husband, who was plain-featured, and seemed not to be aware of his wife’s beauty. I was seized with the desire of asking her some questions, and she gave me the opportunity by coming to sit next to me after a quadrille. She thanked me again for my kindness, and said that the beautiful dress I had supplied had won her many compliments.

“All the same,” I said, “I know you are longing to take it off. I know what love is and how impatient it makes one.”

“It’s very funny that everyone persists in thinking that I am in love, though I saw M. Baret for the first time only a week ago. Before then I was absolutely unconscious of his existence.”

“But why are you getting married in such a hurry without waiting till you know him better?”

“Because my father does everything in a hurry.”

“I suppose your husband is a very rich man?”

“No, but he may become rich. We are going to open a shop for silk stockings at the corner of the Rue St. Honore and the Rue des Prouveres, and I hope that you will deal with us, as we would serve you with the best.”

“I shall certainly do so — nay, I will be your first customer, if I have to wait at the door.”

“You are kind! M. Baret,” said she to her husband, who was standing close by, “this gentleman promises to be our first customer.”

“The gentleman is very good,” said the husband, “and I am sure he will be satisfied, as my stockings are genuine silk.”

Next Tuesday at day-break I began to dance attendance at the corner of the Rue des Prouveres, and waited there till the servant came out to take down the shutters. I went in and the girl asked me my business.

“I want to buy some stockings,” was my answer.

“Master and mistress are still in bed, so you had better come later on.”

“No, I will wait here. Stop a minute,” said I, giving her six francs, “go and get me some coffee; I will drink it in the shop.”

“I might go and get you some coffee, but I am not so silly as to leave you in the shop by yourself.”

“You are afraid I might steal something!”

“Well, one does hear of such things being done, and I don’t know you from Adam.”

“Very good; but I shall stay here all the same.”

Before long Baret came down and scolded the poor girl for not having told him of my presence. “Go and tell my wife to come,” said he, as he began opening packets of stockings for me to choose from. He kept stockings, vests, and silk drawers, and I turned one packet over after another, looking at them all and not fixing on anything till I saw his wife coming down as fresh as a rose and as bright as a lily. She smiled at me in the most seductive manner, apologized for the disorder of her dress, and thanked me for keeping my word.

“I never break my word,” I said, “especially when such a charming lady is concerned!”

Madame Baret was seventeen, of a moderate height, and an exquisite figure; without being classically beautiful, a Raphael could not wish to depict a more enticing face. Her eyes were large and brilliant. Her drooping eyelids, which gave her so modest and yet so voluptuous an appearance, the ever-smiling mouth, her splendid teeth, the dazzling whiteness of her complexion, the pleasing air with which she listened to what was being said, her silvery voice, the sweetness and sparkling vivacity of her manner, her lack of conceit, or rather her unconsciousness of the power of her charms-in fine, everything about this masterpiece of nature made me wonder and admire; while she, by chance or vile monetary considerations, was in the power of Baret, who, pale and sickly, thought a good deal more of his stockings than of the treasure marriage had given him — a treasure of which he was all unworthy, since he could not see its beauty nor taste its sweetness.

I chose stockings and vests to the amount of twenty-five louis, and I paid the price without trying to cheapen them. I saw the face of the fair shopwoman light up, and I augured well for my success, though I could not expect to do much while the honeymoon lasted. I told the servant that I would give her six francs if she would bring the packet to my house, and so I left them.

Next Sunday Baret came himself with my purchases. I gave him six francs to hand over to his servant, but he hinted that he was not too proud to keep them himself. I was disgusted at this petty greed, and at his meanness in depriving his maid of the six francs after having made a good profit in what he had sold me; but I wanted to stand well with him, and I was not sorry to find so simple a way of throwing dust into his eyes. So while I resolved that the servant should not be a loser I gave the husband a good reception that I might the better mould him to my purpose. I had breakfast brought to him, asking why he had not brought his wife.

“She wanted me to take her,” said he, “but I was afraid you might be offended.”

“Not at all, I should have been delighted. I think your wife a charming woman.”

“You are very kind to say so; but she’s young, she’s young.”

“I don’t think that’s any objection; and if she cares for the walk, bring her with you another time.” He said he should be very pleased to do so.

When I passed by the shop in my carriage I blew kisses to her with my hand, but I did not stop as I did not want any more stockings. Indeed, I should have been bored with the crowd of fops with which the shop was always full. She began to be a topic of conversation in the town; the Palais Royal was full of her; and I was glad to hear that she kept to herself as if she had richer prey in view. That told me that no one possessed her so far, and I hoped that I might be the prey myself; I was quite willing to be captured.

Some days after, she saw my carriage coming, and beckoned to me as I passed. I got out, and her husband with many apologies told me that he wanted me to be the first to see a new fashion in breeches he had just got in. The breeches were parti-coloured, and no man of fashion would be seen without them. They were odd-looking things, but became a well-made young man. As they had to fit exactly, I told him to measure me for six pairs, offering to pay in advance. “We have them in all sizes,” said he, “go up to my wife’s room and try some on.”

It was a good opportunity and I accepted, especially when I heard him tell his wife to go and help me. I went upstairs, she following, and I began to undress, apologizing for doing so before her.

“I will fancy I am your valet,” said she, “and I will help you.”

I did not make any difficulties, and after taking off my shoes I gave her my breeches, taking care, however, to keep on my drawers, lest her modesty should receive too severe a shock. This done she took a pair of breeches, drew them on me, took them off, and tried on others, and all this without any impropriety on either side; for I had determined to behave with discretion till the opportunity came to be indiscreet. She decided that four pairs fitted me admirably, and, not wishing to contradict her, I gave her the sixteen louis she asked, and told her I should be delighted if she would bring them herself at any time when she was at leisure. She came downstairs quite proud of her knowledge of business, and Baret said that next Sunday he and his wife would have the honour of bringing me my purchase.

“I shall be charmed, M. Baret,” said I, “especially if you will stay to dinner.”

He answered that having an important engagement for two o’clock he could only accept on the condition that I would let him go at that time, and he would return at about five to fetch his wife. I found the plan vastly to my taste, but I knew how to conceal my joy; and I quietly said that though I should lose the pleasure of his society, he was free to go when he liked, especially as I had not to go out myself before six.

I looked forward to the Sunday, and the tradesman and his wife did not fail me. As soon as they arrived, I told my servant to say “Not at home” for the rest of the day, and as I was impatient to know what would happen in the afternoon I had dinner served at an early hour. The dishes were exquisite, and the wines delicious. The good man ate much and drank deeply, indeed to such an extent that in common politeness I was obliged to remind him that he had an important appointment at two. His wits being sharpened with champagne, the happy thought occurred to him to tell his wife to go home by herself, if he were kept later than five; and I hastened to add that I would take her home myself in my carriage. He thanked me, and I soothed his uneasiness about being punctual to his appointment by telling him that a coach was waiting, and that the fare had been paid. He went off, and I found myself alone with my jewel, whom I was certain of possessing till six o'clock.

As soon as I heard the hall door shut on the kind husband, I said to his wife,

"You are to be congratulated on having such a kind husband; with a man like that your happiness is assured."

"It is easy to say happiness, but enjoying it is a different thing. My husband's health is so delicate that I can only consider myself as his nurse; and then he contracted heavy debts to set up in business which oblige us to observe the strictest economy. We came here on foot to save the twenty-four sons. We could live on the profits of the business, if there were no debts, but as it is everything goes to pay the interest, and our sales are not large enough to cover everything."

"But you have plenty of customers, for whenever I pass I see the shop full of people."

"These customers you see are idlers, crackers of bad jokes, and profligates, who come and make my head ache with their jests. They have not a penny to bless themselves with, and we dare not let them out of our sight for fear of their hands wandering. If we had cared to give them credit, our shop would have been emptied long ago. I am rude to them, in the hopes that they may leave me alone, but it's of no use. Their impudence is astonishing. When my husband is in I retreat to my room, but he is often away, and then I am obliged to put up with them. And the scarcity of money prevents us from doing much business, but we are obliged to pay our workmen all the same. As far as I can see, we shall be obliged to dismiss them, as we shall soon have to meet several bills. Next Saturday we have got to pay six hundred francs, and we have only got two hundred."

"I am surprised at your having all this worry in these early days of your marriage. I suppose your father knew about your husband's circumstances; how about your dowry?"

"My dowry of six thousand francs has served, most of it, to stock the shop and to pay our debts. We have goods which would pay our debts three times over; but in bad times capital sunk is capital dead."

"I am sorry to hear all this, as if peace is not made your situation will become worse, for as you go on your needs will become greater."

“Yes, for when my husband is better we may have children.”

“What! Do you mean to say his health prevents him from making you a mother? I can’t believe it.”

“I don’t see how I can be a mother who am still a maid; not that I care much about the matter.”

“I shouldn’t have believed it! How can a man not in the agony of death feel ill beside you? He must be dead.”

“Well, he is not exactly dead, but he doesn’t shew many signs of life.”

This piece of wit made me laugh, and under cover of my applause I embraced her without experiencing much resistance. The first kiss was like an electric spark; it fired my imagination and I increased my attentions till she became as submissive as a lamb.

“I will help you, dearest, to meet the bill on Saturday;” and so saying I drew her gently into a closet where a soft divan formed a suitable altar for the completion of an amorous sacrifice.

I was enchanted to find her submissive to my caresses and my inquisitiveness, but she surprised me greatly when, as I placed myself in readiness for the consummation of the act, and was already in the proper posture between the two columns, she moved in such a way as to hinder my advance. I thought at first that it was only one of those devices intended to make the final victory more sweet by putting difficulties in the way; but, finding that her resistance was genuine, I exclaimed,

“How was I to expect a refusal like this at a moment when I thought I saw my ardours reflected in your eyes?”

“Your eyes did not deceive you; but what would my husband say if he found me otherwise than as God has made me?”

“He can’t have left you untouched!”

“He really has done so. You can see for yourself if you like. Can I, then, give to you what appertains to the genius of the marriage-bed.”

“You are right, my angel; this fruit must be kept for a mouth unworthy to taste it. I pity and adore you. Come to my arms, abandon yourself to my love, and fear nothing. The fruit shall not be damaged; I will but taste the outer surface and leave no trace behind."

We passed three hours in trifling together in a manner calculated to inflame our passions despite the libations which we now and again poured forth. I was consoled by her swearing to be mine as soon as Baret had good grounds for thinking that she was his, and, after taking her on the Boulevards, I left her at her door, with a present of twenty-five Louis.

I was in love with her as I had never been before, and I passed the shop three or four times a day, going round and round, to the wrath of my coachman, who got sick of telling me that I was ruining my horses. I was happy to see her watch for the moment that I passed, and waft me a kiss by putting her pretty fingers to her mouth.

We had agreed that she should not make me a sign to leave my coach till her husband had forced a passage. At last this day, so ardently desired and so long waited for, arrived. The sign was given, and I stopped the coach and she came out and, standing on the step, told me to go and wait for her at the church door of St. Germain l'Auxerrois.

I was curious to know what the results would be, and had not been at the place appointed more than a quarter of an hour when she came towards me, her head muffled in a hood. She got into the carriage and, saying that she wanted to make some purchases, begged me to take her to the shops.

I had business of my own, and pressing business too, but who can refuse the Beloved Object anything? I told the coachman to drive to the Place Dauphine, and I prepared to loosen my purse-strings, as I had a feeling she was going to treat me as a friend. In point of fact she left few shops unvisited, going from jewels to pretty trifles and toys of different kinds, and from these to dresses of the latest fashion, which they displayed before her, addressing her as princess, and saying that this would become her admirably. She looked at me, and said it must be confessed that it was very pretty and that she would like it if it were not so dear. I was a willing dupe, and assured her that if she liked it it could not be too dear, and that I would pay.

While my sweetheart was thus choosing one trifle after another my ill-luck brought about an incident which placed me in a fearful situation four years afterwards. The chain of events is endless.

I perceived at my left hand a pretty girl of twelve or thirteen, with an old and ugly woman who was disparaging a pair of ear-rings which the girl had in her hands, and on which she had evidently set her heart: she looked sad at not being able to buy them. I heard her say to the old woman that they would make her happy, but she snatched them from the girl's hands and told her to, come away.

"I can let you have a cheaper pair and almost as fine," said the shopwoman, but the young lady said she did not; care about it, and was getting ready to go, making a profound reverence to my princess Baret.

She, no doubt flattered by this sign of respect went up to her, called her little queen, told her she was as fair as a May morning, and asked the old woman her name,

"She is Mdlle. de Boulainvilier, my niece."

"How can you be so hard-hearted," said I to the aunt, "as to refuse your charming niece a toy which would make her happy? Allow me to make her a present of them."

So saying I put the ear-rings in the girl's hands, while she blushed and looked at her aunt as if to ask her permission.

"You may have the ear-rings," said she, "as this gentleman has been kind enough to give you such a present, and you should give him a kiss by way of thanks."

"The ear-rings," said the shopwoman, "will be only three louis."

Hereupon the affair took a comic turn; the old woman got into a rage and said,

"How can you be such a cheat? You told me they were only two louis."

"Nay, madam, I asked three."

"That's a lie, and I shall not allow you to rob this gentleman. Niece, put those ear-rings down; let the shopwoman keep them."

So far all was well enough; but the old aunt spoilt everything by saying that if I liked to give her niece the three louis she could get her a pair twice as good at another shop. It was all the same to me, so I smilingly put the three louis in front of the young lady, who still had the ear-rings in her hands. The shop-woman, who was on the look-out, pocketed the money, saying that the bargain was made, that the three louis belonged to her and the ear-rings to the young lady.

“You are a cheat,” cried out the enraged old woman.

“And you are an old b —— d,” answered the shop-woman, “I know you well.” A crowd began to gather in front of the shop, hearing the cries of the two harpies. Foreseeing a good deal of unpleasantness, I took the aunt by the arm and led her gently away. The niece, who was quite content with the ear-rings, and did not care whether they cost three louis or two, followed her. We shall hear of them again in due course.

My dear Baret having made me waste a score of louis, which her poor husband would have regretted much more than myself, we got into the carriage again, and I took her to the church door from which we had started. On the way she told me she was coming to stop a few days with me at Little Poland, and that it was her husband who would ask me for the invitation.

“When will he do that?”

“To-morrow, if you go by the shop. Come and buy some stockings; I shall have a bad headache, and Baret will speak to you.”

It may be imagined that I took care to call the next day, and as I did not see his wife in the shop I asked in a friendly way after her health.

“She is ill in bed,” he replied; “she wants a little country air.”

“If you have not fixed for any place, I shall be happy to put you up at Little Poland.”

He replied by a smile of delight.

“I will go and urge her to come myself; in the meanwhile, M. Baret, will you pack me up a dozen pairs of stockings?”

I went upstairs and found the invalid in bed, and laughing in spite of her imaginary headache. “The business is done,” said I, “you will soon hear of it.” As I had said, the husband came upstairs with my stockings and told her that I had been good enough to give her a room in my house. The crafty little creature thanked me, assuring her husband that the fresh air would soon cure her.

“You shall be well looked after,” said I, “but you must excuse me if I do not keep you company — I have to attend to my business. M. Baret will be able to come and sleep with you every night, and start early enough in the morning to be in time for the opening of his shop.”

After many compliments had been interchanged, Baret decided on having his sister stay in the house while his wife was away, and as I took leave I said that, I should give orders for their reception that very evening, in case I was out when they came.

Next day I stayed out till after midnight, and the cook told me that the wedded couple had made a good supper and had gone to bed. I warned her that I should be dining at home every day, and that I should not see my company.

The following day I was up betimes, and on enquiring if the husband had risen I learnt that he had got up at day-break and would not be back till supper-time. The wife was still asleep. I thought with reason she was not asleep for me, and I went to pay her my first visit. In point of fact she was awake, and I took a foretaste of greater joys by a thousand kisses, which she returned with interest. We jested at the expense of the worthy man who had trusted me with a jewel of which I was about to make such good use, and we congratulated each other on the prospect of a week’s mutual pleasures.

“Come, my dear,” said I, “get up and put on a few clothes and we will take breakfast in my room.”

She did not make an elaborate toilette; a cotton dressing gown, a pretty lace cap, a lawn kerchief, that was all, but how the simple dress was lighted by the roses of her cheeks! We were quick over our breakfast, we were in a hurry, and when we had done I shut the door and we gave ourselves over to the enjoyment of our bliss.

Surprised to find her in the same condition in which I had left her, I told her I had hoped … but she, without giving me time to finish the phrase, said,

“My jewel, Baret thinks, or pretends to think, that he has done his duty as a husband; but he is no hand at the business, and I am disposed to put myself in your hands, and then there will be no doubt of my condition.”

“We shall thus, my sweet, be doing him a service, and the service shall be well done.”

As I said these words I was on the threshold of the temple, and I opened the door in a manner that overthrew all obstacles. A little scream and then several sighs announced the completion of the sacrifice, and, to tell the truth, the altar of love was covered with the blood of the victim. After the necessary ablutions the priest once more began his pious work, while the victim growing bolder so provoked his rage that it was not till the fourth mactation that we rested and put off our joust to another season. We swore a thousand times to love each other and to remain constant, and we may possibly have been sincere, as we were in our ecstasy of pleasure.

We only separated to dress; then after taking a turn in the garden we dined together, sure that in a sumptuous repast, washed down by the choicest wines, we should find strength to reanimate our desires and to lull them to sleep in bliss.

At dessert, as I was pouring champagne into her glass, I asked her how with such a fiery temperament she had managed to preserve her virtue?

“Cupid,” said I, “might have gathered the fruit that Hymen could not taste. You are seventeen, and the pear has been ripe for two years at least.”

“Very true, but I have never had a lover.”

“Never?”

“I have been courted, but to no effect. My heart was ever silent. Possibly my father thought otherwise when I begged him, a month ago, to get me married soon.”

“Very likely, but as you were not in love, why were you in such a hurry?”

“I knew that the Duc d’Elbeuf would soon be coming to town, and that if he found me still single he would oblige me to become the wife of a man I detest, who would have me at any price.”

“Who is this man for whom you have such an aversion?”

“He is one of the duke’s pets, a monster who sleeps with his master.”

“Really! I did not know the duke had such tastes.”

"Oh yes; he is eighty-four, and he thinks himself a woman; he says he must have a husband."

"That is very funny. And is this aspirant to your hand a handsome man?"

"I think him horrible; but everybody else thinks he is a fine man."

The charming Baret spent a week with me, and each day we renewed the combat in which we were always conquerors and always conquered. I have seen few women as pretty and seductive, and none whose skin was more exquisitely soft and fair. Her breath was aromatic, and this made her kisses most sweet. Her neck was exquisitely shaped, and the two globes, tipped with coral, were as hard as marble. The exquisite curves of her figure would have defied the skill of the ablest painter. I experienced an ineffable joy in contemplating her, and in the midst of my happiness I called myself unhappy because I could not satisfy all the desires which her charms aroused in me. The frieze which crowned her columns was composed of links of pale gold of the utmost fineness, and my fingers strove in vain to give them another direction to that which nature had given them. She could easily have been taught those lively yet graceful movements which double the pleasure; nature had done her part in that direction, and I do not think a more expert mistress in the art of love could be found.

Each of us looked forward to the day of her departure with equal grief, and our only consolation lay in the hope of meeting again, and often. Three days after she went away, I went to see her, more in love than ever, and I gave her two notes of five thousand francs apiece. Her husband might have his suspicions, but he was too happy at being enabled to pay his debts and to keep his shop open to say anything unpleasant. Many husbands besides himself think themselves lucky to have such productive wives.

In the beginning of November I sold shares for fifty thousand francs to a man named Gamier, living in the Rue du Mail, giving up to him a third part of the materials in my warehouse, and accepting a manager chosen by him and paid by the company. Three days after signing the deed I received the money; but in the night the doctor, my warehouseman, emptied the till and absconded. I have always thought that this robbery could not have been effected without the connivance of the painter. This loss was a serious blow to me, as my affairs were getting into an embroiled condition; and, for a finishing touch to my misfortunes, Gamier had me served with a summons to repay him the fifty thousand francs. My answer was that I was not liable, that his manager had been appointed, the agreement and sale of the shares was valid, and that he being one of the company would have to share in the loss. As he persisted in his claim, I was advised to go to law, but Gamier declared the agreement null and void, accusing me in an indirect manner of having appropriated the money which I had said was stolen. I would willingly have given him a good thrashing, but he was an old man, and that course would not have mended matters, so I kept my temper. The merchant who had given surety for the doctor was not to be found; he had become bankrupt. Garnier had all my stock seized, and sequestrated my horses, carriages, and all my private property.

While these troubles were harassing me, I dismissed all my work-girls, who had always been a great expense, and replaced them with workmen and some of my servants. The painter still retained his position, which was an assured one, as he always paid himself out of the sales.

My attorney was an honest man — a rare bird amongst lawyers — but my counsel, who kept telling me that the case would soon be decided, was a rascal. While the decision was pending, Garnier served me with a writ to pay the sum claimed. I took it to my counsel, who promised to appeal the same day, which he did not do, while he appropriated to his own use the money assigned by me for the costs of an action which, if there had been justice in France, I should certainly have gained. Two other summonses were issued against me, and before I knew what was going on a warrant was issued for my arrest. I was seized at eight o’clock in the morning, as I was driving along the Rue St. Denis. The sergeant of police sat beside me, a second got up beside the coachman, and a third stationed himself at the back of the coach, and in this state we drove to Fort l’Eveque.

As soon as the police had handed me over to the gaoler, he informed me that by payment of the fifty thousand francs, or by giving good bail, I might instantly regain my freedom.

“For the moment,” said I, “I can neither command money nor bail.”

“Very good, then you will stay in prison.”

The gaoler took me to a decent-looking room, and I told him I had only been served with one writ.

“Very likely,” answered he, “it often happens like that; but it is rather difficult to prove.”

“Bring me writing materials, and have a trusty messenger at my disposal.”

I wrote to my counsel, my attorney, to Madame d’Urfe, and to all my friends, including my brother, who was just married. The attorney called immediately, but the barrister contented himself with writing to the effect that as he had put in an appeal my seizure was illegal, and that damages might be recovered. He ended by begging me to give him a free hand, and to have patience for a few days.

Manon Baletti sent her brother with her diamond earrings. Madame du Rumain dispatched her barrister — a man of rare honesty — to me, and wrote a friendly note in which she said that if I wanted five hundred louis I should have them to-morrow. My brother neither wrote nor came to see me. As to dear Madame d’Urfe she sent to say that she would expect me at dinner. I thought she had gone mad, as I could not think she was making fun of me.

At eleven o’clock my room was full of people. Poor Baret had come weeping, and offering me all his shop held. I was touched by the worthy man’s kindness. At last I was told that a lady in a coach wanted to see me. I waited, but nobody came. In my impatience I called the turnkey, who told me that, after questioning the clerk of the prison, she had gone away again. From the description I was given I had no difficulty in identifying the lady with Madame d’Urfe.

To find myself deprived of my liberty was a disagreeable shock to me. I thought of The Leads, and though my present situation was not to be compared with that, I cursed my fate as I foresaw that my imprisonment would damage my reputation. I had thirty thousand francs in hard cash and jewels to more than double that amount, but I could not decide on making such a sacrifice, in spite of the advice given by Madame du Rumain’s barrister, who would have me got out of prison at any cost.

“All you have to do,” said the barrister, “is to deposit half the sum demanded which I will give to the clerk of the court, and in a short time I can promise a decision in your favour and the restoration of your money.”

We were discussing the matter, when the gaoler entered, and said, very politely,

"Sir, you are a free man again, and a lady is waiting for you at the door in her carriage."

I called Le Duc, my man, and told him to go and see who the lady was. He returned with the information that it was Madame d'Urfe. I made my bow to everybody, and after four very disagreeable hours of imprisonment, I found myself free again and sitting in a splendid coach.

Madame d'Urfe received me with dignified kindness, and a judge who was in the carriage apologized for his country, where strangers were exposed to such insults. I thanked Madame d'Urfe in a few words, telling her that I was glad to become her debtor, but that it was Garnier who benefited by her generosity. She replied with a pleasant smile that she was not so sure of that, and that we would talk it over at dinner. She wanted me to go and walk in the Tuileries and the Palais Royal, to convince people that the report of my imprisonment had been false. I thought the advice excellent, and as I set out I promised to be with her at two o'clock.

After skewing myself at the two principal walks of Paris, amusing myself by the astonishment depicted on certain faces well known to me, I went and returned the ear-rings to my dear Manon, who gave an astonished but a happy cry when she saw me. I thanked her tenderly for the proof she had given me of her attachment, and said that I had been arrested by a plot for which I would make the plotters pay dear. After promising to spend the evening with them I went to Madame d'Urfe's.

This good lady, whose foible is well known to my readers, made me laugh when she said that her genius had told her that I had got myself arrested to be talked about, for reasons which were known only to myself.

"As soon as I was informed of your arrest," said she, "I went to the Fort l'Eveque, and on learning from the clerk what the affair was about, I deposited bonds to bail you out. If you are not in a position to have justice done you, Gamier will have to reckon with me before he takes the money I have deposited. But your first step should be to commence a criminal prosecution against your counsel, who has not only failed to put in your appeal but has robbed and deceived you."

I left her in the evening, assuring her that in a few days her bail should be returned to her; and went to the French and Italian plays in succession, taking care to render myself conspicuous that my reappearance might be complete. Afterwards I went to sup with Manon Baletti, who was too happy to have had an opportunity of spewing her affection for me; and her joy was full when I told her that I was going to give up business, for she thought that my seraglio was the only obstacle to my marriage with her.

The next day was passed with Madame du Rumain. I felt that my obligations to her were great, while she, in the goodness of her heart, was persuaded that she could make no adequate return to me for the oracles with which I furnished her, and by following which she was safely guided through the perplexities of life. I cannot understand how she, whose wit was keen, and whose judgment on other subjects was of the soundest kind, could be liable to such folly. I was sorry when I reflected that I could not undeceive her, and glad when I reflected that to this deceit of mine the kindness she had shewn me was chiefly due.

My imprisonment disgusted me with Paris, and made me conceive a hatred of the law, which I feel now. I found myself entangled in a double maze of knavery — Garnier was my foe, and so was my own counsel. Every time I went to plead, to spend my money amongst lawyers, and to waste the time better given to pleasure, I felt as if I was going to execution. In this perturbed kind of life, so contrary to my inclinations, I resolved to set to work in earnest to make my fortune, so that I might become independent and free to enjoy life according to my tastes. I decided in the first place that I would cut myself free of all that bound me to Paris, make a second journey into Holland to replenish my purse and invest my money in a yearly income for two lives, and from thenceforth live free from care. The two lives were those of my wife and myself; my wife would be Manon Baletti, and when I told her my plans she would have thought them delightful if I had begun by marrying her.

The first thing I did was to give up Little Poland. I then drew the twenty-four thousand francs which were my surety for keeping a lottery office in the Rue St. Denis. Thus I got rid of my ridiculous office of lottery receiver, and after getting my clerk married I handed over the office to him; in short, I made his fortune. A friend of his wife's was his surety; such things often happen.

I did not like to leave Madame d'Urfe involved in a troublesome suit with Gamier, so I went to Versailles to see the Abbe de la Ville, a great friend of his, and begged him to induce Gamier to make a composition.

The abbe saw that his friend was in the wrong, and so was all the more willing to help me; and a few days afterwards he wrote to me to go and see him, assuring me that I should find him inclined to arrange matters in a friendly manner.

Gamier was at Ruelle, where he had a house which cost him four hundred thousand francs — a fine estate for a man who had made his money as an army contractor during the last war. He was rich, but he was so unfortunate as to be still fond of women at the age of seventy, while his impotence debarred him from the proper enjoyment of their society. I found him in company with three young ladies, all of whom were pretty, and (as I heard afterwards) of good families; but they were poor, and their necessities forced them to submit to a disgusting intercourse with the old profligate. I stayed to dinner and admired the propriety and modesty of their behaviour in spite of the humiliation which accompanies poverty. After dinner, Gamier went to sleep, and left me to entertain these girls whom I would willingly have rescued from their unfortunate situation if I had been able. After Gamier woke, we went into his study to talk over our business.

At first he maintained his claim tenaciously, and seemed unwilling to yield an inch; but when I told him that I was leaving Paris in a few days, he saw that as he could not keep me, Madame d'Urfe might take the suit over and carry it on to infinity, and that he might lose it at last. That made him think it over, and he asked me to stay in his house for the night. The next day, after breakfast, he said, —

"I have made up my mind: I will have twenty-five thousand francs, or keep the matter before the courts till my dying day."

I answered that he would find the sum in the hands of Madame d'Urfe's solicitor, and that he could receive it as soon as he had given replevy on the bail at the Fort l'Eveque.

I could not persuade Madame d'Urfe that I had acted wisely in coming to an arrangement till I had told her that my genius had commanded me not to leave Paris before my affairs were settled, so that no one might be able to accuse me of having gone away to avoid creditors whose claims I could not satisfy.

Three or four days afterwards I went to take leave of M. de Choiseul, who promised to instruct M. d’Afri to aid me in negotiating a loan at five per cent. either with the States-General or a private company.

“You can tell everyone,” said he, “that peace is certain to be made in the course of the winter, and I will take care that you shall have what is due to you on your return to France.”

M. de Choiseul deceived me, for he knew very well that peace would not be made; but I had no definite project, and I repented of having given M. de Boulogne my confidence, and also of having done anything for the Government, the reward of which was not immediate and certain.

I sold my horses, my carriages, my furniture; I went bail for my brother who had contracted debts he was sure of paying, as he had several pictures on the easel which he had been ordered to paint by some of his rich and noble patrons. I took leave of Manon, whom I left in floods of tears, though I swore with the utmost sincerity to come back soon and marry her.

At last all my preparations were finished, and I left Paris with a hundred thousand francs in bills of exchange and jewels to the same amount. I was alone in my post-chaise, Le Duc preceding me on horseback, which the rascal preferred to being shut up in a carriage.

This Le Duc of mine was a Spaniard, aged eighteen, a sharp fellow, whom I valued highly, especially because he did my hair better than anyone else. I never refused him a pleasure which a little money would buy. Besides him I had a good Swiss servant, who served as my courier.

It was the 1st of December, 1759, and the air was frosty, but I was fortified against the inclemency of the season. I was able to read comfortably, and I took Helvetius’s “Esprit,” which I had never had time to read before. After perusing it I was equally astonished at the sensation it created and at the stupidity of the High Court which condemned it. Of course that exalted body was largely influenced by the king and the clergy, and between them all no effort was spared to ruin Helvetius, a good-hearted man with more wit than his book. I saw nothing novel either in the historical part relating to the morals of nations (in which Helvetius dismisses us as triflers), or in the position that morality is dependent on the reason. All that he says has been said over and over again, and Blaise Pascal went much farther, but he wrote more skilfully and better in every way than Helvetius, who, wishing to remain in France, was obliged to retract. He preferred a quiet life to his honour and his philosophy. His wife had a nobler soul than he, as she wanted to sell all they had, and to take refuge in Holland rather than submit to the shame of a recantation. Perhaps Helvetius would have followed the noble advice of his wife if he had foreseen that this monstrous recantation would make his book into a fraud; for he had to confess that he had written without due reflection, that he was more in jest than earnest, and that his arguments were mere sophisms. But many men of keen intellects had not waited for him to recant before exposing this wretched system of his. And admitting that whatever man does is done for his own interest, does it follow that gratitude is a folly, and virtue and vice identical? Are a villain and a man of honour to be weighed in the same balance? If such a dreadful system were not absurd, virtue would be mere hypocrisy; and if by any possibility it were true, it ought to be proscribed by general consent, since it would lead to general ruin and corruption.

It might have been proved to Helvetius that the propositions that the first motive is always self-interest, and that we should always consult our own interest first, are fallacious. It is a strange thing that so virtuous a man would not admit the existence of virtue. It is an amusing suggestion that he only published his book out of modesty, but that would have contradicted his own system. But if it were so, was it well done to render himself contemptible to escape the imputation of pride? Modesty is only a virtue when it is natural; if it is put on, or merely the result of training, it is detestable. The great d'Alembert was the most truly modest man I have ever seen.

When I got to Brussels, where I spent two days, I went to the "Hotel de l'Imperatrice," and chance sent Mdlle. X. C. V. and Farsetti in my way, but I pretended not to see them. From Brussels I went straight to the Hague, and got out at the "Prince of Orange." On my asking the host who sat down at his table, he told me his company consisted of general officers of the Hanoverian army, same English ladies, and a Prince Piccolomini and his wife; and this made me make up my mind to join this illustrious assemblage.

I was unknown to all, and keeping my eyes about me I gave my chief attention to the observation of the supposed Italian princess, who was pretty enough, and more especially of her husband whom I seemed to recognize. In the course of conversation I heard some talk of the celebrated St. Germain, and it seemed that he was stopping in the same hotel.

I had returned to my room, and was thinking of going to bed, when Prince Piccolomini entered, and embraced me as an old friend.

“A look in your face,” said he, “tells me that the recognition has been mutual. I knew you directly in spite of the sixteen years that have passed since we saw each other at Vicenza. To-morrow you can tell everybody that we are friends, and that though I am not a prince I am really a count; here is my passport from the King of Naples, pray read it.”

During this rapid monologue I could not get in a single word, and on attentively scanning his features I could only recollect that I had seen him before, but when or where or how I knew not. I opened the passport and read the name of Ruggero di Rocco, Count Piccolomini. That was enough; I remembered an individual of that name who was a fencing-master in Vicenza, and on looking at him again his aspect, though much changed left no doubt as to the identity of the swordsman and the count.

“I congratulate you,” said I, “on your change of employment, your new business is doubtless much better than the old.”

“I taught fencing,” he replied, “to save myself from dying of hunger, for my father was so hard a man that he would not give me the wherewithal to live, and I disguised my name so as not to disgrace it. On my father’s death I succeeded to the property, and at Rome I married the lady you have seen.”

“You had good taste, for she’s a pretty woman.”

“She is generally thought so, and it was a love match on my side.”

He ended by asking me to come and see him in his room the next day, after dinner, telling me that I should find good company and a bank at faro, which he kept himself. He added, without ceremony, that if I liked we could go half shares, and that I should find it profitable. I thanked him, and promised to pay him a visit.

I went abroad at an early hour next morning, and after having spent some time with the Jew, Boaz, and having given a polite refusal to his offer of a bed, I went to pay my respects to M. d'Afri, who since the death of the Princess of Orange, the Regent of the Low Countries, was generally known as His Most Christian Majesty's ambassador. He gave me an excellent reception, but he said that if I had returned to Holland hoping to do business on behalf of the Government I should waste my time, since the action of the comptroller-general had lowered the credit of the nation, which was thought to be on the verge of bankruptcy.

"This M. Silhouette," said he, "has served the king very badly. It is all very well to say that payments are only suspended for a year, but it is not believed."

He then asked me if I knew a certain Comte de St. Germain, who had lately arrived at the Hague.

"He has not called on me," said the ambassador, "though he says he is commissioned by the king to negotiate a loan of a hundred millions. When I am asked about him, I am obliged to say that I know nothing about him, for fear of compromising myself. Such a reply, as you can understand, is not likely to increase his chance of success, but that is his fault and not mine. Why has he not brought me a letter from the Duc de Choiseul or the Marquise de Pompadour? I take him to be an impostor, but I shall know something more about him in the course of ten days."

I told him, in my turn, all I knew of this truly eccentric individual. He was not a little surprised to hear that the king had given him an apartment at Chambord, but when I told him that the count professed to be able to make diamonds he laughed and said that in that case he would no doubt make the hundred millions. Just as I was leaving, M. d'Afri asked me to dine with him on the following day.

On returning to the hotel I called on the Comte de St. Germain.

"You have anticipated me," said he, on seeing me enter, "I intended to have called on you. I suppose, my dear Casanova, that you have come to try what you can do for our Court, but you will find your task a difficult one, as the Exchange is highly offended at the late doings of that fool Silhouette. All the same I hope I shall be able to get my hundred millions. I have passed my word to my friend, Louis XV. (I may call him so), and I can't disappoint him; the business will be done in the next three or four weeks."

"I should think M. d'Afri might assist you."

"I do not require his assistance. Probably I shall not even call upon him, as he might say he helped me. No, I shall have all the trouble, and I mean to have all the glory, too."

"I presume you will be going to Court, where the Duke of Brunswick may be of service to you?"

"Why should I go to Court? As for the Duke of Brunswick, I do not care to know him. All I have got to do is to go to Amsterdam, where my credit is sufficiently good for anything. I am fond of the King of France; there's not a better man in the kingdom."

"Well, come and dine at the high table, the company is of the best and will please you."

"You know I never eat; moreover, I never sit down at a table where I may meet persons who are unknown to me."

"Then, my lord, farewell; we shall see each other again at Amsterdam."

I went down to the dining-roam, where, while dinner was being served, I conversed with some officers. They asked me if I knew Prince Piccolomini, to which I answered that he was not a prince but a count, and that it was many years since I had seen him.

When the count and his fair wife (who only spoke Italian) came down, I shewed them some polite attentions, and we then sat down to dinner.

EPISODE 13 — HOLLAND AND GERMANY

CHAPTER X

Portrait of the Pretended Countess Piccolomini — Quarrel and
Duel — Esther and Her Father, M. D’O. — Esther Still Taken
with the Cabala — Piccolomini Forges a Bill of Exchange:
Results I Am Fleeced, and in Danger of Being Assassinated —
Debauch with the Two Paduan Girls — I Reveal A Great Secret
To Esther — I Bate the Rascally St. Germain; His Flight —
Manon Baletti Proves Faithless to Me; Her Letter Announcing
Her Marriage: My Despair — Esther Spends a Day With Me —
My Portrait and My Letters to Manon Get Into Esther’s Hands —
I Pass a Day with Her — We Talk of Marrying Each Other

The so-called Countess Piccolomini was a fine example of the adventurers. She was young, tall, well-made, had eyes full of fire, and skin of a dazzling whiteness; not, however, that natural whiteness which delights those who know the value of a satin skin and rose petals, but rather that artificial fairness which is commonly to be seen at Rome on the faces of courtezans, and which disgusts those who know how it is produced. She had also splendid teeth, glorious hair as black as jet, and arched eyebrows like ebony. To these advantages she added attractive manners, and there was something intelligent about the way she spoke; but through all I saw the adventuress peeping out, which made me detest her.

As she did not speak anything but Italian the countess had to play the part of a mute at table, except where an English officer named Walpole was concerned, who, finding her to his taste, set himself to amuse her. I felt friendly disposed towards this Englishman, though my feelings were certainly not the result of sympathy. If I had been blind or deaf Sir James Walpole would have been totally indifferent to me, as what I felt for him was the result of my observation.

Although I did not care for the countess, for all that I went up to her room after dinner with the greater part of the guests. The count arranged a game of whist, and Walpole played at primero with the countess, who cheated him in a masterly manner; but though he saw it he laughed and paid, because it suited his purpose to do so. When he had lost fifty Louis he called quarter, and the countess asked him to take her to the theatre. This was what the good-natured Englishman wanted; and he and the countess went off, leaving the husband playing whist.

I, too, went to the play, and as chance would have it my neighbour in the pit was Count Tot, brother to the count famous for his stay in Constantinople.

We had some conversation together, and he told me he had been obliged to leave France on account of a duel which he had had with a man who had jested with him for not being present at the battle of Minden, saying that he had absented himself in view of the battle. The count had proved his courage with the sword on the other's body — a rough kind of argument which was fashionable then as now. He told me he had no money, and I immediately put my purse at his service; but, as the saying goes, a kindness is never thrown away, and five years later he did the same by me at St. Petersburg. Between the acts he happened to notice the Countess Piccolomini, and asked me if I knew her husband. "I know him very slightly," I answered, "but we happen to be staying at the same hotel."

"He's a regular black sheep," said the count, "and his wife's no better than he."

It seemed that they had already won a reputation in the town.

After the play I went back to the hotel by myself, and the head-waiter told me that Piccolomini had set out hot-foot with his servant, his only luggage being a light portmanteau. He did not know the reason of this sudden departure, but a minute afterwards the countess came in, and her maid having whispered something to her she told me that the count had gone away because he had fought a duel but that often happened. She asked me to sup with her and Walpole, and her appetite did not seem to suffer from the absence of her spouse.

Just as we were finishing supper, an Englishman, who had been of the whist party, came up and told Walpole that the Italian had been caught cheating and had given the lie to their fellow Englishman, who had detected him, and that they had gone out together. An hour afterwards the Englishman returned with two wounds, one on the fore-arm and one on the shoulder. It was a trifling affair altogether.

Next day, after I had had dinner with the Comte d'Afri, I found a letter from Piccolomini, with an enclosure addressed to the countess, waiting for me at the inn. He begged me to give his wife the letter, which would inform her of his plans, and then to bring her to the Ville de Lyon at Amsterdam, where he was staying. He wanted to know how the Englishman whom he had wounded was getting on.

The duty struck me as an amusing one, and I should have laughed with all my heart if I had felt the least desire to profit by the confidence he was pleased to place in me. Nevertheless I went up to the countess, whom I found sitting up in bed playing with Walpole. She read the letter, told me that she could not start till the day following, and informed me what time she would go, as if it had been all settled; but I smiled sardonically, and told her that my business kept me at the Hague, and that I could not possibly escort her. When Walpole heard me say this he offered to be my substitute, to which she agreed. They set out the day following, intending to lie at Leyden.

Two days after their departure, I was sitting down to dinner with the usual company, increased by two Frenchmen who had just come. After the soup one of them said, coolly,

"The famous Casanova is now in Holland."

"Is he?" said the other, "I shall be glad to see him, and ask for an explanation which he will not like."

I looked at the man, and feeling certain that I had never seen him before I began to get enraged; but I merely asked the fellow if he knew Casanova.

"I'll ought to know him," said he, in that self-satisfied tone which is always so unpleasant.

"Nay, sir, you are mistaken; I am Casanova."

Without losing his self-possession, he replied, insolently, “You are really very much mistaken if you think you are the only Casanova in the world.”

It was a sharp answer, and put me in the wrong. I bit my lips and held my tongue, but I was grievously offended, and determined to make him find the Casanova who was in Holland, and from whom he was going to extract an unpleasant explanation, in myself. In the meanwhile I bore as well as I could the poor figure he must be cutting before the officers at table, who, after hearing the insolence of this young blockhead, might take me for a coward. He, the insolent fellow, had no scruple in abusing the triumph his answer had given him, and talked away in the random fashion. At last he forgot himself so far as to ask from what country I came.

“I am a Venetian, sir,” I replied.

“Ah! then you are a good friend to France, as your republic is under French protection.”

At these words my ill-temper boiled aver, and, in the tone of voice one uses to put down a puppy, I replied that the Republic of Venice was strong enough to do without the protection of France or of any other power, and that during the thirteen centuries of its existence it had had many friends and allies but no protectors. “Perhaps,” I ended, “you will reply by begging my pardon for not knowing that these was only one Venice in the world.”

I had no sooner said this than a burst of laughter from the whole table set me right again. The young blockhead seemed taken aback and in his turn bit his lips, but his evil genius made him, strike in again at dessert. As usual the conversation went from one subject to another, and we began to talk about the Duke of Albermarle. The Englishmen spoke in his favour, and said that if he had been alive there would have been no war between England and France; they were probably right, but even if the duke had lived war might have broken out, as the two nations in question have never yet succeeded in understanding that it is for both their interests to live at peace together. Another Englishman praised Lolotte, his mistress. I said I had seen that charming woman at the Duchess of Fulvi’s, and that no one deserved better to become the Countess of Eronville. The Count of Eronville, a lieutenant-general and a man of letters, had just married her.

I had scarcely finished what I had to say when Master Blockhead said, with a laugh, that he knew Lolotte to be a good sort of girl, as he had slept with her at Paris. I could restrain myself no longer; my indignation and rage consumed me. I took up my plate, and made as if I would throw it at his head, saying at the same time, “You infernal liar!” He got up, and stood with his back to the fire, but I could see by his sword-knot that he was a soldier.

Everybody pretended not to hear anything of this, and the conversation went on for some time on indifferent subjects; and at last they all rose from their seats and left the room.

My enemy said to his companion that they would see one another again after the play, and remained by the fire, with his elbow resting on the chimney-piece. I remained at table till the company had all left the room, and when we were alone together I got up and looked him straight in the face, and went out, walking towards Sheveningue, sure that he would follow me if he were a man of any mettle. When I had got to some distance from the hotel I looked round, and saw that he was following me at a distance of fifty paces.

When I got to the wood I stopped at a suitable place, and stood awaiting my antagonist. He was ten paces off when he drew his sword, and I had plenty of time to draw mine though he came on fast. The fight did not last long, for as soon as he was near enough I gave him a thrust which has never failed me, and sent him back quicker than he came. He was wounded in the chest above the right breast, but as my sword was flat and the opening large enough the wound bled easily. I lowered my sword and ran up to him, but I could do nothing; he said that we should meet again at Amsterdam, if I was going there, and that he would have his revenge. I saw him again five or six years afterwards at Warsaw, and then I did him a kindness. I heard afterwards that his name was Varnier, but I do not know whether he was identical with the president of the National Convention under the infamous Robespierre.

I did not return to the hotel till after the play, and I then heard that the Frenchman, after having the surgeon with him for an hour, had set out for Rotterdam with his friend. We had a pleasant supper and talked cheerfully together without a word being said about the duel, with the exception that an English lady said, I forget in what connection, that a man of honour should never risk sitting down to dinner at an hotel unless he felt inclined, if necessary, to fight. The remark was very true at that time, when one had to draw the sword for an idle word, and to expose one's self to the consequences of a duel, or else be pointed at, even by the ladies, with the finger of scorn.

I had nothing more to keep me at the Hague, and I set out next morning before day-break for Amsterdam. On the way I stopped for dinner and recognized Sir James Walpole, who told me that he had started from Amsterdam the evening before, an hour after giving the countess into her husband's charge. He said that he had got very tired of her, as he had nothing more to get from a woman who gave more than one asked, if one's purse-strings were opened wide enough. I got to Amsterdam about midnight and took up my abode at "The Old Bible." The neighbourhood of Esther had awakened my love for that charming girl, and I was so impatient to see her that I could not sleep.

I went out about ten o'clock and called on M. d'O, who welcomed me in the friendliest manner and reproached me for not having alighted at his house. When he heard that I had given up business he congratulated me on not having removed it into Holland, as I should have been ruined. I did not tell him that I had nearly come to that in France, as I considered such a piece of information would not assist my designs. He complained bitterly of the bad faith of the French Government, which had involved him in considerable losses; and then he asked me to come and see Esther.

I was too impatient to embrace her to stay to be asked twice; I ran to greet her. As soon as she saw me she gave a cry of surprise and delight, and threw herself in my arms, where I received her with fondness equal to her own. I found her grown and improved; she looked lovely. We had scarcely sat down when she told me that she had become as skilled in the cabala as myself.

"It makes my life happy," said she, "for it gives me a power over my father, and assures me that he will never marry me to anyone but the man of my choice."

"I am delighted that you extract the only good that can proceed from this idle science, namely, the power to guide persons devoid of strength of will.

But your father must think that I taught you the secret?”

“Yes, he does; and he said, one day, that he would forgive me any sacrifices I might have made to obtain this precious secret from you.”

“He goes a little further than we did, my dearest Esther.”

“Yes, and I told him that I had gained it from you without any sacrifice, and that now I was a true Pythoness without having to endure the torments of the tripod; and I am sure that the replies you gave were invented by yourself.”

“But if that were so how could I have known where the pocket-book was, or whether the ship was safe?”

“You saw the portfolio yourself and threw it where it was discovered, and as for the vessel you spoke at random; but as you are an honest man, confess that you were afraid of the results. I am never so bold as that, and when my father asks me questions of that kind, my replies are more obscure than a sibyl’s. I don’t wish him to lose confidence in my oracle, nor do I wish him to be able to reproach me with a loss that would injure my own interests.”

“If your mistake makes you happy I shall leave you in it. You are really a woman of extraordinary talents — , you are quite unique.”

“I don’t want your compliments,” said she, in a rather vexed manner, “I want a sincere avowal of the truth.”

“I don’t think I can go as far as that.”

At these words, which I pronounced in a serious way, Esther went into a reverie, but I was not going to lose the superiority I had over her, and racked my brains to find some convincing prediction the oracle might make to her, and while I was doing so dinner was announced.

There were four of us at table, and I concluded that the fourth of the party must be in love with Esther, as he kept his eyes on her the whole time. He was her father’s favourite clerk, and no doubt her father would have been glad if she had fallen in love with him, but I soon saw that she was not likely to do so. Esther was silent all through dinner, and we did not mention the cabala till the clerk was gone.

"Is it possible," said M. d'O, "for my daughter to obtain the answers of the oracle without your having taught her?"

"I always thought such a thing impossible till to-day," I answered, "but Esther has convinced me that I was mistaken. I can teach the secret to no one without losing it myself, for the oath I swore to the sage who taught me forbids me to impart it to another under pain of forfeiture. But as your daughter has taken no such oath, having acquired it herself, she may be for all I know at perfect liberty to communicate the secret to anyone."

Esther, who was as keen as a razor, took care to say that the same oath that I had taken had been imposed on her by the oracle, and that she could not communicate the cabalistic secret to anyone without the permission of her genius, under pain of losing it herself.

I read her inmost thoughts, and was rejoiced to see that her mind was calmed. She had reason to be grateful to me, whether I had lied or not, for I had given her a power over her father which a father's kindness could not have assured; but she perceived that what I had said about her oracular abilities had been dictated merely by politeness, and she waited till we were alone to make me confess as much.

Her worthy father, who believed entirely in the infallibility of our oracles, had the curiosity to put the same question to both of us, to see if we should agree in the answer. Esther was delighted with the idea, as she suspected that the one answer would flatly contradict the other, and M. d'O having written his question on two sheets of paper gave them to us. Esther went up to her own room for the operation, and I questioned the oracle on the table at which we had had dinner, in the presence of the father. Esther was quick, as she came down before I had extracted from the pyramid the letters which were to compose my reply, but as I knew what to say as soon as I saw her father read the answer she gave him I was not long in finishing what I had to do.

M. d'O —— asked if he should try to get rid of the French securities he held in spite of the loss he would incur by selling out.

Esther's oracle replied,

"You must sow plentifully before you reap. Pluck not up the vine before the season of the vintage, for your vine is planted in a fruitful soil."

Mine ran as follows: —

“If you sell out you will repent, for there will be a new comptroller-general, who will pay all claims before another year has elapsed.”

Esther’s answer was conceived in the sibylline style, and I admired the readiness of her wit; but mine went right to the point, and the worthy man embraced us joyfully, and, taking his hat and stick, said that since our replies agreed he would run the risk of losing three million francs and make a profit of five or six hundred thousand in the course of the year. His daughter began to recant, and would have warned him against the danger, but he, who was as firm as a Mussulman, kissed her again, saying,

“The oracle is not wont to lie, and even if it does deceive me this time it will only be a fourth part of my fortune that I shall lose.”

When Esther and I were alone I began to compliment her, much to her delight, on the cleverness of her answer, the elegance of her style, and her boldness, for she could not be as well acquainted with French affairs as I was.

“I am much obliged to you,” said she, “for having confirmed my reply, but confess that you lied to please me.”

“I confess, since that will please you, and I will even tell you that you have nothing more to learn.”

“You are a cruel man! But how could you reply that there would be another comptroller-general in a year’s time, and run the risk of compromising the oracle? I never dare to say things like that; I love the oracle too well to expose it to shame and confusion.”

“That shews that I do not invent the answers; but since the oracle has pronounced it I am willing to bet that Silhouette will be dismissed.”

“Your obstinacy drives me to despair, for I shall not rest till I know that I am as much a master of the cabala as you are, and yet you will not confess that you invent the answers yourself. For charity’s sake do something to convince me of the contrary.”

“I will think it over.”

I passed the whole day with this delightful girl, whose amiable disposition and great wealth would have made me a happy man if it were not for my master-passion, the love of independence, and my aversion to make up my mind to live for the rest of my days in Holland.

In the course of my life I have often observed that the happiest hours are often the heralds of misfortune. The very next day my evil genius took me to the Ville de Lyon. This was the inn where Piccolomini and his wife were staying, and I found them there in the midst of a horde of cheats and sharpers, like themselves. As soon as the good people heard my name they rushed forward, some to greet me, and others to have a closer look at me, as if I were some strange wild beast. Amongst those present were a Chevalier de Sabi, who wore the uniform of a Polish major, and protested he had known me at Dresden; a Baron de Wiedan, claiming Bohemia as his fatherland, who greeted me by saying that his friend the Comte St. Germain had arrived at the Etoile d'Orient, and had been enquiring after me; an attenuated-looking bravo who was introduced to me as the Chevalier de la Perine, whom I recognized at the first glance as the fellow called Talvis, who had robbed the Prince-Bishop of Presburg, who had lent me a hundred Louis the same day, and with whom I had fought a duel at Paris. Finally, there was an Italian named Neri, who looked like a blacksmith minus his honesty, and said that he remembered seeing me one evening at the casino. I recollected having seen him at the place where I met the wretched Lucie.

In the midst of this band of cut-purses I saw the so-called wife of the pretended Chevalier de Sabi, a pretty woman from Saxony, who, speaking Italian indifferently well, was paying her addresses to the Countess Piccolomini.

I bit my lips with anger to find myself in such honourable company, but putting a good face on a bad game I greeted everybody politely, and then drawing a roll of a hundred Louis from my pocket I presented them to Master Perine Talvis, telling him I was glad to be able to return them to him with my best thanks.

My politeness did not meet with much of a reception, for the impudent scoundrel answered me, as he pocketed the money, that he remembered having lent it me at Presburg, but he also remembered a more important matter.

“And pray what is that?” said I, in a dry and half-disdainful tone.

“You owe me a revenge at the sword’s point, as you know right well. Here is the mark of the gash you gave me seven years ago.”

So saying, the wretched little man opened his shirt and shewed the small round scar. This scene, which belonged more to farce than comedy, seemed to have struck all tongues with paralysis.

“Anywhere else than in Holland, where important and delicate business debars me from fighting, I shall be glad to meet you and mark you again, if you still desire to cross swords with me; but while I am here I must beg you not to disturb me. All the same, you may as well know that I never go out without a couple of friends in my pockets, and that if you attack me I shall blow your brains out in self-defence.”

“My revenge must be with crossed swords,” said he. “However, I will let you finish your business.”

“You will do wisely.”

Piccolomini, who had been casting a hungry eye upon my hundred louis, proposed immediately afterwards a bank at faro, and began to deal. Prudence would have restrained me from playing in such company, but the dictates of prudence were overcome by my desire to get back the hundred louis which I had given Talvis, so I cut in. I had a run of bad luck and lost a hundred ducats, but, as usual, my loss only excited me. I wished to regain what I had lost, so I stayed to supper, and afterwards, with better luck, won back my money. I was content to stop at this, and to let the money I had paid to Talvis go, so I asked Piccolomini to pay me, which he did with a bill of exchange on an Amsterdam bank drawn by a firm in Middlesburg. At first I made some difficulty in taking it, on the pretext that it would be difficult to negotiate, but he promised to let me have the money next day, and I had to give in.

I made haste to leave this cut-throat place, after refusing to lend Talvis a hundred Louis, which he wanted to borrow of me on the strength of the revenge I owed him. He was in a bad humour, both on this account and because he had lost the hundred Louis I had paid him, and he allowed himself to use abusive language, which I treated with contempt. I went to bed, promising myself never to set foot in such a place again.

The next morning, however, I went out with the intention of calling on Piccolomini to get the bill of exchange cashed, but on my way I happened to go into a coffee-house and to meet Rigerboos, Therese's friend, whose acquaintance the reader has already made. After greeting each other, and talking about Therese, who was now in London and doing well, I skewed him my bill, telling him the circumstances under which I had it. He looked at it closely, and said,

"It's a forgery, and the original from which it was copied was honoured yesterday."

He saw that I could scarcely believe it, and told me to come with him to be convinced of the truth of what he said.

He took me to a merchant of his acquaintance, who skewed me the genuine bill, which he had cashed the day before for an individual who was unknown to him. In my indignation I begged Rigerboos to come with me to Piccolomini, telling him that he might cash it without remark, and that otherwise he would witness what happened.

We arrived at the count's and were politely received, the count asking me to give him the bill and he would send it to the bank to be cashed, but Rigerboos broke in by saying that it would be dishonoured, as it was a mere copy of a bill which had been cashed the evening before.

Piccolomini pretended to be greatly astonished, and said that, "though he could not believe it, he would look into the matter."

"You may look into it when you please," said I, "but in the mean time I should be obliged by your giving me five hundred florins."

"You know me, sir," said he, raising his voice, "I guarantee to pay you, and that ought to be enough."

"No doubt it would be enough, if I chose; but I want my money."

At this his wife came in and began to take her part in the dispute, and on the arrival of the count's man, a very cut-threat, Rigerboos took hold of me by the arm and drew me forcibly away. "Follow me," said he, when we were outside, "and let me see to this business myself." He took me to a fine-looking man, who turned out to be the lieutenant of police, and after he had heard the case he told me to give him the bill of exchange and to say where

I was going to dine. I told him I should be at M. d'O 's, and saying that would do he went off. I thanked Rigerboos, and went to Esther, who reproached me tenderly for not having been to see her the evening before. That flattered me, and I thought her a really charming girl.

"I must take care," said I, "not to see you every day, for your eyes have a sway over me that I shall not be able to resist much longer."

"I shall believe as much of that as I choose, but, by-the-by, have you thought of any way of convincing me?"

"What do you want to be convinced about?"

"If it be true that there is in your cabala an intelligence distinct from your own you ought to be able to find some way of proving it to me."

"That is a happy thought; I will think it over."

At that moment her father came in from the Exchange, and we sat dawn to dinner.

We were at dessert when a police official brought me five hundred florins, for which I gave him a receipt.

When he had gone I told my entertainers what had happened the evening before and in the morning, and the fair Esther reproached me for preferring such bad company to her. "By way of punishment," said she, "I hope you will come with me to the theatre this evening, though they are going to give a Dutch play, of which you will not understand a word."

"I shall be near you, and that is enough for me:"

In fact, I did not comprehend a word of the actors' gibberish, and was terribly bored, as Esther preserved a solemn and serious silence the whole time.

As we were coming from the theatre she told me all about the piece with charming grace and wonderful memory; she seemed to wish to give me some pleasure in return for the tedium to which she had condemned me. When we got home we had supper, and that evening, Heaven be thanked! I heard nothing more about the cabala. Before we parted, Esther and her father made me promise to dine with them every day, and to let them know if anything prevented my coming.

Next morning, about eight o'clock, while I was still dressing, I suddenly saw Piccolomini standing before me, and as he had not sent in his name I began to feel suspicious. I rang the bell for my faithful Spaniard, who came in directly.

"I want to speak to you privately," said he, "tell that fellow to go out."

"He can stay," I answered, "he does not know a word of Italian." Le Duc, of course, knew Italian perfectly well.

"Yesterday, about noon," he began, "two men came into my room. They were accompanied by the innkeeper, who served as interpreter. One of the men asked me if I felt inclined to cash there and then a forged bill of exchange, which I had given the night before, and which he held in his hands. As I gave no reply, he told me that there was no time for consideration or argument; I must say yes or no there and then, for such were their instructions from the chief of police. I had no choice in the matter, so I paid the five hundred florins, but I did not get back the bill, and the man told me I could not have it unless I told the police the name of the person from whom I got it, as, in the interests of commerce, the forger must be prosecuted. My reply was that I could not possibly tell them what they wanted, as I had got it of a stranger who had come into my room while I was holding a small bank of faro, to pass the time.

"I told him that after this person (who I had thought introduced by someone in the company) had gone, I found to my surprise that nobody knew him; and I added that if I had been aware of this I would not only have refused the bill but would not have allowed him to play. Thereupon the second policeman said that I had better find out who this person was, or else I should be considered as the forger and prosecuted accordingly; after this threat they went out.

"In the afternoon my wife called on the chief of police and was politely received, but after hearing what she had to say he informed her that she must find out the forger, since M. Casanova's honour might be endangered by the banker taking proceedings against him, in which case he would have to prosecute me.

"You see in what a difficult position we are placed, and I think you ought to try to help us. You have got your money and you are not without friends.

Get their influence exerted in the matter, and we shall hear no more about it. Your interests as well as mine are concerned."

"Except as a witness of the fact," I answered, "I can have nothing to do with this affair. You agree that I received the bill from you, since you cashed it; that is enough for me. I should be glad to be of service to you, but I really don't see what I can do. The best advice I can give you is to make a sacrifice of the rascally sharper who gave you the forged bill, and if you can't do that I would counsel you to disappear, and the sooner the better, or else you may come to the galleys, or worse."

He got into a rage at this, and turning his back on me went out, saying I should be sorry for what I had said.

My Spaniard followed him down the stair and came back to tell me that the signor had gone off threatening vengeance, and that, in his opinion, I would do well to be on my guard.

"All right," said I, "say no more about it."

All the same I was really very grateful for his advice, and I gave the matter a good deal of thought.

I dressed myself and went to see Esther, whom I had to convince of the divinity of my oracle, a different task with one whose own wits had told her so much concerning my methods. This was the problem she gave me to solve,

"Your oracle must tell me something which I, and only I, know."

Feeling that it would be impossible to fulfil these conditions, I told her that the oracle might reveal some secret she might not care to have disclosed.

"That is impossible," she answered, "as the secret will be known only to myself."

"But, if the oracle replies I shall know the answer as well as you, and it may be something you would not like me to know."

"There is no such thing, and, even if there were, if the oracle is not your own brain you can always find out anything you want to know."

"But there is some limit to the powers of the oracle."

"You are making idle excuses; either prove that I am mistaken in my ideas or acknowledge that my oracle is as good as yours."

This was pushing me hard, and I was on the point of declaring myself conquered when a bright idea struck me.

In the midst of the dimple which added such a charm to her chin Esther had a little dark mole, garnished with three or four extremely fine hairs. These moles, which we call in Italian 'neo, nei', and which are usually an improvement to the prettiest face, when they occur on the face, the neck, the arms, or the hands, are duplicated on the corresponding parts of the body. I concluded, therefore, that Esther had a mole like that on her chin in a certain place which a virtuous girl does not shew; and innocent as she was I suspected that she herself did not know of this second mole's existence. "I shall astonish her," I said to myself, "and establish my superiority in a manner which will put the idea of having equal skill to mine out of her head for good." Then with the solemn and far-away look of a seer I made my pyramid and extracted these words from it,

"Fair and discreet Esther, no one knows that at the entrance of the temple of love you have a mole precisely like that which appears on your chin."

While I was working at my calculations, Esther was leaning over me and following every movement. As she really knew as much about the cabala as I did she did not want it to be explained to her, but translated the numbers into letters as I wrote them down. As soon as I had extracted all the combinations of numbers from the pyramid she said, quietly, that as I did not want to know the answer, she would be much obliged if I would let her translate the cypher.

"With pleasure," I replied. "And I shall do so all the more willingly as I shall thereby save your delicacy from sharing with me a secret which may or may not be agreeable. I promise you not to try to find it out. It is enough for me to see you convinced."

"I shall be convinced when I have verified the truth of the reply."

"Are you persuaded, dearest Esther, that I have had nothing to do with framing this answer?"

"I shall be quite sure of it if it has spoken the truth, and if so the oracle will have conquered, for the matter is so secret a one that even I do not know of it. You need not know yourself, as it is only a trifle which would not interest you; but it will be enough to convince me that the answers of your oracle are dictated by an intelligence which has nothing in common with yours."

There was so much candour and frankness in what she said that a feeling of shame replaced the desire of deceiving her, and I shed some tears, which Esther could only interpret favourably to me. Nevertheless, they were tears of remorse, and now, as I write after such a lapse of years, I still regret having deceived one so worthy of my esteem and love. Even then I reproached myself, but a pitiable feeling of shame would not let me tell the truth; but I hated myself for thus leading astray one whose esteem I desired to gain.

In the mean time I was not absolutely sure that I had hit the mark, for in nature, like everything else, every law has its exceptions, and I might possibly have dug a pitfall for myself. On the other hand, if I were right, Esther would no doubt be convinced for the moment, but her belief would speedily disappear if she chanced to discover that the correspondence of moles on the human body was a necessary law of nature. In that case I could only anticipate her scorn. But however I might tremble I had carried the deception too far, and could not draw back.

I left Esther to call on Rigerboos, whom I thanked for his offices on my behalf with the chief of the police. He told me that I had nothing to fear from Piccolomini in Holland, but all the same he advised me not to go about without pistols. "I am on the eve of embarking for Batavia," said he, "in a vessel which I have laden with the ruins of my fortune. In the state my affairs are in I thought this the best plan. I have not insured the cargo, so as not diminish my profits, which will be considerable if I succeed. If the ship is taken or wrecked I shall take care not to survive its loss; and after all I shall not lose much."

Poor Riberboos said all this as if he were jesting, but despair had no doubt a good deal to do with his resolve, since it is only in great misery that we despise both life and fortune. The charming Therese Trenti, whom Rigerboos always spoke of as Our Lady, had contributed to his ruin in no small degree. She was then in London, where, by her own account, she was doing well. She had exchanged the name of Trenti for that of Cornelis, or Cornely, which, as I found out afterwards, was Rigerboo's real name. We spent an hour in writing to this curious woman, as we desired to take advantage of the circumstance that a man whom Rigerboos desired to commend to her was shortly going to England. When we had finished we went sleighing on the Amstel, which had been frozen over for several days. This diversion, of which the Dutch are very fond, is, to my thinking, the dullest imaginable, for an objectless journey is no pleasure to me. After we were well frozen we went to eat oysters, with Sillery, to warm ourselves again, and after that we went from one casino to another, not intending to commit any debauchery, but for want of something better to do; but it seemed decreed that whenever I preferred any amusement of this kind to the charms of Esther's society I should come to grief.

I do not know how it happened, but as we were going into one of these casinos Rigerboos called me loudly by my name, and at that instant a woman, such as one usually finds in these places, came forward and began to gaze at me. Although the room was ill enough lighted I saw it was the wretched Lucie, whom I had met a year before without her recognizing me. I turned away, pretending not to know her, for the sight of her was disagreeable to me, but in a sad voice she called me by my name, congratulating me on my prosperity and bewailing her own wretchedness. I saw that I could neither avoid her nor repulse her without inhumanity, so I called to Rigerboos to come upstairs and the girl would divert us by recounting the history of her life.

Strictly speaking, Lucie had not become ugly; one could still see that she had been a beautiful woman; but for all that her appearance inspired me with terror and disgust. Since the days when I had known her at Pasean, nineteen years of misery, profligacy, and shame had made her the most debased, the vilest creature that can be imagined. She told us her story at great length; the pith of it might be expressed in six lines.

The footman who had seduced her had taken her to Trieste to lie in, and the scoundrel lived on the sale of her charms for five or six months, and then a sea captain, who had taken a fancy to her, took her to Zante with the footman, who passed for her husband.

At Zante the footman turned soldier, and deserted the army four years after. She was left alone and continued living on the wages of prostitution for six years; but the goods she had to offer lowering in value, and her customers being of the inferior kind, she set out for England with a young Greek girl, whom an English officer of marines treated as his wife, and whom he abandoned in the streets of London when he got tired of her. After living for two or three years in the vilest haunts in London, Lucie came to Holland, where, not being able to sell her own person any longer, she became a procuress — a natural ending to her career. Lucie was only thirty-three, but she was the wreck of a woman, and women are always as old as they look.

While she told her history she emptied two bottles of Burgundy I had ordered, and which neither I nor my friend touched. Finally, she told us she was now supported by two pretty girls whom she kept, and who had to give her the half of what they got.

Rigerboos asked her, jokingly, if the girls were at the casino.

“No,” said she, “they are not here, and shall never come here, for they are ladies of high birth, and their uncle, who looks after their interests, is a Venetian gentleman.”

At this I could not keep back my laughter, but Lucie, without losing countenance, told me that she could only repeat the account they had given of themselves, that if we wanted to be convinced we had only to go and see them at a house she rented fifty paces off, and that we need not be afraid of being disturbed if we went, as their uncle lived in a different part of the town.

“Oh, indeed!” said I, “he does not live with his highborn nieces, then?”

“No, he only comes to dinner to hear how business has been going, and to take all the money from them.”

“Come along,” said Rigerboos, “we will go and see them.”

As I was desirous of seeing and addressing the noble Venetian ladies of so honourable a profession, I told Lucie to take us to the house. I knew very well that the girls were impostors, and their gentleman-uncle a blackguard; but the die was cast.

We found them to be young and pretty. Lucie introduced me as a Venetian, and they were beside themselves with joy to have someone to whom they could talk. I found out directly that they came from Padua, not Venice, as they spoke the Paduan dialect, which I knew very well. I told them so, and they confessed it was the truth. I asked the name of their uncle, but they said they could not tell me.

“We can get on without knowing,” said Rigerboos, catching hold of the one he liked best. Lucie brought in some ham, oysters, a pie, and a good many bottles of wine, and then left us.

I was not in the humour for wantonness, but Rigerboos was disposed to be merry; his sweetheart was at first inclined to be prudish on his taking liberties with her, but as I began to follow his example the ladies relaxed their severity; we went first to one and then the other, and before long they were both in the state of Eve before she used the fig-leaf.

After passing an hour in these lascivious combats we gave each of the girls four ducats, paid for the provisions we had consumed, and sent six Louis to Lucie. We then left them, I going to bed cross with myself for having engaged in such brutal pleasures.

Next morning I awoke late and in a bad humour, partly from the debauch of the night before (for profligacy depresses as well as degrades the mind) and partly from the thought that I had neglected Esther, who had unquestionably been grieved by my absence. I felt that I must hasten to reassure her, feeling certain that I should find some excuses to make, and that they would be well received. I rang for Le Duc, put on my dressing-gown, and sent him for my coffee. He had scarcely left the room when the door opened and I saw Perine and the fellow named Wiedan, whom I had seen at Piccolomini’s, and who styled himself a friend of St. Germain. I was sitting on my bed, putting on my stockings. My apartments consisted of three fine rooms, but they were at the back of the house, and all the noise I could have made would not have been heard. The bell was on the other side of the room; Le Duc would be gone fully ten minutes, and I was in imminent danger of being assassinated without the possibility of self-defence.

The above thoughts flashed through my head with lightning speed, and all that I could do was to keep calm and say,

“Well, gentlemen, what can I do for you?” Wiedan took upon himself to answer me.

“Count Piccolomini has found himself forced to declare that he received the forged bill from us, in order that he may escape from the difficult position in which your denunciation placed him. He has warned us that he is going to do so, and we must escape forthwith if we want to avoid prosecution. We have not a penny; we are desperate men."

"Well, gentlemen, what have I to do with that?"

"Give us four hundred florins immediately; we do not want more, but we must have that much, and now. If you refuse we will take to flight with everything of yours that we can lay our hands on; and our arguments are these."

With this, each man drew a pistol from his pocket and aimed it at my head.

"You need not have recourse to violence," said I, "it can only be fatal to you. Stay, here are a hundred ducats more than you asked. Begone, and I wish you a pleasant journey, but I would not be here when my servant comes back if I were you."

Wiedan took the roll of money with a trembling hand and put it in his pocket without examining it; but Perine came up, and praising my noble generosity, would have put his arms around my neck and kissed me. I repulsed him, but without rudeness, and they went their ways, leaving me very glad to have rid myself of them at so cheap a rate.

As soon as I was out of this snare I rang my bell, not to have them followed but that I might get dressed as quickly as possible. I did not say a word to Le Duc about what had happened, I was silent even to my landlord; and, after I had sent my Spaniard to M. d'O to excuse my dining there that day, I went to the chief of police, but had to wait two hours before I could see him. As soon as the worthy man had heard my account of my misfortune he said he would do his best to catch the two rascals, but he did not conceal from me his fears that it was already too late.

I took the opportunity of telling him of Piccolomini's visit to me, his claims and threats. He thanked me for doing so, and promised to see to it; but he advised me for the future to be on my guard and ready to defend myself in case I was attacked before he could place my enemies in a place where they could do me no harm.

I hastened home again, as I felt ill. An acid taste in my mouth skewed me how all these shocks had upset me; but I knew what to do. I took a strong glass of lemonade, which made me bring up a good deal of bile, and I then felt much better.

Towards evening I went to see Esther, and found her looking serious and rather vexed; but as soon as she saw how pale I was her face lighted up, and she asked me, in a voice of tenderest interest, if I had been ill. I told her I had been out of sorts, that I had taken some medicine, and that I now felt better.

“You will see my appetite at supper,” added I, to calm her fears, “I have had nothing to eat since dinner yesterday.”

This was really the truth, as I had only eaten a few oysters with the Paduan girls.

She could scarcely contain her joy at my recovery, and bade me kiss her, with which request I complied gladly, all unworthy though I felt of so great a favour.

“I am going to tell you an important piece of news,” said she, “and that is that I am sure that you do not invent the answers to your oracle, or at least that you only do so when you choose. The reply you procured me was wonderful-nay, divine, for it told me of a secret unknown to all, even to myself. You may imagine my surprise when I convinced myself, with no little trouble of the truth of the answer.

“You possess a treasure, your oracle is infallible; but surely it can never lie, and my oracle tells me that you love me. It makes me glad to know that, for you are the man of my heart. But I want you to give me an exemplary proof of your love, and if you do love me you will not hesitate to do so. Stay, read the reply you got me; I am sure you do not know what it says; then I will tell you how you can make me quite happy.”

I pretended to read, and kissed the words which declared I loved her. “I am delighted,” said I, “that the oracle has convinced you so easily, but I must be excused if I say that I believe you knew as much long ago.” She replied, blushing, that if it were possible to shew me the object in question I should not wonder at her ignorance. Then, coming to the proof of my love, she told me that she wanted me to communicate the secret to her. “You love me,” said she, “and you ought to make no difficulty in assuring the bliss of a girl who will be your wife, and in your power. My father will agree to our marriage, and when I become your wife I will do whatever you please. We will even go and live in another country if that would add to your happiness. But you must teach me how to obtain the answer to any question without inventing it myself."

I took Esther's hands in mine; she inspired me with the tenderest feelings, and I kissed her hands with respectful fervour, saying, "You know, Esther, dear, that my word is passed at Paris. Certainly, Manon is not to be compared to you; but for all that I gave my promise to her poor mother, and I must keep it."

A sigh escaped from Esther, and her head fell upon her breast: but what could I do? I could not teach her any other way of consulting the oracle than the method she understood as well as I: my superiority over her only consisting in my greater craft and more extensive experience.

Early one morning, two or three days later, a man was announced as wanting to see me. He called himself an officer, but his name was perfectly unknown to me. I sent down to say that I could not see him, and as soon as my Spaniard went out I locked my door. What had happened already had made me suspicious, and I did not care to see any more gentlemen alone. The two scoundrels who had robbed me had eluded all the snares of the police, and Piccolomini was not to be found; but I knew a good many of the gang were still in Amsterdam, and I thought it well to be on my guard.

Some time after, Le Duc came in with a letter written in bad Italian, saying that it had been given him by an officer who was waiting for an answer. I opened it, and recognized the name I had heard a short while ago. The writer said we knew each other, but that he could only give his true name with his own lips, and that he had important information to give me.

I told Le Duc to shew him in, and to stay by the door. I saw enter a well-made man of about forty, dressed in the uniform of an officer of I do not know what army, and bearing on his countenance all the marks of an escaped gallows'-bird.

"What can I do for you, sir?" said I, as soon as he entered.

"Sir, we knew each other at Cerigo, sixteen or seventeen years ago, and I am delighted to have an opportunity of renewing the acquaintance."

I knew that I had spent but a few minutes at Cerigo, on my way to Constantinople, and concluded that my visitor must be one of the unfortunate wretches to whom I gave alms.

“Are you the man,” I said, “who told me that you were the son of a Count Peccini, of Padua, although there is no such count in Padua at all?”

“I congratulate you on your excellent memory,” said he, coolly, “I am that very individual.”

“Well, what do you want with me now?”

“I can’t divulge my business in the presence of your servant.”

“My servant does not understand Italian, so you can speak out; however, if you like, I will send him away.”

I ordered Le Duc to stay in the ante-chamber, and when he had left the room my Paduan count told me that I had been with his nieces, and had treated them as if they were courtezans, and that he was come to demand satisfaction.

I was tired of being cheated, and I took hold of my pistols and pointed them at him, bidding him be gone instantly. Le Duc came in and the third robber took himself off, muttering that “a time would come.”

I was placed in a disagreeable position; if I wanted to prosecute, I should have to tell the whole story to the police. I thought of my honour and determined to be silent, and the only person to whom I mentioned the matter was Rigerboos, who not being in the same position as myself took his measures, the result of which was that Lucie had to send her high-born dames about their business. But the wretched woman came to me to say that this misfortune had plunged her into the deepest distress, so I made her a present of a few ducats, and she went away somewhat consoled. I begged her not to call on me again.

Everything I did when I was away from Esther seemed to turn out ill, and I felt that if I wanted to be happy I should do well to keep near her; but my destiny, or rather my inconstancy, drew me away.

Three days afterwards, the villainous Major Sabi called on me to warn me to be on my guard, as, according to his account, a Venetian officer I had insulted and refused to give satisfaction to had vowed vengeance against me.

“Then,” said I, “I shall have him arrested as an escaped galley slave, in which character I have given him alms, and for wearing without the right to do so the uniform of an officer, thereby disgracing the whole army. And pray what outrage can I have committed against girls who live in a brothel, and whom I have paid according to their deserts?”

“If what you say is true you are quite right, but this poor devil is in a desperate situation; he wants to leave the country, and does not possess a single florin. I advise you to give him an alms once more, and you will have done with him. Two score florins will not make you any the poorer, and will rid you of a villainous enemy.”

“A most villainous one, I think.” At last I agreed to give him the forty florins, and I handed them to him in a coffee-house where the major told me I should find him. The reader will see how I met this blackguard four months later.

Now, when all these troubles have been long over and I can think over them calmly, reflecting on the annoyances I experienced at Amsterdam, where I might have been so happy, I am forced to admit that we ourselves are the authors of almost all our woes and griefs, of which we so unreasonably complain. If I could live my life over again, should I be wiser? Perhaps; but then I should not be myself.

M. d’O —— asked me to sup with him at the Burgomasters’ Lodge, and this was a great distinction, for, contrary to the rules of Freemasonry, no one but the twenty-four members who compose the lodge is admitted, and these twenty-four masons were the richest men on the Exchange.

“I have told them that you are coming,” said M. d’O —— , “and to welcome you more honourably the lodge will be opened in French.” In short, these gentlemen gave me the most distinguished reception, and I had the fortune to make myself so agreeable to them that I was unanimously chosen an honorary member during the time I should stay at Amsterdam. As we were going away, M. d’O —— told me that I had supped with a company which represented a capital of three hundred millions.

Next day the worthy Dutchman begged me to oblige him by answering a question to which his daughter's oracle had replied in a very obscure manner. Esther encouraged me, and I asked what the question was. It ran as follows:

"I wish to know whether the individual who desires me and my company to transact a matter of the greatest importance is really a friend of the King of France?"

It was not difficult for me to divine that the Comte de St. Germain was meant. M. d'O was not aware that I knew him, and I had not forgotten what M. d'Afri had told me.

"Here's a fine opportunity," thought I, "for covering my oracle with glory, and giving my fair Esther something to think about."

I set to work, and after erecting my pyramid and placing above the four keys the letters O, S, A, D, the better to impose on Esther, I extracted the reply, beginning with the fourth key, D. The oracle ran as follows:

"The friend disavows. The order is signed. They grant. They refuse. All vanishes. Delay."

I pretended to think the reply a very obscure one, but Esther gave a cry of astonishment and declared that it gave a lot of information in an extraordinary style. M. d'O ——, in an ecstasy of delight, exclaimed,

"The reply is clear enough for me. The oracle is divine; the word 'delay' is addressed to me. You and my daughter are clever enough in making the oracle speak, but I am more skilled than you in the interpretation thereof. I shall prevent the thing going any further. The project is no less a one than to lend a hundred millions, taking in pledge the diamonds of the French crown. The king wishes the loan to be concluded without the interference of his ministers and without their even knowing anything about it. I entreat you not to mention the matter to anyone."

He then went out.

"Now," said Esther, when we were by ourselves, "I am quite sure that that reply came from another intelligence than yours. In the name of all you hold sacred, tell me the meaning of those four letters, and why you usually omit them."

"I omit them, dearest Esther, because experience has taught me that in ordinary cases they are unnecessary; but while I was making the pyramid the command came to me to set them down, and I thought it well to obey."

"What do they mean?"

"They are the initial letters of the holy names of the cardinal intelligences of the four quarters of the world."

"I may not tell you, but whoever deals with the oracle should know them."

"Ah! do not deceive me; I trust in you, and it would be worse than murder to abuse so simple a faith as mine."

"I am not deceiving you, dearest Esther."

"But if you were to teach me the cabala, you would impart to me these holy names?"

"Certainly, but I cannot reveal them except to my successor. If I violate this command I should lose my knowledge; and this condition is well calculated to insure secrecy, is it not?"

"It is, indeed. Unhappy that I am, your successor will be, of course, Manon."

"No, Manon is not fitted intellectually for such knowledge as this."

"But you should fix on someone, for you are mortal after all. If you like, my father would give you the half of his immense fortune without your marrying me."

"Esther! what is it that you have said? Do you think that to possess you would be a disagreeable condition in my eyes?"

After a happy day — I think I may call it the happiest of my life — I left the too charming Esther, and went home towards the evening.

Three or four days after, M. d'O —— came into Esther's room, where he found us both calculating pyramids. I was teaching her to double, to triple, and to quadruple the cabalistic combinations. M. d'O —— strode into the room in a great hurry, striking his breast in a sort of ecstasy. We were surprised and almost frightened to see him so strangely excited, and rose to meet him, but he running up to us almost forced us to embrace him, which we did willingly.

“But what is the matter, papa dear?” said Esther, “you surprise me more than I can say.”

“Sit down beside me, my dear children, and listen to your father and your best friend. I have just received a letter from one of the secretaries of their high mightinesses informing me that the French ambassador has demanded, in the name of the king his master, that the Comte St. Germain should be delivered over, and that the Dutch authorities have answered that His Most Christian Majesty’s requests shall be carried out as soon as the person of the count can be secured. In consequence of this the police, knowing that the Comte St. Germain was staying at the Etoile d’Orient, sent to arrest him at midnight, but the bird had flown. The landlord declared that the count had posted off at nightfall, taking the way to Nimeguen. He has been followed, but there are small hopes of catching him up.

“It is not known how he can have discovered that a warrant existed against him, or how he continued to evade arrest.”

“It is not known;” went an M. d’O —— , laughing, “but everyone guesses that M. Calcoen, the same that wrote to me, let this friend of the French king’s know that he would be wanted at midnight, and that if he did not get the key of the fields he would be arrested. He is not so foolish as to despise a piece of advice like that. The Dutch Government has expressed its sorrow to M. d’Afri that his excellence did not demand the arrest of St. Germain sooner, and the ambassador will not be astonished at this reply, as it is like many others given on similar occasions.

“The wisdom of the oracle has been verified, and I congratulate myself on having seized its meaning, for we were on the point of giving him a hundred thousand florins on account, which he said he must have immediately. He gave us in pledge the finest of the crown diamonds, and this we still retain. But we will return it to him an demand, unless it is claimed by the ambassador. I have never seen a finer stone.

“And now, my children, you see what I owe to the oracle. On the Exchange the whole company can do nothing but express their gratitude to me. I am regarded as the most prudent and most farseeing man in Holland. To you, my dear children, I owe this honour, but I wear my peacock's feathers without scruple.

"My dear Casanova, you will dine with us, I hope. After dinner I shall beg you to enquire of your inscrutable intelligence whether we ought to declare ourselves in possession of the splendid diamond, or to observe secrecy till it is reclaimed."

After this discourse papa embraced us once more and left us.

"Sweetheart," said Esther, throwing her arms round my neck, "you have an opportunity for giving me a strong proof of your friendship. It will cost you nothing, but it will cover me with honour and happiness."

"Command me, and it shall be done. You cannot think that I would refuse you a favour which is to cost me nothing, when I should deem myself happy to shed my blood for your sake."

"My father wishes you to tell him after dinner whether it will be better to declare that they have the diamond or to keep silence till it is claimed. When he asks you a second time, tell him to seek the answer of me, and offer to consult the oracle also, in case my answer may be too obscure. Then perform the operation, and I will make my father love me all the better, when he sees that my knowledge is equal to yours."

"Dearest one, would I not do for thee a task a thousand times more difficult than this to prove my love and my devotion? Let us set to work. Do you write the question, set up the pyramids, and inscribe with your own hand the all-powerful initials. Good. Now begin to extract the answer by means of the divine key. Never was a cleverer pupil!"

When all this had been done, I suggested the additions and subtractions I wanted made, and she was quite astonished to read the following reply: "Silence necessary. Without silence, general derision. Diamond valueless; mere paste."

I thought she would have gone wild with delight. She laughed and laughed again.

"What an amazing reply!" said she. "The diamond is false, and it is I who am about to reveal their folly to them. I shall inform my father of this important secret. It is too much, it overwhelms me; I can scarcely contain myself for joy! How much I owe you, you wonderful and delightful man! They will verify the truth of the oracle immediately, and when it is found that the famous diamond is but glittering paste the company will adore my father, for it will feel that but for him it would have been covered with shame, by avowing itself the dupe of a sharper. Will you leave the pyramid with me?"

"Certainly; but it will not teach you anything you do not know." The father came in again and we had dinner, and after the dessert, when the worthy d 'O —— learnt from his daughter's oracle that the stone was false, the scene became a truly comical one. He burst into exclamations of astonishment, declared the thing impossible, incredible, and at last begged me to ask the same question, as he was quite sure that his daughter was mistaken, or rather that the oracle was deluding her.

I set to work, and was not long in obtaining my answer. When he saw that it was to the same effect as Esther's, though differently expressed, he had no longer any doubts as to his daughter's skill, and hastened to go and test the pretended diamond, and to advise his associates to say nothing about the matter after they had received proofs of the worthlessness of the stone. This advice was, as it happened, useless; for though the persons concerned said nothing, everybody knew about it, and people said, with their usual malice, that the dupes had been duped most thoroughly, and that St. Germain had pocketed the hundred thousand florins; but this was not the case.

Esther was very proud of her success, but instead of being satisfied with what she had done, she desired more fervently every day to possess the science in its entirety, as she supposed I possessed it.

It soon became known that St. Germain had gone by Emden and had embarked for England, where he had arrived in safety. In due time we shall hear some further details concerning this celebrated impostor; and in the meanwhile I must relate a catastrophe of another kind, which was near to have made me die the death of a fool.

It was Christmas Day. I had got up early in the morning in better spirits than usual. The old women tell you that always presages misfortune, but I was as far then as I am now from making my happiness into an omen of grief. But this time chance made the foolish belief of good effect. I received a letter and a large packet from Paris; they came from Manon. I opened the letter and I thought I should have died of grief when I read, —

“Be wise, and receive the news I give you calmly. The packet contains your portrait and all the letters you have written to me. Return me my portrait, and if you have kept my letters be kind enough to burn them. I rely on your honour. Think of me no more. Duty bids me do all I can to forget you, for at this hour to-morrow I shall become the wife of M. Blondel of the Royal Academy, architect to the king. Please do not seem as if you knew me if we chance to meet on your return to Paris.”

This letter struck me dumb with astonishment, and for more than two hours after I read it I was, as it were, bereft of my senses. I sent word to M. d’O —— that, not feeling well, I was going to keep my room all day. When I felt a little better I opened the packet. The first thing to fall out was my portrait. I looked at it, and such was the perturbation of my mind, that, though the miniature really represented me as of a cheerful and animated expression, I thought I beheld a dreadful and a threatening visage. I went to my desk and wrote and tore up a score of letters in which I overwhelmed the faithless one with threats and reproaches.

I could bear no more; the forces of nature were exhausted, and I was obliged to lie down and take a little broth, and court that sleep which refused to come. A thousand designs came to my disordered imagination. I rejected them one by one, only to devise new ones. I would slay this Blondel, who had carried off a woman who was mine and mine only; who was all but my wife. Her treachery should be punished by her losing the object for whom she had deserted me. I accused her father, I cursed her brother for having left me in ignorance of the insult which had so traitorously been put upon me.

I spent the day and night in these delirious thoughts, and in the morning, feeling worse than ever, I sent to M. d’O —— to say that I could not possibly leave my room. Then I began to read and re-read the letters I had written to Manon, calling upon her name in a sort of frenzy; and again set myself to write to her without finishing a single letter. The emptiness of my stomach and the shock I had undergone began to stupefy me, and for a few moments I forgot my anguish only to re-awaken to acuter pains soon after.

About three o'clock, the worthy M. d'O —— came to invite me to go with him to the Hague, where the chief masons of Holland met on the day following to keep the Feast of St. John, but when he saw my condition he did not press me to come.

"What is the matter with you, my dear Casanova?" said he.

"I have had a great grief, but let us say no more about it."

He begged me to come and see Esther, and left me looking almost as downcast as I was. However, the next morning Esther anticipated my visit, for at nine o'clock she and her governess came into the room. The sight of her did me good. She was astonished to see me so undone and cast down, and asked me what was the grief of which I had spoken to her father, and which had proved too strong for my philosophy.

"Sit down beside me, Esther dear, and allow me to make a mystery of what has affected me so grievously. Time, the mighty healer, and still more your company, will effect a cure which I should in vain seek by appealing to my reason. Whilst we talk of other things I shall not feel the misfortune which gnaws at my heart."

"Well, get up, dress yourself, and come and spend the day with me, and I will do my best to make you forget your sorrow."

"I feel very weak; for the last three days I have only taken a little broth and chocolate."

At these words her face fell, and she began to weep.

After a moment's silence she went to my desk, took a pen, and wrote a few lines, which she brought to me. They were, —

"Dear, if a large sum of money, beyond what my father owes you, can remove or even soothe your grief I can be your doctor, and you ought to know that your accepting my treatment would make me happy."

I took her hands and kissed them affectionately, saying, —

"No, dear Esther, generous Esther, it is not money I want, for if I did I would ask you and your father as a friend: what I want, and what no one can give me, is a resolute mind, and determination to act for the best."

"Ask advice of your oracle."

I could not help laughing.

"Why do you laugh?" said she, "if I am not mistaken, the oracle must know a remedy for your woes."

"I laughed, dearest, because I felt inclined to tell you to consult the oracle this time. As for me I will have nothing to do with it, lest the cure be worse than the disease."

"But you need not follow your advice unless you like it."

"No, one is free to act as one thinks fit; but not to follow the advice of the oracle would be a contempt of the intelligence which directs it."

Esther could say no more, and stood silent for several minutes, and then said that if I like she would stay with me for the rest of the day. The joy which illumined my countenance was manifest, and I said that if she would stay to dinner I would get up, and no doubt her presence would give me an appetite. "Ah!" said she, "I will make you the dish you are so fond of." She ordered the sedan-chairs to be sent back, and went to my landlady to order an appetising repast, and to procure the chafing-dish and the spirits of wine she required for her own cooking.

Esther was an angel, a treasure, who consented to become mine if I would communicate to her a science which did not exist. I felt that I was looking forward to spending a happy day; this shewed me that I could forget Manon, and I was delighted with the idea. I got out of bed, and when Esther came back and found me on my feet she gave a skip of pleasure. "Now," said she, "you must oblige me by dressing, and doing your hair as if you were going to a ball."

"That," I answered, "is a funny idea, but as it pleases you it pleases me."

I rang for Le Duc, and told him I wanted to have my hair done, and to be dressed as if I were going to a ball. "Choose the dress that suits me best."

"No," said Esther, "I will choose it myself."

Le Duc opened my trunk, and leaving her to rummage in it he came to shave me, and to do my hair. Esther, delighted with her task, called in the assistance of her governess. She put on my bed a lace shirt, and the suit she found most to her taste. Then coming close, as if to see whether Le Duc was dressing my hair properly, she said, "A little broth would do you good; send for a dish, it will give you an appetite for dinner."

I thought her advice dictated by the tenderest care, and I determined to benefit by it. So great was the influence of this charming girl over me, that, little by little, instead of loving Manon, I hated her. That gave me courage, and completed my cure. At the present time I can see that Manon was very wise in accepting Blondel's offer, and that my love for self and not my love for her was wounded.

I was in my servant's hands, my face turned away towards the fire, so that I could not see Esther, but only divert myself with the idea that she was inspecting my belongings, when all at once she presented herself with a melancholy air, holding Mamon's fatal letter in her hand.

"Am I to blame," said she, timidly, "for having discovered the cause of your sorrow?"

I felt rather taken aback, but looking kindly at her, I said,

"No, no, my dear Esther; pity your friend, and say no more about it."

"Then I may read all the letters?"

"Yes, dearest, if it will amuse you."

All the letters of the faithless Manon Baletti to me, with mine to her, were together on my table. I pointed them out to Esther, who begun to read them quite eagerly.

When I was dressed, as if for some Court holiday, Le Duc went out and left us by ourselves, for the worthy governess, who was working at her lace by the window, looked at her lace, and nothing else. Esther said that nothing had ever amused her so much as those letters.

"Those cursed epistles, which please you so well, will be the death of me."

"Death? Oh, no! I will cure you, I hope."

"I hope so, too; but after dinner you must help me to burn them all from first to last."

"Burn them! No; make me a present of them. I promise to keep them carefully all my days."

"They are yours, Esther. I will send them to you to-morrow."

These letters were more than two hundred in number, and the shortest were four pages in length. She was enchanted to find herself the possessor of the letters, and she said she would make them into a parcel and take them away herself.

"Shall you send back the portrait to your faithless mistress?" said she.

"I don't know what to do with it."

"Send it back to her; she is not worthy of your honouring her by keeping it. I am sure that your oracle would give you the same advice. Where is the portrait? Will you shew it me?"

I had the portrait in the interior of a gold snuff-box, but I had never shewn it to Esther for fear she should think Manon handsomer than herself, and conclude that I only shewd it her out of vanity; but as she now asked to see it I opened the box where it was and gave it her.

Any other woman besides Esther would have pronounced Manon downright ugly, or have endeavored at the least to find some fault with her, but Esther pronounced her to be very beautiful, and only said it was a great pity so fair a body contained so vile a soul.

The sight of Manon's portrait made Esther ask to see all the other portraits which Madame Manzoni had sent me from Venice. There were naked figures amongst them, but Esther was too pure a spirit to put on the hateful affectations of the prude, to whom everything natural is an abomination. O-Murphy pleased her very much, and her history, which I related, struck her as very curious. The portrait of the fair nun, M —— M —— , first in the habit of her order and afterwards naked, made her laugh, but I would not tell Esther her story, in spite of the lively desire she displayed to hear it.

At dinner-time a delicate repast was brought to us, and we spent two delightful hours in the pleasures of a conversation and the table. I seemed to have passed from death to life, and Esther was delighted to have been my physician. Before we rose from table I had declared my intention of sending Manon's portrait to her husband on the day following, but her good nature found a way of dissuading me from doing so without much difficulty.

Some time after, while we were talking in front of the fire, she took a piece of paper, set up the pyramids, and inscribed the four keys O, S, A, D. She asked if I should send the portrait to the husband, or whether it would not be more generous to return it to the faithless Manon. Whilst she was calculating she said over and over again, with a smile, "I have not made up the answer." I pretend to believe her, and we laughed like two augurs meeting each other alone. At last the reply came that I ought to return the portrait, but to the giver, since to send it to the husband would be an act unworthy of a man of honour.

I praised the wisdom of the oracle, and kissed the Pythoness a score of times, promising that the cabala should be obeyed implicitly, adding that she had no need of being taught the science since she knew it as well as the inventor.

I spoke the truth, but Esther laughed, and, fearing lest I should really think so, took pains to assure me of the contrary.

It is thus that love takes his pleasure, thus his growth increases, and thus that he so soon becomes a giant in strength.

"Shall I be impertinent," said Esther, "if I ask you where your portrait is? Manon says in her letter that she is sending it back; but I don't see it anywhere."

"In my first paroxysm of rage, I threw it down; I don't know in what direction. What was thus despised by her cannot be of much value to me."

"Let us look for it; I should like to see it."

We soon found it on my table, in the midst of a of books; Esther said it was a speaking likeness.

"I would give it you if such a present were worthy of you."

"Ah! you could not give me anything I would value more."

"Will you deign to accept it, Esther, though it has been possessed by another?"

"It will be all the dearer to me."

At last she had to leave me, after a day which might be called delightful if happiness consists of calm and mutual joys without the tumultuous raptures of passion. She went away at ten, after I had promised to spend the whole of the next day with her.

After an unbroken sleep of nine hours' duration I got up refreshed and feeling once more in perfect health, and I went to see Esther immediately. I found she was still abed and asleep, but her governess went and roused her in spite of my request that her repose should be respected.

She received me with a sweet smile as she sat up in bed, and shewd me my voluminous correspondence with Manon on her night-table, saying that she had been reading it till two o'clock in the morning.

Her appearance was ravishing. A pretty cambric night-cap, tied with a light-blue ribbon and ornamented with lace, set off the beauties of her face; and a light shawl of Indian muslin, which she had hastily thrown on, veiled rather than concealed her snowy breast, which would have shamed the works of Praxiteles. She allowed me to take a hundred kisses on her rosy lips — ardent kisses which the sight of such charms made yet more ardent; but her hands forbade my approach to those two spheres I so longed to touch.

I sat down by her and told her that her charms of body and mind would make a man forget all the Manons that ever were.

"Is your Marion fair to see all over?" said she.

"I really can't say, for, not being her husband, I never had an opportunity of investigating the matter."

"Your discretion is worthy of all praise," she said, with a smile, "such conduct becomes a man of delicate feeling."

"I was told by her nurse that she was perfect in all respects, and that no mote or blemish relieved the pure whiteness of her skin."

"You must have a different notion of me?"

"Yes, Esther, as the oracle revealed to me the great secret you desired to know. Nevertheless, I should find you perfect in all your parts."

Hereupon I was guilty of a stupidity which turned to my confusion. I said,

"If I became your husband, I could easily refrain from touching you there."

"I suppose you think," said she, blushing, and evidently a little vexed, "that if you touched it your desires might be lessened?"

This question probed me to the core and covered me with shame. I burst into tears, and begged her pardon in so truly repentant a voice that sympathy made her mingle her tears with mine. The incident only increased our intimacy, for, as I kissed her tears away, the same desires consumed us, and if the voice of prudence had not intervened, doubtless all would have been over. As it was, we had but a foretaste and an earnest of that bliss which it was in our power to procure. Three hours seemed to us as many minutes. She begged me to go into her sitting-room while she dressed, and we then went down and dined with the wretched secretary, who adored her, whom she did not love, and who must have borne small love to me, seeing how high I stood in her graces.

We passed the rest of the day together in that confidential talk which is usual when the foundations of the most intimate friendship have been laid between two persons of opposite sex, who believe themselves created for each other. Our flames burnt as brightly, but with more restraint, in the dining-room as in the bedroom. In the very air of the bedroom of a woman one loves there is something so balmy and voluptuous that the lover, asked to choose between this garden of delights and Paradise, would not for one moment hesitate in his choice.

We parted with hearts full of happiness, saying to each other, "Till to-morrow."

I was truly in love with Esther, for my sentiment for her was composed of sweeter, calmer, and more lively feelings than mere sensual love, which is ever stormy and violent. I felt sure I could persuade her to marry me without my first teaching her what could not be taught. I was sorry I had not let her think herself as clever as myself in the cabala, and I feared it would be impossible to undeceive her without exciting her to anger, which would cast out love. Nevertheless, Esther was the only woman who would make me forget Manon, whom I began to think unworthy of all I had proposed doing for her.

M. d'O —— came back and I went to dine with him. He was pleased to hear that his daughter had effected a complete cure by spending a day with me. When we were alone he told me that he had heard at the Hague that the

Comte St. Germain had the art of making diamonds which only differed from the real ones in weight, and which, according to him, would make his fortune. M. d'O —— would have been amused if I had told him all I knew about this charlatan.

Next day I took Esther to the concert, and while we were there she told me that on the day following she would not leave her room, so that we could talk about getting married without fear of interruption. This was the last day of the year 1759.

CHAPTER XI

I Undeceive Esther — I set out for Germany — Adventure Near Cologne — The Burgomaster's Wife; My Conquest of Her — Ball at Bonn — Welcome From the Elector of Cologne — Breakfast at Bruhl — First Intimacy — I sup Without Being Asked at General Kettler's I am Happy — I Leave Cologne — The Toscani — The Jewel — My Arrival at Stuttgart

The appointment which Esther had made with me would probably have serious results; and I felt it due to my honour not to deceive her any longer, even were it to cost me my happiness; however, I had some hope that all would turn out well.

I found her in bed, and she told me that she intended to stop there throughout the day. I approved, for in bed I thought her ravishing.

“We will set to work,” said she; and her governess set a little table by her bed, and she gave me a piece of paper covered with questions tending to convince me that before I married her I should communicate to her my supposed science. All these questions were artfully conceived, all were so worded as to force the oracle to order me to satisfy her, or to definitely forbid my doing so. I saw the snare, and all my thoughts were how to avoid it, though I pretended to be merely considering the questions. I could not make the oracle speak to please Esther, and I could still less make it pronounce a positive prohibition, as I feared that she would resent such an answer bitterly and revenge herself on me. Nevertheless, I had to assume an indifferent air, and I got myself out of the difficulty by equivocal answers, till the good-humoured papa came to summon me to dinner.

He allowed his daughter to stay in bed on the condition that she was to do no more work, as he was afraid that by applying herself so intently she would increase her headache. She promised, much to my delight, that he should be obeyed, but on my return from dinner I found her asleep, and sitting at her bedside I let her sleep on.

When she awoke she said she would like to read a little; and as if by inspiration, I chanced to take up Coiardeau’s ‘Heroides’, and we inflamed each other by reading the letters of Heloise and Abelard. The ardours thus aroused passed into our talk and we began to discuss the secret which the oracle had revealed.

“But, Esther dear,” said I, “did not the oracle reveal a circumstance of which you knew perfectly well before?”

“No, sweetheart, the secret was perfectly unknown to me and would have continued unknown.”

“Then you have never been curious enough to inspect your own person?”

"However curious I may have been, nature placed that mole in such a position as to escape any but the most minute search."

"You have never felt it, then?"

"It is too small to be felt."

"I don't believe it."

She allowed my hand to wander indiscreetly, and my happy fingers felt all the precincts of the temple of love. This was enough to fire the chastest disposition. I could not find the object of my research, and, not wishing to stop short at so vain an enjoyment, I was allowed to convince myself with my eyes that it actually existed. There, however, her concessions stopped short, and I had to content myself by kissing again and again all those parts which modesty no longer denied to my gaze.

Satiated with bliss, though I had not attained to the utmost of enjoyment, which she wisely denied me, after two hours had been devoted to those pastimes which lead to nothing, I resolved to tell her the whole truth and to shew her how I had abused her trust in me, though I feared that her anger would be roused.

Esther, who had a large share of intelligence (indeed if she had had less I could not have deceived her so well), listened to me without interrupting me and without any signs of anger or astonishment. At last, when I had brought my long and sincere confession to an end, she said,

"I know your love for me is as great as mine for you; and if I am certain that what you have just said cannot possibly be true, I am forced to conclude that if you do not communicate to me all the secrets of your science it is because to do so is not in your power. Let us love one another till death, and say no more about this matter."

After a moment's silence, she went on, —

"If love has taken away from you the courage of sincerity I forgive you, but I am sorry for you. You have given me too positive proof of the reality of your science to be able to shake my belief. You could never have found out a thing of which I myself was ignorant, and of which no mortal man could know."

"And if I shew you, Esther dear, that I knew you had this mole, that I had good reasons for supposing you to be ignorant of it, will your belief be shaken then?"

"You knew it? How could you have seen it? It's incredible!"

"I will tell you all."

I then explained to her the theory of the correspondence of moles on the various parts of the human body, and to convince her I ended by saying that her governess who had a large mark on her right cheek ought to have one very like it on her left thigh. At this she burst into laughter, and said, "I will find out, but after all you have told me I can only admire you the more for knowing what no one else does."

"Do you really think, Esther, that I am the sole possessor of this science? Undeceive yourself. All who have studied anatomy, physiology, and astrology, know of it."

"Then I beg you to get me, by to-morrow — yes, tomorrow — all the books which will teach me secrets of that nature. I long to be able to astonish the ignorant with my cabala, which I see requires a mixture of knowledge and imposition. I wish to devote myself entirely to this study. We can love each other to the death, but we can do that without getting married."

I re-entered my lodging in a peaceful and happy frame of mind; an enormous weight seemed taken off my spirits. Next morning I purchased such volumes as I judged would instruct and amuse her at the same time, and went to present them to her. She was most pleased with my Conis, as she found in it the character of truth. As she wished to shine by her answers through the oracle it was necessary for her to have an extensive knowledge of science, and I put her on the way.

About that time I conceived the idea of making a short tour in Germany before returning to Paris, and Esther encouraged me to do so, after I had promised that she should see me again before the end of the year. This promise was sincerely, given; and though from that day to this I have not beheld the face of that charming and remarkable woman, I cannot reproach myself with having deceived her wilfully, for subsequent events prevented me from keeping my word.

I wrote to M. d'Afri requesting him to procure me a passport through the empire, where the French and other belligerent powers were then campaigning. He answered very politely that I had no need of a passport, but that if I wished to have one he would send it me forthwith. I was content with this letter and put it among my papers, and at Cologne it got me a better reception than all the passports in the world.

I made M. d'O —— the depositary of the various moneys I had in different banking houses, and the worthy man, who was a true friend to me, gave me a bill of exchange on a dozen of the chief houses in Germany.

When my affairs were all in order I started in my post-chaise, with the sum of nearly a hundred thousand Dutch florins to my credit, some valuable jewels, and a well-stocked wardrobe. I sent my Swiss servant back to Paris, keeping only my faithful Spaniard, who on this occasion travelled with me, seated behind my chaise.

Thus ends the history of my second visit to Holland, where I did nothing to augment my fortune. I had some unpleasant experiences there for which I had my own imprudence to thank, but after the lapse of so many years I feel that these mishaps were more than compensated by the charms of Esther's society.

I only stopped one day at Utrecht, and two days after I reached Cologne at noon, without accident, but not without danger, for at a distance of half a league from the town five deserters, three on the right hand and two on the left, levelled their pistols at me, with the words, "Your money or your life." However, I covered the postillion with my own pistol, threatening to fire if he did not drive on, and the robbers discharged their weapons at the carriage, not having enough spirit to shoot the postillion.

If I had been like the English, who carry a light purse for the benefit of the highwaymen, I would have thrown it to these poor wretches; but, as it was, I risked my life rather than be robbed. My Spaniard was quite astonished not to have been struck by any of the balls which whistled past his ears.

The French were in winter quarters at Cologne, and I put up at the "Soleil d'Or." As I was going in, the first person I met was the Comte de Lastic, Madame d'Urfe's nephew, who greeted me with the utmost politeness, and offered to take me to M. de Torci, who was in command. I accepted, and this gentleman was quite satisfied with the letter M. d'Afri had written me. I told him what had happened to me as I was coming into Cologne, and he congratulated me on the happy issue of the affair, but with a soldier's freedom blamed the use I had made of my courage.

"You played high," said he, "to save your money, but you might have lost a limb, and nothing would have made up for that."

I answered that to make light of a danger often diminished it. We laughed at this, and he said that if I was going to make any stay in Cologne I should probably have the pleasure of seeing the highwaymen hanged.

"I intend to go to-morrow," said I, "and if anything could keep me at Cologne it would certainly not be the prospect of being present at an execution, as such sights are not at all to my taste."

I had to accept M. de Lastic's invitation to dinner, and he persuaded me to go with himself and his friend, M. de Flavacour, an officer of high rank, and an agreeable man, to the theatre. As I felt sure that I should be introduced to ladies, and wished to make something of a figure, I spent an hour in dressing.

I found myself in a box opposite to a pretty woman, who looked at me again and again through her opera-glass. That was enough to rouse my curiosity, and I begged M. de Lastic to introduce me; which he did with the best grace imaginable. He first presented me to Count Kettler, lieutenant-general in the Austrian army, and on the general staff of the French army — just as the French General Montacet was on the staff of the Austrian army. I was then presented to the lady whose beauty had attracted my attention the moment I entered my box. She greeted me graciously, and asked me questions about Paris and Brussels, where she had been educated, without appearing to pay any attention to my replies, but gazing at my lace and jewellery.

While we were talking of indifferent matters, like new acquaintances, she suddenly but politely asked me if I intended to make a long stay in Cologne.

"I think of crossing the Rhine to-morrow," I answered, "and shall probably dine at Bonn."

This reply, which was given as indifferently as her question, appeared to vex her; and I thought her vexation a good omen. General Kettler then rose, saying, —

“I am sure, sir, that this lady will persuade you to delay your departure — at least, I hope so, that I may bane the pleasure of seeing more of your company.”

I bowed and he went out with Lastic, leaving me alone with this ravishing beauty. She was the burgomaster’s wife, and the general was nearly always with her.

“Is the count right,” said she, pleasantly, “in attributing such power to me?”

“I think so, indeed,” I answered, “but he may possibly be wrong in thinking you care to exercise it.”

“Very good! We must catch him, then, if only as the punishment of his indiscretion. Stay.”

I was so astonished at this speech that I looked quite foolish and had to collect my senses. I thought the word indiscretion sublime, punishment exquisite, and catching admirable; and still more the idea of catching him by means of me. I thought it would be a mistake to enquire any further, and putting on an expression of resignation and gratitude I lowered my lips and kissed her hand with a mixture of respect and sentiment, which, without exactly imparting my feelings for her, let her know that they might be softened without much difficulty.

“Then you will stay, sir! It is really very kind of you, for if you went off to-morrow people might say that you only came here to shew your disdain for us. Tomorrow the general gives a ball, and I hope you will be one of the party.”

“Can I hope to dance with you all the evening?”

“I promise to dance with nobody but you, till you get tired of me.”

“Then we shall dance together through all the ball.”

“Where did you get that pomade which perfumes the air? I smelt it as soon as you came into the box.”

“It came from Florence, and if you do not like it you shall not be troubled with it any more.”

"Oh! but I do like it. I should like some of it myself."

"And I shall be only too happy if you will permit me to send you a little to-morrow."

Just then the door of the box opened and the entrance of the general prevented her from replying. I was just going, when the count said:

"I am sure madame has prevailed on you to stay, and to come to my ball and supper to-morrow?"

"She has led me to anticipate that you would do me that honour, and she promises to dance the quadrilles with me. How can one resist entreaty from such lips?"

"Quite so, and I am obliged to her for having kept you with us. I hope to see you to-morrow."

I went out of the box in love, and almost happy in anticipation. The pomade was a present from Esther, and it was the first time I had used it. The box contained twenty-four pots of beautiful china. The next day I put twelve into an elegant casket, which I wrapped up in oil-cloth and sent to her without a note.

I spent the morning by going over Cologne with a guide; I visited all the marvels of the place, and laughed with all my heart to see the horse Bayard, of whom Ariosto has sung, ridden by the four sons of Aimon, or Amone, father of Bradamante the Invincible, and Ricciardetto the Fortunate.

I dined with M. de Castries, and everybody was surprised that the general had asked me himself to the ball, as his jealousy was known, while the lady was supposed only to suffer his attentions through a feeling of vanity. The dear general was well advanced in years, far from good-looking, and as his mental qualities by no means compensated for his lack of physical ones he was by no means an object to inspire love. In spite of his jealousy, he had to appear pleased that I sat next the fair at supper, and that I spent the night in dancing with her or talking to her. It was a happy night for me, and I re-entered my lodging no longer thinking of leaving Cologne. In a moment of ecstasy, emboldened by the turn the conversation had taken, I had dared to tell her that if she would meet me alone I would stay in Cologne till the end of the carnival. "And what would you say," she asked, "if I give my promise, and do not keep it?"

"I should bemoan my lot, without accusing you; I should say to myself that you had found it impossible to keep your word."

"You are very good; you must stay with us."

The day after the ball I went to pay her my first visit. She made me welcome, and introduced me to her worthy husband, who, though neither young nor handsome, was extremely good-hearted. After I had been there an hour, we heard the general's carriage coming, and she said to me:

"If he asks you whether you are going to the Elector's ball at Bonn, say yes!"

The general came in, and after the usual compliments had been passed I withdrew.

I did not know by whom the ball was to be given, or when it was to take place, but scenting pleasure from afar off I hastened to make enquiries about it, and heard that all the good families in Cologne were going. It was a masked ball, and consequently open to all. I decided then that I would go; indeed I concluded that I had had orders to that effect, and at all events my lady would be there, and I might hope for a happy meeting with her. But as I wished to keep up my incognito as much as possible, I resolved to reply to all who asked me that important business would prevent my being present.

It fell out that the general asked me this very question in the presence of the lady, and without regard to the orders I had received from her I replied that my health would forbid my having that pleasure.

"You are very wise, sir," said the general, "all the pleasures on earth should be sacrificed when it is a question of one's health."

I think so, too, now, but I thought differently then.

On the day of the ball, towards the evening, I set out in a post-chaise, disguised so that not a soul in Cologne could have recognized me, and provided with a box containing two dominoes; and on my arrival at Bonn I took a room and put on one of the dominoes, locking up the other in the box; and I then had myself carried to the ball in a sedan-chair.

I got in easily and unperceived, and recognized all the ladies of Cologne without their masks, and my mistress sitting at a faro-table risking a ducat. I was glad to see in the banker, Count Verita of Verona, whom I had known in

Bavaria. He was in the Elector's service. His small bank did not contain more than five or six ducats, and the punters, men and women, were not more than twelve. I took up a position by my mistress, and the banker asked me to cut. I excused myself with a gesture, and my neighbour cut without being asked. I put ten ducats on a single card, and lost four times running; I played at the second deal, and experienced the same fate. At the third deal nobody would cut, and the general, who was standing by but not playing, agreed to do so. I fancied his cutting would be lucky, and I put fifty ducats on one card. I won. I went 'paroli', and at the second deal I broke the bank. Everybody was curious about me; I was stared at and followed, but seizing a favourable opportunity I made my escape.

I went to my room, took out my money, changed my costume, and returned to the ball. I saw the table occupied by new gamesters, and another banker who seemed to have a good deal of gold, but not caring to play any more I had not brought much money with me. I mingled in all the groups in the ballroom, and on all sides I heard expressions of curiosity about the mask who broke the first bank.

I did not care to satisfy the general curiosity, but made my way from one side of the room to the other till I found the object of my search talking to Count Verita, and as I drew near I found out that they were talking of me. The count was saying that the Elector had been asking who had broken the bank, and that General Kettler had expressed his opinion that it was a Venetian who had been in Cologne for the last week. My mistress answered that she did not think I was there, as she had heard me say that the state of my health would keep me at home.

"I know Casanova," said the count, "and if he be at Bonn the Elector shall hear of it, and he shan't go off without my seeing him." I saw that I might easily be discovered after the ball, but I defied the keenest eyes to penetrate beneath my present disguise. I should have, no doubt, remained unknown, but when the quadrilles were being arranged I took my place in one, without reflecting that I should have to take off my mask.

As soon as my mistress saw me she told me she had been deceived, as she would have wagered that I was the masker who broke Count Verita's bank. I told her I had only just come.

At the end of the dance the count spied me out and said, “My dear fellow-countryman, I am sure you are the man who broke my bank; I congratulate you.”

“I should congratulate myself if I were the fortunate individual.”

“I am sure that it was you.”

I left him laughing, and after having taken some refreshments I continued dancing. Two hours afterwards the count saw me again and said, —

“You changed your domino in such a room, in such a house. The Elector knows all about it, and as a punishment for this deceit he has ordered me to tell you that you are not to leave Bonn to-morrow.”

“Is he going to arrest me, then?”

“Why not, if you refuse his invitation to dinner tomorrow?”

“Tell his highness that his commands shall be obeyed. Will you present me to him now?”

“He has left the ball, but wait on me to-morrow at noon.” So saying, he gave me his hand and went away.

I took care to keep the appointment on the day following, but when I was presented I was in some confusion, as the Elector was surrounded by five or six courtiers, and never having seen him I looked in vain for an ecclesiastic. He saw my embarrassment and hastened to put an end to it, saying, in bad Venetian, “I am wearing the costume of Grand Master of the Teutonic Order to-day.” In spite of his costume I made the usual genuflexion, and when I would have kissed his hand he would not allow it, but shook mine in an affectionate manner. “I was at Venice,” said he, “when you were under the Leads, and my nephew, the Elector of Bavaria, told me that after your fortunate escape you stayed some time at Munich; if you had come to Cologne I should have kept you. I hope that after dinner you will be kind enough to tell us the story of your escape, that you will stay to supper, and will join in a little masquerade with which we propose to amuse ourselves.”

I promised to tell my tale if he thought it would not weary him, warning him that it would take two hours. “One could never have too much of a good thing,” he was kind enough to say; and I made him laugh by my account of the conversation between the Duc de Choiseul and myself.

At dinner the prince spoke to me in Venetian, and was pleased to be most gracious towards me. He was a man of a jovial and easy-going disposition, and with his look of health one would not have prophesied so soon an end as came to him. He died the year following.

As soon as we rose from table he begged me to begin my story, and for two hours I had the pleasure of keeping this most brilliant company amused.

My readers know the history; its interest lies in the dramatic nature of the details, but it is impossible to communicate the fire of a well-told story to an account in writing.

The Elector's little bail was very pleasant. We were all dressed as peasants, and the costumes were taken from a special wardrobe of the prince's. It would have been ridiculous to choose any other dresses, as the Elector wore one of the same kind himself. General Kettler was the best disguised of us all; he looked the rustic to the life. My mistress was ravishing. We only danced quadrilles and German dances. There were only four or five ladies of the highest rank; all the others, who were more or less pretty, were favourites of the prince, all his days a great lover of the fair sex. Two of these ladies danced the Forlana, and the Elector was much amused in making me dance it also. I have already said that the Forlana is a Venetian dance, and one of the most energetic kind imaginable. It is danced by a lady and gentleman opposite to one another, and as the two ladies relieved one another they were almost the death of me. One has to be strong to dance twelve turns, and after the thirteenth I felt I could do no more, and begged for mercy.

Soon after we danced another dance, where each gentleman kisses a lady. I was not too shy, and each time I continued to kiss my mistress with considerable ardour, which made the peasant-elector burst with laughter and the peasant-general burst with rage.

In a lull between the dances, this charming and original woman found means to tell me in private that all the Cologne ladies would leave at noon on the next day, and that I would increase my popularity by inviting them all to breakfast at Bruhl.

"Send each one a note with the name of her cavalier, and trust in Count Verita to do everything for the best; you need only tell him that you wish to give an entertainment similar to that given two years ago by the Prince de Deux-Ponts. Lose no time. You will have a score of guests; mind you let them know the hour of the repast. Take care, too, that your invitations are sent round by nine o'clock in the morning."

All these instructions were uttered with lightning speed, and I, enchanted with the power my mistress thought she possessed over me, thought only of obeying, without reflecting whether I owed her obedience. Bruhl, breakfast, a score of people like the Prince Deux-Ponts, invitations to the ladies, Count Verita; I knew as much as she could have told me if she had taken an hour.

I left the room in my peasant's dress, and begged a page to take me to Count Verita, who began to laugh on seeing my attire. I told my business with the importance of an ambassador, and this made him in a still better humour.

"It can all easily be arranged," said he, "I have only to write to the steward, and I will do so immediately. But how much do you want to spend?"

"As much as possible."

"As little as possible, I suppose you mean."

"Not at all; I want to treat my guests with magnificence."

"All the same you must fix on a sum, as I know whom I've got to deal with."

"Well, well! two-three hundred ducats; will that do?"

"Two hundred; the Prince de Deux-Ponts did not spend more."

He began to write, and gave me his word that everything should be in readiness. I left him and addressing myself to a sharp Italian page said that I would give two ducats to the valet who would furnish me with the names of the Cologne ladies who were in Bonn, and of the gentlemen who had accompanied them. I got what I wanted in less than half an hour, and before leaving the ball I told my mistress that all should be done according to her desires.

I wrote eighteen notes before I went to bed, and in the morning a confidential servant had delivered them before nine o'clock.

At nine o'clock I went to take leave of Count Verita, who gave me, on behalf of the Elector, a superb gold snuff-box with his portrait set in diamonds. I was very sensible of this mark of kindness, and I wished to go and thank his serene highness before my departure, but my friendly fellow-countryman told me that I might put off doing so till I passed through Bonn on my way to Frankfort.

Breakfast was ordered for one o'clock. At noon I had arrived at Bruhl, a country house of the Elector's, with nothing remarkable about it save its furniture. In this it is a poor copy of the Trianon. In a fine hall I found a table laid for twenty-four persons, arranged with silver gilt plates, damask linen, and exquisite china, while the sideboard was adorned with an immense quantity of silver and silvergilt plate. At one end of the room were two other tables laden with sweets and the choicest wines procurable. I announced myself as the host, and the cook told me I should be perfectly satisfied.

"The collation," said he, "will be composed of only twenty-four dishes, but in addition there will be twenty-four dishes of English oysters and a splendid dessert."

I saw a great number of servants, and told him that they would not be necessary, but he said they were, as the guests' servants could not be admitted.

I received all my guests at the door, confining my compliments to begging their pardons for having been so bold as to procure myself this great honour.

The breakfast was served at one exactly, and I had the pleasure of enjoying the astonishment in my mistress's eyes when she saw that I had treated them as well as a prince of the empire. She was aware that everybody knew her to be the chief object of this lavish outlay, but she was delighted to see that I did not pay her any attentions which were at all invidious. The table was seated for twenty-four, and though I had only asked eighteen people every place was occupied. Three couples, therefore, had come without being asked; but that pleased me all the more. Like a courtly cavalier I would not sit down, but waited on the ladies, going from one to the other, eating the dainty bits they gave me, and seeing that all had what they wanted.

By the time the oysters were done twenty bottles of champagne had been emptied, so that when the actual breakfast commenced everybody began to talk at once. The meal might easily have passed for a splendid dinner, and I was glad to see that not a drop of water was drunk, for the Champagne, Tokay, Rhine wine, Madeira, Malaga, Cyprus, Alicante, and Cape wine would not allow it.

Before dessert was brought on an enormous dish of truffles was placed on the table. I advised my guests to take Maraschino with it, and those ladies who appreciated the liqueur drank it as if it had been water. The dessert was really sumptuous. In it were displayed the portraits of all the monarchs of Europe. Everyone complimented the cook on his achievement, and he, his vanity being tickled and wishing to appear good-natured, said that none of it would spoil in the pocket, and accordingly everybody took as much as they chose.

General Kettler, who, in spite of his jealousy and the part he saw me play, had no suspicion of the real origin of the banquet, said,

“I will wager that this is the Elector’s doing. His highness has desired to preserve his incognito, and M. Casanova has played his part to admiration.”

This remark set all the company in a roar.

“General,” said I, “if the Elector had given me such an order, I should, of course, have obeyed him, but I should have felt it a humiliating part to play. His highness, however, has deigned to do me a far greater honour; look here.” So saying, I shewed him the gold snuff-box, which made the tour of the table two or three times over.

When we had finished, we rose from table, astonished to find we had been engaged for three hours in a pleasurable occupation, which all would willingly have prolonged; but at last we had to part, and after many compliments they all went upon their way, in order to be in time for the theatre. As well pleased as my guests, I left twenty ducats with the steward, for the servants, and promised him to let Count Verita know of my satisfaction in writing.

I arrived at Cologne in time for the French play, and as I had no carriage I went to the theatre in a sedan chair. As soon as I got into the house, I saw the Comte de Lastic alone with my fair one. I thought this a good omen, and

I went to them directly. As soon as she saw me, she said with a melancholy air that the general had got so ill that he had been obliged to go to bed. Soon after, M. de Lastic left us, and dropping her assumed melancholy she made me, with the utmost grace, a thousand compliments, which compensated me for the expenses of my breakfast a hundred times over.

“The general,” said she, “had too much to drink; he is an envious devil, and has discovered that it is not seemly of you to treat us as if you were a prince. I told him that, on the contrary, you had treated us as if we were princes, waiting on us with your napkin on your arm. He thereupon found fault with me for degrading you.”

“Why do you not send him about his business? So rude a fellow is not worthy of serving so famous a beauty.”

“It’s too late. A woman whom you don’t know would get possession of him. I should be obliged to conceal my feelings, and that would vex me.”

“I understand — I understand. Would that I were a great prince! In the mean time, let me tell you that my sickness is greater than Kettler’s.”

“You are joking, I hope.”

“Nay, not at all; I am speaking seriously, for the kisses I was so happy to snatch from you at the ball have inflamed my blood, and if you have not enough kindness to cure me in the only possible way I shall leave Cologne with a life-long grief.”

“Put off your departure: why should you desire to go to Stuttgart so earnestly? I think of you, believe me, and I do not wish to deceive you; but it is hard to find an opportunity.”

“If you had not the general’s carriage waiting for you to-night, and I had mine, I could take you home with perfect propriety.”

“Hush! As you have not your carriage, it is my part to take you home. It is a splendid idea, that we must so contrive it that it may not seem to be a concerted plan. You must give me your arm to my carriage, and I shall then ask you where your carriage is; you will answer that you have not got one. I shall ask you to come into mine, and I will drop you at your hotel. It will only give us a couple of minutes, but that is something till we are more fortunate.”

I replied to her only by a look which expressed the intoxication of my spirits at the prospect of so great bliss.

Although the play was quite a short one, it seemed to me to last for ever. At last the curtain fell, and we went downstairs. When we got to the portico she asked me the questions we had agreed upon, and when I told her I had not got a carriage, she said, “I am going to the general’s to ask after his health; if it will not take you too much out of your way, I can leave you at your lodging as we come back.”

It was a grand idea. We should pass the entire length of the ill-paved town twice, and thus we secured a little more time. Unfortunately, the carriage was a chariot, and as we were going the moon shone directly on us. On that occasion the planet was certainly not entitled to the appellation of the lovers’ friend. We did all we could, but that was almost nothing, and I found the attempt a desperate one, though my lovely partner endeavoured to help me as much as possible. To add to our discomforts, the inquisitive and impudent coachman kept turning his head round, which forced us to moderate the energy of our movements. The sentry at the general’s door told our coachman that his excellency could see no one, and we joyfully turned towards my hotel, and now that the moon was behind us and the man’s curiosity less inconvenient, we got on a little better, or rather not so badly as before, but the horses seemed to me to fly rather than gallop; however, feeling that it would be well to have the coachman on my side in case of another opportunity, I gave him a ducat as I got down.

I entered the hotel feeling vexed and unhappy, though more in love than ever, for my fair one had convinced me that she was no passive mistress, but could experience pleasure as well as give it. That being the case I resolved not to leave Cologne before we had drained the cup of pleasure together, and that, it seemed to me, could not take place till the general was out of the way.

Next day, at noon, I went to the general’s house to write down my name, but I found he was receiving visitors and I went in. I made the general an appropriate compliment, to which the rude Austrian only replied by a cold inclination of the head. He was surrounded by a good many officers, and after four minutes I made a general bow and went out. The boor kept his room for three days, and as my mistress did not come to the theatre I had not the pleasure of seeing her.

On the last day of the carnival Kettler asked a good many people to a ball and supper. On my going to pay my court to my mistress in her box at the theatre, and being left for a moment alone with her, she asked me if I were invited to the general's supper. I answered in the negative.

"What!" said she, in an imperious and indignant voice, "he has not asked you? You must go, for all that."

"Consider what you say," said I, gently, "I will do anything to please you but that."

"I know all you can urge; nevertheless, you must go. I should feel insulted if you were not at that supper. If you love me you will give me this proof of your affection and (I think I may say) esteem."

"You ask me thus? Then I will go. But are you aware that you are exposing me to the danger of losing my life or taking his? for I am not the man to pass over an affront."

"I know all you can say," said she. "I have your honour at heart as much as mine, or perhaps more so, but nothing will happen to you; I will answer for everything. You must go, and you must give me your promise now, for I am resolved if you do not go, neither will I, but we must never see each other more."

"Then you may reckon upon me."

At that moment M. de Castries came in, and I left the box and went to the pit, where I passed two anxious hours in reflecting on the possible consequences of the strange step this woman would have me take. Nevertheless, such was the sway of her beauty aver my soul, I determined to abide by my promise and to carry the matter through, and to put myself in the wrong as little as possible. I went to the general's at the end of the play, and only found five or six people there. I went up to a canoness who was very fond of Italian poetry, and had no trouble in engaging her in an interesting discussion. In half an hour the room was full, my mistress coming in last on the general's arm. I was taken up with the canoness and did not stir, and consequently Kettler did not notice me, while the lady in great delight at seeing me left him no time to examine his guests, and he was soon talking to some people at the other end of the room. In a quarter of an hour afterwards supper was announced. The canoness rose, took my arm, and we seated ourselves at table together, still talking about Italian literature. Then came the catastrophe. When all the places had been taken one gentleman was left standing, there being no place for him. “How can that have happened?” said the general, raising his voice, and while the servants were bringing another chair and arranging another place he passed his guests in review. All the while I pretended not to notice what was going on, but when he came to me he said loudly,

“Sir, I did not ask you to come.”

“That is quite true, general,” I said, respectfully, “but I thought, no doubt correctly, that the omission was due to forgetfulness, and I thought myself obliged all the same to come and pay my court to your excellency.”

Without a pause I renewed my conversation with the canoness, not so much as looking around. A dreadful silence reigned for four or five minutes, but the canoness began to utter witticisms which I took up and communicated to my neighbours, so that in a short time the whole table was in good spirits except the general, who preserved a sulky silence. This did not much matter to me, but my vanity was concerned in smoothing him down, and I watched for my opportunity.

M. de Castries was praising the dauphin, and his brothers, the Comte de Lusace and the Duc de Courlande, were mentioned; this led the conversation up to Prince Biron, formerly a duke, who was in Siberia, and his personal qualities were discussed, one of the guests having said that his chiefest merit was to have pleased the Empress Anne. I begged his pardon, saying, —

“His greatest merit was to have served faithfully the last Duke Kettler; who if it had not been for the courage of him who is now so unfortunate, would have lost all his belongings in the war. It was Duke Kettler who so heroically sent him to the Court of St. Petersburg, but Biron never asked for the duchy. An earldom would have satisfied him, as he recognized the rights of the younger branch of the Kettler family, which would be reigning now if it were not for the empress’s whim: nothing would satisfy her but to confer a dukedom on the favourite.”

The general, whose face had cleared while I was speaking, said, in the most polite manner of which he was capable, that I was a person of remarkable information, adding regretfully, —

“Yes, if it were not for that whim I should be reigning now.”

After this modest remark he burst into a fit of laughter and sent me down a bottle of the best Rhine wine, and addressed his conversation to me till the supper was over. I quietly enjoyed the turn things had taken, but still more the pleasure I saw expressed in the beautiful eyes of my mistress.

Dancing went on all night, and I did not leave my canoness, who was a delightful woman and danced admirably. With my lady I only danced one minuet. Towards the end of the ball the general, to finish up with a piece of awkwardness, asked me if I was going soon. I replied that I did not think of leaving Cologne till after the grand review.

I went to bed full of joy at having given the burgomaster’s wife such a signal proof of my love, and full of gratitude to fortune who had helped me so in dealing with my doltish general, for God knows what I should have done if he had forgotten himself so far as to tell me to leave the table! The next time I saw the fair she told me she had felt a mortal pang of fear shoot through her when the general said he had not asked me.

“I am quite sure,” said she, “that he would have gone further, if your grand answer had not stopped his mouth; but if he had said another word, my mind was made up.”

“To do what?”

“I should have risen from the table and taken your arm, and we should have gone out together. M. de Castries has told me that he would have done the same, and I believe all the ladies whom you asked to breakfast would have followed our example.”

“But the affair would not have stopped then, for I should certainly have demanded immediate satisfaction, and if he had refused it I should have struck him with the flat of my sword.”

“I know that, but pray forget that it was I who exposed you to this danger. For my part, I shall never forget what I owe to you, and I will try to convince you of my gratitude.”

Two days later, on hearing that she was indisposed, I went to call on her at eleven o'clock, at which time I was sure the general would not be there. She received me in her husband's room, and he, in the friendliest manner possible, asked me if I had come to dine with them. I hastened to thank him for his invitation, which I accepted with pleasure, and I enjoyed this dinner better than Kettler's supper. The burgomaster was a fine-looking man, pleasant-mannered and intelligent, and a lover of peace and quietness. His wife, whom he adored, ought to have loved him, since he was by no means one of those husbands whose motto is, "Displease whom you like, so long as you please me."

On her husband's going out for a short time, she shewed me over the house.

"Here is our bedroom," said she; "and this is the closet in which I sleep for five or six nights in every month. Here is a church which we may look upon as our private chapel, as we hear mass from those two grated windows. On Sundays we go down this stair and enter the church by a door, the key to which is always in my keeping." It was the second Saturday in Lent; we had an excellent fasting dinner, but I did not for once pay much attention to eating. To see this young and beautiful woman surrounded by her children, adored by her family, seemed to me a beautiful sight. I left them at an early hour to write to Esther, whom I did not neglect, all occupied as I was with this new flame.

Next day I went to hear mass at the little church next to the burgomaster's house. I was well cloaked so as not to attract attention. I saw my fair one going out wearing a capuchin, and followed by her family. I noted the little door which was so recessed in the wall that it would have escaped the notice of anyone who was unaware of its existence; it opened, I saw, towards the staircase.

The devil, who, as everybody knows, has more power in a church than anywhere else, put into my head the idea of enjoying my mistress by means of the door and stair. I told her my plan the next day at the theatre.

"I have thought of it as well as you," said she, laughing, "and I will give you the necessary instructions in writing; you will find them in the first gazette I send you."

We could not continue this pleasant interview, as my mistress had with her a lady from Aix-la-Chapelle, who was staying with her for a few days. And indeed the box was full of company.

I had not long to wait, for next day she gave me back the gazette openly, telling me that she had not found anything to interest her in it. I knew that it would be exceedingly interesting to me. Her note was as follows:

"The design which love inspired is subject not to difficulty but uncertainty. The wife only sleeps in the closet when her husband asks her — an event which only occurs at certain periods, and the separation does not last for more than a few days. This period is not far off, but long custom has made it impossible for the wife to impose on her husband. It will, therefore, be necessary to wait. Love will warn you when the hour of bliss has come. The plan will be to hide in the church; and there must be no thought of seducing the door-keeper, for though poor he is too stupid to be bribed, and would betray the secret. The only way will be to hide so as to elude his watchfulness. He shuts the church at noon on working days; on feast days he shuts it at evening, and he always opens it again at dawn. When the time comes, all that need be done is to give the door a gentle push-it will not be locked. As the closet which is to be the scene of the blissful combat is only separated from the room by a partition, there must be no spitting, coughing, nor nose-blowing: it would be fatal. The escape will be a matter of no difficulty; one can go down to the church, and go out as soon as it is opened. Since the beadle has seen nobody in the evening, it is not likely that he will see more in the morning."

I kissed again and again this charming letter, which I thought shewed great power of mental combination, and I went next day to see how the coast lay: this was the first thing to be done. There was a chair in the church in which I should never have been seen, but the stair was on the sacristy side, and that was always locked up. I decided on occupying the confessional, which was close to the door. I could creep into the space beneath the confessor's seat, but it was so small that I doubted my ability to stay there after the door was shut. I waited till noon to make the attempt, and as soon as the church was empty I took up my position. I had to roll myself up into a ball, and even then I was so badly concealed by the folding door that anyone happening to pass by at two paces distance might easily have seen me. However I did not care for that, for in adventures of that nature one must leave a great deal to fortune. Determined to run all risks I went home highly pleased with my observations. I put everything I had determined down in writing, and sent it to her box at the theatre, enclosed in an old gazette.

A week after she asked the general in my presence if her husband could do anything for him at Aix-la-Chapelle, where he was going on the morrow, with the intention of returning in three days. That was enough for me, but a glance from her added meaning to her words. I was all the more glad as I had a slight cold, and the next day being a feast day I could take up my position at night fall, and thus avoid a painful vigil of several hours' duration.

I curled myself up in the confessional at four o'clock, hiding myself as best I could, and commending myself to the care of all the saints. At five o'clock the beadle made his usual tour of inspection, went out and locked the door. As soon as I heard the noise of the key I came out of my narrow cell and sat down on a bench facing the windows. Soon after my mistress's shadow appeared on the grated panes, and I knew she had seen me.

I sat on the bench for a quarter of an hour and then pushed open the little door and entered. I shut it and sat down on the lowest step of the stair, and spent there five hours which would probably have not been unpleasant ones if I had not been dreadfully tormented by the rats running to and fro close to me. Nature has given me a great dislike to this animal, which is comparatively harmless; but the smell of rats always sickens me.

At last I heard the clock strike ten, the hour of bliss, and I saw the form of my beloved holding a candle, and I was then freed from my painful position. If my readers have been in such a situation they can imagine the pleasures of that happy night, but they cannot divine the minute circumstances; for if I was an expert my partner had an inexhaustible store of contrivances for augmenting the bliss of that sweet employment. She had taken care to get me a little collation, which looked delicious, but which I could not touch, my appetite lying in another quarter.

For seven hours, which I thought all too short, we enjoyed one another, not resting, except for talk, which served to heighten our pleasure.

The burgomaster was not the man for an ardent passion, but his strength of constitution enabled him to do his duty to his wife every night without failing, but, whether from regard to his health or from a religious scruple, he suspended his rights every month while the moon exercised hers, and to put himself out of temptation he made his wife sleep apart. But for once in a way, the lady was not in the position of a divorcee.

Exhausted, but not satiated with pleasure, I left her at day-break, assuring her that when we met again she would find me the same; and with that I went to hide in the confessional, fearing lest the growing light might betray me to the beadle. However, I got away without any difficulty, and passed nearly the whole day in bed, having my dinner served to me in my room. In the evening I went to the theatre, to have the pleasure of seeing the beloved object of whom my love and constancy had made me the possessor.

At the end of a fortnight she sent me a note in which she told me that she would sleep by herself on the night following. It was a ferial day, and I therefore went to the church at eleven in the morning after making an enormous breakfast. I hid myself as before, and the beadle locked me in without making any discovery.

I had a wait of ten hours, and the reflection that I should have to spend the time partly in the church and partly on the dark and rat-haunted staircase, without being able to take a pinch of snuff for fear of being obliged to blow my nose, did not tend to enliven the prospect; however, the hope of the great reward made it easy to be borne. But at one o'clock I heard a slight noise, and looking up saw a hand appear through the grated window, and a paper drop on the floor of the church. I ran to pick it up, while my heart beat fast, for my first idea was that some obstacle had occurred which would compel me to pass the night on a bench in the church. I opened it, and what was my joy to read as follows:

"The door is open, and you will be more comfortable on the staircase, where you will find a light, a little dinner, and some books, than in the church. The seat is not very easy, but I have done my best to remedy the discomfort with a cushion. Trust me, the time will seem as long to me as to you, but be patient. I have told the general that I do not feel very well, and shall not go out to-day. May God keep you from coughing, especially during the night, for on the least noise we should be undone."

What stratagems are inspired by love! I opened the door directly, and found a nicely-laid meal, dainty viands, delicious wine, coffee, a chafing dish, lemons, spirits of wine, sugar, and rum to make some punch if I liked. With these comforts and some books, I could wait well enough; but I was astonished at the dexterity of my charming mistress in doing all this without the knowledge of anybody in the house.

I spent three hours in reading, and three more in eating, and making coffee and punch, and then I went to sleep. At ten o'clock my darling came and awoke me. This second night was delicious, but not so much so as the former, as we could not see each other, and the violence of our ecstatic combats was restrained by the vicinity of the good husband. We slept part of the time, and early in the morning I had to make good my retreat. Thus ended my amour with this lady. The general went to Westphalia, and she was soon to go into the country. I thus made my preparations for leaving Cologne, promising to come and see her the year following, which promise however I was precluded, as the reader will see, from keeping. I took leave of my acquaintance and set out, regretted by all.

The stay of two months and a half which I made in Cologne did not diminish my monetary resources, although I lost whenever I was persuaded to play. However, my winnings at Bonn made up all deficiencies, and my banker, M. Franck, complained that I had not made any use of him. However, I was obliged to be prudent so that those persons who spied into my actions might find nothing reprehensible.

I left Cologne about the middle of March, and I stopped at Bonn, to present my respects to the Elector, but he was away. I dined with Count Verita and the Abbe Scampar, a favourite of the Elector's. After dinner the count gave me a letter of introduction to a canoness at Coblentz, of whom he spoke in very high terms. That obliged me to stop at Coblentz; but when I got down at the inn, I found that the canoness was at Manheim, while in her stead I encountered an actress named Toscani, who was going to Stuttgart with her young and pretty daughter. She was on her way from Paris, where her daughter had been learning character-dancing with the famous Vestris. I had known her at Paris, but had not seen much of her, though I had given her a little spaniel dog, which was the joy of her daughter. This daughter was a perfect jewel, who had very little difficulty in persuading me to come with them to Stuttgart, where I expected, for other reasons, to have a very pleasant stay. The mother was impatient to know what the duke would think of her daughter, for she had destined her from her childhood to serve the pleasures of this voluptuous prince, who, though he had a titular mistress, was fond of experimenting with all the ballet-girls who took his fancy.

We made up a little supper-party, and it may be guessed that two of us belonging to the boards the conversation was not exactly a course in moral theology. The Toscani told me that her daughter was a neophyte, and that she had made up her mind not to let the duke touch her till he had dismissed his reigning mistress, whose place she was designed to take. The mistress in question was a dancer named Gardella, daughter of a Venetian boatman, whose name has been mentioned in my first volume — in fine, she was the wife of Michel d'Agata, whom I found at Munich fleeing from the terrible Leads, where I myself languished for so long.

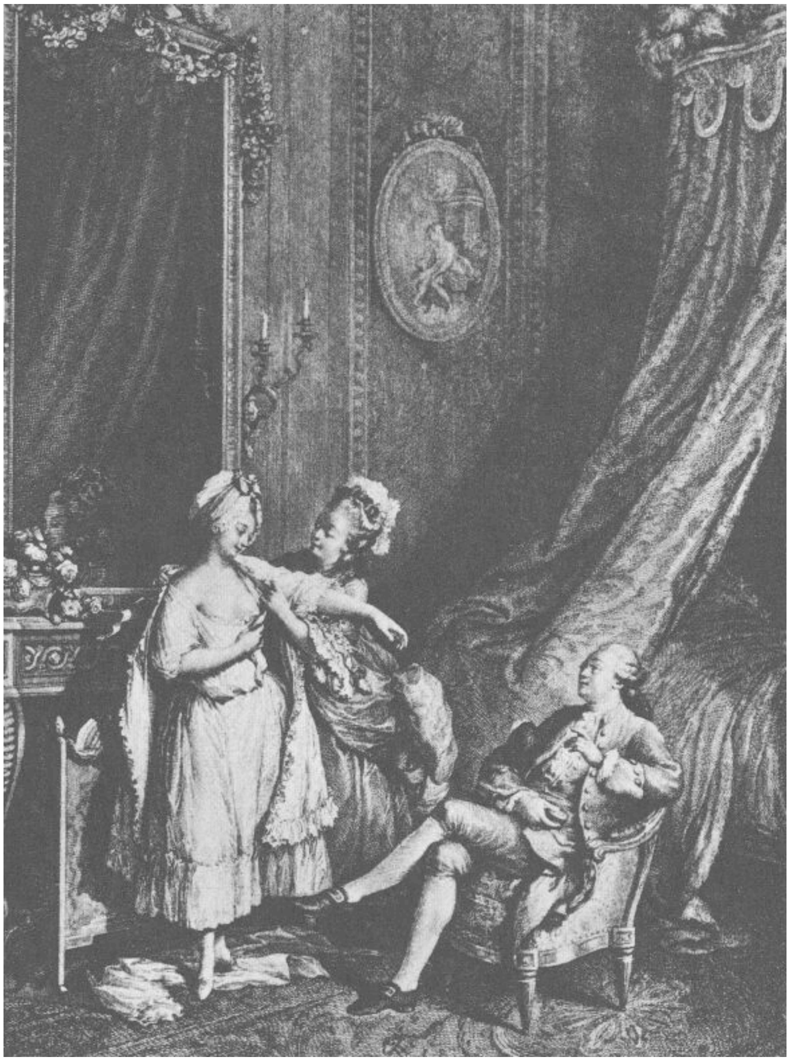
As I seemed to doubt the mother's assertion, and threw out some rather broad hints to the effect that I believed that the first bloom had been plucked at Paris, and that the Duke of Wurtemburg would only have the second, their vanity was touched; and on my proposing to verify the matter with my own eyes it was solemnly agreed that this ceremony should take place the next day. They kept their promise, and I was pleasantly engaged for two hours the next morning, and was at last obliged to extinguish in the mother the flames her daughter had kindled in my breast.

Although the Toscani was young enough, she would have found me ice if her daughter had been able to satisfy my desires, but she did not trust me well enough to leave us alone together. As it was she was well satisfied.

I resolved, then, on going to Stuttgart in company with the two nymphs, and I expected to see there the Binetti, who was always an enthusiastic admirer of mine. This actress was the daughter of a Roman boatman. I had helped her to get on the boards the same year that Madame de Valmarana had married her to a French dancer named Binet, whose name she had Italianized by the addition of one syllable, like those who ennoble themselves by adding another syllable to their names. I also expected to see the Gardella, young Baletti, of whom I was very fond, his young wife the Vulcani, and several other of my old friends, who I thought would combine to make my stay at Stuttgart a very pleasant one. But it will be seen that it is a risky thing to reckon without one's host. At the last posting station I bid adieu to my two friends, and went to the "Bear."

CHAPTER XII

Gardella Portrait of The Duke of Wurtemburg — My Dinner with Gardella, And its Consequences — Unfortunate Meeting I Play and Lose Four Thousand Louis — Lawsuit — Lucky Flight — My Arrival at Zurich — Church Consecrated By Jesus Christ Himself



At that period the Court of the Duke of Wurtemburg was the most brilliant in Europe. The heavy subsidies paid by France for quartering ten thousand men upon him furnished him with the means for indulging in luxury and debauchery. The army in question was a fine body of men, but during the war it was distinguished only by its blunders.

The duke was sumptuous in his tastes, which were for splendid palaces, hunting establishments on a large scale, enormous stables — in short, every whim imaginable; but his chief expense was the large salaries he paid his theatre, and, above all, his mistresses. He had a French play, an Italian opera, grand and comic, and twenty Italian dancers, all of whom had been principal dancers in Italian theatres. His director of ballets was Novers, and sometimes five hundred dancers appeared at once. A clever machinist and the best scene painters did their best to make the audience believe in magic. All the ballet-girls were pretty, and all of them boasted of having been enjoyed at least once by my lord. The chief of them was a Venetian, daughter of a gondolier named Gardella. She was brought up by the senator Malipiero, whom my readers know for his good offices towards myself, who had her taught for the theatre, and gave her a dancing-master. I found her at Munich, after my flight from The Leads, married to Michel Agata. The duke took a fancy to her, and asked her husband, who was only too happy to agree, to yield her; but he was satisfied with her charms in a year, and put her on the retired list with the title of madame.

This honour had made all the other ballet-girls jealous, and they all thought themselves as fit as she to be taken to the duke’s titular mistress, especially as she only enjoyed the honour without the pleasure. They all intrigued to procure her dismissal, but the Venetian lady succeeded in holding her ground against all cabals.

Far from reproaching the duke for this incorrigible infidelity, she encouraged him in it, and was very glad to be left to herself, as she cared nothing for him. Her chief pleasure was to have the ballet-girls who aspired to the honours of the handkerchief come to her to solicit her good offices. She always received them politely, gave them her advice, and bade them do their best to please the prince. In his turn the duke thought himself bound to shew his gratitude for her good nature, and gave her in public all the honours which could be given to a princess.

I was not long in finding out that the duke's chief desire was to be talked about. He would have liked people to say that there was not a prince in Europe to compare with him for wit, taste, genius, in the invention of pleasures, and statesman-like capacities; he would fain be regarded as a Hercules in the pleasures of Bacchus and Venus, and none the less an Aristides in governing his people. He dismissed without pity an attendant who failed to wake him after he had been forced to yield to sleep for three or four hours, but he did not care how roughly he was awakened.

It has happened that after having given his highness a large cup of coffee, the servant has been obliged to throw him into a bath of cold water, where the duke had to choose between awaking or drowning.

As soon as he was dressed the duke would assemble his council and dispatch whatever business was on hand, and then he would give audience to whoever cared to come into his presence. Nothing could be more comic than the audiences he gave to his poorer subjects. Often there came to him dull peasants and workmen of the lowest class; the poor duke would sweat and rage to make them hear reason, in which he was sometimes unsuccessful, and his petitioners would go away terrified, desperate, and furious. As to the pretty country maidens, he examined into their complaints in private, and though he seldom did anything for them they went away consoled.

The subsidies which the French Crown was foolish enough to pay him for a perfectly useless service did not suffice for his extravagant expenses. He loaded his subjects with taxes till the patient people could bear it no longer, and some years after had recourse to the Diet of Wetzlar, which obliged him to change his system. He was foolish enough to wish to imitate the King of Prussia, while that monarch made fun of the duke, and called him his ape. His wife was the daughter of the Margrave of Bayreuth, the prettiest and most accomplished princess in all Germany. When I had come to Stuttgart she was no longer there; she had taken refuge with her father, on account of a disgraceful affront which had been offered her by her unworthy husband. It is incorrect to say that this princess fled from her husband because of his infidelities.

After I had dined by myself, I dressed and went to the opera provided gratis by the duke in the fine theatre he had built. The prince was in the front of the orchestra, surrounded by his brilliant Court. I sat in a box on the first tier, delighted to be able to hear so well the music of the famous Jumella, who was in the duke's service. In my ignorance of the etiquette of small German Courts I happened to applaud a solo, which had been exquisitely sung by a castrato whose name I have forgotten, and directly afterwards an individual came into my box and addressed me in a rude manner. However, I knew no German, and could only answer by 'nich verstand'— "I don't understand."

He went out, and soon after an official came in, who told me, in good French, that when the sovereign was present all applause was forbidden.

"Very good, sir. Then I will go away and come again when the sovereign is not here, as when an air pleases me I always applaud."

After this reply I called for my carriage, but just as I was getting into it the same official came and told me that the duke wanted to speak to me. I accordingly followed him to the presence.

"You are M. Casanova, are you?" said the duke.

"Yes, my lord."

"Where do you come from?"

"From Cologne."

"Is this the first time you have been to Stuttgart?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Do you think of staying long?"

"For five or six days, if your highness will allow me."

"Certainly, you may stay as long as you like, and you may clap when you please."

"I shall profit by your permission, my lord."

"Good."

I sat down again, and the whole audience settled down to the play. Soon after, an actor sung an air which the duke applauded, and of course all the courtiers, but not caring much for the song I sat still — everyone to his taste. After the ballet the duke went to the favourite's box, kissed her hand,

and left the theatre. An official, who was sitting by me and did not know that I was acquainted with the Gardella, told me that as I had had the honour of speaking to the prince I might obtain the honour of kissing his favourite's hand.

I felt a strong inclination to laugh, but I restrained myself; and a sudden and very irrational impulse made me say that she was a relation of mine. The words had no sooner escaped me than I bit my lip, for this stupid lie could only do me harm, but it was decreed that I should do nothing at Stuttgart but commit blunders. The officer, who seemed astonished at my reply, bowed and went to the favourite's box to inform her of my presence. The Gardelia looked in my direction and beckoned to me with her fan, and I hastened to comply with the invitation, laughing inwardly at the part I was going to play. As soon as I came in she graciously gave me her hand, which I kissed, calling her my cousin.

"Did you tell the duke you were my cousin?" said she.

"No," I replied.

"Very good, then I will do so myself; come and dine with me to-morrow."

She then left the house, and I went to visit the ballet-girls, who were undressing: The Binetti, who was one of the oldest of my acquaintances, was in an ecstasy of joy at seeing me, and asked me to dine with her every day. Cartz, the violin, who had been with me in the orchestra at St. Samuel's, introduced me to his pretty daughter, saying,

"She is not made for the duke's eyes to gaze on, and he shall never have her."

The good man was no prophet, as the duke got possession of her a short time after. She presented him with two babies, but these pledges of affection could not fix the inconstant prince. Nevertheless, she was a girl of the most captivating kind, for to the most perfect beauty she added grace, wit, goodness, and kindness, which won everyone's heart. But the duke was satiated, and his only pleasure lay in novelty.

After her I saw the Vulcani, whom I had known at Dresden, and who suddenly presented her husband to me. He threw his arms round my neck. He was Baletti, brother of my faithless one, a young man of great talent of whom I was very fond.

I was surrounded by all these friends, when the officer whom I had so foolishly told that I was related to the Gardella came in and began to tell the story. The Binetti, after hearing it, said to him,

"It's a lie."

"But my dear," said I to her, "you can't be better informed on the subject than I am." She replied by laughing, but Cartz said, very wittily,

"As Gardella is only a boatman's daughter, like Binetti, the latter thinks, and very rightly, that you ought to have given her the refusal of your cousinship."

Next day I had a pleasant dinner with the favourite, though she told me that, not having seen the duke, she could not tell me how he would take my pleasantry, which her mother resented very much. This mother of hers, a woman of the lowest birth, had become very proud since her daughter was a prince's mistress, and thought my relationship a blot on their escutcheon. She had the impudence to tell me that her relations had never been players, without reflecting that it must be worse to descend to this estate than to rise from it, if it were dishonourable. I ought to have pitied her, but not being of a forbearing nature I retorted by asking if her sister was still alive, a question which made her frown and to which she gave no answer. The sister I spoke of was a fat blind woman, who begged on a bridge in Venice.

After having spent a pleasant day with the favourite, who was the oldest of my theatrical friends, I left her, promising to come to breakfast the next day; but as I was going out the porter bade me not to put my feet there again, but would not say on whose authority he gave me this polite order. It would have been wiser to hold my tongue, as this stroke must have come from the mother; or, perhaps, from the daughter, whose vanity I had wounded: she was a good-enough actress to conceal her anger.

I was angry with myself, and went away in an ill humour; I was humiliated to see myself treated in such a manner by a wretched wanton of an actress; though if I had been more discreet I could have got a welcome in the best society. If I had not promised to dine with Binetti the next day I should have posted off forthwith, and I should thus have escaped all the misadventures which befell me in that wretched town.

The Binetti lived in the house of her lover, the Austrian ambassador, and the part of the house she occupied adjoined the town wall. As will be seen; this detail is an important one. I dined alone with my good fellow-countrywoman, and if I had felt myself capable of love at that period all my old affection would have resumed its sway over me, as her beauty was undiminished, and she had more tact and knowledge of the world than when I knew her formerly.

The Austrian ambassador was a good-natured, easygoing, and generous man; as for her husband he was not worthy of her, and she never saw him. I spent a pleasant day with her, talking of our old friends, and as I had nothing to keep me in Wurtemburg I decided to leave in two days, as I had promised the Toscani and her daughter to go with them on the next day to Louisbourg. We were to start at five in the morning, but the following adventure befell me: —

As I was leaving Binetti's house I was greeted very courteously by three officers whom I had become acquainted with at the coffee house, and I walked along the promenade with them.

“We are going,” said one of them, “to visit certain ladies of easy virtue; we shall be glad to have you of our company.”

“I only speak a few words of German,” I answered, “and if I join you I shall be bored.”

“Ah! but the ladies are Italians,” they exclaimed, “nothing could suit you better.”

I did not at all like following them, but my evil genius led me in that wretched town from one blunder to another, and so I went in spite of myself.

We turned back into the town, and I let myself be led up to the third floor of an ill-looking house, and in the meanest of rooms I saw the pretended nieces of Peccini. A moment after Peccini appeared, and had the impudence to throw his arms around my neck, calling me his best friend. His nieces overwhelmed me with caresses, and seemed to confirm the idea that we were old friends. I did nothing and held my tongue.

The officers prepared for a debauch; I did not imitate their example, but this made no difference to them. I saw into what an evil place I had been decoyed, but a false shame prevented me from leaving the house without ceremony. I was wrong, but I determined to be more prudent for the future.

Before long a pot-house supper was served, of which I did not partake; but not wishing to seem bad company I drank two or three small glasses of Hungarian wine. After supper, which did not last very long, cards were produced, and one of the officers held a bank at faro. I punted and lost the fifty or sixty Louis I had about me. I felt that I was drunk, my head was reeling, and I would have gladly given over playing and gone away, but I have never been so possessed as on that day, either from false shame or from the effects of the drugged wine they gave me. My noble officers seemed vexed that I had lost, and would give me my revenge. They made me hold a bank of a hundred Louis in fish, which they counted out to me. I did so, and lost. I made a bank again, and again I lost. My inflamed understanding, my increasing drunkenness, and my anger, deprived me of all sense, and I kept increasing my bank, losing all the time, till at midnight my good rascals declared they would play no more. They made a calculation, and declared that I had lost nearly a hundred thousand francs. So great was my intoxication, although I had had no more wine, that they were obliged to send for a sedan chair to take me to my inn. While my servant was undressing me he discovered that I had neither my watches nor my gold snuff-boy.

“Don’t forget to wake me at four in the morning,” said I. Therewith I went to bed and enjoyed a calm and refreshing sleep.

While I was dressing next morning I found a hundred Louis in my pocket, at which I was much astonished, for my dizziness of brain being over now, I remembered that I had not this money about me the evening before; but my mind was taken up with the pleasure party, and I put off thinking of this incident and of my enormous losses till afterwards. I went to the Toscani and we set out for Louisbourg, where we had a capital dinner, and my spirits ran so high that my companions could never have guessed the misfortune that had just befallen me. We went back to Stuttgart in the evening.

When I got home my Spaniard told me that they knew nothing about my watches and snuff-box at the house where I had been the evening before, and that the three officers had come to call on me, but not finding me at home they had told him to warn me that they would breakfast with me on the following morning. They kept the appointment.

“Gentlemen,” said I, as soon as they came in, “I have lost a sum which I cannot pay, and which I certainly should not have lost without the drugged wine you gave me. You have taken me to a den of infamy, where I was shamefully robbed of jewellery to the value of more than three hundred Louis. I complain of no one, since I have only my own folly to complain of. If I had been wiser all this would not have happened to me.”

They exclaimed loudly at this speech, and tried to play the part of men of honour. They spoke in vain, as I had made up my mind to pay nothing.

Whilst we were in the thick of the fight, and were beginning to get angry over it, Baletti, Toscani, and Binetti came in, and heard the discussion. I then had breakfast brought in, and after we had finished my friends left me.

When we were once more alone, one of the rascals addressed me as follows:

“We are too honest, sir, to take advantage of your position. You have been unfortunate, but all men are sometimes unfortunate, and we ask nothing better than a mutual accommodation. We will take over all your properties; jewels, diamonds, arms, and carriage, and have them valued; and if the sum realized does not cover your debt we will take your acceptance, payable at date, and remain good friends.”

“Sir, I do not wish for the friendship of robbers, and I will not play a single farthing.”

At this they tried threats, but I kept cool and said, —

“Gentlemen, your menaces will not intimidate me, and, as far as I can see, you have only two ways of getting paid; either by way of the law, in which case I do not think I shall find it difficult to get a barrister to take up my case, or, secondly, you can pay yourselves on my body, honourably, with sword in hand.”

As I had expected, they replied that if I wished they would do me the honour of killing me after I had paid them. They went off cursing, telling me that I would be sorry for what I had said.

Soon after I went out and spent the day with the Toscani in gaiety which, situated as I was, was not far off madness. At the time I placed it to the daughter's charms, and to the need my spirits were in of recovering their elasticity.

However, the mother having witnessed the rage of the three robbers was the first to urge me to fortify myself against their villainy by an appeal to the law.

"If you give them the start," said she, "they may possibly gain a great advantage over you in spite of the right being on your side."

And whilst I toyed with her charming daughter, she sent for a barrister. After hearing my case the counsel told me that my best way would be to tell the whole story to the sovereign as soon as possible.

"They took you to the house of ill-fame; they poured out the drugged wine which deprived you of your reason; they made you play in spite of their prince's prohibition (for gaming is strictly forbidden); in this company you were robbed of your jewels after they had made you lose an enormous sum. It's a hanging matter, and the duke's interest will be to do you justice, for an act of scoundrelism like this committed by his officers would dishonour him all over Europe."

I felt some repugnance to this course, for though the duke was a shameless libertine I did not like telling him such a disgraceful story. However, the case was a serious one, and after giving it due reflection I determined to wait on the dike on the following morning.

"As the duke gives audience to the first comer," I said to myself, "why should I not have as good a reception as a labouring man?" In this way I concluded that it would be no use to write to him, and I was on my way to the Court, when, at about twenty paces from the gate of the castle, I met my three gentlemen who accosted me rudely and said I had better make up my mind to pay, or else they would play the devil with me.

I was going on without paying any attention to them, when I felt myself rudely seized by the right arm. A natural impulse of self-defence made me put my hand to my sword, and I drew it in a manner that shewed I was in earnest. The officer of the guard came running up, and I complained that the three were assaulting me and endeavouring to hinder my approach to the prince. On enquiry being made, the sentry and the numerous persons who were present declared that I had only drawn in self-defence, so the officer decided that I had perfect liberty to enter the castle.

I was allowed to penetrate to the last antechamber without any obstacle being raised. Here I addressed myself to the chamberlain, demanding an audience with the sovereign, and he assured me that I should be introduced into the presence. But directly afterwards the impudent scoundrel who had taken hold of my arm came up and began to speak to the chamberlain in German. He said his say without my being able to contradict him, and his representations were doubtless not in my favour. Very possibly, too, the chamberlain was one of the gang, and I went from Herod to Pilate. An hour went by without my being able to see the prince, and then the chamberlain, who had assured me that I should have an audience, came and told me that I might go home, as the duke had heard all the circumstances of the case, and would no doubt see that justice was done me.

I saw at once that I should get no justice at all, and as I was walking away I thought how best I could get out of the difficulty. On my way I met Binetti, who knew how I was placed, and he asked me to come and dine with him, assuring me that the Austrian ambassador would take me under his protection, and that he would save me from the violent measures which the rascals no doubt intended to take, in spite of the chamberlain's assurances. I accepted the invitation, and Binetti's charming wife, taking the affair to heart, did not lose a moment in informing her lover, the ambassador, of all the circumstances.

This diplomatist came into the room with her, and after hearing all the details from my lips he said that in all probability the duke knew nothing about it.

"Write a brief account of the business," said he, "and I will lay it before the sovereign, who will no doubt see justice done."

I went to Binetti's desk, and as soon as I had written down my true relation I gave it, unsealed, to the ambassador, who assured me that it should be in the duke's hands in the course of an hour.

At dinner my country-woman assured me again that her lover should protect me, and we spent the day pleasantly enough; but towards evening my Spaniard came and assured me that if I returned to the inn I should be arrested, “for,” said he, “an officer came to see you, and finding you were out he took up his position at the street door and has two soldiers standing at the foot of the staircase.”

The Binetti said, “You must not go to the inn; stay here, where you have nothing to fear. Send for what you want, and we will wait and see what happens.” I then gave orders to my Spaniard to go and fetch the belongings which were absolutely necessary to me.

At midnight the ambassador came in; we were still up, and he seemed pleased that his mistress had sheltered me. He assured me that my plea had been laid before the sovereign, but during the three days I was in the house I heard no more about it.

On the fourth day, whilst I was pondering as to how I should act, the ambassador received a letter from a minister requesting him, on behalf of the sovereign, to dismiss me from his house, as I had a suit pending with certain officers of his highness, and whilst I was with the ambassador justice could not take its course. The ambassador gave me the letter, and I saw that the minister promised that strict justice should be done me. There was no help for it; I had to make up my mind to return to my inn, but the Binetti was so enraged that she began to scold her lover, at which he laughed, saying, with perfect truth, that he could not keep me there in defiance of the prince.

I re-entered the inn without meeting anyone, but when I had had my dinner and was just going to see my counsel an officer served me with a summons, which was interpreted to me by my landlord, which ordered me to appear forthwith before the notary appointed to take my deposition. I went to him with the officer of the court, and spent two hours with the notary, who wrote down my deposition in German while I gave it in Latin. When it was done he told me to sign my name; to which I answered that I must decline to sign a document I did not understand. He insisted on my doing it, but I was immovable. He then got in a rage and said I ought to be ashamed of myself for suspecting a notary’s honour. I replied calmly that I had no doubts as to his honour, but that I acted from principle, and that as I did not understand what he had written I refused to sign it. I left him, and was accompanied by the officer to my own counsel, who said I had done quite right, and promised to call on me the next day to receive my power of attorney.

"And when I have done that," he said, "your business will be mine."

I was comforted by this man, who inspired me with confidence, and went back to the hotel, where I made a good supper and went tranquilly to sleep. Next morning, however, when I awoke, my Spaniard announced an officer who had followed him, and told me in good French that I must not be astonished to find myself a prisoner in my room, for being a stranger and engaged in a suit at law it was only right that the opposite party should be assured that I would not escape before judgment was given. He asked very politely for my sword, and to my great regret I was compelled to give it him. The hilt was of steel, exquisitely chased; it was a present from Madame d'Urfe, and was worth at least fifty louis.

I wrote a note to my counsel to tell him what had happened; he came to see me and assured me that I should only be under arrest for a few days.

As I was obliged to keep my room, I let my friends know of my confinement, and I received visits from dancers and ballet-girls, who were the only decent people I was acquainted with in that wretched Stuttgart, where I had better never have set foot. My situation was not pleasant to contemplate: I had been drugged, cheated, robbed, abused, imprisoned, threatened with a mulct of a hundred thousand francs, which would have stripped me to my shirt, as nobody knew the contents of my pocket-book. I could think of nothing else. I had written to Madame the Gardella, but to no purpose, as I got no answer. All the consolation I got was from Binetti, Toscani, and Baletti, who dined or supped with me every day. The three rascals came to see me one by one, and each tried to get me to give him money unknown to the other two, and each promised that if I would do that, he would get me out of the difficulty. Each would have been content with three or four hundred louis, but even if I had given that sum to one of them I had no guarantee that the others would desist from their persecution. Indeed, if I had done so I should have given some ground to their pretensions, and bad would have been made worse. My answer was that they wearied me, and that I should be glad if they would desist from visiting me.

On the fifth day of my arrest the duke left for Frankfort; and the same day Binetti came and told me from her lover that the duke had promised the officers not to interfere, and that I was therefore in danger of an iniquitous sentence. His advice was to neglect no means of getting out of the difficulty, to sacrifice all my property, diamonds, and jewellery, and thus to obtain a release from my enemies. The Binetti, like a wise woman, disliked this counsel, and I relished it still less, but she had to perform her commission.

I had jewellery and lace to the value of more than a hundred thousand francs, but I could not resolve to make the sacrifice. I did not know which way to turn or where to go, and while I was in this state of mind my barrister came in. He spoke as follows:

"Sir, all my endeavors on your behalf have been unsuccessful. There is a party against you which seems to have support in some high quarter, and which silences the voice of justice. It is my duty to warn you that unless you find some way of arranging matters with these rascals you are a ruined man. The judgment given by the police magistrate, a rascal like the rest of them, is of a summary character, for as a stranger you will not be allowed to have recourse to the delays of the law. You would require bail to do that. They have managed to procure witnesses who swear that you are a professional gamester, that it was you who seduced the three officers into the house of your countryman Peccini, that it is not true that your wine was drugged that you did not lose your watches nor your snuff-box, for, they say, these articles will be found in your mails when your goods are sold. For that you will only have to wait till to-morrow or the day after, and do not think that I am deceiving you in any particular, or you will be sorry for it. They will come here and empty your mails, boxes, and pockets, a list will be made, and they will be sold by auction the same day. If the sum realized is greater than the debt the surplus will go in costs, and you may depend upon it that a very small sum will be returned to you; but if, on the other hand, the sum is not sufficient to pay everything, including the debt, costs, expenses of the auction, etc., you will be enrolled as a common soldier in the forces of His Most Serene Highness. I heard it said to the officer, who is your greatest creditor, that the four Louis enlistment money would be taken into account, and that the duke would be glad to get hold of such a fine man."

The barrister left me without my noticing him. I was so petrified by what he had said. I was in such a state of collapse that in less than an hour all the liquids in my body must have escaped. I, a common soldier in the army of a petty sovereign like the duke, who only existed by the horrible traffic in human flesh which he carried on after the manner of the Elector of Hesse. I, despoiled by those knaves, the victim of an iniquitous sentence. Never! I would endeavour to hit upon some plan to gain time.

I began by writing to my chief creditor that I had decided to come to an agreement with them, but I wished them all to wait upon my notary, with witnesses, to put a formal close to the action and render me a free man again.

I calculated that one of them was sure to be on duty on the morrow, and thus I should gain a day at any rate. In the mean time I hoped to discover some way of escape.

I next wrote to the head of the police, whom I styled "your excellency" and "my lord," begging him to vouchsafe his all-powerful protection. I told him that I had resolved on selling all my property to put an end to the suit which threatened to overwhelm me, and I begged him to suspend the proceedings, the cost of which could only add to my difficulties. I also asked him to send me a trustworthy man to value my effects as soon as I had come to an agreement with my creditors, with whom I begged for his good offices. When I had done I sent my Spaniard to deliver the letters.

The officer to whom I had written, who pretended that I was his debtor to the amount of two thousand Louis, came to see me after dinner. I was in bed; and I told him I thought I had fever. He began to offer his sympathy, and, genuine or not, I was pleased with it. He told me he had just had some conversation with the chief of the police, who had shewn him my letter.

"You are very wise," said he, "in consenting to a composition, but we need not all three be present. I have full powers from the other two, and that will be sufficient for the notary:"

"I am in bad enough case," I replied, "for you to grant me the favour of seeing you all together; I cannot think you will refuse me."

"Well, well, you shall be satisfied, but if you are in a hurry to leave Stuttgart I must warn you that we cannot come before Monday, for we are on duty for the next four days."

"I am sorry to hear it, but I will wait. Give me your word of honour that all proceedings shall be suspended in the mean time."

"Certainly; here is my hand, and you may reckon on me. In my turn I have a favour to ask. I like your post-chaise; will you let me have it for what it cost you?"

"With pleasure."

"Be kind enough to call the landlord, and tell him in my presence that the carriage belongs to me."

I had the landlord upstairs and did as the rascal had asked me, but mine host told him that he could dispose of it after he had paid for it, and with that he turned his back on him and left the room.

"I am certain of having the chaise," said the officer, laughing. He then embraced me, and went away.

I had derived so much pleasure from my talk with him that I felt quite another man. I had four days before me; it was a rare piece of good luck.

Some hours after, an honest-looking fellow who spoke Italian well came to tell me, from the chief of police, that my creditors would meet on the ensuing Monday, and that he himself was appointed to value my goods. He advised me to make it a condition of the agreement that my goods should not be sold by auction, and that my creditors should consider his valuation as final and binding. He told me that I should congratulate myself if I followed his advice.

I told him that I would not forget his services, and begged him to examine my mails and my jewel-box. He examined everything and told me that my lace alone was worth twenty thousand francs. "In all," he added, "your goods are worth more than a hundred thousand francs, but I promise to tell your adversaries another story, Thus, if you can persuade them to take half their debt, you will get off with half your effects."

"In that ease," I said, "you shall have fifty louis, and here are six as an earnest."

"I am grateful to you, and you can count upon my devotion. The whole town and the duke as well know your creditors to be knaves, but they have their reasons for refusing to see their conduct in its true light."

I breathed again, and now all my thoughts were concentrated on making my escape with all I possessed, my poor chaise excepted. I had a difficult task before me, but not so difficult a one as my flight from The Leads, and the recollection of my great escape gave me fresh courage.

My first step was to ask Toscani, Baletti, and the dancer Binetti to supper, as I had measures to concert with these friends of mine, whom I could rely on, and who had nothing to fear from the resentment of three rascals.

After we had had a good supper I told them how the affair stood, and that I was determined to escape, and to carry my goods with me. "And now," I said, "I want your advice."

After a brief silence Binetti said if I could get to his house I could lower myself down from a window, and once on the ground I should be outside the town walls and at a distance of a hundred paces from the high road, by which I could travel post and be out of the duke's dominions by daybreak. Thereupon Baletti opened the window and found that it would be impossible to escape that way, on account of a wooden roof above a shop. I looked out also, and seeing that he was right I said that I should no doubt hit on some way of making my escape from the inn, but what troubled me chiefly was my luggage. The Toscani then said: —

"You will have to abandon your mails, which you could not take off without attracting attention, and you must send all your effects to my house. I engage to deliver safely whatever you may put in my care. I will take away your effects under my clothes in several journeys, and I can begin to-night."

Baletti thought this idea a good one, and said that to do it the quicker his wife would come and help. We fixed on this plan, and I promised Binetti to be with him at midnight on Sunday, even if I had to stab the sentry, who was at my door all day, but who went away at night after locking me in. Baletti said he would provide me with a faithful servant, and a post-chaise with swift horses, which would take my effects in other mails. To make the best use of the time, the Toscani began to load herself, putting two of my suits of clothes under her dress. For the next few days my friends served me so well that, at midnight on Saturday, my mails and my dressing case were empty; I kept back all the jewellery intending to carry it in my pocket.

On Sunday, the Toscani brought me the keys of the two mails, in which she had put my goods; and Baletti came also to tell me that all the necessary measures had been taken, and that I should find a post-chaise, under the charge of his servant, waiting for me on the high road. So far good, and the reader shall now hear how I contrived to escape from my inn.

The sentry confined himself to a small ante-chamber, where he walked up and down, without ever coming into my room, except at my invitation. As soon as he heard that I had gone to bed he locked the door, and went off till the next day. He used to sup on a little table in a corner of the ante-room; his food being sent out by me. Profiting by my knowledge of his habits, I gave my Spaniard the following instructions:

“After supper, instead of going to bed, I shall hold myself in readiness for leaving my room, and I shall leave it when I see the light extinguished in the ante-room, while I shall take care that my candle be so placed as not to shew any light outside, or to reflect my shadow. Once out of my room, I shall have no difficulty in reaching the stairs, and my escape will be accomplished. I shall go to Binetti’s, leave the town by his house, and wait for you at Furstenburg. No one can hinder you from joining me in the course of a day or two. So when you see me ready in my room, and this will be whilst the sentry is having his supper, put out the candle on the table: you can easily manage to do so whilst snuffing it. You will then take it to re-light it, and I shall seize that moment to get off in the darkness. When you conclude that I have got out of the ante-room, you can come back to the soldier with the lighted candle, and you can help him to finish his bottle. By that time I shall be safe, and when you tell him I have gone to bed he will come to the door, wish me good night, and after locking the door and putting the key in his pocket he will go away with you. It is not likely that he will come in and speak to me when he hears I have gone to bed.”

Nevertheless, as he might possibly take it into his head to come into the room, I carefully arranged a wig-block in a night-cap on the pillow, and huddled up the coverlet so as to deceive a casual glance.

All my plans were successful, as I heard afterwards from my Spaniard. Whilst he was drinking with the sentry I was getting on my great coat, girding on my hanger (I had no longer a sword), and putting my loaded pistols in my pocket. As soon as the darkness told me that Le Duc had put out the candle I went out softly, and reached the staircase without making the least noise. Once there the rest was easy, for the stair led into the passage, and the passage to the main door, which was always open till nearly midnight.

I stepped out along the street, and at a quarter to twelve I got to Binetti's, and found his wife looking out for me at the window. When I was in the room, whence I intended to escape, we lost no time. I threw my overcoat to Baletti, who was standing in the ditch below, up to the knees in mud, and binding a strong cord round my waist I embraced the Binetti and Baletti's wife, who lowered me down as gently as possible. Baletti received me in his arms, I cut the cord, and after taking my great coat I followed his footsteps. We strode through the mud, and going along a hedge we reached the high road in a state of exhaustion, although it was not more than a hundred paces as the crow flies from where we stood to the house. At a little distance off, beside a small wayside inn, we found the postchaise in which sat Baletti's servant. He got out, telling us that the postillion had just gone into the inn to have a glass of beer and light his pipe. I took the good servant's place, and gave him a reward, and begged them both to be gone, saying I would manage all the rest myself.

It was April and, 1760 — my birthday — and a remarkable period in my career, although my whole life has been filled with adventures, good or bad.

I had been in the carriage for two or three minutes when the postillion came and asked me if we had much longer to wait. He thought he was speaking to the same person that he had left in the chaise, and I did not undeceive him. “Drive on,” I answered, “and make one stage of it from here to Tubingen, without changing horses at Waldenbach.” He followed my instructions, and we went along at a good pace, but I had a strong inclination to laugh at the face he made when he saw me at Tubingen. Baletti's servant was a youth, and slightly built; I was tall, and quite a man. He opened his eyes to their utmost width, and told me I was not the same gentleman that was in the carriage when he started. “You're drunk,” said I, putting in his hand four times what he was accustomed to get, and the poor devil did not say a word. Who has not experienced the persuasive influence of money? I went on my journey, and did not stop till I reached Furstenburg, where I was quite safe.

I had eaten nothing on the way, and by the time I got to the inn I was dying of hunger. I had a good supper brought to me, and then I went to bed and slept well. As soon as I awoke I wrote to my three rascals. I promised to wait ten days for them at the place from which I dated the letter, and I challenged them to a duel a l'outrance, swearing that I would publish their cowardice all over Europe if they refused to measure swords with me. I next wrote to the Toscani, to Baletti, and to the good-natured mistress of the Austrian ambassador, commending Le Duc to their care, and thanking them for their friendly help.

The three rascals did not come, but the landlord's two daughters, both of them pretty, made me pass the three days very agreeably.

On the fourth day, towards noon, I had the pleasure of seeing my faithful Spaniard riding into the town carrying his portmanteau on his saddle.

“Sir,” said he, “all Stuttgart knows you to be here, and I fear, lest the three officers who were too cowardly to accept your challenge may have you assassinated. If you are wise you will set out for Switzerland forthwith.”

“That's cowardly, my lad,” said I. “Don't be afraid about me, but tell me all that happened after my escape.”

“As soon as you were gone, sir, I carried out your instructions, and helped the poor devil of a sentry to empty his bottle, though he would have willingly dispensed with my assistance in the matter; I then told him you had gone to bed, and he locked the door as usual, and went away after shaking me by the hand. After he had gone I went to bed. Next morning the worthy man was at his post by nine o'clock, and at ten the three officers came, and on my telling them that you were still asleep they went away, bidding me come to a coffee-house, and summon them when you got up. As they waited and waited to no purpose, they came again at noon, and told the soldier to open the door. What followed amused me, though I was in some danger in the midst of the rascals.

“They went in, and taking the wig-block for your head they came up to the bed and politely wished you good morning. You took no notice, so one of them proceeded to give you a gentle shake, and the bauble fell and rolled along the floor. I roared with laughter at the sight of their amazement.

"'You laugh, do you, rascal? Tell us where your master is.' And to give emphasis to their words they accompanied them with some strokes of the cane.

"I was not going to stand this sort of thing, so I told them, with an oath, that if they did not stop I should defend myself, adding that I was not my master's keeper, and advising them to ask the sentry.

"The sentry on his part swore by all the saints that you must have escaped by the window, but in spite of this a corporal was summoned, and the poor man was sent to prison.

"The clamour that was going on brought up the landlord, who opened your mails, and on finding them empty said that he would be well enough paid by your postchaise, replying only with a grin to the officer who pretended you had given it him.

"In the midst of the tumult a superior officer came up, who decided that you must have escaped through the window, and ordered the sentry to be set at liberty on the spot. Then came my turn, for, as I kept on laughing and answered all questions by 'I don't know,' these gentleman had me taken to prison, telling me I should stay there till I informed them where you, or at least your effects, could be found.

"The next day one of them came to the prison, and told me that unless I confessed I should undoubtedly be sent to the galleys.

"'On the faith of a Spaniard,' I answered, I know nothing, but if I did it would be all the same to you, for no one can make an honest servant betray his master.

"At this the rascal told the turnkey to give me a taste of the lash, and after this had been done I was set at liberty.

"My back was somewhat scarified, but I had the proud consciousness of having done my duty, and I went back and slept at the inn, where they were glad to see me. Next morning everyone knew you were here and had sent a challenge to the three sharpers, but the universal opinion was that they were too knowing to risk their lives by meeting you. Nevertheless, Madame Baletti told me to beg you to leave Furstenburg, as they might very likely have you assassinated. The landlord sold your chaise and your mails to the Austrian ambassador, who, they say, let you escape from a window in the apartment occupied by his mistress. No one offered to prevent me coming here.

“Three hours after Le Duc’s arrival I took post and went to Schaffhaus, and from there to Zurich, with hired horses, as there are no posts in Switzerland. At Zurich I put up at the ‘Sward,’ an excellent inn.

“After supper, powdering over my arrival in Zurich where I had dropped from the clouds as it were, I began, to reflect seriously upon my present situation and the events of my past life. I recalled my misfortunes and scrutinized my conduct; and was not long in concluding that all I had suffered was through my own fault, and that when fortune would have crowned me with happiness I had persistently trifled that happiness away. I had just succeeded in escaping from a trap where I might have perished, or at least have been overwhelmed with shame, and I shuddered at the thought. I resolved to be no more fortune’s plaything, but to escape entirely from her hands. I calculated my assets and found I was possessed of a hundred thousand crowns. ‘With that,’ said I, ‘I can live secure amidst the changes and chances of this life, and I shall at last experience true happiness.’”

I went to bed pondering over these fancies, and my sleep was full of happy dreams. I saw myself dwelling in a retired spot amidst peace and plenty. I thought I was surrounded on all sides by a fair expanse of country which belonged to me, where I enjoyed that freedom the world cannot give. My dreams had all the force of reality, till a sudden awakening at day-break came to give them the lie. But the imaginary bliss I had enjoyed had so taken my fancy that I could not rest till I realized it. I arose, dressed myself hastily, and went out, fasting, without knowing where I was going.

I walked on and on, absorbed in contemplation, and did not really awake till I found myself in a ravine between two lofty mountains. Stepping forward I reached a valley surrounded by mountains on all sides, and in the distance a fine church, attached to a pile of buildings, magnificently situated. I guessed it to be a monastery, and I made my way towards it.

The church door was open, and I went in and was amazed at the rich marbles and the beauty of the altars; and, after hearing the last mass, I went to the sacristy and found myself in a crowd of Benedictines.

The abbot, whom I recognized by his cross, came towards me and asked if I wished to see the church and monastery. I replied that I should be delighted, and he, with two other brethren, offered to shew me all. I saw their rich ornaments, chasubles embroidered with gold and pearls, the sacred vessels adorned with diamonds and other precious stones, a rich balustrade, etc.

As I understood German very imperfectly and the Swiss dialect (which is hard to acquire and bears the same relation to German that Genoese has to Italian) not at all, I began to speak Latin, and asked the abbot if the church had been built for long. Thereupon the very reverend father entered into a long history, which would have made me repent my inquisitiveness if he had not finished by saying that the church was consecrated by Jesus Christ Himself. This was carrying its foundation rather far back, and no doubt my face expressed some surprise, for to convince me of the truth of the story the abbot bade me follow him into the church, and there on a piece of marble pavement he shewed me the imprint of the foot of Jesus, which He had left there at the moment of the consecration, to convince the infidels and to save the bishop the trouble of consecrating the church.

The abbot had had this divinely revealed to him in a dream, and going into the church to verify the vision he saw the print of the Divine Foot, and gave thanks to the Lord.

EPISODE 14 — SWITZERLAND

CHAPTER XIII

I Resolve to Become a Monk — I go to Confession — Delay of a Fortnight — Giustiniani, the Apostle Capuchin — I Alter my Mind; My Reasons — My Pranks at the Inn — I Dine With the Abbot

The cool way in which the abbot told these cock-and-bull stories gave me an inclination to laughter, which the holiness of the place and the laws of politeness had much difficulty in restraining. All the same I listened with such an attentive air that his reverence was delighted with me and asked where I was staying.

“Nowhere,” said I; “I came from Zurich on foot, and my first visit was to your church.”

I do not know whether I pronounced these words with an air of compunction, but the abbot joined his hands and lifted them to heaven, as if to thank God for touching my heart and bringing me there to lay down the burden of my sins. I have no doubt that these were his thoughts, as I have always had the look of a great sinner.

The abbot said it was near noon and that he hoped I would do him the honour of dining with him, and I accepted with pleasure, for I had had nothing to eat and I knew that there is usually good cheer in such places. I did not know where I was and I did not care to ask, being willing to leave him under the impression that I was a pilgrim come to expiate my sins.

On our way from the church the abbot told me that his monks were fasting, but that we should eat meat in virtue of a dispensation he had received from Benedict XIV., which allowed him to eat meat all the year round with his guests. I replied that I would join him all the more willingly as the Holy Father had given me a similar dispensation. This seemed to excite his curiosity about myself, and when we got to his room, which did not look the cell of a penitent, he hastened to shew me the brief, which he had framed and glazed and hung up opposite the table so that the curious and scrupulous might have it in full view.

As the table was only laid for two, a servant in full livery came in and brought another cover; and the humble abbot then told me that he usually had his chancellor with him at dinner, “for,” said he, “I have a chancery, since as abbot of Our Lady of Einsiedel I am a prince of the Holy Roman Empire.”

This was a relief to me, as I now knew where I was, and I no longer ran the risk of shewing my ignorance in the course of conversation.

This monastery (of which I had heard before) was the Loretto of the Mountains, and was famous for the number of pilgrims who resorted to it.

In the course of dinner the prince — abbot asked me where I came from, if I were married, if I intended to make a tour of Switzerland, adding that he should be glad to give me letters of introduction. I replied that I was a Venetian, a bachelor, and that I should be glad to accept the letters of introduction he had kindly offered me, after I had had a private conference with him, in which I desired to take his advice on my conscience.

Thus, without premeditation, and scarcely knowing what I was saying, I engaged to confess to the abbot.

This was my way. Whenever I obeyed a spontaneous impulse, whenever I did anything of a sudden, I thought I was following the laws of my destiny, and yielding to a supreme will. When I had thus plainly intimated to him that he was to be my confessor, he felt obliged to speak with religious fervour, and his discourses seemed tolerable enough during a delicate and appetising repast, for we had snipe and woodcock; which made me exclaim, —

“What! game like that at this time of year?”

“It’s a secret,” said he, with a pleased smile, “which I shall be glad to communicate to you.”

The abbot was a man of taste, for though he affected sobriety he had the choicest wines and the most delicious dishes on the table. A splendid salmon-trout was brought, which made him smile with pleasure, and seasoning the good fare with a jest, he said in Latin that we must taste it as it was fish, and that it was right to fast a little.

While he was talking the abbot kept a keen eye on me, and as my fine dress made him feel certain that I had nothing to ask of him he spoke at ease.

When dinner was over the chancellor bowed respectfully and went out. Soon after the abbot took me over the monastery, including the library, which contained a portrait of the Elector of Cologne in semi-ecclesiastical costume. I told him that the portrait was a good though ugly likeness, and drew out of my pocket the gold snuffbox the prince had given me, telling him that it was a speaking likeness. He looked at it with interest, and thought his highness had done well to be taken in the dress of a grand-master. But I perceived that the elegance of the snuff-box did no harm to the opinion the abbot had conceived of me. As for the library, if I had been alone it would have made me weep. It contained nothing under the size of folio, the newest books were a hundred years old, and the subject-matter of all these huge books was solely theology and controversy. There were Bibles, commentators, the Fathers, works on canon law in German, volumes of annals, and Hoffman's dictionary.

"I suppose your monks have private libraries of their own," I said, "which contain accounts of travels, with historical and scientific works."

"Not at all," he replied; "my monks are honest folk, who are content to do their duty, and to live in peace and sweet ignorance."

I do not know what happened to me at that moment, but a strange whim came into my head — I would be a monk, too. I said nothing about it at the moment, but I begged the abbot to take me to his private chamber.

"I wish to make a general confession of all my sins," said I, "that I may obtain the benefit of absolution, and receive the Holy Eucharist on the morrow."

He made no answer, but led the way to a pretty little room, and without requiring me to kneel down said he was ready to hear me.

I sat down before him and for three consecutive hours I narrated scandalous histories unnumerable, which, however, I told simply and not spicily, since I felt ascetically disposed and obliged myself to speak with a contrition I did not feel, for when I recounted my follies I was very far from finding the remembrance of them disagreeable.

In spite of that, the serene or reverend abbot believed, at all events, in my attrition, for he told me that since by the appointed means I had once more placed myself in a state of grace, contrition would be perfected in me.

According to the good abbot, and still more according to me, without grace contrition is impossible.

After he had pronounced the sacramental words which take away the sins of men, he advised me to retire to the chamber he had appointed for me, to pass the rest of the day in prayer, and to go to bed at an early hour, but he added that I could have supper if I was accustomed to that meal. He told me that I might communicate at the first mass next morning, and with that we parted.

I obeyed with a docility which has puzzled me ever since, but at the time I thought nothing of it. I was left alone in a room which I did not even examine, and there I pondered over the idea which had come into my head before making my confession; and I quite made up my mind that chance, or rather my good genius, had led me to that spot, where happiness awaited me, and where I might shelter all my days from the tempests of the world.

“Whether I stay here,” said I, “depends on myself alone, as I am sure the abbot will not refuse me the cowl if I give him ten thousand crowns for my support.”

All that was needed to secure my happiness seemed a library of my own choosing, and I did not doubt but that the abbot would let me have what books I pleased if I promised to leave them to the monastery after my death.

As to the society of the monks, the discord, envy, and all the bickerings inseparable from such a mode of life, I thought I had nothing to pass in that way, since I had no ambitions which could rouse the jealousy of the other monks. Nevertheless, despite my fascination, I foresaw the possibility of repentance, and I shuddered at the thought, but I had a cure for that also.

“When I ask for the habit,” I said, “I will also ask that my novitiate be extended for ten years, and if repentance do not come in ten years it will not come at all. I shall declare that I do not wish for any cure or any ecclesiastical dignity. All I want is peace and leave to follow my own tastes, without scandalising anyone.” I thought: I could easily remove any objections which might be made to the long term of my novitiate, by agreeing, in case I changed my mind, to forfeit the ten thousand crowns which I would pay in advance.

I put down this fine idea in writing before I went to bed; and in the morning, finding myself unshaken in my resolve, after I had communicated I gave my plan to the abbot, who was taking chocolate in his room.

He immediately read my plan, and without saying anything put it on the table, and after breakfast he walked up and down the room and read it again, and finally told me that he would give me an answer after dinner.

I waited till night with the impatience of a child who has been promised toys on its birthday — so completely and suddenly can an infatuation change one’s nature. We had as good a dinner as on the day before, and when we had risen from the table the good abbot said,

“My carriage is at the door to take you to Zurich. Go, and let me have a fortnight to think it over. I will bring my answer in person. In the meanwhile here are two sealed letters, which please deliver yourself.”

I replied that I would obey his instructions and that I would wait for him at the “Sword,” in the hope that he would deign to grant my wishes. I took his hand, which he allowed me to kiss, and I then set out for Zurich.

As soon as my Spaniard saw me the rascal began to laugh. I guessed what he was thinking, and asked him what he was laughing at.

“I am amazed to see that no sooner do you arrive in Switzerland than you contrive to find some amusement which keeps you away for two whole days.”

“Ah, I see; go and tell the landlord that I shall want the use of a good carriage for the next fortnight, and also a guide on whom I can rely.”

My landlord, whose name was Ote, had been a captain, and was thought a great deal of at Zurich. He told me that all the carriages in the neighbourhood were uncovered. I said they would do, as there was nothing better to be had, and he informed me I could trust the servant he would provide me with.

Next morning I took the abbot's letters. One was for M. Orelli and the other for a M. Pestalozzi, neither of whom I found at home; but in the afternoon they both called on me, asked me to dinner, and made me promise to come with them the same evening to a concert. This is the only species of entertainment allowed at Zurich, and only members of the musical society can be present, with the exception of strangers, who have to be introduced by a member, and are then admitted on the payment of a crown. The two gentlemen both spoke in very high terms of the Abbot of Einsiedel.

I thought the concert a bad one, and got bored at it. The men sat on the right hand and the women on the left. I was vexed with this arrangement, for in spite of my recent conversation I saw three or four ladies who pleased me, and whose eyes wandered a good deal in my direction. I should have liked to make love to them, to make the best of my time before I became a monk.

When the concert was over, men and women went out together, and the two citizens presented me to their wives and daughters, who looked pleasant, and were amongst those I had noticed.

Courtesy is necessarily cut short in the street, and, after I had thanked the two gentlemen, I went home to the "Sword."

Next day I dined with M. Orelli, and I had an opportunity for doing justice to his daughter's amiability without being able to let her perceive how she had impressed me. The day after, I played the same part with M. Pestalozzi, although his charming daughter was pretty enough to excite my gallantry. But to my own great astonishment I was a mirror of discretion, and in four days that was my character all over the town. I was quite astonished to find myself accosted in quite a respectful manner, to which I was not accustomed; but in the pious state of mind I was in, this confirmed me in the belief that my idea of taking the cowl had been a Divine inspiration. Nevertheless, I felt listless and weary, but I looked upon that as the inevitable consequence of so complete a change of life, and thought it would disappear when I grew more accustomed to goodness.

In order to put myself, as soon as possible, on an equality with my future brethren, I passed three hours every morning in learning German. My master was an extraordinary man, a native of Genoa, and an apostate Capuchin. His name was Giustiniani. The poor man, to whom I gave six francs every morning, looked upon me as an angel from heaven, although I, with the enthusiasm of a devotee, took him for a devil of hell, for he lost no opportunity of throwing a stone at the religious orders. Those orders which had the highest reputation, were, according to him, the worst of all, since they led more people astray. He styled monks in general as a vile rabble, the curse of the human race.

"But," said I to him one day, "you will confess that Our Lady of Einsiedel …"

"What!" replied the Genoese, without letting me finish my remark, "do you think I should make an exception in favour of a set of forty ignorant, lazy, vicious, idle, hypocritical scoundrels who live bad lives under the cloak of humility, and eat up the houses of the poor simpletons who provide for them, when they ought to be earning their own bread?"

"But how about his reverend highness the abbot?"

"A stuck-up peasant who plays the part of a prince, and is fool enough to think himself one."

"But he is a prince."

"As much a prince as I am. I look upon him as a mere buffoon."

"What has he done to you?"

"Nothing; but he is a monk."

"He is a friend of mine."

"I cannot retract what I have said, but I beg your pardon."

This Giustiniani had a great influence upon me, although I did not know it, for I thought my vocation was sure. But my idea of becoming a monk at Einsiedel came to an end as follows:

The day before the abbot was coming to see me, at about six o'clock in the evening, I was sitting at my window, which looked out on the bridge, and gazing at the passers-by, when all at once a carriage and four came up at a good pace and stopped at the inn. There was no footman on it, and consequently the waiter came out and opened the door, and I saw four well-dressed women leave the carriage. In the first three I saw nothing noticeable, but the fourth, who was dressed in a riding-habit, struck me at once with her elegance and beauty. She was a brunette with fine and well-set eyes, arched eyebrows, and a complexion in which the hues of the lily and the rose were mingled. Her bonnet was of blue satin with a silver fillet, which gave her an air I could not resist. I stretched out from the window as far as I could, and she lifted her eyes and looked at me as if I had bade her do so. My position obliged me to look at her for half a minute; too much for a modest woman, and more than was required to set me all ablaze.

I ran and took up my position at the window of my ante-chamber, which commanded a view of the staircase, and before long I saw her running by to rejoin her three companions. When she got opposite to my window she chanced to turn in that direction, and on seeing me cried out as if she had seen a ghost; but she soon recollected herself and ran away, laughing like a madcap, and rejoined the other ladies who were already in their room.

Reader, put yourself in my place, and tell me how I could have avoided this meeting. And you who would bury yourselves in monastic shades, persevere, if you can, after you have seen what I saw at Zurich on April 23rd.

I was in such a state of excitement that I had to lie down on my bed. After resting a few minutes, I got up and almost unconsciously went towards the passage window and saw the waiter coming out of the ladies' room.

"Waiter," said I, "I will take supper in the dining-room with everybody else."

"If you want to see those ladies, that won't do, as they have ordered their supper to be brought up to them. They want to go to bed in good time as they are to leave at day-break."

"Where are they going?"

"To Our Lady of Einsiedel to pay their vows."

"Where do they come from?"

"From Soleure."

"What are their names?"

"I don't know."

I went to lie down again, and thought how I could approach the fair one of my thoughts. Should I go to Einsiedel, too? But what could I do when I got there? These ladies are going to make their confessions; I could not get into the confessional. What kind of a figure should I cut among the monks? And if I were to meet the abbot on the way, how could I help returning with him? If I had had a trusty friend I would have arranged an ambuscade and carried off my charmer. It would have been an easy task, as she had nobody to defend her. What if I were to pluck up my heart and beg them to let me sup in their company? I was afraid of the three devotees; I should meet with a refusal. I judged that my charmer's devotion was more a matter of form than any thing else, as her physiognomy declared her to be a lover of pleasure, and I had long been accustomed to read womens' characters by the play of their features.

I did not know which way to turn, when a happy idea came into my head. I went to the passage window and stayed there till the waiter went by. I had him into the room, and began my discourse by sliding a piece of gold into his hand. I then asked him to lend me his green apron, as I wished to wait upon the ladies at supper.

"What are you laughing at?"

"At your taking such a fancy, sir, though I think I know why."

"You are a sharp fellow."

"Yes, sir, as sharp as most of them; I will get you a new apron. The pretty one asked me who you were."

"What did you tell her?"

"I said you were an Italian; that's all."

"If you will hold your tongue I will double that piece of gold."

"I have asked your Spaniard to help me, sir, as I am single-handed, and supper has to be served at the same time both upstairs and downstairs."

"Very good; but the rascal mustn't come into the room or he would be sure to laugh. Let him go to the kitchen, bring up the dishes, and leave them outside the door."

The waiter went out, and returned soon after with the apron and Le Duc, to whom I explained in all seriousness what he had to do. He laughed like a madman, but assured me he would follow my directions. I procured a carving-knife, tied my hair in a queue, took off my coat, and put on the apron over my scarlet waistcoat ornamented with gold lace. I then looked at myself in the glass, and thought my appearance mean enough for the modest part I was about to play. I was delighted at the prospect, and thought to myself that as the ladies came from Soleure they would speak French.

Le Duc came to tell me that the waiter was going upstairs. I went into the ladies' room and said, "Supper is about to be served, ladies."

"Make haste about it, then," said the ugliest of them, "as we have got to rise before day-break."

I placed the chairs round the table and glanced at my fair one, who looked petrified. The waiter came in, and I helped him to put the dishes on the table, and he then said to me, "Do you stay here, as I have to go downstairs."

I took a plate and stood behind a chair facing the lady, and without appearing to look at her I saw her perfectly, or rather I saw nothing else. She was astonished the others did not give me a glance, and they could not have pleased me better. After the soup I hurried to change her plate, and then did the same office for the rest: they helped themselves to the boiled beef.

While they were eating, I took a boiled capon and cut it up in a masterly manner.

"We have a waiter who knows his work," said the lady of my thoughts.

"Have you been long at this inn?"

"Only a few weeks, madam."

"You wait very well."

"Madam is very good."

I had tucked in my superb ruffles of English point lace, but my frilled shirt front of the same material protruded slightly through my vest, which I had not buttoned carefully. She saw it, and said, "Come here a moment."

"What does madam require?"

"Let me see it. What beautiful lace!"

“So I have been told, madam, but it is very old. An Italian gentleman who was staying here made me a present of it.”

“You have ruffles of the same kind, I suppose?”

“Yes, madam;” and so saying I stretched out my hand, unbuttoning my waistcoat. She gently drew out the ruffle, and seemed to place herself in a position to intoxicate me with the sight of her charms, although she was tightly laced. What an ecstatic moment! I knew she had recognized me, and the thought that I could not carry the masquerade beyond a certain point was a veritable torment to me.

When she had looked a long time, one of the others said,

“You are certainly very curious, my dear, one would think you had never seen lace before.”

At this she blushed.

When the supper was done, the three ugly ladies each went apart to undress, while I took away the dishes, and my heroine began to write. I confess that I was almost infatuated enough to think that she was writing to me; however, I had too high an opinion of her to entertain the idea.

As soon as I had taken away the dishes, I stood by the door in the respectful manner becoming the occasion.

“What are you waiting for?” she said.

“For your orders, madam.”

“Thank you, I don’t want anything.”

“Your boots, madam, you will like them removed before you retire.”

“True, but still I don’t like to give you so much trouble.”

“I am here to attend on you, madam.”

So saying, I knelt on one knee before her, and slowly unplaced her boots while she continued writing. I went farther; I unbuckled her garters, delighting in the contemplation and still more in the touch of her delicately-shaped legs, but too soon for me she turned her head, and said,

“That will do, thank you. I did not notice that you were giving yourself so much trouble. We shall see you to-morrow evening.”

“Then you will sup here, ladies?”

“Certainly.”

I took her boots away, and asked if I should lock the door.

“No, my good fellow,” said she, in the voice of a syren, “leave the key inside.”

Le Duc took the charmer’s boots from me, and said, laughing, —

“She has caught you.”

“What?”

“I saw it all, sir, you played your part as well as any actor in Paris; and I am certain that she will give you a louis to-morrow, but if you don’t hand it over to me I will blow on the whole thing.”

“That’s enough, you rascal; get me my supper as quickly as possible.”

Such are the pleasures which old age no longer allows me to enjoy, except in my memory. There are monsters who preach repentance, and philosophers who treat all pleasures as vanity. Let them talk on. Repentance only befits crimes, and pleasures are realities, though all too fleeting.

A happy dream made me pass the night with the fair lady; doubtless it was a delusion, but a delusion full of bliss. What would I not give now for such dreams, which made my nights so sweet!

Next morning at day-break I was at her door with her boots in my hand just as their coachman came to call them. I asked them, as a matter of form, if they would have breakfast, and they replied merrily that they had made too good a supper to have any appetite at such an early hour. I went out of the room to give them time to dress, but the door was half open, and I saw reflected in the glass the snow-white bosom of my fair one; it was an intoxicating sight. When she had laced herself and put on her dress she called for her boots. I asked if I should put them on, to which she consented with a good grace, and as she had green velvet breeches, she seemed to consider herself as almost a man. And, after all, a waiter is not worth putting one’s self out about. All the worst for him if he dare conceive any hopes from the trifling concessions he receives. His punishment will be severe, for who would have thought he could have presumed so far? As for me, I am now, sad to say, grown old, and enjoy some few privileges of this description, which I relish, though despising myself, and still more those who thus indulge me.

After she had gone I went to sleep again, hoping to see her in the evening. When I awoke I heard that the abbot of Einsiedel was at Zurich, and my landlord told me that his reverend highness would dine with me in my room. I told him that I wished to treat the abbot well, and that he must set the best dinner he could for us.

At noon the worthy prelate was shewn up to my room, and began by complimenting me on the good reputation I had at Zurich, saying that this made him believe that my vocation was a real one.

“The following distich,” he added, “should now become your motto:

“Inveni portum. Spes et fortuna valete;

Nil mihi vobiscum est: ludite nuns alios.”

“That is a translation of two verses from Euripides,” I answered; “but, my lord, they will not serve me, as I have changed my mind since yesterday.”

“I congratulate you,” said he, “and I hope you will accomplish all your desires. I may tell you confidentially that it is much easier to save one’s soul in the world where one can do good to one’s neighbours, than in the convent, where a man does no good to himself nor to anyone else.”

This was not speaking like the hypocrite Guistiniani had described to me; on the contrary, it was the language of a good and sensible man.

We had a princely dinner, as my landlord had made each of the three courses a work of art. The repast was enlivened by an interesting conversation, to which wit and humour were not lacking. After coffee I thanked the abbot with the greatest respect, and accompanied him to his carriage, where the reverend father reiterated his offers of serving me, and thus, well pleased with one another, we parted.

The presence and the conversation of this worthy priest had not for a moment distracted my thoughts from the pleasing object with which they were occupied. So soon as the abbot had gone, I went to the bridge to await the blessed angel, who seemed to have been sent from Soleure with the express purpose of delivering me from the temptation to become a monk, which the devil had put into my heart. Standing on the bridge I built many a fine castle in Spain, and about six in the evening I had the pleasure of seeing my fair traveller once more. I hid myself so as to see without being seen. I was greatly surprised to see them all four looking towards my window. Their curiosity shewed me that the lady had told them of the secret, and with my astonishment there was some admixture of anger. This was only natural, as I not only saw myself deprived of the hope of making any further advances, but I felt that I could no longer play my part of waiter with any confidence. In spite of my love for the lady I would not for the world become the laughing-stock of her three plain companions. If I had interested her in my favour, she would certainly not have divulged my secret, and I saw in her doing so proof positive that she did not want the jest to go any further, or rather of her want of that spirit so necessary to ensure the success of an intrigue. If the three companions of my charmer had had anything attractive about them, I might possibly have persevered and defied misfortune; but in the same measure as beauty cheers my heart, ugliness depresses it. Anticipating the melancholy which I foresaw would result from this disappointment, I went out with the idea of amusing myself, and happening to meet Giustiniani I told him of my misfortune, saying that I should not be sorry to make up for it by a couple of hours of the society of some mercenary beauty.

"I will take you to a house," said he, "where you will find what you want. Go up to the second floor and you will be well received by an old woman, if you whisper my name to her. I dare not accompany you, as I am well known in the town and it might get me into trouble with the police, who are ridiculously strict in these matters. Indeed I advise you to take care that nobody sees you going in."

I followed the ex-Capuchin's advice and waited for the dusk of the evening. I had a good reception, but the supper was poor, and the hours that I spent with two young girls of the working class were tedious. They were pretty enough, but my head was full of my perfidious charmer, and besides, despite their neatness and prettiness, they were wanting in that grace which adds so many charms to pleasure. The liberality of my payment, to which they were not accustomed, captivated the old woman, who said she would get me all the best stuff in the town; but she warned me to take care that nobody saw me going into her house.

When I got back Le Duc told me that I had been wise to slip away, as my masquerade had become generally known, and the whole house, including the landlord, had been eagerly waiting to see me play the part of waiter. “I took your place,” he added. “The lady who has taken your fancy is Madame —— , and I must confess she is vastly fine.”

“Did she ask where the other waiter was?”

“No, but the other ladies asked what had become of you several times.”

“And Madame said nothing?”

“She didn’t open her mouth, but looked sad and seemed to care for nothing, till I said you were away because you were ill.”

“That was stupid of you. Why did you say that?”

“I had to say something.”

“True. Did you untie her shoe?”

“No; she did not want me to do so.”

“Good. Who told you her name?”

“Her coachman. She is just married to a man older than herself.”

I went to bed, but could only think of the indiscretion and sadness of my fair lady. I could not reconcile the two traits in her character. Next day, knowing that she would be starting early, I posted myself at the window to see her get into the carriage, but I took care to arrange the curtain in such a way that I could not be seen. Madame was the last to get in, and pretending that she wanted to see if it rained, she took off her bonnet and lifted her head. Drawing the curtain with one hand, and taking off my cap with the other, I wafted her a kiss with the tips of my fingers. In her turn she bowed graciously, returning my kiss with a good-natured smile.

CHAPTER XIV

I Leave Zurich — Comic Adventure at Baden — Soleure — M. De Chavigni — M. and Madame * * * I Act in a Play — I Counterfeit Sickness to Attain Happiness

M. Mote, my landlord, introduced his two sons to me. He had brought them up like young princes. In Switzerland, an inn-keeper is not always a man of no account. There are many who are as much respected as people of far higher rank are in other countries. But each country has its own manners. My landlord did the honours of the table, and thought it no degradation to make his guests pay for the meal. He was right; the only really degrading thing in the world is vice. A Swiss landlord only takes the chief place at table to see that everyone is properly attended to. If he have a son, he does not sit down with his father, but waits on the guests, with napkin in hand. At Schaffhaus, my landlord's son, who was a captain in the Imperial army, stood behind my chair and changed my plate, while his father sat at the head of the table. Anywhere else the son would have been waited on, but in his father's house he thought, and rightly, that it was an honour to wait.

Such are Swiss customs, of which persons of superficial understanding very foolishly make a jest. All the same, the vaunted honour and loyalty of the Swiss do not prevent them from fleecing strangers, at least as much as the Dutch, but the greenhorns who let themselves be cheated, learn thereby that it is well to bargain before-hand, and then they treat one well and charge reasonably. In this way, when I was at Bale, I baffled the celebrated Imhoff, the landlord of the "Three Kings."

M. Ote complimented me on my waiter's disguise, and said he was sorry not to have seen me officiating, nevertheless, he said he thought I was wise not to repeat the jest. He thanked me for the honour I had done his house, and begged me to do him the additional favour of dining at his table some day before I left. I answered that I would dine with him with pleasure that very day. I did so, and was treated like a prince.

The reader will have guessed that the last look my charmer gave me had not extinguished the fire which the first sight of her had kindled in my breast. It had rather increased my flame by giving me hopes of being better acquainted with her; in short, it inspired me with the idea of going to Soleure in order to give a happy ending to the adventure. I took a letter of credit on Geneva, and wrote to Madame d'Urfe, begging her to give me a written introduction, couched in strong terms to M. de Chavigni, the French ambassador, telling her that the interests of our order were highly involved in my knowing this diplomatist, and requesting her to address letters to me at the post office at Soleure. I also wrote to the Duke of Wurtemburg, but had no answer from him, and indeed he must have found my epistle very unpleasant reading.

I visited the old woman whom Giustiniani had told me of several times before I left Zurich, and although I ought to have been well satisfied as far as physical beauty was concerned, my enjoyment was very limited, as the nymphs I wooed only spoke Swiss dialect — a rugged corruption of German. I have always found that love without speech gives little enjoyment, and I cannot imagine a more unsatisfactory mistress than a mute, were she as lovely as Venus herself.

I had scarcely left Zurich when I was obliged to stop at Baden to have the carriage M. Ote had got me mended. I might have started again at eleven, but on hearing that a young Polish lady on her way to Our Lady of Einseidel was to dine at the common table, I decided to wait; but I had my trouble for nothing, as she turned out to be quite unworthy of the delay.

After dinner, while my horses were being put in, the host's daughter, a pretty girl enough, came into the room and made me waltz with her; it chanced to be a Sunday. All at once her father came in, and the girl fled.

“Sir,” said the rascal, “you are condemned to pay a fine of one louis.”

“Why?”

“For having danced on a holy day.”

“Get out; I won't pay.”

“You will pay, though,” said he, shewing me a great parchment covered with writing I did not understand.

“I will appeal.”

“To whom, sir?”

“To the judge of the place.”

He left the room, and in a quarter of an hour I was told that the judge was waiting for me in an adjoining chamber. I thought to myself that the judges were very polite in that part of the world, but when I got into the room I saw the rascally host buried in a wig and gown.

“Sir,” said he, “I am the judge.”

“Judge and plaintiff too, as far as I can see.”

He wrote in his book, confirming the sentence, and mulcting me in six francs for the costs of the case.

“But if your daughter had not tempted me.” said I, “I should not have danced; she is therefore as guilty as I.”

“Very true, sir; here is a Louis for her.” So saying he took a Louis out of his pocket, put it into a desk beside him, and said; “Now yours.”

I began to laugh, paid my fine, and put off my departure till the morrow.

As I was going to Lucerne I saw the apostolic nuncio (who invited me to dinner), and at Fribourg Comte d’Afri’s young and charming wife; but at ten leagues from Soleure I was a witness of the following curious circumstances.

I was stopping the night in a village, and had made friends with the surgeon, whom I had found at the inn, and while supper, which he was to share with me, was getting ready, we walked about the village together. It was in the dusk of the evening, and at a distance of a hundred paces I saw a man climbing up the wall of a house, and finally vanishing through a window on the first floor.

“That’s a robber,” said I, pointing him out to the surgeon. He laughed and said, —

“The custom may astonish you, but it is a common one in many parts of Switzerland. The man you have just seen is a young lover who is going to pass the night with his future bride. Next morning he will leave more ardent than before, as she will not allow him to go too far. If she was weak enough to yield to his desires he would probably decline to marry her, and she would find it difficult to get married at all."

At Soleure I found a letter from Madame d'Urfe, with an enclosure from the Duc de Choiseul to the ambassador, M. de Chavigni. It was sealed, but the duke's name was written below the address.

I made a Court toilet, took a coach, and went to call on the ambassador. His excellency was not at home, so I left my card and the letter. It was a feast-day, and I went to high mass, not so much, I confess, to seek for God as for my charmer, but she was not there. After service I walked around the town, and on my return found an officer who asked me to dinner at the ambassador's.

Madame d'Urfe said that on the receipt of my letter she had gone straightway to Versailles, and that with the help of Madame de Grammont she had got me an introduction of the kind I wanted. This was good news for me, as I desired to cut an imposing figure at Soleure. I had plenty of money, and I knew that this magic metal glittered in the eyes of all. M. de Chavigni had been ambassador at Venice thirty years before, and I knew a number of anecdotes about his adventures there, and I was eager to see what I could make out of him.

I went to his house at the time appointed, and found all his servants in full livery, which I looked upon as a happy omen. My name was not announced, and I remarked that when I came in both sides of the door were opened for me by the page. A fine old man came forward to meet me, and paying me many well-turned compliments introduced me to those present. Then, with the delicate tact of the courtier, pretending not to recollect my name, he drew the Duc de Choiseul's letter from his pocket, and read aloud the paragraph in which the minister desired him to treat me with the utmost consideration. He made me sit on an easy chair at his right hand, and asked me questions to which I could only answer that I was travelling for my pleasure, and that I considered the Swiss nation to be in many respects superior to all other nations whatsoever.

Dinner was served, and his excellency set me on his right hand in a position of equal honour to his own. We were sixteen in company, and behind every chair stood a magnificent lackey in the ambassador's livery. In the course of conversation I got an opportunity of telling the ambassador that he was still spoken of at Venice with the utmost affection.

“I shall always remember,” he said, “the kindness with which the Venetians treated me; but tell me, I beg, the names of those gentlemen who still remember me; they must be quite old now.”

This was what I was waiting for. M. de Malipiero had told me of certain events which had happened during the regency, and M. de Bragadin had informed me of the ambassador’s amours with the celebrated Stringhetta.

His excellency’s fare was perfect, but in the pleasure of conversing I forgot that of eating. I told all my anecdotes so racily that his features expressed the pleasure I was affording him, and when we rose from the table he shook me by the hand, and told me he had not had so agreeable a dinner since he had been at Soleure.

“The recollection of my Venetian gallantries,” said the worthy old man, “makes me recall many a happy moment; I feel quite young again.”

He embraced me, and bade me consider myself as one of his family during my stay at Soleure.

After dinner he talked a good deal about Venice, praising the Government, and saying that there was not a town in the world where a man could fare better, provided he took care to get good oil and foreign wines. About five o’clock he asked me to come for a drive with him, getting into the carriage first to give me the best place.

We got out at a pretty country house where ices were served to us. On our way back he said that he had a large party every evening, and that he hoped I would do him the honour to be present whenever it suited my inclinations, assuring me that he would do his best to amuse me. I was impatient to take part in the assembly, as I felt certain I should see my charmer there. It was a vain hope, however, for I saw several ladies, some old and ugly, some passable, but not one pretty.

Cards were produced, and I soon found myself at a table with a young lady of fair complexion and a plain-looking woman well advanced in years, who seemed, however, not to be destitute of wit. Though I was looed I played on, and I lost five or six hundred fish without opening my lips. When it came to a profit and loss account, the plain woman told me I owed three louis.

“Three louis, madam.”

“Yes, sir; we have been playing at two sous the fish. You thought, perhaps, we were playing for farthings.”

“On the contrary, I thought it was for francs, as I never play lower.” She did not answer this boast of mine, but she seemed annoyed. On rejoining the company after this wearisome game, I proceeded to scrutinize all the ladies present rapidly but keenly, but I could not see her for whom I looked, and was on the point of leaving, when I happened to notice two ladies who were looking at me attentively. I recognized them directly. They were two of my fair one’s companions, whom I had had the honour of waiting on at Zurich. I hurried off, pretending not to recognize them.

Next day, a gentleman in the ambassador’s suite came to tell me that his excellency was going to call on me. I told him that I would not go out till I had the honour of receiving his master, and I conceived the idea of questioning him concerning that which lay next to my heart. However, he spared me the trouble, as the reader will see for himself.

I gave M. de Chavigni the best reception I could, and after we had discussed the weather he told me, with a smile, that he had the most ridiculous affair to broach to me, begging me to credit him when he said that he did not believe it for a moment.

“Proceed, my lord.”

“Two ladies who saw you at my house yesterday told me in confidence, after you had gone, that I should do well to be on my guard, as you were the waiter in an inn at Zurich where they had stayed. They added that they had seen the other waiter by the Aar, and that in all probability you had run away from the inn together; God alone knows why! They said, furthermore, that you slipped away from my house yesterday as soon as you saw them. I told them that even if you were not the bearer of a letter from his grace the Duc de Choiseul I should have been convinced that they were mistaken, and that they should dine with you to-day, if they would accept my invitation. I also hinted that you might have merely disguised yourself as a waiter in the hopes of winning some favours from them, but they rejected the hypothesis as absurd, and said that you could carve a capon and change a plate dexterously enough, but were only a common waiter for all that, adding that with my permission they would compliment you on your skill to-day.

"'Do so, by all means, ladies,' said I, 'M. Casanova and myself will be highly amused.' And now do you mind telling me whether there be any foundation of truth in the whole story?"

"Certainly, my lord, I will tell you all without reserve, but in confidence, as this ridiculous report may injure the honour of one who is dear to me, and whom I would not injure for the world."

"It is true, then? I am quite interested to hear all about it."

"It is true to a certain extent; I hope you don't take me for the real waiter at the 'Sword.'"

"Certainly not, but I supposed you played the part of waiter?"

"Exactly. Did they tell you that they were four in company."

"Ah, I have got it! Pretty Madame was one of the party. That explains the riddle; now I understand everything. But you were quite right in saying that discretion was needful; she has a perfectly blameless reputation."

"Ah! I did not know that. What happened was quite innocent, but it might be so garbled in the telling as to become prejudicial to the honour of a lady whose beauty struck me with admiration."

I told him all the details of the case, adding that I had only come to Soleure in the hopes of succeeding in my suit.

"If that prove an impossibility," said I, "I shall leave Soleure in three or four days; but I will first turn the three ugly companions of my charmer into ridicule. They might have had sense enough to guess that the waiter's apron was only a disguise. They can only pretend to be ignorant of the fact in the hope of getting some advantage over me, and injuring their friend, who was ill advised to let them into the secret."

"Softly, softly, you go too fast and remind me of my own young days. Permit me to embrace you, your story has delighted me. You shall not go away, you shall stay here and court your charmer. To-day you can turn two mischievous women into ridicule, but do it in an easy way. The thing is so straightforward that M. —— will be the first to laugh at it. His wife cannot be ignorant of your love for her, and I know enough of women to pronounce that your disguise cannot have displeased her. She does know of your love?"

"Undoubtedly."

He went away laughing, and at the door of his coach embraced me for the third time.

I could not doubt that my charmer had told the whole story to her three friends as they were returning from Einsiedel to Zurich, and this made the part they had played all the more ill-natured; but I felt that it was to my interest to let their malice pass for wit.

I went to the ambassador's at half-past one, and after making my bow to him I proceeded to greet the company, and saw the two ladies. Thereupon, with a frank and generous air, I went up to the more malicious-looking of the two (she was lame, which may have made me think her more ill-looking) and asked if she recognized me.

"You confess, then, that you are the waiter at the 'Sword'?"

"Well, not quite that, madam, but I confess that I was the waiter for an hour, and that you cruelly disdained to address a single word to me, though I was only a waiter, because I longed for the bliss of seeing you. But I hope I shall be a little more fortunate here, and that you will allow me to pay you my respectful homage."

"This is very wonderful! You played your part so well that the sharpest eye would have been deceived. Now we shall see if you play your new part as well. If you do me the honour to call on me I will give you a good welcome."

After these complimentary speeches, the story became public property, and the whole table was amusing itself with it, when I had the happiness of seeing M. —— and Madame coming into the room.

"There is the good-natured waiter," said she to her husband.

The worthy man stepped forward, and politely thanked me for having done his wife the honour of taking off her boots.

This told me that she had concealed nothing, and I was glad. Dinner was served, M. de Chavigni made my charmer sit at his right hand, and I was placed between my two calumniators. I was obliged to hide my game, so, although I disliked them intensely, I made love to them, hardly raising my eyes to glance at Madame, who looked ravishing. I did not find her husband either as old or as jealous as I had expected. The ambassador asked him and his wife to stay the evening to an impromptu ball, and then said, that in order for me to be able to tell the Duc de Choiseul that I was well amused at Soleure, he would be delighted to have a play, if Madame would act the fair 'Ecossaise' again. She said she should be delighted, but two more actors were wanted.

"That is all right," said the kind old gentleman, "I will play Montrose."

"And I, Murray," I remarked.

My lame friend, angry at this arrangement, which only left her the very bad part of Lady Alton, could not help lancing a shaft at me.

"Oh! why isn't there a waiter's part in the play?" said she, "you would play it so well."

"That is well said, but I hope you will teach me to play Murray even better."

Next morning, I got the words of my part, and the ambassador told me that the ball would be given in my honour. After dinner I went to my inn, and after making an elaborate toilette I returned to the brilliant company.

The ambassador begged me to open the ball, and introduced me to the highest born but not the most beautiful lady in the place. I then danced with all the ladies present until the good-natured old man got me the object of my vows as a partner in the quadrilles, which he did so easily that no one could have made any remark. "Lord Murray," said he, "must dance with no one but Lindane."

At the first pause I took the opportunity of saying that I had only come to Soleure for her sake, that it was for her sake that I had disguised myself at Zurich, and that I hoped she would permit me to pay my addresses to her.

"I cannot invite you to my house," said she, "for certain sufficient reasons; but if you will stay here some time we shall be able to see each other. But I entreat you not to shew me any marked attention in public, for there are those who will spy upon our actions, and it is not pleasant to be talked about."

I was quite satisfied with this, and told her that I would do all in my power to please her, and that the most prying eyes should have nothing to fix on. I felt that the pleasure I looked forward to would be rendered all the sweeter by a tincture of mystery.

I had proclaimed myself as a novice in the mimic art, and had entreated my lame friend to be kind enough to instruct me. I therefore went to her in the morning, but she could only flatter herself that hers was a reflected light, as I had opportunities for paying my court to my charmer in her house, and however great her vanity may have been, she must have had some suspicions of the truth.

This woman was a widow, aged between thirty and forty years, of a jaundiced complexion, and a piercing and malicious aspect. In her efforts to hide the inequality of her legs, she walked with a stiff and awkward air; and, wishing to be thought a wit, she increased her natural dullness by a ceaseless flow of small talk. I persisted in behaving towards her with a great air of respect, and one day she said that, having seen me in the disguise of a waiter, she would not have thought I was a man of a timid nature.

"In what respect do you think me timid?" said I; to which she gave me no answer, but I knew perfectly well what she meant. I was tired of my part, and I had determined to play it no more when we had acted L'Ecossaise.

All the best people at Soleure were present at our first performance. The lame lady was delighted with the horror inspired by her acting; but she might credit a great deal of it to her appearance. M. de Chavigni drew forth the tears of the audience, his acting was said to be better than the great Voltaire's. As for me, I remember how near I was to fainting when, in the third scene of the fifth act, Lindane said to me,

"What! You! You dare to love me?"

She pronounced these words with such fiery scorn that all the spectators applauded vehemently. I was almost put out of countenance, for I thought I detected in her voice an insult to my honour. However, I collected myself in the minute's respite which the loud applause gave me, and I replied, —

"Yes; I adore you! How should I not?"

So pathetically and tenderly did I pronounce these words that the hall rang again with the applause, and the encores from four hundred throats made me repeat the words which, indeed, came from my heart.

In spite of the pleasure we had given to the audience, we judged ourselves not perfect in our parts, and M. de Chavigni advised us to put off our second performance for a couple of days.

“We will have a rehearsal to-morrow at my country house,” said he, “and I beg the favour of all your companies to dinner there.”

However, we all made each other compliments on our acting. My lame friend told me I had played well, but not so well as in the part of waiter, which really suited me admirably. This sarcasm got the laugh on her side, but I returned it by telling her that my performance was a work of art, while her playing of Lady Alton was pure nature. M. de Chavigni told Madame that the spectators were wrong to applaud when she expressed her wonder at my loving her, since she had spoken the words disdainfully; and it was impossible that Lindane could have despised Murray. The ambassador called for me the next day in his carriage, and when we reached his country-house we found all the actors assembled there. His excellency addressed himself in the first place to M. —— , telling him he thought his business was as good as done, and that they would talk about it after dinner. We sat down to table, and afterwards rehearsed the piece without any need of the prompter’s assistance.

Towards evening the ambassador told the company that he would expect them to supper that evening at Soleure, and everyone left with the exception of the ambassador, myself, and M. —— and Madame —— . Just as we were going I had an agreeable surprise.

“Will you come with me,” said the Ambassador to M. —— , “we can talk the matter over at our ease? M. Casanova will have the honour of keeping your wife company in your carriage.”

I gave the fair lady my hand respectfully, and she took it with an air of indifference, but as I was helping her in she pressed my hand with all her might. The reader can imagine how that pressure made my blood circulate like fire in my veins.

Thus we were seated side by side, our knees pressed tenderly against each other. Half an hour seemed like a minute, but it must not be thought that we wasted the time. Our lips were glued together, and were not set apart till we came within ten paces of the ambassador's house, which I could have wished at ten leagues distance. She was the first to get down, and I was alarmed to see the violent blush which overspread her whole face. Such redness looked unnatural; it might betray us; our spring of happiness would soon be dry. The watchful eye of the envious Alton would be fixed upon us, and not in vain; her triumph would outweigh her humiliation. I was at my wits' end.

Love and luck, which have so favoured me throughout the course of my life, came to my aid. I had about me a small box containing hellebore. I opened it as if by instinct, and invited her to take a small pinch. She did so, and I followed her example; but the dose was too strong, and as we were going up the stairs we began to sneeze, and for the next quarter of an hour we continued sneezing. People were obliged to attribute her high colour to the sneezing, or at least no one could give voice to any other suppositions. When the sneezing fit was over, this woman, who was as clever as she was pretty, said her headache was gone, but she would take care another time not to take so strong a dose. I looked out of the corner of my eye at the malicious widow, who said nothing but seemed deep in thought.

This piece of good luck decided me on staying at Soleure till my love was crowned with success, and I determined to take a country house. I shall not have much opinion of my readers if they find themselves in my position — rich, young, independent, full of fire, and having only pleasure to seek for — and do not follow my example. A perfect beauty was before me with whom I was madly in love, and who, I was sure, shared that love. I had plenty of money, and I was my own master. I thought this a much better plan than turning monk, and I was above caring "what people would say." As soon as the ambassador had returned, which he always did at an early hour on account of his advanced age, I left the company and went to see him in his private room. In truth I felt I must give him that confidence which he had so well deserved.

As soon as he saw me he said, —

"Well, well, did you profit by the interview I got you?"

I embraced him, and said, —

“I may hope for everything.”

When I was telling him about the hellebore he was lavish in his compliments on my presence of mind, for, as he said, such an unusual colour would have made people think there had been some kind of a combat — a supposition which would not have tended towards my success. After I had told him all, I imparted my plan.

“I shall do nothing in a hurry,” said I, “as I have to take care that the lady’s honour does not suffer, and I trust to time to see the accomplishment of my wishes. I shall want a pretty country house, a good carriage, two lackeys, a good cook, and a housekeeper. All that I leave to your excellency, as I look upon you as my refuge and guardian angel.”

“To-morrow, without fail, I will see what I can do, and I have good hopes of doing you a considerable service and of rendering you well content with the attractions of Soleure.”

Next day our rehearsal went off admirably, and the day after the ambassador spoke to me as follows:

“So far as I can see, what you are aiming at in this intrigue is the satisfying of your desires without doing any harm to the lady’s reputation. I think I know the nature of your love for her well enough to say that if she told you that your leaving Soleure was necessary to her peace of mind you would leave her at once. You see that I have sounded you well enough to be a competent adviser in this delicate and important affair, to which the most famous events in the annals of diplomacy are not to be compared.”

“Your excellency does not do sufficient justice to a career which has gained you such distinction.”

“That’s because I am an old man, my dear fellow, and have shaken off the rust and dust of prejudices, and am able to see things as they really are, and appreciate them at their true value. But let us return to your love-affair. If you wish to keep it in the dark, you must avoid with the greatest care any action which may awaken suspicion in the minds of people who do not believe that anything is indifferent. The most malicious and censorious will not be able to get anything but the merest chance out of the interview I procured you today, and the accident of the sneezing bout, defy the most ill-natured to draw any deductions; for an eager lover does not begin his suit by sending the beloved one into convulsions. Nobody can guess that your hellebore was used to conceal the blush that your caresses occasioned, since it does not often happen that an amorous combat leaves such traces; and how can you be expected to have foreseen the lady's blushes, and to have provided yourself with a specific against them? In short, the events of to-day will not disclose your secret. M. —— who, although he wishes to pass for a man devoid of jealousy, is a little jealous; M. —— himself cannot have seen anything out of the common in my asking him to return with me, as I had business of importance with him, and he has certainly no reasons for supposing that I should be likely to help you to intrigue with his wife. Furthermore, the laws of politeness would have forbidden me, under any circumstances, offering the lady the place I offered him, and as he prides himself on his politeness he can raise no possible objection to the arrangement which was made. To be sure I am old and you are young — a distinction not unimportant in a husband's eyes." After this exordium, added the good-natured ambassador, with a laugh, "an exordium which I have delivered in the official style of a secretary of state, let us see where we are. Two things are necessary for you to obtain your wished-for bliss. The first thing, which concerns you more particularly, is to make M. —— your friend, and to conceal from him that you have conceived a passion for his wife, and here I will aid you to the best of my ability. The second point concerns the lady's honour; all your relations with her must appear open and above-board. Consider yourself under my protection; you must not even take a country house before we have found out some plan for throwing dust into the eyes of the observant. However, you need not be anxious; I have hit upon a plan.

"You must pretend to be taken ill, but your illness must be of such a kind that your doctor will be obliged to take your word for the symptoms. Luckily, I know a doctor whose sole idea is to order country air for all complaints. This physician, who is about as clever as his brethren, and kills or cures as well as any of them, will come and feel my pulse one of these days. You must take his advice, and for a couple of louis he will write you a prescription with country air as the chief item. He will then inform everybody that your case is serious, but that he will answer for your cure."

"What is his name?"

“Doctor Herrenschwand.”

“What is he doing here? I knew him at Paris; he was Madame du Rumain’s doctor.”

“That is his brother. Now find out some polite complaint, which will do you credit with the public. It will be easy enough to find a house, and I will get you an excellent cook to make your gruel and beef-tea.”

The choice of a complaint cost me some thought; I had to give it a good deal of attention. The same evening I managed to communicate my plan to Madame who approved of it. I begged her to think of some way of writing to me, and she said she would.

“My husband,” said she, “has a very high opinion of you. He has taken no offence at our coming in the same carriage. But tell me, was it an accident or design that made M. de Chavigni take my husband and leave us together?”

“It was the result of design, dearest.” She raised her beautiful eyes and bit her lips. “Are you sorry it was so?”

“Alas! no.”

In three or four days, on the day on which we were going to act L’Ecossaise, the doctor came to dine with the ambassador and stayed till the evening to see the play. At dessert he complimented me on my good health, on which I took the opportunity, and told him that appearances were deceitful, and that I should be glad to consult him the next day. No doubt he was delighted to be deceived in his estimate of my health, and he said he should be glad if he could be of any service. He called on me at the hour agreed upon, and I told him such symptoms as my fancy dictated; amongst other things, that I was subject to certain nocturnal irritations which made me extremely weak, especially in the reins.

“Quite so, quite so; it’s a troublesome thing, but we will see what can be done. My first remedy, which you may possibly not care much for, is for you to pass six weeks in the country, where you will not see those objects which impress your brain, acting on the seventh pair of nerves, and causing that lumbar discharge which no doubt leaves you in a very depressed state.”

“Yes, it certainly does.”

"Quite so, quite so. My next remedy is cold bathing."

"Are the baths far from here?"

"They are wherever you like. I will write you a prescription, and the druggist will make it up."

I thanked him, and after he had pouched the double-louis I slipped politely into his hand, he went away assuring me that I should soon experience an improvement in my health. By the evening the whole town knew that I was ill and had to go into the country. M. de Chavigni said pleasantly at dinner to the doctor, that he should have forbidden me all feminine visitors; and my lame friend, refining on the idea, added that I should above all be debarred access to certain portraits, of which I had a box-full. I laughed approvingly, and begged M. de Chavigni, in the presence of the company, to help me to find a pretty house and a good cook, as I did not intend to take my meals alone.

I was tired of playing a wearisome part, and had left off going to see my lame friend, but she soon reproached me for my inconstancy, telling me that I had made a tool of her. "I know all," said this malicious woman, "and I will be avenged."

"You cannot be avenged for nothing," said I, "for I have never done you an injury. However, if you intend to have me assassinated, I shall apply for police protection."

"We don't assassinate here," said she, savagely. "We are not Italians."

I was delighted to be relieved from the burden of her society, and henceforth Madame was the sole object of my thoughts. M. de Chavigni, who seemed to delight in serving me, made her husband believe that I was the only person who could get the Duc de Choiseul to pardon a cousin of his who was in the guards, and had had the misfortune to kill his man in a duel. "This," said the kindly old gentleman, "is the best way possible of gaining the friendship of your rival. Do you think you can manage it?"

"I am not positive of success."

"Perhaps I have gone a little too far; but I told him that by means of your acquaintance with the Duchesse de Grammont you could do anything with the minister."

“I must make you a true prophet; I will do all I can.”

The consequence was that M. —— informed me of the facts in the ambassador’s presence, and brought me all the papers relative to the case.

I spent the night in writing to the Duchesse de Grammont. I made my letter as pathetic as possible, with a view to touching her heart, and then her father’s; and I then wrote to the worthy Madame d’Urfe telling her that the well-being of the sublime order of the Rosy Cross was concerned in the pardon of a Swiss officer, who had been obliged to leave the kingdom on account of a duel in which the order was highly concerned.

In the morning, after resting for an hour, I went to the ambassador, and shewed him the letter I had written to the duchess. He thought it excellently expressed, and advised me to skew it to M. —— I found him with his night-cap on; he was extremely grateful for the interest I took in a matter which was so near to his heart. He told me that his wife had not yet risen, and asked me to wait and take breakfast with her. I should have much liked to accept the invitation, but I begged him to make my excuses to his lady for my absence, on the pretence that I had to finish my letters, and hand them to the courier who was just leaving. I hoped in this way to scatter any jealousy that might be hovering in his brain, by the slight importance I attached to a meeting with his wife.

I went to dine with M. de Chavigni, who thought my conduct had been very politic, and said that he was certain that henceforth M. —— would be my best friend. He then skewed me a letter from Voltaire thanking him for playing Montrose in his Ecossaise; and another from the Marquis de Chauvelin, who was then at Delices with the philosopher of Ferney. He promised to come and see him after he had been to Turin, where he had been appointed ambassador.

CHAPTER XV

My Country House — Madame Dubois — Malicious Trick Played on Me by My Lame Enemy — My Vexation

There was a reception and a supper at the Court, as they styled the hotel of M. de Chavigni, or rather of the ambassador of the King of France in Switzerland. As I came in I saw my charmer sitting apart reading a letter. I accosted her, apologizing for not having stayed to breakfast, but she said I had done quite right, adding that if I had not chosen a country house she hoped I would take one her husband would probably mention to me that evening. She could not say any more, as she was called away to a game at quadrille. For my part I did not play, but wandered from one table to another.

At supper everybody talked to me about my health, and my approaching stay in the country. This gave M. —— an opportunity to mention a delightful house near the Aar; "but," he added, "it is not to be let for less than six months."

"If I like it," I replied, "and am free to leave it when I please, I will willingly pay the six months' rent in advance."

"There is a fine hall in it."

"All the better; I will give a ball as evidence of my gratitude to the people of Soleure for the kind welcome I have received from them."

"Would you like to come and see it to-morrow?"

"With pleasure."

"Very good, then I will call for you at eight o'clock, if that hour will suit you."

"I shall expect you."

When I got back to my lodging I ordered a travelling carriage and four, and the next morning, before eight o'clock, I called for M. who was ready, and seemed flattered at my anticipating him.

"I made my wife promise to come with us; but she is a sluggard, who prefers her bed to the fresh air."

In less than an hour we reached our journey's end, and I found the house a beautiful one and large enough to lodge the whole court of a prince of the Holy Roman Empire. Besides the hall, which I thought magnificent, I noted with great pleasure a closet arranged as a boudoir, and covered with the most exquisite pictures. A fine garden, fountains, baths, several well-furnished rooms, a good kitchen — in a word, everything pleased me, and I begged M. —— to arrange for me to take up my abode there in two days' time.

When we got back to Soleure, Madame told me how pleased she was that I liked the house; and seizing the opportunity, I said that I hoped they would often do me the honour of dining with me. They promised they would do so. I drew from my pocket a packet containing a hundred louis, which I gave M. —— to pay the rent. I then embraced him, and after imprinting a respectful kiss on the hand of his fair mate I went to M. de Chavigni, who approved of my having taken the house as it pleased my lady, and asked me if it was true that I was going to give a ball.

"Yes, if I see any prospect of its being a brilliant one, and if I have your approbation."

"You need have no doubts on that point, my dear fellow, and whatever you can't find in the shops come to me for. Come, I see you are going to spend a little money. It is a good plan, and overcomes many difficulties. In the meanwhile you shall have two footmen, an excellent cook, a housekeeper, and whatever other servants you require. The head of my household will pay them, and you can settle with him afterwards, he is a trustworthy man. I will come now and then and take a spoonful of soup with you, and you shall reward me for what services I may have done you by telling me how things are getting on. I have a great esteem for your charming friend, her discretion is beyond her years, and the pledges of love you will obtain of her will doubtless increase your passion and your esteem. Is she aware that I know all?"

"She knows that we are firm friends, and she is glad of it, as she is sure that you will be discreet."

"She may count on my discretion. She is really a delicious woman; I should have been tempted to seduce her myself thirty years ago."

A druggist, whom the doctor had recommended to me, set out the same day to get ready the baths which were to cure me of my imaginary complaint, and in two days I went myself, after having given Le Duc orders to bring my baggage on.

I was extremely surprised, on entering the apartment I was to occupy, to see a pretty young woman who came up to me in a modest way to kiss my hand. I stopped her doing so, and my astonished air made her blush.

"Do you belong to the household?" I said.

"The ambassador's steward has engaged me as your housekeeper."

"Pardon my surprise. Take me to my room."

She obeyed, and sitting down on the couch I begged her to sit beside me.

"That is an honour," said she, in the most polite and modest way, "I cannot allow myself. I am only your servant."

"Very good, but when I am alone I hope you will consent to take your meals with me, as I don't like eating by myself."

"I will do so, sir."

"Where is your room?"

"This is the one the steward assigned to me, but you have only to speak if you wish me to sleep in another."

"Not at all; it will do very well."

Her room was just behind the recess in which my bed stood. I went in with her and was astonished to see a great display of dresses, and in an adjoining closet all the array of the toilette, linen in abundance, and a good stock of shoes and embroidered slippers. Dumb with surprise I looked at her, and was thoroughly satisfied with what I saw. Nevertheless I determined to subject her to a close examination, as I thought her manners too interesting and her linen too extensive for her to be a mere servant. All at once I was struck with the idea that it might be a trick of the ambassador's, for a fine woman, well educated, and aged twenty-four or at the most twenty-five years, seemed to me more fitted to be my mistress than my housekeeper. I therefore asked her if she knew the ambassador, and what wages she was to receive. She replied that she only knew M. de Chavigni by sight, and that the steward had promised her two louis a month and her meals in her own room.

"Where do you come from? What's your name?"

"I come from Lyons; I am a widow, and my name is Dubois."

"I am delighted to have you in my service. I shall see you again."

She then left me, and I could not help thinking her a very interesting woman, as her speech was as dignified as her appearance. I went down to the kitchen and found the cook, an honest-looking fellow, who told me his name was Rosier. I had known his brother in the service of the French ambassador at Venice. He told me that supper would be ready at nine o'clock.

"I never eat by myself," said I.

"So I hear, sir; and I will serve supper accordingly."

"What are your wages?"

"Four louis a month."

I then went to see the rest of my people. I found two sharp-looking footmen, and the first of them told me he would see I had what wine I wanted. Then I inspected my bath, which seemed convenient. An apothecary was preparing certain matters for my imaginary cure. Finally, I took a walk round my garden, and before going in I went into the gate-keeper's, where I found a numerous family, and some girls who were not to be despised. I was delighted to hear everybody speak French, and I talked with them some time.

When I got back to my room, I found Le Duc occupied in unpacking my mails; and telling him to give my linen to Madame Dubois, I went into a pretty cabinet adjoining, where there was a desk and all materials necessary for writing. This closet had only one window facing north, but it commanded a view capable of inspiring the finest thoughts. I was amusing myself with the contemplation of this sublime prospect, when I heard a knock at my door. It was my pretty housekeeper, who wore a modest and pleasant expression, and did not in the least resemble a person who bears a complaint.

“What can I do for you, madam?”

“I hope you will be good enough to order your man to be polite to me?”

“Certainly; how has he failed in politeness?”

“He might possibly tell you in no respect. He wanted to kiss me, and as I refused he thought himself justified in being rather insolent.”

“How?”

“By laughing at me. You will pardon me, sir, but I do not like people who make game.”

“You are right; they are sure to be either silly or malicious. Make yourself easy; Le Duc shall understand that you are to be treated with respect. You will please sup with me.”

Le Duc came in soon after, and I told him to behave respectfully towards Madame Dubois.

“She’s a sly cat,” said the rascal; “she wouldn’t let me kiss her.”

“I am afraid you are a bad fellow.”

“Is she your servant or your mistress?”

“She might be my wife.”

“Oh! well, that’s different. That will do; Madame Dubois shall have all respect, and I will try my luck somewhere else.”

I had a delicious supper. I was contented with my cook, my butler, my housekeeper, and even with my Spaniard, who waited capitally at table.

After supper I sent out Le Duc and the other servant, and as soon as I was alone with my too lovely housekeeper, who had behaved at table like a woman of the world, I begged her to tell me her history.

“My history, sir, is short enough, and not very interesting. I was — born at Lyons, and my relations took me to Lausanne, as I have been told, for I was too young at the time to remember anything about it. My father, who was in the service of Madame d'Ermance, left me an orphan when I was fourteen. Madame d'Ermance was fond of me, and knowing that my mother's means were small she took me to live with her. I had attained my seventeenth year when I entered the service of Lady Montagu as lady's maid, and some time after I was married to Dubois, an old servant of the house. We went to England, and three years after my marriage I lost my husband. The climate of England affected my lungs, and I was obliged to beg my lady to allow me to leave her service. The worthy lady saw how weak I was, and paid the expenses of my journey and loaded me with rich presents. I returned to my mother at Lausanne, where my health soon returned, and I went into the service of an English lady who was very fond of me, and would have taken me with her to Italy if she had not conceived some suspicions about the young Duke of Rosebury, with whom she was in love, and whom she thought in love with me. She suspected me, but wrongfully, of being her rival in secret. She sent me away, after giving me rich presents, and saying how sorry she was she could not keep me. I went back to my mother, and for two years I have lived with the toil of my hands. Four days ago M. Lebel, the ambassador's steward, asked me if I would enter the service of an Italian gentleman as housekeeper. I agreed, in the hope of seeing Italy, and this hope is the cause of my stupidity. In short: here I am."

"What stupidity are you referring to?"

"The stupidity of having entered your service before I knew you."

"I like your freedom. You would not have come, then, if you had not known me?"

"Certainly not, for no lady will ever take me after having been with you."

"Why not? may I ask."

"Well, sir; do you think you are the kind of man to have a house-keeper like myself without the public believing my situation to be of quite a different nature?"

"No, you are too pretty, and I don't look like a fossil, certainly; but after all, what matter does it make?"

"It is all very well for you to make light of it, and if I were in your place I would do the same; but how am I, who am a woman and not in an independent position, to set myself above the rules and regulations of society?"

"You mean, Madame Dubois, that you would very much like to go back to Lausanne?"

"Not exactly, as that would not be just to you."

"How so?"

"People would be sure to say that either your words or your deeds were too free, and you might possibly pass a rather uncharitable judgment on me."

"What judgment could I pass on you?"

"You might think I wanted to impose on you."

"That might be, as I should be very much hurt by so sudden and uncalled-for a departure. All the same I am sorry for you, as with your ideas you can neither go nor stay with any satisfaction. Nevertheless, you must do one or the other."

"I have made up my mind. I shall stay, and I am almost certain I shall not regret it."

"I am glad to hear that, but there is one point to which I wish to call your attention."

"What is that?"

"I will tell you. Let us have no melancholy and no scruples."

"You shall not see me melancholy, I promise you; but kindly explain what you mean by the word 'scruples.'"

"Certainly. In its ordinary acceptation, the word 'scruple' signifies a malicious and superstitious whim, which pronounces an action which may be innocent to be guilty."

"When a course of action seems doubtful to me, I never look upon the worst side of it. Besides, it is my duty to look after myself and not other people."

"I see you have read a good deal."

"Reading is my greatest luxury. Without books I should find life unbearable."

“Have you any books?”

“A good many. Do you understand English?”

“Not a word.”

“I am sorry for that, as the English books would amuse you.”

“I do not care for romances.”

“Nor do I. But you don’t think that there are only romances in English, do you? I like that. Why do you take me for such a lover of the romantic, pray?”

“I like that, too. That pretty outburst is quite to my taste, and I am delighted to be the first to make you laugh.”

“Pardon me if I laugh, but …”

“But me no buts, my dear; laugh away just as you like, you will find that the best way to get over me. I really think, though, that you put your services at too cheap a rate.”

“That makes me laugh again, as it is for you to increase my wages if you like.”

“I shall take care that it is done.”

I rose from table, not taken, but surprised, with this young woman, who seemed to be getting on my blind side. She reasoned well, and in this first interview she had made a deep impression on me. She was young, pretty, elegant, intellectual, and of distinguished manners; I could not guess what would be the end of our connection. I longed to speak to M. Lebel, to thank him for getting me such a marvel, and still more, to ask him some questions about her.

After the supper had been taken away, she came to ask if I would have my hair put in curl papers.

“It’s Le Duc’s business,” I answered, “but if you like, it shall be yours for the future.”

She acquitted herself like an expert.

“I see,” said I, “that you are going to serve me as you served Lady Montagu.”

"Not altogether; but as you do not like melancholy, allow me to ask a favour."

"Do so, my dear."

"Please do not ask me to give you your bath."

"Upon my honour, I did not think of doing so. It would be scandalous. That's Le Duc's business."

"Pardon me, and allow me to ask another favour."

"Tell me everything you want."

"Allow me to have one of the door-keeper's daughters to sleep with me."

"If it had come into my head, I would have proposed it to you. Is she in your room now?"

"No."

"Go and call her, then."

"Let us leave that till to-morrow, as if I went at this time of night it might make people talk."

"I see you have a store of discretion, and you may be sure I will not deprive you of any of it."

She helped me to undress, and must have found me very modest, but I must say it was not from virtue. My heart was engaged elsewhere, and Madame Dubois had impressed me; I was possibly duped by her, but I did not trouble myself to think whether I was or not. I rang for Le Duc in the morning, and on coming in he said he had not expected the honour.

"You're a rascal," I said, "get two cups of chocolate ready directly after I have had my bath."

After I had taken my first cold bath, which I greatly enjoyed, I went to bed again. Madame Dubois came in smiling, dressed in a style of careless elegance.

"You look in good spirits."

"I am, because I am happy with you. I have had a good night, and there is now in my room a girl as lovely as an angel, who is to sleep with me."

"Call her in."

She called her, and a monster of ugliness entered, who made me turn my head away.

"You haven't given yourself a rival certainly, my dear, but if she suits you it is all right. You shall have your breakfast with me, and I hope you will take chocolate with me every morning."

"I shall be delighted, as I am very fond of it."

I had a pleasant afternoon. M. de Chavigni spent several hours with me. He was pleased with everything, and above all with my fair housekeeper, of whom Lebel had said nothing to him.

"She will be an excellent cure for your love for Madame," said he.

"There you are wrong," I answered, "she might make me fall in love with her without any diminution of my affection for my charmer."

Next day, just as I was sitting down to table with my housekeeper, I saw a carriage coming into the courtyard, and my detestable lame widow getting out of it. I was terribly put out, but the rules of politeness compelled me to go and receive her.

"I was far from anticipating that you would do me so great an honour, madam."

"I daresay; I have come to dine with you, and to ask you to do me a favour."

"Come in, then, dinner is just being served. I beg to introduce Madame Dubois to you."

I turned towards my charming housekeeper, and told her that the lady would dine with us.

Madame Dubois, in the character of mistress of the house, did the honours admirably, and my lame friend, in spite of her pride, was very polite to her. I did not speak a dozen words during the meal, and paid no sort of attention to the detestable creature; but I was anxious to know what she could want me to do for her. As soon as Madame Dubois had left the room she told me straight out that she had come to ask me to let her have a couple of rooms in my house for three weeks or a month at the most.

I was astonished at such a piece of impudence, and told her she asked more than I was at liberty to give.

“You can’t refuse me, as everybody knows I have come on purpose to ask you.”

“Then everybody must know that I have refused you. I want to be alone — absolutely alone, without any kind of restriction on my liberty. The least suspicion of company would bore me.”

“I shall not bore you in any way, and you will be at perfect liberty to ignore my presence. I shall not be offended if you don’t enquire after me, and I shall not ask after you — even if you are ill. I shall have my meals served to me by my own servant, and I shall take care not to walk in the garden unless I am perfectly certain you are not there. You must allow that if you have any claims to politeness you cannot refuse me.”

“If you were acquainted with the most ordinary rules of politeness, madam, you would not persist in a request to which I have formally declined to accede.”

She did not answer, but my words had evidently produced no effect. I was choking with rage. I strode up and down the room, and felt inclined to send her away by force as a madwoman. However, I reflected that she had relations in a good position whom I might offend if I treated her roughly, and that I might make an enemy capable of exacting a terrible revenge; and, finally, that Madame might disapprove of my using violence to this hideous harpy….

“Well, madam,” said I, “you shall have the apartment you have solicited with so much importunity, and an hour after you come in I shall be on my way back to Soleure.”

“I accept the apartment, and I shall occupy it the day after to-morrow. As for your threat of returning to Soleure, it is an idle one, as you would thereby make yourself the laughing-stock of the whole town.”

With this final impertinence she rose and went away, without taking any further notice of me. I let her go without moving from my seat. I was stupefied. I repented of having given in; such impudence was unparalleled. I called myself a fool, and vowed I deserved to be publicly hooted. I ought to have taken the whole thing as a jest; to have contrived to get her out of the house on some pretext, and then to have sent her about her business as a madwoman, calling all my servants as witnesses.

My dear Dubois came in, and I told my tale. She was thunderstruck.

“I can hardly credit her requesting, or your granting, such a thing,” said she, “unless you have some motives of your own.”

I saw the force of her argument, and not wishing to make a confidante of her I held my tongue, and went out to work off my bile.

I came in tired, after taking a stiff walk. I took supper with Madame Dubois, and we sat at table till midnight. Her conversation pleased me more and more; her mind was well-furnished, her speech elegant, and she told her stories and cracked her jokes with charming grace. She was devoid of prejudices, but by no means devoid of principle. Her discretion was rather the result of system than of virtue; but if she had not a virtuous spirit, her system would not have shielded her from the storms of passion or the seductions of vice.

My encounter with the impudent widow had so affected me that I could not resist going at an early hour on the following day to communicate it to M. de Chavigni. I warned Madame Dubois that if I were not back by dinner-time she was not to wait for me.

M. de Chavigni had been told by my enemy that she was going to pay me a visit, but he roared with laughter on hearing the steps she had taken to gain her ends.

“Your excellency may find it very funny,” said I, “but I don’t.”

“So I see; but take my advice, and be the first to laugh at the adventure. Behave as if you were unaware of her presence, and that will be a sufficient punishment for her. People will soon say she is smitten with you, and that you disdain her love. Go and tell the story to M. —— , and stay without ceremony to dinner. I have spoken to Lebel about your pretty housekeeper: the worthy man had no malicious intent in sending her to you. He happened to be going to Lausanne, and just before, I had told him to find you a good housekeeper; thinking it over on his way, he remembered his friend Madame Dubois, and the matter was thus arranged without malice or pretense. She is a regular find, a perfect jewel for you, and if you get taken with her I don’t think she will allow you to languish for long.”

“I don’t know, she seems to be a woman of principle.”

“I shouldn’t have thought you would be taken in by that sort of thing. I will ask you both to give me a dinner to-morrow, and shall be glad to hear her chatter.”

M —— welcomed me most kindly, and congratulated me on my conquest, which would make my country house a paradise. I joined in the jest, of course, with the more ease that his charming wife, though I could see that she suspected the truth, added her congratulations to those of her husband; but I soon changed the course of their friendly mirth by telling them the circumstances of the case. They were indignant enough then, and the husband said that if she had really quartered herself on me in that fashion, all I had to do was to get an injunction from the courts forbidding her to put her foot within my doors.

“I don’t want to do that,” said I, “as besides publicly disgracing her I should be skewing my own weakness, and proclaiming that I was not the master in my own house, and that I could not prevent her establishing herself with me.”

“I think so, too,” said the wife, “and I am glad you gave way to her. That shews how polite you are, and I shall go and call on her to congratulate her on the welcome she got, as she told me that her plans had succeeded.”

Here the matter ended, and I accepted their invitation to dine with them. I behaved as a friend, but with that subtle politeness which takes away all ground for suspicion; accordingly, the husband felt no alarm. My charmer found the opportunity to tell me that I had done wisely in yielding to the ill-timed demand of that harpy, and that as soon as M. de Chauvelin, whom they were expecting, had gone away again, I could ask her husband to spend a few days with me, and that she would doubtless come too.

“Your door-keeper’s wife,” she added, “was my nurse. I have been kind to her, and when necessary I can write to you by her without running any risk.”

After calling on two Italian Jesuits who were passing through Soleure, and inviting them to dine with me on the following day, I returned home where the good Dubois amused me till midnight by philosophical discussions. She admired Locke; and maintained that the faculty of thought was not a proof of the existence of spirit in us, as it was in the power of God to endow matter with the capacity for thought; I was unable to controvert this position. She made me laugh by saying that there was a great difference between thinking and reasoning, and I had the courage to say, —

"I think you would reason well if you let yourself be persuaded to sleep with me, and you think you reason well in refusing to be so persuaded."

"Trust me, sir," said she; "there is as much difference between the reasoning powers of men and women as there is between their physical characteristics."

Next morning at nine o'clock we were taking our chocolate, when my enemy arrived. I heard her carriage, but I did not take the slightest notice. The villainous woman sent away the carriage and installed herself in her room with her maid.

I had sent Le Duc to Soleure for my letters, so I was obliged to beg my housekeeper to do my hair; and she did it admirably, as I told her we should have the ambassador and the two Jesuits to dinner. I thanked her, and kissed her for the first time on the cheek, as she would not allow me to touch her beautiful lips. I felt that we were fast falling in love with one another, but we continued to keep ourselves under control, a task which was much easier for her than for me, as she was helped by that spirit of coquetry natural to the fair sex, which often has greater power over them than love itself.

M. de Chavigni came at two; I had consulted him before asking the Jesuits, and had sent my carriage for them. While we were waiting for these gentlemen we took a turn in the garden, and M. de Chavigni begged my fair housekeeper to join us as soon as she had discharged certain petty duties in which she was then engaged.

M. de Chavigni was one of those men who were sent by France to such powers as she wished to cajole and to win over to her interests. M. de l'Hopital, who knew how to gain the heart of Elizabeth Petrovna, was another; the Duc de Nivernois, who did what he liked with the Court of St. James's in 1762, is a third instance.

Madame Dubois came out to us in due course, and entertained us very agreeably; and M. de Chavigni told me that he considered she had all the qualities which would make a man happy. At dinner she enchanted him and captivated the two Jesuits by her delicate and subtle wit. In the evening this delightful old nobleman told me he had spent a most pleasant day, and after asking me to dine at his house while M. de Chauvelin was there, he left me with an effusive embrace.

M. de Chauvelin, whom I had the honour to know at Versailles, at M. de Choiseul's, was an extremely pleasant man. He arrived at Soleure in the course of two days, and M. de Chavigni having advised me of his presence I hastened to pay my court to him. He remembered me, and introduced me to his wife, whom I had not the honour of knowing. As chance placed me next to my charmer at table, my spirits rose, and my numerous jests and stories put everybody in a good temper. On M. de Chauvelin remarking that he knew some pleasant histories of which I was the hero, M. de Chavigni told him that he did not know the best of all, and recounted to him my adventure at Zurich. M. de Chauvelin then told Madame that to serve her he would willingly transform himself into a footman, on which M. —— joined in and said that I had a finer taste for beauty, as she, for whose sake I had made myself into a waiter, was at that moment a guest of mine in my country house.

"Ah, indeed!" said M. de Chauvelin, "then we must come and see your quarters, M. Casanova."

I was going to reply, when M. de Chavigni anticipated me by saying,

"Yes, indeed! and I hope he will lend me his beautiful hall to give you a ball next Sunday."

In this manner the good-natured courtier prevented me from promising to give a ball myself, and relieved me of my foolish boast, which I should have been wrong in carrying out, as it would have been an encroachment on his privilege as ambassador of entertaining these distinguished strangers during the five or six days they might stay at Soleure. Besides, if I had kept to my word, it would have involved me in a considerable expense, which would not have helped me in my suit.

The conversation turning on Voltaire, the Ecossaise was mentioned, and the acting of my neighbour was highly commended in words that made her blush and shine in her beauty like a star, whereat her praises were renewed.

After dinner the ambassador invited us to his ball on the day after the morrow, and I went home more deeply in love than ever with my dear charmer, whom Heaven had designed to inflict on me the greatest grief I have had in my life, as the reader shall see.

I found that my housekeeper had gone to bed, and I was glad of it, for the presence of my fair one had excited my passions to such an extent that my reason might have failed to keep me within the bounds of respect. Next morning she found me sad, and rallied me in such a way that I soon recovered my spirits. While we were taking our chocolate the lame creature's maid brought me a note, and I sent her away, telling her that I would send the answer by my own servant. This curious letter ran as follows:

"The ambassador has asked me to his ball on Sunday. I answered that I was not well, but if I found myself better in the evening I would come. I think that as I am staying in your house I ought to be introduced by you or stay away altogether. So if you do not wish to oblige me by taking me, I must beg of you to tell the ambassador that I am ill. Pardon me if I have taken the liberty of infringing our agreement in this peculiar instance, but it is a question of keeping up some sort of appearance in public."

"Not so," I cried, mad with rage; and taking my pen I wrote thus:

"I think your idea is a beautiful one, madam. You will have to be ill, as I mean to keep to the conditions you made yourself, and to enjoy full liberty in all things, and I shall therefore deny myself the honour of taking you to the ball which the ambassador is to give in my hall."

I read her insolent letter and my reply to my housekeeper, who thought the answer just what she deserved. I then sent it to her.

I passed the next two days quietly and agreeably without going out or seeing any visitors, but the society of Madame Dubois was all-sufficient for me. Early on Sunday morning the ambassador's people came to make the necessary preparations for the ball and supper. Lebel came to pay me his respects while I was at table. I made him sit down, while I thanked him for procuring me a housekeeper who was all perfection.

Lebel was a fine man, middle-aged, witty, and an excellent steward, though perfectly honest.

“Which of you two,” said he to me, “is the most taken in?”

“We are equally pleased with each other,” answered my charming housekeeper.

To my great delight the first pair to appear were M. —— and Madame. She was extremely polite to Madame Dubois, and did not shew the slightest astonishment when I introduced her as my housekeeper. She told me that I must take her to see her lame friend, and to my great disgust I had to go. We were received with a show of great friendship, and she went out with us into the garden, taking M. — — ‘s arm, while his wife leant amorously on mine.

When we had made a few turns of the garden, Madame begged me to take her to her nurse. As her husband was close by, I said, —

“Who is your nurse?”

“Your door-keeper’s wife,” said her husband, “we will wait for you in this lady’s apartment.”

“Tell me, sweetheart,” said she on the way, “does not your pretty housekeeper sleep with you?”

“I swear she does not; I can only love you.”

“I would like to believe you, but I find it hard to do so; however, if you are speaking the truth it is wrong of you to keep her in the house, as nobody will believe in your innocence.”

“It is enough for me that you believe in it. I admire her, and at any other time I expect we could not sleep under the same roof without sleeping in the same bed; but now that you rule my heart I am not capable of a passion for her.”

“I am delighted to hear it; but I think she is very pretty.”

We went in to see her nurse, who called her “my child,” and kissed her again and again, and then left us alone to prepare some lemonade for us. As soon as we found ourselves alone our mouths were glued together, and my hands touched a thousand beauties, covered only by a dress of light sarcenet; but I could not enjoy her charms without this cruel robe, which was all the worse because it did not conceal the loveliness beneath it. I am sure that the good nurse would have kept us waiting a long time if she had known how we longed to be left alone for a few moments longer; but, alas! the celerity with which she made those two glasses of lemonade was unexampled.

“It was made beforehand, was it?” said I, when I saw her coming in.

“Not at all, sir; but I am a quick hand.”

“You are, indeed.”

These words made my charmer go off into a peal of laughter, which she accompanied with a significant glance in my direction. As we were going away she said that as things seemed to be against us we must wait till her husband came to spend a few days with me.

My terrible enemy gave us some sweets, which she praised very highly, and above all some quince marmalade, which she insisted on our testing. We begged to be excused, and Madame pressed my foot with hers. When we had got away she told me I had been very wise not to touch anything, as the widow was suspected of having poisoned her husband.

The ball, the supper, the refreshments, and the guests were all of the most exquisite and agreeable kind. I only danced one minuet with Madame de Chauvelin, nearly all my evening being taken up with talking to her husband. I made him a present of my translation of his poem on the seven deadly sins, which he received with much pleasure.

“I intend,” said I, “to pay you a visit at Turin.”

“Are you going to bring your housekeeper with you?”

“No.”

“You are wrong, for she is a delightful person.”

Everybody spoke of my dear Dubois in the same way. She had a perfect knowledge of the rules of good breeding, and she knew how to make herself respected without being guilty of the slightest presumption. In vain she was urged to dance, and she afterwards told me that if she had yielded she would have become an object of hatred to all the ladies. She knew that she could dance exquisitely.

M. de Chauvelin went away in two days, and towards the end of the week I heard from Madame d’Urfe, who told me that she had spent two days at

Versailles in furtherance of my desires. She sent me a copy of the letters of pardon signed by the king in favour of the relation of M. —— , assuring me that the original had been sent to the colonel of his regiment, where he would be reinstated in the rank which he held before the duel.

I had my horses put into my carriage, and hastened to carry this good news to M. de Chavigni. I was wild with joy, and I did not conceal it from the ambassador, who congratulated me, since M. —— having obtained by me, without the expenditure of a penny, a favour which would have cost him dear if he had succeeded in purchasing it, would henceforth be only too happy to treat me with the utmost confidence.

To make the matter still more important, I begged my noble friend to announce the pardon to M. —— in person, and he immediately wrote a note to that gentleman requesting his presence.

As soon as he made his appearance, the ambassador handed him the copy of the pardon, telling him that he owed it all to me. The worthy man was in an ecstasy, and asked what he owed me.

“Nothing, sir, unless you will give me your friendship, which I value more than all the gold in the world; and if you would give me a proof of your friendship, come and spend a few days with me; I am positively dying of loneliness. The matter I have done for you is a mere trifle; you see how quickly it has been arranged.”

“A mere trifle! I have devoted a year’s labour to it; I have moved heaven and earth without succeeding, and in a fortnight you have accomplished it. Sir, you may dispose of my life.”

“Embrace me, and come and see me. I am the happiest of men when I am enabled to serve persons of your merit.”

“I will go and tell the good news to my wife, who will love you as well as I do.”

“Yes, do so,” said the ambassador, “and bring her to dinner here to-morrow.”

When we were alone together, the Marquis de Chavigni, an old courtier and a wit, began to make some very philosophical reflections on the state of a court where nothing can be said to be easy or difficult per se, as the one at a moment’s notice may become the other; a court where justice often pleads in vain, while interest or even importunity get a ready hearing. He had known Madame d’Urfe, had even paid his court to her at the period when she was secretly beloved by the regent. He it was who had given her the name of Egeria, because she said she had a genius who directed her and passed the nights with her when she slept by herself. The ambassador then spoke of M. —— , who had undoubtedly become a very great friend of mine.

“The only way to blind a jealous husband,” said he, “is to make him your friend, for friendship will rarely admit jealousy.”

The next day at dinner, at the ambassador’s, Madame gave me a thousand proofs of grateful friendship, which my heart interpreted as pledges of love. The husband and wife promised to pay me a three days’ visit in the following week at my country house.

They kept their word without giving me any further warning, but I was not taken by surprise as I had made all preparations for their reception.

My heart leapt with joy on seeing my charmer getting down from the carriage, but my joy was not unalloyed, as the husband told me that they must absolutely return on the fourth day, and the wife insisted on the horrible widow being present at all our conversation.

I took my guests to the suite of rooms I had prepared for them, and which I judged most suitable for my designs. It was on the ground floor, opposite to my room. The bedroom had a recess with two beds, separated by a partition through which one passed by a door. I had the key to all the doors, and the maid would sleep in a closet beyond the ante-chamber.

In obedience to my divinity’s commands we went and called on the widow, who gave us a cordial welcome; but under the pretext of leaving us in freedom refused to be of our company during the three days. However, she gave in when I told her that our agreement was only in force when I was alone.

My dear Dubois, with her knowledge of the rules of society, did not need a hint to have her supper in her room, and we had an exquisite meal as I had given orders that the fare should be of the best. After supper I took my guests to their apartment, and felt obliged to do the same by the widow. She wanted me to assist at her toilet, but I excused myself with a bow. She said, maliciously, that after all the pains I had taken I deserved to be successful. I gave her no answer.

Next morning, as we were walking in the garden, I warned my charmer that I had all the keys of the house, and that I could introduce myself into her room at any moment.

“I am waiting,” said she, “for my husband’s embraces, which he has prefaced with caresses, as is usual with him. We must therefore wait till the night after next, which will take away all risk, as I have never known him to embrace me for two nights in succession.”

About noon we had a visit from M. de Chavigni, who came to ask for dinner, and made a great to-do when he heard that my housekeeper dined in her room. The ladies said he was quite right, so we all went and made her sit down at table with us. She must have been flattered, and the incident evidently increased her good humour, as she amused us by her wit and her piquant stories about Lady Montagu. When we had risen from table Madame said to me, —

“You really must be in love with that young woman; she is ravishing.”

“If I could pass two hours in your company to-night, I would prove to you that I am yours alone.”

“It is still out of the question, as my husband has ascertained that the moon changes to-day.”

“He has to ask leave of the moon, has he, before discharging so sweet a duty?”

“Exactly. According to his system of astrology, it is the only way to keep his health and to have the son that Heaven wills to grant him, and indeed without aid from above it is hardly likely that his wishes will be accomplished.”

“I hope to be the instrument of Heaven,” said I, laughing.

“I only hope you may.”

Thus I was obliged to wait. Next morning, as we were walking in the garden, she said to me, —

"The sacrifice to the moon has been performed, and to make sure I will cause him to renew his caresses tonight as soon as we go to bed; and after that he is certain to sleep soundly. You can come at an hour after midnight; love will await you."

Certain of my bliss, I gave myself up to the joy that such a certainty kindles in a fiery heart. It was the only night remaining, as M. —— had decided that on the next day they would return to Soleure.

After supper I took the ladies to their apartments, and on returning told my housekeeper that I had a good deal of writing to do, and that she should go to bed.

Just before one o'clock I left my room, and the night being a dark one I had to feel my way half round my house, and to my surprise found the door open; but I did not pay any attention to this circumstance. I opened the door of the second ante-chamber, and the moment I shut it again a hand seized mine, whilst another closed my lips. I only heard a whispered "hush!" which bade me silent. A sofa was at hand; we made it our altar of sacrifice, and in a moment I was within the temple of love. It was summer time and I had only two hours before me, so I did not lose a moment, and thinking I held between my arms the woman I had so long sighed for I renewed again and again the pledges of my ardent love. In the fulness of my bliss I thought her not awaiting me in her bed an admirable idea, as the noise of our kisses and the liveliness of our motions might have awakened the troublesome husband. Her tender ecstasies equalled mine, and increased my bliss by making me believe (oh, fatal error!) that of all my conquests this was the one of which I had most reason to boast.

To my great grief the clock warned me that it was time for me to be gone. I covered her with the tenderest kisses, and returning to my room, in the greatest gladness, I resigned myself to sleep.

I was roused at nine o'clock by M. —— , who seemed in a happy frame of mind, and shewed me a letter he had just received, in which his relative thanked me for restoring him to his regiment. In this letter, which was dictated by gratitude, he spoke of me as if I had been a divinity.

"I am delighted," I said, "to have been of service to you."

"And I," said he, "am equally pleased to assure you of my gratitude. Come and breakfast with us, my wife is still at her toilette. Come along."

I rose hastily, and just as I was leaving the room I saw the dreadful widow, who seemed full of glee, and said, —

"I thank you, sir; I thank you with all my heart. I beg to leave you at liberty again; I am going back to Soleure."

"Wait for a quarter of an hour, we are going to breakfast with Madame."

"I can't stop a moment, I have just wished her good day, and now I must be gone. Farewell, and remember me."

"Farewell, madam."

She had hardly gone before M. —— asked me if the woman was beside herself.

"One might think so, certainly," I replied, "for she has received nothing but politeness at my hands, and I think she might have waited to go back with you in the evening."

We went to breakfast and to discuss this abrupt leave-taking, and afterwards we took a turn in the garden where we found Madame Dubois. M. —— took possession of her; and as I thought his wife looking rather downcast I asked her if she had not slept well.

"I did not go to sleep till four o'clock this morning," she replied, "after vainly sitting up in bed waiting for you till that time. What unforeseen accident prevented your coming?"

I could not answer her question. I was petrified. I looked at her fixedly without replying; I could not shake off my astonishment. At last a dreadful suspicion came into my head that I had held within my arms for two hours the horrible monster whom I had foolishly received in my house. I was seized with a terrible tremor, which obliged me to go and take shelter behind the arbour and hide my emotion. I felt as though I should swoon away. I should certainly have fallen if I had not rested my head against a tree.

My first idea had been a fearful thought, which I hastened to repel, that Madame, having enjoyed me, wished to deny all knowledge of the fact — a device which is in the power of any woman who gives up her person in the dark to adopt, as it is impossible to convict her of lying. However, I knew the divine creature I had thought I possessed too well to believe her capable of such base deceit. I felt that she would have been lacking in delicacy, if she had said she had waited for me in vain by way of a jest; as in such a case as this the least doubt is a degradation. I was forced, then, to the conclusion that she had been supplanted by the infernal widow. How had she managed it? How had she ascertained our arrangements? I could not imagine, and I bewildered myself with painful surmises. Reason only comes to the aid of the mind when the confusion produced by painful thoughts has almost vanished. I concluded, then, that I had spent two hours with this abominable monster; and what increased my anguish, and made me loathe and despise myself still more, was that I could not help confessing that I had been perfectly happy. It was an unpardonable mistake, as the two women differed as much as white does from black, and though the darkness forbade my seeing, and the silence my hearing, my sense of touch should have enlightened me — after the first set-to, at all events, but my imagination was in a state of ecstasy. I cursed love, my nature, and above all the inconceivable weakness which had allowed me to receive into my house the serpent that had deprived me of an angel, and made me hate myself at the thought of having defiled myself with her. I resolved to die, after having torn to pieces with my own hands the monster who had made me so unhappy.

While I was strengthening myself in this resolution M. —— came up to me and asked me kindly if I were ill; he was alarmed to see me pale and covered with drops of sweat. “My wife,” said the worthy man, “is uneasy about you, and sent me to look after you.” I told him I had to leave her on account of a sudden dizziness, but that I began to feel better. “Let us rejoin her.” Madame Dubois brought me a flask of strong waters, saying pleasantly that she was sure it was only the sudden departure of the widow that had put me out.

We continued our walk, and when we were far enough from the husband, who was with my housekeeper, I said I had been overcome by what she had said, but that it had doubtless been spoken jestingly.

“I was not jesting at all,” said she, with a sigh, “tell me what prevented your coming.”

Again I was struck dumb. I could not make up my mind to tell her the story, and I did not know what to say to justify myself. I was silent and confused when my housekeeper's little servant came up and gave me a letter which the wretched widow had sent her by an express. She had opened it, and found an enclosure addressed to me inside. I put it in my pocket, saying I would read it at my leisure. On Madame saying in joke that it was a love-letter, I could not laugh, and made no answer. The servant came to tell us that dinner was served, but I could touch nothing. My abstinence was put down to my being unwell.

I longed to read the letter, but I wished to be alone to do so, and that was a difficult matter to contrive.

Wishing to avoid the game of piquet which formed our usual afternoon's amusement, I took a cup of coffee, and said that I thought the fresh air would do me good. Madame seconded me, and guessing what I wanted she asked me to walk up and down with her in a sheltered alley in the garden. I offered her my arm, her husband offered his to my housekeeper, and we went out.

As soon as my mistress saw that we were free from observation, she spoke as follows, —

"I am sure that you spent the night with that malicious woman, and I am afraid of being compromised in consequence. Tell me everything; confide in me without reserve; 'tis my first intrigue, and if it is to serve as a lesson you should conceal nothing from me. I am sure you loved me once, tell me that you have not become my enemy."

"Good heavens! what are you saying? I your enemy!"

"Then tell me all, and before you read that wretched creature's letter. I adjure you in the name of love to hide nothing from me."

"Well, divine creature, I will do as you bid me. I came to your apartment at one o'clock, and as soon as I was in the second ante-chamber, I was taken by the arm, and a hand was placed upon my lips to impose silence; I thought I held you in my arms, and I laid you gently on the sofa. You must remember that I felt absolutely certain it was you; indeed, I can scarcely doubt it even now. I then passed with you, without a word being spoken, two of the most delicious hours I have ever experienced. Cursed hours! of which the remembrance will torment me for the remainder of my days. I left you at a quarter past three. The rest is known to you."

"Who can have told the monster that you were going to visit me at that hour?"

"I can't make out, and that perplexes me."

"You must confess that I am the most to be pitied of us three, and perhaps, alas! the only one who may have a just title to the name 'wretched.'"

"If you love me, in the name of Heaven do not say that; I have resolved to stab her, and to kill myself after having inflicted on her that punishment she so well deserves."

"Have you considered that the publicity of such an action would render me the most unfortunate of women? Let us be more moderate, sweetheart; you are not to blame for what has happened, and if possible I love you all the more. Give me the letter she has written to you. I will go away from you to read it, and you can read it afterwards, as if we were seen reading it together we should have to explain matters."

"Here it is."

I then rejoined her husband, whom my housekeeper was sending into fits of laughter. The conversation I had just had had calmed me a little, and the trustful way in which she had asked for the letter had done me good. I was in a fever to know the contents, and yet I dreaded to read it, as it could only increase my rage and I was afraid of the results.

Madame rejoined us, and after we had separated again she gave me the letter, telling me to keep it till I was alone. She asked me to give her my word of honour to do nothing without consulting her, and to communicate all my designs to her by means of her nurse.

"We need not fear the harpy saying anything about it," she remarked, "as she would first have to proclaim her own prostitution, and as for us, concealment is the best plan. And I would have you note that the horrible creature gives you a piece of advice you would do well to follow."

What completely tore my heart asunder during this interview was to see great tears — tears of love and grief — falling from her beautiful eyes; though to moderate my anguish she forced a smile. I knew too well the importance she attached to her fair fame not to guess that she was tormented with the idea that the terrible widow knew of the understanding between us, and the thought added fresh poignancy to my sorrow.

This amiable pair left me at seven in the evening, and I thanked the husband in such a manner that he could not doubt my sincerity, and, in truth, I said no more than I felt. There is no reason why the love one feels for a woman should hinder one from being the true friend of her husband — if she have a husband. The contrary view is a hateful prejudice, repugnant both to nature and to philosophy. After I had embraced him I was about to kiss the hand of his charming wife, but he begged me to embrace her too, which I did respectfully but feelingly.

I was impatient to read the terrible letter, and as soon as they were gone I shut myself up in my room to prevent any interruptions. The epistle was as follows:

“I leave your house, sir, well enough pleased, not that I have spent a couple of hours with you, for you are no better than any other man, but that I have revenged myself on the many open marks of contempt you have given me; for your private scorn I care little, and I willingly forgive you. I have avenged myself by unmasking your designs and the hypocrisy of your pretty prude, who will no longer be able to treat me with that irritating air of superiority which she, affecting a virtue which she does not possess, has displayed towards me. I have avenged myself in the fact that she must have been waiting for you all the night, and I would have given worlds to have heard the amusing conversation you must have had when she found out that I had taken for vengeance’s sake, and not for love, the enjoyment which was meant for her. I have avenged myself because you can no longer pretend to think her a marvel of beauty, as having mistaken me for her, the difference between us must needs be slight; but I have done you a service, too, as the thought of what has happened should cure you of your passion. You will no longer adore her before all other women who are just as good as she. Thus I have disabused you, and you ought to feel grateful to me; but I dispense you from all gratitude, and do not care if you choose to hate me, provided your hatred leaves me in peace; but if I find your conduct objectionable in the future, I warn you that I will tell all, since I do not care for my own fame as I am a widow and mistress of my own actions. I need no man's favour, and care not what men may say of me. Your mistress, on the other hand, is in quite a different position.

"And here I will give you a piece of advice, which should convince you of my generosity. For the last ten years I have been troubled with a little ailment which has resisted all attempts at treatment. You exerted yourself to such an extent to prove how well you loved me that you must have caught the complaint. I advise you, then, to put yourself under treatment at once to weaken the force of the virus; but above all do not communicate it to your mistress, who might chance to hand it on to her husband and possibly to others, which would make a wretched woman of her, to my grief and sorrow, since she has never done me any harm. I felt certain that you two would deceive the worthy husband, and I wished to have proof; thus I made you take me in, and the position of the apartment you gave them was enough to remove all doubts; still I wanted to have proof positive. I had no need of any help to arrive at my ends, and I found it a pleasant joke to keep you in the dark. After passing two nights on the sofa all for nothing, I resolved on passing the third night there, and my perseverance was crowned with success. No one saw me, and my maid even is ignorant of my nocturnal wanderings, though in any case she is accustomed to observe silence. You are, then, at perfect liberty to bury the story in oblivion, and I advise you to do so.

"If you want a doctor, tell him to keep his counsel, for people at Soleure know of my little indisposition, and they might say you caught it from me, and this would do us both harm."

Her impudence struck me so gigantic in its dimensions that I almost laughed. I was perfectly aware that after the way I had treated her she must hate me, but I should not have thought she would have carried her perverse hatred so far. She had communicated to me an infectious disease, though I did not so far feel any symptoms; however, they would no doubt appear, and I sadly thought I should have to go away to be cured, to avoid the gossip of malicious wits. I gave myself up to reflection, and after two hours' thought I wisely resolved to hold my tongue, but to be revenged when the opportunity presented itself.

I had eaten nothing at dinner, and needed a good supper to make me sleep. I sat down to table with my housekeeper, but, like a man ashamed of himself, I dared not look her in the face.

CHAPTER XVI

Continuation of the Preceding Chapter — I Leave Soleure

When the servants had gone away and left us alone, it would have looked strange if we had remained as dumb as two posts; but in my state of mind I did not feel myself capable of breaking the silence. My dear Dubois, who began to love me because I made her happy, felt my melancholy react on herself, and tried to make me talk.

"Your sadness," said she, "is not like you; it frightens me. You may console yourself by telling me of your troubles, but do not imagine that my curiosity springs from any unworthy motive, I only want to be of service to you. You may rely on my being perfectly discreet; and to encourage you to speak freely, and to give you that trust in me which I think I deserve, I will tell you what I know and what I have learnt about yourself. My knowledge has not been obtained by any unworthy stratagems, or by a curiosity in affairs which do not concern me."

"I am pleased with what you say, my dear housekeeper. I see you are my friend, and I am grateful to you. Tell me all you know about the matter which is now troubling me, and conceal nothing."

"Very good. You are the lover and the beloved of Madame —— . The widow whom you have treated badly has played you some trick which has involved you with your mistress, and then the wretched woman has 477 left your house with the most unpardonable rudeness this tortures you. You fear some disastrous consequences from which you cannot escape, your heart and mind are at war, and there is a struggle in your breast between passion and sentiment. Perhaps I am wrong, but yesterday you seemed to me happy and to-day miserable. I pity you, because you have inspired me with the tenderest feelings of friendship. I did my best to-day to converse with the husband that you might be free to talk to the wife, who seems to me well worthy of your love."

"All that you have said is true. Your friendship is dear to me, and I have a high opinion of your intellectual powers. The widow is a monster who has made me wretched in return for my contempt, and I cannot revenge myself on her. Honour will not allow me to tell you any more, and indeed it would be impossible for you or any one else to alleviate the grief that overwhelms me. It may possibly be my death, but in the mean time, my dear Dubois, I entreat you to continue your friendship towards me, and to treat me with entire candour. I shall always attend to what you say, and thus you will be of the greatest service to me. I shall not be ungrateful."

I spent a weary night as I had expected, for anger, the mother of vengeance, always made me sleepless, while sudden happiness had sometimes the same effect.

I rang for Le Duc early in the morning, but, instead of him, Madame Dubois's ugly little attendant came, and told me that my man was ill, and that the housekeeper would bring me my chocolate. She came in directly after, and I had no sooner swallowed the chocolate than I was seized with a violent attack of sickness, the effect of anger, which at its height may kill the man who cannot satisfy it. My concentrated rage called for vengeance on the dreadful widow, the chocolate came on the top of the anger, and if it had not been rejected I should have been killed; as it was I was quite exhausted. Looking at my housekeeper I saw she was in tears, and asked her why she wept.

"Good heavens! Do you think I have a heart of stone?"

"Calm yourself; I see you pity me. Leave me, and I hope I shall be able to get some sleep."

I went to sleep soon after, and I did not wake till I had slept for seven hours. I felt restored to life. I rang the bell, my housekeeper came in, and told me the surgeon of the place had called. She looked very melancholy, but on seeing my more cheerful aspect I saw gladness reappearing on her pretty face.

"We will dine together, dearest," said I, "but tell the surgeon to come in. I want to know what he has to say to me."

The worthy man entered, and after looking carefully round the room to see that we were alone, he came up to me, and whispered in my ear that Le Duc had a malady of a shameful character.

I burst out laughing, as I had been expecting some terrible news.

"My dear doctor," said I, "do all you can to cure him, and I will pay you handsomely, but next time don't look so doleful when you have anything to tell me. How old are you?"

"Nearly eighty."

"May God help you!"

I was all the more ready to sympathize with my poor Spaniard, as I expected to find myself in a like case.

What a fellow-feeling there is between the unfortunate! The poor man will seek in vain for true compassion at the rich man's doors; what he receives is a sacrifice to ostentation and not true benevolence; and the man in sorrow should not look for pity from one to whom sorrow is unknown, if there be such a person on the earth.

My housekeeper came in to dress me, and asked me what had been the doctor's business.

"He must have said something amusing to make you laugh."

"Yes, and I should like to tell you what it was; but before I do so I must ask you if you know what the venereal disease is?"

"Yes, I do; Lady Montagu's footman died of it while I was with her."

"Very good, but you should pretend not to know what it is, and imitate other ladies who assume an ignorance which well becomes them. Poor Le Duc has got this disease."

"Poor fellow, I am sorry for him! Were you laughing at that?"

"No; it was the air of mystery assumed by the old doctor which amused me."

"I too have a confidence to make, and when you have heard it you must either forgive me or send me away directly."

"Here is another bother. What the devil can you have done? Quick! tell me."

“Sir, I have robbed you!”

“What robbed me? When? How? Can you return me what you have taken? I should not have thought you capable of such a thing. I never forgive a robber or a liar.”

“You are too hasty, sir. I am sure you will forgive me, as I robbed you only half an hour ago, and I am now going to return to you the theft.”

“You are a singular woman, my dear. Come, I will vouchsafe full forgiveness, but restore immediately what you have taken.”

“This is what I stole.”

“What! that monster’s letter? Did you read it?”

“Yes, of course, for otherwise I should not have committed a theft, should I?”

“You have robbed me my secret, then, and that is a thing you cannot give me back. You have done very wrong.”

“I confess I have. My theft is all the greater in that I cannot make restoration. Nevertheless, I promise never to speak a word of it all my life, and that ought to gain me my pardon. Give it me quickly.”

“You are a little witch. I forgive you, and here is the pledge of my mercy.” So saying I fastened my lips on hers.

“I don’t doubt the validity of your pardon; you have signed with a double and a triple seal.”

“Yes; but for the future do not read, or so much as touch, any of my papers, as I am the depositary of secrets of which I am not free to dispose.”

“Very good; but what shall I do when I find papers on the ground, as that letter was?”

“You must pick them up, but not read them.”

“I promise to do so.”

“Very well, my dear; but you must forget the horrors you have read.”

“Listen to me. Allow me to remember what I have read; perhaps you may be the gainer. Let us talk over this affair, which has made my hair stand on end. This monster of immodesty has given you two mortal blows — one in the body and one in the soul; but that is not the worst, as she thinks that Madame's honour is in her keeping. This, in my thinking, is the worst of all; for, in spite of the affront, your mutual love might continue, and the disease which the infamous creature has communicated to you would pass off; but if the malicious woman carries out her threats, the honour of your charming mistress is gone beyond return. Do not try to make me forget the matter, then, but let us talk it over and see what can be done."

I thought I was dreaming when I heard a young woman in her position reasoning with more acuteness than Minerva displays in her colloquies with Telemachus. She had captured not only my esteem but my respect.

"Yes, my dear," I answered, "let us think over some plan for delivering a woman who deserves the respect of all good men from this imminent danger; and the very thought that we have some chance of success makes me indebted to you. Let us think of it and talk of it from noon to night. Think kindly of Madame —— , pardon her first slip, protect her honour, and have pity on my distress. From henceforth call me no more your master but your friend. I will be your friend till death; I swear it to you. What you say is full of wisdom; my heart is yours. Embrace me."

"No, no, that is not necessary; we are young people, and we might perhaps allow ourselves to go astray. I only wish for your friendship; but I do not want you to give it to me for nothing. I wish to deserve it by giving you solid proofs of my friendship for you. In the meanwhile I will tell them to serve dinner, and I hope that after you have eaten something you will be quite well."

I was astonished at her sagacity. It might all be calculated artifice, and her aim might be to seduce me, but I did not trouble myself about that. I found myself almost in love with her, and like to be the dupe of her principles, which would have made themselves felt, even if she had openly shared my love. I decided that I would add no fuel to my flames, and felt certain that they would go out of their own accord. By leaving my love thus desolate it would die of exhaustion. I argued like a fool. I forgot that it is not possible to stop at friendship with a pretty woman whom one sees constantly, and especially when one suspects her of being in love herself. At its height friendship becomes love, and the palliative one is forced to apply to soothe it for a moment only increases its intensity. Such was the experience of Anacreon with Smerdis, and Cleobulus with Badyllus. A Platonist who pretends that one is able to live with a young woman of whom one is fond, without becoming more than her friend, is a visionary who knows not what he says. My housekeeper was too young, too pretty, and above all too pleasant, she had too keen a wit, for me not to be captivated by all these qualities conjoined; I was bound to become her lover.

We dined quietly together without saying anything about the affair we had at heart, for nothing is more imprudent or more dangerous than to speak in the presence of servants, who out of maliciousness or ignorance put the worst construction on what they hear; add or diminish, and think themselves privileged to divulge their master's secrets, especially as they know them without having been entrusted with them.

As soon as we were alone, my dear Dubois asked me if I had sufficient proof of Le Duc's fidelity.

"Well, my dear, he is a rascal and a profligate, full of impudence, sharp-witted, ignorant, a fearful liar, and nobody but myself has any power over him. However, he has one good quality, and that is blind obedience to my orders. He defies the stick, and he would defy the gallows if it were far enough off. When I have to ford a river on my travels, he strips off his clothes without my telling him, and jumps in to see if I can across in safety."

"That will do; he is just what we want under the circumstances. I will begin by assuring you, my dear friend, as you will have me style you thus, that Madame's honour is perfectly safe. Follow my advice, and if the detestable widow does not take care she will be the only person put to shame. But we want Le Duc; without him we can do nothing. Above all we must find out how he contracted his disease, as several circumstances might throw obstacles in the way of my design. Go to him at once and find out all particulars, and if he has told any of the servants what is the matter with him. When you have heard what he has to say, warn him to keep the matter quiet."

I made no objection, and without endeavouring to penetrate her design I went to Le Duc. I found him lying on his bed by himself. I sat down beside him with a smile on my face, and promised to have him cured if he would tell me all the circumstances of the case.

“With all my heart, sir, the matter happened like this. The day you sent me to Soleure to get your letters, I got down at a roadside dairy to get a glass of milk. It was served to me by a young wench who caught my fancy, and I gave her a hug; she raised no objection, and in a quarter of an hour she made me what you see.”

“Have you told anyone about it?”

“I took good care not to do so, as I should only have got laughed at. The doctor is the only one who knows what is the matter, and he tells me the swelling will be gone down before tomorrow, and I hope I shall be able by that time to wait upon you.”

“Very good, but remember to keep your own counsel.”

I proceeded to inform my Minerva of our conversation, and she said, —

“Tell me whether the widow could take her oath that she had spent the two hours on the sofa with you.”

“No, for she didn’t see me, and I did not say a word.”

“Very good; then sit down at your desk and write, and tell her she is a liar, as you did not leave your room at all, and that you are making the necessary enquiries in your household to find out who is the wretched person she has unwittingly contaminated. Write at once and send off your letter directly. In an hour and a half’s time you can write another letter; or rather you can copy what I am just going to put down.”

“My dear, I see your plan; it is an ingenious one, but I have given my word of honour to Madame to take no steps in the matter without first consulting her.”

“Then your word of honour must give way to the necessity of saving her honour. Your love retards your steps, but everything depends on our promptitude, and on the interval between the first and second letter. Follow my advice, I beg of you, and you will know the rest from the letter I am going to write for you to copy. Quick I write letter number one.”

I did not allow myself to reflect. I was persuaded that no better plan could be found than that of my charming governess, and I proceeded to write the following love-letter to the impudent monster:

"The impudence of your letter is in perfect accord with the three nights you spent in discovering a fact which has no existence save in your own perverse imagination. Know, cursed woman, that I never left my room, and that I have not to deplore the shame of having passed two hours with a being such as you. God knows with whom you did pass them, but I mean to find out if the whole story is not the creation of your devilish brain, and when I do so I will inform you.

"You may thank Heaven that I did not open your letter till after M. and Madame had gone. I received it in their presence, but despising the hand that wrote it I put it in my pocket, little caring what infamous stuff it contained. If I had been curious enough to read it and my guests had seen it, I would have you know that I would have gone in pursuit of you, and at this moment you would have been a corpse. I am quite well, and have no symptoms of any complaint, but I shall not lower myself to convince you of my health, as your eyes would carry contagion as well as your wretched carcase."

I shewed the letter to my dear Dubois, who thought it rather strongly expressed, but approved of it on the whole; I then sent it to the horrible being who had caused me such unhappiness. An hour and a half afterwards I sent her the following letter, which I copied without addition or subtraction:

"A quarter of an hour after I had sent off my letter, the village doctor came to tell me that my man had need of his treatment for a disease of a shameful nature which he had contracted quite recently. I told him to take care of his patient; and when he had gone I went to see the invalid, who confessed, after some pressure, that he had received this pretty present from you. I asked him how he had contrived to obtain access to you, and he said that he saw you going by your self in the dark into the apartment of M. —— . Knowing that I had gone to bed, and having no further services to render me, curiosity made him go and see what you were doing there by stealth, as if you had wanted to see the lady, who would be in bed by that time, you would not have gone by the door leading to the garden. He at first thought that you went there with ill-intent, and he waited an hour to see if you stole anything, in which case he would have arrested you; but as you did not come out, and he heard no noise, he resolved to go in after you, and found you had left the door open. He has assured me that he had no intentions in the way of carnal enjoyment, and I can well believe him. He tells me he was on the point of crying for help, when you took hold of him and put your hand over his mouth; but he changed his plans on finding himself drawn gently to a couch and covered with kisses. You plainly took him for somebody else, 'and,' said he, 'I did her a service which she has done ill to recompense in this fashion.' He left you without saying a word as soon as the day began to dawn, his motive being fear of recognition. It is easy to see that you took my servant for myself, for in the night, you know, all cats are grey, and I congratulate you on obtaining an enjoyment you certainly would not have had from me, as I should most surely have recognized you directly from your breath and your aged charms, and I can tell you it would have gone hard with you. Luckily for you and for me, things happened otherwise. I may tell you that the poor fellow is furious, and intends making you a visit, from which course I believe I have no right to dissuade him. I advise you to hear him politely, and to be in a generous mood when he comes, as he is a determined fellow like all Spaniards, and if you do not treat him properly he will publish the matter, and you will have to take the consequences. He will tell you himself what his terms are, and I daresay you will be wise enough to grant them."

An hour after I had sent off this epistle I received a reply to my first letter. She told me that my device was an ingenious one, but that it was no good, as she knew what she was talking about. She defied me to shew her that I was healthy in the course of a few days.

While we were at supper, my dear Dubois tried her utmost to cheer me up, but all to no purpose; I was too much under the influence of strong emotion to yield to her high spirits. We discussed the third step, which would put an apex to the scheme and cover the impudent woman with shame. As I had written the two letters according to my housekeeper's instructions, I determined to follow her advice to the end. She told me what to say to Le Duc in the morning; and she was curious to know what sort of stuff he was made of, she begged me to let her listen behind the curtains of my bed.

Next morning Le Due came in, and I asked if he could ride on horseback to Soleure.

“Yes, sir,” he replied, “but the doctor tells me I must begin to bathe to-morrow.”

“Very good. As soon as your horse is ready, set out and go to Madame F —— , but do not let her know you come from me, or suspect that you are a mere emissary of mine. Say that you want to speak to her. If she refuses to receive you, wait outside in the street; but I fancy she will receive you, and without a witness either. Then say to her, ‘You have given me my complaint without having been asked, and I require you to give me sufficient money to get myself cured.’ Add that she made you work for two hours in the dark, and that if it had not been for the fatal present she had given to you, you would have said nothing about it; but that finding yourself in such a state (you needn’t be ashamed to shew her) she ought not to be astonished at your taking such a course. If she resists, threaten her with the law. That’s all you have to do, but don’t let my name appear. Return directly without loss of time, that I may know how you have got on.”

“That’s all very fine, sir, but if this jolly wench has me pitched out of window, I shan’t come home quite so speedily.”

“Quite so, but you needn’t be afraid; I will answer for your safety.”

“It’s a queer business you are sending me on.”

“You are the only man I would trust to do it properly.”

“I will do it all right, but I want to ask you one or two essential questions. Has the lady really got the what d’you call it?”

“She has.”

“I am sorry for her. But how am I to stick to it that she has peppered me, when I have never spoken to her?”

“Do you usually catch that complaint by speaking, booby?”

“No, but one speaks in order to catch it, or while one is catching it.”

“You spent two hours in the dark with her without a word being spoken, and she will see that she gave this fine present to you while she thought she was giving it to another.”

"Ah! I begin to see my way, sir. But if we were in the dark, how was I to know it was she I had to do with?

"Thus: you saw her going in by the garden door, and you marked her unobserved. But you may be sure she won't ask you any of these questions."

"I know what to do now. I will start at once, and I am as curious as you to know what her answer will be. But here's another question comes into my head. She may try to strike a bargain over the sum I am to ask for my cure; if so, shall I be content with three hundred francs?"

"That's too much for her, take half."

"But it isn't much for two hours of such pleasure for her and six weeks of such pain for me."

"I will make up the rest to you."

"That's good hearing. She is going to pay for damage she has done. I fancy I see it all, but I shall say nothing. I would bet it is you to whom she has made this fine present, and that you want to pay her out."

"Perhaps so; but keep your own counsel and set out."

"Do you know I think the rascal is unique," said my dear Dubois, emerging from her hiding-place, "I had hard work to keep from laughing when he said that if he were pitched out of the window he would not come back so soon. I am sure he will acquit himself better than ever did diplomatist. When he gets to Soleure the monster will have already dispatched her reply to your second letter. I am curious to see how it will turn out."

"To you, my dear, the honour of this comedy belongs. You have conducted this intrigue like a past master in the craft. It could never be taken for the work of a novice."

"Nevertheless, it is my first and I hope it will be my last intrigue."

"I hope she won't defy me to 'give evidence of my health'."

"You are quite well so far, I think?"

"Yes; and, by the way, it is possible she may only have leucorrhoea. I am longing to see the end of the piece, and to set my mind at rest."

"Will you give Madame an account of our scheme?"

"Yes; but I shall not be able to give you the credit you deserve."

"I only want to have credit in your eyes."

"You cannot doubt that I honour you immensely, and I shall certainly not deprive you of the reward that is your due."

"The only reward I ask for is for you to be perfectly open with me."

"You are very wonderful. Why do you interest yourself so much in my affairs? I don't like to think you are really inquisitive."

"You would be wrong to think that I have a defect which would lower me in my own eyes. Be sure, sir, that I shall only be curious when you are sad."

"But what can have made you feel so generously towards me?"

"Only your honourable conduct towards me."

"You touch me profoundly, and I promise to confide in you for the future."

"You will make me happy."

Le Duc had scarcely gone an hour when a messenger on foot came to bring me a second letter from the widow. He also gave me a small packet, telling me that he had orders to wait for a reply. I sent him down to wait, and I gave the letter to Madame Dubois, that she might see what it contained. While she was reading it I leant upon the window, my heart beating violently.

"Everything is getting on famously," cried my housekeeper. "Here is the letter; read it."

"Whether I am being told the truth, or whether I am the victim of a myth arising from your fertile imagination (for which you are too well known all over Europe), I will regard the whole story as being true, as I am not in a position to disprove it. I am deeply grieved to have injured an innocent man who has never done me any ill, and I will willingly pay the penalty by giving him a sum which will be more than sufficient to cure him of the plague with which I infected him. I beg that you will give him the twenty-five louis I am sending you; they will serve to restore him to health, and to make him forget the bitterness of the pleasure I am so sorry to have procured for him. And now are you sufficiently generous to employ your authority as master to enjoin on your man the most absolute secrecy? I hope so, for you have reason to dread my vengeance otherwise. Consider that, if this affair is allowed to transpire, it will be easy for me to give it a turn which may be far from pleasant to you, and which will force the worthy man you are deceiving to open his eyes; for I have not changed my opinion, as I have too many proofs of your understanding with his wife. As I do not desire that we should meet again, I shall go to Lucerne on the pretext of family concerns. Let me know that you have got this letter."

"I am sorry," I said, "to have sent Le Duc, as the harpy is violent, and I am afraid of something happening to him."

"Don't be afraid," she replied, "nothing will happen, and it is better that they should see each other; it makes it more certain. Send her the money directly; she will have to give it to him herself, and your vengeance will be complete. She will not be able to entertain the slightest suspicion, especially if Le Duc shews her her work, and in two or three hours you will have the pleasure of hearing everything from his lips. You have reason to bless your stars, as the honour of the woman you love is safe. The only thing that can trouble you is the remembrance of the widow's foul embraces, and the certainty that the prostitute has communicated her complaint to you. Nevertheless, I hope it may prove a slight attack and be easily cured. An inveterate leucorrhoea is not exactly a venereal disease, and I have heard people in London say that it was rarely contagious. We ought to be very thankful that she is going to Lucerne. Laugh and be thankful; there is certainly a comic touch in our drama."

"Unfortunately, it is tragi-comic. I know the human heart, and I am sure that I must have forfeited Madame's affections."

"It is true that —— ; but this is not the time to be thinking of such matters. Quick! write to her briefly and return her the twenty-five Louis."

My reply was as follows:

"Your unworthy suspicions, your abominable design of revenge, and the impudent letter you wrote me, are the only causes of your no doubt bitter repentance. I hope that it will restore peace to your conscience. Our messengers have crossed, through no fault of mine. I send you the twenty-five Louis; you can give them to the man yourself. I could not prevent my servant from paying you a visit, but this time you will not keep him two hours, and you will not find it difficult to appease his anger. I wish you a good journey, and I shall certainly flee all occasions of meeting you, for I always avoid the horrible; and you must know, odious woman, that it isn't everybody who endeavours to ruin the reputation of their friends. If you see the apostolic nuncio at Lucerne, ask him about me, and he will tell you what sort of a reputation I have in Europe. I can assure you that Le Duc has only spoken to me of his misadventure, and that if you treat him well he will be discreet, as he certainly has nothing to boast of. Farewell."

My dear Minerva approved of this letter, and I sent it with the money by the messenger.

"The piece is not yet done," said my housekeeper, "we have three scenes more:"

"What are they?"

"The return of your Spaniard, the appearance of the disease, and the astonishment of Madame when she hears it all."

I counted the moments for Le Duc to return, but in vain; he did not appear. I was in a state of great anxiety, although my dear Dubois kept telling me that the only reason he was away so long was that the widow was out. Some people are so happily constituted that they never admit the possibility of misfortune. I was like that myself till the age of thirty, when I was put under the Leads. Now I am getting into my dotage and look on the dark side of everything. I am invited to a wedding, and see nought but gloom; and witnessing the coronation of Leopold, at Prague, I say to myself, 'Nolo coronari'. Cursed old age, thou art only worthy of dwelling in hell, as others before me have thought also, 'tristisque senectus'.

About half-past nine my housekeeper looked out, and saw Le Duc by the moonlight coming along at a good pace. That news revived me. I had no light in the room, and my housekeeper ran to hide in the recess, for she would not have missed a word of the Spaniard's communication.

"I am dying of hunger," said he, as he came in. "I had to wait for that woman till half-past six. When she came in she found me on the stairs and told me to go about my business, as she had nothing to say to me.

"'That may be, fair lady,' I replied; 'but I have a few words to say to you, and I have been waiting here for a cursed time with that intent.'

"'Wait a minute,' she replied; and then putting into her pocket a packet and a letter which I thought was addressed in your writing, she told me to follow her. As soon as I got to her room, I saw there was no one else present, and I told her that she had infected me, and that I wanted the wherewithal to pay the doctor. As she said nothing I proceeded to convince her of my infected state, but she turned away her head, and said, —

"'Have you been waiting for me long?

"'Since eleven, without having had a bite or a sup.'

"Thereupon she went out, and after asking the servant, whom I suppose she had sent here, what time he had come back, she returned to me, shut the door, and gave me the packet, telling me that it contained twenty-five Louis for my cure, and that if I valued my life I would keep silence in the matter. I promised to be discreet, and with that I left here, and here I am.

"Does the packet belong to me?"

"Certainly. Have some supper and go to bed."

My dear Dubois came out of her recess and embraced me, and we spent a happy evening. Next morning I noticed the first symptoms of the disease the hateful widow had communicated to me, but in three or four days I found it was of a very harmless character, and a week later I was quite rid of it. My poor Spaniard, on the other hand, was in a pitiable case.

I passed the whole of the next morning in writing to Madame. I told her circumstantially all I had done, in spite of my promise to consult her, and I sent her copies of all the letters to convince her that our enemy had gone to Lucerne with the idea that her vengeance had been only an imaginary one. Thus I shewed her that her honour was perfectly safe. I ended by telling her that I had noticed the first symptoms of the disease, but that I was certain of getting rid of it in a very few days. I sent my letter through her nurse, and in two days' time I had a few lines from her informing me that I should see her in the course of the week in company with her husband and M. de Chavigni.

Unhappy I! I was obliged to renounce all thoughts of love, but my Dubois, who was with me nearly all day on account of Le Duc's illness, began to stand me in good stead. The more I determined to be only a friend to her, the more I was taken with her; and it was in vain that I told myself that from seeing her without any love-making my sentiment for her would die a natural death. I had made her a present of a ring, telling her that whenever she wanted to get rid of it I would give her a hundred louis for it; but this could only happen in time of need — an impossible contingency while she continued with me, and I had no idea of sending her away. She was natural and sincere, endowed with a ready wit and good reasoning powers. She had never been in love, and she had only married to please Lady Montagu. She only wrote to her mother, and to please her I read the letters. They were full of filial piety, and were admirably written.

One day the fancy took me to ask to read the letters her mother wrote in reply. "She never replies," said she, "For an excellent reason, namely, that she cannot write. I thought she was dead when I came back from England, and it was a happy surprise to find her in perfect health when I got to Lausanne."

"Who came with you from England?"

"Nobody."

"I can't credit that. Young, beautiful, well dressed, obliged to associate casually with all kinds of people, young men and profligates (for there are such everywhere), how did you manage to defend yourself?"

"Defend myself? I never needed to do so. The best plan for a young woman is never to stare at any man, to pretend not to hear certain questions and certainly not to answer them, to sleep by herself in a room where there is a lock and key, or with the landlady when possible. When a girl has travelling adventures, one may safely say that she has courted them, for it is easy to be discreet in all countries if one wishes."

She spoke justly. She assured me that she had never had an adventure and had never tripped, as she was fortunate enough not to be of an amorous disposition. Her naive stories, her freedom from prudery, and her sallies full of wit and good sense, amused me from morning till night, and we sometimes thoued each other; this was going rather far, and should have shewn us that we were on the brink of the precipice. She talked with much admiration of the charms of Madame, and shewed the liveliest interest in my stories of amorous adventure. When I got on risky ground, I would make as if I would fain spare her all unseemly details, but she begged me so gracefully to hide nothing, that I found myself obliged to satisfy her; but when my descriptions became so faithful as almost to set us on fire, she would burst into a laugh, put her hand over my mouth, and fly like a hunted gazelle to her room, and then lock herself in. One day I asked her why she did so, and she answered, "To hinder you from coming to ask me for what I could not refuse you at such moments."

The day before that on which M. and Madame and M. de Chavigni came to dine with me, she asked me if I had had any amorous adventures in Holland. I told her about Esther, and when I came to the mole and my inspection of it, my charming curiosity ran to stop my mouth, her sides shaking with laughter. I held her gently to me, and could not help seeking whether she had a mole in the same place, to which she opposed but a feeble resistance. I was prevented by my unfortunate condition from immolating the victim on the altar of love, so we confined ourselves to a make-believe combat which only lasted a minute; however, our eyes took in it, and our excited feelings were by no means appeased. When we had done she said, laughing, but yet discreetly, —

"My dear friend, we are in love with one another; and if we do not take care we shall not long be content with this trifling."

Sighing as she spoke, she wished me good night and went to bed with her ugly little maid. This was the first time we had allowed ourselves to be overcome by the violence of our passion, but the first step was taken. As I retired to rest I felt that I was in love, and foresaw that I should soon be under the rule of my charming housekeeper.

M. and Madame — and M. Chavigni gave us an agreeable surprise, the next day, by coming to dine with us, and we passed the time till dinner by walking in the garden. My dear Dubois did the honours of the table, and I was glad to see that my two male guests were delighted with her, for they did not leave her for a moment during the afternoon, and I was thus enabled to tell my charmer all I had written to her. Nevertheless I took care not to say a word about the share my housekeeper had had in the matter, for my mistress would have been mortified at the thought that her weakness was known to her.

“I was delighted to read your letters,” said she, “and to hear that that villainous woman can no longer flatter herself upon having spent two hours with you. But tell me, how can you have actually spent them with her without noticing, in spite of the dark, the difference between her and me? She is much shorter, much thinner, and ten years older. Besides, her breath is disagreeable, and I think you know that I have not that defect. Certainly, you could not see her hair, but you could touch, and yet you noticed nothing! I can scarcely believe it!”

“Unhappily, it is only too true. I was inebriated with love, and thinking only of you, I saw nothing but you.”

“I understand how strong the imagination would be at first, but this element should have been much diminished after the first or second assault; and, above all, because she differs from me in a matter which I cannot conceal and she cannot supply.”

“You are right — a burst of Venus! When I think that I only touched two dangling flabby breasts, I feel as if I did not deserve to live!”

“And you felt them, and they did not disgust you!”

“Could I be disgusted, could I even reflect, when I felt certain that I held you in my arms, you for whom I would give my life. No, a rough skin, a stinking breath, and a fortification carried with far too much ease; nothing could moderate my amorous fury.”

“What do I hear? Accursed and unclean woman, nest of impurities! And could you forgive me all these defects?”

“I repeat, the idea that I possessed you deprived me of my thinking faculties; all seemed to me divine.”

“You should have treated me like a common prostitute, you should even have beaten me on finding me such as you describe.”

“Ah! now you are unjust!”

“That may be; I am so enraged against that monster that my anger deprives me of reason. But now that she thinks that she had to do with a servant, and after the degrading visit she has had she ought to die of rage and shame. What astonishes me is her believing it, for he is shorter than you by four inches. And how can she imagine that a servant would do it as well as you? It's not likely. I am sure she is in love with him now. Twenty-five louis! He would have been content with ten. What a good thing that the poor fellow's illness happened so conveniently. But I suppose you had to tell him all?"

"Not at all. I gave him to understand that she had made an appointment with me in that room, and that I had really spent two hours with her, not speaking for fear of being heard. Then, thinking over the orders I gave him, he came to the conclusion that on finding myself diseased afterwards I was disgusted, and being able to disavow my presence I had done so for the sake of revenge."

"That's admirable, and the impudence of the Spaniard passes all belief. But her impudence is the most astonishing thing of all. But supposing her illness had been a mere trick to frighten you, what a risk the rascal would have run!"

"I was afraid of that, as I had no symptoms of disease whatever."

"But now you really have it, and all through my fault. I am in despair."

"Be calm, my angel, my disease is of a very trifling nature. I am only taking nitre, and in a week I shall be quite well again. I hope that then … ."

"Ah! my dear friend."

"What?"

"Don't let us think of that any more, I beseech you."

"You are disgusted, and not unnaturally; but your love cannot be very strong, Ah! how unhappy I am."

"I am more unhappy than you. I love you, and you would be thankless indeed if you ceased to love me. Let us love each other, but let us not endeavour to give one another proofs of our love. It might be fatal. That accursed widow! She is gone away, and in a fortnight we shall be going also to Bale, where we remain till the end of November."

The die is cast, and I see that I must submit to your decision, or rather to my destiny, for none but fatal events have befallen me since I came to

Switzerland. My only consoling thought is that I have made your honour safe."

"You have won my husband's friendship and esteem; we shall always be good friends."

"If you are going I feel that I must go before you. That will tend to convince the wretched author of my woe that there is nothing blame-worthy in my friendship for you."

"You reason like an angel, and you convince me more and more of your love. Where are you going?"

"To Italy; but I shall take Berne and Geneva on my way."

"You will not be coming to Bale, then? I am glad to hear it, in spite of the pleasure it would give me to see you. No doubt your arrival would give a handle for the gossips, and I might suffer by it. But if possible, in the few days you are to remain, shew yourself to be in good spirits, for sadness does not become you."

We rejoined the ambassador and M. —— who had not had time to think about us, as my dear Dubois had kept them amused by her lively conversation. I reproached her for the way in which she husbanded her wit as far as I was concerned, and M. de Chavigni, seizing the opportunity, told us it was because we were in love, and lovers are known to be chary of their words. My housekeeper was not long in finding a repartee, and she again began to entertain the two gentlemen, so that I was enabled to continue my walk with Madame, who said, —

"Your housekeeper, my dear friend, is a masterpiece. Tell me the truth, and I promise to give you a mark of my gratitude that will please you before I go."

"Speak; what do you wish to know?"

"You love her and she loves you in return."

"I think you are right, but so far … ."

"I don't want to know any more, for if matters are not yet arranged they soon will be, and so it comes to the same thing. If you had told me you did not love her I should not have believed you, for I can't conceive that a man of your age can live with a woman like that without loving her. She is very pretty and exceedingly intelligent, she has good spirits, talents, an excellent manner, and she speaks exceedingly well: that is enough to charm you, and I expect you will find it difficult to separate from her. Lebel did her a bad turn in sending her to you, as she used to have an excellent reputation, and now she will no longer be able to get a place with ladies in the highest society."

"I shall take her to Berne."

"That is a good idea."

Just as they were going I said that I should soon be coming to Soleure to thank them for the distinguished reception they had given me, as I proposed leaving in a few days. The idea of never seeing Madame again was so painful to me that as soon as I got in I went to bed, and my housekeeper, respecting my melancholy, retired after wishing me good-night.

In two or three days I received a note from my charmer, bidding me call upon them the day following at about ten o'clock, and telling me I was to ask for dinner. I carried out her orders to the letter. M. gave me a most friendly reception, but saying that he was obliged to go into the country and could not be home till one o'clock, he begged me not to be offended if he delivered me over to his wife for the morning. Such is the fate of a miserable husband! His wife was engaged with a young girl at tambour-work; I accepted her company on the condition that she would not allow me to disturb her work.

The girl went away at noon, and soon after we went to enjoy the fresh air outside the house. We sat in a summer-house from which, ourselves unseen, we could see all the carriages that approached the house.

"Why, dearest, did you not procure me the bliss when I was in good health."

"Because at that time my husband suspected that you turned yourself into a waiter for my sake, and that you could not be indifferent towards me. Your discretion has destroyed his suspicions; and also your housekeeper, whom he believes to be your wife, and who has taken his fancy to such an extent, that I believe he would willingly consent to an exchange, for a few days at any rate. Would you agree?"

"Ah! if the exchange could be effected."

Having only an hour before me, and foreseeing that it would be the last I should pass beside her, I threw myself at her feet. She was full of affection, and put no obstacles in the way of my desires, save those which my own feelings dictated, for I loved her too well to consent to injure her health. I did all I could to replace the utmost bliss, but the pleasure she enjoyed doubtless consisted in a great measure in shewing me her superiority to the horrible widow.

When we saw the husband's carriage coming, we rose and took care that the worthy man should not find us in the arbour. He made a thousand excuses for not having returned sooner.

We had an excellent dinner, and at table he talked almost entirely of my housekeeper, and he seemed moved when I said I meant to take her to Lausanne to her mother. I took leave of them at five o'clock with a broken heart, and from there I went to M. de Chavigni and told him all my adventures. He had a right to be told, as he had done all in his power to insure the success of a project which had only failed by an unexampled fatality.

In admiration of my dear Dubois's wit — for I did not conceal the part she played he said that old as he was he should think himself quite happy if he had such a woman with him, and he was much pleased when I told him that I was in love with her. "Don't give yourself the trouble, my dear Casanova, of running from house to house to take leave," said the amiable nobleman. "It can be done just as well at the assembly, and you need not even stay to supper, if you don't want to."

I followed his advice, and thus saw again Madame as I thought, for the last time, but I was wrong; I saw her ten years afterwards; and at the proper time the reader will see where, when, how, and under what circumstances.

Before going away, I followed the ambassador to his room to thank him as he deserved, for his kindness, and to ask him to give me a letter of introduction for Berne, where I thought of staying a fortnight. I also begged him to send Lebel to me that we might settle our accounts. He told me that Lebel should bring me a letter for M. de Muralt, the Mayor of Thun.

When I got home, feeling sad on this, the eve of my leaving a town where I had but trifling victories and heavy losses, I thanked my housekeeper for waiting for me, and to give her a good night I told her that in three days we should set out for Berne, and that my mails must be packed.

Next day, after a somewhat silent breakfast, she said, —

“You will take me with you, won’t you?”

“Certainly, if you like me well enough to want to go.”

“I would go with you to the end of the world, all the more as you are now sick and sad, and when I saw you first you were blithe and well. If I must leave you, I hope at least to see you happy first.”

The doctor came in just then to tell me that my poor Spaniard was so ill that he could not leave his bed.

“I will have him cured at Berne,” said I; “tell him that we are going to dine there the day after to-morrow.”

“I must tell you, sir, that though it’s only a seven leagues’ journey, he cannot possibly undertake it as he has lost the use of all his limbs.”

“I am sorry to hear that, doctor.”

“I dare say, but it’s true.”

“I must verify the matter with my own eyes;” and so saying I went to see Le Duc.

I found the poor rascal, as the doctor had said, incapable of motion. He had only the use of his tongue and his eyes.

“You are in a pretty state,” said I to him.

“I am very ill, sir, though otherwise I feel quite well.”

“I expect so, but as it is you can’t move, and I want to dine at Berne the day after to-morrow.”

“Have me carried there, I shall get cured.”

“You are right, I will have you carried in a litter.”

“I shall look like a saint out for a walk.”

I told one of the servants to look after him, and to see to all that was necessary for our departure. I had him taken to the “Falcon” by two horses who drew his litter.

Lebel came at noon and gave me the letter his master had written for M. de Murat. He brought his receipts and I paid everything without objection, as I found him an entirely honest man, and I had him to dinner with Madame Dubois and myself. I did not feel disposed to talk, and I was glad to see that they got on without me; they talked away admirably and amused me, for Lebel was by no means wanting in wit. He said he was very glad I had given him an opportunity of knowing the housekeeper, as he could not say he had known her before, having only seen her two or three times in passing through Lausanne. On rising from the table he asked my permission to write to her, and she, putting in her voice, called on him not to forget to do so.

Lebel was a good-natured man, of an honest appearance, and approaching his fiftieth year. Just as he was going, without asking my leave, he embraced her in the French fashion, and she seemed not to have the slightest objection.

She told me as soon as he was gone that this worthy man might be useful to her, and that she was delighted to enter into a correspondence with him.

The next day was spent in putting everything in order for our short journey, and Le Duc went off in his litter, intending to rest for the night at four leagues from Soleure. On the day following, after I had remembered the door-keeper, the cook, and the man-servant I was leaving behind, I set out in my carriage with the charming Dubois, and at eleven o'clock I arrived at the inn at Berne, where Le Duc had preceded me by two hours. In the first place, knowing the habits of Swiss innkeepers, I made an agreement with the landlord; and I then told the servant I had kept, who came from Berne, to take care of Le Duc, to put him under good medical superintendence, and to bid the doctor spare nothing to cure him completely.

I dined with my housekeeper in her room, for she had a separate lodging, and after sending my letter to M. de Muralt I went out for a walk.

CHAPTER XVII

Berne — La Mata Madame de la Saone — Sara — My Departure —

Arrival at Bale

I reached an elevation from which I could look over a vast stretch of country watered by a little river, and noticing a path leading to a kind of stair, the fancy took me to follow it. I went down about a hundred steps, and found forty small closets which I concluded were bathing machines. While I was looking at the place an honest-looking fellow came up to me, and asked me if I would like a bath. I said I would, and he opened one of the closets, and before long I surrounded by a crowd of young girls.

“Sir,” said the man, “they all aspire to the honour of attending you while you bathe; you have only to choose which it shall be. Half-a-crown will pay for the bath, the girl, and your coffee.”

As if I were the Grand Turk, I examined the swarm of rustic beauties, and threw my handkerchief at the one I liked the best. We went into a closet, and shutting the door with the most serious air, without even looking at me, she undressed me, and put a cotton cap on my head, and as soon as she saw me in the water she undressed herself as coolly as possible, and without a word came into the bath. Then she rubbed me all over, except in a certain quarter, which I had covered with my hands. When I thought I had been manipulated sufficiently, I asked for coffee. She got out of the bath, opened the door, and after asking for what I wanted got in again without the slightest consciousness.

When the coffee came she got out again to take it, shut the door, and returned to the bath, and held the tray while I was drinking, and when I had finished she remained beside me.

Although I had taken no great notice of her, I could see that she possessed all the qualifications a man could desire in a woman: fine features, lively eyes, a pretty mouth, and an excellent row of teeth, a healthy complexion, a well-rounded bosom a curved back, and all else in the same sort. I certainly thought her hands might have been softer, but their hardness was probably due to hard work. Furthermore, she was only eighteen, and yet I remained cold to all her charms. How was that? That was the question I asked myself; and I think the reason probably was that she was too natural, too devoid of those assumed graces and coquettish airs which women employ with so much art for the seduction of men. We only care for artifice and false show. Perhaps, too, our senses, to be irritated, require woman's charms to be veiled by modesty. But if, accustomed as we are to clothe ourselves, the face is the smallest factor in our perfect happiness, how is it that the face plays the principal part in rendering a man amorous? Why do we take the face as an index of a woman's beauty, and why do we forgive her when the covered parts are not in harmony with her features? Would it not be much more reasonable and sensible to veil the face, and to have the rest of the body naked? Thus when we fall in love with a woman, we should only want, as the crown of our bliss, to see a face answerable to those other charms which had taken our fancy. There can be no doubt that that would be the better plan, as in that case we should only be seduced by a perfect beauty, and we should grant an easy pardon if at the lifting of the mask we found ugliness instead of loveliness. Under those circumstances an ugly woman, happy in exercising the seductive power of her other charms, would never consent to unveil herself; while the pretty ones would not have to be asked. The plain women would not make us sigh for long; they would be easily subdued on the condition of remaining veiled, and if they did consent to unmask, it would be only after they had practically convinced one that enjoyment is possible without facial beauty. And it is evident and undeniable that inconstancy only proceeds from the variety of features. If a man did not see the face, he would always be constant and always in love with the first woman who had taken his fancy. I know that in the opinion of the foolish all this will seem folly, but I shall not be on the earth to answer their objections.

When I had left the bath, she wiped me with towels, put on my shirt, and then in the same state — that is, quite naked, she did my hair.

While I was dressing she dressed herself too, and having soon finished she came to buckle my shoes. I then gave her half-a-crown for the bath and six francs for herself; she kept the half-crown, but gave me back the six francs with silent contempt. I was mortified; I saw that I had offended her, and that she considered her behaviour entitled her to respect. I went away in a bad enough humour.

After supper I could not help telling my dear Dubois of the adventure I had had in the afternoon, and she made her own comments on the details. “She can’t have been pretty,” said she, “for if she had been, you would certainly have given way. I should like to see her.”

“If you like I will take you there.”

“I should be delighted.”

“But you will have to dress like a man:”

She rose, went out without a word, and in a quarter of an hour returned in a suit of Le Duc’s, but minus the trousers, as she had certain protuberances which would have stood out too much I told her to take a pair of my breeches, and we settled to go to the bath next morning.

She came to wake at six o’clock. She was dressed like a man, and wore a blue overcoat which disguised her shape admirably. I rose and went to La Mata, as the place is called.

Animated by the pleasure the expedition gave her, my dear Dubois looked radiant. Those who saw her must have seen through her disguise, she was so evidently a woman; so she wrapped herself up in her overcoat as well as she could.

As soon as we arrived we saw the master of the baths, who asked me if I wanted a closet for four, and I replied in the affirmative. We were soon surrounded by the girls, and I shewed my housekeeper the one who had not seduced me; she made choice of her, and I having fixed upon a big, determined-looking wench, we shut ourselves up in the bath.

As soon as I was undressed I went into the water with my big attendant. My housekeeper was not so quick; the novelty of the thing astonished her, and her expression told me that she repented of having come; but putting a good face on it, she began to laugh at seeing me rubbed by the feminine grenadier. She had some trouble before she could take off her chemise, but as it is only the first step that costs, she let it fall off, and though she held her two hands before her she dazzled me, in spite of myself, by the beauty of her form. Her attendant prepared to treat her as she had treated me, but she begged to be left alone; and on my following her example she felt obliged to let me look after her.

The two Swiss girls, who had no doubt often been present at a similar situation, began to give us a spectacle which was well known to me, but which was quite strange to my dear Dubois.

These two Bacchantes began to imitate the caresses I lavished on my housekeeper, who was quite astonished at the amorous fury with which my attendant played the part of a man with the other girl. I confess I was a little surprised myself, in spite of the transports which my fair Venetian nun had shewn me six years before in conjunction with C —— C —— .

I could not have imagined that anything of the kind could have distracted my attention, holding, as I did, the woman I loved, whose charms were sufficient to captivate all the senses; but the strange strife of the two young Menads took up her attention as well as mine.

“Your attendant,” said she, “must be a boy, not a girl.”

“But,” said I, “you saw her breasts.”

“Yes, but she may be a boy all the same.”

The big Swiss girl who had heard what we had said turned round and shewed me what I should not have credited. There could be no mistake, however. It was a feminine membrane, but much longer than my little finger, and stiff enough to penetrate. I explained to my dear Dubois what it was, but to convince her I had to make her touch it. The impudent creature pushed her shamelessness so far as to offer to try it on her, and she insisted so passionately that I was obliged to push her away. She then turned to her companion and satiated on her body her fury of lust. In spite of its disgusting nature, the sight irritated us to such a degree that my housekeeper yielded to nature and granted me all I could desire.

This entertainment lasted for two hours, and we returned to the town well pleased with one another. On leaving the bath I gave a Louis to each of the two Bacchantes, and we went away determined to go there no more. It will be understood that after what had happened there could be no further obstacle to the free progress of our love; and accordingly my dear Dubois became my mistress, and we made each other happy during all the time we spent at Berne. I was quite cured of my misadventure with the horrible widow, and I found that if love's pleasures are fleeting so are its pains. I will go farther and maintain that the pleasures are of much longer duration, as they leave memories which can be enjoyed in old age, whereas, if a man does happen to remember the pains, it is so slightly as to have no influence upon his happiness.

At ten o'clock the Mayor of Thun was announced. He was dressed in the French fashion, in black, and had a manner at once graceful and polite that pleased me. He was middle-aged, and enjoyed a considerable position in the Government. He insisted on my reading the letter that M. de Chavigni had written to him on my account. It was so flattering that I told him that if it had not been sealed I should not have had the face to deliver it. He asked me for the next day to a supper composed of men only, and for the day after that, to a supper at which women as well as men would be present. I went with him to the library where we saw M. Felix, an unfrocked monk, more of a scribbler than a scholar, and a young man named Schmidt, who gave good promise, and was already known to advantage in the literary world. I also had the misfortune of meeting here a very learned man of a very wearisome kind; he knew the names of ten thousand shells by heart, and I was obliged to listen to him for two hours, although I was totally ignorant of his science. Amongst other things he told me that the Aar contained gold. I replied that all great rivers contained gold, but he shrugged his shoulders and did not seem convinced.

I dined with M. de Muralt in company with four or five of the most distinguished women in Berne. I liked them very well, and above all Madame de Saconai struck me as particularly amiable and well-educated. I should have paid my addresses to her if I had been staying long in the so-called capital of Switzerland.

The ladies of Berne are well though not extravagantly dressed, as luxury is forbidden by the laws. Their manners are good and they speak French with perfect ease. They enjoy the greatest liberty without abusing it, for in spite of gallantry decency reigns everywhere. The husbands are not jealous, but they require their wives to be home by supper-time.

I spent three weeks in the town, my time being divided between my dear Dubois and an old lady of eighty-five who interested me greatly by her knowledge of chemistry. She had been intimately connected with the celebrated Boerhaave, and she shewed me a plate of gold he had transmuted in her presence from copper. I believed as much as I liked of this, but she assured me that Boerhaave possessed the philosopher's stone, but that he had not discovered the secret of prolonging life many years beyond the century. Boerhaave, however, was not able to apply this knowledge to himself, as he died of a polypus on the heart before he had attained the age of perfect maturity, which Hypocrates fixes at between sixty and seventy years. The four millions he left to his daughter, if they do not prove that he could make gold, certainly prove that he could save it. The worthy old woman told me he had given her a manuscript in which the whole process was explained, but that she found it very obscure.

"You should publish it," said I.

"God forbid!"

"Burn it, then."

"I can't make up my mind to do so."

M. de Muralt took me to see the military evolutions gone through by the citizens of Berne, who are all soldiers, and I asked him the meaning of the bear to be seen above the gate of the town. The German for bear is 'bar', 'bern', and the animal has given its name to the town and canton which rank second in the Republic, although it is in the first place for its wealth and culture. It is a peninsula formed by the Aar, which rises near the Rhine. The mayor spoke to me of the power of the canton, its lordships and bailiwicks, and explained his own powers; he then described the public policy, and told me of the different systems of government which compose the Helvetic Union.

"I understand perfectly well," I said, "that each of the thirteen cantons has its own government."

"I daresay you do," he replied, "but what you don't understand any more than I do is, that there is a canton which has four separate governments."

I had an excellent supper with fourteen or fifteen senators. There were no jokes, no frivolous conversation, and no literature; but law, the commonweal, commerce, political economy, speculation, love of country, and the duty of preferring liberty to life, in abundance.

I felt as if I were in a new element, but I enjoyed the privilege of being a man amidst men who were all in honour to our common humanity. But as the supper went on, these rigid republicans began to expand, the discourse became less measured, there were even some bursts of laughter, owing to the wine. I excited their pity, and though they praised sobriety they thought mine excessive. However, they respected my liberty, and did not oblige me to drink, as the Russians, Swedes, Poles, and most northern peoples do.

We parted at midnight — a very late hour in Switzerland, and as they wished me a good night, each of them made me a sincere offer of his friendship. One of the company at an early period of the supper, before he had begun to get mellow, had condemned the Venetian Republic for banishing the Grisons, but on his intellect being enlightened by Bacchus he made his apologies.

"Every government," said he, "ought to know its own interests better than strangers, and everybody should be allowed to do what he wills with his own."

When I got home I found my housekeeper lying in my bed. I gave her a hundred caresses in witness of my joy, and I assured her practically of my love and gratitude. I considered her as my wife, we cherished each other, and did not allow the thought of separating to enter our minds. When two lovers love each other in all freedom, the idea of parting seems impossible.

Next morning I got a letter from the worthy Madame d'Urfe, who begged me to call on Madame de la Saone, wife of a friend of hers — a lieutenant-general. This lady had come to Berne in the hope of getting cured of a disease which had disfigured her in an incredible manner. Madame de la Saone was immediately introduced to all the best society in the place. She gave a supper every day, only asking men; she had an excellent cook. She had given notice that she would pay no calls, and she was quite right. I hastened to make my bow to her; but, good Heavens! what a terrible and melancholy sight did I behold!

I saw a woman dressed with the utmost elegance, reclining voluptuously upon a couch. As soon as she saw me she arose, gave me a most gracious reception, and going back to her couch invited me to sit beside her. She doubtless noticed my surprise, but being probably accustomed to the impression which the first sight of her created, she talked on in the most friendly manner, and by so doing diminished my aversion.

Her appearance was as follows: Madame de Saone was beautifully dressed, and had the whitest hands and the roundest arms that can be imagined. Her dress, which was cut very low, allowed me to see an exquisite breast of dazzling whiteness, heightened by two rosy buds; her figure was good, and her feet the smallest I have ever seen. All about her inspired love, but when one's eyes turned to her face every other feeling gave way to those of horror and pity. She was fearful. Instead of a face, one saw a blackened and disgusting scab. No feature was distinguishable, and her ugliness was made more conspicuous and dreadful by two fine eyes full of fire, and by a lipless mouth which she kept parted, as if to disclose two rows of teeth of dazzling whiteness. She could not laugh, for the pain caused by the contraction of the muscles would doubtless have drawn tears to her eyes; nevertheless she appeared contented, her conversation was delightful, full of wit and humour, and permeated with the tone of good society. She might be thirty at the most, and she had left three beautiful young children behind in Paris. Her husband was a fine, well-made man, who loved her tenderly, and had never slept apart from her. It is probable that few soldiers have shewn such courage as this, but it is to be supposed that he did not carry his bravery so far as to kiss her, as the very thought made one shudder. A disorder contracted after her first child-bed had left the poor woman in this sad state, and she had borne it for ten years. All the best doctors in France had tried in vain to cure her, and she had come to Berne to put herself into the hands of two well-known physicians who had promised to do so. Every quack makes promises of this sort; their patients are cured or not cured as it happens, and provided that they pay heavily the doctor is ready enough to lay the fault, not on his ignorance, but at the door of his poor deluded patient.

The doctor came while I was with her, and just as her intelligent conversation was making me forget her face. She had already began to take his remedies, which were partly composed of mercury.

"It seems to me," said she, "that the itching has increased since I have taken your medicines."

"It will last," said the son of AEsculapius, "till the end of the cure, and that will take about three months."

"As long as I scratch myself," said she, "I shall be in the same state, and the cure will never be completed."

The doctor replied in an evasive manner. I rose to take my leave, and holding my hand she asked me to supper once for all. I went the same evening; the poor woman took everything and drank some wine, as the doctor had not put her on any diet. I saw that she would never be cured.

Her good temper and her charming conversational powers kept all the company amused. I conceived that it would be possible to get used to her face, and to live with her without being disgusted. In the evening I talked about her to my housekeeper, who said that the beauty of her body and her mental endowments might be sufficient to attract people to her. I agreed, though I felt that I could never become one of her lovers.

Three or four days after, I went to a bookseller's to read the newspaper, and was politely accosted by a fine young man of twenty, who said that Madame de la Saone was sorry not to have seen me again at supper.

"You know the lady?"

"I had the honour to sup at her house with you."

"True; I remember you."

"I get her the books she likes, as I am a bookseller, and not only do I sup with her every evening, but we breakfast together every morning before she gets up."

"I congratulate you. I bet you are in love with her."

"You are pleased to jest, but she is pleasanter than you think."

"I do not jest at all, but I would wager she would not have the courage to push things to an extremity."

"Perhaps you would lose."

"Really? I should be very glad to."

"Let us make a bet."

"How will you convince me I have lost?"

"Let us bet a louis, and you must promise to be discreet."

“Very good.”

“Come and sup at her house this evening, and I will tell you something.”

“You shall see me there.”

When I got home I told my housekeeper what I had heard.

“I am curious to know,” said she, “how he will convince you.” I promised to tell her, which pleased her very much.

I was exact to my appointment. Madame de la Saone reproached me pleasantly for my absence, and gave me a delicious supper. The young bookseller was there, but as his sweetheart did not speak a word to him he said nothing and passed unnoticed.

After supper we went out together, and he told me on the way that if I liked he would satisfy me the next morning at eight o’clock. “Call here, and the lady’s maid will tell you her mistress is not visible, but you have only to say that you will wait, and that you will go into the ante-chamber. This room has a glass door commanding a view of madame’s bed, and I will take care to draw back the curtains over the door so that you will be able to see at your ease all that passes between us. When the affair is over I shall go out by another door, she will call her maid, and you will be shewn in. At noon, if you will allow me, I will bring you some books to the ‘Falcon,’ and if you find that you have lost you shall pay me my louis.” I promised to carry out his directions, and we parted.

I was curious to see what would happen, though I by no means regarded it as an impossibility; and on my presenting myself at eight o’clock, the maid let me in as soon as I said that I could wait. I found a corner of the glass door before which there was no curtain, and on applying my eye to the place I saw my young adventurer holding his conquest in his arms on the bed. An enormous nightcap entirely concealed her face — an excellent precaution which favoured the bookseller’s enterprise.

When the rascal saw that I had taken up my position, he did not keep me waiting, for, getting up, he presented to my dazzled gaze, not only the secret treasures of his sweetheart, but his own also. He was a small man, but where the lady was most concerned he was a Hercules, and the rogue seemed to make a parade of his proportions as if to excite my jealousy. He turned his victim round so that I should see her under all aspects, and treated her manfully, while she appeared to respond to his ardour with all her might. Phidias could not have modelled his Venus on a finer body; her form was rounded and voluptuous, and as white as Parian marble. I was affected in a lively manner by the spectacle, and re-entered my lodging so inflamed that if my dear Dubois had not been at hand to quench my fire I should have been obliged to have extinguished it in the baths of La Mata.

When I had told her my tale she wanted to know the hero of it, and at noon she had that pleasure. The young bookseller brought me some books I had ordered, and while paying him for them I gave him our bet and a Louis over and above as a mark of my satisfaction at his prowess. He took it with a smile which seemed to shew that he thought I ought to think myself lucky to have lost. My housekeeper looked at him for some time, and asked if he knew her; he said he did not.

“I saw you when you were a child,” said she. “You are the son of M. Mignard, minister of the Gospel. You must have been ten when I saw you.”

“Possibly, madam.”

“You did not care to follow your father’s profession, then?”

“No madam, I feel much more inclined to the worship of the creature than to that of the Creator, and I did not think my father’s profession would suit me.”

“You are right, for a minister of the Gospel ought to be discreet, and discretion is a restraint.”

This stroke made him blush, but we did not give him time to lose courage. I asked him to dine with me, and without mentioning the name of Madame de la Saone he told his amorous adventures and numerous anecdotes about the pretty women of Berne.

After he had gone, my housekeeper said that once was quite enough to see a young man of his complexion. I agreed with her, and had no more to do with him; but I heard that Madame de Saone took him to Paris and made his fortune. Many fortunes are made in this manner, and there are some which originated still more nobly. I only returned to Madame de la Saone to take my leave, as I shall shortly relate.

I was happy with my charmer, who told me again and again that with me she lived in bliss. No fears or doubts as to the future troubled her mind; she was certain, as I was, that we should never leave each other; and she told me she would pardon all the infidelities I might be guilty of, provided I made full confession. Hers, indeed, was a disposition with which to live in peace and content, but I was not born to enjoy such happiness.

After we had been a fortnight at Berne, my housekeeper received a letter from Soleure. It came from Lebel. As I saw she read it with great attention, I asked her what it was about.

"Take it and read it," said she; and she sat down in front of me to read my soul by the play of my features.

Lebel asked her, in concise terms, if she would become his wife.

"I have only put off the proposition," said he, "to set my affairs in order, and to see if I could afford to marry you, even if the consent of the ambassador were denied us. I find I am rich enough to live well in Berne or elsewhere without the necessity of my working; however I shall not have to face the alternative, for at the first hint of the matter M. de Chavigni gave his consent with the best grace imaginable."

He went on begging her not to keep him long waiting for a reply, and to tell him in the first place if she consented; in the second, whether she would like to live at Berne and be mistress in her own house, or whether she would prefer to return to Soleure and live with the ambassador, which latter plan might bring them some profit. He ended by declaring that whatever she had would be for her sole use, and that he would give her a dower of a hundred thousand francs. He did not say a word about me.

"Dearest," said I, "you are at perfect liberty to choose your own course, but I cannot contemplate your leaving me without considering myself as the most unhappy of men."

"And if I lose you I should be the most unhappy of women; for if you love me I care not whether we are married or no."

"Very good; but what answer are you going to make."

"You shall see my letter to-morrow. I shall tell him politely but plainly that I love you, that I am yours, that I am happy, and that it is thus impossible for me to accept his flattering propositions. I shall also say that I appreciate his generosity, and that if I were wise I should accept him, but that being the slave of my love for you I can only follow my inclination."

"I think you give an excellent turn to your letter. In refusing such an offer you could not have better reasons than those you give, and it would be absurd to try and persuade him that we are not lovers, as the thing is self-evident. Nevertheless, my darling, the letter saddens me."

"Why, dearest?"

"Because I have not a hundred thousand francs to offer you."

"I despise them; and if you were to offer me such a sum, I should only accept it to lay it at your feet. You are certainly not destined to become miserable, but if that should come to pass, be sure that I should be only too happy to share your misery."

We fell into one another's arms, and love made us taste all its pleasures. Nevertheless, in the midst of bliss, some tinge of sadness gained upon our souls. Languishing love seems to redouble its strength, but it is only in appearance; sadness exhausts love more than enjoyment. Love is a madcap who must be fed on laughter and mirth, otherwise he dies of inanition.

Next day my sweetheart wrote to Lebel in the sense she had decided on, and I felt obliged to write M. de Chavigni a letter in which love, sentiment, and philosophy were mingled. I did not conceal from him that I loved the woman whom Lebel coveted to distraction, but I said that as a man of honour I would rather die than deprive my sweetheart of such solid advantages.

My letter delighted the housekeeper, for she was anxious to know what the ambassador thought of the affair, which needed much reflection.

I got on the same day the letters of introduction I had asked Madame d'Urfe to give me, and I determined, to the joy of my dear Dubois, to set out for Lausanne. But we must hark back a little.

When one is sincerely in love, one thinks the beloved object full of deserts, and the mind, the dupe of the feelings, thinks all the world jealous of its bliss.

A. M. de F —— , member of the Council of the Two Hundred, whom I had met at Madame de la Saone's, had become my friend. He came to see me and I introduced him to my dear Dubois, whom he treated with the same distinction he would have used towards my wife. He had presented us to his wife, and had come several times to see us with her and her daughter Sara. Sara was only thirteen, but she was extremely precocious, dark complexioned, and full of wit; she was continually uttering naivetes, of which she understood the whole force, although looking at her face one would have thought her perfectly innocent. She excelled in the art of making her father and mother believe in her innocence, and thus she enjoyed plenty of liberty.

Sara had declared that she was in love with my housekeeper, and as her parents laughed at her she lavished her caresses on my dear Dubois. She often came to breakfast with us, and when she found us in bed she would embrace my sweetheart, whom she called her wife, passing her hand over the coverlet to tickle her, telling her that she was her wife, and that she wanted to have a child. My sweetheart laughed and let her go on.

One day I told her jokingly that she would make me jealous, that I thought she really was a man, and that I was going to make sure. The sly little puss told me that I was making a mistake, but her hand seemed rather to guide mine than to oppose it. That made me curious, and my mind was soon set at rest as to her sex. Perceiving that she had taken me in and got exactly what she wanted, I drew back my hand, and imparted my suspicions to my housekeeper, who said I was right. However, as the little girl had no part in my affections, I did not push the thing any farther.

Two or three days after, this girl came in as I was getting up, and said in her usual simple way,

"Now that you know I am not really a man you can not be jealous or have objection to my taking your place beside my little wife, if she will let me."

My housekeeper, who looked inclined to laugh, said,

"Come along."

In the twinkling of an eye she was undressed and in the arms of her little wife, whom she proceeded to treat as an amorous husband. My sweetheart laughed, and Sara, having contrived in the combat to rid herself of her chemise and the coverlet, displayed herself to me without any veil, while at the same time she shewed me all the beauties of my sweetheart. This sight inflamed me. I shut the door, and made the little hussy witness of my ardour with my sweetheart. Sara looked on attentively, playing the part of astonishment to perfection, and when I had finished she said, with the utmost simplicity,

“Do it again:”

“I can’t, my dear; don’t you see I am a dead man?”

“That’s very funny,” she cried; and with the most perfect innocence she came over, and tried to effect my resurrection.

When she had succeeded in placing me in the wished-for condition, she said, “Now go in;” and I should doubtless have obeyed, but my housekeeper said, “No, dearest, since you have effected its resurrection, you must make it die again.”

“I should like to,” said she, “but I am afraid I have not got enough room;” and so saying she placed herself in a position to shew me that she was speaking the truth, and that if she did not make me die it was not her fault.

Imitating her simplicity I approached her, as if I wished to oblige her, but not to go too far; but not finding any resistance I accomplished the act in all its forms, without her giving the slightest evidence of pain, without any of the accidents of a first trial, but, on the contrary, with all the marks of the utmost enjoyment.

Although I was sure of the contrary, I kept my self-possession enough to tell my housekeeper that Sara had given me what can only be given once, and she pretended to believe me.

When the operation was finished, we had another amusing scene. Sara begged us not to say a word about it to her papa or mamma, as they would be sure to scold her as they had scolded her when she got her ears pierced without asking their leave.

Sara knew that we saw through her feigned simplicity, but she pretended not to do so as it was to her own advantage. Who could have instructed her in the arts of deceit? Nobody; only her natural wit, less rare in childhood than in youth, but always rare and astonishing. Her mother said her simplicities shewed that she would one day be very intelligent, and her father maintained that they were signs of her stupidity. But if Sara had been stupid, our bursts of laughter would have disconcerted her; and she would have died for shame, instead of appearing all the better pleased when her father deplored her stupidity. She would affect astonishment, and by way of curing one sort of stupidity she corroborated it by displaying another. She asked us questions to which we could not reply, and laughed at her instead, although it was evident that before putting such questions she must have reasoned over them. She might have rejoined that the stupidity was on our side, but by so doing she would have betrayed herself.

Lebel did not reply to his sweetheart, but M. de Chavigni wrote me a letter of four pages. He spoke like a philosopher and an experienced man of the world.

He shewed me that if I were an old man like him, and able to insure a happy and independent existence to my sweetheart after my death, I should do well to keep her from all men, especially as there was so perfect a sympathy between us; but that as I was a young man, and did not intend to bind myself to her by the ties of marriage, I should not only consent to a union which seemed for her happiness, but that as a man of honour it was my duty to use my influence with her in favour of the match. “With your experience,” said the kind old gentleman, “you ought to know that a time would come when you would regret both having lost this opportunity, for your love is sure to become friendship, and then another love will replace that which you now think as firm as the god Terminus.

“Lebel,” he added, “has told me his plans, and far from disapproving, I have encouraged him, for your charming friend won my entire esteem in the five or six times I had the pleasure of seeing her with you. I shall be delighted, therefore, to have her in my house, where I can enjoy her conversation without transgressing the laws of propriety. Nevertheless, you will understand that at my age I have formed no desires, for I could not satisfy them even if their object were propitious.” He ended by telling me that Lebel had not fallen in love in a young man’s style, that he had reflected on what he was doing, and that he would consequently not hurry her, as she would see in the letter he was going to send her. A marriage ought always to be undertaken in cold blood.

I gave the letter to my housekeeper, who read it attentively, and gave it back to me quite coolly.

“What do you think of his advice, dearest?”

“I think I had better follow it: he says there is no hurry, and delay is all we want. Let us love each other and think only of that. This letter is written with great wisdom, but I cannot imagine our becoming indifferent to each other, though I know such a thing is possible.”

“Never indifferent; you make a mistake there.”

“Well, friends, then; and that is not much better after being lovers.”

“But friendship, dearest, is never indifferent. Love, it is true, may be in its composition. We know it, as it has been thus from the beginning of the world.”

“Then the ambassador was right. Repentance might come and torment us when love had been replaced by calmer friendship.”

“If you think so, let us marry each other to-morrow, and punish thereby the vices of our human nature.”

“Yes, we will marry, but there is no hurry; fearing lest hymen should quicken the departure of love, let us enjoy our happiness while we can.”

“You speak admirably, my angel, and deserve the greatest good fortune.”

“I wish for no greater than what you procure me.”

We went to bed, continuing our discussions, and when we were in each other’s arms we made an arrangement which suited us very well.

“Lausanne,” said she, “is a little town where you would meet with the warmest hospitality, and during your fortnight’s stay you will have nothing to do but to make visits and to go to suppers. I am known to all the nobility, and the Duke of Rosebury, who wearied me with his love-making, is still there. My appearance with you will make everybody talk, and it will be as annoying for you as for me. My mother lives there, too. She would say nothing, but in her heart she would be ill-pleased to see me as the housekeeper of a man like you, for common sense would inform everyone that I was your mistress.”

I thought she was right, and that it would be well to respect the rules of society. We decided that she should go to Lausanne by herself and stay with her mother, that in two or three days I should follow her, and should live by myself, as long as I liked, having full liberty to see her at her mother's.

"When you leave Lausanne," said she, "I will rejoin you at Geneva, and then we will travel together where you please and as long as our love lasts."

In two days she started early in the morning, sure of my constancy, and congratulating herself on her discretion. I was sad at her leaving me, but my calls to take leave served to rouse me from my grief. I wished to make M. Haller's acquaintance before I left Switzerland, and the mayor, M. de Muralt, gave me a letter of introduction to him very handsomely expressed. M. de Haller was the bailiff of Roche.

When I called to take leave of Madame de la Saone I found her in bed, and I was obliged to remain by her bedside for a quarter of an hour. She spoke of her disease, and gave the conversation such a turn that she was able with perfect propriety to let me see that the ravages of the disease had not impaired the beauty of her body. The sight convinced me that Mignard had need of less courage than I thought, and I was within an inch of doing her the same service. It was easy enough to look only at her body, and it would have been difficult to behold anything more beautiful.

I know well that prudes and hypocrites, if they ever read these Memoirs, will be scandalized at the poor lady, but in shewing her person so readily she avenged herself on the malady which had disfigured her. Perhaps, too, her goodness of heart and politeness told her what a trial it was to look at her face, and she wished to indemnify the man who disguised his feelings of repugnance by shewing him what gifts nature had given her. I am sure, ladies, that the most prudish — nay, the most virtuous, amongst you, if you were unfortunate enough to be so monstrously deformed in the face, would introduce some fashion which would conceal your ugliness, and display those beauties which custom hides from view. And doubtless Madame de la Saone would have been more chary of her person if she had been able to enchant with her face like you.

The day I left I dined with M —— I —— , and was severely taken to task by pretty Sara for having sent her little wife away before me. The reader will see how I met her again at London three years later. Le Duc was still in the doctor’s hands, and very weak; but I made him go with me, as I had a good deal of property, and I could not trust it to anybody else.

I left Berne feeling naturally very sad. I had been happy there, and to this day the thought of it is a pleasant one.

I had to consult Dr. Herrenschwand about Madame d’Urfe, so I stopped at Morat, where he lived, and which is only four leagues from Berne. The doctor made me dine with him that I might try the fish of the lake, which I found delicious. I had intended to go on directly after dinner, but I was delayed by a curiosity of which I shall inform the reader.

After I had given the doctor a fee of two Louis for his advice, in writing, on a case of tapeworm, he made me walk with him by the Avanches road, and we went as far as the famous mortuary of Morat.

“This mortuary,” said the doctor, “was constructed with part of the bones of the Burgundians, who perished here at the well-known battle lost by Charles the Bold.”

The Latin inscription made me laugh.

“This inscription,” said I, “contains an insulting jest; it is almost burlesque, for the gravity of an inscription should not allow of laughter.”

The doctor, like a patriotic Swiss, would not allow it, but I think it was false shame on his part. The inscription ran as follows, and the impartial reader can judge of its nature:

“Deo. opt. Max. Caroli inclyti et fortisimi Burgundie duds

exercitus Muratum obsidens, ab Helvetiis cesus, hoc sui

monumentum reliquit anno MCDLXXVI.”

Till then I had had a great idea of Morat. Its fame of seven centuries, three sieges sustained and repulsed, all had given me a sublime notion of it; I expected to see something and saw nothing.

“Then Morat has been razed to the ground?” said I to the doctor.

“Not at all, it is as it always has been, or nearly so.”

I concluded that a man who wants to be well informed should read first and then correct his knowledge by travel. To know ill is worse than not to know at all, and Montaigne says that we ought to know things well.

But it was the following comic adventure which made me spend the night at Morat:

I found at the inn a young maid who spoke a sort of rustic Italian. She struck me by her great likeness to my fair stocking-seller at Paris. She was called Raton, a name which my memory has happily preserved. I offered her six francs for her favours, but she refused the money with a sort of pride, telling me that I had made a mistake and that she was an honest girl.

“It may be so,” said I, and I ordered my horses to be put in. When the honest Raton saw me on the point of leaving, she said, with an air that was at once gay and timid, that she wanted two louis, and if I liked to give her them and pass the night with her I should be well content.

“I will stay, but remember to be kind.”

“I will.”

When everybody had gone to bed, she came into my room with a little frightened manner, calculated to redouble my ardour, but by great good luck, feeling I had a necessity, I took the light and ran to the place where I could satisfy it. While there I amused myself by reading innumerable follies one finds written in such places, and suddenly my eyes lighted on these words: —

“This tenth day of August, 1760, the wretched Raton gave me the what-d’-you-call-it: reader, beware.”

I was almost tempted to believe in miracles, for I could not think there were two Ratons in the same house. I returned gaily to my room and found my sweetheart in bed without her chemise. I went to the place beside the bed where she had thrown it down, and as soon as she saw me touching it she begged me in a fright not to do so, as it was not clean. She was right, for it bore numerous marks of the disease which infected her. It may be imagined that my passion cooled, and that I sent her away in a moment; but I felt at the same time the greatest gratitude to what is called chance, for I should have never thought of examining a girl whose face was all lilies and roses, and who could not be more than eighteen.

Next day I went to Roche to see the celebrated Haller.

CHAPTER XVIII

M. Haller — My Stay at Lausanne — Lord Rosebury — The Young Saconai — Dissertation on Beauty — The Young Theologian

M. Haller was a man six feet high and broad in a proportion; he was a well-made man, and a physical as well as a mental colossus. He received me courteously, and when he had read M. de Muralt's letter, he displayed the greatest politeness, which shews that a good letter of introduction is never out of place. This learned man displayed to me all the treasures of his knowledge, replying with exactitude to all my questions, and above all with a rare modesty which astonished me greatly, for whilst he explained the most difficult questions, he had the air of a scholar who would fain know; but on the other hand, when he asked me a scientific question, it was with so delicate an art that I could not help giving the right answer.

M. de Haller was a great physiologist, a great doctor, and a great anatomist. He called Morgagni his master, though he had himself made numerous discoveries relating to the frame of man. While I stayed with him he shewed me a number of letters from Morgagni and Pontedera, a professor of botany, a science of which Haller had an extensive knowledge. Hearing me speak of these learned men whose works I had read at an early age, he complained that Pontedera's letters were almost illegible and written in extremely obscure Latin. He shewed me a letter from a Berlin Academician, whose name I have forgotten, who said that since the king had read his letter he had no more thoughts of suppressing the Latin language. Haller had written to Frederick the Great that a monarch who succeeded in the unhappy enterprise of proscribing the language of Cicero and Virgil from the republic of letters would raise a deathless monument to his own ignorance. If men of letters require a universal language to communicate with one another, Latin is certainly the best, for Greek and Arabic do not adapt themselves in the same way to the genius of modern civilization.

Haller was a good poet of the Pindaric kind; he was also an excellent statesman, and had rendered great services to his country. His morals were irreproachable, and I remember his telling me that the only way to give precepts was to do so by example. As a good citizen he was an admirable paterfamilias, for what greater proof could he give of his love of country than by presenting it with worthy subjects in his children, and such subjects result from a good education. His wife was still young, and bore on her features the marks of good nature and discretion. He had a charming daughter of about eighteen; her appearance was modest, and at table she only opened her mouth to speak in a low tone to a young man who sat beside her. After dinner, finding myself alone with M. Haller, I asked him who this young man was. He told me he was his daughter's tutor.

"A tutor like that and so pretty a pupil might easily become lovers."

"Yes, please God."

This Socratic reply made me see how misplaced my remark had been, and I felt some confusion. Finding a book to my hand I opened it to restore my composure.

It was an octavo volume of his works, and I read in it:

"Utrum memoria post mortem dubito."

"You do not think, then," said I, "that the memory is an essential part of the soul?"

"How is that question to be answered?" M. de Haller replied, cautiously, as he had his reasons for being considered orthodox.

During dinner I asked if M. de Voltaire came often to see him. By way of reply he repeated these lines of the poet: —

"Vetabo qui Cereris sacrum vulgarit arcanum sub usdem sit trabibus."

I spent three days with this celebrated man, but I thought myself obliged to refrain from asking his opinion on any religious questions, although I had a great desire to do so, as it would have pleased me to have had his opinion on that delicate subject; but I believe that in matters of that kind M. Haller judged only by his heart. I told him, however, that I should consider a visit to Voltaire as a great event, and he said I was right. He added, without the slightest bitterness, “M. de Voltaire is a man who ought to be known, although, in spite of the laws of nature, many persons have found him greater at a distance than close at hand.”

M. de Haller kept a good and abundant though plain table; he only drank water. At dessert only he allowed himself a small glass of liqueur drowned in an enormous glass of water. He talked a great deal of Boerhaave, whose favourite pupil he had been. He said that after Hypocrates, Boerhaave was the greatest doctor and the greatest chemist that had ever existed.

“How is it,” said I, “that he did not attain mature age?”

“Because there is no cure for death. Boerhaave was born a doctor, as Homer was born a poet; otherwise he would have succumbed at the age of fourteen to a malignant ulcer which had resisted all the best treatment of the day. He cured it himself by rubbing it constantly with salt dissolved in his own urine.”

“I have been told that he possessed the philosopher’s stone.”

“Yes, but I don’t believe it.”

“Do you think it possible?”

“I have been working for the last thirty years to convince myself of its impossibility; I have not yet done so, but I am sure that no one who does not believe in the possibility of the great work can be a good chemist.”

When I left him he begged me to write and tell him what I thought of the great Voltaire, and in, this way our French correspondence began. I possess twenty-two letters from this justly celebrated man; and the last word written six months before, his too, early death. The longer I live the more interest I take in my papers. They are the treasure which attaches me to life and makes death more hateful still.

I had been reading at Berne Rousseau’s “Heloise,” and I asked M. Haller’s opinion of it. He told me that he had once read part of it to oblige a friend, and from this part he could judge of the whole. “It is the worst of all romances, because it is the most eloquently expressed. You will see the country of Vaud, but don’t expect to see the originals of the brilliant portraits which Jean Jacques painted. He seems to have thought that lying was allowable in a romance, but he has abused the privilege. Petrarch, was a learned man, and told no lies in speaking of his love for Laura, whom he loved as every man loves the woman with whom he is taken; and if Laura had not contented her illustrious lover, he would not have celebrated her."

Thus Haller spoke to me of Petrarch, mentioning Rousseau with aversion. He disliked his very eloquence, as he said it owed all its merits to antithesis and paradox. Haller was a learned man of the first class, but his knowledge was not employed for the purpose of ostentation, nor in private life, nor when he was in the company of people who did not care for science. No one knew better than he how to accommodate himself to his company he was friendly with everyone, and never gave offence. But what were his qualifications? It would be much easier to say what he had not than what he had. He had no pride, self-sufficiency, nor tone of superiority — in fact, none of those defects which are often the reproach of the learned and the witty.

He was a man of austere virtue, but he took care to hide the austerity under a veil of a real and universal kindness. Undoubtedly he thought little of the ignorant, who talk about everything right or wrong, instead of remaining silent, and have at bottom only contempt for the learned; but he only shewed his contempt by saying nothing. He knew that a despised ignoramus becomes an enemy, and Haller wished to be loved. He neither boasted of nor concealed his knowledge, but let it run like a limpid stream flowing through the meadows. He talked well, but never absorbed the conversation. He never spoke of his works; when someone mentioned them he would turn the conversation as soon as he conveniently could. He was sorry to be obliged to contradict anyone who conversed with him.

When I reached Lausanne I found myself enabled to retain my incognito for a day at any rate. I naturally gave the first place to my affections. I went straight to my sweetheart without needing to ask my way, so well had she indicated the streets through which I had to pass. I found her with her mother, but I was not a little astonished to see Lebel there also. However, my surprise must have passed unnoticed, for my housekeeper, rising from her seat with a cry of joy, threw her arms about my neck, and after having kissed me affectionately presented me to her worthy mother, who welcomed me in the friendliest manner. I asked Lebel after the ambassador, and how long he had been at Lausanne.

He replied, with a polite and respectful air, that his master was quite well, and that he had come to Lausanne on business, and had only been there a few hours; and that, wishing to pay his regards to Madame Dubois's mother, he had been pleasantly surprised to see the daughter there as well.

"You know," he added, "what my intentions are. I have to go back to-morrow, and when you have made up your minds, write to me and I will come and take her to Soleure, where I will marry her."

He could not have spoken more plainly or honourably. I said that I would never oppose the will of my sweetheart, and my Dubois, interrupting me, said in her turn that she would never leave me until I sent her away.

Lebel found these replies too vague, and told me with noble freedom that we must give him a definite reply, since in such cases uncertainty spoils all. At that moment I felt as if I could never agree to his wishes, and I told him that in ten days I would let him know of our resolution, whatever it was. At that he was satisfied, and left us.

After his departure my sweetheart's mother, whose good sense stood her instead of wit, talked to us in a manner that answered our inclinations, for, amorous as we were, we could not bear the idea of parting. I agreed that my housekeeper should wait up for me till midnight, and that we could talk over our reply with our heads on the pillow.

My Dubois had a separate room with a good bed and excellent furniture. She gave me a very good supper, and we spent a delicious night. In the morning we felt more in love than ever, and were not at all disposed to comply with Lebel's wishes. Nevertheless, we had a serious conversation.

The reader will remember that my mistress had promised to pardon my infidelities, provided that I confessed them. I had none to confess, but in the course of conversation I told her about Raton.

"We ought to think ourselves very fortunate," said she, "for if it had not been for chance, we should have been in a fine state now."

"Yes, and I should be in despair."

"I don't doubt it, and you would be all the more wretched as I should never complain to you."

"I only see one way of providing against such a misfortune. When I have been unfaithful to you I will punish myself by depriving myself of the pleasure of giving you proofs of my affection till I am certain that I can do so without danger."

"Ah! you would punish me for your faults, would you? If you love me as I love you, believe me you would find a better remedy than that."

"What is that?"

"You would never be unfaithful to me."

"You are right. I am sorry I was not the first to think of this plan, which I promise to follow for the future."

"Don't make any promises," said she, with a sigh, "it might prove too difficult to keep them."

It is only love which can inspire such conversations, but unfortunately it gains nothing by them.

Next morning, just as I was going out to take my letters, the Baron de Bercei, uncle of my friend Bavois, entered.

"I know," said he, "that my nephew owes his fortune to you; he is just going to be made general, and I and all the family will be enchanted to make your acquaintance. I have come to offer my services, and to beg that you will dine with me to-day, and on any other day you please when you have nothing better to do, and I hope you will always consider yourself of the family.

"At the same time I beg of you not to tell anybody that my nephew has become a Catholic, as according to the prejudices of the country it would be a dishonour which would reflect on the whole family."

I accepted his invitation, and promised to say nothing about the circumstance he had mentioned.

I left my letters of introduction, and I received everywhere a welcome of the most distinguished kind. Madame de Gentil-Langalerie appeared the most amiable of all the ladies I called on, but I had not time to pay my court to one more than another. Every day politeness called me to some dinner, supper, ball, or assembly. I was bored beyond measure, and I felt inclined to say how troublesome it is to have such a welcome. I spent a fortnight in the little town, where everyone prides himself on his liberty, and in all my life I have never experienced such a slavery, for I had not a moment to myself. I was only able to pass one night with my sweetheart, and I longed to set off with her for Geneva. Everybody would give me letters of introduction for M. de Voltaire, and by their eagerness one would have thought the great man beloved, whereas all detested him on account of his sarcastic humour.

"What, ladies!" said I, "is not M. de Voltaire good-natured, polite, and affable to you who have been kind enough to act in his plays with him?"

"Not in the least. When he hears us rehearse he grumbles all the time. We never say a thing to please him: here it is a bad pronunciation, there a tone not sufficiently passionate, sometimes one speaks too softly, sometimes too loudly; and it's worse when we are acting. What a hubbub there is if one add a syllable, or if some carelessness spoil one of his verses. He frightens us. So and so laughed badly; so and so in Alzire had only pretended to weep."

"Does he want you to weep really?"

"Certainly. He will have real tears. He says that if an actor wants to draw tears he must shed them himself."

"I think he is right there; but he should not be so severe with amateurs, above all with charming actresses like you. Such perfection is only to be looked for from professionals, but all authors are the same. They never think that the actor has pronounced the words with the force which the sense, as they see it, requires."

"I told him, one day, that it was not my fault if his lines had not the proper force."

"I am sure he laughed."

"Laughed? No, sneered, for he is a rude and impertinent man."

"But I suppose you overlook all these failings?"

"Not at all; we have sent him about his business."

"Sent him about his business?"

“Yes. He left the house he had rented here, at short notice, and retired to where you will find him now. He never comes to see us now, even if we ask him.”

“Oh, you do ask him, though you sent him about his business?”

“We cannot deprive ourselves of the pleasure of admiring his talents, and if we have teased him, that was only from revenge, and to teach him something of the manners of good society.”

“You have given a lesson to a great master.”

“Yes; but when you see him mention Lausanne, and see what he will say of us. But he will say it laughingly, that’s his way.”

During my stay I often saw Lord Rosebury, who had vainly courted my charming Dubois. I have never known a young man more disposed to silence. I have been told that he had wit, that he was well educated, and even in high spirits at times, but he could not get over his shyness, which gave him an almost indefinable air of stupidity. At balls, assemblies — in fact, everywhere, his manners consisted of innumerable bows. When one spoke to him, he replied in good French but with the fewest possible words, and his shy manner shewed that every question was a trouble to him. One day when I was dining with him, I asked him some question about his country, which required five or six small phrases by way of answer. He gave me an excellent reply, but blushed all the time like a young girl when she comes out. The celebrated Fox who was then twenty, and was at the same dinner, succeeded in making him laugh, but it was by saying something in English, which I did not understand in the least. Eight months after I saw him again at Turin, he was then amorous of a banker’s wife, who was able to untie his tongue.

At Lausanne I saw a young girl of eleven or twelve by whose beauty I was exceedingly struck. She was the daughter of Madame de Saconai, whom I had known at Berne. I do not know her after history, but the impression she made on me has never been effaced. Nothing in nature has ever exercised such a powerful influence over me as a pretty face, even if it be a child’s.

The Beautiful, as I have been told, is endowed with this power of attraction; and I would fain believe it, since that which attracts me is necessarily beautiful in my eyes, but is it so in reality? I doubt it, as that which has influenced me has not influenced others. The universal or perfect beauty does not exist, or it does not possess this power. All who have discussed the subject have hesitated to pronounce upon it, which they would not have done if they had kept to the idea of form. According to my ideas, beauty is only form, for that which is not beautiful is that which has no form, and the deformed is the opposite of the ‘pulchrum’ and ‘formosum’.

We are right to seek for the definitions of things, but when we have them to hand in the words; why should we go farther? If the word ‘forma’ is Latin, we should seek for the Latin meaning and not the French, which, however, often uses ‘deforme’ or ‘difforme’ instead of ‘laid’, ugly, without people’s noticing that its opposite should be a word which implies the existence of form; and this can only be beauty. We should note that ‘informe’ in French as well as in Latin means shapeless, a body without any definite appearance.

We will conclude, then, that it is the beauty of woman which has always exercised an irresistible sway over me, and more especially that beauty which resides in the face. It is there the power lies, and so true is that, that the sphinxes of Rome and Versailles almost make me fall in love with them though, the face excepted, they are deformed in every sense of the word. In looking at the fine proportions of their faces one forgets their deformed bodies. What, then, is beauty? We know not; and when we attempt to define it or to enumerate its qualities we become like Socrates, we hesitate. The only thing that our minds can seize is the effect produced by it, and that which charms, ravishes, and makes me in love, I call beauty. It is something that can be seen with the eyes, and for my eyes I speak. If they had a voice they would speak better than I, but probably in the same sense.

No painter has surpassed Raphael in the beauty of the figures which his divine pencil produced; but if this great painter had been asked what beauty was, he would probably have replied that he could not say, that he knew it by heart, and that he thought he had reproduced it whenever he had seen it, but that he did not know in what it consisted.

“That face pleases me,” he would say, “it is therefore beautiful!”

He ought to have thanked God for having given him such an exquisite eye for the beautiful; but ‘omne pulchrum difficile’.

The painters of high renown, all those whose works proclaim genius, have excelled in the delineation of the beautiful; but how small is their number compared to the vast craved who have strained every nerve to depict beauty and have only left us mediocrity!

If a painter could be dispensed from making his works beautiful, every man might be an artist; for nothing is easier than to fashion ugliness, and brush and canvas would be as easy to handle as mortar and trowel.

Although portrait-painting is the most important branch of the art, it is to be noted that those who have succeeded in this line are very few. There are three kinds of portraits: ugly likenesses, perfect likenesses, and those which to a perfect likeness add an almost imperceptible character of beauty. The first class is worthy only of contempt and their authors of stoning, for to want of taste and talent they add impertinence, and yet never seem to see their failings. The second class cannot be denied to possess real merit; but the palm belongs to the third, which, unfortunately, are seldom found, and whose authors deserve the large fortunes they amass. Such was the famous Notier, whom I knew in Paris in the year 1750. This great artist was then eighty, and in spite of his great age his talents seemed in all their freshness. He painted a plain woman; it was a speaking likeness, and in spite of that those who only saw the portrait pronounced her to be a handsome woman. Nevertheless, the most minute examination would not have revealed any faithlessness to the original, but some imperceptible touches gave a real but indefinite air of beauty to the whole. Whence does that magic art take its source? One day, when he had been painting the plain-looking "Mesdames de France," who on the canvas looked like two Aspasias, I asked him the above question. He answered: —

"It is a magic which the god of taste distils from my brains through my brushes. It is the divinity of Beauty whom all the world adores, and which no one can define, since no one knows of what it consists. That canvas shews you what a delicate shade there is between beauty and ugliness; and nevertheless this shade seems an enormous difference to those unacquainted with art."

The Greek painters made Venus, the goddess of beauty, squint-eyed, and this odd idea has been praised by some; but these painters were certainly in the wrong.

Two squinting eyes might be beautiful, but certainly not so beautiful as if they did not squint, for whatever beauty they had could not proceed from their deformity.

After this long digression, with which the reader may not be very well pleased, it is time for me to return to my sweetheart. The tenth day of my visit to Lausanne, I went to sup and sleep with my mistress, and that night was the happiest I remember. In the morning, while we were taking coffee with her mother, I observed that we seemed in no hurry to part. At this, the mother, a woman of few words, took up the discourse in a polite and dignified manner, and told me it was my duty to undeceive Lebel before I left; and at the same time she gave me a letter she had had from him the evening before. The worthy man begged her to remind me that if I could not make up my mind to separate from her daughter before I left Lausanne, it would be much more difficult for me to do so when I was farther off; above all, if, as would probably be the case, she gave me a living pledge of her love. He said that he had no thoughts of drawing back from his word, but he should wish to be able to say that he had taken his wife from her mother's hands.

When I had read the letter aloud, the worthy mother wept, and left us alone. A moment's silence ensued, and with a sigh that shewed what it cost her, my dear Dubois had the courage to tell me that I must instantly write to Lebel to give up all pretensions to her, or to come and take her at once.

"If I write and tell him to think no more of you, I must marry you myself."

"No."

With this no she arose and left me. I thought it over for a quarter of an hour, I weighed the pros and cons and still my love shrank from the sacrifice. At last, on consideration that my housekeeper would never have such a chance again, that I was not sure that I could always make her happy, I resolved to be generous, and determined to write to Lebel that Madame Dubois had decided of her own free will to become his wife, that I had no right to oppose her resolution, and that I would go so far as to congratulate him on a happiness I envied him. I begged him to leave Soleure at once and come and receive her in my presence from the hands of her worthy mother.

I signed the letter and took it to my housekeeper, who was in her mother's room. "Take this letter, dearest, and read it, and if you approve its contents put your signature beside mine." She read it several times, while her good mother wept, and then, with an affectionate and sorrowful air, she took the pen and signed. I begged her mother to find somebody to take the letter to Soleure immediately, before my resolution was weakened by repentance.

The messenger came, and as soon as he had gone, "Farewell," said I, embracing her, with my eyes wet with tears, "farewell, we shall see each other again as soon as Lebel comes."

I went to my inn, a prey to the deepest grief. This sacrifice had given a new impetus to my love for this charming woman, and I felt a sort of spasm, which made me afraid I should get ill. I shut myself up in my room, and I ordered the servants to say I was unwell and could see no one.

In the evening of the fourth day after, Lebel was announced. He embraced me, saying his happiness would be due to me. He then left me, telling me he would expect me at the house of his future bride.

"Excuse me to-day, my dear fellow," said I, "but I will dine with you there to-morrow."

When he had left me, I told Le Duc to make all preparations for our leaving the next day after dinner.

I went out early on the following day to take leave of everybody, and at noon Lebel came to take me to that sad repast, at which, however, I was not so sad as I had feared.

As I was leaving I begged the future Madame Lebel to return me the ring I had given her, and as we had agreed, I presented her with a roll of a hundred Louis, which she took with a melancholy air.

"I should never have sold it," she said, "for I have no need of money."

"In that case I will give it back to you, but promise me never to part with it, and keep the hundred Louis as some small reward of the services you have rendered me."

She shook my hand affectionately, put on my finger her wedding ring, and left me to hide her grief. I wiped my tears away, and said to Lebel, "You are about to possess yourself of a treasure which I cannot commend too highly. You are a man of honour; you will appreciate her excellent qualities, and you will know how to make her happy. She will love you only, take care of your household, and keep no secrets from you. She is full of wit and spirits, and will easily disperse the slightest shadow of ill humour which may fall on you."

I went in with him to the mother's room to take leave of her, and Madame Dubois begged me to delay my departure and sup once more with her. I told her that my horses were put in and the carriage waiting at my door, and that such a delay would set tongues talking; but that if she liked, she, her future husband and her mother, could come and see me at an inn two leagues off on the Geneva road, where we could stay as long as we liked. Lebel approved of the plan, and my proposition was accepted.

When I got back to my inn I found my carriage ready, and I got in and drove to the meeting-place, and ordered a good supper for four, and an hour later my guests arrived.

The gay and even happy air of the newly betrothed surprised me, but what astonished me more was the easy way with which she threw herself into my arms as soon as she saw me. It put me quite out of countenance, but she had more wit than I. However, I mustered up sufficient strength to follow her cue, but I could not help thinking that if she had really loved me she would not have found it possible to pass thus from love to mere friendship. However, I imitated her, and made no objections to those marks of affection allowed to friendship, which are supposed to have no tincture of love in them.

At supper I thought I saw that Lebel was more delighted at having such a wife than at the prospect of enjoying her and satisfying a strong passion. That calmed me; I could not be jealous of a man like that. I perceived, too, that my sweetheart's high spirits were more feigned than real; she wished to make me share them so as to render our separation less bitter, and to tranquillise her future husband as to the nature of our feelings for one another. And when reason and time had quieted the tempest in my heart, I could not help thinking it very natural that she should be pleased at the prospect of being independent, and of enjoying a fortune.

We made an excellent supper, which we washed down so well that at last the gaiety which had been simulated ended by being real. I looked at the charming Dubois with pleasure; I regarded her as a treasure which had belonged to me, and which after making me happy was with my full consent about to ensure the happiness of another. It seemed to me that I had been magnanimous enough to give her the reward she deserved, like a good Mussulman who gives a favourite slave his freedom in return for his fidelity. Her sallies made me laugh and recalled the happy moments I had passed with her, but the idea of her happiness prevented my regretting having yielded my rights to another.

As Lebel was obliged to return to Lausanne in order to get back to Soleure in two days, we had to part. I embraced him and asked him to continue his friendship towards me, and he promised with great effusion to be my friend till death. As we were going down the stair, my charming friend said, with great candour,

“I am not really gay, but I oblige myself to appear so. I shall not be happy till the scar on my heart has healed. Lebel can only claim my esteem, but I shall be his alone though my love be all for you. When we see each other again, as from what you say I hope we shall, we shall be able to meet as true friends, and perhaps we shall congratulate each other on the wise part we have taken. As for you, though I do not think you will forget me, I am sure that before long some more or less worthy object will replace me and banish your sorrow. I hope it will be so. Be happy. I may be with child; and if it prove to be so, you shall have no cause to complain of my care of your child, which you shall take away when you please. We made an agreement on this point yesterday. We arranged that the marriage should not be consummated for two months; thus we shall be certain whether the child belongs to you or no, and we will let people think that it is the legitimate offspring of our marriage. Lebel conceived this plan that he might have his mind at rest on the supposed force of blood, in which he declares he believes no more than I do. He has promised to love the child as if he were its father. If you write to me, I will keep you acquainted with everything; and if I have the happiness to give you a child, it will be much dearer to me than your ring.”

We wept, and Lebel laughed to see us.

I could only reply by pressing her to my breast, and then I gave her over to her future husband, who told me as he got into the carriage that our long talk had pleased him very much.

I went to bed sadly enough. Next morning when I awoke, a pastor of the Church of Geneva came to ask me to give him a place in my carriage. I agreed, and was not sorry I had done so.

This priest was an eloquent man, although a theologian, who answered the most difficult religious questions I could put to him. There was no mystery with him, everything was reason. I have never found a more compliant Christianity than that of this worthy man, whose morals, as I heard afterwards at Geneva, were perfectly pure. But I found out that this kind of Christianity was not peculiar to him, all his fellow-Calvinists thought in the same way.

Wishing to convince him that he was a Calvinist in name only, since he did not believe that Jesus Christ was of the same substance as the Father, he replied that Calvin was only infallible where he spoke ‘ex cathedra’, but I struck him dumb by quoting the words of the Gospel. He blushed when I reproached him with Calvin’s belief that the Pope was the Antichrist of the Apocalypse.

“It will be impossible to destroy this prejudice at Geneva,” said he, “till the Government orders the effacement of an inscription on the church door which everybody reads, and which speaks of the head of the Roman Church in this manner.”

“The people,” he added, “are wholly ignorant; but I have a niece of twenty, who does not belong to the people in this way. I shall have the honour of making you known to her; she is a theologian, and pretty as well.”

“I shall be delighted to see her, but God preserve me from arguing with her!”

“She will make you argue, and I can assure you that it will be a pleasure for you!”

“We shall see; but will you give me your address?”

“No sir, but I shall have the honour of conducting you to your inn and acting as your guide.”

I got down at Balances, and was well lodged. It was the 20th of August, 1760. On going to the window I noticed a pane of glass on which I read these words, written with the point of a diamond: “You will forget Henriette.” In a moment my thoughts flew back to the time in which Henriette had written these words, thirteen years ago, and my hair stood on end. We had been lodged in this room when she separated from me to return to France. I was overwhelmed, and fell on a chair where I abandoned myself to deep thought. Noble Henriette, dear Henriette, whom I had loved so well; where was she now? I had never heard of her; I had never asked anyone about her. Comparing my present and past estates, I was obliged to confess that I was less worthy of possessing her now than then. I could still love, but I was no longer so delicate in my thoughts; I had not those feelings which justify the faults committed by the senses, nor that probity which serves as a contrast to the follies and frailties of man; but, what was worst of all, I was not so strong. Nevertheless, it seemed that the remembrance of Henriette restored me to my pristine vigour. I had no longer my housekeeper; I experienced a great void; and I felt so enthusiastic that if I had known where Henriette was I should have gone to seek her out, despite her prohibition.

Next day, at an early hour, I went to the banker Tronchin, who had all my money. After seeing my account, he gave me a letter of credit on Marseilles, Genoa, Florence and Rome, and I only took twelve thousand francs in cash. I had only fifty thousand crowns, three hundred francs, but that would take me a good way. As soon as I had delivered my letters, I returned to Balances, impatient to see M. de Voltaire.

I found my fellow-traveller in my room. He asked me to dinner, telling me that I should have M. Vilars-Chandieu, who would take me after dinner to M. de Voltaire, who had been expecting me for several days. I followed the worthy man, and found at his house excellent company, and the young theologian whom the uncle did not address till dessert.

I will endeavour to report as faithfully as possible the young woman’s conversation.

“What have you been doing this morning, my dear niece?”

“I have been reading St. Augustine, whom I thought absurd, and I think I can refute him very shortly.”

“On what point?”

“Concerning the mother of the Saviour.”

“What does St. Augustine say?”

“You have no doubt remarked the passage, uncle. He says that the Virgin Mary conceived Jesus Christ through the ears.”

“You do not believe that?”

“Certainly not, and for three good reasons. In the first place because God, being immaterial, had no need of a hole to go in or come out by; in the second place, because the ear has no connection with the womb; and in the third place, because Mary, if she had conceived by the ear, would have given birth by the same channel. This would do well enough for the Catholics,” said she, giving me a glance, “as then they would be reasonable in calling her a virgin before her conception, during her pregnancy, and after she had given birth to the child.”

I was extremely astonished, and my astonishment was shared by the other guests. Divine theology rises above all fleshly considerations, and after what we had heard we had either to allow her this privilege, or to consider the young theologian as a woman without shame. The learned niece did not seem to care what we thought, as she asked for my opinion on the matter.

“If I were a theologian and allowed myself an exact examination into the miracles, it is possible I should be of your opinion; but as this is by no means the case, I must limit myself to condemning St. Augustine for having analysed the mystery of the Annunciation. I may say, however, that if the Virgin had been deaf, St. Augustine would have been guilty of a manifest absurdity, since the Incarnation would have been an impossibility, as in that case the nerves of the ear would have had no sort of communication with the womb, and the process would have been inconceivable; but the Incarnation is a miracle.”

She replied with great politeness that I had shown myself a greater theologian than she, and her uncle thanked me for having given her a lesson. He made her discuss various subjects, but she did not shine. Her only subject was the New Testament. I shall have occasion to speak of this young woman when I get back to Geneva.

After dinner we went to see Voltaire, who was just leaving the table as we came in. He was in the middle of a court of gentlemen and ladies, which made my introduction a solemn one; but with this great man solemnity could not fail to be in my favour.

EPISODE 15 — WITH VOLTAIRE

CHAPTER XIX

M. de Voltaire; My Discussions with That Great Man — Ariosto--The Duc de Villars — The Syndic and the Three Girls — Dispute with Voltaire — Aix-en-Savoie — The Marquis Desarmoises

“M. de Voltaire,” said I, “this is the happiest moment of my life. I have been your pupil for twenty years, and my heart is full of joy to see my master.”

“Honour me with your attendance on my course for twenty years more, and promise me that you will bring me my fees at the end of that time.”

“Certainly, if you promise to wait for me.”

This Voltairean sally made all present laugh, as was to be expected, for those who laugh keep one party in countenance at the other’s expense, and the side which has the laughter is sure to win; this is the rule of good society.

I was not taken by surprise, and waited to have my revenge.

Just then two Englishmen came in and were presented to him.

“These gentlemen are English,” said Voltaire; “I wish I were.”

I thought the compliment false and out of place; for the gentlemen were obliged to reply out of politeness that they wished they had been French, or if they did not care to tell a lie they would be too confused to tell the truth. I believe every man of honour should put his own nation first.

A moment after, Voltaire turned to me again and said that as I was a Venetian I must know Count Algarotti.

“I know him, but not because I am a Venetian, as seven-eights of my dear countrymen are not even aware of his existence.”

“I should have said, as a man of letters.”

"I know him from having spent two months with him at Padua, seven years ago, and what particularly attracted my attention was the admiration he professed for M. de Voltaire."

"That is flattering for me, but he has no need of admiring anyone."

"If Algarotti had not begun by admiring others, he would never have made a name for himself. As an admirer of Newton he endeavoured to teach the ladies to discuss the theory of light."

"Has he succeeded?"

"Not as well as M. de Fontenelle in his 'Plurality of Worlds;' however, one may say he has succeeded."

"True. If you see him at Bologna, tell him I am expecting to hear from him about Russia. He can address my letters to my banker, Bianchi, at Milan, and they will be sent on to me."

"I will not fail to do so if I see him."

"I have heard that the Italians do not care for his style."

"No; all that he writes is full of French idioms. His style is wretched."

"But do not these French turns increase the beauty of your language?"

"They make it insufferable, as French would be mixed with Italian or German even though it were written by M. de Voltaire."

"You are right; every language should preserve its purity. Livy has been criticised on this account; his Latin is said to be tainted with patavinity."

"When I began to learn Latin, the Abbe Lazzarini told me he preferred Livy to Sallust."

"The Abbe Lazzarini, author of the tragedy, 'Ulisse il giovine'? You must have been very young; I wish I had known him. But I knew the Abbe Conti well; the same that was Newton's friend, and whose four tragedies contain the whole of Roman history."

"I also knew and admired him. I was young, but I congratulated myself on being admitted into the society of these great men. It seems as if it were yesterday, though it is many years ago; and now in your presence my inferiority does not humiliate me. I wish to be the younger son of all humanity."

"Better so than to be the chief and eldest. May I ask you to what branch of literature you have devoted yourself?"

"To none; but that, perhaps, will come afterwards. In the meantime I read as much as I can, and try to study character on my travels."

"That is the way to become learned, but the book of humanity is too vast. Reading a history is the easier way."

"Yes, if history did not lie. One is not sure of the truth of the facts. It is tiring, while the study of the world is amusing. Horace, whom I know by heart, is my guide-book."

"Algarotti, too, is very fond of Horace. Of course you are fond of poetry?"

"It is my passion."

"Have you made many sonnets?"

"Ten or twelve I like, and two or three thousand which in all probability I have not read twice."

"The Italians are mad after sonnets."

"Yes; if one can call it a madness to desire to put thought into measured harmony. The sonnet is difficult because the thought has to be fitted exactly into the fourteen lines."

"It is Procrustes' bed, and that's the reason you have so few good ones. As for us, we have not one; but that is the fault of our language."

"And of the French genius, which considers that a thought when extended loses all its force."

"And you do not think so?"

"Pardon me, it depends on the kind of thought. A witty saying, for example, will not make a sonnet; in French or Italian it belongs to the domain of epigram."

"What Italian poet do you like best?"

"Ariosto; but I cannot say I love him better than the others, for he is my only love."

"You know the others, though?"

"I think I have read them all, but all their lights pale before Ariosto's. Fifteen years ago I read all you have written against him, and I said that you, would retract when you had read his works."

"I am obliged to you for thinking that I had not read them. As a matter of fact I had done so, but I was young. I knew Italian very imperfectly, and being prejudiced by the learned Italians who adore Tasso I was unfortunate enough to publish a criticism of Ariosto which I thought my own, while it was only the echo of those who had prejudiced me. I adore your Ariosto!"

"Ah! M. de Voltaire, I breathe again. But be good enough to have the work in which you turned this great man into ridicule excommunicated."

"What use would that be? All my books are excommunicated; but I will give you a good proof of my retractation."

I was astonished! The great man began to recite the two fine passages from the thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth cantos, in which the divine poet speaks of the conversation of Astolpho with St. John and he did it without missing a single life or committing the slightest fault against the laws of prosody. He then pointed out the beauties of the passages with his natural insight and with a great man's genius. I could not have had anything better from the lips of the most skilled commentators in Italy. I listened to him with the greatest attention, hardly daring to breath, and waiting for him to make a mistake, but I had my trouble for nothing. I turned to the company crying that I was more than astonished, and that all Italy should know what I had seen. "And I, sir," said the great man, "will let all Europe know of the amends I owe to the greatest genius our continent has produced."

Greedy of the praise which he deserved so well, Voltaire gave me the next day his translation which Ariosto begins thus:

"Quindi avvien the tra principi a signori."

At the end of the recitation which gained the applause of all who heard it, although not one of them knew Italian, Madame Denis, his niece, asked me if I thought the passage her uncle had just recited one of the finest the poet had written.

“Yes, but not the finest.”

“It ought to be; for without it Signor Lodovico would not have gained his apotheosis.”

“He has been canonised, then? I was not aware of that.”

At these words the laugh, headed by Voltaire, went for Madame Denis. Everybody laughed except myself, and I continued to look perfectly serious.

Voltaire was vexed at not seeing me laugh like the rest, and asked me the reason.

“Are you thinking,” said he, “of some more than human passage?”

“Yes,” I answered.

“What passage is that?”

“The last thirty-six stanzas of the twenty-third canto, where the poet describes in detail how Roland became mad. Since the world has existed no one has discovered the springs of madness, unless Ariosto himself, who became mad in his old age. These stanzas are terrible, and I am sure they must have made you tremble.”

“Yes, I remember they render love dreadful. I long to read them again.”

“Perhaps the gentleman will be good enough to recite them,” said Madame Denis, with a side-glance at her uncle.

“Willingly,” said I, “if you will have the goodness to listen to me.”

“You have learn them by heart, then, have you?” said Voltaire.

“Yes, it was a pleasure and no trouble. Since I was sixteen, I have read over Ariosto two or three times every year; it is my passion, and the lines naturally become linked in my memory without my having given myself any pains to learn them. I know it all, except his long genealogies and his historical tirades, which fatigue the mind and do not touch the heart. It is only Horace that I know throughout, in spite of the often prosaic style of his epistles, which are certainly far from equalling Boileau’s.”

"Boileau is often too lengthy; I admire Horace, but as for Ariosto, with his forty long cantos, there is too much of him."

"It is fifty-one cantos, M. de Voltaire."

The great man was silent, but Madame Denis was equal to the occasion.

"Come, come," said she, "let us hear the thirty-six stanzas which earned the author the title of divine, and which are to make us tremble."

I then began, in an assured voice, but not in that monotonous tone adopted by the Italians, with which the French so justly reproach us. The French would be the best reciters if they were not constrained by the rhyme, for they say what they feel better than any other people. They have neither the passionate monotonous tone of my fellow-countrymen, nor the sentimentality of the Germans, nor the fatiguing mannerisms of the English; to every period they give its proper expression, but the recurrence of the same sounds partly spoils their recitation. I recited the fine verses of Ariosto, as if it had been rhythmic prose, animating it by the sound of my voice and the movements of my eyes, and by modulating my intonation according to the sentiments with which I wished to inspire my audience. They saw how hardly I could restrain my tears, and every eye was wet; but when I came to the stanza,

"Poiche allargare il freno al dolor puote,

Che resta solo senza altrui rispetto,

Giu dagli occhi rigando per le gote

Sparge un fiume de lacrime sul petto,"

my tears coursed down my cheeks to such an extent that everyone began to sob. M. de Voltaire and Madame Denis threw their arms round my neck, but their embraces could not stop me, for Roland, to become mad, had to notice that he was in the same bed in which Angelica had lately been found in the arms of the too fortunate Medor, and I had to reach the next stanza. For my voice of sorrow and wailing I substituted the expression of that terror which arose naturally from the contemplation of his fury, which was in its effects like a tempest, a volcano, or an earthquake.

When I had finished I received with a sad air the congratulations of the audience. Voltaire cried, "I always said so; the secret of drawing tears is to weep one's self, but they must be real tears, and to shed them the heart must be stirred to its depths. I am obliged to you, sir," he added, embracing me, "and I promise to recite the same stanzas myself to-morrow, and to weep like you."

He kept his word.

"It is astonishing," said Madame Denis, "that intolerant Rome should not have condemned the song of Roland."

"Far from it," said Voltaire, "Leo X. excommunicated whoever should dare to condemn it. The two great families of Este and Medici interested themselves in the poet's favour. Without that protection it is probable that the one line on the donation of Rome by Constantine to Silvester, where the poet speaks 'puzza forte' would have sufficed to put the whole poem under an interdict."

"I believe," said I, "that the line which has excited the most talk is that in which Ariosto throws doubt on the general resurrection. Ariosto," I added, "in speaking of the hermit who would have hindered Rhodomonte from getting possession of Isabella, widow of Zerbin, paints the African, who wearied of the hermit's sermons, seizes him and throws him so far that he dashes him against a rock, against which he remains in a dead swoon, so that 'che al novissimo di forse fia desto'."

This 'forse' which may possibly have only been placed there as a flower of rhetoric or as a word to complete the verse, raised a great uproar, which would doubtless have greatly amused the poet if he had had time!

"It is a pity," said Madame Denis, "that Ariosto was not more careful in these hyperbolical expressions."

"Be quiet, niece, they are full of wit. They are all golden grains, which are dispersed throughout the work in the best taste."

The conversation was then directed towards various topics, and at last we got to the 'Ecossaise' we had played at Soleure.

They knew all about it.

M. de Voltaire said that if I liked to play it at his house he would write to M. de Chavigni to send the Lindane, and that he himself would play Montrose. I excused myself by saying that Madame was at Bale and that I should be obliged to go on my journey the next day. At this he exclaimed loudly, aroused the whole company against me, and said at last that he should consider my visit as an insult unless I spared him a week at least of my society.

“Sir,” said I, “I have only come to Geneva to have the honour of seeing you, and now that I have obtained that favour I have nothing more to do.”

“Have you come to speak to me, or for me to speak to you?”

“In a measure, of course, to speak to you, but much more for you to speak to me.”

“Then stay here three days at least; come to dinner every day, and we will have some conversation.”

The invitation was so flattering and pressing that I could not refuse it with a good grace. I therefore accepted, and I then left to go and write.

I had not been back for a quarter of an hour when a syndic of the town, an amiable man, whom I had seen at M. de Voltaire’s, and whose name I shall not mention, came and asked me to give him supper. “I was present,” said he, “at your argument with the great man, and though I did not open my mouth I should much like to have an hour’s talk with you.” By way of reply, I embraced him, begging him to excuse my dressing-gown, and telling him that I should be glad if he would spend the whole night with me.

The worthy man spent two hours with me, without saying a word on the subject of literature, but to please me he had no need to talk of books, for he was a disciple of Epicurus and Socrates, and the evening was spent in telling little stories, in bursts of laughter, and in accounts of the various kinds of pleasure obtainable at Geneva. Before leaving me he asked me to come and sup with him on the following evening, promising that boredom should not be of the party.

“I shall wait for you,” said I.

“Very good, but don’t tell anyone of the party.”

I promised to follow his instructions.

Next morning, young Fox came to see me with the two Englishmen I had seen at M. de Voltaire’s. They proposed a game of quinze, which I accepted, and after losing fifty louis I left off, and we walked about the town till dinner-time.

We found the Duc de Villars at Delices; he had come there to consult Dr. Tronchin, who had kept him alive for the last ten years.

I was silent during the repast, but at dessert, M. de Voltaire, knowing that I had reasons for not liking the Venetian Government, introduced the subject; but I disappointed him, as I maintained that in no country could a man enjoy more perfect liberty than in Venice.

“Yes,” said he, “provided he resigns himself to play the part of a dumb man.”

And seeing that I did not care for the subject, he took me by the arm to his garden, of which, he said, he was the creator. The principal walk led to a pretty running stream.

“’Tis the Rhone,” said he, “which I send into France.”

“It does not cost you much in carriage, at all events,” said I.

He smiled pleasantly and shewed me the principal street of Geneva, and Mont Blanc which is the highest point of the Alps.

Bringing back the conversation to Italian literature, he began to talk nonsense with much wit and learning, but always concluding with a false judgment. I let him talk on. He spoke of Homer, Dante, and Petrarch, and everybody knows what he thought of these great geniuses, but he did himself wrong in writing what he thought. I contented myself with saying that if these great men did not merit the esteem of those who studied them; it would at all events be a long time before they had to come down from the high place in which the praise of centuries, had placed them.

The Duc de Villars and the famous Tronchin came and joined us. The doctor, a tall fine man, polite, eloquent without being a conversationalist, a learned physician, a man of wit, a favourite pupil of Boerhaeve, without scientific jargon, or charlatanism, or self-sufficiency, enchanted me. His system of medicine was based on regimen, and to make rules he had to be a man of profound science. I have been assured, but can scarcely believe it, that he cured a consumptive patient of a secret disease by means of the milk of an ass, which he had submitted to thirty strong frictions of mercury by four sturdy porters.

As to Villars he also attracted my attention, but in quite a different way to Tronchin. On examining his face and manner I thought I saw before me a woman of seventy dressed as a man, thin and emaciated, but still proud of her looks, and with claims to past beauty. His cheeks and lips were painted, his eyebrows blackened, and his teeth were false; he wore a huge wig, which, exhaled amber, and at his buttonhole was an enormous bunch of flowers, which touched his chin. He affected a gracious manner, and he spoke so softly that it was often impossible to hear what he said. He was excessively polite and affable, and his manners were those of the Regency. His whole appearance was supremely ridiculous. I was told that in his youth he was a lover of the fair sex, but now that he was no longer good for anything he had modestly made himself into a woman, and had four pretty pets in his employ, who took turns in the disgusting duty of warming his old carcase at night.

Villars was governor of Provence, and had his back eaten up with cancer. In the course of nature he should have been buried ten years ago, but Tronchin kept him alive with his regimen and by feeding the wounds on slices of veal. Without this the cancer would have killed him. His life might well be called an artificial one.

I accompanied M. de Voltaire to his bedroom, where he changed his wig and put on another cap, for he always wore one on account of the rheumatism to which he was subject. I saw on the table the Summa of St. Thomas, and among other Italian poets the ‘Secchia Rapita’ of Tassoni.

“This,” said Voltaire, “is the only tragicomic poem which Italy has. Tassoni was a monk, a wit and a genius as well as a poet.”

“I will grant his poetical ability but not his learning, for he ridiculed the system of Copernicus, and said that if his theories were followed astronomers would not be able to calculate lunations or eclipses.”

“Where does he make that ridiculous remark?”

“In his academical discourses.”

“I have not read them, but I will get them.”

He took a pen and noted the name down, and said, —

"But Tassoni has criticised Petrarch very ingeniously."

"Yes, but he has dishonoured taste and literature, like Muratori."

"Here he is. You must allow that his learning is immense."

"Est ubi peccat."

Voltaire opened a door, and I saw a hundred great files full of papers.

"That's my correspondence," said he. "You see before you nearly fifty thousand letters, to which I have replied."

"Have you a copy of your answers?"

"Of a good many of them. That's the business of a servant of mine, who has nothing else to do."

"I know plenty of booksellers who would give a good deal to get hold of your answers.

"Yes; but look out for the booksellers when you publish anything, if you have not yet begun; they are greater robbers than Barabbas."

"I shall not have anything to do with these gentlemen till I am an old man."

"Then they will be the scourge of your old age."

Thereupon I quoted a Macaronic verse by Merlin Coccaeus.

"Where's that from?"

"It's a line from a celebrated poem in twenty-four cantos."

"Celebrated?"

"Yes; and, what is more, worthy of being celebrated; but to appreciate it one must understand the Mantuan dialect."

"I could make it out, if you could get me a copy."

"I shall have the honour of presenting you with one to-morrow."

"You will oblige me extremely."

We had to leave his room and spend two hours in the company, talking over all sorts of things. Voltaire displayed all the resources of his brilliant and fertile wit, and charmed everyone in spite of his sarcastic observations which did not even spare those present, but he had an inimitable manner of lancing a sarcasm without wounding a person's feelings. When the great man accompanied his witticisms with a graceful smile he could always get a laugh.

He kept up a notable establishment and an excellent table, a rare circumstance with his poetic brothers, who are rarely favourites of Plutus as he was. He was then sixty years old, and had a hundred and twenty thousand francs a year. It has been said maliciously that this great man enriched himself by cheating his publishers; whereas the fact was that he fared no better than any other author, and instead of duping them was often their dupe. The Cramers must be excepted, whose fortune he made. Voltaire had other ways of making money than by his pen; and as he was greedy of fame, he often gave his works away on the sole condition that they were to be printed and published. During the short time I was with him, I was a witness of such a generous action; he made a present to his bookseller of the "Princess of Babylon," a charming story which he had written in three days.

My epicurean syndic was exact to his appointment, and took me to a house at a little distance where he introduced me to three young ladies, who, without being precisely beautiful, were certainly ravishing. Two of them were sisters. I had an easy and pleasant welcome, and from their intellectual appearance and gay manners I anticipated a delightful evening, and I was not disappointed. The half hour before supper was passed in conversation, decent but without restraint, and during supper, from the hints the syndic gave me, I guessed what would happen after dessert.

It was a hot evening, and on the pretext of cooling ourselves, we undressed so as to be almost in a state of nature. What an orgy we had! I am sorry I am obliged to draw a veil over the most exciting details. In the midst of our licentious gaiety, whilst we were heated by love, champagne, and a discourse of an exciting nature, I proposed to recite Grecourt's 'Y Gyec'. When I had finished the voluptuous poem, worthy of an abbe's pen, I saw that the eyes of the three beauties were all aflame, and said, —

"Ladies, if you like, I will shew you all three, one after the other, why the sentence, 'Gaudeant bene nati', was uttered"; and without waiting for their reply, I succeeded in making them happy. The syndic was radiant, he was pleased at having given me a present entirely to my taste; and I fancied that the entertainment was not displeasing to the three Graces, who were kept low by the Sybarite, as his powers were almost limited to desires. The girls lavished their thanks on me, while I endeavoured to assure them of my gratitude; but they leapt for joy when they heard the syndic asking me to come next day.

As he was taking me back to my inn I told him how great a pleasure he had given me, and he said he had brought up the three jewels himself.

“You,” he added, “are the only man besides myself they know. You shall see them again, but I beg you will take care not to leave anything behind you, for in this town of prejudices that would be a great misfortune for them and for me.”

“You are always moderate in your enjoyment, then?” I said to him.

“Unfortunately, that is no merit as far as I am concerned. I was born for the service of love, and Venus has punished me for worshipping her when I was too young.”

After a good night’s sleep I awoke in an active mood, and began to write a letter to Voltaire in blank verse, which cost me four times the pains that rhymed verses would have done. I sent it to him with the poem of Theophile Falengue, but I made a mistake in doing so, as I might have known he would not care for it; one cannot appreciate what one does not understand. I then went to Mr. Fox, where I found the two Englishmen who offered me my revenge. I lost a hundred Louis, and was glad to see them set out for Lausanne.

The syndic had told me that the three young ladies belonged to respectable families, but were not rich. I puzzled my head to think of some useful present I might make them without offending them, and at last I hit on a plan of the most ridiculous nature, as the reader will see. I went to a jeweller and told him to make me three golden balls, each of two ounces in weight.

At noon I went to M. de Voltaire’s. He was not to be seen, but Madame Denis consoled me for his absence. She had wit, learning without pretension, taste, and a great hatred for the King of Prussia, whom she called a villain. She asked about my beautiful housekeeper, and congratulated me on having married her to a respectable man. Although I feel now that she was quite right, I was far from thinking so then; the impression was too fresh on my mind. Madame Denis begged me to tell her how I had escaped from The Leads, but as the story was rather a long one I promised to satisfy her another time.

M. de Voltaire did not dine with us; he appeared, however, at five o'clock, holding a letter in his hand.

"Do you know," said he, "the Marquis Albergati Capacelli, senator of Bologna, and Count Paradisi?"

"I do not know Paradisi, but I know Albergati by sight and by reputation; he is not a senator, but one of the Forty, who at Bologna are Fifty."

"Dear me! That seems rather a riddle!"

"Do you know him?"

"No, but he has sent me Goldoni's 'Theatre,' the translation of my Tancred, and some Bologna sausages, and he says he will come and see me."

"He will not come; he is not such a fool."

"How a fool? Would there be anything foolish in coming to see me?"

"Certainly not, as far as you are concerned; but very much so far his own sake."

"Would you mind telling me why?"

"He knows what he would lose; for he enjoys the idea you seem to have of him, and if he came you would see his nothingness, and good-bye to the illusion. He is a worthy man with six thousand sequins a year, and a craze for the theatre. He is a good actor enough, and has written several comedies in prose, but they are fit neither for the study nor the stage."

"You certainly give him a coat which does not make him look any bigger."

"I assure you it is not quite small enough."

"But tell me how he can belong to the Forty and the Fifty?"

"Just as at Bale noon is at eleven."

"I understand; just as your Council of Ten is composed of seventeen members."

"Exactly; but the cursed Forty of Bologna are men of another kind."

"Why cursed?"

"Because they are not subject to the fisc, and are thus enabled to commit whatever crimes they like with perfect impunity; all they have got to do is to live outside the state borders on their revenues."

"That is a blessing, and not a curse; but let me return to our subject. I suppose the Marquis Albergati is a man of letters?"

"He writes well enough, but he is fond of the sound of his own voice, his style is prolix, and I don't think he has much brains."

"He is an actor, I think you said?"

"Yes, and a very good one, above all, when he plays the lover's part in one of his own plays."

"Is he a handsome man?"

"Yes, on the stage, but not elsewhere; his face lacks expression."

"But his plays give satisfaction?"

"Not to persons who understand play writing; they would be hissed if they were intelligible."

"And what do you think of Goldoni?"

"I have the highest opinion of him. Goldoni is the Italian Moliere."

"Why does he call himself poet to the Duke of Parma?"

"No doubt to prove that a wit as well as a fool has his weak points; in all probability the duke knows nothing about it. He also calls himself a barrister, though he is such only in his own imagination. Goldoni is a good play writer, and nothing more. Everybody in Venice knows me for his friend, and I can therefore speak of him with authority. He does not shine in society, and in spite of the fine satire of his works he is a man of an extremely gentle disposition."

"So I have been told. He is poor, and wants to leave Venice. The managers of the theatres where they play his pieces will not like that."

"People talked about getting him a pension, but the project has been relegated to the Greek Kalends, as they said that if he had a pension he would write no more."

"Cumae refused to give a pension to Homer, for fear that all the blind men would ask for a pension."

We spent a pleasant day, and he thanked me heartily for the copy of the Macaronicon, which he promised to read. He introduced me to a Jesuit he had in his household, who was called Adam, and he added, after telling me his name, "not the first Adam." I was told afterwards that Voltaire used to play backgammon with him, and when he lost he would throw the dice and the box at his head. If Jesuits were treated like that all the world over, perhaps we should have none but inoffensive Jesuits at last, but that happy time is still far off.

I had scarcely got to my inn in the evening when I received my three golden balls, and as soon as the syndic came we set off to renew our voluptuous orgy. On the way he talked about modesty, and said, —

"That feeling which prevents our shewing those parts which we have been taught to cover from our childhood, may often proceed from virtue, but is weaker than the force of education, as it cannot resist an attack when the attacking party knows what he is about. I think the easiest way to vanquish modesty is to ignore its presence, to turn it into ridicule, to carry it by storm. Victory is certain. The hardihood of the assailer subdues the assailed, who usually only wishes to be conquered, and nearly always thanks you for your victory.

"Clement of Alexandria, a learned man and a philosopher, has remarked that the modesty which appears so deeply rooted in women's hearts really goes no farther than the clothes they wear, and that when these are plucked off no trace of it remains."

We found the three girls lightly clad and sitting on a large sopha, and we sat down opposite to them. Pleasant talk and a thousand amorous kisses occupied the half hour just before supper, and our combat did not begin till we had eaten a delicious repast, washed down with plenty of champagne.

We were sure of not being interrupted by the maid and we put ourselves at our ease, whilst our caresses became more lively and ardent. The syndic, like a careful man, drew a packet of fine French letters from his pocket, and delivered a long eulogium on this admirable preservative from an accident which might give rise to a terrible and fruitless repentance. The ladies knew them, and seemed to have no objection to the precaution; they laughed heartily to see the shape these articles took when they were blown out. But after they had amused themselves thus for some time, I said,

"My dear girls, I care more for your honour than your beauty; but do not think I am going to shut myself in a piece of dead skin to prove that I am alive. Here," I added, drawing out the three golden balls, "is a surer and less disagreeable way of securing you from any unpleasant consequences. After fifteen years' experience I can assure you that with these golden balls you can give and take without running the least risk. For the future you will have no need of those humiliating sheaths. Trust in me and accept this little present from a Venetian who adores you."

"We are very grateful," said the elder of the two sisters, "but how are these pretty balls used?"

"The ball has to be at the rear of the temple of love, whilst the amorous couple are performing the sacrifice. The antipathy communicated to the metal by its being soaked for a certain time in an alkaline solution prevents impregnation."

"But," said the cousin, "one must take great care that the ball is not shaken out by the motion before the end of the sacrifice."

"You needn't be afraid of that if you place yourself in a proper position."

"Let us see how it's done," said the syndic, holding a candle for me to put the ball in place.

The charming cousin had gone too far to turn back; she had to submit to the operation. I placed the ball in such a position that it could not fall out before I was in; however, it fell out towards the end, just as we were separating. The victim perceived that I had taken her in. However, she said nothing, picked up the ball, and challenged the two sisters to submit to the pleasant experiment, to which they lent themselves with the greatest interest; while the syndic, who had no faith in the virtues of the metal, contented himself with looking on. After half an hour's rest I began again, without balls, assuring them that I would be careful, and I kept my word, without depriving them of the pleasure in the slightest degree.

When it was time to part, these girls, who had formerly been scantily provided for, threw their arms round my neck, overwhelmed me with caresses, and declared how much they owed me. The syndic told them that I was going in two days, and suggested that they should make me stay a day longer in Geneva, and I made this sacrifice joyfully. The worthy syndic had an engagement on the following day, and I sorely needed a holiday myself. He took me back to my inn, thanking me almost as heartily as his charming nymphs.

After having enjoyed a calm and refreshing sleep ten hours, I felt myself able to enjoy the delightful society of M. de Voltaire. I went to his house, but I was disappointed in my hopes, as it pleased the great man to be in a fault-finding and sarcastic mood the whole day. He knew I had to leave on the morrow.

He began by thanking me at table for my present of Merlin Coccaeus.

"You certainly gave it me with good intentions," said he, "but I owe you no thanks for praising it so highly, as you made me lose four hours in reading nonsense."

I felt my hair stand on end, but I mastered my emotions, and told him quietly enough that one day, perhaps, he would find himself obliged to praise the poem more highly than I had done. I quoted several instances of the insufficiency of a first perusal.

"That's true," said he; "but as for your Merlin, I will read him no more. I have put him beside Chapelain's 'Pucelle'."

"Which pleases all the critics, in spite of its bad versification, for it is a good poem, and Chapelain was a real poet though he wrote bad verses. I cannot overlook his genius."

My freedom must have shocked him, and I might have guessed it when he told me he had put the 'Macaronicon' beside the 'Pucelle'. I knew that there was a poem of the same title in circulation, which passed for Voltaire's; but I also knew that he disavowed it, and I thought that would make him conceal the vexation my explanation must have caused him. It was not so, however; he contradicted me sharply, and I closed with him.

“Chapelain,” said I, “has the merit of having rendered his subject-matter pleasant, without pandering to the tastes of his readers by saying things shocking to modesty and piety. So thinks my master Crebillon:”

“Crebillon! You cite a weighty authority. But how is my friend Crebillon your master, may I ask?”

“He taught me to speak French in less than two years, and as a mark of my gratitude I translated his Radamiste into Italian Alexandrines. I am the first Italian who has dared to use this metre in our language.”

“The first? I beg your pardon, as that honour belongs to my friend Pierre Jacques Martelli.”

“I am sorry to be obliged to tell you that you are making a mistake.”

“Why, I have his works, printed at Bologna, in my room!”

“I don’t deny that, I am only talking about the metre used by Martelli. What you are thinking of must be verses of fourteen syllables; without alternative masculine and feminine rhymes. However, I confess that he thinks he has imitated the French Alexandrines, and his preface made me explode with laughter. Did you read it?”

“Read it? I always read prefaces, and Martelli proves there that his verses have the same effect in Italian as our Alexandrine verses have in French.”

“Exactly, that’s what’s so amusing. The worthy man is quite mistaken, and I only ask you to listen to what I have to say on the subject. Your masculine verse has only twelve poetic syllables, and the feminine thirteen. All Martelli’s lines have fourteen syllables, except those that finish with a long vowel, which at the end of a line always counts as two syllables. You will observe that the first hemistitch in Martelli always consists of seven syllables, while in French it only has six. Your friend Pierre Jacques was either stone deaf or very hard of hearing.”

“Then you have followed our theory of versification rigorously.”

“Just so, in spite of the difficulty, as nearly all our words end with a short syllable.”

“What reception has been accorded to your innovation?”

“It has not been found pleasing, because nobody knows how to recite my verses; but I hope to triumph when I deliver them myself before our literary clubs.”

“Do you remember any of your version of the Radamiste?”

“I remember it all.”

“You have a wonderful memory; I should be glad to hear it.”

I began to recite the same scene that I had recited to Crebillon ten years before, and I thought M. de Voltaire listened with pleasure.

“It doesn’t strike one as at all harsh,” said he.

This was the highest praise he would give me. In his turn the great man recited a passage from Tancred which had not as yet been published, and which was afterwards considered, and rightly, as a masterpiece.

We should have got on very well if we had kept to that, but on my quoting a line of Horace to praise one of his pieces, he said that Horace was a great master who had given precepts which would never be out of date. Thereupon I answered that he himself had violated one of them, but that he had violated it grandly.

“Which is that?”

“You do not write, ‘Contentus paucis lectoribus’.”

“If Horace had had to combat the hydra-headed monster of superstition, he would have written as I have written — for all the world.”

“It seems to me that you might spare yourself the trouble of combating what you will never destroy.”

“That which I cannot finish others will, and I shall always have the glory of being the first in the field.”

“Very good; but supposing you succeed in destroying superstition, what are you going to put in its place?”

“I like that. If I deliver the race of man from a wild beast which is devouring it, am I to be asked what I intend to put in its place?”

“It does not devour it; on the contrary, it is necessary to its existence.”

“Necessary to its existence! That is a horrible blasphemy, the falsity of which will be seen in the future. I love the human race; I would fain see men like myself, free and happy, and superstition and freedom cannot go together. Where do you find an enslaved and yet a happy people?”

“You wish, then, to see the people sovereign?”

“God forbid! There must be a sovereign to govern the masses.”

“In that case you must have superstition, for without it the masses will never obey a mere man decked with the name of monarch.”

“I will have no monarch; the word expresses despotism, which I hate as I do slavery.”

“What do you mean, then? If you wish to put the government in the hands of one man, such a man, I maintain, will be a monarch.”

“I would have a sovereign ruler of a free people, of which he is the chief by an agreement which binds them both, which would prevent him from becoming a tyrant.”

“Addison will tell you that such a sovereign is a sheer impossibility. I agree with Hobbes, of two evils choose the least. A nation without superstition would be a nation of philosophers, and philosophers would never obey. The people will only be happy when they are crushed and down-trodden, and bound in chains.”

“This is horrible; and you are of the people yourself. If you have read my works you must have seen how I shew that superstition is the enemy of kings.”

“Read your works? I have read and re-read them, especially in places where I have differed from you. Your ruling passion is the love of humanity. ‘Est ubi peccas’. This blinds you. Love humanity, but love it as it is. It is not fit to receive the blessings you would lavish on it, and which would only make it more wretched and perverse. Leave men their devouring monster, it is dear to them. I have never laughed so heartily as at Don Quixote assailed by the galley-slaves whom his generosity had set free.”

“I am sorry that you have such a bad opinion of your fellow-creatures. And by the way, tell me whether there is freedom in Venice.”

“As much as can be expected under an aristocracy. Our liberty is not so great as that which the English enjoy, but we are content.”

“Even under The Leads?”

“My imprisonment was certainly despotic; but as I had knowingly abused my liberty I am satisfied that the Government was within its rights in shutting me up without the usual formalities.”

“All the same, you made your escape.”

“I used my rights as they had used theirs.”

“Very good! But as far as I can see, no one in Venice is really free.”

“That may be; but you must agree that the essence of freedom consists in thinking you have it.”

“I shall not agree to that so easily. You and I see liberty from very different points of view. The aristocrats, the members of the Government even, are not free at Venice; for example, they cannot travel without permission.”

“True, but that is a restriction of their own making to preserve their power. Would you say that a Bernese is not free, because he is subject to the sumptuary laws, which he himself had made.”

“Well, well, I wish the people made the laws everywhere.”

After this lively answer, he abruptly asked me what part I came from.

“From Roche,” said I. “I should have been very sorry to leave Switzerland without seeing the famous Haller. In my travels I render homage to my learned contemporaries, and you come the last and best.”

“You must have liked Haller.”

“I spent three of the happiest days of my life with him.”

“I congratulate you. He is a great man and worthy of all honour.”

“I think as you do, and I am glad to hear you doing him justice; I am sorry he was not so just towards you.”

“Well, you see we may be both of us mistaken.”

At this reply, the quickness of which constituted its chief merit, everybody present began to laugh and applaud.

No more was said of literature, and I became a silent actor till M. de Voltaire retired, when I approached Madame Denis, and asked her if she had any commands for me at Rome. I went home well pleased at having compelled the giant of intellect to listen to reason, as I then thought foolishly enough; but there was a rankling feeling left in my heart against him which made me, ten years later, criticise all he had written.

I am sorry now for having done so, though on reading my censures over again I find that in many places I was right. I should have done better, however, to have kept silence, to have respected his genius, and to have suspected my own opinions. I should have considered that if it had not been for those quips and cranks which made me hate him on the third day, I should have thought him wholly sublime. This thought alone should have silenced me, but an angry man always thinks himself right. Posterity on reading my attack will rank me among the Zoyluses, and the humble apology I now make to the great man's shades may not be read.

If we meet in the halls of Pluto, the more peccant parts of our mortal nature purged away, all will be made up; he will receive my heartfelt apologies, and he will be my friend, I his sincere admirer.

I spent part of the night and the whole of the following day in writing down my conversations with Voltaire, and they amounted nearly to a volume, of which I have only given a mere abridgment. Towards the evening my Epicurean syndic called on me, and we went to sup with the three nymphs, and for five hours we indulged in every species of wantonness, in which I had a somewhat fertile imagination. On leaving I promised to call on them again on my return from Rome, and I kept my word. I set out the next day, after dining with the syndic, who accompanied me as far as Anneci, where I spent the night. Next day I dined at Aix, with the intention of lying at Chamberi, but my destiny ordered otherwise.

Aix is a villainous hole where the mineral waters attract people of fashion towards the end of the summer — a circumstance of which I was then ignorant. I dined hastily, wishing to set out immediately for Chamberi, when in the middle of my repast a crowd of fashionable people burst into the room. I looked at them without stirring, replying with an inclination of the head to the bows which some of them made me. I soon discovered from their conversation that they had all come to take the waters. A gentleman of a fine presence came up to me and asked if I were going to Turin; I answered that my way was to Marseilles.

Their dinner was served, and everybody sat down. Among them I noticed several pleasant-looking ladies, with gentlemen who were either their husbands or their lovers. I concluded that I might find some amusement with them, as they all spoke French with that easy tone of good society which is so attractive, and I felt that I should be inclined to stay without much pressing, for that day at all events.

I finished my dinner before the company had come to the end of their first course, and as my coach could not go for another hour I went up to a pretty woman, and complimented her on the good the waters of Aix seemed to have done her, for her appetite made all who looked at her feel hungry.

“I challenge you to prove that you are speaking the truth,” said she, with a smile. I sat down next to her, and she gave me a nice piece of the roast which I ate as if I had been fasting.

While I was talking with the lady, and eating the morsels she gave me, I heard a voice saying that I was in the abbe’s place, and another voice replying that the abbe had been gone for half an hour.

“Why has he gone?” asked a third, “he said he was going to stay here for another week.” At this there was some whispering, but the departure of an abbe had nothing interesting in it for me, and I continued eating and talking. I told Le Duc, who was standing behind my chair, to get me some champagne. I offered the lady some, she accepted, and everyone began to call for champagne. Seeing my neighbour’s spirits rising, I proceeded to make love to her, and asked her if she were always as ready to defy those who paid their court to her.

“So many of them,” she answered, “are not worthy the trouble.”

She was pretty and quick-witted, and I took a fancy to her, and wished for some pretext on which I could put off my departure, and chance came to my aid.

“The place next to you was conveniently empty,” said a lady to my neighbour who was drinking with me.

“Very conveniently, for my neighbour wearied me.”

“Had he no appetite?” said I.

“Gamesters only have an appetite for money.”

“Usually, but your power is extraordinary; for I have never made two dinners on one day before now.”

“Only out of pride; as I am sure you will eat no supper.”

“Let us make a bet on it.”

“We will; we will bet the supper.”

“All right.”

All the guests began to clap, and my fair neighbour blushed with pleasure. I ordered Le Duc to tell my coachman that I should not be going till the next day.

“It is my business,” said the lady, “to order the supper.”

“Yes, you are right; for he who pays, orders. My part will be to oppose you to the knife, and if I eat as much as you I shall be the winner.”

“Very good.”

At the end of dinner, the individual who had addressed me before called for cards, and made a small bank of faro. He put down twenty-five Piedmontese pistoles, and some silver money to amuse the ladies — altogether it amounted nearly to forty louis. I remained a spectator during the first deal, and convinced myself that the banker played very well.

Whilst he was getting ready for the second deal, the lady asked me why I did not play. I whispered to her that she had made me lose my appetite for money. She repaid this compliment with a charming smile.

After this declaration, feeling myself entitled to play, I put down forty louis, and lost them in two deals. I got up, and on the banker saying very politely that he was sorry for my loss, I replied that it was a mere nothing, but that I always made it a rule never to risk a sum of money larger than the bank. Somebody then asked me if I knew a certain Abbe Gilbert.

“I knew a man of that name,” said I, “at Paris; he came from Lyons, and owes me a pair of ears, which I mean to cut off his head when I meet him.”

My questioner made no reply to this, and everybody remained silent, as if nothing had been said. From this I concluded that the abbe aforesaid must be the same whose place I had occupied at dinner. He had doubtless seen me on my arrival and had taken himself off. This abbe was a rascal who had visited me at Little Poland, to whom I had entrusted a ring which had cost me five thousand florins in Holland; next day the scoundrel had disappeared.

When everybody had left the table, I asked Le Duc if I were well lodged.

"No," said he; "would you like to see your room?"

He took me to a large room, a hundred paces from the inn, whose sole furniture consisted of its four walls, all the other rooms being occupied. I complained vainly to the inn-keeper, who said,

"It's all I can offer you, but I will have a good bed, a table, and chairs taken there."

I had to content myself with it, as there was no choice.

"You will sleep in my room," said I to Le Duc, "take care to provide yourself with a bed, and bring my baggage in."

"What do you think of Gilbert, sir?" said my Spaniard; "I only recognized him just as he was going, and I had a lively desire to take him by the back of his neck."

"You would have done well to have satisfied that desire."

"I will, when I see him again."

As I was leaving my big room, I was accosted politely by a man who said he was glad to be my neighbour, and offered to take me to the fountain if I were going there. I accepted his offer. He was a tall fair man, about fifty years old; he must once have been handsome, but his excessive politeness should have made me suspect him; however, I wanted somebody to talk to, and to give me the various pieces of information I required. On the way he informed me of the condition of the people I had seen, and I learnt that none of them had come to Aix for the sake of the waters.

"I am the only one," said he, "who takes them out of necessity. I am consumptive; I get thinner every day, and if the waters don't do me any good I shall not last much longer.”

So all the others have only come here for amusement’s sake?”

“And to game, sir, for they are all professional gamesters.”

“Are they French?”

“They are all from Piedmont or Savoy; I am the only Frenchman here.”

“What part of France do you come from?”

“From Lorraine; my father, who is eighty years old, is the Marquis Desarmoises. He only keeps on living to spite me, for as I married against his wishes he has disinherited me. However, as I am his only son, I shall inherit his property after his death, in spite of him. My house is at Lyons, but I never go there, as I have the misfortune to be in love with my eldest daughter, and my wife watches us so closely as to make my courtship hopeless.”

“That is very fine; otherwise, I suppose, your daughter would take pity on her amorous papa?”

“I daresay, for she is very fond of me, and has an excellent heart.”

CHAPTER XX

My Adventures at Aix — My Second M. M. — Madame Zeroli

This man, who, though he did not know me, put the utmost confidence in me, so far from thinking he was horrifying me by the confession of such wickedness, probably considered he was doing me a great honour. While I listened to him I reflected that though depraved he might have his good points, and that his weakness might have a pitiable if not a pardonable side. However, wishing to know more of him, I said, —

“In spite of your father’s sternness, you live very well.”

“On the contrary, I live very ill. I enjoy a pension from the Government, which I surrender to my wife, and as for me I make a livelihood on my travels. I play black gammon and most other games perfectly. I win more often than I lose, and I live on my winnings.”

“But is what you have told me about your daughter known to the visitors here?”

“Everybody knows it; why should I hide it? I am a man of honour and injure no one; and, besides, my sword is sharp.”

“Quite so; but would you tell me whether you allow your daughter to have a lover?”

“I should have no objection, but my wife is religious.”

“Is your daughter pretty?”

“Very; if you are going to Lyons, you can go and see her; I will give you a letter of introduction for her.”

“Thank you, but I am going to Italy. Can you tell me the name of the gentleman who kept the bank?”

“That is the famous Parcalier, Marquis de Prie since the death of his father, whom you may have known as ambassador at Venice. The gentleman who asked you if you knew the Abbe Gilbert is the Chevalier Zeroli, husband of the lady you are to sup with. The rest are counts, marquises, and barons of the usual kind, some from Piedmont and some from Savoy. Two or three are merchants' sons, and the ladies are all their friends or relations. They are all professional gamblers and sharp-witted. When a stranger comes here they know how to get over him, and if he plays it is all up with him, for they go together like pickpockets at a fair. They think they have got you, so take care of yourself."

In the evening we returned to the inn, and found all the company playing, and my companion proceeded to play with a Count de Scarnafisch.

The Chevalier Zeroli offered to play faro with me for forty sequins, and I had just lost that sum when supper was served. My loss had not affected my spirits, and the lady finding me at once hungry and gay paid the bet with a good grace. At supper I surprised her in certain side-glances, which warned me that she was going to try to dupe me; I felt myself safe as far as love was concerned, but I had reason to dread fortune, always the friend of those who keep a bank at faro, especially as I had already lost. I should have done well to go, but I had not the strength; all I could do was to promise myself that I would be extremely prudent. Having large sums in paper money and plenty of gold, it was not difficult for me to be careful.

Just after supper the Marquis de Prie made a bank of about three hundred sequins. His staking this paltry sum shewed me that I had much to lose and little to win, as it was evident that he would have made a bank of a thousand sequins if he had had them. I put down fifty Portuguese crowns, and said that as soon as I had lost them I should go to bed. In the middle of the third deal I broke the bank.

"I am good for another two hundred louis," said the marquis.

"I should be glad to continue playing," I replied, "if I had not to go at day-break"; and I thereupon left the room.

Just as I was going to bed, Desarmoises came and asked me to lend him twelve louis. I had expected some such request, and I counted them out to him. He embraced me gratefully, and told me that Madame Zeroli had sworn to make me stay on at least for another day. I smiled and called Le

Duc, and asked him if my coachman knew that I was starting early; he replied that he would be at the door by five o'clock.

"Very good," said Desarmoises, "but I will wager that you will not go for all that."

He went out and I went to bed, laughing at his prophecy.

At five o'clock next morning the coachman came to tell me that one of the horses was ill and could not travel. I saw that Desarmoises had had an inkling of some plot, but I only laughed. I sent the man roughly about his business, and told Le Duc to get me post-horses at the inn. The inn-keeper came and told me that there were no horses, and that it would take all the morning to find some, as the Marquis de Prie, who was leaving at one o'clock in the morning, had emptied his stables. I answered that in that case I would dine at Aix, but that I counted on his getting me horses by two o'clock in the afternoon.

I left the room and went to the stable, where I found the coachman weeping over one of his horses stretched out on the straw. I thought it was really an accident, and consoled the poor devil, paying him as if he had done his work, and telling him I should not want him any more. I then went towards the fountain, but the reader will be astonished by a meeting of the most romantic character, but which is yet the strict truth.

At a few paces from the fountain I saw two nuns coming from it. They were veiled, but I concluded from their appearance that one was young and the other old. There was nothing astonishing in such a sight, but their habit attracted my attention, for it was the same as that worn by my dear M —— M —— , whom I had seen for the last time on July 24th, 1755, five years before. The look of them was enough, not to make me believe that the young nun was M —— M —— , but to excite my curiosity. They were walking towards the country, so I turned to cut them off that I might see them face to face and be seen of them. What was my emotion when I saw the young nun, who, walking in front, and lifting her veil, disclosed the veritable face of M —— M —— . I could not doubt that it was she, and I began to walk beside her; but she lowered her veil, and turned to avoid me.

The reasons she might have for such a course passed in a moment through my mind, and I followed her at a distance, and when she had gone about five hundred paces I saw her enter a lonely house of poor appearance that was enough for me. I returned to the fountain to see what I could learn about the nun.

On my way there I lost myself in a maze of conjectures.

“The too charming and hapless M —— M —— ,” said I to myself, “must have left her convent, desperate — nay, mad; for why does she still wear the habit of her order? Perhaps, though, she has got a dispensation to come here for the waters; that must be the reason why she has a nun with her, and why she has not left off her habit. At all events the journey must have been undertaken under false pretences. Has she abandoned herself to some fatal passion, of which the result has been pregnancy? She is doubtless perplexed, and must have been pleased to see me. I will not deceive her expectations; I will do all in my power to convince her that I am worthy of her.”

Lost in thought I did not notice I had arrived at the fountain, round which stood the whole host of gamesters. They all crowded round me, and said how charmed they were to see me still there. I asked the Chevalier Zeroli after his wife, and he told me she was still abed, and that it would be a good thing if I would go and make her get up. I was just going when the doctor of the place accosted me, saying, that the waters of the Aix would increase my good health. Full of the one idea, I asked him directly if he were the doctor in attendance on a pretty nun I had seen.

“She takes the waters,” he replied, “but she does not speak to anyone.”

“Where does she come from?”

“Nobody knows; she lives in a peasant’s house.”

I left the doctor, and instead of going towards the inn, where the hussy Zeroli was doubtless waiting for me, I made my way towards the peasant’s house, which already seemed to me the temple of the most blissful deities, determined to obtain the information I required as prudently as might be. But as if love had favoured my vows, when I was within a hundred paces of the cottage I saw the peasant woman coming out to meet me.

“Sir,” said she, accosting me, “the young nun begs you to return this evening at nine o’clock; the lay-sister will be asleep then, and she will be able to speak freely to you.”

There could be no more doubt. My heart leapt with joy. I gave the country-woman a louis, and promised to be at the house at nine exactly.

With the certainty of seeing my dear M —— M —— again I returned to the inn, and on ascertaining which was Madame Zeroli's room I entered without ceremony, and told her that her husband had sent me to make her get up.

"I thought you were gone?"

"I am going at two."

I found her still more enticing in bed than at table. I helped her to put on her stays, and the sight of her charms inflamed my ardour, but I experienced more resistance than I had anticipated. I sat down at the foot of the bed, and told her how fervently I loved her, and how unhappy I was at not being able to give her marks of my love before I left.

"But," said she, laughing, "you have only got to stay."

"Give me some hope, and I will stay till to-morrow."

"You are in too much of a hurry, take things more quietly."

I contented myself with the few favours she granted me, pretending as usual only to yield to violence, when I was obliged to restrain myself on the appearance of her husband, who took the precaution of making a noise before he came in. As soon as she saw him, she said, without the slightest perturbation, "I have persuaded the gentleman to stay tell the day after to-morrow."

"I am all the more pleased to hear it, my dear," said the chevalier, "as I owe him his revenge."

With these words he took up a pack of cards, which came as readily to his hands as if they had been placed there on purpose, and seating himself beside his wife, whom he made into the table, he began to deal.

I could not draw back, and as my thoughts were distracted I kept on losing till they came to tell me dinner was ready.

"I have no time to dress," said the lady, "so I will have my dinner in bed, if you gentlemen will keep me company."

How could I refuse? The husband went out to order the dinner, and feeling myself authorized by the loss of twenty Louis, I told the hussy that if she would not give me a plain promise to make me happy that afternoon I should go away when I had had my dinner.

“Breakfast with me to-morrow morning. We shall be alone.”

After receiving from her certain earnests of her promise, I promised to stay on.

We dined by her bedside, and I told Le Duc that I should not be going till the afternoon of the next day, which made the husband and wife radiant. When we had done, the lady said she would like to get up; and I went out, promising to return and play piquet with her. I proceeded to reline my purse, and I met Desarmoises, who said,

“I have found out the secret; they gave her coachman two Louis to substitute a sick horse for his own.”

“It’s a matter of give and take,” said I; “I am in love with the chevalier’s wife, and I am putting off my departure till I have got all I want out of her.”

“I am afraid you will have to pay pretty dearly for your pleasure. However, I will do what I can for your interests.”

I thanked him smilingly, and returned to the lady, whom I left at eight o’clock under pretext of a violent headache, after having lost ten louis to her. I reminded her of her promise for next morning at nine o’clock, and I left her in the midst of the company.

It was a fine moonlight night as I walked towards the peasant’s house, where I was to see my dear M —— M —— once more. I was impatient to see what the visit, on which the rest of my life might depend, would bring forth.

I had taken the precaution to provide myself with a pair of pistols, and my sword hung at my side, for I was not wholly devoid of suspicion in this place, where there were so many adventurers; but at twenty paces from the cottage I saw the woman coming towards me. She told me that the nun could not come down, so I must be content to enter through the window, by means of a ladder which she had placed there for the purpose. I drew near, and not seeing any light I should not have easily decided on going up, if I had not heard the voice I thought I knew so well, saying, “Fear nothing; come.” Besides, the window was not very high up, and there could not be much danger of a trap. I ascended, and thought for certain that I held my dear M —— M —— in my arms, as I covered her face with my ardent kisses.

“Why,” said I, in Venetian, “have you not a light? I hope you are going to inform me of an event which seems wonderful to me; quick, dearest, satisfy my impatience.”

The reader will guess my surprise when he learns that on hearing her voice close to me I found that she was not M —— M —— . She told me that she did not understand Venetian, and that I did not require a light to tell her what M. de Coudert had decided on doing to save her from her peril.

“You surprise me; I do not know M. de Coudert. What! Are you not a Venetian? Are you not the nun I saw this morning?”

“Hapless one! I have made a mistake. I am the nun you saw this morning, but I am French. In the name of God keep my counsel and begone, for I have nothing to say to you! Whisper, for if the lay-sister woke up I should be undone.”

“Do not be afraid of my discretion. What deceived me was your exact likeness to a nun of your order who will be always dear to me: and if you had not allowed me to see your features I should not have followed you. Forgive the tenderness I shewed towards you, though you must think me very audacious.”

“You astonished me very much, but you did not offend me. I wish I were the nun in whom you are interested. I am on the brink of a fearful precipice.”

“If ten louis are any good to you, it will be an honour for me to give you them.”

“Thank you, I have no need of money. Allow me to give you back the louis you sent me this morning.”

“The louis was for the country-woman. You increase my surprise; pray tell me what is the misfortune under which you labour, for which money can do nothing.”

"Perhaps God has sent you to my aid. Maybe you will give me good advice. Listen to what I am about to tell you."

"I am at your service, and I will listen with the greatest attention. Let us sit down."

"I am afraid there is neither seat nor bed."

"Say on, then; we will remain standing."

"I come from Grenoble. I was made to take the veil at Chamberi. Two years after my profession, M. de Coudert found means to see me. I received him in the convent garden, the walls of which he scaled, and at last I was so unfortunate as to become pregnant. The idea of giving birth to a child at the convent was too dreadful — I should have languished till I died in a terrible dungeon — and M. de Coudert thought of a plan for taking me out of the convent. A doctor whom he gained over with a large sum of money declared that I should die unless I came here to take the waters, which he declared were the only cure for my illness. A princess whom M. de Coudert knew was partly admitted to the secret, and she obtained the leave of absence for three months from the Bishop of Chamberi, and the abbess consented to my going.

"I thus hoped to be delivered before the expiration of the three months; but I have assuredly made a mistake, for the time draws to an end and I feel no signs of a speedy delivery. I am obliged to return to the convent, and yet I cannot do so. The lay-sister who is with me is a perfect shrew. She has orders not to let me speak to anybody, and never to let my face be seen. She it was who made me turn when she saw you following us. I lifted my veil for you to see that I was she of whom I thought you were in search, and happily the lay-sister did not notice me. She wants me to return with her to the convent in three days, as she thinks I have an incurable dropsy. She does not allow me to speak to the doctor, whom I might, perhaps, have gained over by telling him the truth. I am only twenty-one, and yet I long for death."

"Do not weep so, dear sister, and tell me how you expect to be delivered here without the lay-sister being aware of it?"

"The worthy woman with whom I am staying is an angel of goodness. I have confided in her, and she promised me that when I felt the pangs coming on she would give that malicious woman a soporific, and thus we should be freed from all fears of her. By virtue of the drug she now sleeps soundly in the room under this garret."

"Why was I not let in by the door?"

"To prevent the woman's brother seeing you; he is a rude boor."

"What made you think that I had anything to do with M. de Coudert?"

"Ten or twelve days ago, I wrote to him and told him of my dreadful position. I painted my situation with such lively colours that I thought he must do all in his power to help me. As the wretched cling to every straw, I thought, when I saw you following me, that you were the deliverer he had sent."

"Are you sure he got your letter?"

"The woman posted it at Anneci."

"You should write to the princess."

"I dare not."

"I will see her myself, and I will see M. de Coudert. In fine, I will move heaven and earth, I will even go to the bishop, to obtain an extension of your leave; for it is out of the question for you to return to the convent in your present situation. You must decide, for I can do nothing without your consent. Will you trust in me? If so, I will bring you a man's clothes to-morrow and take you to Italy with me, and while I live I swear I will care for you."

For reply, I only heard long-drawn sobs, which distressed me beyond words, for I felt acutely the situation of this poor creature whom Heaven had made to be a mother, and whom the cruelty of her parents had condemned to be a useless nun.

Not knowing what else to say, I took her hand and promised to return the next day and hear her decision, for it was absolutely necessary that she should decide on some plan. I went away by the ladder, and gave a second louis to the worthy woman, telling her that I should be with her on the morrow at the same hour, but that I should like to be able to enter by the door. I begged her to give the lay-sister a stronger dose of opium, so that there should be no fear of her awaking while I talked with the young nun.

I went to bed glad at heart that I had been wrong in thinking that the nun was M —— M —— . Nevertheless the great likeness between them made me wish to see her nearer at hand, and I was sure that she would not refuse me the privilege of looking at her the next day. I smiled at the thought of the ardent kisses I had given her, but I felt that I could not leave her to her fate. I was glad to find that I did not need any sensual motive to urge me to a good deed, for as soon as I found that it was not M —— M —— who had received those tender kisses I felt ashamed of having given them. I had not even given her a friendly kiss when I left her.

In the morning Desarmoises came and told me that all the company, not seeing me at supper, had been puzzling itself to find out what had become of me. Madame Zeroli had spoken enthusiastically about me, and had taken the jests of the two other ladies in good part, boasting that she could keep me at Aix as long as she remained there herself. The fact was that I was not amorous but curious where she was concerned, and I should have been sorry to have left the place without obtaining complete possession of her, for once at all events.

I kept my appointment, and entered her room at nine o'clock exactly. I found her dressed, and on my reproaching her she said that it should be of no consequence to me whether she were dressed or undressed. I was angry, and I took my chocolate without so much as speaking to her. When I had finished she offered me my revenge at piquet, but I thanked her and begged to be excused, telling her that in the humour in which she had put me I should prove the better player, and that I did not care to win ladies' money. So saying I rose to leave the room.

"At least be kind enough to take me to the fountain."

"I think not. If you take me for a freshman, you make a mistake, and I don't care to give the impression that I am pleased when I am displeased. You can get whomsoever you please to take you to the fountain, but as for me I must beg to be excused. Farewell, madam."

With these words I went out, paying no attention to her efforts to recall me.

I found the inn-keeper, and told him that I must leave at three o'clock without a fail. The lady, who was at her window, could hear me. I went straight to the fountain where the chevalier asked me what had become of his wife, and I answered that I had left her in her room in perfect health. In half an hour we saw her coming with a stranger, who was welcomed by a certain M. de St. Maurice. Madame Zeroli left him, and tacked herself on to me, as if there had been nothing the matter. I could not repulse her without the most troublesome consequences, but I was very cold. After complaining of my conduct she said that she had only been trying me, that if I really loved her I should put off my departure, and that I should breakfast with her at eight o'clock the next day. I answered coolly that I would think it over. I was serious all dinner-time, and said once or twice that I must go at three o'clock, but as I wanted to find some pretext for staying on account of the nun, I let myself be persuaded into making a bank at faro.

I staked all the gold I had, and I saw every face light up as I put down about four hundred louis in gold, and about six hundred francs in silver. "Gentlemen," said I, "I shall rise at eight o'clock precisely." The stranger said, with a smile, that possibly the bank might not live so long, but I pretended not to understand him. It was just three o'clock. I begged Desarmoises to be my croupier, and I began to deal with due deliberation to eighteen or twenty punters, all professional gamblers. I took a new pack at every deal.

By five o'clock I had lost money. We heard carriage wheels, and they said it was three Englishmen from Geneva, who were changing horses to go on to Chamberi. A moment after they came in, and I bowed. It was Mr. Fox and his two friends, who had played quinze with me. My croupier gave them cards, which they received gladly, and went ten louis, playing on two and three cards, going paroli, seven and the 'va', as well as the 'quinze', so that my bank was in danger of breaking. However, I kept up my face, and even encouraged them to play, for, God being neutral, the chances were in my favour. So it happened, and at the third deal I had cleared the Englishmen out, and their carriage was ready.

While I was shuffling a fresh pack of cards, the youngest of them drew out of his pocket-book a paper which he spewed to his two companions. It was a bill of exchange. "Will you stake the value of this bill on a card, without knowing its value?" said he.

“Yes,” I replied, “if you will tell me upon whom it is drawn, and provided that it does not exceed the value of the bank.”

After a rapid glance at the pile of gold before me, he said, “The bill is not for so large a sum as your bank, and it is payable at sight by Zappata, of Turin.”

I agreed, he cut, and put his money on an ace, the two friends going half shares. I drew and drew and drew, but no ace appeared. I had only a dozen cards left.

“Sir,” said I, calmly to the punter, “you can draw back if you like.”

“No, go on.”

Four cards more, and still no ace; I had only eight cards left.

“My lord,” said I, “it’s two to one that I do not hold the ace, I repeat you can draw back.”

“No, no, you are too generous, go on.”

I continued dealing, and won; I put the bill of exchange in my pocket without looking at it. The Englishmen shook me by the hand and went off laughing. I was enjoying the effect this bold stroke had made on the company, when young Fox came in and with a roar of laughter begged me to lend him fifty Louis. I counted them out with the greatest pleasure, and he paid me them back in London three years later.

Everyone was curious to know the value of the bill of exchange, but I was not polite enough to satisfy their curiosity. It was for eight thousand Piedmontese francs, as I saw as soon as I was alone. The Englishmen had brought me good luck, for when they had gone fortune declared for the bank. I rose at eight o’clock, some ladies having won a few louis, all the others were dried up. I had won more than a thousand louis, and I gave twenty-five to Desarmoises, who jumped for joy. I locked up my money, put my pistols in my pocket, and set out towards the meeting-place.

The worthy peasant woman brought me in by the door, telling me that everybody was asleep, and that she had not found it necessary to renew the lay-sister’s dose, as she was still asleep.

I was terrified. I went upstairs, and by the light of a single candle I saw the wretched, veiled figure of the nun, extended upon a sack which the peasant woman had placed along the wall instead of a sofa. The candle which lighted this dreary place was fixed in a bottle.

“What have you decided on doing?” said I.

“I have decided on nothing, for an unforeseen incident has confounded us. The lay-sister has been asleep for eighteen hours.”

“She will die of convulsions or of an apoplectic fit to-night if you do not call a doctor, who may possibly restore her to life with a dose of castor oil.”

“We have thought of that, but we did not dare to take that step for fear of consequences; for whether he restores her or not, he will say that we have poisoned her.”

“I pity you, upon my soul! Indeed, I believe that it is too late, and that a doctor could do nothing. One must obey the laws of prudence and let her die. The mischief is done, and I see no remedy.”

“At any rate, we ought to think of her soul and send for a priest.”

“A priest would do her no good, as she is in a perfect lethargy; her soul is safe enough. Besides, an ignorant priest would find out too much, and would tell the whole story either through malice or stupidity. It will be time to call a priest when she has ceased to breathe. You must tell him that she died very suddenly; you must weep a great deal, and give him a fee, and he will think only of calming your grief, and nothing about the sudden death.”

“Then we must let her die?”

“We must leave her to nature.”

“If she dies I will send a messenger to the abbess, who will dispatch another lay-sister.”

“Yes, and that will give you another ten days. During that time you may be delivered, and you will confess that every cloud has a silver lining. Do not grieve so, but let us endeavour to submit to the will of God. Send for the country-woman, for I must give her some hints as to her conduct in this delicate matter, on which the honour and life of all three may depend. For instance, if it were discovered that I had come here, I might be taken for the poisoner."

The woman came, and I shewed her how necessary it was for her to be prudent and discreet. She understood me perfectly, perceived her own dangerous position, and promised that she would not send for the priest till she was certain of the sister's death. I then made her accept ten louis in case of need.

Seeing herself made rich by my liberality, she kissed my hands, knelt down, and bursting into tears promised to follow my advice carefully. When she had left us, the nun began to weep bitterly, accusing herself of the murder of the lay-sister, and thinking that she saw hell opening beneath her feet. I sought in vain to calm her; her grief increased, and at last she fell in a dead faint on the sack. I was extremely distressed, and not knowing what to do I called to the woman to bring some vinegar, as I had no essences about me. All at once I remembered the famous hellebore, which had served me so well with Madame and, taking the little box, I held it to her nostrils. It took effect just as the woman brought the vinegar. "Rub her temples," said I. She took off her cap, and the blackness of her hair was the only thing that convinced me it was not my fair Venetian. The hellebore having brought her to her senses, she opened her large black eyes, and from that moment I fell madly in love with her. The peasant woman, seeing that she was herself again and out of danger, went away, and taking her between my arms I covered her with fiery kisses, in spite of her continuous sneezes.

"Please let me put on my veil again," said she, "or else I shall be excommunicated."

I laughed at her fears, and continued to lavish my burning kisses on her face.

"I see you do not believe me, but I assure you that the abbess threatened me with excommunication if I let myself be seen by a man."

"Fear these bolts no longer, dear, they cannot hurt you."

But she sneezed more violently than ever, and fearing lest her efforts might bring on her delivery I called the woman again, and left the nun in her care, promising to return at the same hour on the next day.

It would not have been like me to leave this interesting creature in her distress, but my devotion to her cause had no merit, since I was madly in love with this new M —— M —— with black eyes; and love always makes men selfish, since all the sacrifices they make for the beloved object are always ultimately referable to their own desires.

I had determined, then, to do all in my power for her, and certainly not to allow her to return to the convent in the state she was in. I concluded that to save her would be an action pleasing to God, since God alone could have made her so like my beloved, and God had willed that I should win a good deal of money, and had made me find the Zeroli, who would serve as a shield to my actions and baffle the curiosity of spies. The philosophers and the mystics may perhaps laugh at me, but what do I care? I have always delighted in referring all the actions of my life to God, and yet people have charged me with Atheism!

Next morning I did not forget the Zeroli, and I went to her room at eight and found her asleep. Her maid begged me to go in quietly for fear of awakening her, and then left me and shut the door. I knew my part, for I remembered how, twenty years before, a Venetian lady, whose sleep I had foolishly respected, had laughed at me and sent me about my business. I therefore knew what to do; and having gently uncovered her, I gave myself up to those delicate preliminary delights which sweeten the final pleasure. The Zeroli wisely continued to sleep; but at last, conquered by passion, she seconded my caresses with greater ardour than my own, and she was obliged to laugh at her stratagem. She told me that her husband had gone to Geneva to buy a repeating watch, and that he would not return till next day, and that she could spend the night with me.

“Why the night, dearest, while we have the day before us? The night is for slumber, and in the day one enjoys double bliss, since the light allows all the senses to be satisfied at once. If you do not expect anybody, I will pass the whole morning with you.”

“Very good; nobody will interrupt us.”

I was soon in her arms, and for four hours we gave ourselves up to every kind of pleasure, cheating each other the better to succeed, and laughing with delight each time we convinced each other of our love. After the last assault she asked me, in return for her kindness, to spend three more days at Aix.

“I promise you,” I said, “to stay here as long as you continue giving me such marks of your love as you have given me this morning.”

“Let us get up, then, and go to dinner.”

“In company, dearest? Look at your eyes.”

“All the better. People will guess what has happened, and the two countesses will burst with envy. I want everybody to know that it is for me alone that you are remaining at Aix.”

“I am not worth the trouble, my angel, but so be it; I will gladly oblige you, even though I lose all my money in the next three days.”

“I should be in despair if you lost; but if you abstain from punting you will not lose, though you may let yourself be robbed.”

“You may be sure that I know what I am about, and that I shall only allow ladies to rob me. You have had some money out of me yourself.”

“Yes, but not nearly so much as the countesses, and I am sorry you allowed them to impose on you, as they no doubt put it down to your being in love with them.”

“They are quite wrong, poor dears, for neither would have kept me here a day.”

“I am delighted to hear it. But let me tell you what the Marquis of St. Maurice was saying about you yesterday.”

“Say on. I hope he did not allow himself any offensive remarks.”

“No; he only said that you should never have offered the Englishman to be off at eight cards, as you had as much chance as he, and if he had won he might have thought that you knew the card was there.”

“Very good, but tell the marquis that a gentleman is incapable of such a thought, and besides I knew the character of the young nobleman, and I was almost sure he would not accept my offer.”

When we appeared in the dining-room we were received with applause. The fair Zeroli had the air of regarding me as her property, and I affected an extremely modest manner. No one dared to ask me to make a bank after dinner; the purses were too empty, and they contented themselves with trente-quarante, which lasted the whole day, and which cost me a score of louis.

I stole away as usual towards evening, and after having ordered Le Duc not to leave my room for a moment during my stay at Aix, I went towards the cottage where the unfortunate nun was no doubt expecting me anxiously. Soon, in spite of the darkness, I thought I made out somebody following me. I stopped short, and some persons passed me. In two or three minutes I went on again, and I saw the same people, whom I could not have caught up if they had not slackened their pace. It might all be accidental, but I wanted to be sure about it. I left the road without losing my reckoning, feeling quite sure of finding my way when I ceased to be followed; but I soon felt sure that my steps were dogged, as I saw the same shadowy figures at a little distance off. I doubled my speed, hid behind a tree, and as soon as I saw the spies fired a pistol in the air. I looked round shortly after, saw no one, and went on my way.

I went upstairs and found the nun in bed, with two candles on the table.

“Are you ill?”

“I was ill for a time, but praised be God! I am now quite well, having given birth to a fine boy at two o’clock this morning.”

“Where is the child?”

“Alas! I did but kiss him once, and my good hostess carried him away I know not where. The Holy Virgin heard my prayers, for my pains, though sharp, were soon over, and a quarter of an hour after my delivery I was still sneezing. Tell me whether you are a man or an angel, for I fear lest I sin in adoring you.”

“This is good news indeed. And how about the lay-sister?”

“She still breathes, but we have no hope that she will recover. Her face is terribly distorted. We have sinned exceedingly, and God will punish me for it.”

“No, dearest, God will forgive you, for the Most Holy judges by the heart, and in your heart you had no evil thoughts. Adore Divine Providence, which doeth all things well."

"You console me. The country-woman assures me that you are an angel, for the powder you gave me delivered me. I shall never forget you, though I do not know your name."

The woman then came, and I thanked her for the care she had taken of the invalid. I again warned her to be prudent, and above all to treat the priest well when the lay-sister breathed her last, and thus he would not take notice of anything that might involve leer in disaster.

"All will be well," said she, "for no one knows if the lay-sister is well or ill, or why the lady does not leave her bed."

"What have you done with the child?"

"I took him with my own hands to Anneci, where I bought everything necessary for the well-being of this lady and for the death of the other one."

"Doesn't your brother know anything about it?"

"Lord preserve us — no! He went away yesterday, and will not be back for a week. We have nothing to fear."

I gave her another ten louis, begging her to buy some furniture, and to get me something to eat by the time I came next day. She said she had still plenty of money left, and I thought she would go mad when I told her that whatever was over was her own. I thought the invalid stood in need of rest, and I left her, promising to return at the same hour on the following day.

I longed to get this troublesome matter safely over, and I knew that I could not regard myself as out of the wood till the poor lay-sister was under the sod. I was in some fear on this account, for if the priest was not an absolute idiot he must see that the woman had been poisoned.

Next morning I went to see the fair Zeroli, and I found her and her husband examining the watch he had bought her. He came up to me, took my hand, and said he was happy that his wife had the power to keep me at Aix. I replied that it was an easy task for her, and a "bravo" was all he answered.

The chevalier was one of those men who prefer to pass for good-natured than foolish husbands. His wife took my arm, and we left him in his room while we proceeded to the fountain. On the way she said she would be alone the next day, and that she would no longer indulge her curiosity in my nocturnal excursions.

“Oh! it is you who have had me followed, is it?”

“No, it is I who followed you, but to no effect. However, I did not think you were so wicked. You frightened me dreadfully! Do you know, sir, you might have killed me if your shot had not luckily missed.”

“I missed on purpose, dearest; for though I did not suspect that it was you, I fired in the air, feeling certain that that would be enough to scare off the spies.”

“You won’t be troubled with them any more.”

“If they like to follow me, perhaps I shall let them, for my walk is quite innocent. I am always back by ten.”

While we were at table we saw a travelling carriage and six horses drawn up. It was the Marquis de Prie, with a Chevalier de St. Louis and two charming ladies, of whom one, as the Zeroli hastened to inform me, was the Marquis’s mistress. Four places were laid, and while the newcomers were waiting to be served, they were told the story of my bet with the Englishman.

The marquis congratulated me, telling me that he had not hoped to find me at Aix on his return; and here Madame Zeroli put in her word, and said that if it had not been for her he would not have seen me again. I was getting used to her foolish talk, and I could only agree with a good grace, which seemed to delight her intensely although her husband was present, but he seemed to share her triumph.

The marquis said that he would make a little bank for me, and feeling obliged to accept I soon lost a hundred louis. I went to my room to write some letters, and at twilight I set out to see my nun.

“What news have you?”

“The lay-sister is dead, and she is to be buried tomorrow. To-morrow is the day we were to have returned to the convent. This is the letter I am sending to the abbess. She will dispatch another laysister, unless she orders the country-woman to bring me back to the convent.”

“What did the priest say?”

“He said the lay-sister died of a cerebral lethargy, which super-induced an attack of apoplexy.”

“Very good, very good.”

“I want him to say fifteen masses for her, if you will let me?”

“Certainly, my dear, they will serve as the priest’s reward, or rather as the reward of his happy ignorance.”

I called the peasant woman, and gave her the order to have the masses said, and bade her tell the priest that the masses were to be said for the intention of the person who paid for them. She told me that the aspect of the dead sister was dreadful, and that she had to be guarded by two women who sprinkled her with holy water, lest witches, under the form of cats, should come and tear her limb from limb. Far from laughing at her, I told her she was quite right, and asked where she had got the laudanum.

“I got it from a worthy midwife, and old friend of mine. We got it to send the poor lay-sister to sleep when the pains of child-birth should come on.”

“When you put the child at the hospital door, were you recognized?”

“Nobody saw me as I put it into the box, and I wrote a note to say the child had not been baptized.”

“Who wrote the note?”

“I did.”

“You will, of course, see that the funeral is properly carried out?”

“It will only cost six francs, and the parson will take that from two louis which were found on the deceased; the rest will do for masses to atone for her having had the money.”

“What! ought she not to have had the two louis?”

“No,” said the nun, “we are forbidden to have any money without the knowledge of the abbess, under pain of excommunication.”

“What did they give you to come here?”

"Ten Savoy sols a day. But now I live like a princess, as you shall see at supper, for though this worthy woman knows the money you gave her is for herself she lavishes it on me."

"She knows, dear sister, that such is my intention, and here is some more to go on with."

So saying I took another ten louis from my purse, and bade the country-woman spare nothing for the invalid's comfort. I enjoyed the worthy woman's happiness; she kissed my hands, and told me that I had made her fortune, and that she could buy some cows now.

As soon as I was alone with the charming nun, whose face recalled to my memory the happy hours I had passed with M—— M—— , my imagination began to kindle, and drawing close to her I began to talk of her seducer, telling her I was surprised that he had not helped her in the cruel position in which he had placed her. She replied that she was debarred from accepting any money by her vow of poverty and obedience, and that she had given up to the abbess what remained of the alms the bishop had procured her.

"As to my state when I was so fortunate as to meet you, I think he cannot have received my letter."

"Possibly, but is he a rich or handsome man?"

"He is rich but certainly not handsome. On the contrary, he is extremely ugly, deformed, and over fifty."

"How did you become amorous of a fellow like that?"

"I never loved him, but he contrived to gain my pity. I thought he would kill himself, and I promised to be in the garden on the night he appointed, but I only went there with the intention of bidding him begone, and he did so, but after he had carried his evil designs into effect."

"Did he use violence towards you, then?"

"No, for that would have been no use. He wept, threw himself on his knees, and begged so hard, that I let him do what he liked on the condition that he would not kill himself, and that he would come no more to the garden."

"Had you no fear of consequences?"

"I did not understand anything about it; I always thought that one could not conceive under three times at least."

"Unhappy ignorance! how many woes are caused by it! Then he did not ask you to give him any more assignations?"

"He often asked me, but I would not grant his request because our confessor made me promise to withstand him thenceforth, if I wished to be absolved."

"Did you tell him the name of the seducer?"

"Certainly not; the good confessor would not have allowed me to do so; it would have been a great sin."

"Did you tell your confessor the state you were in?"

"No, but he must have guessed it. He is a good old man, who doubtless prayed to God for me, and my meeting you was, perhaps, the answer to his prayers."

I was deeply moved, and for a quarter of an hour I was silent, and absorbed in my thoughts. I saw that this interesting girl's misfortune proceeded from her ignorance, her candour, her perfect innocence, and a foolish feeling of pity, which made her grant this monster of lubricity a thing of which she thought little because she had never been in love. She was religious, but from mere habit and not from reflection, and her religion was consequently very weak. She abhorred sin, because she was obliged to purge herself of it by confession under pain of everlasting damnation, and she did not want to be damned. She had plenty of natural common sense, little wit, for the cultivation of which she had no opportunities, and she was in a state of ignorance only pardonable in a nun. On weighing these facts I foresaw that I should find it a difficult task to gain those favours which she had granted to Coudert; her repentance had been too bitter for her to expose herself to the same danger over again.

The peasant woman returned, laid the table for two, and brought us our supper. Everything was new — napkins, plates, glasses, spoons, knives, etc., and everything was exquisitely clean. The wines were excellent, and the dishes delightful in their simplicity. We had roast game, fish, cheese with cream, and very good fruit. I spent an hour and a half at supper, and drank two bottles of wine as I talked to the nun, who ate very little.

I was in the highest spirits, and the woman, delighted with my praise of her provision, promised I should be served the same way every evening.

When I was alone with the nun, whose face filled me with such burning recollections, I began to speak of her health, and especially of the inconveniences attached to child-birth. She said she felt quite well, and would be able to return to Chamberi on foot. “The only thing that troubles me is my breasts, but the woman assures me that the milk will recede to-morrow, and that they will then assume their usual shape.”

“Allow me to examine them, I know something about it.”

“Look!”

She uncovered her bosom, not thinking it would give me any pleasure, but wishing to be polite, without supposing I had any concealed desires. I passed my hands over two spheres whose perfect shape and whiteness would have restored Lazarus to life. I took care not to offend her modesty, but in the coolest manner possible asked her how she felt a little lower down, and as I put the question I softly extended my hand. However, she kept it back gently, telling me not to go any further as she still felt a little uneasy. I begged her pardon, and said I hoped I should find everything quite right by the next day.

“The beauty of your bosom,” I added, “makes me take a still greater interest in you.”

So saying I let my mouth meet hers, and I felt a kiss escape as if involuntarily from her lips. It ran like fire through my veins, my brain began to whirl, and I saw that unless I took to a speedy flight I should lose all her confidence. I therefore left her, calling her “dear daughter” as I bade her farewell.

It poured with rain, and I got soaked through before I reached my lodging. This was a bath well fitted to diminish the ardour of my passion, but it made me very late in rising the next morning.

I took out the two portraits of M —— M —— , one in a nun’s dress, and the other nude, as Venus. I felt sure they would be of service to me with the nun.

I did not find the fair Zeroli in her room, so I went to the fountain, where she reproached me with a tenderness I assessed at its proper value, and our quarrel was made up in the course of our walk. When dinner was over the Marquis the Prie made a bank, but as he only put down a hundred louis I guessed that he wanted to win a lot and lose a little. I put down also a hundred louis, and he said that it would be better sport if I did not stake my money on one card only. I replied that I would stake a louis on each of the thirteen.

“You will lose.”

“We will see. Here is my hand on the table, and I stake a louis on each of the thirteen cards.”

According to the laws of probability, I should certainly have lost, but fate decided otherwise and I won eighty louis. At eight o’clock I bowed to the company, and I went as usual to the place where my new love dwelt. I found the invalid ravishing. She said she had had a little fever, which the country-woman pronounced to be milk fever, and that she would be quite well and ready to get up by the next day. As I stretched out my hand to lift the coverlet; she seized it and covered it with kisses, telling me that she felt as if she must give me that mark of her filial affection. She was twenty-one, and I was thirty-five. A nice daughter for a man like me! My feelings for her were not at all of a fatherly character. Nevertheless, I told her that her confidence in me, as shewn by her seeing me in bed, increased my affection for her, and that I should be grieved if I found her dressed in her nun’s clothes next day.

“Then I will stop in bed,” said she; “and indeed I shall be very glad to do so, as I experience great discomfort from the heat of my woollen habit; but I think I should please you more if I were decently dressed; however, as you like it better, I will stop in bed.”

The country-woman came in at that moment, and gave her the abbess’ letter which her nephew had just brought from Chamberi. She read it and gave it to me. The abbess told her that she would send two lay-sisters to bring her back to the convent, and that as she had recovered her health she could come on-foot, and thus save money which could be spent in better ways. She added that as the bishop was away, and she was unable to send the lay-sisters without his permission, they could not start for a week or ten days.

She ordered her, under pain of the major excommunication, never to leave her room, never to speak to any man, not even to the master of the house, and to have nothing to do with anybody except with the woman. She ended by saying that she was going to have a mass said for the repose of the departed sister's soul.

"I am obliged to you for having shewn me this letter, but be pleased to tell me if I may visit you for the next week or ten days, without doing hurt to your conscience; for I must tell you I am a man. I have only stopped in this place because of the lively interest with which you have inspired me, but if you have the least objection to receive me on account of the singular excommunication with which you are threatened, I will leave Aix tomorrow. Speak."

"Sir, our abbess is lavish of these thunders, and I have already incurred the excommunication with which she threatens me; but I hope it will not be ratified by God, as my fault has made me happy and not miserable. I will be sincere with you; your visits are my only joy, and that joy is doubled when you tell me you like to come. But if you can answer my question without a breach of confidence, I should like to know for whom you took me the first time you saw me; you cannot imagine how you astonished and frightened me. I have never felt such kisses as those you lavished on me, but they cannot increase my sin as I was not a consenting party, and you told me yourself that you thought you were kissing another."

"I will satisfy your curiosity. I think I can do so as you are aware by this time that the flesh is weak, or rather stronger than the spirit, and that it compels the strongest intellects to commit faults against right reason. You shall hear the history of an amour that lasted for two years with the fairest and the best of all the nuns of Venice."

"Tell me all, sir. I have fallen myself, and I should be cruel and unjust if I were to take offence at anything you may tell me, for you cannot have done anything with her that Coudert did not do to me."

"I did much more and much less, for I never gave her a child. If I had been so unfortunate I should have carried her off to Rome, where we should have fallen at the feet of the Holy Father, who would have absolved her from her vows, and my dear M —— M —— would now be my wife."

"Good heavens M —— M —— is my name."

This circumstance, which was really a mere coincidence, rendered our meeting still more wonderful, and astonished me as much as it did her. Chance is a curious and fickle element, but it often has the greatest influence on our lives.

After a brief silence I told her all that had taken place between the fair Venetian and myself. I painted our amorous combats in a lively and natural manner, for, besides my recollections, I had her living picture before my eyes, and I could follow on her features the various emotions aroused by my recital. When I had finished she said,

"But is your M —— M —— really so like me, that you mistook me for her?"

Drawing from my pocket-book the portrait in which M —— M —— was dressed as a nun, I gave it to her, saying,

"Judge for yourself."

"She really is; it might pass for my portrait. It is my dress and my face; it is wonderful. To this likeness I owe all my good fortune. Thanks be to God that you do not love me as you loved her, whom I am glad to call my sister. There are indeed two M —— M —— s. Mighty Providence, all Thy least ways are wonderful, and we are at best poor, weak, ignorant mortals."

The worthy country-woman came up and have us a still better supper than on the previous night. The invalid only ate soup, but she promised to do better by the following evening.

I spent an hour with her after supper, and I convinced her by my reserve that she had made a mistake in thinking that I only loved her as a daughter. Of her own accord she shewed me that her breast had regained its usual condition. I assured myself of the fact by my sense of touch, to which she made no opposition, not thinking that I could be moved by such a trifle. All the kisses which I lavished on her lips and eyes she put down to the friendship for her. She said, smiling, that she thanked God she was not fair like her sister, and I smiled myself at her simplicity.

But I could not keep up this sort of thing for long, and I had to be extremely careful. As soon as I felt that passion was getting the upper hand, I gave her a farewell kiss and went away. When I got home Le Duc gave me a note from Madame Zeroli, who said she would expect me at the fountain, as she was going to breakfast with the marquis's mistress.

I slept well, but in my dreams I saw again and again the face of the new M —— M —— . Next day, as soon as I got to the fountain, Madame Zeroli told me that all the company maintained that I ought to have lost in playing on thirteen cards at once, as it was not true that one card won four times in each deal; however, the marquis, though he agreed with the rest, had said that he would not let me play like that again.

"I have only one objection to make to that — namely, that if I wanted to play in the same way again he could only prevent me by fighting for it."

"His mistress swears she will make you play in the usual way."

I smiled, and thanked her for her information.

When I got back to the inn I played a game of quinze with the marquis, and lost fifty louis; afterwards I let myself be persuaded to hold a bank. I put down five hundred louis, and defied fortune. Desarmoises was my croupier, and I warned the company that every card must have the stake placed on it, and that I should rise at half-past seven. I was seated between two ladies. I put the five hundred louis on the board, and I got change from the inn-keeper to the amount of a hundred crowns, to amuse the ladies with. But something happened. All the cards before me were loose packs, and I called for new ones. The inn-keeper said he had sent to Chamberi for a hundred packs, and that the messenger would be back soon.

"In the meanwhile," said he, "you can use the cards on the table, which are as good as new."

"I want them new, not as good as new. I have my prejudices, and they are so strong as to be invincible. In the meanwhile I shall remain a spectator, though I am sorry to keep the ladies waiting."

Nobody dared say a word, and I rose, after replacing my money in my cash-box. The Marquis de Prie took the bank, and played splendidly. I stood beside Madame Zeroli, who made me her partner, and gave me five or six Louis the next day. The messenger who was to be back soon did not return till midnight, and I thanked my stars for the escape I had had, for in such a place, full of professional gamesters, there are people whose eyes are considerably sharper than a lynx's. I put the money back in my room, and proceeded on my usual way.

I found my fair nun in bed, and asked her,

"How do you feel to-day, madam?"

"Say daughter, that name is so sweet to me that I would you were my father that I might clasp you in my arms without fearing anyone."

"Well, my dear daughter, do not fear anything, but open your arms to me."

"I will; we will embrace one another."

"My little ones are prettier than they were yesterday let me suck them."

"You silly papa, you are drinking your daughter's milk."

"It is so sweet, darling, and the little drop I tasted has made me feel so happy. You cannot be angry at my enjoying this harmless privilege."

"Of course I am not angry; you delighted me. But I shall have to call you baby, not papa."

"How glad I am to find you in better spirits to-night!"

"You have 'given me back my happiness, and I feel at peace once more. The country-woman told me that in a few days I should be just the same as if I had never seen Coudert."

"That is not quite true; how about your stomach, for instance?"

"Be quiet; you can't know anything about such things, and I am quite astonished myself."

"Let me see."

"Oh, no; you mustn't see, but you may feel."

"All right."

"Oh! please don't go there."

"Why not? You can't be made differently from your sister, who would be now about thirty. I want to shew you her portrait naked."

"Have you got it with you? I should so like to see it."

I drew it out and gave it to her. She admired it, kissed it, and asked me if the painter had followed nature in all respects.

“Certainly,” said I. “She knew that such a picture would give me pleasure.”

“It is very fine. It is more like me than the other picture. But I suppose the long hair is only put in to please you?”

“Not at all. Italian nuns are allowed to wear their hair as long as they please, provided they do not shew it.

“We have the same privilege. Our hair is cut once, and then we may let it grow as long as we like.”

“Then you have long hair?”

“As long as in the picture; but you would not like my hair as it is black.”

“Why, black is my favourite colour. In the name of God, let me see it.”

“You ask me in God’s name to commit a sin; I shall incur another excommunication, but I cannot refuse you anything. You shall see my hair after supper, as I don’t want to scandalize the countrywoman.”

“You are right; I think you are the sweetest of your sex. I shall die of grief when you leave this cottage to return to your sad prison.”

“I must indeed return and do penance for my sins.”

“I hope you have the wit to laugh at the abbess’s silly excommunications?”

“I begin not to dread them so much as I used to.”

“I am delighted to hear it, as I see you will make me perfectly happy after supper.”

The country-woman came up, and I gave her another ten louis; but it suddenly dawned upon me that she took me for a madman. To disabuse her of this idea I told her that I was very rich, and that I wanted to make her understand that I could not give her enough to testify my gratitude to her for the care she had taken of the good nun. She wept, kissed my hand, and served us a delicious supper. The nun ate well and drank indifferently, but I was in too great a hurry to see the beautiful black hair of this victim to her goodness of heart, and I could not follow her example. The one appetite drove out the other.

As soon as we were relieved of the country-woman’s presence, she removed her hood, and let a mass of ebon hair fall upon her alabaster shoulders, making a truly ravishing contrast. She put the portrait before her, and proceeded to arrange her hair like the first M —— M —— .

“You are handsomer than your sister,” said I, “but I think she was more affectionate than you.”

“She may have been more affectionate, but she had not a better heart.”

“She was much more amorous than you.”

“I daresay; I have never been in love.”

“That is strange; how about your nature and the impulse of the senses?”

“We arrange all that easily at the convent. We accuse ourselves to the confessor, for we know it is a sin, but he treats it as a childish fault, and absolves us without imposing any penances.”

“He knows human nature, and makes allowances for your sad position.”

“He is an old man, very learned, and of ascetic habits, but he is all indulgence. It will be a sad day when we lose him.”

“But in your amorous combats with another nun, don’t you feel as if you would like her to change into a man?”

“You make me laugh. To be sure, if my sweetheart became a man I should not be sorry, but we do not desire such a miracle.”

“That is, perhaps, through a coldness of temperament. In that your sister was better, for she liked me much more than C —— C —— , and you do not like me as well as the sweetheart you left behind you at the convent.”

“Certainly not, for with you I should violate my own chastity and expose myself to consequences I tremble to think of.”

“You do not love me, then?”

“What are you saying? I adore you, and I am very sorry you are not a woman.”

“I love you too, but your desire makes me laugh; for I would rather not be turned into a woman to please you, especially as I expect I should not think you nearly as beautiful. Sit down, my dear, and let me see your fine hair flowing over your beautiful body."

"Do you want me to take off my chemise?"

"Of course; how handsome you look without it. Let me suck your pretty breasts, as I am your baby."

She granted me this privilege, and looking at me with a face full of pleasure, she allowed me to press her naked body to my breast, not seeing, or pretending not to see, the acuteness of my enjoyment. She then said,

"If such delights as these were allowed friendship, I should say it is better than love; for I have never experienced so great pleasure as when you put your lips to my bosom. Let me do the same to you."

"I wish you could, but you will find nothing there."

"Never mind; it will amuse us."

After she had fulfilled her desire, we spent a quarter of an hour in mutual embraces, and my excitement was more than I could bear.

"Tell me truly," said I, "amidst our kisses, amidst these ecstacies which we call child-like, do you not feel a desire for something more?"

"I confess that I do, but such desires are sinful; and as I am sure that your passions are as high as mine, I think we had better stop our agreeable employment; for, papa dear, our friendship is becoming burning love, is it not?"

"Yes, love, and love that cannot be overcome."

"I know it."

"If you know it, let us perform to love the sweetest of all sacrifices."

"No, no; on the contrary, let us stop and be more prudent in the future, lest we become the victims of love. If you love me, you should say so too."

With these words she slipped gently from my arms, put back her beautiful hair under her cap, and when I had helped her on with her chemise, the coarseness of which horrified me, I told her she might calm herself. I told her how sorry I felt to see her delicate body frayed by so coarse a stuff, and she told me it was of the usual material, and that all the nuns wore chemises of the same kind.

My mind was in a state of consternation, for the constraint I had imposed on myself seemed much greater than the utmost pleasure I could have gained. I neither determined on persevering in nor on abandoning the pursuit; all I wanted was to be sure that I should not encounter the least resistance. A folded rose-leaf spoilt the repose of the famous Smindyrides, who loved a soft bed. I preferred, therefore, to go away, than to risk finding the rose-leaf which troubled the voluptuous Sybarite. I left the cottage in love and unhappy, and as I did not go to bed till two o'clock in the morning I slept till mid-day.

When I woke up Le Duc gave me a note which he should have given me the night before. He had forgotten it, and I was not sorry. The note came from Madame Zeroli, who said she would expect me at nine o'clock in the morning, as she would be alone. She told me that she was going to give a supper-party, that she was sure I would come, and that as she was leaving Aix directly after, she counted on my coming too — at any rate, as far as Chamberi. Although I still liked her, her pretensions made me laugh. It was too late now to be with her at nine, I could not go to her supper-party because of my fair nun, whom I would not have left just then for the seraglio of the Grand Turk; and it was impossible for me to accompany her to Chamberi, as when I came back I might no longer find the only object which kept me at Aix.

However, as soon as I had finished dressing, I went to see her and found her furious. I excused myself by saying that I had only had her letter for an hour, but she went away without giving me time to tell her that I could not sup with her or go to Chamberi with her. She scowled at me at table, and when the meal was over the Marquis de Prie told me that they had some new cards, and that everybody was longing to see me make a bank. I went for my money, and I made a bank of five hundred louis. At seven o'clock I had lost more than half that sum, but for all that I put the rest in my pocket and rose from the table.

After a sad glance in the direction of Madame Zeroli I went to the cottage, where I found my angel in a large new bed, with a small but pretty bed beside it which was meant for me. I laughed at the incongruity of these pieces of furniture with our surroundings, but by way of thanking the thoughtful country-woman I drew fifty louis from my purse and gave them to her, telling her it was for the remainder of the time the lady was with her, and I told her to spend no more money in furniture.

This was done in true gamester fashion. I had lost nearly three hundred louis, but I had risked more than five hundred, and I looked on the difference as pure profit. If I had gained as much as I had lost I should probably have contented myself with giving her ten louis, but I fancied I was losing the fifty louis on a card. I have always liked spending money, but I have never been careless with it except in gaming.

I was in an ecstasy to see the face of my M —— M —— light up with delight and astonishment.

“You must be very rich,” said she.

“Don’t think it, dearest, but I love you passionately; and not being able to give you anything by reason of your unfortunate vow of poverty, I lavish what I possess on this worthy woman, to induce her to spare nothing for your comfort while you are here. Perhaps, too — though it is not a definite thought — I hope that it will make you love me more.”

“How can I love you more than I do? The only thing that makes me unhappy is the idea of returning to the convent.”

“But you told me yesterday that it was exactly that idea which made you happy.”

“I have changed my mind since yesterday. I passed a cruel night, for as soon as I fell asleep I was in your arms, and I awoke again and again on the point of consummating the greatest of crimes.”

“You did not go through such a struggle before committing the same crime with a man you did — not love.”

“It is exactly because I did not love him that my sin struck me as venial. Do you understand what I mean?”

“It’s a piece of superstitious metaphysics, but I understand you perfectly.”

“You have made me happy, and I feel very grateful to you, and I feel glad and certain of conquering when I reflect that your situation is different to mine.”

“I will not dispute it with you, although I am sorry for what you say.”

“Why?”

“Because you think yourself in duty bound to refuse caresses which would not hurt you, and which would give me new life and happiness.”

“I have thought it over.”

“Are you weeping?”

“Yes, and what is more, these tears are dear to me.”

“I do not understand.”

“I have two favours to ask of you.”

“Say on, and be sure you will obtain what you ask.”

CHAPTER XXI

End of My Adventure with the Nun from Chamberi — My Flight

from Aix

“Yesterday,” said the charming nun, “you left in my hands the two portraits of my Venetian sister. I want you to give them to me.”

“They are yours.”

“I thank you. My second favour is, that you will be good enough to take my portrait in exchange; you shall have it to-morrow.”

“I shall be delighted. It will be the most precious of all my jewels, but I wonder how you can ask me to take it as a favour, whereas you are doing me a favour I should never have dared to demand. How shall I make myself worthy of giving you my portrait?”

“Ah, dearest! it would be a dear possession, but God preserve me from having it at the convent!”

“I will get myself painted under the costume of St. Louis of Gonzaga, or St. Anthony of Padua.”

“I shall be damned eternally.”

“We will say no more about it.”

She had on a dimity corset, trimmed with red ribbon, and a cambric chemise. I was surprised, but politeness did not allow me to ask where they came from, so I contented myself with staring at them. She guessed my thoughts, and said, smilingly, that it was a present from the countrywoman.

“Seeing her fortune made, the worthy woman tries every possible way to convince her benefactor that she is grateful to him. Look at the bed; she was certainly thinking of you, and look at these fine materials. I confess I enjoy their softness extremely. I shall sleep better to-night if I am not plagued by those seductive dreams which tormented me last night.”

“Do you think that the bed and the fine linen will deliver you from the dreams you fear?”

“No doubt they will have a contrary effect, for softness irritates the passions. I shall leave everything with the good woman. I do not know what they would say if I took them with me to the convent.”

“You are not so comfortable there?”

“Oh, no! A straw bed, a couple of blankets, and sometimes, as a great favour, a thin mattress and two coarse sheets. But you seem sad; you were so happy yesterday.”

“How can I be happy when I can no longer toy with you without making you unhappy.”

“You should have said without giving me the greatest delight.”

“Then will you consent to receive pleasure in return for that which you give me?”

“But yours is innocent and mine is not.”

“What would you do, then, if mine and yours were the same?”

“You might have made me wretched yesterday, for I could not have refused you anything.”

“Why wretched? You would have had none of those dreams, but would have enjoyed a quiet night. I am very sorry the peasant woman has given you that corset, as otherwise I might at least have seen my little pets without fear of bad dreams.”

“But you must not be angry with the good woman, for she knows that a corset is easy to unlace. And I cannot bear to see you sad.”

With these words she turned her ardent gaze upon me, and I covered her with kisses which she returned with interest. The country-woman came up to lay the pretty new table, just as I was taking off her corset without her offering the least resistance.

This good omen put me in high spirits, but as I looked at her I saw a shadow passing across her face. I took care not to ask her the reason, for I guessed what was the matter, and I did not wish to discuss those vows which religion and honour should have made inviolable. To distract her mind from these thoughts, I made her eat by the example I set, and she drank the excellent claret with as much pleasure as I, not thinking that as she was not used to it it would put her in a frame of mind not favourable to continence. But she did not notice this, for her gaiety made her look prettier than before, and aroused her passions.

When we were alone I congratulated her on her high spirits, telling her that my sadness had fled before her gaiety, and that the hours I could spend with her would be all too short.

“I should be blithe,” said she, “if it were only to please you.”

“Then grant me the favour you accorded me yesterday evening.”

“I would rather incur all the excommunications in the world than run the risk of appearing unjust to you. Take me.”

So saying, she took off her cap, and let down her beautiful hair. I unlaced her corset, and in the twinkling of an eye I had before me such a siren as one sees on the canvas of Correggio. I could not look upon her long without covering her with my burning kisses, and, communicating my ardour, before long she made a place for me beside herself. I felt that there was no time for thinking, that nature had spoken out, and that love bade me seize the opportunity offered by that delicious weakness. I threw myself on her, and with my lips glued to hers I pressed her between my amorous arms, pending the moment of supreme bliss.

But in the midst of these joys, she turned her head, closed her eyelids, and fell asleep. I moved away a little, the better to contemplate the treasures that love displayed before me. The nun slept, as I thought; but even if her sleep was feigned, should I be angry with her for the stratagem? Certainly not; true or feigned, the sleep of a loved one should always be respected by a delicate lover, although there are some pleasures he may allow himself. If the sleep is real there is no harm done, and if it is put on the lover only responds to the lady’s desires. All that is necessary is so to manage one’s caresses that they are pleasant to the beloved object. But M —— M —— was really asleep; the claret had numbed her senses, and she had yielded to its influence without any ulterior motives. While I gazed at her I saw that she was dreaming. Her lips uttered words of which I could not catch the meaning, but her voluptuous aspect told me of what she dreamt. I took off my clothes; and in two minutes I had clasped her fair body to mine, not caring much whether she slept on or whether I awoke her and brought our drama to a climax, which seemed inevitable.

I was not long uncertain, for the instinctive movements she made when she felt the minister that would fain accomplish the sacrifice at the door of the sanctuary, convinced me that her dream still lasted, and that I could not make her happier than by changing it into reality. I delicately moved away all obstacles, and gently and by degrees consummated this sweet robbery, and when at last I abandoned myself to all the force of passion, she awoke with a sigh of bliss, murmuring,

“Ah! it is true then.”

“Yes, my angel! are you happy?”

For all reply she drew me to her and fastened her lips on mine, and thus we awaited the dawn of day, exhausting all imaginable kinds of pleasure, exciting each other’s desires, and only wishing to prolong our enjoyment.

“Alas!” said she, “I am happy now, but you must leave me till the evening. Let us talk of our happiness, and enjoy it over again.”

“Then you do not repent having made me a happy man?”

“No; it is you who have made me happy. You are an angel from heaven. We loved, we crowned our love; I cannot have done aught to offend God. I am free from all my fears. We have obeyed nature and our destinies. Do you love me still?”

“Can you ask me? I will shew you to-night.”

I dressed myself as quickly as possible while we talked of our love, and I left her in bed, bidding her rest.

It was quite light when I got home. Le Duc had not gone to bed, and gave me a letter from the fair Zeroli, telling me that it had been delivered at eleven o’clock. I had not gone to her supper, and I had not escorted her to Chamberi; I had not had time to give her a moment’s thought. I was sorry, but I could not do anything. I opened her letter which consisted of only six lines, but they were pregnant ones. She advised me never to go to Turin, for if I went there she would find means to take vengeance on me for the dastardly affront I had put upon her. She reproached me with having put her to public shame, said I had dishonoured her, and vowed she would never forgive me. I did not distress myself to any great extent; I tore up the friendly missive, and after I had had my hair done I went to the fountain.

Everybody flew at me for not having been at Madame Zeroli's supper. I defended myself as best I could, but my excuses were rather tame, about which I did not trouble myself. I was told that all was known, and this amused me as I was aware that nothing was known. The marquis's mistress took hold of my arm, and told me, without any circumlocution, that I had the reputation of being inconstant, and by way of reply I observed politely that I was wrongfully accused, but that if there was any ground for the remark it was because I had never served so sweet a lady as herself. She was flattered by my compliment, and I bit my lip when I heard her ask in the most gracious manner why I did not breakfast sometimes with the marquis.

"I was afraid of disturbing him," said I.

"How do you mean?"

"I should be interrupting him in his business."

"He has no business, and he would be delighted to see you. Come to-morrow, he always breakfasts in my room."

This lady was the widow of a gentleman of quality; she was young, undoubtedly pretty, and possessing in perfection the jargon of good society; nevertheless, she did not attract me. After recently enjoying the fair Zeroli, and finding my suit with the fair nun at the height of its prosperity, I was naturally hard to please, and in plain words — I was perfectly contented with my situation. For all that, I had foolishly placed myself in such a position that I was obliged to give her to understand that she had delighted me by her preference.

She asked the marquis if she could return to the inn.

"Yes," said he, "but I have some business in hand, and cannot come with you."

"Would you be kind enough to escort me?" said she to me. I bowed in assent.

On the way she told me that if Madame Zeroli were still there she would not have dared to take my arm. I could only reply by equivocating, as I had no wish to embark in a fresh intrigue. However, I had no choice; I was obliged to accompany her to her room and sit down beside her; but as I had had no sleep the night before I felt tired and began to yawn, which was not flattering for the lady. I excused myself to the best of my ability, telling her that I was ill, and she believed me or pretended to believe me. But I felt sleep stealing upon me, and I should have infallibly dropped off if it had not been for my hellebore, which kept me awake by making me sneeze.

The marquis came in, and after a thousand compliments he proposed a game of quinze. I begged him to excuse me, and the lady backed me up, saying I could not possibly play in the midst of such a sneezing fit. We went down to dinner, and afterwards I easily consented to make a bank, as I was vexed at my loss of the day before. As usual I staked five hundred louis, and about seven o'clock, though two-thirds of the bank had gone, I announced the last deal. The marquis and two other heavy gamesters then endeavoured to break the bank, but fortune turned, and I not only got back my losses but won three hundred Louis besides. Thereupon I rose, promising the company to begin again next day. All the ladies had won, as Desarmoises had orders to let them play as they liked up to a certain limit.

I locked up my money, and warning my faithful Spaniard that I should not be coming back, I went to my idol, having got wet through on the way, and being obliged to undress as soon as I arrived. The good woman' of the house took care to dry my clothes.

I found the fair nun dressed in her religious habit, and lying on the small bed.

"Why are you not in your own bed, dearest?"

"Because I feel quite well again, my darling, and I wished to sup with you at table. We will go to bed afterwards, if that will give you any pleasure."

"It will give me pleasure if you share in my delight."

"Alas! I am undone, and I shall doubtless die when I have to leave you."

"Do not leave me, sweetheart; come with me to Rome; and leave the matter in my hands. I will make you my wife, and we will live happily together ever after."

"That would be too great a bliss, but I could never make up my mind to it; say no more about it."

I was sure of spending a delicious night — in the possession of all her charms, and we stayed an hour at table, seasoning the dishes with sweet converse. When we had done, the woman came up, gave her a packet, and went away again, wishing us good night.

"What does this packet contain, darling?"

"It is the present I have got for you-my portrait, but you must not see it till I am in bed."

"I will indulge you in that fancy, although I am very curious to see the portrait."

"You will say I am right afterwards."

I wanted to undress her myself, and she submitted like a lamb. When she was in bed, she opened the packet, and shewed me her portrait, naked, and very like the naked portrait of M —— M —— . I praised the painter for the excellence of the copy he had made; nothing was altered but the colour of the hair and eyes.

"It isn't a copy," she said, "there would not have been time. He only made the eyes and hair black, and the latter more abundant. Thus you have in it a portrait of the first and also of the second M —— M —— , in whom you must forget the first. She has also vanished from the clothed portrait, for you see the nun has black eyes. I could shew this picture to anyone as my portrait."

"You do not know how precious your present is to me! Tell me, dearest, how you succeeded in carrying out your plan so well."

"I told the country-woman about it yesterday morning, and she said that she had a foster-son at Anneci, who was a miniature painter. Through him she sent the two miniatures to a more skilful painter at Geneva, who made the change you see for four or five Louis; he was probably able to do it in two or three hours. I entrusted the two portraits to him, and you see how well he did his work. The woman has no doubt just received them, and to-morrow she may be able to tell you more about it."

"She is really a wonderful woman. I will indemnify her for the expense. But now tell me why you did not want me to see the portrait before you were in bed?"

"Guess."

"Because I can now see you in the same posture as that in which you are represented."

"Exactly."

"It is an excellent idea; only love can have given it you. But you must wait till I am in the same state."

When we were both in a state of nature, exactly like Adam and Eve before they tasted the fatal apple, I placed her in the position of the portrait, and guessing my intention from my face she opened her arms for me to come to her; but I asked her to wait a moment, for I had a little packet too, which contained something she would like. I then drew from my pocket-book a little article of transparent skin, about eight inches long, with one opening, which was ornamented with a red rosette. I gave her this preventive sheath, and she looked, admired, and laughed loudly, asking me if I had used such articles with her Venetian sister. "I will put it on myself; you don't know how I shall enjoy it. Why didn't you use one last night? How could you have forgotten it? Well, I shall be very wretched if anything comes of it. What shall I do in four or five months, when my condition becomes past doubt?"

"Dearest, the only thing to do is not to think of it, for if the damage is done, there is no cure for it; but from my experience and knowledge of the laws of nature I expect that our sweet combats of last night will probably have no troublesome consequences. It has been stated that after child-birth a woman cannot conceive afresh without having seen something which I expect you have not seen."

"No, God be thanked!"

"Good. Then let us not give any thought to the dismal future lest we lose our present bliss."

"I am quite comforted; but I can't understand why you are afraid to-day of what you were not afraid yesterday; my state is the same."

"The event has sometimes given the lie to the most eminent physicians. Nature, wiser than they, has exceptions to her rules, let us not defy them for the future, but let us not trouble ourselves if we have defied there in the past."

"I like to hear you talk so sagely. Yes, we will be prudent whatever it costs. There you are, hooded like a mother abbess, but in spite of the fineness of the sheath I like the little fellow better quite naked. I think that this covering degrades us both."

"You are right, it does. But let us not dwell on these ideas which will only spoil our pleasure."

"We will enjoy our pleasure directly; let me be reasonable now, for I have never thought of these matters before. Love must have invented these little sheaths, but it must first have listened to the voice of prudence, and I do not like to see love and prudence allied."

"The correctness of your arguments surprises me, but we will philosophize another time."

"Wait a minute. I have never seen a man before, and I have never wished to enjoy the sight as much as now. Ten months ago I should have called that article an invention of the devil; but now I look upon the inventor as a benefactor, for if my wretched hump-back had provided himself with such a sheath he would not have exposed me to the danger of losing my honour and my life. But, tell me, how is that the makers of these things remain unmolested; I wonder they are not found out, excommunicated, or heavily fined, or even punished corporeally, if they are Jews as I expect. Dear me, the maker of this one must have measured you badly! Look! it is too large here, and too small there; it makes you into a regular curve. What a stupid the fellow must be, he can't know his own trade! But what is that?"

"You make me laugh; it's all your fault. You have been feeling and fondling, and you see the natural consequence. I knew it would be so."

"And you couldn't keep it back a minute. It is going on now. I am so sorry; it is a dreadful pity."

"There is not much harm done, so console yourself."

"How can I? you are quite dead. How can you laugh?"

"At your charming simplicity. You shall see in a moment that your charms will give me new life which I shall not lose so easily."

"Wonderful! I couldn't have believed it!"

I took off the sheath, and gave her another, which pleased her better, as it seemed to fit me better, and she laughed for joy as she put it on. She knew nothing of these wonders. Her thoughts had been bound in chains, and she could not discover the truth before she knew me; but though she was scarcely out of Egypt she shewed all the eagerness of an enquiring and newly emancipated spirit. "But how if the rubbing makes the sheath fall off?" said she. I explained to her that such an accident could scarcely happen, and also told her of what material the English made these articles.

After all this talking, of which my ardour began to weary, we abandoned ourselves to love, then to sleep, then to love again, and so on alternately till day-break. As I was leaving, the woman of the house told us that the painter had asked four louis, and that she had give two louis to her foster-son. I gave her twelve, and went home, where I slept till morn, without thinking of breakfasting with the Marquis de Prie, but I think I should have given him some notice of my inability to come. His mistress sulked with me all dinner-time, but softened when I allowed myself to be persuaded into making a bank. However, I found she was playing for heavy stakes, and I had to check her once or twice, which made her so cross that she went to hide her ill-temper in a corner of the hall. However, the marquis won, and I was losing, when the taciturn Duke of Rosebury, his tutor Smith, and two of his fellow-countrymen, arrived from Geneva. He came up to me and said, "How do you do?" and without another word began to play, inviting his companions to follow his example.

Seeing my bank in the last agony I sent Le Duc to my room for the cash-box, whence I drew out five rolls of a hundred louis each. The Marquis de Prie said, coolly, that he wouldn't mind being my partner, and in the same tone I begged to be excused. He continued punting without seeming to be offended at my refusal and when I put down the cards and rose from the table he had won two hundred louis; but all the others had lost, especially one of the Englishmen, so that I had made a profit of a thousand louis. The marquis asked me if I would give him chocolate in my room next morning, and I replied that I should be glad to see him. I replaced my cash-box in my room, and proceeded to the cottage, pleased with the day’s work and feeling inclined to crown it with love.

I found my fair friend looking somewhat sad, and on my enquiring the reason she told me that a nephew of the country-woman’s, who had come from Chamberi that morning, had told her that he had heard from a lay-sister of the same convent, whom he knew, that two sisters would start at day-break in two days’ time to fetch her; this sad news, she said, had made her tears flow fast.

“But the abbess said the sisters could not start before ten days had expired.”

“She must have changed her mind.”

“Sorrow intrudes into our happy state. Will you be my wife? Will you follow me to Rome and receive absolution from your vows. You may be sure that I shall have a care for your happiness.”

“Nay, I have lived long enough; let me return to my tomb.”

After supper I told the good woman that if she could rely on her nephew, she would do well to send him at once to Chamberi with orders to return directly the lay-sisters started, and to endeavour to reach Aix two hours before them. She told me that I might reckon on the young man’s silence, and on his carrying out my orders. I quieted in this way the charming nun’s alarm, and got into bed with her, feeling sad though amorous; and on the pretext that she required rest I left her at midnight, as I wanted to be at home in the morning since I had an engagement with the marquis. In due course he arrived with his mistress, two other ladies, and their husbands or lovers.

I did not limit myself to giving them chocolate; my breakfast consisted of all the luxuries the place afforded. When I had got rid of my troublesome company, I told Le Duc to shut my door, and to tell everybody that I was ill in bed and could not see any visitors. I also warned him that I should be away for two days, and that he must not leave my room a moment till I came back. Having made these arrangements, I slipped away unperceived and went to my mistress, resolved not to leave her till half an hour before the arrival of the lay-sisters.

When she saw me and heard that I was not going to leave her till she went away, she jumped for joy; and we conceived the idea of not having any dinner that we might enjoy our supper the better.

“We will go to bed after supper,” said she, “and will not get up till the messenger brings the fatal news that the lay-sisters have started.”

I thought the idea an excellent one, and I called the woman of the house to tell her of our arrangements, and she promised to see that we were not disturbed.

We did not find the time long, for two passionate lovers find plenty to talk about since their talk is of themselves. And besides our caresses, renewed again and again, there was something so mysterious and solemn in our situation that our souls and our senses were engaged the whole time.

After a supper which would have pleased a Lucullus, we spent twelve hours in giving each other proofs, of our passionate love, sleeping after our amorous struggles, and waking only to renew the fight. The next day we rose to refresh ourselves, and after a good dinner, mashed down by some excellent Burgundy, we went to bed again; but at four the country-woman came to tell us that the lay-sisters would arrive about six. We had nothing now to look for in the future, the die was cast, and we began our farewell caresses. I sealed the last with my blood. My first M —— M —— had seen it, and my second rightly saw it also. She was frightened, but I calmed her fears. I then rose, and taking a roll containing fifty louis I begged her to keep them for me, promising to come for them in two years, and take them from her hands through the grating of her terrible prison. She spent the last quarter of an hour in tears, and mine were only restrained lest I should add to her grief. I cut off a piece of her fleece and a lock of her beautiful hair, promising her always to bear them next my heart.

I left her, telling the country-woman that she should see me again the next day, and I went to bed as soon as I got home. Next morning I was on the way to Chamberi. At a quarter of a league’s distance from Aix I saw my angel slowly walking along. As soon as the lay-sisters were near enough they asked an alms in the name of God. I gave them a Louis, but my saint did not look at me.

With a broken heart I went to the good countrywoman, who told me that M —— M —— had gone at day-break, bidding her to remind me of the convent grating. I kissed the Worthy woman, and I gave her nephew all the loose silver I had about me, and returning to the inn I had my luggage put on to the carriage, and would have started that moment if I had had any horses. But I had two hours to wait, and I went and bade the marquis farewell. He was out, but his mistress was in the room by herself. On my telling her of my departure, she said,

“Don’t go, stay with me a couple of days longer.”

“I feel the honour you are conferring on me, but business of the greatest importance obliges me to be gone forthwith.”

“Impossible,” said the lady, as she went to a glass the better to lace herself, shewing me a superb breast. I saw her design, but I determined to baulk her. She then put one foot upon a couch to retie her garter, and when she put up the other foot I saw beauties more enticing than Eve’s apple. It was nearly all up with me, when the marquis came in. He proposed a little game of quinze, and his mistress asked me to be her partner. I could not escape; she sat next to me, and I had lost forty Louis by dinner-time.

“I owe you twenty,” said the lady, as we were going down.

At dessert Le Duc came to tell me that my carriage was at the door, and I got up, but under the pretence of paying me the twenty louis the marquis’s mistress made me come with her to her room.

When we were there she addressed me in a serious and supplicating voice, telling me that if I went she would be dishonoured, as everybody knew that she had engaged to make me stay.

“Do I look worthy of contempt?” said she, making me sit down upon the sofa.

Then with a repetition of her tactics in the morning she contrived that I should see everything. Excited by her charms I praised her beauties, I kissed, I touched; she let herself fall on me, and looked radiant when her vagrant hand found palpable proof of her powers of attraction.

“I promise to be yours to-morrow, wait till then.”

Not knowing how to refuse, I said I would keep her to her word, and would have my horses taken out. Just then the marquis came in, saying he would give me my revenge and without answering I went downstairs as if to come back again, but I ran out of the inn, got into my carriage, and drove off, promising a good fee to the postillion if he would put his horses at a gallop.

VOLUME 4 — ADVENTURES IN THE SOUTH

EPISODE 16 — DEPART SWITZERLAND

CHAPTER I

The Door — Keeper’s Daughters — The Horoscopes — Mdlle. Roman

The idea of the sorry plight in which I had left the Marquis de Prie, his mistress, and perhaps all the company, who had undoubtedly coveted the contents of my cash-box, amused me till I reached Chamberi, where I only stopped to change horses. When I reached Grenoble, where I intended to stay a week, I did not find my lodging to my liking, and went in my carriage to the post-office, where I found several letters, amongst others, one from Madame d’Urfe, enclosing a letter of introduction to an officer named Valenglard, who, she told me, was a learned man, and would present me at all the best houses in the town.

I called on this officer and received a cordial welcome. After reading Madame d’Urfe’s letter he said he was ready to be useful to me in anything I pleased.

He was an amiable, middle aged man, and fifteen years before had been Madame d’Urfe’s friend, and in a much more intimate degree the friend of her daughter, the Princess de Toudeville. I told him that I was uncomfortable at the inn, and that the first service I would ask of him would be to procure me a comfortable lodging. He rubbed his head, and said, —

“I think I can get you rooms in a beautiful house, but it is outside the town walls. The door-keeper is an excellent cook, and for the sake of doing your cooking I am sure he will lodge you for nothing.”

“I don’t wish that,” said I.

“Don’t be afraid,” said the baron, “he will make it up by means of his dishes; and besides, the house is for sale and costs him nothing. Come and see it.”

I took a suite of three rooms and ordered supper for two, warning the man that I was dainty, liked good things, and did not care for the cost. I also begged M. de Valenglard to sup with me. The doorkeeper said that if I was not pleased with his cooking I had only to say so, and in that case I should have nothing to pay. I sent for my carriage, and felt that I had established myself in my new abode. On the ground floor I saw three charming girls and the door-keeper's wife, who all bowed profoundly. M. de Valenglard took me to a concert with the idea of introducing me to everybody, but I begged him not to do so, as I wished to see the ladies before deciding which of them I should like to know.

The company was a numerous one, especially where women were concerned, but the only one to attract my attention was a pretty and modest-looking brunette, whose fine figure was dressed with great simplicity. Her charming eyes, after having thrown one glance in my direction, obstinately refused to look at me again. My vanity made me conclude at once that she behaved thus only to increase my desire of knowing her, and to give me plenty of time to examine her side-face and her figure, the proportions of which were not concealed by her simple attire. Success begets assurance, and the wish is father to the thought. I cast a hungry gaze on this young lady without more ado, just as if all the women in Europe were only a seraglio kept for my pleasures. I told the baron I should like to know her.

"She is a good girl," said he, "who sees no company, and is quite poor."

"Those are three reasons which make me the more anxious to know her."

"You will really find nothing to do in that quarter."

"Very good."

"There is her aunt, I will introduce you to her as we leave the concert-room."

After doing me this service, he came to sup with me. The door-keeper and cook struck me as being very like Lebel. He made his two pretty daughters wait on me, and I saw that Valenglard was delighted at having lodged me to my satisfaction, but he grumbled when he saw fifteen dishes.

"He is making a fool of you and me," he said.

"On the contrary, he has guessed my tastes. Don't you think everything was very good?"

"I don't deny it, but … . "

“Don’t be afraid; I love spending my money.”

“I beg your pardon, I only want you to be pleased.”

We had exquisite wines, and at dessert some ratafia superior to the Turkish ‘visnat’ I had tasted seventeen years before at Yussuf Ali’s. When my landlord came up at the end of supper, I told him that he ought to be Louis XV.’s head cook.

“Go on as you have begun, and do better if you can; but let me have your bill every morning.”

“You are quite right; with such an arrangement one can tell how one is getting on.”

“I should like you always to give me ices, and you must let me have two more lights. But, unless I am mistaken, those are candles that I see. I am a Venetian, and accustomed to wax lights.”

“That is your servant’s fault, sir.”

“How is that?”

“Because, after eating a good supper, he went to bed, saying he was ill. Thus I heard nothing as to how you liked things done.”

“Very good, you shall learn from my own lips.”

“He asked my wife to make chocolate for you tomorrow morning; he gave her the chocolate, I will make it myself.”

When he had left the room M. de Valenglard said, in a manner that was at the same time pleased and surprised, that Madame d’Urfe had been apparently joking in telling him to spare me all expense.

“It’s her goodness of heart. I am obliged to her all the same. She is an excellent woman.”

We stayed at table till eleven o’clock, discussing in numerable pleasant topics, and animating our talk with that choice liqueur made at Grenoble, of which we drank a bottle. It is composed of the juice of cherries, brandy, sugar, and cinnamon, and cannot be surpassed, I am sure, by the nectar of Olympus.

I sent home the baron in my carriage, after thanking him for his services, and begging him to be my companion early and late while I stayed at Grenoble — a re quest which he granted excepting for those days on which he was on duty. At supper I had given him my bill of exchange on Zappata, which I endorsed with the name de Seingalt, which Madame d'Urfe had given me. He discounted it for me next day. A banker brought me four hundred louis and I had thirteen hundred in my cash-box. I always had a dread of penuriousness, and I delighted myself at the thought that M. de Valenglard would write and tell Madame d'Urfe, who was always preaching economy to me, what he had seen. I escorted my guest to the carriage, and I was agreeably surprised when I got back to find the doorkeeper's two charming daughters.

Le Duc had not waited for me to tell him to find some pretext for not serving me. He knew my tastes, and that when there were pretty girls in a house, the less I saw of him the better I was pleased.

The frank eagerness of the two girls to wait on me, their utter freedom from suspicion or coquetry, made me determine that I would shew myself deserving of their trust. They took off my shoes and stockings, did my hair and put on my night-gown with perfect propriety on both sides. When I was in bed I wished them a goodnight, and told them to shut the door and bring me my chocolate at eight o'clock next morning.

I could not help confessing that I was perfectly happy as I reflected over my present condition. I enjoyed perfect health, I was in the prime of life, I had no calls on me, I was thoroughly independent, I had a rich store of experience, plenty of money, plenty of luck, and I was a favourite with women. The pains and troubles I had gone through had been followed by so many days of happiness that I felt disposed to bless my destiny. Full of these agreeable thoughts I fell asleep, and all the night my dreams were of happiness and of the pretty brunette who had played with me at the concert.

I woke with thoughts of her, and feeling sure that we should become acquainted I felt curious to know what success I should have with her. She was discreet and poor; and as I was discreet in my own way she ought not to despise my friendship.

At eight o'clock, one of the door-keeper's daughters brought me my chocolate, and told me that Le Duc had got the fever.

"You must take care of the poor fellow."

"My cousin has just taken him some broth."

"What is your name?"

"My name is Rose, and my sister is Manon."

Just then Manon came in with my shirt, on which she had put fresh lace. I thanked her, and she said with a blush that she did her father's hair very well.

"I am delighted to hear it, and I shall be very pleased if you will be kind enough to do the same offices for me till my servant recovers."

"With pleasure, sir."

"And I," said Rose, laughing, "will shave you."

"I should like to see how you do it; get the water."

I rose hastily, while Manon was preparing to do my hair. Rose returned and shaved me admirably. As soon as she had washed off the lather, I said,

"You must give me a kiss," presenting my cheek to her. She pretended not to understand.

"I shall be vexed," said I, gravely but pleasantly, "if you refuse to kiss me."

She begged to be excused, saying with a little smile, that it was not customary to do so at Grenoble.

"Well, if you won't kiss me, you shan't shave me."

The father came in at that point, bringing his bill.

"Your daughter has just shaved me admirably," said I, "and she refuses to kiss me, because it is not the custom at Grenoble."

"You little silly," said he, "it is the custom in Paris. You kiss me fast enough after you have shaved me, why should you be less polite to this gentleman?"

She then kissed me with an air of submission to the paternal decree which made Manon laugh.

“Ah!” said the father, “your turn will come when you have finished doing the gentleman’s hair.”

He was a cunning fellow, who knew the best way to prevent me cheapening him, but there was no need, as I thought his charges reasonable, and as I paid him in full he went off in great glee.

Manon did my hair as well as my dear Dubois, and kissed me when she had done without making as many difficulties as Rose. I thought I should get on well with both of them. They went downstairs when the banker was announced.

He was quite a young man, and after he had counted me out four hundred Louis, he observed that I must be very comfortable.

“Certainly,” said I, “the two sisters are delightful.”

“Their cousin is better. They are too discreet.”

“I suppose they are well off.”

“The father has two thousand francs a year. They will be able to marry well-to-do tradesmen.”

I was curious to see the cousin who was said to be prettier than the sisters, and as soon as the banker had gone I went downstairs to satisfy my curiosity. I met the father and asked him which was Le Duc’s room, and thereon I went to see my fine fellow. I found him sitting up in a comfortable bed with a rubicund face which did not look as if he were dangerously ill.

“What is the matter with you?

“Nothing, sir. I am having a fine time of it. Yesterday I thought I would be ill.”

“What made you think that?”

“The sight of the three Graces here, who are made of better stuff than your handsome housekeeper, who would not let me kiss her. They are making me wait too long for my broth, however. I shall have to speak severely about it.”

“Le Duc, you are a rascal.”

“Do you want me to get well?”

"I want you to put a stop to this farce, as I don't like it." Just then the door opened, and the cousin came in with the broth. I thought her ravishing, and I noticed that in waiting on Le Duc she had an imperious little air which well became her.

"I shall dine in bed," said my Spaniard.

"You shall be attended to," said the pretty girl, and she went out.

"She puts on big airs," said Le Duc, "but that does not impose on me. Don't you think she is very pretty?"

"I think you are very impudent. You ape your betters, and I don't approve of it. Get up. You must wait on me at table, and afterwards you will eat your dinner by yourself, and try to get yourself respected as an honest man always is, whatever his condition, so long as he does not forget himself. You must not stay any longer in this room, the doorkeeper will give you another."

I went out, and on meeting the fair cousin I told her that I was jealous of the honour which she had done my man, and that I begged her to wait on him no longer.

"Oh, I am very glad!"

The door-keeper came up, and I gave him my orders, and went back to my room to write.

Before dinner the baron came and told me that he had just come from the lady to whom he had introduced me. She was the wife of a barrister named Morin, and aunt to the young lady who had so interested me.

"I have been talking of you," said the baron, "and of the impression her niece made on you. She promised to send for her, and to keep her at the house all day."

After a dinner as good as the supper of the night before, though different from it in its details, and appetising enough to awaken the dead, we went to see Madame Morin, who received us with the easy grace of a Parisian lady. She introduced me to seven children, of whom she was the mother. Her eldest daughter, an ordinary-looking girl, was twelve years old, but I should have taken her to be fourteen, and said so. To convince me of her age the mother brought a book in which the year, the month, the day, the hour, and even the minute of her birth were entered. I was astonished at such minute accuracy, and asked if she had had a horoscope drawn.

“No,” said she, “I have never found anybody to do it.”

“It is never too late,” I replied, “and without doubt God has willed that this pleasure should be reserved for me.”

At this moment M. Morin came in, his wife introduced me, and after the customary compliments had passed, she returned to the subject of the horoscope. The barrister sensibly observed that if judicial astrology was not wholly false, it was, nevertheless, a suspected science; that he had been so foolish as once to devote a considerable portion of his time to it, but that on recognizing the inability of man to deal with the future he had abandoned astrology, contenting himself with the veritable truths of astronomy. I saw with pleasure that I had to deal with a man of sense and education, but Valenglard, who was a believer in astrology, began an argument with him on the subject. During their discussion I quietly copied out on my tablets the date of Mdlle. Morin’s birth. But M. Morin saw what I was about, and shook his head at me, with a smile. I understood what he meant, but I did not allow that to disconcert me, as I had made up my mind fully five minutes ago that I would play the astrologer on this occasion.

At last the fair niece arrived. Her aunt introduced me to her as Mdlle. Roman Coupier, her sister’s daughter; and then, turning to her, she informed her how ardently I had been longing to know her since I had seen her at the concert.

She was then seventeen. Her satin skin by its dazzling whiteness displayed to greater advantage her magnificent black hair. Her features were perfectly regular, and her complexion had a slight tinge of red; her fine eyes were at once sweet and sparkling, her eyebrows were well arched, her mouth small, her teeth regular and as white as pearls, and her lips, of an exquisite rosy hue, afforded a seat to the deities of grace and modesty.

After some moments’ conversation, M. Morin was obliged to go out on business, and a game of quadrille was proposed, at which I was greatly pitied for having lost a louis. I thought Mdlle. Roman discreet, judicious, pleasant without being brilliant, and, still better, without any pretensions. She was high-spirited, even-tempered, and had a natural art which did not allow her to seem to understand too flattering a compliment, or a joke which passed in any way the bounds of propriety. She was neatly dressed, but had no ornaments, and nothing which shewed wealth; neither ear-rings, rings, nor a watch. One might have said that her beauty was her only adornment, the only ornament she wore being a small gold cross hanging from her necklace of black ribbon. Her breast was well shaped and not too large. Fashion and custom made her shew half of it as innocently as she shewed her plump white hand, or her cheeks, whereon the lily and the rose were wedded. I looked at her features to see if I might hope at all; but I was completely puzzled, and could come to no conclusion. She gave no sign which made me hope, but on the other hand she did nothing to make me despair. She was so natural and so reserved that my sagacity was completely at fault. Nevertheless, a liberty which I took at supper gave me a gleam of hope. Her napkin fell down, and in returning it to her I pressed her thigh amorously, and could not detect the slightest displeasure on her features. Content with so much I begged everybody to come to dinner with me next day, telling Madame Morin that I should not be going out, and that I was therefore delighted to put my carriage at her service.

When I had taken Valenglard home, I went to my lodging building castles in Spain as to the conquest of Mdlle. Roman.

I warned my landlord that we should be six at dinner and supper the following day, and then I went to bed. As Le Duc was undressing me he said,

“Sir, you are punishing me, but what makes me sorry you are punishing yourself in depriving yourself of the services of those pretty girls.”

“You are a rogue.”

“I know it, but I serve you with all my heart, and I love your pleasure as well as my own.”

“You plead well for yourself; I am afraid I have spoilt you.”

“Shall I do your hair to-morrow?”

“No; you may go out every day till dinner-time.”

“I shall be certain to catch it.”

“Then I shall send you to the hospital.”

“That is a fine prospect, ‘por Dios’.”

He was impudent, sly, profligate, and a rascally fellow; but also obedient, devoted, discreet, and faithful, and his good qualities made me overlook his defects.

Next morning, when Rose brought my chocolate, she told me with a laugh that my man had sent for a carriage, and after dressing himself in the height of fashion he had gone off with his sword at his side, to pay calls, as he said.

“We laughed at him.”

“You were quite right, my dear Rose.”

As I spoke, Manon came in under some pretext or other. I saw that the two sisters had an understanding never to be alone with me; I was displeased, but pretended not to notice anything. I got up, and I had scarcely put on my dressing-gown when the cousin came in with a packet under her arm.

“I am delighted to see you, and above all to look at your smiling face, for I thought you much too serious yesterday.”

“That’s because M. le Duc is a greater gentleman than you are; I should not have presumed to laugh in his presence; but I had my reward in seeing him start off this morning in his gilded coach.”

“Did he see you laughing at him?”

“Yes, unless he is blind.”

“He will be vexed.”

“All the better.”

“You are really very charming. What have you got in that parcel?”

“Some goods of our own manufacture. Look; they are embroidered gloves.”

“They are beautiful; the embroidery is exquisitely done. How much for the lot?”

“Are you a good hand at a bargain.”

“Certainly.”

“Then we must take that into account.”

After some whisperings together the cousin took a pen, put down the numbers of gloves, added up and said,

“The lot will cost you two hundred and ten francs.”

“There are nine louis; give me six francs change.”

“But you told us you would make a bargain.”

“You were wrong to believe it.”

She blushed and gave me the six francs. Rose and Manon shaved me and did my hair, giving me a kiss with the best grace imaginable; and when I offered my cheek to the cousin she kissed me on the mouth in a manner that told me she would be wholly mine on the first opportunity.

“Shall we have the pleasure of waiting on you at the table?” said Rose.

“I wish you would.”

“But we should like to know who is coming to dinner first; as if it is officers from the garrison we dare not come; they make so free.”

“My guests are Madame Morin, her husband, and her niece.”

“Very good.”

The cousin said, “Mdlle. Roman is the prettiest and the best girl in Grenoble; but she will find some difficulty in marrying as she has no money.”

“She may meet some rich man who will think her goodness and her beauty worth a million of money.”

“There are not many men of that kind.”

“No; but there are a few.”

Manon and the cousin went out, and I was left alone with Rose, who stayed to dress me. I attacked her, but she defended herself so resolutely that I desisted, and promised it should not occur again. When she had finished I gave her a louis, thanked her, and sent her away.

As soon as I was alone I locked the door, and proceeded to concoct the horoscope I had promised to Madame Morin. I found it an easy task to fill eight pages with learned folly; and I confined myself chiefly to declaring the events which had already happened to the native. I had deftly extracted some items of information in the course of conversation, and filling up the rest according to the laws of probability and dressing up the whole in astrological diction, I was pronounced to be a seer, and no doubts were cast on my skill. I did not indeed run much risk, for everything hung from an if, and in the judicious employment of ifs lies the secret of all astrology.

I carefully re-read the document, and thought it admirable. I felt in the vein, and the use of the cabala had made me an expert in this sort of thing.

Just after noon all my guests arrived, and at one we sat down to table. I have never seen a more sumptuous or more delicate repast. I saw that the cook was an artist more in need of restraint than encouragement. Madame Morin was very polite to the three girls, whom she knew well, and Le Duc stood behind her chair all the time, looking after her wants, and dressed as richly as the king's chamberlain. When we had nearly finished dinner Mdlle. Roman passed a compliment on my three fair waiting-maids, and this giving me occasion to speak of their talents I got up and brought the gloves I had purchased from them. Mdlle. Roman praised the quality of the material and the work. I took the opportunity, and begged leave of the aunt to give her and her niece a dozen pair apiece. I obtained this favour, and I then gave Madame Morin the horoscope. Her husband read it, and though an unbeliever he was forced to admire, as all the deductions were taken naturally from the position of the heavenly bodies at the instant of his daughter's birth. We spent a couple of hours in talking about astrology, and the same time in playing at quadrille, and then we took a walk in the garden, where I was politely left to enjoy the society of the fair Roman.

Our dialogue, or rather my monologue, turned solely on the profound impression she had made on me, on the passion she had inspired, on her beauty, her goodness, the purity of my intentions, and on my need of love, lest I should go down to the grave the most hapless of men.

"Sir," said she, at last, "if my destiny points to marriage I do not deny that I should be happy to find a husband like you."

I was emboldened by this frank declaration, and seizing her hand I covered it with fiery kisses, saying passionately that I hoped she would not let me languish long. She turned her head to look for her aunt. It was getting dark, and she seemed to be afraid of something happening to her. She drew me gently with her, and on rejoining the other guests we returned to the dining-room, where I made a small bank at faro for their amusement. Madame Morin gave her daughter and niece, whose pockets were empty, some money, and Valenglard directed their play so well that when we left off to go to supper I had the pleasure of seeing that each of the three ladies had won two or three louis.

We sat at table till midnight. A cold wind from the Alps stopped my plan of proposing a short turn in the garden. Madame Morin overwhelmed me with thanks for my entertainment, and I gave each of my lady-visitors a respectful kiss.

I heard singing in the kitchen, and on going in I found Le Duc in a high state of excitement and very drunk. As soon as he saw me he tried to rise, but he lost his centre of gravity, and fell right under the kitchen table. He was carried away to bed.

I thought this accident favourable to my desire of amusing myself, and I might have succeeded if the three Graces had not all been there. Love only laughs when two are present, and thus it is that the ancient mythology tells no story of the loves of the Graces, who were always together. I had not yet found an opportunity of getting my three maids one after the other, and I dared not risk a general attack, which might have lost me the confidence of each one. Rose, I saw, was openly jealous of her cousin, as she kept a keen look-out after her movements. I was not sorry, for jealousy leads to anger, and anger goes a long way. When I was in bed I sent them away with a modest good night.

Next morning, Rose came in by herself to ask me for a cake of chocolate, for, as she said, Le Duc was now ill in real earnest. She brought me the box, and I gave her the chocolate, and in doing so I took her hand and shewed her how well I loved her. She was offended, drew back her hand sharply, and left the room. A moment after Manon came in under the pretext of shewing me a piece of lace I had torn away in my attempts of the day before, and of asking me if she should mend it. I took her hand to kiss it, but she did not give me time, presenting her lips, burning with desire. I took her hand again, and it was just on the spot when the cousin came in. Manon held the piece of lace, and seemed to be waiting for my answer. I told her absently that I should be obliged if she would mend it when she had time, and with this she went out.

I was troubled by this succession of disasters, and thought that the cousin would not play me false from the earnest of her affection which she had given me the day before in that ardent kiss of hers. I begged her to give me my handkerchief, and gently drew her hand towards me. Her mouth fastened to mine, and her hand, which she left to my pleasure with all the gentleness of a lamb, was already in motion when Rose came in with my chocolate. We regained our composure in a moment, but I was furious at heart. I scowled at Rose, and I had a right to do so after the manner in which she had repulsed me a quarter of an hour before. Though the chocolate was excellent, I pronounced it badly made. I chid her for her awkwardness in waiting on me, and repulsed her at every step. When I got up I would not let her shave me; I shaved myself, which seemed to humiliate her, and then Manon did my hair. Rose and the cousin then went out, as if to make common cause together, but it was easy to see that Rose was less angry with her sister than her cousin.

As Manon was finishing my toilette, M. de Valenglard came in. As soon as we were alone, the officer, who was a man of honour and of much sense, in spite of his belief in astrology and the occult sciences, said that he thought me looking rather melancholy, and that if my sadness had any connection with the fair Roman, he warned me to think no more of her, unless I had resolved to ask her hand in marriage. I replied that to put an end to all difficulties I had decided on leaving Grenoble in a few days. We dined together and we then called on Madame Morin, with whom we found her fair niece.

Madame Morin gave me a flattering welcome, and Mdlle. Roman received me so graciously that I was emboldened to kiss her and place her on my knee. The aunt laughed, the niece blushed, and then slipping into my hand a little piece of paper made her escape. I read on the paper the year, day, Hour, and minute of her birth, and guessed what she meant. She meant, I thought, that I could do nothing with her before I had drawn up her horoscope. My resolve was soon taken to profit by this circumstance, and I told her that I would tell her whether I could oblige her or not next day, if she would come to a ball I was giving. She looked at her aunt and my invitation was accepted.

Just then the servant announced “The Russian Gentleman.” I saw a well-made man of about my own age, slightly marked with the small-pox, and dressed as a traveller. He accosted Madame Morin with easy grace, was welcomed heartily by her, spoke well, scarcely gave me a glance, and did not say a word to the nieces. In the evening M. Morin came in, and the Russian gave him a small phial full of a white liquid, and then made as if he would go, but he was kept to supper.

At table the conversation ran on this marvellous liquid of his. M. Morin told me that he had cured a young man of a bruise from a billiard ball in five minutes, by only rubbing it with the liquid. He said modestly that it was a trifling thing of his own invention, and he talked a good deal about chemistry to Valenglard. As my attention was taken up by the fair Mdlle. Roman I could not take part in their conversation; my hope of succeeding with her on the following day absorbed all my thoughts. As I was going away with Valenglard he told me that nobody knew who the Russian was, and that he was nevertheless received everywhere.

“Has he a carriage and servants?”

“He has nothing, no servants and no money.”

“Where did he come from?”

“From the skies.”

“A fair abode, certainly; how long has he been here?”

“For the last fortnight. He visits, but asks for nothing.”

“How does he live?”

“On credit at the inn; he is supposed to be waiting for his carriage and servants.”

“He is probably a vagabond.”

“He does not look like one, as you saw for yourself, and his diamonds contradict that hypothesis.”

“Yes, if they are not imitation stones, for it seems to me that if they were real he would sell them.”

When I got home Rose came by herself to attend on me, but she continued to sulk. I tried to rouse her up, but as I had no success I ordered her to go and tell her father that I was going to give a ball next day in the room by the garden, and that supper was to be laid for twenty.

When the door-keeper came to take my orders the following morning, I told him that I should like his girls to dance if he didn't mind. At this Rose condescended to smile, and I thought it a good omen. Just as she went out with her father, Manon came in under the pretext of asking me what lace I would wear for the day. I found her as gentle as a lamb and as loving as a dove. The affair was happily consummated, but we had a narrow escape of being caught by Rose, who came in with Le Duc and begged me to let him dance, promising that he would behave himself properly. I was glad that everybody should enjoy themselves and consented, telling him to thank Rose, who had got him this favour.

I had a note from Madame Morin, asking me if she might bring with her to the ball two ladies of her acquaintance and their daughters. I replied that I should be delighted for her to invite not only as many ladies but as many gentlemen as she pleased, as I had ordered supper for twenty people. She came to dinner with her niece and Valenglard, her daughter being busy dressing and her husband being engaged till the evening. She assured me that I should have plenty of guests.

The fair Mdlle. Roman wore the same dress, but her beauty unadorned was dazzling. Standing by me she asked if I had thought about her horoscope. I took her hand, made her sit on my knee, and promised that she should have it on the morrow. I held her thus, pressing her charming breasts with my left hand, and imprinting fiery kisses on her lips, which she only opened to beg me to calm myself. She was more astonished than afraid to see me trembling, and though she defended herself successfully she did not lose countenance for a moment, and in spite of my ardent gaze she did not turn her face away. I calmed myself with an effort, and her eyes expressed the satisfaction of one who has vanquished a generous enemy by the force of reason. By my silence I praised the virtue of this celestial being, in whose destiny I only had a part by one of those caprices of chance which philosophy seeks to explain in vain.

Madame Morin came up to me, and asked me to explain some points in her daughter's horoscope. She then told me that if I wanted to have four beauties at my ball she had only to write a couple of notes.

"I shall only see one beauty," said I, looking at her niece.

"God alone knows," said Valenglard, "what people will say in Grenoble!"

"They will say it is your wedding ball," said Madame Morin to her niece.

"Yes, and they will doubtless talk of my magnificent dress, my lace, and my diamonds," said the niece, pleasantly.

"They will talk of your beauty, your wit, and your goodness," I replied, passionately, "goodness which will make your husband a happy man."

There was a silence, because they all thought I was alluding to myself. I was doing nothing of the sort. I should have been glad to give five hundred louis for her, but I did not see how the contract was to be drawn up, and I was not going to throw my money away.

We went to my bedroom, and while Mdlle. Roman was amusing herself with looking at the jewellry on my toilette-table, her aunt and Valenglard examined the books on the table by my bedside. I saw Madame Morin going to the window and looking closely at something she held in her hand. I remembered I had left out the portrait of the fair nun. I ran to her and begged her to give me the indecent picture I had so foolishly left about.

"I don't mind the indecency of it," she said, "but what strikes me is the exact likeness."

I understood everything, and I shuddered at the carelessness of which I had been guilty.

"Madam," I said, "that is the portrait of a Venetian, lady, of whom I was very found."

"I daresay, but it's very curious. These two M's, these cast-off robes sacrificed to love, everything makes my surprise greater."

"She is a nun and named M —— M —— ."

"And a Welsh niece of mine at Camberi is also named M —— M —— , and belongs to the same order. Nay, more, she has been at Aix, whence you have come, to get cured of an illness."

"And this portrait is like her?"

"As one drop of water is like another."

"If you go to Chamberi call on her and say you come from me; you will be welcome and you will be as much surprised as I am."

"I will do so, after I have been in Italy. However, I will not shew her this portrait, which would scandalize her; I will put it away carefully."

"I beg you not to shew it to anyone."

"You may rely on me."

I was in an ecstasy at having put her off so effectually.

At eight o'clock all my guests arrived, and I saw before me all the fairest ladies and the noblest gentlemen of Grenoble. The only thing which vexed me was the compliments they lavished on me, as is customary in the provinces.

I opened the ball with the lady pointed out to me by M. Valenglard, and then I danced with all the ladies in succession; but my partner in all the square dances was the fair Mdlle. Roman, who shone from her simplicity — at least, in my eyes.

After a quadrille, in which I had exerted myself a good deal, I felt hot and went up to my room to put on a lighter suit, and as I was doing so, in came the fair cousin, who asked me if I required anything.

"Yes, you, dearest," I replied, going up to her and taking her in my arms. "Did anyone see you coming in here?"

"No, I came from upstairs, and my cousins are in the dancing-room."

"That is capital. You are fair as Love himself, and this is an excellent opportunity for skewing you how much I love you."

"Good heavens! What are you doing? Let me go, somebody might come in. Well, put out the light!"

I put it out, shut the door, and, my head full of Mdlle. Roman, the cousin found me as ardent as I should have been with that delightful person. I confess, too, that the door-keeper's niece was well worthy of being loved on her own merits. I found her perfect, perhaps better than Mdlle. Roman, a novice, would have been. In spite of my ardour her passion was soon appeased, and she begged me to let her go, and I did so; but it was quite time. I wanted to begin over again, but she was afraid that our absence would be noticed by her two Argus-eyed cousins, so she kissed me and left the room.

I went back to the ball-room, and we danced on till the king of door-keepers came to tell us supper was ready.

A collation composed of the luxuries which the season and the country afforded covered the table; but what pleased the ladies most was the number and artistic arrangement of the wax lights.

I sat down at a small table with a few of my guests, and I received the most pressing invitations to spend the autumn in their town. I am sure that if I had accepted I should have been treated like a prince, for the nobility of Grenoble bear the highest character for hospitality. I told them that if it had been possible I should have had the greatest pleasure in accepting their invitation, and in that case I should have been delighted to have made the acquaintance of the family of an illustrious gentleman, a friend of my father's.

"What name is it?" they asked me, altogether.

"Bouchenu de Valbonnais."

"He was my uncle. Ah! sir, you must come and stay with us. You danced with my daughter. What was your father's name?"

This story, which I invented, and uttered as I was wont, on the spur of the moment, turned me into a sort of wonder in the eyes of the worthy people.

After we had laughed, jested, drank, and eaten, we rose from the table and began to dance anew.

Seeing Madame Morin, her niece, and Valenglard going into the garden, I followed them, and as we walked in the moonlight I led the fair Mdlle. Roman through a covered alley; but all my fine speeches were in vain; I could do nothing. I held her between my arms, I covered her with burning kisses, but not one did she return to me, and her hands offered a successful resistance to my hardy attempts. By a sudden effort, however, I at last attained the porch of the temple of love, and held her in such a way that further resistance would have been of no avail; but she stopped me short by saying in a voice which no man of feeling could have resisted, —

“Be my friend, sir, and not my enemy and the cause of my ruin.”

I knelt before her, and taking her hand begged her pardon, swearing not to renew my attempts. I then rose and asked her to kiss me as a pledge of her forgiveness. We rejoined her aunt, and returned to the ball-room, but with all my endeavours I could not regain my calm.

I sat down in a corner of the room, and I asked Rose, who passed by me, to get me a glass of lemonade. When she brought it she gently chid me for not having danced with her, her sister, or her cousin.

“It will give people but a poor opinion of our merits.”

“I am tired,” said I, “but if you will promise to be kind I will dance a minuet with you.”

“What do want me to do?” said she.

“Go into my bedroom and wait for me there in the dark when you see your sister and your cousin busy dancing.”

“And you will only dance with me.”

“I swear!”

“Then you will find me in your room.”

I found her passionate, and I had full satisfaction. To keep my word with her I waited for the closing minuet, for having danced with Rose I felt obliged in common decency to dance with the other two, especially as I owed them the same debt.

At day-break the ladies began to vanish, and as I put the Morins into my carriage I told them that I could not have the pleasure of seeing them again that day, but that if they would come and spend the whole of the day after with me I would have the horoscope ready.

I went to the kitchen to thank the worthy door-keeper for having made me cut such a gallant figure, and I found the three nymphs there, filling their pockets with sweetmeats. He told them, laughing, that as the master was there they might rob him with a clear conscience, and I bade them take as much as they would. I informed the door-keeper that I should not dine till six, and I then went to bed.

I awoke at noon, and feeling myself well rested I set to work at the horoscope, and I resolved to tell the fair Mdlle. Roman that fortune awaited her at Paris, where she would become her master's mistress, but that the monarch must see her before she had attained her eighteenth year, as at that time her destiny would take a different turn. To give my prophecy authority, I told her some curious circumstances which had hitherto happened to her, and which I had learnt now and again from herself or Madame Morin without pretending to heed what they said.

With an Ephemeris and another astrological book, I made out and copied in six hours Mdlle. Roman's horoscope, and I had so well arranged it that it struck Valenglard and even M. Morin with astonishment, and made the two ladies quite enthusiastic.

My horoscope must only be known to the young lady and her family, who would no doubt keep the secret well. After I had put the finishing touches to it, read it, and read it again, I felt certain that I had made a masterpiece, and I then dined in bed with my three nymphs. I was polite and affectionate to them all, and we were all happy together, but I was the happiest. M. de Valenglard came to see me early the next day, and informed me that nobody suspected me of being in love with Mdlle. Roman, but that I was thought to be amorous of my landlord's girls.

"Well, let them think so," said I; "they are worthy of love, though not to be named in the same breath with one past compare, but who leaves me no hope."

"Let me tell Madame d'Urfe all about it."

"Certainly; I shall be delighted."

M. and Madame Morin and their niece came at noon, and we spent the hour before dinner in reading the horoscope. It would be impossible to describe the four distinct sorts of surprise which I saw before me. The interesting Mdlle. Roman looked very grave, and, not knowing whether she had a will of her own, listened to what was said in silence. M. Morin looked at me now and again, and seeing that I kept a serious countenance did not dare to laugh. Valenglard shewed fanatic belief in astrology in every feature. Madame Morin seemed struck as by a miracle, and, far from thinking the fact prophesied too improbable, remarked that her niece was much more worthy of becoming her sovereign's wife or mistress than the bigoted Maintenon had been.

"She would never have done anything," said Madame Morin, "if she had not left America and come to France; and if my niece does not go to Paris nobody can say that the horoscope has prophesied falsely. We should therefore — go to Paris, but how is it to be done? I don't see my way to it. The prediction of the birth of a son has something divine and entrancing about it. I don't wish to seem prejudiced, but my niece has certainly more qualifications for gaining the king's affection than the Maintenon had: my niece is a good girl and young, while the Maintenon was no longer as young as she had been, and had led a strange life before she became a devotee. But we shall never accomplish this journey to Paris."

"Nay," said Valenglard, in a serious tone, which struck me as supremely ridiculous, "she must go; her fate must be fulfilled."

The fair Mdlle. Roman seemed all amazed. I let them talk on, and we sat down to dinner.

[The next two paragraphs were misplaced in the original, likely by the typesetter, and have been inserted here where it seems that they belong. D.W.]

I hoped I should be asked to take the diamond to Paris myself, and I felt inclined to grant the request. I flattered myself that they could not do without me, and that I should get what I wanted, if not for love at any rate through gratitude; indeed, who knew what might become of the plan? The monarch would be sure to be caught directly. I had no doubts on that subject, for where is the man in love who does not think that his beloved object will win the hearts of all others? For the moment I felt quite jealous of the king, but, from my thorough knowledge of my own inconstancy, I felt sure that my jealousy would cease when my love had been rewarded, and I was aware that Louis XV. did not altogether hold the opinions of a Turk in such concerns. What gave an almost divine character to the horoscope was the prediction of a son to be born, who would make the happiness of France, and could only come from the royal blood and from a singular vessel of election.

A curious fancy increased my delight, namely, the thought of becoming a famous astrologer in an age when reason and science had so justly demolished astrology. I enjoyed the thought of seeing myself sought out by crowned heads, which are always the more accessible to superstitious notions. I determined I would be particular to whom I gave my advice. Who has not made his castles in Spain? If Mdlle. Roman gave birth to a daughter instead of a son I should be amused, and all would not be lost, for a son might come afterwards.

At first silence reigned, and then the conversation ran on a thousand trifles, as is usual in good society, but by degrees, as I had thought, they returned to the horoscope.

“According to the horoscope,” said the aunt, “the king is to fall in love with my niece in her eighteenth year; she is now close on it. What are we to do? Where are we to get the hundred louis necessary? And when she gets to Paris is she to go to the king and say, ‘Here I am, your majesty’? And who is going to take her there? I can’t.”

“My aunt Roman might,” said the young lady, blushing up to her eyes at the roar of laughter which none of us could restrain.

“Well,” said Madame Morin, “there is Madame Varnier, of the Rue de Richelieu; she is an aunt of yours. She has a good establishment, and knows everybody.”

“See,” said Valenglard, “how the ways of destiny are made plain. You talk of a hundred louis; twelve will be sufficient to take you to Madame Varnier’s. When you get there, leave the rest to your fate, which will surely favour you.”

“If you do go to Paris,” said I, “say nothing to Madame Roman or Madame Varnier about the horoscope.”

“I will say nothing to anyone about it; but, after all, it is only a happy dream. I shall never see Paris, still less Louis XV.”

I arose, and going to my cash-box I took out a roll of a hundred and fifty louis, which I gave to her, saying it was a packet of sweetmeats. It felt rather heavy, and on opening it she found it to contain fifty pieces-of-eight, which she took for medals.

“They are gold,” said Valenglard.

“And the goldsmith will give you a hundred and fifty louis for them,” added M. Morin.

“I beg you will keep them; you can give me a bill payable at Paris when you become rich.”

I knew she would refuse to accept my present, although I should have been delighted if she had kept the money. But I admired her strength of mind in restraining her tears, and that without disturbing for a moment the smile on her face.

We went out to take a turn in the garden. Valenglard and Madame Morin began on the topic of the horoscope anew, and I left them, taking Mdlle. Roman with me.

“I wish you would tell me,” said she, when we were out of hearing of the others, “if this horoscope is not all a joke.”

“No,” I answered, “it is quite serious, but it all depends on an if. If you do not go to Paris the prophecy will never be fulfilled.”

“You must think so, certainly, or you would never have offered me those fifty medals.”

“Do me the pleasure of accepting them now; nobody will know anything about it.”

“No, I cannot, though I am much obliged to you. But why should you want to give me such a large sum?”

“For the pleasure of contributing to your happiness, and in the hope that you will allow me to love you.”

“If you really love met why should I oppose your love? You need not buy my consent; and to be happy I do not want to possess the King of France, if you did but know to what my desires are limited.”

“Tell me.”

"I would fain find a kind husband, rich enough for us not to lack the necessaries of life."

"But how if you did not love him?"

"If he was a good, kind man how could I help loving him?"

"I see that you do not know what love is."

"You are right. I do not know the love that maddens, and I thank God for it."

"Well, I think you are wise; may God preserve you from that love."

"You say, that as soon as the king sees me he will fall in love with me, and to tell you the truth that strikes me as vastly improbable; for though it is quite possible that he may not think me plain, or he might even pronounce me pretty, yet I do not think he will become so madly in love as you say."

"You don't? Let us sit down. You have only got to fancy that the king will take the same liking to you that I have done; that is all."

"But what do you find in me that you will not find in most girls of my age? I certainly may have struck you; but that only proves that I was born to exercise this sway over you, and not at all that I am to rule the king in like manner. Why should I go and look for the king, if you love me yourself?"

"Because I cannot give you the position you deserve."

"I should have thought you had plenty of money."

"Then there's another reason: you are not in love with me."

"I love you as tenderly as if I were your wife. I might then kiss you, though duty now forbids my doing so."

"I am much obliged to you for not being angry with me for being so happy with you!"

"On the contrary, I am delighted to please you."

"Then you will allow me to call on you at an early hour to-morrow, and to take coffee at your bedside."

"Do not dream of such a thing. If I would I could not. I sleep with my aunt, and I always rise at the same time she does. Take away your hand; you promised not to do it again. In God's name, let me alone."

Alas! I had to stop; there was no overcoming her. But what pleased me extremely was that in spite of my amorous persecution she did not lose that smiling calm which so became her. As for myself I looked as if I deserved that pardon for which I pleaded on my knees, and in her eyes I read that she was sorry that she could not grant what I required of her.

I could no longer stay beside her, my senses were too excited by her beauty. I left her and went to my room where I found the kind Manon busying herself on my cuffs, and she gave me the relief I wanted, and when we were both satisfied made her escape. I reflected that I should never obtain more than I had obtained hitherto from young Mdlle. Roman — at least, unless I gave the lie to my horoscope by marrying her, and I decided that I would not take any further steps in the matter. I returned to the garden, and going up to the aunt I begged her to walk with me. In vain I urged the worthy woman to accept a hundred louis for her niece's journey from me. I swore to her by all I held sacred that no one else should ever know of the circumstance. All my eloquence and all my prayers were in vain. She told me that if her niece's destiny only depended on that journey all would be well, for she had thought over a plan which would, with her husband's consent, enable Mdlle. Roman to go to Paris. At the same time she gave me her sincerest thanks, and said that her niece was very fortunate to have pleased me so well.

"She pleased me so well," I replied, "that I have resolved to go away to-morrow to avoid making proposals to you which would bring the great fortune that awaits her to nought. If it were not for that I should have been happy to have asked her hand of you."

"Alas! her happiness would, perhaps, be built on a better foundation. Explain yourself."

"I dare not wage war with fate."

"But you are not going to-morrow?"

"Excuse me, but I shall call to take leave at two o'clock."

The news of my approaching departure saddened the supper-table. Madame Morin, who, for all I know, may be alive now, was a most kind-hearted woman. At table she announced her resolve that as I had decided on going, and as I should only leave my house to take leave of her, she would not force me to put myself out to such an extent, and ordained that our farewells should be said that evening.

“At least,” I said, “I may have the honour of escorting you to your door?”

“That will protract our happiness for some minutes.” Valenglard went away on foot, and the fair Mdlle. Roman sat on my knee. I dared to be bold with her, and contrary to expectation she shewed herself so kind that I was half sorry I was going; but the die was cast.

A carriage lying overturned on the road outside an inn made my coachman stop a short while, and this accident which made the poor driver curse overwhelmed me with joy, for in these few moments I obtained all the favours that she could possibly give under the circumstances.

Happiness enjoyed alone is never complete. Mine was not until I assured myself, by looking at my sweetheart’s features, that the part she had taken had not been an entirely passive one; and I escorted the ladies to their room. There, without any conceit, I was certain that I saw sadness and love upon that fair creature’s face. I could see that she was neither cold nor insensible, and that the obstacles she had put in my way were only suggested by fear and virtue. I gave Madame Morin a farewell kiss, and she was kind enough to tell her niece to give me a similar mark of friendship, which she did in a way that shewed me how completely she had shared my ardour.

I left them, feeling amorous and sorry I had obliged myself to go. On entering my room I found the three nymphs together, which vexed me as I only wanted one. I whispered my wishes to Rose as she curled my hair, but she told me it was impossible for her to slip away as they all slept in one room. I then told them that I was going away the next day, and that if they would pass the night with me I would give them a present of six louis each. They laughed at my proposal and said it couldn’t possibly be done. I saw by this they had not made confidantes of one another, as girls mostly do, and I also saw that they were jealous of each other. I wished them a good night, and as soon as I was in bed the god of dreams took me under his care, and made me pass the night with the adorable Mdlle. Roman.

I rang rather late in the morning, and the cousin came in and said that Rose would bring my chocolate, and that M. Charles Ivanoff wanted to speak to me. I guessed that this was the Russian, but as he had not been introduced to me I thought I might decline to see him.

“Tell him I don’t know his name.”

Rose went out, and came in again saying he was the gentleman who had had the honour of supping with me at Madame Morin’s.

“Tell him to come in.”

“Sir,” said he, “I want to speak with you in private.”

“I cannot order these young ladies to leave my room, sir. Be kind enough to wait for me outside till I have put on my dressing-gown, and then I shall be ready to speak to you.”

“If I am troubling you, I will call again to-morrow.”

“You would not find me, as I am leaving Grenoble to-day.”

“In that case I will wait.”

I got up in haste and went out to him.

“Sir,” said he, “I must leave this place, and I have not a penny to pay my landlord. I beg of you to come to my aid. I dare not have recourse to anyone else in the town for fear of exposing myself to the insult of a refusal.”

“Perhaps I ought to feel myself flattered at the preference you have shewn me, but without wishing to insult you in any way I am afraid I shall be obliged to refuse your request.”

“If you knew who I am I am sure you would not refuse me some small help.”

“If you think so, tell me who you are; you may count on my silence.”

“I am Charles, second son of Ivan, Duke of Courland, who is in exile in Siberia. I made my escape.”

“If you go to Genoa you will find yourself beyond the reach of poverty; for no doubt the brother of your lady-mother would never abandon you.”

“He died in Silesia.”

“When?”

“Two years ago, I believe.”

“You have been deceived, for I saw him at Stuttgart scarcely six months ago. He is the Baron de Treiden.”

It did not cost me much to get wind of the adventurer, but I felt angry that he had had the impudence to try and dupe me. If it had not been for that I would willingly have given him six louis, for it would have been bad form on my part to declare war against adventurers, as I was one myself, and I ought to have pardoned his lies as nearly all adventurers are more or less impostors. I gave a glance at his diamond buckles, which were considered real at Grenoble, and I saw directly that they were counterfeits of a kind made in Venice, which imitate the facets of the diamonds in perfection, except to people who are experienced in diamonds.

“You have diamond buckles,” said I. “Why don’t you sell them?”

“It’s the last piece of jewellery I possess out of all my mother gave me, and I promised her never to part with them.”

“I would not shew those buckles if I were you; your pocket would be a better place for them. I may tell you frankly that I believe the stones to be counterfeit, and that your lie displeases me.”

“Sir, I am not a liar.”

“We shall see. Prove that the stones are genuine, and I will give you six louis. I shall be delighted if I am in the wrong. Farewell.”

Seeing M. de Valerlglard coming up to my door, he begged me not to tell him of what had passed between us; and I promised that I would tell no one.

Valenglard came to wish me a prosperous journey; he himself was obliged to go with M. Monteinard. He begged me to correspond constantly with him, and I had been intending to prefer the same request, as I took too great an interest in the fair Mdlle. Roman not to wish to hear of her fate, and the correspondence the worthy officer desired was the best way possible for me to hear about her. As will be imagined, I promised what he asked without making any difficulty. He shed tears as he embraced me, and I promised to be his friend.

CHAPTER II

My Departure from Grenoble — Avignon — The Fountain of Vaucluse — The False Astrodi and the Humpback — Gaetan Costa — I Arrive at Marseilles

While the three girls were helping Le Duc to pack my mails my landlord entered, gave me his bill, and finding everything correct I paid him, much to his satisfaction. I owed him a compliment, too, at which he seemed extremely gratified.

“Sir,” said I, “I do not wish to leave your house without having the pleasure of dining with your charming girls, to shew them how I appreciate the care they have taken of me. Let me have, then, a delicate repast for four, and also order post horses, that I may start in the evening.”

“Sir,” broke in Le Duc, “I entreat you to order a saddle-horse besides; I was not made for a seat behind a chaise.”

The cousin laughed openly at his vain boasting, and to avenge himself the rascal told her that he was better than she.

“Nevertheless, M. le Duc, you will have to wait on her at table.”

“Yes, as she waits on you in bed.”

I ran for my stick, but the rogue, knowing what was going to happen, opened the window and jumped into the courtyard. The girls gave a shriek of terror, but when we looked out we saw him jumping about and performing a thousand apish tricks.

Very glad to find that he had not broken a limb, I called out, “Come back, I forgive you.” The girls, and the man himself who escaped so readily, were as delighted as I. Le Duc came in in high spirits, observing that he did not know he was such a good jumper.

“Very good, but don’t be so impudent another time. Here, take this watch.”

So saying, I gave him a valuable gold watch, which he received, saying, —

"I would jump again for another watch like this."

Such was my Spaniard, whom I had to dismiss two years afterwards. I have often missed him.

The hours went by with such speed when I was seated at table with the three girls, whom I vainly endeavoured to intoxicate, that I decided that I would not leave till the next day. I was tired of making mysteries and wanted to enjoy them all together, and resolved that the orgy should take place that night. I told them that if they would pass the night in my room I would not go till the next day. This proposition was received with a storm of exclamations and with laughter, as at an impossibility, while I endeavoured to excite them to grant my request. In the midst of this the door-keeper came in, advising me not to travel by night, but to go to Avignon by a boat in which I could ship my carriage.

"You will save time and money," said he.

"I will do so," I answered, "if these girls of yours will keep me company all night, as I am determined I will not go to bed."

"O Lord!" said he with a laugh, "that's their business."

This decided them and they gave in. The door-keeper sent to order the boat, and promised to let me have a dainty supper by midnight.

The hours passed by in jests and merriment, and when we sat down to supper I made the champagne corks fly to such an extent that the girls began to get rather gay. I myself felt a little heated, and as I held each one's secret I had the hardihood to tell them that their scruples were ridiculous, as each of them had shewn no reserve to me in private.

At this they gazed at one another in a kind of blank surprise, as if indignant at what I had said. Foreseeing that feminine pride might prompt them to treat my accusation as an idle calumny, I resolved not to give them time, and drawing Manon on to my knee I embraced her with such ardour that she gave in and abandoned herself to my passion. Her example overcame the others, and for five hours we indulged in every kind of voluptuous enjoyment. At the end of that time we were all in need of rest, but I had to go. I wanted to give them some jewels, but they said they would rather I ordered gloves to the amount of thirty louis, the money to be paid in advance, and the gloves not to be called for.

I went to sleep on board the boat, and did not awake till we got to Avignon. I was conducted to the inn of “St. Omen” and supped in my room in spite of the marvellous tales which Le Duc told me of a young beauty at the public table.

Next morning my Spaniard told me that the beauty and her husband slept in a room next to mine. At the same time he brought me a bill of the play, and I saw Company from Paris, with Mdlle. Astrodi, who was to sing and dance. I gave a cry of wonder, and exclaimed, —

“The famous Astrodi at Avignon — how she will be astonished to see me!”

Not wanting to live in hermit fashion, I went downstairs to dine at the public table, and I found a score of people sitting down to such a choice repast that I could not conceive how it could be done for forty sous a head. The fair stranger drew all eyes, and especially mine, towards her. She was a young and perfect beauty, silent, her eyes fixed on a napkin, replying in monosyllables to those who addressed her, and glancing at the speaker with large blue eyes, the beauty of which it would be difficult to describe. Her husband was seated at the other end of the table — a man of a kind that inspires contempt at the first glance. He was young, marked with the small-pox, a greedy eater, a loud talker, laughing and speaking at random, and altogether I took him for a servant in disguise. Feeling sure that such a fellow did not know how to refuse, I sent him a glass of champagne, which he drank off to my health forthwith. “May I have the pleasure of sending a glass to your wife?” He replied, with a roar of laughter, to ask her myself; and with a slight bow she told me that she never took anything to drink. When the dessert came in she rose, and her husband followed her to their room.

A stranger who like myself had never seen her before, asked me who she was. I said I was a newcomer and did not know, and somebody else said that her husband called himself the Chevalier Stuard, that he came from Lyons, and was going to Marseilles; he came, it appeared, to Avignon a week ago, without servants, and in a very poor carriage.

I intended staying at Avignon only as long as might be necessary to see the Fountain or Fall of Vaucluse, and so I had not got any letters of introduction, and had not the pretext of acquaintance that I might stay and enjoy her fine eyes. But an Italian who had read and enjoyed the divine Petrarch would naturally wish to see the place made divine by the poet's love for Laura. I went to the theatre, where I saw the vice-legate Salviati, women of fashion, neither fair nor foul, and a wretched comic opera; but I neither saw Astrodi nor any other actor from the Comedie Italienne at Paris.

"Where is the famous Astrodi?" said I, to a young man sitting by me, "I have not seen her yet."

"Excuse me, she has danced and sang before your eyes."

"By Jove, it's impossible! I know her perfectly, and if she has so changed as not to be recognized she is no longer herself."

I turned to go, and two minutes after the young man I had addressed came up and begged me to come back, and he would take me to Astradi's dressing-room, as she had recognized me. I followed him without saying a word, and saw a plain-looking girl, who threw her arms round my neck and addressed me by my name, though I could have sworn I had never seen her before, but she did not leave me time to speak. Close by I saw a man who gave himself out as the father of the famous Astrodi, who was known to all Paris, who had caused the death of the Comte d'Egmont, one of the most amiable noblemen of the Court of Louis XV. I thought this ugly female might be her sister, so I sat down and complimented her on her talents. She asked if I would mind her changing her dress; and in a moment she was running here and there, laughing and shewing a liberality which possibly might have been absent if what she had to display had been worth seeing.

I laughed internally at her wiles, for after my experiences at Grenoble she would have found it a hard task to arouse my desires if she had been as pretty as she was ugly. Her thinness and her tawny skin could not divert my attention from other still less pleasing features about her. I admired her confidence in spite of her disadvantages. She must have credited me with a diabolic appetite, but these women often contrive to extract charms out of their depravity which their delicacy would be impotent to furnish. She begged me to sup with her, and as she persisted I was obliged to refuse her in a way I should not have allowed myself to use with any other woman.

She then begged me to take four tickets for the play the next day, which was to be for her benefit. I saw it was only a matter of twelve francs, and delighted to be quit of her so cheaply I told her to give me sixteen. I thought she would have gone mad with joy when I gave her a double louis. She was not the real Astrodi. I went back to my inn and had a delicious supper in my own room.

While Le Duc was doing my hair before I went to bed, he told me that the landlord had paid a visit to the fair stranger and her husband before supper, and had said in clear terms that he must be paid next morning; and if he were not, no place would be laid for them at table, and their linen would be detained.

“Who told you that?”

“I heard it from here; their room is only separated from this by a wooden partition. If they were in it now, I am sure they could hear all we are saying.”

“Where are they, then?”

“At table, where they are eating for to-morrow, but the lady is crying. There’s a fine chance for you, sir.”

“Be quiet; I shan’t have anything to do with it. It’s a trap, for a woman of any worth would die rather than weep at a public table.”

“Ah, if you saw how pretty she looks in tears! I am only a poor devil, but I would willingly give her two louis if she would earn them.”

“Go and offer her the money.”

A moment after the gentleman and his wife came back to their room, and I heard the loud voice of the one and the sobs of the other, but as he was speaking Walloon I did not understand what he said.

“Go to bed,” said I to Le Duc, “and next morning tell the landlord to get me another room, for a wooden partition is too thin a barrier to keep off people whom despair drive to extremities.”

I went to bed myself, and the sobs and muttering did not die away till midnight.

I was shaving next morning, when Le Duc announced the Chevalier Stuard.

"Say I don't know anybody of that name."

He executed my orders, and returned saying that the chevalier on hearing my refusal to see him had stamped with rage, gone into his chamber, and come out again with his sword beside him.

"I am going to see," added Le Duc, "that your pistols are well primed for the future."

I felt inclined to laugh, but none the less I admired the foresight of my Spaniard, for a man in despair is capable of anything.

"Go," said I, "and ask the landlord to give me another room."

In due course the landlord came himself and told me that he could not oblige me until the next day.

"If you don't get me another room I shall leave your house on the spot, because I don't like hearing sobs and reproaches all night."

"Can you hear them, sir?"

"You can hear them yourself now. What do you think of it? The woman will kill herself, and you will be the cause of her death."

"I, sir? I have only asked them to pay me my just debts."

"Hush! there goes the husband. I am sure he is telling his wife in his language that you are an unfeeling monster."

"He may tell her what he likes so long as he pays me."

"You have condemned them to die of hunger. How much do they owe you?"

"Fifty francs."

"Aren't you ashamed of making such a row for a wretched sum like that?"

"Sir, I am only ashamed of an ill deed, and I do not commit such a deed in asking for my own."

"There's your money. Go and tell them that you have been paid, and that they may eat again; but don't say who gave you the money."

"That's what I call a good action," said the fellow; and he went and told them that they did not owe him anything, but that they would never know who paid the money.

"You may dine and sup," he added, "at the public table, but you must pay me day by day."

After he had delivered this speech in a high voice, so that I could hear as well as if I had been in the room, he came back to me.

"You stupid fool!" said I, pushing him away, "they will know everything." So saying I shut my door.

Le Duc stood in front of me, staring stupidly before him.

"What's the matter with you, idiot?" said I.

"That's fine. I see. I am going on the stage. You would do well to become an actor."

"You are a fool."

"Not so big a fool as you think."

"I am going for a walk; mind you don't leave my room for a moment."

I had scarcely shut the door when the chevalier accosted me and overwhelmed me with thanks.

"Sir, I don't know to what you are referring."

He thanked me again and left me, and walking by the banks of the Rhone, which geographers say is the most rapid river in Europe, I amused myself by looking at the ancient bridge. At dinner-time I went back to the inn, and as the landlord knew that I paid six francs a meal he treated me to an exquisite repast. Here, I remember, I had some exceedingly choice Hermitage. It was so delicious that I drank nothing else. I wished to make a pilgrimage to Vaucluse and begged the landlord to procure me a good guide, and after I had dressed I went to the theatre.

I found the Astrodi at the door, and giving her my sixteen tickets, I sat down near the box of the vice-legate Salviati, who came in a little later, surrounded by a numerous train of ladies and gentlemen bedizened with orders and gold lace.

The so-called father of the false Astrodi came and whispered that his daughter begged me to say that she was the celebrated Astrodi I had known at Paris. I replied, also in a whisper, that I would not run the risk of being posted as a liar by bolstering up an imposture. The ease with which a rogue invites a gentleman to share in a knavery is astonishing; he must think his confidence confers an honour.

At the end of the first act a score of lackeys in the prince's livery took round ices to the front boxes. I thought it my duty to refuse. A young gentleman, as fair as love, came up to me, and with easy politeness asked me why I had refused an ice.

"Not having the honour to know anyone here, I did not care that anyone should be able to say that he had regaled one who was unknown to him."

"But you, sir, are a man who needs no introduction."

"You do me too much honour."

"You are staying at the 'St. Omer'!"

"Yes; I am only stopping here to see Vaucluse, where I think of going to-morrow if I can get a good guide."

"If you would do me the honour of accepting me, I should be delighted. My name is Dolci, I am son of the captain of the vice-legate's guard."

"I feel the honour you do me, and I accept your obliging offer. I will put off my start till your arrival."

"I will be with you at seven."

I was astonished at the easy grace of this young Adonis, who might have been a pretty girl if the tone of his voice had not announced his manhood. I laughed at the false Astrodi, whose acting was as poor as her face, and who kept staring at me all the time. While she sang she regarded me with a smile and gave me signs of an understanding, which must have made the audience notice me, and doubtless pity my bad taste. The voice and eyes of one actress pleased me; she was young and tall, but hunchbacked to an extraordinary degree. She was tall in spite of her enormous humps, and if it had not been for this malformation she would have been six feet high. Besides her pleasing eyes and very tolerable voice I fancied that, like all hunchbacks, she was intelligent. I found her at the door with the ugly Astrodi when I was leaving the theatre. The latter was waiting to thank me, and the other was selling tickets for her benefit.

After the Astrodi had thanked me, the hunchbacked girl turned towards me, and with a smile that stretched from ear to ear and displayed at least twenty-four exquisite teeth, she said that she hoped I would honour her by being present at her benefit.

“If I don’t leave before it comes off, I will,” I replied.

At this the impudent Astrodi laughed, and in the hearing of several ladies waiting for their carriages told me that her friend might be sure of my presence, as she would not let me go before the benefit night. “Give him sixteen tickets,” she added. I was ashamed to refuse, and gave her two louis. Then in a lower voice the Astrodi said, “After the show we will come and sup with you, but on the condition that you ask nobody else, as we want to be alone.”

In spite of a feeling of anger, I thought that such a supper-party would be amusing, and as no one in the town knew me I resolved to stay in the hope of enjoying a hearty laugh.

I was having my supper when Stuard and his wife went to their room. This night I heard no sobs nor reproaches, but early next morning I was surprised to see the chevalier who said, as if we had been old friends, that he had heard that I was going to Vaucluse, and that as I had taken a carriage with four places he would be much obliged if I would allow him and his wife, who wanted to see the fountain, to go with me. I consented.

Le Duc begged to be allowed to accompany me on horseback, saying that he had been a true prophet. In fact it seemed as if the couple had agreed to repay me for my expenditure by giving me new hopes. I was not displeased with the expedition, and it was all to my advantage, as I had had recourse to no stratagems to obtain it.

Dolci came, looking as handsome as an angel; my neighbours were ready, and the carriage loaded with the best provisions in food and drink that were obtainable; and we set off, Dolci seated beside the lady and I beside the chevalier.

I had thought that the lady’s sadness would give place, if not to gaiety, at least to a quiet cheerfulness, but I was mistaken; for, to all my remarks, grave or gay, she replied, either in monosyllables or in a severely laconic style. Poor Dolci, who was full of wit, was stupefied. He thought himself the cause of her melancholy, and was angry with himself for having innocently cast a shadow on the party of pleasure. I relieved him of his fears by telling him that when he offered me his pleasant society I was not aware that I was to be of service to the fair lady. I added that when at day-break I received this information, I was pleased that he would have such good company. The lady did not say a word. She kept silent and gloomy all the time, and gazed to right and left like one who does not see what is before his [her] eyes.

Dolci felt at ease after my explanation, and did his best to arouse the lady, but without success. He talked on a variety of topics to the husband, always giving her an opportunity of joining in, but her lips remained motionless. She looked like the statue of Pandora before it had been quickened by the divine flame.

The beauty of her face was perfect; her eyes were of a brilliant blue, her complexion a delicate mixture of white and red, her arms were as rounded as a Grace's, her hands plump and well shaped, her figure was that of a nymph's, giving delightful hints of a magnificent breast; her hair was a chestnut brown, her foot small: she had all that constitutes a beautiful woman save that gift of intellect, which makes beauty more beautiful, and gives a charm to ugliness itself. My vagrant fancy shewed me her naked form, all seemed ravishing, and yet I thought that though she might inspire a passing fancy she could not arouse a durable affection. She might minister to a man's pleasures, she could not make him happy. I arrived at the isle resolved to trouble myself about her no more; she might, I thought, be mad, or in despair at finding herself in the power of a man whom she could not possibly love. I could not help pitying her, and yet I could not forgive her for consenting to be of a party which she knew she must spoil by her morose behaviour.

As for the self-styled Chevalier Stuard, I did not trouble my head whether he were her husband or her lover. He was young, commonplace-looking, he spoke affectedly; his manners were not good, and his conversation betrayed both ignorance and stupidity. He was a beggar, devoid of money and wits, and I could not make out why he took with him a beauty who, unless she were over-kind, could add nothing to his means of living. Perhaps he expected to live at the expense of simpletons, and had come to the conclusion, in spite of his ignorance, that the world is full of such; however, experience must have taught him that this plan cannot be relied on.

When we got to Vaucluse I let Dolci lead; he had been there a hundred times, and his merit was enhanced in my eyes by the fact that he was a lover of the lover of Laura. We left the carriage at Apt, and wended our way to the fountain which was honoured that day with a numerous throng of pilgrims. The stream pours forth from a vast cavern, the handiwork of nature, inimitable by man. It is situated at the foot of a rock with a sheer descent of more than a hundred feet. The cavern is hardly half as high, and the water pours forth from it in such abundance that it deserves the name of river at its source. It is the Sorgue which falls into the Rhone near Avignon. There is no other stream as pure and clear, for the rocks over which it flows harbour no deposits of any kind. Those who dislike it on account of its apparent blackness should remember that the extreme darkness of the cavern gives it that gloomy tinge.

Chiare fresche a dolce aque

Ove le belle membra

Pose colei the sola a me pay donna.

I wished to ascend to that part of the rock where Petrarch's house stood. I gazed on the remains with tears in my eyes, like Leo Allatius at Homer's grave. Sixteen years later I slept at Arqua, where Petrarch died, and his house still remains. The likeness between the two situations was astonishing, for from Petrarch's study at Arqua a rock can be seen similar to that which may be viewed at Vaucluse; this was the residence of Madonna Laura.

"Let us go there," said I, "it is not far off."

I will not endeavour to delineate my feelings as I contemplated the ruins of the house where dwelt the lady whom the amorous Petrarch immortalised in his verse — verse made to move a heart of stone:

"Morte bella parea nel suo bel viso"

I threw myself with arms outstretched upon the ground as if I would embrace the very stones. I kissed them, I watered them with my tears, I strove to breathe the holy breath they once contained. I begged Madame

Stuard's pardon for having left her arm to do homage to the spirit of a woman who had quickened the profoundest soul that ever lived.

I say soul advisedly, for after all the body and the senses had nothing to do with the connection.

"Four hundred years have past and gone," said I to the statue of a woman who gazed at me in astonishment, "since Laura de Sade walked here; perhaps she was not as handsome as you, but she was lively, kindly, polite, and good of heart. May this air which she breathed and which you breathe now kindle in you the spark of fire divine; that fire that coursed through her veins, and made her heart beat and her bosom swell. Then you would win the worship of all worthy men, and from none would you receive the least offence. Gladness, madam, is the lot of the happy, and sadness the portion of souls condemned to everlasting pains. Be cheerful, then, and you will do something to deserve your beauty."

The worthy Dolci was kindled by my enthusiasm. He threw himself upon me, and kissed me again and again; the fool Stuard laughed; and his wife, who possibly thought me mad, did not evince the slightest emotion. She took my arm, and we walked slowly towards the house of Messer Francesco d'Arezzo, where I spent a quarter of an hour in cutting my name. After that we had our dinner.

Dolci lavished more attention on the extraordinary woman than I did. Stuard did nothing but eat and drink, and despised the Sorgue water, which, said he, would spoil the Hermitage; possibly Petrarch may have been of the same opinion. We drank deeply without impairing our reason, but the lady was very temperate. When we reached Avignon we bade her farewell, declining the invitation of her foolish husband to come and rest in his rooms.

I took Dolci's arm and we walked beside the Rhone as the sun went down. Among other keen and witty observations the young man said, —

"That woman is an old hand, infatuated with a sense of her own merit. I would bet that she has only left her own country because her charms, from being too freely displayed, have ceased to please there. She must be sure of making her fortune out of anybody she comes across. I suspect that the fellow who passes for her husband is a rascal, and that her pretended melancholy is put on to drive a persistent lover to distraction. She has not yet succeeded in finding a dupe, but as she will no doubt try to catch a rich man, it is not improbable that she is hovering over you.”.

When a young man of Dolci’s age reasons like that, he is bound to become a great master. I kissed him as I bade him good-night, thanked him for his kindness, and we agreed that we would see more of one another.

As I came back to my inn I was accosted by a fine-looking man of middle age, who greeted me by name and asked with great politeness if I had found Vaucluse as fine as I had expected. I was delighted to recognize the Marquis of Grimaldi, a Genoese, a clever and good-natured man, with plenty of money, who always lived at Venice because he was more at liberty to enjoy himself there than in his native country; which shews that there is no lack of freedom at Venice.

After I had answered his question I followed him into his room, where having exhausted the subject of the fountain he asked me what I thought of my fair companion.

“I did not find her satisfactory in all respects,” I answered; and noticing the reserve with which I spoke, he tried to remove it by the following confession:

“There are some very pretty women in Genoa, but not one to compare with her whom you took to Vaucluse to-day. I sat opposite to her at table yesterday evening, and I was struck with her perfect beauty. I offered her my arm up the stair; I told her that I was sorry to see her so sad, and if I could do anything for her she had only to speak. You know I was aware she had no money. Her husband, real or pretended, thanked me for my offer, and after I had wished them a good night I left them.

“An hour ago you left her and her husband at the door of their apartment, and soon afterwards I took the liberty of calling. She welcomed me with a pretty bow, and her husband went out directly, begging me to keep her company till his return. The fair one made no difficulty in sitting next to me on a couch, and this struck me as a good omen, but when I took her hand she gently drew it away. I then told, her, in as few words as I could, that her beauty had made me in love with her, and that if she wanted a hundred louis they were at her service, if she would drop her melancholy, and behave in a manner suitable to the feelings with which she had inspired me. She only replied by a motion of the head, which shewed gratitude, but also an absolute refusal of my offer. 'I am going to-morrow,' said I. No answer. I took her hand again, and she drew it back with an air of disdain which wounded me. I begged her to excuse me, and I left the room without more ado.

"That's an account of what happened an hour ago. I am not amorous of her, it was only a whim; but knowing, as I do, that she has no money, her manner astonished me. I fancied that you might have placed her in a position to despise my offer, and this would explain her conduct, in a measure; otherwise I can't understand it at all. May I ask you to tell me whether you are more fortunate than I?"

I was enchanted with the frankness of this noble gentleman, and did not hesitate to tell him all, and we laughed together at our bad fortune: I had to promise to call on him at Genoa, and tell him whatever happened between us during the two days I purposed to remain at Avignon. He asked me to sup with him and admire the fair recalcitrant.

"She has had an excellent dinner," said I, "and in all probability she will not have any supper."

"I bet she will," said the marquis; and he was right, which made me see clearly that the woman was playing a part. A certain Comte de Bussi, who had just come, was placed next to her at table. He was a good-looking young man with a fatuous sense of his own superiority, and he afforded us an amusing scene.

He was good-natured, a wit, and inclined to broad jokes, and his manner towards women bordered on the impudent. He had to leave at midnight and began to make love to his fair neighbour forthwith, and teased her in a thousand ways; but she remained as dumb as a statue, while he did all the talking and laughing, not regarding it within the bounds of possibility that she might be laughing at him.

I looked at M. Grimaldi, who found it as difficult to keep his countenance as I did. The young roue was hurt at her silence, and continued pestering her, giving her all the best pieces on his plate after tasting them first. The lady refused to take them, and he tried to put them into her mouth, while she repulsed him in a rage. He saw that no one seemed inclined to take her part, and determined to continue the assault, and taking her hand he kissed it again and again. She tried to draw it away, and as she rose he put his arm round her waist and made her sit down on his knee; but at this point the husband took her arm and led her out of the room. The attacking party looked rather taken aback for a moment as he followed her with his eyes, but sat down again and began to eat and laugh afresh, while everybody else kept a profound silence. He then turned to the footman behind his chair and asked him if his sword was upstairs. The footman said no, and then the fatuous young man turned to an abbe who sat near me, and enquired who had taken away his mistress:

“It was her husband,” said the abbe.

“Her husband! Oh, that’s another thing; husbands don’t fight — a man of honour always apologises to them.”

With that he got up, went upstairs, and came down again directly, saying, —

“The husband’s a fool. He shut the door in my face, and told me to satisfy my desires somewhere else. It isn’t worth the trouble of stopping, but I wish I had made an end of it.”

He then called for champagne, offered it vainly to everybody, bade the company a polite farewell and went upon his way.

As M. Grimaldi escorted me to my room he asked me what I had thought of the scene we had just witnessed. I told him I would not have stirred a finger, even if he had turned up her clothes.

“No more would I,” said he, “but if she had accepted my hundred louis it would have been different. I am curious to know the further history of this siren, and I rely upon you to tell me all about it as you go through Genoa.”

He went away at day-break next morning.

When I got up I received a note from the false Astrodi, asking me if I expected her and her great chum to supper. I had scarcely replied in the affirmative, when the sham Duke of Courland I had left at Grenoble appeared on the scene. He confessed in a humble voice that he was the son of clock-maker at Narva, that his buckles were valueless, and that he had come to beg an alms of me. I gave him four Louis, and he asked me to keep his secret. I replied that if anyone asked me about him that I should say what was absolutely true, that I knew him nothing about him. “Thank you; I am now going to Marseilles.” “I hope you will have a prosperous journey.” Later on my readers will hear how I found him at Genoa. It is a good thing to know something about people of his kind, of whom there are far too many in the world.

I called up the landlord and told him I wanted a delicate supper for three in my own room.

He told me that I should have it, and then said, “I have just had a row with the Chevalier Stuard.”

“What about?”

“Because he has nothing to pay me with, and I am going to turn them out immediately, although the lady is in bed in convulsions which are suffocating her.”

“Take out your bill in her charms.”

“Ah, I don’t care for that sort of thing! I am getting on in life, and I don’t want any more scenes to bring discredit on my house.”

“Go and tell her that from henceforth she and her husband will dine and sup in their own room and that I will pay for them as long as I remain here.”

“You are very generous, sir, but you know that meals in a private room are charged double.”

“I know they are.”

“Very good.”

I shuddered at the idea of the woman being turned out of doors without any resources but her body, by which she refused to profit. On the other hand I could not condemn the inn-keeper who, like his fellows, was not troubled with much gallantry. I had yielded to an impulse of pity without any hopes of advantage for myself. Such were my thoughts when Stuard came to thank me, begging me to come and see his wife and try and persuade her to behave in a different manner.

“She will give me no answers, and you know that that sort of thing is rather tedious.”

“Come, she knows what you have done for her; she will talk to you, for her feelings … .”

“What business have you to talk about feelings after what happened yesterday evening?”

“It was well for that gentleman that he went away at midnight, otherwise I should have killed him this morning.”

“My dear sir, allow me to tell you that all that is pure braggadocio. Yesterday, not to-day, was the time to kill him, or to throw your plate at his head, at all events. We will now go and see your wife.”

I found her in bed, her face to the wall, the coverlet right up to her chin, and her body convulsed with sobs. I tried to bring her to reason, but as usual got no reply. Stuard wanted to leave me, but I told him that if he went out I would go too, as I could do nothing to console her, as he might know after her refusing the Marquis of Grimaldi’s hundred louis for a smile and her hand to kiss.

“A hundred Louis!” cried the fellow with a sturdy oath; “what folly! We might have been at home at Liege by now. A princess allows one to kiss her hand for nothing, and she…. A hundred Louis! Oh, damnable!”

His exclamations, very natural under the circumstances, made me feel inclined to laugh. The poor devil swore by all his gods, and I was about to leave the room, when all at once the wretched woman was seized with true or false convulsions. With one hand she seized a water-bottle and sent it flying into the middle of the room, and with the other she tore the clothes away from her breast. Stuard tried to hold her, but her disorder increased in violence, and the coverlet was disarranged to such a degree that I could see the most exquisite naked charms imaginable. At last she grew calm, and her eyes closed as if exhausted; she remained in the most voluptuous position that desire itself could have invented. I began to get very excited. How was I to look on such beauties without desiring to possess them? At this point her wretched husband left the room, saying he was gone to fetch some water. I saw the snare, and my self-respect prevented my being caught in it. I had an idea that the whole scene had been arranged with the intent that I should deliver myself up to brutal pleasure, while the proud and foolish woman would be free to disavow all participation in the fact. I constrained myself, and gently veiled what I would fain have revealed in all its naked beauty. I condemned to darkness these charms which this monster of a woman only wished me to enjoy that I might be debased.

Stuard was long enough gone. When he came back with the water-bottle full, he was no doubt surprised to find me perfectly calm, and in no disorder of any kind, and a few minutes afterwards I went out to cool myself by the banks of the Rhone.

I walked along rapidly, feeling enraged with myself, for I felt that the woman had bewitched me. In vain I tried to bring myself to reason; the more I walked the more excited I became, and I determined that after what I had seen the only cure for my disordered fancy was enjoyment, brutal or not. I saw that I should have to win her, not by an appeal to sentiment but by hard cash, without caring what sacrifices I made. I regretted my conduct, which then struck me in the light of false delicacy, for if I had satisfied my desires and she chose to turn prude, I might have laughed her to scorn, and my position would have been unassailable. At last I determined on telling the husband that I would give him twenty-five louis if he could obtain me an interview in which I could satisfy my desires.

Full of this idea I went back to the inn, and had my dinner in my own room without troubling to enquire after her. Le Duc told me that she was dining in her room too, and that the landlord had told the company that she would not take her meals in public any more. This was information I possessed already.

After dinner I called on the good-natured Dolci, who introduced me to his father, an excellent man, but not rich enough to satisfy his son’s desire of travelling. The young man was possessed of considerable dexterity, and performed a number of very clever conjuring tricks. He had an amiable nature, and seeing that I was curious to know about his love affairs he told me numerous little stories which shewed me that he was at that happy age when one’s inexperience is one’s sole misfortune.

There was a rich lady for whom he did not care, as she wanted him to give her that which he would be ashamed to give save for love, and there was a girl who required him to treat her with respect. I thought I could give him a piece of good advice, so I told him to grant his favours to the rich woman, and to fail in respect now and again to the girl, who would be sure to scold and then forgive. He was no profligate, and seemed rather inclined to become a Protestant. He amused himself innocently with his friends of his own age, in a garden near Avignon, and a sister of the gardener's wife was kind to him when they were alone.

In the evening I went back to the inn, and I had not long to wait for the Astrodi and the Lepi (so the hunchbacked girl was named); but when I saw these two caricatures of women I felt stupefied. I had expected them, of course, but the reality confounded me. The Astrodi tried to counterbalance her ugliness by an outrageous freedom of manners; while the Lepi, who though a hunchback was very talented and an excellent actress, was sure of exciting desire by the rare beauty of her eyes and teeth, which latter challenged admiration from her enormous mouth by their regularity and whiteness. The Astrodi rushed up to me and gave me an Italian embrace, to which, willy nilly, I was obliged to submit. The quieter Lepi offered me her cheek, which I pretended to kiss. I saw that the Astrodi was in a fair way to become intolerable, so I begged her to moderate her transports, because as a novice at these parties I wanted to get accustomed to them by degrees. She promised that she would be very good.

While we were waiting for supper I asked her, for the sake of something to say, whether she had found a lover at Avignon.

"Only the vice-legate's auditor," she replied; "and though he makes me his pathic he is good-natured and generous. I have accustomed myself to his taste easily enough, though I should have thought such a thing impossible a year ago, as I fancied the exercise a harmful one, but I was wrong."

"So the auditor makes a boy of you?"

"Yes. My sister would have adored him, as that sort of love is her passion."

"But your sister has such fine haunches."

"So have I! Look here, feel me."

"You are right; but wait a bit, it is too soon for that kind of thing yet."

"We will be wanton after supper."

"I think you are wanton now," said the Lepi.

"Why?"

“Why? Ought you to shew your person like that?”

“My dear girl, you will be shewing yourself soon. When one is in good company, one is in the golden age.”

“I wonder at your telling everyone what sort of a connection you have with the auditor,” said I.

“Nonsense! I don’t tell everyone, but everyone tells me and congratulates me too. They know the worthy man never cared for women, and it would be absurd to deny what everybody guesses. I used to be astonished at my sister, but the best plan in this world is to be astonished at nothing. But don’t you like that?”

“No, I only like this.”

As I spoke I laid hands on the Lepi, on the spot where one usually finds what I called “this;” but the Astrodi, seeing that I found nothing, burst into a roar of laughter, and taking my hand put it just under her front hump, where at last I found what I wanted. The reader will guess my surprise. The poor creature, too ashamed to be prudish, laughed too. My spirits also begin to rise, as I thought of the pleasure I should get out of this new discovery after supper.

“Have you never had a lover?” said I to the Lepi.

“No,” said the Astrodi, “she is still a maid.”

“No, I am not,” replied the Lepi, in some confusion, “I had a lover at Bordeaux, and another at Montpellier.”

“Yes, I know, but you are still as you were born.”

“I can’t deny it.”

“What’s that? Two lovers and still a maid! I don’t understand; please tell me about it, for I have never heard of such a thing.”

“Before I satisfied my first lover which happened when I was only twelve, I was just the same as I am now.”

“It’s wonderful. And what did he say when he saw it?”

“I swore that he was my first, and he believed me, putting it down to the peculiar shape of my body.”

“He was a man of spirit; but didn’t he hurt you?”

“Not a bit; but then he was very gentle.”

“You must have a try after supper,” said the Astrodi to me, “that would be fine fun.”

“No, no,” said the Lepi, “the gentleman would be too big for me.”

“Nonsense! You don’t want to take in all of him. I will show you how it is.”

With these words the impudent hussy proceeded to exhibit me, and I let her do what she liked.

“That’s just what I should have thought,” cried the Lepi; “it could never be done.”

“Well, he is rather big,” answered the Astrodi; “but there’s a cure for everything, and he will be content with half-measures.”

“It’s not the length, my dear, but the thickness which frightens me; I am afraid the door is too narrow.”

“All the better for you, for you can sell your maidenhead after having had two lovers.”

This conversation, not devoid of wit, and still more the simplicity of the hunchback, had made me resolve to verify things for myself.

Supper came up, and I had the pleasure of seeing the two nymphs eat like starving savages, and drink still better. When the Hermitage had done its work the Astrodi proposed that we should cast off the clothes which disfigure nature.

“Certainly,” said I; “and I will turn away while you are getting ready.”

I went behind the curtains, took off my clothes, and went to bed with my back to them. At last the Astrodi told me that they were ready, and when I looked the Lepi took up all my attention. In spite of her double deformity she was a handsome woman. My glances frightened her, for she was doubtless taking part in an orgy for the first time. I gave her courage, however, by dint of praising those charms which the white and beautiful hands could not hide, and at last I persuaded her to come and lie beside me. Her hump prevented her lying on her back, but the ingenious Astrodi doubled up the pillows and succeeded in placing her in a position similar to that of a ship about to be launched. It was also by the tender care of the Astrodi that the introduction of the knife was managed, to the great delight of priest and victim. After the operation was over she got up and kissed me, which she could not do before, for her mouth reached to the middle of my chest, while my feet were scarcely down to her knees. I would have given ten louis to have been able to see the curious sight we must have presented at work.

“Now comes my turn,” said the Astrodi; “but I don’t want you to infringe on the rights of my auditor, so come and look round and see where the path lies. Take that.”

“What am I to do with this slice of lemon?”

“I want you to try whether the place is free from infection, or whether it would be dangerous for you to pay it a visit.”

“Is that a sure method?”

“Infallible; if everything were not right I could not bear the smart.”

“There you are. How’s that?”

“All right; but don’t deceive me, I want no half measures. My reputation would be made if I became with child.”

I ask my reader’s leave to draw a veil over some incidents of this truly scandalous orgy, in which the ugly woman taught me some things I did not know before. At last, more tired than exhausted, I told them to begone, but the Astrodi insisted on finishing up with a bowl of punch. I agreed, but not wishing to have anything more to do with either of them I dressed myself again. However, the champagne punch excited them to such an extent that at last they made me share their transports. The Astrodi placed her friend in such a singular position that the humps were no longer visible, and imagining that I had before me the high priestess of Jove, I paid her a long sacrifice, in which death and resurrection followed one another in succession. But I felt disgusted with myself, and drew away from their lascivious frenzies, and gave them ten Louis to get rid of them. The Astrodi fell on her knees, blessed me, thanked me, called me her god; and the Lepi wept and laughed for joy at the same time; and thus for a quarter of an hour I was treated to a scene of an extraordinary kind.

I had them taken home in my carriage, and slept till ten o'clock next morning. Just as I was going out for a walk Stuard came to my room and told me, with an air of despair, that if I did not give him the means of going away before I left he would throw himself in the Rhine.

"That's rather tragic," said I, "but I can find a cure. I will disburse twenty-five Louis, but it is your wife who must receive them; and the only condition is that she must receive me alone for an hour, and be entirely kind."

"Sir, we need just that sum; my wife is disposed to receive you; go and talk to her. I shall not be in till noon."

I put twenty-five Louis in a pretty little purse, and left my room thinking that the victory was won. I entered her room and approached her bed respectfully. When she heard me she sat up in bed without taking the trouble to cover her breast, and before I could wish her good-day she spoke to me as follows:

"I am ready, sir, to pay with my body for the wretched twenty-five Louis of which my husband is in need. You can do what you like with me; but remember that in taking advantage of my position to assuage your brutal lust you are the viler of the two, for I only sell myself so cheaply because necessity compels me to do so. Your baseness is more shameful than mine. Come on; here I am."

With this flattering address she threw off the coverlet with a vigorous gesture, and displayed all her beauties, which I might have gazed on with such different feelings from those which now filled my breast. For a moment I was silent with indignation. All my passion had evaporated; in those voluptuous rounded limbs I saw now only the covering of a wild beast's soul. I put back the coverlet with the greatest calmness, and addressed her in a tone of cold contempt:

"No, madam, I shall not leave this room degraded because you have told me so, but I shall leave it after imparting to you a few degrading truths, of which you cannot be ignorant if you are a woman of any decency whatever. Here are twenty-five louis, a wretched sum to give a virtuous woman in payment of her favours, but much more than you deserve. I am not brutal, and to convince you of the fact I am going to leave you in the undisturbed possession of your charms, which I despise as heartily as I should have admired them if your behaviour had been different. I only give you the money from a feeling of compassion which I cannot overcome, and which is the only feeling I now have for you. Nevertheless, let me tell you that whether a woman sells herself for twenty-five louis or twenty-five million louis she is as much a prostitute in the one case as in the other, if she does not give her love with herself, or at all events the semblance of love. Farewell."

I went back to my room, and in course of time Stuard came to thank me.

"Sir," said I, "let me alone; I wish to hear no more about your wife."

They went away the next day for Lyons, and my readers will hear of them again at Liege.

In the afternoon Dolci took me to his garden that I might see the gardener's sister. She was pretty, but not so pretty as he was. He soon got her into a good humour, and after some trifling objection she consented to be loved by him in my presence. I saw that this Adonis had been richly dowered by nature, and I told him that with such a physical conformation he had no need of emptying his father's purse to travel, and before long he took my advice. This fair Ganymede might easily have turned me into Jove, as he struggled amorously with the gardener's sister.

As I was going home I saw a young man coming out of a boat; he was from twenty to twenty-five years old, and looked very sad. Seeing me looking at him, he accosted me, and humbly asked for alms, shewing me a document authorizing him to beg, and a passport stating he had left Madrid six weeks before. He came from Parma, and was named Costa. When I saw Parma my national prejudice spoke in his favour, and I asked him what misfortune had reduced him to beggary.

"Only lack of money to return to my native country," said he.

"What were you doing at Madrid, and why did you leave?"

"I was there four years as valet to Dr. Pistoria, physician to the King of Spain, but on my health failing I left him. Here is a certificate which will shew you that I gave satisfaction."

"What can you do?"

“I write a good hand, I can assist a gentleman as his secretary, and I intend being a scribe when I get home. Here are some verses I copied yesterday.”

“You write well; but can you write correctly without a book?”

“I can write from dictation in French, Latin, and Spanish.”

“Correctly?”

“Yes, sir, if the dictation is done properly, for it is the business of the one who dictates to see that everything is correct.”

I saw that Master Gaetan Costa was an ignoramus, but in spite of that I took him to my room and told Le Duc to address him in Spanish. He answered well enough, but on my dictating to him in Italian and French I found he had not the remotest ideas on orthography.

“But you can’t write,” said I to him. However, I saw he was mortified at this, and I consoled him by saying that I would take him to his own country at my expense. He kissed my hand, and assured me that I should find a faithful servant in him.

This young fellow took my fancy by his originality; he had probably assumed it to distinguish himself from the blockheads amongst whom he had hitherto lived, and now used it in perfect good faith with everybody. He thought that the art of a scribe solely consisted in possessing a good hand, and that the fairest writer would be the best scribe. He said as much while he was examining a paper I had written, and as my writing was not as legible as his he tacitly told me I was his inferior, and that I should therefore treat him with some degree of respect. I laughed at this fad, and, not thinking him incorrigible I took him into my service. If it had not been for that odd notion of his I should probably have merely given him a louis, and no more. He said that spelling was of no consequence, as those who knew how to spell could easily guess the words, while those who did not know were unable to pick out the mistakes. I laughed, but as I said nothing he thought the laugh signified approval. In the dictation I gave him the Council of Trent happened to occur. According to his system he wrote Trent by a three and a nought. I burst out laughing; but he was not in the least put out, only remarking that the pronunciation being the same it was of no consequence how the word was spelt. In point of fact this lad was a fool solely through his intelligence, matched with ignorance and unbounded self-confidence. I was pleased with his originality and kept him, and was thus the greater fool of the two, as the reader will see.

I left Avignon next day, and went straight to Marseilles, not troubling to stop at Aix. I halted at the "Treize Cantons," wishing to stay for a week at least in this ancient colony of the Phocaeans, and to do as I liked there. With this idea I took no letter of introduction; I had plenty of money, and needed nobody's help. I told my landlord to give me a choice fish dinner in my own room, as I was aware that the fish in those parts is better than anywhere else.

I went out the next morning with a guide, to take me back to the inn when I was tired of walking. Not heeding where I went, I reached a fine quay; I thought I was at Venice again, and I felt my bosom swell, so deeply is the love of fatherland graven on the heart of every good man. I saw a number of stalls where Spanish and Levantine wines were kept, and a number of people drinking in them. A crowd of business men went hither and thither, running up against each other, crossing each other's paths, each occupied with his own business, and not caring whose way he got into. Hucksters, well dressed and ill dressed, women, pretty and plain, women who stared boldly at everyone, modest maidens with downcast eyes, such was the picture I saw.

The mixture of nationalities, the grave Turk and the glittering Andalusian, the French dandy, the gross Negro, the crafty Greek, the dull Hollander; everything reminded me of Venice, and I enjoyed the scene.

I stopped a moment at a street corner to read a playbill, and then I went back to the inn and refreshed my weary body with a delicious dinner, washed down with choice Syracusan wine. After dinner I dressed and took a place in the amphitheatre of the theatre.

CHAPTER III

Rosalie — Toulon — Nice — I Arrive at Genoa — M. Grimaldi —

Veronique and Her Sister

I noticed that the four principal boxes on both sides of the proscenium were adorned with pretty women, but not a single gentleman. In the interval between the first and second acts I saw gentlemen of all classes paying their devoirs to these ladies. Suddenly I heard a Knight of Malta say to a girl, who was the sole occupant of a box next to me,

"I will breakfast with you to-morrow."

This was enough for me. I looked at her more closely and finding her to be a dainty morsel I said, as soon as the knight had gone —

"Will you give me my supper?"

"With pleasure; but I have been taken in so often that I shan't expect you without an earnest."

"How can I give you an earnest? I don't understand."

"You must be a new-comer here."

"Just arrived."

She laughed, called the knight, and said, —

"Be pleased to explain to this gentleman, who has just asked me for supper, the meaning of the word 'earnest.'"

The good-natured knight explained, with a smile, that the lady, fearing lest my memory should prove defective, wanted me to pay for my supper in advance. I thanked him, and asked her if a louis would be enough; and on her replying in the affirmative, I gave her the Louis and asked for her address. The knight told me politely that he would take me there himself after the theatre, adding, —

"She's the wantonest wench in all Marseilles."

He then asked me if I knew the town, and when I told him that I had only come that day he said he was glad to be the first to make my acquaintance. We went to the middle of, the amphitheatre and he pointed out a score of girls to right and left, all of them ready to treat the first comer to supper. They are all on the free list, and the manager finds they serve his ends as respectable women will not sit in their boxes, and they draw people to the theatre. I noticed five or six of a better type than the one I had engaged, but I resolved to stick to her for the evening, and to make the acquaintance of the others another time.

“Is your favourite amongst them?” I said to the knight.

“No, I keep a ballet-girl, and I will introduce you to her, as I am glad to say that I am free from all jealousy.”

When the play came to an end he took me to my nymph’s lodging, and we parted with the understanding that we were to see more of one another.

I found the lady in undress — a circumstance which went against her, for what I saw did not please me. She gave me a capital supper, and enlivened me by some witty and wanton sallies which made me regard her in a more favourable light. When we had supper she got into bed, and asked me to follow her example; but I told her that I never slept out. She then offered me the English article which brings peace to the soul, but I did not accept the one she offered as I thought it looked of a common make.

“I have finer ones, but they are three francs each, and the maker only sells them by the dozen,” she said. “I will take a dozen if they are really good,” I replied.

She rang the bell, and a young, charming, and modest-looking girl came in. I was struck with her.

“You have got a nice maid,” I remarked, when the girl had gone for the protective sheaths.

“She is only fifteen,” she said, “and won’t do anything, as she is new to it.”

“Will you allow me to see for myself?”

“You may ask her if you like, but I don’t think she will consent.”

The girl came back with the packet, and putting myself in a proper position I told her to try one on. She proceeded to do so with a sulky air and with a kind of repugnance which made me feel interested in her. Number one would not go on, so she had to try on a second, and the result was that I besprinkled her plentifully. The mistress laughed, but she was indignant, threw the whole packet in my face, and ran away in a rage. I wanted nothing more after this, so I put the packet in my pocket, gave the woman two Louis, and left the room. The girl I had treated so cavalierly came to light me downstairs, and thinking I owed her an apology I gave her a Louis and begged her pardon. The poor girl was astonished, kissed my hand, and begged me to say nothing to her mistress.

“I will not, my dear, but tell me truly whether you are still a ‘virgo intacta’.”

“Certainly, sir!”

“Wonderful! but tell me why you wouldn’t let me see for myself?”

“Because it revolted me.”

“Nevertheless you will have to do so, for otherwise, in spite of your prettiness, people will not know what to make of you. Would you like to let me try?”

“Yes, but not in this horrible house.”

“Where, then?”

“Go to my mother’s to-morrow, I will be there. Your guide knows where she lives.”

When I got outside, I asked the man if he knew her. He replied in the affirmative, and said he believed her to be an honest girl.

“You will take me to-morrow to see her mother,” I said.

Next morning he took me to the end of the town, to a poor house, where I found a poor woman and poor children living on the ground floor, and eating hard black bread.

“What do you want?” said she.

“Is you daughter here?”

“No, and what if she were? I am not her bawd.”

"No, of course not, my good woman."

Just then the girl came in, and the enraged mother flung an old pot which came handy, at her head. Luckily it missed, but she would not have escaped her mother's talons if I had not flung myself between them. However, the old woman set up a dismal shriek, the children imitated her, and the poor girl began to cry. This hubbub made my man come in.

"You hussy!" screamed the mother, "you are bringing disgrace on me; get out of my house. You are no longer my daughter!"

I was in a difficult position. The man begged her not to make such a noise, as it would draw all the neighbours about the house; but the enraged woman answered only by abuse. I drew six francs from my pocket and gave them to her, but she flung them in my face. At last I went out with the daughter, whose hair she attempted to pull out by the roots, which project was defeated by the aid of my man. As soon as we got outside, the mob which the uproar had attracted hooted me and followed me, and no doubt I should have been torn to pieces if I had not escaped into a church, which I left by another door a quarter of an hour later. My fright saved me, for I knew the ferocity of the Provencals, and I took care not to reply a word to the storm of abuse which poured on me. I believe that I was never in greater danger than on that day.

Before I got back to my inn I was rejoined by the servant and the girl.

"How could you lead me into such a dangerous position?" said I. "You must have known your mother was savage."

"I hoped she would behave respectfully to you."

"Be calm; don't weep any more. Tell me how I can serve you."

"Rather than return to that horrible house I was in yesterday I would throw myself into the sea."

"Do you know of any respectable house where I can keep her?" said I to the man.

He told me he did know a respectable individual who let furnished apartments.

"Take me to it, then."

The man was of an advanced age, and he had rooms to let on all the floors.

“I only want a little nook,” said the girl; and the old man took us to the highest story, and opened the door of a garret, saying —

“This closet is six francs a month, a month’s rent to be paid in advance, and I may tell you that my door is always shut at ten o’clock, and that nobody can come and pass the night with you.”

The room held a bed with coarse sheets, two chairs, a little table, and a chest of drawers.

“How much will you board this young woman for?” said I.

He asked twenty sous, and two sous for the maid who would bring her meals and do her room.

“That will do,” said the girl, and she paid the month’s rent and the day’s board. I left her telling her I would come back again.

As I went down the stairs I asked the old man to shew me a room for myself. He skewed me a very nice one at a Louis a month, and I paid in advance. He then gave me a latch-key, that I might go and come when I liked.

“If you wish to board here,” said he, “I think I could give satisfaction.”

Having done this good work, I had my dinner by myself, and then went to a coffee-house where I found the amiable Knight of Malta who was playing. He left the game as soon as he saw me, put the fistfull of gold he had won into his pocket, accosted me with the politeness natural to a Frenchman, and asked me how I had liked the lady who had given me my supper. I told him what had happened, at which he laughed, and asked me to come and see his ballet-girl. We found her under the hairdresser’s hands, and she received me with the playful familiarity with which one greets an old acquaintance. I did not think much of her, but I pretended to be immensely struck, with the idea of pleasing the good-natured knight.

When the hairdresser left her, it was time for her to get ready for the theatre, and she dressed herself, without caring who was present. The knight helped her to change her chemise, which she allowed him to do as a matter of course, though indeed she begged me to excuse her.

As I owed her a compliment, I could think of nothing better than to tell her that though she had not offended me she had made me feel very uncomfortable.

“I don’t believe you,” said she.

“It’s true all the same.”

She came up to me to verify the fact, and finding I had deceived her, she said half crossly,

“You are a bad fellow.”

The women of Marseilles are undoubtedly the most profligate in France. They not only pride themselves on never refusing, but also on being the first to propose. This girl skewed me a repeater, for which she had got up a lottery at twelve francs a ticket. She had ten tickets left; I took them all, and so delighted was she to touch my five Louis that she came and kissed me, and told the knight that her unfaithfulness to him rested only with me.

“I am charmed to hear it,” said the Maltese. He asked me to sup with her, and I accepted the invitation, but the sole pleasure I had was looking at the knight at work. He was far inferior to Dolci!

I wished them good night, and went to the house where I had placed the poor girl. The maid skewed me to my room, and I asked her if I might go to the garret. She took the light, I followed her up, and Rosalie, as the poor girl was named, heard my voice and opened the door. I told the maid to wait for me in my room, and I went in and sat down on the bed.

“Are you contented, dear?” I said.

“I am quite happy.”

“Then I hope you will be kind, and find room for me in your bed.”

“You may come if you like, but I must tell you that you will not find me a maid, as I have had one lover.”

“You told me a lie, then?”

“Forgive me, I could not guess you would be my lover.”

“I forgive you willingly; all the more so as I am no great stickler for maidenheads.”

She was as gentle as a lamb, and allowed me to gaze on all those charms of which my hands and my lips disputed the possession; and the notion that I was master of all these treasures put fire in all my veins, but her submissive air distressed me.

“How is it you do not partake my desires?” said I.

“I dare not, lest you take me for a pretender.”

Artifice or studied coquetry might have prompted such an answer, but the real timidity and the frankness with which these words were uttered could not have been assumed. Impatient to gain possession of her I took off my clothes, and on getting into bed to her I was astonished to find her a maid.

“Why did you tell me you had a lover?” said I. “I never heard of a girl telling a lie of that sort before.”

“All the same I did not tell a lie, but I am very glad that I seem as if I had done so.”

“Tell me all about it.”

“Certainly I will, for I want to win your confidence. This is the story:

“Two years ago my mother, though she was hot-tempered, still loved me. I was a needle-woman, and earned from twenty to thirty sous a day. Whatever I earned I gave my mother. I had never had a lover, never thought of such a thing, and when my goodness was praised I felt inclined to laugh. I had been brought up from a child never to look at young men when I met them in the street, and never to reply to them when they addressed any impudence to me.

“Two months ago a fine enough looking young man, a native of Genoa, and a merchant in a small way, came to my mother to get her to wash some very fine cotton stockings which the sea-water had stained. When he saw me he was very complimentary, but in an honest way. I liked him, and, no doubt seeing it, he came and came again every evening. My mother was always present at our interviews, and he looked at me and talked to me, but did not so much as ask to kiss my hand. My mother was very pleased to notice that the young man liked me, and often scolded me because I was not polite enough to him. In time he had to go to Genoa in a small ship which belonged to him, and which was laden with goods. He assured us that he would return again the next spring and declare his intentions. He said he hoped he should find me as good as ever, and still without any lover. This was enough; my mother looked upon him as my betrothed, and let us talk together at the door till midnight. When he went I would shut the door and lie down beside my mother, who was always asleep.

"Four or five days before his departure, he took my arm and got me to go with him to a place about fifty paces from the house to drink a glass of Muscat at a Greek's, who kept his tavern open all night. We were only away for half an hour, and then it was that he first kissed me. When I got home I found my mother awake, and told her all; it seemed so harmless to me.

"Next day, excited by the recollection of what had happened the night before, I went with him again, and love began to gain ground. We indulged in caresses which were no longer innocent, as we well knew. However, we forgave each other, as we had abstained from the chief liberty.

"The day after, my lover — as he had to journey in the night — took leave of my mother, and as soon as she was in bed I was not longer in granting what I desired as much as he. We went to the Greek's, ate and drank, and our heated senses gained love's cause; we forgot our duty, and fancied our misdemeanour a triumph.

"Afterwards we fell asleep, and when we awoke we saw our fault in the clear, cold light of day. We parted sorrowful rather than rejoicing, and the reception my mother gave me was like that you witnessed this morning. I assured her that marriage would take away the shame of my sin, and with this she took up a stick and would have done for me, if I had not taken to my heels, more from instinct than from any idea of what I was doing.

"Once in the street I knew not where to turn, and taking refuge in a church I stayed there like one in a dream till noon. Think of my position. I was hungry, I had no refuge, nothing but the clothes I wore, nothing that would get me a morsel of bread. A woman accosted me in the street. I knew her and I also knew that she kept a servants' agency. I asked her forthwith if she could get me a place.

"'I had enquiries about a maid this morning,' said she, 'but it is for a gay woman, and you are pretty. You would have a good deal of difficulty in remaining virtuous.'

"'I can keep off the infection,' I answered, 'and in the position I am in I cannot pick and choose.'

"She thereupon took me to the lady, who was delighted to see me, and still more delighted when I told her that I had never had anything to do with a man. I have repented of this lie bitterly enough, for in the week I spent at that profligate woman's house I have had to endure the most humiliating insults that an honest girl ever suffered. No sooner did the men who came to the house hear that I was a maid than they longed to slake their brutal lust upon me, offering me gold if I would submit to their caresses. I refused and was reviled, but that was not all. Five or six times every day I was obliged to remain a witness of the disgusting scenes enacted between my mistress and her customers, who, when I was compelled to light them about the house at night, overwhelmed me with insults, because I would not do them a disgusting service for a twelve-sous piece. I could not bear this sort of life much longer, and I was thinking of drowning myself. When you came you treated me so ignominiously that my resolve to die was strengthened, but you were so kind and polite as you went away that I fell in love with you directly, thinking that Providence must have sent you to snatch me away from the abyss. I thought your fine presence might calm my mother and persuade her to take me back till my lover came to marry me. I was undeceived, and I saw that she took me for a prostitute. Now, if you like, I am altogether yours, and I renounce my lover of whom I am no longer worthy. Take me as your maid, I will love you and you only; I will submit myself to you and do whatever you bid me."

Whether it were weakness or virtue on my part, this tale of woe and a mother's too great severity drew tears from my eyes, and when she saw my emotion she wept profusely, for her heart was in need of some relief.

"I think, my poor Rosalie, you have only one chemise."

"Alas! that is all."

"Comfort yourself, my dear; all your wants shall be supplied tomorrow, and in the evening you shall sup with me in my room on the second floor. I will take care of you."

"You pity me, then?"

"I fancy there is more love than pity in it."

"Would to God it were so!"

This "would to God," which came from the very depths of her soul, sent me away in a merry mood. The servant who had been waiting for me for two hours, and was looking rather glum, relaxed when she saw the colour of a crown which I gave her by way of atonement.

"Tell your master," said I, "that Rosalie will sup with me to-morrow; let us have a fasting dinner, but let it be a good one."

I returned to my inn quite in love with Rosalie, and I congratulated myself on having at last heard a true tale from a pretty mouth. She appeared to me so well disposed that her small failing seemed to make her shine the more. I resolved never to abandon her, and I did so in all sincerity; was I not in love?

After I had had my chocolate next morning I went out with a guide to the shops, where I got the necessary articles, paying a good but not an excessive price. Rosalie was only fifteen, but with her figure, her well-formed breasts, and her rounded arms, she would have been taken for twenty. Her shape was so imprinted on my brain that everything I got for her fitted as if she had been measured for it. This shopping took up all the morning, and in the afternoon the man took her a small trunk containing two dresses, chemises, petticoats, handkerchiefs, stockings, gloves, caps, a pair of slippers, a fan, a work-bag, and a mantle. I was pleased at giving her such a delightful surprise, and I longed for suppertime that I might enjoy the sight of her pleasure.

The Knight of Malta came to dine with me without ceremony, and I was charmed to see him. After we had dined he persuaded me to go to the theatre, as in consequence of the suspense of the subscription arrangements the boxes would be filled with all the quality in Marseilles.

"There will be no loose women in the amphitheatre," said he, "as everybody has to pay."

That decided me and I went. He presented me to a lady with an excellent connection, who asked me to come and see her. I excused myself on the plea that I was leaving so shortly. Nevertheless she was very useful to me on my second visit to Marseilles. Her name was Madame Audibert.

I did not wait for the play to end, but went where love called me. I had a delightful surprise when I saw Rosalie; I should not have known her. But I cannot resist the pleasure of recalling her picture as she stood before me then, despite the years that have rolled by since that happy moment.

Rosalie was an enticing-looking brunette, above the middle height. Her face was a perfect oval, and exquisitely proportioned. Two fine black eyes shed a soft and ravishing light around. Her eyebrows were arched, and she had a wealth of hair, black and shining as ebony; her skin was while and lightly tinged with colour. On her chin was a dimple, and her slightest smile summoned into being two other dimples, one on each cheek. Her mouth was small, disclosing two rows of fairest orient pearls, and from her red lips flowed forth an indefinable sweetness. The lower lip projected ever so lightly, and seemed designed to hold a kiss. I have spoken of her arms, her breast, and her figure, which left nothing to be desired, but I must add to this catalogue of her charms, that her hand was exquisitely shaped, and that her foot was the smallest I have ever seen. As to her other beauties, I will content myself with saying that they were in harmony with those I have described.

To see her at her best, one had to see her smiling; and hitherto she had been sad or vexed — states of mind which detract from a woman's appearance. But now sadness was gone, and gratitude and pleasure had taken its place. I examined her closely, and felt proud, as I saw what a transformation I had effected; but I concealed my surprise, lest she should think I had formed an unfavourable impression of her. I proceeded, therefore, to tell her that I should expose myself to ridicule if I attempted to keep a beauty like herself for a servant.

“You shall be my mistress,” I said, “and my servants shall respect you as if you were my wife.”

At this Rosalie, as if I had given her another being, began to try and express her gratitude for what I had done. Her words, which passion made confused, increased my joy; here was no art nor deceit, but simple nature.

There was no mirror in her garret, so she had dressed by her sense of touch, and I could see that she was afraid to stand up and look at herself in the mirror in my room. I knew the weak spot in all women's hearts (which men are very wrong in considering as matter for reproach), and I encouraged her to admire herself, whereupon she could not restrain a smile of satisfaction.

“I think I must be in disguise,” said she, “for I have never seen myself so decked out before.”

She praised the tasteful simplicity of the dress I had chosen, but was vexed at the thought that her mother would still be displeased.

“Think no more of your mother, dearest one. You look like a lady of quality, and I shall be quite proud when the people at Genoa ask me if you are my daughter.”

“At Genoa?”

“Yes, at Genoa. Why do you blush?”

“From surprise; perhaps I may see there one whom I have not yet forgotten.”

“Would you like to stay here better?”

“No, no! Love me and be sure that I love you and for your own sake, not from any thought of my own interests.”

“You are moved, my angel; let me wipe away your tears with kisses.”

She fell into my arms, and she relieved the various feelings of which her heart was full by weeping for some time. I did not try to console her, for she had not grief; she wept as tender souls, and women, more especially, often will. We had a delicious supper to which I did honour for two, for she ate nothing. I asked her if she was so unfortunate as not to care for good food.

“I have as good an appetite as anyone,” she replied, “and an excellent digestion. You shall see for yourself when I grow more accustomed to my sudden happiness.”

“At least you can drink; this wine is admirable. If you prefer Greek muscat I will send for some. It will remind you of your lover.”

“If you love me at all, I beg you will spare me that mortification.”

“You shall have no more mortification from me, I promise you. It was only a joke, and I beg your pardon for it.”

“As I look upon you I feel in despair at not having known you first.”

“That feeling of yours, which wells forth from the depths of your open soul, is grand. You are beautiful and good, for you only yielded to the voice of love with the prospect of becoming his wife; and when I think what you are to me I am in despair at not being sure you love me. An evil genius whispers in my ear that you only bear with me because I had the happiness of helping you.”

“Indeed, that is an evil genius. To be sure, if I had met you in the street I should not have fallen head over ears in love with you, like a wanton, but you would certainly have pleased me. I am sure I love you, and not for what you have done for me; for if I were rich and you were poor, I would do anything in the world for you. But I don’t want it to be like that, for I had rather be your debtor than for you to be mine. These are my real feelings, and you can guess the rest.”

We were still talking on the same subject when midnight struck, and my old landlord came and asked me if I were pleased.

“I must thank you,” I replied, “I am delighted. Who cooked this delicious supper?”

“My daughter.”

“She understands her craft; tell her I thought it excellent.”

“Yes, sir, but it is dear.”

“Not too dear for me. You shall be pleased with me as I with you, and take care to have as good a supper to-morrow evening, as I hope the lady will be well enough to do justice to the products of your daughter’s culinary skill.”

“Bed is a capital place to get an appetite. Ah! it is sixty years since I have had anything to do with that sort of thing. What are you laughing at, mademoiselle?”

“At the delight with which you must recollect it.”

“You are right, it is a pleasant recollection; and thus I am always ready to forgive young folks the peccadilloes that love makes them commit.”

“You are a wise old man,” said I, “everyone should sympathise with the tenderest of all our mortal follies.”

"If the old man is wise," said Rosalie, when he had left the room, "my mother must be very foolish."

"Would you like me to take you to the play to-morrow?"

"Pray do not. I will come if you like, but it will vex me very much. I don't want to walk out with you or to go to the theatre with you here. Good heavens! What would people say. No, neither at Marseilles; but elsewhere, anything you please and with all my heart."

"Very good, my dear, just as you please. But look at your room; no more garret for you; and in three days we will start."

"So soon?"

"Yes; tell me to-morrow what you require for the journey, for I don't want you to lack for anything, and if you leave it all to me I might forget something which would vex me."

"Well, I should like another cloak, a cloak with a lining, some boots, a night-cap, and a prayer-book."

"You know how to read, do you?"

"Certainly; and I can write fairly well."

"I am glad to hear it. Your asking me so freely for what you want is a true proof of your love; where confidence dwells not there is no love. I will not forget anything, but your feet are so small that I should advise you to get your boots yourself."

Our talk was so pleasant, and I experienced such delight in studying her disposition, that we did not go to bed till five o'clock. In the arms of love and sleep we spent seven delicious hours, and when we rose at noon we were fast lovers. She called me thou, talked of love and not of gratitude, and, grown more familiar with her new estate, laughed at her troubles. She kissed me at every opportunity, called me her darling boy, her joy, and as the present moment is the only real thing in this life, I enjoyed her love, I was pleased with her caresses, and put away all ideas of the dreadful future, which has only one certainty — death, 'ultima linea rerum'.

The second night was far sweeter than the first; she had made a good supper, and drunk well, though moderately; thus she was disposed to refine on her pleasure, and to deliver herself with greater ardour to all the voluptuous enjoyments which love inspires.

I gave her a pretty watch and a gold shuttle for her to amuse herself with.

“I wanted it,” said she, “but I should never have dared to ask for it.”

I told her that this fear of my displeasure made me doubt once more whether she really loved me. She threw herself into my arms, and promised that henceforth she would shew me the utmost confidence.

I was pleased to educate this young girl, and I felt that when her mind had been developed she would be perfect.

On the fourth day I warned her to hold herself in readiness to start at a moment’s notice. I had said nothing about my plans to Costa or Le Duc, but Rosalie knew that I had two servants, and I told her that I should often make them talk on the journey for the sake of the laughter their folly would afford me.

“You, my dear,” I had said to her, “must be very reserved with them, and not allow them to take the slightest liberty. Give them your orders as a mistress, but without pride, and you will be obeyed and respected. If they forget themselves in the slightest particular, tell me at once.”

I started from the hotel of the “Treize Cantons” with four post-horses, Le Duc and Costa sitting on the coachman’s seat. The guide, whom I had paid well for his services, took us to Rosalie’s door. I got out of the carriage, and after thanking the kindly old landlord, who was sorry to lose so good a boarder, I made her get in, sat down beside her, and ordered the postillions to go to Toulon, as I wished to see that fine port before returning to Italy. We got to Toulon at five o’clock.

My Rosalie behaved herself at supper like the mistress of a house accustomed to the best society. I noticed that Le Duc as head man made Costa wait upon her, but I got over him by telling my sweetheart that he would have the honour of doing her hair, as he could do it as well as the best barber in Paris. He swallowed the golden pill, and gave in with a good grace, and said, with a profound bow, that he hoped to give madam satisfaction.

We went out next morning to see the port, and were shewn over the place by the commandant, whose acquaintance we made by a lucky chance. He offered his arm to Rosalie, and treated her with the consideration she deserved for her appearance and the good sense of her questions. The commandant accepted my invitation to dinner, at which Rosalie spoke to the point though not to excess, and received the polite compliments of our worthy guest with much grace. In the afternoon he took us over the arsenal, and after having him to dinner could not refuse his invitation to supper. There was no difficulty about Rosalie; the commandant introduced her immediately to his wife, his daughter, and his son. I was delighted to see that her manner with ladies even surpassed her manner with gentlemen. She was one of Nature's own ladies. The commandant's wife and daughter caressed her again and again, and she received their attentions with that modest sensibility which is the seal of a good education.

They asked me to dinner the next day, but I was satisfied with what I had seen, so I took leave, intending to start on the morrow.

When we got back to the inn I told her how pleased I was with her, and she threw her arms round my neck for joy.

"I am always afraid," said she, "of being asked who I am."

"You needn't be afraid, dearest; in France no gentleman or lady would think of asking such a question."

"But if they did, what ought I to do?"

"You should make use of an evasion."

"What's an evasion?"

"A way of escaping from a difficulty without satisfying impertinent curiosity."

"Give me an example."

"Well, if such a question were asked you, you might say, 'You had better ask this gentleman.'"

"I see, the question is avoided; but is not that impolite?"

"Yes; but not so impolite as to ask an embarrassing question."

"And what would you say if the question was passed on to you?"

"Well, my answer would vary in a ratio with the respect in which I held the questioner. I would not tell the truth, but I should say something. And I am glad to see you attentive to my lessons. Always ask questions, and you will always find me ready to answer, for I want to teach you. And now let us to bed; we have to start for Antibes at an early hour, and love will reward you for the pleasure you have given me to-day."

At Antibes I hired a felucca to take me to Genoa, and as I intended to return by the same route I had my carriage warehoused for a small monthly payment. We started early with a good wind, but the sea becoming rough, and Rosalie being mortally afraid, I had the felucca rowed into Villafranca, where I engaged a carriage to take me to Nice. The weather kept us back for three days, and I felt obliged to call on the commandant, an old officer named Peterson.

He gave me an excellent reception, and after the usual compliments had passed, said, —

"Do you know a Russian who calls himself Charles Ivanoff?"

"I saw him once at Grenoble."

"It is said that he has escaped from Siberia, and that he is the younger son of the Duke of Courland."

"So I have heard, but I know no proof of his claim to the title."

"He is at Genoa, where it is said a banker is to give him twenty thousand crowns. In spite of that, no one would give him a sou here, so I sent him to Genoa at my own expense, to rid the place of him."

I felt very glad that the Russian had gone away before my arrival. An officer named Ramini, who was staying at the same inn as myself, asked if I would mind taking charge of a packet which M. de St. Pierre, the Spanish consul, had to send to the Marquis Grimaldi, at Genoa. It was the nobleman I had just seen at Avignon, and I was pleased to execute the commission. The same officer asked me whether I had ever seen a certain Madame Stuard.

"She came here a fortnight ago with a man who calls himself her husband. The poor devils hadn't a penny, and she, a great beauty, enchanted everybody, but would give no one a smile or a word.”

“I have both seen and know her,” I answered. “I furnished her with the means to come here. How could she leave Nice without any money?”

“That’s just what no one can understand. She went off in a carriage, and the landlord’s bill was paid. I was interested in the woman. The Marquis Grimaldi told me that she had refused a hundred louis he offered her, and that a Venetian of his acquaintance had fared just as badly. Perhaps that is you?”

“It is, and I gave her some money despite my treatment.”

M. Peterson came to see me, and was enchanted with Rosalie’s amiable manner. This was another conquest for her, and I duly complimented her upon it.

Nice is a terribly dull place, and strangers are tormented by the midges, who prefer them to the inhabitants. However, I amused myself at a small bank at faro, which was held at a coffee-house, and at which Rosalie, whose play I directed, won a score of Piedmontese pistoles. She put her little earnings into a purse, and told me she liked to have some money of her own. I scolded her for not having told me so before, and reminded her of her promise.

“I don’t really want it,” said she, “it’s only my thoughtlessness.”

We soon made up our little quarrel.

In such ways did I make this girl my own, in the hope that for the remnant of my days she would be mine, and so I should not be forced to fly from one lady to another. But inexorable fate ordained it otherwise.

The weather grew fine again, and we got on board once more, and the next day arrived at Genoa, which I had never seen before. I put up at “St. Martin’s Inn,” and for decency’s sake took two rooms, but they were adjoining one another. The following day I sent the packet to M. Grimaldi, and a little later I left my card at his palace.

My guide took me to a linen-draper’s, and I bought some stuff for Rosalie, who was in want of linen. She was very pleased with it.

We were still at table when the Marquis Grimaldi was announced; he kissed me and thanked me for bringing the parcel. His next remark referred to Madame Stuard. I told him what had happened, and he laughed, saying that he was not quite sure what he would have done under the circumstances.

I saw him looking at Rosalie attentively, and I told him she was as good as she was beautiful.

“I want to find her a maid,” I said, “a good seamstress, who could go out with her, and above all who could talk Italian to her, for I want her to learn the language that I may take her into society at Florence, Rome and Naples.”

“Don’t deprive Genoa of the pleasure of entertaining her,” said the marquis. “I will introduce her under whatever name she pleases, and in my own house to begin with.”

“She has good reasons for preserving her incognito here.”

“Ah, I see! — Do you think of staying here long?”

“A month, or thereabouts, and our pleasures will be limited to seeing the town and its surroundings and going to the theatre. We shall also enjoy the pleasures of the table. I hope to eat champignons every day, they are better here than anywhere else.”

“An excellent plan. I couldn’t suggest a better. I am going to see what I can do in the way of getting you a maid, mademoiselle.”

“You sir? How can I deserve such great kindness?”

“My interest in you is the greater, as I think you come from Marseilles.”

Rosalie blushed. She was not aware that she lisped, and that this betrayed her. I extricated her from her confusion by telling the marquis his conjecture was well founded.

I asked him how I could get the Journal de Savans, the Mercure de France, and other papers of the same description. He promised to send me a man who would get me all that kind of thing. He added that if I would allow him to send me some of his excellent chocolate he would come and breakfast with us. I said that both gift and guest were vastly agreeable to me.

As soon as he had gone Rosalie asked me to take her to a milliner’s.

“I want ribbons and other little things,” said she, “but I should like to bargain for them and pay for them out of my own money, without your having anything to do with it.”

“Do whatever you like, my dear, and afterwards we will go to the play.”

The milliner to whom we went proved to be a Frenchwoman. It was a charming sight to see Rosalie shopping. She put on an important air, seemed to know all about it, ordered bonnets in the latest fashion, bargained, and contrived to spend five or six louis with great grandeur. As we left the shop I told her that I had been taken for her footman, and I meant to be revenged. So saying, I made her come into a jeweller’s, where I bought her a necklace, ear-rings, and brooches in imitation diamonds, and without letting her say a word I paid the price and left the shop.

“You have bought me some beautiful things,” said she, “but you are too lavish with your money; if you had bargained you might have saved four louis at least.”

“Very likely, dearest, but I never was any hand at a bargain.”

I took her to the play, but as she did not understand the language she got dreadfully tired, and asked me to take her home at the end of the first act, which I did very willingly. When we got in I found a box waiting for me from M. Grimaldi. It proved to contain twenty-four pounds of chocolate. Costa, who had boasted of his skill in making chocolate in the Spanish fashion, received orders to make us three cups in the morning.

At nine o’clock the marquis arrived with a tradesman, who sold me some beautiful oriental materials. I gave them to Rosalie to make two ‘mezzaro’ for herself. The ‘mezzaro’ is a kind of hooded cloak worn by the Genoese women, as the ‘cendal’ is worn at Venice, and the ‘mantilla’ at Madrid.

I thanked M. Grimaldi for the chocolate, which was excellent; Costa was quite proud of the praise the marquis gave him. Le Duc came in to announce a woman, whose name I did not know.

“It’s the mother of the maid I have engaged,” said M. Grimaldi.

She came in, and I saw before me a well-dressed woman, followed by a girl from twenty to twenty-four years old, who pleased me at the first glance. The mother thanked the marquis, and presented her daughter to Rosalie, enumerating her good qualities, and telling her that she would serve her well, and walk with her when she wished to go out.

“My daughter,” she added, “speaks French, and you will find her a good, faithful, and obliging girl.”

She ended by saying that her daughter had been in service lately with a lady, and that she would be obliged if she could have her meals by herself.

The girl was named Veronique. Rosalie told her that she was a good girl, and that the only way to be respected was to be respectable. Veronique kissed her hand, the mother went away, and Rosalie took the girl into her room to begin her work.

I did not forget to thank the marquis, for he had evidently chosen a maid more with a view to my likings than to those of my sweetheart. I told him that I should not fail to call on him, and he replied that he would be happy to see me at any hour, and that I should easily find him at his casino at St. Pierre d’Arena, where he often spent the night.

EPISODE 17 — RETURN TO ITALY

GENOA — TUSCANY — ROME

CHAPTER IV

The Play — The Russian — Petri — Rosalie at the Convent

When the marquis had gone, seeing Rosalie engaged with Veronique, I set myself to translate the 'Ecossaise' for the actors at Genoa, who seemed pretty good ones, to play.

I thought Rosalie looking sad at dinner, and said,

"What is the matter, dearest? You know I do not like to see you looking melancholy."

"I am vexed at Veronique's being prettier than I."

"I see what you mean; I like that! But console your self, Veronique is nothing compared to you, in my eyes at all events. You are my only beauty; but to reassure you I will ask M. de Grimaldi to tell her mother to come and fetch her away, and to get me another maid as ugly as possible."

"Oh, no! pray do not do so; he will think I am jealous, and I wouldn't have him think so for the world."

"Well, well, smile again if you do not wish to vex me."

"I shall soon do that, if, as you assure me, she will not make me lose your love. But what made the old gentleman get me a girl like that? Do you think he did it out of mischief?"

"No, I don't think so. I am sure, on the other hand, that he wanted to let you know that you need not fear being compared with anybody. Are you pleased with her in other respects?"

"She works well, and she is very respectful. She does not speak four words without addressing me as signora, and she is careful to translate what she says from Italian into French. I hope that in a month I shall speak well enough for us to dispense with her services when we go to Florence. I have ordered Le Duc to clear out the room I have chosen for her, and I will send her her dinner from our own table. I will be kind to her, but I hope you will not make me wretched."

"I could not do so; and I do not see what there can be in common between the girl and myself."

"Then you will pardon my fears."

"The more readily as they shew your love."

"I thank you, but keep my secret."

I promised never to give a glance to Veronique, of whom I was already afraid, but I loved Rosalie and would have done anything to save her the least grief.

I set to at my translation after dinner; it was work I liked. I did not go out that day, and I spent the whole of the next morning with M. de Grimaldi.

I went to the banker Belloni and changed all my gold into gigliati sequins. I made myself known after the money was changed, and the head cashier treated me with great courtesy. I had bills on this banker for forty thousand Roman crowns, and on Lepri bills for twenty thousand.

Rosalie did not want to go to the play again, so I got her a piece of embroidery to amuse her in the evening. The theatre was a necessity for me; I always went unless it interfered with some still sweeter pleasure. I went by myself, and when I got home I found the marquis talking to my mistress. I was pleased, and after I had embraced the worthy nobleman I complimented Rosalie on having kept him till my arrival, adding gently that she should have put down her work.

"Ask him," she replied, "if he did not make me keep on. He said he would go if I didn't, so I gave in to keep him."

She then rose, stopped working, and in the course of an interesting conversation she succeeded in making the marquis promise to stay to supper, thus forestalling my intention. He was not accustomed to take anything at that hour, and ate little; but I saw he was enchanted with my treasure, and that pleased me, for I did not think I had anything to fear from a man of sixty; besides, I was glad at the opportunity of accustoming Rosalie to good society. I wanted her to be a little coquettish, as a woman never pleases in society unless she shews a desire to please.

Although the position was quite a strange one for her, she made me admire the natural aptitude of women, which may be improved or spoiled by art but which exists more or less in them all, from the throne to the milk-pail. She talked to M. de Grimaldi in a way that seemed to hint she was willing to give a little hope. As our guest did not eat, she said graciously that he must come to dinner some day that she might have an opportunity of seeing whether he really had any appetite.

When he had gone I took her on my knee, and covering her with kisses asked her where she had learnt to talk to great people so well.

“It’s an easy matter,” she replied. “Your eyes speak to my soul, and tell me what to do and what to say.”

A professed rhetorician could not have answered more elegantly or more flatteringly.

I finished the translation; I had it copied out by Costa and took it to Rossi, the manager, who said he would put it on directly, when I told him I was going to make him a present of the play. I named the actors of my choice, and asked him to bring them to dine with me at my inn, that I might read the play and distribute the parts.

As will be guessed, my invitation was accepted, and Rosalie enjoyed dining with the actors and actresses, and especially hearing herself called Madame Casanova every moment. Veronique explained everything she did not understand.

When my actors were round me in a ring, they begged me to tell them their parts, but I would not give in on this point.

“The first thing to be done,” said I, “is for you to listen attentively to the whole piece without minding about your parts. When you know the whole play I will satisfy your curiosity.”

I knew that careless or idle actors often pay no attention to anything except their own parts, and thus a piece, though well played in its parts, is badly rendered as a whole.

They submitted with a tolerably good grace, which the high and mighty players of the Comedie Francaise would certainly not have done. Just as I was beginning my heading the Marquis de Grimaldi and the banker Belloni came in to call on me. I was glad for them to be present at the trial, which only lasted an hour and a quarter.

After I had heard the opinion of the actors, who by their praise of various situations shewed me that they had taken in the plot, I told Costa to distribute the parts; but no sooner was this done than the first actor and the first actress began to express their displeasure; she, because I had given her the part of Lady Alton; he, because I had not given him Murray's part; but they had to bear it as it was my will. I pleased everybody by asking them all to dinner for the day after the morrow, after dinner the piece to be rehearsed for the first time.

The banker Belloni asked me to dinner for the following day, including my lady, who excused herself with great politeness, in the invitation; and M. Grimaldi was glad to take my place at dinner at her request.

When I got to M. Belloni's, I was greatly surprised to see the impostor Ivanoff, who instead of pretending not to know me, as he ought to have done, came forward to embrace me. I stepped back and bowed, which might be put down to a feeling of respect, although my coldness and scant ceremony would have convinced any observant eye of the contrary. He was well dressed, but seemed sad, though he talked a good deal, and to some purpose, especially on politics. The conversation turned on the Court of Russia, where Elizabeth Petrovna reigned; and he said nothing, but sighed and turned away pretending to wipe the tears from his eyes. At dessert, he asked me if I had heard anything of Madame Morin, adding, as if to recall the circumstance to my memory, that we had supped together there:

“I believe she is quite well,” I answered.

His servant, in yellow and red livery, waited on him at table. After dinner he contrived to tell me that he had a matter of the greatest importance he wanted to discuss with me.

“My only desire sir, is to avoid all appearance of knowing anything about you.”

“One word from you will gain me a hundred thousand crowns, and you shall have half.”

I turned my back on him, and saw him no more at Genoa.

When I got back to the inn I found M. de Grimaldi giving Rosalie a lesson in Italian.

"She has given me an exquisite dinner," said he, "you must be very happy with her."

In spite of his honest face, M. Grimaldi was in love with her, but I thought I had nothing to fear. Before he went she invited him to come to the rehearsal next day.

When the actors came I noticed amongst them a young man whose face I did not know, and on my enquiring Rossi told me he was the prompter.

"I won't have any prompter; send him about his business."

"We can't get on without him."

"You'll have to; I will be the prompter."

The prompter was dismissed, but the three actresses began to complain.

"If we knew our parts as well as the 'pater noster' we should be certain to come to a dead stop if the prompter isn't in his box."

"Very good," said I to the actress, who was to play Lindane, "I will occupy the box myself, but I shall see your drawers."

"You would have some difficulty in doing that," said the first actor, "she doesn't wear any."

"So much the better."

"You know nothing about it," said the actress.

These remarks put us all in high spirits, and the ministers of Thalia ended by promising that they would dispense with a prompter. I was pleased with the way the piece was read, and they said they would be letter-perfect in three days. But something happened.

On the day fixed for the rehearsal they came without the Lindane and Murray. They were not well, but Rossi said they would not fail us eventually. I took the part of Murray, and asked Rosalie to be the Lindane.

"I don't read Italian well enough," she whispered, "and I don't wish to have the actors laughing at me; but Veronique could do it."

"Ask if she will read the part."

However, Veronique said that she could repeat it by heart.

"All the better," said I to her, laughing internally, as I thought of Soleure, for I saw that I should thus be obliged to make love to the girl to whom I had not spoken for the fortnight she had been with us. I had not even had a good look at her face. I was so afraid of Rosalie (whom I loved better every day) taking fright.

What I had feared happened. When I took Veronique's hand, and said, "Si, bella Lindana, debbe adorarvi!" everybody clapped, because I gave the words their proper expression; but glancing at Rosalie I saw a shadow on her face, and I was angry at not having controlled myself better. Nevertheless, I could not help feeling amazed at the way Veronique played the part. When I told her that I adored her she blushed up to her eyes; she could not have played the love-sick girl better.

We fixed a day for the dress-rehearsal at the theatre, and the company announced the first night a week in advance to excite public curiosity. The bills ran:

"We shall give Voltaire's Ecossaise, translated by an anonymous author: no prompter will be present."

I cannot give the reader any idea of the trouble I had to quiet Rosalie. She refused to be comforted; wept incessantly, and touched my heart by gentle reproaches.

"You love Veronique," said she, "and you only translated that piece to have an opportunity of declaring your love."

I succeeded in convincing her that she wronged me, and at last after I had lavished caresses on her she suffered herself to be calmed. Next morning she begged pardon for her jealousy, and to cure it insisted on my speaking constantly to Veronique. Her heroism went farther. She got up before me and sent me my coffee by Veronique, who was as astonished as I was.

At heart Rosalie was a great creature, capable of noble resolves, but like all women she gave way to sudden emotions. From that day she gave me no more signs of jealousy, and treated her maid with more kindness than ever.

Veronique was an intelligent and well-mannered girl, and if my heart had not been already occupied she would have reigned there.

The first night of the play I took Rosalie to a box, and she would have Veronique with her. M. de Grimaldi did not leave her for a moment. The play was praised to the skies; the large theatre was full of the best people in Genoa. The actors surpassed themselves, though they had no prompter, and were loudly applauded. The piece ran five nights and was performed to full houses. Rossi, hoping perhaps that I would make him a present of another play, asked my leave to give my lady a superb pelisse of lynx-fur, which pleased her immensely.

I would have done anything to spare my sweetheart the least anxiety, and yet from my want of thought I contrived to vex her. I should never have forgiven myself if Providence had not ordained that I should be the cause of her final happiness.

“I have reason to suspect,” she said one day, “that I am with child, and I am enchanted at the thought of giving you a dear pledge of my love.”

“If it comes at such a time it will be mine, and I assure you I shall love it dearly.”

“And if it comes two or three weeks sooner you will not be sure that you are the parent?”

“Not quite sure; but I shall love it just as well, and look upon it as my child as well as yours.”

“I am sure you must be the father. It is impossible the child can be Petri’s, who only knew me once, and then very imperfectly, whilst you and I have lived in tender love for so long a time.”

She wept hot tears.

“Calm yourself, dearest, I implore you! You are right; it cannot be Petri’s child. You know I love you, and I cannot doubt that you are with child by me and by me alone. If you give me a baby as pretty as yourself, it will be mine indeed. Calm yourself.”

“How can I be calm when you can have such a suspicion?”

We said no more about it; but in spite of my tenderness, my caresses, and all the trifling cares which bear witness to love, she was often sad and thoughtful. How many times I reproached myself bitterly for having let out my silly calculations.

A few days later she gave me a sealed letter, saying, —

“The servant has given me this letter when you were away. I am offended by his doing so, and I want you to avenge me.”

I called the man, and said, —

“Where did you get this letter?”

“From a young man, who is unknown to me. He gave me a crown, and begged me to give the letter to the lady without your seeing me, and he promised to give me two crowns more if I brought him a reply tomorrow. I did not think I was doing wrong, sir, as the lady was at perfect liberty to tell you.”

“That’s all very well, but you must go, as the lady, who gave me the letter unopened, as you can see for yourself, is offended with you.”

I called Le Duc, who paid the man and sent him away. I opened the letter, and found it to be from Petri. Rosalie left my side, not wishing to read the contents. The letter ran as follows:

“I have seen you, my dear Rosalie. It was just as you were coming out of the theatre, escorted by the Marquis de Grimaldi, who is my godfather. I have not deceived you; I was still intending to come and marry you at Marseilles next spring, as I promised. I love you faithfully, and if you are still my good Rosalie I am ready to marry you here in the presence of my kinfolk. If you have done wrong I promise never to speak of it, for I know that it was I who led you astray. Tell me, I entreat you, whether I may speak to the Marquis de Grimaldi with regard to you. I am ready to receive you from the hands of the gentleman with whom you are living, provided you are not his wife. Be sure, if you are still free, that you can only recover your honour by marrying your seducer.”

“This letter comes from an honourable man who is worthy of Rosalie,” I thought to myself, “and that’s more than I shall be, unless I marry her myself. But Rosalie must decide.”

I called her to me, gave her the letter, and begged her to read it attentively. She did so, and gave it me back, asking me if I advised her to accept Petri's offer.

"If you do dear Rosalie, I shall die of grief; but if I do not yield you, my honour bids me marry you, and that I am quite ready to do."

At this the charming girl threw herself on my breast, crying in the voice of true love, "I love you and you alone, darling; but it is not true that your honour bids you marry me. Ours is a marriage of the heart; our love is mutual, and that is enough for my happiness."

"Dear Rosalie, I adore you, but I am the best judge of my own honour. If Petri is a well-to-do man and a man who would make you happy, I must either give you up or take you myself."

"No, no; there is no hurry to decide. If you love me I am happy, for I love you and none other. I shall not answer the letter, and I don't want to hear anything more of Petri."

"You may be sure that I will say no more of him, but I am sure that the marquis will have a hand in it."

"I daresay, but he won't speak to me twice on the subject."

After this treaty — a more sincere one than the Powers of Europe usually make — I resolved to leave Genoa as soon as I got some letters for Florence and Rome. In the meanwhile all was peace and love between myself and Rosalie. She had not the slightest shadow of jealousy in her soul, and M. de Grimaldi was the sole witness of our happiness.

Five or six days later I went to see the marquis at his casino at St. Pierre d'Arena, and he accosted me by saying that he was happy to see me as he had an important matter he wished to discuss with me. I guessed what it would be, but begged him to explain himself. He then spoke as follows:

"A worthy merchant of the town brought his nephew, a young man named Petri, to see me two days ago. He told me that the young man is my godson, and he asked me to protect him. I answered that as his godfather I owed him my protection, and I promised to do what I could.

"He left my godson to talk it over with me, and he informed me that he knew your mistress before you did at Marseilles, that he had promised to marry her next spring, that he had seen her in my company, and that having followed us he found out that she lived with you. He was told that she was your wife, but not believing it, wrote her a letter saying that he was ready to marry her; but this letter fell into your hands, and he has had no reply to it.

“He could not make up his mind to lose a hope which made his happiness, so he resolved to ascertain, through my good offices, whether Rosalie would accept his proposition. He flatters himself that on his informing me of his prosperous condition, I can tell you that he is a likely man to make his wife happy. I told him that I knew you, and would speak to you on the matter, and afterwards inform him of the result of our interview.

“I have made enquires into his condition, and find that he has already amassed a considerable sum of money. His credit, morals, and reputation, are all excellent; besides, he is his uncle’s sole heir, and the uncle passes for a man very comfortably off. And now, my dear M. Casanova, tell me what answer I am to make.”

“Tell him that Rosalie is much obliged to him, and begs him to forget her. We are going away in three or four days. Rosalie loves me, and I her, and I am ready to marry her whenever she likes.”

“That’s plain speaking; but I should have thought a man like you would prefer freedom to a woman, however beautiful, to whom you would be bound by indissoluble ties. Will you allow me to speak to Rosalie myself about it?”

“You need not ask, my leave; speak to her, but in your own person and not as representing my opinions. I adore her, and would not have her think that I could cherish the thought of separating from her.”

“If you don’t want me to meddle in the matter, tell me so frankly.”

“On the contrary, I wish you to see for yourself that I am not the tyrant of the woman I adore.”

“I will talk to her to-night.”

I did not come home till supper-time, that the marquis might say what he had to say in perfect freedom. The noble Genoese supped with us, and the conversation turned on indifferent subjects. After he had gone, my sweetheart told me what had passed between them. He had spoken to her in almost the same words that he had addressed to me, and our replies were nearly identical, though she had requested the marquis to say no more about his godson, to which request he had assented.

We thought the matter settled, and busied ourselves with preparations for our departure; but three or four days after, the marquis (who we imagined had forgotten all about his godson) came and asked us to dine with him at St. Pierre d'Arena, where Rosalie had never been.

"I want you to see my beautiful garden before you go," said M. Grimaldi to her; "it will be one more pleasant recollection of your stay for me."

We went to see him at noon the next day. He was with an elderly man and woman, to whom he introduced us. He introduced me by name, and Rosalie as a person who belonged to me.

We proceeded to walk in the garden, where the two old people got Rosalie between them, and overwhelmed her with politeness and complimentary remarks. She, who was happy and in high spirits, answered in Italian, and delighted them by her intelligence, and the grace which she gave to her mistakes in grammar.

The servants came to tell us that dinner was ready, and what was my astonishment on entering the room to see the table laid for six. I did not want much insight now to see through the marquis's trick, but it was too late. We sat down, and just then a young man came in.

"You are a little late," said the marquis; and then, without waiting for his apology, he introduced him to me as M. Petri, his godson, and nephew to his other guests, and he made him sit down at his left hand, Rosalie being on his right. I sat opposite to her, and seeing that she turned as pale as death the blood rushed to my face; I was terribly enraged. This small despot's plot seemed disgraceful to me; it was a scandalous insult to Rosalie and myself — an insult which should be washed away in blood. I was tempted to stab him at his table, but in spite of my agitation I constrained myself. What could I do? Take Rosalie's arm, and leave the room with her? I thought it over, but foreseeing the consequences I could not summon up courage.

I have never spent so terrible an hour as at that fatal dinner. Neither Rosalie nor myself ate a morsel, and the marquis who helped all the guests was discreet enough not to see that we left one course after another untouched.

Throughout dinner he only spoke to Petri and his uncle, giving them opportunities for saying how large a trade they did. At dessert the marquis told the young man that he had better go and look after his affairs, and after kissing his hand he withdrew with a bow to which nobody replied.

Petri was about twenty-four, of a moderate height, with ordinary but yet good-natured and honest features; respectful in his manner, and sensible though not witty in what he said. After all was said and done, I thought him worthy of Rosalie, but I shuddered at the thought that if she became his wife she was lost to me forever. After he had gone, the marquis said he was sorry he had not known him before as he might be of use to him in his business.

“However, we will see to that in the future,” said he, meaningly, “I mean to make his fortune.”

At this the uncle and aunt, who no doubt knew what to say, began to laud and extol their nephew, and ended by saying that as they had no children they were delighted that Petri, who would be their heir, was to have his excellency’s patronage.

“We are longing,” they added, “to see the girl from Marseilles he is going to marry. We should welcome her as a beloved daughter.”

Rosalie whispered to me that she could bear it no longer, and begged me to take her away. We rose, and after we had saluted the company with cold dignity we left the room. The marquis was visibly disconcerted. As he escorted us to the door he stammered out compliments, for the want of something to say, telling Rosalie that he should not have the honour of seeing her that evening, but that he hoped to call on her the next day.

When we were by ourselves we seemed to breathe again, and spoke to one another to relieve ourselves of the oppression which weighed on our minds.

Rosalie thought, as well as I, that the marquis had played us a shameful trick, and she told me I ought to write him a note, begging him not to give himself the trouble of calling on us again.

“I will find some means of vengeance,” said I; “but I don’t think it would be a good plan to write to him. We will hasten our preparations for leaving, and receive him to-morrow with that cold politeness which bears witness to indignation. Above all, we will not make the slightest reference to his godson."

"If Petri really loves me," said she, "I pity him. I think he is a good fellow, and I don't feel angry with him for being present at dinner, as he may possibly be unaware that leis presence was likely to give me offence. But I still shudder when I think of it: I thought I should have died when our eyes met! Throughout dinner he could not see my eyes, as I kept them nearly shut, and indeed he could hardly see me. Did he look at me while he was talking?"

"No, he only looked at me. I am as sorry for him as you are, for, as you say, he looks an honest fellow."

"Well, it's over now, and I hope I shall make a good supper. Did you notice what the aunt said? I am sure she was in the plot. She thought she would gain me over by saying she was ready to treat me like her own child. She was a decent-looking woman, too."

We made a good supper, and a pleasant night inclined us to forget the insult the marquis had put upon us. When we woke up in the morning we laughed at it. The marquis came to see us in the evening, and greeting me with an air of mingled confusion and vexation, he said that he knew he had done wrong in surprising me as he had, but that he was ready to do anything in his power by way of atonement, and to give whatever satisfaction I liked.

Rosalie did not give me time to answer. "If you really feel," said she, "that you have insulted us, that is enough; we are amply avenged. But all the same, sir, we shall be on our guard against you for the future, though that will be for a short while, as we are just leaving."

With this proud reply she made him a low bow and left the room.

When he was left alone with me M. Grimaldi addressed me as follows:

"I take a great interest in your mistress's welfare; and as I feel sure that she cannot long be happy in her present uncertain position, while I am sure that she would make my godson an excellent wife, I was determined that both of you should make his acquaintance, for Rosalie herself knows very little of him. I confess that the means I employed were dishonourable, but you will pardon the means for the sake of the excellent end I had in view. I hope you will have a pleasant journey, and that you may live for a long time in uninterrupted happiness with your charming mistress. I hope you will write to me, and always reckon on my standing your friend, and doing everything in my power for you. Before I go, I will tell you something which will give you an idea of the excellent disposition of young Petri, to whose happiness Rosalie seems essential.

"He only told me the following, after I had absolutely refused to take charge of a letter he had written to Rosalie, despairing of being able to send it any other way. After assuring me that Rosalie had loved him, and that consequently she could not have any fixed aversion for him, he added that if the fear of being with child was the reason why she would not marry him he would agree to put off the marriage till after the child was born, provided that she would agree to stay in Genoa in hiding, her presence to be unknown to all save himself. He offers to pay all the expenses of her stay. He made a remarkably wise reflection when we were talking it over.

"'If she gave birth to a child too soon after our marriage,' said he, 'both her honour and mine would suffer hurt; she might also lose the liking of my relations, and if Rosalie is to be my wife I want her to be happy in everything.'"

At this Rosalie, who had no doubt been listening at the door after the manner of her sex, burst into the room, and astonished me by the following speech:

"If M. Petri chid not tell you that it was possible that I might be with child by him, he is a right honest man, but now I tell you so myself. I do not think it likely, but still it is possible. Tell him, sir, that I will remain at Genoa until the child is born, in the case of my being pregnant, of which I have no certain knowledge, or until I am quite sure that I am not with child. If I do have a child the truth will be made known. In the case of there being no doubt of M. Petri's being the parent, I am ready to marry him; but if he sees for himself that the child is not his I hope he will be reasonable enough to let me alone for the future. As to the expenses and my lodging at Genoa, tell him that he need not trouble himself about either."

I was petrified. I saw the consequence of my own imprudent words, and my heart seemed broken. The marquis asked me if this decision was given with my authority, and I replied that as my sweetheart's will was mine he might take her words for law. He went away in high glee, for he foresaw that all would go well with his plans when once he was able to exert his influence on Rosalie. The absent always fare ill.

“You want to leave me, then, Rosalie?” said I, when we were alone.

“Yes, dearest, but it will not be for long.”

“I think we shall never see each other again.”

“Why not, dearest? You have only to remain faithful to me. Listen to me. Your honour and my own make it imperative that I should convince Petri that I am not with child by him, and you that I am with child by you.”

“I never doubted it, dear Rosalie.”

“Yes, dear, you doubted it once and that is enough. Our parting will cost me many a bitter tear, but these pangs are necessary to my future happiness. I hope you will write to me, and after the child is born it will be for you to decide on how I shall rejoin you. If I am not pregnant I will rejoin you in a couple of months at latest.”

“Though I may grieve at your resolve I will not oppose it, for I promised I would never cross you. I suppose you will go into a convent; and the marquis must find you a suitable one, and protect you like a father. Shall I speak to him on the subject? I will leave you as much money as you will want.”

“That will not be much. As for M. de Grimaldi, he is bound in honour to procure me an asylum. I don’t think it will be necessary for you to speak to him about it.”

She was right, and I could not help admiring the truly astonishing tact of this girl.

In the morning I heard that the self-styled Ivanoff had made his escape an hour before the police were to arrest him at the suit of the banker, who had found out that one of the bills he had presented was forged. He had escaped on foot, leaving all his baggage behind him.

Next day the marquis came to tell Rosalie that his godson had no objection to make to her plan. He added that the young man hoped she would become his wife, whether the child proved to be his or not.

“He may hope as much as he likes,” said Rosalie, with a smile.

"He also hopes that you will allow him to call on you now and then. I have spoken to my kinswoman, the mother-superior of convent. You are to have two rooms, and a very good sort of woman is to keep you company, wait on you, and nurse you when the time comes. I have paid the amount you are to pay every month for your board. Every morning I will send you a confidential man, who will see your companion and will bring me your orders. And I myself will come and see you at the grating as often as you please."

It was then my sad duty, which the laws of politeness enjoined, to thank the marquis for his trouble.

"'Tis to you, my lord," said I, "I entrust Rosalie. I am placing her, I am sure, in good hands. I will go on my way as soon as she is in the convent; I hope you will write a letter to the mother-superior for her to take."

"I will write it directly," said he.

And as Rosalie had told him before that she would pay for everything herself, he gave her a written copy of the agreement he had made.

"I have resolved," said Rosalie to the marquis, "to go into the convent to-morrow, and I shall be very glad to have a short visit from you the day after."

"I will be there," said the marquis, "and you may be sure that I will do all in my power to make your stay agreeable."

The night was a sad one for both of us. Love scarcely made a pause amidst our alternate complaints and consolations. We swore to be faithful for ever, and our oaths were sincere, as ardent lovers' oaths always are. But they are as nought unless they are sealed by destiny, and that no mortal mind may know.

Rosalie, whose eyes were red and wet with tears, spent most of the morning in packing up with Veronique, who cried too. I could not look at her, as I felt angry with myself for thinking how pretty she was. Rosalie would only take two hundred sequins, telling me that if she wanted more she could easily let me know.

She told Veronique to look after me well for the two or three days I should spend at Genoa, made me a mute curtsy, and went out with Costa to get a sedan-chair. Two hours after, a servant of the marquis's came to fetch her belongings, and I was thus left alone and full of grief till the marquis came and asked me to give him supper, advising that Veronique should be asked in to keep us company.

"That's a rare girl," said he, "you really don't know her, and you ought to know her better."

Although I was rather surprised, I did not stop to consider what the motives of the crafty Genoese might be, and I went and asked Veronique to come in. She replied politely that she would do so, adding that she knew how great an honour I did her.

I should have been the blindest of men if I had not seen that the clever marquis had succeeded in his well-laid plans, and that he had duped me as if I had been the merest freshman. Although I hoped with all my heart that I should get Rosalie back again, I had good reasons for suspecting that all the marquis's wit would be employed to seduce her, and I could not help thinking that he would succeed.

Nevertheless, in the position I was in, I could only keep my fears to myself and let him do his utmost.

He was nearly sixty, a thorough disciple of Epicurus, a heavy player, rich, eloquent, a master of state-craft, highly popular at Genoa, and well acquainted with the hearts of men, and still more so with the hearts of women. He had spent a good deal of time at Venice to be more at liberty, and to enjoy the pleasures of life at his ease. He had never married, and when asked the reason would reply that he knew too well that women would be either tyrants or slaves, and that he did not want to be a tyrant to any woman, nor to be under any woman's orders. He found some way of returning to his beloved Venice, in spite of the law forbidding any noble who has filled the office of doge to leave his native soil. Though he behaved to me in a very friendly manner he knew how to maintain an air of superiority which imposed on me. Nothing else could have given him the courage to ask me to dinner when Petri was to be present. I felt that I had been tricked, and I thought myself in duty bound to make him esteem me by my behaviour for the future. It was gratitude on his part which made him smooth the way to my conquest of Veronique, who doubtless struck him as a fit and proper person to console me for the loss of Rosalie.

I did not take any part in the conversation at supper, but the marquis drew out Veronique, and she shone. It was easy for me to see that she had more wit and knowledge of the world than Rosalie, but in my then state of mind this grieved rather than rejoiced me. M. de Grimaldi seemed sorry to see me melancholy, and forced me, as it were, to join in the conversation. As he was reproaching me in a friendly manner for my silence, Veronique said with a pleasing smile that I had a good reason to be silent after the declaration of love I had made to her, and which she had received so ill. I was astonished at this, and said that I did not remember having ever made her such a declaration; but she made me laugh in spite of myself, when she said that her name that day was Lindane.

"Ah, that's in a play," said I, "in real life the man who declares his love in words is a simpleton; 'tis with deeds the true lover shews his love."

"Very true, but your lady was frightened all the same."

"No, no, Veronique; she is very fond of you."

"I know she is; but I have seen her jealous of me."

"If so, she was quite wrong."

This dialogue, which pleased me little, fell sweetly on the marquis's ears; he told me that he was going to call on Rosalie next morning, and that if I liked to give him a supper, he would come and tell me about her in the evening. Of course I told him that he would be welcome.

After Veronique had lighted me to my room, she asked me to let my servants wait on me, as if she did so now that my lady was gone, people might talk about her.

"You are right," said I, "kindly send Le Duc to me."

Next morning I had a letter from Geneva. It came from my Epicurean syndic, who had presented M. de Voltaire with my translation of his play, with an exceedingly polite letter from me, in which I begged his pardon for having taken the liberty of travestying his fine French prose in Italian. The syndic told me plainly that M. de Voltaire had pronounced my translation to be a bad one.

My self-esteem was so wounded by this, and by his impoliteness in not answering my letter, with which he could certainly find no fault, whatever his criticism of my translation might be, that I became the sworn enemy of the great Voltaire. I have censured him in all the works I have published, thinking that in wronging him I was avenging myself, to such an extent did passion blind me. At the present time I feel that even if my works survive, these feeble stings of mine can hurt nobody but myself. Posterity will class me amongst the Zoiluses whose own impotence made them attack this great man to whom civilization and human happiness owe so much. The only crime that can truthfully be alleged against Voltaire is his attacks on religion. If he had been a true philosopher he would never have spoken on such matters, for, even if his attacks were based on truth, religion is necessary to morality, without which there can be no happiness.

CHAPTER V

I Fall in Love With Veronique — Her Sister — Plot Against

Plot — My Victory — Mutual Disappointment

I have never liked eating by myself, and thus I have never turned hermit, though I once thought of turning monk; but a monk without renouncing all the pleasures of life lives well in a kind of holy idleness. This dislike to loneliness made me give orders that the table should be laid for two, and indeed, after supping with the marquis and myself, Veronique had some right to expect as much, to say nothing of those rights which her wit and beauty gave her.

I only saw Costa, and asked him what had become of Le Duc. He said he was ill. “Then go behind the lady’s chair,” said I. He obeyed, but smiled as he did so. Pride is a universal failing, and though a servant’s pride is the silliest of all it is often pushed to the greatest extremes.

I thought Veronique prettier than before. Her behaviour, now free and now reserved, as the occasion demanded, shewed me that she was no new hand, and that she could have played the part of a princess in the best society. Nevertheless (so strange a thing is the heart of man), I was sorry to find I liked her, and my only consolation was that her mother would come and take her away before the day was over. I had adored Rosalie, and my heart still bled at the thought of our parting.

The girl’s mother came while we were still at table. She was astounded at the honour I shewed her daughter, and she overwhelmed me with thanks.

“You owe me no gratitude,” said I to her; “your daughter is clever, good, and beautiful.”

“Thank the gentleman for his compliment,” said the mother, “for you are really stupid, wanton, and ugly;” and then she added, “But how could you have the face to sit at table with the gentleman in a dirty chemise?”

"I should blush, mother, if I thought you were right; but I put a clean one on only two hours ago."

"Madam," said I to the mother, "the chemise cannot look white beside your daughter's whiter skin."

This made the mother laugh, and pleased the girl immensely. When the mother told her that she was come to take her back, Veronique said, with a sly smile, —

"Perhaps the gentleman won't be pleased at my leaving him twenty-four hours before he goes away."

"On the contrary," said I, "I should be very vexed."

"Well; then, she can stay, sir," said the mother; "but for decency's sake I must send her younger sister to sleep with her."

"If you please," I rejoined. And with that I left them.

The thought of Veronique troubled me, as I knew I was taken with her, and what I had to dread was a calculated resistance.

The mother came into my room where I was writing, and wished me a pleasant journey, telling me for the second time that she was going to send her daughter Annette. The girl came in the evening, accompanied by a servant, and after lowering her mezzaro, and kissing my hand respectfully, she ran gaily to kiss her sister.

I wanted to see what she was like, and called for candles; and on their being brought I found she was a blonde of a kind I had never before seen. Her hair, eyebrows, and eyelashes were the colour of pale gold, fairer almost than her skin, which was extremely delicate. She was very short-sighted, but her large pale blue eyes were wonderfully beautiful. She had the smallest mouth imaginable, but her teeth, though regular, were not so white as her skin. But for this defect Annette might have passed for a perfect beauty.

Her shortness of sight made too brilliant a light painful to her, but as she stood before me she seemed to like me looking at her. My gaze fed hungrily on the two little half-spheres, which were not yet ripe, but so white as to make me guess how ravishing the rest of her body must be. Veronique did not shew her breasts so freely. One could see that she was superbly shaped, but everything was carefully hidden from the gaze. She made her sister sit down beside her and work, but when I saw that she was obliged to hold the stuff close to her face I told her that she should spare her eyes, for that night at all events, and with that she obediently put the work down.

The marquis came as usual, and like myself he thought Annette, whom he had never seen before, an astonishing miniature beauty. Taking advantage of his age and high rank, the voluptuous old man dared to pass his hand over her breast, and she, who was too respectful to cross my lord, let him do it without making the slightest objection. She was a compound of innocence and coquetry.

The woman who shewing little succeeds in making a man want to see more, has accomplished three-fourths of the task of making him fall in love with her; for is love anything else than a kind of curiosity? I think not; and what makes me certain is that when the curiosity is satisfied the love disappears. Love, however, is the strongest kind of curiosity in existence, and I was already curious about Annette.

M. Grimaldi told Veronique that Rosalie wished her to stay with me till I left Genoa, and she was as much astonished at this as I was.

“Be kind enough to tell her,” said I to the marquis, “that Veronique has anticipated her wishes and has got her sister Annette to stay with her.”

“Two are always better than one, my dear fellow,” replied the crafty Genoese.

After these remarks we left the two sisters together and went into my room, where he said, —

“Your Rosalie is contented, and you ought to congratulate yourself on having made her happy, as I am sure she will be. The only thing that vexes me is that you can’t go and see her yourself with any decency.”

“You are in love with her, my lord.”

“I confess that I am, but I am an old man, and it vexes me.”

“That’s no matter, she will love you tenderly; and if Petri ever becomes her husband, I am sure she will never be anything more than a good friend to him. Write to me at Florence and tell me how she receives him.”

"Stay here for another three days; the two beauties there will make the time seem short."

"It's exactly for that reason that I want to go tomorrow. I am afraid of Veronique."

"I shouldn't have thought that you would have allowed any woman to frighten you."

"I am afraid she has cast her fatal nets around me, and when the time comes she will be strictly moral. Rosalie is my only love."

"Well, here's a letter from her."

I went apart to read the letter, the sight of which made my heart beat violently; it ran as follows:

"Dearest, — I see you have placed me in the hands of one who will care for me like a father. This is a new kindness which I owe to the goodness of your heart. I will write to you at whatever address you send me. If you like Veronique, my darling, do not fear any jealousy from me; I should be wrong to entertain such a feeling in my present position. I expect that if you make much of her she will not be able to resist, and I shall be glad to hear that she is lessening your sadness. I hope you will write me a few lines before you go."

I went up to the marquis and told him to read it. He seemed greatly moved.

"Yes," said he, "the dear girl will find in me her friend and father, and if she marries my godson and he does not treat her as he ought, he will not possess her long. I shall remember her in my will, and thus when I am dead my care will still continue. But what do you think of her advice as to Veronique? I don't expect she is exactly a vestal virgin, though I have never heard anything against her."

I had ordered that the table should be laid for four, so Annette sat down without our having to ask her. Le Duc appeared on the scene, and I told him that if he were ill he might go to bed.

"I am quite well," said he.

"I am glad to hear it; but don't trouble now, you shall wait on me when I am at Leghorn."

I saw that Veronique was delighted at my sending him away, and I resolved then and there to lay siege to her heart. I began by talking to her in a very meaning manner all supper-time, while the marquis entertained Annette. I asked him if he thought I could get a felucca next day to take me to Lerici.

"Yes," said he, "whenever you like and with as many oarsmen as you please; but I hope you will put off your departure for two or three days."

"No," I replied, ogling Veronique, "the delay might cost me too dear."

The sly puss answered with a smile that shewed she understood my meaning.

When we rose from the table I amused myself with Annette, and the marquis with Veronique. After a quarter of an hour he came and said to me,—

"Certain persons have asked me to beg you to stay a few days longer, or at least to sup here to-morrow night."

"Very good. We will talk of the few days more at supper to-morrow."

"Victory!" said the marquis; and Veronique seemed very grateful to me for granting her request. When our guest was gone, I asked my new housekeeper if I might send Costa to bed.

"As my sister is with me, there can be no ground for any suspicion."

"I am delighted that you consent; now I am going to talk to you."

She proceeded to do my hair, but she gave no answer to my soft speeches. When I was on the point of getting into bed she wished me good night, and I tried to kiss her by way of return. She repulsed me and ran to the door, much to my surprise. She was going to leave the room, when I addressed her in a voice of grave politeness.

“I beg you will stay; I want to speak to you; come and sit by me. Why should you refuse me a pleasure which after all is a mere mark of friendship?”

“Because, things being as they are, we could not remain friends, neither could we be lovers.”

“Lovers! why not, we are perfectly free.”

“I am not free; I am bound by certain prejudices which do not trouble you.”

“I should have thought you were superior to prejudices.”

“There are some prejudices which a woman ought to respect. The superiority you mention is a pitiful thing; always the dupe of itself. What would become of me, I should like to know, if I abandoned myself to the feelings I have for you?”

“I was waiting for you to say that, dear Veronique. What you feel for me is not love. If it were so, you would feel as I do, and you would soon break the bonds of prejudice.”

“I confess that my head is not quite turned yet, but still I feel that I shall grieve at your departure.”

“If so, that is no fault of mine. But tell me what I can do for you during my short stay here.”

“Nothing; we do not know one another well enough.”

“I understand you, but I would have you know that I do not intend to marry any woman who is not my friend.”

“You mean you will not marry her till you have ceased to be her lover?”

“Exactly.”

“You would like to finish where I would begin.”

“You may be happy some day, but you play for high stakes.”

“Well, well, it’s a case of win all or lose all.”

“That’s as may be. But without further argument it seems to me that we could safely enjoy our love, and pass many happy moments undisturbed by prejudice.”

"Possibly, but one gets burnt fingers at that game, and I shudder at the very thought of it. No, no; leave me alone, there is my sister who will wonder why I am in your arms."

"Very good; I see I was mistaken, and Rosalie too."

"Why what did she think about me?"

"She wrote and told me that she thought you would be kind."

"I hope she' mayn't have to repent for having been too kind herself."

"Good bye, Veronique."

I felt vexed at having made the trial, for in these matters one always feels angry at failure. I decided I would leave her and her precepts, true or false, alone; but when I awoke in the morning and saw her coming to my bed with a pleasant smile on her face, I suddenly changed my mind. I had slept upon my anger and I was in love again. I thought she had repented, and that I should be victorious when I attacked her again. I put on a smile myself and breakfasted gaily with her and her sister. I behaved in the same way at dinner; and the general high spirits which M. de Grimaldi found prevailing in the evening, made him think, doubtless, that we were getting on well, and he congratulated us. Veronique behaved exactly as if the marquis had guessed the truth, and I felt sure of having her after supper, and in the ecstasy of the thought I promised to stay for four days longer.

"Bravo, Veronique!" said the marquis, "that's the way. You are intended by nature to rule your lovers with an absolute sway."

I thought she would say something to diminish the marquis's certainty that there was an agreement between us, but she did nothing of the sort, seeming to enjoy her triumph which made her appear more beautiful than ever; whilst I looked at her with the submissive gaze of a captive who glories in, his chain. I took her behaviour as an omen of my approaching conquest, and did not speak to M. de Grimaldi alone lest he might ask me questions which I should not care to answer. He told us before he went away that he was engaged on the morrow, and so could not come to see us till the day after.

As soon as we were alone Veronique said to me, "You see how I let people believe what they please; I had rather be thought kind, as you call it, than ridiculous, as an honest girl is termed now-a-days. Is it not so?"

"No, dear Veronique, I will never call you ridiculous, but I shall think you hate me if you make me pass another night in torture. You have inflamed me."

"Oh, pray be quiet! For pity's sake leave me alone! I will not inflame you any more. Oh! Oh!"

I had enraged her by thrusting a daring hand into the very door of the sanctuary. She repulsed me and fled. Three or four minutes later her sister came to undress me. I told her gently to go to bed as I had to write for three or four hours; but not caring that she should come on a bootless errand I opened a box and gave her a watch. She took it modestly, saying, —

"This is for my sister, I suppose?"

"No, dear Annette, it's for you."

She gave a skip of delight, and I could not prevent her kissing my hand.

I proceeded to write Rosalie a letter of four pages. I felt worried and displeased with myself and everyone else. I tore up my letter without reading it over, and making an effort to calm myself I wrote her another letter more subdued than the first, in which I said nothing of Veronique, but informed my fair recluse that I was going on the day following.

I did not go to bed till very late, feeling out of temper with the world. I considered that I had failed in my duty to Veronique, whether she loved me or not, for I loved her and I was a man of honour. I had a bad night, and when I awoke it was noon, and on ringing Costa and Annette appeared. The absence of Veronique shewed how I had offended her. When Costa had left the room I asked Annette after her sister, and she said that she was working. I wrote her a note, in which I begged her pardon, promising that I would never offend her again, and begging her to forget everything and to be just the same as before. I was taking my coffee when she came into my room with an expression of mortification which grieved me excessively.

"Forget everything, I beg, and I will trouble you no more. Give me my buckles, as I am going for a country walk, and I shall not be in till suppertime. I shall doubtless get an excellent appetite, and as you have nothing more to fear you need not trouble to send me Annette again."

I dressed myself in haste, and left the town by the first road that came in my way, and I walked fast for two hours with the intention of tiring myself, and of thus readjusting the balance between mind and body. I have always found that severe exercise and fresh air are the best cure for any mental perturbation.

I had walked for more than three leagues when hunger and weariness made me stop at a village inn, where I had an omelette cooked. I ate it hungrily with brown bread and wine, which seemed to me delicious though it was rather sharp.

I felt too tired to walk back to Genoa, so I asked for a carriage; but there was no such thing to be had. The inn-keeper provided me with a sorry nag and a man to guide me. Darkness was coming on, and we had more than six miles to do. Fine rain began to fall when I started, and continued all the way, so that I got home by eight o'clock wet to the skin, shivering with cold, dead tired, and in a sore plight from the rough saddle, against which my satin breeches were no protection. Costa helped me to change my clothes, and as he went out Annette came in.

"Where is your sister?"

"She is in bed with a bad headache. She gave me a letter for you; here it is."

"I have been obliged to go to bed on account of a severe headache to which I am subject. I feel better already, and I shall be able to wait on you to-morrow. I tell you as much, because I do not wish you to think that my illness is feigned. I am sure that your repentance for having humiliated me is sincere, and I hope in your turn that you will forgive me or pity me, if my way of thinking prevents me from conforming to yours."

"Annette dear, go and ask your sister if she would like us to sup in her room."

She soon came back telling me that Veronique was obliged, but begged me to let her sleep.

I supped with Annette, and was glad to see that, though she only drank water, her appetite was better than mine. My passion for her sister prevented me thinking of her, but I felt that Annette would otherwise have taken my fancy. When we were taking dessert, I conceived the idea of making her drunk to get her talk of her sister, so I gave her a glass of Lunel muscat.

“I only drink water, sir.”

“Don’t you like wine?”

“Yes, but as I am not used to it I am afraid of its getting into my head.”

“Then you can go to bed; you will sleep all the better.”

She drank the first glass, which she enjoyed immensely, then a second, and then a third. Her little brains were in some confusion when she had finished the third glass. I made her talk about her sister, and in perfect faith she told me all the good imaginable.

“Then you are very fond of Veronique?” said I.

“Oh, yes! I love her with all my heart, but she will not let me caress her.”

“No doubt she is afraid of your ceasing to love her. But do you think she ought to make me suffer so?”

“No, but if you love her you ought to forgive her.”

Annette was still quite reasonable. I made her drink a fourth glass of muscat, but an instant after she told me that she could not see anything, and we rose from the table. Annette began to please me a little too much, but I determined not to make any attempts upon her for fear of finding her too submissive. A little resistance sharpens the appetite, while favours granted with too much ease lose a great deal of their charm. Annette was only fourteen, she had a soft heart, no knowledge of the world or her own rights, and she would not have resisted my embraces for fear of being rude. That sort of thing would only please a rich and voluptuous Turk.

I begged her to do my hair, intending to dismiss her directly after, but when she had finished I asked her to give me the ointment.

“What do you want it for?”

“For the blisters that cursed saddle on which I rode six miles gave me.”

“Does the ointment do them good?”

“Certainly; it takes away the smart, and by to-morrow I shall be cured, but you must send Costa to me, as I cannot put it on myself.”

"Can't I do it?"

"Yes, but I am afraid that would be an abuse of your kindness."

"I guess why; but as I am short-sighted, how shall I see the blisters?"

"If you want to do it for me, I will place myself so that it will be easier for you. Stay, put the candle on this table."

"There you are, but don't let Costa put it on again to-morrow, or he will guess that I or my sister did it to-night."

"You will do me the same service, then, to-morrow?"

"I or my sister, for she will get up early."

"Your sister! No, my dear; she would be afraid of giving me too much pleasure by touching me so near."

"And I am only afraid of hurting you. Is that right? Good heavens! what a state your skin is in!"

"You have not finished yet."

"I am so short-sighted; turn round."

"With pleasure. Here I am."

The little wanton could not resist laughing at what she saw, doubtless, for the first time. She was obliged to touch it to continue rubbing the ointment in, and I saw that she liked it, as she touched it when she had no need, and not being able to stand it any longer I took hold of her hand and made her stop her work in favour of a pleasanter employment.

When she had finished I burst out laughing to hear her ask, in the most serious way, the pot of ointment still in her left hand,

"Did I do it right!"

"Oh, admirably, dear Annette! You are an angel, and I am sure you know what pleasure you gave me. Can you come and spend an hour with me?"

"Wait a bit."

She went out and shut the door, and I waited for her to return; but my patience being exhausted I opened the door slightly, and saw her undressing and getting into bed with her sister. I went back to my room and to bed again, without losing all hope. I was not disappointed, for in five minutes back she came, clad in her chemise and walking on tip-toe.

“Come to my arms, my love; it is very cold.”

“Here I am. My sister is asleep and suspects nothing; and even if she awoke the bed is so large that she would not notice my absence.”

“You are a divine creature, and I love you with all my heart.”

“So much the better. I give myself up to you; do what you like with me, on the condition that you think of my sister no more.”

“That will not cost me much. I promise that I will not think of her.”

I found Annette a perfect neophyte, and though I saw no blood on the altar of love next morning I did not suspect her on that account. I have often seen such cases, and I know by experience that the effusion of blood or its absence proves nothing. As a general rule a girl cannot be convicted of having had a lover unless she be with child.

I spent two hours of delight with this pretty baby, for she was so small, so delicate, and so daintily shaped all over, that I can find no better name for her. Her docility did not detract from the piquancy of the pleasure, for she was voluptuously inclined.

When I rose in the morning she came to my room with Veronique, and I was glad to see that while the younger sister was radiant with happiness the elder looked pleasant and as if she desired to make herself agreeable. I asked her how she was, and she told me that diet and sleep had completely cured her. “I have always found them the best remedy for a headache.” Annette had also cured me of the curiosity I had felt about her. I congratulated myself on my achievement.

I was in such high spirits at supper that M. de Grimaldi thought I had won everything from Veronique, and I let him think so. I promised to dine with him the next day, and I kept my word. After dinner I gave him a long letter for Rosalie, whom I did not expect to see again except as Madame Petri, though I took care not to let the marquis know what I thought.

In the evening I supped with the two sisters, and I made myself equally agreeable to both of them. When Veronique was alone with me, putting my hair into curl-papers, she said that she loved me much more now that I behaved discreetly.

“My discretion,” I replied, “only means that I have given up the hope of winning you. I know how to take my part.”

“Your love was not very great, then?”

“It sprang up quickly, and you, Veronique, could have made it increase to a gigantic size.”

She said nothing, but bit her lip, wished me good night and left the room. I went to bed expecting a visit from Annette, but I waited in vain. When I rang the next morning the dear girl appeared looking rather sad. I asked her the reason.

“Because my sister is ill, and spent the whole night in writing,” said she.

Thus I learnt the reason of her not having paid me a visit.

“Do you know what she was writing about?”

“Oh, no! She does not tell me that kind of thing, but here is a letter for you.”

I read through the long and well-composed letter, but as it bore marks of craft and dissimulation it made me laugh. After several remarks of no consequence she said that she had repulsed me because she loved me so much and that she was afraid that if she satisfied my fancy she might lose me.

“I will be wholly yours,” she added, “if you will give me the position which Rosalie enjoyed. I will travel in your company, but you must give me a document, which M. de Grimaldi will sign as a witness, in which you must engage to marry me in a year, and to give me a portion of fifty thousand francs; and if at the end of a year you do not wish to marry me, that sum to be at my absolute disposal.”

She stipulated also that if she became a mother in the course of a year the child should be hers in the event of our separating. On these conditions she would become my mistress, and would have for me all possible love and kindness.

This proposal, cleverly conceived, but foolishly communicated to me, shewed me that Veronique had not the talent of duping others. I saw directly that M. de Grimaldi had nothing to do with it, and I felt sure that he would laugh when I told him the story.

Annette soon came back with the chocolate, and told me that her sister hoped I would answer her letter.

"Yes, dear," said I, "I will answer her when I get up."

I took my chocolate, put on my dressing-gown, and went to Veronique's room. I found her sitting up in bed in a negligent attire that might have attracted me if her letter had not deprived her of my good opinion. I sat on the bed, gave her back the letter, and said, —

"Why write, when we can talk the matter over?"

"Because one is often more at ease in writing than in speaking."

"In diplomacy and business that will pass, but not in love. Love makes no conditions. Let us have no documents, no safeguards, but give yourself up to me as Rosalie did, and begin to-night without my promising anything. If you trust in love, you will make him your prisoner. That way will honour us and our pleasures, and if you like I will consult M. de Grimaldi on the subject. As to your plan, if it does not injure your honour, it does small justice to your common sense, and no one but a fool would agree to it. You could not possibly love the man to whom you make such a proposal, and as to M. de Grimaldi, far from having anything to do with it, I am sure he would be indignant at the very idea."

This discourse did not put Veronique out of countenance. She said she did not love me well enough to give herself to me unconditionally; to which I replied that I was not sufficiently taken with her charms to buy them at the price she fixed, and so I left her.

I called Costa, and told him to go and warn the master of the felucca that I was going the next day, and with this idea I went to bid good-bye to the marquis, who informed me that he had just been taking Petri to see Rosalie, who had received him well enough. I told him I was glad to hear it, and said that I commended to him the care of her happiness, but such commendations were thrown away.

It is one of the most curious circumstances of my history, that in one year two women whom I sincerely loved and whom I might have married were taken from me by two old men, whose affections I had fostered without wishing to do so. Happily these gentlemen made my mistresses' fortunes, but on the other hand they did me a still greater service in relieving me of a tie which I should have found very troublesome in course of time. No doubt they both saw that my fortune, though great in outward show, rested on no solid basis, which, as the reader will see, was unhappily too true. I should be happy if I thought that my errors or rather follies would serve as a warning to the readers of these Memoirs.

I spent the day in watching the care with which Veronique and Annette packed up my trunks, for I would not let my two servants help in any way. Veronique was neither sad nor gay. She looked as if she had made up her mind, and as if there had never been any differences between us. I was very glad, for as I no longer cared for her I should have been annoyed to find that she still cared for me.

We supped in our usual manner, discussing only commonplace topics, but just as I was going to bed Annette shook my hand in a way that told me to prepare for a visit from her. I admired the natural acuteness of young girls, who take their degrees in the art of love with so much ease and at such an early age. Annette, almost a child, knew more than a young man of twenty. I decided on giving her fifty sequins without letting Veronique see me, as I did not intend to be so liberal towards her. I took a roll of ducats and gave them to her as soon as she came.

She lay down beside me, and after a moment devoted to love she said that Veronique was asleep, adding, —

"I heard all you said to my sister, and I am sure you love her."

"If I did, dear Annette, I should not have made my proposal in such plain terms."

"I should like to believe that, but what would you have done if she had accepted your offer? You would be in one bed by this, I suppose?"

"I was more than certain, dearest, that her pride would hinder her receiving me."

We had reached this point in our conversation when we were surprised by the sudden appearance of Veronique with a lighted candle, and wearing only her chemise. She laughed at her sister to encourage her, and I joined in the laughter, keeping a firm hold on the little one for fear of her escaping. Veronique looked ravishing in her scanty attire, and as she laughed I could not be angry with her. However, I said, —

"You have interrupted our enjoyment, and hurt your sister's feelings; perhaps you will despise her for the future?"

"On the contrary, I shall always love her."

"Her feelings overcame her, and she surrendered to me without making any terms."

"She has more sense than I."

"Do you mean that?"

"I do, really."

"I am astonished and delighted to hear it; but as it is so, kiss your sister."

At this invitation Veronique put down the candle, and covered Annette's beautiful body with kisses. The scene made me feel very happy.

"Come, Veronique," said I, "you will die of cold; come and lie down."

I made room for her, and soon there were three of us under the same sheet. I was in an ecstasy at this group, worthy of Aretin's pencil.

"Dearest ones," said I, "you have played me a pretty trick; was it premeditated? And was Veronique false this morning, or is she false now?"

"We did not premeditate anything, I was true this morning, and I am true now. I feel that I and my plan were very silly, and I hope you will forgive me, since I have repented and have had my punishment. Now I think I am in my right senses, as I have yielded to the feelings with which you inspired me when I saw you first, and against which I have fought too long."

"What you say pleases me extremely."

"Well, forgive me and finish my punishment by shewing that you are not angry with me."

"How am I to do that?"

"By telling me that you are vexed no longer, and by continuing to give my sister proofs of your love."

"I swear to you that so far from being angry with you I am very fond of you; but would you like us to be fond in your presence?"

"Yes, if you don't mind me."

Feeling excited by voluptuous emotions, I saw that my part could no longer be a passive one.

"What do you say," said I to my blonde, "will you allow your heroic sister to remain a mere looker-on at our sweet struggles? Are you not generous enough to let me make her an actress in the drama?"

"No; I confess I do not feel as if I could be so generous to-night, but next night, if you will play the same part, we will change. Veronique shall act and I will look on."

"That would do beautifully," said Veronique, with some vexation in her manner, "if the gentleman was not going to-morrow morning."

"I will stay, dear Veronique, if only to prove how much I love you."

I could not have wished for plainer speech on her part, and I should have liked to shew her how grateful I felt on the spot; but that would have been at Annette's expense, as I had no right to make any alteration in the piece of which she was the author and had a right to expect all the profits. Whenever I recall this pleasant scene I feel my heart beat with voluptuous pleasure, and even now, with the hand of old age upon me, I can not recall it without delight.

Veronique resigned herself to the passive part which her younger sister imposed on her, and turning aside she leant her head on her hand, disclosing a breast which would have excited the coldest of men, and bade me begin my attack on Annette. It was no hard task she laid upon me, for I was all on fire, and I was certain of pleasing her as long as she looked at me. As Annette was short-sighted, she could not distinguish in the heat of the action which way I was looking, and I succeeded in getting my right hand free, without her noticing me, and I was thus enabled to communicate a pleasure as real though not as acute as that enjoyed by her sister. When the coverlet was disarranged, Veronique took the trouble to replace it, and thus offered me, as if by accident, a new spectacle. She saw how I enjoyed the sight of her charms, and her eye brightened. At last, full of unsatisfied desire, she shewed me all the treasures which nature had given her, just as I had finished with Annette for the fourth time. She might well think that I was only rehearsing for the following night, and her fancy must have painted her coming joys in the brightest colours. Such at all events were my thoughts, but the fates determined otherwise. I was in the middle of the seventh act, always slower and more pleasant for the actress than the first two or three, when Costa came knocking loudly at my door, calling out that the felucca was ready. I was vexed at this untoward incident, got up in a rage, and after telling him to pay the master for the day, as I was not going till the morrow, I went back to bed, no longer, however, in a state to continue the work I begun. My two sweethearts were delighted with me, but we all wanted rest, though the piece should not have finished with an interruption. I wanted to get some amusement out of the interval, and proposed an ablution, which made Annette laugh and which Veronique pronounced to be absolutely necessary. I found it a delicious hors d'oeuvre to the banquet I had enjoyed. The two sisters rendered each other various services, standing in the most lascivious postures, and I found my situation as looker-on an enviable one.

When the washing and the laughter it gave rise to were over, we returned to the stage where the last act should have been performed. I longed to begin again, and I am sure I should have succeeded if I had been well backed up by my partner; but Annette, who was young and tired out with the toils of the night, forgot her part, and yielded to sleep as she had yielded to love. Veronique began to laugh when she saw her asleep, and I had to do the same, when I saw that she was as still as a corpse.

"What a pity!" said Veronique's eyes; but she said it with her eyes alone, while I was waiting for these words to issue from her lips. We were both of us wrong: she for not speaking, and I for waiting for her to speak. It was a favourable moment, but we let it pass by, and love punished us. I had, it is true, another reason for abstaining. I wished to reserve myself for the night. Veronique went to her own bed to quiet her excited feelings, and I stayed in bed with my sleeping beauty till noon, when I wished her good morning by a fresh assault which was completed neither on her side nor on mine to the best of my belief.

The day was spent in talking about ourselves, and determined to eat only one meal, we did not sit down to table till night began to fall. We spent two hours in the consumption of delicate dishes, and in defying Bacchus to make us feel his power. We rose as we saw Annette falling asleep, but we were not much annoyed at the thought that she would not see the pleasures we promised each other. I thought that I should have enough to do to contemplate the charms of the one nymph without looking at Annette's beauties. We went to bed, our arms interlaced, our bodies tight together, and lip pressed on lip, but that was all. Veronique saw what prevented me going any further, and she was too polite and modest to complain. She dissembled her feelings and continued to caress me, while I was in a frenzy of rage. I had never had such a misfortune, unless as the result of complete exhaustion, or from a strong mental impression capable of destroying my natural faculties. Let my readers imagine what I suffered; in the flower of my age, with a strong constitution, holding the body of a woman I had ardently desired in my arms, while she tenderly caressed me, and yet I could do nothing for her. I was in despair; one cannot offer a greater insult to a woman.

At last we had to accept the facts and speak reasonably, and I was the first to bewail my misfortune.

"You tired yourself too much yesterday," said she, "and you were not sufficiently temperate at supper. Do not let it trouble you, dearest, I am sure you love me. Do not try to force nature, you will only weaken yourself more. I think a gentle sleep would restore your manly powers better than anything. I can't sleep myself, but don't mind me. Sleep, we will make love together afterwards."

After those excellent and reasonable suggestions, Veronique turned her back to me and I followed her example, but in vain did I endeavour to obtain a refreshing slumber; nature which would not give me the power of making her, the loveliest creature, happy, envied me the power of repose as well. My amorous ardour and my rage forbade all thoughts of rest, and my excited passions conspired against that which would enable them to satisfy their desires. Nature punished me for having distrusted her, and because I had taken stimulants fit only for the weak. If I had fasted, I should have done great things, but now there was a conflict between the stimulants and nature, and by my desire for enjoyment I had deprived myself of the power to enjoy. Thus nature, wise like its Divine Author, punishes the ignorance and presumption of poor weak mortals.

Throughout this terrible and sleepless night my mind roamed abroad, and amidst the reproaches with which I overwhelmed myself I found a certain satisfaction in the thought that they were not wholly undeserved. This is the sole enjoyment I still have when I meditate on my past life and its varied adventures. I feel that no misfortune has befallen me save by my own fault, whilst I attribute to natural causes the blessings, of which I have enjoyed many. I think I should go mad if in my soliloquies I came across any misfortune which I could not trace to my own fault, for I should not know where to place the reason, and that would degrade me to the rank of creatures governed by instinct alone. I feel that I am somewhat more than a beast. A beast, in truth, is a foolish neighbour of mine, who tries to argue that the brutes reason better than we do.

"I will grant," I said, "that they reason better than you, but I can go no farther; and I think every reasonable man would say as much."

This reply has made me an enemy, although he admits the first part of the thesis.

Happier than I, Veronique slept for three hours; but she was disagreeably surprised on my telling her that I had not been able to close an eye, and on finding me in the same state of impotence as before. She began to get angry when I tried to convince her rather too forcibly that my misfortune was not due to my want of will, and then she blamed herself as the cause of my impotence; and mortified by the idea, she endeavoured to destroy the spell by all the means which passion suggested, and which I had hitherto thought infallible; but her efforts and mine were all thrown away. My despair was as great as hers when at last, wearied, ashamed, and degraded in her own eyes, she discontinued her efforts, her eyes full of tears. She went away without a word, and left me alone for the two or three hours which had still to elapse before the dawn appeared.

At day-break Costa came and told me that the sea being rough and a contrary wind blowing, the felucca would be in danger of perishing.

"We will go as soon as the weather improves," said I; "in the mean time light me a fire."

I arose, and proceeded to write down the sad history of the night. This occupation soothed me, and feeling inclined to sleep I lay down again and slept for eight hours. When I awoke I felt better, but still rather sad. The two sisters were delighted to see me in good health, but I thought I saw on Veronique's features an unpleasant expression of contempt. However, I had deserved it, and I did not take the trouble of changing her opinion, though if she had been more caressing she might easily have put me in a state to repair the involuntary wrongs I had done her in the night. Before we sat down to table I gave her a present of a hundred sequins, which made her look a little more cheerful. I gave an equal present to my dear Annette, who had not expected anything, thinking herself amply recompensed by my first gift and by the pleasure I had afforded her.

At midnight the master of the felucca came to tell me that the wind had changed, and I took leave of the sisters. Veronique shed tears, but I knew to what to attribute them. Annette kissed me affectionately; thus each played her own part. I sailed for Lerici, where I arrived the next day, and then posted to Leghorn. Before I speak of this town I think I shall interest my readers by narrating a circumstance not unworthy of these Memoirs.

CHAPTER VI

A Clever Cheat — Passano — Pisa — Corilla — My Opinion of Squinting Eyes — Florence — I See Therese Again — My Son — Corticelli

I was standing at some distance from my carriage into which they were putting four horses, when a man accosted me and asked me if I would pay in advance or at the next stage. Without troubling to look at him I said I would pay in advance, and gave him a coin requesting him to bring me the change.

“Directly, sir,” said he, and with that he went into the inn.

A few minutes after, just as I was going to look after my change, the post-master came up and asked me to pay for the stage.

“I have paid already, and I am waiting for my change. Did I not give the money to you?”

“Certainly not, sir.”

“Whom did I give it to, then?”

“I really can’t say; but you will be able to recognize the man, doubtless.”

“It must have been you or one of your people.”

I was speaking loud, and all the men came about me.

“These are all the men in my employ,” said the master, and he asked if any of them had received the money from me.

They all denied the fact with an air of sincerity which left no room for suspicion. I cursed and swore, but they let me curse and swear as much as I liked. At last I discovered that there was no help for it, and I paid a second time, laughing at the clever rascal who had taken me in so thoroughly. Such are the lessons of life; always full of new experiences, and yet one never knows enough. From that day I have always taken care not to pay for posting except to the proper persons.

In no country are knaves so cunning as in Italy, Greece ancient and modern excepted.

When I got to the best inn at Leghorn they told me that there was a theatre, and my luck made me go and see the play. I was recognized by an actor who accosted me, and introduced me to one of his comrades, a self-styled poet, and a great enemy of the Abbe Chiari, whom I did not like, as he had written a biting satire against me, and I had never succeeded in avenging myself on him. I asked them to come and sup with me — a windfall which these people are not given to refusing. The pretended poet was a Genoese, and called himself Giacomo Passano. He informed me that he had written three hundred sonnets against the abbe, who would burst with rage if they were ever printed. As I could not restrain a smile at the good opinion the poet had of his works, he offered to read me a few sonnets. He had the manuscript about him, and I could not escape the penance. He read a dozen or so, which I thought mediocre, and a mediocre sonnet is necessarily a bad sonnet, as this form of poetry demands sublimity; and thus amongst the myriads of sonnets to which Italy gives birth very few can be called good.

If I had given myself time to examine the man’s features, I should, no doubt, have found him to be a rogue; but I was blinded by passion, and the idea of three hundred sonnets against the Abbe Chiari fascinated me.

I cast my eyes over the title of the manuscript, and read, “La Chiareide di Ascanio Pogomas.”

“That’s an anagram of my Christian name and my surname; is it not a happy combination?”

This folly made me smile again. Each of the sonnets was a dull diatribe ending with “l’abbate Chiari e un coglione.” He did not prove that he was one, but he said so over and over again, making use of the poet’s privilege to exaggerate and lie. What he wanted to do was to annoy the abbe, who was by no means what Passano called him, but on the contrary, a wit and a poet; and if he had been acquainted with the requirements of the stage he would have written better plays than Goldoni, as he had a greater command of language.

I told Passano, for civility's sake, that he ought to get his Chiareide printed.

"I would do so," said he, "if I could find a publisher, for I am not rich enough to pay the expenses, and the publishers are a pack of ignorant beggars. Besides, the press is not free, and the censor would not let the epithet I give to my hero pass. If I could go to Switzerland I am sure it could be managed; but I must have six sequins to walk to Switzerland, and I have not got them."

"And when you got to Switzerland, where there are no theatres, what would you do for a living?"

"I would paint in miniature. Look at those."

He gave me a number of small ivory tablets, representing obscene subjects, badly drawn and badly painted.

"I will give you an introduction to a gentleman at Berne," I said; and after supper I gave him a letter and six sequins. He wanted to force some of his productions on me, but I would not have them.

I was foolish enough to give him a letter to pretty Sara's father, and I told him to write to me at Rome, under cover of the banker Belloni.

I set out from Leghorn the next day and went to Pisa, where I stopped two days. There I made the acquaintance of an Englishman, of whom I bought a travelling carriage. He took me to see Corilla, the celebrated poetess. She received me with great politeness, and was kind enough to improvise on several subjects which I suggested. I was enchanted, not so much with her grace and beauty, as by her wit and perfect elocution. How sweet a language sounds when it is spoken well and the expressions are well chosen. A language badly spoken is intolerable even from a pretty mouth, and I have always admired the wisdom of the Greeks who made their nurses teach the children from the cradle to speak correctly and pleasantly. We are far from following their good example; witness the fearful accents one hears in what is called, often incorrectly, good society.

Corilla was 'straba', like Venus as painted by the ancients — why, I cannot think, for however fair a squint-eyed woman may be otherwise, I always look upon her face as distorted. I am sure that if Venus had been in truth a goddess, she would have made the eccentric Greek, who first dared to paint her cross-eyed, feel the weight of her anger. I was told that when Corilla sang, she had only to fix her squinting eyes on a man and the conquest was complete; but, praised be God! she did not fix them on me.

At Florence I lodged at the “Hotel Carrajo,” kept by Dr. Vannini, who delighted to confess himself an unworthy member of the Academy Della Crusca. I took a suite of rooms which looked out on the bank of the Arno. I also took a carriage and a footman, whom, as well as a coachman, I clad in blue and red livery. This was M. de Bragadin’s livery, and I thought I might use his colours, not with the intention of deceiving anyone, but merely to cut a dash.

The morning after my arrival I put on my great coat to escape observation, and proceeded to walk about Florence. In the evening I went to the theatre to see the famous harlequin, Rossi, but I considered his reputation was greater than he deserved. I passed the same judgment on the boasted Florentine elocution; I did not care for it at all. I enjoyed seeing Pertici; having become old, and not being able to sing any more, he acted, and, strange to say, acted well; for, as a rule, all singers, men and women, trust to their voice and care nothing for acting, so that an ordinary cold entirely disables them for the time being.

Next day I called on the banker, Sasso Sassi, on whom I had a good letter of credit, and after an excellent dinner I dressed and went to the opera an via della Pergola, taking a stage box, not so much for the music, of which I was never much of an admirer, as because I wanted to look at the actress.

The reader may guess my delight and surprise when I recognised in the prima donna Therese, the false Bellino, whom I had left at Rimini in the year 1744; that charming Therese whom I should certainly have married if M. de Gages had not put me under arrest. I had not seen her for seventeen years, but she looked as beautiful and ravishing as ever as she came forward on the stage. It seemed impossible. I could not believe my eyes, thinking the resemblance must be a coincidence, when, after singing an air, she fixed her eyes on mine and kept them there. I could no longer doubt that it was she; she plainly recognized me. As she left the stage she stopped at the wings and made a sign to me with her fan to come and speak to her.

I went out with a beating heart, though I could not explain my perturbation, for I did not feel guilty in any way towards Therese, save in that I had not answered the last letter she had written me from Naples, thirteen years ago.

I went round the theatre, feeling a greater curiosity as to the results of our interview than to know what had befallen her during the seventeen years which seemed an age to me.

I came to the stage-door, and I saw Therese standing at the top of the stair. She told the door-keeper to let me pass; I went up and we stood face to face. Dumb with surprise I took her hand and pressed it against my heart.

“Know from that beating heart,” said I, “all that I feel.”

“I can’t follow your example,” said she, “but when I saw you I thought I should have fainted. Unfortunately I am engaged to supper. I shall not shut my eyes all night. I shall expect you at eight o’clock to-morrow morning. Where are you staying?”

“At Dr. Vannini’s.”

“Under what name?”

“My own.”

“How long have you been here?”

“Since yesterday.”

“Are you stopping long in Florence?”

“As long as you like.”

“Are you married?”

“No.”

“Cursed be that supper! What an event! You must leave me now, I have to go on. Good-bye till seven o’clock to-morrow.”

She had said eight at first, but an hour sooner was no harm. I returned to the theatre, and recollected that I had neither asked her name or address, but I could find out all that easily. She was playing Mandane, and her singing and acting were admirable. I asked a well-dressed young man beside me what that admirable actress’s name was.

“You have only come to Florence to-day, sir?”

“I arrived yesterday.”

"Ah! well, then it's excusable. That actress has the same name as I have. She is my wife, and I am Cirillo Palesi, at your service."

I bowed and was silent with surprise. I dared not ask where she lived, lest he might think my curiosity impertinent. Therese married to this handsome young man, of whom, of all others, I had made enquiries about her! It was like a scene in a play.

I could bear it no longer. I longed to be alone and to ponder over this strange adventure at my ease, and to think about my visit to Therese at seven o'clock the next morning. I felt the most intense curiosity to see what the husband would do when he recognized me, and he was certain to do so, for he had looked at me attentively as he spoke. I felt that my old flame for Therese was rekindled in my heart, and I did not know whether I was glad or sorry at her being married.

I left the opera-house and told my footman to call my carriage.

"You can't have it till nine o'clock, sir; it was so cold the coachman sent the horses back to the stable."

"We will return on foot, then."

"You will catch a cold."

"What is the prima donna's name?"

"When she came here, she called herself Lanti, but for the last two months she has been Madame Palesi. She married a handsome young man with no property and no profession, but she is rich, so he takes his ease and does nothing."

"Where does she live?"

"At the end of this street. There's her house, sir; she lodges on the first floor."

This was all I wanted to know, so I said no more, but took note of the various turnings, that I might be able to find my way alone the next day. I ate a light supper, and told Le Duc to call me at six o'clock.

"But it is not light till seven."

"I know that."

"Very good."

At the dawn of day, I was at the door of the woman I had loved so passionately. I went to the first floor, rang the bell, and an old woman came out and asked me if I were M. Casanova. I told her that I was, whereupon she said that the lady had informed her I was not coming till eight.

"She said seven."

"Well, well, it's of no consequence. Kindly walk in here. I will go and awake her."

In five minutes, the young husband in his night-cap and dressing-gown came in, and said that his wife would not be long. Then looking at me attentively with an astounded stare, he said,

"Are you not the gentleman who asked me my wife's name last night?"

"You are right, I did. I have not seen your wife for many years, but I thought I recognized her. My good fortune made me enquire of her husband, and the friendship which formerly attached me to her will henceforth attach me to you."

As I uttered this pretty compliment Therese, as fair as love, rushed into the room with open arms. I took her to my bosom in a transport of delight, and thus we remained for two minutes, two friends, two lovers, happy to see one another after a long and sad parting. We kissed each other again and again, and then bidding her husband sit down she drew me to a couch and gave full course to her tears. I wept too, and my tears were happy ones. At last we wiped our eyes, and glanced towards the husband whom we had completely forgotten. He stood in an attitude of complete astonishment, and we burst out laughing. There was something so comic in his surprise that it would have taxed all the talents of the poet and the caricaturist to depict his expression of amazement. Therese, who knew how to manage him, cried in a pathetic an affectionate voice, —

"My dear Palesi, you see before you my father — nay, more than a father, for this is my generous friend to whom I owe all. Oh, happy moment for which my heart has longed for these ten years past."

At the word "father" the unhappy husband fixed his gaze on me, but I restrained my laughter with considerable difficulty. Although Therese was young for her age, she was only two years younger than I; but friendship gives a new meaning to the sweet name of father.

"Yes, sir," said I, "your Therese is my daughter, my sister, my cherished friend; she is an angel, and this treasure is your wife."

"I did not reply to your last letter," said I, not giving him time to come to himself.

"I know all," she replied. "You fell in love with a nun. You were imprisoned under the Leads, and I heard of your almost miraculous flight at Vienna. I had a false presentiment that I should see you in that town. Afterwards I heard of you in Paris and Holland, but after you left Paris nobody could tell me any more about you. You will hear some fine tales when I tell you all that has happened to me during the past ten years. Now I am happy. I have my dear Palesi here, who comes from Rome. I married him a couple of months ago. We are very fond of each other, and I hope you will be as much his friend as mine."

At this I arose and embraced the husband, who cut such an extraordinary figure. He met me with open arms, but in some confusion; he was, no doubt, not yet quite satisfied as to the individual who was his wife's father, brother, friend, and perhaps lover, all at once. Therese saw this feeling in his eyes, and after I had done she came and kissed him most affectionately, which confused me in my turn, for I felt all my old love for her renewed, and as ardent as it was when Don Sancio Pico introduced me to her at Ancona.

Reassured by my embrace and his wife's caress, M. Palesi asked me if I would take a cup of chocolate with them, which he himself would make. I answered that chocolate was my favourite breakfast-dish, and all the more so when it was made by a friend. He went away to see to it. Our time had come.

As soon as we were alone Therese threw herself into my arms, her face shining with such love as no pen can describe.

"Oh, my love! whom I shall love all my life, clasp me to your breast! Let us give each other a hundred embraces on this happy day, but not again, since my fate has made me another's bride. To-morrow we will be like brother and sister; to-day let us be lovers."

She had not finished this speech before my bliss was crowned. Our transports were mutual, and we renewed them again and again during the half hour in which we had no fear of an interruption. Her negligent morning dress and my great coat were highly convenient under the circumstances.

After we had satiated in part our amorous ardour we breathed again and sat down. There was a short pause, and then she said,

"You must know that I am in love with my husband and determined not to deceive him. What I have just done was a debt I had to pay to the remembrance of my first love. I had to pay it to prove how much I love you; but let us forget it now. You must be contented with the thought of my great affection for you — of which you can have no doubt — and let me still think that you love me; but henceforth do not let us be alone together, as I should give way, and that would vex me. What makes you look so sad?"

"I find you bound, while I am free. I thought we had met never to part again; you had kindled the old fires. I am the same to you as I was at Ancona. I have proved as much, and you can guess how sad I feel at your decree that I am to enjoy you no more. I find that you are not only married but in love with your husband. Alas! I have come too late, but if I had not stayed at Genoa I should not have been more fortunate. You shall know all in due time, and in the meanwhile I will be guided by you in everything. I suppose your husband knows nothing of our connection, and my best plan will be to be reserved, will it not?"

"Yes, dearest, for he knows nothing of my affairs, and I am glad to say he shews no curiosity respecting them. Like everybody else, he knows I made my fortune at Naples; I told him I went there when I was ten years old. That was an innocent lie which hurts nobody; and in my position I find that inconvenient truths have to give way to lies. I give myself out as only twenty-four, how do you think I look?"

"You look as if you were telling the truth, though I know you must be thirty-two."

"You mean thirty-one, for when I knew you I couldn't have been more than fourteen."

"I thought you were fifteen at least."

"Well, I might admit that between ourselves; but tell me if I look more than twenty-four."

"I swear to you you don't look as old, but at Naples … ."

"At Naples some people might be able to contradict me, but nobody would mind them. But I am waiting for what ought to be the sweetest moment of your life."

"What is that, pray?"

"Allow me to keep my own counsel, I want to enjoy your surprise. How are you off? If you want money, I can give you back all you gave me, and with compound interest. All I have belongs to me; my husband is not master of anything. I have fifty thousand ducats at Naples, and an equal sum in diamonds. Tell me how much you want — quick! the chocolate is coming."

Such a woman was Therese. I was deeply moved, and was about to throw my arms about her neck without answering when the chocolate came. Her husband was followed by a girl of exquisite beauty, who carried three cups of chocolate on a silver-gilt dish. While we drank it Palesi amused us by telling us with much humour how surprised he was when he recognized the man who made him rise at such an early hour as the same who had asked him his wife's name the night before. Therese and I laughed till our sides ached, the story was told so wittily and pleasantly. This Roman displeased me less than I expected; his jealousy seemed only put on for form's sake.

"At ten o'clock," said Theresa, "I have a rehearsal here of the new opera. You can stay and listen if you like. I hope you will dine with us every day, and it will give me great pleasure if you will look upon my house as yours."

"To-day," said I, "I will stay with you till after supper, and then I will leave you with your fortunate husband."

As I pronounced these words M. Palesi embraced me with effusion, as if to thank me for not objecting to his enjoying his rights as a husband.

He was between the ages of twenty and twenty-two, of a fair complexion, and well-made, but too pretty for a man. I did not wonder at Therese being in love with him, for I knew too well the power of a handsome face; but I thought that she had made a mistake in marrying him, for a husband acquires certain rights which may become troublesome.

Therese's pretty maid came to tell me that my carriage was at the door.

"Will you allow me," said I to her, "to have my footman in?"

"Rascal," said I, as soon as he came in, "who told you to come here with my carriage?"

"Nobody, sir, but I know my duty."

"Who told you that I was here?"

"I guessed as much."

"Go and fetch Le Duc, and come back with him."

When they arrived I told Le Duc to pay the impertinent fellow three days' wages, to strip him of his livery, and to ask Dr. Vannini to get me a servant of the same build, not gifted with the faculty of divination, but who knew how to obey his master's orders. The rascal was much perturbed at the result of his officiousness, and asked Therese to plead for him; but, like a sensible woman, she told him that his master was the best judge of the value of his services.

At ten o'clock all the actors and actresses arrived, bringing with them a mob of amateurs who crowded the hall. Therese received their greetings graciously, and I could see she enjoyed a great reputation. The rehearsal lasted three hours, and wearied me extremely. To relieve my boredom I talked to Palesi, whom I liked for not asking me any particulars of my acquaintance with his wife. I saw that he knew how to behave in the position in which he was placed.

A girl from Parma, named Redegonde, who played a man's part and sang very well, stayed to dinner. Therese had also asked a young Bolognese, named Corticelli. I was struck with the budding charms of this pretty dancer, but as I was just then full of Therese, I did not pay much attention to her. Soon after we sat down I saw a plump abbe coming in with measured steps. He looked to me a regular Tartuffe, after nothing but Therese. He came up to her as soon as he saw her, and going on one knee in the Portuguese fashion, kissed her hand tenderly and respectfully. Therese received him with smiling courtesy and put him at her right hand; I was at their left. His voice, manner, and all about him told me that I had known him, and in fact I soon recognized him as the Abbe Gama, whom I had left at Rome seventeen years before with Cardinal Acquaviva; but I pretended not to recognize him, and indeed he had aged greatly. This gallant priest had eyes for no one but Therese, and he was too busy with saying a thousand soft nothings to her to take notice of anybody else in the company. I hoped that in his turn he would either not recognize me or pretend not to do so, so I was continuing my trifling talk with the Corticelli, when Therese told me that the abbe wanted to know whether I did not recollect him. I looked at his face attentively, and with the air of a man who is trying to recollect something, and then I rose and asked if he were not the Abbe Gama, with whose acquaintance I was honoured.

“The same,” said he, rising, and placing his arms round my neck he kissed me again and again. This was in perfect agreement with his crafty character; the reader will not have forgotten the portrait of him contained in the first volume of these Memoirs.

After the ice had been thus broken it will be imagined that we had a long conversation. He spoke of Barbaruccia, of the fair Marchioness G —— , of Cardinal S —— C —— , and told me how he had passed from the Spanish to the Portuguese service, in which he still continued. I was enjoying his talk about numerous subjects which had interested me in my early youth, when an unexpected sight absorbed all my thinking faculties. A young man of fifteen or sixteen, as well grown as Italians usually are at that age, came into the room, saluted the company with easy grace, and kissed Therese. I was the only person who did not know him, but I was not the only one who looked surprised. The daring Therese introduced him to me with perfect coolness with the words: —

“That is my brother.”

I greeted him as warmly as I could, but my manner was slightly confused, as I had not had time to recover my composure. This so-called brother of Therese was my living image, though his complexion was rather clearer than mine. I saw at once that he was my son; nature had never been so indiscreet as in the amazing likeness between us. This, then, was the surprise of which Therese had spoken; she had devised the pleasure of seeing me at once astounded and delighted, for she knew that my heart would be touched at the thought of having left her such a pledge of our mutual love. I had not the slightest foreknowledge in the matter, for Therese had never alluded to her being with child in her letters. I thought, however, that she should not have brought about this meeting in the presence of a third party, for everyone has eyes in their head, and anyone with eyes must have seen that the young man was either my son or my brother. I glanced at her, but she avoided meeting my eye, while the pretended brother was looking at me so attentively that he did not hear what was said to him. As to the others, they did nothing but look first at me and then at him, and if they came to the conclusion that he was my son they would be obliged to suppose that I had been the lover of Therese's mother, if she were really his sister, for taking into consideration the age she looked and gave herself out to be she could not possibly be his mother. It was equally impossible that I could be Therese's father, as I did not look any older than she did.

My son spoke the Neapolitan dialect perfectly, but he also spoke Italian very well, and in whatever he said I was glad to recognize taste, good sense, and intelligence. He was well-informed, though he had been brought up at Naples, and his manners were very distinguished. His mother made him sit between us at table.

"His favourite amusement," she said to me, "is music. You must hear him on the clavier, and though I am eight years older I shall not be surprised if you pronounce him the better performer."

Only a woman's delicate instinct could have suggested this remark; men hardly ever approach women in this respect.

Whether from natural impulses or self-esteem, I rose from the table so delighted with my son that I embraced him with the utmost tenderness, and was applauded by the company. I asked everybody to dine with me the next day, and my invitation was joyfully accepted; but the Corticelli said, with the utmost simplicity,

"May I come, too?"

"Certainty; you too."

After dinner the Abbe Gama asked me to breakfast with him, or to have him to breakfast the next morning, as he was longing for a good talk with me.

"Come and breakfast with me," said I, "I shall be delighted to see you."

When the guests had gone Don Cesarino, as the pretended brother of Therese was called, asked me if I would walk with him. I kissed him, and replied that my carriage was at his service, and that he and his brother-in-law could drive in it, but that I had resolved not to leave his sister that day. Palesi seemed quite satisfied with the arrangement, and they both went away.

When we were alone, I gave Therese an ardent embrace, and congratulated her on having such a brother.

“My dear, he is the fruit of our amours; he is your son. He makes me happy, and is happy himself, and indeed he has everything to make him so.”

“And I, too, am happy, dear Therese. You must have seen that I recognized him at once.”

“But do you want to give him a brother? How ardent you are!”

“Remember, beloved one, that to-morrow we are to be friends, and nothing more.”

By this my efforts were crowned with success, but the thought that it was the last time was a bitter drop in the cup of happiness.

When we had regained our composure, Therese said, —

“The duke who took me from Rimini brought up our child; as soon as I knew that I was pregnant I confided my secret to him. No one knew of my delivery, and the child was sent to nurse at Sorrento, and the duke had him baptized under the name of Caesar Philip Land. He remained at Sorrento till he was nine, and then he was boarded with a worthy man, who superintended his education and taught him music. From his earliest childhood he has known me as his sister, and you cannot think how happy I was when I saw him growing so like you. I have always considered him as a sure pledge of our final union. I was ever thinking what would happen when we met, for I knew that he would have the same influence over you as he has over me. I was sure you would marry me and make him legitimate.”

“And you have rendered all this, which would have made me happy, an impossibility.”

“The fates decided so; we will say no more about it. On the death of the duke I left Naples, leaving Cesarino at the same boarding school, under the protection of the Prince de la Riccia, who has always looked upon him as a brother. Your son, though he does not know it, possesses the sum of twenty thousand ducats, of which I receive the interest, but you may imagine that I let him want for nothing. My only regret is that I cannot tell him I am his mother, as I think he would love me still more if he knew that he owed his being to me. You cannot think how glad I was to see your surprise to-day, and how soon you got to love him."

"He is wonderfully like me."

"That delights me. People must think that you were my mother's lover. My husband thinks that our friendship is due to the connection between you and my mother. He told me yesterday that Cesarino might be my brother on the mother's side, but not on my father's; as he had seen his father in the theatre, but that he could not possibly be my father, too. If I have children by Palesi all I have will go to them, but if not Cesarino will be my heir. My property is well secured, even if the Prince de Riccia were to die."

"Come," said she, drawing me in the direction of her bed-room. She opened a large box which contained her jewels and diamonds, and shares to the amount of fifty thousand ducats. Besides that she had a large amount of plate, and her talents which assured her the first place in all the Italian theatres.

"Do you know whether our dear Cesarino has been in love yet?" said I.

"I don't think so, but I fancy my pretty maid is in love with him. I shall keep my eyes open."

"You mustn't be too strict."

"No, but it isn't a good thing for a young man to engage too soon in that pleasure which makes one neglect everything else."

"Let me have him, I will teach him how to live."

"Ask all, but leave me my son. You must know that I never kiss him for fear of my giving way to excessive emotion. I wish you knew how good and pure he is, and how well he loves me, I could not refuse him anything."

"What will people say in Venice when they see Casanova again, who escaped from The Leads and has become twenty years younger?"

“You are going to Venice, then, for the Ascensa?”

“Yes, and you are going to Rome?”

“And to Naples, to see my friend the Duke de Matalone.”

“I know him well. He has already had a son by the daughter of the Duke de Bovino, whom he married. She must be a charming woman to have made a man of him, for all Naples knew that he was impotent.”

“Probably, she only knew the secret of making him a father.”

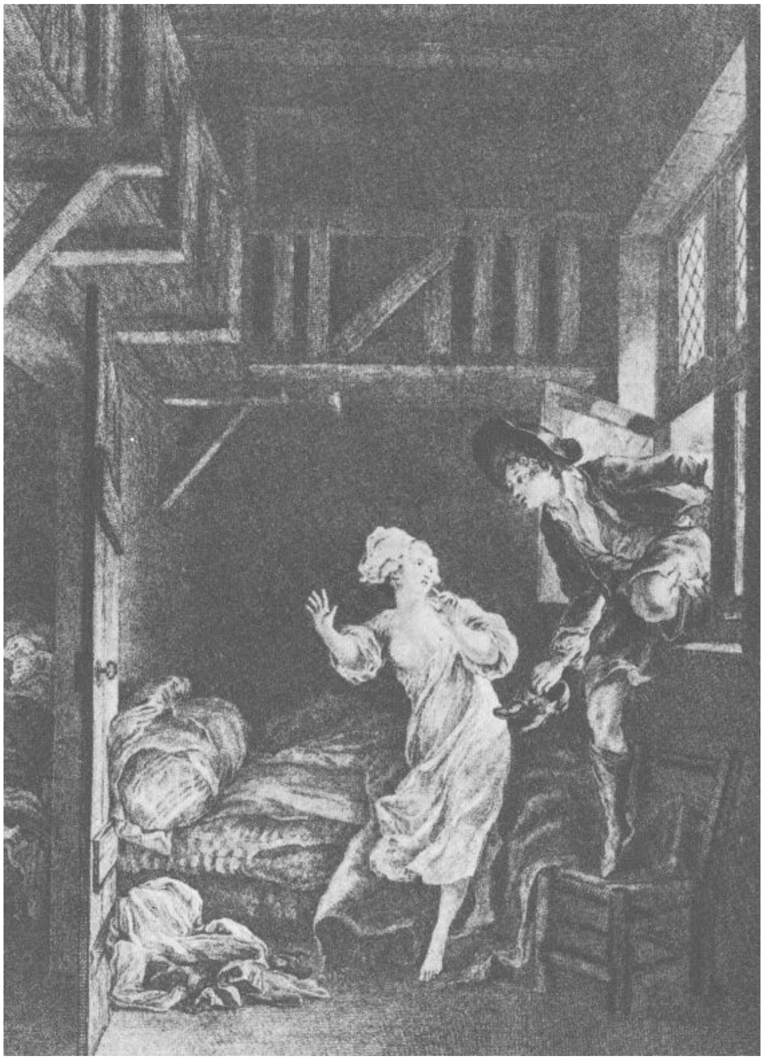
“Well, it is possible.”

We spent the time by talking with interest on various topics till Cesarino and the husband came back. The dear child finished his conquest of me at supper; he had a merry random wit, and all the Neapolitan vivacity. He sat down at the clavier, and after playing several pieces with the utmost skill he began to sing Neapolitan songs which made us all laugh. Therese only looked at him and me, but now and again she embraced her husband, saying, that in love alone lies happiness.

I thought then, and I think now, that this day was one of the happiest I have ever spent.

CHAPTER VII

The Corticelli — The Jew Manager Beaten — The False Charles Ivanoff and the Trick He Played Me — I Am Ordered to Leave Tuscany — I Arrive at Rome — My Brother Jean



At nine o'clock the next morning, the Abbe Gama was announced. The first thing he did was to shed tears of joy (as he said) at seeing me so well and prosperous after so many years. The reader will guess that the abbe addressed me in the most flattering terms, and perhaps he may know that one may be clever, experienced in the ways of the world, and even distrustful of flattery, but yet one's self-love, ever on the watch, listens to the flatterer, and thinks him pleasant. This polite and pleasant abbe, who had become extremely crafty from having lived all his days amongst the high dignitaries at the court of the 'Servus Servorum Dei' (the best school of strategy), was not altogether an ill-disposed man, but both his disposition and his profession conspired to make him inquisitive; in fine, such as I have depicted him in the first volume of these Memoirs. He wanted to hear my adventures, and did not wait for me to ask him to tell his story. He told me at great length the various incidents in his life for the seventeen years in which we had not seen one another. He had left the service of the King of Spain for that of the King of Portugal, he was secretary of embassy to the Commander Almada, and he had been obliged to leave Rome because the Pope Rezzonico would not allow the King of Portugal to punish certain worthy Jesuit assassins, who had only broken his arm as it happened, but who had none the less meant to take his life. Thus, Gama was staying in Italy corresponding with Almada and the famous Carvalho, waiting for the dispute to be finished before he returned to Rome. In point of fact this was the only substantial incident in the abbe's story, but he worked in so many episodes of no consequence that it lasted for an hour. No doubt he wished me to shew my gratitude by telling him all my adventures without reserve; but the upshot of it was that we both shewed ourselves true diplomatists, he in lengthening his story, I in shortening mine, while I could not help feeling some enjoyment in baulking the curiosity of my cassocked friend.

"What are you going to do in Rome?" said he, indifferently.

"I am going to beg the Pope to use his influence in my favour with the State Inquisitors at Venice."

It was not the truth, but one lie is as good as another, and if I had said I was only going for amusement's sake he would not have believed me. To tell the truth to an unbelieving man is to prostitute, to murder it. He then begged me to enter into a correspondence with him, and as that bound me to nothing I agreed to do so.

"I can give you a mark of my friendship," said he, "by introducing you to the Marquis de Botta-Adamo, Governor of Tuscany; he is supposed to be a friend of the regent's."

I accepted his offer gratefully, and he began to sound me about Therese, but found my lips as tightly closed as the lid of a miser's coffer. I told him she was a child when I made the acquaintance of her family at Bologna, and that the resemblance between her brother and myself was a mere accident — a freak of nature. He happened to catch sight of a well-written manuscript on the table, and asked me if that superb writing was my secretary's. Costa, who was present, answered in Spanish that he wrote it. Gama overwhelmed him with compliments, and begged me to send Costa to him to copy some letters. I guessed that he wanted to pump him about me, and said that I needed his services all the day.

"Well, well," said the abbe, "another time will do." I gave him no answer. Such is the character of the curious.

I am not referring to that curiosity which depends on the occult sciences, and endeavours to pry into the future — the daughter of ignorance and superstition, its victims are either foolish or ignorant. But the Abbe Gama was neither; he was naturally curious, and his employment made him still more so, for he was paid to find out everything. He was a diplomatist; if he had been a little lower down in the social scale he would have been treated as a spy.

He left me to pay some calls, promising to be back by dinner-time.

Dr. Vannini brought me another servant, of the same height as the first, and engaged that he should obey orders and guess nothing. I thanked the academician and inn-keeper, and ordered him to get me a sumptuous dinner.

The Corticelli was the first to arrive, bringing with her her brother, an effeminate-looking young man, who played the violin moderately well, and her mother, who informed me that she never allowed her daughter to dine out without herself and her son.

"Then you can take her back again this instant," said I, "or take this ducat to dine somewhere else, as I don't want your company or your son's."

She took the ducat, saying that she was sure she was leaving her daughter in good hands.

"You may be sure of that," said I, "so be off."

The daughter made such witty observations on the above dialogue that I could not help laughing, and I began to be in love with her. She was only thirteen, and was so small that she looked ten. She was well-made, lively, witty, and fairer than is usual with Italian women, but to this day I cannot conceive how I fell in love with her.

The young wanton begged me to protect her against the manager of the opera, who was a Jew. In the agreement she had made with him he had engaged to let her dance a ‘pas de deux’ in the second opera, and he had not kept his word. She begged me to compel the Jew to fulfil his engagement, and I promised to do so.

The next guest was Redegonde, who came from Parma. She was a tall, handsome woman, and Costa told me she was the sister of my new footman. After I had talked with her for two or three minutes I found her remarks well worthy of attention.

Then came the Abbe Gama, who congratulated me on being seated between two pretty girls. I made him take my place, and he began to entertain them as if to the manner born; and though the girls were laughing at him, he was not in the least disconcerted. He thought he was amusing them, and on watching his expression I saw that his self-esteem prevented him seeing that he was making a fool of himself; but I did not guess that I might make the same mistake at his age.

Wretched is the old man who will not recognize his old age; wretched unless he learn that the sex whom he seduced so often when he was young will despise him now if he still attempts to gain their favour.

My fair Therese, with her husband and my son, was the last to arrive. I kissed Therese and then my son, and sat down between them, whispering to Therese that such a dear mysterious trinity must not be parted; at which Therese smiled sweetly. The abbe sat down between Redegonde and the Corticelli, and amused us all the time by his agreeable conversation.

I laughed internally when I observed how respectfully my new footman changed his sister’s plate, who appeared vain of honours to which her brother could lay no claim. She was not kind; she whispered to me, so that he could not hear, —

“He is a good fellow, but unfortunately he is rather stupid.”

I had put in my pocket a superb gold snuff-box, richly enamelled and adorned with a perfect likeness of myself. I had had it made at Paris, with the intention of giving it to Madame d'Urfe, and I had not done so because the painter had made me too young. I had filled it with some excellent Havana snuff which M. de Chavigny had given me, and of which Therese was very fond; I was waiting for her to ask me for a pinch before I drew it out of my pocket.

The Abbe Gama, who had some exceedingly good snuff in an Origonela box, sent a pinch to Therese, and she sent him her snuff in a tortoise-shell box encrusted with gold in arabesques — an exquisite piece of workmanship. Gama criticised Therese's snuff, while I said that I found it delicious but that I thought I had some better myself. I took out my snuff-box, and opening it offered her a pinch. She did not notice the portrait, but she agreed that my snuff was vastly superior to hers.

"Well, would you like to make an exchange?" said I. "Certainly, give me some paper."

"That is not requisite; we will exchange the snuff and the snuff-boxes."

So saying, I put Therese's box in my pocket and gave her mine shut. When she saw the portrait, she gave a cry which puzzled everybody, and her first motion was to kiss the portrait.

"Look," said she to Cesarino, "here is your portrait."

Cesarino looked at it in astonishment, and the box passed from hand to hand. Everybody said that it was my portrait, taken ten years ago, and that it might pass for a likeness of Cesarino. Therese got quite excited, and swearing that she would never let the box out of her hands again, she went up to her son and kissed him several times. While this was going on I watched the Abbe Gama, and I could see that he was making internal comments of his own on this affecting scene.

The worthy abbe went away towards the evening, telling me that he would expect me to breakfast next morning.

I spent the rest of the day in making love to Redegonde, and Therese, who saw that I was pleased with the girl, advised me to declare myself, and promised that she would ask her to the house as often as I liked. But Therese did not know her.

Next morning Gama told me that he had informed Marshal Botta that I would come and see him, and he would present me at four o'clock. Then the worthy abbe, always the slave of his curiosity, reproached me in a friendly manner for not having told him anything about my fortune.

"I did not think it was worth mentioning, but as you are interested in the subject I may tell you that my means are small, but that I have friends whose purses are always open to me."

"If you have true friends you are a rich man, but true friends are scarce."

I left the Abbe Gama, my head full of Redegonde, whom I preferred to the young Corticelli, and I went to pay her a visit; but what a reception! She received me in a room in which were present her mother, her uncle, and three or four dirty, untidy little monkeys: these were her brothers.'

"Haven't you a better room to receive your friends in?" said I.

"I have no friends, so I don't want a room."

"Get it, my dear, and you will find the friends come fast enough. This is all very well for you to welcome your relations in, but not persons like myself who come to do homage to your charms and your talents."

"Sir," said the mother, "my daughter has but few talents, and thinks nothing of her charms, which are small."

"You are extremely modest, and I appreciate your feelings; but everybody does not see your daughter with the same eyes, and she pleased me greatly."

"That is an honour for her, and we are duly sensible of it, but not so as to be over-proud. My daughter will see you as often as you please, but here, and in no other place."

"But I am afraid of being in the way here."

"An honest man is never in the way."

I felt ashamed, for nothing so confounds a libertine as modesty in the mouth of poverty; and not knowing what to answer I took my leave.

I told Therese of my unfortunate visit, and we both, laughed at it; it was the best thing we could do.

“I shall be glad to see you at the opera,” said she, “and you can get into my dressing-room if you give the door-keeper a small piece of money.”

The Abbe Gama came as he promised, to take me to Marshal Botta, a man of high talents whom the affair of Genoa had already rendered famous. He was in command of the Austrian army when the people, growing angry at the sight of the foreigners, who had only come to put them under the Austrian yoke, rose in revolt and made them leave the town. This patriotic riot saved the Republic. I found him in the midst of a crowd of ladies and gentlemen, whom he left to welcome me. He talked about Venice in a way that shewed he understood the country thoroughly, and I conversed to him on France, and, I believe, satisfied him. In his turn he spoke of the Court of Russia, at which he was staying when Elizabeth Petrovna, who was still reigning at the period in question, so easily mounted the throne of her father, Peter the Great. “It is only in Russia,” said he, “that poison enters into politics.”

At the time when the opera began the marshal left the room, and everybody went away. On my way the abbe assured me, as a matter of course, that I had pleased the governor, and I afterwards went to the theatre, and obtained admission to Therese’s dressing-room for a tester. I found her in the hands of her pretty chamber-maid, and she advised me to go to Redegonde’s dressing-room, as she played a man’s part, and might, perhaps, allow me to assist in her toilette.

I followed her advice, but the mother would not let me come in, as her daughter was just going to dress. I assured her that I would turn my back all the time she was dressing, and on this condition she let me in, and made me sit down at a table on which stood a mirror, which enabled me to see all Redegonde’s most secret parts to advantage; above all, when she lifted her legs to put on her breeches, either most awkwardly or most cleverly, according to her intentions. She did not lose anything by what she shewed, however, for I was so pleased, that to possess her charms I would have signed any conditions she cared to impose upon me.

“Redegonde must know,” I said to myself, “that I could see everything in the glass;” and the idea inflamed me. I did not turn round till the mother gave me leave, and I then admired my charmer as a young man of five feet one, whose shape left nothing to be desired.

Redegonde went out, and I followed her to the wings.

“My dear,” said I, “I am going to talk plainly to you. You have inflamed my passions and I shall die if you do not make me happy.”

“You do not say that you will die if you chance to make me unhappy.”

“I could not say so, because I cannot conceive such a thing as possible. Do not trifle with me, dear Redegonde, you must be aware that I saw all in the mirror, and I cannot think that you are so cruel as to arouse my passions and then leave me to despair.”

“What could you have seen? I don’t know what you are talking about.”

“May be, but know that I have seen all your charms. What shall I do to possess you?”

“To possess me? I don’t understand you, sir; I’m an honest girl.”

“I dare say; but you wouldn’t be any less honest after making me happy. Dear Redegonde, do not let me languish for you, but tell me my fate now this instant.”

“I do not know what to tell you, but you can come and see me whenever you like.”

“When shall I find you alone?”

“Alone! I am never alone.”

“Well, well, that’s of no consequence; if only your mother is present, that comes to the same thing. If she is sensible, she will pretend not to see anything, and I will give you a hundred ducats each time.”

“You are either a madman, or you do not know what sort of people we are.”

With these words she went on, and I proceeded to tell Therese what had passed.

“Begin,” said she, “by offering the hundred ducats to the mother, and if she refuses, have no more to do with them, and go elsewhere.”

I returned to the dressing-room, where I found the mother alone, and without any ceremony spoke as follows: —

“Good evening, madam, I am a stranger here; I am only staying a week, and I am in love with your daughter. If you like to be obliging, bring her to sup with me. I will give you a hundred sequins each time, so you see my purse is in your power.”

“Whom do you think you are talking to, sir? I am astonished at your impudence. Ask the townsfolk what sort of character I bear, and whether my daughter is an honest girl or not! and you will not make such proposals again.”

“Good-bye, madam.”

“Good-bye, sir.”

As I went out I met Redegonde, and I told her word for word the conversation I had had with her mother. She burst out laughing.

“Have I done well or ill?” said I.

“Well enough, but if you love me come and see me.”

“See you after what your mother said?”

“Well, why not, who knows of it?”

“Who knows? You don’t know me, Redegonde. I do not care to indulge myself in idle hopes, and I thought I had spoken to you plainly enough.”

Feeling angry, and vowing to have no more to do with this strange girl, I supped with Therese, and spent three delightful hours with her. I had a great deal of writing to do the next day and kept in doors, and in the evening I had a visit from the young Corticelli, her mother and brother. She begged me to keep my promise regarding the manager of the theatre, who would not let her dance the ‘pas de deux’ stipulated for in the agreement.

“Come and breakfast with me to-morrow morning,” said I, “and I will speak to the Israelite in your presence — at least I will do so if he comes.”

“I love you very much,” said the young wanton, “can’t I stop a little longer here.”

“You may stop as long as you like, but as I have got some letters to finish, I must ask you to excuse my entertaining you.”

“Oh! just as you please.”

I told Costa to give her some supper.

I finished my letters and felt inclined for a little amusement, so I made the girl sit by me and proceeded to toy with her, but in such a way that her mother could make no objection. All at once the brother came up and tried to join in the sport, much to my astonishment.

“Get along with you,” said I, “you are not a girl.”

At this the young scoundrel proceeded to shew me his sex, but in such an indecent fashion that his sister, who was sitting on my knee, burst out laughing and took refuge with her mother, who was sitting at the other end of the room in gratitude for the good supper I had given her. I rose from my chair, and after giving the impudent pederast a box on the ear I asked the mother with what intentions she had brought the young rascal to my house. By way of reply the infamous woman said, —

“He’s a pretty lad, isn’t he?”

I gave him a ducat for the blow I had given him, and told the mother to begone, as she disgusted me. The pathic took my ducat, kissed my hand, and they all departed.

I went to bed feeling amused at the incident, and wondering at the wickedness of a mother who would prostitute her own son to the basest of vices.

Next morning I sent and asked the Jew to call on me. The Corticelli came with her mother, and the Jew soon after, just as we were going to breakfast.

I proceeded to explain the grievance of the young dancer, and I read the agreement he had made with her, telling him politely that I could easily force him to fulfil it. The Jew put in several excuses, of which the Corticelli demonstrated the futility. At last the son of Judah was forced to give in, and promised to speak to the ballet-master the same day, in order that she might dance the ‘pas’ with the actor she named.

“And that, I hope, will please your excellency,” he added, with a low bow, which is not often a proof of sincerity, especially among Jews.

When my guests had taken leave I went to the Abbe Gama, to dine with Marshal Botta who had asked us to dinner. I made the acquaintance there of Sir Mann, the English ambassador, who was the idol of Florence, very rich, of the most pleasing manners although an Englishman; full of wit, taste, and a great lover of the fine arts. He invited me to come next day and see his house and garden. In this home he had made — furniture, pictures, choice books — all shewed the man of genius. He called on me, asked me to dinner, and had the politeness to include Therese, her husband, and Cesarino in the invitation. After dinner my son sat down at the clavier and delighted the company by his exquisite playing. While we were talking of likenesses, Sir Mann shewed us some miniatures of great beauty.

Before leaving, Therese told me that she had been thinking seriously of me.

“In what respect?” I asked.

“I have told Redegonde that I am going to call for her, that I will keep her to supper, and have her taken home. You must see that this last condition is properly carried out. Come to supper too, and have your carriage in waiting. I leave the rest to you. You will only be a few minutes with her, but that’s something; and the first step leads far.”

“An excellent plan. I will sup with you, and my carriage shall be ready. I will tell you all about it to-morrow.”

I went to the house at nine o’clock, and was welcomed as an unexpected guest. I told Redegonde that I was glad to meet her, and she replied that she had not hoped to have the pleasure of seeing me. Redegonde was the only one who had any appetite; she ate capitally, and laughed merrily at the stories I told her.

After supper Therese asked her if she would like to have a sedan-chair sent for, or if she would prefer to be taken back in my carriage.

“If the gentleman will be so kind,” said she, “I need not send for a chair.”

I thought this reply of such favourable omen that I no longer doubted of my success. After she had wished the others good night, she took my arm, pressing it as she did so; we went down the stairs, and she got into the carriage. I got in after her, and on attempting to sit down I found the place taken.

“Who is that?” I cried.

Redegonde burst out laughing, and informed me it was her mother.

I was done; I could not summon up courage to pass it off as a jest. Such a shock makes a man stupid; for a moment it numbs all the mental faculties, and wounded self-esteem only gives place to anger.

I sat down on the front seat and coldly asked the mother why she had not come up to supper with us. When the carriage stopped at their door, she asked me to come in, but I told her I would rather not. I felt that for a little more I would have boxed her ears, and the man at the house door looked very like a cut-throat.

I felt enraged and excited physically as well as mentally, and though I had never been to see the Corticelli, told the coachman to drive there immediately, as I felt sure of finding her well disposed. Everybody was gone to bed. I knocked at the door till I got an answer, I gave my name, and I was let in, everything being in total darkness. The mother told me she would light a candle, and that if she had expected me she would have waited up in spite of the cold. I felt as if I were in the middle of an iceberg. I heard the girl laughing, and going up to the bed and passing my hand over it I came across some plain tokens of the masculine gender. I had got hold of her brother. In the meanwhile the mother had got a candle, and I saw the girl with the bedclothes up to her chin, for, like her brother, she was as naked as my hand. Although no Puritan, I was shocked.

“Why do you allow this horrible union?” I said to the mother.

“What harm is there? They are brother and sister.”

“That’s just what makes it a criminal matter.”

“Everything is perfectly innocent.”

“Possibly; but it’s not a good plan.”

The pathic escaped from the bed and crept into his mother’s, while the little wanton told me there was really no harm, as they only loved each other as brother and sister, and that if I wanted her to sleep by herself all I had to do was to get her a new bed. This speech, delivered with arch simplicity, in her Bolognese jargon, made me laugh with all my heart, for in the violence of her gesticulations she had disclosed half her charms, and I saw nothing worth looking at. In spite of that, it was doubtless decreed that I should fall in love with her skin, for that was all she had.

If I had been alone I should have brought matters to a crisis on the spot, but I had a distaste to the presence of her mother and her scoundrelly brother. I was afraid lest some unpleasant scenes might follow. I gave her ten ducats to buy a bed, said good night, and left the house. I returned to my lodging, cursing the too scrupulous mothers of the opera girls.

I passed the whole of the next morning with Sir Mann, in his gallery, which contained some exquisite paintings, sculptures, mosaics, and engraved gems. On leaving him, I called on Therese and informed her of my misadventure of the night before. She laughed heartily at my story, and I laughed too, in spite of a feeling of anger due to my wounded self-esteem.

“You must console yourself,” said she; “you will not find much difficulty in filling the place in your affections.”

“Ah! why are you married?”

“Well, it’s done; and there’s no helping it. But listen to me. As you can’t do without someone, take up with the Corticelli; she’s as good as any other woman, and won’t keep you waiting long.”

On my return to my lodging, I found the Abbe Gama, whom I had invited to dinner, and he asked me if I would accept a post to represent Portugal at the approaching European Congress at Augsburg. He told me that if I did the work well, I could get anything I liked at Lisbon.

“I am ready to do my best,” said I; “you have only to write to me, and I will tell you where to direct your letters.” This proposal made me long to become a diplomatist.

In the evening I went to the opera-house and spoke to the ballet-master, the dancer who was to take part in the ‘pas de deux’, and to the Jew, who told me that my protegee should be satisfied in two or three days, and that she should perform her favourite ‘pas’ for the rest of the carnival. I saw the Corticelli, who told me she had got her bed, and asked me to come to supper. I accepted the invitation, and when the opera was over I went to her house.

Her mother, feeling sure that I would pay the bill, had ordered an excellent supper for four, and several flasks of the best Florence wine. Besides that, she gave me a bottle of the wine called Oleatico, which I found excellent. The three Corticellis unaccustomed to good fare and wine, ate like a troop, and began to get intoxicated. The mother and son went to bed without ceremony, and the little wanton invited me to follow their example. I should have liked to do so, but I did not dare. It was very cold and there was no fire in the room, there was only one blanket on the bed, and I might have caught a bad cold, and I was too fond of my good health to expose myself to such a danger. I therefore satisfied myself by taking her on my knee, and after a few preliminaries she abandoned herself to my transports, endeavouring to persuade me that I had got her maidenhead. I pretended to believe her, though I cared very little whether it were so or not.

I left her after I had repeated the dose three or four times, and gave her fifty sequins, telling her to get a good wadded coverlet and a large brazier, as I wanted to sleep with her the next night.

Next morning I received an extremely interesting letter from Grenoble. M. de Valenglard informed me that the fair Mdlle. Roman, feeling convinced that her horoscope would never come true unless she went to Paris, had gone to the capital with her aunt.

Her destiny was a strange one; it depended on the liking I had taken to her and my aversion to marriage, for it lay in my power to have married the handsomest woman in France, and in that case it is not likely that she would have become the mistress of Louis XV. What strange whim could have made me indicate in her horoscope the necessity of her journeying to Paris; for even if there were such a science as astrology I was no astrologer; in fine, her destiny depended on my absurd fancy. And in history, what a number of extraordinary events would never have happened if they had not been predicted!

In the evening I went to the theatre, and found my Corticelli clad in a pretty cloak, while the other girls looked at me contemptuously, for they were enraged at the place being taken; while the proud favourite caressed me with an air of triumph which became her to admiration.

In the evening I found a good supper awaiting me, a large brazier on the hearth, and a warm coverlet on the bed. The mother shewed me all the things her daughter had bought, and complained that she had not got any clothes for her brother. I made her happy by giving her a few louis.

When I went to bed I did not find my mistress in any amorous transports, but in a wanton and merry mood. She made me laugh, and as she let me do as I liked I was satisfied. I gave her a watch when I left her, and promised to sup with her on the following night. She was to have danced the pas de deux, and I went to see her do it, but to my astonishment she only danced with the other girls.

When I went to supper I found her in despair. She wept and said that I must avenge her on the Jew, who had excused himself by putting the fault on somebody else, but that he was a liar. I promised everything to quiet her, and after spending several hours in her company I returned home, determined to give the Jew a bad quarter of an hour. Next morning I sent Costa to ask him to call on me, but the rascal sent back word that he was not coming, and if the Corticelli did not like his theatre she might try another.

I was indignant, but I knew that I must dissemble, so I only laughed. Nevertheless, I had pronounced his doom, for an Italian never forgets to avenge himself on his enemy; he knows it is the pleasure of the gods.

As soon as Costa had left the room, I called Le Duc and told him the story, saying that if I did not take vengeance I should be dishonoured, and that it was only he who could procure the scoundrel a good thrashing for daring to insult me.

“But you know, Le Duc, the affair must be kept secret.”

“I only want twenty-four hours to give you an answer.”

I knew what he meant, and I was satisfied.

Next morning Le Duc told me he had spent the previous day in learning the Jew’s abode and habits, without asking anybody any questions.

“To-day I will not let him go out of my sight. I shall find out at what hour he returns home, and to-morrow you shall know the results.”

“Be discreet,” said I, “and don’t let anybody into your plans.”

“Not I!”

Next day, he told me that if the Jew came home at the same time and by the same way as before, he would have a thrashing before he got to bed.

"Whom have you chosen for this expedition?"

"Myself. These affairs ought to be kept secret, and a secret oughtn't to be known to more than two people. I am sure that everything will turn out well, but when you are satisfied that the ass's hide has been well tanned, will there be anything to be picked up?"

"Twenty-five sequins."

"That will do nicely. When I have done the trick I shall put on my great coat again and return by the back door. If necessary Costa himself will be able to swear that I did not leave the house, and that therefore I cannot have committed the assault. However, I shall put my pistols in my pocket in case of accidents, and if anybody tries to arrest me I shall know how to defend myself."

Next morning he came coolly into my room while Costa was putting on my dressing-gown, and when we were alone he said, —

"The thing's done. Instead of the Jew's running away when he received the first blow he threw himself on to the ground. Then I tanned his skin for him nicely, but on hearing some people coming up I ran off. I don't know whether I did for him, but I gave him two sturdy blows on the head. I should be sorry if he were killed, as then he could not see about the dance."

This jest did not arouse my mirth; the matter promised to be too serious.

Therese had asked me to dine with the Abbe Gama and M. Sassi, a worthy man, if one may prostitute the name of man to describe a being whom cruelty has separated from the rest of humanity; he was the first castrato of the opera. Of course the Jew's mishap was discussed.

"I am sorry for him," said I, "though he is a rascally fellow."

"I am not at all sorry for him myself," said Sassi, "he's a knave."

"I daresay that everybody will be putting down his wooden baptism to my account."

"No," said the abbe, "people say that M. Casanova did the deed for good reasons of his own."

"It will be difficult to pitch on the right man," I answered, "the rascal has pushed so many worthy people to extremities that he must have a great many thrashings owing him."

The conversation then passed to other topics, and we had a very pleasant dinner.

In a few days the Jew left his bed with a large plaster on his nose, and although I was generally regarded as the author of his misfortune the matter was gradually allowed to drop, as there were only vague suspicions to go upon. But the Corticelli, in an ecstasy of joy, was stupid enough to talk as if she were sure it was I who had avenged her, and she got into a rage when I would not admit the deed; but, as may be guessed, I was not foolish enough to do so, as her imprudence might have been a hanging matter for me.

I was well enough amused at Florence, and had no thoughts of leaving, when one day Vannini gave me a letter which someone had left for me. I opened it in his presence, and found it contained a bill of exchange for two hundred Florentine crowns on Sasso Sassi. Vannini looked at it and told me it was a good one. I went into my room to read the letter, and I was astonished to find it signed "Charles Ivanoff." He dated it from Pistoia, and told me that in his poverty and misfortune he had appealed to an Englishman who was leaving Florence for Lucca, and had generously given him a bill of exchange for two hundred crowns, which he had written in his presence. It was made payable to bearer.

"I daren't cash it in Florence," said he, "as I am afraid of being arrested for my unfortunate affair at Genoa. I entreat you, then, to have pity on me, to get the bill cashed, and to bring me the money here, that I may pay my landlord and go."

It looked like a very simple matter, but I might get into trouble, for the note might be forged; and even if it were not I should be declaring myself a friend or a correspondent, at all events, of a man who had been posted. In this dilemma I took the part of taking the bill of exchange to him in person. I went to the posting establishment, hired two horses, and drove to Pistoia. The landlord himself took me to the rascal's room, and left me alone with him.

I did not stay more than three minutes, and all I said was that as Sassi knew me I did not wish him to think that there was any kind of connection between us.

"I advise you," I said, "to give the bill to your landlord, who will cash it at M. Sassi's and bring you your change."

"I will follow your advice," he said, and I therewith returned to Florence.

I thought no more of it, but in two days' time I received a visit from M. Sassi and the landlord of the inn at Pistoia. The banker shewed me the bill of exchange, and said that the person who had given it me had deceived me, as it was not in the writing of the Englishman whose name it bore, and that even if it were, the Englishman not having any money with Sassi could not draw a bill of exchange.

"The inn-keeper here," said he, "discounted the bill, the Russian has gone off, and when I told him that it was a forgery he said that he knew Charles Ivanoff had it of you, and that thus he had made no difficulty in cashing it; but now he wants you to return him two hundred crowns."

"Then he will be disappointed!"

I told all the circumstances of the affair to Sassi; I shewed him the rascal's letter; I made Dr. Vannini, who had given it me, come up, and he said he was ready to swear that he had seen me take the bill of exchange out of the letter, that he had examined it, and had thought it good.

On this the banker told the inn-keeper that he had no business to ask me to pay him the money; but he persisted in his demand, and dared to say that I was an accomplice of the Russian's.

In my indignation I ran for my cane, but the banker held me by the arm, and the impertinent fellow made his escape without a thrashing.

"You had a right to be angry," said M. Sassi, "but you must not take any notice of what the poor fellow says in his blind rage."

He shook me by the hand and went out.

Next day the chief of police, called the auditor at Florence, sent me a note begging me to call on him. There was no room for hesitation, for as a stranger I felt that I might look on this invitation as an intimation. He received me very politely, but he said I should have to repay the landlord his two hundred crowns, as he would not have discounted the bill if he had not seen me bring it. I replied that as a judge he could not condemn me unless he thought me the Russian’s accomplice, but instead of answering he repeated that I would have to pay.

“Sir,” I replied, “I will not pay.”

He rang the bell and bowed, and I left him, walking towards the banker’s, to whom I imparted the conversation I had had from the auditor. He was extremely astonished, and at my request called on him to try and make him listen to reason. As we parted I told him that I was dining with the Abbe Gama.

When I saw the abbe I told him what had happened, and he uttered a loud exclamation of astonishment.

“I foresee,” he said, “that the auditor will not let go his hold, and if M. Sassi does not succeed with him I advise you to speak to Marshal Botta.”

“I don’t think that will be necessary; the auditor can’t force me to pay.”

“He can do worse.”

“What can he do?”.

“He can make you leave Florence.”

“Well, I shall be astonished if he uses his power in this case, but rather than pay I will leave the town. Let us go to the marshal.”

We called on him at four o’clock, and we found the banker there, who had told him the whole story.

“I am sorry to tell you,” said M. Sassi, “that I could do nothing with the auditor, and if you want to remain in Florence you will have to pay.”

“I will leave as soon as I receive the order,” said I; “and as soon as I reach another state I will print the history of this shameful perversion of justice.”

“It’s an incredible, a monstrous sentence,” said the marshal, “and I am sorry I cannot interfere. You are quite right,” he added, “to leave the place rather than pay.”

Early the next morning a police official brought me a letter from the auditor, informing me that as he could not, from the nature of the case, oblige me to pay, he was forced to warn me to leave Florence in three days, and Tuscany in seven. This, he added, he did in virtue of his office; but whenever the Grand Duke, to whom I might appeal, had quashed his judgment I might return.

I took a piece of paper and wrote upon it, “Your judgment is an iniquitous one, but it shall be obeyed to the letter.”

At that moment I gave orders to pack up and have all in readiness for my departure. I spent three days of respite in amusing myself with Therese. I also saw the worthy Sir Mann, and I promised the Corticelli to fetch her in Lent, and spend some time with her in Bologna. The Abbe Gama did not leave my side for three days, and shewed himself my true friend. It was a kind of triumph for me; on every side I heard regrets at my departure, and curses of the auditor. The Marquis Botta seemed to approve my conduct by giving me a dinner, the table being laid for thirty, and the company being composed of the most distinguished people in Florence. This was a delicate attention on his part, of which I was very sensible.

I consecrated the last day to Therese, but I could not find any opportunity to ask her for a last consoling embrace, which she would not have refused me under the circumstances, and which I should still fondly remember. We promised to write often to one another, and we embraced each other in a way to make her husband’s heart ache. Next day I started on my journey, and got to Rome in thirty-six hours.

It was midnight when I passed under the Porta del Popolo, for one may enter the Eternal City at any time. I was then taken to the custom-house, which is always open, and my mails were examined. The only thing they are strict about at Rome is books, as if they feared the light. I had about thirty volumes, all more or less against the Papacy, religion, or the virtues inculcated thereby. I had resolved to surrender them without any dispute, as I felt tired and wanted to go to bed, but the clerk told me politely to count them and leave them in his charge for the night, and he would bring them to my hotel in the morning. I did so, and he kept his word. He was well enough pleased when he touched the two sequins with which I rewarded him.

I put up at the Ville de Paris, in the Piazza di Spagna. It is the best inn in the town. All the world, I found, was drowned in sleep, but when they let me in they asked me to wait on the ground floor while a fire was lighted in my room. All the seats were covered with dresses, petticoats, and chemises, and

I heard a small feminine voice begging me to sit on her bed. I approached and saw a laughing mouth, and two black eyes shining like carbuncles.

“What splendid eyes!” said I, “let me kiss them.”

By way of reply she hid her head under the coverlet, and I slid a hasty hand under the sheets; but finding her quite naked, I drew it back and begged pardon. She put out her head again, and I thought I read gratitude for my moderation in her eyes.

“Who are you, my angel?”

“I am Therese, the inn-keeper’s daughter, and this is my sister.” There was another girl beside her, whom I had not seen, as her head was under the bolster.

“How old are you?”

“Nearly seventeen.”

“I hope I shall see you in my room to-morrow morning.”

“Have you any ladies with you?”

“No.”

“That’s a pity, as we never go to the gentlemen’s rooms.”

“Lower the coverlet a little; I can’t hear what you say.”

“It’s too cold.”

“Dear Therese, your eyes make me feel as if I were in flames.”

She put back her head at this, and I grew daring, and after sundry experiments I was more than ever charmed with her. I caressed her in a somewhat lively manner, and drew back my hand, again apologizing for my daring, and when she let me see her face I thought I saw delight rather than anger in her eyes and on her cheeks, and I felt hopeful with regard to her. I was just going to begin again, for I felt on fire; when a handsome chambermaid came to tell me that my room was ready and my fire lighted.

“Farewell till to-morrow,” said I to Therese, but she only answered by turning on her side to go to sleep.

I went to bed after ordering dinner for one o'clock, and I slept till noon, dreaming of Therese. When I woke up, Costa told me that he had found out where my brother lived, and had left a note at the house. This was my brother Jean, then about thirty, and a pupil of the famous Raphael Mengs. This painter was then deprived of his pension on account of a war which obliged the King of Poland to live at Warsaw, as the Prussians occupied the whole electorate of Saxe. I had not seen my brother for ten years, and I kept our meeting as a holiday. I was sitting down to table when he came, and we embraced each other with transport. We spent an hour in telling, he his small adventures, and I my grand ones, and he told me that I should not stay at the hotel, which was too dear, but come and live at the Chevalier Mengs's house, which contained an empty room, where I could stay at a much cheaper rate.

"As to your table, there is a restaurant in the house where one can get a capital meal."

"Your advice is excellent," said I, "but I have not the courage to follow it, as I am in love with my landlord's daughter;" and I told him what had happened the night before.

"That's a mere nothing," said he, laughing; "you can cultivate her acquaintance without staying in the house."

I let myself be persuaded, and I promised to come to him the following day; and then we proceeded to take a walk about Rome.

I had many interesting memories of my last visit, and I wanted to renew my acquaintance with those who had interested me at that happy age when such impressions are so durable because they touch the heart rather than the mind; but I had to make up my mind to a good many disappointments, considering the space of time that had elapsed since I had been in Rome.

I went to the Minerva to find Donna Cecilia; she was no more in this world. I found out where her daughter Angelica lived, and I went to see her, but she gave me a poor reception, and said that she really scarcely remembered me.

"I can say the same," I replied, "for you are not the Angelica I used to know. Good-bye, madam!"

The lapse of time had not improved her personal appearance. I found out also where the printer’s son, who had married Barbaruccia, lived, but — I put off the pleasure of seeing him till another time, and also my visit to the Reverend Father Georgi, who was a man of great repute in Rome. Gaspar Vivaldi had gone into the country.

My brother took me to Madame Cherubini. I found her mansion to be a splendid one, and the lady welcomed me in the Roman manner. I thought her pleasant and her daughters still more so, but I thought the crowd of lovers too large and too miscellaneous. There was too much luxury and ceremony, and the girls, one of whom was as fair as Love himself, were too polite to everybody. An interesting question was put to me, to which I answered in such a manner as to elicit another question, but to no purpose. I saw that the rank of my brother, who had introduced me, prevented my being thought a person of any consequence, and on hearing an abbe say, “He’s Casanova’s brother,” I turned to him and said, —

“That’s not correct; you should say Casanova’s my brother.”

“That comes to the same thing.”

“Not at all, my dear abbe.”

I said these words in a tone which commanded attention, and another abbe said, —

“The gentleman is quite right; it does not come to the same thing.”

The first abbe made no reply to this. The one who had taken my part, and was my friend from that moment, was the famous Winckelmann, who was unhappily assassinated at Trieste twelve years afterwards.

While I was talking to him, Cardinal Alexander Albani arrived. Winckelmann presented me to his eminence, who was nearly blind. He talked to me a great deal, without saying anything worth listening to. As soon as he heard that I was the Casanova who had escaped from The Leads, he said in a somewhat rude tone that he wondered I had the hardihood to come to Rome, where on the slightest hint from the State Inquisitors at Venice an ‘ordine sanctissimo’ would re-consign me to my prison. I was annoyed by this unseemly remark, and replied in a dignified voice, —

“It is not my hardihood in coming to Rome that your eminence should wonder at, but a man of any sense would wonder at the Inquisitors if they had the hardihood to issue an ‘ordine sanctissimo’ against me; for they would be perplexed to allege any crime in me as a pretext for thus infamously depriving me of my liberty.”

This reply silenced his eminence. He was ashamed at having taken me for a fool, and to see that I thought him one. Shortly after I left and never set foot in that house again.

The Abbe Winckelmann went out with my brother and myself, and as he came with me to my hotel he did me the honour of staying to supper. Winckelmann was the second volume of the celebrated Abbe de Voisenon. He called for me next day, and we went to Villa Albani to see the Chevalier Mengs, who was then living there and painting a ceiling.

My landlord Roland (who knew my brother) paid me a visit at supper. Roland came from Avignon and was fond of good living. I told him I was sorry to be leaving him to stay with my brother, because I had fallen in love with his daughter Therese, although I had only spoken to her for a few minutes, and had only seen her head.

“You saw her in bed, I will bet!”

“Exactly, and I should very much like to see the rest of her. Would you be so kind as to ask her to step up for a few minutes?”

“With all my heart.”

She came upstairs, seeming only too glad to obey her father’s summons. She had a lithe, graceful figure, her eyes were of surpassing brilliancy, her features exquisite, her mouth charming; but taken altogether I did not like her so well as before. In return, my poor brother became enamoured of her to such an extent that he ended by becoming her slave. He married her next year, and two years afterwards he took her to Dresden. I saw her five years later with a pretty baby; but after ten years of married life she died of consumption.

I found Mengs at the Villa Albani; he was an indefatigable worker, and extremely original in his conceptions. He welcomed me, and said he was glad to be able to lodge me at his house in Rome, and that he hoped to return home himself in a few days, with his whole family.

I was astonished with the Villa Albani. It had been built by Cardinal Alexander, and had been wholly constructed from antique materials to satisfy the cardinal's love for classic art; not only the statues and the vases, but the columns, the pedestals — in fact, everything was Greek. He was a Greek himself, and had a perfect knowledge of antique work, and had contrived to spend comparatively little money compared with the masterpiece he had produced. If a sovereign monarch had had a villa like the cardinal's built, it would have cost him fifty million francs, but the cardinal made a much cheaper bargain.

As he could not get any ancient ceilings, he was obliged to have them painted, and Mengs was undoubtedly the greatest and the most laborious painter of his age. It is a great pity that death carried him off in the midst of his career, as otherwise he would have enriched the stores of art with numerous masterpieces. My brother never did anything to justify his title of pupil of this great artist. When I come to my visit to Spain in 1767, I shall have some more to say about Mengs.

As soon as I was settled with my brother I hired a carriage, a coachman, and a footman, whom I put into fancy livery, and I called on Monsignor Cornaro, auditor of the 'rota', with the intention of making my way into good society, but fearing lest he as a Venetian might get compromised, he introduced me to Cardinal Passionei, who spoke of me to the sovereign pontiff.

Before I pass on to anything else, I will inform my readers of what took place on the occasion of my second visit to this old cardinal, a great enemy of the Jesuits, a wit, and man of letters.

EPISODE 18 — RETURN TO NAPLES

ROME — NAPLES — BOLOGNA

CHAPTER VIII

Cardinal Passianei — The Pope — Masiuccia — I Arrive At Naples

Cardinal Passionei received me in a large hall where he was writing. He begged me to wait till he had finished, but he could not ask me to take a seat as he occupied the only chair that his vast room contained.

When he had put down his pen, he rose, came to me, and after informing me that he would tell the Holy Father of my visit, he added, —

"My brother Cornaro might have made a better choice, as he knows the Pope does not like me."

"He thought it better to choose the man who is esteemed than the man who is merely liked."

"I don't know whether the Pope esteems me, but I am sure he knows I don't esteem him. I both liked and esteemed him before he was pope, and I concurred in his election, but since he has worn the tiara it's a different matter; he has shewn himself too much of a 'coglione'."

"The conclave ought to have chosen your eminence."

"No, no; I'm a root-and-branch reformer, and my hand would not have been stayed for fear of the vengeance of the guilty, and God alone knows what would have come of that. The only cardinal fit to be pope was Tamburini; but it can't be helped now. I hear people coming; good-bye, come again to-morrow."

What a delightful thing to have heard a cardinal call the Pope a fool, and name Tamburini as a fit person. I did not lose a moment in noting this pleasant circumstance down: it was too precious a morsel to let slip. But who was Tamburini? I had never heard of him. I asked Winckelmann, who dined with me.

"He's a man deserving of respect for his virtues, his character, his firmness, and his farseeing intelligence. He has never disguised his opinion of the Jesuits, whom he styles the fathers of deceits, intrigues, and lies; and that's what made Passionei mention him. I think, with him, that Tamburini would be a great and good pope."

I will here note down what I heard at Rome nine years later from the mouth of a tool of the Jesuits. The Cardinal Tamburini was at the last gasp, and the conversation turned upon him, when somebody else said, —

"This Benedictine cardinal is an impious fellow after all; he is on his death-bed, and he has asked for the viaticum, without wishing to purify his soul by confession."

I did not make any remark, but feeling as if I should like to know the truth of the matter I asked somebody about it next day, my informant being a person who must have known the truth, and could not have had any motive for disguising the real facts of the case. He told me that the cardinal had said mass three days before, and that if he had not asked for a confessor it was doubtless because he had nothing to confess.

Unfortunate are they that love the truth, and do not seek it out at its source. I hope the reader will pardon this digression, which is not without interest.

Next day I went to see Cardinal Passionei, who told me I was quite right to come early, as he wanted to learn all about my escape from The Leads, of which he had heard some wonderful tales told.

“I shall be delighted to satisfy your eminence, but the story is a long one.”

“All the better; they say you tell it well.”

“But, my lord, am I to sit down on the floor?”

“No, no; your dress is too good for that.”

He rang his bell, and having told one of his gentlemen to send up a seat, a servant brought in a stool. A seat without a back and without arms! It made me quite angry. I cut my story short, told it badly, and had finished in a quarter of an hour.

“I write better than you speak,” said he.

“My lord, I never speak well except when I am at my ease.”

“But you are not afraid of me?”

“No, my lord, a true man and a philosopher can never make me afraid; but this stool of yours … .”

“You like to be at your ease, above all things.”

“Take this, it is the funeral oration of Prince Eugene; I make you a present of it. I hope you will approve of my Latinity. You can kiss the Pope’s feet tomorrow at ten o’clock.”

When I got home, as I reflected on the character of this strange cardinal — a wit, haughty, vain, and boastful, I resolved to make him a fine present. It was the ‘Pandectarum liber unicus’ which M. de F. had given me at Berne, and which I did not know what to do with. It was a folio well printed on fine paper, choicely bound, and in perfect preservation. As chief librarian the present should be a valuable one to him, all the more as he had a large private library, of which my friend the Abbe Winckelmann was librarian. I therefore wrote a short Latin letter, which I enclosed in another to Winckelmann, whom I begged to present my offering to his eminence.

I thought it was as valuable as his funeral oration at any rate, and I hoped that he would give me a more comfortable chair for the future.

Next morning, at the time appointed, I went to Monte Cavallo, which ought to be called Monte Cavalli, as it gets its name from two fine statues of horses standing on a pedestal in the midst of the square, where the Holy Father's palace is situated.

I had no real need of being presented to the Pope by anyone, as any Christian is at liberty to go in when he sees the door open. Besides I had known His Holiness when he was Bishop of Padua; but I had preferred to claim the honor of being introduced by a cardinal.

After saluting the Head of the Faithful, and kissing the holy cross embroidered on his holy slipper, the Pope put his right hand on my left shoulder, and said he remembered that I always forsook the assembly at Padua, when he intoned the Rosary.

"Holy Father, I have much worse sins than that on my conscience, so I come prostrate at your foot to receive your absolution."

He then gave me his benediction, and asked me very graciously what he could do for me.

"I beg Your Holiness to plead for me, that I may be able to return to Venice."

"We will speak of it to the ambassador, and then we will speak again to you on the matter."

"Do you often go and see Cardinal Passionei?"

"I have been three times. He gave me his funeral oration on Prince Eugene, and in return I sent him the 'Pandects'."

"Has he accepted them?"

"I think so, Holy Father."

"If he has, he will send Winckelmann to pay you for them."

"That would be treating me like a bookseller; I will not receive any payment."

"Then he will return the volume of the 'Pandects'; we are sure of it, he always does so."

"If his eminence returns me the 'Pandects', I will return him his funeral oration."

At this the Pope laughed till his sides shook.

"We shall be pleased to hear the end of the story without anyone being informed of our innocent curiosity."

With these words, a long benediction delivered with much unction informed me that my audience was at an end.

As I was leaving His Holiness's palace, I was accosted by an old abbe, who asked me respectfully if I were not the M. Casanova who had escaped from The Leads.

"Yes," said I, "I am the man."

"Heaven be praised, worthy sir, that I see you again in such good estate!"

"But whom have I the honour of addressing?"

"Don't you recollect me? I am Momolo, formerly gondolier at Venice."

"Have you entered holy orders, then?"

"Not at all, but here everyone wears the cassock. I am the first scopatore (sweeper) of His Holiness the Pope."

"I congratulate you on your appointment, but you mustn't mind me laughing."

"Laugh as much as you like. My wife and daughters laugh when I put on the cassock and bands, and I laugh myself, but here the dress gains one respect. Come and see us."

"Where do you live?"

"Behind the Trinity of Monti; here's my address."

"I will come to-night."

I went home delighted with this meeting, and determined to enjoy the evening with my Venetian boatman. I got my brother to come with me, and I told him how the Pope had received me.

The Abbe Winckelmann came in the afternoon and informed me that I was fortunate enough to be high in favour with his cardinal, and that the book I had sent him was very valuable; it was a rare work, and in much better condition than the Vatican copy.

“I am commissioned to pay you for it.”

“I have told his eminence that it was a present.”

“He never accepts books as presents, and he wants yours for his own library; and as he is librarian of the Vatican Library he is afraid lest people might say unpleasant things.”

“That’s very well, but I am not a bookseller; and as this book only cost me the trouble of accepting it, I am determined only to sell it at the same price. Pray ask the cardinal to honour me by accepting it.”

“He is sure to send it back to you.”

“He can if he likes, but I will send back his funeral oration, as I am not going to be under an obligation to anyone who refuses to take a present from me.”

Next morning the eccentric cardinal returned me my Pandects, and I immediately returned his funeral oration, with a letter in which I pronounced it a masterpiece of composition, though I laid barely glanced over it in reality. My brother told me I was wrong, but I did not trouble what he said, not caring to guide myself by his rulings.

In the evening my brother and I went to the ‘scopatore santissimo’, who was expecting me, and had announced me to his family as a prodigy of a man. I introduced my brother, and proceeded to a close scrutiny of the family. I saw an elderly woman, four girls, of whom the eldest was twenty-four, two small boys, and above all universal ugliness. It was not inviting for a man of voluptuous tastes, but I was there, and the best thing was to put a good face on it; so I stayed and enjoyed myself. Besides the general ugliness, the household presented the picture of misery, for the ‘scopatore santissimo’ and his numerous family were obliged to live on two hundred

Roman crowns a year, and as there are no perquisites attached to the office of apostolic sweeper, he was compelled to furnish all needs out of this slender sum. In spite of that Momolo was a most generous man. As soon as he saw me seated he told me he should have liked to give me a good supper, but there was only pork chops and a polenta.

"They are very nice," said I; "but will you allow me to send for half a dozen flasks of Orvieto from my lodging?"

"You are master here."

I wrote a note to Costa, telling him to bring the six flasks directly, with a cooked ham. He came in half an hour, and the four girls cried when they saw him, "What a fine fellow!" I saw Costa was delighted with this reception, and said to Momolo,

"If you like him as well as your girls I will let him stay."

Costa was charmed with such honour being shewn him, and after thanking me went into the kitchen to help the mother with the polenta.

The large table was covered with a clean cloth, and soon after they brought in two huge dishes of polenta and an enormous pan full of chops. We were just going to begin when a knocking on the street door was heard.

"'Tis Signora Maria and her mother," said one of the boys.

At this announcement I saw the four girls pulling a wry face. "Who asked them?" said one. "What do they want?" said another. "What troublesome people they are!" said a third. "They might have stayed at home," said the fourth. But the good, kindly father said, "My children, they are hungry, and they shall share what Providence has given us."

I was deeply touched with the worthy man's kindness. I saw that true Christian charity is more often to be found in the breasts of the poor than the rich, who are so well provided for that they cannot feel for the wants of others.

While I was making these wholesome reflections the two hungry ones came in. One was a young woman of a modest and pleasant aspect, and the other her mother, who seemed very humble and as if ashamed of their poverty. The daughter saluted the company with that natural grace which is a gift of nature, apologizing in some confusion for her presence, and saying that she would not have taken the liberty to come if she had known there was company. The worthy Momolo was the only one who answered her, and he said, kindly, that she had done quite right to come, and put her a chair between my brother and myself. I looked at her and thought her a perfect beauty.

Then the eating began and there was no more talking. The polenta was excellent, the chops delicious, and the ham perfect, and in less than an hour the board was as bare as if there had been nothing on it; but the Orvieto kept the company in good spirts. They began to talk of the lottery which was to be drawn the day after next, and all the girls mentioned the numbers on which they had risked a few bajocchi.

“If I could be sure of one number,” said I, “I would stake something on it.”

Mariuccia told me that if I wanted a number she could give me one. I laughed at this offer, but in the gravest way she named me the number 27.

“Is the lottery still open?” I asked the Abbe Momolo.

“Till midnight,” he replied, “and if you like I will go and get the number for you.”

“Here are fifty crowns,” said I, “put twenty-five crowns on 27-this for these five young ladies; and the other twenty-five on 27 coming out the fifth number, and this I will keep for myself.”

He went out directly and returned with the two tickets.

My pretty neighbour thanked me and said she was sure of winning, but that she did not think I should succeed as it was not probable that 27 would come out fifth.

“I am sure of it,” I answered, “for you are the fifth young lady I saw in this house.” This made everybody laugh. Momolo’s wife told me I would have done much better if I had given the money to the poor, but her husband told her to be quiet, as she did not know my intent. My brother laughed, and told me I had done a foolish thing. “I do, sometimes,” said I, “but we shall see how it turns out, and when one plays one is obliged either to win or lose.”

I managed to squeeze my fair neighbour’s hand, and she returned the pressure with all her strength. From that time I knew that my fate with Mariuccia was sealed. I left them at midnight, begging the worthy Momolo to ask me again in two days' time, that we might rejoice together over our gains. On our way home my brother said I had either become as rich as Croesus or had gone mad. I told him that both suppositions were incorrect, but that Mariuccia was as handsome as an angel, and he agreed.

Next day Mengs returned to Rome, and I supped with him and his family. He had an exceedingly ugly sister, who for all that, was a good and talented woman. She had fallen deeply in love with my brother, and it was easy to see that the flame was not yet extinguished, but whenever she spoke to him, which she did whenever she could get an opportunity, he looked another way.

She was an exquisite painter of miniatures, and a capital hand at catching a likeness. To the best of my belief she is still living at Rome with Maroni her husband. She often used to speak of my brother to me, and one day she said that he must be the most thankless of men or he would not despise her so. I was not curious enough to enquire what claim she had to his gratitude.

Mengs's wife was a good and pretty woman, attentive to her household duties and very submissive to her husband, though she could not have loved him, for he was anything but amiable. He was obstinate and fierce in his manner, and when he dined at home he made a point of not leaving the table before he was drunk; out of his own house he was temperate to the extent of not drinking anything but water. His wife carried her obedience so far as to serve as his model for all the nude figures he painted. I spoke to her one day about this unpleasant obligation, and she said that her confessor had charged her to fulfil it, "for," said he, "if your husband has another woman for a model he will be sure to enjoy her before painting her, and that sin would be laid to your charge."

After supper, Winckelmann, who was as far gone as all the other male guests, played with Mengs's children. There was nothing of the pedant about this philosopher; he loved children and young people, and his cheerful disposition made him delight in all kinds of enjoyment.

Next day, as I was going to pay my court to the Pope, I saw Momolo in the first ante-chamber, and I took care to remind him of the polenta for the evening.

As soon as the Pope saw me, he said, —

"The Venetian ambassador has informed us that if you wish to return to your native land, you must go and present yourself before the secretary of the Tribunal."

"Most Holy Father, I am quite ready to take this step, if Your Holiness will grant me a letter of commendation written with your own hand. Without this powerful protection I should never dream of exposing myself to the risk of being again shut up in a place from which I escaped by a miracle and the help of the Almighty."

"You are gaily dressed; you do not look as if you were going to church."

"True, most Holy Father, but neither am I going to a ball."

"We have heard all about the presents being sent back. Confess that you did so to gratify your pride."

"Yes, but also to lower a pride greater than mine."

The Pope smiled at this reply, and I knelt down and begged him to permit me to present the volume of Pandects to the Vatican Library. By way of reply he gave me his blessing, which signifies, in papal language, "Rise; your request is granted."

"We will send you," said he, "a mark of our singular affection for you without your having to pay any fees."

A second blessing bid me begone. I have often felt what a good thing it would be if this kind of dismissal could be employed in general society to send away importunate petitioners, to whom one does not dare say, "Begone."

I was extremely curious to know what the Pope had meant by "a mark of our singular affection." I was afraid that it would be a blessed rosary, with which I should not have known what to do.

When I got home I sent the book by Costa to the Vatican, and then I went to dine with Mengs. While we were eating the soup the winning numbers from the lottery were brought in. My brother glanced at them and looked at me with astonishment. I was not thinking of the subject at that moment, and his gaze surprised me.

"Twenty-seven," he cried, "came out fifth."

"All the better," said I, "we shall have some amusement out of it."

I told the story to Mengs, who said, —

"It's a lucky folly for you this time; but it always is a folly."

He was quite right, and I told him that I agreed with him; but I added that to make a worthy use of the fifteen hundred roman crowns which fortune had given me, I should go and spend fifteen days at Naples.

"I will come too," said the Abbe Alfani. "I will pass for your secretary."

"With all my heart," I answered, "I shall keep you to your word."

I asked Winckelmann to come and eat polenta with the scopatore santissimo, and told my brother to shew him the way; and I then called on the Marquis Belloni, my banker, to look into my accounts, and to get a letter of credit on the firm at Naples, who were his agents. I still had two hundred thousand francs: I had jewellery worth thirty thousand francs, and fifty thousand florins at Amsterdam.

I got to Momolo's in the dusk of the evening, and I found Winckelmann and my brother already there; but instead of mirth reigning round the board I saw sad faces on all sides.

"What's the matter with the girls?" I asked Momolo.

"They are vexed that you did not stake for them in the same way as you did for yourself."

"People are never satisfied. If I had staked for them as I did for myself, and the number had come out first instead of fifth, they would have got nothing, and they would have been vexed then. Two days ago they had nothing, and now that they have twenty-seven pounds apiece they ought to be contented."

"That's just what I tell them, but all women are the same."

"And men too, dear countryman, unless they are philosophers. Gold does not spell happiness, and mirth can only be found in hearts devoid of care. Let us say no more about it, but be happy."

Costa placed a basket containing ten packets of sweets, upon the table.

"I will distribute them," said I, "when everybody is here."

On this, Momolo's second daughter told me that Mariuccia and her mother were not coming, but that they would send them the sweets.

"Why are they not coming?"

"They had a quarrel yesterday," said the father, "and Mariuccia, who was in the right, went away saying that she would never come here again."

"You ungrateful girls!" said I, to my host's daughters, "don't you know that it is to her that you owe your winnings, for she gave me the number twenty-seven, which I should never have thought of. Quick! think of some way to make her come, or I will go away and take all the sweets with me."

"You are quite right," said Momolo.

The mortified girls looked at one another and begged their father to fetch her.

"Ira," said he, "that won't do; you made her say that she would never come here again, and you must make up the quarrel."

They held a short consultation, and then, asking Costa to go with them, they went to fetch her.

In half an hour they returned in triumph, and Costa was quite proud of the part he had taken in the reconciliation. I then distributed the sweets, taking care to give the two best packets to the fair Mary.

A noble polenta was placed upon the board, flanked by two large dishes of pork chops. But Momolo, who knew my tastes, and whom I had made rich in the person of his daughters, added to the feast some delicate dishes and some excellent wine. Mariuccia was simply dressed, but her elegance and beauty and the modesty of her demeanour completely seduced me.

We could only express our mutual flames by squeezing each other's hands; and she did this so feelingly that I could not doubt her love. As we were going out I took care to go downstairs beside her and asked if I could not meet her by herself, to which she replied by making an appointment with me far the next day at eight o'clock at the Trinity of Monti.

Mariuccia was tall and shapely, a perfect picture, as fair as a white rose, and calculated to inspire voluptuous desires. She had beautiful light brown hair, dark blue eyes, and exquisitely arched eyelids. Her mouth, the vermilion of her lips, and her ivory teeth were all perfect. Her well-shaped forehead gave her an air approaching the majestic. Kindness and gaiety sparkled in her eyes; while her plump white hands, her rounded finger-tips, her pink nails, her breast, which the corset seemed scarcely able to restrain, her dainty feet, and her prominent hips, made her worthy of the chisel of Praxiteles. She was just on her eighteenth year, and so far had escaped the connoisseurs. By a lucky chance I came across her in a poor and wretched street, and I was fortunate enough to insure her happiness.

It may easily be believed that I did not fail to keep the appointment, and when she was sure I had seen her she went out of the church. I followed her at a considerable distance: she entered a ruined building, and I after her. She climbed a flight of steps which seemed to be built in air, and when she had reached the top she turned.

“No one will come and look for me here,” said she, “so we can talk freely together.”

I sat beside her on a stone, and I then declared my passionate love for her.

“Tell me,” I added, “what I can do to make you happy; for I wish to possess you, but first to shew my deserts.”

“Make me happy, and I will yield to your desires, for I love you.”

“Tell me what I can do.”

“You can draw me out of the poverty and misery which overwhelm me. I live with my mother, who is a good woman, but devout to the point of superstition; she will damn my soul in her efforts to save it. She finds fault with my keeping myself clean, because I have to touch myself when I wash, and that might give rise to evil desires.

“If you had given me the money you made me win in the lottery as a simple alms she would have made me refuse it, because you might have had intentions. She allows me to go by myself to mass because our confessor told her she might do so; but I dare not stay away a minute beyond the time, except on feast days, when I am allowed to pray in the church for two or three hours. We can only meet here, but if you wish to soften my lot in life you can do so as follows:

"A fine young man, who is a hairdresser, and bears an excellent character, saw me at Momolo's a fortnight ago, and met me at the church door next day and gave me a letter. He declared himself my lover, and said that if I could bring him a dowry of four hundred crowns, he could open a shop, furnish it, and marry me.

"'I am poor,' I answered, 'and I have only a hundred crowns in charity tickets, which my confessor keeps for me.' Now I have two hundred crowns, for if I marry, my mother will willingly give me her share of the money you made us gain. You can therefore make me happy by getting me tickets to the amount of two hundred crowns more. Take the tickets to my confessor, who is a very good man and fond of me; he will not say anything to my mother about it."

"I needn't go about seeking for charity tickets, my angel. I will take two hundred piastres to your confessor to-morrow, and you must manage the rest yourself. Tell me his name, and to-morrow I will tell you what I have done, but not here, as the wind and the cold would be the death of me. You can leave me to find out a room where we shall be at our ease, and without any danger of people suspecting that we have spent an hour together. I will meet you at the church to-morrow at the same hour and when you see me follow me."

Mariuccia told me her confessor's name, and allowed me all the caresses possible in our uncomfortable position. The kisses she gave me in return for mine left no doubt in my mind, as to her love for me. As nine o'clock struck I left her, perishing with cold, but burning with desire; my only thought being where to find a room in which I might possess myself of the treasure the next day.

On leaving the ruined palace, instead of returning to the Piazza di Spagna I turned to the left and passed along a narrow and dirty street only inhabited by people of the lowest sort. As I slowly walked along, a woman came out of her house and asked me politely if I were looking for anybody.

"I am looking for a room to let."

"There are none here, sir, but, you will find a hundred in the square."

"I know it, but I want the room to be here, not for the sake of the expense, but that I may be sure of being able to spend an hour or so of a morning with a person in whom I am interested. I am ready to pay anything."

"I understand what you mean, and you should have a room in my house if I had one to spare, but a neighbour of mine has one on the ground floor, and if you will wait a moment I will go and speak to her."

"You will oblige me very much."

"Kindly step in here."

I entered a poor room, where all seemed wretchedness, and I saw two children doing their lessons. Soon after, the good woman came back and asked me to follow her. I took several pieces of money from my pocket, and put them down on the only table which this poor place contained. I must have seemed very generous, for the poor mother came and kissed my hand with the utmost gratitude. So pleasant is it to do good, that now when I have nothing left the remembrance of the happiness I have given to others at small cost is almost the only pleasure I enjoy.

I went to a neighbouring house where a woman received me in an empty room, which she told me she would let cheaply if I would pay three months in advance, and bring in my own furniture.

"What do you ask for the three months' rent?"

"Three Roman crowns."

"If you will see to the furnishing of the room this very day I will give you twelve crowns."

"Twelve crowns! What furniture do you want?"

"A good clean bed, a small table covered with a clean cloth, four good chairs, and a large brazier with plenty of fire in it, for I am nearly perishing of cold here. I shall only come occasionally in the morning, and I shall leave by noon at the latest."

"Come at three o'clock, then, to-day, and you will find everything to your satisfaction."

From there I went to the confessor. He was a French monk, about sixty, a fine and benevolent-looking man, who won one's respect and confidence.

"Reverend father," I began, "I saw at the house of Abbe Momolo, 'scoptore santissimo', a young girl named Mary, whose confessor you are. I fell in love with her, and offered her money to try and seduce her. She replied that instead of trying to lead her into sin I would do better to get her some charity tickets that she might be able to marry a young man who loved her, and would make her happy. I was touched by what she said, but my passion still remained. I spoke to her again, and said that I would give her two hundred crowns for nothing, and that her mother should keep them.

"'That would be my ruin,' said she; 'my mother would think the money was the price of sin, and would not accept it. If you are really going to be so generous, take the money to my confessor, and ask him to do what he can for my marriage.'"

"Here, then, reverend father, is the sum of money for the good girl; be kind enough to take charge of it, and I will trouble her no more. I am going to Naples the day after to-morrow, and I hope when I come back she will be married."

The good confessor took the hundred sequins and gave me a receipt, telling me that in interesting myself on behalf of Mariuccia I was making happy a most pure and innocent dove, whom he had confessed since she was five years old, and that he had often told her that she might communicate without making her confession because he knew she was incapable of mortal sin.

"Her mother," he added, "is a sainted woman, and as soon as I have enquired into the character of the future husband I will soon bring the marriage about. No one shall ever know from whom this generous gift comes."

After putting this matter in order I dined with the Chevalier Mengs, and I willingly consented to go with the whole family to the Aliberti Theatre that evening. I did not forget, however, to go and inspect the room I had taken. I found all my orders executed, and I gave twelve crowns to the landlady and took the key, telling her to light the fire at seven every morning.

So impatient did I feel for the next day to come that I thought the opera detestable, and the night for me was a sleepless one.

Next morning I went to the church before the time, and when Mariuccia came, feeling sure that she had seen me, I went out. She followed me at a distance, and when I got to the door of the lodging I turned for her to be sure that it was I, and then went in and found the room well warmed. Soon after Mariuccia came in, looking timid, confused, and as if she were doubtful of the path she was treading. I clasped her to my arms, and reassured her by my tender embraces; and her courage rose when I shewed her the confessor's receipt, and told her that the worthy man had promised to care for her marriage. She kissed my hand in a transport of delight, assuring me that she would never forget my kindness. Then, as I urged her to make me a happy man, she said, —

"We have three hours before us, as I told my mother I was going to give thanks to God for having made me a winner in the lottery."

This reassured me, and I took my time, undressing her by degrees, and unveiling her charms one by one, to my delight, without the slightest attempt at resistance on her part. All the time she kept her eyes fixed on mine, as if to soothe her modesty; but when I beheld and felt all her charms I was in an ecstasy. What a body; what beauties! Nowhere was there the slightest imperfection. She was like Venus rising from the foam of the sea. I carried her gently to the bed, and while she strove to hide her alabaster breasts and the soft hair which marked the entrance to the sanctuary, I undressed in haste, and consummated the sweetest of sacrifices, without there being the slightest doubt in my mind of the purity of the victim. In the first sacrifice no doubt the young priestess felt some pain, but she assured me out of delicacy that she had not been hurt, and at the second assault she shewed that she shared my flames. I was going to immolate the victim for the third time when the clock struck ten. She began to be restless, and hurriedly put on our clothes. I had to go to Naples, but I assured her that the desire of embracing her once more before her marriage would hasten my return to Rome. I promised to take another hundred crowns to her confessor, advising her to spend the money she had won in the lottery on her trousseau.

"I shall be at Monolo's to-night, dearest, and you must come, too; but we must appear indifferent to each other, though our hearts be full of joy, lest those malicious girls suspect our mutual understanding."

“It is all the more necessary to be cautious,” she replied, “as I have noticed that they suspect that we love each other.”

Before we parted she thanked me for what I had done for her, and begged me to believe that, her poverty notwithstanding, she had given herself for love alone.

I was the last to leave the house, and I told my landlady that I should be away for ten or twelve days. I then went to the confessor to give him the hundred crowns I had promised my mistress. When the good old Frenchman heard that I had made this fresh sacrifice that Mariuccia might be able to spend her lottery winnings on her clothes, he told me that he would call on the mother that very day and urge her to consent to her daughter’s marriage, and also learn where the young man lived. On my return from Naples I heard that he had faithfully carried out his promise.

I was sitting at table with Mengs when a chamberlain of the Holy Father called. When he came in he asked M. Mengs if I lived there, and on that gentleman pointing me out, he gave me, from his holy master, the Cross of the Order of the Golden Spur with the diploma, and a patent under the pontifical seal, which, in my quality as doctor of laws, made me a prothonotary-apostolic ‘extra urbem’.

I felt that I had been highly honoured, and told the bearer that I would go and thank my new sovereign and ask his blessing the next day. The Chevalier Mengs embraced me as a brother, but I had the advantage over him in not being obliged to pay anything, whereas the great artist had to disburse twenty-five Roman crowns to have his diploma made out. There is a saying at Rome, ‘Sine efusione sanguinis non fit remissio’, which may be interpreted, Nothing without money; and as a matter of fact, one can do anything with money in the Holy City.

Feeling highly flattered at the favour the Holy Father had shewn me, I put on the cross which depended from a broad red ribbon-red being the colour worn by the Knights of St. John of the Lateran, the companions of the palace, ‘comites palatini’, or count-palatins. About the same time poor Cahusac, author of the opera of Zoroaster, went mad for joy on the receipt of the same order. I was not so bad as that, but I confess, to my shame, that I was so proud of my decoration that I asked Winckelmann whether I should be allowed to have the cross set with diamonds and rubies. He said I could if I liked, and if I wanted such a cross he could get me one cheap. I was delighted, and bought it to make a show at Naples, but I had not the face to wear it in Rome. When I went to thank the Pope I wore the cross in my button-hole out of modesty. Five years afterwards when I was at Warsaw, Czartoryski, a Russian prince-palatine, made me leave it off by saying, —

“What are you doing with that wretched bauble? It’s a drug in the market, and no one but an impostor would wear it now.”

The Popes knew this quite well, but they continued to give the cross to ambassadors while they also gave it to their ‘valets de chambre’. One has to wink at a good many things in Rome.

In the evening Momolo gave me a supper by way of celebrating my new dignity. I recouped him for the expense by holding a bank at faro, at which I was dexterous enough to lose forty crowns to the family, without having the slightest partiality to Mariuccia who won like the rest. She found the opportunity to tell me that her confessor had called on her, that she had told him where her future husband lived, and that the worthy monk had obtained her mother’s consent to the hundred crowns being spent on her trousseau.

I noticed that Momolo’s second daughter had taken a fancy to Costa, and I told Momolo that I was going to Naples, but that I would leave my man in Rome, and that if I found a marriage had been arranged on my return I would gladly pay the expenses of the wedding.

Costa liked the girl, but he did not marry her then for fear of my claiming the first-fruits. He was a fool of a peculiar kind, though fools of all sorts are common enough. He married her a year later after robbing me, but I shall speak of that again.

Next day, after I had breakfasted and duly embraced my brother, I set out in a nice carriage with the Abbe Alfani, Le Duc preceding me on horseback, and I reached Naples at a time when everybody was in a state of excitement because an eruption of Vesuvius seemed imminent. At the last stage the inn-keeper made me read the will of his father who had died during the eruption of 1754. He said that in the year 1761 God would overwhelm the sinful town of Naples, and the worthy host consequently advised me to return to Rome. Alfani took the thing seriously, and said that we should do well to be warned by so evident an indication of the will of God. The event was predicted, therefore it had to happen. Thus a good many people reason, but as I was not of the number I proceeded on my way.

CHAPTER IX

My Short But Happy Stay at Naples — The Duke de Matalone My

Daughter — Donna Lucrezia — My Departure

I shall not, dear reader, attempt the impossible, however much I should like to describe the joy, the happiness, I may say the ecstasy, which I experienced in returning to Naples, of which I had such pleasant memories, and where, eighteen years ago, I had made my first fortune in returning from Mataro. As I had come there for the second time to keep a promise I had made to the Duke de Matalone to come and see him at Naples, I ought to have visited this nobleman at once; but foreseeing that from the time I did so I should have little liberty left me, I began by enquiring after all my old friends.

I walked out early in the morning and called on Belloni's agent. He cashed my letter of credit and gave me as many bank-notes as I liked, promising that nobody should know that we did business together. From the bankers I went to see Antonio Casanova, but they told me he lived near Salerno, on an estate he had bought which gave him the title of marquis. I was vexed, but I had no right to expect to find Naples in the statu quo I left it. Polo was dead, and his son lived at St. Lucia with his wife and children; he was a boy when I saw him last, and though I should have much liked to see him again I had no time to do so.

It may be imagined that I did not forget the advocate, Castelli, husband of my dear Lucrezia, whom I had loved so well at Rome and Tivoli. I longed to see her face once more, and I thought of the joy with which we should recall old times that I could never forget. But Castelli had been dead for some years, and his widow lived at a distance of twenty miles from Naples. I resolved not to return to Rome without embracing her. As to Lelio Caraffa, he was still alive and residing at the Matalone Palace.

I returned, feeling tired with my researches, dressed with care, and drove to the Matalone Palace, where they told me that the duke was at table. I did not care for that but had my name sent in, and the duke came out and did me the honour of embracing me and thouing me, and then presented me to his wife, a daughter of the Duke de Bovino, and to the numerous company at table. I told him I had only come to Naples in fulfillment of the promise I had made him at Paris.

“Then,” said he, “you must stay with me;” and, without waiting for my answer, ordered my luggage to be brought from the inn, and my carriage to be placed in his coach-house. I accepted his invitation.

One of the guests, a fine-looking man, on hearing my name announced, said gaily, —

“If you bear my name, you must be one of my father’s bastards.”

“No,” said I, directly, “one of your mother’s.”

This repartee made everybody laugh, and the gentleman who had addressed me came and embraced me, not in the least offended. The joke was explained to me. His name was Casalnovo, not Casanova, and he was duke and lord of the fief of that name.

“Did you know,” said the Duke de Matalone, “that I had a son?”

“I was told so, but did not believe it, but now I must do penance for my incredulity, for I see before me an angel capable of working this miracle.”

The duchess blushed, but did not reward my compliment with so much as a glance; but all the company applauded what I had said, as it was notorious that the duke had been impotent before his marriage. The duke sent for his son, I admired him, and told the father that the likeness was perfect. A merry monk, who sat at the right hand of the duchess, said, more truthfully, that there was no likeness at all. He had scarcely uttered the words when the duchess coolly gave him a box on the ear, which the monk received with the best grace imaginable.

I talked away to the best of my ability, and in half an hour’s time I had won everybody’s good graces, with the exception of the duchess, who remained inflexible. I tried to make her talk for two days without success; so as I did not care much about her I left her to her pride.

As the duke was taking me to my room he noticed my Spaniard, and asked where my secretary was, and when he saw that it was the Abbe Alfani, who had taken the title so as to escape the notice of the Neapolitans, he said, —

“The abbe is very wise, for he has deceived so many people with his false antiques that he might have got into trouble.”

He took me to his stables where he had some superb horses, Arabs, English, and Andalusians; and then to his gallery, a very fine one; to his large and choice library; and at last to his study, where he had a fine collection of prohibited books.

I was reading titles and turning over leaves, when the duke said, —

“Promise to keep the most absolute secrecy on what I am going to shew you.”

I promised, without making any difficulty, but I expected a surprise of some sort. He then shewed me a satire which I could not understand, but which was meant to turn the whole Court into ridicule. Never was there a secret so easily kept.

“You must come to the St. Charles Theatre,” said he, “and I will present you to the handsomest ladies in Naples, and afterwards you can go when you like, as my box is always open to my friends. I will also introduce you to my mistress, and she, I am sure, will always be glad to see you.”

“What! you have a mistress, have you?”

“Yes, but only for form’s sake, as I am very fond of my wife. All the same, I am supposed to be deeply in love with her, and even jealous, as I never introduce anyone to her, and do not allow her to receive any visitors.”

“But does not your young and handsome duchess object to your keeping a mistress?”

“My wife could not possibly be jealous, as she knows that I am impotent — except, of course, with her.”

“I see, but it seems strange; can one be said to have a mistress whom one does not love?”

“I did not say I loved her not; on the contrary, I am very fond of her; she has a keen and pleasant wit, but she interests my head rather than my heart.”

“I see; but I suppose she is ugly?”

"Ugly? You shall see her to-night, and you can tell me what you think of her afterwards. She is a handsome and well-educated girl of seventeen."

"Can she speak French?"

"As well as a Frenchwoman."

"I am longing to see her."

When we got to the theatre I was introduced to several ladies, but none of them pleased me. The king, a mere boy, sat in his box in the middle of the theatre, surrounded by his courtiers, richly but tastefully dressed. The pit was full and the boxes also. The latter were ornamented with mirrors, and on that occasion were all illuminated for some reason or other. It was a magnificent scene, but all this glitter and light put the stage into the background.

After we had gazed for some time at the scene, which is almost peculiar to Naples, the duke took me to his private box and introduced me to his friends, who consisted of all the wits in the town.

I have often laughed on hearing philosophers declare that the intelligence of a nation is not so much the result of the climate as of education. Such sages should be sent to Naples and then to St. Petersburg, and be told to reflect, or simply to look before them. If the great Boerhaave had lived at Naples he would have learnt more about the nature of sulphur by observing its effects on vegetables, and still more on animals. In Naples, and Naples alone, water, and nothing but water, will cure diseases which are fatal elsewhere, despite the doctors' efforts.

The duke, who had left me to the wits for a short time, returned and took me to the box of his mistress, who was accompanied by an old lady of respectable appearance. As he went in he said, "'Leonilda mia, ti presento il cavalier Don Giacomo Casanova, Veneziano, amico mio'."

She received me kindly and modestly, and stopped listening to the music to talk to me.

When a woman is pretty, one recognizes her charms instantaneously; if one has to examine her closely, her beauty is doubtful. Leonilda was strikingly beautiful. I smiled and looked at the duke, who had told me that he loved her like a daughter, and that he only kept her for form’s sake. He understood the glance, and said, —

“You may believe me.”

“It’s credible,” I replied.

Leonilda no doubt understood what we meant, and said, with a shy smile, —

“Whatever is possible is credible.”

“Quite so,” said I, “but one may believe, or not believe, according to the various degrees of possibility.”

“I think it’s easier to believe than to disbelieve. You came to Naples yesterday; that’s true and yet incredible.”

“Why incredible?”

“Would any man suppose that a stranger would come to Naples at a time when the inhabitants are wishing themselves away?”

“Indeed, I have felt afraid till this moment, but now I feel quite at my ease, since, you being here, St. Januarius will surely protect Naples.”

“Why?”

“Because I am sure he loves you; but you are laughing at me.”

“It is such a funny idea. I am afraid that if I had a lover like St. Januarius I should not grant him many favours.”

“Is he very ugly, then?”

“If his portrait is a good likeness, you can see for yourself by examining his statue.”

Gaiety leads to freedom, and freedom to friendship. Mental graces are superior to bodily charms.

Leonilda’s frankness inspired my confidence, and I led the conversation to love, on which she talked like a past mistress.

“Love,” said she, “unless it leads to the possession of the beloved object, is a mere torment; if bounds are placed to passion, love must die.”

"You are right; and the enjoyment of a beautiful object is not a true pleasure unless it be preceded by love."

"No doubt if love precedes it accompanies, but I do not think it necessarily follows, enjoyment."

"True, it often makes love to cease."

"She is a selfish daughter, then, to kill her father; and if after enjoyment love still continue in the heart of one, it is worse than murder, for the party in which love still survives must needs be wretched."

"You are right; and from your strictly logical arguments I conjecture that you would have the senses kept in subjection: that is too hard!"

"I would have nothing to do with that Platonic affection devoid of love, but I leave you to guess what my maxim would be."

"To love and enjoy; to enjoy and love. Turn and turn about."

"You have hit the mark."

With this Leonilda burst out laughing, and the duke kissed her hand. Her governess, not understanding French, was attending to the opera, but I was in flames.

Leonilda was only seventeen, and was as pretty a girl as the heart could desire.

The duke repeated a lively epigram of Lafontaine's on "Enjoyment," which is only found in the first edition of his works. It begins as follows: —

"La jouissance et les desirs

Sont ce que l'homme a de plus rare;

Mais ce ne sons pas vrais plaisirs

Des le moment qu'on les separe."

I have translated this epigram into Italian and Latin; in the latter language I was almost able to render Lafontaine line for line; but I had to use twenty lines of Italian to translate the first ten lines of the French. Of course this argues nothing as to the superiority of the one language over the other.

In the best society at Naples one addresses a newcomer in the second person singular as a peculiar mark of distinction. This puts both parties at their ease without diminishing their mutual respect for one another.

Leonilda had already turned my first feeling of admiration into something much warmer, and the opera, which lasted for five hours, seemed over in a moment.

After the two ladies had gone the duke said, “Now we must part, unless you are fond of games of chance.”

“I don’t object to them when I am to play with good hands.”

“Then follow me; ten or twelve of my friends will play faro, and then sit down to a cold collation, but I warn you it is a secret, as gaming is forbidden. I will answer for you keeping your own counsel, however.”

“You may do so.”

He took me to the Duke de Monte Leone’s. We went up to the third floor, passed through a dozen rooms, and at last reached the gamester’s chamber. A polite-looking banker, with a bank of about four hundred sequins, had the cards in his hands. The duke introduced me as his friend, and made me sit beside him. I was going to draw out my purse, but I was told that debts were not paid for twenty-four hours after they were due. The banker gave me a pack of cards, with a little basket containing a thousand counters. I told the company that I should consider each counter as a Naples ducat. In less than two hours my basket was empty. I stopped playing and proceeded to enjoy my supper. It was arranged in the Neapolitan style, and consisted of an enormous dish of macaroni and ten or twelve different kinds of shellfish which are plentiful on the Neapolitan coasts. When we left I took care not to give the duke time to condole with me on my loss, but began to talk to him about his delicious Leonilda.

Early next day he sent a page to my room to tell me that if I wanted to come with him and kiss the king’s hand I must put on my gala dress. I put on a suit of rose-coloured velvet, with gold spangles, and I had the great honour of kissing a small hand, covered with chilblains, belonging to a boy of nine. The Prince de St. Nicander brought up the young king to the best of his ability, but he was naturally a kindly, just, and generous monarch; if he had

had more dignity he would have been an ideal king; but he was too unceremonious, and that, I think, is a defect in one destined to rule others.

I had the honour of sitting next the duchess at dinner, and she deigned to say that she had never seen a finer dress. "That's my way," I said, "of distracting attention from my face and figure." She smiled, and her politeness to me during my stay were almost limited to these few words.

When we left the table the duke took me to the apartment occupied by his uncle, Don Lelio, who recognized me directly. I kissed the venerable old man's hand, and begged him to pardon me for the freaks of my youth. "It's eighteen years ago," said he, "since I chose M. Casanova as the companion of your studies." I delighted him by giving him a brief account of my adventures in Rome with Cardinal Acquaviva. As we went out, he begged me to come and see him often.

Towards the evening the duke said, —

"If you go to the Opera Buffa you will please Leonilda."

He gave me the number of her box, and added, —

"I will come for you towards the close, and we will sup together as before."

I had no need to order my horses to be put in, as there was always a carriage ready for me in the courtyard.

When I got to the theatre the opera had begun. I presented myself to Leonilda, who received me with the pleasant words, "Caro Don Giacomo, I am so pleased to see you again."

No doubt she did not like to thou me, but the expression of her eyes and the tone of her voice were much better than the to which is often used lavishly at Naples.

The seductive features of this charming girl were not altogether unknown to me, but I could not recollect of what woman she reminded me. Leonilda was certainly a beauty, and something superior to a beauty, if possible. She had splendid light chestnut hair, and her black and brilliant eyes, shaded by thick lashes, seemed to hear and speak at the same time. But what ravished me still more was her expression, and the exquisite appropriateness of the gestures with which she accompanied what she was saying. It seemed as if her tongue could not give speech to the thoughts which crowded her brain.

She was naturally quick-witted, and her intellect had been developed by an excellent education.

The conversation turned upon Lafontaine’s epigram, of which I had only recited the first ten verses, as the rest is too licentious; and she said, —

“But I suppose it is only a poet’s fancy, at which one could but smile.”

“Possibly, but I did not care to wound your ears.”

“You are very good,” said she, using the pleasant tu, “but all the same, I am not so thin-skinned, as I have a closet which the duke has had painted over with couples in various amorous attitudes. We go there sometimes, and I assure you that I do not experience the slightest sensation.”

“That may be through a defect of temperament, for whenever I see well-painted voluptuous pictures I feel myself on fire. I wonder that while you and the duke look at them, you do not try to put some of them into practice.”

“We have only friendship for one another.”

“Let him believe it who will.”

“I am sure he is a man, but I am unable to say whether he is able to give a woman any real proofs of his love.”

“Yet he has a son.”

“Yes, he has a child who calls him father; but he himself confesses that he is only able to shew his manly powers with his wife.”

“That’s all nonsense, for you are made to give birth to amorous desires, and a man who could live with you without being able to possess you ought to cease to live.”

“Do you really think so?”

“Dear Leonilda, if I were in the duke’s place I would shew you what a man who really loves can do.”

“Caro Don Giacomo, I am delighted to hear you love me, but you will soon forget me, as you are leaving Naples.”

“Cursed be the gaming-table, for without it we might spend some delightful hour together.”

"The duke told me that you lost a thousand ducats yesterday evening like a perfect gentleman. You must be very unlucky."

"Not always, but when I play on a day in which I have fallen in love I am sure to lose."

"You will win back your money this evening."

"This is the declaration day; I shall lose again."

"Then don't play."

"People would say I was afraid, or that all my money was gone."

"I hope at all events that you will win sometimes, and that you will tell me of your good luck. Come and see me to-morrow with the duke."

The duke came in at that moment, and asked me if I had liked the opera. Leonilda answered for me,

"We have been talking about love all the time, so we don't know what has been going on the stage."

"You have done well."

"I trust you will bring M. Casanova to see me tomorrow morning, as I hope he will bring me news that he has won."

"It's my turn to deal this evening, dearest, but whether he wins or loses you shall see him to-morrow. You must give us some breakfast."

"I shall be delighted."

We kissed her hand, and went to the same place as the night before. The company was waiting for the duke. There were twelve members of the club, and they all held the bank in turn. They said that this made the chances more equal; but I laughed at this opinion, as there is nothing more difficult to establish than equality between players.

The Duke de Matalone sat down, drew out his purse and his pocket-book, and put two thousand ducats in the bank, begging pardon of the others for doubling the usual sum in favour of the stranger. The bank never exceeded a thousand ducats.

"Then," said I, "I will hazard two thousand ducats also and not more, for they say at Venice that a prudent player never risks more than he can win.

Each of my counters will be equivalent to two ducats.” So saying, I took ten notes of a hundred ducats each from my pocket, and gave them to the last evening’s banker who had won them from me.

Play began; and though I was prudent, and only risked my money on a single card, in less than three hours my counters were all gone. I stopped playing, though I had still twenty-five thousand ducats; but I had said that I would not risk more than two thousand, and I was ashamed to go back from my word.

Though I have always felt losing my money, no one has ever seen me put out, my natural gaiety was heightened by art on such occasions, and seemed to be more brilliant than ever. I have always found it a great advantage to be able to lose pleasantly.

I made an excellent supper, and my high spirits furnished me with such a fund of amusing conversation that all the table was in a roar. I even succeeded in dissipating the melancholy of the Duke de Matalone, who was in despair at having won such a sum from his friend and guest. He was afraid he had half ruined me, and also that people might say he had only welcomed me for the sake of my money.

As we returned to the palace the conversation was affectionate on his side and jovial on mine, but I could see he was in some trouble, and guessed what was the matter. He wanted to say that I could pay the money I owed him whenever I liked, but was afraid of wounding my feelings; but as soon as he got in he wrote me a friendly note to the effect that if I wanted money his banker would let me have as much as I required. I replied directly that I felt the generosity of his offer, and if I was in need of funds I would avail myself of it.

Early next morning I went to his room, and after an affectionate embrace I told him not to forget that we were going to breakfast with his fair mistress. We both put on great coats and went to Leonilda’s pretty house.

We found her sitting up in bed, negligently but decently dressed, with a dimity corset tied with red ribbons. She looked beautiful, and her graceful posture added to her charms. She was reading Crebillon’s Sopha. The duke sat down at the bottom of the bed, and I stood staring at her in speechless admiration, endeavouring to recall to my memory where I had seen such another face as hers. It seemed to me that I had loved a woman like her. This was the first time I had seen her without the deceitful glitter of candles. She laughed at my absent-mindedness, and told me to sit down on a chair by her bedside.

The duke told her that I was quite pleased at having lost two thousand ducats to his bank, as the loss made me sure she loved me.

“Caro mio Don Giacomo, I am sorry to hear that! You would have done better not to play, for I should have loved you all the same, and you would have been two thousand ducats better off.”

“And I two thousand ducats worse off,” said the duke, laughing.

“Never mind, dear Leonilda, I shall win this evening if you grant me some favour to-day. If you do not do so, I shall lose heart, and you will mourn at my grave before long.”

“Think, Leonilda, what you can do for my friend.”

“I don’t see that I can do anything.”

The duke told her to dress, that we might go and breakfast in the painted closet. She began at once, and preserved a just mean in what she let us see and what she concealed, and thus set me in flames, though I was already captivated by her face, her wit, and her charming manners. I cast an indiscreet glance towards her beautiful breast, and thus added fuel to the fire. I confess that I only obtained this satisfaction by a species of larceny, but I could not have succeeded if she had not been well disposed towards me. I pretended to have seen nothing.

While dressing she maintained with much ingenuity that a wise girl will be much more chary of her favours towards a man she loves than towards a man she does not love, because she would be afraid to lose the first, whereas she does not care about the second.

“It will not be so with me, charming Leonilda,” said I.

“You make a mistake, I am sure.”

The pictures with which the closet where we breakfasted was adorned were admirable more from the colouring and the design than from the amorous combats they represented.

“They don’t make any impression on me,” said the duke, and he shewed us that it was so.

Leonilda looked away, and I felt shocked, but concealed my feelings.

“I am in the same state as you,” said I, “but I will not take the trouble of convincing you.”

“That can’t be,” said he; and passing his hand rapidly over me he assured himself that it was so. “It’s astonishing,” he cried; “you must be as impotent as I am.”

“If I wanted to controvert that assertion one glance into Leonilda’s eyes would be enough.”

“Look at him, dearest Leonilda, that I may be convinced.”

Leonilda looked tenderly at me, and her glance produced the result I had expected.

“Give me your hand,” said I, to the poor duke, and he did so.

“I was in the wrong,” he exclaimed, but when he endeavoured to bring the surprising object to light I resisted. He persisted in his endeavours, and I determined to play on him a trick. I took Leonilda’s hand and pressed my lips to it, and just as the duke thought he had triumphed I besprinkled him, and went off into a roar of laughter. He laughed too, and went to get a napkin.

The girl could see nothing of all this, as it went on under the table; and while my burning lips rested on her hand, my eyes were fixed on hers and our breath mingled. This close contact had enabled me to baptise the duke, but when she took in the joke we made a group worthy of the pen of Aretin.

It was a delightful breakfast, though we passed certain bounds which decency ought to have proscribed to us, but Leonilda was wonderfully innocent considering her position. We ended the scene by mutual embraces, and when I took my burning lips from Leonilda’s I felt consumed with a fire which I could not conceal.

When we left I told the duke that I would see his mistress no more, unless he would give her up to me, declaring that I would marry her and give her a dower of five thousand ducats.

"Speak to her, and if she consents I will not oppose it. She herself will tell you what property she has."

I then went to dress for dinner. I found the duchess in the midst of a large circle, and she told me kindly that she was very sorry to hear of my losses.

"Fortune is the most fickle of beings, but I don't complain of my loss — nay, when you speak thus I love it, and I even think that you will make me win this evening."

"I hope so, but I am afraid not; you will have to contend against Monte Leone, who is usually very lucky."

In considering the matter after dinner, I determined for the future to play with ready money and not on my word of honour, lest I should at any time be carried away by the excitement of play and induced to stake more than I possessed. I thought, too, that the banker might have his doubts after the two heavy losses I had sustained, and I confess that I was also actuated by the gambler's superstition that by making a change of any kind one changes the luck.

I spent four hours at the theatre in Leonilda's box, where I found her more gay and charming than I had seen her before.

"Dear Leonilda," I said, "the love I feel for you will suffer no delay and no rivals, not even the slightest inconstancy. I have told the duke that I am ready to marry you, and that I will give you a dower of five thousand ducats."

"What did he say?"

"That I must ask you, and that he would offer no opposition."

"Then we should leave Naples together."

"Directly, dearest, and thenceforth death alone would part us."

"We will talk of it to-morrow, dear Don Giacomo, and if I can make you happy I am sure you will do the same by me."

As she spoke these delightful words the duke came in.

"Don Giacomo and I are talking of marrying," said she.

"Marriage, mia carissima," he replied, "ought to be well considered beforehand."

"Yes, when one has time; but my dear Giacomo cannot wait, and we shall have plenty of time to think it over afterwards."

"As you are going to marry," said the duke, "you can put off your departure, or return after the wedding."

"I can neither put it off nor return, my dear duke. We have made up our minds, and if we repent we have plenty of time before us."

He laughed and said we would talk it over next day. I gave my future bride a kiss which she returned with ardour, and the duke and I went to the club, where we found the Duke de Monte Leone dealing.

"My lord," said I, "I am unlucky playing on my word of honour, so I hope you will allow me to stake money."

"Just as you please; it comes to the same thing, but don't trouble yourself. I have made a bank of four thousand ducats that you may be able to recoup yourself for your losses."

"Thanks, I promise to break it or to lose as much."

I drew out six thousand ducats, gave two thousand ducats to the Duke de Matalone, and began to punt at a hundred ducats. After a short time the duke left the table, and I finally succeeded in breaking the bank. I went back to the place by myself, and when I told the duke of my victory the next day, he embraced me with tears of joy, and advised me to stake money for the future.

As the Princess de Vale was giving a great supper, there was no play that evening. This was some respite. We called on Leonilda, and putting off talking of our marriage till the day after we spent the time in viewing the wonders of nature around Naples. In the evening I was introduced by a friend at the princess's supper, and saw all the highest nobility of the place.

Next morning the duke told me that he had some business to do, and that I had better go and see Leonilda, and that he would call for me later on. I went to Leonilda, but as the duke did not put in an appearance we could not settle anything about our marriage. I spent several hours with her, but I was obliged to obey her commands, and could only shew myself amorous in words. Before leaving I repeated that it only rested with her to unite our lives by indissoluble ties, and to leave Naples almost immediately.

When I saw the duke he said, —

"Well, Don Giacomo, you have spent all the morning with my mistress; do you still wish to marry her?"

"More than ever; what do you mean?"

"Nothing; and as you have passed this trial to which I purposely subjected you, we will discuss your union tomorrow, and I hope you will make this charming woman happy, for she will be an excellent wife."

"I agree with you."

When we went to Monte Leone's in the evening, we saw a banker with a good deal of gold before him. The duke told me he was Don Marco Ottoboni. He was a fine-looking man, but he held the cards so closely together in his left hand that I could not see them. This did not inspire me with confidence, so I only punted a ducat at a time. I was persistently unlucky, but I only lost a score of ducats. After five or six deals the banker, asked me politely why I staked such small sums against him.

"Because I can't see half the pack," I replied, "and I am afraid of losing."

Some of the company laughed at my answer.

Next night I broke the bank held by the Prince the Cassaro, a pleasant and rich nobleman, who asked me to give him revenge, and invited me to supper at his pretty house at Posilipo, where he lived with a virtuosa of whom he had become amorous at Palermo. He also invited the Duke de Matalone and three or four other gentlemen. This was the only occasion on which I held the bank while I was at Naples, and I staked six thousand ducats after warning the prince that as it was the eve of my departure I should only play for ready money.

He lost ten thousand ducats, and only rose from the table because he had no more money. Everybody left the room, and I should have done the same if the prince's mistress had not owed me a hundred ducats. I continued to deal in the hope that she would get her money back, but seeing that she still lost I put down the cards, and told her that she must pay me at Rome. She was a handsome and agreeable woman, but she did not inspire me with any passions, no doubt because my mind was occupied with another, otherwise I should have drawn a bill on sight, and paid myself without meddling with her purse. It was two o'clock in the morning when I got to bed.

Both Leonilda and myself wished to see Caserta before leaving Naples, and the duke sent us there in a carriage drawn by six mules, which went faster than most horses. Leonilda's governess accompanied us.

The day after, we settled the particulars of our marriage in a conversation which lasted for two hours.

"Leonilda," began the duke, "has a mother, who lives at a short distance from here, on an income of six hundred ducats, which I have given her for life, in return for an estate belonging to her husband; but Leonilda does not depend on her. She gave her up to me seven years ago, and I have given her an annuity of five hundred ducats, which she will bring to you, with all her diamonds and an extensive trousseau. Her mother gave her up to me entirely, and I gave my word of honour to get her a good husband. I have taken peculiar care of her education, and as her mind has developed I have put her on her guard against all prejudices, with the exception of that which bids a woman keep herself intact for her future husband. You may rest assured that you are the first man whom Leonilda (who is a daughter to me) has pressed to her heart."

I begged the duke to get the contract ready, and to add to her dower the sum of five thousand ducats, which I would give him when the deed was signed.

"I will mortgage them," said he, "on a house which is worth double."

Then turning to Leonilda, who was shedding happy tears, he said, —

"I am going to send for your mother, who will be delighted to sign the settlement, and to make the acquaintance of your future husband."

The mother lived at the Marquis Galiani's, a day's journey from Naples. The duke said he would send a carriage for her the next day, and that we could all sup together the day after.

"The law business will be all done by then, and we shall be able to go to the little church at Portici, and the priest will marry you. Then we will take your mother to St. Agatha and dine with her, and you can go your way with her maternal blessing."

This conclusion gave me an involuntary shudder, and Leonilda fell fainting in the duke's arms. He called her dear child, cared for her tenderly, and brought her to herself.

We all had to wipe our eyes, as we were all equally affected.

I considered myself as a married man and under obligation to alter my way of living, and I stopped playing. I had won more than fifteen thousand ducats, and this sum added to what I had before and Leonilda's dowry should have sufficed for an honest livelihood.

Next day, as I was at supper with the duke and Leonilda, she said, —

"What will my mother say to-morrow evening, when she sees you?"

"She will say that you are silly to marry a stranger whom you have only known for a week. Have you told her my name, my nation, my condition, and my age?"

"I wrote to her as follows:

"'Dear mamma, come directly and sign my marriage contract with a gentleman introduced to me by the duke, with whom I shall be leaving for Rome on Monday next.'"

"My letter ran thus," said the duke,

"'Come without delay, and sign your daughter's marriage contract, and give her your blessing. She has wisely chosen a husband old enough to be her father; he is a friend of mine.'"

"That's not true," cried Leonilda, rushing to my arms, "she will think you are really old, and I am sorry."

"Is your mother an elderly woman?"

"She's a charming Woman," said the duke, "full of wit, and not thirty-eight yet."

"What has she got to do with Galiani?"

"She is an intimate friend of the marchioness's, and she lives with the family but pays for her board."

Next morning, having some business with my banker to attend to, I told the duke that I should not be able to see Leonilda till supper-time. I went there at eight o'clock and I found the three sitting in front of the fire.

"Here he is!" cried the duke.

As soon as the mother saw me she screamed and fell nearly fainting on a chair. I looked at her fixedly for a minute, and exclaimed, —

"Donna Lucrezia! I am fortunate indeed!"

"Let us take breath, my dear friend. Come and sit by me. So you are going to marry my daughter, are you?"

I took a chair and guessed it all. My hair stood on end, and I relapsed into a gloomy silence.

The stupefied astonishment of Leonilda and the duke cannot be described. They could see that Donna Lucrezia and I knew each other, but they could not get any farther. As for myself, as I pondered gloomily and compared Leonilda's age with the period at which I had been intimate with Lucrezia Castelli, I could see that it was quite possible that she might be my daughter; but I told myself that the mother could not be certain of the fact, as at the time she lived with her husband, who was very fond of her and not fifty years of age. I could bear the suspense no longer, so, taking a light and begging Leonilda and the duke to excuse me, I asked Lucrezia to come into the next room with me.

As soon as she was seated, she drew me to her and said, —

"Must I grieve my dear one when I have loved so well? Leonilda is your daughter, I am certain of it. I always looked upon her as your daughter, and my husband knew it, but far from being angry, he used to adore her. I will shew you the register of her birth, and you can calculate for yourself. My husband was at Rome, and did not see me once, and my daughter did not come before her time. You must remember a letter which my mother should have given you, in which I told you I was with child. That was in January, 1744, and in six months my daughter will be seventeen. My late husband gave her the names of Leonilda Giacomina at the baptismal font, and when he played with her he always called her by the latter name. This idea of your marrying her horrifies me, but I cannot oppose it, as I am ashamed to tell the reason. What do you think? Have you still the courage to marry her? You seem to hesitate. Have you taken any earnest of the marriage-bed?"

"No, dear Lucrezia, your daughter is as pure as a lily."

"I breathe again."

"Ah, yes! but my heart is torn asunder."

"I am grieved to see you thus."

"She has no likeness to me."

"That proves nothing; she has taken after me. You are weeping, dearest, you will break my heart."

"Who would not weep in my place? I will send the duke to you; he must know all."

I left Lucrezia, and I begged the duke to go and speak to her. The affectionate Leonilda came and sat on my knee, and asked me what the dreadful mystery was. I was too much affected to be able to answer her; she kissed me, and we began to weep. We remained thus sad and silent till the return of the duke and Donna Lucrezia, who was the only one to keep her head cool.

"Dear Leonilda," said she, "you must be let into the secret of this disagreeable mystery, and your mother is the proper person to enlighten you. Do you remember what name my late husband used to call you when he petted you?"

"He used to call me his charming Giacomina."

"That is M. Casanova's name; it is the name of your father. Go and kiss him; his blood flows in your veins; and if he has been your lover, repent of the crime which was happily quite involuntary."

The scene was a pathetic one, and we were all deeply moved. Leonilda clung to her mother's knees, and in a voice that struggled with sobs exclaimed, —

"I have only felt what an affectionate daughter might feel for a father."

At this point silence fell on us, a silence that was only broken by the sobs of the two women, who held each other tightly embraced; while the duke and I sat as motionless as two posts, our heads bent and our hands crossed, without as much as looking at each other.

Supper was served, and we sat at table for three hours, talking sadly over this dramatic recognition, which had brought more grief than joy; and we departed at midnight full of melancholy, and hoping that we should be calmer on the morrow, and able to take the only step that now remained to us.

As we were going away the duke made several observations on what moral philosophers call prejudices. There is no philosopher who would maintain or even advance the thesis that the union of a father and daughter is horrible naturally, for it is entirely a social prejudice; but it is so widespread, and education has graven it so deeply in our hearts, that only a man whose heart is utterly depraved could despise it. It is the result of a respect for the laws, it keeps the social scheme together; in fact, it is no longer a prejudice, it is a principle.

I went to bed, but as usual, after the violent emotion I had undergone, I could not sleep. The rapid transition from carnal to paternal love cast my physical and mental faculties into such a state of excitement that I could scarcely withstand the fierce struggle that was taking place in my heart.

Towards morning I fell asleep for a short time, and woke up feeling as exhausted as two lovers who have been spending a long and voluptuous winter's night.

When I got up I told the duke that I intended to set out from Naples the next day; and he observed that as everybody knew I was on the eve of my departure, this haste would make people talk.

"Come and have some broth with me," said he; "and from henceforth look upon this marriage project as one of the many pranks in which you have engaged. We will spend the three or four days pleasantly together, and perhaps when we have thought over all this for some time we shall end by thinking it matter for mirth and not sadness. Believe me the mother's as good as the daughter; recollection is often better than hope; console yourself with Lucrezia. I don't think you can see any difference between her present appearance and that of eighteen years ago, for I don't see how she can ever have been handsomer than she is now."

This remonstrance brought me to my senses. I felt that the best thing I could do would be to forget the illusion which had amused me for four or five days, and as my self-esteem was not wounded it ought not to be a difficult task; but yet I was in love and unable to satisfy my love.

Love is not like merchandise, where one can substitute one thing for another when one cannot have what one wants. Love is a sentiment, only the object who has kindled the flame can soothe the heat thereof.

We went to call on my daughter, the duke in his usual mood, but I looking pale, depressed, weary, and like a boy going to receive the rod. I was extremely surprised when I came into the room to find the mother and daughter quite gay, but this helped on my cure. Leonilda threw her arms round my neck, calling me dear papa, and kissing me with all a daughter's freedom. Donna Lucrezia stretched out her hand, addressing me as her dear friend. I regarded her attentively, and I was forced to confess that the eighteen years that had passed away had done little ill to her charms. There was the same sparkling glance, that fresh complexion, those perfect shapes, those beautiful lips — in fine, all that had charmed my youthful eyes.

We mutely caressed each other. Leonilda gave and received the tenderest kisses without seeming to notice what desires she might cause to arise; no doubt she knew that as her father I should have strength to resist, and she was right. One gets used to everything, and I was ashamed to be sad any longer.

I told Donna Lucrezia of the curious welcome her sister had given me in Rome, and she went off into peals of laughter. We reminded each other of the night at Tivoli, and these recollections softened our hearts. From these softened feelings to love is but a short way; but neither place nor time were convenient, so we pretended not to be thinking of it.

After a few moments of silence I told her that if she cared to come to Rome with me to pay a visit to her sister Angelique, I would take her back to Naples at the beginning of Lent. She promised to let me know whether she could come on the following day.

I sat between her and Leonilda at dinner; and as I could no longer think of the daughter, it was natural that my old flame for Lucrezia should rekindle; and whether from the effect of her gaiety and beauty, or from my need of someone to love, or from the excellence of the wine, I found myself in love with her by the dessert, and asked her to take the place which her daughter was to have filled.

"I will marry you," said I, "and we will all of us go to Rome on Monday, for since Leonilda is my daughter I do not like to leave her at Naples."

At this the three guests looked at each other and said nothing. I did not repeat my proposal, but led the conversation to some other topic.

After dinner I felt sleepy and lay down on a bed, and did not wake till eight o'clock, when to my surprise I found that my only companion was Lucrezia, who was writing. She heard me stir, and came up to me and said affectionately, —

"My dear friend, you have slept for five hours; and as I did not like to leave you alone I would not go with the duke and our daughter to the opera."

The memory of former loves awakens when one is near the once beloved object, and desires rapidly become irresistible if the beauty still remain. The lovers feel as if they were once more in possession of a blessing which belongs to them, and of which they have been long deprived by unfortunate incidents. These were our feelings, and without delay, without idle discussion, and above all, without false modesty, we abandoned ourselves to love, the only true source of nature.

In the first interval, I was the first to break the silence; and if a man is anything of a wit, is he the less so at that delicious moment of repose which follows on an amorous victory?

"Once again, then," said I, "I am in this charming land which I entered for the first time to the noise of the drum and the rattle of musket shots."

This remark made her laugh, and recalled past events to her memory. We recollected with delight all the pleasures we had enjoyed at Testaccio, Frascati, and Tivoli. We reminded each other of these events, only to make each other laugh; but with two lovers, what is laughter but a pretext for renewing the sweet sacrifice of the goddess of Cythera?

At the end of the second act, full of the enthusiasm of the fortunate lover, I said, —

"Let us be united for life; we are of the same age, we love each other, our means are sufficient for us, we may hope to live a happy life, and to die at the same moment.”

“Tis the darling wish of my heart,” Lucrezia replied, “but let us stay at Naples and leave Leonilda to the duke. We will see company, find her a worthy husband, and our happiness will be complete.”

“I cannot live at Naples, dearest, and you know that your daughter intended to leave with me.”

“My daughter! Say our daughter. I see that you are still in love with her, and do not wish to be considered her father.”

“Alas, yes! But I am sure that if I live with you my passion for her will be stilled, but otherwise I cannot answer for myself. I shall fly, but flight will not bring me happiness. Leonilda charms me still more by her intelligence than by her beauty. I was sure that she loved me so well that I did not attempt to seduce her, lest thereby I should weaken my hold on her affections; and as I wanted to make her happy I wished to deserve her esteem. I longed to possess her, but in a lawful manner, so that our rights should have been equal. We have created an angel, Lucrezia, and I cannot imagine how the duke …”

“The duke is completely impotent. Do you see now how I was able to trust my daughter to his care?”

“Impotent? I always thought so myself, but he has a son.”

“His wife might possibly be able to explain that mystery to you, but you may take it for granted that the poor duke will die a virgin in spite of himself; and he knows that as well as anybody.”

“Do not let us say any more about it, but allow me to treat you as at Tivoli.”

“Not just now, as I hear carriage wheels.”

A moment after the door opened, and Leonilda laughed heartily to see her mother in my arms, and threw herself upon us, covering us with kisses. The duke came in a little later, and we supped together very merrily. He thought me the happiest of men when I told him I was going to pass the night honourably with my wife and daughter; and he was right, for I was so at that moment.

As soon as the worthy man left us we went to bed, but here I must draw a veil over the most voluptuous night I have ever spent. If I told all I should wound chaste ears, and, besides, all the colours of the painter and all the phrases of the poet could not do justice to the delirium of pleasure, the ecstasy, and the license which passed during that night, while two wax lights burnt dimly on the table like candles before the shrine of a saint.

We did not leave the stage, which I watered with my blood, till long after the sun had risen. We were scarcely dressed when the duke arrived.

Leonilda gave him a vivid description of our nocturnal labours, but in his unhappy state of impotence he must have been thankful for his absence.

I was determined to start the next day so as to be at Rome for the last week of the carnival and I begged the duke to let me give Leonilda the five thousand ducats which would have been her dower if she had become my bride.

“As she is your daughter,” said he, “she can and ought to take this present from her father, if only as a dowry for her future husband.”

“Will you accept it, then, my dear Leonilda?”

“Yes, papa dear,” she said, embracing me, “on the condition that you will promise to come and see me again as soon as you hear of my marriage.”

I promised to do so, and I kept my word.

“As you are going to-morrow,” said the duke, “I shall ask all the nobility of Naples to meet you at supper. In the meanwhile I leave you with your daughter; we shall see each other again at suppertime.”

He went out and I dined with my wife and daughter in the best of spirits. I spent almost the whole afternoon with Leonilda, keeping within the bounds of decency, less, perhaps, out of respect to morality, than because of my labours of the night before. We did not kiss each other till the moment of parting, and I could see that both mother and daughter were grieved to lose me.

After a careful toilette I went to supper, and found an assembly of a hundred of the very best people in Naples. The duchess was very agreeable, and when I kissed her hand to take leave, she said, “I hope, Don Giacomo, that you have had no unpleasantness during your short stay at Naples, and that you will sometimes think of your visit with pleasure.”

I answered that I could only recall my visit with delight after the kindness with which she had deigned to treat me that evening; and, in fact, my recollections of Naples were always of the happiest description.

After I had treated the duke’s attendants with generosity, the poor nobleman, whom fortune had favoured, and whom nature had deprived of the sweetest of all enjoyments, came with me to the door of my carriage and I went on my way.

CHAPTER X

My Carriage Broken — Mariuccia's Wedding-Flight of Lord Lismore — My Return to Florence, and My Departure with the Corticelli

My Spaniard was going on before us on horseback, and I was sleeping profoundly beside Don Ciccio Alfani in my comfortable carriage, drawn by four horses, when a violent shock aroused me. The carriage had been overturned on the highway, at midnight, beyond Francolisa and four miles from St. Agatha.

Alfani was beneath me and uttered piercing shrieks, for he thought he had broken his left arm. Le Duc rode back and told me that the postillions had taken flight, possibly to give notice of our mishap to highwaymen, who are very common in the States of the Church and Naples.

I got out of the carriage easily enough, but poor old Alfani, who was unwieldly with fat, badly hurt, and half dead with fright, could not extricate himself without assistance. It took us a quarter of an hour to get him free. The poor wretch amused me by the blasphemies which he mingled with prayers to his patron saint, St. Francis of Assisi.

I was not without experience of such accidents and was not at all hurt, for one's safety depends a good deal on the position one is in. Don Ciccio had probably hurt his arm by stretching it out just as the accident took place.

I took my sword, my musket, and my horse-pistols out of the carriage, and I made them and my pockets pistols ready so as to offer a stiff resistance to the brigands if they came; and I then told Le Duc to take some money and ride off and see if he could bring some peasants to our assistance.

Don Ciccio groaned over the accident, but I, resolving to sell my money and my life dearly, made a rampart of the carriage and four horses, and stood sentry, with my arms ready.

I then felt prepared for all hazards, and was quite calm, but my unfortunate companion continued to pour forth his groans, and prayers, and blasphemies, for all that goes together at Naples as at Rome. I could do nothing but compassionate him; but in spite of myself I could not help laughing, which seemed to vex the poor abbe, who looked for all the world like a dying dolphin as he rested motionless against the bank. His distress may be imagined, when the nearest horse yielded to the call of nature, and voided over the unfortunate man the contents of its bladder. There was nothing to be done, and I could not help roaring with laughter.

Nevertheless, a strong northerly wind rendered our situation an extremely unpleasant one. At the slightest noise I cried, "Who goes there?" threatening to fire on anyone who dared approach. I spent two hours in this tragic-comic position, until at last Le Duc rode up and told me that a band of peasants, all armed and provided with lanterns, were approaching to our assistance.

In less than an hour, the carriage, the horses, and Alfani were seen to. I kept two of the country-folk to serve as postillions, and I sent the others away well paid for the interruption of their sleep. I reached St. Agatha at day-break, and I made the devil's own noise at the door of the postmaster, calling for an attorney to take down my statement, and threatening to have the postillions who had overturned and deserted me, hanged.

A wheelwright inspected my coach and pronounced the axle-tree broken, and told me I should have to remain for a day at least.

Don Ciccio, who stood in need of a surgeon's aid, called on the Marquis Galliani without telling me anything about it. However, the marquis hastened to beg me to stay at his home till I could continue my journey. I accepted the invitation with great pleasure, and with this my ill humour, which was really only the result of my desire to make a great fuss like a great man, evaporated.

The marquis ordered my carriage to be taken to his coach-house, took me by the arm, and led me to his house. He was as learned as he was polite, and a perfect Neapolitan — i.e., devoid of all ceremony. He had not the brilliant wit of his brother, whom I had known at Paris as secretary of embassy under the Count Cantillana Montdragon, but he possessed a well-ordered judgment, founded on study and the perusal of ancient and modern classics.

Above all, he was a great mathematician, and was then preparing an annotated edition of Vitruvius, which was afterwards published.

The marquis introduced me to his wife, whom I knew as the intimate friend of my dear Lucrezia. There was something saint-like in her expression, and to see her surrounded by her little children was like looking at a picture of the Holy Family.

Don Ciccio was put to bed directly, and a surgeon sent for, who consoled him by saying that it was only a simple luxation, and that he would be well again in a few days.

At noon a carriage stopped at the door, and Lucrezia got down. She embraced the marchioness, and said to me in the most natural manner, as we shook hands, —

"What happy chance brings you hear, dear Don Giacomo?"

She told her friend that I was a friend of her late husband's, and that she had recently seen me again with great pleasure at the Duke de Matalone's.

After dinner, on finding myself alone with this charming woman, I asked her if it were not possible for us to pass a happy night together, but she shewed me that it was out of the question, and I had to yield. I renewed my offer to marry her.

"Buy a property," said she, "in the kingdom of Naples, and I will spend the remainder of my days with you, without asking a priest to give us his blessing, unless we happen to have children."

I could not deny that Lucrezia spoke very sensibly, and I could easily have bought land in Naples, and lived comfortably on it, but the idea of binding myself down to one place was so contrary to my feelings that I had the good sense to prefer my vagabond life to all the advantages which our union would have given me, and I do not think that Lucrezia altogether disapproved of my resolution.

After supper I took leave of everybody, and I set out at day-break in order to get to Rome by the next day. I had only fifteen stages to do, and the road was excellent.

As we were getting into Carillano, I saw one of the two-wheeled carriages, locally called mantice, two horses were being put into it, while my carriage required four. I got out, and on hearing myself called I turned round. I was not a little surprised to find that the occupants of the mantice were a young and pretty girl and Signora Diana, the Prince de Sassaro's mistress, who owed me three hundred ounces. She told me that she was going to Rome, and that she would be glad if we could make the journey together.

"I suppose you don't mind stopping for the night at Piperno?"

"No," said I, "I am afraid that can't be managed; I don't intend to break my journey."

"But you would get to Rome by to-morrow."

"I know that, but I sleep better in my carriage than in the bad beds they give you in the inns."

"I dare not travel by night."

"Well, well, madam, I have no doubt we shall see each other at Rome."

"You are a cruel man. You see I have only a stupid servant, and a maid who is as timid as I am, besides it is cold and my carriage is open. I will keep you company in yours."

"I really can't take you in, as all the available space is taken up by my old secretary, who broke his arm yesterday."

"Shall we dine together at Terracino? We could have a little talk."

"Certainly."

We made good cheer at this small town, which is the frontier of the States of the Church. We should not reach Piperno till far on in the night, and the lady renewed and redoubled her efforts to keep me till daybreak; but though young and pretty she did not take my fancy; she was too fair and too fat. But her maid, who was a pretty brunette, with a delicious rounded form and a sparkling eye, excited all my feelings of desire. A vague hope of possessing the maid won me over, and I ended by promising the signora to sup with her, and not to continue my journey without giving notice to the landlord.

When we got to Piperno, I succeeded in telling the pretty maid that if she would let me have her quietly I would not go any further. She promised to wait for me, and allowed me to take such liberties as are usually the signs of perfect complaisance.

We had our supper, and I wished the ladies good night and escorted them to their room, where I took note of the relative positions of their beds so that there should be no mistake. I left them and came back in a quarter of an hour. Finding the door open I felt sure of success, and I got into bed; but as I found out, it was the signora and not the maid who received me. Evidently the little hussy had told her mistress the story, and the mistress had thought fit to take the maid's place. There was no possibility of my being mistaken, for though I could not see I could feel.

For a moment I was undecided, should I remain in bed and make the best of what I had got, or go on my way to Rome immediately? The latter counsel prevailed. I called Le Duc, gave my orders, and started, enjoying the thought of the confusion of the two women, who must have been in a great rage at the failure of their plans. I saw Signora Diana three or four times at Rome, and we bowed without speaking; if I had thought it likely that she would pay me the four hundred louis she owed me I might have taken the trouble to call on her, but I know that your stage queens are the worst debtors in the world.

My brother, the Chevalier Mengs, and the Abbe Winckelmann were all in good health and spirits. Costa was delighted to see me again. I sent him off directly to His Holiness's 'scopatore maggiore' to warn him that I was coming to take polenta with him, and all he need do was to get a good supper for twelve. I was sure of finding Mariuccia there, for I knew that Momolo had noticed her presence pleased me.

The carnival began the day after my arrival, and I hired a superb landau for the whole week. The Roman landaus seat four people and have a hood which may be lowered at pleasure. In these landaus one drives along the Corso with or without masks from nine to twelve o'clock during the carnival time.

From time immemorial the Corso at Rome has presented a strange and diverting spectacle during the carnival. The horses start from the Piazza del Popolo, and gallop along to the Column of Trajan, between two lines of carriages drawn up beside two narrow pavements which are crowded with maskers and people of all classes. All the windows are decorated. As soon as the horses have passed the carriages begin to move, and the maskers on foot and horseback occupy the middle of the street. The air is full of real and false sweetmeats, pamphlets, pasquinades, and puns. Throughout the mob, composed of the best and worst classes of Rome, liberty reigns supreme, and when twelve o'clock is announced by the third report of the cannon of St. Angelo the Corso begins to clear, and in five minutes you would look in vain for a carriage or a masker. The crowd disperses amongst the neighbouring streets, and fills the opera houses, the theatres, the rope-dancers' exhibitions, and even the puppet-shows. The restaurants and taverns are not left desolate; everywhere you will find crowds of people, for during the carnival the Romans only think of eating, drinking, and enjoying themselves.

I banked my money with M. Belloni and got a letter of credit on Turin, where I expected to find the Abbe Gama and to receive a commission to represent the Portuguese Court at the Congress of Augsburg, to which all Europe was looking forward, and then I went to inspect my little room, where I hoped to meet Mariuccia the next day. I found everything in good order.

In the evening Momolo and his family received me with joyful exclamations. The eldest daughter said with a smile that she was sure she would please me by sending for Mariuccia.

"You are right," said I, "I shall be delighted to see the fair Mariuccia."

A few minutes after she entered with her puritanical mother, who told me I must not be surprised to see her daughter better dressed, as she was going to be married in a few days. I congratulated her, and Momolo's daughters asked who was the happy man. Mariuccia blushed and said modestly, to one of them, —

"It is somebody whom you know, So and so, he saw me here, and we are going to open a hair-dresser's shop."

"The marriage was arranged by good Father St. Barnabe," added the mother. "He has in his keeping my daughter's dower of four hundred Roman crowns."

"He's a good lad," said Momolo. "I have a high opinion of him; he would have married one of my daughters if I could have given him such a dowry."

At these words the girl in question blushed and lowered her eyes.

“Never mind, my dear,” said I, “your turn will come in time.”

She took my words as seriously meant, and her face lit up with joy. She thought I had guessed her love for Costa, and her idea was confirmed when I told him to get my landau the next day and take out all Momolo’s daughters, well masked, as it would not do for them to be recognized in a carriage I meant to make use of myself. I also bade him hire some handsome costumes from a Jew, and paid the hire-money myself. This put them all in a good humour.

“How about Signora Maria?” said the jealous sister.

“As Signora Maria is going to be married,” I replied, “she must not be present at any festivity without her future husband.”

The mother applauded this decision of mine, and sly Mariuccia pretended to feel mortified. I turned to Momolo and begged him to ask Mariuccia’s future husband to meet me at supper, by which I pleased her mother greatly.

I felt very tired, and having nothing to keep me after seeing Mariuccia, I begged the company to excuse me, and after wishing them a good appetite I left them.

I walked out next morning at an early hour. I had no need of going into the church, which I reached at seven o’clock, for Mariuccia saw me at some distance off and followed me, and we were soon alone together in the little room, which love and voluptuous pleasure had transmuted into a sumptuous place. We would gladly have talked to each other, but as we had only an hour before us, we set to without even taking off our clothes. After the last kiss which ended the third assault, she told me that she was to be married on the eve of Shrove Tuesday, and that all had been arranged by her confessor. She also thanked me for having asked Momolo to invite her intended.

“When shall we see each other again, my angel?”

“On Sunday, the eve of my wedding, we shall be able to spend four hours together.”

“Delightful! I promise you that when you leave me you will be in such a state that the caresses of your husband won’t hurt you.”

She smiled and departed, and I threw myself on the bed where I rested for a good hour.

As I was going home I met a carriage and four going at a great speed. A footman rode in front of the carriage, and within it I saw a young nobleman. My attention was arrested by the blue ribbon on his breast. I gazed at him, and he called out my name and had the carriage stopped. I was extremely surprised when I found it was Lord O'Callaghan, whom I had known at Paris at his mother's, the Countess of Lismore, who was separated from her husband, and was the kept mistress of M. de St. Aubin, the unworthy successor of the good and virtuous Fenelon in the archbishopric of Cambrai. However, the archbishop owed his promotion to the fact that he was a bastard of the Duc d'Orleans, the French Regent.

Lord O'Callaghan was a fine-looking young man, with wit and talent, but the slave of his unbridled passions and of every species of vice. I knew that if he were lord in name he was not so in fortune, and I was astonished to see him driving such a handsome carriage, and still more so at his blue ribbon. In a few words he told me that he was going to dine with the Pretender, but that he would sup at home. He invited me to come to supper, and I accepted.

After dinner I took a short walk, and then went to enliven myself at the theatre, where I saw Momolo's girls strutting about with Costa; afterwards I went to Lord O'Callaghan, and was pleasantly surprised to meet the poet Poinsinet. He was young, short, ugly, full of poetic fire, a wit, and dramatist. Five or six years later the poor fellow fell into the Guadalquivir and was drowned. He had gone to Madrid in the hope of making his fortune. As I had known him at Paris I addressed him as an old acquaintance.

"What are you doing at Rome? Where's my Lord O'Callaghan?"

"He's in the next room, but as his father is dead his title is now Earl of Lismore. You know he was an adherent of the Pretender's. I left Paris with him, well enough pleased at being able to come to Rome without its costing me anything."

"Then the earl is a rich man now?"

"Not exactly; but he will be, as he is his father's heir, and the old earl left an immense fortune. It is true that it is all confiscated, but that is nothing, as his claims are irresistible."

"In short, he is rich in claims and rich in the future; but how did he get himself made a knight of one of the French king's orders?"

"You're joking. That is the blue ribbon of the Order of St. Michael, of which the late Elector of Cologne was grand master. As you know, my lord plays exquisitely on the violin, and when he was at Bonn he played the Elector a concerto by Tartini. The prince could not find words in which to express the pleasure of my lord's performance, and gave him the ribbon you have seen."

"A fine present, doubtless."

"You don't know what pleasure it gave my lord, for when we go back to Paris everybody will take it for the Order of the Holy Ghost."

We passed into a large room, where we found the earl with the party he had asked to supper. As soon as he saw me he embraced me, called me his dear friend, and named his guests. There were seven or eight girls, all of them pretty, three or four castrati who played women's parts in the Roman theatre, and five or six abbes, the husband of every wife and the wives of every husband, who boasted of their wickedness, and challenged the girls to be more shameless than they. The girls were not common courtezans, but past mistresses of music, painting, and vice considered as a fine art. The kind of society may be imagined when I say that I found myself a perfect novice amongst them.

"Where are you going, prince?" said the earl to a respectable-looking man who was making for the door.

"I don't feel well, my lord. I think I must go out."

"What prince is that?" said I.

"The Prince de Chimai. He is a sub-deacon, and is endeavouring to gain permission to marry, lest his family should become extinct."

"I admire his prudence or his delicacy, but I am afraid I should not imitate him."

There were twenty-four of us at table, and it is no exaggeration to say that we emptied a hundred bottles of the choicest wines. Everybody was drunk, with the exception of myself and the poet Poinsinet, who had taken nothing but water. The company rose from table, and then began a foul orgy which I should never have conceived possible, and which no pen could describe, though possibly a seasoned profligate might get some idea of it.

A castrato and a girl of almost equal height proposed to strip in an adjoining room, and to lie on their backs, in the same bed with their faces covered. They challenged us all to guess which was which.

We all went in and nobody could pronounce from sight which was male and which was female, so I bet the earl fifty crowns that I would point out the woman.

He accepted the wager, and I guessed correctly, but payment was out of the question.

This first act of the orgy ended with the prostitution of the two individuals, who defied everybody to accomplish the great act. All, with the exception of Poinsinet and myself, made the attempt, but their efforts were in vain.

The second act displayed four or five couples reversed, and here the abbes shone, both in the active and passive parts of this lascivious spectacle. I was the only person respected.

All at once, the earl, who had hitherto remained perfectly motionless, attacked the wretched Poinsinet, who in vain attempted to defend himself. He had to strip like my lord, who was as naked as the others. We stood round in a circle. Suddenly the earl, taking his watch, promised it to the first who succeeded in giving them a sure mark of sensibility. The desire of gaining the prize excited the impure crowd immensely, and the castrati, the girls, and the abbes all did their utmost, each one striving to be the first. They had to draw lots. This part interested me most, for throughout this almost incredible scene of debauchery I did not experience the slightest sensation, although under other circumstances any of the girls would have claimed my homage, but all I did was to laugh, especially to see the poor poet in terror of experiencing the lust of the flesh, for the profligate nobleman swore that if he made him lose he would deliver him up to the brutal lust of all the abbes. He escaped, probably through fear of the consequences.

The orgy came to an end when nobody had any further hopes of getting the watch. The secret of the Lesbians was only employed, however, by the abbes and the castrata. The girls, wishing to be able to despise those who made use of it, refrained from doing so. I suspect they were actuated by pride rather than shame, as they might possibly have employed it without success.

This vile debauch disgusted me, and yet gave me a better knowledge of myself. I could not help confessing that my life had been endangered, for the only arm I had was my sword, but I should certainly have used it if the earl had tried to treat me like the others, and as he had treated poor Poinsinet. I never understood how it was that he respected me, for he was quite drunk, and in a kind of Bacchic fury.

As I left, I promised to come and see him as often as he pleased, but I promised myself never to set foot in his house again.

Next day, he came to see me in the afternoon, and asked me to walk with him to the Villa Medici.

I complimented him on the immense wealth he had inherited to enable him to live so splendidly, but he laughed and told me that he did not possess fifty piastres, that his father had left nothing but debts, and that he himself already owed three or four thousand crowns.

“I wonder people give you credit, then.”

“They give me credit because everybody knows that I have drawn a bill of exchange on Paris to the tune of two hundred thousand francs. But in four or five days the bill will be returned protested, and I am only waiting for that to happen to make my escape.”

“If you are certain of its being protested, I advise you to make your escape to-day; for as it is so large a sum it may be taken up before it is due.”

“No, I won’t do that; I have one hope left. I have written to tell my mother that I shall be undone if she does not furnish the banker, on whom I have drawn the bill, with sufficient funds and if she does that, the bill will be accepted. You know my mother is very fond of me.”

“Yes, but I also know that she is far from rich.”

“True, but M. de St. Aubin is rich enough, and between you and me I think he is my father. Meanwhile, my creditors are almost as quiet as I am. All those girls you saw yesterday would give me all they have if I asked them, as they are all expecting me to make them a handsome present in the course of the week, but I won’t abuse their trust in me. But I am afraid I shall be obliged to cheat the Jew, who wants me to give him three thousand sequins for this ring, as I know it is only worth one thousand.”

“He will send the police after you.”

“I defy him to do whatever he likes.”

The ring was set with a straw-coloured diamond of nine or ten carats. He begged me to keep his secret as we parted. I did not feel any sentiments of pity for this extravagant madman, as I only saw in him a man unfortunate by his own fault, whose fate would probably make him end his days in a prison unless he had the courage to blow his brains out.

I went to Momolo’s in the evening, and found the intended husband of my fair Mariuccia there, but not the lady herself. I heard she had sent word to the ‘scopatore santissimo’ that, as her father had come from Palestrina to be present at her wedding, she could not come to supper. I admired her subtlety. A young girl has no need of being instructed in diplomacy, nature and her own heart are her teachers, and she never blunders. At supper I studied the young man, and found him eminently suitable for Mariuccia; he was handsome, modest, and intelligent, and whatever he said was spoken frankly and to the point.

He told me before Momolo’s daughter, Tecla, that he would have married her if she had possessed means to enable him to open his shop, and that he had reason to thank God for having met Maria, whose confessor had been such a true spiritual father to her. I asked him where the wedding festivities were to take place, and he told me they were to be at his father’s house, on the other side of the Tiber. As his father, who kept a garden, was poor, he had furnished him with ten crowns to defray the expenses.

I wanted to give him the ten crowns, but how was I to do it? It would have betrayed me.

“Is your father’s garden a pretty one?” I asked.

“Not exactly pretty, but very well kept. As he owns the land, he has separated a plot which he wants to sell; it would bring in twenty crowns a year, and I should be as happy as a cardinal if I could buy it.”

“How much will it cost?”

“It’s a heavy price; two hundred crowns.”

“Why, that’s cheap! Listen to me. I have met your future bride at this house, and I have found her all worthy of happiness. She deserves an honest young fellow like you for a husband. Now what would you do supposing I were to make you a present of two hundred crowns to buy the garden?”

“I should put it to my wife’s dowry.”

“Then here are the two hundred crowns. I shall give them to Momolo, as I don’t know you well enough, though I think you are perfectly to be trusted. The garden is yours, as part of your wife’s dowry.”

Momolo took the money, and promised to buy the garden the following day, and the young man shedding tears of joy and gratitude fell on his knees and kissed my hand. All the girls wept, as I myself did, for there’s a contagion in such happy tears. Nevertheless, they did not all proceed from the same source; some were virtuous and some vicious, and the young man’s were the only ones whose source was pure and unalloyed. I lifted him from the ground, kissed him, and wished him a happy marriage. He made bold to ask me to his wedding, but I refused, thanking him kindly. I told him that if he wanted to please me, he must come and sup at Momolo’s on the eve of his wedding, and I begged the good scopatore to ask Mariuccia, her father and mother as well. I was sure of seeing her for the last time on the Sunday morning.

At seven o’clock on the Sunday morning we were in each other’s arms, with four hours before us. After the first burst of mutual ardour she told me that all arrangements had been made in her house the evening before, in the presence of her confessor and of Momolo; and that on the receipt for the two hundred crowns being handed in the notary had put the garden into the settlement, and that the good father had made her a present of twenty piastres towards defraying the notary’s fees and the wedding expenses.

“Everything is for the best, and I am sure I shall be happy. My intended adores you, but you did wisely not to accept his invitation, for you would have found everything so poor, and besides tongues might have been set wagging to my disadvantage.”

“You are quite right, dearest, but what do you intend to do if your husband finds that the door has been opened by someone else, for possibly he expects you to be a maid.”

“I expect he will know no more about it than I did the first time you knew me; besides, I do not feel that you have defiled me, and my clean conscience will not allow me to think of the matter; and I am sure that he will not think of it any more than I.”

“Yes, but if he does?”

“It would not be delicate on his part, but what should prevent me from replying that I don’t know what he means?”

“You are right; that’s the best way. But have you told your confessor of our mutual enjoyment?”

“No, for as I did not give myself up to you with any criminal intention, I do not think I have offended God.”

“You are an angel, and I admire the clearness of your reasoning. But listen to me; it’s possible that you are already with child, or that you may become so this morning; promise to name the child after me.”

“I will do so.”

The four hours sped rapidly away. After the sixth assault we were wearied though not satiated. We parted with tears, and swore to love each other as brother and sister ever after.

I went home, bathed, slept an hour, rose, dressed, and dined pleasantly with the family. In the evening I took the Mengs family for a drive in my landau, and we then went to the theatre, where the castrato who played the prima donna was a great attraction. He was the favourite pathic of Cardinal Borghese, and supped every evening with his eminence.

This castrato had a fine voice, but his chief attraction was his beauty. I had seen him in man’s clothes in the street, but though a fine-looking fellow, he had not made any impression on me, for one could see at once that he was only half a man, but on the stage in woman's dress the illusion was complete; he was ravishing.

He was enclosed in a carefully-made corset and looked like a nymph; and incredible though it may seem, his breast was as beautiful as any woman's; it was the monster's chiefest charm. However well one knew the fellow's neutral sex, as soon as one looked at his breast one felt all aglow and quite madly amorous of him. To feel nothing one would have to be as cold and impassive as a German. As he walked the boards, waiting for the refrain of the air he was singing, there was something grandly voluptuous about him; and as he glanced towards the boxes, his black eyes, at once tender and modest, ravished the heart. He evidently wished to fan the flame of those who loved him as a man, and probably would not have cared for him if he had been a woman.

Rome the holy, which thus strives to make all men pederasts, denies the fact, and will not believe in the effects of the glamour of her own devising.

I made these reflections aloud, and an ecclesiastic, wishing to blind me to the truth, spoke as follows: —

"You are quite right. Why should this castrato be allowed to shew his breast, of which the fairest Roman lady might be proud, and yet wish everyone to consider him as a man and not a woman? If the stage is forbidden to the fair sex lest they excite desires, why do they seek out men-monsters made in the form of women, who excite much more criminal desires? They keep on preaching that pederasty is comparatively unknown and entraps only a few, but many clever men endeavour to be entrapped, and end by thinking it so pleasant that they prefer these monsters to the most beautiful women."

"The Pope would be sure of heaven if he put a stop to this scandalous practice."

"I don't agree with you. One could not have a pretty actress to supper without causing a scandal, but such an invitation to a castrato makes nobody talk. It is of course known perfectly well that after supper both heads rest on one pillow, but what everybody knows is ignored by all. One may sleep with a man out of mere friendship, it is not so with a woman."

"True, monsignor, appearances are saved, and a sin concealed is half pardoned, as they say in Paris."

"At Rome we say it is pardoned altogether. 'Peccato nascosto non offende'."

His jesuitical arguments interested me, for I knew that he was an avowed partisan of the forbidden fruit.

In one of the boxes I saw the Marchioness Passarini (whom I had known at Dresden) with Don Antonio Borghese, and I went to pay my addresses to them. The prince, whom I had known at Paris ten years before, recognized me, and asked me to dine with him on the following day. I went, but my lord was not at home. A page told me that my place was laid at table, and that I could dine just as if the prince was there, on which I turned my back on him and went away. On Ash Wednesday he sent his man to ask me to sup with him and the marchioness, who was his mistress, and I sent word that I would not fail to come; but he waited for me in vain. Pride is the daughter of folly, and always keeps its mother's nature.

After the opera I went to Momolo's, where I found Mariuccia, her father, her mother, and her future husband. They were anxiously expecting me. It is not difficult to make people happy when one selects for one's bounty persons who really deserve happiness. I was amidst poor but honest people, and I can truly say that I had a delightful supper. It may be that some of my enjoyment proceeded from a feeling of vanity, for I knew that I was the author of the happiness depicted on the faces of the bride and bridegroom and of the father and mother of Mariuccia; but when vanity causes good deeds it is a virtue. Nevertheless, I owe it to myself to tell my readers that my pleasure was too pure to have in it any admixture of vice.

After supper I made a small bank at faro, making everybody play with counters, as nobody had a penny, and I was so fortunate as to make everyone win a few ducats.

After the game we danced in spite of the prohibition of the Pope, whom no Roman can believe to be infallible, for he forbids dancing and permits games of chance. His successor Ganganelli followed the opposite course, and was no better obeyed. To avoid suspicion I did not give the pair any present, but I gave up my landau to them that they might enjoy the carnival on the Corso, and I told Costa to get them a box at the Capranica Theatre. Momolo asked me to supper on Shrove Tuesday.

I wished to leave Rome on the second day of Lent, and I called on the Holy Father at a time when all Rome was on the Corso. His Holiness welcomed me most graciously, and said he was surprised that I had not gone to see the sights on the Corso like everybody else. I replied that as a lover of pleasure I had chosen the greatest pleasure of all for a Christian — namely, to kneel at the feet of the vicar of Christ on earth. He bowed with a kind of majestic humility, which shewed me how the compliment had pleased him. He kept me for more than an hour, talking about Venice, Padua, and Paris, which latter city the worthy man would not have been sorry to have visited. I again commended myself to his apostolic intercession to enable me to return to my native country, and he replied, —

“Have recourse to God, dear son; His grace will be more efficacious than my prayers;” and then he blessed me and wished me a prosperous journey.

I saw that the Head of the Church had no great opinion of his own power.

On Shrove Tuesday I dressed myself richly in the costume of Polichinello, and rode along the Corso showering sweetmeats on all the pretty women I saw. Finally I emptied the basket on the daughters of the worthy ‘scopatore’, whom Costa was taking about in my landau with all the dignity of a pasha.

At night-time I took off my costume and went to Momolo’s, where I expected to see dear Mariuccia for the last time. Supper passed off in almost a similar manner to the supper of last Sunday; but there was an interesting novelty for me — namely, the sight of my beloved mistress in her character of bride. Her husband seemed to be much more reserved with respect to me than at our first meeting. I was puzzled by his behaviour, and sat down by Mariuccia and proceeded to question her. She told me all the circumstances which had passed on the first night, and she spoke highly of her husband’s good qualities. He was kind, amorous, good-tempered, and delicate. No doubt he must have noticed that the casket had been opened, but he had said nothing about it. As he had spoken about me, she had not been able to resist the pleasure of telling him that I was her sole benefactor, at which, so far from being offended, he seemed to trust in her more than ever.

“But has he not questioned you indirectly as to the connection between us?”

“Not at all. I told him that you went to my confessor after having spoken to me once only in the church, where I told you what a good chance I had of being married to him.”

“Do you think he believed you?”

“I am not sure; however, even if it were otherwise, it is enough that he pretends to, for I am determined to win his esteem.”

“You are right, and I think all the better of him for his suspicions, for it is better to marry a man with some sense in his head than to marry a fool.”

I was so pleased with what she told me that when I took leave of the company I embraced the hairdresser, and drawing a handsome gold watch from my fob I begged him to accept it as a souvenir of me. He received it with the utmost gratitude. From my pocket I took a ring, worth at least six hundred francs, and put it on his wife’s finger, wishing them a fair posterity and all manner of happiness, and I then went home to bed, telling Le Duc and Costa that we must begin to pack up next day.

I was just getting up when they brought me a note from Lord Lismore, begging me to come and speak to him at noon at the Villa Borghese.

I had some suspicion of what he might want, and kept the appointment. I felt in a mood to give him some good advice. Indeed, considering the friendship between his mother and myself, it was my duty to do so.

He came up to me and gave me a letter he had received the evening before from his mother. She told him that Paris de Monmartel had just informed her that he was in possession of a bill for two hundred thousand francs drawn by her son, and that he would honour it if she would furnish him with the funds. She had replied that she would let him know in two or three days if she could do so; but she warned her son that she had only asked for this delay to give him time to escape, as the bill would certainly be protested and returned, it being absolutely out of the question for her to get the money.

“You had better make yourself scarce as soon as you can,” said I, returning him the letter.

"Buy this ring, and so furnish me with the means for my escape. You would not know that it was not my property if I had not told you so in confidence."

I made an appointment with him, and had the stone taken out and valued by one of the best jewellers in Rome.

"I know this stone," said he, "it is worth two thousand Roman crowns."

At four o'clock I took the earl five hundred crowns in gold and fifteen hundred crowns in paper, which he would have to take to a banker, who would give him a bill of exchange in Amsterdam.

"I will be off at nightfall," said he, "and travel by myself to Amsterdam, only taking such effects as are absolutely necessary, and my beloved blue ribbon."

"A pleasant journey to you," said I, and left him. In ten days I had the stone mounted at Bologna.

I got a letter of introduction from Cardinal Albani for Onorati, the nuncio at Florence, and another letter from M. Mengs to Sir Mann, whom he begged to receive me in his house. I was going to Florence for the sake of the Corticelli and my dear Therese, and I reckoned on the auditor's feigning to ignore my return, in spite of his unjust order, especially if I were residing at the English minister's.

On the second day of Lent the disappearance of Lord Lismore was the talk of the town. The English tailor was ruined, the Jew who owned the ring was in despair, and all the silly fellow's servants were turned out of the house in almost a state of nakedness, as the tailor had unceremoniously taken possession of everything in the way of clothes that he could lay his hands on.

Poor Poinsinet came to see me in a pitiable condition; he had only his shirt and overcoat. He had been despoiled of everything, and threatened with imprisonment. "I haven't a farthing," said the poor child of the muses, "I have only the shirt on my back. I know nobody here, and I think I shall go and throw myself into the Tiber."

He was destined, not to be drowned in the Tiber but in the Guadalquivir. I calmed him by offering to take him to Florence with me, but I warned him that I must leave him there, as someone was expecting me at Florence. He immediately took up his abode with me, and wrote verses incessantly till it was time to go.

My brother Jean made me a present of an onyx of great beauty. It was a cameo, representing Venus bathing, and a genuine antique, as the name of the artist, Sostrates, was cut on the stone. Two years later I sold it to Dr. Masti, at London, for three hundred pounds, and it is possibly still in the British Museum.

I went my way with Poinsinet who amused me, in spite of his sadness, with his droll fancies. In two days I got down at Dr. Vannini's, who tried to conceal his surprise at seeing me. I lost no time, but waited on Sir —— Mann immediately, and found him sitting at table. He gave me a very friendly reception, but he seemed alarmed when, in reply to his question, I told him that my dispute with the auditor had not been arranged. He told me plainly that he thought I had made a mistake in returning to Florence, and that he would be compromised by my staying with him. I pointed out that I was only passing through Florence.

"That's all very well," said he, "but you know you ought to call on the auditor."

I promised to do so, and returned to my lodging. I had scarcely shut the door, when an agent of police came and told me that the auditor had something to say to me, and would be glad to see me at an early hour next morning.

I was enraged at this order, and determined to start forthwith rather than obey. Full of this idea I called on Therese and found she was at Pisa. I then went to see the Corticelli, who threw her arms round my neck, and made use of the Bolognese grimaces appropriate to the occasion. To speak the truth, although the girl was pretty, her chief merit in my eyes was that she made me laugh.

I gave some money to her mother to get us a good supper, and I took the girl out on pretence of going for a walk. I went with her to my lodging, and left her with Poinsinet, and going to another room I summoned Costa and Vannini. I told Costa in Vannini's presence to go on with Le Duc and my luggage the following day, and to call for me at the "Pilgrim" at Bologna. I gave Vannini my instructions, and he left the room; and then I ordered

Costa to leave Florence with Signora Laura and her son, and to tell them that I and the daughter were on in front. Le Duc received similar orders, and calling Poinsinet I gave him ten Louis, and begged him to look out for some other lodging that very evening. The worthy but unfortunate young man wept grateful tears, and told me that he would set out for Parma on foot next day, and that there M. Tillot would do some, thing for him.

I went back to the next room, and told the Corticelli to come with me. She did so under the impression that we were going back to her mother's, but without taking the trouble to undeceive her I had a carriage and pair got ready, and told the postillion to drive to Uccellatoio, the first post on the Bologna road.

"Where in the world are we going?" said she.

"Bologna."

"How about mamma?"

"She will come on to-morrow."

"Does she know about it?"

"No, but she will to-morrow when Costa comes to tell her, and to fetch her and your brother."

She liked the joke, and got into the carriage laughing, and we drove away.

CHAPTER XI

My Arrival at Bologna — I Am Expelled from Modena — I Visit Parma and Turin — The Pretty Jewess — The Dressmaker

The Corticelli had a good warm mantle, but the fool who carried her off had no cloak, even of the most meagre kind, to keep off the piercing cold, which was increased by a keen wind blowing right in our faces.

In spite of all I would not halt, for I was afraid I might be pursued and obliged to return, which would have greatly vexed me.

When I saw that the postillion was slackening his speed, I increased the amount of the present I was going to make him, and once more we rushed along at a headlong pace. I felt perishing with the cold; while the postillions seeing me so lightly clad, and so prodigal of my money to speed them on their way, imagined that I was a prince carrying off the heiress of some noble family. We heard them talking to this effect while they changed horses, and the Corticelli was so much amused that she did nothing but laugh for the rest of the way. In five hours we covered forty miles; we started from Florence at eight o'clock, and at one in the morning we stopped at a post in the Pope's territory, where I had nothing to fear. The stage goes under the name of "The Ass Unburdened."

The odd name of the inn made my mistress laugh afresh. Everybody was asleep, but the noise I made and the distribution of a few pauls procured me the privilege of a fire. I was dying of hunger, and they coolly told me there was nothing to eat. I laughed in the landlord's face, and told him to bring me his butter, his eggs, his macaroni, a ham, and some Parmesan cheese, for I knew that so much will be found in the inns all over Italy. The repast was soon ready, and I shewed the idiot host that he had materials for an excellent meal. We ate like four, and afterwards they made up an impromptu bed and we went to sleep, telling them to call me as soon as a carriage and four drew up.

Full of ham and macaroni, slightly warmed with the Chianti and Montepulciano, and tired with our journey, we stood more in need of slumber than of love, and so we gave ourselves up to sleep till morning. Then we gave a few moments to pleasure, but it was so slight an affair as not to be worth talking about.

At one o'clock we began to feel hungry again and got up, and the host provided us with an excellent dinner, after receiving instructions from me. I was astonished not to see the carriage draw up, but I waited patiently all day. Night came on and still no coach, and I began to feel anxious; but the Corticelli persisted in laughing at everything. Next morning I sent off an express messenger with instructions for Costa. In the event of any violence having taken place, I was resolved to return to Florence, of which city I could at any time make myself free by the expenditure of two hundred crowns.

The messenger started at noon, and returned at two o'clock with the news that my servants would shortly be with me. My coach was on its way, and behind it a smaller carriage with two horses, in which sat an old woman and a young man.

"That's the mother," said Corticelli; "now we shall have some fun. Let's get something for them to eat, and be ready to hear the history of this marvellous adventure which she will remember to her dying day."

Costa told me that the auditor had revenged my contempt of his orders by forbidding the post authorities to furnish any horses for my carriage. Hence the delay. But here we heard the allocution of the Signora Laura.

"I got an excellent supper ready," she began, "according to your orders; it cost me more than ten pauls, as I shall shew you, and I hope you will make it up to me as I'm but a poor woman. All was ready and I joyfully expected you, but in vain; I was in despair. At last when midnight came I sent my son to your lodging to enquire after you, but you may imagine my 'grief when I heard that nobody knew what had become of you. I passed a sleepless night, weeping all the time, and in the morning I went and complained to the police that you had taken off my daughter, and asked them to send after you and make you give her back to me. But only think, they laughed at me! 'Why did you let her go out without you? laughing in my face. 'Your daughter’s in good hands,’ says another, ‘you know perfectly well where she is.’ In fact I was grossly slandered.”

“Slandered?” said the Corticelli.

“Yes, slandered, for it was as much as to say that I had consented to your being carried off, and if I had done that the fools might have known I would not have come to them about it. I went away in a rage to Dr. Vannini’s, where I found your man, who told me that you had gone to Bologna, and that I could follow you if I liked. I consented to this plan, and I hope you wilt pay my travelling expenses. But I can’t help telling you that this is rather beyond a joke.”

I consoled her by telling her I would pay all she had spent, and we set off for Bologna the next day, and reached that town at an early hour. I sent my servants to the inn with my carriage, and I went to lodge with the Corticelli.

I spent a week with the girl, getting my meals from the inn, and enjoying a diversity of pleasures which I shall remember all my days; my young wanton had a large circle of female friends, all pretty and all kind. I lived with them like a sultan, and still I delight to recall this happy time, and I say with a sigh, ‘Tempi passati’!

There are many towns in Italy where one can enjoy all the pleasures obtainable at Bologna; but nowhere so cheaply, so easily, or with so much freedom. The living is excellent, and there are arcades where one can walk in the shade in learned and witty company. It is a great pity that either from the air, the water, or the wine — for men of science have not made up their minds on the subject persons who live at Bologna are subject to a slight itch. The Bolognese, however, far from finding this unpleasant, seem to think it an advantage; it gives them the pleasure of scratching themselves. In springtime the ladies distinguish themselves by the grace with which they use their fingers.

Towards mid-Lent I left the Corticelli, wishing her a pleasant journey, for she was going to fulfil a year’s engagement at Prague as second dancer. I promised to fetch her and her mother to Paris, and my readers will see how I kept my word.

I got to Modena the evening after I left Bologna, and I stopped there, with one of those sudden whims to which I have always been subject. Next morning I went out to see the pictures, and as I was returning to my lodging for dinner a blackguardly-looking fellow came up and ordered me, on the part of the Government, to continue my journey on the day following at latest.

“Very good,” said I, and the fellow went away.

“Who is that man?” I said to the landlord. “A SPY.”

“A spy; and the Government dares to send such a fellow to me?”

“The ‘borgello’ must have sent him.”

“Then the ‘borgello’ is the Governor of Modena — the infamous wretch!”

“Hush! hush! all the best families speak to him in the street.”

“Then the best people are very low here, I suppose?”

“Not more than anywhere else. He is the manager of the opera house, and the greatest noblemen dine with him and thus secure his favour.”

“It’s incredible! But why should the high and mighty borgello send me away from Modena?”

“I don’t know, but do you take my advice and go and speak to him; you will find him a fine fellow.”

Instead of going to see this b… . I called on the Abbe Testa Grossa, whom I had known at Venice in 1753. Although he was a man of low extraction he had a keen wit. At this time he was old and resting on his laurels; he had fought his way into favour by the sheer force of merit, and his master, the Duke of Modena, had long chosen him as his representative with other powers.

Abbe Testa Grossa recognized me and gave me the most gracious reception, but when he heard of what had befallen me he seemed much annoyed.

“What can I do?” said I.

“You had better go, as the man may put a much more grievous insult on you.”

“I will do so, but could you oblige me by telling me the reason for such a high-handed action?”

“Come again this evening; I shall probably be able to satisfy you.”

I called on the abbe again in the evening, for I felt anxious to learn in what way I had offended the lord borgello, to whom I thought I was quite unknown. The abbe satisfied me.

“The borgello,” said he, “saw your name on the bill which he receives daily containing a list of the names of those who enter or leave the city. He remembered that you were daring enough to escape from The Leads, and as he does not at all approve of that sort of thing he resolved not to let the Modenese be contaminated by so egregious an example of the defiance of justice, however unjust it may be; and in short he has given you the order to leave the town.”

“I am much obliged, but I really wonder how it is that while you were telling me this you did not blush to be a subject of the Duke of Modena’s. What an unworthy action! How contrary is such a system of government to all the best interests of the state!”

“You are quite right, my dear sir, but I am afraid that as yet men’s eyes are not open to what best serves their interests.”

“That is doubtless due to the fact that so many men are unworthy.”

“I will not contradict you.”

“Farewell, abbe.”

“Farewell, M. Casanova.”

Next morning, just as I was going to get into my carriage, a young man between twenty-five and thirty, tall and strong and broad shouldered, his eyes black and glittering, his eyebrows strongly arched, and his general air being that of a cut-throat, accosted me and begged me to step aside and hear what he had to say.

“If you like to stop at Parma for three days, and if you will promise to give me fifty sequins when I bring you the news that the borgello is dead, I promise to shoot him within the next twenty-four hours.”

“Thanks. Such an animal as that should be allowed to die a natural death. Here’s a crown to drink my health.”

At the present time I feel very thankful that I acted as I did, but I confess that if I had felt sure that it was not a trap I should have promised the money. The fear of committing myself spared me this crime.

The next day I got to Parma, and I put up at the posting-house under the name of the Chevalier de Seingalt, which I still bear. When an honest man adopts a name which belongs to no one, no one has a right to contest his use of it; it becomes a man's duty to keep the name. I had now borne it for two years, but I often subjoined to it my family name.

When I got to Parma I dismissed Costa, but in a week after I had the misfortune to take him on again. His father, who was a poor violin player, as I had once been, with a large family to provide for, excited my pity.

I made enquiries about M. Antonio, but he had left the place; and M. Dubois Chalelereux, Director of the Mint, had gone to Venice with the permission of the Duke of Parma, to set up the beam, which was never brought into use. Republics are famous for their superstitious attachment to old customs; they are afraid that changes for the better may destroy the stability of the state, and the government of aristocratic Venice still preserves its original Greek character.

My Spaniard was delighted when I dismissed Costa and proportionately sorry when I took him back.

"He's no profligate," said Le Duc; "he is sober, and has no liking for bad company. But I think he's a robber, and a dangerous robber, too. I know it, because he seems so scrupulously careful not to cheat you in small things. Remember what I say, sir; he will do you. He is waiting to gain your confidence, and then he will strike home. Now, I am quite a different sort of fellow, a rogue in a small way; but you know me."

His insight was, keener than mine, for five or six months later the Italian robbed me of fifty thousand crowns. Twenty-three years afterwards, in 1784, I found him in Venice, valet to Count Hardegg, and I felt inclined to have him hanged. I shewed him by proof positive that I could do so if I liked; but he had resource to tears and supplications, and to the intercession of a worthy man named Bertrand, who lived with the ambassador of the King of Sardinia. I esteemed this individual, and he appealed to me successfully to pardon Costa. I asked the wretch what he had done with the gold and jewels he had stolen from me, and he told me that he had lost the whole of it in furnishing funds for a bank at Biribi, that he had been despoiled by his own associates, and had been poor and miserable ever since.

In the same year in which he robbed me he married Momolo's daughter, and after making her a mother he abandoned her.

To pursue our story.

At Turin I lodged in a private house with the Abbe Gama, who had been expecting me. In spite of the good abbe's sermon on economy, I took the whole of the first floor, and a fine suite it was.

We discussed diplomatic topics, and he assured me that I should be accredited in May, and that he would give me instructions as to the part I was to play. I was pleased with his commission, and I told the abbe that I should be ready to go to Augsburg whenever the ambassadors of the belligerent powers met there.

After making the necessary arrangements with my landlady with regard to my meals I went to a coffeehouse to read the papers, and the first person I saw was the Marquis Desarmoises, whom I had known in Savoy. The first thing he said was that all games of chance were forbidden, and that the ladies I had met would no doubt be delighted to see me. As for himself, he said that he lived by playing backgammon, though he was not at all lucky at it, as talent went for more than luck at that game. I can understand how, if fortune is neutral, the best player will win, but I do not see how the contrary can take place.

We went for a walk in the promenade leading to the citadel, where I saw numerous extremely pretty women. In Turin the fair sex is most delightful, but the police regulations are troublesome to a degree. Owing to the town being a small one and thinly peopled, the police spies find out everything. Thus one cannot enjoy any little freedoms without great precautions and the aid of cunning procuresses, who have to be well paid, as they would be cruelly punished if they were found out. No prostitutes and no kept women are allowed, much to the delight of the married women, and with results which the ignorant police might have anticipated. As well be imagined, pederasty has a fine field in this town, where the passions are kept under lock and key.

Amongst the beauties I looked at, one only attracted me. I asked Desarmoises her name, as he knew all of them.

"That's the famous Leah," said he; "she is a Jewess, and impregnable. She has resisted the attacks of the best strategists in Turin. Her father's a famous horse-dealer; you can go and see her easily enough, but there's nothing to be done there."

The greater the difficulty the more I felt spurred on to attempt it.

"Take me there," said I, to Desarmoises.

"As soon as you please."

I asked him to dine with me, and we were on our way when we met M. Zeroli and two or three other persons whom I had met at Aix. I gave and received plenty of compliments, but not wishing to pay them any visits I excused myself on the pretext of business.

When we had finished dinner Desarmoises took me to the horse-dealer's. I asked if he had a good saddle horse. He called a lad and gave his orders, and whilst he was speaking the charming daughter appeared on the scene. She was dazzlingly beautiful, and could not be more than twenty-two. Her figure was as lissom as a nymph's, her hair a raven black, her complexion a meeting of the lily and the rose, her eyes full of fire, her lashes long, and her eye-brows so well arched that they seemed ready to make war on any who would dare the conquest of her charms. All about her betokened an educated mind and knowledge of the world.

I was so absorbed in the contemplation of her charms that I did not notice the horse when it was brought to me. However, I proceeded to scrutinise it, pretending to be an expert, and after feeling the knees and legs, turning back the ears, and looking at the teeth, I tested its behaviour at a walk, a trot, and a gallop, and then told the Jew that I would come and try it myself in top-boots the next day. The horse was a fine dappled bay, and was priced at forty Piedmontese pistoles — about a hundred sequins.

"He is gentleness itself," said Leah, "and he ambles as fast as any other horse trots."

"You have ridden it, then?"

"Often, sir, and if I were rich I would never sell him."

"I won't buy the horse till I have seen you ride it."

She blushed at this.

"You must oblige the gentleman," said her father. She consented to do so, and I promised to come again at nine o'clock the next day.

I was exact to time, as may be imagined, and I found Leah in riding costume. What proportions! What a Venus Callipyge! I was captivated.

Two horses were ready, and she leapt on hers with the ease and grace of a practised rider, and I got up on my horse. We rode together for some distance. The horse went well enough, but what of that; all my eyes were for her.

As we were turning, I said, —

"Fair Leah, I will buy the horse, but as a present for you; and if you will not take it I shall leave Turin today. The only condition I attach to the gift is, that you will ride with me whenever I ask you."

I saw she seemed favourably inclined to my proposal, so I told her that I should stay six weeks at Turin, that I had fallen in love with her on the promenade, and that the purchase of the horse had been a mere pretext for discovering to her my feelings. She replied modestly that she was vastly flattered by the liking I had taken to her, and that I need not have made her such a present to assure myself of her friendship.

"The condition you impose on me is an extremely pleasant one, and I am sure that my father will like me to accept it."

To this she added, —

"All I ask is for you to make me the present before him, repeating that you will only buy it on the condition that I will accept it."

I found the way smoother than I had expected, and I did what she asked me. Her father, whose name was Moses, thought it a good bargain, congratulated his daughter, took the forty pistoles and gave me a receipt, and begged me to do them the honour of breakfasting with them the next day. This was just what I wanted.

The following morning Moses received me with great respect. Leah, who was in her ordinary clothes, told me that if I liked to ride she would put on her riding habit.

“Another day,” said I; “to-day I should like to converse with you in your own house.”

But the father, who was as greedy as most Jews are, said that if I liked driving he could sell me a pretty phaeton with two excellent horses.

“You must shew them to the gentleman,” said Leah, possibly in concert with her father.

Moses said nothing, but went out to get the horses harnessed.

“I will look at them,” I said to Leah, “but I won’t buy, as I should not know what to do with them.”

“You can take your lady-love out for a drive.”

“That would be you; but perhaps you would be afraid!”

“Not at all, if you drove in the country or the suburbs.”

“Very good, Leah, then I will look at them.”

The father came in, and we went downstairs. I liked the carriage and the horses, and I told Leah so.

“Well,” said Moses, “you can have them now for four hundred sequins, but after Easter the price will be five hundred sequins at least.”

Leah got into the carriage, and I sat beside her, and we went for an hour’s drive into the country. I told Moses I would give him an answer by the next day, and he went about his business, while Leah and I went upstairs again.

“It’s quite worth four hundred sequins,” said I, “and to-morrow I will buy it with pleasure; but on the same condition as that on which I bought the horse, and something more — namely, that you will grant me all the favours that a tender lover can desire.”

“You speak plainly, and I will answer you in the same way. I’m an honest girl, sir, and not for sale.”

"All women, dear Leah, whether they are honest or not, are for sale. When a man has plenty of time he buys the woman his heart desires by unremitting attentions; but when he's in a hurry he buys her with presents, and even with money."

"Then he's a clumsy fellow; he would do better to let sentiment and attention plead his cause and gain the victory."

"I wish I could give myself that happiness, fair Leah, but I'm in a great hurry."

As I finished this sentence her father came in, and I left the house telling him that if I could not come the next day I would come the day after, and that we could talk about the phaeton then.

It was plain that Leah thought I was lavish of my money, and would make a capital dupe. She would relish the phaeton, as she had relished the horse, but I knew that I was not quite such a fool as that. It had not cost me much trouble to resolve to chance the loss of a hundred sequins, but beyond that I wanted some value for my money.

I temporarily suspended my visits to see how Leah and her father would settle it amongst themselves. I reckoned on the Jew's greediness to work well for me. He was very fond of money, and must have been angry that his daughter had not made me buy the phaeton by some means or another, for so long as the phaeton was bought the rest would be perfectly indifferent to him. I felt almost certain that they would come and see me.

The following Saturday I saw the fair Jewess on the promenade. We were near enough for me to accost her without seeming to be anxious to do so, and her look seemed to say, "Come."

"We see no more of you now," said she, "but come and breakfast with me to-morrow, or I will send you back the horse."

I promised to be with her in good time, and, as the reader will imagine, I kept my word.

The breakfast party was almost confined to ourselves, for though her aunt was present she was only there for decency's sake. After breakfast we resolved to have a ride, and she changed her clothes before me, but also before her aunt. She first put on her leather breeches, then let her skirts fall, took off her corset, and donned a jacket. With seeming indifference I succeeded in catching a glimpse of a magnificent breast; but the sly puss knew how much my indifference was worth.

“Will you arrange my frill?” said she.

This was a warm occupation for me, and I am afraid my hand was indiscreet. Nevertheless, I thought I detected a fixed design under all this seeming complaisance, and I was on my guard.

Her father came up just as we were getting on horseback.

“If you will buy the phaeton and horses,” said he, “I will abate twenty sequins.”

“All that depends on your daughter,” said I.

We set off at a walk, and Leah told me that she had been imprudent enough to confess to her father that she could make me buy the carriage, and that if I did not wish to embroil her with him I would be kind enough to purchase it.

“Strike the bargain,” said she, “and you can give it me when you are sure of my love.”

“My dear Leah, I am your humble servant, but you know on what condition.”

“I promise to drive out with you whenever you please, without getting out of the carriage, but I know you would not care for that. No, your affection was only a temporary caprice.”

“To convince you of the contrary I will buy the phaeton and put it in a coach-house. I will see that the horses are taken-care of, though I shall not use them. But if you do not make me happy in the course of a week I shall re-sell the whole.”

“Come to us to-morrow.”

“I will do so, but I trust have some pledge of your affection this morning.”

“This morning? It’s impossible.”

“Excuse me; I will go upstairs with you, and you can shew me more than one kindness while you are undressing.”

We came back, and I was astonished to hear her telling her father that the phaeton was mine, and all he had to do was to put in the horses. The Jew grinned, and we all went upstairs, and Leah coolly said, —

“Count out the money.”

“I have not any money about me, but I will write you a cheque, if you like.”

“Here is paper.”

I wrote a cheque on Zappata for three hundred sequins, payable at sight. The Jew went off to get the money, and Leah remained alone with me.

“You have trusted me,” she said, “and have thus shewn yourself worthy of my love.”

“Then undress, quick!”

“No, my aunt is about the house; and as I cannot shut the door without exciting suspicion, she might come in; but I promise that you shall be content with me tomorrow. Nevertheless, I am going to undress, but you must go in this closet; you may come back when I have got my woman’s clothes on again.”

I agreed to this arrangement, and she shut me in. I examined the door, and discovered a small chink between the boards. I got on a stool, and saw Leah sitting on a sofa opposite to me engaged in undressing herself. She took off her shift and wiped her breasts and her feet with a towel, and just as she had taken off her breeches, and was as naked as my hand, one of her rings happened to slip off her finger, and rolled under the sofa. She got up, looked to right and left, and then stooped to search under the sofa, and to do this she had to kneel with her head down. When she got back to couch, the towel came again into requisition, and she wiped herself all over in such a manner that all her charms were revealed to my eager eyes. I felt sure that she knew I was a witness of all these operations, and she probably guessed what a fire the sight would kindle in my inflammable breast.

At last her toilette was finished, and she let me out. I clasped her in my arms, with the words, “I have seen everything.” She pretended not to believe me, so I chewed her the chink, and was going to obtain my just dues, when the accursed Moses came in. He must have been blind or he would have seen the state his daughter had put me in; however, he thanked me, and gave me a receipt for the money, saying, “Everything in my poor house is at your service.”

I bade them adieu, and I went away in an ill temper. I got into my phaeton, and drove home and told the coachman to find me a stable for the horses and a coach-house for the carriage.

I did not expect to see Leah again, and I felt enraged with her. She had pleased me only too much by her voluptuous attitudes, but she had set up an irritation wholly hostile to Love. She had made Love a robber, and the hungry boy had consented, but afterwards, when he craved more substantial fare, she refused him, and ardour was succeeded by contempt. Leah did not want to confess herself to be what she really was, and my love would not declare itself knavish.

I made the acquaintance of an amiable chevalier, a soldier, a man of letters, and a great lover of horses, who introduced me to several pleasant families. However, I did not cultivate them, as they only offered me the pleasures of sentiment, while I longed for lustier fare for which I was willing to pay heavily. The Chevalier de Breze was not the man for me; he was too respectable for a profligate like myself. He bought the phaeton and horses, and I only lost thirty sequins by the transaction.

A certain M. Baretti, who had known me at Aix, and had been the Marquis de Pries croupier, took me to see the Mazzoli, formerly a dancer, and then mistress to the Chevalier Raiberti, a hardheaded but honest man, who was then secretary for foreign affairs. Although the Mazzoli was by no means pretty, she was extremely complaisant, and had several girls at her house for me to see; but I did not think any of them worthy of occupying Leah’s place. I fancied I no longer loved Leah, but I was wrong.

The Chevalier Cocona, who had the misfortune to be suffering from a venereal disease, gave me up his mistress, a pretty little ‘soubrette’; but in spite of the evidence of my own eyes, and in spite of the assurances she gave me, I could not make up my mind to have her, and my fear made me leave her untouched. Count Trana, a brother of the chevalier’s whom I had known at Aix, introduced me to Madame de Sc —— , a lady of high rank and very good-looking, but she tried to involve me in a criminal transaction, and I ceased to call on her. Shortly after, Count Trana’s uncle died and he became rich and got married, but he lived an unhappy life.

I was getting bored, and Desarmoises, who had all his meals with me, did not know what to do. At last he advised me to make the acquaintance of a certain Madame R —— , a Frenchwoman, and well known in Turin as a milliner and dressmaker. She had six or eight girls working for her in a room adjoining her shop. Desarmoises thought that if I got in there I might possibly be able to find one to my taste. As my purse was well furnished I thought I should not have much difficulty, so I called on Madame R —— . I was agreeably surprised to find Leah there, bargaining for a quantity of articles, all of which she pronounced to be too dear. She told me kindly but reproachfully that she had thought I must be ill.

"I have been very busy," I said; and felt all my old ardour revive. She asked me to come to a Jewish wedding, where there would be a good many people and several pretty girls. I knew that ceremonies of this kind are very amusing, and I promised to be present. She proceeded with her bargaining, but the price was still too high and she left the shop. Madame R —— was going to put back all the trifles in their places, but I said, —

"I will take the lot myself."

She smiled, and I drew out my purse and paid the money.

"Where do you live, sir?" said she; "and when shall I send you your purchases?"

"You may bring them to-morrow yourself, and do me the honour of breakfasting with me."

"I can never leave the shop, sir." In spite of her thirty-five years, Madame R —— was still what would be called a tasty morsel, and she had taken my fancy.

"I want some dark lace," said I.

"Then kindly follow me, sir."

I was delighted when I entered the room to see a lot of young work-girls, all charming, hard at work, and scarcely daring to look at me. Madame R —— opened several cupboards, and showed me some magnificent lace. I was distracted by the sight of so many delicious nymphs, and I told her that I wanted the lace for two 'baoutes' in the Venetian style. She knew what I meant. The lace cost me upwards of a hundred sequins. Madame R ——

told two of her girls to bring me the lace the next day, together with the goods which Leah had thought too dear. They meekly replied, —

"Yes, mother."

They rose and kissed the mother's hand, which I thought a ridiculous ceremony; however, it gave me an opportunity of examining them, and I thought them delicious. We went back to the shop, and sitting down by the counter I enlarged on the beauty of the girls, adding, though not with strict truth, that I vastly preferred their mistress. She thanked me for the compliment and told me plainly that she had a lover, and soon after named him. He was the Comte de St. Giles, an infirm and elderly man, and by no means a model lover. I thought Madame R —— was jesting, but next day I ascertained that she was speaking the truth. Well, everyone to his taste, and I suspect that she was more in love with the count's purse than his person. I had met him at the "Exchange" coffeehouse.

The next day the two pretty milliners brought me my goods. I offered them chocolate, but they firmly and persistently declined. The fancy took me to send them to Leah with all the things she had chosen, and I bade them return and tell me what sort of a reception they had had. They said they would do so, and waited for me to write her a note.

I could not give them the slightest mark of affection. I dared not shut the door, and the mistress and the ugly young woman of the house kept going and coming all the time; but when they came back I waited for them on the stairs, and giving them a sequin each told each of them that she might command my heart if she would. Leah had accepted my handsome present and sent to say that she was waiting for me.

As I was walking aimlessly about in the afternoon I happened to pass the milliner's shop, and Madame R —— saw me and made me come in and sit down beside her.

"I am really much obliged to you," said she, "for your kindness to my girls. They came home enchanted. Tell me frankly whether you are really in love with the pretty Jewess."

"I am really in love with her, but as she will not make me happy I have signed my own dismissal."

"You were quite right. All Leah thinks of is duping those who are captivated by her charms."

"Do not your charming apprentices follow your maxims?"

"No; but they are only complaisant when I give them leave."

"Then I commend myself to your intercession, for they would not even take a cup of chocolate from me."

"They were perfectly right not to accept your chocolate: but I see you do not know the ways of Turin. Do you find yourself comfortable in your present lodging?"

"Quite so."

"Are you perfectly free to do what you like?"

"I think so."

"Can you give supper to anyone you like in your own rooms? I am certain you can't."

"I have not had the opportunity of trying the experiment so far, but I believe … ."

"Don't flatter yourself by believing anything; that house is full of the spies of the police."

"Then you think that I could not give you and two or three of your girls a little supper?"

"I should take very good care not to go to it, that's all I know. By next morning it would be known to all the town, and especially to the police."

"Well, supposing I look out for another lodging?"

"It's the same everywhere. Turin is a perfect nest of spies; but I do know a house where you could live at ease, and where my girls might perhaps be able to bring you your purchases. But we should have to be very careful."

"Where is the house I will be guided by you in everything."

"Don't trust a Piedmontese; that's the first commandment here."

She then gave me the address of a small furnished house, which was only inhabited by an old door-keeper and his wife.

“They will let it you by the month,” said she, “and if you pay a month in advance you need not even tell them your name.”

I found the house to be a very pretty one, standing in a lonely street at about two hundred paces from the citadel. One gate, large enough to admit a carriage, led into the country. I found everything to be as Madame R —— had described it. I paid a month in advance without any bargaining, and in a day I had settled in my new lodging. Madame R —— admired my celerity.

I went to the Jewish wedding and enjoyed myself, for there is something at once solemn and ridiculous about the ceremony; but I resisted all Leah’s endeavours to get me once more into her meshes.. I hired a close carriage from her father, which with the horses I placed in the coach-house and stables of my new house. Thus I was absolutely free to go whenever I would by night or by day, for I was at once in the town and in the country. I was obliged to tell the inquisitive Gama where I was living, and I hid nothing from Desarmoises, whose needs made him altogether dependent on me. Nevertheless I gave orders that my door was shut to them as to everyone else, unless I had given special instructions that they were to be admitted. I had no reason to doubt the fidelity of my two servants.

In this blissful abode I enjoyed all Mdlle. R — — ‘s girls, one after the other. The one I wanted always brought a companion, whom I usually sent back after giving her a slice of the cake. The last of them, whose name was Victorine, as fair as day and as soft as a dove, had the misfortune to be tied, though she knew nothing about it. Mdlle. R —— , who was equally ignorant on the subject, had represented her to me as a virgin, and so I thought her for two long hours in which I strove with might and main to break the charm, or rather open the shell. All my efforts were in vain. I was exhausted at last, and I wanted to see in what the obstacle consisted. I put her in the proper position, and armed with a candle I began my scrutiny. I found a fleshy membrane pierced by so small a hole that large pin’s head could scarcely have gone through. Victorine encouraged me to force a passage with my little finger, but in vain I tried to pierce this wall, which nature had made impassable by all ordinary means. I was tempted to see what I could do with a bistoury, and the girl wanted me to try, but I was afraid of the haemorrhage which might have been dangerous, and I wisely refrained.

Poor Victorine, condemned to die a maid, unless some clever surgeon performed the same operation that was undergone by Mdlle. Cheruffini shortly after M. Lepri married her, wept when I said, —

“My dear child, your little Hymen defies the most vigorous lover to enter his temple.”

But I consoled her by saying that a good surgeon could easily make a perfect woman of her.

In the morning I told Madame R —— of the case.

She laughed and said, —

“It may prove a happy accident for Victorine; it may make her fortune.”

A few years after the Count of Padua had her operated on, and made her fortune. When I came back from Spain I found that she was with child, so that I could not exact the due reward for all the trouble I had taken with her.

Early in the morning on Maunday Thursday they told me that Moses and Leah wanted to see me. I had not expected to see them, but I welcomed them warmly. Throughout Holy Week the Jews dared not shew themselves in the streets of Turin, and I advised them to stay with me till the Saturday. Moses began to try and get me to purchase a ring from him, and I judged from that that I should not have to press them very much.

“I can only buy this ring from Leah’s hands,” said I.

He grinned, thinking doubtless that I intended to make her a present of it, but I was resolved to disappoint him. I gave them a magnificent dinner and supper, and in the evening they were shewn a double-bedded room not far from mine. I might have put them in different rooms, and Leah in a room adjoining mine, which would have facilitated any nocturnal excursions; but after all I had done for her I was resolved to owe nothing to a surprise; she should come of herself.

The next day Moses (who noticed that I had not yet bought the ring) was obliged to go out on business, and asked for the loan of my carriage for the whole day, telling me that he would come for his daughter in the evening. I had the horses harnessed, and when he was gone I bought the ring for six hundred sequins, but on my own terms. I was in my own house, and Leah could not deceive me. As soon as the father was safely out of the way I possessed myself of the daughter. She proved a docile and amorous subject the whole day. I had reduced her to a state of nature, and though her body was as perfect as can well be imagined I used it and abused it in every way imaginable. In the evening her father found her looking rather tired, but he seemed as pleased as I was. Leah was not quite so well satisfied, for till the moment of their departure she was expecting me to give her the ring, but I contented myself with saying that I should like to reserve myself the pleasure of taking it to her.

On Easter Monday a man brought me a note summoning me to appear at the police office.

CHAPTER XII

My Victory Over the Deputy Chief of Police — My Departure —

Chamberi — Desarmoises's Daughter — M. Morin — M * * * M * * * —

At Aix — The Young Boarder — Lyons — Paris

This citation, which did not promise to lead to anything agreeable, surprised and displeased me exceedingly. However, I could not avoid it, so I drove to the office of the deputy-superintendent of police. I found him sitting at a long table, surrounded by about a score of people in a standing posture. He was a man of sixty, hideously ugly, his enormous nose half destroyed by an ulcer hidden by a large black silk plaster, his mouth of huge dimensions, his lips thick, with small green eyes and eyebrows which had partly turned white. As soon as this disgusting fellow saw me, he began, —

"You are the Chevalier de Seingalt?"

"That is my name, and I have come here to ask how I can oblige you?"

"I have summoned you here to order you to leave the place in three days at latest."

"And as you have no right to give such an order, I have come here to tell you that I shall go when I please, and not before."

"I will expel you by force."

"You may do that whenever you please. I cannot resist force, but I trust you will give the matter a second thought; for in a well-ordered city they do not expel a man who has committed no crimes, and has a balance of a hundred thousand francs at the bank."

"Very good, but in three days you have plenty of time to pack up and arrange matters with your banker. I advise you to obey, as the command comes from the king."

"If I were to leave the town I should become accessory to your injustice! I will not obey, but since you mention the king's name, I will go to his majesty at once, and he will deny your words or revoke the unjust order you have given me with such publicity."

"Pray, does not the king possess the power to make you go?"

"Yes, by force, but not by justice. He has also the power to kill me, but he would have to provide the executioner, as he could not make me commit suicide."

"You argue well, but nevertheless you will obey."

"I argue well, but I did not learn the art from you, and I will not obey."

With these words I turned my back on him, and left without another word.

I was in a furious rage. I felt inclined to offer overt resistance to all the myrmidons of the infamous superintendent. Nevertheless I soon calmed myself, and summoning prudence to my aid I remembered the Chevalier Raiberti, whom I had seen at his mistress's house, and I decided on asking his advice. He was the chief permanent official in the department of foreign affairs. I told the coachman to drive to his house, and I recounted to him the whole tale, saying, finally, that I should like to speak to the king, as I was resolved that I would not go unless I was forced to do so. The worthy man advised me to go to the Chevalier Osorio, the principal secretary for foreign affairs, who could always get an audience of the king. I was pleased with his advice, and I went immediately to the minister, who was a Sicilian and a man of parts. He gave me a very good reception, and after I had informed him of the circumstances of the case I begged him to communicate the matter to his majesty, adding that as the superintendent's order appeared horribly unjust to me I was resolved not to obey it unless compelled to do so by main force. He promised to oblige me in the way I wished, and told me to call again the next day.

After leaving him I took a short walk to cool myself, and then went to the Abbe Gama, hoping to be the first to impart my ridiculous adventure to him. I was disappointed; he already knew that I had been ordered to go, and how I had answered the superintendent. When he saw that I persisted in my determination to resist, he did not condemn my firmness, though he must have thought it very extraordinary, for the good abbe could not understand anybody’s disobeying the order of the authorities. He assured me that if I had to go he would send me the necessary instructions to any address I liked to name.

The next day the Chevalier Osorio received me with the utmost politeness, which I thought a good omen. The Chevalier Raiberti had spoken to him in my behalf, and he had laid the matter before the king and also before the Count d’Aglie, and the result was that I could stay as long as I liked. The Count d’Aglie was none other than the horrible superintendent. I was told that I must wait on him, and he would give me leave to remain at Turin till my affairs were settled.

“My only business here,” said I, “is to spend my money till I have instructions from the Court of Portugal to attend the Congress of Augsburg on behalf of his most faithful majesty.”

“Then you think that this Congress will take place?”

“Nobody doubts it.”

“Somebody believes it will all end in smoke. However, I am delighted to have been of service to you, and I shall be curious to hear what sort of reception you get from the superintendent.”

I felt ill at ease. I went to the police office immediately, glad to shew myself victorious, and anxious to see how the superintendent would look when I came in. However, I could not flatter myself that he looked ashamed of himself; these people have a brazen forehead, and do not know what it is to blush.

As soon as he saw me, he began, —

“The Chevalier Osorio tells me that you have business in Turin which will keep you for some days. You may therefore stay, but you must tell me as nearly as possible how long a time you require.”

“I cannot possibly tell you that.”

“Why? if you don’t mind telling me.”

“I am awaiting instructions from the Court of Portugal to attend the Congress to be held at Augsburg, and before I could tell you how long I shall have to stay I should be compelled to ask his most faithful majesty. If this time is not sufficient for me to do my business, I will intimate the fact to you."

"I shall be much obliged by your doing so."

This time I made him a bow, which was returned, and on leaving the office I returned to the Chevalier Osorio, who said, with a smile, that I had caught the superintendent, as I had taken an indefinite period, which left me quite at my ease.

The diplomatic Gama, who firmly believed that the Congress would meet, was delighted when I told him that the Chevalier Osorio was incredulous on the subject. He was charmed to think his wit keener than the minister's; it exalted him in his own eyes. I told him that whatever the chevalier might say I would go to Augsburg, and that I would set out in three or four weeks.

Madame R. congratulated me over and over again, for she was enchanted that I had humiliated the superintendent; but all the same we thought we had better give up our little suppers. As I had had a taste of all her girls, this was not such a great sacrifice for me to make.

I continued thus till the middle of May, when I left Turin, after receiving letters from the Abbe Gama to Lord Stormont, who was to represent England at the approaching Congress. It was with this nobleman that I was to work in concert at the Congress.

Before going to Germany I wanted to see Madame d'Urfe, and I wrote to her, asking her to send me a letter of introduction to M. de Rochebaron, who might be useful to me. I also asked M. Raiberti to give me a letter for Chamberi, where I wanted to visit the divine M —— M —— (of whom I still thought with affection) at her convent grating. I wrote to my friend Valenglard, asking him to remind Madame Morin that she had promised to shew me a likeness to somebody at Chamberi.

But here I must note down an event worthy of being recorded, which was extremely prejudicial to me.

Five or six days before my departure Desarmoises came to me looking very downcast, and told me that he had been ordered to leave Turin in twenty-four hours.

"Do you know why?" I asked him.

"Last night when I was at the coffee-house, Count Scarnafis dared to say that France subsidised the Berne newspapers. I told him he lied, at which he rose and left the place in a rage, giving me a glance the meaning of which is not doubtful. I followed him to bring him to reason or to give him satisfaction; but he would do nothing and I suspect he went to the police to complain. I shall have to leave Turin early to-morrow morning."

"You're a Frenchman, and as you can claim the protection of your ambassador you will be wrong to leave so suddenly."

"In the first place the ambassador is away, and in the second my cruel father disavows me. No, I would rather go, and wait for you at Lyons. All I want is for you to lend me a hundred crowns, for which I will give you an account."

"It will be an easy account to keep," said I, "but a long time before it is settled."

"Possibly; but if it is in my power I will shew my gratitude for the kindnesses you have done me."

I gave him a hundred crowns and wished him a pleasant journey, telling him that I should stop some time at Lyons.

I got a letter of credit on an Augsburg house, and three days after I left Turin I was at Chamberi. There was only one inn there in those days, so I was not much puzzled to choose where I would go, but for all that I found myself very comfortable.

As I entered my room, I was struck by seeing an extremely pretty girl coming out of an adjacent room.

"Who is that young lady?" said I to the chambermaid who was escorting me.

"That's the wife of a young gentleman who has to keep his bed to get cured of a sword-thrust which he received four days ago on his way from France."

I could not look at her without feeling the sting of concupiscence. As I was leaving my room I saw the door half open, and I stopped short and offered my services as a neighbour. She thanked me politely, and asked me in. I saw a handsome young man sitting up in bed, so I went up to enquire how he felt.

"The doctor will not let him talk," said the young lady, "on account of a sword-thrust in the chest he received at half a league from here. We hope he will be all right in a few days, and then we can continue our journey."

"Where are you going, madam?"

"To Geneva."

Just as I was leaving, a maid came to ask me if I would take supper in my own room or with the lady. I laughed at her stupidity, and said I would sup in my own apartment, adding that I had not the honour of the lady's acquaintance.

At this the young lady said it would give her great pleasure if I would sup with her, and the husband repeated this assurance in a whisper. I accepted the invitation gratefully, and I thought that they were really pleased. The lady escorted me out as far as the stairs, and I took the liberty of kissing her hand, which in France is a declaration of tender though respectful affection.

At the post-office I found a letter from Valenglard, telling me that Madame Morin would wait on me at Chamberi if I would send her a carriage, and another from Desarmoises dated from Lyons. He told me that as he was on his way from Chamberi he had encountered his daughter in company with a rascal who had carried her off. He had buried his sword in his body, and would have killed them if he had been able to stop their carriage. He suspected that they had been staying in Chamberi, and he begged me to try and persuade his daughter to return to Lyons; and he added that if she would not do so I ought to oblige him by sending her back by force. He assured me that they were not married, and he begged me to answer his letter by express, for which purpose he sent me his address.

I guessed at once that this daughter of his was my fair neighbour, but I did not feel at all inclined to come to the aid of the father in the way he wished.

As soon as I got back to the inn I sent off Le Duc in a travelling carriage to Madame Morin, whom I informed by letter that as I was only at Chamberi for her sake I would await her convenience. This done, I abandoned myself to the delight I felt at the romantic adventure which fortune had put in my way.

I repeated Mdlle. Desarmoises and her ravisher, and I did not care to enquire whether I was impelled in what I did by virtue or vice; but I could not help perceiving that my motives were of a mixed nature; for if I were amorous, I was also very glad to be of assistance to two young lovers, and all the more from my knowledge of the father's criminal passion.

On entering their room I found the invalid in the surgeon's hands. He pronounced the wound not to be dangerous, in spite of its depth; suppuration had taken place without setting up inflammation — in short, the young man only wanted time and rest. When the doctor had gone I congratulated the patient on his condition, advising him to be careful what he ate, and to keep silent. I then gave Mdlle. Desarmoises her father's letter, and I said farewell for the present, telling them that I would go to my own room till supper-time. I felt sure that she would come and speak to me after reading her father's letter.

In a quarter of an hour she knocked timidly at my door, and when I let her in she gave me back the letter and asked me what I thought of doing.

"Nothing. I shall be only too happy, however, if I can be of any service to you."

"Ah! I breathe again!"

"Could you imagine me pursuing any other line of conduct? I am much interested in you, and will do all in my power to help you. Are you married?"

"Not yet, but we are going to be married when we get to Geneva."

"Sit down and tell me all about yourself. I know that your father is unhappily in love with you, and that you avoid his attentions."

"He has told you that much? I am glad of it. A year ago he came to Lyons, and as soon as I knew he was in the town I took refuge with a friend of my mother's, for I was aware that I could not stay in the same house with my father for an hour without exposing myself to the most horrible outrage. The young man in bed is the son of a rich Geneva merchant. My father introduced him to me two years ago, and we soon fell in love with each other. My father went away to Marseilles, and my lover asked my mother to give me in marriage to him; but she did not feel authorized to do so without my father's consent. She wrote and asked him, but he replied that he would announce his decision when he returned to Lyons. My lover went to Geneva, and as his father approved of the match he returned with all the necessary documents and a strong letter of commendation from M. Tolosan. When my father came to Lyons I escaped, as I told you, and my lover got M. Tolosan to ask my hand for him of my father. His reply was, ‘I can give no answer till she returns to my house!’

“M. Tolosan brought this reply to me, and I told him that I was ready to obey if my mother would guarantee my safety. She replied, however, that she knew her husband too well to dare to have us both under the same roof. Again did M. Tolosan endeavour to obtain my father’s consent, but to no purpose. A few days after he left Lyons, telling us that he was first going to Aix and then to Turin, and as it was evident that he would never give his consent my lover proposed that I should go off with him, promising to marry me as soon as we reached Geneva. By ill luck we travelled through Savoy, and thus met my father. As soon as he saw us he stopped the carriage and called to me to get out. I began to shriek, and my lover taking me in his arms to protect me my father stabbed him in the chest. No doubt he would have killed him, but seeing that my shrieks were bringing people to our rescue, and probably believing that my lover was as good as dead, he got on horseback again and rode off at full speed. I can shew you the sword still covered with blood.”

“I am obliged to answer this letter of his, and I am thinking how I can obtain his consent.”

“That’s of no consequence; we can marry and be happy without it.”

“True, but you ought not to despise your dower.”

“Good heavens! what dower? He has no money!”

“But on the death of his father, the Marquis Desarmoises … . “

“That’s all a lie. My father has only a small yearly pension for having served thirty years as a Government messenger. His father has been dead these thirty years, and my mother and my sister only live by the work they do.”

I was thunderstruck at the impudence of the fellow, who, after imposing on me so long, had himself put me in a position to discover his deceit. I said nothing. Just then we were told that supper was ready, and we sat at table for three hours talking the matter over. The poor wounded man had only to listen to me to know my feelings on the subject. His young mistress, as witty as she was pretty, jested on the foolish passion of her father, who had loved her madly ever since she was eleven.

“And you were always able to resist his attempts?” said I.

“Yes, whenever he pushed things too far.”

“And how long did this state of things continue?”

“For two years. When I was thirteen he thought I was ripe, and tried to gather the fruit; but I began to shriek, and escaped from his bed stark naked, and I went to take refuge with my mother, who from that day forth would not let me sleep with him again.”

“You used to sleep with him? How could your mother allow it?”

“She never thought that there was anything criminal in his affection for me, and I knew nothing about it. I thought that what he did to me, and what he made me do to him, were mere trifles.”

“But you have saved the little treasure?”

“I have kept it for my lover.”

The poor lover, who was suffering more from the effects of hunger than from his wounds, laughed at this speech of hers, and she ran to him and covered his face with kisses. All this excited me intensely. Her story had been told with too much simplicity not to move me, especially when I had her before my eyes, for she possessed all the attractions which a woman can have, and I almost forgave her father for forgetting she was his daughter and falling in love with her.

When she escorted me back to my room I made her feel my emotion, and she began to laugh; but as my servants were close by I was obliged to let her go.

Early next morning I wrote to her father that his daughter had resolved not to leave her lover, who was only slightly wounded, that they were in perfect safety and under the protection of the law at Chamberi, and finally that having heard their story, and judging them to be well matched, I could only approve of the course they had taken. When I had finished I went into their room and gave them the letter to read, and seeing the fair runaway at a loss how to express her ‘gratitude, I begged the invalid to let me kiss her.

"Begin with me," said he, opening his arms.

My hypocritical love masked itself under the guise of paternal affection. I embraced the lover, and then more amorously I performed the same office for the mistress, and skewed them my purse full of gold, telling them it was at their service. While this was going on the surgeon came in, and I retired to my room.

At eleven o'clock Madame Morin and her daughter arrived, preceded by Le Duc on horseback, who announced their approach by numerous smacks of his whip. I welcomed her with open arms, thanking her for obliging me.

The first piece of news she gave me was that Mdlle. Roman had become mistress to Louis XV., that she lived in a beautiful house at Passi, and that she was five months gone with child. Thus she was in a fair way to become queen of France, as my divine oracle had predicted.

"At Grenoble," she added, "you are the sole topic of conversation; and I advise you not to go there unless you wish to settle in the country, for they would never let you go. You would have all the nobility at your feet, and above all, the ladies anxious to know the lot of their daughters. Everybody believes in judicial astrology now, and Valenglard triumphs. He has bet a hundred Louis to fifty that my niece will be delivered of a young prince, and he is certain of winning; though to be sure, if he loses, everybody will laugh at him."

"Don't be afraid of his losing."

"Is it quite certain?"

"Has not the horoscope proved truthful in the principal particular? If the other circumstances do not follow, I must have made a great mistake in my calculations."

"I am delighted to hear you say so."

"I am going to Paris and I hope you will give me a letter of introduction to Madame Varnier, so that I may have the pleasure of seeing your niece."

"You shall have the letter to-morrow without fail."

I introduced Mdlle. Desarmoises to her under the family name of her lover, and invited her to dine with Madame Morin and myself. After dinner we went to the convent, and M —— M —— came down very surprised at this unexpected visit from her aunt; but when she saw me she had need of all her presence of mind. When her aunt introduced me to her by name, she observed with true feminine tact that during her stay at Aix she had seen me five or six times at the fountain, but that I could not remember her features as she had always worn her veil. I admired her wit as much as her exquisite features. I thought she had grown prettier than ever, and no doubt my looks told her as much. We spent an hour in talking about Grenoble and her old friends, whom she gladly recalled to her memory, and then she went to fetch a young girl who was boarding at the convent, whom she liked and wanted to present to her aunt.

I seized the opportunity of telling Madame Morin that I was astonished at the likeness, that her very voice was like that of my Venetian M —— M —— , and I begged her to obtain me the privilege of breakfasting with her niece the next day, and of presenting her with a dozen pounds of capital chocolate. I had brought it with me from Genoa.

"You must make her the present yourself," said Madame Morin, "for though she's a nun she's a woman, and we women much prefer a present from a man's than from a woman's hand."

M —— M —— returned with the superior of the convent, two other nuns, and the young boarder, who came from Lyons, and was exquisitely beautiful. I was obliged to talk to all the nuns, and Madame Morin told her niece that I wanted her to try some excellent chocolate I had brought from Genoa, but that I hoped her lay-sister would make it.

"Sir," said M —— M —— , "kindly send me the chocolate, and to-morrow we will breakfast together with these dear sisters."

As soon as I got back to my inn I sent the chocolate with a respectful note, and I took supper in Madame Morin's room with her daughter and Mdlle. Desarmoises, of whom I was feeling more and more amorous, but I talked of M —— M —— all the time, and I could see that the aunt suspected that the pretty nun was not altogether a stranger to me.

I breakfasted at the convent and I remember that the chocolate, the biscuits, and the sweetmeats were served with a nicety which savoured somewhat of the world. When we had finished breakfast I told M —— M —— that she would not find it so easy to give me a dinner, with twelve persons sitting down to table, but I added that half the company could be in the convent and half in the parlour, separated from the convent by a light grating.

“It’s a sight I should like to see,” said I, “if you will allow me to pay all expenses.”

“Certainly,” replied M —— M —— , and this dinner was fixed for the next day.

M —— M —— took charge of the whole thing, and promised to ask six nuns. Madame Morin, who knew my tastes, told her to spare nothing, and I warned her that I would send in the necessary wines.

I escorted Madame Morin, her daughter, and Mdlle. Desarmoises back to the hotel, and I then called on M. Magnan, to whom I had been recommended by the Chevalier Raiberti. I asked him to get me some of the best wine, and he took me down to his cellar, and told me to take what I liked. His wines proved to be admirable.

This M. Magnan was a clever man, of a pleasant appearance, and very comfortably off. He occupied an extremely large and convenient house outside the town, and there his agreeable wife dispensed hospitality. She had ten children, amongst whom there were four pretty daughters; the eldest, who was nineteen, was especially good-looking.

We went to the convent at eleven o’clock, and after an hour’s conversation we were told that dinner was ready. The table was beautifully laid, covered with a fair white cloth, and adorned with vases filled with artificial flowers so strongly scented that the air of the parlour was quite balmy. The fatal grill was heavier than I had hoped. I found myself seated to the left of M —— M —— , and totally unable to see her. The fair Desarmoises was at my right, and she entertained us all the time with her amusing stories.

We in the parlour were waited on by Le Duc and Costa, and the nuns were served by their lay-sisters. The abundant provision, the excellent wines, the pleasant though sometimes equivocal conversation, kept us all merrily employed for three hours. Mirth had the mastery over reason, or, to speak more plainly, we were all drunk; and if it had not been for the fatal grill, I could have had the whole eleven ladies without much trouble. The young Desarmoises was so gay, indeed, that if I had not restrained her she would probably have scandalised all the nuns, who would have liked nothing better. I was longing to have her to myself, that I might quench the flame she had kindled in my breast, and I had no doubt of my success on the first attempt. After coffee had been served, we went into another parlour and stayed there till night came on. Madame Morin took leave of her niece, and the hand-shakings, thanks, and promises of remembrance between me and the nuns, lasted for a good quarter of an hour. After I had said aloud to M —— M —— that I hoped to have the pleasure of seeing her before I left, we went back to the inn in high good humour with our curious party which I still remember with pleasure.

Madame Morin gave me a letter for her cousin Madame Varnier, and I promised to write to her from Paris, and tell her all about the fair Mdlle. Roman. I presented the daughter with a beautiful pair of ear-rings, and I gave Madame Morin twelve pounds of good chocolate which M. Magnan got me, and which the lady thought had come from Genoa. She went off at eight o'clock preceded by Le Duc, who had orders to greet the doorkeeper's family on my behalf.

At Magnan's I had a dinner worthy of Lucullus, and I promised to stay with him whenever I passed Chamberi, which promise I have faithfully performed.

On leaving the gourmand's I went to the convent, and M —— M —— came down alone to the grating. She thanked me for coming to see her, and added that I had come to disturb her peace of mind.

"I am quite ready, dearest, to climb the harden wall, and I shall do it more dexterously than your wretched humpback."

"Alas! that may not be, for, trust me, you are already spied upon. Everybody here is sure that we knew each other at Aix. Let us forget all, and thus spare ourselves the torments of vain desires."

"Give me your hand."

"No. All is over. I love you still, probably I shall always love you; but I long for you to go, and by doing so, you will give me a proof of your love."

"This is dreadful; you astonish me. You appear to me in perfect health, you are prettier than ever, you are made for the worship of the sweetest of the gods, and I can't understand how, with a temperament like yours, you can live in continual abstinence."

"Alas! lacking the reality we console ourselves by pretending. I will not conceal from you that I love my young boarder. It is an innocent passion, and keeps my mind calm. Her caresses quench the flame which would otherwise kill me."

"And that is not against your conscience?"

"I do not feel any distress on the subject."

"But you know it is a sin."

"Yes, so I confess it."

"And what does the confessor say?"

"Nothing. He absolves me, and I am quite content:"

"And does the pretty boarder confess, too?"

"Certainly, but she does not tell the father of a matter which she thinks is no sin."

"I wonder the confessor has not taught her, for that kind of instruction is a great pleasure."

"Our confessor is a wise old man."

"Am I to leave you, then, without a single kiss?"

"Not one."

"May I come again to-morrow? I must go the day after."

"You may come, but I cannot see you by myself as the nuns might talk. I will bring my little one with me to save appearances. Come after dinner, but into the other parlour."

If I had not known M —— M —— at Aix, her religious ideas would have astonished me; but such was her character. She loved God, and did not believe that the kind Father who made us with passions would be too severe because we had not the strength to subdue them. I returned to the inn, feeling vexed that the pretty nun would have no more to do with me, but sure of consolation from the fair Desarmoises.

I found her sitting on her lover's bed; his poor diet and the fever had left him in a state of great weakness. She told me that she would sup in my room to leave him in quiet, and the worthy young man shook my hand in token of his gratitude.

As I had a good dinner at Magnan's I ate very little supper, but my companion who had only had a light meal ate and drank to an amazing extent. I gazed at her in a kind of wonder, and she enjoyed my astonishment. When my servants had left the room I challenged her to drink a bowl of punch with me, and this put her into a mood which asked for nothing but laughter, and which laughed to find itself deprived of reasoning power. Nevertheless, I cannot accuse myself of taking an advantage of her condition, for in her voluptuous excitement she entered eagerly into the pleasure to which I excited her till two o'clock in the morning. By the time we separated we were both of us exhausted.

I slept till eleven, and when I went to wish her good day I found her smiling and as fresh as a rose. I asked her how she had passed the rest of the night.

"Very pleasantly," said she, "like the beginning of the night."

"What time would you like to have dinner?"

"I won't dine; I prefer to keep my appetite for supper."

Here her lover joined in, saying in a weak voice, —

"It is impossible to keep up with her."

"In eating or drinking?" I asked.

"In eating, drinking, and in other things," he replied, with a smile. She laughed, and kissed him affectionately.

This short dialogue convinced me that Mdlle. Desarmoises must adore her lover; for besides his being a handsome young man, his disposition was exactly suitable to hers. I dined by myself, and Le Duc came in as I was having dessert. He told me that the door-keeper's daughters and their pretty cousin had made him wait for them to write to me, and he gave me three letters and three dozen of gloves which they had presented me. The letters urged me to come and spend a month with them, and gave me to understand that I should be well pleased with my treatment. I had not the courage to return to a town, where with my reputation I should have been obliged to draw horoscopes for all the young ladies or to make enemies by refusing.

After I had read the letters from Grenoble I went to the convent and announced my presence, and then entered the parlour which M —— M —— had indicated. She soon came down with the pretty boarder, who feebly sustained my part in her amorous ecstacies. She had not yet completed her twelfth year, but she was extremely tall and well developed for her age. Gentleness, liveliness, candour, and wit were united in her features, and gave her expression an exquisite charm. She wore a well-made corset which disclosed a white throat, to which the fancy easily added the two spheres which would soon appear there. Her entrancing face, her raven locks, and her ivory throat indicated what might be concealed, and my vagrant imagination made her into a budding Venus. I began by telling her that she was very pretty, and would make her future husband a happy man. I knew she would blush at that. It may be cruel, but it is thus that the language of seduction always begins. A girl of her age who does not blush at the mention of marriage is either an idiot or already an expert in profligacy. In spite of this, however, the blush which mounts to a young girl's cheek at the approach of such ideas is a puzzling problem. Whence does it arise? It may be from pure simplicity, it may be from shame, and often from a mixture of both feelings. Then comes the fight between vice and virtue, and it is usually virtue which has to give in. The desires — the servants of vice — usually attain their ends. As I knew the young boarder from M —— M — — 's description, I could not be ignorant of the source of those blushes which added a fresh attraction to her youthful charms.

Pretending not to notice anything, I talked to M —— M —— for a few moments, and then returned to the assault. She had regained her calm.

"What age are you, pretty one?" said I.

"I am thirteen."

"You are wrong," said M —— M —— , "you have not yet completed your twelfth year."

"The time will come," said I, "when you will diminish the tale of your years instead of increasing it."

"I shall never tell a lie, sir; I am sure of that."

"So you want to be a nun, do you?"

"I have not yet received my vocation; but even if I live in the world I need not be a liar."

"You are wrong; you will begin to lie as soon as you have a lover."

"Will my lover tell lies, too?"

"Certainly he will."

"If the matter were really so, then, I should have a bad opinion of love; but I do not believe it, for I love my sweetheart here, and I never conceal the truth from her."

"Yes, but loving a man is a different thing to loving a woman."

"No, it isn't; it's just the same."

"Not so, for you do not go to bed with a woman and you do with your husband."

"That's no matter, my love would be the same."

"What? You would not rather sleep with me than with M —— M —— ?"

"No, indeed I should not, because you are a man and would see me."

"You don't want a man to see you, then?"

"No."

"Do you think you are so ugly, then?"

At this she turned to M —— M —— and said, with evident vexation, "I am not really ugly, am I?"

"No, darling," said M —— M —— , bursting with laughter, "it is quite the other way; you are very pretty." With these words she took her on her knee and embraced her tenderly.

"Your corset is too tight; you can't possibly have such a small waist as that."

"You make a mistake, you can put your hand there and see for yourself."

"I can't believe it."

M —— M —— then held her close to the grill and told me to see for myself. At the same moment she turned up her dress.

"You were right," said I, "and I owe you an apology;" but in my heart I cursed the grating and the chemise.

"My opinion is," said I to M —— M —— , "that we have here a little boy."

I did not wait for a reply, but satisfied myself by my sense of touch as to her sex, and I could see that the little one and her governess were both pleased that my mind was at rest on the subject.

I drew my hand away, and the little girl looked at M —— M —— , and reassured by her smiling air asked if she might go away for a moment. I must have reduced her to a state in which a moment's solitude was necessary, and I myself was in a very excited condition.

As soon as she was gone I said to M —— M —— ,

"Do you know that what you have shewn me has made me unhappy?"

"Has it? Why?"

"Because your boarder is charming, and I am longing to enjoy her."

"I am sorry for that, for you can't possibly go any further; and besides, I know you, and even if you could satisfy your passion without danger to her, I would not give her up to you, you would spoil her."

"How?"

"Do you think that after enjoying you she would care to enjoy me? I should lose too heavily by the comparison."

"Give me your hand."

"No."

"Stay, one moment."

"I don't want to see anything."

"Not a little bit?"

"Nothing at all."

"Are you angry with me, then?"

"Not at all. If you have been pleased I am glad, and if you have filled her with desires she will love me all the better."

"How pleasant it would be, sweetheart, if we could all three of us be together alone and at liberty!"

"Yes; but it is impossible."

"Are you sure that no inquisitive eye is looking upon us?"

"Quite sure."

"The height of that fatal grill has deprived me of the sight of many charms."

"Why didn't you go to the other parlour it is much lower there."

"Let us go there, then."

"Not to-day; I should not be able to give any reason for the change."

"I will come again to-morrow, and start for Lyons in the evening."

The little boarder came back, and I stood up facing her. I had a number of beautiful seals and trinkets hanging from my watch-chain, and I had not had the time to put myself in a state of perfect decency again.

She noticed it, and by way of pretext she asked if she might look at them.

"As long as you like; you may look at them and touch them as well."

M —— M —— foresaw what would happen and left the room, saying that she would soon be back. I had intended to deprive the young boarder of all interest in my seals by shewing her a curiosity of another kind. She did not conceal her pleasure in satisfying her inquisitiveness on an object which was quite new to her, and which she was able to examine minutely for the first time in her life. But soon an effusion changed her curiosity into surprise, and I did not interrupt her in her delighted gaze.

I saw M —— M —— coming back slowly, and I lowered my shirt again, and sat down. My watch and chains were still on the ledge of the grating, and M —— M —— asked her young friend if the trinkets had pleased her.

"Yes," she replied, but in a dreamy and melancholy voice. She had learnt so much in the course of less than two hours that she had plenty to think over. I spent the rest of the day in telling M —— M —— the adventures I had encountered since I had left her; but as I had not time to finish my tale I promised to return the next day at the same time.

The little girl, who had been listening to me all the time, though I appeared to be only addressing her friend, said that she longed to know the end of my adventure with the Duke of Matelone’s mistress.

I supped with the fair Desarmoises, and after giving her sundry proofs of my affection till midnight, and telling her that I only stopped on for her sake, I went to bed.

The next day after dinner I returned to the convent, and having sent up my name to M —— M —— I entered the room where the grating was more convenient.

Before long M —— M —— arrived alone, but she anticipated my thoughts by telling me that her pretty friend would soon join her.

“You have fired her imagination. She has told me all about it, playing a thousand wanton tricks, and calling me her dear husband. You have seduced the girl, and I am very glad you are going or else you would drive her mad. You will see how she has dressed herself.”

“Are you sure of her discretion?”

“Perfectly, but I hope you won’t do anything in my presence. When I see the time coming I will leave the room.”

“You are an angel, dearest, but you might be something better than that if you would— “

“I want nothing for myself; it is out of the question.”

“You could— “

“No, I will have nothing to do with a pastime which would rekindle fires that are hardly yet quenched. I have spoken; I suffer, but let us say no more about it.”

At this moment the young adept came in smiling, with her eyes full of fire. She was dressed in a short pelisse, open in front, and an embroidered muslin skirt which did not go beyond her knees. She looked like a sylph.

We had scarcely sat down when she reminded me of the place where my tale had stopped. I continued my recital, and when I was telling them how Donna Lucrezia shewed me Leonilda naked, M —— M —— went out, and the sly little puss asked me how I assured myself that my daughter was a maid.

I took bold of her through the fatal grating, against which she placed her pretty body, and shewed her how assured myself of the fact, and the girl liked it so much that she pressed my hand to the spot. She then gave me her hand that I might share her pleasure, and whilst this enjoyable occupation was in progress M —— M —— appeared. My sweetheart said hastily, —

“Never mind, I told her all about it. She is a good creature and will not be vexed.” Accordingly M —— M —— pretended not to see anything, and the precocious little girl wiped her hand in a kind of voluptuous ecstacy, which shewed how well she was pleased.

I proceeded with my history, but when I came to the episode of the poor girl who was ‘tied’, describing all the trouble I had vainly taken with her, the little boarder got so curious that she placed herself in the most seducing attitude so that I might be able to shew her what I did. Seeing this M —— M —— made her escape.

“Kneel down on the ledge, and leave the rest to me,” said the little wanton.

The reader will guess what she meant, and I have no doubt that she would have succeeded in her purpose if the fire which consumed me had not distilled itself away just at the happy moment.

The charming novice felt herself sprinkled, but after ascertaining that nothing more could be done she withdrew in some vexation. My fingers, however, consoled her for the disappointment, and I had the pleasure of seeing her look happy once more.

I left these charming creatures in the evening, promising to visit them again in a year, but as I walked home I could not help reflecting how often these asylums, supposed to be devoted to chastity and prayer, contain in themselves the hidden germs of corruption. How many a timorous and trustful mother is persuaded that the child of her affection will escape the dangers of the world by taking refuge in the cloister. But behind these bolts and bars desires grow to a frenzied extreme; they crave in vain to be satisfied.

When I returned to the inn I took leave of the wounded man, whom I was happy to see out of danger. In vain I urged him to make use of my purse; he told me, with an affectionate embrace, that he had sufficient money, and if not, he had only to write to his father. I promised to stop at Lyons, and to oblige Desarmoises to desist from any steps he might be taking against them, telling them I had a power over him which would compel him to obey. I kept my word. After we had kissed and said good-bye, I took his future bride into my room that we might sup together and enjoy ourselves till midnight; but she could not have been very pleased with my farewell salute, for I was only able to prove my love for her once, as M —— M —— 's young friend had nearly exhausted me.

I started at day-break, and the next day I reached the "Hotel du Parc," at Lyons. I sent for Desarmoises, and told him plainly that his daughter's charms had seduced me, that I thought her lover worthy of her, and that I expected him out of friendship for me to consent to the marriage. I went further, and told him that if he did not consent to everything that very instant I could no longer be his friend, and at this he gave in. He executed the requisite document in the presence of two witnesses, and I sent it to Chamberi by an express messenger.

This false marquis made me dine with him in his poor house. There was nothing about his younger daughter to remind me of the elder, and his wife inspired me with pity. Before I left I managed to wrap up six Louis in a piece of paper, and gave it to her without the knowledge of her husband. A grateful look shewed me how welcome the present was.

I was obliged to go to Paris, so I gave Desarmoises sufficient money for him to go to Strasburg, and await me there in company with my Spaniard.

I thought myself wise in only taking Costa, but the inspiration came from my evil genius.

I took the Bourbonnais way, and on the third day I arrived at Paris, and lodged at the Hotel du St. Esprit, in the street of the same name.

Before going to bed I sent Costa with a note to Madame d'Urfe, promising to come and dine with her the next day. Costa was a good-looking young fellow, and as he spoke French badly and was rather a fool I felt sure that Madame d’Urfe would take him for some extraordinary being. She wrote to say that she was impatiently expecting me.

“How did the lady receive you, Costa?”

“She looked into a mirror, sir, and said some words I could make nothing of; then she went round the room three times burning incense; then she came up to me with a majestic air and looked me in the face; and at last she smiled very pleasantly, and told me to wait for a reply in the ante-chamber.”

EPISODE 19 — BACK AGAIN TO PARIS

CHAPTER XIII

My Stay at Paris and My Departure for Strasburg, Where I Find the Renaud — My Misfortunes at Munich and My Sad Visit to Augsburg

At ten o'clock in the morning, cheered by the pleasant feeling of being once more in that Paris which is so imperfect, but which is the only true town in the world, I called on my dear Madame d'Urfe, who received me with open arms. She told me that the young Count d'Aranda was quite well, and if I liked she would ask him to dinner the next day. I told her I should be delighted to see him, and then I informed her that the operation by which she was to become a man could not be performed till Querilinto, one of the three chiefs of the Fraternity of the Rosy Cross, was liberated from the dungeons of the Inquisition, at Lisbon.

"This is the reason," I added, "that I am going to Augsburg in the course of next month, where I shall confer with the Earl of Stormont as to the liberation of the adept, under the pretext of a mission from the Portuguese Government. For these purposes I shall require a good letter of credit, and some watches and snuff-boxes to make presents with, as we shall have to win over certain of the profane."

"I will gladly see to all that, but you need not hurry yourself as the Congress will not meet till September."

"Believe me, it will never meet at all, but the ambassadors of the belligerent powers will be there all the same. If, contrary to my expectation, the Congress is held, I shall be obliged to go to Lisbon. In any case, I promise to see you again in the ensuing winter. The fortnight that I have to spend here will enable me to defeat a plot of St. Germain's."

"St. Germain — he would never dare to return to Paris."

"I am certain that he is here in disguise. The state messenger who ordered him to leave London has convinced him the English minister was not duped by the demand for his person to be given up, made by the Comte d'Afri in the name of the king to the States-General."

All this was mere guess-work, and it will be seen that I guessed rightly.

Madame d'Urfe then congratulated me on the charming girl whom I had sent from Grenoble to Paris. Valenglard had told her the whole story.

"The king adores her," said she, "and before long she will make him a father. I have been to see her at Passi with the Duchesse de l'Oraguais."

"She will give birth to a son who will make France happy, and in thirty years time you will see wondrous things, of which, unfortunately, I can tell you nothing until your transformation. Did you mention my name to her?"

"No, I did not; but I am sure you will be able to see her, if only at Madame Varnier's."

She was not mistaken; but shortly afterwards an event happened which made the madness of this excellent woman much worse.

Towards four o'clock, as we were talking over my travels and our designs, she took a fancy to walk in the Bois du Boulogne. She begged me to accompany her, and I acceded to her request. We walked into the deepest recesses of the wood and sat down under a tree. "It is eighteen years ago," said she, "since I fell asleep on the same spot that we now occupy. During my sleep the divine Horosmadis came down from the sun and stayed with me till I awoke. As I opened my eyes I saw him leave me and ascend to heaven. He left me with child, and I bore a girl which he took away from me years ago, no doubt to punish me for, having so far forgotten myself as to love a mortal after him. My lovely Iriasis was like him."

"You are quite sure that M. d'Urfe was not the child's father?"

"M. d'Urfe did not know me after he saw me lying beside the divine Anael."

"That's the genius of Venus. Did he squint?"

"To excess. You are aware, then, that he squints?"

"Yes, and I know that at the amorous crisis he ceases to squint."

"I did not notice that. He too, left me on account of my sinning with an Arab."

"The Arab was sent to you by an enemy of Anael's, the genius of Mercury."

"It must have been so; it was a great misfortune."

"On the contrary, it rendered you more fit for transformation."

We were walking towards the carriage when all at once we saw St. Germain, but as soon as he noticed us he turned back and we lost sight of him.

"Did you see him?" said I. "He is working against us, but our genie makes him tremble."

"I am quite thunderstruck. I will go and impart this piece of news to the Duc de Choiseul to-morrow morning. I am curious to hear what he will say when I tell him."

As we were going back to Paris I left Madame d'Urfe, and walked to the Porte St. Denis to see my brother. He and his wife received me with cries of joy. I thought the wife very pretty but very wretched, for Providence had not allowed my brother to prove his manhood, and she was unhappily in love with him. I say unhappily, because her love kept her faithful to him, and if she had not been in love she might easily have found a cure for her misfortune as her husband allowed her perfect liberty. She grieved bitterly, for she did not know that my brother was impotent, and fancied that the reason of his abstention was that he did not return her love; and the mistake was an excusable one, for he was like a Hercules, and indeed he was one, except where it was most to be desired. Her grief threw her into a consumption of which she died five or six years later. She did not mean her death to be a punishment to her husband, but we shall see that it was so.

The next day I called on Madame Varnier to give her Madame Morin's letter. I was cordially welcomed, and Madame Varnier was kind enough to say that she had rather see me than anybody else in the world; her niece had told her such strange things about me that she had got quite curious. This, as is well known, is a prevailing complaint with women.

"You shall see my niece," she said, "and she will tell you all about herself."

She wrote her a note, and put Madame Morin's letter under the same envelope.

"If you want to know what my niece's answer is," said Madame Varnier, "you must dine with me."

I accepted the invitation, and she immediately told her servant that she was not at home to anyone.

The small messenger who had taken the note to Passi returned at four o'clock with the following epistle:

"The moment in which I see the Chevalier de Seingalt once more will be one of the happiest of my life. Ask him to be at your house at ten o'clock the day after tomorrow, and if he can't come then please let me know."

After reading the note and promising to keep the appointment, I left Madame Varnier and called on Madame de Rumain, who told me I must spend a whole day with her as she had several questions to put to my oracle.

Next day Madame d'Urfe told me the reply she had from the Duc de Choiseul, when she told him that she had seen the Comte de St. Germain in the Bois du Boulogne.

"I should not be surprised," said the minister, "considering that he spent the night in my closet."

The duke was a man of wit and a man of the world. He only kept secrets when they were really important ones; very different from those make-believe diplomatists, who think they give themselves importance by making a mystery of trifles of no consequence. It is true that the Duc de Choiseul very seldom thought anything of great importance; and, in point of fact, if there were less intrigue and more truth about diplomacy (as there ought to be), concealment would be rather ridiculous than necessary.

The duke had pretended to disgrace St. Germain in France that he might use him as a spy in London; but Lord Halifax was by no means taken in by this stratagem. However, all governments have the politeness to afford one another these services, so that none of them can reproach the others.

The small Conte d'Aranda after caressing me affectionately begged me to come and breakfast with him at his boarding-house, telling me that Mdlle. Viar would be glad to see me.

The next day I took care not to fail in my appointment with the fair lady. I was at Madame Varnier's a quarter of an hour before the arrival of the dazzling brunette, and I waited for her with a beating at the heart which shewed me that the small favours she had given me had not quenched the flame of love. When she made her appearance the stoutness of her figure carried respect with it, so that I did not feel as if I could come forward and greet her tenderly; but she was far from thinking that more respect was due to her than when she was at Grenoble, poor but also pure. She kissed me affectionately and told me as much.

"They think I am happy," said she, "and envy my lot; but can one be happy after the loss of one's self-respect? For the last six months I have only smiled, not laughed; while at Grenoble I laughed heartily from true gladness. I have diamonds, lace, a beautiful house, a superb carriage, a lovely garden, waiting-maids, and a maid of honour who perhaps despises me; and although the highest Court ladies treat me like a princess, I do not pass a single day without experiencing some mortification."

"Mortification?"

"Yes; people come and bring pleas before me, and I am obliged to send them away as I dare not ask the king anything."

"Why not?"

"Because I cannot look on him as my lover only; he is always my sovereign, too. Ah! happiness is to be sought for in simple homes, not in pompous palaces."

"Happiness is gained by complying with the duties of whatever condition of life one is in, and you must constrain yourself to rise to that exalted station in which destiny has placed you."

"I cannot do it; I love the king and I am always afraid of vexing him. I am always thinking that he does too much for me, and thus I dare not ask for anything for others."

"But I am sure the king would be only too glad to shew his love for you by benefiting the persons in whom you take an interest."

"I know he would, and that thought makes me happy, but I cannot overcome my feeling of repugnance to asking favours. I have a hundred louis a month for pin-money, and I distribute it in alms and presents, but with due economy, so that I am not penniless at the end of the month. I have a foolish notion that the chief reason the king loves me is that I do not importune him."

"And do you love him?"

"How can I help it? He is good-hearted, kindly, handsome, and polite to excess; in short, he possesses all the qualities to captivate a woman's heart.

"He is always asking me if I am pleased with my furniture, my clothes, my servants, and my garden, and if I desire anything altered. I thank him with a kiss, and tell him that I am pleased with everything."

"Does he ever speak of the scion you are going to present to him?"

"He often says that I ought to be careful of myself in my situation. I am hoping that he will recognize my son as a prince of the blood; he ought in justice to do so, as the queen is dead."

"To be sure he will."

"I should be very happy if I had a son. I wish I felt sure that I would have one. But I say nothing about this to anyone. If I dared speak to the king about the horoscope, I am certain he would want to know you; but I am afraid of evil tongues."

"So am I. Continue in your discreet course and nothing will come to disturb your happiness, which may become greater, and which I am pleased to have procured for you."

We did not part without tears. She was the first to go, after kissing me and calling me her best friend. I stayed a short time with Madame Varnier to compose my feelings, and I told her that I should have married her instead of drawing her horoscope.

"She would no doubt have been happier. You did not foresee, perhaps, her timidity and her lack of ambition."

"I can assure you that I did not reckon upon her courage or ambition. I laid aside my own happiness to think only of hers. But what is done cannot be recalled, and I shall be consoled if I see her perfectly happy at last. I hope, indeed, she will be so, above all if she is delivered of a son."

I dined with Madame d'Urfe, and we decided to send back Aranda to his boarding-school that we might be more free to pursue our cabalistic operations; and afterwards I went to the opera, where my brother had made an appointment with me. He took me to sup at Madame Vanloo's, and she received me in the friendliest manner possible.

"You will have the pleasure of meeting Madame Blondel and her husband," said she.

The reader will recollect that Madame Blondel was Manon Baletti, whom I was to have married.

"Does she know I am coming?" I enquired.

"No, I promise myself the pleasure of seeing her surprise."

"I am much obliged to you for not wishing to enjoy my surprise as well. We shall see each other again, but not to-day, so I must bid you farewell; for as I am a man of honour I hope never to be under the same roof as Madame Blondel again."

With this I left the room, leaving everybody in astonishment, and not knowing where to go I took a coach and went to sup with my sister-in-law, who was extremely glad to see me. But all through supper-time this charming woman did nothing but complain of her husband, saying that he had no business to marry her, knowing that he could not shew himself a man.

"Why did you not make the trial before you married?"

"Was it for me to propose such a thing? How should I suppose that such a fine man was impotent? But I will tell you how it all happened. As you know, I was a dancer at the Comedie Italienne, and I was the mistress of M. de Sauci, the ecclesiastical commissioner. He brought your brother to my house, I liked him, and before long I saw that he loved me. My lover advised me that it was an opportunity for getting married and making my fortune. With this idea I conceived the plan of not granting him any favours. He used to come and see me in the morning, and often found me in bed; we talked together, and his passions seemed to be aroused, but it all ended in kissing. On my part, I was waiting for a formal declaration and a proposal of marriage. At that period, M. de Sauci settled an annuity of a thousand crowns on me on the condition that I left the stage.

"In the spring M. de Sauci invited your brother to spend a month in his country house. I was of the party, but for propriety's sake it was agreed that I should pass as your brother's wife. Casanova enjoyed the idea, looking upon it as a jest, and not thinking of the consequences. I was therefore introduced as his wife to my lover's family, as also to his relations, who were judges, officers, and men about town, and to their wives, who were all women of fashion. Your brother was in high glee that to play our parts properly we were obliged to sleep together. For my part, I was far from disliking the idea, or at all events I looked upon it as a short cut to the marriage I desired.

"But how can I tell you? Though tender and affectionate in everything, your brother slept with me for a month without our attaining what seemed the natural result under the circumstances."

"You might have concluded, then, that he was impotent; for unless he were made of stone, or had taken a vow of chastity, his conduct was inexplicable."

"The fact is, that I had no means of knowing whether he was capable or incapable of giving me substantial proof of his love."

"Why did you not ascertain his condition for yourself?"

"A feeling of foolish pride prevented me from putting him to the test. I did not suspect the truth, but imagined reasons flattering to myself. I thought that he loved me so truly that he would not do anything before I was his wife. That idea prevented me humiliating myself by making him give me some positive proof of his powers."

"That supposition would have been tenable, though highly improbable, if you had been an innocent young maid, but he knew perfectly well that your novitiate was long over."

"Very true; but what can you expect of a woman impelled by love and vanity?"

"Your reasoning is excellent, but it comes rather late."

"Well, at last we went back to Paris, your brother to his house, and I to mine, while he continued his courtship, and I could not understand what he meant by such strange behaviour. M. de Sauci, who knew that nothing serious had taken place between us, tried in vain to solve the enigma. ‘No doubt he is afraid of getting you with child,’ he said, ‘and of thus being obliged to marry you.’ I began to be of the same opinion, but I thought it a strange line for a man in love to take.

“M. de Nesle, an officer in the French Guards, who had a pretty wife I had met in the country, went to your brother’s to call on me. Not finding me there he asked why we did not live together. Your brother replied openly that our marriage had been a mere jest. M. de Nesle then came to me to enquire if this were the truth, and when he heard that it was he asked me how I would like him to make Casanova marry me. I answered that I should be delighted, and that was enough for him. He went again to your brother, and told him that his wife would never have associated with me on equal terms if I had not been introduced to her as a married woman; that the deceit was an insult to all the company at the country-house, which must be wiped out by his marrying me within the week or by fighting a duel. M. de Nesle added that if he fell he would be avenged by all the gentlemen who had been offended in the same way. Casanova replied, laughing, that so far from fighting to escape marrying me, he was ready to break a lance to get me. ‘I love her,’ he said, ‘and if she loves me I am quite ready to give her my hand. Be kind enough,’ he added, ‘to prepare the way for me, and I will marry her whenever you like.’

“M. de Nesle embraced him, and promised to see to everything; he brought me the joyful news, and in a week all was over. M. de Nesle gave us a splendid supper on our wedding-day, and since then I have had the title of his wife. It is an empty title, however, for, despite the ceremony and the fatal yes, I am no wife, for your brother is completely impotent. I am an unhappy wretch, and it is all his fault, for he ought to have known his own condition. He has deceived me horribly.”

“But he was obliged to act as he did; he is more to be pitied than to be blamed. I also pity you, but I think you are in the wrong, for after his sleeping with you for a month without giving any proof of his manhood you might have guessed the truth. Even if you had been a perfect novice, M. de Sauci ought to have known what was the matter; he must be aware that it is beyond the power of man to sleep beside a pretty woman, and to press her naked body to his breast without becoming, in spite of himself, in a state which would admit of no concealment; that is, in case he were not impotent."

"All that seems very reasonable, but nevertheless neither of us thought of it; your brother looks such a Hercules."

"There are two remedies open to you; you can either have your marriage annulled, or you can take a lover; and I am sure that my brother is too reasonable a man to offer any opposition to the latter course."

"I am perfectly free, but I can neither avail myself of a divorce nor of a lover; for the wretch treats me so kindly that I love him more and more, which doubtless makes my misfortune harder to bear."

The poor woman was so unhappy that I should have been delighted to console her, but it was out of the question. However, the mere telling of her story had afforded her some solace, and after kissing her in such a way as to convince her that I was not like my brother, I wished her good night.

The next day I called on Madame Vanloo, who informed me that Madame Blondel had charged her to thank me for having gone away, while her husband wished me to know that he was sorry not to have seen me to express his gratitude.

"He seems to have found his wife a maid, but that's no fault of mine; and Manon Baletti is the only person he ought to be grateful to. They tell me that he has a pretty baby, and that he lives at the Louvre, while she has another house in the Rue Neuve-des-Petits-Champs."

"Yes, but he has supper with her every evening."

"It's an odd way of living."

"I assure you it answers capitally. Blondel regards his wife as his mistress. He says that that keeps the flame of love alight, and that as he never had a mistress worthy of being a wife, he is delighted to have a wife worthy of being a mistress."

The next day I devoted entirely to Madame de Rumain, and we were occupied with knotty questions till the evening. I left her well pleased. The marriage of her daughter, Mdlle. Cotenfau, with M. de Polignac, which took place five or six years later, was the result of our cabalistic calculations.

The fair stocking-seller of the Rue des Prouveres, whom I had loved so well, was no longer in Paris. She had gone off with a M. de Langlade, and her husband was inconsolable. Camille was ill. Coralline had become the titulary mistress of the Comte de la Marche, son of the Prince of Conti, and the issue of this union was a son, whom I knew twenty years later. He called himself the Chevalier de Montreal, and wore the cross of the Knights of Malta. Several other girls I had known were widowed and in the country, or had become inaccessible in other ways.

Such was the Paris of my day. The actors on its stage changed as rapidly as the fashions.

I devoted a whole day to my old friend Baletti, who had left the theatre and married a pretty ballet-girl on the death of his father; he was making experiments with a view to finding the philosopher's stone.

I was agreeably surprised at meeting the poet Poinsinet at the Comedic Francaise. He embraced me again and again, and told me that M. du Tillot had overwhelmed him with kindness at Parma.

"He would not get me anything to do," said Poinsinet, "because a French poet is rather at a discount in Italy."

"Have you heard anything of Lord Lismore?"

"Yes, he wrote to his mother from Leghorn, telling her that he was going to the Indies, and that if you had not been good enough to give him a thousand Louis he would have been a prisoner at Rome."

"His fate interests me extremely, and I should be glad to call on his lady-mother with you."

"I will tell her that you are in Paris, and I am sure that she will invite you to supper, for she has the greatest desire to talk to you."

"How are you getting on here? Are you still content to serve Apollo?"

"He is not the god of wealth by any means. I have no money and no room, and I shall be glad of a supper, if you will ask me. I will read you my play, the 'Cercle', which has been accepted. I am sure it will be successful?"

The 'Cercle' was a short prose play, in which the poet satirised the jargon of Dr. Herrenschwand, brother of the doctor I had consulted at Soleure. The play proved to be a great success.

I took Poinsinet home to supper, and the poor nursling of the muses ate for four. In the morning he came to tell me that the Countess of Lismore expected me to supper.

I found the lady, still pretty, in company with her aged lover, M. de St. Albin, Archbishop of Cambrai, who spent all the revenues of his see on her. This worthy prelate was one of the illegitimate children of the Duc d'Orleans, the famous Regent, by an actress. He supped with us, but he only opened his mouth to eat, and his mistress only spoke of her son, whose talents she lauded to the skies, though he was in reality a mere scamp; but I felt in duty bound to echo what she said. It would have been cruel to contradict her. I promised to let her know if I saw anything more of him.

Poinsinet, who was hearthless and homeless, as they say, spent the night in my room, and in the morning I gave him two cups of chocolate and some money wherewith to get a lodging. I never saw him again, and a few years after he was drowned, not in the fountain of Hippocrene, but in the Guadalquivir. He told me that he had spent a week with M. de Voltaire, and that he had hastened his return to Paris to obtain the release of the Abbe Morellet from the Bastile.

I had nothing more to do at Paris, and I was only waiting for some clothes to be made and for a cross of the order, with which the Holy Father had decorated me, to be set with diamonds and rubies.

I had waited for five or six days when an unfortunate incident obliged me to take a hasty departure. I am loth to write what follows, for it was all my own fault that I was nearly losing my life and my honour. I pity those simpletons who blame fortune and not themselves for their misfortunes.

I was walking in the Tuileries at ten o'clock in the morning, when I was unlucky enough to meet the Dangenancour and another girl. This Dangenancour was a dancer at the opera-house, whom I had desired to meet previously to my last departure from Paris. I congratulated myself on the lucky chance which threw her in my way, and accosted her, and had not much trouble in inducing her to dine with me at Choisi.

We walked towards the Pont-Royal, where we took a coach. After dinner had been ordered we were taking a turn in the garden, when I saw a carriage stop and two adventurers whom I knew getting out of it, with two girls, friends of the ones I had with me. The wretched landlady, who was standing at the door, said that if we liked to sit down together she could give us an excellent dinner, and I said nothing, or rather I assented to the yes of my two nymphs. The dinner was excellent, and after the bill was paid, and we were on the point of returning to Paris, I noticed that a ring, which I had taken off to shew to one of the adventurers named Santis, was still missing. It was an exceedingly pretty miniature, and the diamond setting had cost me twenty-five Louis. I politely begged Santis to return me the ring, and he replied with the utmost coolness that he had done so already.

"If you had returned it," said I, "it would be on my finger, and you see that it is not."

He persisted in his assertion; the girls said nothing, but Santis's friend, a Portuguese, named Xavier, dared to tell me that he had seen the ring returned.

"You're a liar," I exclaimed; and without more ado I took hold of Santis by the collar, and swore I would rot let him go till he returned me my ring. The Portuguese rose to come to his friend's rescue, while I stepped back and drew my sword, repeating my determination not to let them go. The landlady came on the scene and began to shriek, and Santis asked me to give him a few words apart. I thought in all good faith that he was ashamed to restore the ring before company, but that he would give it me as soon as we were alone. I sheathed my sword, and told him to come with me. Xavier got into the carriage with the four girls, and they all went back to Paris.

Santis followed me to the back of the inn, and then assuming a pleasant smile he told me that he had put the ring into his friend's pocket for a joke, but that I should have it back at Paris.

"That's an idle tale," I exclaimed, "your friend said that he saw you return it, and now he has escaped me. Do you think that I am green enough to be taken in by this sort of thing? You're a couple of robbers."

So saying, I stretched out my hand for his watch-chain, but he stepped back and drew his sword. I drew mine, and we had scarcely crossed swords when he thrust, and I parrying rushed in and ran him through and through. He fell to the ground calling, “Help!” I sheathed my sword, and, without troubling myself about him, got into my coach and drove back to Paris.

I got down in the Place Maubert, and walked by a circuitous way to my hotel. I was sure that no one could have come after me there, as my landlord did not even know my name.

I spent the rest of the day in packing up my trunks, and after telling Costa to place them on my carriage I went to Madame d’Urfe. After I had told her of what had happened, I begged her, as soon as that which she had for me was ready, to send it to me at Augsburg by Costa. I should have told her to entrust it to one of her own servants, but my good genius had left me that day. Besides I did not look upon Costa as a thief.

When I got back to the hotel I gave the rascal his instructions, telling him to be quick and to keep his own counsel, and then I gave him money for the journey.

I left Paris in my carriage, drawn by four hired horses, which took me as far as the second post, and I did not stop till I got to Strasburg, where I found Desarmoises and my Spaniard.

There was nothing to keep me in Strasburg, so I wanted to cross the Rhine immediately; but Desarmoises persuaded me to come with him to see an extremely pretty woman who had only delayed her departure for Augsburg in the hope that we might journey there together.

“You know the lady,” said the false marquis, “but she made me give my word of honour that I would not tell you. She has only her maid with her, and I am sure you will be pleased to see her.”

My curiosity made me give in. I followed Desarmoises, and came into a room where I saw a nice-looking woman whom I did not recognize at first. I collected my thoughts, and the lady turned out to be a dancer whom I had admired on the Dresden boards eight years before. She was then mistress to Count Bruhl, but I had not even attempted to win her favour. She had an excellent carriage, and as she was ready to go to Augsburg I immediately concluded that we could make the journey together very pleasantly.

After the usual compliments had passed, we decided on leaving for Augsburg the following morning. The lady was going to Munich, but as I had no business there we agreed that she should go by herself.

"I am quite sure," she said, afterwards, "that you will come too, for the ambassadors do not assemble at Augsburg till next September."

We supped together, and next morning we started on our way; she in her carriage with her maid, and I in mine with Desarmoises, preceded by Le Duc on horseback. At Rastadt, however, we made a change, the Renaud (as she was called) thinking that she would give less opportunity for curious surmises by riding with me while Desarmoises went with the servant. We soon became intimate. She told me about herself, or pretended to, and I told her all that I did not want to conceal. I informed her that I was an agent of the Court of Lisbon, and she believed me, while, for my part, I believed that she was only going to Munich and Augsburg to sell her diamonds.

We began to talk about Desarmoises, and she said that it was well enough for me to associate with him, but I should not countenance his styling himself marquis.

"But," said I, "he is the son of the Marquis Desarmoises, of Nancy."

"No, he isn't; he is only a retired messenger, with a small pension from the department of foreign affairs. I know the Marquis Desarmoises; he lives at Nancy, and is not so old as our friend."

"Then one can't see how he can be Desarmoises's father."

"The landlord of the inn at Strasburg knew him when he was a messenger."

"How did you make his acquaintance?"

"We met at the table d'hote. After dinner he came up to my room, and told me he was waiting for a gentleman who was going to Augsburg, and that we might make the journey together. He told me the name, and after questioning him I concluded that the gentleman was yourself, so here we are, and I am very glad of it. But listen to me; I advise you to drop all false styles and titles. Why do you call yourself Seingalt?"

"Because it's my name, but that doesn't prevent my old friends calling me Casanova, for I am both. You understand?"

"Oh, yes! I understand. Your mother is at Prague, and as she doesn't get her pension on account of the war, I am afraid she must be rather in difficulties."

“I know it, but I do not forget my filial duties. I have sent her some money.”

“That’s right. Where are you going to stay at Augsburg?”

“I shall take a house, and if you like you shall be the mistress and do the honours.”

“That would be delightful! We will give little suppers, and play cards all night.”

“Your programme is an excellent one.”

“I will see that you get a good cook; all the Bavarian cooks are good. We shall cut a fine figure, and people will say we love each other madly.”

“You must know, dearest, that I do not understand jokes at the expense of fidelity.”

“You may trust me for that. You know how I lived at Dresden.”

“I will trust you, but not blindly, I promise you. And now let us address each other in the same way; you must call me tu. You must remember we are lovers.”

“Kiss me!”

The fair Renaud did not like traveling by night; she preferred to eat a good supper, to drink heavily, and to go to bed just as her head began to whirl. The heat of the wine made her into a Bacchante, hard to appease; but when I could do no more I told her to leave me alone, and she had to obey.

When we reached Augsburg we alighted at the “Three Moors,” but the landlord told us that though he could give us a good dinner he could not put us up, as the whole of the hotel had been engaged by the French ambassador. I called on M. Corti, the banker to whom I was accredited, and he soon got me a furnished house with a garden, which I took for six months. The Renaud liked it immensely.

No one had yet arrived at Augsburg. The Renaud contrived to make me feel that I should be lonely at Augsburg without her, and succeeded in persuading me to come with her to Munich. We put up at the “Stag,” and made ourselves very comfortable, while Desarmoises went to stay somewhere else. As my business and that of my new mate had nothing in common, I gave her a servant and a carriage to herself, and made myself the same allowance.

The Abbe Gama had given me a letter from the Commendatore Almada for Lord Stormont, the English ambassador at the Court of Bavaria. This nobleman being then at Munich I hastened to deliver the letter. He received me very well, and promised to do all he could as soon as he had time, as Lord Halifax had told him all about it. On leaving his Britannic Lordship's I called on M. de Folard, the French ambassador, and gave him a letter from M. de Choiseul. M. de Folard gave me a hearty welcome, and asked me to dine with him the next day, and the day after introduced me to the Elector.

During the four fatal weeks I spent at Munich, the ambassador's house was the only one I frequented. I call these weeks fatal, and with reason, for in then I lost all my money, I pledged jewels (which I never recovered) to the amount of forty thousand francs, and finally I lost my health. My assassins were the Renaud and Desarmoises, who owed me so much and paid me so badly.

The third day after my arrival I had to call on the Dowager Electress of Saxony. It was my brother-in-law, who was in her train, that made me go, by telling me that it must be done, as she knew me and had been enquiring for me. I had no reason to repent of my politeness in going, as the Electress gave me a good reception, and made me talk to any extent. She was extremely curious, like most people who have no employment, and have not sufficient intelligence to amuse themselves.

I have done a good many foolish things in the course of my existence. I confess it as frankly as Rousseau, and my Memoirs are not so egotistic as those of that unfortunate genius; but I never committed such an act of folly as I did when I went to Munich, where I had nothing to do. But it was a crisis in my life. My evil genius had made me commit one folly after another since I left Turin. The evening at Lord Lismore's, my connection with Desarmoises, my party at Choisi, my trust in Costa, my union with the Renaud, and worse than all, my folly in letting myself play at faro at a place where the knavery of the gamesters is renowned all over Europe, followed one another in fatal succession. Among the players was the famous, or rather infamous, Affisio, the friend of the Duc de Deux-Ponts, whom the duke called his aide-decamp, and who was known for the keenest rogue in the world.

I played every day, and as I often lost money on my word of honour, the necessity of paying the next day often caused me the utmost anxiety. When I had exhausted my credit with the bankers, I had recourse to the Jews who require pledges, and in this Desarmoises and the Renaud were my agents, the latter of whom ended by making herself mistress of all my property. This was not the worst thing she did to me; for she, gave me a disease, which devoured her interior parts and left no marks outwardly, and was thus all the more dangerous, as the freshness of her complexion seemed to indicate the most perfect health. In short, this serpent, who must have come from hell to destroy me, had acquired such a mastery over me that she persuaded me that she would be dishonoured if I called in a doctor during our stay at Munich, as everybody knew that we were living together as man and wife.

I cannot imagine what had become of my wits to let myself be so beguiled, while every day I renewed the poison that she had poured into my veins.

My stay at Munich was a kind of curse; throughout that dreadful month I seemed to have a foretaste of the pains of the damned. The Renaud loved gaming, and Desarmoises was her partner. I took care not to play with them, for the false marquis was an unmitigated cheat and often tricked with less skill than impudence. He asked disreputable people to my house and treated them at my expense; every evening scenes of a disgraceful character took place.

The Dowager Electress mortified me extremely by the way she addressed me on my last two visits to her.

“Everybody knows what kind of a life you lead here, and the way the Renaud behaves, possibly without your knowing it. I advise you to have done with her, as your character is suffering.”

She did not know what a thraldom I was under. I had left Paris for a month, and I had neither heard of Madame d’Urfe nor of Costa. I could not guess the reason, but I began to suspect my Italian’s fidelity. I also feared lest my good Madame d’Urfe might be dead or have come to her senses, which would have come to the same thing so far as I was concerned; and I could not possibly return to Paris to obtain the information which was so necessary both for calming my mind and refilling my purse.

I was in a terrible state, and my sharpest pang was that I began to experience a certain abatement of my vigors, the natural result of advancing years. I had no longer that daring born of youth and the knowledge of one's strength, and I was not yet old enough to have learnt how to husband my forces. Nevertheless, I made an effort and took a sudden leave of my mistress, telling her I would await her at Augsburg. She did not try to detain me, but promised to rejoin me as soon as possible; she was engaged in selling her jewellery. I set out preceded by Le Duc, feeling very glad that Desarmoises had chosen to stay with the wretched woman to whom he had introduced me. When I reached my pretty house at Augsburg I took to my bed, determined not to rise till I was cured or dead. M. Carli, my banker, recommended to me a doctor named Cephalides, a pupil of the famous Fayet, who had cured me of a similar complaint several years before. This Cephalides was considered the best doctor in Augsburg. He examined me and declared he could cure me by sudorifics without having recourse to the knife. He began his treatment by putting me on a severe regimen, ordering baths, and applying mercury locally. I endured this treatment for six weeks, at the end of which time I found myself worse than at the beginning. I had become terribly thin, and I had two enormous inguinal tumours. I had to make up my mind to have them lanced, but though the operation nearly killed me it did not to make me any better. He was so clumsy as to cut the artery, causing great loss of blood which was arrested with difficulty, and would have proved fatal if it had not been for the care of M. Algardi, a Bolognese doctor in the service of the Prince-Bishop of Augsburg.

I had enough of Cephalides, and Dr. Algardi prepared in my presence eighty-six pills containing eighteen grains of manna. I took one of these pills every morning, drinking a large glass of curds after it, and in the evening I had another pill with barley water, and this was the only sustenance I had. This heroic treatment gave me back my health in two months and a half, in which I suffered a great deal of pain; but I did not begin to put on flesh and get back my strength till the end of the year.

It was during this time that I heard about Costa's flight with my diamonds, watches, snuff-box, linen, rich suits, and a hundred louis which Madame d'Urfe had given him for the journey. The worthy lady sent me a bill of exchange for fifty thousand francs, which she had happily not entrusted to the robber, and the money rescued me very opportunely from the state to which my imprudence had reduced me.

At this period I made another discovery of an extremely vexatious character; namely, that Le Duc had robbed me. I would have forgiven him if he had not forced me to a public exposure, which I could only have avoided with the loss of my honour. However, I kept him in my service till my return to Paris at the commencement of the following year.

Towards the end of September, when everybody knew that the Congress would not take place, the Renaud passed through Augsburg with Desarrnoises on her way to Paris; but she dared not come and see me for fear I should make her return my goods, of which she had taken possession without telling me. Four or five years later she married a man named Bohmer, the same that gave the Cardinal de Rohan the famous necklace, which he supposed was destined for the unfortunate Marie Antoinette. The Renaud was at Paris when I returned, but I made no endeavour to see her, as I wished, if possible, to forget the past. I had every reason to do so, for amongst all the misfortunes I had gone through during that wretched year the person I found most at fault was myself. Nevertheless, I would have given myself the pleasure of cutting off Desarmoises's ears; but the old rascal, who, no doubt, foresaw what kind of treatment I was likely to mete to him, made his escape. Shortly after, he died miserably of consumption in Normandy.

My health had scarcely returned, when I forgot all my woes and began once more to amuse myself. My excellent cook, Anna Midel, who had been idle so long, had to work hard to satisfy my ravenous appetite. My landlord and pretty Gertrude, his daughter, looked at me with astonishment as I ate, fearing some disastrous results. Dr. Algardi, who had saved my life, prophesied a dyspepsia which would bring me to the tomb, but my need of food was stronger than his arguments, to which I paid no kind of attention; and I was right, for I required an immense quantity of nourishment to recover my former state, and I soon felt in a condition to renew my sacrifices to the deity for whom I had suffered so much.

I fell in love with the cook and Gertrude, who were both young and pretty. I imparted my love to both of them at once, for I had foreseen that if I attacked them separately I should conquer neither. Besides, I felt that I had not much time to lose, as I had promised to sup with Madame, d'Urfe on the first night of the year 1761 in a suite of rooms she had furnished for me in the Rue de Bac. She had adorned the rooms with superb tapestry made for Rene of Savoy, on which were depicted all the operations of the Great Work. She wrote to me that she had heard that Santis had recovered from the wound I had given him, and had been committed to the Bicetre for fraud.

Gertrude and Anna Midel occupied my leisure moments agreeably enough during the rest of my stay at Augsburg, but they did not make me neglect society. I spent my evenings in a very agreeable manner with Count Max de Lamberg, who occupied the position of field-marshal to the prince-bishop. His wife had all the attractions which collect good company together. At this house I made the acquaintance of the Baron von Selentin, a captain in the Prussian service, who was recruiting for the King of Prussia at Augsburg. I was particularly drawn to the Count Lamberg by his taste for literature. He was an extremely learned man, and has published some excellent works. I kept up a correspondence with him till his death, by his own fault, in 1792, four years from the time of my writing. I say by his fault, but I should have said by the fault of his doctors, who treated him mercurially for a disease which was not venereal; and this treatment not only killed him but took away his good name.

His widow is still alive, and lives in Bavaria, loved by her friends and her daughters, who all made excellent marriages.

At this time a miserable company of Italian actors made their appearance in Augsburg, and I got them permission to play in a small and wretched theatre. As this was the occasion of an incident which diverted me, the hero, I shall impart it to my readers in the hope of its amusing them also.

CHAPTER XIV

The Actors — Bassi — The Girl From Strasburg The Female Count-

-My Return to Paris I Go to Metz — Pretty Raton — The

Pretended Countess Lascaris

A woman, ugly enough, but lively like all Italians, called on me, and asked me to intercede with the police to obtain permission for her company to act in Augsburg. In spite of her ugliness she was a poor fellow-countrywoman, and without asking her name, or ascertaining whether the company was good or bad, I promised to do my best, and had no difficulty in obtaining the favour.

I went to the first performance, and saw to my surprise that the chief actor was a Venetian, and a fellow-student of mine, twenty years before, at St. Cyprian's College. His name was Bassi, and like myself he had given up the priesthood. Fortune had made an actor of him, and he looked wretched enough, while I, the adventurer, had a prosperous air.

I felt curious to hear his adventures, and I was also actuated by that feeling of kindliness which draws one towards the companions of one's youthful and especially one's school days, so I went to the back as soon as the curtain fell. He recognized me directly, gave a joyful cry, and after he had embraced me he introduced me to his wife, the woman who had called on me, and to his daughter, a girl of thirteen or fourteen, whose dancing had delighted me. He did not stop here, but turning to his mates, of whom he was chief, introduced me to them as his best friend. These worthy people, seeing me dressed like a lord, with a cross on my breast, took me for a cosmopolitan charlatan who was expected at Augsburg, and Bassi, strange to say, did not undeceive them. When the company had taken off its stage rags and put on its everyday rags, Bassi's ugly wife took me by the arm and said I must come and sup with her. I let myself be led, and we soon got to just the kind of room I had imagined. It was a huge room on the ground floor, which served for kitchen, dining-room, and bedroom all at once. In the middle stood a long table, part of which was covered with a cloth which looked as if it had been in use for a month, and at the other end of the room somebody was washing certain earthenware dishes in a dirty pan. This den was lighted by one candle stuck in the neck of a broken bottle, and as there were no snuffers Bassi's wife snuffed it cleverly with her finger and thumb, wiping her hand on the table-cloth after throwing the burnt wick on the floor. An actor with long moustaches, who played the villain in the various pieces, served an enormous dish of hashed-up meat, swimming in a sea of dirty water dignified with the name of sauce; and the hungry family proceeded to tear pieces of bread off the loaf with their fingers or teeth, and then to dip them in the dish; but as all did the same no one had a right to be disgusted. A large pot of ale passed from hand to hand, and with all this misery mirth displayed itself on every countenance, and I had to ask myself what is happiness. For a second course there was a dish of fried pork, which was devoured with great relish. Bassi was kind enough not to press me to take part in this banquet, and I felt obliged to him.

The meal over, he proceeded to impart to me his adventures, which were ordinary enough, and like those which many a poor devil has to undergo; and while he talked his pretty daughter sat on my knee. Bassi brought his story to an end by saying that he was going to Venice for the carnival, and was sure of making a lot of money. I wished him all the luck he could desire, and on his asking me what profession I followed the fancy took me to reply that I was a doctor.

"That's a better trade than mine," said he, "and I am happy to be able to give you a valuable present."

"What is that?" I asked.

"The receipt for the Venetian Specific, which you can sell at two florins a pound, while it will only cost you four gros."

"I shall be delighted; but tell me, how is the treasury?"

"Well, I can't complain for a first night. I have paid all expenses, and have given my actors a florin apiece. But I am sure I don't know how I am to play to-morrow, as the company has rebelled; they say they won't act unless I give each of them a florin in advance."

"They don't ask very much, however."

"I know that, but I have no money, and nothing to pledge; but they will be sorry for it afterwards, as I am sure I shall make at least fifty florins to-morrow."

"How many are there in the company?"

"Fourteen, including my family. Could you lend me ten florins? I would pay you back tomorrow night."

"Certainly, but I should like to have you all to supper at the nearest inn to the theatre. Here are the ten florins."

The poor devil overflowed with gratitude, and said he would order supper at a florin a head, according to my instructions. I thought the sight of fourteen famished actors sitting down to a good supper would be rather amusing.

The company gave a play the next evening, but as only thirty or at most forty people were present, poor Bassi did not know where to turn to pay for the lighting and the orchestra. He was in despair; and instead of returning my ten florins he begged me to lend him another ten, still in the hope of a good house next time. I consoled him by saying we would talk it over after supper, and that I would go to the inn to wait for my guests.

I made the supper last three hours by dint of passing the bottle freely. My reason was that I had taken a great interest in a young girl from Strasburg, who played singing chamber-maids. Her features were exquisite and her voice charming, while she made me split my sides with laughing at her Italian pronounced with an Alsatian accent, and at her gestures which were of the most comic description.

I was determined to possess her in the course of the next twenty-four hours, and before the party broke up I spoke as follows: —

"Ladies and gentlemen, I will engage you myself for a week at fifty florins a day on the condition that you acknowledge me as your manager for the time being, and pay all the expenses of the theatre. You must charge the prices I name for seats, five members of the company to be chosen by me must sup with me every evening. If the receipts amount to more than fifty florins, we will share the overplus between us."

My proposal was welcomed with shouts of joy, and I called for pen, ink, and paper, and drew up the agreement.

"For to-morrow," I said to Bassi, "the prices for admission shall remain the same, but the day after we will see what can be done. You and your family will sup with me to-morrow, as also the young Alsatian whom I could never separate from her dear Harlequin:"

He issued bills of an enticing description for the following evening; but, in spite of all, the pit only contained a score of common people, and nearly all the boxes were empty.

Bassi had done his best, and when we met at supper he came up to me looking extremely confused, and gave me ten or twelve florins.

"Courage!" said I; and I proceeded to share them among the guests present.

We had a good supper, and I kept them at table till midnight, giving them plenty of choice wine and playing a thousand pranks with Bassi's daughter and the young Alsatian, who sat one on each side of me. I did not heed the jealous Harlequin, who seemed not to relish my familiarities with his sweetheart. The latter lent herself to my endearments with a bad enough grace, as she hoped Harlequin would marry her, and consequently did not want to vex him. When supper was over, we rose, and I took her between my arms, laughing, and caressing her in a manner which seemed too suggestive to the lover, who tried to pull me away. I thought this rather too much in my turn, and seizing him by his shoulders I dismissed him with a hearty kick, which he received with great humility. However, the situation assumed a melancholy aspect, for the poor girl began to weep bitterly. Bassi and his wife, two hardened sinners, laughed at her tears, and Bassi's daughter said that her lover had offered me great provocation; but the young Alsatian continued weeping, and told me that she would never sup with me again if I did not make her lover return.

"I will see to all that," said I; and four sequins soon made her all smiles again. She even tried to shew me that she was not really cruel, and that she would be still less so if I could manage the jealous Harlequin. I promised everything, and she did her best to convince me that she would be quite complaisant on the first opportunity.

I ordered Bassi to give notice that the pit would be two florins and the boxes a ducat, but that the gallery would be opened freely to the first comers.

“We shall have nobody there,” said he, looking alarmed.

“Maybe, but that remains to be seen. You must request twelve soldiers to keep order, and I will pay for them.”

“We shall want some soldiers to look after the mob which will besiege the gallery, but as for the rest of the house … .”

“Again I tell you, we shall see. Carry out my instructions, and whether they prove successful or no, we will have a merry supper as usual.”

The next day I called upon the Harlequin in his little den of a room, and with two Louis, and a promise to respect his mistress, I made him as soft as a glove.

Bassi’s bills made everybody laugh. People said he must be mad; but when it was ascertained that it was the lessee’s speculation, and that I was the lessee, the accusation of madness was turned on me, but what did I care? At night the gallery was full an hour before the rise of the curtain; but the pit was empty, and there was nobody in the boxes with the exception of Count Lamberg, a Genoese abbe named Bolo, and a young man who appeared to me a woman in disguise.

The actors surpassed themselves, and the thunders of applause from the gallery enlivened the performance.

When we got to the inn, Bassi gave me the three ducats for the three boxes, but of course I returned them to him; it was quite a little fortune for the poor actors. I sat down at table between Bassi’s wife and daughter, leaving the Alsatian to her lover. I told the manager to persevere in the same course, and to let those laugh who would, and I made him promise to play all his best pieces.

When the supper and the wine had sufficiently raised my spirits, I devoted my attention to Bassi’s daughter, who let me do what I liked, while her father and mother only laughed, and the silly Harlequin fretted and fumed at not being able to take the same liberties with his Dulcinea. But at the end of supper, when I had made the girl in a state of nature, I myself being dressed like Adam before he ate the fatal apple, Harlequin rose, and taking his sweetheart’s arm was going to draw her away. I imperiously told him to sit down, and he obeyed me in amazement, contenting himself with turning his back. His sweetheart did not follow his example, and so placed herself on the pretext of defending my victim that she increased my enjoyment, while my vagrant hand did not seem to displease her.

The scene excited Bassi's wife, and she begged her husband to give her a proof of his love for her, to which request he acceded, while modest Harlequin sat by the fire with his head on his hands. The Alsatian was in a highly excited state, and took advantage of her lover's position to grant me all I wished, so I proceeded to execute the great work with her, and the violent movements of her body proved that she was taking as active a part in it as myself.

When the orgy was over I emptied my purse on the table, and enjoyed the eagerness with which they shared a score of sequins.

This indulgence at a time when I had not yet recovered my full strength made me enjoy a long sleep. Just as I awoke I was handed a summons to appear before the burgomaster. I made haste with my toilette, for I felt curious to know the reason of this citation, and I was aware I had nothing to fear. When I appeared, the magistrate addressed me in German, to which I turned a deaf ear, for I only knew enough of that language to ask for necessaries. When he was informed of my ignorance of German he addressed me in Latin, not of the Ciceronian kind by any means, but in that peculiar dialect which obtains at most of the German universities.

"Why do you bear a false name?" he asked.

"My name is not false. You can ask Carli, the banker, who has paid me fifty thousand florins."

"I know that; but your name is Casanova, so why do you call yourself Seingalt?"

"I take this name, or rather I have taken it, because it belongs to me, and in such a manner that if anyone else dared to take it I should contest it as my property by every legitimate resource."

"Ah! and how does this name belong to you?"

"Because I invented it; but that does not prevent my being Casanova as well."

"Sir, you must choose between Casanova and Seingalt; a man cannot have two names."

“The Spaniards and Portuguese often have half a dozen names.”

“But you are not a Spaniard or a Portuguese; you are an Italian: and, after all, how can one invent a name?”

“It’s the simplest thing in the world.”

“Kindly explain.”

“The alphabet belongs equally to the whole human race; no one can deny that. I have taken eight letters and combined them in such a way as to produce the word Seingalt. It pleased me, and I have adopted it as my surname, being firmly persuaded that as no one had borne it before no one could deprive me of it, or carry it without my consent.”

“This is a very odd idea. Your arguments are rather specious than well grounded, for your name ought to be none other than your father’s name.”

“I suggest that there you are mistaken; the name you yourself bear because your father bore it before you, has not existed from all eternity; it must have been invented by an ancestor of yours who did not get it from his father, or else your name would have been Adam. Does your worship agree to that?”

“I am obliged to; but all this is strange, very strange.”

“You are again mistaken. It’s quite an old custom, and I engage to give you by to-morrow a long list of names invented by worthy people still living, who are allowed to enjoy their names in peace and quietness without being cited to the town hall to explain how they got them.”

“But you will confess that there are laws against false names?”

“Yes, but I repeat this name is my true name. Your name which I honour, though I do not know it, cannot be more true than mine, for it is possible that you are not the son of the gentleman you consider your father.” He smiled and escorted me out, telling me that he would make enquiries about me of M. Carli.

I took the part of going to M. Carli’s myself. The story made him laugh. He told me that the burgomaster was a Catholic, a worthy man, well to do, but rather thick-headed; in short, a fine subject for a joke.

The following morning M. Carli asked me to breakfast, and afterwards to dine with the burgomaster.

"I saw him yesterday," said he, "and we had a long talk, in the course of which I succeeded in convincing him on the question of names, and he is now quite of your opinion."

I accepted the invitation with pleasure, as I was sure of seeing some good company. I was not undeceived; there were some charming women and several agreeable men. Amongst others, I noticed the woman in man's dress I had seen at the theatre. I watched her at dinner, and I was the more convinced that she was a woman. Nevertheless, everybody addressed her as a man, and she played the part to admiration. I, however, being in search of amusement, and not caring to seem as if I were taken in, began to talk to her in a stream of gallantry as one talks to a woman, and I contrived to let her know that if I were not sure of her sex I had very strong suspicions. She pretended not to understand me, and everyone laughed at my feigned expression of offence.

After dinner, while we were taking coffee, the pretended gentleman shewed a canon who was present a portrait on one of her rings. It represented a young lady who was in the company, and was an excellent likeness — an easy enough matter, as she was very ugly. My conviction was not disturbed, but when I saw the imposter kissing the young lady's hand with mingled affection and respect, I ceased jesting on the question of her sex. M. Carli took me aside for a moment, and told me that in spite of his effeminate appearance this individual was a man, and was shortly going to marry the young lady whose hand he had just kissed.

"It may be so," said I, "but I can't believe it all the same."

However, the pair were married during the carnival, and the husband obtained a rich dowry with his wife. The poor girl died of 'grief in the course of a year, but did not say a word till she was on her death-bed. Her foolish parents, ashamed of having been deceived so grossly, dared not say anything, and got the female swindler out of the way; she had taken good care, however, to lay a firm hold on the dowry. The story became known, and gave the good folk of Augsburg much amusement, while I became renowned for my sagacity in piercing the disguise.

I continued to enjoy the society of my two servants and of the fair Alsation, who cost me a hundred louis. At the end of a week my agreement with Bassi came to an end, leaving him with some money in his pocket. He continued to give performances, returning to the usual prices and suppressing the free gallery. He did very fair business.

I left Augsburg towards the middle of December.

I was vexed on account of Gertrude, who believed herself with child, but could not make up her mind to accompany me to France. Her father would have been pleased for me to take her; he had no hopes of getting her a husband, and would have been glad enough to get rid of her by my making her my mistress.

We shall hear more of her in the course of five or six years, as also of my excellent cook, Anna Midel, to whom I gave a present of four hundred florins. She married shortly afterwards, and when I visited the town again I found her unhappy.

I could not make up my mind to forgive Le Duc, who rode on the coachman's box, and when we were in Paris, half-way along the Rue St. Antoine, I made him take his trunk and get down; and I left him there without a character, in spite of his entreaties. I never heard of him again, but I still miss him, for, in spite of his great failings, he was an excellent servant. Perhaps I should have called to mind the important services he had rendered me at Stuttgart, Soleure, Naples, Florence, and Turin; but I could not pass over his impudence in compromising me before the Augsburg magistrate. If I had not succeeded in bringing a certain theft home to him, it would have been laid to my door, and I should have been dishonoured.

I had done a good deal in saving him from justice, and, besides, I had rewarded him liberally for all the special services he had done me.

From Augsburg I went to Bale by way of Constance, where I stayed at the dearest inn in Switzerland. The landlord, Imhoff, was the prince of cheats, but his daughters were amusing, and after a three days' stay I continued my journey. I got to Paris on the last day of the year 1761, and I left the coach at the house in the Rue du Bacq, where my good angel Madame d'Urfe had arranged me a suite of rooms with the utmost elegance.

I spent three weeks in these rooms without going anywhere, in order to convince the worthy lady that I had only returned to Paris to keep my word to her, and make her be born again a man.

We spent the three weeks in making preparations for this divine operation, and our preparations consisted of devotions to each of the seven planets on the days consecrated to each of the intelligences. After this I had to seek, in a place which the spirits would point out to me, for a maiden, the daughter of an adept, whom I was to impregnate with a male child in a manner only known to the Fraternity of the Rosy Cross. Madame d'Urfe was to receive the child into her arms the moment it was born; and to keep it beside her in bed for seven days. At the end of the seven days she would die with her lips on the lips of the child, who would thus receive her reasonable soul, whereas before it had only possessed a vegetal soul.

This being done, it was to be my part to care for the child with the magisterium which was known to me, and as soon as it had attained to its third year Madame d'Urfe would begin to recover her self-consciousness, and then I was to begin to initiate her in the perfect knowledge of the Great Work.

The operation must take place under the full moon during the months of April, May, or June. Above all, Madame d'Urfe was to make a will in favour of the child, whose guardian I was to be till its thirteenth year.

This sublime madwoman had no doubts whatever as to the truth of all this, and burned with impatience to see the virgin who was destined to be the vessel of election. She begged me to hasten my departure.

I had hoped, in obtaining my answers from the oracle, that she would be deterred by the prospect of death, and I reckoned on the natural love of life making her defer the operation for an indefinite period. But such was not the case, and I found myself obliged to keep my word, in appearance at all events, and to go on my quest for the mysterious virgin.

What I wanted was some young hussy whom I could teach the part, and I thought of the Corticelli. She had been at Prague for the last nine months, and when we were at Bologna I had promised to come and see her before the end of the year. But as I was leaving Germany — by no means a land of pleasant memories to me — I did not think it was worth while going out of my way for such a trifle in the depth of winter. I resolved to send her enough money for the journey, and to let her meet me in some French town.

M. de Fouquet, a friend of Madame d'Urfe's, was Governor of Metz, and I felt sure that, with a letter of introduction from Madame d'Urfe, this nobleman would give me a distinguished reception. Besides, his nephew, the Comte de Lastic, whom I knew well, was there with his regiment. For these reasons I chose Metz as a meeting-place with the virgin Corticelli, to whom this new part would certainly be a surprise. Madame d'Urfe gave me the necessary introductions, and I left Paris on January 25th, 1762, loaded with presents. I had a letter of credit to a large amount, but I did not make use of it as my purse was abundantly replenished.

I took no servant, for after Costa's robbing me and Le Duc's cheating me I felt as if I could not trust in anyone. I got to Metz in two days, and put up at the "Roi Dagobert," an excellent inn, where I found the Comte de Louvenhaupt, a Swede, whom I had met at the house of the Princess of Anhalt-Zerbst, mother of the Empress of Russia. He asked me to sup with him and the Duc de Deux Pants, who was travelling incognito to Paris to visit Louis XV., whose constant friend he was.

The day after my arrival I took my letters to the governor, who told me I must dine with him every day. M. de Lastic had left Metz, much to my regret, as he would have contributed in no small degree to the pleasure of my stay. The same day I wrote to the Corticelli, sending her fifty louis, and telling her to come with her mother as soon as possible, and to get someone who knew the way to accompany her. She could not leaves Prague before the beginning of Lent, and to make sure of her coming I promised that I would make her fortune.

In four or five days I knew my way about the town, but I did not frequent polite assemblies, preferring to go to the theatre, where a comic opera singer had captivated me. Her name was Raton, and she was only fifteen, after the fashion of actresses who always subtract at least two or three years from their age. However, this failing is common to women, and is a pardonable one, since to be youthful is the greatest of all advantages to them. Raton was not so much handsome as attractive, but what chiefly made her an object of desire was the fact that she had put the price of twenty-five louis on her maidenhead. One could spend a night with her, and make the trial for a Louis; the twenty-five were only to be paid on the accomplishment of the great work.

It was notorious that numerous officers in the army and young barristers had undertaken the operation unsuccessfully, and all of them had paid a louis apiece.

This singular case was enough to whet my curiosity. I was not long before I called on Raton, but not wishing to be duped by her I took due precautions. I told her that she must come and sup with me, and that I would give her the twenty-five louis if my happiness was complete, and that if I were unsuccessful she should have six louis instead of one, provided that she was not tied. Her aunt assured me that this was not the case; but I could not help thinking of Victorine.

Raton came to supper with her aunt, who went to bed in an adjoining closet when the dessert was brought in. The girl's figure was exquisitely beautiful, and I felt that I had no small task before me. She was kind, laughing, and defied me to the conquest of a fleece not of gold, but of ebony, which the youth of Metz had assaulted in vain. Perhaps the reader will think that I, who was no longer in my first vigour, was discouraged by the thought of the many who had failed; but I knew my powers, and it only amused me. Her former lovers had been Frenchmen, more skilled in carrying strong places by assault than in eluding the artfulness of a girl who corked herself up. I was an Italian, and knew all about that, so I had no doubts as to my victory.

However, my preparations were superfluous; for as soon as Raton felt from my mode of attack that the trick would be of no avail she met my desires half-way, without trying the device which had made her seem to be what she was no longer to her inexpert lovers. She gave herself up in good faith, and when I had promised to keep the secret her ardours were equal to mine. It was not her first trial, and I consequently need not have given her the twenty-five louis, but I was well satisfied, and not caring much for maidenheads rewarded her as if I had been the first to bite at the cherry.

I kept Raton at a louis a day till the arrival of the Corticelli, and she had to be faithful to me, as I never let her go out of my sight. I liked the girl so well and found her so pleasant that I was sorry that the Corticelli was coming; however, I was told of her arrival one night just as I was leaving my box at the theatre. My footman told me in a loud voice that my lady wife, my daughter, and a gentleman had just arrived from Frankfort, and were awaiting me at the inn.

“Idiot,” I exclaimed, “I have no wife and no daughter.”

However, all Metz heard that my family had arrived.

The Corticelli threw her arms round my neck, laughing as usual, and her mother presented me to the worthy man who had accompanied them from Prague to Metz. He was an Italian named Month, who had lived for a long time at Prague, where he taught his native language. I saw that M. Month and the old woman were suitably accommodated, and I then led the young fool into my room. I found her changed for the better; she had grown, her shape was improved, and her pleasant manners made her a very charming girl.

CHAPTER XV

I Returned to Paris With The Corticelli, Now Countess Lascaris — The Hypostasis Fails — Aix-la-Chapelle — Duel — Mimi d'Ache — The Corticelli Turns Traitress to Her Own Disadvantage — Journey to Sulzbach

"Why did you allow your mother to call herself my wife, little simpleton? Do you think that's a compliment to my judgment? She might have given herself out for your governess, as she wishes to pass you off as my daughter."

"My mother is an obstinate old woman who had rather be whipped at the cart-tail than call herself my governess. She has very narrow ideas, and always thinks that governess and procuress mean the same thing."

"She's an old fool, but we will make her hear reason either with her will or in spite of it. But you look well dressed, have you made your fortune?"

"At Prague I captivated the affections of Count N —— , and he proved a generous lover. But let your first action be to send back M. Month. The worthy man has his family at Prague to look after; he can't afford to stay long here."

"True, I will see about it directly."

The coach started for Frankfort the same evening, and summoning Month I thanked him for his kindness and paid him generously, so he went off well pleased.

I had nothing further to do at Metz, so I took leave of my new friends, and in two days time I was at Nancy, where I wrote to Madame d'Urfe that I was on my way back with a virgin, the last of the family of Lascaris, who had once reigned at Constantinople. I begged her to receive her from my hands, at a country house which belonged to her, where we should be occupied for some days in cabalistic ceremonies.

She answered that she would await us at Pont-Carre, an old castle four leagues distant from Paris, and that she would welcome the young princess with all possible kindness.

"I owe her all the more friendship," added the sublime madwoman, "as the family of Lascaris is connected with the family of d'Urfe, and as I am to be born again in the seed of the happy virgin."

I felt that my task would be not exactly to throw cold water on her enthusiasm, but to hold it in check and to moderate its manifestations. I therefore explained to her by return of post that she must be content to treat the virgin as a countess, not a princess, and I ended by informing her that we should arrive, accompanied by the countess's governess, on the Monday of Holy Week.

I spent twelve days at Nancy, instructing the young madcap in the part she had to play, and endeavouring to persuade her mother that she must content herself with being the Countess Lascaris's humble servant. It was a task of immense difficulty; it was not enough to shew her that our success depended on her submitting; I had to threaten to send her back to Bologna by herself. I had good reason to repent of my perseverance. That woman's obstinacy was an inspiration of my good angel's, bidding me avoid the greatest mistake I ever made.

On the day appointed we reached Pont-Carre. Madame d'Urfe, whom I had advised of the exact hour of our arrival, had the drawbridge of the castle lowered, and stood in the archway in the midst of her people, like a general surrendering with all the honours of war. The dear lady, whose madness was but an excess of wit, gave the false princess so distinguished a reception that she would have shewn her amazement if I had not warned her of what she might expect. Thrice did she clasp her to her breast with a tenderness that was quite maternal, calling her her beloved niece, and explaining the entire pedigrees of the families of Lascaris and d'Urfe to make the countess understand how she came to be her niece. I was agreeably surprised to see the polite and dignified air with which the Italian wench listened to all this; she did not even smile, though the scene must have struck her as extremely laughable.

As soon as we got into the castle Madame d'Urfe proceeded to cense the new-comer, who received the attention with all the dignity of an opera queen, and then threw herself into the arms of the priestess, who received her with enthusiastic affection.

At dinner the countess was agreeable and talkative, which won her Madame d'Urfe's entire favour; her broken French being easily accounted for. Laura, the countess's mother, only knew her native Italian, and so kept silence. She was given a comfortable room, where her meals were brought to her, and which she only left to hear mass.

The castle was a fortified building, and had sustained several sieges in the civil wars. As its name, Pont-Carre, indicated, it was square, and was flanked by four crenelated towers and surrounded by a broad moat. The rooms were vast, and richly furnished in an old-fashioned way. The air was full of venomous gnats who devoured us and covered our faces with painful bites; but I had agreed to spend a week there, and I should have been hard put to it to find a pretext for shortening the time. Madame d'Urfe had a bed next, her own for her niece, but I was not afraid of her attempting to satisfy herself as to the countess's virginity, as the oracle had expressly forbidden it under pain or failure. The operation was fixed for the fourteenth day of the April moon.

On that day we had a temperate supper, after which I went to bed. A quarter of an hour afterwards Madame d'Urfe came, leading the virgin Lascaris. She undressed her, scented her, cast a lovely veil over her body, and when the countess was laid beside me she remained, wishing to be present at an operation which was to result in her being born again in the course of nine months.

The act was consummated in form, and then Madame d'Urfe left us alone for the rest of the night, which was well employed. Afterwards, the countess slept with her aunt till the last day of the moon, when I asked the oracle if the Countess Lascaris had conceived. That well might be, for I had spared nothing to that intent; but I thought it more prudent to make the oracle reply that the operation had failed because the small Count d'Aranda had watched us behind a screen. Madame d'Urfe was in despair, but I consoled her by a second reply, in which the oracle declared that though the operation could only be performed in France in April, it could take place out of that realm in May; but the inquisitive young count, whose influence had proved so fatal, must be sent for at least a year to some place a hundred leagues from Paris.

The oracle also indicated the manner in which he was to travel; he was to have a tutor, a servant, and all in order.

The oracle had spoken, and no more was wanted. Madame d'Urfe thought of an abbe she liked for his tutor, and the count was sent to Lyons, with strong letters of commendation to M. de Rochebaron, a relation of his patroness. The young man was delighted to travel, and never had any suspicion of the way in which I had slandered him. It was not a mere fancy which suggested this course of action. I had discovered that the Corticelli was making up to him, and that her mother favoured the intrigue. I had surprised her twice in the young man's room, and though he only cared for the girl as a youth cares for all girls, the Signora Laura did not at all approve of my opposing her daughter's designs.

Our next task was to fix on some foreign town where we could again attempt the mysterious operation. We settled on Aix-la-Chapelle, and in five or six days all was ready for the journey.

The Corticeili, angry with me for having thwarted her in her projects, reproached me bitterly, and from that time began to be my enemy; she even allowed herself to threaten me if I did not get back the pretty boy, as she called him.

"You have no business to be jealous," said she, "and I am the mistress of my own actions."

"Quite right, my dear," I answered; "but it is my business to see that you do not behave like a prostitute in your present position."

The mother was in a furious rage, and said that she and her daughter would return to Bologna, and to quiet them I promised to take them there myself as soon as we had been to Aix-la-Chapelle.

Nevertheless I did not feel at ease, and to prevent any plots taking place I hastened our departure.

We started in May, in a travelling carriage containing Madame d'Urfe, myself, the false Lascaris, and her maid and favourite, named Brougnole. We were followed by a coach with two seats; in it were the Signora Laura and another servant. Two men-servants in full livery sat on the outside of our travelling carriage. We stopped a day at Brussels, and another at Liege. At Aix there were many distinguished visitors, and at the first ball we attended Madame d'Urfe presented the Lascaris to two Princesses of Mecklenburg as her niece. The false countess received their embraces with much ease and modesty, and attracted the particular attention of the Margrave of Baireuth and the Duchess of Wurtemberg, his daughter, who took possession of her, and did not leave her till the end of the ball.

I was on thorns the whole time, in terror lest the heroine might make some dreadful slip. She danced so gracefully that everybody gazed at her, and I was the person who was complimented on her performance.

I suffered a martyrdom, for these compliments seemed to be given with malicious intent. I suspected that the ballet-girl had been discovered beneath the countess, and I felt myself dishonoured. I succeeded in speaking privately to the young wanton for a moment, and begged her to dance like a young lady, and not like a chorus girl; but she was proud of her success, and dared to tell me that a young lady might know how to dance as well as a professional dancer, and that she was not going to dance badly to please me. I was so enraged with her impudence, that I would have cast her off that instant if it had been possible; but as it was not, I determined that her punishment should lose none of its sharpness by waiting; and whether it be a vice or a virtue, the desire of revenge is never extinguished in my heart till it is satisfied.

The day after the ball Madame d'Urfe presented her with a casket containing a beautiful watch set with brilliants, a pair of diamond ear-rings, and a ring containing a ruby of fifteen carats. The whole was worth sixty thousand francs. I took possession of it to prevent her going off without my leave.

In the meanwhile I amused myself with play and making bad acquaintances. The worst of all was a French officer, named d'Ache, who had a pretty wife and a daughter prettier still. Before long the daughter had taken possession of the heart which the Corticelli had lost, but as soon as Madame d'Ache saw that I preferred her daughter to herself she refused to receive me at her house.

I had lent d'Ache ten Louis, and I consequently felt myself entitled to complain of his wife's conduct; but he answered rudely that as I only went to the house after his daughter, his wife was quite right; that he intended his daughter to make a good match, and that if my intentions were honourable I had only to speak to the mother. His manner was still more offensive than his words, and I felt enraged, but knowing the brutal drunken characteristics of the man, and that he was always ready to draw cold steel for a yes or a no, I was silent and resolved to forget the girl, not caring to become involved with a man like her father.

I had almost cured myself of my fancy when, a few days after our conversation, I happened to go into a billiard-room where d'Ache was playing with a Swiss named Schmit, an officer in the Swedish army. As soon as d'Ache saw me he asked whether I would lay the ten Louis he owed me against him.

"Yes," said I, "that will make double or quits."

Towards the end of the match d'Ache made an unfair stroke, which was so evident that the marker told him of it; but as this stroke made him the winner, d'Ache seized the stakes and put them in his pocket without heeding the marker or the other player, who, seeing himself cheated before his very eyes, gave the rascal a blow across the face with his cue. D'Ache parried the blow with his hand, and drawing his sword rushed at Schmit, who had no arms. The marker, a sturdy young fellow, caught hold of d'Ache round the body, and thus prevented murder. The Swiss went out, saying,

"We shall see each other again."

The rascally Frenchman cooled down, and said to me,

"Now, you see, we are quits."

"Very much quits."

"That's all very well; but, by God! you might have prevented the insult which has dishonoured me."

"I might have done so, but I did not care to interfere. You are strong enough to look after yourself. Schmit had not his sword, but I believe him to be a brave man; and he will give you satisfaction if you will return him his money, for there can be no doubt that you lost the match."

An officer, named de Pyene, took me up and said that he himself would give me the twenty louis which d'Ache had taken, but that the Swiss must give satisfaction. I had no hesitation in promising that he would do so, and said I would bring a reply to the challenge the next morning.

I had no fears myself. The man of honour ought always to be ready to use the sword to defend himself from insult, or to give satisfaction for an insult he has offered. I know that the law of duelling is a prejudice which may be called, and perhaps rightly, barbarous, but it is a prejudice which no man of honour can contend against, and I believed Schmit to be a thorough gentleman.

I called on him at day-break, and found him still in bed. As soon as he saw me, he said,

“I am sure you have come to ask me to fight with d’Ache. I am quite ready to burn powder with him, but he must first pay me the twenty Louis he robbed me of.”

“You shall have them to-morrow, and I will attend you. D’Ache will be seconded by M. de Pyene.”

“Very good. I shall expect you at day-break.”

Two hours after I saw de Pyene, and we fixed the meeting for the next day, at six o’clock in the morning. The arms were to be pistols. We chose a garden, half a league from the town, as the scene of the combat.

At day-break I found the Swiss waiting for me at the door of his lodgings, carolling the ‘ranz-des-vaches’, so dear to his fellow-countrymen. I thought that a good omen.

“Here you are,” said he; “let us be off, then.”

On the way, he observed, “I have only fought with men of honour up to now, and I don’t much care for killing a rascal; it’s hangman’s work.”

“I know,” I replied, “that it’s very hard to have to risk one’s life against a fellow like that.”

“There’s no risk,” said Schmit, with a laugh. “I am certain that I shall kill him.”

“How can you be certain?”

“I shall make him tremble.”

He was right. This secret is infallible when it is applied to a coward. We found d'Ache and de Pyene on the field, and five or six others who must have been present from motives of curiosity.

D'Ache took twenty louis from his pocket and gave them to his enemy, saying,

"I may be mistaken, but I hope to make you pay dearly for your brutality." Then turning to me he said,

"I owe you twenty louis also;" but I made no reply.

Schmit put the money in his purse with the calmest air imaginable, and making no reply to the other's boast placed himself between two trees, distant about four paces from one another, and drawing two pistols from his pocket said to d'Ache,

"Place yourself at a distance of ten paces, and fire first. I shall walk to and fro between these two trees, and you may walk as far if you like to do so when my turn comes to fire."

Nothing could be clearer or more calmly delivered than this explanation.

"But we must decide," said I, "who is to have the first shot."

"There is no need," said Schmit. "I never fire first, besides, the gentleman has a right to the first shot."

De Pyene placed his friend at the proper distance and then stepped aside, and d'Ache fired on his antagonist, who was walking slowly to and fro without looking at him. Schmit turned round in the coolest manner possible, and said,

"You have missed me, sir; I knew you would. Try again."

I thought he was mad, and that some arrangement would be come to; but nothing of the kind. D'Ache fired a second time, and again missed; and Schmit, without a word, but as calm as death, fired his first pistol in the air, and then covering d'Ache with his second pistol hit him in the forehead and stretched him dead on the ground. He put back his pistols into his pocket and went off directly by himself, as if he were merely continuing his walk. In two minutes I followed his example, after ascertaining that the unfortunate d'Ache no longer breathed.

I was in a state of amazement. Such a duel was more like a combat of romance than a real fact. I could not understand it; I had watched the Swiss, and had not noticed the slightest change pass over his face.

I breakfasted with Madame d'Urfe, whom I found inconsolable. It was the full moon, and at three minutes past four exactly I ought to perform the mysterious creation of the child in which she was to be born again. But the Lascaris, on whom the work was to be wrought, was twisting and turning in her bed, contorting herself in such a way that it would be impossible for me to accomplish the prolific work.

My grief, when I heard what had happened, was hypocritical; in the first place because I no longer felt any desire for the girl, and in the second because I thought I saw a way in which I could make use of the incident to take vengeance on her.

I lavished consolations on Madame d'Urfe; and on consulting the oracle I found that the Lascaris had been defiled by an evil genius, and that I must search for another virgin whose purity must be under the protection of more powerful spirits. I saw that my madwoman was perfectly happy with this, and I left her to visit the Corticelli, whom I found in bed with her mother beside her.

"You have convulsions, have you, dearest?" said I.

"No, I haven't. I am quite well, but all the same I shall have them till you give me back my jewel-casket."

"You are getting wicked, my poor child; this comes of following your mother's advice. As for the casket, if you are going to behave like this, probably you will have it."

"I will reveal all."

"You will not be believed; and I shall send you back to Bologna without letting you take any of the presents which Madame d'Urfe has given you."

"You ought to have given me back the casket when I declared myself with child."

Signora Laura told me that this was only too true, though I was not the father.

“Who is, then?” I asked.

“Count N —— , whose mistress she was at Prague.”

It did not seem probable, as she had no symptoms of pregnancy; still it might be so. I was obliged to plot myself to bring the plots of these two rascally women to nought, and without saying anything to them I shut myself up with Madame d’Urfe to enquire of the oracle concerning the operation which was to make her happy.

After several answers, more obscure than any returned from the oracular tripod at Delphi, the interpretation of which I left to the infatuated Madame d’Urfe, she discovered herself — and I took care not to contradict her — that the Countess Lascaris had gone mad. I encouraged her fears, and succeeded in making her obtain from a cabalistic pyramid the statement that the reason the princess had not conceived was that she had been defiled by an evil genius — an enemy of the Fraternity of the Rosy Cross. This put Madame d’Urfe fairly on the way, and she added on her own account that the girl must be with child by a gnome.

She then erected another pyramid to obtain guidance on our quest, and I so directed things that the answer came that she must write to the moon.

This mad reply, which should have brought her to her senses, only made her more crazy than ever. She was quite ecstatic, and I am sure that if I had endeavoured to shew her the nothingness of all this I show have had nothing for my trouble. Her conclusion would probably have been that I was possessed by an evil spirit, and was no longer a true Rosy Cross. But I had no idea of undertaking a cure which would have done me harm and her no ‘good. Her chimerical notions made her happy, and the cold naked truth would doubtless have made her unhappy.

She received the order to write to the moon with the greater delight as she knew what ceremonies were to be observed in addressing that planet; but she could not dispense with the assistance of an adept, and I knew she would reckon on me. I told her I should always be ready to serve her, but that, as she knew herself, we should have to wait for the first phase of the new moon. I was very glad to gain time, for I had lost heavily at play, and I could not leave Aix-la-Chapelle before a bill, which I had drawn on M. d’O. of Amsterdam, was cashed. In the mean time we agreed that as the Countess

Lascaris had become mad, we must not pay any attention to what she might say, as the words would not be hers but would proceed from the evil spirit who possessed her.

Nevertheless, we determined that as her state was a pitiable one, and should be as much alleviated as possible, she should continue to dine with us, but that in the evening she was to go to her governess and sleep with her.

After having thus disposed of Madame d'Urfe to disbelieve whatever the Corticelli cared to tell her, and to concentrate all her energies on the task of writing to Selenis, the intelligence of the moon, I set myself seriously to work to regain the money I had lost at play; and here my cabala was no good to me. I pledged the Corticelli's casket for a thousand louis, and proceeded to play in an English club where I had a much better chance of winning than with Germans or Frenchmen.

Three or four days after d'Ache's death, his widow wrote me a note begging me to call on her. I found her in company with de Pyene. She told me in a lugubrious voice that her husband had left many debts unsettled, and that his creditors had seized everything she possessed; and — that she was thus unable to pay the expenses of a journey, though she wanted to take her daughter with her to Colmar, and there to rejoin her family.

"You caused my husband's death," she added, "and I ask you to give me a thousand crowns; if you refuse me I shall commence a lawsuit against you, for as the Swiss officer has left, you are the only person I can prosecute."

"I am surprised at your taking such a tone towards me," I replied, coldly, "and were it not for the respect I feel for your misfortune, I should answer as bitterly as you deserve. In the first place I have not a thousand crowns to throw away, and if I had I would not sacrifice my money to threats. I am curious to know what kind of a case you could get up against me in the courts of law. As for Schmit, he fought like a brave gentleman, and I don't think you could get much out of him if he were still here. Good-day, madam."

I had scarcely got fifty paces from the house when I was joined by de Pyene, who said that rather than Madame d'Ache should have to complain of me he would cut my throat on the spot. We neither of us had swords.

“Your intention is not a very flattering one,” said I, “and there is something rather brutal about it. I had rather not have any affair of the kind with a man whom I don’t know and to whom I owe nothing.”

“You are a coward.”

“I would be, you mean, if I were to imitate you. It is a matter of perfect indifference to me what opinion you may have on the subject.

“You will be sorry for this.”

“Maybe, but I warn you that I never go out unattended by a pair of pistols, which I keep in good order and know how to use.” So saying I shewd him the pistols, and took one in my right hand.

At this the bully uttered an oath and we separated.

At a short distance from the place where this scene had occurred I met a Neapolitan named Maliterni, a lieutenant-colonel and aide to the Prince de Condo, commander-in-chief of the French army. This Maliterni was a boon companion, always ready to oblige, and always short of money. We were friends, and I told him what had happened.

“I should be sorry,” said I, “to have anything to do with a fellow like de Pyene, and if you can rid me of him I promise you a hundred crowns.”

“I daresay that can be managed,” he replied, “and I will tell you what I can do to-morrow!”

In point of fact, he brought me news the next day that my cut-throat had received orders from his superior officer to leave Aix-la-Chapelle at day-break, and at the same time he gave me a passport from the Prince de Conde.

I confess that this was very pleasant tidings. I have never feared to cross my sword with any man, though never sought the barbarous pleasure of spilling men’s blood; but on this occasion I felt an extreme dislike to a duel with a fellow who was probably of the same caste as his friend d’Ache.

I therefore gave Maliterni my heartiest thanks, as well as the hundred crowns I had promised him, which I considered so well employed that I did not regret their loss.

Maliterni, who was a jester of the first water, and a creature of the Marshal d'Estrees, was lacking neither in wit nor knowledge; but he was deficient in a sense of order and refinement. He was a pleasant companion, for his gaiety was inexhaustible and he had a large knowledge of the world. He attained the rank of field-marshal in 1768, and went to Naples to marry a rich heiress, whom he left a widow a year after.

The day after de Pyene's departure I received a note from Mdlle. d'Ache, begging me, for the sake of her sick mother, to come and see her. I answered that I would be at such a place at such a time, and that she could say what she liked to me.

I found her at the place and time I appointed, with her mother, whose illness, it appeared, did not prevent her from going out. She called me her persecutor, and said that since the departure of her best friend, de Pyene, she did not know where to turn; that she had pledged all her belongings, and that I, who was rich, ought to aid her, if I were not the vilest of men.

"I feel for your condition," I replied, "as I feel your abuse of me; and I cannot help saying that you have shewn yourself the vilest of women in inciting de Pyene, who may be an honest man for all I know, to assassinate me. In fine, rich or not, and though I owe you nothing, I will give you enough money to take your property out of pawn, and I may possibly take you to Colmar myself, but you must first consent to my giving your charming daughter a proof of my affection."

"And you dare to make this horrible proposal to me?"

"Horrible or not, I do make it."

"I will never consent."

"Good day, madam."

I called the waiter to pay him for the refreshments I had ordered, and I gave the girl six double louis, but her proud mother forbade her to accept the money from me. I was not surprised, in spite of her distress; for the mother was in reality still more charming than the daughter, and she knew it. I ought to have given her the preference, and thus have ended the dispute, but who can account for his whims? I felt that she must hate me, for she did not care for her daughter, and it must have humiliated her bitterly to be obliged to regard her as a victorious rival.

I left them still holding the six double louis, which pride or scorn had refused, and I went to the faro-table and decided in sacrificing them to fortune; but that capricious deity, as proud as the haughty widow, refused them, and though I left them on the board for five deals I almost broke the bank. An Englishman, named Martin, offered to go shares with me, and I accepted, as I knew he was a good player; and in the course of eight or ten days we did such good business that I was not only able to take the casket out of pledge and to cover all losses, but made a considerable profit in addition.

About this period, the Corticelli, in her rage against me, had told Madame d'Urfe the whole history of her life, of our acquaintance, and of her pregnancy. But the more truthfully she told her story so much the more did the good lady believe her to be mad, and we often laughed together at the extraordinary fancies of the traitress. Madame d'Urfe put all her trust in the instructions which Selenis would give in reply to her letter.

Nevertheless, as the girl's conduct displeased me, I made her eat her meals with her mother, while I kept Madame d'Urfe company. I assured her that we should easily find another vessel of election, the madness of the Countess Lascaris having made her absolutely incapable of participating in our mysterious rites.

Before long, d'Ache's widow found herself obliged to give me her Mimi; but I won her by kindness, and in such a way that the mother could pretend with decency to know nothing about it. I redeemed all the goods she had pawned, and although the daughter had not yet yielded entirely to my ardour, I formed the plan of taking them to Colmar with Madame d'Urfe. To make up the good lady's mind, I resolved to let that be one of the instructions from the moon, and this she would not only obey blindly but would have no suspicions as to my motive.

I managed the correspondence between Selenis and Madame d'Urfe in the following manner:

On the day appointed, we supped together in a garden beyond the town walls, and in a room on the ground floor of the house I had made all the necessary preparations, the letter which was to fall from the moon, in reply to Madame d'Urfe's epistle, being in my pocket. At a little distance from the chamber of ceremonies I had placed a large bath filled with lukewarm water and perfumes pleasing to the deity of the night, into which we were to plunge at the hour of the moon, which fell at one o'clock.

When we had burnt incense, and sprinkled the essences appropriate to the cult of Selenis, we took off all our clothes, and holding the letter concealed in my left hand, with the right I graciously led Madame d'Urfe to the brink of the bath. Here stood an alabaster cup containing spirits of wine which I kindled, repeating magical words which I did not understand, but which she said after me, giving me the letter addressed to Selenis. I burnt the letter in the flame of the spirits, beneath the light of the moon, and the credulous lady told me she saw the characters she had traced ascending in the rays of the planet.

We then got into the bath, and the letter, which was written in silver characters on green paper appeared on the surface of the water in the course of ten minutes. As soon as Madame d'Urfe saw it, she picked it up reverently and got out of the bath with me.

We dried and scented ourselves, and proceeded to put on our clothes. As soon as we were in a state of decency I told Madame d'Urfe that she might read the epistle, which she had placed on a scented silk cushion. She obeyed, and I saw sadness visibly expressed on her features when she saw that her hypostasis was deferred till the arrival of Querilinthus, whom she would see with me at Marseilles in the spring of next year. The genius also said that the Countess Lascaris could not only do her harm, and that she should consult me as to the best means of getting rid of her. The letter ended by ordering her not to leave at Aix a lady who had lost her husband, and had a daughter who was destined to be of great service to the fraternity of the R. C. She was to take them to Alsace, and not to leave them till they were there, and safe from that danger which threatened them if they were left to themselves.

Madame d'Urfe, who with all her folly was an exceedingly benevolent woman, commended the widow to my care enthusiastically, and seemed impatient to hear her whole history. I told her all the circumstances which I thought would strengthen her in her resolution to befriend them, and promised to introduce the ladies to them at the first opportunity.

We returned to Aix, and spent the night in discussing the phantoms which coursed through her brain. All was going on well, and my only care was for the journey to Aix, and how to obtain the complete enjoyment of Mimi after having so well deserved her favours.

I had a run of luck at play the next day, and in the evening I gave Madame d'Ache an agreeable surprise by telling her that I should accompany her and her Mimi to Colmar. I told her that I should begin by introducing her to the lady whom I had the honour to accompany, and I begged her to be ready by the next day as the marchioness was impatient to see her. I could see that she could scarcely believe her ears, for she thought Madame d'Urfe was in love with me, and she could not understand her desire to make the acquaintance of two ladies who might be dangerous rivals.

I conducted them to Madame d'Urfe at the appointed hour, and they were received with a warmth which surprised them exceedingly, for they could not be expected to know that their recommendation came from the moon. We made a party of four, and while the two ladies talked together in the fashion of ladies who have seen the world, I paid Mimi a particular attention, which her mother understood very well, but which Madame d'Urfe attributed to the young lady's connection with the Rosy Cross.

In the evening we all went to a ball, and there the Corticelli, who was always trying to annoy me, danced as no young lady would dance. She executed rapid steps, pirouetted, cut capers, and shewed her legs; in short, she behaved like a ballet-girl. I was on thorns. An officer, who either ignored, or pretended to ignore, my supposed relation to her, asked me if she was a professional dancer. I heard another man behind me say that he thought he remembered seeing her on the boards at Prague. I resolved on hastening my departure, as I foresaw that if I stayed much longer at Aix the wretched girl would end by costing me my life.

As I have said, Madame d'Ache had a good society manner, and this put her in Madame d'Urfe's good graces, who saw in her politeness a new proof of the favour of Selenis. Madame d'Ache felt, I suppose, that she awed me some return after all I had done for her, and left the ball early, so that when I took Mimi home I found myself alone with her, and at perfect liberty to do what I liked. I profited by the opportunity, and remained with Mimi for two hours, finding her so complaisant and even passionate that when I left her I had nothing more to desire.

In three days time I provided the mother and daughter with their outfit, and we left Aix gladly in an elegant and convenient travelling carriage which I had provided. Half an hour before we left I made an acquaintance which afterwards proved fatal to me. A Flemish officer, unknown to me, accosted me, and painted his destitute condition in such sad colours that I felt obliged to give him twelve louis. Ten minutes after, he gave me a paper in which he acknowledged the debt, and named the time in which he could pay it. From the paper I ascertained that his name was Malingan. In ten months the reader will hear the results.

Just as we were starting I shewed the Corticelli a carriage with four places, in which she, her mother, and the two maids, were to travel. At this she trembled, her pride was wounded, and for a moment I thought she was going out of her mind; she rained sobs, abuse, and curses on me. I stood the storm unmoved, however, and Madame d'Urfe only laughed at her niece's paroxysms, and seemed delighted to find herself sitting opposite to me with the servant of Selenis beside her, while Mimi was highly pleased to be so close to me.

We got to Liege at nightfall on the next day, and I contrived to make Madame d'Urfe stay there the day following, wishing to get horses to take us through the Ardennes, and thus to have the charming Mimi longer in my possession.

I rose early and went out to see the town. By the great bridge, a woman, so wrapped up in a black mantilla that only the tip of her nose was visible, accosted me, and asked me to follow her into a house with an open door which she shewed me.

"As I have not the pleasure of knowing you," I replied, "prudence will not allow me to do so."

"You do know me, though," she replied, and taking me to the corner of a neighbouring street she shewed me her face. What was my surprise to see the fair Stuart of Avignon, the statue of the Fountain of Vaucluse. I was very glad to meet her.

In my curiosity I followed her into the house, to a room on the first floor, where she welcomed me most tenderly. It was all no good, for I felt angry with her, and despised her advances, no doubt, because I had Mimi, and wished to keep all my love for her. However, I took three louis out of my purse and gave them to her, asking her to tell me her history.

“Stuart,” she said, “was only my keeper; my real name is Ranson, and I am the mistress of a rich landed proprietor. I got back to Liege after many sufferings.”

“I am delighted to hear that you are more prosperous now, but it must be confessed that your behaviour at Avignon was both preposterous and absurd. But the subject is not worth discussing. Good day, madam.”

I then returned to my hotel to write an account of what I had seen to the Marquis Grimaldi.

The next day we left Liege, and were two days passing through the Ardennes. This is one of the strangest tracts in Europe: a vast forest, the traditions of which furnished Ariosto with some splendid passages.

There is no town in the forest, and though one is obliged to cross it to pass from one country to another, hardly any of the necessaries of life are to be found in it.

The enquirer will seek in vain for vices or virtues, or manners of any kind. The inhabitants are devoid of correct ideas, but have wild notions of their own on the power of men they style scholars. It is enough to be a doctor to enjoy the reputation of an astrologer and a wizard. Nevertheless the Ardennes have a large population, as I was assured that there were twelve hundred churches in the forest. The people are good-hearted and even pleasant, especially the young girls; but as a general rule the fair sex is by no means fair in those quarters. In this vast district watered by the Meuse is the town of Bouillon — a regular hole, but in my time it was the freest place in Europe. The Duke of Bouillon was so jealous of his rights that he preferred the exercise of his prerogatives to all the honours he might have enjoyed at the Court of France. We stayed a day at Metz, but did not call on anyone; and in three days we reached Colmar, where we left Madame d’Ache, whose good graces I had completely won. Her family, in extremely comfortable circumstances, received the mother and daughter with great affection. Mimi wept bitterly when I left her, but I consoled her by saying that I would come back before long. Madame d’Urfe seemed not to mind leaving them, and I consoled myself easily enough. While congratulating myself on having made mother and daughter happy, I adored the secret paths and ways of Divine Providence.

On the following day we went to Sulzbach, where the Baron of Schaumburg, who knew Madame d'Urfe, gave us a warm welcome. I should have been sadly boared in this dull place if it had not been for gaming. Madame d'Urfe, finding herself in need of company, encouraged the Corticelli to hope to regain my good graces, and, consequently, her own. The wretched girl, seeing how easily I had defeated her projects, and to what a pass of humiliation I had brought her, had changed her part, and was now submissive enough. She flattered herself that she would regain the favour she had completely lost, and she thought the day was won when she saw that Madame d'Ache and her daughter stayed at Colmar. But what she had more at heart than either my friendship or Madame d'Urfe's was the jewel-casket; but she dared not ask for it, and her hopes of seeing it again were growing dim. By her pleasantries at table which made Madame d'Urfe laugh she succeeded in giving me a few amorous twinges; but still I did not allow my feelings to relax my severity, and she continued to sleep with her mother.

A week after our arrival at Sulzbach I left Madame d'Urfe with the Baron of Schaumburg, and I went to Colmar in the hope of good fortune. But I was disappointed, as the mother and daughter had both made arrangements for getting married.

A rich merchant, who had been in love with the mother eighteen years before, seeing her a widow and still pretty, felt his early flames revive, and offered his hand and was accepted. A young advocate found Mimi to his taste, and asked her in marriage. The mother and daughter, fearing the results of my affection, and finding it would be a good match, lost no time in giving their consent. I was entertained in the family, and supped in the midst of a numerous and choice assemblage; but seeing that I should only annoy the ladies and tire myself in waiting for some chance favour if I stayed, I bade them adieu and returned to Sulzbach the next morning. I found there a charming girl from Strasburg, named Salzmann, three or four gamesters who had come to drink the waters, and several ladies, to whom I shall introduce the reader in the ensuing chapter.

CHAPTER XVI

I Send The Corticelli to Turin — Helen is Initiated Into The Mysteries of Love I Go to Lyons — My Arrival at Turin

One of the ladies, Madame Saxe, was intended by nature to win the devotion of a man of feeling; and if she had not had a jealous officer in her train who never let her go out of his sight, and seemed to threaten anyone who aspired to please, she would probably have had plenty of admirers. This officer was fond of piquet, but the lady was always obliged to sit close beside him, which she seemed to do with pleasure.

In the afternoon I played with him, and continued doing so for five or six days. After that I could stand it no longer, as when he had won ten or twelve louis he invariably rose and left me to myself. His name was d’Entragues; he was a fine-looking man, though somewhat thin, and had a good share of wit and knowledge of the world.

We had not played together for two days, when one afternoon he asked if I would like to take my revenge.

“No, I think not,” said I, “for we don’t play on the same principle. I play for amusement’s sake and you play to win money.”

“What do you mean? Your words are offensive.”

“I didn’t mean them to be offensive, but as a matter of fact, each time we have played you have risen after a quarter of an hour.”

“You ought to be obliged to me, as otherwise you would have lost heavily.”

“Possibly; but I don’t think so.”

“I can prove it to you:”

“I accept the offer, but the first to leave the table must forfeit fifty Louis.”

“I agree; but money down.”

“I never play on credit.”

I ordered a waiter to bring cards, and I went to fetch four or five rolls of a hundred Louis each. We began playing for five Louis the game, each player putting down the fifty Louis wagered.

We began to play at three, and at nine o’clock d’Entragues said we might take some supper.

“I am not hungry,” I replied, “but you can go if you want me to put the hundred Louis in my pocket.”

He laughed at this and went on playing, but this lacy fair scowled at me, though I did not care in the least for that. All the guests went to supper, and returned to keep us company till midnight, but at that hour we found ourselves alone. D’Entragues saw what kind of man he had got hold of and said never a word, while I only opened my lips to score; we played with the utmost coolness.

At six o’clock the ladies and gentlemen who were taking the waters began to assemble. We were applauded for our determination, in spite of our grim look. The Louis were on the table; I had lost a hundred, and yet the game was going in my favour.

At nine the fair Madame Saxe put in an appearance, and shortly after Madame d'Urfe came in with M. de Schaumburg. Both ladies advised us to take a cup of chocolate. D'Entragues was the first to consent, and thinking that I was almost done he said, —

"Let us agree that the first man who asks for food, who absents himself for more than a quarter of an hour, or who falls asleep in his chair, loses the bet."

"I will take you at your word," I replied, "and I adhere to all your conditions."

The chocolate came, we took it, and proceeded with our play. At noon we were summoned to dinner, but we both replied that we were not hungry. At four o'clock we allowed ourselves to be persuaded into taking some soup. When supper-time came and we were still playing, people began to think that the affair was getting serious, and Madame Saxe urged us to divide the wager. D'Entragues, who had won a hundred louis, would have gladly consented, but I would not give in, and M. de Schaumburg pronounced me within my rights. My adversary might have abandoned the stake and still found himself with a balance to the good, but avarice rather than pride prevented his doing so. I felt the loss myself, but what I cared chiefly about was the point of honour. I still looked fresh, while he resembled a disinterred corpse. As Madame Saxe urged me strongly to give way, I answered that I felt deeply grieved at not being able to satisfy such a charming woman, but that there was a question of honour in the case; and I was determined not to yield to my antagonist if I sat there till I fell dead to the ground.

I had two objects in speaking thus: I wanted to frighten him and to make him jealous of me. I felt certain that a man in a passion of jealousy would be quite confused, and I hoped his play would suffer accordingly, and that I should not have the mortification of losing a hundred louis to his superior play, though I won the fifty louis of the wager.

The fair Madame Saxe gave me a glance of contempt and left us, but Madame d'Urfe, who believed I was infallible, avenged me by saying to d’Entragues, in a tone of the profoundest conviction, —

“O Lord! I pity you, sir.”

The company did not return after supper, and we were left alone to our play. We played on all the night, and I observed my antagonist’s face as closely as the cards. He began to lose his composure, and made mistakes, his cards got mixed up, and his scoring was wild. I was hardly less done up than he; I felt myself growing weaker, and I hoped to see him fall to the ground every moment, as I began to be afraid of being beaten in spite of the superior strength of my constitution. I had won back my money by day-break, and I cavilled with him for being away for more than a quarter of an hour. This quarrel about nothing irritated him, and roused me up; the difference of our natures produced these different results, and my stratagem succeeded because it was impromptu, and could not have been foreseen. In the same way in war, sudden stratagems succeed.

At nine o’clock Madame Saxe came in, her lover was losing.

“Now, sir,” she said to me, “you may fairly yield.”

“Madam,” said I, “in hope of pleasing you, I will gladly divide the stakes and rise from the table.”

The tone of exaggerated gallantry with which I pronounced these words, put d’Entragues into a rage, and he answered sharply that he would not desist till one of us was dead.

With a glance at the lady which was meant to be lovelorn, but which must have been extremely languid in my exhausted state, I said, —

“You see, Madam, that I am not the more obstinate of the two.”

A dish of soup was served to us, but d’Entragues, who was in the last stage of exhaustion, had no sooner swallowed the soup than he fell from his chair in a dead faint. He was soon taken up, and after I had given six louis to the marker who had been watching for forty-eight hours, I pocketed the gold, and went to the apothecary’s where I took a mild emetic. Afterwards I went to bed and slept for a few hours, and at three o’clock I made an excellent dinner.

D’Entragues remained in his room till the next day. I expected a quarrel, but the night brings counsel, and I made a mistake. As soon as he saw me he ran up to me and embraced me, saying, —

“I made a silly bet, but you have given me a lesson which will last me all my days, and I am much obliged to you for it.”

“I am delighted to hear it, provided that your health has not suffered.”

“No, I am quite well, but we will play no more together.”

“Well, I hope we shan’t play against each other any more.”

In the course of eight or ten days I took Madame d’Urfe and the pretended Lascaris to Bale. We put up at the inn of the famous Imhoff, who swindled us, but, all the same, the “Three Kings” is the best inn in the town. I think I have noted that noon at Bale is at eleven o’clock — an absurdity due to some historic event, which I had explained to me but have forgotten. The inhabitants are said to be subject to a kind of madness, of which they are cured by taking the waters of Sulzbach; but they ‘get it again as soon as they return.

We should have stayed at Bale some time, if it had not been for an incident which made me hasten our departure. It was as follows:

My necessities had obliged me to forgive the Corticelli to a certain extent, and when I came home early I spent the night with her; but when I came home late, as often happened, I slept in my own room. The little hussy, in the latter case, slept also alone in a room next to her mother’s, through whose chamber one had to pass to get to the daughter’s.

One night I came in at one o’clock, and not feeling inclined to sleep, I took a candle and went in search of my charmer. I was rather surprised to find Signora Laura’s door half open, and just as I was going in the old woman came forward and took me by the arm, begging me not to go into her daughter’s room.

“Why?” said I.

“She has been very poorly all the evening, and she is in need of sleep.”

“Very good; then I will sleep too.”

So saying I pushed the mother to one side, and entering the girl’s room I found her in bed with someone who was hiding under the sheets.

I ‘gazed at the picture for a moment and then began to laugh, and sitting down on the bed begged to enquire the name of the happy individual whom I should have the pleasure of throwing out of the window. On a chair I saw the coat, trousers, hat, and cane of the gentleman; but as I had my two trusty pistols about me I knew I had nothing to fear; however, I did not want to make a noise.

With tears in her eyes, and trembling all over, the girl took my hand and begged me to forgive her.

“It’s a young lord,” said she, “and I don’t even know his name.”

“Oh, he is a young lord, is he? and you don’t know his name, you little hussy, don’t you? Well, he will tell me himself.”

So saying, I took a pistol and vigorously stripped the sheets off the cuckoo who had got into my nest. I saw the face of a young man whom I did not know, his head covered with a nightcap, but the rest perfectly naked, as indeed was my mistress. He turned his back to me to get his shirt which he had thrown on the floor, but seizing him by the arm I held him firmly, with my pistol to his forehead.

“Kindly tell me your name, fair sir.”

“I am Count B —— , canon of Bale.”

“And do you think you have been performing an ecclesiastical function here?”

“No sir, no, and I hope you will forgive me and the lady too, for I am the only guilty party.”

“I am not asking you whether she is guilty or not.”

“Sir, the countess is perfectly innocent.”

I felt in a good temper, and far from being angry I was strongly inclined to laugh. I found the picture before me an attractive one; it was amusing and voluptuous. The sight of the two nudities on the bed was a truly lascivious one, and I remained contemplating it in silence for a quarter of an hour, occupied in resisting a strong temptation to take off my clothes and lie beside them. The only thing which prevented my yielding to it was the fear that I might find the canon to be a fool, incapable of playing the part with dignity. As for the Corticelli, she soon passed from tears to laughter, and would have done it well, but if, as I feared, the canon was a blockhead, I should have been degrading myself.

I felt certain that neither of them had guessed my thoughts, so I rose and told the canon to put on his clothes.

"No one must hear anything more of this," said I, "but you and I will go to a distance of two hundred paces and burn a little powder."

"No, no, sir," cried my gentleman, "you may take me where you like, and kill me if you please, but I was not meant for a fighting man."

"Really?"

"Yes, sir, and I only became a priest to escape the fatal duty of duelling."

"Then you are a coward, and will not object to a good thrashing?"

"Anything you like, but it would be cruelty, for my love blinded me. I only came here a quarter of an hour ago, and the countess and her governess were both asleep."

"You are a liar."

"I had only just taken off my shirt when you came, and I have never seen this angel before."

"And that's gospel truth," said the Corticelli.

"Are you aware that you are a couple of impudent scoundrels? And as for you, master canon, you deserve to be roasted like St. Laurence."

In the meanwhile the wretched ecclesiastic had huddled on his clothes.

"Follow me, sir," said I, in a tone which froze the marrow of his bones; and I accordingly took him to my room.

"What will you do," said I, "if I forgive you and let you go without putting you to shame?"

"I will leave in an hour and a half, and you shall never see me here again; but even if we meet in the future, you will find me always ready to do you a service."

“Very good. Begone, and in the future take more precautions in your amorous adventures.”

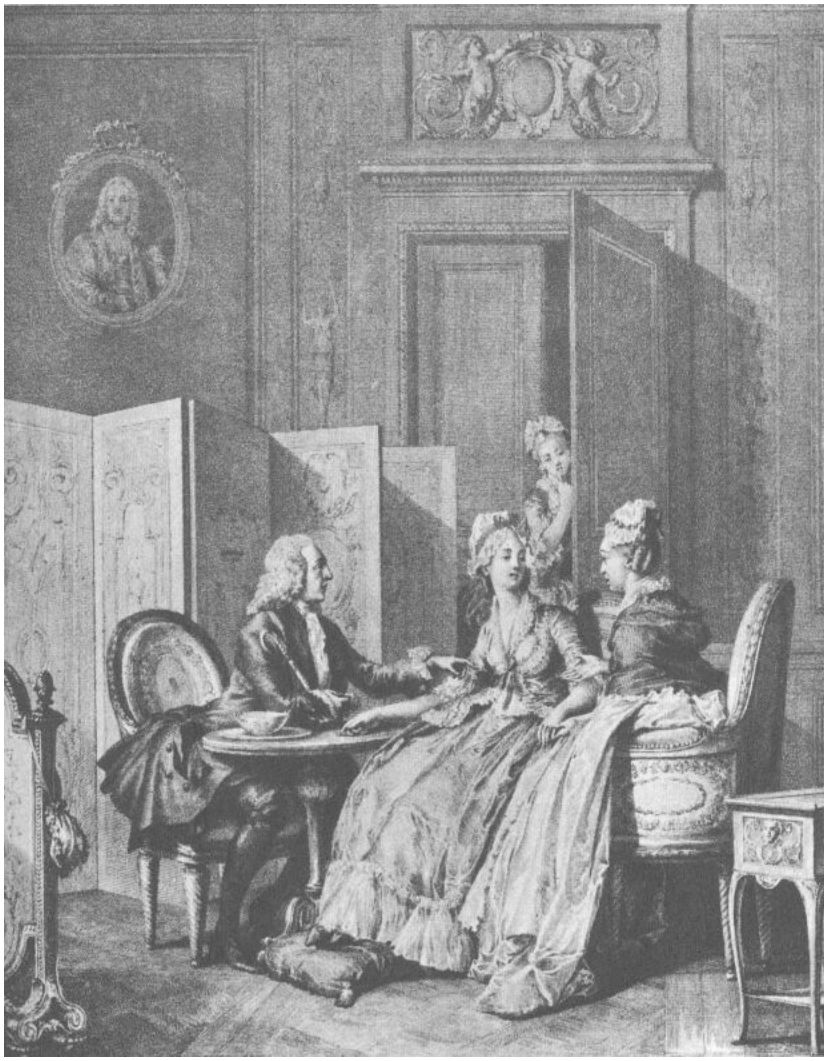
After this I went to bed, well pleased with what I had seen and what I had done, for I now had complete power over the Corticelli.

In the morning I called on her as soon as I got up, and told her to pack up her things, forbidding her to leave her room till she got into the carriage.

“I shall say I am ill.”

“Just as you please, but nobody will take any notice of you.”

I did not wait for her to make any further objections, but proceeded to tell the tale of what had passed to Madame d’Urfe, slightly embroidering the narrative. She laughed heartily, and enquired of the oracle what must be done with the Lascaris after her evident pollution by the evil genius disguised as a priest. The oracle replied that we must set out the next day for Besancon, whence she would go to Lyons and await me there, while I would take the countess to Geneva, and thus send her back to her native country.



The worthy visionary was enchanted with this arrangement, and saw in it another proof of the benevolence of Selenis, who would thus give her an opportunity of seeing young Aranda once more. It was agreed that I was to rejoin her in the spring of the following year, to perform the great operation which was to make her be born a man. She had not the slightest doubts as to the reasonableness of this performance.

All was ready, and the next day we started; Madame d'Urfe and I in the travelling carriage, and the Corticelli, her mother, and the servants in another conveyance.

When we got to Besancon Madame d'Urfe left me, and on the next day I journeyed towards Geneva with the mother and daughter.

On the way I not only did not speak to my companions, I did not so much as look at them. I made them have their meals with a servant from the Franche Comte, whom I had taken on M. de Schaumburg's recommendation.

I went to my banker, and asked him to get me a good coachman, who would take two ladies of my acquaintance to Turin.

When I got back to the inn I wrote to the Chevalier Raiberti, sending him a bill of exchange. I warned him that in three or four days after the receipt of my letter he would be accosted by a Bolognese dancer and her mother, bearing a letter of commendation. I begged him to see that they lodged in a respectable house, and to pay for them on my behalf. I also said that I should be much obliged if he would contrive that she should dance, even for nothing, at the carnival, and I begged him to warn her that, if I heard any tales about her when I came to Turin, our relations would be at an end.

The following day a clerk of M. Tronchin's brought a coachman for me to see. The man said he was ready to start as soon as he had had his dinner. I confirmed the agreement he had made with the banker, I summoned the two Corticellis, and said to the coachman,

"These are the persons you are to drive, and they will pay you when they reach Turin in safety with their luggage. You are to take four days and a half for the journey, as is stipulated in the agreement, of which they have one copy and you another." An hour after he called to put the luggage in.

The Corticelli burst into tears, but I was not so cruel as to send her away without any consolation. Her bad conduct had been severely enough punished already. I made her dine with me, and as I gave her the letter for M. Raiberti, and twenty-five Louis for the journey, I told her what I had written to the gentleman, who would take good care of them. She asked me for a trunk containing three dresses and a superb mantle which Madame d'Urfe had given her before she became mad, but I said that we would talk of that at Turin. She dared not mention the casket, but continued weeping; however, she did not move me to pity. I left her much better off than when I first knew her; she had good clothes, good linen, jewels, and an exceedingly pretty watch I had given her; altogether a good deal more than she deserved.

As she was going I escorted her to the carriage, less for politeness' sake than to commend her once more to the coachman. When she was fairly gone I felt as if a load had been taken off my back, and I went to look up my worthy syndic, whom the reader will not have forgotten. I had not written to him since I was in Florence, and I anticipated the pleasure of seeing his surprise, which was extreme. But after gazing at me for a moment he threw his arms round my neck, kissed me several times, and said he had not expected the pleasure of seeing me.

"How are our sweethearts getting on?"

"Excellently. They are always talking about you and regretting your absence; they will go wild with joy when they know you are here."

"You must tell them directly, then."

"I will go and warn them that we shall all sup together this evening. By the way, M. de Voltaire has given up his house at Delices to M. de Villars, and has gone to live at Ferney."

"That makes no difference to me, as I was not thinking of calling on him this time. I shall be here for two or three weeks, and I mean to devote my time to you."

"You are too good."

"Will you give me writing materials before you go out? I will write a few letters while you are away."

He put me in possession of his desk, and I wrote to my late housekeeper, Madame Lebel, telling her that I was going to spend three weeks at Geneva, and that if I were sure of seeing her I would gladly pay a visit to Lausanne. Unfortunately, I also wrote to the bad Genoese poet, Ascanio Pogomas, or Giaccomo Passano, whom I had met at Leghorn. I told him to go to Turin and to wait for me there. At the same time I wrote to M. F —— , to whom I had commended him, asking him to give the poet twelve Louis for the journey.

My evil genius made me think of this man, who was an imposing-looking fellow, and had all the air of a magician, to introduce him to Madame d'Urfe as a great adept. You will see, dear reader, in the course of a year whether I had reason to repent of this fatal inspiration.

As the syndic and I were on our way to our young friend's house I saw an elegant English carriage for sale, and I exchanged it for mine, giving the owner a hundred Louis as well. While the bargain was going on the uncle of the young theologian who argued so well, and to whom I had given such pleasant lessons in physiology, came up to me, embraced me, and asked me to dine with him the next day.

Before we got to the house the syndic informed me that we should find another extremely pretty but uninitiated girl present.

"All the better," said I, "I shall know how to regulate my conduct, and perhaps I may succeed in initiating her."

In my pocket I had placed a casket containing a dozen exquisite rings. I had long been aware that such trifling presents are often very serviceable.

The moment of meeting those charming girls once more was one of the happiest I have ever enjoyed. In their greeting I read delight and love of pleasure. Their love was without envy or jealousy, or any ideas which would have injured their self-esteem. They felt worthy of my regard, as they had lavished their favours on me without any degrading feelings, and drawn by the same emotion that had drawn me.

The presence of the neophyte obliged us to greet each other with what is called decency, and she allowed me to kiss her without raising her eyes, but blushing violently.

After the usual commonplaces had passed and we had indulged in some double meanings which made us laugh and her look thoughtful, I told her she was pretty as a little love, and that I felt sure that her mind, as beautiful as its casket, could harbour no prejudices.

"I have all the prejudices which honour and religion suggest," she modestly replied.

I saw that this was a case requiring very delicate treatment. There was no question of carrying the citadel by sudden assault. But, as usual, I fell in love with her.

The syndic having pronounced my name, she said, —

"Ah! then, you, sir, are the person who discussed some very singular questions with my cousin, the pastor's niece. I am delighted to make your acquaintance.”

“I am equally pleased to make yours, but I hope the pastor’s niece said nothing against me.”

“Not at all; she has a very high opinion of you.”

“I am going to dine with her to-morrow, and I shall take care to thank her.”

“To-morrow! I should like to be there, for I enjoy philosophical discussions though I never dare to put a word in.”

The syndic praised her discretion and wisdom in such a manner that I was convinced he was in love with her, and that he had either seduced her or was trying to do so. Her name was Helen. I asked the young ladies if Helen was their sister. The eldest replied, with a sly smile, that she was a sister, but as yet she had no brother; and with this explanation she ran up to Helen and kissed her. Then the syndic and I vied with each other in paying her compliments, telling her that we hoped to be her brothers. She blushed, but gave no answer to our gallantries. I then drew forth my casket, and seeing that all the girls were enchanted with the rings, I told them to choose which ones they liked best. The charming Helen imitated their example, and repaid me with a modest kiss. Soon after she left us, and we were once more free, as in old times.

The syndic had good cause to shew for his love of Helen. She was not merely pleasing, she was made to inspire a violent passion. However, the three friends had no hope of making her join in their pleasures, for they said that she had invincible feelings of modesty where men were concerned.

We supped merrily, and after supper we began our sports again, the syndic remaining as usual a mere looker-on, and well pleased with his part. I treated each of the three nymphs to two courses, deceiving them whenever I was forced by nature to do so. At midnight we broke up, and the worthy syndic escorted me to the door of my lodging.

The day following I went to the pastor’s and found a numerous party assembled, amongst others M. d’Harcourt and M. de Ximenes, who told me that M. de Voltaire knew that I was at Geneva and hoped to see me. I replied by a profound bow. Mdlle. Hedvig, the pastor’s niece, complimented me, but I was still better pleased to see her cousin Helen. The theologian of twenty-two was fair and pleasant to the eyes, but she had not that ‘je ne sais quoi’, that shade of bitter-sweet, which adds zest to hope as well as pleasure. However, the evident friendship between Hedvig and Helen gave me good hopes of success with the latter.

We had an excellent dinner, and while it lasted the conversation was restricted to ordinary topics; but at dessert the pastor begged M. de Ximenes to ask his niece some questions. Knowing his worldwide reputation, I expected him to put her some problem in geometry, but he only asked whether a lie could be justified on the principle of a mental reservation.

Hedvig replied that there are cases in which a lie is necessary, but that the principle of a mental reservation is always a cheat.

“Then how could Christ have said that the time in which the world was to come to an end was unknown to Him?”

“He was speaking the truth; it was not known to Him.”

“Then he was not God?”

“That is a false deduction, for since God may do all things, He may certainly be ignorant of an event in futurity.”

I thought the way in which she brought in the word “futurity” almost sublime. Hedvig was loudly applauded, and her uncle went all round the table to kiss her. I had a very natural objection on the tip of my tongue, which she might have found difficult to answer, but I wanted to get into her good graces and I kept my own counsel.

M. d’Harcourt was urged to ask her some questions, but he replied in the words of Horace, ‘Nulla mihi religio est’. Then Hedvig turned to me and asked me to put her some hard question, “something difficult, which you don’t know yourself.”

“I shall be delighted. Do you grant that a god possesses in a supreme degree the qualities of man?”

“Yes, excepting man’s weaknesses.”

“Do you class the generative power as a weakness?”

“No.”

"Will you tell me, then, of what nature would have been the offspring of a union between a god and a mortal woman?"

Hedvig looked as red as fire.

The pastor and the other guests looked at each other, while I gazed fixedly at the young theologian, who was reflecting. M. d'Harcourt said that we should have to send for Voltaire to settle a question so difficult, but as Hedvig had collected her thoughts and seemed ready to speak everybody was silent.

"It would be absurd," said she, "to suppose that a deity could perform such an action without its having any results. At the end of nine months a woman would be delivered a male child, which would be three parts man and one part god."

At these words all the guests applauded, M. de Ximenes expressed his admiration of the way the question had been solved, adding, —

"Naturally, if the son of the woman married, his children would be seven-eighths men and one-eighth gods."

"Yes," said I, "unless he married a goddess, which would have made the proportion different."

"Tell me exactly," said Hedvig, "what proportion of divinity there would be in a child of the sixteenth generation."

"Give me a pencil and I will soon tell you," said M. de Ximenes.

"There is no need to calculate it," said I; "the child would have some small share of the wit which you enjoy."

Everybody applauded this gallant speech, which did not by any means offend the lady to whom it was addressed.

This pretty blonde was chiefly desirable for the charms of her intellect. We rose from the table and made a circle round her, but she told us with much grace not to pay her any more compliments.

I took Helen aside, and told her to get her cousin to choose a ring from my casket, which I gave her, and she seemed glad to execute the commission. A quarter of an hour afterwards Hedvig came to shew me her hand adorned with the ring she had chosen. I kissed it rapturously, and she must have guessed from the warmth of my kisses with what feelings she had inspired me.

In the evening Helen told the syndic and the three girls all about the morning's discussion without leaving out the smallest detail. She told the story with ease and grace, and I had no occasion to prompt her. We begged her to stay to supper, but she whispered something to the three friends, and they agreed that it was impossible; but she said that she might spend a couple of days with them in their country house on the lake, if they would ask her mother.

At the syndic's request the girls called on the mother the next day, and the day after that they went off with Helen. The same evening we went and supped with them, but we could not sleep there. The syndic was to take me to a house at a short distance off, where we should be very comfortable. This being the case there was no hurry, and the eldest girl said that the syndic and I could leave whenever we liked, but that they were going to bed. So saying she took Helen to her room, while the two others slept in another room. Soon after the syndic went into the room where Helen was, and I visited the two others.

I had scarcely been with my two sweethearts for an hour when the syndic interrupted my erotic exploits by begging me to go.

"What have you done with Helen?" I asked.

"Nothing; she's a simpleton, and an intractable one. She hid under the sheets and would not look at my performance with her friend."

"You ought to go to her direct."

"I have done so, but she repulsed me again and again. I have given it up, and shall not try it again, unless you will tame her for me."

"How is it to be done?"

"Come to dinner to-morrow. I shall be away at Geneva. I shall be back by supper-time. I wish we could give her too much to drink!"

"That would be a pity. Let me see what I can do."

I accordingly went to dine with them by myself the next day, and they entertained me in all the force of the word. After dinner we went for a walk, and the three friends understanding my aims left me alone with the intractable girl, who resisted my caresses in a manner which almost made me give up the hope of taming her.

“The syndic,” said I, “is in love with you, and last night …

“Last night,” she said, “he amused himself with his old friend. I am for everyone’s following their own tastes, but I expect to be allowed to follow mine.”

“If I could gain your heart I should be happy.”

“Why don’t you invite the pastor and my cousin to dine with you? I could come too, for the pastor makes much of everyone who loves his niece.”

“I am glad to hear that. Has she a lover?”

“No.”

“I can scarcely believe it. She is young, pretty, agreeable, and very clever.”

“You don’t understand Genevan ways. It is because she is so clever that no young man falls in love with her. Those who might be attracted by her personal charms hold themselves aloof on account of her intellectual capacities, as they would have to sit in silence before her.”

“Are the young Genevans so ignorant, then?”

“As a rule they are. Some of them have received excellent educations, but in a general way they are full of prejudice. Nobody wishes to be considered a fool or a blockhead, but clever women are not appreciated; and if a girl is witty or well educated she endeavors to hide her lights, at least if she desires to be married.”

“Ah! now I see why you did not open your lips during our discussion.”

“No, I know I have nothing to hide. This was not the motive which made me keep silence, but the pleasure of listening. I admired my cousin, who was not afraid to display her learning on a subject which any other girl would have affected to know nothing about.”

“Yes, affected, though she might very probably know as much as her grandmother.”

“That’s a matter of morals, or rather of prejudices.”

“Your reasoning is admirable, and I am already longing for the party you so cleverly suggested:”

“You will have the pleasure of being with my cousin.”

“I do her justice. Hedvig is certainly a very interesting and agreeable girl, but believe me it is your presence that will constitute my chief enjoyment.”

“And how if I do not believe you?”

“You would wrong me and give me pain, for I love you dearly.”

“In spite of that you have deceived me. I am sure that you have given marks of your affection to those three young ladies. For my part I pity them.”

“Why?”

“Because neither of them can flatter herself that you love her, and her alone.”

“And do you think that your delicacy of feeling makes you happier than they are?”

“Yes, I think so though of course, I have no experience in the matter. Tell me truly, do you think I am right?”

“Yes, I do.”

“I am delighted to hear it; but you must confess that to associate me with them in your attentions would not be giving me the greatest possible proof of your love.”

“Yes, I do confess it, and I beg your pardon. But tell me how I should set to work to ask the pastor to dinner.”

“There will be no difficulty. Just call on him and ask him to come, and if you wish me to be of the party beg him to ask my mother and myself.”

“Why your mother?”

“Because he has been in love with her these twenty years, and loves her still.”

“And where shall I give this dinner?”

“Is not M. Tronchin your banker?”

"Yes."

"He has a nice pleasure house on the lake; ask him to lend it you for the day; he will be delighted to do so. But don't tell the syndic or his three friends anything about it; they can hear of it afterwards."

"But do you think your learned cousin will be glad to be in my company?"

"More than glad, you may be sure."

"Very good, everything will be arranged by tomorrow. The day after, you will be returning to Geneva, and the party will take place two or three days later."

The syndic came back in due course, and we had a very pleasant evening. After supper the ladies went to bed as before, and I went with the eldest girl while the syndic visited the two younger ones. I knew that it would be of no use to try to do anything with Helen, so I contented myself with a few kisses, after which I wished them good night and passed on to the next room. I found them in a deep sleep, and the syndic seemed visibly bored. He did not look more cheerful when I told him that I had had no success with Helen.

"I see," said he, "that I shall waste my time with the little fool. I think I shall give her up."

"I think that's the best thing you could do," I replied, "for a man who languishes after a woman who is either devoid of feeling or full of caprice, makes himself her dupe. Bliss should be neither too easy nor too hard to be won."

The next day we returned to Geneva, and M. Tronchin seemed delighted to oblige me. The pastor accepted my invitation, and said I was sure to be charmed with Helen's mother. It was easy to see that the worthy man cherished a tenderness for her, and if she responded at all it would be all the better for my purposes.

I was thinking of supping with the charming Helen and her three friends at the house on the lake, but an express summoned me to Lausanne. Madame Lebel, my old housekeeper, invited me to sup with her and her husband. She wrote that she had made her husband promise to take her to Lausanne as soon as she got my letter, and she added she was sure that I would resign everything to give her the pleasure of seeing me. She notified the hour at which she would be at her mother's house.

Madame Lebel was one of the ten or twelve women for whom in my happy youth I cherished the greatest affection. She had all the qualities to make a man a good wife, if it had been my fate to experience such felicity. But perhaps I did well not to tie myself down with irrevocable bonds, though now my independence is another name for slavery. But if I had married a woman of tact, who would have ruled me unawares to myself, I should have taken care of my fortune and have had children, instead of being lonely and penniless in my old age.

But I must indulge no longer in digressions on the past which cannot be recalled, and since my recollections make me happy I should be foolish to cherish idle regrets.

I calculated that if I started directly I should get to Lausanne an hour before Madame Lebel, and I did not hesitate to give her this proof of my regard. I must here warn my readers, that, though I loved this woman well, I was then occupied with another passion, and no voluptuous thought mingled with my desire of seeing her. My esteem for her was enough to hold my passions in check, but I esteemed Lebel too, and nothing would have induced me to disturb the happiness of this married pair.

I wrote in haste to the syndic, telling him that an important and sudden call obliged me to start for Lausanne, but that I should have the pleasure of supping with him and his three friends at Geneva on the following day.

I knocked at Madame Dubois's door at five o'clock, almost dying with hunger. Her surprise was extreme, for she did not know that her daughter was going to meet me at her house. Without more ado I gave her two louis to get us a good supper.

At seven o'clock, Madame Lebel, her husband, and a child of eighteen months, whom I easily recognized as my own, arrived. Our meeting was a happy one indeed; we spent ten hours at table, and mirth and joy prevailed. At day-break she started for Soleure, where Lebel had business. M. de Chavigni had desired to be remembered most affectionately to me. Lebel assured me that the ambassador was extremely kind to his wife, and he thanked me heartily for having given such a woman up to him. I could easily see that he was a happy husband, and that his wife was as happy as he.

My dear housekeeper talked to me about my son. She said that nobody suspected the truth, but that neither she nor Lebel (who had faithfully kept his promise, and had not consummated the marriage for the two months agreed upon) had any doubts.

“The secret,” said Lebel to me, “will never be known, and your son will be my sole heir, or will share my property with my children if I ever have any, which I doubt.”

“My dear,” said his wife, “there is somebody who has very strong suspicions on the subject, and these suspicions will gain strength as the child grows older; but we have nothing to fear on that score, as she is well paid to keep the secret.”

“And who is this person?” said I.

“Madame —— . She has not forgotten the past, and often speaks of you.”

“Will you kindly remember me to her?”

“I shall be delighted to do so, and I am sure the message will give her great pleasure.”

Lebel shewed me my ring, and I shewed him his, and gave him a superb watch for my son.

“You must give it him,” I said, “when you think he is old enough.”

We shall hear of the young gentleman in twenty-one years at Fontainebleau.

I passed three hours in telling them of all the adventures I had during the twenty-seven months since we had seen one another. As to their history, it was soon told; it had all the calm which belongs to happiness.

Madame Lebel was as pretty as ever, and I could see no change in her, but I was no longer the same man. She thought me less lively than of old, and she was right. The Renaud had blasted me, and the pretended Lascaris had given me a great deal of trouble and anxiety.

We embraced each other tenderly, and the wedded pair returned to Soleure and I to Geneva; but feeling that I wanted rest I wrote to the syndic that I was not well and could not come till the next day, and after I had done so I went to bed.

The next day, the eve of my dinner party, I ordered a repast in which no expense was to be spared. I did not forget to tell the landlord to get me the best wines, the choicest liqueurs, ices, and all the materials for a bowl of punch. I told him that we should be six in number, for I foresaw that M. Tronchin would dine with us. I was right; I found him at his pretty house ready to receive us, and I had not much trouble in inducing him to stay. In the evening I thought it as well to tell the syndic and his three friends about it in Helen's presence, while she, feigning ignorance, said that her mother had told her they were going somewhere or other to dinner.

"I am delighted to hear it," said I; "it must be at M. Tronchin's."

My dinner would have satisfied the most exacting gourmet, but Hedvig was its real charm. She treated difficult theological questions with so much grace, and rationalised so skilfully, that though one might not be convinced it was impossible to help being attracted. I have never seen any theologian who could treat the most difficult points with so much facility, eloquence, and real dignity, and at dinner she completed her conquest of myself. M. Tronchin, who had never heard her speak before, thanked me a hundred times for having procured him this pleasure, and being obliged to leave us by the call of business he asked us to meet again in two days' time.

I was much interested during the dessert by the evident tenderness of the pastor for Helen's mother. His amorous eloquence grew in strength as he irrigated his throat with champagne, Greek wine, and eastern liqueurs. The lady seemed pleased, and was a match for him as far as drinking was concerned, while the two girls and myself only drank with sobriety. However, the mixture of wines, and above all the punch, had done their work, and my charmers were slightly elevated. Their spirits were delightful, but rather pronounced.

I took this favourable opportunity to ask the two aged lovers if I might take the young ladies for a walk in the garden by the lake, and they told us enthusiastically to go and enjoy ourselves. We went out arm in arm, and in a few minutes we were out of sight of everyone.

“Do you know,” said I to Hedvig, “that you have made a conquest of M. Tronchin?”

“Have I? The worthy banker asked me some very silly questions.”

“You must not expect everyone to be able to contend with you.”

“I can’t help telling you that your question pleased me best of all. A bigoted theologian at the end of the table seemed scandalized at the question and still more at the answer.”

“And why?”

“He says I ought to have told you that a deity could not impregnate a woman. He said that he would explain the reason to me if I were a man, but being a woman and a maid he could not with propriety expound such mysteries. I wish you would tell me what the fool meant.”

“I should be very glad, but you must allow me to speak plainly, and I shall have to take for granted that you are acquainted with the physical conformation of a man.”

“Yes, speak as plainly as you like, for there is nobody to hear what we say; but I must confess that I am only acquainted with the peculiarities of the male by theory and reading. I have no practical knowledge. I have seen statues, but I have never seen or examined a real live man. Have you, Helen?”

“I have never wished to do so.”

“Why not? It is good to know everything.”

“Well, Hedvig, your theologian meant to say that a god was not capable of this.”

“What is that?”

“Give me your hand.”

“I can feel it, and have thought it would be something like that; without this provision of nature man would not be able to fecundate his mate. And how could the foolish theologian maintain that this was an imperfection?”

“Because it is the result of desire, Hedvig, and it would not have taken place in me if I had not been charmed with you, and if I had not conceived the most seducing ideas of the beauties that I cannot see from the view of the beauties I can see. Tell me frankly whether feeling that did not give you an agreeable sensation."

"It did, and just in the place where your hand is now. Don't you feel a pleasant tickling there, Helen, after what the gentleman has been saying to us?"

"Yes, I feel it, but I often do, without anything to excite me."

"And then," said I, "nature makes you appease it … thus?"

"Not at all."

"Oh, yes!" said Hedvig. "Even when we are asleep our hands seek that spot as if by instinct, and if it were not for that solace I think we should get terribly ill."

As this philosophical discourse, conducted by the young theologian in quite a professional manner, proceeded, we reached a beautiful basin of water, with a flight of marble steps for bathers. Although the air was cool our heads were hot, and I conceived the idea of telling them that it would do them good to bathe their feet, and that if they would allow me I would take off their shoes and stockings.

"I should like to so much," said Hedvig.

"And I too," said Helen.

"Then sit down, ladies, on the first step."

They proceeded to sit down and I began to take off their shoes, praising the beauty of their legs, and pretending for the present not to want to go farther than the knee. When they got into the water they were obliged to pick up their clothes, and I encouraged them to do so.

"Well, well," said Hedvig, "men have thighs too."

Helen, who would have been ashamed to be beaten by her cousin, was not backward in shewing her legs.

"That will do, charming maids," said I, "you might catch cold if you stayed longer in the water."

They walked up backwards, still holding up their clothes for fear of wetting them, and it was then my duty to wipe them dry with all the handkerchiefs I had. This pleasant task left me at freedom to touch and see, and the reader will imagine that I did my best in that direction. The fair theologian told me I wanted to know too much, but Helen let me do what I liked with such a tender and affectionate expression that it was as much as I could do to keep within bounds. At last, when I had drawn on their shoes and stockings, I told them that I was delighted to have seen the hidden charms of the two prettiest girls in Geneva.

“What effect had it on you?” asked Hedvig.

“I daren’t tell you to look, but feel, both of you.”

“Do you bathe, too.”

“It’s out of the question, a man’s undressing takes so much trouble.”

“But we have still two hours before us, in which we need not fear any interruption.”

This reply gave me a foretaste of the bliss I had to gain, but I did not wish to expose myself to an illness by going into the water in my present state. I noticed a summer-house at a little distance, and feeling sure that M. Tronchin had left the door open, I took the two girls on my arm and led them there without giving them any hint of my intentions. The summer-house was scented with vases of pot-pourri and adorned with engravings; but, best of all, there was a large couch which seemed made for repose and pleasure. I sat down on it between my two sweethearts, and as I caressed them I told them I was going to shew them something they had never seen before, and without more ado I displayed to their gaze the principal agent in the preservation of the human race. They got up to admire it, and taking a hand of each one I procured them some enjoyment, but in the middle of their labours an abundant flow of liquid threw them into the greatest astonishment.

“That,” said I, “is the Word which makes men.”

“It’s beautiful!” cried Helen, laughing at the term “word.”

“I have a word too,” said Hedvig, “and I will shew it to you if you will wait a minute.”

“Come, Hedvig, and I will save you the trouble of making it yourself, and will do it better.”

“I daresay, but I have never done it with a man.”

“No more have I,” said Helen.

Placing them in front of me I gave them another ecstacy. We then sat down, and while I felt all their charms I let them touch me as much as they liked till I watered their hands a second time.

We made ourselves decent once more, and spent half an hour in kisses and caresses, and I then told them that they had made me happy only in part, but that I hoped they would make my bliss complete by presenting me with their maidenheads. I shewed them the little safety-bags invented by the English in the interests of the fair sex. They admired them greatly when I explained their use, and the fair theologian remarked to her cousin that she would think it over. We were now close friends, and soon promised to be something more; and we walked back and found the pastor and Helen’s mother strolling by the side of the lake.

When I got back to Geneva I went to spend the evening with the three friends, but I took good care not to tell the syndic anything about my victory with Helen. It would only have served to renew his hopes, and he would have had this trouble for nothing. Even I would have done no good without the young theologian; but as Helen admired her she did not like to appear her inferior by refusing to imitate her freedom.

I did not see Helen that evening, but I saw her the next day at her mother’s house, for I was in mere politeness bound to thank the old lady for the honour she had done me. She gave me a most friendly reception, and introduced me to two very pretty girls who were boarding with her. They might have interested me if I had been stopping long in Geneva, but as if was Helen claimed all my attraction.

“To-morrow,” said the charming girl, “I shall be able to get a word with you at Madame Tronchin’s dinner, and I expect Hedvig will have hit on some way for you to satisfy your desires.”

The banker gave us an excellent dinner. He proudly told me that no inn-keeper could give such a good dinner as a rich gentleman who has a good cook, a good cellar, good silver plate, and china of the best quality. We were twenty of us at table, and the feast was given chiefly in honour of the learned theologian and myself, as a rich foreigner who spent money freely. M. de Ximenes, who had just arrived from Ferney was there, and told me that M. de Voltaire was expecting me, but I had foolishly determined not to go.

Hedvig shone in solving the questions put to her by the company. M. de Ximenes begged her to justify as best she could our first mother, who had deceived her husband by giving him the fatal apple to eat.

"Eve," she said, "did not deceive her husband, she only cajoled him into eating it in the hope of giving him one more perfection. Besides Eve had not been forbidden to eat the fruit by God, but only by Adam, and in all probability her woman's sense prevented her regarding the prohibition as serious."

At this reply, which I found full of sense and wit, two scholars from Geneva and even Hedvig's uncle began to murmur and shake their heads. Madame Tronchin said gravely that Eve had received the prohibition from God himself, but the girl only answered by a humble "I beg your pardon, madam." At this she turned to the pastor with a frightened manner, and said, —

"What do you say to this?"

"Madam, my niece is not infallible."

"Excuse me, dear uncle, I am as infallible as Holy Writ when I speak according to it."

"Bring a Bible, and let me see."

"Hedvig, my dear Hedvig, you are right after all. Here it is. The prohibition was given before woman was made."

Everybody applauded, but Hedvig remained quite calm; it was only the two scholars and Madame Tronchin who still seemed disturbed. Another lady then asked her if it was allowable to believe the history of the apple to be symbolical. She replied, —

"I do not think so, because it could only be a symbol of sexual union, and it is clear that such did not take place between Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden."

"The learned differ on this point."

"All the worse for them, madam, the Scripture is plain enough. In the first verse of the fourth chapter it is written, that Adam knew his wife after they had been driven from the Garden, and that in consequence she conceived Cain."

"Yes, but the verse does not say that Adam did not know her before and consequently he might have done so."

"I cannot admit the inference, as in that case she would have conceived; for it would be absurd to suppose that two creatures who had just left God's hands, and were consequently as nearly perfect as is possible, could perform the act of generation without its having any result."

This reply gained everyone's applause, and compliments to Hedvig made the round of the table.

Mr. Tronchin asked her if the doctrine of the immortality of the soul could be gathered from the Old Testament alone.

"The Old Testament," she replied, "does not teach this doctrine; but, nevertheless, human reason teaches it, as the soul is a substance, and the destruction of any substance is an unthinkable proposition."

"Then I will ask you," said the banker, "if the existence of the soul is established in the Bible."

"Where there is smoke there is always fire."

"Tell me, then, if matter can think."

"I cannot answer that question, for it is beyond my knowledge. I can only say that as I believe God to be all powerful, I cannot deny Him the power to make matter capable of thought."

"But what is your own opinion?"

"I believe that I have a soul endowed with thinking capacities, but I do not know whether I shall remember that I had the honour of dining with you to-day after I die."

"Then you think that the soul and the memory may be separable; but in that case you would not be a theologian."

"One may be a theologian and a philosopher, for philosophy never contradicts any truth, and besides, to say 'I do not know' is not the same as 'I am sure'."

Three parts of the guests burst into cries of admiration, and the fair philosopher enjoyed seeing me laugh for pleasure at the applause. The pastor wept for joy, and whispered something to Helen's mother. All at once he turned to me, saying, —

"Ask my niece some question."

"Yes," said Hedvig, "but it must be something quite new."

"That is a hard task," I replied, "for how am I to know that what I ask is new to you? However, tell me if one must stop at the first principle of a thing one wants to understand."

"Certainly, and the reason is that in God there is no first principle, and He is therefore incomprehensible."

"God be praised! that is how I would have you answer. Can God have any self-consciousness?"

"There my learning is baffled. I know not what to reply. You should not ask me so hard a thing as that."

"But you wished for something new. I thought the newest thing would be to see you at a loss."

"That's prettily said. Be kind enough to reply for me, gentlemen, and teach me what to say."

Everybody tried to answer, but nothing was said worthy of record. Hedvig at last said, —

"My opinion is that since God knows all, He knows of His own existence, but you must not ask me how He knows it."

"That's well said," I answered; and nobody could throw any further light on the matter.

All the company looked on me as a polite Atheist, so superficial is the judgment of society, but it did not matter to me whether they thought me an Atheist or not.

M. de Ximenes asked Hedvig if matter had been created.

“I cannot recognize the word ‘created,’” she replied. “Ask me whether matter was formed, and I shall reply in the affirmative. The word ‘created’ cannot have existence, for the existence of anything must be prior to the word which explains it.”

“Then what meaning do you assign to the word ‘created’?”

“Made out of nothing. You see the absurdity, for nothing must have first existed. I am glad to see you laugh. Do you think that nothingness could be created?”

“You are right.”

“Not at all, not at all,” said one of the guests, superciliously.

“Kindly tell me who was your teacher?” said M. de Ximenes.

“My uncle there.”

“Not at all, my dear niece. I certainly never taught you what you have been telling us to-day. But my niece, gentlemen, reads and reflects over what she has read, perhaps with rather too much freedom, but I love her all the same, because she always ends by acknowledging that she knows nothing.”

A lady who had not opened her lips hitherto asked Hedvig for a definition of spirit.

“Your question is a purely philosophical one, and I must answer that I do not know enough of spirit or matter to be able to give a satisfactory definition.”

“But since you acknowledge the existence of Deity and must therefore have an abstract idea of spirit, you must have some notions on the subject, and should be able to tell me how it acts on matter.”

“No solid foundation can be built on abstract ideas. Hobbes calls such ideas mere fantasms. One may have them, but if one begins to reason on them, one is landed in contradiction. I know that God sees me, but I should labour in vain if I endeavoured to prove it by reasoning, for reason tells us no one can see anything without organs of sight; and God being a pure spirit, and therefore without organs, it is scientifically impossible that He can see us any more than we can see Him. But Moses and several others have seen Him, and I believe it so, without attempting to reason on it."

"You are quite right," said I, "for you would be confronted by blank impossibility. But if you take to reading Hobbes you are in danger of becoming an Atheist."

"I am not afraid of that. I cannot conceive the possibility of Atheism."

After dinner everybody crowded round this truly astonishing girl, so that I had no opportunity of whispering my love. However, I went apart with Helen, who told me that the pastor and his niece were going to sup with her mother the following day.

"Hedvig," she added, "will stay the night and sleep with me as she always does when she comes to supper with her uncle. It remains to be seen if you are willing to hide in a place I will shew you at eleven o'clock tomorrow, in order to sleep with us. Call on my mother at that hour to-morrow, and I will find an opportunity of shewing you where it is. You will be safe though not comfortable, and if you grow weary you can console yourself by thinking that you are in our minds."

"Shall I have to stay there long?"

"Four hours at the most. At seven o'clock the street door is shut, and only opened to anyone who rings."

"If I happen to cough while I am in hiding might I be heard?"

"Yes, that might happen."

"There's a great hazard. All the rest is of no consequence; but no matter, I will risk all for the sake of so great happiness."

In the morning I paid the mother a visit, and as Helen was escorting me out she shewed me a door between the two stairs.

"At seven o'clock," said she, "the door will be open, and when you are in put on the bolt. Take care that no one sees you as you are entering the house."

At a quarter to seven I was already a prisoner. I found a seat in my cell, otherwise I should neither have been able to lie down or to stand up. It was a regular hole, and I knew by my sense of smell that hams and cheeses were usually kept there; but it contained none at present, for I fell all round to see how the land lay. As I was cautiously stepping round I felt my foot encounter some resistance, and putting down my hand I recognized the feel of linen. It was a napkin containing two plates, a nice roast fowl, bread, and a second napkin. Searching again I came across a bottle and a glass. I was grateful to my charmers for having thought of my stomach, but as I had purposely made a late and heavy meal I determined to defer the consumption of my cold collation till a later hour.

At nine o'clock I began, and as I had neither a knife nor a corkscrew I was obliged to break the neck of the bottle with a brick which I was fortunately able to detach from the mouldering floor. The wine was delicious old Neuchatel, and the fowl was stuffed with truffles, and I felt convinced that my two nymphs must have some rudimentary ideas on the subject of stimulants. I should have passed the time pleasantly enough if it had not been for the occasional visits of a rat, who nearly made me sick with his disgusting odour. I remembered that I had been annoyed in the same way at Cologne under somewhat similar circumstances.

At last ten o'clock struck, and I heard the pastor's voice as he came downstairs talking; he warned the girls not to play any tricks together, and to go to sleep quietly. That brought back to my memory M. Rose leaving Madame Orio's house at Venice twenty-two years before; and reflecting on my character I found myself much changed, though not more reasonable; but if I was not so sensible to the charms of the sex, the two beauties who were awaiting me were much superior to Madame Orio's nieces.

In my long and profligate career in which I have turned the heads of some hundreds of ladies, I have become familiar with all the methods of seduction; but my guiding principle has been never to direct my attack against novices or those whose prejudices were likely to prove an obstacle except in the presence of another woman. I soon found out that timidity makes a girl averse to being seduced, while in company with another girl she is easily conquered; the weakness of the one brings on the fall of the other. Fathers and mothers are of the contrary opinion, but they are in the wrong. They will not trust their daughter to take a walk or go to a ball with a young man, but if she has another girl with her there is no difficulty made. I repeat, they are in the wrong; if the young man has the requisite skill their daughter is a lost woman. A feeling of false shame hinders them from making an absolute and determined resistance, and the first step once taken the rest comes inevitably and quickly. The girl grants some small favour, and immediately makes her friend grant a much greater one to hide her own blushes; and if the seducer is clever at his trade the young innocent will soon have gone too far to be able to draw back. Besides the more innocence a girl has, the less she knows of the methods of seduction. Before she has had time to think, pleasure attracts her, curiosity draws her a little farther, and opportunity does the rest.

For example, I might possibly have been able to seduce Hedvig without Helen, but I am certain I should never have succeeded with Helen if she had not seen her cousin take liberties with me which she no doubt thought contrary to the feelings of modesty which a respectable young woman ought to have.

Though I do not repent of my amorous exploits, I am far from wishing that my example should serve for the perversion of the fair sex, who have so many claims on my homage. I desire that what I say may be a warning to fathers and mothers, and secure me a place in their esteem at any rate.

Soon after the pastor had gone I heard three light knocks on my prison door. I opened it, and my hand was folded in a palm as soft as satin. All my being was moved. It was Helen's hand, and that happy moment had already repaid me for my long waiting.

"Follow me on tiptoe," she whispered, as soon as she had shut the door; but in my impatience I clasped her in my arms, and made her feel the effect which her mere presence had produced on me, while at the same time I assured myself of her docility. "There," she said, "now come upstairs softly after me."

I followed her as best I could in the darkness, and she took me along a gallery into a dark room, and then into a lighted one which contained Hedvig almost in a state of nudity. She came to me with open arms as soon as she saw me, and, embracing me ardently, expressed her gratitude for my long and dreary imprisonment.

"Divine Hedvig," I answered, "if I had not loved you madly I would not have stayed a quarter of an hour in that dismal cell, but I am ready to spend four hours there every day till I leave Geneva for your sake. But we must not lose any time; let us go to bed."

"Do you two go to bed," said Helen; "I will sleep on the sofa."

"No, no," cried Hedvig, "don't think of it; our fate must be exactly equal."

"Yes, darling Helen," said I, embracing her; "I love you both with equal ardour, and these ceremonies are only wasting the time in which I ought to be assuring you of my passion. Imitate my proceedings. I am going to undress, and then I shall lie in the middle of the bed. Come and lie beside me, and I'll shew you how I love you. If all is safe I will remain with you till you send me away, but whatever you do do not put out the light."

In the twinkling of an eye, discussing the theory of shame the while with the theological Hedvig, I presented myself to their gaze in the costume of Adam. Hedvig blushed and parted with the last shred of her modesty, citing the opinion of St. Clement Alexandrinus that the seat of shame is in the shirt. I praised the charming perfection of her shape, in the hope of encouraging Helen, who was slowly undressing herself; but an accusation of mock modesty from her cousin had more effect than all my praises. At last this Venus stood before me in a state of nature, covering her most secret parts with her hand, and hiding one breast with the other, and appearing woefully ashamed of what she could not conceal. Her modest confusion, this strife between departing modesty and rising passion, enchanted me.

Hedvig was taller than Helen; her skin was whiter, and her breasts double the size of Helen's; but in Helen there was more animation, her shape was more gently moulded, and her breast might have been the model for the Venus de Medicis.

She got bolder by degrees, and we spent some moments in admiring each other, and then we went to bed. Nature spoke out loudly, and all we wanted was to satisfy its demands. With much coolness I made a woman of Hedvig, and when all was over she kissed me and said that the pain was nothing in comparison with the pleasure.

The turn of Helen (who was six years younger than Hedvig) now came, but the finest fleece that I have ever seen was not won without difficulty. She was jealous of her cousin's success, and held it open with her two hands; and though she had to submit to great pain before being initiated into the amorous mysteries, her sighs were sighs of happiness, as she responded to my ardent efforts. Her great charms and the vivacity of her movements shortened the sacrifice, and when I left the sanctuary my two sweethearts saw that I needed repose.

The alter was purified of the blood of the victims, and we all washed, delighted to serve one another.

Life returned to me under their curious fingers, and the sight filled them with joy. I told them that I wished to enjoy them every night till I left Geneva, but they told me sadly that this was impossible.

“In five or six days time, perhaps, the opportunity may recur again, but that will be all.”

“Ask us to sup at your inn to-morrow,” said Hedvig; “and maybe, chance will favour the commission of a sweet felony.”

I followed this advice.

I overwhelmed them with happiness for several hours, passing five or six times from one to the other before I was exhausted. In the intervals, seeing them to be docile and desirous, I made them execute Aretin’s most complicated postures, which amused them beyond words. We kissed whatever took our fancy, and just as Hedvig applied her lips to the mouth of the pistol, it went off and the discharge inundated her face and her bosom. She was delighted, and watched the process to the end with all the curiosity of a doctor. The night seemed short, though we had not lost a moment’s time, and at daybreak we had to part. I left them in bed and I was fortunate enough to get away without being observed.

I slept till noon, and then having made my toilette I went to call on the pastor, to whom I praised Hedvig to the skies. This was the best way to get him to come to supper at Balances the next day.

“We shall be in the town,” said I, “and can remain together as long as we please, but do not forget to bring the amiable widow and her charming daughter.”

He promised he would bring them both.

In the evening I went to see the syndic and his three friends, who naturally found me rather insensible to their charms. I excused myself by saying that

I had a bad headache. I told them that I had asked the young theologian to supper, and invited the girls and the syndic to come too; but, as I had foreseen, the latter would not hear of their going as it would give rise to gossip.

I took care that the most exquisite wines should form an important feature of my supper. The pastor and the widow were both sturdy drinkers, and I did my best to please them. When I saw that they were pretty mellow and were going over their old recollections, I made a sign to the girls, and they immediately went out as if to go to a retiring-room. Under pretext of shewing them the way I went out too, and took them into a room telling them to wait for me.

I went back to the supper-room, and finding the old friends taken up with each other and scarcely conscious of my presence, I gave them some punch, and told them that I would keep the young ladies company; they were looking at some pictures, I explained. I lost no time, and shewed them some extremely interesting sights. These stolen sweets have a wonderful charm. When we were to some extent satisfied, we went back, and I plied the punch-ladle more and more freely. Helen praised the pictures to her mother, and asked her to come and look at them.

"I don't care to," she replied.

"Well," said Helen, "let us go and see them again."

I thought this stratagem admissible, and going out with my two sweethearts I worked wonders. Hedvig philosophised over pleasure, and told me she would never have known it if I had not chanced to meet her uncle. Helen did not speak; she was more voluptuous than her cousin, and swelled out like a dove, and came to life only to expire a moment afterwards. I wondered at her astonishing fecundity; while I was engaged in one operation she passed from death to life fourteen times. It is true that it was the sixth time with me, so I made my progress rather slower to enjoy the pleasure she took in it.

Before we parted I agreed to call on Helen's mother every day to ascertain the night I could spend with them before I left Geneva. We broke up our party at two o'clock in the morning.

Three or four days after, Helen told me briefly that Hedvig was to sleep with her that night, and that she would leave the door open at the same time as before.

“I will be there.”

“And I will be there to shut you up, but you cannot have a light as the servant might see it.”

I was exact to the time, and when ten o’clock struck they came to fetch me in high glee.

“I forgot to tell you,” said Helen, “that you would find a fowl there.”

I felt hungry, and made short work of it, and then we gave ourselves up to happiness.

I had to set out on my travels in two days. I had received a couple of letters from M. Raiberti. In the first he told me that he had followed my instructions as to the Corticelli, and in the second that she would probably he paid for dancing at the carnival as first ‘figurante’. I had nothing to keep me at Geneva, and Madame d’Urfe, according to our agreement, would be waiting for me at Lyons. I was therefore obliged to go there. Thus the night that I was to pass with my two charmers would be my last.

My lessons had taken effect, and I found they had become past mistresses in the art of pleasure. But now and again joy gave place to sadness.

“We shall be wretched, sweetheart,” said Hedvig, “and if you like we will come with you.”

“I promise to come and see you before two years have expired,” said I; and in fact they had not so long to wait.

We fell asleep at midnight, and waking at four renewed our sweet battles till six o’clock. Half an hour after I left them, worn out with my exertions, and I remained in bed all day. In the evening I went to see the syndic and his young friends. I found Helen there, and she was cunning enough to feign not to be more vexed at my departure than the others, and to further the deception she allowed the syndic to kiss her. I followed suit, and begged her to bid farewell for me to her learned cousin and to excuse my taking leave of her in person.

The next day I set out in the early morning, and on the following day I reached Lyons. Madame d'Urfe was not there, she had gone to an estate of hers at Bresse. I found a letter in which she said that she would be delighted to see me, and I waited on her without losing any time.

She greeted me with her ordinary cordiality, and I told her that I was going to Turin to meet Frederic Gualdo, the head of the Fraternity of the Rosy Cross, and I revealed to her by the oracle that he would come with me to Marseilles, and that there he would complete her happiness. After having received this oracle she would not go to Paris before she saw us. The oracle also bade her wait for me at Lyons with young d'Aranda; who begged me to take him with me to Turin. It may be imagined that I succeeded in putting him off.

Madame d'Urfe had to wait a fortnight to get me fifty thousand francs which I might require on my journey. In the course of this fortnight I made the acquaintance of Madame Pernon, and spent a good deal of money with her husband, a rich mercer, in refurnishing my wardrobe. Madame Pernon was handsome and intelligent. She had a Milanese lover, named Bono, who did business for a Swiss banker named Sacco. It was through Madame Peron that Bono got Madame d'Urfe the fifty thousand francs I required. She also gave me the three dresses which she had promised to the Countess of Lascaris, but which that lady had never seen.

One of these dresses was furred, and was exquisitely beautiful. I left Lyons equipped like a prince, and journeyed towards Turin, where I was to meet the famous Gualdo, who was none other than Ascanio Pogomas, whom I had summoned from Berne. I thought it would be easy to make the fellow play the part I had destined for him, but I was cruelly deceived as the reader will see.

I could not resist stopping at Chamberi to see my fair nun, whom I found looking beautiful and contented. She was grieving, however, after the young boarder, who had been taken from the convent and married.

I got to Turin at the beginning of December, and at Rivoli I found the Corticelli, who had been warned by the Chevalier de Raiberti of my arrival. She gave me a letter from this worthy gentleman, giving the address of the house he had taken for me as I did not want to put up at an inn. I immediately went to take possession of my new lodging.

CHAPTER XVII

My Old Friends — Pacienza — Agatha — Count Boryomeo — The Ball —

Lord Percy

The Corticelli was as gentle as a lamb, and left me as we got into Turin. I promised I would come and see her, and immediately went to the house the Chevalier had taken, which I found convenient in every way.

The worthy Chevalier was not long in calling on me. He gave me an account of the moneys he had spent on the Corticelli, and handed over the rest to me.

“I am flush of money,” I said, “and I intend to invite my friends to supper frequently. Can you lay your hands on a good cook?”

“I know a pearl amongst cooks,” said he, “and you can have him directly.”

“You, chevalier, are the pearl of men. Get me this wonder, tell him I am hard to please, and agree on the sum I am to pay him per month.”

The cook, who was an excellent one, came the same evening.

“It would be a good idea,” said Raiberti, “to call on the Count d’Aglie. He knows that the Corticelli is your mistress, and he has given a formal order to Madame Pacienza, the lady with whom she lives, that when you come and see her you are not to be left alone together.”

This order amused me, and as I did not care about the Corticelli it did not trouble me in the least, though Raiberti, who thought I was in love with her, seemed to pity me.

“Since she has been here,” he said, “her conduct has been irreproachable.”

“I am glad to hear that.”

“You might let her take some lessons from the dancing-master Dupre,” said he. “He will no doubt give her something to do at the carnival.”

I promised to follow his advice, and I then paid a visit to the superintendent of police.

He received me well, complimented me on my return to Turin, and then added with a smile: —

“I warn you that I have been informed that you keep a mistress, and that I have given strict orders to the respectable woman with whom she lives not to leave her alone with you.”

“I am glad to hear it,” I replied, “and the more as I fear her mother is not a person of very rigid morals. I advised the Chevalier Raiberti of my intentions with regard to her, and I am glad to see that he has carried them out so well. I hope the girl will shew herself worthy of your protection.”

“Do you think of staying here throughout the carnival?”

“Yes, if your excellency approves.”

“It depends entirely on your good conduct.”

“A few peccadilloes excepted, my conduct is always above reproach.”

“There are some peccadilloes we do not tolerate here. Have you seen the Chevalier Osorio?”

“I think of calling on him to-day or to-morrow.”

“I hope you will remember me to him.”

He rang his bell, bowed, and the audience was over.

The Chevalier Osorio received me at his office, and gave me a most gracious reception. After I had given him an account of my visit to the superintendent, he asked me, with a smile, if I felt inclined to submit with docility to not seeing my mistress in freedom.

“Certainly,” said I, “for I am not in love with her.”

Osorio looked at me slyly, and observed, “Somehow I don’t think your indifference will be very pleasing to the virtuous duenna.”

I understood what he meant, but personally I was delighted not to be able to see the Corticelli save in the presence of a female dragon. It would make people talk, and I loved a little scandal, and felt curious to see what would happen.

When I returned to my house I found the Genoese Passano, a bad poet and worse painter, to whom I had intended to give the part of a Rosicrucian, because there was something in his appearance which inspired, if not respect, at least awe and a certain feeling of fear. In point of fact, this was only a natural presentiment that the man must be either a clever rogue or a morose and sullen scholar.

I made him sup with me and gave him a room on the third floor, telling him not to leave it without my permission. At supper I found him insipid in conversation, drunken, ignorant, and ill disposed, and I already repented of having taken him under my protection; but the thing was done.

The next day, feeling curious to see how the Corticelli was lodged, I called on her, taking with me a piece of Lyons silk.

I found her and her mother in the landlady's room, and as I came in the latter said that she was delighted to see me and that she hoped I would often dine with them. I thanked her briefly and spoke to the girl coolly enough.

"Shew me your room," said I. She took me there in her mother's company. "Here is something to make you a winter dress," said I, skewing her the silk.

"Is this from the marchioness?"

"No, it is from me."

"But where are the three dresses she said she would give me?"

"You know very well on what conditions you were to have them, so let us say no more about it."

She unfolded the silk which she liked very much, but she said she must have some trimmings. The Pacienza offered her services, and said she would send for a dressmaker who lived close by. I acquiesced with a nod, and as soon as she had left the room the Signora Laura said she was very sorry only to be able to receive me in the presence of the landlady.

"I should have thought," said I, "that a virtuous person like you would have been delighted."

"I thank God for it every morning and night."

"You infernal old hypocrite!" said I, looking contemptuously at her.

“Upon my word, anybody who didn’t know you would be taken in.”

In a few minutes Victorine and another girl came in with their band-boxes.

“Are you still at Madame R — — ‘s?” said I.

“Yes sir,” said she, with a blush.

When the Corticelli had chosen what she wanted I told Victorine to present my compliments to her mistress, and tell her that I would call and pay for the articles.

The landlady had also sent for a dressmaker, and while the Corticelli was being measured, she shewed me her figure and said she wanted a corset. I jested on the pregnancy with which she threatened me, and of which there was now no trace, pitying Count N —— for being deprived of the joys of fatherhood. I then gave her what money she required and took my leave. She escorted me to the door, and asked me if she should have the pleasure of seeing me again before long.

“It’s a pleasure, is it?” I replied; “well, I don’t know when you will have it again; it depends on my leisure and my fancy.”

It is certain that if I had any amorous feelings or even curiosity about the girl, I should not have left her in that house for a moment; but I repeat my love for her had entirely vanished. There was one thing, however, which annoyed me intolerably, namely, that in spite of my coolness towards her, the little hussy pretended to think that I had forgotten and forgiven everything.

On leaving the Corticelli, I proceeded to call on my bankers, amongst others on M. Martin, whose wife was justly famous for her wit and beauty.

I chanced to meet the horse-dealing Jew, who had made money out of me by means of his daughter Leah. She was still pretty, but married; and her figure was too rounded for my taste. She and her husband welcomed me with great warmth, but I cared for her no longer, and did not wish to see her again.

I called on Madame R —— , who had been awaiting me impatiently ever since Victorine had brought news of me. I sat down by the counter and had the pleasure of hearing from her lips the amorous histories of Turin for the past few months.

"Victorine and Caton are the only two of the old set that still remain, but I have replaced them with others."

"Has Victorine found anyone to operate on her yet?"

"No, she is just as you left her, but a gentleman who is in love with her is going to take her to Milan."

This gentleman was the Comte de Perouse, whose acquaintance I made three years afterwards at Milan. I shall speak of him in due time. Madame R —— told me that, in consequence of her getting into trouble several times with the police, she had been obliged to promise the Count d'Aglie only to send the girls to ladies, and, consequently, if I found any of them to my taste I should be obliged to make friends with their relations and take them to the festas. She shewed me the girls in the work-room, but I did not think any of them worth taking trouble about.

She talked about the Pacienza, and when I told her that I kept the Corticelli, and of the hard conditions to which I was obliged to submit, she exclaimed with astonishment, and amused me by her jests on the subject.

"You are in good hands, my dear sir," said she; "the woman is not only a spy of d'Aglie's, but a professional procuress. I wonder the Chevalier Raiberti placed the girl with her."

She was not so surprised when I told her that the chevalier had good reasons for his action, and that I myself had good reasons of my own for wishing the Corticelli to remain there.

Our conversation was interrupted by a customer who wanted silk stockings. Hearing him speak of dancing, I asked him if he could tell me the address of Dupre, the ballet-master.

"No one better, sir, for I am Dupre, at your service."

"I am delighted at this happy chance. The Chevalier Raiberti gave me to understand that you might be able to give dancing lessons to a ballet-girl of my acquaintance."

"M. de Raiberti mentioned your name to me this morning. You must be the Chevalier de Seingalt?"

"Exactly."

"I can give the young lady lessons every morning at nine o'clock at my own home."

"No, do you come to her house, but at whatever hour you like. I will pay you, and I hope you will make her one of your best pupils. I must warn you, however, that she is not a novice."

"I will call on her to-day, and to-morrow I will tell you what I can make of her; but I think I had better tell you my terms: I charge three Piedmontese livres a lesson."

"I think that is very reasonable; I will call on you to-morrow."

"You do me honour. Here is my address. If you like to come in the afternoon you will see the rehearsal of a ballet."

"Is it not rehearsed at the theatre?"

"Yes, but at the theatre no on-lookers are allowed by the orders of the superintendent of police."

"This superintendent of yours puts his finger into a good many pies."

"In too many."

"But at your own house anybody may come?"

"Undoubtedly, but I could not have the dancers there if my wife were not present. The superintendent knows her, and has great confidence in her."

"You will see me at the rehearsal."

The wretched superintendent had erected a fearful system of surveillance against the lovers of pleasure, but it must be confessed that he was often cheated. Voluptuousness was all the more rampant when thus restrained; and so it ever will be while men have passions and women desires. To love and enjoy, to desire and to satisfy one's desires, such is the circle in which we move, and whence we can never be turned. When restrictions are placed upon the passions as in Turkey, they still attain their ends, but by methods destructive to morality.

At the worthy Mazzali's I found two gentlemen to whom she introduced me. One was old and ugly, decorated with the Order of the White Eagle — his name was Count Borromeo; the other, young and brisk, was Count A

—— B —— of Milan. After they had gone I was informed that they were paying assiduous court to the Chevalier Raiberti, from whom they hoped to obtain certain privileges for their lordships which were under the Sardinian rule.

The Milanese count had not a penny, and the Lord of the Borromean Isles was not much better off. He had ruined himself with women, and not being able to live at Milan he had taken refuge in the fairest of his isles, and enjoyed there perpetual spring and very little else. I paid him a visit on my return from Spain, but I shall relate our meeting when I come to my adventures, my pleasures, my misfortunes, and above all my follies there, for of such threads was the weft of my life composed, and folly was the prominent element.

The conversation turned on my house, and the lively Mazzoli asked me how I liked my cook. I replied that I had not yet tried him, but I proposed to put him to test the next day, if she and the gentlemen would do me the honour of supping with me.

The invitation was accepted, and she promised to bring her dear chevalier with her, and to warn him of the event, as his health only allowed him to eat once a day.

I called on Dupre in the afternoon. I saw the dancers, male and female, the latter accompanied by their mothers, who stood on one side muffled up in thick cloaks. As I passed them under review in my lordly manner, I noticed that one of them still looked fresh and pretty, which augured well for her daughter, though the fruit does not always correspond to the tree.

Dupre introduced me to his wife, who was young and pretty, but who had been obliged to leave the theatre owing to the weakness of her chest. She told me that if the Corticelli would work hard her husband would make a great dancer of her, as her figure was eminently suited for dancing. While I was talking with Madame Dupre, the Corticelli, late Lascaris, came running up to me with the air of a favourite, and told me she wanted some ribbons and laces to make a bonnet. The others girls began to whisper to each other, and guessing what they must be saying I turned to Dupre without taking any notice of Madame Madcap, and gave him twelve pistoles, saying that I would pay for the lessons three months in advance, and that I hoped he would bring his new pupil on well. Such a heavy payment in advance caused general surprise, which I enjoyed, though pretending not to be aware of it. Now I know that I acted foolishly, but I have promised to speak the truth in these Memoirs, which will not see the light till all light has left my eyes, and I will keep my promise.

I have always been greedy of distinction; I have always loved to draw the eyes of men towards men, but I must also add that if I have humiliated anyone it has always been a proud man or a fool, for it has been my rule to please everyone if I can.

I sat on one side, the better to observe the swarm of girls, and I soon fixed my eyes on one whose appearance struck me. She had a fine figure, delicate features, a noble air, and a patient look which interested me in the highest degree. She was dancing with a man who did not scruple to abuse her in the coarsest manner when she made any mistakes, but she bore it without replying, though an expression of contempt mingled with the sweetness of her face.

Instinct drew me to the mother I have remarked on, and I asked her to whom the dancer that interested me belonged.

“I am her mother,” she replied.

“You, madam! I should not have thought it possible.”

“I was very young when she was born.”

“I should think so. Where do you come from?”

“I am from Lucca, and what is more-a poor widow.”

“How can you be poor, when you are still young and handsome, and have an angel for a daughter?”

She replied only by an expressive glance. I understood her reserve, and I stayed by her without speaking. Soon after, Agatha, as her daughter was named, came up to her to ask for a handkerchief to wipe her face.

“Allow me to offer you mine,” said I. It was a white handkerchief, and scented with attar of roses; this latter circumstance gave her an excuse for accepting it, but after smelling it she wanted to return it to me.

“You have not used it,” said I! “do so.”

She obeyed, and then returned it to me with a bow by way of thanks.

"You must not give it me back, fair Agatha, till you have had it washed."

She smiled, and gave it to her mother, glancing at me in a grateful manner, which I considered of good omen.

"May I have the pleasure of calling on you?" said I. "I cannot receive you, sir, except in the presence of my landlady."

"This cursed restriction is general in Turin, then?"

"Yes, the superintendent uses everybody in the same way."

"Then I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again here?"

In the evening I had one of the best suppers I ever had in my life, if I except those I enjoyed during my stay at Turin. My cook was worthy of a place in the kitchen of Lucullus; but without detracting from his skill I must do justice to the products of the country. Everything is delicious; game, fish, birds, meat, vegetables, fruit, milk, and truffles — all are worthy of the table of the greatest gourmets, and the wines of the country yield to none. What a pity that strangers do not enjoy liberty at Turin! It is true that better society, and more politeness, such as are found in several French and Italian towns, are to be wished for.

The beauty of the women of Turin is no doubt due to the excellence of the air and diet.

I had not much trouble in extracting a promise from Madame Mazzoli and the two counts to sup with me every night, but the Chevalier de Raiberti would only promise to come whenever he could.

At the Carignan Theatre, where opera-bouffe was being played, I saw Redegonde, with whom I had failed at Florence. She saw me in the pit and gave me a smile, so I wrote to her, offering my services if the mother had changed her way of thinking. She answered that her mother was always the same, but that if I would ask the Corticelli she could come and sup with me, though the mother would doubtless have to be of the party. I gave her no answer, as the terms she named were by no means to my taste.

I had a letter from Madame du Rumain, enclosing one from M. de Choiseul to M. de Chauvelin, the French ambassador at Turin. It will be remembered that I had known this worthy nobleman at Soleure, and had been treated with great politeness by him, but I wished to have a more perfect title to his acquaintance; hence I asked Madame du Rumain to give me a letter.

M. de Chauvelin received me with the greatest cordiality; and reproaching me for having thought a letter of introduction necessary, introduced me to his charming wife, who was no less kind than her husband. Three or four days later he asked me to dine with him, and I met at his table M. Imberti, the Venetian ambassador, who said he was very sorry not to be able to present me at Court. On hearing the reason M. de Chauvelin offered to present me himself, but I thought it best to decline with thanks. No doubt it would have been a great honour, but the result would be that I should be more spied on than even in this town of spies, where the most indifferent actions do not pass unnoticed. My pleasures would have been interfered with.

Count Borromeo continued to honour me by coming every night to sup with me, preserving his dignity the while, for as he accompanied Madame Mazzoli it was not to be supposed that he came because he was in need of a meal. Count A —— B —— came more frankly, and I was pleased with him. He told me one day that the way I put up with his visits made him extremely grateful to Providence, for his wife could not send him any money, and he could not afford to pay for his dinner at the inn, so that if it were not for my kindness he would often be obliged to go hungry to bed. He shewed me his wife's letters; he had evidently a high opinion of her. "I hope," he would say, "that you will come and stay with us at Milan, and that she will please you."

He had been in the service of Spain, and by what he said I judged his wife to be a pleasing brunette of twenty-five or twenty-six. The count had told her how I had lent him money several times, and of my goodness to him, and she replied, begging him to express her gratitude to me, and to make me promise to stay with them at Milan. She wrote wittily, and her letters interested me to such an extent that I gave a formal promise to journey to Milan, if it were only for the sake of seeing her.

I confess that in doing so I was overcome by my feelings of curiosity. I knew they were poor, and I should not have given a promise which would either bring them into difficulties or expose me to paying too dearly for my lodging. However, by way of excuse, I can only say that curiosity is near akin to love. I fancied the countess sensible like an Englishwoman, passionate like a Spaniard, caressing like a Frenchwoman, and as I had a good enough opinion of my own merit, I did not doubt for a moment that she would respond to my affection. With these pleasant delusions in my head, I counted on exciting the jealousy of all the ladies and gentlemen of Milan. I had plenty of money, and I longed for an opportunity of spending it.

Nevertheless, I went every day to rehearsal at Dupre's, and I soon got madly in love with Agatha. Madame Dupre won over by several presents I made her, received my confidences with kindness, and by asking Agatha and her mother to dinner procured me the pleasure of a more private meeting with my charmer. I profited by the opportunity to make known my feelings, and I obtained some slight favours, but so slight were they that my flame only grew the fiercer.

Agatha kept on telling me that everybody knew that the Corticelli was my mistress, and that for all the gold in the world she would not have it said that she was my last shift, as I could not see the Corticelli in private. I swore to her that I did not love the Corticelli, and that I only kept her to prevent M. Raiberti being compromised; but all this was of no avail, she had formed her plans, and nothing would content her but a formal rupture which would give all Turin to understand that I loved her and her alone. On these conditions she promised me her heart, and everything which follows in such cases.

I loved her too well not to endeavour to satisfy her, since my satisfaction depended on hers. With this idea I got Dupre to give a ball at my expense in some house outside the town, and to invite all the dancers, male and female, who were engaged for the carnival at Turin. Every gentleman had the right to bring a lady to have supper and look on, as only the professional dancers were allowed to dance.

I told Dupre that I would look after the refreshment department, and that he might tell everybody that no expense was to be spared. I also provided carriages and sedan-chairs for the ladies, but nobody was to know that I was furnishing the money. Dupre saw that there was profit in store for him, and went about it at once. He found a suitable house, asked the lady dancers, and distributed about fifty tickets.

Agatha and her mother were the only persons who knew that the project was mine, and that I was responsible to a great extent for the expenses; but these facts were generally known the day after the ball.

Agatha had no dress that was good enough, so I charged Madame Dupre to provide one at my expense, and I was well served. It is well known that when this sort of people dip their fingers into other's purses they are not sparing, but that was just what I wanted. Agatha promised to dance all the quadrilles with me, and to return to Turin with Madame Dupre.

On the day fixed for the ball I stayed to dinner at the Dupre's to be present at Agatha's toilette. Her dress was a rich and newly-made Lyons silk, and the trimming was exquisite Alencon point lace, of which the girl did not know the value. Madame R —— , who had arranged the dress, and Madame Dupre, had received instructions to say nothing about it to her.

When Agatha was ready to start, I told her that the ear-rings she was wearing were not good enough for her dress.

"That's true," said Madame Dupre, "and it's a great pity."

"Unfortunately," said the mother, "my poor girl hasn't got another pair."

"I have some pretty imitation pendants, which I could lend you," said I; "they are really very brilliant."

I had taken care to put the ear-rings which Madame d'Urfe had intended for the Countess Lascaris in my pocket. I drew them out, and they were greatly admired.

"One would swear they were real diamonds," said Madame Dupre.

I put them in Agatha's ears. She admired them very much, and said that all the other girls would be jealous, as they would certainly take them for real stones.

I went home and made an elaborate toilette, and on arriving at the ball I found Agatha dancing with Lord Percy, a young fool, who was the son of the Duke of Northumberland, and an extravagant spendthrift.

I noticed several handsome ladies from Turin, who, being merely onlookers, might be thinking that the ball was given for their amusement, like the fly on the chariot wheel. All the ambassadors were present, and amongst others M. de Chauvelin, who told me that to make everything complete my pretty housekeeper at Soleure was wanting.

The Marquis and Marchioness de Prie were there also. The marquis did not care to dance, so was playing a little game of quinze with a rude gamester, who would not let the marquis's mistress look over his cards. She saw me, but pretended not to recognize me; the trick I had played her at Aix being probably enough to last her for some time.

The minuets came to an end, and Dupre announced the quadrilles, and I was glad to see the Chevalier Ville-Follet dancing with the Corticelli. My partner was Agatha, who had great difficulty in getting rid of Lord Percy, though she told him that she was fully engaged.

Minuets and quadrilles followed each other in succession, and refreshments began to make their appearance. I was delighted to see that the refreshment counter was furnished with the utmost liberality. The Piedmontese, who are great at calculations, estimated that Dupre must lose by it, the firing of champagne corks was continuous.

Feeling tired I asked Agatha to sit down, and I was telling her how I loved her when Madame de Chauvelin and another lady interrupted us. I rose to give them place, and Agatha imitated my example; but Madame de Chauvelin made her sit down beside her, and praised her dress, and above all the lace trimming. The other lady said how pretty her ear-rings were, and what a pity it was that those imitation stones would lose their brilliance in time. Madame de Chauvelin, who knew something about precious stones, said that they would never lose their brilliance, as they were diamonds of the first water.

“It is not so?” she added, to Agatha, who in the candour of her heart confessed that they were imitation, and that I had lent them to her.

At this Madame de Chauvelin burst out laughing, and said, —

“M. de Seingalt has deceived you, my dear child. A gentleman of his caste does not lend imitation jewellery to such a pretty girl as you are. Your ear-rings are set with magnificent diamonds.”

She blushed, for my silence confirmed the lady's assertion, and she felt that the fact of my having lent her such stones was a palpable proof of the great esteem in which I held her.

Madame de Chauvelin asked me to dance a minuet with Agatha, and my partner executed the dance with wonderful grace. When it was over Madame de Chauvelin thanked me, and told me that she should always remember our dancing together at Soleure, and that she hoped I would dance again with her at her own house. A profound bow shewed her how flattered I felt by the compliment.

The ball did not come to an end till four o'clock in the morning, and I did not leave it till I saw Agatha going away in the company with Madame Dupre.

I was still in bed the next morning, when my man told me a pretty woman wanted to speak to me. I had her in and was delighted to find it was Agatha's mother. I made her sit down beside me, and gave her a cup of chocolate. As soon as we were alone she drew my ear-rings from her pocket, and said, with a smile, that she had just been shewing them to a jeweller, who had offered her a thousand sequins for them.

"The man's mad," said I, "you ought to have let him have them; they are not worth four sequins."

So saying, I drew her to my arms and gave her a kiss. Feeling that she had shared in the kiss, and that she seemed to like it, I went farther, and at last we spent a couple of hours in shewing what a high opinion we had of each other.

Afterwards we both looked rather astonished, and it was the beautiful mother who first broke the silence.

"Am I to tell my girl," said she, with a smile, "of the way in which you proved to me that you love her?"

"I leave that to your discretion, my dear," said I. "I have certainly proved that I love you, but it does not follow that I do not adore your daughter. In fact, I burn for her; and yet, if we are not careful to avoid being alone together, what has just happened between us will often happen again."

"It is hard to resist you, and it is possible that I may have occasion to speak to you again in private."

"You may be sure you will always be welcome, and all I ask of you is not to put any obstacles in the way of my suit with Agatha."

"I have also a favour to ask."

"If it is within my power, you may be sure I will grant it."

"Very good! Then tell me if these ear-rings are real, and what was your intention in putting them in my daughter's ears?"

"The diamonds are perfectly genuine, and my intention was that Agatha should keep them as a proof of my affection."

She heaved a sigh, and then told me that I might ask them to supper, with Dupre and his wife, whenever I pleased. I thanked her, gave her ten sequins, and sent her away happy.

On reflection I decided that I had never seen a more sensible woman than Agatha's mother. It would have been impossible to announce the success of my suit in a more delicate or more perspicuous manner.

My readers will no doubt guess that I seized the opportunity and brought this interesting affair to a conclusion. The same evening I asked Dupre and his wife, Agatha and her mother, to sup with me the next day, in addition to my usual company. But as I was leaving Dupre's I had an adventure.

My man, who was a great rascal, but who behaved well on this occasion, ran up to me panting for breath, and said triumphantly,

"Sir, I have been looking for you to warn you that I have just seen the Chevalier de Ville-Follet slip into Madame Pacienza's house, and I suspect he is making an amorous call on the Corticelli."

I immediately walked to the abode of the worthy spy in high spirits, and hoping that my servant's guess had been correct. I walked in and found the landlady and the mother sitting together. Without noticing them, I was making my way towards the Corticelli's room when the two old ladies arrested my course, telling me that the signora was not well and wanted rest. I pushed them aside, and entered the room so swiftly and suddenly that

I found the gentleman in a state of nature while the girl remained stretched on the bed as if petrified by my sudden apparition.

“Sir,” said I, “I hope you will pardon me for coming in without knocking.”

“Wait a moment, wait a moment.”

Far from waiting I went away in high glee, and told the story to the Chevalier Raiberti, who enjoyed it as well as I did. I asked him to warn the Pacienza woman that from that day I would pay nothing for Corticelli, who had ceased to belong to me. He approved, and said, —

“I suppose you will not be going to complain to the Count d’Aglie?”

“It is only fools who complain, above all in circumstances like these.”

This scandalous story would have been consigned to forgetfulness, if it had not been for the Chevalier de Ville-Follet’s indiscretion. He felt angry at being interrupted in the middle of the business, and remembering he had seen my man just before fixed on him as the informer. Meeting him in the street the chevalier reproached him for spying, whereon the impudent rascal replied that he was only answerable to his master, and that it was his duty to serve me in all things. On this the chevalier caned him, and the man went to complain to the superintendent, who summoned Ville-Follet to appear before him and explain his conduct. Having nothing to fear, he told the whole story.

The Chevalier de Raiberti, too, was very ill received when he went to tell Madame Pacienza that neither he nor I were going to pay her anything more in future; but he would listen to no defence. The chevalier came to sup with me, and he informed me that on leaving the house he had met a police sergeant, whom he concluded had come to cite the landlady to appear before the Count d’Aglie.

The next day, just as I was going to M. de Chauvelin’s ball, I received to my great surprise a note from the superintendent begging me to call on him as he had something to communicate to me. I immediately ordered my chairmen to take me to his residence.

M. de Aglie received me in private with great politeness, and after giving me a chair he began a long and pathetic discourse, the gist of which was that it was my duty to forgive this little slip of my mistress’s.

“That’s exactly what I am going to do,” said I; “and for the rest of my days I never wish to see the Corticelli again, or to make or mar in her affairs, and for all this I am greatly obliged to the Chevalier de Ville-Follet.”

“I see you are angry. Come, come! you must not abandon the girl for that. I will have the woman Pacienza punished in such a way as to satisfy you, and I will place the girl in a respectable family where you can go and see her in perfect liberty.”

“I am greatly obliged to you for your kindness, indeed I am grateful; but I despise the Pacienza too heartily to wish for her punishment, and as to the Corticelli and her mother, they are two female swindlers, who have given me too much trouble already. I am well quit of them.”

“You must confess, however, that you had no right to make a forcible entry into a room in a house which does not belong to you.”

“I had not the right, I confess, but if I had not taken it I could never have had a certain proof of the perfidy of my mistress; and I should have been obliged to continue supporting her, though she entertained other lovers.”

“The Corticelli pretends that you are her debtor, and not vice versa. She says that the diamonds you have given another girl belong of right to her, and that Madame d’Urfe, whom I have the honour to know, presented her with them.”

“She is a liar! And as you know Madame d’Urfe, kindly write to her (she is at Lyons); and if the marchioness replies that I owe the wretched girl anything, be sure that I will discharge the debt. I have a hundred thousand francs in good banks of this town, and the money will be a sufficient surety for the ear-rings I have disposed of.”

“I am sorry that things have happened so.”

“And I am very glad, as I have ridden myself of a burden that was hard to bear.”

Thereupon we bowed politely to one another, and I left the office.

At the French ambassador’s ball I heard so much talk of my adventure that at last I refused to reply to any more questions on the subject. The general opinion was that the whole affair was a trifle of which I could not honourably take any notice; but I thought myself the best judge of my own honour, and was determined to take no notice of the opinions of others. The Chevalier de Ville-Follet came up to me and said that if I abandoned the Corticelli for such a trifle, he should feel obliged to give me satisfaction. I shook his hand, saying, —

“My dear chevalier, it will be enough if you do not demand satisfaction of me.”

He understood how the land lay, and said no more about it; but not so his sister, the Marchioness de Prie, who made a vigorous attack on me after we had danced together. She was handsome, and might have been victorious if she had liked, but luckily she did not think of exerting her power, and so gained nothing.

Three days after, Madame de St. Giles, a great power in Turin, and a kind of protecting deity to all actresses, summoned me to her presence by a liveried footman. Guessing what she wanted, I called on her unceremoniously in a morning coat. She received me politely, and began to talk of the Corticelli affair with great affability; but I did not like her, and replied dryly that I had had no hesitation in abandoning the girl to the protection of the gallant gentleman with whom I had surprised her in ‘flagrante delicto’. She told me I should be sorry for it, and that she would publish a little story which she had already read and which did not do me much credit. I replied that I never changed my mind, and that threats were of no avail with me. With that parting shot I left her.

I did not attach much importance to the town gossip, but a week after I received a manuscript containing an account — accurate in most respects — of my relations with the Corticelli and Madame d’Urfe, but so ill written and badly expressed that nobody could read it without weariness. It did not make the slightest impression on me, and I stayed a fortnight longer in Turin without its causing me the slightest annoyance. I saw the Corticelli again in Paris six months after, and will speak of our meeting in due time.

The day after M. de Chauvelin’s ball I asked Agatha, her mother, the Dupres, and my usual company to supper. It was the mother’s business to so arrange matters that the ear-rings should become Agatha’s lawful property, so I left everything to her. I knew she would manage to introduce the subject, and while we were at supper she said that the common report of

Turin was that I had given her daughter a pair of diamond ear-rings worth five hundred Louis, which the Corticelli claimed as hers by right.

“I do not know,” she added, “if they are real diamonds, or if they belong to the Corticelli, but I do know that my girl has received no such present from the gentleman.”

“Well, well,” said I, “we will have no more surmises in the matter;” and going up to Agatha I put the earrings on her, saying, —

“Dearest Agatha, I make you a present of them before this company, and my giving them to you now is a proof that hitherto they have belonged to me.”

Everybody applauded, and I read in the girl’s eyes that I should have no cause to regret my generosity.

We then fell to speaking of the affair of Ville-Follet and the Corticelli, and of the efforts that had been made to compel me to retain her. The Chevalier Raiberti said that in my place he would have offered Madame de St. Giles or the superintendent to continue paying for her board, but merely as an act of charity, and that I could have deposited money with either of them.

“I should be very glad to do so,” said I; and the next day the worthy chevalier made the necessary arrangements with Madame de St. Giles, and I furnished the necessary moneys.

In spite of this charitable action, the wretched manuscript came out, but, as I have said, without doing me any harm. The superintendent made the Corticelli live in the same house with Redegonde, and Madame Pacienza was left in peace.

After supper, with the exception of the Chevalier Raiberti, we all masked, and went to the ball at the opera-house. I soon seized the opportunity of escaping with Agatha, and she granted me all that love can desire. All constraint was banished; she was my titular mistress, and we were proud of belonging the one to the other, for we loved each other. The suppers I had given at my house had set me perfectly at liberty, and the superintendent could do nothing to thwart our love, though he was informed of it, so well are the spies of Turin organized.

Divine Providence made use of me as its instrument in making Agatha’s fortune. It may be said that Providence might have chosen a more moral method, but are we to presume to limit the paths of Providence to the narrow circle of our prejudices and conventions? It has its own ways, which often appear dark to us because of our ignorance. At all events, if I am able to continue these Memoirs for six or seven years more, the reader will see that Agatha shewed herself grateful. But to return to our subject.

The happiness we enjoyed by day and night was so great, Agatha was so affectionate and I so amorous, that we should certainly have remained united for some time if it had not been for the event I am about to relate. It made me leave Turin much sooner than I had intended, for I had not purposed to visit the wonderful Spanish countess at Milan till Lent. The husband of the Spanish lady had finished his business and left Turin, thanking me with tears in his eyes; and if it had not been for me he would not have been able to quit the town, for I paid divers small debts he had incurred, and gave him the wherewithal for his journey. Often is vice thus found allied to virtue or masking in virtue’s guise; but what matter? I allowed myself to be taken in, and did not wish to be disabused. I do not seek to conceal my faults. I have always led a profligate life, and have not always been very delicate in the choice of means to gratify my passions, but even amidst my vices I was always a passionate lover of virtue. Benevolence, especially, has always had a great charm for me, and I have never failed to exercise it unless when restrained by the desire of vengeance — a vice which has always had a controlling influence on my actions.

Lord Percy, as I have remarked, was deeply in love with my Agatha. He followed her about everywhere, was present at all the rehearsals, waited for her at the wings, and called on her every day, although her landlady, a duenna of the Pacienza school, would never let her see him alone. The principal methods of seduction — rich presents — had not been spared, but Agatha persistently refused them all, and forbade her duenna to take anything from the young nobleman. Agatha had no liking for him, and kept me well informed of all his actions, and we used to laugh at him together. I knew that I possessed her heart, and consequently Lord Percy’s attempts neither made me angry or jealous — nay, they flattered my self-esteem, for his slighted love made my own happiness stand out in greater relief. Everybody knew that Agatha remained faithful to me, and at last Lord

Percy was so convinced of the hopelessness of the attempt that he resolved on making a friend of me, and winning me over to his interests.

With the true Englishman's boldness and coolness he came to me one morning, and asked me to give him breakfast. I welcomed him in the French manner, that is, with combined cordiality and politeness, and he was soon completely at his ease.

With insular directness he went straight to the point at the first interview, declared his love for Agatha, and proposed an exchange, which amused, but did not offend me, as I knew that such bargains were common in England.

"I know," said he, "that you are in love with Redegonde, and have long tried vainly to obtain her; now I am willing to exchange her for Agatha, and all I want to know is what sum of money you want over and above?"

"You are very good, my dear lord, but to determine the excess of value would require a good mathematician. Redegonde is all very well, and inspires me with curiosity, but what is she compared to Agatha?"

"I know, I know, and I therefore offer you any sum you like to mention."

Percy was very rich, and very passionate. I am sure that if I had named twenty-five thousand guineas as overplus, or rather as exchange — for I did not care for Redegonde — he would have said done. However, I did not, and I am glad of it. Even now, when a hundred thousand francs would be a fortune to me, I never repent of my delicacy.

After we had breakfasted merrily together, I told him that I liked him well, but that in the first place it would be well to ascertain whether the two commodities would consent to change masters.

"I am sure of Redegonde's consent," said Lord Percy.

"But I am not at all sure of Agatha's," said I.

"Why not?"

"I have very strong grounds for supposing that she would not consent to the arrangement. What reasons have you for the contrary opinion?"

"She will shew her sense."

"But she loves me."

"Well, Redegonde loves me."

"I dare say; but does she love me?"

"I am sure I don't know, but she will love you."

"Have you consulted her upon the point?"

"No, but it is all the same. What I want to know now is whether you approve of my plan, and how much you want for the exchange, for your Agatha is worth much more than my Redegonde."

"I am delighted to hear you do my mistress justice. As for the money question, we will speak of that later. In the first place I will take Agatha's opinion, and will let you know the result to-morrow morning."

The plan amused me, and though I was passionately attached to Agatha I knew my inconstant nature well enough to be aware that another woman, may be not so fair as she, would soon make me forget her. I therefore resolved to push the matter through if I could do so in a manner that would be advantageous for her.

What surprised me was that the young nobleman had gained possession of Redegonde, whose mother appeared so intractable, but I knew what an influence caprice has on woman, and this explained the enigma.

Agatha came to supper as usual, and laughed heartily when I told her of Lord Percy's proposal.

"Tell me," said I, "if you would agree to the change?"

"I will do just as you like," said she; "and if the money he offers be acceptable to you, I advise you to close with him."

I could see by the tone of her voice that she was jesting, but her reply did not please me. I should have liked to have my vanity flattered by a peremptory refusal, and consequently I felt angry. My face grew grave, and Agatha became melancholy.

"We will see," said I, "how it all ends."

Next day I went to breakfast with the Englishman, and told him Agatha was willing, but that I must first hear what Redegonde had to say.

"Quite right," he observed.

“I should require to know how we are to live together.”

“The four of us had better go masked to the first ball at the Carignan Theatre. We will sup at a house which belongs to me, and there the bargain can be struck.”

The party took place according to agreement, and at the given signal we all left the ball-room. My lord’s carriage was in waiting, and we all drove away and got down at a house I seemed to know. We entered the hall, and the first thing I saw was the Corticelli. This roused my choler, and taking Percy aside I told him that such a trick was unworthy of a gentleman. He laughed, and said he thought I should like her to be thrown in, and that two pretty women were surely worth as much as Agatha. This amusing answer made me less angry; but, calling him a madman, I took Agatha by the arm and went out without staying for any explanations. I would not make use of his carriage, and instead of returning to the ball we went home in sedan-chairs, and spent a delicious night in each other’s arms.

EPISODE 20 — MILAN

CHAPTER XVIII

I Give up Agatha to Lord Percy — I Set out for Milan —

The Actress at Pavia — Countess A * * * B * * * — Disappointment —

Marquis Triulzi — Zenobia — The Two Marchionesses Q * * * —

The Venetian Barbaro

Far from punishing the Corticelli by making her live with Redegonde, the Count d’Aglie seemed to have encouraged her; and I was not sorry for it, since as long as she did not trouble me any more I did not care how many lovers she had. She had become a great friend of Redegonde’s, and did exactly as she pleased, for their duenna was much more easy going than the Pacienza.

Nobody knew of the trick which Lord Percy had played me, and I took care to say nothing about it. However, he did not give up his designs on Agatha, his passion for her was too violent. He hit upon an ingenious method for carrying out his plans. I have already said that Percy was very rich, and spent his money wildly, not caring at what expenditure he gratified his passion. I was the last person to reproach him for his extravagance, and in a country where money is always scarce his guineas opened every door to him.

Four or five days after the ball night, Agatha came to tell me that the manager of the Alexandria Theatre had asked her if she would take the part of second dancer throughout the carnival time.

“He offered me sixty sequins,” she added, “and I told him I would let him know by to-morrow. Do you advise me to accept his offer?”

“If you love me, dearest Agatha, you will prove it by refusing all engagements for a year. You know I will let you want for nothing.

“I will get you the best masters, and in that time you can perfect your dancing, and will be able to ask for a first-class appointment, with a salary of five hundred sequins a year.”

"Mamma thinks that I should accept the offer, as the dancing on the stage will improve my style, and I can study under a good master all the same. I think myself that dancing in public would do me good."

"There is reason in what you say, but you do not need the sixty sequins. You will dishonour me by accepting such a poor offer, and you will do yourself harm too, as you will not be able to ask for a good salary after taking such a small one."

"But sixty sequins is not so bad for a carnival engagement."

"But you don't want sixty sequins; you can have them without dancing at all. If you love me, I repeat, you will tell the manager that you are going to rest for a year."

"I will do what you please, but it seems to me the best plan would be to ask an exorbitant sum."

"You are right; that is a good idea. Tell him you must be first dancer, and that your salary must be five hundred sequins."

"I will do so, and am only too happy to be able to prove that I love you."

Agatha had plenty of inborn common sense, which only needed development. With that and the beauty which Heaven had given her her future was assured.

She was eventually happy, and she deserved her happiness.

The next day she told me that the manager did not appear at all astonished at her demands.

"He reflected a few minutes," said she, "and told me he must think it over, and would see me again. It would be amusing if he took me at my word, would it not?"

"Yes, but we should then have to enquire whether he is a madman or a beggar on the verge of bankruptcy."

"And if he turns out to be a man of means?"

"In that case you would be obliged to accept."

"That is easily said and easily done, but have I sufficient talent? Where shall I find an actor to dance with me?"

"I will engage to find you one. As to talent, you have enough and to spare; but you will see that it will come to nothing."

All the time I felt a presentiment that she would be engaged, and I was right. The manager came to her the next day, and offered her the agreement for her signature. She was quite alarmed, and sent for me. I called at her house, and finding the manager there asked him what security he could give for the fulfilment of his part of the engagement.

He answered by naming M. Martin, a banker of my acquaintance, who would be his surety. I could make no objection to this, and the agreement was made out in duplicate in good form.

On leaving Agatha I went to M. Raiberti and told him the story. He shared my astonishment that M. Martin should become surety for the manager whom he knew, and whose financial position was by no means good; but the next day the problem was solved, for in spite of the secrecy that had been observed we found out that it was Lord Percy who was behind the manager. I might still bar the Englishman's way by continuing to keep Agatha, in spite of his five hundred sequins, but I was obliged to return to France after Easter to wait on Madame d'Urfe, and afterwards, peace having been concluded, I thought it would be a good opportunity for seeing England. I therefore determined to abandon Agatha, taking care to bind her new lover to provide for her, and I proceeded to make a friend of the nobleman.

I was curious to see how he would win Agatha's good graces, for she did not love him, and physically he was not attractive.

In less than a week we had become intimate. We supped together every night either at his house or mine, and Agatha and her mother were always of the party. I concluded that his attentions would soon touch Agatha's heart, and that finding herself so beloved she would end by loving. This was enough to make me determine not to put any obstacles in their way, and I resolved to leave Turin earlier than I had intended. In consequence I spoke as follows to Lord Percy, while we were breakfasting together:

"My lord, you know that I love Agatha, and that she loves me, nevertheless I am your friend, and since you adore her I will do my best to hasten your bliss. I will leave you in possession of this treasure, but you must promise that when you abandon her you will give her two thousand guineas."

"My dear sir," said he, "I will give them her now if you like."

"No, my lord, I do not wish her to know anything about our agreement while you are living happily together."

"Then I will give you a bond binding myself to pay her the two thousand guineas when we separate."

"I don't want that, the word of an Englishman is enough; but since we cannot command the fates, and may die without having time to put our affairs in order, I wish you to take such steps as may seem convenient to you, whereby that sum would go to her after your death."

"I give you my word on it."

"That is enough; but I have one other condition to make."

"Say on."

"It is that you promise to say nothing to Agatha before my departure."

"I swear I will not."

"Very good; and on my part I promise to prepare her for the change:"

The same day the Englishman, whose love grew hotter and hotter, made Agatha and her mother rich presents, which under any other circumstances I should not have allowed them to accept.

I lost no time in preparing Agatha and her mother for the impending change. They seemed affected, but I knew they would soon get reconciled to the situation. Far from giving me any cause for complaint, Agatha was more affectionate than ever. She listened attentively to my advice as to her conduct towards her new lover and the world in general, and promised to follow it. It was to this advice that she owed her happiness, for Percy made her fortune. However, she did not leave the theatre for some years, when we shall hear more of her.

I was not the man to take presents from my equals, and Percy no doubt being aware of that succeeded in making me a handsome present in a very singular way. I told him that I thought of paying a visit to England and requested him to give me a letter of introduction to the duchess, his mother, whereon he drew out a portrait of her set with magnificent diamonds, and gave it to me, saying, —

“This is the best letter I can give you. I will write and tell her that you will call and give her the portrait, unless, indeed, she likes to leave it in your hands.”

“I hope my lady will think me worthy of such an honour.”

There are certain ideas, it seems to me, which enter no head but an Englishman’s.

I was invited by Count A —— B —— to Milan, and the countess wrote me a charming letter, begging me to get her two pieces of sarcenet, of which she enclosed the patterns.

After taking leave of all my friends and acquaintances I got a letter of credit on the banker, Greppi, and started for the capital of Lombardy.

My separation from Agatha cost me many tears, but not so many as those shed by her. Her mother wept also, for she loved me, and was grateful for all my kindness to her daughter. She said again and again that she could never have borne any rival but her own daughter, while the latter sobbed out that she wished she had not to part from me.

I did not like Passano, so I sent him to his family at Genoa, giving him the wherewithal to live till I came for him. As to my man, I dismissed him for good reasons and took another, as I was obliged to have somebody; but since I lost my Spaniard I have never felt confidence in any of my servants.

I travelled with a Chevalier de Rossignan, whose acquaintance I had made, and we went by Casal to see the opera-bouffe there.

Rossignan was a fine man, a good soldier, fond of wine and women, and, though he was not learned, he knew the whole of Dante’s Divine Comedy by heart. This was his hobby-horse, and he was always quoting it, making the passage square with his momentary feelings. This made him insufferable in society, but he was an amusing companion for anyone who knew the sublime poet, and could appreciate his numerous and rare beauties. Nevertheless he made me privately give in my assent to the proverb, Beware of the man of one book. Otherwise he was intelligent, statesmanlike, and good-natured. He made himself known at Berlin by his services as ambassador to the King of Sardinia.

There was nothing interesting in the opera at Casal, so I went to Pavia, where, though utterly unknown, I was immediately welcomed by the Marchioness Corti, who received all strangers of any importance. In 1786 I made the acquaintance of her son, an admirable man, who honoured me with his friendship, and died quite young in Flanders with the rank of major-general. I wept bitterly for his loss, but tears, after all, are but an idle tribute to those who cause them to flow. His good qualities had endeared him to all his acquaintances, and if he had lived longer he would undoubtedly have risen to high command in the army.

I only stopped two days at Pavia, but it was decreed that I should get myself talked of, even in that short time.

At the second ballet at the opera an actress dressed in a tippet held out her cap to the bones as if to beg an alms, while she was dancing a pas de deux. I was in the Marchioness of Corti's box, and when the girl held out her cap to me I was moved by feelings of ostentation and benevolence to draw forth my purse and drop it in. It contained about twenty ducats. The girl took it, thanked me with a smile, and the pit applauded loudly. I asked the Marquis Belcredi, who was near me, if she had a lover.

"She has a penniless French officer, I believe," he replied; "there he is, in the pit."

I went back to my inn, and was supping with M. Basili, a Modenese colonel, when the ballet girl, her mother, and her younger sister came to thank me for my providential gift. "We are so poor," said the girl.

I had almost done supper, and I asked them all to sup with me after the performance the next day. This offer was quite a disinterested one, and it was accepted.

I was delighted to have made a woman happy at so little expense and without any ulterior objects, and I was giving orders to the landlord for the supper, when Clairmont, my man, told me that a French officer wanted to speak to me. I had him in, and asked what I could do for him.

"There are three courses before you, Mr. Venetian," said he, "and you can take which you like. Either countermand this supper, invite me to come to it, or come and measure swords with me now."

Clairmont, who was attending to the fire, did not give me time to reply, but seized a burning brand and rushed on the officer, who thought it best to escape. Luckily for him the door of my room was open. He made such a noise in running downstairs that the waiter came out and caught hold of him, thinking he had stolen something; but Clairmont, who was pursuing him with his firebrand, had him released.

This adventure became town talk directly. My servant, proud of his exploit and sure of my approval, came to tell me that I need not be afraid of going out, as the officer was only a braggart. He did not even draw his sword on the waiter who had caught hold of him, though the man only had a knife in his belt.

"At all events," he added, "I will go out with you."

I told him that he had done well this time, but that for the future he must not interfere in my affairs.

"Sir," he replied, "your affairs of this kind are mine too, I shall take care not to go beyond my duty."

With this speech, which I thought very sensible, though I did not tell him so, he took one of my pistols and saw to the priming, smiling at me significantly.

All good French servants are of the same stamp as Clairmont; they are devoted and intelligent, but they all think themselves cleverer than their masters, which indeed is often the case, and when they are sure of it they become the masters of their masters, tyrannize over them, and give them marks of contempt which the foolish gentlemen endeavour to conceal. But when the master knows how to make himself respected, the Clairmonts are excellent.

The landlord of my inn sent a report of the affair to the police, and the French officer was banished from the town the same day. At dinner Colonel Basili asked to hear the story, and said that no one but a French officer would think of attacking a man in his own room in such a foolish manner. I differed from him.

“The French are brave,” I replied, “but generally they are perfectly polite and have wonderful tact. Wretchedness and love, joined to a false spirit of courage, makes a fool of a man all the world over.”

At supper the ballet-girl thanked me for ridding her of the poor devil, who (as she said) was always threatening to kill her, and wearied her besides. Though she was not beautiful, there was something captivating about this girl. She was graceful, well-mannered, and intelligent, her mouth was well-shaped, and her eyes large and expressive. I think I should have found her a good bargain, but as I wanted to get away from Pavia, and piqued myself on having been good-natured without ulterior motive, I bade her farewell after supper, with many thanks for her kindness in coming. My politeness seemed rather to confuse her, but she went away reiterating her gratitude.

Next day I dined at the celebrated Chartreuse, and in the evening I reached Milan, and got out at Count A —— B — — ‘s, who had not expected me till the following day.

The countess, of whom my fancy had made a perfect woman, disappointed me dreadfully. It is always so when passion gives reins to the imagination. The Countess was certainly pretty, though too small, and I might still have loved her, in spite of my disappointment, but at our meeting she greeted me with a gravity that was not to my taste, and which gave me a dislike to her.

After the usual compliments, I gave her the two pieces of sarcenet she had commissioned me to get. She thanked me, telling me that her confessor would reimburse me for my expenditure. The count then took me to my room, and left me there till supper. It was nicely furnished, but I felt ill at ease, and resolved to leave in a day or two if the countess remained immovable. Twenty-four hours was as much as I cared to give her.

We made a party of four at supper; the count talking all the time to draw me out, and to hide his wife’s sulkiness. I answered in the same gay strain, speaking to his wife, however, in the hope of rousing her. It was all lost labour. The little woman only replied by faint smiles which vanished almost as they came, and by monosyllabic answers of the briefest description, without taking her eyes off the dishes which she thought tasteless; and it was to the priest, who was the fourth person present, that she addressed her complaints, almost speaking affably to him.

Although I liked the count very well, I could not help pronouncing his wife decidedly ungracious. I was looking at her to see if I could find any justification for her ill humour on her features, but as soon as she saw me she turned away in a very marked manner, and began to speak about nothing to the priest. This conduct offended me, and I laughed heartily at her contempt, or her designs on me, for as she had not fascinated me at all I was safe from her tyranny.

After supper the sarcenet was brought in; it was to be used for a dress with hoops, made after the extravagant fashion then prevailing.

The count was grieved to see her fall so short of the praises he had lavished on her, and came to my room with me, begging me to forgive her Spanish ways, and saying that she would be very pleasant when she knew me better.

The count was poor, his house was small, his furniture shabby, and his footman's livery threadbare; instead of plate he had china, and one of the countess's maids was chief cook. He had no carriages nor horses, not even a saddle horse of any kind. Clairmont gave me all this information, and added that he had to sleep in a little kitchen, and was to share his bed with the man who had waited at table.

I had only one room, and having three heavy trunks found myself very uncomfortable, and I decided on seeking some other lodging more agreeable to my tastes.

The count came early in the morning to ask what I usually took for breakfast.

“My dear count,” I replied, “I have enough fine Turin chocolate to go all round. Does the countess like it?”

“Very much, but she won't take it unless it is made by her woman.”

“Here are six pounds: make her accept it, and tell her that if I hear anything about payment I shall take it back.”

“I am sure she will accept it, and thank you too. Shall I have your carriage housed?”

“I shall be extremely obliged to you, and I shall be glad if you would get me a hired carriage, and a guide for whom you can answer.”

“It shall be done.”

The count was going out when the priest, who had supped with us the night before, came in to make his bow. He was a man of forty-one of the tribe of domestic chaplains who are so common in Italy — who, in return for keeping the accounts of the house, live with its master and mistress. In the morning this priest said mass in a neighbouring church, for the rest of the day he either occupied himself with the cares of the house, or was the lady’s obedient servant.

As soon as We were alone he begged me to say that he had paid me the three hundred Milanese crowns for the sarcenet, if the countess asked me about it.

“Dear, dear, abbe!” said I, laughing, “this sort of thing is not exactly proper in a man of your sacred profession. How can you advise me to tell a lie? No, sir; if the countess asks me any such impertinent question, I shall tell her the truth.”

“I am sure she will ask you, and if you answer like that I shall suffer for it.”

“Well, sir, if you are in the wrong you deserve to suffer.”

“But as it happens, I should be blamed for nothing.”

“Well, go and tell her it’s a present; and if she won’t have that, tell her I am in no hurry to be paid.”

“I see, sir, that you don’t know the lady or the way in which this house is managed. I will speak to her husband.”

In a quarter of an hour the count told me that he owed me a lot of money, which he hoped to pay back in the course of Lent, and that I must add the sarcenet to the account. I embraced him and said that he would have to keep the account himself, as I never noted down any of the moneys that I was only too happy to lend to my friends.

“If your wife asks me whether I have received the money, be sure I will answer in the affirmative.”

He went out shedding grateful tears, while I felt indebted to him for having given me the opportunity of doing him a service; for I was very fond of him.

In the morning, the countess being invisible, I watched my man spreading out my suits over the chairs, amongst them being some handsome women's cloaks, and a rich red dress deeply trimmed with fur, which had been originally intended for the luckless Corticelli. I should no doubt have given it to Agatha, if I had continued to live with her, and I should have made a mistake, as such a dress was only fit for a lady of rank.

At one o'clock I received another visit from the count, who told me that the countess was going to introduce me to their best friend. This was the Marquis Triuizi, a man of about, my own age, tall, well made, squinting slightly, and with all the manner of a nobleman. He told me that besides coming to have the honour of my acquaintance, he also came to enjoy the fire, "for," said he, "there's only one fireplace in the house and that's in your room."

As all the chairs were covered, the marquis drew the countess on to his knee and made her sit there like a baby; but she blushed, and escaped from his grasp. The marquis laughed heartily at her confusion, and she said, —

"Is it possible that a man of your years has not yet learnt to respect a woman?"

"Really, countess," said he, "I thought it would be very disrespectful to continue sitting while you were standing."

While Clairmont was taking the clothes off the chairs, the marquis noticed the mantles and the beautiful dress, and asked me if I were expecting a lady.

"No," said I, "but I hope to find someone at Milan who will be worthy of such presents." I added, "I know the Prince Triulzi, at Venice; I suppose he is of your family?"

"He says he is, and it may be so; but I am certainly not a member of his family."

This let me know that I should do well to say no more about the prince.

"You must stay to dinner, marquis," said Count A —— B —— ; "and as you only like dishes prepared by your own cook you had better send for them."

The marquis agreed, and we made good cheer. The table was covered with fair linen and handsome plate, the wine was good and plentiful, and the servants quick and well dressed. I could now understand the marquis's position in the house. It was his wit and mirth which kept the conversation going, and the countess came in for a share of his pleasantries, while she scolded him for his familiarity.

I could see, however, that the marquis did not want to humiliate her; on the contrary, he was fond of her, and only wished to bring down her exaggerated pride. When he saw her on the point of bursting into tears of rage and shame, he quieted her down by saying that no one in Milan respected her charms and her high birth more than he.

After dinner the tailor who was to measure the countess for a domino for the ball was announced. On the marquis's praising the colours and the beauty of the materials, she told him that I had brought her the sarcenet from Turin, and this reminded her to ask me whether I had been paid.

"Your husband settled with me," said I, "but you have given me a lesson I can never forget."

"What lesson?" said the marquis.

"I had hoped that the countess would have deigned to receive this poor present at my hands."

"And she wouldn't take it? It's absurd, on my life."

"There is nothing to laugh at," said the countess, "but you laugh at everything."

While the man was measuring her, she complained of feeling cold, as she was in her stays, and her beautiful breast was exposed. Thereupon, the marquis put his hands on it, as if he were quite accustomed to use such familiarities. But the Spaniard, no doubt ashamed because of my presence, got into a rage, and abused him in the most awful manner, while he laughed pleasantly, as if he could calm the storm when he pleased. This was enough to inform me of the position in which they stood to one another, and of the part I ought to take.

We remained together till the evening, when the countess and the marquis went to the opera, and the count came with me to my room, till my carriage was ready to take us there too. The opera had begun when we got in, and the first person I noticed on the stage was my dear Therese Palesi, whom I had left at Florence. It was a pleasant surprise to me, and I foresaw that we should renew our sweet interviews while I remained at Milan I was discreet enough to say nothing to the count about his wife's charms, or the way their house was managed. I saw that the place was taken, and the odd humours of the lady prevented my falling in love with her. After the second act we went to the assembly rooms, where five or six banks at faro were being held; I staked and lost a hundred ducats as if to pay for my welcome, and then rose from the table.

At supper the countess seemed to unbend a little, she condoled with me on my loss, and I said that I was glad of it as it made her speak so.

Just as I rang my bell the next morning, Clairmont told me that a woman wanted to speak to me.

"Is she young?"

"Both young and pretty, sir."

"That will do nicely, shew her in."

I saw a simply dressed girl, who reminded me of Leah. She was tall and beautiful, but had not as high pretensions as the Jewess; as she only wanted to know whether she could do my washing for me. I was quite taken with her. Clairmont had just brought me my chocolate, and I asked her to sit down on the bed; but she answered modestly that she did not want to trouble me, and would come again when I was up.

"Do you live at any distance?"

"I live on the ground floor of this house."

"All by yourself?"

"No sir, I have my father and mother."

"And what is your name?"

"Zenobia."

"Your name is as pretty as you are. Will you give me your hand to kiss?"

"I can't," she replied, with a smile, "my hand is another's."

"You are engaged, are you?"

"Yes, to a tailor, and we are going to be married before the end of the carnival:"

"Is he rich or handsome?"

"Neither the one nor the other."

"Then why are you going to marry him?"

"Because I want to have a house of my own:"

"I like you, and will stand your friend. Go and fetch your tailor. I will give him some work to do."

As soon as she went out I got up and told Clairmont to put my linen on a table. I had scarcely finished dressing when she came back with her tailor. It was a striking contrast, for he was a little shrivelled-up man, whose appearance made one laugh.

"Well, master tailor," said I, "so you are going to marry this charming girl?"

"Yes, sir, the banns have been published already."

"You are a lucky fellow indeed to have so much happiness in store. When are you going to marry her?"

"In ten or twelve days."

"Why not to-morrow?"

"Your worship is in a great hurry."

"I think I should be, indeed," said I, laughing, "if I were in your place. I want you to make me a domino for the ball to-morrow."

"Certainly, sir; but your excellency must find me the stuff, for nobody in Milan would give me credit for it, and I couldn't afford to lay out so much money in advance."

"When you are married you will have money and credit too. In the meanwhile here are ten sequins for you."

He went away in high glee at such a windfall.

I gave Zenobia some lace to do up, and asked her if she was afraid of having a jealous husband.

"He is neither jealous nor amorous," she replied. "He is only marrying me because I earn more than he does."

"With your charms I should have thought you might have made a better match."

"I have waited long enough; I have got tired of maidenhood. Besides, he is sharp if he is not handsome, and perhaps a keen head is better than a handsome face."

"You are sharp enough yourself, anyhow. But why does he put off the wedding?"

"Because he hasn't got any money, and wants to have a fine wedding for his relations to come to. I should like it myself."

"I think you are right; but I can't see why you should not let an honest man kiss your hand."

"That was only a piece of slyness to let you know I was to be married. I have no silly prejudices myself."

"Ah, that's better! Tell your future husband that if he likes me to be the patron of the wedding I will pay for everything."

"Really?"

"Yes, really. I will give him twenty-five sequins on the condition that he spends it all on the wedding."

"Twenty-five sequins! That will make people talk; but what care we? I will give you an answer to-morrow."

"And a kiss now?"

"With all my heart."

Zenobia went away in great delight, and I went out to call on my banker and dear Therese.

When the door was opened the pretty maid recognized me, and taking me by the hand led me to her mistress, who was just going to get up. Her emotion at seeing me was so great that she could not utter a word, but only claps me to her breast.

Our natural transports over, Therese told me that she had got tired of her husband, and that for the last six months they had not been living together. She had made him an allowance to get rid of him, and he lived on it at Rome.

“And where is Cesarino?”

“In this town. You can see him whenever you like.”

“Are you happy?”

“Quite. People say that I have a lover, but it is not true; and you can see me at any time with perfect liberty.”

We spent two pleasant hours in telling each other of our experiences since our last meeting, and then, finding her as fresh and fair as in the season of our early loves, I asked her if she had vowed to be faithful to her husband.

“At Florence,” she replied, “I was still in love with him; but now, if I am still pleasing in your eyes, we can renew our connection, and live together till we die.”

“I will soon shew you, darling, that I love you as well as ever.”

She answered only by giving herself up to my embrace.

After action and contemplation I left her as amorous as she had been eighteen years before, but my passion found too many new objects to remain constant long.

Countess A —— B —— began to be more polite. “I know where you have been,” said she, with a pleased air; “but if you love that person, you will not go and see her again, or else her lover will leave her.”

“Then I would take his place, madam.”

“You are right in amusing yourself with women who know how to earn your presents. I am aware that you never give anything till you have received evident proofs of their affection.”

“That has always been my principle.”

“It’s an excellent way to avoid being duped. The lover of the person you have been with kept a lady in society for some time in great splendour, but all the rest of us despised her.”

"Why so, if you please?"

"Because she lowered herself so terribly. Greppi is absolutely a man of no family whatever."

Without expressing my surprise at the name of Greppi, I replied that a man need not be well born to be an excellent lover.

"The only thing needful," said I, "is a fine physique and plenty of money, and those ladies who despised their friend were either ridiculously proud or abominably envious. I have not the slightest doubt that if they could find any more Gieppis they would be willing enough to lower themselves."

She would doubtless have made a sharp reply, for what I had said had angered her; but the Marquis Triulzi arriving, she went out with him, while her husband and myself went to a place where there was a bank at faro, the banker only having a hundred sequins before him.

I took a card and staked small sums like the rest of the company. After losing twenty ducats I left the place.

As we were going to the opera the poor count told me I had made him lose ten ducats on his word of honour, and that he did not know how he could pay it by the next day. I pitied him, and gave him the money without a word; for misery has always appealed strongly to me. Afterwards I lost two hundred ducats at the same bank to which I had lost money the evening before. The count was in the greatest distress. He did not know that Greppi, whom his proud wife considered so worthless, had a hundred thousand francs of my money, and that I possessed jewellery to an even greater amount.

The countess, who had seen me lose, asked me if I would sell my beautiful dress.

"They say it's worth a thousand sequins," said she.

"Yes, that is so; but I would sell everything I possess before parting with any of the articles which I intend for the fair sex."

"Marquis Triulzi wants it badly to present to someone."

"I am very sorry, but I cannot sell it to him."

She went away without a word, but I could see that she was exceedingly vexed at my refusal.

As I was leaving the opera-house I saw Therese getting into her sedan-chair. I went up to her, and told her that I was sure she was going to sup with her lover. She whispered in my ear that she was going to sup by herself, and that I might come if I dared. I gave her an agreeable surprise by accepting the invitation.

“I will expect you, then,” she said.

I asked the count to ride home in my carriage, and taking a chair I reached Therese’s house just as she was going in.

What a happy evening we had! We laughed heartily when we told each other our thoughts.

“I know you were in love with Countess A—— B—— ,” said she, “and I felt sure you would not dare to come to supper with me.”

“And I thought I should confound you by accepting your invitation, as I knew Greppi was your lover.”

“He is my friend,” she replied. “If he loves me in any other way than that of friendship, I pity him, for as yet he has not discovered the secret of seduction.”

“Do you think he ever will?”

“No, I don’t. I am rich.”

“Yes, but he is richer than you.”

“I know that, but I think he loves his money better than he loves me.”

“I understand. You will make him happy if he loves you well enough to ruin himself.”

“That is it, but it will never come to pass. But here we are, together again after a divorce of nearly twenty years. I don’t think you will find any change in me.”

“That is a privilege which nature grants to the fair sex only. You will find me changed, but you will be able to work miracles.”

This was a piece of politeness, for she was hardly capable of working any miracle. However, after an excellent supper, we spent two hours in amorous raptures, and then Morpheus claimed us for his own. When we awoke I did not leave her before giving her a good day equal to the good night which had sent us to sleep.

When I got back I found the fair Zenobia, who said the tailor was ready to marry her next Sunday if my offer was not a joke.

“To convince you of the contrary,” said I, “here are the twenty-five sequins.”

Full of gratitude she let herself fall into my arms, and I covered her mouth and her beautiful bosom with my fiery kisses. Therese had exhausted me, so I did not go any further, but the girl no doubt attributed my self-restraint to the fact that the door was open. I dressed carefully, and made myself look less weary, and to freshen myself up I had a long drive in an open carriage.

When I returned, I found the Marquis of Triulzi teasing the countess as usual. On that day he furnished the dinner, and it was consequently, a very good one.

The conversation turned on the dress in my possession, and the countess told the marquis, like an idiot, that it was destined for the lady who would make me desirous and gratify my desire.

With exquisite politeness the marquis told me that I deserved to enjoy favours at a cheaper rate.

“I suppose you will be giving it to the person with whom you spent the night,” said the countess.

“That’s an impossibility,” I answered, “for I spent the night in play.”

Just then Clairmont came in, and told me an officer wanted to speak to me. I went to the door, and saw a handsome young fellow, who greeted me with an embrace. I recognized him as Barbaro, the son of a Venetian noble, and brother of the fair and famous Madame Gritti Scombro, of whom I spoke ten years ago, whose husband had died in the citadel of Cattaro, where the State Inquisitors had imprisoned him. My young friend had also fallen into disgrace with the despotic Inquisitors. We had been good friends during the year before my imprisonment, but I had heard nothing of him since.

Barbaro told me the chief incidents in a life that had been adventurous enough, and informed me that he was now in the service of the Duke of Modena, the Governor of Milan.

"I saw you losing money at Canano's bank," said he, "and remembering our old friendship I want to communicate to you a sure way of winning money. All that is necessary is for me to introduce you to a club of young men who are very fond of play, and cannot possibly win."

"Where does this club meet?"

"In an extremely respectable house. If you agree I will keep the bank myself, and I am sure of winning. I want you to lend me capital, and I only ask a fourth of the profits."

"I suppose you can hold the cards well."

"You are right."

This was as much as to tell me that he was an adroit sharper, or, in other words, a skilful corrector of fortune's mistakes. He concluded by saying that I should find something worth looking at in the house he had mentioned.

"My dear sir," I replied, "I will give you my decision after seeing the club to which you want to introduce me."

"Will you be at the theatre coffee-house at three o'clock to-morrow?"

"Yes, but I hope to see you at the ball in the evening."

Zenobia's betrothed brought me my domino, and the countess had hers already. As the ball did not begin till the opera was over, I went to hear Therese's singing. In the interval between the acts I lost another two hundred sequins, and then went home to dress for the ball. The countess said that if I would be kind enough to take her to the ball in my carriage and fetch her home in it, she would not send for the Marquis Triulzi's. I replied that I was at her service.

Under the impression that the fair Spaniard had only given me the preference to enable me to take liberties with her, I told her I should be very glad to give her the dress, and that the only condition was that I should spent a night with her.

"You insult me cruelly," said she, "you must know my character better than that."

"I know everything, my dear countess; but, after all, the insult's nothing; you can easily forgive me if you pluck up a little spirit; trample on a foolish prejudice; get the dress, and make me happy for a whole night long."

"That it all very well when one is in love, but you must confess that your coarse way of speaking is more likely to make me hate you than love you."

"I use that style, because I want to come to the point; I have no time to waste. And you, countess, must confess in your turn, that you would be delighted to have me sighing at your feet."

"It would be all the same to me, I don't think I could love you."

"Then we are agreed on one point at all events, for I love you no more than you love me."

"And yet you would spend a thousand sequins for the pleasure of passing a night with me."

"Not at all, I don't want to sleep with you for the sake of the pleasure, but to mortify your infernal pride, which becomes you so ill."

God knows what the fierce Spaniard would have answered, but at that moment the carriage stopped at the door of the theatre. We parted, and after I had got tired of threading my way amidst the crowd I paid a visit to the gaming-room, hoping to regain the money I had lost. I had more than five hundred sequins about me and a good credit at the bank, but I certainly did my best to lose everything I had. I sat down at Canano's bank, and noticing that the poor count, who followed me wherever I went, was the only person who knew me, I thought I should have a lucky evening. I only punted on one card, and spent four hours without losing or gaining. Towards the end, wishing to force fortune's favour, I lost rapidly, and left all my money in the hands of the banker. I went back to the ball-room, where the countess rejoined me, and we returned home.

When we were in the carriage, she said, —

"You lost an immense sum, and I am very glad of it. The marquis will give you a thousand sequins, and the money will bring you luck."

"And you, too, for I suppose you will have the dress?"

"Maybe."

"No, madam, you shall never have it in this way, and you know the other. I despise a thousand sequins."

"And I despise you and your presents."

"You may despise me as much as you please, and you may be sure I despise you."

With these polite expressions we reached the house. When I got to my room I found the count there with a long face, as if he wanted to pity me but dared not do it. However, my good temper gave him the courage to say: —

"Triulzi will give you a thousand sequins; that will fit you up again."

"For the dress you mean?"

"Yes."

"I wanted to give it to your wife, but she said she would despise it, coming from my hands."

"You astonish me; she is mad after it. You must have wounded her haughty temper in some way or another. But sell it, and get the thousand sequins."

"I will let you know to-morrow."

I slept four or five hours, and then rose and went out in my great coat to call on Greppi, for I had no more money. I took a thousand sequins, begging him not to tell my affairs to anyone. He replied that my affairs were his own, and that I could count on his secrecy. He complimented me on the esteem in which Madame Palesi held me, and said he hoped to meet me at supper at her house one night.

"Such a meeting would give me the greatest pleasure," I replied.

On leaving him I called on Therese, but as there were some people with her I did not stay long. I was glad to see that she knew nothing about my losses or my affairs. She said that Greppi wanted to sup with me at her house, and that she would let me know when the day was fixed. When I got home I found the count in front of my fire.

"My wife is in a furious rage with you," said he, "and won't tell me why."

“The reason is, my dear count, that I won’t let her accept the dress from any hand but mine. She told me that she should despise it as a gift from me, but she has nothing to be furious about that I know.”

“It’s some mad notion of hers, and I don’t know what to make of it. But pray attend to what I am about to say to you. You despise a thousand sequins — good. I congratulate you. But if you are in a position to despise a sum which would make me happy, offer up a foolish vanity on the shrine of friendship, take the thousand sequins, and lend them to me, and let my wife have the dress, for of course he will give it her.”

This proposal made me roar with laughter, and certainly it was of a nature to excite the hilarity of a sufferer from confirmed melancholia, which I was far from being. However, I stopped laughing when I saw how the poor count blushed from shame. I kissed him affectionately to calm him, but at last I was cruel enough to say,

“I will willingly assist you in this arrangement. I will sell the dress to the marquis as soon as you please, but I won’t lend you the money. I’ll give it to you in the person of your wife at a private interview; but when she receives me she must not only be polite and complaisant, but as gentle as a lamb. Go and see if it can be arranged, my dear count; ’tis absolutely my last word.”

“I will see,” said the poor husband; and with that he went out.

Barbaro kept his appointment with exactitude. I made him get into my carriage, and we alighted at a house at the end of Milan. We went to the first floor, and there I was introduced to a fine-looking old man, an amiable lady of pleasing appearance, and then to two charming cousins. He introduced me as a Venetian gentleman in disgrace with the State Inquisitors, like himself, adding, that as I was a rich bachelor their good or ill favour made no difference to me.

He said I was rich, and I looked like it. My luxury of attire was dazzling: My rings, my snuff-boxes, my chains, my diamonds, my jewelled cross hanging on my breast-all gave me the air of an important personage. The cross belonged to the Order of the Spur the Pope had given me, but as I had carefully taken the spur away it was not known to what order I belonged. Those who might be curious did not dare to ask me, for one can no more enquire of a knight what order he belongs to, than one can say to a lady how old are you? I wore it till 1785, when the Prince Palatine of Russia told me in private that I would do well to get rid of the thing.

“It only serves to dazzle fools,” said he, “and here you have none such to deal with.”

I followed his advice, for he was a man of profound intelligence. Nevertheless, he removed the corner-stone of the kingdom of Poland. He ruined it by the same means by which he had made it greater.

The old man to whom Barbaro presented me was a marquis. He told me that he knew Venice, and as I was not a patrician I could live as pleasantly anywhere else. He told me to consider his house and all he possessed as mine.

The two young marchionesses had enchanted me; they were almost ideal beauties. I longed to enquire about them of some good authority, for I did not put much faith in Barbaro.

In half an hour the visitors commenced to come on foot and in carriages. Among the arrivals were several pretty and well-dressed girls, and numerous smart young men all vying with each other in their eagerness to pay court to the two cousins. There were twenty of us in all. We sat round a large table, and began to play a game called bankruptcy. After amusing myself for a couple of hours in losing sequins, I went out with Barbaro to the opera.

“The two young ladies are two incarnate angels,” I said to my countryman. “I shall pay my duty to them, and shall find out in a few days whether they are for me. As for the gaming speculation, I will lend you two hundred sequins; but I don’t want to lose the money, so you must give me good security.”

“To that I agree willingly, but I am certain of giving it you back with good interest.”

“You shall have a half share and not twenty-five per cent., and I must strongly insist that nobody shall know of my having anything to do with your bank. If I hear any rumours, I shall bet heavily on my own account.”

"You may be sure I shall keep the secret; it is to my own interest to have it believed that I am my own capitalist."

"Very good. Come to me early to-morrow morning, and bring me good security, and you shall have the money."

He embraced me in the joy of his heart.

The picture of the two fair ladies was still in my brain, and I was thinking of enquiring of Greppi when I chanced to see Triulzi in the pit of the opera-house. He saw me at the same moment, and came up to me, saying gaily that he was sure I had had a bad dinner, and that I had much better dine with him every day.

"You make me blush, marquis, for not having called on you yet."

"No, no; there can be nothing of that kind between men of the world, who know the world's worth."

"We are agreed there, at all events."

"By the way, I hear you have decided on selling me that handsome dress of yours. I am really very much obliged to you, and will give you the fifteen thousand livres whenever you like."

"You can come and take it to-morrow morning."

He then proceeded to tell me about the various ladies I noticed in the theatre. Seizing the opportunity, I said, —

"When I was in church the other day I saw two exquisite beauties. A man at my side told me they were cousins, the Marchionesses Q —— and I —— , I think he said. Do you know them? I am quite curious to hear about them."

"I know them. As you say, they are charming. It's not very difficult to obtain access to them; and I suppose they are good girls, as I have not heard their names in connection with any scandal. However, I know that Mdlle. F has a lover, but it is a great secret; he is the only son of one of the noblest of our families. Unfortunately, they are not rich; but if they are clever, as I am sure they are, they may make good matches. If you like I can get someone to introduce you there."

"I haven't made up my mind yet. I may be able to forget them easily only having seen them once. Nevertheless, I am infinitely obliged to you for your kind offer.”

After the ballet I went into the assembly-room and I heard “there he is” several times repeated as I came in. The banker made me a bow, and offered me a place next to him. I sat down and he handed me a pack of cards. I punted, and with such inveterate bad luck that in less than an hour I lost seven hundred sequins. I should probably have lost all the money I had in my pocket if Canano had not been obliged to go away. He gave the cards to a man whose looks displeased me, and I rose and went home and got into bed directly, so as not to be obliged to conceal my ill temper.

In the morning Barbaro came to claim the two hundred sequins. He gave me the right to sequestrate his pay by way of surety. I do not think I should have had the heart to exercise my rights if things had gone wrong, but I liked to have some control over him. When I went out I called on Greppi, and took two thousand sequins in gold.

CHAPTER XIX

Humiliation of The Countess — Zenobia’s Wedding — Faro

Conquest of The Fair Irene — Plan for a Masquerade

On my return I found the count with one of the marquis’s servants, who gave me a note, begging me to send the dress, which I did directly.

“The marquis will dine with us,” said the count, “and, no doubt, he will bring the money with him for this treasure.”

“You think it a treasure, then?”

“Yes, fit for a queen to wear.”

“I wish the treasure had the virtue of giving you a crown; one head-dress is as good as another.”

The poor devil understood the allusion, and as I liked him I reproached myself for having humiliated him unintentionally, but I could not resist the temptation to jest. I hastened to smooth his brow by saying that as soon as I got the money for the dress I would take it to the countess.

“I have spoken to her about it,” said he, “and your proposal made her laugh; but I am sure she will make up her mind when she finds herself in possession of the dress.”

It was a Friday. The marquis sent in an excellent fish dinner, and came himself soon after with the dress in a basket. The present was made with all ceremony, and the proud countess was profuse in her expressions of thanks, which the giver received coolly enough, as if accustomed to that kind of thing. However, he ended by the no means flattering remark that if she had any sense she would sell it, as everybody knew she was too poor to wear it. This suggestion by no means met with her approval. She abused him to her heart’s content, and told him he must be a great fool to give her a dress which he considered unsuitable to her.

They were disputing warmly when the Marchioness Menafoglio was announced. As soon as she came in her eyes were attracted by the dress, which was stretched over a chair, and finding it superb she exclaimed,

“I would gladly buy that dress.”

“I did not buy it to sell again,” said the countess, sharply.

“Excuse me,” replied the marchioness, “I thought it was for sale, and I am sorry it is not.”

The marquis, who was no lover of dissimulation, began to laugh, and the countess, fearing he would cover her with ridicule, hastened to change the conversation. But when the marchioness was gone the countess gave reins to her passion, and scolded the marquis bitterly for having laughed. However, he only replied by remarks which, though exquisitely polite, had a sting in them; and at last the lady said she was tired, and was going to lie down.

When she had left the room the marquis gave me the fifteen thousand francs, telling me that they would bring me good luck at Canano’s.

“You are a great favourite of Canano’s,” he added, “and he wants you to come and dine with him. He can’t ask you to supper, as he is obliged to spend his nights in the assembly-rooms.”

“Tell him I will come any day he likes except the day after to-morrow, when I have to go to a wedding at the ‘Apple Garden.’”

“I congratulate you,” said the count and the marquis together, “it will no doubt be very pleasant.”

“I expect to enjoy myself heartily there.”

“Could not we come, too?”

“Do you really want to?”

“Certainly.”

“Then I will get you an invitation from the fair bride herself on the condition that the countess comes as well. I must warn you that the company will consist of honest people of the lower classes, and I cannot have them humiliated in any way.”

“I will persuade the countess,” said Triulzi.

“To make your task an easier one, I may as well tell you that the wedding is that of the fair Zenobia.”

“Bravo! I am sure the countess will come to that.”

The count went out, and shortly reappeared with Zenobia. The marquis congratulated her, and encouraged her to ask the countess to the wedding. She seemed doubtful, so the marquis took her by the hand and let her into the proud Spaniard’s room. In half an hour they returned informing us that my lady had deigned to accept the invitation.

When the marquis had gone, the count told me that I might go and keep his wife company, if I had nothing better to do, and that he would see to some business.

“I have the thousand sequins in my pocket,” I remarked, “and if I find her reasonable, I will leave them with her.”

“I will go and speak to her first.”

“Do so.”

While the count was out of the room, I exchanged the thousand sequins for the fifteen thousand francs in bank notes which Greppi had given me.

I was just shutting up my cash-box when Zenobia came in with my lace cuffs. She asked me if I would like to buy a piece of lace. I replied in the affirmative, and she went out and brought it me.

I liked the lace, and bought it for eighteen sequins, and said, —

“This lace is yours, dearest Zenobia, if you will content me this moment.”

“I love you well, but I should be glad if you would wait till after my marriage.”

“No, dearest, now or never. I cannot wait. I shall die if you do not grant my prayer. Look! do you not see what a state I am in?”

“I see it plainly enough, but it can’t be done.”

“Why not? Are you afraid of your husband noticing the loss of your maidenhead?”

“Not I, and if he did I shouldn’t care. I promise you if he dared to reproach me, he should not have me at all.”

“Well said, for my leavings are too good for him. Come quick!”

“But you will shut the door, at least?”

“No, the noise would be heard, and might give rise to suspicion. Nobody will come in.”

With these words I drew her towards me, and finding her as gentle as a lamb and as loving as a dove, the amorous sacrifice was offered with abundant libations on both sides. After the first ecstacy was over, I proceeded to examine her beauties, and with my usual amorous frenzy told her that she should send her tailor out to graze and live with me. Fortunately she did not believe in the constancy of my passion. After a second assault I rested, greatly astonished that the count had not interrupted our pleasures. I thought he must have gone out, and I told Zenobia my opinion, whereon she overwhelmed me with caresses. Feeling at my ease, I set her free from her troublesome clothes, and gave myself up to toying with her in a manner calculated to arouse the exhausted senses; and then for the third time we were clasped to each other’s arms, while I made Zenobia put herself into the many attitudes which I knew from experience as most propitious to the voluptuous triumph.

We were occupied a whole hour in these pleasures, but Zenobia, in the flower of her age and a novice, poured forth many more libations than I.

Just as I lost life for the third time, and Zenobia for the fourteenth, I heard the count’s voice. I told my sweetheart, who had heard it as well, and after we had dressed hastily I gave her the eighteen sequins, and she left the room.

A moment after the count came in laughing, and said, —

“I have been watching you all the time by this chink” (which he shewed me), “and I have found it very amusing.”

“I am delighted to hear it, but keep it to yourself.”

“Of course, of course.”

"My wife," said he, "will be very pleased to see you; and I," he added, "shall be very pleased as well."

"You are a philosophical husband," said I, "but I am afraid after the exercises you witnessed the countess will find me rather slow."

"Not at all, the recollection will make it all the pleasanter for you."

"Mentally perhaps, but in other respects …"

"Oh! you will manage to get out of it."

"My carriage is at your service, as I shall not be going out for the rest of the day."

I softly entered the countess's room and finding her in bed enquired affectionately after her health.

"I am very well," said she, smiling agreeably, "my husband has done me good."

I had seated myself quietly on the bed, and she had shewn no vexation; certainly a good omen.

"Aren't you going out any more to-day?" said she, "you have got your dressing-gown on."

"I fell asleep lying on my bed, and when I awoke I decided on keeping you company if you will be as good and gentle as you are pretty."

"If you behave well to me, you will always find me so.

"And will you love me?"

"That depends on you. So you are going to sacrifice Canano to me this evening."

"Yes, and with the greatest pleasure. He has won a lot from me already, and I foresee that he will win the fifteen thousand francs I have in my pocket to-morrow. This is the money the Marquis Triulzi gave me for the dress."

"It would be a pity to lose such a large sum."

"You are right, and I need not lose them if you will be complaisant, for they are meant for you. Allow me to shut the door."

"What for?"

"Because I am perishing with cold and desire, and intend warming myself in your bed."

"I will never allow that."

"I don't want to force you. Good-bye, countess, I will go and warm myself by my own fire, and to-morrow I will wage war on Canano's bank."

"You are certainly a sad dog. Stay here, I like your conversation."

Without more ado I locked the door, took off my clothes, and seeing that her back was turned to me, jumped into bed beside her. She had made up her mind, and let me do as I liked, but my combats with Zenobia had exhausted me. With closed eyes she let me place her in all the postures which lubricity could suggest, while her hands were not idle; but all was in vain, my torpor was complete, and nothing would give life to the instrument which was necessary to the operation.

Doubtless the Spaniard felt that my nullity was an insult to her charms; doubtless I must have tortured her by raising desires which I could not appease; for several times I felt my fingers drenched with a flow that shewed she was not passive in the matter; but she pretended all the while to be asleep. I was vexed at her being able to feign insensibility to such an extent, and I attached myself to her head; but her lips, which she abandoned to me, and which I abused disgracefully, produced no more effect than the rest of her body. I felt angry that I could not effect the miracle of resurrection, and I decided on leaving a stage where I had so wretched a part, but I was not generous to her, and put the finishing stroke to her humiliation by saying, —

"'Tis not my fault, madam, that your charms have so little power over me. Here, take these fifteen thousand francs by way of consolation."

With this apostrophe I left her.

My readers, more especially my lady readers, if I ever have any, will no doubt pronounce me a detestable fellow after this. I understand their feelings, but beg them to suspend their judgment. They will see afterwards that my instinct served me wonderfully in the course I had taken.

Early the next day the count came into my room with a very pleased expression.

"My wife is very well," said he, "and told me to wish you good day."

I did not expect this, and I no doubt looked somewhat astonished.

"I am glad," he said, "that you gave her francs instead of the sequins you got from Triulzi, and I hope, as Triulzi said, you will have luck with it at the bank."

"I am not going to the opera," said I, "but to the masked ball, and I don't want anyone to recognize me."

I begged him to go and buy me a new domino, and not to come near me in the evening, so that none but he should know who I was. As soon as he had gone out I began to write letters. I had heavy arrears to make up in that direction.

The count brought me my domino at noon, and after hiding it we went to dine with the countess. Her affability, politeness, and gentleness astounded me. She looked so sweetly pretty that I repented having outraged her so scandalously. Her insensibility of the evening before seemed inconceivable, and I began to suspect that the signs I had noticed to the contrary were only due to the animal faculties which are specially active in sleep.

"Was she really asleep," said I to myself, "when I was outraging her so shamefully?"

I hoped it had been so. When her husband left us alone, I said, humbly and tenderly, that I knew I was a monster, and that she must detest me.

"You a monster?" said she. "On the contrary I owe much to you, and there is nothing I can think of for which I have cause to reproach you."

I took her hand, tenderly, and would have carried it to my lips, but she drew it away gently and gave me a kiss. My repentance brought a deep blush to my face.

When I got back to my room I sealed my letters and went to the ball. I was absolutely unrecognizable. Nobody had ever seen my watches or my snuff-boxes before, and I had even changed my purses for fear of anybody recognizing me by them.

Thus armed against the glances of the curious, I sat down at Canano's table and commenced to play in quite a different fashion. I had a hundred Spanish pieces in my pocket worth seven hundred Venetian sequins. I had got this Spanish money from Greppi, and I took care not to use what Triulzi had given me for fear he should know me.

I emptied my purse on the table, and in less than an hour it was all gone. I rose from the table and everybody thought I was going to beat a retreat, but I took out another purse and put a hundred sequins on one card, going second, with paroli, seven, and the va. The stroke was successful and Canano gave me back my hundred Spanish pieces, on which I sat down again by the banker, and recommenced regular play. Canano was looking at me hard. My snuff-box was the one which the Elector of Cologne had given me, with the prince’s portrait on the lid. I took a pinch of snuff and he gave me to understand that he would like one too, and the box was subjected to a general examination. A lady whom I did not know said the portrait represented the Elector of Cologne in his robes as Grand Master of the Teutonic Order. The box was returned to me and I saw that it had made me respected, so small a thing imposes on people. I then put fifty sequins on one card, going paroli and paix de paroli, and at daybreak I had broken the bank. Canano said politely that if I liked to be spared the trouble of carrying all that gold he would have it weighed and give me a cheque. A pair of scales was brought, and it was found that I had thirty-four pounds weight in gold, amounting to two thousand eight hundred and fifty-six sequins. Canano wrote me a cheque, and I slowly returned to the ball-room.

Barbaro had recognized me with the keenness of a Venetian. He accosted me and congratulated me on my luck, but I gave him no answer, and seeing that I wished to remain incognito he left me.

A lady in a Greek dress richly adorned with diamonds came up to me, and said in a falsetto voice that she would like to dance with me.

I made a sign of assent, and as she took off her glove I saw a finely-shaped hand as white as alabaster, one of the fingers bearing an exquisite diamond ring. It was evidently no ordinary person, and though I puzzled my head I could not guess who she could be.

She danced admirably, in the style of a woman of fashion, and I too exerted myself to the utmost. By the time the dance was over I was covered with perspiration.

“You look hot,” said my partner, in her falsetto voice, “come and rest in my box.”

My heart leaped with joy, and I followed her with great delight; but as I saw Greppi in the box to which she took me, I had no doubt that it must be Therese, which did not please me quite so well. In short, the lady took off her mask; it was Therese, and I complimented her on her disguise.

“But how did you recognize me, dearest?”

“By your snuff-box. I knew it, otherwise I should never have found you out.”

“Then you think that nobody has recognized me?”

“Nobody, unless in the same way as I did.”

“None of the people here have seen my snuff-box.”

I took the opportunity of handing over to Greppi Canano’s cheque, and he gave me a receipt for it. Therese asked us to supper for the ensuing evening, and said, —

“There will be four of us in all.”

Greppi seemed curious to know who the fourth person could be, but I right guessed it would be my dear son Cesarino.

As I went down once more to the ball-room two pretty female dominos attacked me right and left, telling me that Messer-Grande was waiting for me outside. They then asked me for some snuff, and I gave them a box ornamented with an indecent picture. I had the impudence to touch the spring and shew it them, and after inspecting it they exclaimed, —

“Fie, fie! your punishment is never to know who we are.”

I was sorry to have displeased the two fair masquers, who seemed worth knowing, so I followed them, and meeting Barbaro, who knew everybody, I pointed them out to him, and heard to my delight that they were the two Marchionesses Q —— and F —— . I promised Barbaro to go and see them. He said that everybody in the ball-room knew me, and that our bank was doing very well, though, of course, that was a trifle to me.

Towards the end of the ball, when it was already full daylight, a masquer, dressed as a Venetian gondolier, was accosted by a lady masquer, also in Venetian costume. She challenged the gondolier to prove himself a Venetian by dancing the ‘forlana’ with her. The gondolier accepted, and the music struck up, but the boatman, who was apparently a Milanese, was hooted, while the lady danced exquisitely. I was very fond of the dance, and I asked the unknown Venetian lady to dance it again with me. She agreed, and a ring was formed round us, and we were so applauded that we had to dance it over again. This would have sufficed if a very pretty shepherdess without a mask had not begged me to dance it with her. I could not refuse her, and she danced exquisitely; going round and round the circle three times, and seeming to hover in the air. I was quite out of breath. When it was finished, she came up to me and whispered my name in my ear. I was astonished, and feeling the charm of the situation demanded her name.

“You shall know,” said she, in Venetian, “if you will come to the ‘Three Kings.’”

“Are you alone?”

“No, my father and mother, who are old friends of yours, are with me”

“I will call on Monday.”

What a number of adventures to have in one night! I went home wearily, and went to bed, but I was only allowed to sleep for two hours. I was roused and begged to dress myself. The countess, the marquis, and the count, all ready for Zenobia’s wedding, teased me till I was ready, telling me it was not polite to keep a bride waiting. Then they all congratulated me on my breaking the bank and the run of luck against me. I told the marquis that it was his money that had brought me luck, but he replied by saying that he knew what had become of his money.

This indiscretion either on the count’s part or the countess’s surprised me greatly; it seemed to me contrary to all the principles in intrigue.

“Canano knew you,” said the marquis, “by the way you opened your snuff-box, and he hopes to see us to dinner before long. He says he hopes you will win a hundred pounds weight of gold; he has a fancy for you.”

“Canano,” said I, “has keen eyes, and plays faro admirably. I have not the slightest wish to win his money from him.”

We then started for the “Apple Garden,” where we found a score of honest folks and the bride and bridegroom, who overwhelmed us with compliments. We soon put the company at their ease. At first our presence overawed them, but a little familiarity soon restored the general hilarity. We sat down to dinner, and among the guests were some very pretty girls, but my head was too full of Zenobia to care about them. The dinner lasted three hours. It was an abundant repast, and the foreign wines were so exquisite that it was easy to see that the sum I had furnished had been exceeded. Good fellowship prevailed, and after the first bumper had passed round everybody proposed somebody else’s health, and as each tried to say something different to his neighbour the most fearful nonsense prevailed. Then everybody thought himself bound to sing, and they were not at all first-rate vocalists by any means. We laughed heartily and also caused laughter, for our speeches and songs were as bad as those of our humble friends.

When we rose from the table kissing became general, and the countess could not resist laughing when she found herself obliged to hold out her cheeks for the salute of the tailor, who thought her laughter a special mark of favour.

Strains of sweet music were heard, and the ball was duly opened by the newly-married couple. Zenobia danced, if not exactly well, at least gracefully; but the tailor, who had never put his legs to any other use besides crossing them, cut such a ridiculous figure that the countess had much ado to restrain her laughter. But in spite of that I led out Zenobia for the next minuet, and the proud countess was obliged to dance with the wretched tailor.

When the minuets stopped the square dances began, and refreshments were liberally handed round. Confetti, a kind of sweetmeat, even better than that made at Verdun, were very plentiful.

When we were just going I congratulated the husband and offered to bring Zenobia home in my carriage, which he was pleased to style a very honourable offer. I gave my hand to Zenobia, and helped her into the carriage, and having told the coachman to go slowly I put her on my knee, extinguisher fashion, and kept her there all the time. Zenobia was the first to get down, and noticing that my breeches of grey velvet were spoiled, I told her that I would be with her in a few minutes. In two minutes I put on a pair of black satin breeches, and I rejoined the lady before her husband came in. She asked what I had been doing, and on my telling her that our exploits in the carriage had left very evident marks on my trousers, she gave me a kiss, and thanked me for my forethought.

Before long the husband and his sister arrived. He thanked me, calling me his gossip, and then noticing the change in my dress he asked me how I had contrived to make the alteration so quickly.

“I went to my room, leaving your wife at your house, for which I beg your pardon.”

“Didn’t you see that the gentleman had spilt a cup of coffee over his handsome breeches?” said Zenobia.

“My dear wife,” said the crafty tailor, “I don’t see everything, nor is it necessary that I should do so, but you should have accompanied the gentleman to his room.”

Then turning to me with a laugh, he asked me how I had enjoyed the wedding.

“Immensely, and my friends have done the same; but you must let me pay you, dear gossip, for what you spent over and above the twenty-four sequins. You can tell me how much it is.”

“Very little, a mere trifle; Zenobia shall bring you the bill.”

I went home feeling vexed with myself for not having foreseen that the rogue would notice my change of dress, and guess the reason. However, I consoled myself with the thought that the tailor was no fool, and that it was plain that he was content to play the part we had assigned to him. So after wishing good night to the count, the countess and the marquis, who all thanked me for the happy day they had spent, I went to bed.

As soon as I was awake, I thought of the shepherdess who had danced the ‘forlana’ so well at the ball, and I resolved to pay her a visit. I was not more interested in her beauty than to find out who her father and mother, “old friends of mine,” could be. I dressed and walked to the “Three Kings,” and on walking into the room which the shepherdess had indicated to me, what was my astonishment to find myself face to face with the Countess Rinaldi, whom Zavoisky had introduced me to at the ‘locanda’ of Castelletto sixteen years ago. The reader will remember how M. de Bragadin paid her husband the money he won from me at play.

Madame Rinaldi had aged somewhat, but I knew her directly. However, as I had never had more than a passing fancy for her, we did not go back to days which did neither of us any honour.

“I am delighted to see you again,” said I; “are you still living with your husband?”

“You will see him in half an hour, and he will be glad to present his respects to you.”

“I should not at all care for it myself, madam; there are old quarrels between us which I do not want to renew, so, madam, farewell.”

“No, no, don’t go yet, sit down.”

“Pardon me.”

“Irene, don’t let the gentleman go.”

At these words Irene ran and barred the way — not like a fierce mastiff, but like an angel, entreating me to stay with that mingled look of innocence, fear, and hope, of which girls know the effect so well. I felt I could not go.

“Let me through, fair Irene,” said I, “we may see each other somewhere else.”

“Pray do not go before you have seen my father:”

The words were spoken so tenderly that our lips met. Irene was victorious. How can one resist a pretty girl who implores with a kiss? I took a chair, and Irene, proud of her victory, sat on my knee and covered me with kisses.

I took it into my head to task the countess where and when Irene was born.

“At Mantua,” said she, “three months after I left Venice.”

“And when did you leave Venice?”

“Six months after I met you.”

“That is a curious coincidence, and if we had been tenderly acquainted you might say that Irene was my daughter, and I should believe you, and think that my affection for her was purely paternal."

"Your memory is not very good, sir, I wonder at that."

"I may tell you, that I never forget certain things, But I guess your meaning. You want me to subdue my liking for Irene. I am willing to do so, but she will be the loser."

This conversation had silenced Irene, but she soon took courage, and said she was like me.

"No, no," I answered, "if you were like me you would not be so pretty."

"I don't think so; I think you are very handsome."

"You flatter me."

"Stay to dinner with us."

"No, if I stayed I might fall in love with you, and that would be a pity, as your mother says I am your father."

"I was joking," said the countess, "you may love Irene with a good conscience."

"We will see what can be done."

When Irene had left the room, I said to the mother, —

"I like your daughter, but I won't be long sighing for her, and you mustn't take me for a dupe."

"Speak to my husband about it. We are very poor, and we want to go to Cremona."

"I suppose Irene has a lover?"

"No."

"But she has had one, of course?"

"Never anything serious."

"I can't believe it."

"It's true, nevertheless. Irene is intact."

Just then Irene came in with her father, who had aged to such an extent that I should never have known him in the street. He came up to me and embraced me, begging me to forget the past. “It is only you,” he added, “who can furnish me with funds to go to Cremona.

“I have several debts here, and am in some danger of imprisonment. Nobody of any consequence comes to see me. My dear daughter is the only thing of value which I still possess. I have just been trying to sell this pinchbeck watch, and though I asked only six sequins, which is half what it is worth, they would not give me more than two. When a man gets unfortunate, everything is against him.”

I took the watch, and gave the father six sequins for it, and then handed it to Irene. She said with a smile that she could not thank me, as I only gave her back her own, but she thanked me for the present I had made her father.

“Here,” said she seriously to the old man, “you can sell it again now.”

This made me laugh. I gave the count ten sequins in addition, embraced Irene, and said I must be gone, but that I would see them again in three or four days.

Irene escorted me to the bottom of the stairs, and as she allowed me to assure myself that she still possessed the rose of virginity, I gave her another ten sequins, and told her that the first time she went alone to the ball with me I would give her a hundred sequins. She said she would consult her father.

Feeling sure that the poor devil would hand over Irene to me, and having no apartment in which I could enjoy her in freedom, I stopped to read a bill in a pastrycook’s window. It announced a room to let. I went in, and the pastrycook told me that the house belonged to him, and his pretty wife, who was suckling a baby, begged me to come upstairs and see the room. The street was a lonely one, and had a pleasing air of mystery about it. I climbed to the third floor, but the rooms there were wretched garrets of no use to me.

“The first floor,” said the woman, “consists of a suite of four nice rooms, but we only let them together.”

“Let us go and see them. Good! they will do. What is the rent?”

“You must settle that with my husband.”

"And can't I settle anything with you, my dear?"

So saying I gave her a kiss which she took very kindly, but she smelt of nursing, which I detested, so I did not go any farther despite her radiant beauty.

I made my bargain with the landlord, and paid a month's rent in advance for which he gave me a receipt. It was agreed that I should come and go as I pleased, and that he should provide me with food. I gave him a name so common as to tell him nothing whatever about me, but he seemed to care very little about that.

As I had agreed with Barbaro to visit the fair marchionesses, I dressed carefully, and after a slight repast with the countess, who was pleasant but did not quite please me, I met my fellow-countryman and we called on the two cousins.

"I have come," said I, "to beg your pardons for having revealed to you the secret of the snuff-box."

They blushed, and scolded Barbaro, thinking that he had betrayed them. On examining them I found them far superior to Irene, my present flame, but their manner, the respect they seemed to require, frightened me. I was not at all disposed to dance attendance on them. Irene, on the contrary, was an easy prey. I had only to do her parents a service, and she was in my power; while the two cousins had their full share of aristocratic pride, which debases the nobility to the level of the vilest of the people, and only imposes upon fools, who after all are in the majority everywhere. Further I was no longer at that brilliant age which fears nothing, and I was afraid that my appearance would hardly overcome them. It is true that Barbaro had made me hope that presents would be of some use, but after what the Marquis Triulzi had said, I feared that Barbaro had only spoken on supposition.

When the company was sufficiently numerous, the card-tables were brought in. I sat down by Mdlle. Q —— , and disposed myself to play for small stakes. I was introduced by the aunt, the mistress of the house, to a young gentleman in Austrian uniform who sat beside me.

My dear countryman played like a true sharper, much to my displeasure. My fair neighbour, at the end of the game, which lasted four hours, found herself the gainer of a few sequins, but the officer, who had played on his word of honour, after losing all the money in his pockets, owed ten louis. The bank was the winner of fifty sequins, including the officer's debt. As the young man lived at some distance he honoured me by coming in my carriage.

On the way, Barbaro told us he would introduce us to a girl who had just come from Venice. The officer caught fire at this, and begged that we should go and see her directly, and we accordingly went. The girl was well enough looking, but neither I nor the officer cared much about her. While they were making some coffee for us, and Barbaro was entertaining the young lady, I took a pack of cards, and had not much difficulty in inducing the officer to risk twenty sequins against the twenty I put on the table. While we were playing I spoke to him of the passion with which the young marchioness inspired me.

"She's my sister," said he.

I knew as much, but pretended to be astonished, and I went on playing. Taking the opportunity I told him that I knew of no one who could let the marchioness know of my affection better than he. I made him laugh, and as he thought I was jesting he only gave vague answers; but seeing that while I talked of my passion I forgot my card, he soon won the twenty sequins from me, and immediately paid them to Barbaro. In the excess of his joy he embraced me as if I had given him the money; and when we parted he promised to give me some good news of his sister at our next meeting.

I had to go to supper with Therese, Greppi, and my son, but having some spare time before me I went to the opera-house. The third act was going on, and I accordingly visited the cardroom, and there lost two hundred sequins at a single deal. I left the room almost as if I was flying from an enemy. Canano shook me by the hand, and told me he expected me and the marquis to dinner every day, and I promised we would come at the earliest opportunity.

I went to Therese's, and found Greppi there before me. Therese and Don Cesarino, whom I covered with kisses, came in a quarter of an hour afterwards. The banker stared at him in speechless wonder. He could not make out whether he was my son or my brother. Seeing his amazement, Therese told him Cesarino was her brother. This stupefied the worthy man still more. At last he asked me if I had known Therese's mother pretty well, and on my answering in the affirmative he seemed more at ease.

The meal was excellent, but all my attention went to my son. He had all the advantages of a good disposition and an excellent education. He had grown a great deal since I had seen him at Florence, and his mental powers had developed proportionately. His presence made the party grave, but sweet. The innocence of youth throws around it an ineffable charm; it demands respect and restraint. An hour after midnight we left Therese, and I went to bed, well pleased with my day's work, for the loss of two hundred sequins did not trouble me much.

When I got up I received a note from Irene, begging me to call on her. Her father had given her permission to go to the next ball with me, and she had a domino, but she wanted to speak to me. I wrote and told her I would see her in the course of the day. I had written to tell the Marquis Triulzi that I was going to dine with Canano, and he replied that he would be there.

We found this skilled gamester in a fine house, richly furnished, and shewing traces on every side of the wealth and taste of its owner. Canano introduced me to two handsome women, one of whom was his mistress, and to five or six marquises; for at Milan no noble who is not a marquis is thought anything of, just as in the same way they are all counts at Vicenza. The dinner was magnificent and the conversation highly intellectual. In a mirthful moment Canano said he had known me for seventeen years, his acquaintance dating from the time I had juggled a professional gamester, calling himself Count Celi, out of a pretty ballet-girl whom I had taken to Mantua. I confessed the deed and amused the company by the story of what had happened at Mantua with Oreilan, and how I had found Count Celi at Cesena metamorphosed into Count Alfani. Somebody mentioned the ball which was to be held the next day, and when I said I was not going they laughed.

"I bet I know you," said Canano, "if you come to the bank."

"I am not going to play any more," said I.

"All the better for me," answered Canano; "for though your punting is unlucky, you don't leave off till you have won my money. But that's only my joke; try again, and I protest I would see you win half my fortune gladly."

Count Canano had a ring on his finger with a stone not unlike one of mine; it had cost him two thousand sequins, while mine was worth three thousand. He proposed that we should stake them against each other after having them unmounted and valued.

"When?" said I.

"Before going to the opera."

"Very good; but on two turns of the cards, and a deal to each."

"No, I never punt."

"Then we must equalise the game."

"How do you mean?"

"By leaving doubles and the last two cards out of account."

"Then you would have the advantage."

"If you can prove that I will pay you a hundred sequins. Indeed, I would bet anything you like that the game would still be to the advantage of the banker."

"Can you prove it?"

"Yes; and I will name the Marquis Triulzi as judge."

I was asked to prove my point without any question of a bet.

"The advantages of the banker," said I, "are two. The first and the smaller is that all he has got to attend to is not to deal wrongly, which is a very small matter to an habitual player; and all the time the punter has to rack his brains on the chances of one card or another coming out. The other advantage is one of time. The banker draws his card at least a second before the punter, and this again gives him a purchase."

No one replied; but after some thought the Marquis Triulzi said that to make the chances perfectly equal the players would have to be equal, which was almost out of the question.

“All that is too sublime for me,” said Canano; “I don’t understand it.” But, after all, there was not much to understand.

After dinner I went to the “Three Kings” to find out what Irene had to say to me, and to enjoy her presence. When she saw me she ran up to me, threw her arms round my neck, and kissed me, but with too much eagerness for me to lay much value on the salute. However, I have always known that if one wants to enjoy pleasure one must not philosophise about it, or one runs a risk of losing half the enjoyment. If Irene had struck me in dancing the ‘forlana’, why should not I have pleased her in spite of my superiority in age? It was not impossible, and that should be enough for me, as I did not intend to make her my wife.

The father and mother received me as their preserver, and they may have been sincere. The count begged me to come out of the room for a moment with him, and when we were on the other side of the door, said, —

“Forgive an old and unfortunate man, forgive a father, if I ask you whether it is true that you promised Irene a hundred sequins if I would let her go to the ball with you.”

“It is quite true, but of course you know what the consequences will be.”

At these words the poor old rascal took hold of me in a way which would have frightened me if I had not possessed twice his strength, but it was only to embrace me.

We went back to the room, he in tears and I laughing. He ran and told his wife, who had not been able to believe in such luck any more than her husband, and Irene added a comic element to the scene by saying, —

“You must not think me a liar, or that my parents suspected that I was imposing on them; they only thought you said fifty instead of a hundred, as if I were not worth such a sum.”

“You are worth a thousand, my dear Irene; your courage in barring the way pleased me extremely. But you must come to the ball in a domino.”

“Oh! you will be pleased with my dress.”

“Are those the shoes and buckles you are going to wear? Have you no other stockings? Where are your gloves?”

"Good heavens! I have nothing."

"Quick! Send for the tradesmen. We will choose what we want, and I will pay."

Rinaldi went out to summon a jeweller, a shoemaker, a stocking-maker, and a perfumer. I spent thirty sequins in what I considered necessary, but then I noticed that there was no English point on her mask, and burst out again. The father brought in a milliner, who adorned the mask with an ell of lace for which I paid twelve sequins. Irene was in great delight, but her father and mother would have preferred to have the money in their pockets, and at bottom they were right.

When Irene put on her fine clothes I thought her delicious, and I saw what an essential thing dress is to a woman.

"Be ready," said I, "before the time for the opera to-morrow, for before going to the ball we will sup together in a room which belongs to me, where we shall be quite at our ease. You know what to expect," I added, embracing her. She answered me with an ardent kiss.

As I took leave of her father, he asked me where I was going after leaving Milan.

"To Marseilles, then to Paris, and then to London, at which place I intend stopping a year."

"Your flight from The Leads was wonderfully lucky."

"Yes, but I risked my life."

"You have certainly deserved all your good fortune."

"Do you think so? I have only used my fortune — in subservience to my pleasures."

"I wonder you do not have a regular mistress:"

"The reason is, that I like to be my own master. A mistress at my coat-tails would be more troublesome than a wife; she would be an obstacle to the numerous pleasant adventures I encounter at every town. For example, if I had a mistress I should not be able to take the charming Irene to the ball to-morrow."

"You speak like a wise man."

"Yes, though my wisdom is by no means of the austere kind."

In the evening I went to the opera, and should no doubt have gone to the card-table if I had not seen Cesarino in the pit. I spent two delightful hours with him. He opened his heart to me, and begged me to plead for him with his sister to get her consent to his going to sea, for which he had a great longing. He said that he might make a large fortune by a judicious course of trading. After a temperate supper with my dear boy, I went to bed. The next morning the fine young officer, the Marchioness of Q — — 's brother, came and asked me to give him a breakfast. He said he had communicated my proposal to his sister, and that she had replied that I must be making a fool of him, as it was not likely that a man who lived as I did would be thinking of marrying.

"I did not tell you that I aspired to the honour of marrying her."

"No, and I did not say anything about marriage; but that's what the girls are always aiming at."

"I must go and disabuse her of the notion."

"That's a good idea; principals are always the best in these affairs. Come at two o'clock, I shall be dining there, and as I have got to speak to her cousin you will be at liberty to say what you like."

This arrangement suited me exactly. I noticed that my future brother-in-law admired a little gold case on my night-table, so I begged him to accept it as a souvenir of our friendship. He embraced me, and put it in his pocket, saying he would keep it till his dying day.

"You mean till the day when it advances your suit with a lady," said I.

I was sure of having a good supper with Irene, so I resolved to take no dinner. As the count had gone to St. Angelo, fifteen miles from Milan, the day before, I felt obliged to wait on the countess in her room, to beg her to excuse my presence at dinner. She was very polite, and told me by no means to trouble myself. I suspected that she was trying to impose on me, but I wanted her to think she was doing so successfully. In my character of dupe I told her that in Lent I would make amends for the dissipation which prevented me paying my court to her. “Happily,” I added, “Lent is not far off.”

“I hope it will be so,” said the deceitful woman with an enchanting smile, of which only a woman with poison in her heart is capable. With these words she took a pinch of snuff, and offered me her box.

“But what is this, my dear countess, it isn’t snuff?”

“No,” she replied, “it makes the nose bleed, and is an excellent thing for the head-ache.”

I was sorry that I had taken it, but said with a laugh, that I had not got a head-ache, and did not like my nose to bleed.

“It won’t bleed much,” said she, with a smile, “and it is really beneficial.”

As she spoke, we both began to sneeze, and I should have felt very angry if I had not seen her smile.

Knowing something about these sneezing powders, I did not think we should bleed, but I was mistaken. Directly after, I felt a drop of blood, and she took a silver basin from her night-table.

“Come here,” said she, “I am beginning to bleed too.”

There we were, bleeding into the same basin, facing each other in the most ridiculous position. After about thirty drops had fallen from each of us, the bleeding ceased. She was laughing all the time, and I thought the best thing I could do was to imitate her example. We washed ourselves in fair water in another basin.

“This admixture of our blood,” said she, still smiling, “will create a sweet sympathy between us, which will only end with the death of one or the other.”

I could make no sense of this, but the reader will soon see that the wretched woman did not mean our friendship to last very long. I asked her to give me some of the powder, but she refused; and on my enquiring the name of it, she replied that she did not know, as a lady friend had given it to her.

I was a good deal puzzled by the effects of this powder, never having heard of the like before, and as soon as I left the countess I went to an apothecary to enquire about it, but Mr. Drench was no wiser than I. He certainly said that euphorbia sometimes produced bleeding of the nose, but it was not a case of sometimes but always. This small adventure made me think seriously. The lady was Spanish, and she must hate me; and these two facts gave an importance to our blood-letting which it would not otherwise possess.

I went to see the two charming cousins, and I found the young officer with Mdlle. F —— in the room by the garden. The lady was writing, and on the pretext of not disturbing her I went after Mdlle. Q —— , who was in the garden. I greeted her politely, and said I had come to apologize for a stupid blunder which must have given her a very poor opinion of me.

“I guess what you mean, but please to understand that my brother gave me your message in perfect innocence. Let him believe what he likes. Do you think I really believed you capable of taking such a step, when we barely knew each other?”

“I am glad to hear you say so.”

“I thought the best thing would be to give a matrimonial turn to your gallantry. Otherwise my brother, who is quite a young man, might have interpreted it in an unfavourable sense.”

“That was cleverly done, and of course I have nothing more to say. Nevertheless, I am ‘grateful to your brother for having given you to understand that your charms have produced a vivid impression on me. I would do anything to convince you of my affection.”

“That is all very well, but it would have been wiser to conceal your feelings from my brother, and, allow me to add, from myself as well. You might have loved me without telling me, and then, though I should have perceived the state of your affections, I could have pretended not to do so. Then I should have been at my ease, but as circumstances now stand I shall have to be careful. Do you see?”

“Really, marchioness, you astonish me. I was never so clearly convinced that I have done a foolish thing. And what is still more surprising, is that I was aware of all you have told me. But you have made me lose my head. I hope you will not punish me too severely?”

“Pray inform me how it lies in my power to punish you.”

"By not loving me."

"Ah! loving and not loving; that is out of one's power. Of a sudden we know that we are in love, and our fate is sealed."

I interpreted these last words to my own advantage, and turned the conversation. I asked her if she was going to the ball.

"No."

"Perhaps you are going incognito?"

"We should like to, but it is an impossibility; there is always someone who knows us."

"If you would take me into your service, I would wager anything that you would not be recognized."

"You would not care to trouble yourself about us."

"I like you to be a little sceptical, but put me to the proof. If you could manage to slip out unobserved, I would engage to disguise you in such a manner that no one would know you."

"We could leave the house with my brother and a young lady with whom he is in love. I am sure he would keep our counsel."

"I shall be delighted, but it must be for the ball on Sunday. I will talk it over with your brother. Kindly warn him not to let Barbaro know anything about it. You will be able to put on your disguise in a place I know of. However, we can settle about that again. I shall carry the matter through, you may be sure, with great secrecy. Permit me to kiss your hand."

She gave it me, and after imprinting a gentle kiss I held it to my heart, and had the happiness of feeling a soft pressure. I had no particular disguise in my head, but feeling sure of hitting on something I put off the consideration of it till the next day; the present belonged to Irene. I put on my domino, and went to the "Three Kings," where I found Irene waiting for me at the door. She had run down as soon as she had seen my carriage, and I was flattered by this mark of her eagerness. We went to my rooms, and I ordered the confectioner to get me a choice supper by midnight. We had six hours before us, but the reader will excuse my describing the manner in which they were spent. The opening was made with the usual fracture, which Irene bore with a smile, for she was naturally voluptuous. We got up at midnight, pleasantly surprised to find ourselves famishing with hunger, and a delicious supper waiting for us.

Irene told me that her father had taught her to deal in such a manner that she could not lose. I was curious to see how it was done, and on my giving her a pack of cards she proceeded to distract my attention by talking to me, and in a few minutes the thing was done. I gave her the hundred sequins I had promised her, and told her to go on with her play.

“If you only play on a single card,” said she, “you are sure to lose.”

“Never mind; go ahead.”

She did so, and I was forced to confess that if I had not been warned I should never have detected the trick. I saw what a treasure she must be to the old rascal Rinaldi. With her air of innocence and gaiety, she would have imposed on the most experienced sharpers. She said in a mortified manner that she never had any opportunity of turning her talents to account, as their associates were always a beggarly lot. She added tenderly that if I would take her with me she would leave her parents there and win treasures for me.

“When I am not playing against sharpers,” she said, “I can also punt very well.”

“Then you can come to Canano’s bank and risk the hundred sequins I have given you. Put twenty sequins on a card, and if you win go paroli, seven, and the va, and leave the game when they turn up. If you can’t make the three cards come out second, you will lose, but I will reimburse you.”

At this she embraced me, and asked if I would take half the profits.

“No,” said I, “you shall have it all.”

I thought she would have gone mad with joy.

We went off in sedan-chairs, and the ball not having commenced we went to the assembly-rooms. Canano had not yet done anything, and he opened a pack of cards and pretended not to recognize me, but he smiled to see the pretty masker, my companion, sit down and play instead of me. Irene made him a profound bow as he made room for her by his side, and putting the hundred sequins before her she began by winning a hundred and twenty-five, as instead of going seven and the va, she only went the paix de paroli. I was pleased to see her thus careful, and I let her go on. In the following deal she lost on three cards in succession, and then won another paix de paroli. She then bowed to the banker, pocketed her winnings, and left the table, but just as we were going out I heard somebody sobbing, and on my turning to her she said,

“I am sure it is my father weeping for joy.”

She had three hundred and sixty sequins which she took to him after amusing herself for a few hours. I only danced one minuet with her, for my amorous exploits and the heavy supper I had taken had tired me, and I longed for rest. I let Irene dance with whom she liked, and going into a corner fell asleep. I woke up with a start and saw Irene standing before me. I had been asleep for three hours. I took her back to the “Three Kings,” and left her in the charge of her father and mother. The poor man was quite alarmed to see so much gold on the table, and told me to wish him a pleasant journey, as he was starting in a few hours. I could make no opposition and I did not wish to do so, but Irene was furious.

“I won’t go,” she cried; “I want to stay with my lover. You are the ruin of my life. Whenever anybody takes a liking to me, you snatch me away. I belong to this gentleman, and I won’t leave him.”

However, she saw that I did not back her up, and began to weep, then kissed me again and again, and just as she was going to sit down, worn out with fatigue and despair, I went off, wishing them a pleasant journey, and telling Irene we should meet again. The reader will learn in due time when and how I saw them again. After all the fatigue I had gone through I was glad to go to bed.

It was eight o’clock when the young lieutenant awoke me.

“My sister has told me about the masquerade,” said he, “but I have a great secret to confide in you.”

“Say on, and count on my keeping your secret.”

“One of the finest noblemen of the town, my friend and my cousin’s lover, who has to be very careful of his actions on account of his exalted position, would like to be of the party if you have no objection. My sister and my cousin would like him to come very much.”

"Of course he shall. I have been making my calculations for a party of five, and now it will be a party of six, that is all."

"You really are a splendid fellow."

"On Sunday evening you must be at a certain place, of which I will tell you. First of all we will have supper, then put on our disguises, and then go to the ball. To-morrow at five o'clock we shall meet at your sister's. All I want to know is what is the height of your mistress and of the young nobleman."

"My sweetheart is two inches shorter than my sister, and a little thinner; my friend is just about the same make as you are, and if you were dressed alike you would be mistaken for each other."

"That will do. Let me think it over, and leave me alone now; there's a Capuchin waiting for me, and I am curious to learn his business."

A Capuchin had called on me and I had told Clairmont to give him an alms, but he had said he wanted to speak to me in private. I was puzzled, for what could a Capuchin have to say to me?

He came in, and I was at once impressed by his grave and reverend appearance. I made him a profound bow and offered him a seat, but he remained standing, and said,

"Sir, listen attentively to what I am about to tell you, and beware of despising my advice, for it might cost you your life. You would repent when it was too late. After hearing me, follow my advice immediately; but ask no questions, for I can answer none. You may guess, perhaps, that what silences me is a reason incumbent on all Christians — the sacred seal of the confessional. You may be sure that my word is above suspicion; I have no interests of my own to serve. I am acting in obedience to an inspiration; I think it must be your guardian angel speaking with my voice. God will not abandon you to the malice of your enemies. Tell me if I have touched your heart, and if you feel disposed to follow the counsels I am going to give you."

"I have listened to you, father, with attention and respect. Speak freely and advise me; what you have said has not only moved me, but has almost frightened me. I promise to do as you tell me if it is nothing against honour or the light of reason."

“Very good. A feeling of charity will prevent your doing anything to compromise me, whatever may be the end of the affair. You will not speak of me to anyone, or say either that you know me or do not know me?”

“I swear to you I will not on my faith as a Christian. But speak, I entreat you. Your long preface has made me burn with impatience.”

“This day, before noon, go by yourself to —— Square, No. — , on the second floor, and ring at the bell on your left. Tell the person who opens the door that you want to speak to Madame. You will be taken to her room without any difficulty; I am sure your name will not be asked, but if they do ask you, give an imaginary name. When you are face to face with the woman, beg her to hear you, and ask her for her secret, and to inspire confidence put a sequin or two in her hand. She is poor, and I am sure that your generosity will make her your friend. She will shut her door, and tell you to say on.

“You must then look grave, and tell her that you are not going to leave her house before she gives you the little bottle that a servant brought her yesterday with a note. If she resists, remain firm, but make no noise; do not let her leave the room or call anybody. Finally, tell her that you will give her double the money she may lose by giving you the bottle and all that depends on it. Remember these words: and all that depends on it. She will do whatever you want. It will not cost you much, but even if it did, your life is worth more than all the gold of Peru. I can say no more, but before I go, promise me that you will follow my advice.”

“Yes, reverend father, I will follow the inspiration of the angel who led you here.”

“May God give you His blessing.”

When the good priest went out I did not feel at all disposed to laugh. Reason, certainly, bade me despise the warning, but my inherent superstition was too strong for reason. Besides, I liked the Capuchin. He looked like a good man, and I felt bound by the promise I had given him. He had persuaded me, and my reason told me that a man should never go against his persuasion; in fine, I had made up my mind. I took the piece of paper on which I had written the words I had to use, I put a pair of pistols in my pocket, and I told Clairmont to wait for me in the square. This latter, I thought, was a precaution that could do no harm.

Everything happened as the good Capuchin had said. The awful old creature took courage at the sight of the two sequins, and bolted her door. She began by laughing and saying that she knew I was amorous, and that it was my fault if I were not happy, but that she would do my business for me. I saw by these words that I had to do with a pretended sorceress. The famous Mother Bontemps had spoken in the same way to me at Paris. But when I told her that I was not going to leave the room till I had got the mysterious bottle, and all that depended on it, her face became fearful; she trembled, and would have escaped from the room; but I stood before her with an open knife, and would not suffer her to pass. But on my telling her that I would give her double the sum she was to be paid for her witchcraft, and that thus she would be the gainer and not a loser in complying with my demands, she became calm once more.

"I shall lose six sequins," said she, "but you will gladly pay double when I shew you what I have got; I know who you are."

"Who am I?"

"Giacomo Casanova, the Venetian."

It was then I drew the ten sequins from my purse. The old woman was softened at the sight of the money, and said,

"I would not have killed you outright, certainly, but I would have made you amorous and wretched."

"Explain what you mean."

"Follow me."

I went after her into a closet, and was greatly amazed at sing numerous articles about which my common sense could tell me nothing. There were phials of all shapes and sizes, stones of different colours, metals, minerals, big nails and small nails, pincers, crucibles, misshapen images, and the like.

"Here is the bottle," said the old woman.

"What does it contain?"

"Your blood and the countess's, as you will see in this letter."

I understood everything then, and now I wonder I did not burst out laughing. But as a matter of fact my hair stood on end, as I reflected on the awful wickedness of which the Spaniard was capable. A cold sweat burst out all over my body.

“What would you have done with this blood?”

“I should have plastered you with it.”

“What do you mean by ‘plastered’? I don’t understand you.”

“I will shew you.”

As I trembled with fear the old woman opened a casket, a cubit long, containing a waxen statue of a man lying on his back. My name was written on it, and though it was badly moulded, my features were recognizable. The image bore my cross of the Order of the Golden Spur, and the generative organs were made of an enormous size. At this I burst into a fit of hysterical laughter, and had to sit down in an arm-chair till it was over.

As soon as I had got back my breath the sorceress said,

“You laugh, do you? Woe to you if I had bathed you in the bath of blood mingled according to my art, and more woe still if, after I had bathed you, I had thrown your image on a burning coal:”

“Is this all?”

“Yes.”

“All the apparatus is to become mine for twelve sequins; here they are. And now, quick! light me a fire that I may melt this monster, and as for the blood I think I will throw it out of the window.”

This was no sooner said than done.

The old woman had been afraid that I should take the bottle and the image home with me, and use them to her ruin; and she was delighted to see me melt the image. She told me that I was an angel of goodness, and begged me not to tell anyone of what had passed between us. I swore I would keep my own counsel, even with the countess.

I was astonished when she calmly offered to make the countess madly in love with me for another twelve sequins, but I politely refused and advised her to abandon her fearful trade if she did not want to be burnt alive.

I found Clairmont at his post, and I sent him home. In spite of all I had gone through, I was not sorry to have acquired the information, and to have followed the advice of the good Capuchin who really believed me to be in deadly peril. He had doubtless heard of it in the confessional from the woman who had carried the blood to the witch. Auricular confession often works miracles of this kind.

I was determined never to let the countess suspect that I had discovered her criminal project, and I resolved to behave towards her so as to appease her anger, and to make her forget the cruel insult to which I had subjected her. It was lucky for me that she believed in sorcery; otherwise she would have had me assassinated.

As soon as I got in, I chose the better of the two cloaks I had, and presented her with it. She accepted the gift with exquisite grace, and asked me why I gave it her.

"I dreamt," said I, "that you were so angry with me that you were going to have me assassinated."

She blushed, and answered that she had not gone mad. I left her absorbed in a sombre reverie. Nevertheless, whether she forgot and forgave, or whether she could hit upon no other way of taking vengeance, she was perfectly agreeable to me during the rest of my stay in Milan.

The count came back from his estate, and said that we must really go and see the place at the beginning of Lent. I promised I would come, but the countess said she could not be of the party. I pretended to be mortified, but in reality her determination was an extremely pleasant one to me.

CHAPTER XX

The Masquerade — My Amour with the Fair Marchioness — The Deserted Girl; I Become Her Deliverer — My Departure for St. Angelo

As I had engaged myself to provide an absolutely impenetrable disguise, I wanted to invent a costume remarkable at once for its originality and its richness. I tortured my brains so to speak, and my readers shall see if they think my invention was a good one.

I wanted someone on whom I could rely, and above all, a tailor. It may be imagined that my worthy gossip was the tailor I immediately thought of. Zenobia would be as serviceable as her husband; she could do some of the work, and wait on the young ladies whom I was going to dress up.

I talked to my gossip, and told him to take me to the best second-hand clothes dealer in Milan.

When we got to the shop I said to the man —

“I want to look at your very finest costumes, both for ladies and gentlemen.”

“Would you like something that has never been worn?”

“Certainly, if you have got such a thing.”

“I have a very rich assortment of new clothes.”

“Get me, then, in the first place, a handsome velvet suit, all in one piece, which nobody in Milan will be able to recognize.”

Instead of one he shewed me a dozen such suits, all in excellent condition. I chose a blue velvet lined with white satin. The tailor conducted the bargaining, and it was laid on one side; this was for the pretty cousin’s lover. Another suit, in smooth sulphur-coloured velvet throughout, I put aside for the young officer. I also took two handsome pairs of trousers in smooth velvet, and two superb silk vests.

I then chose two dresses, one flame-coloured and the other purple, and a third dress in shot silk. This was for the officer's mistress. Then came lace shirts, two for men, and three for women, then lace handkerchiefs, and finally scraps of velvet, satin, shot silk, etc., all of different colours.

I paid two hundred gold ducats for the lot, but on the condition that if anybody came to know that I had bought them by any indiscretion of his he should give me the money and take back the materials in whatever condition they might be in. The agreement was written out and signed, and I returned with the tailor, who carried the whole bundle to my rooms over the pastrycook's.

When it was all spread out on the table I told the tailor that I would blow out his brains if he told anybody about it, and then taking a stiletto I proceeded to cut and slash the coats, vests, and trousers all over, to the astonishment of the tailor, who thought I must be mad to treat such beautiful clothes in this manner.

After this operation, which makes me laugh to this day when I remember it, I took the scraps I had bought and said to the tailor, —

"Now, 'gossip, it is your turn; I want you to sew in these pieces into the holes I have made, and I hope your tailoring genius will aid you to produce some pretty contrasts. You see that you have got your work cut out for you and no time to lose. I will see that your meals are properly served in an adjoining chamber, but you must not leave the house till the work is finished. I will go for your wife, who will help you, and you can sleep together."

"For God's sake, sir! you don't want the ladies' dresses treated like the coats and trousers?"

"Just the same."

"What a pity! it will make my wife cry."

"I will console her."

On my way to Zenobia's I bought five pairs of white silk stockings, men's and women's gloves, two fine castor hats, two burlesque men's masks, and three graceful-looking female masks. I also bought two pretty china plates, and I carried them all to Zenobia's in a sedan-chair.

I found that charming woman engaged in her toilet. Her beautiful tresses hung about her neck, and her full breast was concealed by no kerchief. Such charms called for my homage, and to begin with I devoured her with kisses. I spent half an hour with her, and my readers will guess that it was well employed. I then helped her to finish her toilette, and we went off in the sedan-chair.

We found the tailor engaged in picking out the scraps and cutting them to fit the holes I had made. Zenobia looked on in a kind of stupor, and when she saw me begin to slash the dresses she turned pale and made an involuntary motion to stay my hand, for not knowing my intentions she thought I must be beside myself. Her husband had got hardened, and reassured her, and when she heard my explanation she became calm, though the idea struck her as a very odd one.

When it is a question of an affair of the heart, of the passions, or of pleasure, a woman's fancy moves much faster than a man's. When Zenobia knew that these dresses were meant for three beautiful women, whom I wished to make a centre of attraction to the whole assembly, she improved on my cuts and slashes, and arranged the rents in such a manner that they would inspire passion without wounding modesty. The dresses were slashed especially at the breast, the shoulders, and the sleeves; so that the lace shift could be seen, and in its turn the shift was cut open here and there, and the sleeves were so arranged that half the arms could be seen. I saw sure that she understood what I wanted, and that she would keep her husband right; and I left them, encouraging them to work their best and quickest. But I looked in three or four times in the day, and was more satisfied every time with my idea and their execution.

The work was not finished till the Saturday afternoon. I gave the tailor six sequins and dismissed him, but I kept Zenobia to attend on the ladies. I took care to place powder, pomade, combs, pins, and everything that a lady needs, on the table, not forgetting ribbons and pack-thread.

The next day I found play going on in a very spirited manner, but the two cousins were not at the tables, so I went after them. They told me they had given up playing as Barbaro always won.

"You have been losing, then?"

"Yes, but my brother has won something," said the amiable Q —— .

"I hope luck will declare itself on your side also."

"No, we are not lucky."

When their aunt left the room, they asked me if the lieutenant had told me that a lady friend of theirs was coming to the ball with them.

"I know all," I answered, "and I hope you will enjoy yourselves, but you will not do so more than I. I want to speak to the gallant lieutenant to-morrow morning."

"Tell us about our disguises."

"You will be disguised in such a manner that nobody will recognize you."

"But how shall we be dressed?"

"Very handsomely."

"But what costume have you given us?"

"That is my secret, ladies. However much I should like to please you, I shall say nothing till the time for you to dress comes round. Don't ask me anything more, as I have promised myself the enjoyment of your surprise. I am very fond of dramatic situations. You shall know all after supper."

"Are we to have supper, then?"

"Certainly, if you would like it. I am a great eater myself and I hope you will not let me eat alone."

"Then we will have some supper to please you. We will take care not to eat much dinner, so as to be able to vie with you in the evening. The only thing I am sorry about," added Mdlle. Q —— , "is that you should be put to such expense."

"It is a pleasure; and when I leave Milan I shall console myself with the thought that I have supped with the two handsomest ladies in the town."

"How is fortune treating you?"

"Canano wins two hundred sequins from me every day."

“But you won two thousand from him in one night.”

“You will break his bank on Sunday. We will bring you luck.”

“Would you like to look on?”

“We should be delighted, but my brother says you don’t want to go with us.”

“Quite so, the reason is that I should be recognized. But I believe the gentleman who will accompany you is of the same figure as myself.”

“Exactly the same,” said the cousin; “except that he is fair.”

“All the better,” said I, “the fair always conquer the dark with ease.”

“Not always,” said the other. “But tell us, at any rate, whether we are to wear men’s dresses.”

“Fie! fie! I should be angry with myself if I had entertained such a thought.”

“That’s curious; why so?”

“I’ll tell you. If the disguise is complete I am disgusted, for the shape of a woman is much more marked than that of a man, and consequently a woman in man’s dress, who looks like a man, cannot have a good figure.”

“But when a woman skews her shape well?”

“Then I am angry with her for skewing too much, for I like to see the face and the general outlines of the form and to guess the rest.”

“But the imagination is often deceptive!”

“Yes, but it is with the face that I always fall in love, and that never deceives me as far as it is concerned. Then if I have the good fortune to see anything more I am always in a lenient mood and disposed to pass over small faults. You are laughing?”

“I am smiling at your impassioned arguments.”

“Would you like to be dressed like a man?”

“I was expecting something of the kind, but after you have said we can make no more objections.”

"I can imagine what you would say; I should certainly not take you for men, but I will say no more."

They looked at each other, and blushed and smiled as they saw my gaze fixed on two pre-eminences which one would never expect to see in any man. We began to talk of other things, and for two hours I enjoyed their lively and cultured conversation.

When I left them I went off to my apartments, then to the opera, where I lost two hundred sequins, and finally supped with the countess, who had become quite amiable. However, she soon fell back into her old ways when she found that my politeness was merely external, and that I had no intentions whatever of troubling her in her bedroom again.

On the Saturday morning the young officer came to see me, and I told him that there was only one thing that I wanted him to do, but that it must be done exactly according to my instructions. He promised to follow them to the letter, and I proceeded, —

"You must get a carriage and four, and as soon as the five of you are in it tell the coachman to drive as fast as his horses can gallop out of Milan, and to bring you back again by another road to the house. There you must get down, send the carriage away, after enjoining silence on the coachman, and come in. After the ball you will undress in the same house, and then go home in sedan-chairs. Thus we shall be able to baffle the inquisitive, who will be pretty numerous, I warn you."

"My friend the marquis will see to all that," said he, "and I promise you he will do it well, for he is longing to make your acquaintance."

"I shall expect you, then, at seven o'clock to-morrow.

"Warn your friend that it is important the coachman should not be known, and do not let anybody bring a servant."

All these arrangements being made, I determined to disguise myself as Pierrot. There's no disguise more perfect; for, besides concealing the features and the shape of the body, it does not even let the colour of the skin remain recognizable. My readers may remember what happened to me in this disguise ten years before. I made the tailor get me a new Pierrot costume, which I placed with the others, and with two new purses, in each of which I placed five hundred sequins, I repaired to the pastrycook's before seven o’clock. I found the table spread, and the supper ready. I shut up Zenobia in the room where the ladies were to make their toilette, and at five minutes past seven the joyous company arrived.

The marquis was delighted to make my acquaintance, and I welcomed him as he deserved. He was a perfect gentleman in every respect, handsome, rich, and young, very much in love with the pretty cousin whom he treated with great respect. The lieutenant’s mistress was a delightful little lady and madly fond of her lover.

As they were all aware that I did not want them to know their costumes till after supper, nothing was said about it, and we sat down to table. The supper was excellent; I had ordered it in accordance with my own tastes; that is to say, everything was of the best, and there was plenty of everything. When we had eaten and drunk well, I said, —

“As I am not going to appear with you, I may as well tell you the parts you are to play. You are to be five beggars, two men and three women, all rags and tatters.”

The long faces they pulled at this announcement were a pleasant sight to see.

“You will each carry a plate in your hands to solicit alms, and you must walk together about the ball-room as a band of mendicants. But now follow me and take possession of your ragged robes.”

Although I had much ado to refrain from laughing at the vexation and disappointment which appeared on all their faces, I succeeded in preserving my serious air. They did not seem in any kind of hurry to get their clothes, and I was obliged to tell them that they were keeping me waiting. They rose from the table and I threw the door open, and all were struck with Zenobia’s beauty as she stood up by the table on which the rich though tattered robes were displayed, bowing to the company with much grace.

“Here, ladies,” said I to the cousins, “are your dresses, and here is yours, mademoiselle — a little smaller. Here are your shifts, your handkerchiefs and your stockings, and I think you will find everything you require on this table. Here are masks, the faces of which shew so poorly beside your own, and here are three plates to crave alms. If anybody looks as high as your garters, they will see how wretched you are, and the holes in the stockings will let people know that you have not the wherewithal to buy silk to mend them. This packthread must serve you for buckles, and we must take care that there are holes in your shoes and also in your gloves, and as everything must match, as soon as you have put on your chemises you must tear the lace round the neck."

While I was going through this explanation I saw surprise and delight efface the disappointment and vexation which had been there a moment before. They saw what a rich disguise I had provided for them, and they could not find it in their hearts to say, "What a pity!"

"Here, gentlemen, are your beggar-clothes. I forgot to lacerate your beaver hats, but that is soon done. Well, what do you think of the costume?"

"Now, ladies, we must leave you; shut the door fast, for it is a case of changing your shifts. Now, gentlemen, leave the room."

The marquis was enthusiastic.

"What a sensation we shall create!" said he, "nothing could be better."

In half an hour we were ready. The stockings in holes, the worn-out shoes, the lace in rags, the straggling hair, the sad masks, the notched plates — all made a picture of sumptuous misery hard to be described.

The ladies took more time on account of their hair, which floated on their shoulders in fine disorder. Mdlle. Q — — 's hair was especially fine, it extended almost to her knees.

When they were ready the door was opened, and we saw everything which could excite desire without wounding decency. I admired Zenobia's adroitness. The rents in dresses and chemises disclosed parts of their shoulders, their breasts, and their arms, and their white legs shone through the holes in the stockings.

I shewed them how to walk, and to sway their heads to and fro, to excite compassion, and yet be graceful, and how to use their handkerchiefs to shew people the tears in them and the fineness of the lace. They were delighted, and longed to be at the ball, but I wanted to be there first to have the pleasure of seeing them come in. I put on my mask, told Zenobia to go to bed, as we would not be back till daybreak, and set out on my way.

I entered the ball-room, and as there were a score of Pierrots nobody noticed me. Five minutes after there was a rush to see some maskers who were coming in, and I stood so as to have a good view. The marquis came in first between the two cousins. Their slow, pitiful step matched the part wonderfully. Mdlle. Q —— with her flame-coloured dress, her splendid hair, and her fine shape, drew all eyes towards her. The astonished and inquisitive crowd kept silence for a quarter of an hour after they had come in, and then I heard on every side, “What a disguise!” “It’s wonderful!” “Who are they?” “Who can they be?” “I don’t know.” “I’ll find out.”

I enjoyed the results of my inventiveness.

The music struck up, and three fine dominos went up to the three beggar-girls to ask them to dance a minuet, but they excused themselves by pointing to their dilapidated shoes. I was delighted; it shewed that they had entered into the spirit of the part.

I followed them about for a quarter of an hour, and the curiosity about them only increased, and then I paid a visit to Canano’s table, where play was running high. A masquer dressed in the Venetian style was punting on a single card, going fifty sequins paroli and paix de paroli, in my fashion. He lost three hundred sequins, and as he was a man of about the same size as myself people said it was Casanova, but Canano would not agree. In order that I might be able to stay at the table, I took up the cards and punted three or four ducats like a beginner. The next deal the Venetian masquer had a run of luck, and going paroli, paix de paroli and the va, won back all the money he had lost.

The next deal was also in his favour, and he collected his winnings and left the table.

I sat down in the chair he had occupied, and a lady said, —

“That’s the Chevalier de Seingalt.”

“No,” said another. “I saw him a little while ago in the ball-room disguised as a beggar, with four other masquers whom nobody knows.”

“How do you mean, dressed as a beggar?” said Canano.

“Why, in rags, and the four others, too; but in spite of that the dresses are splendid and the effect is very good. They are asking for alms.”

“They ought to be turned out,” said another.

I was delighted to have attained my object, for the recognition of me was a mere guess. I began putting sequins on one card, and I lost five or six times running. Canano studied me, but I saw he could not make me out. I heard whispers running round the table.

“It isn’t Seingalt; he doesn’t play like that; besides, he is at the ball.”

The luck turned; three deals were in my favour, and brought me back more than I had lost. I continued playing with a heap of gold before me, and on my putting a fistfull of sequins on a card it came out, and I went paroli and pair de paroli. I won again, and seeing that the bank was at a low ebb I stopped playing. Canano paid me, and told his cashier to get a thousand sequins, and as he was shuffling the cards I heard a cry of, “Here come the beggars.”

The beggars came in and stood by the table, and Canano, catching the marquis’s eye, asked him for a pinch of snuff. My delight may be imagined when I saw him modestly presenting a common horn snuffbox to the banker. I had not thought of this detail, which made everybody laugh immensely. Mdlle. Q —— stretched out her plate to ask an alms of Canano, who said, —

“I don’t pity you with that fine hair of yours, and if you like to put it on a card I will allow you a thousand sequins for it.”

She gave no answer to this polite speech, and held out her plate to me, and I put a handful of sequins on it, treating the other beggars in the same way.

“Pierrot seems to like beggars,” said Canano, with a smile.

The three mendicants bowed gratefully to me and left the room.

The Marquis Triulzi who sat near Canano, said, —

“The beggar in the straw-coloured dress is certainly Casanova.”

“I recognized him directly,” replied the banker, “but who are the others?”

“We shall find out in due time.”

“A dearer costume could not be imagined; all the dresses are quite new.”

The thousand sequins came in, and I carried them all off in two deals.

“Would you like to go on playing?” said Canano.

I shook my head, and indicating with a sign of my hand that I would take a cheque, he weighed my winnings and gave me a cheque for twenty-nine pounds of gold, amounting to two thousand, five hundred sequins. I put away the cheque, and after shaking him by the hand, I got up and rolled away in true Pierrot fashion, and after making the tour of the ball-room I went to a box on the third tier of which I had given the key to the young officer, and there I found my beggars.

We took off our masks and congratulated each other on our success, and told our adventures. We had nothing to fear from inquisitive eyes, for the boxes on each side of us were empty. I had taken them myself, and the keys were in my pocket.

The fair beggars talked of returning me the alms I had given them, but I replied in such a way that they said no more about it.

“I am taken for you, sir,” said the marquis, “and it may cause some annoyance to our fair friends here.”

“I have foreseen that,” I replied, “and I shall unmask before the end of the ball. This will falsify all suppositions, and nobody will succeed in identifying you.”

“Our pockets are full of sweetmeats,” said Mdlle. Q —— . “Everybody wanted to fill our plates.”

“Yes,” said the cousin, “everybody admired us; the ladies came down from their boxes to have a closer view of us, and everyone said that no richer disguise could be imagined.”

“You have enjoyed yourselves, then?”

“Yes, indeed.”

“And I too. I feel quite boastful at having invented a costume which has drawn all eyes upon you, and yet has concealed your identity.”

“You have made us all happy,” said the lieutenant’s little mistress. “I never thought I should have such a pleasant evening.”

“Finis coronat opus,” I replied, “and I hope the end will be even better than the beginning.”

So saying I gave my sweetheart's hand a gentle pressure, and whether she understood me or not I felt her hand tremble in mine.

"We will go down now," said she.

"So will I, for I want to dance, and I am sure I shall make you laugh as Pierrot."

"Do you know how much money you gave each of us?"

"I cannot say precisely, but I believe I gave each an equal share."

"That is so. I think it is wonderful how you could do it."

"I have done it a thousand times. When I lose a paroli of ten sequins I put three fingers into my purse, and am certain to bring up thirty sequins. I would bet I gave you each from thirty-eight to forty sequins."

"Forty exactly. It's wonderful. We shall remember this masqued ball."

"I don't think anybody will imitate us," said the marquis.

"No," said the cousin, "and we would not dare to wear the same dresses again."

We put on our masks, and I was the first to go out. After numerous little jocularities with the harlequins, especially the female ones, I recognized Therese in a domino, and walking up to her as awkwardly as I could I asked her to dance with me.

"You are the Pierrot who broke the bank?" she said.

I answered the question in the affirmative by a nod.

I danced like a madman, always on the point of falling to the ground and never actually doing so.

When the dance was over, I offered her my arm and took her back to her box, where Greppi was sitting by himself. She let me come in, and their surprise was great when I took off my mask. They had thought I was one of the beggars. I gave M. Greppi Canano's cheque, and as soon as he had handed me an acknowledgment I went down to the ball-room again with my mask off, much to the astonishment of the inquisitive, who had made sure that the marquis was I.

Towards the end of the ball I went away in a sedan-chair, which I stopped near the door of an hotel, and a little further on I took another which brought me to the door of the pastry-cook's. I found Zenobia in bed. She said she was sure I would come back by myself. I undressed as quickly as I could, and got into bed with this Venus of a woman. She was absolute perfection. I am sure that if Praxiteles had had her for a model, he would not have required several Greek beauties from which to compose his Venus. What a pity that such an exquisite figure should be the property of a sorry tailor.

I stripped her naked, and after due contemplation I made her feel how much I loved her. She was pleased with my admiration, and gave me back as much as she got. I had her entirely to myself for the first time. When we heard the trot of four horses we rose and put on our clothes in a twinkling.

When the charming beggars came in, I told them that I should be able to help in their toilette as they had not to change their chemises, and they did not make many objections.

My gaze was fixed all the while on Mdlle. Q —— . I admired her charms, and I was delighted to see that she was not miserly in their display. After Zenobia had done her hair she left her to me, and went to attend on the others. She allowed me to put on her dress, and did not forbid my eyes wandering towards a large rent in her chemise, which let me see almost the whole of one of her beautiful breasts.

"What are you going to do with this chemise?"

"You will laugh at our silliness. We have determined to keep everything as a memorial of the splendid evening we have had. My brother will bring it all to the house. Are you coming to see us this evening?"

"If I were wise I should avoid you."

"And if I were wise I shouldn't ask you to come."

"That is fairly answered! Of course I will come; but before we part may I ask one kiss?"

"Say two."

Her brother and the marquis left the room, and two sedan-chairs I had summoned took off the cousins.

As soon as the marquis was alone with me he asked me very politely to let him share in the expenses.

“I guessed you were going to humiliate me.”

“Such was not my intention, and I do not insist; but then you know I shall be humiliated.”

“Not at all; I reckon on your good sense. It really costs me nothing. Besides, I give you my word to let you pay for all the parties of pleasure we enjoy together during the carnival. We will sup here when you like; you shall invite the company, and I will leave you to pay the bill.”

“That arrangement will suit me admirably. We must be friends. I leave you with this charming attendant. I did not think that such a beauty could exist in Milan unknown to all but you.”

“She is a townswoman, who knows how to keep a secret. Do you not?”

“I would rather die than tell anyone that this gentleman is the Marquis of F —— .”

“That’s right; always keep your word, and take this trifle as a souvenir of me.”

It was a pretty ring, which Zenobia received with much grace; it might be worth about fifty sequins.

When the marquis was gone, Zenobia undressed me and did my hair for the night, and as I got into bed I gave her twenty-four sequins, and told her she might go and comfort her husband.

“He won’t be uneasy,” said she, “he is a philosopher.”

“He need be with such a pretty wife. Kiss me again, Zenobia, and then we must part.”

She threw herself upon me, covering me with kisses, and calling me her happiness and her providence. Her fiery kisses produced their natural effect, and after I had given her a fresh proof of the power of her charms, she left me and I went to sleep.

It was two o’clock when I awoke ravenously hungry. I had an excellent dinner, and then I dressed to call on the charming Mdlle. Q —— , whom I did not expect to find too hard on me, after what she had said. Everybody was playing cards with the exception of herself. She was standing by a window reading so attentively that she did not hear me come into the room, but when she saw me near her, she blushed, shut up the book, and put it in her pocket.

“I will not betray you,” said I, “or tell anyone that I surprised you reading a prayer-book.”

“No, don’t; for my reputation would be gone if I were thought to be a devotee.”

“Has there been any talk of the masqued ball or of the mysterious masquers?”

“People talk of nothing else, and condole with us for not having been to the ball, but no one can guess who the beggars were. It seems that an unknown carriage and four that sped like the wind took them as far as the first stage, and where they went next God alone knows! It is said that my hair was false, and I have longed to let it down and thus give them the lie. It is also said that you must know who the beggars were, as you loaded them with ducats.”

“One must let people say and believe what they like and not betray ourselves.”

“You are right; and after all we had a delightful evening. If you acquit yourself of all commissions in the same way, you must be a wonderful man.”

“But it is only you who could give me such a commission.”

“I to-day, and another to-morrow.”

“I see you think I am inconstant, but believe me if I find favour in your eyes your face will ever dwell in my memory.”

“I am certain you have told a thousand girls the same story, and after they have admitted you to their favour you have despised them.”

“Pray do not use the word ‘despise,’ or I shall suppose you think me a monster. Beauty seduces me. I aspire to its possession, and it is only when it is given me from other motives than love that I despise it. How should I despise one who loved me? I should first be compelled to despise myself. You are beautiful and I worship you, but you are mistaken if you think that I should be content for you to surrender yourself to me out of mere kindness."

"Ah! I see it is my heart you want."

"Exactly."

"To make me wretched at the end of a fortnight."

"To love you till death, and to obey your slightest wishes."

"My slightest wishes?"

"Yes, for to me they would be inviolable laws."

"Would you settle in Milan?"

"Certainly, if you made that a condition of my happiness."

"What amuses me in all this is that you are deceiving me without knowing it, if indeed you really love me."

"Deceiving you without knowing it! That is something new. If I am not aware of it, I am innocent of deceit."

"I am willing to admit your innocency, but you are deceiving me none the less, for after you had ceased to love me no power of yours could bring love back again."

"That, of course, might happen, but I don't choose to entertain such unpleasant thoughts; I prefer to think of myself as loving you to all eternity. It is certain at all events that no other woman in Milan has attracted me."

"Not the pretty girl who waited on us, and whose arms you have possibly left an hour or, two ago?"

"What are you saying? She is the wife of the tailor who made your clothes. She left directly after you, and her husband would not have allowed her to come at all if he was not aware that she would be wanted to wait on the ladies whose dresses he had made."

"She is wonderfully pretty. Is it possible that you are not in love with her?"

"How could one love a woman who is at the disposal of a low, ugly fellow? The only pleasure she gave me was by talking of you this morning."

"Of me?"

"Yes. You will excuse me if I confess to having asked her which of the ladies she waited on looked handsomest without her chemise."

"That was a libertine's question. Well, what did she say?"

"That the lady with the beautiful hair was perfect in every respect."

"I don't believe a word of it. I have learnt how to change my chemise with decency, and so as not to shew anything I might not shew a man. She only wished to flatter your impertinent curiosity. If I had a maid like that, she should soon go about her business."

"You are angry with me."

"No."

"It's no good saying no, your soul flashed forth in your denunciation. I am sorry to have spoken."

"Oh! it's of no consequence. I know men ask chambermaids questions of that kind, and they all give answers like your sweetheart, who perhaps wanted to make you curious about herself."

"But how could she hope to do that by extolling your charms above those of the other ladies? And, how could she know that I preferred you?"

"If she did not know it, I have made a mistake; but for all that, she lied to you."

"She may have invented the tale, but I do not think she lied. You are smiling again! I am delighted."

"I like to let you believe what pleases you."

"Then you will allow me to believe that you do not hate me."

"Hate you? What an ugly word! If I hated you, should I see you at all? But let's talk of something else. I want you to do me a favour. Here are two sequins; I want you to put them on an 'ambe' in the lottery. You can bring me the ticket when you call again, or still better, you can send it me, but don't tell anybody."

“You shall have the ticket without fail, but why should I not bring it?”

“Because, perhaps, you are tired of coming to see me.”

“Do I look like that? If so I am very unfortunate. But what numbers will you have?”

“Three and forty; you gave them me yourself.”

“How did I give them you?”

“You put your hand three times on the board, and took up forty sequins each time. I am superstitious, and you will laugh at me, I daresay, but it seems to me that you must have come to Milan to make me happy.”

“Now you make me happy indeed. You say you are superstitious, but if these numbers don’t win you mustn’t draw the conclusion that I don’t love you; that would be a dreadful fallacy.”

“I am not superstitious as all that, nor so vile a logician.”

“Do you believe I love you?”

“Yes.”

“May I tell you so a hundred times?”

“Yes.”

“And prove it in every way?”

“I must enquire into your methods before I consent to that, for it is possible that what you would call a very efficacious method might strike me as quite useless.”

“I see you are going to make me sigh after you for a long time.”

“As long as I can.”

“And when you have no strength left?”

“I will surrender. Does that satisfy you?”

“Certainly, but I shall exert all my strength to abate yours.”

“Do so; I shall like it.”

“And will you help me to succeed?”

"Perhaps."

"Ah, dear marchioness; you need only speak to make a man happy. You have made me really so, and I am leaving you full of ardour."

On leaving this charming conversationalist I went to the theatre and then to the faro-table, where I saw the masquer who had won three hundred sequins the evening before. This night he was very unlucky. He had lost two thousand sequins, and in the course of the next hour his losses had doubled. Canano threw down his cards and rose, saying, "That will do." The masquer left the table. He was a Genoese named Spinola.

"The bank is prosperous," I remarked to Canano.

"Yes," he replied, "but it is not always so. Pierrot was very lucky the other night."

"You did not recognize me in the least?"

"No, I was so firmly persuaded that the beggar was you. You know who he is?"

"I haven't an idea. I never saw him before that day." In this last particular I did not lie.

"It is said that they are Venetians, and that they went to Bergamo."

"It may be so, but I know nothing about them. I left the ball before they did."

In the evening I supped with the countess, her husband, and Triulzi. They were of the same opinion as Canano. Triulzi said that I had let the cat out of the bag by giving the beggars handfuls of sequins.

"That is a mistake," I answered. "When the luck is in my favour I never refuse anyone who asks me for money, for I have a superstition that I should lose if I did. I had won thirty pounds weight of gold, and I could afford to let fools talk."

The next day I got the lottery ticket and took it to the marchioness. I felt madly in love with her because I knew she was in love with me. Neither of them were playing, and I spent two hours in their company, talking of love all the while and enjoying their conversation immensely, for they were exceedingly intelligent. I left them with the conviction that if the cousin, and not Mdlle. Q —— , had been thrown in my way, I should have fallen in love with her in just the same manner.

Although the carnival is four days longer at Milan than at any other town, it was now drawing to a close. There were three more balls. I played every day, and every day I lost two or three hundred sequins. My prudence caused even more surprise than my bad fortune. I went every day to the fair cousins and made love, but I was still at the same point; I hoped, but could get nothing tangible. The fair marchioness sometimes gave me a kiss, but this was not enough for me. It is true that so far I had not dared to ask her to meet me alone. As it was I felt my love might die for want of food, and three days before the ball I asked her if she, her two friends, the marquis, and the lieutenant, would come and sup with me.

"My brother," she said, "will call on you to-morrow to see what can be arranged."

This was a good omen. The next day the lieutenant came. I had just received the drawings at the lottery, and what was my surprise and delight to see the two numbers three and forty. I said nothing to the young marquis, as his sister had forbidden me, but I foresaw that this event would be favourable to my suit.

"The Marquis of F —— ," said the worthy ambassador, "asks you to supper in your own rooms with all the band of beggars. He wishes to give us a surprise, and would be obliged if you would lend him the room to have a set of disguises made, and to ensure secrecy he wants you to let have the same waiting-maid."

"With pleasure; tell the marquis that all shall be according to his pleasure."

"Get the girl to come there at three o'clock to-day, and let the pastry-cook know that the marquis has full powers to do what he likes in the place."

"Everything shall be done as you suggest."

I guessed at once that the marquis wanted to have a taste of Zenobia; but this seemed to me so natural that, far from being angry, I felt disposed to do all in my power to favour his plans. Live and let live has always been my maxim, and it will be so to my dying day, though now I do but live a life of memories.

As soon as I was dressed I went out, and having told the pastrycook to consider the gentleman who was coming as myself, I called on the tailor, who was delighted at my getting his wife work. He knew by experience that she was none the worse for these little absences.

"I don't want you," said I to the tailor, "as it is only women's dresses that have to be done. My good gossip here will be sufficient."

"At three o'clock she may go, and I shall not expect to see her again for three days."

After I had dined I called as usual on the fair marchioness, and found her in a transport of delight. Her lottery ticket had got her five hundred sequins.

"And that makes you happy, does it?" said I.

"It does, not because of the gain in money, though I am by no means rich, but for the beauty of the idea and for the thought that I owe it all to you. These two things speak volumes in your favour."

"What do they say?"

"That you deserve to be loved."

"And also that you love me?"

"No, but my heart tells me as much."

"You make me happy, but does not your heart also tell you that you should prove your love?"

"Dearest, can you doubt it?"

With these words she gave me her hand to kiss for the first time.

"My first idea," she added, "was to put the whole forty sequins on the 'ambe'."

"You hadn't sufficient courage?"

"It wasn't that, I felt ashamed to do it. I was afraid that you might have a thought you would not tell me of — namely, that if I gave you the forty sequins to risk on the lottery, you would think I despised your present. This would have been wrong, and if you had encouraged me I should have risked all the money."

"I am so sorry not to have thought of it. You would have had ten thousand sequins, and I should be a happy man."

"We will say no more about it."

"Your brother tells me that we are going to the masqued ball under the direction of the marquis, and I leave you to imagine how glad I feel at the thought of spending a whole night with you. But one thought troubles me."

"What is that?"

"I am afraid it will not go off so well as before."

"Don't be afraid, the marquis is a man of much ingenuity, and loves my cousin's honour as herself. He is sure to get us disguises in which we shall not be recognized."

"I hope so. He wants to pay for everything, including the supper."

"He cannot do better than imitate your example in that respect."

On the evening of the ball I went at an early hour to the pastry-cook's, where I found the marquis well pleased with the progress that had been made. The dressing room was shut. I asked him in a suggestive manner if he was satisfied with Zenobia.

"Yes, with her work," he answered; "I did not ask her to do anything else for me."

"Oh! of course I believe it, but I am afraid your sweetheart will be rather sceptical."

"She knows that I cannot love anyone besides herself."

"Well, well, we will say no more about it."

When the guests came the marquis said that as the costumes would amuse us we had better put them on before supper.

We followed him into the next room, and he pointed out two thick bundles.

"Here, ladies, are your disguises," said he; "and here is your maid who will help you while we dress in another room."

He took the larger of the two bundles, and when we were shut up in our room he undid the string, and gave us our dresses, saying, —

"Let us be as quick as we can."

We burst out laughing to see a set of women's clothes. Nothing was wanting, chemises, embroidered shoes with high heels, superb garters, and, to relieve us of the trouble of having our hair done, exquisite caps with rich lace coming over the forehead. I was surprised to find that my shoes fitted me perfectly, but I heard afterwards that he employed the same bootmaker as I did. Corsets, petticoats, gowns, kerchief, fans, work-bags, rouge-boxes, masks, gloves-all were there. We only helped each other with our hair, but when it was done we looked intensely stupid, with the exception of the young officer, who really might have been taken for a pretty woman; he had concealed his deficiency in feminine characteristics by false breasts and a bustle.

We took off our breeches one after the other.

"Your fine garters," said I, to the marquis, "make me want to wear some too."

"Exactly," said the marquis; "but the worst of it is nobody will take the trouble to find out whether we have garters or not, for two young ladies five feet ten in height will not inspire very ardent desires."

I had guessed that the girls would be dressed like men, and I was not mistaken. They were ready before us, and when we opened the door we saw them standing with their backs to the fireplace.

They looked three young pages minus their impudence, for though they endeavoured to seem quite at their ease they were rather confused.

We advanced with the modesty of the fair sex, and imitating the air of shy reserve which the part demanded. The girls of course thought themselves obliged to mimic the airs of men, and they did not accost us like young men accustomed to behave respectfully to ladies. They were dressed as running footmen, with tight breeches, well-fitting waistcoats, open throats, garters with a silver fringe, laced waistbands, and pretty caps trimmed with silver lace, and a coat of arms emblazoned in gold. Their lace shirts were ornamented with an immense frill of Alencon point. In this dress, which displayed their beautiful shapes under a veil which was almost transparent, they would have stirred the sense of a paralytic, and we had no symptoms of that disease. However, we loved them too well to frighten them.

After the silly remarks usual on such occasions had been passed, we began to talk naturally while we were waiting for supper. The ladies said that as this was the first time they had dressed as men they were afraid of being recognized.

"Supposing somebody knew us," cried the cousin, "we should be undone!"

They were right; but our part was to reassure them, though I at any rate would have preferred to stay where we were. We sat down to supper, each next to his sweetheart, and to my surprise the lieutenant's mistress was the first to begin the fun. Thinking that she could not pretend to be a man without being impudent, she began to toy with the lady-lieutenant, who defended himself like a prudish miss. The two cousins, not to be outdone, began to caress us in a manner that was rather free. Zenobia, who was waiting on us at table could not help laughing when Mdlle. Q — reproached her for having made my dress too tight in the neck. She stretched out her hand as if to toy with me, whereupon I gave her a slight box on the ear, and imitating the manner of a repentant cavalier she kissed my hand and begged my pardon.

The marquis said he felt cold, and his mistress asked him if he had his breeches on, and put her hand under his dress to see, but she speedily drew it back with a blush. We all burst out laughing, and she joined in, and proceeded with her part of hardy lover.

The supper was admirable; everything was choice and abundant. Warm with love and wine, we rose from the table at which we had been for two hours, but as we got up sadness disfigured the faces of the two pretty cousins. They did not dare to go to the ball in a costume that would put them at the mercy of all the libertines there. The marquis and I felt that they were right.

"We must make up our minds," said the lieutenant, "shall we go to the ball or go home?"

"Neither," said the marquis, "we will dance here."

"Where are the violins" asked his mistress, "you could not get them to-night for their weight in gold."

"Well," said I, "we will do without them. We will have some punch, laugh, and be merry, and we shall enjoy ourselves better than at the ball, and when we are tired we can go to sleep. We have three beds here."

“Two would be enough,” said the cousin.

“True, but we can’t have too much of a good thing.”

Zenobia had gone to sup with the pastrycook’s wife, but she was ready to come up again when she should be summoned.

After two hours spent in amorous trifling, the lieutenant’s mistress, feeling a little dizzy, went into an adjoining room and lay down on the bed. Her lover was soon beside her.

Mdlle. Q —— , who was in the same case, told me that she would like to rest, so I took her into a room where she could sleep the night, and advised her to do so.

“I don’t think I need fear its going any farther,” I said, “we will leave the marquis with your cousin then, and I will watch over you while you sleep.”

“No, no, you shall sleep too.” So saying, she went into the dressing-room, and asked me to get her cloak. I brought it to her, and when she came in she said, —

“I breathe again. Those dreadful trousers were too tight; they hurt me.” She threw herself on the bed, with nothing on besides her cloak.

“Where did the breeches hurt you?” said I.

“I can’t tell you, but I should think you must find them dreadfully uncomfortable.”

“But, dearest, our anatomy is different, and breeches do not trouble us at all where they hurt you.”

As I spoke I held her to my breast and let myself fall gently beside her on the bed. We remained thus a quarter of an hour without speaking, our lips glued together in one long kiss. I left her a moment by herself, and when I returned she was between the sheets. She said she had undressed to be able to sleep better, and, shutting her eyes, turned away. I knew that the happy hour had come, and taking off my woman’s clothes in a twinkling, I gently glided into the bed beside her, for the last struggles of modesty must be tenderly respected. I clasped her in my arms and a gentle pressure soon aroused her passions, and turning towards me she surrendered to me all her charms.

After the first sacrifice I proposed a wash, for though I could not exactly flatter myself that I had been the first to break open the lock, the victim had left some traces on the bed, which looked as if it were so. The offer was received with delight, and when the operation was over she allowed me to gaze on all her charms, which I covered with kisses. Growing bolder, she made me grant her the same privilege.

“What a difference there is,” said she, “between nature and art!”

“But of course you think that art is the better?”

“No, certainly not.”

“But there may be imperfections in nature, whereas art is perfect.”

“I do not know whether there be any imperfection in what I behold, but I do know that I have never seen anything so beautiful.”

In fact she had the instrument of love before her eyes in all its majesty, and I soon made her feel its power. She did not remain still a moment, and I have known few women so ardent and flexible in their movements.

“If we were wise,” said she, “instead of going to the ball again we would come here and enjoy ourselves.”

I kissed the mouth which told me so plainly that I was to be happy, and I convinced her by my transports that no man could love her as ardently as I did. I had no need to keep her awake, she shewed no inclination for sleep. We were either in action or contemplation, or engaged in amorous discourse, the whole time. I cheated her now and then, but to her own advantage, for a young woman is always more vigorous than a man, and we did not stop till the day began to break. There was no need for concealment, for each had enjoyed his sweetheart in peace and happiness, and it was only modesty which silenced our congratulations. By this silence we did not proclaim our happiness, but neither did we deny it.

When we were ready I thanked the marquis, and asked him to supper for the next ball night without any pretence of our going to the masquerade, if the ladies had no objection. The lieutenant answered for them in the affirmative, and his mistress threw her arms round his neck, reproaching him for having slept all night. The marquis confessed to the same fault, and I repeated the words like an article of faith, while the ladies kissed us, and thanked us for our kindness to them. We parted in the same way as before, except that this time the marquis remained with Zenobia.

I went to bed as soon as I got home, and slept till three o'clock. When I got up I found the house was empty, so I went to dine at the pastry-cook's, where I found Zenobia and her husband, who had come to enjoy the leavings of our supper. He told me that I had made his fortune, as the marquis had given his wife twenty-four sequins and the woman's dress he had worn. I gave her mine as well. I told my gossip that I should like some dinner, and the tailor went away in a grateful mood.

As soon as I was alone with Zenobia I asked her if she were satisfied with the marquis.

"He paid me well," she answered, a slight blush mounting on her cheeks.

"That is enough," said I, "no one can see you without loving you, or love you without desiring to possess your charms."

"The marquis did not go so far as that."

"It may be so, but I am surprised to hear it."

When I had dined, I hastened to call on the fair marchioness, whom I loved more than ever after the delicious night she had given me. I wanted to see what effect she would have on me, after making me so happy. She looked prettier than ever. She received me in a way becoming in a mistress who is glad to have acquired some rights over her lover.

"I was sure," said she, "that you would come and see me;" and though her cousin was there she kissed me so often and so ardently that there was no room for doubt as to the manner in which we had spent our night together. I passed five hours with her, which went by all too quickly, for we talked of love, and love is an inexhaustible subject. This five hours' visit on the day after our bridal shewed me that I was madly in love with my new conquest, while it must have convinced her that I was worthy of her affection.

Countess A —— B —— had sent me a note asking me to sup with her, her husband, and the Marquis Triulzi, and other friends. This engagement prevented my paying a visit to Canano, who had won a thousand sequins of me since my great victory as Pierrot. I knew that he boasted that he was sure of me, but in my own mind I had determined to gain the mastery. At supper the countess waged war on me. I slept out at night. I was rarely visible. She tried hard to steal my secret from me, and to get some information as to my amorous adventures. It was known that I sometimes supped at Therese's with Greppi, who was laughed at because he had been silly enough to say that he had nothing to dread from my power. The better to conceal my game, I said he was quite right.

The next day Barbaro, who was as honest as most professional sharpers are, brought me the two hundred sequins I had lent him, with a profit of two hundred more. He told me that he had had a slight difference with the lieutenant, and was not going to play any more. I thanked him for having presented me to the fair marchioness, telling him that I was quite in love with her and in hopes of overcoming her scruples. He smiled, and praised my discretion, letting me understand that I did not take him in; but it was enough for me not to confess to anything.

About three o'clock I called on my sweetheart, and spent five hours with her as before. As Barbaro was not playing, the servants had been ordered to say that no one was at home. As I was the declared lover of the marchioness, her cousin treated me as an intimate friend. She begged me to stay at Milan as long as possible, not only to make her cousin happy, but for her sake as well, since without me she could not enjoy the marquis's society in private, and while her father was alive he would never dare to come openly to the house. She thought she would certainly become his wife as soon as her old father was dead, but she hoped vainly, for soon after the marquis fell into evil ways and was ruined.

Next evening we all assembled at supper, and instead of going to the ball gave ourselves up to pleasure. We spent a delicious night, but it was saddened by the reflection that the carnival was drawing to a close, and with it our mutual pleasures would be over.

On the eve of Shrove Tuesday as there was no ball I sat down to play, and not being able once to hit on three winning cards, I lost all the gold I had about me. I should have left the table as usual if a woman disguised as a man had not given me a card, and urged me by signs to play it. I risked a hundred sequins on it, giving my word for the payment. I lost, and in my endeavours to get back my money I lost a thousand sequins, which I paid the next day.

I was just going out to console myself with the company of my dear marchioness, when I saw the evil-omened masquer approaching, accompanied by a man, also in disguise, who shook me by the hand and begged me to come at ten o'clock to the "Three Kings" at such a number, if the honour of an old friend was dear to me.

"What friend is that?"

"Myself."

"What is your name?"

"I cannot tell you."

"Then you need not tell me to come, for if you were a true friend of mine you would tell me your name."

I went out and he followed me, begging me to come with him to the end of the arcades. When we got there he took off his mask, and I recognized Croce, whom my readers may remember.

I knew he was banished from Milan, and understood why he did not care to give his name in public, but I was exceedingly glad I had refused to go to his inn.

"I am surprised to see you here," said I.

"I dare say your are. I have come here in this carnival season, when one can wear a mask, to compel my relations to give me what they owe me; but they put me off from one day to another, as they are sure I shall be obliged to go when Lent begins."

"And will you do so?"

"I shall be obliged to, but as you will not come and see me, give me twenty sequins, which will enable me to leave Milan. My cousin owes me ten thousand livres, and will not pay me a tenth even. I will kill him before I go."

"I haven't a farthing, and that mask of yours has made me lose a thousand sequins, which I do not know how to pay.

"I know. I am an unlucky man, and bring bad luck to all my friends. It was I who told her to give you a card, in the hope that it would change the run against you."

"Is she a Milanese girl?"

"No, she comes from Marseilles, and is the daughter of a rich agent. I fell in love with her, seduced her, and carried her off to her unhappiness. I had plenty of money then, but, wretch that I am, I lost it all at Genoa, where I had to sell all my possessions to enable me to come here. I have been a week in Milan. Pray give me the wherewithal to escape."

I was touched with compassion, and I borrowed twenty sequins from Canano, and gave them to the poor wretch, telling him to write to me.

This alms-giving did me good; it made me forget my losses, and I spent a delightful evening with the marchioness.

The next day we supped together at my rooms, and spent the rest of the night in amorous pleasures. It was the Saturday, the last day of the carnival at Milan, and I spent the whole of the Sunday in bed, for the marchioness had exhausted me, and I knew that a long sleep would restore my strength.

Early on Monday morning Clairmont brought me a letter which had been left by a servant. It had no signature, and ran as follows:

"Have compassion, sir, on the most wretched creature breathing. M. de la Croix has gone away in despair. He has left me here in the inn, where he has paid for nothing. Good God! what will become of me? I conjure you to come and see me, be it only to give me your advice."

I did not hesitate for a moment, and it was not from any impulses of love or profligacy that I went, but from pure compassion. I put on my great coat, and in the same room in which I had seen Irene I saw a young and pretty girl, about whose face there was something peculiarly noble and attractive. I saw in her innocence and modesty oppressed and persecuted. As soon as I came in she humbly apologized for having dared to trouble me, and she asked me to tell a woman who was in the room to leave it, as she did not speak Italian.

"She has been tiring me for more than an hour. I cannot understand what she says, but I can make out that she wants to do me a service. However, I do not feel inclined to accept her assistance."

"Who told you to come and see this young lady?" said I, to the woman.

"One of the servants of the inn told me that a young lady from foreign parts had been left alone here, and that she was much to be pitied. My feelings of humanity made me come and see if I could be useful to her; but I see she is in good hands, and I am very glad of it for her sake, poor dear!"

I saw that the woman was a procuress, and I only replied with a smile of contempt.

The poor girl then told me briefly what I had already heard, and added that Croce, who called himself De St. Croix, had gone to the gaming-table as soon as he had got my twenty sequins, and that he had then taken her back to the inn, where he had spent the next day in a state of despair, as he did not dare to shew himself abroad in the daytime. In the evening he put on his mask and went out, not returning till the next morning.

"Soon after he put on his great coat and got ready to go out, telling me that if he did not return he would communicate with me by you, at the same time giving me your address, of which I have made use as you know. He has not come back, and if you have not seen him I am sure he has gone off on foot without a penny in his pocket. The landlord wants to be paid, and by selling all I have I could satisfy his claims; but, good God! what is to become of me, then?"

"Dare you return to your father?"

"Yes, sir, I dare return to him. He will forgive me when on my knees and with tears in my eyes I tell him that I am ready to bury myself in a nunnery."

"Very good! then I will take you to Marseilles myself, and in the meanwhile I will find you a lodging with some honest people. Till then, shut yourself up in your room, do not admit anyone to see you, and be sure I will have a care for you."

I summoned the landlord and paid the bill, which was a very small one, and I told him to take care of the lady till my return. The poor girl was dumb with surprise and gratitude. I said good-bye kindly and left her without even taking her hand. It was not altogether a case of the devil turning monk; I always had a respect for distress.

I had already thought of Zenobia in connection with the poor girl's lodging, and I went to see her on the spot. In her husband's presence I told her what I wanted, and asked if she could find a corner for my new friend.

“She shall have my place,” cried the worthy tailor, “if she won’t mind sleeping with my wife. I will hire a small room hard bye, and will sleep there as long as the young lady stays.”

“That’s a good idea, gossip, but your wife will lose by the exchange.”

“Not much,” said Zenobia; and the tailor burst out laughing.

“As for her meals,” he added, “she must arrange that herself.”

“That’s a very simple matter,” said I, “Zenobia will get them and I will pay for them.”

I wrote the girl a short note, telling her of the arrangements I had made, and charged Zenobia to take her the letter. The next day I found her in the poor lodging with these worthy folks, looking pleased and ravishingly pretty. I felt that I could behave well for the present, but I sighed at the thought of the journey. I should have to put a strong restraint on myself.

I had nothing more to do at Milan, but the count had made me promise to spend a fortnight at St. Angelo. This was an estate belonging to him, fifteen miles from Milan, and the count spoke most enthusiastically of it. If I had gone away without seeing St. Angelo, he would have been exceedingly mortified. A married brother of his lived there, and the count often said that his brother was longing to know me. When we returned he would no doubt let me depart in peace.

I had made up my mind to shew my gratitude to the worthy man for his hospitality, so on the fourth day of Lent I took leave of Therese, Greppi, and the affectionate marchioness, for two weeks, and we set out on our way.

To my great delight the countess did not care to come. She much preferred staying in Milan with Triulzi, who did not let her lack for anything.

We got to St. Angelo at three o’clock, and found that we were expected to dinner.

CHAPTER XXI

An Ancient Castle — Clementine — The Fair Penitent — Lodi —

A Mutual Passion

The manorial castle of the little town of St. Angelo is a vast and ancient building, dating back at least eight centuries, but devoid of regularity, and not indicating the date of its erection by the style of its architecture. The ground floor consists of innumerable small rooms, a few large and lofty apartments, and an immense hall. The walls, which are full of chinks and crannies, are of that immense thickness which proves that our ancestors built for their remote descendants, and not in our modern fashion; for we are beginning to build in the English style, that is, barely for one generation. The stone stairs had been trodden by so many feet that one had to be very careful in going up or down. The floor was all of bricks, and as it had been renewed at various epochs with bricks of divers colours it formed a kind of mosaic, not very pleasant to look upon. The windows were of a piece with the rest; they had no glass in them, and the sashes having in many instances given way they were always open; shutters were utterly unknown there. Happily the want of glass was not much felt in the genial climate of the country. The ceilings were conspicuous by their absence, but there were heavy beams, the haunts of bats, owls, and other birds, and light ornament was supplied by the numerous spiders' webs.

In this great Gothic palace — for palace it was rather than castle, for it had no towers or other attributes of feudalism, except the enormous coat-of-arms which crowned the gateway — in this palace, I say, the memorial of the ancient glories of the Counts A —— B —— , which they loved better than the finest modern house, there were three sets of rooms better kept than the rest. Here dwelt the masters, of whom there were three; the Count A —— B —— , my friend, Count Ambrose, who always lived there, and a third, an officer in the Spanish Walloon Guards. I occupied the apartment of the last named. But I must describe the welcome I received.

Count Ambrose received me at the gate of the castle as if I had been some high and puissant prince. The door stood wide open on both sides, but I did not take too much pride to myself on this account, as they were so old that it was impossible to shut them.

The noble count who held his cap in his hand, and was decently but negligently dressed, though he was only forty years old, told me with high-born modesty that his brother had done wrong to bring me here to see their miserable place, where I should find none of those luxuries to which I had been accustomed, but he promised me a good old-fashioned Milanese welcome instead. This is a phrase of which the Milanese are very fond, but as they put it into practice it becomes them well. They are generally most worthy and hospitable people, and contrast favourably with the Piedmontese and Genoese.

The worthy Ambrose introduced me to his countess and his two sisters-in-law, one of whom was an exquisite beauty, rather deficient in manner, but this was no doubt due to the fact that they saw no polished company whatever. The other was a thoroughly ordinary woman, neither pretty nor ugly, of a type which is plentiful all the world over. The countess looked like a Madonna; her features had something angelic about them in their dignity and openness. She came from Lodi, and had only been married two years. The three sisters were very young, very noble, and very poor. While we were at dinner Count Ambrose told me that he had married a poor woman because he thought more of goodness than riches.

“She makes me happy,” he added; “and though she brought me no dower, I seem to be a richer man, for she has taught me to look on everything we don’t possess as a superfluity.”

“There, indeed,” said I, “you have the true philosophy of an honest man.”

The countess, delighted at her husband’s praise and my approval, smiled lovingly at him, and took a pretty baby from the nurse’s arms and offered it her alabaster breast. This is the privilege of a nursing mother; nature tells her that by doing so she does nothing against modesty. Her bosom, feeding the helpless, arouses no other feelings than those of respect. I confess, however, that the sight might have produced a tenderer sentiment in me; it was exquisitely beautiful, and I am sure that if Raphael had beheld it his Madonna would have been still more lovely.

The dinner was excellent, with the exception of the made dishes, which were detestable. Soup, beef, fresh salted pork, sausages, mortadella, milk dishes, vegetables, game, mascarpon cheese, preserved fruits — all were delicious; but the count having told his brother that I was a great gourmand, the worthy Ambrose had felt it his duty to give me some ragouts, which were as bad as can well be imagined. I had to taste them, out of politeness; but I made up my mind that I would do so no more. After dinner I took my host apart, and spewed him that with ten plain courses his table would be delicate and excellent, and that he had no need of introducing any ragouts. From that time I had a choice dinner every day.

There were six of us at table, and we all talked and laughed with the exception of the fair Clementine. This was the young countess who had already made an impression on me. She only spoke when she was obliged to do so, and her words were always accompanied with a blush; but as I had no other way of getting a sight of her beautiful eyes, I asked her a good many questions. However, she blushed so terribly that I thought I must be distressing her, and I left her in peace, hoping to become better acquainted with her.

At last I was taken to my apartment and left there. The windows were glazed and curtained as in the diningroom, but Clairmont came and told me that he could not unpack my trunks as there were no locks to anything and should not care to take the responsibility. I thought he was right, and I went to ask my friend about it.

“There’s not a lock or a key,” said he, “in the whole castle, except in the cellar, but everything is safe for all that. There are no robbers at St. Angelo, and if there were they would not dare to come here.”

“I daresay, my dear count, but you know’ it is my business to suppose robbers everywhere. My own valet might take the opportunity of robbing me, and you see I should have to keep silence if I were robbed.”

“Quite so, I feel the force of your argument. Tomorrow morning a locksmith shall put locks and keys to your doors, and you will be the only person in the castle who is proof against thieves.”

I might have replied in the words of Juvenal, ‘Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator’, but I should have mortified him. I told Clairmont to leave my trunks alone till next day, and I went out with Count A —— B —— and his sisters-in-law to take a walk in the town.

Count Ambrose and his better-half stayed in the castle; the good mother would never leave her nursling. Clementine was eighteen, her married sister being four years older. She took my arm, and my friend offered his to Eleanore.

“We will go and see the beautiful penitent,” said the count.

I asked him who the beautiful penitent was, and he answered, without troubling himself about his sisters-in-law,

“She was once a Lais of Milan, and enjoyed such a reputation for beauty that not only all the flower of Milan but people from the neighbouring towns were at her feet. Her hall-door was opened and shut a hundred times in a day, and even then she was not able to satisfy the desires aroused. At last an end came to what the old and the devout called a scandal. Count Firmian, a man of learning and wit, went to Vienna, and on his departure received orders to have her shut up in a convent. Our august Marie Therese cannot pardon mercenary beauty, and the count had no choice but to have the fair sinner imprisoned. She was told that she had done amiss, and dealt wickedly; she was obliged to make a general confession, and was condemned to a life-long penance in this convent. She was absolved by Cardinal Pozzobonelli, Archbishop of Milan, and he then confirmed her, changing the name of Therese, which she had received at the baptismal font, to Mary Magdalen, thus shewing her how she should save her soul by following the example of her new patroness, whose wantonness had hitherto been her pattern.

“Our family are the patrons of this convent, which is devoted to penitents. It is situated in an inaccessible spot, and the inmates are in the charge of a kind mother-superior, who does her best to soften the manifold austerities of their existences. They only work and pray, and see no one besides their confessor, who says mass every day. We are the only persons whom the superioress would admit, as long as some of our family are present she always let them bring whom they like.”

This story touched me and brought tears to my eyes. Poor Mary Magdalen! Cruel empress! I think I have noted in another passage the source of her austere virtue.

When we were announced the mother-superior came to meet us, and took us into a large hall, where I soon made out the famous penitent amongst five or six other girls, who were penitents like herself, but I presume for trifling offences, as they were all ugly. As soon as the poor women saw us they ceased working, and stood up respectfully. In spite of the severe simplicity of her dress, Therese made a great impression on me. What beauty! What majesty brought low! With my profane eyes, instead of looking to the enormity of the offences for which she was suffering so cruelly, I saw before me a picture of innocence — a humbled Venus. Her fine eyes were fixed on the ground, but what was my surprise, when, suddenly looking at me, she exclaimed, —

“O my God! what do I see? Holy Mary, come to my aid! Begone, dreadful sinner, though thou deservest to be here more than I. Scoundrel!”

I did not feel inclined to laugh. Her unfortunate position, and the singular apostrophe she had addressed to me, pierced me to the heart. The mother-superior hastened to say, —

“Do not be offended, sir, the poor girl has become mad, and unless she really has recognized you … .”

“That is impossible, madam, I have never seen her before.”

“Of course not, but you must forgive her, as she has lost the use of her reason.”

“Maybe the Lord has made her thus in mercy.”

As a matter of fact, I saw more sense than madness in this outburst, for it must have been very grievous for the poor girl to have to encounter my idle curiosity, in the place of her penitence. I was deeply moved, and in spite of myself a big tear rolled down my face. The count, who had known her, laughed, but I begged him to restrain himself.

A moment after, the poor wretch began again. She raved against me madly, and begged the mother-superior to send me away, as I had come there to damn her.

The good lady chid her with all a true mother’s gentleness, and told her to leave the room, adding that all who came there only desired that she should be saved eternally. She was stern enough, however, to add, that no one had been a greater sinner than she, and the poor Magdalen went out weeping bitterly.

If it had been my fortune to enter Milan at the head of a victorious army, the first thing I should have done would be he setting free of this poor captive, and if the abbess had resisted she would have felt the weight of my whip.

When Magdalen was gone, the mother-superior told us that the poor girl had many good qualities, and if God willed that she should keep some particle of sense she did not doubt her becoming a saint like her patroness.

“She has begged me,” she added, “to take down the pictures of St. Louis de Gonzaga and St. Antony from the chapel wall because she says they distract her fearfully. I have thought it my duty to yield to her request, in spite of our confessor, who says it’s all nonsense.”

The confessor was a rude churl. I did not exactly tell the abbess that, but I said enough for a clever woman as she was to grasp my meaning.

We left the sorrowful place in sadness and silence, cursing the sovereign who had made such ill use of her power.

If, as our holy religion maintains, there is a future life before us all, Marie Therese certainly deserves damnation, if only the oppressions she has used towards those poor women whose life is wretched enough at the best. Poor Mary Magdalen had gone mad and suffered the torments of the damned because nature had given her two of her best gifts — beauty, and an excellent heart. You will say she had abused them, but for a fault which is only a crime before God, should a fellow-creature and a greater sinner have condemned her to such a fearful doom? I defy any reasonable man to answer in the affirmative.

On our way back to the castle Clementine, who was on my arm, laughed to herself once or twice. I felt curious to know what she was laughing at, and said, —

“May I ask you, fair countess, why you laugh thus to yourself?”

“Forgive me; I was not amused at the poor girl’s recognizing you, for that must have been a mistake, but I cannot help laughing when I think of your face at her wordy ‘You are more deserving of imprisonment than I.’”

"Perhaps you think she was right."

"I? Not at all. But how is it that she attacked you and not my brother-in-law?"

"Probably because she thought I looked a greater sinner than he."

"That, I suppose, must have been the reason. One should never heed the talk of mad people."

"You are sarcastic, but I take it all in good part. Perhaps I am as great a sinner as I look; but beauty should be merciful to me, for it is by beauty that I am led astray."

"I wonder the empress does not shut up men as well as women."

"Perhaps she hopes to see them all at her feet when there are no more girls left to amuse them."

"That is a jest. You should rather say that she cannot forgive her own sex the lack of a virtue which she exercises so eminently, and which is so easily observed."

"I have nothing to allege against the empress's virtue, but with your leave I beg to entertain very strong doubts as to the possibility of the general exercise of that virtue which we call continence."

"No doubt everyone thinks by his own standard. A man may be praised for temperance in whom temperance is no merit. What is easy to you may be hard to me, and 'vice versa'. Both of us may be right."

This interesting conversation made me compare Clementine to the fair marchioness at Milan, but there was this difference between them: Mdlle. Q—— spoke with an air of gravity and importance, whereas Clementine expounded her system with great simplicity and an utter indifference of manner. I thought her observations so acute and her utterance so perfect and artistic, that I felt ashamed of having misjudged her at dinner. Her silence, and the blush which mounted to her face when anyone asked her a question, had made me suspect both confusion and poverty in her ideas, for timidity is often another word for stupidity; but the conversation I have just reported made me feel that I had made a great mistake. The marchioness, being older and having seen more of the world, was more skilled in argument; but

Clementine had twice eluded my questions with the utmost skill, and I felt obliged to award her the palm.

When we got back to the castle we found a lady with her son and daughter, and another relation of the count's, a young abbe, whom I found most objectionable.

He was a pitiless talker, and on the pretence of having seen me at Milan he took the opportunity of flattering me in a disgusting manner. Besides, he made sheep's eyes at Clementine, and I did not like the idea of having a fellow like that for a rival. I said very dryly that I did not remember him at all; but he was not a man of delicate feeling, and this did not disconcert him in the least. He sat down beside Clementine, and taking her hand told her that she must add me to the long catalogue of her victims. She could do nothing else but laugh at silly talk of this kind; I knew it, but that laugh of hers displeased me. I would have had her say — I do not know what, but something biting and sarcastic. Not at all; the impertinent fellow whispered something in her ear, and she answered in the same way. This was more than I could bear. Some question or other was being discussed, and the abbe asked for my opinion. I do not remember what I answered, but I know that I gave him a bitter reply in the hope of putting him in a bad temper and reducing him to silence. But he was a battle charger, and used to trumpet, fife, and gun; nothing put him out. He appealed to Clementine, and I had the mortification of hearing her opinion given, though with a blush, in his favour. The fop was satisfied, and kissed the young countess's hand with an air of fatuous happiness. This was too much; and I cursed the abbe and Clementine, too. I rose from my seat and went to the window.

The window is a great blessing to an impatient man, whom the rules of politeness in some degree constrain. He can turn his back on bores, without their being able to charge him witch direct rudeness; but people know what he means, and that soothes his feelings.

I have noted this trifling circumstance only to point out how bad temper blinds its victims. The poor abbe vexed me because he made himself agreeable to Clementine, with whom I was already in love without knowing it. I saw in him a rival, but far from endeavouring to offend me, he had done his best to please me; and I should have taken account of his good will. But under such circumstances I always gave way to ill humour, and now I am too old to begin curing myself. I don't think I need do so, for if I am ill tempered the company politely pass me over. My misfortune obliges me to submit.

Clementine had conquered me in the space of a few hours. True, I was an inflammable subject, but hitherto no beauty had committed such ravages upon me in so short a time. I did not doubt of success, and I confess that there was a certain amount of vanity in this assurance; but at the same time I was modest, for I knew that at the slightest slip the enterprise would miscarry. Thus I regarded the abbe as a wasp to be crushed as speedily as possible. I was also a victim to that most horrible of passions, jealousy; it seemed to me that if Clementine was not in love with this man-monkey, she was extremely indulgent to him; and with this idea I conceived a horrible plan of revenging my wrongs on her. Love is the god of nature, but this god is, after all, only a spoilt child. We know all his follies and frailties, but we still adore him.

My friend the count, who was surprised, I suppose, to see me contemplating the prospect for such a long time, came up to me and asked me if I wanted anything.

"I am thinking some matter over," said I, "and I must go and write one or two letters in my room till it is time for supper."

"You won't leave us surely?" said he.

"Clementine, help me to keep M. de Seingalt; you must make him postpone his letter-writing."

"But my dear brother," said the charming girl, "if M. de Seingalt has business to do, it would be rude of me to try and prevent his doing it."

Though what she said was perfectly reasonable, it stung me to the quick; when one is in an ill humour, everything is fuel for the fire. But the abbe said pleasantly that I had much better come and make a bank at faro, and as everything echoed this suggestion I had to give in.

The cards were brought in, and various coloured counters handed round, and I sat down putting thirty ducats before me. This was a very large sum for a company who only played for amusement's sake; fifteen counters were valued only at a sequin. Countess Ambrose sat at my right hand, and the abbe at my left. As if they had laid a plot to vex and annoy me, Clementine had made room for him. I took a mere accident for a studied impertinence, and told the poor man that I never dealt unless I had a lady on each side of me, and never by any chance with a priest beside me.

“Do you think it would bring you ill luck?”

“I don’t like birds of ill omen.”

At this he got up, and Clementine took his place.

At the end of three hours, supper was announced. Everybody had won from me except the abbe; the poor devil had lost counters to the extent of twenty sequins.

As a relation the abbe stayed to supper, but the lady and her children were asked in vain to do so.

The abbe looked wretched, which made me in a good temper, and inclined me to be pleasant. I proceeded to flirt with Clementine, and by making her reply to the numerous questions I asked, I gave her an opportunity of displaying her wit, and I could see that she was grateful. I was once more myself, and I took pity of the abbe, and spoke to him politely, asking him his opinion on some topic.

“I was not listening,” said he, “but I hope you will give me my revenge after supper.”

“After supper I shall be going to bed, but you shall have your revenge, and as much as you like of it, tomorrow, provided that our charming hostesses like playing. I hope the luck will be in your favour.”

After supper the poor abbe went sadly away, and the count took me to my room, telling me that I could sleep securely in spite of the lack of keys for his sisters-in-law who were lodged close by were no better off.

I was astonished and delighted at the trust he put in me, and at the really magnificent hospitality (it must be remembered all things are relative) with which I had been treated in the castle.

I told Clairmont to be quick about putting my hair in curl-papers, for I was tired and in need of rest, but he was only half-way through the operation when I was agreeably surprised by the apparition of Clementine.

"Sir," said she, "as we haven't got a maid to look after your linen, I have come to beg you to let me undertake that office."

"You! my dear countess?"

"Yes, I, sir, and I hope you will make no objection. It will be a pleasure to me, and I hope to you as well. Let me have the shirt you are going to wear to-morrow, and say no more about it."

"Very good, it shall be as you please."

I helped Clairmont to carry my linen trunk into her room, and added, —

"Every day I want a shirt, a collar, a front, a pair of drawers, a pair of stocking, and two handkerchiefs; but I don't mind which you take, and leave the choice to you as the mistress, as I wish you were in deed and truth. I shall sleep a happier sleep than Jove himself. Farewell, dear Hebe!"

Her sister Eleanore was already in bed, and begged pardon for her position. I told Clairmont to go to the count directly, and inform him that I had changed my mind about the locks. Should I be afraid for my poor properties when these living treasures were confined to me so frankly? I should have been afraid of offending them.

I had an excellent bed, and I slept wonderfully. Clairmont was doing my hair when my youthful Hebe presented herself with a basket in her hands. She wished me good day and said she hoped I would be contented with her handiwork. I gazed at her delightedly, no trace of false shame appeared on her features. The blush on her cheeks was a witness of the pleasure she experienced in being useful — a pleasure which is unknown to those whose curse is their pride, the characteristic of fools and upstarts. I kissed her hand and told her that I had never seen linen so nicely done.

Just then the count came in and thanked Clementine for attending on me. I approved of that, but he accompanied his thanks with a kiss which was well received, and this I did not approve of at all. But you will say they were brother-in-law and sister-in-law? Just so, but I was jealous all the same. Nature is all-wise, and it was nature that made me jealous. When one loves and has not as yet gained possession, jealousy is inevitable; the heart must fear lest that which it longs for so be carried away by another.

The count took a note from his pocket and begged me to read it. It came from his cousin the abbe, who begged the count to apologize to me for him if he was unable to pay the twenty sequins he had lost to me in the proper time, but that he would discharge his debt in the course of the week.

“Very good! Tell him that he can pay when he likes, but warn him not to play this evening. I will not take his bets.”

“But you would have no objection to his punting with ready money.”

“Certainly I should, unless he pays me first, otherwise he would be punting with my money. Of course it’s a mere trifle, and I hope he won’t trouble himself in the least or put himself to any inconvenience to pay it.”

“I am afraid he will be mortified.”

“So much the better,” said Clementine; “what did he play for, when he knew that he could not pay his debts if he incurred any? It will be a lesson to him.”

This outburst was balm to my heart. Such is man — a mere selfish egotist, when passion moves him.

The count made no reply, but left us alone.

“My dear Clementine, tell me frankly whether the rather uncivil way in which I have treated the abbe has pained you. I am going to give you twenty sequins, do you send them to him, and to-night he can pay me honourably, and make a good figure. I promise you no one shall know about it.”

“Thank you, but the honour of the abbe is not dear enough to me for me to accept your offer. The lesson will do him good. A little shame will teach him that he must mend his ways.”

“You will see he won’t come this evening.”

“That may be, but do you think I shall care?”

“Well — yes, I did think so.”

“Because we joked together, I suppose. He is a hare-brained fellow, to whom I do not give two thoughts in the year.”

“I pity him, as heartily as I congratulate anyone of whom you do think.”

“Maybe there is no such person”

“What! You have not yet met a man worthy of your regard?”

“Many worthy of regard, but none of love.”

“Then you have never been in love?”

“Never.”

“Your heart is empty?”

“You make me laugh. Is it happiness, is it unhappiness? Who can say. If it be happiness, I am glad, and if it be unhappiness, I do not care, for I do not feel it to be so.”

“Nevertheless, it is a misfortune, and you will know it to have been so on the day in which you love.”

“And if I become unhappy through love, shall I not pronounce my emptiness of heart to have been happiness.”

“I confess you would be right, but I am sure love would make you happy.”

“I do not know. To be happy one must live in perfect agreement; that is no easy matter, and I believe it to be harder still when the bond is lifelong.”

“I agree, but God sent us into the world that we might run the risk”

“To a man it may be a necessity and a delight, but a girl is bound by stricter laws.”

“In nature the necessity is the same though the results are different, and the laws you speak of are laid down by society.”

The count came in at this point and was astonished to see us both together.

“I wish you would fall in love with one another,” said he.

“You wish to see us unhappy, do you?” said she.

“What do you mean by that?” I cried.

“I should be unhappy with an inconstant lover, and you would be unhappy too, for you would feel bitter remorse for having destroyed my peace of mind.”

After this she discreetly fled.

I remained still as if she had petrified me, but the count who never wearied himself with too much thinking, exclaimed,

“Clementine is rather too romantic; she will get over it, however; she is young yet.”

We went to bid good day to the countess, whom we found suckling her baby.

“Do you know, my dear sister,” said the count, “that the chevalier here is in love with Clementine, and she seems inclined to pay him back in his own coin?”

The countess smiled and said, —

“I hope a suitable match like that may make us relations.”

There is something magical about the word “marriage.”

What the countess said pleased me extremely, and I replied with a bow of the most gracious character.

We went to pay a call on the lady who had come to the castle the day before. There was a canon regular there, who after a great many polite speeches in praise of my country, which he knew only from books, asked me of what order was the cross I carried on my breast.

I replied, with a kind of boastful modesty, that it was a peculiar mark of the favour of the Holy Father, the Pope, who had freely made me a knight of the Order of St. John Lateran, and a prothonotary-apostolic.

This monk had stayed at home far from the world, or else he would not have asked me such a question. However, far from thinking he was offending me, he thought he was honouring me by giving me an opportunity of talking of my own merit.

At London, the greatest possible rudeness is to ask anyone what his religion is, and it is something the same in Germany; an Anabaptist is by no means ready to confess his creed. And in fact the best plan is never to ask any questions whatever, not even if a man has change for a louis.

Clementine was delightful at dinner. She replied wittily and gracefully to all the questions which were addressed to her. True, what she said was lost on the majority of her auditors — for wit cannot stand before stupidity — but I enjoyed her talk immensely. As she kept filling up my glass I reproached her, and this gave rise to the following little dialogue which completed my conquest.

“You have no right to complain,” said she, “Hebe’s duty is to keep the cup of the chief of the gods always full.”

“Very good; but you know Jupiter sent her away.”

“Yes, but I know why. I will take care not to stumble in the same way; and no Ganymede shall take my place for a like cause.”

“You are very wise. Jupiter was wrong, and henceforth I will be Hercules. Will that please you, fair Hebe?”

“No; because he did not marry her till after her death.”

“True, again. I will be Iolas then, for …”

“Be quiet. Iolas was old.”

“True; but so was I yesterday. You have made me young again.”

“I am very glad, dear Iolas; but remember what I did when he left me.”

“And what did you do? I do not remember.”

“I did not believe a word he said.”

“You can believe.”

“I took away the gift I had made.”

At these words this charming girl’s face was suffered with blushes. If I had touched her with my hand, sure it would have been on fire; but the rays that darted from her eyes froze my heart.

Philosophers, be not angry if I talk of freezing rays. It is no miracle, but a very natural phenomenon, which is happening every day. A great love, which elevates a man’s whole nature, is a strong flame born out of a great cold, such as I then felt for a moment; it would have killed me if it had lasted longer.

The superior manner in which Clementine had applied the story of Hebe convinced me not only that she had a profound knowledge of mythology, but also that she had a keen and far-reaching intellect. She had given me more than a glimpse of her learning; she had let me guess that I interested her, and that she thought of me.

These ideas, entering a heart which is already warm, speedily set all the senses in flames. In a moment all doubt was laid to rest; Clementine loved me, and I was sure that we should be happy.

Clementine slipped away from the table to calm herself, and thus I had time to escape from my astonishment.

“Pray where was that young lady educated?” I said to the countess.

“In the country. She was always present when my brother had his lessons, but the tutor, Sardini, never took any notice of her, and it was only she who gained anything; my brother only yawned. Clementine used to make my mother laugh, and puzzle the old tutor sadly sometimes.”

“Sardini wrote and published some poems which are not bad; but nobody reads them, because they are so full of mythology.”

“Quite so. Clementine possesses a manuscript with which he presented her, containing a number of mythological tales verified. Try and make her shew you her books and the verses she used to write; she won’t shew them to any of us.”

I was in a great state of admiration. When she returned I complimented her upon her acquirements, and said that as I was a great lover of literature myself I should be delighted if she would shew me her verses.

“I should be ashamed. I had to give over my studies two years ago, when my sister married and we came to live here, where we only see honest folks who talk about the stable, the harvest, and the weather. You are the first person I have seen who has talked to me about literature. If our old Sardini had come with us I should have gone on learning, but my sister did not care to have him here.”

“But my dear Clementine,” said the countess, “what do you think my husband could have done with an old man of eighty whose sole accomplishments are weighing the wind, writing verses, and talking mythology?”

“He would have been useful enough,” said the husband, “if he could have managed the estate, but the honest old man will not believe in the existence of rascals. He is so learned that he is quite stupid."

"Good heavens!" cried Clementine. "Sardini stupid? It is certainly easy to deceive him, but that is because he is so noble. I love a man who is easily deceived, but they call me silly."

"Not at all, my dear sister," said the countess. "On the contrary, there is wisdom in all you say, but it is wisdom out of place in a woman; the mistress of a household does not want to know anything about literature, poetry, or philosophy, and when it comes to marrying you I am very much afraid that your taste for this kind of thing will stand in your way."

"I know it, and I am expecting to die a maid; not that it is much compliment to the men."

To know all that such a dialogue meant for me, the reader must imagine himself most passionately in love. I thought myself unfortunate. I could have given her a hundred thousand crowns, and I would have married her that moment. She told me that Sardini was at Milan, very old and ill.

"Have you been to see him?" I asked.

"I have never been to Milan."

"Is it possible? It is not far from here."

"Distance is relative, you know."

This was beautifully expressed. It told me without any false shame that she could not afford to go, and I was pleased by her frankness. But in the state of mind I was in I should have been pleased with anything she chose to do. There are moments in a man's life when the woman he loves can make anything of him.

I spoke to her in a manner that affected her so that she took me into a closet next to her room to shew me her books. There were only thirty in all, but they were chosen, although somewhat elementary. A woman like Clementine needed something more.

"Do you know, my dear Hebe, that you want more books?"

"I have often suspected it, dear Iolas, without being able to say exactly what I want."

After spending an hour in glancing over Sardini's works, I begged her to spew me her own.

"No," said she, "they are too bad."

"I expect so; but the good will outweigh the bad."

"I don't think so."

"Oh, yes! you needn't be afraid. I will forgive the bad grammar, bad style, absurd images, faulty method, and even the verses that won't scan."

"That's too much, Iolas; Hebe doesn't need so vast a pardon as all that. Here, sir, these are my scribblings; sift the faults and the defaults. Read what you will."

I was delighted that my scheme of wounding her vanity had succeeded, and I began by reading aloud an anacreontic, adding to its beauties by the modulation of my voice, and keenly enjoying her pleasure at finding her work so fair. When I improved a line by some trifling change she noticed it, for she followed me with her eyes; but far from being humiliated, she was pleased with my corrections. The picture was still hers, she thought, though with my skilled brush I brought out the lights and darkened the shadows, and she was charmed to see that my pleasure was as great or greater than hers. The reading continued for two hours. It was a spiritual and pure, but a most intensely voluptuous, enjoyment. Happy, and thrice happy, if we had gone no farther; but love is a traitor who laughs at us when we think to play with him without falling into his nets. Shall a man touch hot coals and escape the burning?

The countess interrupted us, and begged us to join the company. Clementine hastened to put everything back, and thanked me for the happiness I had given her. The pleasure she felt shewed itself in her blushes, and when she came into the drawing-room she was asked if she had been fighting, which made her blush still more.

The faro-table was ready, but before sitting down I told Clairmont to get me four good horses for the following day. I wanted to go to Lodi and back by dinnertime.

Everybody played as before, the abbe excepted, and he, to my huge delight, did not put in an appearance at all, but his place was supplied by a canon, who punted a ducat at a time and had a pile of ducats before him. This made me increase my bank, and when the game was over, I was glad to see that everybody had won except the canon, but his losses had not spoilt his temper.

Next day I started for Lodi at day-break without telling anybody where I was going, and bought all the books I judged necessary for Clementine, who only knew Italian. I bought numerous translation, which I was surprised to find at Lodi, which hitherto had been only famous in my mind for its cheese, usually called Parmesan. This cheese is made at Lodi and not at Parma, and I did not fail to make an entry to that effect under the article "Parmesan" in my "Dictionary of Cheeses," a work which I was obliged to abandon as beyond my powers, as Rousseau was obliged to abandon his "Dictionary of Botany." This great but eccentric individual was then known under the pseudonym of Renaud, the Botanist. 'Quisque histrioniam exercet'. But Rousseau, great man though he was, was totally deficient in humour.

I conceived the idea of giving a banquet at Lodi the day after next, and a project of this kind not calling for much deliberation I went forthwith to the best hotel to make the necessary arrangements. I ordered a choice dinner for twelve, paid the earnest money, and made the host promise that everything should be of the best.

When I got back to St. Angelo, I had a sackfull of books carried into Clementine's room. She was petrified. There were more than one hundred volumes, poets, historians, geographers, philosophers, scientists — nothing was forgotten. I had also selected some good novels, translated from the Spanish, English, and French, for we have no good novels in Italian.

This admission does not prove by any means that Italian literature is surpassed by that of any other country. Italy has little to envy in other literatures, and has numerous masterpieces, which are unequalled the whole world over. Where will you find a worthy companion to the Orlando Furioso? There is none, and this great work is incapable of transalation. The finest and truest panegyric of Ariosto was written by Voltaire when he was sixty. If he had not made this apology for the rash judgement of his youthful days, he would not have enjoyed, in Italy at all events, that immortality which is so justly his due. Thirty-six years ago I told him as much, and he took me at my word. He was afraid, and he acted wisely.

If I have any readers, I ask their pardon for these digressions. They must remember that these Memoirs were written in my old age, and the old are always garrulous. The time will come to them also, and then they will understand that if the aged repeat themselves, it is because they live in a world of memories, without a present and without a future.

I will now return to my narrative, which I have kept steadily in view.

Clementine gazed from me to the books, and from the books to me. She wondered and admired, and could scarcely believe this treasure belonged to her. At last she collected herself, and said in a tone full of gratitude, —

“You have come to St. Angelo to make me happy.”

Such a saying makes a man into a god. He is sure that she who speaks thus will do all in her power to make a return for the happiness which she has been given.

There is something supremely lovely in the expression of gratefulness on the face of the being one loves. If you have not experienced the feelings I describe, dear reader, I pity you, and am forced to conclude that you must have been either awkward or miserly, and therefore unworthy of love.

Clementine ate scarcely anything at dinner, and afterwards retired to her room where I soon joined her. We amused ourselves by putting the books in order, and she sent for a carpenter to make a bookcase with a lock and key.

“It will be my pleasure to read these books,” said she, “when you have left us.”

In the evening she was lucky with the cards, and in delightful spirits. I asked them all to dine with me at Lodi, but as the dinner was for twelve the Countess Ambrose said she would be able to find the two guests who were wanted at Lodi, and the canon said he would take the lady friend with her two children.

The next day was one of happy quiet, and I spent it without leaving the castle, being engaged in instructing my Hebe on the nature of the sphere, and in preparing her for the beauties of Wolf. I presented her with my case of mathematical instruments, which seemed to her invaluable.

I burned with passion for this charming girl; but would I have done so in her taste for literature and science had not been backed up by her personal charms? I suspect not. I like a dish pleasing to the palate, but if it is not pleasing to the eye as well, I do not taste it but put down as bad. The surface is always the first to interest, close examination comes afterwards. The man who confines himself to superficial charms, is superficial himself, but with them all love begins, except that which rises in the realm of fancy, and this nearly always falls before the reality.

When I went to bed, still thinking of Clementine, I began to reflect seriously, and I was astonished to find that during all the hours we had spent together she had not caused the slightest sensual feeling to arise in me. Nevertheless, I could not assign the reason to fear, nor to shyness which is unknown to me, nor to false shame, nor to what is called a feeling of duty. It was certainly not virtue, for I do not carry virtue so far as that. Then what was it? I did not tire myself by pursuing the question. I felt quite sure that the Platonic stage must soon come to an end, and I was sorry, but my sorrow was virtue in extremis. The fine things we read together interested us so strongly that we did not think of love, nor of the pleasure we took in each other's company; but as the saying goes, the devil lost nothing by us. When intellect enters on the field, the heart has to yield; virtue triumphs, but the battle must not last for long. Our conquests made us too sure, but this feeling of security was a Colossus whose feet were of clay; we knew that we loved but were not sure that we were beloved. But when this became manifest the Colossus must fall to the ground.

This dangerous trust made me go to her room to tell her something about our journey to Lodi, the carriages were already waiting. She was still asleep, but my step on the floor made her awake with a start. I did not even think it necessary to apologize. She told me that Tasso's Aminta had interested her to such an extent that she had read it till she fell asleep.

"The Pastor Fido will please you still more."

"Is it more beautiful?"

"Not exactly."

"Then why do you say it will please me more?"

"Because it charms the heart. It appeals to our softest feelings, and seduces us — and we love seduction."

"It is a seducer, then?"

"No, not a seducer; but seductive, like you."

"That's a good distinction. I will read it this evening. Now I am going to dress."

She put on her clothes in seeming oblivion that I was a man, but without shewing any sights that could be called indecent. Nevertheless it struck me that if she had thought I was in love with her, she would have been more reserved, for as she put on her chemise, laced her corset, fastened her garters above her knee, and drew on her boots, I saw glimpses of beauty which affected me so strongly that I was obliged to go out before she was ready to quench the flames she had kindled in my senses.

I took the countess and Clementine in my carriage, and sat on the bracket seat holding the baby on my knee. My two fair companions laughed merrily, for I held the child as if to the manner born. When we had traversed half the distance the baby demanded nourishment, and the charming mother hastened to uncover a sphere over which my eyes roved with delight, not at all to her displeasure. The child left its mother's bosom satisfied, and at the sight of the liquor which flowed so abundantly I exclaimed, —

"It must not be lost, madam; allow me to sip nectar which will elevate me to the rank of the gods. Do not be afraid of my teeth." I had some teeth in those days.

The smiling countess made no opposition, and I proceeded to carry out my design, while the ladies laughed that magic laugh which not painter can portray. The divine Homer is the only poet who has succeeded in delineating it in those lines in which he describes Andromache with the young Astyanax in her arms, when Hector is leaving her to return to the battle.

I asked Clementine if she had the courage to grant me a similar favour.

"Certainly," said she, "if I had any milk."

"You have the source of the milk; I will see to the rest."

At this the girl's face suffused with such a violent blush that I was sorry I had spoken; however, I changed the conversation, and it soon passed away. Our spirits were so high that when the time came for us to get down at the inn at Lodi, we could scarcely believe it possible, so swiftly had the time gone by.

The countess sent a message to a lady friend of hers, begging her to dine with us, and to bring her sister; while I dispatched Clairmont to a stationer's, where he bought me a beautiful morocco case with lock and key, containing paper, pens, sealing-wax, ink-well, paper knife, seal, and in fact, everything necessary for writing. It was a present I meant to give Clementine before dinner. It was delightful to watch her surprise and pleasure, and to read gratitude so legibly written in her beautiful eyes. There is not a woman in the world who cannot be overcome by being made grateful. It is the best and surest way to get on, but it must be skilfully used. The countess's friend came and brought her sister, a girl who was dazzlingly beautiful. I was greatly struck with her, but just then Venus herself could not have dethroned Clementine from her place in my affections. After the friends had kissed each other, and expressed their joy at meeting, I was introduced, and in so complimentary a manner that I felt obliged to turn it off with a jest.

The dinner was sumptuous and delicious. At dessert two self-invited guests came in, the lady's husband and the sister's lover, but they were welcome, for it was a case of the more the merrier. After the meal, in accordance with the request of the company, I made a bank at faro, and after three hours' play I was delighted to find myself a loser to the extent of forty sequins. It was these little losses at the right time which gave me the reputation of being the finest gamester in Europe.

The lady's lover was named Vigi, and I asked him if he was descended from the author of the thirteenth book of the "AEneid." He said he was, and that in honour of his ancestor he had translated the poem into Italian verse. I expressed myself curious as to his version, and he promised to bring it me in two days' time. I complimented him on belonging to such a noble and ancient family; Maffeo Vigi flourished at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

We started in the evening, and less than two hours we got home. The moon which shone brightly upon us prevented me making any attempts on Clementine, who had put up her feet in order that she might be able to hold her little nephew with more ease. The pretty mother could not help thanking me warmly for the pleasure I had given them; I was a universal favourite with them all.

We did not feel inclined to eat any supper, and therefore retired to our apartments; and I accompanied Clementine, who told me that she was ashamed at not knowing anything about the "AEneid."

"Vigi will bring his translation of the thirteenth book, and I shall not know a word about it."

I comforted her by telling her that we would read the fine translation by Annibale Caro that very night. It was amongst her books, as also the version by Anguilara, Ovid's Metamorphoses, and Marchetti's Lucreece.

"But I wanted to read the Pastor Fido."

"We are in a hurry; we must read that another time."

"I will follow your advice in all things, my dear Iolas."

"That will make me happy, dearest Hebe."

We spent the night in reading that magnificent translation in Italian blank verse, but the reading was often interrupted by my pupil's laughter when we came to some rather ticklish passage. She was highly amused by the account of the chance which gave 'AEneas an opportunity of proving his love for Dido in a very inconvenient place, and still more, when Dido, complaining of the son of Priam's treachery, says, —

"I might still pardon you if, before abandoning me, you had left me a little AEneas to play about these halls."

Clementine had cause to be amused, for the reproach has something laughable in it; but how is it that one does not feel inclined to smile in reading the Latin— 'Si quis mihi parvulus aula luderet AEneas?'. The reason must be sought for in the grave and dignified nature of the Latin tongue.

We did not finish our reading till day-break.

"What a night!" exclaimed Clementine, with a sigh.

"It has been one of great pleasure to me, has it not to you?"

"I have enjoyed it because you have."

"And if you had been reading by yourself?"

"It would have still been a pleasure, but a much smaller one. I love your intellect to distraction, Clementine, but tell me, do you think it possible to love the intellect without loving that which contains it?"

"No, for without the body the spirit would vanish away."

"I conclude from that that I am deeply in love with you, and that I cannot pass six or seven hours in your company without longing to kiss you."

"Certainly, but we resist these desires because we have duties to perform, which would rise up against us if we left them undone."

"True again, but if your disposition at all resembles mine this constraint must be very painful to you."

"Perhaps I feel it as much as you do, but it is my belief that it is only hard to withstand temptation at first. By degrees one gets accustomed to loving without running any risk and without effort. Our senses, at first so sharp set, end by becoming blunted, and when this is the case we may spend hours and days in safety, untroubled by desire."

"I have my doubts as far as I am concerned, but we shall see. Good night, fair Hebe."

"Good night, my good Iolas, may you sleep well!"

"My sleep will be haunted by visions of you."

CHAPTER XXII

Our Excursion — Parting From Clementine — I Leave Milan With

Croce's Mistress My Arrival At Genoa

The ancients, whose fancy was so fertile in allegory, used to figure Innocence as playing with a serpent or with a sharp arrow. These old sages had made a deep study of the human heart; and whatever discoveries modern science may have made, the old symbols may still be profitably studied by those who wish to gain a deep insight into the working of man's mind.

I went to bed, and after having dismissed Clairmont I began to reflect on my relations with Clementine, who seemed to have been made to shine in a sphere from which, in spite of her high birth, her intelligence, and her rare beauty, her want of fortune kept her apart. I smiled to myself at her doctrines, which were as much as to say that the best way of curing appetite was to place a series of appetising dishes before a hungry man, forbidding him to touch them. Nevertheless I could but approve the words which she had uttered with such an air of innocence — that if one resists desires, there is no danger of one being humiliated by giving way to them.

This humiliation would arise from a feeling of duty, and she honoured me by supposing that I had as high principles as herself. But at the same time the motive of self-esteem was also present, and I determined not to do anything which would deprive me of her confidence.

As may be imagined, I did not awake till very late the next morning, and when I rang my bell Clementine came in, looking very pleased, and holding a copy of the Pastor Fido in her hand. She wished me good day, and said she had read the first act, and that she thought it very beautiful, and told me to get up that we might read the second together before dinner.

"May I rise in your presence?"

“Why not? A man has need of very little care to observe the laws of decency.”

“Then please give me that shirt.”

She proceeded to unfold it, and then put it over my head, smiling all the time.

“I will do the same for you at the first opportunity,” said I.

She blushed and answered, “It’s not nearly so far from you to me as it is from me to you.”

“Divine Hebe, that is beyond my understanding. You speak like the Cumaean sibyls, or as if you were rendering oracles at your temple in Corinth.”

“Had Hebe a temple at Corinth? Sardini never said so.”

“But Apollodorus says so. It was an asylum as well as a temple. But come back to the point, and pray do not elude it. What you said is opposed to all the laws of geometry. The distance from you to me ought to be precisely the same as from me to you.”

“Perhaps, then, I have said a stupid thing.”

“Not at all, Hebe, you have an idea which may be right or wrong, but I want to bring it out. Come, tell me.”

“Well, then, the two distances differ from each other with respect to the ascent and descent, or fall, if you like. Are not all bodies inclined to obey the laws of gravitation unless they are held back by a superior force?”

“Certainly.”

“And is it not the case that no bodies move in an upward direction unless they are impelled?”

“Quite true.”

“Then you must confess that since I am shorter than you I should have to ascend to attain you, and ascension is always an effort; while if you wish to attain me, you have only to let yourself go, which is no effort whatever. Thus it is no risk at all for you to let me put on your shirt, but it would be a great risk for me if I allowed you to do the same service for me. I might be overwhelmed by your too rapid descent on me. Are you persuaded?"

"Persuaded is not the word, fair Hebe. I am ravished in an ecstacy of admiration. Never was paradox so finely maintained. I might cavil and contest it, but I prefer to keep silence to admire and adore."

"Thank you, dear Iolas, but I want no favour. Tell me how you could disprove my argument?"

"I should attack it on the point of height. You know you would not let me change your chemise even if I were a dwarf."

"Ah, dear Iolas! we cannot deceive each other. Would that Heaven had destined me to be married to a man like you!"

"Alas! why am I not worthy of aspiring to such a position?"

I do not know where the conversation would have landed us, but just then the countess came to tell us that dinner was waiting, adding that she was glad to see we loved one another.

"Madly," said Clementine, "but we are discreet."

"If you are discreet, you cannot love madly."

"True, countess," said I, "for the madness of love and wisdom cannot dwell together. I should rather say we are reasonable, for the mind may be grave while the heart's gay."

We dined merrily together, then we played at cards, and in the evening we finished reading the Pastor Fido. When we were discussing the beauties of this delightful work Clementine asked me if the thirteenth book of the "AEneid" was fine.

"My dear countess, it is quite worthless; and I only praised it to flatter the descendant of the author. However, the same writer made a poem on the tricks of countryfolk, which is by no means devoid of merit. But you are sleepy, and I am preventing you from undressing."

"Not at all."

She took off her clothes in a moment with the greatest coolness, and did not indulge my licentious gaze in the least. She got into bed, and I sat beside her; whereupon she sat up again, and her sister turned her back upon us. The Pastor Fido was on her night-table, and opening the book I proceeded to read the passage where Mirtillo describes the sweetness of the kiss Amaryllis had given him, attuning my voice to the sentiment of the lines. Clementine seemed as much affected as I was, and I fastened my lips on hers. What happiness! She drew in the balm of my lips with delight, and appeared to be free from alarm, so I was about to clasp her in my arms when she pushed me away with the utmost gentleness, begging me to spare her.

This was modesty at bay. I begged her pardon, and taking her hand breathed out upon it all the ecstasy of my lips.

“You are trembling,” said she, in a voice that did but increase the amorous tumult of my heart.

“Yes, dearest countess, and I assure you I tremble for fear of you. Good night, I am going; and my prayer must be that I may love you less.”

“Why so? To love less is to begin to hate. Do as I do, and pray that your love may grow and likewise the strength to resist it.”

I went to bed ill pleased with myself. I did not know whether I had gone too far or not far enough; but what did it matter? One thing was certain, I was sorry for what I had done, and that was always a thought which pained me.

In Clementine I saw a woman worthy of the deepest love and the greatest respect, and I knew not how I could cease to love her, nor yet how I could continue loving her without the reward which every faithful lover hopes to win.

“If she loves me,” I said to myself, “she cannot refuse me, but it is my part to beg and pray, and even to push her to an extremity, that she may find an excuse for her defeat. A lover’s duty is to oblige the woman he loves to surrender at discretion, and love always absolves him for so doing.”

According to this argument, which I coloured to suit my passions, Clementine could not refuse me unless she did not love me, and I determined to put her to the proof. I was strengthened in this resolve by the wish to free myself from the state of excitement I was in, and I was sure that if she continued obdurate I should soon get cured. But at the same time

I shuddered at the thought; the idea, of my no longer loving Clementine seemed to me an impossibility and a cruelty.

After a troubled night I rose early and went to wish her good morning. She was still asleep, but her sister Eleanore was dressing.

“My sister,” said she, “read till three o’clock this morning. Now that she has so many books, she is getting quite mad over them. Let us play a trick on her; get into the bed beside her; it will be amusing to see her surprise when she wakes up.”

“But do you think she will take it as a joke?”

“She won’t be able to help laughing; besides, you are dressed.”

The opportunity was too tempting, and taking off my dressing-gown, I gently crept into the bed, and Eleanore covered me up to my neck. She laughed, but my heart was beating rapidly. I could not give the affair the appearance of a joke, and I hoped Clementine would be some time before she awoke that I might have time to compose myself.

I had been in this position for about five minutes, when Clementine, half asleep and half awake, turned over, and stretching out her arm, gave me a hasty kiss, thinking I was her sister. She then fell asleep again in the same position. I should have stayed still long enough, for her warm breath played on my face, and gave me a foretaste of ambrosia; but Eleanore could restrain herself no longer, and, bursting into a peal of laughter, forced Clementine to open her eyes. Nevertheless, she did not discover that she held me in her arms till she saw her sister standing laughing beside the bed.

“This is a fine trick,” said she, “you are two charmers indeed!”

This quiet reception gave me back my self-composure, and I was able to play my part properly.

“You see,” said I, “I have had a kiss from my sweet Hebe.”

“I thought I was giving it to my sister. ’Tis the kiss that Amaryllis gave to Mistillo.”

“It comes to the same thing. The kiss has produced its effects, and Iolas is young again.”

"Dear Eleanore, you have gone too far, for we love each other, and I was dreaming of him."

"No, no," said her sister, "Iolas is dressed. Look!"

So saying, the little wanton with a swift movement uncovered me, but at the same time she uncovered her sister, and Clementine with a little scream veiled the charms which my eyes had devoured for a moment. I had seen all, but as one sees lightning. I had seen the cornice and the frieze of the altar of love.

Eleanore then went out, and I remained gazing at the treasure I desired but did not dare to seize. At last I broke the silence.

"Dearest Hebe," said I, "you are certainly fairer than the cupbearer of the gods. I have just seen what must have been seen when Hebe was falling, and if I had been Jupiter I should have changed my mind."

"Sardini told me that Jupiter drove Hebe away, and now I ought to drive Jupiter away out of revenge."

"Yes; but, my angel, I am Iolas, and not Jupiter. I adore you, and I seek to quench the desires which torture me."

"This is a trick between you and Eleanore."

"My dearest, it was all pure chance. I thought I should find you dressed, and I went in to wish you good day. You were asleep and your sister was dressing. I gazed at you, and Eleanore suggested that I should lie down beside you to enjoy your astonishment when you awoke. I ought to be grateful to her for a pleasure which has turned out so pleasantly. But the beauties she discovered to me surpass all the ideas I had formed on the subject. My charming Hebe will not refuse to pardon me."

"No, since all is the effect of chance. But it is curious that when one loves passionately one always feels inquisitive concerning the person of the beloved object."

"It is a very natural feeling, dearest. Love itself is a kind of curiosity, if it be lawful to put curiosity in the rank of the passions; but you have not that feeling about me?"

"No, for fear you might disappoint me, for I love you, and I want everything to speak in your favour."

"I know you might be disappointed, and consequently I must do everything in my power to preserve your good opinion."

"Then you are satisfied with me?"

"Surely. I am a good architect, and I think you are grandly built."

"Stay, Iolas, do not touch me; it is enough that you have seen me."

"Alas! it is by touching that one rectifies the mistakes of the eyes; one judges thus of smoothness and solidity. Let me kiss these two fair sources of life. I prefer them to the hundred breasts of Cybele, and I am not jealous of Athys."

"You are wrong there; Sardini told me that it was Diana of Ephesus who had the hundred breasts."

How could I help laughing to hear mythology issuing from Clementine's mouth at such a moment! Could any lover foresee such an incident?

I pressed with my hand her alabaster breast, and yet the desire of knowledge subdued love in the heart of Clementine. But far from mistaking her condition I thought it a good omen. I told her that she was perfectly right, and that I was wrong, and a feeling of literary vanity prevented her opposing my pressing with my lips a rosy bud, which stood out in relief against the alabaster sphere.

"You apply your lips in vain, my dear Iolas, the land is barren. But what are you swallowing?"

"The quintessence of a kiss."

"I think you must have swallowed something of me, since you have given me a pleasurable sensation I have never before experienced."

"Dear Hebe, you make me happy."

"I am glad to hear it, but I think the kiss on the lips is much better."

"Certainly, because the pleasure is reciprocal, and consequently greater."

"You teach by precept and example too. Cruel teacher! Enough, this pleasure is too sweet. Love must be looking at us and laughing."

“Why should we not let him enjoy a victory which would make us both happier?”

“Because such happiness is not built on a sure foundation. No, no! put your arms down. If we can kill each other with kisses, let us kiss on; but let us use no other arms.”

After our lips had clung to each other cruelly but sweetly, she paused, and gazing at me with eyes full of passion she begged me to leave her alone.

The situation in which I found myself is impossible to describe. I deplored the prejudice which had constrained me, and I wept with rage. I cooled myself by making a toilette which was extremely necessary, and returned to her room.

She was writing.

“I am delighted to see you back,” said she, “I am full of the poetic frenzy and propose to tell the story of the victory we have gained in verse.”

“A sad victory, abhorred by love, hateful to nature.”

“That will do nicely. Will each write a poem; I to celebrate the victory and you to deplore it. But you look sad.”

“I am in pain; but as the masculine anatomy is unknown to you, I cannot explain matters.”

Clementine did not reply, but I could see that she was affected. I suffered a dull pain in that part which prejudice had made me hold a prisoner while love and nature bade me give it perfect freedom. Sleep was the only thing which would restore the balance of my constitution.

We went down to dinner, but I could not eat. I could not attend to the reading of the translation which M. Vigi had brought with him, and I even forgot to compliment him upon it. I begged the count to hold the bank for me, and asked the company to allow me to lie down; nobody could tell what was the matter with me, though Clementine might have her suspicions.

At supper-time Clementine, accompanied by a servant, brought me a delicate cold collation, and told me that the bank had won. It was the first time it had done so, for I had always taken care to play a losing game. I made a good supper, but remained still melancholy and silent. When I had finished Clementine bade me good night, saying that she was going to write her poem.

I, too, was in the vein: I finished my poem, and made a fair copy of it before I went to bed. In the morning Clementine came to see me, and gave me her piece, which I read with pleasure; though I suspect that the delight my praises gave was equal to mine.

Then came the turn of my composition, and before long I noticed that the picture of my sufferings was making a profound impression on her. Big tears rolled down her cheeks, and from her eyes shot forth tender glances. When I had finished, I had the happiness of hearing her say that if she had known that part of physiology better, she would not have behaved so.

We took a cup of chocolate together, and I then begged her to lie down beside me in bed without undressing, and to treat me as I had treated her the day before, that she might have some experience of the martyrdom I had sung in my verses. She smiled and agreed, on the condition that I should do nothing to her.

It was a cruel condition, but it was the beginning of victory, and I had to submit. I had no reason to repent of my submission, for I enjoyed the despotism she exercised on me, and the pain she must be in that I did nothing to her, whilst I would not let her see the charms which she held in her hands. In vain I excited her to satisfy herself, to refuse her desires nothing, but she persisted in maintaining that she did not wish to go any further.

"Your enjoyment cannot be so great as mine," said I. But her subtle wit never left her without a reply.

"Then," said she, "you have no right to ask me to pity you."

The test, however, was too sharp for her. She left me in a state of great excitement, giving me a kiss which took all doubts away, and saying that in love we must be all or nothing.

We spent the day in reading, eating, and walking, and in converse grave and gay. I could not see, however, that my suit had progressed, as far as the events of the morning seemed to indicate. She wanted to reverse the medal of Aristippus, who said, in speaking of Lois, "I possess her, but she does not possess me." She wanted to be my mistress, without my being her master. I ventured to bewail my fate a little, but that did not seem to advance my cause.

Three or four days after, I asked Clementine in the presence of her sister to let me lie in bed beside her. This is the test proposed to a nun, a widow, a girl afraid of consequences, and it nearly always succeeds. I took a packet of fine English letters and explained their use to her. She took them examined them attentively, and after a burst of laughter declared them to be scandalous, disgusting, horrible in which anathema her sister joined. In vain I tried to plead their utility in defence, but Clementine maintained that there was no trusting them, and pushed her finger into one so strongly that it burst with a loud crack. I had to give way, and put my specialties in my pocket, and her final declaration was that such things made her shudder.

I wished them good night, and retired in some confusion. I pondered over Clementine's strange resistance, which could only mean that I had not inspired her with sufficient love. I resolved on overcoming her by an almost infallible method. I would procure her pleasures that were new to her without sparing expense. I could think of nothing better than to take the whole family to Milan, and to give them a sumptuous banquet at my pastry-cook's. "I will take them there," I said to myself, "without saying a word about our destination till we are on our way, for if I were to name Milan the count might feel bound to tell his Spanish countess, that she might have an opportunity of making the acquaintance of her sisters-in-law, and this would vex me to the last degree." The party would be a great treat to the sisters, who had never been in Milan, and I resolved to make the expedition as splendid as I possibly could.

When I awoke the next morning I wrote to Zenobia to buy three dresses of the finest Lyons silk for three young ladies of rank. I sent the necessary measurements, and instructions as to the trimming. The Countess Ambrose's dress was to be white satin with a rich border of Valenciennes lace. I also wrote to M. Greppi, asking him to pay for Zenobia's purchases. I told her to take the three dresses to my private lodgings, and lay them upon the bed, and give the landlord a note I enclosed. This note ordered him to provide a banquet for eight persons, without sparing expense. On the day and hour appointed, Zengbia was to be at the pastrycook's ready to wait on the three ladies. I sent the letter by Clairmont, who returned before dinner, bearing a note from Zenobia assuring me that all my wishes should be carried out. After dessert I broached my plan to the countess, telling her that I wanted to give a party like the one at Lodi, but on two conditions: the first, that no one was to know our destination till we were in the carriages, and the second, that after dinner we should return to St. Angelo.

Out of politeness the countess looked at her husband before accepting the invitation, but he cried out, without ceremony, that he was ready to go if I took the whole family.

“Very good,” said I, “we will start at eight o’clock to-morrow, and nobody need be at any trouble, the carriages are ordered.”

I felt obliged to include the canon, because he was a great courtier of the countess, and also because he lost money to me every day, and thus it was he, in fact, who was going to pay for the expedition. That evening he lost three hundred sequins, and was obliged to ask me to give him three day’s grace to pay the money. I replied by assuring him that all I had was at his service.

When the company broke up I offered my hand to Hebe, and escorted her and her sister to their room. We had begun to read Fontenelle’s “Plurality of Worlds,” and I had thought we should finish it that night; but Clementine said that as she had to get up early, she would want to get to sleep early also.

“You are right, dearest Hebe, do you go to bed, and I will read to you.”

She made no objection, so I took the Ariosto, and began to read the history of the Spanish princess who fell in love with Bradamante. I thought that by the time I had finished Clementine would be ardent, but I was mistaken; both she and her sister seemed pensive.

“What is the matter with you, dearest? Has Ricciardetto displeased you?”

“Not at all, he has pleased me, and in the princess’s place I should have done the same; but we shall not sleep all night, and it is your fault.”

“What have I done, pray?”

“Nothing, but you can make us happy, and give us a great proof of your friendship.”

"Speak, then. What is it you want of me? I would do anything to please you. My life is yours. You shall sleep soundly."

"Well, then, tell us where we are going to-morrow."

"Have I not already said that I would tell you just as we are going?"

"Yes, but that won't do. We want to know now, and if you won't tell us we shan't sleep, all night, and we shall look frightful to-morrow."

"I should be so sorry, but I don't think that you could look frightful."

"You don't think we can keep a secret. It is nothing very important, is it?"

"No, it is not very important, but all the same it is a secret."

"It would be dreadful if you refused me."

"Dearest Hebe! how can I refuse you anything? I confess freely that I have been wrong in keeping you waiting so long. Here is my secret: you are to dine with me to-morrow."

"With you? Where?"

"Milan."

In their immoderate joy they got out of bed, and without caring for their state of undress, threw their arms round my neck, covered me with kisses, clasped me to their breasts, and finally sat down on my knees.

"We have never seen Milan," they cried, "and it has been the dream of our lives to see that splendid town. How often I have been put to the blush when I have been forced to confess that I have never been to Milan."

"It makes me very happy," said Hebe, "but my happiness is troubled by the idea that we shall see nothing of the town, for we shall have to return after dinner. It is cruel! Are we to go fifteen miles to Milan only to dine and come back again? At least we must see our sister-in-law."

"I have foreseen all your objections, and that was the reason I made a mystery of it, but it has been arranged. You don't like it? Speak and tell me your pleasure."

"Of course we like it, dear Iolas. The party will be charming, and perhaps, if we knew all, the very conditions are all for the best."

“It may be so, but I may not tell you any more now.”

“And we will not press you.”

In an ecstasy of joy she began to embrace me again, and Eleanore said that she would go to sleep so as to be more on the alert for the morrow. This was the best thing she could have done. I knew the fortunate hour was at hand, and exciting Clementine by my fiery kisses, and drawing nearer and nearer, at last I was in full possession of the temple I had so long desired to attain. Hebe’s pleasure and delight kept her silent; she shared my ecstasies, and mingled her happy tears with mine.

I spent two hours in this manner, and then went to bed, impatient to renew the combat on the following day more at my ease and with greater comfort.

At eight o’clock we were all assembled round the breakfast-table, but in spite of my high spirits I could not make the rest of the company share them. All were silent and pensive; curiosity shewed itself on every face. Clementine and her sister pretended to partake the general feeling, and were silent like the rest while I looked on and enjoyed their expectancy.

Clairmont, who had fulfilled my instructions to the letter, came in and told us that the carriages were at the door. I asked my guests to follow me, and they did so in silence. I put the countess and Clementine in my carriage, the latter holding the baby on her lap, her sister and the three gentlemen being seated in the other carriage. I called out, with a laugh,

“Drive to Milan.”

“Milan! Milan!” they exclaimed with one voice. “Capital! capital!”

Clairmont galloped in front of us and went off. Clementine pretended to be astonished, but her sister looked as if she had known something of our destination before. All care, however, had disappeared, and the highest spirits prevailed. We stopped at a village half-way between St. Angelo and Milan to blow the horses, and everybody got down.

“What will my wife say?” asked the count.

“Nothing, for she will not know anything about it, and if she does I am the only guilty party. You are to dine with me in a suite of rooms which I have occupied incognito since I have been at Milan; for you will understand that

I could not have my wants attended to at your house, where the place is already taken."

"And how about Zenobia?"

"Zenobia was a lucky chance, and is a very nice girl, but she would not suffice for my daily fare."

"You are a lucky fellow!"

"I try to make myself comfortable."

"My dear husband," said the Countess Ambrose, "you proposed a visit to Milan two years ago, and the chevalier proposed it a few hours ago, and now we are on our way."

"Yes, sweetheart, but my idea was that we should spend a month there."

"If you want to do that," said I, "I will see to everything."

"Thank you, my dear sir; you are really a wonderful man."

"You do me too much honour, count, there is nothing wonderful about me, except that I execute easily an easy task."

"Yes; but you will confess that a thing may be difficult from the way in which we regard it, or from the position in which we find ourselves."

"You are quite right."

When we were again on our way the countess said, —

"You must confess, sir, that you are a very fortunate man."

"I do not deny it, my dear countess, but my happiness is due to the company I find myself in; if you were to expel me from yours, I should be miserable."

"You are not the kind of man to be expelled from any society."

"That is a very kindly compliment."

"Say, rather, a very true one."

"I am happy to hear you say so, but it would be both foolish and presumptuous for me to say so myself."

Thus we made merry on our way, above all at the expense of the canon, who had been begging the countess to intercede with me to give him leave to absent himself half an hour.

"I want to call on a lady," said he; "I should lose her favour forever if she came to know that I had been in Milan without paying her a visit."

"You must submit to the conditions," replied the amiable countess, "so don't count on my intercession."

We got to Milan exactly at noon, and stepped out at the pastry-cook's door. The landlady begged the countess to confide her child to her care, and shewed her a bosom which proved her fruitfulness. This offer was made at the foot of the stairs, and the countess accepted it with charming grace and dignity. It was a delightful episode, which chance had willed should adorn the entertainment I had invented. Everybody seemed happy, but I was the happiest of all. Happiness is purely a creature of the imagination. If you wish to be happy fancy that you are so, though I confess that circumstances favourable to this state are often beyond our control. On the other hand, unfavourable circumstances are mostly the result of our own mistakes.

The countess took my arm, and we led the way into my room which I found exquisitely neat and clean. As I had expected, Zenobia was there, but I was surprised to see Croce's mistress, looking very pretty; however, I pretended not to know her. She was well dressed, and her face, free from the sadness it had borne before, was so seductive in its beauty, that I felt vexed at her appearance at that particular moment.

"Here are two pretty girls," said the countess. "Who are you, pray?"

"We are the chevalier's humble servants," said Zenobia, "and we are here only to wait on you."

Zenobia had taken it on herself to bring her lodger, who began to speak Italian, and looked at me in doubt, fearing that I was displeased at her presence. I had to reassure her by saying I was very glad she had come with Zenobia. These words were as balm to her heart; she smiled again, and became more beautiful than ever. I felt certain that she would not remain unhappy long; it was impossible to behold her without one's interest being excited in her favour. A bill signed by the Graces can never be protested; anyone with eyes and a heart honours it at sight.

My humble servants took the ladies' cloaks and followed them into the bedroom, where the three dresses were laid out on a table. I only knew the white satin and lace, for that was the only one I had designed. The countess, who walked before her sisters, was the first to notice it, and exclaimed, —

"What a lovely dress! To whom does it belong, M. de Seingalt? You ought to know."

"Certainly. It belongs to your husband who can do what he likes with it, and I hope, if he gives it you, you will take it. Take it, count; it is yours; and if you refuse I will positively kill myself."

"We love you too well to drive you to an act of despair. The idea is worthy of your nobility of heart. I take your beautiful present with one hand, and with the other I deliver it to her to whom it really belongs."

"What, dear husband! is this beautiful dress really mine? Whom am I to thank? I thank you both, and I must put it on for dinner."

The two others were not made of such rich materials, but they were more showy, and I was delighted to see Clementine's longing gaze fixed upon the one I had intended for her. Eleanore in her turn admired the dress that had been made for her. The first was in shot satin, and ornamented with lovely wreaths of flowers; the second was sky-blue satin, with a thousand flowers scattered all over it. Zenobia took upon herself to say that the first was for Clementine.

"How do you know?"

"It is the longer, and you are taller than your sister."

"That is true. It is really mine, then?" said she, turning to me.

"If I may hope that you will deign to accept it."

"Surely, dear Iolas, and I will put it on directly."

Eleanore maintained that her dress was the prettier, and said she was dying to put it on.

"Very good, very good!" I exclaimed, in high glee, "we will leave you to dress, and here are your maids."

I went out with the two brothers and the canon, and I remarked that they looked quite confused. No doubt they were pondering the prodigality of gamesters; light come, light go. I did not interrupt their thoughts, for I loved to astonish people. I confess it was a feeling of vanity which raised me above my fellow-men-at least, in my own eyes, but that was enough for me. I should have despised anyone who told me that I was laughed at, but I daresay it was only the truth.

I was in the highest spirits, and they soon proved infectious. I embraced Count Ambrose affectionately, begging his pardon for having presumed to make the family a few small presents, and I thanked his brother for having introduced me to them. “You have all given me such a warm welcome,” I added, “that I felt obliged to give you some small proof of my gratitude.”

The fair countesses soon appeared, bedecked with smiles and their gay attire.

“You must have contrived to take our measures,” said they; “but we cannot imagine how you did it.”

“The funniest thing is,” said the eldest, “that you have had my dress made so that it can be let out when necessary without destroying the shape. But what a beautiful piece of trimming! It is worth four times as much as the dress itself.”

Clementine could not keep away from the looking-glass. She fancied that in the colours of her dress, rose and green, I had indicated the characteristics of the youthful Hebe. Eleanore still maintained that her dress was the prettiest of all.

I was delighted with the pleasure of my fair guests, and we sat down to table with excellent appetites. The dinner was extremely choice; but the finest dish of all was a dish of oysters, which the landlord had dressed a la maitre d’hotel. We enjoyed them immensely. We finished off three hundred of them, for the ladies relished them extremely, and the canon seemed to have an insatiable appetite; and we washed down the dishes with numerous bottles of champagne. We stayed at table for three hours, drinking, singing, and jesting, while my humble servants, whose beauty almost rivalled that of my guests, waited upon us.

Towards the end of the meal the pastry-cook's wife came in with the countess's baby on her breast. This was a dramatic stroke. The mother burst into a cry of joy, and the woman seemed quite proud of having suckled the scion of so illustrious a house for nearly four hours. It is well known that women, even more than men, are wholly under the sway of the imagination. Who can say that this woman, simple and honest like the majority of the lower classes, did not think that her own offspring would be ennobled by being suckled at the breast which had nourished a young count? Such an idea is, no doubt, foolish, but that is the very reason why it is dear to the hearts of the people.

We spent another hour in taking coffee and punch, and then the ladies went to change their clothes again. Zenobia took care that their new ones should be carefully packed in cardboard boxes and placed under the seat of my carriage.

Croce's abandoned mistress found an opportunity of telling me that she was very happy with Zenobia. She asked me when we were to go.

"You will be at Marseilles," said I, pressing her hand, "a fortnight after Easter at latest."

Zenobia had told me that the girl had an excellent heart, behaved very discreetly, and that she should be very sorry to see her go. I gave Zenobia twelve sequins for the trouble she had taken.

I was satisfied with everything and paid the worthy pastry-cook's bill. I noticed we had emptied no less than twenty bottles of champagne, though it is true that we drank very little of any other wine, as the ladies preferred it.

I loved and was beloved, my health was good, I had plenty of money, which I spent freely; in fine, I was happy. I loved to say so in defiance of those sour moralists who pretend that there is no true happiness on this earth. It is the expression on this earth which makes me laugh; as if it were possible to go anywhere else in search of happiness. 'Mors ultima linea rerum est'. Yes, death is the end of all, for after death man has no senses; but I do not say that the soul shares the fate of the body. No one should dogmatise on uncertainties, and after death everything is doubtful.

It was seven o'clock when we began our journey home, which we reached at midnight. The journey was so pleasant that it seemed to us but short. The champagne, the punch, and the pleasure, had warmed my two fair companions, and by favour of the darkness I was able to amuse myself with them, though I loved Clementine too well to carry matters very far with her sister.

When we alighted we wished each other good night, and everybody retired to his or her room, myself excepted, for I spent several happy hours with Clementine, which I can never forget.

“Do you think,” said she, “that I shall be happy when you have left me all alone?”

“Dearest Hebe, both of us will be unhappy for the first few days, but then philosophy will step in and soften the bitterness of parting without lessening our love.”

“Soften the bitterness! I do not think any philosophy can work such a miracle. I know that you, dear sophist, will soon console yourself with other girls. Don’t think me jealous; I should abhor myself if I thought I was capable of so vile a passion, but I should despise myself if I was capable of seeking consolation in your way.”

“I shall be in despair if you entertain such ideas of me.”

“They are natural, however.”

“Possibly. What you call ‘other girls’ can never expel your image from my breast. The chief of them is the wife of a tailor, and the other is a respectable young woman, whom I am going to take back to Marseilles, whence she has been decoyed by her wretched seducer.

“From henceforth to death, you and you alone will reign in my breast; and if, led astray by my senses, I ever press another in these arms, I shall soon be punished for an act of infidelity in which my mind will have no share.”

“I at all events will never need to repent in that fashion. But I cannot understand how, with your love for me, and holding me in your arms, you can even contemplate the possibility of becoming unfaithful to me.”

“I don’t contemplate it, dearest, I merely take it as an hypothesis.”

“I don’t see much difference.”

What reply could I make? There was reason in what Clementine said, though she was deceived, but her mistakes were due to her love. My love was so ardent as to be blind to possible — nay, certain, infidelities. The only circumstance which made me more correct in my estimate of the future than she, was that this was by no means my first love affair. But if my readers have been in the same position, as I suppose mast of them have, they will understand how difficult it is to answer such arguments coming from a woman one wishes to render happy. The keenest wit has to remain silent and to take refuge in kisses.

"Would you like to take me away with you?" said she, "I am ready to follow you, and it would make me happy. If you love me, you ought to be enchanted for your own sake. Let us make each other happy, dearest."

"I could not dishonour your family."

"Do you not think me worthy of becoming your wife?"

"You are worthy of a crown, and it is I who am all unworthy of possessing such a wife. You must know that I have nothing in the world except my fortune, and that may leave me to-morrow. By myself I do not dread the reverses of fortune, but I should be wretched if, after linking your fate with mine, you were forced to undergo any privation."

"I think — I know not why — that you can never be unfortunate, and that you cannot be happy without me. Your love is not so ardent as mine; you have not so great a faith."

"My angel, if my fate is weaker than yours, that is the result of cruel experience which makes me tremble for the future. Affrighted love loses its strength but gains reason."

"Cruel reason! Must we, then, prepare to part?"

"We must indeed, dearest; it is a hard necessity, but my heart will still be thine. I shall go away your fervent adorer, and if fortune favours me in England you will see me again next year. I will buy an estate wherever you like, and it shall be yours on your wedding day, our children and literature will be our delights."

"What a happy prospect! — a golden vision indeed! I would that I might fall asleep dreaming thus, and wake not till that blessed day, or wake only to die if it is not to be. But what shall I do if you have left me with child?”

“Divine Hebe, you need not fear. I have managed that.”

“Managed? I did not think of that, but I see what you mean, and I am very much obliged to you. Alas perhaps after all it would have been better if you had not taken any precautions, for surely you are not born for my misfortune, and you could never have abandoned the mother and the child.”

“You are right, sweetheart, and if before two months have elapsed you find any signs of pregnancy in spite of my precautions, you have only to write to me, and whatever my fortunes may be, I will give you my hand and legitimise our offspring. You would certainly be marrying beneath your station, but you would not be the less happy for that, would you?”

“No, no! to bear your name, and to win your hand would be the crowning of all my hopes. I should never repent of giving myself wholly to you.”

“You make me happy.”

“All of us love you, all say that you are happy, and that you deserve your happiness. What praise is this! You cannot tell how my heart beats when I hear you lauded when you are away. When they say I love you, I answer that I adore you, and you know that I do not lie.”

It was with such dialogues that we passed away the interval between our amorous transports on the last five or six nights of my stay. Her sister slept, or pretended to sleep. When I left Clementine I went to bed and did not rise till late, and then I spent the whole day with her either in private or with the family. It was a happy time. How could I, as free as the air, a perfect master of my movements, of my own free will put my happiness away from me? I cannot understand it now.

My luck had made me win all the worthy canon’s money, which in turn I passed on to the family at the castle. Clementine alone would not profit by my inattentive play, but the last two days I insisted on taking her into partnership, and as the canon’s bad luck still continued she profited to the extent of a hundred louis. The worthy monk lost a thousand sequins, of which seven hundred remained in the family. This was paying well for the hospitality I had received, and as it was at the expense of the monk, though a worthy one, the merit was all the greater.

The last night, which I spent entirely with the countess, was very sad; we must have died of grief if we had not taken refuge in the transports of love. Never was night better spent. Tears of grief and tears of love followed one another in rapid succession, and nine times did I offer up sacrifice on the altar of the god, who gave me fresh strength to replace that which was exhausted. The sanctuary was full of blood and tears, but the desires of the priest and victim still cried for more. We had at last to make an effort and part. Eleanore had seized the opportunity of our sleeping for a few moments, and had softly risen and left us alone. We felt grateful to her, and agreed that she must either be very insensitive or have suffered torments in listening to our voluptuous combats. I left Clementine to her ablutions, of which she stood in great need, while I went to my room to make my toilette.

When we appeared at the breakfast, table we looked as if we had been on the rack, and Clementine's eyes betrayed her feelings, but our grief was respected. I could not be gay in my usual manner, but no one asked me the reason. I promised to write to them, and come and see them again the following year. I did write to them, but I left off doing so at London, because the misfortunes I experienced there made me lose all hope of seeing them again. I never did see any of them again, but I have never forgotten Clementine.

Six years later, when I came back from Spain, I heard to my great delight that she was living happily with Count N —— , whom she had married three years after my departure. She had two sons, the younger, who must now be twenty-seven, is in the Austrian army. How delighted I should be to see him! When I heard of Clementine's happiness, it was, as I have said, on my return from Spain, and my fortunes were at a low ebb. I went to see what I could do at Leghorn, and as I went through Lombardy I passed four miles from the estate where she and her husband resided, but I had not the courage to go and see her; perhaps I was right. But I must return to the thread of my story.

I felt grateful to Eleanore for her kindness to us, and I had resolved to leave her some memorial of me. I took her apart for a moment, and drawing a fine cameo, representing the god of Silence, off my finger, I placed it on hers, and then rejoined the company, without giving her an opportunity to thank me.

The carriage was ready to take me away, and everyone was waiting to see me off, but my eyes filled with tears. I sought for Clementine in vain; she had vanished. I pretended to have forgotten something in my room, and going to my Hebe's chamber I found her in a terrible state, choking with sobs. I pressed her to my breast, and mingled my tears with hers; and then laying her gently in her bed, and snatching a last kiss from her trembling lips, I tore myself away from a place full of such sweet and agonizing memories.

I thanked and embraced everyone, the good canon amongst others, and whispering to Eleanore to see to her sister I jumped into the carriage beside the count. We remained perfectly silent, and slept nearly the whole of the way. We found the Marquis Triulzi and the countess together, and the former immediately sent for a dinner for four. I was not much astonished to find that the countess had found out about our being at Milan, and at first she seemed inclined to let us feel the weight of her anger; but the count, always fertile in expedients, told her that it was delicacy on my part not to tell her, as I was afraid she would be put out with such an incursion of visitors.

At dinner I said that I should soon be leaving for Genoa, and for my sorrow the marquis gave me a letter of introduction to the notorious Signora Isola-Bella, while the countess gave me a letter to her kinsman the Bishop of Tortona.

My arrival at Milan was well-timed; Therese was on the point of going to Palermo, and I just succeeded in seeing her before she left. I talked to her of the wish of Cesarino to go to sea, and I did all in my power to make her yield to his inclinations.

“I am leaving him at Milan,” said she. “I know how he got this idea into his head, but I will never give my consent. I hope I shall find him wiser by the time I come back.”

She was mistaken. My son never altered his mind, and in fifteen years my readers will hear more of him.

I settled my accounts with Greppi and took two bills of exchange on Marseilles, and one of ten thousand francs on Genoa, where I did not think I would have to spend much money. In spite of my luck at play, I was poorer by a thousand sequins when I left Milan than when I came there; but my extravagant expenditure must be taken into account.

I spent all my afternoons with the fair Marchioness sometimes alone and sometimes with her cousin, but with my mind full of grief for Clementine she no longer charmed me as she had done three weeks ago.

I had no need to make any mystery about the young lady I was going to take with me, so I sent Clairmont for her small trunk, and at eight o'clock on the morning of my departure she waited on me at the count's. I kissed the hand of the woman who had attempted my life, and thanked her for her hospitality, to which I attributed the good reception I had had at Milan. I then thanked the count, who said once more that he should never cease to be grateful to me, and thus I left Milan on the 20th of March, 1763. I never re-visited that splendid capital.

The young lady, whom out of respect for her and her family I called Crosin, was charming. There was an air of nobility and high-bred reserve about her which bore witness to her excellent upbringing. As I sat next to her, I congratulated myself on my immunity from love of her, but the reader will guess that I was mistaken. I told Clairmont that she was to be called my niece, and to be treated with the utmost respect.

I had had no opportunity of conversing with her, so the first thing I did was to test her intelligence, and though I had not the slightest intention of paying my court to her, I felt that it would be well to inspire her with friendship and confidence as far as I was concerned.

The scar which my late amours had left was still bleeding, and I was glad to think that I should be able to restore the young Marseillaise to the paternal hearth without any painful partings or vain regrets. I enjoyed in advance my meritorious action, and I was quite vain to see my self-restraint come to such a pitch that I was able to live in close intimacy with a pretty girl without any other desire than that of rescuing her from the shame into which she might have fallen if she had traveled alone. She felt my kindness to her, and said, —

"I am sure M. de la Croix would not have abandoned me if he had not met you at Milan."

"You are very charitable, but I am unable to share in your good opinion. To my mind Croce has behaved in a rascally manner, to say the least of it, for in spite of your many charms he had no right to count on me in the matter. I will not say that he openly scorned you, since he might have acted from despair; but I am sure he must have ceased to love you, or he could never have abandoned you thus."

"I am sure of the contrary. He saw that he had no means of providing for me, and he had to choose between leaving me and killing himself."

"Not at all. He ought to have sold all he had and sent you back to Marseilles. Your journey to Genoa would not have cost much, and thence you could have gone to Marseilles by sea. Croce counted on my having been interested in your pretty face, and he was right; but you must see that he exposed you to a great risk. You must not be offended if I tell you the plain truth. If your face had not inspired me with a lively interest in you, I should have only felt ordinary compassion on reading your appeal, and this would not have been enough to force me to great sacrifices of time and trouble. But I have no business to be blaming Croce. You are hurt; I see you are still in love with him."

"I confess it, and I pity him. As for myself, I only pity my cruel destiny. I shall never see him again, but I shall never love anyone else, for my mind is made up. I shall go into a convent and expiate my sins. My father will pardon me, for he is a man of an excellent heart. I have been the victim of love; my will was not my own. The seductive influence of passion ravished my reason from me, and the only thing that I blame myself for is for not having fortified my mind against it. Otherwise I cannot see that I have sinned deeply, but I confess I have done wrong."

"You would have gone with Croce from Milan if he had asked you, even on foot."

"Of course; it would have been my duty; but he would not expose me to the misery that he saw before us."

"Nay, you were miserable enough already. I am sure that if you meet him at Marseilles you will go with him again."

"Never. I begin to get back my reason. I am free once more, and the day will come when I shall thank God for having forgotten him."

Her sincerity pleased me, and as I knew too well the power of love I pitied her from my heart. For two hours she told me the history of her unfortunate amour, and as she told it well I began to take a liking for her.

We reached Tortona in the evening, and with the intention of sleeping there I told Clairmont to get us a supper to my taste. While we were eating it I was astonished at my false niece's wit, and she made a good match for me at the meal, for she had an excellent appetite, and drank as well as any girl of her age. As we were leaving the table, she made a jest which was so much to the point that I burst out laughing, and her conquest was complete. I embraced her in the joy of my heart, and finding my kiss ardently returned, I asked her without any, circumlocution if she was willing that we should content ourselves with one bed.

At this invitation her face fell, and she replied, with an air of submission which kills desire, —

"Alas! you can do what you like. If liberty is a precious thing, it is most precious of all in love."

"There is no need for this disobedience. You have inspired me with a tender passion, but if you don't share my feelings my love for you shall be stifled at its birth. There are two beds here, as you see; you can choose which one you will sleep in."

"Then I will sleep in that one, but I shall be very sorry if you are not so kind to me in the future as you have been in the past."

"Don't be afraid. You shall not find me un worthy of your esteem. Good night; we shall be good friends."

Early the next morning I sent the countess's letter to the bishop, and an hour afterwards, as I was at breakfast, an old priest came to ask me and the lady with me to dine with my lord. The countess's letter did not say anything about a lady, but the prelate, who was a true Spaniard and very polite, felt that as I could not leave my real or false niece alone in the inn I should not have accepted the invitation if she had not been asked as well. Probably my lord had heard of the lady through his footmen, who in Italy are a sort of spies, who entertain their masters with the scandalous gossip of the place. A bishop wants something more than his breviary to amuse him now that the apostolic virtues have grown old-fashioned and out of date; in short, I accepted the invitation, charging the priest to present my respects to his lordship.

My niece was delightful, and treated me as if I had no right to feel any resentment for her having preferred her own bed to mine. I was pleased with her behaviour, for now that my head was cool I felt that she would have degraded herself if she had acted otherwise. My vanity was not even wounded, which is so often the case under similar circumstances. Self-love and prejudice prevent a woman yielding till she has been assidiously courted, whereas I had asked her to share my bed in an off-hand manner, as if it were a mere matter of form. However, I should not have done it unless it had been for the fumes of the champagne and the Somard, with which we had washed down the delicious supper mine host had supplied us with. She had been flattered by the bishop's invitation, but she did not know whether I had accepted for her as well as myself; and when I told her that we were going out to dinner together, she was wild with joy. She made a careful toilette, looking very well for a traveller, and at noon my lord's carriage came to fetch us.

The prelate was a tall man, two inches taller than myself; and in spite of the weight of his eighty years, he looked well and seemed quite active, though grave as became a Spanish grandee. He received us with a politeness which was almost French, and when my niece would have kissed his hand, according to custom, he affectionately drew it back, and gave her a magnificent cross of amethysts and brilliants to kiss. She kissed it with devotion, saying, —

“This is what I love.”

She looked at me as she said it, and the jest (which referred to her lover La Croix or Croce) surprised me.

We sat down to dinner, and I found the bishop to be a pleasant and a learned man. We were nine in all; four priests, and two young gentlemen of the town, who behaved to my niece with great politeness, which she received with all the manner of good society. I noticed that the bishop, though he often spoke to her, never once looked at her face. My lord knew what danger lurked in those bright eyes, and like a prudent greybeard he took care not to fall into the snare. After coffee had been served, we took leave, and in four hours we left Tortona, intending to lie at Novi.

In the course of the afternoon my fair niece amused me with the wit and wisdom of her conversation. While we were supping I led the conversation up to the bishop, and then to religion, that I might see what her principles were. Finding her to be a good Christian, I asked her how she could allow herself to make a jest when she kissed the prelate's cross.

"It was a mere chance," she said. "The equivocation was innocent because it was not premeditated, for if I had thought it over I should never have said such a thing."

I pretended to believe her; she might possibly be sincere. She was extremely clever, and my love for her was becoming more and more ardent, but my vanity kept my passion in check. When she went to bed I did not kiss her, but as her bed had no screen as at Tortona, she waited until she thought I was asleep to undress herself. We got to Genoa by noon the next day.

Pogomas had got me some rooms and had forwarded me the address. I visited it, and found the apartment to consist of four well-furnished rooms, thoroughly comfortable, as the English, who understand how to take their ease, call it. I ordered a good dinner, and sent to tell Pogomas of my arrival.

VOLUME 5 — IN LONDON AND MOSCOW

EPISODE 21 — SOUTH OF FRANCE

CHAPTER I

I Find Rosalie Happy — The Signora Isola-Bella — The Cook — Biribi — Irene — Possano in Prison — My Niece Proves to be an Old Friend of Rosalie's

At Genoa, where he was known to all, Pogomas called himself Possano. He introduced me to his wife and daughter, but they were so ugly and disgusting in every respect that I left them on some trifling pretext, and went to dine with my new niece. Afterwards I went to see the Marquis Grimaldi, for I longed to know what had become of Rosalie. The marquis was away in Venice, and was not expected back till the end of April; but one of his servants took me to Rosalie, who had become Madame Paretti six months after my departure.

My heart beat fast as I entered the abode of this woman, of whom I had such pleasant recollections. I first went to M. Paretti in his shop, and he received me with a joyful smile, which shewed me how happy he was. He took me to his wife directly, who cried out with delight, and ran to embrace me.

M. Paretti was busy, and begged me to excuse him, saying his wife would entertain me.

Rosalie shewed me a pretty little girl of six months old, telling me that she was happy, that she loved her husband, and was loved by him, that he was industrious and active in business, and under the patronage of the Marquis Grimaldi had prospered exceedingly.

The peaceful happiness of marriage had improved her wonderfully; she had become a perfect beauty in every sense of the word.

"My dear friend," she said, "you are very good to call on me directly you arrive, and I hope you will dine with us to-morrow. I owe all my happiness to you, and that is even a sweeter thought than the recollection of the passionate hours we have spent together. Let us kiss, but no more; my duty as an honest wife forbids me from going any further, so do not disturb the happiness you have given."

I pressed her hand tenderly, to skew that I assented to the conditions she laid down.

"Oh! by the way," she suddenly exclaimed, "I have a pleasant surprise for you."

She went out, and a moment afterward returned with Veronique, who had become her maid. I was glad to see her and embraced her affectionately, asking after Annette. She said her sister was well, and was working with her mother.

"I want her to come and wait on my niece while we are here," said I.

At this Rosalie burst out laughing.

"What! another niece? You have a great many relations! But as she is your niece, I hope you will bring her with you to-morrow."

"Certainly, and all the more willingly as she is from Marseilles."

"From Marseilles? Why, we might know each other. Not that that would matter, for all your nieces are discreet young persons. What is her name?"

"Crosin."

"I don't know it."

"I daresay you don't. She is the daughter of a cousin of mine who lived at Marseilles."

"Tell that to someone else; but, after all, what does it matter? You choose well, amuse yourself, and make them happy. It may be wisdom after all, and at any rate I congratulate you. I shall be delighted to see your niece, but if she knows me you must see that she knows her part as well."

On leaving Madame Paretti I called on the Signora Isola-Bella, and gave her the Marquis Triulzi's letter. Soon after she came into the room and welcomed me, saying that she had been expecting me, as Triulzi had written to her on the subject. She introduced me to the Marquis Augustino Grimaldi delta Pietra, her ‘cicisbeoin-chief’ during the long absence of her husband, who lived at Lisbon.

The signora’s apartments were very elegant. She was pretty with small though regular features, her manner was pleasant, her voice sweet, and her figure well shaped, though too thin. She was nearly thirty. I say nothing of her complexion, for her face was plastered with white and red, and so coarsely, that these patches of paint were the first things that caught my attention. I was disgusted at this, in spite of her fine expressive eyes. After an hour spent in question and reply, in which both parties were feeling their way, I accepted her invitation to come to supper on the following day. When I got back I complimented my niece on the way in which she had arranged her room, which was only separated from mine by a small closet which I intended for her maid, who, I told her, was coming the next day. She was highly pleased with this attention, and it paved the way for my success. I also told her that the next day she was to dine with me at a substantial merchant’s as my niece, and this piece of news made her quite happy.

This girl whom Croce had infatuated and deprived of her senses was exquisitely beautiful, but more charming than all her physical beauties were the nobleness of her presence and the sweetness of her disposition. I was already madly in love with her, and I repented not having taken possession of her on the first day of our journey. If I had taken her at her word I should have been a steadfast lover, and I do not think it would have taken me long to make her forget her former admirer.

I had made but a small dinner, so I sat down to supper famishing with hunger; and as my niece had an excellent appetite we prepared ourselves for enjoyment, but instead of the dishes being delicate, as we had expected, they were detestable. I told Clairmont to send for the landlady, and she said that she could not help it, as everything had been done by my own cook.

“My cook?” I repeated.

“Yes, sir, the one your secretary, M. Possano, engaged for you. I could have got a much better one and a much cheaper one myself.”

“Get one to-morrow.”

"Certainly; but you must rid yourself and me of the present cook, for he has taken up his position here with his wife and children. Tell Possano to send for him."

"I will do so, and in the meanwhile do you get me a fresh cook. I will try him the day after to-morrow."

I escorted my niece into her room, and begged her to go to bed without troubling about me, and so saying I took up the paper and began to read it. When I had finished, I went up to bed, and said,

"You might spare me the pain of having to sleep by myself."

She lowered her eyes but said nothing, so I gave her a kiss and left her.

In the morning my fair niece came into my room just as Clairmont was washing my feet, and begged me to let her have some coffee as chocolate made her hot. I told my man to go and fetch some coffee, and as soon as he was gone she went down on her knees and would have wiped my feet.

"I cannot allow that, my dear young lady."

"Why not? it is a mark of friendship."

"That may be, but such marks cannot be given to anyone but your lover without your degrading yourself."

She got up and sat down on a chair quietly, but saying nothing.

Clairmont came back again, and I proceeded with my toilette.

The landlady came in with our breakfast, and asked my niece if she would like to buy a fine silk shawl made in the Genoese fashion. I did not let her be confused by having to answer, but told the landlady to let us see it. Soon after the milliner came in, but by that time I had given my young friend twenty Genoese sequins, telling her that she might use them for her private wants. She took the money, thanking me with much grace, and letting me imprint a delicious kiss on her lovely lips.

I had sent away the milliner after having bought the shawl, when Possano took it upon himself to remonstrate with me in the matter of the cook.

"I engaged the man by your orders," said he, "for the whole time you stayed at Genoa, at four francs a day, with board and lodging."

"Where is my letter?"

"Here it is: 'Get me a good cook; I will keep him while I stay in Genoa.'"

"Perhaps you did not remark the expression, a good cook? Well, this fellow is a very bad cook; and, at all events, I am the best judge whether he is good or bad."

"You are wrong, for the man will prove his skill. He will cite you in the law courts, and win his case."

"Then you have made a formal agreement with him?"

"Certainly; and your letter authorized me to do so."

"Tell him to come up; I want to speak to him."

While Possano was downstairs I told Clairmont to go and fetch me an advocate. The cook came upstairs, I read the agreement, and I saw that it was worded in such a manner that I should be in the wrong legally; but I did not change my mind for all that.

"Sir," said the cook, "I am skilled in my business, and I can get four thousand Genoese to swear as much."

"That doesn't say much for their good taste; but whatever they may-say, the execrable supper you gave me last night proves that you are only fit to keep a low eating-house."

As there is nothing more irritable than the feelings of a culinary artist, I was expecting a sharp answer; but just then the advocate came in. He had heard the end of our dialogue, and told me that not only would the man find plenty of witnesses to his skill, but that I should find a very great difficulty in getting anybody at all to swear to his want of skill.

"That may be," I replied, "but as I stick to my own opinion, and think his cooking horrible, he must go, for I want to get another, and I will pay that fellow as if he had served me the whole time."

"That won't do," said the cook; "I will summon you before the judge and demand damages for defamation of character."

At this my bile overpowered me, and I was going to seize him anti throw him out of the window, when Don Antonio Grimaldi came in. When he heard what was the matter, he laughed and said, with a shrug of his shoulders,

“My dear sir, you had better not go into court, or you will be cast in costs, for the evidence is against you. Probably this man makes a slight mistake in believing himself to be an excellent cook, but the chief mistake is in the agreement, which ought to have stipulated that he should cook a trial dinner. The person who drew up the agreement is either a great knave or a great fool.”

At this Possano struck in in his rude way, and told the nobleman that he was neither knave nor fool.

“But you are cousin to the cook,” said the landlady.

This timely remark solved the mystery. I paid and dismissed the advocate, and having sent the cook out of the room I said,

“Do I owe you any money, Possano?”

“On the contrary, you paid me a month in advance, and there are ten more days of the month to run.”

“I will make you a present of the ten days and send you away this very moment, unless your cousin does not leave my house to-day, and give you the foolish engagement which you signed in my name.”

“That’s what I call cutting the Gordian knot,” said M. Grimaldi.

He then begged me to introduce him to the lady he had seen with me, and I did so, telling him she was my niece.

“Signora Isola-Bella will be delighted to see her.”

“As the marquis did not mention her in his letter, I did not take the liberty of bringing her.”

The marquis left a few moments afterwards, and soon after Annette came in with her mother. The girl had developed in an incredible manner while I was away. Her cheeks blossomed like the rose, her teeth were white as pearls, and her breasts, though modestly concealed from view, were exquisitely rounded. I presented her to her mistress, whose astonishment amused me.

Annette, who looked pleased to be in my service again, went to dress her new mistress; and, after giving a few sequins to the mother I sent her away, and proceeded to make my toilette.

Towards noon, just as I was going out with my niece to dine at Rosalie's, my landlady brought me the agreement Possano had made, and introduced the new cook. I ordered the next day's dinner, and went away much pleased with my comic victory.

A brilliant company awaited us at the Paretti's, but I was agreeably surprised on introducing my niece to Rosalie to see them recognize each other. They called each other by their respective names, and indulged in an affectionate embrace. After this they retired to another room for a quarter of an hour, and returned looking very happy. Just then Paretti entered, and on Rosalie introducing him to my niece under her true name he welcomed her in the most cordial manner. Her father was a correspondent of his, and drawing a letter he had just received from him from his pocket, he gave it to her to read. My niece read it eagerly, with tears in her eyes, and gave the signature a respectful pressure with her lips. This expression of filial love, which displayed all the feelings of her heart, moved me to such an extent that I burst into tears. Then taking Rosalie aside, I begged her to ask her husband not to mention the fact to his correspondent that he had seen his daughter.

The dinner was excellent, and Rosalie did the honours with that grace which was natural to her. However, the guests did not by any means pay her all their attentions, the greater portion of which was diverted in the direction of my supposed niece. Her father, a prosperous merchant of Marseilles, was well known in the commercial circles of Genoa, and besides this her wit and beauty captivated everybody, and one young gentleman fell madly in love with her. He was an extremely good match, and proved to be the husband whom Heaven had destined for my charming friend. What a happy thought it was for me that I had been the means of rescuing her from the gulf of shame, misery, and despair, and placing her on the high road to happiness. I own that I have always felt a keener pleasure in doing good than in anything else, though, perhaps, I may not always have done good from strictly disinterested motives.

When we rose from the table in excellent humour with ourselves and our surroundings, cards were proposed, and Rosalie, who knew my likings, said it must be trente-quarante. This was agreed to, and we played till supper, nobody either winning or losing to any extent. We did not go till midnight, after having spent a very happy day.

When we were in our room I asked my niece how she had known Rosalie.

"I knew her at home; she and her mother used to bring linen from the wash. I always liked her."

"You must be nearly the same age."

"She is two years older than I am. I recognized her directly."

"What did she tell you?"

"That it was you who brought her from Marseilles and made her fortune."

"She has not made you the depositary of any other confidences?"

"No, but there are some things which don't need telling."

"You are right. And what did you tell her?"

"Only what she could have guessed for herself. I told her that you were not my uncle, and if she thought you were my lover I was not sorry. You do not know how I have enjoyed myself to-day, you must have been born to make me happy."

"But how about La Croix?"

"For heaven's sake say nothing about him."

This conversation increased my ardour. She called Annette, and I went to my room.

As I had expected, Annette came to me as soon as her mistress was in bed.

"If the lady is really your niece," said she, "may I hope that you still love me?"

"Assuredly, dear Annette, I shall always love you. Undress, and let us have a little talk."

I had not long to wait, and in the course of two voluptuous hours I quenched the flames that another woman had kindled in my breast.

Next morning Possano came to tell me that he had arranged matters with the cook with the help of six sequins. I gave him the money, and told him to be more careful for the future.

I went to Rosalie's for my breakfast, which she was delighted to give me: and I asked her and her husband to dinner on the following day, telling her to bring any four persons she liked.

"Your decision," said I, "will decide the fate of my cook; it will be his trial dinner."

She promised to come, and then pressed me to tell her the history of my amours with her fair country-woman.

"Alas!" I said, "you may not believe me, but I assure you I am only beginning with her."

"I shall certainly believe you, if you tell me so, though it seems very strange."

"Strange but true. You must understand, however, that I have only known her for a very short time; and, again, I would not be made happy save through love, mere submission would kill me."

"Good! but what did she say of me?"

I gave her a report of the whole conversation I had had with my niece the night before, and she was delighted."

"As you have not yet gone far with your niece, would you object if the young man who shewed her so much attention yesterday were of the party to-morrow?"

"Who is he? I should like to know him."

"M. N —— , the only son of a rich merchant."

"Certainly, bring him with you."

When I got home I went to my niece, who was still in bed, and told her that her fellow-countryman would dine with us to-morrow. I comforted her with the assurance that M. Paretti would not tell her father that she was in Genoa. She had been a good deal tormented with the idea that the merchant would inform her father of all.

As I was going out to supper I told her that she could go and sup with Rosalie, or take supper at home if she preferred it.

“You are too kind to me, my dear uncle. I will go to Rosalie’s.”

“Very good. Are you satisfied with Annette?”

“Oh! by the way, she told me that you spent last night with her, and that you had been her lover and her sister’s at the same time.”

“It is true, but she is very indiscreet to say anything about it.”

“We must forgive her, though. She told me that she only consented to sleep with you on the assurance that I was really your niece. I am sure she only made this confession out of vanity, and in the hope of gaining my favour, which would be naturally bestowed on a woman you love.”

“I wish you had the right to be jealous of her; and I swear that if she does not comport herself with the utmost obedience to you in every respect, I will send her packing, in despite of our relations. As for you, you may not be able to love me, and I have no right to complain; but I will not have you degrade yourself by becoming my submissive victim.”

I was not sorry for my niece to know that I made use of Annette, but my vanity was wounded at the way she took it. It was plain that she was not at all in love with me, and that she was glad that there was a safeguard in the person of her maid, and that thus we could be together without danger, for she could not ignore the power of her charms.

We dined together, and augured well of the skill of the new cook. M. Paretti had promised to get me a good man, and he presented himself just as we were finishing dinner, and I made a present of him to my niece. We went for a drive together, and I left my niece at Rosalie’s, and I then repaired to Isola-Bella’s, where I found a numerous and brilliant company had assembled consisting of all the best people in Genoa.

Just then all the great ladies were mad over ‘biribi’, a regular cheating game. It was strictly forbidden at Genoa, but this only made it more popular, and besides, the prohibition had no force in private houses, which are outside of the jurisdiction of the Government; in short, I found the game in full swing at the Signora Isola-Bella’s. The professional gamesters who kept the bank went from house to house, and the amateurs were advised of their presence at such a house and at such a time.

Although I detested the game, I began to play — to do as the others did.

In the room there was a portrait of the mistress of the house in harlequin costume, and there happened to be the same picture on one of the divisions of the biribi-table: I chose this one out of politeness, and did not play on any other. I risked a sequin each time. The board had thirty-six compartments, and if one lost, one paid thirty-two tines the amount of the stake; this, of course, was an enormous advantage for the bank.

Each player drew three numbers in succession, and there were three professionals; one kept the bag, another the bank, and the third the board, and the last took care to gather in the winnings as soon as the result was known, and the bank amounted to two thousand sequins or thereabouts. The table, the cloth, and four silver candlesticks belonged to the players.

I sat at the left of Madame Isola-Bella, who began to play, and as there were fifteen or sixteen of us I had lost about fifty sequins when my turn came, for my harlequin had not appeared once. Everybody pitied me, or pretended to do so, for selfishness is the predominant passion of gamesters.

My turn came at last. I drew my harlequin and received thirty-two sequins. I left them on the same figure, and got a thousand sequins. I left fifty still on the board, and the harlequin came out for the third time. The bank was broken, and the table, the cloth, the candlesticks, and the board all belonged to me. Everyone congratulated me, and the wretched bankrupt gamesters were hissed, hooted, and turned out of doors.

After the first transports were over, I saw that the ladies were in distress; for as there could be no more gaming they did not know what to do. I consoled them by declaring that I would be banker, but with equal stakes, and that I would pay winning cards thirty-six times the stake instead of thirty-two. This was pronounced charming of me, and I amused everybody till supper-time, without any great losses or gains on either side. By dint of entreaty I made the lady of the house accept the whole concern as a present, and a very handsome one it was.

The supper was pleasant enough, and my success at play was the chief topic of conversation. Before leaving I asked Signora Isola-Bella and her marquis to dine with me, and they eagerly accepted the invitation. When I got home I went to see my niece, who told me she had spent a delightful evening.

“A very pleasant young man,” said she, “who is coming to dine with us to-morrow, paid me great attention.”

“The same, I suppose, that did so yesterday?”

“Yes. Amongst other pretty things he told me that if I liked he would go to Marseilles and ask my hand of my father. I said nothing, but I thought to myself that if the poor young man gave himself all this trouble he would be woefully misled, as he would not see me.”

“Why not?”

“Because I should be in a nunnery. My kind good father will forgive me, but I must punish myself.”

“That is a sad design, which I hope you will abandon. You have all that would make the happiness of a worthy husband. The more I think it over, the more I am convinced of the truth of what I say.”

We said no more just then, for she needed rest. Annette came to undress her, and I was glad to see the goodness of my niece towards her, but the coolness with which the girl behaved to her mistress did not escape my notice. As soon as she came to sleep with me I gently remonstrated with her, bidding her to do her duty better for the future. Instead of answering with a caress, as she ought to have done, she began to cry.

“My dear child,” said I, “your tears weary me. You are only here to amuse me, and if you can’t do that, you had better go.”

This hurt her foolish feelings of vanity, and she got up and went away without a word, leaving me to go to sleep in a very bad temper.

In the morning I told her, in a stern voice, that if she played me such a trick again I would send her away. Instead of trying to soothe me with a kiss the little rebel burst out crying again. I sent her out of the room impatiently, and proceeded to count my gains.

I thought no more about it, but presently my niece came in and asked me why I had vexed poor Annette.

"My dear niece," said I, "tell her to behave better or else I will send her back to her mother's."

She gave me no reply, but took a handful of silver and fled. I had not time to reflect on this singular conduct, for Annette came in rattling her crowns in her pocket, and promised, with a kiss, not to make me angry any more.

Such was my niece. She knew I adored her, and she loved me; but she did not want me to be her lover, though she made use of the ascendancy which my passion gave her. In the code of feminine coquetry such cases are numerous.

Possano came uninvited to see me, and congratulated me on my victory of the evening before.

"Who told you about it?"

"I have just been at the coffee-house, where everybody is talking of it. It was a wonderful victory, for those biribanti are knaves of the first water. Your adventure is making a great noise, for everyone says that you could not have broken their bank unless you had made an agreement with the man that kept the bag."

"My dear fellow, I am tired of you. Here, take this piece of money for your wife and be off."

The piece of money I had given him was a gold coin worth a hundred Genoese livres, which the Government had struck for internal commerce; there were also pieces of fifty and twenty-five livres.

I was going on with my calculations when Clairmont brought me a note. It was from Irene, and contained a tender invitation to breakfast with her. I did not know that she was in Genoa, and the news gave me very great pleasure. I locked up my money, dressed in haste, and started out to see her. I found her in good and well-furnished rooms, and her old father, Count Rinaldi, embraced me with tears of joy.

After the ordinary compliments had been passed, the old man proceeded to congratulate me on my winnings of the night before.

"Three thousand sequins!" he exclaimed, "that is a grand haul indeed."

"Quite so."

"The funny part of it is that the man who keeps the bag is in the pay of the others."

"What strikes you as funny in that?"

"Why, he gained half without any risk, otherwise he would not have been likely to have entered into an agreement with you."

"You think, then, that it was a case of connivance?"

"Everybody says so; indeed what else could it be? The rascal has made his fortune without running any risk. All the Greeks in Genoa are applauding him and you."

"As the greater rascal of the two?"

"They don't call you a rascal; they say you're a great genius; you are praised and envied."

"I am sure I ought to be obliged to them."

"I heard it all from a gentleman who was there. He says that the second and the third time the man with the bag gave you the office."

"And you believe this?"

"I am sure of it. No man of honour in your position could have acted otherwise. However, when you come to settle up with the fellow I advise you to be very careful, for there will be spies on your tracks. If you like, I will do the business for you."

I had enough self-restraint to repress the indignation and rage I felt. Without a word I took my hat and marched out of the room, sternly repulsing Irene who tried to prevent me from going as she had done once before. I resolved not to have anything more to do with the wretched old count.

This calumnious report vexed me extremely, although I knew that most gamesters would consider it an honour. Possano and Rinaldi had said enough to shew me that all the town was talking over it, and I was not surprised that everyone believed it; but for my part I did not care to be taken for a rogue when I had acted honourably.

I felt the need of unbosoming myself to someone, and walked towards the Strada Balbi to call on the Marquis Grimaldi, and discuss the matter with him. I was told he was gone to the courts, so I followed him there and was ushered into vast hall, where he waited on me. I told him my story, and he said,

"My dear chevalier, you ought to laugh at it, and I should not advise you to take the trouble to refute the calumny."

"Then you advise me to confess openly that I am a rogue?"

"No, for only fools will think that of you. Despise them, unless they tell you you are a rogue to your face."

"I should like to know the name of the nobleman who was present and sent this report about the town."

"I do not know who it is. He was wrong to say anything, but you would be equally wrong in taking any steps against him, for I am sure he did not tell the story with any intention of giving offence; quite the contrary."

"I am lost in wonder at his course of reasoning. Let us suppose that the facts were as he told them, do you think they are to my honour?"

"Neither to your honour nor shame. Such are the morals and such the maxims of gamesters. The story will be laughed at, your skill will be applauded, and you will be admired, for each one will say that in your place he would have done likewise!"

"Would you?"

"Certainly. If I had been sure that the ball would have gone to the harlequin, I would have broken the rascal's bank, as you did. I will say honestly that I do not know whether you won by luck or skill, but the most probable hypothesis, to my mind, is that you knew the direction of the ball. You must confess that there is something to be said in favour of the supposition."

"I confess that there is, but it is none the less a dishonourable imputation on me, and you in your turn must confess that those who think that I won by sleight of hand, or by an agreement with a rascal, insult me grievously."

"That depends on the way you look at it. I confess they insult you, if you think yourself insulted; but they are not aware of that, and their intention being quite different there is no insult at all in the matter. I promise you no one will tell you to your face that you cheated, but how are you going to prevent them thinking so?"

"Well, let them think what they like, but let them take care not to tell me their thoughts."

I went home angry with Grimaldi, Rinaldi, and everyone else. My anger vexed me, I should properly have only laughed, for in the state of morals at Genoa, the accusation, whether true or false, could not injure my honour. On the contrary I gained by it a reputation for being a genius, a term which the Genoese prefer to that Methodistical word, "a rogue," though the meaning is the same. Finally I was astonished to find myself reflecting that I should have had no scruple in breaking the bank in the way suggested, if it had only been for the sake of making the company laugh. What vexed me most was that I was credited with an exploit I had not performed.

When dinner-time drew near I endeavoured to overcome my ill temper for the sake of the company I was going to receive. My niece was adorned only with her native charms, for the rascal Croce had sold all her jewels; but she was elegantly dressed, and her beautiful hair was more precious than a crown of rubies.

Rosalie came in richly dressed and looking very lovely. Her husband, her uncle, and her aunt were with her, and also two friends, one of whom was the aspirant for the hand of my niece.

Madame Isola-Bella and her shadow, M. Grimaldi, came late, like great people. Just as we were going to sit down, Clairmont told me that a man wanted to speak to me.

"Shew him in."

As soon as he appeared M. Grimaldi exclaimed:

"The man with the bag!"

"What do you want?" I said, dryly.

"Sir, I am come to ask you to help me. I am a family man, and it is thought that …"

I did not let him finish.

“I have never refused to aid the unfortunate,” said I. “Clairmont, give him ten sequins. Leave the room.”

This incident spoke in my favour, and made me in a better temper.

We sat down to table, and a letter was handed to me. I recognized Possano’s writing, and put it in my pocket without reading it.

The dinner was delicious, and my cook was pronounced to have won his spurs. Though her exalted rank and the brilliance of her attire gave Signora Isoia-Bella the first place of right, she was nevertheless eclipsed by my two nieces. The young Genoese was all attention for the fair Marseillaise, and I could see that she was not displeased. I sincerely wished to see her in love with someone, and I liked her too well to bear the idea of her burying herself in a convent. She could never be happy till she found someone who would make her forget the rascal who had brought her to the brink of ruin.

I seized the opportunity, when all my guests were engaged with each other, to open Possano’s letter. It ran as follows:

“I went to the bank to change the piece of gold you gave me. It was weighed, and found to be ten carats under weight. I was told to name the person from whom I got it, but of course I did not do so. I then had to go to prison, and if you do not get me out of the scrape I shall be prosecuted, though of course I am not going to get myself hanged for anybody.”

I gave the letter to Grimaldi, and when we had left the table he took me aside, and said, —

“This is a very serious matter, for it may end in the gallows for the man who clipped the coin.”

“Then they can hang the biribanti! That won’t hurt me much.”

“No, that won’t do; it would compromise Madame Isola-Bella, as biribi is strictly forbidden. Leave it all to me, I will speak to the State Inquisitors about it. Tell Possano to persevere in his silence, and that you will see him safely through. The laws against coiners and clippers are only severe with regard to these particular coins, as the Government has special reasons for not wishing them to be depreciated.”

I wrote to Possano, and sent for a pair of scales. We weighed the gold I had won at biribi, and every single piece had been clipped. M. Grimaldi said he would have them defaced and sold to a jeweller.

When we got back to the dining-room we found everybody at play. M. Grimaldi proposed that I should play at quinze with him. I detested the game, but as he was my guest I felt it would be impolite to refuse, and in four hours I had lost five hundred sequins.

Next morning the marquis told me that Possano was out of prison, and that he had been given the value of the coin. He brought me thirteen hundred sequins which had resulted from the sale of the gold. We agreed that I was to call on Madame Isola-Bella the next day, when he would give me my revenge at quinze.

I kept the appointment, and lost three thousand sequins. I paid him a thousand the next day, and gave him two bills of exchange, payable by myself, for the other two thousand. When these bills were presented I was in England, and being badly off I had to have them protested. Five years later, when I was at Barcelona, M. de Grimaldi was urged by a traitor to have me imprisoned, but he knew enough of me to be sure that if I did not meet the bills it was from sheer inability to do so. He even wrote me a very polite letter, in which he gave the name of my enemy, assuring me that he would never take any steps to compel me to pay the money. This enemy was Possano, who was also at Barcelona, though I was not aware of his presence. I will speak of the circumstance in due time, but I cannot help remarking that all who aided me in my pranks with Madame d’Urfe proved traitors, with the exception of a Venetian girl, whose acquaintance the reader will make in the following chapter.

In spite of my losses I enjoyed myself, and had plenty of money, for after all I had only lost what I had won at biribi. Rosalie often dined with us, either alone or with her husband, and I supped regularly at her home with my niece, whose love affair seemed quite promising. I congratulated her upon the circumstance, but she persisted in her determination to take refuge from the world in a cloister. Women often do the most idiotic things out of sheer obstinacy; possibly they deceive even themselves, and act in good faith; but unfortunately, when the veil falls from before their eyes, they see but the profound abyss into which their folly had plunged them.

In the meanwhile, my niece had become so friendly and familiar that she would often come and sit on my bed in the morning when Annette was still in my arms. Her presence increased my ardour, and I quenched the fires on the blonde which the brunette was kindling. My niece seemed to enjoy the sight, and I could see that her senses were being pleasantly tortured. Annette was short-sighted, and so did not perceive my distractions, while my fair niece caressed me slightly, knowing that it would add to my pleasures. When she thought I was exhausted she told Annette to get up and leave me alone with her, as she wanted to tell me something. She then began to jest and toy, and though her dress was extremely disordered she seemed to think that her charms would exercise no power over me. She was quite mistaken, but I was careful not to undeceive her for fear of losing her confidence. I watched the game carefully, and noting how little by little her familiarity increased, I felt sure that she would have to surrender at last, if not at Genoa, certainly on the journey, when we would be thrown constantly in each other's society with nobody to spy upon our actions, and with nothing else to do but to make love. It is the weariness of a journey, the constant monotony, that makes one do something to make sure of one's existence; and when it comes to the reckoning there is usually more joy than repentance.

But the story of my journey from Genoa to Marseilles was written in the book of fate, and could not be read by me. All I knew was that I must soon go as Madame d'Urfe was waiting for me at Marseilles. I knew not that in this journey would be involved the fate of a Venetian girl of whom I had never heard, who had never seen me, but whom I was destined to render happy. My fate seemed to have made me stop at Genoa to wait for her.

I settled my accounts with the banker, to whom I had been accredited, and I took a letter of credit on Marseilles, where, however, I was not likely to want for funds, as my high treasurer, Madame d'Urfe was there. I took leave of Madame Isola-Bella and her circle that I might be able to devote all my time to Rosalie and her friends.

CHAPTER II

Disgraceful Behaviour of My Brother, the Abbe, I Relieve Him

of His Mistress — Departure from Genoa — The Prince of Monaco-

-My Niece Overcome — Our Arrival at Antibes

On the Tuesday in Holy Week I was just getting up, when Clairmont came to tell me that a priest who would not give his name wanted to speak to me. I went out in my night-cap, and the rascally priest rushed at me and nearly choked me with his embraces. I did not like so much affection, and as I had not recognized him at first on account of the darkness of the room, I took him by the arm and led him to the window. It was my youngest brother, a good-for-nothing fellow, whom I had always disliked. I had not seen him for ten years, but I cared so little about him that I had not even enquired whether he were alive or dead in the correspondence I maintained with M. de Bragadin, Dandolo, and Barbaro.

As soon as his silly embraces were over, I coldly asked him what chance had brought him to Genoa in this disgusting state of dirt, rags, and tatters. He was only twenty-nine, his complexion was fresh and healthy, and he had a splendid head of hair. He was a posthumous son, born like Mahomet, three months after the death of his father.

“The story of my misfortunes would be only too long. Take me into your room, and I will sit down and tell you the whole story.”

“First of all, answer my questions. How long have you been here?”

“Since yesterday.”

“Who told you that I was here?”

“Count B —— , at Milan.”

“Who told you that the count knew me?”

"I found out by chance. I was at M. de Bragadin's a month ago, and on his table I saw a letter from the count to you."

"Did you tell him you were my brother?"

"I had to when he said how much I resembled you."

"He made a mistake, for you are a blockhead."

"He did not think so, at all events, for he asked me to dinner."

"You must have cut a pretty figure, if you were in your present state."

"He gave me four sequins to come here; otherwise, I should never have been able to do the journey."

"Then he did a very foolish thing. You're a mere beggar, then; you take alms. Why did you leave Venice? What do you want with me? I can do nothing for you."

"Ah! do not make me despair, or I shall kill myself."

"That's the very best thing you could do; but you are too great a coward. I ask again why you left Venice, where you could say mass, and preach, and make an honest living, like many priests much better than you?"

"That is the kernel of the whole matter. Let us go in and I will tell you."

"No; wait for me here. We will go somewhere where you can tell me your story, if I have patience to listen to it. But don't tell any of my people that you are my brother, for I am ashamed to have such a relation. Come, take me to the place where you are staying."

"I must tell you that at my inn I am not alone, and I want to have a private interview with you."

"Who is with you?"

"I will tell you presently, but let us go into a coffeehouse."

"Are you in company with a band of brigands? What are you sighing at?"

"I must confess it, however painful it may be to my feelings. I am with a woman."

"A woman! and you a priest!"

"Forgive me. I was blinded by love, and seduced by my senses and her beauty, so I seduced her under a promise to marry her at Geneva. I can never go back to Venice, for I took her away from her father's house."

"What could you do at Geneva? They would expel you after you had been there three or four days. Come, we will go to the inn and see the woman you have deceived. I will speak to you afterwards."

I began to trace my steps in the direction he had pointed out, and he was obliged to follow me. As soon as we got to the inn, he went on in front, and after climbing three flights of stairs I entered a wretched den where I saw a tall young girl, a sweet brunette, who looked proud and not in the least confused. As soon as I made my appearance she said, without any greeting,—

"Are you the brother of this liar and monster who has deceived me so abominably?"

"Yes," said I. "I have the honour."

"A fine honour, truly. Well, have the kindness to send me back to Venice, for I won't stop any longer with this rascal whom I listened to like the fool I was, who turned my head with his lying tales. He was going to meet you at Milan, and you were to give us enough money to go to Geneva, and there we were to turn Protestants and get married. He swore you were expecting him at Milan, but you were not there at all, and he contrived to get money in some way or another, and brought me here miserably enough. I thank Heaven he has found you at last, for if he had not I should have started off by myself and begged my way. I have not a single thing left; the wretch sold all I possessed at Bergamo and Verona. I don't know how I kept my senses through it all. To hear him talk, the world was a paradise outside Venice, but I have found to my cost that there is no place like home. I curse the hour when I first saw the miserable wretch. He's a beggarly knave; always whining. He wanted to enjoy his rights as my husband when we got to Padua, but I am thankful to say I gave him nothing. Here is the writing he gave me; take it, and do what you like with it. But if you have any heart, send me back to Venice or I will tramp there on foot."

I had listened to this long tirade without interrupting her. She might have spoken at much greater length, so far as I was concerned; my astonishment took my breath away. Her discourse had all the fire of eloquence, and was heightened by her expressive face and the flaming glances she shot from her eyes.

My brother, sitting down with his head between his hands, and obliged to listen in silence to this long catalogue of well-deserved reproaches, gave something of a comic element to the scene. In spite of that, however, I was much touched by the sad aspects of the girl's story. I felt at once that I must take charge of her, and put an end to this ill-assorted match. I imagined that I should not have much difficulty in sending her back to Venice, which she might never have quitted if it had not been for her trust in me, founded on the fallacious promises of her seducer.

The true Venetian character of the girl struck me even more than her beauty. Her courage, frank indignation, and the nobility of her aspect made me resolve not to abandon her. I could not doubt that she had told a true tale, as my brother continued to observe a guilty silence.

I watched her silently for some time, and, my mind being made up, said, —

"I promise to send you back to Venice with a respectable woman to look after you; but you will be unfortunate if you carry back with you the results of your amours."

"What results? Did I not tell you that we were going to be married at Geneva?"

"Yes, but in spite of that …"

"I understand you, sir, but I am quite at ease on that point, as I am happy to say that I did not yield to any of the wretch's desires."

"Remember," said the abbe, in a plaintive voice, "the oath you took to be mine for ever. You swore it upon the crucifix."

So saying he got up and approached her with a supplicating gesture, but as soon as he was within reach she gave him a good hearty box on the ear. I expected to see a fight, in which I should not have interfered, but nothing of the kind. The humble abbe gently turned away to the window, and casting his eyes to heaven began to weep.

"You are too malicious, my dear," I said; "the poor devil is only unhappy because you have made him in love with you."

"If he is it's his own fault, I should never have thought of him but for his coming to me and fooling me, I shall never forgive him till he is out of my sight. That's not the first blow I have given him; I had to begin at Padua."

"Yes," said the abbe, "but you are excommunicated, for I am a priest."

"It's little I care for the excommunication of a scoundrel like you, and if you say another word I will give you some more."

"Calm yourself, my child," said I; "you have cause to be angry, but you should not beat him. Take up your things and follow me."

"Where are you going to take her?" said the foolish priest.

"To my own house, and I should advise you to hold your tongue. Here, take these twenty sequins and buy yourself some clean clothes and linen, and give those rags of yours to the beggars. I will come and talk to you to-morrow, and you may thank your stars that you found me here. As for you, mademoiselle, I will have you conducted to my lodging, for Genoa must not see you in my company after arriving here with a priest. We must not have any scandal. I shall place you under the charge of my landlady, but whatever you do don't tell her this sad story. I will see that you are properly dressed, and that you want for nothing."

"May Heaven reward you!"

My brother, astonished at the sight of the twenty sequins, let me go away without a word. I had the fair Venetian taken to my lodging in a sedan-chair, and putting her under the charge of my landlady I told the latter to see that she was properly dressed. I wanted to see how she would look in decent clothes, for her present rags and tatters detracted from her appearance. I warned Annette that a girl who had been placed in my care would eat and sleep with her, and then having to entertain a numerous company of guests I proceeded to make my toilette.

Although my niece had no rights over me, I valued her esteem, and thought it best to tell her the whole story lest she should pass an unfavourable judgment on me. She listened attentively and thanked me for my confidence in her, and said she should very much like to see the girl and the abbe too, whom she pitied, though she admitted he was to be blamed for what he had done. I had got her a dress to wear at dinner, which became her exquisitely. I felt only too happy to be able to please her in any way, for her conduct towards myself and the way she treated her ardent lover commanded my admiration. She saw him every day either at my house or at Rosalie's. The young man had received an excellent education, though he was of the mercantile class, and wrote to her in a business-like manner, that, as they were well suited to each other in every way, there was nothing against his going to Marseilles and obtaining her father's consent to the match, unless it were a feeling of aversion on her side. He finished by requesting her to give him an answer. She shewed me the letter, and I congratulated her, and advised her to accept, if there was nothing about the young man which displeased her.

"There is nothing of the kind," she said, "and Rosalie thinks with you."

"Then tell him by word of mouth that you give your consent, and will expect to see him at Marseilles."

"Very good; as you think so, I will tell him tomorrow."

When dinner was over a feeling of curiosity made me go into the room where Annette was dining with the Venetian girl, whose name was Marcoline. I was struck with astonishment on seeing her, for she was completely changed, not so much by the pretty dress she had on as by the contented expression of her face, which made her look quite another person. Good humour had vanquished unbecoming rage, and the gentleness born of happiness made her features breathe forth love. I could scarcely believe that this charming creature before me was the same who had dealt such a vigorous blow to my brother, a priest, and a sacred being in the eyes of the common people. They were eating, and laughing at not being able to understand each other, for Marcoline only spoke Venetian, and Annette Genoese, and the latter dialect does not resemble the former any more than Bohemian resembles Dutch.

I spoke to Marcoline in her native tongue, which was mine too, and she said, —

"I seem to have suddenly passed from hell to Paradise."

"Indeed, you look like an angel."

"You called me a little devil this morning. But here is a fair angel," said she, pointing to Annette; "we don't see such in Venice."

“She is my treasure.”

Shortly after my niece came in, and seeing me talking and laughing with the two girls began to examine the new-comer. She told me in French that she thought her perfectly beautiful, and repeating her opinion to the girl in Italian gave her a kiss. Marcoline asked her plainly in the Venetian manner who she was.

“I am this gentleman’s niece, and he is taking me back to Marseilles, where my home is.”

“Then you would have been my niece too, if I had married his brother. I wish I had such a pretty niece.”

This pleasant rejoinder was followed by a storm of kisses given and returned with ardour which one might pronounce truly Venetian, if it were not that this would wound the feelings of the almost equally ardent Provencals.

I took my niece for a sail in the bay, and after we had enjoyed one of those delicious evenings which I think can be found nowhere else — sailing on a mirror silvered by the moon, over which float the odours of the jasmine, the orange-blossom, the pomegranates, the aloes, and all the scented flowers which grow along the coasts — we returned to our lodging, and I asked Annette what had become of Marcoline. She told me that she had gone to bed early, and I went gently into her room, with no other intention than to see her asleep. The light of the candle awoke her, and she did not seem at all frightened at seeing me. I sat by the bed, and fell to making love to her, and at last made as if I would kiss her, but she resisted, and we went on talking.

When Annette had put her mistress to bed, she came in and found us together.

“Go to bed, my dear,” said I. “I will come to you directly.”

Proud of being my mistress, she gave me a fiery kiss and went away without a word.

I began to talk about my brother, and passing from him to myself I told her of the interest I felt for her, saying that I would either have her taken to Venice, or bring her with me when I went to France.

"Do you want to marry me?"

"No, I am married already."

"That's a lie, I know, but it doesn't matter. Send me back to Venice, and the sooner the better. I don't want to be anybody's concubine."

"I admire your sentiments, my dear, they do you honour."

Continuing my praise I became pressing, not using any force, but those gentle caresses which are so much harder for a woman to resist than a violent attack. Marcoline laughed, but seeing that I persisted in spite of her resistance, she suddenly glided out of the bed and took refuge in my niece's room and locked the door after her. I was not displeased; the thing was done so easily and gracefully. I went to bed with Annette, who lost nothing by the ardour with which Marcoline had inspired me. I told her how she had escaped from my hands, and Annette was loud in her praises.

In the morning I got up early and went into my niece's room to enjoy the sight of the companion I had involuntarily given her, and the two girls were certainly a very pleasant sight. As soon as my niece saw me, she exclaimed, —

"My dear uncle, would you believe it? This sly Venetian has violated me."

Marcoline understood her, and far from denying the fact proceeded to give my niece fresh marks of her affection, which were well received, and from the movements of the sheets which covered them I could make a pretty good guess as to the nature of their amusement.

"This is a rude shock to the respect which your uncle has had for your prejudices," said I.

"The sports of two girls cannot tempt a man who has just left the arms of Annette."

"You are wrong, and perhaps you know it, for I am more than tempted."

With these words I lifted the sheets of the bed. Marcoline shrieked but did not move, but my niece earnestly begged me to replace the bed-clothes. However, the picture before me was too charming to be concealed.

At this point Annette came in, and in obedience to her mistress replaced the coverlet over the two Bacchantes. I felt angry with Annette, and seizing her threw her on the bed, and then and there gave the two sweethearts such an interesting spectacle that they left their own play to watch us. When I had finished, Annette, who was in high glee; said I was quite right to avenge myself on their prudery. I felt satisfied with what I had done, and went to breakfast. I then dressed, and visited my brother.

“How is Marcoline?” said he, as soon as he saw me.

“Very well, and you needn’t trouble yourself any more about her. She is well lodged, well dressed, and well fed, and sleeps with my niece’s maid.”

“I didn’t know I had a niece.”

“There are many things you don’t know. In three or four days she will return to Venice.”

“I hope, dear brother, that you will ask me to dine with you to-day.”

“Not at all, dear brother. I forbid you to set foot in my house, where your presence would be offensive to Marcoline, whom you must not see any more.”

“Yes, I will; I will return to Venice, if I have to hang for it.”

“What good would that be? She won’t have you.”

“She loves me.”

“She beats you.”

“She beats me because she loves me. She will be as gentle as a lamb when she sees me so well dressed. You do not know how I suffer.”

“I can partly guess, but I do not pity you, for you are an impious and cruel fool. You have broken your vows, and have not hesitated to make a young girl endure misery and degradation to satisfy your caprice. What would you have done, I should like to know, if I had given you the cold shoulder instead of helping you?”

“I should have gone into the street, and begged for my living with her.”

“She would have beaten you, and would probably have appealed to the law to get rid of you.”

“But what will you do for me, if I let her go back to Venice without following her.”

"I will take you to France, and try to get you employed by some bishop."

"Employed! I was meant by nature to be employed by none but God."

"You proud fool! Marcoline rightly called you a whiner. Who is your God? How do you serve Him? You are either a hypocrite or an idiot. Do you think that you, a priest, serve God by decoying an innocent girl away from her home? Do you serve Him by profaning the religion you do not even understand? Unhappy fool! do you think that with no talent, no theological learning, and no eloquence, you can be a Protestant minister. Take care never to come to my house, or I will have you expelled from Genoa."

"Well, well, take me to Paris, and I will see what my brother Francis can do for me; his heart is not so hard as yours."

"Very good! you shall go to Paris, and we will start from here in three or four days. Eat and drink to your heart's content, but remain indoors; I will let you know when we are going. I shall have my niece, my secretary, and my valet with me. We shall travel by sea."

"The sea makes me sick."

"That will purge away some of your bad humours."

When I got home I told Marcoline what had passed between us.

"I hate him!" said she; "but I forgive him, since it is through him I know you."

"And I forgive him, too, because unless it had been for him I should never have seen you. But I love you, and I shall die unless you satisfy my desires."

"Never; for I know I should be madly in love with you, and then you would leave me, and I should be miserable again."

"I will never leave you."

"If you will swear that, take me into France and make me all your own. Here you must continue living with Annette; besides, I have got your niece to make love to."

The pleasant part of the affair was that my niece was equally taken with her, and had begged me to let her take meals with us and sleep with her. As I had a prospect of being at their lascivious play, I willingly consented, and henceforth she was always present at the table. We enjoyed her company immensely, for she told us side-splitting tales which kept us at table till it was time to go to Rosalie's, where my niece's adorer was certain to be awaiting us.

The next day, which was Holy Thursday, Rosalie came with us to see the processions. I had Rosalie and Marcoline with me, one on each arm, veiled in their mezzaros, and my niece was under the charge of her lover. The day after we went to see the procession called at Genoa Caracce, and Marcoline pointed out my brother who kept hovering round us, though he pretended not to see us. He was most carefully dressed, and the stupid fop seemed to think he was sure to find favour in Marcoline's eyes, and make her regret having despised him; but he was woefully deceived, for Marcoline knew how to manage her mezzaro so well that, though he was both seen and laughed at, the poor devil could not be certain that she had noticed him at all, and in addition the sly girl held me so closely by the arm that he must have concluded we were very intimate.

My niece and Marcoline thought themselves the best friends in the world, and could not bear my telling them that their amorous sports were the only reason for their attachment. They therefore agreed to abandon them as soon as we left Genoa, and promised that I should sleep between them in the felucca, all of us to keep our clothes on. I said I should hold them to their word, and I fixed our departure for Thursday. I ordered the felucca to be in readiness and summoned my brother to go on board.

It was a cruel moment when I left Annette with her mother. She wept so bitterly that all of us had to shed tears. My niece gave her a handsome dress and I thirty sequins, promising to come and see her again on my return from England. Possano was told to go on board with the abbe; I had provisioned the boat for three days. The young merchant promised to be at Marseilles, telling my niece that by the time he came everything would be settled. I was delighted to hear it; it assured me that her father would give her a kind reception. Our friends did not leave us till the moment we went on board.

The felucca was very conveniently arranged, and was propelled by the twelve oarsmen. On the deck there were also twenty-four muskets, so that we should have been able to defend ourselves against a pirate. Clairmont had arranged my carriage and my trunks so cleverly, that by stretching five mattresses over them we had an excellent bed, where we could sleep and undress ourselves in perfect comfort; we had good pillows and plenty of sheets. A long awning covered the deck, and two lanterns were hung up, one at each end. In the evening they were lighted and Clairmont brought in supper. I had warned my brother that at the slightest presumption on his part he should be flung into the sea, so I allowed him and Possano to sup with us.

I sat between my two nymphs and served the company merrily, first my niece, then Marcoline, then my brother, and finally Possano. No water was drunk at table, so we each emptied a bottle of excellent Burgundy, and when we had finished supper the rowers rested on their oars, although the wind was very light. I had the lamps put out and went to bed with my two sweethearts, one on each side of me.

The light of dawn awoke me, and I found my darlings still sleeping in the same position. I could kiss neither of them, since one passed for my niece, and my sense of humanity would not allow me to treat Marcoline as my mistress in the presence of an unfortunate brother who adored her, and had never obtained the least favour from her. He was lying near at hand, overwhelmed with grief and seasickness, and watching and listening with all his might for the amorous encounter he suspected us of engaging in. I did not want to have any unpleasantness, so I contented myself with gazing on them till the two roses awoke and opened their eyes.

When this delicious sight was over, I got up and found that we were only opposite Final, and I proceeded to reprimand the master.

“The wind fell dead at Savona, sir;” and all the seamen chorused his excuse.

“Then you should have rowed instead of idling.”

“We were afraid of waking you. You shall be at Antibes by tomorrow.”

After passing the time by eating a hearty meal, we took a fancy to go on shore at St. Remo. Everybody was delighted. I took my two nymphs on land, and after forbidding any of the others to disembark I conducted the ladies to an inn, where I ordered coffee. A man accosted us, and invited us to come and play biribi at his house.

"I thought the game was forbidden in Genoa," said I. I felt certain that the players were the rascals whose bank I had broken at Genoa, so I accepted the invitation. My niece had fifty Louis in her purse, and I gave fifteen to Marcoline. We found a large assemblage, room was made for us, and I recognized the knaves of Genoa. As soon as they saw me they turned pale and trembled. I should say that the man with the bag was not the poor devil who had served me so well without wanting to.

"I play harlequin," said I.

"There isn't one."

"What's the bank?"

"There it is. We play for small stakes here, and those two hundred louis are quite sufficient. You can bet as low as you like, and the highest stake is of a louis."

"That's all very well, but my louis is full weight."

"I think ours are, too."

"Are you sure?"

"No."

"Then I won't play," said I, to the keeper of the rooms.

"You are right; bring the scales."

The banker then said that when play was over he would give four crowns of six livres for every louis that the company had won, and the matter was settled. In a moment the board was covered with stakes.

We each punted a louis at a time, and I and my niece lost twenty Louis, but Marcoline, who had never possessed two sequins in her life before, won two hundred and forty Louis. She played on the figure of an abbe which came out fifth twenty times. She was given a bag full of crown pieces, and we returned to the felucca.

The wind was contrary, and we had to row all night, and in the morning the sea was so rough that we had to put in at Mentone. My two sweethearts were very sick, as also my brother and Possano, but I was perfectly well. I took the two invalids to the inn, and allowed my brother and Possano to land and refresh themselves. The innkeeper told me that the Prince and Princess of Monaco were at Mentone, so I resolved to pay them a visit. It was thirteen years since I had seen the prince at Paris, where I had amused him and his mistress Caroline at supper. It was this prince who had taken me to see the horrible Duchess of Rufec; then he was unmarried, and now I met him again in his principality with his wife, of whom he had already two sons. The princess had been a Duchess de Borgnoli, a great heiress, and a delightful and pretty woman. I had heard all about her, and I was curious to verify the facts for myself.

I called on the prince, was announced, and after a long wait they introduced me to his presence. I gave him his title of highness, which I had never done at Paris, where he was not known under his full style and title. He received me politely, but with that coolness which lets one know that one is not an over-welcome visitor.

“You have put in on account of the bad weather, I suppose?” said he.

“Yes, prince, and if your highness will allow me I will spend the whole day in your delicious villa.” (It is far from being delicious.)

“As you please. The princess as well as myself likes it better than our place at Monaco, so we live here by preference.”

“I should be grateful if your highness would present me to the princess.”

Without mentioning my name he ordered a page in waiting to present me to the princess.

The page opened the door of a handsome room and said, “The Princess,” and left me. She was singing at the piano, but as soon as she saw me she rose and came to meet me. I was obliged to introduce myself, a most unpleasant thing, and no doubt the princess felt the position, for she pretended not to notice it, and addressed me with the utmost kindness and politeness, and in a way that shewed that she was learned in the maxims of good society. I immediately became very much at my ease, and proceeded in a lordly manner to entertain her with pleasant talk, though I said nothing about my two lady friends.

The princess was handsome, clever, and good-natured. Her mother, who knew that a man like the prince would never make her daughter happy, opposed the marriage, but the young marchioness was infatuated, and the mother had to give in when the girl said, —

“O Monaco O monaca.” (Either Monaco or a convent.)

We were still occupied in the trifles which keep up an ordinary conversation, when the prince came in running after a waiting-maid, who was making her escape, laughing. The princess pretended not to see him, and went on with what she was saying. The scene displeased me, and I took leave of the princess, who wished me a pleasant journey. I met the prince as I was going out, and he invited me to come and see him whenever I passed that way.

“Certainly,” said I; and made my escape without saying any more.

I went back to the inn and ordered a good dinner for three.

In the principality of Monaco there was a French garrison, which was worth a pension of a hundred thousand francs to the prince — a very welcome addition to his income.

A curled and scented young officer, passing by our room, the door of which was open, stopped short, and with unblushing politeness asked us if we would allow him to join our party. I replied politely, but coldly, that he did us honour — a phrase which means neither yes nor no; but a Frenchman who has advanced one step never retreats.

He proceeded to display his graces for the benefit of the ladies, talking incessantly, without giving them time to get in a word, when he suddenly turned to me and said that he wondered how it was that the prince had not asked me and my ladies to dinner. I told him that I had not said anything to the prince about the treasure I had with me.

I had scarcely uttered the words, when the kindly blockhead rose and cried enthusiastically, —

“Parbleu! I am no longer surprised. I will go and tell his highness, and I shall soon have the honour of dining with you at the castle.”

He did not wait to hear my answer, but went off in hot haste.

We laughed heartily at his folly, feeling quite sure that we should neither dine with him nor the prince, but in a quarter of an hour he returned in high glee, and invited us all to dinner on behalf of the prince.

“I beg you will thank his highness, and at the same time ask him to excuse us. The weather has improved, and I want to be off as soon as we have taken a hasty morsel.”

The young Frenchman exerted all his eloquence in vain, and at length retired with a mortified air to take our answer to the prince.

I thought I had got rid of him at last, but I did not know my man. He returned a short time after, and addressing himself in a complacent manner to the ladies, as if I was of no more account, he told them that he had given the prince such a description of their charms that he had made up his mind to dine with them.

“I have already ordered the table to be laid for two more, as I shall have the honour of being of the party. In a quarter of an hour, ladies, the prince will be here.”

“Very good,” said I, “but as the prince is coming I must go to the felucca and fetch a capital pie of which the prince is very fond, I know. Come, ladies.”

“You can leave them here, sir. I will undertake to keep them amused.”

“I have no doubt you would, but they have some things to get from the felucca as well.”

“Then you will allow me to come too.”

“Certainly with pleasure.”

As we were going down the stairs, I asked the innkeeper what I owed him.

“Nothing, sir, I have just received orders to serve you in everything, and to take no money from you.”

“The prince is really magnificent!” During this short dialogue, the ladies had gone on with the fop. I hastened to rejoin them, and my niece took my arm, laughing heartily to hear the officer making love to Marcoline, who did not understand a word he said. He did not notice it in the least, for his tongue kept going like the wheel of a mill, and he did not pause for any answers.

"We shall have some fun at dinner," said my niece, "but what are we going to do on the felucca?"

"We are leaving. Say nothing."

"Leaving?"

"Immediately."

"What a jest! it is worth its weight in gold."

We went on board the felucca, and the officer, who was delighted with the pretty vessel, proceeded to examine it. I told my niece to keep him company, and going to the master, whispered to him to let go directly.

"Directly?"

"Yes, this moment."

"But the abbe and your secretary are gone for a walk, and two of my men are on shore, too."

"That's no matter; we shall pick them up again at Antibes; it's only ten leagues, and they have plenty of money. I must go, and directly. Make haste."

"All right."

He tripped the anchor, and the felucca began to swing away from the shore. The officer asked me in great astonishment what it meant.

"It means that I am going to Antibes and I shall be very glad to take you there for nothing."

"This is a fine jest! You are joking, surely?"

"Your company will be very pleasant on the journey."

"Pardieu! put me ashore, for with your leave, ladies, I cannot go to Antibes."

"Put the gentleman ashore," said I to the master, "he does not seem to like our company."

"It's not that, upon my honour. These ladies are charming, but the prince would think that I was in the plot to play this trick upon him, which you must confess is rather strong."

“I never play a weak trick.”

“But what will the prince say?”

“He may say what he likes, and I shall do as I like.”

“Well, it’s no fault of mine. Farewell, ladies! farewell, sir!”

“Farewell, and you may thank the prince for me for paying my bill.”

Marcoline who did not understand what was passing gazed in astonishment, but my niece laughed till her sides ached, for the way in which the poor officer had taken the matter was extremely comic.

Clairmont brought us an excellent dinner, and we laughed incessantly during its progress, even at the astonishment of the abbe and Possano when they came to the quay and found the felucca had flown. However, I was sure of meeting them again at Antibes, and we reached that port at six o’clock in the evening.

The motion of the sea had tired us without making us feel sick, for the air was fresh, and our appetites felt the benefits of it, and in consequence we did great honour to the supper and the wine. Marcoline whose stomach was weakened by the sickness she had undergone soon felt the effects of the Burgundy, her eyes were heavy, and she went to sleep. My niece would have imitated her, but I reminded her tenderly that we were at Antibes, and said I was sure she would keep her word. She did not answer me, but gave me her hand, lowering her eyes with much modesty.

Intoxicated with her submission which was so like love, I got into bed beside her, exclaiming, —

“At last the hour of my happiness has come!

“And mine too, dearest.”

“Yours? Have you not continually repulsed me?”

“Never! I always loved you, and your indifference has been a bitter grief to me.”

“But the first night we left Milan you preferred being alone to sleeping with me.”

“Could I do otherwise without passing in your eyes for one more a slave to sensual passion than to love? Besides you might have thought I was giving myself to you for the benefits I had received; and though gratitude be a noble feeling, it destroys all the sweet delights of love. You ought to have told me that you loved me and subdued me by those attentions which conquer the hearts of us women. Then you would have seen that I loved you too, and our affection would have been mutual. On my side I should have known that the pleasure you had of me was not given out of a mere feeling of gratitude. I do not know whether you would have loved me less the morning after, if I had consented, but I am sure I should have lost your esteem.”

She was right, and I applauded her sentiments, while giving her to understand that she was to put all notions of benefits received out of her mind. I wanted to make her see that I knew that there was no more need for gratitude on her side than mine.

We spent a night that must be imagined rather than described. She told me in the morning that she felt all had been for the best, as if she had given way at first she could never have made up her mind to accept the young Genoese, though he seemed likely to make her happy.

Marcoline came to see us in the morning, caressed us, and promised to sleep by herself the rest of the voyage.

“Then you are not jealous?” said I.

“No, for her happiness is mine too, and I know she will make you happy.”

She became more ravishingly beautiful every day.

Possano and the abbe came in just as we were sitting down to table, and my niece having ordered two more plates I allowed them to dine with us. My brother’s face was pitiful and yet ridiculous. He could not walk any distance, so he had been obliged to come on horseback, probably for the first time in his life.

“My skin is delicate,” said he, “so I am all blistered. But God’s will be done! I do not think any of His servants have endured greater torments than mine during this journey. My body is sore, and so is my soul.”

So saying he cast a piteous glance at Marcoline, and we had to hold our sides to prevent ourselves laughing. My niece could bear it no more, and said, —

“How I pity you, dear uncle!”

At this he blushed, and began to address the most absurd compliments to her, styling her “my dear niece.” I told him to be silent, and not to speak French till he was able to express himself in that equivocal language without making a fool of himself. But the poet Pogomas spoke no better than he did.

I was curious to know what had happened at Mentone after we had left, and Pogomas proceeded to tell the story.

“When we came back from our walk we were greatly astonished not to find the felucca any more. We went to the inn, where I knew you had ordered dinner; but the inn-keeper knew nothing except that he was expecting the prince and a young officer to dine with you. I told him he might wait for you in vain, and just then the prince came up in a rage, and told the inn-keeper that now you were gone he might look to you for his payment. ‘My lord,’ said the inn-keeper, ‘the gentleman wanted to pay me, but I respected the orders I had received from your highness and would not take the money.’ At this the prince flung him a louis with an ill grace, and asked us who we were. I told him that we belonged to you, and that you had not waited for us either, which put us to great trouble. ‘You will get away easily enough,’ said he; and then he began to laugh, and swore the jest was a pleasant one. He then asked me who the ladies were. I told him that the one was your niece, and that I knew nothing of the other; but the abbe interfered, and said she was your cuisine. The prince guessed he meant to say ‘cousin,’ and burst out laughing, in which he was joined by the young officer. ‘Greet him from me,’ said he, as he went away, ‘and tell him that we shall meet again, and that I will pay him out for the trick he has played me.’ The worthy host laughed, too, when the prince had gone, and gave us a good dinner, saying that the prince’s Louis would pay for it all. When we had dined we hired two horses, and slept at Nice. In the morning we rode on again, being certain of finding you here.” Marcoline told the abbe in a cold voice to take care not to tell anyone else that she was his cuisine, or his cousin, or else it would go ill with him, as she did not wish to be thought either the one or the other. I also advised him seriously not to speak French for the future, as the absurd way in which he had committed himself made everyone about him ashamed.

Just as I was ordering post-horses to take us to Frejus, a man appeared, and told me I owed him ten louis for the storage of a carriage which I had left on his hands nearly three years ago. This was when I was taking Rosalie to Italy. I laughed, for the carriage itself was not worth five louis. “Friend,” said I, “I make you a present of the article.”

“I don’t want your present. I want the ten louis you owe me.”

“You won’t get the ten louis. I will see you further first.”

“We will see about that;” and so saying he took his departure.

I sent for horses that we might continue our journey.

A few moments after, a sergeant summoned me to the governor’s presence. I followed him, and was politely requested to pay the ten louis that my creditor demanded. I answered that, in the agreement I had entered into for six francs a month, there was no mention of the length of the term, and that I did not want to withdraw my carriage.

“But supposing you were never to withdraw it?”

“Then the man could bequeath his claim to his heir.”

“I believe he could oblige you to withdraw it, or to allow it to be sold to defray expenses.”

“You are right, sir, and I wish to spare him that trouble. I make him a present of the carriage.”

“That’s fair enough. Friend, the carriage is yours.”

“But sir,” said the plaintiff, “it is not enough; the carriage is not worth ten louis, and I want the surplus.”

“You are in the wrong. I wish you a pleasant journey, sir, and I hope you will forgive the ignorance of these poor people, who would like to shape the laws according to their needs.”

All this trouble had made me lose a good deal of time, and I determined to put off my departure till the next day. However, I wanted a carriage for

Possano and the abbe, and I got my secretary to buy the one I had abandoned for four louis. It was in a deplorable state, and I had to have it repaired, which kept us till the afternoon of the next day; however, so far as pleasure was concerned, the time was not lost.

CHAPTER III

My Arrival at Marseilles — Madame d'Urfe — My Niece Is

Welcomed by Madame Audibert I Get Rid of My Brother and

Possano — Regeneration — Departure of Madame d'Urfe — Marcoline

Remains Constant

My niece, now my mistress, grew more dear to me every day, and I could not help trembling when I reflected that Marseilles would be the tomb of our love. Though I could not help arriving there, I prolonged my happiness as long as I could by travelling by short stages. I got to Frejus in less than three hours, and stopped there, and telling Possano and the abbe to do as they liked during our stay, I ordered a delicate supper and choice wine for myself and my nymphs. Our repast lasted till midnight, then we went to bed, and passed the time in sweet sleep and sweeter pleasures. I made the same arrangements at Lucca, Brignoles, and Aubayne, where I passed the sixth and last night of happiness.

As soon as I got to Marseilles I conducted my niece to Madame Audibert's, and sent Possano and my brother to the "Trieze Cantons" inn, bidding them observe the strictest silence with regard to me, for Madame d'Urfe had been awaiting me for three weeks, and I wished to be my own herald to her.

It was at Madame Audibert's that my niece had met Croce. She was a clever woman, and had known the girl from her childhood, and it was through her that my niece hoped to be restored to her father's good graces. We had agreed that I should leave my niece and Marcoline in the carriage, and should interview Madame Audibert, whose acquaintance I had made before, and with whom I could make arrangements for my niece's lodging till some arrangement was come to.

Madame Audibert saw me getting out of my carriage, and as she did not recognize me her curiosity made her come down and open the door. She soon recognized me, and consented to let me have a private interview with the best grace in the world.

I did not lose any time in leading up to the subject, and after I had given her a rapid sketch of the affair, how misfortune had obliged La Croix to abandon Mdlle. Crosin, how I had been able to be of service to her, and finally, how she had had the good luck to meet a wealthy and distinguished person, who would come to Marseilles to ask her hand in a fortnight, I concluded by saying that I should have the happiness of restoring to her hands the dear girl whose preserver I had been.

“Where is she?” cried Madame Audibert.

“In my carriage. I have lowered the blinds.”

“Bring her in, quick! I will see to everything. Nobody shall know that she is in my house.”

Happier than a prince, I made one bound to the carriage and, concealing her face with her cloak and hood, I led my niece to her friend’s arms. This was a dramatic scene full of satisfaction for me. Kisses were given and received, tears of happiness and repentance shed, I wept myself from mingled feelings of emotion, happiness, and regret.

In the meanwhile Clairmont had brought up my niece’s luggage, and I went away promising to return and see her another day.

I had another and as important an arrangement to conclude, I mean with respect to Marcoline. I told the postillions to take me to the worthy old man’s where I had lodged Rosalie so pleasantly. Marcoline was weeping at this separation from her friend. I got down at the house, and made my bargain hastily. My new mistress was, I said, to be lodged, fed, and attended on as if she had been a princess. He shewed me the apartment she was to occupy; it was fit for a young marchioness, and he told me that she should be attended by his own niece, that she should not leave the house, and that nobody but myself should visit her.

Having made these arrangements I made the fair Venetian come in. I gave her the money she had won, which I had converted into gold and made up to a thousand ducats.

"You won't want it here," said I, "so take care of it. At Venice a thousand ducats will make you somebody. Do not weep, dearest, my heart is with you, and to-morrow evening I will sup with you."

The old man gave me the latch-key, and I went off to the "Treize Cantons." I was expected, and my rooms were adjacent to those occupied by Madame d'Urfe.

As soon as I was settled, Bourgnole waited on me, and told me her mistress was alone and expecting me impatiently.

I shall not trouble my readers with an account of our interview, as it was only composed of Madame d'Urfe's mad flights of fancy, and of lies on my part which had not even the merit of probability. A slave to my life of happy profligacy, I profited by her folly; she would have found someone else to deceive her, if I had not done so, for it was really she who deceived herself. I naturally preferred to profit by her rather than that a stranger should do so; she was very rich, and I did myself a great deal of good, without doing anyone any harm. The first thing she asked me was, "Where is Querilinthos?" And she jumped with joy when I told her that he was under the same roof.

"'Tis he, then, who shall make me young again. So has my genius assured me night after night. Ask Paralis if the presents I have prepared are good enough for Semiramis to present to the head of the Fraternity of the Rosy Cross."

I did not know what these presents were, and as I could not ask to see them, I answered that, before consulting Paralis, it would be necessary to consecrate the gifts under the planetary hours, and that Querilinthos himself must not see them before the consecration. Thereupon she took me to her closet, and shewed me the seven packets meant for the Rosicrucian in the form of offerings to the seven planets.

Each packet contained seven pounds of the metal proper to the planet, and seven precious stones, also proper to the planets, each being seven carats in weight; there were diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires, chrysolites, topazes, and opals.

I made up my mind that nothing of this should pass into the hands of the Genoese, and told the mad woman that we must trust entirely in Paralis for the method of consecration, which must be begun by our placing each packet in a small casket made on purpose. One packet, and one only, could be consecrated in a day, and it was necessary to begin with the sun. It was now Friday, and we should have to wait till Sunday, the day of the sun. On Saturday I had a box with seven niches made for the purpose.

For the purposes of consecration I spent three hours every day with Madame d'Urfe, and we had not finished till the ensuing Saturday. Throughout this week I made Possano and my brother take their meals with us, and as the latter did not understand a word the good lady said, he did not speak a word himself, and might have passed for a mute of the seraglio. Madame d'Urfe pronounced him devoid of sense, and imagined we were going to put the soul of a sylph into his body that he might engender some being half human, half divine.

It was amusing to see my brother's despair and rage at being taken for an idiot, and when he endeavoured to say something to spew that he was not one, she only thought him more idiotic than ever. I laughed to myself, and thought how ill he would have played the part if I had asked him to do it. All the same the rascal did not lose anything by his reputation, for Madame d'Urfe clothed him with a decent splendour that would have led one to suppose that the abbe belonged to one of the first families in France. The most uneasy guest at Madame d'Urfe's table was Possano, who had to reply to questions, of the most occult nature, and, not knowing anything about the subject, made the most ridiculous mistakes.

I brought Madame d'Urfe the box, and having made all the necessary arrangements for the consecrations, I received an order from the oracle to go into the country and sleep there for seven nights in succession, to abstain from intercourse with all mortal women, and to perform ceremonial worship to the moon every night, at the hour of that planet, in the open fields. This would make me fit to regenerate Madame d'Urfe myself in case Querilinthos, for some mystic reasons, might not be able to do so.

Through this order Madame d'Urfe was not only not vexed with me for sleeping away from the hotel, but was grateful for the pains I was taking to ensure the success of the operation.

The day after my arrival I called on Madame Audibert, and had the pleasure of finding my niece wail pleased with the efforts her friend was making in her favour. Madame Audibert had spoken to her father, telling him that his daughter was with her, and that she hoped to obtain his pardon and to return to his house, where she would soon become the bride of a rich Genoese, who wished to receive her from her father's hands. The worthy man, glad to find again the lost sheep, said he would come in two days and take her to her aunt, who had a house at St. Louis, two leagues from the town. She might then quietly await the arrival of her future husband, and avoid all occasion of scandal. My niece was surprised that her father had not yet received a letter from the young man, and I could see that she was anxious about it; but I comforted her and assured her that I would not leave Marseilles till I had danced at her wedding.

I left her to go to Marcoline, whom I longed to press to my heart. I found her in an ecstasy of joy, and she said that if she could understand what her maid said her happiness would be complete. I saw that her situation was a painful one, especially as she was a woman, but for the present I saw no way out of the difficulty; I should have to get an Italian-speaking servant, and this would have been a troublesome task. She wept with joy when I told her that my niece desired to be remembered to her, and that in a day she would be on her father's hearth. Marcoline had found out that she was not my real niece when she found her in my arms.

The choice supper which the old man had procured us, and which spewed he had a good memory for my favorite tastes, made me think of Rosalie. Marcoline heard me tell the story with great interest, and said that it seemed to her that I only went about to make unfortunate girls happy, provided I found them pretty.

"I almost think you are right," said I; "and it is certain that I have made many happy, and have never brought misfortune to any girl."

"God will reward you, my dear friend."

"Possibly I am not worth His taking the trouble!"

Though the wit and beauty of Marcoline had charmed me, her appetite charmed me still more; the reader knows that I have always liked women who eat heartily. And in Marseilles they make an excellent dish of a common fowl, which is often so insipid.

Those who like oil will get on capitally in Provence, for it is used in everything, and it must be confessed that if used in moderation it makes an excellent relish.

Marcoline was charming in bed. I had not enjoyed the Venetian vices for nearly eight years, and Marcoline was a beauty before whom Praxiteles would have bent the knee. I laughed at my brother for having let such a treasure slip out of his hands, though I quite forgave him for falling in love with her. I myself could not take her about, and as I wanted her to be amused I begged my kind old landlord to send her to the play every day, and to prepare a good supper every evening. I got her some rich dresses that she might cut a good figure, and this attention redoubled her affection for me.

The next day, which was the second occasion on which I had visited her, she told me that she had enjoyed the play though she could not understand the dialogues; and the day after she astonished me by saying that my brother had intruded himself into her box, and had said so many impertinent things that if she had been at Venice she would have boxed his ears.

“I am afraid,” she added, “that the rascal has followed me here, and will be annoying me.”

“Don’t be afraid,” I answered, “I will see what I can do.”

When I got to the hotel I entered the abbe’s room, and by Possano’s bed I saw an individual collecting lint and various surgical instruments.

“What’s all this? Are you ill?”

“Yes, I have got something which will teach me to be wiser for the future.”

“It’s rather late for this kind of thing at sixty.”

“Better late than never.”

“You are an old fool. You stink of mercury.”

“I shall not leave my room.”

“This will harm you with the marchioness, who believes you to be the greatest of adepts, and consequently above such weaknesses.”

“Damn the marchioness! Let me be.”

The rascal had never talked in this style before. I thought it best to conceal my anger, and went up to my brother who was in a corner of the room.

“What do you mean by pestering Marcoline at the theatre yesterday?”

“I went to remind her of her duty, and to warn her that I would not be her complaisant lover.”

“You have insulted me and her too, fool that you are! You owe all to Marcoline, for if it had not been for her, I should never have given you a second glance; and yet you behave in this disgraceful manner.”

“I have ruined myself for her sake, and I can never shew my face in Venice again. What right have you to take her from me?”

“The right of love, blockhead, and the right of luck, and the right of the strongest! How is it that she is happy with me, and does not wish to leave me?”

“You have dazzled her.”

“Another reason is that with you she was dying of misery and hunger.”

“Yes, but the end of it will be that you will abandon her as you have done with many others, whereas I should have married her.”

“Married her! You renegade, you seem to forget that you are a priest. I do not propose to part with her, but if I do I will send her away rich.”

“Well, well, do as you please; but still I have the right to speak to her whenever I like.”

“I have forbidden you to do so, and you may trust me when I tell you that you have spoken to her for the last time.”

So saying I went out and called on an advocate. I asked him if I could have a foreign abbe, who was indebted to me, arrested, although I had no proof of the debt.

“You can do so, as he is a foreigner, but you will have to pay caution-money. You can have him put under arrest at his inn, and you can make him pay unless he is able to prove that he owes you nothing. Is the sum a large one?”

“Twelve louis.”

"You must come with me before the magistrate and deposit twelve louis, and from that moment you will be able to have him arrested. Where is he staying?"

"In the same hotel as I am, but I do not wish to have him arrested there, so I will get him to the 'Ste. Baume,' and put him under arrest. Here are the twelve louis caution-money, so you can get the magistrate's order, and we will meet again to-morrow."

"Give me his name, and yours also."

I returned in haste to the "Treize Cantons," and met the abbe, dressed up to the nines, and just about to go out.

"Follow me," said I, "I am going to take you to Marcoline, and you shall have an explanation in her presence."

"With pleasure."

He got into a carriage with me, and I told the coachman to take us to the "Ste. Baume" inn. When we got there, I told him to wait for me, that I was going to fetch Marcoline, and that I would return with her in a minute.

I got into the carriage again, and drove to the advocate, who gave the order for arrest to a policeman, who was to execute it. I then returned to the "Treize Cantons" and put his belongings into a trunk, and had them transported to his new abode.

I found him under arrest, and talking to the astonished host, who could not understand what it was all about. I told the landlord the mythical history of the abbe debt to me, and handed over the trunk, telling him that he had nothing to fear with regard to the bill, as I would take care that he should be well paid.

I then began my talk with the abbe, telling him that he must get ready to leave Marseilles the next day, and that I would pay for his journey to Paris; but that if he did not like to do so, I should leave him to his fate, and in three days he would be expelled from Marseilles. The coward began to weep and said he would go to Paris.

"You must start for Lyons to-morrow, but you will first write me out an I O U for twelve louis."

"Why?"

"Because I say so. If you do so I will give you twelve louis and tear up the document before your face."

"I have no choice in the matter."

"You are right."

When he had written the I O U, I went to take a place in the diligence for him, and the next morning I went with the advocate to withdraw the arrest and to take back the twelve louis, which I gave to my brother in the diligence, with a letter to M. Bono, whom I warned not to give him any money, and to send him on to Paris by the same diligence. I then tore up his note of hand, and wished him a pleasant journey.

Thus I got rid of this foolish fellow, whom I saw again in Paris in a month's time.

The day I had my brother arrested and before I went to dine with Madame d'Urfe I had an interview with Possano in the hope of discovering the reason of his ill humour.

"The reason is," said he, "that I am sure you are going to lay hands on twenty or thirty thousand crowns in gold and diamonds, which the marchioness meant me to have."

"That may be, but it is not for you to know anything about it. I may tell you that it rests entirely with me to prevent your getting anything. If you think you can succeed go to the marchioness and make your complaints to her. I will do nothing to prevent you."

"Then you think I am going to help you in your imposture for nothing; you are very much mistaken. I want a thousand louis, and I will have it, too."

"Then get somebody to give it you," said I; and I turned my back on him.

I went up to the marchioness and told her that dinner was ready, and that we should dine alone, as I had been obliged to send the abbe away.

"He was an idiot; but how about Querilinthos?"

"After dinner Paralis will tell us all about him. I have strong suspicions that there is something to be cleared up."

"So have I. The man seems changed. Where is he?"

"He is in bed, ill of a disease which I dare not so much as name to you."

"That is a very extraordinary circumstance; I have never heard of such a thing before. It must be the work of an evil genius."

"I have never heard of such a thing, either; but now let us dine. We shall have to work hard to-day at the consecration of the tin."

"All the better. We must offer an expiatory sacrifice to Oromasis, for, awful thought! in three days he would have to regenerate me, and the operation would be performed in that condition."

"Let us eat now," I repeated; "I fear lest the hour of Jupiter be over-past."

"Fear nothing, I will see that all goes well."

After the consecration of the tin had been performed, I transferred that of Oromasis to another day, while I consulted the oracle assiduously, the marchioness translating the figures into letters. The oracle declared that seven salamanders had transported the true Querilinthos to the Milky Way, and that the man in the next room was the evil genius, St. Germain, who had been put in that fearful condition by a female gnome, who had intended to make him the executioner of Semiramis, who was to die of the dreadful malady before her term had expired. The oracle also said that Semiramis should leave to Payaliseus Galtinardus (myself) all the charge of getting rid of the evil genius, St. Germain; and that she was not to doubt concerning her regeneration, since the word would be sent me by the true Querilinthos from the Milky Way on the seventh night of my worship of the moon. Finally the oracle declared that I was to embrace Semiramis two days before the end of the ceremonies, after an Undine had purified us by bathing us in the room where we were.

I had thus undertaken to regenerate the worthy Semiramis, and I began to think how I could carry out my undertaking without putting myself to shame. The marchioness was handsome but old, and I feared lest I should be unable to perform the great act. I was thirty-eight, and I began to feel age stealing on me. The Undine, whom I was to obtain of the moon, was none other than Marcoline, who was to give me the necessary generative vigour by the sight of her beauty and by the contact of her hands. The reader will see how I made her come down from heaven.

I received a note from Madame Audibert which made me call on her before paying my visit to Marcoline. As soon as I came in she told me joyously that my niece's father had just received a letter from the father of the Genoese, asking the hand of his daughter for his only son, who had been introduced to her by the Chevalier de Seingalt, her uncle, at the Paretti's.

"The worthy man thinks himself under great obligations to you," said Madame Audibert. "He adores his daughter, and he knows you have cared for her like a father. His daughter has drawn your portrait in very favourable colors, and he would be extremely pleased to make your acquaintance. Tell me when you can sup with me; the father will be here to meet you, though unaccompanied by his daughter."

"I am delighted at what you tell me, for the young man's esteem for his future wife will only be augmented when he finds that I am her father's friend. I cannot come to supper, however; I will be here at six and stop till eight."

As the lady left the choice of the day with me I fixed the day after next, and then I repaired to my fair Venetian, to whom I told my news, and how I had managed to get rid of the abbe.

On the day after next, just as we were sitting down to dinner, the marchioness smilingly gave me a letter which Possano had written her in bad but perfectly intelligible French. He had filled eight pages in his endeavour to convince her that I was deceiving her, and to make sure he told the whole story without concealing any circumstance to my disadvantage. He added that I had brought two girls with me to Marseilles; and though he did not know where I had hidden them, he was sure that it was with them that I spent my nights.

After I had read the whole letter through, with the utmost coolness I gave it back to her, asking her if she had had the patience to read it through. She replied that she had run through it, but that she could not make it out at all, as the evil genius seemed to write a sort of outlandish dialect, which she did not care to puzzle herself over, as he could only have written down lies calculated to lead her astray at the most important moment of her life. I was much pleased with the marchioness's prudence, for it was important that she should have no suspicions about the Undine, the sight and the touch of whom were necessary to me in the great work I was about to undertake.

After dining, and discharging all the ceremonies and oracles which were necessary to calm the soul of my poor victim, I went to a banker and got a bill of a hundred louis on Lyons, to the order of M. Bono, and I advised him of what I had done, requesting him to cash it for Possano if it were presented on the day named thereon.

I then wrote the advice for Possano to take with him, it ran as follows: "M. Bonno, pay to M. Possano, on sight, to himself, and not to order, the sum of one hundred louis, if these presents are delivered to you on the 30th day of April, in the year 1763; and after the day aforesaid my order to become null and void."

With this letter in my hand I went to the traitor who had been lanced an hour before.

"You're an infamous traitor," I began, "but as Madame d'Urfe knows of the disgraceful state you are in she would not so much as read your letter. I have read it, and by way of reward I give you two alternatives which you must decide on immediately. I am in a hurry. You will either go to the hospital — for we can't have pestiferous fellows like you here — or start for Lyons in an hour. You must not stop on the way, for I have only given you sixty hours, which is ample to do forty posts in. As soon as you get to Lyons present this to M. Bono, and he will give you a hundred louis. This is a present from me, and afterwards I don't care what you do, as you are no longer in my service. You can have the carriage I bought for you at Antibes, and there is twenty-five louis for the journey: that is all. Make your choice, but I warn you that if you go to the hospital I shall only give you a month's wages, as I dismiss you from my service now at this instant."

After a moment's reflection he said he would go to Lyons, though it would be at the risk of his life, for he was very ill.

"You must reap the reward of your treachery," said I, "and if you die it will be a good thing for your family, who will come in for what I have given you, but not what I should have given you if you had been a faithful servant."

I then left him and told Clairmont to pack up his trunk. I warned the inn-keeper of his departure and told him to get the post horses ready as soon as possible.

I then gave Clairmont the letter to Bono and twenty-five Louis, for him to hand them over to Possano when he was in the carriage and ready to go off.

When I had thus successfully accomplished my designs by means of the all-powerful lever, gold, which I knew how to lavish in time of need, I was once more free for my amours. I wanted to instruct the fair Marcoline, with whom I grew more in love every day. She kept telling me that her happiness would be complete if she knew French, and if she had the slightest hope that I would take her to England with me.

I had never flattered her that my love would go as far as that, but yet I could not help feeling sad at the thought of parting from a being who seemed made to taste voluptuous pleasures, and to communicate them with tenfold intensity to the man of her choice. She was delighted to hear that I had got rid of my two odious companions, and begged me to take her to the theatre, "for," said she, "everybody is asking who and what I am, and my landlord's niece is quite angry with me because I will not let her tell the truth."

I promised I would take her out in the course of the next week, but that for the present I had a most important affair on hand, in which I had need of her assistance.

"I will do whatever you wish, dearest."

"Very good! then listen to me. I will get you a disguise which will make you look like a smart footman, and in that costume you will call on the marchioness with whom I live, at the hour I shall name to you, and you will give her a note. Have you sufficient courage for that?"

"Certainly. Will you be there?"

"Yes. She will speak, but you must pretend to be dumb, as the note you bring with you will tell us; as also that you have come to wait upon us while we are bathing. She will accept the offer, and when she tells you to undress her from head to foot you will do so. When you have done, undress yourself, and gently rub the marchioness from the feet to the waist, but not higher. In the meanwhile I shall have taken off my clothes, and while I hold her in a close embrace you must stand so that I can see all your charms.

"Further, sweetheart, when I leave you you must gently wash her generative organs, and afterwards wipe them with a fine towel. Then do the same to me, and try to bring me to life again. I shall proceed to embrace the marchioness a second time, and when it is over wash her again and embrace her, and then come and embrace me and kiss in your Venetian manner the instrument with which the sacrifice is consummated. I shall then clasp the marchioness to my arms a third time, and you must caress us till the act is complete. Finally, you will wash us for the third time, then dress, take what she gives you and come here, where I will meet you in the course of an hour."

"You may reckon on my following all your instructions, but you must see that the task will be rather trying to my feelings."

"Not more trying than to mine. I could do nothing with the old woman if you were not present."

"Is she very old?"

"Nearly seventy."

"My poor sweetheart! I do pity you. But after this painful duty is over you must sup here and sleep with me."

"Certainly."

On the day appointed I had a long and friendly interview with the father of my late niece. I told him all about his daughter, only suppressing the history of our own amours, which were not suitable for a father's ears. The worthy man embraced me again and again, calling me his benefactor, and saying that I had done more for his daughter than he would have done himself, which in a sense was perhaps true. He told me that he had received another letter from the father, and a letter from the young man himself, who wrote in the most tender and respectful manner possible.

"He doesn't ask anything about the dower," said he, "a wonderful thing these days, but I will give her a hundred and fifty thousand francs, for the marriage is an excellent one, above all after my poor simpleton's escape. All Marseilles knows the father of her future husband, and to-morrow I mean to tell the whole story to my wife, and I am sure she will forgive the poor girl as I have done."

I had to promise to be present at the wedding, which was to be at Madame Audibert's. That lady knowing me to be very fond of play, and there being a good deal of play going on at her house, wondered why she did not see more of me; but I was at Marseilles to create and not to destroy: there is a time for everything.

I had a green velvet jacket made for Marcoline, with breeches of the same and silver-lace garters, green silk stockings, and fine leather shoes of the same colour. Her fine black hair was confined in a net of green silk, with a silver brooch. In this dress the voluptuous and well-rounded form of Marcoline was displayed to so much advantage, that if she had shewn herself in the street all Marseilles would have run after her, for, in spite of her man's dress, anybody could see that she was a girl. I took her to my rooms in her ordinary costume, to shew her where she would have to hide after the operation was over.

By Saturday we had finished all the consecrations, and the oracle fixed the regeneration of Semiramis for the following Tuesday, in the hours of the sun, Venus, and Mercury, which follow each other in the planetary system of the magicians, as also in Ptolemy's. These hours were in ordinary parlance the ninth, tenth, and eleventh of the day, since the day being a Tuesday, the first hour was sacred to Mars. And as at the beginning of May the hours are sixty-five minutes long, the reader, however little of a magician he may be, will understand that I had to perform the great work on Madame d'Urfe, beginning at half-past two and ending at five minutes to six. I had taken plenty of time, as I expected I should have great need of it.

On the Monday night, at the hour of the moon, I had taken Madame d'Urfe to the sea-shore, Clairmont following behind with the box containing the offerings, which weighed fifty pounds.

I was certain that nobody could see us, and I told my companion that the time was come. I told Clairmont to put down the box beside us, and to go and await us at the carriage. When we were alone we addressed a solemn prayer to Selenis, and then to the great satisfaction of the marchioness the box was consigned to the address. My satisfaction however was still greater than hers, for the box contained fifty pounds of lead. The real box, containing the treasure, was comfortably hidden in my room.

When we got back to the "Treize Cantons," I left Madame d'Urfe alone, telling her that I would return to the hotel when I had performed my conjurations to the moon, at the same hour and in the same place in which I had performed the seven consecrations.

I spoke the truth. I went to Marcoline, and while she was putting on her disguise I wrote on a sheet of white paper, in large and odd-looking letters, the following sentences, using, instead of ink, rock-alum:

“I am dumb but not deaf. I am come from the Rhone to bathe you. The hour of Oromasis has begun.”

“This is the note you are to give to the marchioness,” I said, “when you appear before her.”

After supper we walked to the hotel and got in without anyone seeing us. I hid Marcoline in a large cupboard, and then putting on my dressing-gown I went to the marchioness to inform her that Selenis had fixed the next day for the hour of regeneration, and that we must be careful to finish before the hour of the moon began, as otherwise the operation would be annulled or at least greatly enfeebled.

“You must take care,” I added, “that the bath be here beside your bed, and that Brougnole does not interrupt us.”

“I will tell her to go out. But Selenis promised to send an Undine.”

“True, but I have not yet seen such a being.”

“Ask the oracle.”

“Willingly.”

She herself asked the question imploring Paralis not to delay the time of her regeneration, even though the Undine were lacking, since she could very well bathe herself.

“The commands of Oromasis change not,” came the reply; “and in that you have doubted them you have sinned.”

At this the marchioness arose and performed an expiatory sacrifice, and it appeared, on consulting the oracle, that Oromasis was satisfied.

The old lady did not move my pity so much as my laughter. She solemnly embraced me and said, —

“To-morrow, Galtinardus, you will be my spouse and my father.” When I got back to my room and had shut the door, I drew the Undine out of her place of concealment. She undressed, and as she knew that I should be obliged to husband my forces, she turned her back on me, and we passed the night without giving each other a single kiss, for a spark would have set us all ablaze.

Next morning, before summoning Clairmont, I gave her her breakfast, and then replaced her in the cupboard. Later on, I gave her her instructions over again, telling her to do everything with calm precision, a cheerful face, and, above all, silence.

“Don’t be afraid,” said she, “I will make no mistakes.”

As we were to dine at noon exactly, I went to look for the marchioness, but she was not in her room, though the bath was there, and the bed which was to be our altar was prepared.

A few moments after, the marchioness came out of her dressing-room, exquisitely painted, her hair arranged with the choicest lace, and looking radiant. Her breasts, which forty years before had been the fairest in all France, were covered with a lace shawl, her dress was of the antique kind, but of extremely rich material, her ear-rings were emeralds, and a necklace of seven aquamarines of the finest water, from which hung an enormous emerald, surrounded by twenty brilliants, each weighing a carat and a half, completed her costume. She wore on her finger the carbuncle which she thought worth a million francs, but which was really only a splendid imitation.

Seeing Semiramis thus decked out for the sacrifice, I thought it my bounden duty to offer her my homage. I would have knelt before her and kissed her hand, but she would not let me, and instead opened her arms and strained me to her breast.

After telling Brougnole that she could go out till six o’clock, we talked over our mysteries till the dinner was brought in.

Clairmont was the only person privileged to see us at dinner, at which Semiramis would only eat fish. At half-past one I told Clairmont I was not at home to anyone, and giving him a louis I told him to go and amuse himself till the evening.

The marchioness began to be uneasy, and I pretended to be so, too. I looked at my watch, calculated how the planetary hours were proceeding, and said from time to time, —

"We are still in the hour of Mars, that of the sun has not yet commenced."

At last the time-piece struck half-past two, and in two minutes afterwards the fair and smiling Undine was seen advancing into the room. She came along with measured steps, and knelt before Madame d'Urfe, and gave her the paper she carried. Seeing that I did not rise, the marchioness remained seated, but she raised the spirit with a gracious air and took the paper from her. She was surprised, however, to find that it was all white.

I hastened to give her a pen to consult the oracle on the subject, and after I had made a pyramid of her question, she interpreted it and found the answer:

"That which is written in water must be read in water."

"I understand now," said she, and going to the bath she plunged the paper into it, and then read in still whiter letters: "I am dumb, but not deaf. I am come from the Rhone to bathe you. The hour of Oromasis has begun."

"Then bathe me, divine being," said Semiramis, putting down the paper and sitting on the bed.

With perfect exactitude Marcoline undressed the marchioness, and delicately placed her feet in the water, and then, in a twinkling she had undressed herself, and was in the bath, beside Madame d'Urfe. What a contrast there was between the two bodies; but the sight of the one kindled the flame which the other was to quench.

As I gazed on the beautiful girl, I, too, undressed, and when I was ready to take off my shirt I spoke as follows: "O divine being, wipe the feet of Semiramis, and be the witness of my union with her, to the glory of the immortal Horomadis, King of the Salamanders."

Scarcely had I uttered my prayer when it was granted, and I consummated my first union with Semiramis, gazing on the charms of Marcoline, which I had never seen to such advantage before.

Semiramis had been handsome, but she was then what I am now, and without the Undine the operation would have failed. Nevertheless, Semiramis was affectionate, clean, and sweet in every respect, and had nothing disgusting about her, so I succeeded.

When the milk had been poured forth upon the altar, I said, —

“We must now await the hour of Venus.”

The Undine performed the ablutions, embraced the bride, and came to perform the same office for me.

Semiramis was in an ecstasy of happiness, and as she pointed out to me the beauties of the Undine I was obliged to confess that I had never seen any mortal woman to be compared to her in beauty. Semiramis grew excited by so voluptuous a sight, and when the hour of Venus began I proceeded to the second assault, which would be the severest, as the hour was of sixty-five minutes. I worked for half an hour, steaming with perspiration, and tiring Semiramis, without being able to come to the point. Still I was ashamed to trick her. She, the victim, wiped the drops of sweat from my forehead, while the Undine, seeing my exhaustion, kindled anew the flame which the contact of that aged body had destroyed. Towards the end of the hour, as I was exhausted and still unsuccessful, I was obliged to deceive her by making use of those movements which are incidental to success. As I went out of the battle with all the signs of my strength still about me, Semiramis could have no doubts as to the reality of my success, and even the Undine was deceived when she came to wash me. But the third hour had come, and we were obliged to satisfy Mercury. We spent a quarter of the time in the bath, while the Undine delighted Semiramis by caresses which would have delighted the regent of France, if he had ever known of them. The good marchioness, believing these endearments to be peculiar to river spirits, was pleased with everything, and begged the Undine to shew me the same kindness. Marcoline obeyed, and lavished on me all the resources of the Venetian school of love. She was a perfect Lesbian, and her caresses having soon restored me to all my vigour I was encouraged to undertake to satisfy Mercury. I proceeded to the work, but alas! it was all in vain. I saw how my fruitless efforts vexed the Undine, and perceiving that Madame d’Urfe had had enough, I again took the course of deceiving her by pretended ecstacies and movements, followed by complete rest. Semiramis afterwards told me that my exertions shewed that I was something more than mortal.

I threw myself into the bath, and underwent my third ablution, then I dressed. Marcoline washed the marchioness and proceeded to clothe her, and did so with such a graceful charm that Madame d’Urfe followed the inspiration of her good genius, and threw her magnificent necklace over the

Undine's neck. After a parting Venetian kiss she vanished, and went to her hiding place in the cupboard.

Semiramis asked the oracle if the operation had been successful. The answer was that she bore within her the seed of the sun, and that in the beginning of next February she would be brought to bed of another self of the same sex as the creator; but in order that the evil genii might not be able to do her any harm she must keep quiet in her bed for a hundred and seven hours in succession.

The worthy marchioness was delighted to receive this order, and looked upon it as a good omen, for I had tired her dreadfully. I kissed her, saying that I was going to the country to collect together what remained of the substances that I had used in my ceremonies, but I promised to dine with her on the morrow.

I shut myself up in my room with the Undine, and we amused ourselves as best we could till it was night, for she could not go out while it was light in her spiritual costume. I took off my handsome wedding garment, and as soon as it was dusk we crept out, and went away to Marcoline's lodging in a hackney coach, carrying with us the planetary offerings which I had gained so cleverly.

We were dying of hunger, but the delicious supper which was waiting for us brought us to life again. As soon as we got into the room Marcoline took off her green clothes and put on her woman's dress, saying, —

"I was not born to wear the breeches. Here, take the beautiful necklace the madwoman gave me!"

"I will sell it, fair Undine, and you shall have the proceeds."

"Is it worth much?"

"At least a thousand sequins. By the time you get back to Venice you will be worth at least five thousand ducats, and you will be able to get a husband and live with him in a comfortable style."

"Keep it all, I don't want it; I want you. I will never cease to love you; I will do whatever you tell me, and I promise never to be jealous. I will care for you — yes, as if you were my son."

“Do not let us say anything more about it, fair Marcoline, but let us go to bed, for you have never inspired me with so much ardour as now.”

“But you must be tired.”

“Yes, but not exhaustion, for I was only able to perform the distillation once.”

“I thought you sacrificed twice on that old altar. Poor old woman! she is still pretty, and I have no doubt that fifty years ago she was one of the first beauties in France. How foolish of her to be thinking of love at that age.”

“You excited me, but she undid your work even more quickly.”

“Are you always obliged to have — a girl beside you when you make love to her?”

“No; before, there was no question of making a son.”

“What? you are going to make her pregnant? That’s ridiculous! Does she imagine that she has conceived?”

“Certainly; and the hope makes her happy.”

“What a mad idea! But why did you try to do it three times?”

“I thought to shew my strength, and that if I gazed on you I should not fail; but I was quite mistaken.”

“I pity you for having suffered so much.”

“You will renew my strength.”

As a matter of fact, I do not know whether to attribute it to the difference between the old and the young, but I spent a most delicious night with the beautiful Venetian — a night which I can only compare to those I passed at Parma with Henriette, and at Muran with the beautiful nun. I spent fourteen hours in bed, of which four at least were devoted to expiating the insult I had offered to love. When I had dressed and taken my chocolate I told Marcoline to dress herself with elegance, and to expect me in the evening just before the play began. I could see that she was intensely delighted with the prospect.

I found Madame d’Urfe in bed, dressed with care and in the fashion of a young bride, and with a smile of satisfaction on her face which I had never remarked there before.

“To thee, beloved Galtinardus, I owe all my happiness,” said she, as she embraced me.

“I am happy to have contributed to it, divine Semiramis, but you must remember I am only the agent of the genii.”

Thereupon the marchioness began to argue in the most sensible manner, but unfortunately the foundation of her argument was wholly chimerical.

“Marry me,” said she; “you will then be able to be governor of the child, who will be your son. In this manner you will keep all my property for me, including what I shall have from my brother M. de Pontcarre, who is old and cannot live much longer. If you do not care for me in February next, when I shall be born again, into what hands shall I fall! I shall be called a bastard, and my income of twenty-four thousand francs will be lost to me. Think over it, dear Galtinardus. I must tell you that I feel already as if I were a man. I confess I am in love with the Undine, and I should like to know whether I shall be able to sleep with her in fourteen or fifteen years time. I shall be so if Oromasis will it, and then I shall be happy indeed. What a charming creature she is? Have you ever seen a woman like her? What a pity she is dumb!”

“She, no doubt, has a male water-spirit for a lover. But all of them are dumb, since it is impossible to speak in the water. I wonder she is not deaf as well. I can’t think why you didn’t touch her. The softness of her skin is something wonderful — velvet and satin are not to be compared to it! And then her breath is so sweet! How delighted I should be if I could converse with such an exquisite being.”

“Dear Galtinardus, I beg you will consult the oracle to find out where I am to be brought to bed, and if you won’t marry me I think I had better save all I have that I may have some provision when I am born again, for when I am born I shall know nothing, and money will be wanted to educate me. By selling the whole a large sum might be realized which could be put out at interest. Thus the interest would suffice without the capital being touched.”

“The oracle must be our guide,” said I. “You will be my son, and I will never allow anyone to call you a bastard.”

The sublime madwoman was quiet by this assurance.

Doubtless many a reader will say that if I had been an honest man I should have undeceived her, but I cannot agree with them; it would have been impossible, and I confess that even if it had been possible I would not have done so, for it would only have made me unhappy.

I had told Marcoline to dress with elegance, and I put on one of my handsomest suits to accompany her to the theatre. Chance brought the two sisters Rangoni, daughters of the Roman consul, into our box. As I had made their acquaintance on my first visit to Marseilles, I introduced Marcoline to them as my niece, who only spoke Italian. As the two young ladies spoke the tongue of Tasso also, Marcoline was highly delighted. The younger sister, who was by far the handsomer of the two, afterwards became the wife of Prince Gonzaga Solferino. The prince was a cultured man, and even a genius, but very poor. For all that he was a true son of Gonzaga, being a son of Leopold, who was also poor, and a girl of the Medini family, sister to the Medini who died in prison at London in the year 1787.

Babet Rangoni, though poor, deserved to become a princess, for she had all the airs and manners of one. She shines under her name of Rangoni amongst the princess and princesses of the almanacs. Her vain husband is delighted at his wife being thought to belong to the illustrious family of Medini — an innocent feeling, which does neither good nor harm. The same publications turn Medini into Medici, which is equally harmless. This species of lie arises from the idiotic pride of the nobles who think themselves raised above the rest of humanity by their titles which they have often acquired by some act of baseness. It is of no use interfering with them on this point, since all things are finally appreciated at their true value, and the pride of the nobility is easily discounted when one sees them as they really are.

Prince Gonzaga Solferino, whom I saw at Venice eighteen years ago, lived on a pension allowed him by the empress. I hope the late emperor did not deprive him of it, as it was well deserved by this genius and his knowledge of literature.

At the play Marcoline did nothing but chatter with Babet Rangoni, who wanted me to bring the fair Venetian to see her, but I had my own reasons for not doing so.

I was thinking how I could send Madame d'Urfe to Lyons, for I had no further use for her at Marseilles, and she was often embarrassing. For instance, on the third day after her regeneration, she requested me to ask Paralis where she was to die — that is, to be brought to bed. I made the oracle reply that she must sacrifice to the water-spirits on the banks of two rivers, at the same hour, and that afterwards the question of her lying-in would be resolved. The oracle added that I must perform three expiatory sacrifices to Saturn, on account of my too harsh treatment of the false Querilinthos, and that Semiramis need not take part in these ceremonies, though she herself must perform the sacrifices to the water-spirits.

As I was pretending to think of a place where two rivers were sufficiently near to each other to fulfil the requirements of the oracle, Semiramis herself suggested that Lyons was watered by the Rhone and the Saone, and that it would be an excellent place for the ceremony. As may be imagined, I immediately agreed with her. On asking Paralis if there were any preparations to be made, he replied that it Would be necessary to pour a bottle of sea-water into each river a fortnight before the sacrifice, and that this ceremony was to be performed by Semiramis in person, at the first diurnal hour of the moon.

"Then," said the marchioness, "the bottles must be filled here, for the other French ports are farther off. I will go as soon as ever I can leave my bed, and will wait for you at Lyons; for as you have to perform expiatory sacrifices to Saturn in this place, you cannot come with me."

I assented, pretending sorrow at not being able to accompany her. The next morning I brought her two well-sealed bottles of sea-water, telling her that she was to pour them out into the two rivers on the 15th of May (the current month). We fixed her departure for the 11th, and I promised to rejoin her before the expiration of the fortnight. I gave her the hours of the moon in writing, and also directions for the journey.

As soon as the marchioness had gone I left the "Treize Cantons" and went to live with Marcoline, giving her four hundred and sixty louis, which, with the hundred and forty she had won at biribi, gave her a total of six hundred louis, or fourteen thousand four hundred francs. With this sum she could look the future in the face fearlessly.

The day after Madame d'Urfe's departure, the betrothed of Mdlle. Crosin arrived at Marseilles with a letter from Rosalie, which he handed to me on the day of his arrival. She begged me in the name of our common honour to introduce the bearer in person to the father of the betrothed. Rosalie was right, but as the lady was not my real niece there were some difficulties in the way. I welcomed the young man and told him that I would first take him to Madame Audibert, and that we could then go together to his father-in-law in prospective.

The young Genoese had gone to the "Treize Cantons," where he thought I was staying. He was delighted to find himself so near the goal of his desires, and his ecstacy received a new momentum when he saw how cordially Madame Audibert received him. We all got into my carriage and drove to the father's who gave him an excellent reception, and then presented him to his wife, who was already friendly disposed towards him.

I was pleasantly surprised when this good and sensible man introduced me to his wife as his cousin, the Chevalier de Seingalt, who had taken such care of their daughter. The good wife and good mother, her husband's worthy partner, stretched out her hand to me, and all my trouble was over.

My new cousin immediately sent an express messenger to his sister, telling her that he and his wife, his future son-in-law, Madame Audibert, and a cousin she had not met before, would come and dine with her on the following day. This done he invited us, and Madame Audibert said that she would escort us. She told him that I had another niece with me, of whom his daughter was very fond, and would be delighted to see again. The worthy man was overjoyed to be able to increase his daughter's happiness.

I, too, was pleased with Madame Audibert's tact and thoughtfulness; and as making Marcoline happy was to make me happy also, I expressed my gratitude to her in very warm terms.

I took the young Genoese to the play, to Marcoline's delight, for she would have liked the French very much if she could have understood them. We had an excellent supper together, in the course of which I told Marcoline of the pleasure which awaited her on the morrow. I thought she would have gone wild with joy.

The next day we were at Madame Audibert's as punctually as Achilles on the field of battle. The lady spoke Italian well, and was charmed with Marcoline, reproaching me for not having introduced her before. At eleven we got to St. Louis, and my eyes were charmed with the dramatic situation. My late niece had an air of dignity which became her to admiration, and received her future husband with great graciousness; and then, after thanking me with a pleasant smile for introducing him to her father, she passed from dignity to gaiety, and gave her sweetheart a hundred kisses.

The dinner was delicious, and passed off merrily; but I alone preserved a tender melancholy, though I laughed to myself when they asked me why I was sad. I was thought to be sad because I did not talk in my usual vivacious manner, but far from being really sad that was one of the happiest moments of my life. My whole being was absorbed in the calm delight which follows a good action. I was the author of the comedy which promised such a happy ending. I was pleased with the thought that my influence in the world was more for good than for ill, and though I was not born a king yet I contrived to make many people happy. Everyone at table was indebted to me for some part of their happiness, and the father, the mother, and the betrothed pair wholly so. This thought made me feel a peaceful calm which I could only enjoy in silence.

Mdlle. Crosin returned to Marseilles with her father, her mother, and her future husband, whom the father wished to take up his abode with them. I went back with Madame Audibert, who made me promise to bring the delightful Marcoline to sup with her.

The marriage depended on the receipt of a letter from the young man's father, in answer to one from my niece's father. It will be taken for granted that we were all asked to the wedding, and Marcoline's affection for me increased every day.

When we went to sup with Madame Audibert we found a rich and witty young wine merchant at her house. He sat beside Marcoline, who entertained him with her sallies; and as the young man could speak Italian, and even the Venetian dialect (for he had spent a year at Venice), he was much impressed by the charms of my new niece.

I have always been jealous of my mistresses; but when a rival promises to marry them and give them a good establishment, jealousy gives way to a more generous feeling. For the moment I satisfied myself by asking Madame Audibert who he was, and I was delighted to hear that he had an excellent reputation, a hundred thousand crowns, a large business, and complete independence.

The next day he came to see us in our box at the theatre, and Marcoline received him very graciously. Wishing to push the matter on I asked him to sup with us, and when he came I was well pleased with his manners and his intelligence; to Marcoline he was tender but respectful. On his departure I told him I hoped he would come and see us again, and when we were alone I congratulated Marcoline on her conquest, and shewed her that she might succeed almost as well as Mdlle. Crosin. But instead of being grateful she was furiously, angry.

“If you want to get rid of me,” said she, “send me back to Venice, but don’t talk to me about marrying.”

“Calm yourself, my angel! I get rid of you? What an idea! Has my behaviour led you to suppose that you are in my way? This handsome, well-educated, and rich young man has come under my notice. I see he loves you and you like him, and as I love you and wish to see you sheltered from the storms of fortune, and as I think this pleasant young Frenchman would make you happy, I have pointed out to you these advantages, but instead of being grateful you scold me. Do not weep, sweetheart, you grieve my very soul!”

“I am weeping because you think that I can love him.”

“It might be so, dearest, and without my honour taking any hurt; but let us say no more about it and get into bed.”

Marcoline’s tears changed to smiles and kisses, and we said no more about the young wine merchant. The next day he came to our box again, but the scene had changed; she was polite but reserved, and I dared not ask him to supper as I had done the night before. When we had got home Marcoline thanked me for not doing so, adding that she had been afraid I would.

“What you said last night is a sufficient guide for me for the future.”

In the morning Madame Audibert called on behalf of the wine merchant to ask us to sup with him. I turned towards the fair Venetian, and guessing my thoughts she hastened to reply that she would be happy to go anywhere in company with Madame Audibert. That lady came for us in the evening, and took us to the young man's house, where we found a magnificent supper, but no other guests awaiting us. The house was luxuriously furnished, it only lacked a mistress. The master divided his attention between the two ladies, and Marcoline looked ravishing. Everything convinced me that she had kindled the ardour of the worthy young wine merchant.

The next day I received a note from Madame Audibert, asking me to call on her. When I went I found she wanted to give my consent to the marriage of Marcoline with her friend.

"The proposal is a very agreeable one to me," I answered, "and I would willingly give her thirty thousand francs as a dowry, but I can have nothing to do with the matter personally. I will send her to you; and if you can win her over you may count on my word, but do not say that you are speaking on my behalf, for that might spoil everything."

"I will come for her, and if you like she shall dine with me, and you can take her to the play in the evening."

Madame Audibert came the following day, and Marcoline went to dinner with her. I called for her at five o'clock, and finding her looking pleased and happy I did not know what to think. As Madame Audibert did not take me aside I stifled my curiosity and went with Marcoline to the theatre, without knowing what had passed.

On the way Marcoline sang the praises of Madame Audibert, but did not say a word of the proposal she must have made to her. About the middle of the piece, however, I thought I saw the explanation of the riddle, for the young man was in the pit, and did not come to our box though there were two empty places.

We returned home without a word about the merchant or Madame Audibert, but as I knew in my own mind what had happened, I felt disposed to be grateful, and I saw that Marcoline was overjoyed to find me more affectionate than ever. At last, amidst our amorous assaults, Marcoline, feeling how dearly I loved her, told me what had passed between her and Madame Audibert.

"She spoke to me so kindly and so sensibly," said she, "but I contented myself with saying that I would never marry till you told me to do so. All the same I thank you with all my heart for the ten thousand crowns you are willing to give me. You have tossed the ball to me and I have sent it back. I will go back to Venice whenever you please if you will not take me to England with you, but I will never marry. I expect we shall see no more of the young gentleman, though if I had never met you I might have loved him."

It was evidently all over, and I liked her for the part she had taken, for a man who knows his own worth is not likely to sigh long at the feet of an obdurate lady.

The wedding-day of my late niece came round. Marcoline was there, without diamonds, but clad in a rich dress which set off her beauty and satisfied my vanity.

CHAPTER IV

I Leave Marseilles — Henriette at Aix — Irene at Avignon —

Treachery of Possano — Madame d’Urfe Leaves Lyon

The wedding only interested me because of the bride. The plentiful rather than choice repast, the numerous and noisy company, the empty compliments, the silly conversation, the roars of laughter at very poor jokes — all this would have driven me to despair if it had not been for Madame Audibert, whom I did not leave for a moment. Marcoline followed the young bride about like a shadow, and the latter, who was going to Genoa in a week, wanted Marcoline to come in her train, promising to have her taken to Venice by a person of trust, but my sweetheart would listen to no proposal for separating her from me, —

“I won’t go to Venice,” she said, “till you send me there.”

The splendours of her friend’s marriage did not make her experience the least regret at having refused the young wine merchant. The bride beamed with happiness, and on my congratulating her she confessed her joy to be great, adding that it was increased by the fact that she owed it all to me. She was also very glad to be going to Genoa, where she was sure of finding a true friend in Rosalie, who would sympathize with her, their fortunes having been very similar.

The day after the wedding I began to make preparations for my departure. The first thing I disposed of was the box containing the planetary offerings. I kept the diamonds and precious stones, and took all the gold and silver to Rousse de Cosse, who still held the sum which Greppi had placed to my credit. I took a bill of exchange on Tourton and Bauer, for I should not be wanting any money at Lyons as Madame d’Urfe was there, and consequently the three hundred louis I had about me would be ample. I acted differently where Marcoline was concerned. I added a sufficient sum to her six hundred louis to give her a capital in round numbers of fifteen thousand francs. I got a bill drawn on Lyons for that amount, for I intended at the first opportunity to send her back to Venice, and with that idea had her trunks packed separately with all the linen and dresses which I had given her in abundance.

On the eve of our departure we took leave of the newly-married couple and the whole family at supper, and we parted with tears, promising each other a lifelong friendship.

The next day we set out intending to travel all night and not to stop till we got to Avignon, but about five o'clock the chain of the carriage broke, and we could go no further until a wheelwright had repaired the damage. We settled ourselves down to wait patiently, and Clairmont went to get information at a fine house on our right, which was approached by an alley of trees. As I had only one postillion, I did not allow him to leave his horses for a moment. Before long we saw Clairmont reappear with two servants, one of whom invited me, on behalf of his master, to await the arrival of the wheelwright at his house. It would have been churlish to refuse this invitation which was in the true spirit of French politeness, so leaving Clairmont in charge Marcoline and I began to wend our way towards the hospitable abode.

Three ladies and two gentleman came to meet us, and one of the gentlemen said they congratulated themselves on my small mishap, since it enabled madam to offer me her house and hospitality. I turned towards the lady whom the gentleman had indicated, and thanked her, saying, that I hoped not to trouble her long, but that I was deeply grateful for her kindness. She made me a graceful curtsy, but I could not make out her features, for a stormy wind was blowing, and she and her two friends had drawn their hoods almost entirely over their faces. Marcoline's beautiful head was uncovered and her hair streaming in the breeze. She only replied by graceful bows and smiles to the compliments which were addressed to her on all sides. The gentleman who had first accosted me asked me, as he gave her his arm, if she were my daughter. Marcoline smiled and I answered that she was my cousin, and that we were both Venetians.

A Frenchman is so bent on flattering a pretty woman that he will always do so, even if it be at the expense of a third party. Nobody could really think that Marcoline was my daughter, for though I was twenty years older than she was, I looked ten years younger than my real age, and so Marcoline smiled suggestively.

We were just going into the house when a large mastiff ran towards us, chasing a pretty spaniel, and the lady, being afraid of getting bitten, began to run, made a false step, and fell to the ground. We ran to help her, but she said she had sprained her ankle, and limped into the house on the arm of one of the gentlemen. Refreshments were brought in, and I saw that Marcoline looked uneasy in the company of a lady who was talking to her. I hastened to excuse her, saying that she did not speak French. As a matter of fact, Marcoline had begun to talk a sort of French, but the most charming language in the world will not bear being spoken badly, and I had begged her not to speak at all till she had learned to express herself properly. It is better to remain silent than to make strangers laugh by odd expressions and absurd equivocations.

The less pretty, or rather the uglier, of the two ladies said that it was astonishing that the education of young ladies was neglected in such a shocking manner at Venice. “Fancy not teaching them French!”

“It is certainly very wrong, but in my country young ladies are neither taught foreign languages nor round games. These important branches of education are attended to afterwards.”

“Then you are a Venetian, too?”

“Yes, madam.”

“Really, I should not have thought so.”

I made a bow in return for this compliment, which in reality was only an insult; for if flattering to me it was insulting to the rest of my fellow-countrymen, and Marcoline thought as much for she made a little grimace accompanied by a knowing smile.

“I see that the young lady understands French,” said our flattering friend, “she laughs exactly in the right place.”

“Yes, she understands it, and as for her laughter it was due to the fact that she knows me to be like all other Venetians.”

“Possibly, but it is easy to see that you have lived a long time in France.”

"Yes, madam," said Marcoline; and these words in her pretty Venetian accent were a pleasure to hear.

The gentleman who had taken the lady to her room said that she found her foot to be rather swollen, and had gone to bed hoping we would all come upstairs.

We found her lying in a splendid bed, placed in an alcove which the thick curtains of red satin made still darker. I could not see whether she was young or old, pretty or ugly. I said that I was very sorry to be the indirect cause of her mishap, and she replied in good Italian that it was a matter of no consequence, and that she did not think she could pay too dear for the privilege of entertaining such pleasant guests.

"Your ladyship must have lived in Venice to speak the language with so much correctness."

"No, I have never been there, but I have associated a good deal with Venetians."

A servant came and told me that the wheelwright had arrived, and that he would take four hours to mend my carriage, so I went downstairs. The man lived at a quarter of a league's distance, and by tying the carriage pole with ropes, I could drive to his place, and wait there for the carriage to be mended. I was about to do so, when the gentleman who did the honours of the house came and asked me, on behalf of the lady, to sup and pass the night at her house, as to go to the wheelwright's would be out of my way; the man would have to work by night, I should be uncomfortable, and the work would be ill done. I assented to the countess's proposal, and having agreed with the man to come early the next day and bring his tools with him, I told Clairmont to take my belongings into the room which was assigned to me.

When I returned to the countess's room I found everyone laughing at Marcoline's sallies, which the countess translated. I was not astonished at seeing the way in which my fair Venetian caressed the countess, but I was enraged at not being able to see her, for I knew Marcoline would not treat any woman in that manner unless she were pretty.

The table was spread in the bedroom of the countess, whom I hoped to see at supper-time, but I was disappointed; for she declared that she could not take anything, and all supper-time she talked to Marcoline and myself, shewing intelligence, education, and a great knowledge of Italian. She let fall the expression, “my late husband,” so I knew her for a widow, but as I did not dare to ask any questions, my knowledge ended at that point. When Clairmont was undressing me he told me her married name, but as I knew nothing of the family that was no addition to my information.

When we had finished supper, Marcoline took up her old position by the countess’s bed, and they talked so volubly to one another that nobody else could get in a word.

When politeness bade me retire, my pretended cousin said she was going to sleep with the countess. As the latter laughingly assented, I refrained from telling my madcap that she was too forward, and I could see by their mutual embraces that they were agreed in the matter. I satisfied myself with saying that I could not guarantee the sex of the countess’s bed-fellow, but she answered,

“Never mind; if there be a mistake I shall be the gainer.”

This struck me as rather free, but I was not the man to be scandalized. I was amused at the tastes of my fair Venetian, and at the manner in which she contrived to gratify them as she had done at Genoa with my last niece. As a rule the Provencal women are inclined this way, and far from reproaching them I like them all the better for it.

The next day I rose at day-break to hurry on the wheelwright, and when the work was done I asked if the countess were visible. Directly after Marcoline came out with one of the gentlemen, who begged me to excuse the countess, as she could not receive me in her present extremely scanty attire; “but she hopes that whenever you are in these parts you will honour her and her house by your company, whether you are alone or with friends.”

This refusal, gilded as it was, was a bitter pill for me to swallow, but I concealed my disgust, as I could only put it down to Marcoline’s doings; she seemed in high spirits, and I did not like to mortify her. I thanked the gentleman with effusion, and placing a Louis in the hands of all the servants who were present I took my leave.

I kissed Marcoline affectionately, so that she should not notice my ill humour, and asked how she and the countess spent the night.

"Capitally," said she. "The countess is charming, and we amused ourselves all night with the tricks of two amorous women."

"Is she pretty or old?"

"She is only thirty-three, and, I assure you, she is as pretty as my friend Mdlle. Crosin. I can speak with authority for we saw each other in a state of nature."

"You are a singular creature; you were unfaithful to me for a woman, and left me to pass the night by myself."

"You must forgive me, and I had to sleep with her as she was the first to declare her love."

"Really? How was that?"

"When I gave her the first of my kisses she returned it in the Florentine manner, and our tongues met. After supper, I confess, I was the first to begin the suggestive caresses, but she met me half-way. I could only make her happy by spending the night with her. Look, this will shew you how pleased she was."

With these words Marcoline drew a superb ring, set with brilliants, from her finger. I was astonished.

"Truly," I said, "this woman is fond of pleasure and deserves to have it."

I gave my Lesbian (who might have vied with Sappho) a hundred kisses, and forgave her her infidelity.

"But," I remarked, "I can't think why she did not want me to see her; I think she has treated me rather cavalierly."

"No, I think the reason was that she was ashamed to be seen by my lover after having made me unfaithful to him; I had to confess that we were lovers."

"Maybe. At all events you have been well paid; that ring is worth two hundred louis:"

"But I may as well tell you that I was well enough paid for the pleasure I gave by the pleasure I received."

"That's right; I am delighted to see you happy."

"If you want to make me really happy, take me to England with you. My uncle will be there, and I could go back to Venice with him."

"What! you have an uncle in England? Do you really mean it? It sounds like a fairy-tale. You never told me of it before."

"I have never said anything about it up to now, because I have always imagined that this might prevent your accomplishing your desire."

"Is your uncle a Venetian? What is he doing in England? Are you sure that he will welcome you?"

"Yes."

"What is his name? And how are we to find him in a town of more than a million inhabitants?"

"He is ready found. His name is Mattio Boisi, and he is valet de chambre to M. Querini, the Venetian ambassador sent to England to congratulate the new king; he is accompanied by the Procurator Morosini. My uncle is my mother's brother; he is very fond of me, and will forgive my fault, especially when he finds I am rich. When he went to England he said he would be back in Venice in July, and we shall just catch him on the point of departure."

As far as the embassy went I knew it was all true, from the letters I had received from M. de Bragadin, and as for the rest Marcoline seemed to me to be speaking the truth. I was flattered by her proposal and agreed to take her to England so that I should possess her for five or six weeks longer without committing myself to anything.

We reached Avignon at the close of the day, and found ourselves very hungry. I knew that the "St. Omer" was an excellent inn, and when I got there I ordered a choice meal and horses for five o'clock the next morning. Marcoline, who did not like night travelling, was in high glee, and threw her arms around my neck, saying, —

"Are we at Avignon now?"

"Yes, dearest."

"Then I conscientiously discharge the trust which the countess placed in me when she embraced me for the last time this morning. She made me swear not to say a word about it till we got to Avignon."

"All this puzzles me, dearest; explain yourself."

"She gave me a letter for you."

"A letter?"

"Will you forgive me for not placing it in your hands sooner?"

"Certainly, if you passed your word to the countess; but where is this letter?"

"Wait a minute."

She drew a large bundle of papers from her pocket, saying, —

"This is my certificate of baptism."

"I see you were born in 1746."

"This is a certificate of 'good conduct.'"

"Keep it, it may be useful to you."

"This is my certificate of virginity."

"That's no use. Did you get it from a midwife?"

"No, from the Patriarch of Venice."

"Did he test the matter for himself?"

"No, he was too old; he trusted in me."

"Well, well, let me see the letter."

"I hope I haven't lost it."

"I hope not, to God."

"Here is your brother's promise of marriage; he wanted to be a Protestant."

"You may throw that into the fire."

"What is a Protestant?"

"I will tell you another time. Give me the letter."

"Praised be God, here it is!"

"That's lucky; but it has no address."

My heart beat fast, as I opened it, and found, instead of an address, these words in Italian:

"To the most honest man of my acquaintance."

Could this be meant for me? I turned down the leaf, and read one word — Henriette! Nothing else; the rest of the paper was blank.

At the sight of that word I was for a moment annihilated.

"Io non mori, e non rimasi vivo."

Henriette! It was her style, eloquent in its brevity. I recollected her last letter from Pontarlier, which I had received at Geneva, and which contained only one word — Farewell!

Henriette, whom I had loved so well, whom I seemed at that moment to love as well as ever. "Cruel Henriette," said I to myself, "you saw me and would not let me see you. No doubt you thought your charms would not have their old power, and feared lest I should discover that after all you were but mortal. And yet I love you with all the ardour of my early passion. Why did you not let me learn from your own mouth that you were happy? That is the only question I should have asked you, cruel fair one. I should not have enquired whether you loved me still, for I feel my unworthiness, who have loved other women after loving the most perfect of her sex. Adorable Henriette, I will fly to you to-morrow, since you told me that I should be always welcome."

I turned these thoughts over in my own mind, and fortified myself in this resolve; but at last I said, —

"No, your behaviour proves that you do not wish to see me now, and your wishes shall be respected; but I must see you once before I die."

Marcoline scarcely dared breathe to see me thus motionless and lost in thought, and I do not know when I should have come to myself if the landlord had not come in saying that he remembered my tastes, and had got me a delicious supper. This brought me to my senses, and I made my fair Venetian happy again by embracing her in a sort of ecstacy.

"Do you know," she said, "you quite frightened me? You were as pale and still as a dead man, and remained for a quarter of an hour in a kind of swoon, the like of which I have never seen. What is the reason? I knew that the countess was acquainted with you, but I should never have thought that her name by itself could have such an astonishing effect."

"Well, it is strange; but how did you find out that the countess knew me?"

"She told me as much twenty times over in the night, but she made me promise to say nothing about it till I had given you the letter."

"What did she say to you about me?"

"She only repeated in different ways what she has written for an address."

"What a letter it is! Her name, and nothing more."

"It is very strange."

"Yes, but the name tells all."

"She told me that if I wanted to be happy I should always remain with you. I said I knew that well; but that you wanted to send me back to Venice, though you were very fond of me. I can guess now that you were lovers. How long ago was it?"

"Sixteen or seventeen years."

"She must have been very young, but she cannot have been prettier than she is now."

"Be quiet, Marcoline."

"Did your union with her last long?"

"We lived together four months in perfect happiness."

"I shall not be happy for so long as that."

"Yes you will, and longer, too; but with another man, and one more suitable to you in age. I am going to England to try to get my daughter from her mother."

"Your daughter? The countess asked me if you were married, and I said no."

“You were right; she is my illegitimate daughter. She must be ten now, and when you see her you will confess that she must belong to me.”

Just as we were sitting down to table we heard someone going downstairs to the table d’hote in the room where I had made Madame Stuard’s acquaintance, our door was open, and we could see the people on the stairs; and one of them seeing us gave a cry of joy, and came running in, exclaiming, “My dear papa!” I turned to the light and saw Irene, the same whom I had treated so rudely at Genoa after my discussion with her father about biribi. I embraced her effusively, and the sly little puss, pretending to be surprised to see Marcoline, made her a profound bow, which was returned with much grace. Marcoline listened attentively to our conversation.

“What are you doing here, fair Irene?”

“We have been here for the last fortnight. Good heavens! how lucky I am to find you again. I am quite weak. Will you allow me to sit down, madam?”

“Yes, yes, my dear,” said I, “sit down;” and I gave her a glass of wine which restored her.

A waiter came up, and said they were waiting for her at supper, but she said, “I won’t take any supper;” and Marcoline, always desirous of pleasing me, ordered a third place to be laid. I made her happy by giving an approving nod.

We sat down to table, and ate our meal with great appetite. “When we have done,” I said to Irene, “you must tell us what chance has brought you to Avignon.”

Marcoline, who had not spoken a word hitherto, noticing how hungry Irene was, said pleasantly that it would have been a mistake if she had not taken any supper. Irene was delighted to hear Venetian spoken, and thanked her for her kindness, and in three or four minutes they had kissed and become friends.

It amused me to see the way in which Marcoline always fell in love with pretty women, just as if she had been a man.

In the course of conversation I found that Irene’s father and mother were at the table d’hote below, and from sundry exclamations, such as “you have been brought to Avignon out of God's goodness," I learned that they were in distress. In spite of that Irene's mirthful countenance matched Marcoline's sallies, and the latter was delighted to hear that Irene had only called me papa because her mother had styled her my daughter at Milan.

We had only got half-way through our supper when Rinaldi and his wife came in. I asked them to sit down, but if it had not been for Irene I should have given the old rascal a very warm reception. He began to chide his daughter for troubling me with her presence when I had such fair company already, but Marcoline hastened to say that Irene could only have given me pleasure, for in my capacity of her uncle I was always glad when she was able to enjoy the society of a sweet young girl.

"I hope," she added, "that if she doesn't mind she will sleep with me."

"Yes, yes," resounded on all sides, and though I should have preferred to sleep with Marcoline by herself, I laughed and agreed; I have always been able to accommodate myself to circumstances.

Irene shared Marcoline's desires, for when it was settled that they should sleep together they seemed wild with joy, and I added fuel to the fire by plying them with punch and champagne.

Rinaldi and his wife did not leave us till they were quite drunk. When we had got rid of them, Irene told us how a Frenchman had fallen in love with her at Genoa, and had persuaded her father to go to Nice where high play was going on, but meeting with no luck there she had been obliged to sell what she had to pay the inn-keeper. Her lover had assured her that he would make it up to her at Aix, where there was some money owing to him, and she persuaded her father to go there; but the persons who owed the money having gone to Avignon, there had to be another sale of goods.

"When we got here the luck was no better, and the poor young man, whom my father reproached bitterly, would have killed himself if I had not given him the mantle you gave me that he might pawn it and go on his quest. He got four louis for it, and sent me the ticket with a very tender letter, in which he assured me that he would find some money at Lyons, and that he would then return and take us to Bordeaux, where we are to find treasures. In the meanwhile we are penniless, and as we have nothing more to sell the landlord threatens to turn us out naked."

"And what does your father mean to do?"

"I don't know. He says Providence will take care of us."

"What does your mother say?"

"Oh! she was as quiet as usual."

"How about yourself?"

"Alas! I have to bear a thousand mortifications every day. They are continually reproaching me with having fallen in love with this Frenchman, and bringing them to this dreadful pass."

"Were you really in love with him?"

"Yes, really."

"Then you must be very unhappy."

"Yes, very; but not on account of my love, for I shall get over that in time, but because of that which will happen to-morrow."

"Can't you make any conquests at the table-d'hote?"

"Some of the men say pretty things to me, but as they all know how poor we are they are afraid to come to our room."

"And yet in spite of all you keep cheerful; you don't look sad like most of the unhappy. I congratulate you on your good spirits." Irene's tale was like the fair Stuard's story over again, and Marcoline, though she had taken rather too much champagne, was deeply moved at this picture of misery. She kissed the girl, telling her that I would not forsake her, and that in the meanwhile they would spend a pleasant night.

"Come! let us to bed!" said she; and after taking off her clothes she helped Irene to undress. I had no wish to fight, against two, and said that I wanted to rest. The fair Venetian burst out laughing and said, —

"Go to bed and leave us alone."

I did so, and amused myself by watching the two Bacchantes; but Irene, who had evidently never engaged in such a combat before, was not nearly so adroit as Marcoline.

Before long Marcoline brought Irene in her arms to my bedside, and told me to kiss her.

“Leave me alone, dearest,” said I, “the punch has got into your head, and you don’t know what you are doing.”

This stung her; and urging Irene to follow her example, she took up a position in my bed by force; and as there was not enough room for three, Marcoline got on top of Irene, calling her her wife.

I was virtuous enough to remain a wholly passive spectator of the scene, which was always new to me, though I had seen it so often; but at last they flung themselves on me with such violence that I was obliged to give way, and for the most part of the night I performed my share of the work, till they saw that I was completely exhausted. We fell asleep, and I did not wake up till noon, and then I saw my two beauties still asleep, with their limbs interlaced like the branches of a tree. I thought with a sigh of the pleasures of such a sleep, and got out of bed gently for fear of rousing them. I ordered a good dinner to be prepared, and countermanded the horses which had been waiting several hours.

The landlord remembering what I had done for Madame Stuard guessed I was going to do the same for the Rinaldis, and left them in peace.

When I came back I found my two Lesbians awake, and they gave me such an amorous welcome that I felt inclined to complete the work of the night with a lover’s good morning; but I began to feel the need of husbanding my forces, so I did nothing, and bore their sarcasms in silence till one o’clock, when I told them to get up, as we ought to have done at five o’clock, and here was two o’clock and breakfast not done.

“We have enjoyed ourselves,” said Marcoline, “and time that is given to enjoyment is never lost.”

When they were dressed, I had coffee brought in, and I gave Irene sixteen louis, four of which were to redeem her cloak. Her father and mother who had just dined came in to bid us good-day, and Irene proudly gave her father twelve Louis telling him to scold her a little less in future. He laughed, wept, and went out, and then came back and said he found a good way of getting to Antibes at a small cost, but they would have to go directly, as the driver wanted to get to St. Andiol by nightfall.

"I am quite ready."

"No, dear Irene," said I, "you shall not go; you shall dine with your friend, and your driver can wait. Make him do so, Count Rinaldi; my niece will pay, will you not, Marcoline?"

"Certainly. I should like to dine here, and still better to put off our departure till the next day."

Her wishes were my orders. We had a delicious supper at five o'clock, and at eight we went to bed and spent the night in wantonness, but at five in the morning all were ready to start. Irene, who wore her handsome cloak, shed hot tears at parting from Marcoline, who also wept with all her heart. Old Rinaldi, who proved himself no prophet, told me that I should make a great fortune in England, and his daughter sighed to be in Marcoline's place. We shall hear of Rinaldi later on.

We drove on for fifteen posts without stopping, and passed the night at Valence. The food was bad, but Marcoline forgot her discomfort in talking of Irene.

"Do you know," said she, "that if it had been in my power I should have taken her from her parents. I believe she is your daughter, though she is not like you."

"How can she be my daughter when I have never known her mother?"

"She told me that certainly."

"Didn't she tell you anything else?"

"Yes, she told me that you lived with her for three days and bought her maidenhead for a thousand sequins."

"Quite so, but did she tell you that I paid the money to her father?"

"Yes, the little fool doesn't keep anything for herself. I don't think I should ever be jealous of your mistresses, if you let me sleep with them. Is not that a mark of a good disposition? Tell me."

"You have, no doubt, a good disposition, but you could be quite as good without your dominant passion."

"It is not a passion. I only have desires for those I love."

“Who gave you this taste?”

“Nature. I began at seven, and in the last ten years I have certainly had four hundred sweethearts.”

“You begin early. But when did you begin to have male sweethearts?”

“At eleven.”

“Tell me all about it.”

“Father Molini, a monk, was my confessor, and he expressed a desire to know the girl who was then my sweetheart. It was in the carnival time, and he gave us a moral discourse, telling us that he would take us to the play if we would promise to abstain for a week. We promised to do so, and at the end of the week we went to tell him that we had kept our word faithfully. The next day Father Molini called on my sweetheart’s aunt in a mask, and as she knew him, and as he was a monk and a confessor, we were allowed to go with him. Besides, we were mere children; my sweetheart was only a year older than I.

“After the play the father took us to an inn, and gave us some supper; and when the meal was over he spoke to us of our sin, and wanted to see our privates. ‘It’s a great sin between two girls,’ said he, ‘but between a man and a woman it is a venial matter. Do you know how men are made?’ We both knew, but we said no with one consent. ‘Then would you like to know?’ said he. We said we should like to know very much, and he added, ‘If you will promise to keep it a secret, I may be able to satisfy your curiosity.’ We gave our promises, and the good father proceeded to gratify us with a sight of the riches which nature had lavished on him, and in the course of an hour he had turned us into women. I must confess that he understood so well how to work on our curiosity that the request came from us. Three years later, when I was fourteen, I became the mistress of a young jeweller. Then came your brother; but he got nothing from me, because he began by saying that he could not ask me to give him any favours till we were married.”

“You must have been amused at that.”

“Yes, it did make me laugh, because I did not know that a priest could get married; and he excited my curiosity by telling me that they managed it at

Geneva. Curiosity and wantonness made me escape with him; you know the rest."

Thus did Marcoline amuse me during the evening, and then we went to bed and slept quietly till the morning. We started from Valence at five, and in the evening we were set down at the "Hotel du Parc" at Lyons.

As soon as I was settled in the pleasant apartments allotted to me I went to Madame d'Urfe, who was staying in the Place Bellecour, and said, as usual, that she was sure I was coming on that day. She wanted to know if she had performed the ceremonies correctly, and Paralis, of course, informed her that she had, whereat she was much flattered. The young Aranda was with her, and after I had kissed him affectionately I told the marchioness that I would be with her at ten o'clock the next morning, and so I left her.

I kept the appointment and we spent the whole of the day in close conference, asking of the oracle concerning her being brought to bed, how she was to make her will, and how she should contrive to escape poverty in her regenerated shape. The oracle told her that she must go to Paris for her lying-in, and leave all her possessions to her son, who would not be a bastard, as Paralis promised that as soon as I got to London an English gentleman should be sent over to marry her. Finally, the oracle ordered her to prepare to start in three days, and to take Aranda with her. I had to take the latter to London and return him to his mother, for his real position in life was no longer a mystery, the little rascal having confessed all; however, I had found a remedy for his indiscretion as for the treachery of the Corticelli and Possano.

I longed to return him to the keeping of his mother, who constantly wrote me impertinent letters. I also wished to take my daughter, who, according to her mother, had become a prodigy of grace and beauty.

After the oracular business had been settled, I returned to the "Hotel du Parc" to dine with Marcoline. It was very late, and as I could not take my sweetheart to the play I called on M. Bono to enquire whether he had sent my brother to Paris. He told me that he had gone the day before, and that my great enemy, Possano, was still in Lyons, and that I would do well to be on my guard as far as he was concerned.

“I have seen him,” said Bono; “he looks pale and undone, and seems scarcely able to stand. ‘I shall die before long,’ said he, ‘for that scoundrel Casanova has had me poisoned; but I will make him pay dearly for his crime, and in this very town of Lyons, where I know he will come, sooner or later.’

“In fact, in the course of half an hour, he made some terrible accusations against you, speaking as if he were in a fury. He wants all the world to know that you are the greatest villain unhung, that you are ruining Madame d’Urfe with your impious lies; that you are a sorcerer, a forger, an utter of false moneys, a poisoner — in short, the worst of men. He does not intend to publish a libellous pamphlet upon you, but to accuse you before the courts, alleging that he wants reparation for the wrongs you have done his person, his honour, and his life, for he says you are killing him by a slow poison. He adds that for every article he possesses the strongest proof.

“I will say nothing about the vague abuse he adds to these formal accusations, but I have felt it my duty to warn you of his treacherous designs that you may be able to defeat them. It’s no good saying he is a miserable wretch, and that you despise him; you know how strong a thing calumny is.”

“Where does the fellow live?”

“I don’t know in the least.”

“How can I find out?”

“I can’t say, for if he is hiding himself on purpose it would be hard to get at him.”

“Nevertheless, Lyons is not so vast a place.”

“Lyons is a perfect maze, and there is no better hiding-place, especially to a man with money, and Possano has money.”

“But what can he do to me?”

“He can institute proceedings against you in the criminal court, which would cause you immense anxiety and bring down your good name to the dust, even though you be the most innocent, the most just of men.”

"It seems to me, then, that the best thing I can do will be to be first in the field."

"So I think, but even then you cannot avoid publicity."

"Tell me frankly if you feel disposed to bear witness to what the rascal has said in a court of justice."

"I will tell all I know with perfect truth."

"Be kind enough to tell me of a good advocate."

"I will give you the address of one of the best; but reflect before you do anything. The affair will make a noise."

"As I don't know where he lives, I have really no choice in the matter."

If I had known where he lived I could have had Possano expelled from Lyons through the influence of Madame d'Urfe, whose relative, M. de la Rochebaron, was the governor; but as it was, I had no other course than the one I took.

Although Possano was a liar and an ungrateful, treacherous hound, yet I could not help being uneasy. I went to my hotel, and proceeded to ask for police protection against a man in hiding in Lyons, who had designs against my life and honour.

The next day M. Bono came to dissuade me from the course I had taken.

"For," said he, "the police will begin to search for him, and as soon as he hears of it he will take proceedings against you in the criminal courts, and then your positions will be changed. It seems to me that if you have no important business at Lyons you had better hasten your departure."

"Do you think I would do such a thing for a miserable fellow like Possano? No! I would despise myself if I did. I would die rather than hasten my departure on account of a rascal whom I loaded with kindnesses, despite his unworthiness! I would give a hundred louis to know where he is now."

"I am delighted to say that I do not know anything about it, for if I did I would tell you, and then God knows what would happen! You won't go any sooner; well, then, begin proceedings, and I will give my evidence by word of mouth or writing whenever you please."

I went to the advocate whom M. Bono had recommended to me, and told him my business. When he heard what I wanted he said, ——

“I can do nothing for you, sir, as I have undertaken the case of your opponent. You need not be alarmed, however, at having spoken to me, for I assure you that I will make no use whatever of the information. Possano’s plea or accusation will not be drawn up till the day after to-morrow, but I will not tell him to make baste for fear of your anticipating him, as I have only been informed of your intentions by hazard. However, you will find plenty of advocates at Lyons as honest as I am, and more skilled.”

“Could you give me the name of one?”

“That would not be etiquette, but M. Bono, who seems to have kindly spoken of me with some esteem, will be able to serve you.”

“Can you tell me where your client lives?”

“Since his chief aim is to remain hidden, and with good cause, you will see that I could not think of doing such a thing.”

In bidding him farewell I put a louis on the table, and though I did it with the utmost delicacy he ran after me and made me take it back.

“For once in a way,” I said to myself, “here’s an honest advocate.”

As I walked along I thought of putting a spy on Possano and finding out his abode, for I felt a strong desire to have him beaten to death; but where was I to find a spy in a town of which I knew nothing? M. Bono gave me the name of another advocate, and advised me to make haste.

“’Tis in criminal matters,” said he, “and in such cases the first comer always has the advantage.”

I asked him to find me a trusty fellow to track out the rascally Possano, but the worthy man would not hear of it. He shewed me that it would be dishonourable to set a spy on the actions of Possano’s advocate. I knew it myself; but what man is there who has not yielded to the voice of vengeance, the most violent and least reasonable of all the passions.

I went to the second advocate, whom I found to be a man venerable not only in years but in wisdom. I told him all the circumstances of the affair, which he agreed to take up, saying he would present my plea in the course of the day.

“That’s just what I want you to do,” said I, “for his own advocate told me that his pleas would be presented the day after to-morrow.”

“That, sir,” said her “would not induce me to act with any greater promptness, as I could not consent to your abusing the confidence of my colleague.”

“But there is nothing dishonourable in making use of information which one has acquired by chance.”

“That may be a tenable position in some cases, but in the present instance the nature of the affair justifies prompt action. ‘Prior in tempore, Potior in jure’. Prudence bids us attack our enemy. Be so kind, if you please, to call here at three o’clock in the afternoon.”

“I will not fail to do so, and in the meanwhile here are six louis.”

“I will keep account of my expenditure on your behalf.”

“I want you not to spare money.”

“Sir, I shall spend only what is absolutely necessary.”

I almost believed that probity had chosen a home for herself amongst the Lyons advocates, and here I may say, to the honour of the French bar, that I have never known a more honest body of men than the advocates of France.

At three o’clock, having seen that the plan was properly drawn up, I went to Madame d’Urfe’s, and for four hours I worked the oracle in a manner that filled her with delight, and in spite of my vexation I could not help laughing at her insane fancies on the subject of her pregnancy. She was certain of it; she felt all the symptoms. Then she said how sorry she felt that she would not be alive to laugh at all the hypotheses of the Paris doctors as to her being delivered of a child, which would be thought very extraordinary in a woman of her age.

When I got back to the inn I found Marcoline very melancholy. She said she had been waiting for me to take her to the play, according to my promise, and that I should not have made her wait in vain.

“You are right, dearest, but an affair of importance has kept me with the marchioness. Don’t be put out.”

I had need of some such advice myself, for the legal affair worried me, and I slept very ill. Early the next morning I saw my counsel, who told me that my plea had been laid before the criminal lieutenant.

“For the present,” said he, “there is nothing more to be done, for as we don’t know where he is we can’t cite him to appear.”

“Could I not set the police on his track?”

“You might, but I don’t advise you to do so. Let us consider what the result would be. The accuser finding himself accused would have to defend himself and prove the accusation he has made against you. But in the present state of things, if he does not put in an appearance we will get judgment against him for contempt of court and also for libel. Even his counsel will leave him in the lurch if he persistently refuses to shew himself.”

This quieted my fears a little, and I spent the rest of the day with Madame d’Urfe, who was going to Paris on the morrow. I promised to be with her as soon as I had dealt with certain matters which concerned the honour of the Fraternity R. C..

Her great maxim was always to respect my secrets, and never to trouble me with her curiosity. Marcoline, who had been pining by herself all day, breathed again when I told her that henceforth I should be all for her.

In the morning M. Bono came to me and begged me to go with him to Possano’s counsel, who wanted to speak to me. The advocate said that his client was a sort of madman who was ready to do anything, as he believed himself to be dying from the effects of a slow poison.

“He says that even if you are first in the field he will have you condemned to death. He says he doesn’t care if he is sent to prison, as he is certain of coming out in triumph as he has the proof of all his accusations. He shews twenty-five louis which you gave him, all of which are clipped, and he exhibits documents dated from Genoa stating that you clipped a number of gold pieces, which were melted by M. Grimaldi in order that the police might not find them in your possession. He has even a letter from your brother, the abbe, deposing against you. He is a madman, a victim to syphilis, who wishes to send you to the other world before himself, if he can. Now my advice to you is to give him some money and get rid of him. He tells me that he is the father of a family, and that if M. Bono would give him a thousand louis he would sacrifice vengeance to necessity. He told me to speak to M. Bono about it; and now, sir what do you say?"

"That which my just indignation inspires me to say regarding a rascal whom I rescued from poverty, and who nevertheless pursues me with atrocious calumnies; he shall not have one single farthing of mine."

I then told the Genoa story, putting things in their true light, and adding that I could call M. Grimaldi as a witness if necessary.

"I have delayed presenting the plea," said the counsel, "to see if the scandal could be hushed up in any way, but I warn you that I shall now present it."

"Do so; I shall be greatly obliged to you."

I immediately called on my advocate, and told him of the rascal's proposal; and he said I was quite right to refuse to have any dealings with such a fellow. He added that as I had M. Bono as a witness I ought to make Possano's advocate present his plea, and I authorized him to take proceedings in my name.

A clerk was immediately sent to the criminal lieutenant, praying him to command the advocate to bring before him, in three days, the plea of one Anami, alias Pogomas, alias Possano, the said plea being against Jacques Casanova, commonly called the Chevalier de Seingalt. This document, to which I affixed my signature, was laid before the criminal lieutenant.

I did not care for the three days' delay, but my counsel told me it was always given, and that I must make up my mind to submit to all the vexation I should be obliged to undergo, even if we were wholly successful.

As Madame d'Urfe had taken her departure in conformity with the orders of Paralis, I dined with Marcoline at the inn, and tried to raise my spirits by all the means in my power. I took my mistress to the best milliners and dressmakers in the town, and bought her everything she took a fancy to; and then we went to the theatre, where she must have been pleased to see all eyes fixed on her. Madame Pernon, who was in the next box to ours, made me introduce Marcoline to her; and from the way they embraced each other when the play was over I saw they were likely to become intimate, the only obstacle to their friendship being that Madame Pernon did not know a word of Italian, and that Marcoline did not dare to speak a word of French for fear of making herself ridiculous. When we got back to the inn, Marcoline told me that her new friend had given her the Florentine kiss: this is the shibboleth of the sect.

The pretty nick-nacks I had given her had made her happy; her ardour was redoubled, and the night passed joyously.

I spent the next day in going from shop to shop, making fresh purchases for Marcoline, and we supped merrily at Madame Pernon's.

The day after, M. Bono came to see me at an early hour with a smile of content on his face.

"Let us go and breakfast at a coffee-house," said he; "we will have some discussion together."

When we were breakfasting he shewed me a letter written by Possano, in which the rascal said that he was ready to abandon proceedings provided that M. de Seingalt gave him a hundred louis, on receipt of which he promised to leave Lyons immediately.

"I should be a great fool," said I, "if I gave the knave more money to escape from the hands of justice. Let him go if he likes, I won't prevent him; but he had better not expect me to give him anything. He will have a writ out against him to-morrow. I should like to see him branded by the hangman. He has slandered me, his benefactor, too grievously; let him prove what he says, or be dishonoured before all men."

"His abandoning the proceedings," said M. Bono, "would in my opinion amount to the same thing as his failing to prove his charges, and you would do well to prefer it to a trial which would do your reputation no good, even if you were completely successful. And the hundred louis is nothing in comparison with the costs of such a trial."

"M. Bono, I value your advice very highly, and still more highly the kindly feelings which prompt you, but you must allow me to follow my own opinion in this case."

I went to my counsel and told him of the fresh proposal that Possano had made, and of my refusal to listen to it, begging him to take measures for the arrest of the villain who had vowed my death.

The same evening I had Madame Pernon and M. Bono, who was her lover, to sup with me; and as the latter had a good knowledge of Italian Marcoline was able to take part in the merriment of the company.

The next day Bono wrote to tell me that Possano had left Lyons never to return, and that he had signed a full and satisfactory retraction. I was not surprised to hear of his flight, but the other circumstance I could not understand. I therefore hastened to call on Bono, who showed me the document, which was certainly plain enough.

“Will that do?” said he.

“So well that I forgive him, but I wonder he did not insist on the hundred Louis.”

“My dear sir, I gave him the money with pleasure, to prevent a scandalous affair which would have done us all harm in becoming public. If I had told you nothing, you couldn’t have taken any steps in the matter, and I felt myself obliged to repair the mischief I had done in this way. You would have known nothing about it, if you had said that you were not satisfied. I am only too glad to have been enabled to skew my friendship by this trifling service. We will say no more about it.”

“Very good,” said I, embracing him, “we will say no more, but please to receive the assurance of my gratitude.”

I confess I felt much relieved at being freed from this troublesome business.

EPISODE 22 — TO LONDON

CHAPTER V

I MEET THE Venetian Ambassadors at Lyons, and also Marcoline’s Uncle — I Part from Marcoline and Set Out for Paris — An Amorous Journey

Thus freed from the cares which the dreadful slanders of Possano had caused me, I gave myself up to the enjoyment of my fair Venetian, doing all in my power to increase her happiness, as if I had had a premonition that we should soon be separated from one another.

The day after the supper I gave to Madame Pernon and M. Bono, we went to the theatre together, and in the box opposite to us I saw M. Querini, the procurator, Morosini, M. Memmo, and Count Stratico, a Professor of the University of Padua. I knew all these gentlemen; they had been in London, and were passing through Lyons on their return to Venice.

“Farewell, fair Marcoline!” I said to myself, feeling quite broken-hearted, but I remained calm, and said nothing to her. She did not notice them as she was absorbed in her conversation with M. Bono, and besides, she did not know them by sight. I saw that M. Memmo had seen me and was telling the procurator of my presence, and as I knew the latter very well I felt bound to pay them my respects then and there.

Querini received me very politely for a devotee, as also did Morosini, while Memmo seemed moved; but no doubt he remembered that it was chiefly due to his mother that I had been imprisoned eight years ago. I congratulated the gentlemen on their embassy to England, on their return to their native land, and for form’s sake commended myself to their good offices to enable me to return also. M. Morosini, noticing the richness of my dress and my general appearance of prosperity, said that while I had to stay away he had to return, and that he considered me the luckier man.

“Your excellency is well aware,” said I, “that nothing is sweeter than forbidden fruit.”

He smiled, and asked me whither I went and whence I came.

“I come from Rome,” I answered, “where I had some converse with the Holy Father, whom I knew before, and I am going through Paris on my way to London.

“Call on me here, if you have time, I have a little commission to give you.”

“I shall always have time to serve your excellency in. Are you stopping here for long?”

“Three or four days.”

When I ‘got back to my box Marcoline asked me who were the gentlemen to whom I had been speaking. I answered coolly and indifferently, but watching her as I spoke, that they were the Venetian ambassadors on their way from London. The flush of her cheek died away and was replaced by pallor; she raised her eyes to heaven, lowered them, and said not a word. My heart was broken. A few minutes afterwards she asked me which was M. Querini, and after I had pointed him out to her she watched him furtively for the rest of the evening.

The curtain fell, we left our box, and at the door of the theatre we found the ambassadors waiting for their carriage. Mine was in the same line as theirs. The ambassador Querini said, —

“You have a very pretty young lady with you.”

Marcoline stepped forward, seized his hand, and kissed it before I could answer.

Querini, who was greatly astonished, thanked her and said, —

“What have I done to deserve this honour?”

“Because,” said Marcoline, speaking in the Venetian dialect, “I have the honour of knowing his excellency M. Querini.”

“What are you doing with M. Casanova?”

“He is my uncle.”

My carriage came up. I made a profound bow to the ambassadors, and called out to the coachman, “To the ‘Hotel du Parc’.” It was the best hotel in Lyons, and I was not sorry for the Venetians to hear where I was staying.

Marcoline was in despair, for she saw that the time for parting was near at hand.

“We have three or four days before us,” said I, “in which we can contrive how to communicate with your uncle Mattio. I must commend you highly for kissing M. Querini’s hand. That was a masterstroke indeed. All will go off well; but I hope you will be merry, for sadness I abhor.”

We were still at table when I heard the voice of M. Memmo in the antechamber; he was a young man, intelligent and good-natured. I warned Marcoline not to say a word about our private affairs, but to display a moderate gaiety. The servant announced the young nobleman, and we rose to welcome him; but he made us sit down again, and sat beside us, and drank a glass of wine with the utmost cordiality. He told me how he had been supping with the old devotee Querini, who had had his hand kissed by a young and fair Venetian. The ambassadors were much amused at the circumstance, and Querini himself, in spite of his scrupulous conscience, was greatly flattered.

“May I ask you, mademoiselle,” he added, “how you came to know M. Querini?”

“It’s a mystery, sir.”

“A mystery, is it? What fun we shall have tomorrow! I have come,” he said, addressing himself to me, “to ask you to dine with us to-morrow, and you must bring your charming niece.”

“Would you like to go, Marcoline?”

“‘Con grandissimo piacere’! We shall speak Venetian, shall we not?”

“Certainly.”

“‘E viva’! I cannot learn French.”

“M. Querini is in the same position,” said M. Memmo.

After half an hour’s agreeable conversation he left us, and Marcoline embraced me with delight at having made such a good impression on these gentlemen.

“Put on your best dress to-morrow,” said I, “and do not forget your jewels. Be agreeable to everybody, but pretend not to see your Uncle Mattio, who will be sure to wait at table."

"You may be sure I shall follow your advice to the letter."

"And I mean to make the recognition a scene worthy of the drama. I intend that you shall be taken back to Venice by M. Querini himself, while your uncle will take care of you by his special orders."

"I shall be delighted with this arrangement, provided it succeeds."

"You may trust to me for that."

At nine o'clock the next day I called on Morosini concerning the commissions he had for me. He gave me a little box and a letter for Lady Harrington, and another letter with the words, —

"The Procurator Morosini is very sorry not to have been able to take a last leave of Mdlle. Charpillon."

"Where shall I find her?"

"I really don't know. If you find her, give her the letter; if not, it doesn't matter. That's a dazzling beauty you have with you, Casanova."

"Well, she has dazzled me."

"But how did she know Querini?"

"She has seen him at Venice, but she has never spoken to him."

"I thought so; we have been laughing over it, but Querini is hugely pleased. But how did you get hold of her? She must be very young, as Memmo says she cannot speak French."

"It would be a long story to tell, and after all we met through a mere chance."

"She is not your niece."

"Nay, she is more — she is my queen."

"You will have to teach her French, as when you get to London."

"I am not going to take her there; she wants to return to Venice."

"I pity you if you are in love with her! I hope she will dine with us?"

"Oh, yes! she is delighted with the honour."

"And we are delighted to have our poor repast animated by such a charming person."

"You will find her worthy of your company; she is full of wit."

When I got back to the inn I told Marcoline that if anything was said at dinner about her return to Venice, she was to reply that no one could make her return except M. Querini, but that if she could have his protection she would gladly go back with him.

"I will draw you out of the difficulty," said I; and she promised to carry out my instructions.

Marcoline followed my advice with regard to her toilette, and looked brilliant in all respects; and I, wishing to shine in the eyes of the proud Venetian nobles, had dressed myself with the utmost richness. I wore a suit of grey velvet, trimmed with gold and silver lace; my point lace shirt was worth at least fifty louis; and my diamonds, my watches, my chains, my sword of the finest English steel, my snuff-box set with brilliants, my cross set with diamonds, my buckles set with the same stones, were altogether worth more than fifty thousand crowns. This ostentation, though puerile in itself, yet had a purpose, for I wished M. de Bragadin to know that I did not cut a bad figure in the world; and I wished the proud magistrates who had made me quit my native land to learn that I had lost nothing, and could laugh at their severity.

In this gorgeous style we drove to the ambassador's dinner at half-past one.

All present were Venetians, and they welcomed Marcoline enthusiastically. She who was born with the instinct of good manners behaved with the grace of a nymph and the dignity of a French princess; and as soon as she was seated between two grave and reverend signors, she began by saying that she was delighted to find herself the only representative of her sex in this distinguished company, and also that there were no Frenchmen present.

"Then you don't like the French," said M. Memmo.

"I like them well enough so far as I know them, but I am only acquainted with their exterior, as I don't speak or understand the language."

After this everybody knew how to take her, and the gaiety became general.

She answered all questions to the point, and entertained the company with her remarks on French manners, so different to Venetian customs.

In the course of dinner M. Querini asked how she had known him, and she replied that she had often seen him at Divine service, whereat the devotee seemed greatly flattered. M. Morosini, pretending not to know that she was to return to Venice, told her that unless she made haste to acquire French, the universal language, she would find London very tedious, as the Italian language was very little known there.

"I hope," she replied, "that M. de Seingalt will not bring me into the society of people with whom I cannot exchange ideas. I know I shall never be able to learn French."

When we had left the table the ambassadors begged me to tell the story of my escape from The Leads, and I was glad to oblige them. My story lasted for two whole hours; and as it was noticed that Marcoline's eyes became wet with tears when I came to speak of my great danger. She was rallied upon the circumstance, and told that nieces were not usually so emotional.

"That may be, gentlemen," she replied, "though I do not see why a niece should not love her uncle. But I have never loved anyone else but the hero of the tale, and I cannot see what difference there can be between one kind of love and another."

"There are five kinds of love known to man," said M. Querini. "The love of one's neighbour, the love of God, which is beyond compare, the highest of all, love matrimonial, the love of house and home, and the love of self, which ought to come last of all, though many place it in the first rank."

The nobleman commented briefly on these diverse kinds of love, but when he came to the love of God he began to soar, and I was greatly astonished to see Marcoline shedding tears, which she wiped away hastily as if to hide them from the sight of the worthy old man whom wine had made more theological than usual. Feigning to be enthusiastic, Marcoline took his hand and kissed it, while he in his vain exaltation drew her towards him and kissed her on the brow, saying, "Poveretta, you are an angel!"

At this incident, in which there was more love of our neighbour than love of God, we all bit our lips to prevent ourselves bursting out laughing, and the sly little puss pretended to be extremely moved.

I never knew Marcoline's capacities till then, for she confessed that her emotion was wholly fictitious, and designed to win the old man's good graces; and that if she had followed her own inclinations she would have laughed heartily. She was designed to act a part either upon the stage or on a throne. Chance had ordained that she should be born of the people, and her education had been neglected; but if she had been properly tutored she would have been fit for anything.

Before returning home we were warmly invited to dinner the next day.

As we wanted to be together, we did not go to the theatre that day and when we got home I did not wait for Marcoline to undress to cover her with kisses.

"Dear heart," said I, "you have not shewn me all your perfections till now, when we are about to part; you make me regret you are going back to Venice. Today you won all hearts."

"Keep me then, with you, and I will ever be as I have been to-day. By the way, did you see my uncle?"

"I think so. Was it not he who was in continual attendance?"

"Yes. I recognized him by his ring. Did he look, at me?"

"All the time, and with an air of the greatest astonishment. I avoided catching his eye, which roved from you to me continually."

"I should like to know what the good man thinks! You will see him again to-morrow. I am sure he will have told M. Querini that, I am his niece, and consequently not yours.

"I expect so, too."

"And if M. Querini says as much to me to-morrow, I, expect I shall have to, admit the fact. What do you think?"

"You must undoubtedly tell him the truth, but frankly and openly, and so as not to let him think that you have need of him to return to Venice. He is not your father, and has no right over your liberty."

"Certainly not."

"Very good. You must also agree that I am not your uncle, and that the bond between us is, of the most tender description. Will, there be any difficulty is that?"

"How can you ask me such a question? The link between us makes me feel proud, and will ever do so."

"Well, well, I say no more. I trust entirely in your tact. Remember that Querini and no other must take you back to Venice; he must treat you as if you were his daughter. If he will not consent, you shall not return at all."

"Would to God it were so!"

Early the next morning I got a note from M. Querini requesting me to call on him, as he wanted to speak to me on a matter of importance.

"We are getting on," said Marcoline. "I am very glad that things have taken this turn, for when you come back you can tell me the whole story, and I can regulate my conduct accordingly."

I found Querini and Morosini together. They gave me their hands when I came in, and Querini asked me to sit down, saying that there would be nothing in our discussion which M. Morosini might not hear.

"I have a confidence to make to you, M. Casanova," he began; "but first I want you to do me the same favor."

"I can have no secrets from your excellency."

"I am obliged to you, and will try to deserve your good opinion. I beg that you will tell me sincerely whether you know the young person who is with you, for no one believes that she is your niece."

"It is true that she is — not my niece, but not being acquainted with her relations or family I cannot be said to know her in the sense which your excellency gives to the word. Nevertheless, I am proud to confess that I love her with an affection which will not end save with my life."

"I am delighted to hear you say so. How long have you had her?"

"Nearly two months."

"Very good! How did she fall into your hands?"

"That is a point which only concerns her, and you will allow me not to answer that question."

"Good! we will go on. Though you are in love with her, it is very possible that you have never made any enquiries respecting her family."

"She has told me that she has a father and a mother, poor but honest, but I confess I have never been curious enough to enquire her name. I only know her baptismal name, which is possibly not her true one, but it does quite well for me."

"She has given you her true name."

"Your excellency surprises me! You know her, then?"

"Yes; I did not know her yesterday, but I do now. Two months … Marcoline … yes, it must be she. I am now certain that my man is not mad."

"Your man?"

"Yes, she is his niece. When we were at London he heard that she had left the paternal roof about the middle of Lent. Marcoline's mother, who is his sister, wrote to him. He was afraid to speak to her yesterday, because she looked so grand. He even thought he must be mistaken, and he would have been afraid of offending me by speaking to a grand lady at my table. She must have seen him, too."

"I don't think so, she has said nothing about it to me."

"It is true that he was standing behind her all the time. But let us come to the point. Is Marcoline your wife, or have you any intention of marrying her?"

"I love her as tenderly as any man can love a woman, but I cannot make her a wife; the reasons are known only to herself and me."

"I respect your secret; but tell me if you would object to my begging her to return to Venice with her uncle?"

"I think Marcoline is happy, but if she has succeeded in gaining the favour of your excellency, she is happier still; and I feel sure that if she were to go back to Venice under the exalted patronage of your excellency, she would efface all stains on her reputation. As to permitting her to go, I can put no stumbling-block in the way, for I am not her master. As her lover I would defend her to the last drop of my blood, but if she wants to leave me I can only assent, though with sorrow."

"You speak with much sense, and I hope you will not be displeased at my undertaking this good work. Of course I shall do nothing without your consent."

"I respect the decrees of fate when they are promulgated by such a man as you. If your excellency can induce Marcoline to leave me, I will make no objection; but I warn you that she must be won mildly. She is intelligent, she loves me, and she knows that she is independent; besides she reckons on me, and she has cause to do so. Speak to her to-day by herself; my presence would only be in your way. Wait till dinner is over; the interview might last some time."

"My dear Casanova, you are an honest man. I am delighted to have made your acquaintance."

"You do me too much honour. I may say that Marcoline will hear nothing of all this."

When I got back to the inn, I gave Marcoline an exact account of the whole conversation, warning her that she would be supposed to know nothing about it.

"You must execute a masterly stroke, dearest," said I, "to persuade M. Querini that I did not lie in saying that you had not seen your uncle. As soon as you see him, you must give a shout of surprise, exclaim, 'My dear uncle!' and rush to his arms. This would be a splendid and dramatic situation, which would do you honour in the eyes of all the company."

"You may be sure that I shall play the part very well, although my heart be sad."

At the time appointed we waited on the ambassadors, and found that all the other guests had assembled. Marcoline, as blithe and smiling as before, first accosted M. Querini, and then did the polite to all the company. A few minutes before dinner Mattio brought in his master's spectacles on a silver tray. Marcoline, who was sitting next to M. Querini, stopped short in something she was saying, and staring at the man, exclaimed in a questioning voice, —

“My uncle?”

“Yes, my dear niece.”

Marcoline flung herself into his arms, and there was a moving scene, which excited the admiration of all.

“I knew you had left Venice, dear uncle, but I did not know you were in his excellency’s service. I am so glad to see you again! You will tell my father and mother about me? You see I am happy. Where were you yesterday?”

“Here.”

“And you didn’t see me?”

“Yes; but your uncle there …”

“Well,” said I, laughing, “let us know each other, cousin, and be good friends. Marcoline, I congratulate you on having such an honest man for an uncle.”

“That is really very fine,” said M. Querini; and everybody exclaimed, “Very affecting, very affecting indeed!”

The newly-found uncle departed, and we sat down to dinner, but in spirits which differed from those of yesterday. Marcoline bore traces of those mingled emotions of happiness and regret which move loyal hearts when they call to mind ther native land. M. Querini looked at her admiringly, and seemed to have all the confidence of success which a good action gives to the mind. M. Morosini sat a pleased spectator. The others were attentive and curious as to what would come next. They listened to what was said, and hung on Marcoline’s lips.

After the first course there was greater unison in the company, and M. Morosini told Marcoline that if she would return to Venice she would be sure of finding a husband worthy of her.

“I must be the judge of that,” said she.

“Yes, but it is a good thing to have recourse to the advice of discreet persons who are interested in the happiness of both parties.”

“Excuse me, but I do not think so. If I ever marry, my husband will have to please me first.”

"Who has taught you this maxim?" said Querini.

"My uncle, Casanova, who has, I verily believe, taught me everything that can be learnt in the two months I have been happy enough to live with him."

"I congratulate the master and the pupil, but you are both too young to have learnt all the range of science. Moral science cannot be learnt in two months."

"What his excellency has just said," said I, turning to Marcoline, "is perfectly correct. In affairs of marriage both parties should rely to a great extent on the advice of friends, for mere marriages of inclination are often unhappy."

"That is a really philosophical remark, my dear Marcoline," said Querini; "but tell me the qualities which in your opinion are desirable in a husband."

"I should be puzzled to name them, but they would all become manifest in the man that pleased me."

"And supposing he were a worthless fellow?"

"He would certainly not please me, and that's the reason why I have made up my mind never to marry a man whom I have not studied."

"Supposing you made a mistake?"

"Then I would weep in secret."

"How if you were poor?"

"She need never fear poverty, my lord," said I. "She has an income of fifty crowns a month for the remainder of her life."

"Oh, that's a different matter. If that is so, sweetheart, you are privileged. You will be able to live at Venice in perfect independence."

"I think that to live honourably there I only need the protection of a lord like your excellency."

"As to that, Marcoline, I give you my word that I will do all in my power for you if you come to Venice. But let me ask you one question, how are you sure of your income of fifty crowns a month? You are laughing."

"I laugh because I am such a silly little thing. I don't have any heed for my own business. My friend there will tell you all about it."

"You have not been joking, have you?" said the worthy old man to me.

"Marcoline," said I, "has not only capital which will produce a larger sum than that which I have named, but she has also valuable possessions. Your excellency will note her wisdom in saying that she would need your lordship's protection at Venice, for she will require someone to look after the investment of her capital. The whole amount is in my hands, and if she likes Marcoline can have it all in less than two hours."

"Very good; then you must start for Venice the day after to-morrow. Mattio is quite ready to receive you."

"I have the greatest respect and love for my uncle, but it is not to his care that your excellency must commend me if I resolve to go."

"Then to whom?"

"To your own care, my lord. Your excellency has called me dear daughter two or three times, lead me, then, to Venice, like a good father, and I will come willingly; otherwise I protest I will not leave the man to whom I owe all I have. I will start for London with him the day after to-morrow."

At these words which delighted me silence fell on all. They waited for M. Querini to speak, and the general opinion seemed to be that he had gone too far to be able to draw back. Nevertheless, the old man kept silence; perhaps in his character of devotee he was afraid of being led into temptation, or of giving occasion to scandal, and the other guests were silent like him, and ate to keep each other in countenance. Mattio's hand trembled as he waited; Marcoline alone was calm and collected. Dessert was served, and still no one dared to say a word. All at once this wonderful girl said, in an inspired voice, as if speaking to herself, —

"We must adore the decrees of Divine Providence, but after the issue, since mortals are not able to discern the future, whether it be good or whether it be evil."

"What does that reflection relate to, my dear daughter?" said M. Querini, "and why do you kiss my hand now?"

"I kiss your hand because you have called me your dear daughter for the fourth time."

This judicious remark elicited a smile of approval from all, and restored the general gaiety; but M. Querini asked Marcoline to explain her observation on Providence.

"It was an inspiration, and the result of self-examination. I am well; I have learned something of life; I am only seventeen, and in the course of two months I have become rich by honest means. I am all happy, and yet I owe my happiness to the greatest error a maiden can commit. Thus I humble myself before the decrees, of Providence and adore its wisdom."

"You are right, but, none the less you ought to repent of what you have done."

"That's where I am puzzled; for before I can repent; I must think of it, and when I think of it I find nothing for which to repent. I suppose I shall have to consult some great theologian on the point."

"That will not be necessary; you are, intelligent, and your heart is good, and I will give you the necessary instruction on the way. When one repents there is no need to think of the pleasure which our sins have given us."

In his character of apostle the good M. Querini was becoming piously amorous of his fair proselyte. He left the table for a few moments, and when he returned he, told Marcoline that if he had a young lady to take to, Venice he should be obliged to leave her in the care of his housekeeper, Dame Veneranda, in whom he had every confidence.

"I have just been speaking to her; and if you would like to come, all is arranged. You shall sleep with her, and dine with us till we get to Venice, and then I will deliver, you into your mother's keeping, in the presence of your uncle. What do you say?"

"I will come with pleasure:"

"Come and see Dame Veneranda."

"Willingly."

"Come with us, Casanova."

Dame Veneranda looked a perfect cannoness, and I did not think that Marcoline would fall, in love with her, but she seemed sensible and trustworthy. M. Querini told her in our presence what he had just told Marcoline, and the duenna assured him that she would take, the utmost care of the young lady. Marcoline kissed her and called her mother, thus gaining the old lady's, good graces. We rejoined, the company, who expressed to Marcoline their intense pleasure at having her for a companion on their journey.

"I shall have to put my steward in another carriage," said M. Querini, "as the calash only holds two."

"That will not be necessary," I remarked, "for Marcoline has her carriage, and Mistress Veneranda will find it a very comfortable one. It will hold her luggage as well."

"You, want to give me your carriage," said Marcoline. "You are too good to me."

I could made no reply, my emotion was so great. I turned aside and wiped, away my tears. Returning to the company, I found that Marcoline had vanished and M. Morosini, who, was also much affected told me she had gome, to speak to Mistress Veneranda. Everybody was melancholy, and seeing that I was the cause I began to talk about England, where I hoped to make my fortune with a project of mine, the success of which only depended on Lord Egremont. M. de Morosini said he would give me a letter for Lord Egremont and another for M. Zuccata, the Venetian ambassador.

"Are you not afraid," said M. Querini, "of getting into, trouble with the State Inquisitors for recommending M. Casanova?"

Morosini replied coldly that as the Inquisitors had, not told him for what crime I was condemned, he did not feel himself bound to share their judgment. Old Querini, who was extremely particular, shook his head and said nothing.

Just then Marcoline came back to the room, and everybody could see that she had been weeping. I confess that this mark of her affection was as pleasing to my vanity as to my love; but such is man, and such, doubtless, is the reader who may be censuring my conduct. This charming girl, who still, after all these years, dwells in my old heart, asked me to take her back to the inn, as she wanted to pack up her trunks. We left directly, after having promised to come to dinner on the following day.

I wept bitterly when I got to my room. I told Clairmont to see that the carriage was in good order, and then, hastily undressing, I flung myself on the bed in my dressing-gown, and wept as if some blessing was being taken from me against my will. Marcoline, who was much more sensible, did what she could to console me, but I liked to torment myself, and her words did but increase my despair.

“Reflect,” said she, “that it is not I who am leaving you, but you who are sending me away; that I long to spend the rest of my days with you, and that you have only got to say a word to keep me.”

I knew that she was right; but still a fatal fear which has always swayed me, the fear of being bound to anyone, and the hypocrisy of a libertine ever longing for change, both these feelings made me persist in my resolution and my sadness.

About six o’clock MM. Morosini and Querini came into the courtyard and looked at the carriage, which was being inspected by the wheelwright. They spoke to Clairmont, and then came to see us.

“Good heavens!” said M. Querini, seeing the numerous boxes which she was going to place on her carriage; and when he had heard that her carriage was the one he had just looked at, he seemed surprised; it was indeed a very good vehicle.

M. Morosini told Marcoline that if she liked to sell it when she got to Venice he would give her a thousand Venetian ducats, or three thousand francs for it.

“You might give her double that amount,” said I, “for it is worth three thousand ducats.”

“We will arrange all that,” said he; and Querini added, —

“It will be a considerable addition to the capital she proposes to invest.”

After some agreeable conversation I told M. Querini that I would give him a bill of exchange for five thousand ducats, which, with the three or four thousand ducats the sale of her jewellery would realize, and the thousand for the carriage, would give her a capital of nine or ten thousand ducats, the interest of which would bring her in a handsome income.

Next morning I got M. Bono to give me a bill of exchange on M. Querini's order, and at dinner-time Marcoline handed it over to her new protector, who wrote her a formal receipt. M. Morosini gave me the letters he had promised, and their departure was fixed for eleven o'clock the next day. The reader may imagine that our dinner-party was not over gay. Marcoline was depressed, I as gloomy as a splenetic Englishman, and between us we made the feast more like a funeral than a meeting of friends.

I will not attempt to describe the night I passed with my charmer. She asked me again and again how I could be my own executioner; but I could not answer, for I did not know. But how often have I done things which caused me pain, but to which I was impelled by some occult force it was my whim not to resist.

In the morning, when I had put on my boots and spurs, and told Clairmont not to be uneasy if I did not return that night, Marcoline and I drove to the ambassadors' residence. We breakfasted together, silently enough, for Marcoline had tears in her eyes, and everyone knowing my noble conduct towards her respected her natural grief. After breakfast we set out, I sitting in the forepart of the carriage, facing Marcoline and Dame Veneranda, who would have made me laugh under any other circumstances, her astonishment at finding herself in a more gorgeous carriage than the ambassador's was so great. She expatiated on the elegance and comfort of the equipage, and amused us by saying that her master was quite right in saying that the people would take her for the ambassadress. But in spite of this piece of comedy, Marcoline and I were sad all the way. M. Querini, who did not like night travelling, made us stop at Pont-Boivoisin, at nine o'clock, and after a bad supper everyone went to bed to be ready to start at daybreak. Marcoline was to sleep with Veneranda, so I accompanied her, and the worthy old woman went to bed without any ceremony, lying so close to the wall that there was room for two more; but after Marcoline had got into bed I sat down on a chair, and placing my head beside hers on the pillow we mingled our sobs and tears all night.

When Veneranda, who had slept soundly, awoke, she was much astonished to see me still in the same position. She was a great devotee, but women's piety easily gives place to pity, and she had moved to the furthest extremity of the bed with the intention of giving me another night of love. But my melancholy prevented my profiting by her kindness.

I had ordered a saddle horse to be ready for me in the morning. We took a hasty cup of coffee and bade each other mutual farewells. I placed Marcoline in the carriage, gave her a last embrace, and waited for the crack of the postillion's whip to gallop back to Lyons. I tore along like a madman, for I felt as if I should like to send the horse to the ground and kill myself. But death never comes to him that desires it, save in the fable of the worthy Lafontaine. In six hours I had accomplished the eighteen leagues between Pont-Boivoisin and Lyons, only stopping to change horses. I tore off my clothes and threw myself on the bed, where thirty hours before I had enjoyed all the delights of love. I hoped that the bliss I had lost would return to me in my dreams. However, I slept profoundly, and did not wake till eight o'clock. I had been asleep about nineteen hours.

I rang for Clairmont, and told him to bring up my breakfast, which I devoured eagerly. When my stomach was restored in this manner I fell asleep again, and did not get up till the next morning, feeling quite well, and as if I could support life a little longer.

Three days after Marcoline's departure I bought a comfortable two-wheeled carriage with patent springs, and sent my trunks to Paris by the diligence. I kept a portmanteau containing the merest necessaries, for I meant to travel in a dressing-gown and night-cap, and keep to myself all the way to Paris. I intended this as a sort of homage to Marcoline, but I reckoned without my host.

I was putting my jewellery together in a casket when Clairmont announced a tradesman and his daughter, a pretty girl whom I had remarked at dinner, for since the departure of my fair Venetian I had dined at the table-d'hote by way of distraction.

I shut up my jewels and asked them to come in, and the father addressed me politely, saying, —

"Sir, I have come to ask you to do me a favour which will cost you but little, while it will be of immense service to my daughter and myself."

"What can I do for you? I am leaving Lyons at day-break to-morrow."

"I know it, for you said so at dinner; but we shall be ready at any hour. Be kind enough to give my daughter a seat in your carriage. I will, of course, pay for a third horse, and will ride post."

"You cannot have seen the carriage."

"Excuse me, I have done so. It is, I know, only meant for one, but she could easily squeeze into it. I know I am troubling you, but if you were aware of the convenience it would be to me I am sure you would not refuse. All the places in the diligence are taken up to next week, and if I don't get to Paris in six days I might as well stay away altogether. If I were a rich man I would post, but that would cost four hundred francs, and I cannot afford to spend so much. The only course open to me is to leave by the diligence tomorrow, and to have myself and my daughter bound to the roof. You see, sir, the idea makes her weep, and I don't like it much better myself."

I looked attentively at the girl, and found her too pretty for me to keep within bounds if I travelled alone with her. I was sad, and the torment I had endured in parting from Marcoline had made me resolve to avoid all occasions which might have similar results. I thought this resolve necessary for my peace of mind.

"This girl," I said to myself, "may be so charming that I should fall in love with her if I yield to the father's request, and I do not wish for any such result."

I turned to the father and said, —

"I sympathize with you sincerely; but I really don't see what I can do for you without causing myself the greatest inconvenience."

"Perhaps you think that I shall not be able to ride so many posts in succession, but you needn't be afraid on that score:"

"The horse might give in; you might have a fall, and I know that I should feel obliged to stop, and I am in a hurry. If that reason does not strike you as a cogent one, I am sorry, for to me it appears unanswerable."

"Let us run the risk, sir, at all events."

"There is a still greater risk of which I can tell you nothing. In brief, sir, you ask what is impossible."

"In Heaven's name, sir," said the girl, with a voice and a look that would have pierced a heart of stone, "rescue me from that dreadful journey on the roof of the diligence! The very idea makes me shudder; I should be afraid of falling off all the way; besides, there is something mean in travelling that way. Do but grant me this favour, and I will sit at your feet so as not to discomfort you."

"This is too much! You do not know me, mademoiselle. I am neither cruel nor impolite, especially where your sex is concerned, though my refusal must make you feel otherwise. If I give way you may regret it afterwards, and I do not wish that to happen." Then, turning to the father, I said, —

"A post-chaise costs six Louis. Here they are; take them. I will put off my departure for a few hours, if necessary, to answer for the chaise, supposing you are not known here, and an extra horse will cost four Louis take them. As to the rest, you would have spent as much in taking two places in the diligence."

"You are very kind, sir, but I cannot accept your gift. I am not worthy of it, and I should be still less worthy if I accepted the money. Adele, let us go. Forgive us, sir, if we have wasted half an hour of your time. Come, my poor child."

"Wait a moment, father."

Adele begged him to wait, as her sobs almost choked her. I was furious with everything, but having received one look from her beautiful eyes I could not withstand her sorrow any longer, and said,

"Calm yourself, mademoiselle. It shall never be said that I remained unmoved while beauty wept. I yield to your request, for if I did not I should not be able to sleep all night. But I accede on one condition," I added, turning to her father, "and that is that you sit at the back of the carriage."

"Certainly; but what is to become of your servant?"

"He will ride on in front. Everything is settled. Go to bed now, and be ready to start at six o'clock."

"Certainly, but you will allow me to pay for the extra horse?"

"You shall pay nothing at all; it would be a shame if I received any money from you. You have told me you are poor, and poverty is no dishonour;

well, I may tell you that I am rich, and riches are no honour save when they are used in doing good. Therefore, as I said, I will pay for all."

"Very good, but I will pay for the extra horse in the carriage."

"Certainly not, and let us have no bargaining, please; it is time to go to bed. I will put you down at Paris without the journey costing you a farthing, and then if you like you may thank me; these are the only conditions on which I will take you. Look! Mdlle. Adele is laughing, that's reward enough for me."

"I am laughing for joy at having escaped that dreadful diligence roof."

"I see, but I hope you will not weep in my carriage, for all sadness is an abomination to me."

I went, to bed, resolved to struggle against my fate no longer. I saw that I could not withstand the tempting charms of this new beauty, and I determined that everything should be over in a couple of days. Adele had beautiful blue eyes, a complexion wherein were mingled the lily and the rose, a small mouth, excellent teeth, a figure still slender but full of promise; here, surely, were enough motives for a fresh fall. I fell asleep, thanking my good genius for thus providing me with amusement on the journey.

Just before we started the father came and asked if it was all the same to me whether we went by Burgundy or the Bourbonnais.

"Certainly. Do you prefer any particular route?"

"If I went through Nevers I might be able to collect a small account."

"Then we will go by the Bourbonnais."

Directly after Adele, simply but neatly dressed, came down and wished me good day, telling me that her father was going to put a small trunk containing their belongings at the back of the carriage. Seeing me busy, she asked if she could help me in any way.

"No," I replied, "you had better take a seat."

She did so, but in a timid manner, which annoyed me, because it seemed to express that she was a dependent of mine. I told her so gently, and made her take some coffee with me, and her shyness soon wore off.

We were just stepping into the carriage when a man came and told me that the lamps were out of repair and would come off if something were not done to them. He offered to put them into good repair in the course of an hour. I was in a terrible rage, and called Clairmont and began to scold him, but he said that the lamps were all right a short while ago, and that the man must have put them out of order that he might have the task of repairing them.

He had hit it off exactly. I had heard of the trick before, and I called out to the man; and on his answering me rather impudently, I began to kick him, with my pistol in my hand. He ran off swearing, and the noise brought up the landlord and five or six of his people. Everybody said I was in the right, but all the same I had to waste two hours as it would not have been prudent to travel without lamps.

Another lamp-maker was summoned; he looked at the damage, and laughed at the rascally trick his fellow-tradesman had played me.

“Can I imprison the rascal?” I said to the landlord. “I should like to have the satisfaction of doing so, were it to cost me two Louis.”

“Two Louis! Your honour shall be attended to in a moment.”

I was in a dreadful rage, and did not notice Adele, who was quite afraid of me. A police official came up to take my information, and examine witnesses, and to draw up the case.

“How much is your time worth, sir?” he asked me.

“Five louis.”

With these words I slid two louis into his hand, and he immediately wrote down a fine of twenty louis against the lamp-maker, and then went his way, saying, —

“Your man will be in prison in the next ten minutes.” I breathed again at the prospect of vengeance. I then begged Mdlle. Adele’s pardon, who asked mine in her turn, not knowing how I had offended her. This might have led to some affectionate passages, but her father came in saying that the rascal was in prison, and that everyone said I was right.

“I am perfectly ready to swear that he did the damage,” said he.

"You saw him, did you?"

"No, but that's of no consequence, as everybody is sure he did it."

This piece of simplicity restored my good temper completely, and I began to ask Moreau, as he called himself, several questions. He told me he was a widower, that Adele was his only child, that he was going to set up in business at Louviers, and so on.

In the course of an hour the farce turned into a tragedy, in the following manner. Two women, one of them with a baby at her breast, and followed by four brats, all of whom might have been put under a bushel measure, came before me, and falling on their knees made me guess the reason of this pitiful sight. They were the wife, the mother, and the children of the delinquent.

My heart was soon moved with pity for them, for my vengeance had been complete, and I did not harbour resentment; but the wife almost put me in a fury again by saying that her husband was an innocent man, and that they who had accused him were rascals.

The mother, seeing the storm ready to burst, attacked me more adroitly, admitting that her son might be guilty, but that he must have been driven to it by misery, as he had got no bread wherewith to feed his children. She added:

"My good sir, take pity on us, for he is our only support. Do a good deed and set him free, for he would stay in prison all his days unless we sold our beds to pay you."

"My worthy woman, I forgive him completely. Hand this document to the police magistrate and all will be well."

At the same time I gave her a louis and told her to go, not wishing to be troubled with her thanks. A few moments after, the official came to get my signature for the man's release, and I had to pay him the legal costs. My lamps cost twelve francs to mend, and at nine o'clock I started, having spent four or five louis for nothing.

Adele was obliged to sit between my legs, but she was ill at ease. I told her to sit further back, but as she would have had to lean on me, I did not urge her; it would have been rather a dangerous situation to begin with. Moreau sat at the back of the carriage, Clairmont went on in front, and we were thus neck and neck, or rather neck and back, the whole way.

We got down to change horses, and as we were getting into the carriage again Adele had to lift her leg, and shewed me a pair of black breeches. I have always had a horror of women with breeches, but above all of black breeches.

"Sir," said I to her father, "your daughter has shewn me her black breeches."

"It's uncommonly lucky for her that she didn't shew you something else."

I liked the reply, but the cursed breeches had so offended me that I became quite sulky. It seemed to me that such clothes were a kind of rampart or outwork, very natural, no doubt, but I thought a young girl should know nothing of the danger, or, at all events, pretend ignorance if she did not possess it. As I could neither scold her nor overcome my bad temper, I contented myself with being polite, but I did not speak again till we got to St. Simphorien, unless it was to ask her to sit more comfortably.

When we got to St. Simphorien I told Clairmont to go on in front and order us a good supper at Roanne, and to sleep there. When we were about half-way Adele told me that she must be a trouble to me, as I was not so gay as I had been. I assured her that it was not so, and that I only kept silence that she might be able to rest.

"You are very kind," she answered, "but it is quite a mistake for you to think that you would disturb me by talking. Allow me to tell you that you are concealing the real cause of your silence."

"Do you know the real cause?"

"Yes, I think I do."

"Well, what is it?"

"You have changed since you saw my breeches."

"You are right, this black attire has clothed my soul with gloom."

"I am very sorry, but you must allow that in the first place I was not to suppose that you were going to see my breeches, and in the second place that I could not be aware that the colour would be distasteful to you."

"True again, but as I chanced to see the articles you must forgive my disgust. This black has filled my soul with funereal images, just as white would have cheered me. Do you always wear those dreadful breeches?"

"I am wearing them for the first time to-day."

"Then you must allow that you have committed an unbecoming action."

"Unbecoming?"

"Yes, what would you have said if I had come down in petticoats this morning? You would have pronounced them unbecoming. You are laughing."

"Forgive me, but I never heard anything so amusing. But your comparison will not stand; everyone would have seen your petticoats, whereas no one has any business to see my breeches."

I assented to her logic, delighted to find her capable of tearing my sophism to pieces, but I still preserved silence.

At Roanne we had a good enough supper, and Moreau, who knew very well that if it had not been for his daughter there would have been no free journey and free supper for him, was delighted when I told him that she kept me good company. I told him about our discussion on breeches, and he pronounced his daughter to be in the wrong, laughing pleasantly. After supper I told him that he and his daughter were to sleep in the room in which we were sitting, while I would pass the night in a neighbouring closet.

Just as we were starting the next morning, Clairmont told me that he would go on in front, to see that our beds were ready, adding that as we had lost one night it would not do much harm if we were to lose another.

This speech let me know that my faithful Clairmont began to feel the need of rest, and his health was dear to me. I told him to stop at St. Pierre le Mortier, and to take care that a good supper was ready for us. When we were in the carriage again, Adele thanked me.

"Then you don't like night travelling?" I said.

"I shouldn't mind it if I were not afraid of going to sleep and falling on you."

“Why, I should like it. A pretty girl like you is an agreeable burden.”

She made no reply, but I saw that she understood; my declaration was made, but something more was wanted before I could rely on her docility. I relapsed into silence again till we got to Varennes, and then I said, —

“If I thought you could eat a roast fowl with as good an appetite as mine, I would dine here.”

“Try me, I will endeavour to match you.”

We ate well and drank better, and by the time we started again we were a little drunk. Adele, who was only accustomed to drink wine two or three times a year, laughed at not being able to stand upright, but seemed to be afraid that something would happen. I comforted her by saying that the fumes of champagne soon evaporated; but though she strove with all her might to keep awake, nature conquered, and letting her pretty head fall on my breast she fell asleep, and did not rouse herself for two hours. I treated her with the greatest respect, though I could not resist ascertaining that the article of clothing which had displeased me so much had entirely disappeared.

While she slept I enjoyed the pleasure of gazing on the swelling curves of her budding breast, but I restrained my ardour, as the disappearance of the black breeches assured me that I should find her perfectly submissive whenever I chose to make the assault. I wished, however, that she should give herself up to me of her own free will, or at any rate come half-way to meet me, and I knew that I had only to smooth the path to make her do so.

When she awoke and found that she had been sleeping in my arms, her astonishment was extreme. She apologized and begged me to forgive her, while I thought the best way to put her at ease would be to give her an affectionate kiss. The result was satisfactory; who does not know the effect of a kiss given at the proper time?

As her dress was in some disorder she tried to adjust it, but we were rather pushed for space, and by an awkward movement she uncovered her knee. I burst out laughing and she joined me, and had the presence of mind to say:

“I hope the black colour has given you no funereal thoughts this time.”

“The hue of the rose, dear Adele, can only inspire me with delicious fancies.”

I saw that she lowered her eyes, but in a manner that shewed she was pleased.

With this talk — and, so to speak, casting oil on the flames — we reached Moulin, and got down for a few moments. A crowd of women assailed us with knives and edged tools of all sorts, and I bought the father and daughter whatever they fancied. We went on our way, leaving the women quarrelling and fighting because some had sold their wares and others had not.

In the evening we reached St. Pierre; but during the four hours that had elapsed since we left Moulin we had made way, and Adele had become quite familiar with me.

Thanks to Clairmont, who had arrived two hours before, an excellent supper awaited us. We supped in a large room, where two great white beds stood ready to receive us.

I told Moreau that he and his daughter should sleep in one bed, and I in the other; but he replied that I and Adele could each have a bed to ourselves, as he wanted to start for Nevers directly after supper, so as to be able to catch-his debtor at daybreak, and to rejoin us when we got there the following day.

“If you had told me before, we would have gone on to Nevers and slept there.”

“You are too kind. I mean to ride the three and a half stages. The riding will do me good, and I like it. I leave my daughter in your care. She will not be so near you as in the carriage.”

“Oh, we will be very discreet, you may be sure!”

After his departure I told Adele to go to bed in her clothes, if she were afraid of me.

“I shan’t be offended,” I added.

“It would be very wrong of me,” she answered, “to give you such a proof of my want of confidence.”

She rose, went out a moment, and when she came back she locked the door, and as soon as she was ready to slip off her last article of clothing came and kissed me. I happened to be writing at the time, and as she had come up on tiptoe I was surprised, though in a very agreeable manner. She fled to her bed, saying saucily,

“You are frightened of me, I think?”

“You are wrong, but you surprised me. Come back, I want to see you fall asleep in my arms.”

“Come and see me sleep.”

“Will you sleep all the time?”

“Of course I shall.”

“We will see about that.”

I flung the pen down, and in a moment I held her in my arms, smiling, ardent, submissive to my desires, and only entreating me to spare her. I did my best, and though she helped me to the best of her ability, the first assault was a labour of Hercules. The others were pleasanter, for it is only the first step that is painful, and when the field had been stained with the blood of three successive battles, we abandoned ourselves to repose. At five o’clock in the morning Clairmont knocked, and I told him to get us some coffee. I was obliged to get up without giving fair Adele good day, but I promised that she should have it on the way.

When she was dressed she looked at the altar where she had offered her first sacrifice to love, and viewed the signs of her defeat with a sigh. She was pensive for some time, but when we were in the carriage again her gaiety returned, and in our mutual transports we forgot to grieve over our approaching parting.

We found Moreau at Nevers; he was in a great state because he could not get his money before noon. He dared not ask me to wait for him, but I said that we would have a good dinner and start when the money was paid.

While dinner was being prepared we shut ourselves up in a room to avoid the crowd of women who pestered us to buy a thousand trifles, and at two o’clock we started, Moreau having got his money. We got to Cosne at twilight, and though Clairmont was waiting for us at Briane, I decided on stopping where I was, and this night proved superior to the first. The next day we made a breakfast of the meal which had been prepared for our supper, and we slept at Fontainebleau, where I enjoyed Adele for the last time. In the morning I promised to come and see her at Louviers, when I returned from England, but I could not keep my word.

We took four hours to get from Fontainebleau to Paris, but how quickly the time passed. I stopped the carriage near the Pont St. Michel, opposite to a clockmaker's shop, and after looking at several watches I gave one to Adele, and then dropped her and her father at the corner of the Rue aux Ours. I got down at the "Hotel de Montmorenci," not wanting to stop with Madame d'Urfe, but after dressing I went to dine with her.

CHAPTER VI

I Drive My Brother The Abbe From Paris — Madame du Rumain Recovers Her Voice Through My Cabala — A Bad Joke — The Corticelli — I Take d'Aranda to London My Arrival At Calais

As usual, Madame d'Urfe received me with open arms, but I was surprised at hearing her tell Aranda to fetch the sealed letter she had given him in the morning. I opened it, found it was dated the same day, and contained the following:

"My genius told me at day-break that Galtinardus was starting from Fontainebleau, and that he will come and dine with me to-day."

She chanced to be right, but I have had many similar experiences in the course of my life-experiences which would have turned any other man's head. I confess they have surprised me, but they have never made me lose my reasoning powers. Men make a guess which turns out to be correct, and they immediately claim prophetic power; but they forgot all about the many cases in which they have been mistaken. Six months ago I was silly enough to bet that a bitch would have a litter of five bitch pups on a certain day, and I won. Everyone thought it a marvel except myself, for if I had chanced to lose I should have been the first to laugh.

I naturally expressed my admiration for Madame d'Urfe's genius, and shared her joy in finding herself so well during her pregnancy. The worthy lunatic had given orders that she was not at home to her usual callers, in expectation of my arrival, and so we spent the rest of the day together, consulting how we could make Aranda go to London of his own free will; and as I did not in the least know how it was to be done, the replies of the oracle were very obscure. Madame d'Urfe had such a strong dislike to bidding him go, that I could not presume on her obedience to that extent, and I had to rack my brains to find out some way of making the little man ask to be taken to London as a favour.

I went to the Comedie Italienne, where I found Madame du Rumain, who seemed glad to see me back in Paris again.

“I want to consult the oracle on a matter of the greatest importance,” said she, “and I hope you will come and see me tomorrow.”

I, of course, promised to do so.

I did not care for the performance, and should have left the theatre if I had not wanted to see the ballet, though I could not guess the peculiar interest it would have for me. What was my surprise to see the Corticelli amongst the dancers. I thought I would like to speak to her, not for any amorous reasons, but because I felt curious to hear her adventures. As I came out I met the worthy Baletti, who told me he had left the stage and was living on an annuity. I asked him about the Corticelli, and he gave me her address, telling me that she was in a poor way.

I went to sup with my brother and his wife, who were delighted to see me, and told me that I had come just in time to use a little gentle persuasion on our friend the abbe, of whom they had got tired.

“Where is he?”

“You will see him before long, for it is near supper-time; and as eating and drinking are the chief concerns of his life, he will not fail to put in an appearance.”

“What has he done?”

“Everything that a good-for-nothing can do; but I hear him coming, and I will tell you all about it in his presence.”

The abbe was astonished to see me, and began a polite speech, although I did not favour him with so much as a look. Then he asked me what I had against him.

“All that an honest man can have against a monster. I have read the letter you wrote to Possano, in which I am styled a cheat, a spy, a coiner, and a poisoner. What does the abbe think of that?”

He sat down to table without a word, and my brother began as follows:

“When this fine gentleman first came here, my wife and I gave him a most cordial welcome. I allowed him a nice room, and told him to look upon my house as his own. Possibly with the idea of interesting us in his favour, he began by saying that you were the greatest rascal in the world. To prove it he told us how he had carried off a girl from Venice with the idea of marrying her, and went to you at Genoa as he was in great necessity. He confesses that you rescued him from his misery, but he says that you traitorously took possession of the girl, associating her with two other mistresses you had at that time. In fine, he says that you lay with her before his eyes, and that you drove him from Marseilles that you might be able to enjoy her with greater freedom.

"He finished his story by saying that as he could not go back to Venice, he needed our help till he could find some means of living on his talents or through his profession as a priest. I asked him what his talents were, and he said he could teach Italian; but as he speaks it vilely, and doesn't know a word of French, we laughed at him. We were therefore reduced to seeing what we could do for him in his character of priest, and the very next day my wife spoke to M. de Sauci, the ecclesiastical commissioner, begging him to give my brother an introduction to the Archbishop of Paris, who might give him something that might lead to his obtaining a good benefice. He would have to go to our parish church, and I spoke to the rector of St. Sauveur, who promised to let him say mass, for which he would receive the usual sum of twelve sols. This was a very good beginning, and might have led to something worth having; but when we told the worthy abbe of our success, he got into a rage, saying that he was not the man to say mass for twelve sols, nor to toady the archbishop in the hope of being taken into his service. No, he was not going to be in anyone's service. We concealed our indignation, but for the three weeks he has been here he has turned everything upside down. My wife's maid left us yesterday, to our great annoyance, because of him; and the cook says she will go if he remains, as he is always bothering her in the kitchen. We are therefore resolved that he shall go, for his society is intolerable to us. I am delighted to have you here, as I think we ought to be able to drive him away between us, and the sooner the better."

"Nothing easier," said I; "if he likes to stay in Paris, let him do so. You can send off his rags to some furnished apartments, and serve him with a police order not to put foot in your house again. On the other hand if he wants to go away, let him say where, and I will pay his journey-money this evening."

“Nothing could be more generous. What do you say, abbe?”

“I say that this is the way in which he drove me from Marseilles. What intolerable violence!”

“Give God thanks, monster, that instead of thrashing you within an inch of your life as you deserve, I am going to give you some money! You thought you would get me hanged at Lyons, did you?”

“Where is Marcoline?”

“What is that to you? Make haste and choose between Rome and Paris, and remember that if you choose Paris you will have nothing to live on.”

“Then I will go to Rome.”

“Good! The journey only costs twenty louis, but I will give you twenty-five.”

“Hand them over.”

“Patience. Give me pens, ink and paper.”

“What are you going to write?”

“Bills of exchange on Lyons, Turin, Genoa, Florence, and Rome. Your place will be paid as far as Lyons, and there you will be able to get five louis, and the same sum in the other towns, but as long as you stay in Paris not one single farthing will I give you. I am staying at the ‘Hotel Montmorenci;’ that’s all you need know about me.”

I then bade farewell to my brother and his wife, telling them that we should meet again. Checco, as we called my brother, told me he would send on the abbe’s trunk the day following, and I bade him do so by all means.

The next day trunk and abbe came together. I did not even look at him, but after I had seen that a room had been assigned to him, I called out to the landlord that I would be answerable for the abbe’s board and lodging for three days, and not a moment more. The abbe tried to speak to me, but I sternly declined to have anything to say to him, strictly forbidding Clairmont to admit him to my apartments.

When I went to Madame du Rumain’s, the porter said, —

“Sir, everybody is still asleep, but who are you? I have instructions.”

"I am the Chevalier de Seingalt."

"Kindly come into my lodge, and amuse yourself with my niece. I will soon be with you."

I went in, and found a neatly-dressed and charming girl.

"Mademoiselle," said I, "your uncle has told me to come and amuse myself with you."

"He is a rascal, for he consulted neither of us."

"Yes, but he knew well enough that there could be no doubt about my opinion after I had seen you."

"You are very flattering, sir, but I know the value of compliments."

"Yes, I suppose that you often get them, and you well deserve them all."

The conversation, as well as the pretty eyes of the niece, began to interest me, but fortunately the uncle put an end to it by begging me to follow him. He took me to the maid's room, and I found her putting on a petticoat, and grumbling the while.

"What is the matter, my pretty maid? You don't seem to be in a good humour."

"You would have done better to come at noon; it is not nine o'clock yet, and madame did not come home till three o'clock this morning. I am just going to wake her, and I am sorry for her."

I was taken into the room directly, and though her eyes were half closed she thanked me for awaking her, while I apologized for having disturbed her sleep.

"Raton," said she, "give us the writing materials, and go away. Don't come till I call you, and if anyone asks for me, I am asleep."

"Very good, madam, and I will go to sleep also."

"My dear M. Casanova, how is it that the oracle has deceived us? M. du Rumain is still alive, and he ought to have died six months ago. It is true that he is not well, but we will not go into all that again. The really important question is this: You know that music is my favourite pursuit, and that my voice is famous for its strength and compass; well, I have completely lost it. I have not sung a note for three months. The doctors have stuffed me with remedies which have had no effect: It makes me very unhappy, for singing was the one thing that made me cling to life. I entreat you to ask the oracle how I can recover my voice. How delighted I should be if I could sing by to-morrow. I have a great many people coming here, and I should enjoy the general astonishment. If the oracle wills it I am sure that it might be so, for I have a very strong chest. That is my question; it is a long one, but so much the better; the answer will be long too, and I like long answers."

I was of the same opinion, for when the question was a long one, I had time to think over the answer as I made the pyramid. Madame Rumain's complaint was evidently something trifling, but I was no physician, and knew nothing about medicine. Besides, for the honour of the cabala, the oracle must have nothing to do with mere empiric remedies. I soon made up my mind that a little care in her way of living would soon restore the throat to its normal condition, and any doctor with brains in his head could have told her as much. In the position I was in, I had to make use of the language of a charlatan, so I resolved on prescribing a ceremonial worship to the sun, at an hour which would insure some regularity in her mode of life.

The oracle declared that she would recover her voice in twenty-one days, reckoning from the new moon, if she worshipped the rising sun every morning, in a room which had at least one window looking to the east.

A second reply bade her sleep seven hours in succession before she sacrificed to the sun, each hour symbolizing one of the seven planets; and before she went to sleep she was to take a bath in honour of the moon, placing her legs in lukewarm water up to the knees. I then pointed out the psalms which she was to recite to the moon, and those which she was to say in the face of the rising sun, at a closed window.

This last direction filled her with admiration, "for," said she, "the oracle knew that I should catch cold if the window were open. I will do everything the oracle bids me," added the credulous lady, "but I hope you will get me everything necessary for the ceremonies."

"I will not only take care that you have all the requisites, but as a proof of my zeal for you, I will come and do the suffumigations myself that you may learn how it is done."

She seemed deeply moved by this offer, but I expected as much. I knew how the most trifling services are assessed at the highest rates; and herein lies the great secret of success in the world, above all, where ladies of fashion are concerned.

As we had to begin the next day, being the new moon, I called on her at nine o'clock. As she had to sleep for seven successive hours before performing the ceremonies to the rising sun, she would have to go to bed before ten; and the observance of all these trifles was of importance, as anyone can understand.

I was sure that if anything could restore this lady's voice a careful regimen would do it. I proved to be right, and at London I received a grateful letter announcing the success of my method.

Madame du Rumain, whose daughter married the Prince de Polignac, was a lover of pleasure, and haunted grand supper-parties. She could not expect to enjoy perfect health, and she had lost her voice by the way in which she had abused it. When she had recovered her voice, as she thought, by the influence of the genii, she laughed at anyone who told her that there was no such thing as magic.

I found a letter from Therese at Madame d'Urfe's, in which she informed me that she would come to Paris and take her son back by force if I did not bring him to London, adding that she wanted a positive reply. I did not ask for anything more, but I thought Therese very insolent.

I told Aranda that his mother would be waiting for us at Abbeville in a week's time, and that she wanted to see him.

"We will both give her the pleasure of seeing us."

"Certainly," said he; "but as you are going on to London, how shall I come back?"

"By yourself," said Madame d'Urfe, "dressed as a postillion."

"What shall I ride post? How delightful!"

"You must only cover eight or ten posts a day, for you have no need to risk your life by riding all night."

"Yes, yes; but I am to dress like a postillion, am I not?"

"Yes; I will have a handsome jacket and a pair of leather breeches made for you, and you shall have a flag with the arms of France on it."

"They will take me for a courier going to London."

With the idea that to throw difficulties in the way would confirm him in his desire to go, I said roughly that I could not hear of it, as the horse might fall and break his neck. I had to be begged and entreated for three days before I would give in, and I did so on the condition that he should only ride on his way back.

As he was certain of returning to Paris, he only took linen sufficient for a very short absence; but as I knew that once at Abbeville he could not escape me, I sent his trunk on to Calais, where we found it on our arrival. However, the worthy Madame d'Urfe got him a magnificent postillion's suit, not forgetting the top-boots.

This business which offered a good many difficulties was happily arranged by the action of pure chance; and I am glad to confess that often in my life has chance turned the scale in my favour.

I called on a banker and got him to give me heavy credits on several of the most important houses in London, where I wished to make numerous acquaintances.

While I was crossing the Place des Victoires, I passed by the house where the Corticelli lived, and my curiosity made me enter. She was astonished to see me, and after a long silence she burst into tears, and said, —

"I should never have been unhappy if I had never known you."

"Yes, you would, only in some other way; your misfortunes are the result of your bad conduct. But tell me what are your misfortunes."

"As I could not stay in Turin after you had dishonoured me …"

"You came to dishonour yourself here, I suppose. Drop that tone, or else I will leave you."

She began her wretched tale, which struck me with consternation, for I could not help feeling that I was the first and final cause of this long list of woes. Hence I felt it was my duty to succour her, however ill she had treated me in the past.

“Then,” said I, “you are at present the victim of a fearful disease, heavily in debt, likely to be turned out of doors and imprisoned by your creditors. What do you propose to do?”

“Do! Why, throw myself in the Seine, to be sure; that’s all that is left for me to do. I have not a farthing left.”

“And what would you do if you had some money?”

“I would put myself under the doctor’s hands, in the first place, and then if any money was left I would go to Bologna and try to get a living somehow. Perhaps I should have learnt a little wisdom by experience.”

“Poor girl, I pity you! and in spite of your bad treatment of me, which has brought you to this pass, I will not abandon you. Here are four louis for your present wants, and to-morrow I will tell you where you are to go for your cure. When you have got well again, I will give you enough money for the journey. Dry your tears, repent, amend your ways, and may God have mercy on you!”

The poor girl threw herself on the ground before me, and covered one of my hands with kisses, begging me to forgive her for the ill she had done me. I comforted her and went my way, feeling very sad. I took a coach and drove to the Rue de Seine, where I called on an old surgeon I knew, told him the story, and what I wanted him to do. He told me he could cure her in six weeks without anybody hearing about it, but that he must be paid in advance.

“Certainly; but the girl is poor, and I am doing it out of charity.”

The worthy man took a piece of paper and gave me a note addressed to a house in the Faubourg St. Antoine, which ran as follows:

“You will take in the person who brings you this note and three hundred francs, and in six weeks you will send her back cured, if it please God. The person has reasons for not wishing to be known.”

I was delighted to have managed the matter so speedily and at such a cheap rate, and I went to bed in a calmer state of mind, deferring my interview with my brother till the next day.

He came at eight o’clock, and, constant to his folly, told me he had a plan to which he was sure I could have no objection.

"I don't want to hear anything about it; make your choice, Paris or Rome."

"Give me the journey-money, I will remain at Paris; but I will give a written engagement not to trouble you or your brother again. That should be sufficient."

"It is not for you to judge of that. Begone! I have neither the time nor the wish to listen to you. Remember, Paris without a farthing, or Rome with twenty-five louis."

Thereupon I called Clairmont, and told him to put the abbe out.

I was in a hurry to have done with the Corticelli affair, and went to the house in the Faubourg St. Antoine, where I found a kindly and intelligent-looking man and woman, and all the arrangements of the house satisfactory and appropriate to the performance of secret cures. I saw the room and the bath destined for the new boarder, everything was clean and neat, and I gave them a hundred crowns, for which they handed me a receipt. I told them that the lady would either come in the course of the day, or on the day following.

I went to dine with Madame d'Urfe and the young Count d'Aranda. After dinner the worthy marchioness talked to me for a long time of her pregnancy, dwelling on her symptoms, and on the happiness that would be hers when the babe stirred within her. I had put to a strong restrain upon myself to avoid bursting out laughing. When I had finished with her I went to the Corticelli, who called me her saviour and her guardian angel. I gave her two louis to get some linen out of pawn, and promised to come and see her before I left Paris, to give her a hundred crowns, which would take her back to Bologna. Then I waited on Madame du Rumain who had said farewell to society for three weeks.

This lady had an excellent heart, and was pretty as well, but she had so curious a society-manner that she often made me laugh most heartily. She talked of the sun and moon as if they were two Exalted Personages, to whom she was about to be presented. She was once discussing with me the state of the elect in heaven, and said that their greatest happiness was, no doubt, to love God to distraction, for she had no idea of calm and peaceful bliss.

I gave her the incense for the fumigation, and told her what psalms to recite, and then we had a delicious supper. She told her chamber-maid to escort me at ten o'clock to a room on the second floor which she had furnished for me with the utmost luxury, adding, —

"Take care that the Chevalier de Seingalt is able to come into my room at five o'clock to-morrow."

At nine o'clock I placed her legs in a bath of lukewarm water, and taught her how to suffumigate. Her legs were moulded by the hand of the Graces and I wiped them amorously, laughing within myself at her expression of gratitude, and I then laid her in bed, contenting myself with a solemn kiss on her pretty forehead. When it was over I went up to my room where I was waited on by the pretty maid, who performed her duties with that grace peculiar to the French soubrette, and told me that as I had become her mistress's chambermaid it was only right that she should be my valet. Her mirth was infectious, and I tried to make her sit down on my knee; but she fled away like a deer, telling me that I ought to take care of myself if I wanted to cut a good figure at five o'clock the next day. She was wrong, but appearances were certainly against us, and it is well known that servants do not give their masters and mistresses the benefit of the doubt.

At five o'clock in the morning I found Madame du Rumain nearly dressed when I went into her room, and we immediately went into another, from which the rising sun might have been see if the "Hotel de Bouillon" had not been in the way, but that, of course, was a matter of no consequence. Madame du Rumain performed the ceremonies with all the dignity of an ancient priestess of Baal. She then sat down to her piano, telling me that to find some occupation for the long morning of nine hours would prove the hardest of all the rules, for she did not dine till two, which was then the fashionable hour. We had a meat breakfast without coffee, which I had proscribed, and I left her, promising to call again before I left Paris.

When I got back to my inn, I found my brother there looking very uneasy at my absence at such an early hour. When I saw him I cried, —

"Rome or Paris, which is it to be?"

"Rome," he replied, cringingly.

"Wait in the antechamber. I will do your business for you."

When I had finished I called him in, and found my other brother and his wife, who said they had come to ask me to give them a dinner.

“Welcome!” said I. “You are come just in time to see me deal with the abbe, who has resolved at last to go to Rome and to follow my directions.”

I sent Clairmont to the diligence office, and told him to book a place for Lyons; and then I wrote out five bills of exchange, of five louis each, on Lyons, Turin, Genoa, Florence, and Rome.

“Who is to assure me that these bills will be honoured?”

“I assure you, blockhead. If you don’t like them you can leave them.”

Clairmont brought the ticket for the diligence and I gave it to the abbe, telling him roughly to be gone.

“But I may dine with you, surely?” said he.

“No, I have done with you. Go and dine with Possano, as you are his accomplice in the horrible attempt he made to murder me. Clairmont, shew this man out, and never let him set foot here again.”

No doubt more than one of my readers will pronounce my treatment of the abbe to have been barbarous; but putting aside the fact that I owe no man an account of my thoughts, deeds, and words, nature had implanted in me a strong dislike to this brother of mine, and his conduct as a man and a priest, and, above all, his connivance with Possano, had made him so hateful to me that I should have watched him being hanged with the utmost indifference, not to say with the greatest pleasure. Let everyone have his own principles and his own passions, and my favourite passion has always been vengeance.

“What did you do with the girl he eloped with?” said my sister-in-raw.

“I sent her back to Venice with the ambassadors the better by thirty thousand francs, some fine jewels, and a perfect outfit of clothes. She travelled in a carriage I gave her which was worth more than two hundred louis.”

“That’s all very fine, but you must make some allowance for the abbe’s grief and rage at seeing you sleep with her.”

“Fools, my dear sister, are made to suffer such grief, and many others besides. Did he tell you that she would not let him have anything to do with her, and that she used to box his ears?"

"On the the contrary, he was always talking of her love for him."

"He made himself a fine fellow, I have no doubt, but the truth is, it was a very ugly business."

After several hours of pleasant conversation my brother left, and I took my sister-in-law to the opera. As soon as we were alone this poor sister of mine began to make the most bitter complaints of my brother.

"I am no more his wife now," said she, "than I was the night before our marriage."

"What! Still a maid?"

"As much a maid as at the moment I was born. They tell me I could easily obtain a dissolution of the marriage, but besides the scandal that would arise, I unhappily love him, and I should not like to do anything that would give him pain."

"You are a wonderful woman, but why do you not provide a substitute for him?"

"I know I might do so, without having to endure much remorse, but I prefer to bear it."

"You are very praiseworthy, but in the other ways you are happy?"

"He is overwhelmed with debt, and if I liked to call upon him to give me back my dowry he would not have a shirt to his back. Why did he marry me? He must have known his impotence. It was a dreadful thing to do."

"Yes, but you must forgive him for it."

She had cause for complaint, for marriage without enjoyment is a thorn without roses. She was passionate, but her principles were stronger than her passions, or else she would have sought for what she wanted elsewhere. My impotent brother excused himself by saying that he loved her so well that he thought cohabitation with her would restore the missing faculty; he deceived himself and her at the same time. In time she died, and he married another woman with the same idea, but this time passion was stronger than virtue, and his new wife drove him away from Paris. I shall say more of him in twenty years time.

At six o'clock the next morning the abbe went off in the diligence, and I did not see him for six years. I spent the day with Madame d'Urfe, and I agreed, outwardly, that young d'Aranda should return to Paris as a postillion. I fixed our departure for the day after next.

The following day, after dining with Madame d'Urfe who continued to revel in the joys of her regeneration, I paid a visit to the Corticelli in her asylum. I found her sad and suffering, but content, and well pleased with the gentleness of the surgeon and his wife, who told me they would effect a radical cure. I gave her twelve louis, promising to send her twelve more as soon as I had received a letter from her written at Bologna. She promised she would write to me, but the poor unfortunate was never able to keep her word, for she succumbed to the treatment, as the old surgeon wrote to me, when I was at London. He asked what he should do with the twelve louis which she had left to one Madame Laura, who was perhaps known to me. I sent him her address, and the honest surgeon hastened to fulfil the last wishes of the deceased.

All the persons who helped me in my magical operations with Madame d'Urfe betrayed me, Marcoline excepted, and all save the fair Venetian died miserably. Later on the reader will hear more of Possano and Costa.

The day before I left for London I supped with Madame du Rumain, who told me that her voice was already beginning to return. She added a sage reflection which pleased me highly.

"I should think," she observed, "that the careful living prescribed by the cabala must have a good effect on my health."

"Most certainly," said I, "and if you continue to observe the rules you will keep both your health and your voice."

I knew that it is often necessary to deceive before one can instruct; the shadows must come before the dawn.

I took leave of my worthy Madame d'Urfe with an emotion which I had never experienced before; it must have been a warning that I should never see her again. I assured her that I would faithfully observe all my promises, and she replied that her happiness was complete, and that she knew she owed it all to me. In fine, I took d'Aranda and his top-boots, which he was continually admiring, to my inn, whence we started in the evening, as he had begged me to travel by night. He was ashamed to be seen in a carriage dressed as a courier.

When we reached Abbeville he asked me where his mother was.

“We will see about it after dinner.”

“But you can find out in a moment whether she is here or not?”

“Yes, but there is no hurry.”

“And what will you do if she is not here?”

“We will go on till we meet her on the way. In the meanwhile let us go and see the famous manufactory of M. Varobes before dinner.”

“Go by yourself. I am tired, and I will sleep till you come back.”

“Very good.”

I spent two hours in going over the magnificent establishment, the owner himself shewing it me, and then I went back to dinner and called for my young gentleman.

“He started for Paris riding post,” replied the innkeeper, who was also the post-master, “five minutes after you left. He said he was going after some dispatches you had left at Paris.”

“If you don’t get him back I will ruin you with law-suits; you had no business to let him have a horse without my orders.”

“I will capture the little rascal, sir, before he has got to Amiens.”

He called a smart-looking postillion, who laughed when he heard what was wanted.

“I would catch him up,” said he, “even if he had four hours start. You shall have him here at six o’clock.”

“I will give you two louis.”

“I would catch him for that, though he were a very lark.”

He was in the saddle in five minutes, and by the rate at which he started I did not doubt his success. Nevertheless I could not enjoy my dinner. I felt so ashamed to have been taken in by a lad without any knowledge of the world. I lay down on a bed and slept till the postillion aroused me by coming in with the runaway, who looked half dead. I said nothing to him, but gave orders that he should be locked up in a good room, with a good bed to sleep on, and a good supper; and I told the landlord that I should hold him answerable for the lad as long as I was in his inn. The postillion had caught him up at the fifth post, just before Amiens, and as he was already quite tired out the little man surrendered like a lamb.

At day-break I summoned him before me, and asked him if he would come to London of his own free will or bound hand and foot.

“I will come with you, I give you my word of honour; but you must let me ride on before you. Otherwise, with this dress of mine, I should be ashamed to go. I don’t want it to be thought that you had to give chase to me, as if I had robbed you.”

“I accept your word of honour, but be careful to keep it. Embrace me, and order another saddle-horse.”

He mounted his horse in high spirits, and rode in front of the carriage with Clairmont. He was quite astonished to find his trunk at Calais, which he reached two hours before me.

CHAPTER VII

My Arrival in London; Madame Cornelis — I Am Presented at Court — I Rent a Furnished House — I Make a Large Circle of Acquaintance — Manners of the English

When I got to Calais I consigned my post-chaise to the care of the landlord of the inn, and hired a packet. There was only one available for a private party, there being another for public use at six francs apiece. I paid six guineas in advance, taking care to get a proper receipt, for I knew that at Calais a man finds himself in an awkward position if he is unable to support his claim by documents.

Before the tide was out Clairmont got all my belongings on board, and I ordered my supper. The landlord told me that louis were not current in England, and offered to give me guineas in exchange for mine; but I was surprised when I found he gave me the same number of guineas as I had given him of louis. I wanted him to take the difference — four per cent. — but he refused, saying that he did not allow anything when the English gave him guineas for louis. I do not know whether he found his system a profitable one on the whole, but it was certainly so for me.

The young Count d'Aranda, to whom I had restored his humble name of Trenti, was quite resigned, but proud of having given me a specimen of his knowingness by riding post. We were just going to sit down at table, well pleased with one another, when I heard a loud conversation in English going on near my door, and mine host came in to tell me what it was about.

"It's the courier of the Duke of Bedford, the English ambassador," said he; "he announces the approach of his master, and is disputing with the captain of the packet. He says he hired the boat by letter, and that the captain had no right to let it to you. The master maintains that he has received no such letter, and no one can prove that he is telling a lie."

I congratulated myself on having taken the packet and paid the earnest-money, and went to bed. At day-break the landlord said that the ambassador had arrived at midnight, and that his man wanted to see me.

He came in and told me that the nobleman, his master, was in a great hurry to get to London, and that I should oblige him very much by yielding the boat to him.

I did not answer a word, but wrote a note which ran as follows:

"My lord duke may dispose of the whole of the packet, with the exception of the space necessary for my own accommodation, that of two other persons, and my luggage. I am delighted to have the opportunity of obliging the English ambassador."

The valet took the note, and returned to thank me on behalf of his master, who stipulated, however, that he should be allowed to pay for the packet.

“Tell him that it is out of the question, as the boat is paid for already.”

“He will give you the six guineas.”

“Tell your master that I cannot allow him to pay. I do not buy to sell again.”

The duke called on me in the course of half an hour, and said that we were both of us in the right.

“However,” he added, “there is a middle course, let us adopt it, and I shall be just as much indebted to you.”

“What is that, my lord?”

“We will each pay half.”

“My desire to oblige you, my lord, will not allow me to refuse, but it is I who will be indebted to you for the honour your lordship does me. We will start as soon as you like, and I can make my arrangements accordingly.”

He shook my hand and left the room, and when he had gone I found three guineas on the table. He had placed them there without my noticing them. An hour afterwards I returned his call, and then told the master to take the duke and his carriages on board.

We took two hours and a half in crossing the Channel; the wind was strong, but we made a good passage.

The stranger who sets his foot on English soil has need of a good deal of patience. The custom-house officials made a minute, vexatious and even an impertinent perquisition; but as the duke and ambassador had to submit, I thought it best to follow his example; besides, resistance would be useless. The Englishman, who prides himself on his strict adherence to the law of the land, is curt and rude in his manner, and the English officials cannot be compared to the French, who know how to combine politeness with the exercise of their rights.

English is different in every respect from the rest of Europe; even the country has a different aspect, and the water of the Thames has a taste peculiar to itself. Everything has its own characteristics, and the fish, cattle, horses, men, and women are of a type not found in any other land. Their manner of living is wholly different from that of other countries, especially their cookery. The most striking feature in their character is their national pride; they exalt themselves above all other nations.

My attention was attracted by the universal cleanliness, the beauty of the country, the goodness of the roads, the reasonable charges for posting, the quickness of the horses, although they never go beyond a trot; and lastly, the construction of the towns on the Dover road; Canterbury and Rochester for instance, though large and populous, are like long passages; they are all length and no breadth.

We got to London in the evening and stopped at the house of Madame Cornelis, as Therese called herself. She was originally married to an actor named Imer, then to the dancer Pompeati, who committed suicide at Venice by ripping up his stomach with a razor.

In Holland she had been known as Madame Trenti, but at London she had taken the name of her lover Cornelius Rigerboos, whom she had contrived to ruin.

She lived in Soho Square, almost facing the house of the Venetian ambassador. When I arrived I followed the instructions I had received in her last letter. I left her son in the carriage, and sent up my name, expecting she would fly to meet me; but the porter told me to wait, and in a few minutes a servant in grand livery brought me a note in which Madame Cornelis asked me to get down at the house to which her servant would conduct me. I thought this rather strange behaviour, but still she might have her reasons for acting in this manner, so I did not let my indignation appear. When we got to the house, a fat woman named Rancour, and two servants, welcomed us, or rather welcomed my young friend; for the lady embraced him, told him how glad she was to see him, and did not appear to be aware of my existence.

Our trunks were taken in, and Madame Rancour having ascertained which belonged to Cornelis, had them placed in a fine suite of three rooms, and said, pointing out to him the apartment and the two servants,

“This apartment and the two servants are for you, and I, too, am your most humble servant.”

Clairmont told me that he had put my things in a room which communicated with Cornelis’s. I went to inspect it, and saw directly that I was being treated as if I were a person of no consequence. The storm of anger was gathering, but wonderful to relate, I subdued myself, and did not say a word.

“Where is your room?” I said to Clairmont.

“Near the roof, and I am to share it with one of those two louts you saw.”

The worthy Clairmont, who knew my disposition, was surprised at the calm with which I said, —

“Take your trunk there.”

“Shall I open yours?”

“No. We will see what can be done to-morrow.”

I still kept on my mask, and returned to the room of the young gentleman who seemed to be considered as my master. I found him listening with a foolish stare to Madame Rancour, who was telling him of the splendid position his mother occupied, her great enterprise, her immense credit, the splendid house she had built, her thirty-three servants, her two secretaries, her six horses, her country house, etc., etc.

“How is my sister Sophie?” said the young gentleman.

“Her name is Sophie, is it? She is only known as Miss Cornelis. She is a beauty, a perfect prodigy, she plays at sight on several instruments, dances like Terpsichore, speaks English, French, and Italian equally well — in a word, she is really wonderful. She has a governess and a maid. Unfortunately, she is rather short for her age; she is eight.”

She was ten, but as Madame Rancour was not speaking to me I refrained from interrupting her.

My lord Cornelis, who felt very tired, asked at what hour they were to sup.

“At ten o’clock and not before,” said the duenna, “for Madame Cornelis is always engaged till then. She is always with her lawyer, on account of an important law-suit she has against Sir Frederick Fermer.”

I could see that I should learn nothing worth learning by listening to the woman’s gossip, so I took my hat and cane and went for a walk in the immense city, taking care not to lose my way.

It was seven o'clock when I went out, and a quarter of an hour after, seeing a number of people in a coffeehouse, I entered it. It was the most notorious place in London, the resort of all the rascally Italians in town. I had heard of it at Lyons, and had taken a firm resolve never to set foot in it, but almighty chance made me go there unknown to myself. But it was my only visit.

I sat down by myself and called for a glass of lemonade, and before long a man came and sat by me to profit by the light. He had a printed paper in his hand, and I could see that the words were Italian. He had a pencil with which he scratched out some words and letters, writing the corrections in the margin. Idle curiosity made me follow him in his work, and I noticed him correcting the word 'ancora', putting in an 'h' in the margin. I was irritated by this barbarous spelling, and told him that for four centuries 'ancora' had been spelt without an 'h'.

"Quite so," said he, "but I am quoting from Boccaccio, and one should be exact in quotations."

"I apologize, sir; I see you are a man of letters."

"Well, in a small way. My name is Martinelli."

"Then you are in a great way indeed. I know you by repute, and if I am not mistaken you are a relation of Calsabigi, who has spoken of you to me. I have read some of your satires."

"May I ask to whom I have the honour of speaking?"

"My name is Seingalt. Have you finished your edition of the Decameron?"

"I am still at work on it, and trying to increase the number of my subscribers."

"If you will be so kind I should be glad to be of the number."

"You do me honour."

He gave me a ticket, and seeing that it was only for a guinea I took four, and telling him I hoped to see him again at the same coffee-house, the name of which I asked him, he told it me, evidently astonished at my ignorance; but his surprise vanished when I informed him that I had only been in London for an hour, and that it was my first visit to the great city.

"You will experience some trouble in finding your way back," said he, "allow me to accompany you."

When we had got out he gave me to understand that chance had led me to the "Orange Coffee House," the most disreputable house in London.

"But you go there."

"Yes, but I can say with Juvenal:

"'Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator.'

"The rogues can't hurt me; I know them and they know me; we never trouble each other."

"You have been a long time in London, I suppose."

"Five years."

"I presume you know a good many people."

"Yes, but I seldom wait on anyone but Lord Spencer. I am occupied with literary work and live all by myself. I don't make much, but enough to live on. I live in furnished apartments, and have twelve shirts and the clothes you see on my back, and that is enough for my happiness.

"'Nec ultra deos lacesso.'"

I was pleased with this honest man, who spoke Italian with the most exquisite correctness.

On the way back I asked him what I had better do to get a comfortable lodging. When he heard the style in which I wished to live and the time I proposed to spend in London, he advised me to take a house completely furnished.

"You will be given an inventory of the goods," said he, "and as soon as you get a surety your house will be your castle."

"I like the idea," I answered, "but how shall I find such a house?"

"That is easily done."

He went into a shop, begged the mistress to lend him the Advertiser, noted down several advertisements, and said, —

"That's all we have to do."

The nearest house was in Pall Mall and we went to see it. An old woman opened the door to us, and shewed us the ground floor and the three floors above. Each floor contained two rooms and a closet. Everything shone with cleanliness; linen, furniture, carpets, mirrors, and china, and even the bells and the bolts on the doors. The necessary linen was kept in a large press, and in another was the silver plate and several sets of china. The arrangements in the kitchen were excellent, and in a word, nothing was lacking in the way of comfort. The rent was twenty guineas a week, and, not stopping to bargain, which is never of any use in London, I told Martinelli that I would take it on the spot.

Martinelli translated what I said to the old woman, who told me that if I liked to keep her on as housekeeper I need not have a surety, and that it would only be necessary for me to pay for each week in advance. I answered that I would do so, but that she must get me a servant who could speak French or Italian as well as English. She promised to get one in a day's time, and I paid her for four weeks' rent on the spot, for which she gave me a receipt under the name of the Chevalier de Seingalt. This was the name by which I was known during the whole of my stay in London.

Thus in less than two hours I was comfortably settled in a town which is sometimes described as a chaos, especially for a stranger. But in London everything is easy to him who has money and is not afraid of spending it. I was delighted to be able to escape so soon from a house where I was welcomed so ill, though I had a right to the best reception; but I was still more pleased at the chance which had made me acquainted with Martinelli, whom I had known by repute for six years.

When I got back Madame Cornelis had not yet arrived, though ten o'clock had struck. Young Cornelis was asleep on the sofa. I was enraged at the way the woman treated me, but I resolved to put a good face on it.

Before long three loud knocks announced the arrival of Madame Cornelis in a sedan-chair, and I heard her ascending the stairs. She came in and seemed glad to see me, but did not come and give me those caresses which I had a right to expect. She ran to her son and took him on her knee, but the sleepy boy did not respond to her kisses with any great warmth.

“He is very tired, like myself,” said I, “and considering that we are travellers in need of rest you have kept us waiting a long time.”

I do not know whether she would have answered at all, or, if so, what her answer would have been, for just at that moment a servant came in and said that supper was ready. She rose and did me the honour to take my arm, and we went into another room which I had not seen. The table was laid for four, and I was curious enough to enquire who was the fourth person.

“It was to have been my daughter, but I left her behind, as when I told her that you and her brother had arrived she asked me if you were well.”

“And you have punished her for doing so?”

“Certainly, for in my opinion she ought to have asked for her brother first and then for you. Don’t you think I was right?”

“Poor Sophie! I am sorry for her. Gratitude has evidently more influence over her than blood relationship.”

“It is not a question of sentiment, but of teaching young persons to think with propriety.”

“Propriety is often far from proper.”

The woman told her son that she was working hard to leave him a fortune when she died, and that she had been obliged to summon him to England as he was old enough to help her in her business.

“And how am I to help you, my dear mother?”

“I give twelve balls and twelve suppers to the nobility, and the same number to the middle classes in the year. I have often as many as six hundred guests at two guineas a head. The expenses are enormous, and alone as I am I must be robbed, for I can’t be in two places at once. Now that you are here you can keep everything under lock and key, keep the books, pay and receive accounts, and see that everyone is properly attended to at the assemblies; in fine, you will perform the duties of the master.”

“And do you think that I can do all that?”

“You will easily learn it.”

“I think it will be very difficult.”

“One of my secretaries will come and live with you, and instruct you in everything. During the first year you will only have to acquire the English language, and to be present at my assemblies, that I may introduce you to the most distinguished people in London. You will get quite English before long."

"I would rather remain French."

"That's mere prejudice, my dear, you will like the sound of Mister Cornelis by-and-bye."

"Cornelis?"

"Yes; that is your name."

"It's a very funny one."

"I will write it down, so that you may not forget it." Thinking that her dear son was joking. Madame Cornelis looked at me in some astonishment, and told him to go to bed, which he did instantly. When we were alone she said he struck her as badly educated, and too small for his age.

"I am very much afraid," said she, "that we shall have to begin his education all over again. What has he learnt in the last six years?"

"He might have learnt a great deal, for he went to the best boarding school in Paris; but he only learnt what he liked, and what he liked was not much. He can play the flute, ride, fence, dance a minuet, change his shirt every day, answer politely, make a graceful bow, talk elegant trifles, and dress well. As he never had any application, he doesn't know anything about literature; he can scarcely write, his spelling is abominable, his arithmetic limited, and I doubt whether he knows in what continent England is situated."

"He has used the six years well, certainly."

"Say, rather, he has wasted them; but he will waste many more."

"My daughter will laugh at him; but then it is I who have had the care of her education. He will be ashamed when he finds her so well instructed though she is only eight."

"He will never see her at eight, if I know anything of reckoning; she is fully ten."

“I think I ought to know the age of my own daughter. She knows geography, history, languages, and music; she argues correctly, and behaves in a manner which is surprising in so young a child. All the ladies are in love with her. I keep her at a school of design all day; she shews a great taste for drawing. She dines with me on Sundays, and if you would care to come to dinner next Sunday you will confess that I have not exaggerated her capacities.”

It was Monday. I said nothing, but I thought it strange that she did not seem to consider that I was impatient to see my daughter. She should have asked me to meet her at supper the following evening.

“You are just in time,” said she, “to witness the last assembly of the year; for in a few weeks all the nobility will leave town in order to pass the summer in the country. I can’t give you a ticket, as they are only issued to the nobility, but you can come as my friend and keep close to me. You will see everything. If I am asked who you are, I will say that you have superintended the education of my son in Paris, and have brought him back to me.”

“You do me too much honour.”

We continued talking till two o’clock in the morning, and she told me all about the suit she had with Sir Frederick Fermer. He maintained that the house she had built at a cost of ten thousand guineas belonged to him as he had furnished the money. In equity he was right, but according to English law wrong, for it was she who had paid the workmen, the contractors, and the architect; it was she that had given and received receipts, and signed all documents. The house, therefore, belonged to her, and Fermer admitted as much; but he claimed the sum he had furnished, and here was the kernel of the whole case, for she had defied him to produce a single acknowledgment of money received.

“I confess,” said this honest woman, “that you have often given me a thousand pounds at a time, but that was a friendly gift, and nothing to be wondered at in a rich Englishman, considering that we were lovers and lived together.”

She had won her suit four times over in two years, but Fermer took advantage of the intricacies of English law to appeal again and again, and now he had gone to the House of Lords, the appeal to which might last fifteen years.

“This suit,” said the honest lady, “dishonours Fermer.”

“I should think it did, but you surely don’t think it honours you.”

“Certainly I do.”

“I don’t quite understand how you make that out.”

“I will explain it all to you.”

“We will talk it over again.”

In the three hours for which we talked together this woman did not once ask me how I was, whether I was comfortable, how long I intended to stay in London, or whether I had made much money. In short she made no enquiries what ever about me, only saying with a smile, but not heedlessly, —

“I never have a penny to spare.”

Her receipts amounted to more than twenty-four thousand pounds per annum, but her expenses were enormous and she had debts.

I avenged myself on her indifference by not saying a word about myself. I was dresssed simply but neatly, and had not any jewellry or diamonds about my person.

I went to bed annoyed with her, but glad to have discovered the badness of her heart. In spite of my longing to see my daughter I determined not to take any steps to meet her till the ensuing Sunday, when I was invited to dinner.

Early next morning I told Clairmont to pull all my goods and chattels in a carriage, and when all was ready I went to take leave of young Cornelis, telling him I was going to live in Pall Mall, and leaving him my address.

“You are not going to stay with me, then?” said he.

“No, your mother doesn’t know how to welcome or to treat me.”

“I think you are right. I shall go back to Paris.”

"Don't do anything so silly. Remember that here you are at home, and that in Paris you might not find a roof to shelter you. Farewell; I shall see you on Sunday."

I was soon settled in my new house, and I went out to call on M. Zuccato, the Venetian ambassador. I gave him M. Morosini's letter, and he said, coldly, that he was glad to make my acquaintance. When I asked him to present me at Court the insolent fool only replied with a smile, which might fairly be described as contemptuous. It was the aristocratic pride coming out, so I returned his smile with a cold bow, and never set foot in his house again.

On leaving Zuccato I called on Lord Egremont, and finding him ill left my letter with the porter. He died a few days after, so M. Morosini's letters were both useless through no fault of his. We shall learn presently what was the result of the little note.

I then went to the Comte de Guerchi, the French ambassador, with a letter from the Marquis Chauvelin, and I received a warm welcome. This nobleman asked me to dine with him the following day, and told me that if I liked he would present me at Court after chapel on Sunday. It was at that ambassador's table that I made the acquaintance of the Chevalier d'Eon, the secretary of the embassy, who afterwards became famous. This Chevalier d'Eon was a handsome woman who had been an advocate and a captain of dragoons before entering the diplomatic service; she served Louis XV. as a valiant soldier and a diplomatist of consummate skill. In spite of her manly ways I soon recognized her as a woman; her voice was not that of a castrato, and her shape was too rounded to be a man's. I say nothing of the absence of hair on her face, as that might be an accident.

In the first days of my stay in London I made the acquaintance of my bankers; who held at least three hundred thousand francs of my money. They all honoured my drafts and offered their services to me, but I did not make use of their good offices.

I visited the theatres of Covent Garden and Drury Lane, but I could not extract much enjoyment out of the performances as I did not know a word of English. I dined at all the taverns, high and low, to get some insight into the peculiar manners of the English. In the morning I went on 'Change, where I made some friends. It was there that a merchant to whom I spoke got me a Negro servant who spoke English, French, and Italian with equal facility; and the same individual procured me a cook who spoke French. I also visited the bagnios where a rich man can sup, bathe, and sleep with a fashionable courtezan, of which species there are many in London. It makes a magnificent debauch and only costs six guineas. The expense may be reduced to a hundred francs, but economy in pleasure is not to my taste.

On Sunday I made an elegant toilette and went to Court about eleven, and met the Comte de Guerchi as we had arranged. He introduced me to George III., who spoke to me, but in such a low voice that I could not understand him and had to reply by a bow. The queen made up for the king, however, and I was delighted to observe that the proud ambassador from my beloved Venice was also present. When M. de Guerchi introduced me under the name of the Chevalier de Seingalt, Zuccato looked astonished, for Mr. Morosini had called me Casanova in his letter. The queen asked me from what part of France I came, and understanding from my answer that I was from Venice, she looked at the Venetian ambassador, who bowed as if to say that he had no objection to make. Her Majesty then asked me if I knew the ambassadors extraordinary, who had been sent to congratulate the king, and I replied that I had the pleasure of knowing them intimately, and that I had spent three days in their society at Lyons, where M. Morosini gave me letters for my Lord d’Egremont and M. Zuccato.

“M. Querini amused me extremely,” said the queen; “he called me a little devil.”

“He meant to say that your highness is as witty as an angel.”

I longed for the queen to ask me why I had not been presented by M. Zuccatto, for I had a reply on the tip of my tongue that would have deprived the ambassador of his sleep for a week, while I should have slept soundly, for vengeance is a divine pleasure, especially when it is taken on the proud and foolish; but the whole conversation was a compound of nothings, as is usual in courts.

After my interview was over I got into my sedan-chair and went to Soho Square. A man in court dress cannot walk the streets of London without being pelted with mud by the mob, while the gentleman look on and laugh. All customs must be respected; they are all at once worthy and absurd.

When I got to the house of Madame Cornelis, I and my Negro Jarbe were shewn upstairs, and conducted through a suite of gorgeous apartments to a room where the lady of the house was sitting with two English ladies and two English gentlemen. She received me with familiar politeness, made me sit down in an armchair beside her, and then continued the conversation in English without introducing me. When her steward told her that dinner was ready, she gave orders for the children to be brought down.

I had long desired this meeting, and when I saw Sophie I ran to meet her; but she, who had profited by her mother's instructions, drew back with profound courtesy and a compliment learnt by heart. I did not say anything for fear I should embarrass her, but I felt grieved to the heart.

Madame Cornelis then brought forward her son, telling the company that I had brought him to England after superintending his education for six years. She spoke in French, so I was glad to see that her friends understood that language.

We sat down to table; Madame Cornelis between her two children, and I between the two Englishwomen, one of whom delighted me by her pleasant wit. I attached myself to her as soon as I noticed that the mistress of the house only spoke to me by chance, and that Sophie did not look at me. She was so like me that no mistake was possible. I could see that she had been carefully tutored by her mother to behave in this manner, and I felt this treatment to be both absurd and impertinent.

I did not want to let anyone see that I was angry, so I began to discourse in a pleasant strain on the peculiarities of English manners, taking care, however, not to say anything which might wound the insular pride of the English guests. My idea was to make them laugh and to make myself agreeable, and I succeeded, but not a word did I speak to Madame Cornelis; I did not so much as look at her.

The lady next to me, after admiring the beauty of my lace, asked me what was the news at Court.

"It was all news to me," said I, "for I went there to-day for the first time."

"Have you seen the king?" said Sir Joseph Cornelis.

"My dear, you should not ask such questions," said his mother.

"Why not?"

"Because the gentleman may not wish to answer them."

"On the contrary, madam, I like being questioned. I have been teaching your son for the last six years to be always asking something, for that is the way to acquire knowledge. He who asks nothing knows nothing."

I had touched her to the quick, and she fell into a sulky silence.

"You have not told me yet," said the lad, "whether you saw the king."

"Yes, my man, I saw the king and the queen, and both their majesties did me the honour to speak to me."

"Who introduced you?"

"The French ambassador."

"I think you will agree with me," said the mother, "that last question was a little too much."

"Certainly it would be if it were addressed to a stranger, but not to me who am his friend. You will notice that the reply he extracted from me did me honour. If I had not wished it to be known that I had been at Court, I should not have come here in this dress."

"Very good; but as you like to be questioned, may I ask you why you were not presented by your own ambassador?"

"Because the Venetian ambassador would not present me, knowing that his Government have a bone to pick with me."

By this time we had come to the dessert, and poor Sophie had not uttered a syllable.

"Say something to M. de Seingalt," said her mother.

"I don't know what to say," she answered. "Tell M. de Seingalt to ask me some questions, and I will answer to the best of my ability."

"Well, Sophie, tell me in what studies you are engaged at the present time."

"I am learning drawing; if you like I will shew you some of my work."

"I will look at it with pleasure; but tell me how you think you have offended me; you have a guilty air."

"I, sir? I do not think I have done anything amiss."

"Nor do I, my dear; but as you do not look at me when you speak I thought you must be ashamed of something. Are you ashamed of your fine eyes? You blush. What have you done?"

"You are embarrassing her," said the mother. "Tell him, my dear, that you have done nothing, but that a feeling of modesty and respect prevents you from gazing at the persons you address."

"Yes," said I; "but if modesty bids young ladies lower their eyes, politeness should make them raise them now and again."

No one replied to this objection, which was a sharp cut for the absurd woman; but after an interval of silence we rose from the table, and Sophie went to fetch her drawings.

"I won't look at anything, Sophie, unless you will look at me."

"Come," said her mother, "look at the gentleman."

She obeyed as quickly as lightning, and I saw the prettiest eyes imaginable.

"Now," said I, "I know you again, and perhaps you may remember having seen me."

"Yes, although it is six years ago since we met, I recognized you directly."

"And yet you did not look me in the face! If you knew how impolite it was to lower your eyes when you are addressing anyone, you would not do it. Who can have given you such a bad lesson?"

The child glanced towards her mother, who was standing by a window, and I saw who was her preceptress.

I felt that I had taken sufficient vengeance, and began to examine her drawings, to praise them in detail, and to congratulate her on her talents. I told her that she ought to be thankful to have a mother who had given her so good an education. This indirect compliment pleased Madame Cornelis, and Sophie, now free from all restraint, gazed at me with an expression of child-like affection which ravished me. Her features bore the imprint of a noble soul within, and I pitied her for having to grow up under the authority of a foolish mother. Sophie went to the piano, played with feeling, and then sang some Italian airs, to the accompaniment of the guitar, too well for her age.

She was too precocious, and wanted much more discretion in her education than Madame Cornelis was able to give her.

When her singing had been applauded by the company, her mother told her to dance a minuet with her brother, who had learnt in Paris, but danced badly for want of a good carriage. His sister told him so with a kiss, and then asked me to dance with her, which I did very readily. Her mother, who thought she had danced exquisitely, as was indeed the case, told her that she must give me a kiss. She came up to me, and drawing her on my knee I covered her face with kisses, which she returned with the greatest affection. Her mother laughed with all her heart, and then Sophie, beginning to be doubtful again, went up to her and asked if she were angry. Her mother comforted her with a kiss.

After we had taken coffee, which was served in the French fashion, Madame Cornelis shewed me a magnificent hall which she had built, in which she could give supper to four hundred persons seated at one table. She told me, and I could easily believe her, that there was not such another in all London.

The last assembly was given before the prorogation of Parliament; it was to take place in four or five days. She had a score of pretty girls in her service, and a dozen footmen all in full livery.

“They all rob me,” said she, “but I have to put up with it. What I want is a sharp man to help me and watch over my interests; if I had such an one I should make an immense fortune in a comparatively short time; for when it is a question of pleasure, the English do not care what they spend.”

I told her I hoped she would find such man and make the fortune, and then I left her, admiring her enterprise.

When I left Soho Square I went to St. James’s Park to see Lady Harrington for whom I bore a letter, as I have mentioned. This lady lived in the precincts of the Court, and received company every Sunday. It was allowable to play in her house, as the park is under the jurisdiction of the Crown. In any other place there is no playing cards or singing on Sundays. The town abounds in spies, and if they have reason to suppose that there is any gaming or music going on, they watch for their opportunity, slip into the house, and arrest all the bad Christians, who are diverting themselves in a manner which is thought innocent enough in any other country. But to make up for this severity the Englishman may go in perfect liberty to the tavern or the brothel, and sanctify the Sabbath as he pleases.

I called on Lady Harrington, and having sent up my letter she summoned me into her presence. I found her in the midst of about thirty persons, but the hostess was easily distinguished by the air of welcome she had for me.

After I had made my bow she told me she had seen me at Court in the morning, and that without knowing who I was she had been desirous of making my acquaintance. Our conversation lasted three-quarters of an hour, and was composed of those frivolous observations and idle questions which are commonly addressed to a traveller.

The lady was forty, but she was still handsome. She was well known for her gallantries and her influence at Court. She introduced me to her husband and her four daughters, charming girls of a marriageable age. She asked me why I had come to London when everybody was on the point of going out of town. I told her that as I always obeyed the impulse of the moment, I should find it difficult to answer her question; besides, I intended staying for a year, so that the pleasure would be deferred but not lost.

My reply seemed to please her by its character of English independence, and she offered with exquisite grace to do all in her power for me.

“In the meanwhile,” said she, “we will begin by letting you see all the nobility at Madame Cornelis’s on Thursday next. I can give you a ticket to admit to ball and supper. It is two guineas.”

I gave her the money, and she took the ticket again, writing on it, “Paid. — Harrington.”

“Is this formality necessary, my lady?”

“Yes; or else they would ask you for the money at the doors.”

I did not think it necessary to say anything about my connection with the lady of Soho Square.

While Lady Harrington was making up a rubber at whist, she asked me if I had any other letters for ladies.

“Yes,” said I, “I have one which I intend to present to-morrow. It is a singular letter, being merely a portrait.”

“Have you got it about you?”

“Yes, my lady.”

“May I see it?”

“Certainly. Here it is.”

“It is the Duchess of Northumberland. We will go and give it her.”

“With pleasure!”

“Just wait till they have marked the game.”

Lord Percy had given me this portrait as a letter of introduction to his mother.

“My dear duchess,” said Lady Harrington, “here is a letter of introduction which this gentleman begs to present to you.”

“I know, it is M. de Seingalt. My son has written to me about him. I am delighted to see you, Chevalier, and I hope you will come and see me. I receive thrice a week.”

“Will your ladyship allow me to present my valuable letter in person?”

“Certainly. You are right.”

I played a rubber of whist for very small stakes, and lost fifteen guineas, which I paid on the spot. Directly afterwards Lady Harrington took me apart, and gave me a lesson which I deem worthy of record.

“You paid in gold,” said she; “I suppose you had no bank notes about you?”

“Yes, my lady, I have notes for fifty and a hundred pounds.”

“Then you must change one of them or wait till another time to play, for in England to pay in gold is a solecism only pardonable in a stranger. Perhaps you noticed that the lady smiled?”

“Yes; who is she?”

“Lady Coventry, sister of the Duchess of Hamilton.”

“Ought I to apologize?”

“Not at all, the offence is not one of those which require an apology. She must have been more surprised than offended, for she made fifteen shillings by your paying her in gold.”

I was vexed by this small mischance, for Lady Coventry was an exquisitely beautiful brunette. I comforted myself, however, without much trouble.

The same day I made the acquaintance of Lord Hervey, the nobleman who conquered Havana, a pleasant an intelligent person. He had married Miss Chudleigh, but the marriage was annulled. This celebrated Miss Chudleigh was maid of honour to the Princess Dowager of Wales, and afterwards became Duchess of Kingston. As her history is well known I shall say something more of her in due course. I went home well enough pleased with my day’s work.

The next day I began dining at home, and found my cook very satisfactory; for, besides the usual English dishes, he was acquainted with the French system of cooking, and did fricandeaus, cutlets, ragouts, and above all, the excellent French soup, which is one of the principal glories of France.

My table and my house were not enough for my happiness. I was alone, and the reader will understand by this that Nature had not meant me for a hermit. I had neither a mistress nor a friend, and at London one may invite a man to dinner at a tavern where he pays for himself, but not to one’s own table. One day I was invited by a younger son of the Duke of Bedford to eat oysters and drink a bottle of champagne. I accepted the invitation, and he ordered the oysters and the champagne, but we drank two bottles, and he made me pay half the price of the second bottle. Such are manners on the other side of the Channel. People laughed in my face when I said that I did not care to dine at a tavern as I could not get any soup.

“Are you ill?” they said, “soup is only fit for invalids.”

The Englishman is entirely carnivorous. He eats very little bread, and calls himself economical because he spares himself the expense of soup and dessert, which circumstance made me remark that an English dinner is like eternity: it has no beginning and no end. Soup is considered very extravagant, as the very servants refuse to eat the meat from which it has been made. They say it is only fit to give to dogs. The salt beef which they use is certainly excellent. I cannot say the same for their beer, which was so bitter that I could not drink it. However, I could not be expected to like beer after the excellent French wines with which the wine merchant supplied me, certainly at a very heavy cost.

I had been a week in my new home without seeing Martinelli. He came on a Monday morning, and I asked him to dine with me. He told me that he had to go to the Museum, and my curiosity to see the famous collection which is such an honour to England made me accompany him. It was there that I made the acquaintance of Dr. Mati, of whom I shall speak in due course.

At dinner Martinelli made himself extremely pleasant. He had a profound knowledge of the English manners and customs which it behoved me to know if I wished to get on. I happened to speak of the impoliteness of which I had been guilty in paying a gaming debt in gold instead of paper, and on this text he preached me a sermon on the national prosperity, demonstrating that the preference given to paper shews the confidence which is felt in the Bank, which may or may not be misplaced, but which is certainly a source of wealth. This confidence might be destroyed by a too large issue of paper money, and if that ever took place by reason of a protracted or unfortunate war, bankruptcy would be inevitable, and no one could calculate the final results.

After a long discussion on politics, national manners, literature, in which subjects Martinelli shone, we went to Drury Lane Theatre, where I had a specimen of the rough insular manners. By some accident or other the company could not give the piece that had been announced, and the audience were in a tumult. Garrick, the celebrated actor who was buried twenty years later in Westminster Abbey, came forward and tried in vain to restore order. He was obliged to retire behind the curtain. Then the king, the queen, and all the fashionables left the theatre, and in less than an hour the theatre was gutted, till nothing but the bare walls were left.

After this destruction, which went on without any authority interposing, the mad populace rushed to the taverns to consume gin and beer. In a fortnight the theatre was refitted and the piece announced again, and when Garrick appeared before the curtain to implore the indulgence of the house, a voice from the pit shouted, “On your knees.” A thousand voices took up the cry “On your knees,” and the English Roscius was obliged to kneel down and beg forgiveness. Then came a thunder of applause, and everything was over.

Such are the English, and above all, the Londoners. They hoot the king and the royal family when they appear in public, and the consequence is, that they are never seen, save on great occasions, when order is kept by hundreds of constables.

One day, as I was walking by myself, I saw Sir Augustus Hervey, whose acquaintance I had made, speaking to a gentleman, whom he left to come to me. I asked him whom he had been speaking to.

“That’s the brother of Earl Ferrers,” said he, “who was hanged a couple of months ago for murdering one of his people.”

“And you speak to his brother?”

“Why shouldn’t I?”

“Is he not dishonoured by the execution of his relative?”

“Dishonoured! Certainly not; even his brother was not dishonoured. He broke the law, but he paid for it with his life, and owed society nothing more. He’s a man of honour, who played high and lost; that’s all. I don’t know that there is any penalty in the statute book which dishonours the culprit; that would be tyrannical, and we would not bear it. I may break any law I like, so long as I am willing to pay the penalty. It is only a dishonour when the criminal tries to escape punishment by base or cowardly actions.”

“How do you mean?”

“To ask for the royal mercy, to beg forgiveness of the people, and the like.”

“How about escaping from justice?”

“That is no dishonour, for to fly is an act of courage; it continues the defiance of the law, and if the law cannot exact obedience, so much the worse for it. It is an honour for you to have escaped from the tyranny of your magistrates; your flight from The Leads was a virtuous action. In such cases man fights with death and flees from it. ‘Vir fugiens denuo pugnabit’.”

“What do you think of highway robbers, then?”

“I detest them as wretches dangerous to society, but I pity them when I reflect that they are always riding towards the gallows. You go out in a coach to pay a visit to a friend three or four miles out of London. A determined and agile-looking fellow springs upon you with his pistol in his hand, and says, 'Your money or your life.' What would you do in such a case?"

"If I had a pistol handy I would blow out his brains, and if not I would give him my purse and call him a scoundrelly assassin."

"You would be wrong in both cases. If you killed him, you would be hanged, for you have no right to take the law into your own hands; and if you called him an assassin, he would tell you that he was no assassin as he attacked you openly and gave you a free choice. Nay, he is generous, for he might kill you and take your money as well. You might, indeed, tell him he has an evil trade, and he would tell you that you were right, and that he would try to avoid the gallows as long as possible. He would then thank you and advise you never to drive out of London without being accompanied by a mounted servant, as then no robber would dare to attack you. We English always carry two purses on our journeys; a small one for the robbers and a large one for ourselves."

What answer could I make to such arguments, based as they were on the national manners? England is a rich sea, but strewn with reefs, and those who voyage there would do well to take precautions. Sir Augustus Hervey's discourse gave me great pleasure.

Going from one topic to another, as is always the way with a desultory conversation, Sir Augustus deplored the fate of an unhappy Englishman who had absconded to France with seventy thousand pounds, and had been brought back to London, and was to be hanged.

"How could that be?" I asked.

"The Crown asked the Duc de Nivernois to extradite him, and Louis XV. granted the request to make England assent to some articles of the peace. It was an act unworthy of a king, for it violates the right of nations. It is true that the man is a wretch, but that has nothing to do with the principle of the thing."

"Of course they have got back the seventy thousand pounds?"

"Not a shilling of it."

"How was that?"

"Because no money was found on him. He has most likely left his little fortune to his wife, who can marry again as she is still young and pretty."

"I wonder the police have not been after her."

"Such a thing is never thought of. What could they do? It's not likely that she would confess that her husband left her the stolen money. The law says robbers shall be hanged, but it says nothing about what they have stolen, as they are supposed to have made away with it. Then if we had to take into account the thieves who had kept their theft and thieves who had spent it, we should have to make two sets of laws, and make all manner of allowances; the end of it would be inextricable confusion. It seems to us Englishmen that it would not be just to ordain two punishments for theft. The robber becomes the owner of what he has stolen; true, he 'got it by violence, but it is none the less his, for he can do what he likes with it. That being the case, everyone should be careful to keep what he has, since he knows that once stolen he will never see it again. I have taken Havana from Spain: this was robbery on a large scale."

He talked at once like a philosopher and a faithful subject of his king.

Engaged in this discussion we walked towards the Duchess of Northumberland's, where I made the acquaintance of Lady Rochefort, whose husband had just been appointed Spanish ambassador. This lady's gallantries were innumerable, and furnished a fresh topic of conversation every day.

The day before the assembly at Soho Square Martinelli dined with me, and told me that Madame Cornelis was heavily in debt, and dared not go out except on Sundays, when debtors are privileged.

"The enormous and unnecessary expense which she puts herself to," said he, "will soon bring her to ruin. She owes four times the amount of her assets, even counting in the house, which is a doubtful item, as it is the subject of litigation."

This news only distressed me for her children's sake, for I thought that she herself well deserved such a fate.

CHAPTER VIII

The Assembly — Adventure at Ranelagh The English Courtezans — Pauline

I went in due time to the assembly, and the secretary at the door wrote down my name as I handed in my ticket. When Madame Cornelis saw me she said she was delighted I had come in by ticket, and that she had had some doubts as to whether I would come.

"You might have spared yourself the trouble of doubting," said I, "for after hearing that I had been to Court you might have guessed that a matter of two guineas would not have kept me away. I am sorry for our old friendship's sake that I did not pay the money to you; for you might have known that I would not condescend to be present in the modest manner you indicated."

This address, delivered with an ironical accent, embarrassed Madame Cornelis, but Lady Harrington, a great supporter of hers, came to her rescue.

"I have a number of guineas to hand over to you, my dear Cornelis, and amongst others two from M. de Seingalt, who, I fancy, is an old friend of yours. Nevertheless, I did not dare to tell him so," she added, with a sly glance in my direction.

"Why not, my lady? I have known Madame Cornelis for many years."

"I should think you have," she answered, laughing, "and I congratulate you both. I suppose you know the delightful Miss Sophie too, Chevalier?"

"Certainly, my lady, who so knows the mother knows the daughter."

"Quite so, quite so."

Sophie was standing by, and after kissing her fondly Lady Harrington said, —

"If you love yourself, you ought to love her, for she is the image of you."

"Yes, it is a freak of nature."

"I think there is something more than a freak in this instance."

With these words the lady took Sophie's hand, and leaning on my arm she led us through the crowd, and I had to bear in silence the remarks of everyone.

"There is Madame Cornelis's husband."

"That must be M. Cornelis."

"Oh! there can be no doubt about it."

"No, no," said Lady Harrington, "you are all quite wrong."

I got tired of these remarks, which were all founded on the remarkable likeness between myself and Sophie. I wanted Lady Harrington to let the child go, but she was too much amused to do so.

“Stay by me,” she said, “if you want to know the names of the guests.” She sat down, making me sit on one side and Sophie on the other.

Madame Cornelis then made her appearance, and everyone asked her the same questions, and made the same remarks about me. She said bravely that I was her best and her oldest friend, and that the likeness between me and her daughter might possibly be capable of explanation. Everyone laughed and said it was very natural that it should be so. To change the subject, Madame Cornelis remarked that Sophie had learnt the minuet and danced it admirably.

“Then fetch a violin player,” said Lady Harrington, “that we may have the pleasure of witnessing the young artist’s performance.”

The ball had not yet begun, and as soon as the violinist appeared, I stepped forward and danced with Sophie, to the delight of the select circle of spectators.

The ball lasted all night without ceasing, as the company ate by relays, and at all times and hours; the waste and prodigality were worthy of a prince’s palace. I made the acquaintance of all the nobility and the Royal Family, for they were all there, with the exception of the king and queen, and the Prince of Wales. Madame Cornelis must have received more than twelve hundred guineas, but the outlay was enormous, without any control or safeguard against the thefts, which must have been perpetrated on all sides. She tried to introduce her son to everybody, but the poor lad looked like a victim, and did nothing but make profound bows. I pitied him from my heart.

As soon as I got home I went to bed and spent the whole of the next day there. The day after I went to the “Staven Tavern,” as I had been told that the prettiest girls in London resorted to it. Lord Pembroke gave me this piece of information; he went there very frequently himself. When I got to the tavern I asked for a private room, and the landlord, perceiving that I did not know English, accosted me in French, and came to keep me company. I was astonished at his grave and reverend manner of speaking, and did not like to tell him that I wanted to dine with a pretty Englishwoman. At last, however, I summoned up courage to say, with a great deal of circumlocution, that I did not know whether Lord Pembroke had deceived me in informing me that I should find the prettiest girls in London at his house.

“No, sir,” said he, “my lord has not deceived you, and you can have as many as you like.”

“That’s what I came for.”

He called out some name, and a tidy-looking lad making his appearance, he told him to get me a wench just as though he were ordering a bottle of champagne. The lad went out, and presently a girl of herculean proportions entered.

“Sir,” said I, “I don’t like the looks of this girl.”

“Give her a shilling and send her away. We don’t trouble ourselves about ceremonies in London.”

This put me at my ease, so I paid my shilling and called for a prettier wench. The second was worse than the first, and I sent her away, and ten others after her, while I could see that my fastidiousness amused the landlord immensely.

“I’ll see no more girls,” said I at last, “let me have a good dinner. I think the procurer must have been making game of me for the sake of the shillings.”

“It’s very likely; indeed it often happens so when a gentleman does not give the name and address of the wench he wants.”

In the evening as I was walking in St. James’s Park, I remembered it was a Ranelagh evening, and wishing to see the place I took a coach and drove there, intending to amuse myself till midnight, and to find a beauty to my taste.

I was pleased with the rotunda. I had some tea, I danced some minuets, but I made no acquaintances; and although I saw several pretty women, I did not dare to attack any of them. I got tired, and as it was near midnight I went out thinking to find my coach, for which I had not paid, still there, but it was gone, and I did not know what to do. An extremely pretty woman who was waiting for her carriage in the doorway, noticed my distress, and said that if I lived anywhere near Whitehall, she could take me home. I thanked her gratefully, and told her where I lived. Her carriage came up, her man opened the door, and she stepped in on my arm, telling me to sit beside her, and to stop the carriage when it got to my house.

As soon as we were in the carriage, I burst out into expressions of gratitude; and after telling her my name I expressed my regret at not having seen her at Soho Square.

"I was not in London," she replied, "I returned from Bath to-day."

I apostrophised my happiness in having met her. I covered her hands with kisses, and dared to kiss her on the cheek; and finding that she smiled graciously, I fastened my lips on hers, and before long had given her an unequivocal mark of the ardour with which she had inspired me.

She took my attentions so easily that I flattered myself I had not displeased her, and I begged her to tell me where I could call on her and pay my court while I remained in London, but she replied, —

"We shall see each other again; we must be careful."

I swore secrecy, and urged her no more. Directly after the carriage stopped, I kissed her hand and was set down at my door, well pleased with the ride home.

For a fortnight I saw nothing of her, but I met her again in a house where Lady Harrington had told me to present myself, giving her name. It was Lady Betty German's, and I found her out, but was asked to sit down and wait as she would be in soon. I was pleasantly surprised to find my fair friend of Ranelagh in the room, reading a newspaper. I conceived the idea of asking her to introduce me to Lady Betty, so I went up to her and proffered my request, but she replied politely that she could not do so not having the honour to know my name.

"I have told you my name, madam. Do you not remember me?"

"I remember you perfectly, but a piece of folly is not a title of acquaintance."

I was dumbfounded at the extraordinary reply, while the lady calmly returned to her newspaper, and did not speak another word till the arrival of Lady Betty.

The fair philosopher talked for two hours without giving the least sign of knowing who I was, although she answered me with great politeness whenever I ventured to address her. She turned out to be a lady of high birth and of great reputation.

Happening to call on Martinelli, I asked him who was the pretty girl who was kissing her hands to me from the house opposite. I was pleasantly surprised to hear that she was a dancer named Binetti. Four years ago she had done me a great service at Stuttgart, but I did not know she was in London. I took leave of Martinelli to go and see her, and did so all the more eagerly when I heard that she had parted from her husband, though they were obliged to dance together at the Haymarket.

She received me with open arms, telling me that she had recognized me directly.

“I am surprised, my dear elder,” said she, “to see you in London.”

She called me “elder” because I was the oldest of her friends.

“Nor did I know that you were here. I came to town after the close of the opera. How is it that you are not living with your husband?”

“Because he games, loses, and despoils me of all I possess. Besides, a woman of my condition, if she be married, cannot hope that a rich lover will come and see her, while if she be alone she can receive visits without any constraint.”

“I shouldn’t have thought they would be afraid of Binetti; he used to be far from jealous.”

“Nor is he jealous now; but you must know that there is an English law which allows the husband to arrest his wife and her lover if he finds them in ‘flagrante delicto’. He only wants two witnesses, and it is enough that they are sitting together on a bed. The lover is forced to pay to the husband the half of all he possesses. Several rich Englishmen have been caught in this way, and now they are very shy of visiting married women, especially Italians.”

“So you have much to be thankful for. You enjoy perfect liberty, can receive any visitors you like, and are in a fair way to make a fortune.”

"Alas! my dear friend, you do not know all. When he has information from his spies that I have had a visitor, he comes to me in a sedan-chair at night, and threatens to turn me out into the street if I do not give him all the money I have. He is a terrible rascal!"

I left the poor woman, after giving her my address, and telling her to come and dine with me whenever she liked. She had given me a lesson on the subject of visiting ladies. England has very good laws, but most of them are capable of abuse. The oath which jurymen have to take to execute them to the letter has caused several to be interpreted in a manner absolutely contrary to the intention of the legislators, thus placing the judges in a difficult predicament. Thus new laws have constantly to be made, and new glosses to explain the old ones.

My Lord Pembroke, seeing me at my window, came in, and after examining my house, including the kitchen, where the cook was at work, told me that there was not a nobleman in town who had such a well-furnished and comfortable house. He made a calculation, and told me that if I wanted to entertain my friends I should require three hundred pounds a month. "You can't live here," said he, "without a pretty girl, and those who know that you keep bachelor's hall are of opinion that you are very wise, and will save a great deal of useless expense."

"Do you keep a girl, my lord?"

"No, for I am unfortunate enough to be disgusted with a woman after I have had her for a day."

"Then you require a fresh one every day?"

"Yes, and without being as comfortable as you I spend four times as much. You must know that I live in London like a stranger. I never dine at my own house. I wonder at your dining alone."

"I can't speak English. I like soup and good wine, and that is enough to keep me from your taverns."

"I expect so, with your French tastes."

"You will confess that they are not bad tastes."

"You are right, for, good Englishman as I am, I get on very well in Paris."

He burst out laughing when I told him how I had dispatched a score of wenches at the "Staven Tavern," and that my disappointment was due to him.

"I did not tell you what names to send for, and I was wrong."

"Yes, you ought to have told me."

"But even if I did they wouldn't have come, for they are not at the orders of the procurers. If you will promise to pay them as I do, I will give you some tickets which will make them come."

"Can I have them here?"

"Just as you like."

"That will be most convenient for me. Write out the tickets and let them know French if you can."

"That's the difficulty; the prettiest only speak English."

"Never mind, we shall understand each other well enough for the purpose I dare say."

He wrote several tickets for four and six guineas each; but one was marked twelve guineas.

"She is doubly pretty, is she?" said I.

"Not exactly, but she has cuckolded a duke of Great Britain who keeps her, and only uses her once or twice a month."

"Would you do me the honour of testing the skill of my cook?"

"Certainly, but I can't make an appointment."

"And supposing I am out."

"I'll go to the tavern."

Having nothing better to do I sent Jarbe to one of the four-guinea wenches, telling him to advise her that she would dine with me. She came. She did not attract me sufficiently to make me attempt more than some slight toying. She went away well pleased with her four guineas, which she had done nothing to earn. Another wench, also at four guineas, supped with me the following evening. She had been very pretty, and, indeed, was so still, but she was too melancholy and quiet for my taste, and I could not makeup my mind to tell her to undress.

The third day, not feeling inclined to try another ticket, I went to Covent Garden, and on meeting an attractive young person I accosted her in French, and asked her if she would sup with me.

“How much will you give me at dessert?”

“Three guineas.”

“Come along.”

After the play I ordered a good supper for two, and she displayed an appetite after mine own heart. When we had supped I asked for her name and address, and I was astonished to find that she was one of the girls whom Lord Pembroke had assessed at six guineas. I concluded that it was best to do one’s own business, or, at any rate, not to employ noblemen as agents. As to the other tickets, they procured me but little pleasure. The twelve-guinea one, which I had reserved for the last, as a choice morsel, pleased me the least of all, and I did not care to cuckold the noble duke who kept her.

Lord Pembroke was young, handsome, rich, and full of wit. I went to see him one day, and found him just getting out of bed. He said he would walk with me and told his valet to shave him.

“But,” said I, “there’s not a trace of beard on your face.”

“There never is,” said he, “I get myself shaved three times a day.”

“Three times?”

“Yes, when I change my shirt I wash my hands; when I wash my hands I have to wash my face, and the proper way to wash a man’s face is with a razor.”

“When do you make these three ablutions?”

“When I get up, when I dress for dinner, and when I go to bed, for I should not like the woman who is sleeping with me to feel my beard.”

We had a short walk together, and then I left him as I had some writing to do. As we parted, he asked me if I dined at home. I replied in the affirmative, and foreseeing that he intended dining with me I warned my cook to serve us well, though I did not let him know that I expected a nobleman to dinner. Vanity has more than one string to its bow.

I had scarcely got home when Madame Binetti came in, and said that if she were not in the way, she would be glad to dine with me. I gave her a warm welcome, and she said I was really doing her a great service, as her husband would suffer the torments of hell in trying to find out with whom she had dined.

This woman still pleased me; and though she was thirty-five, nobody would have taken her for more than twenty-five. Her appearance was in every way pleasing. Her lips were of the hue of the rose, disclosing two exquisite rows of teeth. A fine complexion, splendid eyes, and a forehead where Innocence might have been well enthroned, all this made an exquisite picture. If you add to this, that her breast was of the rarest proportions, you will understand that more fastidious tastes than mine would have been satisfied with her.

She had not been in my house for half an hour when Lord Pembroke came in. They both uttered an exclamation, and the nobleman told me that he had been in love with her for the last six months; that he had written ardent letters to her of which she had taken no notice.

“I never would have anything to do with him,” said she, “because he is the greatest profligate in all England; and it’s a pity,” she added, “because he is a kindhearted nobleman.”

This explanation was followed by a score of kisses, and I saw that they were agreed.

We had a choice dinner in the French style, and Lord Pembroke swore he had not eaten so good a dinner for the last year.

“I am sorry for you,” he said, “when I think of you being alone every day.”

Madame Binetti was as much a gourmet as the Englishman, and when we rose from table we felt inclined to pass from the worship of Comus to that of Venus; but the lady was too experienced to give the Englishman anything more than a few trifling kisses.

I busied myself in turning over the leaves of some books I had bought the day before, and left them to talk together to their heart’s content; but to prevent their asking me to give them another dinner I said that I hoped chance would bring about such another meeting on another occasion.

At six o'clock, after my guests had left me, I dressed and went to Vauxhaull, where I met a French officer named Malingan, to whom I had given some money at Aix-la-Chapelle. He said he would like to speak to me, so I gave him my name and address. I also met a well-known character, the Chevalier Goudar, who talked to me about gaming and women. Malingan introduced me to an individual who he said might be very useful to me in London. He was a man of forty, and styled himself son of the late Theodore, the pretender to the throne of Corsica, who had died miserably in London fourteen years before, after having been imprisoned for debt for seven years. I should have done better if I had never gone to Vauxhall that evening.

The entrance-fee at Vauxhall was half the sum charged at Ranelagh, but in spite of that the amusements were of the most varied kinds. There was good fare, music, walks in solitary alleys, thousands of lamps, and a crowd of London beauties, both high and low.

In the midst of all these pleasures I was dull, because I had no girl to share my abode or my good table, and make it dear to me. I had been in London for six weeks; ana in no other place had I been alone for so long.

My house seemed intended for keeping a mistress with all decency, and as I had the virtue of constancy a mistress was all I wanted to make me happy. But how was I to find a woman who should be the equal of those women I had loved before? I had already seen half a hundred of girls, whom the town pronounced to be pretty, and who did not strike me as even passable. I thought the matter over continually, and at last an odd idea struck me.

I called the old housekeeper, and told her by the servant, who acted as my interpreter, that I wanted to let the second or third floor for the sake of company; and although I was at perfect liberty to do what I liked with the house, I would give her half-a-guinea a week extra. Forthwith I ordered her to affix the following bill to the window:

Second or third floor to be let, furnished, to a young lady speaking English and French, who receives no visitors, either by day or night.

The old Englishwoman, who had seen something of the world, began to laugh so violently when the document was translated to her that I thought she would have choked.

“What are you laughing at, my worthy woman?”

“Because this notice is a laughing matter.”

“I suppose you think I shall have no applications?”

“Not at all, the doorstep will be crowded from morn to night, but I shall leave it all to Fanny. Only tell me how much to ask.”

“I will arrange about the rent in my interview with the young lady. I don’t think I shall have so many enquiries, for the young lady is to speak French and English, and also to be respectable. She must not receive any visits, not even from her father and mother, if she has them.”

“But there will be a mob in front of the house reading the notice.”

“All the better. Nothing is the worse for being a little odd.”

It happened just as the old woman had foretold; as soon as the notice was up, everybody stopped to read it, made various comments, and passed on. On the second day after it was up, my Negro told me that my notice was printed in full in the St. James’s Chronicle, with some amusing remarks. I had the paper brought up to me, and Fanny translated it. It ran as follows:

“The landlord of the second and third floors probably occupies the first floor himself. He must be a man of the world and of good taste, for he wants a young and pretty lodger; and as he forbids her to receive visits, he will have to keep her company himself.”

He added, —

“The landlord should take care lest he become his own dupe, for it is very likely that the pretty lodger would only take the room to sleep in, and possibly only to sleep in now and then; and if she chose she would have a perfect right to refuse to receive the proprietor’s visits.”

These sensible remarks delighted me, for after reading them I felt forewarned.

Such matters as these give their chief interest to the English newspapers. They are allowed to gossip about everything, and the writers have the knack of making the merest trifles seem amusing. Happy is the nation where anything may be written and anything said!

Lord Pembroke was the first to come and congratulate me on my idea, and he was succeeded by Martinelli; but he expressed some fears as to the possible consequences, “for,” said he, “there are plenty of women in London who would come and lodge with you to be your ruin.”

“In that case,” I answered, “it would be a case of Greek meeting Greek; however, we shall see. If I am taken in, people will have the fullest right to laugh at me, for I have been warned.”

I will not trouble my readers with an account of the hundred women who came in the first ten days, when I refused on one pretext or another, though some of them were not wanting in grace and beauty. But one day, when I was at dinner, I received a visit from a girl of from twenty to twenty-four years, simply but elegantly dressed; her features were sweet and gracious, though somewhat grave, her complexion pale, and her hair black. She gave me a bow which I had to rise to return, and as I remained standing she politely begged me not to put myself out, but to continue my dinner. I begged her to be seated and to take dessert, but she refused with an air of modesty which delighted me.

This fair lady said, not in French, but in Italian worthy of a Sinnese, its purity was so perfect, that she hoped I would let her have a room on the third floor, and that she would gladly submit to all my conditions.

“You may only make use of one room if you like, but all the floor will belong to you.”

“Although the notice says the rooms will be let cheaply, I shall not be able to afford more than one room. Two shillings a week is all I can spend.”

“That’s exactly what I want for the whole suite of rooms; so you see you can use them all. My maid will wait on you, get you whatever food you may require, and wash your linen as well. You can also employ her to do your commissions, so that you need not go out for trifles.”

“Then I will dismiss my maid,” she said; “she robs me of little, it is true, but still too much for my small means. I will tell your maid what food to buy for me every day, and she shall have six sots a week for her pains."

"That will be ample. I should advise you to apply to my cook's wife, who will get your dinner and supper for you as cheaply as you could buy it."

"I hardly think so, for I am ashamed to tell you how little I spend."

"Even if you only spend two sols a day, she will give you two sols' worth. All the same I advise you to be content with what you get from the kitchen, without troubling about the price, for I usually have provision made for four, though I dine alone, and the rest is the cook's perquisite. I merely advise you to the best of my ability, and I hope you will not be offended at my interest in your welfare."

"Really, sir, you are too generous."

"Wait a moment, and you will see how everything will be settled comfortably."

I told Clairmont to order up the maid and the cook's wife, and I said to the latter:

"For how much could you provide dinner and supper for this young lady who is not rich, and only wants to eat to live?"

"I can do it very cheaply; for you usually eat alone, and have enough for four."

"Very good; then I hope you will treat her very well for the sum she gives you."

"I can only afford five sols a day."

"That will do nicely."

I gave orders that the bill should be taken down directly, and that the young lady's room should be made comfortable. When the maid and the cook's wife had left the room, the young lady told me that she should only go out on Sundays to hear mass at the Bavarian ambassador's chapel, and once a month to a person who gave her three guineas to support her.

"You can go out when you like," said I, "and without rendering an account to anybody of your movements."

She begged me not to introduce anyone to her, and to tell the porter to deny her to anyone who might come to the door to make enquiries. I promised that her wishes should be respected, and she went away saying that she was going for her trunk.

I immediately ordered my household to treat her with the utmost respect. The old housekeeper told me that she had paid the first week in advance, taking a receipt, and had gone, as she had come, in a sedan-chair. Then the worthy old woman made free to tell me to be on my guard.

“Against what? If I fall in love with her, so much the better; that is just what I want. What name did she give you?”

“Mistress Pauline. She was quite pale when she came, and she went away covered with blushes.”

I was delighted to hear it. I did not want a woman merely to satisfy my natural desires, for such can be found easily enough; I wished for some one whom I could love. I expected beauty, both of the body and the soul; and my love increased with the difficulties and obstacles I saw before me. As to failure, I confess I did not give it a moment’s thought, for there is not a woman in the world who can resist constant and loving attentions, especially when her lover is ready to make great sacrifices.

When I got back from the theatre in the evening the maid told me that the lady had chosen a modest closet at the back, which was only suitable for a servant. She had had a moderate supper, only drinking water, and had begged the cook’s wife only to send her up soup and one dish, to which the woman had replied that she must take what was served, and what she did not eat would do for the servant.

“When she finished she shut herself up to write, and wished me good evening with much politeness.”

“What is she going to take in the morning?”

“I asked her, and she said she would only take a little bread.”

“Then you had better tell her that it is the custom of the house for the cook to serve everybody with coffee, chocolate, or tea, according to taste, in the morning, and that I shall be pained if she refuses to fare like the rest of us.

But don't tell her I said so. Here's a crown for you, and you shall have one every week if you will wait upon and care for her properly."

Before going to bed I wrote her a polite note, begging her to leave the closet. She did so, but she went into another back room, and consented to take coffee for her breakfast. Wishing to make her dine and sup with me, I was dressing myself, and preparing to proffer my request in such a way as to make a refusal impossible, when young Cornelis was announced. I received him smilingly, and thanked him for the first visit he had paid me in the course of six weeks.

"Mamma hasn't allowed me to come. I have tried to do so a score of times without her leave. Read this letter, and you will find something which will surprise you."

I opened the letter and read as follows:

"Yesterday a bailiff waited for my door to be opened and slipped in and arrested me. I was obliged to go with him, and I am now in the sponging-house, and if I can't get bail by to-day he will take me to Kings Bench Prison. The bail I require is to the amount of two hundred pounds, to pay a bill which has fallen due. Dear friend, come and succour me or else my other creditors will get wind of my imprisonment and I shall be ruined. You surely will not allow that to happen, if not for my sake at least for the sake of my innocent children. You cannot bail me yourself, but you can easily get a householder to do so. If you have the time come and call on me, and I will shew you that I could not help doing the bill, otherwise I could not have given my last ball, as the whole of my plate and china was pledged."

I felt angry with the impudent woman who had hitherto paid me so little attention, and I wrote that I could only pity her, and that I had no time to go and see her, and that I should be ashamed to ask anyone to bail her out.

When young Cornelis had gone away in a melancholy mood, I told Clairmont to ask Pauline if she would allow me to bid her a good day. She sent word that I was at liberty to do so, and on going upstairs to her room I found her sitting at a table on which were several books.

Some linen on a chest of drawers did not give me the idea that she was very poor.

"I am immensely obliged," said she, "for all your goodness to me."

“Say nothing of that, madam; it is I who have need of your goodness.”

“What can I do to shew my gratitude?”

“Could you trouble yourself to take your meals with me? When I am alone I eat like an ogre, and my health suffers. If you do not feel inclined to grant me that favour, do not hesitate to refuse, and I assure you you shall fare just as well as if you had acceded to my request.”

“I shall be delighted to dine and sup with you; sir, whenever you are alone and you like to send for me. Nevertheless, I am not sure that my society will amuse you.”

“Very good, I am grateful to you, and I promise you you shall never repent of your kindness. I will do my best to amuse you, and I hope I shall succeed, for you have inspired me with the liveliest interest. We will dine at one to-day.”

I did not sit down or look at her books, or even ask her if she had spent a good night. The only thing I noted was that she had looked pale and careworn when I came in, and when I went out her cheeks were the colour of the rose.

I went for a walk in the park, feeling quite taken with this charming woman, and resolved to make her love me, for I did not want to owe anything to gratitude. I felt curious to know where she came from, and suspected she was an Italian; but I determined to ask her no questions for fear of offending her.

When I got home Pauline came down of her own free will, and I was delighted with this, which I took for a good omen. As we had half an hour before us, I asked her how she found her health.

“Nature,” she replied, “has favoured me with such a good constitution that I have never had the least sickness in my life, except on the sea.”

“You have made a voyage, then.”

“I must have done so to come to England.”

“You might be an Englishwoman.”

“Yes, for the English language has been familiar to me from my childhood.”

We were seated on a sofa, and on the table in front of us was a chess-board. Pauline toyed with the pawns, and I asked her if she could play chess.

"Yes, and pretty well too from what they tell me."

"Then we will have a game together; my blunders will amuse you."

We began, and in four moves I was checkmated. She laughed, and I admired her play. We began again, and I was checkmated in five moves. My agreeable guest laughed heartily, and while she laughed I became intoxicated with love, watching the play of her features, her exquisite teeth, and her happy expression. We began another game, Pauline played carelessly, and I placed her in a difficult position.

"I think you may conquer me," said she.

"What happiness for me!"

The servant came in to tell us that dinner was ready.

"Interruptions are often extremely inconvenient," said I, as I offered her my arm, feeling quite sure that she had not lost the significance of my last words, for women find a meaning for everything.

We were just sitting down to table when Clairmont announced my daughter and Madame Rancour.

"Tell them that I am at dinner, and that I shall not be disengaged till three o'clock."

Just as my man was leaving the room to carry back my answer, Sophie rushed in and knelt before me, choking with sobs.

This was too much for me, and raising her I took her on my knees, saying I knew what she had come for, and that for love of her I would do it.

Passing from grief to joy the dear child kissed me, calling me her father, and at last made me weep myself.

"Dine with us, dear Sophie," said I, "I shall be the more likely to do what you wish."

She ran from my arms to embrace Pauline, who was weeping out of sympathy, and we all dined happily together. Sophie begged me to give Madame Rancour some dinner.

"It shall be so if you please, but only for your sake, for that woman Rancour deserves that I should leave her standing at the door to punish her for her impertinence to me when I came to London."

The child amused us in an astonishing way all dinnertime, Pauline keeping her ears open and not saying a word, so surprised was she to hear a child of her age talk in a way that would have excited attention in a woman of twenty. Although perfectly respectful she condemned her mother's conduct, and said that she was unfortunate in being obliged to give her a blind obedience.

"I would wager that you don't love her much."

"I respect, but I cannot love her, for I am always afraid. I never see her without fearing her."

"Why do you weep, then, at her fate?"

"I pity her, and her family still more, and the expressions she used in sending me to you were very affecting."

"What were these expressions?"

"'Go,' said she, 'kneel before him, for you and you alone can soften his heart.'"

"Then you knelt before me because your mother told you to do so."

"Yes, for if I had followed my own inclination I should have rushed to your arms."

"You answer well. But are you sure of persuading me?"

"No, for one can never be sure of anything; but I have good hopes of success, remembering what you told me at the Hague. My mother told me that I was only three then, but I know I was five. She it was who told me not to look at you when I spoke to you, but fortunately you made her remove her prohibition. Everybody says that you are my father, and at the Hague she told me so herself; but here she is always dinning it into my ears that I am the daughter of M. de Monpernis."

"But, Sophie dear, your mother does wrong in making you a bastard when you are the legitimate daughter of the dancer Pompeati, who killed himself at Vienna."

"Then I am not your daughter?"

"Clearly, for you cannot have two fathers, can you?"

"But how is it that I am your image?"

"It's a mere chance."

"You deprive me of a dream which has made me happy."

Pauline said nothing, but covered her with kisses, which Sophie returned effusively. She asked me if the lady was my wife, and on my replying in the affirmative she called Pauline her "dear mamma," which made "dear mamma" laugh merrily.

When the dessert was served I drew four fifty-pound notes out of my pocket-book, and giving them to Sophie told her that she might hand them over to her mother if she liked, but that the present was for her and not for her mother.

"If you give her the money," I said, "she will be able to sleep to-night in the fine house where she gave me such a poor reception."

"It makes me unhappy to think of it, but you must forgive her."

"Yes, Sophie; but out of love for you."

"Write to her to the effect that it is to me you give the money, not to her; I dare not tell her so myself."

"I could not do that, my dear; it would be insulting her in her affliction. Do you understand that?"

"Yes, quite well."

"You may tell her that whenever she sends you to dine or sup with me, she will please me very much."

"But you can write that down without wounding her, can you not? Do so, I entreat you. Dear mamma," said she, addressing Pauline, "ask papa to do so, and then I will come and dine with you sometimes."

Pauline laughed with all her heart as she addressed me as husband, and begged me to write the desired epistle. The effect on the mother could only let her know how much I loved her daughter, and would consequently increase her love for her child. I gave in, saying that I could not refuse anything to the adorable woman who had honoured me with the name of husband. Sophie kissed us, and went away in a happy mood.

“It’s a long time since I have laughed so much,” said Pauline, “and I don’t think I have ever had such an agreeable meal. That child is a perfect treasure. She is unhappy, poor little girl, but she would not be so if I were her mother.”

I then told her of the true relationship between Sophie and myself, and the reasons I had for despising her mother.

“I wonder what she will say when Sophie tells her that she found you at table with your wife.”

“She won’t believe it, as she knows my horror for the sacrament of matrimony.”

“How is that?”

“I hate it because it is the grave of love.”

“Not always.”

As she said this Pauline sighed, and lowering her eyes changed the conversation. She asked me how long I intended to stay in London and when I had replied, “Nine or ten months,” I felt myself entitled to ask her the same question.

“I really can’t say,” she answered, “my return to my country depends on my getting a letter.”

“May I ask you what country you come from?”

“I see I shall soon have no secrets from you, but let me have a little time. I have only made your acquaintance to-day, and in a manner which makes me have a very high opinion of you.”

“I shall try my best to deserve the good opinions you have conceived of my character.”

“You have shewn yourself to me in a thoroughly estimable light.”

“Give me your esteem, I desire it earnestly, but don’t say anything of respect, for that seems to shut out friendship; I aspire to yours, and I warn you that I shall do my best to gain it.”

"I have no doubt you are very clever in that way, but you are generous too, and I hope you will spare me. If the friendship between us became too ardent, a parting would be dreadful, and we may be parted at any moment, indeed I ought to be looking forward to it."

Our dialogue was getting rather sentimental, and with that ease which is only acquired in the best society, Pauline turned it to other topics, and soon asked me to allow her to go upstairs. I would have gladly spent the whole day with her, for I have never met a woman whose manners were so distinguished and at the same time so pleasant.

When she left me I felt a sort of void, and went to see Madame Binetti, who asked me for news of Pembroke. She was in a rage with him.

"He is a detestable fellow," said she; "he would like to have a fresh wife every day! What do you think of such conduct?"

"I envy him his happiness."

"He enjoys it because all women are such fools. He caught me through meeting me at your house; he would never have done so otherwise. What are you laughing at?"

"Because if he has caught you, you have also caught him; you are therefore quits."

"You don't know what you are talking about."

I came home at eight o'clock, and as soon as Fanny had told Pauline that I had returned she came downstairs. I fancied she was trying to captivate me by her attentions, and as the prospect was quite agreeable to me I thought we should come to an understanding before very long.

Supper was brought in and we stayed at table till midnight, talking about trifles, but so pleasantly that the time passed away very quickly. When she left me she wished me good night, and said my conversation had made her forget her sorrows.

Pembroke came next morning to ask me to give him breakfast, and congratulated me on the disappearance of the bill from my window.

"I should very much like to see your boarder," said he.

"I daresay, my lord, but I can't gratify your curiosity just now, for the lady likes to be alone, and only puts up with my company because she can't help it."

He did not insist, and to turn the conversation I told him that Madame Binetti was furious with him for his inconstancy, which was a testimony to his merits. That made him laugh, and without giving me any answer he asked me if I dined at home that day.

"No, my lord, not to-day."

"I understand. Well, it's very natural; bring the affair to a happy conclusion."

"I will do my best."

Martinelli had found two or three parodies of my notice in the Advertiser, and came and read them to me. I was much amused with them; they were mostly indecent, for the liberty of the press is much abused in London. As for Martinelli he was too discreet and delicate a man to ask me about my new boarder. As it was Sunday, I begged him to take me to mass at the Bavarian ambassador's chapel; and here I must confess that I was not moved by any feelings of devotion, but by the hope of seeing Pauline. I had my trouble for nothing, for, as I heard afterwards, she sat in a dark corner where no one could see her. The chapel was full, and Martinelli pointed out several lords and ladies who were Catholics, and did not conceal their religion.

When I got home I received a note from Madame Cornelis, saying that as it was Sunday and she could go out freely, she hoped I would let her come to dinner. I shewed the letter to Pauline, not knowing whether she would object to dining with her, and she said she would be happy to do so, provided there were no men. I wrote in answer to Madame Cornelis that I should be glad to see her and her charming daughter at dinner. She came, and Sophie did not leave my side for a moment. Madame Cornelis, who was constrained in Pauline's presence, took me aside to express her gratitude and to communicate to me some chimerical schemes of hers which were soon to make her rich.

Sophie was the life and soul of the party, but as I happened to tell her mother that Pauline was a lady who was lodging in my house, she said, "Then she is not your wife?"

"No; such happiness is not for me. It was a joke of mine, and the lady amused herself at the expense of your credulity."

"Well, I should like to sleep with her."

"Really? When?"

"Whenever mamma will let me."

"We must first ascertain," said the mother, "what the lady thinks of the arrangement."

"She needn't fear a refusal," said Pauline, giving the child a kiss.

"Then you shall have her with pleasure, madam. I will get her governess to fetch her away to-morrow."

"At three o'clock," said I, "for she must dine with us."

Sophie, taking her mother's silence for consent, went up to her and kissed her, but these attentions were but coldly received. She unfortunately did not know how to inspire love.

After Madame Cornelis had gone, I asked Pauline if she would like to take a walk with Sophie and myself in the suburbs, where nobody would know her.

"In prudence," said she, "I cannot go out unless I am alone."

"Then shall we stay here?"

"We could not do better."

Pauline and Sophie sang Italian, French, and English duets, and the concert of their voices seemed to me ravishing. We supped gaily, and at midnight I escorted them to the third floor, telling Sophie that I would come and breakfast with her in the morning, but that I should expect to find her in bed. I wanted to see if her body was as beautiful as her face. I would gladly have asked Pauline to grant me the same favour, but I did not think things had advanced far enough for that. In the morning I found Pauline up and dressed.

When Sophie saw me she laughed and hid her head under the sheets, but as soon as she felt me near her she soon let me see her pretty little face, which

I covered with kisses.

When she had got up we breakfasted together, and the time went by as pleasantly as possible till Madame Rancour came for her little charge, who went away with a sad heart. Thus I was left alone with my Pauline who began to inspire me with such ardent desires that I dreaded an explosion every moment. And yet I had not so much as kissed her hand.

When Sophie had gone I made her sit beside me, and taking her hand I kissed it rapturously, saying,

“Are you married, Pauline?”

“Yes.”

“Do you know what it is to be a mother?”

“No, but I can partly imagine what happiness it must be.”

“Are you separated from your husband?”

“Yes, by circumstances and against our will. We were separated before we had cohabited together.”

“Is he at London?”

“No, he is far away, but please don’t say anything more about it.”

“Only tell me whether my loss will be his gain.”

“Yes, and I promise not to leave you till I have to leave England — that is, unless you dismiss me — and I shall leave this happy island to be happy with the husband of my choice.”

“But I, dear Pauline, will be left unhappy, for I love you with all my heart, and am afraid to give you any proof of my love.”

“Be generous and spare me, for I am not my own mistress, and have no right to give myself to you; and perhaps, if you were so ungenerous as to attack me, I should not have the strength to resist.”

“I will obey, but I shall still languish. I cannot be unhappy unless I forfeit your favour.”

“I have duties to perform, my dear friend, and I cannot neglect them without becoming contemptible in my own eyes and yours too.”

"I should deem myself the most miserable of men if I despised a woman for making me happy."

"Well, I like you too well to think you capable of such conduct, but let us be moderate, for we may have to part to-morrow. You must confess that if we yielded to desire, this parting would be all the more bitter. If you are of another opinion, that only shews that your ideas of love and mine are different."

"Then tell me of what sort of love is that with which I am happy enough to have inspired you?"

"It is of such a kind that enjoyment would only increase it, and yet enjoyment seems to me a mere accident."

"Then what is its essence?"

"To live together in perfect unity."

"That's a blessing we can enjoy from morning to eve, but why should we not add the harmless accident which would take so short a time, and give us such peace and tranquillity. You must confess, Pauline, that the essence cannot exist long without the accident."

"Yes, but you in your turn, you will agree that the food often proves in time to be deadly."

"No, not when one loves truly, as I do. Do you think that you will not love me so well after having possessed me?"

"No, it's because I think quite otherwise, that I dread to make the moment of parting so bitter."

"I see I must yield to your logic. I should like to see the food on which you feed your brain, otherwise your books. Will you let me come upstairs?"

"Certainly, but you will be caught."

"How?"

"Come and see."

We went to her room, and I found that all her books were Portuguese, with the exception of Milton, in English, Ariosto, in Italian, and Labruyere's "Characters," in French.

“Your selection gives me a high idea of your mental qualities,” said I, “but tell me, why do you give such a preference to Camoens and all these Portuguese authors?”

“For a very good reason, I am Portuguese myself.”

“You Portuguese? I thought you were Italian. And so you already know five languages, for you doubtless know Spanish.”

“Yes, although Spanish is not absolutely necessary.”

“What an education you have had!”

“I am twenty-two now, but I knew all these languages at eighteen.”

“Tell me who you are, tell me all about yourself. I am worthy of your confidence.”

“I think so too, and to give you a proof of my trust in you I am going to tell you my history, for since you love me you can only wish to do me good.”

“What are all these manuscripts?”

“My history, which I have written down myself. Let us sit down:”

CHAPTER IX

Pauline’s Story — I Am Happy — Pauline Leaves Me

I am the only daughter of the unfortunate Count X —— o, whom Carvailho Oeiras killed in prison on suspicion of being concerned in the attempt on the king’s life, in which the Jesuits were supposed to have had a hand. I do not know whether my father was innocent or guilty, but I do know that the tyrannical minister did not dare to have him tried, or to confiscate the estates, which remain in my possession, though I can only enjoy them by returning to my native land.

“My mother had me brought up in a convent where her sister was abbess. I had all kinds of masters, especially an Italian from Leghorn, who in six years taught me all that he thought proper for me to know. He would answer any questions I chose to put him, save on religious matters, but I must confess that his reserve made me all the fonder of him, for in leaving me to reflect on certain subjects by myself he did a great deal to form my judgment.

“I was eighteen when my grandfather removed me from the convent, although I protested that I would gladly stay there till I got married. I was fondly attached to my aunt, who did all in her power after my mother’s death to make me forget the double loss I had sustained. My leaving the convent altered the whole course of my existence, and as it was not a voluntary action I have nothing to repent of.

“My grandfather placed me with his sister-in-law, the Marchioness X —— o, who gave me up half her house. I had a governess, a companion, maids, pages, and footmen, all of whom, though in my service, were under the orders of my governess, a well-born lady, who was happily honest and trustworthy.

“A year after I had left the convent my grandfather came and told me in the presence of my governess that Count Fl —— had asked my hand for his son, who was coming from Madrid end would arrive that day.

"'What answer did you give him, dear grandfather?'

"'That the marriage would be acceptable to the whole of the nobility, and also to the king and royal family.'

"'But are you quite sure that the young count will like me and that I shall like the count?'

"'That, my dear daughter, is a matter of course, and there need be no discussion on the subject.'

"'But it is a question in which I am strongly interested, and I should like to consider it very carefully. We shall see how matters arrange themselves.'

"'You can see each other before deciding, but you must decide all the same.'

"'I hope so, but let us not be too certain. We shall see.'

"As soon as my grandfather had gone I told my governess that I had made up my mind never to give my hand save where I had given my heart, and that I should only marry a man whose character and tastes I had carefully studied. My governess gave me no answer, and on my pressing her to give me her opinion, she replied that she thought her best course would be to keep silence on such a delicate question. This was as much as to tell me that she thought I was right; at least I persuaded myself that it was so.

"The next day I went to the convent, and told the story to my aunt, the abbess, who listened to me kindly and said it was to be hoped that I should fall in love with him and he with me, but that even if it were otherwise she was of opinion that the marriage would take place, as she had reasons for believing that the scheme came from the Princess of Brazil, who favoured Count Fl —— .

"Though this information grieved me, I was still glad to hear it, and my resolution never to marry save for love was all the more strongly confirmed.

"In the course of a fortnight the count arrived, and my grandfather presented him to me, several ladies being in the company. Nothing was said about marrying, but there was a deal of talk about the strange lands and peoples the new arrival had seen. I listened with the greatest attention, not opening my mouth the whole time. I had very little knowledge of the world, so I could not make any comparisons between my suitor and other men, but my conclusion was that he could never hope to please any woman, and that he would certainly never be mine. He had an unpleasant sneering manner, joked in bad taste, was stupid, and a devotee, or rather a fanatic. Furthermore he was ugly and ill-shapen, and so great a fop that he was not ashamed to relate the story of his conquests in France and Italy.

“I went home hoping with all my heart that he had taken a dislike to me, and a week which passed away without my hearing anything on the subject confirmed me in this belief, but I was doomed to be disappointed. My great-aunt asked me to dinner, and when I went I found the foolish young man and his father present, together with my grandfather, who formally introduced him to me as my future husband, and begged me to fix the wedding day. I made up my mind that I would rather die than marry him, and answered politely but coldly that I would name the day when I had decided on marrying, but I should require time to think it over. The dinner went off silently, and I only opened my mouth to utter monosyllables in reply to questions which I could not avoid. After the coffee had been served I left the house, taking no notice of anyone besides my aunt and my grandfather.

“Some time elapsed; and I again began to hope that I had effectually disgusted my suitor, but one morning my governess told me that Father Freire was waiting to speak to me in the ante-chamber. I ordered him to be sent in. He was the confessor of the Princess of Brazil, and after some desultory conversation he said the princess had sent him to congratulate me on my approaching marriage with Count Fl —— .

“I did not evince any surprise, merely replying that I was sensible of her highness’s kindness, but that nothing had been decided so far, as I was not thinking of getting married.

“The priest, who was a perfect courtier, smiled in a manner, half kindly, half sardonic, and said that I was at that happy age when I had no need to think of anything, as my kind friends and relations did all my thinking for me.

“I only answered by an incredulous smile, which, for all his monastic subtlety, struck him as the expression of a young girl’s coyness.

“Foreseeing the persecution to which I should be subjected, I went the next day to my aunt the abbess, who could not refuse me her advice. I began by stating my firm resolve to die rather than wed a being I detested.

“The worthy nun replied that the count had been introduced to her, and that to tell the truth she thought him insufferable; all the same, she said she was afraid I should be made to marry him.

“These words were such a shock to me that I turned the conversation, and spoke of other subjects for the remainder of my visit. But when I got back to my house I pursued an extraordinary course. I shut myself up in my closet and wrote a letter to the executioner of my unhappy father, the pitiless Oeiras, telling him the whole story, and imploring him to protect me and to speak to the king in my favour; ‘for,’ said I, ‘as you have made me an orphan it is your duty before God to care for me.’ I begged him to shelter me from the anger of the Princess of Brazil, and to leave me at liberty to dispose of my hand according to my pleasure.

“Though I did not imagine Oeiras to be a humane man, yet I thought he must have some sort of a heart; besides, by this extraordinary step and the firmness of my language, I hoped to appeal to his pride and to interest him in my favour. I felt sure that he would do me justice, if only to prove that he had not been unjust to my father. I was right, as will be seen, and although I was but an inexperienced girl my instinct served me well.

“Two days elapsed before I was waited on by a messenger from Oeiras, who begged the honour of a private interview with me. The messenger told me that the minister wished me to reply to all who pressed me to marry that I should not decide until I was assured that the princess desired the match. The minister begged me to excuse his not answering my letter, but he had good reasons for not doing so. The messenger assured me that I could count on his master’s support.

“His message delivered, the gentleman took leave with a profound bow, and went back without waiting for an answer. I must confess that the young man’s looks had made a great impression on me. I cannot describe my feelings, but they have exerted great influence on my conduct, and will no doubt continue to do so for the rest of my life.

“This message put me quite at ease, for he would never have given me the instructions he did without being perfectly sure that the princess would not interfere any farther with my marriage; and so I gave myself up entirely to the new sentiments which possessed my heart. Though strong, the flame would no doubt soon have died down if it had not received fresh fuel every day, for when I saw the young messenger a week later in church I scarcely recognized him. From that moment, however, I met him everywhere; out walking, in the theatre, in the houses where I called, and especially when I was getting in or out of my carriage he was ever beside me, ready to offer his hand; and I got so used to his presence that when I missed his face I felt a void at my heart that made me unhappy.

“Almost every day I saw the two Counts Fl —— at my great-aunt’s, but as there was no longer any engagement between us their presence neither joyed me nor grieved me. I had forgiven them but I was not happy. The image of the young messenger, of whom I knew nothing, was ever before me, and I blushed at my thoughts though I would not ask myself the reasons.

“Such was my state of mind, when one day I heard a voice, which was unknown to me, in my maid’s room. I saw a quantity of lace on a table and proceeded to examine it without paying any attention to a girl who was standing near the table and curtsying to me. I did not like any of the lace, so the girl said that she would bring me some more to choose from the next day, and as I raised my eyes I was astonished to see that she had the face of the young man who was always in my thoughts. My only resource was to doubt their identity and to make myself believe that I had been deceived by a mere chance likeness. I was reassured on second thoughts; the girl seemed to me to be taller than the young man, whom I hesitated to believe capable of such a piece of daring. The girl gathered up her lace and went her way without raising her eyes to mine, and this made me feel suspicious again.

“‘Do you know that girl?’ I said, coldly, to my maid, and she replied that she had never seen her before. I went away without another word, not knowing what to think.

“I thought it over and resolved to examine the girl when she came on the following day, and to unmask her if my suspicions proved to be well founded. I told myself that she might be the young man’s sister, and that if it were otherwise it would be all the more easy to cure myself of my passion. A young girl who reasons on love falls into love, especially if she have no one in whom to confide.

"The pretended lace-seller duly came the next day with a box of lace. I told her to come into my room, and then speaking to her to force her to raise her eyes I saw before me the being who exerted such a powerful influence over me. It was such a shock that I had no strength to ask her any of the questions I had premeditated. Besides, my maid was in the room, and the fear of exposing myself operated, I think, almost as strongly as emotion. I set about choosing some pieces of lace in a mechanical way, and told my maid to go and fetch my purse. No sooner had she left the room than the lace-seller fell at my feet and exclaimed passionately,

"'Give me life or death, madam, for I see you know who I am.'

"'Yes, I do know you, and I think you must have gone mad.'

"'Yes, that may be; but I am mad with love. I adore you.'

"'Rise, for my maid will come back directly.'

"'She is in my secret.'

"'What! you have dared— '

"He got up, and the maid came in and gave him his money with the utmost coolness. He picked up his lace, made me a profound bow, and departed.

"It would have been natural for me to speak to my maid, and still more natural if I had dismissed her on the spot. I had no courage to do so, and my weakness will only astonish those rigorous moralists who know nothing of a young girl's heart, and do not consider my painful position, passionately in love and with no one but myself to rely on.

"I did not follow at once the severe dictates of duty; afterwards it was too late, and I easily consoled myself with the thought that I could pretend not to be aware that the maid was in the secret. I determined to dissemble, hoping that I should never see the adventurous lover again, and that thus all would be as if it had never happened.

"This resolve was really the effect of anger, for a fortnight passed by without my seeing the young man in the theatre, the public walks, or in any of the public places he used to frequent, and I became sad and dreamy, feeling all the time ashamed of my own wanton fancies. I longed to know his name, which I could only learn from my maid, and it was out of the question for me to ask Oeiras. I hated my maid, and I blushed when I saw her, imagining that she knew all. I was afraid that she would suspect my honour, and at another time I feared lest she might think I did not love him; and this thought nearly drove me mad. As for the young adventurer I thought him more to be pitied than to be blamed, for I did not believe that he knew I loved him, and it seemed to me that the idea of my despising him was enough vengeance for his audacity. But my thoughts were different when my vanity was stronger than love, for then despair avenged itself on pride, and I fancied he would think no more of me, and perhaps had already forgotten me.

"Such a state cannot last long, for if nothing comes to put an end to the storm which tosses the soul to and fro, it ends at last by making an effort of itself to sail into the calm waters of peace.

"One day I put on a lace kerchief I had bought from him, and asked my maid,

"'What has become of the girl who sold me this kerchief?'

"I asked this question without premeditation; it was, as it were, an inspiration from my 'good or my evil genius.

"As crafty as I was simple, the woman answered that to be sure he had not dared to come again, fearing that I had found out his disguise.

"'Certainly,' I replied, 'I found it out directly, but I was astonished to hear that you knew this lace-seller was a young man.'

"'I did not think I should offend you, madam, I know him well.'

"'Who is he?

"'Count d'Al —— ; you ought to know him, for he paid you a visit about four months ago.'

"'True, and it is possible that I did not know him, but why did you tell a lie when I asked you, "Do you know that girl?"'

"'I lied to spare your feelings, madam, and I was afraid you would be angry at the part I had taken:

"'You would have honoured me more by supposing the contrary. When you went out, and I told him he was mad, and that you would find him on his knees when you returned, he told me you were in the secret.'

"'If it be a secret, but it seems to me a mere joke:

"'I wished to think so too, but nevertheless it seemed of such weight to me, that I resolved to be silent that I might not be obliged to send you away.'

"'My idea was that you would have been amused, but as you take it seriously I am sorry that I have failed in my strict duty.'

"So weak is a woman in love that in this explanation which should have shewn me the servant's fault in all its enormity I only saw a full justification. In fact she had given peace to my heart, but my mind was still uneasy. I knew that there was a young Count d'Al —— belonging to a noble family, but almost penniless. All he had was the minister's patronage, and the prospect of good State employments. The notion that Heaven meant me to remedy the deficiencies in his fortune made me fall into a sweet reverie, and at last I found myself deciding that my maid who put it all down as a jest had more wit than I. I blamed myself for my scrupulous behaviour, which seemed no better than prudery. My love was stronger than I thought, and this is my best excuse, besides I had no one to guide or counsel me.

"But after sunshine comes shadow. My soul was like the ebb and tide of the sea, now in the heights and now in the depths. The resolve, which the count seemed to have taken, to see me no more, either shewed him to be a man of little enterprise or little love, and this supposition humiliated me. 'If,' I said to myself, 'the count is offended with me for calling him a madman, he can have no delicacy and no discretion; he is unworthy of my love.'

"I was in this dreadful state of uncertainty when my maid took upon herself to write to the count that he could come and see me under the same disguise. He followed her advice, and one fine morning the crafty maid came into my chamber laughing, and told me that the lace-seller was in the next room. I was moved exceedingly, but restraining myself I began to laugh also, though the affair was no laughing matter for me.

"'Shall I shew her in? said the maid.

"'Are you crazy?

"Shall I send her away?

"'No, I will go and speak to him myself.'

"This day was a memorable one. My maid left the room now and again, and we had plenty of time to disclose our feelings to one another. I frankly confessed that I loved him, but added that it were best that I should forget him, as it was not likely that my relations would consent to our marriage. In his turn he told me that the minister having resolved to send him to England, he would die of despair unless he carried with him the hope of one day possessing me, for he said he loved me too well to live without me. He begged me to allow him to come and see me under the same disguise, and though I could not refuse him anything I said that we might be discovered.

"'It is enough for me,' he replied, tenderly, 'that you will incur no danger, my visits will be set down to the account of your maid.'

"'But I am afraid for you,' I replied, 'your disguise is a crime in itself; your reputation will suffer, and that will not tend to bring the wish of your heart nearer.'

"In spite of my objections, my heart spoke in his favour, and he pleaded so well and promised to be so discreet that at last I said I would see him gladly whenever he liked to come.

"Count Al —— is twenty-two, and is shorter than I; he is small-boned, and in his disguise as a lace-seller it was hard to recognize him, even by his voice, which is very soft. He imitated the gestures and ways of women to perfection, and not a few women would be only too glad to be like him.

"Thus for nearly three months the disguised count came to see me three or four times a week, always in my maid's room, and mostly in her presence. But even if we had been perfectly alone his fear of my displeasure was too great to allow him to take the slightest liberties. I think now that this mutual restraint added fuel to our flames, for when we thought of the moment of parting it was with dumb sadness and with no idea of taking the opportunity of rendering one another happy. We flattered ourselves that Heaven would work some miracle in our favour, and that the day would never come wherein we should be parted.

"But one morning the count came earlier than usual, and, bursting into tears, told me that the minister had given him a letter for M. de Saa, the Portuguese ambassador at London, and another letter open for the captain of a ship which was shortly to sail for London. In this letter the minister ordered the captain to embark Count Al —— , to take him to London, and to treat him with distinction.

“My poor lover was overwhelmed, he was nearly choked with sobs, and his brain was all confusion. For his sake, and taking pity on his grief and my love, I conceived the plan of accompanying him as his servant, or rather to avoid disguising my sex, as his wife. When I told him, he was at once stupefied and dazzled. He was beyond reasoning, and left everything in my hands. We agreed to discuss the matter at greater length on the following day, and parted.

“Foreseeing that it would be difficult for me to leave the house in woman’s dress, I resolved to disguise myself as a man. But if I kept to my man’s dress I should be obliged to occupy the position of my lover’s valet, and have to undertake tasks beyond my strength. This thought made me resolve to impersonate the master myself, but thinking that I should not care to see my lover degraded to the rank of a servant, I determined that he should be my wife, supposing that the captain of the ship did not know him by sight.

“‘As soon as we get to England,’ I thought, ‘we will get married, and can resume our several dresses. This marriage will efface whatever shame may be attached to our flight; they will say, perhaps, that the count carried me off; but a girl is not carried off against her will, and Oeiras surely will not persecute me for having made the fortune of his favourite. As to our means of subsistence, till I get my rents, I can sell my diamonds, and they will realize an ample sum.’

“The next day, when I told my lover of this strange plan, he made no objections. The only obstacle which he thought of was the circumstance that the sea-captain might know him by sight, and this would have been fatal; but as he did not think it likely we determined to run the risk, and it was agreed that he should get me the clothes for the new part I was to play.

“I saw my lover again after an interval of three days; it was nightfall when he came. He told me that the Admiralty had informed him that the ship was riding at the mouth of the Tagus, and that the captain would put out to sea as soon as he had delivered his dispatches and had received fresh instructions. Count Al was consequently requested to be at a certain spot at midnight, and a boat would be in waiting to take him on board.

“I had made up my mind, and this was enough for me; and after having fixed the time and place of meeting, I shut myself up, pretending to be unwell. I put a few necessaries into a bag, not forgetting the precious jewel-casket, and I dressed myself up as a man and left the house by a stair only used by the servants. Even the porter did not see me as I made my escape.

“Fearing lest I should go astray the count was waiting for me at a short distance, and I was pleasantly surprised when he took me by the arm, saying, ‘’Tis I.’ From this careful action, simple though it was, I saw that he had intelligence; he was afraid to catch hold of me without making himself known. We went to a house where he had his trunk, and in half an hour his disguise was made. When all was ready a man came for our slight baggage, and we walked to the river where the count was waiting for us. It was eleven o’clock when we left land, and thinking my jewels would be safer in his pocket than in my bag, I gave them to him, and we anxiously awaited the arrival of the captain. He came aboard with his officers at midnight, and accosted me politely, saying he had received orders to treat me with distinction. I thanked him cordially, and introduced my wife to him, whom he greeted respectfully, saying he was delighted to have such a charming passenger, who would doubtless give us a fortunate voyage. He was too polite to be astonished that the minister had made no mention of the count’s wife in his letter.

“We got to the frigate in less than an hour; she was three leagues from land, and as soon as we got on board the captain ordered the men to set sail. He took us to a room which was extremely comfortable, considering it was only a cabin, and after doing the honours left us to ourselves.

“When we were alone we thanked Heaven that everything had gone off so well, and far from going to sleep we spent the night in discussing the bold step we had taken, or rather, only just begun to take; however, we hoped it would have as fortunate an ending as beginning. When the day dawned our hearts were gladdened because Lisbon was no longer in sight, and as we were in need of rest I laid down on a seat, while the count got into a hammock, neither of us troubling to undress.

“We were just falling asleep, when we began to feel the approach of sea-sickness, and for three days we knew no peace.

“On the fourth day, scarcely being able to stand upright for weakness, we began to be hungry, and had to exercise a careful moderation, so as not to become seriously ill. Happily for us the captain had a store of good food, and our meals were delicate and well-served.

“My lover, whose sickness has been more severe than mine, used this as a pretext for not leaving his room. The captain only came to see us once; this must have been out of extreme politeness, for in Portugal one may be jealous and yet not ridiculous. As for me, I stood upon the bridge nearly all day; the fresh air did me good, and I amused myself by scanning the horizon with my telescope.

“The seventh day of the voyage my heart trembled as with a presentiment of misfortune, when the sailors said that a vessel which could be seen in the distance was a corvette which was due to sail a day after us, but being a swift sailor would probably reach England two or three days before us.

“Though the voyage from Lisbon to England is a long one we had a fair wind all the way, and in fourteen days we dropped anchor at day-break in the port of Plymouth.

“The officer sent ashore by the captain to ask leave to disembark passengers came on board in the evening with several letters. One the captain read with peculiar attention, and then called me to one side and said,

“‘This letter comes from Count Oeiras, and enjoins me, on my life, not to let any Portuguese young lady land, unless she be known to me. I am to take her back to Lisbon after having executed my various commissions. There is neither wife nor maid on my frigate, except the countess your wife. If you can prove that she is really your wife she may land with you; otherwise, you see, I cannot disobey the minister’s orders.’

“‘She is my wife,’ I said, coolly; ‘but as I could not foresee this accident I have no papers to prove the fact.’

“‘I am sorry to hear it, as in that case she must go back to Lisbon. You may be sure I will treat her with all possible respect.’

“‘But a wife may not be parted from her husband.’

“‘Quite so, but I cannot disobey orders. If you like you can return to Lisbon in the corvette; you will be there before us.’

"'Why cannot I return in this frigate?

"'Because I have distinct orders to put you on land. And now I come to think of it, how was it that there was not a word about your wife in the letter you gave me when we started? If the lady is not the person meant by the minister, you may be sure she will be sent back to join you in London.'

"'You will allow me to go and speak to her?

"'Certainly, but in my presence.'

"My heart was broken; nevertheless, I had to put a good face on the losing game I was playing. I went to the count, and addressing him as my dear wife communicated the order which was to part us.

"I was afraid he would betray himself, but he was strong-minded enough to restrain his emotion, and only replied that we must needs submit, and that we should see each other again in a couple of months.

"As the captain stood beside us, I could only utter common-places. I warned him, however, that I should write to the abbess directly I got to London, who was the first person he must go and see at Lisbon, as she would have my address. I took care not to ask for my jewel-case, as the captain might have thought that my false wife was some rich young lady whom I had seduced.

"We had to abandon ourselves to our destiny. We embraced each other and mingled our ears, and the captain wept, too, when he heard me say,

"'Trust in all things to the worthy captain, and let us not fear at all.'

"The count's trunk was lowered into the boat, and as I did not dare to take my bag I found myself loaded with nothing but a man's clothes, which would not have fitted me, even if I had intended to keep up my disguise.

"When I came to the custom-house I saw my possessions. There were books, letters, linen, some suits of clothes, a sword and two pairs of pistols, one pair of which I put in my pockets, and then I went to an inn where the host said that if I wanted to travel to London the next morning I should only have to pay for one horse.

"'Who are the people,' said I, 'who desire a companion?

"'You shall sup with them if you like,' said he.

“I accepted the offer, and found the party consisted of a minister of religion and two ladies whose faces pleased me. I was fortunate enough to win their good graces, and early the next day we got to London and alighted in the Strand at an inn where I only dined, going out to seek a lodging appropriate to my means and the kind of life I wished to lead. Fifty Lisbon pieces and a ring of about the same value was all that I possessed in the world.

“I took a room on the third floor, being attracted by the honest and kindly expression of the landlady. I could only trust in God and confide my position to her. I agreed to pay her ten shillings a week, and begged her to get me some woman’s clothes, for I was afraid to go out in my man’s dress any longer.

“The next day I was clothed like a poor girl who desires to escape notice. I spoke English well enough to seem a native of the country, and I knew how I must behave if I wished to be let alone. Although the landlady was a worthy woman, her house was not exactly suitable for me; my stay in England might be protracted, and if I came to destitution I should be wretched indeed; so I resolved to leave the house. I received no visitors, but I could not prevent the inquisitive from hovering round my door, and the more it became known that I saw no one, the more their curiosity increased. The house was not quiet enough. It was near the Exchange, and the neighborhood swarmed with young men who came to dine on the first floor of the house, and did their best to cure me of my sadness, as they called it, though I had not shewn any signs of wishing to be cured.

“I made up my mind not to spend more than a guinea a week, and resolved to sell my ring if I could have the money paid to me at intervals. An old jeweler who lodged next door, and for whose honesty my landlady answered, told me it was worth a hundred and fifty guineas, and asked me to let him have it if I had no better offer. I had not thought it to be so valuable, and I sold it to him on condition that he would pay me four guineas a month, and that I should be at liberty to buy it back if I could do so before all the payments had been made.

“I wanted to keep my ready money, which I still have by me, so as to be able to go back to Lisbon by land when I can do so in safety, for I could not face the horrors of a sea voyage a second time.

“I told my case to my worthy landlady who still befriends me, and she helped me to get another lodging, but I had to procure a servant to fetch me my food; I could not summon up courage to have my meals in a coffee-house. However, all my servants turned out ill; they robbed me continually, and levied a tax on all their purchases.

“The temperance I observed — for I almost lived on bread and water — made me get thinner every day, still I saw no way of mending my existence till chance made me see your singular announcement. I laughed at it; and then drawn by some irresistible power, or perhaps by the curiosity that falls to the lot of most of us women, I could not resist going in and speaking to you. Instinct thus pointed out the way to improve my lot without increasing my expenditure.

“When I got back I found a copy of the Advertiser on my landlady’s table; it contained some editorial fun on the notice I had just read. The writer said that the master of the house was an Italian, and had therefore nothing to fear from feminine violence. On my side I determined to hazard everything, but I feel I have been too hasty, and that there are certain attacks which it is pleasant not to resist. I was brought up by an Italian, a clever and good man, and I have always had a great respect for your fellow-countrymen.”

My fair Portuguese had finished her story, and I observed, —

“Really, your history has amused me very much; it has all the air of a romance.”

“Quite so,” said she; “but it is a strictly historical romance. But the most amusing thing to me is that you have listened to it without weariness.”

“That is your modesty, madam; not only, has your tale interested me, but now that I know you are a Portuguese I am at peace with the nation.”

“Were you at war with us, then?”

“I have never forgiven you for letting your Portuguese Virgil die miserably two hundred years ago.”

“You mean Camoens. But the Greeks treated Homer in the same way.”

“Yes, but the faults of others are no excuse for our own.”

"You are right; but how can you like Camoens so much if you do not know Portuguese?"

"I have read a translation in Latin hexameters so well done that I fancied I was reading Virgil."

"Is that truly so?"

"I would never lie to you."

"Then I make a vow to learn Latin."

"That is worthy of you, but it is of me that you must learn the language. I will go to Portugal and live and die there, if you will give me your heart.'

"My heart! I have only one, and that is given already. Since I have known you I have despised myself, for I am afraid I have an inconstant nature."

"It will be enough for me if you will love me as your father, provided I may sometimes take my daughter to my arms. But go on with your story, the chief part is yet untold. What became of your lover, and what did your relations do when they found out your flight?"

"Three days after I arrived in this vast city I wrote to the abbess, my aunt, and told her the whole story, begging her to protect my lover, and to confirm me in my resolution never to return to Lisbon till I could do so in security, and have no obstacles placed in the way of my marriage. I also begged her to write and inform me of all that happened, addressing her letters to 'Miss Pauline,' under cover of my landlady.

"I sent my letter by Paris and Madrid, and I had to wait three months before I got an answer. My aunt told me that the frigate had only returned a short time, and that the captain immediately on his arrival wrote to the minister informing him that the only lady who was in his ship when he sailed was still on board, for he had brought her back with him, despite the opposition of Count Al —— , who declared she was his wife. The captain ended by asking his excellency for further orders with respect to the lady aforesaid.

"Oeiras, feeling sure that the lady was myself, told the captain to take her to the convent of which my aunt was abbess, with a letter he had written. In this letter he told my aunt that he sent her her niece, and begged her to keep the girl securely till further orders. My aunt was extremely surprised, but she would have been still more surprised if she had not got my letter a few days before. She thanked the captain for his care, and took the false niece to a room and locked her up. She then wrote to Oeiras, telling him that she had received into her convent a person supposed to be his niece, but as this person was really a man in woman's dress she begged his excellency to remove him as soon as possible.

"When the abbess had written this curious letter she paid a visit to the count, who fell on his knees before her. My good aunt raised him, and shewed him my letter. She said that she had been obliged to write to the minister, and that she had no doubt he would be removed from the convent in the course of a few hours. The count burst into tears, and begging the abbess to protect us both gave her my jewel-casket, which the worthy woman received with great pleasure. She left him, promising to write to me of all that happened.

"The minister was at one of his country estates, and did not receive the abbess's letter till the next day, but hastened to reply in person. My aunt easily convinced his excellency of the need for keeping the matter secret, for a man had been sent into the convent, which would be to her dishonour. She shewed the proud minister the letter she had had from me, and told him how the honest young man had given her my jewel-casket. He thanked her for her open dealing, and begged her pardon with a smile for sending a fine young man to her nunnery.

"'The secret,' said he, 'is of the greatest importance; we must see that it goes no farther. I will relieve you of your false niece, and take her away in my carriage.'

"My aunt took him at his word and brought out the young recluse, who drove away with the minister. The abbess tells me that from that day she has heard nothing about him, but that all Lisbon is talking over the affair, but in a wholly distorted manner. They say that the minister first of all put me under the care of my aunt, but soon after took me away, and has kept me in some secret place ever since. Count Al —— is supposed to be in London, and I in the minister's power, and probably we are supposed to have entered into a tender relationship. No doubt his excellency is perfectly well informed of my doings here, for he knows my address and has spies everywhere.

“On the advice of my aunt I wrote to Oeiras a couple of months ago, telling him that I am ready to return to Lisbon, if I may marry Count Al —— and live in perfect liberty. Otherwise, I declared, I would stay in London, where the laws guaranteed my freedom. I am waiting for his answer every day, and I expect it will be a favourable one, for no one can deprive me of my estates, and Oeiras will probably be only too glad to protect me to lessen the odium which attaches to his name as the murderer of my father.”

Pauline made no mystery of the names of the characters, but she may be still alive, and I respect her too well to run the risk of wounding her, though these Memoirs will not see the light of day during my lifetime. It is sufficient to say that the story is known to all the inhabitants of Lisbon, and that the persons who figure in it are public characters in Portugal.

I lived with dear Pauline in perfect harmony, feeling my love for her increase daily, and daily inspiring her with tenderer feelings towards myself. But as my love increased in strength, I grew thin and feeble; I could not sleep nor eat. I should have languished away if I had not succeeded in gratifying my passion. On the other hand, Pauline grew plumper and prettier every day.

“If my sufferings serve to increase your charms,” said I, “you ought not to let me die, for a dead man has no suffering.”

“Do you think that your sufferings are due to your love for me?”

“Certainly.”

“There may be something in it, but, believe me, the tender passion does not destroy the appetite nor take away the power of sleep. Your indisposition is undoubtedly due to the sedentary life you have been leading of late. If you love me, give me a proof of it; go out for a ride.”

“I cannot refuse you anything, dearest Pauline, but what then?”

“Then you shall find me grateful to you, you will have a good appetite, and will sleep well.”

“A horse, a horse! Quick! My boots!” I kissed her hand — for I had not got any farther than that — and began to ride towards Kingston. I did not care for the motion of trotting, so I put my horse at a gallop, when all of a sudden he stumbled, and in an instant I was lying on the ground in front of the Duke of Kingston's house. Miss Chudleigh happened to be at the window, and seeing me thrown to the ground uttered a shriek. I raised my head and she recognized me, and hastened to send some of her people to help me. As soon as I was on my feet I wanted to go and thank her, but I could not stir, and a valet who knew something of surgery examined me, and declared that I had put out my collar-bone and would require a week's rest.

The young lady told me that if I liked to stay in her house the greatest care should be taken of me. I thanked her warmly, but begged her to have me taken home, as I should not like to give her so much trouble. She immediately gave the necessary orders, and I was driven home in a comfortable carriage. The servants in charge would not accept any money, and I saw in the incident a proof of that hospitality for which the English are famed, although they are at the same time profoundly egotistic.

When I got home I went to bed, and sent for a surgeon, who laughed when I told him that I had put out a bone.

"I'll wager it is nothing more than a sprain. I only wish it was put out that I might have some chance of shewing my skill."

"I am delighted," I said, "not to be in a position to call for that amount of talent, but I shall have a high opinion of you if you set me up in a short time."

I did not see Pauline, much to my astonishment. I was told she had gone out in a sedan-chair, and I almost felt jealous. In two hours she came in looking quite frightened, the old house-keeper having told her that I had broken my leg, and that the doctor had been with me already.

"Unhappy wretch that I am!" she exclaimed as she came to my bedside, "'tis I that have brought you to this."

With these words she turned pale and almost fell in a swoon beside me.

"Divine being!" I cried, as I pressed her to my breast, "it is nothing; only a sprain."

"What pain that foolish old woman has given me!

"God be praised that it is no worse! Feel my heart."

"Oh, yes! I felt it with delight. It was a happy fall for me."

Fastening my lips on hers, I felt with delight that our transports were mutual, and I blessed the sprain that had brought me such bliss.

After these ecstasies I felt that Pauline was laughing.

"What are you laughing at, sweetheart?"

"At the craft of love, which always triumphs at last."

"Where have you been?"

"I went to my old jeweler's to redeem my ring, that you might have a souvenir of me; here it is."

"Pauline! Pauline! a little love would have been much more precious to me than this beautiful ring."

"You shall have both. Till the time of my departure, which will come only too soon, we will live together like man and wife; and to-night shall be our wedding night, and the bed the table for the feast."

"What sweet news you give me, Pauline! I cannot believe it till my happiness is actually accomplished."

"You may doubt, if you like; but let it be a slight doubt, or else you will do me wrong. I am tired of living with you as a lover and only making you wretched, and the moment I saw you on horseback I determined to belong to you. Consequently I went to redeem the ring directly you left, and I do not intend to leave you until I receive the fatal message from Lisbon. I have dreaded its arrival every day for the last week."

"May the messenger that brings it be robbed on the way."

"No such luck, I am afraid."

As Pauline was standing, I asked her to come to my arms, for I longed to give her some palpable signs of my love.

"No, dearest, one can love and yet be wise; the door is open."

She got down Ariosto and began to read to me the adventure of Ricciardetto with Fiordespina, an episode which gives its beauty to the twenty-ninth canto of that beautiful poem which I knew by heart. She imagined that she was the princess, and I Ricciardetto. She liked to fancy, ‘Che il ciel L’abbia concesso,

Bradamante cangiata in miglior sesso.’

When she came to the lines;

‘Le belle braccia al collo indi mi getta,

E dolcemente stringe, a baccia in bocca:

Tu puoi pensar se allora la saetta

Dirizza Amor, se in mezzo al cor mi tocca.’

She wanted some explanations on the expression ‘baccia in bocca’, and on the love which made Ricciardetto’s arrow so stiff, and I, only too ready to comment on the text, made her touch an arrow as stiff as Ricciardetto’s. Of course, she was angry at that, but her wrath did not last long. She burst out laughing when she came to the lines,

‘Io il veggo, io il sento, e a pena vero parmi:

Sento in maschio in femina matarsi.’

And then,

‘Cosi le dissi, e feci ch’ella stessa

Trovo con man la veritade expressa.

She expressed her, wonder that this poem abounding in obscenities had not been put on the “Index” at Rome.

“What you call obscenity is mere license, and there is plenty of that at Rome.”

“That’s a joke which should bring the censures of the Church upon you. But what do you call obscenities, if Ariosto is not obscene?”

“Obscenity disgusts, and never gives pleasure.”

“Your logic is all your own, but situated as I am I cannot reargue your proposition. I am amused at Ariosto’s choosing a Spanish woman above all others to conceive that strange passion for Bradamante.”

“The heat of the Spanish climate made him conclude that the Spanish temperament was also ardent, and consequently whimsical in its tastes.”

“Poets are a kind of madmen who allow themselves to give utterance to all their fancies.”

The reading was continued, and I thought my time had come when she read the verses:

Io senza scale in su la rooca salto,

E to stendardo piantovi di botto,

E la nemica mia mi caccio sotto**

**I scaled the rock without a ladder, I planted my standard suddenly, and held my enemy beneath me.

I wanted to give her a practical illustration of the lines, but with that sensibility so natural to women, and which they can use so well as a goad to passion, she said, —

“Dearest, you might make yourself worse; let us wait till your sprain is cured.”

“Are we to wait till I am cured for the consummation of our marriage?”

“I suppose so, for if I am not mistaken the thing can’t be done without a certain movement.”

“You are wrong, dear Pauline, but it would make no difference to me even if it were so. You may be sure I would not put it off till to-morrow, even if it cost me my leg. Besides, you shall see that there are ways and means of satisfying our passions without doing me any harm. Is that enough for you?”

“Well, well, as it is written that a wife should obey her husband, you will find me docile.”

“When?”

“After supper.”

“Then we will have no supper. We shall dine with all the better appetite to-morrow. Let us begin now.”

“No, for the suspicions of the servants might be aroused. Love has its rules of decency like everything else.”

"You talk as wisely as Cato, and I am obliged to confess that you are right in all you say."

Supper was served as usual; it was delicate enough, but the thought of approaching bliss had taken away our appetites, and we ate only for form's sake. At ten o'clock we were at liberty, and could indulge our passion without any fear of being disturbed.

But this delightful woman, who had so plainly told me a few hours before that when I was cured we would live together as man and wife, was now ashamed to undress before me. She could not make up her mind, and told me so, laughing at herself. From this circumstance I gathered that the decency of the body is more tenacious in its grasp than the purity of the soul.

"But, sweetheart," said I, "you dressed and undressed for a fortnight before your betrothed."

"Yes, but he was always lying in his hammock with his back towards me at night, and in the morning he never turned round and wished me good day till he knew I was dressed."

"What, he never turned?"

"I never let him take any liberties."

"Such virtue is incomprehensible to me."

"You see the count was to be my husband, and I was to be his wife, and in such cases a young woman is careful. Besides, I believe that if one will but refrain from taking the first step, continence is easy. Then the count was naturally timid, and would never have taken any liberties without my encouraging him, which I took care not to do. For this once, you will allow me to sleep with you in my clothes."

"Certainly, if you wish me to be dressed also, otherwise it would be unbearable for both of us."

"You are very cruel."

"But, dearest, are you not ashamed of these foolish scruples?"

"Well, well, put out the candles, and in a minute I will be beside you."

“Very good; though the want of light will deprive me of a great pleasure. Quick, out with them!”

My charming Portuguese did not reflect that the moon shone full into the room, and that the muslin curtains would not prevent my seeing her exquisite figure, which shewed to greater advantage in the position she happened to take. If Pauline had been a coquette I should have considered her scruples as mere artifice calculated to increase my ardour; but she had no need to use such stratagems. At last she was within my arms, and we clasped each other closely and in silence that was only broken by the murmur of our kisses. Soon our union became closer, and her sighs and the ardour of her surrender shewed me that her passion was more in need of relief than mine. I was sufficiently master of myself to remember that I must have a care for her honour, greatly to her astonishment, for she confessed she had never thought of such a thing, and had given herself up freely, resolved to brave the consequences which she believed to be inevitable. I explained the mystery and made her happy.

Till this moment love alone had swayed me, but now that the bloody sacrifice was over I felt full of respect and gratitude. I told her effusively that I knew how great was my happiness, and that I was ready to sacrifice my life to her to prove my love.

The thought that our embraces would have no dangerous result had put Pauline at her ease, and she have reins to her ardent temperament, while I did valiant service, till at last we were exhausted and the last sacrifice was not entirely consummated. We abandoned ourselves to a profound and peaceful sleep. I was the first to awake; the sun was shining in through the window, and I gazed on Pauline. As I looked at this woman, the first beauty in Portugal, the only child of an illustrious family, who had given herself to me all for love, and whom I should possess for so short a time, I could not restrain a profound sigh.

Pauline awoke, and her gaze, as bright as the rising sun in springtime, fixed itself on me truthfully and lovingly.

“What are you thinking of, dearest?”

“I am trying to convince myself that my happiness is not a dream, and if it be real I want it to last for ever. I am the happy mortal to whom you have given up your great treasure, of which I am unworthy, though I love you tenderly.”

“Sweetheart, you are worthy of all my devotion and affection, if you have not ceased to respect me.”

“Can you doubt it, Pauline?”

“No, dearest, I think you love me, and that I shall never repent having trusted in you.”

The sweet sacrifice was offered again, and Pauline rose and laughed to find that she was no longer ashamed of her nakedness before me. Then, passing from jest to earnest, she said, —

“If the loss of shame is the result of knowledge, how was it that our first parents were not ashamed till they had acquired knowledge?”

“I don’t know, dearest, but tell me, did you ever ask your learned Italian master that same question?”

“Yes, I did.”

“What did he say?”

“That their shame arose not from their enjoyment, but from disobedience; and that in covering the parts which had seduced them, they discovered, as it were, the sin they had committed. Whatever may be said on the subject, I shall always think that Adam was much more to blame than Eve.”

“How is that?”

“Because Adam had received the prohibition from God, while Eve had only received it from Adam.”

“I thought that both of them received the prohibition directly from God.”

“You have not read Genesis, then.”

“You are laughing at me.”

“Then you have read it carelessly, because it is distinctly stated that God made Eve after he had forbidden Adam to eat of the fruit.”

“I wonder that point has not been remarked by our commentators; it seems a very important one to me.”

“They are a pack of knaves, all sworn enemies of women.”

“No, no, they give proofs of quite another feeling only too often.”

“We won’t say anything more about it. My teacher was an honest man.”

“Was he a Jesuit?”

“Yes, but of the short robe.”

“What do you mean?”

“We will discuss the question another time.”

“Very good; I should like to have it proved to me that a man can be a Jesuit and honest at the same time.”

“There are exceptions to all rules.”

My Pauline was a profound thinker, and strongly attached to her religion. I should never have discovered that she possessed this merit if I had not slept with her. I have known several women of the same stamp; if you wish to know the elevation of their souls, you must begin by damning them. When this is done, one enjoys their confidence, for they have no secrets for the happy victor. This is the reason why the charming though feeble sex loves the brave and despises the cowardly. Sometimes they appear to love cowards, but always for their physical beauty. Women amuse themselves with such fellows, but are the first to laugh if they get caned.

After the most delicious night I had ever passed, I resolved not to leave my house till Pauline had to return to Portugal. She did not leave me for a moment, save to hear mass on Sundays. I shut my door to everybody, even to the doctor, for my sprain disappeared of itself. I did not fail to inform Miss Chudleigh of my rapid cure; she had sent twice a day ever since the accident to learn how I was.

Pauline went to her room after our amorous conflict, and I did not see her again till dinner-time; but when I did see her I thought her an angel. Her face had caught the hues of the lily and the rose, and had an air of happiness I could not help admiring.

As we both wanted to have our portraits taken, I asked Martinelli to send me the best miniature-painter in London. He sent a Jew, who succeeded admirably. I had my miniature mounted in a ring and gave it to Pauline; and this was the only present she would accept from me, who would have thought myself all the richer if she had accepted all I had.

We spent three weeks in a happy dream which no pen can describe. I was quite well again, and we tasted all the sweets of love together. All day and all night we were together, our desires were satisfied only to be renewed; we enjoyed the extremest bliss. In a word, it is difficult to form a just idea of the state of two individuals who enjoy all the range of physical and mental pleasures together, whose life is for the present without thought of the future; whose joys are mutual and continual; such, nevertheless, was the position of myself and my divine Pauline.

Every day I discovered in her some fresh perfection which made me love her more; her nature was inexhaustible in its treasures, for her mental qualities even surpassed her physical beauties, and an excellent education had wonderfully increased the powers of her intelligence. With all the beauty and grace of a woman she had that exalted character which is the lot of the best of men. She began to flatter herself that the fatal letter would never come, and the count was little more than a dream of the past. Sometimes she would say that she could not understand how a pretty face could exercise such a strong influence over us in spite of our reason.

“I have found out too late,” she added, “that chance alone can make a marriage, contracted for such physical reasons, happy.”

The 1st of August was a fatal day for both of us. Pauline received a letter from Lisbon, which summoned her home without delay, and I had a letter from Paris announcing the death of Madame d’Urfe. Madame du Rumain told me that on the evidence of her maid the doctors had pronounced her death to be due to an overdose of the liquid she called “The Panacea.” She added that a will had been found which savoured of a lunatic asylum, for she had left all her wealth to the son or daughter that should be born of her, declaring that she was with child. I was to be the governor of the infant; this vexed me exceedingly, as I knew I should be the laughing-stock of Paris for a week at least. Her daughter, the Comtesse de Chatelet, had taken possession of all her real estate and of her pocket-book, which contained, to my surprise, four hundred thousand francs. It was a great shock for me, but the contents of the two letters Pauline had received was a greater blow. One was from her aunt, and the other from Oeiras, who begged her to return to

Lisbon as soon as possible, and assured her that she should be put in possession of her property on her arrival, and would be at liberty to marry Count Al —— in the sight of all the world. He sent her a cheque for twenty million reis. I was not aware of the small value of the coin, and was in an ecstasy; but Pauline laughed, and said it only came to two thousand pounds, which was a sufficient sum, however, to allow her to travel in the style of a duchess. The minister wanted her to come by sea, and all she had to do was to communicate with the Portuguese ambassador, who had orders to give her a passage on a Portuguese frigate which happened to be riding in an English port. Pauline would not hear of the voyage, or of applying to the ambassador, for she did not want anyone to think that she had been obliged to return. She was angry with the minister for having sent her a cheque, thinking that he must be aware that she had been in need, but I soon brought her to see reason on this point, telling her that it was a very thoughtful and delicate proceeding on the part of Oeiras, and that he had merely lent-her the money, and not given it to her.

Pauline was rich, and she was a high-minded woman. Her generosity may be estimated by her giving me her ring when she was in want, and she certainly never counted on my purse, though she may have felt sure that I would not abandon her. I am sure she believed me to be very rich, and my conduct was certainly calculated to favour that idea.

The day and even the night passed sadly. The next day Pauline addressed me as follows:

“We must part, dear friend, and try to forget one another, for my honour obliges me to become the wife of the count as soon as I arrive in Lisbon. The first fancy of my heart, which you have almost effaced, will regain all its old force when I see you no longer, and I am sure I shall love my husband, for he is a goodhearted, honest, and pleasant young man; that much I know from the few days we lived together.

“Now I have a favour to ask of you, which I am sure you will grant. Promise me never to come to Lisbon without my permission. I hope you will not seek to know my reasons; you would not, I am sure, come to trouble my peace, for if I sinned I should be unhappy, and you would not desire that for me. I have dreamed we have lived together as man and wife, and now we are parted I shall fancy myself a widow about to undertake another marriage.”

I burst into tears, and pressing her to my breast promised I would do as she wished.

Pauline wrote to her aunt and Oeiras that she would be in Lisbon in October, and that they should have further news of her when she reached Spain. She had plenty of money, and bought a carriage and engaged a maid, and these arrangements took up her time during the last week she spent with me. I made her promise me to let Clairmont accompany her as far as Madrid. She was to send me back my faithful servant when she reached the Spanish capital, but fate had decreed that I should see his face no more.

The last few days were spent partly in sorrow and partly in delight. We looked at each other without speaking, and spoke without knowing what we said. We forgot to eat, and went to bed hoping that love and anguish would keep us awake, but our exhausted bodies fell into a heavy sleep, and when we awoke we could only sigh and kiss again.

Pauline allowed me to escort her as far as Calais, and we started on the 10th of August, only stopping at Dover to embark the carriage on the packet, and four hours afterwards we disembarked at Calais, and Pauline, considering her widowhood had begun, begged me to sleep in another room. She started on the 12th of August, preceded by my poor Clairmont, and resolved only to travel by daytime.

The analogy between my parting with Pauline and my parting with Henriette fifteen years before, was exceedingly striking; the two women were of very similar character, and both were equally beautiful, though their beauty was of a different kind. Thus I fell as madly in love with the second as with the first, both being equally intelligent. The fact that one had more talent and less prejudices than the other must have been an effect of their different educations. Pauline had the fine pride of her nation, her mind was a serious cast, and her religion was more an affair of the heart than the understanding. She was also a far more ardent mistress than Henriette. I was successful with both of them because I was rich; if I had been a poor man I should never have known either of them. I have half forgotten them, as everything is forgotten in time, but when I recall them to my memory I find that Henriette made the profounder impression on me, no doubt because I was twenty-five when I knew her, while I was thirty-seven in London.

The older I get the more I feel the destructive effects of old age; and I regret bitterly that I could not discover the secret of remaining young and happy for ever. Vain regrets! we must finish as we began, helpless and devoid of sense.

I went back to England the same day, and had a troublesome passage. Nevertheless, I did not rest at Dover; and as soon as I got to London I shut myself up with a truly English attack of the spleen, while I thought of Pauline and strove to forget her. Jarbe put me to bed, and in the morning, when he came into my room, he made me shudder with a speech at which I laughed afterwards.

“Sir,” said he, “the old woman wants to know whether she is to put up the notice again.”

“The old hag! Does she want me to choke her?”

“Good heavens-no, sir! She is very fond of you, seeing you seemed so sad, she thought … .”

“Go and tell her never to think such things again, and as for you … .”

“I will do as you wish, sir.”

“Then leave me.”

EPISODE 23 — THE ENGLISH

CHAPTER X

Eccentricity of the English — Castelbajac Count Schwerin —

Sophie at School — My Reception at the Betting Club —

The Charpillon

I passed a night which seemed like a never-ending nightmare, and I got up sad and savage, feeling as if I could kill a man on the smallest provocation. It seemed as if the house, which I had hitherto thought so beautiful, was like a millstone about my neck. I went out in my travelling clothes, and walked into a coffee-house, where I saw a score of people reading the papers.

I sat down, and, not understanding English, passed my time in gazing at the goers and comers. I had been there some time when my attention was attracted by the voice of a man speaking as follows in French:

“Tommy has committed suicide, and he was wise, for he was in such a state that he could only expect unhappiness for the rest of his life.”

“You are quite mistaken,” said the other, with the greatest composure. “I was one of his creditors myself, and on making an inventory of his effects I feel satisfied that he has done a very foolish and a very childish thing; he might have lived on comfortably, and not killed himself for fully six months.”

At any other time this calculation would have made me laugh, and, as it was, I felt as if the incident had done me good.

I left the coffee-house without having said a word or spent a penny, and I went towards the Exchange to get some money. Bosanquet gave me what I wanted directly, and as I walked out with him I noticed a curious-looking individual, whose name I asked.

“He’s worth a hundred thousand,” said the banker.

“And who is that other man over there?”

“He’s not worth a ten-pound note.”

"But I don't want to hear what they are worth; it's their names I want."

"I really don't know."

"How can you tell how much they are worth, not knowing their names?"

"Names don't go for anything here. What we want to know about a man is how much he has got? Besides; what's in a name? Ask me for a thousand pounds and give me a proper receipt, and you can do it under the name of Socrates or Attila, for all I care. You will pay me back my money as Socrates or Attila, and not as Seingalt; that is all."

"But how about signing bills of exchange?"

"That's another thing; I must use the name which the drawer gives me."

"I don't understand that."

"Well, you see, you are not English, nor are you a business man."

On leaving him I walked towards the park, but wishing to change a twenty-pound note before going in I went to a fat merchant, an epicure whose acquaintance I had made at the tavern, and put down the note on his counter, begging him to cash it for me.

"Come again in an hour," said he, "I have no money by me just now."

"Very good; I will call again when I come from the park."

"Take back your note; you shall give it to me when I hand you the money."

"Never mind; keep it. I don't doubt your honesty."

"Don't be so foolish. If you left me the note I should certainly decline to hand over the money, if only for the sake of giving you a lesson."

"I don't believe you are capable of such dishonesty."

"Nor am I, but when it comes to such a simple thing as putting a bank note in your pocket, the most honest man in the world would never dream of having such a thing in his possession without having paid the money for it, and the least slip of memory might lead to a dispute in which you would infallibly come off second best."

"I feel the force of your arguments, especially in a town where so much business is carried on."

When I got into the park I met Martinelli and thanked him for sending me a copy of the Decameron, while he congratulated me on my re-appearance in society, and on the young lady of whom I had been the happy possessor and no doubt the slave.

“My Lord Pembroke has seen her,” said he, “and thought her charming.”

“What? Where could he have seen her?”

“In a carriage with you driving fast along the Rochester road. It is three or four days ago.”

“Then I may tell you that I was taking her to Calais; I shall never see her face again.”

“Will you let the room again in the same way?”

“No, never again, though the god of love has been propitious to me. I shall be glad to see you at my house whenever you like to come.”

“Shall I send you a note to warn you?”

“Not at all.”

We walked on talking about literature, manners, and so forth, in an aimless way. All at once, as we approached Buckingham House, I saw five or six persons, relieving nature amidst the bushes, with their hinder parts facing the passers-by. I thought this a disgusting piece of indecency, and said as much to Martinelli, adding that the impudent rascals might at least turn their faces towards the path.

“Not at all,” he exclaimed, “for then they might be recognized; whereas in exposing their posteriors they run no such risk; besides the sight makes squeamish persons turn away.”

“You are right, but you will confess that the whole thing strikes a stranger as very revolting.”

“Yes, there is nothing so ineradicable as national prejudice. You may have noticed that when an Englishman wants to ease his sluices in the street, he doesn’t run up an alley or turn to the wall like we do.”

“Yes, I have noticed them turning towards the middle of the street, but if they thus escape the notice of the people in the shops and on the pavement they are seen by everybody who is driving in a carriage, and that is as bad."

"The people in the carriages need not look."

"That is true."

We walked on to the Green Park, and met Lord Pembroke on horseback. He stopped and burst into exclamations on seeing me. As I guessed the cause of his surprise, I hastened to tell him that I was a free man once more, to my sorrow, and felt lonely amidst my splendour.

"I feel rather curious about it, and perhaps I may come and keep you company to-day."

We parted, and reckoning on seeing him at dinner I, went back to tell my cook that dinner was to be served in the large room. Martinelli had an engagement and could not come to dinner, but he led me out of the park by a door with which I was not acquainted, and sent me on my way.

As we were going along we saw a crowd of people who seemed to be staring at something. Martinelli went up to the crowd, and then returned to me, saying, —

"That's a curious sight for you; you can enter it amidst your remarks on English manners."

"What is it?"

"A man at the point of death from a blow he has received in boxing with another sturdy fellow."

"Cannot anything be done?"

"There is a surgeon there who would bleed him, if he were allowed."

"Who could prevent him?"

"That's the curious part of it. Two men have betted on his death or recovery. One says, 'I'll bet twenty guineas he dies,' and the other says, 'Done.' Number one will not allow the surgeon to bleed him, for if the man recovered his twenty guineas would be gone."

"Poor man! what pitiless betters!"

"The English are very strange in their betting proclivities; they bet about everything. There is a Betting Club to which I will introduce you, if you like.”

“Do they speak French there?”

“Most certainly, for it is composed of men of wit and mark.”

“What do they do?”

“They talk and argue, and if one man brings forward a proposition which another denies, and one backs his opinion, the other has to bet too, on pain of a fine which goes to the common fund.”

“Introduce me to this delightful club, by all means; it will make my fortune, for I shall always take care to be on the right side.”

“You had better be careful; they are wary birds.”

“But to return to the dying man; what will be done to his antagonist?”

“His hand will be examined, and if it is found to be just the same as yours or mine it will be marked, and he will be let go.”

“I don’t understand that, so kindly explain. How do they recognize a dangerous hand?”

“If it is found to be marked already, it is a proof that he has killed his man before and has been marked for it, with the warning, ‘Take care not to kill anyone else, for if you do you will be hanged.’”

“But supposing such a man is attacked?”

“He ought to shew his hand, and then his adversary would let him alone.”

“But if not?”

“Then he is defending himself; and if he kills his man he is acquitted, provided he can bring witnesses to swear that he was obliged to fight.”

“Since fighting with the fist may cause death, I wonder it is allowed.”

“It is only allowed for a wager. If the combatants do not put one or more pieces of money on the ground before the fight, and there is a death, the man is hanged.”

“What laws! What manners!”

In such ways I learnt much concerning the manner and customs of this proud nation, at once so great and so little.

The noble lord came to dinner, and I treated him in a manner to make him wish to come again. Although there were only the two of us, the meal lasted a long time, as I was anxious for additional information on what I had heard in the morning, especially on the Betting Club. The worthy Pembroke advised me not to have anything to do with it, unless I made up my mind to keep perfect silence for four or five weeks.

“But supposing they ask me a question?”

“Evade it.”

“Certainly, if I am not in a position to give my opinion; but if I have an opinion, the powers of Satan could not shut my mouth.”

“All the worse for you.”

“Are the members knaves?”

“Certainly not. They are noblemen, philosophers, and epicures; but they are pitiless where a bet is concerned.”

“Is the club treasury rich?”

“Far from it; they are all ashamed to pay a fine, and prefer to bet. Who will introduce you?”

“Martinelli.”

“Quite so; through Lord Spencer, who is a member. I would not become one.”

“Why not?”

“Because I don’t like argument.”

“My taste runs the other way, so I shall try to get in.”

“By the way, M. de Seingalt, do you know that you are a very extraordinary man?”

“For what reason, my lord?”

“You shut yourself up for a whole month with a woman who spent fourteen months in London without anybody making her acquaintance or even discovering her nationality. All the amateurs have taken a lively interest in the affair."

"How did you find out that she spent fourteen months in London?"

"Because several persons saw her in the house of a worthy widow where she spent the first month. She would never have anything to say to any advances, but the bill in your window worked wonders."

"Yes, and all the worse for me, for I feel as if I could never love another woman."

"Oh, that's childish indeed! You will love another woman in a week-nay, perhaps to-morrow, if you will come and dine with me at my country house. A perfect French beauty has asked me to dine with her. I have told some of my friends who are fond of gaming."

"Does the charming Frenchwoman like gaming?"

"No, but her husband does."

"What's his name?"

"He calls himself Count de Castelbajac."

"Ah! Castelbajac?"

"Yes."

"He is a Gascon?"

"Yes."

"Tall, thin, and dark, and marked with the smallpox?

"Exactly! I am delighted to find you know him. You will agree with me that his wife is very pretty?"

"I really can't say. I knew Castelbajac, as he calls himself, six years ago, and I never heard he was married. I shall be delighted to join you, however. I must warn you not to say anything if he seems not to know me; he may possibly have good reasons for acting in that manner. Before long I will tell you a story which does not represent him in a very advantageous manner. I did not know he played. I shall take care to be on my guard at the Betting Club, and I advise you, my lord, to be on your guard in the society of Castelbajac."

"I will not forget the warning."

When Pembroke had left me I went to see Madame Cornelis, who had written a week before to tell me my daughter was ill, and explained that she had been turned from my doors on two occasions though she felt certain I was in. To this I replied that I was in love, and so happy within my own house that I had excluded all strangers, and with that she had to be contented, but the state in which I found little Sophie frightened me. She was lying in bed with high fever, she had grown much thinner, and her eyes seemed to say that she was dying of grief. Her mother was in despair, for she was passionately fond of the child, and I thought she would have torn my eyes out when I told her that if Sophie died she would only have herself to reproach. Sophie, who was very good-hearted, cried out, "No, no! papa dear;" and quieted her mother by her caresses.

Nevertheless, I took the mother aside, and told her that the disease was solely caused by Sophie's dread of her severity.

"In spite of your affection," said I, "you treat her with insufferable tyranny. Send her to a boarding-school for a couple of years, and let her associate with girls of good family. Tell her this evening that she is to go to school, and see if she does not get better."

"Yes," said she, "but a good boarding-school costs a hundred guineas a year, including masters."

"If I approve of the school you select I will pay a year in advance."

On my making this offer the woman, who seemed to be living so luxuriously, but was in reality poverty-stricken, embraced me with the utmost gratitude.

"Come and tell the news to your daughter now," said she, "I should like to watch her face when she hears it."

"Certainly."

"My dear Sophie," I said, "your mother agrees with me that if you had a change of air you would get better, and if you would like to spend a year or two in a good school I will pay the first year in advance."

"Of course, I will obey my dear mother," said Sophie.

"There is no question of obedience. Would you like to go to school? Tell me truly."

"But would my mother like me to go?"

"Yes, my child, if it would please you."

"Then, mamma, I should like to go very much."

Her face flushed as she spoke, and I knew that my diagnosis had been correct. I left her saying I should hope to hear from her soon.

At ten o'clock the next day Jarbe came to ask if I had forgotten my engagement.

"No," said I, "but it is only ten o'clock."

"Yes, but we have twenty miles to go."

"Twenty miles?"

"Certainly, the house is at St. Albans."

"It's very strange Pembroke never told me; how did you find out the address?"

"He left it when he went away:"

"Just like an Englishman."

I took a post-chaise, and in three hours I had reached my destination. The English roads are excellent, and the country offers a smiling prospect on every side. The vine is lacking, for though the English soil is fertile it will not bear grapes.

Lord Pembroke's house was not a particularly large one, but twenty masters and their servants could easily be accommodated in it.

The lady had not yet arrived, so my lord shewed me his gardens, his fountains, and his magnificent hot-houses; also a cock chained by the leg, and of a truly ferocious aspect.

"What have we here, my lord?"

"A cock."

"I see it is, but why do you chain it?"

“Because it is savage. It is very amorous, and if it were loose it would go after the hens, and kill all the cocks on the country-side.”

“But why do you condemn him to celibacy?”

“To make him fiercer. Here, this is the list of his conquests.”

He gave me a list of his cock’s victories, in which he had killed the other bird; this had happened more than thirty times. He then shewed me the steel spurs, at the sight of which the cock began to ruffle and crow. I could not help laughing to see such a martial spirit in so small an animal. He seemed possessed by the demon of strife, and lifted now one foot and now the other, as if to beg that his arms might be put on.

Pembroke then exhibited the helmet, also of steel.

“But with such arms,” said I, “he is sure of conquest.”

“No; for when he is armed cap-a-pie he will not fight with a defenceless cock.”

“I can’t believe it, my lord.”

“It’s a well-known fact. Here, read this.”

He then gave me a piece of paper with this remarkable biped’s pedigree. He could prove his thirty-two quarters more easily than a good many noblemen, on the father’s side, be it understood, for if he could have proved pure blood on the mother’s side as well, Lord Pembroke would have decorated him with the Order of the Golden Fleece at least.

“The bird cost me a hundred guineas,” said he, “but I would not sell him for a thousand.”

“Has he any offspring?”

“He tries his best, but there are difficulties.”

I do not remember whether Lord Pembroke explained what these difficulties were. Certainly the English offer more peculiarities to the attentive observer than any other nation.

At last a carriage containing a lady and two gentlemen drove up to the door. One of the gentlemen was the rascally Castelbajac and the other was introduced as Count Schwerin, nephew of the famous marshal of that name who fell on what is commonly called the field of glory. General Bekw —— an Englishman who was in the service of the King of Prussia, and was one of Pembroke's guests, received Schwerin politely, saying that he had seen his uncle die; at this the modest nephew drew the Order of the Black Eagle from his breast, and shewed it to us all covered with blood.

"My uncle wore it on the day of his death, and the King of Prussia allowed me to keep it as a noble memorial of my kinsman."

"Yes," said an Englishman who was present, "but the coat-pocket is not the place for a thing like that."

Schwerin made as if he did not understand, and this enabled me to take his measure.

Lord Pembroke took possession of the lady, whom I did not think worthy of being compared to Pauline. She was paler and shorter, and utterly deficient in Pauline's noble air; besides, when she smiled it spoiled her face, and this is a defect in a woman, to whom laughter should always be becoming.

Lord Pembroke introduced us all to each other, and when he came to me Castelbajac said he was delighted to see me again, although he might easily have pretended not to know me under my name of Seingalt.

We had a good English dinner, and afterwards the lady proposed a game of faro. My lord never played, so the general consented to amuse the company by holding the bank, and placed a hundred guineas and several bank notes on the table. There might be a thousand guineas in all. He then gave twenty counters to each punter, saying that every counter was worth ten shillings. As I only staked gold against gold I would not accept them. By the third deal Schwerin had lost his twenty counters and asked for twenty more; but the banker told him he must pay for them, and the self-styled field-marshal's nephew lapsed into silence and played no more.

At the following deal Castelbajac was in the same position as his friend, and being on my side he begged to be allowed to take ten pieces.

"You will bring me ill-luck," I said, coldly, warding off his hand; and he went out to the garden, no doubt to swallow the affront he had received. The lady said her husband had forgotten his pocketbook. An hour afterwards the game came to an end, and I took my leave, after inviting Lord Pembroke and the rest of the company to dine with me the next day.

I got home at eleven o’clock without meeting any highwaymen as I had expected, indeed I had put up six guineas in a small purse for their special use and benefit. I woke up my cook to tell him that the next day I should have twelve people to dinner, and that I hoped he would do me honour. I found a letter from Madame Cornelis on my table telling me that she and her daughter would drive with me on the following Sunday, and that we could go and see the boarding-school she had selected.

Next day Lord Pembroke and the fair Frenchwoman were the first to arrive. They drove in a carriage with two rather uncomfortable seats, but this discomfort is favourable to love. The Gascon and the Prussian were the last to come.

We sat down to table at two and left it at four, all of us well pleased with the cook, and still more so with the wine merchant; for though we had emptied forty bottles of wine, not one of us was at all intoxicated.

After coffee had been served the general invited us all to sup with him, and Madame Castelbajac begged me to hold a bank. I did not wait to be pressed but placed a thousand guineas on the table, and as I had no counters of any kind I warned the company that I would only play gold against gold, and that I should stop playing whenever I thought fit.

Before the game began the two counts paid their losses of the day before to the general in bank notes, which he begged me to change. I also changed two other notes presented to me by the same gentleman, and put them all under my snuff-box. Play began. I had no croupier, so I was obliged to deal slowly and keep an eye on the two counts, whose method of play was very questionable. At last both of them were dried up, and Castelbajac gave me a bill of exchange for two hundred guineas, begging me to discount it for him.

“I know nothing about business,” I replied.

An Englishman took the bill, and after a careful examination said he neither knew the drawer, the accepter, nor the backer.

“I am the backer,” said Castelbajac, “and that ought to be enough, I think.”

Everybody laughed, besides myself, and I gave it him back courteously, saying politely that he could get it discounted on ’Change the next day. He got up in a bad temper, and left the room, murmuring some insolent expressions. Schwering followed him.

After these two worthy gentlemen had left us, I went on dealing till the night was far advanced, and then left off, though I was at a loss. However, the general had a run of luck, and I thought it best to stop. Before leaving he took me and Lord Pembroke aside, and begged me to contrive that the two knaves should not come to his house the following day. “For,” said he, “if that Gascon were to be half as insolent to me as he was to you, I should shew him out by the window.”

Pembroke said he would tell the lady of the general’s wishes.

“Do you think,” said I, “that those four notes of theirs can be forgeries?”

“It’s very possible.”

“What would you advise my doing to clear the matter up?”

“I would send them to the bank.”

“And if they should be forgeries?”

“I would have patience, or I would arrest the rascals.”

The next day I went to the bank myself, and the person to whom I gave the notes gave me them back, saying, coldly, —

“These notes are bad, sir.”

“Be kind enough to examine them closely.”

“It’s no good, they are evident forgeries. Return them to the person from whom you got them, and he will be only too glad to cash them.”

I was perfectly aware that I could put the two knaves under lock and key, but I did not want to do so. I went to Lord Pembroke to find out their address, but he was still in bed, and one of his servants took me to them. They were surprised to see me. I told them coolly enough that the four notes were forged, and that I should feel much obliged if they would give me forty guineas and take their notes back.

“I haven’t got any money,” said Castelbajac, “and what you say astonishes me very much. I can only return them to the persons who gave them to me, if the are really the same notes that we gave you yesterday.”

At this suggestion the blood rushed to my face, and with a withering glance and an indignant apostrophe I left them. Lord Pembroke's servant took me to a magistrate who, having heard my statement on oath, gave me a paper authorizing me to arrest two counts. I gave the document to an alderman, who said he would see it was carried out, and I went home ill pleased with the whole business.

Martinelli was waiting for me; he had come to ask me to give him a dinner. I told him my story, without adding that the knaves were to be arrested, and his advice delivered with philosophic calm was to make an auto-da-fe of the four notes. It was very good advice, but I did not take it.

The worthy Martinelli, thinking to oblige me, told me that he had arranged with Lord Spencer the day on which I was to be introduced to the club, but I answered that my fancy for going there was over. I ought to have treated this learned and distinguished man with more politeness, but who can sound human weakness to its depths? One often goes to a wise man for advice which one has not the courage to follow.

In the evening I went to the general's, and found the self-styled Countess Castelbajac seated on Lord Pembroke's knees. The supper was a good one, and passed off pleasantly; the two rascals were not there, and their absence was not remarked. When we left the table we went into another room, and played till day-break. I left the board with a loss of two or three hundred guineas.

I did not wake till late the next morning, and when I did my man told me that a person wanted to speak to me. I had him shewn in, and as he only spoke English the negro had to be our interpreter. He was the chief of the police, and told me that if I would pay for the journey he would arrest Castelbajac at Dover, for which town he had started at noon. As to the other he was sure of having him in the course of the night. I gave him a guinea, and told him it would be enough to catch the one, and that the other could go where he liked.

The next day was Sunday, the only day on which Madame Cornelis could go abroad without fear of the bailiff. She came to dine with me, and brought her daughter, whom the prospect of leaving her mother had quite cured. The school which Madame Cornelis had chosen was at Harwich, and we went there after dinner.

The head-mistress was a Catholic, and though she must have been sixty, she looked keen, witty, and as if she knew the ways of the world. She had received an introduction from Lady Harrington, and so welcomed the young lady in the most cordial manner. She had about fifteen young boarders of thirteen or fourteen years of age. When she presented Sophie to them as a new companion, they crowded round her and covered her with caresses. Five or six were perfect angels of beauty, and two or three were hideously ugly; and such extremes are more common in England than anywhere else. My daughter was the smallest of them all, but as far as beauty went she had nothing to fear by comparison, and her talents placed her on a par with the eldest, while she responded to their caresses with that ease which later in life is only acquired with great difficulty.

We went over the house, and all the girls followed us, and those who could speak French or Italian spoke to me, saying how much they would love my daughter, while those who could not speak sufficiently well held off as if ashamed of their ignorance. We saw the bedrooms, the dining-room, the drawing-room, the harps and the pianos — in fact, everything, and I decided that Sophie could not be better placid. We went into the head-mistress's private room, and Madame Cornelis paid her a hundred guineas in advance, and obtained a receipt. We then agreed that Sophie should be received as a boarder as soon as she liked to come, that she was to bring her bed with her, and all the necessary linen. Madame Cornelis made the final arrangements on the ensuing Sunday.

Next day the alderman told me that Count Schwerin was a prisoner, and wanted to speak to me. I declined at first, but as the alderman's messenger told me, through Jarbe, that the poor devil had not a farthing in his pocket, I was moved with compassion. As he was charged with uttering forged notes he had been taken to Newgate, and was in danger of being hanged.

I followed the magistrate's messenger, and cannot say how the woeful aspect, the tears and supplications for mercy of the poor wretch, moved my heart. He swore that Castelbajac had given him the notes, but he added that he knew where they came from originally, and would tell me if I would release him.

A little bitterness still remained in my breast, so I told him that if he knew who forged the notes he could certainly escape the gallows, but that I should keep him prisoner till I got my money back. At this threat his tears and supplications began over again and with renewed force, and telling me that he was in utter poverty he emptied his pockets one after the other to shew me that he had no money, and at last offered me the bloodstained badge of his uncle. I was delighted to be able to relieve him without any appearance of weakness, and accepted the bauble as a pledge, telling him that he should have it back on payment of forty pounds.

I wrote out a formal release, and in his presence and in that of the alderman I burnt the four notes and set him free.

Two days afterwards the so-called countess came to my house, saying that now Castelbajac and Schewirin were gone, she knew not where to lay her head. She complained bitterly of Lord Pembroke, who deserted her after making her give him the clearest proofs of her affection. By way of consolation I told her that it would be very foolish of him to have abandoned her before instead of after.

To get rid of her I was obliged to give her the money to pay her journey to Calais. She told me she did not want to rejoin the Gascon, who was not really her husband. We shall hear more of these persons in the course of three years.

Two or three days later an Italian called on me, and gave me a letter from my friend Baletti, which recommended the bearer, Constantini, a native of Vicenza, to my good offices. He had come to London on a matter of importance in which I could help him.

I assured M. Constantini that I was only too happy to do anything to justify the confidence placed in my by one of my best friends, and he said that the long journey had almost exhausted his purse; but he added, —

“I know that my wife lives here, and that she is rich. I shall easily find out where she lives, and you know that as I am her husband all that is hers is mine.”

“I was not aware of that.”

“Then you don’t know the laws of this country?”

“Not at all.”

"I am sorry to hear it, but such is the case. I am going to her house, and I shall turn her out of doors with nothing else than the dress on her back, for the furniture, clothes, jewels, linen-in fact, all her possessions, belong to me. May I ask you to be with me when I perform this exploit?"

I was astonished. I asked him if he had told Baletti what he intended to do.

"You are the first person to whom I have disclosed my intentions."

I could not treat him as a madman, for he did not look like one, and, concluding that there really might be the law he had alleged, I replied that I did not feel inclined to join him in his enterprise, of which I disapproved very strongly, unless his wife had actually robbed him of what she possessed.

"She has only robbed me of my honour, sir, and she left me, taking her talents with her. She must have made a great fortune here, and have I not a right to take it from her, were it only for vengeance sake?"

"That may be, but I ask you what you would think of me if I agreed to join you in an undertaking which seems a cruel one to me, however good your reasons may be. Besides I may know your wife, she may even be a friend of mine."

"I will tell you her name."

"No, I beg of you not to do so, although I do not know any Madame Constantini."

"She has changed her name to Calori, and she sings at the 'Haymarket.'"

"I know who she is now. I am sorry you have told me."

"I have no doubt you will keep my secret, and I am now going to find out where she lives; for that is the principal thing."

He left me weeping, and I pitied him, but at the same time I was sorry that he had made me the depositary of his secret. A few hours after I called on Madame Binetti, and she told me the histories of all the artistes in London. When she came to the Calori she told me that she had had several lovers out of whom she had made a great deal, but at present she had no lover, unless it were the violinist Giardini, with whom she was in love in earnest.

"Where does she come from?"

"From Vicenza."

"Is she married?"

"I don't think so."

I thought no more of this wretched business, but three or four days later I had a letter from King's Bench Prison. It was from Constantini. The poor wretch said I was the only friend he had in London, and that he hoped I would come and see him, were it only to give him some advice.

I thought it my duty to accede to his request, and I went to the prison, where I found the poor man in a wretched state, with an old English attorney, who spoke a little bad Italian, and was known to me.

Constantini had been arrested the day before on account of several bills drawn by his wife which had not been taken up. By these bills she appeared in debt to the amount of a thousand guineas. The attorney had got the five bills, and he was trying to make some arrangements with the husband.

I saw at once that the whole thing was a scandalous swindle, for Madame Binetti had told me that the Calori was very rich. I begged the attorney to leave me alone with the prisoner, as I wanted to have some private conversation with him.

"They have arrested me for my wife's debts," said he, "and they tell me I must pay them because I am her husband."

"It's a trick your wife has played on you; she must have found out you were in London."

"She saw me through the window."

"Why did you delay putting your project into execution?"

"I meant to carry it out this morning, but how was I to know that she had debts?"

"Nor has she any debts; these bills are shams. They must have been ante-dated, for they were really executed yesterday. It's a bad business, and she may have to pay dearly for it."

"But in the meanwhile I am in prison."

"Never mind, trust to me, I will see you again tomorrow."

This scurvy trick had made me angry, and I made up my mind to take up the poor man's cause. I went to Bosanquet, who told me that the device was a very common one in London, but that people had found out the way to defeat it. Finally, he said that if the prisoner interested me he would put the case into the hands of a barrister who would extricate him from his difficulty, and make the wife and the lover, who had probably helped her, repent of their day's work. I begged him to act as if my interests were at stake, and promised to guarantee all expenses.

"That's enough," said he; "don't trouble yourself any more about it."

Same days after Mr. Bosanquet came to tell me that Constantini had left the prison and England as well, according to what the barrister who had charge of the case told him.

"Impossible!"

"Not at all. The lover of his wife, foreseeing the storm that was about to burst over their heads, got round the fellow, and made him leave the country by means of a sum more or less large."

The affair was over, but it was soon in all the newspapers, garnished with all the wit imaginable, and Giardini was warmly praised for the action he had taken.

As for me I was glad enough to have the matter over, but I felt vexed with Constantini for having fled without giving the lovers a lesson. I wrote an account of the circumstances to Baletti, and I heard from Madame Binetti that the Calori had given her husband a hundred guineas to leave the country. Some years later I saw the Calori at Prague.

A Flemish officer, the man whom I had helped at Aix-la-Chapelle, had called on me several times, and had even dined three or four times with me. I reproached myself for not having been polite enough to return his call, and when we met in the street, and he reproached me for not having been to see him, I was obliged to blush. He had his wife and daughter with him, and some feeling of shame and a good deal of curiosity made me call on him.

When he saw me he threw his arms about my neck, calling me his preserver. I was obliged to receive all the compliments which knaves make to honest men when they hope to take them in. A few moments after, an old woman and a girl came in, and I was introduced as the Chevalier de

Seingalt, of whom he had spoken so often. The girl, affecting surprise, said she had known a M. Casanova, who was very like me. I answered that Casanova was my name as well as Seingalt, but that I had not the happiness of recollecting her.

“My name was Anspergher when I saw you,” she replied, “but now it is Charpillon; and considering that we only met once, and that I was only thirteen at the time, I do not wonder at your not recollecting me. I have been in London with my mother and aunts for the last four years.”

“But where had I the pleasure of speaking to you?”

“At Paris.”

“In what part of Paris?”

“In the Bazaar. You were with a charming lady, and you gave me these buckles” (she shewed me them on her shoes), “and you also did me the honour to kiss me.”

I recollected the circumstance, and the reader will remember that I was with Madame Baret, the fair stocking-seller.

“Now I remember you,” said I; “but I do not recognize your aunt.”

“This is the sister of the one you saw, but if you will take tea with us you will see her.”

“Where do you live?”

“In Denmark Street, Soho.”

CHAPTER XI

The Charpillon — Dreadful Consequences of My Acquaintance

With Her

The name Charpillon reminded me that I was the bearer of a letter for her, and drawing it from my pocket-book I gave it her, saying that the document ought to cement our acquaintance.

“What!” she exclaimed, “a letter from the dear ambassador Morosini. How delighted I am to have it! And you have actually been all these months in London without giving it me?”

“I confess I am to blame, but, as you see, the note has no address on it. I am grateful for the chance which has enabled me to discharge my commission to-day.”

“Come and dine with us to-morrow.”

“I cannot do so, as I am expecting Lord Pembroke to dinner.”

“Will you be alone?”

“I expect so.”

“I am glad to hear it; you will see my aunt and myself appearing on the scene.”

“Here is my address; and I shall be delighted if you will come and see me.”

She took the address, and I was surprised to see her smile as she read it.

“Then you are the Italian,” she said, “who put up that notice that amused all the town?”

“I am.”

“They say the joke cost you dear.”

“Quite the reverse; it resulted in the greatest happiness.”

"But now that the beloved object has left you, I suppose you are unhappy?"

"I am; but there are sorrows so sweet that they are almost joys."

"Nobody knows who she was, but I suppose you do?"

"Yes."

"Do you make a mystery of it?"

"Surely, and I would rather die than reveal it."

"Ask my aunt if I may take some rooms in your house; but I am afraid my mother would not let me."

"Why do you want to lodge cheaply?"

"I don't want to lodge cheaply, but I should like to punish the audacious author of that notice."

"How would you punish me?"

"By making you fall in love with me, and then tormenting you. It would have amused me immensely."

"Then you think that you can inspire me with love, and at the same time form the dreadful plan of tyrannising over the victim of your charms. Such a project is monstrous, and unhappily for us poor men, you do not look a monster. Nevertheless, I am obliged to you for your frankness, and I shall be on my guard."

"Then you must take care never to see me, or else all your efforts will be in vain."

As the Charpillon had laughed merrily through the whole of this dialogue, I took it all as a jest, but I could not help admiring her manner, which seemed made for the subjugation of men. But though I knew it not, the day I made that woman's acquaintance was a luckless one for me, as my readers will see.

It was towards the end of the month of September, 1763, when I met the Charpillon, and from that day I began to die. If the lines of ascent and declination are equal, now, on the first day of November, 1797, I have about four more years of life to reckon on, which will pass by swiftly, according to the axiom 'Motus in fine velocior'.

The Charpillon, who was well known in London, and I believe is still alive, was one of those beauties in whom it is difficult to find any positive fault. Her hair was chestnut coloured, and astonishingly long and thick, her blue eyes were at once languorous and brilliant, her skin, faintly tinged with a rosy hue, was of a dazzling whiteness; she was tall for her age, and seemed likely to become as tall as Pauline. Her breast was perhaps a little small, but perfectly shaped, her hands were white and plump, her feet small, and her gait had something noble and gracious. Her features were of that exquisite sensibility which gives so much charm to the fair sex, but nature had given her a beautiful body and a deformed soul. This siren had formed a design to wreck my happiness even before she knew me, and as if to add to her triumph she told me as much.

I left Malingan's house not like a man who, fond of the fair sex, is glad to have made the acquaintance of a beautiful woman, but in a state of stupefaction that the image of Pauline, which was always before me, was not strong enough to overcome the influence of a creature like the Charpillon, whom in my heart I could not help despising.

I calmed myself by saying that this strong impression was due to novelty, and by hoping that I should soon be disenchanted.

"She will have no charm," said I, "when I have once possessed her, and that will not be long in coming." Perhaps the reader will think that I was too presumptuous, but why should I suppose that there would be any difficulty? She had asked me to dinner herself, she had surrendered herself entirely to Morosini, who was not the man to sigh for long at any woman's feet, and must have paid her, for he was not young enough nor handsome enough to inspire her with a fancy for him. Without counting my physical attractions, I had plenty of money, and I was not afraid of spending it; and so I thought I could count on an easy victory.

Pembroke had become an intimate friend of mine since my proceedings with regard to Schwerin. He admired my conduct in not making any claim on the general for half my loss. He had said we would make a pleasant day of it together, and when he saw that my table was laid for four he asked who the other guests were to be. He was extremely surprised when he heard that they were the Charpillon and her aunt, and that the girl had invited herself when she heard he was to dine with me.

"I once took a violent fancy for the little hussy," said he. "It was one evening when I was at Vauxhall, and I offered her twenty guineas if she would come and take a little walk with me in a dark alley. She said she would come if I gave her the money in advance, which I was fool enough to do. She went with me, but as soon as we were alone she ran away, and I could not catch her again, though I looked for her all the evening."

"You ought to have boxed her ears before everybody."

"I should have got into trouble, and people would have laughed at me besides. I preferred to despise her and the money too. Are you in love with her?"

"No; but I am curious, as you were."

"Take care! she will do all in her power to entrap you."

She came in and went up to my lord with the most perfect coolness, and began to chatter away to him without taking any notice of me. She laughed, joked, and reproached him for not having pursued her at Vauxhall. Her stratagem, she said, was only meant to excite him the more.

"Another time," she added, "I shall not escape you."

"Perhaps not, my dear, for another time I shall take care not to pay in advance."

"Oh, fie! you degrade yourself by talking about paying."

"I suppose I honour you."

"We never talk of such things."

Lord Pembroke laughed at her impertinences, while she made a vigorous assault on him, for his coolness and indifference piqued her.

She left us soon after dinner, making me promise to dine with her the day after next.

I passed the next day with the amiable nobleman who initiated me into the mysteries of the English bagnio, an entertainment which I shall not describe, for it is well known to all who care to spend six guineas.

On the day appointed, my evil destiny made me go to the Charpillon's; the girl introduced me to her mother, whom I at once recollected, although she had aged and altered since I had seen her.

In the year 1759 a Genevan named Bolome had persuaded me to sell her jewels to the extent of six thousand francs, and she had paid me in bills drawn by her and her two sisters on this Bolome, but they were then known as Anspergher. The Genevan became bankrupt before the bills were due, and the three sisters disappeared. As may be imagined, I was surprised to find them in England, and especially to be introduced to them by the Charpillon, who, knowing nothing of the affair of the jewels, had not told them that Seingalt was the same as Casanova, whom they had cheated of six thousand francs.

“I am delighted to see you again,” were the first words I addressed to her.

“I recollect you, sir; that rascal Bolome … .”

“We will discuss that subject another time. I see you are ill.”

“I have been at death’s door, but I am better now. My daughter did not tell me your proper name.”

“Yes, she did. My name is Seingalt as well as Casanova. I was known by the latter name at Paris when I made your daughter’s acquaintance, though I did not know then that she was your daughter.”

Just then the grandmother, whose name was also Anspergher, came in with the two aunts, and a quarter of an hour later three men arrived, one of whom was the Chevalier Goudar, whom I had met at Paris. I did not know the others who were introduced to me under the names of Rostaing and Caumon. They were three friends of the household, whose business it was to bring in dupes.

Such was the infamous company in which I found myself, and though I took its measure directly, yet I did not make my escape, nor did I resolve never to go to the house again. I was fascinated; I thought I would be on my guard and be safe, and as I only wanted the daughter I looked on all else as of little moment.

At table I led the conversation, and thought that my prey would soon be within my grasp. The only thing which annoyed me was that the Charpillon, after apologizing for having made me sit down to such a poor dinner, invited herself and all the company to sup with me on any day I liked to mention. I could make no opposition, so I begged her to name the day herself, and she did so, after a consultation with her worthy friends.

After coffee had been served we played four rubbers of whist, at which I lost, and at midnight I went away ill pleased with myself, but with no purpose of amendment, for this sorceress had got me in her toils.

All the same I had the strength of mind to refrain from seeing her for two days, and on the third, which was the day appointed for the cursed supper, she and her aunt paid me a call at nine o'clock in the morning.

"I have come to breakfast with you, and to discuss a certain question," said she, in the most engaging manner.

"Will you tell me your business now, or after breakfast?"

"After breakfast; for we must be alone."

We had our breakfast, and then the aunt went into another room, and the Charpillon, after describing the monetary situation of the family, told me that it would be much relieved if her aunt could obtain a hundred guineas.

"What would she do with the money?"

"She would make the Balm of Life, of which she possesses the secret, and no doubt she would make her fortune, too."

She then began to dilate on the marvellous properties of the balm, on its probable success in a town like London, and on the benefits which would accrue to myself, for of course I should share in the profits. She added that her mother and aunt would give me a written promise to repay the money in the course of six years.

"I will give you a decided answer after supper."

I then began to caress her, and to make assaults in the style of an amorous man, but it was all in vain, though I succeeded in stretching her on a large sofa. She made her escape, however, and ran to her aunt, while I followed her, feeling obliged to laugh as she did. She gave me her hand, and said, —

"Farewell, till this evening."

When they were gone, I reflected over what had passed and thought this first scene of no bad augury. I saw that I should get nothing out of her without spending a hundred guineas, and I determined not to attempt to bargain, but I would let her understand that she must make up her mind not to play prude. The game was in my hands, and all I had to do was to take care not to be duped.

In the evening the company arrived, and the girl asked me to hold a bank till supper was ready; but I declined, with a burst of laughter that seemed to puzzle her.

“At least, let us have a game of whist,” said she.

“It seems to me,” I answered, “that you don’t feel very anxious to hear my reply.”

“You have made up your mind, I suppose?”

“I have, follow me.”

She followed me into an adjoining room, and after she had seated herself on a sofa, I told her that the hundred guineas were at her disposal.

“Then please to give the money to my aunt, otherwise these gentlemen might think I got it from you by some improper means.”

“I will do so.”

I tried to get possession of her, but in vain; and I ceased my endeavours when she said, —

“You will get nothing from me either by money or violence; but you can hope for all when I find you really nice and quiet.”

I re-entered the drawing-room, and feeling my blood boiling I began to play to quiet myself. She was as gay as ever, but her gaiety tired me. At supper I had her on my right hand, but the hundred impertinences which, under other circumstances, would have amused me, only wearied me, after the two rebuffs I had received from her.

After supper, just as they were going, she took me aside, and told me that if I wanted to hand over the hundred guineas she would tell her aunt to go with me into the next room.

“As documents have to be executed,” I replied, “it will take some time; we will talk of it again.

"Won't you fix the time?"

I drew out my purse full of gold, and shewed it her, saying, —

"The time depends entirely on you."

When my hateful guests were gone, I began to reflect, and came to the conclusion that this young adventuress had determined to plunder me without giving me anything in return. I determined to have nothing more to do with her, but I could not get her beauty out of my mind.

I felt I wanted some distraction, something that would give me new aims and make me forget her. With this idea I went to see my daughter, taking with me an immense bag of sweets.

As soon as I was in the midst of the little flock, the delight became general, Sophie distributing the sweetmeats to her friends, who received them gratefully.

I spent a happy day, and for a week or two I paid several visits to Harwich. The mistress treated me with the utmost politeness and my daughter with boundless affection, always calling me "dear papa."

In less than three weeks I congratulated myself on having forgotten the Charpillon, and on having replaced her by innocent amours, though one of my daughter's schoolmates pleased me rather too much for my peace of mind.

Such was my condition when one morning the favourite aunt of the Charpillon paid me a call, and said that they were all mystified at not having seen me since the supper I had given them, especially herself, as her niece had given her to understand that I would furnish her with the means of making the Balm of Life.

"Certainly; I would have given you the hundred guineas if your niece had treated me as a friend, but she refused me favours a vestal might have granted, and you must be aware that she is by no means a vestal."

"Don't mind my laughing. My niece is an innocent, giddy girl; she loves you, but she is afraid you have only a passing whim for her. She is in bed now with a bad cold, and if you will come and see her I am sure you will be satisfied."

These artful remarks, which had no doubt been prepared in advance, ought to have aroused all my scorn, but instead of that they awakened the most violent desires. I laughed in chorus with the old woman, and asked what would be the best time to call.

“Come now, and give one knock.”

“Very good, then you may expect me shortly.”

I congratulated myself on being on the verge of success, for after the explanation I had had with the aunt, and having, as I thought, a friend in her, I did not doubt that I should succeed.

I put on my great coat, and in less than a quarter of an hour I knocked at their door. The aunt opened to me, and said, —

“Come back in a quarter of an hour; she has been ordered a bath, and is just going to take it.”

“This is another imposture. You’re as bad a liar as she is.”

“You are cruel and unjust, and if you will promise to be discreet, I will take you up to the third floor where she is bathing.”

“Very good; take me.” She went upstairs, I following on tiptoe, and pushed me into a room, and shut the door upon me. The Charpillon was in a huge bath, with her head towards the door, and the infernal coquette, pretending to think it was her aunt, did not move, and said, —

“Give me the towels, aunt.”

She was in the most seductive posture, and I had the pleasure of gazing on her exquisite proportions, hardly veiled by the water.

When she caught sight of me, or rather pretended to do so, she gave a shriek, huddled her limbs together, and said, with affected anger, —

“Begone!”

“You needn’t exert your voice, for I am not going to be duped.”

“Begone!”

“Not so, give me a little time to collect myself.”

“I tell you, go!”

"Calm yourself, and don't be afraid of my skewing you any violence; that would suit your game too well."

"My aunt shall pay dearly for this."

"She will find me her friend. I won't touch you, so shew me a little more of your charms."

"More of my charms?"

"Yes; put yourself as you were when I came in."

"Certainly not. Leave the room."

"I have told you I am not going, and that you need not fear for your … . well, for your virginity, we will say."

She then shewed me a picture more seductive than the first, and pretending kindliness, said, —

"Please, leave me; I will not fail to shew my gratitude."

Seeing that she got nothing, that I refrained from touching her, and that the fire she had kindled was in a fair way to be put out, she turned her back to me to give me to understand that it was no pleasure to her to look at me. However, my passions were running high, and I had to have recourse to self-abuse to calm my senses, and was glad to find myself relieved, as this proved to me that the desire went no deeper than the senses.

The aunt came in just as I had finished, and I went out without a word, well pleased to find myself despising a character wherein profit and loss usurped the place of feeling.

The aunt came to me as I was going out of the house, and after enquiring if I were satisfied begged me to come into the parlour.

"Yes," said I, "I am perfectly satisfied to know you and your niece. Here is the reward."

With these words I drew a bank-note for a hundred pounds from my pocket-book, and was foolish enough to give it her, telling her that she could make her balm, and need not trouble to give me any document as I knew if would be of no value. I had not the strength to go away without giving her anything, and the procuress was sharp enough to know it.

When I got home I reflected on what had happened, and pronounced myself the conqueror with great triumph. I felt well at ease, and felt sure that I should never set foot in that house again. There were seven of them altogether, including servants, and the need of subsisting made them do anything for a living; and when they found themselves obliged to make use of men, they summoned the three rascals I have named, who were equally dependent on them.

Five or six days afterwards, I met the little hussy at Vauxhall in company with Goudar. I avoided her at first, but she came up to me reproaching me for my rudeness. I replied coolly enough, but affecting not to notice my manner, she asked me to come into an arbour with her and take a cup of tea.

“No, thank you,” I replied, “I prefer supper.”

“Then I will take some too, and you will give it me, won’t you, just to shew that you bear no malice?”

I ordered supper for four and we sat down together as if we had been intimate friends.

Her charming conversation combined with her beauty gradually drew me under her charm, and as the drink began to exercise its influence over me, I proposed a turn in one of the dark walks, expressing a hope that I should fare better than Lord Pembroke. She said gently, and with an appearance of sincerity that deceived me, that she wanted to be mine, but by day and on the condition that I would come and see her every day.

“I will do so, but first give me one little proof of your love.”

“Most certainly not.”

I got up to pay the bill, and then I left without a word, refusing to take her home. I went home by myself and went to bed.

The first thought when I awoke was that I was glad she had not taken me at my word; I felt very strongly that it was to my interest to break off all connection between that creature and myself. I felt the strength of her influence over me, and that my only way was to keep away from her, or to renounce all pretension to the possession of her charms.

The latter plan seemed to me impossible, so I determined to adhere to the first; but the wretched woman had resolved to defeat all my plans. The manner in which she succeeded must have been the result of a council of the whole society.

A few days after the Vauxhall supper Goudar called on me, and began by congratulating me on my resolution not to visit the Ansperghers any more, "for," said he, "the girl would have made you more and more in love with her, and in the end she would have seduced you to beggary."

"You must think me a great fool. If I had found her kind I should have been grateful, but without squandering all my money; and if she had been cruel, instead of ridiculous, I might have given her what I have already given her every day, without reducing myself to beggary."

"I congratulate you; it shews that you are well off. But have you made up your mind not to see her again?"

"Certainly."

"Then you are not in love with her?"

"I have been in love, but I am so no longer; and in a few days she will have passed completely out of my memory. I had almost forgotten her when I met her with you at Vauxhall."

"You are not cured. The way to be cured of an amour does not lie in flight, when the two parties live in the same town. Meetings will happen, and all the trouble has to be taken over again."

"Then do you know a better way?"

"Certainly; you should satiate yourself. It is quite possible that the creature is not in love with you, but you are rich and she has nothing. You might have had her for so much, and you could have left her when you found her to be unworthy of your constancy. You must know what kind of a woman she is."

"I should have tried this method gladly, but I found her out."

"You could have got the best of her, though, if you had gone to work in the proper way. You should never have paid in advance. I know everything."

"What do you mean?"

"I know she has cost you a hundred guineas, and that you have not won so much as a kiss from her. Why, my dear sir, you might have had her comfortably in your own bed for as much! She boasts that she took you in, though you pride yourself on your craft."

"It was an act of charity towards her aunt."

"Yes, to make her Balm of Life; but you know if it had not been for the niece the aunt would never have had the money."

"Perhaps not, but how come you who are of their party to be talking to me in this fashion?"

"I swear to you I only speak out of friendship for you, and I will tell you how I came to make the acquaintance of the girl, her mother, her grandmother and her two aunts, and then you will no longer consider me as of their party.

"Sixteen months ago I saw M. Morosini walking about Vauxhall by himself. He had just come to England to congratulate the king on his accession to the throne, on behalf of the Republic of Venice. I saw how enchanted he was with the London beauties, and I went up to him and told him that all these beauties were at his service. This made him laugh, and on my repeating that it was not a jest he pointed out one of the girls, and asked if she would be at his service. I did not know her, so I asked him to wait awhile, and I would bring him the information he required. There was no time to be lost, and I could see that the girl was not a vestal virgin, so I went up to her and told her that the Venetian ambassador was amorous of her, and that I would take her to him if she would receive his visits. The aunt said that a nobleman of such an exalted rank could only bring honour to her niece. I took their address, and on my way back to the ambassador I met a friend of mine who is learned in such commodities, and after I had shewed him the address he told me it was the Charpillon."

"And it was she?"

"It was. My friend told me she was a young Swiss girl who was not yet in the general market, but who would soon be there, as she was not rich, and had a numerous train to support.

"I rejoined the Venetian, and told him that his business was done, and asked him at what time I should introduce him the next day, warning him that as she had a mother and aunts she would not be alone.

"'I am glad to hear it,' said he, 'and also that she is not a common woman.' He gave me an appointment for the next day, and we parted.

"I told the ladies at what hour I should have the pleasure of introducing the great man to them, and after warning them that they must appear not to know him I went home.

"The following day I called on M. de Morosini, and took him to Denmark Street incognito. We spent an hour in conversation, and then went away without anything being settled. On the way back the ambassador told me that he should like to have the girl on conditions which he would give me in writing at his residence.

"These conditions were that she should live in a furnished house free of rent, without any companion, and without receiving any visitors. His excellency would give her fifty guineas a month, and pay for supper whenever he came and spent the night with her. He told me to get the house if his conditions were received. The mother was to sign the agreement.

"The ambassador was in a hurry, and in three days the agreement was signed; but I obtained a document from the mother promising to let me have the girl for one night as soon as the Venetian had gone; it was known he was only stopping in London for a year."

Goudar extracted the document in question from his pocket, and gave it to me. I read it and re-read it with as much surprise as pleasure, and he then proceeded with his story.

"When the ambassador had gone, the Charpillon, finding herself at liberty once more, had Lord Baltimore, Lord Grosvenor, and M. de Saa, the Portuguese ambassador, in turn, but no titular lover. I insisted on having my night with her according to agreement, but both mother and daughter laughed at me when I spoke of it. I cannot arrest her, because she is a minor, but I will have the mother imprisoned on the first opportunity, and you will see how the town will laugh. Now you know why I go to their house; and I assure you you are wrong if you think I have any part in their councils. Nevertheless, I know they are discussing how they may catch you, and they will do so if you do not take care."

"Tell the mother that I have another hundred guineas at her service if she will let me have her daughter for a single night."

"Do you mean that?"

"Assuredly, but I am not going to pay in advance."

"That's the only way not to be duped. I shall be glad to execute your commission."

I kept the rogue to dinner, thinking he might be useful to me. He knew everything and everybody, and told me a number of amusing anecdotes. Although a good-for-nothing fellow, he had his merits. He had written several works, which, though badly constructed, shewed he was a man of some wit. He was then writing his "Chinese Spy," and every day he wrote five or six news-letters from the various coffee-houses he frequented. I wrote one or two letters for him, with which he was much pleased. The reader will see how I met him again at Naples some years later.

The next morning, what was my surprise to see the Charpillon, who said with an air that I should have taken for modesty in any other woman, —

"I don't want you to give me any breakfast, I want an explanation, and to introduce Miss Lorenzi to you."

I bowed to her and to her companion, and then said, —

"What explanation do you require?"

At this, Miss Lorenzi, whom I had never seen before, thought proper to leave us, and I told my man that I was not at home to anybody. I ordered breakfast to be served to the companion of the nymph, that she might not find the waiting tedious.

"Sir," said the Charpillon, "is it a fact that you charged the Chevalier Goudar to tell my mother that you would give a hundred guineas to spend the night with me?"

"No, not to spend a night with you, but after I had passed it. Isn't the price enough?"

"No jesting, sir, if you please. There is no question of bargaining; all I want to know is whether you think you have a right to insult me, and that I am going to bear it?"

"If you think yourself insulted, I may, perhaps, confess I was wrong; but I confess I did not think I should have to listen to any reproaches from you. Gondar is one of your intimate friends, and this is not the first proposal he has taken to you. I could not address you directly, as I know your arts only too well."

"I shall not pay any attention to your abuse of my self; I will only remind you of what I said 'that neither money nor violence were of any use,' and that your only way was to make me in love with you by gentle means. Shew me where I have broken my word! It is you that have foresworn yourself in coming into my bath-room, and in sending such a brutal message to my mother. No one but a rascal like Goudar would have dared to take such a message."

"Goudar a rascal, is he? Well, he is your best friend. You know he is in love with you, and that he only got you for the ambassador in the hope of enjoying you himself. The document in his possession proves that you have behaved badly towards him. You are in his debt, discharge it, and then call him a rascal if you have the conscience to do so. You need not trouble to weep, for I knew the source of those tears; it is defiled."

"You know nothing of it. I love you, and it is hard to have you treat me so."

"You love me? You have not taken the best way to prove it!"

"As good a way as yours. You have behaved to me as if I were the vilest of prostitutes, and yesterday you seemed to think I was a brute beast, the slave of my mother. You should have written to me in person, and without the intervention of so vile an agent; I should have replied in the same way, and you need not have been afraid that you would be deceived."

"Supposing I had written, what would your answer have been?"

"I should have put all money matters out of question. I should have promised to content you on the condition that you would come and court me for a fortnight without demanding the slightest favour. We should have lived a pleasant life; we should have gone to the theatre and to the parks. I should have become madly in love with you. Then I should have given myself up to you for love, and nothing but love. I am ashamed to say that hitherto I have only given myself out of mere complaisance. Unhappy woman that I am! but I think nature meant me to love, and I thought when I saw you that my happy star had sent you to England that I might know the bliss of true affection. Instead of this you have only made me unhappy. You are the first man that has seen me weep; you have troubled my peace at home, for my mother shall never have the sum you promised her were it for nothing but a kiss.”

“I am sorry to have injured you, though I did not intend to do so; but I really don’t know what I can do.”

“Come and see us, and keep your money, which I despise. If you love me, come and conquer me like a reasonable and not a brutal lover; and I will help you, for now you cannot doubt that I love you.”

All this seemed so natural to me that I never dreamed it contained a trap. I was caught, and I promised to do what she wished, but only for a fortnight. She confirmed her promise, and her countenance became once more serene and calm. The Charpillon was a born actress.

She got up to go, and on my begging a kiss as a pledge of our reconciliation she replied, with a smile, the charm of which she well knew, that it would not do to begin by breaking the term of our agreement, and she left me more in love than ever, and full of repentance for my conduct.

CHAPTER XII

Goudar's Chair

If she had written all this to me instead of coming and delivering it viva voce, it would probably have produced no effect; there would have been no tears, no ravishing features. She probably calculated all this, for women have a wonderful instinct in these matters.

That very evening I began my visits, and judged from my welcome that my triumph was nigh at hand. But love fills our minds with idle visions, and draws a veil over the truth.

The fortnight went by without my even kissing her hand, and every time I came I brought some expensive gift, which seemed cheap to me when I obtained such smiles of gratitude in exchange. Besides these presents, not a day passed without some excursion to the country or party at the theatre; that fortnight must have cost me four hundred guineas at the least.

At last it came to an end, and I asked her in the presence of her mother where she would spend the night with me, there or at my house. The mother said that we would settle it after supper, and I made no objection, not liking to tell her that in my house the supper would be more succulent, and a better prelude for the kind of exercise I expected to enjoy.

When we had supped the mother took me aside, and asked me to leave with the company and then to come back. I obeyed, laughing to myself at this foolish mystery, and when I came back I found the mother and the daughter in the parlour, in which a bed had been laid on the floor.

Though I did not much care for this arrangement, I was too amorous to raise any objection at a moment when I thought my triumph was at hand; but I was astonished when the mother asked me if I would like to pay the hundred guineas in advance.

"Oh, fie!" exclaimed the girl; and her mother left the room, and we locked the door.

My amorous feelings, so long pent up within my breast, would soon find relief. I approached her with open arms; but she avoided my caress, and gently begged me to get into bed while she prepared to follow me. I watched her undress with delight, but when she had finished she put out the candles. I complained of this act of hers, but she said she could not sleep with the light shining on her. I began to suspect that I might have some difficulties thrown in my way to sharpen the pleasure, but I determined to be resigned and to overcome them all.

When I felt her in the bed I tried to clasp her in my arms, but found that she had wrapped herself up in her long night-gown; her arms were crossed, and her head buried in her chest. I entreated, scolded, cursed, but all in vain; she let me go on, and answered not a word.

At first I thought it was a joke, but I soon found out my mistake; the veil fell from my eyes and I saw myself in my true colours, the degraded dupe of a vile prostitute.

Love easily becomes fury. I began to handle her roughly, but she resisted and did not speak. I tore her night-gown to rags, but I could not tear it entirely off her. My rage grew terrible, my hands became talons, and I treated her with the utmost cruelty; but all for nothing. At last, with my hand on her throat, I felt tempted to strangle her; and then I knew it was time for me to go.

It was a dreadful night. I spoke to this monster of a woman in every manner and tone-with gentleness, with argument, rage, remonstrance, prayers, tears, and abuse, but she resisted me for three hours without abandoning her painful position, in spite of the torments I made her endure.

At three o’clock in the morning, feeling my mind and body in a state of exhaustion, I got up and dressed myself by my sense of touch. I opened the parlour door, and finding the street door locked I shook it till a servant came and let me out. I went home and got into bed, but excited nature refused me the sleep I needed so. I took a cup of chocolate, but it would not stay on my stomach, and soon after a shivering fit warned me that I was feverish. I continued to be ill till the next day, and then the fever left me in a state of complete exhaustion.

As I was obliged to keep to my bed for a few days, I knew that I should soon get my health again; but my chief consolation was that at last I was cured. My shame had made me hate myself.

When I felt the fever coming on I told my man not to let anybody come to see me, and to place all my letters in my desk; for I wanted to be perfectly well before I troubled myself with anything.

On the fourth day I was better, and I told Jarbe to give me my letters. I found one from Pauline, dated from Madrid, in which she informed me that Clairmont had saved her life while they were fording a river, and she had determined to keep him till she got to Lisbon, and would then send him back by sea. I congratulated myself at the time on her resolve; but it was a fatal one for Clairmont, and indirectly for me also. Four months after, I heard that the ship in which he had sailed had been wrecked, and as I never heard from him again I could only conclude that my faithful servant had perished amidst the waves.

Amongst my London letters I found two from the infamous mother of the infamous Charpillon, and one from the girl herself. The first of the mother's letters, written before I was ill, told me that her daughter was ill in bed, covered with bruises from the blows I had given her, so that she would be obliged to institute legal proceedings against me. In the second letter she said she had heard I too was ill, and that she was sorry to hear it, her daughter having informed her that I had some reason for my anger; however, she would not fail to justify herself on the first opportunity. The Charpillon said in her letter that she knew she had done wrong, and that she wondered I had not killed her when I took her by the throat. She added that no doubt I had made up my mind to visit her no more, but she hoped I would allow her one interview as she had an important communication to make to me. There was also a note from Goudar, saying that he wanted to speak to me, and that he would come at noon. I gave orders that he should be admitted.

This curious individual began by astonishing me; he told me the whole story of what had taken place, the mother having been his informant.

"The Charpillon," he added, "has not got a fever, but is covered with bruises. What grieves the old woman most is that she has not got the hundred guineas."

“She would have had them the next morning,” I said, “if her daughter had been tractable.”

“Her mother had made her swear that she would not be tractable, and you need not hope to possess her without the mother’s consent.”

“Why won’t she consent?”

“Because she thinks that you will abandon the girl as soon as you have enjoyed her.”

“Possibly, but she would have received many valuable presents, and now she is abandoned and has nothing.”

“Have you made up your mind not to have anything more to do with her?”

“Quite.”

“That’s your wisest plan, and I advise you to keep to it, nevertheless I want to shew you something which will surprise you. I will be back in a moment.”

He returned, followed by a porter, who carried up an arm-chair covered with a cloth. As soon as we were alone, Goudar took off the covering and asked me if I would buy it.

“What should I do with it? It is not a very attractive piece of furniture.”

“Nevertheless, the price of it is a hundred guineas.”

“I would not give three.”

“This arm-chair has five springs, which come into play all at once as soon as anyone sits down in it. Two springs catch the two arms and hold them tightly, two others separate the legs, and the fifth lifts up the seat.”

After this description Goudar sat down quite naturally in the chair and the springs came into play and forced him into the position of a woman in labour.

“Get the fair Charpillon to sit in this chair,” said he, “and your business is done.”

I could not help laughing at the contrivance, which struck me as at once ingenious and diabolical, but I could not make up my mind to avail myself of it.

"I won't buy it," said I, "but I shall be obliged if you will leave it here till to-morrow."

"I can't leave it here an hour unless you will buy it; the owner is waiting close by to hear your answer."

"Then take it away and come back to dinner."

He shewed me how I was to release him from his ridiculous position, and then after covering it up again he called the porter and went away.

There could be no doubt as to the action of the machinery, and it was no feeling of avarice which hindered me from buying the chair. As I have said, it seemed rather a diabolical idea, and besides it might easily have sent me to the gallows. Furthermore, I should never have had the strength of mind to enjoy the Charpillon forcibly, especially by means of the wonderful chair, the mechanism of which would have frightened her out of her wits.

At dinner I told Goudar that the Charpillon had demanded an interview, and that I had wished to keep the chair so as to shew her that I could have her if I liked. I shewed him the letter, and he advised me to accede to her request, if only for curiosity's sake.

I was in no hurry to see the creature while the marks on her face and neck were still fresh, so I spent seven or eight days without making up my mind to receive her. Goudar came every day, and told me of the confabulations of these women who had made up their minds not to live save by trickery.

He told me that the grandmother had taken the name of Anspergher without having any right to it, as she was merely the mistress of a worthy citizen of Berne, by whom she had four daughters; the mother of the Charpillon was the youngest of the family, and, as she was pretty and loose in her morals, the Government had exiled her with her mother and sisters. They had then betaken themselves to Franche-Comte, where they lived for some time on the Balm of Life. Here it was that the Charpillon came into the world, her mother attributing her to a Count de Boulainvilliers. The child grew up pretty, and the family removed to Paris under the impression that it would be the best market for such a commodity, but in the course of four years the income from the Balm having dwindled greatly, the Charpillon being still too young to be profitable, and debtors closing round them on every side, they resolved to come to London.

He then proceeded to tell me of the various tricks and cheats which kept them all alive. I found his narrative interesting enough then, but the reader would find it dull, and I expect will be grateful for my passing it over.

I felt that it was fortunate for me that I had Goudar, who introduced me to all the most famous courtezans in London, above all to the illustrious Kitty Fisher, who was just beginning to be fashionable. He also introduced me to a girl of sixteen, a veritable prodigy of beauty, who served at the bar of a tavern at which we took a bottle of strong beer. She was an Irishwoman and a Catholic, and was named Sarah. I should have liked to get possession of her, but Goudar had views of his own on the subject, and carried her off in the course of the next year. He ended by marrying her, and she was the Sara Goudar who shone at Naples, Florence, Venice, and elsewhere. We shall hear of her in four or five years, still with her husband. Goudar had conceived the plan of making her take the place of Dubarry, mistress of Louis XV., but a lettre de cachet compelled him to try elsewhere. Ah! happy days of lettres de cachet, you have gone never to return!

The Charpillon waited a fortnight for me to reply, and then resolved to return to the charge in person. This was no doubt the result of a conference of the most secret kind, for I heard nothing of it from Gondar.

She came to see my by herself in a sedan-chair, and I decided on seeing her. I was taking my chocolate and I let her come in without rising or offering her any breakfast. She asked me to give her some with great modesty, and put up her face for me to give her a kiss, but I turned my head away. However, she was not in the least disconcerted.

“I suppose the marks of the blows you gave me make my face so repulsive?”

“You lie; I never struck you.”

“No, but your tiger-like claws have left bruises all over me. Look here. No, you needn’t be afraid that what you see may prove too seductive; besides, it will have no novelty for you.”

So saying the wretched creature let me see her body, on which some livid marks were still visible.

Coward that I was! Why did I not look another way? I will tell you: it was because she was so beautiful, and because a woman’s charms are unworthy of the name if they cannot silence reason. I affected only to look at the bruises, but it was an empty farce. I blush for myself; here was I conquered by a simple girl, ignorant of well nigh everything. But she knew well enough that I was inhaling the poison at every pore. All at once she dropped her clothes and came and sat beside me, feeling sure that I should have relished a continuance of the spectacle.

However, I made an effort and said, coldly, that it was all her own fault.

“I know it is,” said she, “for if I had been tractable as I ought to have been, you would have been loving instead of cruel. But repentance effaces sin, and I am come to beg pardon. May I hope to obtain it?”

“Certainly; I am angry with you no longer, but I cannot forgive myself. Now go, and trouble me no more.”

“I will if you like, but there is something you have not heard, and I beg you will listen to me a moment.”

“As I have nothing to do you can say what you have got to say, I will listen to you.”

In spite of the coldness of my words, I was really profoundly touched, and the worst of it was that I began to believe in the genuineness of her motives.

She might have relieved herself of what she had to say in a quarter of an hour, but by dint of tears, sighs, groans, digressions, and so forth, she took two hours to tell me that her mother had made her swear to pass the night as she had done. She ended by saying that she would like to be mine as she had been M. Morosini’s, to live with me, and only to go out under my escort, while I might allow her a monthly sum which she would hand over to her mother, who would, in that case, leave her alone.

She dined with me, and it was in the evening that she made this proposition. I suppose because she thought me ripe for another cheat. I told her that it might be arranged, but that I should prefer to settle with her mother, and that she would see me at their house the following day, and this seemed to surprise her.

It is possible that the Charpillon would have granted me any favour on that day, and then there would have been no question of deception or resistance for the future. Why did I not press her? Because sometimes love stupefies instead of quickens, and because I had been in a way her judge, and I thought it would be base of me to revenge myself on her by satisfying my amorous desires, and possibly because I was a fool, as I have often been in the course of my existence. She must have left me in a state of irritation, and no doubt she registered a vow to revenge herself on me for the half-contemptuous way in which I had treated her.

Goudar was astonished when he heard of her visit, and of the way in which I had spent the day. I begged him to get me a small furnished house, and in the evening I went to see the infamous woman in her own house.

She was with her mother, and I laid my proposal before them.

“Your daughter will have a house at Chelsea,” said I to the mother, “where I can go and see her whenever I like, and also fifty guineas a month to do what she likes with.”

“I don’t care what you give her a month,” she replied, “but before I let her leave my house she must give me the hundred guineas she was to have had when she slept with you.”

“It is your fault that she didn’t have them; however, to cut the matter short, she shall give them to you.”

“And in the meanwhile, till you have found the house, I hope you will come and see me.”

“Yes.”

The next day Goudar shewed me a pretty house at Chelsea, and I took it, paying ten guineas, a month’s rent, in advance, for which I received a receipt. In the afternoon I concluded the bargain with the mother, the Charpillon being present. The mother asked me to give her the hundred guineas, and I did so, not fearing any treachery, as nearly the whole of the girl’s clothing was already at Chelsea.

In due course we went to our country house. The Charpillon liked the house immensely, and after a short talk we supped merrily together. After supper we went to bed, and she granted me some slight preliminary favours, but when I would have attained my end I found an obstacle which I had not expected. She gave me some physiological reasons for the circumstances, but not being a man to stop for so little, I would have gone on, but she resisted, and yet with such gentleness that I left her alone and went to sleep. I awoke sooner than she did, and determined to see whether she had imposed on me; so I raised her night-gown carefully, and took off her linen only to find that I had been duped once more. This roused her, and she tried to stop me, but it was too late. However, I gently chid her for the trick, and feeling disposed to forgive it set about making up for lost time, but she got on the high horse, and pretended to be hurt at my taking her by surprise. I tried to calm her by renewed tenderness, but the wretched creature only got more furious, and would give me nothing. I left her alone, but I expressed my opinion of her in pretty strong terms. The impudent slut honoured me with a smile of disdain, and then beginning to dress herself she proceeded to indulge in impertinent repartees. This made me angry, and I gave her a box on the ears which stretched her at full length on the floor. She shrieked, stamped her feet, and made a hideous uproar; the landlord came up, and she began to speak to him in English, while the blood gushed from her nose.

The man fortunately spoke Italian, and told me that she wanted to go away, and advised me to let her do so, or she might make it awkward for me, and he himself would be obliged to witness against me.

“Tell her to begone as fast as she likes,” said I, “and to keep out of my sight for ever.”

She finished dressing, staunched the blood, and went off in a sedan-chair, while I remained petrified, feeling that I did not deserve to live, and finding her conduct utterly outrageous and incomprehensible.

After an hour’s consideration I decided on sending her back her trunk, and then I went home and to bed, telling my servants I was not at home to anyone.

I spent twenty-four hours in pondering over my wrongs, and at last my reason told me that the fault was mine; I despised myself. I was on the brink of suicide, but happily I escaped that fate.

I was just going out when Goudar came up and made me go in with him, as he said he wanted to speak to me. After telling me that the Charpillon had come home with a swollen cheek which prevented her shewing herself, he advised me to abandon all claims on her or her mother, or the latter would bring a false accusation against me which might cost me my life. Those who know England, and especially London will not need to be informed as to the nature of this accusation, which is so easily brought in England; it will suffice to say that through it Sodom was overwhelmed.

"The mother has engaged me to mediate," said Goudar, "and if you will leave her alone, she will do you no harm."

I spent the day with him, foolishly complaining, and telling him that he could assure the mother that I would take no proceedings against her, but that I should like to know if she had the courage to receive this assurance from my own lips.

"I will carry your message," said he, "but I pity you; for you are going into their nets again, and will end in utter ruin."

I fancied they would be ashamed to see me; but I was very much mistaken, for Goudar came back laughing, and said the mother expressed a hope that I should always be the friend of the family. I ought to have refused to have anything more to do with them, but I had not the strength to play the man. I called at Denmark Street the same evening, and spent an hour without uttering a syllable. The Charpillon sat opposite to me, with eyes lowered to a piece of embroidery, while from time to time she pretended to wipe away a tear as she let me see the ravages I had worked on her cheek.

I saw her every day and always in silence till the fatal mark had disappeared, but during these mad visits the poison of desire was so instilled into my veins that if she had known my state of mind she might have despoiled me of all I possessed for a single favour.

When she was once more as beautiful as ever I felt as if I must die if I did not hold her in my arms again, and I bought a magnificent pier-glass and a splendid breakfast service in Dresden china, and sent them to her with an amorous epistle which must have made her think me either the most extravagant or the most cowardly of men. She wrote in answer that she would expect me to sup with her in her room, that she might give me the tenderest proofs of her gratitude.

This letter sent me completely mad with joy, and in a paroxysm of delight I resolved to surrender to her keeping the two bills of exchange which Bolomee had given me, and which gave me power to send her mother and aunts to prison.

Full of the happiness that awaited me, and enchanted with my own idiotic heroism, I went to her in the evening. She received me in the parlour with her mother, and I was delighted to see the pier-glass over the mantel, and the china displayed on a little table. After a hundred words of love and tenderness she asked me to come up to her room, and her mother wished us good night. I was overwhelmed with joy. After a delicate little supper I took out the bills of exchange, and after telling her their history gave them up to her, to shew that I had no intention of avenging myself on her mother and aunts. I made her promise that she would never part with them, and she said she would never do so, and with many expressions of gratitude and wonder at my generosity she locked them up with great care.

Then I thought it was time to give her some marks of my passion, and I found her kind; but when I would have plucked the fruit, she clasped me to her arms, crossed her legs, and began to weep bitterly.

I made an effort, and asked her if she would be the same when we were in bed. She sighed, and after a moment's pause, replied, "Yes."

For a quarter of an hour I remained silent and motionless, as if petrified. At last I rose with apparent coolness, and took my cloak and sword.

"What!" said she, "are you not going to spend the night with me?"

"No."

"But we shall see each other to-morrow?"

"I hope so. Good night."

I left that infernal abode, and went home to bed.

CHAPTER XIII

The End of the Story Stranger Than the Beginning

At eight o'clock the next morning Jarbe told me that the Charpillon wanted to see me, and that she had sent away her chairmen.

"Tell her that I can't see her."

But I had hardly spoken when she came in, and Jarbe went out. I addressed her with the utmost calmness, and begged her to give me back the two bills of exchange I had placed in her hands the night before.

"I haven't got them about me; but why do you want me to return them to you?"

At this question I could contain myself no longer, and launched a storm of abuse at her. It was an explosion which relieved nature, and ended with an involuntary shower of tears. My infamous seductress stood as calmly as Innocence itself; and when I was so choked with sobs that I could not utter a word, she said she had only been cruel because her mother had made her swear an oath never to give herself to anyone in her own house, and that she had only come now to convince me of her love, to give herself to me without reserve, and never to leave me any more if I wished it.

The reader who imagines that at these words rage gave place to love, and that I hastened to obtain the prize, does not know the nature of the passion so well as the vile woman whose plaything I was. From hot love to hot anger is a short journey, but the return is slow and difficult. If there be only anger in a man's breast it may be subdued by tenderness, by submission, and affection; but when to anger is added a feeling of indignation at having been shamefully deceived, it is impossible to pass suddenly to thoughts of love and voluptuous enjoyment. With me mere anger has never been of long duration, but when I am indignant the only cure is forgetfulness.

The Charpillon knew perfectly well that I would not take her at her word, and this kind of science was inborn in her. The instinct of women teaches them greater secrets than all the philosophy and the research of men.

In the evening this monster left me, feigning to be disappointed and disconsolate, and saying, —

“I hope you will come and see me again when you are once more yourself.”

She had spent eight hours with me, during which time she had only spoken to deny my suppositions, which were perfectly true, but which she could not afford to let pass. I had not taken anything all day, in order that I might not be obliged to offer her anything or to eat with her.

After she had left me I took some soup and then enjoyed a quiet sleep, for which I felt all the better. When I came to consider what had passed the day before I concluded that the Charpillon was repentant, but I seemed no longer to care anything about her.

Here I may as well confess, in all humility, what a change love worked on me in London, though I had attained the age of thirty-eight. Here closed the first act of my life; the second closed when I left Venice in 1783, and probably the third will close here, as I amuse myself by writing these memoirs. Thus, the three-act comedy will finish, and if it be hissed, as may possibly be the case, I shall not hear the sounds of disapproval. But as yet the reader has not seen the last and I think the most interesting scene of the first act.

I went for a walk in the Green Park and met Goudar. I was glad to see him, as the rogue was useful to me.

“I have just been at the Charpillons,” he began; “they were all in high spirits. I tried in vain to turn the conversation on you, but not a word would they utter.”

“I despise them entirely,” I rejoined, “I don’t want to have anything more to do with them.”

He told me I was quite right, and advised me to persevere in my plan. I made him dine with me, and then we went to see the well-known procuress, Mrs. Wells, and saw the celebrated courtezan, Kitty Fisher, who was waiting for the Duke of —— to take her to a ball. She was magnificently dressed, and it is no exaggeration to say that she had on diamonds worth five hundred thousand francs. Goudar told me that if I liked I might have her then and there for ten guineas. I did not care to do so, however, for, though charming, she could only speak English, and I liked to have all my senses, including that of hearing, gratified. When she had gone, Mrs. Wells told us that Kitty had eaten a bank-note for a thousand guineas, on a slice of bread and butter, that very day. The note was a present from Sir Akins, brother of the fair Mrs. Pitt. I do not know whether the bank thanked Kitty for the present she had made it.

I spent an hour with a girl named Kennedy, a fair Irishwoman, who could speak a sort of French, and behaved most extravagantly under the influence of champagne; but the image of the Charpillon was still before me, though I knew it not, and I could not enjoy anything. I went home feeling sad and ill pleased with myself. Common sense told me to drive all thoughts of that wretched woman out of my head, but something I called honour bade me not leave her the triumph of having won the two bills of exchange from me for nothing, and made me determine to get them back by fair means or foul.

M. Malingan, at whose house I had made the acquaintance of this creature, come and asked me to dinner. He had asked me to dine with him several times before, and I had always refused, and now I would not accept until I had heard what guests he had invited. The names were all strange to me, so I agreed to come.

When I arrived I found two young ladies from Liege, in one of whom I got interested directly. She introduced me to her husband, and to another young man who seemed to be the cavalier of the other lady, her cousin.

The company pleased me, and I was in hopes that I should spend a happy day, but my evil genius brought the Charpillon to mar the feast. She came into the room in high glee, and said to Malingan, —

“I should not have come to beg you to give me a dinner if I had known that you would have so many guests, and if I am at all in the way I will go.”

Everybody welcomed her, myself excepted, for I was on the rack. To make matters worse, she was placed at my left hand. If she had come in before we sat down to dinner I should have made some excuse and gone away, but as we had begun the soup a sudden flight would have covered me with ridicule. I adopted the plan of not looking at her, reserving all my politeness for the lady on my right. When the meal was over Malingan took me apart, and swore to me that he had not invited the Charpillon, but I was not convinced, though I pretended to be for politeness' sake.

The two ladies from Liege and their cavaliers were embarking for Ostend in a few days, and in speaking of their departure the one to whom I had taken a fancy said that she was sorry to be leaving England without having seen Richmond. I begged her to give me the pleasure of shewing it her, and without waiting for an answer I asked her husband and all the company to be present, excepting the Charpillon, whom I pretended not to see.

The invitation was accepted.

"Two carriages," I said, "holding four each, shall be ready at eight o'clock, and we shall be exactly eight."

"No, nine, for I am coming," said the Charpillon, giving me an impudent stare, "and I hope you will not drive me away."

"No, that would be impolite, I will ride in front on horseback."

"Oh, not at all! Emilie shall sit on my lap."

Emilie was Malingan's daughter, and as everybody seemed to think the arrangement an extremely pleasant one I had not the courage to resist. A few moments after, I was obliged to leave the room for a few moments, and when I came back I met her on the landing. She told me I had insulted her grievously, and that unless I made amends I should feel her vengeance.

"You can begin your vengeance," I said, "by returning my bills of exchange."

"You shall have them to-morrow, but you had better try and make me forget the insult you have put on me."

I left the company in the evening, having arranged that we should all breakfast together the next day.

At eight o'clock the two carriages were ready, and Malingan, his wife, his daughter, and the two gentlemen got into the first vehicle, and I had to get into the second with the ladies from Liege and the Charpillon, who seemed to have become very intimate with them. This made me ill-tempered, and I sulked the whole way. We were an hour and a quarter on the journey, and when we arrived I ordered a good dinner, and then we proceeded to view the gardens; the day was a beautiful one, though it was autumn.

Whilst we were Walking the Charpillon came up to me and said she wanted to return the bills in the same place in which I had given her them. As we were at some distance from the others I pelted her with abuse, telling her of her perfidy and of her corruption at an age when she should have retained some vestiges of innocence calling her by the name she deserved, as I reminded her how often she had already prostituted herself; in short I threatened her with my vengeance if she pushed me to extremities. But she was as cold as ice, and opposed a calm front to the storm of invective I rained in her ears. However, as the other guests were at no great distance, she begged me to speak more softly, but they heard me and I was very glad of it.

At last we sat down to dinner, and the wretched woman contrived to get a place beside me, and behaved all the while as if I were her lover, or at any rate as if she loved me. She did not seem to care what people thought of my coldness, while I was in a rage, for the company must either have thought me a fool or else that she was making game of me.

After dinner we returned to the garden, and the Charpillon, determined to gain the victory, clung to my arm and after several turns led me towards the maze where she wished to try her power. She made me sit down on the grass beside her and attacked me with passionate words and tender caresses, and by displaying the most interesting of her charms she succeeded in seducing me, but still I do not know whether I were impelled by love or vengeance, and I am inclined to think that my feelings were a compound of both passions.

But at the moment she looked the picture of voluptuous abandon. Her ardent eyes, her fiery cheeks, her wanton kisses, her swelling breast, and her quick sighs, all made me think that she stood as much in need of defeat as I of victory; certainly I should not have judged that she was already calculating on resistance.

Thus I once more became tender and affectionate; I begged pardon for what I had said and done. Her fiery kisses replied to mine, and I thought her glance and the soft pressure of her body were inviting me to gather the delicious fruit; but just as my hand opened the door of the sanctuary, she gave a sudden movement, and the chance was lost.

“What! you would deceive me again.”

“No, no but we have done enough now. I promise to spend the night in your arms in your own house.”

For a moment I lost my senses. I only saw the deceitful wretch who had profited by my foolish credulity so many times, and I resolved to enjoy or take vengeance. I held her down with my left arm, and drawing a small knife from my pocket I opened it with my teeth and pricked her neck, threatening to kill her if she resisted me.

“Do as you like,” she said with perfect calm, “I only ask you to leave me my life, but after you have satisfied yourself I will not leave the spot; I will not enter your carriage unless you carry me by force, and everybody shall know the reason.”

This threat had no effect, for I had already got back my senses, and I pitied myself for being degraded by a creature for whom I had the greatest contempt, in spite of the almost magical influence she had over me, and the furious desires she knew how to kindle in my breast. I rose without a word, and taking my hat and cane I hastened to leave a place where unbridled passion had brought me to the brink of ruin.

My readers will scarcely believe me (but it is nevertheless the exact truth) when I say that the impudent creature hastened to rejoin me, and took my arm again as if nothing had happened. A girl of her age could not have played the part so well unless she had been already tried in a hundred battles. When we rejoined the company I was asked if I were ill, while nobody noticed the slightest alteration in her.

When we got back to London I excused myself under the plea of a bad headache, and returned home.

The adventure had made a terrible impression on me, and I saw that if I did not avoid all intercourse with this girl I should be brought to ruin. There was something about her I could not resist. I therefore resolved to see her no more, but feeling ashamed of my weakness in giving her the bills of exchange I wrote her mother a note requesting her to make her daughter return them, or else I should be compelled to take harsh measures.

In the afternoon I received the following reply:

“Sir, — I am exceedingly surprised at your addressing yourself to me about the bills you handed to my daughter. She tells me she will give you them back in person when you shew more discretion, and have learnt to respect her.”

This impudent letter so enraged me that I forgot my vow of the morning. I put two pistols in my pocket and proceeded to the wretched woman’s abode to compel her to return me my bills if she did not wish to be soundly caned.

I only took the pistols to overawe the two male rascals who supped with them every evening. I was furious when I arrived, but I passed by the door when I saw a handsome young hairdresser, who did the Charpillon’s hair every Saturday evening, going into the house.

I did not want a stranger to be present at the scene I meant to make, so I waited at the corner of the street for the hairdresser to go. After I had waited half an hour Rostaing and Couman, the two supports of the house, came out and went away, much to my delight. I waited on; eleven struck, and the handsome barber had not yet gone. A little before midnight a servant came out with a lamp, I suppose to look for something that had fallen out of the window. I approached noiselessly, stepped in and opened the parlour-door, which was close to the street, and saw … the Charpillon and the barber stretched on the sofa and doing the beast with two backs, as Shakespeare calls it.

When the slut saw me she gave a shriek and unhorsed her gallant, whom I caned soundly until he escaped in the confusion consequent on the servants, mother, and aunts all rushing into the room. While this was going on the Charpillon, half-naked, remained crouched behind the sofa, trembling lest the blows should begin to descend on her. Then the three hags set upon me like furies; but their abuse only irritated me, and I broke the pier-’glass, the china, and the furniture, and as they still howled and shrieked I roared out that if they did not cease I would break their heads. At this they began to calm.

I threw myself upon the fatal sofa, and bade the mother to return me the bills of exchange; but just then the watchman came in.

There is only one watchman to a district, which he perambulates all night with a lantern in one hand and a staff in the other. On these men the peace of the great city depends. I put three or four crowns into his hand and said "Go away," and so saying shut the door upon him. Then I sat down once more and asked again for the bills of exchange:

"I have not got them; my daughter keeps them."

"Call her."

The two maids said that whilst I was breaking the china she had escaped by the street door, and that they did not know what had become of her. Then the mother and aunts began to shriek, weep, and exclaim, —

"My poor daughter alone in the streets of London at midnight! My dear niece, alas! alas! she is lost. Cursed be the hour when you came to England to make us all unhappy!"

My rage had evaporated, and I trembled at the thought of this young frightened girl running about the streets at such an hour.

"Go and look for her at the neighbours' houses," I said to the servants, "no doubt you will find her. When you tell me she is safe, you shall have a guinea apiece."

When the three Gorgons saw I was interested, their tears, complaints, and invectives began again with renewed vigor, while I kept silence as much as to say that they were in the right. I awaited the return of the servants with impatience, and at last at one o'clock they came back with looks of despair.

"We have looked for her everywhere," said they, "but we can't find her."

I gave them the two guineas as if they had succeeded, whilst I sat motionless reflecting on the terrible consequences of my anger. How foolish is man when he is in love!

I was idiot enough to express my repentance to the three old cheats. I begged them to seek for her everywhere when dawn appeared, and to let me know of her return that I might fall at her feet to beg pardon, and never see her face again. I also promised to pay for all the damage I had done, and to give them a full receipt for the bills of exchange. After these acts, done to the everlasting shame of my good sense, after this apology made to procuresses who laughed at me and my honour, I went home, promising two guineas to the servant who should bring me tidings that her young mistress had come home. On leaving the house I found the watchman at the door; he had been waiting to see me home. It was two o'clock. I threw myself on my bed, and the six hours of sleep I obtained, though troubled by fearful dreams, probably saved me from madness.

At eight o'clock I heard a knock at the door, and on opening the window found it was one of the servants from the house of my foes. I cried out to let her in, and I breathed again on hearing that Miss Charpillon had just arrived in a sedan-chair in a pitiable condition, and that she had been put to bed.

"I made haste to come and tell you," said the cunning maid, "not for the sake of your two guineas, but because I saw you were so unhappy." This duped me directly. I gave her the two guineas, and made her sit down on my bed, begging her to tell me all about her mistress's return. I did not dream that she had been schooled by my enemies; but during the whole of this period I was deprived of the right use of my reason.

The slut began by saying that her young mistress loved me, and had only deceived me in accordance with her mother's orders.

"I know that," I said, "but where did she pass the night?"

"At a shop which she found open, and where she was known from having bought various articles there. She is in bed with a fever, and I am afraid it may have serious consequences as she is in her monthly period."

"That's impossible, for I caught her in the act with her hairdresser."

"Oh, that proves nothing! the poor young man does not look into things very closely."

"But she is in love with him."

"I don't think so, though she has spent several hours in his company."

"And you say that she loves me!"

"Oh, that has nothing to do with it! It is only a whim of hers with the hairdresser."

"Tell her that I am coming to pass the day beside her bed, and bring me her reply."

“I will send the other girl if you like.”

“No, she only speaks English.”

She went away, and as she had not returned by three o’clock I decided on calling to hear how she was. I knocked at the door, and one of the aunts appeared and begged me not to enter as the two friends of the house were there in a fury against me, and her niece lay in a delirium, crying out “There’s Seingalt, there’s Seingalt! He’s going to kill me. Help! help!” “For God’s sake, sir, go away!”

I went home desperate, without the slightest suspicion that it was all a lie. I spent the whole day without eating anything; I could not swallow a mouthful. All night I kept awake, and though I took several glasses of strong waters I could obtain no rest.

At nine o’clock the next morning I knocked at the Charpillon’s door, and the old aunt came and held it half open as before. She forbade me to enter, saying that her niece was still delirious, continually calling on me in her transports, and that the doctor had declared that if the disease continued its course she had not twenty-four hours to live. “The fright you gave her has arrested her periods; she is in a terrible state.”

“O, fatal hairdresser!” I exclaimed.

“That was a mere youthful folly; you should have pretended not to have seen anything.”

“You think that possible, you old witch, do you? Do not let her lack for anything; take that.”

With these words I gave her a bank note for ten guineas and went away, like the fool I was. On my way back I met Goudar, who was quite frightened at my aspect. I begged him to go and see how the Charpillon really was, and then to come and pass the rest of the day with me. An hour after he came back and said he had found them all in tears and that the girl was in extremis.

“Did you see her?”

“No, they said she could see no one.”

“Do you think it is all true?”

"I don't know what to think; but one of the maids, who tells me the truth as a rule, assured me that she had become mad through her courses being stopped, while she has also a fever and violent convulsions. It is all credible enough, for these are the usual results of a shock when a woman is in such a situation. The girl told me it was all your fault."

I then told him the whole story. He could only pity me, but when he heard that I had neither eaten nor slept for the last forty-eight hours he said very wisely that if I did not take care I should lose my reason or my life. I knew it, but I could find no remedy. He spent the day with me and did me good. As I could not eat I drank a good deal, and not being able to sleep I spent the night in striding up and down my room like a man beside himself.

On the third day, having heard nothing positive about the Charpillon, I went out at seven o'clock in the morning to call on her. After I had waited a quarter of an hour in the street, the door was partly opened, and I saw the mother all in tears, but she would not let me come in. She said her daughter was in the last agony. At the same instant a pale and thin old man came out, telling the mother that we must resign ourselves to the will of God. I asked the infamous creature if it were the doctor.

"The doctor is no good now," said the old hypocrite, weeping anew, "he is a minister of the Gospel, and there is another of them upstairs. My poor daughter! In another hour she will be no more."

I felt as if an icy hand had closed upon my heart. I burst into tears and left the woman, saying, —

"It is true that my hand dealt the blow, but her death lies at your door."

As I walked away my knees seemed to bend under me, and I entered my house determined to commit suicide, —

With this fearful idea, I gave orders that I was not at home to anyone. As soon as I got to my room I put my watches, rings, snuff-boxes, purse and pocket-book in my casket, and shut it up in my escritoire. I then wrote a letter to the Venetian ambassador, informing him that all my property was to go to M. de Bragadin after my death. I sealed the letter and put it with the casket, and took the key with me, and also silver to the amount of a few guineas. I took my pistols and went out with the firm intention of drowning myself in the Thames, near the Tower of London.

Pondering over my plan with the utmost coolness, I went and bought some balls of lead as large as my pockets would hold, and as heavy as I could bear, to carry to the Tower, where I intended to go on foot. On my way I was strengthened in my purpose by the reflection, that if I continued to live I should be tormented for the remainder of my days by the pale shade of the Charpillon reproaching me as her murderer. I even congratulated myself on being able to carry out my purpose without any effort, and I also felt a secret pride in my courage.

I walked slowly on account of the enormous weight I bore, which would assure me a speedy passage to the bottom of the river.

By Westminster Bridge my good fortune made me meet Sir Edgar, a rich young Englishman, who lived a careless and joyous life. I had made his acquaintance at Lord Pembroke's, and he had dined with me several times. We suited one another, his conversation was agreeable, and we had passed many pleasant hours together. I tried to avoid him, but he saw me, and came up and took me by the arm in a friendly manner.

"Where are you going? Come with me, unless you are going to deliver some captive. Come along, we shall have a pleasant party."

"I can't come, my dear fellow, let me go."

"What's the matter? I hardly recognized you, you looked so solemn."

"Nothing is the matter."

"Nothing? You should look at your face in the glass. Now I feel quite sure that you are going to commit a foolish action."

"Not at all."

"It's no good denying it."

"I tell you there's nothing the matter with me. Good bye, I shall see you again."

"It's no good, I won't leave you. Come along, we will walk together."

His eyes happening to fall on my breeches pocket, he noticed my pistol, and putting his hand on the other pocket he felt the other pistol, and said, —

"You are going to fight a duel; I should like to see it. I won't interfere with the affair, but neither will I leave you."

I tried to put on a smile, and assured him that he was mistaken, and that I was only going for a walk to pass the time.

"Very good," said Edgar, "then I hope my society is as pleasant to you as yours is to me; I won't leave you. After we have taken a walk we will go and dine at the 'Canon.' I will get two girls to come and join us, and we shall have a gay little party of four."

"My dear friend, you must excuse me; I am in a melancholy mood, and I want to be alone to get over it."

"You can be alone to-morrow, if you like, but I am sure you will be all right in the next three hours, and if not, why I will share your madness. Where did you think of dining?"

"Nowhere; I have no appetite. I have been fasting for the last three days, and I can only drink."

"Ah! I begin to see daylight. Something has crossed you, and you are going to let it kill you as it killed one of my brothers. I must see what can be done."

Edgar argued, insisted, and joked till at last I said to myself, "A day longer will not matter, I can do the deed when he leaves me, and I shall only have to bear with life a few hours longer."

When Edgar heard that I had no particular object in crossing the bridge he said that we had better turn back, and I let myself be persuaded; but in half an hour I begged him to take me somewhere where I could wait for him, as I could not bear the weight of the lead any longer. I gave him my word of honour that I would meet him at the "Canon."

As soon as I was alone I emptied my pockets, and put the leaden balls into a cupboard. Then I lay down and began to consider whether the good-natured young man would prevent me committing suicide, as he had already made me postpone it.

I reasoned, not as one that hopes, but rather as one that foresaw that Edgar would hinder me from shortening my days. Thus I waited in the tavern for the young Englishman, doubtful whether he was doing me a service or an injury.

He came back before long, and was pleased to find me.

“I reckoned on your keeping your word,” said he.

“You did not think that I would break my word of honour.”

“That’s all right; I see you are on the way to recovery.”

The sensible and cheerful talk of the young man did me good, and I began to feel better, when the two young wantons, one of whom was a Frenchwoman, arrived in high spirits. They seemed intended for pleasure, and Nature had dowered them with great attractions. I appreciated their charms, but I could not welcome them in the manner to which they were accustomed. They began to think me some poor valetudinarian; but though I was in torments, a feeling of vanity made me endeavour to behave sensibly. I gave them some cold kisses and begged Edgar to tell his fellow-countrywoman that if I were not three parts dead I would prove how lovely and charming I thought her. They pitied me. A man who has spent three days without eating or sleeping is almost incapable of any voluptuous excitement, but mere words would not have convinced these priestesses of Venus if Edgar had not given them my name. I had a reputation, and I saw that when they heard who I was they were full of respect. They all hoped that Bacchus and Comus would plead the cause of Love, and I let them talk, knowing that their hopes were vain.

We had an English dinner; that is, a dinner without the essential course of soup, so I only took a few oysters and a draught of delicious wine, but I felt better, and was pleased to see Edgar amusing himself with the two nymphs.

The young madcap suddenly proposed that the girls should dance a hornpipe in the costume of Mother Eve, and they consented on the condition that we would adopt the dress of Father Adam, and that blind musicians were summoned. I told them that I would take off my clothes to oblige them, but that I had no hopes of being able to imitate the seductive serpent. I was allowed to retain my dress, on the condition that if I felt the prick of the flesh I should immediately undress. I agreed to do so, and the blind musicians were sent for, and while they tuned their instruments toilettes were made, and the orgy began.

It taught me same useful lessons. I learnt from it that amorous pleasures are the effect and not the cause of gaiety. I sat gazing at three naked bodies of perfect grace and beauty, the dance and the music were ravishing and seductive, but nothing made any impression on me. After the dance was over the male dancer treated the two females, one after the other, until he was forced to rest. The French girl came up to ascertain whether I skewed any signs of life, but feeling my hopeless condition she pronounced me useless.

When it was all over I begged Edgar to give the French girl four guineas, and to pay my share, as I had very little money about me.

What should I have said if I had been told in the morning that instead of drowning myself I should take part in so pleasant an entertainment?

The debt I had contracted with the young Englishman made me resolve to put off my suicide to another day. After the nymphs had gone I tried to get rid of Edgar, but in vain; he told me I was getting better, that the oysters I had taken skewed my stomach was improving, and that if I came with him to Ranelagh I should be able to make a good dinner the next day. I was weak and indifferent and let myself be persuaded, and got into a coach with Edgar in obedience to the Stoic maxim I had learnt in the happy days of my youth: ‘Sequere Deum’.

We entered the fine rotunda with our hats off, and began to walk round and round, our arms behind our backs — a common custom in England, at least in those days.

A minuet was being danced, and I was so attracted by a lady who danced extremely well that I waited for her to turn round. What made me notice her more particularly was that her dress and hat were exactly like those I had given to the Charpillon a few days before, but as I believed the poor wretch to be dead or dying the likeness did not inspire me with any suspicion. But the lady turned round, lifted her face, and I saw — the Charpillon herself!

Edgar told me afterwards that at that moment he thought to see me fall to the ground in an epileptic fit; I trembled and shuddered so terribly.

However, I felt so sure she was ill that I could not believe my own eyes, and the doubt brought me to my senses.

“She can’t be the Charpillon,” I said to myself, “she is some other girl like her, and my enfeebled senses have led me astray.” In the meanwhile the lady, intent on her dancing, did not glance in my direction, but I could afford to wait. At last she lifted her arms to make the curtsy at the end of the minuet, I went up instinctively as if I were about to dance with her; she looked me in the face, and fled.

I constrained myself; but now that there could be no doubt my shuddering fit returned, and I made haste to sit down. A cold sweat bedewed my face and my whole body. Edgar advised me to take a cup of tea but I begged him to leave me alone for a few moments.

I was afraid that I was on the point of death; I trembled all over, and my heart beat so rapidly that I could not have stood up had I wished.

At last, instead of dying, I got new life. What a wonderful change I experienced! Little by little my peace of mind returned, and I could enjoy the glitter of the multitudinous wax lights. By slow degrees I passed through all the shades of feeling between despair and an ecstasy of joy. My soul and mind were so astonished by the shock that I began to think I should never see Edgar again.

“This young man,” I said to myself, “is my good genius, my guardian angel, my familiar spirit, who has taken the form of Edgar to restore me to my senses again.”

I should certainly have persisted in this idea if my friend had not reappeared before very long.

Chance might have thrown him in the way of one of those seductive creatures who make one forget everything else; he might have left Ranelagh without having time to tell me he was going, and I should have gone back to London feeling perfectly certain that I had only seen his earthly shape. Should I have been disabused if I had seen him a few days after? Possibly; but I am not sure of it. I have always had a hankering after superstition, of which I do not boast; but I confess the fact, and leave the reader to judge me.

However, he came back in high spirits, but anxious about me. He was surprised to find me full of animation, and to hear me talking in a pleasant strain on the surrounding objects and persons.

“Why, you are laughing!” said he, “your sadness has departed, then?”

“Yes, good genius, but I am hungry, and I want you to do me a favour, if you have no other pressing engagements.”

“I am free till the day after to-morrow, and till then you can do what you like with me.”

“I owe my life to you, but to make your gift complete I want you to spend this night and the whole of the next day with me.”

“Done.”

“Then let us go home.”

“With all my heart; come along.”

I did not tell him anything as we were in the coach, and when we got home I found nothing fresh, except a note from Goudar, which I put in my pocket, intending to reserve all business for the next day.

It was an hour after midnight. A good supper was served to us, and we fell to; for my part I devoured my food like a wild beast. Edgar congratulated me, and we went to bed, and I slept profoundly till noon. When I awoke I breakfasted with Edgar, and told him the whole story, which would have ended with my life if he had not met me on Westminster Bridge, and he had not been keen enough to mark my condition. I took him to my room, and shewed him my escritoire, my casket, and my will. I then opened Goudar’s letter, and read:

“I am quite sure that the girl you know of is very far from dying, as she has gone to Ranelagh with Lord Grosvenor.”

Although Edgar was a profligate, he was a sensible man, and my story made him furious. He threw his arms around my neck, and told me he should always think the day on which he rescued me from death for so unworthy an object the happiest in his life. He could scarcely credit the infamy of the Charpillon and her mother. He told me I could have the mother arrested, though I had not got the bills of exchange, as her mother’s letter acknowledging her daughter’s possession of the bills was sufficient evidence.

Without informing him of my intention, I resolved that moment to have her arrested. Before we parted we swore eternal friendship, but the reader will see before long what a penance the kind Englishman had to do for befriending me.

The next day I went to the attorney I had employed against Count Schwerin. After hearing my story he said that I had an undoubted claim, and that I could arrest the mother and the two aunts.

Without losing time I went before a magistrate, who took my sworn information and granted me a warrant. The same official who had arrested Schwerin took charge of the affair; but as he did not know the women by sight it was necessary that someone who did should go with him, for though he was certain of surprising them there might be several other women present, and he might not arrest the right ones.

As Goudar would not have undertaken the delicate task of pointing them out, I resolved on accompanying him myself.

I made an appointment with him at an hour when I knew they would be all in the parlour. He was to enter directly the door was opened, and I would come in at the same instant and point out the women he had to arrest. In England all judicial proceedings are conducted with the utmost punctuality, and everything went off as I had arranged. The bailiff and his subaltern stepped into the parlour and I followed in their footsteps. I pointed out the mother and the two sisters and then made haste to escape, for the sight of the Charpillon, dressed in black, standing by the hearth, made me shudder. I felt cured, certainly; but the wounds she had given me were not yet healed, and I cannot say what might have happened if the Circe had had the presence of mind to throw her arms about my neck and beg for mercy.

As soon as I had seen these women in the hands of justice I fled, tasting the sweets of vengeance, which are very great, but yet a sign of unhappiness. The rage in which I had arrested the three procuresses, and my terror in seeing the woman who had well-nigh killed me, shewed that I was not really cured. To be so I must fly from them and forget them altogether.

The next morning Goudar came and congratulated me on the bold step I had taken, which proved, he said, that I was either cured or more in love than ever. “I have just come from Denmark Street,” he added, “and I only saw the grandmother, who was weeping bitterly, and an attorney, whom no doubt she was consulting."

"Then you have heard what has happened?"

"Yes, I came up a minute after you had gone and I stayed till the three old sluts made up their minds to go with the constable. They resisted and said he ought to leave them till the next day, when they would be able to find someone to bail them. The two bravos drew their swords to resist the law, but the other constable disarmed them one after the other, and the three women were led off. The Charpillon wanted to accompany them, but it was judged best that she should remain at liberty, in order to try and set them free."

Goudar concluded by saying that he should go and see them in prison, and if I felt disposed to come to an arrangement he would mediate between us. I told him that the only arrangement I would accept was the payment of the six thousand francs, and that they might think themselves very lucky that I did not insist on having my interest, and thus repaying myself in part for the sums they had cheated out of me.

A fortnight elapsed without my hearing any more of the matter. The Charpillon dined with them every day, and in fact, kept them. It must have cost her a good deal, for they had two rooms, and their landlord would not allow them to have their meals prepared outside the prison. Goudar told me that the Charpillon said she would never beg me to listen to her mother, though she knew she had only to call on me to obtain anything she wanted. She thought me the most abominable of men. If I feel obliged to maintain that she was equally abominable, I must confess that on this occasion she shewed more strength of mind than I; but whereas I had acted out of passion, her misdeeds were calculated, and tended solely to her own interests.

For the whole of this fortnight I had sought for Edgar in vain, but one morning he came to see me, looking in high spirits.

"Where have you been hiding all this time?" said I, "I have been looking for you everywhere."

"Love has been keeping me a prisoner," said he, "I have got some money for you."

“For me? From what quarter?”

“On behalf of the Ansperghers. Give me a receipt and the necessary declaration, for I am going to restore them myself to the poor Charpillon, who has been weeping for the last fortnight.”

“I daresay she has, I have seen her weep myself; but I like the way in which she has chosen the being who delivered me from her chains as a protector. Does she know that I owe my life to you?”

“She only knew that I was with you at Ranelagh when you saw her dancing instead of dying, but I have told her the whole story since.”

“No doubt she wants you to plead with me in her favour.”

“By no means. She has just been telling me that you are a monster of ingratitude, for she loved you and gave you several proofs of her affection, but now she hates you.”

“Thank Heaven for that! The wretched woman! It’s curious she should have selected you as her lover by way of taking vengeance on me, but take care! she will punish you.”

“It may be so, but at all events it’s a pleasant kind of punishment.”

“I hope you may be happy, but look to yourself; she is a mistress in all sorts of deceit.”

Edgar counted me out two hundred and fifty guineas, for which I gave him a receipt and the declaration he required, and with these documents he went off in high spirits.

After this I might surely flatter myself that all was at an end between us, but I was mistaken.

Just about this time the Crown Prince of Brunswick, now the reigning duke, married the King of England’s sister. The Common Council presented him with the freedom of the City, and the Goldsmith’s Company admitted him into their society, and gave him a splendid box containing the documents which made him a London citizen. The prince was the first gentleman in Europe, and yet he did not disdain to add this new honour to a family illustrious for fourteen hundred years.

On this occasion Lady Harrington was the means of getting Madame Cornelis two hundred guineas. She lent her room in Soho Square to a confectioner who gave a ball and supper to a thousand persons at three guineas each. I paid my three guineas, and had the honour of standing up all the evening with six hundred others, for the table only seated four hundred, and there were several ladies who were unable to procure seats. That evening I saw Lady Grafton seated beside the Duke of Cumberland. She wore her hair without any powder, and all the other ladies were exclaiming about it, and saying how very unbecoming it was. They could not anathematize the innovator too much, but in less than six months Lady Grafton's style of doing the hair became common, crossed the Channel, and spread all over Europe, though it has been given another name. It is still in fashion, and is the only method that can boast the age of thirty years, though it was so unmercifully ridiculed at first.

The supper for which the giver of the feast had received three thousand guineas, or sixty-five thousand francs, contained a most varied assortment of delicacies, but as I had not been dancing, and did not feel taken with any of the ladies present, I left at one in the morning. It was Sunday, a day on which all persons, save criminals, are exempt from arrest; but, nevertheless, the following adventure befell me:

I was dressed magnificently, and was driving home in my carriage, with my negro and another servant seated behind me; and just as we entered Pall Mall I heard a voice crying, "Good night, Seingalt." I put my head out of the window to reply, and in an instant the carriage was surrounded by men armed with pistols, and one of them said, —

"In the king's name!"

My servant asked what they wanted, and they answered, —

"To take him to Newgate, for Sunday makes no difference to criminals."

"And what crime have I committed?"

"You will hear that in prison."

"My master has a right to know his crime before he goes to prison," said the negro.

"Yes, but the magistrate's abed."

The negro stuck to his position, however, and the people who had come up declared with one consent that he was in the right.

The head-constable gave in, and said he would take me to a house in the city.

“Then drive to that city,” said I, “and have done with it.”

We stopped before the house, and I was placed in a large room on the ground floor, furnished solely with benches and long tables. My servant sent back the carriage, and came to keep me company. The six constables said they could not leave me, and told me I should send out for some meat and drink for them. I told my negro to give them what they wanted, and to be as amicable with them as was possible.

As I had not committed any crime, I was quite at ease; I knew that my arrest must be the effect of a slander, and as I was aware that London justice was speedy and equitable, I thought I should soon be free. But I blamed myself for having transgressed the excellent maxim, never to answer anyone in the night time; for if I had not done so I should have been in my house, and not in prison. The mistake, however, had been committed, and there was nothing to be done but to wait patiently. I amused myself by reflecting on my rapid passage from a numerous and exalted assemblage to the vile place I now occupied, though I was still dressed like a prince.

At last the day dawned, and the keeper of the tavern came to see who the prisoner was. I could not helping laughing at him when he saw me, for he immediately began to abuse the constables for not awaking him when I came; he had lost the guinea I should have paid for a private room. At last news was brought that the magistrate was sitting, and that I must be brought up.

A coach was summoned, and I got into it, for if I had dared to walk along the streets in my magnificent attire the mob would have pelted me.

I went into the hall of justice, and all eyes were at once attracted towards me; my silks and satins appeared to them the height of impertinence.

At the end of the room I saw a gentleman sitting in an arm-chair, and concluded him to be my judge. I was right, and the judge was blind. He wore a broad band round his head, passing over his eyes. A man beside me, guessing I was a foreigner, said in French, —

“Be of good courage, Mr. Fielding is a just and equitable magistrate.”

I thanked the kindly unknown, and was delighted to see before me this famous and estimable writer, whose works are an honour to the English nation.

When my turn came, the clerk of the court told Mr. Fielding my name, at least, so I presume.

“Signor Casanova,” said he, in excellent Italian, “be kind enough to step forward. I wish to speak to you.”

I was delighted to hear the accents of my native tongue, and making my way through the press I came up to the bar of the court, and said, —

“Eccomi, Signore.”

He continued to speak Italian, and said, —

“Signor de Casanova, of Venice, you are condemned to perpetual confinement in the prisons of His Majesty the King of Great Britain.”

“I should like to know, sir, for what crime I am condemned. Would you be kind enough to inform me as to its nature?”

“Your demand is a reasonable one, for with us no one is condemned without knowing the cause of his condemnation. You must know, then, that the accusation (which is supported by two witnesses) charges you with intending to do grievous bodily harm to the person of a pretty girl; and as this pretty girl aforesaid goes in dread of you, the law decrees that you must be kept in prison for the rest of your days.”

“Sir, this accusation is a groundless calumny; to that I will take my oath! It is very possible indeed that the girl may fear my vengeance when she comes to consider her own conduct, but I can assure you that I have had no such designs hitherto, and I don’t think I ever shall.”

“She has two witnesses.”

“Then they are false ones. But may I ask your worship the name of my accuser?”

“Miss Charpillon.”

“I thought as much; but I have never given her aught but proofs of my affection.”

“Then you have no wish to do her any bodily harm?”

“Certainly not.”

“Then I congratulate you. You can dine at home; but you must find two sureties. I must have an assurance from the mouths of two householders that you will never commit such a crime.”

“Whom shall I find to do so?”

“Two well-known Englishmen, whose friendship you have gained, and who know that you are incapable of such an action. Send for them, and if they arrive before I go to dinner I will set you at liberty.”

The constable took me back to prison, where I had passed the night, and I gave my servants the addresses of all the householders I recollected, bidding them explain my situation, and to be as quick as possible. They ought to have come before noon, but London is such a large place! They did not arrive, and the magistrate went to dinner. I comforted myself by the thought that he would sit in the afternoon, but I had to put up with a disagreeable experience.

The chief constable, accompanied by an interpreter, came to say that I must go to Newgate. This is a prison where the most wretched and abject criminals are kept.

I signified to him that I was awaiting bail, and that he could take me to Newgate in the evening if it did not come, but he only turned a deaf ear to my petition. The interpreter told me in a whisper that the fellow was certainly paid by the other side to put me to trouble, but that if I liked to bribe him I could stay where I was.

“How much will he want?”

The interpreter took the constable aside, and then told me that I could stay where I was for ten guineas.

“Then say that I should like to see Newgate.”

A coach was summoned, and I was taken away.

When I got to this abode of misery and despair, a hell, such as Dante might have conceived, a crowd of wretches, some of whom were to be hanged in the course of the week, greeted me by deriding my elegant attire. I did not answer them, and they began to get angry and to abuse me. The gaoler quieted them by saying that I was a foreigner and did not understand English, and then took me to a cell, informing me how much it would cost me, and of the prison rules, as if he felt certain that I should make a long stay. But in the course of half an hour, the constable who had tried to get ten guineas out of me told me that bail had arrived and that my carriage was at the door.

I thanked God from the bottom of my heart, and soon found myself in the presence of the blind magistrate. My bail consisted of Pegu, my tailor, and Maisonneuve, my wine merchant, who said they were happy to be able to render me this slight service. In another part of the court I noticed the infamous Charpillon, Rostaing, Goudar, and an attorney. They made no impression on me, and I contented myself with giving them a look of profound contempt.

My two sureties were informed of the amount in which they were to bail me, and signed with a light heart, and then the magistrate said, politely, —

"Signor Casanova, please to sign your name for double the amount, and you will then be a free man again."

I went towards the clerk's table, and on asking the sum I was to answer for was informed that it was forty guineas, each of my sureties signing for twenty. I signed my name, telling Goudar that if the magistrate could have seen the Charpillon he would have valued her beauty at ten thousand guineas. I asked the names of the two witnesses, and was told that they were Rostaing and Bottarelli. I looked contemptuously at Rostaing, who was as pale as death, and averting my face from the Charpillon out of pity, I said, —

"The witnesses are worthy of the charge."

I saluted the judge with respect, although he could not see me, and asked the clerk if I had anything to pay. He replied in the negative, and a dispute ensued between him and the attorney of my fair enemy, who was disgusted on hearing that she could not leave the court without paying the costs of my arrest.

Just as I was going, five or six well-known Englishmen appeared to bail me out, and were mortified to hear that they had come too late. They begged me to forgive the laws of the land, which are only too often converted into a means for the annoyance of foreigners.

At last, after one of the most tedious days I have ever spent, I returned home and went to bed, laughing at the experience I had undergone.

EPISODE 24 — FLIGHT FROM LONDON TO BERLIN

CHAPTER XIV

BOTTARELLI — A Letter from Pauline — The Avenging Parrot — Pocchini — Guerra, the Venetian — I Meet Sara Again; My Idea of Marrying Her and Settling in Switzerland — The Hanoverians

Thus ended the first act of the comedy; the second began the next morning. I was just getting up, when I heard a noise at the street door, and on putting my head out of the window I saw Pocchini, the scoundrel who had robbed me at Stuttgart trying to get into my house. I cried out wrathfully that I would have nothing to do with him, and slammed down my window.

A little later Goudar put in an appearance. He had got a copy of the St. James's Chronicle, containing a brief report of my arrest, and of my being set a liberty under a bail of eighty guineas. My name and the lady's were disguised, but Rostaing and Bottarelli were set down plainly, and the editor praised their conduct. I felt as if I should like to know Bottarelli, and begged Goudar to take me to him, and Martinelli, happening to call just then, said he would come with us.

We entered a wretched room on the third floor of a wretched house, and there we beheld a picture of the greatest misery. A woman and five children clothed in rags formed the foreground, and in the background was Bottarelli, in an old dressing-gown, writing at a table worthy of Philemon and Baucis. He rose as we came in, and the sight of him moved me to compassion. I said, —

"Do you know me, sir?"

"No, sir, I do not."

"I am Casanova, against whom you bore false witness; whom you tried to cast into Newgate."

"I am very sorry, but look around you and say what choice have I? I have no bread to give my children. I will do as much in your favour another time for nothing."

“Are you not afraid of the gallows?”

“No, for perjury is not punished with death; besides it is very difficult to prove.”

“I have heard you are a poet.”

“Yes. I have lengthened the Didone and abridged the Demetrio.”

“You are a great poet, indeed!”

I felt more contempt than hatred for the rascal, and gave his wife a guinea, for which she presented me with a wretched pamphlet by her husband: “The Secrets of the Freemasons Displayed.” Bottarelli had been a monk in his native city, Pisa, and had fled to England with his wife, who had been a nun.

About this time M. de Saa surprised me by giving me a letter from my fair Portuguese, which confirmed the sad fate of poor Clairmont. Pauline said she was married to Count Al —— . I was astonished to hear M. de Saa observe that he had known all about Pauline from the moment she arrived in London. That is the hobby of all diplomatists; they like people to believe that they are omniscient. However, M. de Saa was a man of worth and talent, and one could excuse this weakness as an incident inseparable from his profession; while most diplomatists only make themselves ridiculous by their assumption of universal knowledge.

M. de Saa had been almost as badly treated by the Charpillon as myself, and we might have condoled with one another, but the subject was not mentioned.

A few days afterwards, as I was walking idly about, I passed a place called the Parrot Market. As I was amusing myself by looking at these curious birds, I saw a fine young one in a cage, and asked what language it spoke. They told me that it was quite young and did not speak at all yet, so I bought it for ten guineas. I thought I would teach the bird a pretty speech, so I had the cage hung by my bed, and repeated dozens of times every day the following sentence: “The Charpillon is a bigger wh — e than her mother.”

The only end I had in view was my private amusement, and in a fortnight the bird had learnt the phrase with the utmost exactness; and every time it uttered the words it accompanied them with a shriek of laughter which I had not taught it, but which made me laugh myself.

One day Gondar heard the bird, and told me that if I sent it to the Exchange I should certainly get fifty guineas for it. I welcomed the idea, and resolved to make the parrot the instrument of my vengeance against the woman who had treated me so badly. I secured myself from fear of the law, which is severe in such cases, by entrusting the bird to my negro, to whom such merchandise was very suitable.

For the first two or three days my parrot did not attract much attention, its observations being in French; but as soon as those who knew the subject of them had heard it, its audience increased and bids were made. Fifty guineas seemed rather too much, and my negro wanted me to lower the price, but I would not agree, having fallen in love with this odd revenge.

In the course of a week Goudar came to inform me of the effect the parrot's criticism had produced in the Charpillon family. As the vendor was my negro, there could be no doubt as to whom it belonged, and who had been its master of languages. Goudar said that the Charpillon thought my vengeance very ingenious, but that the mother and aunts were furious. They had consulted several counsel, who agreed in saying that a parrot could not be indicted for libel, but that they could make me pay dearly for my jest if they could prove that I had been the bird's instructor. Goudar warned me to be careful of owning to the fact, as two witnesses would suffice to undo me.

The facility with which false witnesses may be produced in London is something dreadful. I have myself seen the word evidence written in large characters in a window; this is as much as to say that false witnesses may be procured within.

The St. James's Chronicle contained an article on my parrot, in which the writer remarked that the ladies whom the bird insulted must be very poor and friendless, or they would have bought it at once, and have thus prevented the thing from becoming the talk of the town. He added, —

"The teacher of the parrot has no doubt made the bird an instrument of his vengeance, and has displayed his wit in doing so; he ought to be an Englishman."

I met my good friend Edgar, and asked him why he had not bought the little slanderer.

“Because it delights all who know anything about the object of the slander,” said he.

At last Jarbe found a purchaser for fifty guineas, and I heard afterwards that Lord Grosvenor had bought it to please the Charpillon, with whom he occasionally diverted himself.

Thus my relations with that girl came to an end. I have seen her since with the greatest indifference, and without any renewal of the old pain.

One day, as I was going into St. James’s Park, I saw two girls drinking milk in a room on the ground floor of a house. They called out to me, but not knowing them I passed on my way. However, a young officer of my acquaintance came after me and said they were Italians, and being curious to see them I retracted my steps.

When I entered the room I was accosted by the scoundrelly Pocchini, dressed in a military uniform, who said he had the honour of introducing me to his daughters.

“Indeed,” said I, “I remember two other daughters of yours robbing me of a snuff-box and two watches at Stuttgart.”

“You lie!” said the impudent rascal.

I gave him no verbal answer, but took up a glass of milk and flung it in his face, and then left the room without more ado.

I was without my sword. The young officer who had brought me into the place followed me and told me I must not go without giving his friend some satisfaction.

“Tell him to come out, and do you escort him to the Green Park, and I shall have the pleasure of giving him a caning in your presence, unless you would like to fight for him; if so, you must let me go home and get my sword. But do you know this man whom you call your friend?”

“No, but he is an officer, and it is I that brought him here.”

“Very good, I will fight to the last drop of my blood; but I warn you your friend is a thief. But go; I will await you.”

In the course of a quarter of an hour they all came out, but the Englishman and Pocchini followed me alone. There were a good many people about, and I went before them till we reached Hyde Park. Pocchini attempted to speak to me, but I replied, lifting my cane, —

“Scoundrel, draw your sword, unless you want me to give you a thrashing!”

“I will never draw upon a defenceless man.”

I gave him a blow with my cane by way of answer, and the coward, instead of drawing his sword, began to cry out that I wished to draw him into a fight. The Englishman burst out laughing and begged me to pardon his interference, and then, taking me by the arm, said, —

“Come along, sir, I see you know the gentleman.”

The coward went off in another direction, grumbling as he went.

On the way I informed the officer of the very good reasons I had for treating Pocchini as a rogue, and he agreed that I had been perfectly right. “Unfortunately,” he added, “I am in love with one of his daughters.”

When we were in the midst of St. James’s Park we saw them, and I could not help laughing when I noticed Goudar with one of them on each side.

“How did you come to know these ladies?” said I.

“Their father the captain,” he answered, “has sold me jewels; he introduced me to them.”

“Where did you leave our father?” asked one.

“In Hyde Park, after giving him a caning.”

“You served him quite right.”

The young Englishman was indignant to hear them approving my ill-treatment of their father, and shook my hand and went away, swearing to me that he would never be seen in their company again.

A whim of Goudar’s, to which I was weak enough to consent, made me dine with these miserable women in a tavern on the borders of London. The rascally Goudar made them drunk, and in this state they told some terrible truths about their pretended father. He did not live with them, but paid them nocturnal visits in which he robbed them of all the money they had earned.

He was their pander, and made them rob their visitors instructing them to pass it off as a joke if the theft was discovered. They gave him the stolen articles, but he never said what he did with them. I could not help laughing at this involuntary confession, remembering what Goudar had said about Pocchini selling him jewels.

After this wretched meal I went away leaving the duty of escorting them back to Goudar. He came and saw me the next day, and informed me that the girls had been arrested and taken to prison just as they were entering their house.

“I have just been to Pocchini’s,” said he, “but the landlord tells me he has not been in since yesterday.”

The worthy and conscientious Goudar added that he did not care if he never saw him again, as he owed the fellow ten guineas for a watch, which his daughters had probably stolen, and which was well worth double.

Four days later I saw him again, and he informed me that the rascal had left London with a servant-maid, whom he had engaged at a registry office where any number of servants are always ready to take service with the first comer. The keeper of the office answers for their fidelity.

“The girl he has gone with is a pretty one, from what the man tells me, and they have taken ship from London. I am sorry he went away before I could pay him for the watch; I am dreading every moment to meet the individual from whom it was stolen.”

I never heard what became of the girls, but Pocchini will re-appear on the scene in due course.

I led a tranquil and orderly life, which I should have been pleased to continue for the remainder of my days; but circumstances and my destiny ordered it otherwise, and against these it is not becoming in a Christian philosopher to complain. I went several times to see my daughter at her school, and I also frequented the British Museum, where I met Dr. Mati. One day I found an Anglican minister with him, and I asked the clergyman how many different sects there were in England.

“Sir,” he replied in very tolerable Italian, “no one can give a positive answer to that question, for every week some sect dies and some new one is brought into being. All that is necessary is for a man of good faith, or some rogue desirous of money or notoriety, to stand in some frequented place and begin preaching. He explains some texts of the Bible in his own fashion, and if he pleases the gapers around him they invite him to expound next Sunday, often in a tavern. He keeps the appointment and explains his new doctrines in a spirited manner. Then people begin to talk of him; he disputes with ministers of other sects; he and his followers give themselves a name, and the thing is done. Thus, or almost thus, are all the numerous English sects produced."

About this time M. Steffano Guerra, a noble Venetian who was travelling with the leave of his Government, lost a case against an English painter who had executed a miniature painting of one of the prettiest ladies in London, Guerra having given a written promise to pay twenty-five guineas. When it was finished Guerra did not like it, and would not take it or pay the price. The Englishman, in accordance with the English custom, began by arresting his debtor; but Guerra was released on bail, and brought the matter before the courts, which condemned him to pay the twenty-five guineas. He appealed, lost again, and was in the end obliged to pay. Guerra contented that he had ordered a portrait, that a picture bearing no likeness to the lady in question was not a portrait, and that he had therefore a right to refuse payment. The painter replied that it was a portrait as it had been painted from life. The judgment was that the painter must live by his trade, and that as Guerra had given him painting to do he must therefore provide him with the wherewithal to live, seeing that the artist swore he had done his best to catch the likeness. Everybody thought this sentence just, and so did I; but I confess it also seemed rather hard, especially to Guerra, who with costs had to pay a hundred guineas for the miniature.

Malingan's daughter died just as her father received a public box on the ear from a nobleman who liked piquet, but did not like players who corrected the caprices of fortune. I gave the poor wretch the wherewithal to bury his daughter and to leave England. He died soon after at Liege, and his wife told me of the circumstance, saying that he had expired regretting his inability to pay his debts.

M. M —— F —— came to London as the representative of the canton of Berne, and I called, but was not received. I suspected that he had got wind of the liberties I had taken with pretty Sara, and did not want me to have an opportunity for renewing them. He was a somewhat eccentric man, so I did not take offence, and had almost forgotten all about it when chance led me to the Marylebone Theatre one evening. The spectators sat at little tables, and the charge for admittance was only a shilling, but everyone was expected to order something, were it only a pot of ale.

On going into the theatre I chanced to sit down beside a girl whom I did not notice at first, but soon after I came in she turned towards me, and I beheld a ravishing profile which somehow seemed familiar; but I attributed that to the idea of perfect beauty that was graven on my soul. The more I looked at her the surer I felt that I had never seen her before, though a smile of inexpressible slyness had begun to play about her lips. One of her gloves fell, and I hastened to restore it to her, whereupon she thanked me in a few well-chosen French sentences.

“Madam is not English, then?” said I, respectfully.

“No, sir, I am a Swiss, and a friend of yours.”

At this I looked round, and on my right hand sat Madame M —— F —— , then her eldest daughter, then her husband. I got up, and after bowing to the lady, for whom I had a great esteem, I saluted her husband, who only replied by a slight movement of the head. I asked Madame M —— F —— what her husband had against me, and she said that Possano had written to him telling some dreadful stories about me.

There was not time for me to explain and justify myself, so I devoted all my energies to the task of winning the daughter’s good graces. In three years she had grown into a perfect beauty: she knew it, and by her blushes as she spoke to me I knew she was thinking of what had passed between us in the presence of my housekeeper. I was anxious to find out whether she would acknowledge the fact, or deny it altogether. If she had done so I should have despised her. When I had seen her before, the blossom of her beauty was still in the bud, now it had opened out in all its splendour.

“Charming Sara,” I said, “you have so enchanted me that I cannot help asking you a couple of questions, which if you value my peace of mind you will answer. Do you remember what happened at Berne?”

“Yes.”

“And do you repent of what you did?”

“No.”

No man of any delicacy could ask the third question, which may be understood. I felt sure that Sara would make me happy-nay, that she was even longing for the moment, and gave reins to my passions, determined to convince her that I was deserving of her love. The waiter came to enquire if we had any orders, and I begged Madame M —— F —— to allow me to offer her some oysters. After the usual polite refusals she gave in, and I profited by her acceptance to order all the delicacies of the season, including a hare (a great delicacy in London), champagne, choice liqueurs, larks, ortolans, truffles, sweetmeats — everything, in fact, that money could buy, and I was not at all surprised when the bill proved to amount to ten guineas. But I was very much surprised when M. M —— F —— , who had eaten like a Turk and drunk like a Swiss, said calmly that it was too dear.

I begged him politely not to trouble himself about the cost; and by way of proving that I did not share his opinion, I gave the waiter half-a-guinea; the worthy man looked as if he wished that such customers came more often. The Swiss, who had been pale and gloomy enough a short while before; was rubicund and affable. Sara glanced at me and squeezed my hand; I had conquered.

When the play was over, M —— F —— asked me if I would allow him to call on me. I embraced him in reply. His servant came in, and said that he could not find a coach; and I, feeling rather surprised that he had not brought his carriage, offered him the use of mine, telling my man to get me a sedan-chair.

“I accept your kind offer,” said he, “on the condition that you allow me to occupy the chair.”

I consented to this arrangement, and took the mother and the two daughters with me in the carriage.

On the way, Madame M —— F —— was very polite, gently blaming her husband for the rudeness of which I had to complain. I said that I would avenge myself by paying an assiduous court to him in the future; but she pierced me to the heart by saying that they were on the point of departing. “We wanted to go on the day after next,” she said, “and to-morrow we shall have to leave our present rooms to their new occupants. A matter of business which my husband was not able to conclude will oblige us to stay for another week, and to-morrow we shall have the double task of moving and finding new apartments."

"Then you have not yet got new rooms?"

"No, but my husband says he is certain to find some to-morrow morning."

"Furnished, I suppose, for as you intend to leave you will be selling, your furniture."

"Yes, and we shall have to pay the expenses of carriage to the buyer."

On hearing that M. M —— F —— was sure of finding lodgings, I was precluded from offering to accommodate them in my own house, as the lady might think that I only made the offer because I was sure it would not be accepted.

When we got to the door of their house we alighted, and the mother begged me to come in. She and her husband slept on the second floor, and the two girls on the third. Everything was upside down, and as Madame M —— F —— had something to say to the landlady she asked me to go up with her daughters. It was cold, and the room we entered had no fire in it. The sister went into the room adjoining and I stayed with Sara, and all of a sudden I clasped her to my breast, and feeling that her desires were as ardent as mine I fell with her on to a sofa where we mingled our beings in all the delights of voluptuous ardours. But this happiness was short lived; scarcely was the work achieved when we heard a footstep on the stair. It was the father.

If M —— F —— had had any eyes he must have found us out, for my face bore the marks of agitation, the nature of which it was easy to divine. We exchanged a few brief compliments; I shook his hand and disappeared. I was in such a state of excitement when I got home that I made up my mind to leave England and to follow Sara to Switzerland. In the night I formed my plans, and resolved to offer the family my house during the time they stayed in England, and if necessary to force them to accept my offer.

In the morning I hastened to call on M —— F —— , and found him on his doorstep.

"I am going to try and get a couple of rooms," said he.

“They are already found,” I replied. “My house is at your service, and you must give me the preference. Let us come upstairs.”

“Everybody is in bed.”

“Never mind,” said I, and we proceeded to go upstairs.

Madame M —— F —— apologized for being in bed. Her husband told her that I wanted to let them some rooms, but I laughed and said I desired they would accept my hospitality as that of a friend. After some polite denials my offer was accepted, and it was agreed that the whole family should take up their quarters with me in the evening.

I went home, and was giving the necessary orders when I was told that two young ladies wished to see me. I went down in person, and I was agreeably surprised to see Sara and her sister. I asked them to come in, and Sara told me that the landlady would not let their belongings out of the house before her father paid a debt of forty guineas, although a city merchant had assured her it should be settled in a week. The long and snort of it was that Sara’s father had sent me a bill and begged me to discount it.

I took the bill and gave her a bank note for fifty pounds in exchange, telling her that she could give me the change another time. She thanked me with great simplicity and went her way, leaving me delighted with the confidence she had placed in me.

The fact of M. M —— F — — ‘s wanting forty guineas did not make me divine that he was in some straits, for I looked at everything through rose-coloured glasses, and was only too happy to be of service to him.

I made a slight dinner in order to have a better appetite for supper, and spent the afternoon in writing letters. In the evening M. M —— F — — ‘s man came with three great trunks and innumerable card-board boxes, telling me that the family would soon follow; but I awaited them in vain till nine o’clock. I began to get alarmed and went to the house, where I found them all in a state of consternation. Two ill-looking fellows who were in the room enlightened me; and assuming a jovial and unconcerned air, I said, —

“I’ll wager, now, that this is the work of some fierce creditor.”

“You are right,” answered the father, “but I am sure of discharging the debt in five or six days, and that’s why I put off my departure.”

"Then you were arrested after you had sent on your trunks."

"Just after."

"And what have you done?"

"I have sent for bail."

"Why did you not send to me?"

"Thank you, I am grateful for your kindness, but you are a foreigner, and sureties have to be householders."

"But you ought to have told me what had happened, for I have got you an excellent supper, and I am dying of hunger."

It was possible that this debt might exceed my means, so I did not dare to offer to pay it. I took Sara aside, and on hearing that all his trouble was on account of a debt of a hundred and fifty pounds, I asked the bailiff whether we could go away if the debt was paid.

"Certainly," said he, shewing me the bill of exchange.

I took out three bank notes of fifty pounds each, and gave them to the man, and taking the bill I said to the poor Swiss, —

"You shall pay me the money before you leave England."

The whole family wept with joy, and after embracing them all I summoned them to come and sup with me and forget the troubles of life.

We drove off to my house and had a merry supper, though the worthy mother could not quite forget her sadness. After supper I took them to the rooms which had been prepared for them, and with which they were delighted, and so I wished them good night, telling them that they should be well entertained till their departure, and that I hoped to follow them into Switzerland.

When I awoke the next day I was in a happy frame of mind. On examining my desires I found that they had grown too strong to be overcome, but I did not wish to overcome them. I loved Sara, and I felt so certain of possessing her that I put all desires out of my mind; desires are born only of doubt, and doubt torments the soul. Sara was mine; she had given herself to me out of pure passion, without any shadow of self-interest.

I went to the father's room, and found him engaged in opening his trunks. His wife looked sad, so I asked her if she were not well. She replied that her health was perfect, but that the thought of the sea voyage troubled her sorely. The father begged me to excuse him at breakfast as he had business to attend to. The two young ladies came down, and after we had breakfast I asked the mother why they were unpacking their trunks so short a time before starting. She smiled and said that one trunk would be ample for all their possessions, as they had resolved to sell all superfluities. As I had seen some beautiful dresses, fine linen, and exquisite lace, I could not refrain from saying that it would be a great pity to sell cheaply what would have to be replaced dearly.

"You are right," she said, "but, nevertheless, there is no pleasure so great as the consciousness of having paid one's debts."

"You must not sell anything," I replied, in a lively manner, "for as I am going to Switzerland with you I can pay your debts, and you shall repay me when you can."

At these words astonishment was depicted on her face.

"I did not think you were speaking seriously," said she.

"Perfectly seriously, and here is the object of my vows."

With these words I seized Sara's hand and covered it with kisses.

Sara blushed, said nothing, and the mother looked kindly at us; but after a moment's silence she spoke at some length, and with the utmost candour and wisdom. She gave me circumstantial information as to the position of the family and her husband's restricted means, saying that under the circumstances he could not have avoided running into debt, but that he had done wrong to bring them all with him to London.

"If he had been by himself," she said, "he could have lived here comfortably enough with only one servant, but with a family to provide for the two thousand crowns per annum provided by the Government are quite insufficient. My old father has succeeded in persuading the State to discharge my husband's debts, but to make up the extra expense they will not employ a Charge d'affaires; a banker with the title of agent will collect the interest on their English securities."

She ended by saying that she thought Sara was fortunate to have pleased me, but that she was not sure whether her husband would consent to the marriage.

The word “marriage” made Sara blush, and I was pleased, though it was evident there would be difficulties in the way.

M —— F —— came back and told his wife that two clothes dealers would come to purchase their superfluous clothes in the afternoon; but after explaining my ideas I had not much trouble in convincing him that it would be better not to sell them, and that he could become my debtor to the amount of two hundred pounds, on which he could pay interest till he was able to return me my capital. The agreement was written out the same day, but I did not mention the marriage question, as his wife had told me she would discuss it with him in private.

On the third day he came down by himself to talk with me.

“My wife,” he began, “has told me of your intentions, and I take it as a great honour, I assure you; but I cannot give you my Sara, as she is promised to M. de W —— , and family reasons prevent me from going back from my word. Besides my old father, a strict Calvinist, would object to the difference in religion. He would never believe that his dear little grandchild would be happy with a Roman Catholic.”

As a matter of fact I was not at all displeased at what he said. I was certainly very fond of Sara, but the word “marriage” had a disagreeable sound to me. I answered that circumstances might change in time, and that in the meanwhile I should be quite content if he would allow me to be the friend of the family and to take upon myself all the responsibility of the journey. He promised everything, and assured me that he was delighted at his daughter having won my affection.

After this explanation I gave Sara as warm marks of my love as decency would allow in the presence of her father and mother, and I could see that all the girl thought of was love.

The fifth day I went up to her room, and finding her in bed all the fires of passion flamed up in my breast, for since my first visit to their house I had not been alone with her. I threw myself upon her, covering her with kisses, and she shewed herself affectionate but reserved. In vain I endeavoured to succeed; she opposed a gentle resistance to my efforts, and though she caressed me, she would not let me attain my end.

“Why, divine Sara,” said I, “do you oppose my loving ecstasy?”

“Dearest, I entreat of you not to ask for any more than I am willing to give.”

“Then you no longer love me?”

“Cruel man, I adore you!”

“Then why do you treat me to a refusal, after having once surrendered unreservedly?”

“I have given myself to you, and we have both been happy, and I think that should be enough for us.”

“There must be some reason for this change. If you love me, dearest Sara, this renunciation must be hard for you to bear.”

“I confess it, but nevertheless I feel it is my duty. I have made up my mind to subdue my passion from no weak motive, but from a sense of what I owe to myself. I am under obligations to you, and if I were to repay the debt I have contracted with my body I should be degraded in my own eyes. When we enjoyed each other before only love was between us — there was no question of debit and credit. My heart is now the thrall of what I owe you, and to these debts it will not give what it gave so readily to love.”

“This is a strange philosophy, Sara; believe me it is fallacious, and the enemy of your happiness as well as mine. These sophisms lead you astray and wound me to the heart. Give me some credit for delicacy of feeling, and believe me you owe me nothing.”

“You must confess that if you had not loved me you would have done nothing for my father.”

“Certainly I will confess nothing of the kind; I would readily do as much, and maybe more, out of regard for your worthy mother. It is quite possible, indeed, that in doing this small service for your father I had no thoughts of you at all.”

“It might be so; but I do not believe it was so. Forgive me, dearest, but I cannot make up my mind to pay my debts in the way you wish.”

"It seems to me that if you are grateful to me your love ought to be still more ardent."

"It cannot be more ardent than it is already."

"Do you know how grievously you make me suffer?"

"Alas! I suffer too; but do not reproach me; let us love each other still."

This dialogue is not the hundredth part of what actually passed between us till dinner-time. The mother came in, and finding me seated at the foot of the daughter's bed, laughed, and asked me why I kept her in bed. I answered with perfect coolness that we had been so interested in our conversation that we had not noticed the flight of time.

I went to dress, and as I thought over the extraordinary change which had taken place in Sara I resolved that it should not last for long. We dined together gaily, and Sara and I behaved in all respects like two lovers. In the evening I took them to the Italian Opera, coming home to an excellent supper.

The next morning I passed in the city, having accounts to settle with my bankers. I got some letters of exchange on Geneva, and said farewell to the worthy Mr. Bosanquet. In the afternoon I got a coach for Madame M —— F —— to pay some farewells calls, and I went to say good-bye to my daughter at school. The dear little girl burst into tears, saying that she would be lost without me, and begging me not to forget her. I was deeply moved. Sophie begged me to go and see her mother before I left England, and I decided on doing so.

At supper we talked over our journey, and M. M —— F —— agreed with me that it would be better to go by Dunkirk than Ostend. He had very little more business to attend to. His debts were paid, and he said he thought he would have a matter of fifty guineas in his pocket at the journey's end, after paying a third share of all the travelling expenses. I had to agree to this, though I made up my mind at the same time not to let him see any of the accounts. I hoped to win Sara, in one way or another, when we got to Berne.

The next day, after breakfast, I took her hand in presence of her mother, and asked her if she would give me her heart if I could obtain her father's consent at Berne.

"Your mother," I added, "has promised me that hers shall not be wanting."

At this the mother got up, and saying that we had no doubt a good deal to talk over, she and her eldest daughter went out to pay some calls.

As soon as we were alone Sara said that she could not understand how I could have the smallest doubt as to whether her consent would be given.

"I have shewn you how well I love you," said she, tenderly; "and I am sure I should be very happy as your wife. You may be sure that your wishes will be mine, and that, however far you lead me, Switzerland shall claim no thought of mine."

I pressed the amorous Sara to my bosom in a transport of delight, which was shared by her; but as she saw me grow more ardent she begged me to be moderate. Clasping me in her arms she adjured me not to ask her for that which she was determined not to grant till she was mine by lawful wedlock.

"You will drive me to despair! Have you reflected that this resistance may cost me my life? Can you love, and yet entertain this fatal prejudice? And yet I am sure you love me, and pleasure too."

"Yes, dearest one, I do love you, and amorous pleasure with you; but you must respect my delicacy."

My eyes were wet with tears, and she was so affected that she fell fainting to the ground. I lifted her up and gently laid her on the bed. Her pallor alarmed me. I brought smelling-salts, I rubbed her forehead with Savoy-water, and she soon opened her eyes, and seemed delighted to find me calm again.

The thought of taking advantage of her helplessness would have horrified me. She sat up on the bed, and said, —

"You have just given a true proof of the sincerity of your affection."

"Did you think, sweetheart, that I was vile enough to abuse your weakness? Could I enjoy a pleasure in which you had no share?"

"I did not think you would do such a thing, but I should not have resisted, though it is possible that I should not have loved you afterwards."

"Sara, though you do not know, you charm my soul out of my body."

After this I sat down sadly on the bed, and abandoned myself to the most melancholy reflections, from which Sara did not endeavour to rouse me.

Her mother came in and asked why she was on the bed, but not at all suspiciously. Sara told her the truth.

M. M —— F —— came in soon after, and we dined together, but silently. What I had heard from the girl's lips had completely overwhelmed me. I saw I had nothing to hope for, and that it was time for me to look to myself. Six weeks before, God had delivered me from my bondage to an infamous woman, and now I was in danger of becoming the slave of an angel. Such were my reflections whilst Sara was fainting, but it was necessary for me to consider the matter at my leisure.

There was a sale of valuable articles in the city, the means taken for disposing of them being a lottery. Sara had read the announcement, and I asked her with her mother and sister to come with me and take part in it. I had not much trouble in obtaining their consent, and we found ourselves in distinguished company, among the persons present being the Countess of Harrington, Lady Stanhope, and Emilie and her daughters. Emilie had a strange case before the courts. She had given information to the police that her husband had been robbed of six thousand pounds, though everyone said that she herself was the thief.

Madame M —— F —— did not take a ticket, but she allowed me to take tickets for her daughters, who were in high glee, since for ten or twelve guineas they got articles worth sixty.

Every day I was more taken with Sara; but feeling sure that I should only obtain slight favours from her, I thought it was time to come to an explanation. So after supper I said that as it was not certain that Sara could become my wife I had determined not to accompany them to Berne. The father told me I was very wise, and that I could still correspond with his daughter, Sara said nothing, but I could see she was much grieved.

I passed a dreadful night; such an experience was altogether new to me. I weighed Sara's reasons, and they seemed to me to be merely frivolous, which drove me to conclude that my caresses had displeased her.

For the last three days I found myself more than once alone with her; but I was studiously moderate, and she caressed me in a manner that would have made my bliss if I had not already obtained the one great favour. It was at this time I learnt the truth of the maxim that if abstinence is sometimes the spur of love, it has also the contrary effect. Sara had brought my feeling to a pitch of gentle friendship, while an infamous prostitute like the Charpillon, who knew how to renew hope and yet grant nothing, ended by inspiring me with contempt, and finally with hatred.

The family sailed for Ostend, and I accompanied them to the mouth of the Thames. I gave Sara a letter for Madame de W —— . This was the name of the learned Hedvig whom she did not know. They afterwards became sisters-in-law, as Sara married a brother of M. de W —— , and was happy with him.

Even now I am glad to hear tidings of my old friends and their doings, but the interest I take in such matters is not to be compared to my interest in some obscure story of ancient history. For our contemporaries, the companions, of our youthful follies, we have a kind of contempt, somewhat similar to that which we entertain for ourselves. Four years ago I wrote to Madame G —— at Hamburg, and my letter began:

"After a silence of twenty-one years …"

She did not deign to reply, and I was by no means displeased. We cared no longer for one another, and it is quite natural that it should be so.

When I tell my reader who Madame G —— is, he will be amused. Two years ago I set out for Hamburg, but my good genius made me turn back to Dux; what had I to do at Hamburg?

After my guests were gone I went to the Italian Opera at Covent Garden, and met Goudar, who asked me if I would come to the Sartori's concert. He told me I should see a beautiful young English woman there who spoke Italian. As I had just lost Sara I did not much care about making new acquaintances, but still I was curious to see the young marvel. I indulged my curiosity, and I am glad to say that instead of being amused I was wearied, though the young English woman was pretty enough. A young Livonian, who called himself Baron of Stenau, seemed extremely interested in her. After supper she offered us tickets for the next concert, and I took one for myself and one for Gondar, giving her two guineas, but the Livonian baron took fifty tickets, and gave her a bank note for fifty guineas.

I saw by this that he wanted to take the place by storm, and I liked his way of doing it. I supposed him to be rich, without caring to enquire into his means. He made advances to me and we became friends, and the reader will see in due time what a fatal acquaintance he was.

One day as I was walking with Goudar in Hyde Park he left me to speak to two ladies who seemed pretty.

He was not long absent, and said, when he rejoined me, —

“A Hanoverian lady, a widow and the mother of five daughters, came to England two months ago with her whole family. She lives close by, and is occupied in soliciting compensation from the Government for any injury that was done her by the passage of the Duke of Cumberland’s army. The mother herself is sick and and never leaves her bed; she sends her two eldest daughters to petition the Government, and they are the two young ladies you have just seen. They have not met with any success. The eldest daughter is twenty-two, and the youngest fourteen; they are all pretty and can speak English, French, and German equally well, and are always glad to see visitors. I had been to visit them myself, but as I gave them nothing I do not care to go there alone a second time. If you like, however, I can introduce you.”

“You irritate my curiosity. Come along, but if the one that pleases me is not complaisant she shall have nothing.”

“They will not even allow one to take them by the hand.”

“They are Charpillons, I suppose.”

“It looks like it. But you won’t see any men there:”

We were shewn into a large room where I noticed three pretty girls and an evil-looking man. I began with the usual compliments, to which the girls replied politely, but with an air of great sadness.

Goudar spoke to the man, and then came to me shrugging his shoulders, and saying, —

“We have come at a sad time. That man is a bailiff who has come to take the mother to prison if she can’t pay her landlord the twenty guineas’ rent she owes him, and they haven’t got a farthing. When the mother has been sent to prison the landlord will no doubt turn the girls out of doors.”

"They can live with their mother for nothing."

"Not at all. If they have got the money they can have their meals in prison, but no one is allowed to live in a prison except the prisoners."

I asked one of them where her sisters were.

"They have gone out, to look for money, for the landlord won't accept any surety, and we have nothing to sell."

"All this is very sad; what does your mother say?"

"She only weeps, and yet, though she is ill and cannot leave her bed, they are going to take her to prison. By way of consolation the landlord says he will have her carried."

"It is very hard. But your looks please me, mademoiselle, and if you will be kind I may be able to extricate you from the difficulty."

"I do not know what you mean by 'kind.'"

"Your mother will understand; go and ask her."

"Sir, you do not know us; we are honest girls, and ladies of position besides."

With these words the young woman turned her back on me, and began to weep again. The two others, who were quite as pretty, stood straight up and said not a word. Goudar whispered to me in Italian that unless we did something for them we should cut but a sorry figure there; and I was cruel enough to go away without saying a word.

CHAPTER XV

The Hanoverians

As we were leaving the house we met the two eldest sisters, who came home looking very sad. I was struck by their beauty, and extremely surprised to hear myself greeted by one of them, who said, —

“It is M. the Chevalier de Seingalt.”

“Himself, mademoiselle, and sorely grieved at your misfortune.”

“Be kind enough to come in again for a moment.”

“I am sorry to say that I have an important engagement.”

“I will not keep you for longer than a quarter of an hour.”

I could not refuse so small a favour, and she employed the time in telling me how unfortunate they had been in Hanover, how they had come to London to obtain compensation, of their failure, their debts, the cruelty of the landlord, their mother’s illness, the prison that awaited her, the likelihood of their being cast into the street, and the cruelty of all their acquaintances.

“We have nothing to sell, and all our resources consist of two shillings, which we shall have to spend on bread, on which we live.”

“Who are your friends? How can they abandon you at such a time?”

She mentioned several names — among others, Lord Baltimore, Marquis Carracioli, the Neapolitan ambassador, and Lord Pembroke.

“I can’t believe it,” said I, “for I know the two last noblemen to be both rich and generous. There must be some good reason for their conduct, since you are beautiful; and for these gentlemen beauty is a bill to be honoured on sight.”

“Yes, there is a reason. These rich noblemen abandon us with contempt. They refuse to take pity on us because we refuse to yield to their guilty passion.”

“That is to say, they have taken a fancy to you, and as you will not have pity on them they refuse to have pity on you. Is it not so?”

“That is exactly the situation.”

“Then I think they are in the right.”

“In the right?”

“Yes, I am quite of their opinion. We leave you to enjoy your sense of virtue, and we spend our money in procuring those favours which you refuse us. Your misfortune really is your prettiness, if you were ugly you would get twenty guineas fast enough. I would give you the money myself, and the action would be put down to benevolence; whereas, as the case stands, if I were to give you anything it would be thought that I was actuated by the hope of favours to come, and I should be laughed at, and deservedly, as a dupe.”

I felt that this was the proper way to speak to the girl, whose eloquence in pleading her cause was simply wonderful.

She did not reply to my oration, and I asked her how she came to know me.

“I saw you at Richmond with the Charpillon.”

"She cost me two thousand guineas, and I got nothing for my money; but I have profited by the lesson, and in future I shall never pay in advance."

Just then her mother called her, and, begging me to wait a moment, she went into her room, and returned almost directly with the request that I would come and speak to the invalid.

I found her sitting up in her bed; she looked about forty-five, and still preserved traces of her former beauty; her countenance bore the imprint of sadness, but had no marks of sickness whatsoever. Her brilliant and expressive eyes, her intellectual face, and a suggestion of craft about her, all bade me be on my guard, and a sort of false likeness to the Charpillon's mother made me still more cautious, and fortified me in my resolution to give no heed to the appeals of pity.

"Madam," I began, "what can I do for you?"

"Sir," she replied, "I have heard the whole of your conversations with my daughters, and you must confess that you have not talked to them in a very fatherly manner."

"Quite so, but the only part which I desire to play with them is that of lover, and a fatherly style would not have been suitable to the part. If I had the happiness of being their father, the case would be altered. What I have said to your daughters is what I feel, and what I think most likely to bring about the end I have in view. I have not the slightest pretence to virtue, but I adore the fair sex, and now you and they know the road to my purse. If they wish to preserve their virtue, why let them; nobody will trouble them, and they, on their side, must not expect anything from men. Good-bye, madam; you may reckon on my never addressing your daughters again."

"Wait a moment, sir. My husband was the Count of —— , and you see that my daughters are of respectable birth."

"Have you not pity for our situation?"

"I pity you extremely, and I would relieve you in an instant if your daughters were ugly, but as it is they are pretty, and that alters the case."

"What an argument!"

"It is a very strong one with me, and I think I am the best judge of arguments which apply to myself. You want twenty guineas; well, you shall have them after one of your five countesses has spent a joyous night with me."

"What language to a woman of my station! Nobody has ever dared to speak to me in such a way before."

"Pardon me, but what use is rank without a halfpenny? Allow me to retire.

"To-day we have only bread to eat."

"Well, certainly that is rather hard on countesses."

"You are laughing at the title, apparently."

"Yes, I am; but I don't want to offend you. If you like, I will stop to dinner, and pay for all, yourself included."

"You are an eccentric individual. My girls are sad, for I am going to prison. You will find their company wearisome."

"That is my affair."

"You had much better give them the money you would spend on the dinner."

"No, madam. I must have at least the pleasures of sight and sound for my money. I will stay your arrest till to-morrow, and afterwards Providence may possibly intervene on your behalf."

"The landlord will not wait."

"Leave me to deal with him."

I told Goudar to go and see what the man would take to send the bailiff away for twenty-four hours. He returned with the message that he must have a guinea and bail for the twenty guineas, in case the lodgers might take to flight before the next day.

My wine merchant lived close by. I told Gondar to wait for me, and the matter was soon settled and the bailiff sent away, and I told the five girls that they might take their ease for twenty-four hours more.

I informed Gondar of the steps I had taken, and told him to go out and get a good dinner for eight people. He went on his errand, and I summoned the girls to their mother's bedside, and delighted them all by telling them that for the next twenty-four hours they were to make good cheer. They could not get over their surprise at the suddenness of the change I had worked in the house.

“But this is all I can do for you,” said I to the mother. “Your daughters are charming, and I have obtained a day’s respite for you all without asking for anything in return; I shall dine, sup, and pass the night with them without asking so much as a single kiss, but if your ideas have not changed by to-morrow you will be in exactly the same position as you were a few minutes ago, and I shall not trouble you any more with my attentions.”

“What do you mean my ‘changing my ideas’?”

“I need not tell you, for you know perfectly well what I mean.”

“My daughters shall never become prostitutes.”

“I will proclaim their spotless chastity all over London — but I shall spend my guineas elsewhere.”

“You are a cruel man.”

“I confess I can be very cruel, but it is only when I don’t meet with kindness.”

Goudar came back and we returned to the ladies’ room, as the mother did not like to shew herself to my friend, telling me that I was the only man she had permitted to see her in bed during the whole time she had been in London.

Our English dinner was excellent in its way, but my chief pleasure was to see the voracity with which the girls devoured the meal. One would have thought they were savages devouring raw meat after a long fast. I had got a case of excellent wine and I made each of them drink a bottle, but not being accustomed to such an indulgence they became quite drunk. The mother had devoured the whole of the plentiful helpings I had sent in to her, and she had emptied a bottle of Burgundy, which she carried very well.

In spite of their intoxication, the girls were perfectly safe; I kept my word, and Goudar did not take the slightest liberty. We had a pleasant supper, and after a bowl of punch I left them feeling in love with the whole bevy, and very uncertain whether I should be able to shew as brave a front the next day.

As we were going away Goudar said that I was conducting the affair admirably, but if I made a single slip I should be undone.

I saw the good sense of his advice, and determined to shew that I was as sharp as he.

The next day, feeling anxious to hear the result of the council which the mother had doubtless held with the daughters, I called at their house at ten o'clock. The two eldest sisters were out, endeavouring to beat up some more friends, and the three youngest rushed up to me as if they had been spaniels and I their master, but they would not even allow me to kiss them. I told them they made a mistake, and knocked at the mother's door. She told me to come in, and thanked me for the happy day I had given them.

"Am I to withdraw my bail, countess?"

"You can do what you like, but I do not think you capable of such an action."

"You are mistaken. You have doubtless made a deep study of the human heart; but you either know little of the human mind, or else you think you have a larger share than any other person. All your daughters have inspired me with love, but were it a matter of life and death I would not do a single thing for them or you before you have done me the only favour that is in your power. I leave you to your reflections, and more especially to your virtues."

She begged me to stay, but I did not even listen to her. I passed by the three charmers, and after telling my wine merchant to withdraw his security I went in a furious mood to call on Lord Pembroke. As soon as I mentioned the Hanoverians he burst out laughing, and said these false innocents must be made to fulfil their occupation in a proper manner.

"They came whining to me yesterday," he proceeded, "and I not only would not give them anything, but I laughed them to scorn. They have got about twelve guineas out of me on false pretences; they are as cunning sluts as the Charpillon."

I told him what I had done the day before, and what I intended to offer: twenty guineas for the first, and as much for each of the others, but nothing to be paid in advance.

"I had the same idea myself, but I cried off, and I don't think you'll succeed, as Lord Baltimore offered them forty apiece; that is two hundred guineas in all, and the bargain has fallen through because they want the money to be paid in advance. They paid him a visit yesterday, but found him pitiless, for he has been taken in several times by them."

"We shall see what will happen when the mother is under lock and key; I'll bet we shall have them cheaply."

I came home for dinner, and Goudar, who had just been at their house, reported that the bailiff would only wait till four o'clock, that the two eldest daughters had come back empty-handed, and that they had been obliged to sell one of their dresses to buy a morsel of bread.

I felt certain that they would have recourse to me again, and I was right. We were at dessert when they put in an appearance. I made them sit down, and the eldest sister exhausted her eloquence to persuade me to give them another three days' grace.

"You will find me insensible," said I, "unless you are willing to adopt my plan. If you wish to hear it, kindly follow me into the next room."

She did so, leaving her sister with Goudar, and making her sit down on a sofa beside me, I shewed her twenty guineas, saying, —

"These are yours; but you know on what terms?"

She rejected my offer with disdain, and thinking she might wish to salve her virtue by being attacked, I set to work; but finding her resistance serious I let her alone, and begged her to leave my house immediately. She called to her sister, and they both went out.

In the evening, as I was going to the play, I called on my wine merchant to hear the news. He told me that the mother had been taken to prison, and that the youngest daughter had gone with her; but he did not know what had become of the four others.

I went home feeling quite sad, and almost reproaching myself for not having taken compassion on then; however, just as I was sitting down to supper they appeared before me like four Magdalens. The eldest, who was the orator of the company, told me that their mother was in prison, and that they would have to pass the night in the street if I did not take pity on them.

“You shall have rooms, beds, and good fires,” said I, “but first let me see you eat.”

Delight appeared on every countenance, and I had numerous dishes brought for them. They ate eagerly but sadly, and only drank water.

“Your melancholy and your abstinence displeases me,” said I, to the eldest girl; “go upstairs and you will find everything necessary for your comfort, but take care to be gone at seven in the morning and not to let me see your faces again.”

They went up to the second floor without a word.

An hour afterwards, just as I was going to bed, the eldest girl came into my room and said she wished to have a private interview with me. I told my negro to withdraw, and asked her to explain herself.

“What will you do for us,” said she, “if I consent to share your couch?”

“I will give you twenty guineas, and I will lodge and board you as long as you give me satisfaction.”

Without saying a word she began to undress, and got into bed. She was submissive and nothing more, and did not give me so much as a kiss. At the end of a quarter of an hour I was disgusted with her and got up, and giving her a bank note for twenty guineas I told her to put on her clothes and go back to her room.

“You must all leave my house to-morrow,” I said, “for I am ill pleased with you. Instead of giving yourself up for love you have prostituted yourself. I blush for you.”

She obeyed mutely, and I went to sleep in an ill humour.

At about seven o’clock in the morning I was awakened by a hand shaking me gently. I opened my eyes, and I was surprised to see the second daughter.

“What do you want?” I said, coldly.

“I want you to take pity on us, and shelter us in your house for a few days longer. I will be very grateful. My sister has told me all, you are displeased with her, but you must forgive her, for her heart is not her own. She is in love with an Italian who is in prison for debt.”

"And I suppose you are in love with someone else?"

"No, I am not."

"Could you love me?"

She lowered her eyes, and pressed my hand gently. I drew her towards me, and embraced her, and as I felt her kisses answer mine, I said, —

"You have conquered."

"My name is Victoire."

"I like it, and I will prove the omen a true one."

Victoire, who was tender and passionate, made me spend two delicious hours, which compensated me for my bad quarter of an hour of the night before.

When our exploits were over, I said, —

"Dearest Victoire, I am wholly throe. Let your mother be brought here as soon as she is free. Here are twenty guineas for you."

She did not expect anything, and the agreeable surprise made her in an ecstasy; she could not speak, but her heart was full of happiness. I too was happy, and I believed that a great part of my happiness was caused by the knowledge that I had done a good deed. We are queer creatures all of us, whether we are bad or good. From that moment I gave my servants orders to lay the table for eight persons every day, and told them that I was only at home to Goudar. I spent money madly, and felt that I was within a measurable distance of poverty.

At noon the mother came in a sedan-chair, and went to bed directly. I went to see her, and did not evince any surprise when she began to thank me for my noble generosity. She wanted me to suppose that she thought I had given her daughters forty guineas for nothing, and I let her enjoy her hypocrisy.

In the evening I took them to Covent Garden, where the castrato Tenducci surprised me by introducing me to his wife, of whom he had two children. He laughed at people who said that a castrato could not procreate. Nature had made him a monster that he might remain a man; he was born triorchis, and as only two of the seminal glands had been destroyed the remaining one was sufficient to endow him with virility.

When I got back to my small seraglio I supped merrily with the five nymphs, and spent a delicious night with Victoire, who was overjoyed at having made my conquest. She told me that her sister's lover was a Neapolitan, calling himself Marquis de Petina, and that they were to get married as soon as he was out of prison. It seemed he was expecting remittances, and the mother would be delighted to see her daughter a marchioness.

"How much does the marquis owe?"

"Twenty guineas."

"And the Neapolitan ambassador allows him to languish in prison for such a beggarly sum? I can't believe it."

"The ambassador won't have anything to do with him, because he left Naples without the leave of the Government."

"Tell your sister that if the ambassador assures me that her lover's name is really the Marquis de Petina, I will get him out of prison immediately."

I went out to ask my daughter, and another boarder of whom I was very fond, to dinner, and on my way called on the Marquis of Caraccioli, an agreeable man, whose acquaintance I had made at Turin. I found the famous Chevalier d'Eon at his house, and I had no need of a private interview to make my inquiries about Petina.

"The young man is really what he professes to me," said the ambassador, "but I will neither receive him nor give him any money till I hear from my Government that he has received leave to travel."

That was enough for me, and I stayed there for an hour listening to d'Eon's amusing story.

Eon had deserted the embassy on account of ten thousand francs which the department of foreign affairs at Versailles had refused to allow him, though the money was his by right. He had placed himself under the protection of the English laws, and after securing two thousand subscribers at a guinea apiece, he had sent to press a huge volume in quarto containing all the letters he had received from the French Government for the last five or six years.

About the same time a London banker had deposited the sum of twenty thousand guineas at the Bank of England, being ready to wager that sum that Eon was a woman. The bet was taken by a number of persons who had formed themselves into a kind of company for the purpose, and the only way to decide it was that Eon should be examined in the presence of witnesses. The chevalier was offered half the wager, but he laughed them to scorn. He said that such an examination would dishonour him, were he man or woman. Caraccioli said that it could only dishonour him if he were a woman, but I could not agree with this opinion. At the end of a year the bet was declared off; but in the course of three years he received his pardon from the king, and appeared at Court in woman's dress, wearing the cross of St. Louis.

Louis XV. had always been aware of the chevalier's sex, but Cardinal Fleuri had taught him that it became kings to be impenetrable, and Louis remained so all his life.

When I got home I gave the eldest Hanoverian twenty guineas, telling her to fetch her marquis out of prison, and bring him to dine with us, as I wanted to know him. I thought she would have died with joy.

The third sister, having taken counsel with Victoire, and doubtless with her mother also, determined to earn twenty guineas for herself, and she had not much trouble in doing so. She it was on whom Lord Pembroke had cast the eye of desire.

These five girls were like five dishes placed before a gourmand, who enjoys them one after the other. To my fancy the last was always the best. The third sister's name was Augusta.

Next Sunday I had a large number of guests. There were my daughter and her friend, Madame Cornelis, and her son. Sophie was kissed and caressed by the Hanoverians, while I bestowed a hundred kisses on Miss Nancy Steyne, who was only thirteen, but whose young beauty worked sad havoc with my senses. My affection was supposed to be fatherly in its character, but, alas I it was of a much more fleshly kind. This Miss Nancy, who seemed to me almost divine, was the daughter of a rich merchant. I said that

I wanted to make her father's acquaintance, and she replied that her father proposed coming to call on me that very day. I was delighted to hear of the coincidence, and gave order that he should be shewn in as soon as he came.

The poor marquis was the only sad figure in the company. He was young and well-made, but thin and repulsively ugly. He thanked me for my kindness, saying that I had done a wise thing, as he felt sure the time would come when he would repay me a hundredfold.

I had given my daughter six guineas to buy a pelisse, and she took me to my bedroom to shew it me. Her mother followed her to congratulate me on my seraglio.

At dinner gaiety reigned supreme. I sat between my daughter and Miss Nancy Steyne, and felt happy. Mr. Steyne came in as we were at the oysters. He kissed his daughter with that tender affection which is more characteristic, I think, of English parents than those of any other nation.

Mr. Steyne had dined, but he nevertheless ate a hundred scolloped oysters, in the preparation of which my cook was wonderfully expert; he also honoured the champagne with equal attention.

We spent three hours at the table and then proceeded to the third floor, where Sophie accompanied her mother's singing on the piano, and young Cornelis displayed his flute-playing talents. Mr. Steyne swore that he had never been present at such a pleasant party in his life, adding that pleasure was forbidden fruit in England on Sundays and holidays. This convinced me that Steyne was an intelligent man, though his French was execrable. He left at seven, after giving a beautiful ring to my daughter, whom he escorted back to school with Miss Nancy.

The Marquis Petina foolishly observed to me that he did not know where to find a bed. I understood what he wanted, but I told him he would easily find one with a little money. Taking his sweetheart aside I gave her a guinea for him, begging her to tell him not to visit me again till he was invited.

When all the guests were gone, I led the five sisters to the mother's room. She was wonderfully well, eating, drinking, and sleeping to admiration, and never doing anything, not even reading or writing. She enjoyed the 'dolce far niente' in all the force of the term. However, she told me she was always thinking of her family, and of the laws which it imposed on her.

I could scarcely help laughing, but I only said that if these laws were the same as those which her charming daughters followed, I thought them wiser than Solon’s.

I drew Augusta on to my knee, and said, —

“My lady, allow me to kiss your delightful daughter.”

Instead of giving me a direct answer, the old hypocrite began a long sermon on the lawfulness of the parental kiss. All the time Augusta was lavishing on me secret but delicious endearments.

‘O tempora! O mores!’

The next day I was standing at my window, when the Marquis Caraccioli, who was passing by, greeted me, and asked me if he could come in. I bade him welcome, and summoning the eldest sister told the ambassador that this young lady was going to marry the Marquis Petina as soon as his remittances arrived.

He addressed himself to her, and spoke as follows:

“Mademoiselle, it is true that your lover is really a marquis, but he is very poor and will never have any money; and if he goes back to Naples he will be imprisoned, and if he is released from the State prison his creditors will put him in the Vittoria.”

However this salutary warning had no effect.

After the ambassador had taken his leave I was dressing to take a ride when Augusta told me that, if I liked, Hippolyta her sister would come with me, as she could ride beautifully.

“That’s amusing,” said I, “make her come down.”

Hippolyta came down and begged me to let her ride with me, saying that she would do me credit.

“Certainly;” said I, “but have you a man’s riding suit or a woman’s costume?”

“No.”

“Then we must put off the excursion till to-morrow.”

I spent the day in seeing that a suit was made for her, and I felt quite amorous when Pegu, the tailor, measured her for the breeches. Everything was done in time and we had a charming ride, for she managed her horse with wonderful skill.

After an excellent supper, to which wine had not been lacking, the happy Hippolyta accompanied Victoire into my room and helped her to undress. When she kissed her sister I asked if she would not give me a kiss too, and after some jesting Augusta changed the joke into earnest by bidding her come to bed beside me, without taking the trouble to ask my leave, so sure did she feel of my consent. The night was well spent, and I had no reason to complain of want of material, but Augusta wisely let the newcomer have the lion's share of my attentions.

Next day we rode out again in the afternoon, followed by my negro, who was a skilful horseman himself. In Richmond Park Hippolyta's dexterity astonished me; she drew all eyes on her. In the evening we came home well pleased with our day's ride, and had a good supper.

As the meal proceeded I noticed that Gabrielle, the youngest of all, looked sad and a little sulky. I asked her the reason, and with a little pout that became her childish face admirably, she replied, —

"Because I can ride on horseback as well as my sister."

"Very good," said I, "then you shall ride the day after to-morrow." This put her into a good temper again.

Speaking of Hippolyta's skill, I asked her where she had learnt to ride. She simply burst out laughing. I asked her why she laughed, and she said, —

"Why, because I never learnt anywhere; my only masters were courage and some natural skill."

"And has your sister learnt?"

"No," said Gabrielle, "but I can ride just as well."

I could scarcely believe it, for Hippolyta had seemed to float on her horse, and her riding skewed the utmost skill and experience. Hoping that her sister would vie with her, I said that I would take them out together, and the very idea made them both jump with joy.

Gabrielle was only fifteen, and her shape, though not fully developed, was well marked, and promised a perfect beauty by the time she was in her maturity. Full of grace and simplicity, she said she would like to come with me to my room, and I readily accepted her offer, not caring whether the scheme had been concerted between her and her other sisters.

As soon as we were alone, she told me that she had never had a lover, and she allowed me to assure myself of the fact with the same child-like simplicity. Gabrielle was like all the others; I would have chosen her if I had been obliged to make the choice. She made me feel sorry for her sake, to hear that the mother had made up her mind to leave. In the morning I gave her her fee of twenty guineas and a handsome ring as a mark of my peculiar friendship, and we spent the day in getting ready our habits for the ride of the day following.

Gabrielle got on horseback as if she had had two years in the riding school. We went along the streets at a walking pace, but as soon as we were in the open country we broke into a furious gallop, and kept it up till we got to Barnet, where we stopped to breakfast. We had done the journey in twenty-five minutes, although the distance is nearly ten miles. This may seem incredible, but the English horses are wonderfully swift, and we were all of us well mounted. My two nymphs looked ravishing. I adored them, and I adored myself for making them so happy.

Just as we were remounting, who should arrive but Lord Pembroke. He was on his way to St. Alban’s. He stopped his horse, and admired the graceful riding of my two companions; and not recognizing them immediately, he begged leave to pay his court to them. How I laughed to myself! At last he recognized them, and congratulated me on my conquest, asking if I loved Hippolyta. I guessed his meaning, and said I only loved Gabrielle.

“Very good,” said he; “may I come and see you?”

“Certainly,” I replied.

After a friendly hand-shake we set out once more, and were soon back in London.

Gabrielle was done up and went to bed directly; she slept on till the next morning without my disturbing her peaceful sleep, and when she awoke and found herself in my arms, she began to philosophise.

"How easy it is," said she, "to be happy when one is rich, and how sad it is to see happiness out of one's reach for lack of a little money. Yesterday I was the happiest of beings, and why should I not be as happy all my days? I would gladly agree that my life should be short provided that it should be a happy one."

I, too, philosophised, but my reflections were sombre. I saw my resources all but exhausted, and I began to meditate a journey to Lisbon. If my fortune had been inexhaustible, the Hanoverians might have held me in their silken fetters to the end of my days. It seemed to me as if I loved them more like a father than a lover, and the fact that I slept with them only added to the tenderness of the tie. I looked into Gabrielle's eyes, and there I saw but love. How could such a love exist in her unless she were naturally virtuous, and yet devoid of those prejudices which are instilled into us in our early years.

The next day Pembroke called and asked me to give him a dinner. Augusta delighted him. He made proposals to her which excited her laughter as he did not want to pay till after the event, and she would not admit this condition. However, he gave her a bank note for ten guineas before he left, and she accepted it with much grace. The day after he wrote her a letter, of which I shall speak presently.

A few minutes after the nobleman had gone the mother sent for me to come to her, and after paying an eloquent tribute to my virtues, my generosity, and my unceasing kindness towards her family, she made the following proposal:

"As I feel sure that you have all the love of a father for my daughters, I wish you to become their father in reality! I offer you my hand and heart; become my husband, you will be their father, their lord and mine. What do you say to this?"

I bit my lips hard and had great difficulty in restraining my inclination to laughter. Nevertheless, the amazement, the contempt, and the indignation which this unparalleled piece of impudence aroused in me soon brought me to myself. I perceived that this consummate hypocrite had counted on an abrupt refusal, and had only made this ridiculous offer with the idea of convincing me that she was under the impression that I had left her daughters as I had found them, and that the money I had spent on them was merely a sign of my tender and fatherly affection. Of course she knew perfectly well how the land lay, but she thought to justify herself by taking this step. She was aware that I could only look upon such a proposal as an insult, but she did not care for that.

I resolved to keep on the mask, and replied that her proposition was undoubtedly a very great honour for me, but it was also a very important question, and so I begged her to allow me some time for consideration.

When I got back to my room I found there the mistress of the wretched Marquis Petina, who told me that her happiness depended on a certificate from the Neapolitan ambassador that her lover was really the person he professed to be. With this document he would be able to claim a sum of two hundred guineas, and then they could both go to Naples, and he would marry her there. “He will easily obtain the royal pardon,” said she. “You, and you alone, can help us in the matter, and I commend myself to your kindness.”

I promised to do all I could for her. In fact, I called on the ambassador, who made no difficulty about giving the required certificate. For the moment my chilly conquest was perfectly happy, but though I saw she was very grateful to me I did not ask her to prove her gratitude.

CHAPTER XVI

Augusta Becomes Lord Pembroke's Titular Mistress The King of

Corsica's Son — M. du Claude, or the Jesuit Lavalette —

Departure of the Hanoverians I Balance My Accounts —

The Baron Stenau — The English Girl, and What She Gave Me —

Daturi — My Flight from London — Comte St. Germain — Wesel

Lord Pembroke wrote to Augusta offering her fifty guineas a month for three years, with lodging, board, servants, and carriage at St. Albans, without reckoning what she might expect from his grateful affection if it were returned.

Augusta translated the letter for me, and asked for my advice.

"I can't give you any counsel," said I, "in a matter which only concerns your own heart and your own interests."

She went up to her mother, who would come to no conclusion without first consulting me, because, as she said, I was the wisest and most virtuous of men. I am afraid the reader will differ from her here, but I comfort myself by the thought that I, too, think like the reader. At last it was agreed that Augusta should accept the offer if Lord Pembroke would find a surety in the person of some reputable London merchant, for with her beauty and numerous graces she was sure to, become Lady Pembroke before long. Indeed, the mother said she was perfectly certain of it, as otherwise she could not have given her consent, as her daughters were countesses, and too good to be any man's mistresses.

The consequence was that Augusta wrote my lord a letter, and in three days it was all settled. The merchant duly signed the contract, at the foot of which I had the honour of inscribing my name as a witness, and then I took the merchant to the mother, and he witnessed her cession of her daughter.

She would not see Pembroke, but she kissed her daughter, and held a private colloquy with her.

The day on which Augusta left my house was signalized by an event which I must set down.

The day after I had given the Marquis Petina's future bride the required certificate, I had taken out Gabrielle and Hippolyta for a ride. When I got home I found waiting for me a person calling himself Sir Frederick, who was said to be the son of Theodore, King of Corsica, who had died in London. This gentleman said he wished to speak to me in private, and when we were alone he said he was aware of my acquaintance with the Marquis Petina, and being on the eve of discounting a bill of two hundred guineas for him he wished to be informed whether it was likely that he could meet the bill when it fell due.

"It is important that I should be informed on that point," he added, "for the persons who are going to discount the bill want me to put my signature to it."

"Sir," I replied, "I certainly am acquainted with the marquis, but I know nothing about his fortune. However, the Neapolitan ambassador assured me that he was the Marquis Petina."

"If the persons who have the matter in hand should drop it, would you discount the bill? You shall have it cheap."

"I never meddle with these speculations. Good day, Sir Frederick."

The next day Goudar came and said that a M. du Claude wanted to speak to me.

"Who is M. du Claude?"

"The famous Jesuit Lavalette, who was concerned in the great bankruptcy case which ruined the Society in France. He fled to England under a false name. I advise you to listen to him, for he must have plenty of money."

"A Jesuit and a bankrupt; that does not sound very well."

"Well, I have met him in good houses, and knowing that I was acquainted with you he addressed himself to me. After all, you run no risk in listening to what he has to say."

“Well, well, you can take me to him; it will be easier to avoid any entanglement than if he came to see me.”

Goudar went to Lavalette to prepare the way, and in the afternoon he took me to see him. I was well enough pleased to see the man, whose rascality had destroyed the infamous work of many years. He welcomed me with great politeness, and as soon as we were alone he shewed me a bill of Petina’s, saying, —

“The young man wants me to discount it, and says you can give me the necessary information.”

I gave the reverend father the same answer as I had given the King of Corsica’s son, and left him angry with this Marquis of Misery who had given me so much needless trouble. I was minded to have done with him, and resolved to let him know through his mistress that I would not be his reference, but I could not find an opportunity that day.

The next day I took my two nymphs for a ride, and asked Pembroke to dinner. In vain we waited for Petina’s mistress; she was nowhere to be found. At nine o’clock I got a letter from her, with a German letter enclosed for her mother. She said that feeling certain that her mother would not give her consent to her marriage, she had eloped with her lover, who had got together enough money to go to Naples, and when they reached that town he would marry her. She begged me to console her mother and make her listen to reason, as she had not gone off with an adventurer but with a man of rank, her equal. My lips curled into a smile of pity and contempt, which made the three sisters curious. I shewed them the letter I had just received, and asked them to come with me to their mother.

“Not to-night,” said Victoire, “this terrible news would keep her awake.”

I took her advice and we supped together, sadly enough.

I thought the poor wretch was ruined for life, and I reproached myself with being the cause of her misfortune; for if I had not released the marquis from prison this could never have happened. The Marquis Caraccioli had been right in saying that I had done a good deed, but a foolish one. I consoled myself in the arms of my dear Gabrielle.

I had a painful scene with the mother the next morning. She cursed her daughter and her seducer, and even blamed me. She wept and stormed alternately.

It is never of any use to try and convince people in distress that they are wrong, for one may only do harm, while if they are left to themselves they soon feel that they have been unjust, and are grateful to the person who let them exhaust their grief without any contradiction.

After this event I spent a happy fortnight in the society of Gabrielle, whom Hippolyta and Victoire looked on as my wife. She made my happiness and I made hers in all sorts of ways, but especially by my fidelity; for I treated her sisters as if they had been my sisters, shewing no recollection of the favours I had obtained from them, and never taking the slightest liberty, for I knew that friendship between women will hardly brook amorous rivalry. I had bought them dresses and linen in abundance, they were well lodged and well fed, I took them to the theatre and to the country, and the consequence was they all adored me, and seemed to think that this manner of living would go on for ever. Nevertheless, I was every day nearer and nearer to moral and physical bankruptcy. I had no more money, and I had sold all my diamonds and precious stones. I still possessed my snuff-boxes, my watches, and numerous trifles, which I loved and had not the heart to sell; and, indeed, I should not have got the fifth part of what I gave for them. For a whole month I had not paid my cook, or my wine merchant, but I liked to feel that they trusted me. All I thought of was Gabrielle's love, and of this I assured myself by a thousand delicacies and attentions.

This was my condition when one day Victoire came to me with sadness on her face, and said that her mother had made up her mind to return to Hanover, as she had lost all hope of getting anything from the English Court.

"When does she intend to leave?"

"In three or four days."

"And is she going without telling me, as if she were leaving an inn after paying her bill?"

"On the contrary, she wishes to have a private talk with you."

I paid her a visit, and she began by reproaching me tenderly for not coming to see her more often. She said that as I had refused her hand she would not run the risk of incurring censure or slander of any kind. "I thank you from my heart," she added, "for all the kindness you have shewn my girls, and I am going to take the three I have left away, lest I lose them as I have lost the two eldest. If you like, you may come too and stay with us as long as you like in my pretty country house near the capital."

Of course I had to thank her and reply that my engagements did not allow me to accept her kind offer.

Three days after, Victoire told me, as I was getting up, that they were going on board ship at three o'clock. Hippolyta and Gabrielle made me come for a ride, according to a promise I had given them the night before. The poor things amused themselves, while I grieved bitterly, as was my habit when I had to separate from anyone that I loved.

When we came home I lay down on my bed, not taking any dinner, and seeing nothing of the three sisters till they had made everything ready for the journey. I got up directly before they left, so as not to see the mother in my own room, and I saw her in hers just as she was about to be taken down into my carriage, which was in readiness at the door. The impudent creature expected me to give her some money for the journey, but perceiving that I was not likely to bleed, she observed, with involuntary sincerity, that her purse contained the sum of a hundred and fifty guineas, which I had given to her daughters; and these daughters of hers were present, and sobbed bitterly.

When they were gone I closed my doors to everyone, and spent three days in the melancholy occupation of making up my accounts. In the month I had spent with the Hanoverians I had dissipated the whole of the sum resulting from the sale of the precious stones, and I found that I was in debt to the amount of four hundred guineas. I resolved to go to Lisbon by sea, and sold my diamond cross, six or seven gold snuff-boxes (after removing the portraits), all my watches except one, and two great trunks full of clothes. I then discharged my debts and found I was eighty guineas to the good, this being what remained of the fine fortune I had squandered away like a fool or a philosopher, or, perhaps, a little like both. I left my fine house where I had lived so pleasantly, and took a little room at a guinea a week. I still kept my negro, as I had every reason to believe him to be a faithful servant.

After taking these measures I wrote to M. de Bragadin, begging him to send me two hundred sequins.

Thus having made up my mind to leave London without owing a penny to anyone, and under obligations to no man’s purse, I waited for the bill of exchange from Venice. When it came I resolved to bid farewell to all my friends and to try my fortune in Lisbon, but such was not the fate which the fickle goddess had assigned to me.

A fortnight after the departure of the Hanoverians (it was the end of February in the year 1764), my evil genius made me go to the “Canon Tavern,” where I usually dined in a room by myself. The table was laid and I was just going to sit down, when Baron Stenau came in and begged me to have my dinner brought into the next room, where he and his mistress were dining.

“I thank you,” said I, “for the solitary man grows weary of his company.”

I saw the English woman I had met at Sartori’s, the same to whom the baron had been so generous. She spoke Italian, and was attractive in many ways, so I was well pleased to find myself opposite to her, and we had a pleasant dinner.

After a fortnight’s abstinence it was not surprising that she inspired me with desires, but I concealed them nevertheless, for her lover seemed to respect her. I only allowed myself to tell the baron that I thought him the happiest of men.

Towards the close of the dinner the girl noticed three dice on the mantel and took them up, saying, —

“Let us have a wager of a guinea, and spend it on oysters and champagne.”

We could not refuse, and the baron having lost called the waiter and gave him his orders.

While we were eating the oysters she suggested that we should throw again to see which should pay for the dinner.

We did so and she lost.

I did not like my luck, and wishing to lose a couple of guineas I offered to throw against the baron. He accepted, and to my annoyance I won. He asked for his revenge and lost again.

“I don’t want to win your money,” said I, “and I will give you your revenge up to a hundred guineas.”

He seemed grateful and we went on playing, and in less than half an hour he owed me a hundred guineas.

“Let us go on,” said he.

“My dear baron, the luck’s against you; you might lose a large sum of money. I really think we have had enough.”

Without heeding my politeness, he swore against fortune and against the favour I seemed to be shewing him. Finally he got up, and taking his hat and cane, went out, saying, —

“I will pay you when I come back.”

As soon as he had gone the girl said:

“I am sure you have been regarding me as your partner at play.”

“If you have guessed that, you will also have guessed that I think you charming.”

“Yes, I think I have.”

“Are you angry with me?”

“Not in the least.”

“You shall have the fifty guineas as soon as he has paid me.”

“Very good, but the baron must know nothing about it.”

“Of course not.”

The bargain was scarcely struck before I began to shew her how much I loved her. I had every reason to congratulate myself on her complaisance, and I thought this meeting a welcome gleam of light when all looked dark around me. We had to make haste, however, as the door was only shut with a catch. I had barely time to ascertain her address and the hour at which she could see me, and whether I should have to be careful with her lover. She replied that the baron’s fidelity was not of a character to make him very exacting. I put the address in my pocket, and promised to pass a night with her.

The baron came in again, and said, —

“I have been to a merchant to discount this bill of exchange, and though it is drawn on one of the best house in Cadiz, and made out by a good house in London, he would not have anything to do with it.”

I took the bill and saw some millions mentioned on it, which astonished me.

The baron said with a laugh that the currency was Portuguese milries, and that they amounted to five hundred pounds sterling.

“If the signatures are known,” said I, “I don’t understand why the man won’t discount it. Why don’t you take it to your banker?”

“I haven’t got one. I came to England with a thousand gold pieces in my pocket, and I have spent them all. As I have not got any letters of credit I cannot pay you unless the bill is discounted. If you have got any friends on the Exchange, however, you could get it done.”

“If the names prove good ones I will let you have the money to-morrow morning.”

“Then I will make it payable to your order.”

He put his name to it, and I promised to send him either the money or the bill before noon on the day following. He gave me his address and begged me to come and dine with him, and so we parted.

The next day I went to Bosanquet, who told me that Mr. Leigh was looking out for bills of exchange on Cadiz, and I accordingly waited on him. He exclaimed that such paper was worth more than gold to him, and gave me five hundred and twenty guineas, of course after I had endorsed it.

I called on the baron and gave him the money I had just received, and he thanked me and gave me back the hundred guineas. Afterwards we had dinner, and fell to talking of his mistress.

“Are you in love with her?” said I.

“No; I have plenty of others, and if you like her you can have her for ten guineas.”

I liked this way of putting it, though I had not the slightest idea of cheating the girl out of the sum I had promised her. On leaving the baron I went to see her, and as soon as she heard that the baron had paid me she ordered a delicious supper, and made me spend a night that obliterated all my sorrows from my memory. In the morning, when I handed over the fifty guineas, she said that as a reward for the way in which I kept my promise I could sup with her whenever I liked to spend six guineas. I promised to come and see her often.

The next morning I received a letter through the post, written in bad Italian, and signed, “Your obedient godson, Daturi.” This godson of mine was in prison for debt, and begged me to give him a few shillings to buy some food.

I had nothing particular to do, the appellation of godson made me curious, and so I went to the prison to see Daturi, of whose identity I had not the slightest idea. He was a fine young man of twenty; he did not know me, nor I him. I gave him his letter, and begging me to forgive him he drew a paper from his pocket and shewed me his certificate of baptism, on which I saw my own name inscribed beside his name and those of his father and mother, the parish of Venice, where he was born, and the church in which he was baptized; but still I racked my memory in vain; I could not recollect him.

“If you will listen to me,” he said, “I can set you right; my mother has told me the story a hundred times.”

“Go on,” said I, “I will listen;” and as he told his story I remembered who he was.

This young man whom I had held at the font as the son of the actor Daturi was possibly my own son. He had come to London with a troupe of jugglers to play the illustrious part of clown, or pagliazzo, but having quarrelled with the company he had lost his place and had got into debt to the extent of ten pounds sterling, and for this debt he had been imprisoned. Without saying anything to him about my relations with his mother, I set him free on the spot, telling him to come to me every morning, as I would give him two shillings a day for his support.

A week after I had done this good work I felt that I had caught the fearful disease from which the god Mercury had already delivered me three times, though with great danger and peril of my life. I had spent three nights with the fatal English woman, and the misfortune was doubly inconvenient under the circumstances. I was on the eve of a long sea voyage, and though Venus may have risen from the waves of the sea, sea air is by no means favourable to those on whom she has cast her malign aspect. I knew what to do, and resolved to have my case taken in hand without delay.

I left my house, not with the intention of reproaching the English woman after the manner of fools, but rather of going to a good surgeon, with whom I could make an agreement to stay in his house till my cure was completed.

I had my trunks packed just as if I was going to leave London, excepting my linen, which I sent to my washerwoman who lived at a distance of six miles from town, and drove a great trade.

The very day I meant to change my lodging a letter was handed to me. It was from Mr. Leigh, and ran as follows:

“The bill of exchange I discounted for you is a forgery, so please to send me at your earliest convenience the five hundred and twenty guineas; and if the man who has cheated you will not reimburse the money, have him arrested. For Heaven’s sake do not force me to have you arrested to-morrow, and whatever you do make haste, for this may prove a hanging matter.”

Fortunately I was by myself when I received the letter. I fell upon my bed, and in a moment I was covered with a cold sweat, while I trembled like a leaf. I saw the gallows before me, for nobody would lend me the money, and they would not wait for my remittance from Venice to reach me.

To my shuddering fit succeeded a burning fever. I loaded my pistols, and went out with the determination of blowing out Baron Stenau’s brains, or putting him under arrest if he did not give me the money. I reached his house, and was informed that he had sailed for Lisbon four days ago.

This Baron Stenau was a Livonian, and four months after these events he was hanged at Lisbon. I only anticipate this little event in his life because I might possibly forget it when I come to my sojourn at Riga.

As soon as I heard he was gone I saw there was no remedy, and that I must save myself. I had only ten or twelve guineas left, and this sum was insufficient. I went to Treves, a Venetian Jew to whom I had a letter from Count Algarotti, the Venetian banker. I did not think of going to Bosanquet, or Sanhel, or Salvador, who might possibly have got wind of my trouble, while Treves had no dealings with these great bankers, and discounted a bill for a hundred sequins readily enough. With the money in my pocket I made my way to my lodging, while deadly fear dogged every step. Leigh had given me twenty-four hours' breathing time, and I did not think him capable of breaking his word, still it would not do to trust to it. I did not want to lose my linen nor three fine suits of clothes which my tailor was keeping for me, and yet I had need of the greatest promptitude.

I called in Jarbe and asked him whether he would prefer to take twenty guineas and his dismissal, or to continue in my service. I explained that he would have to wait in London for a week, and join me at the place from which I wrote to him.

"Sir," said he, "I should like to remain in your service, and I will rejoin you wherever you please. When are you leaving?"

"In an hour's time; but say not a word, or it will cost me my life."

"Why can't you take me with you?"

"Because I want you to bring my linen which is at the wash, and my clothes which the tailor is making. I will give you sufficient money for the journey."

"I don't want anything. You shall pay me what I have spent when I rejoin you. Wait a moment."

He went out and came back again directly, and holding out sixty guineas, said, —

"Take this, sir, I entreat you, my credit is good for as much more in case of need."

"I thank you, my good fellow, but I will not take your money, but be sure I will not forget your fidelity."

My tailor lived close by and I called on him, and seeing that my clothes were not yet made up I told him that I should like to sell them, and also the gold lace that was to be used in the trimming. He instantly gave me thirty guineas which meant a gain to him of twenty-five per cent. I paid the week's rent of my lodging, and after bidding farewell to my negro I set out with Daturi. We slept at Rochester, as my strength would carry me no farther. I was in convulsions, and had a sort of delirium. Daturi was the means of saving my life.

I had ordered post-horses to continue our journey, and Daturi of his own authority sent them back and went for a doctor, who pronounced me to be in danger of an apoplectic fit and ordered a copious blood-letting, which restored my calm. Six hours later he pronounced me fit to travel. I got to Dover early in the morning, and had only half an hour to stop, as the captain of the packet said that the tide would not allow of any delay. The worthy sailor little knew how well his views suited mine. I used this half hour in writing to Jarbe, telling him to rejoin me at Calais, and Mrs. Mercier, my landlady, to whom I had addressed the letter, wrote to tell me that she had given it him with her own hands. However, Jarbe did not come. We shall hear more of this negro in the course of two years.

The fever and the virus that was in my blood put me in danger of my life, and on the third day I was in extremis. A fourth blood-letting exhausted my strength, and left me in a state of coma which lasted for twenty-four hours. This was succeeded by a crisis which restored me to life again, but it was only by dint of the most careful treatment that I found myself able to continue my journey a fortnight after my arrival in France.

Weak in health, grieved at having been the innocent cause of the worthy Mr. Leigh's losing a large sum of money, humiliated by my flight from London, indignant with Jarbe, and angry at being obliged to abandon my Portuguese project, I got into a post-chaise with Daturi, not knowing where to turn or where to go, or whether I had many more weeks to live.

I had written to Venice asking M. de Bragadin to send the sum I have mentioned to Brussels instead of London.

When I got to Dunkirk, the day after I left Paris, the first person I saw was the merchant S —— , the husband of that Therese whom my readers may remember, the niece of Tiretta's mistress, with whom I had been in love seven years ago. The worthy man recognized me, and seeing his astonishment at the change in my appearance I told him I was recovering from a long illness, and then asked after his wife.

“She is wonderfully well,” he answered, “and I hope we shall have the pleasure of seeing you to dinner tomorrow.”

I said I wanted to be off at day-break, but he would not hear of it, and protested he would be quite hurt if I went away without seeing his wife and his three children. At last I appeased him by saying that we would sup together.

My readers will remember that I had been on the point of marrying Therese, and this circumstance made me ashamed of presenting myself to her in such a sorry plight.

In a quarter of an hour the husband arrived with his wife and three children, the eldest of whom looked, about six. After the usual greetings and tiresome enquiries after my health, Therese sent back the two younger children, rightly thinking that the eldest would be the only one in whom I should take any interest. He was a charming boy; and as he was exactly like his mother, the worthy merchant had no doubts as to the parentage of the child.

I laughed to myself at finding my offspring thus scattered all over Europe. At supper Therese gave me news of Tiretta. He had entered the Dutch East India Company's service, but having been concerned in a revolt at Batavia, he had only escaped the gallows by flight — I had my own thoughts as to the similarity between his destiny and mine, but I did not reveal them. After all it is an easy enough matter for an adventurous man, who does not look where he is going, to get hanged for a mere trifle.

The next day, when I got to Tournay, I saw some grooms walking fine horses up and down, and I asked to whom they belonged.

"'To the Comte de St. Germain, the adept, who has been here a month, and never goes out. Everybody who passes through the place wants to see him; but he is invisible."

This was enough to give me the same desire, so I wrote him a letter, expressing my wish to speak to him, and asking him to name an hour. His reply, which I have preserved, ran as follows:

"The gravity of my occupation compels me to exclude everyone, but you are an exception. Come whenever you like, you will be shewn in. You need not mention my name nor your own. I do not ask you to share my repast, far my food is not suitable to others — to you least of all, if your appetite is what it used to be."

At nine o'clock I paid my call, and found he had grown a beard two inches long. He had a score of retorts before him, full of liquids in various stages of digestion. He told me he was experimenting with colours for his own amusement, and that he had established a hat factory for Count Cobenzl, the Austrian ambassador at Brussels. He added that the count had only given him a hundred and fifty thousand florins, which were insufficient. Then we spoke of Madame d'Urfe.

"She poisoned herself," said he, "by taking too strong a dose of the Universal Medicine, and her will shews that she thought herself to be with child. If she had come to me, I could have really made her so, though it is a difficult process, and science has not advanced far enough for us to be able to guarantee the sex of the child."

When he heard the nature of my disease, he wanted me to stay three days at Tournay for him to give me fifteen pills, which would effectually cure me, and restore me to perfect health. Then he shewed me his magistrum, which he called athoeter. It was a white liquid contained in a well-stoppered phial. He told me that this liquid was the universal spirit of nature, and that if the wax on the stopper was pricked ever so lightly, the whole of the contents would disappear. I begged him to make the experiment. He gave me the phial and a pin, and I pricked the wax, and to lo! the phial was empty.

"It is very fine," said I, "but what good is all this?"

"I cannot tell you; that is my secret."

He wanted to astonish me before I went, and asked me if I had any money about me. I took out several pieces and put them on the table. He got up, and without saying what he was going to do he took a burning coal and put it on a metal plate, and placed a twelve-sols piece with a small black grain on the coal. He then blew it, and in two minutes it seemed on fire.

"Wait a moment," said the alchemist, "let it get cool;" and it cooled almost directly.

"Take it; it is yours," said he.

I took up the piece of money and found it had become gold. I felt perfectly certain that he had smuggled my silver piece away, and had substituted a gold piece coated with silver for it. I did not care to tell him as much, but to let him see that I was not taken in, I said, —

“It is really very wonderful, but another time you should warn me what you are going to do, so that the operation might be attentively watched, and the piece of money noted before being placed on the burning coal.”

“Those that are capable of entertaining doubts of my art,” said the rogue, “are not worthy to speak to me.”

This was in his usual style of arrogance, to which I was accustomed. This was the last time I saw this celebrated and learned impostor; he died at Schlesing six or seven years after. The piece of money he gave me was pure gold, and two months after Field-marshal Keith took such a fancy to it that I gave it him.

I left Tournay the next morning, and stopped at Brussels to await the answer of the letter which I had written to M. de Bragadin. Five days after I got the letter with a bill of exchange for two hundred ducats.

I thought of staying in Brussels to get cured, but Daturi told me that he had heard from a rope-dancer that his father and mother and the whole family were at Brunswick, and he persuaded me to go there, assuring me that I should be carefully looked after.

He had not much difficulty in getting me to go to Brunswick, as I was curious to see again the mother of my godson, so I started the same day. At Ruremonde I was so ill that I had to stop for thirty-six hours. At Wesel I wished to get rid of my post-chaise, for the horses of the country are not used to going between shafts, but what was my surprise to meet General Bekw there.

After the usual compliments had passed, and the general had condoled with me on my weak state of health, he said he should like to buy my chaise and exchange it for a commodious carriage, in which I could travel all over Germany. The bargain was soon struck, and the general advised me to stay at Wesel where there was a clever young doctor from the University of Leyden, who would understand my case better than the Brunswick physicians.

Nothing is easier than to influence a sick man, especially if he be in search of fortune, and knows not where to look for the fickle goddess. General Bekw —— , who was in garrison at Wesel, sent for Dr. Pipers, and was present at my confession and even at the examination.

I will not revolt my readers by describing the disgusting state in which I was, suffice it to say that I shudder still when I think of it.

The young doctor, who was gentleness personified, begged me to come and stay with him, promising that his mother and sisters should take the greatest care of me, and that he would effect a radical cure in the course of six weeks if I would carry out all his directions. The general advised me strongly to stay with the doctor, and I agreed all the more readily as I wished to have some amusement at Brunswick and not to arrive there deprived of the use of all my limbs. I therefore gave in, but the doctor would not hear of any agreement. He told me that I could give him whatever I liked when I went away, and he would certainly be satisfied. He took his leave to go and make my room ready, and told me to come in an hour’s time. I went to his house in a sedan-chair, and held a handkerchief before my face, as I was ashamed that the young doctor’s mother and sisters should see me in the state I was in.

As soon as I got to my room, Daturi undressed me and I went to bed.

CHAPTER XVII

My Cure — Daturi is Beaten by Some Soldiers — I Leave Wesel
for Brunswick — Redegonde — Brunswick — The Hereditary Prince —
The Jew — My Stay at Wolfen-Buttel The Library — Berlin
Calsabigi and the Berlin Lottery — Mdlle. Belanger

At Supper-time, the doctor, his mother, and one of his sisters came to see me. All of them bore the love of their kind written on their features; they assured me that I should have all possible care at their hands. When the ladies were gone the doctor explained his treatment. He said that he hoped to cure me by the exhibition of sudorifices and mercurial pills, but he warned me I must be very careful in my diet and must not apply myself in any way. I promised to abide by his directions, and he said that he would read me the newspaper himself twice a week to amuse me, and by way of a beginning he informed me that the famous Pompadour was dead.

Thus I was condemned to a state of perfect rest, but it was not the remedies or the abstinence I dreaded most; I feared the effects of ennui; I thought I should die of it. No doubt the doctor saw the danger as well as myself, for he asked me if I would mind his sister coming and working in my room occasionally with a few of her friends. I replied that, despite my shame of shewing myself to young ladies in such a condition, I accepted her offer with delight. The sister was very grateful for what she was pleased to call my kindness, for my room was the only one which looked in the street, and as everyone knows girls are very fond of inspecting the passers-by. Unfortunately this arrangement turned out ill for Daturi. The poor young man had only received the education of a mountebank, and it was tiresome for him to pass all his time in my company. When he saw that I had plenty of friends, he thought I could dispense with his society, and only thought of amusing himself. On the third day towards the evening he was carried home covered with bruises. He had been in the guard-room with the soldiers, and some quarrel having arisen he had got a severe beating. He was in a pitiable state; all over blood and with three teeth missing. He told me the story with tears, and begged me to take vengeance on his foes.

I sent my doctor to General Bekw —— , who said that all he could do was to give the poor man a bed in the hospital. Baturi had no bones broken, and in a few days was quite well, so I sent him on to Brunswick with a passport from General Salomon. The loss of his teeth secured him from the conscription; this, at any rate, was a good thing.

The treatment of the young doctor was even more successful than he had anticipated, for in a month I was perfectly well again, though terribly thin. The worthy people of the house must have taken an idea of me not in the least like myself; I was thought to be the most patient of men, and the sister and her young lady friends must have considered me as modesty personified; but these virtues only resulted from my illness and my great depression. If you want to discover the character of a man, view him in health and freedom; a captive and in sickness he is no longer the same man.

I gave a beautiful dress to the sister, and twenty louis to the doctor, and both seemed to me extremely satisfied.

On the eve of my departure I received a letter from Madame du Rumain, who had heard I was in want from my friend Baletti, and sent me a bill of exchange on Amsterdam for six hundred florins. She said I could repay her at my convenience, but she died before I was able to discharge the debt.

Having made up my mind to go to Brunswick, I could not resist the temptation to pass through Hanover, for whenever I thought of Gabrielle I loved her still. I did not wish to stop any length of time, for I was poor and I had to be careful of my health. I only wished to pay her a flying visit on the estate which her mother had at Stocken, as she had told me. I may also say that curiosity was a motive for this visit.

I had decided to start at day-break in my new carriage, but the fates had ordained it otherwise.

The English general wrote me a note asking me to sup with him, telling me that some Italians would be present, and this decided me to stay on, but I had to promise the doctor to observe strict temperance.

My surprise may be imagined when I saw the Redegonde and her abominable mother. The mother did not recognize me at first, but Redegonde knew me directly, and said, —

“Good Heavens! how thin you have become!”

I complimented her on her beauty, and indeed she had improved wonderfully.

“I have just recovered from a dangerous illness,” said I, “and I am starting for Brunswick at day-break tomorrow.”

“So are we,” she exclaimed, looking at her mother.

The general, delighted to find that we knew each other, said we could travel together.

“Hardly, I think,” I replied, “unless the lady-mother has changed her principles since I knew her.”

“I am always the same,” she said, dryly enough; but I only replied with a glance of contempt.

The general held a bank at faro at a small table. There were several other ladies and some officers, and the stakes were small. He offered me a place, but I excused myself, saying that I never played while on a journey.

At the end of the deal the general returned to the charge, and said, —

“Really, chevalier, this maxim of yours is anti-social; you must play.”

So saying he drew several English bank notes from his pocket-book, telling me they were the same I had given him in London six months ago.

“Take your revenge,” he added; “there are four hundred pounds here.”

“I don’t want to lose as much as that,” I replied, “but I will risk fifty pounds to amuse you.”

With this I took out the bill of exchange that Madame du Rumain had sent me.

The general went on dealing, and at the third deal I found I was fifty guineas to the good, and with that I was satisfied. Directly afterwards supper was announced, and we went into the dining-room.

Redegonde, who had learnt French admirably, kept everybody amused. She had been engaged by the Duke of Brunswick as second singer, and she had come from Brussels. She bemoaned her journey in the uncomfortable post-chaise, and expressed a fear that she would be ill by the time she got to her journey’s end.

“Why, there’s the Chevalier Seingalt all alone in a most comfortable carriage,” said the general.

Redegonde smiled.

“How many people will your carriage hold?”

“Only two.”

“Then it’s out of the question, for I never let my daughter travel alone with anybody.”

A general burst of laughter, in which Redegonde joined, seemed to confuse the mother in some degree; but like a good daughter Redegonde explained that her mother was always afraid of her being assassinated.

The evening passed away in pleasant conversation, and the younger singer did not need much persuasion to seat herself at the piano, where she sang in a manner that won genuine applause.

When I wanted to go the general begged me to breakfast with him, saying that the post-chaise did not go till twelve, and that this act of politeness was due to my young fellow-countrywoman. Redegonde joined in, reproaching me with my behaviour at Turin and Florence, though she had nothing really to complain of. I gave in, and feeling that I wanted rest I went to bed.

The next morning, at nine o'clock, I took leave of the worthy doctor and his family and walked to the general's, giving orders that my carriage should be brought round as soon as it was ready.

In half an hour Redegonde and her mother arrived, and I was astonished to see them accompanied by the brother who had been my servant at Florence.

When breakfast was over my carriage stood at the door, and I made my bow to the general and all the company, who were standing in the hall to see me off. Redegonde came down the steps with me, and asked if my carriage was comfortable, and then got into it. I got in after her without the slightest premeditation, and the postillion, seeing the carriage full, gave a crack with his whip and we were off, Redegonde shrieking with laughter. I was on the point of telling him to stop, but seeing her enjoyment of the drive I held my tongue, only waiting for her to say, "I have had enough." But I waited in vain, and we had gone over half a league before she said a word.

"I have laughed, and laugh still," she said, "when I think of what my mother will say at this freak of mine. I had no intentions in getting into the carriage, and I am sure you cannot have told the postillion to drive on."

"You may be quite sure of that."

"All the same my mother will believe it to be a deeply-laid plan, and that strikes me as amusing."

"So it is; I am quite satisfied, certainly. Now you are here you had better come on with me to Brunswick; you will be more comfortable than in a villainous stage coach."

"I should be delighted, but that would be pushing matters too far. No, we will stop at the first stage and wait for the coach."

"You may do so if you please, but you will excuse my waiting."

"What! you would leave me all alone?"

"You know, dear Redegonde, that I have always loved you, and I am ready to take you with me to Brunswick; what more can I say?"

"If you love me you will wait with me and restore me to my mother, who must be in despair."

"In spite of my devotion I am afraid I cannot do so."

Instead of turning sulky the young madcap began to laugh again; and I determined she should come with me to Brunswick.

When we got to the end of the stage there were no horses ready. I arranged matters with the postillion, and after baiting the horses we set out once more. The roads were fearful, and we did not come to the second posting-stage till nightfall.

We might have slept there, but not wishing to be caught up by the coach and to lose my prize, I ordered fresh horses and we resumed our journey in spite of Redegonde's tears and supplications. We travelled all night and reached Lippstadt in the early morning, and in spite of the unseasonableness of the hour I ordered something to eat. Redegonde wanted a rest, as indeed did I, but she had to give way when I said caressingly that we could sleep at Minden. Instead of scolding me she began to smile, and I saw she guessed what she had to expect; in fact, when we got to Minden we had supper, and then went to bed together as man and wife, and stayed in bed for five hours. She was quite kind, and only made me entreat her for form's sake.

We got to Hanover and put up at an excellent inn where we had a choice meal, and where I found the waiter who was at the inn in Zurich when I waited on the ladies at table. Miss Chudleigh had dined there with the Duke of Kingston, and they had gone on to Berlin.

We had a beautiful French bed in which to spend the night, and in the morning we were awakened by the noise of the stage coach. Redegonde not wishing to be surprised in my arms rang the bell and told the waiter by no means to admit the lady who would come out of the coach and ask to be shewn in directly; but her precaution was vain, for, as the waiter went out, the mother and son came in, and we were taken in ‘flagrante delicto’.

I told them to wait outside, and getting up in my shirt I locked the door. The mother began to abuse me and her daughter, and threatened me with criminal proceedings if I did not give her up. Redegonde, however, calmed her by telling her the story, and she believed, or pretended to believe, it was all chance; but she said, —

“That’s all very well; but you can’t deny, you little slut, that you have been sleeping with him.”

“Oh, there’s no harm in that, for you know, dear mamma, nobody does anything asleep.”

Without giving her the time to reply she threw her arms round her neck and promised to go on with her in the coach.

After things had been thus settled, I dressed myself, and gave them all a good breakfast, and went on my way to Brunswick, where I arrived a few hours before them.

Redegonde had deprived me of my curiosity to see Gabrielle; besides, in the condition I was in, my vanity would have suffered grievously. As soon as I had settled in a good inn I sent for Daturi, who came immediately, elegantly dressed, and very anxious to introduce to me a certain Signor Nicolini, theatrical manager. This Nicolini understood his craft perfectly, and was high in favour with the prince to whom his daughter Anna was mistress. He gave me a distinguished and a cordial greeting, and was very anxious that I should stay with him, but I was able to escape the constraint of such an arrangement without giving him any offense. I accepted his offer to take my meals at his table, which was furnished by an excellent cook and surrounded by a distinguished company. Here was no gathering of men of title, with the cold and haughty manners of the Court, all were talented, and such company to my mind was delightful.

I was not well, and I was not rich, or else I should have made a longer stay at Brunswick, which had its charms for me. But we will not anticipate, though as old age steals on a man he is never tired of dwelling again and again on the incidents of his past life, in spite of his desire to arrest the sands which run out so quickly.

The third day after my arrival at Brunswick, Redegonde knowing that I was dining at Nicolini's came there too. Everybody had found out, somehow or other, that we had travelled from Wesel to Hanover together, and they were at liberty to draw whatever conclusions they pleased.

Two days later the crown prince arrived from Potsdam on a visit to his future bride, the daughter of the reigning duke, whom he married the year after.

The Court entertained in the most magnificent manner, and the hereditary prince, now the reigning duke, honoured me with an invitation. I had met his highness at an assembly in Soho Square, the day after he had been made a London citizen.

It was twenty-two years since I had been in love with Daturi's mother. I was curious to see the ravages which time had worked on her, but I had reason to repent of my visit, for she had grown terribly ugly. She knew it herself, and a blush of shame appeared on those features which had once been fair.

The prince had an army of six thousand foot in good condition. This army was to be reviewed on a plain at a little distance from the town, and I went to see the spectacle, and was rewarded by having rain dripping down my back the whole time. Among the numerous spectators were many persons of fashion, ladies in handsome dresses, and a good sprinkling of foreigners. I saw the Honourable Miss Chudleigh, who honoured me by addressing me, and asked me, amongst other questions, how long I had left London. She was dressed in Indian muslin, and beneath it she only wore a chemise of fine cambric, and by the time the rain had made her clothes cling to her body she looked more than naked, but she did not evince any confusion. Most of the ladies sheltered themselves from the rain under elegant tents which had been erected.

The troops, who took no notice of the weather, executed their manoeuvres, and fired their muskets in a manner which seemed to satisfy good judges.

There was nothing further to attract me at Brunswick, and I thought of spending the summer at Berlin, which I concluded would be more amusing than a small provincial town. Wanting an overcoat I bought the material from a Jew, who offered to discount bills of exchange for me if I had any. I had the bill which Madame du Rumain had sent me, and finding that it would be convenient for me to get it discounted, I gave it to the Israelite, who cashed it, deducting commission at the ordinary rate of two per cent. The letter was payable to the order of the Chevalier de Seingalt, and with that name I endorsed it.

I thought no more of the matter, but early the next day the same Jew called on me, and told me that I must either return him his money, or give sureties for the amount till he had ascertained whether the bill was a forgery or not.

I was offended at this piece of impertinence, and feeling certain that the bill was a good one I told the fellow that he might set his mind at rest and let me alone, as I should not give him any sureties.

“I must either have the money or the surety,” said he, “and if you refuse I will have you arrested; your character is well known.”

This was too much for me, and raising my cane I gave him a blow on the head which he must have felt for many a long day. I then dressed and dined with Nicolini, without thinking or speaking of this disagreeable incident.

The next day as I was taking a walk outside the town walls, I met the prince on horseback, followed by a single groom. I bowed to him as he passed, but he came up to me and said, —

“You are leaving Brunswick, chevalier?”

“In two or three days, your highness.”

“I heard this morning that a Jew has brought a complaint against you for beating him because he asked you to give him security for a bill of exchange which he was afraid of.”

“My lord, I cannot answer for the effects of my indignation against a rascal who dared to come and insult me in my own house, but I do know that if I had given him security I should have impugned my own honour. The impertinent scoundrel threatened to have me arrested, but I know that a just Government rules here, and not arbitrary power.”

“You are right; it would be unjust to have you arrested, but he is afraid for his ducats.”

“He need not be afraid, my lord, for the bill is drawn by a person of honour and of high station in society.”

“I am delighted to hear it. The Jew said he would never have discounted the bill if you had not mentioned my name.”

“That’s a lie! Your highness’ name never passed, my lips.”

“He also says that you endorsed the bill with a false name.”

“Then he lies again, for I signed myself Seingalt, and that name is mine.”

“In short, it is a case of a Jew who has been beaten, and is afraid of being duped. I pity such an animal, and I must see what I can do to prevent his keeping you here till he learns the fate of the bill at Amsterdam. As I have not the slightest doubt as to the goodness of the bill, I will take it up myself, and this very morning: thus you will be able to leave when you like. Farewell, chevalier! I wish you a pleasant journey.”

With this compliment the prince left me, without giving me time to answer him. I might have felt inclined to tell him that by taking up the bill he would give the Jew and everyone else to understand that it was a favour done to me, to the great hurt of my honour, and that consequently I should be obliged by his doing nothing of the kind. But though the prince was a man of generosity and magnanimity, he was deficient in that delicate quality which we call tact. This defect, common amongst princes, arises from their education, which places them above the politeness which is considered necessary in ordinary mortals.

He could not have treated me worse than he did, if he had been certain of my dishonesty, and wished me to understand that I was forgiven, and that he would bear all the consequences of my misdemeanour. With this idea in my head, I said to myself; “Perhaps, indeed, this is exactly what the prince does think. Is it the Jew or me that he pities? If the latter, I think I must give him a lesson, though I do not wish to cause him any humiliation.”

Feeling deeply humiliated myself, and pondering on my position, I walked away, directing my attention especially to the duke’s concluding words. I thought his wish for a pleasant journey supremely out of place, under the circumstances, in the mouth of one who enjoyed almost absolute power. It was equivalent to an order to leave the town, and I felt indignant at the thought.

I therefore resolved to vindicate my honour by neither going away nor remaining.

“If I stay,” I said to myself, “the Jew will be adjudged to be in the right; and if I go the duke will think I have profited by his favour, and so to speak, by his present of fifty louis if the bill were protested. I will not let anyone enjoy a satisfaction which is no one due.”

After these considerations, which I thought worthy of a wiser head than mine, I packed up my trunk, ordered horses, and after a good dinner and the payment of my bill I went to Wolfenbuttel with the idea of spending week there. I was sure of finding amusement, for Wolfenbuttel contains the third largest library in Europe, and I had long been anxious to see it.

The learned librarian, whose politeness was all the better for being completely devoid of affection, told me that not only could I have whatever books I wished to see, but that I could take them to my lodging, not even excepting the manuscripts, which are the chief feature in that fine library.

I spent a week in the library, only leaving it to take my meals and go to bed, and I count this week as one of the happiest I have ever spent, for then I forgot myself completely; and in the delight of study, the past, the present, and the future were entirely blotted out. Of some such sort, I think, must be the joys of the redeemed; and now I see that only a few trifling little circumstances and incidents were wanting to make me a perfect sage. And here I must note a circumstance which my readers may scarcely believe, but which, for all that, is quite true-namely, that I have always preferred virtue to vice, and that when I sinned I did so out of mere lightness of heart, for which, no doubt, I shall be blamed by many persons. But, no matter — a man has only to give an account of his actions to two beings, to himself here and to God hereafter.

At Wolfenbuttel I gathered a good many hints on the “Iliad” and “Odyssey,” which will not be found in any commentator, and of which the great Pope knew nothing. Some of these considerations will be found in my translation of the “Iliad,” the rest are still in manuscript, and will probably never see the light. However, I burn nothing, not even these Memoirs, though I often think of doing so, but the time never comes.

At the end of the week I returned to the same inn at Brunswick which I had occupied before, and let my godson Daturi know of my arrival.

I was delighted to hear that no one suspected that I had spent the fortnight within five leagues of Brunswick. Daturi told me that the general belief was that I had returned the Jew his money and got the bill of exchange back. Nevertheless I felt sure that the bill had been honoured at Amsterdam, and that the duke knew that I had been staying at Wolfenbuttel.

Daturi told me that Nicolini was expecting to see me at dinner, and I was not astonished to hear of it, for I had not taken leave of anyone. I accordingly went, and the following incident, which served to justify me in the eyes of all men, took place:

We were at the roast when one of the prince's servants came in with the Jew I had beaten. The poor man came up humbly to me, and spoke as follows:

"I am ordered to come here, sir, to apologize for suspecting the authenticity of the bill of exchange you gave me. I have been punished by being fined the amount of my commission."

"I wish that had been your only punishment," said I.

He made me a profound bow, and went out, saying that I was only too good.

When I 'got back to the inn, I found a letter from Redegonde in which she reproached me tenderly for not having been once to see her all the time I had been at Brunswick, and begging me to breakfast with her in a little country house.

"I shall not be in my mother's company," she added, "but in that of a young lady of your acquaintance, whom, I am sure, you will be glad to see once more."

I liked Redegonde, and I had only neglected her at Brunswick because my means did not allow my making her a handsome present. I resolved to accept her invitation, my curiosity being rather stimulated by the account of the young lady.

I was exact at the time indicated, and I found Redegonde looking charming in a pretty room on the ground floor, and with her was a young artiste whom I had known as a child shortly before I had been put under the Leads. I pretended to be delighted to see her, but I was really quite taken up with Redegonde, and congratulated her upon her pretty house. She said she had taken it for six months, but did not sleep there. After coffee had been served we were on the point of going out for a stroll, when who should come in but the prince. He smiled pleasantly when he saw us, and apologized to Redegonde for interrupting our little party.

The appearance of the prince enlightened me as to the position of my delightful fellow countrywoman, and I understood why she had been so precise about the time at which I was to come. Redegonde had made the conquest of the worthy prince, who was always disposed to gallantry, but felt it his duty during the first year of his marriage with the King of England's sister to preserve some kind of incognito in his amours.

We spent an hour in walking up and down and talking of London and Berlin, but nothing was said of the Jew or the bill of exchange. He was delighted with my warm eulogium of his library at Wolfenbuttel, and laughed with all his heart when I said that unless it had been for the intellectual nourishment I enjoyed, the bad fare at the inn would certainly have reduced me to half my present size.

After bidding a graceful farewell to the nymph, the prince left us, and we heard him galloping away on his horse.

When I was alone with Redegonde, far from begging for new favours, I advised her to be faithful to the prince; but though appearances were certainly not deceitful in this case, she would not admit anything. This was in accordance with her part as young mistress, and I did not reproach her for her want of confidence.

I spent the rest of the day at the inn, and started the next morning at day-break.

When I got to Magdeburg, I took a letter of introduction from General Bekw —— to an officer. He shewed me the fortress, and kept me for three days making me taste all the pleasures of the table, women, and gaming. However, I was very moderate, and managed to increase my savings in a small degree, contenting myself with modest wagers.

From Magdeburg I went straight to Berlin, without caring to stop at Potsdam, as the king was not there. The fearful Prussian roads with their sandy soil made me take three days to do eighteen Prussian miles. Prussia is a country of which much could be made with labour and capital, but I do not think it will ever become a really fine country.

I put up at the "Hotel de Paris," which was both comfortable and economical. Madame Rufin who kept it had entered into the spirit of her business without losing her French politeness, and thus the inn had got a reputation. As soon as I was in my room she came to ask me if I were satisfied, and to make divers arrangements for my comfort. There was a table d'hote, and those who ate in their private rooms paid double.

"This arrangement," I said, "may suit you, but for the present it will not suit me. I want to dine in my own room, but I don't want to pay double; I will therefore pay as if I were in the public room, but if you like you need only send me up half the number of dishes."

"I agree, on the condition that you sup with me; we will not put it in the accounts, and you will only meet friends at my little suppers."

I thought her proposal so curious a one that I had a great inclination to laugh, but finding it at the same time very advantageous I accepted frankly, and as if we had long been friends.

On the first day I was tired, and did not sup with her till the day following. Madame Rufin had a husband who attended to the cooking, and a son, but neither of them came to these suppers. The first time I went to one of them I met an elderly but agreeable and sensible gentleman. He lodged in a room adjoining mine, and called himself Baron Treidel; his sister had married the Duke of Courland, Jean Ernest Biron, or Birlen. The baron, who was extremely pleasant, became my friend, and remained so for the couple of months I spent in Berlin. I also met a Hamburg merchant, named Greve, and his wife, whom he had just married and had brought to Berlin that she might see the marvels of the Warrior-King's Court. She was as pleasant as her husband, and I paid her an assiduous court. A lively and high-spirited individual called Noel, who was the sole and beloved cook of his Prussian Majesty, was the fourth person. He only came rarely to the suppers on account of his duties in the king's kitchen. As I have said, his majesty had only this one cook, and Noel had only one scullion to help him.

M. Noel, the ambassador of the French Republic at the Hague, is, as I am assured, the son of this cook, who was an excellent man. And here I must say, in despite of my hatred for the French Revolutionary Government, that I am not at all ill pleased that a man of talents should be enabled to fill exalted offices, which under the old system of privilege were often occupied by fools.

If it had not been for the culinary skill of Noel the cook, the famous Atheist physician Lametrie would not have died of indigestion, for the pie he succeeded in eating in his extremity was made by Noel.

Lametrie often supped with Madame Rufin and I thought it disobliging of him to die so soon, for I should have liked to know him, as he was a learned man and full of mirth. He expired laughing, though it is said that death from indigestion is the most painful of all. Voltaire told me that he thought Lametrie the most obstinate Atheist in the world, and I could easily believe it after reading his works. The King of Prussia himself pronounced his funeral oration, using the words, "It is not wonderful that he only believed in the existence of matter, for all the spirit in the world was enclosed in his own body. No one but a king would venture on such a sally in a funeral oration. However, Frederick the Great was a Deist and not an Atheist; but that is of little consequence, since he never allowed the belief in a God to influence his actions in the slightest degree. Some say that an Atheist who ponders over the possible existence of a God is better than a Deist who never thinks of the Deity, but I will not venture to decide this point."

The first visit I paid in Berlin was to Calsabigi, the younger brother of the Calsabigi with whom I had founded the lottery in Paris in 1757. He had left Paris and his wife too, and had set up a lottery in Brussels; but his extravagance was so great that he became a bankrupt in spite of the efforts of Count Cobenzl to keep him going. He fled from Brussels to Berlin, and was introduced to the King of Prussia. He was a plausible speaker, and persuaded the monarch to establish a lottery, to make him the manager, and to give him the title of Counsellor of State. He promised that the lottery should bring in an annual revenue of at least two hundred thousand crowns, and only asked a percentage of ten per cent. for himself.

The lottery had been going for two years, and had had a great success, as hitherto it had had no large losses; but the king, who knew that the luck might turn, was always in a fidget about it. With this idea he told Calsabigi that he must carry it on on his own responsibility and pay him a hundred thousand crowns per annum, that being the cost of his Italian Theatre.

I happened to call on Calsabigi on the very day on which the king intimated to him this decision. After talking over our old relationship and the vicissitudes we had both experienced, he told me what had happened; it seemed an unexpected blow to him. The next drawing, he said, would be at the king's risk; but the public would have to be informed that in future the lottery would be a private one. He wanted capital to the amount of two million crowns, for he foresaw that otherwise the lottery would collapse, as people would not risk their money without the certainty of being paid in the event of their winning. He said he would guarantee me an income of ten thousand crowns per annum if I succeeded in making the king change his mind, and by way of encouragement he recalled to my mind the effect of my persuasive powers at Paris seven years before.

"'Tis a good omen," said he, "and without any superstition I believe that the good genius of the lottery has brought me to Berlin just now."

I laughed at his illusions, but I pitied him. I shewed him the impossibility of convincing an individual whose only argument was, "I am afraid, and I don't wish to be afraid any longer." He begged me to stay to dinner and introduced me to his wife. This was a double surprise for me, in the first place because I thought General La Motte, as his first wife was called, to be still living, and in the second place because I recognized in this second wife of his, Mdlle. Belanger. I addressed the usual compliments to her and enquired after her mother. She replied with a profound sigh, and told me not to ask any questions about her family as she had only bad news to tell me.

I had known Madame Belanger at Paris; she was a widow with one daughter, and seemed to be well off. Now I saw this daughter, pretty enough and well married, and yet in this doleful humour, and I felt embarrassed and yet curious.

After Calsabigi had placed me in a position to entertain a high opinion of the skill of his cook, he shewed me his horses and carriages, begging me to take a drive with his wife and come back to supper, which, as he said, was his best meal.

When we were in the carriage together, the necessity of talking about something led me to ask the lady by what happy chain of circumstances she found herself the wife of Calsabigi.

“His real wife is still alive, so I have not the misfortune of occupying that position, but everyone in Berlin thinks I am his lawful wife. Three years ago I was deprived of my mother and the means of livelihood at one stroke, for my mother had an annuity. None of my relations were rich enough to help me, and wishing to live virtuously above all things I subsisted for two years on the sale of my mother’s furniture, boarding with a worthy woman who made her living by embroidery. I learnt her art, and only went out to mass on Sundays. I was a prey to melancholy, and when I had spent all I had I went to M. Brea, a Genoese, on whom I thought I could rely. I begged him to get me a place as a mere waiting-maid, thinking that I was tolerably competent for such a position. He promised to do what he could for me, and five or six days afterwards he made me the following proposal:

“He read me a letter from Calsabigi, of whom I had never heard, in which he charged him to send a virtuous young lady to Berlin. She must be of good birth, good education, and pleasant appearance, as when his aged and infirm wife died he intended to marry her.

“As such a person would most probably be badly off, Calsabigi begged M. Brea to give her fifty Louis to buy clothes and linen and fifty Louis to journey to Berlin with a maid. M. Brea was also authorized to promise that the young lady should hold the position of Calsabigi’s wife, and be presented in that character to all his friends; that she should have a waiting-maid, a carriage, an allowance of clothes, and a certain monthly amount as pin-money to be spent as she chose. He promised, if the arrangement was not found suitable, to set her free at the end of a year, giving her a hundred Louis, and leaving her in possession of whatever money she might have saved, and such clothes and jewels as he might have given her; in fine, if the lady agreed to live with him till he was able to marry her, Calsabigi promised to execute a deed of gift in her favour to the amount of ten thousand crowns which the public would believe to be her dowry, and if he died before being able to marry her she would have a right to claim the aforesaid sum from his estate.

“With such fine promises did Brea persuade me to leave my native country to come and dishonour myself here, for though everybody treats me as if I were his wife, it is probably known that I am only his mistress. I have been here for six months, and I have never had an instant’s happiness.”

“Has he not kept the conditions you have mentioned?”

“Conditions! Calsabigi’s state of health will kill him long before his wife, and in that case I shall have nothing, for he is loaded with debt, and his creditors would have the first claim on the estate. Besides, I do not like him; and the reason is that he loves me too much. You can understand that; his devotion worries me.”

“At all events, you can return to Paris in six months’ time, or, in fact, do anything you like when the term stipulated has expired. You will get your hundred louis, and can lay in a pretty stock of linen.”

“If I go to Paris I shall be dishonoured, and if I remain here I shall be dishonoured. In fact, I am very unhappy, and Brea is the cause of my woe. Nevertheless, I can’t blame him, as he could not have been aware that his friend’s property only consisted of debts. And now the king has withdrawn his countenance, the lottery will fail, and Calsabigi will inevitably become a bankrupt.”

She had studiously refrained from exaggeration, and I could not help confessing that she was to be pitied. I advised her to try and sell the deed of gift for ten thousand crowns, as it was not likely he would raise any objection.

“I have thought it over,” said she, “but to do that I have need of a friend; of course, I do not expect to dispose of it save at a great loss.”

I promised to see what I could do for her.

There were four of us at supper. The fourth person was a young man who had helped in the Paris and Brussels Lotteries, and had followed Calsabigi to Berlin. He was evidently in love with Mdlle. Belanger, but I did not think his love was crowned with success.

At dessert Calsabigi begged me to give him my opinion of a scheme he had drafted, the aim of which was to bring in a sum of two million crowns, so that the credit of the lottery might remain secure.

The lady left us to talk business at our ease. She was between twenty-four and twenty-five, and without having much wit she possessed a great knowledge of the usages of society, which is better than wit in a woman; in fine, she had all that a man could well desire. The sentiments I felt for her were confined to those of friendship and esteem after the confidence she had placed in me.

Calsabigi's project was brief, but clear and well imagined. He invited capitalists not to speculate in the lottery, but to guarantee it for a certain sum. In the case of the lottery's losing, each guarantor would have to share in paying according to the sum named, and in like manner they would share in the profits.

I promised to give him my opinion in writing by the next day, and I substituted the following plan for his:

1. A capital of a million, would, I judged, be ample.

2. This million should be divided into a hundred shares of ten thousand crowns each.

3. Each share must be taken up before a notary, who would answer for the shareholder's solvency.

4. All dividends to be paid the third day after the drawing.

5. In case of loss the shareholder to renew his share.

6. A cashier, chosen by a majority of four-fifths of the shareholders, to have the control of all moneys.

7. Winning tickets to be paid the day after the drawing.

8. On the eve of a drawing the shareholders' cashier to have an account of receipts from the lottery cashier, and the former to lock the safe with three keys, one of which to remain in his hands, one in the hands of the lottery cashier, and one in the hands of the manager of the lottery.

9. Only the simple drawing, the ambe and the terne to be retained; the quarterne and the quine to be abolished.

10. On the three combinations a shilling to be the minimum, and a crown the maximum stake; the offices to be closed twenty-four hours before the drawing.

11. Ten per cent. to go to Calsabigi, the manager; all expenses of farming to be paid by him.

12. Calsabigi to be entitled to the possession of two shares, without a guarantee being required.

I saw by Calsabigi's face that the plan did not please him, but I told him that he would not get shareholders save on these terms, or on terms even less favourable to himself.

He had degraded the lottery to the level of biribi; his luxury and extravagance caused him to be distrusted; it was known that he was head over ears in debt, and the king could not banish the fear that he would be cheated in spite of the keenness of his comptroller-general.

The last drawing under the king's sanction made everyone in good spirits, for the lottery lost twenty thousand crowns. The king sent the money immediately by a privy councillor, but it was said, when he heard the result of the drawing, that he burst out laughing, observing, —

"I knew it would be so, and I am only too happy to have got quit of it so cheaply."

I thought it my duty to go and sup with the director to console him, and I found him in a state of great depression. He could not help thinking that his unhappy drawing would make the task of getting shareholders more difficult than ever. Hitherto the lottery had always been a gainer, but its late loss could not have come at a worse time.

Nevertheless, he did not lose heart, and the next morning the public were informed by printed bills that the office would remain closed till a sufficient number of guarantors were found.

CHAPTER XVIII

Lord Keith — My Appointment to Meet the King in the Garden of

Sans-Souci My Conversation with Frederick the Great — Madame

Denis The Pomeranian Cadets — Lambert — I Go to Mitau My

Welcome at the Court, and My Administrative Journey

The fifth day after my arrival at Berlin I presented myself to the lord-marshal, who since the death of his brother had been styled Lord Keith. I had seen him in London after his return from Scotland, where he had been reinstated in the family estates, which had been confiscated for Jacobinism. Frederick the Great was supposed to have brought this about. Lord Keith lived at Berlin, resting on his laurels, and enjoying the blessings of peace.

With his old simplicity of manner he told me he was glad to see me again, and asked if I proposed making any stay at Berlin. I replied that I would willingly do so if the king would give me a suitable office. I asked him if he would speak a word in my favour; but he replied that the king liked to judge men's characters for himself, and would often discover merit where no one had suspected its presence, and vice versa.

He advised me to intimate to the king in writing that I desired to have the honour of an interview. "When you speak to him," the good old man added, "you may say that you know me, and the king will doubtless address me on the subject, and you may be sure what I say shall not be to your disadvantage."

"But, my lord, how can I write to a monarch of whom I know nothing, and who knows nothing of me? I should not have thought of such a step."

"I daresay, but don't you wish to speak to him?"

"Certainly."

"That is enough. Your letter will make him aware of your desire and nothing more."

"But will he reply?"

"Undoubtedly; he replies to everybody. He will tell you when and where he will see you. His Majesty is now at Sans-Souci. I am curious to know the nature of your interview with the monarch who, as you can see, is not afraid of being imposed on."

When I got home I wrote a plain but respectful letter to the king, asking where and at what time I could introduce myself to him.

In two days I received a letter signed "Frederick," in which the receipt of my letter was acknowledged, and I was told that I should find his majesty in the garden of Sans-Souci at four o'clock.

As may be imagined I was punctual to my appointment. I was at Sans-Souci at three, clad in a simple black dress. When I got into the court-yard there was not so much as a sentinel to stop me, so I went on mounted a stair, and opened a door in front of me. I found myself in a picture-gallery, and the curator came up to me and offered to shew me over it.

"I have not come to admire these masterpieces," I replied, "but to see the king, who informed me in writing that I should find him in the garden."

"He is now at a concert playing the flute; he does so every day after dinner. Did he name any time?"

"Yes, four o'clock, but he will have forgotten that."

"The king never forgets anything; he will keep the appointment, and you will do well to go into the garden and await him."

I had been in the garden for some minutes when I saw him appear, followed by his reader and a pretty spaniel. As soon as he saw me he accosted me, taking off his old hat, and pronouncing my name. Then he asked in a terrible voice what I wanted of him. This greeting surprised me, and my voice stuck in my throat.

"Well, speak out. Are you not the person who wrote to me?"

"Yes, sire, but I have forgotten everything now. I thought that I should not be awed by the majesty of a king, but I was mistaken. My lord-marshal should have warned me."

"Then he knows you? Let us walk. What is it that you want? What do you think of my garden?"

His enquiries after my needs and of his garden were simultaneous. To any other person I should have answered that I did not know anything about gardening, but this would have been equivalent to refusing to answer the question; and no monarch, even if he be a philosopher, could endure that. I therefore replied that I thought the garden superb.

"But," he said, "the gardens of Versailles are much finer."

"Yes, sire, but that is chiefly on account of the fountains."

"True, but it is not my fault; there is no water here. I have spent more than three hundred thousand crowns to get water, but unsuccessfully."

"Three hundred thousand crowns, sire! If your majesty had spent them all at once, the fountains should be here."

"Oh, oh! I see you are acquainted with hydraulics."

I could not say that he was mistaken, for fear of offending him, so I simply bent my head, which might mean either yes or no. Thank God the king did not trouble to test my knowledge of the science of hydraulics, with which I was totally unacquainted.

He kept on the move all the time, and as he turned his head from one side to the other hurriedly asked me what forces Venice could put into the field in war time.

"Twenty men-of-war, sire, and a number of galleys."

"What are the land forces?"

"Seventy thousand men, sire; all of whom are subjects of the Republic, and assessing each village at one man."

"That is not true; no doubt you wish to amuse me by telling me these fables. Give me your opinions on taxation."

This was the first conversation I had ever had with a monarch. I made a rapid review of the situation, and found myself much in the same position as an actor of the improvised comedy of the Italians, who is greeted by the hisses of the gods if he stops short a moment. I therefore replied with all the airs of a doctor of finance that I could say something about the theory of taxation.

"That's what I want," he replied, "for the practice is no business of yours."

"There are three kinds of taxes, considered as to their effects. The first is ruinous, the second a necessary evil, and the third invariably beneficial."

"Good! Go on."

"The ruinous impost is the royal tax, the necessary is the military, and the beneficial is the popular."

As I had not given the subject any thought I was in a disagreeable position, for I was obliged to go on speaking, and yet not to talk nonsense.

"The royal tax, sire, is that which deplenishes the purses of the subject to fill the coffers of the king."

"And that kind of tax is always ruinous, you think."

"Always, sire; it prevents the circulation of money — the soul of commerce and the mainstay of the state."

"But if the tax be levied to keep up the strength of the army, you say it is a necessary evil."

"Yes, it is necessary and yet evil, for war is an evil."

"Quite so; and now about the popular tax."

"This is always a benefit, for the monarch takes with one hand and gives with the other; he improves towns and roads, founds schools, protects the sciences, cherishes the arts; in fine, he directs this tax towards improving the condition and increasing the happiness of his people."

"There is a good deal of truth in that. I suppose you know Calsabigi?"

"I ought to, your majesty, as he and I established the Genoa Lottery at Paris seven years ago."

"In what class would you put this taxation, for you will agree that it is taxation of a kind?"

"Certainly, sire, and not the least important. It is beneficial when the monarch spends his profits for the good of the people."

“But the monarch may lose?”

“Once in fifty.”

“Is that conclusion the result of a mathematical calculation?”

“Yes, sire.”

“Such calculations often prove deceptive.”

“Not so, may it please your majesty, when God remains neutral.”

“What has God got to do with it?”

“Well, sire, we will call it destiny or chance.”

“Good! I may possibly be of your opinion as to the calculation, but I don’t like your Genoese Lottery. It seems to me an elaborate swindle, and I would have nothing more to do with it, even if it were positively certain that I should never lose.”

“Your majesty is right, for the confidence which makes the people risk their money in a lottery is perfectly fallacious.”

This was the end of our strange dialogue, and stopping before a building he looked me over, and then, after a short silence, observed, —

“Do you know that you are a fine man?”

“Is it possible that, after the scientific conversation we have had, your majesty should select the least of the qualities which adorn your life guardsmen for remark?”

The king smiled kindly, and said, —

“As you know Marshal Keith, I will speak to him of you.”

With that he took off his hat, and bade me farewell. I retired with a profound bow.

Three or four days after the marshal gave me the agreeable news that I had found favour in the king’s eyes, and that his majesty thought of employing me.

I was curious to learn the nature of this employment, and being in no kind of hurry I resolved to await events in Berlin. The time passed pleasantly enough, for I was either with Calsabigi, Baron Treidel, or my landlady, and when these resources failed me, I used to walk in the park, musing over the events of my life.

Calsabigi had no difficulty in obtaining permission to continue the lottery on his own account, and he boldly announced that henceforward he would conduct the lottery on his own risk. His audacity was crowned with success, and he obtained a profit of a hundred thousand crowns. With this he paid most of his debts, and gave his mistress ten thousand crowns, she returning the document entitling her to that amount. After this lucky drawing it was easy to find guarantors, and the lottery went on successfully for two or three years.

Nevertheless Calsabigi ended by becoming bankrupt and died poor enough in Italy. He might be compared to the Danaides; the more he got the more he spent. His mistress eventually made a respectable marriage and returned to Paris, where she lived in comfort.

At the period of which I am speaking, the Duchess of Brunswick, the king's sister, came to pay him a visit. She was accompanied by her daughter who married the Crown Prince of Prussia in the following year. I saw the king in a suit of lustring trimmed with gold lace, and black silk stockings on his legs. He looked truly comic, and more like a theatrical heavy father than a great king. He came into the hall with his sister on his arm and attracted universal attention, for only very old men could remember seeing him without his uniform and top-boots.

I was not aware that the famous Madame Denis was at Berlin, and it was therefore an agreeable surprise to me to see her in the ballet one evening, dancing a pas seul in an exquisite manner. We were old friends, and I resolved to pay her a visit the next day.

I must tell the reader (supposing I ever have one), that when I was about twelve years old I went to the theatre with my mother and saw, not without much heart-beating, a girl of eight who danced a minuet in so ravishing a manner that the whole house applauded loudly. This young dancer, who was the pantaloon's daughter, charmed me to such a degree that I could not resist going to her dressing-room to compliment her on her performance. I wore the cassock in those days, and she was astonished when she heard her father order her to get up and kiss me. She kissed me, nevertheless, with much grace, and though I received the compliment with a good deal of awkwardness I was so delighted, that I could not help buying her a little ring from a toy merchant in the theatre. She kissed me again with great gratitude and enthusiasm.

The pleasantest part about this was that the sequin I had given for the ring belonged to Dr. Gozzi, and so when I went back to him I was in a pitiable state, for I had not only spent money which did not belong to me, but I had spent it for so small a favour as a kiss.

I knew that the next day I should have to give an account of the money he had entrusted to me, and not having the least idea as to what I should say, I had a bad night of it. The next morning everything came out, and my mother made up the sequin to the doctor. I laugh now when I think of this childish piece of gallantry, which was an omen of the extent to which my heart was to be swayed by the fair sex.

The toy-woman who had sold me the ring came the next day at dinner-time to our house, and after producing several rings and trinkets which were judged too dear, she began to praise my generosity, and said that I had not thought the ring I had given to pretty Jeannette too dear. This did my business; and I had to confess the whole, laying my fault to the account of love, and promising not to do such a thing again. But when I uttered the word love, everybody roared with laughter, and began to make cruel game of me. I wished myself a mile away, and registered an interior resolve never to confess my faults again. The reader knows how well I kept my promise.

The pantaloon's little daughter was my mother's goddaughter, and my thoughts were full of her. My mother, who loved me and saw my pain, asked me if I would like the little girl to be asked to supper. My grandmother, however, opposed the idea, and I was obliged to her.

The day after this burlesque scene I returned to Padua, where Bettina soon made me forget the little ballet-girl. I saw her again at Charlottenbourg, and that was now seventeen years ago.

I longed to have a talk with her, and to see whether she would remember me, though I did not expect her to do so. I asked if her husband Denis was with her, and they told me that the king had banished him because he ill-treated her.

I called on her the day after the performance, and was politely received, but she said she did not think she had had the pleasure of seeing me before.

By degrees I told her of the events of her childhood, and how she enchanted all Venice by the grace with which she danced the minuet. She interrupted me by saying that at that time she was only six years old.

“You could not be more,” I replied, “for I was only ten; and nevertheless, I fell in love with you, and never have I forgotten the kiss you gave me by your father’s order in return for some trifling present I made you.”

“Be quiet; you gave me a beautiful ring, and I kissed you of my own free will. You wore the cassock then. I have never forgotten you. But can it really be you?”

“It is indeed.”

“I am delighted to see you again. But I could never have recognized you, and I suppose you would not have recognized me.”

“No, I should not have known you, unless I had heard your name mentioned.”

“One alters in twenty years, you know.”

“Yes, one cannot expect to have the same face as at six.”

“You can bear witness that I am not more than twenty-six, though some evil speakers give me ten years more.”

“You should not take any notice of such calumnies, my dear. You are in the flower of your age, and made for the service of love. For my part, I congratulate myself on being able to tell you that you are the first woman that inspired me with a real passion.”

We could not help becoming affectionate if we continued to keep up the conversation in this style, but experience had taught us that it was well to remain as we were for the present.

Madame Denis was still fresh and youthful looking, though she persisted in abbreviating her age by ten years. Of course she could not deceive me, and she must have known it, nevertheless, she liked me to bear outward testimony to her youthfulness. She would have detested me if I had attempted to prove to her what she knew perfectly well, but did not care to confess. No doubt she cared little for my thoughts on the subject, and she may have imagined that I owed her gratitude for diminishing her age, as it enabled me to diminish my own to make our tales agree. However, I did not trouble myself much about it, for it is almost a duty in an actress to disguise her age, as in spite of talent the public will not forgive a woman for having been born too soon.

I thought her behaviour augured well, and I hoped she would not make me languish long. She shewed me her house, which was all elegance and good taste. I asked her if she had a lover, and she replied with a smile that all Berlin thought so, but that it was nevertheless deceived on the principal point, as the individual in question was more of a father than a lover.

“But you deserve to have a real lover; I cannot conceive how you can do without one.”

“I assure you I don’t trouble myself about it. I am subject to convulsions, which are the plague of my life. I want to try the Teplitz waters, which are said to be excellent for all nervous affections; but the king has refused his permission, which I, nevertheless, hope to obtain next year.”

I felt ardently disposed, and I thought she was pleased with the restraint I put upon myself.

“Will you be annoyed,” said I, “if I call upon you frequently?”

“If you don’t mind I will call myself your niece, or your cousin, and then we can see each other.”

“Do you know that that may possibly be true? I would not swear that you were not my sister.”

This sally made us talk of the friendship that had subsisted between her father and my mother, and we allowed ourselves those caresses which are permitted to near relations; but feeling that things were going too far we ceased. As she bade me farewell, she asked me to dine with her the next day, and I accepted.

As I went back to my inn I reflected on the strange combinations which made my life one continuous chain of events, and I felt it my duty to give thanks to eternal Providence, for I felt that I had been born under a happy star.

The next day, when I went to dine with Madame Denis, I found a numerous company assembled. The first person who greeted me with the warmth of an old friend was a young dancer named Aubri, whom I had known at Paris and at Venice. He was famous for having been the lover of one of the most exalted Venetian ladies, and at the same time her husband's pathic. It was said that this scandalous intimacy was of such a nature that Aubri used to sleep between the husband and wife. At the beginning of Lent the State Inquisitors sent him to Trieste. He introduced me to his wife, who danced like himself and was called La Panting. He had married her at St. Petersburg, from which city he had just come, and they were going to spend the winter in Paris. The next person who advanced to greet me was a fat man, who held out his hand and said we had been friends twenty-five years ago, but that we were so young then that it would be no wonder if we did not know each other. "We knew each other at Padua, at Dr. Gozzi's," he added; "my name is Joseph da Loglio."

"I remember you," I replied, "in those days you were violoncello at the Russian chapel."

"Exactly; and now I am returning to my native land to leave it no more. I have the honour to introduce you to my wife, who was born at St. Petersburg, but is a daughter of Modonis the violinist, whose reputation is European. In a week I shall be at Dresden, where I hope to have the honour of seeing Madame Casanova, your mother."

I was delighted to find myself in such congenial society, but I could see that Madame Denis did not relish these recollections extending over a quarter of a century, and I turned the conversation to the events at St. Petersburg which had resulted in Catherine the Great ascending the throne. Da Loglio told us that he had taken a small part in this conspiracy, and had thought it prudent to get out of the way. "Fortunately," he added, "this was a contingency I had long provided against, and I am in a position to spend the rest of my days in comfort in Italy."

Madame Denis then observed:

"A week ago a Piedmontese, named Audar, was introduced to me. He had been a chief mover in the conspiracy, and the empress gave him a present of a hundred thousand roubles and an order to leave Russia immediately."

I heard afterwards that this Audar bought an estate in Piedmont on which he built a fine mansion. In two or three years it was struck by a thunder-bolt, and the unfortunate man was killed in the ruins of his own house. If this was a blow from an Almighty hand, it could not, at all events, have been directed by the genius of Russia, for if the unfortunate Peter III. had lived, he would have retarded Russian civilization by a hundred years.

The Empress Catherine rewarded all the foreigners who had assisted her in her plots most magnificently, and shewed herself grateful to the Russians who had helped her to mount the throne; while, like a crafty politician, she sent such nobles as she suspected to be averse to revolution out of the country.

It was Da Loglio and his pretty wife who determined me to betake myself to Russia in case the King of Prussia did not give me any employment. I was assured that I should make my fortune there, and Da Loglio promised to give me good instructions.

As soon as this worthy man left Berlin my intimacy with Madame Denis commenced. One night when I was supping with her she was seized with convulsions which lasted all the night. I did not leave her for a moment, and in the morning, feeling quite recovered, her gratitude finished what my love had begun twenty-six years before, and our amorous commerce lasted while I stayed at Berlin. We shall hear of her again at Florence six years later.

Some days after Madame Denis took me to Potsdam to shew me all the sights of the town. Our intimacy offended no one, for she was generally believed to be my niece, and the general who kept her either believed the report, or like a man of sense pretended to believe it.

Amongst other notable things I saw at Potsdam was the sight of the king commanding the first battalion of his grenadiers, all picked men, the flower of the Prussian army.

The room which we occupied at the inn faced a walk by which the king passed when he came from the castle. The shutters were all closed, and our landlady told us that on one occasion when a pretty dancer called La Reggiana was sleeping in the same room, the king had seen her in ‘puris naturalibus’. This was too much for his modesty, and he had ordered the shutters to be closed, and closed they had remained, though this event was four years old. The king had some cause to fear, for he had been severely treated by La Barbarina. In the king's bedroom we saw her portrait, that of La Cochois, sister to the actress who became Marchioness d'Argens, and that of Marie Theresa, with whom Frederick had been in love, or rather he had been in love with the idea of becoming emperor.

After we had admired the beauty and elegance of the castle, we could not help admiring the way in which the master of the castle was lodged. He had a mean room, and slept on a little bed with a screen around it. There was no dressing-gown and no slippers. The valet shewed us an old cap which the king put on when he had a cold; it looked as if it must be very uncomfortable. His majesty's bureau was a table covered with pens, paper, half-burnt manuscripts, and an ink-pot; beside it was a sofa. The valet told us that these manuscripts contained the history of the last Prussian war, and the king had been so annoyed by their accidentally getting burnt that he had resolved to have no more to do with the work. He probably changed his mind, for the book, which is little esteemed, was published shortly after his death.

Five or six weeks after my curious conversation with the monarch, Marshal Keith told me that his majesty had been pleased to create me a tutor to the new corps of Pomeranian cadets which he was just establishing. There were to be fifteen cadets and five tutors, so that each should have the care of three pupils. The salary was six hundred crowns and board found. The duty of the tutors was to follow or accompany the cadets wherever they went, Court included. I had to be quick in making up my mind, for the four others were already installed, and his majesty did not like to be kept waiting. I asked Lord Keith where the college was, and I promised to give him a reply by the next day.

I had to summon all my powers of self-restraint to my assistance when I heard this extravagant proposal as coming from a man who was so discreet in most things, but my astonishment was increased when I saw the abode of these fifteen young noblemen of rich Pomerania. It consisted of three or four great rooms almost devoid of furniture, several whitewashed bedrooms, containing a wretched bed, a deal table, and two deal chairs. The young cadets, boys of twelve or thirteen, all looked dirty and untidy, and were boxed up in a wretched uniform which matched admirably their rude and rustic faces. They were in company with their four governors, whom I took for their servants, and who looked at me in a stupefied manner, not daring to think that I was to be their future colleague.

Just as I was going to bid an eternal farewell to this abode of misery, one of the governors put his head out of the window and exclaimed, —

“The king is riding up.”

I could not avoid meeting him, and besides, I was glad enough to see him again, especially in such a place.

His majesty came up with his friend Icilius, examined everything, and saw me, but did not honour me with a word. I was elegantly dressed, and wore my cross set with brilliants. But I had to bite my lips so as not to burst out laughing when Frederick the Great got in a towering rage at a chamber utensil which stood beside one of the beds, and which did not appear to be in a very cleanly condition.

“Whose bed is this?” cried the monarch.

“Mine, sire,” answered a trembling cadet.

“Good! but it is not you I am angry with; where is your governor?”

The fortunate governor presented himself, and the monarch, after honouring him with the title of blockhead, proceeded to scold him roundly. However, he ended by saying that there was a servant, and that the governor ought to see that he did his work properly. This disgusting scene was enough for me, and I hastened to call on Marshal Keith to announce my determination. The old soldier laughed at the description I gave him of the academy, and said I was quite right to despise such an office; but that I ought, nevertheless, to go and thank the king before I left Berlin. I said I did not feel inclined for another interview with such a man, and he agreed to present my thanks and excuses in my stead.

I made up my mind to go to Russia, and began my preparations in good earnest. Baron Treidel supported my resolve by offering to give me a letter of introduction to his sister, the Duchess of Courland. I wrote to M. de Bragadin to ‘give me a letter for a banker at St. Petersburg, and to remit me through him every month a sum which would keep me in comfort.

I could not travel without a servant, and chance kindly provided me with one. I was sitting with Madame Rufin, when a young Lorrainer came in;

like Bias, he bore all his fortune with him, but, in his case, it was carried under his arm. He introduced himself thus:

"Madam, my name is Lambert, I come from Lorraine, and I wish to lodge here."

"Very good, sir, but you must pay for your board and lodging every day."

"That, madam, is out of the question, for I have not got a farthing, but I shall have some money when I discover who I am."

"I am afraid I cannot put you up on those conditions, sir."

He was going away with a mortified air, when my heart was touched, and I called him back.

"Stay," said I, "I will pay for you to-day."

Happiness beamed over his face.

"What have you got in that little bundle?" said I.

"Two shirts, a score of mathematical books, and some other trifles."

I took him to my room, and finding him tolerably well educated, I asked him how he came to be in such a state of destitution.

"I come from Strasburg," he replied, "and a cadet of a regiment stationed there having given me a blow in a coffee-house I paid him a visit the next day in his own room and stabbed him there.

"After this I went home, made up my bundle, and left the town. I walked all the way and lived soberly, so that my money lasted till this morning. To-morrow I shall write to my mother, who lives at Luneville, and I am sure she will send me some money."

"And what do you think of doing?"

"I want to become a military engineer, but if needs must I am ready to enlist as a private soldier."

"I can give you board and lodging till you hear from your mother."

"Heaven has sent you in my way," said he, kissing my hand gratefully.

I did not suspect him of deceiving me, though he stumbled somewhat in his narrative. However my curiosity led me to write to M. Schauenbourg, who was then at Strasburg, to enquire if the tale were true.

The next day I happened to meet an officer of engineers, who told me that young men of education were so plentiful that they did not receive them into the service unless they were willing to serve as common soldiers. I was sorry for the young man to be reduced so low as that. I began to spend some time with him every day in mathematical calculations, and I conceived the idea of taking him with me to St. Petersburg, and broached the subject to him.

“It would be a piece of good fortune for me,” he replied, “and to shew my gratitude I will gladly wait on you as a servant during the journey.”

He spoke French badly, but as he was a Lorrainer I was not astonished at that. Nevertheless I was surprised to find that he did not know a word of Latin, and that his spelling was of the wildest description. He saw me laughing, but did not seem in the least ashamed. Indeed he said that he had only gone to school to learn mathematics, and that he was very glad that he had escaped the infliction of learning grammar. Indeed, on every subject besides mathematics, he was profoundly ignorant. He had no manners whatever; in fact, he was a mere peasant.

Ten or twelve days later I received a letter from M. de Schauenbourg, saying that the name of Lambert was unknown in Strasburg, and that no cadet had been killed or wounded.

When I shewed Lambert this letter he said that as he wished to enter the army he thought it would be of service to him to shew that he was brave, adding that as this lie had not been told with the idea of imposing on me I should forgive it.

“Poverty,” said he, “is a rascally teacher, that gives a man some bad lessons. I am not a liar by disposition, but I have nevertheless told you a lie on another and a more important matter. I don’t expect any money whatever from my poor mother, who rather needs that I should send money to her. So forgive me, and be sure I shall be a faithful servant to you.”

I was always ready to forgive other men’s peccadilloes, and not without cause. I liked Lambert’s line of argument, and told him that we would set out in five or six days.

Baron Bodisson, a Venetian who wanted to sell the king a picture by Andrea del Sarto, asked me to come with him to Potsdam and the desire of seeing the monarch once again made me accept the invitation. When I reached Potsdam I went to see the parade at which Frederick was nearly always to be found. When he saw me he came up and asked me in a familiar manner when I was going to start for St. Petersburg.

“In five or six days, if your majesty has no objection.”

“I wish you a pleasant journey; but what do you hope to do in that land?”

“What I hoped to do in this land, namely, to please the sovereign.”

“Have you got an introduction to the empress?”

“No, but I have an introduction to a banker.”

“Ah! that’s much better. If you pass through Prussia on your return I shall be delighted to hear of your adventures in Russia.”

“Farewell, sire.”

Such was the second interview I had with this great king, whom I never saw again.

After I had taken leave of all my friends I applied to Baron Treidel, who gave me a letter for M. de Kaiserling, lord-chancellor at Mitau, and another letter for his sister, the Duchess of Courland, and I spent the last night with the charming Madame Denis. She bought my post-chaise, and I started with two hundred ducats in my purse. This would have been ample for the whole journey if I had not been so foolish as to reduce it by half at a party of pleasure with some young merchants at Dantzic. I was thus unable to stay a few days at Koenigsberg, though I had a letter to Field-Marshal von Lewald, who was the governor of the place. I could only stay one day to dine with this pleasant old soldier, who gave me a letter for his friend General Woiakoff, the Governor of Riga.

I found I was rich enough to arrive at Mitau in state, and I therefore took a carriage and six, and reached my destination in three days. At the inn where I put up I found a Florentine artiste named Bregonei, who overwhelmed me with caresses, telling me that I had loved her when I was a boy and wore the cassock. I saw her six years later at Florence, where she was living with Madame Denis.

The day after my departure from Memel, I was accosted in the open country by a man whom I recognized as a Jew. He informed me that I was on Polish territory, and that I must pay duty on whatever merchandise I had with me.

“I am no merchant,” said I, “and you will get nothing out of me.”

“I have the right to examine your effects,” replied the Israelite, “and I mean to make use of it.”

“You are a madman,” I exclaimed, and I ordered the postillion to whip him off.

But the Jew ran and seized the fore horses by the bridle and stopped us, and the postillion, instead of whipping him, waited with Teutonic calm for me to come and send the Jew away. I was in a furious rage, and leaping out with my cane in one hand and a pistol in the other I soon put the Jew to flight after applying about a dozen good sound blows to his back. I noticed that during the combat my fellow-traveller, my Archimedes-in-ordinary, who had been asleep all the way, did not offer to stir. I reproached him for his cowardice; but he told me that he did not want the Jew to say that we had set on him two to one.

I arrived at Mitau two days after this burlesque adventure and got down at the inn facing the castle. I had only three ducats left.

The next morning I called on M. de Kaiserling, who read the Baron de Treidel’s letter, and introduced me to his wife, and left me with her to take the baron’s letter to his sister.

Madame de Kaiserling ordered a cup of chocolate to be brought me by a beautiful young Polish girl, who stood before me with lowered eyes as if she wished to give me the opportunity of examining her at ease. As I looked at her a whim came into my head, and, as the reader is aware, I have never resisted any of my whims. However, this was a curious one. As I have said, I had only three ducats left, but after I had emptied the cup of chocolate I put it back on the plate and the three ducats with it.

The chancellor came back and told me that the duchess could not see me just then, but that she invited me to a supper and ball she was giving that evening. I accepted the supper and refused the ball, on the pretext that I had only summer clothes and a black suit. It was in the beginning of October, and the cold was already commencing to make itself felt. The chancellor returned to the Court, and I to my inn.

Half an hour later a chamberlain came to bring me her highness's compliments, and to inform me that the ball would be a masked one, and that I could appear in domino.

"You can easily get one from the Jews," he added. He further informed me that the ball was to have been a full-dress one, but that the duchess had sent word to all the guests that it would be masked, as a stranger who was to be present had sent on his trunks.

"I am sorry to have caused so much trouble," said I.

"Not at all," he replied, "the masked ball will be much more relished by the people."

He mentioned the time it was to begin, and left me.

No doubt the reader will think that I found myself in an awkward predicament, and I will be honest and confess I was far from being at my ease. However, my good luck came to my assistance.

As Prussian money (which is the worst in Germany) is not current in Russia, a Jew came and asked me if I had any friedrichs d'or, offering to exchange them against ducats without putting me to any loss.

"I have only ducats," I replied, "and therefore I cannot profit by your offer."

"I know it sir, and you give them away very cheaply."

Not understanding what he meant, I simply gazed at him, and he went on to say that he would be glad to let me have two hundred ducats if I would kindly give him a bill on St. Petersburg for roubles to that amount.

I was somewhat surprised at the fellow's trustfulness, but after pretending to think the matter over I said that I was not in want of ducats, but that I would take a hundred to oblige him. He counted out the money gratefully, and I gave him a bill on the banker, Demetrio Papanelopoulo, for whom Da Loglio had given me a letter. The Jew went his way, thanking me, and saying that he would send me some beautiful dominos to choose from. Just then I remembered that I wanted silk stockings, and I sent Lambert after the Jew to tell him to send some. When he came back he told me that the landlord had stopped him to say that I scattered my ducats broadcast, as the Jew had informed him that I had given three ducats to Madame de Kaiserling's maid.

This, then, was the key to the mystery, and it made me lose myself in wonder at the strangeness of the decrees of fortune. I should not have been able to get a single crown at Mitau if it had not been for the way in which I scattered my three remaining ducats. No doubt the astonished girl had published my generosity all over the town, and the Jew, intent on money-making, had hastened to offer his ducats to the rich nobleman who thought so little of his money.

I repaired to Court at the time appointed, and M. de Kaiserling immediately presented me to the duchess, and she to the duke, who was the celebrated Biron, or Birlen, the former favourite of Anna Ivanovna. He was six feet in height, and still preserved some traces of having been a fine man, but old age had laid its heavy hand on him. I had a long talk with him the day after the ball.

A quarter of an hour after my arrival, the ball began with a polonaise. I was a stranger with introductions, so the duchess asked me to open the ball with her. I did not know the dance, but I managed to acquit myself honourably in it, as the steps are simple and lend themselves to the fancy of the dancer.

After the polonaise we danced minuets, and a somewhat elderly lady asked me if I could dance the "King Conqueror," so I proceeded to execute it with her. It had gone out of fashion since the time of the Regency, but my companion may have shone in it in those days. All the younger ladies stood round and watched us with admiration.

After a square dance, in which I had as partner Mdlle. de Manteufel, the prettiest of the duchess's maids of honour, her highness told me that supper was ready. I came up to her and offered my arm, and presently found myself seated beside her at a table laid for twelve where I was the only gentleman. However, the reader need not envy me; the ladies were all elderly dowagers, who had long lost the power of turning men's heads. The duchess took the greatest care of my comforts, and at the end of the repast gave me with her own hands a glass of liqueur, which I took for Tokay and praised accordingly, but it turned out to be only old English ale. I took her back to the ball when we rose from table. The young chamberlain who had invited me told me the names of all the ladies present, but I had no time to pay my court to any of them.

The next day I dined with M. de Kaiserling, and handed Lambert over to a Jew to be clothed properly.

The day after I dined with the duke with a party consisting only of men. The old prince made me do most of the talking, and towards the end of the dinner the conversation fell upon the resources of the country which was rich in minerals and semi-minerals. I took it into my head to say that these resources ought to be developed, and that they would become precious if that were done. To justify this remark I had to speak upon the matter as if I had made it my principal study. An old chamberlain, who had the control of the mines, after allowing me to exhaust my enthusiasm, began to discuss the question himself, made divers objections, but seemed to approve of many of my remarks.

If I had reflected when I began to speak in this manner that I should have to act up to my words, I should certainly have said much less; but as it was, the duke fancied that I knew much more than I cared to say. The result was that, when the company had risen from the table, he asked me if I could spare him a fortnight on my way to St. Petersburg. I said I should be glad to oblige him, and he took me to his closet and said that the chamberlain who had spoken to me would conduct me over all the mines and manufactories in his duchies, and that he would be much obliged if I would write down any observations that struck me. I agreed to his proposal, and said I would start the next day.

The duke was delighted with my compliance, and gave the chamberlain the necessary orders, and it was agreed that he should call for me at day-break with a carriage and six.

When I got home I made my preparations, and told Lambert to be ready to accompany me with his case of instruments. I then informed him of the object of the journey, and he promised to assist me to the best of his ability, though he knew nothing about mines, and still less of the science of administration.

We started at day-break, with a servant on the box, and two others preceding us on horseback, armed to the teeth. We changed horses every two or three hours, and the chamberlain having brought plenty of wine we refreshed ourselves now and again.

The tour lasted a fortnight, and we stopped at five iron and copper manufactories. I found it was not necessary to have much technical knowledge to make notes on what I saw; all I required was a little sound argument, especially in the matter of economy, which was the duke's main object. In one place I advised reforms, and in another I counselled the employment of more hands as likely to benefit the revenue. In one mine where thirty convicts were employed I ordered the construction of a short canal, by which three wheels could be turned and twenty men saved. Under my direction Lambert drew the plans, and made the measurements with perfect accuracy. By means of other canals I proposed to drain whole valleys, with a view to obtain the sulphur with which the soil was permeated.

I returned to Mitau quite delighted at having made myself useful, and at having discovered in myself a talent which I had never suspected. I spent the following day in making a fair copy of my report and in having the plans done on a larger scale. The day after I took the whole to the duke, who seemed well pleased; and as I was taking leave of him at the same time he said he would have me drive to Riga in one of his carriages, and he gave me a letter for his son, Prince Charles, who was in garrison there.

The worthy old man told me to say plainly whether I should prefer a jewel or a sum of money of equivalent value.

"From a philosopher like your highness," I replied, "I am not afraid to take money, for it may be more useful to me than jewels."

Without more ado he gave me a draft for four hundred albertsthalers, which I got cashed immediately, the albertsthaler being worth half a ducat. I bade farewell to the duchess, and dined a second time with M. de Kaiserling.

The next day the young chamberlain came to bring me the duke's letter, to wish me a pleasant journey, and to tell me that the Court carriage was at my door. I set out well pleased with the assistance the stuttering Lambert had given me, and by noon I was at Riga. The first thing I did was to deliver my letter of introduction to Prince Charles.

EPISODE 25 — RUSSIA AND POLAND

CHAPTER XIX

My Stay at Riga — Campioni St. Heleine — D'Asagon — Arrival of the Empress — I Leave Riga and Go to St. Petersburg — I See Society — I Buy Zaira

Prince Charles de Biron, the younger son of the Duke of Courland, Major-General in the Russian service, Knight of the Order of St. Alexander Newski, gave me a distinguished reception after reading his father's letter. He was thirty-six years of age, pleasant-looking without being handsome, and polite and well-mannered, and he spoke French extremely well. In a few sentences he let me know what he could do for me if I intended to spend some time at Riga. His table, his friends, his pleasures, his horses, his advice, and his purse, all these were at my service, and he offered them with the frankness of the soldier and the geniality of the prince.

"I cannot offer you a lodging," he said, "because I have hardly enough room for myself, but I will see that you get a comfortable apartment somewhere."

The apartment was soon found, and I was taken to it by one of the prince's aides-de-camp. I was scarcely established when the prince came to see me, and made me dine with him just as I was. It was an unceremonious dinner, and I was pleased to meet Campioni, of whom I have spoken several times in these Memoirs. He was a dancer, but very superior to his fellows, and fit for the best company polite, witty, intelligent, and a libertine in a gentlemanly way. He was devoid of prejudices, and fond of women, good cheer, and heavy play, and knew how to keep an even mind both in good and evil fortune. We were mutually pleased to see each other again.

Another guest, a certain Baron de St. Heleine from Savoy, had a pretty but very insignificant wife. The baron, a fat man, was a gamester, a gourmand, and a lover of wine; add that he was a past master in the art of getting into debt and lulling his creditors into a state of false security, and you have all his capacities, for in all other respects he was a fool in the fullest sense of the word. An aide-decamp and the prince's mistress also dined with us. This mistress, who was pale, thin, and dreamy-looking, but also pretty, might be twenty years old. She hardly ate anything, saying that she was ill and did not like anything on the table. Discontent shewed itself on her every feature. The prince endeavoured, but all in vain, to make her eat and drink, she refused everything disdainfully. The prince laughed good-humouredly at her in such a manner as not to wound her feelings.

We spent two hours pleasantly enough at table, and after coffee had been served, the prince, who had business, shook me by the hand and left me with Campioni, telling me always to regard his table as my last resource.

This old friend and fellow-countryman took me to his house to introduce me to his wife and family. I did not know that he had married a second time. I found the so-called wife to be an Englishwoman, thin, but full of intelligence. She had a daughter of eleven, who might easily have been taken for fifteen; she, too, was marvellously intelligent, and danced, sang, and played on the piano and gave such glances that shewed that nature had been swifter than her years. She made a conquest of me, and her father congratulated me to my delight, but her mother offended her dreadfully by calling her baby.

I went for a walk with Campioni, who gave me a good deal of information, beginning with himself.

"I have lived for ten years," he said, "with that woman. Betty, whom you admired so much, is not my daughter, the others are my children by my Englishwoman. I have left St. Petersburg for two years, and I live here well enough, and have pupils who do me credit. I play with the prince, sometimes winning and sometimes losing, but I never win enough to enable me to satisfy a wretched creditor I left at St. Petersburg, who persecutes me on account of a bill of exchange. He may put me in prison any day, and I am always expecting him to do so."

"Is the bill for a large sum?"

"Five hundred roubles."

"That is only two thousand francs."

"Yes, but unfortunately I have not got it."

"You ought to annul the debt by paying small sums on account."

"The rascal won't let me."

"Then what do you propose doing?"

"Win a heavy sum, if I can, and escape into Poland.

"The Baron de St. Heleine will run away, too if he can, for he only lives on credit. The prince is very useful to us, as we are able to play at his house; but if we get into difficulty he could not extricate us, as he is heavily in debt himself. He always loses at play. His mistress is expensive, and gives him a great deal of trouble by her ill-humour."

"Why is she so sour?"

"She wants him to keep his word, for he promised to get her married at the end of two years; and on the strength of this promise she let him give her two children. The two years have passed by and the children are there, and she will no longer allow him to have anything to do with her for fear of having a third child."

"Can't the prince find her a husband?"

"He did find her a lieutenant, but she won't hear of anybody under the rank of major."

The prince gave a state dinner to General Woyakoff (for whom I had a letter), Baroness Korf, Madame Ittinoff, and to a young lady who was going to marry Baron Budberg, whom I had known at Florence, Turin, and Augsburg, and whom I may possibly have forgotten to mention.

All these friends made me spend three weeks very pleasantly, and I was especially pleased with old General Woyakoff. This worthy man had been at Venice fifty years before, when the Russians were still called Muscovites, and the founder of St. Petersburg was still alive. He had grown old like an oak, without changing his horizons. He thought the world was just the same as it had been when he was young, and was eloquent in his praise of the Venetian Government, imagining it to be still the same as he had left it.

At Riga an English merchant named Collins told me that the so-called Baron de Stenau, who had given me the forged bill of exchange, had been hanged in Portugal. This "baron" was a poor clerk, and the son of a small tradesman, and had left his desk in search of adventure, and thus he had ended. May God have mercy upon his soul!

One evening a Russian, on his way from Poland, where he had been executing some commission for the Russian Court, called on the prince, played, and lost twenty thousand roubles on his word of honour. Campioni was the dealer. The Russian gave bills of exchange in payment of his debts; but as soon as he got to St. Petersburg he dishonoured his own bills, and declared them worthless, not caring for his honour or good faith. The result of this piece of knavery was not only that his creditors were defrauded, but gaming was henceforth strictly forbidden in the officers' quarters.

This Russian was the same that betrayed the secrets of Elizabeth Petrovna, when she was at war with Prussia. He communicated to Peter, the empress's nephew and heir-presumptive, all the orders she sent to her generals, and Peter in his turn passed on the information to the Prussian king whom he worshipped.

On the death of Elizabeth, Peter put this traitor at the head of the department for commerce, and the fellow actually made known, with the Czar's sanction, the service for which he had received such a reward, and thus, instead of looking upon his conduct as disgraceful, he gloried over it. Peter could not have been aware of the fact that, though it is sometimes necessary to reward treachery, the traitor himself is always abhorred and despised.

I have remarked that it was Campioni who dealt, but he dealt for the prince who held the bank. I had certain claims, but as I remarked that I expected nothing and would gladly sell my expectations for a hundred roubles, the prince took me at my word and gave me the amount immediately. Thus I was the only person who made any money by our night's play.

Catherine II, wishing to shew herself to her new subjects, over whom she was in reality supreme, though she had put the ghost of a king in the person of Stanislas Poniatowski, her former favourite, on the throne of Poland, came to Riga, and it was then I saw this great sovereign for the first time. I was a witness of the kindness and affability with which she treated the Livonian nobility, and of the way in which she kissed the young ladies, who had come to kiss her hand, upon the mouth. She was surrounded by the Orloffs and by other nobles who had assisted in placing her on the throne.

For the comfort and pleasure of her loyal subjects the empress graciously expressed her intention of holding a bank at faro of ten thousand roubles.

Instantly the table and the cards were brought forward, and the piles of gold placed in order. She took the cards, pretended to shuffle them, and gave them to the first comer to cut. She had the pleasure of seeing her bank broken at the first deal, and indeed this result was to be expected, as anybody not an absolute idiot could see how the cards were going. The next day the empress set out for Mitau, where triumphal arches were erected in her honour. They were made of wood, as stone is scarce in Poland, and indeed there would not have been time to build stone arches.

The day after her arrival great alarm prevailed, for news came that a revolution was ready to burst out at St. Petersburg, and some even said that it had begun. The rebels wished to have forth from his prison the hapless Ivan Ivanovitz, who had been proclaimed emperor in his cradle, and dethroned by Elizabeth Petrovna. Two officers to whom the guardianship of the prince had been confided had killed the poor innocent monarch when they saw that they would be overpowered.

The assassination of the innocent prince created such a sensation that the wary Panin, fearing for the results, sent courier after courier to the empress urging her to return to St. Petersburg and shew herself to the people.

Catherine was thus obliged to leave Mitau twenty-four hours after she had entered it, and after hastening back to the capital she arrived only to find that the excitement had entirely subsided. For politic reasons the assassins of the wretched Ivan were rewarded, and the bold man who had endeavoured to rise by her fall was beheaded.

The report ran that Catherine had concerted the whole affair with the assassins, but this was speedily set down as a calumny. The czarina was strong-minded, but neither cruel nor perfidious. When I saw her at Riga she was thirty-five, and had reigned two years. She was not precisely handsome, but nevertheless her appearance was pleasing, her expression kindly, and there was about her an air of calm and tranquillity which never left her.

At about the same time a friend of Baron de St. Heleine arrived from St. Petersburg on his way to Warsaw. His name was Marquis Dragon, but he called himself d'Aragon. He came from Naples, was a great gamester, a skilled swordsman, and was always ready to extract himself from a difficulty by a duel. He had left St. Petersburg because the Orloffs had persuaded the empress to prohibit games of chance. It was thought strange that the prohibition should come from the Orloffs, as gaming had been their principal means of gaining a livelihood before they entered on the more dangerous and certainly not more honourable profession of conspiracy. However, this measure was really a sensible one. Having been gamesters themselves they knew that gamesters are mostly knaves, and always ready to enter into any intrigue or conspiracy provided it assures them some small gain; there could not have been better judges of gaming and its consequences than they were.

But though a gamester may be a rogue he may still have a good heart, and it is only just to say that this was the case with the Orloffs. Alexis gained the slash which adorns his face in a tavern, and the man who gave the blow had just lost to him a large sum of money, and considered his opponent's success to be rather the result of dexterity than fortune. When Alexis became rich and powerful, instead of revenging himself, he hastened to make his enemy's fortune. This was nobly done.

Dragon, whose first principle was always to turn up the best card, and whose second principle was never to shirk a duel, had gone to St. Petersburg in 1759 with the Baron de St. Heleine. Elizabeth was still on the throne, but Peter, Duke of Holstein, the heir-presumptive, had already begun to loom large on the horizon. Dragon used to frequent the fencing school where the prince was a frequent visitor, and there encountered all comers successfully. The duke got angry, and one day he took up a foil and defied the Neapolitan marquis to a combat. Dragon accepted and was thoroughly beaten, while the duke went off in triumph, for he might say from henceforth that he was the best fencer in St. Petersburg.

When the prince had gone, Dragon could not withstand the temptation of saying that he had only let himself be beaten for fear of offending his antagonist; and this boast soon got to the grand-duke's ears. The great man was terribly enraged, and swore he would have him banished from St. Petersburg if he did not use all his skill, and at the same time he sent an order to Dragon to be at the fencing school the next day.

The impatient duke was the first to arrive, and d'Aragon was not long in coming. The prince began reproaching him for what he had said the day before, but the Neapolitan, far from denying the fact, expressed himself that he had felt himself obliged to shew his respect for his prince by letting him rap him about for upwards of two hours.

"Very good," said the duke, "but now it is your turn; and if you don't do your best I will drive you from St. Petersburg."

"My lord, your highness shall be obeyed. I shall not allow you to touch me once, but I hope you will deign to take me under your protection."

The two champions passed the whole morning with the foils, and the duke was hit a hundred times without being able to touch his antagonist. At last, convinced of Dragon's superiority, he threw down his foil and shook him by the hand, and made him his fencer-in-ordinary, with the rank of major in his regiment of Holsteiners.

Shortly after, D'Aragon having won the good graces of the duke obtained leave to hold a bank at faro in his court, and in three or four years he amassed a fortune of a hundred thousand roubles, which he took with him to the Court of King Stanislas, where games of all sorts were allowed. When he passed through Riga, St. Heleine introduced him to Prince Charles, who begged him to call on him the next day, and to shew his skill with the foils against himself and some of his friends. I had the honour to be of the number; and thoroughly well he beat us, for his skill was that of a demon. I was vain enough to become angry at being hit at every pass, and told him that I should not be afraid to meet him at a game of sharps. He was calmer, and replied by taking my hand, and saying, —

"With the naked sword I fence in quite another style, and you are quite right not to fear anyone, for you fence very well."

D'Aragon set out for Warsaw the next day, but he unfortunately found the place occupied by more cunning Greeks than himself. In six months they had relieved him of his hundred thousand roubles, but such is the lot of gamesters; no craft can be more wretched than theirs.

A week before I left Riga (where I stayed two months) Campioni fled by favour of the good Prince Charles, and in a few days the Baron de St. Heleine followed him without taking leave of a noble army of creditors. He only wrote a letter to the Englishman Collins, to whom he owed a thousand crowns, telling him that like an honest man he had left his debts where he had contracted them. We shall hear more of these three persons in the course of two years.

Campioni left me his travelling carriage, which obliged me to use six horses on my journey to St. Petersburg. I was sorry to leave Betty, and I kept up an epistolary correspondence with her mother throughout the whole of my stay at St. Petersburg.

I left Riga with the thermometer indicating fifteen degrees of frost, but though I travelled day and night, not leaving the carriage for the sixty hours for which my journey lasted, I did not feel the cold in the least. I had taken care to pay all the stages in advance, and Marshal Braun, Governor of Livonia, had given me the proper passport. On the box seat was a French servant who had begged me to allow him to wait on me for the journey in return for a seat beside the coachman. He kept his word and served me well, and though he was but ill clad he bore the horrible cold for two days and three nights without appearing to feel it. It is only a Frenchman who can bear such trials; a Russian in similar attire would have been frozen to death in twenty-four hours, despite plentiful doses of corn brandy. I lost sight of this individual when I arrived at St. Petersburg, but I met him again three months after, richly dressed, and occupying a seat beside mine at the table of M. de Czernitscheff. He was the uchitel of the young count, who sat beside him. But I shall have occasion to speak more at length of the office of uchitel, or tutor, in Russia.

As for Lambert, who was beside me in the carriage, he did nothing but eat, drink, and sleep the whole way; seldom speaking, for he stammered, and could only talk about mathematical problems, on which I was not always in the humour to converse. He was never amusing, never had any sensible observation to make on the varied scenes through which we passed; in short, he was a fool, and wearisome to all save himself.

I was only stopped once, and that was at Nawa, where the authorities demanded a passport, which I did not possess. I told the governor that as I was a Venetian, and only travelled for pleasure, I did not conceive a passport would be necessary, my Republic not being at war with any other power, and Russia having no embassy at Venice.

“Nevertheless,” I added, “if your excellency wills it I will turn back; but I shall complain to Marshal Braun, who gave me the passport for posting, knowing that I had not the political passport.”

After rubbing his forehead for a minute, the governor gave me a pass, which I still possess, and which brought me into St. Petersburg, without my having to allow the custom-house officers to inspect my trunks.

Between Koporie and St. Petersburg there is only a wretched hut for the accommodation of travellers. The country is a wilderness, and the inhabitants do not even speak Russian. The district is called Ingria, and I believe the jargon spoken has no affinity with any other language. The principal occupation of the peasants is robbery, and the traveller does well not to leave any of his effects alone for a moment.

I got to St. Petersburg just as the first rays of the sun began to gild the horizon. It was in the winter solstice, and the sun rose at the extremity of an immense plain at twenty-four minutes past nine, so I am able to state that the longest night in Russia consists of eighteen hours and three quarters.

I got down in a fine street called the Millione. I found a couple of empty rooms, which the people of the house furnished with two beds, four chairs, and two small tables, and rented to me very cheaply. Seeing the enormous stoves, I concluded they must consume a vast amount of wood, but I was mistaken. Russia is the land of stoves as Venice is that of cisterns. I have inspected the interior of these stoves in summer-time as minutely as if I wished to find out the secret of making them; they are twelve feet high by six broad, and are capable of warming a vast room. They are only refuelled once in twenty-four hours, for as soon as the wood is reduced to the state of charcoal a valve is shut in the upper part of the stove.

It is only in the houses of noblemen that the stoves are refuelled twice a day, because servants are strictly forbidden to close the valve, and for a very good reason.

If a gentleman chance to come home and order his servants to warm his room before he goes to bed, and if the servant is careless enough to close the valve before the wood is reduced to charcoal, then the master sleeps his last sleep, being suffocated in three or four hours. When the door is opened in the morning he is found dead, and the poor devil of a servant is immediately hanged, whatever he may say. This sounds severe, and even cruel; but it is a necessary regulation, or else a servant would be able to get rid of his master on the smallest provocation.

After I had made an agreement for my board and lodging, both of which were very cheap (now St. Petersburg, is as dear as London), I brought some pieces of furniture which were necessaries for me, but which were not as yet much in use in Russia, such as a commode, a bureau, &c.

German is the language principally spoken in St. Petersburg, and I did not speak German much better then than I do now, so I had a good deal of difficulty in making myself understood, and usually excited my auditors to laughter.

After dinner my landlord told me that the Court was giving a masked ball to five thousand persons to last sixty hours. He gave me a ticket, and told me I only needed to shew it at the entrance of the imperial palace.

I decided to use the ticket, for I felt that I should like to be present at so numerous an assembly, and as I had my domino still by me a mask was all I wanted. I went to the palace in a sedan-chair, and found an immense crowd assembled, and dancing going on in several halls in each of which an orchestra was stationed. There were long counters loaded with eatables and drinkables at which those who were hungry or thirsty ate or drank as much as they liked. Gaiety and freedom reigned everywhere, and the light of a thousand wax candles illuminated the hall. Everything was wonderful, and all the more so from its contrast with the cold and darkness that were without. All at once I heard a masquer beside me say to another, —

“There’s the czarina.”

We soon saw Gregory Orloff, for his orders were to follow the empress at a distance.

I followed the masquer, and I was soon persuaded that it was really the empress, for everybody was repeating it, though no one openly recognized her. Those who really did not know her jostled her in the crowd, and I imagined that she would be delighted at being treated thus, as it was a proof of the success of her disguise. Several times I saw her speaking in Russian to one masquer and another. No doubt she exposed her vanity to some rude shocks, but she had also the inestimable advantage of hearing truths which her courtiers would certainly not tell her. The masquer who was pronounced to be Orloff followed her everywhere, and did not let her out of his sight for a moment. He could not be mistaken, as he was an exceptionally tall man and had a peculiar carriage of the head.

I arrested my progress in a hall where the French square dance was being performed, and suddenly there appeared a masquer disguised in the Venetian style. The costume was so complete that I at once set him down as a fellow-countryman, for very few strangers can imitate us so as to escape detection. As it happened, he came and stood next to me.

"One would think you were a Venetian," I said to him in French.

"So I am."

"Like myself."

"I am not jesting."

"No more am I."

"Then let us speak in Venetian."

"Do you begin, and I will reply."

We began our conversation, but when he came to the word Sabato, Saturday, which is a Sabo in Venetian, I discovered that he was a real Venetian, but not from Venice itself. He said I was right, and that he judged from my accent that I came from Venice.

"Quite so," said I.

"I thought Bernadi was the only Venetian besides myself in St. Petersburg."

"You see you are mistaken."

"My name is Count Volpati di Treviso."

"Give me your address, and I will come and tell you who I am, for I cannot do so here."

"Here it is."

After leaving the count I continued my progress through this wonderful hall, and two or three hours after I was attracted by the voice of a female masquer speaking Parisian French in a high falsetto, such as is common at an opera ball.

I did not recognize the voice but I knew the style, and felt quite certain that the masquer must be one of my old friends, for she spoke with the intonations and phraseology which I had rendered popular in my chief places of resort at Paris.

I was curious to see who it could be, and not wishing to speak before I knew her, I had the patience to wait till she lifted her mask, and this occurred at the end of an hour. What was my surprise to see Madame Baret, the stocking-seller of the Rue St. Honor& My love awoke from its long sleep, and coming up to her I said, in a falsetto voice, —

“I am your friend of the ‘Hotel d’Elbeuf.’”

She was puzzled, and looked the picture of bewilderment. I whispered in her ear, “Gilbert Baret, Rue des Prouveres,” and certain other facts which could only be known to herself and a fortunate lover.

She saw I knew her inmost secrets, and drawing me away she begged me to tell her who I was.

“I was your lover, and a fortunate one, too,” I replied; “but before I tell you my name, with whom are you, and how are you?”

“Very well; but pray do not divulge what I tell you. I left Paris with M. d’Anglade, counsellor in the Court of Rouen. I lived happily enough for some time with him, and then left him to go with a theatrical manager, who brought me here as an actress under the name of de l’Anglade, and now I am kept by Count Rzewuski, the Polish ambassador. And now tell me who you are?”

Feeling sure of enjoying her again, I lifted my mask. She gave a cry of joy, and exclaimed, —

“My good angel has brought you to St. Petersburg.”

“How do you mean?”

“Rzewuski is obliged to go back to Poland, and now I count on you to get me out of the country, for I can no longer continue in a station for which I was not intended, since I can neither sing nor act.”

She gave me her address, and I left her delighted with my discovery. After having passed half an hour at the counter, eating and drinking of the best, I returned to the crowd and saw my fair stocking-seller talking to Count Volpati. He had seen her with me, and hastened to enquire my name of her. However, she was faithful to our mutual promise, and told him I was her husband, though the Venetian did not seem to give the least credence to this piece of information.

At last I was tired and left the ball, and went to bed intending to go to mass in the morning. I slept for some time and woke, but as it was still dark I turned on the other side and went to sleep again. At last I awoke again, and seeing the daylight stealing through my double windows, I sent for a hairdresser, telling my man to make haste as I wanted to hear mass on the first Sunday after my arrival in St. Petersburg.

“But sir,” said he, “the first Sunday was yesterday; we are at Monday now.”

“What! Monday?”

“Yes, sir.”

I had spent twenty-seven hours in bed, and after laughing at the mishap I felt as if I could easily believe it, for my hunger was like that of a cannibal.

This is the only day which I really lost in my life; but I do not weep like the Roman emperor, I laugh. But this is not the only difference between Titus and Casanova.

I called on Demetrio Papanelopulo, the Greek merchant, who was to pay me a hundred roubles a month. I was also commended to him by M. da Loglio, and I had an excellent reception. He begged me to come and dine with him every day, paid me the roubles for the month due, and assured me that he had honoured my bill drawn at Mitau. He also found me a reliable servant, and a carriage at eighteen roubles, or six ducats per month. Such cheapness has, alas! departed for ever.

The next day, as I was dining with the worthy Greek and young Bernardi, who was afterwards poisoned, Count Volpati came in with the dessert, and told us how he had met a Venetian at the ball who had promised to come and see him.

"The Venetian would have kept his promise," said I, "if he had not had a long sleep of twenty-seven hours. I am the Venetian, and am delighted to continue our acquaintance."

The count was about to leave, and his departure had already been announced in the St. Petersburg Gazette. The Russian custom is not to give a traveller his passports till a fortnight has elapsed after the appearance of his name in the paper. This regulation is for the advantage of tradesmen, while it makes foreigners think twice before they contract any debts.

The next day I took a letter of introduction to M. Pietro Ivanovitch Melissino, colonel and afterwards general of artillery. The letter was written by Madame da Loglio, who was very intimate with Melissino. I was most politely welcomed, and after presenting me to his pleasant wife, he asked me once for all to sup with him every night. The house was managed in the French style, and both play and supper were conducted without any ceremony. I met there Melissino's elder brother, the procurator of the Holy Synod and husband of the Princess Dolgorouki. Faro went on, and the company was composed of trustworthy persons who neither boasted of their gains nor bewailed their losses to anyone, and so there was no fear of the Government discovering this infringement of the law against gaming. The bank was held by Baron Lefort, son of the celebrated admiral of Peter the Great. Lefort was an example of the inconstancy of fortune; he was then in disgrace on account of a lottery which he had held at Moscow to celebrate the coronation of the empress, who had furnished him with the necessary funds. The lottery had been broken and the fact was attributed to the baron's supposed dishonesty.

I played for small stakes and won a few roubles. I made friends with Baron Lefort at supper, and he afterwards told me of the vicissitudes he had experienced.

As I was praising the noble calmness with which a certain prince had lost a thousand roubles to him, he laughed and said that the fine gamester I had mentioned played upon credit but never paid.

"How about his honour?"

"It is not affected by the non-payment of gaming debts. It is an understood thing in Russia that one who plays on credit and loses may pay or not pay as he wishes, and the winner only makes himself ridiculous by reminding the loser of his debt."

"Then the holder of the bank has the right to refuse to accept bets which are not backed by ready money."

"Certainly; and nobody has a right to be offended with him for doing so. Gaming is in a very bad state in Russia. I know young men of the highest rank whose chief boast is that they know how to conquer fortune; that is, to cheat. One of the Matuschkins goes so far as to challenge all foreign cheats to master him. He has just received permission to travel for three years, and it is an open secret that he wishes to travel that he may exercise his skill. He intends returning to Russia laden with the spoils of the dupes he has made."

A young officer of the guards named Zinowieff, a relation of the Orloffs, whom I had met at Melissino's, introduced me to Macartney, the English ambassador, a young man of parts and fond of pleasure. He had fallen in love with a young lady of the Chitroff family, and maid of honour to the empress, and finding his affection reciprocated a baby was the result. The empress disapproved strongly of this piece of English freedom, and had the ambassador recalled, though she forgave her maid of honour. This forgiveness was attributed to the young lady's skill in dancing. I knew the brother of this lady, a fine and intelligent young officer. I had the good fortune to be admitted to the Court, and there I had the pleasure of seeing Mdlle. Chitroff dancing, and also Mdlle. Sievers, now Princesss, whom I saw again at Dresden four years ago with her daughter, an extremely genteel young princess. I was enchanted with Mdlle. Sievers, and felt quite in love with her; but as we were never introduced I had no opportunity of declaring my passion. Putini, the castrato, was high in her favour, as indeed he deserved to be, both for his talents and the beauties of his person.

The worthy Papanelopulo introduced me to Alsuwieff, one of the ministers, a man of wit and letters, and only one of the kind whom I met in Russia. He had been an industrious student at the University of Upsala, and loved wine, women, and good cheer. He asked me to dine with Locatelli at Catherinhoff, one of the imperial mansions, which the empress had assigned to the old theatrical manager for the remainder of his days. He was astonished to see me, and I was more astonished still to find that he had turned taverner, for he gave an excellent dinner every day to all who cared to pay a rouble, exclusive of wine. M. d'Alsuwieff introduced me to his colleague in the ministry, Teploff, whose vice was that he loved boys, and his virtue that he had strangled Peter III.

Madame Mecour, the dancer, introduced me to her lover, Ghelaghin, also a minister. He had spent twenty years of his life in Siberia.

A letter from Da Loglio got me a warm welcome from the castrato Luini, a delightful man, who kept a splendid table. He was the lover of Colonna, the singer, but their affection seemed to me a torment, for they could scarce live together in peace for a single day. At Luini's house I met another castrato, Millico, a great friend of the chief huntsman, Narischkin, who also became one of my friends. This Narischkin, a pleasant and a well-informed man, was the husband of the famous Maria Paulovna. It was at the chief huntsman's splendid table that I met Calogeso Plato, now archbishop of Novgorod, and then chaplain to the empress. This monk was a Russian, and a master of ruses, understood Greek, and spoke Latin and French, and was what would be called a fine man. It was no wonder that he rose to such a height, as in Russia the nobility never lower themselves by accepting church dignities.

Da Loglio had given me a letter for the Princess Daschkoff, and I took it to her country house, at the distance of three versts from St. Petersburg. She had been exiled from the capital, because, having assisted Catherine to ascend the throne, she claimed to share it with her.

I found the princess mourning for the loss of her husband. She welcomed me kindly, and promised to speak to M. Panin on my behalf; and three days later she wrote to me that I could call on that nobleman as soon as I liked. This was a specimen of the empress's magnanimity; she had disgraced the princess, but she allowed her favourite minister to pay his court to her every evening. I have heard, on good authority, that Panin was not the princess's lover, but her father. She is now the President of the Academy of Science, and I suppose the literati must look upon her as another Minerva, or else they would be ashamed to have a woman at their head. For completeness' sake the Russians should get a woman to command their armies, but Joan d'Arcs are scarce.

Melissino and I were present at an extraordinary ceremony on the Day of the Epiphany, namely the blessing of the Neva, then covered with five feet of ice.

After the benediction of the waters children were baptized by being plunged into a large hole which had been made in the ice. On the day on which I was present the priest happened to let one of the children slip through his hands.

“Drugoi!” he cried.

That is, “Give me another.” But my surprise may be imagined when I saw that the father and mother of the child were in an ecstasy of joy; they were certain that the babe had been carried straight to heaven. Happy ignorance!

I had a letter from the Florentine Madame Bregonci for her friend the Venetian Roccolini, who had left Venice to go and sing at the St. Petersburg Theatre, though she did not know a note of music, and had never appeared on the stage. The empress laughed at her, and said she feared there was no opening in St. Petersburg for her peculiar talents, but the Roccolini, who was known as La Vicenza, was not the woman to lose heart for so small a check. She became an intimate friend of a Frenchwoman named Prote, the wife of a merchant who lived with the chief huntsman. She was at the same time his mistress and the confidante of his wife Maria Petrovna, who did not like her husband, and was very much obliged to the Frenchwoman for delivering her from the conjugal importunities.

This Prote was one of the handsomest women I have ever seen, and undoubtedly the handsomest in St. Petersburg at that time. She was in the flower of her age. She had at once a wonderful taste for gallantry and for all the mysteries of the toilette. In dress she surpassed everyone, and as she was witty and amusing she captivated all hearts. Such was the woman whose friend and procuress La Vicenza had become. She received the applications of those who were in love with Madame Prote, and passed them on, while, whether a lover’s suit was accepted or not, the procuress got something out of him.

I recognized Signora Roccolini as soon as I saw her, but as twenty years had elapsed since our last meeting she did not wonder at my appearing not to know her, and made no efforts to refresh my memory. Her brother was called Montellato, and he it was who tried to assassinate me one night in St. Mark’s Square, as I was leaving the Ridotto. The plot that would have cost me my life, if I had not made my escape from the window, was laid in the Roccolini's house.

She welcomed me as a fellow-countryman in a strange land, told me of her struggles, and added that now she had an easy life of it, and associated with the pleasantest ladies in St. Petersburg.

"I am astonished that you have not met the fair Madame Prote at the chief huntsman's, for she is the darling of his heart. Come and take coffee with me to-morrow, and you shall see a wonder."

I kept the appointment, and I found the lady even more beautiful than the Venetian's praises of her had led me to expect. I was dazzled by her beauty, but not being a rich man I felt that I must set my wits to work if I wanted to enjoy her. I asked her name, though I knew it quite well, and she replied, "Prote."

"I am glad to hear it, madam," said I, "for you thereby promise to be mine."

"How so?" said she, with a charming smile. I explained the pun, and made her laugh. I told her amusing stories, and let her know the effect that her beauty had produced on me, and that I hoped time would soften her heart to me. The acquaintance was made, and thenceforth I never went to Narischkin's without calling on her, either before or after dinner.

The Polish ambassador returned about that time, and I had to forego my enjoyment of the fair Anglade, who accepted a very advantageous proposal which was made her by Count Brawn. This charming Frenchwoman died of the small-pox a few months later, and there can be no doubt that her death was a blessing, as she would have fallen into misery and poverty after her beauty had once decayed.

I desired to succeed with Madame Prote, and with that idea I asked her to dinner at Locatelli's with Luini, Colonna, Zinowieff, Signora Vicenza, and a violinist, her lover. We had an excellent dinner washed down with plenty of wine, and the spirits of the company were wound up to the pitch I desired. After the repast each gentleman went apart with his lady, and I was on the point of success when an untoward accident interrupted us. We were summoned to see the proofs of Luini's prowess; he had gone out shooting with his dogs and guns.

As I was walking away from Catherinhoff with Zinowieff I noticed a young country-woman whose beauty astonished me. I pointed her out to the young officer, and we made for her; but she fled away with great activity to a little cottage, where we followed her. We went in and saw the father, mother, and some children, and in a corner the timid form of the fair maiden.

Zinowieff (who, by the way, was for twenty years Russian ambassador at Madrid) had a long conversation in Russian with the father. I did not understand what was said, but I guessed it referred to the girl because, when her father called her, she advanced submissively, and stood modestly before us.

The conversation over, Zinowieff went out, and I followed him after giving the master of the house a rouble. Zinowieff told me what had passed, saying that he had asked the father if he would let him have the daughter as a maid-servant, and the father had replied that it should be so with all his heart, but that he must have a hundred roubles for her, as she was still a virgin. “So you see,” added Zinowieff, “the matter is quite simple.”

“How simple?”

“Why, yes; only a hundred roubles.”

“And supposing me to be inclined to give that sum?”

“Then she would be your servant, and you could do anything you liked with her, except kill her.”

“And supposing she is not willing?”

“That never happens, but if it did you could have beaten her.”

“Well, if she is satisfied and I enjoy her, can I still continue to keep her?”

“You will be her master, I tell you, and can have her arrested if she attempts to escape, unless she can return the hundred roubles you gave for her.”

“What must I give her per month?”

“Nothing, except enough to eat and drink. You must also let her go to the baths on Saturday and to the church on Sunday.”

“Can I make her come with me when I leave St. Petersburg?”

"No, unless you obtain permission and find a surety, for though the girl would be your slave she would still be a slave to the empress."

"Very good; then will you arrange this matter for me? I will give the hundred roubles, and I promise you I will not treat her as a slave. But I hope you will care for my interests, as I do not wish to be duped."

"I promise you you shall not be duped; I will see to everything. Would you like her now?"

"No, to-morrow."

"Very good; then to-morrow it shall be."

We returned to St. Petersburg in a phaeton, and the next day at nine o'clock I called on Zinowieff, who said he was delighted to do me this small service. On the way he said that if I liked he could get me a perfect seraglio of pretty girls in a few days.

"No," said I, "one is enough." And I gave him the hundred roubles.

We arrived at the cottage, where we found the father, mother, and daughter. Zinowieff explained his business crudely enough, after the custom of the country, and the father thanked St. Nicholas for the good luck he had sent him. He spoke to his daughter, who looked at me and softly uttered the necessary yes.

Zinowieff then told me that I ought to ascertain that matters were intact, as I was going to pay for a virgin. I was afraid of offending her, and would have nothing to do with it; but Zinowieff said the girl would be mortified if I did not examine her, and that she would be delighted if I place her in a position to prove before her father and mother that her conduct had always been virtuous. I therefore made the examination as modestly as I could, and I found her to be intact. To tell the truth, I should not have said anything if things had been otherwise.

Zinowieff then gave the hundred roubles to the father, who handed them to his daughter, and she only took them to return them to her mother. My servant and coachman were then called in to witness as arrangement of which they knew nothing.

I called her Zaira, and she got into the carriage and returned with me to St. Petersburg in her coarse clothes, without a chemise of any kind. After I had dropped Zinowieff at his lodging I went home, and for four days I was engaged in collecting and arranging my slave’s toilet, not resting till I had dressed her modestly in the French style. In less than three months she had learnt enough Italian to tell me what she wanted and to understand me. She soon loved me, and afterwards she got jealous. But we shall hear more of her in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XX

Crevecoeur — Bomback — Journey to Moscow — My Adventures At St. Petersburg

The day on which I took Zaira I sent Lambert away, for I did not know what to do with him. He got drunk every day, and when in his cups he was unbearable. Nobody would have anything to say to him except as a common soldier, and that is not an enviable position in Russia. I got him a passport for Berlin, and gave him enough money for the journey. I heard afterwards that he entered the Austrian service.

In May, Zaira had become so beautiful that when I went to Moscow I dared not leave her behind me, so I took her in place of a servant. It was delicious to me to hear her chattering in the Venetian dialect I had taught her. On a Saturday I would go with her to the bath where thirty of forty naked men and women were bathing together without the slightest constraint. This absence of shame must arise, I should imagine, from native innocence; but I wondered that none looked at Zaira, who seemed to me the original of the statue of Psyche I had seen at the Villa Borghese at Rome. She was only fourteen, so her breast was not yet developed, and she bore about her few traces of puberty. Her skin was as white as snow, and her ebony tresses covered the whole of her body, save in a few places where the dazzling whiteness of her skin shone through. Her eyebrows were perfectly shaped, and her eyes, though they might have been larger, could not have been more brilliant or more expressive. If it had not been for her furious jealousy and her blind confidence in fortune-telling by cards, which she consulted every day, Zaira would have been a paragon among women, and I should never have left her.

A young and distinguished-looking Frenchman came to St. Petersburg with a young Parisian named La Riviere, who was tolerably pretty but quite devoid of education, unless it were that education common to all the girls who sell their charms in Paris. This young man came to me with a letter from Prince Charles of Courland, who said that if I could do anything for the young couple he would be grateful to me. They arrived just as I was breakfasting with Zaira.

“You must tell me,” said I to the young Frenchman, “in what way I can be of use to you.”

“By admitting us to your company, and introducing us to your friends.”

“Well, I am a stranger here, and I will come and see you, and you can come and see me, and I shall be delighted; but I never dine at home. As to my friends, you must feel that, being a stranger, I could not introduce you and the lady. Is she your wife? People will ask me who you are, and what you are doing at St. Petersburg. What am I to say? I wonder Prince Charles did not send you to someone else.”

“I am a gentleman of Lorraine, and Madame la Riviere is my mistress, and my object in coming to St. Petersburg is to amuse myself.”

“Then I don’t know to whom I could introduce you under the circumstances; but I should think you will be able to find plenty of amusement without knowing anyone. The theatres, the streets, and even the Court entertainments, are open to everyone. I suppose you have plenty of money?”

“That’s exactly what I haven’t got, and I don’t expect any either.”

“Well, I have not much more, but you really astonish me. How could you have been so foolish as to come here without money?”

“Well, my mistress said we could do with what money we got from day to day. She induced me to leave Paris without a farthing, and up to now it seems to me that she is right. We have managed to get on somehow.”

“Then she has the purse?”

“My purse,” said she, “is in the pockets of my friends.”

“I understand, and I am sure you have no difficulty in finding the wherewithal to live. If I had such a purse, it should be opened for you, but I am not a rich man.”

Bomback, a citizen of Hamburg, whom I had known in England whence he had fled on account of his debts, had come to St. Petersburg and entered the army. He was the son of a rich merchant and kept up a house, a carriage, and an army of servants; he was a lover of good cheer, women, and gambling, and contracted debts everywhere. He was an ugly man, but full of wit and energy. He happened to call on me just as I was addressing the strange traveller whose purse was in the pocket of her friends. I introduced the couple to him, telling the whole story, the item of the purse excepted. The adventure was just to Bomback's taste, and he began making advances to Madame la Riviere, who received them in a thoroughly professional spirit, and I was inwardly amused and felt that her axiom was a true one. Bomback asked them to dine with him the next day, and begged them to come and take an unceremonious dinner the same day with him at Crasnacaback. I was included in the invitation, and Zaira, not understanding French, asked me what we were talking about, and on my telling her expressed a desire to accompany me. I gave in to appease her, for I knew the wish proceeded from jealousy, and that if I did not consent I should be tormented by tears, ill-humour, reproaches, melancholy, etc. This had occurred several times before, and so violent had she been that I had been compelled to conform to the custom of the country and beat her. Strange to say, I could not have taken a better way to prove my love. Such is the character of the Russian women. After the blows had been given, by slow degrees she became affectionate again, and a love encounter sealed the reconciliation.

Bomback left us to make his preparations in high spirits, and while Zaira was dressing, Madame Riviere talked in such a manner as to make me almost think that I was absolutely deficient in knowledge of the world. The astonishing thing was that her lover did not seem in the least ashamed of the part he had to play. He might say that he was in love with the Messalina, but the excuse would not have been admissible.

The party was a merry one. Bomback talked to the adventuress, Zaira sat on my knee, and Crevecoeur ate and drank, laughed in season and out of season, and walked up and down. The crafty Madame Riviere incited Bomback to risk twenty-five roubles at quinze; he lost and paid pleasantly, and only got a kiss for his money. Zaira, who was delighted to be able to watch over me and my fidelity, jested pleasantly on the Frenchwoman and the complaisance of her lover. This was altogether beyond her comprehension, and she could not understand how he could bear such deeds as were done before his face.

The next day I went to Bomback by myself, as I was sure of meeting young Russian officers, who would have annoyed me by making love to Zaira in their own language. I found the two travellers and the brothers Lunin, then lieutenants but now generals. The younger of them was as fair and pretty as any girl. He had been the beloved of the minister Teploff, and, like a lad of wit, he not only was not ashamed but openly boasted that it was his custom to secure the good-will of all men by his caresses.

He had imagined the rich citizen of Hamburg to be of the same tastes as Teploff, and he had not been mistaken; and so he degraded me by forming the same supposition. With this idea he seated himself next to me at table, and behaved himself in such a manner during dinner that I began to believe him to be a girl in man's clothes.

After dinner, as I was sitting at the fire, between him and the Frenchman, I imparted my suspicions to him; but jealous of the superiority of his sex, he displayed proof of it on the spot, and forthwith got hold of me and put himself in a position to make my happiness and his own as he called it. I confess, to my shame, that he might perhaps have succeeded, if Madame la Riviere, indignant at this encroachment of her peculiar province, had not made him desist.

Lunin the elder, Crevecceur, and Bomback, who had been for a walk, returned at nightfall with two or three friends, and easily consoled the Frenchman for the poor entertainment the younger Lunin and myself had given him.

Bomback held a bank at faro, which only came to an end at eleven, when the money was all gone. We then supped, and the real orgy began, in which la Riviere bore the brunt in a manner that was simply astonishing. I and my friend Lunin were merely spectators, and poor Crevecoeur had gone to bed. We did not separate till day-break.

I got home, and, fortunately for myself, escaped the bottle which Zaira flung at my head, and which would infallibly have killed me if it had hit me. She threw herself on to the ground, and began to strike it with her forehead. I thought she had gone mad, and wondered whether I had better call for assistance; but she became quiet enough to call me assassin and traitor, with all the other abusive epithets that she could remember. To convict me of my crime she shewed me twenty-five cards, placed in order, and on them she displayed the various enormities of which I had been guilty.

I let her go on till her rage was somewhat exhausted, and then, having thrown her divining apparatus into the fire, I looked at her in pity and anger, and said that we must part the next day, as she had narrowly escaped killing me. I confessed that I had been with Bomback, and that there had been a girl in the house; but I denied all the other sins of which she accused me. I then went to sleep without taking the slightest notice of her, in spite of all she said and did to prove her repentance.

I woke after a few hours to find her sleeping soundly, and I began to consider how I could best rid myself of the girl, who would probably kill me if we continued living together. Whilst I was absorbed in these thoughts she awoke, and falling at my feet wept and professed her utter repentance, and promised never to touch another card as long as I kept her.

At last I could resist her entreaties no longer, so I took her in my arms and forgave her; and we did not part till she had received undeniable proofs of the return of my affection. I intended to start for Moscow in three days, and she was delighted when she heard she was to go.

Three circumstances had won me this young girl's furious affection. In the first place I often took her to see her family, with whom I always left a rouble; in the second I made her eat with me; and in the third I had beaten her three or four times when she had tried to prevent me going out.

In Russia beating is a matter of necessity, for words have no force whatever. A servant, mistress, or courtezan understands nothing but the lash. Words are altogether thrown away, but a few good strokes are entirely efficacious. The servant, whose soul is still more enslaved than his body, reasons somewhat as follows, after he has had a beating:

"My master has not sent me away, but beaten me; therefore he loves me, and I ought to be attached to him."

It is the same with the Russian soldier, and in fact with everybody. Honour stands for nothing, but with the knout and brandy one can get anything from them except heroical enthusiasm.

Papanelopulo laughed at me when I said that as I liked my Cossack I should endeavour to correct him with words only when he took too much brandy.

“If you do not beat him,” he said, “he will end by beating you;” and he spoke the truth.

One day, when he was so drunk as to be unable to attend on me, I began to scold him, and threatened him with the stick if he did not mend his ways. As soon as he saw my cane lifted, he ran at me and got hold of it; and if I had not knocked him down immediately, he would doubtless have beaten me. I dismissed him on the spot. There is not a better servant in the world than a Russian. He works without ceasing, sleeps in front of the door of his master’s bedroom to be always ready to fulfil his orders, never answering his reproaches, incapable of theft. But after drinking a little too much brandy he becomes a perfect monster; and drunkenness is the vice of the whole nation.

A coachman knows no other way of resisting the bitter cold to which he is exposed, than by drinking rye brandy. It sometimes happens that he drinks till he falls asleep, and then there is no awaking for him in this world. Unless one is very careful, it is easy to lose an ear, the nose, a cheek, or a lip by frost bites. One day as I was walking out on a bitterly cold day, a Russian noticed that one of my ears was frozen. He ran up to me and rubbed the affected part with a handful of snow till the circulation was restored. I asked him how he had noticed my state, and he said he had remarked the livid whiteness of my ear, and this, he said, was always a sign that the frost had taken it. What surprised me most of all is that sometimes the part grows again after it has dropped off. Prince Charles of Courland assured me that he had cost his nose in Siberia, and that it had grown again the next summer. I have been assured of the truth of this by several Russians.

About this time the empress made the architect Rinaldi, who had been fifty years in St. Petersburg, build her an enormous wooden amphitheatre so large as to cover the whole of the space in front of the palace. It would contain a hundred thousand spectators, and in it Catherine intended to give a vast tournament to all the knights of her empire. There were to be four parties of a hundred knights each, and all the cavaliers were to be clad in the national costume of the nations they represented. All the Russians were informed of this great festival, which was to be given at the expense of the sovereign, and the princes, counts, and barons were already arriving with their chargers from the most remote parts of the empire. Prince Charles of Courland wrote informing me of his intention to be present.

It had been ordained, that the tournament should take place on the first fine day, and this precaution was a very wise one; for, excepting in the season of the hard frosts, a day without rain, or snow, or wind, is a marvel. In Italy, Spain, and France, one can reckon on fine weather, and bad weather is the exception, but it is quite the contrary in Russia. Ever since I have known this home of frost and the cold north wind, I laugh when I hear travelling Russians talking of the fine climate of their native country. However, it is a pardonable weakness, most of us prefer "mine" to "thine;" nobles affect to consider themselves of purer blood than the peasants from whom they sprang, and the Romans and other ancient nations pretended that they were the children of the gods, to draw a veil over their actual ancestors who were doubtless robbers. The truth is, that during the whole year 1756 there was not one fine day in Russia, or in Ingria at all events, and the mere proofs of this statement may be found in the fact that the tournament was not held in that year. It was postponed till the next, and the princes, counts, barons, and knights spent the winter in the capital, unless their purses forbade them to indulge in the luxuries of Court life. The dear Prince of Courland was in this case, to my great disappointment.

Having made all arrangements for my journey to Moscow, I got into my sleeping carriage with Zaira, having a servant behind who could speak both Russian and German. For twenty-four roubles the chevochic (hirer out of horses) engaged to carry me to Moscow in six days and seven nights with six horses. This struck me as being extremely cheap. The distance is seventy-two Russian stages, almost equivalent to five hundred Italian miles, or a hundred and sixty French leagues.

We set out just as a cannon shot from the citadel announced the close of day. It was towards the end of May, in which month there is literally no night at St. Petersburg. Without the report of the cannon no one would be able to tell when the day ended and the night began. One can read a letter at midnight, and the moonlight makes no appreciable difference. This continual day lasts for eight weeks, and during that time no one lights a candle. At Moscow it is different; a candle is always necessary at midnight if one wished to read.

We reached Novgorod in forty-eight hours, and here the chevochic allowed us a rest of five hours. I saw a circumstance there which surprised me very much, though one has no business to be surprised at anything if one travels much, and especially in a land of half savages. I asked the chevochic to drink, but he appeared to be in great melancholy. I enquired what was the matter, and he told Zaira that one of his horses had refused to eat, and that it was clear that if he could not eat he could not work. We followed him into the stable, and found the horse looking oppressed by care, its head lowered and motionless; it had evidently got no appetite. His master began a pathetic oration, looking tenderly at the animal, as if to arouse it to a sense of duty, and then taking its head, and kissing it lovingly, he put it into the manger, but to no purpose. Then the man began to weep bitterly, but in such a way that I had the greatest difficulty to prevent myself laughing, for I could see that he wept in the hope that his tears might soften the brute's heart. When he had wept some time he again put the horse's head into the manger, but again to no purpose. At this he got furious and swore to be avenged. He led the horse out of the stable, tied it to a post, and beat it with a thick stick for a quarter of an hour so violently that my heart bled for the poor animal. At last the chevochic was tired out, and taking the horse back to the stable he fastened up his head once more, and to my astonishment it began to devour its provender with the greatest appetite. At this the master jumped for joy, laughed, sang, and committed a thousand extravagancies, as if to shew the horse how happy it had made him. I was beside myself with astonishment, and concluded that such treatment would have succeeded nowhere but in Russia, where the stick seems to be the panacea or universal medicine.

They tell me, however, that the stick is gradually going out of fashion. Peter the Great used to beat his generals black and blue, and in his days a lieutenant had to receive with all submission the cuffs of his captain, who bent before the blows of his major, who did the same to his colonel, who received chastisement from his general. So I was informed by old General Woyakoff, who was a pupil of Peter the Great, and had often been beaten by the great emperor, the founder of St. Petersburg.

It seems to me that I have scarcely said anything about this great and famous capital, which in my opinion is built on somewhat precarious foundations. No one but Peter could have thus given the lie to Nature by building his immense palaces of marble and granite on mud and shifting sand. They tell me that the town is now in its manhood, to the honour of the great Catherine; but in the year 1765 it was still in its minority, and seemed to me only to have been built with the childish aim of seeing it fall into ruins. Streets were built with the certainty of having to repair them in six months' time. The whole place proclaimed itself to be the whim of a despot. If it is to be durable constant care will be required, for nature never gives up its rights and reasserts them when the constraint of man is withdrawn. My theory is that sooner or later the soil must give way and drag the vast city with it.

We reached Moscow in the time the chevochic had promised. As the same horses were used for the whole journey, it would have been impossible to travel mote quickly. A Russian told me that the Empress Elizabeth had done the journey in fifty-two hours.

"You mean that she issued a ukase to the effect that she had done it," said a Russian of the old school; "and if she had liked she could have travelled more quickly still; it was only a question of the wording of the ukase."

Even when I was in Russia it was not allowable to doubt the infallibility of a ukase, and to do so was, equivalent to high treason. One day I was crossing a canal at St. Petersburg by a small wooden bridge; Melissino Papanelopulo, and some other Russians were with me. I began to abuse the wooden bridge, which I characterized as both mean and dangerous. One of my companions said that on such a day it would be replaced by a fine stone bridge, as the empress had to pass there on some state occasion. The day named way three weeks off, and I said plainly that it was impossible. One of the Russians looked askance at me, and said there was no doubt about it, as a ukase had been published ordering that the bridge should be built. I was going to answer him, but Papanelopulo gave my hand a squeeze, and whispered "Taci!" (hush).

The bridge was not built, but I was not justified, for the empress published another ukase in which she declared it to be her gracious pleasure that the bridge should not be built till the following year. If anyone would see what a pure despotism is like, let him go to Russia.

The Russian sovereigns use the language of despotism on all occasions. One day I saw the empress, dressed in man’s clothes, going out for a ride. Her master of the horse, Prince Repnin, held the bridle of the horse, which suddenly gave him a kick which broke his anklebone. The empress instantly ordained that the horse should be taken away, and that no one should mount it again under pain of death. All official positions in Russia have military rank assigned to them, and this sufficiently indicates the nature of the Government. The coachman-in-chief of her imperial highness holds the rank of colonel, as also does her chief cook. The castrato Luini was a lieutenant-colonel, and the painter Toretti only a captain, because he had only eight hundred roubles a year, while the coachman had three thousand. The sentinels at the doors of the palace have their muskets crossed, and ask those who wish to pass through what is their rank. When I was asked this question, I stopped short; but the quick-witted officer asked me how much I had a year, and on my replying, at a hazard, three thousand roubles, he gave me the rank of general, and I was allowed to pass. I saw the czarina for a moment; she stopped at the door and took off her gloves to give her hands to be kissed by the officer and the two sentinels. By such means as this she had won the affection of the corps, commanded by Gregorius Gregorovitch Orloff, on which her safety depended in case of revolution.

I made the following notes when I saw the empress hearing mass in her chapel. The protopapa, or bishop, received her at the door to give her the holy water, and she kissed his episcopal ring, while the prelate, whose beard was a couple of feet in length, lowered his head to kiss the hands of his temporal sovereign and spiritual head, for in Russia the he or she on the throne is the spiritual as well as temporal head of the Church.

She did not evidence the least devotion during mass; hypocrisy did not seem to be one of her vices. Now she smiled at one of her suite, now at another, and occasionally she addressed the favourite, not because she had anything to say to him, but to make him an object of envy to the others.

One evening, as she was leaving the theatre where Metastasio’s Olympiade had been performed, I heard her say, —

“The music of that opera has given the greatest pleasure to everyone, so of course I am delighted with it; but it wearies me, nevertheless. Music is a fine thing, but I cannot understand how anyone who is seriously occupied can love it passionately. I will have Buranello here, and I wonder whether he will interest me in music, but I am afraid nature did not constitute me to feel all its charms."

She always argued in that way. In due time I will set down her words to me when I returned from Moscow. When I arrived at that city I got down at a good inn, where they gave me two rooms and a coach-house for my carriage. After dinner I hired a small carriage and a guide who could speak French. My carriage was drawn by four horses, for Moscow is a vast city composed of four distinct towns, and many of the streets are rough and ill-paved. I had five or six letters of introduction, and I determined to take them all. I took Zaira with me, as she was as curious to see everything as a girl of fourteen naturally is. I do not remember what feast the Greek Church was keeping on that day, but I shall never forget the terrific bell-ringing with which my ears were assailed, for there are churches every where. The country people were engaged in sowing their grain, to reap it in September. They laughed at our Southern custom of sowing eight months earlier, as unnecessary and even prejudicial to the crops, but I do not know where the right lies. Perhaps we may both be right, for there is no master to compare with experience. I took all the introductions I had received from Narischkin, Prince Repnin, the worthy Pananelopulo, and Melissino's brother. The next morning the whole of the persons at whose houses I had left letters called on me. They all asked Zaira and myself to dinner, and I accepted the invitation of the first comer, M. Dinidoff, and promised to dine with the rest on the following days, Zaira, who had been tutored by me to some extent, was delighted to shew me that she was worthy of the position she occupied. She was exquisitely dressed, and won golden opinions everywhere, for our hosts did not care to enquire whether she were my daughter, my mistress, or my servant, for in this matter, as in many others, the Russians are excessively indulgent. Those who have not seen Moscow have not seen Russia, for the people of St, Petersburg are not really Russians at all. Their court manners are very different from their manners 'au naturel', and it may be said with truth that the true Russian is as a stranger in St. Petersburg. The citizens of, Moscow, and especially the rich ones, speak with pity of those, who for one reason or another, had expatriated themselves; and with them to expatriate one's self is to leave Moscow, which they consider as their native land. They look on St. Petersburg with an envious eye, and call it the ruin of Russia. I do not know whether this is a just view to take of the case, I merely repeat what I have heard.

In the course of a week I saw all the sights of Moscow — the manufacturers, the churches, the remains of the old days, the museums, the libraries, (of no interest to my mind), not forgetting the famous bell. I noticed that their bells are not allowed to swing like ours, but are motionless, being rung by a rope attached to the clapper.

I thought the Moscow women more handsome than those of St. Petersburg, and I attribute this to the great superiority of the air. They are gentle and accessible by nature; and to obtain the favour of a kiss on the lips, one need only make a show of kissing their hands.

There was good fare in plenty, but no delicacy in its composition or arrangement. Their table is always open to friends and acquaintances, and a friend may bring to five or six persons to dinner, and even at the end of the meals you will never hear a Russian say, “We have had dinner; you have come too late.” Their souls are not black enough for them to pronounce such words as this. Notice is given to the cook, and the dinner begins over again. They have a delicious drink, the name of which I do not remember; but it is much superior to the sherbet of Constantinople. The numerous servants are not given water, but a light, nourishing, and agreeable fluid, which may be purchased very cheaply. They all hold St. Nicholas in the greatest reverence, only praying to God through the mediation of this saint, whose picture is always suspended in the principal room of the house. A person coming in makes first a bow to the image and then a bow to the master, and if perchance the image is absent, the Russian, after gazing all round, stands confused and motionless, not knowing what to do. As a general rule the Muscovites are the most superstitious Christians in the world. Their liturgy is in Greek, of which the people understand nothing, and the clergy, themselves extremely ignorant, gladly leave them completely in the dark on all matters connected with religion. I could never make them understand that the only reason for the Roman Christians making the sign of the Cross from left to right, while the Greeks make it from right to left, is that we say ‘spiritus sancti’, while they say ‘agion pneuma’.

"If you said pneuma agion," I used to say, "then you would cross yourself like us, and if we said sancti spiritus we should cross ourselves like you."

"The adjective," replied my interlocutor, "should always precede the substantive, for we should never utter the name of God without first giving Him some honourable epithet."

Such are nearly all the differences which divide the two churches, without reckoning the numerous idle tales which they have as well as ourselves, and which are by no means the least cherished articles of their faith.

We returned to St. Petersburg by the way we had come, but Zaira would have liked me never to leave Moscow. She had become so much in love with me by force of constant association that I could not think without a pang of the moment of separation. The day after our arrival in the capital I took her to her home, where she shewed her father all the little presents I had given her, and told him of the honour she had received as my daughter, which made the good man laugh heartily.

The first piece of news I heard was that a ukase had been issued, ordering the erection of a temple dedicated to God in the Moscoi opposite to the house where I resided. The empress had entrusted Rinaldi, the architect, with the erection. He asked her what emblem he should put above the portal, and she replied, —

"No emblem at all, only the name of God in large letters."

"I will put a triangle."

"No triangle at all; but only the name of God in whatever language you like, and nothing more."

The second piece of news was that Bomback had fled and had been captured at Mitau, where he believed himself in safety. M. de Simolia had arrested him. It was a grave case, for he had deserted; however, he was given his life, and sent into barracks at Kamstchatka. Crevecoeur and his mistress had departed, carrying some money with them, and a Florentine adventurer named Billotti had fled with eighteen thousand roubles belonging to Papanelopulo, but a certain Bori, the worthy Greek's factotum, had caught him at Mitau and brought him back to St. Petersburg, where he was now in prison. Prince Charles of Courland arrived about this time, and I hastened to call upon him as soon as he advised me of his coming. He was lodging in a house belonging to Count Dimidoff, who owned large iron mines, and had made the whole house of iron, from attic to basement. The prince had brought his mistress with him, but she was still in an ill-humour, and he was beginning to get heartily sick of her. The man was to be pitied, for he could not get rid of her without finding her a husband, and this husband became more difficult to find every day. When the prince saw how happy I was with my Zaira, he could not help thinking how easily happiness may be won; but the fatal desire for luxury and empty show spoils all, and renders the very sweets of life as bitter as gall.

I was indeed considered happy, and I liked to appear so, but in my heart I was wretched. Ever since my imprisonment under The Leads, I had been subject to haemorrhoids, which came on three or four times a year. At St. Petersburg I had a serious attack, and the daily pain and anxiety embittered my existence. A vegetarian doctor called Senapios, for whom I had sent, gave me the sad news that I had a blind or incomplete fistula in the rectum, and according to him nothing but the cruel pistoury would give me any relief, and indeed he said I had no time to lose. I had to agree, in spite of my dislike to the operation; but fortunately the clever surgeon whom the doctor summoned pronounced that if I would have patience nature itself would give me relief. I had much to endure, especially from the severe dieting to which I was subjected, but which doubtless did me good.

Colonel Melissino asked me to be present at a review which was to take place at three versts from St. Petersburg, and was to be succeeded by a dinner to twenty-four guests, given by General Orloff. I went with the prince, and saw a cannon fired twenty times in a minute, testing the performance with my watch.

My neighbour at dinner was the French ambassador. Wishing to drink deeply, after the Russian fashion, and thinking the Hungarian wine as innocent as champagne, he drank so bravely that at the end of dinner he had lost the use of his legs. Count Orloff made him drink still more, and then he fell asleep and was laid on a bed.

The gaiety of the meal gave me some idea of Russian wit. I did not understand the language, so M. Zinowieff translated the curious sallies to me while the applause they had raised was still resounding.

Melissino rose to his feet, holding a large goblet full of Hungarian wine in his hand. There was a general silence to listen to him. He drank the health of General Orloff in these words:

“May you die when you become rich.”

The applause was general, for the allusion was to the unbounded generosity of Orloff. The general’s reply struck me as better still, but it was equally rugged in character. He, too, took a full cup, and turning to Melissino, said,

“May you never die till I slay you!”

The applause was furious, for he was their host and their general.

The Russian wit is of the energetic kind, devoid of grace; all they care about is directness and vigour.

Voltaire had just sent the empress his “Philosophy of History,” which he had written for her and dedicated to her. A month after, an edition of three thousand copies came by sea, and was sold out in a week, for all the Russians who knew a little French were eager to possess a copy of the work. The leaders of the Voltaireans were two noblemen, named, respectively, Stroganoff and Schuvaloff. I have seen verses written by the former of these as good as Voltaire’s own verses, and twenty years later I saw an ode by the latter of which Voltaire would not have been ashamed, but the subject was ill chosen; for it treated of the death of the great philosopher who had so studiously avoided using his pen on melancholy themes. In those days all Russians with any pretensions to literature read nothing but Voltaire, and when they had read all his writings they thought themselves as wise as their master. To me they seemed pigmies mimicking a giant. I told them that they ought to read all the books from which Voltaire had drawn his immense learning, and then, perhaps, they might become as wise as he. I remember the saying of a wise man at Rome: “Beware of the man of one book.” I wonder whether the Russians are more profound now; but that is a question I cannot answer. At Dresden I knew Prince Biloselski, who was on his way back to Russia after having been ambassador at Turin. He was the author of an admirable world on metaphysics, and the analysis of the soul and reason.

Count Panin was the tutor of Paul Petrovitch, heir-presumptive to the throne. The young prince had a severe master, and dared not even applaud an air at the opera unless he first received permission to do so from his mentor.

When a courier brought the news of the sudden death of Francis I., Emperor of Germany and of the Holy Roman Empire, the czarina being at Czarsko-Zelo, the count minister-tutor was in the palace with his pupil, then eleven years old. The courier came at noon, and gave the dispatch into the hands of the minister, who was standing in the midst of a crowd of courtiers of whom I was one. The prince imperial was at his right hand. The minister read the dispatch in a low voice, and then said:

“This is news indeed. The Emperor of the Romans has died suddenly.”

He then turned to Paul, and said to him, —

“Full court mourning, which your highness will observe for three months longer than the empress.”

“Why so?” said Paul.

“Because, as Duke of Holstein, your highness has a right to attend the diet of the empire, a privilege,” he added, turning to us, “which Peter the Great desired in vain.”

I noted the attention with which the Grand Duke Paul listened to his mentor, and the care with which he concealed his joy at the news. I was immensely pleased with this way of giving instruction. I said as much to Prince Lobkowitz, who was standing by me, and he refined on my praises. This prince was popular with everyone. He was even preferred to his predecessor, Prince Esterhazy; and this was saying a great deal, for Esterhazy was adored in Russia. The gay and affable manner of Prince Lobkowitz made him the life and soul of all the parties at which he was present. He was a constant courtier of the Countess Braun, the reigning beauty, and everyone believed his love had been crowned with success, though no one could assert as much positively.

There was a great review held at a distance of twelve or fourteen versts from St. Petersburg, at which the empress and all her train of courtiers were present. The houses of the two or three adjoining villages were so few and small that it would be impossible for all the company to find a lodging. Nevertheless I wished to be present chiefly to please Zaira, who wanted to be seen with me on such an occasion. The review was to last three days;

there were to be fireworks, and a mine was to be exploded besides the evolutions of the troops. I went in my travelling carriage, which would serve me for a lodging if I could get nothing better.

We arrived at the appointed place at eight o’clock in the morning; the evolutions lasted till noon. When they were over we went towards a tavern and had our meal served to us in the carriage, as all the rooms in the inn were full.

After dinner my coachman tried in vain to find me a lodging, so I disposed myself to sleep all night in the carriage; and so I did for the whole time of the review, and fared better than those who had spent so much money to be ill lodged. Melissino told me that the empress thought my idea a very sensible one. As I was the only person who had a sleeping carriage, which was quite a portable house in itself, I had numerous visitors, and Zaira was radiant to be able to do the honours.

I had a good deal of conversation during the review with Count Tott, brother of the nobleman who was employed at Constantinople, and known as Baron Tott. We had known each other at Paris, and afterwards at the Hague, where I had the pleasure of being of service to him. He had come to St. Petersburg with Madame de Soltikoff, whom he had met at Paris, and whose lover he was. He lived with her, went to Court, and was well received by everyone.

Two or three years after, the empress ordered him to leave St. Petersburg on account of the troubles in Poland. It was said that he kept up a correspondence with his brother, who was endeavouring to intercept the fleet under the command of Alexis Orloff. I never heard what became of him after he left Russia, where he obliged me with the loan of five hundred roubles, which I have not yet been able to return to him.

M. Maruzzi, by calling a Venetian merchant, and by birth a Greek, having left trade to live like a gentleman, came to St. Petersburg when I was there, and was presented at Court. He was a fine-looking man, and was admitted to all the great houses. The empress treated him with distinction because she had thoughts of making him her agent at Venice. He paid his court to the Countess Braun, but he had rivals there who were not afraid of him. He was rich enough, but did not know how to spend his money; and avarice is a sin which meets with no pity from the Russian ladies.

I went to Czarsko-Zelo, Peterhoff, and Cronstadt, for if you want to say you have been in a country you should see as much as possible of it. I wrote notes and memorandums on several questions with the hope of their procuring me a place in the civil service, and all my productions were laid before the empress but with no effect. In Russia they do not think much of foreigners unless they have specially summoned them; those who come of their own account rarely make much, and I suspect the Russians are right.

CHAPTER XXI

I See the Empress — My Conversations with Her — The Valville —

I Leave Zaiya I Leave St. Petersburg and Arrive at Warsaw —

The Princes Adam Czartoryski and Sulkowski — The King of

Poland — Theatrical Intrigues — Byanicki

I thought of leaving Russia at the beginning of the autumn, but I was told by M M. Panin and Alsuwieff that I ought not to go without having spoken to the empress.

“I should be sorry to do so,” I replied, “but as I can’t find anyone to present me to her, I must be resigned.”

At last Panin told me to walk in a garden frequented by her majesty at an early hour, and he said that meeting me, as it were by chance, she would probably speak to me. I told him I should like him to be with her, and he accordingly named a day.

I repaired to the garden, and as I walked about I marvelled at the statuary it contained, all the statues being made of the worst stone, and executed in the worst possible taste. The names cut beneath them gave the whole the air of a practical joke. A weeping statue was Democritus; another, with grinning mouth, was labelled Heraclitus; an old man with a long beard was Sappho; and an old woman, Avicenna; and so on.

As I was smiling at this extraordinary collection, I saw the czarina, preceded by Count Gregorius Orloff, and followed by two ladies, approaching. Count Panin was on her left hand. I stood by the hedge to let her pass, but as soon as she came up to me she asked, smilingly, if I had been interested in the statues. I replied, following her steps, that I presumed they had been placed there to impose on fools, or to excite the laughter of those acquainted with history.

“From what I can make out,” she replied, “the secret of the matter is that my worthy aunt was imposed on, and indeed she did not trouble herself much about such trifles. But I hope you have seen other things in Russia less ridiculous than these statues?”

I entertained the sovereign for more than an hour with my remarks on the things of note I had seen in St. Petersburg. The conversation happened to turn on the King of Prussia, and I sang his praises; but I censured his terrible habit of always interrupting the person whom he was addressing. Catherine smiled and asked me to tell her about the conversation I had had with this monarch, and I did so to the best of my ability. She was then kind enough to say that she had never seen me at the Courtag, which was a vocal and instrumental concert given at the palace, and open to all. I told her that I had only attended once, as I was so unfortunate as not to have a taste for music. At this she turned to Panin, and said smilingly that she knew someone else who had the same misfortune. If the reader remembers what I heard her say about music as she was leaving the opera, he will pronounce my speech to have been a very courtier-like one, and I confess it was; but who can resist making such speeches to a monarch, and above all, a monarch in petticoats?

The czarina turned from me to speak to M. Bezkoi, who had just come up, and as M. Panin left the garden I did so too, delighted with the honour I had had.

The empress, who was a woman of moderate height and yet of a majestic appearance, thoroughly understood the art of making herself loved. She was not beautiful, but yet she was sure of pleasing by her geniality and her wit, and also by that exquisite tact which made one forget the awfulness of the sovereign in the gentleness of the woman. A few days after, Count Partin told me that the empress had twice asked after me, and that this was a sure sign I had pleased her. He advised me to look out for another opportunity of meeting her, and said that for the future she would always tell me to approach whenever she saw me, and that if I wanted some employment she might possible do something for me.

Though I did not know what employ I could ask for in that disagreeable country, I was glad to hear that I could have easy access to the Court. With that idea I walked in the garden every day, and here follows my second conversation with the empress She saw me at a distance and sent an officer to fetch me into her presence. As everybody was talking of the tournament, which had to be postponed on account of the bad weather, she asked me if this kind of entertainment could be given at Venice. I told her some amusing stories on the subject of shows and spectacles, and in this relation I remarked that the Venetian climate was more pleasant than the Russian, for at Venice fine days were the rule, while at St. Petersburg they were the exception, though the year is younger there than anywhere else.

“Yes,” she said, “in your country it is eleven days older.”

“Would it not be worthy of your majesty to put Russia on an equality with the rest of the world in this respect, by adopting the Gregorian calendar? All the Protestants have done so, and England, who adopted it fourteen years ago, has already gained several millions. All Europe is astonished that the old style should be suffered to exist in a country where the sovereign is the head of the Church, and whose capital contains an academy of science. It is thought that Peter the Great, who made the year begin in January, would have also abolished the old style if he had not been afraid of offending England, which then kept trade and commerce alive throughout your vast empire.”

“You know,” she replied, with a sly smile, “that Peter the Great was not exactly a learned man.”

“He was more than a man of learning, the immortal Peter was a genius of the first order. Instinct supplied the place of science with him; his judgment was always in the right. His vast genius, his firm resolve, prevented him from making mistakes, and helped him to destroy all those abuses which threatened to oppose his great designs.”

Her majesty seemed to have heard me with great interest, and was about to reply when she noticed two ladies whom she summoned to her presence. To me she said, —

“I shall be delighted to reply to you at another time,” and then turned towards the ladies.

The time came in eight or ten days, when I was beginning to think she had had enough of me, for she had seen me without summoning me to speak to her.

She began by saying what I desired should be done was done already. “All the letters sent to foreign countries and all the important State records are marked with both dates.”

“But I must point out to your majesty that by the end of the century the difference will be of twelve days, not eleven.”

“Not at all; we have seen to that. The last year of this century will not be counted as a leap year. It is fortunate that the difference is one of eleven days, for as that is the number which is added every year to the epact our epacts are almost the same. As to the celebration of Easter, that is a different question. Your equinox is on March the 21st, ours on the 10th, and the astronomers say we are both wrong; sometimes it is we who are wrong and sometimes you, as the equinox varies. You know you are not even in agreement with the Jews, whose calculation is said to be perfectly accurate; and, in fine, this difference in the time of celebrating Easter does not disturb in any way public order or the progress of the Government.”

“Your majesty’s words fill me with admiration, but the Festival of Christmas — — “

“I suppose you are going to say that we do not celebrate Christmas in the winter solstice as should properly be done. We know it, but it seems to me a matter of no account. I would rather bear with this small mistake than grievously afflict vast numbers of my subjects by depriving them of their birthdays. If I did so, there would be no open complaints uttered, as that is not the fashion in Russia; but they would say in secret that I was an Atheist, and that I disputed the infallibility of the Council of Nice. You may think such complaints matter for laughter, but I do not, for I have much more agreeable motives for amusement.”

The czarina was delighted to mark my surprise. I did not doubt for a moment that she had made a special study of the whole subject. M. Alsuwieff told me, a few days after, that she had very possibly read a little pamphlet on the subject, the statements of which exactly coincided with her own. He took care to add, however, that it was very possible her highness was profoundly learned on the matter, but this was merely a courtier’s phrase.

What she said was spoken modestly and energetically, and her good humour and pleasant smile remained unmoved throughout. She exercised a constant self-control over herself, and herein appeared the greatness of her character, for nothing is more difficult. Her demeanour, so different from that of the Prussian king, shewed her to be the greater sovereign of the two; her frank geniality always gave her the advantage, while the short, curt manners of the king often exposed him to being made a dupe. In an examination of the life of Frederick the Great, one cannot help paying a deserved tribute to his courage, but at the same time one feels that if it had not been for repeated turns of good fortune he must have succumbed, whereas Catherine was little indebted to the favours of the blind deity. She succeeded in enterprises which, before her time, would have been pronounced impossibilities, and it seemed her aim to make men look upon her achievements as of small account.

I read in one of our modern journals, those monuments of editorial self-conceit, that Catherine the Great died happily as she had lived. Everybody knows that she died suddenly on her close stool. By calling such a death happy, the journalist hints that it is the death he himself would wish for. Everyone to his taste, and we can only hope that the editor may obtain his wish; but who told this silly fellow that Catherine desired such a death? If he regards such a wish as natural to a person of her profound genius I would ask who told him that men of genius consider a sudden death to be a happy one? Is it because that is his opinion, and are we to conclude that he is therefore person of genius? To come to the truth we should have to interrogate the late empress, and ask her some such question as:

“Are you well pleased to have died suddenly?”

She would probably reply:

“What a foolish question! Such might be the wish of one driven to despair, or of someone suffering from a long and grievous malady. Such was not my position, for I enjoyed the blessings of happiness and good health; no worse fate could have happened to me. My sudden death prevented me from concluding several designs which I might have brought to a successful issue if God had granted me the warning of a slight illness. But it was not so; I had to set out on the long journey at a moment’s notice, without the time to make any preparations. Is my death any the happier from my not foreseeing it? Do you think me such a coward as to dread the approach of what is common to all? I tell you that I should have accounted myself happy if I had had a respite of but a day. Then I should not complain of the Divine justice."

"Does your highness accuse God of injustice, then?"

"What boots it, since I am a lost soul? Do you expect the damned to acknowledge the justice of the decree which has consigned them to eternal woe?"

"No doubt it is a difficult matter, but I should have thought that a sense of the justice of your doom would have mitigated the pains of it."

"Perhaps so, but a damned soul must be without consolation for ever."

"In spite of that there are some philosophers who call you happy in your death by virtue of its suddenness."

"Not philosophers, but fools, for in its suddenness was the pain and woe."

"Well said; but may I ask your highness if you admit the possibility of a happy eternity after an unhappy death, or of an unhappy doom after a happy death?"

"Such suppositions are inconceivable. The happiness of futurity lies in the ecstasy of the soul in feeling freed from the trammels of matter, and unhappiness is the doom of a soul which was full of remorse at the moment it left the body. But enough, for my punishment forbids my farther speech."

"Tell me, at least, what is the nature of your punishment?"

"An everlasting weariness. Farewell."

After this long and fanciful digression the reader will no doubt be obliged by my returning to this world.

Count Panin told me that in a few days the empress would leave for her country house, and I determined to have an interview with her, foreseeing that it would be for the last time.

I had been in the garden for a few minutes when heavy rain began to fall, and I was going to leave, when the empress summoned me into an apartment on the ground floor of the palace, where she was walking up and down with Gregorovitch and a maid of honour.

“I had forgotten to ask you,” she said, graciously, “if you believe the new calculation of the calendar to be exempt from error?”

“No, your majesty; but the error is so minute that it will not produce any sensible effect for the space of nine or ten thousand years.”

“I thought so; and in my opinion Pope Gregory should not have acknowledged any mistake at all. The Pope, however, had much less difficulty in carrying out his reform than I should have with my subjects, who are too fond of their ancient usages and customs.”

“Nevertheless, I am sure your majesty would meet with obedience.”

“No doubt, but imagine the grief of my clergy in not being able to celebrate the numerous saints’ days, which would fall on the eleven days to be suppressed. You have only one saint for each day, but we have a dozen at least. I may remark also that all ancient states and kingdoms are attached to their ancient laws. I have heard that your Republic of Venice begins the year in March, and that seems to me, as it were, a monument and memorial of its antiquity — and indeed the year begins more naturally in March than in January — but does not this usage cause some confusion?”

“None at all, your majesty. The letters M V, which we adjoin to all dates in January and February, render all mistakes impossible.”

“Venice is also noteworthy for its peculiar system of heraldry, by the amusing form under which it portrays its patron saint, and by the five Latin words with which the Evangelist is invoked, in which, as I am told, there is a grammatical blunder which has become respectable by its long standing. But is it true that you do not distinguish between the day and night hours?”

“It is, your majesty, and what is more we reckon the day from the beginning of the night.”

“Such is the force of custom, which makes us admire what other nations think ridiculous. You see no inconvenience in your division of the day, which strikes me as most inconvenient.”

“You would only have to look at your watch, and you would not need to listen for the cannon shot which announces the close of day.”

“Yes, but for this one advantage you have over us, we have two over you. We know that at twelve o’clock it is either mid-day or midnight.”

The czarina spoke to me about the fondness of the Venetians for games of chance, and asked if the Genoa Lottery had been established there. “I have been asked,” she added, “to allow the lottery to be established in my own dominions; but I should never permit it except on the condition that no stake should be below a rouble, and then the poor people would not be able to risk their money in it.”

I replied to this discreet observation with a profound inclination of the head, and thus ended my last interview with the famous empress who reigned thirty-five years without committing a single mistake of any importance. The historian will always place her amongst great sovereigns, though the moralist will always consider her, and rightly, as one of the most notable of dissolute women.

A few days before I left I gave an entertainment to my friends at Catherinhoff, winding up with a fine display of fireworks, a present from my friend Melissino. My supper for thirty was exquisite, and my ball a brilliant one. In spite of the tenuity of my purse I felt obliged to give my friends this mark of my gratitude for the kindness they had lavished on me.

I left Russia with the actress Valville, and I must here tell the reader how I came to make her acquaintance.

I happened to go to the French play, and to find myself seated next to an extremely pretty lady who was unknown to me. I occasionally addressed an observation to her referring to the play or actors, and I was immensely delighted with her spirited answers. Her expression charmed me, and I took the liberty of asking her if she were a Russian.

“No, thank God!” she replied, “I am a Parisian, and an actress by occupation. My name is Valville; but I don’t wonder I am unknown to you, for I have been only a month here, and have played but once.”

“How is that?”

“Because I was so unfortunate as to fail to win the czarina’s favour. However, as I was engaged for a year, she has kindly ordered that my salary of a hundred roubles shall be paid monthly. At the end of the year I shall get my passport and go.”

"I am sure the empress thinks she is doing you a favour in paying you for nothing."

"Very likely; but she does not remember that I am forgetting how to act all this time."

"You ought to tell her that."

"I only wish she would give me an audience."

"That is unnecessary. Of course, you have a lover."

"No, I haven't."

"It's incredible to me!"

"They say the incredible often happens."

"I am very glad to hear it myself."

I took her address, and sent her the following note the next day:

"Madam, — I should like to begin an intrigue with you. You have inspired me with feelings that will make me unhappy unless you reciprocate them. I beg to take the liberty of asking myself to sup with you, but please tell me how much it will cost me. I am obliged to leave for Warsaw in the course of a month, and I shall be happy to offer you a place in my travelling carriage. I shall be able to get you a passport. The bearer of this has orders to wait, and I hope your answer will be as plainly worded as my question."

In two hours I received this reply:

"Sir, — As I have the knack of putting an end to an intrigue when it has ceased to amuse me, I have no hesitation in accepting your proposal. As to the sentiments with which you say I have inspired you, I will do my best to share them, and to make you happy. Your supper shall be ready, and later on we will settle the price of the dessert. I shall be delighted to accept the place in your carriage if you can obtain my expenses to Paris as well as my passport. And finally, I hope you will find my plain speaking on a match with yours. Good bye, till the evening."

I found my new friend in a comfortable lodging, and we accosted each other as if we had been old acquaintances.

“I shall be delighted to travel with you,” said she, “but I don’t think you will be able to get my passport.”

“I have no doubt as to my success,” I replied, “if you will present to the empress the petition I shall draft for you.”

“I will surely do so,” said she, giving me writing materials.

I wrote out the following petition, —

“Your Majesty, — I venture to remind your highness that my enforced idleness is making me forget my art, which I have not yet learnt thoroughly. Your majesty’s generosity is therefore doing me an injury, and your majesty would do me a great benefit in giving me permission to leave St. Petersburg.”

“Nothing more than that?”

“Not a word.”

“You say nothing about the passport, and nothing about the journey-money. I am not a rich woman.”

“Do you only present this petition; and, unless I am very much mistaken, you will have, not only your journey-money, but also your year’s salary.”

“Oh, that would be too much!”

“Not at all. You do not know Catherine, but I do. Have this copied, and present it in person.”

“I will copy it out myself, for I can write a good enough hand. Indeed, it almost seems as if I had composed it; it is exactly my style. I believe you are a better actor than I am, and from this evening I shall call myself your pupil. Come, let us have some supper, that you may give me my first lesson.”

After a delicate supper, seasoned by pleasant and witty talk, Madame Valville granted me all I could desire. I went downstairs for a moment to send away my coachman and to instruct him what he was to say to Zaira, whom I had forewarned that I was going to Cronstadt, and might not return till the next day. My coachman was a Ukrainian on whose fidelity I could rely, but I knew that it would be necessary for me to be off with the old love before I was on with the new.

Madame Valville was like most young Frenchwomen of her class; she had charms which she wished to turn to account, and a passable education; her ambition was to be kept by one man, and the title of mistress was more pleasing in her ears than that of wife.

In the intervals of four amorous combats she told me enough of her life for me to divine what it had been. Clerval, the actor, had been gathering together a company of actors at Paris, and making her acquaintance by chance and finding her to be intelligent, he assured her that she was a born actress, though she had never suspected it. The idea had dazzled her, and she had signed the agreement. She started from Paris with six other actors and actresses, of whom she was the only one that had never played.

"I thought," she said, "it was like what is done at Paris, where a girl goes into the chorus or the ballet without having learnt to sing or dance. What else could I think, after an actor like Clerval had assured me I had a talent for acting and had offered me a good engagement? All he required of me was that I should learn by heart and repeat certain passages which I rehearsed in his presence. He said I made a capital soubrette, and he certainly could not have been trying to deceive me, but the fact is he was deceived himself. A fortnight after my arrival I made my first appearance, and my reception was not a flattering one."

"Perhaps you were nervous?"

"Nervous? not in the least. Clerval said that if I could have put on the appearance of nervousness the empress, who is kindness itself, would certainly have encouraged me."

I left her the next morning after I had seen her copy out the petition. She wrote a very good hand.

"I shall present it to-day," said she.

I wished her good luck, and arranged to sup with her again on the day I meant to part with Zaira.

All French girls who sacrifice to Venus are in the same style as the Valville; they are entirely without passion or love, but they are pleasant and caressing. They have only one object; and that is their own profit. They make and unmake an intrigue with a smiling face and without the slightest difficulty. It is their system, and if it be not absolutely the best it is certainly the most convenient.

When I got home I found Zaira submissive but sad, which annoyed me more than anger would have done, for I loved her. However, it was time to bring the matter to an end, and to make up my mind to endure the pain of parting.

Rinaldi, the architect, a man of seventy, but still vigorous and sensual, was in love with her, and he had hinted to me several times that he would be only too happy to take her over and to pay double the sum I had given for her. My answer had been that I could only give her to a man she liked, and that I meant to make her a present of the hundred roubles I had given for her. Rinaldi did not like this answer, as he had not very strong hopes of the girl taking a fancy to him; however, he did not despair.

He happened to call on me on the very morning on which I had determined to give her up, and as he spoke Russian perfectly he gave Zaira to understand how much he loved her. Her answer was that he must apply to me, as my will was law to her, but that she neither liked nor disliked anyone else. The old man could not obtain any more positive reply and left us with but feeble hopes, but commending himself to my good offices.

When he had gone, I asked Zaira whether she would not like me to leave her to the worthy man, who would treat her as his own daughter.

She was just going to reply when I was handed a note from Madame Valville, asking me to call on her, as she had a piece of news to give me. I ordered the carriage immediately, telling Zaira that I should not be long.

“Very good,” she replied, “I will give you a plain answer when you come back.”

I found Madame Valville in a high state of delight.

“Long live the petition!” she exclaimed, as soon as she saw me. “I waited for the empress to come out of her private chapel. I respectfully presented my petition, which she read as she walked along, and then told me with a kindly smile to wait a moment. I waited, and her majesty returned me the petition initialled in her own hand, and bade me take it to M. Ghelagin. This gentleman gave me an excellent reception, and told me that the sovereign hand ordered him to give me my passport, my salary for a year, and a hundred ducats for the journey. The money will be forwarded in a fortnight, as my name will have to be sent to the Gazette."

Madame Valville was very grateful, and we fixed the day of our departure. Three or four days later I sent in my name to the Gazette.

I had promised Zaira to come back, so telling my new love that I would come and live with her as soon as I had placed the young Russian in good hands, I went home, feeling rather curious to hear Zaira's determination.

After Zaira had supped with me in perfect good humour, she asked if M. Rinaldi would pay me back the money I had given far her. I said he would, and she went on, —

"It seems to me that I am worth more than I was, for I have all your presents, and I know Italian."

"You are right, dear, but I don't want it to be said that I have made a profit on you; besides, I intend to make you a present of the hundred roubles."

"As you are going to make me such a handsome present, why not send me back to my father's house? That would be still more generous. If M. Rinaldi really loves me, he can come and talk it over with my father. You have no objection to his paying me whatever sum I like to mention."

"Not at all. On the contrary, I shall be very glad to serve your family, and all the more as Rinaldi is a rich man."

"Very good; you will be always dear to me in my memory. You shall take me to my home to-morrow; and now let us go to bed."

Thus it was that I parted with this charming girl, who made me live soberly all the time I was at St. Petersburg. Zinowieff told me that if I had liked to deposit a small sum as security I could have taken her with me; but I had thought the matter over, and it seemed to me that as Zaira grew more beautiful and charming I should end by becoming a perfect slave to her. Possibly, however, I should not have looked into matters so closely if I had not been in love with Madame Valville.

Zaira spent the next morning in gathering together her belongings, now laughing and now weeping, and every time that she left her packing to give me a kiss I could not resist weeping myself. When I restored her to her father, the whole family fell on their knees around me. Alas for poor human nature! thus it is degraded by the iron heel of oppression. Zaira looked oddly in the humble cottage, where one large mattress served for the entire family.

Rinaldi took everything in good part. He told me that since the daughter would make no objection he had no fear of the father doing so. He went to the house the next day, but he did not get the girl till I had left St. Petersburg. He kept her for the remainder of his days, and behaved very handsomely to her.

After this melancholy separation Madame Valville became my sole mistress, and we left the Russian capital in the course of a few weeks. I took an Armenian merchant into my service; he had lent me a hundred ducats, and cooked very well in the Eastern style. I had a letter from the Polish resident to Prince Augustus Sulkowski, and another from the English ambassador for Prince Adam Czartoryski.

The day after we left St. Petersburg we stopped at Koporie to dine; we had taken with us some choice viands and excellent wines. Two days later we met the famous chapel-master, Galuppi or Buranelli, who was on his way to St. Petersburg with two friends and an artiste. He did not know me, and was astonished to find a Venetian dinner awaiting him at the inn, as also to hear a greeting in his mother tongue. As soon as I had pronounced my name he embraced me with exclamations of surprise and joy.

The roads were heavy with rain, so we were a week in getting to Riga, and when we arrived I was sorry to hear that Prince Charles was not there. From Riga, we were four days before getting to Konigsberg, where Madame Valville, who was expected at Berlin, had to leave me. I left her my Armenian, to whom she gladly paid the hundred ducats I owed him. I saw her again two years later, and shall speak of the meeting in due time.

We separated like good friends, without any sadness. We spent the night at Klein Roop, near Riga, and she offered to give me her diamonds, her jewels, and all that she possessed. We were staying with the Countess Lowenwald, to whom I had a letter from the Princess Dolgorouki. This lady had in her house, in the capacity of governess, the pretty English woman whom I had known as Campioni’s wife. She told me that her husband was at Warsaw, and that he was living with Villiers. She gave me a letter for him, and I promised to make him send her some money, and I kept my word. Little Betty was as charming as ever, but her mother seemed quite jealous of her and treated her ill.

When I reached Konigsberg I sold my travelling carriage and took a place in a coach for Warsaw. We were four in all, and my companions only spoke German and Polish, so that I had a dreadfully tedious journey. At Warsaw I went to live with Villiers, where I hoped to meet Campioni.

It was not long before I saw him, and found him well in health and in comfortable quarters. He kept a dancing school, and had a good many pupils. He was delighted to have news of Fanny and his children. He sent them some money, but had no thoughts of having them at Warsaw, as Fanny wished. He assured me she was not his wife.

He told me that Tomatis, the manager of the comic opera, had made a fortune, and had in his company a Milanese dancer named Catai, who enchanted all the town by her charms rather than her talent. Games of chance were permitted, but he warned me that Warsaw was full of card-sharpers. A Veronese named Giropoldi, who lived with an officer from Lorrain called Bachelier, held a bank at faro at her house, where a dancer, who had been the mistress of the famous Afflisio at Vienna, brought customers.

Major Sadir, whom I have mentioned before, kept another gaming-house, in company with his mistress, who came from Saxony. The Baron de St. Heleine was also in Warsaw, but his principal occupation was to contract debts which he did not mean to pay. He also lived in Villier's house with his pretty and virtuous young wife, who would have nothing to say to us. Campioni told me of some other adventurers, whose names I was very glad to know that I might the better avoid them.

The day after my arrival I hired a man and a carriage, the latter being an absolute necessity at Warsaw, where in my time, at all events, it was impossible to go on foot. I reached the capital of Poland at the end of October, 1765.

My first call was on Prince Adam Czartoryski, Lieutenant of Podolia, for whom I had an introduction. I found him before a table covered with papers, surrounded by forty or fifty persons, in an immense library which he had made into his bedroom. He was married to a very pretty woman, but had not yet had a child by her because she was too thin for his taste.

He read the long letter I gave him, and said in elegant French that he had a very high opinion of the writer of the letter; but that as he was very busy just then he hoped I would come to supper with him if I had nothing better to do.

I drove off to Prince Sulkouski, who had just been appointed ambassador to the Court of Louis XV. The prince was the elder of four brothers and a man of great understanding, but a theorist in the style of the Abbe St. Pierre. He read the letter, and said he wanted to have a long talk with me; but that being obliged to go out he would be obliged if I would come and dine with him at four o'clock. I accepted the invitation.

I then went to a merchant named Schempinski, who was to pay me fifty ducats a month on Papanelopulo's order. My man told me that there was a public rehearsal of a new opera at the theatre, and I accordingly spent three hours there, knowing none and unknown to all. All the actresses were pretty, but especially the Catai, who did not know the first elements of dancing. She was greatly applauded, above all by Prince Repnin, the Russian ambassador, who seemed a person of the greatest consequence.

Prince Sulkouski kept me at table for four mortal hours, talking on every subject except those with which I happened to be acquainted. His strong points were politics and commerce, and as he found my mind a mere void on these subjects, he shone all the more, and took quite a fancy to me, as I believe, because he found me such a capital listener.

About nine o'clock, having nothing better to do (a favourite phrase with the Polish noblemen), I went to Prince Adam, who after pronouncing my name introduced me to the company. There were present Monseigneur Krasinski, the Prince-Bishop of Warmia, the Chief Prothonotary Rzewuski, whom I had known at St. Petersburg, the Palatin Oginski, General Roniker, and two others whose barbarous names I have forgotten. The last person to whom he introduced me was his wife, with whom I was very pleased. A few moments after a fine-looking gentleman came into the room, and everybody stood up. Prince Adam pronounced my name, and turning to me said, coolly, —

"That's the king."

This method of introducing a stranger to a sovereign prince was assuredly not an overwhelming one, but it was nevertheless a surprise; and I found that an excess of simplicity may be as confusing as the other extreme. At first I thought the prince might be making a fool of me; but I quickly put aside the idea, and stepped forward and was about to kneel, but his majesty gave me his hand to kiss with exquisite grace, and as he was about to address me, Prince Adam shewed him the letter of the English ambassador, who was well known to the king. The king read it, still standing, and began to ask me questions about the Czarina and the Court, appearing to take great interest in my replies.

When supper was announced the king continued to talk, and led me into the supper-room, and made me sit down at his right hand. Everybody ate heartily except the king, who appeared to have no appetite, and myself, who had no right to have any appetite, even if I had not dined well with Prince Sulkouski, for I saw the whole table hushed to listen to my replies to the king's questions.

After supper the king began to comment very graciously on my answers. His majesty spoke simply but with great elegance. As he was leaving he told me he should always be delighted to see me at his Court, and Prince Adam said that if I liked to be introduced to his father, I had only to call at eleven o'clock the next morning.

The King of Poland was of a medium height, but well made. His face was not a handsome one, but it was kindly and intelligent. He was rather short-sighted, and his features in repose bore a somewhat melancholy expression; but in speaking, the whole face seemed to light up. All he said was seasoned by a pleasant wit.

I was well enough pleased with this interview, and returned to my inn, where I found Campioni seated amongst several guests of either sex, and after staying with them for half an hour I went to bed.

At eleven o'clock the next day I was presented to the great Russian Paladin. He was in his dressing-gown, surrounded by his gentlemen in the national costume. He was standing up and conversing with his followers in a kindly but grave manner. As soon as his son Adam mentioned my name, he unbent and gave me a most kindly yet dignified welcome. His manners were not awful, nor did they inspire one with familiarity, and I thought him likely to be a good judge of character. When I told him that I had only gone to Russia to amuse myself and see good company, he immediately concluded that my aims in coming to Poland were of the same kind; and he told me that he could introduce me to a large circle. He added that he should be glad to see me to dinner and supper whenever I had no other engagements.

He went behind a screen to complete his toilette, and soon appeared in the uniform of his regiment, with a fair peruke in the style of the late King Augustus II. He made a collective bow to everyone, and went to see his wife, who was recovering from a disease which would have proved fatal if it had not been for the skill of Reimann, a pupil of the great Boerhaave. The lady came of the now extinct family of Enoff, whose immense wealth she brought to her husband. When he married her he abandoned the Maltese Order, of which he had been a knight. He won his bride by a duel with pistols on horseback. The lady had promised that her hand should be the conqueror’s guerdon, and the prince was so fortunate as to kill his rival. Of this marriage there issued Prince Adam and a daughter, now a widow, and known under the name of Lubomirska, but formerly under that of Strasnikowa, that being the title of the office her husband held in the royal army.

It was this prince palatine and his brother, the High Chancellor of Lithuania, who first brought about the Polish troubles. The two brothers were discontented with their position at the Court where Count Bruhl was supreme, and put themselves at the head of the plot for dethroning the king, and for placing on the throne, under Russian protection, their young nephew, who had originally gone to St. Petersburg as an attache at the embassy, and afterwards succeeded in winning the favour of Catherine, then Grand Duchess, but soon to become empress.

This young man was Stanislas Poniatowski, son of Constance Czartoryski and the celebrated Poniatowski, the friend of Charles III. As luck would have it, a revolution was unnecessary to place him on the throne, for the king died in 1763, and gave place to Prince Poniatowski, who was chosen king on the 6th of September, 1776, under the title of Stanislas Augustus I. He had reigned two years at the time of my visit; and I found Warsaw in a state of gaiety, for a diet was to be held and everyone wished to know how it was that Catherine had given the Poles a native king.

At dinner-time I went to the paladin's and found three tables, at each of which there were places for thirty, and this was the usual number entertained by the prince. The luxury of the Court paled before that of the paladin's house. Prince Adam said to me,

"Chevalier, your place will always be at my father's table."

This was a great honour, and I felt it. The prince introduced me to his handsome sister, and to several palatins and starosts. I did not fail to call on all these great personages, so in the course of a fortnight I found myself a welcome guest in all the best houses.

My purse was too lean to allow of my playing or consoling myself with a theatrical beauty, so I fell back on the library of Monseigneur Zalewski, the Bishop of Kiowia, for whom I had taken a great liking. I spent almost all my mornings with him, and it was from this prelate that I learnt all the intrigues and complots by which the ancient Polish constitution, of which the bishop was a great admirer, had been overturned. Unhappily, his firmness was of no avail, and a few months after I left Warsaw the Russian tyrants arrested him and he was exiled to Siberia.

I lived calmly and peaceably, and still look back upon those days with pleasure. I spent my afternoons with the paladin playing tressette an Italian game of which he was very fond, and which I played well enough for the paladin to like to have me as a partner.

In spite of my sobriety and economy I found myself in debt three months after my arrival, and I did not know where to turn for help. The fifty ducats per month, which were sent me from Venice, were insufficient, for the money I had to spend on my carriage, my lodging, my servant, and my dress brought me down to the lowest ebb, and I did not care to appeal to anyone. But fortune had a surprise in store for me, and hitherto she had never left me.

Madame Schmit, whom the king for good reasons of his own had accommodated with apartments in the palace, asked me one evening to sup with her, telling me that the king would be of the party. I accepted the invitation, and I was delighted to find the delightful Bishop Kraswiski, the Abbe Guigiotti, and two or three other amateurs of Italian literature. The king, whose knowledge of literature was extensive, began to tell anecdotes of classical writers, quoting manuscript authorities which reduced me to silence, and which were possibly invented by him. Everyone talked except myself, and as I had had no dinner I ate like an ogre, only replying by monosyllables when politeness obliged me to say something. The conversation turned on Horace, and everyone gave his opinion on the great materialist's philosophy, and the Abbe Guigiotti obliged me to speak by saying that unless I agreed with him I should not keep silence.

"If you take my silence for consent to your extravagant eulogium of Horace," I said, "you are mistaken; for in my opinion the 'nec cum venari volet poemata panges', of which you think so much, is to my mind a satire devoid of delicacy."

"Satire and delicacy are hard to combine."

"Not for Horace, who succeeded in pleasing the great Augustus, and rendering him immortal as the protector of learned men. Indeed other sovereigns seem to vie with him by taking his name and even by disguising it."

The king (who had taken the name of Augustus himself) looked grave and said, —

"What sovereigns have adopted a disguised form of the name Augustus?"

"The first king of Sweden, who called himself Gustavus, which is only an anagram of Augustus."

"That is a very amusing idea, and worth more than all the tales we have told. Where did you find that?"

"In a manuscript at Wolfenbuttel."

The king laughed loudly, though he himself had been citing manuscripts. But he returned to the charge and said, —

"Can you cite any passage of Horace (not in manuscript) where he shews his talent for delicacy and satire?"

"Sir, I could quote several passages, but here is one which seems to me very good: 'Coyam rege', says the poet, 'sua de paupertate tacentes, plus quan pocentes ferent."

"True indeed," said the king, with a smile.

Madame Schmit, who did not know Latin, and inherited curiosity from her mother, and eventually from Eve, asked the bishop what it meant, and he thus translated it:

“They that speak not of their necessities in the presence of a king, gain more than they that are ever asking.”

The lady remarked that she saw nothing satirical in this.

After this it was my turn to be silent again; but the king began to talk about Ariosto, and expressed a desire to read it with me. I replied with an inclination of the head, and Horace’s words: ‘Tempora quoeram’.

Next morning, as I was coming out from mass, the generous and unfortunate Stanislas Augustus gave me his hand to kiss, and at the same time slid a roll of money into my hand, saying, —

“Thank no one but Horace, and don’t tell anyone about it.”

The roll contained two hundred ducats, and I immediately paid off my debts. Since then I went almost every morning to the king’s closet, where he was always glad to see his courtiers, but there was no more said about reading Ariosto. He knew Italian, but not enough to speak it, and still less to appreciate the beauties of the great poet. When I think of this worthy prince, and of the great qualities he possessed as a man, I cannot understand how he came to commit so many errors as a king. Perhaps the least of them all was that he allowed himself to survive his country. As he could not find a friend to kill him, I think he should have killed himself. But indeed he had no need to ask a friend to do him this service; he should have imitated the great Kosciuszko, and entered into life eternal by the sword of a Russian.

The carnival was a brilliant one. All Europe seemed to have assembled at Warsaw to see the happy being whom fortune had so unexpectedly raised to a throne, but after seeing him all were agreed that, in his case at all events, the deity had been neither blind nor foolish. Perhaps, however, he liked shewing himself rather too much. I have detected him in some distress on his being informed that there was such a thing as a stranger in Warsaw who had not seen him. No one had any need of an introduction, for his Court was, as all Courts should be, open to everyone, and when he noticed a strange face he was the first to speak.

Here I must set down an event which took place towards the end of January. It was, in fact, a dream; and, as I think I have confessed before, superstition had always some hold on me.

I dreamt I was at a banquet, and one of the guests threw a bottle at my face, that the blood poured forth, that I ran my sword through my enemy's body, and jumped into a carriage, and rode away.

Prince Charles of Courland came to Warsaw, and asked me to dine with him at Prince Poninski's, the same that became so notorious, and was afterwards proscribed and shamefully dishonoured. His was a hospitable house, and he was surrounded by his agreeable family. I had never called on him, as he was not a 'persona grata' to the king or his relations.

In the course of the dinner a bottle of champagne burst, and a piece of broken glass struck me just below the eye. It cut a vein, and the blood gushed over my face, over my clothes, and even over the cloth. Everybody rose, my wound was bound up, the cloth was changed, and the dinner went on merrily. I was surprised at the likeness between my dream and this incident, while I congratulated myself on the happy difference between them. However, it all came true after a few months.

Madame Binetti, whom I had last seen in London, arrived at Warsaw with her husband and Pic the dancer. She had a letter of introduction to the king's brother, who was a general in the Austrian service, and then resided at Warsaw. I heard that the day they came, when I was at supper at the palatin's. The king was present, and said he should like to keep them in Warsaw for a week and see them dance, if a thousand ducats could do it.

I went to see Madame Binetti and to give her the good news the next morning. She was very much surprised to meet me in Warsaw, and still more so at the news I gave her. She called Pic who seemed undecided, but as we were talking it over, Prince Poniatowski came in to acquaint them with his majesty's wishes, and the offer was accepted. In three days Pic arranged a ballet; the costumes, the scenery, the music, the dancers — all were ready, and Tomatis put it on handsomely to please his generous master. The couple gave such satisfaction that they were engaged for a year. The Catai was furious, as Madame Binetti threw her completely into the shade, and, worse still, drew away her lovers. Tomatis, who was under the

Catai's influence, made things so unpleasant for Madame Binetti that the two dancers became deadly enemies.

In ten or twelve days Madame Binetti was settled it a well-furnished house; her plate was simple but good, her cellar full of excellent wine, her cook an artist and her adorers numerous, amongst them being Moszciuski and Branicki, the king's friends.

The pit was divided into two parties, for the Catai was resolved to make a stand against the new comer, though her talents were not to be compared to Madame Binetti's. She danced in the first ballet, and her rival in the second. Those who applauded the first greeted that second in dead silence, and vice versa. I had great obligations towards Madame Binetti, but my duty also drew me towards the Catai, who numbered in her party all the Czartoryskis and their following, Prince Lubomirski, and other powerful nobles. It was plain that I could not desert to Madame Binetti without earning the contempt of the other party.

Madame Binetti reproached me bitterly, and I laid the case plainly before her. She agreed that I could not do otherwise, but begged me to stay away from the theatre in future, telling me that she had got a rod in pickle for Tomatis which would make him repent of his impertinence. She called me her oldest friend; and indeed I was very fond of her, and cared nothing for the Catai despite her prettiness.

Xavier Branicki, the royal Postoli, Knight of the White Eagle, Colonel of Uhlans, the king's friend, was the chief adorer of Madame Binetti. The lady probably confided her displeasure to him, and begged him to take vengeance on the manager, who had committed so many offences against her. Count Branicki in his turn probably promised to avenge her quarrel, and, if no opportunity of doing so arose, to create an opportunity. At least, this is the way in which affairs of this kind are usually managed, and I can find no better explanation for what happened. Nevertheless, the way in which the Pole took vengeance was very original and extraordinary.

On the 20th of February Branicki went to the opera, and, contrary to his custom, went to the Catai's dressing-room, and began to pay his court to the actress, Tomatis being present. Both he and the actress concluded that Branicki had had a quarrel with her rival, and though she did not much care to place him in the number of her adorers, she yet gave him a good reception, for she knew it would be dangerous to despise his suit openly.

When the Catai had completed her toilet, the gallant postoli offered her his arm to take her to her carriage, which was at the door. Tomatis followed, and I too was there, awaiting my carriage. Madame Catai came down, the carriage-door was opened, she stepped in, and Branicki got in after her, telling the astonished Tomatis to follow them in the other carriage. Tomatis replied that he meant to ride in his own carriage, and begged the colonel to get out. Branicki paid no attention, and told the coachman to drive on. Tornatis forbade him to stir, and the man, of course, obeyed his master. The gallant postcili was therefore obliged to get down, but he bade his hussar give Tomatis a box on the ear, and this order was so promptly and vigorously obeyed that the unfortunate man was on the ground before he had time to recollect that he had a sword. He got up eventually and drove off, but he could eat no supper, no doubt because he had a blow to digest. I was to have supped with him, but after this scene I had really not the face to go. I went home in a melancholy and reflective mood, wondering whether the whole had been concerted; but I concluded that this was impossible, as neither Branicki nor Binetti could have foreseen the impoliteness and cowardice of Tomatis.

In the next chapter the reader will see how tragically the matter ended.

CHAPTER XXII

My Duel with Branicki — My Journey to Leopol and Return to Warsaw — I Receive the Order to Leave — My Departure with the Unknown One

On reflection I concluded that Branicki had not done an ungentlemanly thing in getting into Tomatis's carriage; he had merely behaved with impetuosity, as if he were the Catai's lover. It also appeared to me that, considering the affront he had received from the jealous Italian, the box on the ear was a very moderate form of vengeance. A blow is bad, of course, but not so bad as death; and Branicki might very well have run his sword through the manager's body. Certainly, if Branicki had killed him he would have been stigmatised as an assassin, for though Tomatis had a sword the Polish officer's servants would never have allowed him to draw it, nevertheless I could not help thinking that Tomatis should have tried to take the servant's life, even at the risk of his own. He wanted no more courage for that than in ordering the king's favourite to come out of the carriage. He might have foreseen that the Polish noble would be stung to the quick, and would surely attempt to take speedy vengeance.

The next day the encounter was the subject of all conversations. Tomatis remained indoors for a week, calling for vengeance in vain. The king told him he could do nothing for him, as Branicki maintained he had only given insult for insult. I saw Tomatis, who told me in confidence that he could easily take vengeance, but that it would cost him too dear. He had spent forty thousand ducats on the two ballets, and if he had avenged himself he would have lost it nearly all, as he would be obliged to leave the kingdom. The only consolation he had was that his great friends were kinder to him than ever, and the king himself honoured him with peculiar attention. Madame Binetti was triumphant. When I saw her she condoled with me ironically on the mishap that had befallen my friend. She wearied me; but I could not guess that Branicki had only acted at her instigation, and still less that she had a grudge against me. Indeed, if I had known it, I should only have laughed at her, for I had nothing to dread from her bravo's dagger. I had never seen him nor spoken to him; he could have no opportunity for attacking me. He was never with the king in the morning and never went to the palatin's to supper, being an unpopular character with the Polish nobility. This Branicki was said to have been originally a Cossack, Branecki by name. He became the king's favorite and assumed the name of Branicki, pretending to be of the same family as the illustrious marshal of that name who was still alive; but he, far from recognizing the pretender, ordered his shield to be broken up and buried with him as the last of the race. However that may be, Branicki was the tool of the Russian party, the determined enemy of those who withstood Catherine's design of Russianising the ancient Polish constitution. The king liked him out of habit, and because he had peculiar obligations to him.

The life I lived was really exemplary. I indulged neither in love affairs nor gaming. I worked for the king, hoping to become his secretary. I paid my court to the princess-palatine, who liked my company, and I played tressette with the palatin himself.

On the 4th of March, St. Casimir's Eve, there was a banquet at Court to which I had the honour to be invited. Casimir was the name of the king's eldest brother, who held the office of grand chamberlain. After dinner the king asked me if I intended going to the theatre, where a Polish play was to be given for the first time. Everybody was interested in this novelty, but it was a matter of indifference to me as I did not understand the language, and I told the king as much.

"Never mind," said he, "come in my box."

This was too flattering an invitation to be refused, so I obeyed the royal command and stood behind the king's chair. After the second act a ballet was given, and the dancing of Madame Caracci, a Piedmontese, so pleased his majesty that he went to the unusual pains of clapping her.

I only knew the dancer by sight, for I had never spoken to her. She had some talents. Her principal admirer was Count Poninski, who was always reproaching me when I dined with him for visiting the other dancers to the exclusion of Madame Caracci. I thought of his reproach at the time, and determined to pay her a visit after the ballet to congratulate her on her performance and the king's applause. On my way I passed by Madame Binetti's dressing-room, and seeing the door open I stayed a moment. Count Branicki came up, and I left with a bow and passed on to Madame Caracci's dressing-room. She was astonished to see me, and began with kindly reproaches for my neglect; to which I replied with compliments, and then giving her a kiss I promised to come and see her.

Just as I embraced her who should enter but Branicki, whom I had left a moment before with Madame Binetti. He had clearly followed me in the hopes of picking a quarrel. He was accompanied by Bininski, his lieutenant-colonel. As soon as he appeared, politeness made me stand up and turn to go, but he stopped me.

"It seems to me I have come at a bad time; it looks as if you loved this lady."

"Certainly, my lord; does not your excellency consider her as worthy of love?"

"Quite so; but as it happens I love her too, and I am not the man to bear any rivals."

"As I know that, I shall love her no more."

"Then you give her up?"

"With all my heart; for everyone must yield to such a noble as you are."

"Very good; but I call a man that yields a coward."

"Isn't that rather a strong expression?"

As I uttered these words I looked proudly at him and touched the hilt of my sword. Three or four officers were present and witnessed what passed.

I had hardly gone four paces from the dressing-room when I heard myself called "Venetian coward." In spite of my rage I restrained myself, and turned back saying, coolly and firmly, that perhaps a Venetian coward might kill a brave Pole outside the theatre; and without awaiting a reply I left the building by the chief staircase.

I waited vainly outside the theatre for a quarter of an hour with my sword in my hand, for I was not afraid of losing forty thousand ducats like Tomatis.

At last, half perishing with cold, I called my carriage and drove to the palatin's, where the king was to sup.

The cold and loneliness began to cool my brain, and I congratulated myself on my self-restraint in not drawing my sword in the actress's dressing-room; and I felt glad that Branicki had not followed me down the stairs, for his friend Bininski had a sabre, and I should probably have been assassinated.

Although the Poles are polite enough, there is still a good deal of the old leaven in them. They are still Dacians and Samaritans at dinner, in war, and in friendship, as they call it, but which is often a burden hardly to be borne. They can never understand that a man may be sufficient company for himself, and that it is not right to descend on him in a troop and ask him to give them dinner.

I made up my mind that Madame Binetti had excited Branicki to follow me, and possibly to treat me as he had treated Tomatis. I had not received a blow certainly, but I had been called a coward. I had no choice but to demand satisfaction, but I also determined to be studiously moderate throughout. In this frame of mind I got down at the palatin's, resolved to tell the whole story to the king, leaving to his majesty the task of compelling his favourite to give me satisfaction.

As soon as the palatin saw me, he reproached me in a friendly manner for keeping him waiting, and we sat down to tressette. I was his partner, and committed several blunders. When it came to losing a second game he said, —

"Where is your head to-night?"

"My lord, it is four leagues away."

"A respectable man ought to have his head in the game, and not at a distance of four leagues."

With these words the prince threw down his cards and began to walk up and down the room. I was rather startled, but I got up and stood by the fire, waiting for the king. But after I had waited thus for half an hour a chamberlain came from the palace, and announced that his majesty could not do himself the honour of supping with my lord that night.

This was a blow for me, but I concealed my disappointment. Supper was served, and I sat down as usual at the left hand of the palatin, who was annoyed with me, and chewed it. We were eighteen at table, and for once I had no appetite. About the middle of the supper Prince Gaspard Lubomirski came in, and chanced to sit down opposite me. As soon as he saw me he condoled with me in a loud voice for what had happened.

"I am sorry for you," said he, "but Branicki was drunk, and you really shouldn't count what he said as an insult."

"What has happened?" became at once the general question. I held my tongue, and when they asked Lubomirski he replied that as I kept silence it was his duty to do the same.

Thereupon the palatin, speaking in his friendliest manner, said to me, —

"What has taken place between you and Branicki?"

"I will tell you the whole story, my lord, in private after supper."

The conversation became indifferent, and after the meal was over the palatin took up his stand by the small door by which he was accustomed to leave the room, and there I told him the whole story. He sighed, condoled with me, and added, —

"You had good reasons for being absent-minded at cards."

"May I presume to ask your excellency's advice?"

"I never give advice in these affairs, in which you must do every-thing or nothing."

The palatin shook me by the hand, and I went home and slept for six hours. As soon as I awoke I sat up in bed, and my first thought was everything or nothing. I soon rejected the latter alternative, and I saw that I must demand a duel to the death. If Branicki refused to fight I should be compelled to kill him, even if I were to lose my head for it.

Such was my determination; to write to him proposing a duel at four leagues from Warsaw, this being the limit of the starostia, in which duelling was forbidden on pain of death. I Wrote as follows, for I have kept the rough draft of the letter to this day:

"WARSAW,

“March 5th, 1766. 5 A.M.

“My Lord, — Yesterday evening your excellency insulted me with a light heart, without my having given you any cause or reason for doing so. This seems to indicate that you hate me, and would gladly efface me from the land of the living. I both can and will oblige you in this matter. Be kind enough, therefore, to drive me in your carriage to a place where my death will not subject your lordship to the vengeance of the law, in case you obtain the victory, and where I shall enjoy the same advantage if God give me grace to kill your lordship. I should not make this proposal unless I believe your lordship to be of a noble disposition.

“I have the honour to be, etc.”

I sent this letter an hour before day-break to Branicki’s lodging in the palace. My messenger had orders to give the letter into the count’s own hands, to wait for him to rise, and also for an answer.

In half an hour I received the following answer:

“Sir, — I accept your proposal, and shall be glad if you will have the kindness to inform me when I shall have the honour of seeing you.

“I remain, sir, etc.”

I answered this immediately, informing him I would call on him the next day, at six o’clock in the morning.

Shortly after, I received a second letter, in which he said that I might choose the arms and place, but that our differences must be settled in the course of the day.

I sent him the measure of my sword, which was thirty-two inches long, telling him he might choose any place beyond the ban. In reply, I had the following:

“Sir, — You will greatly oblige me by coming now. I have sent my carriage.

“I have the honour to be, etc.”

I replied that I had business all the day, and that as I had made up my mind not to call upon him, except for the purpose of fighting, I begged him not to be offended if I took the liberty of sending back his carriage.

An hour later Branicki called in person, leaving his suite at the door. He came into the room, requested some gentlemen who were talking with me to leave us alone, locked the door after them, and then sat down on my bed. I did not understand what all this meant so I took up my pistols.

"Don't be afraid," said he, "I am not come to assassinate you, but merely to say that I accept your proposal, on condition only that the duel shall take place to-day. If not, never!"

"It is out of the question. I have letters to write, and some business to do for the king."

"That will do afterwards. In all probability you will not fall, and if you do I am sure the king will forgive you. Besides, a dead man need fear no reproaches."

"I want to make my will."

"Come, come, you needn't be afraid of dying; it will be time enough for you to make your will in fifty years."

"But why should your excellency not wait till tomorrow?"

"I don't want to be caught."

"You have nothing of the kind to fear from me."

"I daresay, but unless we make haste the king will have us both arrested."

"How can he, unless you have told him about our quarrel?"

"Ah, you don't understand! Well, I am quite willing to give you satisfaction, but it must be to-day or never."

"Very good. This duel is too dear to my heart for me to leave you any pretext for avoiding it. Call for me after dinner, for I shall want all my strength."

"Certainly. For my part I like a good supper after, better than a good dinner before."

"Everyone to his taste."

"True. By the way, why did you send me the length of your sword? I intend to fight with pistols, for I never use swords with unknown persons."

"What do you mean? I beg of you to refrain from insulting me in my own house. I do not intend to fight with pistols, and you cannot compel me to do so, for I have your letter giving me the choice of weapons."

"Strictly speaking, no doubt you are in the right; but I am sure you are too polite not to give way, when I assure you that you will lay me under a great obligation by doing so. Very often the first shot is a miss, and if that is the case with both of us, I promise to fight with swords as long as you like. Will you oblige me in the matter?"

"Yes, for I like your way of asking, though, in my opinion, a pistol duel is a barbarous affair. I accept, but on the following conditions: You must bring two pistols, charge them in my presence, and give me the choice. If the first shot is a miss, we will fight with swords till the first blood or to the death, whichever you prefer. Call for me at three o'clock, and choose some place where we shall be secure from the law."

"Very good. You are a good fellow, allow me to embrace you. Give me your word of honour not to say a word about it to anyone, for if you did we should be arrested immediately."

"You need not be afraid of my talking; the project is too dear to me."

"Good. Farewell till three o'clock."

As soon as the brave braggart had left me, I placed the papers I was doing for the king apart, and went to Campioni, in whom I had great confidence.

"Take this packet to the king," I said, "if I happen to be killed. You may guess, perhaps, what is going to happen, but do not say a word to anyone, or you will have me for your bitterest enemy, as it would mean loss of honour to me."

"I understand. You may reckon on my discretion, and I hope the affair may be ended honourably and prosperously for you. But take a piece of friendly advice — don't spare your opponent, were it the king himself, for it might cost you your life. I know that by experience."

"I will not forget. Farewell."

We kissed each other, and I ordered an excellent dinner, for I had no mind to be sent to Pluto fasting. Campioni came in to dinner at one o'clock, and at dessert I had a visit from two young counts, with their tutor, Bertrand, a kindly Swiss. They were witnesses to my cheerfulness and the excellent appetite with which I ate. At half-past two I dismissed my company, and stood at the window to be ready to go down directly Branicki's carriage appeared. He drove up in a travelling carriage and six; two grooms, leading saddle-horses, went in front, followed by his two aide-de-camps and two hussars. Behind his carriage stood four servants. I hastened to descend, and found my enemy was accompanied by a lieutenant-general and an armed footman. The door was opened, the general gave me his place, and I ordered my servants not to follow me but to await my orders at the house.

"You might want them," said Branicki; "they had better come along."

"If I had as many as you, I would certainly agree to your proposition; but as it is I shall do still better without any at all. If need be, your excellency will see that I am tended by your own servants."

He gave me his hand, and assured me they should wait on me before himself.

I sat down, and we went off.

It would have been absurd if I had asked where we were going, so I held my tongue, for at such moments a man should take heed to his words. Branicki was silent, and I thought the best thing I could do would be to engage him in a trivial conversation.

"Does your excellency intend spending the spring at Warsaw?"

"I had thought of doing so, but you may possibly send me to pass the spring somewhere else."

"Oh, I hope not!"

"Have you seen any military service?"

"Yes; but may I ask why your excellency asks me the question, for— "

"I had no particular reason; it was only for the sake of saying something."

We had driven about half an hour when the carriage stopped at the door of a large garden. We got down and, following the postoli, reached a green arbour which, by the way, was not at all green on that 5th of March. In it was a stone table on which the footman placed two pistols, a foot and half long, with a powder flask and scales. He weighed the powder, loaded them equally, and laid them down crosswise on the table.

This done, Branicki said boldly,

“Choose your weapon, sir.”

At this the general called out,

“Is this a duel, sir?”

“Yes.”

“You cannot fight here; you are within the ban.”

“No matter.”

“It does matter; and I, at all events, refuse to be a witness. I am on guard at the castle, and you have taken me by surprise.”

“Be quiet; I will answer for everything. I owe this gentleman satisfaction, and I mean to give it him here.”

“M. Casanova,” said the general, “you cannot fight here.”

“Then why have I been brought here? I shall defend myself wherever I am attacked.”

“Lay the whole matter before the king, and you shall have my voice in your favour.”

“I am quite willing to do so, general, if his excellency will say that he regrets what passed between us last night.”

Branicki looked fiercely at me, and said wrathfully that he had come to fight and not to parley.

“General,” said I, “you can bear witness that I have done all in my power to avoid this duel.”

The general went away with his head between his hands, and throwing off my cloak I took the first pistol that came to my hand. Branicki took the other, and said that he would guarantee upon his honour that my weapon was a good one.

“I am going to try its goodness on your head,” I answered.

He turned pale at this, threw his sword to one of his servants, and bared his throat, and I was obliged, to my sorrow, to follow his example, for my sword was the only weapon I had, with the exception of the pistol. I bared my chest also, and stepped back five or six paces, and he did the same.

As soon as we had taken up our positions I took off my hat with my left hand, and begged him to fire first.

Instead of doing so immediately he lost two or three seconds in sighting, aiming, and covering his head by raising the weapon before it. I was not in a position to let him kill me at his ease, so I suddenly aimed and fired on him just as he fired on me. That I did so is evident, as all the witnesses were unanimous in saying that they only heard one report. I felt I was wounded in my left hand, and so put it into my pocket, and I ran towards my enemy who had fallen. All of a sudden, as I knelt beside him, three bare swords were flourished over my head, and three noble assassins prepared to cut me down beside their master. Fortunately, Branicki had not lost consciousness or the power of speaking, and he cried out in a voice of thunder, —

“Scoundrels! have some respect for a man of honour.”

This seemed to petrify them. I put my right hand under the pistoli’s armpit, while the general helped him on the other side, and thus we took him to the inn, which happened to be near at hand.

Branicki stooped as he walked, and gazed at me curiously, apparently wondering where all the blood on my clothes came from.

When we got to the inn, Branicki laid himself down in an arm-chair. We unbuttoned his clothes and lifted up his shirt, and he could see himself that he was dangerously wounded. My ball had entered his body by the seventh rib on the right hand, and had gone out by the second false rib on the left. The two wounds were ten inches apart, and the case was of an alarming nature, as the intestines must have been pierced. Branicki spoke to me in a weak voice, —

“You have killed me, so make haste away, as you are in danger of the gibbet. The duel was fought in the ban, and I am a high court officer, and a Knight of the White Eagle. So lose no time, and if you have not enough money take my purse.”

I picked up the purse which had fallen out, and put it back in his pocket, thanking him, and saying it would be useless to me, for if I were guilty I was content to lose my head. “I hope,” I added, “that your wound will not be mortal, and I am deeply grieved at your obliging me to fight.”

With these words I kissed him on his brow and left the inn, seeing neither horses nor carriage, nor servant. They had all gone off for doctor, surgeon, priest, and the friends and relatives of the wounded man.

I was alone and without any weapon, in the midst of a snow-covered country, my hand was wounded, and I had not the slightest idea which was the way to Warsaw.

I took the road which seemed most likely, and after I had gone some distance I met a peasant with an empty sleigh.

“Warszawa?” I cried, shewing him a ducat.

He understood me, and lifted a coarse mat, with which he covered me when I got into the sleigh, and then set off at a gallop.

All at once Biniski, Branicki’s bosom-friend, came galloping furiously along the road with his bare sword in his hand. He was evidently running after me. Happily he did not glance at the wretched sleigh in which I was, or else he would undoubtedly have murdered me. I got at last to Warsaw, and went to the house of Prince Adam Czartoryski to beg him to shelter me, but there was nobody there. Without delay I determined to seek refuge in the Convent of the Recollets, which was handy.

I rang at the door of the monastery, and the porter seeing me covered with blood hastened to shut the door, guessing the object of my visit. But I did not give him the time to do so, but honouring him with a hearty kick forced my way in. His cries attracted a troop of frightened monks. I demanded sanctuary, and threatened them with vengeance if they refused to grant it. One of their number spoke to me, and I was taken to a little den which looked more like a dungeon than anything else. I offered no resistance, feeling sure that they would change their tune before very long. I asked them to send for my servants, and when they came I sent for a doctor and Campioni. Before the surgeon could come the Palatin of Polduchia was announced. I had never had the honour of speaking to him, but after hearing the history of my duel he was so kind as to give me all the particulars of a duel he had fought in his youthful days. Soon after came the Palatin of Kalisch, Prince Jablenowski. Prince Sanguska, and the Palatin of Wilna, who all joined in a chorus of abuse of the monks who had lodged me so scurvily. The poor religious excused themselves by saying that I had ill-treated their porter, which made my noble friends laugh; but I did not laugh, for my wound was very painful. However I was immediately moved into two of their best guest-rooms.

The ball had pierced my hand by the metacarpus under the index finger, and had broken the first phalanges. Its force had been arrested by a metal button on my waistcoat, and it had only inflicted a slight wound on my stomach close to the navel. However, there it was and it had to be extracted, for it pained me extremely. An empiric named Gendron, the first surgeon my servants had found, made an opening on the opposite side of my hand which doubled the wound. While he was performing this painful operation I told the story of the duel to the company, concealing the anguish I was enduring. What a power vanity exercises on the moral and physical forces! If I had been alone I should probably have fainted.

As soon as the empiric Gendron was gone, the palatin's surgeon came in and took charge of the case, calling Gendron a low fellow. At the same time Prince Lubomirski, the husband of the palatin's daughter, arrived, and gave us all a surprise by recounting the strange occurrences which had happened after the duel. Bininski came to where Branicki was lying, and seeing his wound rode off furiously on horseback, swearing to strike me dead wherever he found me. He fancied I would be with Tomatis, and went to his house. He found Tomatis with his mistress, Prince Lubomirski, and Count Moszczinski, but no Casanova was visible. He asked where I was, and on Tomatis replying that he did not know he discharged a pistol at his head. At this dastardly action Count Moszczincki seized him and tried to throw him out of the window, but the madman got loose with three cuts of his sabre, one of which slashed the count on the face and knocked out three of his teeth.

"After this exploit," Prince Lubomirski continued, "he seized me by the throat and held a pistol to my head, threatening to blow out my brains if I did not take him in safety to the court where his horse was, so that he might get away from the house without any attack being made on him by

Tomatis's servants; and I did so immediately. Moszczinski is in the doctor's hands, and will be laid up for some time.

"As soon as it was reported that Branicki was killed, his Uhlans began to ride about the town swearing to avenge their colonel, and to slaughter you. It is very fortunate that you took refuge here.

"The chief marshal has had the monastery surrounded by two hundred dragoons, ostensibly to prevent your escape, but in reality to defend you from Branicki's soldiers.

"The doctors say that the postoli is in great danger if the ball has wounded the intestines, but if not they answer for his recovery. His fate will be known tomorrow. He now lies at the lord chamberlain's, not daring to have himself carried to his apartments at the palace. The king has been to see him, and the general who was present told his majesty that the only thing that saved your life was your threat to aim at Branicki's head. This frightened him, and to keep your ball from his head he stood in such an awkward position that he missed your vital parts. Otherwise he would undoubtedly have shot you through the heart, for he can split a bullet into two halves by firing against the blade of a knife. It was also a lucky thing for you that you escaped Bininski, who never thought of looking for you in the wretched sleigh."

"My lord, the most fortunate thing for me is that I did not kill my man outright. Otherwise I should have been cut to pieces just as I went to his help by three of his servants, who stood over me with drawn swords. However, the postoli ordered them to leave me alone.

"I am sorry for what has happened to your highness and Count Moszczinski; and if Tomatis was not killed by the madman it is only because the pistol was only charged with powder."

"That's what I think, for no one heard the bullet; but it was a mere chance."

"Quite so."

Just then an officer of the palatin's came to me with a note from his master, which ran as follows:

"Read what the king says to me, and sleep well."

The king's note was thus conceived:

“Branicki, my dear uncle, is dangerous wounded. My surgeons are doing all they can for him, but I have not forgotten Casanova. You may assure him that he is pardoned, even if Branicki should die.”

I kissed the letter gratefully, and shewed it to my visitors, who lauded this generous man truly worthy of being a king.

After this pleasant news I felt in need of rest, and my lords left me. As soon as they were gone, Campioni, who had come in before and had stood in the background, came up to me and gave me back the packet of papers, and with tears of joy congratulated me on the happy issue of the duel.

Next day I had shoals of visitors, and many of the chiefs of the party opposed to Branicki sent me purses full of gold. The persons who brought the money on behalf of such a lord or lady, said that being a foreigner I might be in need of money, and that was their excuse for the liberty they had taken. I thanked and refused them all, and sent back at least four thousand ducats, and was very proud of having done so. Campioni thought it was absurd, and he was right, for I repented afterwards of what I had done. The only present I accepted was a dinner for four persons, which Prince Adam Czartoryski sent me in every day, though the doctor would not let me enjoy it, he being a great believer in diet.

The wound in my stomach was progressing favourably, but on the fourth day the surgeons said my hand was becoming gangrened, and they agreed that the only remedy was amputation. I saw this announced in the Court Gazette the next morning, but as I had other views on the matter I laughed heartily at the paragraph. The sheet was printed at night, after the king had placed his initials to the copy. In the morning several persons came to condole with me, but I received their sympathy with great irreverence. I merely laughed at Count Clary, who said I would surely submit to the operation; and just as he uttered the words the three surgeons came in together.

“Well, gentlemen,” said I, “you have mustered in great strength; why is this?”

My ordinary surgeon replied that he wished to have the opinion of the other two before proceeding to amputation, and they would require to look at the wound.

The dressing was lifted and gangrene was declared to be undoubtedly present, and execution was ordered that evening. The butchers gave me the news with radiant faces, and assured me I need not be afraid as the operation would certainly prove efficacious.

“Gentlemen,” I replied, “you seem to have a great many solid scientific reasons for cutting off my hand; but one thing you have not got, and that is my consent. My hand is my own, and I am going to keep it.”

“Sir, it is certainly gangrened; by to-morrow the arm will begin to mortify, and then you will have to lose your arm.”

“Very good; if that prove so you shall cut off my arm, but I happen to know something of gangrene, and there is none about me.”

“You cannot know as much about it as we do.”

“Possibly; but as far as I can make out, you know nothing at all.”

“That’s rather a strong expression.”

“I don’t care whether it be strong or weak; you can go now.”

In a couple of hours everyone whom the surgeons had told of my obstinacy came pestering me. Even the prince-palatin wrote to me that the king was extremely surprised at my lack of courage. This stung me to the quick, and I wrote the king a long letter, half in earnest and half in jest, in which I laughed at the ignorance of the surgeons, and at the simplicity of those who took whatever they said for gospel truth. I added that as an arm without a hand would be quite as useless as no arm at all, I meant to wait till it was necessary to cut off the arm.

My letter was read at Court, and people wondered how a man with gangrene could write a long letter of four pages. Lubomirski told me kindly that I was mistaken in laughing at my friends, for the three best surgeons in Warsaw could not be mistaken in such a simple case.

“My lord, they are not deceived themselves, but they want to deceive me.”

“Why should they?”

“To make themselves agreeable to Branicki, who is in a dangerous state, and might possibly get better if he heard that my hand had been taken off.”

“Really that seems an incredible idea to me!”

“What will your highness say on the day when I am proved to be right?”

“I shall say you are deserving of the highest praise, but the day must first come.”

“We shall see this evening, and I give you my word that if any gangrene has attacked the arm, I will have it cut off to-morrow morning.”

Four surgeons came to see me. My arm was pronounced to be highly aedematous, and of a livid colour up to the elbow; but when the lint was taken off the wound I could see for myself that it was progressing admirably. However, I concealed my delight. Prince Augustus Sulkowski and the Abbe Gouvel were present; the latter being attached to the palatin’s court. The judgment of the surgeons was that the arm was gangrened, and must be amputated by the next morning at latest.

I was tired of arguing with these rascals, so I told them to bring their instruments, and that I would submit to the operation. At this they went way in high glee, to tell the news at the Court, to Branicki, to the palatin, and so forth. I merely gave my servants orders to send them away when they came.

I can dwell no more on this matter, though it is interesting enough to me. However, the reader will no doubt be obliged to me by my simply saying that a French surgeon in Prince Sulkowski’s household took charge of the case in defiance of professional etiquette, and cured me perfectly, so I have my hand and my arm to this day.

On Easter Day I went to mass with my arm in a sling. My cure had only lasted three weeks, but I was not able to put the hand to any active employment for eighteen months afterwards. Everyone was obliged to congratulate me on having held out against the amputation, and the general consent declared the surgeons grossly ignorant, while I was satisfied with thinking them very great knaves.

I must here set down an incident which happened three days after the duel.

I was told that a Jesuit father from the bishop of the diocese wanted to speak to me in private, and I had him shewn in, and asked him what he wanted.

“I have come from my lord-bishop,” said he, “to absolve you from the ecclesiastical censure, which you have incurred by duelling.”

“I am always delighted to receive absolution, father, but only after I have confessed my guilt. In the present case I have nothing to confess; I was attacked, and I defended myself. Pray thank my lord for his kindness. If you like to absolve me without confession, I shall be much obliged.”

“If you do not confess, I cannot give you absolution, but you can do this: ask me to absolve you, supposing you have fought a duel.”

“Certainly; I shall be glad if you will absolve me, supposing I have fought a duel.”

The delightful Jesuit gave me absolution in similar terms. He was like his brethren — never at a loss when a loophole of any kind is required.

Three days before I left the monastery, that is on Holy Thursday, the marshal withdrew my guard. After I had been to mass on Easter Day, I went to Court, and as I kissed the king’s hand, he asked me (as had been arranged) why I wore my arm in a sling. I said I had been suffering from a rheum, and he replied, with a meaning smile, —

“Take care not to catch another.”

After my visit to the king, I called on Branicki, who had made daily enquiries after my health, and had sent me back my sword, He was condemned to stay in bed for six weeks longer at least, for the wad of my pistol had got into the wound, and in extracting it the opening had to be enlarged, which retarded his recovery. The king had just appointed him chief huntsman, not so exalted an office as chamberlain, but a more lucrative one. It was said he had got the place because he was such a good shot; but if that were the reason I had a better claim to it, for I had proved the better shot — for one day at all events.

I entered an enormous ante-room in which stood officers, footmen, pages, and lacqueys, all gazing at me with the greatest astonishment. I asked if my lord was to be seen, and begged the door-keeper to send in my name. He did not answer, but sighed, and went into his master’s room. Directly after, he came out and begged me, with a profound bow, to step in.

Branicki, who was dressed in a magnificent gown and supported by pillows and cushions, greeted me by taking off his nightcap. He was as pale as death.

“I have come here, my lord,” I began, “to offer you my service, and to assure you how I regret that I did not pass over a few trifling words of yours.”

“You have no reason to reproach yourself, M. Casanova.”

“Your excellency is very kind. I am also come to say that by fighting with me you have done me an honour which completely swallows up all offence, and I trust that you will give me your protection for the future.”

“I confess I insulted you, but you will allow that I have paid for it. As to my friends, I openly say that they are my enemies unless they treat you with respect. Bininski has been cashiered, and his nobility taken from him; he is well served. As to my protection you have no need of it, the king esteems you highly, like myself, and all men of honour. Sit down; we will be friends. A cup of chocolate for this gentleman. You seem to have got over your wound completely.”

“Quite so, my lord, except as to the use of my fingers, and that will take some time.”

“You were quite right to withstand those rascally surgeons, and you had good reason for your opinion that the fools thought to please me by rendering you one-handed. They judged my heart by their own. I congratulate you on the preservation of your hand, but I have not been able to make out how my ball could have wounded you in the hand after striking your stomach.”

Just then the chocolate was brought, and the chamberlain came in and looked at me with a smile. In five minutes the room was full of lords and ladies who had heard I was with Branicki, and wanted to know how we were getting on. I could see that they did not expect to find us on such good terms, and were agreeably surprised. Branicki asked the question which had been interrupted by the chocolate and the visitors over again.

“Your excellency will allow me to assume the position I was in as I received your fire.”

“Pray do so.”

I rose and placed myself in the position, and he said he understood how it was.

A lady said, —

“You should have put your hand behind your body.”

“Excuse me, madam, but I thought it better to put my body behind my hand.”

This sally made Branicki laugh, but his sister said to me, —

“You wanted to kill my brother, for you aimed at his head.”

“God forbid, madam! my interest lay in keeping him alive to defend me from his friends.”

“But you said you were going to fire at his head.”

“That’s a mere figure of speech, just as one says, ‘I’ll blow your brains out.’ The skilled duellist, however, always aims at the middle of the body; the head does not offer a large enough surface.”

“Yes,” said Branicki, “your tactics were superior to mine, and I am obliged to you for the lesson you gave me.”

“Your excellency gave me a lesson in heroism of far greater value.”

“You must have had a great deal of practice with the pistol,” continued his sister.

“Not at all, madam, I regard the weapon with detestation. This unlucky shot was my first; but I have always known a straight line, and my hand has always been steady.”

“That’s all one wants,” said Branicki. “I have those advantages myself, and I am only too well pleased that I did not aim so well as usual.”

“Your ball broke my first phalanges. Here it is you see, flattened by my bone. Allow me to return it to you.”

“I am sorry to say I can’t return yours, which I suppose remains on the field of battle.”

“You seem to be getting better, thank God!”

"The wound is healing painfully. If I had imitated you I should no longer be in the land of the living; I am told you made an excellent dinner?"

"Yes, my lord, I was afraid I might never have another chance of dining again."

"If I had dined, your ball would have pierced my intestines; but being empty it yielded to the bullet, and let it pass by harmlessly."

I heard afterwards that on the day of the duel Branicki had gone to confession and mass, and had communicated. The priest could not refuse him absolution, if he said that honour obliged him to fight; for this was in accordance with the ancient laws of chivalry. As for me I only addressed these words to God:

"Lord, if my enemy kill me, I shall be damned; deign, therefore, to preserve me from death. Amen."

After a long and pleasant conversation I took leave of the hero to visit the high constable, Count Bielinski, brother of Countess Salmor. He was a very old man, but the sovereign administrator of justice in Poland. I had never spoken to him, but he had defended me from Branicki's Uhlans, and had made out my pardon, so I felt bound to go and thank him.

I sent in my name, and the worthy old man greeted me with:

"What can I do for you?"

"I have come to kiss the hand of the kindly man that signed my pardon, and to promise your excellency to be more discreet in future."

"I advise you to be more discreet indeed. As for your pardon, thank the king; for if he had not requested me especially to grant it you, I should have had you beheaded."

"In spite of the extenuating circumstances, my lord?"

"What circumstances? Did you or did you not fight a duel."

"That is not a proper way of putting it; I was obliged to defend myself. You might have charged me with fighting a duel if Branicki had taken me outside the ban, as I requested, but as it was he took me where he willed and made me fight. Under these circumstances I am sure your excellency would have spared my head."

"I really can't say. The king requested that you should be pardoned, and that shews he believes you to be deserving of pardon; I congratulate you on his good will. I shall be pleased if you will dine with me tomorrow."

"My lord, I am delighted to accept your invitation."

The illustrious old constable was a man of great intelligence. He had been a bosom-friend of the celebrated Poniatowski, the king's father. We had a good deal of conversation together at dinner the next day.

"What a comfort it would have been to your excellency's friend," said I, "if he could have lived to see his son crowned King of Poland."

"He would never have consented."

The vehemence with which he pronounced these words gave me a deep insight into his feelings. He was of the Saxon party. The same day, that is on Easter Day, I dined at the palatin's.

"Political reasons," said he, "prevented me from visiting you at the monastery; but you must not think I had forgotten you, for you were constantly in my thoughts. I am going to lodge you here, for my wife is very fond of your society; but the rooms will not be ready for another six weeks."

"I shall take the opportunity, my lord, of paying a visit to the Palatin of Kiowia, who has honoured me with an invitation to come and see him."

"Who gave you the invitation?"

"Count Bruhl, who is at Dresden; his wife is daughter of the palatin."

"This journey is an excellent idea, for this duel of yours has made you innumerable enemies, and I only hope you will have to fight no more duels. I give you fair warning; be on your guard, and never go on foot, especially at night."

I spent a fortnight in going out to dinner and supper every day. I had become the fashion, and wherever I went I had to tell the duel story over again. I was rather tired of it myself, but the wish to please and my own self-love were too strong to be resisted. The king was nearly always present, but feigned not to hear me. However, he once asked me if I had been insulted by a patrician in Venice, whether I should have called him out immediately.

"No, sire, for his patrician pride would have prevented his complying, and I should have had my pains for my trouble."

"Then what would you have done?"

"Sire, I should have contained myself, though if a noble Venetian were to insult me in a foreign country he would have to give me satisfaction."

I called on Prince Moszczinski, and Madame Binetti happened to be there; the moment she saw me she made her escape.

"What has she against me?" I asked the count.

"She is afraid of you, because she was the cause of the duel, and now Branicki who was her lover will have nothing more to say to her. She hoped he would serve you as he served Tomatis, and instead of that you almost killed her bravo. She lays the fault on him for having accepted your challenge, but he has resolved to have done with her."

This Count Moszczinski was both good-hearted and quick-witted, and so, generous that he ruined himself by making presents. His wounds were beginning to heal, but though I was the indirect cause of his mishap, far from bearing malice against me he had become my friend.

The person whom I should have expected to be most grateful to me for the duel was Tomatis, but on the contrary he hated the sight of me and hardly concealed his feelings. I was the living reproach of his cowardice; my wounded hand seemed to shew him that he had loved his money more than his honour. I am sure he would have preferred Branicki to have killed me, for then he would have become an object of general execration, and Tomatis would have been received with less contempt in the great houses he still frequented.

I resolved to pay a visit to the discontented party who had only recognized the new king on compulsion, and some of whom had not recognized him at all; so I set out with my true friend Campioni and one servant.

Prince Charles of Courland had started for Venice, where I had given him letters for my illustrious friends who would make his visit a pleasant one. The English ambassador who had given me an introduction to Prince Adam had just arrived at Warsaw. I dined with him at the prince's house, and the king signified his wish to be of the party. I heard a good deal of conversation about Madame de Geoffrin, an old sweetheart of the king's whom he had just summoned to Warsaw. The Polish monarch, of whom I cannot speak in too favourable terms, was yet weak enough to listen to the slanderous reports against me, and refused to make my fortune. I had the pleasure of convincing him that he was mistaken, but I will speak of this later on.

I arrived at Leopol the sixth day after I had left Warsaw, having stopped a couple of days at Prince Zamoiski's; he had forty thousand ducats a-year, but also the falling sickness.

"I would give all my goods," said he, "to be cured."

I pitied his young wife. She was very fond of him, and yet had to deny him, for his disease always came on him in moments of amorous excitement. She had the bitter task of constantly refusing him, and even of running away if he pressed her hard. This great nobleman, who died soon after, lodged me in a splendid room utterly devoid of furniture. This is the Polish custom; one is supposed to bring one's furniture with one.

At Leopol I put up, at an hotel, but I soon had to move from thence to take up my abode with the famous Kaminska, the deadly foe of Branicki, the king, and all that party. She was very rich, but she has since been ruined by conspiracies. She entertained me sumptuously for a week, but the visit was agreeable to neither side, as she could only speak Polish and German. From Leopol I proceeded to a small town, the name of which I forget (the Polish names are very crabbed) to take an introduction from Prince Lubomirski to Joseph Rzewuski, a little old man who wore a long beard as a sign of mourning for the innovations that were being introduced into his country. He was rich, learned, superstitiously religious, and polite exceedingly. I stayed with him for three days. He was the commander of a stronghold containing a garrison of five hundred men.

On the first day, as I was in his room with some other officers, about eleven o'clock in the morning, another officer came in, whispered to Rzewuski, and then came up to me and whispered in my ear, "Venice and St. Mark."

“St. Mark,” I answered aloud, “is the patron saint and protector of Venice,” and everybody began to laugh.

It dawned upon me that “Venice and St. Mark” was the watchword, and I began to apologize profusely, and the word was changed.

The old commander spoke to me with great politeness. He never went to Court, but he had resolved on going to the Diet to oppose the Russian party with all his might. The poor man, a Pole of the true old leaven, was one of the four whom Repnin arrested and sent to Siberia.

After taking leave of this brave patriot, I went to Christianpol, where lived the famous palatin Potocki, who had been one of the lovers of the empress Anna Ivanovna. He had founded the town in which he lived and called it after his own name. This nobleman, still a fine man, kept a splendid court. He honoured Count Bruhl by keeping me at his house for a fortnight, and sending me out every day with his doctor, the famous Styrneus, the sworn foe of Van Swieten, a still more famous physician. Although Styrneus was undoubtedly a learned man, I thought him somewhat extravagant and empirical. His system was that of Asclepiades, considered as exploded since the time of the great Boerhaave; nevertheless, he effected wonderful cures.

In the evenings I was always with the palatin and his court. Play was not heavy, and I always won, which was fortunate and indeed necessary for me. After an extremely agreeable visit to the palatin I returned to Leopol, where I amused myself for a week with a pretty girl who afterwards so captivated Count Potocki, starost of Sniatin, that he married her. This is purity of blood with a vengeance in your noble families!

Leaving Leopol I went to Palavia, a splendid palace on the Vistula, eighteen leagues distant from Warsaw. It belonged to the prince palatin, who had built it himself.

Howsoever magnificent an abode may be, a lonely man will weary of it unless he has the solace of books or of some great idea. I had neither, and boredom soon made itself felt.

A pretty peasant girl came into my room, and finding her to my taste I tried to make her understand me without the use of speech, but she resisted and shouted so loudly that the door-keeper came up, and asked me, coolly, —

“If you like the girl, why don’t you go the proper way to work?”

“What way is that?”

“Speak to her father, who is at hand, and arrange the matter amicably.”

“I don’t know Polish. Will you carry the thing through?”

“Certainly. I suppose you will give fifty florins?”

“You are laughing at me. I will give a hundred willingly, provided she is a maid and is as submissive as a lamb.”

No doubt the arrangement was made without difficulty, for our hymen took place the same evening, but no sooner was the operation completed than the poor lamb fled away in hot haste, which made me suspect that her father had used rather forcible persuasion with her. I would not have allowed this had I been aware of it.

The next morning several girls were offered to me, but the faces of all of them were covered.

“Where is the girl?” said I. “I want to see her face.”

“Never mind about the face, if the rest is all right.”

“The face is the essential part for me,” I replied, “and the rest I look upon as an accessory.”

He did not understand this. However, they were uncovered, but none of their faces excited my desires.

As a rule, the Polish women are ugly; a beauty is a miracle, and a pretty woman a rare exception. At the end of a week of feasting and weariness, I returned to Warsaw.

In this manner I saw Podolia and Volkynia, which were rebaptized a few years later by the names of Galicia and Lodomeria, for they are now part of the Austrian Empire. It is said, however, that they are more prosperous than they ever were before.

At Warsaw I found Madame Geoffrin the object of universal admiration; and everybody was remarking with what simplicity she was dressed. As for myself, I was received not coldly, but positively rudely. People said to my face, —

“We did not expect to see you here again. Why did you come back?”

"To pay my debts."

This behaviour astonished and disgusted me. The prince-palatin even seemed quite changed towards me. I was still invited to dinner, but no one spoke to me. However, Prince Adam's sister asked me very kindly to come and sup with her, and I accepted the invitation with delight. I found myself seated opposite the king, who did not speak one word to me the whole time. He had never behaved to me thus before.

The next day I dined with the Countess Oginski, and in the course of dinner the countess asked where the king had supper the night before; nobody seemed to know, and I did not answer. Just as we were rising, General Roniker came in, and the question was repeated.

"At Princess Strasnikowa's," said the general, "and M. Casanova was there."

"Then why did you not answer my question?" said the countess to me.

"Because I am very sorry to have been there. His majesty neither spoke to me nor looked at me. I see I am in disgrace, but for the life of me I know not why."

On leaving the house I went to call on Prince Augustus Sulkowski, who welcomed me as of old, but told me that I had made a mistake in returning to Warsaw as public opinion was against me.

"What have I done?"

"Nothing; but the Poles are always inconstant and changeable. 'Sarmatarum virtus veluti extra ipsos'. This inconstancy will cost us dear sooner or later. Your fortune was made, but you missed the turn of the tide, and I advise you to go."

"I will certainly do so, but it seems to me rather hard."

When I got home my servant gave me a letter which some unknown person had left at my door. I opened it and found it to be anonymous, but I could see it came from a well-wisher. The writer said that the slanderers had got the ears of the king, and that I was no longer a persona grata at Court, as he had been assured that the Parisians had burnt me in effigy for my absconding with the lottery money, and that I had been a strolling player in Italy and little better than a vagabond.

Such calumnies are easy to utter but hard to refute in a foreign country. At all Courts hatred, born of envy, is ever at work. I might have despised the slanders and left the country, but I had contracted debts and had not sufficient money to pay them and my expenses to Portugal, where I thought I might do something.

I no longer saw any company, with the exception of Campioni, who seemed more distressed than myself. I wrote to Venice and everywhere else, where there was a chance of my getting funds; but one day the general, who had been present at the duel, called on me, and told me (though he seemed ashamed of his task) that the king requested me to leave the ban in the course of a week.

Such a piece of insolence made my blood boil, and I informed the general that he might tell the king that I did not feel inclined to obey such an unjust order, and that if I left I would let all the world know that I had been compelled to do so by brute force.

"I cannot take such a message as that," said the general, kindly. "I shall simply tell the king that I have executed his orders, and no more; but of course you must follow your own judgment."

In the excess of my indignation I wrote to the king that I could not obey his orders and keep my honour. I said in my letter, —

"My creditors, sire, will forgive me for leaving Poland without paying my debts, when they learn that I have only done so because your majesty gave me no choice."

I was thinking how I could ensure this letter reaching the king, when who should arrive but Count Moszczinski. I told him what had happened, and asked if he could suggest any means of delivering tire letter. "Give it to me," said he; "I will place it in the king's hands."

As soon as he had gone I went out to take the air, and called on Prince Sulkowski, who was not at all astonished at my news. As if to sweeten the bitter pill I had to swallow, he told me how the Empress of Austria had ordered him to leave Vienna in twenty-four hours, merely because he had complimented the Archduchess Christina on behalf of Prince Louis of Wurtemberg.

The next day Count Moszczinski brought me a present of a thousand ducats from the king, who said that my leaving Warsaw would probably be the means of preserving my life, as in that city I was exposed to danger which I could not expect to escape eventually.

This referred to five or six challenges I had received, and to which I had not even taken the trouble to reply. My enemies might possibly assassinate me, and the king did not care to be constantly anxious on my account. Count Moszczinski added that the order to leave carried no dishonour with it, considering by whom it had been delivered, and the delay it gave me to make my preparations.

The consequence of all this was that I not only gave my word to go, but that I begged the count to thank his majesty for his kindness, and the interest he had been pleased to take in me.

When I gave in, the generous Moszczinski embraced me, begged me to write to him, and accept a present of a travelling carriage as a token of his friendship. He informed me that Madame Binetti's husband had gone off with his wife's maid, taking with him her diamonds, jewels, linen, and even her silver plate, leaving her to the tender mercies of the dancer, Pic. Her admirers had clubbed together to make up to her for what her husband had stolen. I also heard that the king's sister had arrived at Warsaw from Bialistock, and it was hoped that her husband would follow her. This husband was the real Count Branicki, and the Branicki, or rather Branecki, or Bragnecki, who had fought with me, was no relation to him whatever.

The following day I paid my debts, which amounted to about two hundred ducats, and I made preparations for starting for Breslau, the day after, with Count Clary, each of us having his own carriage. Clary was one of those men to whom lying has become a sort of second nature; whenever such an one opens his mouth, you may safely say to him, "You have lied, or you are going to lie." If they could feel their own degradation, they would be much to be pitied, for by their own fault at last no one will believe them even when by chance they speak the truth. This Count Clary, who was not one of the Clarys of Teplitz, could neither go to his own country nor to Vienna, because he had deserted the army on the eve of a battle. He was lame, but he walked so adroitly that his defect did not appear. If this had been the only truth he concealed, it would have been well, for it was a piece of deception that hurt no one. He died miserably in Venice.

We reached Breslau in perfect safety, and without experiencing any adventures. Campioni, who had accompanied me as far as Wurtemburg, returned, but rejoined me at Vienna in the course of seven months. Count Clary had left Breslau, and I thought I would make the acquaintance of the Abbe Bastiani, a celebrated Venetian, whose fortune had been made by the King of Prussia. He was canon of the cathedral, and received me cordially; in fact, each mutually desired the other's acquaintance. He was a fine well-made man, fair-complexioned, and at least six feet high. He was also witty, learned, eloquent, and gifted with a persuasive voice; his cook was an artist, his library full of choice volumes, and his cellar a very good one. He was well lodged on the ground floor, and on the first floor he accommodated a lady, of whose children he was very fond, possibly because he was their father. Although a great admirer of the fair sex, his tastes were by no means exclusive, and he did not despise love of the Greek or philosophic kind. I could see that he entertained a passion for a young priest whom I met at his table. This young abbe was Count di Cavalcano and Bastiani seemed to adore him, if fiery glances signified anything; but the innocent young man did not seem to understand, and I suppose Bastiani did not like to lower his dignity by declaring his love. The canon shewed me all the letters he had received from the King of Prussia before he had been made canon. He was the son of a tailor at Venice, and became a friar, but having committed some peccadillo which got him into trouble, he was fortunate enough to be able to make his escape. He fled to The Hague, and there met Tron, the Venetian ambassador, who lent him a hundred ducats with which he made his way to Berlin and favour with the king. Such are the ways by which men arrive at fortune! 'Sequere deum'!

On the event of my departure from Breslau I went to pay a call on a baroness for whom I had a letter of introduction from her son, who was an officer of the Polish Court. I sent up my name and was asked to wait a few moments, as the baroness was dressing. I sat down beside a pretty girl, who was neatly dressed in a mantle with a hood. I asked her if she were waiting for the baroness like myself.

"Yes, sir," she replied, "I have come to offer myself as governess for her three daughters."

"What! Governess at your age?"

"Alas! sir, age has nothing to do with necessity. I have neither father nor mother. My brother is a poor lieutenant who cannot help me; what can I do? I can only get a livelihood by turning my good education to account."

"What will your salary be?"

"Fifty wretched crowns, enough to buy my dresses."

"It's very little."

"It is as much as people give."

"Where are you living now?"

"With a poor aunt, where I can scarce earn enough bread to keep me alive by sewing from morning till night."

"If you liked to become my governess instead of becoming a children's governess, I would give you fifty crowns, not per year, but per month."

"Your governess? Governess to your family, you mean, I suppose?"

"I have no family; I am a bachelor, and I spend my time in travelling. I leave at five o'clock to-morrow morning for Dresden, and if you like to come with me there is a place for you in my carriage. I am staying at such an inn. Come there with your trunk, and we will start together."

"You are joking; besides, I don't know you."

"I am not jesting; and we should get to know each other perfectly well in twenty-four hours; that is ample time."

My serious air convinced the girl that I was not laughing at her; but she was still very much astonished, while I was very much astonished to find I had gone so far when I had only intended to joke. In trying to win over the girl I had won over myself. It seemed to me a rare adventure, and I was delighted to see that she was giving it her serious attention by the side-glances she kept casting in my direction to see if I was laughing at her. I began to think that fate had brought us together that I might become the architect of her fortune. I had no doubt whatever as to her goodness or her feelings for me, for she completely infatuated my judgment. To put the finishing stroke on the affair I drew out two ducats and gave them her as an earnest of her first month’s wages. She took them timidly, but seemed convinced that I was not imposing on her.

By this time the baroness was ready, and she welcomed me very kindly; but I said I could not accept her invitation to dine with her the following day, as I was leaving at day-break. I replied to all the questions that a fond mother makes concerning her son, and then took leave of the worthy lady. As I went out I noticed that the would-be governess had disappeared. The rest of the day I spent with the canon, making good cheer, playing ombre, drinking hard, and talking about girls or literature. The next day my carriage came to the door at the time I had arranged, and I went off without thinking of the girl I had met at the baroness’s. But we had not gone two hundred paces when the postillion stopped, a bundle of linen whirled through the window into the carriage, and the governess got in. I gave her a hearty welcome by embracing her, and made her sit down beside me, and so we drove off.

In the ensuing chapter the reader will become more fully acquainted with my fresh conquest. In the meantime let him imagine me rolling peacefully along the Dresden road.

CHAPTER XXIII

My Arrival at Dresden with Maton — She Makes Me a Present —

Leipzig — Castelbajac — Schwerin — Return to Dresden and

Departure — I Arrive at Vienna — Pocchini's Vengeance

When I saw myself in the carriage with this pretty girl, who had fallen on me as if from the clouds, I imagined I was intended to shape her destiny. Her tutelary genius must have placed her in my hands, for I felt inclined to do her all the good that lay in my power. But for myself; was it a piece of good or ill luck for me? I formed the question, but felt that time alone could give the answer. I knew that I was still living in my old style, while I was beginning to feel that I was no longer a young man.

I was sure that my new companion could not have abandoned herself to me in this manner, without having made up her mind to be complaisant; but this was not enough for me, it was my humour to be loved. This was my chief aim, everything else was only fleeting enjoyment, and as I had not had a love affair since I parted with Zaira, I hoped most fervently that the present adventure would prove to be one.

Before long I learnt that my companion's name was Maton; this at least was her surname, and I did not feel any curiosity to know the name of the he or she saint whom her godmothers had constituted her patron at the baptismal font. I asked her if she could write French as well as she spoke it, and she shewed me a letter by way of sample. It assured me that she had received an excellent education, and this fact increased my pleasure in the conquest I had made. She said she had left Breslau without telling her aunt or her cousin that she was going, perhaps never to return.

"How about your belongings?"

"Belongings? They were not worth the trouble of gathering together. All I have is included in that small package, which contains a chemise, a pair of stockings, some handkerchiefs, and a few nicknacks."

“What will your lover say?”

“Alas! I haven’t got one to say anything.”

“I cannot credit that.”

“I have had two lovers; the first one was a rascal, who took advantage of my innocence to seduce me, and then left me when I ceased to present any novelty for him; my second was an honest man, but a poor lieutenant with no prospects of getting on. He has not abandoned me, but his regiment was ordered to Stetin, and since then— “

“And since then?”

“We were too poor to write to one another, so we had to suffer in silence.”

This pathetic history seemed to bear the marks of truth; and I thought it very possible that Maton had only come with me to make her fortune or to do rather better than she had been doing, which would not be difficult. She was twenty-five years old, and as she had never been out of Breslau before, she would doubtless be delighted to see what the world was like at Dresden. I could not help feeling that I had been a fool to burden myself with the girl, who would most likely cost me a lot of money; but still I found my conduct excusable, as the chances were a hundred to one against her accepting the proposal I had been foolish enough to make. In short, I resolved to enjoy the pleasure of having a pretty girl all to myself, and I determined not to do anything during the journey, being anxious to see whether her moral qualities would plead as strongly with me as her physical beauty undoubtedly did. At nightfall I stopped, wishing to spend the night at the posting-station. Maton, who had been very hungry all day, but had not dared to tell me so, ate with an amazing and pleasing appetite; but not being accustomed to wine, she would have fallen asleep at table, if I had not begged her to retire. She begged my pardon, assuring me she would not let such a thing occur again. I smiled by way of reply, and stayed at the table, not looking to see whether she undressed or went to bed in her clothes. I went to bed myself soon after, and at five o’clock was up again to order the coffee, and to see that the horses were put in. Maton was lying on her bed with all her clothes on, fast asleep, and perspiring with the heat. I woke her, telling her that another time she must sleep more comfortably, as such heats were injurious to health.

She got up and left the room, no doubt to wash, for she returned looking fresh and gay, and bade me good day, and asked me if I would like to give her a kiss.

“I shall be delighted,” I replied; and, after kissing her, I made her hurry over the breakfast, as I wished to reach Dresden that evening. However, I could not manage it, my carriage broke down, and took five hours to mend, so I had to sleep at another posting station. Maton undressed this time, but I had the firmness not to look at her.

When I reached Dresden I put up at the “Hotel de Saxe,” taking the whole of the first floor. My mother was in the country, and I paid her a visit, much to her delight; we made quite an affecting picture, with my arm in a sling. I also saw my brother John and his wife Therese, Roland, and a Roman girl whom I had known before him, and who made much of me. I also saw my sister, and I then went with my brother to pay my suit to Count Bruhl and to his wife, the daughter of the palatin of Kiowia, who was delighted to hear news of her family. I was welcomed everywhere, and everywhere I had to tell the story of my duel. I confess that very little pressing was required, for I was very proud of it.

At this period the States were assembled in Dresden, and Prince Xavier, uncle of the Elector, was regent during his minority.

The same evening I went to the opera-house, where faro was played. I played, but prudently, for my capital only consisted of eighteen hundred ducats.

When I came back we had a good supper, and Maton pleased me both by her appetite and amiability. When we had finished I affectionately asked her if she would like to share my bed, and she replied as tenderly that she was wholly mine. And so, after passing a voluptuous night, we rose in the morning the best friends in the world.

I spent the whole morning in furnishing her toilette. A good many people called on me, and wanted to be presented to Maton; but my answer was that, as she was only my housekeeper, and not my wife, I could not have the pleasure of introducing her. In the same way I had instructed her that she was not to let anyone in when I was away. She was working in her room on the linen I had provided for her, aided in her task by a seamstress.

Nevertheless, I did not want to make her a slave, so I occasionally took her into the pleasant suburbs of Dresden, where she was at liberty to speak to any of my acquaintances we might meet.

This reserve of mine which lasted for the fortnight we stayed in Dresden was mortifying for all the young officers in the place, and especially for the Comte de Bellegarde, who was not accustomed to being denied any girl to whom he chose to take a fancy. He was a fine young fellow, of great boldness and even impudence, and one day he came into our room and asked me to give him a dinner just as Maton and myself were sitting down to table. I could not refuse him, and I could not request Maton to leave the room, so from the beginning to the end of the meal he showered his military jokes and attentions on her, though he was perfectly polite the whole time. Maton behaved very well; she was not prudish, nor did she forget the respect she owed to me and indeed to herself.

I was accustomed to take a siesta every day after dinner, so half an hour after the conclusion of the meal I stated the fact and begged him to leave us. He asked smilingly if the lady took a siesta too, and I replied that we usually took it together. This made him take up his hat and cane, and as he did so he asked us both to dine with him the next day. I replied that I never took Maton out anywhere, but that he would be welcome to come and take pot-luck with us every day if he liked.

This refusal exhausted his resources, and he took his leave if not angrily, at least very coldly.

My mother returned to her town apartments, which were opposite to mine, and the next day when I was calling on her I noticed the erker (a sort of grating in the Spanish fashion) which indicated my rooms in the hotel. I happened to look in that direction and I saw Maton at the window standing up and talking to M. de Bellegarde, who was at a neighbouring window. This window belonged to a room which adjoined my suite of rooms, but did not belong to it. This discovery amused me. I knew what I was about, and did not fear to be made a cuckold in spite of myself. I was sure I had not been observed, and I was not going to allow any trespassers. I was jealous, in fact; but the jealousy was of the mind, not the heart.

I came in to dinner in the highest spirits, and Maton was as gay as myself. I led the conversation up to Bellegarde, and said I believed him to be in love with her.

“Oh, he is like all officers with girls; but I don’t think he is more in love with me than any other girl.”

“Oh, but didn’t he come to call on me this morning?”

“Certainly not; and if he had come the maid would have told him you were out.”

“Did you not notice him walking up and down ‘under the windows?”

“No.”

This was enough for me; I knew they had laid a plot together. Maton was deceiving me, and I should be cheated in twenty-four hours unless I took care. At my age such treason should not have astonished me, but my vanity would not allow me to admit the fact.

I dissembled my feelings and caressed the traitress, and then leaving the house I went to the theatre where I played with some success and returned home while the second act was in progress; it was still daylight. The waiter was at the door, and I asked him whether there were any rooms besides those which I occupied on the first floor. “Yes, two rooms, both looking on the street.”

“Tell the landlord that I will take them both.”

“They were taken yesterday evening.”

“By whom?”

“By a Swiss officer, who is entertaining a party of friends to supper here this evening.”

I said no more lest I should awaken suspicion; but I felt sure that Bellegarde could easily obtain access to my rooms from his. Indeed, there was a door leading to the room where Maton slept with her maid when I did not care to have her in my room. The door was bolted on her side, but as she was in the plot there was not much security in this.

I went upstairs softly, and finding Maton on the balcony, I said, after some indifferent conversation, that I should like to change rooms.

“You shall have my room,” I said, “and I will have yours; I can read there, and see the people going by.”

She thought it a very good idea, and added that it would serve us both if I would allow her to sit there when I was out.

This reply shewed me that Maton was an old hand, and that I had better give her up if I did not wish to be duped.

I changed the rooms, and we supped pleasantly together, laughing and talking, and in spite of all her craft Maton did not notice any change in me.

I remained alone in my new room, and soon heard the voices of Bellegarde and his merry companions. I went on to the balcony, but the curtains of Bellegarde’s room were drawn, as if to assure me that there was no complot. However, I was not so easily deceived, and I found afterwards that Mercury had warned Jupiter that Amphytrion had changed his room.

Next day, a severe headache, a thing from which I seldom suffer, kept me to the house all day. I had myself let blood, and my worthy mother, who came to keep me company, dined with Maton. My mother had taken a weakness for the girl, and had often asked me to let her come and see her, but I had the good sense to refuse this request. The next day I was still far from well, and took medicine, and in the evening, to my horror, I found myself attacked by a fearful disease. This must be a present from Maton, for I had not known anyone else since leaving Leopol. I spent a troubled night, rage and indignation being my principal emotions; and next morning, coming upon Maton suddenly, I found everything in the most disgusting state. The wretched creature confessed she had been infected for the last six months, but that she had hoped not to give it me, as she had washed herself carefully whenever she thought I was going to have to do with her.

“Wretch, you have poisoned me; but nobody shall know it, as it is by my own fault, and I am ashamed of it. Get up, and you shall see how generous I can be.”

She got up, and I had all the linen I had given her packed into a trunk. This done, I told my man to take a small room for her at another inn. His errand was soon over, and I then told Maton to go immediately, as I had done with her. I gave her fifty crowns, and made her sign a receipt specifying the reason why I had sent her away, and acknowledging that she had no further claim upon me. The conditions were humiliating, and she wished me to soften them down, but she soon gave in when I told her that unless she signed I would turn her into the streets as naked as when I found her.

"What am I to do here? I don't know anyone."

"If you like to return to Breslau I will pay your expenses there."

She made no answer, so I sent her away bag and baggage, and merely turned my back on her when she went down on her knees to excite my compassion.

I got rid of her without the slightest feeling of pity, for from what she had done to me and from what she was preparing to do I considered her as a mere monster, who would sooner or later have cost me my life.

I left the inn the following day, and I took a furnished apartment on the first floor of the house where my mother lived for six months, and proceeded about my cure. Everyone asked me what I had done with my housekeeper, and I said that having no further need of her services I had sent her away.

A week afterwards my brother John came to tell me that Bellegarde and five or six of his friends were on the sick list; Maton had certainly lost no time.

"I am sorry for them, but it's their own fault; why didn't they take more care?"

"But the girl came to Dresden with you."

"Yes, and I sent her about her business. It was enough for me to keep them off while she was under my charge. Tell them that if they complain of me they are wrong, and still more wrong to publish their shame. Let them learn discretion and get themselves cured in secrecy, if they do not want sensible men to laugh at them. Don't you think I am right?"

"The adventure is not a very honourable one for you."

"I know it, and that's why I say nothing; I am not such a fool as to proclaim my shame from the housetops. These friends of yours must be simpletons indeed; they must have known that I had good reasons for sending the girl away, and should consequently have been on their guard. They deserve what they got, and I hope it may be a lesson to them."

"They are all astonished at your being well."

"You may comfort them by saying that I have been as badly treated as they, but that I have held my tongue, not wishing to pass for a simpleton."

Poor John saw he had been a simpleton himself and departed in silence. I put myself under a severe diet, and by the middle of August my health was re-established.

About this time, Prince Adam Czartoryski's sister came to Dresden, lodging with Count Bruhl. I had the honour of paying my court to her, and I heard from her own mouth that her royal cousin had had the weakness to let himself be imposed on by calumnies about me. I told her that I was of Ariosto's opinion that all the virtues are nothing worth unless they are covered with the veil of constancy.

"You saw yourself when I supped with you, how his majesty completely ignored me. Your highness will be going to Paris next year; you will meet me there and you can write to the king that if I had been burnt in effigy I should not venture to shew myself."

The September fair being a great occasion at Leipzig, I went there to regain my size by eating larks, for which Leipzig is justly famous. I had played a cautious but a winning game at Dresden, the result of which had been the gain of some hundreds of ducats, so I was able to start for Leipzig with a letter of credit for three thousand crowns on the banker Hohman, an intelligent old man of upwards of eighty. It was of him I heard that the hair of the Empress of Russia, which looked a dark brown or even black, had been originally quite fair. The old banker had seen her at Stettin every day between her seventh and tenth years, and told me that even then they had begun to comb her hair with lead combs, and to rub a certain composition into it. From an early age Catherine had been looked upon as the future bride of the Duke of Holstein, afterwards the hapless Peter III. The Russians are fair as a rule, and so it was thought it that the reigning family should be dark.

Here I will note down a pleasant adventure I had at Leipzig. The Princess of Aremberg had arrived from Vienna, and was staying at the same hotel as myself. She took a fancy to go to the fair incognito, and as she had a large suite she dressed up one of her maids as the princess, and mingled with her following. I suppose my readers to be aware that this princess was witty and beautiful, and that she was the favourite mistress of the Emperor Francis the First.

I heard of his masquerade, and leaving my hotel at the same time I followed her till she stopped at a stall, and then going up to her and addressing her as one would any other maid, I asked if that (pointing at the false princess) were really the famous Princess of Aremberg.

“Certainly,” she replied.

“I can scarcely believe it, for she is not pretty, and she, has, not the look nor the manners of a princess.”

“Perhaps you are not a good judge of princesses.”

“I have seen enough of them anyhow, and to prove that I am a good judge I say that it is you who ought to be the princess; I would willingly give a hundred ducats to spend the night with you.”

“A hundred ducats! What would you do if I were to take you at your word?”

“Try me. I lodge at the same hotel as you, and if yet can contrive ways and means, I will give you the money in advance, but not till I am sure of my prize, for I don’t like being taken in.”

“Very good. Say not a word to anyone, but try to speak with me either before or after supper. If you are brave enough to face certain risks, we will spend the night together.”

“What is your name?”

“Caroline.”

I felt certain it would come to nothing, but I was glad to have amused the princess, and to have let her know that I appreciated her beauties, and I resolved to go on with the part I was playing. About supper-time I began a promenade near the princess’s apartments, stopping every now and then in front of the room where her women were sitting, till one of them came out to ask me if I wanted anything.

“I want to speak for a moment to one of your companions to whom I had the pleasure of talking at the fair.”

“You mean Caroline, I expect?”

"Yes."

"She is waiting on the princess, but she will be out in half an hour."

I spent this half hour in my own room, and then returned to dance attendance. Before long the same maid to whom I had spoken came up to me and told me to wait in a closet which she shewed me, telling me that Caroline would be there before long. I went into the closet, which was small, dark, and uncomfortable. I was soon joined by a woman. This time I was sure it was the real Caroline, but I said nothing.

She came, in, took my hand, and told me that if I would wait there she would come to me as soon as her mistress was in bed.

"Without any light?"

"Of course, or else the people of the house would notice it, and I should not like that."

"I cannot do anything without light, charming Caroline; and besides, this closet is not a very nice place to pass five or six hours. There is another alternative, the first room above is mine. I shall be alone, and I swear to you that no one shall come in; come up and make me happy; I have got the hundred ducats here."

"Impossible! I dare not go upstairs for a million ducats."

"So much the worse for you, as I am not going to stay in this hole which has only a chair in it, if you offer me a million and a half. Farewell, sweet Caroline."

"Wait a moment; let me go out first."

The sly puss went out quickly enough, but I was as sharp as she, and trod on the tail of her dress so that she could not shut the door after her. So we went out together, and I left her at the door, saying, —

"Good night, Caroline, you see it was no use."

I went to bed well pleased with the incident. The princess, it was plain, had intended to make me pass the night in the hole of a closet, as a punishment for having dared to ask the mistress of an emperor to sleep with me for a hundred crowns.

Two days later, as I was buying a pair of lace cuffs, the princess came into the shop with Count Zinzendorf, whom I had known at Paris twelve years before just as I was making way for the lady the count recognized me, and asked me if I knew anything about the Casanova that had fought the duel at Warsaw.

“Alas! count, I am that Casanova, and here is my arm still in a sling.”

“I congratulate you, my dear fellow; I should like to hear about it.”

With these words he introduced me to the princess, asking her if she had heard of the duel.

“Yes; I heard something about it in the papers. So this is the hero of the tale. Delighted to make your acquaintance.”

The princess spoke with great kindness, but with the cool politeness of the Court. She did not give me the slightest sign of recognition, and of course I imitated her in her reserve.

I visited the count in the afternoon, and he begged me to come and see the princess, who would be delighted to hear the account of my duel from my own lips, and I followed him to her apartment with pleasure. The princess listened to my narrative in stately sort, and her women never looked at me. She went away the day after, and the story went no farther.

Towards the end of the fair I received a very unexpected visit from the fair Madame Castelbajac. I was just sitting down to table to eat a dozen larks, when she made her appearance.

“What, madam, you here!”

“Yes, to my sorrow. I have been here for the last three weeks, and have seen you several times, but you have always avoided us.”

“Who are ‘us’?”

“Schwerin and myself.”

“Schwerin is here, is he?”

“Yes; and in prison on account of a forged bill. I am sure I do not know what they will do to the poor wretch. He would have been wise to have fled, but it seems as if he wanted to get hanged.”

“And you have been with him ever since you left England? that is, three years ago.”

“Exactly. Our occupation is robbing, cheating, and escaping from one land to another. Never was a woman so unhappy as I.”

“For how much is the forged bill?”

“For three hundred crowns. Do a generous action M. Casanova, and let bygones be bygones; deliver the poor wretch from the gallows and me from death, for if he is hanged I shall kill myself.”

“Indeed, madam, he may hang for me, for he did his best to send me to the gallows with his forged bills; but I confess I pity you. So much, indeed, that I invite you to come to Dresden with me the day after to-morrow, and I promise to give you three hundred crowns as soon as Schwerin has undergone the extreme penalty of the law. I can’t understand how a woman like you can have fallen in love with a man that has neither face, nor talents, nor wit, nor fortune, for all that he has to boast of is his name of Schwerin.”

“I confess, to my shame, that I never loved him. Ever since the other rogue, Castelbajac — who, by the way, was never married to me — made me know him, I have only lived with him by force, though his tears and his despairs have excited my compassion. If destiny had given me an honest man in his stead, I would have forsaken him long ago, for sooner or later he will be the death of me.”

“Where do you live?”

“Nowhere. I have been turned out into the street with nothing but the clothes on my back. Have compassion on me.”

With these words the hapless woman threw herself at my knees and burst into tears. I was much affected. The waiter of the inn stood staring with amazement till I told him to go out. I may safely say that this woman was one of the most handsome in France; she was probably about twenty-six years old. She had been the wife of a druggist of Montpellier, and had been so unfortunate as to let Castelbajac seduce her. At London her beauty had produced no impression on me, my heart was another’s; nevertheless, she was made to seduce the heart of man.

I raised her from her knees, and said I felt inclined to help her, but that in the first place she must calm herself, and in the second share my supper. The waiter brought another bed and put it in my room, without receiving any orders to do so; this made me feel inclined to laugh.

The appetite with which the poor woman ate, despite her sorrow, reminded me of the matron of Ephesus. When supper was over I gave her her choice: she might either stay in Leipzig and fare as best she might, or I would reclaim her effects, take her with me to Dresden, and pay her a hundred gold ducats as soon as I could be certain that she would not give the money to the wretch who had reduced her to such an extremity. She did not ask much time for reflection. She said that it would be no good for her to stay in Leipzig, for she could do nothing for the wretched Schwerin or even keep herself for a day, for she had not got a farthing. She would have to beg or to become a prostitute, and she could not make up her mind to either course.

"Indeed," she concluded, "if you were to give me the hundred ducats this moment, and I used them to free Schwerin, I should be no better off than before; so I accept your generous offer thankfully."

I embraced her, promised to get back what her landlord had seized for rent, and then begged her to go to bed, as she was in need of rest.

"I see," she answered, "that either out of liking or for politeness' sake you will ask me for those favours which I should be only too happy to grant, but if I allowed that it would be a bad return indeed for your kindness. Look at my linen, and behold in what a state that unhappy wretch has left me!"

I saw that I ran the risk of being infected again, and thanked her for warning me of the danger I ran. In spite of her faults she was a woman of feeling, and had an excellent heart, and from these good qualities of hers proceeded all her misfortunes.

The next morning I arranged for the redemption of her effects, which cost me sixty crowns of Saxony, and in the afternoon the poor woman saw herself once more in possession of her belongings, which she had thought never to see again. She seemed profoundly grateful, and deplored her state, which hindered her from proving the warmth of her feelings.

Such is the way of women: a grateful woman has only one way of shewing her gratitude, and that is to surrender herself without reserve. A man is different, but we are differently constituted; a man is made to give and a woman to receive.

The next day, a short while before we left, the broker I had employed in the redemption of the lady's effects, told me that the banker, whom Schwerin had cheated, was going to send an express to Berlin, to enquire whether the king would object to Count Schwerin's being proceeded against with the utmost rigour of the law.

"Alas!" cried his late mistress, "that's what he was most afraid of. It's all up with him. The King of Prussia will pay his debts, but he will end his days at Spandau. Why didn't they put him there before I ever knew him?"

She left Leipzig with me, and our appearance at Dresden caused a good deal of surprise. She was not a mere girl, like Maton; she had a good appearance, and a modest yet distinguished manner. I called her Countess Blasin, and introduced her to my mother and relations, and put her in my best room. I summoned the doctor who had treated me, and made him swear not to disclose the countess's state, but to tell everyone that he came to see me. I took her to the theatre, and it was my humour to have her regarded as a person of distinction. Good treatment soon restored her to health, and by the end of November she believed herself in a state to reward me for my kindness.

The wedding was a secret one, but none the less pleasant; and as if by way of wedding present the next day I heard that the King of Prussia had paid Schwerin's debts, and had had him brought to Berlin under a strong escort. If he is alive, the rascal is at Spandau to this day.

The time had come for me to pay her the hundred ducats. I told her frankly that I was obliged to go to Portugal, and that I could not make my appearance there in company with a pretty woman without failing in my project. I added that my means would not allow me to pay double expenses for so long a journey.

She had received too many proofs of my love to think for a moment that I had got tired of her, and wanted to be on with some other woman. She told me that she owed everything to me, while I owed nothing to her; and that all she asked of me was to enable her to return to Montpellier.

"I have relations there," said she, "who will be glad to see me, and I hope that my husband will let me return to him. I am the Prodigal Son, and I hope to find in him the forgiving father."

I told her I would do my utmost to send her home in safety and comfort.

Towards the middle of December I left Dresden with Madame Blasin. My purse only contained four hundred ducats, for I had had a run of bad luck at play; and the journey to Leipzig had cost me altogether three hundred ducats. I told my mistress nothing of all this, for my only thought was how to please her.

We stayed a short while at Prague, and reached Vienna on Christmas Day. We put up at the "Red Bull," the Countess Blasin (who had been transformed into a milliner) in one room, and I in another, so that we might pass for strangers while continuing our intimacy.

The next morning, as we were taking coffee together, two individuals came into the room, and asked the rude question, —

"Who are you, madam?"

"My name is Blasin."

"Who is this gentleman?"

"You had better ask him."

"What are you doing at Vienna?"

"Taking coffee. I should have thought you could have seen that for yourselves."

"If the gentleman is not your husband, you will leave the town within twenty-four hours."

"The gentleman is my friend, and not my husband; and I shall leave Vienna exactly when I choose, unless you make me go away by force."

"Very good. We are aware, sir, that you have a separate room, but that makes no difference."

Thereupon one of the policemen entered my room, I following him.

"What do you want here?" said I.

"I am looking at your bed, and I can see you have not slept in it. That's enough."

"The devil! What business have you here at all, and who authorizes such disgraceful proceedings?"

He made no reply, but returned to Madame Blasin's room, where they both ordered her to leave Vienna in the course of twenty-four hours, and then they both left us.

"Dress yourself," said I to her, "and tell the French ambassador the whole story. Tell him that you are a milliner, Blasin by name, and that all you want is to go from here to Strasburg, and from there to Montpellier."

While she was dressing I ordered a carriage and a servant to be in attendance. She returned in an hour's time, and said the ambassador had assured her that she would be left alone, and need not leave Vienna till she thought fit. I took her to mass in triumph, and then, as the weather was bad, we spent the rest of the day in eating and drinking and sitting by the fire.

At eight o'clock in the evening the landlord came up and said very politely that he had been ordered by the police to give the lady a room at some distance from mine, and that he was obliged to obey.

"I am quite ready to change my room," said Madame Blasin, with a smile.

"Is the lady to sup alone?" I asked.

"I have received no instructions on that point."

"Then I will sup with her, and I hope you will treat us well."

"You shall be well served, sir."

In spite of the detestable and tyrannical police we spent the last four days and nights together in the closest intimacy. When she left I wanted her to take fifty Louis; but she would only have thirty, saying that she could travel to Montpellier on that sum, and have money in her pocket when she got there. Our parting was an affecting one. She wrote to me from Strasburg, and we shall hear of her again when I describe my visit to Montpellier.

The first day of the year 1767 I took an apartment in the house of a certain Mr. Schroder, and I took letters of introduction to Madame de Salmor and

Madame de Stahremberg. I then called on the elder Calsabigi, who was in the service of Prince Kaunitz.

This Calsabigi, whose whole body was one mass of eruption, always worked in bed, and the minister, his master, went to see him almost every day. I went constantly to the theatre, where Madame Vestris was dancing. On January the 7th or 8th, I saw the empress dowager come to the theatre dressed in black; she was received with applause, as this was the first appearance she had made since the death of her husband. At Vienna I met the Comte de la Perouse, who was trying to induce the empress to give him half a million of florins, which Charles VI. owed his father. Through him I made the acquaintance of the Spaniard Las Casas, a man of intelligence, and, what is a rare thing in a Spaniard, free from prejudices. I also met at the count's house the Venetian Uccelli, with whom I had been at St. Cyprian's College at Muran; he was, at the time of which I write, secretary to the ambassador, Polo Renieri. This gentleman had a great esteem for me, but my affair with the State Inquisitors prevented him from receiving me. My friend Campioni arrived at this date from Warsaw; he had passed through Cracovia. I accommodated him in my apartment with great pleasure. He had an engagement at London, but to my great delight he was able to spend a couple of months with me.

Prince Charles of Courland, who had been at Venice and had been well received by M. de Bragadin and my other friends, had been in Vienna and had left it a fortnight before my arrival to return to Venice. Prince Charles wrote to tell me that there was no bounds to the care and kindness of my Venetian friends, and that he would be grateful to me for all his days.

I lived very quietly at Vienna; my health was good, and I thought of nothing but my journey to Portugal, which I intended to take place in the spring. I saw no company of any kind, whether good or ill. I often called on Calsabigi, who made a parade of his Atheism, and slandered my friend Metastasio, who despised him. Calsabigi knew it and laughed at him; he was a profound politician and the right hand of Prince Kaunitz.

One day after dinner, as I was sitting at table with my friend Campioni, a pretty little girl, between twelve and thirteen, as I should imagine, came into my room with mingled boldness and fear, and made me a low bow. I asked her what she wanted, and she replied in Latin verse to the effect that her mother was in the next room, and that if I liked she would come in. I replied in Latin prose that I did not care about seeing her mother, telling her my reasons with great plainness. She replied with four Latin lines, but as they were not to the point I could see that she had learnt them by heart, and repeated them like a parrot. She went on-still in Latin verse — to tell me that her mother must come in or else the authorities might think I was abusing her.

This last phrase was uttered with all the directness of the Latin style. It made me burst out laughing, and I felt inclined to explain to her what she had said in her own language. The little slut told me she was a Venetian, and this putting me at my ease I told her that the authorities would never suspect her of doing such a thing as she was too young. At this the girl seemed to reflect a moment, and then recited some verses from the Priapeia to the effect that unripe fruit is often more piquant than that which is ripe. This was enough to set me on fire, and Campioni, seeing that he was not wanted, went back to his room.

I drew her gently to me and asked her if her father was at Vienna. She said yes, and instead of repulsing my caresses she proceeded to accompany my actions with the recital of erotic verses. I sent her away with a fee of two ducats, but before she went she gave me her address written in German with four Latin verses beneath, stating that her bedfellow would find her either Hebe or Ganymede, according to his liking.

I could not help admiring the ingenuity of her father, who thus contrived to make a living out of his daughters. She was a pretty girl enough, but at Vienna pretty girls are so common that they often have to starve in spite of their charms. The Latin verses had been thrown in as an attraction in this case, but I did not think she would find it very remunerative in Vienna.

Next evening my evil genius made me go and seek her out at the address she had given me. Although I was forty-two years old, in spite of the experience I had had, I was so foolish as to go alone. The girl saw me coming from the window, and guessing that I was looking for her, she came down and shewed me in. I went in, I went upstairs, and when I found myself in the presence of the wretch Pocchini my blood froze in my veins. A feeling of false shame prevented my retracing my steps, as it might have looked as if I had been afraid. In the same room were his pretended wife, Catina, two Sclavonic-looking assassins, and the decoy-duck. I saw that this was not a laughing matter, so I dissembled to the best of my ability, and made up my mind to leave the place in five minutes' time.

Pocchini, swearing and blaspheming, began to reproach me with the manner in which I had treated him in England, and said that his time had come, and that my life was in his hands. One of the two Sclavs broke in, and said we must make friends, and so made me sit down, opened a bottle, and said we must drink together. I tried to put as good a face upon it as I could, but I begged to be excused, on which Pocchini swore that I was afraid of having to pay for the bottle of wine.

"You are mistaken," said I; "I am quite ready to pay."

I put my hand in my pocket to take out a ducat without drawing out my purse, but the Sclav told me I need not be afraid, as I was amongst honest people. Again shame made me yield, and as I had some difficulty in extracting my purse, the Sclav kindly did it for me. Pocchini immediately snatched it from his hands, and said he should keep it as part compensation for all I had made him endure.

I saw that it was a concerted scheme, and said with a smile that he could do as he liked, and so I rose to leave them. The Sclav said we must embrace each other, and on my declaring that to be unnecessary, he and his comrade drew their sabres, and I thought myself undone. Without more ado, I hastened to embrace them. To my astonishment they let me go, and I went home in a grievous state, and not knowing what else to do went to bed.

VOLUME 6 — SPANISH PASSIONS,

EPISODE 26 — SPAIN

CHAPTER I

I Am Ordered to Leave Vienna — The Empress Moderates but Does Not Annul the Order — Zavoiski at Munich — My Stay at Augsburg — Gasconnade at Louisburg — The Cologne Newspaper — My Arrival at Aix-la-Chapelle

The greatest mistake a man that punishes a knave can commit is to leave the said rogue alive, for he is certain to take vengeance. If I had had my sword in the den of thieves, I should no doubt have defended myself, but it would have gone ill with me, three against one, and I should probably have been cut to pieces, while the murderers would have escaped unpunished.

At eight o'clock Campioni came to see me in my bed, and was astonished at my adventure. Without troubling himself to compassionate me, we both began to think how we could get back my purse; but we came to the conclusion that it would be impossible, as I had nothing more than my mere assertion to prove the case. In spite of that, however, I wrote out the whole story, beginning with the girl who recited the Latin verses. I intended to bring the document before the police; however, I had not time to do so.

I was just sitting down to dinner, when an agent of the police came and gave me an order to go and speak to Count Schrotembach, the Statthalter. I told him to instruct my coachman, who was waiting at the door, and that I would follow him shortly.

When I called on the Statthalter, I found him to be a thick-set individual; he was standing up, and surrounded by men who seemed ready to execute his orders. When he saw me, he shewed me a watch, and requested me to note the hour.

"I see it."

"If you are at Vienna at that time to-morrow I shall have you expelled from the city."

"Why do you give me such an unjust order?"

"In the first place, I am not here to give you accounts or reasons for my actions. However, I may tell you that you are expelled for playing at games of chance, which are forbidden by the laws under pain of the galleys. Do you recognize that purse and these cards?"

I did not know the cards, but I knew the purse which had been stolen from me. I was in a terrible rage, and I only replied by presenting the magistrate with the truthful narrative of what had happened to me. He read it, and then said with a laugh that I was well known to be a man of parts, that my character was known, that I had been expelled from Warsaw, and that as for the document before him he judged it to be a pack of lies, since in his opinion it was altogether void of probability.

"In fine," he added, "you will obey my order to leave the town, and you must tell me where you are going."

"I will tell you that when I have made up my mind to go."

"What? You dare to tell me that you will not obey?"

"You yourself have said that if I do not go I shall be removed by force."

"Very good. I have heard you have a strong will, but here it will be of no use to you. I advise you to go quietly, and so avoid harsh measures."

"I request you to return me that document."

"I will not do so. Begone!"

This was one of the most terrible moments of my life. I shudder still when I think of it. It was only a cowardly love of life that hindered me from running my sword through the body of the Statthalter, who had treated me as if he were a hangman and not a judge.

As I went away I took it into my head to complain to Prince Kaunitz, though I had not the honour of knowing him. I called at his house, and a man I met told me to stay in the ante-chamber, as the prince would pass through to go to dinner.

It was five o'clock. The prince appeared, followed by his guests, amongst whom was M. Polo Renieri, the Venetian ambassador. The prince asked me what he could do for me, and I told my story in a loud voice before them all.

"I have received my order to go, but I shall not obey. I implore your highness to give me your protection, and to help me to bring my plea to the foot of the throne."

"Write out your petition," he replied, "and I will see that the empress gets it. But I advise you to ask her majesty for a respite, for if you say that you won't obey, she will be predisposed against you."

"But if the royal grace does not place me in security, I shall be driven away by violence."

"Then take refuge with the ambassador of your native country."

"Alas, my lord, my country has forsaken me. An act of legal though unconstitutional violence has deprived me of my rights as a citizen. My name is Casanova, and my country is Venice."

The prince looked astonished and turned to the Venetian ambassador, who smiled, and whispered to him for ten minutes.

"It's a pity," said the prince, kindly, "that you cannot claim the protection of any ambassador."

At these words a nobleman of colossal stature stepped forward and said I could claim his protection, as my whole family, myself included, had served the prince his master. He spoke the truth, for he was the ambassador of Saxony.

"That is Count Vitzthum," said the prince. "Write to the empress, and I will forward your petition immediately. If there is any delay in the answer, go to the count; you will be safe with him, until you like to leave Vienna."

In the meanwhile the prince ordered writing materials to be brought me, and he and his guests passed into the dining-hall.

I give here a copy of the petition, which I composed in less than ten minutes. I made a fair copy for the Venetian ambassador to send home to the Senate:

"MADAM, — I am sure that if, as your royal and imperial highness were walking in your garden, an insect appealed plaintively to you not to crush it, you would turn aside, and so avoid doing the poor creature any hurt.

"I, madam, am an insect, and I beg of you that you will order M. Statthalter Schrotembach to delay crushing me with your majesty's slipper for a week. Possibly, after that time has elapsed, your majesty will not only prevent his crushing me, but will deprive him of that slipper, which was only meant to be the terror of rogues, and not of an humble Venetian, who is an honest man, though he escaped from The Leads.

"In profound submission to your majesty's will,

"I remain,

"CASANOVA.

"Given at Vienna, January 21st, 1769."

When I had finished the petition, I made a fair draft of it, and sent it in to the prince, who sent it back to me telling me that he would place it in the empress's hands immediately, but that he would be much obliged by my making a copy for his own use.

I did so, and gave both copies to the valet de chambre, and went my way. I trembled like a paralytic, and was afraid that my anger might get me into difficulty. By way of calming myself, I wrote out in the style of a manifesto the narrative I had given to the vile Schrotembach, and which that unworthy magistrate had refused to return to me.

At seven o'clock Count Vitzthum came into my room. He greeted me in a friendly manner and begged me to tell him the story of the girl I had gone to see, on the promise of the Latin quatrain referring to her accommodating disposition. I gave him the address and copied out the verses, and he said that was enough to convince an enlightened judge that I had been slandered; but he, nevertheless, was very doubtful whether justice would be done me.

"What! shall I be obliged to leave Vienna to-morrow?"

"No, no, the empress cannot possibly refuse you the week's delay."

"Why not?"

"Oh! no one could refuse such an appeal as that. Even the prince could not help smiling as he was reading it in his cold way. After reading it he passed it on to me, and then to the Venetian ambassador, who asked him if he meant to give it to the empress as it stood. 'This petition,' replied the prince, 'might be sent to God, if one knew the way;' and forthwith he ordered one of his secretaries to fold it up and see that it was delivered. We talked of you for the rest of dinner, and I had the pleasure of hearing the Venetian ambassador say that no one could discover any reason for your imprisonment under the Leads. Your duel was also discussed, but on that point we only knew what has appeared in the newspapers. Oblige me by giving me a copy of your petition; that phrase of Schrotembach and the slipper pleased me vastly."

I copied out the document, and gave it him with a copy of my manifesto. Before he left me the count renewed the invitation to take refuge with him, if I did not hear from the empress before the expiration of the twenty-four hours.

At ten o'clock I had a visit from the Comte de la Perouse, the Marquis de las Casas, and Signor Uccelli, the secretary of the Venetian embassy. The latter came to ask for a copy of my petition for his chief. I promised he should have it, and I also sent a copy of my manifesto. The only thing which rather interfered with the dignity of this latter piece, and gave it a somewhat comic air, were the four Latin verses, which might make people imagine that, after enjoying the girl as Hebe, I had gone in search of her as Ganymede. This was not the case, but the empress understood Latin and was familiar with mythology, and if she had looked on it in the light I have mentioned I should have been undone. I made six copies of the two documents before I went to bed; I was quite tired out, but the exertion had somewhat soothed me. At noon the next day, young Hasse (son of the chapel-master and of the famous Trustina), secretary of legation to Count Vitzthum, came to tell me from the ambassador that nobody would attack me in my own house, nor in my carriage if I went abroad, but that it would be imprudent to go out on foot. He added that his chief would have the pleasure of calling on me at seven o'clock. I begged M. Hasse to let me have all this in writing, and after he had written it out he left me.

Thus the order to leave Vienna had been suspended; it must have been done by the sovereign.

"I have no time to lose," said I to myself, "I shall have justice done me, my assassins will be condemned, my purse will be returned with the two hundred ducats in it, and not in the condition in which it was shewn to me by the infamous Schrotembach, who will be punished by dismissal, at least."

Such were my castles in Spain; who has not built such? 'Quod nimis miseri volunt hoc facile credunt', says Seneca. The wish is father to the thought.

Before sending my manifesto to the empress, Prince Kaunitz, and to all the ambassadors, I thought it would be well to call on the Countess of Salmor, who spoke to the sovereign early and late. I had had a letter of introduction for her.

She greeted me by saying that I had better give up wearing my arm in a sling, as it looked as ii I were a charlatan; my arm must be well enough after nine months.

I was extremely astonished by this greeting, and replied that if it were not necessary I should not wear a sling, and that I was no charlatan.

"However," I added, "I have come to see you on a different matter."

"Yes, I know, but I will have nothing to do with it. You are all as bad as Tomatis."

I gave a turn round and left the room without taking any further notice of her. I returned home feeling overwhelmed by the situation. I had been robbed and insulted by a band of thorough-paced rascals; I could do nothing, justice was denied me, and now I had been made a mock of by a worthless countess. If I had received such an insult from a man I would have soon made him feel the weight of one arm at all events. I could not bear my arm without a sling for an hour; pain and swelling set in immediately. I was not perfectly cured till twenty months after the duel.

Count Vitzthum came to see me at seven o'clock. He said the empress had told Prince Kaunitz that Schrotembach considered my narrative as pure romance. His theory was that I had held a bank at faro with sharpers' cards, and had dealt with both hands the arm in the sling being a mere pretence. I had then been taken in the act by one of the gamesters, and my unjust gains had been very properly taken from me. My detector had then handed over my purse, containing forty ducats, to the police, and the money had of course been confiscated. The empress had to choose between believing Schrotembach and dismissing him; and she was not inclined to do the latter, as it would be a difficult matter to find him a successor in his difficult and odious task of keeping Vienna clear of human vermin.

“This is what Prince Kaunitz asked me to tell you. But you need not be afraid of any violence, and you can go when you like.”

“Then I am to be robbed of two hundred ducats with impunity. The empress might at least reimburse me if she does nothing more. Please to ask the prince whether I can ask the sovereign to give me that satisfaction; the least I can demand.”

“I will tell him what you say.”

“If not, I shall leave; for what can I do in a town where I can only drive, and where the Government keeps assassins in its pay?”

“You are right. We are all sure that Pocchini has calumniated you. The girl who recites Latin verses is well known, but none know her address. I must advise you not to publish your tale as long as you are in Vienna, as it places Schrotembach in a very bad light, and you see the empress has to support him in the exercise of his authority.”

“I see the force of your argument, and I shall have to devour my anger. I will leave Vienna as soon as the washerwoman sends home my linen, but I will have the story printed in all its black injustice.”

“The empress is prejudiced against you, I don’t know by whom.”

“I know, though; it is that infernal old hag, Countess Salmor.”

The next day I received a letter from Count Vitzthum, in which he said that Prince Kaunitz advised me to forget the two hundred ducats, that the girl and her so-called mother had left Vienna to all appearance, as someone had gone to the address and had failed to find her.

I saw that I could do nothing, and resolved to depart in peace, and afterwards to publish the whole story and to hang Pocchini with my own hands when next I met him. I did neither the one nor the other.

About that time a young lady of the Salis de Coire family arrived at Vienna without any companion. The imperial hangman Schrotembach, ordered her to leave Vienna in two days. She replied that she would leave exactly when she felt inclined. The magistrate consigned her to imprisonment in a convent, and she was there still when I left. The emperor went to see her, and the empress, his mother, asked him what he thought of her. His answer was, "I thought her much more amusing than Schrotembach."

Undoubtedly, every man worthy of the name longs to be free, but who is really free in this world? No one. The philosopher, perchance, may be accounted so, but it is at the cost of too precious sacrifices at the phantom shrine of Liberty.

I left the use of my suite of rooms, for which I had paid a month in advance, to Campioni, promising to wait for him at Augsburg, where the Law alone is supreme. I departed alone carrying with me the bitter regret that I had not been able to kill the monster, whose despotism had crushed me. I stopped at Linz on purpose to write to Schrotembach even a more bitter letter than that which I had written to the Duke of Wurtemburg in 1760. I posted it myself, and had it registered so as to be sure of its reaching the scoundrel to whom it had been addressed. It was absolutely necessary for me to write this letter, for rage that has no vent must kill at last. From Linz I had a three days' journey to Munich, where I called on Count Gaetan Zavoicki, who died at Dresden seven years ago. I had known him at Venice when he was in want, and I had happily been useful to him. On my relating the story of the robbery that had been committed on me, he no doubt imagined I was in want, and gave me twenty-five louis. To tell the truth it was much less than what I had given him at Venice, and if he had looked upon his action as paying back a debt we should not have been quits; but as I had never wished him to think that I had lent, not given him money, I received the present gratefully. He also gave me a letter for Count Maximilian Lamberg, marshal at the court of the Prince-Bishop of Augsburg, whose acquaintance I had the honour of having.

There was no theatre then in Augsburg, but there were masked balls in which all classes mingled freely. There were also small parties where faro was played for small stakes. I was tired of the pleasure, the misfortune, and the griefs I had had in three capitals, and I resolved to spend four months in the free city of Augsburg, where strangers have the same privileges as the canons. My purse was slender, but with the economical life I led I had nothing to fear on that score. I was not far from Venice, where a hundred ducats were always at my service if I wanted them. I played a little and waged war against the sharpers who have become more numerous of late than the dupes, as there are also more doctors than patients. I also thought of getting a mistress, for what is life without love? I had tried in vain to retrace Gertrude; the engraver was dead, and no one knew what had become of his daughter.

Two or three days before the end of the carnival I went to a hirer of carriages, as I had to go to a ball at some distance from the town. While the horses were being put in, I entered the room to warm my hands, for the weather was very cold. A girl came up and asked me if I would drink a glass of wine.

"No," said I; and on the question being repeated, repeated the monosyllable somewhat rudely. The girl stood still and began to laugh, and I was about to turn angrily away when she said, —

"I see you do not remember me?"

I looked at her attentively, and at last I discovered beneath her unusually ugly features the lineaments of Anna Midel, the maid in the engraver's house.

"You remind me of Anna Midel," said I.

"Alas, I was Anna Midel once. I am no longer an object fit for love, but that is your fault."

"Mine?"

"Yes; the four hundred florins you gave me made Count Fugger's coachman marry me, and he not only abandoned me but gave me a disgusting disease, which was like to have been my death. I recovered my health, but I never shall recover my good looks."

"I am very sorry to hear all this; but tell me what has become of Gertrude?"

"Then you don't know that you are going to a ball at her house to-night?"

"Her house?"

"Yes. After her father's death she married a well-to-do and respectable man, and I expect you will be pleased with the entertainment."

“Is she pretty still?”

“She is just as she used to be, except that she is six years older and has had children.”

“Is she gallant?”

“I don’t think so.”

Anna had spoken the truth. Gertrude was pleased to see me, and introduced me to her husband as one of her father’s old lodgers, and I had altogether a pleasant welcome; but, on sounding her, I found she entertained those virtuous sentiments which might have been expected under the circumstances.

Campioni arrived at Augsburg at the beginning of Lent. He was in company with Binetti, who was going to Paris. He had completely despoiled his wife, and had left her for ever. Campioni told me that no one at Vienna doubted my story in the slightest degree. Pocchini and the Sclav had disappeared a few days after my departure, and the Statthalter had incurred a great deal of odium by his treatment of me. Campioni spent a month with me, and then went on to London.

I called on Count Lamberg and his countess, who, without being beautiful, was an epitome of feminine charm and amiability. Her name before marriage was Countess Dachsberg. Three months after my arrival, this lady, who was enciente, but did not think her time was due, went with Count Fugger, dean of the chapter, to a party of pleasure at an inn three quarters of a league from Augsburg. I was present; and in the course of the meal she was taken with such violent pains that she feared she would be delivered on the spot. She did not like to tell the noble canon, and thinking that I was more likely to be acquainted with such emergencies she came up to me and told me all. I ordered the coachman to put in his horses instantly, and when the coach was ready I took up the countess and carried her to it. The canon followed us in blank astonishment, and asked me what was the matter. I told him to bid the coachman drive fast and not to spare his horses. He did so, but he asked again what was the matter.

“The countess will be delivered of a child if we do not make haste.”

I thought I should be bound to laugh, in spite of my sympathies for the poor lady’s pains, when I saw the dean turn green and white and purple, and look as if he were going into a fit, as he realized that the countess might be delivered before his eyes in his own carriage. The poor man looked as grievously tormented as St. Laurence on his gridiron. The bishop was at Plombieres; they would write and tell him! It would be in all the papers! “Quick! coachman, quick!”

We got to the castle before it was too late. I carried the lady into her rook, and they ran for a surgeon and a midwife. It was no good, however, for in five minutes the count came out and said the countess had just been happily delivered. The dean looked as if a weight had been taken off his mind; however, he took the precaution of having himself blooded.

I spent an extremely pleasant four months at Augsburg, supping twice or thrice a week at Count Lamberg’s. At these suppers I made the acquaintance of a very remarkable man — Count Thura and Valsamina, then a page in the prince-bishop’s household, now Dean of Ratisbon. He was always at the count’s, as was also Dr. Algardi, of Bologna, the prince’s physician and a delightful man.

I often saw at the same house a certain Baron Sellenthin, a Prussian officer, who was always recruiting for his master at Augsburg. He was a pleasant man, somewhat in the Gascon style, soft-spoken, and an expert gamester. Five or six years ago I had a letter from him dated Dresden, in which he said that though he was old, and had married a rich wife, he repented of having married at all. I should say the same if I had ever chanced to marry.

During my stay at Augsburg several Poles, who had left their country on account of the troubles, came to see me. Amongst others was Rzewuski, the royal Prothonotary, whom I had known at St. Petersburg as the lover of poor Madame Langlade.

“What a diet! What plots! What counterplots! What misfortunes!” said this honest Pole, to me. “Happy are they who have nothing to do with it!”

He was going to Spa, and he assured me that if I followed him I should find Prince Adam’s sister, Tomatis, and Madame Catai, who had become the manager’s wife. I determined to go to Spa, and to take measures so that I might go there with three or four hundred ducats in my purse. To this intent I wrote to Prince Charles of Courland, who was at Venice, to send me a hundred ducats, and in my letter I gave him an infallible receipt for the philosopher's stone. The letter containing this vast secret was not in cypher, so I advised him to burn it after he had read it, assuring him that I possessed a copy. He did not do so, and it was taken to Paris with his order papers when he was sent to the Bastile.

If it had not been for the Revolution my letter would never have seen the light. When the Bastille was destroyed, my letter was found and printed with other curious compositions, which were afterwards translated into German and English. The ignorant fools that abound in the land where my fate wills that I should write down the chief events of my long and troublous life — these fools, I say, who are naturally my sworn foes (for the ass lies not down with the horse), make this letter an article of accusation against me, and think they can stop my mouth by telling me that the letter has been translated into German, and remains to my eternal shame. The ignorant Bohemians are astonished when I tell them that I regard the letter as redounding to my glory, and that if their ears were not quite so long their blame would be turned into praise.

I do not know whether my letter has been correctly translated, but since it has become public property I shall set it down here in homage to truth, the only god I adore. I have before me an exact copy of the original written in Augsburg in the year 1767, and we are now in the year 1798.

It runs as follows:

"MY LORD, — I hope your highness will either burn this letter after reading it, or else preserve it with the greatest care. It will be better, however, to make a copy in cypher, and to burn the original. My attachment to you is not my only motive in writing; I confess my interest is equally concerned. Allow me to say that I do not wish your highness to esteem me alone for any qualities you may have observed in me; I wish you to become my debtor by the inestimable secret I am going to confide to you. This secret relates to the making of gold, the only thing of which your highness stands in need. If you had been miserly by nature you would be rich now; but you are generous, and will be poor all your days if you do not make use of my secret.

"Your highness told me at Riga that you would like me to give you the secret by which I transmuted iron into copper; I never did so, but now I shall teach you how to make a much more marvellous transmutation. I should point out to you, however, that you are not at present in a suitable place for the operation, although all the materials are easily procurable. The operation necessitates my presence for the construction of a furnace, and for the great care necessary, far the least mistake will spoil all. The transmutation of Mars is an easy and merely mechanical process, but that of gold is philosophical in the highest degree. The gold produced will be equal to that used in the Venetian sequins. You must reflect, my lord, that I am giving you information which will permit you to dispense with me, and you must also reflect that I am confiding to you my life and my liberty.

"The step I am taking should insure your life-long protection, and should raise you above that prejudice which is entertained against the general mass of alchemists. My vanity would be wounded if you refuse to distinguish me from the common herd of operators. All I ask you is that you will wait till we meet before undertaking the process. You cannot do it by yourself, and if you employ any other person but myself, you will betray the secret. I must tell you that, using the same materials, and by the addition of mercury and nitre, I made the tree of projection for the Marchioness d'Urfe and the Princess of Anhalt. Zerbst calculated the profit as fifty per cent. My fortune would have been made long ago, if I had found a prince with the control of a mint whom I could trust. Your character enables me to confide in you. However, we will come to the point.

"You must take four ounces of good silver, dissolve in aqua fortis, precipitate secundum artem with copper, then wash in lukewarm water to separate the acids; dry, mix with half an ounce of sal ammoniac, and place in a suitable vessel. Afterwards you must take a pound of alum, a pound of Hungary crystals, four ounces of verdigris, four ounces of cinnabar, and two ounces of sulphur. Pulverise and mix, and place in a retort of such size that the above matters will only half fill it. This retort must be placed over a furnace with four draughts, for the heat must be raised to the fourth degree. At first your fire must be slow so as to extract the gross phlegm of the matter, and when the spirit begins to appear, place the receiver under the retort, and Luna with the ammoniac salts will appear in it. All the joinings must be luted with the Philosophical Luting, and as the spirit comes, so regulate your furnace, but do not let it pass the third degree of heat.

"So soon as the sublimation begins then boldly open your forth vent, but take heed that that which is sublimed pass not into the receiver where is your Luna, and so you must shut, the mouth of the retort closely, and keep it so for twenty-four hours, and then take off your fastenings, and allow the distillation to go on. Then you must increase your fire so that the spirits may pass, over, until the matter in the retort is quite desiccated. After this operation has been performed three times, then you shall see, the gold appear in the retort. Then draw it forth and melt it, adding your corpus perfectum. Melt with it two ounces of gold, then lay it in water, and you shall find four ounces of pure gold.

“Such my lord, is the gold mine for your mint of Mitau, by which, with the assistance of a manager and four men, you can assure yourself a revenue of a thousand ducats a week, and double, and quadruple that sum, if your highness chooses to increase the men and the furnaces. I ask your highness to make me your manager. But remember it must be a State secret, so burn this letter, and if your highness would give me any reward in advance, I only ask you to give me your affection and esteem. I shall be happy if I have reason to believe that my master will also be my friend. My life, which this letter places in your power, is ever at your service, and I know not what I shall do if I ever have cause to repent having disclosed my secret. I have the honour to be, etc.”

In whatever language this letter may have been translated, if its sense run not as above, it is not my letter, and I am ready to give the lie to all the Mirabeaus in the world. I have been called an exile, but wrongfully, for a man who has to leave a country by virtue of a ‘lettre de cachet’ is no exile. He is forced to obey a despotic monarch who looks upon his kingdom as his house, and turns out of doors anyone who meets with his displeasure.

As soon as my purse swelled to a respectable size, I left Augsburg, The date of my departure was June 14th, 1767. I was at Ulm when a courier of the Duke of Wurtemburg’s passed through the town with the news that his highness would arrive from Venice in the course of five or six days. This courier had a letter for me. It had been entrusted to him by Prince Charles of Courland, who had told the courier that he would find me at the “Hotel du Raisin,” in Augsburg. As it happened, I had left the day before, but knowing the way by which I had gone he caught me up at Ulm. He gave me the letter and asked me if I were the same Casanova who had been placed under arrest and had escaped, on account of some gambling dispute with three officers. As I was never an adept in concealing the truth, I replied in the affirmative. A Wurtemburg officer who was standing beside us observed to me in a friendly manner that he was at Stuttgart at the time, and that most people concurred in blaming the three officers for their conduct in the matter.

Without making any reply I read the letter, which referred to our private affairs, but as I was reading it I resolved to tell a little lie — one of those lies which do nobody any harm.

“Well, sir,” I said to the officer, “his highness, your sovereign, has listened to reason at last, and this letter informs me of a reparation which is in every way satisfactory. The duke has created me his private secretary, with a salary of twelve hundred a year. But I have waited for it a long time. God knows what has become of the three officers!”

“They are all at Louisburg, and —— -is now a colonel.”

“Well, they will be surprised to hear my news, and they will hear it to-morrow, for I am leaving this place in an hour. If they are at Louisburg, I shall have a triumph; but I am sorry not to be able to accompany you, however we shall see each other the day after tomorrow.”

I had an excellent night, and awoke with the beautiful idea of going to Louisburg, not to fight the three officers but to frighten them, triumph over them, and to enjoy a pleasant vengeance for the injury they had done me. I should at the same time see a good many old friends; there was Madame Toscani, the duke’s mistress; Baletti, and Vestri, who had married a former mistress of the duke’s. I had sounded the depths of the human heart, and knew I had nothing to fear. The duke was on the point of returning, and nobody would dream of impugning the truth of my story. When he actually did arrive he would not find me, for as soon as the courier announced his approach I should go away, telling everybody that I had orders to precede his highness, and everybody would be duped.

I never had so pleasant an idea before. I was quite proud of it, and I should have despised myself if I had failed to carry it into effect. It would be my vengeance on the duke, who could not have forgotten the terrible letter I had written him; for princes do not forget small injuries as they forget great services.

I slept badly the following night, my anxiety was so great, and I reached Louisburg and gave my name at the town gates, without the addition of my pretended office, for my jest must be matured by degrees. I went to stay at the posting-inn, and just as I was asking for the address of Madame Toscani, she and her husband appeared on the scene. They both flung their arms around my neck, and overwhelmed me with compliments on my wounded arm and the victory I had achieved.

“What victory?”

“Your appearance here has filled the hearts of all your friends with joy.”

“Well, I certainly am in the duke’s service, but how did you find it out?”

“It’s the common talk. The courier who gave you the letter has spread it all abroad, and the officer who was present and arrived here yesterday morning confirmed it. But you cannot imagine the consternation of your three foes. However, we are afraid that you will have some trouble with them, as they have kept your letter of defiance given from Furstenberg.”

“Why didn’t they meet me, then?”

“Two of them could not go, and the third arrived too late.”

“Very good. If the duke has no objection I shall be happy to meet them one after another, not three all at once. Of course, the duel must be with pistols; a sword duel is out of the question with my arm in a sling.”

“We will speak of that again. My daughter wants to make peace before the duke comes, and you had better consent to arrangements, for there are three of them, and it isn’t likely that you could kill the whole three one after the other.”

“Your daughter must have grown into a beauty.”

“You must stop with us this evening; you will see her, for she is no longer the duke’s mistress. She is going to get married.”

“If your daughter can bring about an arrangement I would gladly fall in with it, provided it is an honourable one for me.”

“How is it that you are wearing the sling after all these months?”

“I am quite cured, and yet my arm swells as soon as I let it swing loose. You shall see it after dinner, for you must dine with me if you want me to sup with you.”

Next came Vestri, whom I did not know, accompanied by my beloved Baletti. With them was an officer who was in love with Madame Toscani’s second daughter, and another of their circle, with whom I was also unacquainted. They all came to congratulate me on my honourable position in the duke’s service. Baletti was quite overcome with delight. The reader will recollect that he was my chief assistant in my escape from Stuttgart, and that I was once going to marry his sister. Baletti was a fine fellow, and the duke was very fond of him. He had a little country house, with a spare room, which he begged me to accept, as he said he was only too proud that the duke should know him as my best friend. When his highness came, of course I would have an apartment in the palace. I accepted; and as it was still early, we all went to see the young Toscani. I had loved her in Paris before her beauty had reached its zenith, and she was naturally proud to shew me how beautiful she had become. She shewed me her house and her jewels, told me the story of her amours with the duke, of her breaking with him on account of his perpetual infidelities, and of her marriage with a man she despised, but who was forced on her by her position.

At dinner-time we all went to the inn, where we met the offending colonel; he was the first to take off his hat, we returned the salute, and he passed on his way.

The dinner was a pleasant one, and when it was over I proceeded to take up my quarters with Baletti. In the evening we went to Madame Toscani’s, where I saw two girls of ravishing beauty, Madame Toscani’s daughter and Vestri’s wife, of whom the duke had had two children. Madame Vestri was a handsome woman, but her wit and the charm of her manner enchanted me still more. She had only one fault — she lisped.

There was a certain reserve about the manner of Mdlle. Toscani, so I chiefly addressed myself to Madame Vestri, whose husband was not jealous, for he neither cared for her nor she for him. On the day of my arrival the manager had distributed the parts of a little play which was to be given in honour of the duke’s arrival. It had been written by a local author, in hopes of its obtaining the favour of the Court for him.

After supper the little piece was discussed. Madame Vestri played the principal part, which she was prevailed upon to recite.

“Your elocution is admirable, and your expression full of spirit,” I observed; “but what a pity it is that you do not pronounce the dentals.”

The whole table scouted my opinion.

“It’s a beauty, not a defect,” said they. “It makes her acting soft and delicate; other actresses envy her the privilege of what you call a defect.”

I made no answer, but looked at Madame Vestri.

“Do you think I am taken in by all that?” said she.

“I think you are much too sensible to believe such nonsense.”

“I prefer a man to say honestly, ‘what a pity,’ than to hear all that foolish flattery. But I am sorry to say that there is no remedy for the defect.”

“No remedy?”

“No.”

“Pardon me, I have an infallible remedy for your complaint. You shall give me a good hearty blow if I do not make you read the part perfectly by to-morrow, but if I succeed in making you read it as your husband, for example’s sake, might read it you shall permit me to give you a tender embrace.”

“Very good; but what must I do?”

“You must let me weave a spell over your part, that is all. Give it to me. To-morrow morning at nine o’clock I will bring it to you to get my blow or my kiss, if your husband has no objection.”

“None whatever; but we do not believe in spells.”

“You are right, in a general way; but mine will not fail.”

“Very good.”

Madame Vestri left me the part, and the conversation turned on other subjects. I was condoled with on my swollen hand, and I told the story of my duel. Everybody seemed to delight in entertaining me and feasting me, and I went back to Baletti's in love with all the ladies, but especially with Madame Vestri and Mdlle. Toscani.

Baletti had a beautiful little girl of three years old.

"How did you get that angel?" I asked.

"There's her mother; and, as a proof of my hospitality, she shall sleep with you to-night."

"I accept your generous offer; but let it be to-morrow night."

"And why not to-night?"

"Because I shall be engaged all night in weaving my spell."

"What do you mean? I thought that was a joke."

"No, I am quite serious."

"Are you a little crazy?"

"You shall see. Do you go to bed, and leave me a light and writing materials."

I spent six hours in copying out the part, only altering certain phrases. For all words in which the letter r appeared I substituted another. It was a tiresome task, but I longed to embrace Madame Vestri before her husband. I set about my task in the following manner:

The text ran:

"Les procedes de cet homme m'outragent et me deseparent, je dois penser a me debarrasser."

For this I substituted:

"Cet homme a des facons qui m'offensent et me desolent, il faut que je m'en defasse;" and so on throughout the piece.

When I had finished I slept for three hours, and then rose and dressed. Baletti saw my spell, and said I had earned the curses of the young author, as Madame Vestri would no doubt make him write all parts for her without using the letter 'r'; and, indeed, that was just what she did.

I called on the actress and found her getting up. I gave her the part, and as soon as she saw what I had done she burst out into exclamations of delight;

and calling her husband shewed him my contrivance, and said she would never play a part with an ‘r’ in it again. I promised to copy them all out, and added that I had spent the whole night in amending the present part. “The whole night! Come and take your reward, for you are cleverer than any sorcerer. We must have the author to dinner, and I shall make him promise to write all my parts without the ‘r’, or the duke will not employ him. Indeed, I don’t wonder the duke has made you his secretary. I never thought it would be possible to do what you have done; but I suppose it was very difficult?”

“Not at all. If I were a pretty woman with the like defect I should take care to avoid all words with an ‘r; in them.”

“Oh, that would be too much trouble.”

“Let us bet again, for a box or a kiss, that you can spend a whole day without using an ‘r’. Let us begin now.”

“All in good time,” said she, “but we won’t have any stake, as I think you are too greedy.”

The author came to dinner, and was duly attacked by Madame Vestri. She began by saying that it was an author’s duty to be polite to actresses, and if any of them spoke with a lisp the least he could do was to write their parts without the fatal letter.

The young author laughed, and said it could not be done without spoiling the style. Thereupon Madame Vestri gave him my version of her part, telling him to read it, and to say on his conscience whether the style had suffered. He had to confess that my alterations were positive improvements, due to the great richness of the French language. And he was right, for there is no language in the world that can compare in copiousness of expression with the French.

This trifling subject kept us merry, but Madame Vestri expressed a devout wish that all authors would do for her what I had done. At Paris, where I heard her playing well and lisping terribly, she did not find the authors so obliging, but she pleased the people. She asked me if I would undertake to recompose Zaire, leaving out the r’s.

“Ah!” said I, “considering that it would have to be in verse, and in Voltairean verse, I would rather not undertake the task.”

With a view to pleasing the actress the young author asked me how I would tell her that she was charming without using an ‘r’.

“I should say that she enchanted me, made me in an ecstasy, that she is unique.”

She wrote me a letter, which I still keep, in which the ‘r’ does not appear. If I could have stayed at Stuttgart, this device of mine might have won me her favours; but after a week of feasting and triumph the courier came one morning at ten o’clock and announced that his highness, the duke, would arrive at four.

As soon as I heard the news I told Baletti with the utmost coolness that I thought it would be only polite to meet my lord, and swell his train on his entry into Louisburg; and as I wished to meet him at a distance of two stages I should have to go at once. He thought my idea an excellent one, and went to order post-horses immediately; but when he saw me packing up all my belongings into my trunk, he guessed the truth and applauded the jest. I embraced him and confessed my hardihood. He was sorry to lose me, but he laughed when he thought of the feelings of the duke and of the three officers when they found out the trick. He promised to write to me at Mannheim, where I had decided on spending a week to see my beloved Algardi, who was in the service of the Elector. I had also letters for M. de Sickirigen and Baron Becker, one of the Elector’s ministers.

When the horses were put in I embraced Baletti, his little girl, and his pretty housekeeper, and ordered the postillion to drive to Mannheim.

When we reached Mannheim I heard that the Court was at Schwetzingen, and I bade the postillion drive on. I found everyone I had expected to see. Algardi had got married, M. de Sickingen was soliciting the position of ambassador to Paris, and Baron Becker introduced me to the Elector. Five or six days after my arrival died Prince Frederic des Deux Ponts, and I will here relate an anecdote I heard the day before he died.

Dr. Algardi had attended on the prince during his last illness. I was supping with Veraci, the poet-laureate, on the eve of the prince’s death, and in the course of supper Algardi came in.

“How is the prince?” said I.

“The poor prince — he cannot possibly live more than twenty-four hours.”

“Does he know it?”

“No, he still hopes. He grieved me to the heart by bidding me tell him the whole truth; he even bade me give my word of honour that I was speaking the truth. Then he asked me if he were positively in danger of death.”

“And you told him the truth?”

“Certainly not. I told him his sickness was undoubtedly a mortal one, but that with the help of nature and art wonders might be worked.”

“Then you deceived him, and told a lie?”

“I did not deceive him; his recovery comes under the category of the possible. I did not want to leave him in despair, for despair would most certainly kill him.”

“Yes, yes; but you will confess that you told him a lie and broke your word of honour.”

“I told no lie, for I know that he may possibly be cured.”

“Then you lied just now?”

“Not at all, for lie will die to-morrow.”

“It seems to me that your reasoning is a little Jesuitical.”

“No, it is not. My duty was to prolong my patient’s life and to spare him a sentence which would most certainly have shortened it, possibly by several hours; besides, it is not an absolute impossibility that he should recover, therefore I did not lie when I told him that he might recover, nor did I lie just now when I gave it as my opinion (the result of my experience) that he would die to-morrow. I would certainly wager a million to one that he will die to-morrow, but I would not wager my life.”

“You are right, and yet for all that you deceived the poor man; for his intention in asking you the question was not to be told a commonplace which he knew as well as you, but to learn your true opinion as to his life or death. But again I agree with you that as his physician you were quite right not to shorten his few remaining hours by telling him the terrible truth.”

After a fortnight I left Schwetzingen, leaving some of my belongings under the care of Veraci the poet, telling him I would call for them some day; but I never came, and after a lapse of thirty-one years Veraci keeps them still. He was one of the strangest poets I have ever met. He affected eccentricity to make himself notorious, and opposed the great Metastasio in everything, writing unwieldy verses which he said gave more scope for the person who set them to music. He had got this extravagant notion from Jumelli.

I traveled to Mayence and thence I sailed to Cologne, where I looked forward to the pleasure of meeting with the burgomaster's wife who disliked General Kettler, and had treated me so well seven years ago. But that was not the only reason which impelled me to visit that odious town. When I was at Dresden I had read in a number of the Cologne Gazette that "Master Casanova has returned to Warsaw only to be sent about his business again. The king has heard some stories of this famous adventurer, which compel him to forbid him his Court."

I could not stomach language of this kind, and I resolved to pay Jacquet, the editor, a visit, and now my time had come.

I made a hasty dinner and then called on the burgomaster, whom I found sitting at table with his fair Mimi. They welcomed me warmly, and for two hours I told them the story of my adventures during the last seven years. Mimi had to go out, and I was asked to dine with them the next day.

I thought she looked prettier than ever, and my imagination promised me some delicious moments with her. I spent an anxious and impatient night, and called on my Amphitryon at an early hour to have an opportunity of speaking to his dear companion. I found her alone, and began with an ardent caress which she gently repelled, but her face froze my passion in its course.

"Time is an excellent doctor," said she, "and it has cured me of a passion which left behind it the sting of remorse."

"What! The confessional … ."

"Should only serve as a place wherein to confess our sins of the past, and to implore grace to sin no more."

"May the Lord save me from repentance, the only source of which is a prejudice! I shall leave Cologne to-morrow."

"I do not tell you to go."

"If there is no hope, it is no place for me. May I hope?"

"Never."

She was delightful at table, but I was gloomy and distracted. At seven o'clock next day I set out, and as soon as I had passed the Aix la Chapelle Gate, I told the postillion to stop and wait for me. I then walked to Jacquet's, armed with a pistol and a cane, though I only meant to beat him.

The servant shewed me into the room where he was working by himself. It was on the ground floor, and the door was open for coolness' sake.

He heard me coming in and asked what he could do for me.

"You scoundrelly journalist." I replied, "I am the adventurer Casanova whom you slandered in your miserable sheet four months ago."

So saying I directed my pistol at his head, with my left hand, and lifted my cane with my right. But the wretched scribbler fell on his knees before me with clasped hands and offered to shew me the signed letter he had received from Warsaw, which contained the statements he had inserted in his paper.

"Where is this letter?"

"You shall have it in a moment."

I made way for him to search, but I locked and bolted the door to prevent his escaping. The man trembled like a leaf and began to look for the letter amongst his Warsaw correspondence, which was in a disgraceful state of confusion. I shewed him the date of the article in the paper, but the letter could not be found; and at the end of an hour he fell down again on his knees, and told me to do what I would to him. I gave him a kick and told him to get up and follow me. He made no reply, and followed me bareheaded till he saw me get into my chaise and drive off, and I have no doubt he gave thanks to God for his light escape. In the evening, I reached Aix-la-Chapelle, where I found Princess Lubomirska, General Roniker, several other distinguished Poles, Tomatis and his wife, and many Englishmen of my acquaintance.

CHAPTER II

My Stay at Spa — The Blow — The Sword — Della Croce — Charlotte;

Her Lying-in and Death — A Lettre de Cachet Obliges Me to

Leave Paris in the Course of Twenty-four Hours

All my friends seemed delighted to see me, and I was well pleased to find myself in such good company. People were on the point of leaving Aix for Spa. Nearly everyone went, and those who stayed only did so because lodgings were not to be had at Spa. Everybody assured me that this was the case, and many had returned after seeking in vain for a mere garret. I paid no attention to all this, and told the princess that if she would come with me I would find some lodging, were it only in my carriage. We accordingly set out the next day, and got to Spa in good time, our company consisting of the princess, the prothonotary, Roniker, and the Tomatis. Everyone except myself had taken rooms in advance, I alone knew not where to turn. I got out and prepared for the search, but before going along the streets I went into a shop and bought a hat, having lost mine on the way. I explained my situation to the shopwoman, who seemed to take an interest in me, and began speaking to her husband in Flemish or Walloon, and finally informed me that if it were only for a few days she and her husband would sleep in the shop and give up their room to me. But she said that she had absolutely no room whatever for my man.

“I haven’t got one.”

“All the better. Send away your carriage.”

“Where shall I send it?”

“I will see that it is housed safely.”

“How much am I to pay?”

“Nothing; and if you are not too particular, we should like you to share our meals.”

"I accept your offer thankfully."

I went up a narrow staircase, and found myself in a pretty little room with a closet, a good bed, suitable furniture, and everything perfectly neat and clean. I thought myself very lucky, and asked the good people why they would not sleep in the closet rather than the shop, and they replied with one breath that they would be in my way, while their niece would not interfere with me.

This news about the niece was a surprise to me. The closet had no door, and was not much bigger than the bed which it contained; it was, in fact, a mere alcove, without any window.

I must note that my hostess and her husband, both of them from Liege, were perfect models of ugliness.

"It's not within the limits of possibility," I said to myself, "for the niece to be uglier than they, but if they allow her to sleep thus in the same room with the first comer, she must be proof against all temptation."

However, I gave no sign, and did not ask to see the niece for fear of offense, and I went out without opening my trunk. I told them as I went out that I should not be back till after supper, and gave them some money to buy wax candles and night lights.

I went to see the princess with whom I was to sup. All the company congratulated me on my good fortune in finding a lodging. I went to the concert, to the bank at faro, and to the other gaming saloons, and there I saw the so-called Marquis d'Aragon, who was playing at piquet with an old count of the Holy Roman Empire. I was told about the duel he had had three weeks before with a Frenchman who had picked a quarrel with him; the Frenchman had been wounded in the chest, and was still ill. Nevertheless, he was only waiting for his cure to be completed to have his revenge, which he had demanded as he was taken off the field. Such is the way of the French when a duel is fought for a trifling matter. They stop at the first blood, and fight the duel over and over again. In Italy, on the other hand, duels are fought to the death. Our blood burns to fire when our adversary's sword opens a vein. Thus stabbing is common in Italy and rare in France; while duels are common in France, and rare in Italy.

Of all the company at Spa, I was most pleased to see the Marquis Caraccioli, whom I had left in London. His Court had given him leave of absence, and he was spending it at Spa. He was brimful of wit and the milk of human kindness, compassionate for the weaknesses of others, and devoted to youth, no matter of what sex, but he knew well the virtue of moderation, and used all things without abusing them. He never played, but he loved a good gamester and despised all dupes. The worthy marquis was the means of making the fortune of the so-called Marquis d'Aragon by becoming surety for his nobility and bona fides to a wealthy English widow of fifty, who had taken a fancy to him, and brought him her fortune of sixty thousand pounds sterling. No doubt the widow was taken with the gigantic form and the beautiful title of d'Aragon, for Dragon (as his name really was) was devoid of wit and manners, and his legs, which I suppose he kept well covered, bore disgusting marks of the libertine life he had led. I saw the marquis some time afterwards at Marseilles, and a few years later he purchased two estates at Modena. His wife died in due course, and according to the English law he inherited the whole of her property.

I returned to my lodging in good time, and went to bed without seeing the niece, who was fast asleep. I was waited on by the ugly aunt, who begged me not to take a servant while I remained in her house, for by her account all servants were thieves.

When I awoke in the morning the niece had got up and gone down. I dressed to go to the Wells, and warned my host and hostess that I should have the pleasure of dining with them. The room I occupied was the only place in which they could take their meals, and I was astonished when they came and asked my permission to do so. The niece had gone out, so I had to put my curiosity aside. When I was out my acquaintances pointed out to me the chief beauties who then haunted the Wells. The number of adventurers who flock to Spa during the season is something incredible, and they all hope to make their fortunes; and, as may be supposed, most of them go away as naked as they came, if not more so. Money circulates with great freedom, but principally amongst the gamesters, shop-keepers, money-lenders, and courtezans. The money which proceeds from the gaming-table has three issues: the first and smallest share goes to the Prince-Bishop of Liege; the second and larger portion, to the numerous amateur cheats who frequent the place; and by far the largest of all to the coffers of twelve sharpers, who keep the tables and are authorized by the sovereign.

Thus goes the money. It comes from the pockets of the dupes — poor moths who burn their wings at Spa!

The Wells are a mere pretext for gaming, intriguing, and fortune-hunting. There are a few honest people who go for amusement, and a few for rest and relaxation after the toils of business.

Living is cheap enough at Spa. The table d'hote is excellent, and only costs a small French crown, and one can get good lodging for the like sum.

I came home at noon having won a score of louis. I went into the shop, intending to go to my room, but I was stopped short by seeing a handsome brunette, of nineteen or twenty, with great black eyes, voluptuous lips, and shining teeth, measuring out ribbon on the counter. This, then, was the niece, whom I had imagined as so ugly. I concealed my surprise and sat down in the shop to gaze at her and endeavour to make her acquaintance. But she hardly seemed to see me, and only acknowledged my presence by a slight inclination of the head. Her aunt came down to say that dinner was ready, and I went upstairs and found the table laid for four. The servant brought in the soup, and then asked me very plainly to give her some money if I wanted any wine, as her master and mistress only drank beer. I was delighted with her freedom, and gave her money to buy two bottles of Burgundy.

The master came up and shewed me a gold repeater with a chain also of gold by a well-known modern maker. He wanted to know how much it was worth.

“Forty louis at the least.”

“A gentleman wants me to give him twenty louis for it, on the condition that I return it to-morrow if he brings me twenty-two.”

“Then I advise you to accept his offer.”

“I haven't got the money.”

“I will lend it you with pleasure.”

I gave him the twenty Louis, and placed the watch in my jewel-casket. At table the niece sat opposite to me, but I took care not to look at her, and she, like a modest girl, did not say a score of words all through the meal. The meal was an excellent one, consisting of soup, boiled beef, an entree, and a roast. The mistress of the house told me that the roast was in my honour, "for," she said, "we are not rich people, and we only allow ourselves this Luxury on a Sunday." I admired her delicacy, and the evident sincerity with which she spoke. I begged my entertainers to help me with my wine, and they accepted the offer, saying they only wished they were rich enough to be able to drink half a bottle a day.

"I thought trade was good with you."

"The stuff is not ours, and we have debts; besides, the expenses are very great. We have sold very little up to now."

"Do you only sell hats?"

"No, we have silk handkerchiefs, Paris stockings, and lace ruffs, but they say everything is too dear."

"I will buy some things for you, and will send all my friends here. Leave it to me; I will see what I can do for you."

"Mercy, fetch down one or two packets of those handkerchiefs and some stockings, large size, for the gentleman has a big leg."

Mercy, as the niece was called, obeyed. I pronounced the handkerchiefs superb and the stockings excellent. I bought a dozen, and I promised them that they should sell out their whole stock. They overwhelmed me with thanks, and promised to put themselves entirely in my hands.

After coffee, which, like the roast, was in my honour, the aunt told her niece to take care to awake me in the morning when she got up. She said she would not fail, but I begged her not to take too much trouble over me, as I was a very heavy sleeper.

In the afternoon I went to an armourer's to buy a brace of pistols, and asked the man if he knew the tradesman with whom I was staying.

"We are cousins-german," he replied.

"Is he rich?"

"Yes, in debts."

"Why?"

"Because he is unfortunate, like most honest people."

"How about his wife?"

"Her careful economy keeps him above water."

"Do you know the niece?"

"Yes; she's a good girl, but very pious. Her silly scruples keep customers away from the shop."

"What do you think she should do to attract customers?"

"She should be more polite, and not play the prude when anyone wants to give her a kiss."

"She is like that, is she?"

"Try her yourself and you will see. Last week she gave an officer a box on the ear. My cousin scolded her, and she wanted to go back to Liege; however, the wife soothed her again. She is pretty enough, don't you think so?"

"Certainly I do, but if she is as cross-grained as you say, the best thing will be to leave her alone."

After what I had heard I made up my mind to change my room, for Mercy had pleased me in such a way that I was sure I should be obliged to pay her a call before long, and I detested Pamelas as heartily as Charpillons.

In the afternoon I took Rzewuski and Roniker to the shop, and they bought fifty ducats' worth of goods to oblige me. The next day the princess and Madame Tomatis bought all the handkerchiefs.

I came home at ten o'clock, and found Mercy in bed as I had done the night before. Next morning the watch was redeemed, and the hatter returned me twenty-two louis. I made him a present of the two louis, and said I should always be glad to lend him money in that way — the profits to be his. He left me full of gratitude.

I was asked to dine with Madame Tomatis, so I told my hosts that I would have the pleasure of supping with them, the costs to be borne by me. The supper was good and the Burgundy excellent, but Mercy refused to taste it. She happened to leave the room for a moment at the close of the meal, and I observed to the aunt that her niece was charming, but it was a pity she was so sad.

“She will have to change her ways, or I will keep her no longer.”

“Is she the same with all men?”

“With all.”

“Then she has never been in love.”

“She says she has not, but I don’t believe her.”

“I wonder she can sleep so comfortably with a man at a few feet distant.”

“She is not afraid.”

Mercy came in, bade us good night, and said she would go to bed. I made as if I would give her a kiss, but she turned her back on me, and placed a chair in front of her closet so that I might not see her taking off her chemise. My host and hostess then went to bed, and so did I, puzzling my head over the girl’s behaviour which struck me as most extraordinary and unaccountable. However, I slept peacefully, and when I awoke the bird had left the nest. I felt inclined to have a little quiet argument with the girl, and to see what I could make of her; but I saw no chance of my getting an opportunity. The hatter availed himself of my offer of purse to lend money on pledges, whereby he made a good profit. There was no risk for me in the matter, and he and his wife declared that they blessed the day on which I had come to live with them.

On the fifth or sixth day I awoke before Mercy, and only putting on my dressing-gown I came towards her bed. She had a quick ear and woke up, and no sooner did she see me coming towards her than she asked me what I wanted. I sat down on her bed and said gently that I only wanted to wish her a good day and to have a little talk. It was hot weather, and she was only covered by a single sheet; and stretching out one arm I drew her towards me, and begged her to let me give her a kiss. Her resistance made me angry; and passing an audacious hand under the sheet I discovered that she was made like other women; but just as my hand was on the spot, I received a fisticuff on the nose that made me see a thousand stars, and quite extinguished the fire of my concupiscence. The blood streamed from my nose and stained the bed of the furious Mercy. I kept my presence of mind and left her on the spot, as the blow she had given me was but a sample of what I might expect if I attempted reprisals. I washed my face in cold water, and as I was doing so Mercy dressed herself and left the room.

At last my blood ceased to flow, and I saw to my great annoyance that my nose was swollen in such a manner that my face was simply hideous. I covered it up with a handkerchief and sent for the hairdresser to do my hair, and when this was done my landlady brought me up some fine trout, of which I approved; but as I was giving her the money she saw my face and uttered a cry of horror. I told her the whole story, freely acknowledging that I was in the wrong, and begging her to say nothing to her niece. Then heeding not her excuses I went out with my handkerchief before my face, and visited a house which the Duchess of Richmond had left the day before.

Half of the suite she had abandoned had been taken in advance by an Italian marquis; I took the other half, hired a servant, and had my effects transported there from my old lodgings. The tears and supplications of my landlady had no effect whatever upon me, I felt I could not bear the sight of Mercy any longer.

In the house into which I had moved I found an Englishman who said he would bring down the bruise in one hour, and make the discoloration of the flesh disappear in twenty-four. I let him do what he liked and he kept his word. He rubbed the place with spirits of wine and some drug which is unknown to me; but being ashamed to appear in public in the state I was in, I kept indoors for the rest of the day. At noon the distressed aunt brought me my trout, and said that Mercy was cut to the heart to have used me so, and that if I would come back I could do what I liked with her.

“You must feel,” I replied, “that if I complied with your request the adventure would become public to the damage of my honour and your business, and your niece would not be able to pass for a devotee any longer.”

I made some reflections on the blow she had given the officer, much to the aunt’s surprise, for she could not think how I had heard of it; and I shewed her that, after having exposed me to her niece’s brutality, her request was extremely out of place. I concluded by saying that I could believe her to be an accomplice in the fact without any great stretch of imagination. This made her burst into tears, and I had to apologize and to promise to continue forwarding her business by way of consolation, and so she left me in a calmer mood. Half an hour afterwards her husband came with twenty-five Louis I had lent him on a gold snuff-box set with diamonds, and proposed that I should lend two hundred Louis on a ring worth four hundred.

“It will be yours,” he said, “if the owner does not bring me two hundred and twenty Louis in a week’s time.”

I had the money and proceeded to examine the stone which seemed to be a good diamond, and would probably weigh six carats as the owner declared. The setting was in gold.

“I consent to give the sum required if the owner is ready to give me a receipt.”

“I will do so myself in the presence of witnesses.”

“Very good. You shall have the money in the course of an hour; I am going to have the stone taken out first. That will make no difference to the owner, as I shall have it reset at my own expense. If he redeems it, the twenty Louis shall be yours.”

“I must ask him whether he has any objection to the stone being taken out.”

“Very good, but you can tell him that if he will not allow it to be done he will get nothing for it.”

He returned before long with a jeweller who said he would guarantee the stone to be at least two grains over the six carats.

“Have you weighed it?”

“No, but I am quite sure it weighs over six carats.”

“Then you can lend the money on it?”

“I cannot command such a sum.”

“Can you tell me why the owner objects to the stone being taken out and put in at my expense?”

“No, I can’t; but he does object.”

“Then he may take his ring somewhere else.”

They went away, leaving me well pleased at my refusal, for it was plain that the stone was either false or had a false bottom.

I spent the rest of the day in writing letters and making a good supper, In the morning I was awoke by someone knocking at my door, and on my getting up to open it, what was my astonishment to find Mercy!

I let her in, and went back to bed, and asked her what she wanted with me so early in the morning. She sat down on the bed, and began to overwhelm me with apologies. I replied by asking her why, if it was her principle to fly at her lovers like a tiger, she had slept almost in the same room as myself.

“In sleeping in the closet,” said she, “I obeyed my aunt’s orders, and in striking you (for which I am very sorry) I was but defending my honour; and I cannot admit that every man who sees me is at liberty to lose his reason. I think you will allow that your duty is to respect, and mine to defend, my honour.”

“If that is your line of argument, I acknowledge that you are right; but you had nothing to complain of, for I bore your blow in silence, and by my leaving the house you might know that it was my intention to respect you for the future. Did you come to hear me say this? If so, you are satisfied. But you will not be offended if I laugh at your excuses, for after what you have said I cannot help thinking them very laughable.”

“What have I said?”

“That you only did your duty in flattening my nose. If so, do you think it is necessary to apologize for the performance of duty?”

“I ought to have defended myself more gently. But forget everything and forgive me; I will defend myself no more in any way. I am yours and I love you, and I am ready to prove my love.”

She could not have spoken more plainly, and as she spoke the last words she fell on me with her face close to mine, which she bedewed with her tears. I was ashamed of such an easy conquest, and I gently withdrew from her embrace, telling her to return after the bruise on my face had disappeared. She left me deeply mortified.

The Italian, who had taken half the suite of rooms, had arrived in the course of the night. I asked his name, and was given a card bearing the name of

The Marquis Don Antonio della Croce.

Was it the Croce I knew?

It was very possible.

I asked what kind of an establishment he had, and was informed that the marchioness had a lady's maid, and the marquis a secretary and two servants. I longed to see the nobleman in question.

I had not long to wait, for as soon as he heard that I was his neighbour, he came to see me, and we spent two hours in telling each other our adventures since we had parted in Milan. He had heard that I had made the fortune of the girl he had abandoned, and in the six years that had elapsed he had been travelling all over Europe, engaged in a constant strife with fortune. At Paris and Brussels he had made a good deal of money, and in the latter town he had fallen in love with a young lady of rank, whom her father had shut up in a convent. He had taken her away, and she it was whom he called the Marchioness della Croce, now six months with child.

He made her pass for his wife, because, as he said, he meant to marry her eventually.

"I have fifty thousand francs in gold," said he, "and as much again in jewellery and various possessions. It is my intention to give suppers here and hold a bank, but if I play without correcting the freaks of fortune I am sure to lose." He intended going to Warsaw, thinking I would give him introductions to all my friends there; but he made a mistake, and I did not even introduce him to my Polish friends at Spa. I told him he could easily make their acquaintance by himself, and that I would neither make nor mar with him.

I accepted his invitation to dinner for the same day. His secretary, as he called him, was merely his confederate. He was a clever Veronese named Conti, and his wife was an essential accomplice in Croce's designs.

At noon my friend the hatter came again with the ring, followed by the owner, who looked like a bravo. They were accompanied by the jeweller and another individual. The owner asked me once more to lend him two hundred louis on the ring.

My proper course would have been to beg to be excused, then I should have had no more trouble in the matter; but it was not to be. I wanted to make him see that the objection he made to having the stone taken out was an insuperable obstacle to my lending him the money.

“When the stone is removed,” said I, “we shall see what it really is. Listen to my proposal: if it weighs twenty-six grains, I will give you, not two but three hundred louis, but in its present condition I shall give nothing at all.”

“You have no business to doubt my word; you insult me by doing so.”

“Not at all, I have no intentions of the kind. I simply propose a wager to you. If the stone be found to weigh twenty-six grains, I shall lose two hundred Louis, if it weighs much less you will lose the ring.”

“That’s a scandalous proposal; it’s as much as to tell me that I am a liar.”

I did not like the tone with which these words were spoken, and I went up to the chest of drawers where I kept my pistols, and bade him go and leave me in peace.

Just then General Roniker came in, and the owner of the ring told him of the dispute between us. The general looked at the ring, and said to him, —

“If anyone were to give me the ring I should not have the stone taken out, because one should not look a gift horse in the mouth; but if it came to a question of buying or lending I would not give a crown for it, were the owner an emperor, before the stone was taken out; and I am very much surprised at your refusing to let this be done.”

Without a word the knave made for the door, and the ring remained in the hands of my late host.

“Why didn’t you give him his ring?” said I.

“Because I have advanced him fifty Louis on it; but if he does not redeem it to-morrow I will have the stone taken out before a judge, and afterwards I shall sell it by auction.”

“I don’t like the man’s manners, and I hope you will never bring anyone to my rooms again.”

The affair came to the following conclusion: The impostor did not redeem the ring, and the Liege tradesman had the setting removed. The diamond was found to be placed on a bed of rock crystal, which formed two-thirds of the whole bulk. However, the diamond was worth fifty Louis, and an Englishman bought it. A week afterwards the knave met me as I was walking by myself, and begged me to follow him to place where we should be free from observation, as his sword had somewhat to say to mine. Curiously enough I happened to be wearing my sword at the time.

“I will not follow you,” I replied; “the matter can be settled here?”

“We are observed.”

“All the better. Make haste and draw your sword first.”

“The advantage is with you.”

“I know it, and so it ought to be. If you do not draw I will proclaim you to be the coward I am sure you are.”

At this he drew his sword rapidly and came on, but I was ready to receive him. He began to fence to try my mettle, but I lunged right at his chest, and gave him three inches of cold steel. I should have killed him on the spot if he had not lowered his sword, saying he would take his revenge at another time. With this he went off, holding his hand to the wound.

A score of people were close by, but no one troubled himself about the wounded man, as he was known to have been the aggressor. The duel had no further consequences for me. When I left Spa the man was still in the surgeon’s hands. He was something worse than an adventurer, and all the French at Spa disowned him.

But to return to Croce and his dinner.

The marchioness, his wife so-called, was a young lady of sixteen or seventeen, fair-complexioned and tall, with all the manners of the Belgian nobility. The history of her escape is well known to her brothers and sisters, and as her family are still in existence my readers will be obliged to me for concealing her name.

Her husband had told her about me, and she received me in the most gracious manner possible. She shewed no signs of sadness or of repentance for the steps she had taken. She was with child for some months, and seemed to be near her term, owing to the slimness of her figure. Nevertheless she had the aspect of perfect health. Her countenance expressed candour and frankness of disposition in a remarkable degree. Her eyes were large and blue, her complexion a roseate hue, her small sweet mouth, her perfect teeth made her a beauty worthy of the brush of Albano.

I thought myself skilled in physiognomy, and concluded that she was not only perfectly happy, but also the cause of happiness. But here let me say how vain a thing it is for anyone to pronounce a man or woman to be happy or unhappy from a merely cursory inspection.

The young marchioness had beautiful ear-rings, and two rings, which gave me a pretext for admiring the beauty of her hands.

Conti's wife did not cut any figure at all, and I was all eyes for the marchioness, whose name was Charlotte. I was profoundly impressed by her that I was quite abstracted during dinner.

I sought in vain to discover by what merits Croce had been able to seduce two such superior women. He was not a fine-looking man, he was not well educated, his manners were doubtful, and his way of speaking by no means seductive; in fine, I saw nothing captivating about him, and yet I could be a witness to his having made two girls leave their homes to follow him. I lost myself in conjecture; but I had no premonition of what was to happen in the course of a few weeks.

When dinner was over I took Croce apart, and talked seriously to him. I impressed on him the necessity of circumspect conduct, as in my opinion he would be for ever infamous if the beautiful woman whom he had seduced was to become wretched by his fault.

"For the future I mean to trust to my skill in play, and thus I am sure of a comfortable living."

"Does she know, that your revenue is fed solely by the purses of dupes?"

"She knows that I am a gamester; and as she adores me, her will is as mine. I am thinking of marrying her at Warsaw before she is confined. If you are in any want of money, look upon my purse as your own."

I thanked him, and once more pressed on him the duty of exercising extreme prudence.

As a matter of fact, I had no need of money. I had played with moderation, and my profits amounted to nearly four hundred louis. When the luck turned against me I was wise enough to turn my back on the board. Although the bruise that Mercy had given me was still apparent, I escorted the marchioness to the tables, and there she drew all eyes upon her. She was fond of piquet, and we played together for small stakes for some time. In the end she lost twenty crowns to me, and I was forced to take the money for fear of offending her.

When we went back we met Croce and Conti, who had both won — Conti a score of louis at Faro, and Croce more than a hundred guineas at ‘passe dix’, which he had been playing at a club of Englishmen. I was more lively at supper than dinner, and excited Charlotte to laughter by my wit.

Henceforth the Poles and the Tomatis only saw me at intervals. I was in love with the fair marchioness, and everybody said it was very natural. When a week had elapsed, Croce, finding that the pigeons would not come to be plucked, despite the suppers he gave, went to the public room, and lost continually. He was as used to loss as to gain, and his spirits were unaltered; he was still gay, still ate well and drank better, and caressed his victim, who had no suspicions of what was going on.

I loved her, but did not dare to reveal my passion, fearing lest it should be unrequited; and I was afraid to tell her of Croce’s losses lest she should put down my action to some ulterior motive; in fine, I was afraid to lose the trust she had already begun to place in me.

At the end of three weeks Conti, who had played with prudence and success, left Croce and set out for Verona with his wife and servant. A few days later Charlotte dismissed her maid, sending her back to Liege, her native town.

Towards the middle of September all the Polish party left the Spa for Paris, where I promised to rejoin them. I only stayed for Charlotte’s sake; I foresaw a catastrophe, and I would not abandon her. Every day Croce lost heavily, and at last he was obliged to sell his jewellery. Then came Charlotte’s turn; she had to give up her watches, ear-rings, her rings, and all the jewels she had. He lost everything, but this wonderful girl was as affectionate as ever. To make a finish he despoiled her of her lace and her best gowns, and then selling his own wardrobe he went to his last fight with fortune, provided with two hundred Louis. He played like a madman, without common-sense or prudence, and lost all.

His pockets were empty, and seeing me he beckoned to me, and I followed him out of the Spa.

"My friend," he began, "I have two alternatives, I can kill myself this instant or I can fly without returning to the house. I shall embrace the latter and go to Warsaw on foot, and I leave my wife in your hands, for I know you adore her. It must be your task to give her the dreadful news of the pass to which I have come. Have a care of her, she is too good by far for a poor wretch like me. Take her to Paris and I will write to you there at your brother's address. I know you have money, but I would die rather than accept a single louis from you. I have still two or three pieces left, and I assure you that I am richer at the present moment than I was two months ago. Farewell; once more I commend Charlotte to your care; I would that she had never known me."

With these words he shed tears, and embracing me went his way. I was stupefied at what lay before me.

I had to inform a pregnant woman that the man she dearly loved had deserted her. The only thought that supported me in that moment was that it would be done for love of her, and I felt thankful that I had sufficient means to secure her from privation.

I went to the house and told her that we might dine at once, as the marquis would be engaged till the evening. She sighed, wished him luck, and we proceeded to dine. I disguised my emotions so well that she conceived no suspicion. After the meal was over, I asked her to walk with me in the garden of the Capuchin Monastery, which was close at hand. To prepare her for the fatal news I asked her if she would approve of her lover exposing himself to assassination for the sake of bidding adieu to her rather than making his escape.

"I should blame him for doing so," she replied. "He ought to escape by all means, if only to save his life for my sake. Has my husband done so? Speak openly to me. My spirit is strong enough to resist even so fatal a blow, for I know I have a friend in you. Speak."

"Well, I will tell you all. But first of all remember this; you must look upon me as a tender father who will never let you want, so long as life remains to him."

“In that case I cannot be called unfortunate, for I have a true friend. Say on.”

I told all that Croce had told me, not omitting his last words: “I commend Charlotte to your care; I would that she had never known me.”

For a few minutes she remained motionless, as one turned into stone. By her attitude, by her laboured and unequal breath, I could divine somewhat of the battle between love, and anger, and sorrow, and pity, that was raging in the noble breast. I was cut to the heart. At last she wiped away the big tears that began to trickle down her cheeks, and turning to me sighed and said, —

“Dear friend, since I can count on you, I am far indeed from utter misery.”

“I swear to you, Charlotte, that I will never leave you till I place you again in your husband’s hands, provided I do not die before.”

“That is enough. I swear eternal gratitude, and to be as submissive to you as a good daughter ought to be.”

The religion and philosophy with which her heart and mind were fortified, though she made no parade of either, began to calm her spirit, and she proceeded to make some reflections on Croce’s unhappy lot, but all in pity not in anger, excusing his inveterate passion for play. She had often heard from Croce’s lips the story of the Marseilles girl whom he had left penniless in an inn at Milan, commending her to my care. She thought it something wonderful that I should again be intervening as the tutelary genius; but her situation was much the worse, for she was with child.

“There’s another difference,” I added, “for I made the fortune of the first by finding her an honest husband, whereas I should never have the courage to adopt the same method with the second.”

“While Croce lives I am no man’s wife but his, nevertheless I am glad to find myself free.”

When we were back in the house, I advised her to send away the servant and to pay his journey to Besanion, where she had taken him. Thus all unpleasantness would be avoided. I made her sell all that remained of her poor lover’s wardrobe, as also his carriage, for mine was a better one. She shewed me all she had left, which only amounted to some sets of linen and three or four dresses.

We remained at Spa without going out of doors. She could see that my love was a tenderer passion than the love of a father, and she told me so, and that she was obliged to me for the respect with which I treated her. We sat together for hours, she folded in my arms, whilst I gently kissed her beautiful eyes, and asked no more. I was happy in her gratitude and in my powers of self-restraint. When temptation was too strong I left the beautiful girl till I was myself again, and such conquests made me proud. In the affection between us there was somewhat of the purity of a man's first love.

I wanted a small travelling cap, and the servant of the house went to my former lodging to order one. Mercy brought several for me to choose from. She blushed when she saw me, but I said nothing to her. When she had gone I told Charlotte the whole story, and she laughed with all her heart when I reminded her of the bruise on my face when we first met, and informed her that Mercy had given it me. She praised my firmness in rejecting her repentance, and agreed with me in thinking that the whole plan had been concerted between her and her aunt.

We left Spa without any servant, and when we reached Liege we took the way of the Ardennes, as she was afraid of being recognized if we passed through Brussels. At Luxemburg we engaged a servant, who attended on us till we reached Paris. All the way Charlotte was tender and affectionate, but her condition prescribed limits to her love, and I could only look forward to the time after her delivery. We got down at Paris at the "Hotel Montmorenci," in the street of the same name.

Paris struck me quite as a new place. Madame d'Urfe was dead, my friends had changed their houses and their fortunes; the poor had become rich and the rich poor, new streets and buildings were rising on all sides; I hardly knew my way about the town. Everything was dearer; poverty was rampant, and luxury at it highest pitch. Perhaps Paris is the only city where so great a change could take place in the course of five or six years.

The first call I made was on Madame du Rumain, who was delighted to see me. I repaid her the money she had so kindly lent me in the time of my distress. She was well in health, but harassed by so many anxieties and private troubles that she said Providence must have sent me to her to relieve her of all her griefs by my cabala. I told her that I would wait on her at any hour or hours; and this, indeed, was the least I could do for the woman who had been so kind to me.

My brother had gone to live in the Faubourg St. Antoine. Both he and his wife (who remained constant to him, despite his physical disability) were overjoyed to see me, and entreated me to come and stop with them. I told them I should be glad to do so, as soon as the lady who had travelled with me had got over her confinement. I did not think proper to tell them her story, and they had the delicacy to refrain from questioning me on the subject. The same day I called on Princess Lubomirska and Tomatis, begging them not to take it amiss if my visits were few and far between, as the lady they had seen at Spa was approaching her confinement, and demanded all my care.

After the discharge of these duties I remained constantly by Charlotte's side. On October 8th I thought it would be well to take her to Madame Lamarre, a midwife, who lived in the Faubourg St. Denis, and Charlotte was of the same opinion. We went together, she saw the room, the bed, and heard how she would be tended and looked after, for all of which I would pay. At nightfall we drove to the place, with a trunk containing all her effects.

As we were leaving the Rue Montmorenci our carriage was obliged to stop to allow the funeral of some rich man to go by. Charlotte covered her face with her handkerchief, and whispered in my ear, "Dearest, I know it is a foolish superstition, but to a woman in my condition such a meeting is of evil omen."

"What, Charlotte! I thought you were too wise to have such silly fears. A woman in child-bed is not a sick woman, and no woman ever died of giving birth to a child except some other disease intervened."

"Yes, my dear philosopher, it is like a duel; there are two men in perfect health, when all of a sudden there comes a sword-thrust, and one of them is dead."

"That's a witty idea. But bid all gloomy thoughts go by, and after your child is born, and we have placed it in good hands, you shall come with me to Madrid, and there I hope to see you happy and contented."

All the way I did my best to cheer her, for I knew only too well the fatal effects of melancholy on a pregnant woman, especially in such a delicate girl as Charlotte.

When I saw her completely settled I returned to the hotel, and the next day I took up my quarters with my brother. However, as long as my Charlotte lived, I only slept at his house, for from nine in the morning till after midnight I was with my dear.

On October 13th Charlotte was attacked with a fever which never left her. On the 17th she was happily delivered of a boy, which was immediately taken to the church and baptized at the express wishes of the mother. Charlotte wrote down what its name was to be — Jacques (after me), Charles (after her), son of Antonio della Croce and of Charlotte de (she gave her real name). When it was brought from the church she told Madame Lamarre to carry it to the Foundling Hospital, with the certificate of baptism in its linen. I vainly endeavoured to persuade her to leave the care of the child to me. She said that if it lived the father could easily reclaim it. On the same day, October 18th, the midwife gave me the following certificate, which I still possess:

It was worded as follows:

“We, J. B. Dorival, Councillor to the King, Commissary of the Chatelet, formerly Superintendent of Police in the City of Paris, do certify that there has been taken to the Hospital for Children a male infant, appearing to be one day old, brought from the Faubourg St. Denis by the midwife Lamarre, and bearing a certificate of baptism to the effect that its name is Jacques Charles, son of Antonio della Croce and of Charlotte de —— . Wherefore, we have delivered the above certificate at our office in the City of Paris, this 18th day of October, in the year of our Lord, 1767, at seven o’clock in the afternoon.

“DORIVAL.”

If any of my readers have any curiosity to know the real name of the mother, I have given them the means of satisfying it.

After this I did not leave the bed of the invalid for a single instant. In spite of all the doctor’s care the fever increased, and at five o’clock in the morning of October 26th, she succumbed to it. An hour before she sighed her last, she bade me the last farewell in the presence of the venerable ecclesiastic who had confessed her at midnight. The tears which gather fast as I write these words are probably the last honours I shall pay to this poor victim of a man who is still alive, and whose destiny seemed to be to make women unhappy.

I sat weeping by the bed of her I loved so dearly, and in vain Madame Lamarre tried to induce me to come and sit with her. I loved the poor corpse better than all the world outside.

At noon my brother and his wife came to see me; they had not seen me for a week, and were getting anxious. They saw the body lovely in death; they understood my tears, and mingled theirs with mine. At last I asked them to leave me, and I remained all night by Charlotte's bed, resolved not to leave it till her body had been consigned to the grave.

The day before this morning of unhappy memory my brother had given me several letters, but I had not opened any of them. On my return from the funeral I proceeded to do so, and the first one was from M. Dandolo, announcing the death of M. de Bragadin; but I could not weep. For twenty-two years M. de Bragadin had been as a father to me, living poorly, and even going into debt that I might have enough. He could not leave me anything, as his property was entailed, while his furniture and his library would become the prey of his creditors. His two friends, who were my friends also, were poor, and could give me nothing but their love. The dreadful news was accompanied by a bill of exchange for a thousand crowns, which he had sent me twenty-four hours before his death, foreseeing that it would be the last gift he would ever make me.

I was overwhelmed, and thought that Fortune had done her worst to me.

I spent three days in my brother's house without going out. On the fourth I began to pay an assiduous court to Princess Lubomirska, who had written the king, her brother, a letter that must have mortified him, as she proved beyond a doubt that the tales he had listened to against me were mere calumny. But your kings do not allow so small a thing to vex or mortify them. Besides, Stanislas Augustus had just received a dreadful insult from Russia. Repnin's violence in kidnapping the three senators who had spoken their minds at the Diet was a blow which must have pierced the hapless king to the heart.

The princess had left Warsaw more from hatred than love; though such was not the general opinion. As I had decided to visit the Court of Madrid before going to Portugal, the princess gave me a letter of introduction to the powerful Count of Aranda; and the Marquis Caraccioli, who was still at Paris, gave me three letters, one for Prince de la Catolica, the Neapolitan ambassador at Madrid, one for the Duke of Lossada, the king's favourite and lord high steward, and a third for the Marquis Mora Pignatelli.

On November 4th I went to a concert with a ticket that the princess had given me. When the concert was half-way through I heard my name pronounced, accompanied by scornful laughter. I turned round and saw the gentleman who was speaking contemptuously of me. It was a tall young man sitting between two men advanced in years. I stared him in the face, but he turned his head away and continued his impertinencies, saying, amongst other things, that I had robbed him of a million francs at least by my swindling his late aunt, the Marchioness d'Urfe.

"You are an impudent liar," I said to him, "and if we were out of this room I would give you a kick to teach you to speak respectfully."

With these words I made my way out of the hall, and on turning my head round I saw that the two elderly men were keeping the young blockhead back. I got into my carriage and waited some time, and as he did not come I drove to the theatre and chanced to find myself in the same box as Madame Valville. She informed me that she had left the boards, and was kept by the Marquis the Brunel.

"I congratulate you, and wish you good luck."

"I hope you will come to supper at my house."

"I should be only too happy, but unfortunately I have an engagement; but I will come and see you if you will give me your address."

So saying, I slipped into her hand a rouleau, it being the fifty louis I owed her.

"What is this?"

"The money you lent me so kindly at Konigsberg."

"This is neither the time nor the place to return it. I will only take it at my own house, so please do not insist."

I put the money back into my pocket, she gave me her address, and I left her. I felt too sad to visit her alone.

Two days later, as I was at table with my brother, my sister-in-law, and some young Russians whom he was teaching to paint, I was told that a Chevalier of St. Louis wanted to speak to me in the antechamber. I went out, and he handed me a paper without making any preface. I opened the document, and found it was signed “Louis.” The great king ordered me to leave Paris in twenty-four hours and his realm of France within three weeks, and the reason assigned was: “It is our good pleasure.”

CHAPTER III

My Departure From Paris — My Journey to Madrid — The Count of

Aranda — The Prince de la Catolica — The Duke of Lossada —

Mengs — A Ball — Madame Pichona — Donna Ignazia

“Well, chevalier,” I said, “I have read the little note, and I will try and oblige his majesty as soon as possible. However, if I have not time to get away in twenty-four hours, his majesty must work his dread will on me.”

“My dear sir, the twenty-four hours are a mere formality. Subscribe the order and give me a receipt for the lettre de cachet, and you can go at your convenience. All I ask of you is that you give me your word of honour not to go to the theatres or public places of amusement on foot.”

“I give you my word with pleasure.”

I took the chevalier to my room and gave him the necessary acknowledgment, and with the observation that he would be glad to see my brother, whom he knew already, I led him into the dining-room, and explained with a cheerful face the purport of his visit.

My brother laughed and said, —

“But, M. Buhot, this news is like March in Lent, it was quite unnecessary; my brother was going in the course of a week.”

“All the better. If the minister had been aware of that he would not have troubled himself about it.”

“Is the reason known?”

“I have heard something about a proposal to kick a gentleman, who though young, is too exalted a person to be spoken to in such a manner.”

“Why, chevalier,” said I, “the phrase is a mere formality like the twenty-four hours for if the impudent young rascal had come out he would have met me, and his sword should have been sufficient to ward off any kicks.”

I then told the whole story, and Buhot agreed that I was in the right throughout; adding that the police were also in the right to prevent any encounter between us. He advised me to go next morning and tell the tale to M. de Sartine, who knew me, and would be glad to have the account from my own lips. I said nothing, as I knew the famous superintendent of police to be a dreadful sermoniser.

The lettre de cachet was dated November 6th, and I did not leave Paris till the 20th.

I informed all my friends of the great honour his majesty had done me, and I would not hear of Madame du Rumain appealing to the king on my behalf, though she said she felt certain she could get the order revoked. The Duc de Choiseul gave me a posting passport dated November 19th, which I still preserve.

I left Paris without any servant, still grieving, though quietly, over Charlotte's fate. I had a hundred Louis in cash, and a bill of exchange on Bordeaux for eight thousand francs. I enjoyed perfect health, and almost felt as if I had been rejuvenated. I had need of the utmost prudence and discretion for the future. The deaths of M. de Bragadin and Madame d'Urfe had left me alone in the world, and I was slowly but steadily approaching what is called a certain age, when women begin to look on a man with coldness.

I only called on Madame Valville on the eve of my departure: and found her in a richly-furnished house, and her casket well filled with diamonds. When I proposed to return her the fifty louis, she asked me if I had got a thousand; and on learning that I had only five hundred she refused the money absolutely and offered me her purse, which I in my turn refused. I have not seen the excellent creature since then, but before I left I gave her some excellent advice as to the necessity of saving her gains for the time of her old age, when her charms would be no more. I hope she has profited by my counsel. I bade farewell to my brother and my sister-in-law at six o'clock in the evening, and got into my chaise in the moonlight, intending to travel all night so as to dine next day at Orleans, where I wanted to see an old friend. In half an hour I was at Bourg-la-Reine, and there I began to fall asleep. At seven in the morning I reached Orleans.

Fair and beloved France, that went so well in those days, despite lettres de cachet, despite corvees, despite the people's misery and the king's "good pleasure," dear France, where art thou now? Thy sovereign is the people now, the most brutal and tyrannical sovereign in the world. You have no longer to bear the "good pleasure" of the sovereign, but you have to endure the whims of the mob and the fancies of the Republic — the ruin of all good Government. A republic presupposes self-denial and a virtuous people; it cannot endure long in our selfish and luxurious days.

I went to see Bodin, a dancer, who had married Madame Joffroy, one of my thousand mistresses whom I had loved twenty-two years ago, and had seen later at Turin, Paris, and Vienna. These meetings with old friends and sweethearts were always a weak or rather a strong point with me. For a moment I seemed to be young again, and I fed once more on the delights of long ago. Repentance was no part of my composition.

Bodin and his wife (who was rather ugly than old-looking, and had become pious to suit her husband's tastes, thus giving to God the devil's leavings), Bodin, I say, lived on a small estate he had purchased, and attributed all the agricultural misfortunes he met with in the course of the year to the wrath of an avenging Deity.

I had a fasting dinner with them, for it was Friday, and they strictly observed all the rules of the Church. I told them of my adventures of the past years, and when I had finished they proceeded to make reflections on the faults and failings of men who have not God for a guide. They told me what I knew already: that I had an immortal soul, that there was a God that judgeth righteously, and that it was high time for me to take example by them, and to renounce all the pomps and vanities of the world.

"And turn Capuchin, I suppose?"

"You might do much worse."

"Very good; but I shall wait till my beard grows the necessary length in a single night."

In spite of their silliness, I was not sorry to have spent six hours with these good creatures who seemed sincerely repentant and happy in their way, and after an affectionate embrace I took leave of them and travelled all night. I stopped at Chanteloup to see the monument of the taste and magnificence of the Duc de Choiseul, and spent twenty-four hours there. A gentlemanly and polished individual, who did not know me, and for whom I had no introduction, lodged me in a fine suite of rooms, gave me supper, and would only sit down to table with me after I had used all my powers of persuasion. The next day he treated me in the same way, gave me an excellent dinner, shewed me everything, and behaved as if I were some prince, though he did not even ask my name. His attentions even extended to seeing that none of his servants were at hand when I got into my carriage and drove off. This was to prevent my giving money to any of them.

The castle on which the Duc de Choiseul had spent such immense sums had in reality cost him nothing. It was all owing, but he did not trouble himself about that in the slightest degree, as he was a sworn foe to the principle of meum and tuum. He never paid his creditors, and never disturbed his debtors. He was a generous man; a lover of art and artists, to whom he liked to be of service, and what they did for him he looked upon as a grateful offering. He was intellectual, but a hater of all detail and minute research, being of a naturally indolent and procrastinating disposition. His favourite saying was,

“There’s time enough for that.”

When I got to Poitiers, I wanted to push on to Vivonne; it was seven o’clock in the evening, and two girls endeavoured to dissuade me from this course.

“It’s very cold,” said they, “and the road is none of the best. You are no courier, sup here, we will give you a good bed, and you shall start again in the morning.”

“I have made up my mind to go on, but if you will keep me company at supper I will stay.”

“That would cost you too dearly.”

“Never too dear. Quick I make up your minds.”

“Well, we will sup with you.”

“Then lay the table for three; I must go on in an hour.”

“In an hour! You mean three, sir; papa will take two hours to get you a good supper.”

“Then I will not go on, but you must keep me company all night.”

“We will do so, if papa does not object. We will have your chaise put into the coach-house.”

These two minxes gave me an excellent supper, and were a match for me in drinking as well as eating. The wine was delicious, and we stayed at table till midnight, laughing and joking together, though without overstepping the bounds of propriety.

About midnight, the father came in jovially, and asked me how I had enjoyed my supper.

“Very much,” I answered, “but I have enjoyed still more the company of your charming daughters.”

“I am delighted to hear it. Whenever you come this way they shall keep you company, but now it is past midnight, and time for them to go to bed.”

I nodded my head, for Charlotte’s death was still too fresh in my memory to admit of my indulging in any voluptuous pleasures. I wished the girls a pleasant sleep, and I do not think I should even have kissed them if the father had not urged me to do this honour to their charms. However, my vanity made me put some fire into the embrace, and I have no doubt they thought me a prey to vain desires.

When I was alone I reflected that if I did not forget Charlotte I was a lost man. I slept till nine o’clock, and I told the servant that came to light my fire to get coffee for three, and to have my horses put in.

The two pretty girls came to breakfast with me, and I thanked them for having made me stay the night. I asked for the bill, and the eldest said it was in round figures a Louis apiece. I shewed no sign of anger at this outrageous fleecing, but gave them three Louis with the best grace imaginable and went on my way. When I reached Angouleme, where I expected to find Noel, the King of Prussia’s cook, I only found his father, whose talents in the matter of pates was something prodigious. His eloquence was as fervent as his ovens. He said he would send his pates all over Europe to any address I liked to give him.

“What! To Venice, London, Warsaw, St. Petersburg?”

"To Constantinople, if you like. You need only give me your address, and you need not pay me till you get the pates."

I sent his pates to my friends in Venice, Warsaw, and Turin, and everybody thanked me for the delicious dish.

Noel had made quite a fortune. He assured me he had sent large consignments to America, and with the exception of some losses by shipwreck all the pates had arrived in excellent condition. They were chiefly made of turkeys, partridges, and hare, seasoned with truffles, but he also made pates de foie gras of larks and of thrushes, according to the season.

In two days I arrived at Bordeaux, a beautiful town coming only second to Paris, with respect to Lyons be it said. I spent a week there, eating and drinking of the best, for the living there is the choicest in the world.

I transferred my bill of exchange for eight thousand francs to a Madrid house, and crossed the Landes, passing by Mont de Marsan, Bayonne, and St. Jean de Luz, where I sold my post-chaise. From St. Jean de Luz I went to Pampeluna by way of the Pyrenees, which I crossed on mule-back, my baggage being carried by another mule. The mountains struck me as higher than the Alps. In this I may possibly be wrong, but I am certain that the Pyrenees are the most picturesque, fertile, and agreeable of the two.

At Pampeluna a man named Andrea Capello took charge of me and my luggage, and we set out for Madrid. For the first twenty leagues the travelling was easy enough, and the roads as good as any in France. These roads did honour to the memory of M. de Gages, who had administered Navarre after the Italian war, and had, as I was assured, made the road at his own expense. Twenty years earlier I had been arrested by this famous general; but he had established a claim on posterity greater than any of his victories. These laurels were dyed in blood, but the maker of a good road is a solid benefactor of all posterity.

In time this road came to an end, and thenceforth it would be incorrect to say that the roads were bad, for, to tell the truth, there were no roads at all. There were steep ascents and violent descents, but no traces of carriage wheels, and so it is throughout the whole of Old Castile. There are no good inns, only miserable dens scarce good enough for the muleteers, who make their beds beside their animals. Signor or rather Senor Andrea tried to choose the least wretched inns for me, and after having provided for the mules he would go round the entire village to get something for me to eat. The landlord would not stir; he shewed me a room where I could sleep if I liked, containing a fire-place, in which I could light a fire if I thought fit, but as to procuring firewood or provisions, he left that all to me. Wretched Spain!

The sum asked for a night's accommodation was less than a farmer would ask in France or Germany for leave to sleep in his barn; but there was always an extra charge of a 'pizetta por el ruido'. The pizetta is worth four reals; about twenty-one French sous.

The landlord smoked his paper cigarette nonchalantly enough, blowing clouds of smoke into the air with immense dignity. To him poverty was as good as riches; his wants were small, and his means sufficed for them. In no country in Europe do the lower orders live so contentedly on a very little as in Spain. Two ounces of white bread, a handful of roast chestnuts or acorns (called bellotas in Spanish) suffice to keep a Spaniard for a day. It is his glory to say when a stranger is departing from his abode, —

"I have not given myself any trouble in waiting on him."

This proceeds in part from idleness and in part from Castilian pride. A Castilian should not lower himself, they say, by attending on a Gavacho, by which name the Spaniards know the French, and, indeed, all foreigners. It is not so offensive as the Turkish appellation of dog, or the damned foreigner of the English. Of course, persons who have travelled or have had a liberal education do not speak in this way, and a respectable foreigner will find reasonable Spaniards as he will find reasonable Turks and Englishmen.

On the second night of my journey I slept at Agreda, a small and ugly town, or rather village. There Sister Marie d'Agreda became so crazy as to write a life of the Virgin, which she affirmed to have been dictated to her by the Mother of the Lord. The State Inquisitors had given me this work to read when I was under the Leads, and it had nearly driven me mad.

We did ten Spanish leagues a day, and long and weary leagues they seemed to me. One morning I thought I saw a dozen Capuchins walking slowly in front of us, but when we caught them up I found they were women of all ages.

“Are they mad?” I said to Senior Andrea.

“Not at all. They wear the Capuchin habit out of devotion, and you would not find a chemise on one of them.”

There was nothing surprising in their not having chemises, for the chemise is a scarce article in Spain, but the idea of pleasing God by wearing a Capuchin’s habit struck me as extremely odd. I will here relate an amusing adventure which befell me on my way.

At the gate of a town not far from Madrid I was asked for my passport. I handed it over, and got down to amuse myself. I found the chief of the customs’ house engaged in an argument with a foreign priest who was on his way to Madrid, and had no passport for the capital. He skewed one he had had for Bilbao, but the official was not satisfied. The priest was a Sicilian, and I asked him why he had exposed himself to being placed in this disagreeable predicament. He said he thought it was unnecessary to have a passport in Spain when one had once journeyed in the country.

“I want to go to Madrid,” said he to me, “and hope to obtain a chaplaincy in the house of a grandee. I have a letter for him.”

“Shew it; they will let you pass then.”

“You are right.”

The poor priest drew out the letter and skewed it to the official, who opened it, looked at the signature, and absolutely shrieked when he saw the name Squillace.

“What, senor abbe! you are going to Madrid with a letter from Squillace, and you dare to skew it?”

The clerks, constables, and hangers-on, hearing that the hated Squillace, who would have been stoned to death if it had not been for the king’s protection, was the poor abbe’s only patron, began to beat him violently, much to the poor Sicilian’s astonishment.

I interposed, however, and after some trouble I succeeded in rescuing the priest, who was then allowed to pass, as I believe, as a set-off against the blows he had received.

Squillace was sent to Venice as Spanish ambassador, and in Venice he died at an advanced age. He was a man designed to be an object of intense hatred to the people; he was simply ruthless in his taxation.

The door of my room had a lock on the outside but none on the inside. For the first and second night I let it pass, but on the third I told Senor Andrea that I must have it altered.

“Senor Don Jacob, you must bear with it in Spain, for the Holy Inquisition must always be at liberty to inspect the rooms of foreigners.”

“But what in the devil’s name does your cursed Inquisition want … ?”

“For the love of God, Senor Jacob, speak not thus! if you were overheard we should both be undone.”

“Well, what can the Holy Inquisition want to know?”

“Everything. It wants to know whether you eat meat on fast days, whether persons of opposite sexes sleep together, if so, whether they are married, and if not married it will cause both parties to be imprisoned; in fine, Senor Don Jaimo, the Holy inquisition is continually watching over our souls in this country.”

When we met a priest bearing the viaticum to some sick man, Senor Andrea would tell me imperatively to get out of my carriage, and then there was no choice but to kneel in the mud or dust as the case might be. The chief subject of dispute at that time was the fashion of wearing breeches. Those who wore ‘braguettes’ were imprisoned, and all tailors making breeches with ‘braguettes’ were severely punished. Nevertheless, people persisted in wearing them, and the priests and monks preached in vain against the indecency of such a habit. A revolution seemed imminent, but the matter was happily settled without effusion of blood. An edict was published and affixed to the doors of all the churches, in which it was declared that breeches with braguettes were only to be worn by the public hangmen. Then the fashion passed away; for no one cared to pass for the public executioner.

By little and little I got an insight into the manners of the Spanish nation as I passed through Guadalaxara and Alcala, and at length arrived at Madrid.

Guadalaxara, or Guadalajara, is pronounced by the Spaniards with a strong aspirate, the x and j having the same force. The vowel d, the queen of letters, reigns supreme in Spain; it is a relic of the old Moorish language. Everyone knows that the Arabic abounds in d's, and perhaps the philologists are right in calling it the most ancient of languages, since the a is the most natural and easy to pronounce of all the letters. It seems to me very mistaken to call such words as Achald, Ayanda, Almanda, Acard, Agracaramba, Alcantara, etc., barbarous, for the sonorous ring with which they are pronounced renders the Castilian the richest of all modern languages. Spanish is undoubtedly one of the finest, most energetic, and most majestic languages in the world. When it is pronounced 'ore rotundo' it is susceptible of the most poetic harmony. It would be superior to the Italian, if it were not for the three guttural letters, in spite of what the Spaniards say to the contrary. It is no good remonstrating with them.

'Quisquis amat ranam, ranam purat esse Dianam'.

As I was entering the Gate of Alcala, my luggage was searched, and the clerks paid the greatest attention to my books, and they were very disappointed only to find the "Iliad" in Greek, and a Latin Horace. They were taken away, but three days after, they were returned to me at my lodging in the Rue de la Croix where I had gone in spite of Senor Andrea, who had wanted to take me elsewhere. A worthy man whom I had met in Bordeaux had given me the address. One of the ceremonies I had to undergo at the Gate of Alcala displeased me in the highest degree. A clerk asked me for a pinch of snuff, so I took out my snuff-box and gave it him, but instead of taking a pinch he snatched it out of my hands and said, —

"Senor, this snuff will not pass in Spain" (it was French rappee); and after turning it out on the ground he gave me back the box.

The authorities are most rigorous on the matter of this innocent powder, and in consequence an immense contraband trade is carried on. The spies employed by the Spanish snuff-makers are always on the look-out after foreign snuff, and if they detect anyone carrying it they make him pay dearly for the luxury. The ambassadors of foreign powers are the only persons exempted from the prohibitions. The king who stuffs into his enormous nose one enormous pinch as he rises in the morning wills that all his subjects buy their snuff of the Spanish manufacturers. When Spanish snuff is pure it is very good, but at the time I was in Spain the genuine article could hardly be bought for its weight in gold. By reason of the natural inclination towards forbidden fruit, the Spaniards are extremely fond of foreign snuff, and care little for their own; thus snuff is smuggled to an enormous extent.

My lodging was comfortable enough, but I felt the want of a fire as the cold was more trying than that of Paris, in spite of the southern latitude. The cause of this cold is that Madrid is the highest town in Europe. From whatever part of the coast one starts, one has to mount to reach the capital. The town is also surrounded by mountains and hills, so that the slightest touch of wind from the north makes the cold intense. The air of Madrid is not healthy for strangers, especially for those of a full habit of body; the Spaniards it suits well enough, for they are dry and thin, and wear a cloak even in the dog days.

The men of Spain dwell mentally in a limited horizon, bounded by prejudice on every side; but the women, though ignorant, are usually intelligent; while both sexes are the prey of desires, as lively as their native air, as burning as the sun that shines on them. Every Spaniard hates a foreigner, simply because he is a foreigner, but the women avenge us by loving us, though with great precautions, for your Spaniard is intensely jealous. They watch most jealously over the honour of their wives and daughters. As a rule the men are ugly, though there are numerous exceptions; while the women are pretty, and beauties are not uncommon. The southern blood in their veins inclines them to love, and they are always ready to enter into an intrigue and to deceive the spies by whom they are surrounded. The lover who runs the greatest dangers is always the favourite. In the public walks, the churches, the theatres, the Spanish women are always speaking the language of the eyes. If the person to whom it is addressed knows how to seize the instant, he may be sure of success, but if not, the opportunity will never be offered him again.

I required some kind of heat in my room, and could not bear a charcoal brazier, so I incited an ingenious tin-smith to make me a stove with a pipe going out of the window. However, he was so proud of his success that he made me pay dearly.

Before the stove was ready I was told where I might go and warm myself an hour before noon, and stay till dinner-time. It is called La Pueyta del Sol, “The Gate of the Sun.” It is not a gate, but it takes its name from the manner in which the source of all heat lavishes his treasures there, and warms all who come and bask in his rays. I found a numerous company promenading there, walking and talking, but it was not much to my taste.

I wanted a servant who could speak French, and I had the greatest difficulty in getting one, and had to pay dearly, for in Madrid the kind of man I wanted was called a page. I could not compel him to mount behind my carriage, nor to carry a package, nor to light me by night with a torch or lantern.

My page was a man of thirty, and terribly ugly; but this was a recommendation, as his ugliness secured him from the jealous suspicions of husbands. A woman of rank will not drive out without one of these pages seated in the forepart of her carriage. They are said to be more difficult to seduce than the strictest of duennas.

I was obliged to take one of these rascally tribe into my service, and I wish he had broken his leg on his way to my house.

I delivered all my introductions, beginning with the letter from Princess Lubomirska to the Count of Aranda. The count had covered himself with glory by driving the Jesuits out of Spain. He was more powerful than the king himself, and never went out without a number of the royal guardsmen about him, whom he made to sit down at his table. Of course all the Spaniards hated him, but he did not seem to care much for that. A profound politician, and absolutely resolute and firm, he privately indulged in every luxury that he forbade to others, and did not care whether people talked of it or not.

He was a rather ugly man, with a disagreeable squint. His reception of me was far from cordial.

“What do you want in Spain?” he began.

“To add fresh treasures to my store of experience, by observing the manners and the customs of the country, and if possible to serve the Government with such feeble, talents as I may possess.”

"Well, you have no need of my protection. If you do not infringe the laws, no one will disturb you. As to your obtaining employment, you had better go to the representative of your country; he will introduce you at Court, and make you known."

"My lord, the Venetian ambassador will do nothing for me; I am in disgrace with the Government. He will not even receive me at the embassy."

"Then I would advise you to give up all hopes of employment, for the king would begin by asking your ambassador about you, and his answer would be fatal. You will do well to be satisfied with amusing yourself."

After this I called on the Neapolitan ambassador, who talked in much the same way. Even the Marquis of Moras, one of the most pleasant men in Spain, did not hold out any hopes. The Duke of Lossada, the high steward and favourite of his Catholic majesty, was sorry to be disabled from doing me any service, in spite of his good will, and advised me, in some way or other, to get the Venetian ambassador to give me a good word, in spite of my disgrace. I determined to follow his advice, and wrote to M. Dandolo, begging him to get the ambassador to favour me at the Spanish Court in spite of my quarrel with the Venetian Government. I worded my letter in such a way that it might be read by the Inquisitors themselves, and calculated on its producing a good impression.

After I had written this letter I went to the lodging of the Venetian ambassador, and presented myself to the secretary, Gaspar Soderini, a worthy and intelligent man. Nevertheless, he dared to tell me that he was astonished at my hardihood in presenting myself at the embassy.

"I have presented myself, sir, that my enemies may never reproach me for not having done so; I am not aware that I have ever done anything which makes me too infamous to call on my ambassador. I should have credited myself with much greater hardihood if I had left without fulfilling this duty; but I shall be sorry if the ambassador views my proceedings in the same light as yourself, and puts down to temerity what was meant for a mark of respect. I shall be none the less astonished if his excellency refuses to receive me on account of a private quarrel between myself and the State Inquisitors, of which he knows no more than I do, and I know nothing. You will excuse my saying that he is not the ambassador of the State Inquisitors, but of the Republic of which I am a subject; for I defy him and I defy the

Inquisitors to tell me what crime I have committed that I am to be deprived of my rights as a Venetian citizen. I think that, while it is my duty to reverence my prince in the person of my ambassador, it is his duty to afford me his protection."

This speech had made Soderini blush, and he replied, —

"Why don't you write a letter to the ambassador, with the arguments you have just used to me?"

"I could not write to him before I know whether he will receive me or not. But now, as I have reason to suppose that his opinions are much the same as your own, I will certainly write to him."

"I do not know whether his excellency thinks as I do or not, and, in spite of what I said to you, it is just possible that you do not know my own opinions on the question; but write to him, and he may possibly give you an audience."

"I shall follow your advice, for which I am much obliged."

When I got home I wrote to his excellency all I had said to the secretary, and the next day I had a visit from Count Manucci. The count proved to be a fine-looking young man of an agreeable presence. He said that he lived in the embassy, that his excellency had read my letter, and though he grieved not to receive me publicly he should be delighted to see me in private, for he both knew and esteemed me.

Young Manucci told me that he was a Venetian, and that he knew me by name, as he often heard his father and mother lamenting my fortune. Before long it dawned upon me that this Count Manucci was the son of that Jean Baptiste Manucci who had served as the spy of the State Inquisitors and had so adroitly managed to get possession of my books of magic, which were in all probability the chief corpus delicti.

I did not say anything to him, but I was certain that my guess was correct. His mother was the daughter of a valet de chambre, and his father was a poor mechanic. I asked the young man if he were called count at the embassy, and he said he bore the title in virtue of a warrant from the elector-palatine. My question skewed him that I knew his origin, and he began to speak openly to me; and knowing that I was acquainted with the peculiar tastes of M. de Mocenigo, the ambassador, he informed me laughingly that he was his pathic.

"I will do my best for you," he added; and I was glad to hear him say so, for an Alexis should be able to obtain almost anything from his Corydon. We embraced, and he told me as we parted that he would expect me at the embassy in the afternoon, to take coffee in his room; the ambassador, he said, would certainly come in as soon as he heard of my presence.

I went to the embassy, and had a very kind reception from the ambassador, who said he was deeply grieved not to be able to receive me publicly. He admitted that he might present me at Court without compromising himself, but he was afraid of making enemies.

"I hope soon to receive a letter from a friend of mine, which will authorise your excellency producing me."

"I shall be delighted, in that case, to present you to all the Spanish ministers."

This Mocenigo was the same that acquired such a reputation at Paris by his leanings to pederasty, a vice or taste which the French hold in horror. Later on, Mocenigo was condemned by the Council of Ten to ten years' imprisonment for having started on an embassy to Vienna without formal permission. Maria Theresa had intimated to the Venetian Government that she would not receive such a character, as his habits would be the scandal of her capital. The Venetian Government had some trouble with Mocenigo, and as he attempted to set out for Vienna they exiled him and chose another ambassador, whose morals were as bad, save that the new ambassador indulged himself with Hebe and not Ganymede, which threw a veil of decency over his proceedings.

In spite of his reputation for pederasty, Mocenigo was much liked at Madrid. On one occasion I was at a ball, and a Spaniard noticing me with Manucci, came up to me, and told me with an air of mystery that that young man was the ambassador's wife. He did not know that the ambassador was Manucci's wife; in fact, he did not understand the arrangement at all. "Where ignorance is bliss!" etc. However, in spite of the revolting nature of this vice, it has been a favourite one with several great men. It was well-known to the Ancients, and those who indulged in it were called

Hermaphrodites, which symbolises not a man of two sexes but a man with the passions of the two sexes.

I had called two or three times on the painter Mengs, who had been painter in ordinary to his Catholic majesty for six years, and had an excellent salary. He gave me some good dinners. His wife and family were at Rome, while he basked in the royal favours at Madrid, enjoying the unusual privilege of being able to speak to the king whenever he would. At Mengs's house I trade the acquaintance of the architect Sabatini, an extremely able man whom the king had summoned from Naples to cleanse Madrid, which was formerly the dirtiest and most stinking town in Europe, or, for the matter of that, in the world. Sabatini had become a rich man by constructing drains, sewers, and closets for a city of fourteen thousand houses. He had married by proxy the daughter of Vanvitelli, who was also an architect at Naples, but he had never seen her. She came to Madrid about the same time as myself. She was a beauty of eighteen, and no sooner did she see her husband than she declared she would never be his wife. Sabatini was neither a young man nor a handsome one, but he was kind-hearted and distinguished; and when he told his young wife that she would have to choose between him and a nunnery, she determined to make the best of what she thought a bad bargain. However, she had no reason to repent of her choice; her husband was rich, affectionate, and easygoing, and gave her everything she wanted. I sighed and burned for her in silence, not daring to declare my love, for while the wound of the death of Charlotte was still bleeding I also began to find that women were beginning to give me the cold shoulder.

By way of amusing myself I began to go to the theatre, and the masked balls to which the Count of Aranda had established. They were held in a room built for the purpose, and named 'Los Scannos del Peral'. A Spanish play is full of absurdities, but I rather relished the representations. The 'Autos Sacramentales' were still represented; they were afterwards prohibited. I could not help remarking the strange way in which the boxes are constructed by order of the wretched police. Instead of being boarded in front they are perfectly open, being kept up by small pillars. A devotee once said to me at the theatre that this was a very wise regulation, and he was surprised that it was not carried into force in Italy.

"Why so?"

"Because lovers, who feel sure that no one in the pit can see them, may commit improprieties."

I only answered with a shrug of the shoulders.

In a large box opposite to the stage sat 'los padres' of the Holy Inquisition to watch over the morals of actors and audience. I was gazing on them when of a sudden the sentinel at the door of the pit called out "Dios!" and at this cry all the actors and all the audience, men and women, fell down on their knees, and remained kneeling till the sound of a bell in the street ceased to be heard. This bell betokened that a priest was passing by carrying the viaticum to some sick man. I felt very much inclined to laugh, but I had seen enough of Spanish manners to refrain. All the religion of the Spaniard is in outward show and ceremony. A profligate woman before yielding to the desires of her lover covers the picture of Christ, or the Virgin, with a veil. If the lover laughed at this absurdity he would run a risk of being denounced as an Atheist, and most probably by the wretched woman who had sold him her charms.

In Madrid, and possibly all over Spain, a gentleman who takes a lady to a private room in an inn must expect to have a servant in the room the whole of the time, that he may be able to swear that the couple took no indecent liberties with each other. In spite of all, profligacy is rampant at Madrid, and also the most dreadful hypocrisy, which is more offensive to true piety than open sin. Men and women seemed to have come to an agreement to set the whole system of surveillance utterly at nought. However, commerce with women is not without its dangers; whether it be endemic or a result of dirty habits, one has often good reason to repent the favours one has obtained.

The masked ball quite captivated me. The first time I went to see what it was like and it only cost me a doubloon (about eleven francs), but ever after it cost me four doubloons, for the following reason:

An elderly gentleman, who sat next me at supper, guessed I was a foreigner by my difficulty in making myself understood by the waiter, and asked me where, I had left my lady friend.

"I have not got one; I came by myself to enjoy this delightful and excellently-managed entertainment."

"Yes, but you ought to come with a companion; then you could dance. At present you cannot do so, as every lady has her partner, who will not allow her to dance with anyone else."

"Then I must be content not to dance, for, being a stranger, I do not know any lady whom I can ask to come with me."

"As a stranger you would have much less difficulty in securing a partner than a citizen of Madrid. Under the new fashion, introduced by the Count of Aranda, the masked ball has become the rage of all the women in the capital. You see there are about two hundred of them on the floor to-night; well, I think there are at least four thousand girls in Madrid who are sighing for someone to take them to the ball, for, as you may know, no woman is allowed to come by herself. You would only have to go to any respectable people, give your name and address, and ask to have the pleasure of taking their daughter to the ball. You would have to send her a domino, mask, and gloves; and you would take her and bring her back in your carriage."

"And if the father and mother refused?"

"Then you would make your bow and go, leaving them to repent of their folly, for the girl would sigh, and weep, and moan, bewail parental tyranny, call Heaven to witness the innocency of going to a ball, and finally go into convulsions."

This oration, which was uttered in the most persuasive style, made me quite gay, for I scented an intrigue from afar. I thanked the masked (who spoke Italian very well) and promised to follow his advice and to let him know the results.

"I shall be delighted to hear of your success, and you will find me in the box, where I shall be glad if you will follow me now, to be introduced to the lady who is my constant companion."

I was astonished at so much politeness, and told him my name and followed him. He took me into a box where there were two ladies and an elderly man. They were talking about the ball, so I put in a remark or two on the same topic, which seemed to meet with approval. One of the two ladies, who retained some traces of her former beauty, asked me, in excellent French, what circles I moved in.

"I have only been a short time in Madrid, and not having been presented at Court I really know no one."

"Really! I quite pity you. Come and see me, you will be welcome. My name is Pichona, and anybody will tell you where I live."

"I shall be delighted to pay my respects to you, madam."

What I liked best about the spectacle was a wonderful and fantastic dance which was struck up at midnight. It was the famous fandango, of which I had often heard, but of which I had absolutely no idea. I had seen it danced on the stage in France and Italy, but the actors were careful not to use those voluptuous gestures which make it the most seductive in the world. It cannot be described. Each couple only dances three steps, but the gestures and the attitudes are the most lascivious imaginable. Everything is represented, from the sigh of desire to the final ecstasy; it is a very history of love. I could not conceive a woman refusing her partner anything after this dance, for it seemed made to stir up the senses. I was so excited at this Bacchanalian spectacle that I burst out into cries of delight. The masker who had taken me to his box told me that I should see the fandango danced by the Gitanas with good partners.

"But," I remarked, "does not the Inquisition object to this dance?"

Madame Pichona told me that it was absolutely forbidden, and would not be danced unless the Count of Aranda had given permission.

I heard afterwards that, on the count forbidding the fandango, the ball-room was deserted with bitter complaints, and on the prohibition being withdrawn everyone was loud in his praise.

The next day I told my infamous page to get me a Spaniard who would teach me the fandango. He brought me an actor, who also gave me Spanish lessons, for he pronounced the language admirably. In the course of three days the young actor taught me all the steps so well that, by the confession of the Spaniards themselves, I danced it to perfection.

For the next ball I determined to carry the masker's advice into effect, but I did not want to take a courtesan or a married woman with me, and I could not reasonably expect that any young lady of family would accompany me.

It was St. Anthony's Day, and passing the Church of the Soledad I went in, with the double motive of hearing mass and of procuring a partner for the next day's ball.

I noticed a fine-looking girl coming out of the confessional, with contrite face and lowered eyes, and I noted where she went. She knelt down in the middle of the church, and I was so attracted by her appearance that I registered a mental vow to the effect that she should be my first partner. She did not look like a person of condition, nor, so far as I could see, was she rich, and nothing about her indicated the courtesan, though women of that class go to confession in Madrid like everybody else. When mass was ended, the priest distributed the Eucharist, and I saw her rise and approach humbly to the holy table, and there receive the communion. She then returned to the church to finish her devotions, and I was patient enough to wait till they were over.

At last she left, in company with another girl, and I followed her at a distance. At the end of a street her companion left her to go into her house, and she, retracing her steps, turned into another street and entered a small house, one story high. I noted the house and the street (Calle des Desinjano) and then walked up and down for half an hour, that I might not be suspected of following her. At last I took courage and walked in, and, on my ringing a bell, I heard a voice,

"Who is there?"

"Honest folk," I answered, according to the custom of the country; and the door was opened. I found myself in the presence of a man, a woman, the young devotee I had followed, and another girl, somewhat ugly.

My Spanish was bad, but still it was good enough to express my meaning, and, hat in hand, I informed the father that, being a stranger, and having no partner to take to the ball, I had come to ask him to give me his daughter for my partner, supposing he had a daughter. I assured him that I was a man of honour, and that the girl should be returned to him after the ball in the same condition as when she started.

"Senor," said he, "there is my daughter, but I don't know you, and I don't know whether she wants to go."

"I should like to go, if my parents will allow me."

"Then you know this gentleman?"

"I have never seen him, and I suppose he has never seen me."

"You speak the truth, senora."

The father asked me my name and address, and promised I should have a decisive answer by dinner-time, if I dined at home. I begged him to excuse the liberty I had taken, and to let me know his answer without fail, so that I might have time to get another partner if it were unfavourable to me.

Just as I was beginning to dine my man appeared. I asked him to sit down, and he informed me that his daughter would accept my offer, but that her mother would accompany her and sleep in the carriage. I said that she might do so if she liked, but I should be sorry for her on account of the cold. "She shall have a good cloak," said he; and he proceeded to inform me that he was a cordwainer.

"Then I hope you will take my measure for a pair of shoes."

"I daren't do that; I'm an hidalgo, and if I were to take anyone's measure I should have to touch his foot, and that would be a degradation. I am a cobbler, and that is not inconsistent with my nobility."

"Then, will you mend me these boots?"

"I will make them like new; but I see they want a lot of work; it will cost you a pezzo duro, about five francs."

I told him that I thought his terms very reasonable, and he went out with a profound bow, refusing absolutely to dine with me.

Here was a cobbler who despised bootmakers because they had to touch the foot, and they, no doubt, despised him because he touched old leather. Unhappy pride how many forms it assumes, and who is without his own peculiar form of it?

The next day I sent to the gentleman-cobbler's a tradesman with dominos, masks, and gloves; but I took care not to go myself nor to send my page, for whom I had an aversion which almost amounted to a presentiment. I hired a carriage to seat four, and at nightfall I drove to the house of my pious partner, who was quite ready for me. The happy flush on her face was a sufficient index to me of the feelings of her heart. We got into the carriage with the mother, who was wrapped up in a vast cloak, and at the door of the dancing-room we descended, leaving the mother in the carriage. As soon as we were alone my fair partner told me that her name was Donna Ignazia.

CHAPTER IV

My Amours With Donna Ignazia — My Imprisonment At Buen Retiro — My Triumph — I Am Commended to the Venetian Ambassador by One of the State Inquisitors

We entered the ball-room and walked round several times. Donna Ignazia was in such a state of ecstasy that I felt her trembling, and augured well for my amorous projects. Though liberty, nay, license, seemed to reign supreme, there was a guard of soldiers ready to arrest the first person who created any disturbance. We danced several minuets and square dances, and at ten o'clock we went into the supper-room, our conversation being very limited all the while, she not speaking for fear of encouraging me too much, and I on account of my poor knowledge of the Spanish language. I left her alone for a moment after supper, and went to the box, where I expected to find Madame Pichona, but it was occupied by maskers, who were unknown to me, so I rejoined my partner, and we went on dancing the minuets and quadrilles till the fandango was announced. I took my place with my partner, who danced it admirably, and seemed astonished to find herself so well supported by a foreigner. This dance had excited both of us, so, after taking her to the buffet and giving her the best wines and liqueurs procurable, I asked her if she were content with me. I added that I was so deeply in love with her that unless she found some means of making me happy I should undoubtedly die of love. I assured her that I was ready to face all hazards.

"By making you happy," she replied, "I shall make myself happy, too. I will write to you to-morrow, and you will find the letter sewn into the hood of my domino."

"You will find me ready to do anything, fair Ignazia, if you will give me hope."

At last the ball was over, and we went out and got into the carriage. The mother woke up, and the coachman drove off, and I, taking the girl's hands, would have kissed them. However, she seemed to suspect that I had other intentions, and held my hands clasped so tightly that I believe I should have found it a hard task to pull them away. In this position Donna Ignazia proceeded to tell her mother all about the ball, and the delight it had given her. She did not let go my hands till we got to the corner of their street, when the mother called out to the coachman to stop, not wishing to give her neighbours occasion for slander by stopping in front of their own house.

The next day I sent for the domino, and in it I found a letter from Donna Ignazia, in which she told me that a Don Francisco de Ramos would call on me, that he was her lover, and that he would inform me how to render her and myself happy.

Don Francisco wasted no time, for the next morning at eight o'clock my page sent in his name. He told me that Donna Ignazia, with whom he spoke every night, she being at her window and he in the street, had informed him that she and I had been at the ball together. She had also told him that she felt sure I had conceived a fatherly affection for her, and she had consequently prevailed upon him to call on me, being certain that I would treat him as my own son. She had encouraged him to ask me to lend him a hundred doubloons which would enable them to get married before the end of the carnival.

"I am employed at the Mint," he added, "but my present salary is a very small one. I hope I shall get an increase before long, and then I shall be in a position to make Ignazia happy. All my relations live at Toledo, and I have no friends at Madrid, so when we set up our only friends will be the father and mother of my wife and yourself, for I am sure you love her like a daughter."

"You have probed my heart to its core," I replied, "but just now I am awaiting remittances, and have very little money about me. You may count on my discretion, and I shall be delighted to see you whenever you care to call on me."

The gallant made me a bow, and took his departure in no good humour. Don Francisco was a young man of twenty-two, ugly and ill-made. I resolved to nip the intrigue in the bud, for my inclination for Donna Ignazia was of the lightest description; and I went to call on Madame Pichona, who had given me such a polite invitation to come and see her. I had made enquiries about her, and had found out that she was an actress and had been made rich by the Duke of Medina-Celi. The duke had paid her a visit in very cold weather, and finding her without a fire, as she was too poor to buy coals, had sent her the next day a silver stove, which he had filled with a hundred thousand pezzos duros in gold, amounting to three hundred thousand francs in French money. Since then Madame Pichona lived at her ease and received good company.

She gave me a warm reception when I called on her, but her looks were sad. I began by saying that as I had not found her in her box on the last ball night I had ventured to come to enquire after her health.

"I did not go," said she, "for on that day died my only friend the Duke of Medina-Celi. He was ill for three days."

"I sympathise with you. Was the duke an old man?"

"Hardly sixty. You have seen him; he did not look his age."

"Where have I seen him?"

"Did he not bring you to my box?"

"You don't say so! He did not tell me his name and I never saw him before."

I was grieved to hear of his death; it was in all probability a misfortune for me as well as Madame Pichona. All the duke's estate passed to a son of miserly disposition, who in his turn had a son who was beginning to evince the utmost extravagance.

I was told that the family of Medina-Celi enjoys thirty titles of nobility.

One day a young man called on me to offer me, as a foreigner, his services in a country which he knew thoroughly.

"I am Count Marazzini de Plaisance," he began, "I am not rich and I have come to Madrid to try and make my fortune. I hope to enter the bodyguard of his Catholic majesty. I have been indulging in the amusements of the town ever since I came. I saw you at the ball with an unknown beauty. I don't ask you to tell me her name, but if you are fond of novelty I can introduce you to all the handsomest girls in Madrid."

If my experience had taught me such wholesome lessons as I might have expected, I should have shown the impudent rascal the door. Alas! I began to be weary of my experience and the fruits of it; I began to feel the horrors of a great void; I had need of some slight passion to wile away the dreary hours. I therefore made this Mercury welcome, and told him I should be obliged by his presenting me to some beauties, neither too easy nor too difficult to access.

“Come with me to the ball,” he rejoined, “and I will shew you some women worthy of your attention.”

The ball was to take place the same evening, and I agreed; he asked me to give him some dinner, and I agreed to that also. After dinner he told me he had no money, and I was foolish enough to give him a doubloon. The fellow, who was ugly, blind of one eye, and full of impudence, shewed me a score of pretty women, whose histories he told me, and seeing me to be interested in one of them he promised to bring her to a procuress. He kept his word, but he cost me dear; for the girl only served for an evening’s amusement.

Towards the end of the carnival the noble Don Diego, the father of Donna Ignazia, brought me my boots, and the thanks of his wife and himself for the pleasure I had given her at the ball.

“She is as good as she is beautiful,” said I, “she deserves to prosper, and if I have not called on her it is only that I am anxious to do nothing which could injure her reputation.”

“Her reputation, Senor Caballero, is above all reproach, and I shall be delighted to see you whenever you honour me with a call.”

“The carnival draws near to its end,” I replied, “and if Donna Ignazia would like to go to another ball I shall be happy to take her again.”

“You must come and ask her yourself.”

“I will not fail to do so.”

I was anxious to see how the pious girl, who had tried to make me pay a hundred doubloons for the chance of having her after her marriage, would greet me, so I called the same day. I found her with her mother, rosary in hand, while her noble father was botching old boots. I laughed inwardly at being obliged to give the title of don to a cobbler who would not make boots because he was an hidalgo. Hidalgo, meaning noble, is derived from ‘higo de albo’, son of somebody, and the people, whom the nobles call ‘higos de nade’, sons of nobody, often revenge themselves by calling the nobles hideputas, that is to say, sons of harlots.

Donna Ignazia rose politely from the floor, where she was sitting cross-legged, after the Moorish fashion. I have seen exalted ladies in this position at Madrid, and it is very common in the antechambers of the Court and the palace of the Princess of the Asturias. The Spanish women sit in church in the same way, and the rapidity with which they can change this posture to a kneeling or a standing one is something amazing.

Donna Ignazia thanked me for honouring her with a visit, adding that she would never have gone to the ball if it had not been for me, and that she never hoped to go to it again, as I had doubtless found someone else more worthy of my attentions.

“I have not found anyone worthy to be preferred before you,” I replied, “and if you would like to go to the ball again I should be most happy to take you.”

The father and mother were delighted with the pleasure I was about to give to their beloved daughter. As the ball was to take place the same evening, I gave the mother a doubloon to get a mask and domino. She went on her errand, and, as Don Diego also went out on some business, I found myself alone with the girl. I took the opportunity of telling her that if she willed I would be hers, as I adored her, but that I could not sigh for long.

“What can you ask, and what can I offer, since I must keep myself pure for my husband?”

“You should abandon yourself to me without reserve, and you may be sure that I should respect your innocence.”

I then proceeded to deliver a gentle attack, which she repulsed, with a serious face. I stopped directly, telling her that she would find me polite and respectful, but not in the least affectionate, for the rest of the evening.

Her face had blushed a vivid scarlet, and she replied that her sense of duty obliged her to repulse me in spite of herself.

I liked this metaphysical line of argument. I saw that I had only to destroy the idea of duty in her and all the rest would follow. What I had to do was to enter into an argument, and to bear away the prize directly I saw her at a loss for an answer.

“If your duty,” I began, “forces you to repulse me in spite of yourself, your duty is a burden on you. If it is a burden on you, it is your enemy, and if it is your enemy why do you suffer it thus lightly to gain the victory? If you were your own friend, you would at once expel this insolent enemy from your coasts.”

“That may not be.”

“Yes, it may. Only shut your eyes.”

“Like that?”

“Yes.”

I immediately laid hands on a tender place; she repulsed me, but more gently and not so seriously as before.

“You may, of course, seduce me,” she said, “but if you really love me you will spare me the shame.”

“Dearest Ignazia, there is no shame in a girl giving herself up to the man she loves. Love justifies all things. If you do not love me I ask nothing of you.”

“But how shall I convince you that I am actuated by love and not by complaisance?”

“Leave me to do what I like, and my self-esteem will help me to believe you.”

“But as I cannot be certain that you will believe me, my duty plainly points to a refusal.”

“Very good, but you will make me sad and cold.”

“Then I shall be sad, too.”

At these encouraging words I embraced her, and obtained some solid favours with one hardy hand. She made no opposition, and I was well pleased with what I had got; and for a first attempt I could not well expect more.

At this juncture the mother came in with the dominos and gloves. I refused to accept the change, and went away to return in my carriage, as before.

Thus the first step had been taken, and Donna Ignazia felt it would be ridiculous not to join in with my conversation at the ball which all tended to procuring the pleasure of spending our nights together. She found me affectionate all the evening, and at supper I did my best to get her everything she liked. I made her see that the part she had at last taken was worthy of praise, and not blame. I filled her pockets with sweets, and put into my own pockets two bottles of ratafia, which I handed over to the mother, who was asleep in the carriage. Donna Ignazia gratefully refused the quadruple I wished to give her, saying that if it were in my power to make such presents, I might give the money to her lover whenever he called on me.

“Certainly,” I answered, “but what shall I say to prevent his taking offence?”

“Tell him that it is on account of what he asked you. He is poor, and I am sure he is in despair at not seeing me in the window to-night. I shall tell him I only went to the ball with you to please my father.”

Donna Ignazia, a mixture of voluptuousness and piety, like most Spanish women, danced the fandango with so much fire that no words could have expressed so well the Joys that were in store for me. What a dance it is! Her bosom was heaving and her blood all aflame, and yet I was told that for the greater part of the company the dance was wholly innocent, and devoid of any intention. I pretended to believe it, but I certainly did not. Ignazia begged me to come to mass at the Church of the Soledad the next day at eight o’clock. I had not yet told her that it was there I had seen her first. She also asked me to come and see her in the evening, and said she would send me a letter if we were not left alone together.

I slept till noon, and was awoke by Marazzini, who came to ask me to give him some dinner. He told me he had seen me with my fair companion the night before, and that he had vainly endeavoured to find out who she was. I bore with this singularly misplaced curiosity, but when it came to his saying that he would have followed us if he had had any money, I spoke to him in a manner that made him turn pale. He begged pardon, and promised to bridle his curiosity for the future. He proposed a party of pleasure with the famous courtezan Spiletta, whose favours were dear, but I declined, for my mind was taken up with the fair Ignazia, whom I considered a worthy successor to Charlotte.

I went to the church, and she saw me when she came in, followed by the same companion as before.

She knelt down at two or three paces from me, but did not once look in my direction. Her friend, on the other hand, inspected me closely; she seemed about the same age as Ignazia, but she was ugly. I also noticed Don Francisco, and as I was going out of the church my rival followed me, and congratulated me somewhat bitterly on my good fortune in having taken his mistress a second time to the ball. He confessed that he had been on our track the whole evening, and that he should have gone away well enough pleased if it had not been for the way in which we dance the fandango. I felt this was an occasion for a little gentle management, and I answered good-humouredly that the love he thought he noticed was wholly imaginary, and that he was wrong to entertain any suspicions as to so virtuous a girl as Donna Ignazia. At the same time I placed an ounce in his hand, begging him to take it on account. He did so with an astonished stare, and, calling me his father and guardian angel, swore an eternal gratitude.

In the evening I called on Don Diego, where I was regaled with the excellent ratafia I had given the mother, and the whole family began to speak of the obligations Spain owed to the Count of Aranda.

“No exercise is more healthful than dancing,” said Antonia, the mother, “and before his time balls were strictly forbidden. In spite of that he is hated for having expelled ‘los padres de la compagnia de Jesus’, and for his sumptuary regulations. But the poor bless his name, for all the money produced by the balls goes to them.”

“And thus,” said the father, “to go to the ball is to do a pious work.”

“I have two cousins,” said Ignazia, “who are perfect angels of goodness. I told them that you had taken me to the ball; but they are so poor that they have no hope of going. If you like you can make them quite happy by taking them on the last day of the carnival. The ball closes at midnight, so as not to profane Ash Wednesday."

"I shall be happy to oblige you, all the more as your lady mother will not be obliged to wait for us in the carriage."

"You are very kind; but I shall have to introduce you to my aunt; she is so particular. When she knows you, I am sure she will consent, for you have all the air of discretion. Go and see her to-day; she lives in the next street, and over her door you will see a notice that lace is washed within. Tell her that my mother gave you the address. To-morrow morning, after mass, I will see to everything else, and you must come here at noon to agree as to our meeting on the last day of the carnival."

I did all this, and the next day I heard that it was settled.

"I will have the dominos ready at my house," I said, "and you must come in at the back door. We will dine in my room, mask, and go to the ball. The eldest of your cousins must be disguised as a man."

"I won't tell her anything about that, for fear she might think it a sin, but once in your house you will have no difficulty in managing her."

The younger of the two cousins was ugly, but looked like a woman, where as the elder looked like an ugly dressed man in woman's clothes. She made an amusing contrast with Donna Ignazia, who looked most seductive when she laid aside her air of piety.

I took care that everything requisite for our disguises should be at hand in a neighbouring closet, unbeknown to my rascally page. I gave him a piece of money in the morning, and told him to spend the last day of the carnival according to his own taste, as I should not require his services till noon the day after.

I ordered a good dinner, and a waiter to serve it, at the tavern, and got rid of Marazzini by giving him a doubloon. I took great pains over the entertainment I was to give the two cousins and the fair Ignazia, whom I hoped that day to make my mistress. It was all quite a novelty for me; I had to do with three devotees, two hideous and the third ravishingly beautiful, who had already had a foretaste of the joys in store for her.

They came at noon, and for an hour I discoursed to them in a moral and unctuous manner. I had taken care to provide myself with some excellent wine, which did not fail to take effect on the three girls, who were not accustomed to a dinner that lasted two hours. They were not exactly inebriated, but their spirits were worked up to a pitch they had never attained before.

I told the elder cousin, who might be twenty-five years old, that I was going to disguise her as a man; consternation appeared on her features, but I had expected as much, and Donna Ignazia told her she was only too lucky, and her sister observed that she did not think it could be a sin.

“If it were a sin,” said I, “do you suppose that I should have suggested it to your virtuous sister.”

Donna Ignazia, who knew the Legendarium by heart, corroborated my assertion by saying that the blessed St. Marina had passed her whole life in man’s clothes; and this settled the matter.

I then burst into a very high-flown eulogium of her intellectual capacity, so as to enlist her vanity in the good cause.

“Come with me,” said I, “and do you ladies wait here; I want to enjoy your surprise when you see her in man’s clothes.”

The ugly cousin made a supreme effort and followed me, and when she had duly inspected her disguise I told her to take off her boots and to put on white stockings and shoes, of which I had provided several pairs. I sat down before her, and told her that if she suspected me of any dishonourable intentions she would commit a mortal sin, as I was old enough to be her father. She replied that she was a good Christian, but not a fool. I fastened her garters for her, saying that I should never have supposed she had so well-shapen and so white a leg, which compliment made her smile in a satisfied manner.

Although I had a fine view of her thighs, I observed no traces of a blush on her face. I then gave her a pair, of my breeches, which fitted her admirably, though I was five inches taller than she, but this difference was compensated by the posterior proportions, with which, like most women, she was bountifully endowed. I turned away to let her put them on in freedom, and, having given her a linen shirt, she told me she had finished before she had buttoned it at the neck. There may possibly have been a little coquetry in this, as I buttoned the shirt for her, and was thus gratified with a sight of her splendid breast. I need not say whether she was pleased or not at my refraining from complimenting her upon her fine proportions. When her toilette was finished I surveyed her from head to foot, and pronounced her to be a perfect man, with the exception of one blemish.

“I am sorry for that.”

“Will you allow me to arrange your shirt so as to obviate it?”

“I shall be much obliged, as I have never dressed in man’s clothes before.”

I then sat down in front of her, and, after unbuttoning the fly, arranged the shirt in a proper manner. In doing so I allowed myself some small liberties, but I toyed with such a serious air that she seemed to take it all as a matter of course.

When I had put on her domino and mask I led her forth, and her sister and Donna Ignazia congratulated her on her disguise, saying that anybody would take her for a man.

“Now it’s your turn,” I said to the younger one.

“Go with him,” said the elder, “Don Jaime is as honest a man as you will find in Spain.”

There was really not much to be done to the younger sister, her disguise being simply a mask and domino, but as I wanted to keep Ignazia a long time I made her put on white stockings, change her kerchief, and a dozen other trifles. When she was ready I brought her forth, and Donna Ignazia noticing that she had changed her stockings and kerchief, asked her whether I were as expert at dressing a lady as at turning a lady into a gentleman.

“I don’t know,” she replied, “I did everything for myself.”

Next came the turn of Don Diego’s daughter, and as soon as I had her in the closet I did my pleasure on her, she submitting with an air that seemed to say, “I only give in because I can’t resist.” Wishing to save her honour I withdrew in time, but in the second combat I held her for half an hour to my arms. However, she was naturally of a passionate disposition, and nature had endowed her with a temperament able to resist the most vigorous attacks. When decency made us leave the closet, she remarked to her cousins,

“I thought I should never have done; I had to alter the whole fit of the domino.”

I admired her presence of mind.

At nightfall we went to the ball, at which the fandango might be danced ad libitum by a special privilege, but the crowd was so great that dancing was out of the question. At ten we had supper, and then walked up and down, till all at once the two orchestras became silent. We heard the church clocks striking midnight the carnival was over, and Lent had begun.

This rapid transition from wantonness to devotion, from paganism to Christianity, has something startling and unnatural about it. At fifty-nine minutes past eleven the senses are all aglow; midnight sounds, and in a minute they are supposed to be brought low, and the heart to be full of humble repentance; it is an absurdity, an impossibility.

I took the three girls to my house to take off their dominos, and we then escorted the two cousins home. When we had left them for a few minutes Donna Ignazia told me that she would like a little coffee. I understood her, and took her to my house, feeling sure of two hours of mutual pleasure.

I took her to my room, and was just going out to order the coffee when I met Don Francisco, who asked me plainly to let him come up, as he had seen Donna Ignazia go in with me. I had sufficient strength of mind to conceal my rage and disappointment, and told him to come in, adding that his mistress would be delighted at this unexpected visit. I went upstairs, and he followed me, and I shewed him into the room, congratulating the lady on the pleasant surprise.

I expected that she would play her part as well as I had played mine, but I was wrong. In her rage she told him that she would never have asked me to give her a cup of coffee if she had foreseen this piece of importunity, adding that if he had been a gentleman he would have known better than to intrude himself at such an hour.

In spite of my own anger I felt that I must take the poor devil’s part; he looked like a dog with a tin kettle tied to his tail. I tried to calm Donna Ignazia, telling her that Don Francisco had seen us by a mere accident, and that it was I who had asked him to come upstairs, in the hope of pleasing her.

Donna Ignazia feigned to be persuaded and asked her lover to sit down, but she did not speak another word to him, confining her remarks to me, saying how much she had enjoyed the ball, and how kind I had been to take her cousins.

After he had taken a cup of coffee, Don Francisco bade us a good night. I told him I hoped he would come and see me before Lent was over, but Donna Ignazia only vouchsafed him a slight nod. When he had gone she said, sadly enough, that she was sorry he had deprived us both of our pleasure, and that she was sure Don Francisco was still hanging about the place, and that she dared not expose herself to his vengeance. “So take me home, but if you love me come and see me again. The trick the stupid fellow has played me shall cost him dear. Are you sure I don’t love him?”

“Quite certain, for you love me too well to love anybody else.”

Donna Ignazia gave me a hasty proof of her affection, and I escorted her home, assuring her that she would be the sole object of my thoughts as long as I stayed at Madrid.

The next day I dined with Mengs, and the day after that I was accosted in the street by an ill-looking fellow, who bade me follow him to a cloister, as he had something of importance to communicate to me.

As soon as he saw that we were unobserved, he told me that the Alcalde Messa was going to pay me a visit that same night with a band of police, “of whom,” he added, “I am one. He knows you have concealed weapons in your room. He knows, or thinks he knows, certain other things which authorize him to seize your person and to take you to the prison where persons destined for the galleys are kept. I give you all this warning because I believe you to be a man of honour. Despise not my advice, but look to yourself, and get into some place of security.”

I credited what he told me, as the circumstance of my having arms was perfectly true, so I gave the man a doubloon, and, instead of calling on Donna Ignazia, as I intended, I went back to my lodging, and after putting the weapons under my cloak I went to Mengs’s, leaving word at the cafe to send me my page as soon as he came back. In Mengs's house I was safe, as it belonged to the king.

The painter was an honest fellow, but proud and suspicious in excess. He did not refuse me an asylum for the night, but he told me that I must look out for some other refuge, as the alcalde must have some other accusation against me, and that knowing nothing of the merits or demerits of the case he could not take any part in it. He gave me a room and we supped together, discussing the matter all the time, I persisting that the possession of arms was my only offence, and he replying that if it were so I should have awaited the alcalde fearlessly, as it stood to reason that a man had a right to keep defensive weapons in his own room. To this I answered that I had only come to him to avoid passing the night in prison, as I was certain that the man had told me the truth.

"To-morrow I shall look out for another lodging."

I confessed, however, that it would have been wiser of me to leave my pistols and musket in my room.

"Yes, and you might have remained there yourself. I did not think you were so easily frightened."

As we were arguing it over my landlord came and said that the alcalde with thirty constables had been to my apartment and had broken open the door. He had searched everything, but unsuccessfully, and had gone away after sealing the room and its contents. He had arrested and imprisoned my page on the charge of having warned me, "for otherwise," he said, "the Venetian gentleman would never have gone to the house of Chevalier Mengs, where he is out of my power."

At this Mengs agreed that I had been right in believing my informant's tale, and he added that the first thing in the morning I should go and protest my innocence before the Count of Aranda, but he especially urged on me the duty of defending the poor page. My landlord went his way, and we continued the discussion, Mengs insisting on the page's innocence, till at last I lost all patience, and said, —

"My page must be a thorough-paced scoundrel; the magistrate's arresting him for warning me is an absolute proof that he knew of my approaching arrest. What is a servant who does not warn his master under such circumstances but a rascal? Indeed I am absolutely certain that he was the informer, for he was the only person who knew where the arms were concealed."

Mengs could find no answer to this, and left to go to bed. I did the same and had an excellent night.

Early the next morning the great Mengs sent me linen and all the requisites of the toilette. His maid brought me a cup of chocolate, and his cook came to ask if I had permission to eat flesh-meat. In such ways a prince welcomes a guest, and bids him stay, but such behaviour in a private person is equivalent to a hint to go. I expressed my gratitude, and only accepted a cup of chocolate and one handkerchief.

My carriage was at the door, and I was just taking leave of Mengs when an officer appeared on the scene, and asked the painter if the Chevalier de Casanova was in his house.

"I am the Chevalier de Casanova," said I.

"Then I hope you will follow me of your own free will to the prison of Buen Retiro. I cannot use force here, for this house is the king's, but I warn you that in less than an hour the Chevalier Mengs will have orders to turn you out, and then you will be dragged to prison, which would be unpleasant for you. I therefore advise you to follow me quietly, and to give up such weapons as you may possess."

"The Chevalier Mengs will give you the weapons in question. I have carried them with me for eleven years; they are meant to protect me on the highways. I am ready to follow you, but first allow me to write four notes; I shall not be half an hour."

"I can neither allow you to wait nor to write, but you will be at liberty to do so after you have reached the prison."

"Very good; then I am ready to follow you, for I have no choice. I shall remember Spanish justice!"

I embraced Mengs, had the weapons put into my carriage, and got in with the officer, who seemed a perfect gentleman.

He took me to the Castle of Buen Retiro, formerly a royal palace, and now a prison. When my conductor had consigned me to the officer of the watch I was handed over to a corporal, who led me into a vast hall on the ground floor of the building. The stench was dreadful, and the prisoners were about thirty, ten of them being soldiers. There were ten or twelve large beds, some benches, no tables, and no chairs.

I asked a guard to get me some pens, ink, and paper, and gave him a duro for the purpose. He took the coin smilingly, and went away, but he did not return. When I asked his brethren what had become of him they laughed in my face. But what surprised me the most was the sight of my page and Marazzini, who told me in Italian that he had been there for three days, and that he had not written to me as he had a presentiment that we should soon meet. He added that in a fortnight's time we should be sent off under a heavy escort to work in some fortress, though we might send our pleas to the Government, and might possibly be let out after three or four years' imprisonment.

"I hope," he said, "not to be condemned before I am heard. The alcalde will come and interrogate you tomorrow, and your answers will be taken down; that's all. You may then be sent to hard labour in Africa."

"Has your case been heard yet?"

"They were at me about it for three hours yesterday."

"What kind of questions did they ask you?"

"They wished to know what banker furnished me with money for my expenses. I told them I had not got a banker, and that I lived by borrowing from my friends, in the expectation of becoming one of the king's body-guard. They then asked me how it was that the Parmese ambassador knew nothing about me, and I replied that I had never been presented to him.

"'Without the favour of your ambassador,' they objected, 'you could never join the royal guard, and you must be aware of that, but the king's majesty shall give you employment where you will stand in need of no commendation;' and so the alcalde left me. If the Venetian ambassador does not interpose in your behalf you will be treated in the same way."

I concealed my rage, and sat down on a bed, which I left after three hours, as I found myself covered with the disgusting vermin which seem endemic in Spain. The very sight of them made me sick. I stood upright, motionless, and silent, devouring the bile which consumed me.

There was no good in talking; I must write; but where was I to find writing materials? However, I resolved to wait in silence; my time must come, sooner or later.

At noon Marazzini told me that he knew a soldier for whose trustworthiness he would answer, and who would get me my dinner if I gave him the money.

“I have no appetite,” I replied, “and I am not going to give a farthing to anyone till the stolen crown is restored to me.”

He made an uproar over this piece of cheating, but the soldiers only laughed at him. My page then asked him to intercede with me, as he was hungry, and had no money wherewith to buy food.

“I will not give him a farthing; he is no longer in my service, and would to God I had never seen him!”

My companions in misery proceeded to dine on bad garlic soup and wretched bread, washed down by plain water, two priests and an individual who was styled corregidor excepted, and they seemed to fare very well.

At four o’clock one of Mengs’s servants brought me a dinner which would have sufficed for four. He wanted to leave me the dinner and come for the plates in the evening; but not caring to share the meal with the vile mob around me I made him wait till I had done and come again at the same time the next day, as I did not require any supper. The servant obeyed. Marazzini said rudely that I might at least have kept the bottle of wine; but I gave him no answer.

At five o’clock Manucci appeared, accompanied by a Spanish officer. After the usual compliments had passed between us I asked the officer if I might write to my friends, who would not allow me to stay much longer in prison if they were advised of my arrest.

“We are no tyrants,” he replied; “you can write what letters you like.”

“Then,” said I, “as this is a free country, is it allowable for a soldier who has received certain moneys to buy certain articles to pocket the money and appropriate it to his own use?”

“What is his name?”

The guard had been relieved, and no one seemed to know who or where he was.

“I promise you, sir,” said the officer, “that the soldier shall be punished and your money restored to you; and in the meanwhile you shall have pens, ink, paper, a table, and a candle, immediately.”

“And I,” added Manucci, “promise you that one of the ambassador’s servants shall wait on you at eight o’clock to deliver any letters you may write.”

I took three crowns from my pocket, and told my fellow-prisoners that the first to name the soldier who had deceived me should have the money; Marazzini was the first to do so. The officer made a note of the man’s name with a smile; he was beginning to know me; I had spent three crowns to get back one, and could not be very avaricious.

Manucci whispered to me that the ambassador would do his best in a confidential way to get my release, and that he had no doubt of his success.

When my visitors were gone I sat down to write, but I had need of all my patience. The rascally prisoners crowded round me to read what I was writing, and when they could not understand it they were impudent enough to ask me to explain it to them. Under the pretext of snuffing the candle, they put it out. However, I bore with it all. One of the soldiers said he would keep them quiet for a crown, but I gave him no answer. In spite of the hell around me, I finished my letters and sealed them up. They were no studied or rhetorical epistles, but merely the expression of the fury with which I was consumed.

I told Mocenigo that it was his duty to defend a subject of his prince, who had been arrested and imprisoned by a foreign power on an idle pretext. I shewed him that he must give me his protection unless I was guilty, and that I had committed no offence against the law of the land. I reminded him that I was a Venetian, in spite of my persecution at the hands of the State Inquisitors, and that being a Venetian I had a right to count on his protection.

To Don Emmanuel de Roda, a learned scholar, and the minister of justice, I wrote that I did not ask any favour but only simple justice.

"Serve God and your master," said I. "Let his Catholic majesty save me from the hands of the infamous alcalde who has arrested me, an honest and a law-abiding man, who came to Spain trusting in his own innocence and the protection of the laws. The person who writes to you, my lord, has a purse full of doubloons in his pocket; he has already been robbed, and fears assassination in the filthy den in which he has been imprisoned."

I wrote to the Duke of Lossada, requesting him to inform the king that his servants had subjected to vile treatment a man whose only fault was that he had a little money. I begged him to use his influence with his Catholic majesty to put a stop to these infamous proceedings.

But the most vigorous letter of all was the one I addressed to the Count of Aranda. I told him plainly that if this infamous action went on I should be forced to believe that it was by his orders, since I had stated in vain that I came to Madrid with an introduction to him from a princess.

"I have committed no crime," I said; "what compensation am I to have when I am released from this filthy and abominable place? Set me at liberty at once, or tell your hangmen to finish their work, for I warn you that no one shall take me to the galleys alive."

According to my custom I took copies of all the letters, and I sent them off by the servant whom the all-powerful Manucci despatched to the prison. I passed such a night as Dante might have imagined in his Vision of Hell. All the beds were full, and even if there had been a spare place I would not have occupied it. I asked in vain for a mattress, but even if they had brought me one, it would have been of no use, for the whole floor was inundated. There were only two or three chamber utensils for all the prisoners, and everyone discharged his occasions on the floor.

I spent the night on a narrow bench without a back, resting my head on my hands.

At seven o'clock the next morning Manucci came to see me; I looked upon him as my Providence. I begged him to take me down to the guard-room, and give me some refreshment, for I felt quite exhausted. My request was granted, and as I told my sufferings I had my hair done by a barber.

Manucci told me that my letters would be delivered in the course of the day, and observed, smilingly, that my epistle to the ambassador was rather severe. I shewed him copies of the three others I had written, and the inexperienced young man told me that gentleness was the best way to obtain favours. He did not know that there are circumstances in which a man’s pen must be dipped in gall. He told me confidentially that the ambassador dined with Aranda that day, and would speak in my favour as a private individual, adding that he was afraid my letter would prejudice the proud Spaniard against me.

“All I ask of you,” said I, “is not to tell the ambassador that you have seen the letter I wrote to the Count of Aranda.”

He promised he would keep the secret.

An hour after his departure I saw Donna Ignazia and her father coming in, accompanied by the officer who had treated me with such consideration. Their visit cut me to the quick; nevertheless, I felt grateful, for it shewed me the ‘goodness of Don Diego’s heart and the love of the fair devotee.

I gave them to understand, in my bad Spanish, that I was grateful for the honour they had done me in visiting me in this dreadful situation. Donna Ignazia did not speak, she only wept in silence; but Don Diego gave me clearly to understand that he would never have come to see me unless he had felt certain that my accusation was a mistake or an infamous calumny. He told me he was sure I should be set free, and that proper satisfaction would be given me.

“I hope so,” I replied, “for I am perfectly innocent of any offence.” I was greatly touched when the worthy man slipped into my hands a rouleau, telling me it contained twelve quadruples, which I could repay at my convenience.

It was more than a thousand francs, and my hair stood on end. I pressed his hand warmly, and whispered to him that I had fifty in my pocket, which I was afraid to shew him, for fear the rascals around might rob me. He put back his rouleau, and bade me farewell in tears, and I promised to come and see him as soon as I should be set at liberty.

He had not sent in his name, and as he was very well dressed he was taken for a man of importance. Such characters are not altogether exceptional in heroic Spain; it is a land of extremes.

At noon Mengs's servant came with a dinner that was choicer than before, but not so plentiful. This was just what I liked. He waited for me to finish, and went away with the plates, carrying my heartiest thanks to his master.

At one o'clock an individual came up to me and bade me follow him. He took me to a small room, where I saw my carbine and pistols. In front of me was the Alcalde Messa, seated at a table covered with documents, and a policeman stood on each side of him. The alcalde told me to sit down, and to answer truly such questions as might be put to me, warning me that my replies would be taken down.

"I do not understand Spanish well, and I shall only give written answers to any questions that may be asked of me, in Italian, French, or Latin."

This reply, which I uttered in a firm and determined voice, seemed to astonish him. He spoke to me for an hour, and I understood him very well, but he only got one reply:

"I don't understand what you say. Get a judge who understands one of the languages I have named, and I will write down my answers."

The alcalde was enraged, but I did not let his ill-humour or his threats disturb me.

Finally he gave me a pen, and told me to write my name, profession, and business in Spain in Italian. I could not refuse him this pleasure, so I wrote as follows:

"My name is Jacques Casanova; I am a subject of the Republic of Venice, by profession a man of letters, and in rank a Knight of the Golden Spur. I have sufficient means, and I travel for my pleasure. I am known to the Venetian ambassador, the Count of Aranda, the Prince de la Catolica, the Marquis of Moras, and the Duke of Lossada. I have offended in no manner against the laws of his Catholic majesty, but in spite of my innocence I have been cast into a den of thieves and assassins by magistrates who deserve a ten times greater punishment. Since I have not infringed the laws, his Catholic majesty must know that he has only one right over me, and that is to order me to leave his realms, which order I am ready to obey. My arms, which I see before me, have travelled with me for the last eleven years; I carry them to defend myself against highwaymen. They were seen when my effects were examined at the Gate of Alcala, and were not confiscated;

which makes it plain that they have served merely as a pretext for the infamous treatment to which I have been subjected."

After I had written out this document I gave it to the alcalde, who called for an interpreter. When he had had it read to him he rose angrily and said to me, —

"Valga me Dios! You shall suffer for your insolence."

With this threat he went away, ordering that I should be taken back to prison.

At eight o'clock Manucci called and told me that the Count of Aranda had been making enquiries about me of the Venetian ambassador, who had spoken very highly in my favour, and expressed his regret that he could not take my part officially on account of my being in disgrace with the State Inquisitors.

"He has certainly been shamefully used," said the count, "but an intelligent man should not lose his head. I should have known nothing about it, but for a furious letter he has written me; and Don Emmanuel de Roda and the Duke of Lossada have received epistles in the same style. Casanova is in the right, but that is not the way to address people."

"If he really said I was in the right, that is sufficient."

"He said it, sure enough."

"Then he must do me justice, and as to my style everyone has a style of their own. I am furious, and I wrote furiously. Look at this place; I have no bed, the floor is covered with filth, and I am obliged to sleep on a narrow bench. Don't you think it is natural that I should desire to eat the hearts of the scoundrels who have placed me here? If I do not leave this hell by tomorrow, I shall kill myself, or go mad."

Manucci understood the horrors of my situation. He promised to come again early the next day, and advised me to see what money would do towards procuring a bed, but I would not listen to him, for I was suffering from injustice, and was therefore obstinate. Besides, the thought of the vermin frightened me, and I was afraid for my purse and the jewels I had about me.

I spent a second night worse than the first, going to sleep from sheer exhaustion, only to awake and find myself slipping off the bench.

Manucci came before eight o'clock, and my aspect shocked him. He had come in his carriage, bringing with him some excellent chocolate, which in some way restored my spirits. As I was finishing it, an officer of high rank, accompanied by two other officers, came in and called out, —

"M. de Casanova!"

I stepped forward and presented myself.

"Chevalier," he began, "the Count of Aranda is at the gate of the prison; he is much grieved at the treatment you have received. He only heard about it through the letter you wrote him yesterday, and if you had written sooner your pains would have been shorter."

"Such was my intention, colonel, but a soldier … ."

I proceeded to tell him the story of the swindling soldier, and on hearing his name the colonel called the captain of the guard, reprimanded him severely, and ordered him to give me back the crown himself. I took the money laughingly, and the colonel then ordered the captain to fetch the offending soldier, and to give him a flogging before me.

This officer, the emissary of the all-powerful Aranda, was Count Royas, commanding the garrison of Buen Retiro. I told him all the circumstances of my arrest, and of my imprisonment in that filthy place. I told him that if I did not get back that day my arms, my liberty, and my honour, I should either go mad or kill myself.

"Here," I said, "I can neither rest nor sleep, and a man needs sleep every night. If you had come a little earlier you would have seen the disgusting filth with which the floor was covered."

The worthy man was taken aback with the energy with which I spoke. I saw his feelings, and hastened to say, —

"You must remember, colonel, that I am suffering from injustice, and am in a furious rage. I am a man of honour, like yourself, and you can imagine the effect of such treatment on me."

Manucci told him, in Spanish, that in my normal state I was a good fellow enough. The colonel expressed his pity for me, and assured me that my arms should be restored to me, and my liberty too, in the course of the day.

“Afterwards,” said he, “you must go and thank his excellency the Count of Aranda, who came here expressly for your sake. He bade me tell you that your release would be delayed till the afternoon, that you may have full satisfaction for the affront you have received, if it is an affront, for the penalties of the law only dishonour the guilty. In this instance the Alcalde Messa has been deceived by the rascal who was in your service.”

“There he is,” said I. “Be good enough to have him removed, or else, in my indignation, I might kill him.”

“He shall be taken away this moment,” he replied.

The colonel went out, and two minutes later two soldiers came in and took the rogue away between them. I never saw him again, and never troubled myself to enquire what had become of him.

The colonel begged me to accompany him to the guard-room, to see the thieving soldier flogged. Manucci was at my side, and at some little distance stood the Count of Aranda, surrounded by officers, and accompanied by a royal guard.

The business kept us there for a couple of hours. Before leaving me the colonel begged me to meet Mengs at dinner at his house.

When I returned to my filthy prison I found a clean arm-chair, which I was informed had been brought in for me. I sat down in it immediately, and Manucci left me, after embracing me again and again. He was my sincere friend, and I can never forgive myself the stupidity which made me offend him grievously. He never forgave me, at which I am not surprised, but I believe my readers will agree with me in thinking that he carried his vengeance too far.

After the scene which had taken place, the vile crowd of prisoners stood gazing at me in stupid silence, and Marazzini came up to me and begged me to use my offices for him.

Dinner was brought me as usual, and at three o’clock the Alcalde Messa appeared and begged me to follow him, as he had received orders to take me back to my lodging, where he hoped I should find everything in perfect order. At the same time he shewed me my arms, which one of his men was going to bring to my house. The officer of the guard returned me my sword, the alcalde, who was in his black cloak, put himself on my left hand, and thus I was escorted home with a guard of thirty constables. The seals were removed from my apartment, and after a brief inspection I pronounced that everything was in perfect order.

"If you had not a rascal and a traitor (who shall end his days in the galleys) in your service, Senor Caballero, you would never have written down the servants of his Catholic majesty as scoundrels."

"Senor Alcalde, my indignation made me write the same sentence to four of his majesty's ministers. Then I believed what I wrote, but I do so no longer. Let us forget and forgive; but you must confess that if I had not known how to write a letter you would have sent me to the galleys."

"Alas! it is very likely."

I need not say that I hastened to remove all traces of the vile prison where I had suffered so much. When I was ready to go out my first grateful visit was paid to the noble cobbler. The worthy man was proud of the fulfilment of his prophecy, and glad to see me again. Donna Ignazia was wild with delight — perhaps she had not been so sure of my release — and when Don Diego heard of the satisfaction that had been given me he said that a grandee of Spain could not have asked for more. I begged the worthy people to come and dine with me, telling them that I would name the day another time, and they accepted gladly.

I felt that my love for Donna Ignazia had increased immensely since our last meeting.

Afterwards I called on Mengs, who with his knowledge of Spanish law expected nothing less than to see me. When he heard of my triumphant release he overwhelmed me with congratulations. He was in his Court dress — an unusual thing with him, and on my asking him the reason he told me that he had been to Don Emmanuel de Roda's to speak on my behalf, but had not succeeded in obtaining an audience. He gave me a Venetian letter which had just arrived for me. I opened it, and found it was from M. Dandolo, and contained an enclosure for M. de Mocenigo. M. Dandolo said that on reading the enclosed letter the ambassador would have no more scruples about introducing me, as it contained a recommendation from one of the Inquisitors on behalf of the three.

When I told Mengs of this he said it was now in my power to make my fortune in Spain, and that now was the time when all the ministers would be only too anxious to do something for me to make me forget the wrongs I had received.

“I advise you,” he said, “to take the letter to the ambassador immediately. Take my carriage; after what you have undergone for the last few days you cannot be in a walking humour.”

I had need of rest, and told Mengs that I would not sup with him that night, but would dine with him the next day. The ambassador was out, so I left the letter with Manucci, and then drove home and slept profoundly for twelve hours.

Manucci came to see me the next day in high spirits, and told me that M. Girolamo Zulian had written to the ambassador on behalf of M. du Mula, informing him that he need not hesitate to countenance me, as any articles the Tribunal might have against me were in no degree prejudicial to my honour.

“The ambassador,” he continued, “proposes to introduce you at Court next week, and he wants you to dine with him to-day; there will be a numerous company at dinner.”

“I am engaged to Mengs.”

“No matter, he shall be asked as well; you must come. Consider the effect of your presence at the ambassador’s the day after your triumph.”

“You are right. Go and ask Mengs, and tell the ambassador that I have much pleasure in accepting his invitation.”

CHAPTER V

Campomanes — Olavides — Sierra Morena — Aranjuez — Mengs — The Marquis Grimaldi — Toledo — Madame Pelliccia — My Return to Madrid

Different circumstances in my life seem to have combined to render me somewhat superstitious; it is a humiliating confession, and yet I make it. But who could help it? A man who abandons himself to his whims and fancies is like a child playing with a billiard cue. It may make a stroke that would be an honour to the most practised and scientific player; and such are the strange coincidences of life which, as I have said, have caused me to become superstitious.

Fortune, which under the humbler name of luck seems but a word, is a very divinity when it guides the most important actions of a man's life. Always it has seemed to me that this divinity is not blind, as the mythologists affirm; she had brought me low only to exalt me, and I found myself in high places, only, as it seems, to be cast into the depths. Fortune has done her best to make me regard her as a reasoning, almighty power; she has made me feel that the strength of my will is as nothing before this mysterious power, which takes my will and moulds it, and makes it a mere instrument for the accomplishment of its decrees.

I could not possibly have done anything in Spain without the help of the representative of my country, and he would not have dared to do anything for me without the letter I had just given him. This letter, in its turn, would probably have had but slight effect if it had not come to hand so soon after my imprisonment, which had become the talk of the town, through the handsome satisfaction the Count of Aranda had given me.

The letter made the ambassador sorry that he had not interposed on my behalf, but he hoped people would believe that the count would not have acted as he did if it had not been for his interposition. His favourite, Count Manucci, had come to ask me to dinner; as it happened I was engaged to

Mengs, which obtained an invitation for the painter, and flattered his vanity excessively. He fancied that the invitation proceeded from gratitude, and it certainly smoothed away the mortification he had felt at seeing me arrested in his house. He immediately wrote to the effect that he would call upon me with his carriage.

I called on the Count of Aranda, who kept me waiting for a quarter of an hour, and then came in with some papers in his hand. He smiled when he saw me, and said, —

“Your business is done. Stay, here are four letters; take them and read them over again.”

“Why should I read them again? This is the document I gave the alcalde.”

“I know that. Read, and confess that you should not have written so violently, in spite of the wrongs that vexed you.”

“I crave your pardon, my lord, but a man who meditates suicide does not pick terms. I believed that your excellency was at the bottom of it all.”

“Then you don’t know me. Go and thank Don Emmanuel de Roda, who wants to know you, and I shall be glad if you will call once on the alcalde, not to make him an apology, for you owe him none, but as an act of politeness to salve over the hard things you said of him. If you write the history of Princess Lubomirska, I hope you will tell her that I did my best for you.”

I then called on Colonel Royas, who told me that I had made a great mistake in saying that I was satisfied.

“What could I claim?”

“Everything. Dismissal of the alcalde and compensation to the tune of fifty thousand duros. Spain is a country where a man may speak out save in the matters which the Holy Inquisition looks after.”

This colonel, now a general, is one of the pleasantest Spaniards I have ever met.

I had not long returned to my lodging when Mengs called for me in his carriage. The ambassador gave me a most gracious reception, and overwhelmed Mengs with compliments for having endeavoured to shelter me. At dinner I told the story of my sufferings at Buen Retiro, and the conversation I had just had with the Count of Aranda, who had returned me my letters. The company expressed a desire to see them, and everyone gave an opinion on the matter.

The guests were Abbe Bigliardi, the French consul, Don Rodrigues de Campomanes, and the famous Don Pablo d'Olavides. Everyone spoke his mind, and the ambassador condemned the letters as too ferocious. On the other hand, Campomanes approved them, saying that they were not abusive, and were wonderfully adapted to my purpose, namely, to force the reader to do me prompt justice, were the reader to be the king himself. Olavides and Bigliardi echoed this sentiment. Mengs sided with the ambassador, and begged me to come and live with him, so as not to be liable to any more inconveniences from spying servants. I did not accept this invitation till I had been pressed for some time, and I noted the remark of the ambassador, who said I owed Mengs this reparation for the indirect affront he had received.

I was delighted to make the acquaintance of Campomanes and Olavides, men of intellect and of a stamp very rare in Spain. They were not exactly men of learning, but they were above religious prejudices, and were not only fearless in throwing public scorn upon them but even laboured openly for their destruction. It was Campomanes who had furnished Aranda with all the damaging matter against the Jesuits. By a curious coincidence, Campomanes, the Count of Aranda, and the General of the Jesuits, were all squint-eyed. I asked Campomanes why he hated the Jesuits so bitterly, and he replied that he looked upon them in the same light as the other religious orders, whom he considered a parasitical and noxious race, and would gladly banish them all, not only from the peninsula but from the face of the earth.

He was the author of all the pamphlets that had been written on the subject of mortmain; and as he was an intimate friend of the ambassador's, M. Mocenigo had furnished him with an account of the proceedings of the Venetian Republic against the monks. He might have dispensed with this source of information if he had read the writings of Father Paul Sarpi on the same subject. Quick-sighted, firm, with the courage of his opinions, Campomanes was the fiscal of the Supreme Council of Castille, of which Aranda was president. Everyone knew him to be a thoroughly honest man, who acted solely for the good of the State. Thus statesmen and officials had warm feelings of respect for him, while the monks and bigots hated the sound of his name, and the Inquisition had sworn to be his ruin. It was said openly that he would either become a bishop or perish in the cells of the holy brotherhood. The prophecy was only partly fulfilled. Four years after my visit to Spain he was incarcerated in the dungeons of the Inquisition, but he obtained his release after three years' confinement by doing public penance. The leprosy which eats out the heart of Spain is not yet cured. Olavides was still more harshly treated, and even Aranda would have fallen a victim if he had not had the good sense to ask the king to send him to France as his ambassador. The king was very glad to do so, as otherwise he would have been forced to deliver him up to the infuriated monks. Charles III. (who died a madman) was a remarkable character. He was as obstinate as a mule, as weak as a woman, as gross as a Dutchman, and a thorough-paced bigot. It was no wonder that he became the tool of his confessor.

At the time of which I am speaking the cabinet of Madrid was occupied in a curious scheme. A thousand Catholic families had been enticed from Switzerland to form a colony in the beautiful but deserted region called the Sierra Morena, well known all over Europe by its mention in Don Quixote. Nature seemed there to have lavished all her gifts; the climate was perfect, the soil fertile, and streams of all kinds watered the land, but in spite of all it was almost depopulated.

Desiring to change this state of things, his Catholic majesty had decided to make a present of all the agricultural products for a certain number of years to industrious colonists. He had consequently invited the Swiss Catholics, and had paid their expenses for the journey. The Swiss arrived, and the Spanish government did its best to provide them with lodging and spiritual and temporal superintendence. Olavides was the soul of this scheme. He conferred with the ministers to provide the new population with magistrates, priests, a governor, craftsmen of all kinds to build churches and houses, and especially a bull-ring, a necessity for the Spaniards, but a perfectly useless provision as far as the simple Swiss were concerned.

In the documents which Don Pablo Olavides had composed on the subject he demonstrated the inexpediency of establishing any religious orders in the new colony, but if he could have proved his opinion to be correct with foot and rule he would none the less have drawn on his head the implacable hatred of the monks, and of the bishop in whose diocese the new colony was situated. The secular clergy supported Olavides, but the monks cried out against his impiety, and as the Inquisition was eminently monkish in its sympathies persecution had already begun, and this was one of the subjects of conversation at the dinner at which I was present.

I listened to the arguments, sensible and otherwise, which were advanced, and I finally gave my opinion, as modestly as I could, that in a few years the colony would banish like smoke; and this for several reasons.

“The Swiss,” I said, “are a very peculiar people; if you transplant them to a foreign shore, they languish and die; they become a prey to home-sickness. When this once begins in a Switzer, the only thing is to take him home to the mountain, the lake, or the valley, where he was born, or else he will infallibly die.”

“It would be wise, I think,” I continued, “to endeavour to combine a Spanish colony with the Swiss colony, so as to effect a mingling of races. At first, at all events, their rules, both spiritual and temporal, should be Swiss, and, above all, you would have to insure them complete immunity from the Inquisition. The Swiss who has been bred in the country has peculiar customs and manners of love-making, of which the Spanish Church might not exactly approve; but the least attempt to restrain their liberty in this respect would immediately bring about a general home-sickness.”

At first Olavides thought I was joking, but he soon found out that my remarks had some sense in them. He begged me to write out my opinions on the subject, and to give him the benefit of my knowledge. I promised to do so, and Mengs fixed a day for him to come and dine with me at his house.

The next day I moved my household goods to Mengs’s house, and began my philosophical and physiological treatise on the colony.

I called on Don Emmanuel de Roda, who was a man of letters, a ‘rara aves’ in Spain. He liked Latin poetry, had read some Italian, but very naturally gave the palm to the Spanish poets. He welcomed me warmly, begged me to come and see him again, and told me how sorry he had been at my unjust imprisonment.

The Duke of Lossada congratulated me on the way in which the Venetian ambassador spoke of me everywhere, and encouraged me in my idea of getting some place under Government, promising to give me his support in the matter.

The Prince della Catolica, invited me to dinner with the Venetian ambassador; and in the course of three weeks I had made a great number of valuable acquaintances. I thought seriously of seeking employment in Spain, as not having heard from Lisbon I dared not go there on the chance of finding something to do. I had not received any letters from Pauline of late, and had no idea as to what had become of her.

I passed a good many of my evenings with a Spanish lady, named Sabatini, who gave ‘tertullas’ or assemblies, frequented chiefly by fifth-rate literary men. I also visited the Duke of Medina-Sidonia, a well-read and intelligent man, to whom I had been presented by Don Domingo Varnier, one of the gentlemen of the king’s chamber, whom I had met at Mengs’s house. I paid a good many visits to Donna Ignazia, but as I was never left alone with her these visits became tiresome. When I suggested a party of pleasure with her and her cousins, she replied that she would like it as much as I, but as it was Lent and near Holy Week, in which God died for our salvation, it was more fit to think of penance than pleasure. After Easter, she said, we might consider the matter. Ignazia was a perfect example of the young Spanish devotee.

A fortnight after, the King and Court left Madrid for Aranjuez. M. de Mocenigo asked me to come and stay with him, as he would be able to present me at Court. As may be imagined, I should have been only too glad to accept, but on the eve of my departure, as I was driving with Mengs, I was suddenly seized with a fever, and was convulsed so violently that my head was dashed against the carriage window, which it shivered to fragments. Mengs ordered the coachman to drive home, and I was put to bed. In four hours I was seized with a sweating fit, which lasted for ten or twelve hours. The bed and two mattresses were soaked through with my perspiration, which dripped on to the floor beneath. The fever abated in forty-eight hours, but left me in such a state of weakness that I was kept to my bed for a whole week, and could not go to Aranjuez till Holy Saturday. The ambassador welcomed me warmly, but on the night I arrived a small lump which I had felt in the course of the day grew as large as an egg, and I was unable to go to mass on Easter Day.

In five days the excrescence became as large as an average melon, much to the amazement of Manucci and the ambassador, and even of the king's surgeon, a Frenchman who declared he had never seen the like before. I was not alarmed personally, for, as I suffered no pain and the lump was quite soft, I guessed it was only a collection of lymph, the remainder of the evil humours which I had sweated away in the fever. I told the surgeon the history of the fever and begged him to lance the abscess, which he did, and for four days the opening discharged an almost incredible amount of matter. On the fifth day the wound was almost healed, but the exhaustion had left me so weak that I could not leave my bed.

Such was my situation when I received a letter from Mengs. It is before me at the present moment, and I give below a true copy:

"Yesterday the rector of the parish in which I reside affixed to the church-door a list of those of his parishioners who are Atheists and have neglected their Easter duties. Amongst them your name figures in full, and the aforesaid rector has reproached me bitterly for harbouring a heretic. I did not know what answer to make, for I feel sure that you could have stopped in Madrid a day longer to discharge the duties of a Christian, even if it were only out of regard for me. The duty I owe to the king, my master, the care I am bound to take of my reputation, and my fears of being molested, all make me request you to look upon my house as yours no longer. When you return to Madrid you may go where you will, and my servants shall transport your effects to your new abode.

"I am, etc., "ANTONIO RAPHAEL MENGS."

I was so annoyed by this rude, brutal, and ungrateful letter, that if I had not been seven leagues from Madrid, and in a state of the utmost weakness, Mengs should have suffered for his insolence. I told the messenger who had brought it to begone, but he replied that he had orders to await my reply. I crushed the letter in my hand and flung it at his face, saying, —

"Go and tell your unworthy master what I did with his letter, and tell him that is the only answer that such a letter deserves."

The innocent messenger went his way in great amazement.

My anger gave me strength, and having dressed myself and summoned a sedan-chair I went to church, and was confessed by a Grey Friar, and at six o'clock the next morning I received the Sacrament.

My confessor was kind enough to give me a certificate to the effect that I had been obliged to keep my bed since my arrival 'al sitio', and that in spite of my extreme weakness I had gone to church, and had confessed and communicated like a good Christian. He also told me the name of the priest who had affixed the paper containing my name to the door of the church.

When I returned to the ambassador's house I wrote to this priest, telling him that the certificate enclosed would inform him as to my reasons for not communicating. I expressed a hope that, being satisfied of my orthodoxy, he would not delay in removing my name from his church-doors, and I concluded by begging him to hand the enclosed letter to the Chevalier Mengs.

To the painter I wrote that I felt that I had deserved the shameful insult he had given me by my great mistake in acceding to his request to honour him by staying in his house. However, as a good Christian who had just received the Holy Communion, I told him that his brutal behaviour was forgiven; but I bade him to take to heart the line, well known to all honest people, and doubtless unknown to him:

'Turpius ejicitur quam non admittitur hospes.'

After sending the letter I told the ambassador what had happened, to which he replied, —

"I am not at all surprised at what you tell me. Mengs is only liked for his talents in painting; in everything else he is well known to be little better than a fool."

As a matter of fact he had only asked me to stay with him to gratify his own vanity. He knew that all the town was talking of my imprisonment and of the satisfaction the Count of Aranda had accorded me, and he wanted people to think that his influence had obtained the favour that had been shewn me. Indeed, he had said in a moment of exaltation that I should have compelled the Alcade Messa to escort me not to my own house but to his, as it was in his house that I had been arrested.

Mengs was an exceedingly ambitious and a very jealous man; he hated all his brother painters. His colour and design were excellent, but his invention was very weak, and invention is as necessary to a great painter as a great poet.

I happened to say to him one day, “Just as every poet should be a painter, so every painter should be a poet;” and he got quite angry, thinking that I was alluding to his weakness of imagination, which he felt but would not acknowledge.

He was an ignorant man, and liked to pass for a scholar; he sacrificed to Bacchus and Comus, and would fain be thought sober; he was lustful, bad-tempered, envious, and miserly, but yet would be considered a virtuous man. He loved hard work, and this forced him to abstain, as a rule, from dinner, as he drank so inordinately at that meal that he could do nothing after it. When he dined out he had to drink nothing but water, so as not to compromise his reputation for temperance. He spoke four languages, and all badly, and could not even write his native tongue with correctness; and yet he claimed perfection for his grammar and orthography, as for all his other qualities. While I was staying with him I became acquainted with some of his weak points, and endeavoured to correct them, at which he took great offence. The fellow writhed under a sense of obligation to me. Once I prevented his sending a petition to the Court, which the king would have seen, and which would have made Mengs ridiculous. In signing his name he had written ‘el mas inclito’, wishing to say your most humble. I pointed out to him that ‘el mas inclito’ meant the most illustrious, and that the Spanish for the expression he wanted was ‘el mas humilde’. The proud fool was quite enraged, telling me that he knew Spanish better than I, but when the dictionary was searched he had to swallow the bitter pill of confessing himself in the wrong.

Another time I suppressed a heavy and stupid criticism of his on someone who had maintained that there were no monuments still existing of the antediluvian period. Mengs thought he would confound the author by citing the remains of the Tower of Babel — a double piece of folly, for in the first place there are no such remains, and in the second, the Tower of Babel was a post-diluvian building.

He was also largely given to the discussion of metaphysical questions, on which his knowledge was simply nil, and a favourite pursuit of his was defining beauty in the abstract, and when he was on this topic the nonsense he talked was something dreadful.

Mengs was a very passionate man, and would sometimes beat his children most cruelly. More than once I have rescued his poor sons from his furious hands. He boasted that his father, a bad Bohemian artist, had brought him up with the stick. Thus, he said, he had become a great painter, and he wished his own children to enjoy the same advantages.

He was deeply offended when he received a letter, of which the address omitted his title of chevalier, and his name, Rafael. One day I ventured to say that these things were but trifles after all, and that I had taken no offence at his omitting the chevalier on the letters he had written to me, though I was a knight of the same order as himself. He very wisely made no answer; but his objection to the omission of his baptismal name was a very ridiculous one. He said he was called Antonio after Antonio Correggio, and Rafael after Rafael da Urbino, and that those who omitted these names, or either of them, implicitly denied his possession of the qualities of both these great painters.

Once I dared to tell him that he had made a mistake in the hand of one of his figures, as the ring finger was shorter than the index. He replied sharply that it was quite right, and shewed me his hand by way of proof. I laughed, and shewed him my hand in return, saying that I was certain that my hand was made like that of all the descendants of Adam.

“Then whom do you think that I am descended from?”

“I don’t know, but you are certainly not of the same species as myself.”

“You mean you are not of my species; all well-made hands of men, and women too, are like mine and not like yours.”

“I’ll wager a hundred doubloons that you are in the wrong.”

He got up, threw down brushes and palette, and rang up his servants, saying, —

“We shall see which is right.”

The servants came, and on examination he found that I was right. For once in his life, he laughed and passed it off as a joke, saying, —

"I am delighted that I can boast of being unique in one particular, at all events."

Here I must note another very sensible remark of his.

He had painted a Magdalen, which was really wonderfully beautiful. For ten days he had said every morning, "The picture will be finished to-night." At last I told him that he had made a mistake in saying it would be finished, as he was still working on it.

"No, I have not," he replied, "ninety-nine connoisseurs out of a hundred would have pronounced it finished long ago, but I want the praise of the hundredth man. There's not a picture in the world that can be called finished save in a relative sense; this Magdalen will not be finished till I stop working at it, and then it will be only finished relatively, for if I were to give another day's work to it it would be more finished still. Not one of Petrarch's sonnets is a really finished production; no, nor any other man's sonnets. Nothing that the mind of man can conceive is perfect, save it be a mathematical theorem."

I expressed my warm approval of the excellent way in which he had spoken. He was not so sensible another time when he expressed a wish to have been Raphael.

"He was such a great painter."

"Certainly," said I, "but what can you mean by wishing you had been Raphael? This is not sense; if you had been Raphael, you would no longer be existing. But perhaps you only meant to express a wish that you were tasting the joys of Paradise; in that case I will say no more."

"No, no; I mean I would have liked to have been Raphael without troubling myself about existing now, either in soul or body."

"Really such a desire is an absurdity; think it over, and you will see it for yourself."

He flew into a rage, and abused me so heartily that I could not help laughing.

Another time he made a comparison between a tragic author and a painter, of course to the advantage of the latter.

I analysed the matter calmly, shewing him that the painter's labour is to a great extent purely mechanical, and can be done whilst engaged in casual talk; whilst a well-written tragedy is the work of genius pure and simple. Therefore, the poet must be immeasurably superior to the painter.

"Find me if you can," said I, "a poet who can order his supper between the lines of his tragedy, or discuss the weather whilst he is composing epic verses."

When Mengs was beaten in an argument, instead of acknowledging his defeat, he invariably became brutal and insulting. He died at the age of fifty, and is regarded by posterity as a Stoic philosopher, a scholar, and a compendium of all the virtues; and this opinion must be ascribed to a fine biography of him in royal quarto, choicely printed, and dedicated to the King of Spain. This panegyric is a mere tissue of lies. Mengs was a great painter, and nothing else; and if he had only produced the splendid picture which hangs over the high altar of the chapel royal at Dresden, he would deserve eternal fame, though indeed he is indebted to the great Raphael for the idea of the painting.

We shall hear more of Mengs when I describe my meeting with him at Rome, two or three years later.

I was still weak and confined to my room when Manucci came to me, and proposed that I should go with him to Toledo.

"The ambassador," he said, "is going to give a grand official dinner to the ambassadors of the other powers, and as I have not been presented at Court I am excluded from being present. However, if I travel, my absence will not give rise to any remarks. We shall be back in five or six days."

I was delighted to have the chance of seeing Toledo, and of making the journey in a comfortable carriage, so I accepted. We started the next morning, and reached Toledo in the evening of the same day. For Spain we were lodged comfortably enough, and the next day we went out under the charge of a cicerone, who took us to the Alcazar, the Louvre of Toledo, formerly the palace of the Moorish kings. Afterwards we inspected the cathedral, which is well worthy of a visit, on account of the riches it contains. I saw the great tabernacle used on Corpus Christi. It is made of silver, and is so heavy that it requires thirty strong men to lift it. The Archbishop of Toledo has three hundred thousand duros a year, and his clergy have four hundred thousand, amounting to two million francs in French money. One of the canons, as he was shewing me the urns containing the relics, told me that one of them contained the thirty pieces of silver for which Judas betrayed our Lord. I begged him to let me see them, to which he replied severely that the king himself would not have dared to express such indecent curiosity.

I hastened to apologise, begging him not to take offence at a stranger's heedless questions; and this seemed to calm his anger.

The Spanish priests are a band of knaves, but one has to treat them with more respect than one would pay to honest men elsewhere. The following day we were shewn the museum of natural history. It was rather a dull exhibition; but, at all events, one could laugh at it without exciting the wrath of the monks and the terrors of the Inquisition. We were shewn, amongst other wonders, a stuffed dragon, and the man who exhibited it said, —

"This proves, gentlemen, that the dragon is not a fabulous animal;" but I thought there was more of art than nature about the beast. He then shewed us a basilisk, but instead of slaying us with a glance it only made us laugh. The greatest wonder of all, however, was nothing else than a Freemason's apron, which, as the curator very sagely declared, proved the existence of such an order, whatever some might say.

The journey restored me to health, and when I returned to Aranjuez, I proceeded to pay my court to all the ministers. The ambassador presented me to Marquis Grimaldi, with whom I had some conversations on the subject of the Swiss colony, which was going on badly. I reiterated my opinion that the colony should be composed of Spaniards.

"Yes," said he, "but Spain is thinly peopled everywhere, and your plan would amount to impoverishing one district to make another rich."

"Not at all, for if you took ten persons who are dying of poverty in the Asturias, and placed them in the Sierra Morena, they would not die till they had begotten fifty children. This fifty would beget two hundred and so on."

My scheme was laid before a commission, and the marquis promised that I should be made governor of the colony if the plan was accepted.

An Italian Opera Comique was then amusing the Court, with the exception of the king, who had no taste for music. His majesty bore a considerable resemblance to a sheep in the face, and it seemed as if the likeness went deeper, for sheep have not the slightest idea of sound. His favourite pursuit was sport, and the reason will be given later on.

An Italian musician at the Court desired to compose some music for a new opera, and as there was no time to send to Italy I offered to compose the libretto. My offer was accepted, and by the next day the first act was ready. The music was composed in four days, and the Venetian ambassador invited all the ministers to the rehearsal in the grand hall of his palace. The music was pronounced exquisite; the two other acts were written, and in a fortnight the opera was put upon the stage. The musician was rewarded handsomely, but I was considered too grand to work for money and my reward was paid me in the Court money of compliments. However, I was glad to see that the ambassador was proud of me and that the minister's esteem for me seemed increased.

In writing the libretto I had become acquainted with the actresses. The chief of them was a Roman named Pelliccia, neither pretty nor ugly, with a slight squint, and but moderate talents. Her younger sister was pretty if not handsome; but no one cared for the younger, while the elder was a universal favourite. Her expression was pleasant, her smile delightful, and her manners most captivating. Her husband was an indifferent painter, plain-looking, and more like her servant than her husband. He was indeed her very humble servant, and she treated him with great kindness. The feelings she inspired me with were not love, but a sincere respect and friendship. I used to visit her every day, and wrote verses for her to sing to the Roman airs she delivered so gracefully.

On one of the days of rehearsals I was pointing out to her the various great personages who were present. The manager of the company, Marescalchi by name, had entered into an arrangement with the Governor of Valentia to bring the company there in September to play comic opera in a small theatre which had been built on purpose. Italian opera had hitherto never been presented at Valentia, and Marecalchi hoped to make a good deal of money there. Madame Pelliccia knew nobody in Valentia, and wanted a letter of introduction to someone there. She asked me if I thought she could venture to ask the Venetian ambassador to do her the favour, but I advised her to try the Duke of Arcos.

“Where is he?”

“That gentleman who is looking in your direction now.”

“How can I dare to ask him?”

“He is a true nobleman, and I am sure he will be only too happy to oblige you. Go and ask him now; you will not be denied.”

“I haven’t the courage to do so. Come with me and introduce me.”

“That would spoil everything; he must not even think that I am your adviser in the matter. I am just going to leave you; you must make your request directly afterwards.”

I walked towards the orchestra, and looking round I saw that the duke was approaching the actress.

“The thing’s as good as done,” I said to myself.

After the rehearsal was over Madame Pelliccia came and told me that the Duke would give her the letter on the day on which the opera was produced. He kept his word, and she received a sealed letter for a merchant and banker, Don Diego Valencia.

It was then May, and she was not to go to Valentia till September, so we shall hear what the letter contained later on.

I often saw the king’s gentleman of the chamber, Don Domingo Varnier, another ‘gentleman in the service of the Princess of the Asturias, and one of the princess’s bed-chamber women. This most popular princess succeeded in suppressing a good deal of the old etiquette, and the tone of her Court had lost the air of solemnity common in Spanish society. It was a strange thing to see the King of Spain always dining at eleven o’clock, like the Parisian cordwainers in the seventeenth century. His meal always consisted of the same dishes, he always went out hunting at the same hour, coming back in the evening thoroughly fatigued.

The king was ugly, but everything is relative, he was handsome compared with his brother, who was terrifically ugly.

This brother never went anywhere without a picture of the Virgin, which Mengs had painted for him. It was two feet high by three and a half broad. The figure was depicted as seated on the grass with legs crossed after the Eastern fashion, and uncovered up to the knees. It was, in reality, a voluptuous painting; and the prince mistook for devotion that which was really a sinful passion, for it was impossible to look upon the figure without desiring to have the original within one's arms. However, the prince did not see this, and was delighted to find himself in love with the mother of the Saviour. In this he was a true Spaniard; they only love pictures of this kind, and interpret the passions they excite in the most favourable sense.

At Madrid I had, seen a picture of the Madonna with the child at her breast. It was the altarpiece of a chapel in the Calle St. Jeronimo. The place was filled all day by the devout, who came to adore the Mother of God, whose figure was only interesting by reason of her magnificent breast. The alms given at this chapel were so numerous, that in the hundred and fifty years, since the picture had been placed there, the clergy had been able to purchase numerous lamps and candlesticks of silver, and vessels of silver gilt, and even of gold. The doorway was always blocked by carriages, and a sentinel was placed there to keep order amongst the coachmen; no nobleman would pass by without going in to pray to the Virgin, and to contemplate those 'beata ubera, quae lactaverunt aeterni patris filium'. But there came a change.

When I returned to Madrid I wanted to pay a visit to the Abbe Pico, and told my coachman to take another way so as to avoid the crush in front of the chapel.

"It is not so frequented now, senor," said he, "I can easily get by it."

He went on his way, and I found the entrance to the chapel deserted. As I was getting out of the carriage I asked my coachman what was the reason of the change, and he replied, —

"Oh, senor! men are getting more wicked every day."

This reason did not satisfy me, and when I had taken my chocolate with the abbe, an intelligent and venerable old man, I asked him why the chapel in question had lost its reputation.

He burst out laughing, and replied, —

“Excuse me, I really cannot tell you. Go and see for yourself; your curiosity will soon be satisfied.”

As soon as I left him I went to the chapel, and the state of the picture told me all. The breast of the Virgin had disappeared under a kerchief which some profane brush had dared to paint over it. The beautiful picture was spoilt; the magic and fascination had disappeared. Even the teat had been painted out; the Child held on to nothing, and the head of the Virgin no longer appeared natural.

This disaster had taken place at the end of the Carnival of 1768. The old chaplain died, and the Vandal who succeeded him pronounced the painting to be a scandalous one, and robbed it of all its charm.

He may have been in the right as a fool, but as a Christian and a Spaniard he was certainly in the wrong, and he was probably soon convinced of the mistake he had made by the diminution in the offerings of the faithful.

My interest in the study of human nature made me call on this priest, whom I expected to find a stupid old man.

I went one morning, but instead of being old, the priest was an active, clever-looking man of thirty, who immediately offered me chocolate with the best grace imaginable. I refused, as was my duty as a stranger, and indeed the Spaniards offer visitors chocolate so frequently at all hours, that if one accepted it all one would be choked.

I lost no time in exordiums, but came to the point at once, by saying that as a lover of paintings I had been grieved at finding the magnificent Madonna spoilt.

“Very likely,” he replied, “but it was exactly the physical beauty of the picture that rendered it in my eyes unfit to represent one whose aspect should purify and purge the senses, instead of exciting them. Let all the pictures in the world be destroyed, if they be found to have caused the commission of one mortal sin.”

“Who allowed you to commit this mutilation? The Venetian State Inquisitors, even M. Barberigo, though he is a devout man, would have put you under the Leads for such a deed. The love of Paradise should not be allowed to interfere with the fine arts, and I am sure that St. Luke himself (who was a painter, as you know) would condemn you if he could come to life again."

"Sir, I needed no one's leave or license. I have to say mass at that altar every day, and I am not ashamed to tell you that I was unable to consecrate. You are a man and a Christian, you can excuse my weakness. That voluptuous picture drew away my thoughts from holy things."

"Who obliged you to look at it?"

"I did not look at it; the devil, the enemy of God, made me see it in spite of myself."

"Then you should have mutilated yourself like Origen. Your generative organs, believe me, are not so valuable as the picture you have ruined."

"Sir, you insult me."

"Not at all, I have no intention of doing so."

That young priest shewed me the door with such brusqueness that I felt sure he would inform against me to the Inquisition. I knew he would have no difficulty in finding out my name, so I resolved to be beforehand with him.

Both my fear and my resolve were inspired by an incident which I shall mention as an episode.

A few days before, I had met a Frenchman named Segur, who had just come out of the prisons of the Inquisition. He had been shut up for three years for committing the following crime:

In the hall of his house there was a fountain, composed of a marble basin and the statue of a naked child, who discharged the water in the same way as the well-known statue of Brussels, that is to say, by his virile member. The child might be a Cupid or an Infant Jesus, as you pleased, but the sculptor had adorned the head with a kind of aureole; and so the fanatics declared that it was a mocking of God.

Poor Segur was accused of impiety, and the Inquisition dealt with him accordingly.

I felt that my fault might be adjudged as great as Segur's, and not caring to run the risk of a like punishment I called on the bishop, who held the office of Grand Inquisitor, and told him word for word the conversation I had had with the iconoclast chaplain. I ended by craving pardon, if I had offended the chaplain, as I was a good Christian, and orthodox on all points.

I had never expected to find the Grand Inquisitor of Madrid a kindly and intelligent, though ill-favoured, prelate; but so it was, and he did nothing but laugh from the beginning to the end of my story, for he would not let me call it a confession.

"The chaplain," he said, "is himself blameworthy and unfit for his position, in that he has adjudged others to be as weak as himself; in fact, he has committed a wrong against religion. Nevertheless, my dear son, it was not wise of you to go and irritate him." As I had told him my name he shewed me, smilingly, an accusation against me, drawn up by someone who had witnessed the fact. The good bishop gently chid me for having called the friar-confessor of the Duke of Medina an ignoramus. He had refused to admit that a priest might say mass a second time on a high festival, after breaking his fast, on the command of his sovereign prince, who, by the hypothesis, had not heard mass before.

"You were quite right in your contention," said the Inquisitor, "but yet every truth is not good to utter, and it was wrong to call the man an ignoramus in his presence. For the future you would do well to avoid all idle discussion on religious matters, both on dogma and discipline. And I must also tell you, in order that you may not leave Spain with any harsh ideas on the Inquisition, that the priest who affixed your name to the church-door amongst the excommunicated has been severely reprimanded. He ought to have given you a fatherly admonition, and, above all, enquired as to your health, as we know that you were seriously ill at the time."

Thereupon I knelt down and kissed his hand, and went my way, well pleased with my call.

To go back to Aranjuez. As soon as I heard that the ambassador could not put me up at Madrid, I wrote to the worthy cobbler, Don Diego, that I wanted a well-furnished room, a closet, a good bed, and an honest servant. I informed him how much I was willing to spend a month, and said I would leave Aranjuez as soon as I heard that everything was ready.

I was a good deal occupied with the question of colonising the Sierra Morena; I wrote principally on the subject of the civil government, a most important item in a scheme for a new colony. My articles pleased the Marquis Grimaldi and flattered Mocenigo; for the latter hoped that I should become governor of the colony, and that his embassy would thereby shine with a borrowed light.

My labours did not prevent my amusing myself, and I frequented the society of those about the Court who could tell me most of the king and royal family. Don Varnier, a man of much frankness and intelligence, was my principal source of information.

I asked him one day whether the king was fond of Gregorio Squillace only because he had been once his wife's lover.

"That's an idle calumny," he replied. "If the epithet of 'chaste' can be applied to any monarch, Charles III. certainly deserves it better than any other. He has never touched any woman in his life except his wife, not only out of respect or the sanctity of marriage, but also as a good Christian. He has avoided this sin that his soul may remain pure, and so as not to have the shame of confessing it to his chaplain. He enjoys an iron constitution, sickness is unknown to him, and he is a thorough Spaniard in temperament. Ever since his marriage he has paid his duty to his wife every day, except when the state of her health compelled her to call for a truce. In such seasons this chaste husband brought down his fleshly desires by the fatigue of hunting and by abstinence. You can imagine his distress at being left a widower, for he would rather die than take a mistress. His only resource was in hunting, and in so planning out his day that he should have no time left wherein to think of women. It was a difficult matter, for he cares neither for reading nor writing, music wearies him, and conversation of a lively turn inspires him with disgust.

"He has adopted the following plan, in which he will preserve till his dying day: He dresses at seven, then goes into his closet and has his hair dressed. At eight o'clock he says his prayers, then hears mass, and when this is over he takes chocolate and an enormous pinch of snuff, over which his big nose ruminates for some minutes; this is his only pinch in the whole day. At nine o'clock he sees his ministers, and works with them till eleven. Then comes dinner, which he always takes alone, then a short visit to the Princess of the

Austurias, and at twelve sharp he gets into his carriage and drives to the hunting-grounds. At seven o'clock he takes a morsel wherever he happens to be, and at eight o'clock he comes home, so tired that he often goes to sleep before he can get his clothes off. Thus he keeps down the desires of the flesh."

"Poor voluntary martyr!"

"He thought of marrying a second time, but when Adelaide of France saw his portrait she was quite frightened and refused him. He was very mortified, and renounced all thoughts of marriage; and woe to the courtier who should advise him to get a mistress!"

In further speaking of his character Don Domingo told me that the ministers had good cause for making him inaccessible, as whenever anyone did succeed in getting at him and asked a favour, he made a point of granting it, as it was at such times that he felt himself really a king.

"Then he is not a hard man, as some say?"

"Not at all. Kings seldom have the reputation they deserve. The most accessible monarchs are the least generous; they are overwhelmed with importunate requests, and their first instinct is always to refuse."

"But as Charles III. is so inaccessible he can have no opportunity of either granting or refusing."

"People catch him when he is hunting; he is usually in a good humour then. His chief defect is his obstinacy; when he has once made up his mind there is no changing it.

"He has the greatest liking for his brother, and can scarce refuse him anything, though he must be master in all things. It is thought he will give him leave to marry for the sake of his salvation; the king has the greatest horror of illegitimate children, and his brother has three already."

There were an immense number of persons at Aranjuez, who persecuted the ministers in the hope of getting employment.

"They will go back as they come," said Don Domingo, "and that is empty-handed."

"Then they ask impossibilities?"

"They don't ask anything. 'What do you want?' says a minister.

"'What your excellency will let me have.'

"'What can you do?'

"'I am ready to do whatever your excellency pleases to think best for me'

"'Please leave me. I have no time to waste.'"

That is always the way. Charles III. died a madman; the Queen of Portugal is mad; the King of England has been mad, and, as some say, is not really cured. There is nothing astonishing in it; a king who tries to do his duty is almost forced into madness by his enormous task.

I took leave of M. Mocenigo three days before he left Aranjuez, and I embraced Manucci affectionately. He had been most kind to me throughout my stay.

My cobbler had written to tell me that for the sum I had mentioned he could provide me with a Biscayan maid who could cook. He sent me the address of my new lodging in the Calle Alcala. I arrived there in the afternoon, having started from Aranjuez in the morning.

I found that the Biscayan maid could speak French; my room was a very pleasant one, with another chamber annexed where I could lodge a friend. After I had had my effects carried up I saw my man, whose face pleased me.

I was anxious to test the skill of my cook, so I ordered her to get a good supper for me, and I gave her some money.

"I have some money," she replied, "and I will let you have the bill to-morrow."

After taking away whatever I had left with Mengs I went to Don Diego's house, and to my astonishment found it empty. I went back and asked Philippe, my man, where Don Diego was staying.

"It's some distance, sir; I will take you there tomorrow."

"Where is my landlord?"

"In the floor above; but they are very quiet people."

"I should like to see him."

"He is gone out and won't be home till ten."

At nine o'clock I was told that my supper was ready. I was very hungry, and the neatness with which the table was laid was a pleasant surprise in Spain. I was sorry that I had had no opportunity of expressing my satisfaction to Don Diego, but I sat down to supper. Then indeed I thought the cobbler a hero; the Biscayan maid might have entered into rivalry with the best cook in France. There were five dishes, including my favourite delicacy 'las criadillas', and everything was exquisite. My lodging was dear enough, but the cook made the whole arrangement a wonderful bargain.

Towards the end of supper Philippe told me that the landlord had come in, and that with my leave he would wish me a good evening.

"Shew him in by all means."

I saw Don Diego and his charming daughter enter; he had rented the house on purpose to be my landlord.

CHAPTER VI

My Amours With Donna Ignazia — Return of M. de Mocenino to Madrid

All you barons, counts, and marquises who laugh at an untitled man who calls himself a gentleman, pause and reflect, spare your disdain till you have degraded him; allow him a gentle title so long as he does gentle deeds. Respect the man that defines nobility in a new way, which you cannot understand. With him nobility is not a series of descents from father to son; he laughs at pedigrees, in which no account is taken of the impure blood introduced by wifely infidelities; he defines a nobleman as one who does noble deeds, who neither lies nor cheats, who prefers his honour to his life.

This latter part of the definition should make you tremble for your lives, if you meditate his dishonour. From imposture comes contempt, from contempt hatred, from hatred homicide, which takes out the blot of dishonour.

The cobbler Don Diego might have feared, perhaps, that I should laugh at him, when he told me he was noble; but feeling himself to be really so he had done his best to prove it to me. The fineness of his behaviour when I was in prison had given me some idea of the nobility of his soul, but he was not content with this. On the receipt of my letter, he had taken a new house only to give up the best part of it to me. No doubt he calculated on not losing in the long run, as after I had left he would probably have no difficulty in letting the apartment, but his chief motive was to oblige me.

He was not disappointed; henceforth I treated him entirely as an equal. Donna Ignazia was delighted at what her father had done for me. We talked an hour, settling our business relations over a bottle of excellent wine. I succeeded in my contention that the Biscayan cook should be kept at my expense. All the same, I wanted the girl to think that she was in Don Diego's service, so I begged him to pay her every day, as I should take all my meals at home, at all events, till the return of the ambassador. I also told him that it was a penance to me to eat alone, and begged him to keep me company at dinner and supper every day. He tried to excuse himself, and at last gave in on the condition that his daughter should take his place when he had too much work to do. As may be imagined I had anticipated this condition, and made no difficulty about it.

The next morning, feeling curious to see the way in which my landlord was lodged, I paid him a visit. I went into the little room sacred to Donna Ignazia. A bed, a chest, and a chair made up the whole furniture; but beside the bed was a desk before a picture, four feet high, representing St. Ignatius de Loyola as a fine young man, more calculated to irritate the sense than to arouse devotion.

My cobbler said to me,

“I have a much better lodging than I had before; and the rent of your room pays me for the house four times over.”

“How about the furniture and the linen?”

“It will all be paid in the course of four years. I hope this house will be the dower of my daughter. It is an excellent speculation, and I have to thank you for it.”

“I am glad to hear it; but what is this, you seem to be making new boots?”

“Quite so; but if you look you will see that I am working on a last which has been given me. In this way I have not to put them on, nor need I trouble myself whether they fit well or ill.”

“How much do you get?”

“Thirty reals.”

“That’s a larger price than usual.”

“Yes, but there’s a great difference between my work and my leather, and the usual work and leather of the bootmakers.”

“Then I will have a last made, and you shall make me a pair of shoes, if you will; but I warn you they must be of the finest skin, and the soles of morocco.”

“They will cost more, and not last so long.”

"I can't help that; I can't bear any but the lightest boots."

Before I left him he said his daughter should dine with me that day as he was very busy.

I called on the Count of Aranda, who received me coldly, but with great politeness. I told him how I had been treated by my parish priest and by Mengs.

"I heard about it; this was worse than your imprisonment, and I don't know what I could have done for you if you had not communicated, and obliged the priest to take out your name. Just now they are trying to annoy me with posters on the walls, but I take no notice."

"What do they want your excellency to do?"

"To allow long cloaks and low-crowned hats; you must know all about it."

"I only arrived at Madrid yesterday evening."

"Very good. Don't come here on Sunday, as my house is to be blown up."

"I should like to see that, my lord, so I will be in your hall at noon."

"I expect you will be in good company."

I duly went, and never had I seen it so full. The count was addressing the company, under the last poster threatening him with death, two very energetic lines were inscribed by the person who put up the poster, knowing that he was at the same time running his head into the noose:

Si me cogen, me horqueran,

Pero no me cogeran.

"If they catch me, they will hang me,

So I shall not let them catch me."

At dinner Donna Ignazia told me how glad she was to have me in the house, but she did not respond to all my amorous speeches after Philippe had left the room. She blushed and sighed, and then being obliged to say something, begged me to forget everything that had passed between us. I smiled, and said that I was sure she knew she was asking an impossibility. I added that even if I could forget the past I would not do so.

I knew that she was neither false nor hypocritical, and felt sure that her behaviour proceeded from devotion; but I knew this could not last long. I should have to conquer her by slow degrees. I had had to do so with other devotees who had loved me less than she, nevertheless, they had capitulated. I was therefore sure of Donna Ignazia.

After dinner she remained a quarter of an hour with me, but I refrained from any amorous attempts.

After my siesta I dressed, and went out without seeing her. In the evening when she came in for her father, who had supped with me, I treated her with the greatest politeness without shewing any ill-humour. The following day I behaved in the same manner. At dinner she told me she had broken with her lover at the beginning of Lent, and begged me not to see him if he called on me.

On Whit Sunday I called on the Count of Aranda, and Don Diego, who was exquisitely dressed, dined with me. I saw nothing of his daughter. I asked after her, and Don Diego replied, with a smile, that she had shut herself up in her room to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. He pronounced these words in a manner and with a smile that he would not have dared to use if he had been speaking to a fellow-Spaniard. He added that she would, no doubt, come down and sup with me, as he was going to sup with his brother.

“My dear Don Diego, don’t let there be any false compliments between us. Before you go out, tell your daughter not to put herself out for me, and that I do not pretend to put my society in comparison with that of God. Tell her to keep her room to-night, and she can sup with me another time. I hope you will take my message to her.”

“As you will have it so, you shall be obeyed.”

After my siesta, the worthy man said that Donna Ignazia thanked me and would profit by my kindness, as she did not want to see anyone on that holy day.

“I am very glad she has taken me at my word, and to-morrow I will thank her for it.”

I had some difficulty in shaping my lips to this reply; for this excess of devotion displeased me, and even made me tremble for her love. I could not help laughing, however, when Don Diego said that a wise father forgives an ecstasy of love. I had not expected such a philosophic remark from the mouth of a Spaniard.

The weather was unpleasant, so I resolved to stay indoors. I told Philippe that I should not want the carriage, and that he could go out. I told my Biscayan cook that I should not sup till ten. When I was alone I wrote for some time, and in the evening the mother lit my candles, instead of the daughter, so in the end I went to bed without any supper. At nine o'clock next morning, just as I was awaking, Donna Ignazia appeared, to my great astonishment, telling me how sorry she was to hear that I had not taken any supper.

"Alone, sad, and unhappy," I replied, "I felt that abstinence was the best thing for me."

"You look downcast."

"You alone can make me look cheerful."

Here my barber came in, and she left me. I then went to mass at the Church of the Good Success, where I saw all the handsome courtezans in Madrid. I dined with Don Diego, and when his daughter came in with dessert he told her that it was her fault I had gone supperless to bed.

"It shall not happen again," said she.

"Would you like to come with me to our Lady of Atocha?" said I.

"I should like it very much," she replied, with a side-glance at her father.

"My girl," said Don Diego, "true devotion and merriment go together, and the reason is that the truly devout person has trust in God and in the honesty of all men. Thus you can trust in Don Jaime as an honest man, though he has not the good fortune to be born in Spain."

I could not help laughing at this last sentence, but Don Diego was not offended. Donna Ignazia kissed her father's hands, and asked if she might bring her cousin too.

"What do you want to take the cousin for?" said Don Diego; "I will answer for Don Jaime."

"You are very kind, Don Diego, but if Ignazia likes her cousin to come I shall be delighted, provided it be the elder cousin, whom I like better than the younger."

After this arrangement the father went his way, and I sent Philippe to the stables to put in four mules.

When we were alone Ignazia asked me repentantly to forgive her.

"Entirely, if you will forgive me for loving you."

"Alas, dearest! I think I shall go mad if I keep up the battle any longer."

"There needs no battle, dearest Ignazia, either love me as I love you, or tell me to leave the house, and see you no more. I will obey you, but that will not make you happy."

"I know that. No, you shall not go from your own house. But allow me to tell you that you are mistaken in your estimate of my cousins' characters. I know what influenced you, but you do not know all. The younger is a good girl, and though she is ugly, she too has succumbed to love. But the elder, who is ten times uglier, is mad with rage at never having had a lover. She thought she had made you in love with her, and yet she speaks evil of you. She reproaches me for having yielded so easily and boasts that she would never have gratified your passion."

"Say no more, we must punish her; and the younger shall come."

"I am much obliged to you."

"Does she know that we love each other?"

"I have never told her, but she has guessed it, and pities me. She wants me to join her in a devotion to Our Lady de la Soledad, the effect of which would be a complete cure for us both."

"Then she is in love, too?"

"Yes; and she is unhappy in her love, for it is not returned. That must be a great grief."

"I pity her, and yet, with such a face, I do not know any man who would take compassion on her. The poor girl would do well to leave love alone. But as to you… ."

"Say nothing about me: my danger is greater than hers. I am forced to defend myself or to give in, and God knows there are some men whom it is impossible to ward off! God is my witness that in Holy Week I went to a poor girl with the smallpox, and touched her in the hope of catching it, and so losing my beauty; but God would not have it so, and my confessor blamed me, bidding me to do a penance I had never expected."

"Tell me what it is?"

"He told me that a handsome face is the index of a handsome soul, and is a gift of God, for which a woman should render thanks continually; that in attempting to destroy this beauty I had sinned, for I had endeavoured to destroy God's handiwork. After a good deal of rebuke in this style, he ordered me to put a little rouge on my cheeks whenever I felt myself looking pale. I had to submit, and I have bought a pot of rouge, but hitherto I have not felt obliged to use it. Indeed, my father might notice it, and I should not like to tell him that it is done by way of penance."

"Is your confessor a young man?"

"He is an old man of seventy."

"Do you tell him all your sins without reserve?"

"Certainly, for the smallest circumstance may be really a great sin."

"Does he ask you questions?"

"No, for he sees that I am telling him the whole truth. It is a great trial, but I have to submit to it."

"Have you had this confessor for long?"

"For two years. Before him I had a confessor who was quite unbearable. He asked me questions which made me quite indignant."

"What questions were these?"

"You must please excuse me telling you."

"Why do you go to confession so often?"

"Why? Would to God I had not good cause! but after all I only go once a week."

"That's too often."

"Not so, for when I am in mortal sin I cannot sleep at night. I am afraid of dying in my sleep."

"I pity you, dearest; I have a consolation which is denied you. I have an infinite trust in the infinite mercy of God."

The cousin arrived and we set out. We found a good many carriages in front of the church-door, and the church itself was full of devotees, both male and female. Amongst others I saw the Duchess of Villadorias, notorious for her andromania. When the 'furor uterinus' seized her, nothing could keep her back. She would rush at the man who had excited her, and he had no choice but to satisfy her passion. This had happened several times in public assemblies, and had given rise to some extraordinary scenes. I had seen her at a ball; she was still both young and pretty. As I entered the church I saw her kneeling on the stones of the church floor. She lifted her eyes, and gazed at me, as if doubtful whether she knew me or not, as she had only seen me in domino. After my devotees had prayed for half an hour, they rose to go, and the duchess rose also; and as soon as we were out of the church she asked me if I knew her. I replied in the affirmative, and she asked why I had not been to see her, and if I visited the Duchess of Benevento. I told her that I did not visit her grace, and that I should have the honour of paying her a call before long.

On our way I explained to my two companions the nature of the duchess's malady. Donna Ignazia asked me anxiously if I really meant to go and see her. She seemed reassured when I replied in the negative.

A common and to my mind a ridiculous question is which of the two sexes enjoys the generative act the more. Homer gives us Jupiter and Juno disputing on this point. Tiresias, who was once a woman, has given a correct though amusing decision on the point. A laconic answer has it that a woman enjoys the act the most because with her it is sharper, repeated more frequently, and finally because the battle is fought in her field. She is at the same time an active and passive agent, while action is indispensable to the pleasure of the man. But the most conclusive reason is that if the woman's pleasure were not the greater nature would be unjust, and she never is or can be unjust. Nothing in this universe is without its use, and no pleasure or pain is without its compensation or balance. If woman had not more pleasure than man she would not have more organs than he. The greater nervous power planted in the female organ is demonstrated by the andromania to which some women are subject, and which makes them either Messalines or martyrs. Men have nothing at all similar to this.

Nature has given to women this special enjoyment to compensate for the pains they have to undergo. What man would expose himself, for the pleasure he enjoys, to the pains of pregnancy and the dangers of childbed? But women will do so again and again; so it must be concluded that they believe the pleasure to outbalance the pain; and so it is clearly the woman who has the better share in the enjoyment. In spite of this, if I had the choice of being born again as a woman, I should say no; for in spite of my voluptuousness, a man has pleasures which a woman cannot enjoy. Though, indeed, rather than not be born again, I would be a woman, and even a brute, provided always that I had my memory, for without it I should no longer be myself.

We had some ices, and my two companions returned home with me, well pleased with the enjoyment I had given them without offending God. Donna Ignazia, who was delighted with my continence during the day, and apparently afraid of its not lasting, begged me to invite her cousin to supper. I agreed, and even did so with pleasure.

The cousin was ugly, and also a fool, but she had a great heart and was sympathetic. I knew that Donna Ignazia had told her all, and as she was no restraint on me I did not mind her being at supper, while Ignazia looked upon her as a safeguard.

The table had been laid for three, when I heard a step coming up the stairs. It was the father, and I asked him to sup with us. Don Diego was a pleasant man, as I have said, but what amused me most of all about him was his moral maxims. He knew or suspected that I was fond of his daughter, though in an honourable way; he thought my honour or his daughter’s piety would be a sufficient safeguard. If he had suspected what had really happened, I do not think he would ever have allowed us to be together.

He sat beside his niece and facing his daughter, and did most of the talking, for your Spaniard, though grave, is eloquent, and fond of hearing the fine harmonies of his native tongue.

It was very hot, so I asked him to take off his waistcoat, and to tell his daughter to do just as she would if only he and his wife had been present.

Donna Ignazia had not to be entreated long before she took off her kerchief, but the poor cousin did not like having to shew us her bones and swarthy skin.

Donna Ignazia told her father how much she had enjoyed herself, and how they had seen the Duchess of Villadorias, who had asked me to come and see her.

The good man began to philosophise and to jest on her malady, and he told me some stories, germane to the question, which the girls pretended not to understand.

The good wine of La Mancha kept us at table till a late hour, and the time seemed to pass very quickly. Don Diego told his niece that she could sleep with his daughter, in the room we were in, as the bed was big enough for two. I hastened to add that if the ladies would do so I should be delighted; but Donna Ignazia blushed and said it would not do, as the room was only separated from mine by a glass door. At this I smiled at Don Diego, who proceeded to harangue his daughter in a manner which amused me extremely. He told her that I was at least twenty years older than herself, and that in suspecting me she had committed a greater sin than if she allowed me to take some slight liberty.

“I am sure,” he added, “that when you go to confession next Sunday you will forget to accuse yourself of having wrongfully suspected Don Jaime of a dishonourable action.”

Donna Ignazia looked at me affectionately, asked my pardon, and said she would do whatever her father liked. The cousin said nothing, and the father kissed his daughter, bade me a good night, and went away well pleased with the harangue he had delivered.

I suspected that Donna Ignazia expected me to make some attempt on her honour, and feeling sure that she would resist for the sake of appearance, I determined to leave her in peace. Next morning I got up and went into their room in the hope of playing some trick on them. However, the birds were flown, and I had no doubt that they had gone to hear mass.

Donna Ignazia came home by herself at ten o'clock. She found me alone, dressed, and writing. She told me she had been in the church for three hours.

"You have been to confession, I suppose?"

"No; I went last Sunday, and I shall wait till next Sunday."

"I am very glad that your confession will not be lengthened by any sins I have helped you to commit."

"You are wrong."

"Wrong? I understand; but you must know that I am not going to be damned for mere desires. I do not wish to torment you or to become a martyr myself. What you granted me has made me fall deeply in love with you, and it makes me shudder when I imagine that our love has become a subject of repentance with you. I have had a bad night; and it is time for me to think of my health. I must forget you, but to bring about that effect I will see you no longer. I will keep on the house, but I will not live in it. If your religion is an intelligent one, you will approve of my idea. Tell your confessor of it next Sunday, and you will see that he will approve it."

"You are right, but I cannot agree to it. You can go away if you like, and I shall say nothing, but I shall be the most unhappy girl in all Madrid."

As she spoke these words, two big tears rolled down her cheeks, and her face dropped; I was profoundly moved.

"I love you, dearest Ignazia, and I hope not to be damned for my love. I cannot see you without loving you and to this love some positive proof is essential; otherwise, I am unhappy. If I go you say you will be unhappy, and if I stay it is I that will be unhappy, my health will be ruined. But tell me which I shall do stay or go? Say."

"Stay."

"Then you must be as loving and tender as you were before."

"Alas! I promised to commit that sin no more. I tell you to stay, because I am sure that in eight or ten days we shall have become so accustomed to one another that I shall be able to love you like a father, and you will be able to take me in your arms without any amorous sentiments."

"Are you sure of this?"

"Yes, dearest, quite sure."

"You make a mistake."

"Let me be mistaken, and believe me I shall be glad to be mistaken."

"Unhappy devotee!"

"Why unhappy?"

"Nothing, nothing. I may be too long, I shall endanger … let us say no more about it. I will stay."

I went out more pained with her state than my own, and I felt that the best thing I could do would be to forget her, "for," said I to myself, "even if I do enjoy her once, Sunday will come again; she will confess, repent, and I shall have to begin all over again. She confessed her love, and flatters herself that she will be able to subdue it — a foolish hope, which could only exist in a mind under the dominion of prejudice."

I came home at noon, and Don Diego dined with me; his daughter did not appear till the dessert. I begged her to sit down, politely, but coldly. Her father asked her jestingly if I had paid her a visit in the night.

"I never suspected Don Jaime of such a thing," she replied, "and I only objected out of shyness."

I interrupted her by praising her modesty, and telling her that she would have done quite right to beware of me, if my sense of duty had not been stronger than any voluptuous desires inspired by her charms.

Don Diego pronounced this declaration of love as good as anything to be found in the "Morte d'Arthur."

His daughter said I was laughing at her, but Don Diego said he was certain that I was in earnest, and that I had known her before taking her to the ball.

"You are utterly mistaken," said Donna Ignazia, with some degree of fire.

"Your father is wiser than you, senora," I replied.

"What! How and when did you see me?"

"At the church where I heard mass, and you communicated, when you went out with your cousin. I followed you at some distance; you can guess the rest."

She was speechless, and her father enjoyed the consciousness of his superior intellect.

"I am going to see the bull fight," said he; "it's a fine day, and all Madrid will be there, so one must go early to get a good place. I advise you to go, as you have never seen a bull fight; ask Don Jaime to take you with him, Ignazia."

"Would you like to have my companionship?" said she, tenderly.

"Certainly I would, but you must bring your cousin, as I am in love with her."

Don Diego burst out laughing, but Ignazia said, slyly,

"It is not so impossible after all."

We went to see the splendid but barbarous spectacle in which Spaniards take so much delight. The two girls placed themselves in front of the only vacant box, and I sat behind on the second bench, which was a foot and a half higher than the first. There were already two ladies there, and much to my amusement one of them was the famous Duchess of Villadorias. She was in front of me, and sat in such a position that her head was almost between my legs. She recognized me, and said we were fortunate in meeting one another; and then noticing Donna Ignazia, who was close to her, she congratulated me in French on her charms, and asked me whether she was my mistress or my wife. I replied that she was a beauty before whom I sighed in vain. She replied, with a smile, that she was rather a sceptical person; and turning to Donna Ignazia began a pleasant and amorous discourse, thinking the girl to be as learned in the laws of love as herself. She whispered something in her ear which made Ignazia blush, and the duchess, becoming enthusiastic, told me I had chosen the handsomest girl in Madrid, and that she would be delighted to see us both at her country house.

I promised to come, as I was obliged to do, but I begged to be excused naming the day. Nevertheless, she made me promise to call on her at four o'clock the next day, telling me, much to my terror, that she would be alone. She was pretty enough, but too notorious a character; and such a visit would have given rise to talk.

Happily the fight began, and silence became general, for the Spaniards are passionately devoted of bull fighting.

So much has been written on the subject that my readers will pardon my giving a detailed account of the fight. I may say that the sport is, in my opinion, a most barbarous one, and likely to operate unfavourably on the national morals; the arena is sometimes drenched in the blood of bulls, horses, and even of the unfortunate picadores and matadores, whose sole defence is the red rag with which they irritate the bull.

When it was over I escorted the girls — who had enjoyed themselves immensely — back to the house, and made the ugly cousin stay to supper, as I foresaw that they would again sleep together.

We supped together, but it was a melancholy affair, for Don Diego was away, and I did not feel in the humour to amuse my company.

Donna Ignazia became pensive when, in reply to a question of hers, I said that it would be absolutely rude of me not to go to the duchess's.

"You will come with me some day," I added, "to dine at her country house."

"You need not look for that."

"Why not?"

"Because she is a madwoman. She talked to me in a way that would have offended me if I did not know that she fancied she was honouring me by laying aside her rank."

We rose from table, and after I had dismissed my man we sat on the balcony to wait for Don Diego and to enjoy the delicious evening breezes.

As we sat near to each other in the twilight, so favourable to lovers' vows, I looked into Donna Ignazia's eyes, and saw there that my hour had come. I clasped her to me with one arm, I clung with my lips to hers, and by the way she trembled I guessed the flame which consumed her.

"Will you go and see the duchess?"

"No, if you will promise me not to go to confession next Sunday."

"But what will he say if I do not go?"

"Nothing at all, if he understands his business. But let us talk it over a little."

We were so tightly clasped together that the cousin, like a good girl, left us, and went to the other end of the balcony, taking care to look away from us.

Without changing my position, in spite of the temptation to do so, I asked her if she felt in the humour to repent of the sin she was ready to commit.

"I was not thinking of repentance just then, but as you remind me of it, I must tell you that I shall certainly go to confession."

"And after you have been to confession will you love me as you love me now?"

"I hope God will give me strength to offend Him no more."

"I assure you that if you continue loving me God will not give you grace, yet I feel sure that on Sunday evening you will refuse me that which you are now ready to grant."

"Indeed I will, sweetheart; but why should we talk of that now?"

"Because if I abandon myself to pleasure now I shall be more in love with you than ever, and consequently more unhappy than ever, when the day of your repentance comes. So promise me that you will not go to confession whilst I remain at Madrid, or give the fatal order now, and bid me leave you. I cannot abandon myself to love to-day knowing that it will be refused me on Sunday."

As I remonstrated thus, I clasped her affectionately in my arms, caressing her most ardently; but before coming to the decisive action I asked her again whether she would promise not to go to confession next Sunday.

"You are cruel," said she, "I cannot make you that promise for my conscience sake."

At this reply, which I had quite expected, I remained motionless, feeling sure that she must be in a state of desperate irritation at the work half begun and not concluded. I, too, suffered, for I was at the door of the sanctuary, and a slight movement would have sent me into the inmost shrine; but I knew that her torments must be greater than mine, and that she could not resist long.

Donna Ignazia was indeed in a terrible state; I had not repulsed her, but I was perfectly inactive. Modesty prevented her asking me openly to continue, but she redoubled her caresses, and placed herself in an easier position, reproaching me with my cruelty. I do not know whether I could have held out much longer, but just then the cousin turned round and told us that Don Diego was coming in.

We hastened to arrange our toilette, and to sit in a decent position. The cousin came up to us, and Don Diego, after making a few remarks, left us on the balcony, wishing us a good night. I might have begun over again, but I clung to my system of repression, and after wishing the girls good night with a melancholy air, I went to bed.

I hoped Donna Ignazia would repent and come and keep me company, but I was disappointed. They left their room early in the morning, and at noon Don Diego came to dine with me, saying his daughter had such a bad headache that she had not even gone to mass.

“We must get her to eat something.”

“No, I think abstinence will do her good, and in the evening I daresay she will be able to sup with you.”

I went to keep her company by her bedside after I had taken my siesta. I did my best for three hours to convince her of her folly; but she kept her eyes closed, and said nothing, only sighing when I said something very touching.

I left her to walk in St. Jerome’s Park, and told her that if she did not sup with me I should understand that she did not wish to see me again. This threat had its effect. She came to table at supper-time, but she looked pale and exhausted. She ate little, and said nothing, for she knew not what to say. I saw that she was suffering, and I pitied her from my heart.

Before going to bed she asked me if I had been to see the duchess. She seemed somewhat cheered when I answered in the negative. I told her that she might satisfy herself of the truth of my reply by asking Philippe, who had taken my note begging her grace to excuse me for that day.

"But will you go another day?"

"No, dearest, because I see it would grieve you."

She gave a sigh of content, and I embraced her gently, and she left me as sad as I was.

I could see that what I asked of her was a great deal; but I had good grounds for hope, as I knew her ardent disposition. It was not God and I that were disputing for her, but her confessor and I. If she had not been a Catholic I should have won her the first day.

She had told me that she would get into trouble with her confessor if she did not go to him as usual; she had too much of fine Spanish honour in her to tell him what was not true, or to endeavour to combine her love with her religion.

The Friday and the Saturday passed without any events of consequence. Her father, who could not blind himself to our love any longer, trusted, I suppose, to his daughter's virtue, and made her dine and sup with me every day. On Saturday evening Donna Ignazia left me sadder than ever, and turned her head away when I would have kissed her as usual. I saw what was the matter; she was going to communicate the next day. I admired her consistency, in spite of myself, and pitied her heartily; for I could guess the storm that must be raging in her breast. I began to repent having demanded all, and wished I had been contented with a little.

I wished to be satisfied with my own eyes, and got up early on Sunday morning and followed her. I knew that she would call for her cousin, so I went on to the church. I placed myself by the sacristy-door, where I could see without being seen.

I waited a quarter of an hour, then they came in, and after kneeling down for a few moments, separated, each going to her own confessor.

I only noticed Donna Ignazia; I saw her going to the confessional, and the confessor turning towards her.

I waited patiently. I thought the confession would never come to an end. "What is he saying?" I repeated to myself as I saw the confessor speaking to her now and again.

I could bear it no longer, and I was on the point of going away when I saw her rise from her knees.

Donna Ignazia, looking like a saint, came to kneel in the church, but out of my sight. I thought she would come forward to receive the Holy Communion at the end of the Mass that was being said, but instead of that she went towards the door, rejoined her cousin and they left the church. I was astonished. My heart was seized with a pang of remorse.

“It’s all over,” I said to myself. “The poor girl has made a sincere and full confession, she has avowed her love, and the priest’s cruel duty has made him refuse her absolution.

“All is lost. What will come of it?”

“My peace of mind and hers require me to leave her.

“Wretch that I am, to have lost all for all! I should have made allowance for the peculiar Spanish character.

“I might have enjoyed her by surprise now and again; the difficulty would have added piquancy to the intrigue. I have behaved as if I were once more twenty, and I have lost all.

“At dinner she will be all sad and tearful. I must find some way out of this terrible situation.”

Thus soliloquising, I came home ill pleased with the line of conduct I had adopted.

My hairdresser was waiting for me, but I sent him away, and told my cook not to serve my dinner till I ordered it; then, feeling the need of rest, I flung myself on my bed and slept profoundly till one o’clock.

I got up and ordered dinner to be brought in, and sent a message to the father and daughter that I was expecting them.

My surprise may be imagined when Donna Ignazia appeared in a costume of black velvet, adorned with ribbons and lace. In my opinion there is no more seductive costume in Europe when the wearer is pretty.

I also noticed that every feature of her face breathed peace and calm; I had never seen her looking so well, and I could not help congratulating her. She replied with a smile, and I gave her a kiss, which she took as meekly as a lamb.

Philippe arrived, and we sat down to table. I saw that my fair sweetheart had crossed the Rubicon; the day was won.

“I am going to be happy,” said she, “but let us say nothing, and it will come of itself.”

However, I did not conceal my bliss, and made love to her whenever the servant was out of the room. She was not only submissive, but even ardent.

Before we left the table she asked me if I still loved her.

“More than ever, darling; I adore you.”

“Then take me to the bull fight.”

“Quick! Fetch the hairdresser.”

When my hair was done I made an elaborate toilette, and burning with impatience we set out on foot, as I was afraid we should not secure a good place if we waited till the carriage was ready. We found a fine box with only two persons in it, and Ignazia, after glancing round, said she was glad that the detestable duchess was not anywhere near us.

After some fine sport my mistress begged me to take her to the Prado, where all the best people in Madrid are to be seen.

Donna Ignazia leant on my arm, seemed proud to be thought mine, and filled me with delight.

All at once we met the Venetian ambassador and his favourite, Manucci. They had just arrived from Aranjuez. We greeted each other with due Spanish politeness, and the ambassador paid me a high compliment on the beauty of my companion. Donna Ignazia pretended not to understand, but she pressed my arm with Spanish delicacy.

After walking a short distance with us M. de Mocenigo said he hoped I would dine with him on the following day, and after I had nodded acquiescence in the French style we parted.

Towards the evening we took some ices and returned home, and the gentle pressure of my arm on the way prepared me for the bliss I was to enjoy.

We found Don Diego on the balcony waiting for us. He congratulated his daughter on her pleasant appearance and the pleasure she must have taken in my society.

Charmed with papa’s good humour, I asked him to sup with us, and he accepted, and amused us with his witty conversation and a multitude of little tales that pleased me exceedingly. He made the following speech on leaving us, which I give word for word, but I cannot give the reader any idea of the inimitable Spanish gravity with which it was delivered.

“Amigo Senior Don Jaime, I leave you here to enjoy the cool air with my daughter. I am delighted at your loving her, and you may be assured that I shall place no obstacle in the way of your becoming my son-in-law as soon as you can shew your titles of nobility.”

When he was gone, I said to his daughter, —

“I should be only too happy, if it could be managed; but you must know that in my country they only are called nobles who have an hereditary right to rule the state. If I had been born in Spain I should be noble, but as it is I adore you, and I hope you will make me happy.”

“Yes, dearest, but we must be happy together; I cannot suffer any infidelity.”

“I give you my word of honour that I will be wholly faithful to you.”

“Come then, ‘corazon mio’, let us go in.”

“No, let us put out the lights, and stay here a quarter of an hour. Tell me, my angel, whence comes this unexpected happiness?”

“You owe it to a piece of tyranny which drove me to desperation. God is good, and I am sure He would not have me become my own executioner. When I told my confessor that I could not help loving you, but that I could restrain myself from all excess of love, he replied that this self-confidence was misplaced, as I had already fallen. He wanted me to promise never to be alone with you again, and on my refusing to do so he would not give me absolution.

“I have never had such a piece of shame cast on me, but I laid it all in the hands of God, and said, ‘Thy will be done.’

“Whilst I heard mass my mind was made up, and as long as you love me I shall be yours, and yours only. When you leave Spain and abandon me to despair, I shall find another confessor. My conscience holds me guiltless; this is my comfort. My cousin, whom I have told all, is astonished, but then she is not very clever.”

After this declaration, which put me quite at my ease, and would have relieved me of any scruples if I had had them, I took her to my bed. In the morning, she left me tired out, but more in love with her than ever.

EPISODE 27 — EXPELLED FROM SPAIN

CHAPTER VII

I Make a Mistake and Manucci Becomes My Mortal Foe — His Vengeance — I Leave Madrid — Saragossa — Valentia — Nina — I Arrive at Barcelona

If these Memoirs, only written to console me in the dreadful weariness which is slowly killing me in Bohemia — and which, perhaps, would kill me anywhere, since, though my body is old, my spirit and my desires are as young as ever — if these Memoirs are ever read, I repeat, they will only be read when I am gone, and all censure will be lost on me.

Nevertheless, seeing that men are divided into two sections, the one and by far the greater composed of the ignorant and superficial, and the other of the learned and reflective, I beg to state that it is to the latter I would appeal. Their judgment, I believe, will be in favour of my veracity, and, indeed, why should I not be veracious? A man can have no object in deceiving himself, and it is for myself that I chiefly write.

Hitherto I have spoken nothing but the truth, without considering whether the truth is in my favour or no. My book is not a work of dogmatic theology, but I do not think it will do harm to anyone; while I fancy that those who know how to imitate the bee and to get honey from every flower will be able to extract some good from the catalogue of my vices and virtues.

After this digression (it may be too long, but that is my business and none other's), I must confess that never have I had so unpleasant a truth to set down as that which I am going to relate. I committed a fatal act of indiscretion — an act which after all these years still gives my heart a pang as I think of it.

The day after my conquest I dined with the Venetian ambassador, and I had the pleasure of hearing that all the ministers and grandees with whom I had associated had the highest possible opinion of me. In three or four days the king, the royal family, and the ministers would return to town, and I expected to have daily conferences with the latter respecting the colony in the Sierra Morena, where I should most probably be going. Manucci, who continued to treat me as a valued friend, proposed to accompany me on my journey, and would bring with him an adventuress, who called herself Porto-Carrero, pretending to be the daughter or niece of the late cardinal of that name, and thus obtained a good deal of consideration; though in reality she was only the mistress of the French consul at Madrid, the Abbe Bigliardi.

Such was the promising state of my prospects when my evil genius brought to Madrid a native of Liege, Baron de Fraiture, chief huntsman of the principality, and a profligate, a gamester, and a cheat, like all those who proclaim their belief in his honesty nowadays.

I had unfortunately met him at Spa, and told him I was was going to Portugal. He had come after me, hoping to use me as a means of getting into good society, and of filling his pocket with the money of the dupes he aspired to make.

Gamesters have never had any proof of my belonging to their infernal clique, but they have always persisted in believing that I too am a “Greek.”

As soon as this baron heard that I was in Madrid he called on me, and by dint of politeness obliged me to receive him. I thought any small civilities I might shew or introductions I might give could do me no harm. He had a travelling companion to whom he introduced me. He was a fat, ignorant fellow, but a Frenchman, and therefore agreeable. A Frenchman who knows how to present himself, who is well dressed, and has the society air, is usually accepted without demur or scrutiny. He had been a cavalry captain, but had been fortunate enough to obtain an everlasting furlough.

Four or five days after his appearance the baron asked me quietly enough to lend him a score of louis, as he was hard up. I replied as quietly, thanking him for treating me as a friend, but informing him that I really could not lend him the money, as I wanted what little I had for my own necessities.

“But we can do good business together, and you cannot possibly be moneyless.”

“I do not know anything about good business, but I do know that I want my money and cannot part with it.”

“We are at our wits’ end to quiet our landlord; come and speak to him.”

“If I were to do so I should do you more harm than good. He would ask me if I would answer for you, and I should reply that you are one of those noblemen who stand in need of no surety. All the same, the landlord would think that if I did not stand your surety, it must be from my entertaining doubts as to your solvency.”

I had introduced Fraiture to Count Manucci, on the Pando, and he requested me to take him to see the count, to which request I was foolish enough to accede.

A few days later the baron opened his soul to Manucci.

He found the Venetian disposed to be obliging, but wary. He refused to lend money himself, but introduced the baron to someone who lent him money on pledges without interest.

The baron and his friend did a little gaming and won a little money, but I held aloof from them to the best of my ability.

I had my colony and Donna Ignazia, and wanted to live peacefully; and if I had spent a single night away from home, the innocent girl would have been filled with alarm.

About that time M. de Mocenigo went as ambassador to France, and was replaced by M. Querini. Querini was a man of letters, while Mocenigo only liked music and his own peculiar kind of love.

The new ambassador was distinctly favourable to me, and in a few days I had reason to believe that he would do more for me than ever Mocenigo would have done.

In the meanwhile, the baron and his friend began to think of beating a retreat to France. There was no gaming at the ambassador's and no gaming at the Court; they must return to France, but they owed money to their landlord, and they wanted money for the journey. I could give them nothing, Manucci would give them nothing; we both pitied them, but our duty to ourselves made us cruel to everyone else. However, he brought trouble on us.

One morning Manucci came to see me in evident perturbation.

"What is the matter?" said I.

"I do not know exactly. For the last week I have refused to see the Baron Fraiture, as not being able to give him money, his presence only wearied me. He has written me a letter, in which he threatens to blow out his brains to-day if I will not lend him a hundred pistoles."

"He said the same thing to me three days ago; but I replied that I would bet two hundred pistoles that he would do nothing of the kind. This made him angry, and he proposed to fight a duel with me; but I declined on the plea that as he was a desperate man either he would have an advantage over me or I, over him. Give him the same answer, or, better still, no answer at all."

"I cannot follow your advice. Here are the hundred pistoles. Take them to him and get a receipt."

I admired his generosity and agreed to carry out his commission. I called on the baron, who seemed rather uncomfortable when I walked in; but considering his position I was not at all surprised.

I informed him that I was the bearer of a thousand francs from Count Manucci, who thereby placed him in a position to arrange his affairs and to leave Madrid. He received the money without any signs of pleasure, surprise, or gratitude, and wrote out the receipt. He assured me that he and his friend would start for Barcelona and France on the following day.

I then took the document to Manucci, who was evidently suffering from some mental trouble; and I remained to dinner with the ambassador. It was for the last time.

Three days after I went to dine with the ambassadors (for they all dined together), but to my astonishment the porter told me that he had received orders not to admit me.

The effect of this sentence on me was like that of a thunderbolt; I returned home like a man in a dream. I immediately sat down and wrote to Manucci, asking him why I had been subjected to such an insult; but Philippe, my man, brought me back the letter unopened.

This was another surprise; I did not know what to expect next. "What can be the matter?" I said to myself. "I cannot imagine, but I will have an explanation, or perish."

I dined sadly with Donna Ignazia, without telling her the cause of my trouble, and just as I was going to take my siesta a servant of Manucci's brought me a letter from his master and fled before I could read it. The letter contained an enclosure which I read first. It was from Baron de Fraiture. He asked Manucci to lend him a hundred pistoles, promising to shew him the man whom he held for his dearest friend to be his worst enemy.

Manucci (honouring me, by the way, with the title of ungrateful traitor) said that the baron's letter had excited his curiosity and he had met him in St. Jerome's Park, where the baron had clearly proved this enemy to be myself, since I had informed the baron that though the name of Manucci was genuine the title of count was quite apocryphal.

After recapitulating the information which Fraiture had given him, and which could only have proceeded from myself, he advised me to leave Madrid as soon as possible, in a week at latest.

I can give the reader no idea of the shock this letter gave me. For the first time in my life I had to confess myself guilty of folly, ingratitude, and crime. I felt that my fault was beyond forgiveness, and did not think of asking Manucci to pardon me; I could do nothing but despair.

Nevertheless, in spite of Manucci's just indignation, I could not help seeing that he had made a great mistake in advising me, in so insulting a manner, to leave Madrid in a week. The young man might have known that my self-respect would forbid my following such a piece of advice. He could not compel me to obey his counsel or command; and to leave Madrid would have been to commit a second baseness worse than the first.

A prey to grief I spent the day without taking any steps one way or the other, and I went to bed without supping and without the company of Donna Ignazia.

After a sound sleep I got up and wrote to the friend whom I had offended a sincere and humble confession of my fault. I concluded my letter by saying that I hoped that this evidence of my sincere and heartfelt repentance would suffice, but if not that I was ready to give him any honourable satisfaction in my power.

"You may," I said, "have me assassinated if you like, but I shall not leave Madrid till its suits me to do so."

I put a commonplace seal on my letter, and had the address written by Philippe, whose hand was unknown to Manucci, and then I sent it to Pando where the king had gone.

I kept my room the whole day; and Donna Ignazia, seeing that I had recovered my spirits to some degree, made no more enquiries about the cause of my distress. I waited in the whole of the next day, expecting a reply, but in vain.

The third day, being Sunday, I went out to call on the Prince della Catolica. My carriage stopped at his door, but the porter came out and told me in a polite whisper that his highness had his reasons for not receiving me any longer.

This was an unexpected blow, but after it I was prepared for anything.

I drove to the Abbe Bigliardi, but the lackey, after taking in my name, informed me that his master was out.

I got into my carriage and went to Varnier, who said he wanted to speak to me.

"Come into my carriage," said I, "we will go and hear mass together."

On our way he told me that the Venetian ambassador, Mocenigo, had warned the Duke of Medina Sidonia that I was a dangerous character.

"The duke," he added, "replied that he would cease to know you as soon as he found out the badness of your character himself."

These three shocks, following in such quick succession, cast me into a state of confusion. I said nothing till we heard mass together, but I believe that if I had not then told him the whole story I should have had an apoplectic fit.

Varnier pitied me, and said, —

"Such are the ways of the great when they have abjured all virtue and honesty. Nevertheless, I advise you to keep silence about it, unless you would irritate Manucci still farther."

When I got home I wrote to Manucci begging him to suspend his vengeance, or else I should be obliged to tell the story to all those who insulted me for the ambassador's sake. I sent the letter to M. Soderini, the secretary of the embassy, feeling sure that he would forward it to Manucci.

I dined with my mistress, and took her to the bull fight, where I chanced to find myself in a box adjoining that in which Manucci and the two ambassadors were seated. I made them a bow which they were obliged to return, and did not vouchsafe them another glance for the rest of the spectacle.

The next day the Marquis Grimaldi refused to receive me, and I saw that I should have to abandon all hope. The Duke of Lossada remained my friend on account of his dislike to the ambassador and his unnatural tastes; but he told me that he had been requested not to receive me, and that he did not think I had the slightest chance of obtaining any employment at Court.

I could scarcely believe in such an extremity of vengeance: Manucci was making a parade of the influence he possessed over his wife the ambassador. In his insane desire for revenge he had laid all shame aside.

I was curious to know whether he had forgotten Don Emmanuel de Roda and the Marquis de la Moras; I found both of them had been forewarned against me. There was still the Count of Aranda, and I was just going to see him when a servant of his highness's came and told me that his master wished to see me.

I shuddered, for in my then state of mind I drew the most sinister conclusions from the message.

I found the great man alone, looking perfectly calm. This made me pluck up a heart. He asked me to sit down — a favour he had not hitherto done me, and this further contributed to cheer me.

"What have you been doing to offend your ambassador?" he began.

"My lord, I have done nothing to him directly, but by an inexcusable act of stupidity I have wounded his dear friend Manucci in his tenderest part. With the most innocent intentions I reposed my confidence in a cowardly fellow, who sold it to Manucci for a hundred pistoles. In his irritation, Manucci has stirred up the great man against me: 'hinc illae lacrimae'."

"You have been unwise, but what is done is done. I am sorry for you, because there is an end to all your hopes of advancement. The first thing the king would do would be to make enquiries about you of the ambassador."

"I feel it to my sorrow, my lord, but must I leave Madrid?"

"No. The ambassador did his best to make me send you way, but I told him that I had no power over you so long as you did not infringe the laws."

"'He has calumniated a Venetian subject whom I am bound to protect,' said he.

"'In that case,' I replied, 'you can resort to the ordinary law, and punish him to the best of your ability.'"

"The ambassador finally begged me to order you not to mention the matter to any Venetian subjects at Madrid, and I think you can safely promise me this."

"My lord, I have much pleasure in giving your excellency my word of honour not to do so."

"Very good. Then you can stay at Madrid as long as you please; and, indeed, Mocenigo will be leaving in the course of a week."

From that moment I made up my mind to amuse myself without any thought of obtaining a position in Spain. However, the ties of friendship made me keep up my acquaintance with Varnier, the Duke of Medina Sidonia, and the architect, Sabatini, who always gave me a warm welcome, as did his wife.

Donna Ignazia had more of my company than ever, and congratulated me on my freedom from the cares of business.

After the departure of Mocenigo I thought I would go and see if Querini, his nephew, was equally prejudiced against me. The porter told me that he had received orders not to admit me, and I laughed in the man's face.

Six or seven weeks after Manucci's departure I, too, left Madrid. I did so on compulsion, in spite of my love for Ignazia, for I had no longer hopes of doing anything in Portugal, and my purse was nearly exhausted.

I thought of selling a handsome repeater and a gold snuff-box so as to enable me to go to Marseilles, whence I thought of going to Constantinople and trying my fortune there without turning renegade. Doubtless, I should have found the plan unsuccessful, for I was attaining an age when Fortune flies. I had no reason, however, to complain of Fortune, for she had been lavish in her gifts to me, and I in my turn had always abused them.

In my state of distress the learned Abbe Pinzi introduced me to a Genoese bookseller, named Carrado, a thoroughly honest man, who seemed to have been created that the knavery of most of the Genoese might be pardoned. To him I brought my watch and snuff-box, but the worthy Carrado not only refused to buy them, but would not take them in pledge. He gave me seventeen hundred francs with no other security than my word that I would repay him if I were ever able to do so. Unhappily I have never been able to repay this debt, unless my gratitude be accounted repayment.

As nothing is sweeter than the companionship between a man and the woman he adores, so nothing is bitterer than the separation; the pleasure has vanished away, and only the pain remains.

I spent my last days at Madrid drinking the cup of pleasure which was embittered by the thought of the pain that was to follow. The worthy Diego was sad at the thought of losing me, and could with difficulty refrain from tears.

For some time my man Philippe continued to give me news of Donna Ignazia. She became the bride of a rich shoemaker, though her father was extremely mortified by her making a marriage so much beneath her station.

I had promised the Marquis de las Moras and Colonel Royas that I would come and see them at Saragossa, the capital of Aragon, and I arrived there at the beginning of September. My stay lasted for a fortnight, during which time I was able to examine the manners and customs of the Aragonese, who were not subject to the ordinances of the Marquis of Aranda, as long cloaks and low hats were to be seen at every corner. They looked like dark phantoms more than men, for the cloak covered up at least half the face. Underneath the cloak was carried el Spadino, a sword of enormous length. Persons who wore this costume were treated with great respect, though they were mostly arrant rogues; still they might possibly be powerful noblemen in disguise.

The visitor to Saragossa should see the devotion which is paid to our Lady del Pilar. I have seen processions going along the streets in which wooden statues of gigantic proportions were carried. I was taken to the best assemblies, where the monks swarmed. I was introduced to a lady of monstrous size, who, I was informed, was cousin to the famous Palafox, and I did not feel my bosom swell with pride as was evidently expected. I also made the acquaintance of Canon Pignatelli, a man of Italian origin. He was President of the Inquisition, and every morning he imprisoned the procuress who had furnished him with the girl with whom he had supped and slept. He would wake up in the morning tired out with the pleasures of the night; the girl would be driven away and the procuress imprisoned. He then dressed, confessed, said mass, and after an excellent breakfast with plenty of good wine he would send out for another girl, and this would go on day after day. Nevertheless, he was held in great respect at Saragossa, for he was a monk, a canon, and an Inquisitor.

The bull fights were finer at Saragossa than at Madrid — that is to say, they were deadlier; and the chief interest of this barbarous spectacle lies in the shedding of blood. The Marquis de las Moras and Colonel Royas gave me some excellent dinners. The marquis was one of the pleasantest men I met in Spain; he died very young two years after.

The Church of Nuestra Senora del Pilar is situated on the ramparts of the town, and the Aragonese fondly believe this portion of the town defences to be impregnable.

I had promised Donna Pelliccia to go and see her at Valentia, and on my way I saw the ancient town of Saguntum on a hill at some little distance. There was a priest travelling with me and I told him and the driver (who preferred his mules to all the antiquities in the world) that I should like to go and see the town. How the muleteer and the priest objected to this proposal!

"There are only ruins there, senor."

"That's just what I want to see."

"We shall never get to Valentia to-night."

"Here's a crown; we shall get there to-morrow."

The crown settled everything, and the man exclaimed,

"Valga me Dios, es un hombre de buen!" (So help me God, this is an honest man!) A subject of his Catholic majesty knows no heartier praise than this.

I saw the massive walls still standing and in good condition, and yet they were built during the second Punic War. I saw on two of the gateways inscriptions which to me were meaningless, but which Seguier, the old friend of the Marquis Maffei, could no doubt have deciphered.

The sight of this monument to the courage of an ancient race, who preferred to perish in the flames rather than surrender, excited my awe and admiration. The priest laughed at me, and I am sure he would not have purchased this venerable city of the dead if he could have done so by saying a mass. The very name has perished; instead of Saguntum it is called

Murviedro from the Latin ‘muri veteres’ (old walls); but Time that destroys marble and brass destroys also the very memory of what has been.

“This place,” said the priest, “is always called Murviedro.”

“It is ridiculous to do so,” I replied; “common sense forbids us calling a thing old which was once young enough. That’s as if you would tell me that New Castille is really new.”

“Well, Old Castille is more ancient than New Castille.”

“No so. New Castille was only called so because it was the latest conquest; but as a matter of fact it is the older of the two.”

The poor priest took refuge in silence; shaking his head, and evidently taking me for a madman.

I tried vainly to find Hannibal’s head, and the inscription in honour of Caesar Claudius, but I found out the remains of the amphitheatre.

The next day I remarked the mosaic pavement, which had been discovered twenty years before.

I reached Valentia at nine o’clock in the morning, and found that I should have to content myself with a bad lodging, as Marescalchi, the opera manager, had taken all the best rooms for the members of his company. Marescalchi was accompanied by his brother, a priest, whom I found decidedly learned for his age. We took a walk together, and he laughed when I proposed going into a cafe, for there was not such a thing in the town. There were only taverns of the lowest class where the wine is not fit to drink. I could scarcely believe it, but Spain is a peculiar country. When I was at Valentia, a good bottle of wine was scarcely obtainable, though Malaga and Alicante were both close at hand.

In the first three days of my stay at Valentia (the birthplace of Alexander VI.), I saw all the objects of interest in the town, and was confirmed in my idea that what seems so admirable in the descriptions of writers and the pictures of artists loses much of its charm on actual inspection.

Though Valentia is blessed with an excellent climate, though it is well watered, situated in the midst of a beautiful country, fertile in all the choicest products of nature, though it is the residence of many of the most distinguished of the Spanish nobility, though its women are the most handsome in Spain, though it has the advantage of being the seat of an archbishop; in spite of all these commodities, it is a most disagreeable town to live in. One is ill lodged and ill fed, there is no good wine and no good company, there is not even any intellectual provision, for though there is a university, lettered men are absolutely unknown.

As for the bridges, churches, the arsenal, the exchange, the town hall, the twelve town gates, and the rest, I could not take pleasure in a town where the streets are not paved, and where a public promenade is conspicuous by its absence. Outside the town the country is delightful, especially on the side towards the sea; but the outside is not the inside.

The feature which pleased me most was the number of small one-horse vehicles which transport the traveller rapidly from one point to another, at a very slight expense, and will even undertake a two or three days' journey.

If my frame of mind had been a more pleasant one, I should have travelled through the kingdoms of Murcia and Grenada, which surpass Italy in beauty and fertility.

Poor Spaniards! This beauty and fertility of your land are the cause of your ignorance, as the mines of Peru and Potosi have brought about that foolish pride and all the prejudices which degrade you.

Spaniards, when will the impulse come? when will you shake off that fatal lethargy? Now you are truly useless to yourselves, and the rest of the world; what is it you need?

A furious revolution, a terrible shock, a conquest of regeneration; your case is past gentle methods, it needs the cautery and the fire.

The first call I paid was on Donna Pelliccia. The first performance was to be given in two days. This was not a matter of any difficulty, as the same operas were to be presented as had been already played at Aranjuez, the Escurial, and the Granja, for the Count of Aranda would never have dared to sanction the performance of an Italian comic opera at Madrid. The novelty would have been too great, and the Inquisition would have interfered.

The balls were a considerable shock, and two years after they were suppressed. Spain will never make any real advance, until the Inquisition is suppressed also.

As soon as Donna Pelliccia arrived, she sent in the letter of introduction she had received from the Duke of Arcos, three months before. She had not seen the duke since their meeting at Aranjuez.

“Madam,” said Don Diego, the person to whom she was commended, “I have come to offer you my services, and to tell you of the orders his grace has laid on me, of which you may possibly be ignorant.”

“I hope, sir,” she replied, “that I am not putting you to any inconvenience, but I am extremely grateful to the duke and to yourself; and I shall have the honour of calling on you to give you my thanks.”

“Not at all; I have only to say that I have orders to furnish you with any sums you may require, to the amount of twenty-five thousand doubloons.”

“Twenty-five thousand doubloons?”

“Exactly, madam, two hundred and fifty thousand francs in French money, and no more. Kindly read his grace’s letter; you do not seem to be aware of its contents.”

The letter was a brief one:

“Don Diego, — You will furnish Donna Pelliccia with whatever sums she may require, not exceeding twenty-five thousand doubloons, at my account.
“THE DUKE DOS ARCOS”

We remained in a state of perfect stupefaction. Donna Pelliccia returned the epistle to the banker, who bowed and took his leave.

This sounds almost incredible generosity, but in Spain such things are not uncommon. I have already mentioned the munificent gift of Medina-Celi to Madame Pichona.

Those who are unacquainted with the peculiar Spanish character and the vast riches of some of the nobility, may pronounce such acts of generosity to be ridiculous and positively injurious, but they make a mistake. The spendthrift gives and squanders by a kind of instinct, and so he will continue to do as long as his means remain. But these splendid gifts I have described do not come under the category of senseless prodigality. The Spaniard is chiefly ambitious of praise, for praise he will do anything; but this very desire for admiration serves to restrain him from actions by which he would incur blame. He wants to be thought superior to his fellows, as the

Spanish nation is superior to all other nations; he wants to be thought worthy of a throne, and to be considered as the possessor of all the virtues.

I may also note that while some of the Spanish nobility are as rich as the English lords, the former have not so many ways of spending their money as the latter, and thus are enabled to be heroically generous on occasion.

As soon as Don Diego had gone, we began to discuss the duke's noble behaviour.

Donna Pelliccia maintained that the duke had wished to shew his confidence in her by doing her the honour of supposing her incapable of abusing his generosity; "at all events," she concluded, "I would rather die of hunger than take a single doubloon of Don Diego."

"The duke would be offended," said a violinist; "I think you ought to take something."

"You must take it all," said the husband.

I was of the lady's opinion, and told her that I was sure the duke would reward her delicacy by making her fortune.

She followed my advice and her own impulse, though the banker remonstrated with her.

Such is the perversity of the human mind that no one believed in Donna Pelliccia's delicacy. When the king heard what had happened he ordered the worthy actress to leave Madrid, to prevent the duke ruining himself.

Such is often the reward of virtue here below, but the malicious persons who had tried to injure Donna Pelliccia by calumniating her to the king were the means of making her fortune.

The duke who had only spoken once or twice to the actress in public, and had never spent a penny on her, took the king's command as an insult, and one not to be borne. He was too proud to solicit the king to revoke the order he had given, and in the end behaved in a way befitting so noble-minded a man. For the first time he visited Donna Pelliccia at her own house, and begging her to forgive him for having been the innocent cause of her disgrace, asked her to accept a rouleau and a letter which he laid on the table.

The rouleau contained a hundred gold ounces with the words "for travelling expenses," and the letter was addressed to a Roman bank, and proved to be an order for twenty-four thousand Roman crowns.

For twenty-nine years this worthy woman kept an establishment at Rome, and did so in a manner which proved her worthy of her good fortune.

The day after Donna Pelliccia's departure the king saw the Duke of Arcos, and told him not to be sad, but to forget the woman, who had been sent away for his own good.

"By sending her away, your majesty obliged me to turn fiction into fact, for I only knew her by speaking to her in various public places, and I had never made her the smallest present."

"Then you never gave her twenty-five thousand doubloons?"

"Sire, I gave her double that sum, but only on the day before yesterday. Your majesty has absolute power, but if she had not received her dismissal I should never have gone to her house, nor should I have given her the smallest present."

The king was stupefied and silent; he was probably meditating on the amount of credit a monarch should give to the gossip that his courtiers bring him.

I heard about this from M. Monnino, who was afterwards known under the title of Castille de Florida Blanca, and is now living in exile in Murcia, his native country.

After Marescalchi had gone, and I was making my preparations for my journey to Barcelona, I saw one day, at the bull fight, a woman whose appearance had a strange kind of fascination about it.

There was a knight of Alcantara at my side, and I asked him who the lady was.

"She is the famous Nina."

"How famous?"

"If you do not know her story, it is too long to be told here."

I could not help gazing at her, and two minutes later an ill-looking fellow beside her came up to my companion and whispered something in his ear.

The knight turned towards me and informed me in the most polite manner that the lady whose name I had asked desired to know mine.

I was silly enough to be flattered by her curiosity, and told the messenger that if the lady would allow me I would come to her box and tell her my name in person after the performance.

“From your accent I should suppose you were an Italian.”

“I am a Venetian.”

“So is she.”

When he had gone away my neighbour seemed inclined to be more communicative, and informed me that Nina was a dancer whom the Count de Ricla, the Viceroy of Barcelona, was keeping for some weeks at Valentia, till he could get her back to Barcelona, whence the bishop of the diocese had expelled her on account of the scandals to which she gave rise. “The count,” he added, “is madly in love with her, and allows her fifty doubloons a day.”

“I should hope she does not spend them.”

“She can’t do that, but she does not let a day pass without committing some expensive act of folly.”

I felt curious to know a woman of such a peculiar character, and longed for the end of the bull fight, little thinking in what trouble this new acquaintance would involve me.

She received me with great politeness, and as she got into her carriage drawn by six mules, she said she would be delighted if I would breakfast with her at nine o’clock on the following day.

I promised to come, and I kept my word.

Her house was just outside the town walls, and was a very large building. It was richly and tastefully furnished, and was surrounded by an enormous garden.

The first thing that struck me was the number of the lackeys and the richness of their liveries, and the maids in elegant attire, who seemed to be going and coming in all directions.

As I advanced I heard an imperious voice scolding some one.

The scold was Nina, who was abusing an astonished-looking man, who was standing by a large table covered with stuffs and laces.

“Excuse me,” said she, “but this fool of a Spaniard wants to persuade me that this lace is really handsome.”

She asked me what I thought of the lace, and though I privately thought it lace of the finest quality, I did not care to contradict her, and so replied that I was no judge.

“Madam,” said the tradesman, “if you do not like the lace, leave it; will you keep the stuffs?”

“Yes,” she replied; “and as for the lace, I will shew you that it is not the money that deters me.”

So saying the mad girl took up a pair of scissors and cut the lace into fragments.

“What a pity!” said the man who had spoken to me at the bull fight. “People will say that you have gone off your head.”

“Be silent, you pimping rogue!” said she, enforcing her words with a sturdy box on the ear.

The fellow went off, calling her strumpet, which only made her scream with laughter; then, turning to the Spaniard, she told him to make out his account directly.

The man did not want telling twice, and avenged himself for the abuse he had received by the inordinate length of his bill.

She took up the account and placed her initials at the bottom without deigning to look at the items, and said, —

“Go to Don Diego Valencia; he will pay you immediately.”

As soon as we were alone the chocolate was served, and she sent a message to the fellow whose ears she had boxed to come to breakfast directly.

"You needn't be surprised at my way of treating him," she said. "He's a rascal whom Ricla has placed in my house to spy out my actions, and I treat him as you have seen, so that he may have plenty of news to write to his master."

I thought I must be dreaming; such a woman seemed to me beyond the limits of the possible.

The poor wretch, who came from Bologna and was a musician by profession, came and sat down with us without a word. His name was Molinari.

As soon as he had finished his breakfast he left the room, and Nina spent an hour with me talking about Spain, Italy, and Portugal, where she had married a dancer named Bergonzi.

"My father," she said, "was the famous charlatan Pelandi; you may have known him at Venice."

After this piece of confidence (and she did not seem at all ashamed of her parentage) she asked me to sup with her, supper being her favourite meal. I promised to come, and I left her to reflect on the extraordinary character of the woman, and on the good fortune which she so abused.

Nina was wonderfully beautiful; but as it has always been my opinion that mere beauty does not go for much, I could not understand how a viceroy could have fallen in love with her to such an extent. As for Molinari, after which I had seen, I could only set him down as an infamous wretch.

I went to supper with her for amusement's sake, for, with all her beauty, she had not touched my heart in the slightest degree. It was at the beginning of October, but at Valentia the thermometer marked twenty degrees Reaumur in the shade.

Nina was walking in the garden with her companion, both of them being very lightly clad; indeed, Nina had only her chemise and a light petticoat.

As soon as she saw me she came up and begged me to follow their example in the way of attire, but I begged to be excused. The presence of that hateful fellow revolted me in the highest degree.

In the interval before supper Nina entertained me with a number of lascivious anecdotes of her experiences from the time she began her present mode of living up to the age of twenty-two, which was her age then.

If it had not been for the presence of the disgusting Argus, no doubt all these stories would have produced their natural effect on me; but as it was they had none whatever.

We had a delicate supper and ate with appetite, and after it was over I would have gladly left them; but Nina would not let me go. The wine had taken effect, and she wished to have a little amusement.

After all the servants had been dismissed, this Messalina ordered Molinari to strip naked, and she then began to treat him in a manner which I cannot describe without disgust.

The rascal was young and strong, and, though he was drunk, Nina's treatment soon placed him in a hearty condition. I could see that she wished me to play my part in the revels, but my disgust had utterly deprived me of all my amorous faculties.

Nina, too, had undressed, and seeing that I viewed the orgy coldly she proceeded to satiate her desires by means of Molinari.

I had to bear with the sight of this beautiful woman coupling herself with an animal, whose only merit lay in his virile monstrosity, which she no doubt regarded as a beauty.

When she had exhausted her amorous fury she threw herself into a bath, then came back, drank a bottle of Malmsey Madeira, and finally made her brutal lover drink till he fell on to the floor.

I fled into the next room, not being able to bear it any longer, but she followed me. She was still naked, and seating herself beside me on an ottoman she asked me how I had enjoyed the spectacle.

I told her boldy that the disgust with which her wretched companion had inspired me was so great that it had utterly annulled the effect of her charms.

“That may be so, but now he is not here, and yet you do nothing. One would not think it, to look at you.”

“You are right, for I have my feelings like any other man, but he has disgusted me too much. Wait till tomorrow, and let me not see that monster so unworthy of enjoying you."

"He does not enjoy me. If I thought he did I would rather die than let him have to do with me, for I detest him."

"What! you do not love him, and yet you make use of him in the way you do?"

"Yes, just as I might use a mechanical instrument."

In this woman I saw an instance of the depths of degradation to which human nature may be brought.

She asked me to sup with her on the following day, telling me that we would be alone, as Molinari would be ill.

"He will have got over the effects of the wine."

"I tell you he will be ill. Come to-morrow, and come every evening."

"I am going the day after to-morrow."

"You will not go for a week, and then we will go together."

"That's impossible."

"If you go you will insult me beyond bearing."

I went home with my mind made up to depart without having anything more to do with her; and though I was far from inexperienced in wickedness of all kinds, I could not help feeling astonished at the unblushing frankness of this Megaera, who had told me what I already knew, but in words that I had never heard a woman use before.

"I only use him to satisfy my desires, and because I am certain that he does not love me; if I thought he did I would rather die than allow him to do anything with me, for I detest him."

The next day I went to her at seven o'clock in the evening. She received me with an air of feigned melancholy, saying, —

"Alas! we shall have to sup alone; Molinari has got the colic."

"You said he would be ill; have you poisoned him?"

"I am quite capable of doing so, but I hope I never shall."

"But you have given him something?"

"Only what he likes himself; but we will talk of that again. Let us sup and play till to-morrow, and tomorrow evening we will begin again."

"I am going away at seven o'clock to-morrow."

"No, no, you are not; and your coachman will have no cause for complaint, for he has been paid; here is the receipt."

These remarks, delivered with an air of amorous despotism, flattered my vanity. I made up my mind to submit gaily, called her wanton, and said I was not worth the pains she was taking over me.

"What astonishes me," said I, "is that with this fine house you do not care to entertain company."

"Everybody is afraid to come; they fear Ricla's jealousy, for it is well known that that animal who is now suffering from the colic tells him everything I do. He swears that it is not so, but I know him to be a liar. Indeed, I am very glad he does write to Ricla, and only wish he had something of real importance to write about."

"He will tell him that I have supped alone with you."

"All the better; are you afraid?"

"No; but I think you ought to tell me if I have anything really to fear."

"Nothing at all; it will fall on me."

"But I should not like to involve you in a dispute which might be prejudicial to your interests."

"Not at all; the more I provoke him, the better he loves me, and I will make him pay dearly when he asks me to make it up."

"Then you don't love him?"

"Yes, to ruin him; but he is so rich that there doesn't seem much hope of my ever doing that."

Before me I saw a woman as beautiful as Venus and as degraded as Lucifer; a woman most surely born to be the ruin of anyone who had the misfortune to fall in love with her. I had known women of similar character, but never one so dangerous as she.

I determined to make some money out of her if I could.

She called for cards, and asked me to play with her at a game called primiera. It is a game of chance, but of so complicated a nature that the best player always wins. In a quarter of an hour I found that I was the better player, but she had such luck that at the end of the game I had lost twenty pistoles, which I paid on the spot. She took the money, promising to give me my revenge.

We had supper, and then we committed all the wantonness she wished and I was capable of performing, for with me the age of miracles was past.

The next day I called to see her earlier in the evening. We played again; and she lost, and went on losing evening after evening, till I had won a matter of two or three hundred doubloons, no unwelcome addition to my somewhat depleted purse.

The spy recovered from his colic and supped with us every evening, but his presence no longer interfered with my pleasure since Nina had ceased to prostitute herself to him in my presence. She did the opposite; giving herself to me, and telling him to write to the Comte de Ricla whatever he liked.

The count wrote her a letter which she gave me to read. The poor love-sick viceroy informed her that she might safely return to Barcelona, as the bishop had received an order from the Court to regard her as merely au actress, whose stay in his diocese would only be temporary; she would thus be allowed to live there in peace so long as she abstained from giving cause for scandal. She told me that whilst she was at Barcelona I could only see her after ten o’clock at night, when the count always left her. She assured me that I should run no risk whatever.

Possibly I should not have stayed at Barcelona at all if Nina had not told me that she would always be ready to lend me as much money as I wanted.

She asked me to leave Valentia a day before her, and to await her at Tarragona. I did so, and spent a very pleasant day in that town, which abounds in remains of antiquity.

I ordered a choice supper according to her instructions, and took care that she should have a separate bedroom so as to avoid any scandal.

She started in the morning begging me to wait till the evening, and to travel by night so as to reach Barcelona by day-time. She told me to put up at the "Santa Maria," and not to call till I had heard from her.

I followed all the directions given me by this curious woman, and found myself comfortably lodged at Barcelona. My landlord was a Swiss who told me in confidence that he had received instructions to treat me well, and that I had only to ask for what I wanted.

We shall see soon what was the result of all this.

CHAPTER VIII

My Imprudence — Passano — I Am Imprisoned — My Departure from Barcelona — Madame Castelbajac at Montpellier — Nimes — I Arrive at Aix

Although my Swiss landlord seemed an honest and trustworthy kind of man, I could not help thinking that Nina had acted very imprudently in commending me to him. She was the viceroy's mistress; and though the viceroy might be a very agreeable man, he was a Spaniard, and not likely to be easy-going in his love affairs. Nina herself had told me that he was ardent, jealous, and suspicious. But the mischief was done, and there was no help for it.

When I got up my landlord brought me a valet de place, for whose character he said he could answer, and he then sent up an excellent dinner. I had slept till three o'clock in the afternoon.

After dinner I summoned my host, and asked him whether Nina had told him to get me a servant. He answered in the affirmative, and added that a carriage was awaiting my commands at the door; it had been taken by the week.

"I am astonished to hear it, for no one but myself can say what I can afford or not."

"Sir, everything is paid for."

"Paid for! I will not have it!"

"You can settle that with her, but I shall certainly take no payment."

I saw dangers ahead, but as I have never cared to cherish forbodings I dismissed the idea.

I had a letter of introduction from the Marquis de las Moras to Don Miguel de Cevallos, and another from Colonel Royas to Don Diego de la Secada. I took my letters, and the next day Don Diego came to see me, and took me to the Comte de Peralda. The day after Don Miguel introduced me to the Comte de Ricla, Viceroy of Catalonia, and the lover of Nina.

The Comte de Peralada was a young man with a pleasant face but with an ill-proportioned body. He was a great debauchee and lover of bad company, an enemy of religion, morality, and law. He was directly descended from the Comte de Peralada, who served Philip II. so well that this king declared him "count by the grace of God." The original patent of nobility was the first thing I saw in his antechamber, where it was framed and glazed so that all visitors might see it in the quarter of an hour they were kept waiting.

The count received me with an easy and cordiale manner, which seemed to say that he renounced all the dignities of his rank. He thanked Don Diego for introducing me, and talked a good deal about Colonel Royas. He asked me if I had seen the English girl he was keeping at Saragossa, and on my replying in the affirmative, he told me in a whisper that he had slept with her.

He took me to his stables, where he had some splendid horses, and then asked me to dine with him the next day.

The viceroy received me in a very different manner; he stood up so that he might not have to offer me a chair, and though I spoke Italian, with which language I knew him to be well acquainted, he answered me in Spanish, styling me ‘ussia’ (a contraction of ‘vuestra senoria’, your lordship, and used by everyone in Spain), while I gave him his proper title of excellence.

He talked a good deal about Madrid, and complained that M. de Mocenigo had gone to Paris by Bayonne instead of Barcelona, as he had promised him.

I tried to excuse my ambassador by saying that by taking the other route he had saved fifty leagues of his journey, but the viceroy replied that ‘tenir la palabra’ (keeping to one’s words) comes before all else.

He asked me if I thought of staying long at Barcelona, and seemed surprised when I told him that, with his leave, I hoped to make a long stay.

“I hope you will enjoy yourself,” he said, “but I must warn you that if you indulge in the pleasures which my nephew Peralada will doubtless offer you, you will not enjoy a very good reputation at Barcelona.”

As the Comte de Ricla made this observation in public, I thought myself justified in communicating it to Peralada himself. He was delighted, and told me, with evident vanity, that he had gone to Madrid three times, and had been ordered to return to Catalonia on each occasion.

I thought my best plan would be to follow the viceroy’s indirect advice, so I refused to join in any of the little parties of pleasure which Peralada proposed.

On the fifth day after my arrival, an officer came to ask me to dinner at the viceroy’s. I accepted the invitation with much pleasure, for I had been afraid of the viceroy’s having heard of my relations with Nina, and thought it possible that he might have taken a dislike to me. He was very pleasant to me at dinner, often addressing his observations to me, but always in a tone of great gravity.

I had been in Barcelona for a week, and was beginning to wonder why I had not heard from Nina; but one evening she wrote me a note, begging me to come on foot and alone to her house at ten o'clock the same night.

If I had been wise I should not have gone, for I was not in love with the woman, and should have remembered the respect due to the viceroy; but I was devoid of all wisdom and prudence. All the misfortunes I have experienced in my long life never taught me those two most necessary virtues.

At the hour she had named I called on her, wearing my great coat, and with a sword for my only weapon. I found Nina with her sister, a woman of thirty-six or thereabouts, who was married to an Italian dancer, nicknamed Schizza, because he had a flatter nose than any Tartar.

Nina had just been supping with her lover, who had left her at ten o'clock, according to his invariable custom.

She said she was delighted to hear I had been to dinner with him, as she had herself spoken to him in my praise, saying how admirably I had kept her company at Valentia.

"I am glad to hear it, but I do not think you are wise in inviting me to your house at such late hours."

"I only do so to avoid scandal amongst my neighbours."

"In my opinion my coming so late is only likely to increase the probability of scandal, and to make your viceroy jealous."

"He will never hear of your coming."

"I think you are mistaken."

I went away at midnight, after a conversation of the most decent character. Her sister did not leave us for a moment, and Nina gave her no cause to suspect the intimacy of our relations.

I went to see her every evening, without encroaching on the count's preserves. I thought myself secure, but the following warning should have made me desist if I had not been carried away by the forces of destiny and obstinacy in combination.

An officer in the Walloon Guards accosted me one day as I was walking by myself just outside the town. He begged me in the most polite manner to excuse him if he spoke on a matter which was indifferent to him but of great consequence to me.

“Speak, sir,” I replied, “I will take whatever you say in good part.”

“Very good. You are a stranger, sir, and may not be acquainted with our Spanish manners, consequently you are unaware of the great risk you run in going to see Nina every evening after the count has left her.”

“What risk do I run? I have no doubt that the count knows all about it and does not object.”

“I have no doubt as to his knowing it, and he may possibly pretend to know nothing before her, as he fears as well as loves her; but if she tells you that he does not object, she either deceives herself or you. He cannot love her without being jealous, and a jealous Spaniard …

“Follow my advice, sir, and forgive my freedom.”

“I am sincerely obliged to you for your kind interest in me, but I cannot follow your advice, as by doing so I should be wanting in politeness to Nina, who likes to see me and gives me a warm welcome. I shall continue to visit her till she orders me not to do so, or till the count signifies to me his displeasure at my visits to his mistress.”

“The count will never do such a thing; he is too careful of his dignity.”

The worthy officer then narrated to me all the acts of injustice which Ricla had committed since he had fallen in love with this woman. He had dismissed gentlemen from his service on the mere suspicion that they were in love with her; some had been exiled, and others imprisoned on one frivolous pretext or another. Before he had known Nina he had been a pattern of wisdom, justice, and virtue, and now he had become unjust, cruel, blindly passionate, and in every way a scandal to the high position he occupied.

All this should have influenced me, but it had not the slightest effect. I told him for politeness’ sake that I would endeavour to part from her by degrees, but I had no intention of doing so.

When I asked him how he knew that I visited Nina, he laughed and said it was a common topic of conversation all over the town.

The same evening I called on her without mentioning my conversation with the officer. There would have been some excuse for me if I had been in love with her, but as it was … I acted like a madman.

On the 14th of November I went to see her at the usual time. I found her with a man who was shewing her miniatures. I looked at him and found that he was the scoundrel Passano, or Pogomas.

My blood boiled; I took Nina's hand and led her into a neighbouring room, and told her to dismiss the rogue at once, or I would go to return no more.

"He's a painter."

"I am well acquainted with his history, and will tell you all about it presently; but send him away, or I shall go."

She called her sister, and told her to order the Genoese to leave the house and never to enter it again.

The thing was 'done in a moment, but the sister told us that as he went out he had said, —

"Se ne pentira." ("He shall be sorry for it.").

I occupied an hour in relating some of the injuries I had received from this scoundrelly fellow.

The next day (November 15th), I went to Nina at the usual time, and after spending two hours in pleasant converse with her and her sister I went out as the clocks were striking midnight.

The door of the house was under an arcade, which extended to the end of the street. It was a dark night; and I had scarcely gone twenty-five paces when two men suddenly rushed at me.

I stepped back, drawing my sword, and exclaiming, "Assassins!" and then with a rapid movement, I thrust my blade into the body of the nearest assailant. I then left the arcade, and began to run down the street. The second assassin fired a pistol at me, but it fortunately missed me. I fell down and dropped my hat in my rapid flight, and got up and continued my course without troubling to pick it up. I did not know whether I was wounded or not, but at last I got to my inn, and laid down the bloody sword on the counter, under the landlord's nose. I was quite out of breath.

I told the landlord what had happened, and on taking off my great coat, I found it to be pierced in two places just below the armpit.

"I am going to bed," I said to the landlord, "and I leave my great coat and the sword in your charge. Tomorrow morning I shall ask you to come with me before the magistrate to denounce this act of assassination, for if the man was killed it must be shewn that I only slew him to save my own life."

"I think your best plan would be to fly Barcelona immediately."

"Then you think I have not told you the strict truth?"

"I am sure you have; but I know whence the blow comes, and God knows what will befall you!"

"Nothing at all; but if I fly I shall be accounted guilty. Take care of the sword; they tried to assassinate me, but I think the assassins got the worst of it."

I went to bed somewhat perturbed, but I had the consoling thought that if I had killed a man I had done so to self-defence; my conscience was quite clear.

At seven o'clock the next morning I heard a knocking at my door. I opened it, and saw my landlord, accompanied by an officer, who told me to give him all my papers, to dress, and to follow him, adding that he should be compelled to use force in case of resistance.

"I have no intention of resisting," I replied. "By whose authority do you ask me for my papers?"

"By the authority of the governor. They will be returned to you if nothing suspicious is found amongst them."

"Where are you going to take me?"

"To the citadel."

I opened my trunk, took out my linen and my clothes, which I gave to my landlord, and I saw the officer's astonishment at seeing my trunk half filled with papers.

"These are all the papers I have," I said. I locked the box and gave the officer the key.

"I advise you, sir," he said, "to put all necessary articles into a portmanteau." He then ordered the landlord to send me a bed, and finally asked me if I had any papers in my pockets.

"Only my passports."

"That's exactly what we want," he rejoined, with a grim smile.

"My passports are sacred; I will never give them to anyone but the governor-general. Reverence your king; here is his passport, here is that of the Count of Aranda, and here the passport of the Venetian ambassador. You will have to bind me hand and foot before you get them."

"Be more moderate, sir. In giving them to me it is just as if you gave them to the viceroy. If you resist I will not bind you hand and foot, but I shall take you before the viceroy, and then you will be forced to give them up in public. Give them to me with a good grace, and you shall have an acknowledgement."

The worthy landlord told me I should be wiser to give in, so I let myself be persuaded. The officer gave me a full quittance, which I put in my pocketbook (this he let me keep out of his kindness), and then I followed him. He had six constables with him, but they kept a good distance away. Comparing this with the circumstances of my arrest at Madrid, I thought myself well treated.

Before we left the inn the officer told me that I might order what meals I pleased, and I asked the landlord to let me have my dinner and supper as usual.

On the way I told him of my adventure of the night before; he listened attentively but made no comments.

When we reached the citadel I was delivered to the officer of the guard, who gave me a room on the first floor. It was bare of furniture, but the windows looked on to a square and had no iron bars.

I had scarcely been there ten minutes when my carpet bag and an excellent bed were brought in.

As soon as I was alone I began to think over the situation. I finished where I ought to have begun.

“What can this imprisonment have to do with my last night’s adventure?” I reflected.

I could not make out the connection.

“They are bent on examining my papers; they must think I have been tampering in some political or religious intrigue; but my mind is quite at ease on that score. I am well lodged at present, and no doubt shall be set free after my papers have been examined; they can find nothing against me there.

“The affair of my attempted assassination will, no doubt, be considered separately.

“Even if the rascal is dead, I do not see what they can do to me.

“On the other hand, my landlord’s advice to fly from Barcelona looks ominous; what if the assassins received their orders from some person high in authority?

“It is possible that Ricla may have vowed my ruin, but it does not seem probable to me.

“Would it have been wise to follow the landlord’s advice?

“Possibly, but I do not think so; my honour would have suffered, and I might have been caught and laid up in some horrid dungeon, whereas for a prison I am comfortable enough here.

“In three or four days the examination of my papers will have been completed, and as there is nothing in them likely to be offensive to the powers that be, they will be returned to me with my liberty, which will taste all the sweeter for this short deprivation.

“As for my passports they all speak in my favour.

“I cannot think that the all-powerful hand of the viceroy could have directed the assassin’s sword; it would be a dishonour to him, and if it were so, he would not be treating me so kindly now. If it were his doing, he must have heard directly that the blow had failed, and in that case I do not think he would have arrested me this morning.

“Shall I write to Nina? Will writing be allowed here?”

As I was puzzling my brains with these reflections, stretched on my bed (for I had no chair), I heard some disturbance, and on opening my window I saw, to my great astonishment, Passano being brought into the prison by a corporal and two soldiers. As he was going in, the rascal looked up and saw me, and began to laugh.

“Alas!” I said to myself, “here is fresh food for conjecture. The fellow told Nina’s sister that I should be sorry for what I had done. He must have directed some fearful calumny against me, and they are imprisoning him so as to be sure of his evidence.”

On reflection, I was well pleased at the turn affairs had taken.

An excellent dinner was set before me, but I had no chair or table. The deficiency was remedied by the soldier who was in charge of me for the consideration of a duro.

Prisoners were not allowed to have pen and ink without special permission; but paper and pencils were not included under this regulation, so my guard got them for me, together with candles and candlesticks, and I proceeded to kill time by making geometrical calculations. I made the obliging soldier sup with me, and he promised to commend me to one of his comrades who would serve me well. The guard was relieved at eleven.

On the fourth day the officer of the guard came to me with a distressed look, and told me that he had the disagreeable duty of giving me some very bad news.

“What is that, sir?”

“I have received orders to transfer you to the bottom of the tower.”

“To transfer me?”

“Yes.”

“Then they must have discovered in me a criminal of the deepest dye! Let us go at once.”

I found myself in a kind of round cellar, paved with large flagstones, and lighted by five or six narrow slits in the walls. The officer told me I must order what food required to be brought once a day, as no one was allowed to come into the ‘calabozo’, or dungeon, by night.

“How about lights?”

“You may lave one lamp always burning, and that will be enough, as books are not allowed. When your dinner is brought, the officer on duty will open the pies and the poultry to see that they do not contain any documents; for here no letters are allowed to come in or go out.”

“Have these orders been given for my especial benefit?”

“No, sir; it is the ordinary rule. You will be able to converse with the sentinel.”

“The door will be open, then?”

“Not at all.”

“How about the cleanliness of my cell?”

“A soldier will accompany the officer in charge of your dinner, and he will attend to your wants for a trifle.”

“May I amuse myself by making architectural plans with the pencil?”

“As much as you like.”

“Then will you be good enough to order some paper to be bought for me?”

“With pleasure.”

The officer seemed to pity me as he left me, and bolted and barred the heavy door behind which I saw a man standing sentry with his bayonet fixed. The door was fitted with a small iron grating.

When I got my paper and my dinner at noonday the officer cut open a fowl, and plunged a fork in the other dishes so as to make sure that there were no papers at the bottom.

My dinner would have sufficed for six people. I told the officer that I should be much honoured by his dining with me, but he replied that it was strictly forbidden. He gave me the same answer when I asked if I might have the newspapers.

It was a festival time for the sentinels, as I shared my meals and my good wine with them; and consequently these poor fellows were firmly attached to me.

I was curious to know who was paying for my good cheer, but there was no chance of my finding out, for the waiter from the inn was never allowed to approach my cell.

In this dungeon, where I was imprisoned for forty-two days, I wrote in pencil and without other reference than my memory, my refutation of Amelot de la Houssaye's "History of the Venetian Government."

I was most heartily amused during my imprisonment, and in the following manner:

While I was at Warsaw an Italian named Tadini came to Warsaw. He had an introduction to Tomatis who commended him to me. He called himself an oculist. Tomatis used to give him a dinner now and again, but not being well off in those days I could only give him good words and a cup of coffee when he chanced to come about my breakfast-time.

Tadini talked to everybody about the operations he had performed, and condemned an oculist who had been at Warsaw for twenty years, saying that he did not understand how to extract a cataract, while the other oculist said that Tadini was a charlatan who did not know how the eye was made.

Tadini begged me to speak in his favour to a lady who had had a cataract removed by the Warsaw oculist, only to return again a short time after the operation.

The lady was blind of the one eye, but she could see with the other, and I told Tadini that I did not care to meddle with such a delicate matter.

"I have spoken to the lady," said Tadini, "and I have mentioned your name as a person who will answer for me."

"You have done wrong; in such a matter I would not stand surety for the most learned of men, and I know nothing about your learning."

"But you know I am an oculist."

"I know you were introduced to me as such, but that's all. As a professional man, you should not need anyone's commendation, you should be able to say, ‘Operibus credite’. That should be your motto.”

Tadini was vexed with my incredulity, and shewed me a number of testimonials, which I might possibly have read, if the first which met my eye had not been from a lady who protested to all and singular that M. Tadini had cured her of amaurosis. At this I laughed in his face and told him to leave me alone.

A few days after I found myself dining with him at the house of the lady with the cataract. She had almost made up her mind to submit to the operation, but as the rascal had mentioned my name, she wanted me to be present at a dispute between Tadini and the other oculist who came in with the dessert.

I disposed myself to listen to the arguments of the two rival professors with considerable pleasure. The Warsaw oculist was a German, but spoke French very well; however, he attacked Tadini in Latin. The Italian checked him by saying that their discourse must be conducted in a language intelligible to the lady, and I agreed with him. It was plain that Tadini did not know a word of Latin.

The German oculist began by admitting that after the operation for cataract there was no chance of the disease returning, but that there was a considerable risk of the crystalline humour evaporating, and the patient being left in a state of total blindness.

Tadini, instead of denying this statement (which was inaccurate), had the folly to take a little box out of his pocket. It contained a number of minute round crystals.

“What’s that?” said the old professor.

“A substance which I can place in the cornea to supply the loss of the crystalline matter.”

The German went off into a roar of laughter so long and loud that the lady could not help laughing. I should have liked to join them, but I was ashamed to be thought the patron of this ignorant fellow, so I preserved a gloomy silence.

Tadini no doubt interpreted my silence as a mark of disapproval of the German’s laughter, and thought to better matters by asking me to give my opinion.

“As you want to hear it,” said I, “here it is.”

“There’s a great difference between a tooth and the crystalline humour; and though you may have succeeded in putting an artificial tooth into a gum, this treatment will not do with the eye.”

“Sir, I am not a dentist.”

“No, nor an oculist either.”

At this the ignorant rascal got up and left the room, and it was decidedly the best thing he could do.

We laughed over this new treatment, and the lady promised to have nothing more to do with him. The professor was not content to despise his opponent in silence. He had him cited before the Faculty of Medicine to be examined on his knowledge of the eye, and procured the insertion of a satiric article in the news on the new operation for replacing the crystalline humour, alluding to the wonderful artist then in Warsaw who could perform this operation as easily as a dentist could put in a false tooth.

This made Tadini furious, and he set upon the old professor in the street and forced him to the refuge in a house.

After this he no doubt left the town on foot, for he was seen no more. Now the reader is in a position to understand my surprise and amusement, when, one day as I peered through the grating in my dungeon, I saw the oculist Tadini standing over me with gun in hand. But he at all events evinced no amusement whatever, while I roared and roared again with laughter for the two hours his duty lasted.

I gave him a good meal and a sufficiency of my excellent wine, and at the end a crown, promising that he should have the same treatment every time he returned to the post. But I only saw him four times, as the guard at my cell was a position eagerly coveted and intrigued for by the other soldiers.

He amused me by the story of his misadventures since he had left Warsaw. He had travelled far and wide without making a fortune, and at last arrived in Barcelona, where he failed to meet with any courtesy or consideration. He had no introduction, no diploma; he had refused to submit to an examination in the Latin tongue, because (as he said) there was no connection between the learned languages and the diseases of the eye; and the result was that, instead of the common fate of being ordered to leave the country, he was made into a soldier. He told me in confidence that he intended to desert, but he said he should take care to avoid the galleys.

“What have you done with your crystals?”

“I have renounced them since I left Warsaw, though I am sure they would succeed.”

I never heard of him again.

On December 28th, six weeks after my arrest, the officer of the guard came to my cell and told me to dress and follow him.

“Where are we going?”

“I am about to deliver you to an officer of the viceroy, who is waiting.”

I dressed hastily, and after placing all my belongings in a portmanteau I followed him. We went to the guardroom, and there I was placed under the charge of the officer who had arrested me, who took me to the palace. There a Government official shewed me my trunk, telling me that I should find all my papers intact; and he then returned me my three passports, with the remark that they were genuine documents.

“I knew that all along.”

“I suppose so, but we had reasons for doubting their authenticity.”

“They must have been strange reasons, for, as you now confess, these reasons were devoid of reason.”

“You must be aware that I cannot reply to such an objection.”

“I don’t ask you to do so.”

“Your character is perfectly clear; all the same I must request you to leave Barcelona in three days, and Catalonia in a week.”

“Of course I will obey; but it strikes me that the Catalonian method of repairing injustice is somewhat peculiar.”

“If you think you have ground for complaint you are at liberty to go to Madrid and complain to the Court.”

“I have certainly grounds enough for complaint, sir, but I shall go to France, and not to Madrid; I have had enough of Spanish justice. Will you please give me the order to leave in writing?”

“That’s unnecessary; you may take it for granted. My name is Emmanuel Badillo; I am a secretary of state. That gentleman will escort you back to the room where you were arrested. You will find everything just as you have left it. You are a free man. To-morrow I will send you your passport, signed by the viceroy and myself. Good day, sir.”

Accompanied by the officer and a servant bearing my portmanteau, I proceeded to my old inn.

On my way I saw a theatrical poster, and decided to go to the opera. The good landlord was delighted to see me again, and hastened to light me a fire, for a bitterly cold north wind was blowing. He assured me that no one but himself had been in my room, and in the officer’s presence he gave me back my sword, my great coat, and, to my astonishment, the hat I had dropped in my flight from the assassins.

The officer asked me if I had any complaints to make, and I replied that I had none.

“I should like to hear you say that I had done nothing but my duty, and that personally I have not done you any injury.”

I shook his hand, and assured him of my esteem.

“Farewell, sir,” said he, “I hope you will have a pleasant journey.” I told my landlord that I would dine at noon, and that I trusted to him to celebrate my liberation in a fitting manner, and then I went to the post office to see if there were any letters for me. I found five or six letters, with the seals intact, much to my astonishment. What is one to make of a Government which deprives a man of his liberty on some trifling pretext, and, though seizing all his papers, respects the privacy of his letters? But Spain, as I have remarked, is peculiar in every way. These letters were from Paris, Venice, Warsaw, and Madrid, and I have never had any reason to believe that any other letters had come for me during my imprisonment.

I went back to my inn, and asked my landlord to bring the bill.

"You do not owe me anything, sir. Here is your bill for the period preceding your imprisonment, and, as you see, it has been settled. I also received orders from the same source to provide for you during your imprisonment, and as long as you stayed at Barcelona."

"Did you know how long I should remain in prison?"

"No, I was paid by the week."

"Who paid you?"

"You know very well."

"Have you had any note for me?"

"Nothing at all."

"What has become of the valet de place?"

"I paid him, and sent him away immediately after your arrest."

"I should like to have him with me as far as Perpignan."

"You are right, and I think the best thing you can do is to leave Spain altogether, for you will find no justice in it."

"What do they say about my assassination?"

"Why, they say you fired the shot that people heard yourself, and that you made your own sword bloody, for no one was found there, either dead or wounded."

"That's an amusing theory. Where did my hat come from?"

"It was brought to me three days after."

"What a confusion! But was it known that I was imprisoned in the tower?"

"Everybody knew it, and two good reasons were given, the one in public, and the other in private."

"What are these reasons?"

"The public reason was that you had forged your passports; the private one, which was only whispered at the ear, was that you spent all your nights with Nina."

"You might have sworn that I never slept out of your inn."

"I told everyone as much, but no matter; you did go to her house, and for a certain nobleman that's a crime. I am glad you did not fly as I advised you, for as it is your character is cleared before everybody."

"I should like to go to the opera this evening; take me a box."

"It shall be done; but do not have anything more to do with Nina, I entreat you."

"No, my good friend, I have made up my mind to see her no more."

Just as I was sitting down to dinner, a banker's clerk brought me a letter which pleased me very much. It contained the bills of exchange I had drawn in Genoa, in favour of M. Augustin Grimaldi. He now sent them back, with these words:

"Passano has been vainly endeavouring to persuade me to send these bills to Barcelona, so that they may be protested, and you arrested. I now send them to you to convince you that I am not one of those who delight in trampling down the victims of bad fortune.

" — Genoa, November 30th, 1768."

For the fourth time a Genoese had behaved most generously to me. I was almost persuaded that I ought to forgive the infamous Passano for the sake of his four excellent fellow-countrymen.

But this virtue was a little beyond me. I concluded that the best thing I could do would be to rid the Genoese name of the opprobrium which this rascal was always bringing on it, but I could never find an opportunity. Some years after I heard that the wretch died in miserable poverty in Genoa.

I was curious at the time to know what had become of him, as it was important for me to be on my guard. I confided my curiosity to my landlord, and he instructed one of the servants to make enquiries. I only heard the following circumstance:

Ascanio Pogomas, or Passano, had been released at the end of November, and had then been embarked on a felucca bound for Toulon.

The same day I wrote a long and grateful letter to M. Grimaldi. I had indeed reason to be grateful, for if he had listened to my enemy he might have reduced me to a state of dreadful misery.

My landlord had taken the box at the opera in my name, and two hours afterwards, to everyone's great astonishment, the posters announcing the plays of the evening were covered by bills informing the public that two of the performers had been taken ill, that the play would not be given, and the theatre closed till the second day of the new year.

This order undoubtedly came from the viceroy, and everybody knew the reason.

I was sorry to have deprived the people of Barcelona of the only amusement they had in the evening, and resolved to stay indoors, thinking that would be the most dignified course I could adopt.

Petrarch says, —

'Amor che fa gentile un cor villano'.

If he had known the lover of Nina he would have changed the line into

'Amor che fa villan un cor gentile'.

In four months I shall be able to throw some more light on this strange business.

I should have left Barcelona the same day, but a slight tinge of superstition made me desire to leave on the last day of the unhappy year I had spent in Spain. I therefore spent my three days of grace in writing letters to all my friends.

Don Miguel de Cevallos, Don Diego de la Secada, and the Comte de la Peralada came to see me, but separately. Don Diego de la Secada was the uncle of the Countess A—— B—— whom I had met at Milan. These gentlemen told me a tale as strange as any of the circumstances which had happened to me at Barcelona.

On the 26th of December the Abbe Marquisio, the envoy of the Duke of Modena, asked the viceroy, before a considerable number of people, if he could pay me a visit, to give me a letter which he could place in no hands but mine. If not he said he should be obliged to take the letter to Madrid, for which town he was obliged to set out the next day.

The count made no answer, to everyone's astonishment, and the abbe left for Madrid the next day, the eve of my being set at liberty.

I wrote to the abbe, who was unknown to me, but I never succeeded in finding out the truth about this letter.

There could be no doubt that I had been arrested by the despotic viceroy, who had been persuaded by Nina that I was her favoured lover. The question of my passports must have been a mere pretext, for eight or ten days would have sufficed to send them to Madrid and have them back again if their authenticity had been doubted. Possibly Passano might have told the viceroy that any passports of mine were bound to be false, as I should have had to obtain the signature of my own ambassador. This, he might have said, was out of the question as I was in disgrace with the Venetian Government. As a matter of fact, he was mistaken if he really said so, but the mistake would have been an excusable one.

When I made up my mind at the end of August to leave Madrid, I asked the Count of Aranda for a passport. He replied that I must first obtain one from my ambassador, who, he added, could not refuse to do me this service.

Fortified with this opinion I called at the embassy. M. Querini was at San Ildefonso at the time, and I told the porter that I wanted to speak to the secretary of embassy.

The servant sent in my name, and the fop gave himself airs, and pretended that he could not receive me. In my indignation I wrote to him saying that I had not called to pay my court to the secretary, but to demand a passport which was my right. I gave my name and my degree (doctor of law), and begged him to leave the passport with the porter, as I should call for it on the following day.

I presented myself accordingly, and the porter told me that the ambassador had left verbal orders that I was not to have a passport.

I wrote immediately to the Marquis Grimaldi and to the Duke of Lossada, begging them to request the ambassador to send me a passport in the usual form, or else I should publish the shameful reasons for which his uncle Mocenigo had disgraced me.

I do not know whether these gentlemen shewed my letters to Querini, but I do know that the secretary Oliviera sent me my passport.

Thereupon the Count Aranda furnished me with a passport signed by the king.

On the last day of the year I left Barcelona with a servant who sat behind my chaise, and I agreed with my driver to take me to Perpignan by January 3rd, 1769.

The driver was a Piedmontese and a worthy man: The next day he came into the room of the wayside inn where I was dining, and in the presence of my man asked me whether I had any suspicion that I was being followed.

“Well, I may be,” I said, “but what makes you ask that question?”

“As you were leaving Barcelona yesterday, I noticed three ill-looking fellows watching us, armed to the teeth. Last night they slept in the stable with my mules. They dined here to-day, and they went on three quarters of an hour ago. They don’t speak to anyone, and I don’t like the looks of them.”

“What shall we do to avoid assassination, or the dread of it?”

“We must start late, and stop at an inn I know of, a league this side of the ordinary stage where they will be awaiting us. If they turn back, and sleep at the same inn as ourselves, we shall be certain.”

I thought the idea a sensible one, and we started, I going on foot nearly the whole way; and at five o’clock we halted at a wretched inn, but we saw no signs of the sinister trio.

At eight o’clock I was at supper, when my man came in and told me that the three fellows had come back, and were drinking with our driver in the stable.

My hair stood on end. There could be no more doubt about the matter.

At present, it was true, I had nothing to fear; but it would be getting dark when we arrived at the frontier, and then my peril would come.

I told my servant to shew no sign, but to ask the driver to come and speak with me when the assassins were asleep.

He came at ten o’clock, and told me plainly that we should be all murdered as we approached the French frontier.

“Then you have been drinking with them?”

“Yes, and after we had dispatched a bottle at my expense, one of them asked me why I had not gone on to the end of the stage, where you would be better lodged. I replied that it was late, and you were cold. I might have asked in my turn, why they had not stayed at the stage themselves, and where they were going, but I took care to do nothing of the kind. All I asked was whether the road to Perpignan was a good one, and they told me it was excellent all the way.”

“What are they doing now?”

“They are sleeping by my mules, covered with their cloaks.”

“What shall we do?”

“We will start at day-break after them, of course, and we shall dine at the usual stage; but after dinner, trust me, we will take a different road, and at midnight we shall be in France safe and sound.”

If I could have procured a good armed escort I would not have taken his advice, but in the situation I was in I had no choice.

We found the three scoundrels in the place where the driver had told me we should see them. I gave them a searching glance, and thought they looked like true Sicarii, ready to kill anyone for a little money.

They started in a quarter of an hour, and half an hour later we set out, with a peasant to guide us, and so struck into a cross road. The mules went at a sharp pace, and in seven hours we had done eleven leagues. At ten o’clock we stopped at an inn in a French village, and we had no more to fear. I gave our guide a doubloon, with which he was well pleased, and I enjoyed once more a peaceful night in a French bed, for nowhere will you find such soft beds or such delicious wines as in the good land of France.

The next day I arrived at the posting-inn at Perpignan in time for dinner. I endeavoured in vain to think who could have paid my assassins, but the reader will see the explanation when we get twenty days farther.

At Perpignan I dismissed my driver and my servant, rewarding them according to my ability. I wrote to my brother at Paris, telling him I had had a fortunate escape from the dagger of the assassin. I begged him to direct his answer to Aix, where I intended to spend a fortnight, in the hope of seeing the Marquis d'Argens. I left Perpignan the day after my arrival, and slept at Narbonne, and the day after at Beziers.

The distance from Narbonne to Beziers is only five leagues, and I had not intended to stop; but the good cheer which the kindest of landladies gave me at dinner made me stop with her to supper.

Beziers is a town which looks pleasant even at the worst time of the year. A philosopher who wished to renounce all the vanities of the world, and an Epicurean who would enjoy good cheer cheaply, could find no better retreat than Beziers.

Everybody at Beziers is intelligent, all the women are pretty, and the cooks are all artists; the wines are exquisite — what more could one desire! May its riches never prove its ruin!

When I reached Montpellier, I got down at the "White Horse," with the intention of spending a week there. In the evening I supped at the table d'hote, where I found a numerous company, and I saw to my amusement that for every guest there was a separate dish brought to table.

Nowhere is there better fare than at Montpellier. 'Tis a veritable land of Cocagne!

The next day I breakfasted at the cafe (an institution peculiar to France, the only country where the science of living is really understood), and addressed the first gentleman I met, telling him that I was a stranger and that I would like to know some of the professors. He immediately offered to take me to one of the professors who enjoyed a great reputation.

Herein may be seen another of the good qualities of the French, who rank above other nations by so many titles. To a Frenchman a foreigner is a sacred being; he receives the best of hospitality, not merely in form, but in deed; and his welcome is given with that easy grace which so soon sets a stranger at his ease.

My new friend introduced me to the professor, who received me with all the polished courtesy of the French man of letters. He that loves letters should love all other lovers of letters, and in France that is the case, even more so than Italy. In Germany the literary man has an air of mysterious reserve. He thinks he is proclaiming to all the world that he at all events is a man of no pretension, whereas his pride peeps through every moment. Naturally the stranger is not encouraged by such a manner as this.

At the time of my visit there was an excellent company of actors at Montpellier, whom I went to see the same evening. My bosom swelled at finding myself in the blessed air of France after all the annoyances I had gone through in Spain. I seemed to have become young again; but I was altered, for several beautiful and clever actresses appeared on the stage without arousing any desires within me; and I would have it so.

I had a lively desire to find Madame Castelbajac, not with any wish to renew my old relations with her. I wished to congratulate her on her improved position, but I was afraid of compromising her by asking for her in the town.

I knew that her husband was an apothecary, so I resolved to make the acquaintance of all the apothecaries in the place. I pretended to be in want of some very rare drugs, and entered into conversation about the differences between the trade in France and in foreign countries. If I spoke to the master I hoped he would talk to his wife about the stranger who had visited the countries where she had been, and that that would make her curious to know me. If, on the other hand, I spoke to the man, I knew he would soon tell me all he knew about his master's family.

On the third day my stratagem succeeded. My old friend wrote me a note, telling me that she had seen me speaking to her husband in his shop. She begged me to come again at a certain time, and to tell her husband that I had known her under the name of Mdlle. Blasin in England, Spa, Leipzig, and Vienna, as a seller of lace. She ended her note with these words:

“I have no doubt that my husband will finally introduce you to me as his wife.”

I followed her advice, and the good man asked me if I had ever known a young lace seller of the name of Mdlle. Blasin, of Montpellier.

“Yes, I remember her well enough — a delightful and most respectable young woman; but I did not know she came from Montpellier. She was very pretty and very sensible, and I expect she did a good business. I have seen her in several European cities, and the last time at Vienna, where I was able to be of some slight service to her. Her admirable behaviour won her the esteem of all the ladies with whom she came in contact. In England I met her at the house of a duchess."

"Do you think you would recognize her if you saw her again?"

"By Jove! I should think so! But is she at Montpellier? If so, tell her that the Chevalier de Seingalt is here."

"Sir, you shall speak to her yourself, if you will do me the honour to follow me."

My heart leapt, but I restrained myself. The worthy apothecary went through the shop, climbed a stair, and, opening a door on the first floor, said to me, —

"There she is."

"What, mademoiselle! You here? I am delighted to see you."

"This is not a young lady, sir, 'tis my dear wife; but I hope that will not hinder you from embracing her."

"I have never had such an honour; but I will avail myself of your permission with pleasure. Then you have got married at Montpellier. I congratulate both of you, and wish you all health and happiness. Tell me, did you have a pleasant journey from Vienna to Lyons?"

Madame Blasin (for so I must continue to designate her) answered my question according to her fancy, and found me as good an actor as she was an actress.

We were very glad to see each other again, but the apothecary was delighted at the great respect with which I treated his wife.

For a whole hour we carried on a conversation of a perfectly imaginary character, and with all the simplicity of perfect truth.

She asked me if I thought of spending the carnival at Montpellier, and seemed quite mortified when I said that I thought of going on the next day.

Her husband hastened to say that that was quite out of the question.

"Oh, I hope you won't go," she added, "you must do my husband the honour of dining with us."

After the husband had pressed me for some time I gave in, and accepted their invitation to dinner for the day after next.

Instead of stopping two days I stopped four. I was much pleased with the husband's mother, who was advanced in years but extremely intelligent. She had evidently made a point of forgetting everything unpleasant in the past history of her son's wife.

Madame Blasin told me in private that she was perfectly happy, and I had every reason to believe that she was speaking the truth. She had made a rule to be most precise in fulfilling her wifely duties, and rarely went out unless accompanied by her husband or her mother-in-law.

I spent these four days in the enjoyment of pure and innocent friendship without there being the slightest desire on either side to renew our guilty pleasures.

On the third day after I had dined with her and her husband, she told me, while we were alone for a moment, that if I wanted fifty louis she knew where to get them for me. I told her to keep them for another time, if I was so happy as to see her again, and so unhappy as to be in want.

I left Montpellier feeling certain that my visit had increased the esteem in which her husband and her mother-in-law held her, and I congratulated myself on my ability to be happy without committing any sins.

The day after I had bade them farewell, I slept at Nimes, where I spent three days in the company of a naturalist: M. de Seguier, the friend of the Marquis Maffei of Verona. In his cabinet of natural history I saw and admired the immensity and infinity of the Creator's handiwork.

Nimes is a town well worthy of the stranger's observation; it provides food for the mind, and the fair sex, which is really fair there, should give the heart the food it likes best.

I was asked to a ball, where, as a foreigner, I took first place — a privilege peculiar to France, for in England, and still more in Spain, a foreigner means an enemy.

On leaving Nimes I resolved to spend the carnival at Aix, where the nobility is of the most distinguished character. I believe I lodged at the "Three

Dolphins,” where I found a Spanish cardinal on his way to Rome to elect a successor to Pope Rezzonico.

CHAPTER IX

My Stay at Aix; I Fall Ill — I am Cared for By an Unknown

Lady — The Marquis d'Argens — Cagliostro

My room was only separated from his Castilian eminence's by a light partition, and I could hear him quite plainly reprimanding his chief servant for being too economical.

"My lord, I do my best, but it is really impossible to spend more, unless I compel the inn-keepers to take double the amount of their bills; and your eminence will admit that nothing in the way of rich and expensive dishes has been spared."

"That may be, but you ought to use your wits a little; you might for example order meals when we shall not require any. Take care that there are always three tables — one for us, one for my officers, and the third for the servants. Why I see that you only give the postillions a franc over the legal charge, I really blush for you; you must give them a crown extra at least. When they give you change for a louis, leave it on the table; to put back one's change in one's pocket is an action only worthy of a beggar. They will be saying at Versailles and Madrid, and maybe at Rome itself, that the Cardinal de la Cerda is a miser. I am no such thing, and I do not want to be thought one. You must really cease to dishonour me, or leave my service."

A year before this speech would have astonished me beyond measure, but now I was not surprised, for I had acquired some knowledge of Spanish manners. I might admire the Senor de la Cerda's prodigality, but I could not help deploring such ostentation on the part of a Prince of the Church about to participate in such a solemn function.

What I had heard him say made me curious to see him, and I kept on the watch for the moment of his departure. What a man! He was not only ill made, short and sun-burnt; but his face was so ugly and so low that I concluded that AEsop himself must have been a little Love beside his eminence. I understood now why he was so profuse in his generosity and decorations, for otherwise he might well have been taken for a stableboy. If the conclave took the eccentric whim of making him pope, Christ would never have an uglier vicar.

I enquired about the Marquis d'Argens soon after the departure of his eminence, and was told that he was in the country with his brother, the Marquis d'Eguille, President of the Parliament, so I went there.

This marquis, famous for his friendship for Frederick II. rather than for his writings (which are no longer read), was an old man when I saw him. He was a worthy man, fond of pleasure, a thorough-paced Epicurean, and had married an actress named Cochois, who had proved worthy of the honour he had laid on her. He was deeply learned and had a thorough knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew literature. His memory was prodigious.

He received me very well, and recalled what his friend the marshal had written about me. He introduced me to his wife and to his brother, a distinguished jurist, a man of letters, and a strictly moral man by temperament as much as religion. Though a highly intellectual man, he was deeply and sincerely religious.

He was very fond of his brother, and grieved for his irreligion, but hoped that grace would eventually bring him back to the fold of the Church. His brother encouraged him in his hopes, while laughing at them in private, but as they were both sensible men they never discussed religion together.

I was introduced to a numerous company of both sexes, chiefly consisting of relations. All were amiable and highly polished, like all the Provencal nobility.

Plays were performed on the miniature stage, good cheer prevailed, and at intervals we walked in the garden, in spite of the weather. In Province, however, the winter is only severe when the wind blows from the north, which unfortunately often happens.

Among the company were a Berlin lady (widow of the marquis's nephew) and her brother. This young gentleman, who was gay and free from care, enjoyed all the pleasures of the house without paying any attention to the religious services which were held every day. If he thought on the matter at all, he was a heretic; and when the Jesuit chaplain was saying mass he amused himself by playing on the flute; he laughed at everything. He was unlike his sister, who had not only become a Catholic, but was a very devout one. She was only twenty-two.

Her brother told me that her husband, who had died of consumption, and whose mind was perfectly clear to the last, as is usually the case in phthisis, had told her that he could not entertain any hopes of seeing her in the other world unless she became a Catholic.

These words were engraved on her heart; she had adored her husband, and she resolved to leave Berlin to live with his relations. No one ventured to oppose this design, her brother accompanying her, and she was welcomed joyfully by all her husband's kinsfolk.

This budding saint was decidedly plain.

Her brother, finding me less strict than the others, soon constituted himself my friend. He came over to Aix every day, and took me to the houses of all the best people.

We were at least thirty at table every day, the dishes were delicate without undue profusion, the conversation gay and animated without any improprieties. I noticed that whenever the Marquis d'Argens chanced to let slip any equivocal expressions, all the ladies made wry faces, and the chaplain hastened to turn the conversation. This chaplain had nothing jesuitical in his appearance; he dressed in the costume of an ordinary priest, and I should never had known him if the Marquis d'Argens had not warned me. However, I did not allow his presence to act as a wet blanket.

I told, in the most decent manner possible, the story of the picture of the Virgin suckling her Divine Child, and how the Spaniards deserted the chapel after a stupid priest had covered the beautiful breast with a kerchief. I do not know how it was, but all the ladies began to laugh. The disciple of Loyola was so displeased at their mirth, that he took upon himself to tell me that it was unbecoming to tell such equivocal stories in public. I thanked him by an inclination of the head, and the Marquis d'Argens, by way of turning the conversation, asked me what was the Italian for a splendid dish of stewed veal, which Madame d'Argens was helping.

"Una crostata," I replied, "but I really do not know the Italian for the 'beatilles' with which it is stuffed."

These ‘beatilles’ were balls of rice, veal, champignons, artichoke, foie gras, etc.

The Jesuit declared that in calling them ‘beatilles’ I was making a mock of the glories of hereafter.

I could not help roaring with laughter at this, and the Marquis d’Eguille took my part, and said that ‘beatilles’ was the proper French for these balls.

After this daring difference of opinion with his director, the worthy man thought it would be best to talk of something else. Unhappily, however, he fell out of the frying-pan into the fire by asking me my opinion as to the election of the next pope.

“I believe it will be Ganganelli,” I replied, “as he is the only monk in the conclave.”

“Why should it be necessary to choose a monk?”

“Because none but a monk would dare to commit the excess which the Spaniards will demand of the new pope.”

“You mean the suppression of the Jesuits.”

“Exactly.”

“They will never obtain such a demand.”

“I hope not, for the Jesuits were my masters, and I love them accordingly. But all the same Ganganelli will be elected, for an amusing and yet a weighty reason.”

“Tell us the reason.”

“He is the only cardinal who does not wear a wig; and you must consider that since the foundation of the Holy See the Pope has never been bewigged.”

This reason created a great deal of amusement; but the conversation was brought back to the suppression of the Jesuits, and when I told the company that I had heard from the Abbe Pinzi I saw the Jesuit turn pale.

“The Pope could never suppress the order,” he said.

“It seems that you have never been at a Jesuit seminary,” I replied, “for the dogma of the order is that the Pope can do everything, ‘et aliquid pluris’.”

This answer made everybody suppose me to be unaware that I was speaking to a Jesuit, and as he gave me no answer the topic was abandoned.

After dinner I was asked to stay and see ‘Polieucte’ played; but I excused myself, and returned to Aix with the young Berliner, who told me the story of his sister, and made me acquainted with the character of the society to which the Marquis d’Eguille was chiefly addicted. I felt that I could never adapt myself to their prejudices, and if it had not been for my young friend, who introduced me to some charming people, I should have gone on to Marseilles.

What with assemblies, balls, suppers, and the society of the handsome Provenqal ladies, I managed to spend the whole of the carnival and a part of Lent at Aix.

I had made a present of a copy of the “Iliad” to the learned Marquis d’Argens; to his daughter, who was also a good scholar, I gave a Latin tragedy.

The “Iliad” had Porphyry’s comment; it was a copy of a rare edition, and was richly bound.

As the marquis came to Aix to thank me, I had to pay another visit to the country house.

In the evening I drove back in an open carriage. I had no cloak, and a cold north wind was blowing; I was perishing with cold, but instead of going to bed at once I accompanied the Berliner to the house of a woman who had a daughter of the utmost beauty. Though the girl was only fourteen, she had all the indications of the marriageable age, and yet none of the Provencal amateurs had succeeded in making her see daylight. My friend had already made several unsuccessful efforts. I laughed at him, as I knew it was all a cheat, and I followed him to the house with the idea of making the young imposter dismount from her high horse, as I had done in similar cases in England and Metz.

We set to work; and, far from resisting, the girl said she would be only too glad to get rid of the troublesome burden.

I saw that the difficulty only proceeded from the way she held herself, and I ought to have whipped her, as I had done in Venice twenty-five years ago, but I was foolish enough to try to take the citadel by storm. But my age of miracles was gone.

I wearied myself to no purpose for a couple of hours, and then went to my inn, leaving the young Prussian to do his best.

I went to bed with a pain in my side, and after six hours' sleep awoke feeling thoroughly ill. I had pleurisy. My landlord called in an old doctor, who refused to let me blood. A severe cough came on, and the next day I began to spit blood. In six or seven days the malady became so serious that I was confessed and received the last sacraments.

On the tenth day, the disease having abated for three days, my clever old doctor answered for my life, but I continued to spit blood till the eighteenth day.

My convalescence lasted for three weeks, and I found it more trying than the actual illness, for a man in pain has no time to grow weary. Throughout the whole case I was tended day and night by a strange woman, of whom I knew nothing. She nursed me with the tenderest care, and I awaited my recovery to give her my sincere thanks.

She was not an old woman, neither was she attractive looking. She had slept in my room all the time. After Eastertide, feeling I was well enough to venture out, I thanked her to the best of my ability, and asked who had sent her to me. She told me it was the doctor, and so bade me farewell.

A few days later I was thanking my old doctor for having procured me such a capital nurse, but he stared at me and said he knew nothing about the woman.

I was puzzled, and asked my landlord if she could throw any light on the strange nurse's identity; but she knew nothing, and her ignorance seemed universal. I could not discover whence or how she came to attend me.

After my convalescence I took care to get all the letters which had been awaiting me, and amongst them was a letter from my brother in Paris, in answer to the epistle I wrote him from Perpignan. He acknowledged my letter, and told me how delighted he had been to receive it, after hearing the dreadful news that I had been assassinated on the borders of Catalonia at the beginning of January.

"The person who gave me the news," my brother added, "was one of your best friends, Count Manucci, an attache at the Venetian embassy. He said there could be no doubt as to the truth of the report."

This letter was like a flash of lightning to me. This friend of mine had pushed his vengeance so far as to pay assassins to deprive me of my life.

Manucci had gone a little too far.

He must have been pretty well qualified to prophesy, as he was so certain of my death. He might have known that in thus proclaiming in advance the manner of my death, he was also proclaiming himself as my murderer.

I met him at Rome, two years later, and when I would have made him confess his guilt, he denied everything, saying he had received the news from Barcelona; however, we will speak of this in its proper place.

I dined and supped every day at the table d'hote, and one day I heard the company talking of a male and female pilgrim who had recently arrived. They were Italians, and were returning from St. James of Compostella. They were said to be high-born folks, as they had distributed large alms on their entry into the town.

It was said that the female pilgrim, who had gone to bed on her arrival, was charming. They were staying at the same inn as I was, and we all got very curious about them.

As an Italian, I put myself at the head of the band who proceeded to call on the pilgrims, who, in my opinion, must either be fanatics or rogues.

We found the lady sitting in an arm-chair, looking very tired. She was young, beautiful, and melancholy-looking, and in her hands she held a brass crucifix some six inches long. She laid it down when we came in, and got up and received us most graciously. Her companion, who was arranging cockle-shells on his black mantle, did not stir; he seemed to say, by glancing at his wife, that we must confine our attentions to her. He seemed a man of twenty-four or twenty-five years of age. He was short and badly hung, and his face bore all the indications of daring, impudence, sarcasm, and imposture. His wife, on the other hand, was all meekness and simplicity, and had that modesty which adds so much to the charm of feminine beauty. They only spoke just enough French to make themselves understood on their journey, and when they heard me addressing them in Italian they seemed much relieved.

The lady told me she was a Roman, but I could have guessed as much from her accent. I judged the man to be a Neapolitan or Sicilian. Their passport, dated Rome, called him Balsamo, while she bore the names of Serafina Feliciani, which she still retains. Ten years later we shall hear more of this couple under the name of Cagliostro.

“We are going back to Rome,” said she, “well pleased with our devotions to St. James of Compostella and to Our Lady del Pilar. We have walked the whole way on foot, living on alms, so as to more surely win the mercy of the God whom I have offended so grievously. We have had silver, and even gold money given us, and in every town we came to we gave what remained to the poor, so as not to offend God by lack of faith.

“My husband is strong, and has not suffered much, but I have found so much walking very fatiguing. We have slept on straw or bad beds, always with our clothes on, to avoid contracting diseases it would be hard to rid one’s self of.”

It seemed to me that this last circumstance was added to make us wish to find out whether the rest of her body could compare with her hands and arms in whiteness.

“Do you think of making any stay?”

“My weariness will oblige us to stay here for three days; then we shall go to Rome by the way of Turin, where we shall pay our devotion to the Holy Sudary.”

“You know, of course, that there are several of them in Europe.”

“So we have heard, but we are assured that the Sudary of Turin is the true one. It is the kerchief with which St. Veronica wiped the face of Our Lord, who left the imprint of His divine face upon it.”

We left them, well pleased with the appearance and manners of the lady pilgrim, but placing very little trust in her devotion. I was still weak from my illness, and she inspired me with no desires, but the rest would have gladly supped with her if they had thought there was anything to follow.

Next day her husband asked me if I would come up and breakfast with them, or if they should come down and breakfast with me. It would have been impolite to have replied neither, so I said that I should be delighted to see them in my room.

At breakfast I asked the pilgrim what he did, and he replied that he was an artist.

He could not design a picture, but he could copy it, and he assured me that he could copy an engraving so exactly that none could tell the copy from the original.

“I congratulate you. If you are not a rich man, you are, at least, certain of earning a living with this talent.”

“Everybody says the same, but it is a mistake. I have pursued this craft at Rome and at Naples, and found I had to work all day to make half a tester, and that’s not enough to live on.”

He then shewed me some fans he had done, and I thought them most beautiful. They were done in pen and ink, and the finest copper-plate could not have surpassed them.

Next he showed me a copy from a Rembrandt, which if anything, was finer than the original. In spite of all he swore that the work he got barely supported him, but I did not believe what he said. He was a weak genius who preferred a vagabond life to methodical labour.

I offered a Louis for one of his fans, but he refused to take it, begging me to accept the fan as a gift, and to make a collection for him at the table d’hote, as he wanted to start the day after next.

I accepted the present and promised to do as he desired, and succeeded in making up a purse of two hundred francs for them.

The woman had the most virtuous air. She was asked to write her name on a lottery ticket, but refused, saying that no honest girls were taught to write at Rome.

Everybody laughed at this excuse except myself, and I pitied her, as I could see that she was of very low origin.

Next day she came and asked me to give her a letter of introduction for Avignon. I wrote her out two; one to M. Audifret the banker, and the other to the landlady of the inn. In the evening she returned me the letter to the banker, saying that it was not necessary for their purposes. At the same time she asked me to examine the letter closely, to see if it was really the same document I had given her. I did so, and said I was sure it was my letter.

She laughed, and told me I was mistaken as it was only a copy.

“Impossible!”

She called her husband, who came with the letter in his hand.

I could doubt no longer, and said to him, —

“You are a man of talents, for it is much harder to imitate a handwriting than an engraving. You ought to make this talent serve you in good stead; but be careful, or it may cost you your life.”

The next day the couple left Aix. In ten years I saw them again under the name of Count and Countess Pellegrini.

At the present period he is in a prison which he will probably never leave, and his wife is happy, maybe, in a convent.

CHAPTER X

My Departure — Letter from Henriette — Marsellies — History of Nina — Nice — Turin — Lugano — Madame De****

As soon as I had regained my usual strength, I went to take leave of the Marquis d'Argens and his brother. I dined with them, pretending not to observe the presence of the Jesuit, and I then spent three delightful hours in conversation with the learned and amiable Marquis d'Argens. He told me a number of interesting anecdotes about the private life of Frederick II. No doubt the reader would like to have them, but I lack the energy to set them down. Perhaps some other day when the mists about Dux have dispersed, and some rays of the sun shine in upon me, I shall commit all these anecdotes to paper, but now I have not the courage to do so.

Frederick had his good and his bad qualities, like all great men, but when every deduction on the score of his failings has been made, he still remains the noblest figure in the eighteenth century.

The King of Sweden, who has been assassinated, loved to excite hatred that he might have the glory of defying it to do its worst. He was a despot at heart, and he came to a despot's end. He might have foreseen a violent death, for throughout his life he was always provoking men to the point of despair. There can be no comparison between him and Frederick.

The Marquis d'Argens made me a present of all his works, and on my asking him if I could congratulate myself on possessing the whole number, he said yes, with the exception of a fragment of autobiography which he had written in his youth, and which he had afterwards suppressed.

"Why so?" I asked.

"Because I was foolish enough to write the truth. Never give way to this temptation, if it assails you. If you once begin on this plan you are not only compelled to record all your vices and follies, but to treat them in the severe tone of a philosophical historian. You must not, of course, omit the good you may have done; and so praise and blame is mingled on every page. All the evil you say of yourself will be held for gospel, your peccadilloes will be made into crimes, and your good deeds will not only be received with incredulity, but you will be taxed with pride and vanity for having recorded them. Besides, if you write your memoirs, you make an enemy in every chapter if you once begin to tell the truth. A man should neither talk of himself nor write of himself, unless it be to refute some calumny or libel."

I was convinced, and promised never to be guilty of such a folly, but in spite of that I have been writing memoirs for the last seven years, and though I repent of having begun, I have sworn to go on to the end. However, I write in the hope that my Memoirs may never see the light of day; in the first place the censure would not allow them to be printed, and in the second I hope I shall be strong-minded enough, when my last illness comes, to have all my papers burnt before my eyes. If that be not the case I count on the indulgence of my readers, who should remember that I have only written my story to prevent my going mad in the midst of all the petty insults and disagreeables which I have to bear day by day from the envious rascals who live with me in this castle of Count Waldstein, or Wallenstein, at Dux.

I write ten or twelve hours a day, and so keep black melancholy at bay. My readers shall hear more of my sufferings later on, if I do not die before I write them down.

The day after Corpus Christi I left Aix for Marseilles. But here I must set down a circumstance that I had forgotten; I mean the procession of Corpus Christi.

Everyone knows that this festival is celebrated with great ceremony all over Christendom; but at Aix these ceremonies are of such a nature that every man of sense must be shocked at my recital.

It is well known that this procession in honour of the Being of beings, represented under the sacramental forms, is followed by all the religious confraternities, and this is duly done at Aix; but the scandalous part of the ceremony is the folly and the buffoonery which is allowed in a rite which should be designed to stir up the hearts of men to awe and reverence their Creator.

Instead of that, the devil, death, and the seven deadly sins, are impersonated in the procession. They are clad in the most absurd costumes, and make hideous contortions, beating and abusing each other in their supposed vexation at having to join in the Creator's praises. The people hoot and hiss them, the lower classes sing songs in derision of them, and play them all manner of tricks, and the whole scene is one of incredible noise, uproar, and confusion, more worthy of some pagan bacchanalia than a procession of Christian people. All the country-folk from five or six leagues around Aix pour into the town on that day to do honour to God. It is the only occasion of the kind, and the clergy, either knavish or ignorant, encourage all this shameful riot. The lower orders take it all in good faith, and anyone who raised any objection would run some risk, for the bishop goes in front of the saturnalia, and consequently it is all holy.

I expressed my disapproval of the whole affair, as likely to bring discredit on religion, to a councillor of parliament, M. de St. Marc; but he told me gravely that it was an excellent thing, as it brought no less than a hundred thousand francs into the town on the single day.

I could find no reply to this very weighty reason.

Every day I spent at Aix I thought of Henriette. I knew her real name, and remembering the message she had sent me by Marcoline I hoped to meet her in some assembly, being ready to adapt my conduct to hers. I had often heard her name mentioned, but I never allowed myself to ask any question, not wishing our old friendship to be suspected. Believing her to be at her country house, I had resolved on paying her a visit, and had only stayed on at Aix so as to recover my health before seeing her. In due course I left Aix with a letter in my pocket for her, resolving to send it in, and to remain in my carriage till she asked me to get down.

We arrived at her residence at eleven o'clock. A man came to the door, took my letter, and said madam should have it without fail.

"Then she is not here."

"No, sir; she is at Aix."

"Since when?"

"For the last six months."

"Where does she live?"

"In her town house. She will be coming here in three weeks to spend the summer as usual."

"Will you let me write a letter?"

"If you will get down you will find all the necessary materials in madam's room."

I went into the house, and to my extreme surprise found myself face to face with my nurse.

"You live here, then."

"Yes, sir."

"Since when?"

"For the last ten years."

"How did you come to nurse me?"

"If you will step upstairs I will tell you."

Her story was as follows:

"Madam sent for me in haste, and told me to go and attend to you as if it were herself. She told me to say that the doctor had sent me if you asked any questions."

"The doctor said he didn't know you."

"Perhaps he was speaking the truth, but most likely he had received orders from madam. That's all I know, but I wonder you haven't seen her at Aix."

"She cannot see any company, for I have been everywhere."

"She does not see any company at her own house, but she goes everywhere."

"It's very strange. I must have seen her, and yet I do not think I could have passed her by unrecognized. You have been with her ten years?"

"Yes, sir, as I had the honour of informing you."

"Has she changed? Has she had any sickness? Has she aged?"

"Not at all. She has become rather stout, but I assure you you would take her for a woman of thirty."

"I must be blind, or I cannot have seen her. I am going to write to her now."

The woman went out, leaving me in astonishment, at the extraordinary situation in which I was placed.

"Ought I to return to Aix immediately?" I asked myself. She has a town house, but does not see company, but she might surely see me: She loves me still. She cared for me all through my illness, and she would not have done so if she had become indifferent to me. She will be hurt at my not recognizing her. She must know that I have left Aix, and will no doubt guess that I am here now. Shall I go to her or shall I write? I resolved to write, and I told her in my letter that I should await her reply at Marseilles. I gave the letter to my late nurse, with some money to insure its being dispatched at once, and drove on to Marseilles where I alighted at an obscure inn, not wishing to be recognized. I had scarcely got out of my carriage when I saw Madame Schizza, Nina's sister. She had left Barcelona with her husband. They had been at Marseilles three or four days and were going to Leghorn.

Madame Schizza was alone at the moment, her husband having gone out; and as I was full of curiosity I begged her to come up to my room while my dinner was getting ready.

"What is your sister doing? Is she still at Barcelona?"

"Yes; but she will not be there long, for the bishop will not have her in the town or the diocese, and the bishop is stronger than the viceroy. She only returned to Barcelona on the plea that she wished to pass through Catalonia of her way home, but she does not need to stay there for nine or ten months on that account. She will have to leave in a month for certain, but she is not much put out, as the viceroy is sure to keep her wherever she goes, and she may eventually succeed in ruining him. In the meanwhile she is revelling in the bad repute she has gained for her lover."

"I know something of her peculiarities; but she cannot dislike a man who has made her rich."

"Rich! She has only got her diamonds. Do you imagine this monster capable of any feelings of gratitude? She is not a human being, and no one knows her as I do. She has made the count commit a hundred acts of injustice so that all Spain may talk of her, and know that she has made herself mistress of his body and soul, and all he has. The worse his actions are, the more certain she feels that people will talk of her, and that is all she wants. Her obligations to me are beyond counting, for she owes me all, even to her existence, and instead of continuing my husband in her service she has sent him about his business."

"Then I wonder how she came to treat me so generously."

"If you knew all, you would not feel grateful to her."

"Tell me all, then."

"She only paid for your keep at the inn and in prison to make people believe you were her lover, and to shame the count. All Barcelona knows that you were assassinated at her door, and that you were fortunate enough to run the fellow through."

"But she cannot have been the instigator of, or even the accomplice in, the plot for my assassination. That's against nature."

"I dare say, but everything in Nina is against nature. What I tell you is the bare truth, for I was a witness of it all. Whenever the viceroy visited her she wearied him with praise of your gallantry, your wit, your noble actions, comparing you with the Spaniards, greatly to their disadvantage.

"The count got impatient and told her to talk of something else, but she would not; and at last he went away, cursing your name. Two days before you came to grief he left her, saying, —

"'Valga me Dios! I will give you a pleasure you do not expect.'

"I assure you that when we heard the pistol-shot after you had gone, she remarked, without evincing the slightest emotion, that the shot was the pleasure her rascally Spaniard had promised her.

"I said that you might be killed.

"'All the worse for the count,' she replied, 'for his turn will come also.'

"Then she began laughing like a madcap; she was thinking of the excitement your death would cause in Barcelona.

"At eight o'clock the following day, your man came and told her that you had been taken to the citadel; and I will say it to her credit, she seemed relieved to hear you were alive."

"My man — I did not know that he was in correspondence with her."

"No, I suppose not; but I assure you the worthy man was very much attached to you."

"I am sure he was. Go on."

"Nina then wrote a note to your landlord. She did not shew it me, but it no doubt contained instructions to supply you with everything.

"The man told us that he had seen your sword all red with blood, and that your cloak had a bullet hole through it. She was delighted, but do not think it was because she loved you; she was glad you had escaped that you might take your revenge. However, she was troubled by the pretext on which the count had had you arrested.

"Ricla did not come to see her that day, but he came the next day at eight o'clock, and the infamous creature received him with a smiling face. She told him she had heard he had imprisoned you, and that she was obliged to him, as he had, of course, done so to protect you from any fresh attempts on your life.

"He answered, dryly, that your arrest had nothing to do with anything that might have happened the night before. He added that you had only been seized pending the examination of your papers, and that if they were found to be in good form, you would be set at liberty in the course of a few days.

"Nina asked him who was the man that you had wounded. He replied that the police were enquiring into the matter, but that so far they had neither found a dead man nor a wounded man, nor any traces of blood. All that had been found was Casanova's hat, and this had been returned to him.

"I left them alone together till midnight, so I cannot say what further converse they may have had on the subject, but three or four days later everybody knew that you were imprisoned in the tower.

"Nina asked the count the reason of this severity in the evening, and he replied that your passports were thought to be forgeries, because you were in disgrace with the State Inquisitors, and therefore would not be in a position to get a passport from the Venetian ambassador. On this supposition he said you had been placed in the tower, and if it proved to be a true one, you would be still more severely punished.

"This news disturbed us, and when we heard that Pogomas had been arrested we felt certain he had denounced you in revenge for your having procured his dismissal from Nina's house. When we heard that he had been let out and sent to Genoa, we expected to hear of your being set at liberty, as the authorities must have been satisfied of the genuine character of your passports; but you were still shut up, and Nina did not know what to think, and the count would not answer her when she made enquiries about you. She had made up her mind to say no more about it, when at last we heard you had been set free and that your passports had been declared genuine.

"Nina thought to see you in the pit of the opera-house, and made preparations for a triumph in her box; but she was in despair when she heard no performance was to be given. In the evening the count told her that your passports had been returned with the order to leave in three days. The false creature praised her lover's prudence to his face, but she cursed him in her heart.

"She knew you would not dare to see her, and when you left without writing her a note, she said you had received secret orders not to hold any further communications with her. She was furious with the viceroy.

"'If Casanova had had the courage to ask me to go with him, I would have gone,' said she.

"Your man told her of your fortunate escape from three assassins. In the evening she congratulated Ricla on the circumstance, but he swore he knew nothing about it. Nina did not believe him. You may thank God from the bottom of your heart that you ever left Spain alive after knowing Nina. She would have cost you your life at last, and she punishes me for having given her life."

"What! Are you her mother?"

"Yes; Nina, that horrible woman, is my daughter."

"Really? Everybody says you are her sister."

"That is the horrible part of it, everybody is right."

"Explain yourself!"

"Yes, though it is to my shame. She is my sister and my daughter, for she is the daughter of my father."

"What! your father loved you?"

"I do not know whether the scoundrel loved me, but he treated me as his wife. I was sixteen then. She is the daughter of the crime, and God knows she is sufficient punishment for it. My father died to escape her vengeance; may he also escape the vengeance of God. I should have strangled her in her cradle, but maybe I shall strangle her yet. If I do not, she will kill me."

I remained dumb at the conclusion of this dreadful story, which bore all the marks of truth.

"Does Nina know that you are her mother?"

"Her own father told her the secret when she was twelve, after he had initiated her into the life she has been living ever since. He would have made her a mother in her turn if he had not killed himself the same year, maybe to escape the gallows."

"How did the Conte de Ricla fall in love with her?"

"It is a short story and a curious one. Two years ago she came to Barcelona from Portugal, and was placed in one of the ballets for the sake of her pretty face, for as to talents she had none, and could only do the rebaltade (a sort of skip and pirouette) properly.

"The first evening she danced she was loudly applauded by the pit, for as she did the rebaltade she shewed her drawers up to her waist. In Spain any actress who shews her drawers on the stage is liable to a fine of a crown. Nina knew nothing about this, and, hearing the applause, treated the audience to another skip of the same kind, but at the end of the ballet she was told to pay two crowns for her immodesty. Nina cursed and swore, but she had to give in. What do you think she did to elude the law, and at the same time avenge herself?"

"Danced badly, perhaps."

"She danced without any drawers at all, and did her rebdltade as before, which caused such an effervescence of high spirits in the house as had never been known at Barcelona.

"The Conte de Ricla had seen her from his box, and was divided between horror and admiration, and sent for the inspector to tell him that this impudent creature must be punished.

"'In the mean time,' said he, 'bring her before me.'

"Presently Nina appeared in the viceroy's box, and asked him, impudently, what he wanted with her.

"'You are an immodest woman, and have failed in your duty to the public.'

"'What have I done?

"'You performed the same skip as before.'

"'Yes, but I haven't broken your law, for no one can have seen my drawers as I took the precaution not to put any on. What more can I do for your cursed law, which has cost me two crowns already? Just tell me.'

"The viceroy and the great personages around him had much ado to refrain from laughter, for Nina was really in the right, and a serious discussion of the violated law would have been ridiculous.

"The viceroy felt he was in a false position, and merely said that if she ever danced without drawers again she should have a month's imprisonment on bread and water.

"A week after one of my husband's ballets was given. It was so well received that the audience encored it with enthusiasm. Ricla gave orders that the public should be satisfied, and all the dancers were told they would have to reappear.

"Nina, who was almost undressed, told my husband to do as best he could, as she was not going to dance again. As she had the chief part my husband could not do without her, and sent the manager to her dressing-room. She pushed the poor man out with so much violence that he fell against the wall of the passage, head foremost.

"The manager told his piteous tale to the viceroy, who ordered two soldiers to bring her before him. This was his ruin; for Nina is a beautiful woman, and in her then state of undress she would have seduced the coldest of men.

“The count reproved her, but his voice and his manner were ill-assured, and growing bolder as she watched his embarrassment, Nina replied that he might have her torn to pieces if he liked, but she would not dance against her will, and nowhere in her agreement was it stipulated that she should dance twice in the same evening, whether for his pleasure or anyone else’s. She also expressed her anger at making her appear before him in a state of semi-nudity, and swore she would never forgive his barbarous and despotic conduct.

“‘I will dance no more before you or your people. Let me go away, or kill me if you like; do your worst on me, and you shall find that I am a Venetian and a free woman!’

“The viceroy sat astonished, and said she must be mad. He then summoned my husband and told him she was no longer in his service. Nina was told she was free, and could go where she would.

“She went back to her dressing-room and came to us, where she was living.

“The ballet went on without her, and the poor viceroy sat in a dream, for the poison had entered into his veins.

“Next day a wretched singer named Molinari called on Nina and told her that the viceroy was anxious to know whether she were really mad or not, and would like to see her in a country house, the name of which he mentioned: this was just what the wretched woman wanted.

“‘Tell his highness,’ she said to Molinari, ‘that I will come, and that he will find me as gentle as a lamb and as good as an angel.’

“This is the way in which the connection began, and she fathomed his character so astutely that she maintained her conquest as much with ill-treatment and severity as with her favours.”

Such was the tale of the hapless Madame Schizza. It was told with all the passion of an Italian divided between repentance for the past and the desire of vengeance.

The next day, as I had expected, I received a letter from Henriette. It ran as follows:

“My Dear Old Friend, — Nothing could be more romantic than our meeting at my country house six years ago, and now again, after a parting of so many years. Naturally we have both grown older, and though I love you still I am glad you did not recognize me. Not that I have become ugly, but I am stout, and this gives me another look. I am a widow, and well enough off to tell you that if you lack money you will find some ready for you in Henriette's purse. Do not come back to Aix to see me, as your return might give rise to gossip; but if you chance to come here again after some time, we may meet, though not as old acquaintances. I am happy to think that I have perhaps prolonged your days by giving you a nurse for whose trustworthiness I would answer. If you would like to correspond with me I should be happy to do my part. I am very curious to know what happened to you after your flight from The Leads, and after the proofs you have given me of your discretion I think I shall be able to tell you how we came to meet at Cesena, and how I returned to my country. The first part is a secret for everyone; only M. d'Antoine is acquainted with a portion of the story. I am grateful for the reticence you have observed, though Marcoline must have delivered the message I gave her. Tell me what has become of that beautiful girl. Farewell!"

I replied, accepting her offer to correspond, and I told her the whole story of my adventures. From her I received forty letters, in which the history of her life is given. If she die before me, I shall add these letters to my Memoirs, but at present she is alive and happy, though advanced in years.

The day after I went to call on Madame Audibert, and we went together to see Madame N —— N —— , who was already the mother of three children. Her husband adored her, and she was very happy. I gave her good news of Marcoline, and told the story of Croce and Charlotte's death, which affected her to tears.

In turn she told me about Rosalie, who was quite a rich woman. I had no hopes of seeing her again, for she lived at Genoa, and I should not have cared to face M. Grimaldi.

My niece (as I once called her) mortified me unintentionally; she said I was ageing. Though a man can easily make a jest of his advancing years, a speech like this is not pleasant when one has not abandoned the pursuit of pleasure. She gave me a capital dinner, and her husband made me offers which I was ashamed to accept. I had fifty Louis, and, intending to go on to Turin, I did not feel uneasy about the future.

At Marseilles I met the Duc de Vilardi, who was kept alive by the art of Tronchin. This nobleman, who was Governor of Provence, asked me to supper, and I was surprised to meet at his house the self-styled Marquis d'Aragon; he was engaged in holding the bank. I staked a few coins and lost, and the marquis asked me to dine with him and his wife, an elderly Englishwoman, who had brought him a dowry of forty thousand guineas absolutely, with twenty thousand guineas which would ultimately go to her son in London. I was not ashamed to borrow fifty Louis from this lucky rascal, though I felt almost certain that I should never return the money.

I left Marseilles by myself, and after crossing the Alps arrived at Turin.

There I had a warm welcome from the Chevalier Raiberti and the Comte de la Perouse. Both of them pronounced me to be looking older, but I consoled myself with the thought that, after all, I was only forty-four.

I became an intimate friend of the English ambassador, Sir N —— , a rich, accomplished and cultured man, who kept the choicest of tables. Everybody loved him, and amongst others this feeling was warmly shared by a Parmese girl, named Campioni, who was wonderfully beautiful.

As soon as I had told my friends that I intended to go into Switzerland to print at my own expense a refutation in Italian of the "History of the Venetian Government," by Amelot de la Houssaye, they all did their best by subscribing and obtaining subscriptions. The most generous of all was the Comte de la Perouse, who gave me two hundred and fifty francs for fifty copies. I left Turin in a week with two thousand lire in my purse. With this I should be able to print the book I had composed in my prison; but I should have to rewrite it 'ab initio', with the volume to my hand, as also the "History of Venice," by Nani.

When I had got these works I set out with the intention of having my book printed at Lugano, as there was a good press there and no censure. I also knew that the head of the press was a well-read man, and that the place abounded in good cheer and good society.

Lugano is near Milan, Como, and Lake Maggiore, and I was well pleased with the situation. I went to the best inn, which was kept by a man named Tagoretti, who gave me the best room in the house.

The day after my arrival I called on Dr. Agnelli, who was at once printer, priest, theologian, and an honest man. I made a regular agreement with him, he engaging to print at the rate of four sheets a week, and on my side I promised to pay him every week. He reserved the right of censorship, expressing a hope that our opinions might coincide.

I gave him the preface and the preliminary matter at once, and chose the paper and the size, large octavo.

When I got back to my inn the landlord told me that the bargello, or chief constable, wanted to see me.

Although Lugano is in Switzerland, its municipal government is modelled after that of the Italian towns.

I was curious to hear what this ill-omened personage could have to say to me, so I told him to shew him in. After giving me a profound bow, with his hat in his hand, Signor Bargello told me that he had come to offer me his services, and to assure me that I should enjoy complete tranquillity and safety in Lugano, whether from any enemies within the State or from the Venetian Government, in case I had any dispute with it.

“I thank you, signor,” I replied, “and I am sure that you are telling me the truth, as I am in Switzerland.”

“I must take the liberty of telling you, sir, that it is customary for strangers who take up their residence in Lugano, to pay some trifling sum, either by the week, the month, or the year.”

“And if they refuse to pay?”

“Then their safety is not so sure.”

“Money does everything in Lugano, I suppose.”

“But, sir — — “

“I understand, but let me tell you that I have no fears, and I shall consequently beg to be excused from paying anything.”

“You will forgive me, but I happen to know that you have some disputes with the Venetian Government.”

“You are making a mistake, my good fellow.”

“No, I am not.”

“If you are so sure, find someone to bet me two hundred sequins that I have reason to fear the Venetian Government; I will take the bet and deposit the amount.”

The bargello remained silent, and the landlord told him he seemed to have made some kind of mistake, so he went away, looking very disappointed.

My landlord was delighted to hear that I thought of making some stay at Lugano, and advised me to call on the high bailiff, who governed the place.

“He’s a very nice Swiss gentleman,” said he, “and his wife a clever woman, and as fair as the day.”

“I will go and see him to-morrow.”

I sent in my name to the high bailiff at noon on the day following, and what was my surprise to find myself in the presence of M. de R and his charming wife. Beside her was a pretty boy, five or six years old.

Our mutual surprise may be imagined!

CHAPTER XI

The Punishment of Marazzani — I Leave Lugano — Turin —

M. Dubois at Parma — Leghorn — The Duke of Orloff — Pisa —

Stratico — Sienna — The Marchioness Chigi — My Departure from

Sienna With an Englishwoman

These unforeseen, haphazard meetings with old friends have always been the happiest moments of my life.

We all remained for some time dumb with delight. M. de R. was the first to break the silence by giving me a cordial embrace. We burst out into mutual excuses, he for having imagined that there might be other Casanovas in Italy, and I for not having ascertained his name. He made me take pot-luck with him the same day, and we seemed as if we had never parted. The Republic had given him this employ — a very lucrative one — and he was only sorry that it would expire in two years. He told me he was delighted to be able to be of use to me, and begged me to consider he was wholly at my service. He was delighted to hear that I should be engaged in seeing my work through the press for three or four months, and seemed vexed when I told him that I could not accept his hospitality more than once a week as my labours would be incessant.

Madame de R —— could scarcely recover from her surprise. It was nine years since I had seen her at Soleure, and then I thought her beauty must be at its zenith; but I was wrong, she was still more beautiful and I told her so. She shewed me her only child, who had been born four years after my departure. She cherished the child as the apple of her eye, and seemed likely to spoil it; but I heard, a few years ago, that this child is now an amiable and accomplished man.

In a quarter of an hour Madame de R —— informed me of all that had happened at Soleure since my departure. Lebel had gone to Besancon, where he lived happily with his charming wife.

She happened to observe in a casual way that I no longer looked as young as I had done at Soleure, and this made me regulate my conduct in a manner I might not otherwise have done. I did not let her beauty carry me away; I resisted the effect of her charms, and I was content to enjoy her friendship, and to be worthy of the friendship of her good husband.

The work on which I was engaged demanded all my care and attention, and a love affair would have wasted most of my time.

I began work the next morning, and save for an hour's visit from M. de R —— I wrote on till nightfall. The next day I had the first proof-sheet with which I was well enough pleased.

I spent the whole of the next month in my room, working assiduously, and only going out to mass on feast days, to dine with M. de R —— , and to walk with his wife and her child.

At the end of a month my first volume was printed and stitched, and the manuscript of the second volume was ready for the press. Towards the end of October the printer sent in the entire work in three volumes, and in less than a year the edition was sold out.

My object was not so much to make money as to appease the wrath of the Venetian Inquisitors; I had gone all over Europe, and experienced a violent desire to see my native land once more.

Amelot de la Houssaye had written his book from the point of view of an enemy of Venice. His history was rather a satire, containing learned and slanderous observations mingled together. It had been published for seventy years, but hitherto no one had taken the trouble to refute it. If a Venetian had attempted to do so he would not have obtained permission from his Government to print it in the States of Venice, for the State policy is to allow no one to discuss the actions of the authorities, whether in praise or blame; consequently no writer had attempted to refute the French history, as it was well known that the refutation would be visited with punishment and not with reward.

My position was an exceptional one. I had been persecuted by the Venetian Government, so no one could accuse me of being partial; and by my exposing the calumnies of Amelot before all Europe I hoped to gain a reward, which after all would only be an act of justice.

I had been an exile for fourteen years, and I thought the Inquisitors would be glad to repair their injustice on the pretext of rewarding my patriotism.

My readers will see that my hopes were fulfilled, but I had to wait for five more years instead of receiving permission to return at once.

M. de Bragadin was dead, and Dandolo and Barbaro were the only friends I had left at Venice; and with their aid I contrived to subscribe fifty copies of my book in my native town.

Throughout my stay at Lugano I only frequented the house of M. de R——, where I saw the Abbe Riva, a learned and discreet man, to whom I had been commended by M. Querini, his relation. The abbe enjoyed such a reputation for wisdom amongst his fellow-countrymen that he was a kind of arbiter in all disputes, and thus the expenses of the law were saved. It was no wonder that the gentlemen of the long robe hated him most cordially. His nephew, Jean Baptiste Riva, was a friend of the Muses, of Bacchus, and of Venus; he was also a friend of mine, though I could not match him with the bottles. He lent me all the nymphs he had initiated into the mysteries, and they liked him all the better, as I made them some small presents. With him and his two pretty sisters I went to the Borromean Isles. I knew that Count Borromeo, who had honoured me with his friendship at Turin, was there, and from him I felt certain of a warm welcome. One of the two sisters had to pass for Riva's wife, and the other for his sister-in-law.

Although the count was a ruined man he lived in his isles like a prince.

It would be impossible to describe these Islands of the Blest; they must be seen to be imagined. The inhabitants enjoy an everlasting spring; there is neither heat nor cold.

The count regaled us choicely, and amused the two girls by giving them rods and lines and letting them fish. Although he was ugly, old, and ruined, he still possessed the art of pleasing.

On the way back to Lugano, as I was making place for a carriage in a narrow road, my horse slipped and fell down a slope ten feet high. My head went against a large stone, and I thought my last hour was come as the blood poured out of the wound. However, I was well again in a few days. This was my last ride on horseback.

During my stay at Lugano the inspectors of the Swiss cantons came there in its turn. The people dignified them with the magnificent title of ambassadors, but M. de R —— was content to call them avoyers.

These gentlemen stayed at my inn, and I had my meals with them throughout their stay.

The avoyer of Berne gave me some news of my poor friend M. F —— . His charming daughter Sara had become the wife of M, de V —— , and was happy.

A few days after these pleasant and cultured men had left, I was startled one morning by the sudden appearance of the wretched Marazzani in my room. I seized him by his collar, threw him out, and before he had time to use his cane or his sword, I had kicked, beaten, and boxed him most soundly. He defended himself to the best of his ability, and the landlord and his men ran up at the noise, and had some difficulty in separating us.

“Don’t let him go!” I cried, “send for the bargello and have him away to prison.”

I dressed myself hastily, and as I was going out to see M. de R —— , the bargello met me, and asked me on what charge I gave the man into custody.

“You will hear that at M. de R — — ‘s, where I shall await you.”

I must now explain my anger. You may remember, reader, that I left the wretched fellow in the prison of Buen Retiro. I heard afterwards that the King of Spain, Jerusalem, and the Canary Islands, had given him a small post in a galley off the coast of Africa.

He had done me no harm, and I pitied him; but not being his intimate friend, and having no power to mitigate the hardship of his lot, I had well-nigh forgotten him.

Eight months after, I met at Barcelona Madame Bellucci, a Venetian dancer, with whom I had had a small intrigue. She gave an exclamation of delight on seeing me, and said she was glad to see me delivered from the hard fate to which a tyrannous Government had condemned me.

“What fate is that?” I asked, “I have seen a good deal of misfortune since I left you.”

"I mean the presidio."

"But that has never been my lot, thank God! Who told you such a story?"

"A Count Marazzani, who was here three weeks ago, and told me he had been luckier than you, as he had made his escape."

"He's a liar and a scoundrel; and if ever I meet him again he shall pay me dearly."

From that moment I never thought of the rascal without feeling a lively desire to give him a thrashing, but I never thought that chance would bring about so early a meeting.

Under the circumstances I think my behaviour will be thought only natural. I had beaten him, but that was not enough for me. I seemed to have done nothing, and indeed, I had got as good as I gave.

In the mean time he was in prison, and I went to M. de R —— to see what he could do for me.

As soon as M. de R heard my statement he said he could neither keep him in prison nor drive him out of the town unless I laid a plea before him, craving protection against this man, whom I believed to have come to Lugano with the purpose of assassinating me.

"You can make the document more effective," he added, "by placing your actual grievance in a strong light, and laying stress on his sudden appearance in your room without sending in his name. That's what you had better do, and it remains to be seen how I shall answer your plea. I shall ask him for his passport and delay the case, and order him to be severely treated; but in the end I shall only be able to drive him out of the town, unless he can find good bail."

I could ask no more. I sent in my plea, and the next day I had the pleasure of seeing him brought into the court bound hand and foot.

M. de R began to examine him, and Marazzani swore he had no evil intentions in calling on me. As to the calumny, he protested he had only repeated common rumour, and professed his joy at finding it had been mistaken.

This ought to have been enough for me, but I continued obdurate.

M. de R —— said the fact of my being sent to the galleys having been rumoured was no justification for his repeating it.

“And furthermore,” he proceeded, “M. Casanova’s suspicion that you were going to assassinate him is justified by your giving a false name, for the plaintiff maintains that you are not Count Marazzani at all. He offers to furnish surety on this behalf, and if M. Casanova does you wrong, his bail will escheat to you as damages. In the mean time you will remain in prison till we have further information about your real status.”

He was taken back, and as the poor devil had not a penny in his pocket it would have been superfluous to tell the bargedlo to treat him severely.

M. de R wrote to the Swiss agent at Parma to obtain the necessary information; but as the rascal knew this would be against him, he wrote me a humble letter, in which he confessed that he was the son of a poor shopkeeper of Bobbio, and although his name was really Marazzani, he had nothing to do with the Marazzanis of Plaisance. He begged me to set him at liberty.

I shewed the letter to M. de R —— , who let him out of prison with orders to leave Lugano in twenty-four hours.

I thought I had been rather too harsh with him, and gave the poor devil some money to take him to Augsburg, and also a letter for M. de Sellentin, who was recruiting there for the Prussian king. We shall hear of Marazzani again.

The Chevalier de Breche came to the Lugano Fair to buy some horses, and stopped a fortnight. I often met him at M. de R — — ‘s, for whose wife he had a great admiration, and I was sorry to see him go.

I left Lugano myself a few days later, having made up my mind to winter in Turin, where I hoped to see some pleasant society.

Before I left I received a friendly letter from Prince Lubomirski, with a bill for a hundred ducats, in payment of fifty copies of my book. The prince had become lord high marshal on the death of Count Bilinski.

When I got to Turin I found a letter from the noble Venetian M. Girolamo Zulian, the same that had given me an introduction to Mocenigo. His letter contained an enclosure to M. Berlendis, the representative of the Republic at Turin, who thanked me for having enabled him to receive me.

The ambassador, a rich man, and a great lover of the fair sex, kept up a splendid establishment, and this was enough for his Government, for intelligence is not considered a necessary qualification for a Venetian ambassador. Indeed it is a positive disadvantage, and a witty ambassador would no doubt fall into disgrace with the Venetian Senate. However, Berlendis ran no risk whatever on this score; the realm of wit was an unknown land to him.

I got this ambassador to call the attention of his Government to the work I had recently published, and the answer the State Inquisitors gave may astonish my readers, but it did not astonish me. The secretary of the famous and accursed Tribunal wrote to say that he had done well to call the attention of the Inquisitors to this work, as the author's presumption appeared on the title-page. He added that the work would be examined, and in the mean time the ambassador was instructed to shew me no signal marks of favour lest the Court should suppose he was protecting me as a Venetian.

Nevertheless, it was the same tribunal that had facilitated my access to the ambassador to Madrid — Mocenigo.

I told Berlendis that my visits should be limited in number, and free from all ostentation.

I was much interested in his son's tutor; he was a priest, a man of letters, and a poet. His name was Andreis, and he is now resident in England, where he enjoys full liberty, the greatest of all blessings.

I spent my time at Turin very pleasantly, in the midst of a small circle of Epicureans; there were the old Chevalier Raiberti, the Comte de la Perouse, a certain Abbe Roubien, a delightful man, the voluptuous Comte de Riva, and the English ambassador. To the amusements which this society afforded I added a course of reading, but no love affairs whatever.

While I was at Turin, a milliner, Perouse's mistress, feeling herself in 'articulo mortis', swallowed the portrait of her lover instead of the Eucharist. This incident made me compose two sonnets, which pleased me a good deal at the time, and with which I am still satisfied. No doubt some will say that every poet is pleased with his own handiwork, but as a matter of fact, the severest critic of a sensible author is himself.

The Russian squadron, under the command of Count Alexis Orloff, was then at Leghorn; this squadron threatened Constantinople, and would probably have taken it if an Englishman had been in command.

As I had known Count Orloff in Russia, I imagined that I might possibly render myself of service to him, and at the same time make my fortune.

The English ambassador having given me a letter for the English consul, I left Turin with very little money in my purse and no letter of credit on any banker.

An Englishman named Acton commended me to an English banker at Leghorn, but this letter did not empower me to draw any supplies.

Acton was just then involved in a curious complication. When he was at Venice he had fallen in love with a pretty woman, either a Greek or a Neapolitan. The husband, by birth a native of Turin, and by profession a good-for-nothing, placed no obstacle in Acton's way, as the Englishman was generous with his money; but he had a knack of turning up at those moments when his absence would have been most desirable.

The generous but proud and impatient Englishman could not be expected to bear this for long. He consulted with the lady, and determined to shew his teeth. The husband persisted in his untimely visits, and one day Acton said, dryly, —

"Do you want a thousand guineas? You can have them if you like, on the condition that your wife travels with me for three years without our having the pleasure of your society."

The husband thought the bargain a good one, and signed an agreement to that effect.

After the three years were over the husband wrote to his wife, who was at Venice, to return to him, and to Acton to put no obstacle in the way.

The lady replied that she did not want to live with him any more, and Acton explained to the husband that he could not be expected to drive his mistress away against her will. He foresaw, however, that the husband would complain to the English ambassador, and determined to be before-handed with him.

In due course the husband did apply to the English ambassador, requesting him to compel Acton to restore to him his lawful wife. He even asked the Chevalier Raiberti to write to the Commendatore Camarana, the Sardinian ambassador at Venice, to apply pressure on the Venetian Government, and he would doubtless have succeeded if M. Raiberti had done him this favour. However, as it was he did nothing of the sort, and even gave Acton a warm welcome when he came to Turin to look into the matter. He had left his mistress at Venice under the protection of the English consul.

The husband was ashamed to complain publicly, as he would have been confronted with the disgraceful agreement he had signed; but Berlendis maintained that he was in the right, and argued the question in the most amusing manner. On the one hand he urged the sacred and inviolable character of the marriage rite, and on the other he shewed how the wife was bound to submit to her husband in all things. I argued the matter with him myself, shewing him his disgraceful position in defending a man who traded on his wife's charms, and he was obliged to give in when I assured him that the husband had offered to renew the lease for the same time and on the same terms as before.

Two years later I met Acton at Bologna, and admired the beauty whom he considered and treated as his wife. She held on her knees a fine little Acton.

I left Turin for Parma with a Venetian who, like myself, was an exile from his country. He had turned actor to gain a livelihood; and was going to Parma with two actresses, one of whom was interesting. As soon as I found out who he was, we became friends, and he would have gladly made me a partner in all his amusements, by the way, if I had been in the humour to join him.

This journey to Leghorn was undertaken under the influence of chimerical ideas. I thought I might be useful to Count Orloff, in the conquest he was going to make, as it was said, of Constantinople. I fancied that it had been decreed by fate that without me he could never pass through the Dardanelles. In spite of the wild ideas with which my mind was occupied, I conceived a warm friendship for my travelling companion, whose name was Angelo Bentivoglio. The Government never forgave him a certain crime, which to the philosophic eye appears a mere trifle. In four years later, when I describe my stay at Venice, I shall give some further account of him.

About noon we reached Parma, and I bade adieu to Bentivoglio and his friends. The Court was at Colorno, but having nothing to gain from this mockery of a court, and wishing to leave for Bologna the next morning, I asked Dubois-Chateleraux, Chief of the Mint, and a talented though vain man, to give me some dinner. The reader will remember that I had known him twenty two years before, when I was in love with Henriette. He was delighted to see me, and seemed to set great store by my politeness in giving him the benefit of my short stay at Parma. I told him that Count Orloff was waiting for me at Leghorn, and that I was obliged to travel day and night.

“He will be setting sail before long,” said he; “I have advices from Leghorn to that effect.”

I said in a mysterious tone of voice that he would not sail without me, and I could see that my host treated me with increased respect after this. He wanted to discuss the Russian Expedition, but my air of reserve made him change the conversation.

At dinner we talked a good deal about Henriette, whom he said he had succeeded in finding out; but though he spoke of her with great respect, I took care not to give him any information on the subject. He spent the whole afternoon in uttering complaints against the sovereigns of Europe, the King of Prussia excepted, as he had made him a baron, though I never could make out why.

He cursed the Duke of Parma who persisted in retaining his services, although there was no mint in existence in the duchy, and his talents were consequently wasted there.

I listened to all his complaints, and agreed that Louis XV. had been ungrateful in not conferring the Order of St. Michael on him; that Venice had rewarded his services very shabbily; that Spain was stingy, and Naples devoid of honesty, etc., etc. When he had finished, I asked him if he could give me a bill on a banker for fifty sequins.

He replied in the most friendly manner that he would not give me the trouble of going to a banker for such a wretched sum as that; he would be delighted to oblige me himself.

I took the money promising to repay him at an early date, but I have never been able to do so. I do not know whether he is alive or dead, but if he were to attain the age of Methuselah I should not entertain any hopes of paying him; for I get poorer every day, and feel that my end is not far off.

The next day I was in Bologna, and the day after in Florence, where I met the Chevalier Morosini, nephew of the Venetian procurator, a young man of nineteen, who was travelling with Count Stratico, professor of mathematics at the University of Padua. He gave me a letter for his brother, a Jacobin monk, and professor of literature at Pisa, where I stopped for a couple of hours on purpose to make the celebrated monk's acquaintance. I found him even greater than his fame, and promised to come again to Pisa, and make a longer stay for the purpose of enjoying his society.

I stopped an hour at the Wells, where I made the acquaintance of the Pretender to the throne of Great Britain, and from there went on to Leghorn, where I found Count Orloff still waiting, but only because contrary winds kept him from sailing.

The English consul, with whom he was staying, introduced me at once to the Russian admiral, who received me with expressions of delight. He told me he would be charmed if I would come on board with him. He told me to have my luggage taken off at once, as he would set sail with the first fair wind. When he was gone the English consul asked me what would be my status with the admiral.

“That's just what I mean to find out before embarking my effects.”

“You won't be able to speak to him till to-morrow.” Next morning I called on Count Orloff, and sent him in a short note, asking him to give me a short interview before I embarked my mails.

An officer came out to tell me that the admiral was writing in bed, and hoped I would wait.

“Certainly.”

I had been waiting a few minutes, when Da Loglio, the Polish agent at Venice and an old friend of mine, came in.

“What are you doing here, my dear Casanova?” said he.

“I am waiting for an interview with the admiral.”

“He is very busy.”

After this, Da Loglio coolly went into the admiral’s room. This was impertinent of him; it was as if he said in so many words that the admiral was too busy to see me, but not too busy to see him.

A moment after, Marquis Manucci came in with his order of St. Anne and his formal air. He congratulated me on my visit to Leghorn, and then said he had read my work on Venice, and had been surprised to find himself in it.

He had some reason for surprise, for there was no connection between him and the subject-matter; but he should have discovered before that the unexpected often happens. He did not give me time to tell him so, but went into the admiral’s room as Da Loglio had done.

I was vexed to see how these gentlemen were admitted while I danced attendance, and the project of sailing with Orloff began to displease me.

In five hours Orloff came out followed by a numerous train. He told me pleasantly that we could have our talk at table or after dinner.

“After dinner, if you please,” I said.

He came in and sat down at two o’clock, and I was among the guests.

Orloff kept on saying, “Eat away, gentlemen, eat away;” and read his correspondence and gave his secretary letters all the time.

After dinner he suddenly glanced up at me, and taking me by the hand led me to the window, and told me to make haste with my luggage, as he should sail before the morning if the wind kept up.

“Quite so; but kindly tell me, count, what is to be my status or employment an board your ship?”

“At present I have no special employ to give you; that will come in time. Come on board as my friend.”

"The offer is an honourable one so far as you are concerned, but all the other officers might treat me with contempt. I should be regarded as a kind of fool, and I should probably kill the first man who dared to insult me. Give me a distinct office, and let me wear your uniform; I will be useful to you. I know the country for which you are bound, I can speak the language, and I am not wanting in courage."

"My dear sir, I really have no particular office to give you."

"Then, count, I wish you a pleasant sail; I am going to Rome. I hope you may never repent of not taking me, for without me you will never pass the Dardanelles."

"Is that a prophecy?"

"It's an oracle."

"We will test its veracity, my dear Calchus."

Such was the short dialogue I had with the worthy count, who, as a matter of fact, did not pass the Dardanelles. Whether he would have succeeded if I had been on board is more than I can say.

Next day I delivered my letters to M. Rivarola and the English banker. The squadron had sailed in the early morning.

The day after I went to Pisa, and spent a pleasant week in the company of Father Stratico, who was made a bishop two or three years after by means of a bold stroke that might have ruined him. He delivered a funeral oration over Father Ricci, the last general of the Jesuits. The Pope, Ganganelli, had the choice of punishing the writer and increasing the odium of many of the faithful, or of rewarding him handsomely. The sovereign pontiff followed the latter course. I saw the bishop some years later, and he told me in confidence that he had only written the oration because he felt certain, from his knowledge of the human heart, that his punishment would be a great reward.

This clever monk initiated me into all the charms of Pisan society. He had organized a little choir of ladies of rank, remarkable for their intelligence and beauty, and had taught them to sing extempore to the guitar. He had had them instructed by the famous Gorilla, who was crowned poetess-laureate at the capitol by night, six years later. She was crowned where our great

Italian poets were crowned; and though her merit was no doubt great, it was, nevertheless, more tinsel than gold, and not of that order to place her on a par with Petrarch or Tasso.

She was satirised most bitterly after she had received the bays; and the satirists were even more in the wrong than the profaners of the capitol, for all the pamphlets against her laid stress on the circumstance that chastity, at all events, was not one of her merits. All poetesses, from the days of Homer to our own, have sacrificed on the altar of Venus. No one would have heard of Gorilla if she had not had the sense to choose her lovers from the ranks of literary men; and she would never have been crowned at Rome if she had not succeeded in gaining over Prince Gonzaga Solferino, who married the pretty Mdlle. Rangoni, daughter of the Roman consul, whom I knew at Marseilles, and of whom I have already spoken.

This coronation of Gorilla is a blot on the pontificate of the present Pope, for henceforth no man of genuine merit will accept the honour which was once so carefully guarded by the giants of human intellect.

Two days after the coronation Gorilla and her admirers left Rome, ashamed of what they had done. The Abbe Pizzi, who had been the chief promoter of her apotheosis, was so inundated with pamphlets and satires that for some months he dared not shew his face.

This is a long digression, and I will now return to Father Stratico, who made the time pass so pleasantly for me.

Though he was not a handsome man, he possessed the art of persuasion to perfection; and he succeeded in inducing me to go to Sienna, where he said I should enjoy myself. He gave me a letter of introduction for the Marchioness Chigi, and also one for the Abbe Chiaccheri; and as I had nothing better to do I went to Sienna by the shortest way, not caring to visit Florence.

The Abbe Chiaccheri gave me a warm welcome, and promised to do all he could to amuse me; and he kept his word. He introduced me himself to the Marchioness Chigi, who took me by storm as soon as she had read the letter of the Abbe Stratico, her dear abbe, as she called him, when she read the superscription in his writing.

The marchioness was still handsome, though her beauty had begun to wane; but with her the sweetness, the grace, and the ease of manner supplied the lack of youth. She knew how to make a compliment of the slightest expression, and was totally devoid of any affection of superiority.

“Sit down,” she began. “So you are going to stay a week, I see, from the dear abbe’s letter. That’s a short time for us, but perhaps it may be too long for you. I hope the abbe has not painted us in too rosy colours.”

“He only told me that I was to spend a week here, and that I should find with you all the charms of intellect and sensibility.”

“Stratico should have condemned you to a month without mercy.”

“Why mercy? What hazard do I run?”

“Of being tired to death, or of leaving some small morsel of your heart at Sienna.”

“All that might happen in a week, but I am ready to dare the danger, for Stratico has guarded me from the first by counting on you, and from the second by counting on myself. You will receive my pure and intelligent homage. My heart will go forth from Sienna as free as it came, for I have no hope of victory, and defeat would make me wretched.”

“Is it possible that you are amongst the despairing?”

“Yes, and to that fact I owe my happiness.”

“It would be a pity for you if you found yourself mistaken.”

“Not such a pity as you may think, Madam. ‘Carpe diem’ is my motto. ’Tis likewise the motto of that finished voluptuary, Horace, but I only take it because it suits me. The pleasure which follows desires is the best, for it is the most acute.

“True, but it cannot be calculated on, and defies the philosopher. May God preserve you, madam, from finding out this painful truth by experience! The highest good lies in enjoyment; desire too often remains unsatisfied. If you have not yet found out the truth of Horace’s maxim, I congratulate you.”

The amiable marchioness smiled pleasantly and gave no positive answer.

Chiaccheri now opened his mouth for the first time, and said that the greatest happiness he could wish us was that we should never agree. The marchioness assented, rewarding Chiaccheri with a smile, but I could not do so.

“I had rather contradict you,” I said, “than renounce all hopes of pleasing you. The abbe has thrown the apple of discord between us, but if we continue as we have begun I shall take up my abode at Sienna.”

The marchioness was satisfied with the sample of her wit which she had given me, and began to talk commonplaces, asking me if I should like to see company and enjoy society of the fair sex. She promised to take me everywhere.

“Pray do not take the trouble,” I replied. “I want to leave Sienna with the feeling that you are the only lady to whom I have done homage, and that the Abbe Chiaccheri has been my only guide.”

The marchioness was flattered, and asked the abbe and myself to dine with her on the following day in a delightful house she had at a hundred paces from the town.

The older I grew the more I became attached to the intellectual charms of women. With the sensualist, the contrary takes place; he becomes more material in his old age: requires women well taught in Venus’s shrines, and flies from all mention of philosophy.

As I was leaving her I told the abbe that if I stayed at Sienna I would see no other woman but her, come what might, and he agreed that I was very right.

The abbe shewed me all the objects of interest in Sienna, and introduced me to the literati, who in their turn visited me.

The same day Chiaccheri took me to a house where the learned society assembled. It was the residence of two sisters — the elder extremely ugly and the younger very pretty, but the elder sister was accounted, and very rightly, the Corinna of the place. She asked me to give her a specimen of my skill, promising to return the compliment. I recited the first thing that came into my head, and she replied with a few lines of exquisite beauty. I complimented her, but Chiaccheri (who had been her master) guessed that I did not believe her to be the author, and proposed that we should try bouts rimes. The pretty sister gave out the rhymes, and we all set to work. The ugly sister finished first, and when the verses came to be read, hers were pronounced the best. I was amazed, and made an improvisation on her skill, which I gave her in writing. In five minutes she returned it to me; the rhymes were the same, but the turn of the thought was much more elegant. I was still more surprised, and took the liberty of asking her name, and found her to be the famous "Shepherdess," Maria Fortuna, of the Academy of Arcadians.

I had read the beautiful stanzas she had written in praise of Metastasio. I told her so, and she brought me the poet's reply in manuscript.

Full of admiration, I addressed myself to her alone, and all her plainness vanished.

I had had an agreeable conversation with the marchioness in the morning, but in the evening I was literally in an ecstacy.

I kept on talking of Fortuna, and asked the abbe if she could improvise in the manner of Gorilla. He replied that she had wished to do so, but that he had disallowed it, and he easily convinced me that this improvisation would have been the ruin of her fine talent. I also agreed with him when he said that he had warned her against making impromptus too frequently, as such hasty verses are apt to sacrifice wit to rhyme.

The honour in which improvisation was held amongst the Greeks and Romans is due to the fact that Greek and Latin verse is not under the dominion of rhyme. But as it was, the great poets seldom improvised; knowing as they did that such verses were usually feeble and commonplace.

Horace often passed a whole night searching for a vigorous and elegantly-turned phrase. When he had succeeded, he wrote the words on the wall and went to sleep. The lines which cost him nothing are generally prosaic; they may easily be picked out in his epistles.

The amiable and learned Abbe Chiaccheri, confessed to me that he was in love with his pupil, despite her ugliness. He added that he had never expected it when he began to teach her to make verses.

"I can't understand that," I said, "sublata lucerna', you know."

“Not at all,” said he, with a laugh, “I love her for her face, since it is inseparable from my idea of her.”

A Tuscan has certainly more poetic riches at his disposal than any other Italian, and the Siennese dialect is sweeter and more energetic than that of Florence, though the latter claims the title of the classic dialect, on account of its purity. This purity, together with its richness and copiousness of diction it owes to the academy. From the great richness of Italian we can treat a subject with far greater eloquence than a French writer; Italian abounds in synonyms, while French is lamentably deficient in this respect. Voltaire used to laugh at those who said that the French tongue could not be charged with poverty, as it had all that was necessary. A man may have necessaries, and yet be poor. The obstinacy of the French academy in refusing to adopt foreign words skews more pride than wisdom. This exclusiveness cannot last.

As for us we take words from all languages and all sources, provided they suit the genius of our own language. We love to see our riches increase; we even steal from the poor, but to do so is the general characteristic of the rich.

The amiable marchioness gave us a delicious dinner in a house designed by Palladio. Chiaccheri had warned me to say nothing about the Shepherdess Fortuna; but at dinner she told him she was sure he had taken me to her house. He had not the face to deny it, and I did not conceal the pleasure I had received.

“Stratico admires Fortuna,” said the marchioness, “and I confess that her writings have great merit, but it’s a pity one cannot go to the house, except under an incognito.”

“Why not?” I asked, in some astonishment.

“What!” said she to the abbe, “you did not tell him whose house it is?”

“I did not think it necessary, her father and mother rarely shew themselves.”

“Well, it’s of no consequence.”

“But what is her father?” I asked, “the hangman, perhaps?”

“Worse, he’s the ‘bargello’, and you must see that a stranger cannot be received into good society here if he goes to such places as that.”

Chiaccheri looked rather hurt, and I thought it my duty to say that I would not go there again till the eve of my departure.

“I saw her sister once,” said the marchioness; “she is really charmingly pretty, and it’s a great pity that with her beauty and irreproachable morality she should be condemned to marry a man of her father’s class.”

“I once knew a man named Coltellini,” I replied; “he is the son of the bargello of Florence, and is poet-in-ordinary to the Empress of Russia. I shall try to make a match between him and Fortuna’s sister; he is a young man of the greatest talents.”

The marchioness thought my idea an excellent one, but soon after I heard that Coltellini was dead.

The ‘bargello’ is a cordially-detested person all over Italy, if you except Modena, where the weak nobility make much of the ‘bargello’, and do justice to his excellent table. This is a curious fact, for as a rule these bargellos are spies, liars, traitors, cheats, and misanthropes, for a man despised hates his despisers.

At Sienna I was shewn a Count Piccolomini, a learned and agreeable man. He had a strange whim, however, of spending six months in the year in the strictest seclusion in his own house, never going out and never seeing any company; reading and working the whole time. He certainly did his best to make up for his hibernation during the other six months in the year.

The marchioness promised she would come to Rome in the course of the summer. She had there an intimate friend in Bianconi who had abandoned the practice of medicine, and was now the representative of the Court of Saxony.

On the eve of my departure, the driver who was to take me to Rome came and asked me if I would like to take a travelling companion, and save myself three sequins.

“I don’t want anyone.”

“You are wrong, for she is very beautiful.”

“Is she by herself?”

"No, she is with a gentleman on horseback, who wishes to ride all the way to Rome."

"Then how did the girl come here?"

"On horseback, but she is tired out, and cannot bear it any longer. The gentleman has offered me four sequins to take her to Rome, and as I am a poor man I think you might let me earn the money."

"I suppose he will follow the carriage?"

"He can go as he likes; that can't make much difference to either of us."

"You say she is young and pretty."

"I have been told so, but I haven't seen her myself."

"What sort of a man is her companion?"

"He's a fine man, but he can speak very little Italian."

"Has he sold the lady's horse?"

"No, it was hired. He has only one trunk, which will go behind the carriage."

"This is all very strange. I shall not give any decision before speaking to this man."

"I will tell him to wait on you."

Directly afterwards, a brisk-looking young fellow, carrying himself well enough, and clad in a fancy uniform, came in. He told me the tale I had heard from the coachman, and ended by saying that he was sure I would not refuse to accommodate his wife in my carriage.

"Your wife, sir?"

I saw he was a Frenchman, and I addressed him in French.

"God be praised! You can speak my native tongue. Yes, sir, she is an Englishwoman and my wife. I am sure she will be no trouble to you."

"Very good. I don't want to start later than I had arranged. Will she be ready at five o'clock?"

"Certainly."

The next morning when I got into my carriage, I found her already there. I paid her some slight compliment, and sat down beside her, and we drove off.

CHAPTER XII

Miss Betty — The Comte de L'Etoile — Sir B * * * M * * * —

Reassured

This was the fourth adventure I had had of this kind. There is nothing particularly out of the common in having a fellow-traveller in one's carriage; this time, however, the affair had something decidedly romantic about it.

I was forty-five, and my purse contained two hundred sequins. I still loved the fair sex, though my ardour had decreased, my experience had ripened, and my caution increased. I was more like a heavy father than a young lover, and I limited myself to pretensions of the most modest character.

The young person beside me was pretty and gentle-looking, she was neatly though simply dressed in the English fashion, she was fair and small, and her budding breast could be seen outlined beneath the fine muslin of her dress. She had all the appearances of modesty and noble birth, and something of virginal innocence, which inspired one with attachment and respect at the same time.

"I hope you can speak French madam?" I began.

"Yes, and a little Italian too."

"I congratulate myself on having you for my travelling companion."

"I think you should congratulate me."

"I heard you came to Sienna on horseback."

"Yes, but I will never do such a foolish thing again."

"I think your husband would have been wise to sell his horse and buy a carriage."

"He hired it; it does not belong to him. From Rome we are going to drive to Naples."

"You like travelling?"

"Very much, but with greater comfort."

With these words the English girl, whose white skin did not look as if it could contain a drop of blood, blushed most violently.

I guessed something of her secret, and begged pardon; and for more than an hour I remain silent, pretending to gaze at the scenery, but in reality thinking of her, for she began to inspire me with a lively interest.

Though the position of my young companion was more than equivocal, I determined to see my way clearly before I took any decisive step; and I waited patiently till we got to Bon Couvent, where we expected to dine and meet the husband.

We got there at ten o'clock.

In Italy the carriages never go faster than a walk; a man on foot can outstrip them, as they rarely exceed three miles an hour. The tedium of a journey under such circumstances is something dreadful, and in the hot months one has to stop five or six hours in the middle of the day to avoid falling ill.

My coachman said he did not want to go beyond St. Quirico, where there was an excellent inn, that night, so he proposed waiting at Bon Couvent till four o'clock. We had therefore six hours wherein to rest.

The English girl was astonished at not finding her husband, and looked for him in all directions. I noticed her, and asked the landlord what had become of him. He informed us that he had breakfasted and baited his horse, and had then gone on, leaving word that he would await us at St. Quirico and order supper there.

I thought it all very strange, but I said nothing. The poor girl begged me to excuse her husband's behaviour.

"He has given me a mark of his confidence, madam, and there is nothing to be offended at."

The landlord asked me if the vetturino paid my expenses, and I answered in the negative; and the girl then told him to ask the vetturino if he was paying for her.

The man came in, and to convince the lady that providing her with meals was not in the contract, he gave her a paper which she handed to me to read. It was signed “Comte de l’Etoile.”

When she was alone with me my young companion begged me only to order dinner for myself.

I understood her delicacy, and this made her all the dearer to me.

“Madame,” said I, “you must please look upon me as an old friend. I guess you have no money about you, and that you wish to fast from motives of delicacy. Your husband shall repay me, if he will have it so. If I told the landlord to only prepare dinner for myself I should be dishonouring the count, yourself possibly, and myself most of all.”

“I feel you are right sir. Let dinner be served for two, then; but I cannot eat, for I feel ill, and I hope you will not mind my lying on the bed for a moment.”

“Pray do not let me disturb you. This is a pleasant room, and they can lay the table in the next. Lie down, and sleep if you can, and I will order dinner to be ready by two. I hope you will be feeling better by then.”

I left her without giving her time to answer, and went to order dinner.

I had ceased to believe the Frenchman to be the beautiful Englishwoman’s husband, and began to think I should have to fight him.

The case, I felt certain, was one of elopement and seduction; and, superstitious as usual, I was sure that my good genius had sent me in the nick of time to save her and care for her, and in short to snatch her from the hands of her infamous deceiver.

Thus I fondled my growing passion.

I laughed at the absurd title the rascal had given himself, and when the thought struck me that he had possibly abandoned her to me altogether, I made up my mind that he deserved hanging. Nevertheless, I resolved never to leave her.

I lay down on the bed, and as I built a thousand castles in the air I fell asleep.

The landlady awoke me softly, saying that three o’clock had struck.

"Wait a moment before you bring in the dinner. I will go and see if the lady is awake."

I opened the door gently, and saw she was still asleep, but as I closed the door after me the noise awoke her, and she asked if I had dined.

"I shall not take any dinner, madam, unless you do me the honour to dine with me. You have had a five hours' rest, and I hope you are better."

"I will sit down with you to dinner, as you wish it."

"That makes me happy, and I will order dinner to be served forthwith."

She ate little, but what little she did eat was taken with a good appetite. She was agreeably surprised to see the beefsteaks and plum pudding, which I had ordered for her.

When the landlady came in, she asked her if the cook was an Englishman, and when she heard that I had given directions for the preparation of her national dishes, she seemed full of gratitude. She cheered up, and congratulated me on my appetite, while I encouraged her to drink some excellent Montepulciano and Montefiascone. By dessert she was in good spirits, while I felt rather excited. She told me, in Italian, that she was born in London, and I thought I should have died with joy, in reply to my question whether she knew Madame Cornelis, she replied that she had known her daughter as they had been at school together.

"Has Sophie grown tall?"

"No, she is quite small, but she is very pretty, and so clever."

"She must now be seventeen."

"Exactly. We are of the same age."

As she said this she blushed and lowered her eyes.

"Are you ill?"

"Not at all. I scarcely like to say it, but Sophie is the very image of you."

"Why should you hesitate to say so? It has been remarked to me before. No doubt it is a mere coincidence. How long ago is it since you have seen her?"

"Eighteen months; she went back to her mother's, to be married as it was said, but I don't know to whom."

"Your news interests me deeply."

The landlord brought me the bill, and I saw a note of three pains which her husband had spent on himself and his horse.

"He said you would pay," observed the landlord.

The Englishwoman blushed. I paid the bill, and we went on.

I was delighted to see her blushing, it proved she was not a party to her husband's proceedings.

I was burning with the desire to know how she had left London and had met the Frenchman, and why they were going to Rome; but I did not want to trouble her by my questions, and I loved her too well already to give her any pain.

We had a three hours' drive before us, so I turned the conversation to Sophie, with whom she had been at school.

"Was Miss Nancy Steyne there when you left?" said I.

The reader may remember how fond I had been of this young lady, who had dined with me, and whom I had covered with kisses, though she was only twelve.

My companion sighed at hearing the name of Nancy, and told me that she had left.

"Was she pretty when you knew her?"

"She was a beauty, but her loveliness was a fatal gift to her. Nancy was a close friend of mine, we loved each other tenderly; and perhaps our sympathy arose from the similarity of the fate in store for us. Nancy, too loving and too simple, is now, perhaps, even more unhappy than myself."

"More unhappy? What do you mean?"

"Alas!"

"Is it possible that fate has treated you harshly? Is it possible that you can be unhappy with such a letter of commendation as nature has given you?"

"Alas! let us speak of something else."

Her countenance was suffused with emotion. I pitied her in secret, and led the conversation back to Nancy.

“Tell me why you think Nancy is unhappy.”

“She ran away with a young man she loved; they despaired of gaining the parents’ consent to the match. Since her flight nothing has been heard of her, and you see I have some reason to fear that she is unhappy.”

“You are right. I would willingly give my life if it could be the saving of her.”

“Where did you know her?”

“In my own house. She and Sophie dined with me, and her father came in at the end of the meal.”

“Now I know who you are. How often have I heard Sophie talking of you. Nancy loved you as well as her father. I heard that you had gone to Russia, and had fought a duel with a general in Poland. Is this true? How I wish I could tell dear Sophie all this, but I may not entertain such hopes now.”

“You have heard the truth about me; but what should prevent you writing what you like to England? I take a lively interest in you, trust in me, and I promise you that you shall communicate with whom you please.”

“I am vastly obliged to you.”

With these words she became silent, and I left her to her thoughts.

At seven o’clock we arrived at St. Quirico, and the so-called Comte de l’Etoile came out and welcomed his wife in the most loving fashion, kissing her before everybody, no doubt with the object of giving people to understand that she was his wife, and I her father.

The girl responded to all his caresses, looking as if a load had been lifted off her breast, and without a word of reproach she went upstairs with him, having apparently forgotten my existence. I set that down to love, youth, and the forgetfulness natural to that early age.

I went upstairs in my turn with my carpet bag, and supper was served directly, as we had to start very early the next morning if we wished to reach Radicofani before the noonday heat.

We had an excellent supper, as the count had preceded us by six hours, and the landlord had had plenty of time to make his preparations. The English girl seemed as much in love with de l'Etoile as he with her, and I was left completely out in the cold. I cannot describe the high spirits, the somewhat risky sallies, and the outrageous humours of the young gentleman; the girl laughed with all her heart, and I could not help laughing too.

I considered that I was present at a kind of comedy, and not a gesture, not a word, not a laugh did I allow to escape me.

"He may be merely a rich and feather-brained young officer," I said to myself, "who treats everything in this farcical manner. He won't be the first of the species I have seen. They are amusing, but frivolous, and sometimes dangerous, wearing their honour lightly, and too apt to carry it at the sword's point."

On this hypothesis I was ill pleased with my position. I did not much like his manner towards myself; he seemed to be making a dupe of me, and behaved all the while as if he were doing me an honour.

On the supposition that the Englishwoman was his wife, his treatment of myself was certainly not warranted, and I was not the man to play zero. I could not disguise the fact, however, that any onlooker would have pronounced me to be playing an inferior part.

There were two beds in the room where we had our supper. When the chambermaid came to put on the sheets, I told her to give me another room. The count politely begged me to sleep in the same room with them, and the lady remained neutral; but I did not much care for their company, and insisted on leaving them alone.

I had my carpet bag taken to my room, wished them a good night and locked myself in. My friends had only one small trunk, whence I concluded that they had sent on their luggage by another way; but they did not even have the trunk brought up to their room. I went to bed tranquilly, feeling much less interested about the lady than I had been on the journey.

I was roused early in the morning, and made a hasty toilette. I could hear my neighbours dressing, so I half opened my door, and wished them good day without going into their room.

In a quarter of an hour I heard the sound of a dispute in the court-yard, and on looking out, there were the Frenchman and the vetturino arguing hotly. The vetturino held the horse's bridle, and the pretended count did his best to snatch it away from him.

I guessed the bone of contention: the Frenchman had no money, and the vetturino asked in vain for his due. I knew that I should be drawn into the dispute, and was making up my mind to do my duty without mercy, when the Count de l'Etoile came in and said, —

"This blockhead does not understand what I say to him; but as he may have right on his side, I must ask you to give him two sequins. I will return you the money at Rome. By an odd chance I happen to have no money about me, but the fellow might trust me as he has got my trunk. However, he says he must be paid, so will you kindly oblige me? You shall hear more of me at Rome."

Without waiting for me to reply, the rascal went out and ran down the stairs. The vetturino remained in the room. I put my head out of the window, and saw him leap on horseback and gallop away.

I sat down on my bed, and turned the scene over in my mind, rubbing my hands gently. At last I went off into a mad roar of laughter; it struck me as so whimsical and original an adventure.

"Laugh too," said I to the lady, "laugh or I will never get up."

"I agree with you that it's laughable enough, but I have not the spirit to laugh."

"Well, sit down at all events."

I gave the poor devil of a vetturino two sequins, telling him that I should like some coffee and to start in a quarter of an hour.

I was grieved to see my companion's sadness.

"I understand your grief," said I, "but you must try to overcome it. I have only one favour to ask of you, and if you refuse to grant me that, I shall be as sad as you, so we shall be rather a melancholy couple."

"What can I do for you?"

“You can tell me on your word of honour whether that extraordinary character is your husband, or only your lover.”

“I will tell you the simple truth; he is not my husband, but we are going to be married at Rome.”

“I breathe again. He never shall be your husband, and so much the better for you. He has seduced you, and you love him, but you will soon get over that.”

“Never, unless he deceives me.”

“He has deceived you already. I am sure he has told you that he is rich, that he is a man of rank, and that he will make you happy; and all that is a lie.”

“How can you know all this?”

“Experience — experience is my great teacher. Your lover is a young feather-brain, a man of no worth. He might possibly marry you, but it would be only to support himself by the sale of your charms.”

“He loves me; I am sure of it.”

“Yes, he loves you, but not with the love of a man of honour. Without knowing my name, or my character, or anything about me, he delivered you over to my tender mercies. A man of any delicacy would never abandon his loved one thus.”

“He is not jealous. You know Frenchmen are not.”

“A man of honour is the same in France, and England, and Italy, and all the world over. If he loved you, would he have left you penniless in this fashion? What would you do, if I were inclined to play the brutal lover? You may speak freely.”

“I should defend myself.”

“Very good; then I should abandon you here, and what would you do then? You are pretty, you are a woman of sensibility, but many men would take but little account of your virtue. Your lover has left you to me; for all he knew I might be the vilest wretch; but as it is, cheer up, you have nothing to fear.

"How can you think that adventurer loves you? He is a mere monster. I am sorry that what I say makes you weep, but it must be said. I even dare tell you that I have taken a great liking to you; but you may feel quite sure that I shall not ask you to give me so much as a kiss, and I will never abandon you. Before we get to Rome I shall convince you that the count, as he calls himself, not only does not love you, but is a common swindler as well as a deceiver."

"You will convince me of that?"

"Yes, on my word of honour! Dry your eyes, and let us try to make this day pass as pleasantly as yesterday. You cannot imagine how glad I feel that chance has constituted me your protector. I want you to feel assured of my friendship, and if you do not give me a little love in return, I will try and bear it patiently."

The landlord came in and brought the bill for the count and his mistress as well as for myself. I had expected this, and paid it without a word, and without looking at the poor wandering sheep beside me. I recollected that too strong medicines kill, and do not cure, and I was afraid I had said almost too much.

I longed to know her history, and felt sure I should hear it before we reached Rome. We took some coffee and departed, and not a word passed between us till we got to the inn at La Scala, where we got down.

The road from La Scala to Radicofani is steep and troublesome. The vetturino would require an extra horse, and even then would have taken four hours. I decided, therefore, to take two post horses, and not to begin the journey till ten o'clock.

"Would it not be better to go on now?" said the English girl; "it will be very hot from ten till noon."

"Yes, but the Comte de l'Ltoile, whom we should be sure to meet at Radicofani, would not like to see me."

"Why not? I am sure he would."

If I had told her my reason she would have wept anew, so in pity I spared her. I saw that she was blinded by love, and could not see the true character of her lover. It would be impossible to cure her by gentle and persuasive argument; I must speak sharply, the wound must be subjected to the actual cautery. But was virtue the cause of all this interest? Was it devotion to a young and innocent girl that made me willing to undertake so difficult and so delicate a task? Doubtless these motives went for something, but I will not attempt to strut in borrowed plumes, and must freely confess that if she had been ugly and stupid I should probably have left her to her fate. In short, selfishness was at the bottom of it all, so let us say no more about virtue.

My true aim was to snatch this delicate morsel from another's hand that I might enjoy it myself. I did not confess as much to myself, for I could never bear to calmly view my own failings, but afterwards I came to the conclusion that I acted a part throughout. Is selfishness, then, the universal motor of our actions? I am afraid it is.

I made Betty (such was her name) take a country walk with me, and the scenery there is so beautiful that no poet nor painter could imagine a more delicious prospect. Betty spoke Tuscan with English idioms and an English accent, but her voice was so silvery and clear that her Italian was delightful to listen to. I longed to kiss her lips as they spoke so sweetly, but I respected her and restrained myself.

We were walking along engaged in agreeable converse, when all at once we heard the church bells peal out. Betty said she had never seen a Catholic service, and I was glad to give her that pleasure. It was the feast day of some local saint, and Betty assisted at high mass with all propriety, imitating the gestures of the people, so that no one would have taken her for a Protestant. After it was over, she said she thought the Catholic rite was much more adapted to the needs of loving souls than the Angelican. She was astonished at the southern beauty of the village girls, whom she pronounced to be much handsomer that the country lasses in England. She asked me the time, and I replied without thinking that I wondered she had not got a watch. She blushed and said the count had asked her to give it him to leave in pawn for the horse he hired.

I was sorry for what I had said, for I had put Betty, who was incapable of a lie, to great pain.

We started at ten o'clock with three horses, and as a cool wind was blowing we had a pleasant drive, arriving at Radicofani at noon.

The landlord, who was also the postmaster, asked if I would pay three pauls which the Frenchman had expended for his horse and himself, assuring the landlord that his friend would pay.

For Betty's sake I said I would pay; but this was not all.

"The gentleman," added the man, "has beaten three of my postillions with his naked sword. One of them was wounded in the face, and he has followed his assailant, and will make him pay dearly for it. The reason of the assault was that they wanted to detain him till he had paid."

"You were wrong to allow violence to be used; he does not look like a thief, and you might have taken it for granted that I should pay."

"You are mistaken; I was not obliged to take anything of the sort for granted; I have been cheated in this sort many times before. Your dinner is ready if you want any."

Poor Betty was in despair. She observed a distressed silence; and I tried to raise her spirits, and to make her eat a good dinner, and to taste the excellent Muscat, of which the host had provided an enormous flask.

All my efforts were in vain, so I called the vetturino to tell him that I wanted to start directly after dinner. This order acted on Betty like magic.

"You mean to go as far as Centino, I suppose," said the man. "We had better wait there till the heat is over."

"No, we must push on, as the lady's husband may be in need of help. The wounded postillion has followed him; and as he speaks Italian very imperfectly, there's no knowing what may happen to him."

"Very good; we will go off."

Betty looked at me with the utmost gratitude; and by way of proving it, she pretended to have a good appetite. She had noticed that this was a certain way of pleasing me.

While we were at dinner I ordered up one of the beaten postillions, and heard his story. He was a frank rogue; he said he had received some blows with the flat of the sword, but he boasted of having sent a stone after the Frenchman which must have made an impression on him.

I gave him a Paul, and promised to make it a crown if he would go to Centino to bear witness against his comrade, and he immediately began to speak up for the count, much to Betty's amusement. He said the man's wound in the face was a mere scratch, and that he had brought it on himself, as he had no business to oppose a traveller as he had done. By way of comfort he told us that the Frenchman had only been hit by two or three stones. Betty did not find this very consoling, but I saw that the affair was more comic than tragic, and would end in nothing. The postillion went off, and we followed him in half an hour.

Betty was tranquil enough till we got there, and heard that the count had gone on to Acquapendente with the two postillions at his heels; she seemed quite vexed. I told her that all would be well; that the count knew how to defend himself; but she only answered me with a deep sigh.

I suspected that she was afraid we should have to pass the night together, and that I would demand some payment for all the trouble I had taken.

"Would you like us to go on to Acquapendente?" I asked her.

At this question her face beamed all over; she opened her arms, and I embraced her.

I called the vetturino, and told him. I wanted to go on to Acquapendente immediately.

The fellow replied that his horses were in the stable, and that he was not going to put them in; but that I could have post horses if I liked.

"Very good. Get me two horses immediately."

It is my belief that, if I had liked, Betty would have given me everything at that moment, for she let herself fall into my arms. I pressed her tenderly and kissed her, and that was all She seemed grateful for my self-restraint.

The horses were put in, and after I had paid the landlord for the supper, which he swore he had prepared for us, we started.

We reached Acquapendente in three quarters of an hour, and we found the madcap count in high spirits. He embraced his Dulcinea with transports, and Betty seemed delighted to find him safe and sound. He told us triumphantly that he had beaten the rascally postillions, and had warded their stones off.

“Where’s the slashed postillion?” I asked.

“He is drinking to my health with his comrade; they have both begged my pardon.”

“Yes,” said Betty, “this gentleman gave him a crown.”

“What a pity! You shouldn’t have given them anything.”

Before supper the Comte de l’Etoile skewed us the bruises on his thighs and side; the rascal was a fine well-made fellow. However, Betty’s adoring airs irritated me, though I was consoled at the thought of the earnest I had received from her.

Next day, the impudent fellow told me that he would order us a good supper at Viterbo, and that of course I would lend him a sequin to pay for his dinner at Montefiascone. So saying, he skewed me in an off-hand way a bill of exchange on Rome for three thousand crowns.

I did not trouble to read it, and gave him the sequin, though I felt sure I should never see it again.

Betty now treated me quite confidentially, and I felt I might ask her almost any questions.

When we were at Montefiascone she said, —

“You see my lover is only without money by chance; he has a bill of exchange for a large amount.”

“I believe it to be a forgery.”

“You are really too cruel.”

“Not at all; I only wish I were mistaken, but I am sure of the contrary. Twenty years ago I should have taken it for a good one, but now it’s another thing, and if the bill is a good one, why did he not negotiate it at Sienna, Florence, or Leghorn?”

“It may be that he had not the time; he was in such a hurry to be gone. Ah! if you knew all!”

“I only want to know what you like to tell me, but I warn you again that what I say is no vague suspicion but hard fact.”

“Then you persist in the idea that he does not love me.”

"Nay, he loves you, but in such a fashion as to deserve hatred in return."

"How do you mean?"

"Would you not hate a man who loved you only to traffic in your charms?"

"I should be sorry for you to think that of him."

"If you like, I will convince you of what I say this evening."

"You will oblige me; but I must have some positive proof. It would be a sore pain to me, but also a true service."

"And when you are convinced, will you cease to love him?"

"Certainly; if you prove him to be dishonest, my love will vanish away."

"You are mistaken; you will still love him, even when you have had proof positive of his wickedness. He has evidently fascinated you in a deadly manner, or you would see his character in its true light before this."

"All this may be true; but do you give me your proofs, and leave to me the care of shewing that I despise him."

"I will prove my assertions this evening; but tell me how long you have known him?"

"About a month; but we have only been together for five days."

"And before that time you never accorded him any favours?"

"Not a single kiss. He was always under my windows, and I had reason to believe that he loved me fondly."

"Oh, yes! he loves you, who would not? but his love is not that of a man of honour, but that of an impudent profligate."

"But how can you suspect a man of whom you know nothing?"

"Would that I did not know him! I feel sure that not being able to visit you, he made you visit him, and then persuaded you to fly with him."

"Yes, he did. He wrote me a letter, which I will shew you. He promises to marry me at Rome."

"And who is to answer for his constancy?"

"His love is my surety."

"Do you fear pursuit?"

"No."

"Did he take you from a father, a lover, or a brother?"

"From a lover, who will not be back at Leghorn for a week or ten days."

"Where has he gone?"

"To London on business; I was under the charge of a woman whom he trusted."

"That's enough; I pity you, my poor Betty. Tell me if you love your Englishman, and if he is worthy of your love."

"Alas! I loved him dearly till I saw this Frenchman, who made me unfaithful to a man I adored. He will be in despair at not finding me when he returns."

"Is he rich?"

"Not very; he is a business man, and is comfortably off."

"Is he young?"

"No. He is a man of your age, and a thoroughly kind and honest person. He was waiting for his consumptive wife to die to marry me."

"Poor man! Have you presented him with a child?"

"No. I am sure God did not mean me for him, for the count has conquered me completely."

"Everyone whom love leads astray says the same thing."

"Now you have heard everything, and I am glad I told you, for I am sure you are my friend."

"I will be a better friend to you, dear Betty, in the future than in the past. You will need my services, and I promise not to abandon you. I love you, as I have said; but so long as you continue to love the Frenchman I shall only ask you to consider me as your friend."

"I accept your promise, and in return I promise not to hide anything from you."

"Tell me why you have no luggage."

"I escaped on horseback, but my trunk, which is full of linen and other effects, will be at Rome two days after us. I sent it off the day before my escape, and the man who received it was sent by the count."

"Then good-bye to your trunk!"

"Why, you foresee nothing but misfortune!"

"Well, dear Betty, I only wish my prophecies may not be accomplished. Although you escaped on horseback I think you should have brought a cloak and a carpet bag with some linen."

"All that is in the small trunk; I shall have it taken into my room tonight."

We reached Viterbo at seven o'clock, and found the count very cheerful.

In accordance with the plot I had laid against the count, I began by shewing myself demonstratively fond of Betty, envying the fortunate lover, praising his heroic behaviour in leaving her to me, and so forth.

The silly fellow proceeded to back me up in my extravagant admiration. He boasted that jealousy was utterly foreign to his character, and maintained that the true lover would accustom himself to see his mistress inspire desires in other men.

He proceeded to make a long dissertation on this theme, and I let him go on, for I was waiting till after supper to come to the conclusive point.

During the meal I made him drink, and applauded his freedom from vulgar prejudices. At dessert he enlarged on the duty of reciprocity between lovers.

"Thus," he remarked, "Betty ought to procure me the enjoyment of Fanny, if she has reason to think I have taken a fancy to her; and per contra, as I adore Betty, if I found that she loved you I should procure her the pleasure of sleeping with you."

Betty listened to all this nonsense in silent astonishment.

"I confess, my dear count," I replied, "that, theoretically speaking, your system strikes me as sublime, and calculated to bring about the return of the Golden Age; but I am afraid it would prove absurd in practice. No doubt you are a man of courage, but I am sure you would never let your mistress be enjoyed by another man. Here are twenty-five sequins. I will wager that amount that you will not allow me to sleep with your wife."

"Ha! ha! You are mistaken in me, I assure you. I'll bet fifty sequins that I will remain in the room a calm spectator of your exploits. My dear Betty, we must punish this sceptic; go to bed with him."

"You are joking."

"Not at all; to bed with you, I shall love you all the more."

"You must be crazy, I shall do nothing of the kind."

The count took her in his arms, and caressing her in the tenderest manner begged her to do him this favour, not so much for the twenty-five Louis, as to convince me that he was above vulgar prejudices. His caresses became rather free, but Betty repulsed him gently though firmly, saying that she would never consent, and that he had already won the bet, which was the case; in fine the poor girl besought him to kill her rather than oblige her to do a deed which she thought infamous.

Her words, and the pathetic voice with which they were uttered, should have shamed him, but they only put him into a furious rage. He repulsed her, calling her the vilest names, and finally telling her that she was a hypocrite, and he felt certain she had already granted me all a worthless girl could grant.

Betty grew pale as death, and furious in my turn, I ran for my sword. I should probably have run him through, if the infamous scoundrel had not fled into the next room, where he locked himself in.

I was in despair at seeing Betty's distress, of which I had been the innocent cause, and I did my best to soothe her.

She was in an alarming state. Her breath came with difficulty, her eyes seemed ready to start out of her head, her lips were bloodless and trembling, and her teeth shut tight together. Everyone in the inn was asleep. I could not call for help, and all I could do was to dash water in her face, and speak soothing words.

At last she fell asleep, and I remained beside her for more than two hours, attentive to her least movements, and hoping that she would awake strengthened and refreshed.

At day-break I heard l'Etoile going off, and I was glad of it. The people of the inn knocked at our door, and then Betty awoke.

"Are you ready to go, my dear Betty?"

"I am much better, but I should so like a cup of tea."

The Italians cannot make tea, so I took what she gave me, and went to prepare it myself.

When I came back I found her inhaling the fresh morning air at the window. She seemed calm, and I hoped I had cured her. She drank a few cups of tea (of which beverage the English are very fond), and soon regained her good looks.

She heard some people in the room where we had supped, and asked me if I had taken up the purse which I had placed on the table. I had forgotten it completely.

I found my purse and a piece of paper bearing the words, "bill of exchange for three thousand crowns." The impostor had taken it out of his pocket in making his bet, and had forgotten it. It was dated at Bordeaux, drawn on a wine merchant at Paris to l'Etoile's order. It was payable at sight, and was for six months. The whole thing was utterly irregular.

I took it to Betty, who told me she knew nothing about bills, and begged me to say nothing more about that infamous fellow. She then said, in a voice of which I can give no idea, —

"For pity's sake do not abandon a poor girl, more worthy of compassion than blame!"

I promised her again to have all a father's care for her, and soon after we proceeded on our journey.

The poor girl fell asleep, and I followed her example. We were awoke by the vetturino who informed us, greatly to our astonishment, that we were at Monterosi. We had slept for six hours, and had done eighteen miles.

We had to stay at Monterosi till four o'clock, and we were glad of it, for we needed time for reflection.

In the first place I asked about the wretched deceiver, and was told that he had made a slight meal, paid for it, and said he was going to spend the night at La Storta.

We made a good dinner, and Betty plucking up a spirit said we must consider the case of her infamous betrayer, but for the last time.

“Be a father to me,” said she; “do not advise but command; you may reckon on my obedience. I have no need to give you any further particulars, for you have guessed all except the horror with which the thought of my betrayer now inspires me. If it had not been for you, he would have plunged me into an abyss of shame and misery.”

“Can you reckon on the Englishman forgiving you?”

“I think so.”

“Then we must go back to Leghorn. Are you strong enough to follow this counsel? I warn you that if you approve of it, it must be put into execution at once. Young, pretty, and virtuous as you are, you need not imagine that I shall allow you to go by yourself, or in the company of strangers. If you think I love you, and find me worthy of your esteem, that is sufficient regard for me. I will live with you like a father, if you are not in a position to give me marks of a more ardent affection. Be sure I will keep faith with you, for I want to redeem your opinion of men, and to shew you that there are men as honourable as your seducer was vile.”

Betty remained for a quarter of an hour in profound silence, her head resting on her elbows, and her eyes fixed on mine. She did not seem either angry or astonished, but as far as I could judge was lost in thought. I was glad to see her reflective, for thus she would be able to give me a decided answer: At last she said:

“You need not think, my dear friend, that my silence proceeds from irresolution. If my mind were not made up already I should despise myself. I am wise enough at any rate to appreciate the wisdom of your generous counsels. I thank Providence that I have fallen into the hands of such a man who will treat me as if I were his daughter.”

“Then we will go back to Leghorn, and start immediately.”

“My only doubt is how to manage my reconciliation with Sir B —— M —— . I have no doubt he will pardon me eventually; but though he is tender and good-hearted he is delicate where a point of honour is concerned, and Subject to sudden fits of violence. This is what I want to avoid; for he might possibly kill me, and then I should be the cause of his ruin."

"You must consider it on the way, and tell me any plans you may think of."

"He is an intelligent man, and it would be hopeless to endeavour to dupe him by a lie. I must make a full confession in writing without hiding a single circumstance; for if he thought he was being duped his fury would be terrible. If you will write to him you must not say that you think me worthy of forgiveness; you must tell him the facts and leave him to judge for himself. He will be convinced of my repentance when he reads the letter I shall bedew with my tears, but he must not know of my whereabouts till he has promised to forgive me. He is a slave to his word of honour, and we shall live together all our days without my ever hearing of this slip. I am only sorry that I have behaved so foolishly."

"You must not be offended if I ask you whether you have ever given him like cause for complaint before."

"Never."

"What is his history?"

"He lived very unhappily with his first wife; and he was divorced from his second wife for sufficient reasons. Two years ago he came to our school with Nancy's father, and made my acquaintance. My father died, his creditors seized everything, and I had to leave the school, much to Nancy's distress and that of the other pupils. At this period Sir B —— M —— took charge of me, and gave me a sum which placed me beyond the reach of, want for the rest of my days. I was grateful, and begged him to take me with him when he told me he was leaving England. He was astonished; and, like a man of honour, said he loved me too well to flatter himself that we could travel together without his entertaining more ardent feelings for me than those of a father. He thought it out of the question for me to love him, save as a daughter.

"This declaration, as you may imagine, paved the way for a full agreement."

"'However you love me,' I said, 'I shall be well pleased, and if I can do anything for you I shall be all the happier.'

"He then gave me of his own free will a written promise to marry me on the death of his wife. We started on our travels, and till my late unhappy connection I never gave him the slightest cause for complaint."

"Dry your eyes, dear Betty, he is sure to forgive you. I have friends at Leghorn, and no one shall find out that we have made acquaintance. I will put you in good hands, and I shall not leave the town till I hear you are back with Sir B —— M —— . If he prove inexorable I promise never to abandon you, and to take you back to England if you like."

"But how can you spare the time?"

"I will tell you the truth, my dear Betty. I have nothing particular to do at Rome, or anywhere else. London and Rome are alike to me."

"How can I shew my gratitude to you?"

I summoned the vetturino, and told him we must return to Viterbo. He objected, but I convinced him with a couple of piastres, and by agreeing to use the post horses and to spare his own animals.

We got to Viterbo by seven o'clock, and asked anxiously if no one had found a pocket-book which I pretended I had lost. I was told no such thing had been found, so I ordered supper with calmness, although bewailing my loss. I told Betty that I acted in this sort to obviate any difficulties which the vetturino might make about taking us back to Sienna, as he might feel it his duty to place her in the hands of her supposed husband. I had up the small trunk, and after we had forced the lock Betty took out her cloak and the few effects she had in it, and we then inspected the adventurer's properties, most likely all he possessed in the world. A few tattered shirts, two or three pairs of mended silk stockings, a pair of breeches, a hare's foot, a pot of grease, and a score of little books-plays or comic operas, and lastly a packet of letters; such were the contents of the trunk.

We proceeded to read the letters, and the first thing we noted was the address: "To M. L'Etoile, Actor, at Marseilles, Bordeaux, Bayonne, Montpellier, etc."

I pitied Betty. She saw herself the dupe of a vile actor, and her indignation and shame were great.

"We will read it all to-morrow," said I; "to-day we have something else to do."

The poor girl seemed to breathe again.

We got over our supper hastily, and then Betty begged me to leave her alone for a few moments for her to change her linen and go to bed.

"If you like," said I, "I will have a bed made up for me in the next room."

"No, dear friend, ought I not to love your society? What would have become of me without you?"

I went out for a few minutes, and when I returned and came to her bedside to wish her good night, she gave me such a warm embrace that I knew my hour was come.

Reader, you must take the rest for granted. I was happy, and I had reason to believe that Betty was happy also.

In the morning, we had just fallen asleep, when the vettuyino knocked at the door.

I dressed myself hastily to see him.

"Listen," I said, "it is absolutely necessary for me to recover my pocket-book, and I hope to find it at Acquapendente."

"Very good, sir, very good," said the rogue, a true Italian, "pay me as if I had taken you to Rome, and a sequin a day for the future, and if you like, I will take you to England on those terms."

The vetturino was evidently what is called wide awake. I gave him his money, and we made a new agreement. At seven o'clock we stopped at Montefiascone to write to Sir B —— M —— , she in English, and I in French.

Betty had now an air of satisfaction and assurance which I found charming. She said she was full of hope, and seemed highly amused at the thought of the figure which the actor would cut when he arrived at Rome by himself. She hoped that we should come across the man in charge of her trunk, and that we should have no difficulty in getting it back.

"He might pursue us."

“He dare not do so.”

“I expect not, but if he does I will give him a warm welcome. If he does not take himself off I will blow out his brains.”

Before I began my letter to Sir B —— M —— . Betty again warned me to conceal nothing from him.

“Not even the reward you gave me?”

“Oh, yes! That is a little secret between ourselves.”

In less than three hours the letters were composed and written. Betty was satisfied with my letter; and her own, which she translated for my benefit, was a perfect masterpiece of sensibility, which seemed to me certain of success.

I thought of posting from Sienna, to ensure her being in a place of safety before the arrival of her lover.

The only thing that troubled me was the bill of exchange left behind by l’Etoile, for whether it were true or false, I felt bound to deal with it in some way, but I could not see how it was to be done.

We set out again after dinner in spite of the heat, and arrived at Acquapendente in the evening and spent the night in the delights of mutual love.

As I was getting up in the morning I saw a carriage in front of the inn, just starting for Rome. I imagined that amidst the baggage Betty’s trunk might be discovered, and I told her to get up, and see if it were there. We went down, and Betty recognized the trunk she had confided to her seducer.

We begged the vetturino to restore it to us, but he was inflexible; and as he was in the right we had to submit. The only thing he could do was to have an embargo laid on the trunk at Rome, the said embargo to last for a month. A notary was called, and our claim properly drawn up. The vetturino, who seemed an honest and intelligent fellow, assured us he had received nothing else belonging to the Comte de l’Etoile, so we were assured that the actor was a mere beggar on the lookout for pickings, and that the rags in the small trunk were all his possessions.

After this business had been dispatched Betty brightened up amazingly.

“Heaven,” she exclaimed, “is arranging everything. My mistake will serve as a warning to me for the future, for the lesson has been a severe one, and might have been much worse if I had not had the good fortune of meeting you.”

“I congratulate you,” I replied, “on having cured yourself so quickly of a passion that had deprived you of your reason.”

“Ah! a woman’s reason is a fragile thing. I shudder when I think of the monster; but I verily believe that I should not have regained my senses if he had not called me a hypocrite, and said that he was certain I had already granted you my favours. These infamous words opened my eyes, and made me see my shame. I believe I would have helped you to pierce him to the heart if the coward had not run away. But I am glad he did run away, not for his sake but for ours, for we should have been in an unpleasant position if he had been killed.”

“You are right; he escaped my sword because he is destined for the rope.”

“Let him look to that himself, but I am sure he will never dare to shew his face before you or me again.”

We reached Radicofani at ten o’clock, and proceeded to write postscripts to our letters to Sir B —— M —— We were sitting at the same table, Betty opposite to the door and I close to it, so that anyone coming in could not have seen me without turning round.

Betty was dressed with all decency and neatness, but I had taken off my coat on account of the suffocating heat. Nevertheless, though I was in shirt sleeves, I should not have been ashamed of my attire before the most respectable woman in Italy.

All at once I heard a rapid step coming along the passage, and the door was dashed open. A furious-looking man came in, and, seeing Betty, cried out, —

“Ah! there you are.”

I did not give him time to turn round and see me, but leapt upon him and seized him by the shoulders. If I had not done so he would have shot me dead on the spot.

As I leapt upon him I had involuntarily closed the door, and as he cried, “Let me go, traitor!” Betty fell on her knees before him, exclaiming, “No, no! he is my preserver.”

Sir B —— M —— was too mad with rage to pay any attention to her, and kept on, —

“Let me go, traitors!”

As may be imagined, I did not pay much attention to this request so long as the loaded pistol was in his hand.

In our struggles he at last fell to the ground and I on top of him. The landlord and his people had heard the uproar, and were trying to get in; but as we had fallen against the door they could not do so.

Betty had the presence of mind to snatch the pistol from his hand, and I then let him go, calmly observing,

“Sir, you are labouring under a delusion.”

Again Betty threw herself on her knees, begging him to calm himself, as I was her preserver not her betrayer.

“What do you mean by ‘preserver’?” said B —— M ——

Betty gave him the letter, saying, —

“Read that.”

The Englishman read the letter through without rising from the ground, and as I was certain of its effect I opened the door and told the landlord to send his people away, and to get dinner for three, as everything had been settled.

EPISODE 28 — RETURN TO ROME

CHAPTER XIII

Rome — The Actor's Punishment — Lord Baltimore — Naples — Sara Goudar — Departure of Betty — Agatha — Medina — Albergoni — Miss Chudleigh — The Prince of Francavilla — The Swimmers

As I fell over the Englishman I had struck my hand against a nail, and the fourth finger of my left hand was bleeding as if a vein had been opened. Betty helped me to tie a handkerchief around the wound, while Sir B —— M —— read the letter with great attention. I was much pleased with Betty's action, it shewed she was confident, and sure of her lover's forgiveness.

I took up my coat and carpet-bag, and went into the next room to change my linen, and dress for dinner. Any distress at the termination of my intrigue with Betty was amply compensated for by my joy at the happy ending of a troublesome affair which might have proved fatal for me.

I dressed myself, and then waited for half an hour, as I heard Betty and Sir B —— M —— speaking in English calmly enough, and I did not care to interrupt them. At last the Englishman knocked at my door, and came in looking humble and mortified. He said he was sure I had not only saved Betty, but had effectually cured her of her folly.

"You must forgive my conduct, sir," said he, "for I could not guess that the man I found with her was her saviour and not her betrayer. I thank Heaven which inspired you with the idea of catching hold of me from behind, as I should certainly have killed you the moment I set eyes on you, and at this moment I should be the most wretched of men. You must forgive me, sir, and become my friend."

I embraced him cordially, telling him that if I had been in his place I should have acted in a precisely similar manner.

We returned to the room, and found Betty leaning against the bed, and weeping bitterly.

The blood continuing to flaw from my wound, I sent for a surgeon who said that a vein had been opened, and that a proper ligature was necessary.

Betty still wept, so I told Sir B —— M —— that in my opinion she deserved his forgiveness.

“Forgiveness?” said he, “you may be sure I have already forgiven her, and she well deserves it. Poor Betty repented directly you shewed her the path she was treading, and the tears she is shedding now are tears of sorrow at her mistake. I am sure she recognizes her folly, and will never be guilty of such a slip again.”

Emotion is infectious. Betty wept, Sir B —— M —— wept, and I wept to keep them company. At last nature called a truce, and by degrees our sobs and tears ceased and we became calmer.

Sir B —— M —— , who was evidently a man of the most generous character, began to laugh and jest, and his caresses had great effect in calming Betty. We made a good dinner, and the choice Muscat put us all in the best of spirits.

Sir B —— M —— said we had better rest for a day or two; he had journeyed fifteen stages in hot haste, and felt in need of repose.

He told us that on arriving at Leghorn, and finding no Betty there, he had discovered that her trunk had been booked to Rome, and that the officer to whom it belonged had hired a horse, leaving a watch as a pledge for it. Sir B —— M —— recognized Betty’s watch, and feeling certain that she was either on horseback with her seducer or in the wagon with her trunk, he immediately resolved to pursue.

“I provided myself,” he added, “with two good pistols, not with the idea of using one against her, for my first thought about her was pity, and my second forgiveness; but I determined to blow out the scoundrel’s brains, and I mean to do it yet. We will start for Rome to-morrow.”

Sir B —— M — — ‘s concluding words filled Betty with joy, and I believe she would have pierced her perfidious lover to the heart if he had been brought before her at that moment.

“We shall find him at Roland’s,” said I.

Sir B —— M —— took Betty in his arms, and gazed at me with an air of content, as if he would have shewn me the greatness of an English heart — a greatness which more than atones for its weakness.

“I understand your purpose,” I said, “but you shall not execute your plans without me. Let me have the charge of seeing that justice is done you. If you will not agree, I shall start for Rome directly, I shall get there before you, and shall give the wretched actor warning of your approach. If you had killed him before I should have said nothing, but at Rome it is different, and you would have reason to repent of having indulged your righteous indignation. You don’t know Rome and priestly justice. Come, give me your hand and your word to do nothing without my consent, or else I shall leave you directly.”

Sir B —— M —— was a man of my own height but somewhat thinner, and five or six years older; the reader will understand his character without my describing it.

My speech must have rather astonished him, but he knew that my disposition was benevolent, and he could not help giving me his hand and his pledge.

“Yes, dearest,” said Betty, “leave vengeance to the friend whom Heaven has sent us.”

“I consent to do so, provided everything is done in concert between us.”

After this we parted, and Sir B —— M —— , being in need of rest, I went to tell the vetturino that we should start for Rome again on the following day.

“For Rome! Then you have found your pocketbook? It seems to me, my good sir, that you would have been wiser not to search for it.”

The worthy man, seeing my hand done up in lint, imagined I had fought a duel, and indeed everybody else came to the same conclusion.

Sir B —— M —— had gone to bed, and I spent the rest of the day in the company of Betty, who was overflowing with the gratitude. She said we must forget what had passed between us, and be the best of friends for the rest of our days, without a thought of any further amorous relations. I had not much difficulty in assenting to this condition.

She burned with the desire for vengeance on the scoundrelly actor who had deceived her; but I pointed out that her duty was to moderate Sir B —— M — — 's passions, as if he attempted any violence in Rome it might prove a very serious matter for him, besides its being to the disadvantage of his reputation to have the affair talked of.

"I promise you," I added, "to have the rogue imprisoned as soon as we reach Rome, and that ought to be sufficient vengeance for you. Instead of the advantages he proposed for himself, he will receive only shame and all the misery of a prison."

Sir B —— M —— slept seven or eight hours, and rose to find that a good deal of his rage had evaporated. He consented to abide by my arrangements, if he could have the pleasure of paying the fellow a visit, as he wanted to know him.

After this sensible decision and a good supper I went to my lonely couch without any regret, for I was happy in the consciousness of having done a good action.

We started at day-break the next morning, and when we reached Acquapendente we resolved to post to Rome. By the post the journey took twelve hours, otherwise we should have been three days on the road.

As soon as we reached Rome I went to the customhouse and put in the document relating to Betty's trunk. The next day it was duly brought to our inn and handed over to Betty.

As Sir B —— M —— had placed the case in my hands I went to the bargello, an important person at Rome, and an expeditious officer when he sees a case clearly and feels sure that the plaintiffs do not mind spending their money. The bargello is rich, and lives well; he has an almost free access to the cardinal-vicar, the governor, and even the Holy Father himself.

He gave me a private interview directly, and I told him the whole story, finally saying that all we asked for was that the rogue should be imprisoned and afterwards expelled from Rome.

"You see," I added, "that our demand is a very moderate one, and we could get all we want by the ordinary channels of the law; but we are in a hurry, and I want you to take charge of the whole affair. If you care to do so we shall be prepared to defray legal expenses to the extent of fifty crowns."

The bargello asked me to give him the bill of exchange and all the effects of the adventurer, including the letters.

I had the bill in my pocket and gave it him on the spot, taking a receipt in exchange. I told him to send to the inn for the rest.

“As soon as I have made him confess the facts you allege against him,” said the bargello, “we shall be able to do something. I have already heard that he is at Roland’s, and has been trying to get the Englishwoman’s trunk. If you liked to spend a hundred crowns instead of fifty we could send him to the galleys for a couple of years.”

“We will see about that,” said I, “for the present we will have him into prison.”

He was delighted to hear that the horse was not l’Etoile’s property, and said that if I liked to call at nine o’clock he would have further news for me.

I said I would come. I really had a good deal to do at Rome. I wanted to see Cardinal Bernis in the first place, but I postponed everything to the affair of the moment.

I went back to the inn and was told by a valet de place, whom Sir B —— M —— had hired, that the Englishman had gone to bed.

We were in need of a carriage, so I summoned the landlord and was astonished to find myself confronted by Roland in person.

“How’s this?” I said. “I thought you were still at the Place d’Espagne.”

“I have given my old house to my daughter who has married a prosperous Frenchman, while I have taken this palace where there are some magnificent rooms.”

“Has your daughter many foreigners staying at her house now?”

“Only one Frenchman, the Comte de l’Etoile, who is waiting for his equipage to come on. He has an excellent horse, and I am thinking of buying it from him.”

“I advise you to wait till to-morrow, and to say nothing about the advice I have given you.”

“Why should I wait?”

"I can't say any more just now."

This Roland was the father of the Therese whom I had loved nine years before, and whom my brother Jean had married in 1762, a year after my departure. Roland told me that my brother was in Rome with Prince Beloselski, the Russian ambassador to the Court of Saxony.

"I understood that my brother could not come to Rome."

"He came with a safe-conduct which the Dowager Electress of Saxony obtained for him from the Holy Father. He wants his case to be re-tried, and there he makes a mistake, for if it were heard a hundred times the sentence would continue the same. No one will see him, everyone avoids him, even Mengs will have nothing to say to him."

"Mengs is here, is he? I though he had been at Madrid."

"He has got leave of absence for a year, but his family remains in Spain."

After hearing all this news which was far from pleasant to me, as I did not wish to see Mengs or my brother, I went to bed, leaving orders that I was to be roused in time for dinner.

In an hour's time I was awakened by the tidings that some one was waiting to give me a note. It was one of the bargello's men, who had come to take over l'Etoile's effects.

At dinner I told Sir B —— M —— what I had done, and we agreed that he should accompany me to the bargello's in the evening.

In the afternoon we visited some of the principal palaces, and after taking Betty back to the inn we went to the bargello, who told us our man was already in prison, and that it would cost very little to send him to the galleys.

"Before making up my mind I should like to speak to him," said Sir B —— M —— .

"You can do so to-morrow. He confessed everything without any trouble, and made a jest of it, saying he was not afraid of any consequences, as the young lady had gone with him of her own free will. I shewed him the bill of exchange, but he evinced no emotion whatever. He told me that he was an actor by profession, but also a man of rank. As to the horse, he said he was at perfect liberty to sell it, as the watch he had left in pledge was worth more than the beast."

I had forgotten to inform the bargello that the watch aforesaid belonged to Betty.

We gave the worthy official fifty crowns, and supped with Betty, who had, as I have remarked, recovered her trunk, and had been busying herself in putting her things to rights.

She was glad to hear that the rascal was in prison, but she did not seem to wish to pay him a visit.

We went to see him in the afternoon of the next day.

The bargello had assigned us an advocate, who made out a document demanding payment by the prisoner of the expenses of the journey, and of his arrest, together with a certain sum as compensation to the person whom he had deceived, unless he could prove his right to the title of count in the course of six weeks.

We found l'Etoile with this document in his hand; someone was translating it for him into French.

As soon as the rascal saw me, he said, with a laugh, that I owed him twenty-five Louis as he had left Betty to sleep with me.

The Englishman told him he lied; it was he that had slept with her.

"Are you Betty's lover?" asked l'Etoile.

"Yes, and if I had caught you with her I should have blown out your brains, for you have deceived her doubly; you're only a beggarly actor."

"I have three thousand crowns."

"I will pay six thousand if the bill proves to be a good one. In the meanwhile you will stay here, and if it be false, as I expect it is, you will go to the galleys."

"Very good."

"I shall speak to my counsel."

We went out and called on the advocate, for Sir B —— M —— had a lively desire to send the impudent rascal to the galleys. However, it could not be done, for l'Etoile said he was quite ready to give up the bill, but that he expected Sir B —— M —— to pay a crown a day for his keep while he remained in prison.

Sir B —— M —— thought he would like to see something of Rome, as he was there, and was obliged to buy almost everything as he had left his belongings behind him, while Betty was well provided for as her trunk was of immense capacity. I went with them everywhere; it was not exactly the life I liked, but there would be time for me to please myself after they had gone. I loved Betty without desiring her, and I had taken a liking to the Englishman who had an excellent heart. At first he wanted to stay a fortnight at Rome, and then to return to Leghorn; but his friend Lord Baltimore, who had come to Rome in the meanwhile, persuaded him to pay a short visit to Naples.

This nobleman, who had with him a very pretty Frenchwoman and two servants, said he would see to the journey, and that I must join the party. I had made his acquaintance at London.

I was glad to have the opportunity of seeing Naples again. We lodged at the "Crocielles" at Chiaggia, or Chiaja, as the Neapolitans call it.

The first news I heard was the death of the Duke of Matalone and the marriage of his widow with Prince Caramanica.

This circumstance put an end to some of my hopes, and I only thought of amusing myself with my friends, as if I had never been at Naples before. Lord Baltimore had been there several times, but his mistress, Betty, and Sir B —— M —— , were strangers, and wanted to see everything. I accordingly acted as cicerone, for which part I and my lord, too, were much better qualified than the tedious and ignorant fellows who had an official right to that title.

The day after our arrival I was unpleasantly surprised to see the notorious Chevalier Goudar, whom I had known at London. He called on Lord Baltimore.

This famous rout had a house at Pausilippo, and his wife was none other than the pretty Irish girl Sara, formerly a drawer in a London tavern. The reader has been already introduced to her. Goudar knew I had met her, so he told me who she was, inviting us all to dine with him the next day.

Sara skewed no surprise nor confusion at the sight of me, but I was petrified. She was dressed with the utmost elegance, received company admirably, spoke Italian with perfect correctness, talked sensibly, and was exquisitely beautiful; I was stupefied; the metamorphosis was so great.

In a quarter of an hour five or six ladies of the highest rank arrived, with ten or twelve dukes, princes, and marquises, to say nothing of a host of distinguished strangers.

The table was laid for thirty, but before dinner Madame Goudar seated herself at the piano, and sang a few airs with the voice of a siren, and with a confidence that did not astonish the other guests as they knew her, but which astonished me extremely, for her singing was really admirable.

Goudar had worked this miracle. He had been educating her to be his wife for six or seven years.

After marrying her he had taken her to Paris, Vienna, Venice, Florence, Rome, etc., everywhere seeking fortune, but in vain. Finally he had come to Naples, where he had brought his wife into the fashion of obliging her to renounce in public the errors of the Anglican heresy. She had been received into the Catholic Church under the auspices of the Queen of Naples. The amusing part in all this was that Sara, being an Irishwoman, had been born a Catholic, and had never ceased to be one.

All the nobility, even to the Court, went to see Sara, while she went nowhere, for no one invited her. This kind of thing is a characteristic of nobility all the world over.

Goudar told me all these particulars, and confessed that he only made his living by gaming. Faro and biribi were the only pillars of his house; but they must have been strong ones, for he lived in great style.

He asked me to join with him, and I did not care to refuse; my purse was fast approaching total depletion, and if it were not for this resource I could not continue living in the style to which I had been accustomed.

Having taken this resolution I declined returning to Rome with Betty and Sir B —— M —— , who wanted to repay me all I had spent on her account. I was not in a position to be ostentatious, so I accepted his generous offer.

Two months later I heard that l'Etoile had been liberated by the influence of Cardinal Bernis, and had left Rome. Next year I heard at Florence that Sir B —— M —— had returned to England, where no doubt he married Betty as soon as he became a widower.

As for the famous Lord Baltimore he left Naples a few days after my friends, and travelled about Italy in his usual way. Three years later he paid for his British bravado with his life. He committed the wild imprudence of traversing the Maremma in August, and was killed by the poisonous exhalations.

I stopped at "Crocielles," as all the rich foreigners came to live there. I was thus enabled to make their acquaintance, and put them in the way of losing their money at Goudar's. I did not like my task, but circumstances were too strong for me.

Five or six days after Betty had left I chanced to meet the Abby Gama, who had aged a good deal, but was still as gay and active as ever. After we had told each other our adventures he informed me that, as all the differences between the Holy See and the Court of Naples had been adjusted, he was going back to Rome.

Before he went, however, he said he should like to present me to a lady whom he was sure I should be very glad to see again.

The first persons I thought of were Donna Leonilda, or Donna Lucrezia, her mother; but what was my surprise to see Agatha, the dancer with whom I had been in love at Turin after abandoning the Corticelli.

Our delight was mutual, and we proceeded to tell each other the incidents of our lives since we had parted.

My tale only lasted a quarter of an hour, but Agatha's history was a long one.

She had only danced a year at Naples. An advocate had fallen in love with her, and she shewed me four pretty children she had given him. The husband came in at supper-time, and as she had often talked to him about me he rushed to embrace me as soon as he heard my name. He was an intelligent man, like most of the pagletti of Naples. We supped together like old friends, and the Abbe Gama going soon after supper I stayed with them till midnight, promising to join them at dinner the next day.

Although Agatha was in the very flower of her beauty, the old fires were not rekindled in me. I was ten years older. My coolness pleased me, for I should not have liked to trouble the peace of a happy home.

After leaving Agatha I proceeded to Goudar's, in whose bank I took a strong interest. I found a dozen gamesters round the table, but what was my surprise to recognize in the holder of the bank Count Medini.

Three or four days before this Medini had been expelled from the house of M. de Choiseul, the French ambassador; he had been caught cheating at cards. I had also my reason to be incensed against him; and, as the reader may remember, we had fought a duel.

On glancing at the bank I saw that it was at the last gasp. It ought to have held six hundred ounces, and there were scarcely a hundred. I was interested to the extent of a third.

On examining the face of the punter who had made these ravages I guessed the game. It was the first time I had seen the rascal at Goudar's.

At the end of the deal Goudar told me that this punter was a rich Frenchman who had been introduced by Medini. He told me I should not mind his winning that evening, as he would be sure to lose it all and a good deal more another time.

"I don't care who the punter is," said I, "it is not of the slightest consequence to me, as I tell you plainly that as long as Medini is the banker I will have nothing to do with it."

"I have told Medini about it and wanted to take a third away from the bank, but he seemed offended and said he would make up any loss to you, but that he could not have the bank touched."

"Very good, but if he does not bring me my money by to-morrow morning there will be trouble. Indeed, the responsibility lies with you, for I have told you that as long as Medini deals I will have nothing to do with it."

"Of course you have a claim on me for two hundred ounces, but I hope you will be reasonable; it would be rather hard for me to lose two-thirds."

Knowing Goudar to be a greater rascal than Medini, I did not believe a word he said; and I waited impatiently for the end of the game.

At one o'clock it was all over. The lucky punter went off with his pockets full of gold, and Medini, affecting high spirits, which were very much out of place, swore his victory should cost him dear.

"Will you kindly give me my two hundred ounces," said I, "for, of course, Gondar told you that I was out of it?"

"I confess myself indebted to you for that amount, as you absolutely insist, but pray tell me why you refuse to be interested in the bank when I am dealing."

"Because I have no confidence in your luck."

"You must see that your words are capable of a very unpleasant interpretation."

"I can't prevent your interpreting my words as you please, but I have a right to my own opinion. I want my two hundred ounces, and I am quite willing to leave you any moneys you propose to make out of the conqueror of to-night. You must make your arrangements with M. Goudar, and by noon to-morrow, you, M. Goudar, will bring me that sum."

"I can't remit you the money till the count gives it me, for I haven't got any money."

"I am sure you will have some money by twelve o'clock to-morrow morning. Goodnight."

I would not listen to any of their swindling arguments, and went home without the slightest doubt that they were trying to cheat me. I resolved to wash my hands of the whole gang as soon as I had got my money back by fair means or foul.

At nine the next morning I received a note from Medini, begging me to call on him and settle the matter. I replied that he must make his arrangements with Goudar, and I begged to be excused calling on him.

In the course of an hour he paid me a visit, and exerted all his eloquence to persuade me to take a bill for two hundred ounces, payable in a week. I gave him a sharp refusal, saying that my business was with Goudar and Gondar only, and that unless I received the money by noon I should proceed to extremities. Medini raised his voice, and told me that my language was offensive; and forthwith I took up a pistol and placed it against his cheek, ordering him to leave the room. He turned pale, and went away without a word.

At noon I went to Gondar's without my sword, but with two good pistols in my pocket. Medini was there, and began by reproaching me with attempting to assassinate him in my own house.

I took no notice of this, but told Gondar to give me my two hundred ounces.

Goudar asked Medini to give him the money.

There would undoubtedly have been a quarrel, if I had not been prudent enough to leave the room, threatening Gondar with ruin if he did not send on the money directly.

Just as I was leaving the house, the fair Sara put her head out of the window, and begged me to come up by the back stairs and speak to her.

I begged to be excused, so she said she would come down, and in a moment she stood beside me.

"You are in the right about your money," she said, "but just at present my husband has not got any; you really must wait two or three days, I will guarantee the payment."

"I am really sorry," I replied, "not to be able to oblige such a charming woman, but the only thing that will pacify me is my money, and till I have had it, you will see me no more in your house, against which I declare war."

Thereupon she drew from her finger a diamond ring, worth at least four hundred ounces, and begged me to accept it as a pledge.

I took it, and left her after making my bow. She was doubtless astonished at my behaviour, for in her state of deshabille she could not have counted on my displaying such firmness.

I was very well satisfied with my victory, and went to dine with the advocate, Agatha's husband. I told him the story, begging him to find someone who would give me two hundred ounces on the ring.

"I will do it myself," said he; and he gave me an acknowledgment and two hundred ounces on the spot. He then wrote in my name a letter to Goudar, informing him that he was the depositary of the ring.

This done, I recovered my good temper.

Before dinner Agatha took me into her boudoir and shewed me all the splendid jewels I had given her when I was rich and in love.

“Now I am a rich woman,” said she, “and my good fortune is all your making; so take back what you gave me. Don’t be offended; I am so grateful to you, and my good husband and I agreed on this plan this morning.”

To take away any scruples I might have, she shewed me the diamonds her husband had given her; they had belonged to his first wife and were worth a considerable sum.

My gratitude was too great for words, I could only press her hand, and let my eyes speak the feelings of my heart. Just then her husband came in.

It had evidently been concerted between them, for the worthy man embraced me, and begged me to accede to his wife’s request.

We then joined the company which consisted of a dozen or so of their friends, but the only person who attracted my attention was a very young man, whom I set down at once as in love with Agatha. His name was Don Pascal Latilla; and I could well believe that he would be successful in love, for he was intelligent, handsome, and well-mannered. We became friends in the course of the meal.

Amongst the ladies I was greatly pleased with one young girl. She was only fourteen, but she looked eighteen. Agatha told me she was studying singing, intending to go on the stage as she was so poor.

“So pretty, and yet poor?”

“Yes, for she will have all or nothing; and lovers of that kind are rare in Naples.”

“But she must have some lover?”

“If she has, no one has heard of him. You had better make her acquaintance and go and see her. You will soon be friends.”

“What’s her name?”

"Callimena. The lady who is speaking to her is her aunt, and I expect they are talking about you."

We sat down to the enjoyment of a delicate and abundant meal. Agatha, I could see, was happy, and delighted to shew me how happy she was. The old Abbe Gama congratulated himself on having presented me. Don Pascal Latilla could not be jealous of the attentions paid me by his idol, for I was a stranger, and they were my due; while her husband prided himself on his freedom from those vulgar prejudices to which so many Neapolitans are subject.

In the midst of all this gaiety I could not help stealing many a furtive glance towards Callimena. I addressed her again and again, and she answered me politely but so briefly as to give me no opportunity of displaying my powers in the way of persiflage.

I asked if her name was her family name or a pseudonym.

"It is my baptismal name."

"It is Greek; but, of course, you know what it means?"

"No."

"Mad beauty, or fair moon."

"I am glad to say that I have nothing in common with my name."

"Have you any brothers or sisters?"

"I have only one married sister, with whom you may possibly be acquainted."

"What is her name, and who is her husband?"

"Her husband is a Piedmontese, but she does not live with him."

"Is she the Madame Slopis who travels with Aston?"

"Exactly."

"I can give you good news of her."

After dinner I asked Agatha how she came to know Callimena.

"My husband is her godfather."

"What is her exact age?"

"Fourteen."

"She's a simple prodigy! What loveliness!"

"Her sister is still handsomer."

"I have never seen her."

A servant came in and said M. Goudar would like to have a little private conversation with the advocate.

The advocate came back in a quarter of an hour, and informed me that Goudar had given him the two hundred ounces, and that he had returned him the ring.

"Then that's all settled, and I am very glad of it. I have certainly made an eternal enemy of him, but that doesn't trouble me much."

We began playing, and Agatha made me play with Callimena, the freshness and simplicity of whose character delighted me.

I told her all I knew about her sister, and promised I would write to Turin to enquire whether she were still there. I told her that I loved her, and that if she would allow me, I would come and see her. Her reply was extremely satisfactory.

The next morning I went to wish her good day. She was taking a music lesson from her master. Her talents were really of a moderate order, but love made me pronounce her performance to be exquisite.

When the master had gone, I remained alone with her. The poor girl overwhelmed me with apologies for her dress, her wretched furniture, and for her inability to give me a proper breakfast.

"All that make you more desirable in my eyes, and I am only sorry that I cannot offer you a fortune."

As I praised her beauty, she allowed me to kiss her ardently, but she stopped my further progress by giving me a kiss as if to satisfy me.

I made an effort to restrain my ardour, and told her to tell me truly whether she had a lover.

"Not one."

"And have you never had one?"

"Never."

"Not even a fancy for anyone?"

"No, never."

"What, with your beauty and sensibility, is there no man in Naples who has succeeded in inspiring you with desire?"

"No one has ever tried to do so. No one has spoken to me as you have, and that is the plain truth."

"I believe you, and I see that I must make haste to leave Naples, if I would not be the most unhappy of men."

"What do you mean?"

"I should love you without the hope of possessing you, and thus I should be most unhappy."

"Love me then, and stay. Try and make me love you. Only you must moderate your ecstacies, for I cannot love a man who cannot exercise self-restraint."

"As just now, for instance?"

"Yes. If you calm yourself I shall think you do so for my sake, and thus love will tread close on the heels of gratitude."

This was as much as to tell me that though she did not love me yet I had only to wait patiently, and I resolved to follow her advice. I had reached an age which knows nothing of the impatient desires of youth.

I gave her a tender embrace, and as I was getting up to go I asked her if she were in need of money.

This question male her blush, and she said I had better ask her aunt, who was in the next room.

I went in, and was somewhat astonished to find the aunt seated between two worthy Capuchins, who were talking small talk to her while she worked at her needle. At a little distance three young girls sat sewing.

The aunt would have risen to welcome me, but I prevented her, asked her how she did, and smilingly congratulated her on her company. She smiled back, but the Capuchins sat as firm as two stocks, without honouring me with as much as a glance.

I took a chair and sat down beside her.

She was near her fiftieth year, though some might have doubted whether she would ever see it again; her manner was good and honest, and her features bore the traces of the beauty that time had ruined.

Although I am not a prejudiced man, the presence of the two evil-smelling monks annoyed me extremely. I thought the obstinate way in which they stayed little less than an insult. True they were men like myself, in spite of their goats' beards and dirty frocks, and consequently were liable to the same desires as I; but for all that I found them wholly intolerable. I could not shame them without shaming the lady, and they knew it; monks are adepts at such calculations.

I have travelled all over Europe, but France is the only country in which I saw a decent and respectable clergy.

At the end of a quarter of an hour I could contain myself no longer, and told the aunt that I wished to say something to her in private. I thought the two satyrs would have taken the hint, but I counted without my host. The aunt arose, however, and took me into the next room.

I asked my question as delicately as possible, and she replied, —

“Alas! I have only too great a need of twenty ducats (about eighty francs) to pay my rent.”

I gave her the money on the spot, and I saw that she was very grateful, but I left her before she could express her feelings.

Here I must tell my readers (if I ever have any) of an event which took place on that same day.

As I was dining in my room by myself, I was told that a Venetian gentleman who said he knew me wished to speak to me.

I ordered him to be shewn in, and though his face was not wholly unknown to me I could not recollect who he was.

He was tall, thin and wretched, misery and hunger spewing plainly in his every feature; his beard was long, his head shaven, his robe a dingy brown, and bound about him with a coarse cord, whence hung a rosary and a dirty handkerchief. In the left hand he bore a basket, and in the right a long stick; his form is still before me, but I think of him not as a humble penitent, but as a being in the last state of desperation; almost an assassin.

“Who are you?” I said at length. “I think I have seen you before, and yet …”

“I will soon tell you my name and the story of my woes; but first give me something to eat, for I am dying of hunger. I have had nothing but bad soup for the last few days.”

“Certainly; go downstairs and have your dinner, and then come back to me; you can’t eat and speak at the same time.”

My man went down to give him his meal, and I gave instructions that I was not to be left alone with him as he terrified me.

I felt sure that I ought to know him, and longed to hear his story.

In three quarters of an hour he came up again, looking like some one in a high fever.

“Sit down,” said I, “and speak freely.”

“My name is Albergoni.”

“What!”

Albergoni was a gentleman of Padua, and one of my most intimate friends twenty-five years before. He was provided with a small fortune, but an abundance of wit, and had a great leaning towards pleasure and the exercise of satire. He laughed at the police and the cheated husbands, indulged in Venus and Bacchus to excess, sacrificed to the god of pederasty, and gamed incessantly. He was now hideously ugly, but when I knew him first he was a very Antinous.

He told me the following story:

“A club of young rakes, of whom I was one, had a casino at the Zuecca; we passed many a pleasant hour there without hurting anyone. Some one imagined that these meetings were the scenes of unlawful pleasures, the engines of the law were secretly directed against us, and the casino was shut up, and we were ordered to be arrested. All escaped except myself and a man named Branzandi. We had to wait for our unjust sentence for two years, but at last it appeared. My wretched fellow was condemned to lose his head, and afterwards to be burnt, while I was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment 'in carcere duro'. In 1765 I was set free, and went to Padua hoping to live in peace, but my persecutors gave me no rest, and I was accused of the same crime. I would not wait for the storm to burst, so I fled to Rome, and two years afterwards the Council of Ten condemned me to perpetual banishment.

"I might bear this if I had the wherewithal to live, but a brother-in-law of mine has possessed himself of all I have, and the unjust Tribunal winks at his misdeeds.

"A Roman attorney made me an offer of an annuity of two pawls a day on the condition that I should renounce all claims on my estate. I refused this iniquitous condition, and left Rome to come here and turn hermit. I have followed this sorry trade for two years, and can bear it no more."

"Go back to Rome; you can live on two pawls a day."

"I would rather die."

I pitied him sincerely, and said that though I was not a rich man he was welcome to dine every day at my expense while I remained in Naples, and I gave him a sequin.

Two or three days later my man told me that the poor wretch had committed suicide.

In his room were found five numbers, which he bequeathed to Medini and myself out of gratitude for our kindness to him. These five numbers were very profitable to the Lottery of Naples, for everyone, myself excepted, rushed to get them. Not a single one proved a winning number, but the popular belief that numbers given by a man before he commits suicide are infallible is too deeply rooted among the Neapolitans to be destroyed by such a misadventure.

I went to see the wretched man's body, and then entered a cafe. Someone was talking of the case, and maintaining that death by strangulation must be most luxurious as the victim always expires with a strong erection. It might be so, but the erection might also be the result of an agony of pain, and before anyone can speak dogmatically on the point he must first have had a practical experience.

As I was leaving the cafe I had the good luck to catch a handkerchief thief in the act; it was about the twentieth I had stolen from me in the month I had spent at Naples. Such petty thieves abound there, and their skill is something amazing.

As soon as he felt himself caught, he begged me not to make any noise, swearing he would return all the handkerchiefs he had stolen from me, which, as he confessed, amounted to seven or eight.

"You have stolen more than twenty from me."

"Not I, but some of my mates. If you come with me, perhaps we shall be able to get them all back."

"Is it far off?"

"In the Largo del Castello. Let me go; people are looking at us."

The little rascal took me to an evil-looking tavern, and shewed me into a room, where a man asked me if I wanted to buy any old things. As soon as he heard I had come for my handkerchiefs, he opened a big cupboard full of handkerchiefs, amongst which I found a dozen of mine, and bought them back for a trifle.

A few days after I bought several others, though I knew they were stolen.

The worthy Neapolitan dealer seemed to think me trustworthy, and three or four days before I left Naples he told me that he could sell me, for ten or twelve thousand ducats, commodities which would fetch four times that amount at Rome or elsewhere.

"What kind of commodities are they?"

"Watches, snuff-boxes, rings, and jewels, which I dare not sell here."

"Aren't you afraid of being discovered?"

"Not much, I don't tell everyone of my business."

I thanked him, but I would not look at his trinkets, as I was afraid the temptation of making such a profit would be too great.

When I got back to my inn I found some guests had arrived, of whom a few were known to me. Bartoldi had arrived from Dresden with two young Saxons, whose tutor he was. These young noblemen were rich and handsome, and looked fond of pleasure.

Bartoldi was an old friend of mine. He had played Harlequin at the King of Poland's Italian Theatre. On the death of the monarch he had been placed at the head of the opera-buffa by the dowager electress, who was passionately fond of music.

Amongst the other strangers were Miss Chudleigh, now Duchess of Kingston, with a nobleman and a knight whose names I have forgotten.

The duchess recognized me at once, and seemed pleased that I paid my court to her. An hour afterwards Mr. Hamilton came to see her, and I was delighted to make his acquaintance. We all dined together. Mr. Hamilton was a genius, and yet he ended by marrying a mere girl, who was clever enough to make him in love with her. Such a misfortune often comes to clever men in their old age. Marriage is always a folly; but when a man marries a young woman at a time of life when his physical strength is running low, he is bound to pay dearly for his folly; and if his wife is amorous of him she will kill him even years ago I had a narrow escape myself from the same fate.

After dinner I presented the two Saxons to the duchess; they gave her news of the dowager electress, of whom she was very fond. We then went to the play together. As chance would have it, Madame Goudar occupied the box next to ours, and Hamilton amused the duchess by telling the story of the handsome Irishwoman, but her grace did not seem desirous of making Sara's acquaintance.

After supper the duchess arranged a game of quinze with the two Englishmen and the two Saxons. The stakes were small, and the Saxons proved victorious. I had not taken any part in the game, but I resolved to do so the next evening.

The following day we dined magnificently with the Prince of Francavilla, and in the afternoon he took us to the bath by the seashore, where we saw a wonderful sight. A priest stripped himself naked, leapt into the water, and without making the slightest movement floated on the surface like a piece of deal. There was no trick in it, and the marvel must be assigned to some special quality in his organs of breathing. After this the prince amused the duchess still more pleasantly. He made all his pages, lads of fifteen to seventeen, go into the water, and their various evolutions afforded us great pleasure. They were all the sweethearts of the prince, who preferred Ganymede to Hebe.

The Englishmen asked him if if he would give us the same spectacle, only substituting nymphs for the ‘amoyini’, and he promised to do so the next day at his splendid house near Portici, where there was a marble basin in the midst of the garden.

CHAPTER XIV

My Amours with Gallimena — Journey to Soyento — Medini — Goudar — Miss Chudleigh — The Marquis Petina — Gaetano — Madame Cornelis's Son — An Anecdote of Sara Goudar — The Florentines Mocked by the King — My Journey to Salerno, Return to Naples, and Arrival at Rome

The Prince of Francavilla was a rich Epicurean, whose motto was 'Fovet et favet'.

He was in favour in Spain, but the king allowed him to live at Naples, as he was afraid of his initiating the Prince of Asturias, his brothers, and perhaps the whole Court, into his peculiar vices.

The next day he kept his promise, and we had the pleasure of seeing the marble basin filled with ten or twelve beautiful girls who swam about in the water.

Miss Chudleigh and the two other ladies pronounced this spectacle tedious; they no doubt preferred that of the previous day.

In spite of this gay company I went to see Callimena twice a day; she still made me sigh in vain.

Agatha was my confidante; she would gladly have helped me to attain my ends, but her dignity would not allow of her giving me any overt assistance. She promised to ask Callimena to accompany us on an excursion to Sorento, hoping that I should succeed in my object during the night we should have to spend there.

Before Agatha had made these arrangements, Hamilton had made similar ones with the Duchess of Kingston, and I succeeded in getting an invitation. I associated chiefly with the two Saxons and a charming Abbe Guliani, with whom I afterwards made a more intimate acquaintance at Rome.

We left Naples at four o'clock in the morning, in a felucca with twelve oars, and at nine we reached Sorrento.

We were fifteen in number, and all were delighted with this earthly paradise.

Hamilton took us to a garden belonging to the Duke of Serra Capriola, who chanced to be there with his beautiful Piedmontese wife, who loved her husband passionately.

The duke had been sent there two months before for having appeared in public in an equipage which was adjudged too magnificent. The minister Tanucci called on the king to punish this infringement of the sumptuary laws, and as the king had not yet learnt to resist his ministers, the duke and his wife were exiled to this earthly paradise. But a paradise which is a prison is no paradise at all; they were both dying of ennui, and our arrival was balm in Gilead to them.

A certain Abbe Bettoni, whose acquaintance I had made nine years before at the late Duke of Matalone's, had come to see them, and was delighted to meet me again.

The abbe was a native of Brescia, but he had chosen Sorento as his residence. He had three thousand crowns a year, and lived well, enjoying all the gifts of Bacchus, Ceres, Comus, and Venus, the latter being his favourite divinity. He had only to desire to attain, and no man could desire greater pleasure than he enjoyed at Sorento. I was vexed to see Count Medini with him; we were enemies, and gave each other the coldest of greetings.

We were twenty-two at table and enjoyed delicious fare, for in that land everything is good; the very bread is sweeter than elsewhere. We spent the afternoon in inspecting the villages, which are surrounded by avenues finer than the avenues leading to the grandest castles in Europe.

Abbe Bettoni treated us to lemon, coffee, and chocolate ices, and some delicious cream cheese. Naples excels in these delicacies, and the abbe had everything of the best. We were waited on by five or six country girls of ravishing beauty, dressed with exquisite neatness. I asked him whether that were his seraglio, and he replied that it might be so, but that jealousy was unknown, as I should see for myself if I cared to spend a week with him.

I envied this happy man, and yet I pitied him, for he was at least twelve years older than I, and I was by no means young. His pleasures could not last much longer.

In the evening we returned to the duke's, and sat down to a supper composed of several kinds of fish.

The air of Sorento gives an untiring appetite, and the supper soon disappeared.

After supper my lady proposed a game at faro, and Bettoni, knowing Medini to be a professional gamester, asked him to hold the bank. He begged to be excused, saying he had not enough money, so I consented to take his place.

The cards were brought in, and I emptied my poor purse on the table. It only held four hundred ounces, but that was all I possessed.

The game began; and on Medini asking me if I would allow him a share in the bank, I begged him to excuse me on the score of inconvenience.

I went on dealing till midnight, and by that time I had only forty ounces left. Everybody had won except Sir Rosebury, who had punted in English bank notes, which I had put into my pocket without counting.

When I got to my room I thought I had better look at the bank notes, for the depletion of my purse disquieted me. My delight may be imagined. I found I had got four hundred and fifty pounds — more than double what I had lost.

I went to sleep well pleased with my day's work, and resolved not to tell anyone of my good luck.

The duchess had arranged for us to start at nine, and Madame de Serra Capriola begged us to take coffee with her before going.

After breakfast Medini and Bettoni came in, and the former asked Hamilton whether he would mind his returning with us. Of course, Hamilton could not refuse, so he came on board, and at two o'clock I was back at my inn. I was astonished to be greeted in my antechamber by a young lady, who asked me sadly whether I remembered her. She was the eldest of the five Hanoverians, the same that had fled with the Marquis dells Petina.

I told her to come in, and ordered dinner to be brought up.

“If you are alone,” she said, “I should be glad to share your repast.”

“Certainly; I will order dinner for two.”

Her story was soon told. She had come to Naples with her husband, whom her mother refused to recognize. The poor wretch had sold all he possessed, and two or three months after he had been arrested on several charges of forgery. His poor mate had supported him in prison for seven years. She had heard that I was at Naples, and wanted me to help her, not as the Marquis della Petina wished, by lending him money, but by employing my influence with the Duchess of Kingston to make that lady take her to England with her in her service.

“Are you married to the marquis?”

“No.”

“Then how could you keep him for seven years?”

“Alas … . You can think of a hundred ways, and they would all be true.”

“I see.”

“Can you procure me an interview with the duchess?”

“I will try, but I warn you that I shall tell her the simple truth.”

“Very good.”

“Come again to-morrow.”

At six o’clock I went to ask Hamilton how I could exchange the English notes I had won, and he gave me the money himself.

Before supper I spoke to the duchess about the poor Hanoverian. My lady said she remembered seeing her, and that she would like to have a talk with her before coming to any decision. I brought the poor creature to her the next day, and left them alone. The result of the interview was that the duchess took her into her service in the place of a Roman girl, and the Hanoverian went to England with her. I never heard of her again, but a few days after Petina sent to beg me to come and see him in prison, and I could not refuse. I found him with a young man whom I recognized as his brother, though he was very handsome and the marquis very ugly; but the distinction between beauty and ugliness is often hard to point out.

This visit proved a very tedious one, for I had to listen to a long story which did not interest me in the least.

As I was going out I was met by an official, who said another prisoner wanted to speak to me.

“What’s his name?”

“His name is Gaetano, and he says he is a relation of yours.”

My relation and Gaetano! I thought it might be the abbe.

I went up to the first floor, and found a score of wretched prisoners sitting on the ground roaring an obscene song in chorus.

Such gaiety is the last resource of men condemned to imprisonment on the galleys; it is nature giving her children some relief.

One of the prisoners came up to me and greeted me as “gossip.” He would have embraced me, but I stepped back. He told me his name, and I recognized in him that Gaetano who had married a pretty woman under my auspices as her godfather. The reader may remember that I afterwards helped her to escape from him.

“I am sorry to see you here, but what can I do for you?”

“You can pay me the hundred crowns you owe me, for the goods supplied to you at Paris by me.”

This was a lie, so I turned my back on him, saying I supposed imprisonment had driven him mad.

As I went away I asked an official why he had been imprisoned, and was told it was for forgery, and that he would have been hanged if it had not been for a legal flaw. He was sentenced to imprisonment for life.

I dismissed him from my mind, but in the afternoon I had a visit from an advocate who demanded a hundred crowns on Gaetano’s behalf, supporting his claim by the production of an immense ledger, where my name appeared as debtor on several pages.

“Sir,” said I, “the man is mad; I don’t owe him anything, and the evidence of this book is utterly worthless.

“You make a mistake, sir,” he replied; “this ledger is good evidence, and our laws deal very favorably with imprisoned creditors. I am retained for them, and if you do not settle the matter by to-morrow I shall serve you with a summons.”

I restrained my indignation and asked him politely for his name and address. He wrote it down directly, feeling quite certain that his affair was as good as settled.

I called on Agatha, and her husband was much amused when I told my story.

He made me sign a power of attorney, empowering him to act for me, and he then advised the other advocate that all communications in the case must be made to him alone.

The ‘paglietti’ who abound in Naples only live by cheating, and especially by imposing on strangers.

Sir Rosebury remained at Naples, and I found myself acquainted with all the English visitors. They all lodged at “Crocielles,” for the English are like a flock of sheep; they follow each other about, always go to the came place, and never care to shew any originality. We often arranged little trips in which the two Saxons joined, and I found the time pass very pleasantly. Nevertheless, I should have left Naples after the fair if my love for Callimena had not restrained me. I saw her every day and made her presents, but she only granted me the slightest of favours.

The fair was nearly over, and Agatha was making her preparations for going to Sorento as had been arranged. She begged her husband to invite a lady whom he had loved before marrying her while she invited Pascal Latilla for herself, and Callimena for me.

There were thus three couples, and the three gentlemen were to defray all expenses.

Agatha’s husband took the direction of everything.

A few days before the party I saw, to my surprise, Joseph, son of Madame Cornelis and brother of my dear Sophie.

"How did you come to Naples? Whom are you with?"

"I am by myself. I wanted to see Italy, and my mother gave me this pleasure. I have seen Turin, Milan, Genoa, Florence, Venice, and Rome; and after I have done Italy I shall see Switzerland and Germany, and then return to England by way of Holland."

"How long is this expedition to take?"

"Six months."

"I suppose you will be able to give a full account of everything when you go back to London?"

"I hope to convince my mother that the money she spent was not wasted."

"How much do you think it will cost you?"

"The five hundred guineas she gave me, no more."

"Do you mean to say you are only going to spend five hundred guineas in six months? I can't believe it."

"Economy works wonders."

"I suppose so. How have you done as to letters of introduction in all these countries of which you now know so much?"

"I have had no introductions. I carry an English passport, and let people think that I am English."

"Aren't you afraid of getting into bad company?"

"I don't give myself the chance. I don't speak to anyone, and when people address me I reply in monosyllables. I always strike a bargain before I eat a meal or take a lodging. I only travel in public conveyances."

"Very good. Here you will be able to economize; I will pay all your expenses, and give you an excellent cicerone, one who will cost you nothing."

"I am much obliged, but I promised my mother not to accept anything from anybody."

"I think you might make an exception in my case."

"No. I have relations in Venice, and I would not take so much as a single dinner from them. When I promise, I perform."

Knowing his obstinacy, I did not insist. He was now a young man of twenty-three, of a delicate order of prettiness, and might easily have been taken for a girl in disguise if he had not allowed his whiskers to grow.

Although his grand tour seemed an extravagant project, I could not help admiring his courage and desire to be well informed.

I asked him about his mother and daughter, and he replied to my questions without reserve.

He told me that Madame Cornelis was head over ears in debts, and spent about half the year in prison. She would then get out by giving fresh bills and making various arrangements with her creditors, who knew that if they did not allow her to give her balls, they could not expect to get their money.

My daughter, I heard, was a pretty girl of seventeen, very talented, and patronized by the first ladies in London. She gave concerts, but had to bear a good deal from her mother.

I asked him to whom she was to have been married, when she was taken from the boarding school. He said he had never heard of anything of the kind.

"Are you in any business?"

"No. My mother is always talking of buying a cargo and sending me with it to the Indies, but the day never seems to come, and I am afraid it never will come. To buy a cargo one must have some money, and my mother has none."

In spite of his promise, I induced him to accept the services of my man, who shewed him all the curiosities of Naples in the course of a week.

I could not make him stay another week. He set out for Rome, and wrote to me from there that he had left six shirts and a great coat behind him. He begged me to send them on, but he forgot to give me his address.

He was a hare-brained fellow, and yet with the help of two or three sound maxims he managed to traverse half Europe without coming to any grief.

I had an unexpected visit from Goudar, who knew the kind of company I kept, and wanted me to ask his wife and himself to dinner to meet the two Saxons and my English friends.

I promised to oblige him on the understanding that there was to be no play at my house, as I did not want to be involved in any unpleasantness. He was perfectly satisfied with this arrangement, as he felt sure his wife would attract them to his house, where, as he said, one could play without being afraid of anything.

As I was going to Sorento the next day, I made an appointment with him for a day after my return.

This trip to Sorento was my last happy day.

The advocate took us to a house where we were lodged with all possible comfort. We had four rooms; the first was occupied by Agatha and her husband, the second by Callimena and the advocate's old sweetheart, the third by Pascal Latilla, and the fourth by myself.

After supper we went early to bed, and rising with the sun we went our several ways; the advocate with his old sweetheart, Agatha with Pascal, and I with Callimena. At noon we met again to enjoy a delicious dinner, and then the advocate took his siesta, while Pascal went for a walk with Agatha and her husband's sweetheart, and I wandered with Callimena under the shady alleys where the heat of the sun could not penetrate. Here it was that Callimena consented to gratify my passion. She gave herself for love's sake alone, and seemed sorry she had made me wait so long.

On the fourth day we returned to Naples in three carriages, as there was a strong wind. Callimena persuaded me to tell her aunt what had passed between us, that we might be able to meet without any restraint for the future.

I approved of her idea, and, not fearing to meet with much severity from the aunt, I took her apart and told her all that had passed, making her reasonable offers.

She was a sensible woman, and heard what I had to say with great good humour. She said that as I seemed inclined to do something for her niece, she would let me know as soon as possible what she wanted most. I remarked that as I should soon be leaving for Rome, I should like to sup with her niece every evening. She thought this a very natural wish on my part, and so we went to Callimena, who was delighted to hear the result of our interview.

I lost no time, but supped and passed that night with her. I made her all my own by the power of my love, and by buying her such things as she most needed, such as linen, dresses, etc. It cost me about a hundred louis, and in spite of the smallness of my means I thought I had made a good bargain. Agatha, whom I told of my good luck, was delighted to have helped me to procure it.

Two or three days after I gave a dinner to my English friends, the two Saxons, Bartoldi their governor, and Goudar and his wife.

We were all ready, and only waiting for M. and Madame Goudar, when I saw the fair Irishwoman come in with Count Medini. This piece of insolence made all the blood in my body rush to my head. However, I restrained myself till Goudar came in, and then I gave him a piece of my mind. It had been agreed that his wife should come with him. The rascally fellow prevaricated, and tried hard to induce me to believe that Medini had not plotted the breaking of the bank, but his eloquence was in vain.

Our dinner was a most agreeable one, and Sara cut a brilliant figure, for she possessed every pleasing quality that can make a woman attractive. In good truth, this tavern girl would have filled a throne with any queen; but Fortune is blind.

When the dinner was over, M. de Buturlin, a distinguished Russian, and a great lover of pretty women, paid me a visit. He had been attracted by the sweet voice of the fair Sara, who was singing a Neapolitan air to the guitar. I shone only with a borrowed light, but I was far from being offended. Buturlin fell in love with Sara on the spot, and a few months after I left he got her for five hundred Louis, which Goudar required to carry out the order he had received, namely, to leave Naples in three days.

This stroke came from the queen, who found out that the king met Madame Goudar secretly at Procida. She found her royal husband laughing heartily at a letter which he would not shew her.

The queen’s curiosity was excited, and at last the king gave in, and her majesty read the following:

“Ti aspettero nel medesimo luogo, ed alla stessa ora, coll’ impazienza medesima che ha una vacca che desidera l’avicinamento del toro.”

“Chi infamia!” cried the queen, and her majesty gave the cow’s husband to understand that in three days he would have to leave Naples, and look for bulls in other countries.

If these events had not taken place, M. de Buturlin would not have made so good a bargain.

After my dinner, Goudar asked all the company to sup with him the next evening. The repast was a magnificent one, but when Medini sat down at the end of a long table behind a heap of gold and a pack of cards, no punters came forward. Madame Goudar tried in vain to make the gentlemen take a hand. The Englishmen and the Saxons said politely that they should be delighted to play if she or I would take the bank, but they feared the count’s extraordinary fortune.

Thereupon Goudar had the impudence to ask me to deal for a fourth share.

“I will not deal under a half share,” I replied, “though I have no confidence in my luck.”

Goudar spoke to Medini, who got up, took away his share, and left me the place.

I had only two hundred ounces in my purse. I placed them beside Goudar’s two hundred, and in two hours my bank was broken, and I went to console myself with my Callimena.

Finding myself penniless I decided to yield to the pressure of Agatha’s husband, who continued to beg me to take back the jewelry I had given his wife. I told Agatha I would never have consented if fortune had been kinder to me. She told her husband, and the worthy man came out of his closet and embraced me as if I had just made his fortune.

I told him I should like to have the value of the jewels, and the next day I found myself once more in possession of fifteen thousand francs. From that moment I decided to go to Rome, intending to stop there for eight months; but before my departure the advocate said he must give me a dinner at a casino which he had at Portici.

I had plenty of food for thought when I found myself in the house where I had made a small fortune by my trick with the mercury five-and-twenty years ago.

The king was then at Portici with his Court, and our curiosity attracting us we were witnesses of a most singular spectacle.

The king was only nineteen and loved all kinds of frolics. He conceived a desire to be tossed in a blanket! Probably few crowned heads have wished to imitate Sancho Panza in this manner.

His majesty was tossed to his heart's content; but after his aerial journeys he wished to laugh at those whom he had amused. He began by proposing that the queen should take part in the game; on her replying by shrieks of laughter, his majesty did not insist.

The old courtiers made their escape, greatly to my regret, for I should have liked to see them cutting capers in the air, specially Prince Paul Nicander, who had been the king's tutor, and had filled him with all his own prejudices.

When the king saw that his old followers had fled, he was reduced to asking the young nobles present to play their part.

I was not afraid for myself, as I was unknown, and not of sufficient rank to merit such an honour.

After three or four young noblemen had been tossed, much to the amusement of the queen and her ladies, the king cast his eyes on two young Florentine nobles who had lately arrived at Naples. They were with their tutor, and all three had been laughing heartily at the disport of the king and his courtiers.

The monarch came up and accosted them very pleasantly, proposing that they should take part in the game.

The wretched Tuscans had been baked in a bad oven; they were undersized, ugly, and humpbacked.

His majesty's proposal seemed to put them on thorns. Everybody listened for the effects of the king's eloquence; he was urging them to undress, and saying that it would be unmannerly to refuse; there could be no humiliation in it, he said, as he himself had been the first to submit.

The tutor felt that it would not do to give the king a refusal, and told them that they must give in, and thereupon the two Florentines took off their clothes.

When the company saw their figures and doleful expressions, the laughter became general. The king took one of them by the hand, observing in an encouraging manner that there would be no danger; and as a special honour he held one of the corners of the blanket himself. But, for all that, big tears rolled down the wretched young man's cheeks.

After three or four visits to the ceiling, and amusing everyone by the display of his long thin legs, he was released, and the younger brother went to the torture smilingly, for which he was rewarded by applause.

The governor, suspecting that his majesty destined him for the same fate, had slipped out; and the king laughed merrily when he heard of his departure.

Such was the extraordinary spectacle we enjoyed — a spectacle in every way unique.

Don Pascal Latilla, who had been lucky enough to avoid his majesty's notice, told us a number of pleasant anecdotes about the king; all shewed him in the amiable light of a friend of mirth and an enemy to all pomp and stateliness, by which kings are hedged in generally. He assured us that no one could help liking him, because he always preferred to be treated as a friend rather than a monarch.

"He is never more grieved," said Pascal, "than when his minister Tanucci shews him that he must be severe, and his greatest joy is to grant a favour."

Ferdinand had not the least tincture of letters, but as he was a man of good sense he honoured lettered men most highly, indeed anyone of merit was sure of his patronage. He revered the minister Marco, he had the greatest respect for the memory of Lelio Caraffa, and of the Dukes of Matalone, and he had provided handsomely for a nephew of the famous man of letters Genovesi, in consideration of his uncle's merits.

Games of chance were forbidden; and one day he surprised a number of the officers of his guard playing at faro. The young men were terrified at the sight of the king, and would have hidden their cards and money.

"Don't put yourselves out," said the kindly monarch, "take care that Tanucci doesn't catch you, but don't mind me."

His father was extremely fond of him up to the time when he was obliged to resist the paternal orders in deference to State reasons.

Ferdinand knew that though he was the King of Spain's son, he was none the less king of the two Sicilies, and his duties as king had the prerogative over his duties as son.

Some months after the suppression of the Jesuits, he wrote his father a letter, beginning:

"There are four things which astonish me very much. The first is that though the Jesuits were said to be so rich, not a penny was found upon them at the suppression; the second, that though the Scrivani of Naples are supposed to take no fees, yet their wealth is immense; the third, that while all the other young couples have children sooner or later, we have none; and the fourth, that all men die at last, except Tanucci, who, I believe, will live on in 'saecula saeculorum'."

The King of Spain shewed this letter to all the ministers and ambassadors, that they might see that his son was a clever man, and he was right; for a man who can write such a letter must be clever.

Two or three days later, the Chevalier de Morosini, the nephew of the procurator, and sole heir of the illustrious house of Morosini, came to Naples accompanied by his tutor Stratico, the professor of mathematics at Padua, and the same that had given me a letter for his brother, the Pisan professor. He stayed at the "Crocielles," and we were delighted to see one another again.

Morosini, a young man of nineteen, was travelling to complete his education. He had spent three years at Turin academy, and was now under the superintendence of a man who could have introduced him to the whole range of learning, but unhappily the will was wanting in the pupil. The young Venetian loved women to excess, frequented the society of young rakes, and yawned in good company. He was a sworn foe to study, and spent his money in a lavish manner, less from generosity than from a desire to be revenged on his uncle's economies. He complained of being still kept in tutelage; he had calculated that he could spend eight hundred sequins a month, and thought his allowance of two hundred sequins a month an insult. With this notion, he set himself to sow debts broadcast, and only laughed at his tutor when he mildly reproached him for his extravagance, and pointed out that if he were saving for the present, he would be able to be all the more magnificent on his return to Venice. His uncle had made an excellent match for him; he was to marry a girl who was extremely pretty, and also the heiress of the house of Grimani de Servi.

The only redeeming feature in the young man's character was that he had a mortal hatred of all kinds of play.

Since my bank had been broken I had been at Goudar's, but I would not listen to his proposal that I should join them again. Medini had become a sworn foe of mine. As soon as I came, he would go away, but I pretended not to notice him. He was at Goudar's when I introduced Morosini and his mentor, and thinking the young man good game he became very intimate with him. When he found out that Morosini would not hear of gaming, his hatred of me increased, for he was certain that I had warned the rich Venetian against him.

Morosini was much taken with Sara's charms, and only thought of how he could possess her. He was still a young man, full of romantic notions, and she would have become odious in his eyes if he could have guessed that she would have to be bought with a heavy price.

He told me several times that if a woman proposed payment for her favours, his disgust would expel his love in a moment. As he said, and rightly, he was as good a man as Madame Goudar was a woman.

This was distinctly a good point in his character; no woman who gave her favours in exchange for presents received could hope to dupe him. Sara's maxims were diametrically opposed to his; she looked on her love as a bill of exchange.

Stratico was delighted to see him engaged in this intrigue, for the chief point in dealing with him was to keep him occupied. If he had no distractions he took refuge in bad company or furious riding. He would sometimes ride ten or twelve stages at full gallop, utterly ruining the horses. He was only too glad to make his uncle pay for them, as he swore he was an old miser.

After I had made up my mind to leave Naples, I had a visit from Don Pascal Latilla, who brought with him the Abbe Galiani, whom I had known at Paris.

It may be remembered that I had known his brother at St. Agatha's, where I had stayed with him, and left him Donna Lucrezia Castelli.

I told him that I had intended to visit him, and asked if Lucrezia were still with him.

"She lives at Salerno," said he, "with her daughter the Marchioness C —— ."

I was delighted to hear the news; if it had not been for the abbe's visit, I should never have heard what had become of these ladies.

I asked him if he knew the Marchioness C —— .

"I only know the marquis," he replied, "he is old and very rich."

That was enough for me.

A couple of days afterwards Morosini invited Sara, Goudar, two young gamesters, and Medini, to dinner. The latter had not yet given up hopes of cheating the chevalier in one way or another.

Towards the end of dinner it happened that Medini differed in opinion from me, and expressed his views in such a peremptory manner that I remarked that a gentleman would be rather more choice in his expressions.

"Maybe," he replied, "but I am not going to learn manners from you."

I constrained myself, and said nothing, but I was getting tired of his insolence; and as he might imagine that my resentment was caused by fear, I determined on disabusing him.

As he was taking his coffee on the balcony overlooking the sea, I came up to him with my cup in my hand, and said that I was tired of the rudeness with which he treated me in company.

"You would find me ruder still," he replied, "if we could meet without company."

"I think I could convince you of your mistake if we could have a private meeting."

"I should very much like to see you do it."

"When you see me go out, follow me, and don't say a word to anyone."

"I will not fail."

I rejoined the company, and walked slowly towards Pausilippo. I looked back and saw him following me; and as he was a brave fellow, and we both had our swords, I felt sure the thing would soon be settled.

As soon as I found myself in the open country, where we should not be interrupted, I stopped short.

As he drew near I attempted a parley, thinking that we might come to a more amicable settlement; but the fellow rushed on me with his sword in one hand and his hat in the other.

I lunged out at him, and instead of attempting to parry he replied in quart. The result was that our blades were caught in each other's sleeves; but I had slit his arm, while his point had only pierced the stuff of my coat.

I put myself on guard again to go on, but I could see he was too weak to defend himself, so I said if he liked I would give him quarter.

He made no reply, so I pressed on him, struck him to the ground, and trampled on his body.

He foamed with rage, and told me that it was my turn this time, but that he hoped I would give him his revenge.

"With pleasure, at Rome, and I hope the third lesson will be more effectual than the two I have already given you."

He was losing a good deal of blood, so I sheathed his sword for him and advised him to go to Goudar's house, which was close at hand, and have his wound attended to.

I went back to "Crocielles" as if nothing had happened. The chevalier was making love to Sara, and the rest were playing cards.

I left the company an hour afterwards without having said a word about my duel, and for the last time I supped with Callimena. Six years later I saw her at Venice, displaying her beauty and her talents on the boards of St. Benedict's Theatre.

I spent a delicious night with her, and at eight o'clock the next day I went off in a post-chaise without taking leave of anyone.

I arrived at Salerno at two o'clock in the afternoon, and as soon as I had taken a room I wrote a note to Donna Lucrezia Castelli at the Marquis C — — 's.

I asked her if I could pay her a short visit, and begged her to send a reply while I was taking my dinner.

I was sitting down to table when I had the pleasure of seeing Lucrezia herself come in. She gave a cry of delight and rushed to my arms.

This excellent woman was exactly my own age, but she would have been taken for fifteen years younger.

After I had told her how I had come to hear about her I asked for news of our daughter.

"She is longing to see you, and her husband too; he is a worthy old man, and will be so glad to know you."

"How does he know of my existence?"

"Leonilda has mentioned your name a thousand times during the five years they have been married. He is aware that you gave her five thousand ducats. We shall sup together."

"Let us go directly; I cannot rest till I have seen my Leonilda and the good husband God has given her. Have they any children?"

"No, unluckily for her, as after his death the property passes to his relations. But Leonilda will be a rich woman for all that; she will have a hundred thousand ducats of her own."

"You have never married."

"No."

"You are as pretty as you were twenty-six years ago, and if it had not been for the Abbe Galiani I should have left Naples without seeing you."

I found Leonilda had developed into a perfect beauty. She was at that time twenty-three years old.

Her husband’s presence was no constraint upon her; she received me with open arms, and put me completely at my ease.

No doubt she was my daughter, but in spite of our relationship and my advancing years I still felt within my breast the symptoms of the tenderest passion for her.

She presented me to her husband, who suffered dreadfully from gout, and could not stir from his arm-chair.

He received me with smiling face and open arms, saying, —

“My dear friend, embrace me.”

I embraced him affectionately, and in our greeting I discovered that he was a brother mason. The marquis had expected as much, but I had not; for a nobleman of sixty who could boast that he had been enlightened was a ‘rara avis’ in the domains of his Sicilian majesty thirty years ago.

I sat down beside him and we embraced each other again, while the ladies looked on amazed, wondering to see us so friendly to each other.

Donna Leonilda fancied that we must be old friends, and told her husband how delighted she was. The old man burst out laughing, and Lucrezia suspecting the truth bit her lips and said nothing. The fair marchioness reserved her curiosity for another reason.

The marquis had seen the whole of Europe. He had only thought of marrying on the death of his father, who had attained the age of ninety. Finding himself in the enjoyment of thirty thousand ducats a year he imagined that he might yet have children in spite of his advanced age. He saw Leonilda, and in a few days he made her his wife, giving her a dowry of a hundred thousand ducats. Donna Lucrezia went to live with her daughter. Though the marquis lived magnificently, he found it difficult to spend more than half his income.

He lodged all his relations in his immense palace; there were three families in all, and each lived apart.

Although they were comfortably off they were awaiting with impatience the death of the head of the family, as they would then share his riches. The marquis had only married in the hope of having an heir; and these hopes he could no longer entertain. However, he loved his wife none the less, while she made him happy by her charming disposition.

The marquis was a man of liberal views like his wife, but this was a great secret, as free thought was not appreciated at Salerno. Consequently, any outsider would have taken the household for a truly Christian one, and the marquis took care to adopt in appearance all the prejudices of his fellow-countrymen.

Donna Lucrezia told me all this three hours after as we walked in a beautiful garden, where her husband had sent us after a long conversation on subjects which could not have been of any interest to the ladies. Nevertheless, they did not leave us for a moment, so delighted were they to find that the marquis had met a congenial spirit.

About six o'clock the marquis begged Donna Lucrezia to take me to the garden and amuse me till the evening. His wife he asked to stay, as he had something to say to her.

It was in the middle of August and the heat was great, but the room on the ground floor which we occupied was cooled by a delicious breeze.

I looked out of the window and noticed that the leaves on the trees were still, and that no wind was blowing; and I could not help saying to the marquis that I was astonished to find his room as cool as spring in the heats of summer.

"Your sweetheart will explain it to you," said he.

We went through several apartments, and at last reached a closet, in one corner of which was a square opening.

From it rushed a cold and even violent wind. From the opening one could go down a stone staircase of at least a hundred steps, and at the bottom was a grotto where was the source of a stream of water as cold as ice. Donna Lucrezia told me it would be a great risk to go down the steps without excessively warm clothing.

I have never cared to run risks of this kind. Lord Baltimore, on the other hand, would have laughed at the danger, and gone, maybe, to his death. I told my old sweetheart that I could imagine the thing very well from the description, and that I had no curiosity to see whether my imagination were correct.

Lucrezia told me I was very prudent, and took me to the garden.

It was a large place, and separated from the garden common to the three other families who inhabited the castle. Every flower that can be imagined was there, fountains threw their glittering sprays, and grottoes afforded a pleasing shade from the sun.

The alleys of this terrestrial paradise were formed of vines, and the bunches of grapes seemed almost as numerous as the leaves.

Lucrezia enjoyed my surprise, and I told her that I was not astonished at being more moved by this than by the vines of Tivoli and Frascati. The immense rather dazzles the eyes than moves the heart.

She told me that her daughter was happy, and that the marquis was an excellent man, and a strong man except for the gout. His great grief was that he had no children. Amongst his dozen of nephews there was not one worthy of succeeding to the title.

“They are all ugly, awkward lads, more like peasants than noblemen; all their education has been given them by a pack of ignorant priests; and so it is not to be wondered that the marquis does not care for them much.”

“But is Leonilda really happy?”

“She is, though her husband cannot be quite so ardent as she would like at her age.”

“He doesn’t seem to me to be a very jealous man.”

“He is entirely free from jealousy, and if Leonilda would take a lover I am sure he would be his best friend. And I feel certain he would be only too glad to find the beautiful soil which he cannot fertile himself fertilized by another.”

“Is it positively certain that he is incapable of begetting a child?”

“No, when he is well he does his best; but there seems no likelihood of his ardour having any happy results. There was some ground to hope in the first six months of the marriage, but since he has had the gout so badly there seems reason to fear lest his amorous ecstasies should have a fatal termination. Sometimes he warts to approach her, but she dare not let him, and this pains her very much.”

I was struck with a lively sense of Lucrezia’s merits, and was just revealing to her the sentiments which she had re-awakened in my breast, when the marchioness appeared in the garden, followed by a page and a young lady.

I affected great reverence as she came up to us; and as if we had given each other the word, she answered me in atone of ceremonious politeness.

“I have come on an affair of the highest importance,” she said, “and if I fail I shall for ever lose the reputation of a diplomatist?”

“Who is the other diplomatist with whom you are afraid of failing?”

“’Tis yourself.”

“Then your battle is over, for I consent before I know what you ask. I only make a reserve on one point.”

“So much the worse, as that may turn out to be just what I want you to do. Tell me what it is.”

“I was going to Rome, when the Abbe Galiani told me that Donna Lucrezia was here with you.”

“And can a short delay interfere with your happiness? Are you not your own master?”

“Smile on me once more; your desires are orders which must be obeyed. I have always been my own master, but I cease to be so from this moment, since I am your most humble servant.”

“Very good. Then I command you to come and spend a few days with us at an estate we have at a short distance. My husband will have himself transported here. You will allow me to send to the inn for your luggage?”

“Here, sweet marchioness, is the key to my room. Happy the mortal whom you deign to command.”

Leonilda gave the key to the page, a pretty boy, and told him to see that all my belongings were carefully taken to the castle.

Her lady-in-waiting was very fair. I said so to Leonilda in French, not knowing that the young lady understood the language, but she smiled and told her mistress that we were old acquaintances.

“When had I the pleasure of knowing you, mademoiselle?”

“Nine year ago. You have often spoken to me and teased me.”

“Where, may I ask?”

“At the Duchess of Matalone’s.”

“That may be, and I think I do begin to remember, but I really cannot recollect having teased you.”

The marchioness and her mother were highly amused at this conversation, and pressed the girl to say how I had teased her. She confined herself, however, to saying that I had played tricks on her. I thought I remembered having stolen a few kisses, but I left the ladies to think what they liked.

I was a great student of the human heart, and felt that these reproaches of Anastasia’s (such was her name) were really advances, but unskillfully made, for if she had wanted more of me, she should have held her peace and bided her time.

“It strikes me,” said I, “that you were much smaller in those days.”

“Yes, I was only twelve or thirteen. You have changed also.”

“Yes, I have aged.”

We began talking about the late Duke of Matalone, and Anastasia left us.

We sat down in a charming grotto, and began styling each other papa and daughter, and allowing ourselves liberties which threatened to lead to danger.

The marchioness tried to calm my transports by talking of her good husband.

Donna Lucrezia remarked our mutual emotion as I held Leonilda in my arms, and warned us to be careful. She then left us to walk in a different part of the garden.

Her words had the contrary effect to what was intended, for as soon as she left us in so opportune a manner, although we had no intention of committing the double crime, we approached too near to each other, and an almost involuntary movement made, the act complete.

We remained motionless, looking into one another's eyes, in mute astonishment, as we confessed afterwards, to find neither guilt nor repentance in our breasts.

We rearranged our position, and the marchioness sitting close to me called me her dear husband, while I called her my dear wife.

The new bond between us was confirmed by affectionate kisses. We were absorbed and silent, and Lucrezia was delighted to find us so calm when she returned.

We had no need to warn each other to observe secrecy. Donna Lucrezia was devoid of prejudice, but there was no need to give her a piece of useless information.

We felt certain that she had left us alone, so as not to be a witness of what we were going to do.

After some further conversation we went back to the palace with Anastasia, whom we found in the alley by herself.

The marquis received his wife with joy, congratulating her on the success of her negotiations. He thanked me for my compliance, and assured me I should have a comfortable apartment in his country house.

"I suppose you will not mind having our friend for a neighbor?" he said to Lucrezia.

"No," said she; "but we will be discreet, for the flower of our lives has withered."

"I shall believe as much of that as I please."

The worthy man dearly loved a joke.

The long table was laid for five, and as soon as dinner was served an old priest came in and sat down. He spoke to nobody, and nobody spoke to him.

The pretty page stood behind the marchioness, and we were waited on by ten or twelve servants.

I had only a little soup at dinner, so I ate like an ogre, for I was very hungry, and the marquis's French cook was a thorough artist.

The marquis exclaimed with delight as I devoured one dish after another. He told me that the only fault in his wife that she was a very poor eater like her mother. At dessert the wine began to take effect, and our conversation, which was conducted in French, became somewhat free. The old priest took no notice, as he only understood Italian, and he finally left us after saying the 'agimus'.

The marquis told me that this ecclesiastic had been a confessor to the palace for the last twenty years, but had never confessed anybody. He warned me to take care what I said before him if I spoke Italian, but he did not know a word of French.

Mirth was the order of the day, and I kept the company at table till an hour after midnight.

Before we parted for the night the marquis told me that we would start in the afternoon, and that he should arrive an hour before us. He assured his wife that he was quite well, and that he hoped to convince her that I had made him ten years younger. Leonilda embraced him tenderly, begging him to be careful of his health.

"Yes, yes," said he, "but get ready to receive me."

I wished them a good night, and a little marquis at nine months from date.

"Draw the bill," said he to me, "and to-morrow I will accept it."

"I promise you," said Lucrezia, "to do my best to ensure your meeting your obligations."

Donna Lucrezia took me to my room, where she handed me over to the charge of an imposing-looking servant, and wished me a good night.

I slept for eight hours in a most comfortable bed, and when I was dressed Lucrezia took me to breakfast with the marchioness, who was at her toilette.

"Do you think I may draw my bill at nine months?" said I.

"It will very probably be met," said she.

"Really?"

"Yes, really; and it will be to you that my husband will owe the happiness he has so long desired. He told me so when he left me an hour ago.

“I shall be delighted to add to your mutual happiness.”

She looked so fresh and happy that I longed to kiss her, but I was obliged to restrain myself as she was surrounded by her pretty maids.

The better to throw any spies off the scent I began to make love to Anastasia, and Leonilda pretended to encourage me.

I feigned a passionate desire, and I could see that I should not have much trouble in gaining my suit. I saw I should have to be careful if I did not want to be taken at my word; I could not bear such a surfeit of pleasures.

We went to breakfast with the marquis, who was delighted to see us. He was quite well, except the gout which prevented his walking.

After breakfast we heard mass, and I saw about twenty servants in the chapel. After the service I kept the marquis company till dinner-time. He said I was very good to sacrifice the company of the ladies for his sake.

After dinner we set out for his country house; I in a carriage with the two ladies, and the marquis in a litter borne by two mules.

In an hour and a half we arrived at his fine and well-situated castle.

The first thing the marchioness did was to take me into the garden, where my ardour returned and she once more abandoned herself to me.

We agreed that I should only go to her room to court Anastasia, as it was necessary to avoid the slightest suspicion.

This fancy of mine for his wife’s maid amused the marquis, for his wife kept him well posted in the progress of our intrigue.

Donna Lucrezia approved of the arrangement as she did not want the marquis to think that I had only come to Salerno for her sake. My apartments were next to Leonilda’s, but before I could get into her room I should be obliged to pass through that occupied by Anastasia, who slept with another maid still prettier than herself.

The marquis came an hour later, and he said he would get his people to carry him in an arm-chair round the gardens, so that he might point out their beauties to me. After supper he felt tired and went to bed, leaving me to entertain the ladies.

After a few moments' conversation, I led the marchioness to her room, and she said I had better go to my own apartment through the maids' room, telling Anastasia to shew me the way.

Politeness obliged me to shew myself sensible of such a favour, and I said I hoped she would not be so harsh as to lock her door upon me.

"I shall lock my door," said she, "because it is my duty to do so. This room is my mistress's closet, and my companion would probably make some remark if I left the door open contrary to my usual custom."

"Your reasons are too good for me to overcome, but will you not sit down beside me for a few minutes and help me to recollect how I used to tease you?"

"I don't want you to recollect anything about it; please let me go."

"You must please yourself," said I; and after embracing her and giving her a kiss, I wished her good night.

My servant came in as she went out, and I told him that I would sleep by myself for the future.

The next day the marchioness laughingly repeated the whole of my conversation with Anastasia.

"I applauded her virtuous resistance, but I said she might safely assist at your toilette every evening."

Leonilda gave the marquis a full account of my talk with Anastasia. The old man thought I was really in love with her, and had her in to supper for my sake, so I was in common decency bound to play the lover. Anastasia was highly pleased at my preferring her to her charming mistress, and at the latter's complaisance towards our love-making.

The marquis in his turn was equally pleased as he thought the intrigue would make me stay longer at his house.

In the evening Anastasia accompanied me to my room with a candle, and seeing that I had no valet she insisted combing my hair. She felt flattered at my not presuming to go to bed in her presence, and kept me company for an hour; and as I was not really amorous of her, I had no difficulty in playing the part of the timid lover. When she wished me good night she was delighted to find my kisses as affectionate but not so daring as those of the night before.

The marchioness said, the next morning, that if the recital she had heard were true, she was afraid Anastasia's company tired me, as she very well knew that when I really loved I cast timidity to the winds.

"No, she doesn't tire me at all; she is pretty and amusing. But how can you imagine that I really love her, when you know very well that the whole affair is only designed to cast dust in everyone's eyes?"

"Anastasia fully believes that you adore her, and indeed I am not sorry that you should give her a little taste for gallantry."

"If I can persuade her to leave her door open I can easily visit you, for she will not imagine for a moment that after leaving her I go to your room instead of my own."

"Take care how you set about it."

"I will see what I can do this evening."

The marquis and Lucrezia had not the slightest doubt that Anastasia spent every night with me, and they were delighted at the idea.

The whole of the day I devoted to the worthy marquis, who said my company made him happy. It was no sacrifice on my part, for I liked his principles and his way of thinking.

On the occasion of my third supper with Anastasia I was more tender than ever, and she was very much astonished to find that I had cooled down when I got to my room.

"I am glad to see you so calm," said she, "you quite frightened me at supper."

"The reason is that I know you think yourself in danger when you are alone with me."

"Not at all; you are much more discreet than you were nine years ago."

"What folly did I commit then?"

"No folly, but you did not respect my childhood."

"I only gave you a few caresses, for which I am now sorry, as you are frightened of me, and persist in locking your door."

"I don't mistrust you, but I have told you my reasons for locking the door. I think that you must mistrust me, as you won't go to bed while I am in the room."

"You must think me very presumptuous. I will go to bed, but you must not leave me without giving me a kiss."

"I promise to do so."

I went to bed, and Anastasia spent half an hour beside me. I had a good deal of difficulty in controlling myself, but I was afraid of her telling the marchioness everything.

As she left me she gave me such a kind embrace that I could bear it no longer, and guiding her hand I skewed her the power she exercised over me. She then went away, and I shall not say whether my behaviour irritated or pleased her.

The next day I was curious to know how much she had told the marchioness, and on hearing nothing of the principal fact I felt certain she would not lock her door that evening.

When the evening came I defied her to skew the same confidence in me as I had shewn in her. She replied that she would do so with pleasure, if I would blow out my candle and promise not to put my hand on her. I easily gave her the required promise, for I meant to keep myself fresh for Leonilda.

I undressed hastily, followed her with bare feet, and laid myself beside her.

She took my hands and held them, to which I offered no resistance. We were afraid of awakening her bedfellow, and kept perfect silence. Our lips however gave themselves free course, and certain motions, natural under the circumstances, must have made her believe that I was in torments. The half hour I passed beside her seemed extremely long to me, but it must have been delicious to her, as giving her the idea that she could do what she liked with me.

When I left her after we had shared an ecstatic embrace, I returned to my room, leaving the door open. As soon as I had reason to suppose that she was asleep, I returned, and passed through her room to Leonilda's. She was expecting me, but did not know of my presence till I notified it with a kiss.

After I had given her a strong proof of my love, I told her of my adventure with Anastasia, and then our amorous exploits began again, and I did not leave her till I had spent two most delicious hours. We agreed that they should not be the last, and I returned to my room on tiptoe as I had come.

I did not get up till noon, and the marquis and his wife jested with me at dinner on the subject of my late rising. At supper it was Anastasia's turn, and she seemed to enjoy the situation. She told me in the evening that she would not lock her door, but that I must not come into her room, as it was dangerous. It would be much better, she said, for us to talk in my room, where there would be no need of putting out the light. She added that I had better go to bed, as then she would feel certain that she was not tiring me in any way.

I could not say no, but I flattered myself that I would keep my strength intact for Leonilda.

I reckoned without my host, as the proverb goes.

When I held Anastasia between my arms in bed, her lips glued to mine, I told her, as in duty bound, that she did not trust in me enough to lie beside me with her clothes off.

Thereupon she asked me if I would be very discreet.

If I had said no, I should have looked a fool. I made up my mind, and told her yes, determined to satisfy the pretty girl's desires.

In a moment she was in my arms, not at all inclined to keep me to my promise.

Appetite, it is said, comes in eating. Her ardour made me amorous, and I rendered homage to her charms till I fell asleep with fatigue.

Anastasia left me while I was asleep, and when I awoke I found myself in the somewhat ridiculous position of being obliged to make a full confession to the marchioness as to why I had failed in my duties to her.

When I told Leonilda my tale, she began to laugh and agreed that further visits were out of the question. We made up our minds, and for the remainder of my visit our amorous meetings only took place in the summerhouses in the garden.

I had to receive Anastasia every night, and when I left for Rome and did not take her with me she considered me as a traitor.

The worthy marquis gave me a great surprise on the eve of my departure. We were alone together, and he began by saying that the Duke of Matalone had told him the reason which had prevented me marrying Leonilda, and that he had always admired my generosity in making her a present of five thousand ducats, though I was far from rich.

“These five thousand ducats,” he added, “with seven thousand from the duke, composed her dower, and I have added a hundred thousand, so that she is sure of a comfortable living, even if I die without a successor.

“Now, I want you to take back the five thousand ducats you gave her; and she herself is as desirous of your doing so as I am. She did not like to ask you herself; she is too delicate.”

“Well, I should have refused Leonilda if she had asked me, but I accept this mark of your friendship. A refusal would have borne witness to nothing but a foolish pride, as I am a poor man. I should like Leonilda and her mother to be present when you give me the money.”

“Embrace me; we will do our business after dinner.”

Naples has always been a temple of fortune to me, but if I went there now I should starve. Fortune flouts old age.

Leonilda and Lucrezia wept with joy when the good marquis gave me the five thousand ducats in bank notes, and presented his mother-in-law with an equal sum in witness of his gratitude to her for having introduced me to him.

The marquis was discreet enough not to reveal his chief reason. Donna Lucrezia did not know that the Duke of Matalone had told him that Leonilda was my daughter.

An excess of gratitude lessened my high spirits for the rest of the day, and Anastasia did not spend a very lively night with me.

I went off at eight o’clock the next morning. I was sad, and the whole house was in tears.

I promised that I would write to the marquis from Rome, and I reached Naples at eleven o’clock.

I went to see Agatha, who was astonished at my appearance as she had thought I was at Rome. Her husband welcomed me in the most friendly manner, although he was suffering a great deal.

I said I would dine with them and start directly afterwards, and I asked the advocate to get me a bill on Rome for five thousand ducats, in exchange for the bank notes I gave him.

Agatha saw that my mind was made up, and without endeavoring to persuade me to stay went in search of Callimena.

She too had thought I was in Rome, and was in an ecstasy of delight to see me again.

My sudden disappearance and my unexpected return were the mystery of the day, but I did not satisfy anyone’s curiosity.

I left them at three o’clock, and stopped at Montecasino, which I had never seen. I congratulated myself on my idea, for I met there Prince Xaver de Saxe, who was travelling under the name of Comte de Lusace with Madame Spinucci, a lady of Fermo, with whom he had contracted a semi-clandestine marriage. He had been waiting for three days to hear from the Pope, for by St. Benedict’s rule women are not allowed in monasteries; and as Madame Spinucci was extremely curious on the subject, her husband had been obliged to apply for a dispensation to the Holy Father.

I slept at Montecasino after having seen the curiosities of the place, and I went on to Rome, and put up with Roland’s daughter in the Place d’Espagne.

CHAPTER XV

Margarita — Madame Buondcorsi — The Duchess of Fiano — Cardinal Bernis — The Princess Santa Croce — Menicuccio and His Sister

I had made up my mind to spend a quiet six months at Rome, and the day after my arrival I took a pleasant suite of rooms opposite the Spanish Ambassador, whose name was d'Aspura. It happened to be the same rooms as were occupied twenty-seven years ago by the teacher of languages, to whom I had gone for lessons while I was with Cardinal Acquaviva. The landlady was the wife of a cook who only, slept with his better half once a week. The woman had a daughter of sixteen or seventeen years old, who would have been very pretty if the small-pox had not deprived her of one eye. They had provided her with an ill-made artificial eye, of a wrong size and a bad colour, which gave a very unpleasant expression to her face.

Margarita, as she was called, made no impression on me, but I made her a present which she valued very highly. There was an English oculist named Taylor in Rome at that time, and I got him to make her an eye of the right size and colour. This made Margarita imagine that I had fallen in love with her, and the mother, a devotee, was in some trouble as to whether my intentions were strictly virtuous.

I made arrangements with the mother to supply me with a good dinner and supper without any luxury. I had three thousand sequins, and I had made up my mind to live in a quiet and respectable manner.

The next day I found letters for me in several post-offices, and the banker Belloni, who had known me for several years, had been already advised of my bill of exchange. My good friend Dandolo sent me two letters of introduction, of which one was addressed to M. Erizzo, the Venetian ambassador. He was the brother of the ambassador to Paris. This letter pleased me greatly. The other was addressed to the Duchess of Fiano, by her brother M. Zuliani.

I saw that I should be free of all the best houses, and I promised myself the pleasure of an early visit to Cardinal Bernis.

I did not hire either a carriage or a servant. At Rome both these articles are procurable at a moment's notice.

My first call was on the Duchess of Fiano. She was an ugly woman, and though she was really very good-natured, she assumed the character of being malicious so as to obtain some consideration.

Her husband, who bore the name of Ottoboni, had only married her to obtain an heir, but the poor devil turned out to be what the Romans call 'babilano', and we impotent. The duchess told me as much on the occasion of my third visit. She did not give me the information in a complaining tone, or as if she was fain to be consoled, but merely to defy her confessor, who had threatened her with excommunication if she went on telling people about her husband's condition, or if she tried to cure him of it.

The duchess gave a little supper every evening to her select circle of friends. I was not admitted to these reunions for a week or ten days, by which time I had made myself generally popular. The duke did not care for company and supped apart.

The Prince of Santa Croce was the duchess's 'cavaliere servante', and the princess was served by Cardinal Bernis. The princess was a daughter of the Marquis Falconieri, and was young, pretty, lively, and intended by nature for a life of pleasure. However, her pride at possessing the cardinal was so great that she did not give any hope to other competitors for her favour.

The prince was a fine man of distinguished manners and great capability, which he employed in business speculations, being of opinion, and rightly, that it was no shame for a nobleman to increase his fortune by the exercise of his intelligence. He was a careful man, and had attached himself to the duchess because she cost him nothing, and he ran no risk of falling in love with her.

Two or three weeks after my arrival he heard me complaining of the obstacles to research in the Roman libraries, and he offered to give me an introduction to the Superior of the Jesuits. I accepted the offer, and was made free of the library; I could not only go and read when I liked, but I could, on writing my name down, take books away with me. The keepers of the library always brought me candles when it grew dark, and their politeness was so great that they gave me the key of a side door, so that I could slip in and out as I pleased.

The Jesuits were always the most polite of the regular clergy, or, indeed, I may say the only polite men amongst them; but during the crisis in which they were then involved, they were simply cringing.

The King of Spain had called for the suppression of the order, and the Pope had promised that it should be done; but the Jesuits did not think that such a blow could ever be struck, and felt almost secure. They did not think that the Pope's power was superhuman so far as they were concerned. They even intimated to him by indirect channels that his authority did not extend to the suppression of the order; but they were mistaken. The sovereign pontiff delayed the signature of the bull, but his hesitation proceeded from the fact that in signing it he feared lest he should be signing his own sentence of death. Accordingly he put it off till he found that his honour was threatened. The King of Spain, the most obstinate tyrant in Europe, wrote to him with his own hand, telling him that if he did not suppress the order he would publish in all the languages of Europe the letters he had written when he was a cardinal, promising to suppress the order when he became Pope. On the strength of these letters Ganganelli had been elected.

Another man would have taken refuge in casuistry and told the king that it was not for a pope to be bound to the cardinal's promises, in which contention he would have been supported by the Jesuits. However, in his heart Ganganelli had no liking for the Jesuits. He was a Franciscan, and not a gentleman by birth. He had not a strong enough intellect to defy the king and all his threats, or to bear the shame of being exhibited to the whole world as an ambitious and unscrupulous man.

I am amused when people tell me that Ganganelli poisoned himself by taking so many antidotes. It is true that having reason, and good reason, to dread poison, he made use of antidotes which, with his ignorance of science, might have injured his health; but I am morally certain that he died of poison which was given by other hands than his own.

My reasons for this opinion are as follows:

In the year of which I am speaking, the third of the Pontificate of Clement XIV., a woman of Viterbo was put in prison on the charge of making predictions. She obscurely prophesied the suppression of the Jesuits, without giving any indication of the time; but she said very clearly that the company would be destroyed by a pope who would only reign five years three months and three days — that is, as long as Sixtus V., not a day more and not a day less.

Everybody treated the prediction with contempt, as the product of a brain-sick woman. She was shut up and quite forgotten.

I ask my readers to give a dispassionate judgment, and to say whether they have any doubt as to the poisoning of Ganganelli when they hear that his death verified the prophecy.

In a case like this, moral certainty assumes the force of scientific certainty. The spirit which inspired the Pythia of Viterbo took its measures to inform the world that if the Jesuits were forced to submit to being suppressed, they were not so weak as to forego a fearful vengeance. The Jesuit who cut short Ganganelli's days might certainly have poisoned him before the bull was signed, but the fact was that they could not bring themselves to believe it till it took place. It is clear that if the Pope had not suppressed the Jesuits, they would not have poisoned him, and here again the prophecy could not be taxed with falsity. We may note that Clement XIV., like Sixtus V., was a Franciscan, and both were of low birth. It is also noteworthy that after the Pope's death the prophetess was liberated, and, though her prophecy had been fulfilled to the letter, all the authorities persisted in saying that His Holiness had died from his excessive use of antidotes.

It seems to me that any impartial judge will scout the idea of Ganganelli having killed himself to verify the woman of Viterbo's prediction. If you say it was a mere coincidence, of course I cannot absolutely deny your position, for it may have been chance; but my thoughts on the subject will remain unchanged.

This poisoning was the last sign the Jesuits gave of their power. It was a crime, because it was committed after the event, whereas, if it had been done before the suppression of the order, it would have been a stroke of policy, and might have been justified on politic grounds. The true politician looks into the future, and takes swift and certain measures to obtain the end he has in view.

The second time that the Prince of Santa Croce saw me at the Duchess of Fiano's, he asked me 'ex abrupta' why I did not visit Cardinal Bernis.

"I think of paying my suit to him to-morrow," said I.

"Do so, for I have never heard his eminence speak of anyone with as much consideration as he speaks of yourself."

"He has been very kind to me, and I shall always be grateful to him."

The cardinal received me the next day with every sign of delight at seeing me. He praised the reserve with which I had spoken of him to the prince, and said he need not remind me of the necessity for discretion as to our old Venetian adventures.

"Your eminence," I said, "is a little stouter, otherwise you look as fresh as ever and not at all changed."

"You make a mistake. I am very different from what I was then. I am fifty-five now, and then I was thirty-six. Moreover, I am reduced to a vegetable diet."

"Is that to keep down the lusts of the flesh?"

“I wish people would think so; but no one does, I am afraid.”

He was glad to hear that I bore a letter to the Venetian ambassador, which I had not yet presented. He said he would take care to give the ambassador a prejudice in my favour, and that he would give me a good reception.

“We will begin to break the ice to-morrow,” added this charming cardinal. “You shall dine with me, and his excellence shall hear of it.”

He heard with pleasure that I was well provided for as far as money was concerned, and that I had made up my mind to live simply and discreetly so long as I remained in Rome.

“I shall write about you to M —— M —— ,” he said. “I have always kept up a correspondence with that delightful nun.”

I then amused him by the talk of my adventure with the nun of Chamberi.

“You ought to ask the Prince of Santa Croce to introduce you to the princess. We might pass some pleasant hours with her, though not in our old Venetian style, for the princess is not at all like M —— M —— .

“And yet she serves to amuse your eminence?”

“Well, I have to be content with what I can get.”

The next day as I was getting up from dinner the cardinal told me that M. Zuliani had written about me to the ambassador, who would be delighted to make my acquaintance, and when I went I had an excellent reception from him.

The Chevalier Erizzo, who is still alive, was a man of great intelligence, common sense, and oratorical power. He complimented me on my travels and on my being protected by the State Inquisitors instead of being persecuted by them. He kept me to dinner, and asked me to dine with him whenever I had no other engagement.

The same evening I met Prince Santa Croce at the duchess’s, and asked him to introduce me to his wife.

“I have been expecting that,” he replied “even since the cardinal talked to her about you for more than an hour. You can call any day at eleven in the morning or two in the afternoon.”

I called the next day at two o'clock. She was taking her siesta in bed, but as I had the privileges allowed to a person of no consequence she let me in directly. She was young, pretty, lively, curious, and talkative; she had not enough patience to wait for my answer to her questions. She struck me as a toy, well adapted to amuse a man of affairs, who felt the need of some distraction. The cardinal saw her regularly three times a day; the first thing in the morning he called to ask if she had had a good night, at three o'clock in the afternoon he took coffee with her, and in the evening he met her at the assembly. He always played at piquet, and played with such talent that he invariably lost six Roman sequins, no more and no less. These losses of the cardinal's made the princess the richest young wife in Rome.

Although the marquis was somewhat inclined to be jealous, he could not possibly object to his wife enjoying a revenue of eighteen hundred francs a month, and that without the least scandal, for everything was done in public, and the game was honestly conducted. Why should not fortune fall in love with such a pretty woman?

The Prince of Santa Croce could not fail to appreciate the friendship of the cardinal for his wife, who gave him a child every year, and sometimes every nine months, in spite of the doctor's warnings to beware of results. It was said that to make up for his enforced abstinence during the last few days of his wife's pregnancy, the prince immediately set to again when the child was being baptized.

The friendship of the cardinal for the prince's wife also gave him the advantage of getting silks from Lyons without the Pope's treasurer being able to say anything, as the packets were addressed to the French ambassador. It must also be noted that the cardinal's patronage kept other lovers from the house. The High Constable Colonna was very much taken with her. The prince had surprised this gentleman talking to the princess in a room of the palace and at an hour when she was certain that the cardinal would not be in the way. Scarcely had the Colonna gone when the prince told his wife that she would accompany him into the country the next day. She protested, saying that this sudden order was only a caprice and that her honour would not allow of her obeying him. The prince, however, was very determined, and she would have been obliged to go if the cardinal had not come in and heard the story from the mouth of the innocent princess. He shewed the husband that it was to his own interests to go into the country by himself, and to let his wife remain in Rome. He spoke for her, assuring the prince that she would take more care for the future and avoid such meetings, always unpleasant in a house.

In less than a month I became the shadow of the three principal persons in the play. I listened and admired and became as necessary to the personages as a marker at billiards. When any of the parties were afflicted I consoled them with tales or amusing comments, and, naturally, they were grateful to me. The cardinal, the prince, and his fair wife amused each other and offended no one.

The Duchess of Fiano was proud of being the possessor of the prince who left his wife to the cardinal, but no one was deceived but herself. The good lady wondered why no one acknowledged that the reason why the princess never came to see her was mere jealousy. She spoke to me on the subject with so much fire that I had to suppress my good sense to keep her good graces.

I had to express my astonishment as to what the cardinal could see in the princess, who, according to her, was skinny in person and silly in mind, altogether a woman of no consequence. I agreed to all this, but I was far from thinking so, for the princess was just the woman to amuse a voluptuous and philosophic lover like the cardinal.

I could not help thinking now and again that the cardinal was happier in the possession of this treasure of a woman than in his honours and dignities.

I loved the princess, but as I did not hope for success I confined myself strictly to the limits of my position.

I might, no doubt, have succeeded, but more probably I should have raised her pride against me, and wounded the feelings of the cardinal, who was no longer the same as when we shared M —— M —— in common. He had told me that his affection for her was of a purely fatherly character, and I took that as a hint not to trespass on his preserves.

I had reason to congratulate myself that she observed no more ceremony with me than with her mail. I accordingly pretended to see nothing, while she felt certain I saw all.

It is no easy matter to win the confidence of such a woman, especially if she be served by a king or a cardinal.

My life at Rome was a tranquil and happy one. Margarita had contrived to gain my interest by the assiduity of her attentions. I had no servant, so she waited on me night and morning, and her false eye was such an excellent match that I quite forgot its falsity. She was a clever, but a vain girl, and though at first I had no designs upon her I flattered her vanity by my conversation and the little presents I bestowed upon her, which enabled her to cut a figure in church on Sundays. So before long I had my eyes opened to two facts; the one that she was sure of my love, and wondered why I did not declare it; the other, that if I chose I had an easy conquest before me.

I guessed the latter circumstance one day when, after I had asked her to tell me her adventures from the age of eleven to that of eighteen, she proceeded to tell me tales, the telling of which necessitated her throwing all modesty to the winds.

I took the utmost delight in these scandalous narrations, and whenever I thought she had told the whole truth I gave her a few pieces of money; while whenever I had reason to suppose that she had suppressed some interesting circumstances I gave her nothing.

She confessed to me that she no longer possessed that which a maid can lose but once, that a friend of hers named Buonacorsi was in the same case, and finally she told me the name of the young man who had relieved them both of their maidenheads.

We had for neighbor a young Piedmontese abbe named Ceruti, on whom Margarita was obliged to wait when her mother was too busy. I jested with her about him, but she swore there was no lovemaking between them.

This abbe was a fine man, learned and witty, but he was overwhelmed with debt and in very bad odour at Rome on account of an extremely unpleasant story of which he was the hero.

They said that he had told an Englishman, who was in love with Princess Lanti, that she was in want of two hundred sequins, that the Englishman had handed over the money to the abbe, and that the latter had appropriated it.

This act of meanness had been brought to light by an explanation between the lady and the Englishman. On his saying to the princess that he was ready to do anything for her, and that the two hundred sequins he had given her were as nothing in comparison with what he was ready to do, she indignantly denied all knowledge of the transaction. Everything came out. The Englishman begged pardon, and the abbe was excluded from the princess's house and the Englishman's also.

This Abbe Ceruti was one of those journalists employed to write the weekly news of Rome by Bianconi; he and I had in a manner become friends since we were neighbours. I saw that he loved Margarita, and I was not in the least jealous, but as he was a handsome young fellow I could not believe that Margarita was cruel to him. Nevertheless, she assured me that she detested him, and that she was very sorry that her mother made her wait on him at all.

Ceruti had already laid himself under obligations to me. He had borrowed a score of crowns from me, promising to repay them in a week, and three weeks had gone by without my seeing the money. However, I did not ask for it, and would have lent him as much more if he had requested me. But I must tell the story as it happened.

Whenever I supped with the Duchess of Fiano I came in late, and Margarita waited up for me. Her mother would go to bed. For the sake of amusement I used to keep her for an hour or two without caring whether our pleasantries disturbed the abbe, who could hear everything we said.

One evening I came home at midnight and was surprised to find the mother waiting for me.

"Where is your daughter?" I enquired.

"She's asleep, and I really cannot allow you to pass the whole night with her any longer."

"But she only stays with me till I get into bed. This new whim wounds my feelings. I object to such unworthy suspicions. What has Margarita been telling you? If she has made any complaints of me, she has lied, and I shall leave your house to-morrow."

"You are wrong; Margarita has made no complaints; on the contrary she says that you have done nothing to her."

"Very good. Do you think there is any harm in a little joking?"

"No, but you might be better employed."

"And these are your grounds for a suspicion of which you should be ashamed, if you are a good Christian."

"God save me from thinking evil of my neighbour, but I have been informed that your laughter and your jests are of such a nature as to be offensive to people of morality."

"Then it is my neighbour the abbe who has been foolish enough to give you this information?"

"I cannot tell you how I heard it, but I have heard it."

"Very good. To-morrow I shall seek another lodging, so as to afford your tender conscience some relief."

"Can't I attend on you as well as my daughter?"

"No; your daughter makes me laugh, and laughing is beneficial to me, whereas you would not make me laugh at all. You have insulted me, and I leave your house to-morrow."

"I shall have to tell my husband the reason of your departure, and I do not want to do that."

"You can do as you like; that's no business of mine. Go away; I want to get into bed."

"Allow me to wait on you."

"Certainly not; if you want anybody to wait on me, send Margarita."

"She's asleep."

"Then wake her up."

The good woman went her way, and two minutes later, the girl came in with little on but her chemise. She had not had time to put in her false eye, and her expression was so amusing that I went off into a roar of laughter.

"I was sleeping soundly," she began, "and my mother woke me up all of a sudden, and told me to come and wait on you, or else you would leave, and my father would think we had been in mischief."

"I will stay, if you will continue to wait on me."

"I should like to come very much, but we mustn't laugh any more, as the abbe has complained of us."

"Oh! it is the abbe, is it?"

"Of course it is. Our jests and laughter irritate his passions."

"The rascal! We will punish him rarely. If we laughed last night, we will laugh ten times louder tonight."

Thereupon we began a thousand tricks, accompanied by shouts and shrieks of laughter, purposely calculated to drive the little priest desperate. When the fun was at its height, the door opened and the mother came in.

I had Margarita's night-cap on my head, and Margarita's face was adorned with two huge moustaches, which I had stuck on with ink. Her mother had probably anticipated taking us in the fact, but when she came in she was obliged to re-echo our shouts of mirth.

"Come now," said I, "do you think our amusements criminal?"

"Not a bit; but you see your innocent orgies keep your neighbour awake."

"Then he had better go and sleep somewhere else; I am not going to put myself out for him. I will even say that you must choose between him and me; if I consent to stay with you, you must send him away, and I will take his room."

"I can't send him away before the end of the month, and I am afraid he will say things to my husband which will disturb the peace of the house."

"I promise you he shall go to-morrow and say nothing at all. Leave him to me; the abbe shall leave of his own free will, without giving you the slightest trouble. In future be afraid for your daughter when she is alone with a man and you don't hear laughing. When one does not laugh, one does something serious."

After this the mother seemed satisfied and went off to bed. Margarita was in such high spirits over the promised dismissal of the abbe that I could not resist doing her justice. We passed an hour together without laughing, and she left me very proud of the victory she had gained.

Early the next day I paid the abbe a visit, and after reproaching him for his behaviour I gave him his choice between paying me the money he owed me and leaving the house at once. He did his best to get out of the dilemma, but seeing that I was pitiless he said he could not leave without paying a few small sums he owed the landlord, and without the wherewithal to obtain another lodging.

“Very good,” said I, “I will present you with another twenty crowns; but you must go to-day, and not say a word to anyone, unless you wish me to become your implacable enemy.”

I thus got rid of him and entered into possession of the two rooms. Margarita was always at my disposal, and after a few days so was the fair Buonacorsi, who was much the prettier of the two.

The two girls introduced me to the young man who had seduced them.

He was a lad of fifteen or sixteen, and very handsome though short. Nature had endowed him with an enormous symbol of virility, and at Lampsacus he would no doubt have had an altar erected to him beside that of Priapus, with which divinity he might well have contended.

He was well-mannered and agreeable, and seemed much above a common workman. He did not love Margarita or Mdlle. Bounacorsi; he had merely satisfied their curiosity. They saw and admired, and wished to come to a nearer acquaintance; he read their minds and offered to satisfy them. Thereupon the two girls held a consultation, and pretending to submit out of mere complaisance; the double deed was done. I liked this young man, and gave him linen and clothes. So before long he had complete confidence in me. He told me he was in love with a girl, but unhappily for him she was in a convent, and not being able to win her he was becoming desperate. The chief obstacle to the match lay in the fact that his earnings only amounted to a paul a day, which was certainly an insufficient sum to support a wife on.

He talked so much about her that I became curious, and expressed a desire to see her. But before coming to this I must recite some other incidents of my stay at Rome.

One day I went to the Capitol to see the prizes given to the art students, and the first face I saw was the face of Mengs. He was with Battoni and two or three other painters, all being occupied in adjudging the merits of the various pictures.

I had not forgotten his treatment of me at Madrid, so I pretended not to see him; but as soon as he saw me, he came up and addressed me as follows:

“My dear Casanova, let us forget what happened at Madrid and be friends once more.”

“So be it, provided no allusion is made to the cause of our quarrel; for I warn you that I cannot speak of it and keep my head cool.”

“I dare say; but if you had understood my position at Madrid you would never have obliged me to take a course which gave me great pain.”

“I do not understand you.”

“I dare say not. You must know, then, that I was strongly suspected of being a Protestant; and if I had shewn myself indifferent to your conduct, I might possibly have been ruined. But dine with me tomorrow; we will make up a party of friends, and discuss our quarrel in a good bottle of wine. I know that you do not receive your brother, so he shall not be there. Indeed, I do not receive him myself, for if I did all honest people would give me the cold shoulder.”

I accepted his friendly invitation, and was punctual to the appointment.

My brother left Rome a short time afterwards with Prince Beloselski, the Russian ambassador to Dresden, with whom he had come; but his visit was unsuccessful, as Rezzonico proved inexorable. We only saw each other two or three times at Rome.

Three or four days after he had gone I had the agreeable surprise of seeing my brother the priest, in rags as usual. He had the impudence to ask me to help him.

“Where do you come from?”

“From Venice; I had to leave the place, as I could no longer make a living there.”

“Then how do you think of making a living at Rome?”

“By saying masses and teaching French.”

“You a teacher of languages! Why, you do not know your native tongue.”

“I know Italian and French too, and I have already got two pupils.”

“They will no doubt make wonderful progress under your fostering care. Who are they?”

“The son and daughter of the inn-keeper, at whose house I am staying. But that’s not enough to keep me, and you must give me something while I am starting.”

“You have no right to count on me. Leave the room.”

I would not listen to another word, and told Margarita to see that he did not come in again.

The wretched fellow did his best to ruin me with all my friends, including the Duchess of Fiano and the Abbe Gama. Everybody told me that I should either give him some help, or get him out of Rome; I got heartily sick of the sound of his name. At last the Abbe Ceruti came and told me that if I did not want to see my brother begging his bread in the streets I must give him some assistance.

“You can keep him out of Rome,” he said, “and he is ready to go if you will allow him three pauls a day.” I consented, and Ceruti hit on a plan which pleased me very much. He spoke to a priest who served a convent of Franciscan nuns. This priest took my brother into his service, and gave him three pauls for saying one mass every day. If he could preach well he might earn more.

Thus the Abbe Casanova passed away, and I did not care whether he knew or not where the three pauls had come from. As long as I stayed at Rome the nine piastres a month came in regularly, but after my departure he returned to Rome, went to another convent, and died there suddenly thirteen or fourteen years ago.

Medini had also arrived in Rome, but we had not seen each other. He lived in the street of the Ursulines at the house of one of the Pope’s light-cavalry men, and subsisted on the money he cheated strangers of.

The rascal had done well and had sent to Mantua for his mistress, who came with her mother and a very pretty girl of twelve or thirteen. Thinking it would be to his advantage to take handsome furnished apartments he moved to the Place d’Espagne, and occupied a house four or five doors from me, but I knew nothing of all this at the time.

Happening to dine one day with the Venetian ambassador, his excellency told me that I should meet a certain Count. Manucci who had just arrived from Paris, and had evinced much delight on learning that I was at Rome.

“I suppose you know him well,” said the ambassador, “and as I am going to present him to the Holy Father to-morrow, I should be much obliged if you could tell me who he really is.”

“I knew him at Madrid, where he lived with Mocenigo our ambassador; he is well mannered, polite, and a fine looking young man, and that’s all I know about him.”

“Was he received at the Spanish Court?”

“I think so, but I cannot be positive.”

“Well, I think he was not received; but I see that you won’t tell me all you know about him. It’s of no consequence; I shall run no risk in presenting him to the Pope. He says he is descended from Manucci, the famous traveller of the thirteenth century, and from the celebrated printers of the same name who did so much for literature. He shewed me the Aldine anchor on his coat of arms which has sixteen quarters.”

I was astonished beyond measure that this man who had plotted my assassination should speak of me as an intimate friend, and I determined to conceal my feelings and await events. I did not shew the least sign of anger, and when after greeting the ambassador he came up to me with open arms, I received him cordially and asked after Mocenigo.

Manucci talked a great deal at dinner, telling a score of lies, all in my honour, about my reception at Madrid. I believe his object was to force me to lie too, and to make me do the same for him another time.

I swallowed all these bitter pills, for I had no choice in the matter, but I made up my mind I would have a thorough explanation the next day.

A Frenchman, the Chevalier de Neuville by name, who had come with Manucci, interested me a great deal. He had come to Rome to endeavour to obtain the annulment of marriage of a lady who was in a convent at Mantua. He had a special recommendation to Cardinal Galli.

His conversation was particularly agreeable, and when we left the ambassador’s I accepted the offer to come into his carriage with Manucci, and we drove about till the evening.

As we were returning at nightfall he told us that he was going to present us to a pretty girl with whom we would sup and where we should have a game of faro.

The carriage stopped at the Place d'Espagne, at a short distance from my lodging, and we went up to a room on the second floor. When I went in I was surprised to see Count Medini and his mistress, the lady whom the chevalier had praised, and whom I found not at all to my taste. Medini received me cordially, and thanked the Frenchman for having made me forget the past, and having brought me to see him.

M. de Neuville looked astonished, and to avoid any unpleasant explanations I turned the conversation.

When Medini thought a sufficient number of punters were present he sat down at a large table, placed five or six hundred crowns in gold and notes before him, and began to deal. Manucci lost all the gold he had about him, Neuville swept away half the bank, and I was content with the humble part of spectator.

After supper, Medini asked the chevalier to give him his revenge, and Manucci asked me to lend him a hundred sequins. I did so, and in an hour he had not one left. Neuville, on the other hand, brought down Medini's bank to twenty or thirty sequins, and after that we retired to our several homes.

Manucci lodged with my sister-in-law, Roland's daughter, and I had made up my mind to give him an early call; but he did not leave me the opportunity, as he called on me early in the morning.

After returning me the hundred sequins he embraced me affectionately, and, shewing me a large letter of credit on Bettoni, said that I must consider his purse as mine. In short, though he said nothing about the past, he gave me to understand that he wished to initiate a mutual policy of forget and forgive.

On this occasion my heart proved too strong for my brain; such has often been the case with me. I agreed to the articles of peace he offered and required.

Besides, I was no longer at that headstrong age which only knows one kind of satisfaction, that of the sword. I remembered that if Manucci had been wrong so had I, and I felt that my honour ran no danger of being compromised.

The day after, I went to dinner with him. The Chevalier de Neuville came in towards the close of the meal, and Medini a few moments later. The latter called on us to hold a bank, each in his turn, and we agreed. Manucci gained double what he had lost; Neuvilie lost four hundred sequins, and I only lost a trifle. Medini who had only lost about fifty sequins was desperate, and would have thrown himself out of the window.

A few days later Manucci set out for Naples, after giving a hundred louis to Medini's mistress, who used to sup with him; but this windfall did not save Medini from being imprisoned for debt, his liabilities amounting to more than a thousand crowns.

The poor wretch wrote me doleful epistles, entreating me to come to his assistance; but the sole effect of his letters was to make me look after what he called his family, repaying myself with the enjoyment of his mistress's young sister. I did not feel called upon to behave generously to him for nothing.

About this time the Emperor of Germany came to Rome with his brother, the Grand Duke of Tuscany.

One of the noblemen in their suite made the girl's acquaintance, and gave Medini enough to satisfy his creditors. He left Rome soon after recovering his liberty, and we shall meet him again in a few months.

I lived very happily amongst the friends I had made for myself. In the evenings I visited the Duchess of Fiano, in the afternoons the Princess of Santa Croce. The rest of my time I spent at home, where I had Margarita, the fair Buonacorsi, and young Menicuccio, who told me so much about his lady-love that I felt quite curious to see her.

The girl was in a kind of convent where she had been placed out of charity. She could only leave it to get married, with the consent of the cardinal who superintended the establishment. When a girl went out and got married, she received a dower of two hundred Roman crowns.

Menicuccio had a sister in the same convent, and was allowed to visit her on Sundays; she came to the grating, followed by her governess. Though Menicuccio was her brother, she was not permitted to see him alone.

Five or six months before the date of which I am writing his sister had been accompanied to the grating by another girl, whom he had never seen before, and he immediately fell in love with her.

The poor young man had to work hard all the week, and could only visit the convent on holidays; and even then he had rarely the good luck to see his lady-love. In five or six months he had only seen her seven or eight times.

His sister knew of his love, and would have done all in her power for him, but the choice of a companion did not rest with her, and she was afraid of asking for this particular girl for fear of exciting suspicion.

As I have said, I had made up my mind to pay the place a visit, and on our way Menicuccio told me that the women of the convent were not nuns, properly speaking, as they had never taken any vow and did not wear a monastic dress. In spite of that they had few temptations to leave their prison house, as they would only find themselves alone in the world with the prospect of starvation or hard work before them. The young girls only came out to get married, which was uncommon, or by flight, which was extremely difficult.

We reached a vast ill-built house, near one of the town gates — a lonely and deserted situation, as the gate led to no highway. When we went into the parlour I was astonished to see the double grating with bars so thick and close together that the hand of a girl of ten could scarce have got through. The grating was so close that it was extremely difficult to make out the features of the persons standing on the inner side, especially as this was only lighted by the uncertain reflection from the outer room. The sight of these arrangements made me shudder.

“How and where have you seen your mistress?” I asked Menicuccio; “for there I see nothing but darkness.”

“The first time the governess chanced to have a candle, but this privilege is confined, under pain of excommunication, to relations.”

“Then she will have a light to-day?”

“I expect not, as the portress will have sent up word that there was a stranger with me.”

“But how could you see your sweetheart, as you are not related to her?”

“By chance; the first time she came my sister’s governess — a good soul — said nothing about it. Ever since there has been no candle when she has been present.” Soon after, the forms of three or four women were dimly to be seen; but there was no candle, and the governess would not bring one on any consideration. She was afraid of being found out and excommunicated.

I saw that I was depriving my young friend of a pleasure, and would have gone, but he told me to stay. I passed an hour which interested me in spite of its painfulness. The voice of Menicuccio’s sister sent a thrill through me, and I fancied that the blind must fall in love through their sense of hearing. The governess was a woman under thirty. She told me that when the girls attained their twenty-fifth year they were placed in charge of the younger ones, and at thirty-five they were free to leave the convent if they liked, but that few cared to take this step, for fear of falling into misery.

“Then there are a good many old women here?”

“There are a hundred of us, and the number is only decreased by death and by occasional marriages.”

“But how do those who go out to get married succeed in inspiring the love of their husbands?”

“I have been here for twenty years, and in that time only four have gone out, and they did not know their husbands till they met at the altar. As might be expected, the men who solicit the cardinal for our hands are either madmen, or fellows of desperate fortunes who want the two hundred piastres. However, the cardinal-superintendent refuses permission unless the postulant can satisfy him that he is capable of supporting a wife.”

“How does he choose his bride?”

“He tells the cardinal what age and disposition he would prefer, and the cardinal informs the mother-superior.”

“I suppose you keep a good table, and are comfortably lodged.”

"Not at all. Three thousand crowns a year are not much to keep a hundred persons. Those who do a little work and earn something are the best off."

"What manner of people put their daughters in such a prison?"

"Either poor people or bigots who are afraid of their children falling into evil ways. We only receive pretty girls here."

"Who is the judge of their prettiness?"

"The parents, the priest, and on the last appeal the cardinal-superintendent, who rejects plain girls without pity, observing that ugly women have no reason to fear the seductions of vice. So you may imagine that, wretched as we are, we curse those who pronounced us pretty."

"I pity you, and I wonder why leave is not given to see you openly; you might have some chance of getting married then."

"The cardinal says that it is not in his power to give permission, as anyone transgressing the foundation is excommunicated."

"Then I should imagine that the founder of this house is now consumed by the flames of hell."

"We all think so, and hope he may stay there. The Pope ought to take some order with the house."

I gave her ten crowns, saying that as I could not see her I could not promise a second visit, and then I went away with Menicuccio, who was angry with himself for having procured me such a tedious hour.

"I suppose I shall never see your mistress or your sister," said I; "your sister's voice went to my heart."

"I should think your ten paistres ought to work miracles."

"I suppose there is another parlour."

"Yes; but only priests are allowed to enter it under pain of excommunication, unless you get leave from the Holy Father."

I could not imagine how such a monstrous establishment could be tolerated, for it was almost impossible, under the circumstances, for the poor girls to get a husband. I calculated that as two hundred piastres were assigned to each as a dowry in case of marriage, the founder must have calculated on two marriages a year at least, and it seemed probable that these sums were made away with by some scoundrel.

I laid my ideas before Cardinal Bernis in the presence of the princess, who seemed moved with compassion for these poor women, and said I must write out a petition and get it signed by all of them, entreating the Holy Father to allow them the privileges customary in all other convents.

The cardinal told me to draft the supplication, to obtain the signatures, and to place it in the hands of the princess. In the meantime he would get the ear of the Holy Father, and ascertain by whose hands it was most proper for the petition to be presented.

I felt pretty sure of the signatures of the greater number of the recluses, and after writing out the petition I left it in the hands of the governess to whom I had spoken before. She was delighted with the idea, and promised to give me back the paper when I came again, with the signatures of all her companions in misfortune.

As soon as the Princess Santa Croce had the document she addressed herself to the Cardinal-Superintendent Orsini, who promised to bring the matter before the Pope. Cardinal Bernis had already spoken to His Holiness.

The chaplain of the institute was ordered to warn the superior that for the future visitors were to be allowed to see girls in the large parlour, provided they were accompanied by a governess.

Menicuccio brought me this news, which the princess had not heard, and which she was delighted to hear from my lips.

The worthy Pope did not stop there. He ordered a rigid scrutiny of the accounts to be made, and reduced the number from a hundred to fifty, doubling the dower. He also ordered that all girls who reached the age of twenty-five without getting married should be sent away with their four hundred crowns apiece; that twelve discreet matrons should have charge of the younger girls, and that twelve servants should be paid to do the hard work of the house.

CHAPTER XVI

I Sup at the Inn With Armelline and Emilie

These innovations were the work of some six months. The first reform was the abolition of the prohibition on entering the large parlour and even the interior of the convent; for as the inmates had taken no vows and were not cloistered nuns, the superior should have been at liberty to act according to her discretion. Menicuccio had learnt this from a note his sister wrote him, and which he brought to me in high glee, asking me to come with him to the convent, according to his sister’s request, who said my presence would be acceptable to her governess. I was to ask for the governess.

I was only too glad to lend myself to this pleasant arrangement, and felt curious to see the faces of the three recluses, as well as to hear what they had to say on these great changes.

When we got into the large parlour I saw two grates, one occupied by the Abbe Guasco, whom I had known in Paris in 1751, the other by a Russian nobleman, Ivan Ivanovitch Schuvaloff, and by Father Jacquier, a friar minim of the Trinita dei Monti, and a learned astronomer. Behind the grate I saw three very pretty girls.

When our friends came down we began a very interesting conversation, which had to be conducted in a low tone for fear of our being overheard. We could not talk at our ease till the other visitors had taken their leave. My young friend’s mistress was a very pretty girl, but his sister was a ravishing beauty. She had just entered on her sixteenth year, but she was tall and her figure well developed; in short, she enchanted me. I thought I had never seen a whiter skin or blacker hair and eyebrows and eyes, but still more charming was the sweetness of her voice and expression, and the naive simplicity of her expressions. Her governess who was ten or twelve years older than she was, was a woman of an extremely interesting expression; she was pale and melancholy looking, no doubt from the fires which she had been forced to quench within her. She delighted me by telling me of the confusion which the new regulations had caused in the house.

“The mother-superior is well pleased,” she said, “and all my young companions are overjoyed; but the older ones whom circumstance has made into bigots are scandalized at everything. The superior has already given orders for windows to be made in the dark parlours, though the old women say that she cannot go beyond the concessions she has already received. To this the superior answered that as free communication had been allowed, it would be absurd to retain the darkness. She has also given orders for the alteration of the double grating, as there was only a single one in the large parlour.”

I thought the superior must be a woman of intelligence, and expressed a desire to see her. Emilie obtained this pleasure for me the following day.

Emilie was the friend of Armelline, Menicuccio's sister. This first visit lasted two hours, and seemed all too short. Menicuccio spoke to his well-beloved at the other grating.

I went away, after having given them ten Roman crowns as before. I kissed Armelline's fair hands, and as she felt the contact of my lips her face was suffused by a vivid blush. Never had the lips of man touched more dainty hands before, and she looked quite astounded at the ardour with which I kissed them.

I went home full of love for her, and without heeding the obstacles in my path I gave reins to my passion, which seemed to me the most ardent I had ever experienced.

My young friend was in an ocean of bliss. He had declared his love, and the girl had said that she would gladly become his wife if he could get the cardinal's consent. As this consent only depended on his ability to keep himself, I promised to give him a hundred crowns and my patronage. He had served his time as a tailor's apprentice, and was in a position to open a shop of his own.

"I envy your lot," said I, "for your happiness is assured, while I, though I love your sister, despair of possessing her."

"Are you married then?" he asked.

"Alas, yes! Keep my counsel, for I propose visiting her every day, and if it were known that I was married, my visits would be received with suspicion."

I was obliged to tell this lie to avoid the temptation of marrying her, and to prevent Armelline thinking that I was courting her with that intention.

I found the superioress a polite and clever woman, wholly free from prejudices. After coming down to the grate to oblige me, she sometimes came for her own pleasure. She knew that I was the author of the happy reform in the institution, and she told me that she considered herself under great obligations to me. In less than six weeks three of her girls made excellent marriages, and six hundred crowns had been added to the yearly income of the house.

She told me that she was ill pleased with one of their confessors. He was a Dominican, and made it a rule that his penitents should approach the holy table every Sunday and feast day; he kept them for hours in the confessional, and imposed penances and fastings which were likely to injure the health of young girls.

“All this,” said she, “cannot improve them from a mortal point of view, and takes up a lot of their time, so that they have none left for their work, by the sale of which they procure some small comforts for themselves.

“How many confessors have you?”

“Four.”

“Are you satisfied with the other three?”

“Yes, they are sensible men, and do not ask too much of poor human nature.”

“I will carry your just complaint to the cardinal; will you write out your petition?”

“Kindly give me a model.”

I gave her a rough draft, which she copied out and signed, and I laid it before his eminence. A few days after the Dominican was removed, and his penitents divided amongst the three remaining confessors. The younger members of the community owed me a great debt of gratitude on account of this change.

Menicuccio went to see his sweetheart every holiday, while I, in my amorous ardour, visited his sister every morning at nine o’clock. I breakfasted with her and Emilie, and remained in the parlour till eleven. As there was only one grating I could lock the door behind me, but we could be seen from the interior of the convent, as the door was left open to admit light, there being no window. This was a great annoyance for me; recluses, young or old, were continually passing by, and none of them failed to give a glance in the direction of the grate; thus my fair Armelline could not stretch out her hand to receive my amorous kisses.

Towards the end of December the cold became intense, and I begged the superior to allow me to place a screen in front of the door, as I feared I should catch cold otherwise. The worthy woman granted my request without any difficulty, and we were at our ease for the future, though the desires with which Armelline inspired me had become dreadful torment.

On the 1st day of January, 1771, I presented each of them with a good winter dress, and sent the superior a quantity of chocolate, sugar, and coffee, all of which were extremely welcome.

Emilie often came by herself to the grating, as Armelline was not ready, and in the same way Armelline would come by herself when her governess happened to be busy. It was in these quarters of an hour that she succeeded in captivating me, heart and soul.

Emilie and Armelline were great friends, but their prejudices on the subject of sensual enjoyment were so strong that I could never get them to listen to licentious talk, to allow certain small liberties which I would gladly have taken, or to afford me those pleasures of the eyes that we accept in default of better things.

One day they were petrified by my asking them whether they did not sometimes sleep in the same bed, so as to give each other proofs of the tenderness of their mutual affection.

How they blushed Emilie asked me with the most perfect innocence what there was in common between affection and the inconvenience of sleeping two in a narrow bed.

I took care not to explain myself, for I saw that I had frightened them. No doubt they were of the same flesh and blood as I, but our educators had differed widely. They had evidently never confided their little secrets to one another, possibly not even to their confessor, either through shame, or with the idea that the liberties they indulged in alone were no sin.

I made them a present of some silk stockings, lined with plush to keep out the cold, and vainly endeavoured to make them try the stockings on before me. I might say as often as I pleased that there was no real difference between a man’s legs and a woman’s, and that their confessor would laugh at them if they confessed to shewing their legs. They only answered that girls were not allowed to take such a liberty, as they wore petticoats on purpose to conceal their legs.

The manner in which Emilie spoke, always with Armelline’s approbation, convinced me that their modesty was genuine. I penetrated her idea; she thought that in acceding to my request she would be lowering herself in my eyes, and that I should despise her ever after. Nevertheless Emilie was a woman of twenty-seven, and by no means a devotee.

As for Armelline, I could see that she took Emilie for her model, and would have been ashamed of appearing less precise than her friend. I thought she loved me, and that, contrary to the general rule, she would be more easily won by herself than in company with her friend.

I made the trial one morning when she appeared at the grating by herself, telling me that her governess was busy. I said that I adored her and was the most hapless of men, for being a married man I had no hope of ever being able to clasp her to my arms and cover her with kisses.

“Can I continue to live, dear Armelline, with no other consolation than that of kissing your fair hands?”

At these words, pronounced with so much passion, she fixed her gaze on me, and after a few moments’ reflection she began to kiss my hands as ardently as I had kissed hers.

I begged her to put her mouth so that I might kiss it. She blushed and looked down, and did nothing. I bewailed my fate bitterly, but in vain. She was deaf and dumb till Emilie came and asked us why we were so dull.

About this time, the beginning of 1771, I was visited by Mariuccia, whom I had married ten years before to a young hairdresser. My readers may remember how I met her at Abbe Momolo’s. During the three months I had been in Rome I had enquired in vain as to what had become of her; so that I was delighted when she made her appearance.

“I saw you at St. Peter’s,” said she, “at the midnight mass on Christmas Eve, but not daring to approach you because of the people with whom I was, I told a friend of mine to follow you and find out where you lived.”

“How is it that I have tried to find you out in vain for the last three months?”

“My husband set up at Frascati eight years ago, and we have lived there very happily ever since.”

“I am very glad to hear it. Have you any children?”

“Four; and the eldest, who is nine years old, is very like you.”

“Do you love her?”

“I adore her, but I love the other three as well.”

As I wanted to go to breakfast with Armelline I begged Margarita to keep Mariuccia company till my return.

Mariuccia dined with me, and we spent a pleasant day together without attempting to renew our more tender relationship. We had plenty to talk about, and she told me that Costa, my old servant, had come back to Rome in a splendid coach, three years after I had left, and that he had married one of Momolo’s daughters.

“He’s a rascal; he robbed me.”

“I guessed as much; his theft did him no good. He left his wife two years after their marriage, and no one knows what has become of him.”

“How about his wife?”

“She is living miserably in Rome. Her father is dead.”

I did not care to go and see the poor woman, for I could not do anything for her, and I could not have helped saying that if I caught her husband I would do my best to have him hanged. Such was indeed my intention up to the year 1785, when I found this runagate at Vienna. He was then Count Erdich’s man, and when we come to that period the reader shall hear what I did.

I promised Mariuccia to come and see her in the course of Lent.

The Princess Santa Croce and the worthy Cardinal Bernis pitied me for my hapless love; I often confided my sufferings to their sympathizing ears.

The cardinal told the princess that she could very well obtain permission from Cardinal Orsini to take Armelline to the theatre, and that if I cared to join the party I might find her less cruel.

“The cardinal will make no objection,” said he, “as Armelline has taken no vows; but as you must know our friend’s mistress before making your request, you have only to tell the cardinal that you would like to see the interior of the house.”

"Do you think he will give me leave?"

"Certainly; the inmates are not cloistered nuns. We will go with you."

"You will come too? that will be a delightful party indeed."

"Ask for leave, and we will arrange the day."

This plan seemed to me a delicious dream. I guessed that the gallant cardinal was curious to see Armelline, but I was not afraid as I knew he was a constant lover. Besides I felt sure that if he took an interest in the fair recluse he would be certain to find her a husband.

In three or four days the princess summoned me to her box in the Alberti Theatre, and shewed me Cardinal Orsini's note, allowing her and her friends to see the interior of the house.

"To-morrow afternoon," said she, "we will fix the day and the hour for the visit."

Next day I paid my usual visit to the recluses, and the superioress came to tell me that the cardinal had told her that the Princess Santa Croce was coming to visit the house with some friends.

"I know it," said I; "I am coming with her."

"When is she coming?"

"I don't know yet, but I will inform you later on."

"This novelty has turned the house upside down. The devotees scarcely know whether they are awake or dreaming, for with the exception of a few priests, the doctor, and the surgeon, no one has ever entered the house since its foundation."

"All these restrictions are now removed, and you need not ask the cardinal's permission to receive visits from your friends."

"I know that, but I don't like to go so far."

The time for the visit was fixed for the afternoon of the next day, and I let the superioress know early the next morning. The Duchess of Fiano had asked to join us; the cardinal came, of course, dressed as a simple priest, with no indication of his exalted rank. He knew Armelline directly from my description, and congratulated her on having made my acquaintance.

The poor girl blushed to the roots of her hair; and I thought she would have fainted when the princess, after telling her she was the prettiest girl in the house, gave her two affectionate kisses, a mark of friendship strictly forbidden by the rules.

After these caresses, the princess proceeded to compliment the superioress. She said that I had done well to praise her parts, as she could judge of them by the order and neatness which reigned everywhere.

“I shall mention your name to Cardinal Orsini,” she added, “and you may be sure I shall do you all the justice you deserve.”

When we had seen all the rooms, which contained nothing worth seeing, I presented Emilie to the princess, who received her with great cordiality.

“I have heard of your sadness,” she said, “but I know the reason of it. You are a good girl, and pretty too, and I shall get you a husband who will cure you of your melancholy.”

The superioress gave a smile of approbation, but I saw a dozen aged devotees pulling wry faces.

Emilie dared not reply, but she took the princess’s hand and kissed it, as if to summon her to keep her promise.

As for me, I was delighted to see that though all the girls were really pretty, my Armelline eclipsed them all, as the light of the sun obscures the stars.

When we came down to the parlour, the princess told Armelline that she meant to ask leave of the cardinal to take her two or three times to the theatre before Lent began. This observation seemed to petrify everyone except the superioress, who said that his eminence had now a perfect right to relax any or all of the rules of the establishment.

Poor Armelline was so overwhelmed between joy and confusion that she could not speak. She seemed unable to find words wherein to thank the princess, who commended her and her friend Emilie to the superioress before she left the house, and gave her a small present to buy necessaries for them.

Not to be outdone, the Duchess of Fiano told the superioress that she would make me the almoner of her bounty towards Armelline and Emilie. My expressions of gratitude to the princess when we were back in the carriage may be imagined.

I had no need to excuse Armelline, for the princess and the cardinal had gauged her capacities. Her confusion had prevented her shewing her cleverness, but her face shewed her to possess it. Besides, the influence of the education she had received had to be taken into account. The princess was impatient to take her to the theatre, and afterwards to supper at an inn, according to the Roman custom.

She wrote the names of Armelline and Emilie upon her tablets, so as to remember them on every occasion.

I did not forget the mistress of my poor friend Menicuccio, but the time was not opportune for mentioning her name. The next day, however, I got the cardinal’s ear, and told him that I was anxious to do something for the young man. The cardinal saw him, and Menicuccio pleased him so well that the marriage took place before the end of the carnival, the bride having a dowry of five hundred crowns. With this sum and the hundred crowns I gave him, he was in a position to open a shop for himself.

The day after the princess’s visit was a triumphant one for me. As soon as I appeared at the grating the superioress was sent for, and we had an interview.

The princess had given her fifty crowns, which she was going to lay out on linen for Armelline and Emilie.

The recluses were stupefied when I told them that the fat priest was Cardinal Bernis, as they had an idea that a cardinal can never doff the purple.

The Duchess of Fiano had sent a cask of wine, which was an unknown beverage there, and these presents made them hope for others. I was looked upon as the bringer of all this good luck, and gratitude shewed itself so plainly in every word and glance that I felt I might hope for everything.

A few days later, the princess told Cardinal Orsini that she had taken a peculiar interest in two of the young recluses, and desiring to provide them with suitable establishments she wished to take them now and again to the theatre so as to give them some knowledge of the world. She undertook to take them and bring them back herself or only to confide them to sure hands. The cardinal replied that the superioress should receive instructions to oblige her in every particular.

As soon as I heard of this from the princess, I said that I would ascertain what orders had been actually received at the convent.

The next day the superioress told me that his eminence had instructed her to do what she thought best for the welfare of the young people committed to her charge.

“I have also received orders,” she added, “to send in the names of those who have attained the age of thirty, and wish to leave the convent, that they may receive a warrant for their two hundred crowns. I have not yet published this command, but I haven’t the slightest doubt that we shall get rid of a score at least.”

I told the princess of the cardinal’s orders, and she agreed with me that his behaviour was most generous.

Cardinal Bernis, who was by, advised her that the first time she took the girls to the theatre she had better go in person, and tell the superioress that she would always send her carriage and liveried servants to fetch them.

The princess approved of this advice, and a few days later she called for Emilie and Armelline, and brought them to her palace, where I awaited them with the cardinal, the prince, and the Duchess of Fiano.

They were welcomed warmly, encouraged to reply, to laugh, and to say what was in their minds, but all in vain; finding themselves for the first time in a splendid apartment surrounded by brilliant company, they were so confounded that they could not say a word. Emilie persisted in rising from her seat whenever she was addressed, and Armelline shone only by her beauty and the vivid blush which suffused her face whenever she was addressed. The princess might kiss her as much as she pleased, but the novice had not the courage to return her kisses.

At last Armelline mustered up courage to take the princess’s hand and kiss it, but when the lady kissed her on the lips the girl remained inactive, seeming to be absolutely ignorant of such a natural and easy matter as the returning of a kiss.

The cardinal and the prince laughed; the duchess said that so much restraint was unnatural. As for me I was on thorns, such awkwardness seemed to me near akin to stupidity, for Armelline had only to do to the princess's lips what she had already done to her hand. No doubt she fancied that to do to the princess what the princess had done to her would shew too much familiarity.

The cardinal took me on one side and said he could not believe that I had not initiated her in the course of two months' intimacy, but I pointed out to him the immense force of long engrained prejudice.

Far this first tine the princess had made up her mind to take them to the Torre di Nonna Theatre, as comic pieces were played there, and they could not help but laugh.

After the play we went to sup at an inn, and at table the good cheer and my exhortations began to take some effect on her. We persuaded them to drink a little wine, and their spirits improved visibly. Emilie ceased to be sad, and Armelline gave the princess some real kisses. We applauded their efforts to be gay and our applause convinced them that they had done nothing wrong.

Of course the princess charged me with the pleasant trust of taking the two guests back to the convent. Now, I thought, my time has come; but when we were in the carriage I saw that I had reckoned without my host. When I would have kissed, heads were turned aside; when I would have stretched forth an indiscreet hand, dresses were wrapped more tightly; when I would have forced my way, I was resisted by force; when I complained, I was told that I was in the wrong; when I got in a rage, I was allowed to say on; and when I threatened to see them no more, they did not believe me.

When we got to the convent a servant opened the side door, and noticing that she did not shut it after the girls, I went in too, and went with them to see the superioress, who was in bed, and did not seem at all astonished to see me. I told her that I considered it my duty to bring back her young charges in person. She thanked me, asked them if they had had a pleasant evening, and bade me good night, begging me to make as little noise as possible on my way downstairs.

I wished them all happy slumbers, and after giving a sequin to the servant who opened the door, and another to the coachman, I had myself set down at the door of my lodging. Margarita was asleep on a sofa and welcomed me with abuse, but she soon found out by the ardour of my caresses that I had not been guilty of infidelity.

I did not get up till noon, and at three o'clock I called on the princess and found the cardinal already there.

They expected to hear the story of my triumph, but the tale I told and my apparent indifference in the matter came as a surprise.

I may as well confess that my face was by no means the index of my mind. However, I did my best to give the thing a comic turn, saying that I did not care for Pamelas, and that I had made up my mind to give up the adventure.

"My dear fellow," said the cardinal, "I shall take two or three days before I congratulate you on your self-restraint."

His knowledge of the human heart was very extensive.

Armelline thought I must have slept till late as she did not see me in the morning as usual; but when the second day went by without my coming she sent her brother to ask if I were ill, for I had never let two days pass without paying her a visit.

Menicuccio came accordingly, and was delighted to find me in perfect health.

"Go and tell your sister," I said, "that I shall continue to interest the princess on her behalf, but that I shall see her no more."

"Why not?"

"Because I wish to cure myself of an unhappy passion. Your sister does not love me: I am sure of it. I am no longer a young man, and I don't feel inclined to become a martyr to her virtue. Virtue goes rather too far when it prevents a girl giving the man who adores her a single kiss."

"Indeed, I would not have believed that of her."

"Nevertheless it is the fact, and I must make an end of it. Your sister cannot understand the danger she runs in treating a lover in this fashion. Tell her all that, my dear Menicuccio, but don't give her any advice of your own."

"You can't think how grieved I am to hear all this; perhaps it's Emilie's presence that makes her so cold."

"No; I have often pressed her when we have been alone together, but all in vain. I want to cure myself, for if she does not love me I do not wish to obtain her either by seduction or by any feeling of gratitude on her part. Tell me how your future bride treats you."

"Very well, ever since she has been sure of my marrying her."

I felt sorry then that I had given myself out as a married man, for in my state of irritation I could even have given her a promise of marriage without deliberately intending to deceive her.

Menicuccio went on his way distressed, and I went to the meeting of the "Arcadians," at the Capitol, to hear the Marchioness d'Aout recite her reception piece. This marchioness was a young Frenchwoman who had been at Rome for the last six months with her husband, a man of many talents, but inferior to her, for she was a genius. From this day I became her intimate friend, but without the slightest idea of an intrigue, leaving all that to a French priest who was hopelessly in love with her, and had thrown up his chances of preferment for her sake.

Every day the Princess Santa Croce told me that I could have the key to her box at the theatre whenever I liked to take Armelline and Emilie, but when a week passed by without my giving any sign she began to believe that I had really broken off the connection.

The cardinal, on the other hand, believed me to be still in love, and praised my conduct. He told me that I should have a letter from the superioress, and he was right; for at the end of the week she wrote me a polite note begging me to call on her, which I was obliged to obey.

I called on her, and she began by asking me plainly why my visits had ceased.

"Because I am in love with Armelline."

"If that reason brought you here every day, I do not see how it can have suddenly operated in another direction."

"And yet it is all quite natural; for when one loves one desires, and when one desires in vain one suffers, and continual suffering is great unhappiness.

And so you see that I am bound to act thus for my own sake."

"I pity you, and see the wisdom of your course; but allow me to tell you that, esteeming Armelline, you have no right to lay her open to a judgment being passed upon her which is very far from the truth."

"And what judgment is that?"

"That your love was only a whim, and that as soon as it was satisfied you abandoned her."

"I am sorry indeed to hear of this, but what can I do? I must cure myself of this unhappy passion. Do you know any other remedy than absence? Kindly advise me."

"I don't know much about the affection called love, but it seems to me that by slow degrees love becomes friendship, and peace is restored."

"True, but if it is to become friendship, love must be gently treated. If the beloved object is not very tender, love grows desperate and turns to indifference or contempt. I neither wish to grow desperate nor to despise Armelline, who is a miracle of beauty and goodness. I shall do my utmost for her, just as if she had made me happy, but I will see her no more."

"I am in complete darkness on the matter. They assure me that they have never failed in their duty towards you, and that they cannot imagine why you have ceased coming here."

"Whether by prudence, or timidity, or a delicate wish not to say anything against me, they have told you a lie; but you deserve to know all, and my honour requires that I should tell you the whole story."

"Please do so; you may count on my discretion."

I then told my tale, and I saw she was moved.

"I have always tried," she said, "never to believe evil except on compulsion, nevertheless, knowing as I do the weakness of the human heart, I could never have believed that throughout so long and intimate an acquaintance you could have kept yourself so severely within bounds. In my opinion there would be much less harm in a kiss than in all this scandal."

"I am sure that Armelline does not care about it."

"She does nothing but weep."

"Her tears probably spring from vanity, or from the cause her companions assign for my absence."

"No, I have told them all that you are ill."

"What does Emilie say?"

"She does not weep, but she looks sad, and says over and over again that it is not her fault if you do not come, thereby hinting that it is Armelline's fault. Come tomorrow to oblige me. They are dying to see the opera at the Aliberti, and the comic opera at the Capronica."

"Very good, then I will breakfast with them to-morrow morning, and to-morrow evening they shall see the opera."

"You are very good; I thank you. Shall I tell them the news?"

"Please tell Armelline that I am only coming after hearing all that you have said to me."

The princess skipped for joy when she heard of my interview with the superioress, and the cardinal said he had guessed as much. The princess gave me the key of her box, and ordered that her carriage and servants should be at my orders.

The next day when I went to the convent Emilie came down by herself to reproach me on my cruel conduct. She told me that a man who really loved would not have acted in such a manner, and that I had been wrong to tell the superioress everything.

"I would not have said anything if I had had anything important to say."

"Armelline has become unhappy through knowing you."

"Because she does not want to fail in her duty, and she sees that you only love her to turn her from it."

"But her unhappiness will cease when I cease troubling her."

"Do you mean you are not going to see her any more?"

"Exactly. Do you think that it costs me no pain? But I must make the effort for the sake of my peace of mind."

"Then she will be sure that you do not love her."

"She must think what she pleases. In the meanwhile I feel sure that if she loved me as I loved her, we should be of one mind."

"We have duties which seem to press lightly on you."

"Then be faithful to your duties, and permit a man of honour to respect them by visiting you no more."

Armelline then appeared. I thought her changed.

"Why do you look so grave and pale?"

"Because you have grieved me."

"Come then, be gay once more, and allow me to cure myself of a passion, the essence of which is to induce you to fail in your duty. I shall be still your friend, and I shall come to see you once a week while I remain in Rome."

"Once a week! You needn't have begun by coming once a day."

"You are right; it was your kind expression which deceived me, but I hope you will allow me to become rational again. For this to happen, I must try not to see you more than I can help. Think over it, and you will see that I am doing all for the best."

"It's very hard that you can't love me as I love you."

"You mean calmly, and without desires."

"I don't say that; but holding your desires in check, if they are contrary to the voice of duty."

"I'm too old to learn this method, and it does not seem to me an attractive one. Kindly tell me whether the restraint of your desires gives you much pain?"

"I don't repress my desires when I think of you, I cherish them; I wish you were the Pope, I wish you were my father, that I might caress you in all innocence; in my dreams I wish you could become a girl, so that we might always live happily together."

At this true touch of native simplicity, I could not help smiling.

I told them that I should come in the evening to take them to the Aliberti, and felt in a better humour after my visit, for I could see that there was no art or coquetry in what Armelline said. I saw that she loved me, but would not come to a parley with her love, hence her repugnance to granting me her favours; if she once did so, her eyes would be opened. All this was pure nature, for experience had not yet taught her that she ought either to avoid me or to succumb to my affection.

In the evening I called for the two friends to take them to the opera, and I had not long to wait. I was by myself in the carriage, but they evinced no surprise. Emilie conveyed to me the compliments of the superioress, who would be obliged by my calling on her the following day. At the opera I let them gaze at the spectacle which they saw for the first time, and answered whatever questions they put to me. As they were Romans, they ought to have known what a castrato was, nevertheless, Armelline took the wretched individual who sang the prima donna's part for a woman, and pointed to his breast, which was really a fine one.

"Would you dare to sleep in the same bed with him?" I asked.

"No; an honest girl ought always to sleep by herself."

Such was the severity of the education they had received. Everything connected with love was made a mystery of, and treated with a kind of superstitious awe. Thus Armelline had only let me kiss her hands after a long contest, and neither she nor Emilie would allow me to see whether the stockings I had given them fitted well or not. The severe prohibition that was laid on sleeping with another girl must have made them think that to shew their nakedness to a companion would be a great sin, and let a man see their beauties a hideous crime. The very idea of such a thing must have given them a shudder.

Whenever I had attempted to indulge in conversation which was a little free, I had found them deaf and dumb.

Although Emilie was a handsome girl in spite of her pallor, I did not take sufficient interest in her to try to dissipate her melancholy; but loving Armelline to desperation I was cut to the quick to see her look grave when I asked her if she had any idea of the difference between the physical conformation of men and women.

As we were leaving Armelline said she was hungry, as she had scarcely eaten anything for the last week on account of the grief I had given her.

“If I had foreseen that,” I answered, “I would have ordered a good supper, whereas I have now only potluck to offer you.”

“Never mind. How many shall we be?”

“We three.”

“So much the better; we shall be more at liberty.”

“Then you don’t like the princess?”

“I beg your pardon, but she wants me to kiss her in a way I don’t like.”

“Nevertheless, you kissed her ardently enough.”

“I was afraid she would take me for a simpleton if I did not do so.”

“Then do you think you committed a sin in kissing her like that?”

“Certainly not, for it was very unpleasant for me.”

“Then why won’t you make the same effort on my behalf?”

She said nothing, and when we got to the inn I ordered them to light a fire and to get a good supper ready.

The waiter asked me if I would like some oysters, and noticing the curiosity of my guests on the subject I asked him how much they were.

“They are from the arsenal at Venice,” he replied, “and we can’t sell them under fifty pains a hundred.”

“Very good, I will take a hundred, but you must open them here.”

Armelline was horrified to think that I was going to pay five crowns for her whim, and begged me to revoke the order; but she said nothing when I told her that no pleasure of hers could be bought too dearly by me.

At this she took my hand and would have carried it to her lips, but I took it away rather roughly, greatly to her mortification.

I was sitting in front of the fire between them, and I was sorry at having grieved her.

"I beg pardon, Armelline," I said, "I only took my hand away because it was not worthy of being carried to your fair lips."

In spite of this excuse she could not help two big tears coursing down her blushing cheeks. I was greatly pained.

Armelline was a tender dove, not made to be roughly treated. If I did not want her to hate me I felt that I must either not see her at all or treat her more gently for the future.

Her tears convinced me that I had wounded her feelings terribly, and I got up and went out to order some champagne.

When I came back I found that she had been weeping bitterly. I did not know what to do; I begged her again and again to forgive me, and to be gay once more, unless she wished to subject me to the severest of all punishments.

Emilie backed me up, and on taking her hand and covering it with kisses, I had the pleasure of seeing her smile once more.

The oysters were opened in our presence, and the astonishment depicted on the girls' countenances would have amused me if my heart had been more at ease. But I was desperate with love, and Armelline begged me vainly to be as I was when we first met.

We sat down, and I taught my guests how to suck up the oysters, which swam in their own liquid, and were very good.

Armelline swallowed half a dozen, and then observed to her friend that so delicate a morsel must be a sin.

"Not on account of its delicacy," said Emilie, "but because at every mouthful we swallow half a Paul."

"Half a Paul!" said Armelline, "and the Holy Father does not forbid such a luxury? If this is not the sin of gluttony, I don't know what is. These oysters are delightful; but I shall speak about the matter to my director."

These simplicities of hers afforded me great mental pleasure, but I wanted bodily pleasure as well.

We ate fifty oysters, and drank two bottles of sparkling champagne, which made my two guests eruct and blush and laugh at the same time.

I would fain have laughed too and devoured Armelline with my kisses, but I could only devour her with by eyes.

I kept the remainder of the oysters for dessert, and ordered the supper to be served. It was an excellent meal, and the two heroines enjoyed it; even Emilie became quite lively.

I ordered up lemons and a bottle of rum, and after having the fifty remaining oysters opened I sent the waiter away. I then made a bowl of punch, pouring in a bottle of champagne as a finishing touch.

After they had swallowed a few oysters and drank one or two glasses of punch, which they liked amazingly, I begged Emilie to give me an oyster with her lips.

“I am sure you are too sensible to find anything wrong in that,” I added.

Emilie was astonished at the proposition, and thought it over. Armelline gazed at her anxiously, as if curious as to how she would answer me.

“Why don’t you ask Armelline?” she said at length.

“Do you give him one first,” said Armelline, “and if you have the courage I will try to do the same.”

“What courage do you want? It’s a child’s game; there’s no harm in it.”

After this reply, I was sure of victory. I placed the shell on the edge of her lips, and after a good deal of laughing she sucked in the oyster, which she held between her lips. I instantly recovered it by placing my lips on hers.

Armelline clapped her hands, telling Emilie that she would never have thought her so brave; she then imitated her example, and was delighted with my delicacy in sucking away the oyster, scarcely touching her lips with mine. My agreeable surprise may be imagined when I heard her say that it was my turn to hold the oysters. It is needless to say that I acquitted myself of the duty with much delight.

After these pleasant interludes we went to drinking punch and swallowing oysters.

We all sat in a row with our backs to the fire, and our brains began to whirl, but never was there such a sweet intoxication. However, the punch was not finished and we were getting very hot. I took off my coat, and they were obliged to unlace their dresses, the bodices of which were lined with fur. Guessing at necessities which they did not dare to mention, I pointed out a closet where they could make themselves comfortable, and they went in hand-in-hand. When they came out they were no longer timid recluses, they were shrieking with laughter, and reeling from side to side.

I was their screen as we sat in front of the fire, and I gazed freely on charms which they could no longer conceal. I told them that we must not think of going till the punch was finished, and they agreed, saying, in high glee, that it would be a great sin to leave so good a thing behind.

I then presumed so far as to tell them that they had beautiful legs, and that I should be puzzled to assign the prize between them. This made them gayer than ever, for they had not noticed that their unlaced bodices and short petticoats let me see almost everything.

After drinking our punch to the dregs, we remained talking for half an hour, while I congratulated myself on my self-restraint. Just as we were going I asked them if they had any grounds of complaint against me. Armelline replied that if I would adopt her as my daughter she was ready to follow me to the end of the world. “Then you are not afraid of my turning you from the path of duty?”

“No, I feel quite safe with you.”

“And what do you say, dear Emilie?”

“I shall love you too, when you do for me what the superioress will tell you to-morrow.”

“I will do anything, but I shan’t come to speak to her till the evening, for it is three o’clock now.”

They laughed all the louder, exclaiming, —

“What will the mother say?”

I paid the bill, gave something to the waiter, and took them back to the convent, where the porteress seemed well enough pleased with the new rules when she saw two sequins in her palm.

It was too late to see the superioress, so I drove home after rewarding the coachman and the lackey.

Margarita was ready to scratch my eyes out if I could not prove my fidelity, but I satisfied her by quenching on her the fires Armelline and the punch had kindled. I told her I had been kept by a gaming party, and she asked no more questions.

The next day I amused the princess and the cardinal by a circumstantial account of what had happened.

"You missed your opportunity," said the princess.

"I don't think so," said the cardinal, "I believe, on the contrary, that he has made his victory more sure for another time."

In the evening, I went to the convent where the superioress gave me her warmest welcome. She complimented me on having amused myself with the two girls till three o'clock in the morning without doing anything wrong. They had told her how we had eaten the oysters, and she said it was an amusing idea. I admired her candour, simplicity, or philosophy, whichever you like to call it.

After these preliminaries, she told me that I could make Emilie happy by obtaining, through the influence of the princess, a dispensation to marry without the publication of banns a merchant of Civita Vecchia, who would have married her long ago only that there was a woman who pretended to have claims upon him. If banns were published this woman would institute a suit which might go on forever.

"If you do this," she concluded, "you will have the merit of making Emilie happy."

I took down the man's name, and promised to do my best with the princess.

"Are you still determined to cure yourself of your love for Armelline?"

"Yes, but I shall not begin the cure till Lent."

"I congratulate you; the carnival is unusually long this year."

The next day I spoke of the matter to the princess. The first requisite was a certificate from the Bishop of Civita Vecchia, stating that the man was free to marry. The cardinal said that the man must come to Rome, and that the affair could be managed if he could bring forward two good witnesses who would swear that he was unmarried.

I told the superioress what the cardinal said, and she wrote to the merchant, and a few days after I saw him talking to the superioress and Emilie through the grating.

He commended himself to my protection, and said that before he married he wanted to be sure of having six hundred crowns.

The convent would give him four hundred crowns, so we should have to obtain a grant of two hundred more.

I succeeded in getting the grant, but I first contrived to have another supper with Armelline, who asked me every morning when I was going to take her to the comic opera. I said I was afraid of turning her astray from the path of duty, but she replied that experience had taught her to dread me no longer.

CHAPTER XVII

The Florentine — Marriage of Emilie — Scholastica — Armelline

at the Ball

Before the supper I had loved Armelline to such an extent that I had determined to see her no more, but after it I felt that I must obtain her or die. I saw that she had only consented to my small liberties because she regarded them as mere jokes, of no account, and I resolved to take advantage of this way of looking at it to go as far as I could. I begin to play the part of indifferent to the best of my ability, only visiting her every other day, and looking at her with an expression of polite interest. I often pretended to forget to kiss her hand, while I kissed Emilie's and told her that if I felt certain of receiving positive marks of her affection I should stay at Civita Vecchia for some weeks after she was married. I would not see Armelline's horror, who could not bear me to take a fancy to Emilie.

Emilie said that she would be more at liberty when she was married, while Armelline, vexed at her giving me any hopes, told her sharply that a married woman had stricter duties to perform than a girl.

I agreed with her in my heart, but as it would not have suited my purpose to say so openly I insinuated the false doctrine that a married woman's chief duty is to keep her husband's descent intact, and that everything else is of trifling importance.

With the idea of driving Emilie to an extremity I told Emilie that if she wanted me to exert myself to my utmost for her she must give me good hopes of obtaining her favours not only after but before marriage.

"I will give you no other favours." she replied, "than those which Armelline may give you. You ought to try to get her married also."

In spite of her grief at these proposals, gentle Armelline replied, ——

"You are the only man I have ever seen; and as I have no hopes of getting married I will give you no pledges at all, though I do not know what you mean by the word."

Though I saw how pure and angelic she was, I had the cruelty to go away, leaving her to her distress.

It was hard for me to torment her thus, but I thought it was the only way to overcome her prejudices.

Calling on the Venetian ambassador's steward I saw some peculiarly fine oysters, and I got him to let me have a hundred. I then took a box at the Capronica Theatre, and ordered a good supper at the inn where we had supped before.

"I want a room with a bed," I said to the waiter.

"That's not allowed in Rome, signor," he replied, "but on the third floor we have two rooms with large sofas which might do instead, without the Holy Office being able to say anything."

I looked at the rooms and took them, and ordered the man to get the best supper that Rome could offer.

As I was entering the boa with the two girls I saw the Marchioness d'Aout was my near neighbour. She accosted me, and congratulated herself on her vicinity to me. She was accompanied by her French abbe, her husband, and a fine-looking young man, whom I had never seen before. She asked who my companions were, and I told her they were in the Venetian ambassador's household. She praised their beauty and began to talk to Armelline, who answered well enough till the curtain went up. The young man also complimented her, and after having asked my permission he gave her a large packet of bonbons, telling her to share them with her neighbour. I had guessed him to be a Florentine from his accent, and asked him if the sweets came from the banks of the Arno; he told me they were from Naples, whence he had just arrived.

At the end of the first act I was surprised to hear him say that he had a letter of introduction for me from the Marchioness of C —— .

"I have just heard your name," he said, "and tomorrow I shall have the honour of delivering the letter in person, if you will kindly give me your address."

After these polite preliminaries I felt that I must comply with his request.

I asked after the marquis, his mother-in-law, and Anastasia, saying that I was delighted to hear from the marchioness from whom I had been expecting an answer for the last month.

"The charming marchioness has deigned to entrust me with the answer you speak of."

"I long to read it."

"Then I may give you the letter now, though I shall still claim the privilege of calling on you to-morrow. I will bring it to you in your box, if you will allow me."

"Pray do so."

He might easily have given it to me from the box where he was, but this would not have suited his plans. He came in, and politeness obliged me to give him my place next to Armelline. He took out an elaborate pocket-book, and gave me the letter. I opened it, but finding that it covered four pages, I said I would read it when I got home, as the box was dark. "I shall stay in Rome till Easter," he said, "as I want to see all the sights; though indeed I cannot hope to see anything more beautiful than the vision now before me."

Armelline, who was gazing fixedly at him, blushed deeply. I felt that his compliment, though polite, was entirely out of place, and in some sort an insult to myself. However, I said nothing, but decided mentally that the Florentine Adonis must be a fop of the first water.

Finding his compliment created a silence, he saw he had made himself offensive, and after a few disconnected remarks withdrew from the box. In spite of myself the man annoyed me, and I congratulated Armelline on the rapidity of her conquest, asking her what she thought of him. "He is a fine man, but his compliments shews he has no taste. Tell me, is it the custom for people of fashion to make a young girl blush the first time they see her?"

"No, dear Armelline, it is neither customary nor polite; and anyone who wishes to mix in good society would never do such a thing."

I lapsed into silence, as though I wanted to listen to the music; but as a matter of fact my heart was a prey to cruel jealousy. I thought the matter over, and came to the conclusion that the Florentine had treated me rudely.

He might have guessed that I was in love with Armelline, and to make such an open declaration of love to my very face was nothing more nor less than an insult to me.

After I had kept this unusual silence for a quarter of an hour the simple Armelline made me worse by saying that I must calm myself, as I might be sure that the young man's compliment had not given her the slightest pleasure. She did not see that by saying this she made me feel that the compliment had had the directly opposite effect.

I said that I had hoped he had pleased her.

To finish the matter up, she said by way of soothing me that the young man did not mean to vex me, as he doubtless took me for her father.

What could I reply to this observation, as cruel as it was reasonable? Nothing; I could only take refuge in silence and a fit of childish ill-humour.

At last I could bear it no longer, and begged the two girls to come away with me.

The second act was just over, and if I had been in my right senses I should never have made them such an unreasonable request; but the crassness of my proceedings did not strike me till the following day.

In spite of the strangeness of my request they merely exchanged glances and got ready to go. Not knowing what better excuse to give I told them I did not want the princess's carriage to be noticed as everyone left the theatre, and that I would bring them again to the theatre the following day.

I would not let Armelline put her head inside the Marchioness d'Aout's box, and so we went out. I found the man who accompanied the carriage talking to one of his mates at the door of the theatre, and this made me think that the princess had come to the opera.

We got down at the inn, and I whispered to the man to take his horses home and to call for us at three o'clock; for the cold was intense, and both horses and men had to be considered.

We began by sitting down in front of a roaring fire, and for half an hour we did nothing but eat oysters, which were opened in our presence by a clever waiter, who took care not to lose a drop of the fluid. As quick as he opened we ate, and the laughter of the girls, who talked of how we had eaten them before, caused my anger to gradually disappear.

In Armelline's gentleness I saw the goodness of her heart, and I was angry with myself for my absurd jealousy of a man who was much more calculated to please a young girl than I.

Armelline drank champagne, and stole occasional glances in my direction as if to entreat me to join them in their mirth.

Emilie spoke of her marriage, and without saying anything about my projected visit to Civita Vecchia I promised that her future husband should have his plenary dispensation before very long. While I spoke I kissed Armelline's fair hands, and she looked at me as if thankful for the return of my affection.

The oysters and champagne had their natural effect, and we had a delightful supper. We had sturgeon and some delicious truffles, which I enjoyed not so much for my own sake as for the pleasure with which my companions devoured them.

A man in love is provided with a kind of instinct which tells him that the surest way to success is to provide the beloved object with pleasures that are new to her.

When Armelline saw me become gay and ardent once more she recognized her handiwork, and was doubtless proud of the power she exercised over me. She took my hand of her own accord, and continued gazing into my eyes. Emilie was occupied in the enjoyment of the meal, and did not trouble herself about our behaviour. Armelline was so tender and loving that I made sure of victory after we had had some more oysters and a bowl of punch.

When the dessert, the fifty oysters, and all the materials for making the punch were on the table, the waiter left the room, saying that the ladies would find every requisite in the neighbouring apartment.

The room was small, and the fire very hot, and I bade the two friends arrange their dress more comfortably.

Their dresses fitted their figures, and were trimmed with fur and stiffened with whalebones, so they went into the next room, and came back in white bodices and short dimity petticoats, laughing at the slightness of their attire.

I had sufficient strength of mind to conceal my emotion, and even not to look at their breasts when they complained of having no neckerchiefs or breast-bands to their chemises. I knew how inexperienced they were, and felt certain that when they saw the indifference with which I took their slight attire they themselves would think it was of no consequence. Armelline and Emilie had both beautiful breasts, and knew it; they were therefore astonished at my indifference, perhaps thought that I had never seen a fine breast. As a matter of fact a fine figure is much more scarce at Rome than a pretty face.

Thus, in spite of their modesty, their vanity impelled them to shew me that my indifference was ill-placed, but it was my part to put them at their ease, and to make them fling shame to the winds.

They were enchanted when I told them to try their hands at a bowl of punch, and they simply danced for joy when I pronounced it better than my own brew.

Then came the oyster-game, and I scolded Armelline for having swallowed the liquid as I was taking the oyster from her lips. I agreed that it was very hard to avoid doing so, but I offered to shew them how it could be done by placing the tongue in the way. This gave me an opportunity of teaching them the game of tongues, which I shall not explain because it is well known to all true lovers. Armelline played her part with such evident relish that I could see she enjoyed it as well as I, though she agreed it was a very innocent amusement.

It so chanced that a fine oyster slipped from its shell as I was placing it between Emilie's lips. It fell on to her breast, and she would have recovered it with her fingers; but I claimed the right of regaining it myself, and she had to unlace her bodice to let me do so. I got hold of the oyster with my lips, but did so in such a manner as to prevent her suspecting that I had taken any extraordinary pleasure in the act. Armelline looked on without laughing; she was evidently surprised at the little interest I had taken in what was before my eye. Emilie laughed and relaced her bodice.

The opportunity was too good to be lost, so taking Armelline on my knee I gave her an oyster and let it slip as Emilie's had slipped, much to the delight of the elder, who wanted to see how her young companion would go through the ordeal.

Armelline was really as much delighted herself, though she tried to conceal her pleasure.

“I want my oyster,” said I.

“Take it, then.”

There was no need to tell me twice. I unlaced her corset in such a way as to make it fall still lower, bewailing the necessity of having to search for it with my hands.

What a martyrdom for an amorous man to have to conceal his bliss at such a moment!

I did not let Armelline have any occasion to accuse me of taking too much licence, for I only touched her alabaster spheres so much as was absolutely necessary.

When I had got the oyster again I could restrain myself no more, and affixing my lips to one of the blossoms of her breast I sucked it with a voluptuous pleasure which is beyond all description.

She was astonished, but evidently moved, and I did not leave her till my enjoyment was complete.

When she marked my dreamy langourous gaze, she asked me it it had given me much pleasure to play the part of an infant.

“Yes, dearest,” I replied, “but it’s only an innocent jest.”

“I don’t think so; and I hope you will say nothing about it to the superioress. It may be innocent for you, but it is not for me, as I experienced sensations which must partake of the nature of sin. We will pick up no more oysters.”

“These are mere trifles,” said Emilie, “the stain of which will easily be wiped out with a little holy water. At all events we can swear that there has been no kissing between us.”

They went into the next room for a moment, I did the same, and we then sat on the sofa before the fire. As I sat between them I observed that our legs were perfectly alike, and that I could not imagine why women stuck so obstinately to their petticoats.

While I talked I touched their legs, saying it was just as if I were to touch my own.

They did not interrupt this examination which I carried up to the knee, and I told Emilie that all the reward I would ask for my services was that I might see her thighs, to compare them with Armelline's.

"She will be bigger than I," said Armelline, "though I am the taller."

"Well, there would be no harm in letting me see."

"I think there would."

"Well, I will feel with my hands."

"No, you would look at the same time."

"I swear I will not."

"Let me bandage your eyes."

"Certainly; but I will: bandage yours too."

"Yes; we will play, at blindman's buff."

Before the bandaging began I took care to make them swallow a good dose of punch, and, then we proceeded to play. The two girls let me span their thighs several times, laughing and falling over me whenever my hands went too high.

I lifted the bandage and saw everything, but they pretended not to suspect anything.

They treated me in the same way, no doubt to see what it was that they felt when they fell upon me.

This delightful game went on; till exhausted, nature would not allow me to play it any more. I put myself in a state of decency, and then told them to take off their bandages.

They did so and sat beside me, thinking, perhaps, that they would be able to, disavow everything on the score of the bandage.

It seemed to me that Emilie had had a lover, though I took good care not to tell her so; but Armelline was a pure virgin. She was meeker than her friend, and her great eyes shone as voluptuously but more modestly.

I would have snatched a kiss from her pretty mouth, but she turned away her head, though she squeezed my hands tenderly. I was astonished at this refusal after the liberties I had taken with her.

We had talked about balls, and they were both extremely anxious to see one.

The public ball was the rage with all the young Romans. For ten long years the Pope Rezzonico had deprived them of this pleasure. Although Rezzonico forbade dancing, he allowed gaming of every description. Ganganelli, his successor, had other views, and forbade gaming but allowed dancing.

So much for papal infallibility; what one condemns the other approves. Ganganelli thought it better to let his subjects skip than to give them the opportunity of ruining themselves, of committing suicide, or of becoming brigands; but Rezzonico did not see the matter in that light. I promised the girls I would take them to the ball as soon as I could discover one where I was not likely to be recognized.

Three o'clock struck, and I took them back to the convent, well enough pleased with the progress I had made, though I had only increased my passion. I was surer than ever that Armelline was born to exercise an irresistible sway over every man who owed fealty to beauty.

I was amongst her liegemen, and am so still, but the incense is all gone and the censer of no value.

I could not help reflecting on the sort of glamour which made me fall in love with one who seemed all new to me, while I loved her in exactly the same manner as I had loved her predecessor. But in reality there was no real novelty; the piece was the same, though the title might be altered. But when I had won what I coveted, did I realize that I was going over old ground? Did I complain? Did I think myself deceived?

Not one whit; and doubtless for this reason, that whilst I enjoyed the piece I kept my eyes fixed on the title which had so taken my fancy. If this be so, of what use is title at all? The title of a book, the name of a dish, the name of a town — of what consequence are all these when what one wants is to read the book, to eat the dish, and to see the town.

The comparison is a sophism. Man becomes amorous through the senses, which, touch excepted, all reside in the head. In love a beautiful face is a matter of the greatest moment.

A beautiful female body might well excite a man to carnal indulgence, even though the head were covered, but never to real love. If at the moment of physical delight the covering were taken away, and a face of hideous, revolting ugliness disclosed, one would fly in horror, in spite of the beauties of the woman's body.

But the contrary does not hold good. If a man has fallen in love with a sweet, enchanting face, and succeeds in lifting the veil of the sanctuary only to find deformities there, still the face wins the day, atones for all, and the sacrifice is consummated.

The face is thus paramount, and hence it has come to be agreed that women's bodies shall be covered and their faces disclosed; while men's clothes are arranged in such a way that women can easily guess at what they cannot see.

This arrangement is undoubtedly to the advantage of women; art can conceal the imperfections of the face, and even make it appear beautiful, but no cosmetic can dissemble an ugly breast, stomach, or any other part of the man body.

In spite of this, I confess that the phenomerides of Sparta were in the right, like all women who, though they possess a fine figure, have a repulsive face; in spite of the beauty of the piece, the title drives spectators away. Still an interesting face is an inseparable accident of love.

Thrice happy are they who, like Armelline, have beauty both in the face and body.

When I got home I was so fortunate as to find Margarita in a deep sleep. I took care not to awake her, and went to bed with as little noise as possible. I was in want of rest, for I no longer enjoyed the vigour of youth, and I slept till twelve.

When I awoke, Margarita told me that a handsome young man had called on me at ten o'clock, and that she had amused him till eleven, not daring to awake me.

“I made him some coffee,” said she, “and he was pleased to pronounce it excellent. He would not tell me his name, but he will come again tomorrow. He gave me a piece of money, but I hope you will not mind. I don’t know how much it is worth.”

I guessed that it was the Florentine. The piece was of two ounces. I only laughed, for not loving Margarita I was not jealous of her. I told her she had done quite right to amuse him and to accept the piece, which was worth forty-eight pauls.

She kissed me affectionately, and thanks to this incident I heard nothing about my having come home so late.

I felt curious to learn more about this generous Tuscan, so I proceeded to read Leonilda’s letter.

His name, it appeared, was M —— . He was a rich merchant established in London, and had been commended to her husband by a Knight of Malta.

Leonilda said he was generous, good-hearted, and polished, and assured me that I should like him.

After telling me the family news, Leonilda concluded by saying that she was in a fair way to become a mother, and that she would be perfectly happy if she gave birth to a son. She begged me to congratulate the marquis.

Whether from a natural instinct or the effects of prejudice, this news made me shudder. I answered her letter in a few days, enclosing it in a letter to the marquis, in which I told him that the grace of God was never too late, and that I had never been so much pleased by any news as at hearing he was likely to have an heir.

In the following May Leonilda gave birth to a son, whom I saw at Prague, on the occasion of the coronation of Leopold. He called himself Marquis C —— , like his father, or perhaps we had better say like his mother’s husband, who attained the age of eighty.

Though the young marquis did not know my name, I got introduced to him, and had the pleasure of meeting him a second time at the theatre. He was accompanied by a priest, who was called his governor, but such an office was a superfluity for him, who was wiser at twenty than most men are at sixty.

I was delighted to see that the young man was the living image of the old marquis. I shed tears of joy as I thought how this likeness must have pleased the old man and his wife, and I admired this chance which seemed to have abetted nature in her deceit.

I wrote to my dear Leonilda, placing the letter in the hands of her son. She did not get it till the Carnival of 1792, when the young marquis returned to Naples; and a short time after I received an answer inviting me to her son's marriage and begging me to spend the remainder of my days with her.

"Who knows? I may eventually do so."

I called on the Princess Santa Croce at three o'clock, and found her in bed, with the cardinal reading to her.

The first question she asked was, why I had left the opera at the end of the second act.

"Princess, I can tell you an interesting history of my six hours of adventure, but you must give me a free hand, for some of the episodes must be told strictly after nature."

"Is it anything in the style of Sister M —— M —— ?" asked the cardinal.

"Yes, my lord, something of the kind."

"Princess, will you be deaf?" said his eminence,

"Of course I will," she replied.

I then told my tale almost as I have written it. The slipping oysters and the game of blind man's buff made the princess burst with laughing, in spite of her deafness. She agreed with the cardinal that I had acted with great discretion, and told me that I should be sure to succeed on the next attempt.

"In three or four days," said the cardinal, "you will have the dispensation, and then Emilie can marry whom she likes."

The next morning the Florentine came to see me at nine o'clock, and I found him to answer to the marchioness's description; but I had a bone to pick with him, and I was none the better pleased when he began asking me about the young person in my box at the theatre; he wanted to know whether she were married or engaged, if she had father, mother, or any other relations.

I smiled sardonically, and begged to be excused giving him the required information, as the young lady was masked when he saw her.

He blushed, and begged my pardon.

I thanked him for doing Margarita the honour of accepting a cup of coffee from her hands, and begged him to take one with me, saying I would breakfast with him next morning. He lived with Roland, opposite St. Charles, where Madame Gabrieli, the famous singer, nicknamed la Coghetta, lived.

As soon as the Florentine was gone, I went to St. Paul's in hot haste, for I longed to see what reception I should have from the two vestals I had initiated so well.

When they appeared I noticed a great change. Emilie had become gay, while Armelline looked sad.

I told the former that she should have her dispensation in three days, and her warrant for four hundred crowns in a week.

"At the same time," I added, "you shall have your grant of two hundred crowns."

At this happy tidings she ran to tell the superioress of her good fortune.

As soon as I was alone with Armelline I took her hands and covered them with kisses, begging her to resume her wonted gaiety.

"What shall I do," said she, "without Emilie? What shall I do when you are gone? I am unhappy. I love myself no longer."

She shed tears which pierced me to the heart. I swore I would not leave Rome till I had seen her married with a dowry of a thousand crowns.

"I don't want a thousand crowns, but I hope you will see me married as you say; if you do not keep your promise it will kill me."

"I would die rather than deceive you; but you on your side must forgive my love, which, perhaps, made me go too far the other evening."

“I forgive you everything if you will remain my friend.”

“I will; and now let me kiss your beautiful lips.”

After this first kiss, which I took as a pledge of certain victory, she wiped away her tears; and soon after Emilie reappeared, accompanied by the superioress, who treated me with great cordiality.

“I want you to do as much for Armelline’s new friend as you have done for Emilie,” said she.

“I will do everything in my power,” I replied; “and in return I hope you will allow me to take these young ladies to the theatre this evening.”

“You will find them ready; how could I refuse you anything?”

When I was alone with the two friends I apologised for having disposed of them without their consent.

“Our consent!” said Emilie: “we should be ungrateful indeed if we refused you anything after all you have done for us.”

“And you, Armelline, will you withstand my love?”

“No; so long as it keeps within due bounds. No more blind man’s buff!”

“And it is such a nice game! You really grieve me.”

“Well, invent another game,” said Emilie.

Emilie was becoming ardent, somewhat to my annoyance, for I was afraid Armelline would get jealous. I must not be charged with foppishness on this account. I knew the human heart.

When I left them I went to the Tordinona Theatre and took a box, and then ordered a good supper at the same inn, not forgetting the oysters, though I felt sure I should not require their aid.

I then called on a musician, whom I requested to get me three tickets for a ball, where no one would be likely to know me.

I went home with the idea of dining by myself, but I found a note from the Marchioness d’Aout, reproaching me in a friendly manner for not having broken bread with her, and inviting me to dinner. I resolved to accept the invitation, and when I got to the house I found the young Florentine already there.

It was at this dinner that I found out many of his good qualities, and I saw that Donna Leonilda had not said too much in his favour.

Towards the end of the meal the marchioness asked why I had not stayed till the end of the opera.

“Because the young ladies were getting tired.”

“I have found out that they do not belong to the Venetian ambassador’s household.

“You are right, and I hope you will pardon my small fiction.”

“It was an impromptu effort to avoid telling me who they are, but they are known.”

“Then I congratulate the curious.”

“The one I addressed deserves to excite general curiosity; but if I were in your place I should make her use a little powder.”

“I have not the authority to do so, and if I had, I would not trouble her for the world.”

I was pleased with the Florentine, who listened to all this without saying a word. I got him to talk of England and of his business. He told me that he was going to Florence to take possession of his inheritance, and to get a wife to take back with him to London. As I left, I told him that I could not have the pleasure of calling on him till the day after next, as I was prevented by important business. He told me I must come at dinnertime, and I promised to do so.

Full of love and hope, I went for my two friends, who enjoyed the whole play without any interruption.

When we alighted at the inn I told the coachman to call for me at two, and we then went up to the third floor, where we sat before the fire while the oysters were being opened. They did not interest us as they had done before.

Emilie had an important air; she was about to make a good marriage. Armelline was meek, smiling, and affectionate, and reminded me of the promise I had given her. I replied by ardent kisses which reassured her, while they warned her that I would fain increase the responsibility I had already contracted towards her. However, she seemed resigned, and I sat down to table in a happy frame of mind.

As Emilie was on the eve of her wedding, she no doubt put down my neglect of her to my respect for the sacrament of matrimony.

When supper was over I got on the sofa with Armelline, and spent three hours which might have been delicious if I had not obstinately endeavoured to obtain the utmost favour. She would not give in; all my supplications and entreaties could not move her; she was sweet, but firm. She lay between my arms, but would not grant what I wanted, though she gave me no harsh or positive refusal.

It seems a puzzle, but in reality it is quite simple.

She left my arms a virgin, sorry, perhaps, that her sense of duty had not allowed her to make me completely happy.

At last nature bade me cease, in spite of my love, and I begged her to forgive me. My instinct told me that this was the only way by which I might obtain her consent another time.

Half merry and half sad, we awoke Emilie who was in a deep sleep, and then we started. I went home and got into bed, not troubling myself about the storm of abuse with which Margarita greeted me.

The Florentine gave me a delicious dinner, overwhelmed me with protestations of friendship, and offered me his purse if I needed it.

He had seen Armelline, and had been pleased with her. I had answered him sharply when he questioned me about her, and ever since he had never mentioned her name.

I felt grateful to him, and as if I must make him some return.

I asked him to dinner, and had Margarita to dine with us. Not caring for her I should have been glad if he had fallen in love with her; there would have been no difficulty, I believe, on her part, and certainly not on mine; but nothing came of it. She admired a trinket which hung from his watch-chain, and he begged my permission to give it her. I told him to do so by all means, and that should have been enough; but the affair went no farther.

In a week all the arrangements for Emilie's marriage had been made. I gave her her grant, and the same day she was married and went away with her husband to Civita Vecchia. Menicuccio, whose name I have not mentioned for some time, was well pleased with my relations with his sister, foreseeing advantages for himself, and still better pleased with the turn his own affairs were taking, for three days after Emilie's wedding he married his mistress, and set up in a satisfactory manner. When Emilie was gone the superioress gave Armelline a new companion. She was only a few years older than my sweetheart, and very pretty; but she did not arouse a strong interest in my breast. When violently in love no other woman has ever had much power over me.

The superioress told me that her name was Scholastica, and that she was well worthy of my esteem, being, as she said, as good as Emilie. She expressed a hope that I would do my best to help Scholastica to marry a man whom she knew and who was in a good position.

This man was the son of a cousin of Scholastica's. She called him her nephew, though he was older than she. The dispensation could easily be got for money, but if it was to be had for nothing I should have to make interest with the Holy Father. I promised I would do my best in the matter.

The carnival was drawing to a close, and Scholastica had never seen an opera or a play. Armelline wanted to see a ball, and I had at last succeeded in finding one where it seemed unlikely that I should be recognized. However, it would have to be carefully managed, as serious consequences might ensue; so I asked the two friends if they would wear men's clothes, to which they agreed very heartily.

I had taken a box at the Aliberti Theatre for the day after the ball, so I told the two girls to obtain the necessary permission from the superioress.

Though Armelline's resistance and the presence of her new friend discouraged me, I procured everything requisite to transform them into two handsome lads.

As Armelline got into the carriage she gave me the bad news that Scholastica knew nothing about our relations, and that we must be careful what we did before her. I had no time to reply, for Scholastica got in, and we drove off to the inn. When we were seated in front of a good fire, I told them that if they liked I would go into the next room in spite of the cold.

So saying, I shewed them their disguises, and Armelline said it would do if I turned my back, appealing to Scholastics to confirm her.

“I will do as you like,” said she, “but I am very sorry to be in the way. You are in love with each other, and here am I preventing you from giving one another marks of your affection. Why don’t you treat me with confidence? I am not a child, and I am your friend.”

These remarks shewed that she had plenty of common sense, and I breathed again.

“You are right, fair Scholastics,” I said, “I do love Armelline, but she does not love me, and refuses to make me happy on one pretence or another.”

With these words I left the room, and after shutting the door behind me proceeded to make up a fire in the second apartment.

In a quarter of an hour Armelline knocked at the door, and begged me to open it. She was in her breeches, and said they needed my assistance as their shoes were so small they could not get them on.

I was in rather a sulky humour, so she threw her arms round my neck and covered my face with kisses which soon restored me to myself.

While I was explaining the reason of my ill temper, and kissing whatever I could see, Scholastica burst out laughing.

“I was sure that I was in the way,” said she; “and if you do not trust me, I warn you that I will not go with you to the opera to-morrow.”

“Well, then, embrace him,” said Armelline.

“With all my heart.”

I did not much care for Armelline’s generosity, but I embraced Scholastica as warmly as she deserved. Indeed I would have done so if she had been less pretty, for such kindly consideration deserved a reward. I even kissed her more ardently than I need have done, with the idea of punishing Armelline, but I made a mistake. She was delighted, and kissed her friend affectionately as if in gratitude.

I made them sit down, and tried to pull on their shoes, but I soon found that they were much too small, and that we must get some more.

I called the waiter who attended to us, and told him to go and fetch a bootmaker with an assortment of shoes.

In the meanwhile I would not be contented with merely kissing Armelline. She neither dared to grant nor to refuse; and as if to relieve herself of any responsibility, made Scholastica submit to all the caresses I lavished on her. The latter seconded my efforts with an ardour that would have pleased me exceedingly if I had been in love with her.

She was exceedingly beautiful, and her features were as perfectly chiselled as Armelline's, but Armelline was possessed of a delicate and subtle charm of feature peculiar to herself.

I liked the amusement well enough, but there was a drop of bitterness in all my enjoyment. I thought it was plain that Armelline did not love me, and that Scholastica only encouraged me to encourage her friend.

At last I came to the conclusion that I should do well to attach myself to the one who seemed likely to give me the completest satisfaction.

As soon as I conceived this idea I felt curious to see whether Armelline would discover any jealousy if I shewed myself really in love with Scholastica, and if the latter pronounced me to be too daring, for hitherto my hands had not crossed the Rubicon of their waistbands. I was just going to work when the shoemaker arrived, and in a few minutes the girls were well fitted.

They put on their coats, and I saw two handsome young men before me, while their figures hinted their sex sufficiently to make a third person jealous of my good fortune.

I gave orders for supper to be ready at midnight, and we went to the ball. I would have wagered a hundred to one that no one would recognize me there, as the man who got the tickets had assured me that it was a gathering of small tradesmen. But who can trust to fate or chance?

We went into the hall, and the first person I saw was the Marchioness d'Aout, with her husband and her inseparable abbe.

No doubt I turned a thousand colours, but it was no good going back, for the marchioness had recognized me, so I composed myself and went up to her. We exchanged the usual compliments of polite society, to which she added some good-natured though ironical remarks on my two young friends. Not being accustomed to company, they remained confused and speechless. But the worst of all was to come. A tall young lady who had just finished a minuet came up to Armelline, dropped a curtsy, and asked her to dance.

In this young lady I recognized the Florentine who had disguised himself as a girl, and looked a very beautiful one.

Armelline thought she would not appear a dupe, and said she recognized him.

“You are making a mistake,” said he, calmly. “I have a brother who is very like me, just as you have a sister who is your living portrait. My brother had the pleasure of exchanging a few words with her at the Capronica.” The Florentine’s cleverness made the marchioness laugh, and I had to join in her mirth, though I felt little inclination to do so.

Armelline begged to be excused dancing, so the marchioness made her sit between the handsome Florentine and herself. The marquis took possession of Scholastica, and I had to be attentive to the marchioness without seeming to be aware of the existence of Armelline, to whom the Florentine was talking earnestly.

I felt as jealous as a tiger; and having to conceal my rage under an air of perfect satisfaction, the reader may imagine how well I enjoyed the ball.

However, there was more anxiety in store for me; for presently I noticed Scholastica leave the marquis, and go apart with a middle-aged man, with whom she conversed in an intimate manner.

The minuets over, the square dances began, and I thought I was dreaming when I saw Armelline and the Florentine taking their places.

I came up to congratulate them, and asked Armelline, gently, if she was sure of the steps.

“This gentleman says I have only to imitate him, and that I cannot possibly make any mistakes.”

I had nothing to say to this, so I went towards Scholastica, feeling very curious to know who was her companion.

As soon as she saw me she introduced me to him, saying timidly that this was the nephew of whom she had spoken, the same that wished to marry her.

I was surprised, but I did not let it appear. I told him that the superioress had spoken of him to me, and that I was thinking over the ways and means of obtaining a dispensation without any costs.

He was an honest-looking man, and thanked me heartily, commending himself to my good offices, as he said he was far from rich.

I left them together, and on turning to view the dance I was astonished to see that Armelline was dancing admirably, and executing all the figures. The Florentine seemed a finished dancer, and they both looked very happy.

I was far from pleased, but I congratulated them both on their performance. The Florentine had disguised himself so admirably that no one would have taken him for a man. It was the Marchioness d'Aout who had been his dresser.

As I was too jealous to leave Armelline to her own devices, I refused to dance, preferring to watch her.

I was not at all uneasy about Scholastica, who was with her betrothed. About half-past eleven the Marchioness d'Aout, who was delighted with Armelline, and possibly had her protege's happiness in view, asked me, in a tone that amounted to a command, to sup with her in company with my two companions.

"I cannot have the honour," I replied, "and my two companions know the reason."

"That is as much as to say," said the marchioness, "that he will do as you please," turning to Armelline as she spoke.

I addressed myself to Armelline, and observed smilingly that she knew perfectly well that she must be home by half-past twelve at latest.

"True," she replied, "but you can do as you please."

I replied somewhat sadly that I did not feel myself at liberty to break my word, but that she could make me do even that if she chose.

Thereupon the marchioness, her husband, the abbe, and the Florentine, urged her to use her power to make me break my supposed word, and Armelline actually began to presume to do so.

I was bursting with rage; but making up my mind to do anything rather than appear jealous, I said simply that I would gladly consent if her friend would consent also.

"Very well," said she, with a pleased air that cut me to the quick, "go and ask her."

That was enough for me. I went to Scholastica and told her the circumstances in the presence of her lover, begging her to refuse without compromising me.

Her lover said I was perfectly right, but Scholastica required no persuasion, telling me that she had quite made up her mind not to sup with anyone.

She came with me, and I told her to speak to Armelline apart before saying anything to the others.

I led Scholastica before the marchioness, bewailing my want of success.

Scholastica told Armelline that she wanted to say a few words to her aside, and after a short conversation they came back looking sorry, and Armelline told the marchioness that she found it would be impossible for them to come. The lady did not press us any longer, so we went away.

I told Scholastica's intended to keep what had passed to himself, and asked him to dine with me on the day after Ash Wednesday.

The night was dark, and we walked to the place where I had ordered the carriage to be in waiting.

To me it was as if I had come out of hell, and on the way to the inn I did not speak a word, not even answering the questions which the too-simple Armelline addressed to me in a voice that would have softened a heart of stone. Scholastica avenged me by reproaching her for having obliged me to appear either rude or jealous, or a breaker of my word.

When we got to the inn Armelline changed my jealous rage into pity; her eyes swam with tears, which Scholastica's home truths had drawn forth.

The supper was ready, so they had no time to change their dress. I was sad enough, but I could not bear to see Armelline sad also. I resolved to do my best to drive away her melancholy, even though I suspected that it arose from love of the Florentine.

The supper was excellent, and Scholastica did honour to it, while Armelline, contrary to her wont, scarcely touched a thing. Scholastica was charming. She embraced her friend, and told her to be merry with her, as I had become the friend of her betrothed, and she was sure I would do as much for her as I had done for Emilie. She blessed the ball and the chance which had brought him there. In short, she did her best to shew Armelline that with my love she had no reason to be sad.

Armelline dared not disclose the true cause of her sadness. The fact was, that she wanted to get married, and the handsome Florentine was the man to her liking.

Our supper came to an end, and still Armelline was gloomy. She only drank one glass of punch, and as she had eaten so little I would not try and make her drink more for fear lest it should do her harm. Scholastica, on the other hand, took such a fancy to this agreeable fluid, which she tasted for the first time, that she drank deeply, and was amazed to find it mounting to her head instead of descending to her stomach. In this pleasant state, she felt it was her duty to reconcile Armelline and myself, and to assure us that we might be as tender as we liked without minding her presence.

Getting up from table and standing with some difficulty, she carried her friend to the sofa, and caressed her in such a way that Armelline could not help laughing, despite her sadness. Then she called me and placed her in my arms. I caressed her, and Armelline, though she did not repulse me, did not respond as Scholastica had hoped. I was not disappointed; I did not think it likely she would grant now what she had refused to grant when I had held her in my arms for those hours whilst Emilie was fast asleep.

However, Scholastica began to reproach me with my coldness, though I deserved no blame at all on this score.

I told them to take off their men's clothes, and to dress themselves as women.

I helped Scholastica to take off her coat and waistcoat, and then aided Armelline in a similar manner.

When I brought them their chemises, Armelline told me to go and stand by the fire, and I did so.

Before long a noise of kissing made me turn round, and I saw Scholastica, on whom the punch had taken effect, devouring Armelline's breast with kisses. At last this treatment had the desired result; Armelline became gay, and gave as good as she got.

At this sight the blood boiled in my veins, and running to them I found Scholastic was not ill pleased that I should do justice to her beautiful spheres, while for the nonce I transformed her into a nurse.

Armelline was ashamed to appear less generous than her friend, and Scholastica was triumphant when she saw the peculiar use to which (for the first time) I put Armelline's hands.

Armelline called to her friend to help, and she was not backward; but in spite of her twenty years her astonishment at the catastrophe was great.

After it was over I put on their chemises and took off their breeches with all the decency imaginable, and after spending a few minutes in the next room they came and sat down on my knee of their own accord.

Scholastica, instead of being annoyed at my giving the preference to the hidden charms of Armelline, seemed delighted, watching what I did, and how Armelline took it, with the closest attention. She no doubt longed to see me perform the magnum opus, but the gentle Armelline would not allow me to go so far.

After I had finished with Armelline I recollected I had duties towards Scholastica, and I proceeded to inspect her charms.

It was difficult to decide which of the two deserved to carry off the apple. Scholastica, perhaps, was strictly speaking the more beautiful of the two, but I loved Armelline, and love casts a glamour over the beloved object. Scholastica appeared to me to be as pure a virgin as Armelline, and I saw that I might do what I liked with her. But I would not abuse my liberty, not caring to confess how powerful an ally the punch had been.

However, I did all in my power to give her pleasure without giving her the greatest pleasure of all. Scholastica, was glutted with voluptuous enjoyment, and was certain that I had only eluded her desires from motives of delicacy.

I took them back to the convent, assuring them that I would take them to the opera on the following evening.

I went to bed, doubtful whether I had gained a victory or sustained a defeat; and it was not till I awoke that I was in a position to give a decided opinion.

[There is here a considerable hiatus in the author’s manuscript.]

EPISODE 29 — FLORENCE TO TRIESTE

CHAPTER XVIII

Madame Denis — Dedini — Zanovitch — Zen — I Am Obliged to Leave —

I Arrive at Bologna — General Albergati

Without speaking at any length I asked the young grand duke to give me an asylum in his dominions for as long as I might care to stay. I anticipated any questions he might have asked by telling him the reasons which had made me an exile from my native land.

“As to my necessities,” I added, “I shall ask for help of no one; I have sufficient funds to ensure my independence. I think of devoting the whole of my time to study.”

“So long as your conduct is good,” he replied, “the laws guarantee your freedom; but I am glad you have applied to me. Whom do you know in Florence?”

“Ten years ago, my lord, I had some distinguished acquaintances here; but now I propose to live in retirement, and do not intend renewing any old friendships.”

Such was my conversation with the young sovereign, and after his assurances I concluded that no one would molest me.

My adventures in Tuscany the years before were in all probability forgotten, or almost forgotten, as the new Government had nothing in common with the old.

After my interview with the grand duke I went to a bookseller’s shop and ordered some books. A gentleman in the shop, hearing me making enquiries about Greek works, accosted me, and we got on well together. I told him I was working at a translation of the “Iliad,” and in return he informed me that he was making a collection of Greek epigrams, which he wished to publish in Greek and Italian. I told him I should like to see this work, whereupon he asked me where I lived. I told him, learnt his name and address, and called on him the next day. He returned the visit, and we became fast friends, though we never either walked or ate together.

This worthy Florentine was named (or is named, if he be still alive) Everard de Medici.

I was very comfortable with Allegranti; I had the quiet so necessary to literary labours, but nevertheless I made up my mind to change my lodging. Magdalena, my landlord's niece, was so clever and charming, though but a child, that she continually disturbed my studies. She came into my room, wished me good day, asked me what kind of a night I had spent, if I wanted anything, and the sight of her grace and beauty and the sound of her voice so ravished me, that I determined to seek safety in flight.

A few years later Magdalena became a famous musician.

After leaving Allegranti I took rooms in a tradesman's house; his wife was ugly, and he had no pretty daughters or seductive nieces. There I lived for three weeks like Lafontaine's rat, very discreetly.

About the same time, Count Stratico arrived at Florence with his pupil, the Chevalier Morosini, who was then eighteen. I could not avoid calling on Stratico. He had broken his leg some time before and was still unable to go out with his pupil, who had all the vices and none of the virtues of youth. Consequently, Stratico was always afraid of something happening to him, and he begged me to make myself his companion, and even to share his pleasures, so that he might not go into bad company and dangerous houses alone and undefended.

Thus my days of calm study vanished away. I had to partake in the debauchery of a young rake, and all out of pure sensibility.

The Chevalier Morosini was a thorough-paced profligate. He hated literature, good society, and the company of sensible people. His daily pleasures were furious riding, hard drinking, and hard dissipation with prostitutes, whom he sometimes almost killed.

This young nobleman paid a man for the sole service of getting him a woman or a girl every day.

During the two months which he passed in Florence I saved his life a score of times. I got very tired of my duty, but I felt bound to persevere.

He was liberal to the verge of recklessness, and would never allow me to pay for anything. Even here, however, disputes often arose between us; as he paid, he wanted me to eat, drink, and dissipate in the same measures as himself. However, I had my own way on most occasions, only giving in when it suited me to do so.

We went to see the opera at Lucca, and drought two of the dancers home to supper. As the chevalier was drunk as usual, he treated the woman he had chosen — a superb creature — very indifferently. The other was pretty enough, but I had done nothing serious with her, so I proceeded to avenge the beauty. She took me for the chevalier's father, and advised me to give him a better education.

After the chevalier was gone I betook myself to my studies again, but I supped every night with Madame Denis, who had formerly been a dancer in the King of Prussia's service, and had retired to Florence.

She was about my age, and therefore not young, but still she had sufficient remains of her beauty to inspire a tender passion; she did not look more than thirty. She was as fresh as a young girl, had excellent manners, and was extremely intelligent. Besides all these advantages, she had a comfortable apartment on the first floor of one of the largest cafes in Florence. In front of her room was a balcony where it was delicious to sit and enjoy the cool of the evening.

The reader may remember how I had become her friend at Berlin in 1764, and when we met again at Florence our old flames were rekindled.

The chief boarder in the house where she lived was Madame Brigonzi, whom I had met at Memel. This lady, who pretended that she had been my mistress twenty-five years before, often came into Madame Denis's rooms with an old lover of hers named Marquis Capponi.

He was an agreeable and well-educated man; and noticing that he seemed to enjoy my conversation I called on him, and he called on me, leaving his card as I was not at home.

I returned the visit, and he introduced me to his family and invited me to dinner. For the first time since I had come to Florence I dressed myself with elegance and wore my jewels.

At the Marquis Capponi's I made the acquaintance of Corilla's lover, the Marquis Gennori, who took me to a house where I met my fate. I fell in love with Madame a young widow, who had been spending a few months in Paris. This visit had added to her other attractions the charm of a good manner, which always counts for so much.

This unhappy love made the three months longer which I spent in Florence painful to me.

It was at the beginning of October, and about that time Count Medini arrived at Florence without a penny in his pocket, and without being able to pay his vetturino, who had arrested him.

The wretched man, who seemed to follow me wherever I went, had taken up his abode in the house of a poor Irishman.

I do not know how Medini found out that I was at Florence, but he wrote me a letter begging me to come and deliver him from the police, who besieged his room and talked of taking him to prison. He said he only wanted me to go bail for him, and protested that I should not run any risk, as he was sure of being able to pay in a few days.

My readers will be aware that I had good reason for not liking Medini, but in spite of our quarrel I could not despise his entreaty. I even felt inclined to become his surety, if he could prove his capability of paying the sum for which he had been arrested. I imagined that the sum must be a small one, and could not understand why the landlord did not answer for him. My surprise ceased, however, when I entered his room.

As soon as I appeared he ran to embrace me, begging me to forget the past, and to extract him from the painful position in which he found himself.

I cast a rapid glance over the room, and saw three trunks almost empty, their contents being scattered about the floor. There was his mistress, whom I knew, and who had her reasons for not liking me; her young sister, who wept; and her mother, who swore, and called Medini a rogue, saying that she would complain of him to the magistrate, and that she was not going to allow her dresses and her daughter's dresses to be seized for his debts.

I asked the landlord why he did not go bail, as he had these persons and their effects as security.

"The whole lot," he answered, "won't pay the vetturino, and the sooner they are out of my house the better I shall be pleased."

I was astonished, and could not understand how the bill could amount to more than the value of all the clothes I saw on the floor, so I asked the vetturino to tell me the extent of the debt.

He gave me a paper with Medini's signature; the amount was two hundred and forty crowns.

"How in the world," I exclaimed, "could he contract this enormous debt?"

I wondered no longer when the vetturino told me that he had served them for the last six weeks, having conducted the count and the three women from Rome to Leghorn, and from Leghorn to Pisa, and from Pisa to Florence, paying for their board all the way.

"The vetturino will never take me as bail for such an amount," I said to Medini, "and even if he would I should never be so foolish as to contract such a debt."

"Let me have a word with you in the next room," said he; "I will put the matter clearly before you."

"Certainly."

Two of the police would have prevented his going into the next room, on the plea that he might escape through the window, but I said I would be answerable for him.

Just then the poor vetturino came in and kissed my hand, saying that if I would go bail for the count he would let me have three months wherein to find the money.

As it happened it was the same man who had taken me to Rome with the Englishwoman who had been seduced by the actor l'Etoile. I told him to wait a moment.

Medini who was a great talker and a dreadful liar thought to persuade me by shewing me a number of open letters, commending him in pompous terms to the best houses in Florence. I read the letters, but I found no mention of money in them, and I told him as much.

"I know," said he, "but there is play going on in these houses, and I am sure of gaining immense sums."

"You may be aware that I have no confidence in your good luck."

"Then I have another resource."

"What is that?"

He shewed me a bundle of manuscript, which I found to be an excellent translation of Voltaire's "Henriade" into Italian verse. Tasso himself could not have done it better. He said he hoped to finish the poem at Florence, and to present it to the grand duke, who would be sure to make him a magnificent present, and to constitute him his favourite.

I would not undeceive him, but I laughed to myself, knowing that the grand duke only made a pretence of loving literature. A certain Abbe Fontaine, a clever man, amused him with a little natural history, the only science in which he took any interest. He preferred the worst prose to the best verse, not having sufficient intellect to enjoy the subtle charms of poetry. In reality he had only two passions — women and money.

After spending two wearisome hours with Medini, whose wit was great and his judgment small, after heartily repenting of having yielded to my curiosity and having paid him a visit, I said shortly that I could do nothing for him. Despair drives men crazy; as I was making for the door, he seized me by the collar.

He did not reflect in his dire extremity that he had no arms, that I was stronger than he, that I had twice drawn his blood, and that the police, the landlord, the vetturirco, and the servants, were in the next room. I was not coward enough to call for help; I caught hold of his neck with both hands and squeezed him till he was nearly choked. He had to let go at last, and then I took hold of his collar and asked him if he had gone mad.

I sent him against the wall, and opened the door and the police came in.

I told the vetturino that I would on no account be Medini's surety, or be answerable for him in any way.

Just as I was going out, he leapt forward crying that I must not abandon him.

I had opened the door, and the police, fearing he would escape, ran forward to get hold of him. Then began an interesting battle. Medini, who had no arms, and was only in his dressing-gown, proceeded to distribute kicks, cuffs, and blows amongst the four cowards, who had their swords at their sides, whilst I held the door to prevent the Irishman going out and calling for assistance.

Medini, whose nose was bleeding and his dress all torn, persisted in fighting till the four policemen let him alone. I liked his courage, and pitied him.

There was a moment's silence, and I asked his two liveried servants who were standing by me why they had not helped their master. One said he owed him six months' wages, and the other said he wanted to arrest him on his own account.

As Medini was endeavouring to staunch the blood in a basin of water, the vetturino told him that as I refused to be his surety he must go to prison.

I was moved by the scene that I had witnessed, and said to the vetturino,

"Give him a fortnight's respite, and if he escapes before the expiration of that term I will pay you."

He thought it over for a few moments, and then said, —

"Very good, sir, but I am not going to pay any legal expenses."

I enquired how much the costs amounted to, and paid them, laughing at the policemen's claim of damages for blows they had received.

Then the two rascally servants said that if I would not be surety in the same manner on their account, they would have Medini arrested. However, Medini called out to me to pay no attention to them whatever.

When I had given the vetturino his acknowledgment and paid the four or five crowns charged by the police, Medini told me that he had more to say to me; but I turned my back on him, and went home to dinner.

Two hours later one of his servants came to me and promised if I would give him six sequins to warn me if his master made any preparations for flight.

I told him drily that his zeal was useless to me, as I was quite sure that the count would pay all his debts within the term; and the next morning I wrote to Medini informing him of the step his servant had taken. He replied with a long letter full of thanks, in which he exerted all his eloquence to persuade me to repair his fortunes. I did not answer.

However, his good genius, who still protected him, brought a person to Florence who drew him out of the difficulty. This person was Premislas Zanovitch, who afterwards became as famous as his brother who cheated the Amsterdam merchants, and adopted the style of Prince Scanderbeck. I shall speak of him later on. Both these finished cheats came to a bad end.

Premislas Zanovitch was then at the happy age of twenty-five; he was the son of a gentleman of Budua, a town on the borders of Albania and Dalmatia, formerly subject to the Venetian Republic and now to the Grand Turk. In classic times it was known as Epirus.

Premislas was a young man of great intelligence, and after having studied at Venice, and contracted a Venetian taste for pleasures and enjoyments of all sorts, he could not make up his mind to return to Budua, where his only associates would be dull Sclavs — uneducated, unintellectual, coarse, and brutish. Consequently, when Premislas and his still more talented brother Stephen were ordered by the Council of Ten to enjoy the vast sums they had gained at play in their own country, they resolved to become adventurers. One took the north and the other the south of Europe, and both cheated and duped whenever the opportunity for doing so presented itself.

I had seen Premislas when he was a child, and had already heard reports of a notable achievement of his. At Naples he had cheated the Chevalier de Morosini by persuading him to become his surety to the extent of six thousand ducats, and now he arrived in Florence in a handsome carriage, bringing his mistress with him, and having two tall lackeys and a valet in his service.

He took good apartments, hired a carriage, rented a box at the opera, had a skilled cook, and gave his mistress a lady-in-waiting. He then shewed himself at the best club, richly dressed, and covered with jewellery. He introduced himself under the name of Count Premislas Zanovitch.

There is a club in Florence devoted to the use of the nobility. Any stranger can go there without being introduced, but so much the worse for him if his appearance fails to indicate his right to be present. The Florentines are ice towards him, leave him alone, and behave in such a manner that the visit is seldom repeated. The club is at once decent and licentious, the papers are to be read there, games of all kinds are played, food and drink may be had, and even love is available, for ladies frequent the club.

Zanovitch did not wait to be spoken to, but made himself agreeable to everyone, and congratulated himself on mixing in such distinguished company, talked about Naples which he had just left, brought in his own name with great adroitness, played high, lost merrily, paid after pretending to forget all about his debts, and in short pleased everyone. I heard all this the next day from the Marquis Capponi, who said that someone had asked him if he knew me, whereat he answered that when I left Venice he was at college, but that he had often heard his father speak of me in very high terms. He knew both the Chevalier Morosini and Count Medini, and had a good deal to say in praise of the latter. The marquis asked me if I knew him, and I replied in the affirmative, without feeling it my duty to disclose certain circumstances which might not have been advantageous to him; and as Madame Denis seemed curious to make his acquaintance the Chevalier Puzzi promised to bring him to see her, which he did in the course of a few days.

I happened to be with Madame Denis when Puzzi presented Zanovitch, and I saw before me a fine-looking young men, who seemed by his confident manner to be sure of success in all his undertakings. He was not exactly handsome, but he had a perfect manner and an air of gaiety which seemed infectious, with a thorough knowledge of the laws of good society. He was by no means an egotist, and seemed never at a loss for something to talk about. I led the conversation to the subject of his country, and he gave me an amusing description of it, talking of his fief-part of which was within the domains of the sultan-as a place where gaiety was unknown, and where the most determined misanthrope would die of melancholy.

As soon as he heard my name he began speaking to me in a tone of the most delicate flattery. I saw the makings of a great adventurer in him, but I thought his luxury would prove the weak point in his cuirass. I thought him something like what I had been fifteen years ago, but as it seemed unlikely that he had my resources I could not help pitying him.

Zanovitch paid me a visit, and told me that Medini's position had excited his pity, and that he had therefore paid his debts.

I applauded his generosity, but I formed the conclusion that they had laid some plot between them, and that I should soon hear of the results of this new alliance.

I returned Zanovitch's call the next day. He was at table with his mistress, whom I should not have recognized if she had not pronounced my name directly she saw me.

As she had addressed me as Don Giacomo, I called her Donna Ippolita, but in a voice which indicated that I was not certain of her identity. She told me I was quite right.

I had supped with her at Naples in company with Lord Baltimore, and she was very pretty then.

Zanovitch asked me to dine with him the following day, and I should have thanked him and begged to be excused if Donna Ippolita had not pressed me to come. She assured me that I should find good company there, and that the cook would excel himself.

I felt rather curious to see the company, and with the idea of shewing Zanovitch that I was not likely to become a charge on his purse, I dressed myself magnificently once more.

As I had expected, I found Medini and his mistress there, with two foreign ladies and their attendant cavaliers, and a fine-looking and well-dressed Venetian, between thirty-five and forty, whom I would not have recognized if Zanovitch had not told me his name, Alois Zen.

"Zen was a patrician name, and I felt obliged to ask what titles I ought to give him.

"Such titles as one old friend gives another, though it is very possible you do not recollect me, as I was only ten years old when we saw each other last."

Zen then told me he was the son of the captain I had known when I was under arrest at St. Andrews.

"That's twenty-eight years ago; but I remember you, though you had not had the small-pox in those days."

I saw that he was annoyed by this remark, but it was his fault, as he had no business to say where he had known me, or who his father was.

He was the son of a noble Venetian — a good-for-nothing in every sense of the word.

When I met him at Florence he had just come from Madrid, where he had made a lot of money by holding a bank at faro in the house of the Venetian ambassador, Marco Zen.

I was glad to meet him, but I found out before the dinner was over that he was completely devoid of education and the manners of a gentleman; but he was well content with the one talent he possessed, namely, that of correcting the freaks of fortune at games of chance. I did not wait to see the onslaught of the cheats on the dupes, but took my leave while the table was being made ready.

Such was my life during the seven months which I spent at Florence.

After this dinner I never saw Zen, or Medini, or Zanovitch, except by chance in the public places.

Here I must recount some incidents which took place towards the middle of December.

Lord Lincoln, a young man of eighteen, fell in love with a Venetian dancer named Lamberti, who was a universal favourite. On every night when the opera was given the young Englishman might be seen going to her camerino, and everyone wondered why he did not visit her at her own house, where he would be certain of a good welcome, for he was English, and therefore rich, young, and handsome. I believe he was the only son of the Duke of Newcastle.

Zanovitch marked him down, and in a short time had become an intimate friend of the fair Lamberti. He then made up to Lord Lincoln, and took him to the lady's house, as a polite man takes a friend to see his mistress.

Madame Lamberti, who was in collusion with the rascal, was not niggardly of her favours with the young Englishman. She received him every night to supper with Zanovitch and Zen, who had been presented by the Sclav, either because of his capital, or because Zanovitch was not so accomplished a cheat.

For the first few nights they took care to let the young nobleman win. As they played after supper, and Lord Lincoln followed the noble English custom of drinking till he did not know his right hand from his left, he was quite astonished on waking the next morning to find that luck had been as kind to him as love. The trap was baited, the young lord nibbled, and, as may be expected, was finally caught.

Zen won twelve thousand pounds of him, and Zanovitch lent him the money by installments of three and four hundred louis at a time, as the Englishman had promised his tutor not to play, on his word of honour.

Zanovitch won from Zen what Zen won from the lord, and so the game was kept up till the young pigeon had lost the enormous sum of twelve thousand guineas.

Lord Lincoln promised to pay three thousand guineas the next day, and signed three bills of exchange for three thousand guineas each, payable in six months, and drawn on his London banker.

I heard all about this from Lord Lincoln himself when we met at Bologna three months later.

The next morning the little gaming party was the talk of Florence. Sasso Sassi, the banker, had already paid Zanovitch six thousand sequins by my lord’s orders.

Medini came to see me, furious at not having been asked to join the party, while I congratulated myself on my absence. My surprise may be imagined, when, a few days after, a person came up to my room, and ordered me to leave Florence in three days and Tuscany in a week.

I was petrified, and called to my landlord to witness the unrighteous order I had received.

It was December 28th. On the same date, three years before, I had received orders to leave Barcelona in three days.

I dressed hastily and went to the magistrate to enquire the reason for my exile, and on entering the room I found it was the same man who had ordered me to leave Florence eleven years before.

I asked him to give me his reasons, and he replied coldly that such was the will of his highness.

“But as his highness must have his reasons, it seems to me that I am within my rights in enquiring what they are.”

“If you think so you had better betake yourself to the prince; I know nothing about it. He left yesterday for Pisa, where he will stay three days; you can go there.”

“Will he pay for my journey?”

“I should doubt it, but you can see for yourself.”

“I shall not go to Pisa, but I will write to his highness if you will promise to send on the letter.”

“I will do so immediately, for it is my duty.”

“Very good; you shall have the letter before noon tomorrow, and before day-break I shall be in the States of the Church.”

“There’s no need for you to hurry yourself.”

“There is a very great hurry. I cannot breathe the air of a country where liberty is unknown and the sovereign breaks his word; that is what I am going to write to your master.”

As I was going out I met Medini, who had come on the same business as myself.

I laughed, and informed him of the results of my interview, and how I had been told to go to Pisa.

“What! have you been expelled, too?”

“Yes.”

“What have you done?”

“Nothing.”

“Nor I. Let us go to Pisa.”

"You can go if you like, but I shall leave Florence tonight."

When I got home I told my landlord to get me a carriage and to order four post-horses for nightfall, and I then wrote the following letter to the grand duke:

"My Lord; The thunder which Jove has placed in your hands is only for the guilty; in launching it at me you have done wrong. Seven months ago you promised that I should remain unmolested so long as I obeyed the laws. I have done so scrupulously, and your lordship has therefore broken your word. I am merely writing to you to let you know that I forgive you, and that I shall never give utterance to a word of complaint. Indeed I would willingly forget the injury you have done me, if it were not necessary that I should remember never to set foot in your realms again. The magistrate tells me that I can go and see you at Pisa, but I fear such a step would seem a hardy one to a prince, who should hear what a man has to say before he condemns him, and not afterwards.

"I am, etc."

When I had finished the letter I sent it to the magistrate, and then I began my packing.

I was sitting down to dinner when Medini came in cursing Zen and Zanovitch, whom he accused of being the authors of his misfortune, and of refusing to give him a hundred sequins, without which he could not possibly go.

"We are all going to Pisa," said he, "and cannot imagine why you do not come, too."

"Very good," I said, laughingly, "but please to leave me now as I have to do my packing."

As I expected, he wanted me to lend him some money, but on my giving him a direct refusal he went away.

After dinner I took leave of M. Medici and Madame Dennis, the latter of whom had heard the story already. She cursed the grand duke, saying she could not imagine how he could confound the innocent with the guilty. She informed me that Madame Lamberti had received orders to quit, as also a hunchbacked Venetian priest, who used to go and see the dancer but had never supped with her. In fact, there was a clean sweep of all the Venetians in Florence.

As I was returning home I met Lord Lincoln's governor; whom I had known at Lausanne eleven years before. I told him of what had happened to me through his hopeful pupil getting himself fleeced. He laughed, and told me that the grand duke had advised Lord Lincoln not to pay the money he had lost, to which the young man replied that if he were not to pay he should be dishonoured since the money he had lost had been lent to him.

In leaving Florence I was cured of an unhappy love which would doubtless have had fatal consequences if I had stayed on. I have spared my readers the painful story because I cannot recall it to my mind even now without being cut to the heart. The widow whom I loved, and to whom I was so weak as to disclose my feelings, only attached me to her triumphal car to humiliate me, for she disdained my love and myself. I persisted in my courtship, and nothing but my enforced absence would have cured me.

As yet I have not learnt the truth of the maxim that old age, especially when devoid of fortune, is not likely to prove attractive to youth.

I left Florence poorer by a hundred sequins than when I came there. I had lived with the most careful economy throughout the whole of my stay.

I stopped at the first stage within the Pope's dominions, and by the last day but one of the year I was settled at Bologna, at "St. Mark's Hotel."

My first visit was paid to Count Marulli, the Florentine charge d'affaires. I begged him to write and tell his master, that, out of gratitude for my banishment, I should never cease to sing his praises.

As the count had received a letter containing an account of the whole affair, he could not quite believe that I meant what I said.

"You may think what you like," I observed, "but if you knew all you would see that his highness has done me a very great service though quite unintentionally."

He promised to let his master know how I spoke of him.

On January 1st, 1772, I presented myself to Cardinal Braneaforte, the Pope's legate, whom I had known twenty years before at Paris, when he had been sent by Benedict XVI. with the holy swaddling clothes for the newly-born Duke of Burgundy. We had met at the Lodge of Freemasons, for the members of the sacred college were by no means afraid of their own anathemas. We had also some very pleasant little suppers with pretty sinners in company with Don Francesco Sensate and Count Ranucci. In short, the cardinal was a man of wit, and what is called a bon vivant.

“Oh, here you are!” cried he, when he saw me; “I was expecting you.”

“How could you, my lord? Why should I have come to Bologna rather than to any other place?”

“For two reasons. In the first place because Bologna is better than many other places, and besides I flatter myself you thought of me. But you needn’t say anything here about the life we led together when we were young men.”

“It has always been a pleasant recollection to me.”

“No doubt. Count Marulli told me yesterday that you spoke very highly of the grand duke, and you are quite right. You can talk to me in confidence; the walls of this room have no ears. How much did you get of the twelve thousand guineas?”

I told him the whole story, and shewed him a copy of the letter which I had written to the grand duke. He laughed, and said he was sorry I had been punished for nothing.

When he heard I thought of staying some months at Bologna he told me that I might reckon on perfect freedom, and that as soon as the matter ceased to become common talk he would give me open proof of his friendship.

After seeing the cardinal I resolved to continue at Bologna the kind of life that I had been leading at Florence. Bologna is the freest town in all Italy; commodities are cheap and good, and all the pleasures of life may be had there at a low price. The town is a fine one, and the streets are lined with arcades — a great comfort in so hot a place.

As to society, I did not trouble myself about it. I knew the Bolognese; the nobles are proud, rude, and violent; the lowest orders, known as the birichini, are worse than the lazzaroni of Naples, while the tradesmen and the middle classes are generally speaking worthy and respectable people. At

Bologna, as at Naples, the two extremes of society are corrupt, while the middle classes are respectable, and the depository of virtue, talents, and learning.

However, my intention was to leave society alone, to pass my time in study, and to make the acquaintance of a few men of letters, who are easily accessible everywhere.

At Florence ignorance is the rule and learning the exception, while at Bologna the tincture of letters is almost universal. The university has thrice the usual number of professors; but they are all ill paid, and have to get their living out of the students, who are numerous. Printing is cheaper at Bologna than anywhere else, and though the Inquisition is established there the press is almost entirely free.

All the exiles from Florence reached Bologna four or five days after myself. Madame Lamberti only passed through on her way to Venice. Zanovitch and Zen stayed five or six days; but they were no longer in partnership, having quarreled over the sharing of the booty.

Zanovitch had refused to make one of Lord Lincoln’s bills of exchange payable to Zen, because he did not wish to make himself liable in case the Englishman refused to pay. He wanted to go to England, and told Zen he was at liberty to do the same.

They went to Milan without having patched up their quarrel, but the Milanese Government ordered them to leave Lombardy, and I never heard what arrangements they finally came to. Later on I was informed that the Englishman’s bills had all been settled to the uttermost farthing.

Medini, penniless as usual, had taken up his abode in the hotel where I was staying, bringing with him his mistress, her sister, and her mother, but with only one servant. He informed me that the grand duke had refused to listen to any of them at Pisa, where he had received a second order to leave Tuscany, and so had been obliged to sell everything. Of course he wanted me to help him, but I turned a deaf ear to his entreaties.

I have never seen this adventurer without his being in a desperate state of impecuniosity, but he would never learn to abate his luxurious habits, and always managed to find some way or other out of his difficulties. He was lucky enough to fall in with a Franciscan monk named De Dominis at

Bologna, the said monk being on his way to Rome to solicit a brief of ‘laicisation’ from the Pope. He fell in love with Medini’s mistress, who naturally made him pay dearly for her charms.

Medini left at the end of three weeks. He went to Germany, where he printed his version of the “Henriade,” having discovered a Maecenas in the person of the Elector Palatin. After that he wandered about Europe for twelve years, and died in a London prison in 1788.

I had always warned him to give England a wide berth, as I felt certain that if he once went there he would not escape English bolts and bars, and that if he got on the wrong side of the prison doors he would never come out alive. He despised my advice, and if he did so with the idea of proving me a liar, he made a mistake, for he proved me to be a prophet.

Medini had the advantage of high birth, a good education, and intelligence; but as he was a poor man with luxurious tastes he either corrected fortune at play or went into debt, and was consequently obliged to be always on the wing to avoid imprisonment.

He lived in this way for seventy years, and he might possibly be alive now if he had followed my advice.

Eight years ago Count Torio told me that he had seen Medini in a London prison, and that the silly fellow confessed he had only come to London with the hope of proving me to be a liar.

Medini’s fate shall never prevent me from giving good advice to a poor wretch on the brink of the precipice. Twenty years ago I told Cagliostro (who called himself Count Pellegrini in those days) not to set his foot in Rome, and if he had followed this counsel he would not have died miserably in a Roman prison.

Thirty years ago a wise man advised me to beware visiting Spain. I went, but, as the reader knows, I had no reason to congratulate myself on my visit.

A week after my arrival at Bologna, happening to be in the shop of Tartuffi, the bookseller, I made the acquaintance of a cross-eyed priest, who struck me, after a quarter of an hour’s talk as a man of learning and talent. He presented me with two works which had recently been issued by two of the young professors at the university He told me that I should find them amusing reading, and he was right.

The first treatise contended that women's faults should be forgiven them, since they were really the work of the matrix, which influenced them in spite of themselves. The second treatise was a criticism of the first. The author allowed that the uterus was an animal, but he denied the alleged influence, as no anatomist had succeeded in discovering any communication between it and the brain.

I determined to write a reply to the two pamphlets, and I did so in the course of three days. When my reply was finished I sent it to M. Dandolo, instructing him to have five hundred copies printed. When they arrived I gave a bookseller the agency, and in a fortnight I had made a hundred sequins.

The first pamphlet was called "Lutero Pensante," the second was in French and bore the title "La Force Vitale," while I called my reply "Lana Caprina." I treated the matter in an easy vein, not without some hints of deep learning, and made fun of the lucubrations of the two physicians. My preface was in French, but full of Parisian idioms which rendered it unintelligible to all who had not visited the gay capital, and this circumstance gained me a good many friends amongst the younger generation.

The squinting priest, whose name was Zacchierdi, introduced me to the Abbe Severini, who became my intimate friend in the course of ten or twelve days.

This abbe made me leave the inn, and got me two pleasant rooms in the house of a retired artiste, the widow of the tenor Carlani. He also made arrangements with a pastrycook to send me my dinner and supper. All this, plus a servant, only cost me ten sequins a month.

Severini was the agreeable cause of my losing temporarily my taste for study. I put by my "Iliad," feeling sure that I should be able to finish it again.

Severini introduced me to his family, and before long I became very intimate with him. I also became the favourite of his sister, a lady rather plain than pretty, thirty years old, but full of intelligence.

In the course of Lent the abbe introduced me to all the best dancers and operatic singers in Bologna, which is the nursery of the heroines of the stage. They may be had cheaply enough on their native soil.

Every week the good abbe introduced me to a fresh one, and like a true friend he watched carefully over my finances. He was a poor man himself, and could not afford to contribute anything towards the expenses of our little parties; but as they would have cost me double without his help, the arrangement was a convenient one for both of us.

About this time there was a good deal of talk about a Bolognese nobleman, Marquis Albergati Capacelli. He had made a present of his private theatre to the public, and was himself an excellent actor. He had made himself notorious by obtaining a divorce from his wife, whom he did not like, so as to enable him to marry a dancer, by whom he had two children. The amusing point in this divorce was that he obtained it on the plea that he was impotent, and sustained his plea by submitting to an examination, which was conducted as follows:

Four skilled and impartial judges had the marquis stripped before them, and did all in their power to produce an erection; but somehow or other he succeeded in maintaining his composure, and the marriage was pronounced null and void on the ground of relative impotence, for it was well known that he had had children by another woman.

If reason and not prejudice had been consulted, the procedure would have been very different; for if relative impotence was considered a sufficient ground for divorce, of what use was the examination?

The marquis should have sworn that he could do nothing with his wife, and if the lady had traversed this statement the marquis might have challenged her to put him into the required condition.

But the destruction of old customs and old prejudices is often the work of long ages.

I felt curious to know this character, and wrote to M. Dandolo to get me a letter of introduction to the marquis.

In a week my good old friend sent me the desired letter. It was written by another Venetian, M. de Zaguri, an intimate friend of the marquis.

The letter was not sealed, so I read it. I was delighted; no one could have commended a person unknown to himself but the friend of a friend in a more delicate manner.

I thought myself bound to write a letter of thanks to M. Zaguri. I said that I desired to obtain my pardon more than ever after reading his letter, which made me long to go to Venice, and make the acquaintance of such a worthy nobleman.

I did not expect an answer, but I got one. M. Zaguri said that my desire was such a flattering one to himself, that he meant to do his best to obtain my recall.

The reader will see that he was successful, but not till after two years of continuous effort.

Albergati was away from Bologna at the time, but when he returned Severini let me know, and I called at the palace. The porter told me that his excellence (all the nobles are excellences at Bologna) had gone to his country house, where he meant to pass the whole of the spring.

In two or three days I drove out to his villa. I arrived at a charming mansion, and finding no one at the door I went upstairs, and entered a large room where a gentleman and an exceedingly pretty woman were just sitting down to dinner. The dishes had been brought in, and there were only two places laid.

I made a polite bow, and asked the gentleman if I had the honour of addressing the Marquis Albergati. He replied in the affirmative, whereupon I gave him my letter of introduction. He took it, read the superscription, and put it in his pocket, telling me I was very kind to have taken so much trouble, and that he would be sure to read it.

“It has been no trouble at all,” I replied, “but I hope you will read the letter. It is written by M. de Zaguri, whom I asked to do me this service, as I have long desired to make your lordship’s acquaintance.”

His lordship smiled and said very pleasantly that he would read it after dinner, and would see what he could do for his friend Zaguri.

Our dialogue was over in a few seconds. Thinking him extremely rude I turned my back and went downstairs, arriving just in time to prevent the postillion taking out the horses. I promised him a double gratuity if he would take me to some village at hand, where he could bait his horses while I breakfasted.

Just as the postillion had got on horseback a servant came running up. He told me very politely that his excellence begged me to step upstairs.

I put my hand in my pocket and gave the man my card with my name and address, and telling him that that was what his master wanted, I ordered the postillion to drive off at a full gallop.

When we had gone half a league we stopped at a good inn, and then proceeded on our way back to Bologna.

The same day I wrote to M. de Zaguri, and described the welcome I had received at the hands of the marquis. I enclosed the letter in another to M. Dandolo, begging him to read it, and to send it on. I begged the noble Venetian to write to the marquis that having offended me grievously he must prepare to give me due satisfaction.

I laughed with all my heart next day when my landlady gave me a visiting card with the inscription, General the Marquis of Albeygati. She told me the marquis had called on me himself, and on hearing I was out had left his card.

I began to look upon the whole of his proceedings as pure gasconnade, only lacking the wit of the true Gascon. I determined to await M. Zaguri's reply before making up my mind as to the kind of satisfaction I should demand.

While I was inspecting the card, and wondering what right the marquis had to the title of general, Severini came in, and informed me that the marquis had been made a Knight of the Order of St. Stanislas by the King of Poland, who had also given him the style of royal chamberlain.

"Is he a general in the Polish service as well?" I asked.

"I really don't know."

"I understand it all," I said to myself. "In Poland a chamberlain has the rank of adjutant-general, and the marquis calls himself general. But general what? The adjective without a substantive is a mere cheat."

I saw my opportunity, and wrote a comic dialogue, which I had printed the next day. I made a present of the work to a bookseller, and in three or four days he sold out the whole edition at a bajocco apiece.

CHAPTER XIX

Farinello and the Electress Dowager of Saxony — Madame Slopitz — Nina — The Midwife — Madame Soavi — Abbe Bolini — Madame Viscioletta — The Seamstress — The Sorry Pleasure of Revenge — Severini Goes to Naples — My Departure — Marquis Mosca

Anyone who attacks a proud person in a comic vein is almost sure of success; the laugh is generally on his side.

I asked in my dialogue whether it was lawful for a provost-marshal to call himself simply marshal, and whether a lieutenant-colonel had a right to the title of colonel. I also asked whether the man who preferred titles of honour, for which he had paid in hard cash, to his ancient and legitimate rank, could pass for a sage.

Of course the marquis had to laugh at my dialogue, but he was called the general ever after. He had placed the royal arms of Poland over the gate of his palace, much to the amusement of Count Mischinski, the Polish ambassador to Berlin, who happened to be passing through Bologna at that time.

I told the Pole of my dispute with the mad marquis, and persuaded him to pay Albergati a visit, leaving his card. The ambassador did so, and the call was returned, but Albergati's cards no longer bore the title of general.

The Dowager Electress of Saxony having come to Bologna, I hastened to pay my respects to her. She had only come to see the famous castrato Farinello, who had left Madrid, and now lived at Bologna in great comfort. He placed a magnificent collation before the Electress, and sang a song of his own composition, accompanying himself on the piano. The Electress, who was an enthusiastic musician, embraced Farinello, exclaiming, —

"Now I can die happy."

Farinello, who was also known as the Chevalier Borschi had reigned, as it were, in Spain till the Parmese wife of Philip V. had laid plots which obliged him to leave the Court after the disgrace of Enunada. The Electress noticed a portrait of the queen, and spoke very highly of her, mentioning some circumstances which must have taken place in the reign of Ferdinand VI.

The famous musician burst into tears, and said that Queen Barbara was as good as Elizabeth of Parma was wicked.

Borschi might have been seventy when I saw him at Bologna. He was very rich and in the enjoyment of good health, and yet he was unhappy, continually shedding tears at the thought of Spain.

Ambition is a more powerful passion than avarice. Besides, Farinello had another reason for unhappiness.

He had a nephew who was the heir to all his wealth, whom he married to a noble Tuscan lady, hoping to found a titled family, though in an indirect kind of way. But this marriage was a torment to him, for in his impotent old age he was so unfortunate as to fall in love with his niece, and to become jealous of his nephew. Worse than all the lady grew to hate him, and Farinello had sent his nephew abroad, while he never allowed the wife to go out of his sight.

Lord Lincoln arrived in Bologna with an introduction for the cardinal legate, who asked him to dinner, and did me the honour of giving me an invitation to meet him. The cardinal was thus convinced that Lord Lincoln and I had never met, and that the grand duke of Tuscany had committed a great injustice in banishing me. It was on that occasion that the young nobleman told me how they had spread the snare, though he denied that he had been cheated; he was far too proud to acknowledge such a thing. He died of debauchery in London three or four years after.

I also saw at Bologna the Englishman Aston with Madame Slopitz, sister of the Charming Cailimena. Madame Slopitz was much handsomer than her sister. She had presented Aston with two babes as beautiful as Raphael's cherubs.

I spoke of her sister to her, and from the way in which I sang her praises she guessed that I had loved her. She told me she would be in Florence during the Carnival of 1773, but I did not see her again till the year 1776, when I was at Venice.

The dreadful Nina Bergonci, who had made a madman of Count Ricla, and was the source of all my woes at Barcelona, had come to Bologna at the beginning of Lent, occupying a pleasant house which she had taken. She had carte blanche with a banker, and kept up a great state, affirming herself to be with child by the Viceroy of Catalonia, and demanding the honours which would be given to a queen who had graciously chosen Bologna as the place of her confinement. She had a special recommendation to the legate, who often visited her, but in the greatest secrecy.

The time of her confinement approached, and the insane Ricla sent over a confidential man, Don Martino, who was empowered to have the child baptized, and to recognize it as Ricla's natural offspring.

Nina made a show of her condition, appearing at the theatre and in the public places with an enormous belly. The greatest noble of Bologna paid court to her, and Nina told them that they might do so, but that she could not guarantee their safety from the jealous dagger of Ricla. She was impudent enough to tell them what happened to me at Barcelona, not knowing that I was at Bologna.

She was extremely surprised to hear from Count Zini, who knew me, that I inhabited the same town as herself.

When the count met me he asked me if the Barcelona story was true. I did not care to take him into my confidence, so I replied that I did not know Nina, and that the story had doubtless been made up by her to see whether he would encounter danger for her sake.

When I met the cardinal I told him the whole story, and his eminence was astonished when I gave him some insight into Nina's character, and informed him that she was the daughter of her sister and her grandfather.

"I could stake my life," said I, "that Nina is no more with child than you are."

"Oh, come!" said he, laughing, "that is really too strong; why shouldn't she have a child? It is a very simple matter, it seems to me. Possibly it may not be Ricla's child but there can be no doubt that she is with somebody's child. What object could she have for feigning pregnancy?"

"To make herself famous by defiling the Count de Ricla, who was a model of justice and virtue before knowing this Messalina. If your eminence knew the hideous character of Nina you would not wonder at anything she did."

"Well, we shall see."

"Yes."

About a week later I heard a great noise in the street, and on putting my head out of the window I saw a woman stripped to the waist, and mounted on an ass, being scourged by the hangman, and hooted by a mob of all the biricchini in Bologna. Severini came up at the same moment and informed me that the woman was the chief midwife in Bologna, and that her punishment had been ordered by the cardinal archbishop.

"It must be for some great crime," I observed.

"No doubt. It is the woman who was with Nina the day before yesterday."

"What! has Nina been brought to bed?"

"Yes; but of a still-born child."

"I see it all."

Next day the story was all over the town.

A poor woman had come before the archbishop, and had complained bitterly that the midwife Teresa had seduced her, promising to give her twenty sequins if she would give her a fine boy to whom she had given birth a fortnight ago. She was not given the sum agreed upon, and in her despair at hearing of the death of her child she begged for justice, declaring herself able to prove that the dead child said to be Nina's was in reality her own.

The archbishop ordered his chancellor to enquire into the affair with the utmost secrecy, and then proceed to instant and summary execution.

A week after this scandal Don Martino returned to Barcelona; but Nina remained as impudent as ever, doubled the size of the red cockades which she made her servants wear, and swore that Spain would avenge her on the insolent archbishop. She remained at Bologna six weeks longer, pretending to be still suffering from the effects of her confinement. The cardinal legate, who was ashamed of having had anything to do with such an abandoned prostitute, did his best to have her ordered to leave.

Count Ricla, a dupe to the last, gave her a considerable yearly income on the condition that she should never come to Barcelona again; but in a year the count died.

Nina did not survive him for more than a year, and died miserably from her fearful debauchery. I met her mother and sister at Venice, and she told me the story of the last two years of her daughter’s life; but it is so sad and so disgusting a tale that I feel obliged to omit it.

As for the infamous midwife, she found powerful friends.

A pamphlet appeared in which the anonymous author declared that the archbishop had committed a great wrong in punishing a citizen in so shameful a manner without any of the proper formalities of justice. The writer maintained that even if she were guilty she had been unjustly punished, and should appeal to Rome.

The prelate, feeling the force of these animadversions, circulated a pamphlet in which it appeared that the midwife had made three prior appearances before the judge, and that she would have been sent to the gallows long ago if the archbishop had not hesitated to shame three of the noblest families in Bologna, whose names appeared in documents in the custody of his chancellor.

Her crimes were procuring abortion and killing erring mothers, substituting the living for the dead, and in one case a boy for a girl, thus giving him the enjoyment of property which did not belong to him.

This pamphlet of the prelate reduced the patrons of the infamous midwife to silence, for several young noblemen whose mothers had been attended by her did not relish the idea of their family secrets being brought to light.

At Bologna I saw Madame Marucci, who had been expelled from Spain for the same reason as Madame Pelliccia. The latter had retired to Rome, while Madame Marucci was on her way to Lucca, her native country.

Madame Soavi, a Bolognese dancer whom I had known at Parma and Paris, came to Bologna with her daughter by M. de Marigni. The girl, whose name was Adelaide, was very beautiful, and her natural abilities had been fostered by a careful education.

When Madame Soavi got to Bologna she met her husband whom she had not seen for fifteen years.

“Here is a treasure for you,” said she, shewing him her daughter.

“She’s certainly very pretty, but what am I to do with her? She does not belong to me.”

“Yes she does, as I have given her to you. You must know that she has six thousand francs a year, and that I shall be her cashier till I get her married to a good dancer. I want her to learn character dancing, and to make her appearance on the boards. You must take her out on holidays.”

“What shall I say if people ask me who she is?”

“Say she is your daughter, and that you are certain, because your wife gave her to you.”

“I can’t see that.”

“Ah, you have always stayed at home, and consequently your wits are homely.”

I heard this curious dialogue which made me laugh then, and makes me laugh now as I write it. I offered to help in Adelaide’s education, but Madame Soavi laughed, and said, —

“Fox, you have deceived so many tender pullets, that I don’t like to trust you with this one, for fear of your making her too precocious.”

“I did not think of that, but you are right.”

Adelaide became the wonder of Bologna.

A year after I left the Comte du Barri, brother-in-law of the famous mistress of Louis XV., visited Bologna, and became so amorous of Adelaide that her mother sent her away, fearing he would carry her off.

Du Barri offered her a hundred thousand francs for the girl, but she refused the offer.

I saw Adelaide five years later on the boards of a Venetian theatre. When I went to congratulate her, she said, —

"My mother brought me into the world, and I think she will send me out of it; this dancing is killing me."

In point of fact this delicate flower faded and died after seven years of the severe life to which her mother had exposed her.

Madame Soavi who had not taken the precaution to settle the six thousand francs on herself, lost all in losing Adelaide, and died miserably after having rolled in riches. But, alas! I am not the man to reproach anyone on the score of imprudence.

At Bologna I met the famous Afflisio, who had been discharged from the imperial service and had turned manager. He went from bad to worse, and five or six years later committed forgery, was sent to the galleys, and there died.

I was also impressed by the example of a man of a good family, who had once been rich. This was Count Filomarino. He was living in great misery, deprived of the use of all his limbs by a succession of venereal complaints. I often went to see him to give him a few pieces of money, and to listen to his malevolent talk, for his tongue was the only member that continued active. He was a scoundrel and a slanderer, and writhed under the thought that he could not go to Naples and torment his relations, who were in reality respectable people, but monsters according to his shewing.

Madame Sabatini, the dancer, had returned to Bologna, having made enough money to rest upon her laurels. She married a professor of anatomy, and brought all her wealth to him as a dower. She had with her her sister, who was not rich and had no talents, but was at the same time very agreeable.

At the house I met an abbe, a fine young man of modest appearance. The sister seemed to be deeply in love with him, while he appeared to be grateful and nothing more.

I made some remark to the modest Adonis, and he gave me a very sensible answer. We walked away together, and after telling each other what brought us to Bologna we parted, agreeing to meet again.

The abbe, who was twenty-four or twenty-five years old, was not in orders, and was the only son of a noble family of Novara, which was unfortunately poor as well as noble.

He had a very scanty revenue, and was able to live more cheaply at Bologna than Novara, where everything is dear. Besides, he did not care for his relations; he had no friends, and everybody there was more or less ignorant.

The Abbe de Bolini, as he was called, was a man of tranquil mind, living a peaceful and quiet life above all things. He liked lettered men more than letters, and did not trouble to gain the reputation of a wit. He knew he was not a fool, and when he mixed with learned men he was quite clever enough to be a good listener.

Both temperament and his purse made him temperate in all things, and he had received a sound Christian education. He never talked about religion, but nothing scandalized him. He seldom praised and never blamed.

He was almost entirely indifferent to women, flying from ugly women and blue stockings, and gratifying the passion of pretty ones more out of kindliness than love, for in his heart he considered women as more likely to make a man miserable than happy. I was especially interested in this last characteristic.

We had been friends for three weeks when I took the liberty of asking him how he reconciled his theories with his attachment to Brigida Sabatini.

He supped with her every evening, and she breakfasted with him every morning. When I went to see him, she was either there already or came in before my call was over. She breathed forth love in every glance, while the abbe was kind, but, in spite of his politeness, evidently bored.

Brigida looked well enough, but she was at least ten years older than the abbe. She was very polite to me and did her best to convince me that the abbe was happy in the possession of her heart, and that they both enjoyed the delights of mutual love.

But when I asked him over a bottle of good wine about his affection for Brigida, he sighed, smiled, blushed, looked down, and finally confessed that this connection was the misfortune of his life.

“Misfortune? Does she make you sigh in vain? If so you should leave her, and thus regain your happiness.”

“How can I sigh? I am not in love with her. She is in love with me, and tries to make me her slave.”

"How do you mean?"

"She wants me to marry her, and I promised to do so, partly from weakness, and partly from pity; and now she is in a hurry."

"I daresay; all these elderly girls are in a hurry."

"Every evening she treats me to tears, supplications, and despair. She summons me to keep my promise, and accuses me of deceiving her, so you may imagine that my situation is an unhappy one."

"Have you any obligations towards her?"

"None whatever. She has violated me, so to speak, for all the advances came from her. She has only what her sister gives her from day to day, and if she got married she would not get that."

"Have you got her with child?"

"I have taken good care not to do so, and that's what has irritated her; she calls all my little stratagems detestable treason."

"Nevertheless, you have made up your mind to marry her sooner or later?"

"I'd as soon hang myself. If I got married to her I should be four times as poor as I am now, and all my relations at Novara would laugh at me for bringing home a wife of her age. Besides, she is neither rich nor well born, and at Novara they demand the one or the other."

"Then as a man of honour and as a man of sense, you ought to break with her, and the sooner the better."

"I know, but lacking normal strength what am I to do? If I did not go and sup with her to-night, she would infallibly come after me to see what had happened. I can't lock my door in her face, and I can't tell her to go away."

"No, but neither can go on in this miserable way.

"You must make up your mind, and cut the Gordian knot, like Alexander."

"I haven't his sword."

"I will lend it you."

"What do you mean?"

"Listen to me. You must go and live in another town. She will hardly go after you there, I suppose."

"That is a very good plan, but flight is a difficult matter."

"Difficult? Not at all. Do you promise to do what I tell you, and I will arrange everything quite comfortably. Your mistress will not know anything about it till she misses you at supper."

"I will do whatever you tell me, and I shall never forget your kindness; but Brigida will go mad with grief."

"Well my first order to you is not to give her grief a single thought. You have only to leave everything to me. Would you like to start to-morrow?"

"To-morrow?"

"Yes. Have you any debts?"

"No."

"Do you want any money?"

"I have sufficient. But the idea of leaving tomorrow has taken my breath away. I must have three days delay."

"Why so?"

"I expect some letters the day after to-morrow, and I must write to my relations to tell them where I am going."

"I will take charge of your letters and send them on to you."

"Where shall I be?"

"I will tell you at the moment of your departure; trust in me. I will send you at once where you will be comfortable. All you have to do is to leave your trunk in the hands of your landlord, with orders not to give it up to anyone but myself."

"Very good. I am to go without my trunk, then."

"Yes. You must dine with me every day till you go, and mind not to tell anyone whatsoever that you intend leaving Bologna."

"I will take care not to do so."

The worthy young fellow looked quite radiant. I embraced him and thanked him for putting so much trust in me.

I felt proud at the good work I was about to perform, and smiled at the thought of Brigida's anger when she found that her lover had escaped. I wrote to my good friend Dandolo that in five or six days a young abbe would present himself before him bearing a letter from myself. I begged Dandolo to get him a comfortable and cheap lodging, as my friend was so unfortunate as to be indifferently provided with money, though an excellent man. I then wrote the letter of which the abbe was to be the bearer.

Next day Bolini told me that Brigida was far from suspecting his flight, as owing to his gaiety at the thought of freedom he had contented her so well during the night she had passed with him that she thought him as much in love as she was.

"She has all my linen," he added, "but I hope to get a good part of it back under one pretext or another, and she is welcome to the rest."

On the day appointed he called on me as we had arranged the night before, carrying a huge carpet bag containing necessaries. I took him to Modena in a post chaise, and there we dined; afterward I gave him a letter for M. Dandolo, promising to send on his trunk the next day.

He was delighted to hear that Venice was his destination, as he had long wished to go there, and I promised him that M. Dandolo should see that he lived as comfortably and cheaply as he had done at Bologna.

I saw him off, and returned to Bologna. The trunk I dispatched after him the following day.

As I had expected, the poor victim appeared before me all in tears the next day. I felt it my duty to pity her; it would have been cruel to pretend I did not know the reason for her despair. I gave her a long but kindly sermon, endeavouring to persuade her that I had acted for the best in preventing the abbe marrying her, as such a step would have plunged them both into misery.

The poor woman threw herself weeping at my feet, begging me to bring her abbe back, and swearing by all the saints that she would never mention the word "marriage" again. By way of calming her, I said I would do my best to win him over.

She asked where he was, and I said at Venice; but of course she did not believe me. There are circumstances when a clever man deceives by telling the truth, and such a lie as this must be approved by the most rigorous moralists.

Twenty-seven months later I met Bolini at Venice. I shall describe the meeting in its proper place.

A few days after he had gone, I made the acquaintance of the fair Viscioletta, and fell so ardently in love with her that I had to make up my mind to buy her with hard cash. The time when I could make women fall in love with me was no more, and I had to make up my mind either to do without them or to buy them.

I cannot help laughing when people ask me for advice, as I feel so certain that my advice will not be taken. Man is an animal that has to learn his lesson by hard experience in battling with the storms of life. Thus the world is always in disorder and always ignorant, for those who know are always in an infinitesimal proportion to the whole.

Madame Viscioletta, whom I went to see every day, treated me as the Florentine widow had done, though the widow required forms and ceremonies which I could dispense with in the presence of the fair Viscioletta, who was nothing else than a professional courtezan, though she called herself a virtuosa.

I had besieged her for three weeks without any success, and when I made any attempts she repulsed me laughingly.

Monsignor Buoncompagni, the vice-legate, was her lover in secret, though all the town knew it, but this sort of conventional secrecy is common enough in Italy. As as ecclesiastic he could not court her openly, but the hussy made no mystery whatever of his visits.

Being in need of money, and preferring to get rid of my carriage than of anything else, I announced it for sale at the price of three hundred and fifty Roman crowns. It was a comfortable and handsome carriage, and was well worth the price. I was told that the vice-legate offered three hundred crowns, and I felt a real pleasure in contradicting my favoured rival’s desires. I told the man that I had stated my price and meant to adhere to it, as I was not accustomed to bargaining.

I went to see my carriage at noon one day to make sure that it was in good condition, and met the vice-legate who knew me from meeting me at the legate's, and must have been aware that I was poaching on his preserves. He told me rudely that the carriage was not worth more than three hundred crowns, and that I ought to be glad of the opportunity of getting rid of it, as it was much too good for me.

I had the strength of mind to despise his violence, and telling him dryly that I did not chaffer I turned my back on him and went my way.

Next day the fair Viscioletta wrote me a note to the effect that she would be very much obliged if I would let the vice-legate have the carriage at his own price, as she felt sure he would give it to her. I replied that I would call on her in the afternoon, and that my answer would depend on my welcome, I went in due course, and after a lively discussion, she gave way, and I signified my willingness to sell the carriage for the sum offered by the vice-legate.

The next day she had her carriage, and I had my three hundred crowns, and I let the proud prelate understand that I had avenged myself for his rudeness.

About this time Severini succeeded in obtaining a position as tutor in an illustrious Neapolitan family, and as soon as he received his journey-money he left Bologna. I also had thoughts of leaving the town.

I had kept up an interesting correspondence with M. Zaguri, who had made up his mind to obtain my recall in concert with Dandolo, who desired nothing better. Zaguri told me that if I wanted to obtain my pardon I must come and live as near as possible to the Venetian borders, so that the State Inquisitors might satisfy themselves of my good conduct. M. Zuliani, brother to the Duchess of Fiano, gave me the same advice, and promised to use all his interest in my behalf.

With the idea of following this counsel I decided to set up my abode at Trieste, where M. Zaguri told me he had an intimate friend to whom he would give me a letter of introduction. As I could not go by land without passing through the States of Venice I resolved to go to Ancona, whence boats sail to Trieste every day. As I should pass through Pesaro I asked my patron to give me a letter for the Marquis Mosca, a distinguished man of letters whom I had long wished to know. Just then he was a good deal talked about on account of a treatise on alms which he had recently published, and which the Roman curia had placed on the "Index."

The marquis was a devotee as well as a man of learning, and was imbued with the doctrine of St. Augustine, which becomes Jansenism if pushed to an extreme point.

I was sorry to leave Bologna, for I had spent eight pleasant months there. In two days I arrived at Pesaro in perfect health and well provided for in every way.

I left my letter with the marquis, and he came to see me the same day. He said his house would always be open to me, and that he would leave me in his wife's hands to be introduced to everybody and everything in the place. He ended by asking me to dine with him the following day, adding that if I cared to examine his library he could give me an excellent cup of chocolate.

I went, and saw an enormous collection of comments on the Latin poets from Ennius to the poets of the twelfth century of our era. He had had them all printed at his own expense and at his private press, in four tall folios, very accurately printed but without elegance. I told him my opinion, and he agreed that I was right.

The want of elegance which had spared him an outlay of a hundred thousand francs had deprived him of a profit of three hundred thousand.

He presented me with a copy, which he sent to my inn, with an immense folio volume entitled "Marmora Pisaurentia," which I had no time to examine.

I was much pleased with the marchioness, who had three daughters and two sons, all good-looking and well bred.

The marchioness was a woman of the world, while her husband's interests were confined to his books. This difference in disposition sometimes gave rise to a slight element of discord, but a stranger would never have noticed it if he had not been told.

Fifty years ago a wise man said to me: "Every family is troubled by some small tragedy, which should be kept private with the greatest care. In fine, people should learn to wash their dirty linen in private."

The marchioness paid me great attention during the five days I spent at Pesaro. In the day she drove me from one country house to another, and at night she introduced me to all the nobility of the town.

The marquis might have been fifty then. He was cold by temperament, had no other passion but that of study, and his morals were pure. He had founded an academy of which he was the president. Its design was a fly, in allusion to his name Mosca, with the words 'de me ce', that is to say, take away 'c' from 'musca' and you have 'musa'.

His only failing was that which the monks regard as his finest quality, he was religious to excess, and this excess of religion went beyond the bounds where 'nequit consistere rectum'.

But which is the better, to go beyond these bounds, or not to come up to them? I cannot venture to decide the question. Horace says, —

"Nulla est mihi religio!"

and it is the beginning of an ode in which he condemns philosophy for estranging him from religion.

Excess of every kind is bad.

I left Pesaro delighted with the good company I had met, and only sorry I had not seen the marquis's brother who was praised by everyone.

CHAPTER XX

A Jew Named Mardocheus Becomes My Travelling Companion —

He Persuades Me to Lodge in His House — I Fall in Love With His

Daughter Leah — After a Stay of Six Weeks I Go to Trieste

Some time elapsed before I had time to examine the Marquis of Mosca's collection of Latin poets, amongst which the 'Priapeia' found no place.

No doubt this work bore witness to his love for literature but not to his learning, for there was nothing of his own in it. All he had done was to classify each fragment in chronological order. I should have liked to see notes, comments, explanations, and such like; but there was nothing of the kind. Besides, the type was not elegant, the margins were poor, the paper common, and misprints not infrequent. All these are bad faults, especially in a work which should have become a classic. Consequently, the book was not a profitable one; and as the marquis was not a rich man he was occasionally reproached by his wife for the money he had expended.

I read his treatise on almsgiving and his apology for it, and understood a good deal of the marquis's way of thinking. I could easily imagine that his writings must have given great offence at Rome, and that with sounder judgment he would have avoided this danger. Of course the marquis was really in the right, but in theology one is only in the right when Rome says yes.

The marquis was a rigorist, and though he had a tincture of Jansenism he often differed from St. Augustine.

He denied, for instance, that almsgiving could annul the penalty attached to sin, and according to him the only sort of almsgiving which had any merit was that prescribed in the Gospel: "Let not thy right hand know what thy left hand doeth."

He even maintained that he who gave alms sinned unless it was done with the greatest secrecy, for alms given in public are sure to be accompanied by vanity.

It might have been objected that the merit of alms lies in the intention with which they are given. It is quite possible for a good man to slip a piece of money into the palm of some miserable being standing in a public place, and yet this may be done solely with the idea of relieving distress without a thought of the onlookers.

As I wanted to go to Trieste, I might have crossed the gulf by a small boat from Pesaro; a good wind was blowing, and I should have got to Trieste in twelve hours. This was my proper way, for I had nothing to do at Ancona, and it was a hundred miles longer; but I had said I would go by Ancona, and I felt obliged to do so.

I had always a strong tincture of superstition, which has exercised considerable influence on my strange career.

Like Socrates I, too, had a demon to whom I referred my doubtful counsels, doing his will, and obeying blindly when I felt a voice within me telling me to forbear.

A hundred times have I thus followed my genius, and occasionally I have felt inclined to complain that it did not impel me to act against my reason more frequently. Whenever I did so I found that impulse was right and reason wrong, and for all that I have still continued reasoning.

When I arrived at Senegallia, at three stages from Ancona, my vetturino asked me, just as I was going to bed, whether I would allow him to accommodate a Jew who was going to Ancona in the chaise.

My first impulse made me answer sharply that I wanted no one in my chaise, much less a Jew.

The vetturino went out, but a voice said within me, “You must take this’ poor Israelite;” and in spite of my repugnance I called back the man and signified my assent.

“Then you must make up your mind to start at an earlier hour, for it is Friday to-morrow, and you know the Jews are not allowed to travel after sunset.”

“I shall not start a moment earlier than I intended, but you can make your horses travel as quickly as you like.”

He gave me no answer, and went out. The next morning I found my Jew, an honest-looking fellow, in the carriage. The first thing he asked me was why I did not like Jews.

“Because your religion teaches you to hate men of all other religions, especially Christians, and you think you have done a meritorious action when you have deceived us. You do not look upon us as brothers. You are usurious, unmerciful, our enemies, and so I do not like you.”

“You are mistaken, sir. Come with me to our synagogue this evening, and you will hear us pray for all Christians, beginning with our Lord the Pope.”

I could not help bursting into a roar of laughter.

“True,” I replied, “but the prayer comes from the mouth only, and not from the heart. If you do not immediately confess that the Jews would not pray for the Christians if they were the masters, I will fling you out of the chaise.”

Of course I did not carry out this threat, but I completed his confusion by quoting in Hebrew the passages in the Old Testament, where the Jews are bidden to do all possible harm to the Gentiles, whom they were to curse every day.

After this the poor man said no more. When we were going to take our dinner I asked him to sit beside me, but he said his religion would not allow him to do so, and that he would only eat eggs, fruit, and some foiegras sausage he had in his pocket. He only drank water because he was not sure that the wine was unadulterated.

“You stupid fellow,” I exclaimed, “how can you ever be certain of the purity of wine unless you have made it yourself?”

When we were on our way again he said that if I liked to come and stay with him, and to content myself with such dishes as God had not forbidden, he would make me more comfortable than if I went to the inn, and at a cheaper rate.

“Then you let lodgings to Christians?”

“I don’t let lodgings to anybody, but I will make an exception in your case to disabuse you of some of your mistaken notions. I will only ask you six pauls a day, and give you two good meals without wine.”

"Then you must give me fish and wine, I paying for them as extras."

"Certainly; I have a Christian cook, and my wife pays a good deal of attention to the cooking."

"You can give me the foie gras every day, if you will eat it with me."

"I know what you think, but you shall be satisfied."

I got down at the Jew's house, wondering at myself as I did so. However, I knew that if I did not like my accommodation I could leave the next day.

His wife and children were waiting for him, and gave him a joyful welcome in honour of the Sabbath. All servile work was forbidden on this day holy to the Lord; and all over the house, and in the face of all the family, I observed a kind of festal air.

I was welcomed like a brother, and I replied as best I could; but a word from Mardocheus (so he was called) changed their politeness of feeling into a politeness of interest.

Mardocheus shewed me two rooms for me to choose the one which suited me, but liking them both I said I would take the two for another paul a day, with which arrangement he was well enough pleased.

Mardocheus told his wife what we had settled, and she instructed the Christian servant to cook my supper for me.

I had my effects taken upstairs, and then went with Mardocheus to the synagogue.

During the short service the Jews paid no attention to me or to several other Christians who were present. The Jews go to the synagogue to pray, and in this respect I think their conduct worthy of imitation by the Christians.

On leaving the synagogue I went by myself to the Exchange, thinking over the happy time which would never return.

It was in Ancona that I had begun to enjoy life; and when I thought it over, it was quite a shock to find that this was thirty years ago, for thirty years is a long period in a man's life. And yet I felt quite happy, in spite of the tenth lustrum so near at hand for me.

What a difference I found between my youth and my middle age! I could scarcely recognize myself. I was then happy, but now unhappy; then all the world was before me, and the future seemed a gorgeous dream, and now I was obliged to confess that my life had been all in vain. I might live twenty years more, but I felt that the happy time was passed away, and the future seemed all dreary.

I reckoned up my forty-seven years, and saw fortune fly away. This in itself was enough to sadden me, for without the favours of the fickle goddess life was not worth living, for me at all events.

My object, then, was to return to my country; it was as if I struggled to undo all that I had done. All I could hope for was to soften the hardships of the slow but certain passage to the grave.

These are the thoughts of declining years and not of youth. The young man looks only to the present, believes that the sky will always smile upon him, and laughs at philosophy as it vainly preaches of old age, misery, repentance, and, worst of all, abhorred death.

Such were my thoughts twenty-six years ago; what must they be now, when I am all alone, poor, despised, and impotent. They would kill me if I did not resolutely subdue them, for whether for good or ill my heart is still young. Of what use are desires when one can no longer satisfy them? I write to kill ennui, and I take a pleasure in writing. Whether I write sense or nonsense, what matters? I am amused, and that is enough.

‘Malo scriptor delirus, inersque videri,

Dum mea delectent mala me vel denique fallunt,

Quam sapere.’

When I came back I found Mardocheus at supper with his numerous family, composed of eleven or twelve individuals, and including his mother — an old woman of ninety, who looked very well. I noticed another Jew of middle age; he was the husband of his eldest daughter, who did not strike me as pretty; but the younger daughter, who was destined for a Jew of Pesaro, whom she had never seen, engaged all my attention. I remarked to her that if she had not seen her future husband she could not be in love with him, whereupon she replied in a serious voice that it was not necessary to be in love before one married. The old woman praised the girl for this sentiment, and said she had not been in love with her husband till the first child was born.

I shall call the pretty Jewess Leah, as I have good reasons for not using her real name.

While they were enjoying their meal I sat down beside her and tried to make myself as agreeable as possible, but she would not even look at me.

My supper was excellent, and my bed very comfortable.

The next day my landlord told me that I could give my linen to the maid, and that Leah could get it up for me.

I told him I had relished my supper, but that I should like the foie gras every day as I had a dispensation.

“You shall have some to-morrow, but Leah is the only one of us who eats it.”

“Then Leah must take it with me, and you can tell her that I shall give her some Cyprus wine which is perfectly pure.”

I had no wine, but I went for it the same morning to the Venetian consul, giving him M. Dandolo’s letter.

The consul was a Venetian of the old leaven. He had heard my name, and seemed delighted to make my acquaintance. He was a kind of clown without the paint, fond of a joke, a regular gourmand, and a man of great experience. He sold me some Scopolo and old Cyprus Muscat, but he began to exclaim when he heard where I was lodging, and how I had come there.

“He is rich,” he said, “but he is also a great usurer, and if you borrow money of him he will make you repent it.”

After informing the consul that I should not leave till the end of the month, I went home to dinner, which proved excellent.

The next day I gave out my linen to the maid, and Leah came to ask me how I liked my lace got up.

If Leah had examined me more closely she would have seen that the sight of her magnificent breast, unprotected by any kerchief, had had a remarkable effect on me.

I told her that I left it all to her, and that she could do what she liked with the linen.

“Then it will all come under my hands if you are in no hurry to go.”

“You can make me stay as long as you like,” said I; but she seemed not to hear this declaration.

“Everything is quite right,” I continued, “except the chocolate; I like it well frothed.”

“Then I will make it for you myself.”

“Then I will give out a double quantity, and we will take it together.”

“I don’t like chocolate.”

“I am sorry to hear that; but you like foie gras?”

“Yes, I do; and from what father tells me I am going to take some with you to-day.”

“I shall be delighted.”

“I suppose you are afraid of being poisoned?”

“Not at all; I only wish we could die together.”

She pretended not to understand, and left me burning with desire. I felt that I must either obtain possession of her or tell her father not to send her into my room any more.

The Turin Jewess had given me some valuable hints as to the conduct of amours with Jewish girls.

My theory was that Leah would be more easily won than she, for at Ancona there was much more liberty than at Turin.

This was a rake’s reasoning, but even rakes are mistaken sometimes.

The dinner that was served to me was very good, though cooked in the Jewish style, and Leah brought in the foie gras and sat down opposite to me with a muslin kerchief over her breast.

The foie gras was excellent, and we washed it down with copious libations of Scopolo, which Leah found very much to her taste.

When the foie gras was finished she got up, but I stopped her, for the dinner was only half over.

“I will stay then,” said she, “but I am afraid my father will object.”

“Very good. Call your master,” I said to the maid who came in at that moment, “I have a word to speak to him.”

“My dear Mardocheus,” I said when he came, “your daughter’s appetite doubles mine, and I shall be much obliged if you will allow her to keep me company whenever we have foie gras.”

“It isn’t to my profit to double your appetite, but if you like to pay double I shall have no objection.”

“Very good, that arrangement will suit me.”

In evidence of my satisfaction I gave him a bottle of Scopolo, which Leah guaranteed pure.

We dined together, and seeing that the wine was making her mirthful I told her that her eyes were inflaming me and that she must let me kiss them.

“My duty obliges me to say nay. No kissing and no touching; we have only got to eat and drink together, and I shall like it as much as you.”

“You are cruel.”

“I am wholly dependent on my father.”

“Shall I ask your father to give you leave to be kind?”

“I don’t think that would be proper, and my father might be offended and not allow me to see you any more.”

“And supposing he told you not to be scrupulous about trifles?”

“Then I should despise him and continue to do my duty.”

So clear a declaration shewed me that if I persevered in this intrigue I might go on for ever without success. I also bethought me that I ran a risk of neglecting my chief business, which would not allow me to stay long in Ancona.

I said nothing more to Leah just then, and when the dessert came in I gave her some Cyprus wine, which she declared was the most delicious nectar she had ever tasted.

I saw that the wine was heating her, and it seemed incredible to me that Bacchus should reign without Venus; but she had a hard head, her blood was hot and her brain cool.

However, I tried to seize her hand and kiss it, but she drew it away, saying pleasantly, —

“It’s too much for honour and too little for love.”

This witty remark amused me, and it also let me know that she was not exactly a neophyte.

I determined to postpone matters till the next day, and told her not to get me any supper as I was supping with the Venetian consul.

The consul had told me that he did not dine, but that he would always be delighted to see me at supper.

It was midnight when I came home, and everyone was asleep except the maid who let me in. I gave her such a gratuity that she must have wished me to keep late hours for the rest of my stay.

I proceeded to sound her about Leah, but she told me nothing but good. If she was to be believed, Leah was a good girl, always at work, loved by all, and fancy free. The maid could not have praised her better if she had been paid to do so.

In the morning Leah brought the chocolate and sat down on my bed, saying that we should have some fine foie gras, and that she should have all the better appetite for dinner as she had not taken any supper.

“Why didn’t you take any supper?”

“I suppose it was because of your excellent Cyprus wine, to which my father has taken a great liking.”

“Ah! he like it? We will give him some.”

Leah was in a state of undress as before, and the sight of her half-covered spheres drove me to distraction.

“Are you not aware that you have a beautiful breast?” said I.

“I thought all young girls were just the same.”

"Have you no suspicion that the sight is a very pleasant one for me?"

"If that be so, I am very glad, for I have nothing to be ashamed of, for a girl has no call to hide her throat any more than her face, unless she is in grand company."

As she was speaking, Leah looked at a golden heart transfixed with an arrow and set with small diamonds which served me as a shirt stud.

"Do you like the little heart?" said I.

"Very much. Is it pure gold?"

"Certainly, and that being so I think I may offer it to you."

So saying I took it off, but she thanked me politely, and said that a girl who gave nothing must take nothing.

"Take it; I will never ask any favour of you."

"But I should be indebted to you, and that's the reason why I never take anything."

I saw that there was nothing to be done, or rather that it would be necessary to do too much to do anything, and that in any case the best plan would be to give her up.

I put aside all thoughts of violence, which would only anger her or make her laugh at me. I should either have been degraded, or rendered more amorous, and all for nothing. If she had taken offense she would not have come to see me any more, and I should have had nought to complain of. In fine I made up my mind to restrain myself, and indulge no more in amorous talk.

We dined very pleasantly together. The servant brought in some shell-fish, which are forbidden by the Mosaic Law. While the maid was in the room I asked Leah to take some, and she refused indignantly; but directly the girl was gone she took some of her own accord and ate them eagerly, assuring me that it was the first time she had had the pleasure of tasting shellfish.

"This girl," I said to myself, "who breaks the law of her religion with such levity, who likes pleasure and does not conceal it, this is the girl who wants to make me believe that she is insensible to the pleasures of love; that's impossible, though she may not love me. She must have some secret means of satisfying her passions, which in my opinion are very violent. We will see what can be done this evening with the help of a bottle of good Muscat."

However, when the evening came, she said she could not drink or eat anything, as a meal always prevented her sleeping.

The next day she brought me my chocolate, but her beautiful breast was covered with a white kerchief. She sat down on the bed as usual, and I observed in a melancholy manner that she had only covered her breast because I had said I took a pleasure in seeing it.

She replied that she had not thought of anything, and had only put on her kerchief because she had had no time to fasten her stays.

"You are whole right," I said, smilingly, "for if I were to see the whole breast I might not think it beautiful."

She gave no answer, and I finished my chocolate.

I recollected my collection of obscene pictures, and I begged Leah to give me the box, telling her that I would shew her some of the most beautiful breasts in the world.

"I shan't care to see them," said she; but she gave me the box, and sat down on my bed as before.

I took out a picture of a naked woman lying on her back and abusing herself, and covering up the lower part of it I shewed it to Leah.

"But her breast is like any other," said Leah.

"Take away your handkerchief."

"Take it back; it's disgusting. It's well enough done," she added, with a burst of laughter, "but it's no novelty for me."

"No novelty for you?"

"Of course not; every girl does like that before she gets married."

"Then you do it, too?"

"Whenever I want to."

"Do it now."

"A well-bred girl always does it in private."

"And what do you do after?"

"If I am in bed I go to sleep."

"My dear Leah, your sincerity is too much for me. Either be kind or visit me no more."

"You are very weak, I think."

"Yes, because I am strong."

"Then henceforth we shall only meet at dinner. But shew me some more miniatures."

"I have some pictures which you will not like."

"Let me see them."

I gave her Arentin's figures, and was astonished to see how coolly she examined them, passing from one to the other in the most commonplace way.

"Do you think them interesting?" I said.

"Yes, very; they are so natural. But a good girl should not look at such pictures; anyone must be aware that these voluptuous attitudes excite one's emotions."

"I believe you, Leah, and I feel it as much as you. Look here!"

She smiled and took the book away to the window, turning her back towards me without taking any notice of my appeal.

I had to cool down and dress myself, and when the hairdresser arrived Leah went away, saying she would return me my book at dinner.

I was delighted, thinking I was sure of victory either that day or the next, but I was out of my reckoning.

We dined well and drank better. At dessert Leah took the book out of her pocket and set me all on fire by asking me to explain some of the pictures but forbidding all practical demonstration.

I went out impatiently, determined to wait till next morning.

When the cruel Jewess came in the morning she told me that she wanted explanations, but that I must use the pictures and nothing more as a demonstration of my remarks.

“Certainly,” I replied, “but you must answer all my questions as to your sex.”

“I promise to do so, if they arise naturally from the pictures.”

The lesson lasted two hours, and a hundred times did I curse Aretin and my folly in shewing her his designs, for whenever I made the slightest attempt the pitiless woman threatened to leave me. But the information she gave me about her own sex was a perfect torment to me. She told me the most lascivious details, and explained with the utmost minuteness the different external and internal movements which would be developed in the copulations pictured by Aretin. I thought it quite impossible that she could be reasoning from theory alone. She was not troubled by the slightest tincture of modesty, but philosophized on coition as coolly and much more learnedly than Hedvig. I would willingly have given her all I possessed to crown her science by the performance of the great work. She swore it was all pure theory with her, and I thought she must be speaking the truth when she said she wanted to get married to see if her notions were right or wrong. She looked pensive when I told her that the husband destined for her might be unable to discharge his connubial duties more than once a week.

“Do you mean to say,” said she, “that one man is not as good as another?”

“How do you mean?”

“Are not all men able to make love every day, and every hour, just as they eat, drink and sleep every day?”

“No, dear Leah, they that can make love every day are very scarce.”

In my state of chronic irritation I felt much annoyed that there was no decent place at Ancona where a man might appease his passions for his money. I trembled to think that I was in danger of falling really in love with Leah, and I told the consul every day that I was in no hurry to go. I was as foolish as a boy in his calf-love. I pictured Leah as the purest of women, for with strong passions she refused to gratify them. I saw in her a model of virtue; she was all self-restraint and purity, resisting temptation in spite of the fire that consumed her.

Before long the reader will discover how very virtuous Leah was.

After nine or ten days I had recourse to violence, not in deeds but in words. She confessed I was in the right, and said my best plan would be to forbid her to come and see me in the morning. At dinner, according to her, there would be no risk.

I made up my mind to ask her to continue her visits, but to cover her breast and avoid all amorous conversation.

“With all my heart,” she replied, laughing; “but be sure I shall not be the first to break the conditions.”

I felt no inclination to break them either, for three days later I felt weary of the situation, and told the consul I would start on the first opportunity. My passion for Leah was spoiling my appetite, and I thus saw myself deprived of my secondary pleasure without any prospect of gaining my primary enjoyment.

After what I had said to the consul I felt I should be bound to go, and I went to bed calmly enough. But about two o’clock in the morning I had, contrary to my usual habit, to get up and offer sacrifice to Cloacina. I left my room without any candle, as I knew my way well enough about the house.

The temple of the goddess was on the ground floor, but as I had put on my soft slippers, and walked very softly, my footsteps did not make the least noise.

On my way upstairs I saw a light shining through a chink in the door of a room which I knew to be unoccupied. I crept softly up, not dreaming for a moment that Leah could be there at such an hour. But on putting my eye to the chink I found I could see a bed, and on it were Leah and a young man, both stark naked, and occupied in working out Aretin’s postures to the best of their ability. They were whispering to one another, and every four or five minutes I had the pleasure of seeing a new posture. These changes of position gave me a view of all the beauties of Leah, and this pleasure was something to set against my rage in having taken such a profligate creature for a virtuous woman.

Every time they approached the completion of the great work they stopped short, and completed what they were doing with their hands.

When they were doing the Straight Tree, to my mind the most lascivious of them all, Leah behaved like a true Lesbian; for while the young man excited her amorous fury she got hold of his instrument and took it between her lips till the work was complete. I could not doubt that she had swallowed the vital fluid of my fortunate rival.

The Adonis then shewed her the feeble instrument, and Leah seemed to regret what she had done. Before long she began to excite him again; but the fellow looked at his watch, pushed her away, and began to put on his shirt.

Leah seemed angry, and I could see that she reproached him for some time before she began to dress.

When they were nearly clothed I softly returned to my room and looked out of a window commanding the house-door. I had not to wait long before I saw the fortunate lover going out.

I went to bed indignant with Leah; I felt myself degraded. She was no longer virtuous, but a villainous prostitute in my eyes; and I fell to sleep with the firm resolve of driving her from my room the next morning, after shaming her with the story of the scene I had witnessed. But, alas, hasty and angry resolves can seldom withstand a few hours' sleep. As soon as I saw Leah coming in with my chocolate, smiling and gay as usual, I told her quite coolly all the exploits I had seen her executing, laying particular stress on the Straight Tree, and the curious liquid she had swallowed. I ended by saying that I hoped she would give me the next night, both to crown my love and insure my secrecy.

She answered with perfect calm that I had nothing to expect from her as she did not love me, and as for keeping the secret she defied me to disclose it.

“I am sure you would not be guilty of such a disgraceful action,” said she.

With these words she turned her back on me and went out.

I could not help confessing to myself that she was in the right; I could not bring myself to commit such a baseness. She had made me reasonable in a few words:

“I don't love you.” There was no reply to this, and I felt I had no claim on her.

Rather it was she who might complain of me; what right had I to spy over her? I could not accuse her of deceiving me; she was free to do what she liked with herself. My best course was clearly to be silent.

I dressed myself hastily, and went to the Exchange, where I heard that a vessel was sailing for Fiume the same day.

Fiume is just opposite Ancona on the other side of the gulf. From Fiume to Trieste the distance is forty miles, and I decided to go by that route.

I went aboard the ship and took the best place, said good-bye to the consul, paid Mardocheus, and packed my trunks.

Leah heard that I was going the same day, and came and told me that she could not give me back my lace and my silk stockings that day, but that I could have them by the next day.

“Your father,” I replied coolly, “will hand them all over to the Venetian consul, who will send them to me at Trieste.”

Just as I was sitting down to dinner, the captain of the boat came for my luggage with a sailor. I told him he could have my trunk, and that I would bring the rest aboard whenever he liked to go.

“I intend setting out an hour before dusk.”

“I shall be ready.”

When Mardocheus heard where I was going he begged me to take charge of a small box and a letter he wanted to send to a friend.

“I shall be delighted to do you this small service.”

At dinner Leah sat down with me and chattered as usual, without troubling herself about my monosyllabic answers.

I supposed she wished me to credit her with calm confidence and philosophy, while I looked upon it all as brazen impudence.

I hated and despised her. She had inflamed my passions, told me to my face she did not love me, and seemed to claim my respect through it all. Possibly she expected me to be grateful for her remark that she believed me incapable of betraying her to her father.

As she drank my Scopolo she said there were several bottles left, as well as some Muscat.

“I make you a present of it all,” I replied, “it will prime you up for your nocturnal orgies.”

She smiled and said I had had a gratuitous sight of a spectacle which was worth money, and that if I were not going so suddenly she would gladly have given me another opportunity.

This piece of impudence made me want to break the wine bottle on her head. She must have known what I was going to do from the way I took it up, but she did not waver for a moment. This coolness of hers prevented my committing a crime.

I contented myself with saying that she was the most impudent slut I had ever met, and I poured the wine into my glass with a shaking hand, as if that were the purpose for which I had taken up the bottle.

After this scene I got up and went into the next room; nevertheless, in half an hour she came to take coffee with me.

This persistence of hers disgusted me, but I calmed myself by the reflection that her conduct must be dictated by vengeance.

“I should like to help you to pack,” said she.

“And I should like to be left alone,” I replied; and taking her by the arm I led her out of the room and locked the door after her.

We were both of us in the right. Leah had deceived and humiliated me, and I had reason to detest her, while I had discovered her for a monster of hypocrisy and immodesty, and this was good cause for her to dislike me.

Towards evening two sailors came after the rest of the luggage, and thanking my hostess I told Leah to put up my linen, and to give it to her father, who had taken the box of which I was to be the bearer down to the vessel.

We set sail with a fair wind, and I thought never to set face on Leah again. But fate had ordered otherwise.

We had gone twenty miles with a good wind in our quarter, by which we were borne gently from wave to wave, when all of a sudden there fell a dead calm.

These rapid changes are common enough in the Adriatic, especially in the part we were in.

The calm lasted but a short time, and a stiff wind from the west-north-west began to blow, with the result that the sea became very rough, and I was very ill.

At midnight the storm had become dangerous. The captain told me that if we persisted in going in the wind's eye we should be wrecked, and that the only thing to be done was to return to Ancona.

In less than three hours we made the harbour, and the officer of the guard having recognized me kindly allowed me to land.

While I was talking to the officer the sailors took my trunks, and carried them to my old lodgings without waiting to ask my leave.

I was vexed. I wanted to avoid Leah, and I had intended to sleep at the nearest inn. However, there was no help for it. When I arrived the Jew got up, and said he was delighted to see me again.

It was past three o'clock in the morning, and I felt very ill, so I said I would not get up till late, and that I would dine in my bed without any foie gras. I slept ten hours, and when I awoke I felt hungry and rang my bell.

The maid answered and said that she would have the honour of waiting on me, as Leah had a violent headache.

I made no answer, thanking Providence for delivering me from this impudent and dangerous woman.

Having found my dinner rather spare I told the cook to get me a good supper.

The weather was dreadful. The Venetian consul had heard of my return, and not having seen me concluded I was ill, and paid me a two hours' visit. He assured me the storm would last for a week at least. I was very sorry to hear it; in the first place, because I did not want to see any more of Leah, and in the second, because I had not got any money. Luckily I had got valuable effects, so this second consideration did not trouble me much.

As I did not see Leah at supper-time I imagined that she was feigning illness to avoid meeting me, and I felt very much obliged to her on this account. As it appeared, however, I was entirely mistaken in my conjectures.

The next day she came to ask for chocolate in her usual way, but she no longer bore upon her features her old tranquillity of expression.

“I will take coffee, mademoiselle,” I observed; “and as I do not want foie gras any longer, I will take dinner by myself. Consequently, you may tell your father that I shall only pay seven pauls a day. In future I shall only drink Orvieto wine.”

“You have still four bottles of Scopolo and Cyprus.”

“I never take back a present; the wine belongs to you. I shall be obliged by your leaving me alone as much as possible, as your conduct is enough to irritate Socrates, and I am not Socrates. Besides, the very sight of you is disagreeable to me. Your body may be beautiful, but knowing that the soul within is a monster it charms me no longer. You may be very sure that the sailors brought my luggage here without my orders, or else you would never have seen me here again, where I dread being poisoned every day.”

Leah went out without giving me any answer, and I felt certain that after my plain-spoken discourse she would take care not to trouble me again.

Experience had taught me that girls like Leah are not uncommon. I had known specimens at Spa, Genoa, London, and at Venice, but this Jewess was the worst I had ever met.

It was Saturday. When Mardocheus came back from the synagogue he asked me gaily why I had mortified his daughter, as she had declared she had done nothing to offend me.

“I have not mortified her, my dear Mardocheus, or at all events, such was not my intention; but as I have put myself on diet, I shall be eating no more foie gras, and consequently I shall dine by myself, and save three pauls a day.”

“Leah is quite ready to pay me out of her private purse, and she wants to dine with you to assure you against being poisoned, as she informs me that you have expressed that fear.”

“That was only a jest; I am perfectly aware that I am in the house of an honest man. I don’t want your daughter to pay for herself, and to prove that I am not actuated by feelings of economy, you shall dine with me too. To offer to pay for me is an impertinence on her part. In fine, I will either dine by myself and pay you seven pawls a day, or I will pay you thirteen, and have both father and daughter to dine with me.”

The worthy Mardocheus went away, saying that he really could not allow me to dine by myself.

At dinner-time I talked only to Mardocheus, without glancing at Leah or paying any attention to the witty sallies she uttered to attract me. I only drank Orvieto.

At dessert Leah filled my glass with Scopolo, saying that if I did not drink it neither would she.

I replied, without looking at her, that I advised her only to drink water for the future, and that I wanted nothing at her hands.

Mardocheus, who liked wine, laughed and said I was right, and drank for three.

The weather continued bad, and I spent the rest of the day in writing, and after supper I retired and went to sleep.

Suddenly I was aroused by a slight noise.

“Who is there?” said I.

I heard Leah’s voice, whispering in reply,

“’Tis I; I have not come to disturb you, but to justify myself.”

So saying she lay down on the bed, but on the outside of the coverlet.

I was pleased with this extraordinary visit, for my sole desire was for vengeance, and I felt certain of being able to resist all her arts. I therefore told her politely enough that I considered her as already justified and that I should be obliged by her leaving me as I wanted to go to sleep.

“Not before you have heard what I have to say.”

“Go on; I am listening to you.”

Thereupon she began a discourse which I did not interrupt, and which lasted for a good hour.

She spoke very artfully, and after confessing she had done wrong she said that at my age I should have been ready to overlook the follies of a young and passionate girl. According to her it was all weakness, and pardonable at such an age.

“I swear I love you,” said she, “and I would have given you good proof before now if I had not been so unfortunate as to love the young Christian you saw with me, while he does not care for me in the least; indeed I have to pay him.

“In spite of my passion,” she continued, “I have never given him what a girl can give but once. I had not seen him for six months, and it was your fault that I sent for him, for you inflamed me with your pictures and strong wines.”

The end of it all was that I ought to forget everything, and treat her kindly during the few days I was to remain there.

When she finished I did not allow myself to make any objection. I pretended to be convinced, assuring her that I felt I had been in the wrong in letting her see Aretin’s figures, and that I would no longer evince any resentment towards her.

As her explanation did not seem likely to end in the way she wished, she went on talking about the weakness of the flesh, the strength of self-love which often hushes the voice of passion, etc., etc.; her aim being to persuade me that she loved me, and that her refusals had all been given with the idea of making my love the stronger.

No doubt I might have given her a great many answers, but I said nothing. I made up my mind to await the assault that I saw was impending, and then by refusing all her advances I reckoned on abasing her to the uttermost. Nevertheless, she made no motion; her hands were at rest, and she kept her face at a due distance from mine.

At last, tired out with the struggle, she left me pretending to be perfectly satisfied with what she had done.

As soon as she had gone, I congratulated myself on the fact that she had confined herself to verbal persuasion; for if she had gone further she would probably have achieved a complete victory, though we were in the dark.

I must mention that before she left me I had to promise to allow her to make my chocolate as usual.

Early the next morning she came for the stick of chocolate. She was in a complete state of negligee, and came in on tiptoe, though if she chose to look towards the bed she might have seen that I was wide awake.

I marked her artifices and her cunning, and resolved to be equal to all her wiles. When she brought the chocolate I noticed that there were two cups on the tray, and I said, —

“Then it is not true that you don’t like chocolate?”

“I feel obliged to relieve you of all fear of being poisoned.”

I noticed that she was now dressed with the utmost decency, while half an hour before she had only her chemise and petticoat her neck being perfectly bare. The more resolved she seemed to gain the victory, the more firmly I was determined to humiliate her, as it appeared to me the only other alternative would have been my shame and dishonour; and this turned me to stone.

In spite of my resolves, Leah renewed the attack at dinner, for, contrary to my orders, she served a magnificent foie gras, telling me that it was for herself, and that if she were poisoned she would die of pleasure; Mardocheus said he should like to die too, and began regaling himself on it with evident relish.

I could not help laughing, and announced my wish to taste the deadly food, and so we all of us were eating it.

“Your resolves are not strong enough to withstand seduction,” said Leah. This remark piqued me, and I answered that she was imprudent to disclose her designs in such a manner, and that she would find my resolves strong enough when the time came.

A faint smile played about her lips.

"Try if you like," I said, "to persuade me to drink some Scopolo or Muscat. I meant to have taken some, but your taunt has turned me to steel. I mean to prove that when I make up my mind I never alter it."

"The strong-minded man never gives way," said Leah, "but the good-hearted man often lets himself be overpersuaded."

"Quite so, and the good-hearted girl refrains from taunting a man for his weakness for her."

I called the maid and told her to go to the Venetian consul's and get me some more Scopolo and Muscat. Leah piqued me once more by saying enthusiastically, —

"I am sure you are the most good-hearted of men as well as the firmest." Mardocheus, who could not make out what we meant, ate, drank, and laughed, and seemed pleased with everything.

In the afternoon I went out to a cafe in spite of the dreadful weather. I thought over Leah and her designs, feeling certain that she would pay me another nocturnal visit and renew the assault in force. I resolved to weaken myself with some common woman, if I could find one at all supportable.

A Greek who had taken me to a disgusting place a few days before, conducted me to another where he introduced me to a painted horror of a woman from whose very sight I fled in terror.

I felt angry that in a town like Ancona a man of some delicacy could not get his money's worth for his money, and went home, supped by myself, and locked the door after me.

The precaution, however, was useless.

A few minutes after I had shut the door, Leah knocked on the pretext that I had forgotten to give her the chocolate.

I opened the door and gave it her, and she begged me not to lock myself in, as she wanted to have an important and final interview.

"You can tell me now what you want to say."

"No, it will take some time, and I should not like to come till everyone is asleep. You have nothing to be afraid of; you are lord of yourself. You can go to bed in peace."

"I have certainly nothing to be afraid of, and to prove it to you I will leave the door open."

I felt more than ever certain of victory, and resolved not to blow out the candles, as my doing so might be interpreted into a confession of fear. Besides, the light would render my triumph and her humiliation more complete. With these thoughts I went to bed.

At eleven o'clock a slight noise told me that my hour had come. I saw Leah enter my room in her chemise and a light petticoat. She locked my door softly, and when I cried, "Well; what do you want with me?" she let her chemise and petticoat drop, and lay down beside me in a state of nature.

I was too much astonished to repulse her.

Leah was sure of victory, and without a word she threw herself upon me, pressing her lips to mine, and depriving me of all my faculties except one.

I utilised a short moment of reflection by concluding that I was a presumptuous fool, and that Leah was a woman with a most extensive knowledge of human nature.

In a second my caress became as ardent as hers, and after kissing her spheres of rose and alabaster I penetrated to the sanctuary of love, which, much to my astonishment, I found to be a virgin citadel.

There was a short silence, and then I said, —

"Dearest Leah, you oblige me to adore you; why did you first inspire me with hate? Are you not come here merely to humiliate me, to obtain an empty victory? If so, I forgive you; but you are in the wrong, for, believe me, enjoyment is sweeter far than vengeance."

"Nay, I have not come to achieve a shameful victory, but to give myself to you without reserve, to render you my conqueror and my king. Prove your love by making me happy, break down the barrier which I kept intact, despite its fragility and my ardour, and if this sacrifice does not convince you of my affection you must be the worst of men."

I had never heard more energetic opinions, and I had never seen a more voluptuous sight. I began the work, and while Leah aided me to the best of her ability, I forced the gate, and on Leah's face I read the most acute pain and pleasure mingled. In the first ecstasy of delight I felt her tremble in every limb.

As for me, my enjoyment was quite new; I was twenty again, but I had the self-restraint of my age, and treated Leah with delicacy, holding her in my arms till three o'clock in the morning. When I left her she was inundated and exhausted with pleasure, while I could do no more.

She left me full of gratitude, carrying the soaking linen away with her. I slept on till twelve o'clock.

When I awoke and saw her standing by my bedside with the gentle love of the day after the wedding, the idea of my approaching departure saddened me. I told her so, and she begged me to stay on as long as I could. I repeated that we would arrange everything when we met again at night.

We had a delicious dinner, for Mardocheus was bent on convincing me that he was no miser.

I spent the afternoon with the consul, and arranged that I should go on a Neapolitan man-of-war which was in quarantine at the time, and was to sail for Trieste.

As I should be obliged to pass another month at Ancona, I blessed the storm that had driven me back.

I gave the consul the gold snuff-box with which the Elector of Cologne had presented me, keeping the portrait as a memento. Three days later he handed me forty gold sequins, which was ample for my needs.

My stay in Ancona was costing me dear; but when I told Mardocheus that I should not be going for another month he declared he would no longer feed at my expense. Of course I did not insist. Leah still dined with me.

It has always been my opinion, though perhaps I may be mistaken, that the Jew was perfectly well aware of my relations with his daughter. Jews are usually very liberal on this article, possibly because they count on the child being an Israelite.

I took care that my dear Leah should have no reason to repent of our connection. How grateful and affectionate she was when I told her that I meant to stay another month! How she blessed the bad weather which had driven me back. We slept together every night, not excepting those nights forbidden by the laws of Moses.

I gave her the little gold heart, which might be worth ten sequins, but that would be no reward for the care she had taken of my linen. She also made me accept some splendid Indian handkerchiefs. Six years later I met her again at Pesaro.

I left Ancona on November 14th, and on the 15th I was at Trieste.

CHAPTER XXI

Pittoni — Zaguri — The Procurator Morosini — The Venetian Consul — Gorice — The French Consul — Madame Leo — My Devotion to The State Inquisitors — Strasoldo — Madame Cragnoline — General Burghausen

The landlord asked me my name, we made our agreement, and I found myself very comfortably lodged. Next day I went to the post-office and found several letters which had been awaiting me for the last month. I opened one from M. Dandolo, and found an open enclosure from the patrician Marco Dona, addressed to Baron Pittoni, Chief of Police. On reading it, I found I was very warmly commended to the baron. I hastened to call on him, and gave him the letter, which he took but did not read. He told me that M. Donna had written to him about me, and that he would be delighted to do anything in his power for me.

I then took Mardocheus's letter to his friend Moses Levi. I had not the slightest idea that the letter had any reference to myself, so I gave it to the first clerk that I saw in the office.

Levi was an honest and an agreeable man, and the next day he called on me and offered me his services in the most cordial manner. He shewed me the letter I had delivered, and I was delighted to find that it referred to myself. The worthy Mardocheus begged him to give me a hundred sequins in case I needed any money, adding that any politeness shewn to me would be as if shewn to himself.

This behaviour on the part of Mardocheus filled me with gratitude, and reconciled me, so to speak, with the whole Jewish nation. I wrote him a letter of thanks, offering to serve him at Venice in any way I could.

I could not help comparing the cordiality of Levi's welcome with the formal and ceremonious reception of Baron Pittoni. The baron was ten or twelve years younger than I. He was a man of parts, and quite devoid of prejudice.

A sworn foe of ‘meum and tuum’, and wholly incapable of economy, he left the whole care of his house to his valet, who robbed him, but the baron knew it and made no objection. He was a determined bachelor, a gallant, and the friend and patron of libertines. His chief defect was his forgetfulness and absence of mind, which made him mismanage important business.

He was reputed, though wrongly, to be a liar. A liar is a person who tells falsehoods intentionally, while if Pittoni told lies it was because he had forgotten the truth. We became good friends in the course of a month, and we have remained friends to this day.

I wrote to my friends at Venice, announcing my arrival at Trieste, and for the next ten days I kept my room, busied in putting together the notes I had made on Polish events since the death of Elizabeth Petrovna. I meant to write a history of the troubles of unhappy Poland up to its dismemberment, which was taking place at the epoch in which I was writing.

I had foreseen all this when the Polish Diet recognized the dying czarina as Empress of all the Russians, and the Elector of Brandenburg as King of Prussia, and I proceeded with my history; but only the first three volumes were published, owing to the printers breaking the agreement.

The four last volumes will be found in manuscript after my death, and anyone who likes may publish them. But I have become indifferent to all this as to many other matters since I have seen Folly crowned king of the earth.

To-day there is no such country as Poland, but it might still be in existence if it had not been for the ambition of the Czartoryski family, whose pride had been humiliated by Count Bruhl, the prime minister. To gain vengeance Prince Augustus Czartoryski ruined his country. He was so blinded by passion that he forgot that all actions have their inevitable results.

Czartoryski had determined not only to exclude the House of Saxony from the succession, but to dethrone the member of that family who was reigning. To do this the help of the Czarina and of the Elector of Brandenburg was necessary, so he made the Polish Diet acknowledge the one as Empress of all the Russians, and the other as King of Prussia. The two sovereigns would not treat with the Polish Commonwealth till this claim had been satisfied; but the Commonwealth should never have granted these titles, for Poland itself possessed most of the Russias, and was the true sovereign of Prussia, the Elector of Brandenburg being only Duke of Prussia in reality.

Prince Czartoryski, blinded by the desire of vengeance, persuaded the Diet that to give the two sovereigns these titles would be merely a form, and that they would never become anything more than honorary. This might be so, but if Poland had possessed far-seeing statesmen they would have guessed that an honorary title would end in the usurpation of the whole country.

The Russian palatin had the pleasure of seeing his nephew Stanislas Poniatowski on the throne.

I myself told him that these titles gave a right, and that the promise not to make any use of them was a mere delusion. I added jokingly — for I was obliged to adopt a humorous tone — that before long Europe would take pity on Poland, which had to bear the heavy weight of all the Russias and the kingdom of Prussia as well, and the Commonwealth would find itself relieved of all these charges.

My prophecy has been fulfilled. The two princes whose titles were allowed have torn Poland limb from limb; it is now absorbed in Russia and Prussia.

The second great mistake made by Poland was in not remembering the apologue of the man and the horse when the question of protection presented itself.

The Republic of Rome became mistress of the world by protecting other nations.

Thus Poland came to ruin through ambition, vengeance, and folly — but folly most of all.

The same reason lay at the root of the French Revolution. Louis XVI. paid the penalty of his folly with his life. If he had been a wise ruler he would still be on the throne, and France would have escaped the fury of the Revolutionists. France is sick; in any other country this sickness might be remedied, but I would not wonder if it proved incurable in France.

Certain emotional persons are moved to pity by the emigrant French nobles, but for my part I think them only worthy of contempt. Instead of parading their pride and their disgrace before the eyes of foreign nations, they should have rallied round their king, and either have saved the throne or died under its ruins. What will become of France? It was hard to say; but it is certain that a body without a head cannot live very long, for reason is situate in the head.

On December 1st Baron Pittoni begged me to call on him as some one had come from Venice on purpose to see me.

I dressed myself hastily, and went to the baron's, where I saw a fine-looking man of thirty-five or forty, elegantly dressed. He looked at me with the liveliest interest.

"My heart tells me," I began, "that your excellence's name is Zaguri?"

"Exactly so, my dear Casanova. As soon as my friend Dandolo told me of your arrival here, I determined to come and congratulate you on your approaching recall, which will take place either this year or the next, as I hope to see two friends of mine made Inquisitors. You may judge of my friendship for you when I tell you that I am an 'avogador', and that there is a law forbidding such to leave Venice. We will spend to-day and to-morrow together."

I replied in a manner to convince him that I was sensible of the honour he had done me; and I heard Baron Pittoni begging me to excuse him for not having come to see me. He said he had forgotten all about it, and a handsome old man begged his excellence to ask me to dine with him, though he had not the pleasure of knowing me.

"What!" said Zaguri. "Casanova has been here for the last ten days, and does not know the Venetian consul?"

I hastened to speak.

"It's my own fault," I observed, "I did not like calling on this gentleman, for fear he might think me contraband."

The consul answered wittily that I was not contraband but in quarantine, pending my return to my native land; and that in the meanwhile his house would always be open to me, as had been the house of the Venetian consul at Ancona.

In this manner he let me know that he knew something about me, and I was not at all sorry for it.

Marco Monti, such was the consul's name, was a man of parts and much experience; a pleasant companion and a great conversationalist, fond of telling amusing stories with a grave face — in fact, most excellent company.

I was something of a 'conteur' myself, and we soon became friendly rivals in telling anecdotes. In spite of his thirty additional years I was a tolerable match for him, and when we were in a room there was no question of gaining to kill the time.

We became fast friends, and I benefited a good deal by his offices during the two years I spent in Trieste, and I have always thought that he had a considerable share in obtaining my recall. That was my great object in those days; I was a victim to nostalgia, or home sickness.

With the Swiss and the Sclavs it is really a fatal disease, which carries them off if they are not sent home immediately. Germans are subject to this weakness also; whilst the French suffer very little, and Italians not much more from the complaint.

No rule, however, lacks its exception, and I was one. I daresay I should have got over my nostalgia if I had treated it with contempt, and then I should not have wasted ten years of my life in the bosom of my cruel stepmother Venice.

I dined with M. Zaguri at the consul's, and I was invited to dine with the governor, Count Auersperg, the next day.

The visit from a Venetian 'avogador' made me a person of great consideration. I was no longer looked upon as an exile, but as one who had successfully escaped from illegal confinement.

The day after I accompanied M. Zaguri to Gorice, where he stayed three days to enjoy the hospitality of the nobility. I was included in all their invitations, and I saw that a stranger could live very pleasantly at Gorice.

I met there a certain Count Cobenzl, who may be alive now — a man of wisdom, generosity, and the vastest learning, and yet without any kind of pretention. He gave a State dinner to M. Zaguri, and I had the pleasure of meeting there three or four most charming ladies. I also met Count Tomes, a Spaniard whose father was in in the Austrian service. He had married at sixty, and had five children all as ugly as himself. His daughter was a charming girl in spite of her plainness; she evidently got her character from the mother's side. The eldest son, who was ugly and squinted, was a kind of pleasant madman, but he was also a liar, a profligate, a boaster, and totally devoid of discretion. In spite of these defects he was much sought after in society as he told a good tale and made people laugh. If he had been a student, he would have been a distinguished scholar, as his memory was prodigious. He it was who vainly guaranteed the agreement I made with Valerio Valeri for printing my "History of Poland." I also met at Gorice a Count Coronini, who was known in learned circles as the author of some Latin treatises on diplomacy. Nobody read his books, but everybody agreed that he was a very learned man.

I also met a young man named Morelli, who had written a history of the place and was on the point of publishing the first volume. He gave me his MS. begging me to make any corrections that struck me as desirable. I succeeded in pleasing him, as I gave him back his work without a single note or alteration of any kind, and thus he became my friend.

I became a great friend of Count Francis Charles Coronini, who was a man of talents. He had married a Belgian lady, but not being able to agree they had separated and he passed his time in trifling intrigues, hunting, and reading the papers, literary and political. He laughed at those sages who declared that there was not one really happy person in the world, and he supported his denial by the unanswerable dictum:

"I myself am perfectly happy."

However, as he died of a tumor in the head at the age of thirty-five, he probably acknowledged his mistake in the agonies of death.

There is no such thing as a perfectly happy or perfectly unhappy man in the world. One has more happiness in his life and another more unhappiness, and the same circumstance may produce widely different effects on individuals of different temperaments.

It is not a fact that virtue ensures happiness for the exercise of some virtues implies suffering, and suffering is incompatible with happiness.

My readers may be aware that I am not inclined to make mental pleasure pre-eminent and all sufficing. It may be a fine thing to have a clear conscience, but I cannot see that it would at all relieve the pangs of hunger.

Baron Pittoni and myself escorted Zaguri to the Venetian border, and we then returned to Trieste together.

In three or four days Pittoni took me everywhere, including the club where none but persons of distinction were admitted. This club was held at the inn where I was staying.

Amongst the ladies, the most noteworthy was the wife of the merchant, David Riguelin, who was a Swabian by birth.

Pittoni was in love with her and continued so till her death. His suit lasted for twelve years, and like Petrarch, he still sighed, still hoped, but never succeeded. Her name was Zanetta, and besides her beauty she had the charm of being an exquisite singer and a polished hostess. Still more noteworthy, however, was the unvarying sweetness and equability of her disposition.

I did not want to know her long before recognizing that she was absolutely impregnable. I told Pittoni so, but all in vain; he still fed on empty hope.

Zanetta had very poor health, though no one would have judged so from her appearance, but it was well known to be the case. She died at an early age.

A few days after M. Zaguri’s departure, I had a note from the consul informing me that the Procurator Morosini was stopping in my inn, and advising me to call on him if I knew him.

I was infinitely obliged for this advice, for M. Morosini was a personage of the greatest importance. He had known me from childhood, and the reader may remember that he had presented me to Marshal Richelieu, at Fontainebleau, in 1750.

I dressed myself as if I had been about to speak to a monarch, and sent in a note to his room.

I had not long to wait; he came out and welcomed me most graciously, telling me how delighted he was to see me again.

When he heard the reason of my being at Trieste, and how I desired to return to my country, he assured me he would do all in his power to obtain me my wish. He thanked me for the care I had taken of his nephew at Florence, and kept me all the day while I told him my principal adventures.

He was glad to hear that M. Zaguri was working for me, and said that they must concert the mater together. He commended me warmly to the consul, who was delighted to be able to inform the Tribunal of the consideration with which M. Morosini treated me.

After the procurator had gone I began to enjoy life at Trieste, but in strict moderation and with due regard for economy, for I had only fifteen sequins a month. I abjured play altogether.

Every day I dined with one of the circle of my friends, who were the Venetian consul, the French consul (an eccentric but worthy man who kept a good cook), Pittoni, who kept an excellent table, thanks to his man who knew what was to his own interests, and several others.

As for the pleasures of love I enjoyed them in moderation, taking care of my purse and of my health.

Towards the end of the carnival I went to a masked ball at the theatre, and in the course of the evening a harlequin came up and presented his columbine to me. They both began to play tricks on me. I was pleased with the columbine, and felt a strong desire to be acquainted with her. After some vain researches the French consul, M. de St. Sauveur, told me that the harlequin was a young lady of rank, and that the columbine was a handsome young man.

“If you like,” he added, “I will introduce you to the harlequin’s family, and I am sure you will appreciate her charms when you see her as a girl.”

As they persisted in their jokes I was able, without wounding decency overmuch, to convince myself that the consul was right on the question of sex; and when the ball was over I said I should be obliged by his introducing me as he had promised. He promised to do so the day after Ash Wednesday.

Thus I made the acquaintance of Madame Leo, who was still pretty and agreeable, though she had lived very freely in her younger days. There was her husband, a son, and six daughters, all handsome, but especially the harlequin with whom I was much taken. Naturally I fell in love with her, but as I was her senior by thirty years, and had begun my addresses in a tone of fatherly affection, a feeling of shame prevented my disclosing to her the real state of my heart. Four years later she told me herself that she had guessed my real feelings, and had been amused by my foolish restraint.

A young girl learns deeper lessons from nature than we men can acquire with all our experience.

At the Easter of 1773 Count Auersperg, the Governor of Trieste, was recalled to Vienna, and Count Wagensberg took his place. His eldest daughter, the Countess Lantieri, who was a great beauty, inspired me with a passion which would have made me unhappy if I had not succeeded in hiding it under a veil of the profoundest respect.

I celebrated the accession of the new governor by some verses which I had printed, and in which, while lauding the father, I paid conspicuous homage to the charms of the daughter.

My tribute pleased them, and I became an intimate friend of the count's. He placed confidence in me with the idea of my using it to my own advantage, for though he did not say so openly I divined his intention.

The Venetian consul had told me that he had been vainly endeavouring for the last four years to get the Government of Trieste to arrange for the weekly diligence from Trieste to Mestre to pass by Udine, the capital of the Venetian Friuli.

“This alteration,” he had said, “would greatly benefit the commerce of the two states; but the Municipal Council of Trieste opposes it for a plausible but ridiculous reason.”

These councillors, in the depth of their wisdom, said that if the Venetian Republic desired the alteration it would evidently be to their advantage, and consequently to the disadvantage of Trieste.

The consul assured me that if I could in any way obtain the concession it would weigh strongly in my favour with the State Inquisitors, and even in the event of my non-success he would represent my exertions in the most favourable light.

I promised I would think the matter over.

Finding myself high in the governor's favour, I took the opportunity of addressing myself to him on the subject. He had heard about the matter, and thought the objection of the Town Council absurd and even monstrous; but he professed his inability to do anything himself.

"Councillor Rizzi," said he, "is the most obstinate of them all, and has led astray the rest with his sophisms. But do you send me in a memorandum shewing that the alteration will have a much better effect on the large commerce of Trieste than on the comparatively trifling trade of Udine. I shall send it into the Council without disclosing the authorship, but backing it with my authority, and challenging the opposition to refute your arguments. Finally, if they do not decide reasonably I shall proclaim before them all my intention to send the memoir to Vienna with my opinion on it."

I felt confident of success, and wrote out a memoir full of incontrovertible reasons in favour of the proposed change.

My arguments gained the victory; the Council were persuaded, and Count Wagensberg handed me the decree, which I immediately laid before the Venetian consul. Following his advice, I wrote to the secretary of the Tribunal to the effect that I was happy to have given the Government a proof of my zeal, and an earnest of my desire to be useful to my country and to be worthy of being recalled.

Out of regard for me the count delayed the promulgation of the decree for a week, so that the people of Udine heard the news from Venice before it had reached Trieste, and everybody thought that the Venetian Government had achieved its ends by bribery. The secretary of the Tribunal did not answer my letter, but he wrote to the consul ordering him to give me a hundred ducats, and to inform me that this present was to encourage me to serve the Republic. He added that I might hope great things from the mercy of the Inquisitors if I succeeded in negotiating the Armenian difficulty.

The consul gave me the requisite information, and my impression was that my efforts would be in vain; however, I resolved to make the attempt.

Four Armenian monks had left the Convent of St. Lazarus at Venice, having found the abbot's tyranny unbearable. They had wealthy relations at Constantinople, and laughed the excommunication of their late tyrant to scorn. They sought asylum at Vienna, promising to make themselves useful to the State by establishing an Armenian press to furnish all the Armenian convents with books. They engaged to sink a capital of a million florins if they were allowed to settle in Austria, to found their press, and to buy or build a convent, where they proposed to live in community but without any abbot.

As might be expected the Austrian Government did not hesitate to grant their request; it did more, it gave them special privileges.

The effect of this arrangement would be to deprive Venice of a lucrative trade, and to place it in the emperor's dominions. Consequently the Viennese Court sent them to Trieste with a strong recommendation to the governor, and they had been there for the past six months.

The Venetian Government, of course, wished to entice them back to Venice. They had vainly induced their late abbot to make handsome offers to them, and they then proceeded by indirect means, endeavoring to stir up obstacles in their way, and to disgust them with Trieste.

The consul told me plainly that he had not touched the matter, thinking success to be out of the question; and he predicted that if I attempted it I should find myself in the dilemma of having to solve the insoluble. I felt the force of the consul's remark when I reflected that I could not rely on the governor's assistance, or even speak to him on the subject. I saw that I must not let him suspect my design, for besides his duty to his Government he was a devoted friend to the interests of Trieste, and for this reason a great patron of the monks.

In spite of these obstacles my nostalgia made me make acquaintance with these monks under pretence of inspecting their Armenian types, which they were already casting. In a week or ten days I became quite intimate with them. One day I said that they were bound in honour to return to the obedience of their abbot, if only to annul his sentence of excommunication.

The most obstinate of them told me that the abbot had behaved more like a despot than a father, and had thus absolved them from their obedience. "Besides," he said, "no rascally priest has any right to cut off good Christians from communion with the Saviour, and we are sure that our patriarch will give us absolution and send us some more monks."

I could make no objection to these arguments; however, I asked on another occasion on what conditions they would return to Venice.

The most sensible of them said that in the first place the abbot must withdraw the four hundred thousand ducats which he had entrusted to the Marquis Serpos at four per cent.

This sum was the capital from which the income of the Convent of St. Lazarus was derived. The abbot had no right whatever to dispose of it, even with the consent of a majority among the monks. If the marquis became bankrupt the convent would be utterly destitute. The marquis was an Armenian diamond merchant, and a great friend of the abbot's.

I then asked the monks what were the other conditions, and they replied that these were some matters of discipline which might easily be settled; they would give me a written statement of their grievances as soon as I could assure them that the Marquis Serpos was no longer in possession of their funds.

I embodied my negotiations in writing, and sent the document to the Inquisitors by the consul. In six weeks I received an answer to the effect that the abbot saw his way to arranging the money difficulty, but that he must see a statement of the reforms demanded before doing so. This decided me to have nothing to do with the affair, but a few words from Count Wagensberg made me throw it up without further delay. He gave me to understand that he knew of my attempts to reconcile the four monks with their abbot, and he told me that he had been sorry to hear the report, as my success would do harm to a country where I lived and where I was treated as a friend.

I immediately told him the whole story, assuring him that I would never have begun the negotiation if I had not been certain of failure, for I heard on undoubted authority that Serpos could not possibly restore the four hundred thousand ducats.

This explanation thoroughly dissipated any cloud that might have arisen between us.

The Armenians bought Councillor Rizzi's house for thirty thousand florins. Here they established themselves, and I visited them from time to time without saying anything more about Venice.

Count Wagensberg gave me another proof of his friendship. Unhappily for me he died during the autumn of the same year, at the age of fifty.

One morning he summoned me, and I found him perusing a document he had just received from Vienna. He told me he was sorry I did not read German, but that he would tell me the contents of the paper.

“Here,” he continued, “you will be able to serve your country without in any way injuring Austria.

“I am going to confide in you a State secret (it being understood of course that my name is never to be mentioned) which ought to be greatly to your advantage, whether you succeed or fail; at all hazards your patriotism, your prompt action, and your cleverness in obtaining such information will be made manifest. Remember you must never divulge your sources of information; only tell your Government that you are perfectly sure of the authenticity of the statement you make.

“You must know,” he continued, “that all the commodities we export to Lombardy pass through Venice where they have to pay duty. Such has long been the custom, and it may still be so if the Venetian Government will consent to reduce the duty of four per cent to two per cent.

“A plan has been brought before the notice of the Austrian Court, and it has been eagerly accepted. I have received certain orders on the matter, which I shall put into execution without giving any warning to the Venetian Government.

“In future all goods for Lombardy will be embarked here and disembarked at Mezzola without troubling the Republic. Mezzola is in the territories of the Duke of Modem; a ship can cross the gulf in the night, and our goods will be placed in storehouses, which will be erected.

“In this way we shall shorten the journey and decrease the freights, and the Modenese Government will be satisfied with a trifling sum, barely equivalent to a fourth of what we pay to Venice.

“In spite of all this, I feel sure that if the Venetian Government wrote to the Austrian Council of Commerce expressing their willingness to take two per cent henceforth, the proposal would be accepted, for we Austrians dislike novelties.

"I shall not lay the matter before the Town Council for four or five days, as there is no hurry for us; but you had better make haste, that you may be the first to inform your Government of the matter.

"If everything goes as I should wish I hope to receive an order from Vienna suspending the decree just as I am about to make it public."

Next morning the governor was delighted to hear that everything had been finished before midnight. He assured me that the consul should not have official information before Saturday. In the meanwhile the consul's uneasy state of mind was quite a trouble to me, for I could not do anything to set his mind at ease.

Saturday came and Councillor Rizzi told me the news at the club. He seemed in high spirits over it, and said that the loss of Venice was the gain of Trieste. The consul came in just then, and said that the loss would be a mere trifle for Venice, while the first-shipwreck would cost more to Trieste than ten years' duty. The consul seemed to enjoy the whole thing, but that was the part he had to play. In all small trading towns like Trieste, people make a great account of trifles.

I went to dine with the consul, who privately confessed his doubts and fears on the matter.

I asked him how the Venetians would parry the blow, and he replied, —

"They will have a number of very learned consultations, and then they will do nothing at all, and the Austrians will send their goods wherever they please."

"But the Government is such a wise one."

"Or rather has the reputation of wisdom."

"Then you think it lives on its reputation?"

"Yes; like all your mouldy institutions, they continue to be simply because they have been. Old Governments are like those ancient dykes which are rotten at the base, and only stay in position by their weight and bulk."

The consul was in the right. He wrote to his chief the same day, and in the course of the next week he heard that their excellencies had received information of the matter some time ago by extraordinary channels.

For the present his duties would be confined to sending in any additional information on the same subject.

“I told you so,” said the consul; “now, what do you think of the wisdom of our sages?”

“I think Bedlam of Charenton were their best lodging.”

In three weeks the consul received orders to give me another grant of a hundred ducats, and to allow me ten sequins a month, to encourage me to deserve well of the State.

From that time I felt sure I should be allowed to return in the course of the year, but I was mistaken, for I had to wait till the year following.

This new present, and the monthly payment of ten sequins put me at my ease, for I had expensive tastes of which I could not cure myself. I felt pleased at the thought that I was now in the pay of the Tribunal which had punished me, and which I had defied. It seemed to me a triumph, and I determined to do all in my power for the Republic.

Here I must relate an amusing incident, which delighted everyone in Trieste.

It was in the beginning of summer. I had been eating sardines by the sea-shore, and when I came home at ten o’clock at night I was astonished to be greeted by a girl whom I recognized as Count Strasoldo’s maid.

The count was a handsome young man, but poor like most of that name; he was fond of expensive pleasures, and was consequently heavily in debt. He had a small appointment which brought him in an income of six hundred florins, and he had not the slightest difficulty in spending a year’s pay in three months. He had agreeable manners and a generous disposition, and I had supped with him in company with Baron Pittoni several times. He had a girl in his service who was exquisitely pretty, but none of the count’s friends attempted her as he was very jealous. Like the rest, I had seen and admired her, I had congratulated the count on the possession of such a treasure in her presence, but I had never addressed a word to her.

Strasoldo had just been summoned to Vienna by Count Auersperg who liked him, and had promised to do what he could for him. He had got an employment in Poland, his furniture had been sold, he had taken leave of everyone, and nobody doubted that he would take his pretty maid with him. I thought so too, for I had been to wish him a pleasant journey that morning, and my astonishment at finding the girl in my room may be imagined.

"What do you want, my dear?" I asked.

"Forgive me, sir, but I don't want to go with Strasoldo, and I thought you would protect me. Nobody will be able to guess where I am, and Strasoldo will be obliged to go by himself. You will not be so cruel as to drive me away?"

"No, dearest."

"I promise you I will go away to-morrow, for Strasoldo is going to leave at day-break."

"My lovely Leuzica (this was her name), no one would refuse you an asylum, I least of all. You are safe here, and nobody shall come in without your leave. I am only too happy that you came to me, but if it is true that the count is your lover you may be sure he will not go so easily. He will stay the whole of to-morrow at least, in the hope of finding you again."

"No doubt he will look for me everywhere but here. Will you promise not to make me go with him even if he guesses that I am with you?"

"I swear I will not."

"Then I am satisfied."

"But you will have to share my bed."

"If I shall not inconvenience you, I agree with all my heart."

"You shall see whether you inconvenience me or not. Undress, quick! But where are your things?"

"All that I have is in a small trunk behind the count's carriage, but I don't trouble myself about it."

"The poor count must be raging at this very moment."

"No, for he will not come home till midnight. He is supping with Madame Bissolotti, who is in love with him."

In the meantime Leuzica had undressed and got into bed. In a moment I was beside her, and after the severe regimen of the last eight months I spent a delicious night in her arms, for of late my pleasures had been few.

Leuzica was a perfect beauty, and worthy to be a king’s mistress; and if I had been rich I would have set up a household that I might retain her in my service.

We did not awake till seven o’clock. She got up, and on looking out of the window saw Strasoldo’s carriage waiting at the door.

I confronted her by saying that as long as she liked to stay with me no one could force her away.

I was vexed that I had no closet in my room, as I could not hide her from the waiter who would bring us coffee. We accordingly dispensed with breakfast, but I had to find out some way of feeding her. I thought I had plenty of time before me, but I was wrong.

At ten o’clock I saw Strasoldo and his friend Pittoni coming into the inn. They spoke to the landlord, and seemed to be searching the whole place, passing from one room to another.

I laughed, and told Leuzica that they were looking for her, and that our turn would doubtless come before long.

“Remember your promise,” said she.

“You may be sure of that.”

The tone in which this remark was delivered comforted her, and she exclaimed, —

“Well; well, let them come; they will get nothing by it.”

I heard footsteps approaching, and went out, closing the door behind me, and begging them to excuse my not asking them in, as there was a contraband commodity in my room.

“Only tell me that it is not my maid,” said Strasoldo, in a pitiable voice. “We are sure she is here, as the sentinel at the gate saw her come in at ten o’clock.”

“You are right, the fair Leuzica is at this moment in my room. I have given her my word of honour that no violence shall be used, and you may be sure I shall keep my word.”

"I shall certainly not attempt any violence, but I am sure she would come of her own free will if I could speak to her."

"I will ask her if she wishes to see you. Wait a moment."

Leuzica had been listening to our conversation, and when I opened the door she told me that I could let them in.

As soon as Strasoldo appeared she asked him proudly if she was under any obligations to him, if she had stolen anything from him, and if she was not perfectly free to leave him when she liked.

The poor count replied mildly that on the contrary it was he who owed her a year's wages and had her box in his possession, but that she should not have left him without giving any reason.

"The only reason is that I don't want to go to Vienna," she replied. "I told you so a week ago. If you are an honest man you will leave me my trunk, and as to my wages you can send them to me at my aunt's at Laibach if you haven't got any money now."

I pitied Strasoldo from the bottom of my heart; he prayed and entreated, and finally wept like a child. However, Pittoni roused my choler by saying that I ought to drive the slut out of my room.

"You are not the man to tell me what I ought and what I ought not to do," I replied, "and after I have received her in my apartments you ought to moderate your expressions."

Seeing that I stood on my dignity he laughed, and asked me if I had fallen in love with her in so short a time.

Strasoldo here broke in by saying he was sure she had not slept with me.

"That's where you are mistaken," said she, "for there's only one bed, and I did not sleep on the floor."

They found prayers and reproaches alike useless and left us at noon. Leuzica was profuse in her expressions of gratitude to me.

There was no longer any mystery, so I boldly ordered dinner for two, and promised that she should remain with me till the count had left Trieste.

At three o’clock the Venetian consul came, saying that Count Strasoldo had begged him to use his good offices with me to persuade me to deliver up the fair Leuzica.

“You must speak to the girl herself,” I replied; “she came here and stays here of her own free will.”

When the worthy man had heard the girl’s story he went away, saying that we had the right on our side.

In the evening a porter brought her trunk, and at this she seemed touched but not repentant.

Leuzica supped with me and again shared my couch. The count left Trieste at day-break.

As soon as I was sure that he was gone, I took a carriage and escorted the fair Leuzica two stages on her way to Laibach. We dined together, and I left her in the care of a friend of hers.

Everybody said I had acted properly, and even Pittoni confessed that in my place he would have done the same.

Poor Strasoldo came to a bad end. He got into debt, committed peculation, and had to escape into Turkey and embrace Islam to avoid the penalty of death.

About this time the Venetian general, Palmanova, accompanied by the procurator Erizzo, came to Trieste to visit the governor, Count Wagensberg. In the afternoon the count presented me to the patricians who seemed astonished to see me at Trieste.

The procurator asked me if I amused myself as well as I had done at Paris sixteen years ago, and I told him that sixteen years more, and a hundred thousand francs less, forced me to live in a different fashion. While we were talking, the consul came in to announce that the felucca was ready. Madame de Lantieri as well as her father pressed me to join the party.

I gave a bow, which might mean either no or yes, and asked the consul what the party was. He told me that they were going to see a Venetian man-of-war at anchor in the harbor; his excellence there being the captain I immediately turned to the countess and smilingly professed my regret that I was unable to set foot on Venetian soil.

Everybody exclaimed at me, —

“You have nothing to fear. You are with honest people. Your suspicion is quite offensive.”

“That is all very fine, ladies and gentlemen, and I will come with all my heart, if your excellences will assure me that my joining this little party will not be known to the State Inquisitors possibly by to-morrow.”

This was enough. Everybody looked at me in silence, and no objections could be found to my argument.

The captain of the vessel, who did not know me, spoke a few whispered words to the others, and then they left.

The next day the consul told me that the captain had praised my prudence in declining to go on board, as if anyone had chanced to tell him my name and my case whilst I was on his ship, it would have been his duty to detain me.

When I told the governor of this remark he replied gravely that he should not have allowed the ship to leave the harbour.

I saw the procurator Erizzo the same evening, and he congratulated me on my discretion, telling me he would take care to let the Tribunal know how I respected its decisions.

About this time I had the pleasure of seeing a beautiful Venetian, who visited Trieste with several of her admirers. She was of the noble family of Bon, and had married Count Romili de Bergamo, who left her free to do whatever she liked. She drew behind her triumphal chariot an old general, Count Bourghausen, a famous rake who had deserted Mars for the past ten years in order to devote his remaining days to the service of Venus. He was a delightful man, and we became friends. Ten years later he was of service to me, as my readers will find in the next volume, which may perhaps be the last.

CHAPTER XXII

Some Adventures at Trieste — I Am of Service to the Venetian Government — My Expedition to Gorice and My Return to Trieste — I Find Irene as an Actress and Expert Gamester

Some of the ladies of Trieste thought they would like to act a French play, and I was made stage manager. I had not only to choose the pieces, but to distribute the parts, the latter being a duty of infinite irksomeness.

All the actresses were new to the boards, and I had immense trouble in hearing them repeat their parts, which they seemed unable to learn by heart. It is a well-known fact that the revolution which is really wanted in Italy is in female education. The very best families with few exceptions are satisfied with shutting up their daughters in a convent for several years till the time comes for them to marry some man whom they never see till the eve or the day of their marriage. As a consequence we have the 'cicisbeo', and in Italy as in France the idea that our nobles are the sons of their nominal fathers is a purely conventional one.

What do girls learn in convents, especially in Italian convents? A few mechanical acts of devotion and outward forms, very little real religion, a good deal of deceit, often profligate habits, a little reading and writing, many useless accomplishments, small music and less drawing, no history, no geography or mythology, hardly any mathematics, and nothing to make a girl a good wife and a good mother.

As for foreign languages, they are unheard of; our own Italian is so soft that any other tongue is hard to acquire, and the 'dolce far niente' habit is an obstacle to all assiduous study.

I write down these truths in spite of my patriotism. I know that if any of my fellow-countrywomen come to read me they will be very angry; but I shall be beyond the reach of all anger.

To return to our theatricals. As I could not make my actresses get their parts letter perfect, I became their prompter, and found out by experience all the ungratefulness of the position.

The actors never acknowledged their debt to the prompter, and put down to his account all the mistakes they make.

A Spanish doctor is almost as badly off; if his patient recovers, the cure is set down to the credit of one saint or another; but if he dies, the physician is blamed for his unskilful treatment.

A handsome negress, who served the prettiest of my actresses to whom I shewed great attentions, said to me one day, —

“I can’t make out how you can be so much in love with my mistress, who is as white as the devil.”

“Have you never loved a white man?” I asked.

“Yes,” said she, “but only because I had no negro, to whom I should certainly have given the preference.”

Soon after the negress became mine, and I found out the falsity of the axiom, ‘Sublata lucerna nullum discrimen inter feminas’, for even in the darkness a man would know a black woman from a white one.

I feel quite sure myself that the negroes are a distinct species from ourselves. There is one essential difference, leaving the colour out of account — namely, that an African woman can either conceive or not, and can conceive a boy or a girl. No doubt my readers will disbelieve this assertion, but their incredulity would cease if I instructed them in the mysterious science of the negresses.

Count Rosenberg, grand chamberlain of the emperor, came on a visit to Trieste in company with an Abbe Casti, whose acquaintance I wished to make on account of some extremely blasphemous poems he had written. However, I was disappointed; and instead of a man of parts, I found the abbe to be an impudent worthless fellow, whose only merit was a knack of versification.

Count Rosenberg took the abbe with him, because he was useful in the capacities of a fool and a pimp-occupations well suited to his morals, though by no means agreeable to his ecclesiastical status. In those days syphilis had not completely destroyed his uvula.

I heard that this shameless profligate, this paltry poetaster, had been named poet to the emperor. What a dishonour to the memory of the great Metastasio, a man free from all vices, adorned with all virtues, and of the most singular ability.

Casti had neither a fine style, nor a knowledge of dramatic requirements, as appears from two or three comic operas composed by him, in which the reader will find nothing but foolish buffooneries badly put together. In one of these comic operas he makes use of slander against King Theodore and the Venetian Republic, which he turns into ridicule by means of pitiful lies.

In another piece called The Cave of Trophonius, Casti made himself the laughing-stock of the literary world by making a display of useless learning which contributes nothing towards the plot.

Among the persons of quality who came to Gorice, I met a certain Count Torriano, who persuaded me to spend the autumn with him at a country house of his six miles from Gorice.

If I had listened to the voice of my good genius I should certainly never have gone.

The count was under thirty, and was not married. He could not exactly be called ugly in spite of his hangdog countenance, in which I saw the outward signs of cruelty, disloyalty, treason, pride, brutal sensuality, hatred, and jealousy. The mixture of bad qualities was such an appalling one that I thought his physiognomy was at fault, and the goods better than the sign. He asked me to come and see him so graciously that I concluded that the man gave the lie to his face.

I asked about him before accepting the invitation, and I heard nothing but good. People certainly said he was fond of the fair sex, and was a fierce avenger of any wrong done to him, but not thinking either of these characteristics unworthy of a gentleman I accepted his invitation. He told me that he would expect me to meet him at Gorice on the first day of September, and that the next day we would leave for his estate.

In consequence of Torriano's invitation I took leave of everybody, especially of Count Wagensberg, who had a serious attack of that malady which yields so easily to mercury when it is administered by a skilled hand, but which kills the unfortunate who falls amongst quacks. Such was the fate of the poor count; he died a month after I had left Trieste.

I left Trieste in the morning, dined at Proseco, and reached Gorice in good time. I called at Count Louis Torriano's mansion, but was told he was out. However, they allowed me to deposit what little luggage I had when I informed them that the count had invited me. I then went to see Count Torres, and stayed with him till supper-time.

When I got back to the count's I was told he was in the country, and would not be back till the next day, and that in the meantime my trunks had been taken to the inn where a room and supper had been ordered.

I was extremely astonished, and went to the inn, where I was served with a bad supper in an uncomfortable room; however, I supposed that the count had been unable to accommodate me in his house, and I excused him though I wished he had forewarned me. I could not understand how a gentleman who has a house and invites a friend can be without a room wherein to lodge him.

Next morning Count Torriano came to see me, thanked me for my punctuality, congratulated himself on the pleasure he expected to derive from my society, and told me he was very sorry we could not start for two days, as a suit was to be heard the next day between himself and a rascally old farmer who was trying to cheat him.

"Well, well," said I, "I will go and hear the pleadings; it will be an amusement for me."

Soon after he took his leave, without asking me where I intended dining, or apologizing for not having accommodated me himself.

I could not make him out; I thought he might have taken offence at my descending at his doors without having given him any warning.

"Come, come, Casanova," I said to myself, "you may be all abroad. Knowledge of character is an unfathomable gulf. We thought we had studied it deeply, but there is still more to learn; we shall see. He may have said nothing out of delicacy. I should be sorry to be found wanting in politeness, though indeed I am puzzled to know what I have done amiss."

I dined by myself, made calls in the afternoon, and supped with Count Tomes. I told him that I promised myself the pleasure of hearing the eloquence of the bar of Gorice the next day.

"I shall be there, too," said he, "as I am curious to see what sort of a face Torriano will put on it, if the countryman wins. I know something about the case," he continued, "and Torriano is sure of victory, unless the documents attesting the farmer's indebtedness happen to be forgeries. On the other hand, the farmer ought to win unless it can be shewn that the receipts signed by Torriano are forgeries. The farmer has lost in the first court and in the second court, but he has paid the costs and appealed from both, though he is a poor man. If he loses to-morrow he will not only be a ruined man, but be sentenced to penal servitude, while if he wins, Torriano should be sent to the galleys, together with his counsel, who has deserved this fate many times before."

I knew Count Tomes passed for somewhat of a scandal-monger, so his remarks made little impression on me beyond whetting my curiosity. The next day I was one of the first to appear in the court, where I found the bench, plaintiff and defendant, and the barristers, already assembled. The farmer's counsel was an old man who looked honest, while the count's had all the impudence of a practised knave. The count sat beside him, smiling disdainfully, as if he was lowering himself to strive with a miserable peasant whom he had already twice vanquished.

The farmer sat by his wife, his son, and two daughters, and had that air of modest assurance which indicates resignation and a good conscience.

I wondered how such honest people could have lost in two courts; I was sure their cause must be a just one.

They were all poorly clad, and from their downcast eyes and their humble looks I guessed them to be the victims of oppression.

Each barrister could speak for two hours.

The farmer's advocate spoke for thirty minutes, which he occupied by putting in the various receipts bearing the count's signature up to the time when he had dismissed the farmer, because he would not prostitute his daughters to him. He then continued, speaking with calm precision, to point out the anachronisms and contradictions in the count's books (which made his client a debtor), and stated that his client was in a position to prosecute the two forgers who had been employed to compass the ruin of an honest family, whose only crime was poverty. He ended his speech by an appeal for costs in all the suits, and for compensation for loss of time and defamation of character.

The harangue of the count's advocate would have lasted more than two hours if the court had not silenced him. He indulged in a torrent of abuse against the other barrister, the experts in hand-writing, and the peasant, whom he threatened with a speedy consignment to the galleys.

The pleadings would have wearied me if I had been a blind man, but as it was I amused myself by a scrutiny of the various physiognomies before me. My host's face remained smiling and impudent through it all.

The pleadings over, the court was cleared, and we awaited the sentence in the adjoining room.

The peasant and his family sat in a corner apart, sad, sorry, and comfortless, with no friend to speak a consoling word, while the count was surrounded by a courtly throng, who assured him that with such a case he could not possibly lose; but that if the judges did deliver judgment against him he should pay the peasant, and force him to prove the alleged forgery.

I listened in profound silence, sympathising with the countryman rather than my host, whom I believed to be a thorough-paced scoundrel, though I took care not to say so.

Count Torres, who was a deadly foe to all prudence and discretion, asked me my opinion of the case, and I whispered that I thought the count should lose, even if he were in the right, on account of the infamous apostrophes of his counsel, who deserved to have his ears cut off or to stand in the pillory for six months.

"And the client too," said Tomes aloud; but nobody had heard what I had said.

After we had waited for an hour the clerk of the court came in with two papers, one of which he gave to the peasant's counsel and the other to Torriano's. Torriano read it to himself, burst into a loud laugh, and then read it aloud.

The court condemned the count to recognize the peasant as his creditor, to pay all costs, and to give him a year's wages as damages; the peasant's right to appeal ad minimum on account of any other complaints he might have being reserved.

The advocate looked downcast, but Torriano consoled him by a fee of six sequins, and everybody went away.

I remained with the defendant, and asked him if he meant to appeal to Vienna.

"I shall appeal in another sort," said he; but I did not ask him what he meant.

We left Gorice the next morning.

My landlord gave me the bill, and told me he had received instructions not to insist on my paying it if I made any difficulty, as in that case the count would pay himself.

This struck me as somewhat eccentric, but I only laughed. However, the specimens I had seen of his character made me imagine that I was going to spend six weeks with a dangerous original.

In two hours we were at Spessa, and alighted at a large house, with nothing distinguished about it from an architectural point of view. We went up to the count's room, which was tolerably furnished, and after shewing me over the house he took me to my own room. It was on the ground floor, stuffy, dark, and ill furnished.

"Ah!" said he, "this is the room my poor old father used to love to sit in; like you, he was very fond of study. You may be sure of enjoying perfect liberty here, for you will see no one."

We dined late, and consequently no supper was served. The eating and the wine were tolerable, and so was the company of a priest, who held the position of the count's steward; but I was disgusted at hearing the count, who ate ravenously, reproach me with eating too slowly.

When we rose from table he told me he had a lot to do, and that we should see each other the next day.

I went to my room to put things in order, and to get out my papers. I was then working at the second volume of the Polish troubles.

In the evening I asked for a light as it was growing dark, and presently a servant came with one candle. I was indignant; they ought to have given me wax lights or a lamp at least. However, I made no complaint, merely asking one of the servants if I was to rely on the services of any amongst them.

“Our master has given us no instructions on the subject, but of course we will wait on you whenever you call us.”

This would have been a troublesome task, as there was no bell, and I should have been obliged to wander all over the house, to search the courtyard, and perhaps the road, whenever I wanted a servant.

“And who will do my room?” I asked.

“The maid.”

“Then she has a key of her own?”

“There is no need for a key, as your door has no lock, but you can bolt yourself in at night.”

I could only laugh, whether from ill humour or amusement I really cannot say. However, I made no remark to the man.

I began my task, but in half an hour I was so unfortunate as to put out the candle whilst snuffing it. I could not roam about the house in the dark searching for a light, as I did not know my way, so I went to bed in the dark more inclined to swear than to laugh.

Fortunately the bed was a good one, and as I had expected it to be uncomfortable I went to sleep in a more tranquil humour.

In the morning nobody came to attend on me, so I got up, and after putting away my papers I went to say good morning to my host in dressing-gown and nightcap. I found him under the hand of one of his men who served him as a valet. I told him I had slept well, and had come to breakfast with him; but he said he never took breakfast, and asked me, politely enough, not to trouble to come and see him in the morning as he was always engaged with his tenants, who were a pack of thieves. He then added that as I took breakfast he would give orders to the cook to send me up coffee whenever I liked.

“You will also be kind enough to tell your man to give me a touch with his comb after he has done with you.”

“I wonder you did not bring a servant.”

“If I had guessed that I should be troubling you, I should certainly have brought one.”

“It will not trouble me but you, for you will be kept waiting.”

“Not at all. Another thing I want is a lock to my door, for I have important papers for which I am responsible, and I cannot lock them up in my trunk whenever I leave my room.”

“Everything is safe in my house.”

“Of course, but you see how absurd it would be for you to be answerable in case any of my papers were missing. I might be in the greatest distress, and yet I should never tell you of it.”

He remained silent for some time, and then ordered his man to tell the priest to put a lock on my door and give me the key.

While he was thinking, I noticed a taper and a book on the table beside his bed. I went up to it, and asked politely if I might see what kind of reading had beguiled him to sleep. He replied as politely, requesting me not to touch it. I withdrew immediately, telling him with a smile that I felt sure that it was a book of prayers, but that I would never reveal his secret.

“You have guessed what it is,” he said, laughing.

I left him with a courteous bow, begging him to send me his man and a cup of coffee, chocolate, or broth, it mattered not which.

I went back to my room meditating seriously on his strange behaviour, and especially on the wretched tallow candle which was given me, while he had a wax taper. My first idea was to leave the house immediately, for though I had only fifty ducats in my possession my spirit was as high as when I was a rich man; but on second thoughts I determined not to put myself in the wrong by affronting him in such a signal manner.

The tallow candle was the most grievous wrong, so I resolved to ask the man whether he had not been told to give me wax lights. This was important, as it might be only a piece of knavery or stupidity on the part of the servant.

The man came in an hour with a cup of coffee, sugared according to his taste or that of the cook. This disgusted me, so I let it stay on the table, telling him, with a burst of laughter (if I had not laughed I must have thrown the coffee in his face), that that was not the way to serve breakfast. I then got ready to have my hair done.

I asked him why he had brought me a wretched tallow candle instead of two wax lights.

"Sir," the worthy man replied, humbly, "I could only give you what the priest gave me; I received a wax taper for my master and a candle for you."

I was sorry to have vexed the poor fellow, and said no more, thinking the priest might have taken a fancy to economise for the count's profit or his own. I determined to question him on the subject.

As soon as I was dressed I went out to walk off my bad humour. I met the priest-steward, who had been to the locksmith. He told me that the man had no ready-made locks, but he was going to fit my door with a padlock, of which I should have the key.

"Provided I can lock my door," I said, "I care not how it's done."

I returned to the house to see the padlock fitted, and while the locksmith was hammering away I asked the priest why he had given a tallow candle instead of one or two wax tapers.

"I should never dare to give you tapers, sir, without express orders from the count."

"I should have thought such a thing would go without saying."

"Yes, in other houses, but here nothing goes without saying. I have to buy the tapers and he pays me, and every time he has one it is noted down."

"Then you can give me a pound of wax lights if I pay you for them?"

"Of course, but I think I must tell the count, for you know … ."

"Yes, I know all about it, but I don't care:"

I gave him the price of a pound of wax lights, and went for a walk, as he told me dinner was at one. I was somewhat astonished on coming back to the house at half-past twelve to be told that the count had been half an hour at table.

I did not know what to make of all these acts of rudeness; however, I moderated my passion once more, and came in remarking that the abbe had told me dinner was at one.

"It is usually," replied the count, "but to-day I wanted to pay some calls and take you with me, so I decided on dining at noon. You will have plenty of time."

He then gave orders for all the dishes that had been taken away to be brought back.

I made no answer, and sat down to table, and feigning good humour ate what was on the table, refusing to touch those dishes which had been taken away. He vainly asked me to try the soup, the beef, the entrees; I told him that I always punished myself thus when I came in late for a nobleman's dinner.

Still dissembling my ill humour, I got into his carriage to accompany him on his round of visits. He took me to Baron del Mestre, who spent the whole of the year in the country with his family, keeping up a good establishment.

The count spent the whole of the day with the baron, putting off the other visits to a future time. In the evening we returned to Spessa. Soon after we arrived the priest returned the money I had given him for the candles, telling me that the count had forgotten to inform him that I was to be treated as himself.

I took this acknowledgement for what it was worth.

Supper was served, and I ate with the appetite of four, while the count hardly ate at all.

The servant who escorted me to my room asked me at what time I should like breakfast. I told him, and he was punctual; and this time the coffee was brought in the coffee-pot and the sugar in the sugar basin.

The valet did my hair, and the maid did my room, everything was changed, and I imagined that I had given the count a little lesson, and that I should have no more trouble with him. Here, however, I was mistaken, as the reader will discover.

Three or four days later the priest came to me one morning, to ask when I would like dinner, as I was to dine in my room.

“Why so?” I asked.

“Because the count left yesterday for Gorice, telling me he did not know when he should come back. He ordered me to give you your meals in your room.”

“Very good. I will dine at one.”

No one could be more in favour of liberty and independence than myself, but I could not help feeling that my rough host should have told me he was going to Gorice. He stayed a week, and I should have died of weariness if it had not been for my daily visits to the Baron del Mestre. Otherwise there was no company, the priest was an uneducated man, and there were no pretty country girls. I felt as if I could not bear another four weeks of such a doleful exile.

When the count came back, I spoke to him plainly.

“I came to Spessa,” I said, “to keep you company and to amuse myself; but I see that I am in the way, so I hope you will take me back to Gorice and leave me there. You must know that I like society as much as you do, and I do not feel inclined to die of solitary weariness in your house.”

He assured me that it should not happen again, that he had gone to Gorice to meet an actress, who had come there purposely to see him, and that he had also profited by the opportunity to sign a contract of marriage with a Venetian lady.

These excuses and the apparently polite tone in which they were uttered induced me to prolong my stay with the extraordinary count.

He drew the whole of his income from vineyards, which produced an excellent white wine and a revenue of a thousand sequins a year. However, as the count did his best to spend double that amount, he was rapidly ruining himself. He had a fixed impression that all the tenants robbed him, so whenever he found a bunch of grapes in a cottage he proceeded to beat the occupants unless they could prove that the grapes did not come from his vineyards. The peasants might kneel down and beg pardon, but they were thrashed all the same.

I had been an unwilling witness of several of these arbitrary and cruel actions, when one day I had the pleasure of seeing the count soundly beaten by two peasants. He had struck the first blow himself, but when he found that he was getting the worst of it he prudently took to his heels.

He was much offended with me for remaining a mere spectator of the fray; but I told him very coolly that, being the aggressor, he was in the wrong, and in the second place I was not going to expose myself to be beaten to a jelly by two lusty peasants in another man's quarrel.

These arguments did not satisfy him, and in his rage he dared to tell me that I was a scurvy coward not to know that it was my duty to defend a friend to the death.

In spite of these offensive remarks I merely replied with a glance of contempt, which he doubtless understood.

Before long the whole village had heard what had happened, and the joy was universal, for the count had the singular privilege of being feared by all and loved by none. The two rebellious peasants had taken to their heels. But when it became known that his lordship had announced his resolution to carry pistols with him in all future visits, everybody was alarmed, and two spokesmen were sent to the count informing him that all his tenants would quit the estate in a week's time unless he gave them a promise to leave them in peace in their humble abodes.

The rude eloquence of the two peasants struck me as sublime, but the count pronounced them to be impertinent and ridiculous.

"We have as good a right to taste the vines which we have watered with the sweat of our brow," said they, "as your cook has to taste the dishes before they are served on your table."

The threat of deserting just at the vintage season frightened the count, and he had to give in, and the embassy went its way in high glee at its success.

Next Sunday we went to the chapel to hear mass, and when we came in the priest was at the altar finishing the Credo. The count looked furious, and after mass he took me with him to the sacristy, and begun to abuse and beat the poor priest, in spite of the surplice which he was still wearing. It was really a shocking sight.

The priest spat in his face and cried help, that being the only revenge in his power.

Several persons ran in, so we left the sacristy. I was scandalised, and I told the count that the priest would be certain to go to Udine, and that it might turn out a very awkward business.

"Try to prevent his doing so," I added, "even by violence, but in the first place endeavour to pacify him."

No doubt the count was afraid, for he called out to his servants and ordered them to fetch the priest, whether he could come or no. His order was executed, and the priest was led in, foaming with rage, cursing the count, calling him excommunicated wretch, whose very breath was poisonous; swearing that never another mass should be sung in the chapel that had been polluted with sacrilege, and finally promising that the archbishop should avenge him.

The count let him say on, and then forced him into a chair, and the unworthy ecclesiastic not only ate but got drunk. Thus peace was concluded, and the abbe forgot all his wrongs.

A few days later two Capuchins came to visit him at noon. They did not go, and as he did not care to dismiss them, dinner was served without any place being laid for the friars. Thereupon the bolder of the two informed the count that he had had no dinner. Without replying, the count had him accommodated with a plateful of rice. The Capuchin refused it, saying that he was worthy to sit, not only at his table, but at a monarch's. The count, who happened to be in a good humour, replied that they called themselves "unworthy brethren," and that they were consequently not worthy of any of this world's good things.

The Capuchin made but a poor answer, and as I thought the count to be in the right I proceeded to back him up, telling the friar he ought to be ashamed at having committed the sin of pride, so strictly condemned by the rules of his order.

The Capuchin answered me with a torrent of abuse, so the count ordered a pair of scissors to be brought, that the beards of the filthy rogues might be cut off. At this awful threat the two friars made their escape, and we laughed heartily over the incident.

If all the count's eccentricities had been of this comparatively harmless and amusing nature, I should not have minded, but such was far from being the case.

Instead of chyle his organs must have distilled some virulent poison; he was always at his worst in his after dinner hours. His appetite was furious; he ate more like a tiger than a man. One day we happened to be eating woodcock, and I could not help praising the dish in the style of the true gourmand. He immediately took up his bird, tore it limb from limb, and gravely bade me not to praise the dishes I liked as it irritated him. I felt an inclination to laugh and also an inclination to throw the bottle at his head, which I should probably have indulged in had I been twenty years younger. However, I did neither, feeling that I should either leave him or accommodate myself to his humours.

Three months later Madame Costa, the actress whom he had gone to see at Gorice, told me that she would never have believed in the possibility of such a creature existing if she had not known Count Torriano.

"Though he is a vigorous lover," she continued, "it is a matter of great difficulty with him to obtain the crisis; and the wretched woman in his arms is in imminent danger of being strangled to death if she cannot conceal her amorous ecstacy. He cannot bear to see another's pleasure. I pity his wife most heartily."

I will now relate the incident which put an end to my relations with this venomous creature.

Amidst the idleness and weariness of Spessa I happened to meet a very pretty and very agreeable young widow. I made her some small presents, and finally persuaded her to pass the night in my room. She came at midnight to avoid observation, and left at day-break by a small door which opened on to the road.

We had amused ourselves in this pleasant manner for about a week, when one morning my sweetheart awoke me that I might close the door after her as usual. I had scarcely done so when I heard cries for help. I quickly opened it again, and I saw the scoundrelly Torriano holding the widow with one hand while he beat her furiously with a stick he held in the other. I rushed upon him, and we fell together, while the poor woman made her escape.

I had only my dressing-gown on, and here I was at a disadvantage; for civilized man is a poor creature without his clothes. However, I held the stick with one hand, while I squeezed his throat with the other. On his side he clung to the stick with his right hand, and pulled my hair with the left. At last his tongue started out and he had to let go.

I was on my feet again in an instant, and seizing the stick I aimed a sturdy blow at his head, which, luckily for him, he partially parried.

I did not strike again, so he got up, ran a little way, and began to pick up stones. However, I did not wait to be pelted, but shut myself in my room and lay down on the bed, only sorry that I had not choked the villain outright.

As soon as I had rested I looked to my pistols, dressed myself, and went out with the intention of looking for some kind of conveyance to take me back to Gorice. Without knowing it I took a road that led me to the cottage of the poor widow, whom I found looking calm though sad. She told me she had received most of the blows on her shoulders, and was not much hurt. What vexed her was that the affair would become public, as two peasants had seen the count beating her, and our subsequent combat.

I gave her two sequins, begging her to come and see me at Gorice, and to tell me where I could find a conveyance.

Her sister offered to shew me the way to a farm, where I could get what I wanted. On the way she told me that Torriano had been her sister’s enemy before the death of her husband because she rejected all his proposals.

I found a good conveyance at the farm, and the man promised to drive me in to Gorice by dinner-time.

I gave him half-a-crown as an earnest, and went away, telling him to come for me.

I returned to the count's and had scarcely finished getting ready when the conveyance drove up.

I was about to put my luggage in it, when a servant came from the count asking me to give him a moment's conversation.

I wrote a note in French, saying that after what had passed we ought not to meet again under his roof.

A minute later he came into my room, and shut the door, saying, —

"As you won't speak to me, I have come to speak to you."

"What have you got to say?"

"If you leave my house in this fashion you will dishonour me, and I will not allow it."

"Excuse me, but I should very much like to see how you are going to prevent me from leaving your house."

"I will not allow you to go by yourself; we must go together."

"Certainly; I understand you perfectly. Get your sword or your pistols, and we will start directly. There is room for two in the carriage."

"That won't do. You must dine with me, and then we can go in my carriage."

"You make a mistake. I should be a fool if I dined with you when our miserable dispute is all over the village; to-morrow it will have reached Gorice."

"If you won't dine with me, I will dine with you, and people may say what they like. We will go after dinner, so send away that conveyance."

I had to give in to him. The wretched count stayed with me till noon, endeavouring to persuade me that he had a perfect right to beat a country-woman in the road, and that I was altogether in the wrong.

I laughed, and said I wondered how he derived his right to beat a free woman anywhere, and that his pretence that I being her lover had no right to protect her was a monstrous one.

"She had just left my arms," I continued, "was I not therefore her natural protector? Only a coward or a monster like yourself would have remained indifferent, though, indeed, I believe that even you would have done the same.”

A few minutes before we sat down to dinner he said that neither of us would profit by the adventure, as he meant the duel to be to the death.

“I don’t agree with you as far as I am concerned,” I replied; “and as to the duel, you can fight or not fight, as you please; for my part I have had satisfaction. If we come to a duel I hope to leave you in the land of the living, though I shall do my best to lay you up for a considerable time, so that you may have leisure to reflect on your folly. On the other hand, if fortune favours you, you may act as you please.”

“We will go into the wood by ourselves, and my coachman shall have orders to drive you wherever you like if you come out of the wood by yourself.”

“Very good indeed; and which would you prefer — swords or pistols?”

“Swords, I think.”

“Then I promise to unload my pistols as soon as we get into the carriage.”

I was astonished to find the usually brutal count become quite polite at the prospect of a duel. I felt perfectly confident myself, as I was sure of flooring him at the first stroke by a peculiar lunge. Then I could escape through Venetian territory where I was not known.

But I had good reasons for supposing that the duel would end in smoke as so many other duels when one of the parties is a coward, and a coward I believed the count to be.

We started after an excellent dinner; the count having no luggage, and mine being strapped behind the carriage.

I took care to draw the charges of my pistols before the count.

I had heard him tell the coachman to drive towards Gorice, but every moment I expected to hear him order the man to drive up this or that turning that we might settle our differences.

I asked no questions, feeling that the initiative lay with him; but we drove on till we were at the gates of Gorice, and I burst out laughing when I heard the count order the coachman to drive to the posting inn.

As soon as we got there he said, —

“You were in the right; we must remain friends. Promise me not to tell anyone of what has happened.”

I gave him the promise; we shook hands, and everything was over.

The next day I took up my abode in one of the quietest streets to finish my second volume on the Polish troubles, but I still managed to enjoy myself during my stay at Gorice. At last I resolved on returning to Trieste, where I had more chances of serving and pleasing the State Inquisitors.

I stayed at Gorice till the end of the year 1773, and passed an extremely pleasant six weeks.

My adventure at Spessa had become public property. At first everybody addressed me on the subject, but as I laughed and treated the whole thing as a joke it would soon be forgotten. Torriano took care to be most polite whenever we met; but I had stamped him as a dangerous character, and whenever he asked me to dinner or supper I had other engagements.

During the carnival he married the young lady of whom he had spoken to me, and as long as he lived her life was misery. Fortunately he died a madman thirteen or fourteen years after.

Whilst I was at Gorice Count Charles Coronini contributed greatly to my enjoyment. He died four years later, and a month before his death he sent me his will in ostosyllabic Italian verses — a specimen of philosophic mirth which I still preserve. It is full of jest and wit, though I believe if he had guessed the near approach of death he would not have been so cheerful, for the prospect of imminent destruction can only enliven the heart of a maniac.

During my stay at Gorice a certain M. Richard Lorrain came there. He was a bachelor of forty, who had done good financial service under the Viennese Government, and had now retired with a comfortable pension. He was a fine man, and his agreeable manners and excellent education procured him admission into the best company in the town.

I met him at the house of Count Torres, and soon after he was married to the young countess.

In October the new Council of Ten and the new Inquisitors took office, and my protectors wrote to me that if they could not obtain my pardon in the course of the next twelve months they would be inclined to despair. The first of the Inquisitors was Sagredo, and intimate friend of the Procurator Morosini's; the second, Grimani, the friend of my good Dandolo; and M. Zaguri wrote to me that he would answer for the third, who, according to law, was one of the six councillors who assist the Council of Ten.

It may not be generally known that the Council of Ten is really a council of seventeen, as the Doge has always a right to be present.

I returned to Trieste determined to do my best for the Tribunal, for I longed to return to Venice after nineteen years' wanderings.

I was then forty-nine, and I expected no more of Fortune's gifts, for the deity despises those of ripe age. I thought, however, that I might live comfortably and independently at Venice.

I had talents and experience, I hoped to make use of them, and I thought the Inquisitors would feel bound to give me some sufficient employment.

I was writing the history of the Polish troubles, the first volume was printed, the second was in preparation, and I thought of concluding the work in seven volumes. Afterwards I had a translation of the "Iliad" in view, and other literary projects would no doubt present themselves.

In fine, I thought myself sure of living in Venice, where many persons who would be beggars elsewhere continue to live at their ease.

I left Gorice on the last day of December, 1773, and on January 1st I took up my abode at Trieste.

I could not have received a warmer welcome. Baron Pittoni, the Venetian consul, all the town councillors, and the members of the club, seemed delighted to see me again. My carnival was a pleasant one, and in the beginning of Lent I published the second volume of my work on Poland.

The chief object of interest to me at Trieste was an actress in a company that was playing there. She was no other than the daughter of the so-called Count Rinaldi, and my readers may remember her under the name of Irene. I had loved her at Milan, and neglected her at Genoa on account of her father's misdeeds, and at Avignon I had rescued her at Marcoline's request. Eleven years had passed by since I had heard of her.

I was astonished to see her, and I think more sorry than glad, for she was still beautiful, and I might fall in love again; and being no longer in a position to give her assistance, the issue might be unfortunate for me. However, I called on her the next day, and was greeted with a shriek of delight. She told me she had seen me at the theatre, and felt sure I would come and see her.

She introduced me to her husband, who played parts like Scapin, and to her nine-year-old daughter, who had a talent for dancing.

She gave me an abridged account of her life since we had met. In the year I had seen her at Avignon she had gone to Turin with her father. At Turin she fell in love with her present husband, and left her parents to join her lot to his.

“Since that,” she said, “I have heard of my father’s death, but I do not know what has become of my mother.”

After some further conversation she told me she was a faithful wife, though she did not push fidelity so far as to drive a rich lover to despair.

“I have no lovers here,” she added, “but I give little suppers to a few friends. I don’t mind the expense, as I win some money at faro.”

She was the banker, and she begged me to join the party now and then.

“I will come after the play to-night,” I replied, “but you must not expect any high play of me.”

I kept the appointment and supped with a number of silly young tradesmen, who were all in love with her.

After supper she held a bank, and I was greatly astonished when I saw her cheating with great dexterity. It made me want to laugh; however, I lost my florins with a good grace and left. However, I did not mean to let Irene think she was duping me, and I went to see her next morning at rehearsal, and complimented her on her dealing. She pretended not to understand what I meant, and on my explaining myself she had the impudence to tell me that I was mistaken.

In my anger I turned my back on her saying, “You will be sorry for this some day.”

At this she began to laugh, and said, “Well, well, I confess! and if you tell me how much you lost you shall have it back, and if you like you shall be a partner in the game.”

“No, thank you, Irene, I will not be present at any more of your suppers. But I warn you to be cautious; games of chance are strictly forbidden.”

“I know that, but all the young men have promised strict secrecy.”

“Come and breakfast with me whenever you like.”

A few days later she came, bringing her daughter with her. The girl was pretty, and allowed me to caress her.

One day Baron Pittoni met them at my lodgings, and as he liked young girls as well as I he begged Irene to make her daughter include him in her list of favoured lovers.

I advised her not to reject the offer, and the baron fell in love with her, which was a piece of luck for Irene, as she was accused of playing unlawful games, and would have been severely treated if the baron had not given her warning. When the police pounced on her, they found no gaming and no gamesters, and nothing could be done.

Irene left Trieste at the beginning of Lent with the company to which she belonged. Three years later I saw her again at Padua. Her daughter had become a charming girl, and our acquaintance was renewed in the tenderest manner.

[Thus abruptly end the Memoirs of Giacome Casanova,

Chevalier de Seingalt, Knight of the Golden Spur,

Prothonotary Apostolic, and Scoundrel Cosmopolitic.]

EPISODE 30 — OLD AGE AND DEATH OF CASANOVA

APPENDIX AND SUPPLEMENT

WHETHER THE AUTHOR died before the work was complete, whether the concluding volumes were destroyed by himself or his literary executors, or whether the MS. fell into bad hands, seems a matter of uncertainty, and the materials available towards a continuation of the Memoirs are extremely fragmentary. We know, however, that Casanova at last succeeded in obtaining his pardon from the authorities of the Republic, and he returned to Venice, where he exercised the honourable office of secret agent of the State Inquisitors — in plain language, he became a spy. It seems that the Knight of the Golden Spur made a rather indifferent "agent;" not surely, as a French writer suggests, because the dirty work was too dirty for his fingers, but probably because he was getting old and stupid and out-of-date, and failed to keep in touch with new forms of turpitude. He left Venice again and paid a visit to Vienna, saw beloved Paris once more, and there met Count Wallenstein, or Waldstein. The conversation turned on magic and the occult sciences, in, which Casanova was an adept, as the reader of the Memoirs will remember, and the count took a fancy to the charlatan. In short Casanova became librarian at the count's Castle of Dux, near Teplitz, and there he spent the fourteen remaining years of his life.

As the Prince de Ligne (from whose Memoirs we learn these particulars) remarks, Casanova's life had been a stormy and adventurous one, and it might have been expected that he would have found his patron's library a pleasant refuge after so many toils and travels. But the man carried rough weather and storm in his own heart, and found daily opportunities of mortification and resentment. The coffee was ill made, the maccaroni not cooked in the true Italian style, the dogs had bayed during the night, he had been made to dine at a small table, the parish priest had tried to convert him, the soup had been served too hot on purpose to annoy him, he had not been introduced to a distinguished guest, the count had lent a book without telling him, a groom had not taken off his hat; such were his complaints. The fact is Casanova felt his dependent position and his utter poverty, and was all the more determined to stand to his dignity as a man who had talked with all the crowned heads of Europe, and had fought a duel with the Polish general. And he had another reason for finding life bitter — he had lived beyond his time. Louis XV. was dead, and Louis XVI. had been guillotined; the Revolution had come; and Casanova, his dress, and his manners, appeared as odd and antique as some "blood of the Regency" would appear to us of these days. Sixty years before, Marcel, the famous dancing-master, had taught young Casanova how to enter a room with a lowly and ceremonious bow; and still, though the eighteenth century is drawing to a close, old Casanova enters the rooms of Dux with the same stately bow, but now everyone laughs. Old Casanova treads the grave measures of the minuet; they applauded his dancing once, but now everyone laughs. Young Casanova was always dressed in the height of the fashion; but the age of powder, wigs, velvets, and silks has departed, and old Casanova's attempts at elegance ("Strass" diamonds have replaced the genuine stones with him) are likewise greeted with laughter. No wonder the old adventurer denounces the whole house of Jacobins and canaille; the world, he feels, is permanently out of joint for him; everything is cross, and everyone is in a conspiracy to drive the iron into his soul.

At last these persecutions, real or imaginary, drive him away from Dux; he considers his genius bids him go, and, as before, he obeys. Casanova has but little pleasure or profit out of this his last journey; he has to dance attendance in ante-chambers; no one will give him any office, whether as tutor, librarian, or chamberlain. In one quarter only is he well received — namely, by the famous Duke of Weimar; but in a few days he becomes madly jealous of the duke's more famous proteges, Goethe and Wieland, and goes off declaiming against them and German literature generally — with which literature he was wholly unacquainted. From Weimar to Berlin; where there are Jews to whom he has introductions. Casanova thinks them ignorant, superstitious, and knavish; but they lend him money, and he gives bills on Count Wallenstein, which are paid. In six weeks the wanderer returns to Dux, and is welcomed with open arms; his journeys are over at last.

But not his troubles. A week after his return there are strawberries at dessert; everyone is served before himself, and when the plate comes round to him it is empty. Worse still: his portrait is missing from his room, and is discovered 'salement placarde a la porte des lieux d'aisance'!

Five more years of life remained to him. They were passed in such petty mortifications as we have narrated, in grieving over his ‘afreuse vieillesse’, and in laments over the conquest of his native land Venice, once so splendid and powerful. His appetite began to fail, and with it failed his last source of pleasure, so death came to him somewhat as a release. He received the sacraments with devotion, exclaimed, —

“Grand Dieu, et vous tous temoins de ma mort, j’ai vecu en philosophe, et je meurs en Chretien,” and so died.

It was a quiet ending to a wonderfully brilliant and entirely useless career. It has been suggested that if the age in which Casanova lived had been less corrupt, he himself might have used his all but universal talents to some advantage, but to our mind Casanova would always have remained Casanova. He came of a family of adventurers, and the reader of his Memoirs will remark how he continually ruined his prospects by his ineradicable love for disreputable company. His “Bohemianism” was in his blood, and in his old age he regrets — not his past follies, but his inability to commit folly any longer. Now and again we are inclined to pronounce Casanova to be an amiable man; and if to his generosity and good nature he had added some elementary knowledge of the distinction between right and wrong, he might certainly have laid some claim to the character. The Prince de Ligne draws the following portrait of him under the name of Aventuros:

“He would be a handsome man if he were not ugly; he is tall and strongly built, but his dark complexion and his glittering eyes give him a fierce expression. He is easier to annoy than amuse; he laughs little but makes others laugh by the peculiar turn he gives to his conversation. He knows everything except those matters on the knowledge of which he chiefly prides himself, namely, dancing, the French language, good taste, and knowledge of the world. Everything about him is comic, except his comedies; and all his writings are philosophical, saving those which treat of philosophy. He is a perfect well of knowledge, but he quotes Homer and Horace ad nauseam.”

SUPPLEMENT

TO

THE MEMOIRS OF
JACQUES CASANOVA
DE SEINGALT

Containing an Outline of Casanova’s career from the year 1774, when his own Memoirs abruptly end, until his death in 1798

PART THE FIRST — VENICE 1774-1782

I — CASANOVA'S RETURN TO VENICE

THUS CASANOVA ENDED his Memoirs, concluding his narrative with his sojourn at Trieste, in January 1774, where he had remained, except for a few excursions, since the 15th November 1772. He was forty-nine years of age. Since his unfortunate experiences in England, the loss of his fortune and the failure of his efforts to obtain congenial and remunerative employment in Germany or Russia, he had come to concentrate his efforts on a return to his native city.

Of his faithful friends, the nobles Bragadin, Barbaro and Dandolo, the first had died in 1767, having gone into debt "that I might have enough," sending Casanova, from his death-bed, a last gift of a thousand crowns. Barbaro who had died also, in 1771, left Casanova a life-income of six sequins a month. The survivor, Dandolo, was poor, but until his death, he also gave Casanova a monthly provision of six sequins. However, Casanova was not without influential friends who might not only obtain a pardon from the State Inquisitors but also assist him to employment; and, in fact, it was through such influence as that wielded by the Avogador Zaguri and the Procurator Morosini, that Casanova received his pardon, and later, a position as "Confidant," or Secret Agent, to the Inquisitors at Venice.

Casanova re-entered Venice the 14th September 1774 and, presenting himself, on the 18th, to Marc-Antoine Businello, Secretary of the Tribunal of the Inquisitors of State, was advised that mercy had been accorded him by reason of his refutation of the History of the Venetian Government by Amelot de la Houssaie which he had written during his forty-two day imprisonment at Barcelona in 1768. The three Inquisitors, Francesco Grimani, Francesco Sagredo and Paolo Bembo, invited him to dinner to hear his story of his escape from The Leads.

In 1772, Bandiera, the Republic's resident at Ancona, drew this portrait of Casanova:

"One sees everywhere this unhappy rebel against the justice of the August Council, presenting himself boldly, his head carried high, and well equipped. He is received in many houses and announces his intention of going to Trieste and, from there, of returning to Germany. He is a man of forty years or more," [in reality, forty-seven] "of high stature and excellent appearance, vigorous, of a very brown color, the eye bright, the wig short and chestnut-brown. He is said to be haughty and disdainful; he speaks at length, with spirit and erudition." [Letter of information to the Very Illustrious Giovanni Zon, Secretary of the August Council of Ten at Venice. 2 October 1772.]

Returning to Venice after an absence of eighteen years, Casanova renewed his acquaintance with many old friends, among whom were:

The Christine of the Memoirs. Charles, who married Christine, the marriage being arranged by Casanova while in Venice in 1747, was of financial assistance to Casanova, who "found him a true friend." Charles died "a few months before my last departure from Venice," in 1783.

Mlle. X —— C —— V —— , really Giustina de Wynne, widow of the Count Rosenberg, Austrian Ambassador at Venice. "Fifteen years afterwards, I saw her again and she was a widow, happy enough, apparently, and enjoying a great reputation on account of her rank, wit and social qualities, but our connection was never renewed."

Callimena, who was kind to him "for love's sake alone" at Sorrento in 1770.

Marcoline, the girl he took away from his younger brother, the Abby Casanova, at Geneva in 1763.

Father Balbi, the companion of his flight from The Leads.

Doctor Gozzi, his former teacher at Padua, now become Arch-Priest of St. George of the Valley, and his sister Betting. "When I went to pay him a visit … she breathed her last in my arms, in 1776, twenty-four hours after my arrival. I will speak of her death in due time."

Angela Toselli, his first passion. In 1758 this girl married the advocate Francesco Barnaba Rizzotti, and in the following year she gave birth to a daughter, Maria Rizzotti (later married to a M. Kaiser) who lived at Vienna and whose letters to Casanova were preserved at Dux.

C —— C —— , the young girl whose love affair with Casanova became involved with that of the nun M —— M —— Casanova found her in Venice “a widow and poorly off.”

The dancing girl Binetti, who assisted Casanova in his flight from Stuttgart in 1760, whom he met again in London in 1763, and who was the cause of his duel with Count Branicki at Warsaw in 1766. She danced frequently at Venice between 1769 and 1780.

The good and indulgent Mme. Manzoni, “of whom I shall have to speak very often.”

The patricians Andrea Memmo and his brother Bernardo who, with P. Zaguri were personages of considerable standing in the Republic and who remained his constant friends. Andrea Memmo was the cause of the embarrassment in which Mlle. X —— C —— V —— found herself in Paris and which Casanova vainly endeavored to remove by applications of his astonishing specific, the ‘aroph of Paracelsus’.

It was at the house of these friends that Casanova became acquainted with the poet, Lorenzo Da Ponte. “I made his acquaintance,” says the latter, in his own Memoirs, “at the house of Zaguri and the house of Memmo, who both sought after his always interesting conversation, accepting from this man all he had of good, and closing their eyes, on account of his genius, upon the perverse parts of his nature.”

Lorenzo Da Ponte, known above all as Mozart’s librettist, and whose youth much resembled that of Casanova, was accused of having eaten ham on Friday and was obliged to flee from Venice in 1777, to escape the punishment of the Tribunal of Blasphemies. In his Memoirs, he speaks unsparingly of his compatriot and yet, as M. Rava notes, in the numerous letters he wrote Casanova, and which were preserved at Dux, he proclaims his friendship and admiration.

Irene Rinaldi, whom he met again at Padua in 1777, with her daughter who “had become a charming girl; and our acquaintance was renewed in the tenderest manner.”

The ballet-girl Adelaide, daughter of Mme. Soavi, who was also a dancer, and of a M. de Marigny.

Barbara, who attracted Casanova’s attention at Trieste, in 1773, while he was frequenting a family named Leo, but toward whom he had maintained an attitude of respect. This girl, on meeting him again in 1777, declared that “she had guessed my real feelings and had been amused by my foolish restraint.”

At Pesaro, the Jewess Leah, with whom he had the most singular experiences at Ancona in 1772.

II — RELATIONS WITH THE INQUISITORS

SOON AFTER REACHING Venice, Casanova learned that the Landgrave of Hesse Cassel, following the example of other German princes, wished a Venetian correspondent for his private affairs. Through some influence he believed he might obtain this small employment; but before applying for the position he applied to the Secretary of the Tribunal for permission. Apparently nothing came of this, and Casanova obtained no definite employment until 1776.

Early in 1776, Casanova entered the service of the Tribunal of Inquisitors as an “occasional Confidant,” under the fictitious name of Antonio Pratiloni, giving his address as “at the Casino of S. E. Marco Dandolo.”

In October 1780, his appointment was more definitely established and he was given a salary of fifteen ducats a month. This, with the six sequins of life-income left by Barbaro and the six given by Dandolo, gave him a monthly income of three hundred and eighty-four lires — about seventy-four U. S. dollars — from 1780 until his break with the Tribunal at the end of 1781.

In the Archives of Venice are preserved forty-eight letters from Casanova, including the Reports he wrote as a “Confidant,” all in the same handwriting as the manuscript of the Memoirs. The Reports may be divided into two classes: those referring to commercial or industrial matters, and those referring to the public morals.

Among those of the first class, we find:

A Report relating to Casanova’s success in having a change made in the route of the weekly diligence running from Trieste to Mestre, for which service, rendered during Casanova’s residence at Trieste in 1773, he received encouragement and the sum of one hundred ducats from the Tribunal.

A Report, the 8th September 1776, with information concerning the rumored project of the future Emperor of Austria to invade Dalmatia after the death of Maria Theresa. Casanova stated he had received this information from a Frenchman, M. Salz de Chalabre, whom he had known in Paris twenty years before. This M. Chalabre [printed Calabre] was the pretended nephew of Mme. Amelin. “This young man was as like her as two drops of water, but she did not find that a sufficient reason for avowing herself his mother.” The boy was, in fact, the son of Mme. Amelin and of M. de Chalabre, who had lived together for a long time.

A Report, the 12th of December 1776, of a secret mission to Trieste, in regard to a project of the court of Vienna for making Fiume a French port; the object being to facilitate communications between this port and the interior of Hungary. For this inquiry, Casanova received sixteen hundred lires, his expenditures amounting to seven hundred and sixty-six lires.

A Report, May-July 1779, of an excursion in the market of Ancona for information concerning the commercial relations of the Pontifical States with the Republic of Venice. At Forli, in the course of this excursion, Casanova visited the dancing-girl Binetti. For this mission Casanova received forty-eight sequins.

A Report, January 1780, remarking a clandestine recruiting carried out by a certain Marrazzani for the [Prussian] regiment of Zarembal.

A Report, the 11th October 1781, regarding a so-called Baldassare Rossetti, a Venetian subject living at Trieste, whose activities and projects were of a nature to prejudice the commerce and industry of the Republic.

Among the Reports relating to public morals may be noted:

December 1776. A Report on the seditious character of a ballet called “Coriolanus.” The back of this report is inscribed: “The impressario of S. Benedetto, Mickel de l’Agata, shall be summoned immediately; it has been ordered that he cease, under penalty of his life, from giving the ballet Coriolanus at the theater. Further, he is to collect and deposit all the printed programmes of this ballet.”

December 1780. A Report calling to the attention of the Tribunal the scandalous disorders produced in the theaters when the lights were extinguished.

3rd May 1781. A Report remarking that the Abbe Carlo Grimani believed himself exempt, in his position as a priest, from the interdiction laid on patricians against frequenting foreign ministers and their suites. On the back of this Report is written: “Ser Jean Carlo, Abbe Grimani, to be gently reminded, by the Secretary, of the injunction to abstain from all commerce with foreign ministers and their adherents.”

Venetian nobles were forbidden under penalty of death from holding any communication with foreign ambassadors or their households. This was intended as a precaution to preserve the secrets of the Senate.

26th November 1781. A Report concerning a painting academy where nude studies were made, from models of both sexes, while scholars only twelve or thirteen years of age were admitted, and where dilettantes who were neither painters nor designers, attended the sessions.

22nd December 1781. By order, Casanova reported to the Tribunal a list of the principal licentious or antireligious books to be found in the libraries and private collections at Venice: la Pucelle; la Philosophie de l’Histoire; L’Esprit d’Helvetius; la Sainte Chandelle d’Arras; les Bijoux indiscrets; le Portier des Chartreux; les Posies de Baffo; Ode a Priape; de Piron; etc., etc.

In considering this Report, which has been the subject of violent criticism, we should bear in mind three points:

first — the Inquisitors required this information; second — no one in their employ could have been in a better position to give it than Casanova; third — Casanova was morally and economically bound, as an employee of the Tribunal, to furnish the information ordered, whatever his personal distaste for the undertaking may have been. We may even assume that he permitted himself to express his feelings in some indiscreet way, and his break with the Tribunal followed, for, at the end of 1781, his commission was withdrawn. Certainly, Casanova’s almost absolute dependence on his salary, influenced the letter he wrote the Inquisitors at this time.

“To the Illustrious and Most Excellent Lords, the Inquisitors of State:

“Filled with confusion, overwhelmed with sorrow and repentance, recognizing myself absolutely unworthy of addressing my vile letter to Your Excellencies confessing that I have failed in my duty in the opportunities which presented themselves, I, Jacques Casanova, invoke, on my knees, the mercy of the Prince; I beg that, in compassion and grace, there may be accorded me that which, in all justice and on reflection, may be refused me.

“I ask the Sovereign Munificence to come to my aid, so that, with the means of subsistence, I may apply myself vigorously, in the future, to the service to which I have been privileged.

“After this respectful supplication, the wisdom of Your Excellencies may judge the disposition of my spirit and of my intentions.”

The Inquisitors decided to award Casanova one month’s pay, but specified that thereafter he would receive salary only when he rendered important services.

In 1782 Casanova made a few more Reports to the Tribunal, for one of which, regarding the failure of an insurance and commercial house at Trieste, he received six sequins. But the part of a guardian of the public morals, even through necessity, was undoubtedly unpleasant to him; and, in spite of the financial loss, it may be that his release was a relief.

III — FRANCESCA BUSCHINI

INTIMATELY CONNECTED WITH Casanova’s life at this period was a girl named Francesca Buschini. This name does not appear in any of the literary, artistic or theatrical records of the period, and, of the girl, nothing is known other than that which she herself tells us in her letters to Casanova. From these very human letters, however, we may obtain, not only certain facts, but also, a very excellent idea of her character. Thirty-two of her letters, dated between July 1779 and October 1787, written in the Venetian dialect, were preserved in the library at Dux.

She was a seamstress, although often without work, and had a brother, a younger sister and also a mother living with her. The probabilities are that she was a girl of the most usual sort, but greatly attached to Casanova who, even in his poverty, must have dazzled her as a being from another world. She was his last Venetian love, and remained a faithful correspondent until 1787; and it is chiefly from her letters, in which she comments on news contained in Casanova’s letters to her, that light is thrown on the Vienna-Paris period, particularly, of Casanova’s life. For this, Francesca has placed us greatly in her debt.

With this girl, at least between 1779 and 1782, Casanova rented a small house at Barbaria delle Tole, near S. Giustina, from the noble Pesaro at S. Stae. Casanova, always in demand for his wit and learning, often took dinner in the city. He knew that a place always awaited him at the house of Memmo and at that of Zaguri and that, at the table of these patricians, who were distinguished by their intellectual superiority, he would meet men notable in science and letters. Being so long and so closely connected with theatrical circles, he was often seen at the theater, with Francesca. Thus, the 9th August 1786, the poor girl, in an excess of chagrin writes: “Where are all the pleasures which formerly you procured me? Where are the theatres, the comedies which we once saw together?”

On the 28th July 1779, Francesca wrote:

“Dearest and best beloved,

“ … In the way of novelties, I find nothing except that S. E. Pietro Zaguri has arrived at Venice; his servant has been twice to ask for you, and I have said you were still at the Baths of Abano …”

The Casanova-Buschini establishment kept up relations, more or less frequent and intimate, with a few persons, most of whom are mentioned in Francesca’s letters; the Signora Anzoletta Rizzotti; the Signora Elisabeth Catrolli, an ancient comedienne; the Signora Bepa Pezzana; the Signora Zenobia de Monti, possibly the mother of that Carlo de Monti, Venetian Consul at Trieste, who was a friend to Casanova and certainly contributed toward obtaining his pardon from the Inquisitors; a M. Lunel, master of languages, and his wife.

IV — PUBLICATIONS

CASANOVA'S PRINCIPAL WRITINGS during this period were:

His translation of the Iliad, the first volume of which was issued in 1775, the second in 1777 and the third in 1778.

During his stay at Abano in 1778, he wrote the Scrutinio del libro, eulogies of M. de Voltaire "by various hands." In the dedication of this book, to the Doge Renier, he wrote, "This little book has recently come from my inexperienced pen, in the hours of leisure which are frequent at Abano for those who do not come only for the baths."

From January until July 1780, he published, anonymously, a series of miscellaneous small works, seven pamphlets of about one hundred pages each, distributed at irregular intervals to subscribers.

From the 7th October to the end of December, 1780, on the occasions of the representations given by a troupe of French comedians at the San Angelo theater, Casanova wrote a little paper called The Messenger of Thalia. In one of the numbers, he wrote:

"French is not my tongue; I make no pretentions and, wrong or astray, I place on the paper what heaven sends from my pen. I give birth to phrases turned to Italian, either to see what they look like or to produce a style, and often, also, to draw, into a purist's snare, some critical doctor who does not know my humor or how my offense amuses me."

The "little romance" referred to in the following letter to "Mlle. X —— C —— V —— ," appeared in 1782, with the title; 'Di anecdoti vinizani militari a amorosi del secolo decimo quarto sotto i dogati di Giovanni Gradenigoe di Giovanni Dolfin'. Venezia, 1782.

V — MLLE. X … C … V…

IN 1782, A letter written by this lady, Giustina de Wynne, referring to a visit to Venice of Paul I, Grand Duke, afterward Emperor of Russia, and his wife, was published under the title of Du sejour des Comptes du Nord a Venise en janvier mdcclxxxii. If he had not previously done so, Casanova took this occasion to recall himself to the memory of this lady to whom he had once been of such great service. And two very polite letters were exchanged:

“Madam,

“The fine epistle which V. E. has allowed to be printed upon the sojourn of C. and of the C. du Nord in this city, exposes you, in the position of an author, to endure the compliments of all those who trouble themselves to write. But I flatter myself, Madam, that V. E. will not disdain mine.

“The little romance, Madam, a translation from my dull and rigid pen, is not a gift but a very paltry offering which I dare make to the superiority of your merit.

“I have found, Madam, in your letter, the simple, flowing style of gentility, the one which alone a woman of condition who writes to her friend may use with dignity. Your digressions and your thoughts are flowers which … (forgive an author who pilfers from you the delicious nonchalance of an amiable writer) or … a will-o’-the-wisp which, from time to time, issues from the work, in spite of the author, and burns the paper.

“I aspire, Madam, to render myself favorable to the deity to which reason advises me to make homage. Accept then the offering and render happy he who makes it with your indulgence.

“I have the honor to sign myself, if you will kindly permit me, with very profound respect.

“Giacomo Casanova.”

“Monsieur

“I am very sensible, Monsieur, of the distinction which comes to me from your approbation of my little pamphlet. The interest of the moment, its references and the exaltation of spirits have gained for it the tolerance and favorable welcome of the good Venetians. It is to your politeness in particular, Monsieur, that I believe is due the marked success which my work has had with you. I thank you for the book which you sent me and I will risk thanking you in advance for the pleasure it will give me. Be persuaded of my esteem for yourself and for your talents. And I have the honor to be, Monsieur.

“Your very humble servant de Wynne de Rosemberg.”

Among Casanova’s papers at Dux was a page headed “Souvenir,” dated the 2nd September 1791, and beginning: “While descending the staircase, the Prince de Rosemberg told me that Madame de Rosemberg was dead … . This Prince de Rosemberg was the nephew of Giustina.”

Giustina died, after a long illness, at Padua, the 21st August 1791, at the age of fifty-four years and seven months.

VI — LAST DAYS AT VENICE

TOWARD THE END of 1782, doubtless convinced that he could expect nothing more from the Tribunal, Casanova entered the service of the Marquis Spinola as a secretary. Some years before, a certain Carletti, an officer in the service of the court of Turin, had won from the Marquis a wager of two hundred and fifty sequins. The existence of this debt seemed to have completely disappeared from the memory of the loser. By means of the firm promise of a pecuniary recompense, Casanova intervened to obtain from his patron a written acknowledgment of the debt owing to Carletti. His effort was successful; but instead of clinking cash, Carletti contented himself with remitting to the negotiator an assignment on the amount of the credit. Casanova's anger caused a violent dispute, in the course of which Carlo Grimani, at whose house the scene took place, placed him in the wrong and imposed silence.

The irascible Giacomo conceived a quick resentment. To discharge his bile, he found nothing less than to publish in the course of the month of August, under the title of: 'Ne amori ne donne ovvero la Stalla d'Angia repulita', a libel in which Jean Carlo Grimani, Carletti, and other notable persons were outraged under transparent mythological pseudonyms.

This writing embroiled the author with the entire body of the Venetian nobility.

To allow the indignation against him to quiet down, Casanova went to pass some days at Trieste, then returned to Venice to put his affairs in order. The idea of recommencing his wandering life alarmed him. "I have lived fifty-eight years," he wrote, "I could not go on foot with winter at hand, and when I think of starting on the road to resume my adventurous life, I laugh at myself in the mirror."

PART THE SECOND — VIENNA-PARIS

I — 1783-1785

TRAVELS IN 1783

CASANOVA LEFT VENICE in January 1783, and went to Vienna.

On the 16th April Elisabeth Catrolli wrote to him at Vienna:

“Dearest of friends,

“Your letter has given me great pleasure. Be assured, I infinitely regret your departure. I have but two sincere friends, yourself and Camerani. I do not hope for more. I could be happy if I could have at least one of you near me to whom I could confide my cruel anxieties.

“To-day, I received from Camerani a letter informing me that, in a former one, he had sent me a bill of exchange: I did not receive it, and I fear it has been lost.

“Dear friend, when you reach Paris, clasp him to your heart for me … In regard to Chechina [Francesca Buschini] I would say that I have not seen her since the day I took her your letter. Her mother is the ruin of that poor girl; let that suffice; I will say no more … . “

After leaving Venice, Casanova apparently took an opportunity to pay his last disrespects to the Tribunal. At least, in May 1783, M. Schlick, French Secretary at Venice, wrote to Count Vergennes: “Last week there reached the State Inquisitors an anonymous letter stating that, on the 25th of this month, an earthquake, more terrible than that of Messina, would raze Venice to the ground. This letter has caused a panic here. Many patricians have left the capital and others will follow their example. The author of the anonymous letter … is a certain Casanova, who wrote from Vienna and found means to slip it into the Ambassador’s own mails.”

In about four months, Casanova was again on the way to Italy. He paused for a week at Udine and arrived at Venice on the 16th June. Without leaving his barge, he paused at his house just long enough to salute Francesca. He left Mestre on Tuesday the 24th June and on the same day dined at the house of F. Zanuzzi at Bassano. On the 25th he left Bassano by post and arrived in the evening at Borgo di Valsugano.

On the 29th, he wrote to Francesca from the Augsbourg. He had stopped at Innsbruck to attend the theater and was in perfect health. He had reached Frankfort in forty-eight hours, traveling eighteen posts without stopping.

From Aix-la-Chapelle, on the 16th July, he wrote Francesca that he had met, in that city, Cattina, the wife of Pocchini. Pocchini was sick and in deep misery. Casanova, recalling all the abominable tricks this rogue had played on him refused Cattina the assistance she begged for in tears, laughed in her face, and said: “Farewell, I wish you a pleasant death.”

At Mayence, Casanova embarked on the Rhine in company with the Marquis Durazzo, former Austrian Ambassador at Venice. The voyage was excellent and in two days he arrived at Cologne, in rugged health, sleeping well and eating like a wolf.

On the 30th July he wrote to Francesca from Spa and in this letter enclosed a good coin. Everything was dear at Spa; his room cost eight lires a day with everything else in proportion.

On the 6th September he wrote from Antwerp to one of his good friends, the Abbe Eusebio della Lena, telling him that at Spa an English woman who had a passion for speaking Latin wished to submit him to trials which he judged it unnecessary to state precisely. He refused all her proposals, saying, however, that he would not reveal them to anyone; but that he did not feel he should refuse also “an order on her banker for twenty-five guineas.”

On the 9th he wrote to Francesca from Brussels, and on the 12th he sent her a bill of exchange on the banker Corrado for one hundred and fifty lires. He said he had been intoxicated “because his reputation had required it.” “This greatly astonishes me,” Francesca responded, “for I have never seen you intoxicated nor even illuminated … . I am very happy that the wine drove away the inflammation in your teeth.”

Practically all information of Casanova’s movements in 1783 and 1784 is obtained from Francesca’s letters which were in the library at Dux.

In her letters of the 27th June and 11th July, Francesca wrote Casanova that she had directed the Jew Abraham to sell Casanova’s satin habit and velvet breeches, but could not hope for more than fifty lires because they were patched. Abraham had observed that at one time the habit had been placed in pledge with him by Casanova for three sequins.

On the 6th September, she wrote:

“With great pleasure, I reply to the three dear letters which you wrote me from Spa: the first of the 6th August, from which I learned that your departure had been delayed for some days to wait for someone who was to arrive in that city. I was happy that your appetite had returned, because good cheer is your greatest pleasure … .

“In your second letter which you wrote me from Spa on the 16th August, I noted with sorrow that your affairs were not going as you wished. But console yourself, dear friend, for happiness will come after trouble; at least, I wish it so, also, for you yourself can imagine in what need I find myself, I and all my family … . I have no work, because I have not the courage to ask it of anyone. My mother has not earned even enough to pay for the gold thread with the little cross which you know I love. Necessity made me sell it.

“I received your last letter of the 20th August from Spa with another letter for S. E. the Procurator Morosini. You directed me to take it to him myself, and on Sunday the last day of August, I did not fail to go there exactly at three o’clock. At once on my arrival, I spoke to a servant who admitted me without delay; but, my dear friend, I regret having to send you an unpleasant message. As soon as I handed him the letter, and before he even opened it, he said to me, ‘I always know Casanova’s affairs which trouble me.’ After having read hardly more than a page, he said: ‘I know not what to do!’ I told him that, on the 6th of this month, I was to write you at Paris and that, if he would do me the honor of giving me his reply, I would put it in my letter. Imagine what answer he gave me! I was much surprised! He told me that I should wish you happiness but that he would not write to you again. He said no more. I kissed his hands and left. He did not give me even a sou. That is all he said to me … .

“S. E. Pietro Zaguri sent to me to ask if I knew where you were, because he had written two letters to Spa and had received no reply … .”

II — PARIS

ON THE NIGHT of the 18th or 19th September 1783, Casanova arrived at Paris.

On the 30th he wrote Francesca that he had been well received by his sister-in-law and by his brother, Francesco Casanova, the painter. Nearly all his friends had departed for the other world, and he would now have to make new ones, which would be difficult as he was no longer pleasing to the women.

On the 14th October he wrote again, saying that he was in good health and that Paris was a paradise which made him feel twenty years old. Four letters followed; in the first, dated from Paris on S. Martin's Day, he told Francesco not to reply for he did not know whether he would prolong his visit nor where he might go. Finding no fortune in Paris, he said he would go and search elsewhere. On the 23rd, he sent one hundred and fifty lires; "a true blessing," to the poor girl who was always short of money.

Between times, Casanova passed eight days at Fontainebleau, where he met "a charming young man of twenty-five," the son of "the young and lovely O'Morphi" who indirectly owed to him her position, in 1752, as the mistress of Louis XV. "I wrote my name on his tablets and begged him to present my compliments to his mother."

He also met, in the same place, his own son by Mme. Dubois, his former housekeeper at Soleure who had married the good M. Lebel. "We shall hear of the young gentleman in twenty-one years at Fontainebleau."

"When I paid my third visit to Paris, with the intention of ending my days in that capital, I reckoned on the friendship of M. d'Alembert, but he died, like, Fontenelle, a fortnight after my arrival, toward the end of 1783."

It is interesting to know that, at this time, Casanova met his famous contemporary, Benjamin Franklin. "A few days after the death of the illustrious d'Alembert," Casanova assisted, at the old Louvre, in a session of the Academie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. "Seated beside the learned Franklin, I was a little surprised to hear Condorcet ask him if he believed that one could give various directions to an air balloon. This was the response: ‘The matter is still in its infancy, so we must wait.’ I was surprised. It is not believable that the great philosopher could ignore the fact that it would be impossible to give the machine any other direction than that governed by the air which fills it, but these people ‘nil tam verentur, quam ne dubitare aliqua de re videantur.”

On the 13th November, Casanova left Paris in company with his brother, Francesco, whose wife did not accompany him. “His new wife drove him away from Paris.”

“Now [1797 or 1798] I feel that I have seen Paris and France for the last time. That popular effervescence [the French Revolution] has disgusted me and I am too old to hope to see the end of it.”

III — VIENNA

ON THE 29TH November, Casanova wrote from Frankfort that a drunken postilion had upset him and in the fall he had dislocated his left shoulder, but that a good bone-setter had restored it to place. On the 1st December he wrote that he was healed, having taken medicine and having been blooded. He promised to send Francesca eight sequins to pay her rent. He reached Vienna about the 7th of December and on the 15th sent Francesco a bill of exchange for eight sequins and two lires.

On the last day of 1783, Francesca wrote to him at Vienna:

“I see by your good letter that you will go to Dresden and then to Berlin and that you will return to Vienna the 10th January … . I am astonished, my dear friend, at the great journeys you make in this cold weather, but, still, you are a great man, big-hearted, full of spirit and courage; you travel in this terrible cold as though it were nothing … . “

On the 9th January, Casanova wrote from Dessau to his brother Giovanni, proposing to make peace with him, but without results. On the 27th, he was at Prague. By the 16th February, he was again in Vienna, after a trip lasting sixty-two days. His health was perfect, and he had gained flesh due, as he wrote Francesca, to his contented mind which was no longer tormented.

In February, he entered the service of M. Foscarini, Venetian Ambassador, “to write dispatches.”

On the 10th March, Francesca wrote:

“Dearest of Friends, I reply at once to your good letter of the 28th February which I received Sunday … . I thank you for your kindness which makes you say that you love me and that when you have money you will send me some … but that at the moment you are dry as a salamander. I do not know what sort of animal that is. But as for me I am certainly dry of money and I am consumed with the hope of having some … . I see that you were amused at the Carnival and that you were four times at the masked ball, where there were two hundred women, and that you danced minuets and quadrilles to the great astonishment of the ambassador Foscarini who told everyone that you were sixty years old, although in reality you have not yet reached your sixtieth year. You might well laugh at that and say that he must be blind to have such an idea.

"I see that you assisted, with your brother, at a grand dinner at the Ambassador's … .

"You say that you have read my letters to your brother and that he salutes me. Make him my best compliments and thank him. You ask me to advise you whether, if he should happen to return to Venice with you, he could lodge with you in your house. Tell him yes, because the chickens are always in the loft and make no dirt; and, as for the dogs, one watches to see that they do not make dirt. The furniture of the apartment is already in place; it lacks only a wardrobe and the little bed which you bought for your nephew and the mirror; as for the rest, everything is as you left it… ."

It is possible that, at the "grand dinner," Casanova was presented to Count Waldstein, without whose kindness to Casanova the Memoirs probably would never have been written. The Lord of Dux, Joseph Charles Emmanuel Waldstein-Wartenberg, Chamberlain to Her Imperial Majesty, descendant of the great Wallenstein, was the elder of the eleven children of Emmanuel Philibert, Count Waldstein, and Maria Theresa, Princess Liechtenstein. Very egotistic and willful in his youth, careless of his affairs, and an imprudent gambler, at thirty years of age he had not yet settled down. His mother was disconsolated that her son could not separate himself from occupations "so little suited to his spirit and his birth:"

On the 13th March 1784, Count Lamberg wrote Casanova: "I know M. le C. de Waldstein through having heard him praised by judges worthy of appreciating the transcendent qualities of more than one kind peculiar to the Count. I congratulate you on having such a Maecenas, and I congratulate him in his turn on having chosen such a man as yourself." Which last remark certainly foreshadows the library at Dux.

Later, on the lath March, 1785, Zaguri wrote: "In two months at the latest, all will be settled. I am very happy." Referring further, it is conjectured, to Casanova's hopes of placing himself with the Count.

IV — LETTERS FROM FRANCESCA

20TH MARCH 1784. “I see that you will print one of your books; you say that you will send me two hundred copies which I can sell at thirty sous each; that you will tell Zaguri and that he will advise those who wish copies to apply to me …”

This book was the Lettre historico-critique sur un fait connu dependant d’une cause peu connue, adressee au duc de * * *, 1784.

3rd April 1784. “I see with pleasure that you have gone to amuse yourself in company with two ladies and that you have traveled five posts to see the Emperor [Joseph II] … . You say that your fortune consists of one sequin … . I hope that you obtained permission to print your book, that you will send me the two hundred copies, and that I may be able to sell them… .”

14th April 1784. “You say that a man without money is the image of death, that he is a very wretched animal. I learn with regret that I am unlikely to see you at the approaching Festival of the Ascension … that you hope to see me once more before dying … . You make me laugh, telling me that at Vienna a balloon was made which arose in the air with six persons and that it might be that you would go up also.”

28th April 1784. “I see, to my lively regret, that you have been in bed with your usual ailment [hemorrhoids]. But I am pleased to know that you are better. You certainly should go to the baths … . I have been discouraged in seeing that you have not come to Venice because you have no money …. P. S. Just at this moment I have received a good letter, enclosing a bill of exchange, which I will go and have paid … .”

5th May 1784. “I went to the house of M. Francesco Manenti, at S. Polo di Campo, with my bill of exchange, and he gave me at once eighteen pieces of ten lires each … . I figure that you made fun of me saying seriously that you will go up in a balloon and that, if the wind is favorable, you will go in the air to Trieste and then from Trieste to Venice.”

19th May 1784. “I see, to my great regret, that you are in poor health and still short of money …. You say that you need twenty sequins and that you have only twenty trari … . I hope that your book is printed… .”

29th May 1784. “I note with pleasure that you are going to take the baths; but I regret that this treatment enfeebles and depresses you. It reassures me that you do not fail in your appetite nor your sleep…. I hope I will not hear you say again that you are disgusted with everything, and no longer in love with life … . I see that for you, at this moment, fortune sleeps … . I am not surprised that everything is so dear in the city where you are, for at Venice also one pays dearly and everything is priced beyond reach.”

Zaguri wrote Casanova the 12th May, that he had met Francesca in the Mongolfieri casino. And on the 2nd June Casanova, doubtless feeling his helplessness in the matter of money, and the insufficiency of his occasional remittances, and suspicious of Francesca’s loyalty, wrote her a letter of renunciation. Then came her news of the sale of his books; and eighteen months passed before he wrote to her again.

On the 12th June 1784, Francesca replied: “I could not expect to convey to you, nor could you figure, the sorrow that tries me in seeing that you will not occupy yourself any more with me … . I hid from you that I had been with that woman who lived with us, with her companion, the cashier of the Academie des Mongolfceristes. Although I went to this Academy with prudence and dignity, I did not want to write you for fear you would scold me. That is the only reason, and hereafter you may be certain of my sincerity and frankness… . I beg you to forgive me this time, if I write you something I have never written for fear that you would be angry with me because I had not told you. Know then that four months ago, your books which were on the mezzanine were sold to a library for the sum of fifty lires, when we were in urgent need. It was my mother who did it… .”

26th June 1784. “… Mme. Zenobia [de Monti] has asked me if I would enjoy her company. Certain that you would consent I have allowed her to come and live with me. She has sympathy for me and has always loved me.”

7th July 1784. “Your silence greatly disturbs me! To receive no more of your letters! By good post I have sent you three letters, with this one, and you have not replied to any of them. Certainly, you have reason for being offended at me, because I hid from you something which you learned from another … . But you might have seen, from my last letter, that I have written you all the truth about my fault and that I have asked your pardon for not writing it before…. Without you and your help, God knows what will become of us…. For the rent of your chamber Mme. Zenobia will give us eight lires a month and five lires for preparing her meals. But what can one do with thirteen lires! … I am afflicted and mortified… . Do not abandon me.”

V — LAST DAYS AT VIENNA

IN 1785, AT Vienna, Casanova ran across Costa, his former secretary who, in 1761, had fled from him taking “diamonds, watches, snuffbox, linen, rich suits and a hundred louis.” “In 1785, I found this runagate at Vienna. He was then Count Erdich’s man, and when we come to that period, the reader shall hear what I did.”

Casanova did not reach this period, in writing his Memoirs, but an account of this meeting is given by Da Ponte, who was present at it, in his Memoirs. Costa had met with many misfortunes, as he told Casanova, and had himself been defrauded. Casanova threatened to have him hanged, but according to Da Ponte, was dissuaded from this by counter accusations made by Costa.

Da Ponte’s narration of the incident is brilliant and amusing, in spite of our feeling that it is maliciously exaggerated: “Strolling one morning in the Graben with Casanova, I suddenly saw him knit his brows, squawk, grind his teeth, twist himself, raise his hands skyward, and, snatching himself away from me, throw himself on a man whom I seemed to know, shouting with a very loud voice: ‘Murderer, I have caught thee.’ A crowd having gathered as a result of this strange act and yell, I approached them with some disgust; nevertheless, I caught Casanova’s hand and almost by force I separated him from the fray. He then told me the story, with desperate motions and gestures, and said that his antagonist was Gioachino Costa, by whom he had been betrayed. This Gioachino Costa, although he had been forced to become a servant by his vices and bad practices, and was at that very time servant to a Viennese gentleman, was more or less of a poet. He was, in fact, one of those who had honored me with their satire, when the Emperor Joseph selected me as poet of his theater. Costa entered a cafe, and while I continued to walk with Casanova, wrote and send him by a messenger, the following verses:

“‘Casanova, make no outcry;

You stole, indeed, as well as I;

You were the one who first taught me;

Your art I mastered thoroughly.

Silence your wisest course will be.'

"These verses had the desired effect. After a brief silence, Casanova laughed and then said softly in my ear: 'The rogue is right.' He went into the cafe and motioned to Costa to come out; they began to walk together calmly, as if nothing had happened, and they parted shaking hands repeatedly and seemingly calm and friendly. Casanova returned to me with a cameo on his little finger, which by a strange coincidence, represented Mercury, the god-protector of thieves. This was his greatest valuable, and it was all that was left of the immense booty, but represented the character of the two restored friends, perfectly."

Da Ponte precedes this account with a libellous narrative of Casanova's relations with the Marquise d'Urfe, even stating that Casanova stole from her the jewels stolen in turn by Costa, but, as M. Maynial remarks, we may attribute this perverted account "solely to the rancour and antipathy of the narrator." It is more likely that Casanova frightened Costa almost out of his wits, was grimly amused at his misfortunes, and let him go, since there was no remedy to Casanova's benefit, for his former rascality. Casanova's own brief, anticipatory account is given in his Memoirs.

In 1797, correcting and revising his Memoirs, Casanova wrote: "Twelve years ago, if it had not been for my guardian angel, I would have foolishly married, at Vienna, a young, thoughtless girl, with whom I had fallen in love." In which connection, his remark is interesting: "I have loved women even to madness, but I have always loved liberty better; and whenever I have been in danger of losing it, fate has come to my rescue."

While an identification of the "young, thoughtless girl" has been impossible, M. Rava believes her to be "C. M.," the subject of a poem found at Dux, written in duplicate, in Italian and French, and headed "Giacomo Casanova, in love, to C. M."

"When, Catton, to your sight is shown the love Which all my tenderest caresses prove, Feeling all pleasure's sharpest joys and fears, Burning one moment, shivering the next, Caressing you while showering you with tears, Giving each charm a thousand eager kisses, Wishing to touch at once a thousand blisses And, at the ones beyond my power, vexed, Abandoned in a furious desire, Leaving these charms for other charms that fire, Possessing all and yet desiring Until, destroyed by excesses of pleasure, Finding no words of love nor anything To express my fires overflowing measure Than deepening sighs and obscure murmuring: Ah! Then you think to read my inmost heart To find the love that can these signs impart ….Be not deceived. These transports, amorous cries, These kisses, tears, desires and heavy sighs, Of all the fire which devours me Could less than even the lightest tokens be."

Evidently this same girl is the authoress of the two following letters written by "Caton M … ." to Casanova in 1786.

12th April 1786. "You will infinitely oblige me if you will tell me to whom you wrote such pretty things about me; apparently it is the Abbe Da Ponte; but I would go to his house and, either he would prove that you had written it or I would have the honor of telling him that he is the most infamous traducer in the world. I think that the lovely picture which you make of my future has not as much excuse as you may think, and, in spite of your science, you deceive yourself…. But just now I will inform you of all my wooers and you can judge for yourself by this whether I deserve all the reproaches you made me in your last letter. It is two years since I came to know the Count de K … ; I could have loved him but I was too honest to be willing to satisfy his desires … . Some months afterward, I came to know the Count de M … ; he was not so handsome as K … , but he possessed every possible art for seducing a girl; I did everything for him, but I never loved him as much as his friend. In fine, to tell you all my giddinesses in a few words, I set everything right again with K … . and got myself into a quarrel with M … ., then I left K… . and returned to M … ., but at the house of the latter there was always an officer who pleased me more than both the two others and who sometimes conducted me to the house; then we found ourselves at the house of a friend, and it is of this same officer that I am ill. So, my dear friend, that is all. I do not seek to justify my past conduct; on the contrary, I know well that I have acted badly…. I am much afflicted at being the cause of your remaining away from Venice during the Carnival … . I hope to see you soon again and am, with much love,

"Monsieur, your sincere

“Caton M… .”

16th July 1786. “I have spoken with the Abbe Da Ponte. He invited me to come to his house because, he said, he had something to tell me for you. I went there, but was received so coldly that I am resolved not to go there again. Also, Mlle. Nanette affected an air of reserve and took at on herself to read me lessons on what she was pleased to call my libertinism … . I beg that you will write nothing more about me to these two very dangerous personages…. Just now I will tell you of a little trick which I played on you, which without doubt deserves some punishment. The young, little Kasper, whom you formerly loved, came to ask me for the address of her dear Monsieur de Casanova, so that she could write a very tender letter full of recollections. I had too much politeness to wish to refuse a pretty girl, who was once the favorite of my lover, so just a request, so I gave her the address she wished; but I addressed the letter to a city far from you. Is it not, my dear friend, that you would like well to know the name of the city, so that you could secure the letter by posts. But you can depend on my word that you will not know it until you have written me a very long letter begging me very humbly to indicate the place where the divine letter of the adorable object of your vows has gone. You might well make this sacrifice for a girl in whom the Emperor [Joseph II] interests himself, for it is known that, since your departure from Vienna, it is he who is teaching her French and music; and apparently he takes the trouble of instructing her himself, for she often goes to his house to thank him for his kindnesses to her, but I know not in what way she expresses herself.

“Farewell, my dear friend. Think sometimes of me and believe that I am your sincere friend.”

On the 23rd April 1785, the ambassador Foscarini died, depriving Casanova of a protector, probably leaving him without much money, and not in the best of health. He applied for the position of secretary to Count Fabris, his former friend, whose name had been changed from Tognolo, but without success. Casanova then determined to go to Berlin in the hope of a place in the Academy. On the 30th July he arrived at Bruen in Moravia, where his friend Maximilian-Joseph, Count Lamberg gave him, among other letters of recommendation, a letter addressed to Jean-Ferdinand Opiz, Inspector of Finances and Banks at Czaslau, in which he wrote:

“A celebrated man, M. Casanova, will deliver to you, my dear friend, the visiting card with which he is charged for Mme. Opiz and yourself. Knowing this amiable and remarkable man, will mark an epoch in your life, be polite and friendly to him, ‘quod ipsi facies in mei memoriam faciatis’. Keep yourself well, write to me, and if you can direct him to some honest man at Carlsbad, fail not to do so… .”

On the 15th August 1785, M. Opiz wrote Count Lamberg about Casanova’s visit:

“Your letter of the 30th, including your cards for my wife and myself, was delivered the first of this month by M. Casanova. He was very anxious to meet the Princess Lubomirski again at Carlsbad. But as something about his carriage was broken, he was obliged to stop in Czaslau for two hours which he passed in my company. He has left Czaslau with the promise of giving me a day on his return. I am already delighted. Even in the short space of time in which I enjoyed his company, I found in him a man worthy of our highest consideration and of our love, a benevolent philosopher whose homeland is the great expanse of our planet (and not Venice alone) and who values only the men in the kings … . I know absolutely no one at Carlsbad, so I sincerely regret being unable to recommend him to anyone there, according to your desire. He did not wish, on account of his haste, to pause even at Prague and, consequently, to deliver, at this time, your letter to Prince Furstemberg.”

PART THE THIRD — DUX — 1786-1798

I — THE CASTLE AT DUX

IT IS UNCERTAIN how long Casanova remained at Carlsbad. While there, however, he met again the Polish nobleman Zawoiski, with whom he had gambled in Venice in 1746. “As to Zawoiski, I did not tell him the story until I met him in Carlsbad old and deaf, forty years later.” He did not return to Czaslau, but in September 1785 he was at Teplitz where he found Count Waldstein whom he accompanied to his castle at Dux.

From this time onward he remained almost constantly at the castle where he was placed in charge of the Count’s library and given a pension of one thousand florins annually.

Describing his visit to the castle in 1899, Arthur Symons writes: “I had the sensation of an enormous building: all Bohemian castles are big, but this one was like a royal palace. Set there in the midst of the town, after the Bohemian fashion, it opens at the back upon great gardens, as if it were in the midst of the country. I walked through room after room, corridor after corridor; everywhere there were pictures, everywhere portraits of Wallenstein, and battle scenes in which he led on his troops. The library, which was formed, or at least arranged, by Casanova, and which remains as he left it, contains some twenty-five thousand volumes, some of them of considerable value … . The library forms part of the Museum, which occupies a ground-floor wing of the castle. The first room is an armoury, in which all kinds of arms are arranged, in a decorative way, covering the ceiling and the walls with strange patterns. The second room contains pottery, collected by Casanova’s Waldstein on his Eastern travels. The third room is full of curious mechanical toys, and cabinets, and carvings in ivory. Finally, we come to the library, contained in the two innermost rooms. The book shelves are painted white and reach to the low vaulted ceilings, which are whitewashed. At the end of a bookcase, in the corner of one of the windows, hangs a fine engraved portrait of Casanova.”

In this elaborate setting, Casanova found the refuge he so sadly needed for his last years. The evil days of Venice and Vienna, and the problems and makeshifts of mere existence, were left behind. And for this refuge he paid the world with his Memoirs.

II — LETTERS FROM FRANCESCA

IN 1786, CASANOVA renewed his correspondence with Francesca, who wrote:

1st July 1786. “After a silence of a year and a half, I received from you yesterday a good letter which has consoled me in informing me that you are in perfect health. But, on the other hand, I was much pained to see that in your letter you did not call me Friend, but Madame … . You have reason to chide me and to reproach me for having rented a house without surety or means of paying the rent. As to the advice you give me that if some honest person would pay me my rent, or at least a part of it, I should have no scruples about taking it because a little more, or a little less, would be of little importance … . I declare to you that I have been disconsolated at receiving from you such a reproach which is absolutely unjustified … . You tell me that you have near you a young girl who merits all your solicitations and your love, she and her family of six persons who adore you and give you every attention; that she costs you all you have, so that you cannot send me even a sou … . I am pained to hear you say that you will never return to Venice, and yet I hope to see you again… .”

The “young girl” referred to in Francesca’s letter was Anna-Dorothea Kleer, daughter of the porter of the castle. This young girl became pregnant in 1786 and Casanova was accused of seducing her. The guilty one, however, was a painter named Schottner who married the unfortunate girl in January 1787.

9th August 1786.

“My only true friend,

“It is two days since I received your dear letter; I was very happy to see your writing …. You have reason to mortify me and reproach me in recalling all the troubles I caused you, and especially that which you call treachery, the sale of your books, of which in part I was not guilty … . Forgive me, my dear friend, me and my foolish mother who, despite all my objections, absolutely insisted on selling them. Regarding that which you write me that you know that my mother, last year, told about that you had been my ruin, this may unhappily be true, since you already know the evil thoughts of my mother, who even says that you are still at Venice … . When have I not been always sincere with you, and when have I not at least listened to your good advices and offers? I am in a desperate situation, abandoned by all, almost in the streets, almost about to be homeless … . Where are all the pleasures which formerly you procured me? Where are the theatres, the comedies which we once saw together? …"

5th January 1787.

"The first of the year I received your dear letter with the bill of exchange for one hundred and twenty-five lires which you sent me so generously … . You say you have forgiven me for all the troubles I have caused you. Forget all, then, and do not accuse me any more of things which are but too true and of which the remembrance alone cuts me to the heart … . You write me that you have been forgotten by a person of whom you were very fond, that she is married and that you have not seen her for more than a month."

The "person" referred to was Anna Kleer.

5th October 1787.

… . "Until the other day, I had been waiting for your arrival, hoping that you would come to assist at the entry of the Procurator Memmo … . I see by your good letter that you were not able to get away, since your presence is nearly always necessary in the great castle … . I learn of the visit you have received from the Emperor who wished to see your library of forty-thousand volumes! … You say that you detest the chase and that you are unhappy when politeness obliges you to go … . I am pleased to know that you are in good health, that you are stout and that you have a good appetite and sleep well … . I hope that the printing of your book [Histoire de ma fuite] is going according to your wishes. If you go to Dresden for the marriage of your niece, enjoy yourself for me … . Forget not to write to me; this gives me such pleasure! Remember me. Full of confidence in your friendship, I am, and always will be, your true and sincere friend,

"Francesca Buschina."

III — CORRESPONDENCE AND ACTIVITIES

IN 1787, A book was published under the title of ‘Dreissig Brief uber Galizien by Traunpaur’, which included this passage: “The most famous adventurers of two sorts (there are two, in fact: honest adventurers and adventurers of doubtful reputation) have appeared on the scene of the kingdom of Poland. The best known on the shores of the Vistula are: the miraculous Cagliostro: Boisson de Quency, grand charlatan, soldier of fortune, decorated with many orders, member of numerous Academies: the Venetian Casanova of Saint-Gall, a true savant, who fought a duel with Count Branicki: the Baron de Poellnitz … the lucky Count Tomatis, who knew so well how to correct fortune, and many others.”

In June 1789, Casanova received a letter from Teresa Boisson de Quency, the wife of the adventurer above referred to:

“Much honored Monsieur Giacomo:

“For a long time I have felt a very particular desire to evidence to you the estimation due your spirit and your eminent qualities: the superb sonnet augmented my wish. But the inconveniences of childbirth and the cares required by a little girl whom I adore, made me defer this pleasure. During my husband’s absence, your last and much honored letter came to my hands. Your amiable compliments to me, engage me to take the pen to give you renewed assurance that you have in me a sincere admirer of your great talent … . When I wish to point out a person who writes and thinks with excellence, I name Monsieur Casanova … .”

In 1793, Teresa de Quency wished to return to Venice at which time Zaguri wrote Casanova: “The Bassani has received letters from her husband which tell her nothing more than that he is alive.”

Casanova passed the months of May, June and July 1788 at Prague, supervising the printing of the Histoire de ma fuite.

“I remember laughing very heartily at Prague, six years ago, on learning that some thin-skinned ladies, on reading my flight from The Leads, which was published at that date, took great offense at the above account, which they thought I should have done well to leave out."

In May he was troubled with an attack of the grippe. In October, he was in Dresden, apparently with his brother. Around this time "The Magdalene," a painting by Correggio, was stolen from the Museum of the Elector.

On the 30th October 1788, Casanova wrote to the Prince Belozelski, Russian Minister to the Court of Dresden: "Tuesday morning, after having embraced my dear brother, I got into a carriage to return here. At the barrier on the outskirts of Dresden, I was obliged to descend, and six men carried the two chests of my carriage, my two night-bags and my capelire into a little chamber on the ground level, demanded my keys, and examined everything … . The youngest of these infamous executors of such an order told me they were searching for 'The Magdalene! … The oldest had the impudence to put his hands on my waistcoat … . At last they let me go.

"This, my prince, delayed me so that I could not reach Petervalden by daylight. I stopped at an evil tavern where, dying of famine and rage, I ate everything I saw; and, wishing to drink and not liking beer, I gulped down some beverage which my host told me was good and which did not seem unpleasant. He told me that it was Pilnitz Moste. This beverage aroused a rebellion in my guts. I passed the night tormented by a continual diarrhoea. I arrived here the day before yesterday (the 28th), where I found an unpleasant duty awaiting me. Two months ago, I brought a woman here to cook, needing her while the Count is away; as soon as she arrived, I gave her a room and I went to Leipzig. On returning here, I found three servants in the hands of surgeons and all three blame my cook for putting them in such a state. The Count's courier had already told me, at Leipzig, that she had crippled him. Yesterday the Count arrived and would do nothing but laugh, but I have sent her back and exhorted her to imitate the Magdalene. The amusing part is that she is old, ugly and ill-smelling."

In 1789, 1791 and 1792, Casanova received three letters from Maddalena Allegranti, the niece of J. B. Allegranti the innkeeper with whom Casanova lodged at Florence in 1771. "This young person, still a child, was so pretty, so gracious, with such spirit and such charms, that she incessantly distracted me. Sometimes she would come into my chamber to wish me good-morning … . Her appearance, her grace, the sound of her voice … were more than I could resist; and, fearing the seduction would excuse mine, I could find no other expedient than to take flight… . Some years later, Maddalena became a celebrated musician."

At this period of Casanova's life, we hear again of the hussy who so upset Casanova during his visit to London that he was actually on the point of committing suicide through sheer desperation. On the 20th September 1789, he wrote to the Princess Clari, sister of the Prince de Ligne: "I am struck by a woman at first sight, she completely ravishes me, and I am perhaps lost, for she may be a Charpillon."

There were, among the papers at Dux, two letters from Marianne Charpillon, and a manuscript outlining the story of Casanova's relations with her and her family, as detailed in the Memoirs: With the story in mind, the letters from this girl, "the mistress, now of one, now of another," are of interest:

"I know not, Monsieur, whether you forgot the engagement Saturday last; as for me, I remember that you consented to give us the pleasure of having you at dinner to-day, Monday, the 12th of the month. I would greatly like to know whether your ill-humor has left you; this would please me. Farewell, in awaiting the honor of seeing you.

"Marianne de Charpillon."

"Monsieur,

"As I have a part in all which concerns you, I am greatly put out to know of the new illness which incommodes you; I hope that this will be so trifling that we will have the pleasure of seeing you well and at our house, to-day or to-morrow.

"And, in truth, the gift which you sent me is so pretty that I know not how to express to you the pleasure it has given me and how much I value it; and I cannot see why you must always provoke me by telling me that it is my fault that you are filled with bile, while I am as innocent as a new-born babe and would wish you so gentle and patient that your blood would become a true clarified syrup; this will come to you if you follow my advice. I am, Monsieur,

"Your very humble servant,

“[Marianne Charpillon]

“Wednesday at six o’clock”

On the 8th April, 1790, Zaguri wrote in reference to vertigo of which Casanova complained: “Have you tried riding horseback? Do you not think that is an excellent preservative? I tried it this last summer and I find myself very well.”

In 1790, Casanova had a conversation with the Emperor Joseph II at Luxemburg, on the subject of purchased nobility, which he reports in the Memoirs.

This same year, attending the coronation of Leopold at Prague, Casanova met his grandson (and, probably, as he himself believed, his own son), the son of Leonilda, who was the daughter of Casanova and Donna Lucrezia, and who was married to the Marquis C … . In 1792, Leonilda wrote, inviting Casanova to “spend the remainder of my days with her.”

In February 1791, Casanova wrote to Countess Lamberg: “I have in my capitularies more than four hundred sentences which pass for aphorisms and which include all the tricks which place one word for another. One can read in Livy that Hannibal overcame the Alps by means of vinegar. No elephant ever uttered such a stupidity. Livy? Not at all. Livy was not a beast; it is you who are, foolish instructor of credulous youth! Livy did not say aceto which means vinegar, but aceta which means axe.”

In April 1791, Casanova wrote to Carlo Grimani at Venice, stating that he felt he had committed a great fault in publishing his libel, ‘Ne amori ne donne’, and very humbly begging his pardon. Also that his Memoirs would be composed of six volumes in octavo with a seventh supplementary volume containing codicils.

In June, Casanova composed for the theater of Princess Clari, at Teplitz, a piece entitled: ‘Le Polemoscope ou la Calomnie demasquee par la presence d’esprit, tragicomedie en trois actes’. The manuscript was preserved at Dux, together with another form of the same, having the sub-title of ‘La Lorgnette Menteuse ou la Calomnie demasquee’. It may be assumed that the staging of this piece was an occasion of pleasant activity for Casanova.

In January 1792, during Count Waldstein’s absence in London or Paris, Casanova was embroiled with M. Faulkircher, maitre d’hotel, over the unpleasant matter indicated in two of Casanova’s letters to this functionary:

“Your rascally Vidierol … tore my portrait out of one of my books, scrawled my name on it, with the epithet which you taught him and then stuck it on the door of the privy ….

“Determined to make sure of the punishment of your infamous valet, and wishing at the same time to give proof of my respect for Count Waldstein, not forgetting that, as a last resort, I have the right to invade his jurisdiction, I took an advocate, wrote my complaint and had it translated into German … . Having heard of this at Teplitz, and having known that I would not save your name, you came to my chamber to beg me to write whatever I wished but not to name you because it would place you wrong before the War Council and expose you to the loss of your pension … . I have torn up my first complaint and have written a second in Latin, which an advocate of Bilin has translated for me and which I have deposited at the office of the judiciary at Dux….”

Following this matter, Casanova attended the Carnival at Oberleutensdorf, and left at Dux a manuscript headed ‘Passe temps de Jacques Casanova de Seingalt pour le carnaval de l’an 1792 dans le bourg d’Oberleutensdorf’. While in that city, meditating on the Faulkircher incident, he wrote also ‘Les quinze pardons, monologue nocturne du bibliothecaire’, also preserved in manuscript at Dux, in which we read:

“Gerron, having served twenty years as a simple soldier, acquired a great knowledge of military discipline. This man was not yet seventy years old. He had come to believe, partly from practice, partly from theory, that twenty blows with a baton on the rump are not dishonoring. When the honest soldier was unfortunate enough to deserve them, he accepted them with resignation. The pain was sharp, but not lasting; it did not deprive him of either appetite nor honor … . Gerron, becoming a corporal, had obtained no idea of any kind of sorrow other than that coming from the blows of a baton on the rump … . On this idea, he thought that the soul of an honest man was no different than a soldier’s breech. If Gerron caused trouble to the spirit of a man of honor, he thought that this spirit, like his own, had only a rump, and that any trouble he caused would pass likewise. He deceived himself. The breech of the spirit of an honest man is different than the breech of the spirit of a Gerron who rendered compatible the rank of a military officer with the vile employments of a domestic and the stable-master of some particular lord. Since Gerron deceived himself, we must pardon him all his faults …" etc.

Casanova complained of the Faulkircher incident to the mother of Count Waldstein, who wrote: "I pity you, Monsieur, for being obliged to live among such people and in such evil company, but my son will not forget that which he owes to himself and I am sure he will give you all the satisfaction you wish." Also to his friend Zaguri, who wrote, the 16th March: "I hope that the gout in your hand will not torment you any more… . You have told me the story I asked about and which begins: 'Two months have passed since an officer, who is at Vienna, insulted me!' I cannot understand whether he who wrote you an insulting letter is at Vienna or whether he is at Dux. When will the Count return? … You should await his return because you would have, among other reasons to present to him, that of not wishing to have recourse to other jurisdiction than his… You say your letters have been intercepted? Someone has put your portrait in the privy? The devil! It is a miracle that you have not killed someone. Positively, I am curious to know the results and I hope that you make no mistakes in this affair which appears to me very delicate."

In August 1792, or thereabouts, Da Ponte on his way to Dresden, visited Casanova at Dux, in the hope of collecting an old debt, but gave up this hope on realizing Casanova's limited resources. In the winter of 1792-3 Da Ponte found himself in great distress in Holland. "Casanova was the only man to whom I could apply," he writes in his Memoirs. "To better dispose him, I thought to write him in verse, depicting my troubles and begging him to send me some money on account of that which he still owed me. Far from considering my request, he contented himself with replying, in vulgar prose, by a laconic billet which I transcribe: 'When Cicero wrote to his friends, he avoided telling them of his affairs.'"

In May 1793, Da Ponte wrote from London: "Count Waldstein has lived a very obscure life in London, badly lodged, badly dressed, badly served, always in cabarets, cafes, with porters, with rascals, with … we will leave out the rest. He has the heart of an angel and an excellent character, but not so good a head as ours."

Toward the end of 1792, Cssanova wrote a letter to Robespierre, which, as he advises M. Opiz, the 13th January 1793, occupied one hundred and twenty folio pages. This letter was not to be found at Dux and it may possibly have been sent, or may have been destroyed by Casanova on the advice of Abbe O'Kelly. Casanova's feelings were very bitter over the trial of Louis XVI., and in his letters to M. Opiz he complained bitterly of the Jacobins and predicted the ruin of France. Certainly, to Casanova, the French Revolution represented the complete overthrow of many of his cherished illusions.

On the 1st August 1793, Wilhelmina Rietz, Countess Lichtenau (called the Pompadour of Frederic-William II., King of Prussia) wrote to the librarian at Dux:

“Monsieur

“It seems impossible to know where Count Valstaine [Waldstein] is staying, whether he is in Europe, Africa, America, or possibly the Megamiques. If he is there, you are the only one who could insure his receiving the enclosed letter.

“For my part, I have not yet had time to read their history, but the first reading I do will assuredly be that.

“Mademoiselle Chappuis has the honor of recalling herself to your memory, and I have that of being your very humble servant,

“Wilhelmina Rietz.”

The allusions to a “history” and to the ‘Megamiques’ in this letter refer to Casanova's romance, ‘Icosameron’.

About this time, Count Waldstein returned to Dux after having been, at Paris, according to Da Ponte, concerned in planning the flight of Louis XVI., and in attempting to save the Princess Lamballe. On the 17th August, Casanova replied to the above letter:

“Madame,

“I handed the Count your letter two minutes after having received it, finding him easily. I told him that he should respond at once, for the post was ready to go; but, as he begged to wait for the following ordinary, I did not insist. The day before yesterday, he begged me to wait again, but he did not find me so complaisant. I respond to you, Madame, for his carelessness in replying to letters is extreme; he is so shameful that he is in despair when he is obliged to it. Although he may not respond, be sure of seeing him at your house at Berlin after the Leipzig Fair, with a hundred bad excuses which you will laugh at and pretend to believe good ones … . This last month, my wish to see Berlin again has become immeasurable, and I will do my best to have Count Waldstein take me there in the month of October or at least to permit me to go … . You have given me an idea of Berlin far different than that the city left with me when I passed four months there twenty-nine years ago … . If my 'Icosameron' interests you, I offer you its Spirit. I wrote it here two years ago and I would not have published it if I had not dared hope that the Theological Censor would permit it. At Berlin no one raised the least difficulty … . If circumstances do not permit me to pay you my respects at Berlin, I hope for the happiness of seeing you here next year … ."

Sometime after this and following his quarrel with M. Opiz, Casanova evidently passed through a period of depression, as indicated by a manuscript at Dux, headed "Short reflection of a philosopher who finds himself thinking of procuring his own death," and dated "the 13th December 1793, the day dedicated to S. Lucie, remarkable in my too long life."

"Life is a burden to me. What is the metaphysical being who prevents me from slaying myself? It is Nature. What is the other being who enjoins me to lighten the burdens of that life which brings me only feeble pleasures and heavy pains? It is Reason. Nature is a coward which, demanding only conservation, orders me to sacrifice all to its existence. Reason is a being which gives me resemblance to God, which treads instinct under foot and which teaches me to choose the best way after having well considered the reasons. It demonstrates to me that I am a man in imposing silence on the Nature which opposes that action which alone could remedy all my ills.

"Reason convinces me that the power I have of slaying myself is a privilege given me by God, by which I perceive that I am superior to all animals created in the world; for there is no animal who can slay itself nor think of slaying itself, except the scorpion, which poisons itself, but only when the fire which surrounds it convinces it that it cannot save itself from being burned. This animal slays itself because it fears fire more than death.

Reason tells me imperiously that I have the right to slay myself, with the divine oracle of Cen: ‘Qui non potest vivere bene non vivat male.’ These eight words have such power that it is impossible that a man to whom life is a burden could do other than slay himself on first hearing them.”

Certainly, however, Casanova did not deceive himself with these sophisms, and Nature, who for many years had unquestionably lavished her gifts on him, had her way.

Over the end of the year, the two mathematicians, Casanova and Opiz, at the request of Count Waldstein, made a scientific examination of the reform of the calendar as decreed the 5th October 1793 by the National Convention.

In January 1795, Casanova wrote to the Princess Lobkowitz to thank her for her gift of a little dog. On the 16th the Princess wrote from Vienna:

“Monsieur,

“I am enchanted at the charming reception you accorded the dog which I sent you when I learned of the death of your well-loved greyhound, knowing that she would nowhere be better cared for than with you, Monsieur. I hope with all my heart that she has all the qualities which may, in some fashion, help you to forget the deceased … .”

In the autumn of 1795, Casanova left Dux. The Prince de Ligne writes in his Memoirs: “God directed him to leave Dux. Scarcely believing in more than his death, which he no longer doubted, he pretended that each thing he had done was by the direction of God and this was his guide. God directed him to ask me for letters of recommendation to the Duke of Weimar, who was my good friend, to the Duchess of Gotha, who did not know me, and to the Jews of Berlin. And he departed secretly, leaving for Count Waldstein a letter at once tender, proud, honest and irritating. Waldstein laughed and said he would return. Casanova waited in ante-chambers; no one would place him either as governor, librarian or chamberlain. He said everywhere that the Germans were thorough beasts. The excellent and very amiable Duke of Weimer welcomed him wonderfully; but in an instant he became jealous of Goethe and Wieland, who were under the Duke’s protection. He declaimed against them and against the literature of the country which he did not, and could not, know. At Berlin, he declaimed against the ignorance, the superstition and the knavery of the Hebrews to whom I had addressed him, drawing meanwhile, for the money they claimed of him, bills of exchange on the Count who laughed, paid, and embraced him when he returned. Casanova laughed, wept, and told him that God had ordered him to make this trip of six weeks, to leave without speaking of it, and to return to his chamber at Dux. Enchanted at seeing us again, he agreeably related to us all the misfortunes which had tried him and to which his susceptibility gave the name of humiliations. 'I am proud,' he said, 'because I am nothing'… . Eight days after his return, what new troubles! Everyone had been served strawberries before him, and none remained for him."

The Prince de Ligne, although he was Casanova's sincere friend and admirer, gives a rather somber picture of Casanova's life at Dux: "It must not be imagined that he was satisfied to live quietly in the refuge provided him through the kindness of Waldstein. That was not within his nature. Not a day passed without trouble; something was certain to be wrong with the coffee, the milk, the dish of macaroni, which he required each day. There were always quarrels in the house. The cook had ruined his polenta; the coachman had given him a bad driver to bring him to see me; the dogs had barked all night; there had been more guests than usual and he had found it necessary to eat at a side table. Some hunting-horn had tormented his ear with its blasts; the priest had been trying to convert him; Count Waldstein had not anticipated his morning greeting; the servant had delayed with his wine; he had not been introduced to some distinguished personage who had come to see the lance which had pierced the side of the great Wallenstein; the Count had lent a book without telling him; a groom had not touched his hat to him; his German speech had been misunderstood; he had become angry and people had laughed at him."

Like Count Waldstein, however, the Prince de Ligne made the widest allowances, understanding the chafing of Casanova's restless spirit. "Casanova has a mind without an equal, from which each word is extraordinary and each thought a book."

On the 16th December, he wrote Casanova: "One is never old with your heart, your genius and your stomach."

Casanova's own comment on his trip away from Dux will be found in the Memoirs. "Two years ago, I set out for Hamburg, but my good genius made me return to Dux. What had I to do at Hamburg?”

On the 10th December, Casanova’s brother Giovanni [Jean] died. He was the Director of the Academy of Painting at Dresden. Apparently the two brothers could not remain friends.

Giovanni left two daughters, Teresa and Augusta, and two sons, Carlo and Lorenzo. While he was unable to remain friendly with his brother, Casanova apparently wished to be of assistance to his nieces, who were not in the best of circumstances, and he exchanged a number of letters with Teresa after her father’s death.

On the occasion of Teresa Casanova’s visit to Vienna in 1792, Princess Clari, oldest sister of the Prince de Ligne, wrote of her: “She is charming in every way, pretty as love, always amiable; she has had great success. Prince Kaunitz loves her to the point of madness.”

In a letter of the 25th April 1796, Teresa assured her “very amiable and very dear uncle” that the cautions, which occupied three-fourths of his letter, were unnecessary; and compared him with his brother Francois, to the injury of the latter. On the 5th May, Teresa wrote:

“Before thanking you for your charming letter, my very kind uncle, I should announce the issue of our pension of one hundred and sixty crowns a year, which is to say, eighty crowns apiece; I am well satisfied for I did not hope to receive so much.” In the same letter, Teresa spoke of seeing much of a “charming man,” Don Antonio, who was no other than the rascally adventurer Don Antonio della Croce with whom Casanova had been acquainted since 1753, who assisted Casanova in losing a thousand sequins at Milan in 1763; who in 1767, at Spa, following financial reverses, abandoned his pregnant mistress to the charge of Casanova; and who in August 1795, wrote to Casanova: “Your letter gave me great pleasure as the sweet souvenir of our old friendship, unique and faithful over a period of fifty years.”

It is probable that, at this time, Casanova visited Dresden and Berlin also. In his letter “To Leonard Snetlage,” he writes: “‘That which proves that revolution should arrive,’ a profound thinker said to me in Berlin, last year, ‘is that it has arrived.’”

On the 1st March, 1798, Carlo Angiolini, the son of Maria Maddalena, Casanova’s sister, wrote to Casanova: “This evening, Teresa will marry M. le Chambellan de Veisnicht [Von Wessenig] whom you know well.” This desirable marriage received the approval of Francesco also. Teresa, as the Baroness Wessenig, occupied a prominent social position at Dresden. She died in 1842.

Between the 13th February and the 6th December 1796, Casanova engaged in a correspondence with Mlle. Henriette de Schuckmann who was visiting at Bayreuth. This Henriette (unfortunately not the Henriette of the Memoirs whose “forty letters” to Casanova apparently have not been located), had visited the library at Dux in the summer of 1786. “I was with the Chamberlain Freiberg, and I was greatly moved, as much by your conversation as by your kindness which provided me with a beautiful edition of Metastasio, elegantly bound in red morocco.” Finding herself at Bayreuth in an enforced idleness and wishing a stimulant, wishing also to borrow some books, she wrote Casanova, under the auspices of Count Koenig, a mutual friend, the 13th February 1796, recalling herself to his memory. Casanova responded to her overtures and five of her letters were preserved at Dux. On the 28th May Henriette wrote:

“But certainly, my good friend, your letters have given me the greatest pleasure, and it is with a rising satisfaction that I pore over all you say to me. I love, I esteem, I cherish, your frankness … . I understand you perfectly and I love to distraction the lively and energetic manner with which you express yourself.”

On the 30th September, she wrote: “You will read to-day, if you please, a weary letter; for your silence, Monsieur, has given me humors. A promise is a debt, and in your last letter you promised to write me at least a dozen pages. I have every right to call you a bad debtor; I could summon you before a court of justice; but all these acts of vengeance would not repair the loss which I have endured through my hope and my fruitless waiting … . It is your punishment to read this trivial page; but although my head is empty, my heart is not so, and it holds for you a very living friendship.”

In March 1797, this Henriette went to Lausanne and in May from there to her father’s home at Mecklenburg.

IV — CORRESPONDENCE WITH JEAN-FERDINAND OPIZ

ON THE 27TH July 1792, Casanova wrote M. Opiz that he had finished the twelfth volume of his Memoirs, with his age at forty-seven years 1772. “Our late friend, the worthy Count Max Josef Lamberg,” he added, “could not bear the idea of my burning my Memoirs, and expecting to survive me, had persuaded me to send him the first four volumes. But now there is no longer any questions that his good soul has left his organs. Three weeks ago I wept for his death, all the more so as he would still be living if he had listened to me. I am, perhaps, the only one who knows the truth. He who slew him was the surgeon Feuchter at Cremsir, who applied thirty-six mercurial plasters on a gland in his left groin which was swollen but not by the pox, as I am sure by the description he gave me of the cause of the swelling. The mercury mounted to his esophagus and, being able to swallow neither solids nor fluids, he died the 23rd June of positive famine … . The interest of the bungling surgeon is to say that he died of the pox. This is not true, I beg, you to give the lie to anyone you hear saying it. I have before my eyes four hundred and sixty of his letters over which I weep and which I will burn. I have asked Count Leopold to burn mine, which he had saved, and I hope that he will please me by doing it. I have survived all my true friends. ‘Tempus abire mihi est’ Horace says to me.

“Returning to my Memoirs … I am a detestable man; but I do not care about having it known, and I do not aspire to the honor of the detestation of posterity. My work is full of excellent moral instructions. But to what good, if the charming descriptions of my offences excite the readers more to action than to repentance? Furthermore, knowing readers would divine the names of all the women and of the men which I have masked, whose transgressions are unknown to the world, my indiscretion would injure them, they would cry out against my perfidy, even though every word of my history were true … . Tell me yourself whether or not I should burn my work? I am curious to have your advice.”

On the 6th May 1793, Casanova wrote Opiz: “The letter of recommendation you ask of me to the professor my brother for your younger son, honors me; and there is no doubt that, having for you all the estimation your qualities merit, I should send it to you immediately. But this cannot be. And here is the reason. My brother is my enemy; he has given me sure indications of it and it appears that his hate will not cease until I no longer exist. I hope that he may long survive me and be happy. This desire is my only apology.”

“The epigraph of the little work which I would give to the public,” Casanova wrote the 23rd August 1793, “is ‘In pondere et mensura’. It is concerned with gravity and measure. I would demonstrate not only that the course of the stars is irregular but also that it is susceptible only to approximate measures and that consequently we must join physical and moral calculations in establishing celestial movements. For I prove that all fixed axes must have a necessarily irregular movement of oscillation, from which comes a variation in all the necessary curves of the planets which compose their eccentricities and their orbits. I demonstrate that light has neither body nor spirit; I demonstrate that it comes in an instant from its respective star; I demonstrate the impossibility of many parallaxes and the uselessness of many others. I criticize not only Tiko-Brahi, but also Kepler and Newton … .

“I wish to send you my manuscript and give you the trouble of publishing it with my name at Prague or elsewhere … . I will sell it to the printer or to yourself for fifty florins and twenty-five copies on fine paper when it is printed.”

But Opiz replied:

“As the father of a family, I do not feel myself authorized to dispose of my revenues on the impulse of my fancy or as my heart suggests…. and no offer of yours could make me a book-seller.”

This shows plainly enough that Opiz, for all his interest in Casanova, had not the qualities of true friendship.

On the 6th September 1793, Casanova wrote:

“I will have my Reveries printed at Dresden, and I will be pleased to send you a copy. I laughed a little at your fear that I would take offense because you did not want my manuscript by sending me the ridiculous sum I named to you. This refusal, my dear friend, did not offend me. On the contrary it was useful as an aid in knowing character. Add to this that in making the offer I thought to make you a gift. Fear nothing from the event. Your system of economy will never interfere with either my proceedings or my doctrines; and I am in no need of begging you, for I think that your action followed only your inclination and consequently your greatest pleasure."

On the insistence of Opiz, Casanova continued his correspondence, but he passed over nothing more, neither in exact quotations from Latin authors, nor solecisms, nor lame reasonings. He even reproached him for his poor writing and did not cease joking at the philanthropic and amiable sentiments Opiz loved to parade while at the same time keeping his purse-strings tight. A number of quarreling letters followed, after which the correspondence came to an end. One of Casanova's last letters, that of the 2nd February 1794, concludes: "One day M. de Bragadin said to me: 'Jacques, be careful never to convince a quibbler, for he will become your enemy.' After this wise advice I avoided syllogism, which tended toward conviction. But in spite of this you have become my enemy… ."

Among the Casanova manuscripts at Dux was one giving his final comment on his relations with Opiz. Accusing Opiz of bringing about a quarrel, Casanova nevertheless admits that he himself may not be blameless, but lays this to his carelessness. "I have a bad habit," he writes, "of not reading over my letters. If, in re-reading those I wrote to M. Opiz, I had found them bitter, I would have burned them." Probably Casanova struck the root of the matter in his remark, "Perfect accord is the first charm of a reciprocal friendship." The two men were primarily of so different a temperament, that they apparently could not long agree even on subjects on which they were most in accord.

The complete correspondence is of very considerable interest.

V — PUBLICATIONS

IN 1786, CASANOVA published ‘Le soliloque d’un penseur’, in which he speaks of Saint-Germain and of Cagliostro. On the 23rd December 1792, Zaguri wrote Casanova that Cagliostro was in prison at San Leo. “Twenty years ago, I told Cagliostro not to set his foot in Rome, and if he had followed this advice he would not have died miserably in a Roman prison.”

In January 1788, appeared ‘Icosameron’ a romance in five volumes, dedicated to Count Waldstein, which he describes as “translated from the English.” This fanciful romance, which included philosophic and theological discussions, was the original work of Casanova and not a translation. It was criticized in 1789 by a literary journal at Jena. Preserved at Dux were several manuscripts with variants of ‘Icosameron’ and also an unpublished reply to the criticism.

In 1788 Casanova published the history of his famous flight from “The Leads”. An article on this book appeared in the German ‘Litteratur-Zeitung’, 29th June 1789: “As soon as the history was published and while it was exciting much interest among us and among our neighbors, it was seen that other attempts at flight from prisons would make their appearance. The subject in itself is captivating; all prisoners awake our compassion, particularly when they are enclosed in a severe prison and are possibly innocent … . The history with which we are concerned has all the appearances of truth; many Venetians have testified to it, and the principal character, M. Casanova, brother of the celebrated painter, actually lives at Dux in Bohemia where the Count Waldstein has established him as guardian of his important library.”

In July 1789 there was discovered, among the papers of the Bastille, the letter which Casanova wrote from Augsburg in May 1767 to Prince Charles of Courlande on the subject of fabricating gold. Carrel published this letter at once in the third volume of his ‘Memoirs authentiques et historiques sur la Bastille’. Casanova kept a copy of this letter and includes it in the Memoirs.

In October 1789, Casanova wrote M. Opiz that he was writing to a professor of mathematics [M. Lagrange] at Paris, a long letter in Italian, on the duplication of the cube, which he wished to publish. In August 1790, Casanova published his ‘Solution du Probleme Deliaque demontree and Deux corollaires a la duplication de hexadre’. On the subject of his pretended solution of this problem in speculative mathematics, Casanova engaged with M. Opiz in a heated technical discussion between the 16th September and 1st November 1790. Casanova sought vainly to convince Opiz of the correctness of his solution. Finally, M. Opiz, tired of the polemics, announced that he was leaving on a six-weeks tour of inspection and that he would not be able to occupy himself with the duplication of the cube for some time to come. On the 1st November, Casanova wished him a pleasant journey and advised him to guard against the cold because “health is the soul of life.”

In 1797, appeared the last book published during Casanova’s lifetime, a small work entitled: ‘A Leonard Snetlage, docteur en droit de l’Universite de Goettingue, Jacques Casanova, docteur en droit de l’Universite de Padoue’. This was a careful criticism of the neologisms introduced into French by the Revolution. In reference to Casanova’s title of “Doctor,” researches by M. Favoro at the University of Padua had failed to establish this claim, although, in the Memoirs Casanova had written:

“I remained at Padua long enough to prepare myself for the Doctor’s degree, which I intended to take the following year.” With this devil of a man, it is always prudent to look twice before peremptorily questioning the truth of his statement. And in fact, the record of Casanova’s matriculation was discovered by Signor Bruno Brunelli.

VI — SUMMARY of MY LIFE

THE 2ND NOVEMBER, 1797, Cecilia Roggendorff wrote to Casanova: “By the way, how do you call yourself, by your baptismal name? On what day and in what year were you born? You may laugh, if you wish, at my questions, but I command you to satisfy me …” To this request, Casanova responded with:

“Summary of My Life: — my mother brought me into the world at Venice on the 2nd April, Easter day of the year 1725. She had, the night before, a strong desire for crawfish. I am very fond of them.

“At baptism, I was named Jacques-Jerome. I was an idiot until I was eight-and-a-half years old. After having had a hemorrhage for three months, I was taken to Padua, where, cured of my imbecility, I applied myself to study and, at the age of sixteen years I was made a doctor and given the habit of a priest so that I might go seek my fortune at Rome.

“At Rome, the daughter of my French instructor was the cause of my being dismissed by my patron, Cardinal Aquaviva.

“At the age of eighteen years, I entered the military service of my country, and I went to Constantinople. Two years afterward, having returned to Venice, I left the profession of honor and, taking the bit in my teeth, embraced the wretched profession of a violinist. I horrified my friends, but this did not last for very long.

“At the age of twenty-one years, one of the highest nobles of Venice adopted me as his son, and, having become rich, I went to see Italy, France, Germany and Vienna where I knew Count Roggendorff. I returned to Venice, where, two years later, the State Inquisitors of Venice, for just and wise reasons, imprisoned me under The Leads.

“This was the state prison, from which no one had ever escaped, but, with the aid of God, I took flight at the end of fifteen months and went to Paris. In two years, my affairs prospered so well that I became worth a million, but, all the same, I went bankrupt. I made money in Holland; suffered misfortune in Stuttgart; was received with honors in Switzerland; visited M. de Voltaire; adventured in Genoa, Marseilles, Florence and in Rome where the Pope Rezzonico, a Venetian, made me a Chevalier of Saint-Jean-Latran and an apostolic protonotary. This was in the year 1760.

“In the same year I found good fortune at Naples; at Florence I carried off a girl; and, the following year, I was to attend the Congress at Augsburg, charged with a commission from the King of Portugal. The Congress did not meet there and, after the publication of peace, I passed on into England, which great misfortunes caused me to leave in the following year, 1764. I avoided the gibbet which, however, should not have dishonored me as I should only have been hung. In the same year I searched in vain for fortune at Berlin and at Petersburg, but I found it at Warsaw in the following year. Nine months afterwards, I lost it through being embroiled in a pistol duel with General Branicki; I pierced his abdomen but in eight months he was well again and I was very much pleased. He was a brave man. Obliged to leave Poland, I returned to Paris in 1767, but a ‘lettre de cachet’ obliged me to leave and I went to Spain where I met with great misfortunes. I committed the crime of making nocturnal visits to the mistress of the ‘vice-roi’, who was a great scoundrel.

“At the frontiers of Spain, I escaped from assassins only to suffer, at Aix, in Provence, an illness which took me to the edge of the grave, after spitting blood for eighteen months.

“In the year 1769, I published my Defense of the Government of Venice, in three large volumes, written against Amelot de la Houssaie.

“In the following year the English Minister at the Court of Turin sent me, well recommended, to Leghorn. I wished to go to Constantinople with the Russian fleet, but as Admiral Orlof, would not meet my conditions, I retraced my steps and went to Rome under the pontificate of Ganganelli.

“A happy love affair made me leave Rome and go to Naples and, three months later, an unhappy love made me return to Rome. I had measured swords for the third time with Count Medini who died four years ago at London, in prison for his debts.

“Having considerable money, I went to Florence, where, during the Christmas Festival, the Archduke Leopold, the Emperor who died four or five years ago, ordered me to leave his dominions within three days. I had a mistress who, by my advice, became Marquise de * * * at Bologna.

“Weary of running about Europe, I determined to solicit mercy from the Venetian State Inquisitors. For this purpose, I established myself at Trieste where, two years later, I obtained it. This was the 14th September 1774. My return to Venice after nineteen years was the most pleasant moment of my life.

“In 1782, I became embroiled with the entire body of the Venetian nobility. At the beginning of 1783, I voluntarily left the ungrateful country and went to Vienna. Six months later I went to Paris with the intention of establishing myself there, but my brother, who had lived there for twenty-six years, made me forget my interests in favor of his. I rescued him from the hands of his wife and took him to Vienna where Prince Kaunitz engaged him to establish himself. He is still there, older than I am by two years.

“I placed myself in the service of M. Foscarini, Venetian Ambassador, to write dispatches. Two years later, he died in my arms, killed by the gout which mounted into his chest. I then set out for Berlin in the hope of securing a position with the Academy, but, half way there, Count Waldstein stopped me at Teplitz and led me to Dux where I still am and where, according to all appearances, I shall die.

“This is the only summary of my life that I have written, and I permit any use of it which may be desired.

“‘Non erubesco evangelium’.

“This 17th November 1797.

“Jacques Casanova.”

In reference to Casanova’s ironic remark about his escape from England, see his conversation, on the subject of “dishonor,” with Sir Augustus Hervey at London in 1763, which is given in the Memoirs.

VII — LAST DAYS AT DUX

SCATTERED THROUGH THE Memoirs are many of Casanova’s thoughts about his old age. Some were possibly incorporated in the original text, others possibly added when he revised the text in 1797. These vary from resignation to bitterness, doubtless depending on Casanova’s state of mind at the moment he wrote them:

“Now that I am seventy-two years old, I believe myself no longer susceptible of such follies. But alas! that is the very thing which causes me to be miserable.”

“I hate old age which offers only what I already know, unless I should take up a gazette.”

“Age has calmed my passions by rendering them powerless, but my heart has not grown old and my memory has kept all the freshness of youth.”

“No, I have not forgotten her [Henriette]; for even now, when my head is covered with white hair, the recollection of her is still a source of happiness for my heart.”

“A scene which, even now, excites my mirth.”

“Age, that cruel and unavoidable disease, compels me to be in good health, in spite of myself.”

“Now that I am but the shadow of the once brilliant Casanova, I love to chatter.”

“Now that age has whitened my hair and deadened the ardor of my senses, my imagination does not take such a high flight and I think differently.”

“What embitters my old age is that, having a heart as warm as ever, I have no longer the strength necessary to secure a single day as blissful as those which I owed to this charming girl.”

“When I recall these events, I grow young again and feel once more the delights of youth, despite the long years which separate me from that happy time."

"Now that I am getting into my dotage, I look on the dark side of everything. I am invited to a wedding and see naught but gloom; and, witnessing the coronation of Leopold II, at Prague, I say to myself, 'Nolo coronari'. Cursed old age, thou art only worthy of dwelling in hell."

"The longer I live, the more interest I take in my papers. They are the treasure which attaches me to life and makes death more hateful still."

And so on, through the Memoirs, Casanova supplies his own picture, knowing very well that the end, even of his cherished memories, is not far distant.

In 1797, Casanova relates an amusing, but irritating incident, which resulted in the loss of the first three chapters of the second volume of the Memoirs through the carelessness of a servant girl at Dux who took the papers "old, written upon, covered with scribbling and erasures," for "her own purposes," thus necessitating a re-writing, "which I must now abridge," of these chapters. Thirty years before, Casanova would doubtless have made love to the girl and all would have been forgiven. But, alas for the "hateful old age" permitting no relief except irritation and impotent anger.

On the 1st August, 1797, Cecilia Roggendorff, the daughter of the Count Roggendorff [printed Roquendorf] whom Casanova had met at Vienna in 1753, wrote: "You tell me in one of your letters that, at your death, you will leave me, by your will, your Memoirs which occupy twelve volumes."

At this time, Casanova was revising, or had completed his revision of, the twelve volumes. In July 1792, as mentioned above, Casanova wrote Opiz that he had arrived at the twelfth volume. In the Memoirs themselves we read, "… the various adventures which, at the age of seventy-two years, impel me to write these Memoirs …," written probably during a revision in 1797.

At the beginning of one of the two chapters of the last volume, which were missing until discovered by Arthur Symons at Dux in 1899, we read: "When I left Venice in the year 1783, God ought to have sent me to Rome, or to Naples, or to Sicily, or to Parma, where my old age, according to all appearances, might have been happy. My genius, who is always right, led me to Paris, so that I might see my brother Francois, who had run into debt and who was just then going to the Temple. I do not care whether or not he owes me his regeneration, but I am glad to have effected it. If he had been grateful to me, I should have felt myself paid; it seems to me much better that he should carry the burden of his debt on his shoulders, which from time to time he ought to find heavy. He does not deserve a worse punishment. To-day, in the seventy-third year of my life, my only desire is to live in peace and to be far from any person who might imagine that he has rights over my moral liberty, for it is impossible that any kind of tyranny should not coincide with this imagination."

Early in February, 1798, Casanova was taken sick with a very grave bladder trouble of which he died after suffering for three-and-a-half months. On the 16th February Zaguri wrote: "I note with the greatest sorrow the blow which has afflicted you." On the 31st March, after having consulted with a Prussian doctor, Zaguri sent a box of medicines and he wrote frequently until the end.

On the 20th April Elisa von der Recke, whom Casanova had met, some years before, at the chateau of the Prince de Ligne at Teplitz, having returned to Teplitz, wrote: "Your letter, my friend, has deeply affected me. Although myself ill, the first fair day which permits me to go out will find me at your side." On the 27th, Elisa, still bedridden, wrote that the Count de Montboisier and his wife were looking forward to visiting Casanova. On the 6th May she wrote, regretting that she was unable to send some crawfish soup, but that the rivers were too high for the peasants to secure the crawfish. "The Montboisier family, Milady Clark, my children and myself have all made vows for your recovery." On the 8th, she sent bouillon and madeira.

On the 4th June, 1798, Casanova died. His nephew, Carlo Angiolini was with him at the time. He was buried in the churchyard of Santa Barbara at Dux. The exact location of his grave is uncertain, but a tablet, placed against the outside wall of the church reads:

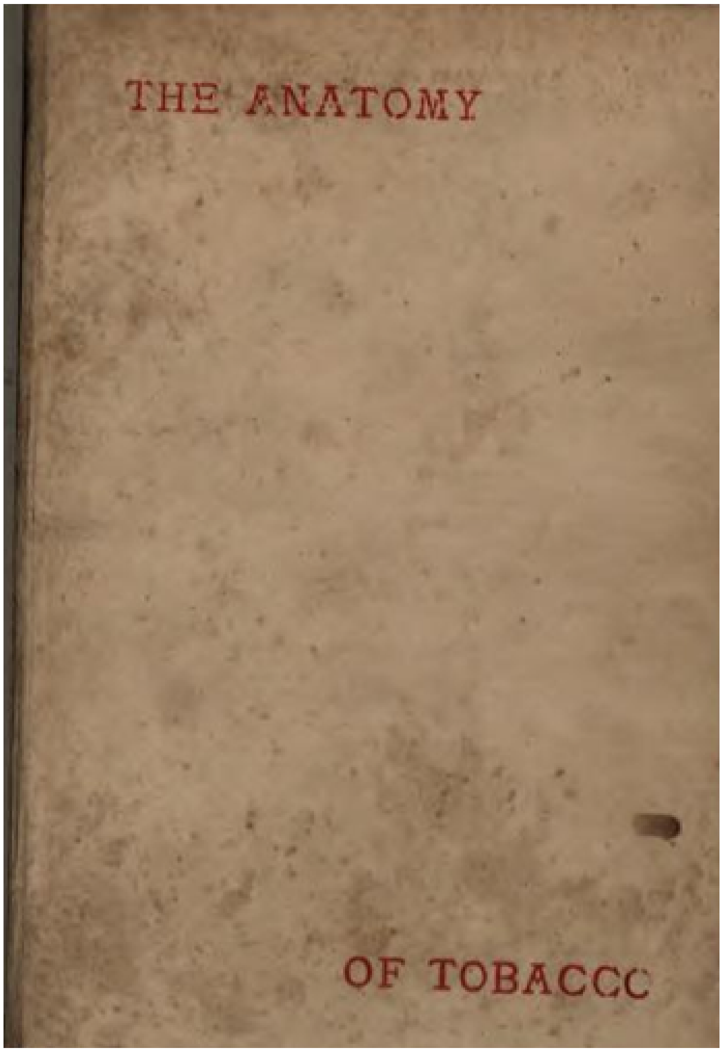
JAKOB

CASANOVA

Venedig 1725   Dux 1798

The Anatomy of Tobacco

This pastiche of seventeenth century scholasticism was Machen’s first published book, appearing in 1884, whilst he worked as a journalist and tutor. It is a sort of prose ode to tobacco, written in the overblown scholarly rhetoric of an Enlightenment essay, which typically sought to taxonomise the world on strictly rational grounds – a tradition often satirised by Jonathan Swift, to whom the book owes much in its style.


THE ANATOMY
OF TOBACCO

Cover of the first edition

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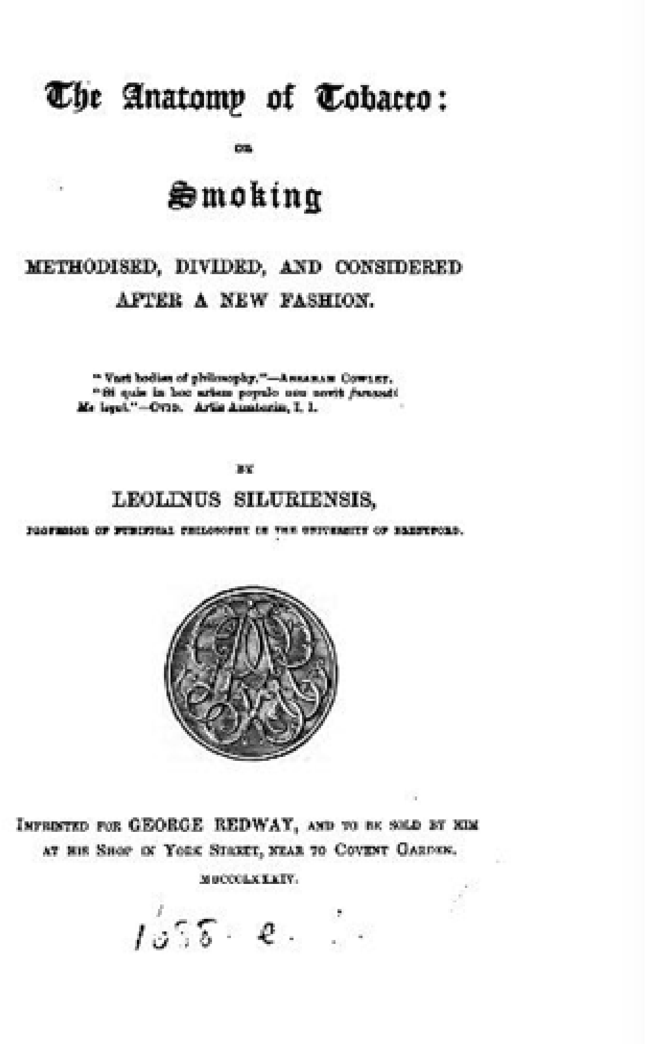

The Anatomy of Tobacco:

or

Smoking

METHODISED, DIVIDED, AND CONSIDERED
AFTER A NEW FASHION.

"Vast bodies of philosophy."—Abraham Cowley.
"Si quis in hoc artem populo non novit *fumandi*
Me legat."—Ovid. Artis Amatoriæ, I. 1.

BY

LEOLINUS SILURIENSIS,

PROFESSOR OF FUMIFICAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BRENTFORD.

Imprinted for GEORGE REDWAY, and to be sold by him
at his Shop in York Street, near to Covent Garden.
MDCCCLXXXIV.

1055 e.

Title page of the first edition

Machen during the 1880s

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◆

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IMPRIMATUR

John Jones R. R^{mo} in Christo Patrie ac Domino D^{no} Joseph divinâ Providentiâ Archi-Episc. Caerleonens. à Sacris Domesticis.

Ex. Æde Ignotâ.

Kal. Græc. 1884.

PREFACE.

CURIOUS READER, COME with me, I pray, to the wooded hills and dreamy valleys of mine own Siluria. Leave the "chargeable noise of the great town," and stand with me on the mountain that I love, while the wind sweeps over the heather and bracken, bringing with it the salt of the far-away sea. Below us the country is extended; wave after wave of wood and meadow floating in the mist of the morning, and here and there a window-pane shoots back the rays of the mounting sun. In a valley to the east the smoke of a walled city, Caerleon, the metropolitan, arises; and on the yellow water beyond ships are passing in and out of harbour. Just beneath us, on the verge between heather and cornfield, stands an ancient house with mullioned windows that have withstood the storm of many a hundred year, and from its chimneys also a faint blue smoke rises straight till it meets the mountain wind. Here then let us stand awhile and mingle the golden clouds of Virginia with those of Siluria. For, mark me, we have got into a little hollow sheltered from the full strength of the breeze, and a beech - tree that bends over us will give sufficient shade, though, like most of our mountain trees, it is somewhat stunted. Here we can smoke, and meditate, and dream, for a time at least, like to the gods of Epicurus, taking no heed for the turmoil of the world beneath us, but each man, rapt in his own fancies, weaves them into what he sees, and the whole is very sweet for him to remember hereafter in the midst of the streets, and noisome smoke, and clamour without end. More I say not; let my reader make his dreams for himself of what he may, and if they be even dreams of love I will reprove him not in this place; though in my lecture-room at Brentford it would be otherwise. So if in my book I speak somewhat harshly of Venus and her train, you, O reader, must remember that it is the Professor of Pipe Philosophy in his chair, and not the Silurian on his hills, who does so; and this because he will not tolerate any *imperium* which seems to threaten and diminish the honour of the Pipe and Jar.

Come with me, then, through our shady woods in summer, wander with me by our rivers and wandering brooks, let us drink deep of the life-giving breath of the mountains; and, so it be done moderately, of the crew that is without guile. And what the printer has set after this shall be to you my discourse by the way.

A. LL. J. M.

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION.

IT IS A thing well known and ascertained that the ancient philosophers were wont to divide their teaching into two parts; of which one was the Esoteric or Acroamatic, and the other the Exoteric. Now the first or Esoteric was that which was taught to the innermost band of disciples, and contained things which were unfit for the hearing of the senseless and evil-minded crowd. But the second or Exoteric was that which was openly taught, and likewise put in writing, and so hath come down to our own days.

And in compiling this book I have thought well to imitate the example of these mighty men of old, and therefore have not writ at all of the Esoteric Doctrines of Pipe Philosophy, not being of a mind to lay open such high and weighty matters to the idle cavils and senseless animadversions that would most surely follow. Therefore doth this book treat alone of the *Fumus Exotericus* and not one whit of the *Flamma Esoterica.*

And they for whom this exposition is chiefly intended are those who deem themselves to have already gone through all human erudition, and to have nothing more to learn. For, unless I mistake, before they have digested many pages they will perceive themselves to have been woefully in the wrong, and that here is laid open a new land of science, set far beyond the limits of Ultima Thule. Nay, more, they will read of men and books before unknown; and some perchance in their pride and stiffneckedness will go so far as to dispute the existence thereof.

And at once to put an end for ever to all objections on the matter, I will demonstrate how it has come to pass that such weighty and erudite doctors as Gulielmus Septemhorologiensis, Johannes de Grotibus, Margites Dummerkopfius, and others have been hitherto unknown to mankind.

Know, then, that when it is said of Pythagoras, “With an elementary work on arithmetic in his pocket he visited the East for the acquirement of knowledge,” only a part is told, and that a small one. For the truth is that after journeying through Persia and Arabia, and paying a short but lively visit to the land of the Anthropophagi, he proceeded still further East, until he came to the Seres or Chinese, whom he describeth as **γένος παιδαριωδέστατον καὶ εὐτραπελώτατον** — a most childlike and bland race, at which blandness being pleased, he thought to remain there some while.

Now it appeareth that he had already formed his mysterious notions concerning the Divine Essence residing in numbers and sounds; and it was these same ideas that contributed not a little to the shortening of his stay in the country of the Seres. For some time after his advent there, his philosophic meditations on the multiplication table considered as a source of evil were rudely disturbed by a most hideous and awful tumult, which perturbed him not a little, since he perceived that if his disciples were ever to apprehend such a clamour, not only would they ascribe no divinity to sounds, but would even go to the opposite extreme. And on inquiring whence arose this fearful tumult he was answered in Columbarian Greek (the dialect used to communicate with foreigners) that it came from an instrument named the *θώμας-θώμας,* which Bossius conjectures may be probably identified with that which we now call the “tom-tom.”

But a still greater discomfiture awaited our philosopher, and one which threatened to shatter and destroy the very citadel of his system — namely, the divine order and sequence of numbers both in matters terrestrial and celestial. For it happed that playing at astragaloi or *dibs* with one whom he describes as *παιδαριωδίστατοϊ και evrpaireyTaroc πάντων*— “of all men most bland and childlike,” the cast of sea-born Aphrodite did fall to his opponent nine times in sequence; while he himself could throw nought but the obscene Bow-wow; and this although the bland one professed an entire nescience of the game and a willingness to be instructed in it. So perceiving that such an event could harmonise in no way with the eternal unities and reciprocities, PythagoTas fled straightway from that land, fearing to meet perchance with some greater mishap.

And going on ever to the rising of the sun he came at last to the country which we call Kamschatka, but which then was named Cynosimus or Dog’s

Nose, so reaching at last the verge of Asia would have doubtless returned to Greece without any material discovery (save only that the game of astragaloi or *dibs* containeth in it much food for thought when played by childlike men), but it fell out that walking the sea-shore he observed a strange and remarkable ship moored close to land. And the strangeness of that ship lay in this — that in place of a mast and sails, such as vessels were wont in those days to have, it was furnished with a tube of well-tempered iron, from whence spouted forth smoke, yea black smoke such as is dear to the heart of Below-Ground Zeus. And on the side thereof were inscribed the mystic characters ΠΟΛΙΤΗΣ.Α', at which the heart of Pythagoras greatly rejoiced, for he perceived that now indeed the unities were about to commence. Also besides this he was ‘ware of a melodious diapason which proceeded (as he relates) from the ship, exceeding sweet and thrilling, and likewise the noise as of a silver bell, mighty pleasant and tintinnabulous. And perceiving that the time was now come to dare all things in the cause of philosophy, and calling on the mystic Samothracian divinities **ΤΙΝΔΑΛ, ΣΠΕΝΣΕΡ, and ΥΞΛΥ**, he boldly ascended the ship. But the instant he touched the deck the noise that was pleasant and tintinnabulous ceased, and after pouring forth one profuse strain of unpremeditated art, likewise ceased the harmonious diapason; and by some mysterious power Pythagoras was borne away over that unknown sea.

Now concerning his voyage there is no certain record, and although many weighty tomes have been written on the matter, the jejunality of this work doth not suffer me to treat of it; so suffice it to say that after a short and fair journey he was at last, with many diapasons and tintinnabulous rejoicings, landed on the opposite coast. But he had scarcely reached the land when a grave and reverend man accosted him, and hailing him nasiloquently as “stranger” gave him welcome. And after the first greetings were over, and the autochthon had ascertained at how many drachmas the nijxius Pythagoras had purchased his *Ifiânov,* he informed him that his name was Odysseus B. Podge, Prince of the Caucusidæ, and proposed that they should immediately fare unto an adjoining temple and pour libations to the deathless gods. And although it -was early in the morning, when the Greeks were not accustomed to perform such rites, Pythagoras denied him not, and going to the temple honey-sweet wine was brought them, which Pythagoras affirms to have been in strength like unto a wall of stone, and they poured libations in the customary manner. But when Pythagoras made known unto the prince the intent and purpose of his voyage — namely, the seeking out of new and strange philosophies and observances — he sware a dreadful oath. For he sware by the eagle that spreads his wings widely extended, over the land of the Setting Sun, by the Capitol wherein they cease not to worship the deathless gods, by all the wheeling Stars of heaven, and the grievous Stripes wherewith the gods plague men, that Pythagoras should accomplish his desire and return again to his native land.

And so indeed he performed his vow, and imparted to Pythagoras the whole theory and practice of Pipe Philosophy, and gave him of the herb that is more powerful than moly and sweeter than ambrosia; and after he had sojourned there a long while he again embarked on the magic ship, carrying with him much tobacco and many clay pipes, and so came again to Cynosim us.

From thence he went on his way rejoicing through the country of the Seres, nathless taking much care not to linger in the towns where they were wont to play the *Oûfiaç-Ôâfiaç,* nor did he venture aught in the game of astragaloi or dibs, which in his heart he determined to forbid to his disciples as a game unbefitting a philosopher and utterly contrary to all unity and reciprocity.

So, to make a long matter short, Pythagoras returned home by way of Ægypt, then much perturbed by the cabals and discontents of an insolent soldier, who out of the malice of his heart persuading the common folk that they had a just claim to the management and enjoyment of their own country, incited them to revolt. And for a time it was like to Lave gone hard with Pharaoh, but he called on Golon, Tyrant of Syracuse, to assist him in his hour of need. And Gelon, out of the great goodness and benevolence of his heart, thinking not at all of any gain or reward accruing to himself, did presently send a mighty fleet of ships, furnished with many banks of oars, and armed with all manner of tormentuous engines, both petroboli and catapeltæ, by which the people of Ægypt were soon utterly overcome and smashed. And the counsellors of Gelon were no less wise at home than in the wars; for perceiving that the vulgar folk did in some sort animadvert on the sending of the ships, they employed certain machines of burnished steel, cunningly contrived for the purpose by geometers, wherewith they blinded the eyes of the people so that they might not perceive what was being accomplished.

But when the land was conquered and laid waste, and Pharaoh thought to have been received back to the throne, Gelon did, *more scholastico,* make perfect a juncture between his thumb and his nose, and so mocked him, bidding him journey to the City of the Waters of the Sun (which men do now call Bath), or if he liked not that, to the City of Palm Trees, which is Jericho. And so Pharaoh, being in the hieroglyphieal language of Ægypt "done brown," ceased to reign, and Gelon of Syracuse reigned in his stead, and his descendants after him, even until the Gauls overran the whole world from Jerusalem to Madagascar.

And Pythagoras carefully considering all these matters, yet forgot not the multiplicity of chests of cedar-wood he bore with him, wherein was stored the precious herb. And in the dead of night he would often secretly light his pipe and smoke without hindrance, till the fumes being apprehended he was accused of gramarye, and so driven from the land. But when he came to Croton in Italy he called together such as he deemed worthy, and imparted to them the great secret whereat they rejoiced mightily, and proceeded to test the greatness thereof by experiment. And though at the first some were perturbed both in body and mind by reason of the virtue of the herb (it being of the kind poetically called *ή oipa* τού *avos* or the tail of the pig), yet at last all attained to the dignity of good and sturdy Pipe Philosophers.

But notwithstanding the vows of secrecy which Pythagoras had laid on his disciples, it began to be noised abroad that there were certain men who inhaled the smoke of a herb which made them contented with all things; whereat the populace grew justly indignant, and as History telleth us (though, as is usual, it lies for the most part), burnt down the club of the Pythagoreans, and with it was destroyed all the tobacco which was stored therein. And from that time no man in Europe saw tobacco for nigh two thousand years, but yet the knowledge of it was kept alive by tradition and handed down till it was restored again. And when it was so restored, those wise men who bad before known of it only by theory were able to ascertain empirically whether their ideas concerning it were true, and thus was formed the modern school of Pipe Philosophers. Yet by their assuming names such as Margites Dummerkopfius, Linalaudulus de Tamesi, Jacobulus Corvinus, and the like, and by their writing in such a way as shall only be understood by the initiate, their very existence hath been ignored and passed over.

But in the two thousand three hundred and forty-fifth year after the journey of Pythagoras at a chapter of the principal among the Pipe Philosophers it was determined that it would be well to promulgate in some way the aforesaid Philosophy; and the lot being taken the office fell upon me; and I have writ this book in discharge of the command.

In the name, therefore, of Dionysos Sabazios, Zagreus, Abraxas, Iao, Haix-Tetrax, and Damnemeneus: Κύγs*μπαξ;* Farewell.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

THE PIPE PHILOSOPHY is divided into two parts, which must be dealt with separately and in no wise confounded.

Now the first part concerns itself with the matter (*materies*), and the second part with the manner *(modus).* The matter contains all things used in smoking, such as be pipes, tobacco, and so on; and the manner treats of the ways in which smoking can be considered. And since we cannot treat of the latter as it ought to be treated without a perfect knowledge of the former, it followeth of necessity that we must first consider at length the matter, and that being thoroughly digested, pass on to the manner.

Now, matter being taken first, it is proper that it should be reasonably anatomised and divided; and the division commonly in vogue is that into four kinds — namely (1) necessary matter; (2) contingent necessary matter; (3) contingent unnecessary matter; (4) impossible matter. And the meaning of these terms is as follows: —

(1) — Necessary matter is that without which the act of smoking is impossible.

(2) — Contingent necessary matter is that which, although not absolutely necessary to the act of smoking, is seldom wanting.

(3) — Contingent unnecessary matter comprehends such things as are convenient in smoking, but are wholly unnecessary.

(4) — Impossible matter is that of which it is possible to inhale the fumes through a pipe; but since it is not tobacco, the inhaling of its fumes is not smoking, and with it it is impossible to smoke.

Now, to make reference to these four kinds of matter more easy, each hath had a memorial letter assigned to it as follows: —

NECESSARY MATTER — Q.
CONTINGENT NECESSARY MATTER… U.
CONTINGENT UNNECESSARY MATTER.. I.
IMPOSSIBLE MATTER — D.

Which letters being compounded into one word QUID give the whole division of matter; or, as the Schoolmen do name it, the *"*Quidditas," which Quidditas being subdivided and cut up, appeareth in Synopsis, *ut infra.*

Q. NECESSARY MATTER.. TOBACCO.

U. Contingent Necessary Matter. (pipes.
(CIGAR TUBES.
I. Contingent Unnecessary
(Tobacco Pouches. R.
(CIGAR CASES. O.
(TOBACCO JARS. T.
(CANES. B.
D. IMPOSSIBLE MATTER (BROWN PAPER. O.
(NON-NICOTINOUS HERBS. S.
(OPIUM. H.

Note, then, that in this synopsis the subdivisions of I and D are marked with other significant letters; and for the better remembering the whole division, the following hexameters are much to the purpose; —

Q Tabacum teneat: des U Cala mosque cigarris, Et TUBULOS: ac I solum ROT continet omne:

Ultima BOSH teneat, qaæ D — dicatur; et usque Dum spiro fumem, recuhans sub tegmine fagi.

And by this synopsis we ascertain the exact signification of the four categories. For it is evident that in necessary matter tobacco is the only thing absolutely necessary to smoking, and in contingent necessary matter that pipes and cigar-tubes, though not absolutely necessary, are, in the vast majority of cases, used. As to contingent unnecessary matter, it is plain that men can very well smoke without possessing jars or pouches; but as to impossible matter, since smoking is defined as “the inhaling of the fume of tobacco,” it is evident that the inhaling of the fume of aught beside tobacco is not smoking, and that therefore with such it is impossible to smoke.

This, then, is the generally-received division of matter, and the explanation thereof; but before we proceed to examine the subdivisions of the four categories more precisely, it is needful to notice certain opinions of those who do not assent to the above division.

For, in the first place, there are philosophers who would delete contingent unnecessary matter on the ground that if a man smoke he must have tobacco, and this tobacco must have position. Now, since jar, pouch, &c., are terms of which the meaning is “things to contain tobacco,” it follows that anything which contains tobacco will come under the same category. But it has been shown that tobacco must be contained by something — *i e.,* have position; therefore the matter now named unnecessary should rightly be termed necessary, though contingently and not absolutely.

Secondly come those who attack the scholastic definition of smoking— “the inhaling the fume of tobacco” — and substitute for it “the inhaling the fume of any soporific or narcotic herb or substance,” the effect of which is to alter in some manner the category of impossible matter. For in accordance with their theory they remove opium and all narcotics as being not really impossible, and place them in a new category of contingently possible matter. These men, however, do not go as far as some, who would abolish impossible matter altogether, their definition of smoking being “the inhaling the smoke of any substance whatsoever,” thus putting the vile cabbage on an equality with our superexcellent herb. But the more reasonable of the Soporifics (as they may fairly be named) argue somewhat as follows: —

If I be, perchance, an inhabitant of some land in which tobacco is unknown, but where a herb of like properties is used in its place, then for me that herb becomes in truth necessary matter; for I know of none other, and without it smoking would be, as far as I am concerned, impossible.

Yet, admitting that in this there is some tincture of reason, we must not let ourselves be bewildered into accepting such a theory. For it is to be remarked that these divergencies arise from a denying of the scholastic definition, and the substitution of one more or less plausible. But we of the orthodox school, who pride ourselves on having kept the Divine tradition intact and unaltered from the days of Pythagoras, will not suffer one jot or tittle to be abated from the wisdom of our predecessors, and are therefore untouched by these curious subtleties.

But with regard to those who would affirm that all receptacles of tobacco are contingently necessary, I confess their sophistries are somewhat less facile to grapple with.

Now I will not deny their main thesis, that if I smoke tobacco I must have tobacco; that that tobacco must be contained by something; that the various subdivisions of "pouch,"

"jar," &c., are merely different sorts of things for containing tobacco; and therefore that they are necessary. So in some wise they are in the right. But if we consider that the category is applied strictly to the *act* of smoking without reference *à parte ante* or *à parte post,* but only to the very *act* itself, we shall perceive the Schoolmen to have been in the right in maintaining that category to be valid. For taking their heterodox position we might as fairly maintain that *ash-trays* are necessary, seeing that before a pipe can be filled with tobacco the ashes that be in it must be emptied out; that these ashes being matter must be contained by something (and ash-tray is only a name given to a thing for the containing of ashes): therefore ash-trays are necessary. And again arguing *à parte ante* we may conclude that earth itself is necessary to smoking. For if I smoke I must have tobacco, and that tobacco must have been produced from the earth; therefore earth is necessary. But since no reasonable man would dream of classing it as necessary matter, we hereby perceive the vanity and inutility of such reasoning, And so the scholastic categories having been put to the test and vindicated, we are free to close the present matter and pass on to the next section with clear pipes, unbefouled with the Acrid Oil of Sophistry and the Uliginous Ashes of Unreason.

CHAPTER II.

WITH RESPECT TO tobacco, let it be defined as follows:— “Tabacus est herba in qua inest nicotinica et soporifera virtus” — Tobacco is a herb in which, resides a nicotinic and soporific virtue.

Next to definition cometh division, which, sooth to say, is somewhat difficult and requireth consideration. And the reason of this difficulty is to be imputed to a certain variant form of tobacco known as the cigar — that is to say, tobacco, not shred finely, but rolled and compacted in such a way as to be smokable without the medium of a pipe. Also there is another form known as the cigarette, which is shred tobacco constricted within a roll of thin paper. Some would differentiate these two forms and consider them apart, but I deem it unnecessary, and have devised a plan which compriseth all kinds within a small compass, which I here present thee with: —

Now methinks I hear many a one objecting to this synopsis, and pronouncing it as altogether meagre and imperfect, containing nought but a mere outline of the subject, and that done after a strange manner.

And in answer to such objections, if they be made, I reply as follows: —

First, as to the main plan, it is clear that all tobacco in ordinary use must come from one of three places. (I) From America, which I call *Occidental* or Hesperidian tobacco.

(2) — From Asia (under Asia I include Roumelia, though Mercator should reprove me). And this I call Oriental tobacco. (3) From the Continent of Europe, which I call Continental tobacco. *Secondly,* as to the imperfection and bareness of the scheme. I imagine that the specific fault found with it will be that there are no *Roney Dews, Golden Clouds,* or *Bird’s Eyes* under tobacco; and no *Regalias, Reinitas,* or *Inlimidads* under cigars. The reason for this omission is that these are rather matters for the tobacconist to consider than the Pipe Philosopher, who, so far from bringing to every subject a microscopic meticulosity, knows well the limits and bounds of his

science, and when to be full and when to be brief. And, in fine, were I to admit any of these distinctions into my synopsis it would be but an advertisement fit to be displayed in a booth, and altogether unmeet for the study of a philosopher. So I know nought of them; but in so far as the principal kinds have different qualities and influences on the mind and body of the smoker, they shall be briefly treated of in the second part of this book.

Next, with respect to differences between philosophers as to the nature of tobacco: *mirabile dictu* these are few and trifling, there being little dispute upon the matter. Only, as I have mentioned before, some would consider tobacco, cigars, and cigarettes separately, thinking thus to prevent those disputes which we shall come upon shortly as to the nature and essence of pipes. And in some wise there is wisdom in this, for if their division should obtain a great part of the grounds of difference between the philosophers of the bowl and the philosophers of the tube would be cut away, and they might be at one; but yet on the other hand these same contentions have led to an infinite amount of learned ingenuity and metaphysical refinement, which 'twere surely pity to render of no account. And further, besides that *expediency* is on our side, the present concatenation is assuredly good, valid, and just, and worth retaining for its own sake. For to separate cigars from tobacco would be as if in a natural history there were separate chapters — one treating of sheep shorn and the other of sheep unshorn, which were folly. For it is certain that cigars are tobacco, and come under the definition, "a herb in which resides a soporific and nicotinic virtue and therefore to treat of the two apart on a doubtful ground of utility would be grave error. Furthermore, to do so would "make harsh the liquid melodies" of those famous lines beginning, "Q tabacum teneat," which is not to be borne. And so, by analogy, I think that these doctrines will not obtain, for, as is well known, some while ago a certain Scotch logician did bring forward amendments in the Art of Logic, which if they had been carried out, *Barbara Celarent* would have been abolished and done away with. But yet, notwithstanding the pretended utility of these improvements, *Barbara Cearent vugentque valerdque* (as Ovidius writes of a different matter): nay, by all accounts, there be students at one of our Universities who will go further and (still with Ovidius) prefix *intempestive* or *unseasonably,* seeing that the ignorance of Barbara Celarent doth entail no small inconvenience and discomfort in the precincts of the *Forum Suarium,* or Pig Market.

Concerning tobacco, therefore, let such things have been said. And this is all that can be said as to definition.

CHAPTER III.

I. LET A pipe (tubulus fumificus) be defined “instrumentum pier quod tabaci fumus trahitur” — as an instrument by which the smoke of tobacco is inhaled.

II. — Let a bowl (vas) be defined “ea pars tubuli fumifici in quit tabaeus ponitur fumandus” — as that part of a pipe in which the tobacco that is to be smoked is placed.

III. — Let a stem (fistula) be defined “ea pars tubuli fumifici per quam tabaci fumus e vase in os ducitur” — as that part of a pipe by which the smoke is educted from the bowl into the mouth.

IV. — Let a mouthpiece (enstomateium) be defined “ea, pars fistulæ quæ vasi remotissima est, et quæ à fistula quoad materiam differt” — as that part of the stem which is furthest from the bowl, and differs from the stem in matter.

V. Let a lid (operculum) be defined “id quod nonnullo vasi adjungitur, ne tabacus vento dispergatur” — as that which is sometimes affixed to the bowl lest the tobacco be scattered by the wind.

VI. — Let a hookah (vox Indica, quæ Latiné nominatur “tubulus fumificus aquarius”) be defined “tubuli fumifici species quædam, in qua tabaci fumus per aquam trahitur” — as a certain kind of pipe in which the smoke of tobacco is drawn through water.

VII. — Ornament (omamentum) is said to exist “cum tubulus fumificus, aut in vase, aut in fistula, non planam habet superficiem” — when a pipe, be it in the bowl or be it in the stem, hath not a flat surface.

VIII. Essential colour (color nativus) is 6aid to exist “cum *facientie* per artem, tubuli fumifici superficies pigmento quolibet imbuta est” — when by the art of the maker the surface of a pipe hath been imbued with some pigment.

IX. Accidental colour (color factitius seu nicotinicus) is said to exist “cum per artem et perseverantiam *fumantis,* tubulus fumificus adeo oleo nicotinico imbutus est, ut ater aut subfuscus fiat” — when by the art and perseverance of the smoker a pipe hath been so imbued with the oil of tobacco that it becomes of a jet-black or brownish hue.

X. A pipe is said to be simple (simplex) “cum solum ex unâ materie constat” — when it consists of only one kind of matter.

XI. A pipe is said to be complex (complexus) “cum habet materiem complexam” — when it is composed of complex matter — that is to say, of more than one kind of matter.

Such are the eleven scholastic definitions of pipes, the various parts of pipes, the essential or accidental colour of pipes, and lastly the two definitions of simplicity and complicity, by the observance of which the Schoolmen have been able to divide all pipes into two great classes. Time was, indeed, when many were for three divisions — viz., simple, complex, and decomplex; wherein complex signified composed of two kinds of matter, and decomplex of more than two; but the researches of the learned and ingenious Schoolman Peter Pfeiffe (whose famous investigation into the nature of pickled pepper is a byword to this day) went far to demolish this theory, which received its final blow at the hands of the recluse Jacobulus de Cornibus. So we have to consider only two classes, with their various and minute divisions and subdivisions, which are given at length in the following SYNOPSIS OF PIPES: —

And to help the memory of the student are adjoined these six hexameters, which I deem of not such pure and classical Latinity as the former ones, but -which are, nathless, well adapted to their purpose:

Binis ordiuibns tubuli ponnntur: et Alter
Est Simplex; fit diversis è partibus Alter.
In primis Simplex elassis disjnngilur æque,
Fictilis è terrâ, seqaitur turn ligneus ordo.
OBSTltoPuLoas alio, FLaBbERgAST atque secundo
Pertinct. Cui legat, tubulum succendere fas est.

Further, by way of comment upon the synopsis, it is to be observed that in the complex order the various subdivisions of the simple order are to be understood, with such obvious differences as will be apparent to all. For example, china pipes do not admit of accidental colour since they are already *percocti;* also in a hookah essential colour may coexist in two parts — in the vase for holding the water, and the bowl for the tobacco.

Lastly, whereas some may reproach me for not having mentioned meerschaum pipes, I reply that meerschaum is merely a kind of clay, and whatever may be said of ordinary clay pipes may also be repeated as to meerschaum pipes (save that they have no essential colour). And seeing that this synopsis hath cost me much anxious thought and twisting of my brain, I do pray thee to excuse any defect thou mayest observo (though, indeed, I do hope that none exist). For while the general division into simple and complex hath long existed, yet the disputes and argumentations of the different schools hath left well-nigh every other matter in doubt and confusion. And at this point I must enjoin thee to truss up thine intellect and make it sure and fast, since we are about to enter upon the doctrines of the several schools, compared to which the Olive Groves of the Academy, and the Peripati of the Lyceum are but onion-trees and bitter cucumbers. So empty thy pipe, and let the tobacco in the next one be heedfully pressed down and clearly lighted.

CHAPTER IV.

NOW THE SIX principal schools of philosophers who dispute concerning pipes are as follows: —

(1) — The *Chorizontic* or *Separatists.*
(1) — The *Solidic.*
(2) — The *Medioliquorean.*
(3) — The *Megacremasiiotic.*
(4) — The *Coelosphaeric* or *Cyclosematic.*
(5) — The *Orthopoetic.*

And, to take them in the above order, the Chorizontics maintain the following thesis — that if a pipe be simple, considered apart from its mouthpiece, it is also simple with it — that is to say, the mouthpiece should not be held to affect in any way the dichotomy into simple and complex, the two essential parts which are to be considered being the bowl and stem, in support of which the learned Bocterbroddius argues thus:— “If I make me a bowl of wood, fitting to it a stem, also of wood, it is plain that such pipe is simple. Next, if I procure a lid of silver and affix it to the bowl, the pipe still remains simple (since the possession of a lid is an accident of a pipe). Finally then if I get a mouthpiece of amber and fit it to the stem, since a mouthpiece as well as a lid is an accident and not a property or differentia, that pipe will coutinue simple, and should be considered as such.” — *Boëterbroddius.* De R*e Fttmaria,* b viii., p. 987. And the Chorizoutic définition of a complex pipe is this ‘— “A complex pipe is such that it cannot become simple without ceasing to be a pipe.”

But, on the other hand, the no less learned Dreckenhauserius, chief of the opposite School of Solidics, expresses his judgment as follows:— “A complex pipe is one in which the matter is not homogeneous. So that if any pipe contain or be composed of more than one kind of matter, that pipe is complex. But a wooden pipe with an amber mouthpiece contains more than one kind of matter; for it contains both wood and amber (here followeth a dissertation of some ten pages as to the nature of amber, and as to how far it may be identified with the *ijXtKrpov* of the Greeks). Therefore a wooden pipe with an amber mouthpiece is complex. Further it is to be remembered that in some pipes the mouthpiece far exceeds in length the true stem, which often does not continue for more than an inch or two beyond the bowl; and to say that in such case the mouthpiece is no essential part of the pipe were surely a rank and insane absurdity.

Such being the opinions of the Chorizontic and Solidic Schools, I shall next proceed to those held by the Medioliquoreans, or half-and-half philosophers, to whom I myself do for the most part incline. Now this School teacheth that the Chorizontics are right and wrong, and the Solidics wrong and right, which seems to me a happy and dextorous distinction. For they agree with the Chorizontics in asserting that the term “pipe” doth by no means of necessity imply the possession of a mouthpiece; so on that ground they allow that the Separatists have reason in refusing to take the mouthpiece into account when making division into simple and complex. But, on the other hand, they do not dispute the contention of the Solidics in the case of a pipe that hath but an inch of true stem, and four or five inches of mouthpiece; and will allow that in such case the pipe should be classed as complex rather than simple.

So that in fact the Medioliquorean must examine the pipe before he will venture to class it; and if it be, by example, a pipe of briar-root six inches as to total length, of which half an inch consists of the mouthpiece, he shall set it down as simple; but if, per contra, it be of six inches of total length, having a true stem of half an inch, and an amber mouthpiece of five and a half inches, then shall it be considered as complex.

Fourthly come the Megacremasuotics, so called *ùni TOV Uvai navra rov <rvv,* because they go the whole hog. And their doctrine is this: — The term “pipe” doth comprise every part which any given pipe possesses, whether it be differentia, property, or accident. And a pipe which, whether by reason of its mouthpiece, lid, colour, or joint in its bowl, stem, or mouthpiece, hath in it more than one kind of matter, cannot be simple. For they define the term

simple as denoting an absolute unity of matter, and allege that as amber both true and false, ivory both true and false, bone and every manner of composition (as to mouthpiece), gold, silver, and base metal (with regard to lids); red, blue, and yellow (with regard to colour, since colour cannot exist on a pipe without the agency of that material substance called paint); — are all certainly matter; therefore they aver that if to Z -f A (by which symbol is denoted the joining of the essence and existence) there be added any matter which is not A, then Z+A + a… — the simple pipe becomes Z+A + x — the complex pipe.

Such are the doctrines of the Megacremasuotic School of Pipe Philosophers.

Fifthly, let us take the Cœlosphaeric or Cyclosematic School. And their teaching is this: — The real essence of the pipe is contained in the bowl, whence cometh the name Cœlosphaeric (Kotyoarqpaupticoi), since they regard the bowl as the root, from out of which, from reasons of practical utility and convenience, the stem hath sprung; some saying that the first pipe was a bowl in which tobacco was placed, and the smoke drawn out from a hole in the side. They profess to find a support to these doctrines in the fact that supposing any one should detach the stem from the bowl he would by no means call the stem by itself a pipe, whereas a bowl without a stem might very well be called so.

Further, by analogy they liken a pipe to a tree. Now without a root the stem of a tree cannot exist, whereas it is conceivable that a root should exist without a stem. So with the bowl and stem of a pipe, they name the bowl the inevitable part and the stem the evitable. They also lay stress on the shape of the bowl, which is circular. Now a circle is the most perfect geometrical conception, and therefore the bowl is the most perfect and ideal part of the pipe, the stem being that part invented by man to bring the whole down to his lower and grosser level. Lastly, they affirm that in the bowl there always resides essence, and sometimes existence also; that in the bowl and stem conjoined there is both essence and existence; and in the stem alone neither essence nor existence.

Sixthly cometh the Orthopoetic Philosophers, so called for that they, rejecting the dogma of the Coelosphaerics that the essence resides in the bowl, maintain that it is in the stem (to *fitpos TO ùpdôv),* and that the first pipe was a tube, in one end of which tobacco was placed, and the smoke thereof drawn through the other; to strengthen which doctrine they adduce the pipes used by Asiatics for the inhaling of the fumes of opium, which do not possess a bowl, but only a place in the stem in which to set the opium. And in opposition to the Coelosphaeries, who affirm that one who had cut off the stem of his pipe would not call the stem by itself a pipe, they reply that "pipe" is a conventional term, by which is meant the whole instrument as we have it at the present day; and, since the time when pipes had no bowls is long gone by, it is according to nature that men should have come to regard the bowl as an essential part; yet, while admitting this, they by no means admit the contrary — that if the bowl be separated from the stem it is still spoken of as a pipe, but rather that it is called by its own name " bowl," or with the adjective "pipe" prefixed to it, that is "pipe-bowl." And the smoke-addicted and ingenious (though perchance somewhat too eristical) Dummerkopfius, who for a long while past hath stood in the van of battle for the Orthopoetics, seizes as with a vice upon this very expression "pipe-bowl," and shows it to be a compound substantive, in which "pipe" used as an adjective defines and limits the substantive bowl, and is a term of wider distribution than bowl. And since the term "pipe" extends more widely than "bowl," it follows that there are some pipes which have not bowls; and therefore that, so far from a bowl containing the whole essence of a pipe, there is no reason why a pipe should have a bowl at all. (See diagram.) Next he proceeds by analogy, and chooseth the words "horse-cloth,"

"nosering," which are in every way similar to "pipe-bowl." And firstly let "horse-cloth" be taken, in which it is manifest that a horse may have both essence and existence without possessing a cloth, which is an accident of "horse." Secondly, "nose-ring," in which it is manifest also that a nose is perfect and complete without a ring being attached to it.

So noses existing without rings, and horses without cloths, it is manifest that pipes do exist without bowls.

Next the acute and cloud-compelling Dummerkopfius proceeds by etymology, and demonstrates thus: — The common name of anything expresses the common meaning attached to that thing when that common name was first given. And if no other name can be shown to have existed, before that which is now used, then that name expresses the primary and essential conception of the thing named. So that if we find by investigation that a “thing-for-smoking-tobacco” has always been named a “pipe,” and is called so now, then we determine that the word “pipe” expresses the primary, essential, and common meaning of a “thing-for-inhaling-tobacco.” Next let us determine the meaning of the word by etymology. It appears that the primary notion expressed by this word is “whistling,” hence it was probably framed by *onomatopoeia,* as more plainly appears in the German “pfeiffe” and the Latin “fistula,” which do counterfeit in some measure the noise of whistling. Therefore the etymological first intention of the term *“*pipe” is “something which whistles.”

But when we inquire what is the logical first intention, at first sight there appears some difficulty. For to take a good example of first and second intention, “bird” in its first intention is an animal that has feathers, in its second intention a partridge, and I do not perceive how we can assign a first intention to “pipe” quite in this manner, Second intentions, however, are sufficiently numerous, as will be seen when we consider that an organist, a plumber, and a pastoral poet use the term each in a peculiar technical sense, plainly constituting second intention. But shall we not agree, supposing an organist to be conversing with a plumber, or a plumber with a pastoral poet, that in speaking to one another they would use the term “pipe” with the meaning of an instrument used in smoking? And is not this, then, the logical first intention of the word pipe? Such, at all events, it appears to me.

Thus, then, I have proved that when we pronounce the word “pipe” in common language we imply remotely and etymologically “something that whistles,” and directly and logically *“*an instrument used in smoking.” How, then, can the Coelosphaerics contend that the bowl is the essential part? For bowls cannot whistle, either of themselves or by the help of another. And if the essence and primary nature lies in the bowl, why do we not call this “instrument for smoking” a bowl and not a pipe? And how comes it to pass that we do not call the stem a “bowl-pipe?” *Responde mihi, O genus cœlospliaericum et rotundum.!*

Finally Dutnnierkopfius citeth the famous *Sorites Smalgrueli.* The name of a thing expresses the innate ideas we have of that thing; the name of an “instrument for smoking tobacco” is a pipe; the name pipe expresses not ideas of sphæricity and circularity, but of length and hollowness; therefore our innate ideas of an “instrument for smoking tobacco” are not conceptions of sphæricity and circularity, but conceptions of length and hollowness.”

But the Coelosphaerics reply, in answer to the “pipe-bowl” argument, that Dummerkopfius might as well argue from the term “goat-skin” that goats can exist without skins, and that such analogous arguments are absurd and sophistical, and quote in support the words of Devey, who asserts that “we cannot adduce any example in which the force of an analogous argument arises above that of weak probability and as to the etymological argument that it is futile, else we might conclude that all “priests” are old men, that the Esquimaux are “nonchalant” *quia non calent,* that no one can be “insulted” unless his adversary leaps on him, that all “imbeciles” lean on staffs, and lastly that two persons cannot be “rivals” unless they dwell on the banks of the same river.

But to return to the Orthopoetics: they, in reply to the Cœlosphaeric ideas concerning the perfection of the circular form, maintain that a circle itself is but a number of straight lines joined angularly and continuously to one another in such a way as to form a circular figure; and as that which makes to exist must be prior to that which exists, therefore the idea of a straight lino is primary, while the idea of a circle is secondary. They also aver that the circle is a barren figure generating nothing; whereas from straight lines are produced all the rectilineal figures. To which the Cyclosematics reply that the *idea* of a circle must have existed before these straight lines were joined to form one, even admitting that they were so joined, which they say is not proven — nay, rather they aver that by taking away an infinitely small part of the circumference of a circle a straight lino was generated; and finally that the objections of the Orthopoetics apply only to the *circumference* of the circle, and not to the *circle* itself. For the definition of Euclides commences, “A circle is a plane figure contained by one line which is called the circumference,” where it is evident that the circle is not the circumference, which is only a formal part necessary to render the ideal conception of a circle comprehensible by our material senses; for if the terms “circle” and “circumference” were identical, then would a thing be said to be contained by itself, which is impossible.

To whom rejoin the Orthopoetics that the essence of anything is “that which makes it to be what it is that essence is divided into two parts — the material part or genus, and the formal part or differentia. Now the definition of a circle is “A circle is a plane figure contained by one line which is called the circumference,” which definition “a plane figure” is the genus, and “contained by one line” the differentia; and since if the differentia be taken away the essence no longer remains, therefore if the idea of circumference be separated fro in the idea of circle, as the Cyclosematics direct, then no essence remains, and a circle does not exist. But we know that circles do exist, therefore their arguments are erroneous and absurd.

Now amongst the arguments of the Cœlosphaerics we noticed one that made comparison between the root of a tree and the bowl of a pipe. Know, then, that the Orthopoetics have made a similar comparison between the parts of a pipe and the parts of a lily in blossom. First comes the bulb concealed in the earth, which they say is the invisible essence of the pipe; next the stem, which they say is the stem of the pipe; and lastly the blossom, which is the bowl of the pipe. And since there must be a lily stem before there is a lily blossom, so there must have been a pipe stem before there was a pipe bowl. But yet to this rejoin the Ceelosphaerics that by this very example of a lily which they bring forward the Orthopoetics are condemned; for since the bulb of a lily implies necessarily the idea of a blossom, therefore the essence of a pipe implies necessarily the idea of a bowl, and that as without a blossom the lily does not exist, so neither without a bowl is existence possible to a pipe.

But yet another argument of the Orthopoetics I have to lay before thee, and it is this. The Ccelosphaerics define a pipe as an instrument used in smoking tobacco. Let it be granted that the definition is valid, and it shall be proved to the satisfaction of all that the bowl is no essential part of a pipe. For take any stem of any pipe, having previously disjoined it from the bowl, and insert into one end a cigar, and place the other in your mouth. Now having applied fire to the free end of the cigar draw in the breath, which, when it is ejected from the mouth, shall be found to consist in great part of the fume of the said cigar; from which it is evident that the *stem alone* of a pipe has been used in smoking tobacco (for who will deny that a cigar is tobacco?) without the agency of a bowl. Wherefore it is proved that the bowl is not an essential part of a pipe, but only a separable accident thereof. And from this conclusion comes the corollary — that what are commonly called cigar-tubes are, in fact, pipes, for they contain in them everything essential to pipes; that they are survivals of the primitive pipes, while those which are commonly called pipes are merely amplified to suit the requirements of tobacco which is cut fine, and requires something to stay it from being drawn into the mouth; that, finally, it is evident that when tobacco was first used it was used in its most simple form, that uncut tobacco is a more simple form than cut, that therefore uncut tobacco was first used; *ergo,* the first pipes had no bowls, for bowls are for cut tobacco.

Such is the stupendous and gigantic controversy between the two Schools of Ccelosphaerio and Orthopoetic philosophers — such, at least, is a short and incomplete statement of a few of the principal points at which they join issue. For so far have I been from giving their disputations at length that here is contained not a hundredth part of the matter at my disposal. But I am like those men who transcribe the speeches in our Senate House for the diurnals, who out of an oration which hath taken two hours to deliver make a something which taketh up six lines or less of print, and all confess that it is well done. Some rash and daring spirits, indeed, would persuade us that, though it is well done to compress so far, it would be better done to omit the whole oration; but these be atheistical and blasphemous doctrines, to which I do in no wise assent. So, observing the golden mediocrity tha t the Venusian commends, I have touched the matter — I will not say with a needle, but with a pipe-stopper, which, be it remarked, is an image much to the purpose. For as when a man, the smoke coming with diffidence and uncertainty from his pipe, doth gently and carefully compress with a pipe-stopper the tobacco within, and lo! it burneth to admiration; so have I, in considering the contentions of these two Schools, applied the pipe-stopper of my understanding unto them. And I dare swear that as one hath said of the book writ by Immanuel Kant (I would say the *Kritik der Reinen Vemunft), "to* read it is like going into a lighted room so shall men say of this book, "to read it is like going into a smoky one." And if it be indeed so said, why, *sublimi feriam vertice sidera* — I shall strike the stars with my sublime top (as Flaccus hath it).

And finally, as to the two Schools, it may not be impertinent to quote the world-renowned and much-learning-possessing Spitsbubius, called for his sublime and impenetrable cloudiness Doctor Fumificus (the Fumifical Doctor), who speaks as follows:— "With regard to the Schools of Cœlosphaeric and Orthopoetic philosophers, verily it appears to me that their several contentions are, as it were, all smoke, and that there is no essential distinction between their dogmas. For since a candle is a candle whether it be long or short, whether it have a large wick or a small wick;

and a ball is a ball, whether it be large, as is a football, or small, as is a tennis-ball: so, if they will but consider, the Cœlosphaerics have but to conceive of the *stem* of the Orthopoetics as a very long *bowl* to remove all difference between them. And on the other hand the Orthopoetics have but to think of the *bowl* of the Ccelosphaerics as a very short *stem,* and they will be completely at one. And therefore since by *bowl* and *stem* they plainly mean the same thing, by much the more does glory redound to them, who have so completely proved each other’s doctrines absurd and monstrous.”

So far Spitsbubius, and with his words I deem fit to close the matter, but if any desire to read further let him take Papaverius Donnerblitsius’s *De Naturâ Fistularum: Exercitationes Fumigabundce* of Spitsbubius, and those excellent *Nodes Nebulosœ,* or *Foggy Nights,* of Margites Dummerkopfius, so extolled by Theodorus Wattsius in his *Minervic Disputations.* For Wattsius sayeth that it is the best done of any book that ever was writ, save only his own sonnet on the “Libellus Lavatorius, or Washerwoman’s Account, of a Minor Poet of the Cave-Dwellers,” lately brought to light and edited *(mm vitâ Poetœ)* by Gossius. For the excellence of this writer see:also Moncurius Scepticus in his *Orationes Notilocéllenses* (South-windy Discourses), where he interrupts himself in the midst of denouncing a certain obscure and contemptible sect called Christians to exalt and magnify this notable Dummerkopfius.

And his is certainly the most worthy to be read of all such works, for in the preface to his disquisition he giveth all that hath been said, on either side since the very dawn of Pipe Philosophy, which preface extendeth to only ten volumes of the book (it having but one hundred and twenty volumes in all). And as a concluding, final, and transcendental testimony to the excellence of these *Foggy Nights* the aforesaid Wattsius can detect one *naevus* alone *in toto egrcgio cor pore,* which is that in tom xcix., cap li., sect. 13, subsect. 8, a “P” hath been substituted for a *“Q,”* which, as Wattsius justly insisteth, doth violate the first canon of the more Humane Letters — *i e,* “*Evyabiov* rà vrà II kai Q, or in the vulgar tongue, “Mind your ‘P’s’ and ‘ Q’s.’”

CHAPTER V.

NOW AS TO the contingent unnecessary matter *(e g.,* tobacco-jars) and impossible matter *(e g.,* cabbage-leaves) I will say nothing. And the reason of this is that I have got nothing to say, and since I am not of sufficiently ripe experience *in arte nihil dicendi,* let this be enough; and so much for the matter of Smoking, which is the first part of this book.

PRŒMIUM TO THE SECOND PART.

IT happed that searching lately among the works of those who have writ things pertinent to this philosophy I found in the third volume of the *Noctes Nebulosæ* of Dummerkopfius some very notable and ingenious versicles that seemed to me well worthy of a place in this book, so I here annex them as a manner of Preface to my Second Part.

“The lazy Earth doth steam amain,
And fumes and smokes beneath the rain:
The Rivers, Brooks, and Rivulets are
No less in smoke particular
At nightfall: and the storm blast loud
Is often wont to *blow a cloud*
Around the Mountain-tops, and they
Do take delight in this same way; And send a fiery fame from out
Their angry heights, and such a rout
Of burnt-up *ashes,* that do strow
Great cities in the plains below.

The *setting Sun* is oft made dim

With smoky mists that circle him.

So all the World’s on *smoking* bent,

And *puffs* and *fumes* to its content:

Fill up the bowl then, fill it high,

Fill all the gaping pipes, for why

Should every creature smoke but *I;* Why, man of morals, tell me why?*”*

This, as it seems to me, contains an exceeding just view of the subject, in so far as is compatible with the poetical and metaphorical diction, although it wants that exact and philosophical minuteness which is to be desired. But yet I esteem it of great weight in testifying to the *Macrocosmical* doctrines entertained by many and weighty doctors, notably by Vanderhorstius, *Be Solutione Nebular um,* Lugd. Bat., 1G34; also by Thomas Schelsegensis, *Be Gigdbilitate, Be Idolie Limi,* &c., so its place here is sufficiently warranted.

Now, since the First Part treated of the *matter,* it follows that the Second Part treats of the *manner,* as was observed in Chapter I. of what! Lave already written. What precedes, therefore, is *Absolute,* and what succeeds *Relative,* which latter member may be further divided into the following categories: —

I. Substantia. II. Ubi. Ill Quando. IV. Relatio. — Substance, Place, Time, and Relation. And these categories constitute the base of this latter part, and will serve for heads, as it were, of discourse. But let it be noted with regard to substance (which might seem rather to pertain to the First Part) that we shall consider it metaphysically alone, and not physically. And as in the former Part we dissected and examined it as a chirurgeon dissects and examines the brain, be now we shall examine it as a metaphysician examines the mind.

So much, then, by way of Preface to the things which are about to be said.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE FOUR categories let substance be taken first, which having been taken let it be examined and further divided into (1) tobacco, and (2) pipes. To which division it may be objected, “Præterire aliquid maximum vitium in dividendo est”— “In division to pass over anything is a very great fault since many things have been omitted (jars, pouches, and the like). The reason for which omission is that all those things which have been omitted are trifling and unimportant, being *contingently unnecessary,* and not worthy of any systematic consideration. Wherefore I am constrained to censure all those (notably Gulielmus Cassiteridensis) who have ventured to differ from me in this matter as being stulti, stolidi, fatui, fungi, bardi, blenni, buccones, as Plautus hath it.

Now tobacco being the prior member of the division, let it be considered as the occasion may direct, and in such a way as will tend to the enlightenment of all. Firstly, then, it will be remembered that it was materially defined “Herba, in quâ inest nicotinica et soporifera virtus” — a herb in which there resides a nicotinic and soporific virtue. But metaphysically it is defined “Nicotinica et soporifera virtus, quse sub tabaci specie, nostris sensibus perspicitur” — a nicotinic and soporific virtue which is evident to our senses under the form of tobacco. Hence this nicotinic virtue is an immutable and eternal idea, having a real existence; and though we know not the where, when, or how of this existence, yet we know that it does exist. And this virtue is also named an energy, and likewise an act. But however we name it, it is evident that it has no ordinary material existence, since all tobacco which we can see, touch, and smoke must have certain accidents, such as a light colour, a strong odour, a heavy weight, and the like; also it must have come from some particular land or lands, such as Asia, America, AEgypt, and the like; yet all these are mere accidents, in no wise pertaining to our abstract notion of tobacco as metaphysically defined. This doctrine, now very generally received, was in some way shadowed forth by Pythagoras (albeit he used not the term “nicotinic,” for it is of modern date), who spoke of a certain *Avva/us* or *power,* corresponding to the *virtue* that was afterwards taught. And the theory we now maintain was first plainly declared by the Pundit Iradi Simkhya, and further illustrated and exemplified by his commentator El-Mudi. Hence arose the mystical School of Neo-Pythagoreans, who maintained that by a life of incessant smoking and meditation the philosopher might participate in the essential virtue, and comprehend its real nature. But here I will pause, and for two reasons — firstly, that I do not profess to communicate the esoteric doctrines of Pipe Philosophy; and secondly, lest, if I continue “obscurus fiam,” I become obscure, and be reproved by Proctoratus Omniscientius, for that my subject-matter is not “plainly worded and exactly described,” which reproof may the gods avert!

It having been granted that there exists a certain energy or virtue, let us consider by what means we may best partake of its essence and approximate to its nature. And the best method appears, in my judgment, to be smoking — /i e., *“*fumum tabaci ore trahere,” as the Schoolmen maintain, which definition, however, may be censured on the ground that it is not adequate to the thing defined. For to say that smoking is “a drawing in [inhaling] of the smoke of tobacco with the mouth,”

“explicat tantum partem,” explains only a part both of the actual process and the abstract idea; since the smoke cannot in the nature of things be continually inhaled without the corresponding process of exhalation; for which reason Scriblerus Redivivus appears to me more correct in defining smoking as “the sucking in of smoke at one part of the mouth, and the ejection thereof at the other.” But yet he, too, goes astray in the latter part (as I think) of his definition. For I will maintain that if I suck in the smoke at the right side of my mouth and eject it, also on the right side, I have smoked. Whereas Scriblerus would seem to imply that it is necessary that the smoke should be ejected at some other part, diverse from that at which it was sucked in; whereas, so long as the smoke *is* exhaled, as far as I know, it is indifferent at what part — whether at mouth, nose, eyes, or ears. So I censure Scriblerus Redivivus for this definition of smoking, and do define it as follows:— “Smoking is the complex act by which we participate in the fumes of tobacco, and for which three things are required — (1) the inhalation of the smoke; (2) the retention thereof within the body for a space of time; (3) the exhalation of *some part* thereof from the mouth, nose, eyes, or ears taken separately or taken conjunctively.” In which definition I would direct your attention to the term “some part” as being significant, and, as far as I know, novel. For it is not necessary to smoking that the *whole* of the tobacco inhaled should be also *exhaled* — nay, it is impossible that this is ever the case, a certain portion of each inhalation being retained within the body, on which it exerts its nicotinic virtue.

Which observation recalls our attention to the subject under discourse — namely, the best means to be employed in participating in the above-named virtue. To which question it was answered that smoking is the best means, and most adapted to the end in view. And this answer led to a precise definition of smoking (ut supra), from which definition followed the corollary that “a certain portion of each inhalation is retained within the body on which it exerts its nicotinic virtue.” Hence the participation of the mind in the nicotinic energy is a mediate one, and dependent on the body. And this is the doctrine of physical participation.

To which the upholders of the doctrine of metaphysical participation object that the pleasure received is incomplete if one smoke in the dark. Whence it followeth that the watching of the smoke, as it escapes from the bowl or mouth, has a large part in the process of participation; some even going so far as to make this contemplation of the smoke the essence of participation, and the physical effect only an inseparable accident thereof. And it is alleged by many that one who smokes in total darkness knows not even whether his pipe is in or out, and will often continue inhaling contentedly his own breath, his pipe containing nought but burnt-out ashes. But if this doctrine were true then it follows that to view others smoking would be an equal pleasure to smoking oneself, which if it were so smoking would shortly become a thing of the past (since who would be at the expense to buy tobacco when he could have the same pleasure by merely watching another smoking?) Also, if tobacco produces no physical sensations, any one of the weakest stomach would be free to smoke the strongest tobacco by the hour, provided only that he either bandaged his eyes or smoked in darkness. And this being granted as possible (argumenti causa) leads us necessarily to the conclusion that the sensation of nausea, which undoubtedly does sometimes result from the use of tobacco, is caused alone by the disturbance to the eye, caused by viewing the clouds of smoke in the air. Furthermore, since the clouds arising from Cavendish and the Turkish tobacco are exactly the same in appearance, it follows that nausea is no more likely to result from the use of the one than the other, which is to say that they are both of an equal strength. But this, as any one of my readers can ascertain for himself, is a falsity, Cavendish tobacco being, at the least, double the strength of Turkish tobacco. Hence, since the proposition, "All sensations experienced in smoking are due to the sight of the smoke," has been proved to be false, its contradictory must be true — that is, "Some sensations experienced in smoking are not due to the sight of the smoke."

And this being established on the firm ground of logical inference, I will at once grant that smoking in darkness is a most unsatisfactory and incomplete process, affording very little pleasure at the best of times, and frequently none at all. And the reason is this — namely, "Some sensations experienced in smoking *are* due to the sight of the smoke," which I account for as follows: — The reception of the smoke into the body acts in two modes — firstly, directly upon the body. And to this first mode are to be referred nausea and sickness as resulting directly from it, and having no connection with the sight of the smoke in the air. Secondly, through the body indirectly on the mind, in which it excites certain sensations and dispositions. Now one of these dispositions is a pleasure in watching the clouds of smoke as they rise, and a desire to do so. Hence if it be dark and the smoke invisible this desire is ungratified, and the pleasure reduced. So in proportion to the virtue of the tobacco is the disappointment experienced, seeing that the more virtuous it be the more does it stir up this desire of beholding the smoke. But the effect upon the body remains entirely the same, being less or greater according to the stomach of the smoker or his habitude to smoking. Such is the explanation of diminution (or even extinction) of pleasure in smoking in the dark.

Now the next question is — how to account for a total absence of *all* sensation whatever under these conditions. And, firstly, we must inquire if such is the fact, unless we would imitate those erudite members of the Royal Society in the reign of our second Charles of ever blessed and glorious memory. And as far as I am able to judge, using both the experience of myself and that of others, I reply that it is a fact, but one that only is manifest in particular cases and under particular circumstances, which are such as follow: — (1.) He who smokes must have been in the habit of so doing for some years. (2.) He must use always the same kind of tobacco. (3.) He must use always the same kind of pipe. (4.) He must smoke at the same time of day at which he has been aforetime wont to smoke. Now let such a one fill his accustomed pipe with his accustomed tobacco, and if it be daylight let his eyes be blindfolded, and if it be night let the lamps be put out, and in such case I should not at all be astonished to hear him declare that he knows not whether his pipe be in or out. But on the other hand, if any one of the four conditions laid down should be violated, then, if I mistake not, the result would be different, and though the pleasure of smoking would be either entirely absent or greatly reduced, still there would be a complete physical appreciation of the act. And from the whole of the above discourse it appears that participation in the energy (or virtue) is composite, partly proceeding from physical influence on the body, partly from dispositions in the mind, one of which dispositions is gratified by the sight of the smoke in the air. And such other more remote sensations of the mind will be treated of under *Relation* at full length.

Next it will be profitable to take a brief view of the principal kinds of tobacco, with their several distinguishing properties.

Cavendish. — A good tobacco, I confess, strong, hearty, and wholesome, well adapted to vivify the mind and confirm the body; cool and pleasant to the mouth, and grateful to the stomachs of such as be used to it. Nathless, caution should be observed in its exhibition, lest by reason of its vigour it breed bile and loathing. So, if any one be about to use it for the-first time, I would recommend that it be admixed with some milder kind, such as is Honeydew or Birdseye.

Birdseye. — A pleasant and fragrant tobacco, adapted for common use by all; not lacking savour, but not too vigorous. Yet is it apt to be hot and fretful in the mouth, so let such as be at all tender in that part use it but sparingly.

Honeydew. — Honeydew is cool and bland in the mouth and mild of digestion, yet by itself it wants fragrance and savour, and by reason of that want fails to stimulate, as it ought, both body and mind, but as I have noted, admixed with Cavendish it is mighty pleasant and delightsome.

Turkish. — A hot, tasteless tobacco, little fitted for the pipe, and incapable of good admixture, yet in it (if it be the best) there is a certain faint fragrance which some do much admire.

Returns. — A strong, rank tobacco, without fragrance or pleasant taste. Hot to the mouth, it breeds bile, and is to be avoided, unless by such as are veteran smokers.

Shag. — Like in all respects to Returns, save that it is ranker and more choleric. This tobacco I commend to none, and wish it were altogether abolished, since by its fumes much discredit is brought on tobacco in general.

Latahia. — Of itself a tasteless tobacco, or at least when smoked in pipes of European fashion, but useful for admixture with stronger tobaccos, and (as I am told) pleasantly to be smoked in a hookah or water-pipe.

Virginia. — Exceeding hot and biting in the mouth, and so to be condemned, yet of a most delicate and delightful fragrance, in which I think no tobacco surpasses it. Also of a fair strength, but a quick burner, and so dear to use.

Such are the principal kinds of tobacco in use amongst us, which may either be taken separately or combined in various proportions as the taste of the smoker may direct. And so various is this taste that to lay down any one kind or admixture as good for all times and for all persons were impossible, yet I may roughly and conjecturally say that those who smoke for the love of smoking will smoke Cavendish, Birdseye, or Honeydew, while those who smoke because they think it adds to the beauty of their countenances will smoke Latakia, Turkish, or Virginia. But these are mostly, as Sir Thomas Schelsegensis maintains, clothes-horses, and not men in any rational sense of the term. And as to admixture I would commend that, of which half-a-pound being taken, four ounces shall consist of Honeydew, one of Birdseye, and three of Cavendish, the Honeydew contributing blandness, the Birdseye fragrance, and the Cavendish strength. And this must be said in favour of admixtures — that by smoking several kinds of tobacco in combination the student approximates more nearly to the universal energy than if he smoke one kind alone, for it is to be considered that each sort has its peculiar excellences and its peculiar defects, whence by mixing several sorts in such a proportion that the excellences are combined in a harmony and the defects or vices annulled, we are near to that ideal tobacco possessing every conceivable excellence and no conceivable vice.

So much, then, for the various kinds of Tobacco, the properties thereof, and the combinations thereof. Now Smalgruelius, in the Appendix to his work *De Omnibus Rebus,* entitled *Be Quibusdem Aliis,* at the beginning of the chapter *De Rebus Hypotheticis,* has these words:— "Anything which can be applied to some use, and, on being so applied, is incapable of being used again, is said to exist in three modes, namely — I. Privation. II. Position. III. Negation. *Exempli gratia* coal, which before it is burnt exists in privation; when it is burning, in position; and when it is burnt to ashes, in negation. Such substance is said to be determinate. And anything which is capable of being applied to some use, and on being applied continues its usefulness to infinity, is said to exist in two modes only, namely — I. Privation. II. Continuation. *Exempli gratia* stone, which, when it is in the quarry, exists in privation; but when it is shapen into a pyramid, in continuation. Such substance is said to be continuous. Thirdly, anything which is capable of being applied to some use, and on being applied vanishes utterly out of our sight, is said to exist in three modes, namely — I. Privation. II. Position. III. Extinction. *Exempli gratia* oil, which, when it is unlighted, exists in privation; when it is in the state of being employed in giving light, in position; and when, the oil being consumed, the lamp goes out, in extinction. Such substance is said to be indeterminate. Fourthly, anything which is capable of being applied to some use, and, on being applied to that use, continues its usefulness for a greater or less amount of time, but then becomes incapable of being so applied any longer, is said to exist in three modes, namely — I. Privation. II. Continuation. III. Negation. *Exempli gratia* wood, which, when alive and growing, exists in privation; when shapen into a beam, in continuation, and when, having in the course of years become rotten, it falls to pieces, in negation. Such substance is said to be temporary. Some, however, would deny that any substance can be properly placed in this class, since it only differs from determinate substance in continuing in position a longer time, which (they allege) is no sufficient differentia. And aught that cannot be placed in some one of these four classes, or partly in one and partly in another, is insoluble and unknowable (est insolubile et inscibile), which substances I have considered under the head *Be Insolubilibus* in the former part of this work." So far Smalgruelius, whom I have quoted, partly from the curiosity and rareness of his book and partly for the application of his words to our subject-matter. Under which class, then, shall we place tobacco — Determinate, Continuous, Indeterminate, or Temporary? Let us consider, then, the classes in their order and endeavour to resolve this matter. And firstly let it be Determinate. Now, determinate substance has three modes — privation, position, and negation, and tobacco before it is kindled with fire may be said to exist in privation. Next, being alight and in the condition of being smoked, it plainly exists in position. And when it has been reduced to ashes and the pipe is out it exists in negation, since the ashes cannot ever be applied to the use of being smoked. So far good; and since tobacco is evidently neither continuous — *i e.,* lasting to infinity — nor temporary — *Le.,* lasting for a long course of years — nor yet indeterminate, for it does not vanish out of our sight, but leaves ashes, we may with safety declare it to be determinate, existing in the three modes above-named.

This granted, let us consider tobacco existing in privation, that is, before it is placed in position — *id est,* combustion. Now, since the whole universe and all contained in it may by a comprehensive dichotomy be divided into that which belongs to oneself and that which does not, it appears plain that all the tobacco in the world may be, as far as I am concerned, also divided into that which I have and that which I have not. (And I may remark, by the way, that at this moment I possess about four ounces of the herb to set against the other somewhat larger member of the dichotomy — that which I have not.) But before I can smoke it is necessary that I do practically make this dichotomy — that is, become possessed of some tobacco for my own use and enjoyment. And to this possession there are four ways — *borrowing, begging*, *buying, dealing,* any or each of which are open to the would-be dichotomiser and fumigator. And let these four methods be taken in their order and considered. Firstly, *borrowing,* which I perceive is defined in the dictionary "to ask upon loan,"

"to take for use," neither of which definitions I am able to accept, for many do "ask upon loan" but yet receive nought save refusals, which is not borrowing but endeavouring to borrow; and many do "take things for use" without going through the pain of asking the owner's consent. But this we name stealing, and those amongst us who are unwilling to use harsh words concerning their fellow-men conveying, which is plainly not borrowing. Let borrowing, then, be defined as "the asking for and obtaining anything on loan" — that is, with the intention of restoring it, or its equivalent, back. And provided this intention of restoring be really present, and afterwards carried into effect, I do highly commend this way of getting tobacco as likely to give the borrower a more universal taste in the herb, since if he borrow from many friends it is probable that he borrows, and likewise smokes, many sorts of tobacco. But if this intention of restoring be altogether absent, or if present never resulting in action, then it is no longer *borrowing* but *sponging,* a hateful and detestable practice, of which certain students at the University of Oxford did show their abhorrence in coining the future tense of a verb, to express a fellow who was notable for such parasitical champetry. Such a "sponge" will walk into another's rooms with a cheerful smile and "Heus! amice," or "Otror *nv,"*

*"*Hullo! old fellow," it matters not which, and before he has tarried long out comes his pipe, and with some lame excuse of having forgotten his pouch, or the like, will dive deep into the tobacco-jar, and calling for ale, will play the host most gallantly — at another's expense. Off with such bloodsuckers from the face of the earth! say I— "a twenty devil way," as old Chaucer hath it. So much for *borrowing.*

Next let us take *begging,* which differeth from borrowing in that he who begs neither pretends nor intends to pay back that which he has borrowed, but sues of your mercy and kindness to grant him his request. And this way of obtaining tobacco is practised chiefly by such lewd folk as do loiter about the streets and market-places *"*seeking what they may devour." And since any one who has reached this point of my discourse must be of far too obstinate, pigheaded, and determined a nature ever to come to begging tobacco it were unprofitable to continue the matter further; and whether it be profitable or not, this is all I shall say on the question.

Next cometh *buying,* which meaneth to give the coins of the realm in exchange for that thou buyest. Now, *buying* may be regarded in three ways — firstly, the place where you buy; secondly, the price at which you buy; and thirdly, those from whom you buy. Now, the place where you buy is sometimes designated a tobacco-shop, but more frequently a "divan or a "cigar stores." And the meaning of the word "divan" is that what would in nature be the sitting-room of the shopkeeper has been fitted up with hard chairs and harder benches and some stony tripods, answering in some respects to tables. Here, by the payment of a shilling, you may smoke a bad cigar and drink a bad cup of coffee, reading meanwhile an obsolete paper. Happy is the man who between this den and the word "divan" can establish any connection. He should be writing this book, not I. Secondly, the price at which you buy may be either a great price, a moderate price, or a small price. For example, of the first take Turkish tobacco at twenty-five shillings the pound; of the second, Birdseye tobacco at six shillings the pound; and of the third, Shag tobacco at four shillings the pound. And in this, as in other matters, wisdom lies in the mean, for he who buys tobacco at a great price needs a long purse, and he who buys it at a small price a strong stomach, but if he observe the mean he need have neither. Thirdly, those from whom you buy, the best division of whom is into male and female. Now the male seller of tobacco is of various sorts, of which take for example (1) the man of many words. From such a one you have much talking concerning all matters in general, especially if he be from foreign lands, which lands he doth not fail greatly to commend, but yet hath no desire to return unto them; (2) the man of few words, whose sole topic is the weather; (3) the man of no words, who selleth thee tobacco as if thou wast doing him an injury, and taketh thy money with a forbidding countenance. Yet if thou givest him no money is his countenance yet more forbidding, which is strange and with difficulty to he explained. For since the contradictory of receiving *some* money is receiving no money, and likewise the contradictory of a forbidding countenance a cheerful countenance, so rightly in such case should this man's countenance be cheerful; but yet it is not so, the reason whereof has not yet been discovered. —

Next take the female sellers of tobacco, whose very existence I consider an insult to the smoker. For as it is not the habit of females in this country to smoke needs must be that such ones do sell that of which they know nothing and on which they are not qualified to discriminate. And this want of knowledge they endeavour to replace by idle verbosities and foolish grimaces wherewith to please the clothes-horses who may frequent their shop. Yet let it not be thought that they have any pretensions to a pleasant wit or pointed understanding, for I myself, being in company with one whose fault it was to have too great a fondness for these harpies, did list to a conversation lasting above an hour, in which I avow no one sensible, pleasant, or humorous word did pass, the talk being like unto ditchwater. And what pleasure he who calls himself a man can find in such discourse I know not, but am willing to be instructed on the matter. So much for buying tobacco.

Fourthly and lastly, it is possible to obtain tobacco by *stealing,* to which there is the one objection that the law will not suffer it, and if by means of "bobbies" it can apprehend the stealer will deprive him of both tobacco and liberty for a greater or less period. Otherwise I can see no objection to this method, it being devoid of all expense and being capable of much dexterity in the application. But unless thou possess a quick hand and a swift foot I do not recommend the direct or *ostensive* method of stealing. But would advise that which is called indirect or per accidens, which is thus accomplished: — By much pains discover a tobacco-shop where the folk seem of a simple and confiding nature, and for some weeks make frequent purchases thereat, paying for all that thou receivest in good and immediate coin. And when thou hast established that confidence which is so much to be desired between man and man it is an easy matter to slide (as it were) into disbursing for that thou hast received at longer and longer intervals, and finally into disbursing not at all. And thus is mere *buying* converted per accidens into *stealing,* and that without any risk or harm to the stealer.

So much for the four ways of becoming possessed of tobacco, to which some do add a fifth — namely, presentation, in which you receive it without request on your part and without the understanding that it is in any way to be repaid the presenter, but by free gift. But this is a very rare and phenomenal occurrence; nay, men have doubted whether there is such a thing as a gift at all, thinking to detect in every gift (so called) a certain sub-audition by which the giver implies that he expects some manner of repayment. This question I leave open, only observing that as there are four ways of becoming possessed of tobacco so there are four ways of becoming dispossessed of it — namely, by being borrowed of, by being begged of, by being bought of, and by being robbed of, of which only the third is to be commended, as leading to profit, while the others are at the best doubtful and mostly to be avoided.

And having by one or all of these methods obtained possession of the required tobacco, nothing remains but to smoke it, of which process somewhat hath already been said, and somewhat more shall presently be noted, but for the present let the matter of tobacco be deemed at an end.

CHAPTER II.

NOW IN THE former part of this treatise, amidst other definitions, a pipe was defined thus: — Instrumentum per quod tabaci fumus ore trahitur — an instrument by which the smoke of tobacco is inhaled — which definition is well adapted for that material portion of Pipe Philosophy in which it has been placed. But for our present purposes it will be better defined as “That by which it is possible for tobacco to have position or positive existence which it will readily be perceived is a more abstract and metaphysical statement than the former. A pipe, then, is a thing instrumental to our participation in the energy developed by tobacco in the state of positive existence. Now all will acknowledge that of pipes some are good, some bad, and some indifferent; let it be ours to inquire in what a pipe’s excellence or goodness consists, and what kind of pipe is most likely to possess this excellence. Now a pipe that is excellent in all respects is a rare and precious thing, not to be acquired every day, and deserving of much attention when possessed. And as in the former part the principal division was into simple and complex (quoad materiam), so here the principal division will be into long and short (quoad formam). Of this I esteem the long pipe as on the whole the best, and, in a word, the most adapted for the philosopher; my reason for so doing being that there is a certain pleasure in viewing the clouds of smoke rising from the bowl at a distance from the smoker, which pleasure the short pipe cannot afford. And it having been proved that this viewing of the smoke is one of the most important, and at the same time mysterious, pleasures which it is in the power of tobacco to afford, it is evident that a pipe which increaseth the force of this pleasure is most to be commended. Further, long pipes are divided into four classes, clay, china, wooden, water or hookah pipe. The first of these, clay, is that kind usually known as a churchwarden, either because it bears the same relation to ordinary pipes as a churchwarden does to the common herd of men, or because churchwardens, with that subtle understanding for which they have always been noted, perceiving the dignity of the pipe, determined to make use of it, and so by its being used by them it got the name.

However that may be, it is in many ways a dignified and noble pipe, gracefully curved and pleasant in the mouth. But yet it is easily broken, and does not feel secure in the hand; having, besides, a very small bowl, requiring to be filled often, and very soon being exhausted.

Secondly, by the china pipe I mean those which are separable into three parts — namely, the stem, the bowl, and a third part joining the two, and acting as a reservoir for such liquor as may collect. And this is a pipe to be beheld with reverence and awe; for is it not the very tubulus philo8ophorum Germanicorum — the pipe of German philosophers? Have I not with mine own eyes seen the mighty Spitsbubius in his study holding such a pipe in his hand, and filling it from a mighty jar beside him? Is not the pipe used by the gigantic Dummerkopfius in the compilation of his *Noctes Nebulosoe* at this present moment to be seen in the Museum of Berlin? And doth it not hold two ounces at the least? Yea, verily it doth, and is a pipe to rejoice the heart of NecXqyepcVa *Zeis* himself. Happy is he who, possessing such an instrument, fashions his life and conversation agreeably to the same.

Next cometh the long wooden pipe, which, though not hallowed by the names of mighty men, is nathless much to be lauded for its coolness to the mouth and adaptability to the hand. Consisting wholly of wood, it is hard to be broken, in this respect being superior to the churchwarden, Also it hath commonly a large and rotund bowl, pleasing to the eye, and holding much tobacco. And if, in addition to these merits, it hath a flexible joining near to the mouthpiece, so that it may be bent to any direction, it seems to me to approach very near to perfection. But let it be noted that the wood from bowl to mouthpiece be sound and good, which wanting it becomes an abomination, transmuting good tobacco into vile and execrable mundungus.

Last of the long pipes, properly so called, comes the hookah or water pipe. But if this is to be smoked well it must be with its appropriate tobacco, prepared in the orthodox manner, and lighted and kept burning by charcoal. Wherefore he who smokes a hookah should have a slave whose sole duty is the care thereof, else is it a weariness, and productive rather of pain than pleasure. But if the slave understand his office well, then shall it give thee joy, both by reason of the twistings and writhings of the tube and the sight of the smoko curling forth at so great a distance. Wherefore, when I shall become possessed of gold and silver in abundance, I will build me a house with a great hall about the size of a tennis-court. And at one end there shall be a dais, with cushions of precious stuff in the Eastern manner, whereon I will sit me down. But at the other, nigh unto the roof, shall be a gallery with mighty hookahs thereon, the least of which shall hold a full pound of tobacco. And from them, in many twining convolutions, shall their tubes go forth, yea, even unto the cushioned dais shall they go; and seated there with my friends I shall truly smoke and partake of the real and divine energy. But since at the present I have neither gold nor silver, nor apes nor peacocks, I will content me with wood and clay, and receive from them such pleasaunce as they will afford.

Now these being the principal kinds of long pipes, next follow the short pipes, of which there are two divisions, clay and wood. And to all short pipes pertain the following excellences: — (1) They are light in the mouth, and do not drag out one's teeth before their time to be dragged out has come. (2) They give no trouble to the hands. (3) They may be smoked abroad, whether in the city or the country. And in this last particular they plainly surpass the long pipes, which it is impossible to use *sub Dio,* at least in this land of ours. Now the wooden pipes are subdivided into an infinite variety of forms, and also a great variety of matter, according to the different species of wood that are wont to be used in their confection. As to form, I do most commend those with a large and rotund bowl and a wide mouthpiece. Let the stem also be straight, for in a short pipe a bent and curling stem *non est virtus sed tritium* — is a blemish and not an excellence. Let the stem likewise be thick and sturdy, of one part with the bowl, and provided with a strong mouthpiece, of some good sort of bone. So that as a fellow-Silurian once observed to me of his favourite pipe, "If thou sittest on this pipe, thou, and not the pipe, wilt be the sufferer." And this saying came not to him by chance or fortuity, but had been handed down from Jestyn ap Gwrgan, his ancestor, the bowl of whose pipe was even a hollow rock, and the stem thereof a young pine-tree. And when the clouds of heaven, hanging low, obscure the mountains from the eyes of men, then they say that Jestyn is smoking his pipe; which whether it be true I dare not pronounce, but am inclined to believe it possible.

Such being our demonstration of short wooden pipes, let us next advance to short clay pipes, which may be arranged under two heads — namely, clay proper, as the term is commonly understood, and meerschaum, which is a finer and better sort of clay. Now it will be remembered that in the former part of this tract in my synopsis of pipes and in the definitions preceding that synopsis mention was made of “ornament” and “essential colour,” and it was explained that the term “ornament” denoted that the surface of a pipe was not smooth and plane, but in all or singular of its parts raised or embossed. And “essential colour” signified that by the art of the maker any colour or colours had been affixed to the pipe to which the term might be applied. Now it is a point much in dispute among philosophers whether it is better that a pipe should be smooth as to its surface, or, on the other hand, he enriched with carving. And for my part I do pronounce that the only way in which carving is profitable is when the bowl of the pipe is made into the similitude of a human head, especially if the head be of that kind known as a skull, the contemplation of which cannot fail to be profitable and agreeable. And if the smoker will but propose to himself that the skull he is smoking is that of a woman, he will, if he think the matter over, be much edified and instructed. And this for two reasons — firstly, that a woman is being turned to some use, which is seldom the case, and when it does occur should be welcomed with joy; and secondly, that by gazing upon this woman’s skull he may better learn to despise and abhor the faces of those women who are alive. For let these faces of flesh be as enticing and beautiful as you please, skulls they are, and ere long skulls they will be, devoid of those graces which have lured many an honest man to shame and destruction — yea, even unto breaking of pipes and burning of cigars for love of a face, than which no shame can be greater or more flagitious. So much for ornament, and as to essential colour I confess I like it not, save that it be used very sparingly, and so as to make of greater effect that “accidental” colour which thy persistent smoking may impart.

Now the merits of short clay pipes are these: (1) They are light and easy to be carried in the mouth; (2) they are “an insult to decent society” — I considering “decent society” as a filthy and obscene harridan which every *man* does well to trample on and defy; (3) they, after long smoking, become saturated with tobacco, and so excellently sweet. But yet they are of all pipes most easy to be broken, as much for their smallness as their brittle texture. For two things being equally brittle, but one larger than the other, the larger will endure, since every one can see it, and so is ‘ware of breaking it; but the smaller is apt to escape the sight, and so be destroyed unawares. Wherefore a short clay pipe is more likely to be broken than a churchwarden. Further, unless the clay be really of the best, they are very noxious, and apt to breed bile and black choler. And of all bad pipes a bad clay pipe is surely the worst. Therefore let the catechumeu in smoking be chary of using them lest they become a Stumbling-Block to him and a cauae of offence. With regard to meerschaums I would remark one thing, and one only. Be not misled in buying them by a pleasant appearance and outward show of a soft and creamy lustre. For all these are easy to be simulated by cunning men, whom I blame not, but those deceived by such devices. But if thou wouldest test whether it be a true meerschaum hold it in thine hand and try it by its weight. For true meerschaum is exceeding light and clay heavy. And this is a certain proof.

Suck being the principal kinds of pipes, next cometh the question which is the best to possess. And if we were tied by an authority to choose one alone and smoke it perpetually I know not how I should answer, since each pipe has peculiar virtues, and not one possesses them all. But this not being the case I give the following five kinds as meet to be smoked, at different times, and in different cases: (1) A short wooden pipe of that stubborn sort which was commended. And this for general use in the open air and in rough walking. (2) A long wooden pipe with a bulbous bowl and a flexible stem. And this to be used in the house, and convenient for meditation. (3) A short clay pipe, plain and without adornment. And this to be used in the parks and public places for the insulting of Fools. (4) A skull's-head pipe of white clay or meerschaum. And this to be used when in danger of falling in love, or being beguiled by "the monster woman," as Master Abraham Cowley hath it.

(5) — A china pipe of the German fashion, as described. And this to be used in the study of ancient tongues and bygone things, or in reading books of German philosophy.

And concerning the various sorts of pipes, their excellences, their vices, and the uses of each sort, let such things have been said.

Now it having been shown that each pipe is appropriate to a certain disposition of the mind, from which ariseth tie questions — Do certain pipes produce certain dispositions, or do certain dispositions produce certain pipes? — that is to say, are the influences which are undoubtedly exerted by pipes inherent in them, or are they only the results of association? On this point much dispute has arisen; for it is maintained, on the one hand, by Smalgruelius that men are moved to read German philosophy by smoking German pipes, which (he insists) have a certain occult influence on the mind owing chiefly to the strange arrangement and shape of the bowl, and also to the manner in which they are held. To him consents Arnoldus, who declares the abstract idea of German pipes to be "An eternal not ourselves that makes for cloudiness." But, on the other hand, Stoschius will have it that men are not Irish navvies because they smoke short black pipes, but smoke short black pipes because they are Irish navvies, which being a knotty point I leave for the solution of my readers, and trust they may come to a satisfactory conclusion thereon.

Next cometh the question whether pipes can ever begin to be, or ever cease to exist. Now in the *Organum Novissimum* it is thus argued that pipes have no beginning:— "All matter has existed from eternity, all pipes are matter — *ergo,* all pipes have existed from eternity," which seems indeed to be a true and valid syllogism in Barbara. And foreseeing that some might object to the major premiss as contrary to religion, it has been put in this form: — Since matter first existed no matter has been destroyed; but pipes are matter, therefore, since matter first existed, no pipes have been destroyed — *i e.,* pipes have existed from the beginning of time. But notwithstanding the force of this argument Dummerkopfius does not hesitate to pronounce it "c*rassa et putida œquivocatio, et nihil amplius*" — a crass and putid equivocation, and nothing more.

On the other hand, those who affirm that it is impossible that a pipe should ever cease to exist argue as follows: —

That which exists cannot cease to exist (since matter is indestructible). A pipe exists! therefore a pipe is indestructible, whence, combining these two conclusions, we determine that pipes have neither a beginning nor ending, which determination cannot fail to produce a calm and equable habit of the mind. For example, yesterday, having the wherewithal, thou didst buy a meerschaum, cunningly and rarely adorned, as if from the very hands of Daedalus, giving, in exchange for it, much gold. And to-day, meeting a friend, in the pride and joy of thine heart thou didst, without delay, pull it forth to exhibit it, and have much honour thereby. But, alas! it slipped from thine hands, and, falling on the stone, was broken and shattered beyond all mending. Nathless grieve not, for hath it not been proved that a pipe is a thing indestructible, and lasting for ever? And though to the eye of sense thy pipe appears to have been destroyed, yet, transcendentally, it doubtless exists unaltered, and will always so exist. And if, upon reading this, the circumstance do really occur as I have related, and thou still wilt persist to repine and cry aloud, ‘AT’At; then shalt thou be accounted a pitiful dolt and loghead, possessed of the Divine reason, but yet not exercising it.

This matter being fully determined and made clear, I would next draw the attention of the studious to a mysterious and doubtful point, by the consideration of which many have become sorely poddered and confounded. And it is this: — Whether, supposing any one to dream of a pipe or of smoking, the pipe that has been dreamt of has any real existence? And the same with regard to the tobacco smoked, the smoke thereof, and the ashes thereof. Now in the judgment of the Rosicrucians pipe, tobacco, ashes, and smoke do verily exist — nay, are more real than the pipes we smoke in our waking hours, which are, indeed, but shadows and similitudes adapted for our material nature, but in no proper sense of the word real. On this see *The Rosicrucians,* editio altera, p. 116, where the following words may be found:— “But to the questions, what is a dream? — nay, what is waking? — who shall answer? or who can declare whether in that broad outside, where our minds and our powers evaporate and cease, where nature melts away into nothing that we can know as nature, or know as anything else, in regard to dreams and realities, the one may not be the other? The dream may be man’s life to him — as another life other than his own life — and the reality may be the dream,… while we, awake as we fancy ourselves, may be sunk in a sleep of many thousand years.” *K.T..* So, it being granted that our dream life is more real than our waking life, the conclusion followeth of necessity that our dream pipes are more real than our waking pipes. Wherefore the whole array of material pipes is, as it were, doubled and confronted by a spiritual host of spiritual pipes, existing in some world we know not of, and to be smoked alone in dreams. To what boundless realms of thought doth this lead us, and what manifold deductions might be drawn therefrom! May not each one of us, from the days of Adam Kadmon to now, have each a patron pipe, as it were, allotted to him, bearing a mysterious relation to his natural habit of mind and body? Hence the pipes a man smokes and his occupation and station may not entirely be disconnected, as Stoschius supposes — *e g.,* it may be in some part true that A is an Irish navvy because he uses a short clay, and X is a man of wealth because he smokes a meerschaum. But of a truth this theory of dream pipes is altogether too deep a matter to be merely handled in so small a treatise, so I do but give hints and outlines, which the reader may fill in for himself as it pleaseth him.

Next I will notice those sophisms or fallacies with which Pipe Philosophers are wont, on occasion, to divert themselves. And, for example, take the following, by which it has been shown that smoking is impossible. To smoke is to inhale tobacco, but to do this it ia necessary for the mouthpiece of the pipe to come in contact with the lips. And suppose that the mouthpiece of the pipe about to be smoked is a foot distant from the lips, then move it so that it becomes nearer by a half; then again move it nearer by a quarter, and then by an eighth, and so on. By which it will continually come more and more near to the mouth, but yet will never touch it. But since it is necessary in smoking for the mouthpiece to touch the mouth, smoking is impossible. This against the possibility of smoking, but against the utility of smoking take the following; —

“If you smoke cigars you cause expense (to yourself).

If you smoke pipes you cause offence (to others).

But you must smoke one or the other, *therefore* it is best not to smoke.”

And this being the composition of a sophist, who sold it at a great price to a certain Anti-Smoking Association, was confuted as follows by the author of this book in his *Disputationes MD Contra Lawsonum:* —

“If I smoke pipes I shall please myself.

If I smoke cigars I shall please others.

Therefore it is best to smoke.”

And many other ingenious arguments of this kind are there, which I omit, they pertaining rather to the eristical art than the fumifical, properly so called.

And this is all that I shall say on the matter of pipes.

CHAPTER III.

THE SECOND CATEGORY of place admits of two divisions — the place where not and the place where. For example of the first take, in past time, Socrates; in present time, Mr. Isaac Pitman; in future time, the perfect man of Herbert Spencer, all of whom hare smoked, smoke, and will smoke in the place where they are not, or, in more common language, nowhere. It has, indeed, been asserted that it is impossible for any one to smoke in the place where he is not, but the above examples plainly prove the contradictory, which to all rational men is a self-evident and axiomatic proposition. But as to the manner in which it is accomplished, and as to the pipes which are used (in smoking where you are not), this I may not manifest, it being one of those secret doctrines known only to a few, and unmeet to be revealed. But he who in a reverent and devout spirit shall apply himself to the study of the Pythagorean hymn "Unus, Duo: Soccum Fibulato" (One, Two: Buckle my Shoe), may, by a perception of the mystic numbers therein contained, arrive at an understanding of this matter. For if he can but become a "pontifex" or "bridge-maker" between the limitable (one) and the illimitable (two), and clearly perceive how it comes to pass that "twice one are two," then indeed the buckling of the shoe is an easy task. But this knowledge is not for the many, and is hard to be got. Now I imagine that I perceive many a one who has hitherto read with patience, and it may be not without edification, now fling the book down and scornfully declare that he who thinks it a hard matter to understand "twice one are two" is not fitted to read books, much less to write them. But yet, O Cato, dost thou thyself understand this? Tell me not that it so because the multiplication-table declares it to be so; for that is but saying, "It is so because it is so." Neither use long words such as "unity" and "duality," for they are but one and two in Roman togas. Neither talk of experience, and endeavour to explain the mystery by telling me that "twice one are two" because twice one shilling is two shillings. For there was a time when there were neither shillings, nor denarii, nor drachmas — nay, nor men to possess them, nor a world for men to dwell in; yet, then as now, it might have been written in space, “Twice one are two.”

This being all that I shall write concerning smoking in the place where you are not, I will next treat of that kind of smoking more commonly practised — namely, in the place where you are. And the different divisions of place where I have exhibited in the form of a “tree,” partly after that known as “Arbor Porphyriana,” but differing from it as to matter.

By this synopsis we perceive that place where is capable of two main divisions — in the open air and indoors. The open air or hypæthral division may be further divided into celestial (in the air), terrestrial (on land), and aqueous (on water). Now it is possible to smoke in the air in two ways — in a balloon and out of a balloon, which last, though it is practicable and, perchance, pleasurable, I do not think has ever been accomplished, and this is doubtless due to the mind being in such cases taken up by the consideration of other matters. It will be seen that the terrestrial member is not further subdivided, which omission is not to be imputed to inability or ignorance on my part, but to an unwillingness to occupy the space that would be required, any further subdivision amounting to a description of the habitable world. The aqueous member, however, is here fully partitioned into its several sections, all of which are too commonly known to require particular discourse. I will, nathless, observe that if any one should sit in a boathouse on the shore of a Scotch *loch* through which a river flows into the sea he will (provided the *lock* be proximate to the open sea) be smoking in as composite a manner as is possible. For let him, though sitting on the floor of the boat-house, dip his legs into the water, and at the same moment he will be partly indoors and partly in the open air, partly on the land and partly on water, partly on the sea, partly on a river, and partly on a lake. So much for hypæthral or open-air smoking. Next for anæthral or indoor smoking, for all general purposes it is sufficient to say that it always implies the being in a room, the which is further subdivided into possible positions in that room. Of these I most commend smoking in bed, but do advise that the pipe smoked be a long one, and would caution the reader to have all things necessary for smoking to hand, for the jumping out of bed to get a light is plainly contrary to sound reason. And if any one should require a demonstration of this let him read the *Great Morals* of Aristotle, who leaveth no doubt whatever on the subject. And as by a careful study of the above “tree” it is easy to get at all the maxims relating to place where, I will not give them at length, but only a few by way of example, such as the following: — I. Super mensam et sub mensâ eodem tempore fumare, impossibile est. To smoke on the table and under the table at the same time is impossible. II. Qui fumat in æthere, non fumat in aquâ. He who smokes in the air does not smoke in the water. III. Tribunis sella curuli sedentibus, fumare vetitum est. It was forbidden the tribunes to smoke while sitting on the curule chair. IV. Cavendum est ut fundum habeat, si vis sella fumave. If you wish to smoke in a chair see that it has a seat. V. Auriculariæ vj doinum sestivam non feceruut. Six earwigs don’t make a summer-house. VI. Tam boni in mari continentur tubuli, quam illi exmari extracts. There are as good pipes in the sea as ever came out of it. Of these the fourth has been disputed on the ground that any one who sits down in a chair without a seat experiences a sensation of surprise; that surprise is akin to joy; that joy is akin to happiness; that happiness is the object and end of our whole lives; therefore that he who sits down in a chair witdout a seat has attained the object and end of his whole life. To the fifth maxim Alciphron (known as “The Minute Philosopher”) objects that the number of earwigs required in the composition of a summer-house is, as a matter of fact, 5 3/4; and he also denies the truth of the sixth maxim, since it is impossible for us to really ascertain whether the sea does not contain even better pipes than have come out of it, and he therefore advocates a wise suspension of judgment on this dubious and obscure question It has also been opposed by the dogmatic Pipe Philosophers, who deny that pipes ever have come out of the sea, but this objection being founded on a false and misleading doctrine of experience does not merit a serious consideration.

And concerning these commonplaces or topics of place where enough, they being obvious and of little concern, but I would fain take notice of a disputable and disputed point — whether it should be lawful to smoke in churches. Now at the present this is not the case, and I doubt not that some may consider it profanity to even mention such a matter. But all this is on the assumption that smoking *is* profanity, which I will by no means allow, for I maintain, on the contrary, that it disposes the mind to attention, which must be either desirable or not desirable. If it is not desirable then it must be right to be inattentive in church (for what is not desirable is not right), but this is plainly not the case, and therefore it is desirable, and therefore right. Secondly, it may be said that the fumes would be disgusting to certain persons, but this objection assumes that whatever is disagreeable to some must be unlawful for all, but this is plainly not a fact; for if it were, since it is disagreeable to some persons to be sober, it would follow that we should be all drunkards, which is absurd. And again, granting that it would be disagreeable to some, and that therefore all should be debarred, what easier than to have *smoking galleries,* by which all possible annoyance would he avoided? And thirdly, it may be said that smoking in churches is not customary, and therefore not right, in which it is assumed that whatever is not customary is not right. But if so it must have been right to burn heretics and schismatics, for it was very customary. Fourthly, it will be argued that what may be called the *associations* of smoking are of such a kind that though *per se* it is not profane, yet by its relations it has become so, and so should not be allowed. These opponents would talk of how "tinkers and beastly folk" do smoke, of the vile places they smoke in, and of the vile words that proceed out of their mouths as they smoke. But no one that I know of has condemned standing or sitting in church because vile people stand and sit in vile places, or singing in church because there are vile and filthy songs. So we perceive that all these objections against smoking in churches are but empty sophisms, possessing no real weight or validity. Yet many feeble folk are misled and confounded by them, and so it was my duty so thoroughly to expose and confute the same that no one upon reading this book should have it in his power to bring forward the excuse of ignorance.

And since some, on a study of the tree, may blame me for having omitted "smoking-carriages," I reply that these "smoking-carriages" are but rooms in motion. And if any one shall say that they are not rooms because they are in motion I tell him he is a dolt and an ass, who if kicked (as he would deserve to be) would deny the foot that kicked him to be a foot for the reason that it was in motion. I may say, however, that some have denied that smoking in anything which moves, whether carriage, boat, or ship, can reasonably be called smoking in any place whatever, since "mobile movetur nec in loco quo est, nec in loco quo non est" — that which is in motion moves neither in the place where it is nor in the place where it is not. (Here the word "loco" would tempt the fool to jest, and seeing that I forbear thou mayest conclude what thou pleasest, but beware of an illicit process.) But since you must either smoke in the place where you are or in the place where you are not, and it is plain that you are not smoking in the place where you are not (for you are in the carriage, ship, or boat), therefore it is clear that you are smoking where you are. But yet, I allow, there is a certain difference between smoking in that which moves and that which moves not, so I will meet the objectors half-way and term such smoking smoking in space. But this again must be carefully distinguished from smoking in or out of a balloon (in air), for in this latter case your body is wholly disconnected from the earth, whereas the carriage rests upon wheels, the wheels upon rails, and the rails upon the earth.

Now as to the question whether it is good to smoke at games, I reply that in all games requiring an application of the mind it is good, as tending to increase the attention and application thereof. Such be chess-play, the philosopher's game, and all ouronomachies and metronomachies, together with games at cards and the like. But, on the other hand, I forbid smoking at tennis and all ball games in which a free play of the body and hands is required, as being likely to impede free action and lead to loss. Especially do I discountenance it in tennis-play, which of all games demandeth the most bodily action, and trust me he who smoketh at this game is little like to make a good chase or put the ball into the grille. But to those in the dedans who watch the sport it may well be allowed, and so for all games with regard to those who look on. And notably in bowls it is a pleasant thing, seated on a bench with a can of ale, to smoke a pipe and cry "Euge! Belle! Pessime!" as it may hap, so to partake in the delight and not the labour of the game. Yet beware of using a pipe of any new-fangled or curious shape, for thus the whole would be marred and become discordant, and like to ancient misereres cushioned with white satin. So the only pipe proper in such case is the churchwarden, and that a full yard in length. Likewise let the tobacco be placed on a dish, and all will be harmonious and in accord.

But this digression into which I have wandered pertains rather to pipe poetry than Pipe Philosophy, and so I will not enlarge upon it. And for the same reason I do not enter into the innumerable digressions which are open to me concerning place, but leave them either to be writ or not to be writ as it may chance. Wherefore as to place, both where and where not, enough, and so to what follows.

CHAPTER IV.

FORASMUCH AS! LAVE lately treated of place I will now treat of time, which for the smoker may be cut into three divisions — initiative, inchoative-contingent, and ultimate, of which technical terms the meaning is this: initiative has reference to the time (or age) at which a man may begin to smoke; inchoative-contingent to the time (or hours) at which he smokes after he hath begun; and ultimate to the time after which he smokes no more, whether by death (which is woeful) or by the compulsion of others (which is more woeful), his own deliberate choice (which is beyond comparison most woeful). But, you ask, do I say that stopping short by death is the least woeful of all? Yea, verily I do. For as in the case of a drunkard (who does evilly) it is good if he cease to drink by his own free-will, less good if he do so compelled by others, and least good if he be estopped by death; so in the case of a smoker (who does well) the very opposite is the case. For it is most melancholy when a man ceases to do well by his own infirmity of mind, less so when he ceases compelled by others (for there is a chance that he may free himself and do well again), and least of all when death finds him still persisting in his well-doing, and to be subdued by it alone. So the three above terms being made clear, we can proceed to a separate consideration thereof.

Firstly, initiative or absolute commencement. That is to say the smoking of the first pipe, the causes that lead to it, the manner of smoking it, and the events that result from it. And as to the causes that lead to it they usually commence with an idle curiosity excited by seeing others smoking, especially if he in whose mind there is this curiosity be of tender years and he perceive certain of his own age (lyXticer *ηβψ)* smoking in secret or openly, and *apparently* deriving gratification therefrom. Secondly, I assign as a cause original sin, disposing the mind to do what is forbidden. Especially is this the case in the schools, where smoking, being strictly forbidden, is much practised. Thirdly, I assign as a cause vanity or self-love, which represents that smoking promoteth a brave and manly appearance. All these acting together cause desire, the only counter to which is fear, arising naturally from the risk of stripes and the well-known vigour of tobacco in the unaccustomed stomach. But finally desire casts out fear, and the catechumen obtains possession of the fumificables in one of the four ways that we have before pointed out. And mostly it is by buying, this method affording the most pleasure. Next in secret (if he be fearful) or in the sight of witnesses (if he be vainglorious) is the very first pipe smoked, with all its rites of solemn illumination, placing between the lips, turning in the fingers, and the rest. At this point the casuists make an objection that properly there is, in fact, no such thing as a first pipe, inasmuch as the beginner's courage and stomach both fail him before half or a quarter of the tobacco in the pipe hath been smoked. Therefore, they maintaining that the term "primus tubulus," or first pipe, connotes the smoking of *all* the tobacco that may be in the aforesaid pipe, deny that such first pipe properly exists. To this I reply that primus tubulus doth by no means respond to their definition, but only denotes the first smoking of tobacco, were it but a single whiff, or even if a pipe be not used, but a cigar or cigarette. Secondly, it is by no means the fact that all beginners are sickened in the middle, for, if I remember rightly, I myself smoked my first pipe through without flinching, and dare say that many others have done likewise. But I admit that in most cases there cometh a horrid presentiment, with quaking of the flesh and a fearful pallor. Then all things, as it were, whirl round, the whole universe appears a-wrack, and night descends upon the soul. Such terrors, indeed, does the wretched one endure that it is likely that he vows henceforth a lifelong abstinence and curseth the hour in which he bought this dreadful herb to be a torment both to his spirit and his flesh. All this if he be private, and no one but himself wotteth of it; how much more if he be discovered and perchance rewarded with stripes and disgrace! And to represent this chain of cause and effect more clearly I subjoin the following scheme *ad exemplar Dummerkopfii,* the which hath met with much approval at the hands of Pipe Philosophers; —

Of a verity this initiative demandeth "robur et aes triplex," and it might seem wonderful how, knowing all this, any one can have courage to begin. But the heart of man is a stubborn thing and not to be taken aback, so, in spite of all, the flame is ever kindled anew, and the race of smokers multiplieth exceedingly.

Now this state of sorrow and abasement continues not long, and “mox reficit rates,” soon the beginner getteth new pipes to replace those which were broken, and new tobacco in the room of that which was consumed. So little by little, by slow degrees, he advanceth to cloudiness, fearing less with every pipe to be disturbed by sickness, and so at last becometh a smoker. But some there be (O infausti, miserabiles!) whose habit of body will never allow them to smoke, or at best only by whiffs and starts, by which little profit is to be got. Others are so confounded by the event of that first pipe that weeks become months and months years before they venture again and become in truth smokers. And Scriblerus Redivivus appears to me to discriminate very wisely between a smoker and one who smoketh, “for the first hath the habit of smoking, which the last hath not yet.” And if it be asked at what age it is best to acquire the habit, I answer that generally the age of seventeen is the best, or thereabouts, but this must depend greatly on circumstances and habit of body, since it may be too early for some and too late for others.

Next, let us proceed to the inchoative-contingent, which presupposes the habitude of smoking, and has reference to the hours of the day or night at which it is most pleasant, to smoke. And as to this answer — at all hours — with certain necessary and obvious exceptions. Firstly, it is good to smoke one pipe, and only one, before breakfast, at which time the body being empty of food is most amenable to the nicotinic energy. Secondly, fail not to smoke three pipes at the least immediately after breakfast. And these should be performed in the open air, and, if it is possible, while sauntering about a fair garden or pleasaunce, off which the dew has not yet gone, and odorous with the scents of flowers. Thirdly, in the afternoon smoke not less than three pipes, but not immediately after eating lest they breed heaviness and black choler. Fourthly, and lastly, in the evening, and far into the night, when hanging over your books, smoke as many pipes as possible, at the least not less than four. This I propound not as a maximum but a minimum, and necessary to be discharged by ail. For any one who smokes less than eleven pipes per diem is not so much to be accounted a smoker as one who smoketh. And if at any time the student should feel his mouth to be, as it were, cloyed and brackish with much smoking, let him by all means pause for awhile, and drink a strong decoction of tea without either sugar or milk. For nothing is more recuperative and invigorant than this same black tea, and altogether a drink mightily to be commended. And thus in constant smoking and meditation passeth the life of the Pipe Philosopher. To him no place and no time are good save they give him liberty to smoke, and none ill save they take this liberty away. Although, by misfortune, he be compelled to battle with the world and earn his livelihood, yet it is but the body of the man that is so engaged, and his mind not at all. Wealth he only cares for as relieving him of this necessity, and enabling him to be more choice and curious in his fumificables. Opiparous fare and gentle living are held by him of no account, but rather as hindrances and stumbling-blocks to the spirit. Outward show, rich dress, and a fine appearance he dreams not of for himself, but delights to see them in others that he may on them vent his scorn. But most of all he despises that which men call love, and is wont, as we have seen, to look under a fair outside, and see the ruddy skin grow yellow and wrinkled, and at last, bursting asunder, disclose the grinning jaws, and holes for eyes, and layers of bone, about which, when they are covered over, there is such a pitiful to-do and exclamation. Thus, with much tobacco, many books, and a few friends, his life goes on, till at last the inchoative-contingent draws to an end, and the ultimate begins.

And when it has come to this, and he knows that he has but a few pipes more to smoke in this world, he taketh care that they be smoked well and with a good grace, until it cometh to *ultimus tubulus,* the very last pipe, and dying as he hath lived, neither hoping, fearing, nor regretting, he departs hence, and becomes but a memory of a life well lived, and a death bravely endured. But if this is a woeful matter — *fitlfav rj Kara Sitxpva* — what shall we say of the man who by his own choice leaves off to smoke, and takes to himself some ribbon as a proclamation of his shame? He shall be as an evil savour, a stink, and an abomination in the nostrils of the faithful, and as one not fit to be named as a man. And let those who have brought him unto this be accounted as lemures and larvæ, and their voices as the squeaking of the bats of hell. So shall they be emptied out like ashes, and the recollection of them be even as the foulness of a pipe that is foul, but with a more exceeding foulness, and their memory as the memory of a bucket that is broken. Wherefore let those to whom there is still time take heed and make use of that time, concerning which let such things have been said.

CHAPTER V.

IN RELATION LET us first take the eight predicaments or categories of fumifical mischance, as they are commonly given by the scholastic writers, and repeated in the Schools of Pipe Philosophy: (1) suffering in body, which befalls detected smokers of tender years; (2) without a pipe-light:

(3) — in a drawing-room, or in the company of females; (4) in a church, which, if my arguments take effect, will soon cease to be reckoned a predicament; (5) sick in body, whether by reason of tobacco or otherwise; (6) with a stopped-up pipe; (7) with a burnt tongue; (8) proctorised, the which is a predicament limited to our English Universities. These predicaments are below enumerated in some Latin lines, of no little elegance and numerosity, and well worthy of a place in the memory: —

"(1) Verbera cum dantur,   (2) tubulo cum lumina desunt, (3) — Aut cum fœmineis œdibus usque manes.

(4) — Aut in Divorum templis,   (5) ægerve,   (6) dedisti Frustra opurarn tubulo, heus! inapertus abit.

(7) — Cum patiens tristi cruciatur lingua dolore, (8) — Proctoribus titulum dicis et asque domum.

Hæc si perlexisse juvit, collecta magistris Omnia fuœantis prædicamenta tencs."

Of these eight predicaments the doctrine was first taught in the University of Padua by certain learned Greeks who had fled thither from Constantinople. And they continued to hold their place without assault, till at the end of the last century they were impugned oy the German Windiemann, who proposed to substitute the following: — Venerability, mulierity, ecclesiasticity, glossarity, and inillumination as being fewer in number, and possessing greater perspicuity. And Zimmerblast, in his "Kritik der Windiemannschen Pfeiffe-Philosophie," *Tub.,* 1815, would further reduce the predicaments to two only — inillumination and imperturbability, or hæccity, by which latter term he denotes that peculiar cohesion of matter inside a pipe which it is impossible, without the assistance of a steam-engine, to pierce through. But the publication of this tractate leading to a riot among the students, and the threatened deprivation of the professorial chair, Zimmerblast consented to withdraw these innovations, and to be content to leave matters as he found them, which, to a German philosopher, is accounted the utmost of humiliation. Yet since that time a new school hath arisen in the University of Paris which teaches that there is in reality but one predicament, which is "N'être pas Parisien" — not to have been born in Paris. For Paris, being the capital of France, is the seat of the French Republic, which is admitted by all to be the most tolerant, magnanimous, and amiable Government that ever has existed or ever can exist; and it being likewise granted that the Parisians are the most courageous people under the sun, and also the most polite (as was indeed most apparent but lately), it follows of necessity that the only real misfortune that can befall a man is not to have been born in Paris; and so but to mention this is sufficient, all other misfortunes being of but minor importance. Moncurius Scepticus, however, in his "Itinerarium per Orbem Terrarum factum," considers the real predicament to be "the not-possessing a house in Bedford Park," which being bounded on one side by an open sewer, on another by a brickfield, and at each end by a railway, cannot fail to be a desirable and pleasant spot. (Rents from <£35 to £100. Apply at the office.) Some obstinate and misguided spirits, indeed, would object to this on the ground that two feet of water on the floor of one room and a delapsed ceiling on the table of another are, to say the least, inconveniences; but as Moncurius contends, is there not a club and a School of Art, and doth not the railway take men direct to that spot, hallowed by the delivery of so many *Orationes Notilocellenses,* or south-windy discourses? And he who having read that notable discourse in which Moncurius completely, logically, and syllogistically proves the absurdity of the Christian religion is yet inclined to doubt the blessedness of living in propinquity to so great a man, must be, in very deed and truth, nought but an ignoramus and blockhead. So that there is not a little to be said for this Moncurian predicament, but as it is but lately promulgated, I am constrained to adhere to the old predicament until such time as the world be dichotomised into — 1. Wise men = Dwellers in Bedford Park. 2. Fools = Dwellers in other places.

To pass from the predicaments to other matters, I will first take the doctrine of tubular remembrance, or *anamnesis,* which, stated briefly, is as follows: — A pipe that has been smoked by any one, (1) in a certain place, (2) at a certain time, (3) in a certain relation, will, if laid by for a season and smoked again by the same person, (1) in another place, (2) at another time, (3) in a different relation, bring back to the soul an *anmnnesis,* or remembrance of the former place, time, and relation. And this, not imperfectly as an outline, but perfectly as in a finished picture. Which in the *Fumifical Logic* of Peter Pfeiffe (Petrus Fistularius) stands thus:— “*Tubulus, ab aliquo fumatus; 1° In loco quodam; 11° In tempore quodam; IIP In ratione quadam; si per temporis quoddam epatium deponatur, et inde rursus ab eodem. 1° In alio loco; 11° In alio tempore; III° In ratione diversâ, fumetur: in animum ejus perfectam, loci, temporis, raiionis prioris memoriam reducet. Quod non indistincte, aut confuse, sed distincte et perspicue, perficit.”*

Such being the doctrine of anamnesis in the precision of the Latin tongue, for the benefit of those who love to see a dignified subject treated of in a dignified language, let us examine somewhat closely this ingenious and subtle opinion. And firstly it may be inquired, Is it in reality so? and if it be so, whether universally or particularly? To which questions I may make one answer, It is so, but not universally. For as a cucumber seed would attain to nothing if it were planted in ice, so neither can this process of anamnesis take place in a cold and unfruitful mind, but only in one that is delicate and readily receiveth and fructifieth whatever is cast upon it. And secondly, what is the cause of this recollection? Why, as to this various explications have been given. Some will have it that a pipe collects while it is being smoked certain *atoms* of a subtile aether, which in its turn is impregnated with the quintessence of the surrounding air, which differeth in some degree in every different place. And if the recollection includes a recollection of persons it is said that the *atoms* collected were partly composed of the breath of these persons. So these *atoms* being collected are stored up within the substance of the pipe, and remain within it for any length of time (but Spitsbubius will not allow a greater duration than a thousand years), and upon the pipe being smoked again are drawn out by the heat, and pass with the smoke into the body, and so act on the mind, not immediately but mediately. But this theory seeming somewhat gross and material was rejected by Limalaudulus de Tamesi, who maintains that the anamnesis is owing to the ideas of place, time, and relation being perceived by the "anima tubuli," or spirit of the pipe, and so becoming a part of it, whence after a certain mysterious fashion they pass directly into the mind when the pipe is again used. But the means by which this is effected he explains not, and so lays himself open in some way to the charge of obscurity which hath been brought against him. And if we admitted this hypothesis we could not fail to regard a pipe as *divinitatis specie quadam imbutus,* a kind of divinity capable of receiving and imparting ideas, independent of matter, which would seem somewhat too extravagant. For my own part I do mostly incline to the opinions of Jacobulus de Corvis, who holds that a pipe is neither capable of receiving aethereal atoms or ideas, much less of storing them up and imparting them. And his explanation by instance is this: — Supposing that on a bitter and frosty day in midwinter I walk through a wild country abounding in hills, the tops of which are covered with snow. And let me also meet with certain of my acquaintance, and talk with them on some particular matter to which we alone are privy. Grant me likewise to fall into a ditch as I journey along, and be not wroth if I be covered with slush even to my doublet. And further when I reach my journey's end let it be not forbidden me to devour muffins (placentæ calefactæ) even till I can eat no more. Now all these events have occupied a certain space of time, during some part of which (say from my meeting with my friends till the falling into the ditch) I have smoked a particular pipe and none other. And a twelvemonth after, this pipe in the meantime not having been used by me, suppose that in the heart of a city, on a burning July day, I once more smoke it. And I have scarce put it to my lips when in imagination I am again among the snow-clad hills and feel again the cold keen air of winter. Next cometh to my mind the meeting with my acquaintance, the matter of our discourse, the wetness of the ditch, and the hotness of the muffins. Now it was only during a part of the whole time that I was actually smoking, so that neither by aethereal atoms or ideas could the pipe participate in what preceded and what followed my smoking of it. And the cause of recollection is as follows: — Every single pipe hath in it a somewhat that renders it different from other pipes. And this somewhat is perceived by the mind secretly — that is to say, it is not known by itself, but by what results from it. So taking this along with more material differences of substance, shape, colour, and the like, it is easy to understand that all these acting together recall to the mind when it was they were last perceived. Which being accomplished, the mind, not content with the bare particulars of time, proceeds to place, relation, action, passion, and so on through the categories until the whole circumstances, with what preceded and what followed, are run over anew. So that the very slightest matter which occurred formerly is now remembered and pondered over, it may be even to a ridiculous and disproportionate extent. And this seems to be a very rational view to take of the matter, far more agreeable to the intellect than the former hypotheses I have cited. For if we allow that the ideas do actually exist in the pipe itself it must follow that they exist for all who may afterwards smoke it, and not alone for the original smoker. So we might suppose a new species of divination arising named *capnomancy,* in which by merely smoking a pipe we might gain a knowledge not only of the deeds or words of others but their very thoughts and desires, which would be an art greedily sought after and pursued, and, indeed, might have we know not what results. For since it is agreed that the superior produces the inferior, and since ideas are confessedly superior to matter, who shall say that ideas may not be so managed as to produce matter? So by continually brooding over the ideas — say of wealth — contained in a pipe the smoker might be surprised by one day seeing the ideas take visible form in the shape of gold, silver, and broad lands. But this hath not yet been accomplished, and as far as I can judge is not at present likely to be, which is much to be regretted and deplored. And as to the atomic theory it is clear that it is not possible that, except during the very act of smoking, the atoms can influence the pipe at all, and since the most subtile part of the anamnesis is its comprehension of what preceded and what succeeded, this is left altogether unexplained, or only to be explained in an unnatural and improbable manner. So let the hypothesis of Jacobulus be adjudged the conqueror, and with this let us end the matter.

Next, by way of disputation, I will take the statement often made by the thoughtless — smoking is a slow poison. First as to the form. What is a “poison?” A poison is a substance, either solid, liquid, or gaseous, which being absorbed into the system of the body either kills it or more or less grievously injures it. And a “slow poison” is therefore a substance which does this slowly and by degrees. From which it appears that “smoking” is a substance. But smoking is the *act* of inhaling smoke. Therefore an *act* is also a *substance,* which is absurd. For how can we talk of a solid *act,* or a liquid *act,* or a gaseous *act?* It might as justly, *quoad formam,* be said of dancing that “it is a slow poison,” or of any other act of the body that can be conceived of. And again, what meaning are we to assign to the word “slow?” I will grant that “smoking” *is* a poison, and search among other poisons and endeavour to understand in what manner “slow” is applied to them. Now among rapid poisons we find, for example, aconite, prussic acid, and the venom of certain snakes. These will kill a man, it may be, in a second of time, it may be in two or three days at the most. And among slow poisons there are those mysterious powders formerly in fashion by which, at most in a few months, a man’s strength was undermined and he seemed to fade away as if by natural disease. Now since “smoking” is a “slow” poison it is in the latter way that we should expect it to act, and a year of smoking at the utmost would be sufficient to insure death. But who ever heard of a smoker fading away after this manner? and even if it has happened so, how many out of the millions of men who have smoked have been thus caused to perish? Furthermore, can we say of any man who has attained the age of seventy, eighty, or ninety years, and who throughout (say fifty years) of his life has persisted in a certain habit, that he has been poisoned by that habit? Yet many who have died at such ages have been constant smokers for the greater part of their lives, and glory in having thus done. I grant that if a boy of twelve, without previous preparation, smoke eight ounces of tobacco in as many hours it is not unlikely he will die, or at any rate be grievously sick, but this amounts only to saying that “Tobacco, if it be used to an inordinate extent by one not used to it, will act as a poison,” which might be said of well-nigh every substance we can think of as capable of being taken into the body. But yet *not* a *slow* poison, for the boy would probably die in a very short space of time, or be at death’s-door for a day or two and then recover. So in no case can tobacco be said to be a *slow* poison, and only a *poison* when taken under exceptional surroundings. And, in fact, this argument, or rather statement (for an argument requires its terms to have a distinct meaning, and also a solid foundation), is mostly brought forward by those who

“Compound for sins they are inclined to

By damning those they have no mind to.”

Such as are, for instance, your fine City dames, who will become well-nigh exanimate at the smell of good wholesome tobacco, but who, in the privity of their chambers, will stupefy themselves with chloral or morphia and the like. But it were waste of breath, better employed in smoking, to rebuke these malaperts, so I will leave them to their drugs, and betake me to my pipe.

This pernicious and hateful dogma being analysed into its elements of equivocation, folly, and alazonie, and so confuted, I will next observe the ten topics of doubt as propounded by Ænesidemus Minimus in his *Prior Fumifics* (Kaimicpopa UpoTepa). They refer actually to the lighting of pipes, but do strike indirectly at the certainty of all smoking whatsoever. For it being impossible to smoke tobacco before it be lighted, if it can be shown that considerable doubt attaches to the certainty of lighting, then it follows that an equal doubt attaches to the certainty of smoking. And this Ænesidemus endeavoured to prove. For being a professor at the famous University of Gotham, he grew dissatisfied with the empirical methods there in vogue, and from his professorial tub enunciated the following sceptical propositions: — Supposing any one to have a pipe containing tobacco in one hand and a matchbox in the other, it is very improbable that this pipe will be lighted. For these reasons: 1. The tobacco may be damp. 2. The pipe may be too full. 3. The pipe may not be full enough. 4. The match may go out *(a)* of its own volition, *(b)* by the force of the wind, (c) by the foolishness of the agent. 5. the pipe may be undrawable, (a) because it is stopped up too much, (6) — b)because it is not stopped up enough. 6. The intending smoker may become an idiot, or have a fit, and so be incapable of light bg the pipe. 7. If he be at school he may be interrupted by the archididascalus or one or more of the hypodidasculi. 8. He may change his mind. 9. There’s many a slip ‘twixt the pipe and the lip. 10. Supposing none of these things happen, and the matter be accomplished, yet it is false to say that the pipe has been lighted; for it is not lighted, but the tobacco that is in it. Which doctrines were no sooner made known than a storm of rage and indignation against Ænesidemus burst forth in Gotham, and not only was his tub of fumifical philosophy at once declared vacant, but its very bottom was knocked out by the students, by which it became yet more vacant, and wholly unfit for professorial purposes. Ænesidemus was further declared to be tainted with the worst errors of Gulielmus de Læto Lapide, the Pope, and the Caucus; and within a short space of time Gotham knew him no more, save as a Radical and a backslider, who had bitten the bosom that cherished him. And Gotham being a city of full five hundred souls, returning two Conservative members to the Commons' House, and possessing six churches and nine public pumps, besides innumerable private ones, it was universally thought in the town that this verdict would be decisive; but the country at large had lately experienced one of its occasional attacks of madness, and had placed Gulielmus de Læto Lapide at the head of the Government. And he, with that shameless wickedness for which he is everywhere known, did show favour to Ænesidemus, and (it is vulgarly reported) did enter into a Corrupt Compact with him, and did give him golden money, on the condition that he should exercise his art of blacking boots for his (Gulielmus's) benefit. But all this, the disputations in the Commons' House upon the matter, the questions asked therein upon it, and the leading articles thereon, are they not written in the books of the misdeeds of Gulielmus de Læto Lapide, who made the people of England to go astray?

But if it be inquired by the curious what was the fate of the tub that was made vacant by the abominable heresies of Ænesidemus, and the boots of the students, I am able in some sort to answer. On every thirty-first of April (Old Style) this tub is borne round the town, vested in full academicals, and surrounded by a body of the graduates of the University of Gotham shouting discordantly the following verses: —

I.

"O! cives civitatis
Hujus clarissâmæ,
Menoriam pravitatis
Æternam tenetc.

II.

"Illius P rofessoris,
Qui ausit dubitare; Et est expulsus è foris,
Ncc seio cur, nec quare.

III.

"Sed solum hoc scio, —
Qui audet dubiture,
Is expelletur Gotbamo
Si absunt cur et quare."

So much for the history of these notable topics of doubt. But if we proceed to examine them critically, notwithstanding the indignation that they aroused, I believe we shall find them more or less reasonable. Being for the most part expressed in clear and precise language, there appears to be no necessity of a particular explication. But I would advise the reader that in the fifth topic the words "not stopped up enough" denote what is usually named "leaking" — that is, an escape of air at some part of the pipe diverse from the bowl or mouthpiece. So considering that of these topics not one is impossible, and very many do frequently come to pass, it seems not unreasonable to argue for an *apathy,* or suspension of the judgment upon the question of certainty or non-certainty. I confess, however, that the tenth topic hath somewhat the appearance of a quibbling with words and of drawing too nice a distinction; yet we must understand that one of the most distinguishing marks of a true philosopher is a nicety in speech and a disposition to correct a loose and vulgar diction. So I will concede that these topics are well founded, and justify a wise suspension of judgment upon the matter of lighting pipes. Yet I can by no means consent with Ænesidemus when in his *Posterior Fumifics* he deduces from this improbability that it will be possible to light any given pipe the conclusion that, it being so uncertain a matter, it is better not to smoke at all. And when he proceeds, on these grounds, to recommend the taking of snuff and the chewing of quids as a substitute for smoking, I do not hesitate to pronounce him a gross materialist. For though he affirms that a quid contains the quidditas or whole essence of the Schoolmen, he seems to me but to equivocate and play the sophist, and I do therefore warn such of my readers as are inclined to materialism against these *Posterior Fumifics,* as being in some places little better than plain *acapnism,* and evidently contrary to the teaching of Pythagoras. And let all such would-be materialists remember that, though *metaphysically* the possibility of smoking may seem doubtful, yet to all *rational* intents and purposes it *is* possible, and may therefore be believed in and practised with an easy conscience. And all doubters on this question I refer to the *Κάπνισμά* EiTeXfeciat or Smoke-offering of Perfection by Proclus Capnobates, where shall be found much wholesome doctrine of a just mean between dogmatism and scepticism. Which observation applies equally to the downright acapnists, who deny all virtue whatsoever to tobacco, in whatsoever form it may be taken. For, they maintain, if there be any real savour in tobacco it must exist independently of the smoker, chewer, or snuffer, and be perceived in the same manner by all who use it. But what is more common than to hear two smokers of the same tobacco express directly contradictory judgments thereon? One will say it is mild, another strong, and if a third enter to them he will probably pronounce it neither mild nor strong, but of a medium flavour. Whence it is evident the virtue exists only in the mind of the smoker, and not at all in the tobacco itself. And who is ignorant that a single puff of tobacco-smoke appears a very different thing to an *aphis vastator* than to a man, inasmuch as to the insect it is death, but to the man a pleasure; but if the virtue really existed in the tobacco or the smoke from the tobacco it would be the same to the one as to the other. And again, you will hear the same man express different opinions at different times concerning the qualities of the very same tobacco; but if there existed any real savour in the tobacco itself this could not possibly be the case. So this nicotinic virtue is plainly a concept or notion of the mind, and in that manner really existing, but as it is vulgarly conceived to exist (namely, not in the mind, but in tobacco), it exists not at all. But these doctrines are so far harmless in that they do not advise the abjuration of smoking, but only regard it in a new and mysterious light, and so may be admired for their ingenuity without fear of any practical consequence. Yet they are to be condemned for obscurity and mistiness of expression, and are therefore not to be studied save by solid and profound doctors of Pipe Philosophy.

Such, in brief outline, are the two principal schools of sceptics, the one headed by the sometime Professor of Gotham, and becoming degraded to the base materialism of snuffing and chewing, and the other diverging into a mystic idealism, or notional philosophy, which, albeit not nocent, is yet wanting in basis, and so not worthy of any high laudation. And now, since I have traced from its origin and dim dawnings this Disciplina Tabulata, or

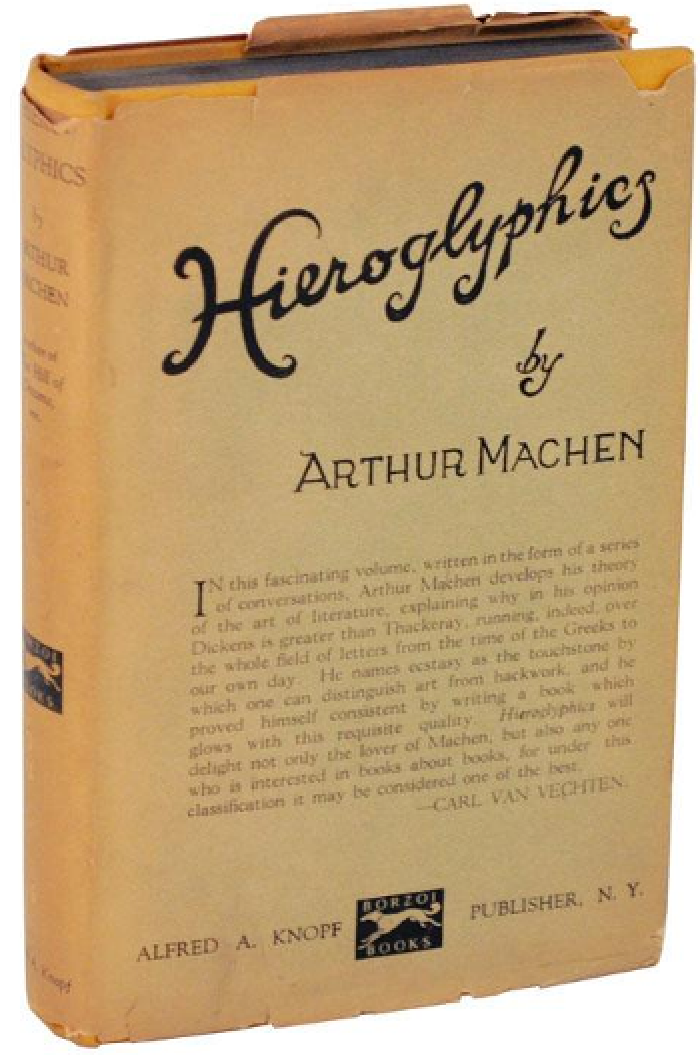
PIPE PHILOSOPHY, expounding, anatomising, and dividing it on my way, rendering plain things dark and dark things plain, I may declare with Naso, *Hoc opus exegi. Fessæ date serta carinæ. Contigimus portum*, *quo mihi cursus erat;* or with Tully, using less tropical adornment, *Adducta ad exüum quæstio est.* And so, most stubborn and undaunted reader, I — bid thee farewell, wishing thee half as much pleasure in the reading as I have had in the writing, which in truth has not been a little.

OHE JAM SATIS EST, OHE LIBELLE
JAM PERVENIMUS USQUE AD UMBILICOS.

Hieroglyphics

Published in 1902, this is Machen's only full-length work of literary criticism and offers a valuable insight into his thoughts on writing. Machen was moved to write the book after becoming sub-editor of *Literature* (later the *Times Literary Supplement*) in 1898.

As well as a valuable insight into Machen's own literary ideas – particularly his notion that writers should strive above all else to create 'ecstasy' in the reader – the work is also of great use to students of *fin de siècle* literary theory in general.



Hieroglyphics

by

ARTHUR MACHEN

IN this fascinating volume, written in the form of a series of conversations, Arthur Machen develops his theory of the art of literature, explaining why in his opinion Dickens is greater than Thackeray, running, indeed, over the whole field of letters from the time of the Greeks to our own day. He names ecstasy as the touchstone by which one can distinguish art from hackwork, and he proved himself consistent by writing a book which glows with this requisite quality. *Hieroglyphics* will delight not only the lover of Machen, but also any one who is interested in books about books, for under this classification it may be considered one of the best.

—CARL VAN VECHTEN.

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Machen, c. 1901

NOTE

IT WAS MY privilege, many years ago, to make the acquaintance of the obscure literary hermit, whose talk I have tried to reproduce in the pages that follow. Our first meeting was one of those chance affairs that now and then mitigate the loneliness of the London streets, and a second hazard led to the discovery that we had many interests in common. I think that the Hermit (as I shall call him) had begun to find the perpetual solitude of his years a growing terror, and he was not sorry to have a listener; at first, indeed, he talked almost with the joy of a child, or rather of a prisoner who has escaped from the house of silence, but as he chose subjects which have always interested me intensely, he gave as much pleasure as he received, and I became an assiduous visitor of his cell.

He had found an odd retreat. He avoided personalities, and had a happy knack of forgetting any that I vouchsafed on my side, (he forgot my name three times on the first evening that we spent together, and succeeded in repeating this feat over and over again since then), and I never gathered much of his past history. But I believe that "something had happened" many years before, in the prehistoric age of the 'seventies. There had been a break of some sort in the man's life when he was quite young; and so he had left the world and gone to Barnsbury, an almost mythical region lying between Pentonville and the Caledonian Road. Here, in the most retired street of that retired quarter, he occupied two rooms on the ground floor of a big, mouldy house, standing apart from the street and sheltered by gaunt grown trees and ancient shrubs; and just beside the dim and dusty window of the sitting-room a laburnum had cast a green stain on the decaying wall. The laburnum had grown wild, like all the trees and shrubs, and some of its black, straggling boughs brushed the pane, and of dark, windy nights while we sat together and talked of art and life we would be startled by the sudden violence with which those branches beat angrily upon the glass.

The room seemed always dark. I suppose that the house had been built in the early eighteenth century, and had been altered and added to at various periods, with a final “doing up” for the comparative luxury of someone in the ‘tens or ‘twenties; there were, I think, twenty rooms in it, and my friend used to declare that when a new servant came she spent many months in finding her way in the complicated maze of stairs and passages, and that the landlady even was now and then at fault. But the room in which we sat was hung with flock paper, of a deep and heavy crimson colour, and even on bright summer evenings the crimson looked almost black, and seemed to cast a shadow into the room. Often we sat there till the veritable darkness came, and each could scarcely see the white of the other’s face, and then my friend would light two lonely candles on the mantelpiece, or if he wished to read he set one on a table beside him; and when the candles were lighted I thought that the gloom grew more intense, and looking through the uncurtained window one could not see even the friendly twinkle of the gas-lamp in the street, but only the vague growth of the laburnum, and the tangle of boughs beyond.

It was a large room and gave me always a sense of empty space. Against one wall stood a heavy bookcase, with glass doors, solid and of dark mahogany, but made in the intermediate period that came between Chippendale and the modern school of machine-turned rubbish. In the duskiest corner of the room there was a secretaire of better workmanship, and two small tables and three gaunt chairs made up the furnishing. The Hermit would sometimes pace up and down in the void centre of the room as he talked, and if I chanced to be sitting by the window, his shape would almost disappear as he neared the secretaire on his march, and I heard the voice, and used to wonder for a moment whether the man had not vanished for ever, having been resolved into the shadows about him.

I have spent many evenings in that old mouldering room, where, when we were silent for an instant, the inanimate matter about us found a voice, and the decaying beams murmured together, and a vague sound might come from the cellars underneath. And it always seemed to me as if the crypt-like odour of the cellar rose also into the room, mingling with a faint suggestion of incense, though I am sure that my friend never burned it. Here then, with such surroundings as I have indicated, we held our sessions and talked freely and with enjoyment of many curious things, which, as the Hermit would say, had the huge merit of interesting no one but ourselves.

He would sometimes, whimsically, compare himself to Coleridge, and I think that he often deliberately talked in S. T. C.'s manner with delight in the joke. For, I need hardly say that the comparison was not in any way a serious one; he had a veneration for Coleridge's achievement, with a still greater veneration for that which Coleridge might have achieved, which would have caused him to regard any such comparison, seriously entertained, as unspeakably ludicrous. Still, he liked to regard himself as a very humble disciple in Coleridge's school, he was fond, as I have said, of imitating his master's manner as well as he could, and I think that he cherished, in the fashion of S. T. C., the notion that he had a "system," an esoteric philosophy of things; he sought for a key that would open, and a lamp that would enlighten all the dark treasure-houses of the Universe, and sometimes he believed that he held both the Key and the Lamp in his hands.

It is a confession of mysticism, but I incline to think that he was right in this belief. I recall the presence of that hollow, echoing room, the atmosphere with its subtle suggestion of incense sweetening the dank odours of the cellar, and the tone of the voice speaking to me, and I believe that once or twice we both saw visions, and some glimpse at least of certain eternal, ineffable Shapes. But these matters, the more esoteric doctrines of "the system" have entered hardly or not at all into the very imperfect and fragmentary notes that I have made of his conversations on literature.

I should scarcely be justified in calling him a literary monomaniac. But it is true that Art in general, and the art of literature in particular had for him a very high significance and interest; and he was always ready to defend the thesis that, all the arts being glorious, the literary art was the most glorious and wonderful of all. He reverenced music, but he was firm in maintaining that in perfect lyrical poetry there is the subtlest and most beautiful melody in the world.

I can scarcely say whether he wrote much himself. He would speak of stories on which he was engaged, but I have never seen his name on publishers' lists, and I do not think that he had adopted a pseudonym. One evening, I remember, I came in a little before my accustomed time, and in the shadowy corner of the room, a drawer in the secretaire was open, and I thought that it looked full of neat manuscripts. But I never spoke to him about his literary work; and I noticed that he did not much care to talk of literature from the commercial standpoint.

It is perhaps needless to say that I consulted my friend before publishing these notes of his conversations. I had been forced to leave London for some months, and I wrote to him from the country, requesting his permission to give to the world (if the world would have them) those judgments on books which I had listened to in Barnsbury. His reply allowed me to take my own way, “with all my heart, so long as you make me sufficiently apocryphal. I am not going to compete with ‘real’ critics whose names are printed in the papers; but if you can maintain the *incognito* and allow your readers (supposing their existence) to believe that I am a mere figment of your brain, you can print my *obiter dicta* ‘with ease of body and rest of reins.’ Here is a suggestion for a title: what do you say to ‘Boswell in Barnsbury’? But I really had no notion that you were taking notes all the time. Remember: keep the secret, *and the secrets*.”

I regarded this as a very liberal license, and I have tried to set in the best order I could compass the “system” so far as it relates to letters. I do not pretend that I am a *verbatim* reporter, for I had to trust to my memory, and though I tried to arrange my notes at the time, I fear I have fallen here and there into confusion. Still, I think that the six chapters which follow will seem fairly consecutive in their argument and arrangement, and the “Appendix” — a confession of failure — is, in reality, the result of the “cyclical mode of discoursing,” in which the Hermit jocularly professed to follow Coleridge.

Perhaps indeed Coleridge was deceived, and my dear friend with him, in the hope of real essential knowledge; but even so, these fragments which I propose are evidence that the latter earnestly desired the truth and sought it.

A. M.

I

DO YOU KNOW that just before you came in I found something highly significant in the evening paper? I am afraid from your expression that you rather undervalue the influence of the press; indeed, I remember one day when we were out together you swore at an inoffensive boy who tried to allure us with news of all the winners. I think I pointed out at the time that even horse-racing and an interest in “events” are preferable to stagnation, and that there is something august in the universal human passion for gambling. And, after all, the office-boy who “puts on” half-a-crown is really only an example of the love of man for the unknown; the half-crown is a venture into mystery, with that due flavour of commercialism which we in England add to most of our interests. But you see, don’t you? that gambling, even under its most sordid aspects, is not altogether sordid; it’s the mystery, the uncertainty, the hours of “strange surmise” that the smallest bet gives to the bettor that make the real delight of betting. When the office-boy wins and gets ten shillings for the risk of his two-and-six, his delight is not by any means pure love of gain, it is distinguished by a very marked line from the constantly repeated joys of the grocer, who is always buying delicious tea at ninepence and selling it at one-and-six. Here you have commercialism in its simplest form; but our office-boy, though he likes the money well enough, stands on a much higher plane. For the moment he is the man who has succeeded in solving the enigma of the Sphinx, in discovering the unknown continent, in reading the cypher, in guessing at the song the Sirens sang, in unveiling the hidden treasure that the buccaneers buried on the lonely shore; he has ventured successfully into the dim region of surmises. And when he loses, there are always consolations; the Indies have not been discovered on this voyage, certainly, but there have been wonders on the way, he has enjoyed many hours of delicious expectation. The proof that he likes the sport, even when he loses, is that he invariably takes the first opportunity of venturing again in the same manner. And, by the way, perhaps I was a little severe just now on trade, and especially on the grocer’s sugary and soapy enterprise. Perhaps if we were to look with a rather finer vision into the commercial spirit, we might find that it is not wholly commercial, not altogether sordid. Of course if the grocer opens his shop with a certainty, mathematical or almost mathematical, that the public will buy his wares, he is a wicked fellow; he is gambling with loaded dice, betting against a horse that he knows is to be made "all right," playing cards with honours up his sleeve, and I am sure that if this be his enterprise, it will always meet with our sternest disapproval. Casanova died towards the close of the last century, and since then cardsharping has become impossible to a man of taste. But seriously, I suspect that a good deal of the allurement that trade possesses for so many of us is the risk which it almost always implies, and risk means uncertainty, and uncertainty connotes the unknown. So you see our despised grocer turns out, after all, to be of the kin of Columbus, of the treasure-seekers, and mystery-mongers, and delvers after hidden things spiritual and material. I suppose we have here the real explanation of the human trading passion, and the solution of a problem that has often puzzled me. The problem I mean is this: how does it happen that the English are both the greatest poets and the greatest tradesmen of the modern world? Superficially, it seems that keeping shops and making poetry are incompatibles, and Wordsworth and Coleridge, Keats and Shelley, Tennyson and Poe, should have come from Provence or Sicily, from the "unpractical," uncommercial Latin races. But if we trace back the trading instinct to that love of a risk — or in other words to the desire for the unknown — the antinomy disappears, and it will become perfectly natural that the race which has gone to the world's end with its merchandise, has penetrated so gloriously into the further regions of poetry.

But that reminds me of what I was saying just after you had lit your pipe. I think I remarked that I had seen something of very high significance in the evening paper, and the glare of disgust with which you greeted my observation constituted an interruption, and an interruption that had to be dealt with. Now again you seem to hint at doubt with your eyebrows; you would say, perhaps, that I have not made out a very convincing case for journalism? But you must remember that my mental process resembles that of Coleridge; you called on the Seer at eleven o'clock in the morning, and (if young and imprudent) asked him a question. And at the waning of the light Coleridge was still diligently engaged in answering your question for you, having talked without intermission all the summer day. A "cyclical mode of discoursing" the pious Henry Nelson Coleridge called it, and he deals faithfully with certain persons who complained “that they could get no answer to a question from Coleridge.” And you will please to remember this when you think that I am “wandering” — a vice of which Coleridge also was accused. To-night, for example, on the evening paper being mentioned, your face expressed disgust and contempt, which I diagnosed (and rightly, I believe?) as a tribute to the enormous interest taken by the editors of these agreeable journals in the very latest sporting news; an interest which allows but little space for the discussion of pure literature. Hence my remarks on the gambling-spirit; and now I hope you will at least assume a thrill of interest when the boy bawls in your ear “All the winners and S. P.” It is possible you may be thinking of Ulysses or of Keats at the moment, and the interruption may annoy you, but it will do so no longer when you reflect that a burning anxiety as to the running of Bolter is for many thousands the symbol — and the only possible symbol — of the Doom of Troy and the wandering fields of foam, and the Isle of Calypso, and the “strange surmise” of Pizarro and all his men.

But here is the evening-paper in question. Yes, the colour is, perhaps, a little sickly. A kind of pinky-green, it seems, doesn’t it? But it forced itself on my notice in the most extraordinary manner, and I expect you will have to admit, when you have heard the story, that some Powers were at work. Well, I was walking up and down the room, just as it was getting dusk, and every now and then I stopped and looked out of the window. Yes, I was making phrases as usual, and thinking of a new story in the middle of the old one: hence the quarter-deck exercise. I daresay you have remarked that I do not keep my window in a very brilliant condition, and the air this evening, you will remember, was rather misty — October, I always think, wears a peculiar dim grace in Barnsbury — so I hope you will not find my impressions too incredible. I was staring, then, out of the window, when to my vast astonishment, a great pale bird seemed suddenly to shoot up into the air from the road, and to flutter into the garden, where it became entangled in that sapless old laburnum that weeps green tears upon the wall. I saw, as I thought, the beating and fluttering of wings, and I ran out, imagining that I was to secure a strange companion for my solitude. It was the evening paper, not a bird, and I saw at once that it would be impious to let it flutter there unread, so I secured it and brought it in, meditating the adventure, and wondering what strange message was thus borne to my eyes. So I went through its columns patiently, even to the leaderettes, and I will do myself the justice to say that I at once recognised the communication that was addressed to me in this singular and even I may say Arabian fashion. It was a short comment upon some agitation that is now appealing rather strongly to Progressive leaders; but the subject-matter is of no consequence, since the significance lies in the last sentence. Here it is: "We are glad to hear that extensive arrangements have been made for the dissemination of literature."

You don't see the immense importance of that? You surprise me. Let us go into it, then. I told you I was not very precise as to the exact scope of the agitation alluded to — it may be a question of a heavy tax on persons who will say "lady" instead of "lydy," it may be an affair of restricting the franchise to citizens thoroughly ignorant of history; it doesn't matter — but here are men who wish some political change to be effected, and these men are issuing printed matter, the purpose of which is to convince others of the righteousness of this particular "program." And this printed matter is called "literature." You know the sort of thing indicated. It may be a series of arguments, simple and fallacious, it may be in dialogue, it may be in story form, it may assume the guise of parody, it may be a brief history. And now what I want to know is this: here we have a vast body of thought, clothed in words, ranging from the agreeable leaflets that we have been speaking of up to — let us say — the Odyssey, and all this mass is known as literature: what is to be our criterion, our means of distinguishing between the two extremes I have mentioned and all the innumerable links between them? Is the whole mass literature in the true sense of the word? If not, with what instrument, by what rule are we to divide the true from the false, to judge exactly in the case of any particular book whether it is literature or not? Of course you may say that the question is rather verbal than real; that "literature" is a general term conveniently applied to anything in print, and that in practice everybody knows the difference between a political pamphlet and the Odyssey. I very much doubt whether people do understand precisely the distinction between the two, but for the avoidance of verbal confusion I suggest that when we mean literature in its highest sense we shall say (for the present at all events), "fine literature"; and the question will be, then: what is it that differentiates fine literature from a number of grammatical, or partly grammatical, sentences arranged in a more or less logical order? Why is the Odyssey to come in, why is the "literature" of our evening paper to be kept out? And again, to put the question in a more subtle form: to which class do the works of Jane Austen belong? Is “Pride and Prejudice” to stand on the Odyssey shelf, or to lie in the pamphlet drawer? Where is Pope’s place? Is he to be set in the class of Keats? If not, for what reason? What is the rank of Dickens, of Thackeray, of George Eliot, of Hawthorne; and in a word, how are we to sort out, as it were, this huge multitude of names, giving to each one his proper rank and station?

I am glad it strikes you as a big question: to me it seems *the* question, the question which covers the final dogma of literary criticism. Of course after we have answered this prerogative riddle, there will be other questions, almost without end, classes, and sub-classes of infinite analysis. But this will be detail; while the question I have propounded is the question of first principles; it marks the parting of two ways, and in a manner, it asks itself not only of literature, but of life, but of philosophy, but of religion. What is the line, then; the mark of division which is to separate spoken, or written, or printed thought into two great genera?

Well, as you may have guessed, I have my solution, and I like it none the less, because the word of the enigma seems to me actually but a single word. Yes, for me the answer comes with the one word, *Ecstasy*. If ecstasy be present, then I say there is fine literature, if it be absent, then, in spite of all the cleverness, all the talents, all the workmanship and observation and dexterity you may show me, then, I think, we have a product (possibly a very interesting one), which is not fine literature.

Of course you will allow me to contradict myself, or rather, to amplify myself before we begin to discuss the matter fully. I said my answer was the word, ecstasy; I still say so, but I may remark that I have chosen this word as the representative of many. Substitute, if you like, rapture, beauty, adoration, wonder, awe, mystery, sense of the unknown, desire for the unknown. All and each will convey what I mean; for some particular case one term may be more appropriate than another, but in every case there will be that withdrawal from the common life and the common consciousness which justifies my choice of “ecstasy” as the best symbol of my meaning. I claim, then, that here we have the touchstone which will infallibly separate the higher from the lower in literature, which will range the innumerable multitude of books in two great divisions, which can be applied with equal justice to a Greek drama, an eighteenth century novelist, and a modern poet, to an epic in twelve books, and to a lyric in twelve lines. I will convince you of my belief in my own nostrum by a bold experiment: here is *Pickwick* and here is *Vanity Fair*; the one regarded as a popular "comic" book, the other as a serious masterpiece, showing vast insight into human character; and applying my test, I set *Pickwick* beside the Odyssey, and *Vanity Fair* on top of the political pamphlet.

I will not argue the matter at the moment; I would merely caution you against supposing that I imply any equality of merit in the books that I have thus summarily "bracketed." You mustn't suppose that I think Dickens's book as good as Homer's, or that I have any doubts as to the vast superiority of *Vanity Fair* over all the pamphlets in the world. "Here is a temple, here is a tub," we may suppose a child to say, learning from a picture-alphabet; but the temple may be a miserably designed structure, in ruinous condition, and the tub is, perhaps, a miracle of excellent workmanship. But one means worship and the other means washing, and that is *the* distinction. Or, to take a better example; the bottom boy in the sixth form may be a miserable dunce compared with the top boy in the fifth; still the dunce is in the sixth form, and the genius is in the fifth. Or, to take a third instance (I want you to understand what I'm driving at), the fact that an English orator is fluent, brilliant, profound, convincing, while a Greek orator is stuttering, stupid, shallow, illogical does not hinder that the former, though he may speak ever so well, still speaks English, while the latter, however badly he may speak, speaks in Greek for all that. Analogies, as you know, are never perfect, and must not be pressed too far; they suggest rather than prove; but I hope you understand me though you may not agree with me.

But before we argue the merits of my own literary solvent, we might very well see what we can do with other tests. I daresay you can suggest a good many. We won't go into the question of printed and not printed, written or not written, because it is obvious that the visible symbols by which literature is recorded have nothing to do with literature itself. In the beginning all literature was a matter of improvisation or recitation and memory, and hieroglyphics, writing, printing are mere conveniences. Indeed the point is only worth mentioning because there are, I believe, simple souls who think that the invention of printing has some sort of mysterious connection with the birth of literature, and that the abolition of the paper duty was its coming of age. But I don't think we need trouble ourselves much about a view of literary art which regards the cheap press as its father and the school board as its nursing mother. Many people think, on the other hand, that literature is to be estimated by its effect on the emotions, by the shock which it gives to the system. You may say that a book which interests you so intensely that you cannot put it down, that affects you so acutely that you weep, that amuses you so immensely that you roar with laughter must be very good. I don't object to "very good," but from my point of view, "very good" and "fine literature" are two different things. You see I believe that the difference between interesting, exciting, tear-compelling, laughter-moving reading matter and fine art is not specific but generic: who would blaspheme against good bitter beer, who would say that *because* it is good, it is *therefore* Burgundy?

I am not quite sure that I am not muddling up two things which are in reality distinct. I mean I am in doubt whether the faculty of making the reader cry ought not to be distinguished from the faculty of interesting him intensely. On the whole I think that it would be well to draw a line between the two, especially as "interesting" is somewhat ambiguous.

And you think it a paradox, then, to maintain that the power of exciting the emotions to a high degree is not a mark of fine literature? But just think it over. Suppose that a few yards from this room — in the next house, in the next street — a woman is waiting for the return of her husband and son. A ring comes at the bell, there's a reddish-brown envelope, and inside it the message: "Railway accident father killed." Well, you can imagine the effect that these four words will have on the woman's emotions; she will either faint away, or burst into an agony of tears; she may even die of the shock, and you can't have a more striking emotional result than death, can you? Very well; but is the telegram fine art? Is it art? Is it even artifice? It isn't art because it is true! But if I invented such a telegram and sent it to a woman whose husband and son were away, would it thereby become art? You must see perfectly well that it would be nothing of the kind; and I must ask you to explain how a book which is, virtually, a long succession of such telegrams can rise higher than its origin and source? You must see, I think, that the question of truth and falsity can make no real difference to our (no doubt pompous) high æsthetic standpoint; and if you admit that four words which produce an emotional result are not necessarily art, then it follows that four hundred or four hundred thousand words woven together on the same principle are in no better position. An increased quantity means no doubt an increased artifice, but artifice and art are very different things. We may agree then that it is impossible to measure the artistic merit of a book by the emotional shock that it may give to its readers. I have never read the "Sorrows of Werther"; but if you have read it and it has made you sorrowful you are hereby warned against deducing from this effect any conclusion as to its æsthetic value.

I confess all this seems A B C to me, though I see you are still inclined to think me a little paradoxical — not to say sophistical — but it grows more difficult when one gets to the question of the "interesting" or "absorbing" book. As I said "interesting" seems such an ambiguous word. It may stand for that æsthetic emotion produced, say, by the Œdipus; it may denote the wide-eyed attention of the butcher's wife listening to the story of my landlady as to the love-affairs of the grocer's daughter — and there are many books which are, virtually, "Tales of My Landlady" printed and bound. We must really then omit "interesting" in our account of the possible criteria of fine art; the word as it were cancels itself out, because it may mean on the one hand the possession of the highest artistic value, or on the other it may serve as epithet for a book which gratifies the lowest curiosity. You know there are books which the French have kindly named "romans à clef"; and I suppose there is no more miserable form of book-making. The receipt is easy enough. The grocer's daughter, to whose amours I alluded just now, is really named Miss Buggins, and the gentleman is Mr Tibb. Well, suppose that my landlady, relating their lyric to the butcher's wife, should, with a knowing wink, profess to tell the story of Miss Ruggins and Mr Ribb — she would simply be composing a *roman à clef* without knowing it. You might say that it is hardly worth while to labour the point, that such "interest" as this is wholly and lamentably inartistic — that it is the very contrary to all true art — but it is not long since a person of some literary note, in criticising the "Heptameron," stated that its chief value lay in the fact that one could identify the persons who tell the stories and those also of whom they were told!

But there is another interest of a much higher kind, and that is the sensational. We have done some excellent books of this sort in England, and perhaps you will understand the class I mean when I say that a novel of this description is hard to lay down, and harder still to take up again when you have once found out the secret. This is not high art; you are always at liberty to put down "Lycidas," but then you are compelled to take it up again and again, and the secret of "Lycidas" is always a secret, and one never fails to experience the joy of an artistic surprise. Still the books I mean sometimes show very high artifice, and in itself, perhaps, the quality that I am talking about, the power of exciting a vivid curiosity, an earnest desire to know what is to come next is not, like the vulgar *roman à clef* curiosity, in actual disaccord from the purpose of art. Indeed I imagine that this trick of stimulating the curiosity may be made subservient to purely æsthetic ends, it may become a handmaid to lead one towards that desire of the unknown which I think was one of the synonyms I gave you for the master word — Ecstasy. Still, though the trick is a good one, it will not, by itself, make fine art. You may discover so much by reading the "Moonstone," that monument of ingenuity and absurdity. On the face of it all detective stories come under this heading: formally, no doubt, they must all be reckoned as tricks, and they may vary from the infinitely ingenious to the infinitely imbecile, and so far as I remember, the famous French tales of detection verge towards the lower rather than the higher ground. But I am inclined, not very logically, perhaps, to make an exception in favour of Poe's Dupin, and to place him almost in the sphere of pure literature. Logically, he is a detective, but I almost think that in his case the detective is a symbol of the mystagogue. As I say, I should be pressed hard if I were asked to make out my case in terms and syllogisms, but if you require me to do so, I would say first of all that the atmosphere of Dupin — and you must remember that in literature everything counts; it is not alone the plot, or the style that we have to consider — has to me hints of that presence which I have called ecstasy. Listen to this:

"It was a freak of fancy in my friend (for what else shall I call it?) to be enamoured of the Night for her own sake; and into this *bizarrerie*, as into all his others, I quietly fell; giving myself up to his wild whims with a perfect *abandon*. The sable divinity would not herself dwell with us always; but we could counterfeit her presence. At the first dawn of the morning we closed all the massive shutters of our old building; lighting a couple of tapers which, strongly perfumed, threw out only the ghastliest and feeblest of rays. By the aid of these we then buried our souls in dreams — reading, writing, or conversing, until warned by the clock of the advent of the true

Darkness. Then we sallied forth into the streets, arm in arm, continuing the topics of the day, or roaming far and wide until a late hour, seeking amid the wild lights and shadows of the populous city, that infinity of mental excitement which quiet observation can afford."

And again; in the stories themselves, in the conduct of M. Dupin's detective processes, I find a faint suggestion of the under-consciousness or other consciousness of man, a mere hint, not, I think, expressed in so many words, rather latent than patent, that if you would thoroughly understand the rational man you must have sounded the irrational man, the mysterious companion that walks beside each one of us on the earthly journey. Of course the artifice in the Dupin stories is of the very highest kind, but for the reasons I have given I am inclined to think that there is more than artifice, and the shadow, at all events, of art itself.

But this exceptional case of Poe's detective tales only leads us back to the main proposition — that the power of exciting a very high sensational interest does not, in itself, mark out a book as being fine literature. I think I proved the proposition by my instance of the "Moonstone," but if that does not convince you, we might demonstrate this theorem in the same way as we demonstrated the other one about the "literature" that produces its effect on the emotions. We have only to send out a series of telegrams, or we may even glance at the newspaper, and follow a case in the Central Criminal Court. Or we may affirm, more generally, that life often offers many highly absorbing and highly interesting spectacles, but that life is not art, and therefore, that literature which fails to rise above the level of life, or rather, to penetrate beneath the surface of life, is not fine literature in our sense of that term. A gold nugget may be as pure and fine as you like, but it is not a sovereign; it lacks the stamp; and it is the business of art to give its stamp and imprint to the matter of life.

I really think then that we have disposed of perhaps the most generally received of artistic fallacies — that books are to be judged by their power of reproducing in the reader those feelings of grief, interest, curiosity, and so forth which he experiences or may experience in his everyday life, which he really does experience in greater or less degree every time he talks to a friend, takes up a newspaper, or receives a telegram. It comes to this again and again, doesn't it, that Art and Life are two different spheres, and that the Artist with a capital A is not a clever photographer who understands selection in a greater or less degree.

But before we go on with our work and see what can be done with other literary “solvents” I want to make a digression. I should have made it before, if you had pulled me up at the proper cue, and that was when I spoke of “interest” as a highly ambiguous term, the fruitful parent of “undistributed middles.” You see how the unscrupulous sophist would bend this word to his dark work, don’t you? It would be, I suppose, something like this:

A very high degree of interest [of the artistic kind] is the mark of fine literature.

But, the “Moonstone” excites a very high degree of interest [of the sensational kind].

Therefore, the “Moonstone” has the mark of fine literature.

You note the “paltering” with the word, its use now in one sense, and now in another; and if that sort of thing were allowed we should have Wilkie Collins placed among the Immortals before we knew where we were. But hasn’t it occurred to you that nearly all the terms we are using are patient of the same vile uses? You remember that we began with “literature” itself, as a monstrous example of ambiguity, sheltering as it did both the publications of the Anti-Everything Society and the Song of Ulysses’ Wandering; even now we are trying to track the monster to his den in spite of his manifold turnings and disguises. In the meanwhile, for the sake of clearness, we agreed to prefix the epithet “fine” to the word when we meant the “Odyssey” class, though if we say “fine” so often I am afraid we run the risk of being thought superfine. However one must run all risks in the cause of making oneself understood; and so I say you ought to have pulled me up when I talked about “art” and “books that appealed to the emotions.” My “art” may not be the same as your “art,” and “emotions” are still more dangerous in the same way.

I think I made some attempt to deal with “art” as I was talking. I contrasted it with “artifice,” and my phrase “Artist with a big A” was another hint to you that the word must be handled cautiously. You know that in ordinary conversation we say that bees have “the art” or “an art” of making hexagonal cells of wax, that wasps have an art of making a sort of paper for their nests, that there is an art of logic, an art of cookery, an art in making a gravel path. Now in each of these instances the word really speaks of the adaptation of means to ends. In the case of the bees and wasps there is a slightly different *nuance* of meaning, because they make their cells and their paper just as a bird builds its nest, through the influence of forces which to us are occult, which we conveniently sum up under the word instinct. In the arts of cookery and pathmaking there is a conscious employment of certain means towards the securing of certain ends; and it is at least possible that the swallow, gathering its materials and shaping them, has at the moment nothing but a blind impulse, similar to that of hunger — we all know when we are hungry and we all know what to do in such a case, but we do not all know the physiology of the stomach and the gastric juices, and perhaps not one of us knows the whole secret of inanition and nutrition. We simply eat because we want to eat, not because we wish to supply ourselves with a certain quantity of peptones; and so perhaps the swallow gathers her nest and shapes it, without the consciousness of the eggs and the little birds that are to follow. But I need not remind you that there are plenty of well authenticated instances of animals who have consciously used means to secure ends, and thus "art" in its common significance is not even an exclusively human faculty. When, for example, the bees find themselves in danger of being left queenless, they administer what has been called "royal food" to a common grub, and that which would have been a worker becomes a queen; and in this case the bees are as much "artists" as the cook who puts a particular ingredient into a dish with the view of obtaining a particular flavour.

Now, then, let us apply all this to our matter. I daresay you have often heard a book praised for its "great art," and if you have read it you will have discovered that its "art" is simply contrivance, the very adaptation of means to ends that we have been discussing. "The art with which the mystery is carefully kept in the background," "the art by which the two characters are contrasted throughout the volume," "the highly artistic manner in which Fernando and the heroine are brought together on the last page" — these, you see clearly, are contrivances, artifices, in no way differing in degree from the contrivances of the man who makes the garden path, of the cook who "dusts in" just a suspicion of lemon-rind, of the bee who administers the "royal food." This "art" then is a totally different thing from our Art with the capital letter, with the epithet “fine,” or “high” before it; and in future when I mean “adaptation of means to ends,” I shall always say “artifice”; while “art” will be retained and set apart for higher uses.

And now as to “emotion.” Here, I think, you ought to have been down on me. You might have said: “You declare that the appeal to the emotions is not a test of fine literature. But to what then does Homer appeal? What is the “Œdipus” but an appeal to the emotions? What is all exquisite lyric poetry but the cry of the emotions, set to music?” I suppose that, as a matter of fact, you understood my real meaning by the instance I gave; the anguish of a wife at the loss of a husband; you saw that what I wanted to say was this: that fine literature does not content itself with repeating, or mimicking, the emotions of private, personal, everyday life. Still, I should have gone into the matter more fully then, and as I did not do so, we had better see what can be done now. And do you know that I believe that the best approach we can make to a rather subtle question will be a somewhat indirect one? Just now I was talking about Poe’s Dupin stories, and I tried, rather vaguely, to justify my tentative inclusion of them in the higher class of letters, by pointing out that Poe seemed to hint at the “other-consciousness” of man, and to suggest, at least, the presence of that shadowy, unknown, or half-known companion who walks beside each one of us all our days. I tried to realise the image of a man, followed or rather attended, by a spiritual fellow, treading a path parallel with but different from his own; and now I want you to carry out this image into the sphere of words. Already you must have a hint of it. One might draw a figure; something like this:

Fine Literature.	“Literature.”
Art.	Artifice.
Emotion.	Feelings.

And before I go into the special question, let me extend the list; it will explain itself.

Romance, romantic.	A “Romantic” Affair in the West End.
Tragedy, tragic.	“Tragedy” in Soho.
Drama, dramatic.	Le “drame” de la Rue Cochon: “Dramatic” Elopement in Peckham.
Interest, interesting [of “Hamlet”].	An “interesting” number of “Snippets.”
Lyric.	The “Lyric” Theatre.
Inebriated.	In an “inebriated” condition.

That almost gives my secret away, doesn’t it? Of course you see the place that the words in the right-hand column take in the scheme. The “Romantic” Affair in the West End really concerned the life of a draper’s assistant, who robbed his master’s till, in order that he might make presents to Miss Claire Tilbury, one of the “Sisters Tilbury” now performing at the “Lucifer.” An unmentionable person cut his throat in some alley off Greek Street; hence the “Tragedy” in Soho. Two peculiarly squalid servants, who beat out their master’s brains, under singularly uninteresting circumstances, acted the “Drama” of the Rue Cochon, and it was a dissolute barmaid who eloped “dramatically” from Peckham in the dog-cart of her employer. The two varying uses of the word “lyric” need not be underlined for you, who know the Elizabethans and the Cavaliers; but perhaps I may say that he who tastes *calix meus inebrians* will not be in an “inebriated” condition. It would be possible to extend these parallel columns almost to infinity; but I think the list is long enough for our purpose, and “Trench on Words” is a well-known handbook. But you see my right-hand column word, parallel with “Emotion”? You see I have written “Feelings,” and I suggest that it will be convenient to speak of feelings when we mean the things of life, of society, of personal and private relationship, while we may reserve emotion for the influence produced in man by fine art. Thus it will be with emotion that we witness the fall of Œdipus, the madness of Lear, while we feel for our friends and ourselves in misfortune. That seems to make it plain enough, doesn't it; you see now, clearly, what I mean by saying that the power of producing an emotional shock cannot be a test of fine literature. Art must appeal to emotion, and sometimes, no doubt, with a shock; but it must always be to the emotion of the left-hand column, never to the "feelings" on the right hand. So you must never tell me that a book is fine art because it made you, or somebody else, cry; your tears are, emphatically, not evidence in the court of Fine Literature.

I daresay it may have struck you that the tests we have considered hitherto have been, in the main, popular tests. No doubt many persons calling themselves critics have praised the art of a book because it has drawn tears from eyes, or because it has not suffered itself to be put down, or because it contains easily recognisable portraits of well-known people, but such critics are to be spelt with a very small initial letter, and, as I said, I don't think we want to extend that list of parallels. There is another test that I had forgotten: I suppose there really are people who believe that a book is fine "because it will do good," but I don't think we'll argue with them, though I once knew a liberally-educated man who said a certain book was fine because it tended "to raise one's opinion of the clergy." So we will reckon our "popular" tests as done with, and proceed to the more technical solvents that are proposed by professed men of letters.

Three of these more literary criteria occur to me at the moment, and I believe we shall understand them and the position which they represent better if we take them, at first, at all events, in a mass. I can conceive, then, that many persons whose opinion one would respect would state their position in literary criticism somewhat as follows:— "If a book (they would say) shows keenness of observation, insight into character, with fidelity to life as the result of these capacities; if its art (we should say, artifice) in the design and 'laying out' of the plot, in the contrivance of incident is confessedly admirable, and finally if it is written in a good style: then you have fine literature. Fine art, in short, is a clear mirror, and the artist's skill consists in arranging and selecting such parts of life as he thinks best for his purpose of reflection."

Well, now, as to the first point: fidelity to life, clearness of reflection, the selection being taken for granted, as no one out of an asylum would maintain that a book must mirror the whole of life, or even the millionth part of one particular man's life. Come, let us apply the test in question to one or two of the acknowledged excellencies — to the "Odyssey" for instance, to the "Morte D'Arthur," to "Don Quixote." Is the story of Ulysses, in any accepted sense of the phrase "faithful" to life as we know it? Is it "faithful," that is to say, with the fidelity of Jane Austen, of Thackeray, of George Eliot, of Fielding? Is there anything in our experience answering to the episodes of the Lotus-Eaters, Calypso's Isle, the Cyclops' Cavern, the descent of the Goddess? Is the "reflection" even a reflection of Homer's own experience? Had he escaped from the cave under the belly of a ram? Had he been in the world of one-eyed giants? Were his friends in the habit of talking in hexameter verse? We may go on, of course, but is it worth while? It is surely hardly necessary to demonstrate the fact that the author of the "Morte D'Arthur" had never seen the Graal, that such a character as Don Quixote never existed in the natural order of things. We might have gone more sharply to work with this "fidelity" test: we might have said that poetry being, admittedly fine literature at its finest, and (admittedly also) being unfaithful to life as we know it both in matter and manner, that therefore the test breaks down at once. If fine literature must be faithful to life, then "Kubla Khan" is not fine literature; which, I think we may say, is highly absurd.

I daresay you think I have dealt rather crudely, in a somewhat materialistic spirit, with this criterion of "fidelity to life." I admit the charge, but you must remember that I am dealing with very bad people, who understand nothing but materialism. And when these people tell you in so many words that it is the author's business clearly and intelligently to present the life — the common, social life around him — then, believe me, the only thing to be done is to throw "Odyssey" and "Œdipus," "Morte D'Arthur," "Kubla Khan" and "Don Quixote" straight in their faces, and to demonstrate that these eternal books were not constructed on the proposed receipt. Of course if I were treating with the initiated, if I were commentating and not arguing, I should handle the great masterpieces in a much more reverent manner. I mean that for those who possess the secret it skills not to bring in the Cyclops (who for us is not a giant but a symbol); we have only to bow down before the great music of such a poem as the Odyssey, recognising that by the very reason of its transcendent beauty, by the very fact that it trespasses far beyond the world of our daily lives, beyond "selection" and "reflection," it is also exalted above our understanding, that because its beauty is supreme, that therefore its beauty is largely beyond criticism. For ourselves we do not need to prove its transcendence of life by this or that extraordinary incident; it is the whole spirit and essence and sound and colour of the song that affect us; and we know that the Odyssey surpassed the bounds of its own age and its own land just as much as it surpasses those of our time and our country. You look as if you thought I were fighting with the vanquished, but let me tell you that great people have praised Homer because he depicted truthfully the men and manners of his time.

But as I was saying, all this would be too subtle for the enemy, for the people who maintain that fine literature is a faithful reflection of life, and think that Jane Austen touched the point of literary supremacy. With them, as I said, we must be rough; we must ask: Did Sophocles describe the ordinary life of Athens in his day? No: very well, then; since the works of Sophocles are fine literature, it follows that some fine literature does not reflect ordinary life, and therefore that fidelity to nature is not the differentia of the highest art.

I wonder whether I ought to caution you again against the ambiguity of language? We are dealing easily enough with such words as "life" and "nature," and from what you know of my system you may perhaps have seen that I have been using these words as the people use them, as those use them who would say that "Vanity Fair" is a faithful presentation of life. I thought you would understand this, but I may just mention in passing that words like "nature," "life" and "truth" or "fidelity" have also their esoteric values, that (by way of example) the truth of the scientist and the truth of the philosopher are two very different things. So it may turn out by and bye that in the occult sense, "fidelity to life" *is* the differentia of fine literature; that the aim of art is truth; that the artist continually mirrors nature in its eternal, essential forms; but for the present moment, it is understood, is it not, that these words have been used in their common, everyday popular significance? The "Dunciad" is a study of man, and Wordsworth's "Ode on Intimations of Immortality" is a study of man, and the literary standpoint that we have been attacking is that of Pope and not that of Wordsworth.

If I remember, the next test we have to analyse is that of artifice, often and improperly called art. But I think we have already demolished this criterion. In distinguishing between art and artifice I pointed out that the latter merely signifies the adaptation of means to an end, and has no relation whatever with art properly so-called; it is simply the mental instrument with which man performs every task and every work of his daily life; it consists in the rejection of that which is unfit for the particular purpose in view, and in the acceptance and use of that which is fit for the desired end and likely to bring it about. It concerns not creation but execution, and it is I need hardly say as indispensable to the author as are his pen and ink, and (I might almost say) is as little concerned as these with the essence of his art. Of course in works of the very highest genius we may declare that, in a sense, art has become all in all, that the necessary artifice has been interpenetrated with art, so that we can hardly distinguish in our minds between the idea and the realisation of it. In such cases, artifice has been lifted up and exalted into the heaven of art, and it remains artifice no longer; but in the view that we are considering it is merely the adaptation of means to an end, a clever choice of incident, the knack of putting in and leaving out. The faculty may, as I said, be glorified and transfigured by genius, but every newspaper reporter must have more or less of it, and it is clear enough I think (perhaps I may mention Wilkie Collins once more) that in itself it cannot establish the claim of any book to be fine literature.

And lastly we have to deal with style; and here again I must have recourse to my distinctions. What *is* a good style? If you mean by a "good" style, one that delivers the author's meaning in the clearest possible manner, if its purpose and effect are obviously utilitarian, if it be designed solely with the view of imparting knowledge — the knowledge of what the author intends — then I must point out that "style" in this sense is or should be amongst the accomplishments of every commercial clerk — indeed, it will be merely a synonym for plain speaking and plain writing — and in this sense it is evidently not one of the marks of art, since the object of art is not information, but a peculiar kind of æsthetic delight. But if on the other hand style is to mean such a use and choice of words and phrases and cadences that the ear and the soul through the ear receive an impression of subtle but most beautiful music, if the sense and sound and colour of the words affect us with an almost inexplicable delight, then I say that while Idea is the soul, style is the glorified body of the very highest literary art. Style, in short, is the last perfection of the very best in literature, it is the outward sign of the burning grace within. But we must keep the systematic consideration of style for some other night; it's not a subject to be dealt with by the way, and

I have only said so much because it was necessary to draw the line between language as a means of imparting facts (good style in the sense of our opponents) and language as an æsthetic instrument, which is a good, or rather a beautiful style in our sense. In the latter sense it is the form of fine literature, in the former sense it is the medium of all else that is expressed in words, from a bill of exchange upwards.

It seems to me, then, that we have considered one by one the alternative tests of fine literature which have been or may be proposed, and we have come to the conclusion that each and all are impossible. It is no longer permissible, I imagine, for you or for me to say: "This book is fine literature because it makes me cry, because it was so interesting that I couldn't put it down, because it is so natural and faithful to life, because it is so well (plainly and neatly) written." We have picked these reasons to pieces one by one, and the result is that we are driven back on my "word of the enigma" — Ecstasy; the infallible instrument, as I think, by which fine literature may be discerned from reading-matter, by which art may be known from artifice, and style from intelligent expression. At any rate we have got our hypothesis, and you remember what stress Coleridge laid on the necessity of forming some hypothesis before entering on any investigation.

I believe we began to-night with the evening paper, and the strange glimpse it gives us, through a pinky-green veil, through a cloud of laborious nonsense about odds and winners and tips and all such foolery, into that ancient eternal desire of man for the unknown. And that, you remember, was one of the synonyms that I offered you for ecstasy; and so in a sense I expect that we shall have the evening paper close beside us all the way of our long voyage in quest of the lost Atlantis.

II

I THINK IT is a horrible thing to have such a good memory as that. I recollect, now that you remind me, that I did lay down “Pickwick” *v.* “Vanity Fair” as a sort of test case of my theory of literature; but you surely do not expect me to work out the arguments in detail? Of course if I were giving a series of lectures I should “set a paper” after each one; but I expect you to content yourself with the suggestion, with the skeleton map, as it were. Besides, if we take that special case of two eminent Victorian novels as a concrete instance of the abstract argument, don’t you see that we are answering the particular question all the while that we are investigating the general proposition? Surely if you recollect all that we said about fine literature in general, you won’t have much difficulty in adjudicating on the claims of Thackeray. Don’t you see that he never withdraws himself from the common life and the common consciousness, that he is all the while nothing but a photographer; a showman with a set of pictures. A consummately clever photographer, certainly, a showman with a gift of amusing, interesting “patter” that is quite extraordinary, an artificer of very high merit. But where will you find Ecstasy in Thackeray? Where is his adoration? You may search, I think, from one end of his books to the other, without finding any evidence that he realised the mystery of things; he was never for a moment aware of that shadowy double, that strange companion of man, who walks, as I said, foot to foot with each one of us, and yet his paces are in an unknown world. And (unless you have got any fresh arguments) I think we decided last week that the book which lacks the sense of all this is not fine literature.

I hope you don’t think I am abusing Thackeray. I am always reading him, and I chose his “Vanity Fair” because it strikes me as such a supremely clever example of its class. I suppose there is nothing more amusing than the society of a brilliant, observant man of the world. Well, Thackeray was brilliant and observant *in excelsis*, and besides that, he understood the artifice of story-telling, and he could write a terse, clean-cut English which was always sufficient for his purpose. He contrives the corporal overthrow of the Marquis of Steyne, he shows you that bald old nobleman sprawling on the floor, and the words that he uses are his brisk, willing, and capable servants. He has observation, and artifice, and "style" in that secondary sense which we distinguished from the real style; from those "melodies unheard" which I called (I think rather picturesquely) the glorified body of the highest literary art. But these qualities, we found out, are not, separately or conjointly, the differentia of fine literature as we understand the term; and consequently, with all our admiration and all our interest we are compelled to place Thackeray in the lower form, simply because he is clearly and decisively lacking in that one essential quality of ecstasy, because he never leaves the street and the highroad to wander on the eternal hills, because he does not seem to be aware that such hills exist.

Of course I have only taken Thackeray as the representative of his class, and I chose him, as I remarked, because, for me, he is the most favourable representative of it. I am thinking, really, of the "plain man" whom we have engaged in so many forms, and of his "plain" argument which comes to this — "for me a great book is a book that amuses me greatly and that I enjoy reading." And I say that Thackeray amuses me greatly and that I enjoy reading his books immensely, but that, with due respect to "common sense," such an argument fails to prove that "Vanity Fair" is fine literature. Other people would, no doubt, have chosen other books; many would have selected Miss Austen, and I daresay they would have a good deal to say for their choice. Undoubtedly there is a severity, a self-restraint, a fineness of observation, a delicacy of irony in "Pride and Prejudice" which are unmatched of their kind (the Thackeray of the caricatures, of those queer woodblocks, comes out now and then in the books, and digression occasionally goes beyond due bounds); but I named "Vanity Fair" because, personally, I find it more amusing than "Pride and Prejudice." In neither of these books is there art in our high sense of the word, and in preferring the one over the other I am simply saying that I prefer the company of a brilliant and witty cosmopolitan to that of a very keen and delicate, but very limited maiden lady, who lives in a remote country town and understands thoroughly the reason why the vicar bowed so low when a certain carriage rolled up the high street, and why that pretty, prim girl crossed over the way when the handsome gentleman from the Hall came out of the chymist's. Yes, the cosmopolitan at the club window certainly fails a little in his manners now and then, and the country gentlewoman's breeding is perfect of its kind, but the circles in which Pendennis moved are (to me) so infinitely the more entertaining of the two.

You see, I think that the question of liking a book or not liking it has nothing whatever to do with the consideration of fine art. Art is *there*, if I may say so, just as the Tenth Commandment is there; and if we don't like them, so much the worse for us. I may find Homer very dull reading, I may covet your ox and your ass and everything that is yours, but my limited and somewhat commonplace brains, and my envy of your prosperity won't alter the fact that the "Odyssey" is fine literature and that covetousness is wicked. But when we once leave the utterances of the eternal, universal human ecstasy, which we have agreed to call art, and descend to these lower levels that we are talking of now, it seems to me that the question of liking or not liking counts for a good deal. Not for everything, of course. We must still distinguish: between plots stupid or ingenious, between observation that is close and keen and observation that is vague and inaccurate, between artifice and the want of it, between sentences that are neatly constructed and mere slipshod. All these things naturally reckon in the account, but when they have been estimated and allowed their value, you will usually find that you are influenced still more by your mere liking or disliking of the subject-matter, and it seems to me quite legitimately. For, if you look closely into the whole question, you will find that you are judging these secondary books as you judge of life, as you choose the scene of your holiday, as you read the newspaper. One man may say that he prefers to talk to artists, another, quite legitimately, may love the society of brewers; you may think Norway perfection, I am going to Constantinople; A. turns at once to the quotation for Turpentine at Savannah, B. folds down the sheet at the Police News. It is not a question of art, but of taste, that is of individual humour and constitution; you frequent the company that suits you, you go to the place you like, you read the news that happens to be most interesting from your special standpoint. And in the same way, if I find the conversation of Miss Becky Sharpe, as reported by Mr W. M. Thackeray, more amusing than the conversation of Miss Elizabeth Bennett as reported by Miss Jane Austen; it seems to me that there is no more to be said. Elizabeth's remarks are more skilfully reported? Very likely, but, granting that, I had rather listen to the record, imperfect, if you please, of the other lady's conversation. Here is a speech on Bimetallism, given at great length, and (let us presume) with great accuracy; here is a short summary of Professor

L.’s “Lecture on the Eleusinian Mysteries,” very badly “sub-edited.” But, you see, I happen not to care twopence about Bimetallism, so I turn away from the careful report, growling; while I cut out that wretched summary of the Lecture with the purpose of pasting it in my scrap-book, since every word about the Eleusinian Mysteries has a vivid interest for me.

It often amuses me to hear people quarrelling about the rival “artistic merit” of books which have, in most cases, no artistic merits at all. A. writes a book about greengrocers, and you, who find something singularly piquant and entertaining in the manners, speech, and habits of the class in question, pronounce A. to be a “great artist” who has written a masterpiece. I love dukes, and B’s. novel of the peerage strikes me as a marvel of artistic accomplishment, while I pronounce the work that has charmed you to be as stupid and tiresome as the class it represents. Each of us is talking nonsense; there is no art in the question, which is purely a matter of individual taste. The Stock Exchange column interests one man, while the latest football news absorbs the other. That is all.

Of course, as I said, artifice counts for something: there is a pleasure in seeing the thing neatly done, and I suppose it is this pleasure that has secured Miss Austen her fervent admirers. It is a little difficult to treat this form of pleasure quite fairly; a musician perhaps would find it difficult to answer the question whether he would rather hear Palestrina badly rendered or Zingarelli executed to perfection. In the latter case there would certainly be the charm of exquisite voices in perfect order and accord, though the music were nothing or worse than nothing; still, our musician might say, on the other hand, that Palestrina martyred was better than Zingarelli triumphant. I am afraid I can imagine myself saying: “Limited country-people, as seen by Jane Austen, are so ‘slow’ that they rather bore me, though the author has portrayed them with wonderful skill,” but I can hardly fancy myself affirming that Becky Sharpe is such an interesting personage that she would still delight me, even if the author of “Ten Thousand a Year” had written her history. On the other hand I believe that the plot of “Jekyll and Hyde” would still have had some fascination, though it had been treated by the veriest dolt in letters. But that is not a good example, since “Jekyll and Hyde” is certainly in its conception, though not in its execution, a work of fine art. Let us take the “Moonstone” again as an example; I believe then, that if the events related in it had caught our eyes in a brief newspaper paragraph they would still have interested.

It seems to me that, after all, this question of artifice, of "how the thing is done," comes under the same category as liking and disliking. I mean it is largely a matter of the personal equation, about which no very strict laws can be laid down. You might say, for example, that Becky would entertain you in any hands, however indifferent, provided that her "facts" were preserved, and I don't see that I could argue the point with you. It reminds me again of the way in which men choose their friends; one lays stress on pleasant manners, another on sterling goodness of character, a third on wit, a fourth on distinction of some kind; and argument is really voiceless. "Here is a book-case," you may say, "look how exquisitely it is made." Yes, but I don't want a book-case; whereas that table, ricketty as it is, will be really useful. But if you were to say: "Look at Westminster Abbey," you can hardly imagine my answering: "Bother Westminster Abbey; I want a pig-sty." You see how, here again, we come to the generic difference between fine literature and interesting reading matter. We read the "Odyssey" because we are supernatural, because we hear in it the echoes of the eternal song, because it symbolises for us certain amazing and beautiful things, because it is music; we read Miss Austen and Thackeray because we like to recognise the faces of our friends aptly reproduced, to see the external face of humanity so deftly mimicked, because we are natural. The question of our preference for one over the other, is, making due allowance for analogy, the question of our preference for a table over a bookcase or *vice versâ*, and the workmanship in each case is largely a matter of detail. And the great poem may be equated with the great church: each is made for beauty, the one is ecstasy in words, the other ecstasy in stone. But the church and the pig-sty, on the other hand, are not to be compared together: incidentally, no doubt, the former is rainproof or in ill repair, has good or bad acoustic properties, while the latter may be either an æsthetic pest in the back-yard, or an agreeable looking little shed enough. Still, the essence of the church is beauty, ecstasy; of the sty utility, the safe keeping of pigs. It would be absurd, you see, to say: "I prefer an abbey to a pig-sty," and it would be equally absurd to say: "I prefer the 'Œdipus' to 'Pride and Prejudice'" or "I prefer the Venus of the Louvre to the wax-figures in the exhibition." Of course these are only analogies, and you mustn't press them, but they may help to make my meaning clearer, to enforce the vast distinction between art and artifice. Please don’t think that I wish to establish a proportion: as a pig-sty is to an abbey, so is Jane Austen to Sophocles. In her case you would have to substitute a neat Georgian house for “pig-sty” and then I think you would have a very fair proportion. But all that I wanted to do was to draw the line between things made for use, to occupy some definite place in relation to our common daily life; and things made by ecstasy and for ecstasy, things that are symbols, proclaiming the presence of the unknown world.

And I chose “Pickwick” as the antithesis to “Vanity Fair” deliberately. Thackeray (in my private judgment) is the chief of those who have provided interesting reading-matter; Dickens is by no means in the first rank of literary artists. I think he is golden, but he is very largely alloyed with baser stuff, with indifferent metal, which was the product of his age, of his circumstances in life, of his own uncertain taste. Just contrast the atmosphere which surrounded the young Sophocles, with that in which the young Dickens flourished. Both were men of genius, but one grew up in the City of the Violet Crown, the other in Camden Town and worse places, one was accustomed to breathe that “most pellucid air,” the other inhaled the “London particular.” The wonder is, not that there are faults in Dickens, but that there is genius of any kind. I am not going to analyze “Pickwick” any more than I analyzed “Vanity Fair,” but of course you see that, in its conception, it is essentially one with the “Odyssey.” It is a book of wandering; you start from your own doorstep and you stray into the unknown; every turn of the road fills you with surmise, every little village is a discovery, a something new, a creation. You know not what may happen next; you are journeying through another world. I need not remind you how glorious all this is in the Odyssey, which of course is so much more beautiful than “Pickwick,” as that glowing Mediterranean Sea, whose bounds on every side were mystery, is more beautiful than the muddy, foggy Thames, as those rolling hexameters are more beautiful than Dickens’s prose; and yet in each case the symbol is, in reality, the same; both the heroic song of the old Ionian world and the comic cockney romance of 1837 communicate that enthralling impression of the unknown, which is, at once, a whole philosophy of life, and the most exquisite of emotions. In varying degrees of intensity you will trace it all through fine literature in every age and in every nation; you will find it in Celtic voyages, in the Eastern Tale, where a door in a dull street suddenly opens into dreamland, in the mediæval stories of the wandering knights, in “Don Quixote,” and at last in our “Pickwick” where Ulysses has become a retired city man, whimsically journeying up and down the England of sixty years ago. You talk of the “grotesquerie” of “Pickwick,” but don’t you see that this element is present in all the masterpieces of the kind? Remember the Cyclops, remember the grotesque shapes that decorate the “Arabian Nights,” remember the bizarre element, the almost wanton grotesquerie of many of the “Arthur” romances. In all these cases as in “Pickwick” the same result is obtained; an overpowering impression of “strangeness,” of remoteness, of withdrawal from the common ways of life. “Pickwick,” is, in no sense, or in no valuable sense, a portrayal, a copy, an imitation of life in the ordinary sense of “imitation,” and “life”; Pickwick, and Sam, and Jingle, and the rest of them are not clever reproductions of actual people, (is there any more foolish pursuit than that of disputing about the “original” of Mr Pickwick?); the book is rather the suggestion of another life, beneath our own or beside our own, and the characters, those queer grotesque people, are queer for the same reason that the Cyclops is queer and the dwarfs and dragons of mediæval romance are queer. We are withdrawn from the common ways of life; and in that withdrawal is the beginning of ecstasy. There are sentences in “Pickwick” that give me an almost extravagant delight. You remember the lines about the Lotus-Eaters.

τῶν δ’ ὅστις λωτοῖο φάγοι μελιηδέα καρπὸν,
οὐκέτ’ ἀπαγγεῖλαι πάλιν ἤθελεν οὐδὲ νέεσθαι
ἀλλ’ αὐτοῦ βούλοντο μετ’ ἀνδράσι Λωτοφάγοισιν
λωτὸν ἐρεπτόμενοι μενέμεν νόστου τε λαθέσθαι.

Well, do you know there is a brief dialogue in “Pickwick” that seems almost as enchanted, to me. The scene is the manor-farm kitchen, on Christmas eve.

“‘How it snows,’ said one of the men, in a low voice.

“‘Snows, does it?’ said Wardle.

“‘Rough, cold night, sir,’ replied the man, ‘and there’s a wind got up that drifts it across the fields, in a thick white cloud.’

“‘What does Jem say?’ inquired the old lady. ‘There ain’t anything the matter, is there?’

"'No, no, mother,' replied Wardle; 'he says there's a snow-drift, and a wind that's piercing cold.'"

You know this is the introduction to the Tale of Gabriel Grub, an admirable legend which Dickens "farsed" with an obtrusive moral. But I confess that the atmosphere (which to me seems all the wild weather and the wild legend of the north) suggested by those phrases "a thick white cloud," and "a wind that's piercing cold" is in my judgment wholly marvellous. But Dickens, of course, is full of impressions which never become expressions. You remember that chapter about the lawyer's clerks in the "Magpie and Stump"? It is always quite pathetic to me to note how Dickens *felt* the strangeness, the mystery, the haunting that are like a mist about the old Inns of Court, and how utterly unable he was to express his emotion — to find a fit symbol for his meaning. He takes refuge, as it were, behind Jack Bamber, who tells two very insignificant legends as to the mystery of the Inns. Dickens feels that these legends are insignificant, and throws in one that is pure burlesque, and then changes the subject in despair; the vague impression has refused to be put into words; probably, indeed, it had stopped short of becoming thought. But I am afraid that if I once begin to talk about the defects and faults of Dickens I shall run on for ever, and I think you will be able to find out his laches quite well for yourself. What I want to insist on is his sense of mystery, his withdrawal from common life, and, finally, his ecstasy. I have not proved my case up to the hilt by a thorough-going analysis of "Pickwick," but I think I have suggested the "heads" of such an analysis. There is ecstasy in the main idea, in the thought of the man who wanders away from his familiar streets into unknown tracks and lanes and villages, there is ecstasy in the conception of all those queer, grotesque characters, reminders each one of the strangeness of life, there is ecstasy in the thought of the wild Christmas Eve, of the fields and woods scourged by "a wind that's piercing cold," hidden by the thick cloud of snow, there is ecstasy in that vague impression of the old, dark, Inns, of the "rotten" chambers that had been shut up for years and years. In a word: "Pickwick" is fine literature.

Well, you've got what you wanted; some sort of analysis of my case: "'Pickwick' *v.* 'Vanity Fair'"; but it must be clearly understood that I'm not going to "work out" every example. However, I am not sorry that I have been led to go into this particular case rather fully, because it is a typical one, and we shall not be obliged to go over the same ground again. I mean, that having witnessed the dissection of Thackeray, you will have no need to come to me for my judgment of George Eliot, or of Anthony Trollope, or — to make a very long list a very short one — of about ninety-nine per cent of our modern novels. Yes, you have mentioned a great name, and I, like you, take off my cap to the man who has gone on his way, without caring for the "public," or the "reviewers," or anything else, except his own judgment of what is right. But, frankly, if you pass from the man and come to his work, my plain opinion is this: that he has written about ordinary life, regarded from an ordinary standpoint, in a style which is extraordinary certainly, but very far from beautiful. It is not a beautiful style, since a fine style, though it may carry suggestion beyond the bourne of thought, though it may be the veil and visible body of concealed mysteries, is always plain on the surface. It may be like an ingeniously devised cryptogram, which may have an occult sense conveyed to initiated eyes in every dot and line and flourish, but is outwardly as simple and straightforward as a business letter. But in the works of the writer whom we are discussing obscurities, dubieties of all kinds are far from uncommon; and in many of his books there are passages which hardly seem to be English at all. The words are familiar — most of them — the grammatical construction often offers no very considerable difficulties — it is rarely, I mean, that one has to search very long for the nominative of the sentence — but when one has read the words and parsed them, one feels inclined to think that after all the passage is not in English but in some other language with a superficial resemblance to English. Style is not everything? Certainly not; a book may fail in style, and yet be fine, though not the finest literature. You have only to open Sir Walter Scott to have highly conclusive evidence on that point. But the writer we are considering not only fails in the body of art but even more conspicuously in the soul of it. Just think for a moment of his story of the very earnest Jew who fell in love with the baroness who was not very earnest. There was a false female friend, you remember, and social complications perturbed the hearts of the curiously assorted lovers, and finally the Jew was shot in a duel by another, less "detrimental," courtier. Can you conceive anything more trivial than this? Don't you see that from such a book as that the *idea*, the soul of fine literature, is completely lacking? Great books may always be summed up in a phrase, often in a single word, and that phrase or that word will always signify some primary and palmary idea. To me the only "idea" suggested by the plot I have outlined is unimportance; and, as in the case of Thackeray, ecstasy is entirely absent both from this and from all other of the author's books. You say that, after all, the plot in question is a plot of the love of a man for a woman, and that *that* is an idea in the highest sense of the word, and an idea which is the most of all fit for the purpose and the making of the finest literature. I agree with you in the latter clause of your sentence, but I must point out that the book is *not* the story of the love of a man for a woman, it is the story of the flirtation of a baroness with a German Jew Socialist — a very different matter. In a word, it is a tale of the accidental, of the particular, of the inessential; it is completely the play of Hamlet with the part of Hamlet omitted, and the greatest stress laid on the minor characters.

It is quite true that when an author writes a romance containing a hero and a heroine he must tell you who they are, he must give, briefly and succinctly, the necessary details — names, ages, conditions and so forth — but if he is a great author he will do this incidentally and make us feel that such details are incidental. In short, he must poise his feet on earth, but his way is to the stars. Think of the "Scarlet Letter," open it again and see how admirably Hawthorne has omitted a world of unessential details that a lesser man would have put in. He has left out a whole encyclopædia of useless and tedious information; there is the dim, necessary background of time and place, but in reality the scene is Eternity, and the drama is the Mystery of Love and Vengeance and Hell-fire. Of course fine literature must have its gross and carnal body, we must know "who's who," for I don't think an old-fashioned receipt that I remember was ever very successful. Oh, you must have read some of the tales I mean; they used to flourish in the old "Keepsakes," and the hero was boldly labelled "Fernando" for all distinction and description. One might surmise that Fernando was domiciled on the continent of Europe, but that was all. It was not successful, this well-meaning school of fiction, and I repeat that the finest literature must have its accidents — it cannot exist as shining substance alone. It is just the same with the art of sculpture, with the art of painting. You cannot look at a Greek Apollo without looking at that part of the body which conceals the bowels, but I imagine you don't want to treasure this thought or to insist on it? And I suppose a geologist, looking at a picture, could tell you whether those wild and terrible rocks were volcanic or carboniferous; but really one doesn't want to know. Bowels, geological formation, in sculpture and painting, the social position of the characters and all other such details in fine literature are inessential; and the great artist will, as I said, make us feel that they are inessential. If you want an instance of what I mean read a book which is very comparable with the German-Jew-Baroness tale that we were talking about. I mean “Two on a Tower” by Mr Hardy. In that you have the contrast of social ranks: the “two” are the Lady of the Manor and an educated peasant, but how utterly all thought of “society” (in any sense of the word) disappears from those wonderful pages, as you advance and find that the theme is really Love. Why even the accidents are glorified and are made of the essence of the book. The old tower standing in the midst of lonely, red ploughlands far from the highway, is at first only the convenient place where the young peasant studies astronomy; but as you read you feel the change coming, the tower is transmuted, glorified; every stone of it is aglow with mystic light; it is made the abode of the Lover and the Beloved, it is seen to be a symbol of Love, of an ecstasy, remote, and passionate, and eternal, dwelling far from the ways of men. Compare these two books, I say again, and you will know the chief distinction between fine literature and reading matter. To me, I confess, the “Jew-book” has not even interest of the lower sort, not by any means the interest of Thackeray, or Jane Austen or even of poor, dreary, draggle-tailed George Eliot; but if you are amused by it, I have no objection to make. You may be amused by the plates of the “Spring and Summer Novelties” in the lady’s paper, if you please; but for heaven’s sake don’t come here and tell me that on the whole you prefer Botticelli’s Primavera! Nay, but the fashion-plates are sometimes very nicely done, and they put in backgrounds, and they are trying to give the faces some character. Do get it into your head — firmly and fixedly — that the camera and the soul of man are two entirely different things.

You think the “photographic” comparison unfair, in this and other instances, because of the mechanical element in photography, because of that camera I have just mentioned? Well, I suppose that it *is* a little misleading. The sun and the camera between them certainly do your picture for you, and as you urge, there is more of artifice in the merest Sunday-school tale than in the best of photographs. Still, you must remember that photography too has its artifice, its choice of the right and the wrong way, and its exercise of judgment; there is a great deal in it that is not mechanical; and in its essence it is of the same class as the books I have been alluding to. The means employed are different, and a higher and finer artifice is required for making books than for taking photographs, but the end of each is the same, and that end is to portray the surface of life, to make a picture of the outside of things. It is on this ground that I defend my use of the analogy, and you must understand me to speak only of the object which is common to each, when I compare the secondary writer to a photographer. The writers, to be sure, have invention in a greater or less degree, but you will remark that the artists in literature have the power of creation, a totally different process. Invention is the finding of a thing in its more or less obscure hiding-place; creation is the making of a new thing, the invocation of Something from Nothingness. Don Quixote is a creation; the clergyman in "Pride and Prejudice" is an invention, Colonel Newcome is, in all probability, a composite portrait, while the Jew-Socialist who fell in love with the Baroness is simply a portrait of Ferdinand Lassalle.

You must remember that while the two classes — fine literature and reading matter — differ the one from the other generically, the individuals of each class differ from each other only specifically. Thus the difference in merit between the "Odyssey" and "Pickwick" is enormous, but it is a specific difference. In the same way it is hard to measure with the imagination the difference between "Madame Bovary" and that famous Sunday-school story "Jackie's Holiday": the former is immensely clever, the latter is immensely silly; but the two are, emphatically, of the same genus. In each case the effort of the author is to "describe life," the aim of Flaubert is absolutely identical with the aim of Miss Flopkins, and their results differ only as the Frenchman differs from the Englishwoman, the one being a serious and patient artificer while the other is a bungling idiot, who obtrudes her very empty personality and her very trashy ethics instead of studiously concealing them. Still: a photograph taken in the most famous studio in London is still a photograph equally with the spotted and misty effort of the amateur, and no amount of "touching-up" or "finishing," however patient it may be, will turn a photograph into a work of art. And, in like manner, no labour, no care, no polishing of the phrase, no patience in investigation, no artifice in plot or in construction will ever make "reading-matter" into fine literature.

III

I SEE THAT I shall be obliged to keep on reiterating the difference between fine literature and “literature,” or in other words between art and observation expressed with artifice. I am afraid, that in your heart of hearts, you still believe that the “Odyssey” is fine literature, and that “Pride and Prejudice” is fine literature, though the “Odyssey” is “better” than “Pride and Prejudice.” It is that “better” that I want to get out of your head, that monstrous fallacy of comparing Westminster Abbey with the charming old houses in Queen Square. You would see the absurdity of imagining that there can be any degree of comparison between two things entirely different, if I substituted for “Pride and Prejudice” some ordinary circulating-library novel of our own times. At least I hope you would see, though, as I told you a few weeks ago, I doubt very much whether many people realise the distinction between the “Odyssey” and a political pamphlet. The general opinion, I expect, is that both belong to the same class, though the Greek poem is much more “important” than the pamphlet. I think we succeeded in demonstrating the falsity of this idea, in showing clearly and decisively that fine literature means the expression of the eternal human ecstasy in the medium of words, and that it means nothing else whatsoever. Words, it is true, are used for other ends than this: they are used in sending telegrams to stockbrokers, for example, but why should this double office create any confusion? A tub and a tabernacle may each be made of wood, but you don’t mix the two things up on that account? The other day you gave me a most amusing account of your landlady’s quarrels with her servant girls. I remember that I laughed consumedly, and at the moment, that solemn preconisation of the servant Mabel to the effect that her mistress, Mrs Stickings, was not a “lydy,” was more to my taste than the recitation of the “Ode on a Grecian Urn.” But you surely didn’t think that you were making literature all the while? Or that the history of Mrs Stickings and Mabel would have mysteriously become literature if you had written it down and got somebody to print it? Or that it would have been literature if some of the details had been a little exaggerated (I thought you had embroidered here and there); or if you had made the whole story up out of your own head? Exactly, you were, as you say, amusing me by the relation of facts a little altered, compressed, and embellished, and I am glad that you see that no process of writing or printing, no variation in the proportion of truth and invention, even to the total lack of all truth, could have changed an amusing presentation of the Stickings *ménage* into fine literature. But, surely, it is so very obvious. Did any cook ever think that he could change a turkey into a bird of paradise by careful attention to the *farse* and the sauce? The farmer might as well expect to breed early phœnixes for Leadenhall Market by the simple process of lighting a bonfire in the farmyard. The young ducks would jump into the blaze, and the transformation would be the work of a second! There is no more madness in *that* notion than in the other one — that one has only to print an amusing, interesting, life-like, or pathetic tale to make it into fine literature.

Yes; but what I am afraid is still lurking somewhere in your skull is this: that if only the stuffing is extremely well made, if only the sauce is an exquisite concoction, the turkey *is*, somehow or other, changed into a bird of paradise. That is, to translate the analogy, if only the plot is very ingenious, if only the construction is well carried out, if the characters are extremely life-like, if the English is admirably neat and sufficient, then reading-matter becomes fine literature. Make the bonfire high enough and your young ducks will be burned into phœnixes fast enough; let the artifice be sufficiently artificial and it will be art. Indeed you might as well maintain that a wooden statue, if it be really well carved, is thereby made into a gold statue.

Well, I remember saying one night that you were here that ecstasy is at once the most exquisite of emotions and a whole philosophy of life. And it is to the philosophy of life that we are brought, in the last resort. You know that there are, speaking very generally, two solutions of existence; one is the materialistic or rationalistic, the other, the spiritual or mystic. If the former were true, then Keats would be a queer kind of madman, and the “Morte d’Arthur” would be an elaborate symptom of insanity; if the latter is true, then “Pride and Prejudice” is not fine literature, and the works of George Eliot are the works of a superior insect — and nothing more. You must make your choice: is the story of the Graal lunacy, or not? You think it is not: then do not talk any more of turning glass into diamonds by careful polishing and cutting. Do not say: Mr A. spends five years over a book, and therefore what he writes is fine literature; Miss B. polishes off five novels in a year, and therefore she does not write fine literature. Do not say, Mr Shorthouse has got the name of a man who kept a private school in the time of Charles I. quite right; therefore "John Inglesant" is fine literature, while the archæological details in "Ivanhoe" are all wrong, therefore it is not fine literature. Good Lord! You might as well say: but my landlady's name is Mrs Stickings, and the girl (who left last month) was really called Mabel; *therefore* that story of mine was fine literature. What's that about sustained effort? Can you turn a deal ladder into a golden staircase by making it of a thousand rungs? What I say three times is right, eh? and if I tell the tale of Mrs Stickings so that it extends to "our minimum length for three volume novels," it becomes fine literature.

Well, I really hope that we have at last settled the matter; that fine literature is simply the expression of the eternal things that are in man, that it is beauty clothed in words, that it is always ecstasy, that it always draws itself away, and goes apart into lonely places, far from the common course of life. Realise this, and you will never be misled into pronouncing mere reading-matter, however interesting, to be fine literature; and now that we clearly understand the difference between the two, I propose that we drop the "fine" and speak simply of literature.

But I assure you that, even after having established the grand distinction, it is by no means plain sailing. Everything terrestrial is so composite (except, perhaps, pure music) that one is confronted by an almost endless task of distinguishing matter from form, and body from spirit. Literature, we say, is ecstasy, but a book must be written about something and about somebody; it must be expressed in words, it must have arrangement and artifice, it must have accident as well as essence. Consider "Don Quixote" as an example; it is, I suppose, the finest prose romance in existence. Essentially, it expresses the eternal quest of the unknown, that longing, peculiar to man, which makes him reach out towards infinity; and he lifts up his eyes, and he strains his eyes, looking across the ocean, for certain fabled, happy islands, for Avalon that is beyond the setting of the sun. And he comes into life from the unknown world, from glorious places, and all his days he journeys through the world, spying about him, going on and ever on, expecting beyond every hill to find the holy city, seeing signs, and omens, and tokens by the way, reminded every hour of his everlasting citizenship. “From the great deep to the great deep he goes”: it is true of King Arthur and of each one of us; and this, I take it, is the essence of “Don Quixote,” and of all his forerunners and successors. Then, in the second place, you get the eternal moral of the book, and you will understand that I am not using “moral” in the vulgar sense. The eternal moral, then, of “Don Quixote” is the strife between temporal and eternal, between the soul and the body, between things spiritual and things corporal, between ecstasy and the common life. You read the book and you see that there is a perpetual jar, you are continually confronted by the great antinomy of life. It seems a mere comic incident when the knight dreaming of enchantment is knocked about, and made ridiculous; but I tell you it is the perpetual tragedy of life itself, symbolised. I say that it is, under a figure, the picture of humanity in the world, that you will find the truth it represents repeated again and again throughout all history. You know that if one goes back resolutely to the first principles of things, one finds oneself, as it were, in a place where all lines that seemed parallel and eternally divided meet, and so it is with this tragedy symbolised by the Don Quixote. It is, you may say, the tragedy of the Unknown and the Known, of the Soul and Body, of the Idea and the Fact, of Ecstasy and Common Life; at last, I suppose, of Good and Evil. The source of it lies far beyond our understanding, but its symbol is shown again and again in Cervantes’s page.

Then, there is a third element in the book. The author intended to write a burlesque on the current romances of chivalry; and he wrote, I suppose, the best burlesque that has ever been written, or ever will be written. If you unhappily so choose, you can shut your eyes to everything serious and everything beautiful, and read merely of Amadis and Arthur “taken off,” of the highest ideals turned into nonsense, of the best motives shown to be, in effect, mischievous. You will read how the knight, in the approved manner of knights, helped the oppressed and the wretched, and how he usually worsened their condition tenfold. You may lend your ear to Sancho, grumbling and quoting “common-sense” proverbs all the road, as he rides on his ass, and if it were not for the wit and the comedy, you might fancy yourself in a suburban train bound for the city. Why, if you so please, “Don Quixote” is the Institute of cynicism, the reduction of every generous impulse to absurdity.

Finally, the knight is the mouthpiece of Cervantes himself, especially towards the end of the second part, where the armour and the fantasy drop off, piece by piece, and shred by shred, on that mournful, homeward journey. At last, I say, Don Quixote is almost simply Cervantes, commenting on men and affairs in Spain, and I think that in those final chapters the art has vanished together with the armour and the ecstasy. Yes, I always dread the ending of "Don Quixote." A star drops a line of streaming fire, down the vault of the sky, and perhaps you may have seen the ugly, shapeless thing that sinks into the earth.

But this very brief and imperfect analysis of a great masterpiece of literary art may give you some idea of the extraordinary complexity of all literature. As it is I have omitted one most important item in the account; I have said nothing of the style, because, I am sorry to say that I have no Spanish, and Cervantes speaks to me through an interpreter named Charles Jarvis. But, omitting style, you see that we have, in this particular case, five books in one; we have the utterance of pure ecstasy, the strife between ecstasy and the common life, the burlesque of chivalry, the institutes of cynicism, and the comments on affairs. Each of these different themes is managed with consummate ability, and (always excepting the last chapters of the book), each keeps its due place, so that it really rests with the reader, in a manner, to choose which book he is to read.

And then, there are other elements which must be accounted for if one is to judge a book as a whole, fairly and thoroughly. I may be so charmed with the writer's rapture, with the wonder and beauty of his idea, that I may forget the fact that the artist must also be the artificer; that while the soul conceives, the understanding must formulate the conception, that while ecstasy must suggest the conduct of the story, common-sense must help to range each circumstance in order, that while an inward, mysterious delight must dictate the burning phrases and sound in the music and melody of the words, cool judgment must go through every line, reminding the author that, if literature be the language of the Shadowy Companion it must yet be translated out of the unknown speech into the vulgar tongue. Here then we have the elements of a book. Firstly the Idea or Conception, the thing of exquisite beauty which dwells in the author's soul, not yet clothed in words, nor even in thought, but a pure emotion. Secondly, when this emotion has taken definite form, is made incarnate as it were, in the shape of a story, which can be roughly jotted down on paper, we may speak of the Plot. Thirdly, the plot has to be systematised, to be drawn to scale, to be carried out to its legitimate conclusions, to be displayed by means of Incident; and here we have Construction. Fourthly, the story is to be written down, and Style is the invention of beautiful words which shall affect the reader by their meaning, by their sound, by their mysterious suggestion.

This, then, is the fourfold work of literature, and if you want to be perfect you must be perfect in each part. Art must inspire and shape each and all, but only the first, the Idea, is pure art; with Plot, and Construction, and Style there is an alloy of artifice. If then any given book can be shown to proceed from an Idea, it is to be placed in the class of literature, in the shelf of the "Odyssey" as I think I once expressed it. It may be placed very high in the class; the more it have of rapture in its every part, the higher it will be: or, it may be placed very low, because, for example, having once admired the Conception, the dream that came to the author from the other world, we are forced to admit that the Story or Plot was feebly imagined, that the Construction was clumsily carried out, that the Style is, æsthetically, non-existent. You will notice that I am never afraid of blaming my favourites, of finding fault with the books which I most adore. I can do so freely and without fear of consequences, since having once applied my test, and having found that "Pickwick," for example, is literature, I am not in the least afraid that I shall be compelled to eat my words if flaws in plot and style and construction are afterwards made apparent. The statue is gold; we have settled that much, and we need not fear that it will turn into lead, if we find that the graving and carving is poor enough. Once be sure that your temple *is* a temple, and I will warrant you against it being suddenly transmuted into a tub, through the discovery of scamped workmanship.

Well, suppose we begin to apply our analysis. Let us take the strange case of Mr R. L. Stevenson, and especially his "Jekyll and Hyde," which, in some ways, is his most characteristic and most effective book. Now I suppose that instructed opinion (granting its existence) was about equally divided as to the class in which this most skilful and striking story was to be placed. Many, I have no doubt, gave it a very high place in the ranks of imaginative literature, or (as we should now say) in the ranks of literature; while many other judges set it down as an extremely clever piece of sensationalism, and nothing more. Well, I think both these opinions are wrong; and I should be inclined to say that “Jekyll and Hyde” just scrapes by the skin of its teeth, as it were, into the shelves of literature, and no more. On the surface it would seem to be merely sensationalism; I expect that when you read it, you did so with breathless absorption, hurrying over the pages in your eagerness to find out the secret, and this secret once discovered, I imagine that “Jekyll and Hyde” retired to your shelf — and stays there, rather dusty. You have never opened it again? Exactly. I *have* read it for a second time, and I was astonished to find how it had, if I may say so, evaporated. At the first reading one was enthralled by mere curiosity, but when once this curiosity had been satisfied what remained? If I may speak from my own experience, simply a rather languid admiration of the ingenuity of the plot with its construction, combined with a slight feeling of impatience, such as one might experience if one were asked to solve a puzzle for the second time. You see that the secret once disclosed, all the steps which lead to the disclosure become, *ipso facto*, insignificant, or rather they become nothing at all, since their only significance and their only existence lay in the secret, and when the secret has ceased to be a secret, the signs and cyphers of it fall also into the world of nonentity. You may be amazed, and perplexed, and entranced by a cryptogram, while you are solving it, but the solution once attained, your cryptogram is either nothing or perilously near to nothingness.

Well, all this points, doesn’t it, towards mere sensationalism, very cleverly done? But, as I said, I think “Jekyll and Hyde” just scrapes over the borderline and takes its place, very low down, among books that are literature. And I base my verdict solely on the Idea, on the Conception that lies, buried rather deeply, beneath the Plot. The plot, in itself, strikes me as mechanical — this actual physical transformation, produced by a drug, linked certainly with a theory of ethical change, but not linked at all with the really mysterious, the really psychical — all this affects me, I say, as ingenious mechanism and nothing more; while I have shown how the construction is ingenious artifice, and the style is affected by the same plague of laboured ingenuity. Throughout it is a thoroughly conscious style, and in literature all the highest things are unconsciously, or at least, subconsciously produced. It has music, but it has no under-music, and there are no phrases in it that seem veils of dreams, echoes of the “inexpressive song.” It is on the conception, then, alone, that I justify my inclusion of “Jekyll” amongst works of art; for it seems to me that, lurking behind the plot, we divine the presence of an Idea, of an inspiration. "Man is not truly one, but truly two," or, perhaps, a polity with many inhabitants, Dr Jekyll writes in his confession, and I think that I see here a trace that Mr Stevenson had received a vision of the mystery of human nature, compounded of the dust and of the stars, of a dim vast city, splendid and ruinous as drowned Atlantis deep beneath the waves, of a haunted quire where a flickering light burns before the Veil. This, I believe, was the vision that came to the artist, but the admirable artificer seized hold of it at once and made it all his own, omitting what he did not understand, translating roughly from the unknown tongue, materialising, coarsening, hardening. Don't you see how thoroughly *physical* the actual plot is, and if one escapes for a moment from the atmosphere of the laboratory it is only to be confronted by the most obvious vein of moral allegory; and from this latter light, "Jekyll and Hyde" seems almost the vivid metaphor of a clever preacher. You mustn't imagine, you know, that I condemn the powder business as bad in itself, for (let us revert for a moment to philosophy) man is a sacrament, soul manifested under the form of body, and art has to deal with each and both and to show their interaction and interdependence. The most perfect form of literature is, no doubt, lyrical poetry which is, one might say, almost pure Idea, art with scarcely an alloy of artifice, expressed in magic words, in the voice of music. In a word, a perfect lyric, such as Keats's "Belle Dame Sans Mercy" is *almost* pure soul, a spirit with the luminous body of melody. But (in our age, at all events) a prose romance must put on a grosser and more material envelope than this, it must have incident, corporeity, relation to material things, and all these will occupy a considerable part of the whole. To a certain extent, then, the Idea must be materialised, but still it must always shine through the fleshly vestment; the body must never be mere body but always the body of the spirit, existing to conceal and yet to manifest the spirit; and here it seems to me that Mr Stevenson's story breaks down. The transformation of Jekyll into Hyde is solely material, as you read it, without artistic significance; it is simply an astounding incident, and not an outward sign of an inward mystery. As for the possible allegory I have too much respect for Mr Stevenson as an artificer to think that he would regard this element as anything but a very grave defect. Allegory, as Poe so well observed, is always a literary vice, and we are only able to enjoy the "Pilgrim's Progress" by forgetting that the allegory exists. Yes, that seems to me the *vitium* of "Jekyll and Hyde": the conception has been badly realised, and by badly I do not mean clumsily, because from the logical, literal standpoint, the plot and the construction are marvels of cleverness; but I mean inartistically: ecstasy, which as we have settled is the synonym of art, gave birth to the idea, but immediately abandoned it to artifice, and to artifice only, instead of presiding over and inspiring every further step in plot, in construction, and in style. All this may seem to you very fine-drawn and over-subtle, but I am convinced that it is the true account of the matter, and perhaps you may realise my theory better if I draw out that analogy of "translation" which I suggested, I think, a few minutes ago. I was passing along New Oxford Street the other day, and I happened to look into a shop which displays Bibles in all languages, and I glanced at the French version, open at the seventh chapter of the Book of Proverbs. I saw the words "un jeune homme dépourvu de bon sens," and then, lower down, "comme un bœuf à la boucherie," and it was some considerable time before I realised that these phrases "translated," "a young man void of understanding," and "as an ox goeth to the slaughter." Now you notice that these are in every way commonplace examples; there is nothing extraordinarily poetical in either phrase as it stands in the Authorised Version. I might have made the contrast much more violent by choosing a passage from the Song of Songs or Ecclesiastes; and I wonder how "Therefore with Angels and Archangels" would go into French. But isn't the gulf astounding between "void of understanding" and "dépourvu de bon sens"? Yet the meaning of the French is really the same as the meaning of the English; logically, I should think, the two phrases are exactly equivalent. And yet … well, we know perfectly well that "dépourvu de bon sens" in no way renders that noble and austere simplicity that we reverence in the English text.

Now, I think, you ought to see what I have been trying to express about the gulf that may open always between the conception and the plot, or story, that does divide the conception from the plot of "Jekyll and Hyde." Of course the analogy is not perfect, because the *magnum chaos* that yawns between the unformulated Idea and the formulated plot, between pure ecstasy and ecstasy *plus* artifice, is much vaster than the distinction between English and French, indeed between the two former there is almost or altogether the difference of the infinite and the finite, of soul and body; still, you see how a book is a rendering, a translation of an Idea, and how a very fine idea may be embodied in a very mechanical plot.

You remember the “Socialist and Baroness” novel that we were talking about the other night. We placed it outside of literature firstly and chiefly because it was not based on ecstasy, on an idea of any kind, and secondly, and by way of consequence, because in its execution and detail it was so thoroughly insignificant, because it played Hamlet with the part of the Prince omitted. Now I think that it is strong evidence of the soundness of my literary theory that we are enabled by it to take two books so utterly dissimilar in manner and method, in story and treatment, and to judge them both by the same scale. For this is what it really comes to: we say that the “Tragic Comedians” is not literature because it simply tells of facts without their significance, because it deals with the outward show and not with the inward spirit, because it is accidental and not essential. And in just the same way we say that “Jekyll and Hyde” (its conception apart) is not literature inasmuch as it too has the body of a story without the soul of a story, the incident, the fact, without the inward thing of which the fact is a symbol. For if you will consider the matter you will see that a fact *qua* fact has no existence in art at all. It is not the painter’s business to make us a likeness of a tree or a rock; it is his business to communicate to us an emotion — an ecstasy, if you please — and that he may do so he uses a tree or a rock as a symbol, a word in his language of colour and form. It is not the business of the sculptor to chisel likenesses of men in marble; the human form is to him also a symbol which stands for an idea. In the same manner it is not the business of the literary artist to describe facts — real or imaginary — in words: he is possessed with an idea which he symbolises by incident, by a story of men and women and things. He is possessed, let us say, by the idea of Love: then he must write a story of lovers, but he must never forget that A. and B., his actual lovers in the tale, with their social positions, their whims and fancies, their sayings and doings are only of consequence in the degree that they symbolise the universal human passion, which in its turn is a copy of certain eternal and ineffable things. If A. and B. do *not* do this then they are nothing, and worse than nothing, so far as art is concerned. “But my tree is like a tree,” says the dull painter, and “my anatomy is faultless,” says the bad sculptor, and “my characters are life-like,” says the novelist.

And one can apply exactly the same reasoning to Mr Stevenson’s ingenious story. I do not know whether there is, or has been, or will be a salt in existence which can turn a man into another person; that is of not the slightest consequence to the argument. The result of the powder, as it is described in the book, is an incident, and it makes no difference to the critical judgment whether the incident is true or false, probable or improbable. The only point, absolutely the only point is this: is the incident significant or insignificant, is it related for its own sake, or is it posited because it is a sign, a symbol, a word which veils and reveals the artist's ecstasy and inspiration? The socialist fell in love with the baroness: it is true, you say, it really happened so in Germany some twenty-five years ago. But in the book it is insignificant. The doctor took the powder and became another man; it is probably untrue. But it is also insignificant; and to the critic of art in literature the one incident stands precisely on the same footing as the other.

And, do you know, I am glad I have made this comparison between "Jekyll and Hyde" and the "Tragic Comedians," because it has struck me that what I have been saying about the essential element of all literature might be open to very grave misunderstanding. I have been insisting, with reiteration that must have tired you, that there is only one test by which literature may be distinguished from mere reading matter, and that that test is summed up in the word, ecstasy. And then we admitted a whole string of synonyms — desire of the unknown, sense of the unknown, rapture, adoration, mystery, wonder, withdrawal from the common life — and I daresay I have used many other phrases in the same sense without giving you any special warning that it was our old friend again in a new guise. But it has just occurred to me that with all this wealth of synonyms, I may not have made my meaning perfectly clear. For example, while I was laying down the law about Dr Jekyll's powder and its effects, you might have interrupted me with the remark: "But I thought you said the sense of wonder was characteristic of literature; and surely the change from Jekyll into Hyde is extremely wonderful." Or again, when I was belauding the "Odyssey," dwelling on the voyage of Ulysses amongst strange peoples, you might have put in some modern tale of strange adventure, and requested me to distinguish between the two, to justify my praise of the old, and rejection of the new. And we have mentioned Sunday-school books, always, I think, with a certain *nuance* of contempt; but Sunday-school books usually deal with religion, and religion and adoration are almost synonymous. And so one could go on with the list, making out, on our premises, with our own test, a plausible case for books which we know very well are neither literature nor anything remotely approaching it. And that would look rather like the collapse of our literary case, wouldn’t it?

Well, the solution of the difficulty seems to me to be sought for in the remarks I was making just now about “facts” in art. I said, you remember, that in art, facts as facts have no existence at all. Facts, incidents, plots, simply form the artistic speech — its mode of expression, or medium — and if there is no idea behind the facts, then you have no longer language but gibberish. Just as language is made up of the letters of the alphabet, arranged in significant words and sentences; so is the artistic language made up of plots, incidents, sentences which are informed with significance. If I heap up letters of the alphabet, and arrange them in an arbitrary collocation, without meaning, I am forming gibberish, and not a language; and so if I pepper my pages with extraordinary incidents, without attaching to them any significance, I am writing, it may be, an exciting, absorbing, interesting book, but I am not making literature. Indeed, some of the books that might be mentioned in this connection remind me of a man swearing: he uses the holiest names but he does so in such a manner that he excites not reverence and awe but disgust and repulsion. Tell the bare “plot” of the Odyssey to one of these writers, and hint that it might be made into a “successful Christmas book for boys,” and he will produce you a book which will contain the Lotus-Eaters, and Calypso and the Cyclops, but which will have just the same relation to literature as blasphemy bears to the Liturgy. That seems to me the explanation; one must say again that mere incident is nothing, that it only becomes something when it is a symbol of an interior meaning. And, turning this maxim inside out, as it were, we shall sometimes find that a book which seems on the surface to be “reading matter” is really literature, and incidents, apparently insignificant, may turn out, on a closer examination, to be significant and symbolic in a very high degree. So I don’t think our literary criterion is in any way invalidated by the occurrence of surprising incidents in very worthless books. Look at “Mr Isaacs” for example. In a sense it is a “wonderful” book, inasmuch as it contains incidents which are far removed from common experience; but you have only to read it to discover that the author had not been visited by any inspiration of the unseen. One may trace some acquaintance with theosophical “literature,” but not even the dimmest vision of “the other things.” The “other things”? Ah, that is another synonym, but who can furnish a precise definition of the indefinable? They are sometimes in the song of a bird, sometimes in the scent of a flower, sometimes in the whirl of a London street, sometimes hidden under a great lonely hill. Some of us seek them with most hope and the fullest assurance in the sacring of the Mass, others receive tidings through the sound of music, in the colour of a picture, in the shining form of a statue, in the meditation of eternal truth. Do you know that I can never hear a jangling piano-organ, contending with the roar of traffic without the tears — not of feeling but of emotion — coming to my eyes?

And that instance — it is grotesque enough — reminds me that I think I have an explanation of another puzzle that has often perplexed me, and I daresay has perplexed you. Do you remember the books that you read when you were a boy? I can think of stories that I read long ago (I have forgotten the very names of them) that filled me with emotions that I recognised, afterwards, as purely artistic. The sorriest pirate, the most wretchedly concealed treasure, poor Captain Mayne Reid at his boldest gave me then the sensations that I now search for in the "Odyssey" or in the thought of it; and I looked into some of these shabby old tales years afterwards, and wondered how on earth I had managed to penetrate into "faëry lands forlorn" through such miserable stucco portals. And you, you say, extracted somehow or other, from Harrison Ainsworth's "Lancashire Witches," that essence of the unknown that you now find in Poe, and I expect that everybody who loves literature could gather similar recollections.

Well, it would be easy enough to solve the problem by saying that the emotions of children are of no consequence and don't count, but then I don't think that proposition is true. I think, on the contrary, that children, especially young children before they have been defiled by the horrors of "education," possess the artistic emotion in remarkable purity, that they reproduce, in a measure, the primitive man before he was defiled, artistically, by the horrors of civilisation. The ecstasy of the artist is but a recollection, a remnant from the childish vision, and the child undoubtedly looks at the world through "magic casements." But you see all this is unconscious, or subconscious (to a less degree it is so in later life, and artists are rare simply because it is their almost impossible task to translate the emotion of the sub-consciousness into the speech of consciousness), and as you may sometimes see children uttering their conceptions in words that are nonsense, or next door to it, so nonsense or at any rate very poor stuff suffices with them to summon up the vision from the depths of the soul. Suppose we could catch a genius at the age of nine or ten and request him to utter what he felt; the boy would speak or write rubbish, and in the same way you would find that he read rubbish, and that it excited in him an ineffable joy and ecstasy. Coleridge was a Bluecoat boy when he read the "poems" of William Lisle Bowles, and admired them to enthusiasm, and I am quite sure that at some early period Poe had been enraptured by Mrs Radcliffe, and we know how Burns founded himself on Fergusson. When men are young, the inward ecstasy, the "red powder of projection" is of such efficacy and virtue that the grossest and vilest matter is transmuted for them into pure gold, glistering and glorious as the sun. The child (and with him you may link all primitive and childlike people) approaches books and pictures just as he approaches nature itself and life; and a wonderful vision appears where many of us can only see the common and insignificant.

But all this has been a digression; it has come by the way in a talk about worthless and insignificant books. But I think that we should by this time have brought our testing apparatus into working order; we should be able to criticise any given book on some ground or principle, not on the rule of thumb of "it sent me to sleep," or "it kept me awake." And I think that what I have already remarked about the subconscious element in literature should have answered that question about "books with a purpose." As a matter of fact I believe that they are mostly trash, but it is not a case for *à priori* reasoning; you must test each book by itself. Mr Stevenson was, I believe, an artist at heart, but we have seen how the artificer overcame the artist in "Jekyll and Hyde," and in like manner there have been cases of people who were artificers, and even preachers, at heart, who were forced to succumb to the concealed, subconscious artist, when pen touched paper. For example; first logically analyze "Lycidas"; you will be disgusted just as Dr Johnson, who had no analysis but the logical, was disgusted. Forget your logic, your common-sense, and read it again as poetry; you will acknowledge the presence of an amazing masterpiece. An unimportant lament over an unimportant personage, constructed on an affected pseudo-pastoral plan, full of acrid, Puritanical declamation and abuse, wantonly absurd with its mixture of the nymphs and St Peter; it is not only wretched in plan but clumsy in construction, the artifice is atrocious. And it is also perfect beauty! It is the very soul set to music; its austere and exquisite rapture thrills one so that I could almost say: he who understands the mystery and the beauty of “Lycidas” understands also the final and eternal secret of art and life and man.

IV

DOYOU KNOW THAT when we last talked *belles lettres* the whole evening went by (or at least I think so) without my saying anything about “Pickwick”? I hope you noted the omission in your diary, if you keep one, because I find it difficult to talk much about literature, without drawing some illustration from that very notable, and curious, and unappreciated book. Yes, I maintain the justice of the last epithet in spite of circulation, in spite of popularity, and in spite of “Pickwick ‘literature.’” You may like a book very much and read it three times a year without appreciating it, and if a great book is really popular it is sure to owe its popularity to entirely wrong reasons. There are people, you know, who study Homer every day, because he throws so much light on the manners and customs of the ancients, and if a book of our own time is both great and popular, you may be sure that it is loved for its most peccant parts, just as nine people out of ten will recall the “Raven” and the “Bells” if the poetry of Edgar Allan Poe is mentioned.

After all, I needn’t have excused myself for my constant references to Dickens’s masterpiece, since I have already informed you that, like Coleridge, I love a “cyclical” mode of discoursing; and I honestly think that if you want to understand something about the Mysteries or the Fine Arts (which are the expression of the mysteries) it is the only way. A proposition in Euclid is demonstrated and done with, since nothing can be added to a mathematical proof; but literature is different. It is many-sided and many-coloured, and variable always; you can consider it in half-a-dozen ways, from half-a-dozen standpoints, and from half-a-dozen judgments, each of which will be true and perfect in itself, and yet each will supplement the other. Two or three weeks ago I think I tried to show you what a complex organism any given book reveals, if one examines it with a little attention, and if one specimen be so curiously and intricately fashioned, you may imagine the complexity of the whole subject.

But I have a more particular reason for turning once more to the "Posthumous Papers." We have noted that that which at first sight seems significant, may turn out to be insignificant, and I think that in passing I hinted that the reverse was sometimes the case. Very good; and the especial instance that is in my mind is the enormous capacity for strong drink exhibited by Mr Pickwick and all his friends and associates. Of course you've noticed it; perhaps you have thought it a nuisance and a blemish from the artistic standpoint, just as many "good people" have found it a nuisance and a blemish from the temperance or teetotal standpoint. You may have felt quite certain that a set of men who were always drinking brandy and water, and strong ale, and milk-punch, and madeira, who constantly drank a great deal too much of each and all of these things, would be extremely unpleasant companions in private life; I daresay you have been thankful that you never knew Mr Pickwick or any of his followers. You know, I expect, by personal experience, that a man whose daily life is a pilgrimage from one whiskey bar to another is, in most cases, an extremely tedious and unprofitable companion; and it is undeniable that the "Pickwickians" rather made opportunities for brandy and water than avoided them. And in an indirect manner, you feel that all this makes you like the book less.

But (I can no more miss an opportunity of digression than Mr Pickwick could keep on the coach if there were a chance of drinking his favourite beverage) do you know that there are really people who make their liking or disliking of the characters the criterion of literature — of romances, I mean? We touched on this some time ago, and I remember saying that in the case of such secondary books as Jane Austen's and Thackeray's, it was permissible enough to go where one was best amused, that one had a right to say, "Yes, the artifice may be the better here, but the characters are much more amusing there, and I had rather talk to the cosmopolitan whose manners are now and then a little to seek, than to the maiden lady in the village, whose decorum is so unexceptionable." But I confess that at the time it had not dawned upon me that there are people who try to judge fine art — the true literature — on the same grounds. I believe, however, that such is the case; I believe, indeed, that the egregious M. Voltaire was dimly moved by some such feeling when he wrote his famous "criticism" of the prophet Habakkuk. What (he must have said to himself) would they think in the *salons* of a man who talked like this: —

And the everlasting mountains were scattered,
The perpetual hills did bow:
His ways are everlasting?

Evidently Habakkuk could never hope for a second invitation; and *therefore* he wrote rubbish. And I believe, as I said, that there are many people who more or less unconsciously judge literature by this measure, by asking, “Would these people be pleasant to meet? would one like to hear this kind of thing in one’s drawing-room?” And this is well enough with secondary books, since they contain nothing but “characters,” and “incidents,” and “scenes,” and “facts”; but it is by no means well in literature, in which, as we found out, all these things are symbols, words of a language, used, not for themselves, but because they are significant. Remember our old definition — ecstasy, the withdrawal, the standing apart from common life — and you will see that we may almost reverse this popular method of judgment, and turn it into another test, or rather another way of putting the test, of art. For, if literature be a kind of withdrawal from the common atmosphere of life, we shall naturally expect to find its utterance, both in matter and manner, wholly unsuitable for the drawing-room or the street, and its “characters” persons whom we cannot imagine ourselves associating with on pleasant or comfortable terms. Neither you nor I would be very happy on Ulysses’s boat, we should soon become irritated with Don Quixote, we should hardly feel at home with Sir Galahad. It is true that all the good there is in men is this — that at rare intervals, in certain lonely moments of exaltation they do feel for the time a faint stirring of the beautiful within them, and *then* they would adventure on the Quest of the Graal; but as you know few of us are saints, fewer, perhaps, are men of genius; we are sunk for the most part of our days in the common life, and our care is for the body and for the things of the body, for the street and the drawing-room, and not for the perpetual, solitary hills. So you see that if you read a book and can say of the characters in it: “I wish I knew them,” there is very strong reason to suspect that the book in question is not literature, though it may well be a pleasant picture of pleasant people.

Yes, I was expecting that question. I should have been sorry if your sense of humour had *not* prompted you to ask whether the drinking of too much milk-punch constituted a withdrawal from the common life, a profound and lonely ecstasy. But don’t you remember that when we were discussing

“Pickwick” before, and comparing it with the “Odyssey,” I suddenly deserted Homer, and brought in Sophocles? I think I contrasted, very briefly, the education of the dramatist with the education of the romance writer, the London of the ‘twenties and ‘thirties with the city of the Violet Crown, the fate of him,

ἀεὶ διὰ λαμπροτάτου
βαίνοντος ἀβρῶς αἰθέρος

with that of the other who tried to find the way through the evil and hideous London fog.

Well, you might have been inclined to ask, why Sophocles? But do you remember for whose festivals, in whose honour the Greek wrote his dramas and his choral songs? It was the god of wine who was worshipped and invoked at the Dionysiaca, in the praise of Dionysus the chorus sang and danced about the altar, and all the drama arose from the celebration of the Bacchic mysteries. So you get, I think, a pretty fair proportion: as the Athens of Sophocles is to the Cockneydom of Dickens, so is the cult of Dionysus to the cult of cold punch and brandy and water. The interior meaning is in each case the same; the artistic expression has lamentably deteriorated, in the degree that the artistic atmosphere on the banks of Fleet Ditch, the “mother of dead dogs,” was inferior to the artistic atmosphere on the banks of the Ilissus.

I expect you have gathered from all this talk the point I want to make: that the brandy and water and punch business in “Pickwick,” which at first sight seems trivial and insignificant and even disgusting, is, in fact, full of the highest significance. Don’t you notice the insistence with which the writer dwells on drinking, the unction and enthusiasm with which he describes it? We have admitted the poverty of the “materials” with which Dickens works, and of course it would be as idle to expect him to write a choral song in honour of Dionysus as it would be to expect him to write in Greek. He expressed himself as best he could, in the “language” (that is with the incidents and in the atmosphere) that he knew, but there can be no possible doubt as to his meaning. In a word, I absolutely identify the “brandy and water scenes” with the Bacchic cultus and all that it implies.

This is “a little too much for you” is it? Well, let us take another well-known book, the “Gargantua” and “Pantagruel.” You know it well, and I have only to remind you of the name to remind you that as “Pickwick” has been said to “reek with brandy and water,” so does Rabelais assuredly reek of wine. The history begins: —

“Grandgousier estoit bon raillard en son temps, aimant à boire net,”

it ends with the Oracle of the Holy Bottle, with the word

“*Trinch* … un mot panomphée, celebré et entendu de toutes nations, et nous signifie, *beuvez*;”

and I refer you to the allocution of Bacbuc, the priestess of the Bottle, at large. “By wine,” she says, “is man made divine,” and I may say that if you have not got the key to these Rabelaisian riddles much of the value — the highest value — of the book is lost to you. You know how they drink, those strange figures, the giants and their followers, you know the aroma of the vintage, the odour of the wine vat that fills all those marvellous and enigmatic pages, and I tell you that here again I recognise the same signs as in “Pickwick,” the same music as that of the dithyrambic choruses in honour of Dionysus, which were eventually amplified into that magnificent literary product, the Greek drama. And if we wish to penetrate the secret we must not forget the Hebrew psalmist, with his *calix meus inebrians quam præclarus est*. And remember, too, if you feel inclined to shudder at the milk-punch, that the words which I have just quoted might be rendered, “how splendid is this cup of wine that makes me drunk!” and we may say that, in a manner, poor Dickens did so render them, since, as I have reminded you he belonged, after the flesh, to the Camden Town of the ‘twenties, and was forced to use its unbeautiful dialect because he knew no other.

And after all, then, what does this Bacchic cultus mean? We have seen that under various disguises the one spirit appeared in Greece, in the France of the Renaissance, and in Victorian England, and that in each instance there is an apparent glorification of drunkenness. The Greeks, indeed, a sober people by necessity, as all Southerners are, impersonated the genius of intoxication, and made excessive drinking, as it would seem, an elaborate religion, with rites and festivals and mysteries. The Tourainian, whose personal habit was that not of a drunkard, but of a learned physician and restorer of ancient letters, who probably drank very much in the manner of the good curé I once knew (“My God!” he said to me, after the third small glass of small white wine, "'tis a veritable debauch!"), has, on the face of it, dedicated all his enormous book to the same cause, so that to read Pantagruel is like walking through a French village in the vintage season, when the whole world, as Zola unpleasantly and nastily expresses it "pue le raisin." Thirdly, Dickens, who loved to talk of concocting gin-punch, and left it, when concocted, to be drunk by his guests, shows us Mr Pickwick "dead drunk" in the wheel-barrow. And, for a final touch of apparent absurdity, you remember that the Dionysus myth represents wine as a civilising influence! You may well think of the public-house at the corner, and ask yourself how strong drink can contribute to civilisation.

Well, that is, in very brief outline, the problem and the puzzle; and I may say at once that to the literalist, the rationalist, the materialist critic, the problem is quite insoluble. But to you and me, who do not end in any kind of *ist*, the enigma will not be quite so hopeless. Let us get back to our maxim that, in literature, facts and incidents are not present for their own sake but as symbols, as words of the language of art; it will follow, then, that the incidents of the Dionysus myth, the incidents of "Pantagruel" and "Pickwick" are not to be taken literally, but symbolically. We are not to conclude that the Greeks were a race of drunkards, or that Rabelais and Dickens preached habitual excess in drink as the highest virtue; we are to conclude that both the ancient people and the modern writers recognised Ecstasy as the supreme gift and state of man, and that they chose the Vine and the juice of the Vine as the most beautiful and significant symbol of that Power which withdraws a man from the common life and the common consciousness, and taking him from the dust of the earth, sets him in high places, in the eternal world of ideas. And, after all, I cannot do better than quote at length the sermon of Bacbuc, priestess of the Dive Bouteille.

"Et icy maintenons que non rire, ains boire, est le propre de l'homme: je ne dis boire simplement et absolument, car aussi bien boivent les bestes: je dis boire vin bon et frais. Notez, amis, que de vin, divin on devient: et n'y a argument tant seur, ni art de divination moins fallace. Vos academiques l'afferment, rendans l'etymologie de vin lequel ils disent en Grec ΟΙΝΟΣ, estre comme *vis*, force, puissance. Car pouvoir il a d'emplir l'ame de toute verité, tout savoir et philosophie. Si avez noté ce qui est en lettres Ioniques escrit dessus la porte du temple, vous avez peu entendre qu'en vin est verité cachée."

You see how that passage lights up the whole book, and you see what Rabelais meant in the Prologue to the first book by that reference to "certain little boxes such as we see nowadays in apothecaries' shops, the which boxes are painted on the outside with joyous and fantastic figures … but within they hold rare drugs, as balm, ambergris, amomum, musk, civet, certain stones of high virtue, and all manner of precious things." I do not know whether you have read any of our English commentators on Rabelais, if not, I would not advise you to do so, unless you take pleasure in futility. For instance they take the passage from the prologue, and seeing the hint that something is concealed, try by some complicated chain of argument to show that Rabelais veiled his attacks on the Church under a mask of "wild buffoonery." Of course the attacks on the Church (the "secondary" and comparatively unimportant element in the book, fairly answering to the attacks on books of Chivalry in the Don Quixote) are as open as any attack can well be, and anyone who finds a veil drawn between Rabelais' dislike for the clergy and his expression of it must have a very singular notion of what constitutes concealment, and a still more singular misapprehension of the motive-forces which make and shape great books. Art, you may feel quite assured, proceeds always from love and rapture, never from hatred and disdain, and satire of every kind *qua* satire is eternally condemned to that Gehenna where the pamphlets, the "literature of the subject," and the "life-like" books lie all together. In "Don Quixote" one perceives that Cervantes loved the romances he condemns, and the satire is therefore good-humoured, and, one may say, does his book little harm or none at all; but Rabelais had been harshly treated by the friars, and his consequent ill-humour, his very violent abuse *are* in disaccord with the eternal melodies which may be discerned in "Pantagruel," noted there under strange symbols. Yes, the satire in Rabelais is an "accident," which one has to accept and to make the best of; some of it is amusing enough, "joyous and fantastic," like the "apes and owls and antiques" that adorn the little boxes of the apothecaries, some of it is a little acrid, as I said; but let us never forget that the essence of the book is its splendid celebration of ecstasy, under the figure of the vine.

You know I have not opened the door; I have only put the key into your hands, in this as in other instances. There are things, which, strange to say, are better left unsaid, and this, no doubt, Rabelais perceived when he devised his symbolism and set many traps in the paths of the shallow commentator. It was not from dread of the consequences of attacking the clergy that he devised curious veils and concealments, since, as I have noted, his hatred of the church is quite open and unconcealed. He chose the method of symbolism, firstly because he was an artist, and symbolism is the speech of art; and secondly because the high truth that he prophesied was not, and is not, fit for vulgar ears. The secret places of the human nature are not heedlessly to be exposed to the uninitiated, who would merely profane this occult knowledge if they had it. By consequence the "Complete Works of Rabelais" are obtainable in Holywell Street, and many, seeking the libidinous, have found merely the tiresome, and have cursed their bargain.

No, I will positively say no more. The key is in your hands, and with it you may open what chambers you can. There is only this to be mentioned: that, if I were you, I would not be "afraid with any amazement" should Mr Pickwick's overdose of milk punch prove, ultimately, a clue to the labyrinth of mystic theology.

There are, however, one or two minor points in Rabelais that may be worth notice. I might, you know, analyze it as I attempted to analyze "Don Quixote." There is in "Gargantua" and "Pantagruel" that same complexity of thought and construction: you may note, first of all, the great essence which is common to these masterpieces as to all literature — ecstasy, expressed in the one case under the similitude of knight-errantry, in the other by the symbol of the vine. Then, in Rabelais you have another symbolism of ecstasy — the shape of *gauloiserie*, of gross, exuberant gaiety, expressing itself by outrageous tales, outrageous words, by a very cataract of obscenity, if you please, if only you will notice how the obscenity of Rabelais transcends the obscenity of common life; how grossness is poured out in a sort of mad torrent, in a frenzy, a very passion of the unspeakable. Then, thirdly, there is the impression one collects from the book: a transfigured picture of that wonderful age: there is the note of the vast, interminable argument of the schools, and for a respond, the clear, enchanted voice of Plato; there is the vision, there is the mystery of the vast, far-lifted Gothic quire; and those fair, ornate, and smiling *châteaux* rise smiling from the rich banks of the Loire and the Vienne. The old tales told in farmhouse kitchens in the Chinonnais, the exultation of the new learning, of lost beauty recovered, the joy of the vintage, the old legends, the ancient turns of speech, the new style and manner of speaking: so to the old world answers the new. Then one has the satire of clergy and lawyers — the criticism of life — analogous, as I said with much that is in Cervantes, and so from divers elements you see how a literary masterpiece is made into a whole.

But now, do you know, I am going to make a confession. You have heard me say more than once that in art, in literature properly so called, liking and disliking count for nothing. We have understood, I think, that when once amusing reading matter has been put out of court, the question of how often, with what absorption one reads a work of art, matters nothing. Well, I want to contradict, or rather to modify that axiom; we have been speaking of three great books, each of which I believe firmly to be true literature— "Pickwick," "Don Quixote," and "Pantagruel." Here is my confession. I read "Pickwick," say, once a year, "Don Quixote," once every three years, while I read Rabelais in fragments perhaps once in six years. You might suppose that I have indicated the order of merit? Well, I have, but you must reverse the order, since I firmly believe that "Pantagruel" is the finest of the three. We will leave Dickens out of account, since we are agreed that though the message was that of angels, the accent and the speech were of Camden town; he, that is to say, approaches most nearly to the common life, to the common passages in which we live, and hence he, naturally, pleases us the most in our ordinary and common humours. But, of the other two, I confess that Cervantes pleases me much the more; the vulgarity of Dickens is absent or rather it is concentrated in Sancho, in a much milder form than that of "Pickwick," for a Spanish peasant of the sixteenth century, with all his "common-sense," and practical reason, is less remote from beauty than the retired "business man" of the early nineteenth century; just as poor Mr Pickwick, an honest, kindly creature, is vastly superior to the blatant, pretentious, diamond-bedecked swindlers who represent the city in our day. But Cervantes, who lacks, as I say, the "commonness" of Dickens, has something of the urbanity, the cosmopolitanism of Thackeray, he is, to a certain degree, a Colonel Newcome of his time, but he has seen the world more sagaciously than Colonel Newcome ever could. So while Rabelais appals me with his extravagance, his torrents of obscene words, I am charmed with the good humoured and observant companionship of Cervantes.

And hence I conclude that “Pantagruel” is the finer book. It may sound paradoxical to say so, but don’t you see that the very *grotesquerie* of Rabelais shows a further remove from the daily round, a purer metal, less tinged with the personal, material, interest than “Don Quixote.” Mind you, I find greater deftness, a finer artifice in Cervantes, who I think expressed his conception the more perfectly, but I think that the conception of Rabelais the higher, precisely because it is the more remote. Look at the “Pantagruel”; consider those “lists,” that more than frankness, that ebullition of grossness, plainly intentional, designed: it is either the merest lunacy, or else it is sublime. Don’t you remember the trite saying “extremes meet,” don’t you perceive that when a certain depth has been passed you begin to ascend into the heights? The Persian poet expresses the most transcendental secrets of the Divine Love by the grossest phrases of the carnal love; so Rabelais soars above the common life, above the streets and the gutter by going far lower than the streets and the gutter: he brings before you the highest by positing that which is lower than the lowest, and if you have the prepared, initiated mind, a Rabelaisian “list” is the best preface to the angelic song. All this may strike you as extreme paradox, but it has the disadvantage of being true, and perhaps you may assure yourself of its truth by recollecting the converse proposition — that it is when one is absorbed in the highest emotions that the most degrading images will intrude themselves. No; you are right: this is not the psychology of the “scientific” persons who write hand-books on the subject, it is not the psychology of the “serious” novelists, of those who write the annals of the “engaged”; but it happens to be the psychology of man.

I don’t know that very much can be made of the signification of the characters in “Pantagruel,” as I hardly think that Rabelais was anxious to be systematic or consistent in delineating them. I believe that there are two reasons for the gigantic stature of Pantagruel, or perhaps three. The form of the whole story came from popular legends about a giant named Gargantua, and that is the first and least important reason. Secondly the “giant” conception does something to remove the book from common experience; it is a sign-post, warning you *not* to expect a faithful picture of life, but rather a withdrawal from life and from common experience, and you are in a position to appreciate the value of that motive, since I have never ceased from telling you that it is the principal motive of all literature. And, thirdly, I hesitate and doubt, but nothing more, whether the giant Pantagruel, he who is “all thirst” and ever athirst, may not be a hint of the stature of the perfect man, of the ideal man, freed from the bonds of the common life, and common appetites, having only the eternal thirst for the eternal vine. Candidly, I am inclined to favour this view, but only as a private interpretation; it may be all nonsense, and I shall not be offended or surprised if you can prove to me that it is nonsense. But have you noticed how Pantagruel is at once the most important and the least important figure in the book? He is the most important personage; he is the hero, the leader, the son of the king, the giant, wiser than any or all of his followers: formally, he is to Rabelais that which Don Quixote is to Cervantes. And yet, actually, he is little more than a vague, tremendous shadow; the living, speaking, impressive personages are Frère Jean and Panurge, who occupy the stage and capture our attention. Doesn’t this rather suggest to you the part played by the “real” man in life itself; a subordinate, unobtrusive part usually, hidden very often by an exterior, which bears little resemblance to the true man within. You know Coleridge says that: —

> “Pantagruel is the Reason; Panurge the Understanding — the pollarded man, the man with every faculty except the reason. I scarcely know an example more illustrative of the distinction between the two. Rabelais had no mode of speaking the truth in those days but in such form as this; as it was, he was indebted to the king’s protection for his life.”

I must cavil at the last sentence, in which Coleridge seems to hint that Rabelais was in danger because he had hinted the distinction between the Reason and the Understanding. With all respect to Coleridge, Rabelais might have gone to the limits of psychology and metaphysics without incurring any danger; he was threatened on account of his very open satire of the church and the clergy, which, as I have pointed out, is as plain spoken as satire well can be. Still, I think that Coleridge, using the technical language of German philosophy, had a glimpse of the truth, and Mr Besant’s remark that Panurge is a careful portrait of a man without a soul is virtually the same definition in another terminology. As I have already said, I don’t think that Rabelais kept his characters within the strict limits of consistence — they are only significant, perhaps, now and then — and I want to say, again, that I speak under correction in this matter, not feeling at all sure of my ground. But I am inclined to think that Pantagruel, Panurge, and the Monk are not so much three different characters, as the representative of man in his three persons. Frère Jean is, perhaps, the natural man, the "healthy animal," Panurge is the rational man, and Pantagruel, as I said, is the spiritual, or perfect man, who looms, gigantic, in the background, almost invisible, and yet all important, and the three are, in reality, One. If I may apply the case to our own subject, I may say that while Pantagruel conceives the idea, Panurge writes the book, and Brother John has the courage to take it to the publishers. The first is the artist, the second the artificer, and the third the social being, ready to battle for his place in the material world. The giant is always calm, since his head is high above earth — *vidit nubes et sidera* — but the other two have to face the compromises of life, and suffer its defeats. All this may be purely fantastical; and at any rate I am sure that anyone who knows his Rabelais could pick many holes in my interpretation. For example, I said that the monk was the "healthy animal," and Panurge the rational man; but there are occasions when Panurge assumes the character of the unhealthy beast, the hairy-legged, hybrid, creature of the Greek myth, who uses the superior human artifice for ends that are wholly bestial or worse than bestial. Still; is this a valid objection? Are there not such men in life itself? Is it not, perhaps, the peculiar and terrible privilege of humanity that it may, if it pleases, prostitute its most holy and most blessed gifts to the worst and most horrible uses? And does not each one of us feel that, potentially, at all events, there is such a being within him, not yielded to, perhaps, for a moment, yet always present, always ready to assume the command. The greatest saints, we are told, have suffered the most fiery temptations; in other words — Pantagruel is always attended by *Panurge diabolicus*. I have talked once or twice of the Shadowy Companion, but one must not forget that there is the Muddy Companion also; a being often of exquisite wit and deep understanding, but given to evil ways if one do not hold him in check.

But, in any case, I think I have shown that the Pantagruel is one of the most extraordinary efforts of the human mind, full of "Pantagruelism"; and that word stands for many concealed and wonderful mysteries.

It is not in the least a "pleasant," or a "life-like," or even an "interesting" book; I think that when one knows of the key — or rather of the keys — one opens the pages almost with a sensation of dread. So it is a book that one consults at long intervals, because it is only at rare moments that a man can bear the spectacle of his own naked soul, and a vision that is splendid, certainly, but awful also, in its constant apposition of the eternal heights and the eternal depths.

V

I HAVE BEEN waiting for that question for a very long time, and I only wonder that you have been able to restrain yourself so well — through such a series of what I know you believe to be paradoxes, though I have assured you that I deal merely in the plainest truth. But, after all, your question is quite a legitimate one, and I remember when I first began to think of these things I went astray — simply because I did not recognise the existence of the difficulty that has been bothering you, ever since that talk of ours about the *haulte sagesse Pantagrueline — et Pickwickienne*, and perhaps before it.

Yes, I will put the question in its plainest, crudest form, and I will make you ask, if you please, whether Charles Dickens had any consciousness of the interior significance of the milk-punch, strong ale, and brandy and water which he caused Mr Pickwick and his friends to consume in such outrageous quantities. It sounds plain enough and simple enough, doesn't it, and yet I must tell you that to answer that question fairly you must first analyze human nature, and I needn't remind you that *that* is a task very far from simple. "Man" sounds a very simple predicate, as you utter it; you imagine that you understand its significance perfectly well, but when you begin to refine a little, and to bring in distinctions, and to carry propositions to their legitimate bounds, you find that you have undertaken the definition of that which is essentially indefinite and probably indefinable. And, after all, we need not pitch on this term or on that, there is no need to select "man" as offering any especial difficulty, for, I take it, that the truth is that all human knowledge is subject to the same disadvantage, the same doubts and reservations. *Omnia exeunt in mysterium* was an old scholastic maxim; and the only people who have always a plain answer for a plain question are the pseudo-scientists, the people who think that one can solve the enigma of the universe with a box of chemicals.

But all this is a caution — necessary I suppose — that you need not expect me to give you a plain, cut and dried answer to your question whether literature is a conscious production — or, in more particular form — was Dickens aware that by milk-punch he meant ecstasy? I shall "ask you another" in the approved Scotch manner. You were telling me that as you came along this evening you had to stop for five minutes at the corner of the Caledonian Road to watch the exquisite grace of two slum-girls of fourteen or fifteen, dancing to the rattling tune of a piano-organ. You spoke of the charm of their movements — *motus Ionici*, some of them, I fear — of the purely æsthetic delight there was in the sight of young girls, disguised as horrible little slatterns, leaping and dancing as young girls have always leapt and danced, I suppose, from the time of the cave-dwellers onwards. Well, but do you suppose that this charm you have remarked was conscious? Do you think that Harriet and Emily realised that they were of the kin of the ecstatic dancers of all time, that they were beautiful because they were naturally expressing by a symbol that is universal, the universal and eternal ecstasy of life? Look back in your memory for illustrations; I, as you know, am rather the enemy of facts, and it is rarely that I am able to support a theory by a systematic *catena* of instances and authorities. But, if one had the industry and energy, one might make a most curious history of the dance. Remember the Hebrew dances of religious joy, of ecstasy in its highest form, remember that strange survival of the choristers' dance before the high altar in Spain on certain solemn feasts, a survival which has persisted in spite of the strong Roman influences which make for rigid uniformity. Think of the Greek Menads and Bacchantes, of the Dionysiac chorus in the theatre, of our old English peasants "treading the mazes," and dancing round the maypole, of dances at Breton *Pardons*, of the fairies, supposed to dance in the forest glade beneath the moon. Why, dancing is as much an expression of the human secret as literature itself, and I expect it is even more ancient; and Harriet and Emily, leaping on the pavement, to that jingling, clattering tune, were merely showing that though they were the children of the slum, and the step-children of the School Board, they were yet human, and partakers of the universal sacrament.

But if you ask, were they conscious of all this, it will be very difficult to give a direct answer. I need hardly say that they could not have put their very real emotion into the terms I have used — nor perhaps into any terms at all — and yet they know the delight of what they do, as much as if they had been initiated in all the mysteries. If someone with the genius of Socrates for propounding searching questions could "corner" Harriet and

Emily, and face and overcome that preliminary, inevitable “garn,” it is possible that he might find that they were fully conscious of the reasons why they danced and delighted in dancing; just as Socrates demonstrated to the slave that he was perfectly acquainted with geometry; but failing a Socrates, and using words in their usual senses, I suppose we must say that they are not conscious. They dance and leap without calculation, as they eat and drink, and as birds sing in springtime; and very much the same answer must be given to the similar question as to literature.

I said that to answer the riddle fully and completely, one would have to make an analysis of human nature; and, in truth, the problem is simply a problem of the consciousness and subconsciousness, and of the action and interaction between the two. I will not be too dogmatic. We are in misty, uncertain and unexplored regions, and it is impossible to chart all the cities and mountains and streams, and fix with the nicety of the ordnance survey their several places on the map — but I am strangely inclined to think that all the quintessence of art is distilled from the subconscious and not from the conscious self; or, in other words, that the artificer seldom or never understands the ends and designs and spirit of the artist. Our literary architects have all, I think, builded better than they knew, and very often, I expect, the draughtsman who sees the triumph and enjoys it in his manner, takes all the credit to himself, and ludicrously imagines that it is his careful drawing and amplification of the sketch, and following the scale, that have created the high and holy house of God. There is a queer instance of what I mean in Dickens’s preface to the later editions of “Pickwick” — I put the book up on a high shelf the other day, and I can’t be bothered getting it down and verifying the quotation — but I believe the author, after telling us that the original design was to give opportunities to the etcher Seymour, goes on to recapitulate, as it were, the achievements of the book, and his list of triumphs is much more amusing than any list in Rabelais. The law of imprisonment for debt has been altered! Fleet Prison has been pulled down! The School-Board is coming! Lawyers’ clerks have nicer manners! Parliamentary elections are a little better, but they might be better still! and one wonders that he does not announce that, in consequence of the publication of “Pickwick,” medical students have given up brandy for barley-water. It is evident, you see, that Dickens thought (or thought that he thought, for it is very difficult to be exact) that his masterpiece of the *picaresque*, his epitome of Pantagruelism, was written to correct abuses, and looking back, many years after its publication, he congratulates himself that most of these abuses have been corrected, and (one can almost hear him say) *ergo*, it is a very fine book. He was impelled to write this nonsense of the preface because he was, by comparison, "educated"; Harriet, the dancer, would probably tell you, if you succeeded in penetrating beyond "garn," that she danced because she liked it; but, granting that the poisoning process had been carried out more successfully in the case of Emily, she might, conceivably, reply that she danced "becos it's 'elthy, and Teacher says as 'ow it cirkilates the blood." Emily, you see, obtained the prize for Physiology, as well as for French and the Piano-Forte; she is thus enabled to give "reasons," and they are quite as valuable as the "reasons" of Dickens, explaining the merits of "Pickwick." You know that pompous old fool Forster, who took in Dickens at times, sniffed a little at "Pickwick," and thought the later books, with their ingenious plots, and floods of maudlin tears, and portentous "character-drawing," immense advances, and I suppose the master felt obliged to justify himself for that first enterprise — to show that he had not really been inspired, but had written a useful tract! You remember he "explains" Stiggins; he warns you not to be under any misconceptions, not to suppose that Stiggins satirises a, b, or c, since he is only aimed at x, y, and z. Can you conceive that a mediæval artist in gurgoyles, having perfected for our eternal joy, a splendid grinning creature, lurking on the parapet, and having endowed him, greatly to our oblectation, with the tail of a dragon, the body of a dog, the feet of an eagle, the head of a bull in hysterics, with a Franciscan cowl, by way of finish, should afterwards explain that no offence was intended to Father Ambrose, the prior over the way?

So it seems fairly plain, doesn't it, that in the case of Dickens, at all events, there was no very clear consciousness of what had been achieved, and I believe that you would find the rule hold good with other artists in a greater or less degree. With Dickens it holds in a very high degree, just because there was that tremendous gulf I have so often spoken about between his inward and his outward self; because, with the soul of rare genius, his intelligence lived in those dreary, dusty London streets, because the artificer, even while he carried out the artist's commands, understood very little what he was doing. But one can trace the same working in other cases. Take the case of Mr Hardy, for instance. You remember what I said about his "Two on a Tower"; I praised it for its ecstatic passion, for that revelation of a great rapture, for its symbolism, showing how one must withdraw from the common ways, from the dusty highroad and the swarming street, and go apart into high, lonely places, if one would perceive the high, eternal mysteries. I did not say so in so many words, but you no doubt saw that I was indicating that which is, in my opinion, valuable in Mr Hardy's work, that which makes his books literature. And I am sure he would most decidedly and entirely disagree with me, and if you want to know why I am sure, I refer you to his later books, to his "Tess" and "Jude." You know how the "Tess" was talked about, how it remade the author from the commercial standpoint, simply because it contained, with many beautiful things, many absurd "preachments," much pseudo-philosophy of a kind suited to the intelligence of persons who think that "Robert Elsmere" is literature. If Mr Hardy had been a conscious artist, if he had understood, I mean, what makes the charm and the wonder of "Two on a Tower," he could never have adulterated the tale of "Tess" with a free-thinking tract, he would never have turned "Jude" into a long pamphlet on secondary education for farm labourers, with agnostic notes. It is pathetic in the latter book amidst much weary and futile writing to come across a passage here and there that shows the artist striving for utterance, longing to sing us his incantations, in spite of the preacher, who howls him down. Think of that distant vision of Oxford from the lonely field, of all those clustering roofs and spires, wet with rain, suddenly kindling into glancing, and scintillant fire, at the sunset; and then remember, with what sorrow, that this is but an oasis in a barren land of blundering argument. It is almost as if literature had become "literature" — the "literature of the subject" — and one must only rejoice that the artist still lives even if the enemy has shut him up in prison. You can trace the struggle all through the book: "Sue" was an artistic conception, a very curious but a very beautiful revelation of some strange elements in the nature and in the love of women; but how difficult it is to detect this — the real Sue — underneath the surface, which makes Sue seem the prophetess of the "Woman Question," or whatever the contemporary twaddle on the subject was called. Conceive the "Odyssey" so handled that it seems like a volume in a "technical series" dealing with "Seamanship and Navigation," think what might have happened if the Rabelais who had been put in the dark cell of Fontenay-le-Comte had completely gained the upper hand, and had silenced that other Rabelais — that solitary and rapturous soul who had seen as in a glass the marvellous face of man. Well, the five books of the “Pantagruel” would have conveyed to us, no doubt with some eloquence and vigour, the highly unimportant fact that François Rabelais, runaway Franciscan friar, did not like Franciscan friars; and now that the centuries have gone by we see how (comparatively) worthless such a book as that would have been. Fortunately Pantagruel was too strong for the forces of Panurge and Frère Jean combined, and so they have been able to do little harm to the book.

And how one wishes that it might be so with Mr Hardy! It is not as if he had no “body” for his conceptions; his studies of peasant folk do very well as backgrounds for his dramas, though, of course, his work in this way, good as it is, is not his element of real value. But it is inoffensive always, sometimes amusing, and it might well suffice him in his more material moments, when he feels the necessity of descending from the solitary heights into the pleasant, populous valleys and villages of common life. But his true work is — as it is the work of all artists — the shaping for us of ecstasy by means of symbols; and for him the symbol which he understands is, no doubt, the passion of love, and with it the symbol of red, lonely ploughlands, of deep overshadowed lanes that climb the hills and wander into lands that we know not, of dark woods that hide a secret, of strange, immemorial barrows where one may have communion with the souls of the dead. The passion of love, the passion of the hills — no artist could desire more exquisite or significant symbols than these, nor need he seek for more beautiful forms for the expression of the perfect beauty. And Mr Hardy has chosen to be a pamphleteer, to voice for us our poor, ignorant contemporary chatter: it is as if an angel’s pen were to be occupied in inditing “Society Small Talk!”

But it proves the unconsciousness of Mr Hardy’s art; and here, by the way, I am moved to revert to the case of Rabelais. How far, you may ask, was he conscious of what he was saying, and I see you remember that passage I quoted from the last book — the splendid declaration of the Priestess Bacbuc that “by wine is man made divine.” That passage, and indeed many other passages in the final chapters, would seem to show that the author had worked consciously, and I certainly think the point worth our consideration. You will remember that I stated my rule without bigotry; I rather proposed it as a pious opinion — to the effect that in literature the finest things are not designed. And I confess, that at first sight, this matter of Bacbuc and her allocution looks rather like an exception to the rule, a proof that Rabelais, at all events, understood clearly what he was doing.

Well; it may have been so; for Rabelais was, as I think I have shown, a very exceptional man, whom it would be difficult to place in any class. But I hardly think this *is* an instance of the proverbial (and fallacious) exception that proves the rule. In the first place I believe that some French editors have grave doubts whether Rabelais wrote the fifth book at all; but I am not inclined to press this point. *My* point is that the allocution of Bacbuc and all those chapters which describe the Oracle of the Holy Bottle are the last in the book — the last words of the author; and I am in no way concerned to defend the position that an author must always remain unconscious of the work that he has done. As a matter of fact I think that always, or almost always, he is unconscious while he is writing; but I see no reason why the revelation may not come to him afterwards, especially in such a case as the “Pantagruel,” which was the affair of many years — of a lifetime, indeed. In the beginning of production, in the youth, the springtime of artistic work, the creative influence prevails, and this, it seems to me, always or almost always operates secretly; but in later years the critical spirit is apt to assert itself, and this will lead, very naturally, to the artist’s understanding more plainly the nature of his accomplishment. Rabelais had a long, wonderful career; his life was full of incident, of violent breaks, and his books were produced at intervals, and it seems to me very possible that, towards the end, he may have reflected on what he had done, and have understood in part, at all events, the sense of the amazing message that he had delivered. This, I think, is the explanation of the “Holy Bottle” chapters, and you will note that, admirable as criticism, they are inferior as art to those astounding early pages where there is no hint of conscious workmanship, but rather evidence of a man for whom the world has been transformed, who has been visited by an astounding vision. He takes an old, popular story about a giant, he takes the vine that flourishes in his native Chinonnais, he takes the New Learning that seems to him like the New Wine, he takes the gross tale of the farmhouse and the tavern, the rank speech of the people, and with these elements, with these “facts,” he symbolises the revelation that he has received. He writes, he writes on, he writes madly, and every line is written in a fury of delight; but, I think I may say, there is at the moment of writing, no conscious apperception of all that that torrent of words conveys and implies. *That* may well come later; one may well begin with legend:

"Grandgousier was a good drinker," and end with the interpretation: "All truth and every philosophy is contained in wine"; but I believe that if Rabelais had perceived this at the beginning he would have been not an artist but a philosopher.

Well; if you are content with this comment on Bacbuc, I should like to give you a very curious instance of our own day, in which the unconscious artist has been subdued by the conscious preacher. You remember those very notable books: "Keynotes" and "Discords"? I have not seen them for some time, so I am afraid my criticism will be very loose and general, but I think that the two volumes mark very well the fatal descent from the higher to the lower ground. In the first, it seems to me, there is a somewhat slight, but very genuine, note of ecstasy; I mean that you can collect a certain distinct image of real womanhood — not the laboured, foolish, inane psychology of Mr Meredith and those who work with him — not the analysis of the surface, of the "society" woman, belonging to a particular grade, and a particular period, but of the very woman who remains really the same in all social grades and in all ages. I remember thinking when I read "Keynotes" that it was a "lonely" book; it hinted, I think, a soul apart, and afar from the secondary, tertiary problems of an organised civilisation, and though there was an undertone of "preaching" and arguing, the total impression was curiously and beautifully artistic. I found, if I remember rightly, that subordination of the accidental to the essential that I praised in "Two in a Tower," and I am the more convinced that this is so by my own recollections. I have forgotten all about social conditions, if any such things are indicated; I only think of women and of men, of the true, inalterable human nature; and here, it seems to me, you have a very high achievement. But the next volume "Discords" took distinctly lower ground. The artifice was better, the stories, as stories, were told with more skill and more deftness than anything in "Keynotes"; but there was no more literature; there was only the "literature of the subject." The incidents were no longer symbols of an emotion; they had become the basis of an agitation, concerning which my curiosity never led me to inquire further: and there you see another proof of the unconsciousness of art. If the author of "Keynotes" had understood her achievement "Discords" would never have been written. One might continue the *catena* almost *ad infinitum*: would not Wordsworth, supposing him to have been a conscious artist, have rather cut off his right hand than have suffered such a *magisterium* as the "Ode on

Intimations of Immortality” to have the companionship of the enormous mass of futility and stupidity which constitutes the greater part of the “Complete Works”?

Well, there is the evidence that must guide us in answering the question you propounded, and it shows, conclusively enough, I think, that art is not, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, a conscious product. Perhaps it would be a perilous dogmatism, on the other hand, to definitely pronounce it to be unconscious; and I expect we had better take refuge in the subconscious, that convenient name for the transcendental element in human nature. For myself, I like best my old figure of the Shadowy Companion, the invisible attendant who walks all the way beside us, though his feet are in the Other World; and I think that it is he who whispers to us his ineffable secrets, which we clumsily endeavour to set down in mortal language. I think that while the artist works he is conscious of joy and of nothing more; he works beautifully but he could give no *rationale* of the process, and when he endeavours to explain himself, we are often perplexed by this strange spectacle of a man wholly ignorant of his own creation. Consider again the grotesqueness of that preface to “Pickwick”; it is really as if a great sculptor, congratulated on his achievement, should answer that his Venus was indeed beautiful — because it tended to improve the marble industry and the general knowledge of anatomy.

And after all the conclusion does return to us from other than literary sources. You cannot conceive a builder of the fourteenth century hesitating as to the respective merits of Romanesque, Norman, First and Second Pointed; to him there was only one possible method, and he built, as he spoke, without calculation and without conscious effort, only knowing the joy of his work. So indeed we all speak and live when we are not bound by convention and acquired usages and manners, and you see that art, properly so called, takes its place in the great scheme of things; it is no studied contortion, no strange trick acquired by the late ingenuity of man, but as “natural” (and as supernatural) as the blossoming of a flower, and the singing of the nightingale. Art, indeed, is wholly natural, artifice is more or less acquired, the creature of reason, of experiment, of systematised intelligence. It is doubtful, I suppose, whether the natural, untaught man has of himself, by endowment, any artifice at all; doubtful, perhaps, whether, in the beginning, his artifice was not the product of his art; whether he did not learn to speak with artifice because he had received from nature the art of singing; certainly the child, entering the world, has not the inborn artifice of the swallow and the bee. This artifice, it seems, man has been forced to acquire by slow and painful degrees, and perhaps it only differs from the artifice of animals in that it has been aided and reinforced by imagination, that is by art, that is by the power the human soul possesses of projecting itself into the unknown, and adventuring in the realm of nothingness. Man, I mean, could never have invented the telephone, had he not first created it, had he not conceived the possibility of its existence, when as yet, it was non-existent, and so his artifice will always be progressive, and distinguished from the artifice of animals.

But art is born with man, and is of the essence, the very differentia of man. It is of his very inmost being, and therefore, I suppose, is removed from his consciousness simply because it is within and not from without. You may say that I have been vague, that I have not solved the problem I propounded, that I have not clearly explained whether the Greeks knew what they did when they worshipped Dionysus, whether Rabelais was conscious of an inner meaning in his praise of wine, whether Dickens understood the value of his punch and brandy. But if I have been vague it is because man, in the last analysis, is a tremendous mystery, because he is a complex being, because he is at once Pantagruel, and Panurge, and Frère Jean, because he is both Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. In some cases Pantagruel and Panurge seem to speak a common language, to be able to communicate the one with the other: if Rabelais wrote the "Dive Bouteille" chapters, he certainly understood much of that which he had expressed in symbols. Sometimes the two seem like foreigners in one home, Pantagruel dictates, and Panurge the scribe writes down his words, hardly or not at all comprehending the magic symbols that he expresses. So Dickens ludicrously misinterprets his own "Pickwick." And, doubtless, this understanding of the artificer of the artist varies in an almost infinite chain of *nuances*: there have been artists, perhaps, who have worked like men under the influence of haschish, who have opened their mouths and prophesied, and then recovering from the possession, have sat up and stared, and asked where they were, and what they had been doing. Indeed, it may be that this was the condition of the working of art in the very dawn of human life, for this, no doubt, is the explanation of that old equation in which bards, magicians, seers, prophets, and madmen ranked all together as men who spoke and worked miracles, things unintelligible to the "common sense," to the understanding which regulates and arranges the affairs of the common life. All these were alike men of the mountains, men who withdrew from the camp, and went apart into high solitary places, into the lonely wilderness, into the forest, and in such retirements and cells they uttered the voices that came to them, speaking words that were unintelligible to themselves.

On the other hand there may have been artists in whom the two persons have been happily reconciled, who have not only the "gift of tongues" but also the gift of the interpretation of tongues. Even these, I think, are always "possessed," ecstatic, rapt from their common nature at the moment of inspiration, but afterwards, when the magic song is done, they awake and return and remember, and understand, in a measure at least, the meaning of their prophecies. They never wholly understand, they are never able to express in rational terms the *whole* force of the message, for the good reason that the language of the soul infinitely transcends the language of the understanding; because art is, indeed, the sole channel by which the highest and purest truth can reach us. You may, perhaps, succeed in giving a Boer "some notion" of a Greek chorus through the medium of the "Taal," but it would be vain to dream of translating almost perfect beauty into that poor medium, framed for the temporary and corporal necessities of rough and illiterate farmers. And so, however well an artist or those who appreciate his work may "understand" his meaning, they do but "understand" a little; since the tongue of art has many words which have no rendering in the speech of the understanding.

Here, then, is another form of our text which enables us to separate art from artifice, literature from reading matter. Artifice is explicable; you remember that someone has said Thackeray was simply the ordinary clubman *plus* genius and a style. We must correct his phrases: but if you substitute an "immense talent of observation" for genius, and a "great gift of expression" for style, I think the definition admirable. Thackeray, in short, is the clubman of heightened faculties; he differs not in quiddity but in quality and quantity from his neighbour at the window; he looks more closely than Tom Eaves, and he can give you the result of his inspection in better phrases and with a better system, but he looks at the same things from the same standpoint, and you and I can admire his work and be amused and delighted by it, but we have no sense of miracle, of transcendent vision and achievement. We simply see a man who does the things that we do, but does them with a far greater dexterity: you may watch an acrobat with an immense admiration, but you recognise that you, too, are potentially an acrobat, that with a little training you, too, could hang by the heels, though not with such grace, nor for so long a time.

But art is always miraculous. In its origin, in its working, in its results it is beyond and above explanation, and the artist’s unconsciousness is only one phase of its infinite mysteries.

VI

I AM AFRAID that at our last conversation I rather spoke to you "as if you were a public meeting." Not precisely in that manner, perhaps, since no public meeting that I can imagine would have stood me for a moment, but I fear that I was what is called "high-flown." And yet how can one avoid that reproach? Look here: let us suppose an examination paper, and the following questions set.

1. Explain, in rational terms, the "Quest of the Holy Graal." State whether in your opinion such a vessel ever existed, and if you think it did not, justify your pleasure in reading the account of the search for it.

2. Explain, logically, your delight in colour. State, in terms that Voltaire would have understood, the meaning of the phrase, "the beauty of line."

3. What do you mean by the word "music"? Give the rational explanation of Bach's Fugues, showing them to be as (1) true as Biology and (2) useful as Applied Mechanics.

4. Estimate the value of Westminster Abbey in the Avoirdupois measure.

5. "The light that never was on land or sea." What light?

6. "Faery lands forlorn." Draw a map of the district in question, putting in principal towns, and naming exports.

7. Show that, "heaven lies about us in our infancy" must mean "wholesome maternal influences surround us in our childhood."

You say that is all nonsense? that one cannot express art of any kind in the terms of rationalism? Well, I agree with you that it *is* nonsense; that the tables of weights and measures give no æsthetic guide to the value of Westminster Abbey; but if we agree on this I am afraid that we must be content to be called high-flown. Having once for all settled that "common sense" has nothing to do with literary art, we must be, I suppose, uncommon, and (apparently) nonsensical if we want to talk about it to any profit. That is what it comes to, after all. If literature be a kind of dignified reporting, in which the reporter is at liberty to invent some incidents and leave out others, and to arrange all in the order that pleases him best; then, let us have as much "common sense" and "rationalism" as you please, and the more the better; but if literature is a mysterious ecstasy, the withdrawal from all common and ordinary conditions — well, I suppose, we had better be mystics when we discuss the subject, and frankly confess that with its first principles logic has nothing to do. I suppose that there are only two parties in the world: the Rationalists and the Mystics, and one's vote on literature goes with one's party. One might leave the matter there, and amiably agree to differ with the other side, but I, personally, have the ferocity to insist, that my side, the mystical, is wholly right, and the other, the rationalist, wholly wrong, and moreover I shall be so indecent as to prove the truth of my position. But, I have done so, and with that "Examination Paper" I just read out to you. For if rationalism be the truth, then all literature, all that both sides agree in thinking the finest literature is simple lunacy, and all the world of the arts must go into the region of mania. Take the lowest, the simplest instance. Here is a knife with a wooden handle, and the handle has certain curious carved designs on it, which do *not* enable it to be held better. Why is this knife better, more to be valued, than that other knife, which is not decorated at all? It does not cut better; it does not justify its existence and purpose as a knife more than the other; where is its superiority? Because I find pleasure in seeing those designs? But *why* do I find any pleasure in ornament? What is the rationalistic justification for that pleasure? By logical definition a knife is an instrument for cutting, and nothing else; the plain cuts as well as the ornate; *why* then are you sorry if you lose the one, while you don't care twopence for the loss of the other? You have at last to answer that you have a joy which you cannot in any way define in the purely decorative pattern; and with that answer the whole system of rationalism topples over. Rationalism may say to you: Either give a definite reason for going to Mass, or leave off going. You have only to answer: Your command is based on the premiss that one should do nothing without being able to give a definite reason for it. But I can give no definite reason for liking — the Odyssey or a curiously carved knife — and yet you confess that I am right in liking these things. Then I have proved the contradictory of your premiss, as you have admitted that there are things that one may do without being able to give a definite reason for doing them: *ergo*, I shall not neglect the "parson's bell."

Of course, all this is altogether outside of my business; but I confess I am fond of carrying things to their limits. You remember how poor S. T. C. used to talk, humbly and yet proudly, of "my system," though I am afraid "my system," never emerged from the state of fragments and *disjecta membra*. And I too, though I have only broken morsels and ruinous stones to show for the splendid outlines and indicated arches of Coleridge, still like to follow up an argument whithersoever it will lead me, regardless of consequences; and this, I am sure, should count for righteousness with our friends the rationalists. I love to start a *sorites*, something as follows: I admire that odd but beautiful little decorative scheme on the seventeenth century chest, and therefore, I think poetry, as poetry, finer than prose, as prose. Hence I approve of "Ritualism" in the service of the church, and from the same premiss I draw the conclusion that Keats was a poet and that Pope was not. Pope not being a poet, it follows that to "intone" is in every way better than to "read" the Liturgy and the Offices, and "reading" the service being wrong, you will easily infer that I dislike Mr Frith's pictures. And after learning that I do not care for the "Derby Day," you will scarcely require my opinion as to the (theoretical) righteousness of the first Reform Bill, and from my attitude towards Lord John Russell's measure, you can, of course, guess my opinion on the respective merits of the French and English languages as literary instruments. And French being vastly inferior to English, it necessarily follows that the English Reformation was a great (though perhaps unavoidable) misfortune. Hence, you see, admiring certain lines cut in an old oaken box, I am led by the strictest logic to dislike the religious policy of Edward VI., with all the other consequences in order; and on the other hand if I saw no sense in that rude ornament I should be an Atheist, or at the mildest, an attendant at Pleasant Sunday Afternoons, with George Eliot for my favourite reading.

Yes, I like my theories to "work through," and I confess that my belief in the truth of "my system" is very much strengthened by the fact that it does "work through," that it seems to me justified by the facts of life. I mean that the premiss which enables me to declare Keats to be a poet and Pope not to be a poet does really enable me to pronounce democracy to be a bad system in theory; and the premiss baldly stated is simply this: that logic does not cover life, or in other words, that life cannot be judged by the rules of logic, of common sense.

But yet I am using logic all the time, you say? Certainly, but I am using it in its right place, to do the work for which it is competent. If I say that a scythe is not exactly the instrument for performing a surgical operation, I am not therefore bound to have my meadow mown with a bistoury? A microscope is good and a telescope is good, but it is the microscope that one uses in bacteriology. You know, don't you, that ever since that unhappy Reformation of ours people have been talking nonsense about the Aristotelian logic, and fumbling, in the most grotesque manner, for some "new" logic. Our great false prophet Bacon (a wretch infinitely more guilty than Hobbes) began it in England with his "Novum Organum"; and if you wish to really estimate "educated" folly, to touch the bottom of the incredible depths to which a man of information may sink, read Macaulay's comparison of the "old" philosophy and the "new" philosophy. The essayist says that the "old" philosophy was no good, because it never led up to the steam-engine and the telegraph post. Isn't it almost humiliating to think that we have to acknowledge ourselves of the same genus as that "brilliant" Macaulay? But if I told you that the Greek Alphabet was no good because it has never grilled a single steak you would probably get uneasy and make for the door, and if you were charitable you would tell the landlady that I ought to be "taken care of." But such a remark as that is no whit more lunatic than Macaulay's "comparison" between philosophy, properly so called, and physical science applied to utilitarian purposes. Well, all the portentous stuff that has been written about logic is nonsense of exactly the same kind. The scholastic logic, people said, won't discover the truth. That is perfectly true, but then the scholastic logic was not intended to discover truth. It will draw conclusions from truths already discovered, from premisses granted, but it wont make premisses any more than a scythe will make grass. And, it is, curiously enough, the very class of people who despise the formal logic, who insist on your giving logical reasons for actions and emotions which are altogether outside the jurisdiction of logic. With one breath they say: Aristotle is useless, because the "Organon" could never have led men to discover the stomach-pump; and with the next breath they ask you what you mean by admiring the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" if you can't give any logical reason for your admiration. Your religion doesn't rest on a logical foundation, they say. But does anything of any consequence rest on a logical foundation? Can you reduce the "Morte d'Arthur" into valid syllogisms in *Barbara*, can you "disprove" Salisbury

Cathedral by the aid of *Celarent*. What is the "rational" explanation of our wonder and joy at the vision of the hills? Are a great symphony, the swell and triumph of the organ, the voices of the choristers, to be tested by the process of the understanding? But perhaps I am misjudging the people who ask these questions. When they say that logic does not discover truth, they doubtless mean by logic that formal analysis of the ratiocinative process that is rightly so called; but I am inclined to think that when they condemn religious or artistic emotions because they are "illogical," they mean by "illogical" that which does not conduce to the ease and comfort of the digestive apparatus or the money-making faculty. They are terrible fellows, you know, some of these persons. For example, I asked, with a tone of undue triumph, I am afraid, for the "reason why" we experience awe and delight in the presence of the hills. But in certain quarters my problem would be very quickly solved. I should be told, more in sorrow than in anger, that my emotion at the sight of certain shapes of earth was due to the fact that hill air was highly ozonised, and that the human race had acquired an instinctive pleasure in breathing it, greatly to its digestive profit. And if I tried to turn the tables by declaring that I experienced an equal, though a different delight in the spectacle of a desolate, smoking marsh, where a red sun sinks from a world of shivering reeds, I suppose I should hear that some remote ancestor of mine had found in some such place "pterodactyls plentiful and strong on the wing." And if I like the woods, it was because a monkey sat at the root of my family tree, and if I love an ancient garden it is because I am "second cousin to the worm."

There: I confess it is difficult to keep one's temper with these people, but one must try to do so. Do you remember how Trunnion's marriage was delayed? The bridegroom set out bravely with his retinue for the parish-church, where the bride waited a whole half hour — in vain. A messenger was sent who saw:

"The whole troop disposed in a long field, crossing the road obliquely, and headed by the bridegroom and his friend Hatchway, who finding himself hindered by a hedge from proceeding farther in the same direction, fired a pistol and stood over to the other side, making an obtuse angle with the line of his former course; and the rest of the squadron followed his example, keeping always in the rear of each other like a flight of wild geese.

“Surprised at this strange method of journeying, the messenger came up … and desired he would proceed with more expedition. To this message Mr Trunnion replied, ‘Hark ye, brother, don’t you see we make all possible speed? Go back, and tell those who sent you, that the wind has shifted since we weighed anchor, and that we are obliged to make short trips in tacking, by reason of the narrowness of the channel; and that, as we lie within six points of the wind, they must make some allowance for variation and leeway.’ ‘Lord, sir!’ said the valet, ‘what occasion have you to go zig-zag in that manner? Do but clap spurs to your horses, and ride straight forward, and I’ll engage you shall be at the church porch in less than a quarter of an hour.’ ‘What! right in the wind’s eye?’ answered the commander. ‘Ahey! brother, where did you learn your navigation?’”

You see Commodore Trunnion’s “logic” was perfect, only it was the logic of seamanship and not of riding to church on horseback. There are a good many people at the present day who are quite unable to get to church in time, for “reasons” as valid as Trunnion’s; and when I hear of “the scientific basis of literature” I am always a little reminded of those scarecrows straggling in short tacks from one side of the lane to the other on their way to the wedding. The moral is, you know, that they didn’t get there.

I tackled a materialist once on very similar lines. He began by saying that time and thought devoted to religion (they never see that art and religion stand or fall together, religion being the foundation of the fine arts) were an utter waste of time as they only diverted us from consideration of the present world, which we ought to study to the utmost; and he went on to praise some saying of Confucius on the folly of troubling about the future things. Then I went for him. He had to admit that agriculture is good, and I pointed out to him that England was changed from a savage wilderness into a pleasant garden by the monastic houses. He agreed that to found and endow hospitals and alms-houses was not precisely a waste of time, and I showed him that such institutions were begun by the religion of the past and carried on by the religion of the present. Then he allowed, in response to my Socratic question, that painting was something, and I demonstrated that all painting arose from the religious impulse, that the greatest paintings in the world were meant to adorn churches. Then he admitted the value of architecture, and he got the Parthenon, all the mediæval cathedrals, and the wonderful mound temples of Ceylon right at his head. He granted me that travel civilised, and I rubbed in the pilgrimage; he confessed that he liked to read the Latin and Greek classics — sometimes — and he received from me information as to the monastic scriptorium, and its part in the preservation of the old literature. As for the blessedness of forming one's character on the teaching of Confucius; there happened to be an article in the morning's paper on the Mandarin class! Well, my rationalist hadn't anything to say to it at all, with the exception of some vague remark that the Romans made roads, which, considering the state of England in the sixth century, was about as helpful as the somewhat similar remark of Mr F's. Aunt — that there are milestones on the Dover Road. I told him that the only Roman civilisation which contributed to the making of our country was that brought over by St Austin; and he had to allow that his statement that religion was a waste of time, an elaborate form of idleness, was, to put it mildly, not proven. Then he said kindly but firmly that religion wasn't rational, and I used up most of the arguments that I have used to-night; I mean, I showed him that it is good to paint pictures, to write poems, to devise romances, and to compose symphonies, and that it is also good to meditate and enjoy all these things. Hence, he was forced to admit, that his suppressed premiss had been disproved, and that he must no longer say: "that which is not rational is absurd."

And then, I think, the fun really began. I carried the war into the very camp of the enemy; that is, into actual, observable life, into the every day world of fact and experience. You talk about "reason," I said, and I presume you won't mind if I substitute, occasionally, "common sense" for reason, as I think that in your phraseology the two terms are very fairly equated. Very well, then, don't you think that there is a good deal of common sense in many of the actions of animals? Take the case of the small birds who mob an owl all day, in order that their enemy may be kept awake, and so unable to hoot at night. Take the case of the ants, who milk the aphides, and go slave-hunting. Take the bees, who rise to an emergency, and remedy, with singular contrivance, the threatened lack of a queen. Take the dog, who brought a wounded fellow to the hospital where he had been cured. All these are instances of common sense, aren't they, as rational as the telegram "Sell Cobras at once"? Very good; animals, then, have a plentiful supply of reason, and not of a mere mechanical reason, but of reason that can rise to the height of unforeseen cases, and remedy unexpected evils. When the experimenter tilted the bees' house to one side, so that the equilibrium was in danger, a sufficient number of bees climbed up, and placed themselves on the other side so that they constituted a balance; here there was no mechanism, but a calculated and rational contrivance. Animals, then, have reason and its effect artifice; the adaptation of means to secure ends. But, then, how about instinct? By what motion does the swallow make her nest in spring? Can the bee demonstrate the advantages of the hexagon cell? Does the fly, laying its eggs, here and there, in this or in that according to its kind, in meat or in dung, or in the crevices of a wall, rationally foresee that it is providing for the future grub its only possible food? No; but then animals, even, perform "irrational" actions; though they have common sense they do things which must be troublesome to them, at some instance, which is not common sense. But if a bluebottle lays her eggs in my beef, and knows not why, perhaps I, a man, may sing the *Sanctus*, and pray that I may be joined *cum angelis et archangelis, cum thronis et dominationbus, Cumque omni militiâ cælestis exercitus*.

And consider our own human life; the great *coups* of war, commerce, diplomacy, of all the conduct of life, are often, or usually, the result of "intuitions," that is of irrational and inexplicable mental processes, which elude all analysis. If the knowledge, the successful and triumphant knowledge of men and affairs and strategy were a "rational" product; then, indeed, Carlyle's dictum were true, and each one of us were, at choice, a man of genius in diplomacy, or business, or battle. We know that it is not so, and that no man by taking thought can make himself, say, a Stonewall Jackson. And we have all heard of the "woman's reason"— "I don't know why I am sure that x = a, but I am sure" — and this extremely irrational process often corresponds with the truth. So, I finished up, your "reason" far from being the despot of the world, turns out to be a humble, though useful, deputy-assistant councillor-general, and is by no means a prerogative force, even in affairs of common, everyday existence. Why, "reason," alone and unassisted, won't enable you to make a decent living by selling ribbons and laces, and you have been trying to make me accept its dictation in the highest affairs of the soul. You have been appealing from the King's Majesty in Council to the Magistrates of Little Pedlington in Petty Sessions assembled!

Then my rationalist made a point. You know, he said, that some men seem to have an almost miraculous skill in solving mathematical problems:

would you, therefore, give up teaching the ordinary arithmetic? I was not alarmed; I pointed out that the analogy was not quite perfect. The case, I said, was this. A certain number of "problems" were, confessedly, beyond the jurisdiction of the "ordinary arithmetic" altogether, but offered no difficulties to the "lightning calculator," who obtained results that were demonstratively correct, and I therefore thought it well to trust to him in all problems of a similar character, even though the "ordinary arithmetic," confessedly incompetent, assured me that his answers were wholly unreliable — a case of a schoolboy, well on in Colenso, scouting the Binomial Theorem because one couldn't prove it by Practice or the Rule of Three. I left then, unanswered, and I suppose my friend passed the rest of the evening in showing that Salisbury Cathedral was "opposed" to the facts of Biology, and that Sisters of Charity are to be classed with criminal lunatics.

But, you know, I was the real lunatic. You would not have "argued" with me if I *had* disparaged the Greek alphabet, because it never grilled a single steak; I hinted the course you would probably have pursued if I had chanced to make such an alarming remark. And why should I argue with the sect of Macaulay, with the tribe which utters such stuff as this:

"Assuredly if the tree which Socrates planted and Plato watered is to be judged of by its flowers and leaves, it is the noblest of trees. But if we take the homely test of Bacon — if we judge the tree by its *fruits* — our opinion of it may be less favourable. When we sum up the useful truths which we owe to that philosophy, to what do they amount…. But when we look for something more — for something which adds to the comfort or alleviates the calamities of the human race — we are forced to own ourselves disappointed."

No; there is, really, nothing to be said. If the Learned Pig found voice and articulate speech and expressed his scorn of the poet's art, since it added nothing to the pleasures of the wash-tub, we might wonder but we should not argue; and it were idle to contend with a Laughing Jackass, contemptuously amused by the chanting of the cathedral choir.

And, perhaps, you are wondering what all this talk of mine has to do with our main subject — literature? But don't you see that all the while I have merely been reiterating our old conclusions in a new phraseology? I may have appeared to you to be the last of the Cavaliers, gallantly contending for the rights of Holy Church, but, in reality, I have been showing, at every step, that Jane Austen's works are not literature. Yes, but it is so. If the science of life, if philosophy, consisted of a series of mathematical propositions, capable of rational demonstration, then, "Pride and Prejudice" would be the highest pinnacle of the literary art; but if not, but oh! if we, being wondrous, journey through a wonderful world, if all our joys are from above, from the other world where the Shadowy Companion walks, then no mere making of the likeness of the external shape will be our art, no veracious document will be our truth; but to us, initiated, the Symbol will be offered, and we shall take the Sign and adore, beneath the outward and perhaps unlovely accidents, the very Presence and eternal indwelling of God.

We have tracked Ecstasy by many strange paths, in divers strange disguises, but I think that now, and only now, we have discovered its full and perfect definition. For Artifice is of Time, but Art is of Eternity.

APPENDIX

POE WAS NOT altogether right in saying that the object of poetry was Beauty as distinguished from Truth. I don’t for a moment suppose that his meaning was amiss, but I hardly like his expression of it. I should contend, on the other hand, that poetry κατ’ ἐξοχήν, and literature, generally, are the sole media by which the very highest truth can be conveyed. Poe, no doubt, meant to state a proposition which is true and self-evident — that poetry has nothing to do with scientific truth, or facts, or information of any kind, and I say that that proposition is self-evident, because we have already seen that in literature, facts as facts, have no existence at all. They are only “words” in the language of literary art, and are used as symbols of something else. That A. is in love with B. is a “scientific truth,” a fact; but if it be not also a symbol, it has no literary existence whatever; and this of course is what Poe wished to say — literature is not a matter of information.

But I doubt, after all, whether Poe had quite grasped the theory of literature, of all the arts. You remember that he says that he yields to no man in his love of the truth; and unless he meant the highest truth the statement is almost nonsensical. No one, I should imagine, surely not Poe, would express his enthusiasm for facts as facts, would adore correct information in the abstract. You remember what Rossetti said — that he neither knew nor cared whether the sun went round the earth or the earth round the sun — and so far as art is concerned this is, no doubt, the expression of the true faith, which, from what we know of Poe, would be his faith also. We should therefore conclude that by truth he meant philosophical truth, the highest truth, the essential truth as distinguished from the accidental, the universal as distinguished from the particular. Yet in the next breath he contrasts this Truth with Beauty, being clearly under the impression that they were two different things. Of course he was completely mistaken. In the last analysis it is entirely true that “Beauty is Truth and Truth Beauty”: they are one and the same entity seen from different points of view. You will see how this fits in with all we have been saying about literature lately: how we can if we please put our test of literature into yet another phraseology. For instance:

“Vanity Fair” is information, while “Pickwick” is Truth; the one tells you a number of facts about Becky Sharpe and other people, while the other symbolises certain eternal and essential elements in human nature by means of incidents. And, as I said, it is doubtful whether truth in this, its highest and its real significance, can be adequately expressed in any other way. All the profound verities which have been revealed to man have come to him under the guise of myths and symbols — such as the myth of Dionysus — and truth in the form of a mathematical demonstration or a “rational” statement is a contradiction in terms. Yet note the profound vice of language; we are obliged to use the same word to imply things which are separated by an immeasurable gulf. It is “true” that Mrs Stickings sent away Ethelberta to-night (you imparted that interesting fact, and I rely on your testimony), and the “Don Quixote” is “true”: that is, it conveys to us by means of symbols the verities of our own nature.

But Poe had not grasped the essential distinction between literature and “literature.” He thought that poetry alone should be beautiful, or as we should say, ecstatic; he did not see that the qualities which make poetry to be what it is must also be present in prose if it is to be something more than “reading-matter.” Poetry of course is literature in its purest state; it is, as I think I once said, *almost* the soul without the body; at its highest it is *almost* pure art unmixed with the alloy of artifice. And to carry on the analysis, the finest form of poetry is necessarily the lyrical. Where you get the element of narrative, you are apt also to get the element of prose; there have to be passages linking the raptures together, and these will, probably or indeed necessarily, run on lower levels.

Of course primitive man had moods in which rapture seemed to embrace everything, to invest every detail of existence with its own singular and inexplicable glory. A meal by the seashore, the dry wood flaming and crackling on the sand, the roasting goat’s flesh, the honey-sweet wine, dark and almost as glorious as the sea itself — a mere dinner of half-savages, one might think it, but it too seems to have its solemnity and its inner meaning. I believe this element in the early poetry has often been noticed; people have wondered at the *naïve* delight with which the writers describe the work of man’s hands, and they are, I think, inclined to account for it on the ground that then everything was new. This might pass, perhaps, since as you, no doubt, perceive, “everything new” means “everything unknown” (that which is known is no longer new), but I hardly think that the explanation can stand in its present form. I am not at all up in the theories which assign this or that age to the appearance of man on the earth, but I presume that on the gentlest and most antiquated computation man must have long known the world before Homer wrote; so one scarcely sees that human skill and art, the knack of making things and the gift of adorning them, could have been novelties, or in any sense, “things unknown.” I repeat I know nothing or next to nothing about these dates in anthropology, but one has heard something about the neolithic age, and the palæolithic age, about the very early man who scratched the rude likeness of a reindeer on the brute’s own bone, and so there hardly seems room for this theory of novelty. And besides, as we have seen, the rapture is universal or all but universal; it colours the whole of life, including the meal by the seashore; and there, we see, there was no possibility of invention or sense of newness. No; the theory is tempting, and it would fall in perfectly, as I daresay you see, with all that we have concluded about literature, but I really think that it must be definitely abandoned. No; it seems to me that primitive man, Homeric man, mediæval man, man, indeed, almost to our own day when the School Board (and other things) have got hold of him, had such an unconscious but all-pervading, all-influencing conviction that he was a wonderful being, descended of a wonderful ancestry, and surrounded by mysteries of all kinds, that even the smallest details of his life partook of the ruling ecstasy; he was so sure that he was miraculous that it seemed that no part of his life could escape from the miracle, so that to him every meal became a sacrament.

It is the attitude of the primitive man, of the real man, of the child, always and everywhere; it may be briefly summed up in the phrase: things are because they are wonderful. This, of course, is the atmosphere in which poets ought to live, and in which poetry should be produced. Formerly it was natural to all men or almost all; now, perhaps, it has to be regained by a conscious effort; and the difficulty of the effort, the impossibility of sustaining it for long, explain the supremacy of lyrical poetry. If you lived in a world that could regard a common meal as a sacrament, you could be supreme in narrative poetry; but, that atmosphere wanting, we have to be content for the most part with the lyric, with the simple incantation, without any description of the circumstance or occasion.

Yet prose, though it yields in much to the world, must still keep the same ideal before it as poetry. I say, distinctly, that the only essential, defining difference between the two is to be sought in the "numbering" of poetry, in the fact that art, in its intensest raptures, in its most truly "natural" moment, desires and obtains the strictest and most formal laws. It is, I suppose, immaterial what these laws are, rhyme, assonance, accents, feet, alliteration, all testify to the important and essential rule that freedom is chiefly free when it is most bound and bounded by restrictions which *we* should call artificial, which are, in truth, in the highest sense, natural. And this, I am sure, is the only possible distinction that can be established between such a book as the "Odyssey" and such a book as the "Morte d'Arthur." Neither is "prosaic" in the common sense of the word; each is "poetical"; but the Greek book is poetry because it is numbered, and the English is prose because it lacks number. Of course there are difficult cases; hybrids, as there always are, whatever laws one may lay down.

That word "natural" is another of the many traps that language sets us. I think that its real meaning has become almost reversed. Take the average man to church, and ask him his opinion of the "intoning," and in nine cases out of ten he will say that it may be pretty, but that it is very unnatural. He means, of course, that speaking is natural, and that singing— "numerosity" of tone — is not natural, is, in a word, artificial. He is utterly wrong. It is artificial to speak in the ordinary manner, while the priests' chant, and every chant are purely natural. For the proof of this you have only to read a little — a very little — about primitive, or "natural" peoples, or, more simply, to listen to children at play. You will always find that where convention has not cast out nature, some kind of "sing-song," some sort of chant is the entirely natural utterance of man in his most fervent, that is, his most natural moments. Listen to half-a-dozen children (children, you must remember, are all "primitives" and therefore natural) playing some game, learning their lesson at school. Their voices are pretty sure to fall into a very rude, but a distinctly measured, chant. The Greek drama was intoned, the Koran is intoned, the Welsh preacher of to-day at the impassioned height of eloquence begins to chant, the Persian passion-plays are recited in a sing-song. Nay, but listen only to our great tragic actor. Quite unconsciously, I am sure, he has elaborated for himself a distinctly musical and measured utterance, so that a skilful musician, provided with scored paper, could note

Irving’s delivery of many passages, as if it were music. The Chinese language, I am told, depends largely on the tonal variations which distinguish the meaning of one word from that of another; you will find the same thing in the Norwegian; and the Jewish “cantillation,” which is “sing-song” in a very simple form, bears witness to the truth — that “speaking” is acquired, conventional, and artificial, while “singing” is natural. All this would be perfectly clear in itself, would require no demonstration of any kind, if it were not for the fact that we have, somehow or other, got into the way of making the very impudent assumption that man is only natural when he is doing business on the Stock-Exchange or reading leading-articles. It seems almost too nonsensical an assumption to put into words, but I really do believe that “at the back of our heads” there is a sort of vague, floating idea that there never were any real men at all till the period of the first Reform Bill, and I suppose that before very long Lord John Russell will be pushed back into the region of myth, and the foundation of the School Board will be the era of true humanity. I say, this sounds too ridiculous, but examine yourself and see whether you don’t dimly believe that before the advent of trousers the whole world was really “play-acting,” that existence in the days of laced coats was, in a way, a kind of phantasmagoria, and that a man who wore chain-mail was hardly a man. I believe it really is so, and you will find the same nonsense influencing religious opinion. Take your average Protestant, and I am much mistaken if you do not discover that he believes some grotesque preacher, in his greasy black suit, mouthing platitudes at his conventicle to be somehow more “natural” than the priest, clad in the mystical robes of his office, chanting Mass at the altar. But in literature — why this perversion of the word influences the whole of criticism. Jane Austen, we say, is natural, and Edgar Allan Poe is unnatural, or as it is sometimes expressed, inhuman. Of course, if you wish for the truth, the proposition must be reversed, unless you are willing to believe that a Company Prospectus is, somehow, more natural and more human than, say, Tennyson’s “Fatima.” If you think that the real man is the stomach, there is, of course, an end of the discussion; but then we should have to admit that all the greatest artists of the world were maniacs. But you see clearly, don’t you, that all these questions as to what we shall get for dinner, and whom shall we meet at dinner, and in what order shall we go into dinner, and how shall we behave at dinner, are in no sense natural, since they are all so purely temporary, since they will be answered by one age in a manner that will seem wholly “unnatural” to the next. That, I think, is truly natural which is unchanging, which belongs to men always, at all times, and in all ages. In this sense, ecstasy is natural to man, and it finds expression in the arts, in poetry, in romance, in singing, in melody, in dancing, in painting, in architecture. Many animals have sufficient artifice to shelter themselves from the weather, no animal has architecture, or the art of beauty in building; many animals, or all animals, have the faculty of communicating with one another by means of signs, but man alone has the art of language.

Has it ever struck you while I have been talking of ecstasy in books, that it is nearly always a question of degree, of more or less? I think I indicated as much while I was talking about “Pickwick”; I showed how the ecstatic conception had been alloyed with much baser matter, in other words that there was much in “Pickwick” that was by no means literature. And, I daresay, though I am not sure, that if you were to go through your Meredith you might succeed in finding some passages and sentences which are literature, and for all I know there may be hints of rapture between the lines of “Pride and Prejudice.” Still, we do not call a man poet on the strength of a single line.

But sometimes one is confronted with books which are really very difficult to judge, and this sometimes happens because the ecstasy, the true literary feeling, supposing it to be present, is present not here or there, not in a phrase or in a particular passage, but throughout, in a very weak solution, if one may borrow the phraseology of physical science. We read such books, and are puzzled, feeling that, somehow, they are literature, only we can’t say why, since on the face of it they seem only to be entertaining reading. Do you know that I can conceive many people who would find something of this difficulty in Mark Twain’s “Huckleberry Finn”? Here you have a tale of the rude America of forty or fifty years ago, of a Mississippi village, full of the most ordinary people, of a boy and a negro who “run away.” I don’t think anyone with the slightest perception of literature could read it without experiencing extraordinary delight, but I can imagine many people would be a good deal puzzled to justify the pleasure they had received. The “stuff” of the book is so very common and commonplace, isn’t it, it seems so frankly a rough bit of recollection drawn up from the author’s boyish days with jottings added from the time when he was a pilot on one of the river-boats — it is all so apparently devoid of “literary” feeling that I am sure many a reader must have felt greatly ashamed of his huge enjoyment. To me “Huckleberry Finn” is not a very difficult case. That flight by night down the great unknown, rolling river, between the dim marshy lands and the high “bluffs” of the other shore comes in my mind well under the great “Odyssey” class; it has, indeed, the old, unquenchable joy of wandering into the unknown in a more acute degree than “Pickwick,” which, as we have seen, is to be reckoned under the same heading. In a word it is pure romance, and you will note that the story is told by a boy, and that by this method a larger element of wonder is secured, for even in this absurd age children are allowed to be amazed at the spectacle of the world. In the mouth of a man the tale would necessarily have lost somewhat of its “strangeness,” since partly from affectation, partly from vicious training, partly from the absorption of the “getting-on” process, grown-up people have largely succeeded in quenching the sense of mystery which should be their principal delight. You have only to read the average book of travels to see how this affectation (or perversion of the soul) has deprived the seeing being of his sight. Dip into a book — say a book on China — and you will probably find that Pekin streets are dusty in summer and muddy in winter, and that the author caught cold through imprudent bathing. So it is well for us that Mark Twain put his story in the mouth of an “infant,” who is frankly at liberty to express his sense of the marvels of the world. Later, there is an introduction of the “literary” feeling; those chapters about Jim’s “Evasion” are very Cervantic in their artifice and method, but, to my thinking, they have lost the spirit, though they preserve the body. They are most amusing reading, but they are burlesque and nothing more than burlesque; and from them one can almost imagine what “Don Quixote” would have been if it had been written by a very clever man, by an artificer who was not an artist. But the earlier chapters are wonderfully fine, and I think that it would be difficult to find a more successful rendering of the old “wandering” theme with modern language.

But there is another writer who is much more difficult to account for — I mean Miss Wilkins. I confess I find her tales delightful, and I often read them, but as you know I am not content to rest on my own pleasure in literary criticism. We are no longer talking of the great masterpieces, of the gigantic achievements of such men as Homer, Sophocles, Rabelais, Cervantes; we agreed that when we spoke of these great, enduring miracles of art, it was best to lay aside all question of liking or not liking, of reading often or reading seldom. But when one comes to modern days, to books which have yet to prove their merit by the test of their endurance, it is pardonable if one is sometimes a little confused, if one fails to discriminate at once between the merely interesting and the really artistic. I may be so delighted with a book for reasons that have nothing to do with art, that, by an unconscious trick of the mind, I persuade myself that I am reading literature while there is only reading-matter. And at one time I was inclined to think that I had "confused" Miss Wilkins in this manner. For, on the surface, you have in her books merely village tales of New Englanders, tales often sentimental, often trivial enough, and sometimes, it would seem, of hardly more than local interest. Hardly can one conceive the possibility of any ecstasy in these pleasant stories; for they deal, ostentatiously, with the surface of things, with a breed of Englishmen whose chief pride it was to hide away and smother all those passions and emotions which are the peculiar mark of man as man.

Yet, I believe that I can justify my love of Miss Wilkins's work on a higher ground than that of mere liking. In the first place I agree with Mr T. P. O'Connor, who pointed out very well that the passion does come through the reserve, and occasionally in the most volcanic manner. He selects a scene from "Pembroke," in which the young people play at some dancing game called "Copenhagen," and Mr O'Connor shows that though the boys and girls of Pembroke knew nothing of it, they were really animated by the spirit of the Bacchanals, that the fire and glow of passion, of the youthful ecstasy, burst through all the hard crusts of Calvinism and New England reserve. And we have agreed that if a writer can make passion for us, if he can create the image of the eternal human ecstasy, we have agreed that in such a case the writer is an artist.

But I think that there are other things, more subtle, more delicately hinted things in Miss Wilkins's tales; or rather I should say that they are all pervaded and filled with an emotion, which I can hardly think that the writer has realised. Well, I find it difficult to express exactly what I mean, but I think that the whole impression which one receives from these tales is one of loneliness, of isolation. Compare Miss Wilkins with Jane Austen, the New England stories with "Pride and Prejudice." You might imagine, at first, that in one case as in the other there is a sense of retirement, of separation from the world, that Miss Austen’s heroines are as remote from the great streams and whirlpools of life as any “Jane Field” or Charlotte of Massachusetts. But in reality this is not so. The people in the English novels are in no sense remote; they are merely dull; they cannot be remote, indeed, since they are not human beings at all but merely the representatives of certain superficial manners and tricks of manner which were common in the rural England of ninety years ago. “Remoteness” is an affection of the soul, and wicker-figures, dressed up in the clothes of a period, cannot have any such affections predicated of them; and consequently though Emma or Elizabeth may appear very quaint to us from the contrast between the manners of the ‘tens and the ‘nineties, they cannot be remote. But that does seem to me the quality of those books of Miss Wilkins’s; the people appear to be very far off from the world, to live in an isolated sphere, and each one lives his own life, and dwells apart with his own soul, and in spite of all the trivial chatter and circumstance of the village one feels that each is a human being moved by eminently human affections.

It seems to me that one of the most important functions of literature is to seize the really fine flavours of life and to preserve them, as it were, in permanent form. When we were talking about “Huckleberry Finn,” for example, I remember that I spoke of it as the story of a boy who “runs away.” But what a curious magic there is in these words “runs away.” Doesn’t it, when you come to examine the phrase, exhale the very essence and spirit of romance? Some time ago I reminded you that the essential thing is concealed under all manner of grotesque and unseemly forms, that one can detect a veritable human passion under the cry of the news-boy, shouting, “All the winners!” So I think that phrase, “run away,” carries to us its meaning and significance. For, after all, what did all the heroes of romance do but “run away”? They left the region of the known, the familiar fields or the familiar shores, and adventured out in the great waste of the unexplored, into the forest or upon the sea. Here, perhaps, you have the true interpretation of the phrase “divine discontent,” for surely only that is divine which revolts from the commonness of the common life, which is conscious of things beyond, of better things, of a world which transcends all daily experience. I said once, I think, that the English passion for trading goes very well with the supremacy of English poetry, since poetry and shop-keeping are but different expressions of the one idea; and here again you find confirmation of the theory in that very marked English characteristic — the desire of wandering, of "going on and on" in the manner of a knight errant or a fairy tale hero. Of course, in practice, this really divine impulse is corrupted by all kinds of earthly, secondary motions; and just as the love of a venture which is at the root of trade often or always ends in a very vulgar wish to make money and more money and to set up a brougham and confound the Smiths, so the great joy of exploration, of running away from the mapped and charted land has for its issues the "development of markets," the "progress of civilisation," the profitable sale of poison, and all manner of base and blackguardly manœuvres. But, of course, one expects all this; it is the inevitable mixture of the lower with the higher which characterises all our human ways. Still the higher motive dwells within us — I suspect, indeed, that if it were not for the higher the lower could hardly flourish — and so when you hear that a boy has run away to sea or elsewhere I wish you to think kindly of him as a survival of the most primitive and important human passions. Yes, I think I am right in saying that the lower things of humanity only flourish in consequence of the existence of the higher. Take the French nation, for example. It is infinitely more bent on gain for the mere sake of gain than the English; it is ready to work harder, to give more time, to live more unpleasantly, to eat less and to drink less than the English; and all in the pursuit of money. Rationally, in short, the French should be infinitely better men of business than the English; and yet we know that this is not so, that the English is, *par excellence*, the business nation. Seriously, I believe, that this is so because the French are money-grubbers and nothing more, because they hate a "risk" of any kind, because they abhor any kind of mercantile venturing into the unknown. In other words, they engage in money-making simply for the sake of making money: they have no joy of the hazard, they will never deserve the title of "merchant adventurers," and, *therefore*, they remain in truth a nation of shopkeepers and of second-rate shopkeepers. Sir, a man of acute intelligence would, in the seventeenth century, have deduced the future state of French and English commerce, of French and English colonization from a comparison between Shakespeare and Racine. I have no doubt that the Phœnicians were shopkeepers of the French kind, and hence their extinction, their shadowy survival merely in the history of their conquerors.

You think the Roman Empire a formidable objection to my theory, because Roman literature and Roman art show, in general, so little of the imaginative, adventurous faculty? I think the objection *is* formidable, but I believe that it can be redargued, as Dominie Sampson used to say. The Roman Empire was such a purely military settlement, wasn't it? it was, if one may say so, a garrisoning of the world, not in any way a real colonizing in the Greek and the English sense. And in the second place, do you know that I have grave doubts whether we know very much of the Roman spirit from the Roman literature. How far into the English character would the works of the excellent Dr. Johnson carry us? One hardly finds Chaucer, the Elizabethans, the Cavalier poets, Keats or Wordsworth in "Rasselas" and "The Rambler," and I have always suspected that Latin literature was in a great measure "Johnsonized," periwigged, hidden and perverted by the irresistible flood of Greek culture. It may be a paradox, but I have a very strong conviction that the Missal and the Breviary tell us more about the true Latin character than Cicero and Horace. But we must be thankful that in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries England stood aloof from the continent of Europe, and that when it did borrow it transformed and transmuted so that the original entirely lost its foreign character. I always think that change of Madame de Querouaille into Madam Carewell such a wonderful instance of our nationalism — our transforming force! If it had been otherwise, if we had grovelled before the literature of France or Spain or Italy, as Rome grovelled before the literature of Greece — well, perhaps, English literature would have meant "Chevy Chace" and a few old ballads, and the eighteenth century! I hate the Reformation, but perhaps it saved our literature, simply by isolating the nation.

I claimed, I think, literary merit for Miss Wilkins because her books give out an impression of loneliness. I think that is so, but I should like to point out that "loneliness" is merely another synonym for that one property which makes the difference between real literature and reading-matter. If you look into the French literature of the last two hundred years and complain of its elegant nothingness, of its wholly secondary character, I would point out that it is second-rate because it is the expression, not of the lonely human soul, like a star, dwelling apart, but of society, of the *ruelles*, of the *salon*, of polite company, of the *café* and the *boulevard*. I am not making an accusation, I am adopting the terms of the eminent M. de Brunetière, who tells us, I think, that French literature is beautiful because it is firstly sociable, and secondly because it is a kind of a long "talk to ladies." I hardly think that I need go into the merits of the question; you and I, I take it, are convinced of the vast immeasurable inferiority of Racine to Shakespeare (with these two names one sums up the whole debate), but I am quite sure that M. de Brunetière has given the true reason of the French literature being on the distinctly low level. It is always Thackeray, it is always Pope, it is always Jane Austen; it is, in our sense of the word, not literature at all, though, to be sure, its artifice is often of the most exquisite description. Of course I do not speak of the ultimate reason — that is to be sought, I presume, in the mental constitution of the nation — but when one reads M. de Brunetière's account of the formation of modern French letters, and notes his insistance on the social element as the chief factor, one may be pretty sure that this social factor is responsible for the pleasant nullities which we all know. You may feel pretty certain, I think, that real literature has always been produced by men who have preserved a certain loneliness of soul, if not of body; the masterpieces are not generated by that pleasant and witty traffic of the drawing-rooms, but by the silence of the eternal hills. Remember; we have settled that literature is the expression of the "standing out," of the withdrawal of the soul, it is the endeavour of every age to return to the first age, to an age, if you like, of savages, when a man crept away to the rocks or to the forests that he might utter, all alone, the secrets of his own soul.

So this is my plea for Miss Wilkins. I think that she has indicated this condition of "ecstasis"; she has painted a society, indeed, but a society in which each man stands apart, responsible only for himself and to himself, conscious only of himself and his God. You will note this, if you read her carefully, you will see how this doctrine of awful, individual loneliness prevails so far that it is carried into the necessary and ordinary transactions of social life, often with results that are very absurd. Many of the people in her stories are so absolutely convinced of their "loneliness," so certain that there are only two persons in the whole universe — each man and his God — that they do not shrink from transgressing and flouting all the social orders and regulations, in spite of their very strong and social instinct drawing them in the opposite direction. You remember the man who vowed that under certain circumstances he would sit on the meeting-house steps every Sunday? He kept his vow — for ten years I think — and he kept it in spite of his profound horror of ridicule, of doing what other people didn’t do, in spite of his own happiness; but he kept it because he realised his “loneliness,” because he saw quite clearly that he must stand or fall by his own word and his own promise, and that the opinions of others could be of no possible importance to him. The instance is ludicrous, even to the verge of farce, and yet I call it a witness to the everlasting truth that, at last, each man must stand or fall alone, and that if he would stand, he must, to a certain extent, live alone with his own soul. It is from this mood of lonely reverie and ecstasy that literature proceeds, and I think that the sense of all this is diffused throughout Miss Wilkins’s New England stories.

You ask me for a new test — or rather for a new expression of the one test — that separates literature from the mass of stuff which is not literature. I will give you a test that will startle you; literature is the expression, through the æsthetic medium of words, of the dogmas of the Catholic Church, and that which in any way is out of harmony with these dogmas is not literature. Yes, it is really so; but not exactly in the sense which you suppose. No literal compliance with Christianity is needed, no, nor even an acquaintance with the doctrines of Christianity. The Greeks, celebrating the festivals of Dionysus, Cervantes recounting the fooleries of Don Quixote, Dickens measuring Mr Pickwick’s glasses of cold punch, Rabelais with his thirsty Pantagruel were all sufficiently Catholic from our point of view, and the cultus of Aphrodite is merely a symbol misunderstood and possibly corrupted, and if you can describe an initiatory dance of savages in the proper manner, I shall call you a good Catholic. You say that “Robert Elsmere” is not literature, and you are perfectly right, but I hope you don’t condemn it because it contains arguments directed against the Catholic Faith? These, from our own standpoint, are simply nothing at all, not reckoning either way. We pass them over, just as we should pass over a passage on quadratic equations pleasantly interpolated by an author into the body of his romance. The conscious opinions of a writer are simply not worth twopence in the court of literature; who cares to enquire into the theology of Keats? But when we find not only the consciousness but also the subconsciousness permeated by the impression that man is a logical, “rationalistic” creature and nothing more, when the total impression of the human being gathered from the book is of a simply demonstrating and demonstrable animal; then, we may be perfectly assured that we have not to deal with literature. It is the subconsciousness, remember, alone that matters; and (to put it again theologically) you will find that books which are not literature proceed from ignorance of the Sacramental System. Thackeray was an unconscious heretic, while George Eliot was a conscious one, but each was ignorant of the meaning of Sacramentalism, and so, making allowance for the fact that the one was a clever man, while the other was a dull, industrious woman, you have from each a view of life that is substantially the same, and entirely false. Each was profoundly convinced that there *are* milestones on the Dover Road, and each, in his several way, was so intent on the truth of this proposition (and it *is* a perfectly true one) that the secret of the scenery and the secret of Canterbury Cathedral are altogether to seek in their books. Certainly the gentleman is a delightful companion, and the milestones seem few indeed while we are on the way, while with the other guide we feel like a girls' school, compelled to listen to the "now, young ladies" and the "lessons" which every object on the road suggests. Still, the total view is much the same, the same in genus if not in species, and you may add Flaubert to your companions on the road and you will be in the same case. But read a chapter of "Don Quixote"; you will not be aware of the existence of the milestones, since your gaze is fixed on the mystery of the woods, and you are a pilgrim to the blissful shrine beyond. Don't imagine that you can improve your literary chances by subscribing the Catechism or the Decrees of the Council of Trent. No; I can give you no such short and easy plan for excelling; but I tell you that unless you have assimilated the final dogmas — the eternal truths — upon which those things rest, consciously if you please, but subconsciously of necessity, you can never write literature, however clever and amusing you may be. Think of it, and you will see that from the literary standpoint, Catholic dogma is merely the witness, under a special symbolism, of the enduring facts of human nature and the universe; it is merely the voice which tells us distinctly that man is *not* the creature of the drawing-room and the Stock Exchange, but a lonely awful soul confronted by the Source of all Souls, and you will realise that to make literature it is necessary to be, at all events, subconsciously Catholic.

Have you noticed how many of the greatest writers, so far from desiring that compliment of "fidelity to life" do their best to get away from life, to make their books, in ordinary phraseology, "unreal?" I do not know whether anybody has compared the facts before or made the only possible inference from them; but you remember how Rabelais professes to derive his book from a little mouldy manuscript, found in a tomb, how Cervantes, beginning in *propria persona authoris*, breaks off and discovers the true history of "Don Quixote" in the Arabic Manuscript of Cid Hamet Benengeli, how Hawthorne prologises with the custom-house at Salem, and lights, in an old lumber-room, on the documents telling him the history of the "Scarlet Letter." "Pickwick" was a transcript of the "Transactions" or "Papers" of the Pickwick Club, and Tennyson's "Morte D'Arthur" shelters itself, in the same way, behind the personality of an imaginary writer. There is a very profound significance in all this, and you find a trace of the same instinct in the Greek Tragedies where the final scene, the peripeteia, is not shown on the stage, but described by a "messenger." The fact is that the true artist, so far from being the imitator of life, endures some of his severest struggles in endeavouring to get away from life, and until he can do this he knows that his labour is all in vain. It would be amusing to trace all the various devices which have been used to secure this effect of separation, of withdrawal from the common track of common things. I have just pointed out one, the hiding of the author, as it were, behind a mask, and in the Greek Play the analogous talking of what has happened in place of visibly showing it, but there must be many more. From this instinct I imagine arises the historical novel in all its forms, you make your story remote by placing it far back in time, by the exhibition of strange dresses and unfamiliar manners. Or again you may get virtually the same effect by using the remoteness of space, by playing on the theme "far, far away" which really calls up a very similar emotion to that produced by the other theme of "long, long ago," or "once on a time," as the fairy tale has it. Briefly we may say that all "strangeness" of incident, or plot, or style makes for this one end; and of course you see that all this is only the repetition of our old text in another form. It is, perhaps, hardly necessary to give the caution that, on the principle of *corruptio optimi*, there is nothing more melancholy than the book which has the body of fine literature without the soul, which uses literary methods without understanding. You needn't ask for proofs of that proposition; our memories are aghast with recollections of futile "historical novels," of the terrific school of the "two horsemen," and every Christmas brings its huge budget of those dreadful "boys' books," which carry commonplace to the very ends of the earth, and occasionally penetrate to the stars. And in style, too, what can be more depressing than the style which is meant to be "strange" and is only flatulent? In many cases of course such books as I have alluded to are mere survivals of tradition, conventions of bookmaking which bear witness to the fact that pirates and treasure-hoards were once symbols of wonder, and the extravagancies of style are probably to be accounted for in the same way. At some remote period it may, possibly, have been effective to call the sun, "the glorious orb," and even now some minds may be made to realise the strangeness of great flights of birds by the phrase "the feathered Zingari of the air"; but if one is a little sophisticated one feels the pathos and the futility of such efforts. The writer has felt and experienced the wonder of things — the beauty of the sun and the hieroglyphic mystery of the figures that the birds make in the air — and he feels, quite rightly, that to describe wonders one must suggest wonder by words. Unfortunately, he breaks down at this point, and falls back on unhappy phrases that give the very opposite impression to that which he wishes to excite. Here you have the whole history of "poetic diction." The instinct is in itself an entirely right one, and I need hardly say that the masters — those who have the secret — can use archaic forms, obsolete constructions, conventional phrases even, with miraculous effect. But the beginner would do well to be wary of these things, and to turn his face resolutely away from "flowery meads" and all the family of inversions. How is one to know when such phrases may be used? If I could give you the answer to that question I should be also giving you the secret of making literature, and from all our talks I expect you have gathered this much at all events — that the art of literature, with all the arts, is quite incommunicable. Many kinds of artifice, even, are unteachable — I could not write or be taught to write one of those George Eliot novels that I have been abusing with such hearty good will — but art is by its very definition quite without the jurisdiction of the schools, and the realm of the reasoning process, since art is a miracle, superior to the laws.

Dr Stiggins: His Views and Principles

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Deus venerunt Gentes in hæreditatem tuam, polluerunt templum sanctum tuum, posuerunt Jerusalem in pomorum custodiam. — Psalmus I xxviii.

Vineam de Ægyp to transtulisti, ejecisti Gentes, et plantasti earn… Exterminavit earn aper de silva, et singularis ferus depastus est earn. — Psalmus Ixxix.

The beastly Covenanters… hardly had any claim to be called men, unless what was founded on their walking upon their hind feet. You can hardly conceive the perfidy, cruelty, and stupidity of these people, according to the accounts they have themselves preserved. — Sir Walter Scott.

I. Protestantism and Preserved Meat — Moral and Political Dignity of the United States of America,

I HAVE BEEN watching for some time past, and with considerable anxiety, the discussion of the so-called “Meat Packing Scandals in America. You, as an earnest Liberal and as a Free Churchman, must have seen the reports to which I allude, for I am sure you agree with me that the rivers of printer’s ink are not the least amongst those which, the Inspired Writer tells us, make glad the City of God. No; you are right; I am far from using the phrase in any of the superstitious senses dear to the mediævalists or pseudo-primitive writers. Holy Writ, as has been well observed, is not only a kernel but a shell, not only an eternal message, but a local and (shall we say?) a temporary pronouncement. The author of these words was, no doubt, thinking of Jerusalem, a city whose largely imaginary glories would not compensate a modern thinker for the lack of the elements of sanitation and of democratic government. The dogmas of the writer were no doubt clearly enough defined — to us, of course, they would be impossible — but we have no reason to suppose that his drains were in the like case. Indeed, it is highly improbable that such things existed in any form at the period in which these words were written, and I need scarcely remind you that the sense of Liberalism and of the Free Churches is not uncertain on the point of Dogma versus Drains. The “City of God” then, as the Inspired Writer viewed it, was, probably, something very different from the City of God to which modern progress is daily approximating; and I need scarcely say that the visions of mediæval dreamers, of men who lived in the heated opium den of Catholicism and Feudalism, are still less likely to image forth the Model City of to-day. The old Hebrew who used the phrase thought of Jerusalem, the centre of Jewish Patriotism, the seat of the Temple with its Holy of Holies, its hidden rites performed by a sacerdotal hierarchy; the writer of the Middle Ages had in his mind some pinnacled and climbing town that rose roof by roof, gable by gable, spire by spire to the vast far-lifted towers of the cathedral, where the idolatrous mass was daily offered: we, wiser far than Jew or Catholic, read the words and think of Manchester or Leeds or Sheffield. Why do you start? You are surely not deluded by what has been called the superstition of antiquity, by the false glamour which a few writers have unfortunately woven about past centuries and forgotten arts? The mediæval city was dirty and insanitary in a high degree, liberty was unknown, cruelty was rampant, a degrading superstition had usurped the place of true religion, Free Churchmen were unheard of. Can such a place as this symbolise to us the City of God? Surely not. Again, I say, Manchester must present a far more appropriate image of that ideal to which creation moves. Flourishing and prosperous, surrounded by the princely mansions of those whom honest toil, business instincts, and enlightened piety have raised to a high place, watered by streams whose refreshing blackness testifies that they no longer minister to the selfish pleasures and the cruel sports of the feudal lord; this, surely, is the true *Civitas Dei* to which the old Hebrew unconsciously looked forward. The aesthete will tell you Manchester is smoky. It is true that it is veiled, but so was the Temple of Jerusalem. The jets of steam that shoot out from apertures in those sturdy walls whisper to me the names of Cobden and Bright, Cobden and Bright; and these, let me tell you, were truer and holier saints than any that Rome commemorates in her storied calendars. Jerusalem was on a hill; it was aristocratic; Manchester stands on a democratic plain. Walk through her ways, note how street is a facsimile of street and house of house. No proud castle scowls from its sullen battlements on the peaceful citizens, no flaunting spire rises high above every roof denying with each stone the great Evangel of Equality; even Owen's College does not oppress the humble workman with a superhuman (and therefore offensive) sense of beauty. On every side the busy hum of labour; to our ears more solemn than the rolling organ, holier than the sound of the harps in the strange vision of the Jewish fakir which closes our Bibles; more solemn and more holy because every rattle of the improved machinery tells us that some supporter of enlightened policy and Liberal religious organisations is getting richer and richer every moment. Here, indeed, we have the true City of God; and this is the city which, as I observed, is made glad by those inky rivers which flow through the columns of a free press.

And this brings me back to the point from which I set out. I took it for granted that you are a diligent student of the newspaper, and such being the case you must have followed the reports of what are called the Chicago Packing Scandals; and I hope I shall convince you of the very bad effect those reports must have had. I may surprise you by saying that I wish it had been found possible to suppress or at least to minimise the whole affair. I may perhaps surprise you still more by saying that I wish with still greater fervour that a body of representative Free Churchmen could be appointed to regulate in some measure the publication of news and comment that is likely to be harmful to the best interests of the people. The Freedom of the Press! My dear friend, do not let us be slaves either to a phrase or to a false appearance of consistency; do not let us be the slaves of anything or anybody, but "Liberals," Free Men, in deed and word. I agree with you with all my heart in reprobating any system which remotely resembles the censorship of the press and of that free speech which is every Englishman's birthright. Remember that every Free Churchman is a descendant of Milton; I rejoice in it, I make my boast of it all the day long, but remember also that the great Milton, that "mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies," that prophet who saw the day of the Divorce Court from afar off and was glad; remember, I say, that Milton served a Government — England's noblest Government — that made the recitation of the Prayer Book, the "mass in masquerade," a penal offence. You see, don't you, the wide distinction between the censorship of tyrants and bigots such as Charles and Laud, with their detestable Star Chamber, and the wise restraints of England's great Captain Cromwell? But I am afraid that if you are not quite clear upon this point you must have failed to grasp those basic principles which lie at the root of all true Liberalism and Protestantism. Let us go a little farther back in the past: the ordinary observer sees, perhaps, but little difference between Queen Mary's executions by fire and Queen Elizabeth's executions by tearing tne heart from the living man. But if we are Protestants we know that the former were the monstrous cruelties of devils in human form, while the latter were entirely justifiable punishments. Again, the Liberal knows that the severities of the feudal law in France were the work of fiends, while the so-called massacres in the prisons during the Revolution were a melancholy necessity, and the wholesale executions under what has been called "The Terror" in reality deeds of mercy. I hope I have convinced you of the need of being on your guard against confusing things which are really essentially distinct in spite of surface similarities. Perhaps a more modern instance may be helpful: your blood must often have boiled at the way in which the late government packed the magistracy with Tories. But you surely do not see any resemblance between this most flagitious proceeding and the efforts of the friends of the present administration to ensure that Liberalism shall be efficiently represented on the Bench? Good; then I hope you will not confuse my proposition for a Board of Press Overseers with the tyrannical and abominable system of the censorship.

Besides, we have already the elements of such a system worked in a rough and ready way by the editors themselves. You must have noticed that few Liberal journals devote much space to meetings of Tories and Churchmen, and every effort is very properly made to minimise the importance of such gatherings — a proceeding which, I need not tell you, is entirely different from the boycotting tactics of the Conservative Press. I say, then, that this most salutary system should be extended and regulated; and I do not think that Englishmen need be afraid to entrust the liberties of the press to the hands of a committee chosen from the Free Church Council, seeing that they have virtually already entrusted their whole destinies to the care of the great Evangelical bodies.

This granted, then, I want to shew you what infinite harm might have been avoided if such a committee had been in existence lately, for I cannot doubt that it would have reduced the reports of the so-called scandals of Chicago to a very modest compass — if indeed it allowed any mention of this most unfortunate matter to appear at all. You think these reports were for the general good, that their publication tended to check the poisoning of the public, that the "Trusts" which make vast fortunes by selling indescribable filth as food should be "shown up"? Are you quite sure that you see the direction in which you are tending? Where did these alleged scandals take place? In America. And what is the government of that favoured land? You surely cannot be ignorant of the fact that it is perhaps the only country in existence which enjoys the inestimable blessings of a pure democracy. France, it is true, is Republican; but France is an old country bound by the galling chains of history and tradition, bound still more grievously by the chains of that accursed system of clericalism which, as one of our most respected leaders observed the other day, is indeed "the enemy." In spite of the crowning mercy of the Revolution, in spite of the work accomplished by such heroes as Danton, Marat, Robespierre, one must fear that the past is not altogether blotted from the National Memory; the chimerical glories of knights and nobles and kings still linger, I am afraid, in the minds of the people; those great decorated rubbish-heaps called cathedrals still cumber the land, witnesses to the hypocrisy and superstition and wastefulness of the past; and cunning bigoted priests such as Francis of Sales and Fénélon, with hysterical women of doubtful character like Joan of Arc, still have their deluded votaries. England, certainly, has many blessings — at the present moment her destinies are practically guided by our good friend Dr. Clifford, and a Sunday afternoon in London is always a cheering and a helpful spectacle — but how much of what I have said of France applies to our own country. We, too, have our wretched traditions of kings, and knights, and “saints,” we too have our cathedrals and our churches, survivals from a Reformation that was far too lax in its work, and I am afraid I must add, we have a sovereign who countenances that awful institution called the Turf. No; it is in America alone that one may observe the fine flavour of democracy, untainted, and unalloyed. The great States have no history of rapine, plunder, adultery, and cruelty to dazzle their eyes under the specious name of chivalry. No “kings” or “knights” freed that happy country; but stern men of business with an eye to the main chance. Nay; let us go further back into history: in Mexico and in South America the poor Indian still survives to bear witness to the Popish cruelty which was exercised on his ancestors; but vainly will you seek for the nation of the Massachusetts in the neighbourhood of Boston; the Pilgrim Fathers scorned to use the “devildoms of Spain,” and saw that swift extermination was the greatest mercy to the unhappy race of whose country they had taken possession. The Englishman blushes, unless he is a flunkey, at the “Dieu et Mon Droit” which denies Democracy from the walls of every Police Station. How much nobler were the device: “Simple Bible teaching and the London County Council how much nobler *is* the American motto: “The Spoils to the Victors.” Ah! there are no murderous Edwards or Henrys, no tyrant Charleses or Jameses on the roll of American Presidents: there you see names like Jackson and Pierce and Buchanan, which make the cheek glow and the heart beat high. They talk of the statesmanship, of the power of kings: what statesmanship, what power can compare with Lincoln’s great action when with a stroke of the pen he transmuted a race of ignorant, incapable, “impossible” negroes into free American citizens with votes to give or to sell, with heads which, though woolly, were as high as the heads of any white man? I know that there is a legend to the effect that the negroes turned the Legislatures into orgies, and ruined the finances of the Southern States for years; but I need scarcely point out that this cannot be true, since if it were so, all men would not be equal — which is absurd, and a proposition which would land us in the inexpressibly grotesque conclusion that there may be something to be said for our House of Lords.

Well, we all know what a great country America is; and we know that it is great because it is at once Protestant and Democratic. It is great because in place of our parasitical Establishment it has a powerful Oil Trust under the control of a professed member of the Baptist Church, it is great because instead of a hereditary monarch it has a President who relies on no ancestral claims or storied pedigree, but on judicious arrangements with the benevolent Trust I have mentioned. It is great because instead of a corrupt House of Lords it has a Senate and a Congress composed entirely of professional politicians whose incomes depend on the acuteness of their business instincts; it is great because it produces a larger proportion of lunatics than any country on earth; and if you have read your Wendell Holmes you will remember that a high lunacy rate is an unfailing test of a country's intellectual supremacy. You are right; all Protestant countries shew their mental superiority to Popery in this striking and convincing manner. And what a moral dignity the Americans have! You remember how the whole land rose in its righteous indignation over the long martyrdom of the unhappy Cubans. There was no counting of the cost, no dread of the haughty power of Spain; it was enough for America that the Cuban rebels were not given exactly what they wanted, and at such devilish cruelty as this the heart of the States grew hot. What do you say of the Filipinos? Don't you know that they had groaned for centuries under the hideous Spanish yoke, and that America set them free? My dear friend, if you doubt such a proposition as that, you will end by doubting that every monastery communicated by a secret passage with a nunnery, you will deny the well-known fact that in these nunneries the walling-up of live nuns was a part of the daily routine of the establishment, you will hesitate to say that every confessor is a monster of cunning and debauchery. Do you know or do you not know that the San Francisco earthquake and the Tory Press are alike the work of the Jesuits; whose motto is, as you are aware, "the end justifies the means"? Well, that being so, I repeat that America freed the Filipinos from

Spanish tyranny. They didn't want to be free after the American pattern of freedom? So much the worse for them. What they want is not of the slightest consequence to anybody. Haven't you seen it laid down by a consensus of Liberal journalists and politicians that the Chinese coolies in South Africa are miserable slaves who pant for freedom? It is true that the coolies themselves decline to be free; but that, as you will have seen, does not affect the question in the least. So, if the Filipinos, as you say, object to be free citizens of the greatest country in the world, they must be convinced of their error by such methods of suasion as are available. But I do not believe for a moment in the report that the American soldiers tortured their prisoners; and if large quantities of water were poured down the throats of these misguided persons with the very laudable object of gaining important information, I am sure that the water in question was of very superior quality to any fluid used in a somewhat similar manner in the dungeons of the accursed Inquisition. In fact you may depend upon it that the Inquisitors never employed anything so innocent as water in their devilries. The great Temperance Movement has never flourished (how could it?) under the Upas Tree of Romanism, and I should not be surprised to hear that many a martyr's torments were aggravated by the diabolical refinement of compelling him to swallow enormous quantities of the best sherry.

But we were considering the moral dignity of the United States of America. I don't think there is anything grander in history than the American People rebuking Russia for its cruel treatment of the Jews. Let me tell you there is no common or customary greatness here. You have doubtless read the very interesting accounts of the summary executions of negroes in the Southern States— "lynchings" I think they are called in the purer, more vivid English of the Great Republic. Well, I have no doubt that these summary executions are a necessity, though perhaps a painful one. Indeed, they *must* be both necessary and justifiable, for they are the will of the people. You know the adage: *Vox populi vox Dei*, you know as well as I do that the People are always right. It is for that reason that we are Liberals, that we base all our principles upon the absolute, eternal, infallible supremacy of the people's will. *Ergo*, as the old logicians say, if the people of America choose to burn negroes alive with what some would call refinements of slow and lingering torment: then the people of America must be right in doing so. But mark: while the left hand, as it were, of this great nation dribbles a little more kerosene on the slowly carbonizing form of its free and equal (but coloured) citizen, the other, raised aloft in all the awfulness of intense moral dignity rebukes the cruelties of guilty Russia and takes the poor hunted Jew under the protecting folds of the banner of the Great Republic! Am I not right? Is not such a picture unique in the world's history?

The Higher Criticism teaches us that the collection known popularly as "Isaiah" was in reality written by fifty-two persons of the same name, who all prophesied many years after the event. But could the whole fifty-two, with the assistance of "Ezekiel" and "Jeremiah," ever have reached such a splendid height of denunciation as that to which I have drawn your attention?

I do not know whether I need elaborate the greatness of this splendid Democracy. You know what the marriage law of America is like: there are variations, of course, in the different States, and I am told that in one commonwealth divorce is as restricted as the cunning priests would have it in England. Still, in most States the law stands as though Milton had framed it. The good sense, the inspiration rather, of the people has triumphed, and vice has shrunk back affrighted to her accustomed haunts of clericalism and reaction: for who would be a libertine in a land where a divorce is as easily obtainable as a dog license, who would risk the shame, the moral degradation, the expense of keeping a mistress when all the worldly advantages of such a course can be obtained by going through a holy and harmless ceremony? You understand now the moral altitude of every American; you comprehend the height from which the citizen of New York and of San Francisco looks down on the deplorable corruption of our effete aristocracy. The fellow-countrymen of Tweed and Oakey Hall carry their own moral atmosphere with them; they would perish else when they condescend to visit the gilded infection of our House of Lords.

Yes! America is Democracy triumphant; the goal to which we are pressing here, the ideal towards which all noble hearts are striving. But — how long can we proclaim the glad tidings of liberty if the offensive and doubtless exaggerated details to which I have alluded are made public in the press? You and I are staunch, I know; I am sure that there is not a member of the Free Church Council who would not see his *Dr. Stiggins:* ib friends eating ordure, poisoned rat, preserved Lithuanian packer, spittle, diseased meat, and noxious chemicals gladly, joyfully, thankfully; knowing, as he would know, that Protestantism was making a handsome profit, that the Eagles of the Great Republic were laughing consumedly. Yes, yes; the Free Churches have always been on the side of Free Trade, and I am sure that they always will be. Cobden and Bright did not live and work in vain, and so long as a mixture of glucose and vitriol is called beer, while tallow and beastliness in general is sold as butter, while thousands of superfluous babies fall yearly victims to interesting and complicated chemical formulae disguised as milk, while gangrened sausages shew the way to glory (and a pretty profit) — so long shall their names be "freshly remembered" in flowing bowls of substitutes. "Adulteration is a form of competition": the man who denies that great axiom is certainly a Tory, and probably a Churchman or a Romanist. Those were the words of honest John Bright; and so long as England emblazons them on her banner all will be well 'with her.

But how about the thoughtless masses? Have they the self-sacrifice, the moral strength, the confidence in Liberal principles that are requisite in such a crisis? Can we not imagine them declaring that if democracy implies the poisoning and adulteration of every conceivable article of food and drink they would rather be without democracy? Here, they may say, is a great free nation, a great commonwealth of sovereign citizens; without king or lords or Established Church; a government for the people, by the people, through the people. And the result seems to be that the sovereign citizens in question have to feed on dung, poisoned rat, and tuberculous cow; while the representatives of the sovereign citizens aforesaid grow rich on the bribes administered by the purveyors of these delicacies. Cannot you see the deplorable results that may follow from this specious though fallacious reasoning? I am older than you, and I have learned to dread the devilish strength of the forces of reaction. Believe me, the enemy is always on the alert; there are not wanting those who have read the annals of Popery and Tyranny with, I am afraid, no honest aims. In the bad old days, in the ages described so justly as dark, they tell us that adulteration was a crime, that "making a corner" was a felony, that our worthy friends in Chicago would certainly have been hanged to the nearest tree. Ah, I see you shudder, and you do well; but have you forgotten the fleshpots of Egypt, after which some writer (who lived many centuries after the probably mythical Moses), tells us the children of Israel lusted? Believe me, the old Hebrew Book has not lost its freshness; here in England, as in some possible desert which could not have been near Sinai, we have many who are willing and ready to lust after the fleshpots, to clamour for beef which is not tuberculous, to scorn the poisoned but spicy rat, to murmur against fragments of their brother men appearing on the breakfast table under the comely disguise of chicken and tongue. The fleshpots of Egypt! Yes, my friend, even though the Higher Criticism should inform us that Egypt in the traditional sense never existed, that the Red Sea is a forgery of P1 J2 L* and P6, that Moses was either a Stone Pillar or the Midnight Sky (all of which conclusions seem to me, I confess, infinitely nobler than the traditional view): even then how true the moral remains. Yes; now, as then, the people are a stiff-necked generation, ready, as ever, to place their carnal appetites above their eternal gain. The so-called Israelites in the old fable wearied of the Heavenly Manna, and forgot the Promised Land: and so the mob to day may weary of the gifts of Packingtown: formaldehyde has ceased, they may say, to charm our palates, glucose is sweet for us no longer, oil of vitriol and gangrened pork will not serve our dainty and luxurious taste, we are weary of the dung of rats. We should like healthy beef, not potted Scandinavian, we want real milk in our tea, we wish for beer with our dinner, not chemical reactions, we are anhungered for pork which is not green with gangrene — in a word, for the flesh-pots of Egypt. And at last they may declare that if Chicago and its products are the results of Liberalism and Protestantism then they would rather not be Protestants or Liberals!

Ah! that old writer who could not have been Moses knew the human heart; knew the terrible appeal of fleshly lusts. Before the eyes of the wandering tribesmen the tempter dangled the Egyptian feasts: can we be sure that he will not repeat his infernal artifice in our day? There are prophets of Baal who are only too ready to insinuate their praises of old English beef and beer, home-grown and home-brewed (the vile Protectionists!) who dispute the well-known fact that in the Dark Ages the people were cowed, half-starved slaves by their stories of yeomen who fought at Crécy, Poitiers, and Agincourt (trust me the Devil never lacks an argument); who fill foolish ears with mischievous fables of some imagined time when honey was made by the bee, butter of milk, and bread of wheat. Nay, some of them go further still, and picture to their dupes, say, the Spanish peasant living in content on the produce of his garden, drinking the light red wine from his own vineyard; indifferent to the mineral wealth of his country, not anxious to live in Manchester, careless as to doing business, happy in an atmosphere almost devoid of sulphur and carbonic acid gas, unwilling to be a Baptist, not clamouring for tinned products, crossing himself when he passes the village crucifix — sunken, in fact, in every conceivable degradation, as you and I know. Yes, there are men who are willing to compare this poor unhappy wretch with the blest denizens of Chicago, who dare to dispute the glories of democracy; and who shall say whether such insidious arguments as these may not prevail?

And now, I think, I have made you understand my regret at the publication of these deplorable details. I am convinced that this so-called scandal is the work of the forces of reaction; I suspect a conspiracy between the Jesuits and the English Church Union. I demand the immediate passing of two short Acts — one to make it a penal offence to manufacture or to sell any pure article of food or drink, the other for the humanising and liberalising of all churches and cathedrals belonging to the Anglican and Romanist denominations — half of them to become places of meeting for the Free Churches, the other half to be converted into miniature Packingtowns. Dr. Clifford shall preach in St. Paul’s Cathedral, and rivers of putrid lard shall make glad the idolatrous pile at Westminster.

II. History must go — A little Christian’s thoughts of Heaven.

HAVE YOU REALISED, do you think, the full extent to which we poison the streams at the very fountain-heads? Listen to this: —

“The history of England has been too often written in the ‘drum and trumpet style,’ and that of the English people too much neglected. Numberless books have been written, and the imagination racked to idealise in visionary style the doubtful deeds of a class who were quite apart from the real life of the nation. Romanticists deal with episodes in the careers of that class, adopt artificial standards of virtue and morals, and by their genius cast a glamour of greatness and nobility over deeds which, judged by a righteous standard, are little short of ruffianism.”

Excellent, you say, but again I ask, do you quite see where these admirable sentiments should lead you? It is easy enough to say that history should be recast, that it has been too long in the hands of the Tories and the Churchmen; but the question arises, how is this to be done? Consider the origins of our history.

Were the early Britons Protestants? Truth forces us to declare that they were Pagans, and not merely Pagans but subject to that most revolting of all influences, a sacerdotal caste — the famous or infamous Druids. Little, I believe, is known of this priestly order; still there is enough for our purpose. We know that it was not permissible for any Briton without education, without training, without authority to rise and proclaim himself as good a Druid as any of those beings who celebrated their mysterious rites in the groves of Mona; we know that the priests kept education in their own hands and exacted elaborate trials from their neophytes; we know that the practice of human sacrifice was only too common. What is all this system but the Church of England in an undeveloped state, exacting its tale of infant souls to be bound up and sacrificed in the rigid framework of dogma, proud of its pompous ordinations, arrogant in repelling the claims of better men to the full privileges of the Gospel. Look again to the organisation of the State; what do we hear but stories of chieftains and princely families, of Caractacus and Boadicea? Why is there nothing said of Caractacus's cook? Why is history silent as to Boadicea's lady's maid? Always the same story; the people are neglected; and when Britain was invaded, have we a list of the private soldiers' names? No, indeed, this island was invaded by Julius Caesar, as if the patient legionaries were nothing — and so the story goes on; a roll of so-called "great men," while the mass of the people is forgotten and despised. I declare to you that the reading of history makes my blood boil: century after century tells the same story, in sickening monotony illustrious name follows illustrious name on the slavish page, saint and hero, king and poet and knight, in an endless repetition, till one is forced to cry out in indignant remonstrance, to ask the historian whether he has forgotten that the English People ever existed.

Yet this is the farrago that we teach our children, this is the food on which we expect to rear good Free Churchmen and Liberals. Only the other day my little boy came home from school, as I could see, in a state of perplexity and distress. At first I was inclined to think that the master (who I believe to be a Jesuit in disguise), had been revolting the child's mind with the fetichism of Infant Baptism, or with some such degrading dogma, but I found that I was mistaken. The child had been learning about the Norman Conquest, and as he told me the story he burst into tears, and said at last: "But, papa, why didn't the County Council pass a resolution forbidding that bad man to conquer England? and was Mr. John Burns away for his holiday when they did it?" What could I say to the poor boy? I have brought him up in the belief that the County Council, the Free Churches, and John Burns have made England what it is, and was I to try his childish faith by confessing that none of these was in existence in the year 1066? I do not know whether I was right or wrong, but, right or wrong, I told him that the Norman Conquest was the result of the Tories being in office, and with that answer he was content.

But you see my point: the whole trend of history is absolutely undemocratic; it falsifies modern and enlightened principles on every page and in every chapter. The tendency of modern thought goes to show that the people are everything. To them the wisdom of the nation has given the supreme power; from them, we believe, all inspiration in things political and ecclesiastical proceeds. We scoff, and we scoff rightly, at the old aristocratic-sacerdotal idea that all good gifts are from above, that the universe is a hierarchy, an ordered system of graded functions and powers, in which there are varied excellencies and functions, one star exceeding another star in glory, the oak having one splendour, the daisy another. On the contrary: we affirm that all good gifts are from below, we say that wisdom is to be found in great masses of people after due preparation by political agencies, that the ministerial functions are delegated by the populace. With all due reverence, we decline to consider the lilies; we prefer to consider the cabbages and the Spanish onions. Lilies are picturesque? I daresay they are; some people have found the monarchy and the papacy picturesque; but have these things benefited the people? We refuse then this analogy *in to to,* as we used to say at college; we declare that daisies make excellent timber, that the blossom of the potato surpasses the proudest blooms in aristocratic gardens, that the oak is a shameless and useless consumer of the soil. Yes; but with what heart can we go on preaching these truths while at the same time we allow our children to read the so-called History of England, which diametrically opposes every one of these conclusions? We might bear to read of the conquest of England, if it were described as an irresistible popular movement; how can we honestly teach our children that this fair land was subdued by William the Conqueror?

You ask my remedy. It is a simple one enough: I would abolish history. Nay; why do you start? Is the world always to be the slave of the past? Is generation after generation to be bound fast in the swaddling bands of antiquity? There was a worthy Puritan in the seventeenth century who proposed that the new order should be consolidated by the burning of all the records of England, and I heartily wish that this most sensible suggestion had been carried out. I confess I grind my teeth when I pass the Record Office; for what is it but a great storehouse of evil precedents; an armoury from which the enemy draws arguments to support his infamous and absurd conclusions. A Romanist Cardinal once said that the appeal to history was treason to the church; I say it is treason to the people and the people’s cause. We know that all Kings were remorseless tyrants; the antiquary with his wretched parchments proves many of them to have been eminently human beings, brave, courteous, and wise. We know that the Church is and always has been a conspiracy against the human race; “we are confronted with documents shewing how the Church fed the hungry and clothed the naked. Nay; the minds of the people are poisoned from the same source with tales of old time merriment, of kindly traffic between rich and poor, of days when there were more spires than factory chimneys, of charity given with love and received without shame. *

I say, once for all, in the words of our classical professor, *Delenda est Carthago* — history must be abolished. After all, our part is in the future, is it not? We are not placed in this world to delve in the graves of the past, that our minds may be enslaved by ghosts of the bad old days that are gone for ever, that in poring over the inflated records of an imaginary chivalry we may forget our Burns and our Bannerman, our Clifford and our Macnamara. Let us take example by our brothers across the ocean, who have given the world such a wonderful lesson in progress and virtue. The American child's lessons in history are simple enough; he is briefly taught that all Kings are bad, that all aristocrats are bad, that all priests are bad; that the dawn of the world's true history begins with the Declaration of Independence, and that the Kingdom of Heaven is a picturesque way of alluding to the United States. See that great nation freed from all the toils of tradition, from all the bigotry and tyranny of the past; and consider what we should be if we could escape in like manner from our dismal roll of conquests and victories, of battles and pageants, of kings and warriors, of saints and bishops. Soon, I hope, we shall have done a great deal; we shall have substituted for the unintelligible utterances of an obsolete dogmatism called creeds the simpler, more human profession of:— "I believe in the County Council Syllabus"; but how much more remains to be accomplished. Let us, I say, shut up the poisonous wells, let the springs of history be condemned, let us begin our textbooks with the simple sentence:— "Once upon a time there was a very good man named Campbell-Bannerman."

And why should not this system be carried right through the books we give our children. I can remember an old geography book from which I learned the lesson that all Protestant countries were prosperous and that all Popish ones were poor, shewing that Protestantism is true Christianity, since Protestants have naturally inherited all the blessings pronounced on the very rich in the New Testament. Thus we children were shewn how everywhere Protestants had overcome the world in accordance with the Gospel precept, and I remember my good mother telling me that Romanists never had anything better to eat than frogs or potatoes. Surely there is a good deal to be said for such a system of education as this; surely it ought to be the basis of all our education if England is to maintain that Protestant character which has made the nation what it is. We know (for Miss Corelli has told us) that a great conspiracy is on' foot, that Romish gold is being lavished throughout the country, that most of the parsons are in direct correspondence with the Vatican. Indeed, it is impossible for the most casual observer to avoid the impression that mischief is in the air; as one passes along the streets one sees church doors open on every side, the mutter of the confessional sounds like the hiss of some venomous snake through the wholesome turmoil of business, and only the other day a friend of mine pointed out to me that a piano-organ in the street was playing a Popish anthem called *Gloria in excelsis.* Are we not to strike a blow for our homes and hearths? Are the men of England asleep? Unless we are beware we shall wake up too late, and find the monasteries have replaced factories, that the brave glow of the blast-furnace has given way to the infernal fires of the Inquisition.

I ask, then, for a scheme of education permeated by Protestantism. A little child was once asked why John was such a good man, and the answer came swiftly: "Because he was a Baptist." That is the right spirit, and I want to see it diffused through all that we teach our children. I want the children to grow up with the love of the healthier England of to-day; I would sternly restrain the teachers who proposed to bewilder those infant minds with the catalogue of crimes and villainies which masquerade as history. It may be necessary for them to learn these things, when they are older; when in the poet's words "shadows of the penitentiary" close around them; it is, unfortunately, necessary that we should make ourselves acquainted with many forms of evil as we descend through the vale of life. But why should we perplex and distress these tender little souls with the "deeds which are little short of ruffianism" — to use the words of the author I quoted a little while ago? We do not teach the little ones the story of Charles Peace or of Sixteen-String Jack, we do not force them to acquire the technique of coining or of forgery, and I have yet to learn that the Newgate Calendar is an indispensable volume in our Sunday School Libraries. Then why should we insist on these little vessels being defiled with tales which are even more flagitious and disgraceful to our common humanity? Why should books be placed within reach of the young which can only minister poison? Why should their minds, at the most impressionable age, be forced to batten on such horrors as Crécy, Poitiers, Agincourt, Trafalgar and Waterloo, on the (probably imaginary) achievements of the Black Prince and the Duke of Wellington? Why should we stain their imaginations with accounts of the landing of Augustine and his gang of idolatrous monks? You talk of the love of country; we know only too well what a chapter of iniquities that phrase covers, and for my part I heartily wish that the phrase and all that it implies could be forgotten. It may be necessary, as I say, that, later on, they should acquire some knowledge of these things; some wise and tender friend, perhaps the mother, may break to them by degrees the orgie of abominations, the roll of shame which we call the history of England. Then, with but little danger, they may learn how their misguided and brutal forefathers fought and died for their country, how they drank pure beer and ate beef all the year round, how they were plunged in darkness, superstition, and ignorance till the "Gospel light first shone from Boleyn's eyes," as someone beautifully expresses it. Then they may be informed of the terrible fact that there were no Free Churches in the Dark Ages — no Free Churches, no processions of unemployed, no workhouses, no East End, no submerged tenth, no margarine, no great factories, none of the things that make us so happy in these better days that we live in. Then they may hear — and I am sure they will hear with horror — that there are things called bishops still suffered to pollute the air, that in every parish a sham-priest still hides his head from the scorn of honest men — but with the poison will come the antidote, for they will be old enough to understand that the darkness of the Dark Ages was due to the absence of all the blessings I have enumerated; their principles will have been firmly established, and they will be fired with a holy zeal to complete the good work that has been so well begun.

But let them not be taught all this while they are young; not while they are lisping at their mothers' knees their little hymns, their undenominational prayers, their simple Bible teaching about "a good man who lived long ago." No; I would have all children taught as I have taught mine. The past with all its horrors is veiled from their eyes; they know that God loves them and that the County Council cares for them; that though Earth hath many a noble city Battersea doth all excel; and last but not least they know that Mr. John Burns is always near them. For them these simple streets about us are all the world, and though I have heard Lavender Dale called monotonous I am sure it is not so to them. The architecture of the Baptist Church to which my ministry is given represents to them the last word of beauty in building; its combination of cast-iron tracery, classic columns in stucco, and fancy design in vari-coloured bricks will always remain in their minds as a vision of celestial loveliness. Last Sunday I had been telling the little ones about Heaven, and after the lesson my boy Albert came up to me with his eyes brimming over with tears, and his lip trembling. I asked the little man what was the matter. “Oh, father,’ he sobbed, “I’ve been thinking of what you told us, and I’m sure I know what heaven will be really like.” I was a good deal touched, and patting the brave little fellow on the head, I answered: “Are you, my son? Will you tell father about it?” Gulping down his tears, he replied: “I think it will be like Battersea Park, only ever so much larger. And there won’t be any games at all going on, and all the gentlemen and ladies, and little boys and girls will be dressed like they are on Sunday. The gentlemen will all be in such beautiful shiny black clothes, with bright silk hats and white shirts, every one of them, and the young ones will have fair moustaches and small chins and bright blue silk ties, and all the old gentlemen will have white beards like fringes all round their throats, and every one will have a Bible in one hand and an umbrella in the other, though the sun will shine just as it did at Clacton when we went on the Sunday School excursion last summer. And the ladies will be in lovely dresses like mother’s best; red and blue and green, all new, like the parlour curtains, with large roses in their hats, and all the little boys and girls will be in velveteen and lace. And the flowers in the beds will be ever so much larger than they are now; there will be geraniums as big as breakfast cups, and double dahlias bigger than my hat, and all sorts of flowers, as bright as they were at the Wesleyan Flower Show at Clapham Rise, and much brighter than any of the flowers that the bad rich people have in their horrid hothouses. And Gawd will sit on a great white throne in the middle, almost as fine as the Albert Memorial that I saw when you took us to Hyde Park, and Dr. Clifford will tell everybody how bad the Tories were, and Mr. John Burns will talk about the House of Lords, and everybody will be so happy that they will say ‘cheers,* and ‘laughter,* and 4 hear, hear’ for ever and ever. There won’t be any bishops or priests or popes there, because they are all burning in the bad place, and very bad people like Father Damien you told me about when I was naughty will be burnt worse than anybody, because they tried to deceive the good people, only the nice, good

Presbyterian minister found him out. There will be thousands and thousands of angels, like ladies in nightgowns, with very large wings, flying about everywhere as if they were so happy they didn't know what to do; but they will talk a good deal to the ministers, who will all be there. And there will be ever so many harmoniums, and American organs, all playing beautiful hymns, and the little children will give services of song in a large beautiful building just like our church; all about the Kings of Israel and Judah and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Amorites, which will make people feel very good. Then some very nice gentlemen from America will come in and say they come from God's own country, which is almost as good as heaven, and all the angels and the ministers will sing the Glory Song, and then everybody will have tea, with lots of jam."

Do you know that I could scarcely answer my little son? I do not know whether it is a father's partiality, but it seemed to me that in these few simple words, bubbling up from the child's heart, there was more spiritual truth than in all the works of foreign Romanist poets whom it seems the fashion to praise nowadays. I have looked into the works of Dante — you know the book to which I allude — a book oddly, and I cannot but think irreverently, entitled the *Divine Comedy*. The title, with its theatrical associations, could not fail to jar upon me, as you may imagine, but when I came to examine the work itself I confess I was astonished that such a book should be so openly and widely circulated. You have heard my little son's vision — for so I dare to call it — and you must have been struck, I think, by the total absence of dogma, of that passion for definition which has been the plague of Christianity in the past, and is so still. God sits on a great throne, good men inculcate the duties of citizenship, all raise the voice of praise to the accompaniment of rare and exquisite music, there are services which delight the emotions and instil a knowledge of Bible History. Nay, the picture may be in a sense fanciful, it may not in all respects correspond to the latest conclusions of philosophical thought; but at all events there are no creeds here, no cramping, disturbing dogmas, no pseudo-scientific "theology," no arrogant assumption of authority. And, after all, criticism apart, the English Sunday that our good Puritan ancestors won for us is, to my mind at all events, no bad symbol of that heavenly home for which we are all bound. A child may do much worse than think of heaven as an eternal Pleasant Sunday Afternoon. This, then, I say is the result of the teaching that I would give to the little ones; you will notice that there is no thought of kings or saints or heroes in the child’s mind, no pompous cathedral stuns and dwarfs his imagination, popes and priests are present only as vague embodiments of evil, destined to final punishment; he thinks of the good people about him, of the simple music he has heard Sunday after Sunday, of the eloquent discourses of which I have told him, and thus forms a picture which for all I know, is as “inspired” as the vision of John. I do not understand why Battersea should not be as holy as Patmos, and a Christian child in the England of to-day may, for all I know, have a clearer vision than the Eastern solitary of the first century.

But when I turn from little Albert’s simple story to the so-called *Divine Comedy* of Dante; what a gulf yawns between them!

But this opens up a new vista before us, and I think I will defer my remarks on this subject to some succeeding afternoon.

III. A Popish Poet — Democracy the Touchstone of our Faith — Free Churches in Heaven

I THINK THAT when you were last kind enough to come and see me I promised, rashly enough, perhaps, to offer some remarks on the Vision of the Italian of the thirteenth century, as contrasted with the Vision of a little child in the England of to-day. I have been considering the subject with some care in the interim, and I hope I shall redeem my promise to your satisfaction, but before I do so I want to say that my phrase, "kind enough to come and see me" is no mere idle compliment. You have been so good as to promise to do your best to put my views before the world, and I assure you that I regard this as a very great service. For, I have long felt that we Free Church ministers have pushed the virtues of modesty and humility so far that in us they have almost become vices. You remember the parable of the Talent in the Napkin? Well, I am not quite sure whether, in the classic phrase, we ministers ought not to say *de nobis fabula narratur;* we have shrunk so sedulously into the shade, we have so strenuously avoided the pitfalls of advertisement, that I am really afraid that we are in danger of hiding the Talent and concealing our Light. I am not speaking at haphazard, for the question has been before me for some time, and I have gone rather carefully through the files of the leading Liberal organs for the past few weeks. What is the result? Here is my analysis of the paper which is said to be most closely identified with the cause of the Free Churches. You see that in the last three weeks Dr. Clifford's name occurs but twenty-five times, and that the total number of times that other Free Church ministers' names are mentioned is only two hundred. The case is much the same with this other journal which is also popularly supposed to be a supporter of Liberalism and the Cause of Humanity in politics and religion; and I do not wonder that some of our friends are beginning to suspect the existence of wire-pulling and to hint at a deliberate boycott. I say I do not wonder at the existence of such a state of feeling, and I must say that I have known a very good case made out on feebler evidence than this. For what do we find in these papers? Here is "News from the Vatican" occurring three times in three weeks; here is “The Pope’s Health” twice; here, and here again is a “Pronouncement of the Most Holy Synod,” and here we have “Pastoral Letter of the Patriarch of Jerusalem”; a valuable piece of news which you will find in three papers which call themselves Liberal. “Liberal”; save the mark! What, I ask, has the health of that unhappy old man, the selfstyled “Prisoner of the Vatican,” to do with Protestant Englishmen? Did Hampden die, did the stern, sure justice of England lead the wretched Laud to the block, in order that the degenerate Englishmen of to-day should be informed as to the pronouncements of him whom our sturdy ancestors called “the Man of Sin”? You have read how our good old Puritan forefathers abolished the semi-Pagan, semi-Popish, wholly superstitious observance of Christmas, how good men, even in our day, have refused to allow the accursed thing, plum pudding, to enter their doors, you know what an example of serious household discipline the great Milton set to the world, how the unutterable infamy of pleasure on the Sabbath was prohibited, how the plague-spot of the theatre was stamped out by those stout Commonwealth’s men. And, I ask, was all this done that Englishmen and Protestants should be regaled with the doings of Cardinals, with the movements of a person calling himself Merry del Val? Merry del Val! What a name for a professing Christian! There is offence in the very sound of it; it seems to suggest to the densest ear the noise of the unholy revelries of the Vatican, surpassing the worst orgies of Nero and Tiberius; it reminds me of the book of which I shall shortly speak more fully — Dante’s *Divine Comedy.* Rome is unchangeable; the Papist of the thirteenth century writes a *Divine Comedy*, and the Cardinal of the twentieth century is named Merry del Val Î *Verb sat sap.*

And again, what have we to do with “most Holy Synods,” with the decrees of decayed and corrupt churches, which are well known to have remained in a state of absolute immobility since tne sixth or seventh century, to be fossilised relics, as it were, of the darkest ages, when the very elements of modern science were unknown, when the possibilities of steam had not dawned on the minds of the wildest dreamers? What has Jerusalem or its “Patriarch” to say to Battersea? Are we to be instructed in the simple religion of the Gospel by a city which has not the elements of popular government, which has never heard of the Nonconformist Conscience, which would regard a Church Tea on the day called Good Friday as an outrage? Let Jerusalem shew us the rude beginnings of progress, the mere outlines of civilisation, before we listen to her dictates. What manufactures can that once proud city now display? I am aware of none, save of superstitious objects made of cedar wood growing on a hill which is traditionally called the Mount of Olives, and therefore, of course, cannot be anything of the kind. Is there anything remotely resembling our Boards of Guardians at Jerusalem, are there electric trams, is there even an efficient service of steamboats run on the brook Kishon? We know there is not, and I tell you that my blood boils when I see so-called Liberal journals devoting their space to the utterances of the "Patriarch" of such a decayed village as this, while the proceedings of the Evangelical Churches in Protestant and Progressive Battersea are slighted and neglected. Only a week ago the female workers of my own church were entertained at tea by Mr. Josiah Gupp, one of my principal deacons, and a wealthy manufacturer of imitation leather. The proceedings were of the most interesting kind; we all drove over to Mr. Gupp's palatial villa at Clapham, and I assure you that I have never seen a more pleasant sight than the innocent mirth of our maidens — they had brought a few gentlemen friends with them — as they sported in the shade of Mr. Gupp's back-garden. Tea was served in the parlour, with ham and tarts galore, and afterwards all joined in the singing of the grand old psalm: —

Ten thousand at left-hand shall fall,
Ten thousand at thy right,
But none shall harm thee not at all.

Nor nothing thee affright.

Then there were the speeches; a gentleman told us about the hardships of a missionary's life in the South Seas, of the bitter persecution to which he himself had been subjected by a Popish Power, for the "offence" of causing a law to be passed by which drawing water on the Sabbath Day was made punishable by hard labour for life. Then a young gentleman, a student, I believe, of the Guildhall School, and evidently a person of great talents, sang us "The Holy City," and I said a few words on "Institutional

Christianity: or, It Doth not Appear what we shall be," words which I trust may not be altogether fruitless. Your interest is very kind: I merely demonstrated that we had good reasons for believing that Christianity, which in the earliest days was a pleasant social club on a liberal basis, would probably return to these lines after centuries of error, and find its centre in the social tea, the true sacrament of our enlightened times, the *Agape* of the Protestant Christian. Well; to return to this especial gathering; harmless games were resumed by the young people in the dusk of the evening, the garden resounded with their simple mirth, and so a happy day came to a close. Will you believe me, I searched the morning papers in vain for any account of our proceedings; and yet in one paper there was a long review of some work on the Early Fathers by a Dean of the Establishment, while another contained an article not only advocating Socialism, but (by sly hints), dogmatic Christianity Î Are you surprised, then, that some of us suspect wheels within wheels, and a carefully organised scheme for the suppression of Free Church news? The instance which I have cited might seem to many evidence almost conclusive of the existence of such a dastardly plot; and when I tell you that a few weeks ago I was present at a meeting of the Peckham Congregational Church, which unanimously passed resolutions demanding the immediate dethronement of the Czar, the Sultan, the Shah, and the Empress of China, at the same time requiring the whole of British India to be handed over to the Bengali Baboos and the Grand Lama of Tibet; when I tell you that merely the briefest references to this most important and representative gathering appeared in two or three papers, you will not, I imagine, be far from a conviction that the boycotting hypothesis is proven up to the hilt.

And yet, I do not myself believe that this is the case. I cannot think that convinced Christians, as the editors and staffs of Liberal journals of course must be, would lend themselves to any such nefarious schemes; I have come to the conclusion that we ourselves, the ministers of the Free Churches, are to blame, and as I told you just now it seems to me that we have shrunk too long in obscurity. Everyone is aware that the Establishment has long since cast dignity to the winds in this matter, that every country parsonage is a centre of bold and blatant self-advertisement. That being so, we must meet them on their own ground; we shall not, I hope, descend quite so low as "Father" Lowder, "Father" Mackonochie, or "Father" Dolling; still, we must make our voices heard, and in no uncertain tones. It is for this reason that I welcome your presence here, that I thank you for your promise to make my opinions known to the world.

Now, at last, then, we can begin to consider the subject to which I invited your attention. I told you the other day how my little Albert described to me his simple vision of the heavenly country, and I mentioned the shock it gave me to turn from his simple undenominational piety to the work of the Popish poet, Dante. Oh! what a change. See; I open the volume at haphazard. What does my eye light on? The scene is in Hell, and Dante hears the sighs:

> "That tremble made the everlasting air * * rising from a great multitude of people. His guide informs him that none of these persons had sinned:

" — and if they merit had, 'Tis not enough, because they had not baptism, Which is the portal of the Faith thou holdest." But what is this but the sacramentalism of the Church Catechism? To what end have we strained every nerve and sinew to put a stop to the teaching of such doctrine as this in the People's Schools if we are to encourage our young men and maidens to subject themselves to the same contagion in another form, under the specious pretext that this work we are examining is a literary masterpiece. But the fact is that from beginning to end this *Divine Comedy* literally bristles with dogma and dogmatic definition. One is absolutely amazed at the glib manner in which the words of the Great Book are taken in their crude, material signification, as for example in the passage I have just quoted; and there is another passage, a whole canto indeed, in which the woman Beatrice is made to discourse of the Incarnation, the Immortality of the Soul, and the Resurrection of the Body, each of these dubious and questionable terms being understood in its literal sense; apparently in utter ignorance of the higher spiritual meaning that a liberal theology has shewn to be latent in such phrases as these. Definition is piled on definition, dogma on dogma; nay, Tests of all kinds are rampant, for in three Cantos Dante is examined by Peter, James, and John upon Faith, Hope, and Charity! And the whole poem is permeated by the spirit of the deplorable and ridiculous scholastic philosophy which enslaved Europe for so many centuries, which discussed such questions as "How many angels can dance upon the point of a needle?" by the spirit of the idolatrous mass, by quotations from Popish hymns and from the Romish version of the Psalms. All this may be Christianity, but it is certainly not the Christianity of

Battersea! I have been informed that there was a Dean of the Establishment who devoted his life to the study of this Dante; I can only say that I can quite believe it! One can understand that such a man would be a rancorous opponent of Simple Bible Teaching in the People's Schools.

And now the question I ask is this — and you will pardon me if I ask it with indignation — how long are the Protestant People of England going to bear the free circulation of this book? Are the efforts of Free Churchmen and Liberals to be stultified, is our great success at the polls to be nullified by teaching such as I have indicated, not only sown broadcast throughout the land, but recommended by persons in high places, and enforced by the shadowy terrors of an imposing reputation? Is England Protestant and Undenominational or not? If it claims these titles, and I think it has done so in no doubtful manner, let there be an end of all this; let us not suffer the Evil Thing which we are pitching out of the school windows to come in again by the study door. It is of little use, believe me, to insist on Simple Bible Teaching at one moment, and to teach the Baptismal Figment at the next, even though this pernicious doctrine appear on the pages of an Italian Poet. As for Freedom, I suppose you do not wish for freedom to sell poisons, freedom to vend arsenic and strychnine? If we are Protestants the Divine Comedy should be suppressed. Is not the spirit — the immortal soul — of higher import than the perishing and transitory body? Shall we shut the public-house door, and open the leaves of this book, which reeks of Catholic Dogma from the first page to the last?

I think that the rock on which you and many others are inclined to split is a very dangerous one, and I believe it would be as well if I "charted" it once for all, so that you and those who think with you may avoid the peril for the future. The rock in question is this: you and indeed many excellent people have, I think, some vague and ill-defined idea to the effect that License, misnamed Toleration, is, or should be, one of the special marks of Liberals and Protestants. I do not quite know how this idea originated, possibly from such phrases as "the intolerance of Rome,"

"the tyranny of kings and nobles," which are often used, and very properly used, by Liberals and Evangelical writers. Of course, all kings and nobles are tyrants, and cruel tyrants to boot; but you surely would not have their opponents, the oppressed people, endeavour to govern by the methods of the jelly fish? We know that the Czar of Russia and the bureaucrats are remorseless tyrants, guilty of the most infamous cruelties; but do you suggest that their miserable victims should throw bombs charged with rosewater?

At any rate, if you search history you will find no justification for this very curious theory of yours. I don't think there was much "tolerance" about Bluff King Hal when he had to deal with recalcitrant abbots and friars; Queen Elizabeth, unless I am mistaken, stamped out Popery without much hesitation, as Tyburn Tree could bear witness, and the triumphant and glorious Puritans of the seventeenth century (sturdy followers of good old John Knox), suppressed the idolatrous worship of Rome and Canterbury under the sanctions of death and transportation. Again, in France, during the Revolution I fear you would miss your favourite virtue (as you think it), in the actions of the Revolutionary Government, in the so-called "massacres," in the prisons, in the thousands of executions which took place under the very insignia of triumphant Liberty. And to-day, in the United States, the freest country in the world, perhaps the only country which is truly free, I am told that there are not wanting certain instruments of coercion which can be applied, if need be, to those who deliberately set themselves against popular sentiment. It is not many weeks ago since I saw the very interesting account of the proceedings taken by Mr. Comstock and the Society for the Suppression of Vice against a certain Art Club which had committed the gross indecency of making studies from the nude. Now the American People (very wisely, in my opinion) does not approve of Art, suspecting, and rightly suspecting, that the word in nine cases out of ten is used as a veil for obscenity; the consequence is that the disgusting publications of this selfstyled "Art Club" have been seized, and the members of the society bound over for prosecution. Again, you will have noted the case of Maxim Gorky. Sacerdotalists have said hard things about the American Marriage Laws, which indeed breathe the genial spirit of an advanced and liberalised Christianity, and are, therefore, naturally unacceptable to our friends the priests. Yet, there is a moral sentiment in America which puts us to the blush, and the Russian having outraged that sentiment, found himself homeless — in the freest country in the earth.

Well, you see my point, do you not? I hope I have convinced you that at no time and in no country has the prevalence of Protestant and Liberal opinions been accompanied by that languid acquiescence in evil which masquerades under the name of “tolerance”; we are not “tolerant” now we never have been “tolerant,” and unless under compulsion, we never will be. We fight for the Good and the True, and (as Liberal leader-writers say when a Liberal Government is in office) wars cannot be made with rosewater. I trust that by this time I have quite convinced you that there was nothing inconsistent with Liberal and Protestant principles in my demand for the suppression of the works of Dante.

I do not wish to stifle a reverent curiosity as to the Future Life. Far from it; I have told you how my boy’s anticipation of his Heavenly Home touched and pleased me, and, as I said, why should not the vision of an English child, attached to a Free Church, a member of a well-governed community, be as acceptable and as probable as that of the old time seer, who must have lived under conditions that we should deem revolting? At all events, to the earnest Christian there are many sources of information open; let him read “The Gates Ajar,” for example; a touching anticipation that life in Heaven will be extremely like life in the smaller villages of the United States of America. And, if we consider the matter seriously, can we find much amiss in such an anticipation? I have often felt that many of my brothers are unduly timorous when speaking on this subject; modern, enlightened, and advanced in most matters, they seem, if I may say so, still somewhat under the bondage of ecclesiastical tradition when they approach the question of eschatology. They use, I mean, the figures and the symbols which John uses, which no doubt may have appealed forcibly enough to the uneducated, unscientific Christians of the early centuries; to men whose eyes were dazed, as it were, with the barbaric pomp of the Temple services, or with the gorgeous pageantry of pagan Rome. Of course, this is a subject which requires delicate handling, but perhaps you will remember that I have already pointed out to you that in Holy Writ (which I need not say is the Life and Inspiration of all Evangelical Churches), one must, it may be, be prepared to recognise certain elements as local and temporary in their scope. Nor do I think this view need present much difficulty to the earnest enquirer; it is surely not an impossible task to disentangle the great Basic Principles of Christianity from the setting of brilliant Orientalisms which, no doubt, recommended these principles to the particular audience to which they were first addressed. Shall I give you my test? Well, it seems simple enough. Ask yourself these questions: — Does such or such a doctrine or utterance appeal to me personally as finely Christian? Is it in accord with the modern spirit? Can I imagine such an utterance being received with "loud and continued applause" at a Liberal meeting? Would this doctrine satisfy the ethical demands of a modern man of science? Can I conceive of such a rite as this suggesting itself spontaneously to a representative assembly of Free Churchmen? And perhaps best of all — the final and conclusive test — Is this a doctrine on which the party could go to the country, with the certainty of being returned by a triumphant, a "thumping" majority? I do not claim this test as an absolute discovery; indeed, I am very glad to be able to call the testimony of a distinguished brother minister, the Rev. C. H. Kelly, ex-president of the Wesleyan Conference, who in his charge to the newly-ordained ministers, is reported to have said that ‘‘they had to preach to an age that was antagonistic to formality. Men would not listen to doctrinal statements unless they were practical. It was a democratic age. Crowns and lawn sleeves did not count for much to-day. If Paul or Wesley returned to the earth now, they would have to act differently. If Martin Luther came back to Germany, he would have to act differently, if for no other reason than from the fact that the Kaiser was living."

Yes; there does seem some slight inconsistency between the sentence about "crowns" and the sentence about the Kaiser; but that apart, note how the preacher goes to the root of the matter, how he gives in practice the same rule that I have given in theory. "Tell the democracy what the democracy wants to hear," is the Rev. C. H. Kelly's message: "Test the Bible by the judgment of the democracy," is mine. How far and how well we have travelled from the spirit of the text (no doubt adapted to Syrian modes of thought) which bids us beware when all men speak well of us, and tells us to rejoice in being evilly spoken of, maltreated, persecuted, imprisoned, put to death! The preaching of Paul brought him bonds, and beatings, and execution; Luther no doubt ran great risks, even Wesley was pelted, insulted, reviled. How different the stories of such men from the career of the late venerated Pastor of the City Temple! Yes, Democracy and Protestantism have led us far.

Well; to apply our test to the particular matter under consideration. I said that my brother ministers seemed to be unduly bound by obsolete ecclesiastical tradition in discussing the sublime subject of our future eternal happiness; and I should like to ask some of them whether they honestly think they would be really happy in such a heaven as John (if it be

John) describes for us. You know the vision: the description of the glowing and bejewelled Court of Heaven, the elders in white robes with crowns of gold, the seven lamps of fire, the vials full of odours (incense, I am afraid, were the truer translation), the prostration and adoration of the elders, the angel with the censer to whom was given much incense. If we are quite sincere, we must confess that all this is a description of a gorgeous and elaborate ceremonial; and I must add that it reads much more like an account of "High Mass" in a Romish or Ritualistic Church than anything else with which I am acquainted. I need scarcely say that neither I, nor any Free Church minister known to me, would be at all happy or even comfortable during the performance of such a ceremonial as John describes. Taking into consideration the fact that we spend our whole lives in denouncing such ceremonial, in warning our people against its insidious, meretricious, and theatrical attractions (whoredoms of the Scarlet Woman, our plain-spoken forefathers called such rites), considering that our Puritan ancestors fought and bled and died and feared not even kings, so that such abominations should be swept out of the land, considering that even in these days stout John Kensit was martyred for his efforts to make all such idolatries impossible; considering all this, I say, is it not a little ridiculous that we should bid our people look forward to certain things as the perpetual joys of heaven, while, with what seems to me startling inconsistency, we order them to shun these very things like the pestilence on earth? *é* Why should we not be candid? Why do we not confess that John's symbols are ill-chosen and dangerous, for our times at all events; that the Congregationalists of Peckham, the Baptists of Battersea, the Wesleyans of Tooting have long passed beyond the spiritual region which was occupied by half-clad, ignorant, uncivilised fellahin and fakirs in the Syria of the first century. But do we quite realise this? Are we not, even the best of us, bound by that superstitious reverence for the past which has been responsible for so much mischief and error, which has enslaved and still enslaves the souls and bodies of men? Would it not be as well if we realised, once for all, that the average seventh standard boy or girl from the school over the way is in many respects the superior of the whole body of the Apostles? I believe there are persons, even in this age, who despise or pretend to despise modern progress, who assert that main drainage, pure water, electric trams — in fact, all the results of applied science — are entirely unimportant. But we are not concerned with the pseudo-mediævalists, but with the British

Democracy, and I think it is time that we appealed to them on their own ground, that we shewed ourselves not merely spiritual but also practical, when we wish to set forth the Reward that is in store.

I heard a story once that pleased me. An American Revivalist was endeavouring to excite the devotion of his congregation by dwelling on the heaven of John. In the midst of his most eloquent passage a sturdy, ringing voice came from the back of the hall: “What’s the matter with Kentucky? It’s God’s own state, anyway, and that’s good enough for me!” I cordially sympathise with the utterer of that sentiment; I sympathise too with a little American boy in a somewhat similar story. The child came crying to the Sunday School Superintendent, and said he didn’t want to go to heaven because his teacher had told him that there would be no chewing-gum there, nor any Britishers to whip.

My good friend, we shall all say, if we are sincere, “what’s the matter with Kentucky” (or Battersea!); we shall all demand our chewing-gum and our Britishers to whip. For otherwise, do we not confess that we are ashamed of our daily occupations, of our daily interests in life; do we not, in fact, plead guilty to leading lives that are essentially wrong and distorted? Unless we are ready to join the Eastern fakir and the Western monk in their miserable blasphemy, we are far from pleading guilty to any such accusation. On the contrary, we say boldly that we are placed in this world to use it, to get on in it, to better its condition by healthy political activities, to make money in it by the judicious exercise of the faculties that have been given us. The world has always worshipped success, and the world has been right; and I have no doubt that these goodly activities in which we have joined together below will be prolonged eternally in heaven. We cannot say how it can be so, but we know that it will be so, and in perfect measure. There will be no violent break, no sudden dislocation of all our interests and all our activities, as John imagined, and as many excellent but mistaken people imagine to this day. The respectable suburban citizen, who has read “Self-Help” to advantage, who has realised the inner meaning of the Parable of the Talents, has amassed an honest fortune by his successful handling of some useful product, and has been the prop and stay of some excellent Evangelical cause — a man like this will not be hurled suddenly into a world to which business methods are altogether unknown, in which the simple Gospel service of the Free Churches is replaced by complicated and mysterious rites, which seem to outvie the impious splendours of Popery. No; “Work without worry” will be, I think, the motto of the Heavenly City. Even the Romish Monk realised in his dark and contracted fashion something of the limitations of this earthly sphere: —

Brief life is here our portion,
Brief sorrow, short-lived care:

Though, of course, his is a pessimism coloured by the gloomy superstition of Rome. Yet, in spite of the advances that have been made, we must confess that the faithful Christian has still many trials, many difficulties to overcome. I once knew a good man who was interested in milk, arid I am sure that his life was as innocent and simple as the product in which he dealt. He is now, I trust, in the enjoyment of glory; his heirs are certainly in the enjoyment of considerable affluence. The father was a Christian man; his descendants, I regret to say, have attached themselves to the Establishment. Well, I have known this worthy gentleman come to me with tears in his eyes while he recounted the annoyances and hindrances that were thrown in his way by the harassing and un-English methods of the Government Inspectors.

“What do they want, doctor?” I have heard him say: “What *will* satisfy them? That’s what I want to know. We have a poor fellow in our employment who has been consumptive for the last three years; he’s *a* handy man, and naturally I don’t pay him full wages, as he’s getting rather weak now. You can’t expect a man to pay a full day’s wage for a half-day’s work — at least, not out of the Parables. After all, if you only give a man a penny a day it’s hardly worth while paying a fellow to keep the time-sheet. You don’t often find out the Good Book in a mistake, do you, doctor? But I wish I knew how the owner of that vineyard managed to keep down wages as he did. The unions wouldn’t stand it now for a moment. But I suppose we shall know all about it when we get to heaven.”

My friend was a shrewd man-of-the-world, and I often derived great benefit from listening to such keen commentaries as these on the Scripture story. But on this occasion to which I am referring, he grew almost beside himself with indignation as he told me that he was threatened with “trouble” because he persisted in keeping on his unfortunate assistant, who was slowly dying of consumption. “Do they want me to throw the poor fellow out into the street?” he exclaimed. I sympathised with him to the best of my ability, and then he went on to say that this was the least of his worries. There was trouble about the comparatively harmless chemicals that he used to preserve the lacteal fluid in its pristine freshness, there was trouble about a case of typhoid occurring in a cottage adjoining the dairy, and an impertinent person who had made a kind of domiciliary visit to the cowsheds had gone away talking of “disgusting substances from diseased, udders” finding their way into the milk. Then there was the question of attenuation; my poor old friend pointed out that milk* “stuffed with cream” (as fie put it) wasn’t wholesome. “The public don’t want it,” he said, “they wouldn’t look at it if they got it; any more than they’d drink beer made out of malt and hops, whiskey made of malt, or brandy distilled from wine.”

“Ah,” he concluded; “the world’s a hard place, and what with the rates and taxes, I don’t think we get much out of it in the end.”

I comforted him, as I say, and when I reminded him of that stream which waters Paradise and makes the angels sing, suggesting that he might be placed in charge of its source, and that there would be no sighing or sorrow there, he looked more cheerful. He knew that there would be no Inspectors among the Shining Ones. Yes; earthly Trusts may be threatened; but no powers of evil will be suffered to break the everlasting “Corners” of our Heavenly Mansion.

There will be no break, no solution of continuity. Science has wiped the dimness from our eyes; we no longer look for the instantaneous scene-shifting, if I may use the expression, which seems to have characterised earlier and less enlightened views — views which seem to have regarded heaven as a transformation scene in a celestial pantomime. The trumpet will *not* sound; we shall *not* all be changed in the twinkling of an eye, for Science teaches us that the Divine Process is a gradual one, and heaven is, after all, but the grand goal of Evolution. Trumpets, of course, are quite impossible, and out of the question.

And need I say that the principle applies (as how should it not) to the religious world as to the secular. Here again I am inclined to think that some of my brother ministers are a little inconsistent. Again and again I have heard sermons and read papers which seem to look forward to a final abolition of all denominational ties, to a union of all into one vast and eternal denomination. We are asked to imagine a heaven in which there will neither be Baptists or Methodists, Congregationalists or Bible Christians, where Presbyterians will be unknown, and Sandemanianism will be sought for in vain. But if this is the ideal, why do we not try to realise it on earth? If such is the goal to which we are moving, to what purpose the labour and expense involved in building churches and administering the affairs of the three hundred denominations which make such a brave show in the useful Whittaker? If we are to be One (in this mechanical sense), hereafter, why do we not endeavour to be One now and on earth? I must say that the inconsistency is too apparent to escape remark.

The truth is, of course, that a merely mechanical unity is not recommended to us on earth, nor promised as a reward hereafter. Let us leave such unity as that to slaves and priests: Christianity is not a thing to be governed by the cast-iron rules of the mathematicians, and in the purely spiritual order in which Evangelical Christians move and have their being, two and two are constantly making five. In this spiritual sense, in the vital sense (the only one which really matters), all the Free Churches are already One, as the Enemy has found to his cost, as the polling booths testified not very long ago. As for the phrase, “our unhappy divisions,” I repudiate it altogether. Our divisions are most happy; they are but another witness to the infinite Diversity in Unity which characterises the whole of Creation. Do we wish that all flowers had been roses, all trees oaks, all metals gold, all places of worship exactly like the City Temple, all pastors perfect duplicates of Dr. Clifford, all hills Primrose Hills, all suburbs Batterseas? No, a thousand times no! Not in this dull mechanical sense was the great Aspiration for Unity uttered, and so far am I from deploring the divisions amongst us, that I wish that I could read each morning of the rise of a new denomination — of a new and dewy bud, as it were, shooting forth from the parent stem, with the freshness and innocence of the dawn still lingering like a glory about its yet unopened petals, rare with the prospect of future usefulness and beauty, promising a rich crop of churches to add still fresh graces to our imposing streets, to delight the world with more unheard of discoveries in the art of architectural ornament. No: many are the colours, the lights and the shades that go to the painting of a great picture— “The Doctor” is not of one uniform hue — and each Protestant Denomination is but a varying pigment in the Great Masterpiece which will at last be exhibited to the angels.

As in earth, so in heaven. We may alter a hymn which has always pleased me, because though written, I believe, in the Dark Ages, it offers a fine witness to the sanctity of the Sabbath. Still, for the moment, let us read it thus: —

O what the joy and the glory must be,
Endless Free Churches the blessed ones see!

Nay, if England alone, this little island in the Northern Sea, can shew to-day Three Hundred distinct denominations, how vast, how aweinspiring will be the Infinite Divisions of Eternity i

IV. What is true Patriotism? — Our Corrupt Stage — Superstition in the Newspaper.

HAVE YOU EVER noticed the strange persistence with which a calumny, oft-times refuted, is again and again repeated? How often, to take a modern political instance, has it been boldly, nay, shamelessly asserted that the advanced wing of the great Liberal Party (to which I have the honour to belong) is indifferent, or indeed, hostile to the British Empire, its fame and its prosperity. We have seen this slander refuted each time it has been advanced, for from the dark days of the Boer War, to the recent troubles in South Africa and Egypt, who but the Advanced Liberals have come forward on every occasion to denounce the Mother Country, to heap well-deserved shame on the British Empire, to prove their countrymen invariably in the wrong, greedy, cruel, rapacious, murderous? And in what better way than this can we prove our intense pride and joy in England? Was Cæsar an enemy to his wife when he declared that she must be above suspicion? Am I the foe of my little ones when I lovingly correct them for their childish faults? What do we call the parent who suffers his infants to have their own way in all things; to torment animals, to annoy the neighbours, to swear, to drink, to steal? Surely such parents are not friends to their children, but rather their deadliest foes; and surely we do well not to keep silence over the misdeeds of our wandering sons. Which is the worse, think you; to pull the kitten's tail or to cut off the heads of the hapless Mahdi, of the deeply-wronged Bambaata, victims both of English lust for gold? Which is the Blacker crime, for my little boy to annoy the bald old gentleman in the next garden by his sportive exercises with the pea shooter, or for the English jingoes and maffickers to annoy our good friends at Berlin by the persistent building of vast ships armed with guns of great power? The other day I was walking down a neighbouring street when my attention was arrested by shrill screams from over the way. I crossed over, and was shocked to find that my little Helen, aged seven, had succeeded in evading domestic supervision, and was endeavouring to wrest a small doll from a child of much tenderer years. I administered suitable castigation to my erring child there and then, and on her return to our roof she received a chapter from the Book of Kings to learn by heart. This course of action I considered, and consider still, to have been dictated by true regard for the welfare of my offspring; and yet — look at the map of the British Empire, like a great stain of blood upon the fair face of the world! I corrected my child for the attempted theft of a paltry doll; shall we not also correct our vagrant children who have stolen, not a child's toy, but whole continents? From the Maori and the Blackfellow, from the African Negro and the myriad tribes of India, from tne Red-skinned native of Canada and the poor down-trodden Egyptian, there goes up an exceeding bitter cry that pierces our hearts as the wail of the infant in the street pierced mine; and are we to remain silent? I say no; punish we must, though we punish with love; and for this are we to be branded as enemies of our country? And yet the vile slander is repeated at each instance of our tender love of these our erring children; and one of us who was not afraid to lift his voice in horror and reprobation of the vile massacre that followed the death by sunstroke of an English officer is held up to execration, forsooth, as a traitor to his country!

Yes; calumny seems a monster which revives from the ashes of its funeral pyre, like the fabled Phoenix of Arabia; and I know of no more abominable calumny than that which ascribes to the Puritan an ignorance of the arts, and indeed a detestation of them.

In answer to this, let me point out once and for all that it is we and we alone who make any artistic success possible in the England of to-day. Of course, there are more or less unclean cults and cliques which lurk in certain byeways and back-alleys of English life, hidden away, happily, from the most of us, and nauseating all right-thinking people by their rare appearances in the public streets. But I must say that on the whole the Press of England understands its duty where such persons are considered. A little sharp ridicule will often affect wonders where more serious rebuke would be inefficient, and I have not yet forgotten my delight when our great comic journal greeted the work of a certain notorious imitator of the old Popish painters with just this comment:— "Burne Jones? Burn Jones!" Then there was a person called Rossetti (a very un-English name it seems to me), and a man named Whistler, and I believe I have heard of an unhappy lad named Beardsley, who was cut off in the midst of his sins. But I am not speaking of these "aesthetes"; I do not wish to discuss a subject which is, to say the least of it, an unsavoury one. What I say is that the artist who wishes to succeed in England must win the affections of the English People, and the English People are, as has been often observed, Puritan to the backbone. Consider the popularity of such pictures as the “Railway Station,” the “Derby Day,” and that eloquent series called, I think, “The Road to Ruin.” Note the humanity, the appeal to our best instincts in all of them, the gratification of that eminently worthy instinct that demands that every picture should tell a story. Note, too, the moral appeal; who, however thoughtless, or, it may be, criminal, would wish to go to the great gambling carnival after gazing at Mr. Frith’s vivid picture? Take a more modern example, the wonderful “Doctor”; how it tends to raise our opinion of the whole medical profession, to excite our sympathies for the anxious parents! Take that class of pictures which are often so admirably reproduced in the Christmas numbers of the illustrated journals. The pictures in question may not be, perhaps, pretentious, though some of them seem to me to shew very high power; but how delicate is the chord struck. A litle girl with golden hair holds up a piece of meat, at which a fox-terrier is jumping; meanwhile pussy, who is perched on the child’s shoulder, slyly extends a paw in the direction of the dainty morsel. One wonders what will be the end of the story: will the fox-terrier secure the meat by some extraordinary exertion, or will the artful cat succeed in her design, and devour the toothsome prize before Jack’s very eyes? Again, there is the humorous catastrophe which befalls the fishmonger’s lad, too intent on the (certainly very fascinating), pages of *Tit-Bits*, so that this time pussy, who has had her eye on his tray, succeeds in carrying out her felonious schemes.

Nay, the catalogue of such excellent works is practically endless, and the fame and fortune which the admirable artists have achieved is due, let me remind you again, to the appeal which their works make to the great mass of the British Nation, which is, as I have said, in profound sympathy with the aims and ideals of the Free Churches.

Again; consider the Drama. Who, if it was not the great Puritan middle class, made the fortune of such a masterpiece as “The Sign of the Cross?” I remember watching the immense crowds that waited patiently outside the Lyric Theatre, and thinking that the tide had at last turned, that it was no longer necessary for the sincere Christian to leave the playhouse severely alone. I seemed to foresee a time when at every theatre in London plays of like nature should be produced, and as the mass of thoughtless pleasure seekers became gradually leavened, it might, perhaps, be possible to strike out more boldly still, and practically to transform the whole character of the stage. It has been said, perhaps with no very complimentary intention, that some of our Sacred Songs are not far removed from the region of Negro Minstrelsy; why, I thought, should not we bridge over our differences and cause Negro Minstrelsy to speak, as it were, the tongue of Zion? Then it seemed to me that I saw in a Pisgah Vision the Opera itself transformed; no longer the resort of a thoughtless aristocracy, assembled to listen to the vocal gymnastics of foreigners and Romanists, but a rallying point for all lovers of homely and innocent English Music. Why, I remembered, the oratorio itself developed from services held in an oratory or chapel in Rome; why should not the Service of Song, which has long been such an attraction in our churches, develop in its turn and become the great musical form of the English People; so that instead of the over-dressed and under-dressed (alas! that I must say it), who throng the opera-house to listen to exotic, un-English, and, I am afraid, unwholesome music, we might have great gatherings of sober, decent, earnest people, clad in their "go-to-meeting" clothes (to use a good old phrase), and rapt to tears and laughter by such masterpieces of the true musician's art as "Little Abe" and "The Oiled Feather."

And I went farther. At present, I said to myself, there is every reason to fear that the ordinary English play is a thoughtless and frivolous production at best, while many are known to be much worse than thoughtless. The scene is laid in gilded halls, in the drawing-rooms of a brainless and effete aristocracy, the dialogue is compounded of idle and pointless jest and repartee; even when the title — such as "The Importance of being Earnest" — promises better things it is to be feared that no real good is intended, that the serious name serves but as a mask to cover the writer's thoughtless gaiety. Why, I thought, should not all this be changed? As one who has seen the lights and shadows of Sunday School life under very favourable conditions, I have often wondered that such a field of intense dramatic interest should be neglected and passed over. Take the career — it is no exceptional one — of a young man who has been long known to me. I remember him as a tiny boy repeating his texts in that shrill clear voice which touches every father's heart; I remember his voice rising shriller yet in the hymn: —

Oh tell me about the Sheep,
Oh tell me about the Fold;
I want to hear ‘bout the Ninety-and-nine,
And the One that was lost in the cold.

Still I remember the pathos on that little face, when the child’s teacher, whose suspicions had been aroused by a strong odour, found half-a-score of tiny packets of peppermint lozenges, which the lad had brought to school, in the hope of disposing of them at a penny a packet. Many such incidents as these come to my memory, and in the last scene there are wedding bells and an extremely prosperous business in Wandsworth, and I am amazed, as I say, that such a story as this has not appealed to any of our rising dramatists. From such sources as these, I thought, will the play of the future be constructed; playwrights will have realised that there is no need for them to pry into the dark corners and unsavoury recesses of the human mind, since there are innocent and engrossing subjects all around them. What should we say of a man who, not content with plucking fruit and flowers from the orchard and the garden, should reject the wholesome and delicious pear, the dewy roses exhaling their odours under the bright sun, and explore the evil-smelling depths of the dustbin and the rubbish-heap?

Well; I often wonder when I shall see my vision realised, when the theatre will be as innocent and as helpful as the Revival Meeting, and the actors will rank with Church Workers in the public estimation. The time is not yet; but after what I have said I do not think you will require any further proof of my intense interest in the English Drama. True, I, and those who think with me, would see the Stage reformed, we would banish from the boards themes which suggest the Penitentiary or the Lunatic Asylum. Nothing would give me greater pain than to witness the murder or madness of my best friends, and I fail to see that such subjects make profitable and pleasing spectacles, even though the *dramatis personæ* are kings and queens whose very existence is doubtful. But I do not think that an attitude such as this can be described as one of hostility to the drama. If you, in a sudden fit of frenzy, were to take off your clothes and propose to walk to Westminster in a state of complete nudity, I do not believe that on coming to your right senses you would characterise my firm but kindly restraint as "hostility and, following the analogy, it seems a little hard that Free Churchmen should be held up to public contempt and execration because they object to plays which contain scenes in a duchess's bedroom after midnight, scenes in which champagne is produced, scenes of which the dialogue is far from edifying. Many of us are the fathers of families, of boys and girls whom we are training up with anxious care, whose young lives are precious in our sight. There is nothing more sacred than that ingenuous shame which the growth of civilisation has fostered as a guarding instinct against the violation of the mind. I make no fight for prudery, but I stand for cleanliness and decency, and there are certain dark places into which I would never have my children introduced. And yet, let us consider one of the so-called "classics" of the English Stage, a piece which, I am sorry to say, seems to enjoy an infamous immortality. Its plot (I do not care to name it), turns on the unsavoury topic of an old man married to a young wife — a theme which, as I daresay you are aware, has always been a favourite with the purveyors of indecency and moral garbage. About these two unhappy persons revolves a crowd of dissolute, idle, and luxurious people of fashion, whose only employment seems to be the circulation of ill-natured and preposterous rumours about each other. The dialogue, I may add, is written in a style which is evidently intended to be brilliant, but which strikes me personally as most unnatural. I may say that my social opportunities have been rather larger than is general; I have known almost intimately two of the most respected Liberal Peers, I have visited the palatial residence of Sir Josiah Smeech, who has raised himself from poverty and obscurity to his present great position, I am naturally, welcome at the tables and in the drawing-rooms of the principal members of my congregation, some of them extremely wealthy men, and I have long been acquainted with the leaders of the Free Church Party in the House of Commons. I think you will admit, then, that I am not without experience in the conversation of men of light and leading; but I can earnestly and truthfully assure you that on no occasion have I heard anything remotely resembling the dialogue in the play I am discussing. Scene after scene proceeds with this stream of empty, irreligious chatter — in another play by the same author there is a character who swears "by the mass" — and we gather by degrees that there are two brothers, one of whom is held up to our admiration, but who seems to me the worse character of the two — if there be degrees of turpitude where all is of the vilest of the vile.

The favourite brother, I must tell you, is portrayed as a spendthrift, a drunkard, a gamester, and a libertine, and he is surrounded by a gang of dissolute and insolent servants and of noisy, ill-bred boon companions who are as bad as himself. Honesty, I need scarcely say, forms no part of this person's composition; he is represented as deliberately refusing to pay his tailor's bill, preferring to spend the money in a deed of so-called charity, which happened to appeal to the false sentiment which ran riot in his maudlin, ill-regulated brain. Now we come to the climax of the piece. The brother of the young spendthrift forms a plot against the honour of the woman who is, I suppose, the "heroine" of the story, and entices her to visit his rooms on an errand of no doubtful purport. And then, in full view of the audience, we have represented the attempted seduction of this foolish and thoughtless wife, whose levity of character brings her to the very brink of destruction. On the one side are all the arguments that a specious and abandoned hypocrite can muster, on the other retorts which we are supposed to accept as wit, and so the scene proceeds to its most unpleasant termination. The worst, it is true, does not happen; but all but the worst happens; and this is the "classic" English Drama, this deliberate and elaborate representation of lust, debauchery, and the lowest and most degraded passions in poor human nature.

You will scarcely believe me when I tell you the defence that has been made for this most disgusting piece of prurience and indecency. It is simply this: we are told, forsooth, that there is no harm in it because it is a "Comedy of Manners," because the whole thing is an elaborate jest! It is a comedy of very bad manners assuredly, and I suppose that you or I would not have much difficulty in stringing together disgusting phrases collected from the drunken revellers of the pot-house and the gutter. As for the theory that the actor is at liberty to depict the vicious and abandoned lives of wicked people, to utter before an audience which may, and probably does, contain a considerable proportion of young people sentiments of the most horrible and disgusting nature, to portray at other times vice in its most alluring character; to do all this without reproach because his dress is of the eighteenth century fashion and not of the twentieth: I say that such a theory is monstrous. Sin is sin, and vice is vice in bloom-coloured satin as in black broadcloth, and a lustful heart is no less odious under lace ruffles than under plain linen. So much for the theory of "the Comedy of Manners." As for the other defence that has been proposed it is even more monstrous and offensive to the common sense of humanity. I cannot conceive how anybody in his sober senses can defend plays such as this because they are supposed to be quite unserious, to treat human nature, both good and evil, as a vast jest. My dear sir, this defence is itself an accusation and a heavy one. Are we sent into this vale of tears to laugh and make merry over ourselves and our destiny? Is the Life of Man, that great Drama which is being performed before the dread audience of High Heaven matter for quip and retort, for senseless and thoughtless merriment? We know that the architects of the Dark Ages thought so; bewildered with superstition, they defiled even their own idolatrous holy places, and sculptured grotesque infamies by the very horns of the altar; while the wretched monks mingled obscene jokes with the would-be sacred mummeries that they called Mystery Plays. All this need not surprise us, for the world was then drunk with the wine of the fornications of Rome; but that so-called men-of-letters, men of education and presumably sharers in the enlightenment which since those dark old days has blessed the earth should deliberately put forward such a theory in modern times is more than surprising; it would be unthinkable if it were not, unhappily, true. Life is real, life is earnest, said the poet; life is a futile but amusing jest say the apologists for these dreadful plays. Adultery is an amusing situation, theft is the odd humour of a comic servant, the debauchery of young men is the theme of endless merriment, drunkenness will set the whole house in a roar, the dishonest debtor is a charming and entertaining hero, slander and lies and calumny make a capital scene, and finally, the only person in the play in question whose sentiments approach the verge of decency and good behaviour is held up to execration as the villain of the piece.

Is it any wonder that amongst earnest Christians such terms as "art" and "classic" are at least terms of suspicion? Is it any wonder that when we hear people singing the praises of the "exquisite art" of this or that volume, when play or poem or picture is awarded the palm of "classic merit," is it wonderful, I say, that we simple Puritans are apt to take alarm, to imagine, and not, as you will confess, without reason, that "classics" are mostly museums of indecency, and that "art" means either Popery or immorality, or both?

I am told, and I am afraid it is true, that at the present time in London there are places of public entertainment where young women counterfeit at all events, the action of taking off their clothes, of undressing, in fact, upon the stage; while in one case a woman has been found who is indecent enough to exhibit herself before thousands in what is, practically, a state of nature. You may note, by the way, that in the latter case the exhibition is supposed to be sanctioned by the name of "art," to be "classic" in so much as the unhappy female in question assumes, I believe, the appearance of some of the statues which have survived to us from heathen times. Now, as you may imagine, no voice will be raised higher than mine against these and all similar exhibitions. The prurient hypocrisy of shewing an audience a naked woman and of pretending at the same time that the sight is "classic" needs no comment from me. But bad as this is, I am quite sure that it is not so bad as the terrible scene from the "classic" comedy which I outlined for you. For, after all, clothes are a convention; a convention of decency and seemliness it is true, but still a convention and not an eternal law. An African woman, clad in a bead girdle, may be, and very likely is, as modest, or much more modest, than an Englishwoman dressed for a great dinner according to the latest dictates of the prevailing fashion. Clothes, I say, are a convention and a convention that affects the body only; how much more important is the clothing of the mind? Conceive the effect on the average young man and woman, while this heroine of the play is being tempted and approached before them; are not the priceless veils of maiden modesty torn, not from the body of the person on the stage, but from the souls of those who gaze at this awful spectacle?

I suppose you will ask me if I expect the writers of such things to address themselves exclusively to the Young Person — if I intend to tie their soaring genius to the pinafores of my children. I say in answer to that query, that it is not I who chose the medium through which these persons have chosen to reveal their genius to the world, I say that having chosen that medium for themselves, they cannot rightly ignore certain responsibilities which the choice imposes on them. The field of art is a very spacious pleasure-ground indeed, and you may legitimately lay out in it almost any sort of garden plot or plantation, and may erect in it almost any sort of palace or cottage or mansion. As in Battersea Park, there are wide spaces in this field of art, and within the limits of reason and decency you may play whatever games you choose. But it is an open space, and it is dedicated to the delectation of the public. The operating theatre, the dissecting room, and the precincts of the divorce court are out of place there, and most out of place of all possible exhibitions is the exhibition of man’s lust and women’s temptation. We referred a little while ago to the mediæval carvers of grotesque obscenities; and I would say here once for all that I do not recognise the right of any maker of such things first to carve revolting shapes, and then to plump them down in the public pleasure-ground for any unsuspecting wayfarer to sicken at!

So far I have been thinking chiefly of the theatre, and I hope I have convinced you that if Free Churchmen distrust the theatre as it is they have reason for their distrust. At the same time I hope you see that it is as irrational to accuse us of a hatred of the Drama, as it would be to accuse the physician who should prescribe plentiful doses of quinine to some poor victim of malaria of hating his unfortunate patient. It is not hatred which causes the surgeon to cut off the gangrened limb, it is not hatred which makes me caution my little ones to shun the fever-stricken slum, and it is not hatred which impels us to denounce the horrors and the indecency of the so-called “classic” drama, and to take care that those we love shall not enter the halls of so deadly a contagion.

But before I pass from my consideration of the Drama to that of other forms of art, I should like to say a word on the outrageous licence which some persons who write for the public press seem to allow themselves. A friend of mine, a man of rather lax views, is in the habit, I am sorry to say, of taking in regularly, week by week, a well-known Sunday paper, which is partly concerned with the subject which we have been discussing — the Drama — and partly with the degrading and destructive topic of horseraces. I have noticed also some columns which appear to be of a jocular nature, but as the jests they contain are couched in a language which to me is quite unintelligible, and as these jests appear in some way or another to have become mingled with advertising matter, I shall say no more about the columns in question. I have often reproached my friend for taking in this paper; I have pointed out that the Fourth Commandment is not only binding in its strictest, most literal sense on all Christian people, but also prohibits every kind of relaxation or amusement, and it is relaxation and amusement, as I have urged on him, that the Sunday Paper is intended to supply. Again, I spoke briefly but firmly on the dreadful evils of betting; I reminded him of cases, known to both of us, in which whole households had been involved in awful, irretrievable ruin through the mania for gambling on race-horses: of the young fellow with good prospects and talents, with an excellent situation in a business house, tempted by these lists of odds to ruin, disgrace and imprisonment; of the sober middle-aged man, prosperous and beloved by his wife and family, yielding to a form of excitement that is worse than dram-drinkirfg, losing and betting to retrieve his losses, losing again till, his wife dead, his children in misery, he himself at last, found rest in a pauper's grave. I could mention scores of such cases, they are known to everyone who cares to interest himself in the subject, and I asked my friend if he thought it right to encourage a journal, published on the Sabbath, which made a special feature of this horrible pest of all classes in England, from the duke to the errand boy. His answer surprised me: he said he never read a line of the sporting intelligence, not knowing, as he remarked, one race from another; he was solely interested, he observed, in the front page, which, according to him, was filled by a writer of singular ability, who discoursed on the most important and weighty subjects. Indeed, my friend had such an opinion of this author that he had pasted a number of his articles into a large scrapbook, and he insisted on my accepting the loan of the volume. I took it home with me, expecting moderate entertainment, and perhaps instruction; but what was my surprise and disgust to find the greater number of these essays devoted to a credulous consideration of the darkest superstitions. I could scarcely believe my own eyes; I found a difficulty in imagining that the pages before me had been written by an apparently educated man in the twentieth century, in Protestant England. I asked myself whether my senses were not playing me false, whether these lucubrations were not in fact the gibberings of some old woman in the Dark Ages, of some pretended seeress who had collected together the myriad delusions of her equally foolish and benighted predecessors. There were tales of Ghosts and Apparitions, of Dreams and Omens and Visions, of mysterious rappings, of "clairvoyance" and "clair-audience," of Divination and Astrology; in a word, I had before me the great rubbish heap of human fatuity, a museum, as it were, of all the miserable debasing superstitions that have haunted man for centuries and have ministered to the artful devices of charlatans and priests. I assure you that I was thunderstruck, and as I looked through this encyclopaedia of imposture, imbecility and hallucination, I could scarce persuade myself that the whole series was not a translation from some journal published in the interior of Africa for the benefit of the local fetich-worshippers and medicine-men. But no; I was reading extracts from an English Newspaper; and, indeed, before long I perceived that wherever possible the Bogies and Turnip-Spectres of the writer were dressed up as far as might be in imposing scientific, or rather, pseudo-scientific terms, with the object, no doubt, of still further bewildering and bemusing the unfortunate reader; and this depth of absurdity was, as I knew, beneath even the intelligence of the superstitious negro.

There was a dear old minister whom I knew years ago, during my pastorate in the hills of Wales. We were discussing the credulity and self-delusion of mankind in these matters one night, and with a shake of his wise old head, he said: "Superstition is a wild beast, look you, that lives in each one of us, and a wild beast that grows very quick indeed, to be sure." No doubt, he was quite right; the wild beast Superstition, bred in the dark caves and dens of the earth when man was in his childhood, still dwells in our hearts, and exercises, it may be, more influence over our actions than we would care to admit. I myself, I am ashamed to say, have been perturbed to find myself sitting down with twelve fellow-guests, I have shuddered inwardly at the sight of spilled salt, and I always avoid going under a ladder. But I do not blazon these infirmities in the open day; I do not, perhaps, starve my "wild beast" as thoroughly as I could wish, but I try to keep him unseen and lonely in his den. I will not take money to make a show of him; I decline to put him on exhibition either for praise or pudding. Each of us must confess that within our souls these obscene terrors exist, and that if we cared we might publish the ghastly and horrible visions that at times come to all of us. I dare say we all know that we could, if we liked, make a very decent (and most indecent) living out of the monster that dwells within us; but for my part I decline to set the Beast on view for the gratification of a prurient vanity.

But what are we to say of a man who seems to have deliberately set himself to make a living by the ostentatious reproduction and exhibition of all that sane and decent people are willing and desirous to forget, who, week by week, is willing to pocket his wages, knowing that they have been earned by this needless and offensive resurrection of the buried plagues of heathendom and Popery? I cannot, of course, admit for a moment that these articles are written because the writer takes an especial interest in this particular subject (though I hardly see that his case would be much the better if I made such an admission); I am forced to conclude that he works, as I say, for the gratification of a prurient vanity, and for the pence of the purchaser. Does he reflect, I wonder, on what he is doing? A cheap newspaper is not in the same class as a book. About the purchase of the latter, some care is usually exercised; the subject-matter at least is more or less ascertained, criticisms in all probability have been read before the volume is placed oil our tables. Even then, should the work prove to be undesirable in its tendency, the parent or master may lbck up the offending pages, so that our boys and girls may not be injured by their perusal. But a newspaper is in a different category; there is a convention that it will contain nothing that is beyond all question corrupting to young people, and so it is bought carelessly and suffered to lie about our rooms within reach of all, both young and old. I wonder whether the author of these articles ever meditates upon the number of young lives he must have ruined, whether he gloats over the thought of the seeds of madness and delusion that he has planted in the hearts of the little ones. Has he ever thought, as he counts his gold, of the little children who cower with horror in the dark, as they recall his tales of hauntings; of the young lives which are growing up hopelessly astray, their attention and their energies misdirected, and misdirected by him, from the safe and sunny highway into the dark and pestilent dungeons beneath the house of man; of the young men and women, starting on life’s journey, who have been lured by him into the obscene thickets of madness and delusion and terror, into those unsavoury caves where half-forgotten superstitions still lurk, ready to claim their victims? A child, it may be said, would not understand such things. Possibly not, but the germ has been implanted, and in due course, the half-remembered, halfunderstood words will have their effect, and will stimulate into rampant growth a whole host of morbid and deleterious fancies that otherwise might have died of inanition.

I had thought that the final blow had been given to this most deplorable side of our human nature, that mysteries and masses, ghosts and goblins, crystal gazings and astrologies had been definitely relegated to the museum of the follies and horrors of the past. It seems that I was wrong; that the quack and the charlatan are still amongst us, anxious and willing to corrupt and deceive both youth and old age; and that an English journalist is not ashamed to make his living by pandering to some of the most noxious delusions that have haunted and enslaved the race of man.

V. Immoral Sculptures — The Domesticated Critic — The Right Place for Shakespeare.

OUR LAST CONVERSATION was, I think, in the main, devoted to the Drama; and I believe I succeeded in showing you that while we Free Churchmen object to the stage as it is at present conducted, we are so far from being hostile to the theatre, that one of our dearest wishes is to see it reformed, re-edified, and made an instrument of innocent and wholesome delight. In touching on the question of the drama, I could scarcely avoid dealing to some extent with literature, but before I go more fully into that great subject, I should like to say a word about an art which is not so generally in the public view; I mean sculpture.

Now I will say in the first place that there are certain aspects of this art which seem to me wholly laudable. When I pass through the public spaces and squares of our great metropolis and see the splendid statues of deceased statesmen — mostly, I am glad to say, of the Liberal persuasion — my heart thrills, and I feel that I am indeed a citizen of no mean country.

Those stately figures, proud and erect, clad in no unmeaning or obsolete finery, but in the homely trousers and tight-fitting frock-coat of the modern Englishman, go far to justify the sculptor’s art, and we feel that the side-whiskers and nose of such a man as Cobden deserved to be commemorated in the enduring marble. Here, too, on that shelf, you will have noticed the bust of a distinguished fellow-minister: how the brow glows with thought, how well the artist has rendered the fine flowing locks, swept back, it seems, from the forehead in some sudden access of inspiration. Nay, there are humbler walks of the art which are at least innocent; the monkey in terra-cotta swinging on his rope will certainly afford harmless amusement, and perhaps may inculcate kindness to animals; while the head of the grinning negro boy may stimulate an interest in missionary enterprise.

But here, I think, we must draw the line. We may be held up to derision as prudes and fanatics, the oft-quoted motto, *honi soit qui mal y pense*, may be hurled at our heads, we may be styled prurient, unclean, and I know not what else; but in spite of all clamour and all abuse we must say once for all that we cannot tolerate the making and the display of likenesses, in marble or bronze, in ivory or terracotta of the naked human form. There is a point at which all modern peoples divide the endurably coarse from the intolerably indecent and abominable. Every civilised man has a limit beyond which he will not permit himself to be carried; and, what is of at least equal importance, he has a limit beyond which he will not knowingly allow those innocences, ignorances and inexperiences which are under his guardianship or control to travel. I say that this limit is overstepped when in defiance of every principle of modesty and decency our eyes are confronted with this spectacle of nudity. A nude picture is, indeed, bad and vicious in the extreme, but what is it to the sculptured form of a large, well-shaped woman, offending our eyes with the blatant realism of bronze or marble?

I was once being entertained by one of my deacons, a comparatively wealthy tradesman. He had moved into a larger house, and was kind enough to invite me to be present at the consequent festivity. Much of the furniture, ornaments, pictures, etc., was new, and to most of it no exception could be taken. But, on looking round the drawing-room I was horrified to perceive a group of statuettes in white marble; the statuettes in question being nothing more or less than the representations of three young women, not one of whom had on a stitch of clothing. Now, as it happened, my host had three daughters, all of them modest and Christian girls, aged from sixteen to twenty-two. I had watched their progress in our Sunday School, and knew them well. So after supper I took Mr. Laskin aside, and said:

“I have a suggestion to make, which I think you will find calculated to add to the pleasure of the delightful evening we have all spent.”

“What is it, doctor?” he said. “Let’s hear about it, by all means.”

“Well,” I said, “I daresay you have heard of tableaux vivants, as they are called; the idea is that people should group themselves in such a way and in such costume as to suggest some well-known, picture or event. Now, I propose that your three daughters, Minnie, Lizzie and Muriei should take off all their clothes and see How well they can remind us of that pretty group I notice on the side-table.”

You may imagine my host’s consternation at this proposal, and it was some time before he was convinced that I had not fallen a victim to a sudden attack of mania. At last, however, my real meaning dawned upon him, and I could see that he was a good deal ashamed. The statuettes were no longer in the drawing-room on my next visit.

Would that I could persuade the world to act as promptly and as sensibly as good Mr. Laskin Yet our Art Galleries and Museums, when they are not filled with the representations of Popish Virgins and Martyrs, teem with so-called works of art such as I have just described. I sometimes see ministers of religion, schoolmasters and schoolmistresses, even mothers and aunts, conducting bands of children round the establishments’ which the nation is wasteful and wicked enough to support; and I confess’ that I view such a sight with very great misgiving, or rather, with horror. How can that be right in art which is admittedly wrong and monstrous in life? If I am not to gaze at the nude and exposed forms of the lady Sunday School teachers, why in heaven’s name should this great Protestant and Christian nation subsidise exhibitions which contain dozens of such forms, forms, moreover, which in many cases add to the offence of their nakedness by the representation of lascivious and alluring attitudes and gestures? I do not see that the antiquity of many of these objects is in any way in their favour, or excuses in the slightest degree their exhibition to the public. Indeed, I should have thought that in a professedly Christian country the pagan origin of these statues would be an additional argument in the contrary direction. But if we are to be told that we are to look with respect and admiration on every relic of antiquity, as such; then of course the path is clear, and we shall revive in our midst all the unspeakable abominations that in remote times defiled the earth. We shall see re-enacted the horrid orgies of Nero, Tiberius, and Heliogabalus; shameless processions will promenade our streets, and the last shreds of decency will depart from our nation. But on the other hand, if we do not wish to see such a state of things, we shall turn a deaf ear to those who prate to us of antiquity, we shall decline to offer up the modesty of our young men and maidens at the shrine of heathen gods and goddesses. Shew me a man who puts forward the plea of “art” in this connection; I will ask him in return how he would like to see the image of his mother in a state of nudity exposed to the gaze of grinning multitudes.

And now we must enter on the consideration - of a question which is more complicated and perhaps of more importance; I mean the question of literature. Here I hardly think I need defend myself or my friends from the charge ot detesting or despising an art which is and has been cultivated with such success by so many members of the Free Churches. The'names or Milton and Emma Jane Worboise, of Bunyan and Hocking, of Baxter and the Rev. E. P. Roe are, I think, sufficient testimony to the contrary. In poetry and fiction, in allegory and exposition we have taught the world the way of excellence, and we might be content with the testimony that such names as these afford. But we have done much more than this. Who can read such works as *John Halifax Gentleman*, *Adam Bede*, and *Robert Elsmere* — to name the masterpieces of the last century — and not acknowledge that these great books are Puritan to the backbone? I can never look into certain of these pages without my mind being carried back to the days of my youth, when I worshipped in an old-fashioned church situated in a great manufacturing town in the north. It was not a beautiful and ornate building such as that to which my ministry is now given; for it bore on its grey stone front the inscription — Ebenezer, 1809 — and in those days the sturdy Independents of the north were not much given to architectural adornment or aesthetic superfluity. No, it was a stern and rugged building, with plain windows and square doorway; but the memory of it is still sweet to me, and I shall never forget a series of sermons preached there, sermons about "Men who got on." The preacher took such examples as Jacob, David and Jehu; and he told the old-world stories with such simple directness in his plain Yorkshire speech that to me at all events they became no mere chronicles of dead and buried kings and patriarchs, but the living histories of living men, whose careers offered as important lessons as the careers of the good citizens of Leeds itself. One was taken from the semi-mythical, wholly oriental atmosphere of the old records right into the life and bustle of modern streets; one heard the busy hum of machinery, the rattle of the loom, the tread of hurrying and eager feet. The preacher shewed us that these old heroes of the Jewish nation were in fact very near to us, that then, as now, strict attention to business, to the business in hand, was bound to ensure success, in Leeds as in Jerusalem, in Yorkshire as in Syria. Even now I can remember the glow of satisfaction that seemed to radiate from the congregation when the good minister told us that Jacob "was a good Yorkshire lad at heart. He knew well enough if you want to get on you must start well, whether it’s in God’s service or in man’s service. Jacob was not a man for compliments and soft sawder — he had no time for that any more than we have at Leeds — he had the Pottage and the Skins ready when they were wanted, and so he became the father of a great people. He stuck to his business, and so his business stuck to him.” It was to such heart-lifting discourses as this that I listened in the old grey chapel thirty years ago, and still the preacher’s tones, the faint aroma of hair-oil and peppermint, the listening faces of the sturdy, well-to-do congregation, and the sweet notes of the hymn return to me when I open the leaves of *John Halifax.*

So it is in a greater or less degree with the works of the other writers I have mentioned. I should like to see on the title-pages of George Eliot’s wonderful books three well-known words — *Beth-el Vll raise.* In formal theological belief, perhaps, she was severed from us; none the less does one gather from her pages the aroma of the good, old-fashioned “meetinghouses” of the Midlands, of placid, gentle, undulating scenery, of plain red-brick country-towns, and above all of the Free Churchmen of the time and place, typical Englishmen and Englishwomen. It has been said that in all those books there is not a single idea; but I do not think that idealism offers many attractions to plain, Protestant England. When an Englishman wants to go from London to Manchester he does not take a balloon, he takes a — *I* - ticket at Euston, content with his comfortable corner of the railway carriage, and not envying the adventurous aeronaut. True; the balloon is nearer to the stars; but our traveller wishes to get to Manchester!

And so the tale goes on. English fiction of the worthier, greater kind owes a debt that can never be repaid to the influence of the Puritans and their descendants; even when its authors are not mechanically of us, spiritually they are very near to us indeed. Indeed, I know of books whose authors would have disclaimed, perhaps with indignation, both Puritan sources and Puritan influence, and yet these books are among the best representatives of our moral atmosphere. Miss Yonge, for example, was technically, I believe, a member of the Establishment, and her pages are here and there tainted with Anglican doctrine. And yet I know of no work which is more distinctly representative of our principles than hers. Those doctors and ministers in the country or in country towns, always with enormous families, the daily round of life under such conditions so faithfully and patiently described, without haste, without rest, are as good in their way as anything that George

Eliot accomplished, and as remote from the fever-heated and unwholesome atmosphere of Romanism and Ritualism and “art” as can be well imagined. We smell no fumes of incense here, our eyes are not dazzled with the sheen of strange vestments, with the complexities of antique architecture — for I have always felt quite sure that the church built by Ethel at Cocksmoor would have been one in which, with few alterations, I could have gladly ministered. Even when the peculiarities of the Establishment are mentioned, we suffer no shock, no repulsion. Richard, it is true, takes “Orders,” but he enters the church with the quiet piety and sense with which a good Free Churchman would open a shop; whatever Miss Yonge’s personal opinions may have been we do not gather from her page that she conceived of this character as called “to the awful and tremendous hierurgy of the Unbloody Sacrifice” — to use the phrase of a dreadful book which I once opened. Again, it is true that there is a “Bishop” who “consecrates” the church at Cocksmoor; but I do not think the most bigoted anti-Episcopalian need be alarmed by his appearance. Here is no mitred, mystic figure, armed with powers from worlds beyond our ken, no claimant to an imaginary apostolic succession, no maker of “sacrificing priests”; but a quiet, kindly old gentleman, who says a few pleasant words to the children; as simple and as Christian a soul as any Sunday School Superintendent. Thank heaven for it, there is no sense of mystery in Miss Yonge’s work, no dark oppression of the sacramental system in the air, nothing that might serve to cherish in the young mind the workings of a vague and fantastic imagination.

Without haste, without rest, must, as I said, have been the motto of this admirable writer. She has that sense of the importance of the infinitely little which is so characteristic of the highest genius; mark how patiently she traces the daily life of each of her child characters step by step, almost hour by hour, till we rise from the book with the delightful impression of having been inhabitants of Dr. May’s nursery for many years. Not a detail is withheld; a childish complaint is an episode, and the escapade of a boy at school has in it all the matter of a great tragedy, while a small practical joke comes near to wrecking one of the young lives in which we grow so absorbed, till, as I say, we seem to hear the energetic screaming of the younger children, the pleasing bellow of the sailor-lad, the incessant (and most edifying) oratory of Ethel, and the grave voice of the good Richard. If I may parody a passage from a very different writer, Miss Yonge has painted for us an eternal tea-table, and the hissing urn seems to whisper that the tea is not too strong. And then note the landscape which serves as a background to these deeply interesting events. There are no bottomless vales and boundless floods, no shoreless seas or sacred rivers, no cedarn caves or Titan woods — none of the distorted and unhealthy landscapes that presented themselves to the opium-drugged minds of the unhappy Edgar Poe and the ill-fated Coleridge. Just as I am sure that there were no magic casements In Dr. May’s most comfortable residence, so I feel convinced that one might seek in vain within a large radius from the agreeable country town in which he practised for anything remotely resembling fairy lands forlorn. No, we seem to look from solid red-brick houses over placid meadows, watered by gentle and sluggish streams, bordered by well-trimmed hedges’with all the gates and stiles in excellent repair. The wildest place mentioned in the book is Cocksipoor; and one understands the exquisite symbolism by which this ragged and unkempt; heath stands for the wild, strange impulses and r s r; / - Oi -V!’.M \ — ° — , / dreams which sometimes haunt and disturb the best of us, whlich we are to trim and tame at * V*f — eu.’— ‘.)[i,n.’ vis-; -:j any cost, at any sacrifice.

I have dwelt perhaps too long on a work which has always fascinated me by its truth and its simplicity, but I have demonstrated, at all events, my admiration for really fine literature, and J think I have shewn you that a Free Church minister is by no means the tasteless boor that his enemies have pictured. Now, I am sorry to say that my task will be a less pleasant one; for it is my duty to declare that much which passes under the name of literature should, in my opinion, be ruthlessly suppressed. I will *not* allow that perfection in the presentation makes the nature of the thing presented of little consequence; I will *not* allow that the deadliest poisons may be vended openly so long as the phials containing them are curiously and “artistically” shaped; I will *not* allow that venomous serpents should be encouraged in our back gardens for the sake of the iridescent colours which their scales display. There are those who would suffer putrid and stagnant water to collect in our highways for the pleasure of observing the green scum which gathers over such places; but against such madness as this I, at least, will never cease to raise my voice in horror and detestation.

And I must say that on the whole modern criticism has taken this view, which I maintain to be the only possible one. After all, even the most enraged mediævalists, the most atrabilious opponents of every kind of progress are obliged to confess that the present age is an ethical one It is by the standard of ethics that we form our judgment of most things. Dogma may be on the wane, for as the worthy ex-president of the Wesleyan Conference so truly affirmed, dogma is not practical, and the twentieth century is nothing if not practical. As Dr. Forrest, a notable example of the fine scholarship and literary culture of Presbyterianism, has observed in a recent and stimulating work:

“It is preposterous to call a state religious according as it does or does not make a formal profession of religion; for example, to call Spain Christian and America godless, as if, so long as the dogmatic of Christianity is preserved, it does not much matter about the ethic.” Considering what we know of the ethical code of America in social, commercial, and political affairs, considering the severity with which any infringement of this high moral standard is punished, especially in the Southern States; it seems to me that the illustration is almost too extravagant for Dr. Forrest’s purpose, but it serves my turn, inasmuch as it insists on the supreme importance of ethics. Ethics, of course, are the natural development or a free commercial state; we are not surprised therefore to note that in the Dark Ages, when the Feudal System and the Church of Rome Held down the world under a terrorism of blood and fire, there were, in our sense, no morals at all. But in commerce morals are essential, trade could not exist for a day without them, and the great commercial systems which have transformed the world from an armed camp into a peaceful factory would perish, unless sustained by a lofty ethical basis.

The world of to-day, then, is peculiarly and essentially a moral world; there is no doubt that if a Syrian Christian of the first century could revisit this earth, and compare the London and Chicago of to-day with Jerusalem of old he would be astonished at the contrast. And the moral code which governs us is itself peculiar to our age. No doubt it represents through a process of growth and development the ethics of the New Testament, but this identity is not to be discovered on the surface. Nor need this surprise us: the gigantic oak tree bears no resemblance to the acorn, and the splendid blooms in our gardens are very dissimilar from the tiny grains which we entrusted to the soil. Who, without minute and delicate observation, could identify the splendid butterfly, clad in all the colours of the rainbow, with a loathsome caterpillar crawling on the ground? So, it must not surprise us if we find in the Inspired Volume that deliberately to hurt another man's feelings is denounced to be a most capital and deadly sin, that poverty is held up to our admiration as a highly-privileged state, that the possessor of a flourishing business and an immense fortune is considered as occupying much the same position as that of a man on the brink of a frightful precipice, that the saving of money and a careful consideration of future contingencies are regarded as both imbecile and wicked. We must not be surprised again when we find the Master studiously shunning the company of what we should call the respectable classes, and associating with persons, male and female, whom we should describe as drunkards, tavern-haunters, wastrels, and "Bohemians." At the same time, I need not point out to you that this is not precisely the code of to-day. We pride ourselves on our commercial prosperity, we do not wish to imitate the Popish "saints" in their superstitious views of poverty, we regard a successful and wealthy business man as a highly enviable and laudable individual, we applaud economy and prudent foresight in business matters, and, speaking for the Free Churches, I need scarcely say that we are devoted adherents of the great cause of Temperance. With the utmost stretch of my imagination, I cannot conceive of a minister of any respectable denomination drinking in a common public-house, with actors, painters, authors, or musicians, who, I am afraid, are rarely men of very sober habits; nor can I for a moment admit that it would be possible for myself, or for any of my brethren, to cultivate the society of the unhappy women who have been branded with the shameful stigma of the Divorce Court.

But ours, as I have observed, is an ethical age, and I cannot sufficiently praise the manner in which the chief literary critics of the time have absorbed the great moral principles which are, as I have said, the backbone of the modern commercial state. I do not know any of these gentlemen personally, I am sorry to say, but if we may judge from their writings, it must be, indeed, a blessed privilege to have their acquaintance, to imbibe, as from the fountain head, those precious streams of high ethical instruction which must well out alway from their lips. And they are by no means the mere pedants of the dull old days, the dry scholars with their quaint interest in purely literary theories, with their puzzle-headed and minute knowledge of antique and dusty tomes such as Chaucer and Shakespeare, learned in occult and useless lore of poesy, gravely discoursing of sonnets and epics, of rhymes and alliterations, acquainted, very likely, with the languages of ancient Greece and Rome. No; the modem critic is far from being of this grim old fellowship; as witness Mr. Arnold Bennett, who says in the columns of a great Liberal newspaper: —

“Money talks. A litterateur who, having made a profound study of fiction, can tell you the colour of the dress in which Charlotte Bronte was married, will command a higher H remuneration (because he interests more people) than the critic who can but chatter amiably of tEe differences between the philosophy of Browning and the philosophy of Algernon Charles Swinburne.”

This is sound sense, not literary pedantry; and it is a combination of sound commercial sense with a high moral standard that has made our English criticism what it Is: the resolute guardian of our homes, determined at all hazards to ward off the prowling bands of so-called “stylists,” “artists,” “mystics,” and all other dabblers in the dark caverns of impurity and disease. I am a father myself, and it has always pleased me to think of our English critics as fathers also, as writing their profound and yet attractive essays in the midst of a laughing throng of merry, happy children; pausing now and then, perhaps, and gaining inspiration and (who knows?) ideas from the cheerful prattle of the little ones. I love to think of these men who guide the great destinies of English Literature as interested in all the details of innocent child-life, as more learned, perhaps, in the shape and uses of the tiny garments of extreme infancy than in the arid history of the masterpieces, as taking a greater interest in Nelly’s doll than in the author of *Don Quixotey* as giving greater thought to the quarrel between Phillis and Jacky (who is always naughty), than to the debates of the Tassoisfs and Ariostoists. Indeed, I feel sure than this fancy of mine must correspond to the truth, for in no other way can I explain the enthusiasm for the cause of youth which has so often edified me in the writings of these excellent gentlemen. Only fathers could identify themselves so absolutely with’ the childish mind, only fathers would perceive with such sure instinct the weak places, as it were, in the nursery wall and appreciate the need of guarding against the latent taste for decadent literature, so prevalent in infantine minds. This principle — that no book should be written or published which may, conceivably, do some harm to some young person or other — is a great one; it has been the salvation of our simple English shelves, and I hope that our criticism will always and without flinching maintain this splendid canon — that the book which is not fit to enter the nursery and the schoolroom is not fit to exist at all. The field of the novelist and the poet, like that of the playwright, is an open space, a Board School playground, if you please, and I contend that the man who would defile and degrade such a paradise with his grinning deathsheads, his grotesque and frightful gurgoyles, is a villain indeed.

Yes, the Principle of the Nursery, as I think I may call it, is a principle of such vital and tremendous importance, that, for my part, I often wonder why it is not extended beyond the region of literature, in which its application has been found to have such beneficent results. Why do we not regulate our whole lives by regard to the little ones, for whose physical and spiritual welfare we are directly responsible?

For example: Why should we have any newspapers? I have said something already on this topic, when I was pointing out to you the terrible harm that must be caused to the young by a person whom I will not name, writing in a journal the title of which I do not care to give. But supposing this person saw the error of his ways, and desisted from appealing to the most morbid and dangerous sides of our nature, supposing his newspaper with its contaminating betting news and reports of stage-plays ceased to exist; how should we be the better off? Take the average daily paper; what is it in the main but a catalogue of horrors, a compendium of all the degrading and abominable vices and crimes to which man is subject? If you had children, would you wish them to be posted in the last divorce case, in the unspeakable details of the unsavoury scandal of the day? Would you wish your boys and girls at the most impres* sionable period of their lives to be familiar with all the degrading vice of the West End, with the aspect of Piccadilly Circus at midnight, with the proceedings of so-called “clubs,* * which in reality deserve a much harsher appellation? Would you have these young minds interested in the careers of murderers and assassins, in the story of their crimes, forming pictures (no doubt, of ghastly realism) of murdered women concealed in cement, of a libertine’s mistress buried in a back garden, of some hapless wretch hacked to pieces by her butcher, of the dying agonies of the poisoned? The paper can be kept out of the way? Yes, but that is the excuse and the defence of the provider of moral garbage in literature, and we are agreed that such a proposition is both monstrous and futile. I leave it to your conscience as to how far you are justified in purchasing a copy of the *Times* to-morrow morning; for myself I have no doubt at all that the scandal of the daily paper should not be suffered to exist another day. I withdraw what I said as to the press on a former occasion; led by an irresistible argument I have been forced to see that the newspaper horror cannot, must not, be allowed to continue.

And again; why do we have fires, why do we boil water? It may be speciously urged that the little ones should be kept away from both; but I have already demonstrated the shallow folly of such a pretence as this; and as a matter of fact, it is only too common for young children to perish in terrible agony, burned or boiled alive, offered up in sacrifice to the MolocK of our selfish and abominable craving for strange luxuries, such as tea and chops. Think over this, and decide once for all whether you are prepared to insist on your roast beef at the cost of roast baby; taste, if you ca:t, your cup of tea without detecting in it the flavour of boiled infant.

Of course, we shall be told that such things are necessaries. This I emphatically deny; this, I say, is demonstrably false, a lie that must be nailed to the counter once and for all. Many millions of human beings have lived and died without having heard of these so-called necessaries; and some of the best and most enlightened Englishmen of to-day would shrink in horror from the thought of touching such abominations. The fruits of the earth are not wanting; figs, dates, tomatoes, nuts, and cereals of all kinds are plentiful and cheap, and Mr. Eustace Miles is a standing, living, triumphant example of the superiority of a vegetarian, fruitarian, nutarian, and cereal man over the devourer of roast beef and boiled chicken. The championship of the Tennis Court was won upon cutlets that were made of nuts. Once more, I say, put out your fires, throw your kettles and saucepans into the dustbin. Else you shall have upon your soul the guilt of infanticide, and the cries of boiled and roasted babies shall disturb your midnight pillow. And moreover, if you abstain from the decadent and disgusting in literature, you will doubtless find that the savours of the orgie called dinner no longer allure you; you will put away “strong* * meat and return to your innocent, happy childhood over a diet of “Riscuit” and Grape Guts.

Have not the poets always sung of a fabled Age of Gold, when iron was suffered to remain in the earth, when, in the happy childhood of the world, man found shelter beneath the oaks and ate their simple produce, washed down with water from the sparkling brook? What if this vision shoufd again be realised, if the world, weary of its follies and its crimes, should put them off and gain a second childhood?

Let us all work prayerfully, earnestly, persistently to this glorious end; but before it can be consummated much remains to be done.

I have said that so far as modern literature goes, the gates are on the whole well kept, for modern criticism does its duty with respect to the current productions of the press. But whit* am I to say of the general attitude towards the fiction, the poetry and the drama of the past? I am afraid my verdict cannot be a very favourable one. It fills me with amazement and horror when I read in the writings of authors (who are safe enough where modern work is concerned) a kind of glib, matter of fact acceptance of some of the most monstrous productions of past ages — on the ground that these abominations are “works of genius,* * “works of art,* * and I know not what else. What a monstrous inconsistency lies in the practice of forcing growing lads to acquire a knowledge of the obscenities of Aristophanes; a writer who would most deservedly be sent to gaol if he lived in our days, whom to read would spell the severest punishment, if he had written not in Greek but in plain English. Is this the way to breed English gentlemen, I ask; are we teaching our boys to become earnest and profitable Christians by forcing down their throats this filth of heathendom, this Athenian sewage? No one, surely, can sincerely think that vile and corrupting garbage is any the Setter because it was written more than two thousand years ago. Again, I say, it is not to be wondered at, if to the Free Churchman the word “classic” implies foul and deliberate nastiness. And yet, the very men who are most prompt în correcting any tendency of this kind in the work of to-day, are with the next breath ready to applaud the filth of some scoundrelly heathen, to smack their lips over some new edition of his plays or poems and to congratulate the editor on his notes — notes elucidating matter of which a Hottentot would be ashamed.

The case is much the same with writers who were at all events professing Christians. Take the case of Chaucer. Here is a man much of whose poetry is deliberately and brutally obscene; and not merely obscene in thought, idea, conception, but obscene in words. Not only are the images he presents to us of a profoundly disgusting and immoral character, but the words which he employs are such that if I uttered them in the public street I should with no long interval make my appearance in the nearest police station on the charge of using filtEy and obscene language. And yet, mark you, the works of this writer are not merely on sale, but they are on sale in cheap editions, and for two shillings and eightpence or some such sum you can buy more disgusting language than a magistrate in a low neighbourhood has to listen to in a month. And not merely is this book on sale at a cheap rate; it is actually made a text-book, it is propounded for the study of young men and girls, who are presently examined on their knowledge of one of the grossest and the vilest writers that our country ever produced. Again, I suppose the plea is that perfection in the presentation makes the nature of the thing presented of little consequence; Chaucer, I suppose, was a “stylist” and an “artist,” and all the rest of it; and again I must express my wonder that critics who would indignantly reject this plea in the case of a modern writer are ready to welcome it with applause in the case of a ruffian who has been dead for five hundred years.

I could mention many other instances of this extraordinary indulgence extended to men whose only merit lies in the fact that they wore clothes of a different fashion from those in use to-day. There is the elegant and alluring lustfulness of Boccaccio, the gross vulgarity of Cervantes, the mad obscenity of Rabelais, whose every page is strewn with abominations of thought and expression which are quite unspeakable, which belong rather to a prostitute in Bedlam than to a rational human being. But I pass these over and come to the most notorious instance of all, the universally read, the almost idolised Shakespeare. Nay; I am quite aware of the obloquy I shall encounter, I know that a kind of fetish worship has gathered round the name of this dramatist, that it is accounted a heresy to mention his works save in terms of the most extravagant praise. And I must allow that Shakespeare has written many great and admirable lines; there are whole pages, indeed, in his plays which may be read both with pleasure and profit, for the beauty of expression, the moral lesson, and the fidelity to life. Such for example are the famous soliloquy beginning “To be, or not to be,” and the hardly less famous moralisings of the Melancholy Jacques. But we purchase such gems as these too dearly when we consider what Shakespeare is as a whole, that throughout his works are scattered many passages of an extremely indecent nature, that his language is by no means such as we should tolerate in our drawing-rooms, and that again and again he appeals to some of the worst passions of Englishmen.

How vain is it for us to preach the wickedness of war from every pulpit, if with our next breath we bid our children study such a play as *Henry* F. We proclaim aloud at every opportunity the blessings of peace, we denounce militarism in high places and in low, we clamour for the reduction of the bloated armaments which suck the life-blood from the English People, and keep the rest of the world in a continual state of irritation and alarm. We resent such festivals as Empire Day, we banish the Union Jack from our schools, we hate and dread the very mention of conscription, and by our ridicule of the “Rifle Club” and similar schemes we do our very best to render our country defenceless in the event of invasion. Military habits — the smartness, the rigid carriage of the Body, the prompt obedience to a superior — all these we consistently look down upon and deride, for they are at once provocative and contrary to the principles of democracy. Nay, as I have said, we have found it our duty in almost every case in which a dispute has arisen between Englishmen and those of another nation to declare our own people absolutely in the wrong, to paint them as a race of savage, sordid, and barbarian robbers. When Englishmen have won victories we allude to them as,Tbrutal massacres of unarmed men,” when Englishmen have been defeated we point out that our own race is effete, rotten, cowardly, and contemptible in every respect, and that the leaders of our armies are too imbecile to fight successfully against men, whatever their prowess may be against women and children. We have done all this, I say, and we crown our work by putting into our children’s hands a book that reeks of Jingoism, Imperialism, and Patriotism; that “mafficks” on every other page, that sings the glories of all the ruffianly kings who bore rule in the Dark Ages, and never fails to applaud their most disreputable military adventures! And when to vices such as thèse we join the immeasurable contempt that the flunkey-soul of Shakespeare felt for the People, when we remember the outrageous and insulting manner in which the Democracy is treated in *Coriolanus* and *Julius Cæsar;* above all, when we read that most injurious and shameful attack on the great Cade in *Henry VI.* Part II., the measure of our just indignation brims over, and we Free Churchmen reluctantly but decisively announce to the world that Shakespeare must go. A few copies of the Works may possibly be allowed to be kept in the strong rooms of the County Council, and may be shewn to such scholars as can satisfy the official custodians that their curiosity is harmless; but the man who by a kind of malignant prophecy at once defiled the memory of the martyr in the people’s cause, and contrived in doing so shamelessly to caricature and degrade the policy of the great Liberal Party of to-day, shall be no guide for our children, for those Liberal citizens of to-morrow, whom we have rescued from parson and from priest.

VI. The Free Churches the heirs of Evolution, and the only Catholic Church of to-day.

I AM ALMOST afraid that in spite of the long talks we have had together I have somewhat neglected what, after all, was to have been the main object of these pleasant afternoons. When you so kindly consented to assist me in giving to the world the views of Free Churchmen, I think there was a distinct understanding that our chief consideration was to be the Free Churches themselves, looked upon as a great body of closely allied Christians who are prepared to offer their system to the world as an alternative to the ecclesiasticism which has in the past usurped the name of Christianity. For many ages, as you must know, the ears of men have been deafened by the clamorous debates of contending sects, who built upon the simple foundations of the Gospel their fantastic and complicated edifices, each widely differing from its neighbour, and each, if but poorly provided with the sanitary arrangements of real Christian piety, amply furnished, at all events, with a bristling armoury of controversial weapons, and with the boiling lead of theological acerbity. Arians and Catholics, Manicheans and Copts, Orthodox Greeks and Basilidians, Armenians and Anglicans raised their voices so loudly against one another that the thoughtful, as I say, were puzzled, and were content to stay without these contending folds (or rather camps), satisfying their religious instincts with the simple charities of the Gospel. And for some time after the Reformation, I am afraid, the Evangelical bodies perpetuated to a certain extent the evil leaven which had been handed down to them, and strove together about questions which seemed to them of vast importance but which we perceive to have been misunderstandings about trifles. Thus Calvin burned Servetus, thus Presbyterian contended with Independent, thus the Baptists were forced to leave Boston, and thus the Orthodox Church of Massachusetts was tempted into courses of some severity against the Quakers. And even in our own time I remember that excellent, though old-fashioned minister Mr. Spurgeon speaking with some severity of what he called the “Down grade” tendency in the Free Church ministry.

Thank Heaven! all that is over; we have perceived, I repeat, that the disputes which agitated the old Catholic and Arian sects and all the other bodies of puzzle-headed and cantankerous metaphysicians, which troubled to a less degree the peace of our Puritan forefathers, we have perceived that these disputes were mere quarrels over a diphthong, mere logomachies over trifles which neither party understood, which it is not important that anyone should understand. The angry battle clouds have been dispersed by the Liberal breezes that have blown from heaven, and in their places we see the great Free Church Denominations, divided, perhaps, mechanically, but really, and spiritually, and vitally united; forming the true Catholic Church of to-day.

It was of this great Body, its aims and its principles that I chiefly desired to discourse to you; but I am afraid that we have delayed so long amongst rather secondary considerations, in the outworks and exterior walls of the Edifice as it were, that I shall be obliged to be somewhat brief in discussing our vital principles — the keep on which our flag floats boldly in the breeze. However, while we talked about the public press, the superiority of America, the study of history, literature, art, the drama, the future life, and other cognate topics, you must have gathered a good deal by the way, and perhaps the omission I have mentioned has been more formal than real.

But, briefly to return to first principles; you will, of course, understand that the Free Churches have but one foundation — the Bible. There is no other foundation on which man can build than on the dear Old Book which for more than three hundred years has been the Englishman's greatest treasure, which to us seems, almost exclusively, an English book. We do not care to discuss with prying ecclesiastical antiquarians the question of the original formation of the New Testament; we just accept the dear old story as the Reformers gave it to us, and by us it shall be defended to the last against the Popish priest and the Ritualist parson. Yes; the Bible is our dearest and best possession, and we would gladly die for it.

But what do we mean by the Bible? Not the dead letter, which, as Paul observes, killeth; not the mere mechanical text? No; we value the book, not the binding; the precious liquor, not the vessel that contains it, the spirit, not the letter; the spirit as interpreted by ourselves, on whom through the liberal and scientific progress of the last century the ends of the world are come. It is an instance of the essential and vital union that exists in the Free

Churches, in spite of apparent divisions, that Dr. Forrest, the Presbyterian minister, and Mr. Kelly, the ex-president of the Wesleyan Conference, agree on this great principle — dogma (which is of the letter) is of no consequence. The ethic of a nation is its life, says Dr. Forrest, contrasting America with Spain, the rich and prosperous country with the poor; and Mr. Kelly says the same thing in other words when he told the young ministers that dogma to be tolerated / K must be *practical*. The age in which men squabbled about the *Homoousion* and the *Filioque* clause is gone for ever; and we should receive the Pelagians and the Albigenses to-day with the open arms of Christian fellowship. No, it is not the letter of the Old Book which we revere with such intensity; it is the exquisite spirit which exhales from those wondrous leaves, the spirit which has banished all ugly words and ugly things such as heresy and schism from our hearts and our lives, which makes us One in a sense which the world cannot understand.

And I would have you note that even in the nearly days of Puritanism this great truth was not without its witnesses. Martin Luther himself, the chief of all Protestants, when he denounced the Epistle of James as an “epistle of straw” because he did not agree with its doctrine, spoke in the spirit of a Free Churchman of to-day, though we may not imitate the hearty bluntness of the great Reformer. Milton, too, understood how to transcend the letter when he published his famous manifesto on Divorce, anticipating by more than two centuries the grand liberty of the United States; and even the Anglican reformers saw something of the truth when they quietly dismiss Unction as a “corrupt following of the Apostles., But while the Anglican seems to be endeavouring to bind the chains of the letter more tightly than ever about him, we have become still more free, released at last from that cramping dungeon cell of literal dogma, the spiritual type, and no doubt the efficient cause of the dungeons and racks of the Inquisition.

I have already told you that the Free Church outlook is in the first place ethical, and, in my first conversation, I shewed you that it is in America that our ethic is most fully and completely realised. I have explained that while our moral code is built upon the foundation of the New Testament, it is rather a healthy and consistent development than a mechanical replica of the gospel system of morals. For example, we do *not* keep the best seats in our churches for beggars, persons in ragged or shabby clothing, or costermongers in their working dress. Our ministry, we conceive, is to the comparatively well-to-do -sheep of the house of England, and my little boy in his touching picture of the future life imaged forth, accurately enough, the kind of congregation that we like to see about us. I daresay you will have observed that Christian Churches are not very plentiful in the really poor neighbourhoods, whose degraded inhabitants we leave to the more degraded — because superstitious — ministrations of parson and priest. Take again the question of celibacy. I daresay several texts will occur to you: there is the "made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake," there is Paul's distinct recommendation of celibacy as the higher and better state, there is the weird procession of the Virgins in the Revelation of John. For a man of leisure with an interest in such questions I can conceive of no more agreeable occupation than that of tracing the evolution of the modern Protestant view of the subject from these crude beginnings. You are of course aware that we have always denounced in the strongest terms the celibate vows of priests and monks and nuns, both as highly displeasing to the Almighty, and as leading in practice to the grossest and most abominable vice. We have contrasted the high ideals of the marriage state held in Protestant countries such as America with the notorious and blatant immorality of all Romanist nations; we have not spared the world our views as to priests' "nieces" or as to the internal economy of convents. Truly the ways of Evolution are mysterious; and it should be, as I say, an interesting task to trace the steps by which the bud, as it were, of the Old Gospel has unfolded into the perfect blossom of our faith to-day.

I could give you many other instances of the same kind. Usury, for example, was, I believe, unknown in the early Christian communities, and was forbidden by the grotesque Scholastic Philosophy. I need not argue this point, for since the whole of our great Commercial System hangs on the giving of interest, it would be otiose to point out that any texts which seem to forbid this practice cannot be taken in their literal sense. But there is another point which I cannot pass by, since it is concerned with the very foundation and bed-rock of all that is best and holiest and most secure in the modern Christian State. You will remember such texts as "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's,"

"honour the King," and "be subject into the higher powers, the powers that be are ordained of God"; you will remember, too, David's horror at the thought of laying hands upon the "Lord's Anointed." Leaving for the moment the superstitious fears of the young guerilla chief; I presume you know something of the character and origin of the Roman Emperors in the days we are speaking of. In the first place, supposing that there could be a legitimate title to such a thing as kingship (which I do not admit for a moment), the title of these men was as bad as bad can be, since it was simply founded on carnage and prescription, and on the shameless violation of the Roman Republican Constitution. The first Emperors sailed to power on a sea of blood and terror, and compared with them Napoleon III. appears a harmless constitutional sovereign. Passing from their public to their private characters we find them stained with every cruel and abominable vice, crime, and wickedness of which humanity at its very worst is capable; their lives are, as it were, the epitome of all the evil of the world; and the horrible barbarities which they used to the Christians seem almost a trifle when compared with the unspeakable, almost incredible catalogue of their other vices. Let us remember, then, that these were the "powers that be," of which the apostle speaks, such were the kings that were to be honoured, these the Cæsars to whom tribute was to be given; and let me ask you whether you can imagine a more violent contrast than that which exists between such teaching, and the great vital truths of Democracy in which we live and move and have our being to-day. Frankly, we should be false to all our best and most dearly bought principles if, for example, we rendered to Caesar the things supposed to be Cæsar's, without first enquiring whether the rule of Cæsar was "broad based upon the people's will," whether the tribute proposed had been ratified by the chosen representatives of the people, elected on a liberal franchise, and finally whether the money when collected would be put to uses which we could thoroughly approve. These, or so I have always understood, are the first principles and rudiments of free popular government, "by the people, for the people, and through the people"; and it will be seen that there are no "powers that be" in existence; though there may be delegates chosen for convenience by the sovereign populace. As for government which is *not* popular, which exists, not by the will of the majority, but in virtue of such a principle as heredity, appealing, perhaps, to imaginary celestial sanctions, and fortified by fetish-ceremonies such as "coronation' * and "unction" bestowed by medicine-men, alias bishops: it is the duty of every free man and every Free Churchman not merely *not* to be "subject" to such powers, not merely *not* to honour such kings, but rather to strain every nerve, to use every means (inclyding armed revolution and assassination) to destroy so infamous a tyranny. Unless this be our doctrine nowadays, I am at a loss to understand our attitude towards the Cæsar of Russia and his oppressed and downtrodden people, I am at a loss to understand our sympathy with Garibaldi and Mazzini, with the heroes of the French Revolution, with the Fathers of the great Republic of the United States, and finally with our ancestors, the men who judged and put to death Charles Stuart.

No: "the letter killeth," and it is the spirit and not the letter of the Grand Old Book that we follow in these and in all other instances. We are the heirs of the ages, the products of the grand process of Evolution, and it is thus that we may claim to be the true and earnest disciples of the Inspired Volume. Should we welcome the claim of a Primitive Man, if such a being existed now, to be the only True Man, to be our superior in manhood? Surely not; we should drive the hairy and apelike creature from us with contempt and disgust; and with the same feelings we repel the claims of Tories and Sacerdotalists to be the true interpreters of the Sacred Text.

By analogy, then, you will easily conjecture that as our ethic is evolutionary so also are our dogmatic and our liturgie. Our great dogma, if I may say so, is that dogmas do not greatly matter, or in the words of Pope:

For modes of faith, let graceless zealots fight;
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.

Hence the profound gulf which separates us from the Romanists and Ritualists who, it is well known, believe that morals are not of the slightest consequence, that all the commandments may be broken with impunity, so long as certain doctrines are held and certain superstitious ceremonies performed. Needless to say, we do not go to the other extreme; we are free to hold what dogmas we will, so long as they are not displeasing to our friends in other denominations, since we are not at liberty to profess doctrine which practically unchurches" whole bodies of earnest and devoted Christians. We are free, I should rather say, to hold whatever dogmas we please so long as we do not hold them with that "passionate certainty" which has been rebuked by an earnest minister of the Establishment, with that acerbity which is sure to follow such certainty, which brings us sooner or later to the painful and uncharitable pass of denouncing the many good men who are unable to accept the literal doctrine of the Divinity of Christ as not Christians.

For, rightly or wrongly, many of us have long felt that the time is past for fervid discussion, for earnest and vehement affirmation on this and on similar topics. The age is a practical age, an ethical age, as Mr. Kelly and Dr. Forrest have affirmed, and I think we are all inclined to echo the amusing outburst of the minister of the Establishment, to say: “Hang Theology! — and let us tax ground values.” The age is a hurrying and strenuous age, with real work in the world to be accomplished; we cannot afford to discuss the niceties of expression of early Christian metaphysicians while valuable building land is left undeveloped owing to the injustice of the laws.

Besides, are not the times “out of joint” for such questions as these? Do we not all feel in our hearts, if we are honest men, that in the whole atmosphere of the Gospel Story, literally understood, there is something strange, unreal, thaumaturgie? We must remember that the East never changes, that the dreamy, mystical Oriental was much the same in Palestine in the first century as he is in India to-day. And such a man as this was of a very different character from the bustling, energetic citizen of London and Chicago. He was not whirled to and fro morning and evening by train or tram, his mind active and busy with schemes in progress or in contemplation; nor was he compelled to strain every nerve, every capacity of his body through a long day of business; every brain cell alert lest money should not be made, or lest money should be lost. The Syrian peasant, we may almost say, had no healthy interests in life; not only was he totally devoid of business instincts and of all opportunities for using such faculties had he possessed them; but he lacked all the other interests which nowadays go to the making of a good citizen and an earnest Christian. Consider, for example, how much of the time of the energetic man of this age is taken up by politics, both local and general. In America, indeed, so engrossing and so important has this function of life become that it has been found necessary to make it a regular and recognised profession, a profession which has to be learned like any other, for which there are special aptitudes needed, in which hard, intelligent, and patient work is executed, which, like other professions, gives to the successful a great reward. In England we are still hampered by the decaying relics of the Feudal System; yet, in our rather casual, amateurish way the work is done, and many worthy and public-spirited men are found ready to serve the people even on the comparatively humble Board of Guardians without any official fee. How different was it in Jerusalem, in Bethlehem, in Nazareth of oldt The politics of a Syrian peasant consisted chiefly in doing what he was told, and in bearing with what patience he could command the exactions of his superiors. He was told no doubt in words more or less anticipatory of the Anglican Catechism to honour and obey Cæsar and all that were put in authority under him, to submit himself to all his governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters, to order himself lowly and reverently to all his betters, and to do his duty in that state of life in which ir had pleased* God to call him.

From such a man as this it would, of course, be as absurd to expect our modern mental and moral activities as it would be to search for such qualities in the mind of a recluse or monk of the Dark Ages; and can we not understand how to these simple peasants, whose days were spent perhaps in a round of dreamy and mystic meditation, the world must have put on the appearance of a weird phantasmagoria? To these men, watching their sheep on the solitude of the Syrian hills, a very ordinary phenomenon might appear to be the opening of the heavens, and the excited imagination of the visionary would readily fill in all appropriate details. We may not dogmatise, we may not positively assert that here lies the explanation of an astounding history; but at all events do not let us be too ready to condemn the earnest and devoted Christians whom such an explanation satisfies. And, if we take this as our keynote, much that has perplexed and grieved devout minds will become clear. We must not, of course, too rigidly prescribe the bounds of nature, for this is not the method of true science, and doubtless the mysterious phenomena of the hypnotic, telepathic and cataleptic conditions will explain many things that have seemed puzzling; but speaking generally, there are very few of the so-called miraculous occurrences in the Gospels that cannot be accounted for by the fact that the Oriental peasant was, and always has been, of a credulous and dreamy nature, prone to view the world as a vision, and to express his experiences in terms of the marvellous. Let us remember, then, that it was by and for such men that the Great Story was written; and while we may heartily acquit the writers of any attempt to deceive, we must not be too harsh towards those who are unable to accept the Gospel narrative with the same profound and literal belief that they accord to the items in their morning paper. After all, we may still show goodwill to men, even if the angels who sang the words only existed in the heated brains of the Shepherds; and if it should be proved that Lazarus was a cataleptic, the lesson would remain, and we would still, I hope, support the work of the great London Hospitals.

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* There is a slight mistake here, but I give the phrase in the words of Dr. Stiggins. — A.M.

In all sincerity and humility I must say that it seems to me that this is the safer way of regarding these wondrous old records; if we are to be, as Mr. Kelly advises us, *practical,* if we are to utter the message that has been entrusted to us, so that it may be understood by the people; for otherwise we become but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Science, of course, has not uttered her last word; it is possible that that which now seems incredible may be demonstrated in a thousand laboratories; but in the meanwhile let us beware how we estrange the least of these little ones, of these timid and doubting, but earnest and devoted spirits who merely ask us not to confound supernaturalism with religion. Let us remember that, so far, no man of science has pronounced in favour of the resurrection of the dead; let us not, then, turn anxious and enquiring souls away by passionately insisting on belief in such a dogma.

And when we have set aside the strange, the thaumaturgie elements in the story, how immensely valuable is the remanet! The Herald Angels, as I have remarked, will still press on us the duty of goodwill to men, still the Sacred Page will warn us to be as meek and lowly as our social positions permit, still we shall give alms to the poor, not, it is true, after the demoralising and degrading fashion of the East, but in such taxation as a progressive government may think best. And, after all, perhaps, the old ideal of the union of Church and State may receive a new meaning in our day; little by little, it may be, technical, mechanical religion may tend to disappear, and the religion of the future may turn out to be simply a name for enlightened, altruistic, and progressive political energies. It is a strange, a solemn thought that in a hundred years’ time man may find expression for all his feelings of awe and adoration by attending Liberal meetings, and the proceedings of the House of Commons may become the supreme worship of the nation. Then, perhaps, for the first time men will understand the vision of John, who saw the Heavenly City, like a Bride, descending upon earth. We cannot realise it yet; but what if “Order, order, order” were the *Sanctus* of the future?

But, at all events, after what I have told you of our Ethic and Dogmatic, I need scarcely say that our Liturgie does not profess to be a literal following of any Apostolic system. I know that many of my brethren think otherwise; they assert that a Free Church service is a reproduction of Christian Worship as it was in the earliest ages. But, as I have pointed out, this is *a priori* unlikely; for if our theory of doctrine and morals differs, as it assuredly does, from the theory of the Syrian Christians; is it not probable that our ideals of public worship will be very different from theirs? Let us remember, if you please, that the first Christians were Orientals, and therefore addicted to an elaborate system of outward forms and ceremonies. Moreover, they were Jews, to whom Ritual’was the very life of religion, whose every hour and action were regulated by ceremonial observances, who were accustomed to regard all the pomp and show of the Temple Services as the appointed and quickening images and patterns of eternal and heavenly realities. We are not surprised, then, to learn that both the Master and His disciples were devout and fervent attendants at these services, that all through the Gospels the Jewish ritual and ceremonial law is treated with reverence and respect. I need not dwell on the sacramental nature of Christianity as it is presented to us in these early documents — on such symbolisms as oil, water, bread, wine, the imposition of hands, the ceremony of breathing, the ceremonial washing ordered in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the elaborate ritual of John’s heaven — for it seems to me that from the nature of the case early Christianity could not fail to be a ceremonial and ritual religion; and such, accordingly, we find that it had become when it emerged from the darkness and the dangers of the catacombs. How should it not be so? If we find a censer in the hands of an angel in the Revelation, why should we be astonished to find a censer in the hands of the Bishop of Jerusalem in the fourth century?

And for the life of me I cannot understand why this truth should perplex and distress earnest and devout Christians. Our morals are a development; are we to expect then that our worship should be an exception and refuse to follow the great law of evolution? Of course John and his fellow disciples were Ritualists, but I have given excellent reasons why we should not follow their example. John no doubt believed that the earth was immovable, that the sun rose and set, and that the Psalms were written by King David — we know that he believed in the existence of "sorcerers" — are we, therefore, to share his belief on these points? And if not, are we to be tied down to his theory and practice of Divine Worship? The question answers itself; and till the Great Consummation that I have hinted at arrives, we shall do well to follow in the steps of Calvin and stout John Knox, and to conduct our services in a manner as remote from the practice and ideals of the Early Christians as are the meetings of a Public Company.

For let it not be forgotten that ritual is the expression of belief. Those old Syrians, with all their piety, were Sacramentalists to the backbone; to them the visible and tangible world was but the symbol of the heavenly realities, and they undoubtedly believed that by a consecrating word, by the touch of blessing the veil might be removed, the dead matter might become quick, and earthly things become the vehicle of celestial virtues. A few years ago, before I received a call to my present ministry, I was induced by an Anglican friend to attend a service in a church of the Establishment. He hoped, I think, that I should be favourably impressed by the "performance" for which the church in question is famous; but I need scarcely tell you that my feelings were those of disgust and horror. The moment I entered the doors of the edifice my nostrils were saluted with the sickening fumes of incense, and unless I am much mistaken there was a vessel containing "Holy Water" inside the church, into which some members of the congregation dipped their hands, making the superstitious sign of the cross upon their breasts with the "consecrated" fluid. The roof was richly and strangely painted; there were carved and gilded images in a side chapel, and across the church ran a screen, surmounted by a Crucifix, beside which there were two more images. The "altar," of course, was decorated with a cross or crucifix, and I was horrified to see four great candles burning in full daylight. All around me people were kneeling down, and, I have no doubt, worshipping the crucifixes and other images. The service began; a strange droning music of a wild and barbarous nature, more like an incantation of savages than the vocal praise of Christians, filled the building and produced in me a feeling of horror and repulsion that I am at a loss to express. I cannot describe these terrible proceedings at length; the strange gestures of the ministers in their Popish vestments, the thick smoke of the incense, the burning lights, and above all the weird rise and fall of that dreadful music made me feel as if I were under the influence of some horrible drug, and I wondered whether if I made an effort I could shake off the oppression of the awful sights and sounds and odours about me, and wake up in my peaceful home in Cricklewood. At last, to my unutterable relief, an old minister (the Dean of Westminster, as 1 was afterwards informed), began to preach. I shall never forget my sense of escape when I heard this excellent man characterise the conduct, of the woman who touched the Master's garment as "superstitious,' * and I was able to witness the rest of tht impious and idolatrous ceremony with something approaching indifference.

But of course the good dean was perfectly Tight; and not only this poor foolish woman but the whole population of the country was nc doubt sunken in the grossest sacramental ism — which is but another name for superstition. These deluded people believed, as we know, that dreams warned them of future events, that lunatics were persons possessed of devils, that the sick could be cured by bathing in holy wells, that the Spirit of God could be given by the imposition of human hands, that the diseased were made well, and the evil spirits expelled by "handkerchiefs and aprons" which had been touched by Paul, who himself credited such superstitions as witchcraft and the Evil Eye.

I need not tell you that such conceptions as these are utterly and completely foreign to all Protestant teaching with which I am acquainted; we no longer believe that the sick in body or mind can be made whole with ceremonies and oils, we no longer believe that we become inheritors of heaven at the touch of a drop of water, and as we have ceased to wash ceremonially before the Ordinance, so we have reduced it from a great, mystic Sacrifice and Sacrament to a touching pledge of Christian goodwill and fraternity. Evolution is justified of her children; we have submitted ourselves gladly and joyfully to her benign sway, while the Ritualist still believes that his child receives divine grace from the pat of an old gentleman called a bishop. He has stopped at the stage which was occupied by those simple and devout but ignorant and superstitious peasants of Syria, nineteen hundred years ago.

But superstitions that may have been edifying or at least harmless, "on account of their ignorance," in the mental backwoods of ancient Palestine are to-day in free, Protestant, commercial England a danger and a disgrace;

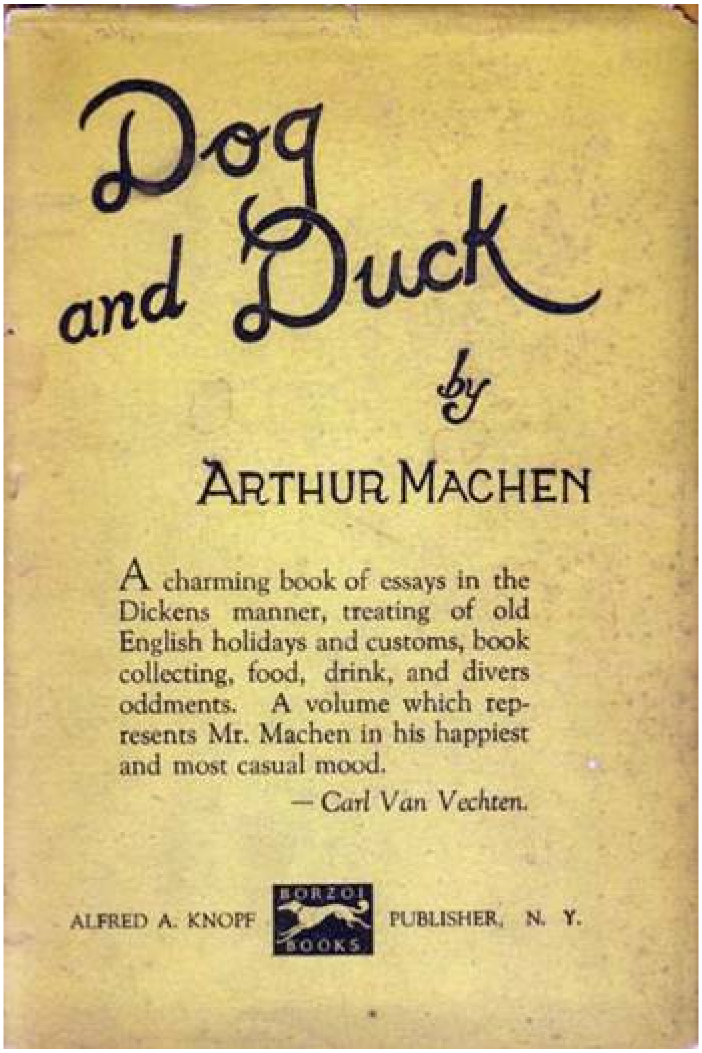
and those who teach such deadly figments must be opposed relentlessly, incessantly, in season and out of season. It may be that, in the scheme of Evolution, a religion of human sacrifice was the only possible one for our far-off British ancestors; but should we tolerate such cruel and devilish rites now in this happy Protestant country? No: and already I see the lines formed, the men at arms arrayed, the glitter of the weapons and the waving of the banners; I hear the pealing of the trumpets and the heavy roll of drums, as legion after legion closes its ranks; already is begun the great battle between two great hosts — between the armies of Sacramentalism and Anti-Sacramentalism. There are defections, on one side and on the other, as the true issue is apprehended, and now you understand why we Free Churchmen are able to range ourselves with the so-called Atheists of France, with Gambetta and Combes, why we rejoice at the ending in that country of all dogmatic teaching, at the expulsion of monks and nuns and all the brood of darkness from their dens, at the driving forth of the Sisters from the hospitals; why we shall rejoice when the idol temples are closed, the fetish images and monstrances and all the paraphernalia of Sacramentalism are confiscated, and the mouths of priests and bishops effectually gagged. Our war cry is not wanting; Lloyd George proclaimed it to the House of Commons and to the listening world when he uttered the great words: “Clericalism is the Enemy!”

Let every man choose, once and for all, on which side he will fight; and let him remember:hat unless he fight on our side, he will have pronounced that the system called Protestantism is the deadliest and most abominable delusion that has ever fallen, for its sins, upon the world.

THE END

Dog and Duck

This non-fiction work of 1924 is a collection of occasional essays, originally published in various magazines and covering a range of topics, but with a focus on folk customs. The style is the informal ‘chatty’ tone adopted by the popular essayists of the day. It is a pleasant collection that reveals a different side to Machen for those that know him principally as an author of Gothic horror and decadent fantasies.



Dog and Duck

by

ARTHUR MACHEN

A charming book of essays in the Dickens manner, treating of old English holidays and customs, book collecting, food, drink, and divers oddments. A volume which represents Mr. Machen in his happiest and most casual mood.

— *Carl Van Vechten.*

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DOG AND DUCK

NOT LONG AGO, I remember reading that a Stool Ball match had been played at Lord’s Cricket Ground. I said to a man I know, a person learned in games:

‘What is Stool Ball? Is it the same thing as Knurr and Spell?’

He rebuked my ignorance. He explained the two games. He explained further that even to hit the ball at Knurr and Spell a man must be northern born. He said it was one of the most difficult games that had ever been invented.

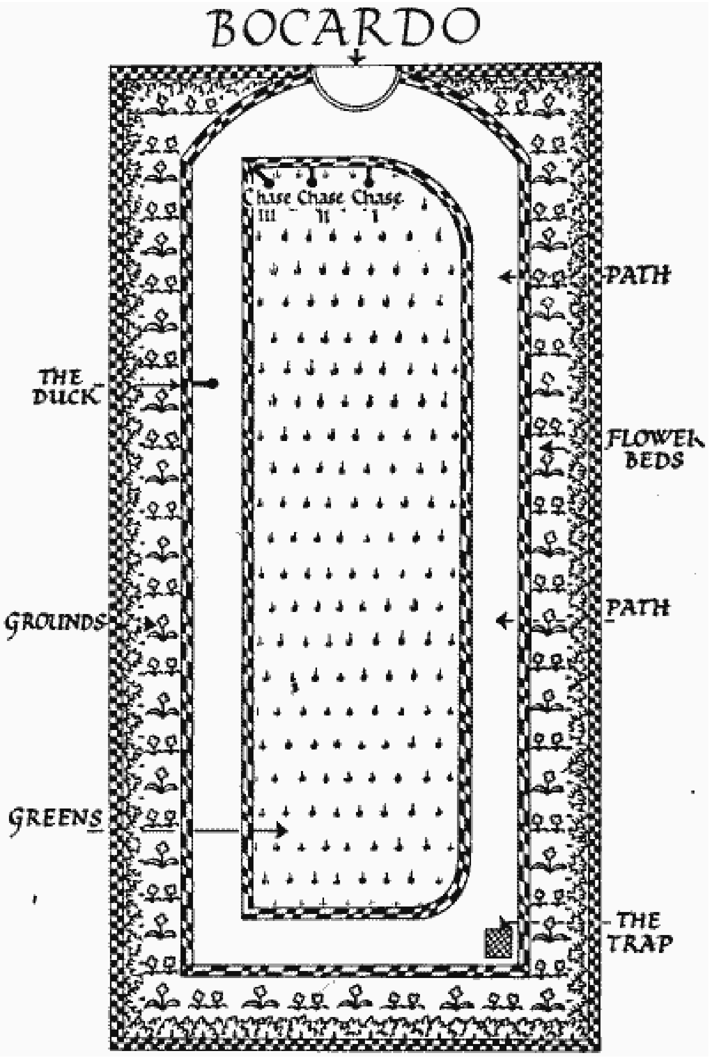
But this is merely by the way; it is an illustration of the fact that many of the old English games linger on, half-forgotten, played vehemently perhaps; but only by a few initiates.

So I dare say that many of my readers will not even have heard of the game of Dog and Duck. Yet, within ten minutes’ walk of Lord’s, the faithful few know where to find the headquarters of the M.D.D.C. — the historic Alley of the Marylebone Dog and Duck Club.

At first sight, entering the alley, one would say that here was a quiet London garden, of the old-fashioned kind, with an old-fashioned house at the back of it. Roughly, the extent of the alley — which includes, as I shall presently explain, the ‘Grounds’ and the ‘Greens’ — is twenty yards by ten. It is overhung by old trees and ivy-covered walls, and seems the very place for an old-world game. Bowls, once the favourite game of the clergy and of dignified and elderly persons generally, used to be played in just such surroundings. And Dog and Duck, like Bowls, is a game for the leisurely, a game of amenities.

I said the alley was like a garden. Well, imagine a lawn, shaped somewhat like a capital D. About it goes what we may call the garden path, this is the actual alley. On the right hand are flower beds — the ‘grounds’ — and to right and left the path is separated from grounds and greens by tiles: these are the ‘walls.’

Note one point. You entered by a door, which may be imagined to be in the middle of the top of the D. Here the alley widens to right and left, making a sort of bay in front of the door. This space, marked off by a white line, is called ‘Bocardo,’ in humorous allusion to a mode of the Fourth Figure in Scholastic Logic. If you got into this figure, you had considerable difficulty in getting out again, in getting back into the more natural first figure. There used to be a prison at Oxford called Bocardo. Facing Bocardo, the lawn, or greens, is marked off by three posts. These are the three ‘chaces,’ or scoring marks.



Now, suppose you are standing in the middle of the green, watching a match at Dog and Duck. The first man to play— ‘first troller’ as he is called — stands in the alley on a slightly raised platform, two feet square, at the right-hand bottom corner of the D. The right foot must be on the platform—

‘the trap’; the left foot on the alley behind. He takes the ball, which is a hollow india-rubber ball of two inches diameter, and begins the ‘bump’: a bump is the delivery of five balls in succession. His object is to bowl, or serve, the ball on the alley as far as possible round the top of the D. If the ball rests between chaces one and two, he scores five. If it rests between the second and third chace, he scores ten. If it turns the corner and rests in the return alley, the trailer’s score is twenty. If it passes the Duck which marks the fourth chace, the player scores forty.

But there are penalties and difficulties. The ball must not leave the alley. It may, indeed, skim on the edge of the tiles, or walls; but if it touches the earth on the right, or the lawn at the left, for a moment, the umpire, standing in the middle of the lawn, calls out ‘grounds’ or ‘greens,’ and the scorer deducts five from the player’s total: ‘lack five.’

Then, there is Bocardo. The ball that stays within the white line which marks Bocardo fails to score.

Here then, are the two great difficulties of the game. The tyro, a cricketer, possibly, possibly a distinguished amateur of bowls, smiles in a superior way as he takes his stand on the trap. He is to bowl a child’s ball round a garden path. Very good! and then, to his astonishment, the ball has jumped ‘walls,’ and is revelling in ‘grounds,’ or more rarely is disporting itself on the lawn.

The fact is that a ball, with sufficient force behind it to round the left-hand corner of the D and score twenty, is apt, save in the hands of the most skilful players, to ‘break alley,’ to ‘go to earth,’ as that famous old professional, Harry Gunter, used to put it. It takes the best part of a lifetime to learn how to impart that peculiar swirling motion to the ball which will carry it down the alley, cause it to impinge on the right wall at exactly the right angle, and then ‘bring it low,’ make it come round the D close to the top wall, and at last swing it triumphantly round the corner, perhaps to Chace IV, the Duck, and a score of forty.

The supercilious beginner comes to grief over walls; Bocardo is the terror of the experienced player. Old James Henry Messiter, who invented the ‘railway service,’ used to groan and say that ‘Bocardo beats all.’ A ball may be well held, well placed, well played, well bungled, and yet some infinitesimal error at the last moment may spoil everything. It may be only the variation of a hundredth of an inch in the ball's position as it leaves the player's fingers. But look, it swings down the alley, a free, a gallant ball; it impinges on the wall low down at the exact spot which the player has marked for it; and then, instead of coming down low it rolls up and abides placidly in Bocardo, and, as Dickens says of another game, the player's score is as blank as his face.

Bocardo lies in wait for every good player, no matter what his service may be. I have seen it bring low the hopes of a distinguished Prebendary of the Church who had studied Dog and Duck under Messiter; and I have seen it foil a well-known actor, who fancied himself extremely, as the sole possessor of the secret of Jack Toplady's 'straight slows.'

Toplady, by the way, was the only player who was ever able to score consistently with the 'white ball.' This, it may be explained, is the ball which never touches 'walls' at all, to left or right, but wheels round the curve of the D in a perfect orbit. Old players who have seen Toplady at work, have assured me that these white balls of his looked as if they were running in tapes.

The game of Dog and Duck — sometimes, in earlier days, known as Chase Mallard — makes its rare appearances in our literature. So far as I know, there has been no scientific treatise on the sport; but there are some odd allusions to it scattered up and down in old half-forgotten books. Thus, in modernized English, the mediaeval poet, traditionally known as Nicholas Scrope — his identity is uncertain — in his *House of Mirth*:

When men in their dalliance
Would have of mirth some pastance,
Then go they to a fair ground,
With the green tree well get around,
And green grass in abundance
To a place that is a gay pleasaunce.
And there is a pathway measured well,
This is their alley, as they tell.
And so with ball in place of bow,
They chase the mallard that may not go
One jot or whit from his station,
But abideth still in his fashion.

But though alway his stand be stable,
Yet is that ball most variable,
And departeth sudden from his right way
And all gates ever will stray;
Till men cry out, ‘Benedicite,
Ye foul ball, whither will ye flee?’

And then, the seventeenth-century moralist, some ‘seraphical’ divine of King Charles II days, speaking of the vanity of human pursuits and occupations:

So have I seen the sun break forth from the cloudy dungeons of the night and climb high in the heavens, giving gladness to the hearts of men and gently unfolding the blossom of a rose, and affording light for all our toils and salutary labours and exemplary endeavours, that we be justified, if it be but a little, before the evening cometh, and the dull curtain of darkness shut in all our scene, and it is time for a reckoning and strict account of all that we have performed. And yet within this brief allotted space of salvation which may be the last accorded to anyone, his life concluding with the day, and sinking into the gloomy retirements of the grave; yet have I seen men go forth in their madness and unthriftiness, and waste the hours of grace and of the sun, rendering to idleness and wantonness and vain sport and pleasure the sum of all they owe to God and to man. For such proceed to the places of their fond diversion, and chase a painted bird with a painted ball, till the sun vanishes under the cloud of the night, and darkness encompasses all things and the game is ended, and they have their pains for their labours, and the remorse of runagates for their choicest cogitations, and the babble of fools in their ears in place of the comfortable whisper of the angels as they lay them down to rest and to that sleep which is the quotidian prophecy of the tomb.

And so, at about the same period, Davenant doggerelizes over the game in a different spirit:

But Husband grey now comes to stall,
For Prentice notch’d he strait does call;
Where’s Dame, quoth he — quoth son of shop,
She’s gone her cake in milk to sop:
Ho! Ho! to Islington; enough!

Fetch Job my son and hearty stuff.
For there in sport we'll shout for luck,
And cry hay duck, there Dog, hay Duck.

And in the old song-books of ninety and a hundred years ago you may still occasionally come across —

THE TROLLERS' CATCH.

Trowl the ball slowly,
So it pass wholly
The mark where the Duck would catch 'em;
Thus shall it go
Both sure and slow,
And that's the way to match 'em.
Trollollilollilo.

And finally, Dog and Duck makes an odd casual appearance in one of the most remarkable trials of the eighteenth century, the famous case in which Anthony Mullins, citizen and haberdasher, was accused of the wilful murder of Thomas Jenkyns, a retired merchant, living at Enfield Wash. The body of Thomas Jenkyns was found in a pool of blood in a lonely field near Highbury; his throat being cut from ear to ear and, as one of the men who found the body declared: 'We were hard put to it to know what to do, for it seemed as if the poor man's head was almost cut away from his body, and I said to my friend, Richard Staple, who was with me: "Why, Dick," said I, "this is a villainous to-do; for if we make shift to raise the body 'tis a great chance that the man's head will fall apart, and I cannot abide the thought of it." "Why, Tom," says he, "I am much of your mind in the business. What if we leave ill work as it lies and go peaceably home by another way?" But I would not have that neither, lest, as I said, we should both be nabbed for the fact and come to Deadly Nevergreen (Tyburn) at last. And so we made shift to raise the dead man tenderly, I holding his head to his shoulders and trembling a great deal, and in this way brought him as far as Islington without any misadventure, it being late of a dark night without a moon and scarce anyone abroad.'

This murder, naturally enough, became the town talk of the day, the murdered man having many good friends in the city, and being both wealthy and hospitable. It may be mentioned by the way that the business of Mr. Thomas Brown and Mr. Richard Staple, the two men who found the body on that dark moonless night, was more than dubious, and it was conjectured that if the author of *Tom Jones* had been still alive, he could have furnished some interesting particulars as to their antecedents. However, no one suspected them of the actual murder, since the dead man's watch was on his body and ten guineas were found in his purse, and that was a good defence, so far as Tom and Dick were concerned. But there was a great buzz of rumour everywhere, and more especially in the northern parts of London, and all the taverns were full of strange talk and whispers of those who could tell strange tales, and at last, at the end of the week, Anthony Mullins was arrested and charged with the murder, on the evidence of three persons who swore that they had seen Mullins and the murdered man together on the afternoon of the day on which the crime was committed.

The three witnesses were: Simon Murchison, a Scot, who kept a snuffshop in Norton Folgate; William Frost, a brassfounder, of Clerkenwell; and Abraham Lewis, a clockmaker of Devizes. These three persons, it appeared, met at the Bowl and Sword tavern in Islington, not having been previously acquainted with one another, and, warming over their cups, struck up an acquaintance, and spoke, as they declared, of ill trade and the decay of good old customs and the insolence of apprentices — they were all men in late middle age.

'We all grew to be pretty dismal over the bad times,' said Abraham Lewis in his evidence, 'till at last I said: "Why, neighbours, this will never end it or mend it. Come! let us go and bump it at Dog and Duck, and I will be surety for the first bowl of punch, the lowest score of the three to be debtor for the second." And so we went out into the alley behind the tavern, and Mr. Murchison ordered pipes and a plate of tobacco, and Mr. Frost bade the drawer bring brandy to hearten the bowl, and so we set to. Mr. Frost played the game very well and crossed the Duck three times and won the match, and I was second, so it fell to Mr. Murchison to call for the second bowl. And while we were in the arbour at the side of the alley, drinking our punch and smoking tobacco, and talking of the game, two men came out of the back door of the tavern and sat on a bench by the wall, speaking together very seriously, but not as we could hear what they said. They called for liquor, and drank two glasses apiece, and so went out, and we saw no more of them.'

And the witness swore that of these two men one was Mullins, the prisoner at the bar, and the other Jenkyns, the murdered man.

'I know him,' said Lewis, pointing to Mullins, 'by his great beaked nose, and the dead man I could swear to any day, for as he lifted his glass I saw that his little finger, was crooked back, as if it had been broken; and I saw the body, and the little finger was crooked as I saw it on the live man.'

Lewis's evidence was corroborated in all essential details by his two tavern acquaintances. Murchison had noted that the prisoner had coughed, 'in a soft sort of fashion,' three or four times in the middle of his talk, and everybody in court had observed this peculiarity in Mullins as he stood in the dock. Frost described how he had seen the prisoner read a paper which the dead man had given him, and how Mullins had drawn out a very rich gold and tortoise-shell spectacle-case from his pocket, and had put on his spectacles to read the paper, and just such a spectacle-case, of an uncommon pattern, was found on Mullins, when he was arrested. And then Nancy Wilcox, who was making merry with some gay friends on ale and cheese-cakes at one of the Islington taverns on the way to Highbury Fields, feeling, as she said, a little heavy and stifled with the heat of the place and the number of the company, went out to take the air and stood by the tavern door. And Nancy swore that she saw the prisoner pass close beside her, walking with another man towards Highbury, but she would not swear that the other man was Jenkyns, though she vowed he was much like him.

Those in the court, barristers and spectators alike, were confident that the noose was already tight about Mullins' neck, when the great surprise of the trial startled them all. The prisoner's two clerks, Osborne and Nichols, swore that their master had been with them the whole afternoon, from three o'clock till eight in the evening. And as the evidence of the three men who played Dog and Duck and drank punch, showed that they were at the 'Crown and Bowl' tavern between three and five, while Nancy Wilcox fixed her coming out to take the air as 'just a little after the clock had struck four; for I said out loud, "There goes the stroke of four, and there go four cups of ale too many,"' it became of the utmost importance to the Crown to shake the evidence of Osborne and Nichols.

Osborne, it was explained, sat at a high desk directly facing Mr. Mullins' private counting-house, where he sat apart, in a place glazed in. Nichols' desk was under a window, and looked the other way, towards the door.

'I was busy with a great account,' said Osborne in court, 'but ever and again I looked up from my book, and there sat my master as he was always accustomed, but very still.'

Counsel. 'Was he not used, then, to sitting still in the counting-house?'

Osborne. 'Why, not so. He would rise now and again commonly and walk a littll to and fro, and so sit down again. And twice or thrice in an hour he would come out and speak with us about the occasions of the day.'

Counsel. 'And did he not stir at all on this afternoon?'

Osborne. 'He sat still at his desk and never moved till it was past eight in the evening.'

Counsel. 'And what did he then?'

Osborne. 'Why, he came forth with a very slow step as if he were weary, and stood awhile in the midst of the counting-house gazing about him. And so, looking about him, he saw that Nichols' place was empty, and he spoke to me in a very sunken voice, little louder than a whisper, and said to me: "Where, then, is thy fellow?" Now the truth was that Mr. Nichols had come softly to me where I sat with a candle on my desk, for it began to grow dark, and he said to me, speaking low: "Alas! my heart is very heavy. I know not what it may be, but I am sadly oppressed." I perceived that he shook a great deal as he spoke, and his face was of a pale colour, he being a ruddy man of his habit. So to cheer him, I spoke hearty, but not loud, and said, "Why, Jack, what's this? Never be downhearted. Go you softly to the 'Mitre' and drink a cup of ale and so defy the devil and the dumps." Whereon he looked fearfully to the place where Mr. Mullins sat, with no candle by him, and so crept out. Then, a little while after, when my master came forth and spoke as I have told it, I gave him the truth, that Jack had the black dog on his shoulders and I had counselled him to go out to the "Mitre" and drink some ale to warm his stomach and raise his spirits. "Alas!" said Mr. Mullins, "poor child! He might do worse than drink a cup of ale." And then came Nichols, and we two went away.'

Counsel. 'Did not the prisoner at the bar speak more with either of you?'

Osborne. ‘No word more, but nodded his head as we went out.’

Counsel. ‘And what did you then?’

Osborne. ‘Why, I made such haste as I could away, for I was appointed to meet with one at Marylebone Gardens to view the fireworks, and it was very late.’

Counsel. ‘Did you then part from Nichols?’

Osborne. ‘Aye, for he told me that there was a supper of tripe waiting for him at his lodging by Pedlar’s Acre an hour agone, and he feared lest all should be undone. “And so,” quoth he, “since I won a wager of half a guinea but yesterday over the man that reads in the dark, I’ll e’en take water and begone with all speed.” And so he fell to running very fast, and I saw him no more that night.’

All this was amply corroborated by Nichols. He was quite sure that Mullins had been in the counting-house all the afternoon, for, said he, ‘My place was by the door, and I could not have failed to see him pass, if he had gone forth.’ And then Counsel for the Crown, already hopeless of hanging the prisoner in the face of such evidence, asked him at hazard, what had been amiss with him on the afternoon of the murder. ‘Are such fits common with you?’ asked the Serjeant. ‘You have the countenance of a hearty man.’

‘Why, please you, so I am,’ answered Nichols; ‘and Hockley-in-the-Hole can answer for it. But on this afternoon there came quite suddenly a great trembling upon me, and a dread on my heart and a sickness in my stomach, and I did not know what ailed me, and I feared very much. And so I looked round on my stool, to see if my fellow, Osborne, was in his place, and looking down on the floor of the counting-house, I could have sworn that there was a great pool of blood there, with bubbles of blood in it, and I had almost swooned away for fear.’

Serjeant Munsey asked the witness no more questions, thinking him an idiot most likely, and the jury presently returned a verdict of ‘not guilty,’ and the prisoner, Mullins, was discharged.

There were rumours of an old and very bitter enmity between the murdered man and Mullins; but in face of the evidence of the two clerks that was nothing to the purpose. The murder of Thomas Jenkyns remains to this day as profound a mystery as the Campden Wonder — and that, after all, may be one of the inventions of Daniel Defoe.

Of late years, it is true, our occultists have been investigating the case from their peculiar viewpoint, and are satisfied, as far as I can make out, that Anthony Mullins was in two places at once. While the natural body of Anthony was engaged in committing murder at Highbury, his ‘astral body’ — whatever that may be — sat, or appeared to sit, in the accustomed chair in the counting-house. Possibly; but my own opinion is that the two clerks, Osborne and Nichols, perjured themselves to save their master, to whom, it afterwards appeared, they were much attached.

Footnote

This must have been Jacob Courland, or Crowland, a foreigner. He had lost one eye in childhood, but possessed, as he declared, the power of seeing and reading in pitch darkness as well as in the brightest light. When in London he gave exhibitions of this singular faculty in a darkened room at the ‘Sir Hugh Myddelton’ tavern, Sadler’s Wells, and afterwards at Salters’ Hall.

WHY NEW YEAR?

WHEN I WAS a boy, which is a good many years ago, there was a very queer celebration on New Year's Day in the little Monmouthshire town where I was born, Caerleon-on-Usk. The town children — village children would be nearer the mark since the population of the place amounted to a thousand souls or thereabouts — got the biggest and bravest and gayest apple they could find in the loft, deep in the dry bracken. They put bits of gold leaf upon it. They stuck raisins into it. They inserted into the apple little sprigs of box, and then they delicately slit the ends of hazel nuts, and so worked that the nuts appeared to grow from the ends of the box-leaves, to be the disproportionate fruit of these small trees. At last, three bits of stick were fixed into the base of the apple, tripod-wise; and so it was borne round from house to house; and the children got cakes and sweets, and — those were wild days, remember — small cups of ale. And nobody knew what it was all about.

And here is the strangeness of it. Caerleon means the fort of the legions, and for about three hundred years the Second Augustan Legion was quartered there, and made a tiny Rome of the place, with amphitheatre, baths, temples, and everything necessary for the comfort of a Roman-Briton. And the Legion brought over the custom of the *strena* (French, *étrennes*) the New Year's gift of good omen. The apple, with its gold leaf, raisins and nuts, meant: 'good crops and wealth in the New Year.' It is the Latin poet, Martial, I think, who alludes to the custom. He was an ungrateful fellow; somebody sent him a gold cup as a New Year's gift, and he said that the gold of the cup was so thin that it would have done very well to put on the festive apple of the day.

Well, I suppose the Second Augustan was recalled somewhere about a.d. 400. The Saxon came to Caerleon, and after him the Dane, and then the Norman, and then the modern spirit, the worst enemy of all, and still, up to fifty years ago, the Caerleon children kept New Year's Day, as if the Legionaries were yet in garrison. And I suppose that Caerleon was the only place south of the Tweed where people took any festal notice at all of the first day in the year. For it is not an old English festival at all. It is distinctly Latin in origin. The Latin peoples have always feasted the day; socially, it ranks far above Christmas in France. Where then do we get it? The answer is that we get it from the country where the whisky comes from. It is a Scottish feast. The Scots call it Hogmanay — a word that comes from an old song with the Latin burden, *hoc in anno*, 'in this year' — and the Scots who dwell amongst us have so popularized the celebration that it flourishes in England, so that we fancy it an old English custom. And the reason why the Scots keep New Year's Eve and New Year's Day with all the solemnities of whisky and good resolutions and elbow-joining and Auld-lang-syneing is that for many hundred years Scotland maintained the closest relations with France. Even to this day, I suppose, there are many Scots who would speak of table-linen as 'napery,' a cup as a 'tassie,' a leg of mutton as a 'gigot,' and a wild cherry as a 'gean.' In France, the *guigne* is a fruit half-way between the ordinary cherry and the morella, neither as sweet as the one nor as 'dry' as the other. France, indeed, has left all manner of trace on Scottish life. A small country town in Scotland reminds the travelled Englishman strangely of many a dull little town which he has visited in France; the sort of town which the French themselves call '*un petit trou de province*.' The small Scots town is not a bit like the small English town; it lacks utterly the smugness, the warm, red brick, comfortable appearance that one finds in such places as Amersham, in Buckinghamshire, Brandon, in Norfolk — or Suffolk? — and Marlborough, in Wiltshire. The county town of Scotland is French, with a certain northern grim ness about it, and if there is an old castle anywhere near, it will have the French *tourelles*, or 'pepperpot' turrets. And the cakes in the confectioner's shop might be matched in France, but hardly in Bond Street, for their choice elaboration, their appeal, not only to the palate, but the eye. And then the cooking: your lodging may be of the humblest, but your landlady will serve you such dishes in the way of Scots Broth and Collops as you may pray for vainly all England over. And after you have finished your broth, the meat which made it will appear on the table, garnished with its attendant herbs and vegetables; just as in France, in many country houses, the *bouilli*, the beef that made the soup, is served after the soup plates have been taken away.

Scotland, then, is largely a land of French custom, and thus, ultimately, of Roman custom. The Scots Law is largely Roman Law. They have no coroner in Scotland. The Procurator Fiscal ‘precognoses’ the case as the Procureur de la République makes his ‘instruction,’ his preliminary inquiry in France. And so, Scotland has given us her Latin-French festival of New Year’s Day. And it has ‘caught on’ wonderfully. Not, I think, quite in the true spirit of its native lands, Rome and France and Scotland. I spoke of ‘good resolutions’ as part of the New Year ritual; but that, perhaps, is our grave English contribution to the feast. We speak of a ‘Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,’ and I believe that no Englishman is quite all mirth as the clock begins to strike midnight on December 31st. He may wish to be purely jolly; but somehow a tinge of solemnity will break in on his jollity. There will never be quite the abandonment of Christmas in our New Year’s mirth. We may be as worldly as we will; but in the last five minutes before the bell of twelve, I believe that a little of the Watch Night spirit of the Methodists finds its way into the cups and strikes a silence about the board.

ON VALENTINES AND OTHER THINGS

IT IS A theory of mine that one very rarely sees the last of anything. In a sense, of course, we have seen the last of the horsed omnibuses of London; we know that we shall never more behold them lumbering along the streets; those vehicles that would look almost like toys to us now, but then seemed great and gay. The last one that I saw at all was quiescent, and not in motion. There is a wharf by the canal somewhere in Camden Town. It looks as if somebody had thought of pulling it down or of turning it into something else, and had then despaired of his endeavour. On this wharf I noted, a few years ago, an old omnibus standing desolate. It is possible that the owner of the wharf had a notion that it would make a good barge: but this fancy also went the way of his other dreams. We have seen the last of the horse-omnibuses in one sense, but who can come forward and declare that he was a passenger in or on the last journey made by the last horse-omnibus in London? The old machine endured, I think, into the war. I tried to keep my eye on one that plied from Somerset House to Waterloo and back; but it faded imperceptibly and was gone. So with the Valentine. Who bought the last Valentine, and when? I can remember very well indeed the days in which the fourteenth of the month of February came with a flutter of excitement to the breakfast-table. There was no knowing what the post might or might not bring in the way of sentiment or comedy. There were the fine and scented Valentines in cardboard boxes, puffy with cotton-wool and the tenderest feelings; things of silk and satin, delicately scented, painted with flowers. And then there was satire of the milder kind, pictures of absurd young men holding crutchsticks and chewing toothpicks and looking foolish. These mortified the more sensitive recipients; and there was always the anxiety of wondering whose hand had sped the dart. The writing on the envelope was of course disguised, or written by some person whose script was unknown to the receiver of the Valentine. Hence the question: was it only that fool Bill; or, alas! was it from the fair adored Hermione?

But there was a third class of Valentine; the kind which the butcher’s boy sent to the cook, which the housemaid dispatched to the young greengrocer whose suit she scorned. No ‘nice’ stationer kept these Valentines. They were to be sought in back streets, near the rag-and-bone shop, close at hand to the broken-down furniture warehouse. They stood in rows in the windows of mean shops; things made of the thinnest paper, about five inches broad by eighteen long. They bore hideous libels on the human form, outlined in black with liberal splashes of coarse red paint, usually determining to the nose. On these things cook, who in real life was a pleasant, comfortable body, would find herself depicted as bloated beyond recognition. Beside her a bottle of brandy, half finished, might stand, and a horrid verse below would sing:

You always find the kitchen dripping handy:
You know the way to turn it into brandy.

Thus insinuating against the poor woman the vice, not only of dishonesty, but inebriety. So the young greengrocer would be counselled to keep his carrots for his own consumption, instead of wasting them on his ass:

To say the least,
If he’s a four-legged, you’re a two-legged beast.

And so on, and so on. The satire was somewhat ponderous, perhaps; but those were hearty days. The butcher boy, in particular, was an irresistible and an easy mark. Here was the opportunity for the red pigment, and plenty of it. The poor lad was depicted as gnawing a huge and bloody bone with loathsome appetite and hideous grimaces, and underneath would run the legend:

You starved so long at home
You went abroad to gnaw a bone.

And all these fine, brave things are gone! It is years upon years since I have seen them hung up in the small shops in the back streets. I think, somehow, that the last of all must have been on view in the purlieus of Hoxton; Hoxton the home of lost causes; the last place to have a genuine theatrical stock company, the last place, I fear, which will make the toy theatre, the delight of so many childhoods that have since turned to dismal old age. And I am wondering whether any collector, wise in time, felt by instinct that the day of the vulgar Valentines was almost done, and so collected them forthwith. Probably such a man arose in the nick of time; a man who specialized in this one subject, and could tell you the very year of the first Valentine depicting that bloated cook and that sanguineous butcher boy, of the firm which had the monopoly of their production. If you know this man he will show you his portfolio of back-street Valentines, and point out the rarer specimens, even the unique Undertaker Valentine, a lachrymose and drunken fellow, shedding hypocritical tears, and illustrating the couplet:

You swab your eyes, but not with grief,
You want more gin for your relief.

There must be some such collection, I am sure, and if it is but given time to age, it will become valuable. For here is one of the most curious things in that complex which we call human nature; age will give merit to anything, or almost anything. The vulgarest abuse scrawled on the walls of Pompeii has a huge interest to us; and the time will come when those old pasquinades of the London slums of twenty, thirty, fifty years ago may give more delight than grave books full of science. For, if one thinks it over, it will appear that science, which has always assumed such great airs, is one of the most fleeting and evanescent of things. It does not last; it becomes perilously near nothing at all. Take a chemistry book of twenty-five years ago, with its dogmas of the intransmutable elements, and the atom as the ultimate of matter. The elements, or some of them, have been transmuted; the atom is a universe of electrons: the chemistry of 1895 is but an idle tale. But old fellows will still chuckle as they draw their bald old heads together in the club window and recall the remark made by the driver of the ‘John Bull’ to the conductor of the yellow ‘Tilling’ in 1895, one fine summer evening.

I think some substitute should be found for the vanished Valentine and its observances. Suppose we made February 14 a day on which we could do what we liked — of course without malice or injury to our neighbours. Suppose we made a regular wild day of it, and insisted on buying chocolate creams — and why not bullseyes? — at 8.15 p.m.; on having another glass of small beer after ten, on buying cigarettes openly at eleven.

Why not — to use a vulgar old expression — go the whole hog on St. Valentine’s Day, and make believe we are Englishmen again, not inmates of a Home of Care and Restraint for the Feeble-minded?

ON SIMNEL CAKES

'MOTHERING SUNDAY,' WE may take it, falls, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, in the month of March. I should not like to be too precise, since the calculation of the date of Easter is a very knotty matter, and the oldest difference to divide Christendom into two camps. Moreover, I have not got the Dominical Letter, the Golden Number and the Epact by me; and you must have all these handy if you would talk about Easter and the dates dependent on it. But, on the whole, I think we may say safely that Mothering Sunday — called also Mi-Carême, Mid-Lent, and Refreshment Sunday — falls in March. We will not go into the question of the origin of the name 'Mothering' — a very pleasant, friendly and homely title. There are certain words in the Epistle for the day which may account for it; at all events, this Sunday has always been celebrated as a feast in the midst of a fast. And I have a very vivid recollection of the manner in which the festival was observed in the west country about fifty years ago. I was not very old then; and the ritual appealed to me highly. I can well remember the aspect of the country town on the Saturday, the market day, before Mothering Sunday. Or, I should say, the aspect of the confectioners' shops in the narrow high street. For they were more gorgeous on this day than on the market day before Christmas. They were full of cakes, cakes for every purse, wonderfully adorned with icing, white and pink; a truly delicious spectacle. For the custom of the country was that on the day following, Mothering Sunday, every child should present his mother with a cake. I believe that farm-servants, in especial, made a great point of this observance. Out of slender savings — five or six or seven pounds a year were their wages in those days — they would buy a cake and beg leave of absence from the farmer on the Sunday, tramping, some of them, ten miles over the hills to the maternal cottage, there to make their offering, and warm their hands at the old hearth before setting out again for the farm by deep lanes and black March woods. A friendly, kindly custom; one of the good observances that smoothed the rough places of life in the old days.

Now these kind cakes were, of course, Simnel cakes, though I do not recollect whether they were prepared according to the usual recipe which so pleasantly puts a layer of almond-paste not only outside the cake but in its very vitals. And, that everything should be pleasant about this mid-Lent festivity, some ingenious person was at the pains to invent an etymology for the word Simnel, which is matchless in its absurdity. Simnel was just mediaeval English for a cake. It comes from the Latin, *Simila*, which means the finest wheaten flour. Originally, I suppose, the English word was 'simmel,' this became 'simnel' as 'pantomime' becomes — on some lips— 'pantomine.' But about eighty or a hundred years ago, the ingenious person got to work on simnel. I conjecture that he had settled that Charing was, really, *chère reine;* a touching allusion to Queen Eleanor. He had shrunk from the vulgarity of Rotten Row and had demonstrated that it was a corruption *Route du Roi*. He had made Birdcage Walk into Bocage Walk, and had explained how energetic apprentices sometimes set the *tems,* or sieve, on fire. Refreshed by these labours he turned his eye on simnel — and produced his masterpiece.

Once on a time, it appears, there was an old couple, Sim and Nell by name. They were dear old people, with the best hearts in the world, but after many long years of happy married life, they had retained their several individualities. And so, when it came to a question of their having a cake, there was something of a dispute. One — I forget which — wanted it baked; the other would have a cake that was boiled. So, one regrets to say it, they differed and even quarrelled as to this cake; the debate rose to such a pitch that Nell rushed at Sim with the broom. In her violence, she broke some eggs that lay on the table, and this catastrophe brought these nice old people to their senses. They saw that they had been silly. They agreed that, to please both parties, the famous cake should be part baked, part boiled. And to round off all, and to smooth everything over, literally and metaphorically, the smashed eggs should be used to glaze the cake. And so, from this quarrel and reconciliation between Sim and Nell, the cake was naturally called Sim-nel.

There; that is the etymology; and in the words of my favourite classic, 'Get Rich Quick Wallingford': 'Can Limburger smell worse?' But I confess to being curious as to the identity of the inventor of this ridiculous and imbecile fable. Was he one with the inventor of the other etymologies which

I have mentioned, or was he ‘a little syndicate,’ operating in false derivations? — I forgot, by the way, one of the noblest efforts in this kind: the account of how the tavern sign of ‘The Goat and Compasses’ arose from the piety of Puritan days, when the Sour Saints drank their ale under the proclamation, ‘God Encompasseth Us.’ But, as I say, the mental process of the individual, or individuals, who invented the simnel nonsense, and all the other like nonsenses, interests me. Was he a leg-puller, who deliberately made up idiotic tales, chuckling as he reflected that there was no limit to human folly? Or was he merely a solemn ignoramus, with a misdirected zeal for piercing to the root of things, who sat down, as it were, before any word or phrase that he did not understand, and set his weak brains working until they evolved a feeble fable? It will ever be a mystery. In all probability, the person who invented these outrageous tales was a Rationalist, a man with the scientific mind. He perceived that it was all nonsense to talk of setting the Thames on fire; the thing couldn’t be done. He didn’t know that every nation has the proverb, the name of the river being varied. So he made up his ingenious story of the energetic apprentice and his sieve, or whatever the *tems* may be. And so again; never having heard of *simila*, fine, sifted flour, he made up the tragi-comedy of Sim and Nell.

APRIL FOOL!

DOES THE RITE of the April fool still survive amongst us? Or has it gone the way of the February Valentine and of the ceremony of the oak-apple on the twenty-ninth of May? I am afraid that if it has not gone it is going fast, like most of the light-hearted observances which our fathers loved.

I can remember the time when on the first of April men ordinarily grave and sedate enough would invent mad errands for the simple. Boys would be sent to the chemist's for a pint of pigeon's milk or to the cobbler's for a certain quantity of 'strap oil'; these April jests were mostly jokes of much the same quality as the actor's trick of sending the beginner to borrow an 'ibid,' a mysterious prop, which had its origin in the list of characters and their costumes at the beginning of the old play books. Thus, the Duke of Otranto — let us say — was to wear a black velvet mantle, black hose and shoes, and a cap with a black plume in the first act. Then, for the second act, he would be set down 'ibid'; that is, *ibidem*; stage Latin for 'same costume.' The young actor would go forth on his search for the ibid, and be sent from the vaults underneath the stage to the flies, and climb many stairs and peer into many strange dens before he became convinced that he might as well look for an ibis as an ibid; and such was the spirit of the ceremony and quest of the April fool. The whole principle of the business was that you were to send somebody to look for something that didn't exist and moreover wasn't there! Thus, it would be very graceful April Foolery if I were to have a number of cards printed reading like this:

HAMPTON COURT

THE FIRST COMMISSIONER OF WORKS

Requests the honour of your company

AT THE FEEDING OF THE
DRAGONS

April 1st.
Eleven o'clock precisely.
Morning dress.

And as I write this nonsense, the conviction seizes me that every hundred such cards sent out would find at least five April fools, and very likely more. The older I grow, the more firmly I am convinced that there is no proposition, tale or statement so monstrous that it will not find some true believers. I feel certain that if I announced an Exhibition of Two-Sided Triangles, I should have numerous inquiries; and I think I could find modern artists who would paint them for me. No proposition is too absurd for belief; I knew hard-headed men of business who grew cross and heated if you hinted some doubt as to those tens of thousands of Russian soldiers who had passed through Ealing Broadway 'last Sunday morning, between ten and eleven; my brother saw them, I tell you.' Why, it is only a few weeks since I saw an odd-looking picture on the back page of a newspaper. It was, like the rest of the pictures on the page, a reproduction of a photograph. Most of it was ordinary enough; it showed a girl standing against a background of leafage. But close to the girl's head there was something not so ordinary; a little winged figure, perhaps six inches long, clothed in some gauzy stuff, appearing to float in the air, in the manner of a butterfly. That little winged figure was a fairy!

This 'fairy' is believed in and commented on by grave men, men of undoubted culture, men of undoubted intelligence — in other matters, at all events. Nay, serious scientific language is brought in to explain these *in camera* fairies: they are invisible to most mortal eyes, it appears, but the ultra-violet rays perceive them and fix them on the photographic plate. And their intelligence is measured by the experts; it is equal to that of the average Newfoundland dog, or perhaps a little lower. And their business? Skilled and scientific, they build up the molecules which compose the flowers.

There you are! I believe I should have a mob waiting to see the Hampton Court Dragons fed — if I placed my cards with a certain discretion.

And another instance. A dozen years ago or so, an old friend of mine, a musician, was in the artists' room of a provincial concert hall. A concert was going on, and my friend's attention was attracted by the sound of a certain showy but indifferent piece of modern violin music from the platform.

‘What are they playing that thing for?’ he asked somewhat contemptuously of another artist, a lady who was standing by him.

‘Oh, didn’t you hear,’ she replied, in a sort of reverent church whisper; ‘the Holy Grail ordered it to be played.’

The monstrous April Fool story on which this remark hung is much too long to be told here in its full significance. But briefly: somebody a few years ago picked up in a French curiosity-shop a queer saucer-like vessel of blue glass. Somebody else, seeing the thing, remarked: ‘I always think the Holy Grail must have been like that’; and so, by certain elaborate stages, the saucer — a modern imitation of antique glass, said the antiquaries — became the Holy Grail, gave oracles, diffused blessedness, and meddled with concert programmes.

‘This way for the Dragons, ladies and gentlemen!’

And now, as the preacher says, for the application. It seems pretty clear, I think, from these examples, that some of us are April Fools all the year round. There is no tale too outrageous for us to swallow, no quest too absurd for us to undertake. Pigeons’ milk, indeed! We are ready to fetch quarts of it, gallons. And it is possible that the wise men of old, from whom all good customs and strange ceremonies proceed, perceived this abounding folly of the human heart, and devised the rite of the April fool, that thereby we might be purged of absurd credulity by ‘pity and terror,’ as Aristotle has it. ‘Let there be an orgie of folly on one day in the year,’ these sages may have said, ‘so that thereby it may exhaust itself, and learn its own mad excess, and refrain itself for the remaining three hundred and sixty-four days.’ There is, of course, another explanation, known to a few. According to these people, the April Fool business is, like many other popular customs, games, and ceremonies, the remnant of a rite or mystery of the most profound antiquity. This rite, as it is declared, instructed those who had ‘passed the doors’ that most of the business of the world, especially that business commonly regarded as most weighty, important, grave and serious, is a crazy quest, a search for what doesn’t exist and isn’t there. So, say these authorities, the initiated were instructed that most of the reputed great, serious, portentous and weighty men of this world, on arriving in the other world, will be received with undying shouts of mirth and by a voice pealing in an unknown tongue a pretty close equivalent to ‘April Fool!’

THE MERRY MONTH OF MAY

I HAVE BEEN reading about the customs of May Day; of the rising up early and going into the fields and to the borders of the woods, of the gathering of the white blossoming boughs and the bearing of them home again. And of the Maypole also; of the tall tree all bedecked and garlanded and gay; and the men and women dancing round it, in sheer lightness of heart, in sheer delight that the sun is warm once more, and that the earth once more has grown green. I wonder and admire and am quite sure that the age which performed all these happy observances was, so far, infinitely more civilized than ours, which, I believe, observes May Day, so far as it observes the feast at all, by holding demonstrations of a scarlet colour and holloing of Bolshevist anthems. Without going deeply into politics, one can say quite definitely that it is more civilized to bear branches of flowering thorn than to bear the Red Flag. But, having freely admitted this much, I would urge my strong objection to the attempted revival of May Day customs — or of any old customs for the matter of that. What is the use of tying grapes on thorns or figs on thistles? You may make a ghastly and unconvincing imitation of a vine, and a fig, but the fruits will rot and the thorn will remain a thorn, and the thistle a thistle. It is without the slightest enthusiasm that I read of the revival of Morris dancing and the teaching of it; it is as if one taught laughter in the Council Schools. Little pamphlets and magazine articles would be written showing how our old English literature is full of allusions to mirth and laughter, how once upon a time everybody laughed, how an old man had been found in an out-of-the-way hamlet who still laughed, how many eminent physiologists were inclined to think that laughter, in some mysterious manner, promoted digestion. You can imagine the scene: the schoolroom smelling of damp deal boards and inkpots, its walls hung round with maps and charts, the mistress — certificated in Laughter — at her desk.

‘Now, children,’ she begins, ‘I have explained to you how once upon a time everybody laughed a great deal. We don’t quite know why they did so. Some learned men think that laughter was an imitation of a thunderstorm, and that people laughed to bring the thunder and rain and do good to the crops, just as sailors used to whistle when they wanted the wind to blow and make their ship go through the water. You heard all about that the other day in Miss Skimpton's lecture on the Mimetic and Cultural Origin of the Arts. But, whatever the reason for people laughing, it is thought that it was good for them and that it would be good for us too.

'Now, children, imitate me— '

The Mistress — *sadly*— 'Ha, ha, ha!'

The Children — *gloomily*— 'Ha, ha, ha!'

The Mistress — *miserably*— 'He, he, he!'

The Children — *despairingly*— 'He, he, he!'

Well, it may come to that, if the world goes on as it goes now, and laughter may become a lost art. But it will be of no use to try to 'revive' it. It will be idle to put it into a syllabus and teach it in the schools. And so it is idle and useless to try to revive Morris dancing or May games or Maypoles or any of the ancient customs of our fathers. For these things are effects, symptoms; not causes. You cannot get scarlet fever by painting yourself with red spots; you cannot get a light and happy heart by dancing a Morris or dancing round the Maypole or bringing in the May. The German baron in the story was found jumping over his chairs and tables. He was asked what he meant by it, and he replied: 'Sh'apprens t'être fif — by which he intended to say: 'I am learning to be lively.' But it is quite certain that he remained as heavy as ever. And it is quite certain that we have lost that quality which lay behind all these old merry customs of the May, which was the cause and source of them all. I have called that quality light-heartedness, but I am not sure but that joy is not the real name. It is already becoming something of a mystery to us, as the origin and cause and meaning of laughter had become to our imaginary County Council mistress. It was not a thing that depended upon external good fortune or ill; people had hard times and bad luck in plenty in the Middle Ages, and bad luck of a very ill kind: we may be sure of that. But, as a race, we always had joy, and that in an eminent degree, as is expressed by the phrase, 'Merry England.' We must not confuse this sense of mirth or joy or light-heartedness — whatever it may be called — with the sense of humour. *That*, I think, we have in a superior degree; all of us, that is, who can relish Dickens and W. W. Jacobs. The mediæval notion of a joke was primitive and practical; there are certain tales in Chaucer which are assuredly funny, but in a rough and ready way, and without the subtler flavours which we have learned to relish and appreciate. But humour has nothing much to do with a light heart; its savour is not far removed from sadness. Humour, we may almost say, is a strange and beautiful and exquisite by-product of a world which is seen to be all wrong; a recognition that its incoherences and even its tragedies have something wildly funny about them. Let us review Mr. Micawber's career as it appeared to the eyes of the world and Mrs. Micawber's family; it was, seriously, rather shocking, disastrous, and not over honest. I don't think the Middle Ages would have seen anything funny in Micawber: they would probably have whippd him. But Dickens, by a happy and marvellous magic, distilled Micawber's shabby disgraces into an elixir of rare humour.

But that quality which we have been speaking of, that quality which made Morris dances and May mirth, which caused grave lawyers to dance solemnly round an imaginary fireplace in Middle Temple Hall as late as the beginning of the eighteenth century — that quality was due to a conviction that in spite of the Black Death and the Hangman and the King's Counsellors the times were on the whole in joint, and not out of joint. Dante wrote of horrors terrible enough, and many of them eternal horrors; yet, surveying the universe, he could call his book, the 'Divine Comedy.' He could afford to be light-hearted. Not only the end, but the whole purpose and scheme, as he saw it, were happy. I think that this joy, this mirth, had departed from the world, or were fast departing from it, when Shakespeare wrote. His outlook on the universe was, I believe, on the whole, a sad one. It was thus that he was able to create Falstaff, that supreme work of humour out of the villainies and cowardices and shameful shifts of one of the most disgraceful old rascals who ever breathed in imaginative literature. To Chaucer, Falstaff would have been merely a 'recreant knight' and 'foul caitiff': but Shakespeare saw him as a fountain bubbling with laughter.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

IT WAS IN April, if I remember, that I said something about fairies. I am afraid I was talking about April fools, and more or less maintaining that they flourished not only in April but all the year round. And one example was the case of the Yorkshire Fairies, as we may conveniently call them. Or, if you like, we will be good journalists and call them the 'alleged' fairies. You know the story. Two young ladies of Yorkshire — one of them, I think, has had some practical and professional experience in the art of photography — were in the habit of taking country rambles and snapshots together. When the plates were developed, strange to say, besides the portrait and the leafage and the flowers there appeared certain forms which were easily recognizable as fairies — as the fairies of a somewhat third-rate artistic conception. Scaling the little figure against the girl's face, I should give the tiny being some nine or ten inches of height. It was draped. It had the familiar wings of the fairies in all the pictures in all the children's fairy-tale books. If you were producing a fairy play for Christmas you would dress your chorus exactly as the photographic fairy is dressed; and the 'principals' would wear a similar, though richer, habit and have like wings, more brilliantly spangled. In a word, the fairy of the photographs is the conventional fairy and nothing else. And that is why I cannot believe in that fairy. For I cannot suppose that the modern inventions of nineteenth-century storytellers, artists and stage managers can have projected themselves into nature; and no such fairies as these deal in have any place in ancient tradition. It is June; the month of the fairies, of the Midsummer Night's Dream; let us occupy ourselves a little with the fair people.

To begin with the conventional fairy, the fairy of the photograph, the fairy that we have been discussing. I trace this little creature back to Shakespeare and Herrick. Queen Mab in Mercutio's speech rode abroad in an empty hazel nut; Herrick's Oberon drinks his wine from a daisy, and his loaf is a grain of wheat. Here are minute entities, indeed. Queen Mab is to be conceived as of about the size of a housefly; Oberon may be almost as huge as a harvest mouse. Hans Andersen, who dealt more in fancy than in folklore, has such fairies in some of his tales; fairies that he concealed in tulips. But, so far as I know, this minute fairy is a purely literary invention. It is first met in Elizabethan literature; it puts on a few inches in the fairy tales of the nineteenth century, chiefly, I suppose, because a fairy queen no bigger than a fly is too small to be handled, either by writer or artist. The children's fairy-tale fairy becomes about the size of the Yorkshire photographic fairy; anything between six inches and a foot high. But, as I say, neither the minute Mab, the tiny Oberon of Herrick, nor the picture-book sprite of modern times has any original in true popular tradition. The fairies were, indeed, the 'Little People,' and hence, perhaps, the poets, exaggerating, thought of Mab small enough to ride in a hazel nut. But the older conception is also illustrated by Shakespeare. The sham fairies who plague Falstaff in 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' are impersonated by Windsor children. They are imagined, then, to be beings from three to four feet high; and such was the traditional height of the 'Little People.' Such is the figure of the Irish Leprechaun — the fairy cobbler with the pot of gold.

There is a very tempting theory which now comes in our way. It has been held that the tradition of the fairies is, in fact, the tradition preserved amongst the Celts of the small, dark race which they supplanted. There is a good deal to be said for this. It is only a few years ago that a certain hill in Ireland was excavated. This hill had been known from time immemorial and was still known as a Fairy Rath. The Little People dwelt within it; the light of their fires had been seen shining from it of dark nights. And the queer thing is that this was perfectly true. Or rather, it had been true — a thousand years ago. For the exploration of the hill showed that the primitive pre-Celtic race had dwelt within it, till the Danes broke into their hiding-place somewhere in the tenth century. And the fairy lights? The blocked-up chimney shaft of the hidden house in the hill was disclosed. No doubt, when the Little People made great fires the flames shot up and flickered on the hill-top; and were seen by some trembling wandering man astray in the wilds and the darkness. What a tale that man told when he found his way at last to friendlier fires; with the door set fast! And the stories of the fair children taken away to live in the hollow hill by the Little People, of the dark, wizened babes, the changelings, left in their place? Likely enough these things happened.

It is probable, then, that the pre-Celtic inhabitants of these islands may account for a great deal of fairy tradition; but not, I think, for all. The fairies are also gods and goddesses of the old time now diminished in dignity but still potent; and, be it remarked, always, or almost always, evil. About forty years ago I was talking of old ways with an elderly Monmouthshire farmer, and he told me that in his youth people used to put the May blossom on the doorsteps of their houses — to keep the fairies out. So, when I was driving eight years ago in the country near Belfast, my friend, a hard-headed Presbyterian man of business, showed me the mountain-ash trees planted by every house — to keep the fairies out. We have come a long way from the fancies of Shakespeare and Herrick, a long way indeed from the benevolent little beings of the children's books. In true popular tradition the fairies are always dreaded; partly, perhaps, because they were old gods and goddesses, accursed by the Christian Faith, partly, because they were the little dark people who lived in the hills and stole away the fair Celtic children from the Christian hearth. There, I think, you have the main strands in fairy tradition. But there are others. A fairy is sometimes an 'elemental,' a spirit of one of the four elements, according to the ancient theory of elements; air, fire, earth, water. The Sylphs were of the air, the Salamanders of the fire, the Gnomes of the earth, the Undines of the water; and I am sorry to say I do not know how far Paracelsus, who made this classification, was deriving from tradition and how far he was inventing or drawing on his reading in queer, forbidden manuscripts. And I am not clear as to the character of these spirits of the elements. Some servants' 'characters' are obscure, and so it is here. But I do not remember to have heard any particular good of Salamanders, considered, that is, as spirits of flame, and insinuating nothing against a harmless lizard of that name or against a cooking utensil which might be used more than it is. But on the elementals, read 'Le Comte de Gabalis,' a singular treatise of the seventeenth century.

Again, you have another kind of fairy; the Robin Goodfellow, Lob-lie-by-the-fire, the Lubber fiend; who would work hard for you at nights and thresh out your corn if you set a great bowl of cream for his refreshment. And last of all there is the Fairy Queen whom mortals sometimes visit, who, as in Walter Map's tale, makes three hundred years seem but the passing of a single night. Such was the lady to whom Thomas of Ercildoune returned at last. I am not sure whether she is the lady whom Tannhauser knew; the lady Venus; but I am certain that she has nothing to do with the Yorkshire fairy on the photographic plate.

JULY SPORT WITH SOME REMARKS ON YOUNG MR. BLUEFACE

ONE JULY PICTURE always remains clear in my mind. A heavy, sweltering heat, a dark sky with darker clouds moving across it, a promise of heavy rain — usually fulfilled — in the still air, a river flowing down from an ancient grey bridge between rich meadows, lawns and gardens and overhanging trees, vanishing beyond a wooded point beneath high leafy hills. Altogether, a beautiful English landscape, improved to my mind by the temple in eighteenth-century classic, which, if I remember, stands among the trees down stream; it is the Thames at Henley.

All the foreground of the river, on the town side, is full of boats, and the boats are full of pretty girls in pretty summery frocks talking to young men in blazers of every device with the arms of all colleges embroidered upon them. And the boats are gay with cushions of all colours, and queer entertainers wearing pink mortar-boards and blue coats and yellow trousers and black faces move up and down the river twanging the banjo and singing; altogether a very lively scene. Then, a gun is heard in the distance by the point, and up come the boats. The men row for their lives — and it is not their fault that in these days of the motor they cannot give the notion of tremendous speed — and the race is decided somewhere opposite to the boats full of pretty girls and blazers.

Now, it has once or twice been my business to be on a stand just at this point, and I have therefore had the opportunity of observing what happens to the crews when the race is over. They do not look happy. Some of them fall backward. Some of them lurch forward, their heads between their knees. Some of them have open mouths, and they gasp for breath after the fashion of fish out of the water. Some of their faces are blue. And there can be no doubt that some of them will suffer from the effects of that boat race for the rest of their lives. And the puzzle of it is that all this is done for fun. They row because they like it; it is not one of the ‘extraordinary punishments’ which the seventeenth-century Puritans accused the Star

Chamber of inflicting; it is no cruel sentence of an arbitrary and oppressive court that has condemned these young men to so many minutes of bodily torture. And let it be remembered that there has been a long period of chronic unpleasantness before the acute agony of the race. All these men have kept a kind of athletic Ramadan. They have gone into training. Their meats and their drinks have been regulated for them, their stomachs have been handed over to the trainer, every muscle of their bodies has been under strict inspection, they have had to rise at abominably early hours and go to sleep soon after the children are put to bed — and, worst of all, their tobacco has been cut off. In fact, these men in the boat have gladly consented to a rule sterner than that of a Benedictine monastery, all for the sake of this final ten minutes of long-pumping, heart-wracking, muscle-burning torment, called a boat race.

There it is; and all done voluntarily, nay, eagerly, for the pleasure, the delight of the thing. It may be said that these rowing men endure what they endure and suffer what they suffer in order that they may win. And, very likely, the men themselves think so; but they are mistaken. The winning of the race, which is, formally and in theory, the object and the reason of the whole thing, is in reality an afterthought, a cunning excuse. Excuse for what?

The priests of Baal, it may be remembered, cut themselves with knives after their manner. They pretended that they behaved in this odd way because they wanted Baal to hear them, just as our young white-robed priests of the Holy Boat pretend they go through all the torments that have been described because they want to have absurd objects called Diamond Sculls and Golden Goblets in their nominal possession for the twelve ensuing months. Both sets of priests lie, as Dr. Johnson would say, or, as we should say, are mistaken. The priests of Baal cut themselves with knives because they liked cutting themselves with knives, and the priests of Henley subject themselves to almost intolerable distress because they enjoy doing so. And it won’t do to say that they turn blue and gasp because of the honour and renown, because the pretty girls in the summery frocks love him that gaspeth, whose face is even of the colour of lead. Watch the after career of one of these men. Likely enough, you may see him in a photograph, a year or two later. The scene is an awful one. All about are hideous desolations of ice and snow. There are black gulfs as horrible as if they were prepared for

Titans' graves. There are sheer depths that terrify even in a picture; precipices that your soul will remember in those dreams from which men awake sweating and shrieking. And high over these unutterable frozen wastes, high above four thousand feet of nothingness, a rock juts out precipitous. It is a smooth wall, and it leans, as it were, towards you as you look at the picture. On this sloping rock, stretched out like a spatch-cocked fowl, is young Blueface, late of Henley. He is holding on by teeth and feet and nails to fragments of uncertain stability; the failure of a quarter of an inch will send him plunging through those four thousand feet of empty air to destruction. If he is lucky, he will get to the top of that unpleasant rock and see a frightful landscape, not unlike the horrid lakes and mountains of the moon. He will then turn, and face the equal perils of the descent. And he does all this because he likes it; likes it even better than the induced suffocation and heart-disease at Henley.

And, this time, let it be noted, young Blueface has no admiring audience. There are no pretty, summery girls to be melted. There are no harmless drudges of the Press peering from their stand over the abyss, ready to record his achievement in double-leaded longprimer. There may be a paragraph in the 'Alpinist' — only seen by fellow-fakirs — mentioning briefly Mr. Blueface's successful climb of the Dummerkopf; or another sort of paragraph headed 'Alpine Fatality.' Blueface himself will never speak of the affair willingly. If you apply strong pressure to him you may squeeze out a sort of half-admission that 'the last lap of the old mound was a bit tricky'; and then he will change the subject and ask you if you have heard anything about Bolter and what you fancy for the Cantershire. Again; there it is. The terrors and the horrible dangers and the frightful bodily and mental strain of Alpine climbing are faced freely and voluntarily because they are enjoyed. Nay, take Mr. Blueface in his leisure moments, when he is resting from his acuter pleasures. It is a hot, a very hot afternoon. The thermometer mounts to 87. Existence is just bearable if you keep perfectly still. The logical understanding suggests a hammock or a deck chair in the deepest shade, a curiously compounded drink with ice, in a very long glass, and a placid pipe. What does young Blueface do? He finds another like unto him, and they get into the full blaze of the sun with a net between them, and proceed to hit a ball with a racket in the most violent manner, and to rush to and fro with tremendous speed for the next three hours, till they are as like burning coals as human beings may be.

Long ago a French book was written called *A quoi tient la Supériorité des Anglo-Saxones? What is the Secret of Anglo-Saxon Supremacy*? So far as I remember, the work in question offered no very helpful solution of the mystery; perhaps, we may venture to say that we owe a great deal to the fact that we have invented an odd ritual, called sport, which gives one of the most deep-seated instincts of humanity an opportunity of gratification.

A THOROUGH CHANGE

TWO HAPPY, MUSTY tags of quotation occur to me as I contemplate this month of August. One is the classic adage which informs you in a grave and ancient manner that you may fork out nature as many times as you like; but back she will come, again and again. The other tag is from the French: Change and change and change again; still the same it will remain. And putting the two together, you have the solution of the problem of the Londoner's holiday. Why is it that when he goes away for a change he looks out for some place that is as like London as possible?

You see? Expel nature with a fork; tell Mr. Londoner that what he wants is a thorough change, that he must be off to the sea-breezes and the sea-bathing of the peaceful little fishing village of Brighthelmstone, on the Sussex coast. In a very few years the Thrales have heard of it, and Jack Wilkes has heard of it, and the Prince has heard of it; and the peaceful little village of Brighthelmstone has become Brighton, a fashionable place, a place with smart shops and smart hotels, in a word, as good an imitation of London as can be knocked up on the bit of coast under the Downs. You can certainly bathe if you like, and you cannot help breathing the good salt air; but the point is that Brighton is the Londoner's home from home. And so, to refer back to the second tag, the more he is ordered change, the more he makes it the same thing, so far as it can be made the same thing.

And this by the way: I often wonder what the Brighton man does when he wants a change. If he be the wealthier sort, the case is, of course, easy enough. He moves from a smart hotel on or near the Brighton front to a smart hotel in or near Piccadilly. And he again is perfectly at home; at Brighton-on-the-Park. But some of us, alas! are not smart, whatever our habitat, and I wonder whether the people who keep lodgings in the back blocks, the up-and-beyond of Brighton, know where to go when they are ordered a complete change. I can tell them. There is a region in London little known. It was once called Spa Fields; now it has no name, or none that I have ever heard. It is to be approached by going up the Gray's Inn Road some way north of Gray’s Inn and then turning to the right. It has its Squares and its Crescents and its Places on the side of a steep hill; it has its dusty little by-streets going off these more important avenues; it has its colonies of small shops, its queer reminiscences and parodies on a small scale of old-fashioned architectural modes; just as in Brighton you come upon the most amusing reproductions of the Pavilion in little. And here is the odd thing. In the back parts of Brighton and of other old-fashioned seaside places, it is only by a strong exercise of the imagination that you can believe that you are near the sea at all. You can’t see it — though your landlady may have advertised that her apartments enjoy a fine view of it. You can’t see it, and nothing around you looks like it. Everything is gritty, urban, suburban, in its aspect. It is only faith, confidence in the scheme of the Universe, and an assurance that the L.B. & S.C.R. would not play a silly trick on you and go round and round London and call Kentish Town Preston Park; it is only a sure faith that prevents you saying: ‘Why, this is Camden Town!’ So, by an odd reversal; it is only faith of the same sort, the knowledge that life is real and life is earnest, as Longfellow said, and not an Arabian Night, that prevents you from looking out for a glimpse of the sea from that London region of which I have been speaking. You don’t expect to see much of it; you know that you are not in the best quarters of the town, where the first floor may run to anything; but you can’t help feeling that there must be a glimpse of the ocean visible from the top windows of that house in Rougemont Square. Actually, I am afraid, you would only have a prospect of St. Pancras Railway Station; still, the impression remains. And hence I say: let the people at the back of Brighton who want a real change, take lodgings up in this east-by-north of Gray’s Inn quarter. They will find it most refreshing; it is so much the same thing.

And, lest I be accused of cheap superiority, let me say that I believe most of these good people, who change to remain the same, are perfectly right. I don’t think that the majority of us are prepared for the real and tremendous changes; I don’t believe that such things would do us any good. I feel no hankerings after St. Helena; I do not wish to take a holiday on the Plains of Alberta, Canada. It is true that most of us are the better for a change; but it must usually be a slight change to be beneficial, and, often, a very slight change indeed. I have been thinking of Guernsey this August, but I shall not go there; for, if I did, I should stay there, which would be out of the question. Guernsey would be a thorough change; and I am not thinking so much of the beautiful old town of St. Peter Port, where you mount a flight of stone steps to get from one street to another, nor of the lovely coast, nor of the sweet airs of the sea. For once I am a political man; I am thinking of the Guernsey Constitution. It seems perfect. The King was there last month, we know, and the royal visit led, naturally, to meditations on Guernsey on the part of the English papers. All of them spoke of the feudal ceremonies that were observed, of the seigneurs who put their hands between the hands of the Duke of Normandy — he also happens to be King of England — and swore to be his liegemen of life and limb, ready to defend him against all manner of folk. And then there was the matter of the lords who had to come through the water to greet their Duke, and of the lord who had to present two mallards, or wild ducks, with gilded bills, on a silver dish; and so with a number of beautiful old rites. But what I heeded was a short leading article in that fairest of papers, the *Manchester Guardian*. The *Guardian* was frankly puzzled with Guernsey. The *Guardian* represents the old school of Liberalism: the school of Bright and Cobden — the school that at its worst was Gradgrind and Bounderby. And here, said the *Guardian*, was an island, boys and girls — just a little in the M’Choakumchild manner — which is happy, prosperous, loyal, contented. And yet the government of this island is in the hands of a High Bailiff, of the Jurats, elected for life, of the island parsons, and of a few officials. If the High Bailiff objects to a proposed measure, he vetoes it at once, and it is no more heard of. And, what the devil, boys and girls, the *Guardian* seemed to ask, if it could have used such language, does that island mean by being happy, loyal, prosperous, and contented under such an entirely preposterous Constitution? Now, as it happened, I was talking about the Guernsey Constitution and the *Manchester Guardian* article to a highly distinguished American. He is not obsolete, he was not born in a hot-bed of aristocratic prejudices. I think I may say he is a live wire. And he said: ‘I only wish we had the Guernsey Constitution in my country. We set out — and we meant well — to have a democracy. What we’ve got is a kakistocracy — a government by the worst men in the country.’

The American spoke on — he was eloquent like many of his countrymen — and showed, correctly, as I think, that politics and constitutions are a means, not an end, that the good and content and happiness of the people at large are the supreme end and law and reason of all governments; that the constitution of Guernsey was, therefore and evidently, perfect. Very likely he was right; and therefore I shall not take my holiday in Guernsey. I do not hold with violent changes, as I have said.

ROAST GOOSE WITH A DISSERTATION ON APPLE SAUCE AND SAGE AND ONIONS

THE WAR, I believe, is over. At all events, I will assume this to be the case, in order that I may speak of Michaelmas goose, and confess that, in common with most Englishmen, I have certain Teutonic tastes. In 1918, it was dangerous to admit a liking for Bach or Beethoven; now, I think, things are a little calmer, and I may venture to say that I like apple sauce with roast goose. As a matter of fact, I do not think that the goose, a very favourite dish in Germany, is served with apple sauce in that country; but the combination is purely Teutonic. In France, where dwells the True Church of cookery, they would shudder at the notion; ust as they shudder at lamb and mint sauce and red-currant jelly with saddle of mutton and jugged hare. I know that these things are wrong; but I like them all the same; and they are all German in feeling. In Germany, as I have read, they serve raspberry jam with roast veal, and English travellers have been known to denounce the absurdity of the combination, not seeing that it is on all fours with their own saddle of mutton and currant jelly. I say again that these things are wickedness, but I like them very well, and all peoples who have any Teutonic blood in them love such mixtures. There is the ‘Mostarda Soffrafina’ of northern Italy; it is fruit — small pears, if I remember — pickled in a hot sweet sauce. This they eat in Lombardy with their boiled beef; and from this circumstance, if all the history books in the world had perished, we might infer that the Lombards were of Teutonic stock. So, I say, I am for apple sauce with the Michaelmas goose; and, let it be added, for the stuffing of sage and onions, which, so far as I know, is a purely English and a most happy thought. Here, again, we must differ from our masters in cookery, the French. Walking once in Touraine with a French friend, I saw a bush of sage growing by the roadside. I told the Frenchman the use to which it was put in England, in relation to the goose, the duck, and the pig. He nibbled a leaf, and then looked at me with a glance which I had met before in French company.

I had met it once from M. le Curé, on his learning from me that in England we pronounce ‘Credo in unum Deum,’ ‘Creedo in yunum Deeum,’ instead of ‘Craydo in oonoom Dayoom.’ I met it again from a small farmer. We were talking in his vineyard, and as it happened, a great elderbush, laden with purple berries, grew at the corner of it. ‘In England,’ said I, ‘we make those berries there into wine.’ He glanced at me, and underlined his glance by spitting on the ground. And all three Frenchmen intimated by this glance that they had always heard that the English were fools, and that now they were sure of it. Well, true friends can still be friends, in spite of differences; even if those differences are as vital and deep-reaching as the question raised by apple sauce and sage and onions with roast goose. And, since we are on the matter of stuffing, let us consider the traditional thyme and parsley stuffing which we in England dedicate to the fowl, the turkey, and to roast veal. We eat it because we like it, but science has discovered within the last few years that ‘thymol’ is a substance of high value. It is a powerful disinfectant, it is of great service to the digestive process, it is the very thing to give to the mucous membrane; and so we have been scientific without knowing it in eating thyme with our fowl. And so, no doubt, science will presently discover that Salvine — which is the name that science will give to sage — is just as good for us as thymol. And this opens a question which has always struck me as of curious interest; the question of traditional wisdom in meat, drink, and medicine. Long ago, before chemistry in the modern sense can be said to have existed, old women used to treat goitre by rubbing a certain seaweed on the affected part. The treatment was successful; and a few hundred years afterwards science found that this seaweed contained iodine, which is just the thing for goitre. So with quinine. How did the savages of South America find out that the bark of one tree out of the thousands in their forests was good for malaria? They did so; just as our forefathers combined malt and hops into that admirable beverage, beer, without understanding in the least that they were concocting a perfectly balanced drink, which united the most valuable nutritive and tonic constituents.

It is the process by which these results were arrived at that puzzles me. Take the quinine, for example. There is, I imagine, a vast choice of trees and of plants in a South American forest. Are we to imagine the Indian of past ages threading his way through this waste of wood, tasting bits of trees, one after another, till he found the cinchona and found that it eased his pains? And our old Englishwomen, with their seaweed for goitre: how on earth did they come to think of it? And the leaf that makes tea, and the berry that gives us coffee, and the plant that affords cocoa — the only end of which is chocolate — I how are we to account for the discovery of their virtues? For with these, it is to be noted, the I process is a complicated one. Not much satisfaction, one imagines, could be obtained by chewing the green leaves of the tea shrub; nor would the grinding of raw coffee berries between the teeth be of great service to body or mind. It must have been sheer intuition which told some wise man of thousands of years ago that the leaves of the tea plant must be dried, and that then boiling water must be poured upon them, and that the resultant liquor was good to drink. And so with tobacco; how did the poor Indian know that this was stuff to be smoked in a pipe? For all we can see, the Indians of Hindustan might well have smoked their tea leaves, and the Indians of America poured boiling water on their tobacco leaves. I remember, indeed, that Amundsen, the Arctic explorer, told me how he and his companions found that the tobacco had been forgotten at one of their ‘dumps’; so they smoked tea in its place; but he did not speak well of the experiment. And I doubt whether tobacco tea would please a delicate palate. One must conceive primitive man, then, as engaged in endless dietetic and medicinal experiments; one must conceive him also as frequently feeling very unwell indeed; one must conceive him as occasionally dead. The man who wondered whether deadly nightshade would cure toothache, and made the experiment, fell a victim to the spirit of inquiry. And so, perhaps, there were anxious faces round the board when the first goose stuffed with sage and onions was eaten. It was a bold idea, all might be well; and, on the other hand, all might be very far from well.

All was well; and now, as I say, it only remains for science to prove that Salvine is the one preparation necessary to the happy digestion of the Michaelmas Goose.

WHERE ARE THE FOGS OF YESTERYEARS?

THIS IS A degenerate age. All our comforts have either gone or are fast going. I have said so again and again. Nobody heeds me, or if I am heeded I am told to think of the telephone, the aeroplane, and tubular boilers. But what idle trifling is this? Whoever heard of a jolly party drinking punch as they sat about the sparkling, dancing telephone? Is there any true history of a party, weather-bound in an aeroplane, getting down at a cloud-tavern and telling stories to each other till they had compiled a *Household Words* or *All the Tear Round* Christmas Number, only leaving the introduction, or framework, to be written by Mr. Dickens? Has a tubular boiler ever aided in the production of what John Browdie called something 'warm and varry coomfortable' to be taken after supper? Of course not; so what is the use of urging these idle conventions against my contention of the age's degeneracy?

All our comforts, I say, are passing from us. For here am I, writing in September and looking forward to October. Once on a time there would have been something to look forward to. For, with decent luck, and allowing for the eccentricities of our climate, the Londoner of twenty-five years ago had every reason to expect in October that rare treat, the first fog of the season. I must allow that the October fog was rarely, if ever, a perfect specimen of its kind. It was tender, it was, if you like, immature. It had not the richness of the right November growth. I do not think that I have ever heard of a man going past his own doorstep in a fog of October. The Great Fog Legend of the omnibus which somehow wandered into Clare Market — where is that market now? — was seen to vanish under an archway and was never seen more, belongs to November and Lord Mayor's Day. I admit, then, readily, that the amateur of fogs did not expect the great growths in October; but still there was a peculiar relish in the misty gifts of the month. A little thin, perhaps, in substance, a little lacking in the true sulphurous bouquet of later fogs; comparable, if you will, to the earliest duckling, to the August pear, but still, how relishable in their young and tender bloom! Wise men have held that a green goose eaten at Petertide has a delicacy of flavour that is wanting to the fatted bird of Michaelmas; and so there was a fleeting, sylph-like charm about the firstling fogs of October. The night before, perhaps, it had been warm and stuffy, and you began by casting off the second blanket on your bed. But somewhere in the small, mysterious hours, a chill came into the air and you half awoke, shivering slightly, and drew that rejected blanket back into its place and nestled gratefully under its genial warmth, and so fell asleep again and into happy dreams. And when the morning summons came, the light filtered dim and uncertain through the window, and, looking out, you saw not a street, but a white and fleecy cloud, through which rose the fantastic pinnacles of a fairy castle — otherwise, the chimney-pots of the houses over the way. And the noises of awakening London and the rattle of the rousing streets were hushed and muffled, as the whorls and eddies and wreaths of mist floated past your window. It had frozen in the night; and there was the exquisite result, the first fog of the year. And note the subtle relishes and aromas of this delicacy of the season. It was delightful in itself; for what can there be more delightful or of finer magic than an agency which turns Bloomsbury or Brixton into the appearance of a cloud and the architecture thereof into a thing of unearthly beauty? But beyond the actual enjoyment that your first fog afforded, how rare was it in its prophecy and promise of what was to come! You looked forward to the great fogs of November, December, January; to the masterpieces of foggery, when all London should pass into the mighty cloud, when noon should be as midnight, when the raw cold should pierce to the very bone, when an errand to the shop round the corner should be as desperate and doubtful as an errand to the Pole, almost an occasion for doorstep farewells; when huge blocks of ice should grind together in the invisible Thames, when the curtain of thick Egyptian darkness, if it were lifted for a moment, should show vast caverns and antres of tawny, fiery light, as it were the glow of a dying furnace. Such were the happy anticipations of that October morning of the past.

But, as I said once or twice before, our comforts and our simple pleasures are taken from us one by one. There are no real fogs in London now; the dimness of October gives no promise of November darkness. The last real fog was ‘presented’ on or about December 23, 1904. It was not a fog of the first class, for it was pure white and rigorists might maintain that it was merely a thick river mist. But the hansom cabmen were leading their horses, lamps went before the crawling omnibuses, and some guests, bidden to a wedding feast, went past one of the biggest London hotels without seeing it. Call it a mist if you will; but when shall we have such a mist again? And, just as I was going to write — for the third or fourth time — that life and London have few comforts left in them, it suddenly strikes me that there may be people who will declare that the London fogs of olden time were not comforts at all, but gross discomforts and miseries; that, in short, we are all the better and more comfortable without them. Well, I love a good paradox, but this is a little too much, even for me. The proposition that would deny the curious pleasures of a London fog is not a paradox; it is not even an oxymoron; it is a piece of rank absurdity. Surely this is obvious. I remember once talking to a great Arctic explorer. It was a day of piercing cold — what we in London call piercing cold — and there was a glorious and tremendous fire on the hearth. Before this fire the great man stood displayed, as I think the heralds say, in his enjoyment of the light, of the glow, of the crackling coals, and the genial heat. His face beamed like the blaze behind it, brightened like the light of the flames that danced on the dull walls. ‘You know,’ said he, ‘that nobody who has not been up to his waist in the freezing slush of the Arctic can enjoy a fire like this.’ Of course not; I saw his point at once. The argument surely needs not to be laboured; it is clear enough that the comforts of life cannot be enjoyed without the apposition of their contraries. You do not hear of the people of Aden or Bagdad or Bassorah — I prefer the old spelling — gathering about a glowing, roaring fire, drinking hot punch, and thanking Heaven for these delights. And since man is evidently meant to sit at flaming hearths and to drink hot punch, it is clear that if circumstances forbid his enjoyment of these pursuits he is so far a maimed and imperfect creature, deprived of the comforts in which he was intended to take his pleasure. Should we not then all become Arctic explorers?

That, no doubt, were the right and manly course; but there are difficulties in the way, and one can conceive objections being raised to the population of London spending the season round the North and South Poles. It would interfere with the films and with many social fixtures. In the old days there was a happy middle course. We had the fogs of which I have been speaking; with what a relish we drew back the curtains and saw the air grow dark without as the fire blazed bright within. The bitterer the chill of the air, the more grateful the warmth; the deeper the gloom without, the happier the hearts within. Decidedly, a London fog was one of the choicest of comforts.

But now, as Mr. Micawber said, when he was released from prison, everything is gone from us.

MARTINMAS

IN THE INFANCY of photography, the artist with the camera was accustomed to say to his patients: ‘Smile, please.’ In those days one had to assume rigidity for a considerable time before the releasing ‘Thank you’ was uttered; and so it was no wonder that these frozen and prolonged smiles came out in a somewhat ghastly manner, and render many an old family album a terror and a wonder to this day. But this is beside the point. I merely recall the photographer of 1869-70, because I am reversing his favourite injunction. I do not say ‘Smile, please.’ I say: ‘Be so kind as to look grave.’ For we are to have a little theology.

It comes about like this. Somebody — I forget his name and the name of his book — has just written an amusing work about the eminent men of our age. He ‘takes them off,’ I gather, with a pretty wit, and dealing with Mr. G. K. Chesterton, gives a pleasant version of the Chestertonian doctrine; that no one without a bottle of Bass in each hand can enter the Kingdom of Heaven. And the curious thing is that he is evidently under the impression that he has uttered an extravagant paroody of G. K. C., that he has reduced his position to an absurdity. Well, I cannot answer for Mr. Chesterton, but if I were he, I should accept the intended sarcasm as an admirable statement of my case; condensed, no doubt, and familiar, in its illustration, but all the better for that. Of course a man cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven without a bottle of Bass in each hand. Advanced theologians, Modernists, Universalists and all that lot may hold that one bottle in one hand may just scrape a man past the gates, but I have never had much sympathy with what is called Liberal theology. But, surely, the supposed absurd and damaging overstatement is merely the most obvious and the soundest common sense. For, sinking the technical expression of the doctrine — I am afraid pure theology is apt now and then to degenerate into asperity, and I must not get cross in these calm pages — what reason is there to suppose that a good man is one who is devoid of a palate and devoid of a stomach; devoid, in fact, of senses of any kind? It having pleased Heaven to give its creatures these faculties of sense, why should we think that Heaven will be highly gratified by our behaving as if we had no such faculties? A man who blandly but firmly declined to admit that the sun was bright or the sky was blue, on the ground \ that good men never saw anything, would run the risk of being certified. Why whould a man, who pretends that he can't taste anything be \ thought to be a being of a superior caste? For, be it noted, I am not pressing the pro-alcohol side of the argument. 'Bass,' as I take it, means something good to drink, without reference to the fact that if you drink too much of that agreeable beverage you may be led to commit indiscretions. For the moment, I am willing to substitute for 'a bottle of Bass in each hand,' 'an exquisitely made cup of chocolate in each hand,' and that beverage reminds me of the story told by the great French gourmet, Brillat Savarin. That most sensible man, reviewing the Revolution from his special point of view, deplored the ruin that it brought to the monasteries and the convents. These, he said, speaking from experience, were the great schools of the last refinements in cookery, and he quotes the dictum of an Abbess of his acquaintance on this very subject of chocolate. 'If you would have chocolate in perfection, my dear sir,' said the religious lady, 'if you would taste its most exquisite aromas, you must make it overnight and warm it up again the next morning; and I am sure that the good God, in whom reside all perfections, will not grudge us this little refinement.' The Abbess was in the right of it. It is, of course, true that a really good man does not suffer his liking for a bottle of Bass or a cup of chocolate to make him neglect his mother, starve his wife, or send his children to the workhouse. If a good man has to choose between making the chocolate overnight and suffering the wife of his bosom to experience the pangs of want, he will, almost always, say: 'By all means make it in the morning; I can bear it.' But this is true of all delights of the senses; a really nice man will not suffer his family to come to grief in order that he may indulge his propensity for looking at sunsets.

I said that we would waive the more or less alcoholic side of the question as involved in the symbol, 'Bass,' selected by Mr. Chesterton's critic. I said so because I think that good drink merely represents the first line of the cause which the bad people are attacking. It is my opinion that these bad people are only in the first stage or movement of a much more general attack. Tobacco will be the next line, the next engagement will centre round the meditative pipe, the gay cigarette, the magnificent Corona. Already that battle is preparing in America; soon, in powerful circles, a pipe will be inconsistent with piety. Nor will matters stop there. The Vegetarians have long been aware that what is the matter with the world is Meat. They have their feelings, like the anti-Burgundy and anti-Bass people and the anti-Tobacco people. They are quite convinced, with Mr. Bumble in *Oliver Twist*, that Meat is the root of all evil.

‘It’s not Madness, ma’am,’ replied Mr. Bumble … ‘it’s Meat.’

These persons then, sharing the opinion and the intelligence of Mr. Bumble, will engage on an anti-meat campaign. If they win, they will divide into two parties. One set will allow us to cook our vegetables; the other side will insist that if you are to boil your green peas, you may as well dine off rumpsteak at once. And, of course, sham science will come to their aid. There are plenty of doctors already who are quite prepared to demonstrate by unanswerable arguments that if you cook anything you destroy all its value. Before long there will be letters in *The Times over* signatures furnished with the most appalling array of degrees and qualifications showing that the way out of all our difficulties is to put out the kitchen fire. But it would be a great mistake to suppose that the campaign will stop here, with our palates and stomachs and general comfort and well-being. All the arts will next be the object of attack; tobacco, beer, beef and boiled beans having fallen, painting, sculpture, music, literature will be suspected, examined, denounced, prohibited. This is no fantasy; for this has happened before. It happened in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and is generally known as Puritanism. The movement was then allied with certain theological views. It began by smashing and destroying all the beautiful things that were then to be found in churches. It blotted out of the world a mass of beauty in a manner which is really awful to contemplate. Macaulay, not by any means the acutest of critics in a general way, got to the heart of the matter in his account of the Puritan objection to bear-baiting. They disliked bear-baiting, he said, not because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators. So with their objection to sports and games of all sorts. They began by saying — and, no doubt, believing — that games were wicked when played on Sunday. They ended by banning games and sports of all kinds on any day. They shut up the theatres: they gave pleasure, and the Puritan hates pleasure because it is a good thing.

Now at the end of this grave sermon, I will give my text, reserving it, contrary to the usual practice of sound divines, to the last. This is the month of November, and on the eleventh of November is the feast of St. Martin, that good soldier-saint who gave half his cloak to the shivering beggar. And in the old days they used to say:

On the feast of Martinmas
Cups of ale shall freely pass.

They knew in those days that the saint and his charity and good ale were all good together, each in its several degree. They knew that all three were ‘congruous.’ They knew that a man cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven unless he carries a bottle of Bass in each hand.

Footnote

I was a true prophet. The above was written in 1921. Now, in 1923,1 have just been reading the report of a lecture by Dr. Leonard Williams, a well-known Harley Street specialist. Dr. Williams declares that the kitchen range is the worst enemy of man, and that we ought to live on raw roots and things, and very little of them. Compare with this the system of another distinguished specialist, Mr. Squeers, of Dotheboys Hall, Yorkshire. ‘When a boy gets weak and ill and don’t relish his meals we give him a change of diet — turn him out for an hour or so every day into a neighbour’s turnip-field, or sometimes, if it’s a delicate case, a turnip-field and a piece of carrots alternately.’

CHRISTMAS MUMMING

I HAVE OFTEN been tempted to put a certain question to the Vicar: to any vicar. Does he in his heart think that anything has much changed in the last four or five thousand years — that is in the known course of history? Are we any better; are we any worse? On the whole, if the said vicar had a parish in Babylon, would the general conduct of his parishioners have been much different from that of his parishioners in his parish in Marylebone? Or supposing him to be a country vicar; wouldn't he be glad on the whole if his young people were as decent in their ways as Daphnis and Chloe?

It is a large question, and I have had grave doubts on the matter; but, lately looking up this business of Christmas, I am inclined to think that we really have got on a little. But, first, it is necessary to go into the origin of Christmas. The old story was that it was a peculiarly northern festival; that all its mirth and jollity and ringing carols and sumptuous meats and drinks had no reference to any Christian joy. All our Christmas mirth, these wise men told us, we had inherited from our Scandinavian ancestors, who had noted that the tide of winter began to turn for the better somewhere about our Christmastide. The shortest day was past, the hours of light steadily began to lengthen, the spring was already prophesied. And so the Northern people literally made a song and dance about it; they made merry because the worst of the winter was over, and better things were coming. It is all very ingenious; but I think I see flaws. Did these people who rejoiced at Christmas tear their hair on Midsummer Day because the longest day was over and winter would soon be upon them? I have never heard that they did anything of the kind. And, again, it may be objected that the worst of the winter is, demonstrably, not over at Christmas. In nine cases out of ten the worst is to come. They must have been simple souls, indeed, those Scandinavians, if they rejoiced for winter past in December; with the terrors of January, February, and, often, of March to come. As a matter of fact, of course, they made merry as we make merry at this season, so far as our mirth is seasonal at all, precisely for the opposite reason. 'It is very cold, indeed: the snow is falling fast, the wind comes piercing from the North, all appearances of summer are long over: and the best of it is, there is greater cold to come.' That is the real sentiment of the season, and De Quincey; expresses it admirably. Thus he writes, indicating the season and the circumstances of felicity:

'Let it, however, not be spring, nor summer, nor autumn — but winter in his sternest shape. This is a most important point in the science of happiness. And I am surprised to see people overlook it, and think it matter of congratulation that winter is going, or if coming, is not likely to be a severe one…. Indeed, so much of an epicure am I in this matter, that I cannot relish a winter night fully if it be much past St. Thomas's day, and have degenerated into disgusting tendencies to vernal appearances; no, it must be divided by a thick wall of dark nights from all return of light and sunshine.'

And that, no doubt, is the truth of the matter, expressed as only that wonderful, profound and eloquent De Quincey could express it. But there is another point to be noted: they kept up Christmas tremendously in pagan Rome, though they did not call it by that name. Now, winter has no frightful terrors in Italy, and yet, it is odd enough, the Christmas of Rome fell, within a day or two, just at our Christmastide. They called it the Saturnalia. The *Classical Dictionary* tells me that it was a feast of immemorial antiquity, founded to commemorate the golden, happy age of Saturn. 'All animosity ceased, schools were shut, war was never declared, but all was mirth, riot and debauchery.' The last phrase is a little severe, but I think we may take it as meaning that the ancient Romans had a thoroughly good time at this season of the year. All social inequalities were annulled while the feast lasted; and as in old Virginia, in the slavery days, the black people claimed the right of taking the inside places in the coaches at Christmas while their masters rode outside, so in Rome, the slave told his master what he thought of him. 'Come,' says Horace to his man, 'use your December liberty, say what you like.' The man used it, freely enough; he told his master what he thought of him; that nobody would have been unhappier than he if he had suddenly found himself in the good old times that he was always praising, and so forth. Davus, in fact, told his master home truths, and it is in this point that, I claim, we have advanced over ancient morals. For, be it observed, we use our December liberty in quite another sense. Christmastide is exactly the season when we keep what are called home truths in the background. We hold back all the nasty things that are at the tip of our tongues, we begin to find that there is a good deal to be said for ‘that scoundrel Brown,’ we discover that M’Caw’s cold and studied insolence is ‘only manner,’ and that Mulligan’s noisy and tiresome vulgarity is pure heartiness and high spirits. We find out, in short, that we are all jolly good fellows. Even a man who considers himself deeply injured thinks it all over at Christmas, and sees that there is something to be said on the other side. And thus we transcend and surpass the pagan conception of Christmas — or Saturnalian — jollity. The Romans told each other ‘home truths’; we tell each other *the* truth. For, of course, we *are*, all of us, jolly good fellows. Consider, if we speak of literature; what is the truth about it? Surely, that is to be sought in Shakespeare, and Keats, not in the commercial drama of the West End, nor in the feeble imbecilities of the minor poets. If we are to speak of painting, we mean Turner, we neglect the existence of German oleographs and all the multitude of pink sentimentalities in pigment. Architecture means Westminster Abbey, not a tin meeting house. It is the good things and the splendid things and the perfect things that come to the account; not the failures or make-believes. So, with ourselves and the rest of us: at Christmas we see humanity as it ought to be: genial, full of charity, brimming over with mirth and good will. We are mummers, if you please; we dress up, if you like: but we know that these gay, cheerful and resplendent vestments are the clothes that we should always wear, if things were right, if ‘the letters of the Name were made known.’ It is true that one cannot go by the Underground into the City in parti-coloured jester’s robes, or in the silver armour of St. George: but so much the worse for the Underground and the City.

At Queen’s College, Oxford, they bring in the Boar’s Head with surpliced songmen and choristers and a noble old carol at Christmas. Everybody knows in his heart that this is the way in which we should always dine, if the world were properly managed. In the rush of business, it would be slightly inconvenient if the chops and steaks and cuts from the joint were brought in by chanting waiters: still, the old Oxford Christmas custom shows how the thing should be done.

The boar’s head in hand bear I
Bedecked with bays and rosemary.
And I pray you, my masters, be merry
Qui estis in convivio

Caput apri defero
Reddens laudes Domino.

A TALK FOR TWELFTH NIGHT

WE HAVE BEEN talking a lot of one Will Shakespeare lately. Miss Clemence Dane wrote not long ago a play about him. Mr. Arthur Whitby, one of the actors in it, an old Bensonian of ripe and large experience, and as well-graced a player as any we have in these days, told me that never had he been called upon to deliver such beautiful lines upon the stage — save when he had to speak the verse written by Shakespeare himself. And all kinds of fine things have been spoken of the piece, and yet it did not run — principally, I think, because the critics took it into their heads on the first night that Shakespeare was represented as Marlowe's murderer. Now, I never saw 'Will Shakespeare,' so I must say nothing of its presentation, or of the stage management which allowed this tavern scuffle between the two dramatists to be dubious and obscure: but I am a little entertained at the — implied — horror in the criticisms. Supposing Miss Clemence Dane had really made Shakespeare get into a rage with his rival, Marlowe, and draw that little dagger which hung by every man's side in those days and stab Marlowe to the heart: what about it? Should we have any reason to be shocked or surprised or alarmed or disgusted if such had been the fact, not merely in the twentieth-century play, but in sixteenth-century real life? Didn't Ben Jonson kill his man? Does anybody suppose that Shakespeare, the social being of his age, was any better than Ben Jonson, any better than the average Elizabethan playwright? Really it is time that we cleared our minds of this cant about Shakespeare; it is worse than the Scottish cant about Burns, a noble poet and a capital fellow in many ways, but — in actual life — not always in the Cotter's Saturday Night frame of mind.

Now, be patient. Examine yourself, and, speaking by custom of confession, avow that you hold Shakespeare to have been all good and all knowing and all wise; the genius being taken for granted. In spite of Ben Jonson's fervent but most truthful eulogy you insist that he had all the science of the age at his command. It has been quite in vain that the good Ben insisted that Will's education was a mere smattering— 'small Latin and less Greek' — you will have it that the creator of Falstaff must have been to some Dotheboys Hall of the period, where he was ‘instructed in all languages living and dead, mathematics, orthography, geometry, the use of the globes, algebra, singlestick (if required), writing, arithmetic, fortification, and every other branch of classical literature.’ Now, this was not the case. I have just been turning up his January play, ‘Twelfth Night.’ I look over the cast. The scene is laid in Illyria, which is now Jugo-Slovakia. Most of the names are Italian, which passes very well: but what about ‘Sir Toby Belch, uncle to Olivia,’ and his friend, ‘Sir Andrew Aguecheek’? Are Belch and Aguecheek names often found on the Illyrian seaboard? Most certainly not in the year 1600; possibly now, if the Gloucestershire Belches and the Westmorland Aguecheeks have small fixed incomes and are able to take advantage of the extremely favourable rate of exchange in Jugo-Slovakia. This is a small instance. But it does illustrate, and prove, the position that the true Shakespeare was not the creature of the intellectual and moral tea-party that we imagine. He laughs at all the schoolmasters. I dare say he knew that people on the Illyrian seaboard had, as a rule, Italian sounding names. What did he care? When he wanted broad comic effects from his characters he gave them gross and ridiculous English names — because he knew that these names would incline the pit to mirth. The ‘high brow,’ the ‘intellectual,’ the ‘intelligentsia’ would rather perish than use such a device: but Shakespeare — or ‘Shagsper,’ if you like — was not of that world. I have often thought that one of the finest pieces of Shakespearean criticism that I have ever heard came from my old friend, Jerome K. Jerome. I was talking to him about the libraries, especially the German libraries, that had been written on Shakespearean psychology.

‘Shakespeare,’ said Jerome, ‘was not like that. When he had got all those people dead in the last scene in “Hamlet,” he struck a flourish with his pen, and said to himself: “There! that ought to bring ’em in!” ‘

And there no doubt you have a great deal of the root of the matter. Shakespeare was not, consciously, a moralist, a philosopher, a thinker. He was a Warwickshire lad, with a small scholastic grounding and a universal curiosity, who came up to town and, somehow, fell into the theatre business first as actor, then as playhouse author, then as speculator — he was a member of the little syndicate that took up the land in Southwark on which the Globe was built. In addition, he happened to be a man of the supremest genius. But the chief passion of his life was Stratford-on-Avon. He never forgot it. Amid all the wild whirl of that London life — and it was a wild whirl then, a foaming torrent of such passions, political, sensual, emotional, intellectual, that our poor attempts at being alive in London now are pretty much as the green stuff on a duck-pond is to Niagara — he thought of the friendly fires and the good taverns and the solid, stolid, worthy people and the beloved fields. ‘Romeo and Juliet,’ ‘Hamlet,’ ‘Othello,’ — so many steps nearer to the haven where he would be, to the true, secure life that he loved. We think our London a tremendous centre of excitement; we, who are impressed when somebody takes hold of a revue which is a failure and turns it into a revue which is a success! Rubbish! William Shakespeare lived in a London which was impressed when it saw live men disembowelled at Tyburn, and heads of traitor nobles spiked on London Bridge. He lived in a red-hot world; a world of terrific beauty, horror, cruelty, disgust, revelry; our tea-party people and commentating Dons do not begin to have the elementary data — as they would say — for the understanding of Shakespeare. I do not believe that many of them have read Ben Jonson’s description of a voyage down Fleet Ditch; they had better not; it would make them unwell. But it is, no doubt, this imbecile notion of what Shakespeare ought to have been — a Don who condescended to write plays — that has led to the more imbecile notion that he could not have been the son of a Stratford shopkeeper who prospered none too well, and did not keep the roadway in front of his shop any too clean. To the horrible people who are best distinguished as Dons, whose idea of heaven is an everlasting examination, it is repulsive that this young wastrel, with a possible Grammar School smattering, should have written the finest things in the world. ‘The Warwickshire yokel,’ says one of them, in high contempt. Clearly impossible that such a person should have written plays which we annotate with innumerable ‘cf.’s’ and infinitely tiresome and irrelevant information, plays which we conduct examinations on, concerning which we write infinite dissertations. This author could have been no Stratford vagabond, no miserable player; he must have been one of us. And so has arisen the most marvellous folly of the world; the Baconian hypothesis. Grave men, being first assured that shabby, ‘Bohemian’ fellows do not write immortalities, have committed themselves to all the wonderful lunacies of the bi-literal cypher, have gone a little farther, and have at last found that Bacon wrote, not only all Shakespeare, but all the literature of the age, not only English, but foreign, including Montaigne’s *Essays*, and Cervantes’

Don Quixote. The last book which I read on the subject showed that *Don Quixote* should be read ‘d’un qui s’ôte’ — concerning one who hides himself — Bacon, of course. Indeed, the writer proved that the alleged author, Cervantes, had an illegitimate child and was very poor.

Which is evidence, of course, that he could not write masterpieces. The masterpieces notoriously are all written by moral men with large banking accounts.

May this January, this Twelfth Night, bring us better sense, as we sit about our sea-coal fire.

Footnote

Since dead, alas!

SOME FEBRUARY STARS

THE OTHER DAY a sad case came before the courts; one of those cases in which 'the home' has been broken up owing to differences, disagreements, subjects of variance and quarrel. Such affairs are not uncommon, though they are not quite so common as the members of the Society for the Instant Abolition of the Family pretend; but in the case of which I am speaking there were highly uncommon elements. Husband and wife had parted, not on account of the fabled lodger, or for any such simple cause. It was astrology that had driven them apart; it was astrology that sent the wife to dwell in the workhouse. I think that it was the lady who began it. I believe that she and her mother had dealt deeply in the Twelve Houses of the Heavens, in Rising Signs, in Lords of the Ascendant, in Trine and Sextile. At any rate, during the war, a communication came from astrological or other occult regions to the effect that the wife would be killed by an explosion. The husband, who had evidently become a fervent believer, met this threat with a scheme of his own. He caused his wife to sleep in the kitchen, and, as it were, bid the stars come on. Here, you may say, is one of the oddest instances of the mad irrationalities which infest the human mind. The husband believed in the stars and their doom, and he thought that this august fate, written in the heavens, this sentence issuing, we will suppose, from Mars ill-aspected with the Sun, could be turned aside and annulled — by a thin basement ceiling! Absurd enough, certainly; and yet no more absurd than the conduct of the father and mother of Œdipus in the Greek play. They were informed by the oracle that the child born to them would murder his father and marry his mother; and so — believing in the Oracle with all their hearts — they exposed the infant on a desolate mountain. It didn't do; you could not get round Greek Oracles that way, though you may play fast and loose with English horoscopes.

But to return to our modern family. The evidence as reported seems to become vague; all that was clear was that husband and wife, through roaming too freely in the starry plains, drifted apart on the earthly ones; and so the process of the courts drops a dull curtain on a curious scene. But the interest of all this to me was the survival of the belief in astrology; in that system which declares, sometimes in extreme terms, sometimes in moderate phrases, that human life is ruled by the planets; that things in Park Lane and Peckham, Brixton and Belgravia, Aldgate and Mayfair, all depend upon the march of Sun and Moon, Mars, Mercury, Venus, and the rest of them. It is an astounding theory. Here, we will say, is a little boy with a racking cough and an anxious mother bending over him; Saturn is 'afflicting the Native.' At the same time, Smith takes to his breast Beauty and Half-a-Million; Mercury and the Moon have fulfilled their promise to him. And Uranus, aided by Mercury, now in a very different humour, shuts up the small grocer's shop in Norwood and sends the grocer — poor man — off to the Bankruptcy Court.

There, in the rough, is the system. The broad lines of your life are all settled at the moment of your birth; success or failure, happiness or misery, riches or poverty, early death or length of days; all these are patent to the astrologer's eye. Give him but the moment of birth; his predictions will extend to the day of death. And the odd thing is: that while the astrologer's art has been known to the world certainly six thousand years, probably for a much longer time — they had horoscopes and bearer-cheques and bills-of-sale, all in bricks, in Babylon — yet mankind has never yet been able to make up its mind definitely whether there is anything in it, or whether it is all stuff and nonsense.

Not really to make up its mind. Certainly, the eighteenth century pooh-poohed the whole business, just as it pooh-poohed Alchemy. But that was more an impatient gesture than a reasoned conviction. The eighteenth century pooh-poohed Gothic Architecture in a similar manner. Gothic has long come to its own again; and they tell me that there are great commercial possibilities before Alchemy — or 'Synthetic Gold' — in Germany. At any rate, the principle of alchemy, the artificial transmutation of metals, has long been recognized by modern science. And, then, coming to my own experience: I once knew an astrologer. He predicted nothing so far as I was concerned. But one day, in the midst of casual conversation, he remarked, quietly enough:

'You have received two interesting letters in the course of the week, since I last saw you. One dealt with the discomforts of theatrical travelling. The other was about a particular article in the *Classical Dictionary*. And last

Sunday you were talking to some people about the fooleries of your occult friends.’

There it was. It was all true. How did he do it? I don’t know. He said it was astrological A B C. It struck me that a very rough-and-ready test might be to my hand in the February Calendar, in the list of the great born during that month. For, if the general principles of astrology were true, it would probably follow that each month would have its own type. There would be the Februarian man, the Martian man, the Augustan man, and so forth. I did not, somehow, expect to find much confirmation in the February Calendar. But I found it.

The three most eminent names of those born in February are Charles Dickens, Henry Irving, and Ellen Terry. The most distinguished actor and actress of the last age; and the great Dickens, whose passion for the stage was almost a disease! I am sure that it was only the immense common sense of Dickens, the servant of his genius — as it often is — that prevented him from joining Crummles early in life. And he was an enthusiastic amateur all his days; his theatrical exploits make but tiresome reading. But there you are: it really looks as if the February aspects of the heavens inclined strongly to the theatre. Yet, for my part, I do not believe a word of it. Astrology cannot be true: for, if it were true, life would be impossible. Human nature, as we know it, would perish away and blacken as a piece of tissue paper in a candle flame. We could not live, if we knew what our life was to be. We could form no plans if their futility were plain from the start. And how about racing? I know racing men pretend that they deal in ‘certs,’ even in ‘dead certs.’ I have listened to them conferring together and proving beyond a shadow of doubt that the arrival of Bolter at the winning-post in advance of all others is as sure a thing as the arrival of the sun over the horizon in the morning. Well, the race is run and Bolter is nowhere in particular; but in a week’s time the same group will be talking in the same terms of Wolter or Polter or Nolter. They only deal in ‘certs.’

But, of course, in their hearts they must be quite well aware that their ‘certs’ are really ‘uncerts.’ If it were otherwise betting would be dead in a day. You can’t wager your money on the number of days in the week or the number of weeks in the year or on the multiplication table. There must be some sort of a chance, or there can be no bet. But if astrology were true, it would be A B C, I suppose, for the skilled astrologer to forecast every race by the immutable laws of the heavens. Whereupon, the Turf and all that it implies would instantly cease to exist. And I submit that, as Britons, we know that this would be absurd.

Therefore, Astrology is all stuff and nonsense!

MARCH AND A MORAL

I WAS GOING to write some fierce and eloquent things about March weather: about the days that grow longer and yet drearier, about the leaden heavens, the villainous wind from the north-east which comes from far, unhappy Siberian plains and searches to the very marrow of the bones, and about the March dust which swirls about the pavements, afflicting the eyes, choking mouth and nostrils. Our light-hearted ancestors used to say that a peck of this March dust was worth a king's ransom; but they lived on the land and measured life, largely, by the land. They knew nothing of what that dust can do in Piccadilly and the Strand. In fine, I was going to be savage with March and with Charles Kingsley, who was perverse enough to write a poem in praise of that horrible northeast wind, which sent him at last to his grave. And then, calling up memories of bygone March weather, I changed my mind. The sort of article which I had in mind would look silly, read in a deck-chair placed securely in garden shade, while the young people played lawn tennis in the full blaze and glow of the sun, and mopped their brows, calling for more ice in the cup. Yet that might well happen. Exactly forty years ago, I remember that there was just such weather in March; almost a week of it. A cloudless blue sky morning after morning, a delicious warmth in the sunlight, and that brilliance in the air which we do not often seem London — or in England either for the matter of that — that brilliance which reminds me always of Touraine and Provence, in which everything seen is clearly and sharply defined, in which every object seems to sparkle, as if it were not only in the light but was itself a form of light: all these signs were to be seen in those days of March, 1882. All the shops put out their awnings, people sauntered happily in this happy summer air, and lawn tennis — a youngish game then — flourished in that wonderful March weather. We all took the snowstorm which ended the spell as an outrage.

So again in '93, the year of the King's marriage — there were real music-halls in London in those days, and Charles Godfrey was singing two songs, 'After the Ball' and a loyal chant about 'Georgy-Porgy, Duke of Yorky' — in the year 1893 summer began in March and continued without a break till autumn. Then, again, only two years ago March in London was like July in Penzance; warm, still air and a constant dropping of fine warm rain; the sort of weather which gardeners like for budding-roses and taking cuttings. My pear tree — *the* pear tree — was a white cloud of shining glory that year on St. Patrick's Day; and my fern — *the* fern — had sent up its young growth with the fronds curved like a bishop's crozier five or six inches above ground. So, on the whole, it is best to leave March well alone; to say nothing about that vile north-easter, those bitter and grievous skies, the abominable scourge of the blinding, stinging dust. March may be anything or everything: it is only constant in its inconstancy — like the remaining eleven months of our blessed English year.

And hence the interest which we take in our weather. Foolish and proud people often reproach us with talking overmuch about the weather. 'A fine day, isn't it, for March?' 'Gorgeous June weather!' 'A very seasonable Christmas': these remarks, and many others like them, are supposed to indicate the depths of banality and stupidity on the part of the speakers. 'They can talk about nothing except the weather,' say the proud and foolish ones. These would like us to talk about Mrs. Humphry Ward, *The Story of an African Farm,* Nietzsche, Bergson, Psycho-Analysis, Relativity. They do not realize that it is they themselves who are the frivolous chatterers, occupied with the passing, the transient, the radically unimportant. What price — if I may be familiar for a moment — *Robert Elsmere* to-day? How many people in a hundred can tell me what happened at that African Farm? And as to the *élan vital*, now? And where do you think Psycho-Analysis will be in 1932? With crinolines and gigot sleeves — and *Robert Elsmere*. But we shall still be talking about the weather. And rightly: for our English weather is a matter of perennial interest. This, be it noted, is by no means the case with all weather. Don't tell a Southern Spaniard in August what a sunny day it is; he would invoke his saints against you. It is unwise to greet an Anglo-Indian on the plains at breakfast with, 'Another splendid day!' for if you do his liver will burn with angry bile, as Horace says of another matter, and he will hate you. I do not know what an Eskimo would say if you remarked to him: 'Snowy, isn't it?' in December. But he would not be interested. Note the distinction. In the Arctic region and on the Indian plain, weather talk is banal, empty and ridiculous. Here the sun never fails to blaze and scorch, there the snow surely falls. There is nothing to be said. To comment on the weather in such lands is as if one remarked: 'The sun rose this morning,' or 'The angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal.' But in England the case is altogether different. The Englishman may justly note that it is a fine day for March and that it is gorgeous June weather and so forth — just because there is no possibility of his encountering the answer: 'Of course it is.' It is never, of course. It froze in the southern counties in August a year and a half ago; and I must confess that the blaze of sunlight and the figures of the thermometer last October frightened me. There was something almost Apocalyptic about such weather. I remember especially noting the incongruity between the position of the sun in the sky with its heat and brilliance. Morning and evening it was low in the heavens, for such is the place of the sun in October; and yet its heat was vehement and its light blazed in the eyes as if we had been in the high dog-days. And on the other hand, there is the old tale of the Derby, run, not in a snowstorm, but — as I am assured — between two flurries of snow. Hence the perpetual interest of the English weather. It abounds in differences, in the unexpected; and it is only such things which are truly interesting, significant and beautiful. All the relish of life, or almost all of it, is to be sought in the element of surprise.

And this, let it be observed, is one of the few universal axioms that apply to everything; to nature, to man, to art. Let us consider, for example, the case of Jones, of London Wall and Surbiton, and the case of the starry heavens. Take Jones. We avoid him when we can. We let him choose his own carriage in the 9.30; and then get into another. The reason is that Jones never fails to say the expected thing. His conversation can be foretold with a degree of accuracy that the Meteorological Department of the Air Service has never attained in dealing with the weather. You always know exactly what he will say on any possible subject. A good man is Jones in every relation of life, and his pink peonies are the pride of Surbiton, Hampton, Molesey and the Dittons; but avoid him, since he lacks the element of surprise; in Bacon's words, there is no 'strangeness in the proportion' of Jones. He lacks that quality which the man who didn't write Shakespeare's works saw was essential to true beauty — or, we may add, to true significance and interest. And then, with this rule and measure of things still in our hands, let us contemplate the midnight sky of a clear, frosty night. An awful spectacle indeed, as Carlyle is supposed to have observed; but a spectacle awful in its wonder and its beauty — in its infinite diversity of form. Consider how the heavens would appear if the stars had been arranged in a definite and formal pattern of geometrical design, with everything matching and corresponding. *That* would be an awful spectacle in another sense; a spectacle as awful as a model prison or the corridors of a modern hotel. We could not have borne to look upon it. Indeed, there are modern streets that we can hardly bear to look upon, long, straight streets that go off from main roads in the far east of London, almost vanishing in perspective. They are terrible, these streets, because they consist of one house repeated, as it seems, to infinity. From end to end there is no variety, no element of surprise, in these dreary ways; hence, if we can, we avoid them as we avoid Jones of London Wall and Surbiton.

Hence, on the other hand, the charm and delight of things made by hand as contrasted with things made mechanically. Mark the difference between a bit of ironwork that has been hammered out by a craftsman, and another bit of ironwork that has been cast from the same design. In the latter case, absolute uniformity of execution, twirl and twist and curve corresponding with twirl and twist and curve to the tenth of an inch. In the former, infinite difference, endless though slight variety; no two twirls or twists exactly or absolutely alike. And you will find, if you care to examine the matter closely, that an oak tree is constructed on the same principle as the craftsman’s ironwork. No two leaves on that tree are exactly alike, though there is a close general resemblance between all the leaves on the broad tree. And here I am reminded that with all the goodwill in the world, one must not write about our English weather and omit to have a dig at it. So, be it observed, the difference between the leaves on the oak tree and the curly-wurlies on the iron gates are slight differences. The pattern in the ironwork ‘matches,’ though not absolutely; the leaves of the oak are very like one another, though not the same. I should not like to see fronds of a tree-fern sprouting from the boughs of our stout native oak.

So — it may be hinted — our English climate sometimes overdoes its passion for the unexpected. Eighty-four in the shade in October, five degrees of frost in August; a little violent, a thought Futurist?

ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

ON THE TWENTY-THIRD of this month of April, we keep the feast-day of our Patron Saint — St. George for Merry England. Some of us are inclined to grumble about St. George. In the most respectable Church quarters the opinion has been expressed that it is a pity that the Patron of England is at the best misty, and at the worst mythological. Putting on one side Gibbon's slander, that the St. George of fact was a profiteering if not a swindling contractor to the Roman army — and really there seems every reason to suppose that this was only Gibbon's mischief — nothing remains about St. George but the Dragon. And when it comes to dragons, you know — to put the matter in the manner of Mr. George Sampson — really, you know, upon your life you mustn't. Dragons won't do. And you take away the dragon-killing, really there is nothing left. The compilers of the Roman Breviary did not live in what is called a critical age. They were certainly not men to scan the acts and legends of the saints with a glance of sour incredulity and suspicion; but they can make nothing, or next to nothing, of St. George. The Collect speaks of him as a Martyr without any specific detail, the verses and responses are from the 'Common of Martyrs' — such as are used for all martyrs. There is no legend; no hint that there was a dragon in the case.

Well, that being so, the Roman Breviary evidently knowing nothing whatever about St. George, we may conclude that there is nothing to be known. Our Patron Saint is a shadowy figure. And yet he is vitally interesting — to me at all events. For though the martyr of the third century did not kill any dragons, somebody did kill dragons at that vaguer date known as once upon a time. We know nothing about St. George; but the popular tradition that he was a dragon-killer proves that a very long time ago there were dragons and that there were men who encountered them and killed them. For tradition is always true. It rather understates than exaggerates. In this specific case, for example; go to your cabinet of rarities and curiosities, press the hidden pin, cause the secret drawers in which the rarest things lie to fly open; and take out a golden sovereign. Look at the figure of the dragon which the Saint is riding down and destroying. A horrid-looking brute, certainly; but a pet lamb, a positive kitten compared with the dragon as it really was. As it really was? Certainly; only the scientific people call dragons pterodactyls. As Kingsley observes, very pleasantly, in *The Water Babies*, the learned men had been scoffing at the mere notion of dragons for long years. Then they found their bones, and instead of owning up like decent fellows, and acknowledging that the simple old tale was a true tale, that there really had been dragons on the earth, they made up a Greek word and spoke of pterodactyls, or 'winged fingers' — a stupid term and not nearly so expressive as dragons. And, what is more, we know exactly what these terrific beasts — fifty feet long or more — looked like; not by the learned reconstructions of their frames, but in a much more vivid way. There remains to this day an exact model, on a huge scale, of the dragon of the slime. Not as he appeared in the soaring of his awful flight, beating the air with his 'winged fingers,' but as he lay torpid, reposing on the earth. This model is to be seen in Wales. The Peninsula of Gower, Glamorgan, runs out into the Bristol Channel. I have often looked at it, across the water, from the south Pembrokeshire coast. Carrying the eye from the horrid factory chimneys of Llanelly and Burry Port, you see an undulating range of hills running out south by west. The skyline of these hills swells upwards into a kind of gentle hump at about the middle of the range, and then curving down, ends in an insignificant point, low on the water. A singular shape this point; to the eye it seems curiously flattened: and its name is The Worm's Head. It is not a bit like the head of the worm that the gardener slices with his spade; but 'worm' was old English for dragon; and these swelling hills, ending in a small promontory, must form an exact picture of the horrible pterodactyl, half reptile, half bird, huge in body, ridiculous in head, as it lay at length on the ground. Here, in hill and rock, you have a picture — it is rather an awful thought — of the image in the mind and eye of a prehistoric ancestor who may have lived 400,000 years ago. He had looked into the place of dragons, and had noted the likeness of the monsters to that line of hills running out into the sea; and, somehow, his thought has come down through the tremendous ages; even to our day.

Tradition is always in the right, And, still occupying ourselves with the St. George legend, another proof can be gathered of the accuracy of the age-long memory of man. There is a picture of St. George and the Dragon, I think by a master of the Venetian school, in which the monster has quite a different aspect from the ‘worm’ or pterodactyl which gave its name to the Worm’s Head. In this picture, the dragon is a horrible bloated beast with a swollen, misshapen body. The painter could never have had a model; but he painted an excellent likeness of an iguanodon, another of those huge monsters that roamed the earth before the earth had boiled and flooded and dried and frozen into the shape that it now bears. Somehow, it seems clear, the word was passed on from age to age across all the gulfs and chasms of time. Where the seas are now, then was dry land; vast Atlantis, the island continent, had not sunken under the waves; there were terrors on the earth indeed — but not the terror of the Channel Passage, since men walked dryfoot from the points known to us as Dover and Calais. The earth heaved, as I say, and boiled; islands rose out of the sea, ships now sail over primæval mountain tops; Europe became a sheet of ice; yet the word was passed on, so that the Pembroke countryman and the Venetian painter knew what dragons were like; both the long breed and the thick breed.

By the way, I wonder whether the members of the Prehistoric Ladies’ Toy Dragon Club got on well together? But the consideration of this deep and obscure problem must be postponed for the present.

The memory of man, then, is boundless, reaching back to inconceivable antiquity. It is no marvel, therefore, if it has retained events and circumstances of historic and measurable times. A thousand years, two thousand years are trifling periods indeed when we compare them with the huge, unimaginable chaos of time; still, I remember being amazed when an Oxfordshire farm labourer, who had never been to school and could neither read nor write, said casually to me:

‘Ay, Chalgrove Field, that’s where they killed Muster Hampden. *They do say it was down in oats at the time*.’

Down in oats at the time! I could almost hear the brushing and rushing of the Cavaliers’ chargers, as they trampled down that field of oats in their hot onset.

‘And then,’ old Harmon went on, ‘Squire Scoop down at Wormsley there; he got hanged when it was all over.’

The name was not quite accurate. He was speaking of the Roundhead Colonel, Adrian Scrope, who was one of the few persons excepted by the merciful Charles II from the Act of Indemnity. To the old countryman it was all actual, gossip of the neighbouring countryside. To be sure, it was only two hundred and fifty years or so since it happened.

And then, I remember reading — I think in *The Guardian* — an interesting article on Tewkesbury and its Minster. The writer described a visit he had paid to the place thirty years before. He was shown over the church by a verger who ran over the associations of the place, after the manner of most vergers. But presently the visitor became aware that the old fellow was talking quite differently from most vergers. He was speaking of the battle of Tewkesbury; and he talked as if he had been there! He told of little things which do not get into the history books, he described the upper room in a house in the town where certain princes were murdered, and he ended up with a ghastly description of how the dead were brought from the battlefield and brought into the church, 'till the bodies reached up to the top of those pillars.' It was the vivid picture of an onlooker. The visitor made his inquiries, and found that the old man came of a family who had supplied sacristans, clerks, vergers to Tewkesbury Minster from the fifteenth century onward. The verger was telling the tale that his father had told him. And there are odd stories from Scotland and Ireland. In Scotland the simple country people had a silly tale of a knight all in silver armour who was buried under a certain mound on a hillside. Everybody laughed; till some one passing by the mound — eighty or perhaps a hundred years ago — noticed that the ground had been recently disturbed. The antiquaries took the matter in hand. But they were too late. A wisely credulous villager had been before them. Only the knight's bones and one or two laminæ of the wonderful silver armour remained. It was all true; the armour was Danish, dating back to the year 900 or so; the Hamlet period. The tradition had lasted among the unlearned for nine hundred years. And in Ireland the tale was of a fairy rath or castle; a rounded hill from which, said the peasants, flames could be seen issuing of nights. Again tradition was right; flames could have been seen issuing at night from the top of that queer hill; could have been seen, that is, if you happened to have been strolling that way somewhere about a.d 850. Investigation showed that this place had been a retreat of the aboriginal inhabitants of Ireland, the dark 'little people,' and had been sacked by Danes sometime in the ninth century. And as to the flames; the flue to carry off the smoke from the fairy fire was duly discovered.

It is wonderful, all this; but it is all over. I doubt whether old Harmon's children know anything about the culture of Chalgrove Field where Hampden fell; they went to school, the place where ignorance of everything that matters is so carefully imparted. And so with the story of Tewkesbury; the writer of the article visited the place a second time and found a strange verger. *This* man had never seen the stricken field of Tewkesbury, or the blood running in the upper room, or the dead men piled capital-high in the church. He told the story as it was printed in the Guide. The old folk-memory is dead; we have killed it with our silly schools and our rubbishy books.

THE POOR VICTORIANS

WE ALL KNOW what the poor Victorians were like. We have heard all about them over and over again. To begin with, they were prim. They were proper. They always went to bed early. Their only form of revelry consisted in tea-parties. The laws of their lives were dictated to them by maiden ladies and the vicar's wife. When the maiden ladies and the vicar's wife said that so-and-so was 'not quite nice,' or 'not at all the kind of thing that we expect to meet with in Dulchester,' there was an end of it, whatever 'it' was. Profligacy — displayed, let us say, by smoking a cigar in the High Street — was reproved, and genius, if it had said anything contrary to the maiden standard of Dulchester, thenceforth held its peace. So much for life; as for the arts in the Victorian era; they could not properly be said to exist. Here, too, the ladies of Dulchester were all mighty. Nobody spoke out; nobody dared to be 'daring.' No picture was painted that went beyond the vision of the Young Person. No poem that the Curate might possibly dislike was ever written. If you were at heart a gay dog you must keep your gaiety dark; else the County would reject you. If you were a moral sort of fellow and had an inclination to rebuke vice, you had to hold your tongue equally; since vice and immorality and all that sort of thing were not so much as to be mentioned. You were not to know that such things existed; since the existence of such things was not recognized at Miss Pinkerton's Academy for Young Ladies, and what those young ladies did not know, nobody was supposed to know. As to love; the word was, beware! Above all there must be no faintest hint of the vital things, of any sort of realities. You might be weakly sentimental, but you must never be fervid. You must not have 'ideas.' You must never stray for one moment from the pink-and-white drawing-room carpet. The convention was laid strictly down for you and no Victorian ever thought of departing from it. And then, all questions of morality and passion apart, the Victorian author was strictly required to keep his pages free of everything 'disagreeable' or 'unpleasant.' After all, the great rule applied here as everywhere else; he was not to write anything that he would hesitate to utter in the Vicarage drawing-room full of maiden ladies and curates and Young Persons. One did not in this sacred place talk about disagreeable things; equally one must not write about them. And so on, and so on; the general conclusion being that the Victorians couldn't write, couldn't paint, couldn't think, and couldn't properly be said to be alive at all. They lived and moved in a world of prim, feeble, old-maidish, curatical, school-girlish pretences, their chief object being to avoid telling or hearing the truth about any subject whatever.

There you are, with your accepted and recognized picture of the Victorian Age. And is it not enough to make one despair of all history? If this nonsense can be written and believed of a period close to our own of a time which many of us remember perfectly well, of an age which has left a great body of documents behind it; if this mendacious rubbish, I say, can pass current as fact; what *is* the good of trying to find out what life was like in the seventeenth century, or in the seventh century? If the near is so hopelessly misrepresented, how will it fare with the remote? For, to come to the documents; this is the manner in which one of the mild Victorian poets wrote of the passion of love.

O Love, Love, Love! O withering might!
O sun that from thy noonday height
Shudderest when I strain my sight,
Throbbing thro' all thy heat and light.
Lo, falling from my constant mind,
Lo, parch'd and wither'd, deaf and blind,
I whirl like leaves in roaring wind.
Last night, when some one spoke his name,
From my swift blood that went and came
A thousand little shafts of flame
Were shiver'd in my narrow frame.
O Love, O fire! once he drew
With one long kiss my whole soul thro'
My lips, as sunlight drinketh dew.

Thus wrote Victorian Tennyson. It does not remind me of Miss Pinkerton's Academy or the Vicarage drawing-room.

A little solemn, do you think? Well, let us try

Lazy, laughing, languid Jenny
Fond of a kiss and fond of a guinea.
… Poor shameful Jenny, full of grace
Thus with your head upon my knee:
Whose person or whose purse may be
The lodestar of your reverie?

Pretty well, in the way of frankness, it seems to me. The lines are the work of an eminent mid-Victorian, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. And anybody who is not satisfied may be referred to the first series of *Poems and Ballads* by another eminent mid-Victorian, Algernon Charles Swinburne. And then, as to that other well-known Victorian rule, that you must never mention anything that is not quite nice: listen to this. A well-known character in a novel of this prim age was sent to request the loan of a knife and fork.

‘Captain Hopkins lent me the knife and fork, with his compliments to Mr. Micawber. There was a very dirty lady in his little room, and two wan girls, his daughters, with shock heads of hair. I thought it was better to borrow Captain Hopkins’ knife and fork, than Captain Hopkins’ comb.’

That is not nice, but it was written by Charles Dickens. And do you know the same author’s description of the birth of Little Dorrit? The midwife is speaking.

‘The flies trouble you, don’t they, my dear?’ said Mrs. Bangham. ‘But p’raps they’ll take your mind off it, and do you good. What between the buryin’ ground, the grocers, the wagon-stables, and the paunch trade, the Marshalsea flies gets very large. P’raps they’re sent as a consolation, if we only know’d it. How are you now, my dear? No better? No, my dear, it ain’t to be expected; you’ll be worse before you’re better, and you know it, don’t you? Yes.’

Really, you know, this account of a confinement in a gaol, with all its nauseous circumstances, is by no means prim, curatical, or old-maidish. It does not at all fit in with the picture of the pink-and-white drawing-room in which the souls and bodies of the Victorians are supposed, in popular belief, to have dwelt.

And the Victorians all went to bed early after a cup of weak tea? Did they! I have just turned up a mid-Victorian magazine, *The Welcome Guest*, published in 1858. I open it at a picture: ‘Midnight: Supper Rooms in the Haymarket.’ It illustrates George Augustus Sala’s ‘Twice Round the Clock,’ and the text tells how the playgoers pour out of the theatres and pour into the Haymarket to eat expensive French dishes, to drink Clos Vougeot, Lafitte and ‘Chambertin with yellow seal’; to eat chops, steaks, kidneys, sausages or Welsh rabbit ‘washed down by the homely British brown stout, and followed, perchance, by the soothing cigar and the jorum of hot anything and water’; but above all to eat oysters. Why, in our mad daring days the mere cigar purchased at midnight is a criminal offence; and as to Burgundy, stout and ‘something hot,’ all *that* is a Star Chamber matter.

And be it remembered, these Haymarket supper-rooms were the early places for people who wanted to get home in good time. For the real amateurs of supper there was Evans’, and one o’clock was the time to go to Evans’, if you would sup like a man. You took a few oysters at the Haymarket, but that as a mere whet to the appetite. Great people have always had strong stomachs, says Sala — in italics — and forthwith he tells us how men supped in the mid-Victorian age; he described the mountains of kidneys, chops, sausages, the pints of stout, the creaming Scotch ale, the mighty measures of punch and grog; and all this beginning at one o’clock in the morning.

So it was in prim 1858; and we, we mad Georgian revellers, we may not buy so much as a cigarette after eight o’clock at night.

The truth is, of course, that the Victorian age, more especially the early and mid-Victorian ages, were times of jollity, and times of liberty, both in life and in letters. Those people who took a dozen oysters in the Haymarket at midnight and strolled off to Covent Garden to eat great suppers at Evans’ would not have believed that their grandsons would submit to be smacked and sent to bed early like naughty children. And as in life, so in letters. What the mid-Victorians wrote, whether it were well or ill, was written with a relish. We have lost all that. For Evans’ and his ‘jolly suppers, his brown stout and his hot grog to follow’ at one, two, three in the morning; what have we? The subterranean night-club, mean, debauched, futile, bloodless, the places where adulterated whisky is called ‘ginger ale,’ and drunk in coffee cups with an air of tremendous devilry, where the guests are spectres of the gutter, dissolute reptiles destitute utterly of all mirth, all gaiety and all jollity, where silly flappers get their ‘snow,’ and set the first scene of their squalid little tragedies. Jolly? Why, a mortuary is a gay scene by comparison.

And so with art and letters. Cubism, Vorticism, Post-Impressionism; verse that doesn’t scan and doesn’t rhyme; novels that make one think of a stupid post-mortem or a dull dissection; this is what we have in place of Tennyson, Swinburne, Rossetti, Dickens, Thackeray, the Pre-Raphaelites, and the great illustrators of the despised age, the wood-engravers whose work has become to us miraculous.

Those poor Victorians!

STUFF — AND SCIENCE

THE TWO MOST extravagant and improbable books in the world are Euclid and the *Arabian Nights*; but of the two by far the more improbable and extravagant is Euclid. Nay, it is flattery to say that Euclid is improbable; it is impossible.

For, consider; it is highly improbable, no doubt, that by rubbing a lamp you can summon a spirit, or jinn, who will build you a palace of incredible splendour in a night. This is most unlikely, I confess, but I cannot say that it is impossible, simply because neither I nor any one else can pretend to know all the laws of the universe. We are entitled to say that we have never come across the lamp, the genie or the palace; and that we have no intention of believing in the story till it be supported by strong evidence. We can say that, but we are really not entitled to say any more. We mustn’t even say ‘nonsense!’ or ‘rubbish!’ that is if we are cautious people. For — how long ago is it; twenty years, thirty years? — the state of a gentleman’s mind was once in some doubt. His relations were afraid that he was going mad, so they took out what Mr. Sampson Brass called a pretty little commission *de lunatico*. And a mental expert who gave evidence said that in his opinion Mr. X was mad, as mad as a hatter. The doctor had had a cosy little chat with Mr. X, and that gentleman had declared his belief in the possibility of dirigible flight. That was quite enough for the doctor. I don’t know whether the poor man was shut up. Possibly he is alive and in a madhouse to this day. He must find it highly amusing to watch the airplanes and airships soaring high above the asylum walls. Then the X-rays. I remember telling a friend about them in the ‘nineties; how some queer light had been found which would pierce through the solid walls of flesh and show, as in a photograph, every bone in your body. My friend laughed. He said that he did not believe *everything* that he saw in the papers. And then, you know, ‘wireless’: what would people have said to *that*? And wireless telephony: before long, they tell me, words uttered in London will be plainly audible in New York. Think of it, the human voice heard clearly across the Atlantic Ocean, as clearly and as easily as if the two speakers were talking to one another across the duck-pond in the farm-yard. It was utterly impossible according to all our notions and all our experience; but it has happened or soon will happen. So it doesn’t do to say that the highly improbable thing is therefore the impossible thing; Aladdin’s Lamp and the Genie and the Palace may yet come into experience.

Yet, as I say, I am willing to allow that the story of Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp is, on the face of it, highly extravagant and improbable. But Euclid cannot be let down so easily as that. I remember little of that author, I am glad to say, but I shall never forget the astounding statements with which he opens his work. A point, he begins, with the calmness of the finished and shameless liar, has neither parts nor magnitude, but only position. A line, he goes on, is length without breadth. And a plane surface, so he declares, has length and breadth but no thickness. On such foundations does Euclid raise his system of Geometry. Let us consider a little. Euclid is not a theologian. He is not a metaphysician. He is not a spiritualist. He is not dealing with the world of mind, soul or spirit. He is occupied with the visible world that we know, the world of time, space, solidity and matter. And he declares that in this material world there is something existing called a point which has no size at all and no parts: a material thing without materiality. So with his line; it has length without breadth. Who has seen such a thing? Who can imagine the possibility of such a thing? And who can conceive a surface without depth? Aladdin is improbable; but Euclid is, in the strictest sense of the word, impossible. His definitions are contradictions. A man once asked me if I couldn’t think of the Euclidean surface as I thought of the surface of a perfectly still pool of water. Certainly I can; but I cannot think of water without depth; and that is the surface which Euclid propounds for our acceptance.

So, you see, geometry, a branch of pure mathematics, the most abstract of the sciences, the science which is supposed to convey necessary truth, which no discoveries can affect, which no experience can render invalid; this branch of science turns out to be founded on a series of absurdities and contradictions in terms. And arithmetic, again, another branch of pure mathematics; lucky is it for our poor little boys and girls as they get through the multiplication table, and advance by painful degrees to vulgar fractions; lucky is it for them that they do not dream of the nightmare country into which these studies inevitably lead. The Snark was a Boojum! There are worse Boojums than the Snark, as witness that notorious affair of the contest between Achilles and the Tortoise. It is well known that Achilles was the swiftest of all men; *the* champion sprinter, in fact. It is equally well known that the tortoise is one of the slowest of animals. So, oddly enough, their Managements met and arranged that the two should race each other. Naturally, it was a case for handicapping, and to make things simple it was agreed that Achilles ran a hundred times as quickly as the Tortoise, and therefore that Achilles must be scratch, and the animal have a hundred yards' start. Very good. The race takes place. The swift-footed hero flies like light over the hundred yards which separate him from the Tortoise. But in that little space of time the Tortoise, a hundred times slower, has run a yard, and is still ahead. Achilles passes that yard, but the Tortoise has raced a hundredth of a yard and is still ahead. Then the thousandth part of a yard separates them; but the Tortoise by that much is still ahead — and will be ahead throughout all ages, if there be any truth in the science of arithmetic and in its doctrine of fractions. *Solvitur ambulando*: a practical experiment solves *that* puzzle, a philosopher said long ago; but as De Quincey notes, he was a foolish fellow, since the essence of the puzzle lies in the opposition between the known facts of the case and the teaching of science. We know that Achilles would pass the Tortoise in a flash; science tells us that the man must lag behind the reptile for ever.

Now then; to come to the practical application of all this. We have seen that science, in its most abstract mood; in those branches of it which are supposed to deal with necessary and unchanging truth, is founded on rank and preposterous absurdities. With its lines that are all length and no breadth, with its fraction dogmas that lead to the ridiculous; it is clearly nonsense. Very good; *then do not let the doctor interfere with your dinner*.

For, note the difference between pure science and applied science. A line is always a line in all climates and all ages. Supposing there is such a thing at all, it is the same in Paris as in London, in Pekin as in Cape Town. If two and two make four, they have always made four, and make four as much for Smith as for Robinson. But with applied science the case is very different. Here you enter into a region of infinite doubts, difficulties, differences; differences of body, differences of mind, differences of climate, differences of custom, differences of disposition, differences of inheritance. To put it in a nutshell; I would as soon go to an astrologer as to a doctor, if I wanted an answer to the question: 'Is beef bad for me?' It is monstrous indeed that science, shown to be mad in the abstract, should presume to dictate to us in the concrete. Yet it does. Look at the solemn diets that are prescribed. I have known people who live — or think they live, for they are not alive — on nuts, carrots, bread and dates; with a little cheese as a perilous and doubtful indulgence, and with a glass of milk, if they are resolved to be dogs and devils. This diet, which is supposed to be a cure for rheumatism, forbids all wine, beer, spirits, all coffee, chocolate, cocoa, tea, all peas and beans, all meat, fish and eggs. If you wish to tread the narrow way you drink no milk and eat no cheese. I do not know whether it cures rheumatism, I do not know whether a wise man would not prefer to be rheumatic. But the worst of it is that the people who live in this ridiculous way, who follow the Vague Treatment, as it is called, affect airs of superiority. They look down on the people who eat chops and steaks and thank God for them. They watch each other. One of them records how, at afternoon tea, she occasionally takes half a cup to save trouble; and she complains mildly that through the Vague sect the rumour wildly runs: 'Oh, Mrs. Blank has given up The Diet; *she drinks tea!*' Then, there is the Bague diet. In this you eat no meat, of course not; but, furthermore, you must not have anything cooked. You may have peas and beans, but they must be raw; you revel on carrots and turnips, as they come from the field, save that they are finely shredded. Cooking, it appears, blasts the vitamines, it destroys the invaluable potassium salts; cooking is the cause of most of the deadly and awful diseases that waste the world. Can there be any more putrid silliness than this? Here is modern science advising us to go back to the wretched apish savages who were our remote ancestors, who grubbed for roots and climbed for nuts and devoured raw worms because they had not found out the secret of fire. Even supposing these pompous imbeciles are right — there is not the slightest reason to believe that they are right — is it not better to live like a man for fifty years on beefsteaks and vol-au-vents than to mop and mow for a hundred years like a monkey on chopped carrots? And then there is the milder but still abhorrent folly of the physician, the 'well-known physician' of the newspaper interview, who tells people that they eat far too much; the sort of man who advises, in print, a small portion of porridge for breakfast, a tomato and a bit of cheese for lunch, and half a sole and one slice of mutton for dinner. This fellow is everywhere; and I need scarcely say that he regards all the alcohols as deadly poison. He represents the almost universal concession to cant. Politicians, who love nothing better than a sound bottle of champagne opened at two o'clock in the morning, tell us that the State will rush down to ruin if we drink a glass of beer after ten p.m. So doctors, who can relish good meat and good drink with any man, tell the world through the newspaper that it ought to live in a manner that would make a riot in a monastery.

But the *reductio ad absurdum* — I remember that much Euclid — is quite delightful. For the last sixty or seventy years, this great bully, science, a sort of Gradgrind and Bounderby rolled into one, has been bragging and blustering and pretending to know everything and telling its grandmother how to suck eggs, and coming the most tremendous howlers on every possible subject. It has announced with a grin that would make an Earlswood idiot envious that it has been into the dissecting-room and hasn't found the soul there. It tried a little Scripture History and announced, with a decision that the most dogmatic popes have been unable to command, that there are grave flaws in the story of Abraham, because writing is mentioned, and writing was unknown in the period at which Abraham is supposed to have lived. And this magnificent proclamation was made about a fortnight before certain inscribed tablets were found at Tel-el-Amarna; the characters having been formed 2,000 years at least before Abraham was born. Then a little profane history, for a change. You know about Homer and the Siege of Troy. Science laughed. There never was any Homer, there wasn't any Troy, there wasn't any Siege. The whole tale was a sun-myth. It was an account, in allegorical language, of the course of the sun over the heavens, from its rising to its setting. Then came Schliemann. He found Troy standing, what remained of it, in the place in which Homer said it stood. And, moreover, he found that it had been sacked, and that it had been burned, as Homer said it had been burnt. So sun-myths and sun-heroes went out of fashion, and in their place we have culture-gods and culture-heroes and culture-myths, and science is as happy as ever and as pleased as Punch, because it is quite sure that the Holy Grail was a saucepan used for cooking spring cabbage — as sure on this point as it was on the other point; that Achilles was the sun.

Very well, I have no objection. Fools must be fed with folly, and it seems the province of science to give fools their meat in due season. But I say to science: hands off my bill-of-fare! Conclude, if you like, that monkeys and anthropoid apes were the only people who knew how to order dinner. Discover, if you will, that the jackass is the supreme authority on diet, and that there is nothing like thistles. But let science keep its conclusions and discoveries to itself. I am going to have my dinner at the Café Royal.

ON HOLIDAYS

IT MAY SOUND unpatriotic, even now, almost four years since the ending of the war, but I cannot help it: there is a certain German with whom I am in the most cordial sympathy. I am sure that he and I would have got on very well indeed, on one point at all events.

He is not an actual German. He lives in a book, *The Caravaners*, by the Countess Russell, the author of *Elizabeth and her German Garden*. And I do not deny that there was a great deal to be said against the Baron von Ottringel, of Storchwerder in Prussia. He was a bore of the deadliest kind. He was a snob of the purest water. His selfishness stuck out of him in lumps. He was, as one of the characters in the book declares, 'a very grievous bounder.' He was utterly deficient in all the decent amenities of life. He was a mean cad. But I like him all the same. *For he would not pretend that caravaning was a pleasant holiday*. It fell out like this. Some of the Baron's friends near Storchwerder had English connections, and were making up a caravaning party for the summer holidays. They told the Baron how cheap a plan it was: how a caravan could be hired for fourteen pounds a month, how there would be no hotel bills to pay, no waiters to tip, no railway tickets to be taken. The Baron was a saving man; he was tempted; he became a caravaner. And he disliked it thoroughly. He didn't like helping to get doubtful dinners which took so long to prepare that they had to be eaten by lantern light 'in a gusty place, vainly endeavouring to hold our wraps about us, our feet in wet grass and our heads in a stormy darkness. The fitful flicker of the lanterns played over rapidly cooling eggs…. This was not a holiday; this was privation combined with exposure.' And then the poor man had to help to wash up in a rainstorm; and he didn't like that either.

And in spite of the many differences that have separated England and Prussia, I cordially shake hands with the Baron von Ottringel. It is not in the least amusing to anybody but a fool to eat a bad dinner on wet grass in the dark and then to undertake a job for which you have had no training in circumstances of the extremest discomfort. For there is a right way and a wrong way of doing the most trifling tasks, and the right way has to be learned. Even in washing up there are mysteries, as any man can find out for himself if he care to enter his own well-found back-kitchen, with a special washing-up geyser to help him; let him try the experiment on a blasted heath in the dark, with water half warmed over doubtful oil lamps and the heavens emptying themselves upon his head. The Baron was perfectly right; all this is beastly discomfort, and to pretend that it is a pleasant holiday is merely one of the many forms of cant. Of course the only way to enjoy caravaning would be to do in the caravan as the real caravaners do; that is to make oneself into a gipsy. The gipsies, no doubt, get on well enough; they lay no elaborate tables; they have their own modes of cooking suited to the life and the circumstances; they have no passion for spotless plates or for polished knives and forks. They know nothing of the many refinements, delicacies, niceties that have been invented, wisely or unwisely, by people who have had the habit of living in houses for hundreds — or thousands — of years. It is like enough that Mr. Petulengro would be as unhappy at a London hotel as was the Baron von Ottringel in the caravan. But Mr. Petulengro is too sensible a Romany to try to live like a gipsy in a London hotel; he would not attempt to bake a hedgehog in a clay oven on his bedroom floor. It is only the foolish gentile who is capable of playing the impossible part of drawing-room gipsy. Again and again the Baron was right — on the matter of caravaning, at all events.

Yet, though the practice is absurd, the theory is sound. For I suppose that the root of this uncomfortable caravaning business is the desire to take a holiday that shall be as great a change as possible; and this, no doubt, is the real end and benefit of holiday-making. It is not chiefly change of air that we want; change of everything else is much more important. From the mere physical point of view, the London air is good enough for anybody; and our great city, monstrous as it is with its infinite wilderness of houses, is one of the healthiest places in England. It is not our air that we require to change as the summer draws on, but the whole habit of mind and body, of the mind rather than of the body. And, no doubt, a farmer living somewhere Careg y Wastad (Rock of the Wilderness) way, near St. David’s (which is sixteen miles from a railway), should take his holiday at Charing Cross. An analysis of the air blowing over Careg y Wastad from the Atlantic Ocean might show it to be purer than the air of the Strand; but the change would set up Mr.

Caradoc Owen Morgan, of Llangadwaladyr Fach, for the rest of the year. And here we have the justification of the practice of ‘going abroad’ for a holiday. We are often told that it is a pity to go to France before we have exhausted the many and exquisite beauties of our own country; that we should explore our own mountains and lakes and moors before we roam in Touraine and Gascony and Provence. And, indeed, it is quite true that there are beauties and delights enough in England, Scotland and Wales to last and outlast the holidays of most lives; and yet there is a great deal to be said for the Continental holiday. Things may not be better nor more beautiful across the Channel; but they are so utterly different. The whole aspect is changed; even a tree on a French hilltop is a different object from a tree on an English hilltop. In our driest, hottest weather the world is presented to our eyes through faint veiling mists; in France the outlines of visible things are shown clearly in an air which is so luminous that the objects seen appear to be illuminated. And then there are the differences of architecture, the strange shock of finding that even small children seem able to speak French quite fluently, the sound of a strange tongue all the while in our ears, the novel aspect of the cafes with the people on the *terrasse* drinking their beer and their coffee in the open air, the queerness of a lunch that has garlic sausage, *omelette fines herbes* and *pieds de porcs grillés* in it instead of roast mutton, mashed, and Cheddar; all these things and many more combine to make a French holiday a very admirable holiday. You have been for a while in another world, you are immensely refreshed and delighted — unless you are like the gentleman I once saw at the Hotel de France at Bordeaux. It was the hour of déjeuner, and all the company were beginning the *hors d’œuvres* save this true Briton. He was pouring out tea from a Britannia-metal teapot, and ham and eggs were on the plate before him. But I believe this sturdy fellow to have been at Bordeaux on business, not pleasure; anyhow, his was not the way to enjoy the chief benefits of a holiday; change and new experiences. And that brings me to the puzzle of the average Londoner’s holiday. I have just been saying that when Mr. Caradoc Owen Morgan, of Llangadwaladyr Fach, Careg y Wastad, Pembroke, feels that he wants a holiday his best course is to spend a week or two in the heart of London; and clearly the reverse treatment should apply to the City man who is feeling ‘fed up’ with the City. But somehow it doesn’t. He ought to take his holiday at Careg y Wastad; but in fact he very rarely does anything of the kind. He seeks no solitudes, no wild places. He goes to Penzance, Brighton, Eastbourne, Folkestone, Margate, Southend, Cromer, according to his pocket or his tastes, almost always to some place where he will be in the company of crowds of people, where the life of London will be reproduced as nearly as possible, with fresh sea air thrown in.

This is queer; but so it is; and I am afraid the explanation is that the true Londoner hates the true country. It says nothing to him; he is bored by it, he is more than bored by it. I believe that he is frightened of it; that a deep, dark lane at night is almost as terrible to him as is the dark passage to the little child at bedtime. It is a repetition of history. They were just like that in the Augustan age of Rome. The authorities were alarmed. They couldn't prevent the country people from flocking into the great city, and once there, they never went back to the fields. Horace and Virgil, at the high desire of the Emperor, wrote beautiful poems about the delights of farming, and the joys of a country life in summer and winter, of piling the logs on the flame when the snow lay deep on Soracte, of the cool shade by the well of Bandusia in the heats of summer, of the good old days when the Romans loved the land. They wrote these delightful things, but I don't think that they troubled the country much themselves, or Virgil would never have told farmers that the way to get a swarm of bees was to kill a calf and bury it, and Horace would not read so absolutely as a finished man about town. And the country people still swarmed up to the city; and stayed there. So with our Londoners; they agree profoundly with that great Londoner who said a long time ago that he who is tired of London is tired of Life. Perhaps, indeed, like the children, we feel that we are all in the dark and love to keep together and make a noise to raise our spirits; and will not, even for a month or a bare fortnight, leave the cheer of the friendly lamps and the noisy, crowded streets.

SIX DOZEN OF PORT

MANY GOOD PEOPLE must have been sadly shocked to read of a certain recent bequest which has been recorded in the papers. The testator, a wealthy solicitor, directed his executors to buy six dozen of the best vintage port for the benefit of ‘his good friend and partner,’ Mr. Blank, in the hope that in drinking it Mr. Blank would be reminded of the cordial relations that had existed between them for many years.

I can imagine, as I say, that horror of varying degrees of intensity will be aroused by these dispositions. There are all the people who hate life, who have many names and styles and titles. They call themselves intellectuals, or, sometimes, the *intelligentsia*; I suppose because they have no intelligent understanding or perception of anything whatever. When you talk to them about literature they will be cross with you if you suggest that the thing exists or has ever existed outside Russia — always excepting, of course, one or two honoured and ‘conscientious’ English names. If you talk to them about education, they will laugh anything except physical science out of court, reserving always psycho-analysis, which turns the whole world of waking and dreaming into a peculiarly putrid and silly form of nightmare nastiness. But the real mark of this sect is their hatred of life. That is a large order, you will say. So it is. But a lady of my acquaintance put the matter very clearly once before one of the most distinguished members of the sect, a gentleman who never touches good meat or good drink and thinks the habit of smoking a disgusting vice. The lady had been listening to the Intellectual for some time, and then she turned and said: ‘I tell you what, George, what would do you good would be to be brought to bed with twins; then you might know something about life!’ The lady was proceeding *per impossible,* of course; but I think one sees her point. The sect in question argues most acutely against this, and that, and the other, and argues so well that you are confounded by the strength of its position — till you perceive that what they object to is not this, or that, or the other, but life itself, and, indeed, life is full of objectionable incidents, but it is all the life we know anything about.

Need I say that to the intellectuals, this bequest of six dozen of the very best port will be highly offensive? They are not all teetotallers, perhaps, but they would be agreed to holding port to be at best a very trivial thing. I remember one of them being highly irritated by one of the most savoury volumes of modern times, Professor Saintsbury's *Notes from a Cellar Book*, to read which is almost — but not quite — as rare a treat as the drinking of the choice and curious delicacies in wine that it describes. 'A record of a state of things which has fortunately quite passed away'; in these words, or in words to that effect, did the Intellectual describe the golden volume of one who is learned, it is true, in wine, but learned also in the literatures of the world, a true Professor of the humaner letters. These people, with certain exceptions, always speak with scorn of the Classics. If we get beaten in a foreign market, if the current goes wrong on 'the Met.,' if anything happens that ought not to happen, they say that it is because our educational system is all wrong, since we teach our boys Latin and Greek instead of physical science. Consequently, as despisers of what the Irish hedge schoolmaster called 'the haythen mythology,' these people know nothing about the story of Dionysos, the Wine God; how he went all over the world, civilizing the nations by teaching them the culture of the vine, and they have not heard the moral fable of King Pentheus, who resisted the civilizing mission of Dionysos, tried to keep the vine out of his kingdom, and, as a natural consequence, went mad and came to a dreadful end; being, in fact, torn to pieces. This sounds nonsense, doesn't it? But it has just been happening in our own day. Russia went dry — and then Russia went mad and Bolshevist; and even our advanced 'thinkers' are coming to the conclusion that Bolshevism is a very dreadful end indeed. Russia has been torn to pieces. As for the United States of America, a distinguished American statesman has declared recently that the increase of crime in the States since the coming of Prohibition has been terrific and terrifying.

And, by the way, I have been reading lately about two recent enactments of the Legislature of the Sovereign Commonwealths of Kentucky and Georgia. Kentucky has declared that Evolution is contrary to the laws of the State: Georgia enacts that the man who goes out fishing without his wife's leave is a felon, and that the punishment of his crime shall be a sentence of five years' penal servitude. As I was saying, Pentheus was very odd in his manner towards the end.

But, as I say, the Intellectual is by no means always a teetotaller. His position is rather that meat and drink are matters of no importance, that they are unworthy the consideration of a sage, and that a man who thinks much of his dinner and his glass of vintage port is an inferior person who thinks of meat and drink because he has no mind to think of anything higher. That is why the *intelligentsia* dislike Dickens, who loves nothing better than to describe a feast and the joys of good eating and good drinking. 'This is an inferior mind,' they say. 'If you would see true greatness read Luntic Kolnyatsch in the original Gibrisch' — with Mr. Max Beerbohm's leave. '*He* specializes in skin-disease, vermin and suicide; subjects fit for the genius of the modern world.' All I can say is that it strikes me as a very strange frame of mind. You have something like it in the seventeenth-century Puritans, who hated a great number of noble and beautiful and goodly things; you have, perhaps, the original of it all in the fifth-century Manichees, who founded their faith on a logical basis, at all events. They were persuaded that the world with all that therein is was made by the devil, and therefore that everything in the world was very evil. A really thoroughgoing Manichee could not break a crust of bread without uttering a long apology for doing so, which was his grace before meat. This was all very well and consistent; but the *intelligentsia* have no very fervid belief in the devil; so why do they either hate, or, at least, despise old vintage port and, in general, all the good things of life? Remember the *Kreutzer Sonata*, by Tolstoi, the ancestor of the whole family of Kolnyatsch. Here you have a book which strikes not at this detail or that; not at the bottle of old port, or the good cigar, or the roast partridge, but at the very source of all life. It is thoroughgoing, certainly, for if the *Kreutzer Sonata* doctrine were carried out we should be delivered from all our troubles, since there would soon be none of us left. Tolstoi held, as it seems, that no children should be born into the world; presumably, therefore, he held that existence in itself is an evil, thus approximating to the doctrine of Buddhism. Well, Buddhism is of India, and Manes, the founder of the Manichees, was a Persian: the East has always been inclined to teetotalism; that is to the denial of the joy of life.

You will remember, of course, that highly popular best seller *Rasselas*, by the late Samuel Johnson, LL.D. Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia, is speaking:

'By what means,' said the Prince, 'are the Europeans thus powerful; or why, since they can so easily visit Asia and Africa for trade and conquest, cannot the Asiaticks and Africans invade their coasts, plant colonies in their ports, and give laws to their natural princes? The same wind that carries them back would bring us thither.’

The puzzle is addressed to the sage, Imlac, the prince’s philosophic counsellor. Imlac, with some circumlocution, gives it up, and Johnson himself, commenting on the passage many years after, did the same. He said that he could see no real explanation of the remarkable facts.

The explanation is, of course, easy enough. The East, as I said, has always been inclined to teetotalism, with all that is implied in that term.

Let us be warned in time. Woe to us if we take to despising good drink while the myriads of millions of China take to strong ale and vintage port. Our day will be done. ‘Mene, Mene’ will be written on the wall. Let us rather honour the memory and imitate the example of the good man of Gray’s Inn, who left six dozen bottles of the finest port to his old friend. I am sure that he was a good man. If a man talks to me of the sacred cause of Humanity, I lock up my few silver spoons. If he speaks of Liberty I know that he has a Bill in his pocket by which it will be made penal to be out of bed after ten p.m. But he who speaks well of port is, as the Greeks said of their best men, beautiful and good.

THE CUSTOM OF THE MANOR

THEY HAVE BEEN abolishing things again. Lord Birkenhead’s Law of Property Bill — now, I suppose, an Act — puts an end, as ‘A Barrister’ in the newspaper informs me, to the whole of the Feudal System. A great link has been broken, a link that joined us, in a way, with the men of 1066, with all the life of our forefathers from that far-off time to yesterday.

Well, I think it is a pity. I believe that I am not known generally as a politician. My views as to the lodger franchise, the borough as distinct from the county franchise, the several Reform Bills from the ‘thirties of the last century onward that were always going to make us happy, as to Redistribution on a logical basis, as to many other things of the same sort, are generally understood to be vague. They are. Extremes meet — few people understand the depths of wisdom contained in apparently obvious proverbs — and Trotsky and Lenin and I have an equal contempt for votes and all that appertains to votes. *I* am thoroughly with the Parson. My suffragette friend was telling him that ‘the Vote’ was the breath of life to her, that it would make everything that was wrong right. ‘The Vote,’ it seemed, was a sort of Tree of Life, the leaves of which were appointed for the healing of the nations. The Parson listened kindly; and made a liberal offer.

‘Well,’ said he, ‘I’ve got *three* votes, and you’re welcome to the lot for half-a-crown.’

Those are my sentiments. I have no interest in votes or in the people who deal in them. But once upon a time I was an ardent politician. The great victory of Gladstone in 1880 warmed my heart. I was an earnest young Liberal. I remember reading in the *Daily News* a short leading article on the Unreformed Corporations. These, it appeared, were certain small bodies ruling small towns up and down England, which had somehow slipped through the sweeping nets of the ‘thirties, and now those also were to go. Lord Rosebery, another earnest young Liberal of somewhat greater eminence than myself, had taken the Bill through the Lords and one more relic of the bad old times was over. I was profoundly glad to hear it. And I must make a parenthesis. Why on earth should I be glad? To put the question quite distinctly: What the devil did it matter to me whether corporations were reformed or unreformed? ‘Keep your breath to cool your ain parritch,’ Lord Lauderdale might well have said to me: ‘Ye’ll find it het eneuch.’ It is indeed a mystery that I should have concerned myself with such stuff. But I have been investigating these matters somewhat keenly of late, and have come to certain conclusions. More than a year ago I wrote on the mystery of young Blueface, who rows himself into incipient heart-disease at Henley, and later in life finds his chief joy in spread-eagling himself on the face of dreadful Alpine heights, at the imminent risk of his life. I have found out why he does these things. The truth is that the actualities of life are so repulsive that we have been forced to invent all sorts of ways of escaping from them. The Blueface way is one way; the playing of a dozen games of chess all at once blindfolded, is another way; drinking methylated, spirit is yet another way; and I suppose politics is another of these grim sports. If you feel a genial glow at the thought that the Unreformed Corporations are no more; then you are less likely to worry over the fact that you have not had any dinner to-day, and are likely to have a smaller dinner to-morrow.

Well, I glowed as I read this blessed news in the London street. But, a year or two later, being in my own country down in the West, I read in the local paper that the last Portreeve of Usk, accompanied by his two Bailiffs, had unveiled a window in the parish church, commemorating the ending of this old song. That Unreformed Corporations Act had got to work; and something that had endured for a thousand years or more was ended. I knew then, suddenly, that I was no longer an earnest young Liberal. I knew that I hated the notion of destroying old things, just because they were old; and that, I believe, is not a Liberal frame of mind. But to abolish the Portreeve of Usk! Why, the Chief Magistrate of the City of London was the Portreeve of London before Mayors, much less Lord Mayors, were born or thought of. And I don’t believe that Usk is any the happier for having a Local Government Board instead of a Portreeve and two Bailiffs.

Let it be understood clearly; I am by no means in favour of retaining horrible abuses, just because they are old. If the Portreeve of Usk had been enabled, by a Charter of King John, to burn alive in Porthycarne Street any persons to whose opinions he objected, I should be all in favour of a Limiting Clause: earnest Young Liberals, Unbending Young Conservatives, and a few other people being alone excepted from its benefits. But I think it is a pity to smash links just for the sake of smashing them. Thus with the measure of that ardent and devoted Tory, Lord Birkenhead. It abolishes the heriot; the fine of the 'best beast' levied by the lord of the manor on the successor of a dead copyholder. I confess that if I were the new copyholder I should dislike having to give up my five-hundred guinea hunter to the lord as the fee of succession. But why abolish the ancient goodly custom of the heriot? There is no difficulty. The term 'the best beast' should be retained, with an explanatory clause declaring that the said beast shall not exceed in value a groat, or at the most vj pence. Now, according to the Laws of Howel Dda, and allowing for the exchange, this beast should be a kitten before it has caught its first mouse; and I would insist on the kitten. I would put the copyholder who refused his heriot of a kitten in the stocks for five minutes, and if I knew the correct mediæval English for a custom which is, doubtless, ancient, I should stipulate that this false varlet should stand drinks all round to the Court Baron of the Manor.

And then, again; this wretched enactment sweeps away 'Borough English,' the custom which in certain manors ordains that, not the eldest, but the youngest son is heir. Now, this is fairly tearing things up by the roots. Here is a custom which, I suspect, goes far beyond Norman, far beyond Saxon, far beyond that far, far time when the Celts invaded this island and found a little, dark people dwelling here, a people that lived in caves and in houses, hollowed out in the heart of domed hills. These small people, aborigines so far as we know, are considered on a plausible theory to have furnished the source of all the stories about the Little People — the wise name for the fairies. No doubt the custom of Borough English — under a name and in a tongue which would sound unearthly to modern Europe, save perhaps to Basques and Laps — was the custom of the dark little people of the hills; and so it is, naturally enough, that in the fairy tales the hero is often the youngest son. Has Lord Birkenhead ever heard of Hop-o'-my-Thumb? In framing his measure did he consider the leading case of Beauty and the Beast, which shows that the principle of Borough English applied even to female descent? It would seem not. And yet, how simple it would have been to retain this relic of pre-history, without annoying anybody. Suppose the case of John Smith, copyholder of Mudford, being and situate in the Manor of Muckindyke-le-Marsh. John Smith is making his will; he likes his son Perivale and wishes to cut off his youngest, Mulciber, with a shilling. Very good; let him do so. Mudford goes to Perivale, and Mulciber gets nothing — save the right to entitle himself for the rest of his days 'Heir of Mudford,' after the Scottish precedents of 'Master of Dun-blather' and 'Younger of Haddaneuk.' And thus the ancient custom of Borough English would be preserved.

And gavelkind goes too. Gavelkind provided that the estate should be shared out equally between all the surviving sons of the copyholder. This custom, I think, is not of the vast antiquity of Borough English; still it is old and bore witness to the highly interesting fact that in early times the share-and-share-alike principle had its strong supporters, anticipating the modern French laws of inheritance by many hundreds of years. Why abolish it, when it would have been easy to get round it? Why not have arranged that the estate of Blenkinsop should be devised entirely according to the copyholder's fancy, but that all sons should be known as Commoners of Blenkinsop, with the right of digging up one cabbage in the kitchen garden once a year at midnight on the Eve of the Derby?

Why didn't the Lord Chancellor arrange for the digging up of that cabbage? Instead of which he goes about rooting up the past.

THE VICE OF COLLECTING

THIS YEAR I spent my holiday with a party of collectors, as, in point of fact, I always do spend it. They are not people of mature years, their ages ranging from five to fifteen. They do not collect First Folios or Conrads or Masefields or *incunabula* — a pleasing word, which means in English very early printed books. They collect shells. Every day, this dozen of children, members of four or five families, comes down to the beach as if for enjoyment. They might bathe in the genial sea, well warmed by the Gulf Stream. They might play games on the mile-long stretch of firm sand. They might get up parties of hide-and-seek among the grassy dunes, up hills and down dales purple with wild thyme, golden with Ladies' Slipper, starred with burnet-roses. The older ones might play golf on the natural links, a wonderful sporting course as I am assured. They might even follow my example and do nothing at all, the best of all sports. Instead of which, they collect shells. As each party arrives, it scatters abroad. Some make for Giltar Head, some for Tenby town, some for the rocks, some for the smooth verge of the sea. In a few minutes the happy party has dissolved itself into melancholy individuals, who walk very slowly to and fro, their bodies bent double, their eyes glued to the sand. Land and sea and sky, craggy rocks and the golden sweep of the bay are all lost for them, blotted out; they see nothing but shells. They gather these shells every day for three weeks. When the night falls they sort them out. Finally, they mount them on sheets of cardboard. And then, the day before the end of the holidays — they throw them away. I believe that the landladies' garden paths consist of the accumulated collections of the last ten years. But commoner sorts gathered with less pains would make as good paths or better. You want about a bushel of pectens to make a foot of good, dry path.

I write, it will be observed, with some degree of venom. But I have always been the enemy of collectors or collections, whether on the large scale or on the small. I love the shell on the seashore, glittering from the water, gleaming and pearly in the sun. That very shell, dry and desiccated, gummed on to a cardboard square, seems to me dull, insignificant, uninteresting. And so with the hedgerows, with the deep, shaded banks where flowers of all kinds flourish and grow luxuriant and great and green, with the eyebright and the pink centaury and the enchanting Ladies' Tresses — an exquisite little orchid — on the dunes; with the singular growth of the water plants at the edge of the great marsh; with that patch of luminous blue at the edge of the deep wood where you would say that summer sky had fallen, if you did not know that the forget-me-not blossomed there every year; with the blue rounds of the chicory, the strangely mingled colours of the viper's bugloss, the dwale or deadly nightshade growing sinister, in stony places; with all these beauties and wonders I am enchanted, and on them in their natural places I cannot gaze long enough. But pick them, dry them, press them to death, bury their poor dead bodies in a folio book and call your crime a *Hortus Siccus*: then for me all the enchantment is over. These dismal things are not flowers, but the corpses of flowers. You may take your *Hortus Siccus*, your 'Dry Garden,' to the rubbish heap, for all I care. I don't like corpses. And so with other collections. Years ago a very young man was trying to impart to me the art of sucking eggs with a perseverance and an energy worthy of a better cause. He 'put me through it' smartly, he poured his precious balms of art, literature, culture on my head, he rebuked me in his righteous indignation. Well do I remember his stinging tones as he said to me one day: 'You talk sometimes as if you cared for beautiful things, and yet you never go near the South Kensington Museum!' I hung my head and had not a word to say. The fact was that I had paid a visit to the South Kensington Museum in the year 1880; and this visit had lasted me till 1910. I changed the subject hastily; and soon after my young friend gave me up as a hopeless case. I spent a few more happy years in keeping away from South Kensington Museum; and then one fine day I had to make a second visit, whether I would or no. I shall never forget the horror of that afternoon. Here was another 'Dry Garden'; a collection of beautiful things of all sorts torn from their natural places, their natural purposes, their natural and fit surroundings. The rare and costly plate that should have shone on the cupboard of some high lord was in a case, the chasuble that should have been on a priest's back was in a case, the Persian carpet that should have been on the floor was in a case. In short, everything was out of its place and in a case — except one object, the most melancholy ruin of all. This was, in itself, an exquisite piece of work. It had been an outer winding stairway. It was of carved oak, unpainted and untreated in any way. It was a beautiful piece of fifteenth-century workmanship, and it had been torn from its place, which was, I think, an old house in Rouen. Once, no doubt, these richly balustraded stairs had led up to a doorway as rich, to a goodly house of equal craft and beauty; now they took you to a blank wall and to empty space in the room at South Kensington Museum. I had never thought that there could be such a thing as the corpse of a staircase; but there it was before me; a staircase torn up by the roots, rent from the soil whence it had sprung, deprived of all its fit meaning and significance; truly a ghastly and repulsive spectacle.

I shall be asked, of course, whether I hold that the Rouen staircase should not have been preserved. Certainly I hold that it should be preserved, and preserved in a Museum, for the instruction of technical students, architects, wood carvers, and all such persons. But the general public should not be admitted. It is highly necessary that human bodies should be dissected, that human skeletons should be preserved; for the instruction of students of medicine, surgery, anatomy. But the general sightseer is not admitted to the Dissecting Room or to the Museum of Anatomy. We do not make a general and public show of a charnel house. Then there is another and very virulent form of this crime of collecting; that is the collecting of books. Take a notorious instance; the First Folio of Shakespeare. What on earth does anybody want with a copy of the First Folio? It is a thoroughly ugly book, vilely printed from a very poor fount on indifferent paper. It is quite difficult to read the text, which is choked with printer’s errors. Its size makes it thoroughly unhandy. If you possess a copy you must keep it guarded like a royal treasure, for fear of expert thieves. You hardly dare to turn a page for fear of its ‘condition’ deteriorating. Practically you have to treat the thing as a magpie treats a bit of glass or a ring; that is, bury it; and which, I wonder, is the more sensible, the collector or the magpie? The only person to whom a first folio can do any real good is that happy man, the convinced and enthusiastic Baconian. For him the printer’s errors and blunders are a goldmine. Nothing like the First Folio for those who work the various cyphers. No limit to the gorgeous secrets that can be extracted by this method; the hidden history of the Court of Queen Elizabeth, the true parentage of Bacon, the fact that he wrote the whole literature of the age, English and foreign; that he left ground plans and elevations from which Sir Christopher Wren rebuilt St. Paul’s Cathedral, Hampton Court and the City churches a little later, that he designed the watermarks (containing great mysteries) for the paper-makers of his time, that he was the founder of the Society of the Rosy Cross, that he knew all about the Sons of the Widow; all these marvels and many more are to be discovered in the First Folio by the true Baconian. I wish there were enough First Folios to go round these enlightened men; I would shut them and their copies up together.

And then there are the collectors of modern books. They are almost as bad. The other day I was speaking of the habit to an author whose books are just beginning to be collected. ‘Of course,’ he said, ‘I’m glad in a way, because in the long run it means money for me. But what rot it all is! You know those little books of mine, *Waite and Waite* and *Hedger and Mixer?* Well, people are giving a couple of quid for first editions, when they can get infinitely better editions for a bob a time. What do they do it for?’ I could not put my author wise — to use an idiom to which he is addicted — and I don’t believe anybody can. Why don’t people leave the shells on the shore, the flowers in the hedgerows, and the first editions in the booksellers’ shops? It is all a mystery. But then life is full of mysteries and, after all, it is mystery which gives life its delight, its joy and its savour.

SPLENDOUR

I AM GOING to do a very naughty thing. It is dreadful to be bad, but sometimes it is a relief to the feelings. And it does a man good to be a regular devil now and then; always provided that he does not let it get into a hobby. But, I confess, the particular form of naughtiness which I am contemplating is very bad indeed. It is called in the nursery ‘answering back.’ Bed without any supper is the usual penalty for this offence; and sometimes mummy comes and cries over the cot afterwards, and won’t go away till there is a firm understanding that Johnnie is going to be a better boy for the future. And Johnnie, being sleepy, readily undertakes to be a saint for the rest of his days. Well, I hope I shall not catch it quite as badly as that — I rather like supper with something devilled in it — but I confess that I mean to break out. It is not merely answering back, but answering back a reviewer, and a reviewer is more important even than Nana. Still, who cares? I don’t believe that Don’t Care was eaten by lions. Here goes.

The facts, are these. Some few weeks ago I published a little book. It was about most sorts of things, and amongst these things it contained a comparison between the general aspect of London as I remember it more than forty years ago, and the London of to-day. There was a particular contrast drawn between the Row of the ‘eighties and early ‘nineties and the Row of to-day. It is like this:

‘Now the old equipages were undeniably the last word of smartness; in themselves they were enough to tell the stranger that he had come to the very centre of the earth, of its riches and its splendours. There were the high-bred, high-spirited, high-stepping horses, in the first place, groomed to the last extreme of shiny, satiny perfection, tossing their heads proudly and champing their bits and doing the most wonderful things with their legs.’

And so forth and so forth; with a very unflattering comparison between these splendid arrays and the modern style— ‘now there are some “Snorting Billies” that choke and snarl and splutter as they dodge furtively and meanly in and out of the Park like mechanical rabbits, bolting for their burrows.' And I dwelt more particularly on the splendid liveries that were still to be seen in those old days, disassociating myself from the people who despise a servant's job, and laugh at him for being gorgeously dressed. 'The man who found "Blazes" ridiculous,' I observe, 'would probably find the King in his Coronation robes equally ridiculous,' objecting not so much to splendour on a footman's back, but to splendour in itself.

Now, as to all this, Mr. Maurice Hewlett, in a very amiable review of the book in question, takes a strong exception. He agrees with me, he says, in thinking that the old turn-outs were splendid, and that the modern motor-car is not splendid. Where he differs from me is in being quite sure that all splendour is a bad thing.

'I fear,' says Mr. Hewlett, 'that I share what he calls "that vile Liberal objection" to splendour as splendour.' He does find the King in his Coronation robes ridiculous. 'We are all so ridiculous essentially that none of us can afford to dress up.' Now, is Mr. Hewlett right? Waiving for a moment the point about 'Blazes' and His Majesty's Coronation robes, and dressing-up in general: is splendour as splendour a bad thing? Is meanness, the opposite, I take it, of splendour, the one thing that we ought to cultivate? It may be so; but if it be so, we have a tough job before us. We shall have to remake the earth; and the expense will be enormous. For if we are to be honest, and I take it that all good Liberals are honest, we cannot deny that there are many splendours in the material universe. There are the stars at night, for instance, they are splendid; you may call them showy if you like; but still, there they are. There are a great many of them; and some of them are excessively bright. Occasionally, they fall; and we perceive that they are, in fact, great ugly lumps of a metallic nature which science can analyse, if I may say so, in a brace of shakes. Then, why do they shine and put ideas into the heads of poets— 'patens of bright gold' and that sort of thing — and lovers? We know that they are really ferrous compounds and not patens of bright gold. Then what do they mean by it? And what are we going to do about it? And how are we to deal with the notorious outrage of harvest moons? I saw one, last September, coming up through the mists of the sea, a red and smouldering fire, a splendour of the night, an adorable beauty. It is all very well to object to splendour as splendour. But will the harvest moon take any notice of our objections? I doubt it. I know it is disloyal; but I doubt it.

And then there is another case; a very bad one. Early this year I bought a bulb for three and six. It was rather an ugly, shapeless-looking thing; not nearly so symmetrical as an onion. I placed it in a wooden tub full of leaf mould, and watered it at intervals and gave it certain doses of superphosphate of lime from week to week. What was the result? Two slender green stems came up out of the leaf mould and grew taller and taller and at last produced little green buds. These swelled and grew great and at last opened. And now there is a great crown of splendour: flowers of creamy loveliness, striped with gold, starred with crimson, radiant with orange-coloured stamens, exhaling rich odours. Truly the *Lilium Auratum* is splendour and glorious splendour, arrayed more nobly than Solomon or any other king. It may be urged, of course, that this lily comes from Japan, an autocratically-governed country, and that, therefore, the *Lilium Auratum* knows no better; but I hardly think that this will do. Why, even in our own country, where every one who wants the vote can have it, forget-me-nots are still very blue, and, in spite of the abolition of Christmas by the sturdy Puritans, holly berries have remained of a bright shade of red. So I am rather in a difficulty. Like many of the people in Miss Wilkins' beautiful New England tales: 'I wanter know.' Nature, from the stars in the sky to the forget-me-nots on the ground, seems given to splendour. Why should we, who are, I suppose, a part of nature, stand out, as it were, and resolve to be as mean and ugly as we possibly can? Is this really Liberalism? I cannot think it. I hope, for the sake of Liberalism, that it isn't. For if it were, Liberalism would be like the law according to Mr. Bumble, 'a ass.' For, if Mr. Hewlett will think it over, he will see that he has committed himself to the 'Program' of abolishing all the arts. Turner is splendid, Bach is splendid; they must go. Mr. Hewlett, he says, objects to splendour as splendour. Then Lincoln Cathedral, Durham Cathedral, St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey; all these must come down, and be beaten into shapeless ruins and rubble. All beautiful furniture must be smashed, all curious pottery and porcelain of the ages must be broken to mend the roads; nothing splendid, nothing beautiful must be preserved. Mr. Hewlett objects to splendour as splendour.

And then, more particularly, as to men, as to human beings. 'We are all so ridiculous essentially that none of us can afford to dress up.' Is that so? If so, we are in a very bad way indeed. Are we really to insist that every woman shall go about in a long robe of cinder grey, or in dark green corduroy coat and breeches? Is lace to be a penal offence? Are pretty shoes to spell a month's hard? Are fanciful and charming hats to be a matter for the magistrate? Nay, is a man with a well-cut suit and tie and socks and hat to correspond to be liable to be frog-marched on sight to the nearest police station? But all this is 'dressing up.' Anything, as that wisest of men, Dr. Johnson said, beyond a bull's-hide suit, is dressing up. And what about changing from grey to oddly cut black after seven o'clock every evening: what is this but dressing up? Is Mr. Hewlett too ridiculous essentially to put on evening-dress when he goes out to dinner? And again; since we are all so essentially ridiculous, as he says, what can be more ridiculous than serving that meal of dinner on snowy white napery of choice and costly make, with the ritual of curiously cut glasses, of fine silver, of exquisite flowers, in a room richly furnished, adorned with admirable paintings? The ridiculous creature man is to shovel food into his ridiculous belly that he may prolong his ridiculous existence: cannot he do this without the ridiculous splendour of cut glass, fair linen, Queen Anne silver, costly flowers, while he wears in honour of the evening the sort of coat that his grandfather wore in the morning, and the kind of tie that clergymen wore fifty years ago?

The fact is, of course, that when Mr. Hewlett declares that he dislikes splendour as splendour he is really declaring his dislike of the universe in general and of human nature in particular. The world from the flowers to the stars is a splendid spectacle, and the love of splendour is deeply set in the heart of man. The wretchedest savage with a few poor pots and gourds for all his belongings will yet scratch or cut some kind of decorative pattern on them. Poor work, rude work enough, but it is the best that he can do; the only splendour that he is capable of fashioning. And let us remember this: that it is the love of splendour, the splendid robe, the splendid word, the splendid tune, the splendid picture, which constitutes the vital distinction between man and brute. Many beasts have reason, the faculty of using means for a certain end. But only man has Art, which is the love of splendour and the desire to create it.

HOW TO SPEND CHRISTMAS

IT SEEMS PARADOXICAL, but I am strongly inclined to think that the more comfortable we become, the less we know of comfort. As I may have remarked before in this work, there is no reason to suppose that the Anglo-Indians of the Plains really appreciate the glorious sunshine of the dry season. It would take a new-comer from the Hebrides to enjoy the golden blaze.

You will remember that I once saw a man enjoy a noble fire as it ought to be enjoyed. It was a bitter day of fog and frost in London, and the fire was indeed a gorgeous one, with radiant depths of glowing coal at the heart of it, and great boulders from which jets of burning gas came shooting with a hissing, rushing noise, and flames that roared up the chimney. The man laughed as he came into the room and saw this mighty blaze.

‘Ah!’ he said as he drew his chair up to the heat, ‘you don’t really appreciate a good fire till you’ve been where I’ve been.’

Then Amundsen began to talk to me about the Polar places where he had been, of the remorseless cold, of wading up to the waist through boundless plains of freezing slush. And he looked at the fire as though he loved it. Now, he was no doubt right in holding that if a man would really taste all the full savours of a blazing hearth, he must go to the North Pole; to the utter, bitter darkness of the world. But the recipe is a severe one, and the journey long, and one cannot afford to be all that time away from business. Still, in the old days, people contrived to relish their firesides without taking the extreme measure of Polar Exploration. There is an old coaching print of which I am very fond. It shows the coach overturned in a wild, snowy landscape. The passengers are picking their way heavily, clumsily through the drift, one going on before with a lantern. ‘What miserable discomfort!’ you will say. Not a bit of it. I know, and they know, that after half an hour or so of our English substitute for the North Pole, they will come to the noblest roadside inn. The glow of it will gush out into the wild night through red-curtained windows; as the door opens the genial heat will conquer in an instant all winter weather; and within, a fire that would melt the frozen Pole itself, and tempting armchairs, and firelight and candlelight flickering and glittering on right Spanish mahogany. The coach passengers will laugh just as Amundsen laughed as they come into the room, and the guard — the man with the lamp — will say: ‘Make yourselves comfortable, gentlemen; we shan’t be able to get on for another couple of hours, or maybe three,’ and there will most certainly be punch, and probably some jolly stories. My belief is that when the coach was announced, and the passengers were packed in the straw and muffled up to the eyes in their shawls, they all declared that they had seldom passed a pleasanter evening, and fell asleep for the rest of the journey five minutes afterwards.

In these days one cannot do that kind of thing. Suppose the express is hung up for a while in a snowdrift. The steam heat is on, certainly; but there is nothing jolly about steam heat. As to punch: it is past ten o’clock and punch after ten is felony. Besides, most of the passengers have been instructed by ‘A Physician’ in their morning paper that there is nothing more chilling in its effects on the human frame than hot spirits. So there you are. The coach incident was, undeniably, something of a lark. There is nothing of a lark in sitting still in an express for an hour or two, waiting for the snow ploughs. And putting these incidents of travel on one side, I believe we are losing our sense of the joy of a blazing fire. We are getting to be rationalists on this subject; and it is always a bad thing to be a rationalist on any subject. I remember one night in my own house some guests of mine began to fall out about the heat of the room. Some said it was too hot, others that it was not hot enough. Whereupon an American gentleman in company, raised in the tradition of central heating, said sourly:

‘What’s the good of talking about the temperature of this room? There are probably ten distinct temperatures in this room.’

Of course there were; and that’s just the fun of it. You can only relish the joy of warmth properly when cold is, as it were, at your elbow.

The central-heating and steam-pipe people argue, no doubt, that fires are merely means to give heat, and that since the modern systems distribute heat more evenly and more effectually, they are quite evidently superior to open fires. Now, this sounds reasonable; but as a matter of fact it is nonsense. Nay, but it is so. Offer a *fin gourmet* the rarest of Bordeaux, the noblest Burgundy that you like to imagine, in a teacup, and watch his face. And be quick about it; for he will certainly kill you, and the verdict will be 'Justifiable Homicide.' Rationally, the wine is as good in old Betty's teacup as in the thinnest and most curious glass: but — we know better. It isn't. Science would assure us that Château Un Tel or Clos Chose cannot possibly be affected in any way by being poured into porcelain or earthenware instead of glass; and as usual where science is concerned we are forced to answer: 'You are perfectly right: but you lie for all that.' How does this matter of the wine and the teacup — one *could* drink Château vintages out of a teapot, for the matter of that — relate to that other matter of pipe-heating *versus* a roaring fire? Why, each example illustrates the singular but undeniable principle that, even in matters of the senses, there is much more involved than the senses; rather, perhaps, more than the particular sense which is to be gratified. The old hearth, if one comes to think of it, is a species of sacrament, symbolizing a whole world of dear and friendly and sacred and happy things. That leaping flame on the wild winter's night is much more than a means of securing that the temperature of the room shall not fall below 60° Fahrenheit. They understood this so well in old Rome that there were gods of the hearth, the Lares and Penates, and it was in their honour that the flame on the hearth blazed and glowed. And we have something of that ancient feeling still with us; we talk of fighting for our hearths and homes. Has anybody ever talked of fighting for our cellular 'Thermidor' improved reverberating radiators? But the 'Thermidor,' no doubt, distributes heat in a much more even manner than any open fire of coal or logs. And yet again, it doesn't. If we were sheep and goats 'that nourish a blind life within the brain' and felt the cold, then the radiator would be our proper apparatus of heat; but being men, we require, odd as it may seem, to have our souls warmed as well as our bodies; and so we choose, if we are wise, the flame of the sacred hearth, and if we are lucky and have a good store of well-seasoned oak logs, it is of them that we build the fire, and add to our joys the exquisite aroma, the incense of burning wood.

And so, of course, with the parallel case of good wine and the way to drink it. We drink wine for its rare savours and for the genial warmth of body and mind that it produces. But we do not drink it as we drink quinine. I have never heard of a quinine or castor oil gourmet who insisted on quaffing these beverages from a particular kind of glass — I suppose it would be a graduated medicine glass with the beautiful figures for drachms and scruples duly inscribed on its surface. But wine, somehow, we desire to receive after a different fashion. It must be brought to us, either ancient in its encrusted bottle with the dust and cobwebs of its deep, dark cellar thick upon it, or else decanted, in a vessel of cut glass; and the actual glass from which we drink it must be as fine as may be, a pleasure to the eye, a pleasure to the lip on which it rests. Here, again, we are unscientific. The flavour of our Bordeaux or Burgundy or old Port would be just as good if the wine were brought to table in a beer-jug and poured out in a coarse mug with blue band and a brown, blobby tree for its decoration; and, once more, how blest are they who ne'er consent by the ill advice of science to walk! It is a very odd thing — the world is simply chock full of very odd things — but the effect of consenting to walk by the advice of science would be to reduce humanity pretty well to the rank of beasts and barbarians. A pig is not particular as to the design of its trough, and a savage who drinks doesn't care in the least about the shape of the bottle which contains the firewater. This, as I say, is really odd, considering that science is supposed to be the guiding star of the very latest civilization. Science is triumphantly new, modern, progressive; and yet, as we have seen, its practical tendency would appear to be reactionary — though, after all, pigs are very nice animals, and there is a good deal to be said for the Red Man. And thus we come back to the paradox with which we started: the more comfortable we become, the less we know of comfort. We follow scientific principles, close up the hearth and take to the radiator, the error being that man is considered simply as a physiological surface, capable of certain impressions of cold and heat. He is that, but he is quite a number of other things, which are often more important to the sum of his well-being. Why, I dare say that science would be inclined to agree with Mr. Uriah Heep. He, being in gaol, thought that it would be better for everybody if they could be 'took up and brought here.' And as far as I can make out from reading that infernal 'Physician' in the daily paper, those are exactly the conclusions of the latest science. We all eat too much. In gaol our bill-of-fare would be expressed in ounces, and not many of them. Some of us drink 'alcohol' — to think that there are scoundrels so shameless as to call a fine Corton 'alcohol'! In gaol there is no 'alcohol.' Some of us are given to inhaling the dubious or more than dubious alkaloids generally known as tobacco. In gaol no smoking is allowed. Outside, we are often lazy. Inside, scientific authority would see that each got the exact amount of work and exercise proper to his case and constitution. Outside, all sorts of temptations, every kind of vice; nothing of the kind in a prison cell. Outside, houses are often damp and in defective repair — I have had a loose slate on my roof for weeks — inside, everything of this kind is in perfect condition.

In short, we should all be much better off if we were to spend this Christmas in gaol. Clearly: on scientific principles. It is undeniable; and it is also, as usual with scientific principles, the Devil's own lie.

ADELPHI: FAREWELL!

‘HE AND I walked away together; we stopped a little while by the rails of the Adelphi, looking on the Thames, and I said to him with some emotion that I was now thinking of two friends we had lost, who had once lived in the buildings behind us, Beauclerk and Garrick. “Ay, sir (said he tenderly), and two such friends as cannot be supplied.”’

‘He and I were Johnson and Boswell. And yet I understand that they are going to pull down the Adelphi.

Nay, ‘he and I’ were just coming away from poor Davy’s house, Number 5, where his widow had entertained them elegantly. Mrs. Garrick had talked of her husband with complacency, and when she cast her eyes on his portrait, which hung over the chimney-piece, said that ‘death was now the most agreeable object to her.’

Now, this should be sufficient. The place where this amazing remark was uttered to a festive assembled party, presumably with the object of cheering everybody up, and promoting a flow of genial spirits, such a place as this should be a sacred relic, a house to be preserved for ever.

And yet they are going to pull down the Adelphi. Nay, more. After this gay beginning, there was a large company in the drawing-room. Hannah More and Sir Joshua and Dr. Burney were present at dinner; later came the Bishop of Killaloe — did he often visit his Cathedral Church? — Dr. Percy of the Reliques, and several others. Johnson, talking of ‘a very respectable authour’ — modern English, ‘a distinguished man of letters’ — told the company a curious circumstance of his life, which was that he had married a printer’s devil.

‘And,’ added the Doctor, ‘she did not disgrace him; the woman had a bottom of good sense.’ Now, the Doctor was here talking the English of his youth. If he had said this in 1730 nobody would have laughed. To this day we don’t see anything funny when we speak of a blind street or alley as a *cul-de-sac*\ I am sure no self-respecting French cook of a very few years ago would have seen the slightest impropriety in murmuring in the ears of Madame la Duchesse, as he presented his new-found and exquisite dish to Her Grace: ‘Les culs d’Artichauts à la Marjolaine.’ But times change and phrases, and when the great Doctor brought out this sentence at Mrs. Garrick’s reception, on Friday, April 20th, 1781: ‘most of us could not forbear tittering and laughing.’ So Boswell records, though, remembering the honour of the Church, he declares that the Bishop of Killaloe kept his face with perfect steadiness. And Hannah More, who might be considered the Church’s Maiden-Aunt-in-chief, slyly hid her face behind a lady’s back. This was a tremendous occasion. Johnson would not bear that a phrase of his, meant to be perfectly straightforward common-sense English, should be regarded as funny. And so he glared sternly round and said: ‘Where’s the merriment?’ And then he ‘looked aweful,’ and slowly pronounced: ‘I say the woman was *fundamentally* sensible.’ I think that it shows the power of this great man that the company, which had tittered, did not now howl with mirth. But they did not. They ‘sat composed as at a funeral.’

And all this in the Adelphi. And yet they are going to pull down the Adelphi.

And, coming to a later, though still a most noble age, and to imagination in place of fact, do you remember where it was that Mr. Wardle rubbed his hands and said:

‘Let us have some of your best wine to-day, waiter.’

And the waiter replied:

‘You shall have some of the very best, sir.’

Now, I declare that that wine, the very best wine of an old-fashioned London hotel in 1830, has afforded me more choice pleasures than any wine I have ever drunk in fact. I revel in it. I do not seek to know exactly what wine it was. But I have every confidence in it. ‘Some of the very best!’ It was more than wine; it was dreams and chimes and music. The oldest and the rarest of it had been binned very deep down in dark cellars near the flow of the river, almost from the time of the Brothers Adam. I incline to surmise, though I will not be obstinate, that the dessert wine was Malmsey Madeira, older perhaps than the place where it was drunk; a vintage, let us say, of 1740.

And this wine was administered at Osborne's Hotel in the Adelphi. Is this a place to pull down?

But I am afraid it will be pulled down, and that the game of our dear old London is definitely up. In the last twenty years the change has been great; in the next twenty years it will probably be much greater. The world changes and the Strand must change with it. I suppose so; but I am sorry. Of course it all began just a hundred years ago. Many people have been accustomed to regard our late King George IV as a typical Tory. Some people said he was a pig-headed despot. Leigh Hunt, a Radical, was sent to gaol for abusing him. But I am afraid he was not of the true Tory faith. In his youth, let it be remembered, he had associated with the Whigs — I fear that they left their mark on him. Anyhow, it was in his reign that they began to knock about the Strand; the West Strand, by Trafalgar Square. David Copperfield remembered the old West Strand.

'I remember two pudding-shops, between which I was divided, according to my finances. One was in a court close to St. Martin's Church — at the back of the church — which is now removed altogether. The pudding at that shop was made of currants, and was rather a special pudding, but was dear, twopennyworth not being larger than a pennyworth of more ordinary pudding. A good shop for the latter was in the Strand — somewhere in that part which has been rebuilt since. It was a stout, pale pudding, heavy and flabby, and with great flat raisins in it, stuck in whole at wide distances apart.'

And I remember that stout, pale pudding too. In my day, it was to be seen sweltering in pans in the window of a shop on the north side of the Strand, over against St. Mary's.

Thus David's recollections of his sparse meals. I do not suppose that he — or Dickens — was aware that the court which sold the superior pudding was a relic of a cookshop rookery of the early seventeenth century. The quarter was sometimes called Porridge Island, sometimes the Bermudas, sometimes the Caribbee Islands. In Ben Jonson's day the place was noted for 'bottle ale' and tobacco. In 1753 a periodical essayist mentions the 'fine gentleman whose dinner is served up under cover of a pewter plate, from the Cook's shop in Porridge Island.' Men had eaten and drunk roughly in this maze of courts and alleys for more than two hundred years; poor little David

Copperfield comes last and gets his slice of pudding there; and then George IV sweeps it all away. I wish he hadn’t. Then there was peace for a long time. Now and then a fine old house was pulled down, and an ugly modern house took its place, but the aspect of things in the Strand and about it remained pretty much as they were in 1830. When I first saw the Strand in 1880 it was still intact, and so it remained till late in the ‘nineties. And then the crash came. Beautiful old Clement’s Inn was, I think, the first to fall.

‘I was once of Clement’s Inn,’ says Shallow, ‘where I think they will talk of mad Shallow yet.’

As you went up by the narrow way from the Strand, you passed the fine hall of the Society, built in 1715, and within there were green gardens and closes, and a delicious eighteenth-century house standing in the middle of a lawn; what a choice retreat in the very heart of London; peace and greenness within a minute of the roaring Strand! Down came St. Clement’s Inn; and up went the big red flats. Soon after came the great scheme. Holywell Street and Wych Street with their sixteenth-century gables were swept away; New Inn disappeared; queer mazes of mouldering streets about Clare Market banished for ever; the old Globe, the old Olympic became as Babylon, things fallen and abolished. Australia House, mighty business buildings, as magnificent as anything in Berlin, stand in their stead.

And now the Adelphi also is to become a memory!

THE ART OF UNBELIEF

I HAVE JUST been reading a very odd article in a Sunday paper. It is a series of extracts from a book called *Lord Kitchener's Lives*. It tells you exactly how it all happened. It was dictated by Lord Kitchener's ghost to an otherwise unknown person called 'Ala Mana.' The story begins with the great soldier's embarkation on the *Hampshire*. It relates the odd behaviour of a cabin-boy:

'I was attracted to a cabin-boy who darted out of a shadow, and as he did so, glanced at me sharply, an expression of peculiar guilt in his eyes.'

The tale goes on to describe the apparition of Lord Kitchener's mother and her warning; the alarm of the submarine; Lord Kitchener's exit from his cabin and return to it, when he finds that his papers have been disturbed; his hearing the click of the lock and finding that he is locked into the cabin; the shock of the fatal torpedo; and, when Lord Kitchener had pounded through the panels of the cabin door, the discovery of the cabin-boy, with a bullet in his brain and a revolver in his hand. Then comes death by drowning, the assumption of an 'astral body' and remarkable encounters in the world of spirits.

Now, let it be noted that the Sunday paper describes the work as 'mediumistic balderdash.' But it prints four columns of extracts. Why? This is a side issue of the main argument — we shall come to that before long — but the point is curious. The paper prints all these extracts because it realizes that there is a Kitchener Myth, and that many of its readers will be highly interested in anything which bears on it. Strange though it may seem, even in these later days when folk-lore and folk-songs are almost forgotten by the folk whose fathers made them; when the real folk memory is either gone or on the point of going; when all the old tales which were told of winter nights about the fire have become 'subjects' to be dissected and examined and theorized over by learned men; when students in far Western American Universities now gain degrees by writing learned theses on stories that once gladdened or terrified smock-frocked alehouse company by lonely English lanes; when the old myth-making faculty was, one would have said, a thing utterly ended; still, in these days the folk have made a myth about Kitchener. It was not so strange that the Ireland of a generation ago refused to believe that Parnell was dead. There were men in the Ireland of the ‘nineties of the last century — perhaps there are still — who were living in the world of a thousand years ago; and so the Men of the Hills, as Parnell himself called them, believed that the story of their leader’s death in a Brighton lodging-house was all a lie, a lie concocted by the Saxon and Tim Healy, most likely. Parnell was gone into some strange region to rest and be restored and healed of his grievous wounds — I don’t think the Men of the Hills had heard of Avalon, and probably they had the United States of America in their minds — but he would come again and rule once more, and as the old man in the Irish workhouse told Lady Gregory: ‘there would be no police at all, and every poet should have twenty pounds a year.’

I was saying that there are Irishmen to-day who are living in the world of a thousand years ago. I have just quoted an instance. The old man in the workhouse had no notion, I am sure, that he was repeating a Welsh prophecy of the twelfth century with slight variations of phrase. The Welsh writer was speaking of the golden age that was to be when Cadwaladyr Vendigeid should return: ‘then,’ he said, ‘Saxons shall be eradicated and Bards shall flourish.’

It was not wonderful then, that the men of Kerry and Connemara made a myth of the return of Parnell; and for all I know there may be old men and women of the hills who still look for it, in spite of Sinn Fein and the Free State. But we of England, we of London with our morning papers and our evening papers and our Sunday papers and our wireless and our broadcasting and all the rest of it — progress, I think, it is called — it is marvellous that we too still possess the old faculty. We must know in our hearts, you would think, that the *Hampshire* was blown out of the water and that Kitchener was drowned; but we will not have it so. I remember that in my very own house, one night about two years ago, I was saying innocently: ‘They tell me that there are really people who believe that Kitchener is still alive: is it possible that there are such people?’ Whereupon a young gentleman in company lifted up his hand and with an expression of fervid belief said boldly: ‘Here’s one of them.’ It struck me as wonderful; and all the more when I found that the Survival of Kitchener was only one article in a queer sort of *Credo*, as to the details of which I have become somewhat vague. I think that you were bound to believe that the failure — if it were a failure — of the British Fleet at Jutland was planned by the British Admiralty, and with that went a confession of the iniquity of 'Salome,' and faith in a mysterious volume, possessed by Germany, in which all our names were written. It was the oddest confusion of a creed that ever was, I verily believe. For a few days it turned the calmness and the decency of a British Court of Justice into a scandalous disorder and produced a most ridiculous verdict; and then all the nonsense was forgotten, or so I thought. But, evidently, it was not so. The popular Sunday paper still finds it profitable to quote stuff which it confesses to be 'balderdash,' because the said stuff is related to the Kitchener mythology. Note that mysterious cabin-boy, who behaves in the manner of what the stage calls the heavy man: he is in the famous vein of the myth-makers.

But this by the way. I read on; I read how after a severe struggle, after the ghost of Lord Kitchener had the mortification of seeing the fishes tear his dead body as it sank through the waves; I read how the ghost went up and was received by 'guides' who led it to its high appointed place. The ghost was immediately placed under a professor, who offers a choice of studies and the choicest company.

'He said: "My brother is here too. He was once a man of distinguished rank." He paused. "To-night we go to the banquet. Queen Mary of Scots, King Edward the Seventh and Queen Victoria will be present, also several other notables of the physical world. They are all doing their work here."

'I asked: "What are Queen Mary and Queen Victoria doing?"

'He smiled. "Queen Mary is teaching young souls who are very tender and very spiritual. Each one has a message." He paused. "Queen Victoria is doing some literary, medical, and also scientific work. She is a brilliant student. She will teach the higher souls in a class in medical science. Also, through her interest in the earth, she will be the means of inspiring many great souls there."

'We had by this time come to a very tall building. As we entered, the professor said, "We will go up now in the lightning elevator,"' There is plenty more of the like sort: Queen Elizabeth, Tolstoi, Louis XVI are all encountered. But my point is this: by what faculty are we enabled to declare the whole farrago to be, as the paper rightly names it, balderdash; rubbish of the most hideous kind? For — let us be quite clear as to this point — we know nothing whatever as to the ghostly world. There may be people who think that they are quite certain that there is no such world, who think they are quite certain that when a man dies physically he dies utterly and for ever. I say 'people who *think* that they are certain' as to this and that advisedly; because it is certain that they are not certain: they know nothing whatever about it, and no human being can know anything about it. But, excluding these folks, and taking the rest of us, who are willing to admit that the human personality may persist after death in some manner which we cannot distinctly conceive, how, I ask, are we enabled to say decisively and finally that all this stuff that I have quoted about Kitchener and Queen Victoria and her literary and scientific studies and the rest of it is a lie?

For, as I say, we know nothing about the other world. For all we know it may be a world of balderdash; or, to go deeper still, this account of the studies and occupations of Queen Victoria and Mary Queen of Scots may not be balderdash at all. Let us remember: Dr. Johnson, a very great man and a very acute man, was quite sure that Milton's 'Lycidas' was balderdash or something perilously near it. And Voltaire, a very great man and a very acute man, of quite a different sort from Dr. Johnson, would have put Dante into a lunatic asylum. Now, of course, we are quite sure that both these great men were monstrously wrong: but how about the verdict of two hundred years hence? Then there was poor John Keats and his little book of verses, published about a hundred years ago. The reviewers in *Blackwood's Magazine* and the *Quarterly Review*, men of literary education and of accredited taste in literature, were quite certain that Keats' verse was balderdash. 'Go back to your gallipots, Master John': that, I think, was the polite advice of the Blackwood's authority. Yet, we have since come to the conclusion that Master John wrote some of the most exquisite poetry that has ever been written in English; I think we may be bold enough to say in any earthly tongue. So, dare we be confident as to what constitutes balderdash? Perhaps Queen Victoria is really making progress in her literary, scientific and medical studies. Of course it may be said that the whole tale is very unlikely. It is. But such unlikely things do happen sometimes. Suppose a prophet coming to those obscure solicitor people, the

Buonapartes of Corsica, and telling them what the young Napoleon was to do in history. They would have said that the prophet’s story was a very unlikely one. And if you had told Robespierre, as he was resigning his judicial post, because it was against his conscience to sentence a criminal to death; if you had told him of the seas of innocent blood he was to spill; how indignant that mild young legal gentleman with his mild young verses would have been! And on the face of it, is there anything much more unlikely than the transmutation of a bloated caterpillar into the airy, exquisite butterfly?

Well, then, perhaps Mary Queen of Scots did exclaim to Lord Kitchener as in the printed story:

‘Oh, you should see King Edward’s work! He paints marvellously. Queen Victoria helps him in his training, and she is very clever in painting the eyes.’

And yet, we, we — I will put it brutally — who have any sense in our heads, know that all this and all other tales like to it are a farrago of ghastly imbecility, lying, fraud, delusion; these elements being mixed in varying proportions in various cases. We are perfectly certain that this is so: that nobody told the ghost of Kitchener that the ghost of King Edward VII is being helped to put in the eyes by the ghost of Queen Victoria. We are sure of all this: but how? Frankly, I do not know. Logically, as I think I have shown, we have no right to come to any conclusions whatever on the matter; we know nothing at all about it or of the final constitution of the universe.

Yet, we are sure, and when we cease to be sure, why, Heaven help us! And let it be remembered that there is this corollary: if we are justified in disbelieving certain tales, though we have no logical grounds for our disbelief, so also we are justified in believing certain other tales, though we have no logical grounds for our belief.

NOTE

ALL THESE ESSAYS and chronicles, with the exception of the last, ‘The Art of Unbelief,’ appeared in *The Lyons Mail*. The first article, ‘Dog and Duck,’ has been revised and considerably enlarged since its original appearance in print.

‘The Art of Unbelief was returned to me by the Editor of *The Lyons Mail*, with a few trenchant criticisms:

‘I cannot deal with the enclosed … I am afraid my readers would not understand it … a mass of dissertation, some of which I would not ask our linotype operators to translate.’

Such are the amenities of that highway which Sir Philip Gibbs has so delightfully called ‘The Street of Adventure.’

There are adventures and adventures, and some adventures are … muddy.

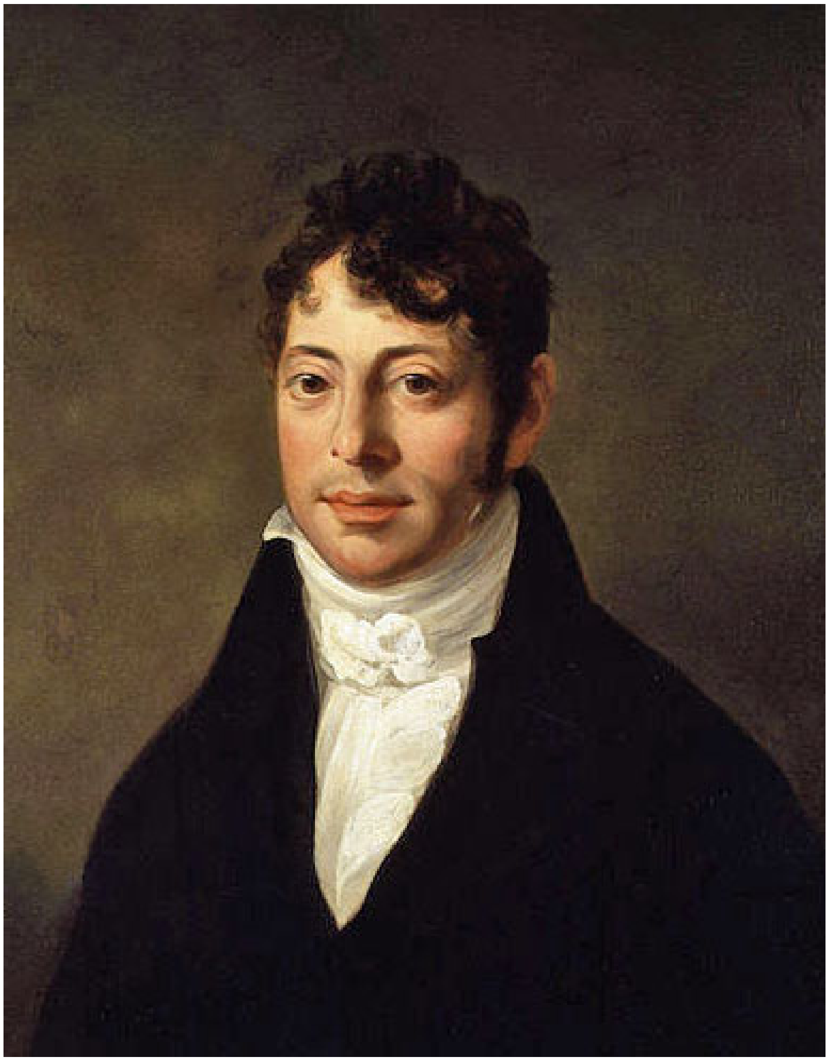
A. M.

THE END

Dreads and Drolls

This non-fiction work is a series of true stories, many of which deal with the supernatural, the fantastic and the sensational. It was first published in 1926. As Machen explains in his introductory note, he has exercised his literary imagination and adopted a poetic license in order to render these ‘bare facts’ interesting and romantic for the reader. Consequently, this collection is as readable and intriguing (and, at times, as unsettling) as Machen’s avowedly fictional tales.

The stories take the form of ‘studies’ of particular events, persons and places, each of which may be categorised as a ‘dread’ or a ‘droll’ according to its capacity to evoke either terror or amusement.



Joseph Grimaldi, a comic actor of the Regency period, who features in 'The Adventure of the Long-Lost Brother'

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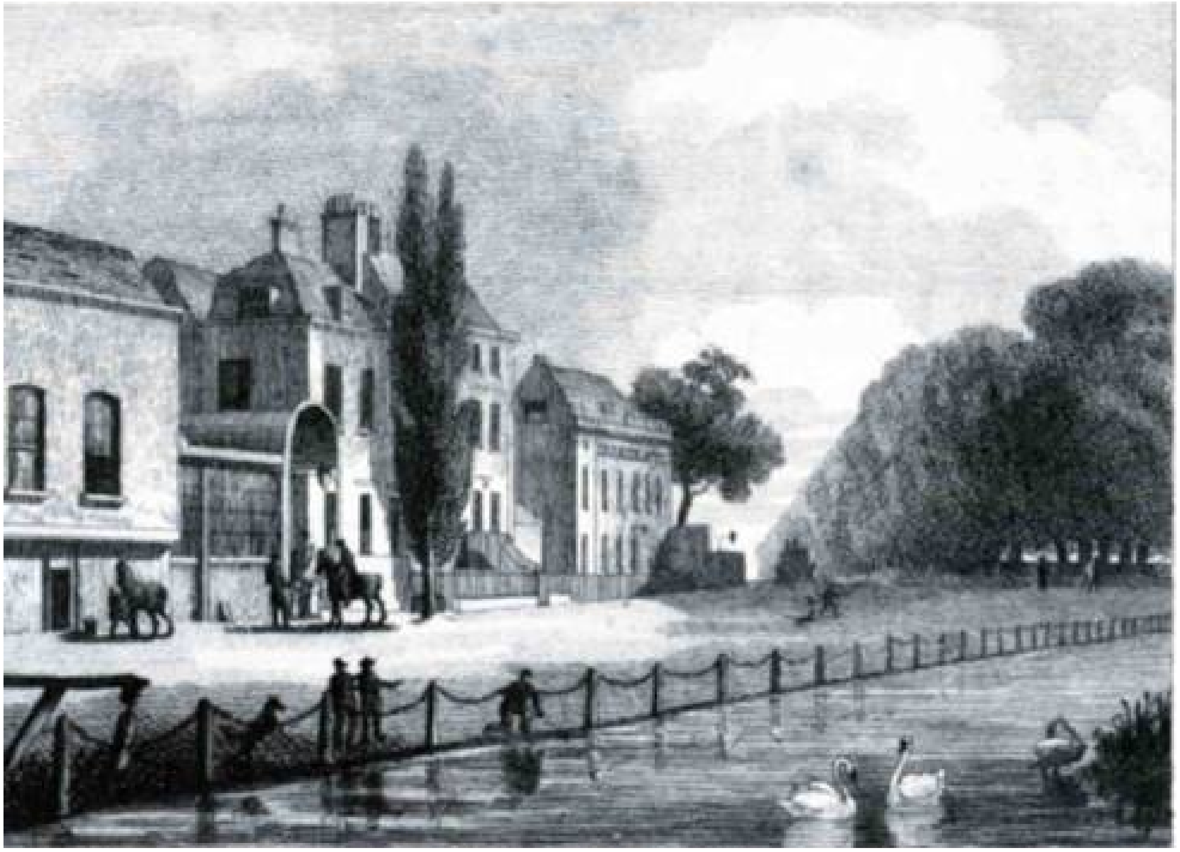

Highbury, Islington, c. 1815, now a part of North London – the setting for 'The Highbury Mystery'

Note

ALL THESE "DREADS" and "Drolls" appeared in "The Graphic". They were gathered from all sorts of sources. Most of them are strictly veridical, but it may be confessed that here and there imagination plays a small part.

My favourite in the collection is, decidedly, the story of Grimaldi the Clown and his long-lost brother. It is an enigma of a tale. On the one hand, there is nothing improbable in the bare plot. Many lads, I have no doubt, went to sea in the adventurous times of the Napoleonic Wars, and were unheard of by their families for long years, often enough they were never heard of again. They were killed in one fight or another, they perished in African swamps, they became Archimandrites in Russia, or confidential advisers to the Dey of Algiers or to Prester John. And again there is nothing improbable in the adventurer's return with a heavy bag of gold, nothing improbable in the final disappearance of a young man who flourishes this bag of gold in the purlieus of Drury Lane as the chimes are ringing midnight.

That is the bare plot of the tale, and as I say, it is all probable enough; and yet I defy anybody to read Grimaldi's story without lifting an incredulous eyebrow. And I have come to the conclusion that this impression is due to Grimaldi's unconscious art, I have no doubt that the Clown spoke the truth; but he had within him that love of mystery and wonder which (as I have said till people are sick of hearing me say it) is the sure foundation, the only foundation of Art. Again and again in his odd book this note of mysteriousness occurs. Take, for example, the incident, of the man with the silver staff. Grimaldi always declared that he never knew who this personage was. He didn't want to know. If he had made enquiries, I suppose he would have found that the mysterious stranger was Chief Bow Street Runner, or, as we should say, something big at Scotland Yard. And so, I daresay that the affair of Mr. Mackintosh and his twelve friends — a tale absolutely Arabian, as Grimaldi tells it — would have seemed tiresome enough to a man without his admirable capacity for mystery and capacity of creating it.

And thus in the business of the long-lost brother. It all happened, and there is nothing very remarkable in it — save for the wonderful though unconscious art which has made a plain tale of plain facts read like a subtle study in mysterious suggestion, a ghost story of the rarest kind.

This is a great gift: to be able so to tell the bare truth that it seems a magnificent lie. To many of us, it is rather given to invent elaborate fictions which are plainer (and duller) than the plainest facts.

A. M.

The Man With The Silver Staff

JOE GRIMALDI, THE famous clown, whose life was edited by Dickens, had many strange adventures, and among them is the affair of the Man with the Silver Staff. This happened in the year 1798. Grimaldi had become engaged to his manager's daughter, and had settled in Penton Street, off Pentonville. He was employed at famous Sadler's Wells Theatre, and he was accustomed to pass from his house to the theatre by going across some pleasant pastures called Sadler's Wells Fields. These fields have long been covered by squares, the names of which are unfamiliar to most Londoners: Claremont, Myddleton, Lloyd, and Wilmington; and I will only say that he who is desirous of experiencing the sense of penetrating into outland and unknown territory cannot do better than explore this region, before the leases fall in and the great red flats go up.

One day, then, Grimaldi, on his peaceful way to rehearsal at the Wells, found the Fields occupied by a mob of about a thousand people, all of them scoundrels, engaged in a popular sport of the day. They were hunting an overdriven ox, and they were so densely packed and so extremely ruffianly that Grimaldi wondered whether he would not do better to turn back and go round by the Angel, Islington. Whereupon a young gentleman, looking at him attentively, came up to him and said.

"Is not your name Grimaldi, sir?"

"Yes, sir, it is," replied Grimaldi. "Pray may I enquire why you ask the question?"

"Because," answered the stranger, pointing to a man who stood among a little group of people hard by, "because I just now heard that gentleman mention it to a companion."

Grimaldi looked round, saw "the gentleman," and was not at all flattered to hear that he was being noted by him. The gentleman was "Old Lucas", a "desperate villain" — we should say, an infernal scoundrel — and Parish Constable of Clerkenwell. The fact is Mr. Lucas was in the habit of taking advantage of his official position. He made a practice of accusing innocent people of this, that, or the other crime, of perjuring himself freely and of engaging other perjurers in the necessary quantities, and of pocketing certain small sums due to him on the conviction of the supposed guilty person. And so Grimaldi was not pleased to hear that Lucas had mentioned him, and still less pleased when he heard what came next. He asked the polite young gentleman if he were quite sure that Old Lucas had mentioned his name.

“Quite certain,” was the reply. “I can’t have made any mistake upon the subject, because he wrote it down in his book.”

“Wrote it down in his book?” exclaimed Grimaldi.

“Yes, he did, indeed,” replied the other, “and more than that, I heard him say to another man beside him that ‘he could lay hold of you whenever he wanted you.’”

Grimaldi was not at all pleased to hear this. However, he took the long way round to the Wells, avoiding the mad ox, and bad Lucas, and the worse mob, and forgot all about the matter in the business of rehearsal. In the evening, however, he recollected it and told the tale to his friends in the green-room, soon before the curtain went up. And Dubois, the comedian, and another actor named Davis, and Richer, the renowned rope-dancer, all roared with laughter, after the good custom of green-rooms everywhere. Dubois remarked that Old Lucas would stick at nothing, not even at Joe’s life, to gain a few pounds, perhaps even a few shillings. Then they speculated as to whether the charge would be murder or only forgery, though, as one remarked, that made little difference, since it was a hanging matter either way. And poor Joe tried to laugh, too, but did not feel really happy; and then a theatre messenger came in and said that Mr. Grimaldi was wanted directly at the stage-door.

“Who wants me?” enquired Grimaldi, turning rather pale.

“Old Lucas,” answered the messenger, with something between a smile and a gasp. Whereupon the green-room howled with laughter, the messenger joining in, till Mr. Dubois perceived that Grimaldi looked very unhappy indeed. Whereupon Mr. Dubois and the others said — again according to players’ custom everywhere and always — that having had their laugh they would back up their friend to the uttermost of their power. The whole party trooped out to the stage-door and defied Lucas, who told Grimaldi that he must come with him directly to the police office in Hatton Garden; the actors asked for the constable's warrant, told him, one rather gathers, to go to hell, mentioning as, an alternative, a ducking in the adjacent waters of the New River. A joyous mob gathered at the sound of strife, and began to shout execrations against Lucas, who confessed at last that he had no warrant; "because people generally knows that I'm in authority, and thinks that sufficient." Whereupon the happy mob shouted again, derisively, and perhaps with a little threatening note, too. So Mr. Lucas said that if Mr. Grimaldi would promise to come to the police office in Hatton Garden the next morning, that would do; and Mr. Lucas turned to go on his way. But the news became general that the villain of a constable was trying to arrest the great Grimaldi, the favourite of all London, and in a moment the whole quarter rang with whoops and yells. Here was better sport than ox-hunting. Mr. Lucas ran for his life with a volley of rotten apples, mud, and so forth following after him — and the curtain went up at Sadler's Wells Theatre.

The next morning Grimaldi, accompanied by the famous rope-dancer and the two comedians, attended before Mr. Blamire, the magistrate of Hatton Garden. Old Lucas forthwith charged Grimaldi with hunting, and inciting and inducing other persons to hunt an overdriven ox in the fields of Pentonville, to the irritation of the ox and the hazard and danger of his Majesty's subjects. In confirmation of this, Lucas summoned a few friends, who confirmed him in every particular. On the other hand, Grimaldi told the truth, and called the young gentleman who had first given him warning of the threatening attitude of Lucas. The magistrate said, finally, that he was quite sure that Grimaldi's story was the true story and that Lucas and his friends were liars; still he was bound to act upon the deposition of the constable and his witnesses, and so he fined Grimaldi five shillings. As for Lucas, Mr. Blamire told him to be careful. In great delight the actors bowed to the magistrate, paid the five shillings fine, with a mysterious extra shilling "for the discharge," and, oddly enough, it was proposed and unanimously agreed that the party should adjourn to the King of Prussia (afterwards the Clown), a tavern opposite the Wells. Here they had a little lunch and made merry over the small profits accruing to Lucas on a five shilling fine. And in the middle of their mirth a man ran into the room and cried: "Joe! Joe! here's Old Lucas again." More roars of laughter. Grimaldi and his friends thought this was a capital joke — when in walked Old Lucas. He was, really, a surprising fellow, this Constable of Clerkenwell. He declared that Grimaldi had not paid the five shillings or the aforementioned one shilling, and that he must either pay or "come along."

"Not paid?" said the unfortunate clown. "Why, I paid the six shillings before I left the office."

Old Lucas only grinned, and said: "Pay the money, or come on with me."

Grimaldi swore he would not pay another farthing. The constable advanced to seize him and tore his shirt and waistcoat to ribbons. Whereupon, the mild Grimaldi was roused to anger and knocked Lucas down, causing the "porochial" nose to bleed grievously. But he got up again and produced his staff, and the fight was just going to begin again when a Mysterious Stranger rose from his place in the tavern room. He rose and drew from his pocket a Silver Staff, which he shook at Lucas; and, at the sight of that Staff, Lucas withered and collapsed. At the command of him of the Staff, the whole party returned to the police office, where Mr. Blamire remarked with amazement the change that had taken place in the shape of the constable's nose. And Mr. Blamire seemed to know the Mysterious Stranger very well indeed, and greeted him cordially. The matter was heard, the Silver Staff corroborated Grimaldi's story, and Old Lucas was fined five pounds, the money to go to the poor of the parish. Whereupon Old Lucas foamed at the mouth, like the hunted ox, and swore with frightful oaths and "great expressions of disrespect" that he would pay nothing. Then the worthy magistrate ordered Old Lucas to the cells, where he remained for five or six hours, devoting the whole time to howlings and imprecations, and at last paid up and wrote a penitent letter to Grimaldi.

And the Man with the Silver Staff? "Who," said Grimaldi, with profound respect and an air of great mystery: "Who this gentleman was, I never could ascertain; but that he was a person possessing a somewhat high degree of authority was evident to me from the great respect paid to him at the police office."

And here is another queer business in which Grimaldi was engaged, a few years later. He had a professional friend named Bologna, and Bologna knew a wealthy country gentleman, a Mr. Mackintosh, who lived down in Kent. Now Mr. Mackintosh had often pressed Bologna to come down to his place for the shooting and bring a friend; and so one October Grimaldi and Bologna hired a gig (the date is 1804) and drove in the direction of Bromley. Here they met a man in a fustian jacket, driving a lame horse in a taxed cart; and greatly to Grimaldi's amazement, this was Mr. Mackintosh the wealthy. And the magnificent house was a small roadside tavern, kept by Mr. Mackintosh's mother; and Bologna was mortified, and Grimaldi was inclined to laugh. However, the two actors had a good plain dinner, and in a day or two were taken out for the shooting.

"Now's your time," said Mackintosh, pointing to a field where a great number of pigeons were feeding.

The actors were cross. They said they had come to shoot birds. Mr. Mackintosh said that pigeons were birds, and the two comedians fired in a rage and slew twenty-five of them.

"And now," said Mackintosh, "if you will take my advice, you will cut away at once."

They were the squire's pigeons. Grimaldi and Bologna were chased to the Lane by the squire's gamekeeper, on Mr. Mackintosh's information, but that difficulty was surmounted by a moderate payment on account of the pigeons, a rumpsteak dinner and a bottle of wine.

And so, you will say, the end of Mr. Mackintosh and his odd sense of humour. Not at all. In three years' time a much smartened, spruced-up Mackintosh calls on Grimaldi, hopes his little joke has been forgiven, and trusts that Grimaldi and his wife will accept the hospitality offered by some friends in Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square. Grimaldi drives round one night after the play, finds a splendid mansion, splendidly furnished, a blaze of light, luxurious furniture, and noble meats and nobler wines for supper. There were just twelve people present besides Mackintosh and Grimaldi: Mr. and Mrs. Farmer, host and hostess, and five other married couples, all exquisitely dressed. The jewellery of the ladies was superb, the liveries of the servants were gorgeous. Again and again the Grimaldis partook of this Arabian hospitality; and always the party was the same; the six ladies, the six gentlemen, and Mr. Mackintosh. Mr. Grimaldi was a little perplexed; he thought that there was something peculiar about the manners of these people, but he could not quite say what it was. He puzzled his head, he felt that the Charlotte Street ways were different from the ways of the noblemen and gentlemen he met in the green-rooms of the Lane and the Wells; but he could not make out what the difference was.

And now for the solution of the puzzle. Alas! Mr. Mackintosh and his friends were all “desperate characters.” Mr. Farmer had been reprieved while he stood on the drop under the gallows; they were a pack of burglars, forgers, passers of forged notes. And what did they want with Mr. Grimaldi? Simply to be amused; that was all.

The Adventure Of The Long–Lost Brother

IN THE SECOND week of November, 1803, a play called “A Bold Stroke for a Wife” was running at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Miss Mellor was playing Anne; Bannister, Highwell; Atkin was Simon Pure; and Grimaldi, Aminadab. One night the prompter, otherwise the assistant stage manager, had put his head in at the green-room door and had summoned Mr. Grimaldi, and as the actor was going on the stage a messenger told him that two gentlemen were waiting to see him at the stage door. The stage must never wait, so Grimaldi sent a message to the gentlemen, to the effect that he would come down to them as soon as the business of the scene was over. Accordingly, he went to the stage door and found there two gentlemanly young men.

“Here’s Mr. Grimaldi — who wants him?” said the actor, and one of the young men turned swiftly about and accosted Grimaldi in a very cordial manner. Grimaldi looked at him. He was about, his own age and had the appearance of a man who had lived in some tropical climate. He wore the fashionable evening dress of 1803: a blue coat with gilt buttons, white waistcoat, and tight pantaloons, and a gold-headed dress cane was in his hand.

“Joe, my lad!” exclaimed this person, holding out his hand, with something of emotion in his manner, “how goes it with you now, old fellow?”

Grimaldi was confused. To the best of his belief he had never seen the young man before and, hesitating, he replied that he really had not the pleasure of his acquaintance. “Not the pleasure of my acquaintance!” repeated the stranger, with a loud laugh. “Well, Joe, that seems funny, anyhow!” He appealed to his companion, who agreed, and they both laughed heartily. Grimaldi grew perturbed and uneasy; he suspected that the two men were rather laughing at him than with him, and he was turning away offended, when the first young man said, in a tremulous voice:

“Joe, don’t you know me now?”

Grimaldi looked at him again. The man had opened his shirt, and was pointing to a scar upon his breast. By this scar Grimaldi recognised the young man as his only brother, John, who had gone to sea, had not been heard of for many years, and was supposed to be dead. Grimaldi was very much moved. The two embraced again and again, and gave vent to their feelings in tears. Men embraced each other in Dickens' earlier books. It is odd; but in the days of the Napoleonic War, when John Bull is supposed to have been most John Bullish, he had ways which we should call "Continental."

"Come upstairs," said Grimaldi. "Mr. Wroughton is there — Mr. Wroughton, who was the means of your going to sea — he'll be delighted to see you." The two were hurrying off, when the other young man, who had been quite forgotten, said:

"Well, John, then I'll wish you good-night."

"Good-night, good-night," said John Grimaldi, shaking his friend's hand. "I shall see you in the morning."

"Yes," replied the other, "at ten, mind!"

"At ten precisely; I shall not forget," answered John.

So the friend went away, unintroduced and unknown, so far as the actor was concerned. The brothers went first on the stage and then to the green-room; and the tale was told of this wonderful return, and the sailor was introduced to the actors. Still, the business of the stage continued, and the actor-brother had to leave the sailor-brother, gathering bits of his story between exits and entrances. The sailor said he had made a very successful trip.

"At this moment," he boasted, slapping his pocket, "I have six hundred pounds here."

"Why, John," said his brother, "it's very dangerous to carry so much money about with you."

"Dangerous!" replied John, "we sailors know nothing about danger. But, my lad, even if all this were gone, I should not be penniless."

Grimaldi was convinced by this and the knowing glance that the sailor gave him that he was, in fact, a wealthy man. But before he could get more exact information the prompter's voice was heard again, and the actor had to hurry away. In the meantime Mr. Wroughton talked to John, making kind enquiries as to his doings and his success. John replied as he had replied to his brother, and brought out a coarse canvas bag, stuffed full of coins. The comedy was over at last, and Grimaldi asked his brother how long he had been in town. He replied only two or three hours; that he had had his dinner and come on at once to the theatre. What did he intend to do? He had not considered the matter; his only object had been to see his brother and mother once more. The two had a long talk. Joe told his brother that he, his wife, and his mother all lived together. But there was plenty of room in the house; why should not the sailor come and live with them, and so they would all be happy together. John was delighted with the notion. But he said that he knew he would not be able to sleep unless he saw his mother that very night; what was her address? The address was given, but the actor suggested that they had better walk home together. He had finished for the night, and would be ready as soon as he had changed his dress. The sailor assented, and Joe went off to his dressing-room.

And then the strangeness of it all came with a sudden onset on Grimaldi. "The agitation of his feelings, the suddenness of his brother's return, the good fortune which had attended him in his absence, the gentility of his appearance, and his possession of so much money; all together confused him so that he could scarcely use his hands." He seems to have fallen into the state which the Scots call a "dwam," a manner of waking vision, in which actualities are taken for dreams and the man wonders when he will awake and recognise that he has been amongst the shadows of the night. "He stood still every now and then, quite lost in wonder, and then suddenly recollecting that his brother was waiting, looked over the room again and again for articles of dress that were lying before him." In consequence, he took much more time than usual in getting off his make-up and changing his dress; but at last he was ready and ran down to the stage. On his way he met Powell, one of the Company. Powell congratulated him on his brother's return, and Grimaldi "asked him more from nervousness than for information if he had seen him lately."

I think the phrase is curious. It must be remembered that Grimaldi wrote his own Memoirs — they were severely sub-edited, it is true — and, likely enough, the phrase in question is the old actor's own. Taking into account the odd things that came upon him in the dressing-room, I am inclined to think that he had begun to suspect that his brother had never returned, had never been introduced to the actors, had never spoken of his wealth; that the whole thing was an illusion, a phantasm of his mind. That, I believe, was what he meant by “nervousness”; he wished to be reassured by Powell, to be told that there was an actual brother waiting for him below, and that he would see him in a moment. But the events that were to come give this part of the story a very strange interest.

But Powell was reassuring enough.

“I saw him,” he replied, “but a moment ago; he is waiting for you on the stage. I won’t detain you, for he complains that you have been longer away now than you said you would be.”

Grimaldi hurried down to the spot where he had left his brother — it must have been the green-room, surely, not the stage, since there was an after-piece to follow “A Bold Stroke for a Wife” — but he was not there.

“Who are you looking for, Joe?” inquired Bannister, as he saw him looking eagerly about.

“For my brother,” he answered. “I left him here a little while back.”

“Well, and I saw and spoke to him not a minute ago,” said Bannister. “When he left me, he went in that direction (pointing towards the passage that led towards the stage-door). I should think he had left the theatre.”

Grimaldi rushed to the stage-door, and asked the door-keeper whether his brother had gone out. The man said he had gone out not a minute before, he had not had time to get out of the street. Grimaldi ran out, and ran up and down the street; not a sign of his brother. He wondered what had happened. Then it struck him that John might have gone to look up some old friend or neighbour — the Grimaldis had been brought up close to the Lane. There was Mr. Bowley; he and John had been bosom friends when they were boys together. Forthwith Joe knocked at Mr. Bowley’s door.

Mr. Bowley himself opened the door, and was evidently greatly surprised.

“I have, indeed, seen your brother,” said he. “Good God! I was never so amazed in all my life.”

“Is he here now?” was the anxious inquiry.

“No; but he has not been gone a minute; he cannot have gone many yards.”

“Which way?”

“That way — towards Duke Street.”

Grimaldi thought on this that his brother must have gone to call on Mr. Bailey, the Grimaldis’ landlord, when they lived in Great Wild Street. Away to Mr. Bailey’s house in that street; again he knocked at the door. No-one answered; he knocked and rang again With increased fury, and at length a girl put her head out of an upper window, and said in a voice both sulky and sleepy:

“I tell you again, he is not at home.”

“What are you talking about? Who is not at home?”

“Why, Mr. Bailey. I told you so before. What do you keep on knocking for at this time of night?”

In great bewilderment, Grimaldi begged the girl to come downstairs, as he wanted to speak to her, telling her his name. She came down after a short interval.

“I’m sure I beg your pardon, sir,” said the maid. “But there was a gentleman here knocking and ringing very violently not a minute before you came. I told him Mr. Bailey was not at home; and when I heard you at the door I thought It was him, and that he would not go away.”

Then Grimaldi asked the girl if she had seen the gentleman’s face. She had not; she had looked out of the upper-window, and all that she noticed was that the gentleman had a white waistcoat, whence she inferred that he might have come to take her master out to a party.

Back went the amazed and frightened actor to the theatre. There nothing had been seen of the lost brother; and then Grimaldi began a sort of mad midnight tour of the houses of old friends round the Lane, knocking and ringing people out of their beds and enquiring after his brother. Some of the people thought Grimaldi was mad; and said so. His manner was wild, and nobody had heard of John Grimaldi for fourteen years. They had long given him up as dead.

One more call at the theatre; nothing had been seen of the missing man. Perhaps, Grimaldi thought, his brother had gone to the house in Pentonville. He had seemed so anxious to see his mother that very night; and between the calls of the prompter the two had been making plans of happiness of a family reunited after the passing of many years. But there was no brother at the house; but his mother sat in the supper-room, looking much paler than usual, so that Grimaldi thought she must have seen him.

“Well, mother,” he said, “has anything strange occurred here tonight?”

“No; nothing that I have heard of.”

“What! no stranger arrived! no long-lost relative recovered!” exclaimed Grimaldi.

“What do you mean?”

“Mean! Why, that John is come home safe and well, and with money enough to make all our fortunes.”

The mother screamed and fainted. John Grimaldi was never seen again, never heard of. A great noble, a frequenter of Drury Lane, used his influence at the Admiralty; some people thought that John had been pressed for the Navy. He was known to have gone under another name, and when no news came, it was suggested that he might well have fallen in one of the great sea fights of those great wars; it was two years before Trafalgar. Then a police officer, who had made enquiries in the neighbourhood of the Lane, had his theory of the boastful sailor with his bag of gold being decoyed into some black den, there to be robbed and murdered. And Grimaldi himself was inclined to suspect his brother’s companion, the smart young man in the white waistcoat, who made the appointment with his brother for ten o’clock the next morning. Why had this man not come round to the theatre, to make enquiries after his vanished friend? But John Grimaldi was seen no more.

It is an extraordinary tale. It may be true in every particular. But there are strange circumstances in the history. For example: why should John knock up his old friend, Mr. Bowley, only to dart away from his door in a minute’s time? Note that minute in advance all through the chase. It persisted up to Mr. Bailey’s house. The servant-girl there said, “there was a gentleman here knocking and ringing very violently not a minute before you came.” I do not quite know why; but this fixed period of a minute inspires me with distrust.

But if the story be an invention, I am sure it was not Joe Grimaldi’s. The famous clown was a worthy, stolid, solid man outside of his clowning. The lie, if it be a lie, must be the work of Mr. Thomas Egerton Wilks, Grimaldi’s friend during his life, editor of his Memoirs after the great clown’s death.

But many of the actors at the theatre had seen John Grimaldi and talked to him on the night of his return? Possibly; but that was in 1808. Bannister died, I think, in the ‘twenties; was anyone of the company alive when the Memoirs were published in 1838?

And yet, in spite of all, I incline to believe in the truth of the tale.

7B Coney Court

A GOOD MANY years ago the late Stephen Phillips, the poet and dramatist, got himself into a very queer piece of trouble. He had just left his house somewhere on the south coast, I think at Littlehampton or near it, and rumours had got abroad that he had done so because the place was haunted. The rumours penetrated to Fleet Street, and some paper sent down a reporter to interview the poet. Stephen Phillips told the newspaper man his experiences in his late residence, and they were, indeed, most remarkable. I have forgotten the detail, and cannot recall the manner of the noises or voices or apparitions that had vexed the late tenant; but there was no doubt that the house was haunted, and haunted very badly. A sensational “story” appeared in the paper and then the landlord of the house sued everybody concerned for heavy damages. It had not occurred to Phillips or the newspaper that you could libel a house; but the owner of it pointed out that to call a house haunted made it unlettable, and that in consequence of the statements in the interview the place once occupied by the poet had been empty on his hands for the last eighteen months. How the matter ended has escaped my memory, but I believe somebody, the poet or the paper, had to pay, and I should think it was the paper. However, I am taking the affair as a warning, and so I declare that all names and places in the following history are fictitious. There is no such Inn of Court or Chancery as Curzon’s Inn; there is no such square as Coney Court, though South Square, Gray’s Inn, once bore that name. And therefore: no action will lie.

But assuming for the moment that names and places are as true as the tale, it may be said that Curzon’s Inn lies somewhere between Fleet Street and Holborn. It is approached by a maze of crooked courts and paved alleys, guarded by iron posts, and it consists of a small hall — note the very odd and elaborate “sham Gothic” work about the principal doorway, date 1755 — a huge and ancient and flourishing mulberry tree in a railed enclosure, a quadrangle called Assay Square, and another which is Coney Court. In Coney Court there are nine entrances in the buildings, which were rebuilt in 1670. All is of a dim red of ancient brickwork; the entrances are enriched with Corinthian pilasters, in the manner of the older doorways in King's Bench Walk in the Temple; and the carved wooden penthouses over these doorways have been attributed to Grinling Gibbons; somewhat doubtfully, as I am told, and on a misreading of an allusion in a contemporary diary. But, at all events, there are nine doors in Coney Court, and no more than nine, and hence the perplexity of Mr. Hemmings, the Steward, when he received a cheque for £20, with a note to this effect:

Dear Sir —

Please receive the enclosed cheque for Twenty Pounds (£20 0 0), being the quarter's rent due to you for my chambers at 7B Coney Court, Curzon's Inn.

I remain, Yours faithfully,

Michael Carver.

That was all. There was no address. There was no date. The postmark bore the letter N. The letter was delivered by the first post of November 11, 1913, and by immemorial custom, of unknown origin, rents in Curzon's Inn are payable not on the English, but on the Scottish Quarter days. Now, November 11 is Martinmas, and so far everything was in order, But there is no such entrance in Coney Court as 7B, and there was no such name as Michael Carver on the books of the Inn. Mr. Hemmings was bothered, and nobody seemed to have heard of Mr. Carver. The porter, who had been employed at the Inn for upwards of forty years, was quite positive that no such name had been on the doorposts during the time of his service. Of course, the Steward made all possible enquiries. He went round to the various tenants at 6, 7, and 8, but could get no information whatever. As is usual in the old Inns, the tenants were miscellaneous. The main substratum — also as usual — was legal. There was a publisher in a very small and young way of business, who thought that poetry could be made to pay. There were the offices of a few shy and queer companies and syndicates, with names such as "Trexel Development Company, Ltd.," "J.H.V.N. Syndicate," "Sargasso Salvage: G. Nash, Secretary," and so forth, and so forth. Then the private residents; some of these were initials on the doorposts, "A.D.S.", "F.X.S.", one "Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Sheldon", and names that were little more than names to the inhabitants of the Inn, since the owners of them were never seen during the day, but crept out at night, after the gates were shut, and prowled from Assay Square to Coney Court and back again, stealthily, silently, not looking at one another, never speaking a word. Among all these folk the Steward made his quest, but not one of them had heard of such a person as Michael Carver, and one or two had occupied their chambers for thirty years. The next day, “St. Martin’s Morrow,” being the day appointed for the quarterly meeting of the Society, the “Pension”. as they called it, the puzzled Hemmings laid the matter before the President and the Ancients, with the result that they decided that there was nothing to be done. And from that date onward, quarter after quarter came the cheque for twenty pounds, with the formal note accompanying it. No date, no address, and the postmark still bearing the N. of the northern district, The matter was regularly laid before the Society: the Society as regularly decided that there was nothing to be done.

This went on till the Martinmas of November, 1918. The usual cheque was received; but the formal letter varied. It ran thus:

Dear Sir —

Please receive the enclosed cheque for Twenty Pounds (£20 0 0), being the quarter’s rent due to you for my Chambers at 7B Coney Court, Curzon’s Inn.

There is a bad patch of damp on the ceiling of my sitting room; arising, I should think, from a defective tile.

I shall be obliged if you will have this seen to at once.

I remain, Yours faithfully,

Michael Carver.

The Steward was stupefied. There was no such number in Coney Court, or the Inn, as 7B; how, then, could there be a leak in the roof! How could the Society see to a roof which did not exist? Next day, Mr. Hemmings laid the letter before the Pension in silence: there was nothing to say. The President read it attentively; the ten Ancients read it attentively. Then one of them, who happened to be a solicitor, suggested that enquiries should be made at Mr. Carver’s bank. “Sometimes you can bluff a bank,” he said hopefully. But Mr. Carver banked at Tellson’s, and the ancient should have known better. Hemmings received the curtest of letters from the House, informing him that Messrs. Tellson were not in the habit of discussing their client’s affairs with outsiders; and so, for the time being, the matter dropped. Next quarter day the usual Carver cheque was received, and with it an extremely stiff letter, pointing out that no notice had been taken of the writer's request, and that, in consequence the damp had spread all over the ceiling, and threatened to drip on the carpet. "I shall be obliged if you will remedy the defect immediately," the letter ended. The President and the Ancients again considered the matter. One suggested that the whole thing was the work of a practical joker, and another uttered the word "Mad," but these explanations were considered unsatisfactory, and the society, in the circumstances, resolved that there was nothing to be done.

The next quarter day brought no cheque. There was a letter, declaring that the tenant's furniture was covered with mould, and that in wet weather he was obliged to put a bowl on the floor to catch the water. Mr. Carver said finally that he had determined to cease all payment of rent until the necessary repairs were seen to. And then something still queerer happened, and this is the point at which the history would have become libellous if there were such a place as Curzon's Inn, or if there were such a court as Coney Court. The third pair chambers (right) of No. 7, Coney Court, had just been vacated by the tenants, solicitors or agents, and a widow lady and her daughter had moved in— "dingy, but so quiet", as the lady told her friends. And now she found her chambers very far from quiet. Night after night, at twelve, one, two, or three o'clock, she and her daughter were awoke by thunderous piano music, always the same music, which rendered sleep out of the question. The widow complained to the Steward, and he came round, with the Inn carpenter, and said he couldn't understand it at all.

"We never had any complaints from Jackson and Dowling," he declared, and the lady pointed out that Jackson and Dowling left the Inn every night at six.

The Steward went over the set carefully. He noticed a sort of crazy flight of steps, leading out of one of the rooms.

"What's that?" he asked the carpenter, and the man said it was a sort of lumber place, used by tenants for odds and ends.

They went up, and found themselves in a garret, lighted by one pane of glass in the roof. Here was a broken-down old piano with hardly a dozen notes sounding, a mouldy gladstone bag, two odd men's socks, a pair of trousers, and some ragged copies of Bach’s Fugues, in paper wrappers. There was a leak in the roof, and all reeked with damp.

The rubbish was removed, the place was turned out and whitewashed. There were no more disturbances. But a year later, the widow lady, being at a concert with a friend, suddenly gasped and choked, and whispered to the friend:

“That is the awful music I told you about.”

The distinguished pianist had just sounded the opening notes of John Sebastian Bach’s Fugue in C Major.

Neither the Principal, the Ancients, nor the Steward heard any more of the tenant of 7B Coney Court.

The Strange Case Of Emily Weston

THERE ARE CERTAIN resemblances between the affair of Grimaldi's brother and the disappearance and reappearance of Emily Weston at Stafford in the years 1849–50. Emily Weston was the only child of Samuel Weston, a shopkeeper and dealer in that pleasant town, which differs so happily from those other Staffordshire towns which make up the Potteries. Weston's shop was somewhere in that back quarter of Stafford which is near the eighteenth century theatre; a very modest looking place, as I recollect seeing it about twenty-five years ago, with a bulging window divided into small squares of glass. Within the stock was various: sides of bacon, large cheeses, mops and brooms, clusters of tallow candles hanging from a beam in the ceiling, rat-traps, tea in canisters, and some sacks of flour; in fact, as the old man who was my informant described it, the characteristic general shop of small country places, where, oddly enough, very solid sums of money were once made. Here, then, behind the little dark shop in the narrow street, lived Weston, his daughter Emily, and an old servant, who had been in the family for forty years. In 1849, Emily was twenty-three years old, and was considered to be, not exactly handsome, but decidedly attractive. She bore the best of characters, sang in the choir of the parish church, and was supposed to look favourably on the addresses of the son of the principal chemist of the town, named Elgie. One night in December, 1849, she told her father that she was going to a choir practice that was to be held in the church at nine o'clock. There was to be a new anthem for Christmas Day, "Unto us a Child," and the organist was rather anxious as to the solos. So the supper — bread, cheese, butter, and an openwork raspberry tart — was served at 8.30 instead of 9, the usual hour; and at five minutes to 9 Emily started for the church, which is about five minutes' walk from Weston's shop. Mary Williams, the old servant, was to call for her at 10 o'clock. But Mary was delayed by some household business at the last moment, and it was eight or ten minutes past ten when she got to the church. The windows were all dark, and the rector was locking the door. The servant said she supposed Miss Emily had gone home by the other way.

“Indeed,” said the rector, “she has not been at practice to-night. We feared she was ill. Do you say that she started from her home to come to practice?”. . . .

Emily Weston did not come home that night. No trace of her was to be found. A woman said she thought that a person who passed her close to the church soon after nine was Emily; but the lighting of Stafford in those days was far from brilliant, and the veil that was then generally worn made identification difficult, if not impossible. Week after week went by; still no Emily. Her father offered a reward of £100 to anyone who would find the girl, living or dead: there was no result. The police seemed helpless in the matter.

It was almost a year — a year within three days, I believe — before Emily Weston returned, as her father always declared. It was late at night — for that household — actually about half-past ten, when old Weston, who had been sitting up over some accounts, heard a gentle tapping at the door. Mary Williams, the servant, had been in bed for half an hour or more, and Weston went to the shop door and slowly unbolted, unchained, and unlocked it. While he did so he had put down the candle on the counter. By the dim light he could see a woman standing on the doorstep. He took the candle and held it up, peering at the figure before him. He saw that the woman was richly dressed in silk and furs; but he did not recognise her.

“Who are you?” said the old man, “And what can I have the pleasure of doing for you? It’s rather late at night.”

The woman raised her veil.

“Father,” she exclaimed, “don’t you know me? It’s Emily.”

“Even then,” the old man said afterwards, “I didn’t recognise her for a moment. Everything she wore was so splendid, and pearls and diamonds and all, that I could scarcely believe it was my Emily. But then when she smiled at me, I knew her to be sure, and brought her in, and lit the other candle in the parlour, and began to ask her all the questions I could think of. And all she would say was: ‘Wait a bit, father, wait a bit. I’ll tell you all about it; but I’ve come a very long way, and I feel tired.’” Samuel Weston was overwhelmed with joy at his daughter's return. He was so excited, as he said, that he did not know what to do with himself. He could "scarce believe his eyes," and insisted on knocking up Mr. and Mrs. Dales, neighbours and old friends, who lived two doors off. According to his account, when he at last brought Mr. Dales to his bedroom window, he called out that he and his wife must dress and come down at once, as Emily had come back. The two friends came down at length, heavy with sleep, and "mazed" as they said; and Mr. Weston opened a bottle of some very old sherry that he kept for great festivals, and the party sat together far into the night. At last the visitors went back to their beds, and Mr. Weston kissed his daughter good night at her bedroom door. She told him that he should hear everything in the morning.

Now it seems odd that Weston, who knocked up the Dales, should not have roused the old servant. So it was, however; and the next morning when the old man came down to breakfast, he found the table laid for one, as usual.

"What are you about, Mary?" he said. "Don't you know that Emily has come back? Lay her place, and tell her that breakfast is ready."

Old Mary Williams shrieked and fainted. Mr. Weston rushed upstairs, and knocked at; his daughter's door. There was no answer, and when he went into the room it was empty. The bed had not been slept in. And Emily Weston was never seen again. And here is an odd circumstance. The Dales, the people who were roused from sleep by Weston, declared that to the best of their recollection, the old man did not mention his daughter. They thought he said, "I have got somebody you would like to see," but were not sure. They remembered going round and seeing a beautiful lady, beautifully dressed, who was very pleasant and talked about a wonderful country a long way off where she had been; but they didn't think it was Emily Weston, though as Mrs. Dales said, "There was a look of her."

That is all. There is an explanation, but I leave that to the ingenuity of the reader.

The Highbury Mystery

WHEN THOMAS PINCH and his sister Ruth, having accomplished their unpleasant discussion with the brass-and-copper founder of Camberwell, went into the wild of London to look for lodgings, Tom suggested Islington as a promising quarter for their search. It is needless to say that Tom knew nothing whatever about Islington — or any other part of London. But an old phrase was in his mind, and it tempted him.

“It used to be called Merry Islington, once upon a time,” said Tom. “Perhaps it’s merry now; if so, it’s all the better. Eh?”

“If it’s not too dear,” said Tom’s sister.

“Of course, if it’s not too dear,” assented Tom. “Well, where is Islington? We can’t do better than go there, I should think. Let’s go.”

So far as I remember they did not find much mirth in Islington, though they did find two bedrooms and a triangular parlour which suited them very well. But the fact is that Tom Pinch went to Islington a little too late; just as I went to the old Fleet Street tavern in 1881, hoping to meet there the Principal Wits of the Town: a little too late. Islington was once a noted place for its houses of entertainment, for its bottled ale and skittles, its cakes, custard, stewed prunes, and so forth; and thus merry to seventeenth and eighteenth-century London. And in an Islington tavern just 160 years ago there was a meeting not devoid of mirth, or at least of cheerfulness, which yet linked itself on to a mysterious and terrible crime; the murder of Thomas Jenkyns, retired merchant, of Enfield Wash. The body of this Thomas Jenkyns was found on the night of September 23, 1765. It was lying in a pool of blood in a field near Highbury. The poor man’s throat had been cut from ear to ear, as the two men who found the corpse declared. And as for these two men, Thomas Brown and Richard Staple, inhabitants of some festering maze of alleys between Holborn and Clerkenwell, I am afraid they did not bear the best of characters. Bow Street knew them and they were known also at the taproom of the Bell, where they met friends of the same way of thinking as themselves. There had been a little highway robbery and a little burglary in their stories, and they had just missed the gallows more than once. So it may be as well not to consider too curiously what the two were doing in Highbury Fields ten o'clock of this dark September night. Thomas Brown told of the horror of his friend and himself when they stumbled on the murdered man.

"We were hard put to it to know what to do," he declared. "It seemed as if the poor man's head was almost cut away from his body, and I said to my friend, Richard Staple, who was with me, 'Why, Dick,' said I, 'this is a villainous to-do. For if we shift to raise the body, 'tis a great chance that the man's head will fall apart, and I cannot abide the thought of it.' 'Why, Tom,' said he, 'I am much of your mind in the business. What if we leave ill work as it lies, and go home peaceably by another way.' But I would not have that neither, lest, as I said, we should both be nabbed for the fact and come to Tyburn at last. And so we made shift to raise the dead man tenderly, I holding his head to his shoulders and trembling a great deal, and in this way bore him as far as Islington, without any misadventure, it being late of a dark night, with a cold wind rising, and very black clouds, and scarce anyone abroad."

This is, certainly, not a very merry opening, and, indeed, mirth is only a brief interlude in the tale. The cheerful relief is afforded by the evidence of Simon Murchison, who kept a snuff-shop in Norton Folgate, of William Frost, a brass-founder, of Clerkenwell, and of Abraham Lewis, clock maker, of Devizes. It was largely on their evidence that Anthony Mullins, citizen and haberdasher, was arrested and charged with the murder, a week after the discovery of the crime by the dubious Brown and Staple. The three elderly tradesmen had met by chance — they had not known each other before — at the Bowl and Sword tavern at Islington on the afternoon of September 23, and had got into conversation, all agreeing that things were not as they were in the reign of King George II.

"We all grew to be pretty dismal over the bad times," said Abraham Lewis, "till at last I said, 'Why, this will never end it or mend it. Come! let us go and bump it at Dog and Duck, and I will be surety for the first bowl of punch, the lowest notch of the three to be debtor for the second.'"

The three went out into the alley behind the tavern, and it is interesting to note that Mr. Murchison ordered pipes and a plate of tobacco, and that Mr. Frost paid for a bottle of brandy “to hearten the bowl,” and so they went to their match, which Mr. Frost won.

“And while we were in the garden-house at the side of the alley, drinking our punch, and smoking tobacco, and talking of the game, two men came out from the tavern and sat on a bench by the wall, speaking together very seriously, but not as we could hear what they said. They called for liquor and drank two glasses apiece and went out, and we saw no more of them.” The three identified the murderer and the murdered.

“I know him,” said Lewis, pointing to Mullins, “by his great beaked nose, and the dead man I could swear to any day, for as he lifted his glass I saw that his little finger was crooked back as if it had been broken, and I saw the body, and the little finger was crooked as I saw it on the live man.” Then Frost had seen the prisoner read a paper which Jenkyns had given to him, and Mullins had drawn out a tortoiseshell and gold spectacle-case of curious workmanship, and just such a spectacle-case was found on Mullins when he was taken. There were other witnesses who had seen Mullins and Jenkyns walking on the way to Highbury Fields a little later in the afternoon: there seemed no doubt as to the verdict which the jury would bring in.

Then came the surprise of the case. The prisoner’s two clerks, Mr. Osborne and Mr. Nichols, swore that their master had not stirred out of his counting-house from dinner time till eight o’clock in the evening. Osborne sat at a high desk facing Mr. Mullins’s private counting-house, which was separated from the rest of the room by a glass partition. Nichols’s stool was under a window and commanded a view of the door.

“I was busy with a great account,” said Osborne, “but ever and again I looked up from my book, and there sat my master, as he was always accustomed, but very still.”

Counsel: “Was he not used, then, to sit still in his counting-house?”

Osborne: “Why, not so. He would rise now and again commonly, and walk a little to and fro, and so sit down again. And twice or thrice in an hour he would come out and speak with us about the occasions of the day.”

Counsel: “And did he not stir at all on this afternoon?”

Osborne: “He sat still at his desk and never moved till it was past eight in the evening.”

And then a very curious point arose. Nichols, the other clerk, had been strangely overcome towards the end of the afternoon. He had come up to Osborne, looking very ill and pale, as Osborne said, and complaining that his heart was heavy, and that “he was sadly oppressed.” Osborne, belonging to a pre-scientific age, advised his fellow-clerk to go to the Mitre and drink a little ale, and Nichols did so, “looking tearfully to the place where Mr Mullins sat, with no candle by him.” A moment later, Mr. Mullins rose and came down to the general counting-house and asked Osborne where his fellow was. On hearing of his occupation, Mullins said, “Ah, poor child! He might do worse than drink a cup of ale.” Then Nichols returned, and soon after the two clerks went on their way, one to his lodgings by Pedlar’s Acre, the other to see the fireworks, at Marylebone Gardens. But when counsel for the Crown cross-examined Nichols as to the nature and cause of his seizure, the witness said:

“There came a great trembling upon me, and a dread on my heart and a sickness in my stomach… and I feared very much. And so I looked round on my stool to see if my fellow Osborne was in his place, and looking down on the floor of the counting-house I could have sworn that there was a great pool of blood there, with bubbles of blood in it, and I had almost swooned away.”

Naturally, Mullins was acquitted on the evidence of his two clerks. But what is the solution of the puzzle? When I treated this curious case some time ago, I mentioned the theory that has been advanced by some occultists of our day. These persons hold that while the natural body of Anthony Mullins was committing murder at Highbury, his “astral” body appeared all the while in the counting-house in the City. I was unable to accept this tempting solution, and declared my opinion that the two clerks perjured themselves to save their master from the gallows. But there is this difficulty: Why should the clerk Nichols have invented the outrageous tale of the visionary pool of blood?

The Little People

I HAVE BEEN looking into a very odd book, and I am going to tell the story of the Asiki, or Little Beings, first observing that the singular is Isiki. Well, it is said that the Asiki were once ordinary, human children, but were caught, when young and defenceless, by wizards or witches, and were dragged into the black depths of the forest, where there was no help for them, where no one could hear their cries. The wizards cut off their tongues as a first measure; and so they never speak again, and cannot inform against the magicians. They are then carried away, and hidden in a secret place, where they are subjected to magical processes which change their whole nature, so that they are no longer mortal. They forget their homes, their fathers and mothers and all their kinsfolk. Even the hair of their heads changes. Instead of being crisp wool, it becomes long and straight and hangs down their backs. At the back of their heads they wear a curious comb-shaped ornament, made of some twisted fibre. This they value almost as part of their life, just as in another quarter of the world there are people who drive motorcars and cherish little images and idols and grotesque figures, which are believed to constitute a most powerful protection. These Asiki will sometimes be seen walking on dark nights, and are occasionally met on their walks. It is believed that if a person is either naturally fearless, or made fearless by charms and spells, and dares to seize an Isiki and snatch away the comb, the possession of this mascot will bring him great wealth. But he will not be allowed to remain in peaceful possession of it. The Isiki, in a state of misery and desolation, will be seen wandering about the place where the magic comb was taken from it, endeavouring to get it back. And as late as the year 1901 strange things were told of these Little People in Libreville, French Congo. A certain Frenchman, known to be a Freemason, returning from his restaurant dinner to his house one evening noticed a small figure keeping pace with him on the other side of the road. He called out, “Who are you?” There was no reply; the figure kept on walking, advancing and retreating before him.

A few nights later, a negro clerk in some trading house met the Isiki near the place where the Frenchman had encountered it. And the Little Being began to chase the negro. He ran for his life, and told his master, the trader, what had happened. He got laughed at for his pains, and the next night the trader told the tale to a select company of white men and black women, the Freemason being present. And he said, "Your clerk did not lie; he told the truth. I have myself met that Little Being, but I did not try to catch it." Then the black women spoke of the odd comb-ornament, and of how the Asiki treasured it, and of the good fortune it would bring to anybody who could capture it. Whereupon the Frenchman — otherwise the Freemason — said, "As the Little Being is so small, the very next time I see it I will try to catch it and bring it here, so that you can see it and know that this story is actually true."

Soon after, the Frenchman and the trader went out at night and tried to find the Isiki. No Little Being was to be found, but a few nights later the Frenchman met it near the place where it had been seen before. He ran forward and tried to catch it, but the Isiki eluded him. However, he succeeded in snatching the comb, and ran with it towards his house. The Little Being was displeased and ran after him to recover the charm. Having no tongue, it could not speak, but holding out one hand pleadingly and with the other motioning to the back of its head, it made pathetic sounds in its throat, thus pleading that its treasure should be given back to it. It followed the Frenchman till the lights of his house began to shine, and then it disappeared. The Frenchman showed the comb to his friends, both black and white, and all agreed that they had never seen anything like it before. From that night the Isiki was often seen by negroes, who were afraid to pass that way in the dark. It followed the Frenchman persistently, pleading with its hands in dumb show, and making a grunting noise in its throat. The Frenchman got tired of all this, and made up his mind that he would give the comb back. And so next night he took it with him; and also a pair of scissors. The Little Being appeared and followed him. He held out his hand, with the comb in it. The Isiki leapt forward and snatched at the talisman and secured it, and the Frenchman tried to catch the Isiki. The Little Being was too agile, however, and escaped; but the Frenchman snipped off a lock of the long straight hair with his scissors, and brought it home and showed it to his friends.

Such is the story told by Dr. Robert H. Nassau, an American missionary, who had worked for forty years in Africa. He seems to fear that his tale will be regarded as incredible. It seems to me, on the contrary, highly, probable. Naturally, one dismisses that part of it which relates to the process by which these Little Beings are made, and that part of it which ascribes to them immortality. The Little People were not made out of little woolly piccaninnies by the magic arts of the wizards; and probably, if one could be caught and examined, it would be found that it had a tongue in its mouth, like any other human being. The fact is that here, in all likelihood, we have a pretty exact parallel to the Little People of our own folk-lore: the Daione Sidhe of Ireland, the Tylwyth Teg of Wales. The substratum in both cases is the same: an aboriginal people of small stature overcome and sent into the dark by invaders. In Britain and Ireland the dark meant subterranean dwellings made under the hills in the wildest and most remote parts of the country; they will point you out the place of these dwellings in Antrim to this day, and tell you that they are Fairy Raths. And in nine cases out of ten you may accept the statement with entire confidence; so long as you define “fairies” or “the People” as small, dark aborigines who hid from the invading Celt somewhere about 1500–1000 B.C. And in Africa the dark meant the blackness of the forest; places hidden in the thickest tangle of trees and undergrowth, protected, perhaps, from all outsiders, black or white, by a maze of narrow paths winding in and out of a foul swamp. And as to the legend of the torn-out tongues, of the guttural noises made by the Asiki; is it not the case that the Little People of the genuine Celtic tradition are also silent? I will not be sure; but I incline to think that this is so. They beckon, they gesticulate, they are seen by Irish countrymen playing at hurly: but they say nothing — the reason being that they do not speak the language of their conquerors. I have seen a monoglot Englishman in Touraine behaving much as the Isiki behaved to the Frenchman at Libreville, even to the making of unearthly sounds and the indulging in antic gestures. But he only wanted milk with his tea. And there is this further parallel between the Little Beings of Africa and the Little People of Ireland. Both are on a curious borderland between the natural and the supernatural. Both are able to “propagate procerity” — I use an elegant phrase of Dr. Johnson’s. This is formally asserted of the Asiki; and in Celtdom we have the legends of the changeling, the little, dark creature found in the cradle of the big, red-haired Celtic baby. And both are material and capable of dealing with material things and of making use of them. Miss Somerville has strange tales of them which are of our own day. Miss Somerville herself had seen the shoe that was found on the lonely hill. It was of the size that a child of about a year old might use, but it was heavily made, in the fashion of a workman's brogue, and had seen hard wear. And, again, she tells the story of two servants sent on a sudden errand at night. They were driving a car, and at the entrance of a certain town, the harness broke. And there they found a little saddler's shop, open in the dead of night, and two little men within — described with a shudder as "quare" — to whom the servants told their trouble. They were terrified almost out of their senses; they would not stay in the shop: but the work was done, and done well.

We have here a state of mind which is very hard to understand. What can an Immortal want with a workman's leather shoe? And how should Beings of another order from that of man, Beings to be beheld with awe and dread of the spirit, undertake saddlery repairs on demand? One would say that the belief that such things are so is impossible; but yet it exists in Ireland, probably to this day; and it is much like the negro belief as to the Asiki.

It is interesting to note, by the way, that Fairyland in Ireland seems strongly associated with leather. There is the matter of the fairy brogue, there is the adventure of the fairy saddlers; and then there is the Leprechaun, who is a fairy cobbler. He is, clearly, a distant cousin of the Asiki. And if, in spite of all his efforts to distract you, you continue to regard him with a fixed gaze, your reward will be a crock of gold.

Madame Rachel

THE OTHER DAY, reading the paper, I came upon a half-column that interested me. It was headed: “Slimness–While-You–Wait,” and a sub-heading ran: “The ‘Boiled Cyclist’ Treatment.” Who could resist such invitations as these! Not I.

I found that the article concerned a new “Beauty Parlour” in the Bond Street quarter. And how pleasant it is, by the way, to note the manner in which America is restoring to us the good old English word, “parlour,” which we had lost awhile. Well, in this Beauty Parlour, the lady who would achieve perfection of form must undergo many severe trials; and, indeed, this is the way of perfection of every kind, and there is no escape from it. And the trials of Bond Street are hard to bear; they almost recall the terrors which, in popular tradition, are supposed to await him who would pass through the Third Degree of a venerable secret order. Thus I read:

“First she (the person to be initiated in these mysteries) has to strip herself of her clothing and sit for twenty minutes in the ‘reducycle bath.’ The bath is surrounded by canvas which is fastened round her neck. In its interior a bicycle is fitted, and the client sits on the bicycle saddle and works the pedals as though she were actually riding quickly along a road.”

Then follows the Shower. To it succeeds the Roller, painted a pale mauve, “with kinks in it.” Then the Candidate is vested in a bathing costume, and there ensues the Ceremony of the Exercises on Coloured Mats to the music of the gramophone. Altogether, it strikes me as a strange but gorgeous rite; and I trust and believe that She renews her youth, in the fashion of that other She of Sir Rider Haggard’s invention.

In the bad old days, there were beauty parlours in Bond Street, though they did not call them then by that name. But there was no science then; only a great deal of wickedness. Listen, therefore, to the story of Sarah Rachel Leverson, called Madame Rachel, who lived at the corner of New Bond Street and Maddox Street, and said that she could make ladies beautiful for ever. Madame Rachel drove, on the face of it, much the same trade as that plied by Dickens's famous Miss Mowcher. She sold all sorts of cosmetics, enamels, paints, powders, rouges, unguents. She constantly proclaimed that she could make women beautiful for ever, and she came at last to Marlborough Street police station and to the Court of the Recorder of London, in the year 1868. The complainant was a Mrs. Borradaile, widow of a Colonel, who said that Madame Rachel had swindled her, one way and another, of £3000.

"On my first visit" — testifies Mrs. Borradaile— "I spent £10, and in the course of two or three days I had invested £170 with her. I paid her various sums of money for cosmetics, and so forth, during the latter part of 1864 and the commencement of 1865. Before purchasing these articles I asked her to do something for my skin, and she promised that if I would follow out her course of treatment in every particular she would succeed in making me beautiful for ever."

Poor Mrs. Borradaile! Serjeant Ballantine was retained for the prosecution — with him Mr. Straight and Mr. Montague Williams — and the last testifies that Mrs. Borradaile was "a sparse, thin, scraggy-looking woman, wholly devoid of figure; her hair was dyed a bright yellow; her face was raddled with paint." The matter went far beyond selling creams and powders, and Arabian herbs and nonsense of every sort in boxes and bottles and baths.

"On one occasion," said the witness, "I called on Madame Rachel, who told me that she had had an interview with the gentleman who had fallen in love with me. On asking his name, I was informed that it was Lord Ranelagh. I asked when he had met me, and the reply was, both before and after my marriage… Madame Rachel said that she would introduce me to him the next day… I called at Maddox Street, where the prisoner lived. Madame Rachel opened the door and said, 'I will now introduce you to the man who loves you.' She then introduced me to a man whom I believed, and still believe to be Lord Ranelagh. I said to him, 'Are you Lord Ranelagh?' and he answered, 'Yes; here is my card.' He then handed me a card, which I returned to him. The gentleman who gave me the card is the gentleman I now see in Court." This gentleman in Court, thus identified, was undoubtedly Lord Ranelagh. He gave evidence. He said he had often been in Madame Rachel's shop. He thought he had seen Mrs. Borradaile once at the shop, but he had no recollection of being introduced to her. He was asked, it would appear, what business he had in Madame Rachel's shop at all. He answered, "You don't suppose I went there to be enamelled."

Which reminds me of "Charley Pyegrave, the duke's son."

"He goes into a perfumer's shop, and wants to buy a bottle of the Madagascar Liquid."

"Charley does?" said Steerforth.

"Charley does. But they haven't got any of the Madagascar Liquid."

"What is it? Something to drink?" asked Steerforth.

"To drink?" returned Miss Mowcher, stopping to slap his cheek. "To doctor his own mustachios with, you know."

Well, the elderly woman in the shop said to Charley:

"Begging pardon, sir, it's not-not-not ROUGE, is it?"

"Rouge," said Charley. "What the unmentionable to ears polite do you think I want with rouge?"

But what was Lord Ranelagh doing at Madame Rachel's? Well, the curious are advised to consult the rumours of the time.

Madame Rachel, then, quite persuaded Mrs. Borradaile that Lord Ranelagh was desirous of marrying her. And, at Lord Ranelagh's express desire, Mrs. Borradaile was to go through an extra process of being made beautiful for ever. The poor, silly woman accordingly sold out securities and paid Madame Rachel £800 on account of £1000 "for bath preparations, spices, powders, sponges, perfumes, and attendance, to be continued till I (Mrs. Borradaile) am finished by the process." And from this moment the story surpasses the very bounds of extravagance. Madame Rachel said she was going to marry this happy couple "by proxy," otherwise "by letter writings." There were plenty of letter-writings handed over by Madame Rachel to Mrs. Borradaile. Sometimes they were signed "William," sometimes "Edward," Lord Ranelagh's name being Thomas; but, as Madame sagely observed, this was a wise precaution since letters are apt to be left about. They were odd letters. They all dwelt on the importance of keeping "Granny" (Madame Rachel) in good temper. They warned "Darling love, Mary, my sweet one," not to hold any communication with her family or with Lewis and Lewis — suspicious and untrustful tribes, both of them. The letters were in different handwritings, but, as "Granny" explained, Lord Ranelagh had hurt his arm, and sometimes made his servant write for him. Affectionate letters these: "I shall be at your feet — those pretty feet that I love — and you may kick your ugly old donkey"; "I would rather be shot like a dog than leave England without you"; "I heard you were insulted by a cabman in Oxford Street, yesterday. I wish I had been there"; "Mary, my heart's love, is it your wish to drive me mad? Granny has my instructions. Do as she tells you… . What is the meaning of the delay, at the eleventh hour? Granny lent me the money. You shall pay her, my own sweet one. Get the lace to-day and fear nothing. It will be £35." Clothes and lace and jewellery were necessary for the wedding, said Granny, and Mrs. Borradaile bought them — and Granny took care of them. Presumably, suspicion began to rise in the foolish woman's heart; she said she could not get any of these articles back. "You must ask the man who loves you for them back," said Madame, and she brought her victim a lighted cigar, "saying that Lord Ranelagh's love for me was as warm as that." That must have reassured Mrs. Borradaile, since soon after she executed a bond for £1600. This was for Lord Ranelagh, but Granny took care of it, and I suppose Granny also took care of a carriage which Mrs. Borradaile bought for her wedding.

And the end of the story? Five years' penal servitude for Granny.

Sir Benjamin The “Baron”

IT WAS WITH considerable delight that I read the other day an article “sticking up” very bravely for Harrison Ainsworth, and Dick Turpin, and the Ride to York, and the Tower of London, and all that world of brave things. I was pleased, because a man likes to have his opinions confirmed by high authority; and I have always had a very tender feeling for Harrison Ainsworth, recollecting how he made my ten-years’-old blood run cold by his description of the Subterranean Temple of the Demon in the “Lancashire Witches.” And it was of Harrison Ainsworth that I was chiefly thinking when I once observed that, though the Victorians did not always write well, they always wrote with a relish.

Things happened in those old Victorian story-books. There were lonely inns in which travellers were apt to be murdered. And these travellers were not always what they seemed. The names they gave were not always their own names. The apparent merchant sometimes turned out to be something very different. Sometimes they shuddered as they dismounted from their coaches. Sometimes they wrote vehemently as soon as they entered; sometimes they consigned papers to the fire and watched these papers burn to the last ember. Now and then the (apparently) faithful attendant of the Mysterious Stranger was not what he seemed. There were cases in which the traveller was seen one moment in the inn yard, and then had vanished in the twinkling of an eye, and had vanished for ever. Perhaps years afterwards a skeleton was discovered, buried deeply not far from the inn yard; and wife or sister, grown old and sick with vain waiting, came and gazed doubtfully with dim eyes upon the relics — and wondered.

There! Can you imagine what would happen if one submitted the above as an outline or sketch of a possible plot to our really modern writers, the veritable Georgians? I don’t think that they would be cross, or snap your head off, or wonder audibly what theatre put on transpontine melodrama in these days, or say it was interesting to find that Sue still found readers. There would be nothing violent of this kind; only the slight movement of a weary brow, before the conversation flowed back to its proper channel of “complexes” and skin-disease. Because you see, the Georgian novelist knows that the stuff of which we have been talking is not Life, has no relation to Life, and in a word, doesn’t happen. Exactly. And it all happened on the twenty-fifth of November, 1809, at Perleberg, a small Prussian town between Berlin and Hamburg. A coach and four drew up at the White Swan, and a tall, handsomely dressed man, wrapped up in a fur cloak lined with purple velvet, got down. He said he was in a hurry and wanted his lunch at once, and so, accompanied by his secretary and his servant, he entered the White Swan. It was noon when he arrived, and when he had finished his lunch he began to ask questions. Were there many soldiers stationed at Perleberg; who was in command? Captain Klitzing, of the Brandenburg Cuirassiers. Very good; where did he live? The stranger got the captain’s address, and ordered his horses to be put in at once. He did not seem to notice two Jew dealers who came into the inn as he was lunching. He went to Captain Klitzing’s house and found the captain with so bad a cold that he could hardly speak. The stranger said that he was Baron de Koch, that he was a merchant, and that he was now on a business journey to Hamburg. But, he added, trembling, he had seen something at the White Swan that frightened him, something that made him fear for his life; finally, that he would be grateful if Captain Klitzing would give him a guard during the few hours that he was at Perleberg. Captain Klitzing laughed at the request for a guard, whereon the stranger’s nerves got worse and worse. So the Captain said he should have two of his cuirassiers, and as the Baron trembled with cold — or terror — he was given a cup of hot tea, and he drank it gratefully, his hands shaking so that some of the tea was spilt. Then he put on the fur cloak with the velvet lining and went back to the White Swan. He ordered the horses to be taken out of the carriage, and sat down with a pile of papers about him, and began to write at top speed.

Seven o’clock in the evening. The Baron finished writing, burnt some documents, and once more ordered the horses to be put in. The soldiers were told that they could go, and as some of the witnesses declared, the Baron strolled into the inn kitchen and hung about there among the stablemen and postboys. It was said that some of these fellows must have seen him drawing out a full, fat purse and dangling a handsome watch in an absentminded sort of way. In the street a dim oil lamp hung up high in the air, and a stableman with a horn lantern was helping the postboy to harness the horses. The Baron stood there in the street, watching the horses being put in. On the steps of the inn, the Baron's secretary, having paid the bill, was talking to the landlord. Everything was ready. The postillion was standing with his hand on the saddle, waiting for the word to mount and away… when it suddenly became evident that the Baron had vanished.

And the mystery was never solved; it remains a mystery to this day. No time was lost on that dark and bitter night of November 25, 1809. The White Swan was searched, the posting-house was searched in vain; there was no trace of the traveller in the stables, in the outhouses, or in the street. The secretary sent a messenger to Captain Klitzing; no news of the Baron there, since his afternoon call. Then more ransacking of all the houses of the quarter, everybody joining in — except the two Jew tradesmen, who got into their carriage and resumed their journey. People remarked that they were the only persons present who took no interest in the quest for the lost Baron. Captain Klitzing remembered that his visitor appeared to be in mortal terror, to anticipate some dreadful fate. The Captain had laughed at the time; but now he began to wonder. He sent some of his men to seize the vanished stranger's travelling carriage; he gave orders that the Baron's secretary and his servant should be detained at an inn at the other end of the town; soldiers are posted at the White Swan; the civil magistracy is dragged out of bed to lend its aid, and the civil magistracy beats up Perleberg all through the night; and finds nothing. Meanwhile, the active Klitzing examines the Baron's secretary, and makes some strange discoveries. To begin with; the secretary confessed that though he had been known as Fisher, he was really Krouse. And as for the "Baron de Koch, merchant," he wasn't a baron, and he wasn't a merchant. He was Sir Benjamin Bathurst, late English Ambassador Extraordinary to Vienna. His mission to Vienna had failed, and he was making his way to England, via Hamburg. He had with him papers supposed to be of the highest importance. His false name, his lack of ambassadorial state were due to his desire to avoid the attentions of the French soldiers, who were then patrolling all Germany. Fisher, or Krouse, had been for some time a courier at the British Embassy at Vienna. The servant's name was Nicolaus Hilbert. Captain Klitzing left Perleberg, as he said, for a short journey of the utmost consequence. In reality, he consulted his military superior, who told him all about Sir Benjamin, the enormous importance of his mission, and the fury of Napoleon over the part which England had tried to play. But it was not known till later that before

Sir Benjamin Bathurst left Vienna the Prussian Government had warned him: to keep a sharp look-out on Krouse.

And after? Very little of consequence. The two Jew dealers were tracked to their abode. They were well-known people with the best of characters. The dubious Krouse and the servant pass out of the story. A week after the disappearance of Bathurst, his trousers were found in a thicket by two poor women gathering sticks. That thicket had been searched before without result. There were two bullet holes in one leg; but experts declared that the trousers had been held up, empty, to be fired at. In one pocket there was a letter, written, no doubt, at the White Swan. It was from Sir Benjamin to his wife. He told her of his fears. He was afraid, he said, that he would never see her or England any more. He added that if he were murdered it would be the doing of d'Entraigues, then the agent of Russia; a secret man, d'Entraigues, who had served all nations, and betrayed them all. And nothing more was ever known certainly. It was rumoured that Sir Benjamin was alive and a prisoner at Magdeburg, in French hands. Mrs. Bathurst — perhaps a wife, perhaps a widow — resolved to follow up this clue. Nothing came of her journey, save this: that she found that her intention of making it was known in Paris before it was suspected in London. She returned to London, and there the secret man, d'Entraigues, called on her. He said that her husband was dead, that the Governor of Magdeburg had been his gaoler till, on the order of Napoleon, the prisoner had been "put out of the Emperor's way." And d'Entraigues promised to tell Mrs. Bathurst the whole story. But soon afterwards he was assassinated by a dismissed servant, who immediately committed suicide. People said that at last the secret man had paid the penalty of knowing too much. Years later, in 1852, Mrs. Thistlethwayte, Sir Benjamin Bathurst's sister, was told that a skeleton had been found buried under a stable in Perleberg. The skull had been fractured by a blow of a hatchet; there were circumstances which linked the former owner of the house with Sir Benjamin's visit to Perleberg; this man, named Mertens, had been a servant at the White Swan. But Mrs. Thistlethwayte looked closely at the skull, and said that she was sure, from the shape, that it could not be her brother's.

But she may have been mistaken.

The Campden Wonder

MR. WILLIAM HARRISON was steward to the Viscountess Campden, of Campden, in Gloucestershire. One afternoon — to be precise, on the 16th of August, 1660 — he walked out from Campden to Charringworth, a place about two miles off, to receive some rent due to the Viscountess. He was late getting back, and between eight and nine in the evening his wife, feeling a little uneasy, sent the man, John Perry, to meet his master and bring him home. That night neither master nor man returned. Early the next morning Mr. Harrison's son, Edward, went towards Charringworth to enquire after his father. He met Perry coming from Charringworth, and was told by him that his father was not there. Then Edward Harrison and Perry went together to a village called Ebrington, between Charringworth and Campden, and at Ebrington a man named Daniel told them that Mr. Harrison had called on him on his way home from Charringworth the night before, but had not stayed. On this, the younger Harrison and the man turned back home, and on their way heard something of a hat, a band, and a comb found on the road between Ebrington and Campden by a poor woman, who was harvesting. They sought out the woman, they identified the hat, comb, and band as being the property of Mr. William Harrison. The hat and comb were hacked and cut, and the band — the broad round collar, ancestor of the legal bands of today, for which the bandbox was designed — bloody. Crowds came to look for the body of Mr. Harrison — his properties were found by a great brake of gorse — but no body was found. Mrs. Harrison was grievously alarmed. It struck her as highly suspicious that Perry, the manservant, had stayed out the whole night, instead of coming back, with news or without news. So Perry was haled before a justice of the peace, and told a very odd story. He said he set out for Charringworth, but soon met one William Reed, of Campden. It was getting dark, and Perry told Reed that he was afraid to go to Charringworth afoot, and so he would turn back and get his young master's horse, and ride to Charringworth. So Perry turned back, Reed being in his company, and came to the gate of the Harrison demesne. Reed went on his way, Perry stayed still by the gate. Then one Pierce came by, and Perry went with Pierce "a bow's shot into the fields," and again returned, Pierce being of his company; and so Pierce went on his way. And then Perry went and lay about an hour in the henroost, but could not sleep. Then the clock struck twelve and for the third time Perry sallied forth on his errand. But a great mist arose, and he lost his way, and lay the rest of the night under a hedge. At daybreak the next morning he at last ended his journey and came to Charringworth. Here he heard from William Plaisterer that Mr. Harrison had called the afternoon before and had received three-and-twenty pounds. And William Curtis had heard that Mr. Harrison had called at his house; but he was out and did not see him. And so Perry turned back and met young Edward Harrison, as we have heard already. Reed, Pierce, Plaisterer and Curtis were called and confirmed Perry's story so far as it concerned them.

The justice asked the man why he was afraid to go to Charringworth at nine, and not afraid at twelve. The answer was that it was dark at nine, but moonlight at twelve. Then he was asked why he did not inquire whether his master had come back after his first return and his second return. He said he saw light in his master's bedroom window, "which never used to be there so late when he was at home." It was considered wise to keep Perry in custody, and so he was held at Campden, sometimes in the prison, sometimes in an inn — a genial age — and there he told all sorts of stories. He told some people that Mr. Harrison had been murdered by a tinker, others that he had been robbed and murdered by a gentleman's servant, others that he had been killed and his body hidden in a bean-rick. The bean-rick was searched and nothing found. Finally, Perry confessed that William Harrison had been murdered by his mother and his brother. He declared that the two had "lain at him" — note the nearness of the seventeenth century idiom to our "had been at him" — ever since he entered the service of Mr. Harrison. They had pointed out how poor they were, and how simple it would be for John to tell them when Mr. Harrison was going to receive rents, so that they could waylay and rob him. These pleadings won at last upon John Perry's filial and fraternal heart, as he said, and on the Thursday morning — the day of Mr. Harrison's disappearance — he met his brother in the street of Campden and told him where his master was going in the afternoon, amiably remarking to brother Richard that if he cared to waylay Mr. Harrison he might have his money. That evening, Mrs. Harrison sent John Perry to meet his master, as we have heard, the time being about half-past eight. He met his brother Richard close at hand, and the two prowled about in the dusk of the evening till they came to some private grounds of Lady Campden's, called the Conygree. Certain persons were allowed to have a key which gave them passage through these grounds. Mr. Harrison, the agent, was, naturally, one of these persons, and he was accustomed to use the Conygree as a short cut to his house. Good son and brother John Perry saw a figure going into the Conygree, and told Richard Perry that this figure was probably his master, and that he could have his money. For his part, John observed, he would take a short walk in the fields. So John communes with nature, and then strolls into the Conygree. He finds his master on the ground, brother Richard upon him, and his mother standing by. William Harrison then cried out, "Ah, rogues, will you kill me?" John Perry, shocked, observed to Richard that he hoped he would not kill his master. Whereupon Richard, exclaiming briefly, "Peace, peace, you are a fool," strangled old Mr. Harrison — the agent was a man of seventy. The prudent Richard then took a bag of money out of Mr. Harrison's pocket and threw it into his mother's lap. The two Perrys carried the dead body into the garden adjoining the Conygree, and consulted what they should do with it. It was finally determined that it should be thrown into "the great sink by Wallington's mill, behind the garden." At this point John left the little family party, taking with him his master's hat, band, and comb, which he laid for the moment in the henroost. He then mooned about, in the manner described by him at his first examination, meeting Reed and Pierce. Finally, he took the hat, band, and comb, and after slashing them a little, laid them on the high-road, where the harvesting woman found them. And as to his master's body, said John, if it were not in the great sink, he did not know where it was.

The great sink was searched, the fishponds of Campden were searched, the ruins of Campden House, burnt in the Great Rebellion, were searched, but the body of William Harrison was not found. Nevertheless, Joan and Richard Perry, the mother and brother of John, were arrested; and the whole three charged with the murder of Mr. Harrison. Joan and Richard denied the fact with imprecations on themselves if they had any share in the deed alleged against them: John persisted in his accusations and declared he would maintain them to his death. All three prisoners were committed. On their way to prison, Richard, at the end of the procession, "pulling a clout out of his pocket, dropped a ball of inkle, which one of his guard taking up, he desired him to restore, saying it was only his wife's hair lace." But the guard showed it to John, who said sorrowfully that he knew it very well; his brother had strangled his master with it. Next day, being Sunday, the prisoners were taken to church. On their way, they passed Richard's house, and two of his children ran out to meet him. He took the smaller child on his arm, and led the other by the hand; whereupon both the children's noses began to bleed. This was thought to look badly for Richard.

There was another point. The year before Mr. Harrison's house had been broken into while he was at "lecture" — the Puritans were still in power in 1659 — and £140 had been taken. The justice of the peace, finding John in a confessing mood, asked him whether he knew about the robbery. Certainly, John knew. Richard had taken the money and hidden it in his garden. The garden was searched; nothing was found.

At the September assizes, the three were indicted for robbery and for robbery and murder. The Judge, Sir Christopher Turner, refused to try the latter charge, for the very good reason that no body had been found. On the charge of robbery — the robbery of 1659 —— they at first pleaded Not Guilty, but on advice altered the plea to Guilty, and enjoyed the benefit of the King's pardon and Act of Oblivion. Later, they denied any part in the robbery.

At the spring assizes of 1661, the three were tried again for murder, Sir Robert Hyde being the Judge. John's confession was put in evidence. Whereupon John said that he was mad when he uttered it, and knew not what he said. All three were found guilty of murdering William Harrison, condemned, and executed on Broadway Hill, in sight of Campden. Joan Perry, the mother, was hanged first. It was thought that she was a witch, and had cast a spell upon her sons, so that they could not confess while she lived. Richard then took his turn on the ladder, and died, protesting his innocence, and imploring his brother to tell all he knew about Mr. Harrison. John, the last to climb, wore "a dogged and surly carriage," and told the people he was not bound to confess to them. But at the last he said he knew nothing about his master's death; but, he added, they might, possibly, hear hereafter.

They did. In a little under two years Mr. Harrison came back to Campden.

He told the story of his adventures, in a letter addressed to Sir Thomas Overbury, Knight, of Bourton (near Campden), in Gloucestershire. He begins from the beginning.

“One Thursday in the afternoon, in the time of harvest, I went to Charringworth to demand rents, due to my lady Campden; at which time the tenants were bus in the fields, and late ere they came home, which occasioned my stay there till the close of the evening. I expected a considerable sum, but received only three-and-twenty pounds and no more. In my return home (in the narrow passage, amongst Ebrington Furzes), there met me one horseman, and said, ‘Art thou there?’ And I, fearing that he would have rid over me, struck his horse over the nose, whereupon he struck at me with his sword, several blows, and run it into my side; while I (with my little cane) made my defence as well as I could; at last another came behind me, run me into the thigh, laid hold on the collar of my doublet, and drew me to a hedge near to the place. Then came in another; they did not take my money, but mounted me behind one of them, drew my arms about his middle, and fastened my wrists together with something that had a spring lock to it as I conceived, by hearing it give a snap as they put it on; then they threw a great cloak over me, and carried me away. In the night they alighted at a hayrick which stood near unto a stone pit by a wall-side, where they took away my money, about two hours before day (as I heard one of them tell the other he thought it to be then). They tumbled me into the stone pit, they staid (as I thought) about an hour at the hayrick. When they took horse again, one of them bade me come out of the pit; I answered they had my money already, and asked what they would do with me; whereupon he struck me again, drew me out and put a great quantity of money to my pockets, and mounted me again after the same manner. And on the Friday night, about sun-setting, they brought me to a house… where they took me down almost dead, being sorely bruised with the carriage of the money. When the woman of the house saw I could neither stand nor speak, she asked them whether or no they had brought a dead man? They answered no, but a friend that was hurt, and they carrying him to a chirurgeon. She answered that if they did not make haste their friend would be dead before they could bring him to one. There they laid me on cushions, and suffered none to come into the room, but a little girl; there we stayed all night, they giving me some broth and strong waters. In the morning, very early, they mounted me as before, and on Saturday night they brought me to a place where were two or three houses, in one of which I lay all night on cushions, by their bedside. On Sunday morning they carried me from thence, and about three or four o'clock they brought me to a place by the seaside, called Deal, where they laid me down on the ground; and one of them staying by me, the other two walked a little off, to meet a man, with whom they talked; and in their discourse I heard them mention seven pounds, after which they went away together, and about half an hour after returned.

"The man (whose name, as I after heard, was Wrenshaw) said he feared I would die before he could get me on board; then presently they put me into a boat, and carried me on shipboard, where my wounds were dressed. I remained in the ship (as near as I could reckon) about six weeks, in which time I was indifferently recovered of my wounds and weakness. Then the master of the ship came and told me (and the rest who were in the same condition) that he discovered three Turkish ships; we all offered to fight in the defence of the ship and ourselves, but he commanded us to keep close, and said he could deal with them well enough. A little while after he called us up, and when we came on the deck we saw two Turkish ships close by us. Into one of them we were put, and placed in a dark hole, where how long we continued before we were landed, I know not. When we were landed they led us two days' journey, and put us into a great house or prison, where we remained four days and a half. And then came to us eight men to view us, who seemed to be officers; they called us and examined us of our trades and callings, which everyone answered; one said he was a chirurgeon, another that he was a broadcloth weaver, and I (after two or three demands) said I had some skill in physic. We three were set by and I was chosen by a grave physician of 87 years of age, who lived near to Smyrna, who had formerly been in England and knew Crowland, in Lincolnshire, which he preferred before all other places in England. He employed me to keep his still house, and gave me a silver bowl, double gilt, to drink in; my business was most in that place; but once he set me to gather cotton wool, which I not doing to his mind, he struck me down to the ground, and after drew his stiletto to stab me; but I, holding up my hands to him, he gave a stamp, and turned from me… . I was there about a year and three-quarters, and then my master fell sick on a Thursday, and sent for me, and calling me as he used by the name of Boll told me he should die, and bade me shift for myself. He died on Saturday following, and I presently hastened with my bowl to a port about a day's journey distant… . When I came thither, I addressed myself to two men who came out of a ship of Hamborough, which (as they said) was bound for Portugal within three or four days. I enquired of them for an English ship, they answered there was none. I entreated them to take me into their ship; they answered they durst not for fear of being discovered by the searchers."

To abbreviate Mr. Harrison a little: he at length prevailed on another man of the same ship to take him on board; the effective argument being a sight of the gilt bowl. He was placed below in the vessel "in a very uneasy place," and so well hidden that he escaped the Turkish searchers and was finally landed at Lisbon, free but moneyless. Here he fortunately fell in with an Englishman, a native of Wisbech, who paid for his passage to Dover, and so, with some pious and becoming expression of gratitude, Mr. William Harrison ends the story of his adventures, perils and deliverances.

Now, it may or may not have been noted, that I have told the whole story without comment or expression of opinion of any kind. And I have not commented, because I have no notion whether there is a single word of truth in the story. My authority is the State Trials, and one might think, on the face of it, that no more solid foundation of fact could be desired. But this is not so. The account in the State Trials is merely a reprint of a pamphlet issued in London in the year 1676:

"A True and Perfect Account of the Examination, Confession, Trial, Condemnation and Execution of Joan Perry, and her two sons, John and Richard Perry, for the Supposed Murder of William Harrison, Gent. London, printed for Rowland Reynolds, next Arundel Gate, over against St. Clement's Church in the Strand, 1676."

The pamphlet gives as its authority a letter sent by Sir T. O. (Thomas Overbury) to T. S. (T. Shirley), a London physician; but as both these gentlemen are far beyond all cross-examination, nothing is established thereby. Of course, the story reeks with improbabilities. At first sight, the most improbable circumstance of all is the conduct of John Perry in swearing away, not only the life of his mother and his brother, but his own life as well. But his conduct is not without precedent. To this day, people give themselves up for murders which they have not committed, and in John Perry's day women confessed freely to having shared in the monstrous horrors of the Witches' Sabbath. If the story be true, John Perry was a hysterical madman. And there is another point: the condemnation and execution of these people for murder, there being no *corpus delicti* — otherwise the body of the dead man or some identifiable part of it — producible; was such a thing possible? Unfortunately, it was. It was against all legal principle. The Civil Law forbade it. Lord Hale said: "I would never convict any person of murder or manslaughter unless the fact were proved to be done, or at least the body found dead." But, apparently, this was a matter left to the taste and fancy of the judge, for Lord Hale supports his principle by citing two cases in which men were hanged for the murder of persons who proved afterwards to be alive. So there is no improbability in this part of the story. As we have seen, the judge at the first assize, Sir Christopher Turner, held with Lord Hale and refused to try the Perrys, "because the body was not found." At the next assizes, the judge, Sir Robert Hyde, made no difficulties on the ground of the lacking body.

The big difficulty lies in Mr. Harrison's story. Why was he abducted, and who were his abductors? He speaks of other people on the ship as being in the same condition as himself. Was there a Little Syndicate which operated in old gentlemen, selling them to master mariners at seven pounds apiece? This seems unlikely. And could you transport this sort of goods from Campden, Gloucestershire, to Deal, Kent, without fear of interruption? I do not know; the tale must remain the Campden Wonder, so far as I am concerned.

The Man From Nowhere

IN THAT HIGHLY picturesque, but quite un-Dickensian book, “A Tale of Two Cities,” there is a curious chapter describing the reception at the house of Monseigneur — Monseigneur being a great nobleman, high in favour and power at Court. Dickens describes the company:

“Military officers destitute of military knowledge; naval officers with no idea of a ship; civil officers without a notion of affairs; brazen ecclesiastics of the worst world worldly, with sensual eyes, loose tongues, and looser lives; all totally unfit for their several callings, all lying horribly in pretending to belong to them, but all nearly or remotely of the order of Monseigneur, and therefore foisted on all public employments from which any living was to be got; these were to be told off by the score and the score.”

But there were still more remarkable people present at Monseigneur’s reception.

“In the outermost room were half a dozen exceptional people who had had, for a few years, some vague misgiving in them that things in general were going rather wrong. As a promising way of setting them right, half of the half dozen had become members of a fantastic sect of Convulsionists, and were even then considering within themselves whether they should foam, rage, roar, and turn cataleptic on the spot, thereby setting up a highly intelligible finger-post to the future, for Monseigneur’s guidance. Besides these Dervishes, were the other three who had rushed into another sect, which mended matters with a jargon about ‘the Centre of Truth,’ holding that man had got out of the Centre of Truth — which did not need much demonstration — but had not got out of the Circumference, and that he was to be kept from flying out of the Circumference, and was even to be shoved back into the Centre by fasting and seeing of spirits. Among these, accordingly, much discoursing with spirits went on, and it did a world of good which never became manifest.”

Dickens was thinking of a very curious sect, or occult fraternity, which existed in France in the later years of Louis XV. The founder of this fraternity or order (oddly enough, called "The Elect Cohens," Cohen being taken in its Hebrew significance of priest) was a mysterious person called Don Martines de Pasqually de la Tour, otherwise known as Martinez de Pasquales. Mr. A. E. Waite, from whose most curious and most interesting "Life of Louis Claude de St. Martin" I gather these particulars, says that Martinez was probably of Spanish origin; but that nothing is known of his early life or of the sources of the occult knowledge which he professed, truly or falsely, to hold in his keeping. He said that he was a transfigured disciple of Swedenborg, "and an initiate of the Rose Cross;" and one is tempted to infer from this latter claim that Martinez was either foolish or knavish, since all the story of the Rosicrucians is a dream about an order which never existed. However that may be, the evidence goes to show that Martinez, the Man from Nowhere, was in Paris in 1754, founding the Lodge — there was a Masonic connection — of the Elect Cohens. Later, the centre of the Elect Cohens was moved to Bordeaux, and here Martinez met Saint Martin, a young Tourainian of noble family, then a lieutenant in the regiment of Foix. Saint Martin became an enthusiastic admirer and disciple, and was initiated into the mysteries of the order. He was a valuable adherent; as a man of race he had access to the receptions of Monseigneur, and could propagate there the doctrines of his master. But the order of the Elect Cohens came to an abrupt end. It was understood by the faithful that Martinez had still certain secrets in reserve, that they had not yet attained to the highest grades of the order, when in 1772, the Grand Sovereign of the Elect Cohens was called by private affairs to the island of St. Domingo.

He never returned — in the body — dying there in 1774. And from that time Saint Martin gradually withdrew himself more and more from the world of occultism — which is a world where visible and sensible marvels happen or are supposed to happen — and attached himself to the teaching of Jacob Behmen, to the world of mysticism, where the signs and wonders are of the spirit, not of the body. Saint Martin ended as a Catholic Quaker, if one may use such a term. He accepted all the doctrines of the Church, and denied the efficacy of all its Sacraments.

But there was another disciple of Martinez de Pasquales, the Man from Nowhere, to whom very strange things happened. This was the Abbé

Fournié, who wrote a book called "Ce que nous avons été, ce que nous sommes, et ce que nous viendrons," published in London in 1801, and now very rare. Fournié states that at an early age he conceived "an intense desire for a demonstration of the reality of another life and the truth of the central doctrines of Christianity."

After eighteen months of profound agitation — I quote from Mr. Waite's life of Saint Martin — he met an unknown personage who promised a solution of his doubts, and pointing to the throng of a crowded thoroughfare observed: "They know not whither they are going, but thou shalt know."

This personage was Martinez. The Abbé speaks oddly of him. "He left the disciples often in suspense as to whether he himself were true or false, good or bad, angel of light or fiend. This uncertainty kindled so strongly within me, that night and day I cried out on God to help me, if He really existed. But the more I appealed the more I sank into the abyss, and my only interior answer was the desolating feeling — there is no God, there is no life to come, there is only death and nothingness." In spite of these desolations the Abbé continued in fervent prayer. He says that light came to him, but only in flashes, and now and then there were visions of things to come, which were afterwards fulfilled. In this manner he continued for five years "full of agitation and darkness, consumed by the desire of God and the contradiction of that desire. At length, on a certain day towards ten o'clock in the evening, I, being prostrated in my chamber, calling on God to assist me, heard suddenly the voice of M. de Pasqually, my director, who had died in the body more than two years previously. I heard him speaking distinctly outside my chamber, the door being closed and the windows in like manner, the shutters also being secured. I turned in the direction of the voice, being that of the long garden belonging to the house, and thereupon I beheld M. de Pasqually with my eyes, who began speaking, and with him: were my father and my mother, both also dead in the body. God knows the terrible night which I passed."

As Mr. Waite observes, it is clear that this proof of the life to come, so long and so fervently desired by the Abbé Fournié, almost frightened him to death. He describes an extraordinary sensation which accompanied the vision, "as of a hand passing through his body and smiting his soul, leaving an impression of pain which could not be described in words, and seemed to belong rather to eternity than time." The terror remained in the Abbé's soul as he wrote his story many years after the event; though he declares that he held with the figures of the vision an ordinary conversation, such as he might have held with the living. Then there was added to the ghostly assembly the appearance of his sister, who had been dead for twenty years, and, finally, there came “another being who was not of the nature of men.” The vision returned again and again and became persistent.

It is an extraordinary tale. As Mr. Waite notes, there can be no doubt of the Abbé’s sincerity or honesty. There is one mark which distinguishes these apparitions from the apparitions of our modern spiritualistic séance. That is the mark of awe and terror even to the point of agony; of a dread so great that it could be described as a Hand piercing body and spirit. So Job spoke of his vision:

“Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof.

“In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men,

“Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake,

“Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up.”

But, as I understand, the frequenters of the séance experience nothing of the dread of Job, nothing of the awful fear of the Abbé Fournié. They converse easily, familiarly, cosily with the spirits of the dead, and that Hand of Terror does not smite them.

And our conclusion? It is quite impossible to form any conclusion. Probably, I suppose, the long spiritual conflict through which the Abbé had passed had broken down the wall between perception and hallucination. There are all sorts of ways of breaking down this wall, one of them being brandy, the resulting visions being known as delirium tremens. Opium and haschisch also do the work in their manner; staring at a bright object such as a pool of ink or a crystal can induce visions in some subjects. And intense fatigue will now and then bring about like results. Amongst the nonsense and lies that gathered about the “Angels of Mons” legend, there were certain veridical stories, which no doubt gave a true account of the experiences of those concerned. Worn-out men on that terrible retreat of August, 1914, found their way barred by spectral chairs and burning candles that were not there. A distinguished officer wrote to me, telling me how he, several of his officers, and several of his men watched for twenty minutes a ghostly army.

“As we rode along I became conscious of the fact that, in the fields on both sides of the road along which we were marching, I could see a very large body of horsemen. These horsemen had the appearance of squadrons of cavalry, and they seemed to be riding across the fields and going in the same direction as we ourselves, and keeping level with us.” A party was sent out to investigate. They found nothing. “We were all dog tired and overtaxed,” said my correspondent; but he notes, very acutely, that all the observers saw the same appearance.

And so the Abbé Fournié may have hallucinated himself into that seeing of visions. Or perhaps not.

Morduck The Witch

THE BELIEF IN witchcraft died very hard. Indeed, it is not dead yet; but we call the thing and our belief in it by other names. It is not difficult, if you are so disposed, to consult both men and women who have a familiar spirit, in the year 1926.

Richard Hathaway was the defendant in an odd trial in this matter of witchcraft in the first year of Queen Anne. He said he had been bewitched by Sarah Morduck, and twenty years or so earlier, Sarah Morduck would, no doubt, have been hanged for the fact. But it was getting a little late, and so Richard was convicted of being a cheat and impostor, and pilloried in Southwark and Cornhill and at Temple Bar, and imprisoned for six months, and handsomely flogged — for being too late. Indeed Sarah Morduck had a narrow escape. Richard had vomited nails and pins, he could not speak nor open his eyes, great noises were heard in his house; all these troubles being due, as he said, to the spells of Sarah. Accordingly he went to the woman's house and scratched her savagely, and immediately experienced great relief. But there was a clever clergyman then at Southwark, where the persons of the story lived. It seemed that Hathaway, after the relief brought about by his scratchings, had relapsed, and Dr. Martin, rector of St. George's, calling on the man, found that he could neither speak nor see. So Dr. Martin told Hathaway that he had heard of his troubles, and had brought Sarah Morduck with him that she might be scratched again, and another cure effected. But in the background Dr. Martin had another woman, not visible to Hathaway, and when a hand was held out to be scratched, the Doctor had seen to it that it was the other woman's hand. Hathaway's eyes opened, and he began to talk, but, of course, the believers in witchcraft said that proved nothing. It has been laid down by high spiritualist authority that if a ghost is seized at a séance, and is found to be the medium swathed in white muslin, that proves nothing. Consequently, Sarah Morduck was haled from Southwark to the City, and set upon by the rabble, and scratched again in full court, but as luck and the turn of the tide of opinion would have it, acquitted in the end. Hathaway should have taken the hint. But he still persisted that he was bewitched, and now a spell had been laid upon him which prevented him from eating. He was consigned to the care and observation of a surgeon and in public kept up a tremendous fast. But crafty holes had been bored in the walls of his room, and through these holes he was observed to eat and drink most heartily. And so he was put upon his trial as a cheat and an impostor; whereupon the "prayers of the congregation" were asked for him in many churches, and good people collected money to support him in his trials. And poor Sarah, as counsel observed, was in grave danger of being torn in pieces by the mob. Dr. Martin, the Rector of Southwark, told the Court how he managed his ingenious device. There had been some difficulty, he said, in getting a woman who was willing to be scratched.

"I had before met with a poor woman, whom I ordered to follow me, who received alms of the parish, designing she should be the person the experiment should be tried on… . I told her I would give her a shilling if she would let this man scratch her. She flew off, and said she would not suffer it for all the world. At last somebody said, 'Here is a woman who will suffer herself to be scratched'; and this was one Johnson."

The Doctor goes on with his story; tells how his plain demonstration that Hathaway was a humbug, a cheat, and a liar did not demonstrate anything to the people who had made up their minds. Nay; the man himself had the impudence to speak to his parish priest in this style:

"Do you not believe," he said to Dr. Martin, "that I am bewitched?"

"No, I do not."

"Then," says he, "I may as well not believe what you say in the pulpit; I may say to you as our Saviour said to the Jews: 'Though you see miracles you will not believe.'"

The logic is almost modern.

The good Rector went down to Guildford Assizes, where Sarah Morduck was charged with the capital offence of witchcraft. He gave his evidence, and Sarah was acquitted. And the result to the Doctor?

"When I came to town, I was abused by many people, both openly and privately: 'You have the blood of that innocent man to be at your door; the woman had been hanged if you had not saved her; the judgments of God will fall on you.'"

And the general opinion was, added Dr. Martin, that he had been bribed, and the judge had been bribed, and the jury had been bribed, and that on the whole, mercy, and truth, and justice were fled out of the land since Sarah Morduck was not hanged, and oh! what must the feelings of poor Mr Hathaway be in this dreadful trial?

Mr. Bateman, of Pembrokeshire, gave an entertaining account of Hathaway's great performance of vomiting pins.

"I said to him, 'I hear you vomit pins!' 'Yes,' says he. Says I, 'Prithee let me see thee.' So he sat on a low seat, and they gave him something in a cup, and by drinking this I was to see him vomit pins; and he took some drink; but, as far as I could perceive, he did not swallow any. He pretended then to be in an agony and vomited several times, and there were pins on the ground. I had the room swept very clean, and gave him the same again. He vomited again, and there were abundance of pins on the ground again. I believe he vomited fourteen or fifteen times, and I believe there were some hundreds of pins on the ground; but I thought the pins were dropt from one or other; and I took up some of them, and they were dry."

Mr. Bateman searched Hathaway, and found pins by the parcel in his pockets. The man from Pembrokeshire concludes, sanely enough, that rascal Hathaway had some trick of dropping the pins on the ground, but he confesses that he could not catch him in the act, though he observed him keenly and closely. Then one Hearne, brother of the supposed witch, told how his sister was set upon and grievously used by the mob. Hearne applied for protection to Sir Thomas Lane, a magistrate, and that wise Solomon of a judge said there had been grievous provocation; and all the satisfaction Morduck and her brother received from the Court was that Sir Thomas ordered the witch to be scratched again. This done, Hathaway, supposed to be fasting under an evil spell, fell on some bread and cheese with enormous appetite, and "brustled about like a cock sparrow." Nobody could resist this, so poor Sarah Morduck was committed by Sir Thomas Lane to take her trial for witchcraft. Mr. Kensy, the surgeon to whose care Hathaway was entrusted, then told, with much liveliness, how he had laid traps for the impostor, how he had feigned a furious quarrel with his servant in

Hathaway’s presence; and how this servant, instructed by him, arranged to bring the man food and drink in secret; and how the doctor viewed, through a secret hole in the wall, Mr. Hathaway consuming fish, oysters, strong beer and brandy with immense relish, with so much relish, indeed, that he became extremely unwell. The maid-servant who was in the plot gave an example of the abusive language used by her master in the course of the sham quarrel: he called her “presbyterian jade”; a phrase that shows that people had not yet forgotten Oliver’s days in the first year of the reign of Queen Anne. And the maid relates how she gave Hathaway a bottle of stout — I did not know that strong porter was called so as far back as this — and this drink was so stout that the cheat became very merry, and danced about, and took the tongs and played upon them. But after that he was mighty sick — details omitted. Strange noises were heard every night in the house where Hathaway slept. A psychical researcher, named Hunt, told how he had observed this side of the mystery. Hathaway was put to bed, “three little things in black bags” called “the charms” were sewed on his shirt, and Mr. Hunt presently observed the man moving his hands about. Hunt struck the fellow’s hands and told him to keep them still or put them out of the bed.

“Then I and the company sitting still about the bed, Welling (Hathaway’s master) said, ‘Hearken, you will not believe; hear what a noise there is; the like is heard here almost every night.’ Whereupon all were silent. At last I heard a small scratching or rubbing at the bed’s feet; and putting my head close to the bed’s feet, listening, I heard something shriek; and perceiving the bed-clothes stir, I took hold of the fellow’s foot, and said, ‘I have caught the witch that made the noise.’ I thought it had been mice at first, but seeing the clothes move, I catched his foot.”

And so on, and so on. The defence called their witnesses who were sure, or almost sure, that Hathaway was bewitched. One of these, Mrs. Willoughby, gives curious evidence.

L. C. J. “Do you think he was bewitched?”

Willoughby. “I believe he was, my lord.”

L. C. J. “I suppose you have some skill in witchcraft. Did you ever see anybody that was bewitched before?”

Willoughby. “My lord, I have been under the same circumstances myself, when I was a girl… I flew over them all… one held me by one arm, another by the other, and another behind, and I flew sheer over their heads.”

L. C. J. “Woman, can you produce any of these women that saw you fly?”

But they were dead. After the Lord Chief Justice had summed up, the jury found Hathaway guilty with all convenient speed, and he received the sentence that his crimes deserved.

And the odd thing is that when I began to unbury this old tale, I thought it might interest because it was so hopelessly obsolete. But it seems to me now that there are modern applications in it; enough and to spare.

“Characters”

I AM WONDERING as I look through my book of “Characters” whether the number of queer people in the world has actually diminished in the last hundred years, or whether they are simply neglected, suffered to go about dressing oddly, behaving oddly, talking oddly, and dying oddly, without the tribute of more than a brief paragraph in the newspapers. On the whole, I am inclined to think this latter the true explanation of the case. For, as I remember, I once tried to draw a pale outline of a truly remarkable character who lived in our day; say some fourteen or fifteen years ago. In those days I was connected with a daily paper, and in the routine of the office I was sent down one fine day to Reigate, to make enquiries about a certain Mr. Campo Tosto, who had lived near that town, and had left his wealth — wealth of a curious kind — in a somewhat curious manner. At Reigate, I found that Mr. Campo Tosto’s house was about four miles away, and that it was situated in a hamlet called Burnt Green. I began to be entertained. Decidedly, there was to be something odd about this tale. Here was the late Campo Tosto living at Burnt Green; which was to all intents and purposes a translation of his name into English. Very good; elated, I hired a trap at Reigate, and we drove on our way. I asked the driver if he knew anything about Campo Tosto, deceased. Not much; he was a queer old gentleman; he didn’t like people about his grounds, and sometimes he would shoot at trespassers.

“Shoot!” said I. “Shoot at them with a gun!”

“Yes, with a gun now and then; but mostly with a bow and arrows!”

Now there were two oddities mentioned in the paragraph on which my enquiries were based. The wealth of Campo Tosto consisted almost wholly in antiquities and objects of art. The late fifteenth century had been the queer old gentleman’s favourite period; and his collection contained all sorts of pieces of that age: pictures, chests, spike candlesticks, statues; valued, I believe, at two thousand pounds or thereabouts. And all this property he had left to a man who, with his wife, had looked after him for some time. This man had been a farm labourer, and his name was Turk; an odd sort of name for an English labourer. We drew near the residence of the late Campo Tosto; a house removed a little way from the road on a slight hillside; a place rather pretentious in a small way without being in the least interesting; about fifty or sixty years old, I suppose. And just then we ran into Mr. Turk, the happy heir of mediæval art. He seemed worried. Men with cameras and long sticks buzzed about him. They wanted him to be photographed in the interests of the public, but he denied them, and did so with considerable irritation. I jumped out of the trap, and put my business before him. He stood still for a moment; and that was enough. Four cameras clicked at once, as Mr. Turk firmly declined to have anything to do with me. Turk declared that he would tell me nothing, show me nothing. "This is the only thing I'll do for you," he said. "Give me that paper," I gave him my paper, open at the "leader page." He deliberately turned it upside down, and read out nine or ten lines of inverted type with the greatest ease, and with absolute correctness.

"You see," said Turk, cunningly, "I used to be a farm labourer, but of late I've had a lot to do with fuller's earth."

He was evidently convinced that he had furnished me with a complete and lucid explanation of his singular feat; a matter which is no feat at all to those engaged in the technical side of newspaper production, but not an accomplishment of the ordinary man.

I walked beside him on the path leading to his hall door. I was endeavouring to wheedle and persuade; without the faintest result. Now and again, he would stop to emphasise his denial with a blow of his fist on his open palm; and again the cameras went click, click. Finally, we got to the hall door, which was half glass. I had just caught a glimpse of a huddle of strange things within; Madonnas dim and rich, in curious frames of carven gold, great brass candlesticks that had stood before Flemish altars and had heard the holy mutter of the Mass, carved chests with linen-fold panels, saints in oak, grey with age — when Mrs. Turk appeared, terrible as an army with banners. Not even the men of the cameras could abide her onset. We all fled, as sheep before the wolf.

And then I went home and set down everything, just as it had happened. But it never got into print. People in authority at the newspaper office sidled into my room and looked at me quietly, keenly. They took counsel together over the matter. I think it was lucky that my engagements for the next few weeks were of an entirely ordinary kind, for if I had lit on anything remotely resembling the wonder world that had been disclosed to me at Burnt Green, I feel sure that I should have had an interview with a specialist; a specialist in the affairs of the mind.

The moral is obvious. We do not hear of “Characters” now, because men are not suffered to write about them. They have become incredible, owing, as I believe, to a certain grossness and thickening of the power of apprehension. I have known many characters myself: there was the case of the lady, a member of a wandering company of entertainers, whose sentimental and pathetic ballad usually touched all hearts at the seaside. One afternoon she perceived to her amazement and indignation that the ballad was not going at all well. She heard some gasps of horrified wonder, then chuckles, then open mirth. Furious, and rightly so, for she was a most delightful and accomplished singer, she turned to leave the stage, and, turning, she saw the cause of this altered reception. On the floor, against the backcloth depicting a happy valley, bowered in roses, there crawled on his stomach another member of the company. One eye was upturned, and it was bloodshot. Between his teeth he held a gigantic carving knife. Years afterwards, this same gentleman caused some little commotion in Holborn, between two and three in the morning. He was reposing on his back in a horse-trough, calling loudly for his solicitor, declining to move till his legal adviser should attend. And the resident in a southern suburb who demanded in a formal and serious letter that his next door neighbour should chain up the bees in his hive, “because your bee has stung my baby’s bottom” — he deserved fame, but the age denies it him.

It was otherwise of old. “Characters” were once a literary genre; and I have often wondered as to those who compiled these chronicles of odd and whimsical lives. There is a certain style which was evidently considered appropriate to the matter; for the manner of these biographies never varies. The stranger the tale, the more stolid, flat and insipid does the chronicler become. I feel sure that every word is true; no liar could write with such dulness. Take the case of Betty Bolaine, born at Canterbury, in the year 1723. She was of “a covetous turn.” She smiled on many suitors for the sake of the presents they gave her.

“At an assembly at Canterbury, when large hoop-petticoats were universally worn, the ladies, complaining of the inconvenience of the fashion, agreed to lay aside their hoops for awhile. Miss Bolaine objected to this proposal, fearing her saving contrivances would make her laughed at. However, her objections were overcome by her companions, and instead of a cane hoop she exhibited a straw one stitched with pack-thread and red tape and covered by an old dirty apron of her father’s.”

Miss Bolaine found a man after her own heart, a Mr. Box, with whom she set up house-keeping on the most economical principles.

“With this man she could eat a mouldy crust, with frowsy or stinking meat, sometimes picked up in the road, and cooked on cabbage stalks, burnt with turf, which was constantly stolen from the commons by night. These, with dried furze bushes, and dead stalks from their garden, constantly supplied fuel all the year round… . At this time, she was sometimes seen in a jacket crimped round her waist, and made of bed furniture, having monkeys, macaws and frogs depicted in needlework… . Her upper bonnet (for she wore two) consisted of thirty-six pieces of black stuff, curiously joined together; the under one was an old chip hat she once found on a dunghill in a garden, and which she was remembered to have worn nineteen years at least. Over this covering sometimes she would throw pieces of gauze, silk brocade, and tiffany, to make herself fine, as she thought… in this manner did she call every Sunday evening on the Dean of Canterbury, stumping through the hall and up the great staircase into the drawing-room.”

There is something stupendous about this bundle of unsavoury rags calling on the Dean of Canterbury; and Miss Bolaine’s will was also picturesque. A dozen or so of people had endured her and bribed her for long years; and she left the whole of her fortune of £20,000 to a Prebendary of Canterbury, whose acquaintance she had just made.

The miser was a great favourite with the depicter of “Characters,” as the friends of Mr. Boffin and of Silas Wegg will remember, but he had other strings to his bow. There was the Reverend George Harvest, “a lover of good eating almost to gluttony, extremely negligent in his dress, and a believer in ghosts, goblins, and fairies”: there was the great painter, George Morland, who went through the ways of Marylebone, carrying a pig which he matched against every dog he met; there was Thomas Topham who could roll up a large pewter dish with his fingers; the Cock Lane Ghost; and the Fasting Woman of Tutbury — for Mrs. Nickleby, it seems, was wrong in alluding to this Character as the Thirsty Woman.

“Doubles” In Crime

THERE ARE CASES, in life and at law, which must ever remain mysteries. We may be assured, as reasonable beings, that the verdict was truly given, that the truth of the matter was reached, and yet at the unreasonable back of our heads there will be that little jot of hesitation, that unjustifiable “and yet,” which refuses to be quashed or put out of court.

There is such a case as this in Montagu Williams’s wonderful volume of reminiscences. The affair happened somewhere in the mid-’eighties, and in its day was known as “The Brighton Bigamy.” One Miss Emma Dash met a gentleman on the Parade at Brighton, shortly before Eastertide. He introduced himself. He said he had met Miss Dash at a dance in London, and he was allowed to join the young lady, who was promenading with her mother. Captain McDonald — that was the name he gave — told the story of his heart. He was a sea captain, and four years before he had been engaged to a lady, who, her mother said, was over young to marry yet. So the Captain waited; but when he returned from his last voyage he found his sweetheart married to another. And he drew a moral: if he ever did get married, he avowed, he would take his wife aboard with him. Captain McDonald, it appeared, was every inch a sailor. One might almost venture to call him a Jack Tar. There were no cautious delays, no slow deliberations for him. He was full of the rush, the fine impulsiveness of the deep blue mariner — of fiction. That very afternoon, on permission given, he called on the young lady and her mother, and drove Miss Dash to Lewes. They dined at the White Hart and drove back to Brighton. At the station, the Captain took train to London, promising to send a wire to Miss Dash. The wire was duly received; it requested Miss Dash to meet the 12.34 train, and, if possible, secure the man who had driven them to Lewes. The two met, drove to Worthing, dined there, and returned to Brighton. The Captain saw Miss Dash home, and asked the mother for the daughter’s hand. Mrs. Dash said that really they had known him for a very short time; still, she gave her consent. Captain McDonald thereupon said that he would get the licence directly. In the course of conversation he happened to mention the name of his ship: it was the Kaikoura. Next day came the Captain with the licence, and the two went to a clergyman. The Captain, evidently unprejudiced by any ecclesiastical bias, said he would like to be married on Good Friday. But the clergyman declined, and it was arranged that the wedding should take place the day after, Easter Eve. They were duly married at St. James's Church, among those present being Mrs. Dash, a Miss Lewis, and a Mr. May. After the breakfast Captain and Mrs. McDonald went away to Chichester. They came back to Brighton on Easter Monday, and the Captain departed, to go to his ship, as he said, there to make arrangements for the due reception and entertainment of his bride. But he never came back.

Some months afterwards, a Mr. Osborne, who had been one of the wedding guests, was at a garden-party at Fulham, given by the Butchers' Company. There he saw a gentleman dressed as a Highlander, and he thought he recognised him as that missing Highlander, Captain McDonald. Osborne thereupon tapped his man on the shoulder, and accused him of being Miss Dash's recreant husband. The Highlander denied it, and said his name was Malcolm. He was detained, and poor Miss Dash — or Mrs. Captain McDonald — was brought up from Brighton, and promptly identified the man as her husband. Mr. Malcolm denied everything. He said he had never been to Brighton in his life, and that he was married to another lady. When it came to the trial, the bride, the priest, and all the wedding guests swore without hesitation that Malcolm and McDonald were the same. On the other hand, Montagu Williams, defending, called, as he says, a host of witnesses who swore, also without hesitation, that the prisoner was in London on the days when, according to the prosecution, he was courting Miss Dash and getting married at Brighton. Mr. Malcolm, who was a meat-salesman at Newgate Market, received a most excellent character; he was, they said, the strictest of teetotallers. And Mr. Williams, his counsel, was able to produce a better piece of evidence even than this. He called the manageress of the hotel at Brighton where Captain McDonald told Miss Dash that he was staying, just before the wedding. The manageress swore that on the night before Good Friday a Captain McDonald was undoubtedly staying at her hotel, and also that the prisoner was, most certainly, not the Captain McDonald whom she had entertained. But then, again, all the wedding guest witnesses recognised on Malcolm's face a scar which, they said, they had seen on the face of McDonald. The signature on the marriage register was produced, and the master-butcher, Malcolm's employer, admitted, against his will, that, in his opinion, the name McDonald was in the handwriting of his man, Malcolm. And then, a very odd circumstance: McDonald had told Miss Dash that his ship was called the Kaikoura. And this was the name of a ship which had brought over a consignment of meat from Australia to Malcolm's master — a short while before McDonald went courting at Brighton.

The general defence was that Malcolm must have a double, a man exactly like him, who could honestly be mistaken for him. And this strange thing happened, in fact, which happened in fancy in the "Tale of Two Cities."

"While I was addressing the jury," says Montagu Williams, "and dwelling upon the probability that there were two men concerned who closely resembled one another, an individual, either by accident or design, wandered into the Court and took up his place underneath the dock, when it was immediately perceived that he bore a striking resemblance to the prisoner. It was, of course, not for one moment suggested that he was the mysterious bridegroom."

The jury disagreed. The case was tried again in the following sessions, but by that time Montagu Williams was too ill to undertake the defence. "O Jaggerth, Jaggerth, Jaggerth! all otherth ith Cag–Maggerth, give me Jaggerth." Malcolm was defended by another counsel, found guilty, and sentenced to five years' penal servitude. And, apparently, the verdict was a just one, since Montagu Williams adds: "It subsequently transpired that Miss Dash was not the only woman with whom he had committed bigamy."

And yet, what about that "host of witnesses" (say half a dozen) who swore that Malcolm was in London, not at Brighton, on the critical dates? Professional perjurers, hired on the Jagger's system? Possibly. And the hotel manageress, with her evidence as to a Captain McDonald, who was not the prisoner, Malcolm, staying at her hotel? Here it would be interesting to consult the full report of the case. In the summary before me, it does not appear whether the manageress were asked if this guest of hers were like the prisoner, though she was sure he was, in fact, not the prisoner. There, evidently, is the real point. McDonald is not a very rare name. It might easily happen that a veritable McDonald and a man who had falsely taken the name might be in Brighton at the same time.

How Clubs Began

ONE OR TWO shop fronts of our old Regent Street still survive amongst the ruins and the new buildings which are more depressing than any ruins. But the goodly street is ended, and it seems fitting that Mr. Jaschke, the Barber of Kings, did not long survive the destruction of his famous shop.

There was a picture in his window that was one of the features of London, like the Filter in Fleet Street and — in the same thoroughfare — the Meerschaum Pipe, with the carving of the Battle of Leipsic on the bowl, priced at one hundred guineas. Mr. Jaschke's picture represented a personage in the costume of a hundred years ago. Long, dark locks flowed luxuriant and profuse over his shoulders, and the inscription was, "The Secret of Beau Brummel." It advertised some cunning preparation which would make baldness impossible; and it is gone, like many another London landmark. Too many, indeed, of these landmarks have departed from us, and the men who come back to us after their years of service in the Malay States and China and Persia will look round vainly, seeking for things that are to be seen no more. It was not so formerly. Twenty years ago a friend of mine who had been in China for some time came back and found London the same as ever. "Nothing has changed," he said. "The chickens are still feeding in the window of the incubator shop at the top of Regent Street." The chickens have long flown away.

But about Mr. Jaschke and his shop. We have all heard how King Edward pronounced him to be the perfect barber; the man who knew not only the art of beard-trimming in perfection, but also that more difficult art of hearing everything and saying nothing. Royalty was the province of Jaschke's razor and scissors; his back shop was called the House of Lords, so noble was the custom of the place. And, considering these things, the awful question has just struck me: what would have happened to me if I had strolled into Jaschke's and asked for a shave or a hair cut? This is a very deep and perplexing question, but the situation is not without precedent. Newman Noggs, it may be remembered, once escorted Miss Morleena Kenwigs to a highly genteel establishment in Soho, where they not only cut and curled ladies elegantly and children carefully, but shaved gentlemen easily. And while Morleena's pigtails were being attended to there presented himself for shaving a big, burly, good-humoured coal-heaver, with a pipe in his mouth, who, drawing his hand across his chin, requested to know when a shaver would be disengaged.

The journeyman, to whom this question was put, looked doubtfully at the young proprietor, and the young proprietor looked scornfully at the coal-heaver, observing at the same time:

"You won't get shaved here, my man."

"Why not?" said the coal-heaver.

"We don't shave gentlemen in your line," remarked the young proprietor.

"Why, I see you a-shaving of a baker, when I was a-looking through the winder, last week," said the coal-heaver.

"It's necessary to draw the line somewheres, my fine fellow," replied the principal. "We draw the line there. We can't go beyond bakers. If we was to get any lower than bakers, our customers would desert us, and we might shut up shop." The situations seem to me fairly analogous. But what would I have said, if I had ventured into the "House of Lords" at Jaschke's, asked for a shave, and been told that Jaschke didn't shave gentlemen in my line? Should I have observed, "I see you a-shaving of a temporary major," and would Jaschke have replied that he drew the line at temporary majors? It is a curious and a doubtful point.

And that consideration led me to another curious point, how, formerly at all events, things that were nominally public were, in fact, private. In the mythical days before the War you might find yourself in an old-fashioned country town and wander into the bar-parlour of an old-fashioned inn. There would be half a dozen comfortable-looking men, substantial farmers and tradesmen, talking together over their reasonable potations, and by the fire an inviting and an empty chair. In it you would sit down, and as you did so a round man would beg your pardon "but that's Mr. Apple's chair." "He's sat in that chair every night for thirty years, has Mr Apple," another round man would say to his neighbour, and there would be nothing for it but to get up as quickly as possible and leave Mr. Apple his place by the hearth. And in some such fashion, I suppose, certain of the old coffee-houses and chocolate-houses were converted from a public to a private use, sometimes by way of business, sometimes by way of pleasure.

Lloyd's was once Lloyd's Coffee House, and White's was White's Chocolate House in the year 1700, and for some time after. Indeed, as late as 1733, the proprietor, Mr. Arthur, "having had the misfortune to be burnt out of White's Chocolate House, is removed to Gaunt's Coffee House, next the St. James's Coffee House in St. James's Street, where he humbly begs they"— "all noblemen and gentlemen"— "will favour him with their company as usual." Evidently, it was still an open house, in name at all events; and it would probably be a difficult matter to trace the successive steps by which White's became a club in the modern sense, open to its members, but strictly private as far as all others were concerned. Possibly a room was at first appropriated to the use of a few constant and privileged customers, who constituted the club and eventually took possession of all the rooms in the Chocolate House. There was, no doubt, a transitional period, as Davies, writing of Colley Cibber, remarks:

"But Colley, we are told, had the honour to be a member of the great club at White's and so, I suppose, might any man who wore good clothes and paid his money when he lost it."

Indeed, it is certain that Colley Cibber was a member, since a book of rules and list of members dated 1736 contains his name, with those of the Duke of Devonshire, the Earls of Cholmondeley, Chesterfield and Rockingham, Sir John Cope, and Major–General Churchill. It seems likely, then, that Davies — he was the Tom Davies who kept the bookseller's shop in Russell Street, Covent Garden, where Boswell first met Johnson — was wrong in thinking that any well-dressed man who paid his gaming debts could be a member of "the great club at White's." There might have been a public room into which the well-dressed man might stroll; but I do not think he would stay very long in the room occupied by the Duke and the Earls.

The first traces of a club subscription are to be found in the 1736 rules. It is directed that "every member is to pay one guinea a year towards having a good Cook," and it was not till 1775 that this guinea became ten and of general application. A few years later an order was made that dinner should be served daily while Parliament was sitting, the reckoning to be twelve shillings a head: in our money, at least two guineas, and probably more. The old Chocolate House, as it existed in the days of the *Tatler* and *Spectator* had been distinguished for "gallantry and intrigue, pleasure and entertainment," the later club had become the headquarters of high play. Walpole writes in 1750:

"They have put in the papers a good story made on White's. A man dropped down dead at the door was carried in; the club immediately made bets whether he was dead or not, and when they were going to bleed him the wagerers for his death interposed, and said it would affect the fairness of the bet."

And so Lord Lyttleton says that he trembles to think that "the rattling of a dice-box at White's may one day or other (if my son should be a member of that noble academy) shake down all our fine oaks."

Indeed, the rules deal more and more with the apparatus of gambling. A rule of 1736 directs that "every member who is in the room after 7 o'clock and plays is to pay Half a Crown." Note, by the way, that the phrase "in the room" goes to confirm my conjecture that the original club occupied one room in the Chocolate House; there being other rooms open to Davies' man in good clothes, who was not a member. Then, the "Picket Cards" are to be charged to the Dinner or Supper Bill, and the Quinze players are to pay for their own cards, the Dice used at Hazard are to be paid for by Boxes, and it is ordained that each member who plays at Chess, Draughts, or Backgammon "do pay One Shilling each time of playing by daylight and half a crown Each by candlelight." But White's, like the barber in "Nicholas Nickleby," did draw the line somewhere. There was a Rule that "No Member of the Club shall hold a Faro Bank."

Polite Correspondance

THEY TALK MUCH of Dr. Johnson’s Letter to Lord Chesterfield. Certainly, it is an amazing, a triumphant epistle. It is, perhaps, the palmary example of how agony long endured, shame, misery and humiliation can at last turn to flame and a sword, and rend and devour and hew asunder the wretched tormentor who is found at last to be but a Wig and buckram and a grin and a black heart. Listen to the phrases. They are well known, and yet I think that they cannot be too well known.

“When upon some slight encouragement I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address; and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre* — that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found myself so little encouraged that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in publick, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could, and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

“Seven years, my Lord, have now passed since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a Patron before… the notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known and do not want it.”

“Till I am solitary and cannot impart it.” Johnson’s wife had died in the interval between the beginning and the end of the Dictionary. An absurd woman, they say, many years older than Johnson, given to “cordials” somewhat too freely, given also to the extravagant use of paint as applied to the face; but yet the Doctor loved her dearly. It would have been an exquisite joy to tell his “Tetty” how the great Lord Chesterfield was the fervent friend of the poor, ragged, starving scholar, the approver of his work and his helper in it. But Tetty was dead, and it had never been possible to utter that comfortable word; and so, I say, agony turns to flaming fire, to this great letter of denunciation.

There is no letter that I know of worthy of being compared with it. But Johnson’s letter is tragedy; the spectacle of a soul on fire, while yet the tears rain down from the man’s eyes. There is no spectacle, I think, that can be paralleled with this. But if I were compiling an anthology of letters, I believe that I could find something on the comic side, worthy at least of being in the same volume.

A little way off the white limestone road that winds by the river from Newport to Caerleon-on-Usk, in Monmouthshire, there is, or was, an ancient dwelling called St. Julians. In this place lived, in the time of Queen Elizabeth, a certain Sir William Herbert, third son of the first Earl of Pembroke. This gentleman was once annoyed by a Mr. Morgan, who is only known as the object of Sir William’s fury. And thus we begin:

“Sir — Peruse this letter in God’s name. Be not disquieted. I reverence your hoary hair. Although in your son I find too much folly and lewdness, yet in you I expect gravity and wisdom. It hath pleased your son, late of Bristol, to deliver a challenge to a man of mine, on the behalf of a gentleman (as he said) ‘as good as myself’ who he was, he named not, neither do I know; but if he be as good as myself, it must be either for virtue, for birth, for ability, or for calling and dignity: for virtue, I think he meant not, for it is a thing which exceeds his judgment; if for birth, he must be the heir male of an Earl, the heir in blood of ten Earls, for in testimony thereof I bear their several coats. Besides, he must be of the blood royal, for by my grandmother Devereux, I am lineally and legitimately descended out of the body of Edward IV. If for ability, he must have a thousand pounds a year in possession, a thousand pounds more in expectation, and must have some thousands in substance besides. If for calling and dignity, he must be knight, or lord of several seignories, in several kingdoms; a lieutenant of his county; and a counsellor of a province.

“Now, to lay all circmnstances aside, be it known to your son, or to any man else, that if there be anyone who beareth the name of gentleman, and whose words are of reputation in his county, that doth say, or dare say, that I have done unjustly, spoken an untruth, stained my credit and reputation in this matter, or in any matter else, wherein your son is exasperated, I say he lieth in his throat, and my sword shall maintain my word upon him, in any place or province, wheresoever he dare, and where I stand not sworn to observe the peace. But if they be such as are within my governance, and over whom I have authority, I will, for their reformation, chastise them with justice, and for their malapert misdemeanour bind them to their good behaviour. Of this sort I account your son, and his like; against whom I will shortly issue my warrant, if this my warning doth not reform them. And so I thought fit to advertise you hereof, and leave you to God."

How magnificent is "my grandmother Devereux!" The race of such grandmothers is, I am sure, extinct. No man can write such a letter now. No man dares in these days to think so nobly of himself and his ancestors. Sir Leicester Dedlock, even, would not have addressed Mr. Lawrence Boythorn in this superb and exalted manner. He would have instructed Mr. Tulkinghorn to take some kind of proceedings, and though Mr. Tulkinghorn was a great man in his way, after all he was but an attorney. And recourse to an attorney is but a shabby substitute for the resounding boasts and the terrific threats of "old Sir William Herbert of St. Gillyans," as his age called him.

And now for an example of a very different school of letter-writing. We are to fall a little in the world. Our polite correspondent is neither a Georgian saint and sage, nor a high Elizabethan gentleman. He is Mr. Percy Mapleton, generally known as Lefroy, who is in Maidstone Gaol, awaiting his trial for the murder of Frederick Isaac Gold upon the 27th of June, 1881. He is addressing a lady who, I believe, was a relation of his:

"My Darling Annie,

"I am getting this posted secretly by a true and kind friend, and I trust you implicitly to do as I ask you. Dearest, should God permit a verdict of 'Guilty' to be returned, you know what my fate must be unless you prevent it, which you can do by assisting me in this way. Send me (concealed in a common meat pie, made in an oblong tin cheap dish), a saw file, six inches or so long, without a handle; place this at bottom of pie, embedded in under crust and gravy. And now, dearest, for the greater favour of the two. Send me, in centre of a small cake, like your *half-crown* one, a tiny bottle of prussic acid, the smaller the better; this last you could, I believe, obtain from either Drs. Green or Cressy for *destroying a favourite cat*. My darling, believe me when I say, as *I hope for salvation*, that this last should only be used the last night allowed me by the law *to live*, if it comes to that last extremity. Never while a *chance of life remained* would I use it, but only as a last resource… . By packing these, as I say, carefully, sending with them a tin of milk, etc no risk will be incurred as my things are, comparatively speaking, never examined. Get them yourself soon, and direct them in a feigned hand, without any accompanying note. If you receive this safely, and will aid me, by return send a postcard, saying; '*Dear P., Captain Lefroy has returned*.'"

It has been remarked, I believe, that the profuse use of the italic character is often a sign of a weak and confused mind. It is certainly evidence of such a state in this extraordinary letter of Lefroy's. It will be noted that he italicises phrases which need no italics. "As I hope for salvation," is quite clear in Roman type; "a chance of life," "a favourite cat" are phrases which involve no obscurity. There are, indeed, phrases which the commentator might write in italics or mark with bracketed notes of exclamation, and chief of these is Lefroy's remark that his things were, "comparatively speaking, never examined." How do you "comparatively speaking," never examine anything? Clearly, the man's mind was a heap of foolishness and confusion; he doesn't even understand how a meat pie is made, as appears by his idle talk about "under crust." He has been reading silly fictions about prisoners escaping by means of hidden files, the kind of fiction with which Tom Sawyer embittered the life of the unfortunate Jim, who "mashed his teeth" by biting on a brass candlestick concealed by Tom in the negro's prison fare. And the "feigned hand" of Lefroy is much on the level of the "nonnamous letters" which Tom insisted on writing to Jim's gaolers. And it must be said that the poor woman to whom this extraordinary letter was addressed seems to have belonged to the crazy world which Lefroy himself inhabited. She replied. She did not say, as kindly as might be, "don't talk nonsense." She did not perceive that the file business was sheer idiocy, but:

"First I must tell you that the delay about what you mentioned has happened through our being told that only two shops in London make them, but trust before you have this it will have arrived safely; if so, say in your next: ‘The little basket with butter, etc., came safely.’”

And her letter, too, is full of italics, and many phrases are in “small caps.” Lefroy, clearly, was a man of confusion, and lived in a world of confusion. If he had avoided italics, he might have avoided Maidstone Gaol, the hangman and the rope.

Casanova In London

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, that extraordinary, admirable, and detestable age, gave us all manner of wonderful things and men, but was, above all, rich in adventurers, in the species which was rightly named *chevaliers d'industrie*. Rightly, because there was always something of polish, of singularity, of distinction about the eighteenth century rogue. The species, I think, is extinct.

We have swindlers now in plenty, confidence men in abundance. There were some highly ingenious artists in knavery engaged in the case of "Mr. A." And we have occultists, and occult cranks, and founders of new religions, and initiators in secret rites, enough and more than enough. And again, we have dons, learned men, in profusion. But the type that combined all these types in one has ceased to exist. There is no modern translation of Casanova; swindler, cardsharper, occult quack, profligate, dealer in all the mysteries, man of the world — and LL.D. of the University of Padua at the age of fifteen. There were, as I say, some very clever people who interested themselves in the unfortunate Indian Rajah's banking account; but not one of them, I feel sure, could have written as a degree thesis: *Utrum judaei possint construere novam synagogas*: "Should the Jews be allowed to build new synagogues?" Then, on the other hand: Madame Blavatsky told some amazing tales about Mahatmas, and deceived many persons in high official places. But I never understood that she made much money by it, "it" being taken to mean Theosophy, the "ancient wisdom religion." Casanova, on the other hand, was accused by the nephew of Madame la Duchesse d'Urfê of having swindled his aunt of a million francs, forty thousand pounds or more. The nephew may have exaggerated, for he was in a rage. But it is certain that Venetian Casanova did very handsomely out of Madame d'Urfê's Rosicrucian delusions.

This ingenious gentleman, Giovanni Giacomo Casanova, visited our shores in the early 'sixties of the eighteenth century, soon after the accession of King George III. He had hired a packet at Calais, and was delighted to accommodate the Duke of Bedford on board. The passage took two and a half hours, and at Dover "the custom-house officials made a minute, offensive, and even an impertinent perquisition." Still:

"England is different in every respect from the rest of Europe; even the country has a different aspect, and the water of the Thames has a taste peculiar to itself. Everything has its own characteristics, and the fish, cattle, horses, men and women are of a type not found in any other land. Their manner of living is totally different from that of other countries, especially their cookery. The most striking feature in their character is their national pride; they exalt themselves above all other nations."

Casanova had business in London. He had to call on the famous Madame Comely, Cornelis, or Comelys. This lady, an old Venetian friend of our adventurer, had used in her time many names, but had finally and for English use coined a new one out of the name of a Dutch lover, Cornelius Rigerboos. She had settled down in Carlisle House, Soho Square — afterwards in the occupation of Crosse and Blackwell — just opposite to the Venetian Embassy, and here she gave balls, concerts and masquerades to the nobility and gentry on the most splendid scale. But, somehow, she displeased the Grand Jury of the County of Middlesex, who presented her as a public nuisance. Madame was ruined. She became a vendor of asses' milk at Knightsbridge, and died at last in 1797, a prisoner in the Fleet.

But when Casanova called on her in the early sixties, she was in all the splendour of success. In her own words:

"I give twelve balls and twelve suppers to the nobility, and the same number to the middle-classes in the year. I have often as many as six hundred guests at two guineas a head."

She had two secretaries, over thirty servants, and her gross receipts were £24,000 per annum. And she felt able to be insolent to her old friend Casanova, who resented her behaviour, and took a furnished house in Pall Mall, china, linen and plate included, for twenty guineas a week. He was in disgrace with his own government, since he had broken prison in a spectacular and amazing manner, and so he was presented at Court by the French ambassador, the Comte de Guerchi. King George III spoke in a low voice, but his Queen seems to have been lively. She spoke of the Venetian Ambassador Extraordinary:

“M. Querini amused me extremely, he called me a little devil.”

“He meant to say,” replied Casanova, “that your highness is as witty as an angel.”

And one seems to hear the voice of a later member of the Royal house remarking severely:

“We are not amused.”

Casanova had managed to get introductions to fine company in England. He called on Lady Harrington and played whist for small stakes, losing fifteen guineas. He was given a lesson in English manners.

“You paid in gold,” said Lady Harrington. “I suppose you had no bank-notes about you?”

“Yes, my lady, I have notes for fifty and a hundred pounds.”

“Then you must change one of them or wait till another time to pay, for, in England, to pay in gold is a solecism only pardonable in a stranger. Perhaps you noticed that the lady smiled.”

Many things struck Casanova as strange. He was invited by a younger son of the Duke of Bedford to oysters and champagne at a tavern. They drank two bottles of champagne, and the Duke’s son made Casanova pay half the cost of the second bottle. And the tavern cooking: they laughed at Casanova when he said that he did not care to dine at taverns, because he could not get soup.

“Are you ill?” said the Englishmen. “Soup is only fit for invalids.”

The English of the day, says Casanova, were wholly carnivorous; they ate neither soup nor dessert: “which circumstance made me remark that an English dinner is like eternity; it has no beginning and no end. Soup is considered very extravagant, as the very servants refuse to eat the meat from which it has been made. They say it is only fit to give to dogs. The salt beef which they use is certainly excellent. I cannot say the same for their beer, which was so bitter that I could not drink it.”

Casanova went to Drury Lane. By some accident the company could not give the piece that had been announced. The house was in an uproar. “Garrick, the celebrated actor, came forward and tried in vain to restore order. He was obliged to retire behind the curtain. Then the King, the Queen, and all the fashionables left the theatre, and in less than an hour the house was gutted, till nothing but the bare walls were left. After this destruction, which went on without any authority interposing, the mad populace rushed to the taverns to consume gin and beer… . Such are the English and above all the Londoners. They hoot the King and the royal family when they appear in public, and the consequence is that they are never seen, save on great occasions, when order is kept by hundreds of constables." Casanova went everywhere; he was to be seen alike in high company and in low. He went to Ranelagh and to Vauxhall, preferring the latter. He strolled into coffee-houses, and now and then caught odd scraps of conversation — when the language used was French or Italian. Thus:

"Tommy has committed suicide, and he was right, for he was in such a state that he could only expect unhappiness for the rest of his life."

"You are quite mistaken," said the other, with the greatest composure. "I was one of his creditors myself, and on making an inventory of his effects I feel satisfied that he has done a very foolish and a very childish thing; he might have lived on comfortably, and not killed himself for fully six months."

And, then, Casanova met Miss Charpillon, of Denmark Street, Soho, and this turned out to be the most unfortunate meeting of his life. Miss Charpillon robbed, swindled, humbugged the experienced old profligate to her heart's content. She drove him to the point of suicide. She belonged to a Swiss family of hereditary bad character, and a few years later she triumphed almost as completely over another wily old practitioner of bad morals, the famous Jack Wilkes. Jack recovered; but Casanova was never quite the triumphant rascal again. One of the consequences of his entanglement with the terrible Charpillon was an appearance before Sir John Fielding at Bow Street. The woman had sworn an information against him. He was arrested and taken before the magistrate, whom he confused with the illustrious novelist, dead in Lisbon many years before.

"At the end of the room I saw a gentleman sitting in an armchair, and concluded him to be my judge. I was right, and the judge was blind. He wore a broad band round his head, passing over his eyes. A man beside me, guessing I was a foreigner, said in French:

“‘Be of good courage, Mr. Fielding is a just and equitable magistrate.’

“I thanked the kindly unknown, and was delighted to see before me this famous and estimable writer, whose works are an honour to the English nation… .

“‘Signor Casanova,’ said he in excellent Italian, ‘be kind enough to step forward. I wish to speak to you.’

“I was delighted to hear the accents of my native tongue, and making my way through the press, I came up to the bar of the court, and said:

“‘Eccomi, Signore.’

“He continued to speak Italian, and said:

“‘Signor de Casanova, citizen of Venice, you are condemned to perpetual confinement in the prisons of his Majesty the King of Great Britain.’”

This was Sir John’s little joke. He explained to Casanova that an information, supported by witnesses, charged him with “intending to do grievous bodily harm to the person of a pretty girl,” and that, in consequence, he must be kept in prison for the rest of his days. Casanova declared that he had no intention of doing harm to the pretty girl, who was, of course, Miss Charpillon of Denmark Street. Then two householders were summoned, and Casanova was bailed out, after a brief visit to Newgate, which struck him as “a hell such as Dante might have conceived.”

He left London and England in a hurry. There was a forged bill of exchange and a talk of hanging, and Casanova wisely posted away with all speed on the Dover Road.

Mr. Lutterloh

ON A FAMOUS evening Mr. Boffin called on his literary man in ordinary, Mr. Silas Wegg. He was in a cab, blocked up with books, and he called excitedly:

"Here! lend a hand, Wegg, I can't get out till the way is cleared for me. This is the Annual Register, Wegg, in a cabful of wollumes. Do you know him?"

"Know the Animal Register, sir," said the Impostor, who had caught the name imperfectly. "For a trifling wager, I think I could find any Animal in him, blindfold, Mr. Boffin."

I shall never pretend to the minute knowledge affected by Mr. Wegg; but I have been glancing through an odd volume of the Register, and have certainly come across some very queer animals.

And the first of them is a literal animal, the swallow. The account quoted in the Register is from Barrington's Miscellanies. It seems that during the winter the swallow hides itself under water. This is a well-known fact, and Linnæus is quoted in support of it, with many other witnesses. For example, Mr. Stephens, A.S.S. — there seems to me something ominous about these letters — used to pick up bunches of swallows or martins from a pond at Shrivenham, where his father was vicar. "The birds were carried into the kitchen, on which they soon afterwards flew about the room, in the presence of his father, mother, and others, particularly the Rev. Dr. Pye."

I find it very hard to resist the Rev. Dr. Pye. There is something orthodox, comfortable and full-bodied in his style. I wish I could have seen him as he walked abroad, in wig, cassock, gown and bands, round of speech, I am sure.

But, indeed, a host of witnesses to the submersive habit of the swallow are cited, including a Brentford man and Sigismond, King of Poland. The Brentford man said he had caught specimens in the eyt opposite the town, and the King affirmed on his oath to Cardinal Commendon that he had frequently seen swallows which were found at the bottom of lakes.

And before we laugh, let us remember how many of us saw Russians, thousands of them, in England, in the year 1914. The Annual Register from which I am quoting is dated 1781.

And then there are the other Animals, the featherless bipeds. There is a full account of the trial of Lord George Gordon for High Treason on February 5, 1781, with a very vivid description of the scene at the doors of the House of Commons (see "Barnaby Rudge," Chapter XLIX). And here I came across a very odd animal. There is a well-known passage in Boswell's "Johnson" in which Johnson and Boswell decide that Fleet Street (or the town) is better than Greenwich Park (that is, the country). Boswell fortifies himself in this opinion "by the authority of a very fashionable baronet in the brilliant world, who, on his attention being called to the fragrance of a May evening in the country, observed, 'This may be very well; but for my part, I prefer the smell of a flambeau at the playhouse.'" A footnote informs us that Mr. Boswell's smart friend was Sir Michael Le Fleming. I have never heard more of him, and never expected to hear more of him. A learned Boswellian surmises that, on the evidence given, Sir Michael was probably an unprofitable friend for Boswell, and so the matter ended, as I thought. And here, to my amazement, the fashionable, brilliant and — may one surmise? — somewhat sophisticated baronet, makes his appearance in the Gordon trial. The Rev. Thomas Bowen was officiating as Chaplain to the House of Commons on June 2, 1780. Giving evidence, he says that, prayers ended, he sat under the gallery, near the door. In and out of the House comes Lord George, telling his supporters in the lobby what was going on within. This intelligence comes in gusts to the Chaplain, thus:

Lord George: "Mr. Burke, member for Bristol (*the* Burke) has said — — " and then the door was shut, and no more was heard.

Again: "Lord North calls you a mob": "Mr. Rous has just moved that the civil power be sent for, but don't you mind; keep yourselves cool; be steady — — " and so on, and so on. And then the Chaplain saw a gentleman go up to Lord George and speak to him, and as soon as Lord George saw who it was, he called to the people, "This is Sir Michael le Fleming; he has just been speaking for you." He seemed to be remarkably pleased with Sir Michael, the witness testified: "patted or stroaked, his shoulder, and exhibited a kind of joy, which the witness knew not how to describe."

Dear me! Who would have thought that Boswell’s brilliant, fashionable, playhouse-flambeau loving baronet was a stout Protestant after all?

But the most awe-inspiring of all the Animals in this Register of 1781 is a certain Mr. Lutterloh. He and his strange name and his strange career are to be found in the account of the arrest, trial, conviction and condemnation of Henry Francis de la Motte for treasonable practices. De la Motte was a French nobleman, with the queer title of Baron Deckham. He had been colonel of the regiment of Soubise in the last war, and had shown gallantry. He had lived beyond his income, and taken refuge in England, and had then, so said the prosecution, engaged in the treasonable practice of furnishing the French Government with information as to his Majesty King George’s forces and plans. He had resided in Bond Street, at a Mr. Otley’s, a woollen-draper, for some time. The story begins with Mr. De la Motte visiting the Secretary of State — of his free will or in response to a hint does not appear. On his way upstairs he dropped several papers full of guilty matters, which were picked up by the messengers and carried with him to the Secretary, Lord Hillsborough. Thereupon, De la Motte was immediately committed a close prisoner to the Tower on the charge of high treason. And here is the first shock: Would a man guilty of such practices fortify himself for a visit to the Secretary of State by stuffing his pockets with treasonable documents, and then carelessly strew the Secretary’s stairs with them, as if they were roses? But I lack space in which to tell the whole story of poor De la Motte — the evident source and prototype of Darnay in “The Tale of Two Cities.” I do not know whether he were guilty; but the case against him has an ill look — for the Government and its agents. The dignity and nobility of his demeanour during the trial were remarked by all, and after the dreadful sentence had been passed, Mr. Akerman, the gaoler, said that he never in his life saw a man in De la Motte’s position with more becoming firmness and fortitude. But the mysterious Mr. Lutterloh? After the examination of the papers which Mr. De la Motte had so thoughtfully dropped on the Secretary’s stairs, orders were issued for the apprehension of Henry Lutterloh, Esq., of Wickham, near Portsmouth. The messengers found Mr. Lutterloh ready booted to go a-hunting, but when he was told of the messengers’ business “he did not discover the least embarrassment.” His keys, his papers were all at their service. He was a German, who had lately taken a house near Portsmouth. He kept a pack of hounds, and was very popular with the neighbouring gentry.

And yet, as it turned out at the trial, Mr. Lutterloh had been a servant (discharged on suspicion of thieving), a chandler in Great Wild Street, Drury Lane, a bankrupt and a fugitive, and a book-keeper at the George Inn, Portsmouth. He confessed in the witness-box that the prisoner, De la Motte, had raised him from beggary to comfort by his generosity. But a powerful feeling came upon Mr. Lutterloh, urging him to make some restitution to the country he had injured. Also, he said, he felt a desire to enrich himself. And so he swore the generous French gentleman's life away.

I am sure that Mr. Dunning and Mr. Peckham did their best for the defence. But I wish the prisoner's solicitor could have briefed Mr. Stryver and Mr. Sydney Carton.

Before Wembley

IT IS TO be gathered from all sorts of sources that the great Exhibition at Wembley did not go so prosperously as might be desired. I wonder why. I believe the reasons are composite. In the first place, I suspect that the Exhibition was much too big; the Great Exhibition of 1851 went into the Crystal Palace. Then it was too technical. I think I have heard that six acres — the area of Trafalgar Square — were devoted to engineering exhibits. Perfectly enchanting — to engineers. But how I should loathe seeing six acres of wheels going round. And, lastly, there is the matter of "closing hours." It is said that the first remark of the late Lord Tennyson on entering the Exhibition of 1851 was "Can one get a decent bottle of Bass here?" It is deplorable, no doubt; but to the average male mind Exhibitions and the modern closing hours are incompatible.

It seems to me that we should begin by separating things which don't go together in the least. Let the Engineers hold their exhibition at Olympia, or at the Agricultural Hall, Islington; let the Builders follow them; let the Dominion Products have their due turn. But what London wants of a summer night is a place of moderate size where, amidst agreeable surroundings, it can sit and eat and drink and smoke in the open-air, and listen to a band or two and dance a dance or two, and perhaps see a revue or two, with a few variety turns now and then, and a cabaret performance and an occasional concert. Fireworks, of course; and I think a Grand Guignol theatre, with the audience in the open air on fine nights. I doubt whether there would be room for an Amusement Park. The fact is, I am for a return to Vauxhall, and all that sort of thing, with all the improvements that modern ingenuity can suggest. Here is a note of a pleasant evening spent at Vauxhall, just 175 years ago.

"I had a card," writes Horace Walpole, "from Lady Caroline Petersham, to go with her to Vauxhall. I went accordingly to her house, and found her and the little Ashe, or the Pollard Ashe as they called her; they had just finished their last layer of red, and looked as handsome as crimson could make them… . We marched to our barge, with a boat of French horns attending and little Ashe singing. We paraded some time up the river, and at last debarked at Vauxhall… . Here we picked up Lord Granby, arrived very drunk from Jenny Whims (a Chelsea tavern). At last we assembled in our booth, Lady Caroline in the front with the vizor of her hat erect, and looking gloriously jolly and handsome. She had fetched my brother Orford from the next box, where he was enjoying himself with his *petite partie*, to help us to mince chickens. We minced seven chickens into a China dish, which Lady Caroline stewed over a lamp with three pats of butter and a flagon of water, stirring and rattling and laughing, and we every minute expecting the dish to fly about our ears. She had brought Betty, the fruit-girl, with hampers of strawberries and cherries from Roger's, and made her wait upon us, and then made her sup by us at a little table… . In short, the whole air of our party was sufficient, as you will easily imagine, to take up the whole attention of the Gardens; so much so, that from 11 o'clock till half an hour after one we had the whole concourse round our booth; at last they came into the little gardens of each booth on the sides of ours, till Harry Vane took up a bumper and drank their healths, and was proceeding to treat them with still greater freedoms. It was three o'clock before we got home."

The company, as you perceive, was high, though distinctly jolly. Indeed, a contemporary writer describing Spring Gardens, as the place was then called, declares that they were laid out "in so grand a taste that they are frequented in the three summer months by most of the nobility and gentry then in and near London; and are often honoured with some of the Royal Family, who are here entertained with the sweet song of numbers of nightingales, in concert with the best band of musick in England. Here are fine pavilions, shady groves, and most delightful walks, illuminated by above a thousand lamps, so disposed that they all take fire together, almost as quick as lightning, and with such a sudden blaze as is perfectly surprising." In the generation before this Sir Roger de Coverley visited Vauxhaul "exquisitely pleasant in summer," as his friend, the Spectator, declares. "When," he says, "I considered the fragrancy of the walks and bowers, with the choirs of birds that sang upon the trees, and the loose tribe of people that walked under their shades, I could not but look on the place as a kind of Mahometan Paradise. Sir Roger told me it put him in mind of a little coppice by his house in the country, which his chaplain used to call an

Aviary of Nightingales. He here fetched a deep sigh, and was falling into a fit of musing when a Mask, who came behind him, gave him a gentle tap on the shoulder and asked him if he would drink a bottle of Mead with her? But the Knight being startled at so unexpected a familiarity and displeased to be interrupted in his thoughts of the widow, told her she was a wanton baggage, and bid her go about her business. We concluded our walk with a glass of Burton ale and a slice of hung beef."

The gardens lingered on, I believe, into the fifties of the last century, but the shady groves had got too shady to be agreeable. The Mask or Baggage still frequented the walks, but the nightingales had flown away, and with them Lady Caroline Petersham, the little Ashe, Horace Walpole, Lord Orford, the Marquis of Granby, Harry Vane, Sir Roger and the Spectator. The last real party who went to Vauxhall were Amelia Sedley, Jos. Sedley, George Osborne, Dobbin, and Becky Sharp; when Jos. drank too much rack punch and called Becky his diddle-diddle-darling.

Vauxhall had many competitors, on the large scale and the small. In 1740, Ranelagh was begun on a site near Chelsea Hospital. "Vauxhall under cover" it was called: there was a Rotunda with balconies full of little alehouses. Of course, Horace Walpole went to Ranelagh.

"Two nights ago Ranelagh Gardens were opened at Chelsea; the prince, princess, duke, much nobility, and much mob besides were there. There is a vast amphitheatre, finely gilt, painted, and illuminated, into which everybody that loves eating, drinking, staring, or crowding is admitted for twelve pence. The building and disposition of the gardens cost sixteen thousand pounds. Twice a week there are to be ridottos at guinea tickets, for which you are to have a supper and music."

Horace was inclined to sniff in a languid manner when Ranelagh was opened. Vauxhall, he thought, was "a little better." But in two years the fashionable success of Ranelagh was assured, and the languid sniff has changed into a shrill squeak. "Every night constantly I go to Ranelagh, which has totally beat Vauxhall. Nobody goes anywhere else — everybody goes there. My Lord Chesterfield is so fond of it that he says he has ordered all his letters to be directed thither." One of the first of the entertainment gardens of London was old Spring Gardens, close to Charing Cross, and it is strange to think that this place, with its grave, late memories of the serious and salutary labours of the London County Council, owed its name to a piece of simple jocularity. There was a jet, or spring, of water there, and a German, travelling in England in Queen Elizabeth's days, writes:

"In a garden joining to this Palace (Whitehall) there is a jet d'eau, with a sundial, at which, while strangers are looking, a quantity of water forced by a wheel, which the gardener turns at a distance through a number of little pipes, plentifully sprinkles those that are standing around."

The joke was improved later. A trap was contrived on the ground, and whoever trod on this trap was immediately deluged. There were other amusements, a bathing pond, a pheasant yard, and a bowling green. In the time of King Charles I:

"There was kept in it an ordinary of six shillings a meal (when the King's proclamation allows but two shillings elsewhere), continual bibbing and drinking wine all day under the trees; two or three quarrels every week." There was also "a certain cabaret, in the middle of this paradise, where the forbidden fruits are certain trifling tarts, neats' tongues, salacious meats, and bad Rhenish."

Then there were Cuper's Gardens just opposite Somerset House, which became Cupid's Gardens in the famous old song, and Marylebone Gardens, and Bagnigge Wells, and Sadler's Wells, all popular in their day.

I believe I saw the last of the tribe one day in Camden Town. In a dreary street there was a drearier public house, with the dreariest little triangle of a garden beside it. Two dusty trees, six dusty bushes, four metal tables, and twice as many chairs, a small pipe from which a small jet of water might sometimes issue, traces of fairy lamps… . Such was the last echo of gorgeous, gay Vauxhall.

The Ingenious Mr. Blee

“STEPHEN M’DANIEL, JOHN Berry, James Egan (otherwise Gahagan) and James Salmon were indicted, for that, at the gaol delivery for our sovereign lord the King at the county gaol at Maidstone for the county of Kent, on Tuesday, the 13th of August, in the twenty-eighth year of our said sovereign lord the King, Peter Kelly and John Ellis were, in due form of law, indicted for a robbery on the King’s highway on James Salmon, by putting him in corporal fear and danger of his life, in the parish of St. Paul, Deptford, in the county of Kent, and taking from him one linen handkerchief, value 4d., two pair of leather breeches, one clasp knife, one iron tobacco box, one silver pocket-piece, one guinea, and one half-crown; and that the said Peter Kelly and John Ellis were tried and convicted for that robbery; and that the said M’Daniel, Berry, Egan, and Salmon, on the 23rd of July, 1754, in the City of London, were accessories before this felony was committed; and feloniously and maliciously did aid, abet, assist, counsel, hire and command the said Ellis and Kelly to commit this robbery, against the peace his crown and dignity.”

Thus in and these words were the Right Honourable Theodore Janssen, Esq., Lord Mayor of the City of London, and his Majesty’s Justices of Oyer and Terminer introduced to what Mr. Sampson Brass would have called a pretty little conspiracy. And the person who unveiled it all, for good reasons, no doubt, pertaining to his comfort and peace of mind and of body was a Mr. Thomas Blee, who lodged at John Berry’s house and did odd jobs, very odd jobs indeed, for him. It seemed that there was what we should call a Little Syndicate, consisting of Berry and his fellows at the bar of the Old Bailey. They all lived round and about Hatton Garden and the backways of Holborn, and they had quiet little drinks together over business in the taproom of the Bell and in other vanished taverns. The syndicate was in low water in July, 1754, and Berry sent his man Blee — how did Stevenson miss so wonderful a name while he was thinking of his pirates and villains at large? — to M’Daniel, and a sort of unofficial committee meeting was held. At the end of it they both said to Blee: “Tom, money grows scarce, you must give a sharp look out for a couple to go upon the scamp now, and if you cannot get two, you must get one." The "scamp," Thomas Blee explained, meant the highway. But Thomas was troubled with scruples. He told Berry and M'Daniel, as he swore, that Kidden's was so bad an affair that he did not choose to be concerned more. Kidden had been tried, condemned and executed a year before; and since secrecy is now valueless it may be mentioned that the business of Berry and his syndicate was to lure poor runagates into the commission of felony, to get them condemned and executed, and then to pocket the reward. It was Fagin, and perhaps rather worse than Fagin, long before Fagin's day; but it will be noted that Mr. Berry's beat was not very remote from that of Dickens's Jew.

Well, Thomas Blee, remembering poor Kidden's end, had scruples, but they were overcome. The next day Berry, M'Daniel and Blee went into Spa Fields — all grey squares and grey streets now between Sadler's Wells and Islington — and looked for idle fellows, at first without success. Then there was another and a fuller committee meeting at the sign of Sir John Oldcastle; in this Salmon, the breeches maker, was included. There was a good deal of discussion as to where the robbery should be committed, and it was pointed out that there were peculiar advantages attached to the road between New Cross turnpike and Deptford, since the inhabitants of East Greenwich offered a special reward of twenty pounds for the apprehension of highwaymen and footpads. And it was settled that Mr. Salmon should be the gentleman to be robbed, and that a Mr. Egan should act as "fence," to buy the stolen goods, and the happy party calculated that what with the official reward and the unofficial reward they would make twenty pounds apiece — about £100 of our money, I suppose. And a day or two later, the friends met together at the Bell, in Holborn, and made the most minute arrangements as to the various identifiable properties that Salmon was to carry; in order that he might be robbed of them. So everything was settled very comfortably, and it only remained to find a couple of young fellows to play the part of the thieves; and that was the business of good Thomas Blee. Accordingly, Mr. Blee went to work. He found two likely young fellows, known pickpockets, down in Fleet Market, Farringdon Street. These were Kelly and Ellis, and Blee told them, according to his instructions, that he knew where to get "a brave parcel of lullies" — otherwise, a parcel of linen. And then followed the most elaborate proceedings. Blee had to show his two prospective highwaymen to Berry and the other members of the syndicate that their skilled eyes might see whether the two young men were suitable for the purpose; and there were meetings at the Plumb Tree alehouse in Plumb Tree Court, Shoe Lane, and occasions when Blee stood by Ellis and Kelly in the Artillery Ground — where the White Regiment was marching. Everything was satisfactory.

"Mr. Berry," said Thomas Blee, "do you think they will do?" And Mr. Berry said, in his hearty way:

"Do! Damme, I have done less than they over, for March and Newman were less."

I am not quite clear as to the precise sense of this remark. It may mean that Mr. Berry was quite satisfied that Ellis and Kelly were not too young to be hanged. At any rate, he was pleased, since he gave Blee sixpence, double his usual gratuity. The affair seemed very promising, and the day for the robbery had been settled, when the plan was a little disarranged by some trouble in the Artillery Ground, where Kelly and Ellis usually "worked" — in the sense that the Artful Dodger and Charley Bates worked.

"About half-an-hour after that," says Thomas Blee, "there was hue-and-cry after a pickpocket. M'Daniel came to me, and said, 'The chief person is a-ducking in the Pyed–Horse Yard; follow him, and give him some gin, for they have almost killed him.'"

Blee found Ellis and gave him a penny or two and went back and reassured M'Daniel: "then he and I came out of the Artillery ground together; as we were coming out of the ground, we met one they call Plump (his name Brebrook) and another fellow they call Doctor, that was turnkey at Clerkenwell Bridewell. Plump, seeing M'Daniel and I together, said to me, 'You rascal, you deserve to be hanged for that affair of Ridden.'"

The day was finally settled. Berry gave Blee the extraordinary sum of five shillings "to flash to the boys," to dazzle them, that is, with the sight of so much money, for Blee usually gave them gin by ha'porths. So the party set out on the way to Deptford, calling by arrangement with the syndicate at certain taverns on the way. At one of these taverns there was almost a misadventure. Kelly caught a glimpse of Berry, lurking in obscurity, and on coming out observed with an oath to Blee: "There is that old thief-catching son of a bitch, your old master." But Blee soothed his fears, and a breast of lamb was bought in the Borough Market, and fried for dinner at the Black Spread Eagle in Kent Street. The three drank together, and slept in the fields, Salmon and Berry always, as it were, round the corner, slinking on the track of Blee and his victims, communicating with Blee under the very noses of Kelly and Ellis. Salmon came into a tavern where Blee and his young friends were sitting, and, taking a place near them, began to speak of walking to London. Then Berry passes the tavern window and beckons to Blee with an evil crook of his finger, and so Blee gets his last instructions, and the three steal out on the track of Salmon. Up to this time, be it remembered, the two dupes thought they were to steal "lullies," or linen. But the sight of Salmon walking before them on the dark, lonely road had the desired effect. Kelly observed: "There is that old blood of a bitch, the breeches-maker in Shoe Lane… let's scamp him." Accordingly, Salmon was set upon by all three and robbed according to plan. The next day, Egan, the receiver, or fence, of the comedy, was "discovered" in the Black Spread Eagle by Blee, and over a breakfast of lamb's liver and bacon, washed down by a pot of "twopenny" — the eighteenth century equivalent of the "four ale" of pre-War days — the stolen goods, all carefully marked for identification, were handed over to the fence. Kelly and Ellis were arrested, tried, and condemned to death in due course; and everything seemed to point to a large reward and a happy ending for everybody concerned — save Kelly and Ellis.

But something went wrong. The constables arrested not only Kelly and Ellis but also Thomas Blee. This may have been a blunder, a pure accident, or Kelly and Ellis may have given Blee away, or Mr. Berry may have considered in his wisdom that Blee's time was come, and that he was ripe for the journey in the Tyburn cart. But Thomas did exactly as might have been expected. He turned King's Evidence at the first possible moment; and the little syndicate found themselves in the dock at the Old Bailey pleading not guilty to the indictment quoted at the head of this article. They called divers friends to give evidence as to character, and the said friends declared in cheerful unison that Berry and the rest of them bore the worst characters possible. The verdict was Guilty, and sentence seven years' imprisonment, two turns in the pillory, and a fine of one mark each. The sting of the sentence was in the pillory. M'Daniel and Berry, pilloried near Hatton Garden, were with difficulty rescued by the sheriff from the fury of the mob. Then Egan and Salmon stood in the pillory at Smithfield. At the end of half an hour’s hail of oyster-shells and stones, Egan was struck dead, and Salmon dangerously wounded. In the end, Salmon and Berry died in Newgate, and M’Daniel “procured himself to be sent abroad for life to the Indies as a soldier.”

The Gay Victorians

THERE IS A certain fable with which we greatly comfort our hearts in these days. And this is the fable of the mild, the tame, the old-maiden-ladylike Victorians. We know in our inner hearts that we, the Georgians, are the most regulation-ridden people that ever were. If we want a box of chocolates or a packet of cigarettes after eight o'clock at night, we cannot get either without breaking the law. In most parts of London, the greatest city in the world, a glass of beer after ten becomes a penal offence. We have the liberty to go to bed quietly; that is about all. I suppose it is the secret knowledge of all this, the knowledge that we have become a flock of rather pitiful sheep, driven tamely off to our pens by the sheep dog of the law, that makes us puff out our chests and pity the poor, limited, propriety-ridden Victorians, and pretend that we are desperate dogs, indeed. If a man would keep any spirit at all, it is necessary that he should look down on someone; rightly or wrongly. But the mid-Victorian age was not really what we pretend to think it. It was, probably, one of the jolliest ages in our history; and all the better for this, that a great deal of the jollity was above-ground, harmless, hearty mirth. There was the other side, of course; there always is that, and now more than ever, since the coming of cocaine — the nasty, underground, poisonous gaiety that is not gaiety at all, but rather ghastliness. But on the whole, the mid-Victorian who was resolved to "keep it up" and "make a night of it" could make a most tremendous night of it and be rather the better than the worse the morning after. A headache? Possibly. But an occasional headache does not do anyone much harm.

I was talking the other day to a man whose business it is, speaking generally, to know everything. I will not define his occupation more precisely; but I happened to mention to him the "Welcome Guest" and Sala's "Twice Round the Clock." He had neither heard of the periodical nor the series of articles. And so, perhaps, I may safely quote this witness of the London world in the year 1858, when Queen Victoria had been reigning twenty-seven years. The period may fairly be called the mid-Victorian; and this was the fashion of it. The time is midnight; the people are coming out of the Haymarket Theatre, still laughing at the drolleries of the inimitable Mr. Buckstone and ——

“Supper is now the great cry, and the abundant eating and drinking resources of the Haymarket are forthwith called into requisition. By the ravenous hunger and thirst displayed by the late patrons of the theatre, you would imagine that they had gone without dinner for a week… Are you rich — there is Dubourg’s, the Hotel de Paris, and the upstairs department of the Café de l’Europe. There is no lack of cunning cooks there, I warrant, to send you up pheasants and partridges *en papillote*; *filets* with mushrooms or truffles, culinary gew-gaws that shall cost five shillings the dish. Yes, and cellarers shall not be wanting to convey to you the Roederer’s champagne, the fragrant Clos Vougeot, the refreshing Lafitte and the enlivening Chambertin with yellow seal… If your taste leads you still towards French cookery — though you wince somewhat at the idea of the claret, burgundy and champagne to follow — there exists a second-class French restaurant or two where excellent suppers may be obtained at moderate prices.” Sala follows on the descending scale: a porkpie and a glass of ale at a bar for a few pence: “trotters,” mysterious but succulent, for a penny; a potato from the can at the Coventry Street end of the Haymarket, with salt and pepper, for a halfpenny: and then reverts to oysters, as the refreshment most proper to the hour and the place.

“I will abide by the Haymarket oyster shop, rude, simple, primitive as it is, with its peaceful concourse of customers taking perpendicular refreshment at the counter, plying the unpretending pepper-castor and the vinegar cruet with the perforated cork, calling cheerfully for crusty bread and pats of butter; and tossing off foaming pints of brownest stout.” But a a few oysters and a little bread-and-butter and stout at midnight were only the beginning of a mid-Victorian’s night out. Refreshed, he strolled on to Evans’s in Covent Garden, where, as Mr. Sala assures him, Captain Costigan is no longer allowed to sing his dubious songs, to the shame of young Clive Newcome and to the rage and indignation of the immortal Colonel, his father.

“We have been to the play, we have consumed a few oysters in the Haymarket; but the principal effect of that refreshment seems to have been to make us ten times hungrier. The delicate bivalves of Colchester” — I am afraid that Sala was the first to call an oyster a “succulent bivalve”— “have failed in appeasing our bucolic stomachs. We require meat. Wherefore we walk till the piazza looms in sight. A low doorway, brilliantly lit with gas, greets our view. We descend a flight of stone steps, pass through a vestibule, and enter the 'Cave of Harmony.' The visitor finds himself in a vast music-hall of really noble proportions and decorated not only with admirable taste, but with something nearly akin to splendour. At the northern extremity of the hall is a spacious proscenium and stage, with the grand pianoforte *de rigueur*, the whole veiled by a curtain in the intervals of performance. As for the huge area stretching from the proscenium to a row of columns which separate it from the ante-chamber café, it is occupied by parallel lines of tables… . See the suppers set forth for the strong stomached supporters of Evans's. See the pyramids of dishes arrive; the steaming succession of red-hot chops, with their brown, frizzling caudal appendages seething hot tears of passionate fat. See the serene kidneys unsubdued, though grilled, smiling though cooked, weltering proudly in their noble gravy… . See the yellow lava of the Welsh rabbit stream over and engulf the timid toast. Sniff the fragrant vapour of the corpulent sausage. Mark how the russet leathern-coated baked potato at first defies the knife, then gracefully cedes, and through a lengthened gash yields its farinaceous effervescence to the influence of butter and catsup. The only refreshment present open to even a suspicion of effeminacy are the poached eggs, glistening like suns in a firmament of willow-pattern plate; and those, too, I am willing to believe, are only to be taken by country gentlemen hard-pressed by hunger, just to 'stay their stomachs,' while the more important chops and kidneys are being prepared… Pints of stout, if you please, no puny half-measures, pints of sparkling pale ale, or brownest Burton moisten these sturdy rations. And when the strong men have supped — or, rather, before they have supped, and while they have supped — and indeed generally during the evening, there bursts out a strong smell of something good to drink; and presently you perceive that the strong men have ordered potent libations of spirituous liquors, hot whiskey and water being the favourite one; and are hastily brewing mighty jorums of punch and grog which they undauntedly quaff."

There! What a jolly scene it is, and how entirely honest and free from blame. And while people are eating heartily and drinking heartily and smoking heartily, a choir of small boys sing eighteenth century glees to them; or perhaps it is a nigger minstrel, some far-off precursor of poor

Chirgwin; or it may be a comic singer who obliges. Perhaps, as I have hinted, there may be a headache to-morrow morning, perhaps a slight distaste for breakfast; but those stout fellows of the ‘fifties care little for such trifles. And all this jollity, all this brown stout and steaming punch at one o’clock in the morning! To us “daring” Georgians it seems well-nigh incredible.

There is one odd note in this tale of Sala’s. It is well-known that Thackeray was a constant visitor at Evans’s. Here is his portrait according to Sala.

“Thersites Theorbo (who is an assiduous frequenter of the Cave at hours when men of not so transcendent a genius are in bed), Thersites Theorbo, down yonder in the café ante-saloon, glowering over his grog, cannot forbear beating time and wagging his august head approvingly when he hears the little boys sing. May their pure harmony do the battered old cynic good!”

Now, I wonder. This was the very year of the famous Dickens–Thackeray-Yates quarrel. Thackeray had called Yates “Young Grub-street” in print; I wonder whether he had called Sala “Young Guttersnipe” in conversation. Sala was a Dickens man; and led-captains fought valiantly for their chiefs in those brave days.

Chivalry

WHEN I AM down in the country, I am sometimes taken to see castles, and I want to make a confession about them. I look about their walls, I mark portcullis and moat, newel stair and keep, I enter into the central court, a green space surrounded by walls half-whole, half-broken — and I cannot form the faintest conception of what these great places were like when they were inhabited; for, it must be remembered, what we see when we admire a ruined castle is a house without a roof, generally without floors or ceilings, always without woodwork of any kind or sort. Take the roof off Smith's villa at Surbiton. Burn every beam in the house, break in all the windows, make the kitchen and back garden a heap of confused stones overgrown with grass and weeds. Knock down every door and every party wall, blow up the stairs, smash the floors, make Smith's potting-shed and his fowl-house in the back garden into beautiful green mounds, turf-covered; and then bring along your post-historic New Zealander, and ask him to tell you what Laburnum Villa was like in the days of its pride, and what manner of life the Smiths led there. I don't believe the New Zealander would make much of the job; and so I make very little of the job when I pass into a twelfth century castle. I can see that those high outer walls, sloping outward to the ground ("battered") for greater strength, were meant to keep people out; I conjecture that those windows, a narrow slit outside, a broad splay within, were handy for shooting without much chance of being shot; I have been told that the keep, or central tower, with walls six, eight, ten feet thick, was the last refuge of the De Somethings when a breach had been made in the outer defence; and that is about all. "The great hall," says somebody, pointing to a large space, where an inner wall half-stands, half-falls. It may be so; but it may be the chapel, or the great kitchen; all is so broken, so uncertain. And then: "Secret passage, communicating with the Abbey, five miles away," and "The black dungeon under the keep, where the objects of feudal oppression pined away." It may be so, or it may be the mere apparatus of drainage.

And as to how the De Somethings lived, where they slept, at what time they had their meals, what they ate at their meals, how they spent their days when the foe were not battering at the outer bailey, I have hardly the faintest notion. I except a few items of the castle bill of fare: a great deal of salt cod, a great deal of salt beef, a great deal of salt herring, venison pies, roast game, peacock and swan occasionally, buttered eggs, richly spiced dishes from the east, dishes in which meat, raisins, and currants were mingled — the mince-pie is the only modern survivor of this school of cookery — pike and other fish from the castle pond; abundance of strong, thick ale — there were no clarifying hops then — and liberal Gascon wine; we may make out a fairly satisfactory bill for the table of our great lord. But that is about all, so far as I am concerned. Indeed, I once asked a man deeply learned in antiquity, a famous herald, to tell me what it was like, generally speaking, to pay a visit to a thirteenth century lord at his castle. “For example,” I said, “when a Barry of Manorbier went to stay for a few weeks with a Bohun of Caldicot, how did the castle party begin the day? Was the Barry called for breakfast?”

He considered the question, and finally declared that in his opinion there was no formal beginning of the day: “I believe they all woke up like animals, and shook themselves.” It may be: but I would rather incline to think that a bell at six o’clock in the morning roused everybody for Mass in the chapel, and that afterwards people strolled to the buttery-hatch and broke their fast, lunching-in the proper sense of the word “lunch” — on hunks of bread and chunks of salt beef or pasty, with quarts of ale for the simple and quarts of red wine for the gentle. And then to the stables, quite in the manner of a modern country house in the hunting shires, and a long discussion there as to the horses. And then, perhaps, a little tennis, the court being the castle court-yard with its lean-to wooden buildings (the penthouse of the game) the opening now called the grille — then the buttery-hatch aforesaid — and the odd projection of one wall which tennis players call the tambour. And so to a mighty dinner at ten, with a very honest appetite, and a strong thirst. Of course, knight errantry in the sense of the romances never existed; nothing at all like it ever existed. The romances of chivalry that is, do not picture the thirteenth century as Dickens, Thackeray, and Trollope between them very fairly pictured the earlier and middle nineteenth century. The romances are pure fantasies of the imagination: nothing more. I have just been reading a curious document which bears on this point. It is a contract, and is as formal and business-like a document as any contract between manager and actor, or between author and publisher. It was executed in the year 1297. It begins:

“An du rengne le Roy Edward fiz le Roy Hen’ vintenne et quint ssi accoumto p’entr Sire Johan Bluet Chevaler et Wylliame Martel.”

Or in English:

“In the year of the reign of King Edward, the son of King Henry, one score and five, it was thus agreed between Sir John Bluet, Knight, and William Martel.”

The fact was that the stout knight — to use the later Gothic manner — Sir John Bluet, wanted a courtly squire. William Martel applied for the engagement, and got it. A contract was then drawn up, and duly sealed: it was a contract valid during the life of William Martel, and it was binding on the heirs of Sir John Bluet. And the said Sir John was to pay William sixty pence of silver yearly; payments due at Hockday (Eastertide) and Michaelmas. Provision is made for default on the part of tenants who paid the rents from which William was to draw his salary: it is expressly stipulated that the squire or his solicitor may put an execution into the house of any such defaulting tenant. Besides the money payment, the chivalrous (though businesslike) squire was to have a robe at Christmas and another robe at Easter; the value of each to be ten pence. Furthermore, William was to be maintained as long as he lived in sufficient meat and drink as a gentleman ought to have— “E a sustenir le devauntdit Wyll’ taunt come il vivera en manger e en beovere avenauntement come a gental homme a peut.” And his two servants are also to have their board and lodging, and his two horses are to be found in hay and oats and shoes; the two horses to have between them 46 bushels of oats a year. And, on his side, the gentle William engaged himself well and faithfully to serve Sir John Bluet as an esquire ought to do “in the war now wageing between the King of England and the King of France; and also in England if war should break out there, which God forbid; and in Wales and all other lands on this side the sea, or beyond the sea wherever the said John may be (except the Holy Land), and in tournaments in time of peace with a great war horse — en tens de pees od en graunt chevall de armes — which the said John will find him and suitable armour without any default on his part.”

The gentle, the chivalrous William! He had evidently heard a thing or two about crusading; and I seem to hear a more modern voice speaking to much the same effect:

“No, dear old chap, I’m afraid we’ll have to cut that clause about the Eastern Tour. I don’t mind the Welsh smalls or the Scotch fitups, and I’m quite willing to go to South Africa or the States; but I’ve made up my mind I’ll never play juvenile leads in the East again. You see, old man, if you come to cues, there’s no bunce in it.”

Such was the actual Age of Chivalry. A little on the practical side, perhaps. Don Quixote would have been disgusted by the document which I have quoted; and, indeed, when Sancho Panza asked for a fixed salary — Teresa urging him — the Knight said there was no precedent in the books for such an arrangement. Not in *Amadis of Gaul* or in *Tirante lo Blanch*, perhaps, but we see how it was in actual life.

It is clear that Sancho knew more about Chivalry than his master.

How The Rich Live

THIS IS TO be a talk about some wealthy men that I have known and heard of. I was once a wealthy man myself; a friend of mine confessed to me quite lately that he had been a capitalist in his day; and then there is a great figure in musical history, known well enough for his work, but not generally recognised as being amongst the very rich. To begin with my friend. This is Mr. Lenville, the well-known actor. We were talking the other day as we often do talk about the old times of the stage, of which I know a very little, and he a great deal; the old times being understood to be somewhere between thirty and forty years ago. There is no doubt that they were bad old times. Now a bright young gentleman “walks on” for six months or so. He has little paragraphs in the papers about the amazingly brilliant way in which he walks on, and how interesting it is that he should walk on at all. Then he has a small part; and there are portraits and clever caricatures as well as paragraphs. Then he models in clay a little, and the public interest, as the paragraphists declare, is enormous, so that he gets quite a large part and delivers it so naturally that very few people beyond the front row of the stalls hear a word he says. The bright young man’s fortune is then made. Things were very different in the time of which Mr. Lenville was talking. In those days people had to learn how to act before they were heard of in the western theatres of London. They learned how to act by playing dozens, hundreds of parts in all sorts of obscure playhouses in the country and in the unknown suburbs. They laboured in stock companies in northern towns, at the Britannia, Hoxton; they went on tour in repertory. They were hungry for experience and for bread and cheese and beer. They tried the booths for a while, some of them, and learned what “nunty munjare” means, and how to put the “portable” together, take it to pieces, and get the snow off the roof; also to paint scenery and manufacture dress shirts and shoes and mediæval armour out of white paper, American cloth, and sheet tin, and, by the way, to learn the text of any part ever written in rather less than no time. I remember one of the old stock managers saying to me:

“So I made up my mind to put up ‘Venice Preserved,’ and gave the company three days for study. The Heavy Man said to me: ‘Look here, I can’t study the Cardinal in three days.’ I talked to him. ‘You play the Heavy Lead, don’t you?’ ‘Yes,’ he said, ‘but I can’t study 500 lengths in three days.’ ‘Well, the Cardinal is the heavy part, isn’t it?’ ‘I know.’ ‘Then,’ said I, ‘you’d better go’; and one of the Responsibles took it on, and was perfect on the night.”

Well, it was of such times as those that Mr. Lenville was telling me. He and his friend, Mr. Folair, were in a very bad way. There was nothing doing, and very little to eat. So the two of them walked up one fine morning to the Grand, Islington, where a stock company was running, in the hopes of getting an engagement. But there was no vacancy. They came out into the sunlight, with twopence between them, and walked over to the Angel, and, boldly entering the public bar, ordered a pint of four ale, which they drank slowly, in alternate sips, out of the pewter pot. And as they drank, they discussed the best way to walk home. This was an easy problem for Lenville, who lived in Marylebone, but a formidable business for Folair, an inhabitant of uttermost Hammersmith. And so Lenville gave his views on the subject of the shortest cut to Hammersmith, illustrating his remarks by drawing a kind of diagram, or map, with his stick on the sawdust of the floor.

“Here you see,” said Lenville, “you get up by Portobello Road,” and drew the stick firmly along in the direction of Notting Hill Gate. *Something glittered in the disturbed sawdust.* The two men hardly dared to believe in that which they saw. It was a half-sovereign — otherwise wealth beyond the dreams of avarice. “Do we hand it over to the barman?” whispered Folair. Lenville replied in words which signified that they emphatically didn’t, and as he spoke his pipe dropped from his hand on to the floor. He picked it up, and soon after the pair of players were having some more beer and sharing the change.

“And I never felt so well off before or since.” So Mr. Lenville ended his tale.

And I, too, I have known wealth in my day. I was living in Queer Street at the time, a quiet place enough to look at, but not really so quiet as it seemed, being close to a certain Grove, where there are streets even queerer.

Well, in those days, I went out regularly to get the supper beer. Not in the honest, manly way of the Briton, who carries the jug in his hand and boldly enters the jug and bottle department, rejoicing in the brown foam that crowns the vessel. This was too high for me; so I used to go to the saloon bar and buy a quart bottle of beer and smuggle it back in a bag or great coat pocket, the whole being done in a very careless, easy manner. But one night there was only fivepence-halfpenny in the house. It is true the bottle of beer cost only fourpence; but it was my custom every evening to have a small glass of something with bitters in it. This cost threepence; and I was ashamed to go to the public-house and omit this decorative part of the ceremony — and yet there was only fivepence-halfpenny in the house. And then, as I fumbled aimlessly, desperately, about in odd corners and disused places, there appeared and was manifested in a dusty drawer, a shabby little old purse, with a broken fastening. I opened the purse, and at the bottom of it was a sixpence and a shilling, both black from lying by. How rich, how glorious a superfluity! I tasted in their acutest savours the delights of wealth!

The last story of the wealthy was told of himself by the mighty John Sebastian Bach. When he was a lad — it was soon after his voice had broken — he had a great desire to hear an illustrious organist of Hamburg, one Reinken. Bach was very poor, and the long journey had to be done on foot, and coming back, he found himself a far way from his home, with hardly any money left in his pockets. He sat down on a bench outside an inn, very hungry, very weary. Suddenly, a window was opened, and two herring heads fell at Bach's feet. He picked them up; there might be a scrap or two of herring left that he might eat. And behold! he found on examination that in each head was a piece of gold. He never found out how it had happened, but, refreshed, he went back and heard the great Reinken once more, and was able to go on his way home at ease and rejoicing.

So much of wealthy men. I once knew a poor man. He was a country squire with an income of ten thousand a year, in the time when ten thousand bought twice as much as it will buy to-day. This squire wished very violently to set up a coach and four, and to possess a steam yacht; but found that he could hardly afford the upkeep of both. In the end, he fixed on the coach, and drove it about bravely enough and tried to smile. But he longed all the while, very bitterly and grievously, for the steam yacht.

I was sorry for him.

A Lament For London’s Lost Inns

AMONGST THE PLEASANT recollections of old, vanished London that I possess, none is more agreeable than my memories of the old inns. I do not mean the inns which would now be called hostels — in an attempt to be older than the old — that is, the various Inns of Chancery, though of these I could tell a long tale. I remember well the joy of turning aside from the gaiety of the Strand when the Strand was the cheerfullest, most delightful street in all London, and, as I believe, in the world, and going up a little quiet way and so into Clement’s Inn, with its fine Hall, its lawns, its peace and quiet, and its Garden House, a red brick, mid-Georgian house in the middle of a green garden. Once when I turned thus aside, the Garden House was empty, and I asked the rent. It was only £120 a year; but it was slightly beyond my means. And then there was New Inn, as peaceful as Clement’s, which it adjoined, but not so green. There were some sad, broken fragments of it surviving off Aldwych up to two or three years ago, but I am afraid these are now gone. The main entrance to New Inn was in Wych Street.

“The gentleman next in esteem and authority among us is another Bachelor who is a member of the Inner Temple. He is an excellent Critic and the time of the Play is his hour of business; exactly at five he passes through New Inn, crosses through Russell Court, and takes a turn at Will’s till the play begins.”

Thus the Spectator, and thus, I think, we see one of the sources of the younger Dickens. Lyons’ Inn, where the old Globe Theatre stood, was gone long before my day. Barnard’s, which Pip in “Great Expectations” disliked so thoroughly, has been converted into the Mercer’s School, its hall happily intact; Clifford’s (one of the choicest specimens of the Inns of Chancery) survives in a fragmentary state, but, I am afraid, will not last much longer. Thavie’s Inn, the residence of Mr. Jellaby, still exists by Holborn, but looks exactly like a street. I suppose it was rebuilt soon after the Society of Lincoln’s Inn sold it in 1771. It was named after John Thavie, an armourer, who lived in the reign of Edward III. Thus do old, old names, even the names of lesser men, cling to our London byways.

But it is not of the inns of this sort that I am thinking, but rather of those inns of common, not of legal, entertainment. It is odd to note that the word is fast becoming — if it has not become — obsolete, together with tavern; the reason being, as I suppose, that the things themselves are gone, or almost gone. We have hotels and we have “pubs”; scarcely inns or taverns. One of the noblest of the old inns that I remember was the Bell, in Holborn, to which the Amersham coach used to run up to in 1880, or thereabouts. Facing the street, it was seen to be a late seventeenth century building of dim and yet warm old brick, with a fine coat of arms in terra-cotta set into it. But within, under the archway, it was, in my recollection, almost a replica of the White Hart Yard, as shown in the “Pickwick” plate, depicting the first appearance of Mr. Samuel Weller. There were two tiers of galleries leading to the bedrooms, running round three sides of the court. In a word, you turned from Holborn into the seventeenth century, as, by the way, you may still turn if you will take the trouble to walk under Gray’s Inn archway through South Square into Gray’s Inn Square. Then, near at hand, was Ridley’s Family Hotel, with bow windows bulging over the Holborn pavement; a sound, comfortable, snug-looking place, where I can see archdeacons reading the Times after breakfast. Of the taverns of former years my chief recollections cluster round the Cock, standing where a branch of the Bank of England now stands, near the corner of Chancery Lane. I had several chops in that old coffee-room of the Cock, where Tennyson called for his pint of port, of which he wrote one of the finest things in the lighter vein that have been written in English or in any other language. Thus to the head-waiter:

Live long, ere from thy topmost head
The thick-set hazel dies;
Long, ere the hateful crow shall tread
The comers of thine eyes;
Live long, nor feel in head or chest
Our changeful equinoxes,
Till mellow Death, like some late guest,

Shall call thee from the boxes.

My occasional visits to the old vanished tavern were paid in its last days, in ‘82 or ‘83. I do not know what I could have been reading, what eighteenth century stuff was in my head — I was twenty at the time — but I had a vague idea that I should meet “the wits” at the Cock, otherwise, “the most respectable authors of the day.” I should think I was about a hundred years too late. I met no wits at the Cock, and I found that the coffee-room began to empty soon after nine, when, according to my out-dated fancies, it should have begun to be brilliant. But the odd thing is that once upon a time the sort of thing that I expected to happen did really happen.

“I was about seventeen when I first came up to town, an odd-looking boy, with short rough hair, and that sort of awkwardness which one always brings up at first out of the country. However, in spite of my bashfulness and appearance, I used now and then to thrust myself into Will’s to have the pleasure of seeing the most celebrated wits of that time, who then resorted thither. The second time that ever I was there, Mr. Dryden was speaking of his own things, as he frequently did, especially of such as had been lately published. ‘If anything of mine is good,’ said he, ’tis MacFlecknoe; and I value myself the more upon it, because it is the first piece of ridicule written in Heroics!’ On hearing this, I plucked up my spirit so far as to say, in a voice just loud enough to be heard, ‘that MacFlecknoe was a very fine poem, but that I had not imagined it to be the first that ever was writ that way.’ On this, Dryden turned short upon me, as surprised at my interposing; asked me how long I had been a dealer in poetry; and added, with a smile, ‘Pray, sir, what is it that you *did* imagine to have been writ so before?’ I named Boileau’s Lutrin, and Tassoni’s Secchia Rapita, which I had read, and knew Dryden had borrowed some strokes from each. ‘’Tis true,’ said Dryden, ‘I had forgot them.’ A little after Dryden went out, and in going spoke to me again, and desired me to come and see him next day. I was delighted with the invitation; went to see him accordingly and was well acquainted with him after, as long as he lived.”

Thus it was at Will’s, the Great Coffee House in Covent Garden, as Pepys called it. It was No.1, Bow Street, on the west side at the corner of Russell Street, and was perhaps the most illustrious of London taverns, from the Restoration to early Hanoverian days. It was here that “old Swinney” described Dryden as holding court. He told Dr. Johnson that “at Will’s

Coffee House Dryden had a particular chair for himself, which was set by the fire in winter, and was then called his winter-chair; and that it was carried out for him to the balcony in summer, and was then called his summer-chair.”

Decidedly, I was a little late in searching for the wits at the Cock.

More Inns

THERE IS A certain "framework" to one of Dickens's Christmas Stories which, I suppose, is not as well known as many of his occasional works. It is called "Somebody's Luggage," and is, as a framework, tolerably artificial. The scheme of it is, that a certain unknown traveller comes to an old fashioned London Inn, situated (I gather) in Holborn or the Strand, writes a great deal in the coffee-room, sends the porter on errands to publishing quarters, stays a night, and vanishes the next evening, leaving all his luggage behind him. Christopher, the head waiter, a most delightful character, becomes curious about this abandoned luggage. He buys it from the proprietress for the amount of the unknown's bill, and discovers that the luggage is full of manuscripts.

"He had crumpled up this writing of his everywhere, in every part and parcel of his luggage. There was writing in his dressing-case, writing in his boots, writing among his shaving tackle, writing in his hat box, writing folded away down among the whalebones of his umbrella."

Christopher first of all disposes of the luggage to a dealer not far from St. Clement Danes in the Strand. "On my remarking that I should have thought these articles not quite in his line, he said; 'No more ith a manth grandmother, Mithter Chrithtoper; but if any man will bring hith grandmother here, and offer her at a fair trifle below what the'll feth with good luck when the'th thcoured and turned — I'll buy her.'"

And then Christopher disposes of the Writings to the Editor of the *All the Year Round*, otherwise Mr. Dickens, and the Christmas Number begins with the manuscript that was found in the traveller's boots — and I am afraid that it had been better to have left it in his boots.

But what concerns me for the moment with "Somebody's Luggage," is the Bill of the man who went away. It is entered under the heading: "Coffee Room, No.4 — the number of the box occupied by the traveller — Feb. 2nd, 1856." It contains some curious items.

Item	£	s.	d.
Pen and Paper			6
Port Negus		2	0
Ditto		2	0
Pen and Paper			6
Tumbler Broken		2	6
Brandy		2	0
Pen and Paper			6
Anchovy Toast		2	6
Pen and Paper			6
Bed		3	0
Feb. 3rd	£	s.	d.
Pen and Paper			6
Breakfast		2	6
Broiled Ham		2	0
Eggs		1	0
Watercresses		1	0
Shrimps		1	0

Pen and Paper		6
Blotting Paper		6
Messenger to Paternoster Row and back	1	6
Again, when No Answer	1	6
Brandy, 2s. Devilled Port Chop, 2s	4	0
Pens and Paper	1	0
Messenger to Albemarle Street and back	1	0
Again (detained), when No Answer	1	6
Salt-cellar broken	3	6
Large Liqueur glass Orange Brandy	1	6
Dinner, Soup, Fish, Joint, and Bird	7	6
Bottle old East India Brown	8	0
Pen and Paper		6
Total	£2 16	6

The oddest item is the charge for breakfast. Nominally this was half-a-crown, but this sum covered, it is evident, merely the tea or coffee, the bread and toast and the butter. Everything else is an extra, and these bring the total up to seven-and-sixpence; the profits to the establishment amounting to about 1000 per cent. or more; since I do not believe that the water-cress cost more than a penny. The breakages were also charged excessively, but the bed is cheap at three shillings, and the dinner most reasonable — provided that the dishes were good of their kind. Unfortunately, it is impossible to compare Christophers' inn with any hotel of our day, since the old kind has ceased to exist, save, perhaps, in a few old hostelries, lingering in small out-of-the-way country towns.

I have stayed at all sorts of houses of entertainment in my day in all parts of this island. I have lodged at small country "pubs" and have been very comfortable; I have stayed at Palatial Hotels in big towns and have been hideously uncomfortable. I remember especially one of these latter. It had a Louis Quatorze, or Quinze, or Seize Tea room, furnished with the utmost luxury. There was marble everywhere, and hot air and cold air, and bathing arrangements that recalled the later Romans at their worst. And they kept me waiting twenty-five minutes for the bacon and eggs at breakfast; and when this rare and exotic dish did appear it was by no means excellent.

A great contrast to this was the Bell at Driffield, in that part of Yorkshire splendidly called the High Wolds. It is an extraordinary country; a great part of it ploughland when I visited it about eight years ago. The fields are huge; some of them, I believe, a hundred acres in extent. There are hardly any trees; they want to grow corn (they told me) not trees. The hedges are about three feet high by a foot broad, and if a hedge shows signs of becoming luxuriant, it is torn up. No weeds were suffered to grow in these hedgerows; not a flower appeared. But the lie of the land was the strangest thing about this strange region. It rose up before you with a great surge and swell; not precipitously, but gently and yet mightily, climbing up and up to the sky line; the white road rising perhaps for three or four miles, and in such a way that one felt that there must be a sudden and tremendous descent on the other side. Indeed I was strongly reminded of the Graveyard Scene in Sir John Martin Harvey's production of "Hamlet," the finest piece of scenic illusion that I have ever seen, where there was just such a gradual upward surge of the stage to the panorama cloth of the sky, with the like imperative suggestion that beyond the line of meeting, a thousand feet of sheer, precipitous cliff fell to the sea. But the Wolds were as deceptive as the theatre. The summit of the long wave gained, there was no violent, abrupt fall. The land went slowly down as it had slowly ascended; and then, far away, rose again into another climbing billow, marked by the white chalk road.

But the Bell at Driffield. It is a small, old coaching inn, and I did not suppose that its resources would be very varied. So when the landlord asked me on my first evening there what I would like for breakfast, I said, "Oh, bacon and eggs, I suppose." Instantly my host was roused. His manner became combative, his chin advanced with a sort of side-toss, peculiar to Yorkshire. And he said:

"Ah don't know about that. What about devilled kidneys?"

I assented gladly. Next morning, the devilled kidneys came and were admirable. Soon after they were served, the landlord came into the coffee-room. I expressed my high approval of the kidneys. He pointed to the sideboard, on which were a magnificent ham, just cut, and two plump fowls, golden brown from the roasting.

"Now mind you help yourself, Mr. Machen," said he, in an admonitory manner; implying that he would think very little of me if I did not help myself. "And if there's anything else you would fancy, I hope you'll mention it."

I left early the next day, and bid good-bye to this good host of the Bell. He relaxed a little.

"Coom again, Mr. Machen, coom again. Coom next time for your pleasure, not for your business. As far as I know, you can get oop when you like, and go to bed when you like, and do anything you like for that matter." And he wagged a genial finger at me, as if he would say that he had imparted the great secret of life. Driving to the station, I found myself thinking of Shenstone's lines. I quote from memory:

Whoe'er hath travelled life's dull round,

Whate'er his fortunes may have been,

Must sigh to think he still has found

His warmest welcome at an inn.

I have other good inns of pleasant and grateful memory. It is a great thing to stay at the Swan at Wells in summer weather; to look out across the street over the green turf of the close, to see the marvellous imagery of the west front of the cathedral against a sky of such a glowing and luminous blue as one only sees in the west. The inn at Dunster, too, the Luttrell Arms; that has a warm welcome and one of the loveliest prospects in England to commend it. And the Vine at Stafford has an old and flourishing vine making all its front green and living; and within there is the most delightful bar parlour, shaped like a boat. Here the boots brought a bag of list slippers at ten o’clock at night, and we all suited ourselves with slippers, as men who are too comfortable to stir in a hurry. We sat up talking to one another, and to the landlady and her daughter, who sat in the boat-shaped room with us in the old, friendly fashion. It was two o’clock in the morning before we stirred. The next morning, the landlady apologised for keeping me up so late. “But really,” she said smiling, “when one once embarks on these literary conversations, time seems to fly.” I agreed that literature was an absorbing subject; but what I remembered chiefly was some very old bottled ale which, to quote Mr. Bob Sawyer on the brandy at the Blue Lion, Muggleton, was too good to leave in a hurry.

How I wish somebody would open a Bell or a Swan, or a Luttrell Arms, or a Vine — in London!

Deadly Nevergreen

THERE IS A great talk of ghosts just now. They call them spirits, but ghosts is the good and ancient word of England. These ghosts come when the lights are out, and utter nothing or very little of consequence; and sometimes their remarks are “evidential” and sometimes they are not “evidential,” and on the whole nothing much happens. But how is it — if ghosts are, in fact, accustomed to revisit the lands beneath the moon — that anyone dares to pass the intersection of the Edgware Road with the Oxford Road after night has fallen? For it is stated that the ghosts of men who have died violently are given to revisit the scenes of their taking off. The murdered haunt the places of their dreadful endings; how is it, then, that the site of Tyburn Tree is not dense with the spirits of the great multitude of men and women who perished awfully there during the space of three hundred years or more? One would have said that the very ground would cry out with the agony of all these unhappy souls, that perished there by the old torturous method of execution: the cart driven on, the poor wretch left dangling in the air, to strangle by slow and excruciating degrees. But there are no reports of ghosts by the place of Deadly Nevergreen, Tyburn Tree.

One of the strangest of the ends made at Tyburn was that of Lord Ferrers, who was executed on May 5, 1760, for the murder of his steward, John Johnson. It is probable that Lord Ferrers was, in fact, a homicidal maniac, but, being tried by his peers, he was found guilty of murder and condemned to death, and accordingly was hanged with infinite pomp and ceremony. Every courtesy was shown this unhappy nobleman. He was allowed to drive from the Tower to Tyburn in his own landau, drawn by six horses, instead of in the mourning coach which had been provided by some friends. Mr. Sheriff Vaillant attended him, and observed “that it gave him the highest concern to wait upon him upon so melancholy an occasion, but that he would do everything in his power to render his situation as easy as possible.” Earl Ferrers replied politely, and, being dressed in light clothes, embroidered with silver, remarked that his dress might seem strange, but that he had a reason for wearing it. It is said that this gay and rich habit was his lordship's wedding suit, and that he remarked that the latter occasion was as good a one for wearing it as the former. And so the procession set forth: a large number of the constables of Middlesex, a party of horse-grenadiers, and a party of foot, Mr. Sheriff Errington's coach, the famous landau and six, Mr. Sheriff Vaillant's chariot, a mourning coach and six, and lastly a hearse and six. This horrid pageantry set out from the Tower soon after nine, but moved so slowly that Tyburn was not reached till a quarter to twelve. The condemned man behaved with the greatest calmness, hinted very politely to the chaplain that he was a Deist, censured the late Lord Bolingbroke for suffering his religious sentiments to be given to the world, and as to the late Mr. Johnson, whom he had shot dead, protested that he had not the slightest malice against him, but "he had met with so many crosses and vexations that he scarce knew what he did" — he had been a good deal worried, as we should put it.

At last the procession got as far as Drury Lane, and here Lord Ferrers said that he was thirsty and would like a glass of wine and water. But Mr. Sheriff Valliant pointed out that the dense crowd would become still denser if a halt were made, and that his lordship might be disturbed thereby, whereupon the Earl answered: "That's true, I say no more, let us by no means stop." They drew near to Tyburn, and Earl Ferrers said that there was a person waiting in a coach, for whom he had a very sincere regard, and of whom he would be glad to take leave before he died. Again the Sheriff was polite, but firm. He said that if his lordship insisted it should be so, "but that he wished his lordship, for his own sake, would decline it, lest the sight of a person, for whom he had such regard, should unman him, and disarm him of the fortitude he possessed." Again my lord gave way, and now the landau was over against the place of death.

And here it is to be noted that there were two instruments of execution at Tyburn. One was the permanent three-legged structure, the true Tyburn Tree which stood where the two roads meet. The other was a temporary scaffold sometimes erected in the Oxford road, by the park railings. It was on this scaffold that Lord Ferrers suffered. It was covered with black baize, and on two black cushions the condemned man and the chaplain knelt and, repeated the Lord's Prayer together. Lord Ferrers took leave of the chaplain and the two sheriffs with many polite expressions, desiring Mr. Sheriff Vaillant to be so good as to accept his watch. Then he called for the executioner, who desired his forgiveness, and his lordship, intending to give the man five guineas, gave it to the assistant hangman by mistake. Hence an "unseasonable dispute between these unthinking wretches." But Mr. Sheriff Vaillant instantly ended that. And then:

"His neckcloth being taken off, a white cap, which his lordship had brought in his pocket being put upon his head, his arms secured by a black sash from incommoding himself, and the cord put round his neck, he advanced by three steps upon an elevation in the middle of the scaffold, where part of the floor had been raised about eighteen inches higher than the rest, and standing under the cross-beam which went over it, covered with black baize, he asked the executioner, 'Am I right?' Then the cap was drawn over his face; and then, upon a signal given by the sheriff (for his lordship, upon being asked, declined to give one himself), that part upon which he stood instantly sunk down from beneath his feet, and left him entirely suspended; but not having sunk down so low as was designed, it was immediately pressed down, and levelled with the rest of the floor. For a few seconds his lordship made some struggles against the attacks of death, but was soon eased of all pain by the pressure of the executioner."

It was his lordship's misfortune that he made the experiment of the New Drop in a very early and ineffective stage of that invention.

It was one of the ugly features of the eighteenth century that it was by no means the rough mob of London that alone took pleasure in these hideous scenes. Boswell was an amateur of executions, and there were many elegant gentlemen who made a point of being present and write to each other, in unspeakably loathsome terms, on the matter. Thus Gilly Williams writes to George Selwyn:

"Harrington's porter was condemned yesterday. Cadogan and I have already bespoke places at the Brazier's. I presume we shall have your honour's company, if your stomach is not too squeamish for a single swing."

And so again, the Earl of Carlisle, another of Selwyn's correspondents, writes of Hackman, the murderer of Miss Reay:

"He was long at his prayers; and when he flung down his handkerchief for the signal for the cart to move on, Jack Ketch, instead of instantly whipping on the horse, jumped on the other side of him to snatch up the handkerchief, lest he should lose his rights. He then returned, to the head of the cart, and jehu'd him out of the world."

Dickens has been accused of grossly libelling the famous Lord Chesterfield by his character of Sir John Chester in "Barnaby Rudge." All good friends of Dr. Johnson will agree that it is impossible to speak too harshly of the detestable Chesterfield. But, that apart, it is doubtful whether a more odious type has ever existed than the bad Whig noble of the eighteenth century.

Ceremony On The Scaffold

ON THE TENTH of June, 1541, Sir Edmund Knevet was arraigned before the officers of the Green Cloth for striking one Master Cleer of Norfolk within the Tennis Court of the King's House. The sentence was that Sir Edmund Knevet must lose his right hand, and forfeit all his possessions.

Now supposing that the Board of Green Cloth existed still in all its vigour, with the old power of passing exemplary sentences, what would happen to plain Bill Smith of these days convicted of giving Tom Robinson one for himself within the verges of St. James's Park? I can imagine the scene very well. Bill would be taken from his cell at eight o'clock one morning. He would be led to a dingy and despairing metal shed in the prison-yard by a couple of warders. Here there would await him the Governor of the Prison, the Medical Officer, perhaps the Chaplain, a skilled surgeon, an anæsthetist, a nurse (very bright and cheerful, with red cheeks), and an operating table. On this table Bill would be politely requested to place himself. He would inhale the very latest formula, the Medical Officer keeping in careful touch with his pulse. The distinguished surgeon would then amputate Bill's right hand, the dressings would be applied with the greatest care, and in due course the prisoner would be escorted to the hospital. Here he would remain for the next three weeks, being nurtured on a light but nourishing diet. On his release from prison he would be fitted with an artificial hand, of the newest pattern. Such would be the course of justice in 1926, if it had continued to order right hands to be cut off.

They did not do things in that shabby, hole-in-the-corner way four hundred years ago. The ancient chronicle from which I quote continues the story thus:

"Whereupon there was called to do execution, first the Serjeant Surgeon, with his Instruments pertaining to his office, then, the Serjeant of the Wood Yard, with a mallet and a block to lay the hand upon, then the King's Master Cook with a knife to cut off the hand, then the Serjeant of the Larder to set the knife right on the joint, then the Serjeant Ferrier with searing irons to sear the veins, then the Serjeant of the Poultry with a Cock, which Cock should have his head smitten off upon the same block and with the same knife; then the Yeoman of the Chandry with Sear-cloaths, then the Yeoman of the Scullery, with a pan of fire to heat the Irons, a chafer of water to cool the ends of the Irons, and two forms for all officers to set their stuff on, then the Serjeant of the Cellar with Wine, Ale and Beer; then the Serjeant of the Ewry with Bason, Ewre, and Towels."

There! It must be confessed that there was nothing mean about the court of Henry VIII. If it was only a matter of cutting off a gentleman's hand, the thing was done magnificently; with — I think we may say — a sense of style. In this particular affair of Sir Edmund Knevet I am afraid that some of the company were disappointed; for when it came to the point of execution Sir Edmund confessed everything and submitted himself in every respect, only begging that the King's Majesty would take the left hand instead of the right, since with that hand, he said, he might live to do the King some service. Whereupon somebody ran to tell the King, and the King immediately forgave Sir Edmund, and left him both his hands and restored to him all his forfeited lands and goods. I am afraid, I say, that, some of the company went away grumbling and asking (more or less) if they were going to have their money back; but I daresay there were others who were all for a happy ending. And I have no doubt that the seven Serjeants, the two Yeomen, and the King's Master Cook gave a good account of the Wine, Ale, and Beer.

Things did not always end so pleasantly. When Nigel (he of "The Fortunes") was in prison for drawing his sword on the villain, Dalgarno, in the precincts of the Court, Sir Mungo Malagrowther visited him, and, by way of consolation, gave a lively account of some proceedings under the Board of Green Cloth which he had once witnessed. The culprit, if I remember, bore the striking off of his hand bravely enough, but when it came to the application of those red-hot irons to the stump, he uttered an eldritch screech. The Palace Court, the body which once gave these savage sentences, lingered on far into the 'forties of the last century. Tip (otherwise Edward) Dorrit once occupied a stool in the office of an attorney "in a great National Palladium called the Palace Court," and indeed the Marshalsea, whence Tip came, was originally built as a prison for persons accused of offences committed within the verge of the Court. But I suppose that in its later years the tribunal bled its victims rather metaphorically than literally.

But as to the general question of the public ceremonial and elaborate execution of judgment upon criminals; how does it compare with our grim and secret way of carrying out the last doom of the law? So far as we are concerned, no doubt Charles Dickens, that determined and consistent denouncer of public executions, was perfectly right. Johnson was mistaken when he said that the pageant of Tyburn, with its long drive from Newgate, furnished an example to the populace. Dickens describes the execution of the Mannings and the demeanour of the crowd that waited all night to witness it; it is plain that the vilest degradation, not reformation, was the result of that hideous spectacle. But as for the criminal himself; there, perhaps, Johnson was right in thinking that he was fortified by the dismal pageantry, by the bell ringing at St. Sepulchre's, by the flowers presented by lady admirers, by the last drink at St. Giles's. Jonathan Wild is reported by Fielding to have picked the chaplain's pocket of a corkscrew going in the cart to Tyburn, and Sixteen Stringed Jack wore a bright pea-green coat as he went on his way to the Three Wooden Stilts. And, then, there was the admirable Colonel Turner, who was hanged in the seventeenth century for something like robbery with violence. He made what Leslie Stephen rightly called a superb dying speech. "He spoke under the gallows as if he were the good apprentice just arrived at the mayoralty… . " He was brought up in an honest family in the good old times, he said, and lamented the bad times that had since come in. So the Colonel ran on happily, speaking of his loyalty to the King, his firm piety, his detestation of profane swearing and drunkenness; in a word of his well-nigh saintly character. At last the hangman put the rope round his neck.

"Dost thou mean to choke me, fellow?" asked the Colonel. "What a simple fellow is this! How long have you been executioner that you know not how to put the knot?"

Then, as he was putting on the white cap, he saw a lady at a window. He kissed his hand to her, said, "Your servant, Mistress," and pulled down the cap, undaunted to the last, as an eye-witness of the scene reports.

It is clear that Colonel Turner would not have liked our modern ways of doing things.

Old Dr. Mounsey

SOMETIME IN THE summer of 1768, Dr. Samuel Johnson supped at the Crown and Anchor, in the Strand, with a little company that Mr. Boswell had collected to meet him. The company consisted of Dr. Percy, afterwards Bishop of Dromore (Percy’s “Reliques”), Dr. Douglas, Mr. Langton (“Lanky”), Dr. Robertson, the historian, Dr. Blair (Blair’s “Rhetoric”) and Mr. Thomas Davies, the bookseller of Russell Street, Covent Garden. The Scots were all prudent and silent, but Johnson was “in remarkable vigour of mind and eager to exert himself in conversation.” He did exert himself in conversation: to the following effect:

“He was vehement against old Dr. Mounsey, of Chelsea College, as ‘a fellow who swore and talked bawdy.’ ‘I have been often in his company (said Dr. Percy), and never heard him swear or talk bawdy.’ Mr. Davies, who sat next to Dr. Percy, having after this had some conversation ‘aside with him, made a discovery which, in his zeal to pay court to Dr. Johnson, he eagerly proclaimed aloud from the foot of the table: ‘O, Sir, I have found out a very good reason why Dr. Percy never heard Mounsey swear or talk bawdy; for he tells me he never saw him but at the Duke of Northumberland’s table!’, ‘And so, Sir (said Johnson loudly to Dr. Percy), you would shield this man from the charge of swearing and talking bawdy because he did not do so at the Duke of Northumberland’s table. Sir, you might as well tell us that you had seen him hold up his hand at the Old Bailey, and he neither swore nor talked bawdy; or that you had seen him in the cart at Tyburn, and he neither swore nor talked bawdy. And is it thus, Sir, that you presume to controvert what I have related?”, Whereupon Dr. Percy left the room in a huff, and next morning Dr. Johnson observed complacently that there had been “good talk.”

Of course, the passage had been long familiar to me, but not reading Boswell in the luxury of an annotated edition, I had always speculated vainly as to this “old Dr. Mounsey,” who appears on the great lantern show for a moment, sets Johnson and Percy by the ears, and then vanishes. It was only the other day that I found in an odd old book (published, strangely enough, at Louisville, Kentucky) the true history of Dr. Messenger Mounsey (or Monsey), Physician to Chelsea Hospital.

He was the son of a country parson, who refused in 1689 to take the oath of allegiance to the Usurpers, William and Mary. He was educated at Cambridge and settled down as a physician in Bury St. Edmunds, where he married a widow with a handsome jointure. He made an income of £300 a year, and grumbled because he had to work too hard for it. Fortunately for him, Lord Godolphin was seized with apoplexy on a journey to his country seat, and Bury was the nearest point where medical help was to be had. Dr. Mounsey was called in, Lord Godolphin got better, liked his physician's talk, and made Dr. Messenger for life. He had an apartment at Lord Godolphin's town house, was made Physician to Chelsea Hospital and saw all the best company of the age, from King George II downwards. For a a time he was a great friend of Garrick's; but Garrick had a sly tongue, and the Doctor had a rough tongue, and the friendship ended in offence and epigrams. Garrick used to make comic business out of Mounsey's oddities for the entertainment of his friends; Mounsey said that Garrick would never leave the stage "so long as he knows a guinea is cross on one side and pile on the other" — so long as guineas have heads and tails — and the two became sworn enemies. The fact is that Dr. Mounsey was an intensely rude old man, or, in the elegant phrase of my authority, "it became the fashion for the young, the delicate, and the gay to exclaim against him as an interrupter of established forms, and as a violator of those minute rules of good breeding — which, however trifling they may appear to the sage and the philosopher, contribute essentially to the ease and comfort of modern life." Yet the queer old man had, like the greater Doctor of his age, an interior benevolence. Once, going along Oxford Market, he observed a poor woman asking the price of a fine piece of beef.

"The brute answered the woman, 'One penny a pound,' thinking, no doubt, it was too good for her. 'Weigh that piece of beef,' said the Doctor.

"'Ten pounds and a half,' said Mr. Butcher.

"'Here, good woman,' cried the Doctor, 'hold up your apron and take that beef home to your family.'

"'God bless your honour!'

"'Go off, directly, home; no compliments! Here, Mr. Butcher,' continued the Doctor, 'give me change out of this shilling for that poor woman's beef.'

"'What do you mean, Sir?' replied the Butcher.

"'Mean, Sir! why to pay for the poor woman's beef, what you asked her; a penny a pound. Come, make haste and give me three halfpence; I am in a hurry.'

"'Why, Sir… ' said the Butcher.

"'No why sirs with me,' answered the Doctor, 'give me my change instantly, or I will break your head.' The Butcher again began to expostulate, and the Doctor struck him with all his force with his cane."

But the principal adventure of his life seems to have been the affair of the bank-notes. Dr. Mounsey, who was born in 1693, not long after the foundation of the Bank of England, had an old-fashioned distrust of "securities" of all sorts, and so, being bound on a summer holiday, he hid his notes and gold in his fire-place, putting them under the "cinders and shavings" of the laid fire. A month later Dr. Mounsey returned and found his house-keeper entertaining a few friends to tea in his sitting-room. The fire had just been lighted; the kettle was on the hob. "He ran across the room like a madman, swearing his housekeeper had ruined him for ever, and had burned all his bank-notes. First went the contents of the slop-basin, then the teapot, and then he rushed to the pump in the kitchen, and brought a pail of water, which he threw partly over the fire and partly over the company, who in the utmost consternation retreated as speedily as possible. His housekeeper cried out: 'For God's sake, Sir, forbear, you will spoil the steel stove and fire-irons.' 'Damn the stove, irons, you, your company, and all!' replied the Doctor, 'you have ruined and undone me for ever; you have burned my bank-notes.' 'Lord, Sir,' said the half-drowned woman, 'who'd think of putting bank-notes in a Bath stove, where the fire is ready laid?' 'Fire,' said he, 'who'd think of making a fire in summer-time, where there has not been one for months?'" The notes were recovered in a damaged and dubious condition. But Dr. Mounsey's patron, Lord Godolphin, said that he would go with him the next day to the Bank of England, and everything would be quite all right. But Godolphin had told the King, and the King said that he must hear Mounsey tell the tale of the burning notes and the drenched tea-party. And so, when the Doctor came, King George II was hidden in a cupboard, and was so much amused that he kicked the cupboard door open. “God!” said the Doctor in a rage, and then saw who had been listening, and with considerable tact ran on his sentence, “bless your majesty; this may be a joke with you and his lordship, but to me a loss of near £400.” But Lord Godolphin assured him that he should have his money, and made an appointment to meet him at the Bank a little later. Dr. Mounsey, in the interval, transacted some business at the Horse Guards, and took water at Whitehall for the Bank. In going down the river he felt that he must have a look at the bank-notes, to make quite sure that they were safe. So he pulled out his pocket-book; and a gust of wind blew the notes out of the book and into the river. “The Doctor, with a volley of oaths — the other Doctor was right on one point, at all events — desired the waterman to put back, for that his bank-notes were overboard. He was instantly obeyed; and when he reached them he took the hat from his head, and, dipping it in the river, took up his notes, together with half a hatful of water. With his hat, the notes, and the water under his arm he was landed at the famous stairs called the Three Cranes in the Vintry, and walked straight to the Bank.

“What have you under your arm?” asked Lord Godolphin. “The damned notes,” replied the Doctor, throwing the hat on the table with such violence that the water spurted into the faces of the City Kings who sat about the board. “There,” said the Doctor, “take the remains of your damned notes, for neither fire nor water will consume them.” He got his money in full, but he did not go away in peace. He had forgotten all about the watermen and the fare from Whitehall. They were waiting outside the Bank “howling for their money,” and swearing that the Doctor was a madman. When he came out, one of the watermen laid hold of him — and was instantly knocked down for his pains. However, a crown for the little mistake, with half a crown for the fare, adjusted this little difficulty, and Dr. Messenger Mounsey resolved to invest his money in the Funds for the future.

This remarkable character outlived Dr. Johnson by five years, dying in 1789, at the age of ninety-six. Naturally, he made an eccentric will. He left the bulk of his money to his daughter, tying it up by a complicated system of entail to her female descendants. He mentioned in his will a young lady on whose wit, taste and elegance be “lavished encomiums” — leaving her an old battered snuff-box, worth about sixpence. He mentioned also another young lady to whom he had intended to bequeath a legacy. But she turned out “a pert, conceited minx,” so she got nothing. Then came annuities to two clergymen, who had turned Unitarian.

And I am wondering whether Dr. Johnson knew all that there was to be known about Dr. Messenger Mounsey. He abominated foul and blasphemous language, no doubt; he would have detested a man who abused the Church of England and comforted heretics. But if he had known of the principal clause in old Dr. Mounsey’s will, by which large property was not only left to a woman but entailed in the female line, then he would have dismissed Dr. Mounsey as a wild and irresponsible madman, fit for Bedlam and nothing else.

The Euston Square Mystery

DECIDEDLY; THE MURDER of Matilda J. Hacker in Euston Square, in the year 1878, is one of those cases that are to be marked with an “and yet… . “ No doubt the verdict of the jury was the right verdict, according to the rules of the law; but… .

Miss Hacker, if she had lived in an earlier age, would undoubtedly have been one of those “Characters,” of whom we were talking. Like Miss Betty Bolaine, she lived at Canterbury; like Miss Bolaine she had an aversion from the spending of money. But, born in a later age, she did not appear in polite company as an animated and malodorous rag-bag, nor did she make her meals of rotten meat picked up in the gutter and roasted on a fire of cabbage stalks. We have long lost the courage of our opinions; and Miss Hacker expressed herself in a purely negative way — she would not pay her rates at Canterbury. She was a well-to-do old woman, but she did not like paying rates. Accordingly, she absconded. She took various names, and lived in various places, so as to avoid being traced and proceeded against by the Canterbury authorities. At length, she called herself Huish, and took lodgings at 4, Euston Square — the place changed its name in consequence — a house kept by a Mr. and Mrs. Bastindoff. Like many other “Characters” of the chronicles, she was accustomed to keep a good deal of money by her in a cash-box.

On the 10th of October, 1878, she wrote a business letter to her agent about some property, the reply to be addressed to “M. B., Post Office, Holborn.” On Sunday, October 14, Mr. and Mrs. Bastindoff were out for the day, and Miss Hacker was alone in the house with the servant, Hannah Dobbs. Next day, Mr. Bastindoff told the servant to go up to the old lady and get some rent due to him. Hannah, Mr. Bastindoff declared, ran upstairs with alacrity, saying, “I’ll go,” and came down again with a £5 note. The note was changed, the rent owing deducted, and the balance handed to Hannah Dobbs; it does not appear why. But one would think that the lodger would have received the balance. And now a very singular point. Mrs. Bastindoff said afterwards in the witness-box that on the morning of Sunday, October 14, Hannah had told her that she thought that Miss Huish (otherwise Hacker) was going to leave the lodgings that day; indeed, that she believed the old lady had already gone. This statement seems to have produced little effect on the Bastindoff family, since Mr. Bastindoff sent up his servant to collect money from his lodger on the Monday morning, and collected it. It is not recorded that he said: “So she hasn’t gone, after all,” or made any remark in particular. But after the successful embassy of the £5 note, it would appear that the lodger’s disappearance was gently allowed to steal on the family consciousness. Still, nobody troubled to go into the old lady’s rooms for a couple of days, and then only to get them ready for a new lodger. In these rooms, Mrs Bastindoff declared, she saw a stain on the carpet, and also clear evidence that someone had tried to wash the stain away. Still, Mrs. Bastindoff did not seem afraid with any amazement. A lodger had disappeared, probably on Sunday morning; had handed over five pounds on the Monday; her room, on the Wednesday, was found to be darkly stained; afterwards, analysis showed that this was, indeed, the stain of blood. But, so far as we can see, all these odd circumstances were accepted by the Bastindoffs as being completely in the natural order of things.

And there were other queer things, that appear to have aroused no particular comment at the time of their occurrence. Soon after October 15 Hannah Dobbs showed one of the Bastindoff children a Dream Book, which, she said, had belonged to Miss Hacker. She gave another child a funny toy, the lodger’s cash-box — with a broken lid. She also mounted a watch and chain which no one had ever seen about her before. But she explained that the watch and chain had been left her by an old uncle, lately dead at Bideford. She pawned them, later, under a false name, and it turned out at last that they were originally the property of Miss Hacker. It was found that there was no uncle at Bideford, and, naturally enough, therefore, that he hadn’t died. Soon after the disappearance of the old woman, Hannah Dobbs left the Bastindoff service, and went into lodgings. She could not pay her rent, so left her box as security. Eventually it was opened, and several articles in it were identified as having been the property of Miss Hacker.

So much for Miss Hacker’s disappearance; now for her reappearance. Seven months later, in May, 1879, the cellar at No.4, Euston Square, was cleared out, as one of the lodgers wanted to store coal there. Then Miss Hacker reappeared; very dead down in that cellar, with a rope about her neck. But the body was identified beyond doubt, and some pieces of jewellery found by the body were known to have been the property of the dead woman. A pretty strong case, as Montagu Williams observes, and yet Hannah Dobbs was acquitted. The judge was Mr. Justice Hawkins, who was not generally supposed to be unduly favourable to prisoners at the bar. But the point, it seems, was technical. Hannah Dobbs was, undoubtedly, in possession of various pieces of property that had belonged to Miss Hacker; but that was no proof that she had murdered Miss Hacker; it was not even proof that she knew that Miss Hacker had been murdered. I do not know whether it were proved that Hannah Dobbs must have seen the watch and chain (for example) in the dead woman's possession; even so, they might have been given to her by another person and that other person might have assured Hannah that they were a gift to him from Miss Hacker.

Then followed a very odd sequel. Hannah Dobbs became a popular heroine. The proprietor of the *Police News* took up her case, and issued a pamphlet, which pretended to tell Miss Dobbs' true story. Miss Dobbs declared that there had been certain relations between herself and Bastindoff, before she entered his service, and during her residence in his house. Then Mr. Bastindoff filed an affidavit, denying these allegations. And on that affidavit he was indicted for perjury. Again the Judge was Hawkins. Hannah Dobbs, who had been rather shabby at her own trial, turned up smartly dressed in the witness-box. She swore that the relations between herself and Bastindoff began in the autumn of 1877, when she was in service at 42, Torrington Square. Hannah and another girl were cleaning windows, and Mr. Severin Bastindoff spoke to them.

"In consequence of that conversation he and I went out together that night or a night or two afterwards, and from that time until I entered his service we frequently went out together. The relationship was kept up during the time I was an inmate of his house."

This story was corroborated by Hannah's fellow-servants. Two of them said that one night they were waiting for Bastindoff and that all three fell asleep before the kitchen fire, leaving the area door open. Two policemen noticed the open door, entered, woke the girls up, and partook of a little coffee with them. The girls identified the prisoner as the man they had seen, but explained that when they had met him below stairs his beard was differently cut. Mr. Justice Hawkins then directed that a witness, once a partner of Bastindoff's, should be recalled, and he gave a description of the prisoner's beard, old style, which confirmed the statement of the servant girls. A Mrs. Carpenter, keeper of an inn at Redhill, swore that in the year 1877 Dobbs and Bastindoff passed the night together at her hotel. It was observed that this Mrs. Carpenter was violently antagonistic to the accused man. Hannah Dobbs was cross-examined. It appeared that she had been convicted of theft, and her little life story led Mr. Justice Hawkins to declare her "a most infamous person." The defence was that on the day on which Bastindoff was said to have been at Redhill with infamous Hannah, he was really fishing in quite a different part of the country; and that the man who was with Hannah was really brother Peter Bastindoff, who was just like Severin. But, unfortunately, the people who swore that Severin was fishing, swore that Peter was fishing too, a statement making confusion very much worse confounded, but not helpful to the defence.

There is only one gleam of light in this strange, tragical, most horrible case: Severin Bastindoff's best witness was his mother-in-law. One would have thought that this affecting circumstance would have melted brassy bosoms and hearts of flint; but it was not so. In the result, Severin Bastindoff was found guilty of the crime of perjury, and sentenced to twelve months hard labour.

There is no happy ending to this queer story. Nobody was hanged, though it seems pretty clear that somebody, perhaps several somebodies, would have been "nane the waur for a hanging," as the humorous Scots justice observed on one occasion.

The Power Of Jargon

NOT SO MANY years ago, fifteen or sixteen, or seventeen, perhaps, we were all following the Druce Case with immense interest. Stated baldly, as I remember it, the general thesis was that a Mr. Druce, keeper of a big furniture shop in Baker Street, who in due season died, and was buried in Highgate Cemetery, was not Mr. Druce at all, but the Duke of Portland; the famous Duke who caused to be constructed the underground mansion at Welbeck, and was thought to be more than a little eccentric. Now, I have forgotten the detail, I regret to say, but if this Mr. Druce could be proved to have been, in fact, the Duke, then somebody would come in for a great deal of money. The original claimant went mad and died, and then another claimant appeared, and turned himself or herself into a company, and found some hundreds of people ready to subscribe quite large sums so that the legal proceedings should be taken and the recovered treasure distributed amongst them. This monstrous bubble of a story was finally burst by leave being given to open the Druce vault at Highgate; whereupon the body of poor Mr. Druce was disclosed and found to be undoubtedly the body of Mr. Druce, and not a lump of lead, as (I think) was alleged by the Claimant. But in the course of litigation one extraordinary witness was called in support of the Claimant's case. She was a very old lady, over eighty, to the best of my recollection, and she had been brought all the way from New Zealand to tell the most outrageous cock-and-bull story that was ever heard in an English law court. She knew all about the secret of the Duke of Portland, who had the odd humour, according to the fable, of pretending at intervals to be an upholsterer in Baker Street; she knew, because in her youth she had been "outside correspondent" to him, Charles Dickens, and Lord Lytton. She did not explain what an "outside correspondent" was; she placidly babbled her imbecilities in the witness-box, and was finally prosecuted for perjury, convicted and let off very lightly.

But it is her phrase that interests me. I am convinced that it was a great attraction to the people who were persuaded to back this crazy imposture, just because it was idiotic, which, after all, is not surprising, since the persons concerned who parted with their money in such a cause were undoubtedly idiots, and so it was, I think, with the amazing case of Benson and the Turf Frauds, an old tale of the ‘seventies.

Benson was a man of Jewish race. He was only twenty-six, but he had been in grave trouble before. He was perfectly well-mannered, well-educated, well-dressed, and had contrived, one gathers, by gig-keeping on a magnificent scale, to associate with the very best people in the Isle of Wight. He drove a splendidly equipped carriage and pair; therefore, he was a good man. He had collected about him a remarkable gang of assistants; and in the year 1876 Benson and his friends laid a remarkable trap, and baited it in the oddest manner. This bait was taken, and taken eagerly, by one Madame de Goncourt, a wealthy French widow. Benson, no doubt, had marked her down; it is the business of men who follow his difficult and dangerous craft to know everything — everything that may at all concern them. At all events, Madame de Goncourt received an odd number of an English paper called *Sport*. Of course, there was no such paper. But Madame. de Goncourt, reading this journal which had fallen on her from the clouds, learned from it that it was the property of an immensely wealthy Englishman, a Mr. Montgomery. This Mr. Montgomery had mysterious and masterly access to turf and stable secrets that had enabled him to win, not thousands, but millions of pounds on the race-course. Not unnaturally, the bookmakers were enraged at the disastrous science of Mr. Montgomery. They refused to take his bets. *Sport* was enraged. It pointed out a way. Though Mr. Montgomery could not make bets in his own name, he could pay a slight commission to foreign agents, who would back horses for him in their own names. All this impressed Madame de Goncourt immensely, and she was impressed still more by the receipt of a letter from the great Mr. Montgomery. This gentleman — alias Benson — wrote as follows:

“Your name has been favourably mentioned to me by the Franco–English Society of Publicity, and I consequently repose in you the most esteemed confidence. What I require of you is very simple indeed. I will send you for each race the amount which I desire to put on the horse which must, in my opinion, win. You will have to forward the money *in your name*, but *on my account*, to the bookmaker, and thus will be able to get the real odds, which, on account of my success and great knowledge, are denied me. The bookmaker will, on settling day, send you the amount, added to the stake originally forwarded to him. This you will please remit to me, and, on its receipt, I will forthwith forward to you a commission of five per cent."

Madame de Goncourt had more money than she knew what to do with; naturally, therefore, she wanted to make more. She became Mr. Montgomery's agent, and received cheques of "The Royal Bank of London, Charing Cross." There was no such bank, to be sure; but, then, there was no Franco–English Society of Publicity. Sham cheques came raining on Madame de Goncourt, and she forwarded them to various agents of Benson, who were supposed to be English bookmakers. Then Mr. Montgomery sent her a Bank of London cheque for £1000, which was to be put on a certain horse and sent to a bookmaker named Francis, who, said Mr. Montgomery, was a "sworn-bookmaker." And he advised the lady, very strongly, to invest a like sum on her own account. She did so, and in a few days she had sent £10,000 to various sworn-bookmakers.

Then, of course, the inevitable mistake. The gang did not know when to leave the board. They put it to Madame de Goncourt that a vast fortune was to be made if she could venture £30,000 with a sworn-bookmaker named Ellerton; and Mr. Montgomery said that if the lady could not command the whole sum he would gladly advance the difference himself. She was only too ready to find the whole sum required; but before this could be done she had to have a talk with her banker — and then all was spoilt. Madame de Goncour came over to England, and characteristically enough, applied to the Lord Mayor, telling him, no doubt, that she had suffered wrong. Her confidence in the French Legend of the Lord Mayor of London was justified; Benson and his rascals were caught, and the lady recovered almost the whole of her money. I do not think I am in the least glad to record this fact. On the whole, I think Benson and his pirates deserved the money quite as well as Madame de Goncourt, if not better. Poor men, men of large families and small means, may be readily excused if they are over-ready to accept idle tales of immense gains: but the rich should not be covetous. But this is not a moral tale. Its point lies in the highly successful use of absurd jargon, of the "outside correspondent" order. Mark the "Franco–English Society of Publicity," non-existent, of course but interesting as containing an early example of the ugly word, "publicity." Note "The Royal Bank of London"; note, above all, the "sworn-bookmaker," a great creation. There is no surer bait than pompous and unmeaning gibberish of this sort. You remember “The Anglo–Bengalee Disinterested Loan and Life Assurance Company.” In England we require the moral touch implied in “Disinterested.” Benson was baiting his hook for Continental victims, and so did not appeal to the ethical issue. It is well known that they are not really moral on the Continent. I shall call my swindle “The All–British Orphans’ Benevolent Protection and Reconstruction Company, Ltd.” Reconstruction is one of the most blessed of these blessed words; and what good man could resist the temptation of benevolently protecting and reconstructing an All–British Orphan — especially if he were promised interest on his money at the rate of twenty-five per cent?

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GUINEVERE AND LANCELOT

UPON A MORNING in May a man kept his master’s sheep on the hills that are above the Forest of Dendreath, in the midst of the Isle of Britain. It was very early in the morning when the man came out of the shelter that he had made between two rocks, and the dew was thick upon the short grass, and at the sun rising all the land glittered as if it had been the Shining Isle beyond the waves of ocean, and an odour of sweetness rose up from the region of the leaves. Then the sun ascended in his splendour, and the mists in the forests vanished away, and the shepherd saw before him all the wonders of the Forest of Dendreath. In the west he beheld the Road of the Eagle that issues from the waste land of Cameliard; and suddenly he was amazed, for far away he saw a red flame and a white flame advancing side by side along the alley of the wood.

Now, these flames were indeed nothing but that famous knight of high worship, Sir Lancelot, the principal warrior of the Order of the Round Table, and beside him Guinevere, that was to be Arthur’s Queen. When the shepherd far on the wild hill had seen them they had but come forth from a shade of beechen leaves, and as they appeared suddenly in the open glade the sunbeams smote upon them, and so bright was Lancelot’s armour made that it was as if it spouted white fire, and Guinevere was as the burning of vehement flames. Upon her head she bore a cap of golden cloth, curiously adorned with jewels such as rubies and carbuncles and chrysoprases, and her cotehardie was of red samite. And about her she held a cloak of flame-coloured satin, and her belt was of gold and crystals. Golden was the glory of her hair. So they rode through the alleys of the forest in the sweetness of the May morning, amidst the glittering of many leaves stirred by the wind of heaven. And at their passing by all the choir of the birds of the wood exulted. Deep from the shade in the heart of the forest Eos the nightingale chanted the melody of lovers with unwearied antiphons; to him gladly replied the blackbird, a master of song; the blackcap was of their chorus; from the throats of smaller birds there rose a sweet sound like that of pipes of faerie. So journeyed Sir Lancelot and the lady by the ways of the happy forest, one glancing gently on the other as they rode at a merry pace.

Now, when Sir Lancelot brought Guinevere from her father's castle in Cameliard, they rode for a day and found no adventure. But as night fell, and the sun went down, and it grew dark, they heard a noise as of crackling flames, and the sky grew red; and they saw a high hill before them, and on the height of it a fair castle was built, with lofty walls and many springing towers and pinnacles. But a black smoke swelled up from it, and great flames encompassed it, and as they looked there was a roaring and a riving as of thunder; and then that fair and goodly place fell apart, and was dashed down into the dust, being consumed with fire. 'Alas, fair lord,' said Guinevere, 'what castle was this, and who was the lord of it? What evil chance hath so piteously destroyed it all?'

'Lady,' replied Sir Lancelot, 'that I may scarcely tell. Let be awhile, and it: may be that we shall fall in with some man who shall advise us.' And then they pressed a little forward, and Sir Lancelot found a poor man hidden amongst the thorns and bushes by the way, and he asked the man what enemy had come upon the castle, and for what cause it had thus been burned and ruined. 'Sir,' said the poor man, 'ye are to understand that this castle was the castle of Sir Sagramour of the Fair Mount, that was a knight of great worship, and a noble warrior, and the lord of all these lands. And it fell out by evil chance that he saw Eglaise, the daughter of King Ryon of the Rugged Island, as she went forth from her chamber to hear mass, and the hearts of these two became inflamed with love, and so they fled away together and dwelt happily at that castle for a year and a day. Then cometh King Ryon against Sir Sagramour and taketh his castle and burneth it as ye have seen, and Sir Sagramour is slain, and his wife with him, and no living man is left therein.' Then Sir Lancelot and Guinevere, the queen that was to be, marvelled, and went on their way; and said Guinevere: 'I see very well that this love is both piteous and cruel, since by it husband and wife are slain, and a fair hold has its portion with ashes and destruction.'

'Will ye say so, lady!' answered Lancelot. 'Consider well that by this name love is all the round earth ordered, with the shining of the stars at night, and with all the spheres of the heavens, and with the perpetual choirs of Paradise. And without this love ye are to understand right as the doctors teach us, that there were no brightness of the sun at all, nor any light of the moon, nor should there be any green thing upon the earth, nor any bird of the wood, nor beast of the rocks, nor fishes in ocean; nay, when love shall pass, then passeth man also. And ye shall not say that this knight and his sweetheart were unhappy nor of an ill end, for to our lord Love they did great worship and great honour, and were well rewarded of him, so that they dwelt for a year and a day in the estate of gladness, and now praise God in Paradise, in the bliss that is perdurable and everlasting.'

'Oh, knight,' said then Guinevere, 'I see well that ye are a great lover and a high master — yea, a very doctor of love; and well I wit that in the King's court at Camelot ye have the love of many ladies, and bear the palm of all amorous knights.'

'Lady, ye judge falsely, since never yet have I loved maid nor wife.'

'Is this as ye say, of very truth!'

'It is as I have said, lady, and ye must know that I am none of the knights of the bower, but of the stricken field, where I do battle for my lord, King Arthur, against his enemies, and against the foes of all the land.'

'Nevertheless, sir knight, of love ye speak very honestly and fairly, and ye hold love in great worship, as is plain to see, and so at last ye shall doubtless receive the high guerdon and reward of that lord Love whose lauds and offices ye so well recite.' And then that fair lady looked on Sir Lancelot with right good liking. And as they passed on their way they came to a lake, and all about it there were yew-trees set as a high hedge, and from the shadow of these trees they heard issuing a noise of lamentation. 'What is this?' said Guinevere. 'Let us delay and listen.' And there was a sound of a man who wept, and after his weeping they saw him take a lute, and he sang this melody:

I make an incantation against the brightness of the sky:
I make an incantation against the shining of the sun:
I make an incantation against the wind of heaven.

I utter a spell against the boughs of the oak,

Against the Aspen and the alder, the willow and the birch,
Against the budding of every tree that is in the wood.

I bind a charm against the rose that it blossom not:
May my magic bring darkness on the generation of the flowers:
May blackness consume the grass of the fields.

Let there be a mighty spell upon the melody of the birds, Let the green perpetual choir be silent, Let the song of fairyland be heard no more.

For in Gwenllian was the brightness of the sky, She was the splendour of the heavenly sun, She imparted sweetness to the breeze from on high.

In her were contained the delight of the woods, The sweetness of the rose, the pleasure of the flowers.
Her voice gave rapture to the song of the birds.
The joys of the world have departed with her to Paradise.

And Guinevere and Sir Lancelot went on their way, considering the sad estate of this desolate lover, and again the lady spoke and said: ‘What say ye, sir knight? Will ye still be so hardy as to praise this love that bringeth men into so piteous a case! Heard ye not how he spoke, saying that all joys had departed with the lady that death has taken from him?’

‘Lady,’ said he, ‘there shall come a day when ye shall understand well that, albeit lovers may die and perish, yet love remaineth ever immortal, since no pangs of death may ever assail him.’ And a second time Guinevere looked gently on Sir Lancelot, and in her heart she had him in right good liking.

After this fashion Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere passed through the regions of Britain, till they drew near to Camelot, where King Arthur held his court with his Knights of the Round Table. And as they paced through the Forest of Dendreath they could see through the boughs of the trees the open country shining before them, and Sir Lancelot said: ‘Lady, in a day’s journey we shall come to Camelot, and there shall we find King Arthur and all his Knights of the Round Table, and the ladies of his court, and the saint that shall make you King Arthur’s queen.’ And she knew not what she should have said to this, and her heart grew sad and then she bethought her of an old tale and matter of wizardry, or so men say. And she gazed at the trees of the wood, searching for a tree that she knew of; and as they came to the wood’s verge she saw her desire, and broke off a little bough from a wych-elm that grew by the way. Then she has broken this bough in twain, and one she has hidden about her, and the other she has given to the knight, saying: ‘I wit well that all of my lord’s knights are men of truth and gentle dealing, and I think that of them all ye be not the least.

Wherefore, whatsoever ye swear to me, sure am I that ye will perform your oath and keep it, and never gainsay it not so long as ye live.’

‘Ye say rightly, lady. What will ye that I swear to you?’

‘I will have you swear that evermore while ye be quick and in this life ye keep this bough that I give you, for to be a token of this wayfaring and of my wedding of my lord, King Arthur.’

‘So shall it be, very willingly,’ and Lancelot swore this by holy rood. Then at the end of their way they came to high Camelot, the golden and glorious city of King Arthur, and by the high saint were King Arthur and the Lady Guinevere made man and wife.

There was a day when Queen Guinevere, that now is married to King Arthur, sat with her ladies in her bower, and they were at sport, devising of certain flowers, that were their lovers, and of their divers properties. Said one damosel: ‘I know a rose-tree that rises not too tall, and it grows in a low garden, and four shining waters are about this garden, and five lions keep watch over this garden, and six thorns there be on this rose-tree, and one blossom only. Tell me where my rose is hidden.’ Then, by computing of numbers, the other ladies made out the name of a knight and spoke it, and they all laughed with glee; and so sped their sport very merrily. But all the while the Queen sat silent, and she looked out of the window of the high tower, and saw far away the green trees in the wood, and the road by which she had passed from Cameliard to Camelot. And whereas her ladies spoke of flowers and of the knights their lovers, so her thoughts fell on the bough of the wychelm which she had broken with Lancelot; and fervently did she desire the love of this knight in her heart. Then did she wholly burn, then did her heart become as a coal of fire, and forthwith she went apart and wrote a scroll, and sent the writing to one that dwelt in Camelot, being a man reputed a sorcerer and a great clerk in art magic. So it fell out that Guinevere stole away in the night-time, and came to a hidden place in a wood that was near to Camelot, and there the wizard had already his cauldron of sorcery and incantation. And he had made set about this cauldron a ring of fires, and a shining smoke went up from the vessel as it were quick glass, and within the ring you might see divers puppets and images in wax and in wood, shamefully devised and foully wrought, having on their foreheads and their breasts the signs and marks of the devils of hell and of the cursed gods and goddesses of heathen men, and with the wizard there was a lad that all the while made the fires to burn with spices and gums of Satan, and a black smoke rose up from these flames. Then came the Queen into the ring, and at the wizard’s bidding she doffed all her clothes and stood naked by the cauldron, and so she dipped the elm wand into the bubbling of the cauldron, right as the wizard commanded her. Forthwith ye might hear a noise and a rushing sound amongst the black branches and thickets of the wood, the great boughs of the trees tossed one on other, and said the wizard: ‘Now, madam, the Hosts of the Air draw near; now is at hand the Army of Tzabaoth.’ Then, in the shimmering and in the shining of the glassy smoke that rose from the cauldron there showed the shapes of the Mighty Ones, and to the Mightiest did Guinevere there make offering of herself; and, this done, ‘Now,’ said the wizard, ‘is the time come.’ Then drew forth Queen Guinevere the wych-bough from its place and again dipped it down three times into the cauldron of incantation and drew it forth, saying:

One was one in the wood,

On the tree of old enchantment; One was made twain in the wood,

A word of wisdom was uttered.
Now, one calleth to one,
One tree cannot be dissevered.
By the sign of union
Let the parted be joined together.

Then, with the great word of incantation, the lady made the sign, and forth came flying in the air Sir Lancelot, in his ghostly body. And from that night Sir Lancelot, that was the flower and crown of all King Arthur’s warriors, durst nor deny the Queen Guinevere in anything, but loved her from that time forth.

Now at that time it is to be understood that Camelot was the wonder and prize of all the cities in the Isle of Britain, nay, of the whole world. For, like that city of Syon, it was set on a high hill, and encompassed on every side by rich gardens and bowers of delight and orchards and pleasure places. And on high were the palaces of the warriors and the choirs and altars of the saints, and the most lordly palace of the Emperor Arthur, as it were a mountain on a mountain. And here were assembled all the rarities and precious things of the whole world, and all the instruments of wisdom, and all the books in which the secret things were written, which Merlin had gathered together from all the coasts of the world. In this city did Sir Lancelot and the Queen have their pleasure and delight and dalliance, and by art magic no eye could discern their pleasures, while they lived in wantonness. And ever Sir Lancelot, that was a loyal knight in his heart, must grieve and mourn for his piteous transgression against his lord, and ever must he weep and lament in his chamber for this mortal sin, and ever must he strive that it be put from him. Yet, by virtue of the spell and by the cauldron of incantation, he was without succour and relief, and what the Queen would that must he do. And it fell out that one night he strove against the word of incantation and magic, and it was as if his heart was bursten within him, and down fell he on the floor of his chamber, as though he were stark dead. Then came his squire, and to him it seemed that the spirit was departed from Sir Lancelot, and he made a lamentable crying, and still Sir Lancelot lay there like a dead man. And when the life returned to him he that was the mightiest of all King Arthur’s Knights of the Round Table was, as it were, a little child, and no strength nor virtue was there left in his body. And while he lay there, there came without his window one of Guinevere’s damsels, taught by the Queen, and thus she sang to him:

All through the nightertale I longed for thee, In loneliness, and harkened for the door To open, or a footstep on the floor.

O lief sweetheart, I pray thee pity me, I hunger for thy kisses evermore; All through the nightertale I longed for thee.

Delight is turned to woe, and misery Is my solace, certes, my heart is sore, Yet these poor lips a smile at morning bore, Though all the nightertale I longed for thee.

Wherefore henceforth Sir Lancelot strove no more, but lived deliciously in the golden meshes of the Queen’s desires. And so to them twain the fruits of the orchards of Camelot were as apples of Avalon and golden delights, and the gardens were as walks of Paradise, and the feasts in King Arthur’s hall were like the perpetual entertainment of the Blessed and Venerable Head of Bran Vendigeid, and the singing of the birds was as the song of the Three Fairy Birds of Rhiannon.

And one year King Arthur kept the feast of Pentecost at Camelot, as his custom was for the most part, and thirteen churches were set apart wherein King Arthur and his court heard mass. And afterwards, when they were in hall, suddenly there fell a silence, and each man looked on other and was afraid. Then there was a noise like thunder, and the roof was all afire; and then they heard in that place a melody as of the choirs of Paradise and the rejoicing of the angels, and ye would have said that there was an odour in that hall as of all the spicery of the world. And all the knights fell down on their knees together, and they saw as it were a hand pass from one end of the hall to the other and go forth; and the hand bore up the holy and blessed Vessel of the Sangraal, wrapt about in veils of red samite, and there was a shining of light that made the sun darkness; and to Sir Lancelot, because of his deadly sin, it was as if a sword had pierced his body, for his flesh began to tremble when he beheld the spiritual things. Yet he might not put his sin from him, but ever again returned to his dalliance with the Queen, for the spell that she had set upon him could not yet be broken.

Now, with the passing of the years, it happened that the bough of wych-elm that Queen Guinevere had severed in the wood withered and shrank, and, though the Queen and Sir Lancelot might keep each their portion never so well, the leaves that were on the boughs fell ff. And when a leaf fell off then it vanished away, and as it vanished there flew forth a great bird, black as a coal; and these birds perched on the trees of the wood, and cried out as men passed by, 'Guinevere is the leman of Sir Lancelot.' And so this sin could no longer be covered, and all the court of King Arthur had knowledge of these birds and of what their message was, and some believed it and some not, but all looked strangely on Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere. And it fell out at last that Guinevere took out her portion of the bough and set it before her, counting the leaves that remained; and suddenly she must go forth from her chamber to sit in hall; and by ill chance she had forgotten the bough, so that one of her damsels cometh in, and seeing it, casteth it into the fire. And in that moment was Sir Lancelot set free from the virtue of the enchantment and the wizardry that had been done upon him; and in that moment came the lad that had prepared the fires of the sorcery, and confessed all to the King, and the report of this was made known to all the city of Camelot. Then the anger of King Arthur was like to burning of fire, and he sent ten knights, that were the mightiest that he had, to waylay Sir Lancelot, that they might slay him forthwith and hew his body in pieces. So these knights went forth, and they came upon Sir Lancelot as he walked in his garden, and he had no arms, but only a short sword, upon him. Then they cried: 'Now shall ye surely die, thou foul and disloyal knight, for the deep dishonour that ye have done our lord the King,' and they ran at him to kill him But for their mail five of them did he leave for dead in that garden, since he was the most valorous and most mightiest of all knights that ever have been in this world; and so the five knights that were left in life fled away from before Sir Lancelot. Then would Sir Lancelot endeavour to bring forth the Queen harmless, but he might not, she was so closely kept; and so Sir Lancelot fled forth from Camelot, and gathered his kinsfolk about him, if haply he might deliver the Queen from prison. For Arthur swore that for wizardry and disloyalty she should be burnt. But afterward King Arthur repented of his oath, and Guinevere dwelt, as all men know, in an abbey of nuns at Amesbury, and in due time was Sir Lancelot hallowed Bishop of Canterbury. And so, having repented of their sins, they both departed from this life: on whose souls may God have pity.

SHAKESPEARE AND SHAKESPERE

I ONCE READ an amusing story about Charles Kingsley and Dean Stanley. Kingsley had a letter from Stanley, and was observed to be poring over it with twisted brows all through breakfast-time. At last, after half-an-hour's study, he turned and said: 'I am sure that his letter of Stanley's is full of the dearest things, but so far I can only read one word, and that looks like 'damn.'

'However, so far as I know, no critic has advanced the opinion that 'Stanley,' the illegible correspondent, must have been a different man from 'Stanley,' the cultured author. And yet Mr G. G. Greenwood, M.P., author of 'In *re* Shakespeare: Beeching v. Greenwood,' has said that 'It is hardy possible to conceive that the poems and plays were written in William Shakespere's illegible, illiterate scrawl.' This remark was in Mr Greenwood's *Shakespeare Problem Re-stated.* In this 'Rejoinder' to Canon Beeching he hardly sticks to his guns and hardly abandons them. And, personally, I cannot quite understand how a point which is demonstrably of no earthly importance should have been made at all. And I confess that I do not think that Mr Greenwood is much happier in his other arguments. Shakespeare or 'Shake-speare,' he says, is just the sort of name to serve as a pseudonym. Why? Are pseudonyms usually 'pictorial' names? Are authors with pictorial names — such as Ashmole and Bacon — to be suspected of imposture? Again, there is the question of 'dirty Stratford.' Mr Greenwood admits that the dirtiness signifies nothing. Why, then, did he mention it? Because it is 'one of the few known facts of Shakespere's life.' But it is not one of the significant facts of Shakspere's life. The 'reeking pile of filth' at the front door of the house in Henley Street is in no sense illative; it stands in no possible or thinkable relation to the 'Venus and Adonis 'or to the 'Sonnets.' And Shakespeare was 'a rustic.' Well, and Burns was a rustic, and Keats was a Cockney, and Hogg was a shepherd, and Boswell was a drunken and dissolute laird, and Tennyson did not take his degree, and Dickens lived in squalid purlieus and stuck labels on blacking-bottles, and Borrow was a vagabond, and Poe was a wastrel, and Zola was 'ploughed' for his Baccalauréat! And what then? Does Mr Greenwood think that the world’s masterpieces are necessarily written by University dons, people of fashion, and members of the Athenæum Club? Shakespeare was a call-boy, or a prompter, or a super, when he came up to London. Certainly; and Chaucer was in the Customs, and Lamb was a clerk, and Dickens — the blacking business over — was a newspaper reporter, and Coleridge enlisted in the Army. Ergo! Really; if it be necessary for Mr Greenwood’s thesis to beat up such ‘arguments’ as these, the case against the identity of the ‘rustic’ and play-actor with the playwright must be weak indeed.

A NEW YEAR MEDITATION

I WANT TO enter into competition with Mr Sherlock Holmes — or rather, perhaps, with M. Dupin, the great detective of Poe's imagination. We all know, of course, that if we placed before either of these personages a little tooth-powder, a bunch of violets, and the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* we should immediately arrive at the most astounding and unexpected results; and so I hope to deduce odd conclusions from three recent events, all chronicled in the daily paper. In the first place, Mr H. G. Wells has published his novel, *The War in the Air,* wherein we are instructed that the whole fabric of civilisation is destined to utter destruction and ruin. Secondly, the yearly address delivered at the meeting of the Egypt Exploration Fund showed that in prehistoric times the Egyptians kept pet dogs, whose bodies have been found braceleted about the legs with ivory, whose teeth show traces of overfeeding and systematic pampering. Thirdly, that records of the Birmingham Police Court have dealt quite lately with the adventures of five boys charged with breaking into a number of houses at Harborne. 'Their abode,' said the police, 'was a cave which they had constructed at Florida, a lonely district near Harborne Golf Links. Investigations showed the cave to be partly a natural declivity and partly an ingeniously constructed hut, formed of interlaced boughs. Grass and soil laid on the top formed a perfectly rainproof roof. This was supported by stout balks of timber. The walls and floor of the hut had been carefully lined with straw.'

Now, I submit that these three items of news, incongruous as they may seem, have, in spite of all appearances, a certain relation to one another. To take Mr Wells's book in the first place. I do not know, nor do I suppose that Mr Wells knows, the precise manner and fashion in which the present structure of things which we call Modern Civilisation will be reduced to dust and ashes, but we may be sure that somehow or other the fabric of our social order will sooner or later come thundering to the ground; commerce and manufactures, machines and great cities, economic systems, means of communication — all these things are destined to pass away as the old empires with their civilisation have passed away. The world will go into the melting-pot again, and the great breakup which followed the decline of the Roman Empire will be repeated in a very different form. But in a certain way the results will be similar. A highly artificial state of things will be succeeded by a barbarous and natural state of things. Perhaps a man who wants a knife will not be able to buy one in Oxford Street or in Bond Street, for the reason that both streets will be heaps of ruins overgrown by trees and flowers. The man in need of a knife will be obliged to make it himself as best he can; and it is likely enough that the man incapable of making knives (or spears or swords) will find himself hopelessly handicapped, and doomed to perish. In a word, the arts and crafts will be born again in a world where dilettantism has, perforce, ceased to exist — in a world of sincerities. There will be painting in this new world, as in the old; but nobody will be inspired to paint pictures of fox-terriers capering about a little girl and a Persian kitten. Poetry will be rude enough, but it will be the expression of sheer ecstasy, not to be repressed or controlled; people will dance, but they will not waltz; there will be strange songs, but no musical comedies.

It may be said that it is impossible to prophesy; but I think that this opinion is mistaken. I think that the instance of these prehistoric pets of prehistoric Egyptians — one instance of many possible instances — shows that humanity, in spite of surface changes for good or bad, is radically immutable. There is, I know, a sort of assumption, usually rather implied than expressed as a definite proposition, that modern man is really a different creature from medieval man or ancient man or prehistoric man; that a cabbage has somehow or other turned into a rose-tree — or, if you like, that a rose-tree has become a mangelwurzel. For the last hundred years or more one has encountered this ‘transformation-scene’ hypothesis or assumption; some people will date the beginning of the miracle from the fall of Constantinople, others from the Reformation, others from the French Revolution. And yet — to take the last date of transmutation — I have met peasants who don’t care twopence for M. le Curé, and spend considerable sums with ‘le grand divin’ when their cattle are out of sorts. And I suppose that ‘palmists’ and astrologers gain a very pretty living from the pockets of well-educated people in the London of today. Then there is another region: one has heard that the reign of brute force is over. But if that is the case it seems a pity to waste such a lot of money on ‘Dreadnoughts’ and

‘Invincibles’ and ‘Collingwoods.’ No, it seems to me that humanity is always humanity. It may be bound down by all kinds of conventions; it may be caged up by every sort of rule and regulation; but it remains unaltered, both for good and for evil. The lion of the Zoo is essentially the lion of the desert. This may be demonstrated by the simple and pleasing experiment of throwing open the gates of his cage.

Probably the boys who recently appeared before the Birmingham magistrates were the children of comparatively well-to-do parents; they were burglars and cave-dwellers not from necessity, but from choice. The boys ‘bolted’ to the best of their ability from civilisation; they made their own house instead of the houses that had been made for them; they won their own food by their own wit: they returned, in a word, as far as they were able, to the primitive state. A most interesting example. It shows that the secret has been kept; that in spite of the yearly, monthly, hourly work of the enormous machine that we call civilisation the human spirit yet remains, unchanged and unchangeable, ready, when the opportunity occurs, to wipe out all the lines that have been ruled for it, and to write again the ancient hieroglyphics in place of the modern commercial hand. No doubt those Birmingham boys will get into sad trouble, since so long as the present social structure endures our larders must be protected; and yet in their doings I find grounds for a great optimism. For the whole note of our modern civilisation is that everybody is engaged in ‘dry-nursing’ everybody else, and the dry-nursing is all done by machinery. Now, the fact is that man’s happiness really depends on the exercise of his creative faculties, of the power given him of making all sorts of things with his own brains and his own hands; and some have hoped and many have feared that those faculties were becoming more and more atrophied, so that in a hundred years or so nine-tenths of the human race would be unable to do anything beyond touching an electric button. And if this were really the truth, we can see that the inevitable collapse of modern civilisation would lead to the extinction of a hopeless and a helpless race.

The secret, as I say, has been well kept through centuries of mechanical oppression; in the heart of man there is still the desire of making, of inventing, of creating. At first in the new age the faculty will be utilitarian; the spear to kill the game and the pot to cook it in will be the things needful. But the spear will be a real spear made out of the man’s own head; it will not be a feeble, second-hand copy of some spear made three thousand years ago. And the maker of pots will have no South Kensington Museum to go to, so that he may imitate, very badly, pots that cooked Trojan dinners during the great siege. And from this compulsory sincerity and from the desire of the beautiful and the wonderful that is part of man's unalterable nature will rise the new art, the new literature, and the new music.

CASUISTRY

I HAVE ALWAYS sympathised with Count Smorltork. Mr Pickwick, it will be remembered, uttered the dictum, 'The word politics, sir, comprises in itself a difficult study of no inconsiderable magnitude.' And the Count, drawing out his tablets, began to write: 'Politics. The word poltic surprises by himself.' The Count had not, perhaps, quite penetrated to the root of the matter; but had Mr Pickwick? And have any of us achieved the feat in question? I, at all events, am ready to confess that I am in comparative, if not positive darkness; and my perplexity has been rather increased than diminished by reading a report of Professor Pollard's recent lecture on *Politics and Character*, delivered before the London Institution. Here, for instance, is a sentence from the report in question:

> He (Professor Pollard) had no hesitation in saying that it would be a man's duty to tell a lie if thereby he could save his country from a great disaster.

And in the margin of the paper a friend of mine has scribbled:

> The party politician easily defines 'a great disaster' as the defeat of his own candidate or fad at the polls.

Exactly; and so we seem to arrive at the proposition that any politician may tell any lie that will benefit his party.

Which is as much as to say that politicians are exempt from all the rules of morality. For if a lie is allowable, why not a theft? Suppose the existence of certain documents to be dangerous in the highest degree to the programme — nay, to the very existence of the Blues or the Reds. Now we have already granted the premiss that on the success of the Blues — or the Reds —

depends the spiritual, moral, and material salvation of England; surely, therefore, it follows on Professor Pollard's showing that it is a duty to steal the documents in question, if it can be done without scandal. Again, let us put the case that the success of the Reds largely depends on the high moral reputation of X, the Red leader, with a numerous class of the community. Clearly, it is the duty of the Blues — to whom the success of the Reds is 'a great disaster' — to involve X in the most horrible scandal that can be arranged. Suppose X to be a fervent teetotaller, to depend largely on teetotal support. Then it is the business of the Blues, through some discreet and trusty agent, to contrive that X shall be seen dead drunk in Piccadilly at the height of the season. Or again, Y, the champion of the Blues, may have quite innocently involved himself in a chain of incidents which one little word can render utterly and conclusively damning to his reputation; it is, obviously, the Reds' duty to insert that fatal word, and so to deliver England from 'a great disaster.' And thus we may run pretty well through the range of the Ten Commandments and arrive at the conclusion that the politician is absolved from all obedience to the moral law. You may lie, you may steal, you may bear false witness; nay, you can commit murder. It was the Royalists of the seventeenth century, oddly enough, who quoted the assassination of Cæsar by Brutus as an example to be followed — Cromwell, of course, being Cæsar. And on the other hand, I am sure that many of us at the present day would be ready to maintain that the murders of Charles I and Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were, to say the least, highly excusable. The Good of the People is the Supreme Law. Of course, and anyone not utterly brutish or utterly insane must be aware that it is only Our Party which works or can work for the Good of the People. Therefore, Our Party is at perfect liberty to commit what crimes it pleases, so long as these crimes seem likely to secure its ascendancy.

And, it may be asked, what does this lead to? The conclusion is obviously monstrous — no one believes that it would be right to dope Mr Balfour's tea or to knock Mr Lloyd George on the head, however grave one's conviction of the political mischievousness of the one or the other. What, then, is the truth of the matter? Let us take one point of view — that of absolute ethics; let us deny Professor Pollard's position right out without mincing matters, and say that it is in no circumstances whatever lawful to tell a lie or to commit any other direct sin for any good result whatever. This is a splendid position; we can all approve of it and a pretty pickle it would lead us into. Suppose you are on a lonely road at night, and a woman flies past you and turns to the right. Three minutes later comes a ruffian with a revolver, and asks with imprecations which way the woman went. Are you going to say, To the right, and take care of the quarry in the second field just by the stile'? surely not, unless you are a murderer. You may refuse to give any information whatever? Certainly, if you have the courage of martyrdom. It would be easy to construct dozens of such cases to show that again and again, not only in politics but in the whole course of life, men are confronted by such enigmas, are faced by the choice, not between guilt and innocence, but between a minor evil and a major evil. Put again a political case: Suppose yourself to be aware that your reader is an unscrupulous ruffian, who has committed actions which would lead to his instant expulsion from any decent pothouse where his offence was known. You are to expose him! Yes; and with his ruin, which would inevitably follow, would come the ruin of the whole series of good laws which you are convinced would make the desert of modern life blossom like the rose, which, let us say, would redeem many children from early death, and rescue many men and women from Life-long misery and degradation. No; the problem is indeed a difficult one. I am sure that there is no absolute solution. It is one of the privileges and the paradoxes which constitute the position of man that he can ask many questions to which there is no one clear and definite and absolute answer. We cannot understand Space and Time, and yet we cannot deny Space and Time. Either way we seem driven to absurdity.

I suppose that the only possible answer is to be found in accommodation, which is Latin for making the best of a bad business. Take this specific instance of Politics and Ethics. Personally, I am inclined to conclude that the vast mass of humbug, and 'inexactitude,' and exaggeration, and bearing of false witness, and downright malignant lying which seems inseparable from modern democratic politics, is, in fact, the *reductio ad absurdum* (or *ad iniquitatem)* of democracy: a practical demonstration that the theory of democracy, however charming and logical it may be as pure theory, is virtually and intrinsically false. A cynic once said that the main difference between the old regime and the new in France was this, that whereas of old corruption was the privilege of the few, now it had become the delight of the multitude. This is extreme, but it is not to be denied that while one factory chimney is ugly, a thousand such chimneys, smoking all together, shut out the sun and constitute a grievous pestilence. So, while it may be very bad for the individual courtier to tell lies to the individual despot, it may be much worse when the whole nation enters, as it were, the great market of lies — which is modern politics — and buys and sells falsehood wholesale.

Or, there is another solution; I do not know whether it will be found more tolerable. This is to be sought in the confession that very few actions can be pronounced wholly bad, apart from the circumstances of each individual case; that a lie may be a sacred duty, that the killing of a fellow-creature may be a sacred duty, that to bear false witness against one's neighbour may be a sacred duty, or — at the worst — a very venial sin. And this solution is the solution of casuistry — of making distinctions, of weighing circumstances — of readjusting one's ethical balance a dozen times a day. 'Oh, casuistry!' people say, with a vague yet intense shudder, as if every iniquity was comprehended in that word. But how about the soldier who levels his rifle against the enemy of his king and country in the day of battle? How about the man who smashes the skull of the ruffian who has attacked his wife or his child? It is written, plain enough, 'Thou shalt not kill,' and no less a man than Tolstoy holds to the letter of the law. Are we prepared to follow him — into a region of intolerable and indeed wicked absurdity?

SUPERSTITION — OR INSTINCT

WHAT IS SUPERSTITION? The word is in common use enough, but I suppose a good many of us would find ourselves in some difficulty if we were suddenly called upon for a precise definition. The old Latin dictionary explanation, ‘Excessive fear of the gods,’ is hardly satisfactory, since the superstitious are often profoundly irreligious; and I remember a character in a novel who hung on the words of the late Mr Bradlaugh, and shuddered at the thought of spilling the salt. As a matter of fact *John o’ London* and *Thormanby* have defined the word by example: a superstition is a conventional belief of which we can give no reasonable account. To this category we may refer the horror of salt-spilling and of walking under ladders, the trust in the caul, and the like; in none of these cases is there any obvious or ascertainable connection whatever between cause and effect.

There are many beliefs, which the strictly ‘scientific’ mind would call superstitious, which are not really superstitious at all. Only the other day an aunt of mine, in whose veracity I have the most profound confidence, told me the following story, which, I may add, rests on corroborative evidence: Some sixty years ago the aunt in question, having just come home for the holidays, was looking forward to a short visit to a friendly family. Two days before the visit she noticed that her mother looked disturbed in the morning; the day before the visit her mother announced that they were not going to the Garth. No reason was forthcoming, but on the very night of their proposed arrival there was a tropical thunderstorm, the wells in the hills burst and flooded over, the Garth was overwhelmed, and every soul in it perished. Then my grandmother explained that for two nights running she had woke up from sleep with the words *Do not go to the Garth* ringing in her ears.

In this case the event proved clearly enough that it would have been ‘superstitious’ — or foolish, at all events — to have disregarded the warning voice; and yet, in a somewhat similar instance, also authentic, the omen was obeyed and led its victims to destruction. A few years ago a husband and wife put off their holiday from the Tuesday to the Thursday. They were going to the Channel Islands, if I remember rightly, and on the Monday night: the wife dreamed that she saw the boat wrecked on the rocks. She told her friends, and she and her husband sailed on the Thursday. It was the Thursday boat that was wrecked, and they were amongst the lost. It would be very difficult, it seems to me, to form a plausible theory of this message that went so fatally astray, that was delivered to the destruction of the recipients. But I believe that research would show that many of these ‘warnings’ are purposeless, or accidental. The Cornish farmer’s dream, twice repeated, of the assassination of Mr Perceval did not save the statesman’s life. Perhaps it is sheer accident which allows us these momentary glimpses of that mysterious region in which there is neither past nor future — only an Everlasting Now.

But, to return to superstition properly so called, to beliefs and practices which seem wholly devoid of rational justification, which are not patient of any theory, however wild: are we to regard the superstitious man as a person who has retained certain fragments of a lost knowledge? A friend of mine holds this theory; he totally rejects the explanations of the Rationalists. He rejects the doctrine of the paint-pot on the ladder and the doctrine of the ancient scarcity of salt; he will have none of the notion that a first tenancy is unlucky, because a brand-new house is often damp. But he takes his stand on the ground that it is always safest to obey the rules of the superstitious game, because superstitions may eventually turn out to be true and well based, though at present we have not the remotest knowledge of their basis.

Many years ago, before the dawn of modern chemistry, old wives used to say that a certain kind of seaweed cured goitre. The faculty of medicine laughed; there was no possible reason why goitre should be cured by seaweed. I do not know how the doctors treated the malady; most likely they followed the famous advice given in Molière’s *Interlude.* But in process of time it was discovered that the seaweed of the old women was full of iodine, and iodine is undoubtedly good for goitre. But for how many centuries before iodine was thought of had the seaweed worked its ‘irrational’ cures?

Now it may be that there is a very strong analogy between this circumstance and many popular superstitions; there may be a real procession of cause and effect in the latter case as in the former. At present one cannot see the remotest connection between spilling sat and misfortune; still, it is possible that the connection exists, and that to one's descendants it may seem the merest commonplace of the most ordinary common sense. But personally I incline to the theory of a survival from the remotest dawn of human history — perhaps even from a period still more remote. Is it not possible that 'superstition' may be a corrupted and fragmentary survival of the 'instincts' of our half-human, half-bestial ancestor?

Of course, I abandon the attempt to work out the theory. I believe the best scientific authorities have frowned on the well-known doctrine as to certain dreams common to most of us — those dreams which end terribly enough with a fall from a fearful height. It has been surmised that this is an inherited recollection of a prehistoric fall from one bough to another; but this, it seems, is an explanation that we must not receive. But perhaps we may imagine a tradition, broken and inconsequent doubtless, passed on from those unimaginable beings who were our first fathers to 'articulate-speaking men,' as Homer calls them, and not void even in our time, but existent still, and yet powerful in a certain degree in these days of swarming suburbs and fields that bear streets, as if it were mushrooms, in a night.

Perhaps, then, in our very midst today, even in this generation that rides in motor cars and writes to the daily paper, beneath the common characters of common life there are discernible the shadowy marks of a most ancient language; so that the morning paper is itself a sort of palimpsest. Who knows what strong reasons there might not have been 'once upon a time' against entering a newly discovered cave? And was the ladder once a man-trap?

I remember a curious case of superstition that came under my own notice. An acquaintance of mine, a very well-known littérateur, was a devout believer in astrology, who lived, let us say, in Barnes, and was happy in that agreeable district. However, he experienced some sort of uneasiness, whether of body or spirit I know not, and promptly consulted his star-gazer-in-chief. He was advised that the south of London was highly dangerous to him, that the north-west district meant salvation, and forthwith the Wisdom of the Chaldees drove my acquaintance to some street near Maida Vale, a neighbourhood which he detested most profoundly!

It may be very absurd to believe that the advent of a black cat means good luck. Personally I have no doubt on this point, since by this very event I was translated from penury to (comparative) opulence at a certain Christmastide a few years ago. I had asked a friend to dinner on Christmas Day, and if I had been asked how I proposed to entertain him I expect I should have replied in the spirit of Marcel in the *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème.* The landlord of the unfurnished rooms saw that his new lodger had no furniture, and observed, naturally enough: ‘Au moins vous avez un lit? Sur quoi reposez-vous?’ The reply was: ‘Monsieur, je me repose sur la Providence!’ Anyhow, it looked like a banquet of bread and cheese; then came the black cat, and in his train abundance. I leave the curious reader to work out for himself any possible connection between black cats and the prehistoric equivalents of Burgundy and banking accounts.

IMAGINATION AND HEALTH

THE OTHER DAY I read some remarkable statistics. They were given by the President of the British Pharmaceutical Conference, and they relate to the wonderful increase in the consumption of Patent medicines. Here they are:

The amount expended in remedies of this description in the years mentioned was approximately as follows: 1860, £350,000; 1870, £580,000; 1880, £1,080,000; 1890, £1,740,000; 1900, £2,310,000; 1907, £2,620,000. Reckoning the population of the British Isles at about twenty-three millions in 1860, and thirty-nine millions in 1906, it followed that the amount spent in patent medicines per head is now five times as great as it was half a century ago.

Each of us, therefore, takes five bottles of medicine instead of the one bottle that contented our fathers and mothers; and let it be remembered that these doses leave out of account all medicine save the ‘proprietary’ sort. Besides the bottles and boxes that are bought at the chemist’s, we must take into account all the physicians’ prescriptions that are made up, all the drugs that the ‘surgeon and apothecary’ dispenses in the course of his practice, all the ‘tabloids’ and ‘tablets’ and ‘pilules’ of ascertained contents that so many of us prescribe for ourselves, and, in country places, the medicaments of the herbalist, and even the herbs which are still gathered and dried for healing purposes by labouring folk. One has no idea of the ‘dem’d total,’ but its size must be enormous; we are consuming whole oceans of liquid, whole mountains of solid medicine. And I believe that the public health is better than it was fifty years ago. What is the explanation? Are we stronger because we take so much medicine, or do we take so much medicine because, in spite of an improved bill of health, we are more frightened of disease, more anxious about the welfare of our bodies than of old?

Those who mingle their drugs with some tincture of psychology are aware that a ten-ounce bottle may sometimes contain strange ingredients — ingredients that would escape the most subtle analysis of the Pharmaceutical Society. I was once staying with a country doctor, and one morning, after opening his letters, my friend came out of the surgery with what I can only call a grin of embarrassment on his face. He explained that he had just heard from a patient to the effect that 'that new green medicine has done me a lot of good; it suits me ever so much better than that pink stuff. Please send me another bottle of the green.' The doctor then told me what had happened: in sending out his medicines he had mixed up his 'pink patient' and his 'green patient,' if one may call them so. One colour was, we will say, for indigestion, the other for catarrh. Still, the pink man undoubtedly felt better for his green dose. I never heard whether the individual with the bad cold derived great benefit from the indigestion mixture. But it is quite possible that he did.

And here is another case which also came within my own experience. Once upon a time there was a corn merchant who had a shop somewhere near Drury Lane. Outside the shop, in little bins or receptacles, samples of the various kinds of grain were exposed to view, and small boys who passed by were in many cases unable to resist the temptation of clutching handfuls of corn. The enraged proprietor would rush out with fury stamped on his countenance; the small boy would fly, shrieking insult and opprobrium. At last one of these imps was caught in the very act and circumstance of felonious grain-snatching; he was held tight by the collar while the man of the shop informed him that his doom would be swift and horrible. The corn-merchant led his prisoner forthwith to a neighbouring chemist's shop, and whispered something to the two assistants. These immediately busied themselves in horrid preparations, and presently the wretched boy was handed a goblet, on which fearsome and cabalistic characters were graven. It contained a clear, colourless liquid. 'Now, drink that, you young rascal,' said the dealer, 'and you'll find it a dose that you won't forget to the day of your death.' The liquid was swallowed, and the boy left the shop; he was already green, and his limbs tottered beneath him. And the next day that lad's mother came round in fury, bringing with her an inspector of police from the adjoining Bow Street. Her son, she said, had all but died in the night; a giant's dose had been administered to him in that shop, and she would have the law of the chemist. And the two apothe-

Imagination and Health caries explained that the grim goblet had held no other drug or gum or medicament than pure distilled water!

Now, the curious point is that both my friend the doctor and my friend the apothecary were in the strictest sense of the terms wizards and magicians. The doctor was a ‘white’ wizard, the chemist a wizard pure and simple. And what I want to know is whether the law of England allows the Lieges to be slain by black magic? The Act — or Acts — against witchcraft was repealed in the thirties of the eighteenth century — Dr Johnson was a young man of twenty-five or thereabouts — so I suppose that if the corn-stealing urchin had actually died no indictment would have lain against the chemist. The rationale of each case is one and the same; the imagination of the doctor’s patient was seized and possessed by the strange green colour of his new bottle of medicine; he was convinced that such queer-looking stuff must be a potent producer of health; he drank, and felt much better. In the other case the imagination was attacked more forcibly; the spell of the chemist’s shop, of the strange glass, of the threatening words, transmuted the pure water into something very like a poison, and the result was as we have seen. So it seems to me that the repeal of those Witchcraft Acts was an affair of questionable wisdom. And I think that we should not speak slightingly of a great and mysterious part of our nature. We are in the habit of saying, ‘Oh, that is all imagination,’ or, That was only imagination.’ But if this imagination can cure or kill, it must be a somewhat important thing after all.

But here there arises a very important question: What is the strength of this power of the imagination; is it possible to measure it? I suppose not; we can lay down no rules, for the reason that the imagination is a variable and varying quality. The lower degrees of the imagination are so evident in their effects; every doctor knows that a cheerful patient, a man who thinks that he is going to get well, has an infinitely better chance than a man who is frightened and despondent. Is it not, then, reasonable to suppose that a power which all of us, or nearly all of us, possess in a slight degree has been or may be raised to *x* — to an infinitely high degree? Many of us can write verse of a sort and a few of us can write *Hamlet,* the *Divine Comedy,* and *Lycidas.* With a pencil and a bit of paper a child of five can draw something which is recognisable as an attempt to portray the human figure, or a tree; at the other end of the scale are Velasquez and Turner. The physical scientist would say, I suppose, that no imaginative power on earth can help or hinder the operation of strychnine or carbolic acid taken into the system; and I wonder whether he is right, though I am quite sure that I should not like to confute him by the way of personal experiment. I believe, however, that Mr Andrew Lang is convinced that under certain conditions fire does not burn. And if that be so, I should be inclined to think that there may be conditions in which prussic acid does not kill.

ENGLAND AND REVOLUTION

WHEN ROBESPIERRE WAS a young man he was, I believe, an ecclesiastical judge — what is known in England as a bishop's 'official' — and in course of time a person guilty of some capital offence was brought before him for judgement. And, so great was the tenderness of the young lawyer's heart, that, rather than pronounce sentence of death, Robespierre resigned his office, became an idealist politician — and drowned Paris in the blood of his victims. And this story of Robespierre illustrates fairly enough one of the main theses of Mr W. Lawler Wilson's *The Menace of Socialism.* Mr Wilson has many alarming predictions to make — he tells us that all Socialistic systems, beginning with the reduction of the rich to poverty, must assuredly end in the reduction of the poor to beggary — but he insists, above all, on the fact that the benevolence and philanthropy of Socialist words are the infallible forerunners of ferocious and bloody Socialist deeds. You begin, he says, by professing an almost ecstatic enthusiasm for your brother man's welfare, and you end by plunging a pike into your brother man's breast.

It would be impossible competently to review *The Menace of Socialism* in the course of a brief article. The subject is too vast, and the author's treatment of his matter is complex. But I will try to indicate in a few words the whole scheme of Mr Wilson's book, and to notice some special points which have struck me. Mr Wilson begins, then, by giving various definitions of Socialism, Communism, Collectivism, and Anarchism. He traces the rise of each and all of these forms of political thought to the French Revolution of 1789, which, according to his thesis, he describes as essentially economic in its final ends; he shows the revolutionary, or Socialist, spirit asleep during the Napoleonic period, and again roused at the Revolution of 1830. This rising, he declares, was essentially 'red' in its origin, but it was skilfully diverted into other channels by the cautious bourgeoisie. Then he takes us to the period of the unrest of 1848, which broke out in different forms all over Europe, but in each case, according to the author, with a Socialist end in view. Next, we have the period of the

International, of Marx, and of Lassalle; and Mr Wilson's Lassalle is by no means the sympathetic figure that some of us know in Meredith's *Tragic Comedians.* The French Commune marks the end of this period. From France we pass to Berlin and Bebel's work in the Reichstag and in the constituencies; and the Russian Revolution of 1905-6 closes this general survey. The next section of the book deals with the 'English Movement,' its origins, its leaders, and its organisation or organisations; then come Mr Wilson's 'Anti-Socialist Economics,' and, to end all, his 'Alternative Policy.' And unless this policy, or some equivalent policy, is put into speedy and energetic action, the author is of opinion that all Europe — England not excepted — is in danger of a terrible and destructive revolutionary rising, which will spare neither life nor purse nor land. No doubt, he says in effect, many of the Socialist leaders are amiable enthusiasts who sincerely desire the good of their fellow-men, and would not dream of attaining their ends by any but lawful and pacific means. But the French Revolution was the work of amiable enthusiasts, and ended in the bloody orgies of the guillotine. And, besides, in revolution it is the mob which leads, and even the most furious section of the mob. The leaders are, in reality, at the mercy of their followers, and must go forward or be trampled to death. When Robespierre sent the Hebertists — the Extreme Left — to the scaffold and proclaimed the existence of the Supreme Being, his doom was sealed. Such, I think, in fair summary, are the content and the doctrine of *The Menace of Socialism.*

Well, I have said that I cannot pretend to review the whole book or the whole question; but there are one or two matters that may be discussed by the way. The author says that all wealth is the reward of intelligence, or in his own phrase, 'Intelligence is the determining factor in all values.' I disagree with him entirely. Some wealth is the reward of intelligence, and some wealth is the reward of public or private baseness, of downright swindling, of poisoning the poor with adulterated and noxious provisions, of a crafty and detestable capacity for taking advantage of other men's weaknesses and kindnesses, of the worst possible painting, of the worst possible writing, of the worst possible music, and, finally, of sheer luck. Two men are working in the gold-fields: the claim of the one may yield ten thousand pounds, the claim of the other nothing — or a broken neck. I do not know that certain English gentlemen of the sixteenth century were gifted with any especial degree of intelligence; presumably their chief grace was the art of rendering themselves agreeable to Henry VIII. Hence they were endowed with the loot of the monasteries.

Then there is a phrase about ‘backward and undeveloped peoples’ as contrasted, presumably, with industrial and commercial peoples, and I cannot at all agree with the implied judgement. I remember a little valley in the West of England, which I have not seen for many years. When I visited this place twenty years ago it held, I suppose, some four or five homesteads: two farms, let us say, and three cottages. One of these farms was a freehold, the other was rented from a considerate landlord, and each of the cottagers had a bit of land of his own. These people all worked hard but worked healthily; they lived plainly, but they lived wholesomely, and I do not think that a little discreet poaching in the shining brook was very severely visited. Their houses, farms, and cottages were sturdy buildings of the sixteenth century, pleasant to look at and pleasant to live in: in a word, the valley was not Avalon, but it was a worthy human place enough. And now, if I revisited that valley, I might very likely find the clear brook transmuted into a black scum-sewer, great chimneys vomiting poisonous smoke into the air, the goodly old houses and their orchards and gardens replaced by rows of mean, jerry-built houses, by emporiums of margarine, and vile cagmag, and bad drink, and every kind of abomination. If any trees should be left, they would be black to the touch; and under these inhuman conditions perhaps five thousand people would exist instead of the twenty-five or thirty who lived there decently and pleasantly twenty years ago. No doubt the colliery-owner or the mill-owner who has effected this transmutation is extremely comfortable on the profits, but his case would not make me call the former state of things ‘backward and undeveloped.’ True, the valley may now support five thousand people instead of only twenty-five, but what about the old Latin tag which speaks of ‘losing all that makes life worth living — for the sake of keeping alive’? There is one thing which I am glad to note in Mr Wilson’s book: his mind is quite free from optimistic delusions; he is not writing under the impression that there is nothing the matter with England. On the contrary, he sees plainly that Socialism is the symptom of a deep-rooted disease, that the state of England today is not far from desperate. He is probably right in thinking that there is just this choice — remedy or revolution.

CELTIC MAGIC

IN CONSEQUENCE OF that, the men of the Island of the Mighty obtained such success as they had; but they were not victorious, for only seven men of them all escaped, and Bendigeid Vran himself was wounded in the foot with a poisoned dart… And Bendigeid Vran commanded them that they should cut off his head. 'And take you my head,' said he, 'and bear it even unto the White Mount in London, and bury it there with the face towards France. And a long time will you be upon the road. In Harlech you will be feasting seven years, the birds of Rhiannon singing unto you the while. And all that time the head will be to you as pleasant company as it ever was when on my body. And at Gwales in Penvro you will be fourscore years, and you may remain there, and the head with you, uncorrupted, until you open the door that looks towards Aber Henvelen, and towards Cornwall.'

This is from the tale of 'Branwen, the daughter of Llyr,' in the *Mabinogion;* and even readers who are not folklorists will guess how the story ends. The heroes who guarded the head of Bran the Blessed feasted in Harlech, and three birds came and sang to them such a song as they had never heard before, birds whose notes were clear and distinct, yet sounding as if they came over the waves of ocean. Then the heroes went to Gwales, to the palace of delights; there they lost all the burden of heavy years, and all sorrows passed from them, and all the time was as one moment of joy, till 'Heilyn, the son of Gwynn,' opened the forbidden door and looked towards Cornwall and Aber Henvelen, and then their rapture was ended, all their bitter memories returned, and they were cast out of Paradise. Now, so far as I know, the true significance of this most ancient and primitive legend has hitherto escaped notice. Mr Alfred Nutt has pointed out, with his customary acumen, that this Bran, whom no house could contain, is clearly a pre-Christian god or demi-god, and that the tales which made: him the first of the saints and evangelists of Britain are late inventions and confusions. Mr

Nutt is no doubt absolutely right in his contention; but it seems to me that the vital interest of this story is to be sought in the fact that it is a legend of Loss, a Legend of the Fall of Man. Sir Oliver Lodge, I believe, will not hear of such a thing as the Fall of Man; he sees nothing in history but the gradual and triumphant Rise of Man; and it is here that Sir Oliver Lodge differs from the early Celts. No doubt there is a good deal to be said for Sir Oliver's theory; it is certain, for instance, that travelling is much more comfortable than it was a hundred years ago, and sanitation is almost a science of yesterday. Bur I am with the Celts.

For it seems to me that it is the sense of a great loss which lies at the root of all the Celtic magic, the Celtic mysticism, the Celtic wonder. The story that I have quoted does not stand alone; the same message is delivered in many and various symbols. Parallel, to a certain extent, with the Head of Bran is the great mystery of the Sangraal, the holy thing that healed all hurts and doles, that filled those who were privileged to gaze on it with celestial joys, and was in itself a portion of heaven, a gift from Paradise. Corbenic, the castle or church of the Graal, was scarcely on earth; the way to it was charted only on the maps of the spirit. And the whole legend of the Graal is a tale of a great and woeful loss. The companions of Bran were like Adam and Eve; they fell through disobedience to a direct command; and the Holy Vessel was withdrawn from Britain by reason of the wickedness of the Britons. In the Norman-French legends with which we are more or less familiar, the Graal is withdrawn finally; the Celts, I think, had a vague hope that it would return in the great day of Redemption, when 'Saxons shall be rooted out of the land, and bards shall flourish therein.' Still the sense of loss lay deep in the Celtic heart; lost were the magic rarities of the Isle of Britain, for Merlin bore them with him into the House of Glass, where he himself lies lost to the whole world. And King Arthur 'changed his life,' and passed into the enchanted region of Avalon, where he awaits the signal that he is to return and to restore all things. And it is the sense of this loss that lies at the heart of Wordsworth's wonderful *Ode;* we dwell very far inland, but we have memories of the great deep, the *pelagus vastissimum Dei,* from which we have come.

This, then, is the 'Celtic magic.' If we are honest we must confess that, in a sense, the Celts have been ineffective; in Celtdom there is no Homer, nor Dante, nor Shakespeare, nor Milton. There is, instead, the story of the venerable head of Bran the Blessed, and there were doubtless legends, as bare and unadorned as this, from which the Anglo-Normans and the Germans constructed the *Quest of the Sangraal,* the *Parsifal,* the whole Arthurian Mythos. Indeed, there is only one line in Welsh literature which foreshadows the Arthur that we know: it occurs in the poem called 'The Graves.' The burial-places of the heroes are enumerated and described; they lie in the mountain, in the valley, by the ninth wave on the sea-shore, but 'not wise is it to seek the grave of Arthur.' There is this one line to hint that Arthur was a mystery as well as a warrior; and this line, no doubt, refers to a legend that has been lost — or, rather, survives glorified in the Norman romances. But the Celts, as I say, did not make a great world literature; they set a little leaven in the somewhat solid, somewhat mundane Anglo-Norman lump, and the whole became leavened. The late seventeenth, or early eighteenth century cast out this leaven for a time; and so, with all our admiration for Mr Pope's wonderful talents, we do not quite esteem him a poet.

Here, then, is the paradox, which is also a truth — that those who write best of the song of the nightingale do so inasmuch as they have heard the song of the Fairy Birds of Rhiannon; that the actual and tangible earth and sea are best described by men who have visions and memories of domed hills in fairyland, who have accompanied in dreams St Brendan and his fellows sailing in a magic boat across the enchanted deep in search of the holy and heavenly island of the West, which is Avalon, and Atlantis, and also Paradise. Logically, no doubt, the best describer of the primrose and of the flower on the wall should be the man who thinks of the primrose as complete and perfect in itself, as a natural object of purely natural beauty. But actually, in hard fact, the best descriptions of flowers are not to be sought in florists' catalogues, but in the pages written by dreamers, who see in earthly blossoms the relics of a lost kingdom, the half-comprehended hieroglyphics of a most ancient speech. To the Celt, and to those who have the Celtic spirit, the whole material universe appears as a vast symbol; and art is a great incantation which can restore, to a certain extent, the paradise that has been lost. You could not have comforted the heroes who had enjoyed the entertainment of the Venerable Head with a Lord Mayor's banquet; they would still have sighed for the magic feast that they had lost and for the song of the fairy birds; and this sorrow of theirs, this longing of theirs which we still suffer, is the true 'divine discontent.' And perhaps in the first ages of man art was indeed an incantation in the literal sense of the word; it was an effort to bring back that which had been lost, to renew the delights which no material pleasures can give.

And, as I say, we still suffer this regret and this longing of the Celtic heroes; for man in his essence is changeless, immutable. All we, Like Pryderi, Manawyddan, Taliesin, and the rest of them, have heard, secretly, ‘a certain song,’ and all the songs that earthly voices sing to us are ‘unpleasant compared thereto.’ And the only refuge for us is in incantation, in high magic; happy are they that find the secret of this concealed mystery.

THE HOLY GRAAL

IF ONE MENTIONS the term 'Holy Graal' in average — not expert — company, I suppose that the majority is reminded of Tennyson's idyll, while a large and respectable minority is aware that Tennyson drew his matter from Malory's *Morte d'Arthur.* Some of those present will have read the latter book, and a few will know that Malory was a fifteenth-century editor of older legends. Now these are the rude elements of knowledge of a great and difficult and most complicated literary question; and to those who desire to go further I earnestly recommend *The Hidden Church of the Holy Graal: Its Legends and Symbolism,* by A.E.Waite.

I do not think that I exaggerate when I say that the study of the Graal is as perplexed as the study of Liturgies, and the first thing that will astonish Mr Waite's readers will be the number of the sources. These sources, in prose and verse, were written in Old French, Dutch, and German, and were composed, roughly speaking, between the years 1170 and 1230. If was the period during which the Order of the Knights of the Temple was at its highest power, during which the dogma of Transubstantiation was formulated. And between these years the massive pillars and round arches of Norman architecture had, somehow or other, become transmuted into the wonderful and unique magic of the Early English or 'First Pointed' style: Durham, as it were, had become Salisbury. A principal part of Mr Waite's task — admirably carried out — has been to give a long and elaborate analysis of all these romances. By consequence, every reader of the book has before him the materials for framing a judgement on this fascinating question; he will note the points on which the various romances agree, the numerous points on which they differ; he will be able to form his own conclusions, or perhaps to agree with the conclusion propounded by the author, or again to decide that the problem is an insoluble one, in spite of the wealth of evidence. In any case, *The Hidden Church of the Holy Graal* will be indispensable to all students of the greatest romance-cycle in the world.

It would be impossible in the space at my disposal to tell the story of the Graal as it may be collected from the Norman-French Romances — firstly, because of its complexity; secondly, because every statement would have to be qualified by a reference to a varying account in Romance A or B or C. But the general outlines of the legend are very briefly and baldly as follows: St Joseph of Arimathæa collected in a vessel the Precious Blood which dropped from the wounds of our Lord. In this vessel Christ had 'made His Sacrament.' The Jews, hearing how Joseph had cared for the Lord's Body, threw him into prison, where he remained for many years. But Christ, bearing the Precious vessel (or Graal), appeared to Joseph and comforted him, telling him that the Eucharist should never be offered without memorial being made of what he had done, and imparting to him certain 'secret words' which would give to the faithful hearer power over men and favour with God. As a specimen of the language in which these romances are written, here are some of the words which Christ is supposed to have spoken to Joseph: 'Et veisseaux ou l'en sacrifiera et sanctifiera, sénéfiera la pierre en quoi tu meis mon cors' — the vessel in which the Eucharist shall be sacrificed and consecrated shall symbolise the stone in which you laid My body. To be brief, Joseph is released at last from prison, and finds his way, with certain of the faithful, after strange adventures, to Britain. Here he founds Christianity; his son (or nephew) succeeds him in the custody of the Holy Relic, and in the super-apostolic priesthood bestowed by Christ Himself. But in the very beginning of the story we have the sense of sin and doom; the Graal is approached by an unlicensed or unworthy person, who is immediately subjected to strange judgements and enchantments; the House of Faith is, apparently, half-ruined before it is built; and a cloud descends upon the sanctuary and upon the whole of Britain. But there is a promise that a knight of the lineage of Joseph shall in due season heal the wounded keeper and put an end to the 'adventurous' (i e evil) days. This knight was Galahad (or Percival). And yet, though the dreary enchantments are removed from Britain, the Graal is at last either lifted up to heaven or taken into still closer hiding, and the predestined knight either renders up his soul to God in Sarras, the 'spiritual place,' or else vanishes, like King Arthur, into some dim Avalon.

Now, this is the baldest and most insufficient of statements of the root-matter of the legend, and I trust that Mr Waite, and all other 'questers,' will accept the excuse of limited space. But now we are confronted by the great problems: What is the date of the invention of this story? From what materials was it drawn? Is it a Celtic legend amplified and glorified, or is it a French romance into which a few Celtic names have been dropped for ornament? Well, so far as I understand the entrancing but very subtle theory that Mr Waite propounds, the Celtic elements are mere accidents. A pagan legend survived into the twelfth century, and was then informed with a new design. According to Mr Waite, the design which thus gave life to the inert body of folklore was to express the most profound secrets of Christian mysticism; or, using the author's own phraseology, the minstrels and the monks had heard faint and distant rumour proceeding from the 'Secret School' which had always been latent in the Christian Church, and, without understanding very well the real intent of the message, they constructed this marvellous story of a chalice holier than the chalice of the mass, of a Communion more intimate than that of any earthly altar, of a mass with words more mighty in their operations than the Words of Institution, of a priesthood and episcopate which held their Orders directly from God. It must be added that the author of *The Hidden Church* is careful to point out that he does not use the word 'school' in any concrete or corporate sense; he rather implies by it the existence in certain exalted souls of a consciousness of an invisible sanctuary within the visible.

Of course, there have been many other theories. Dr Sebastian Evans advances the impossible view that the whole legend is a politico-ecclesiastical allegory of the events of 1200-1208; Professor Rhys of Oxford, has invited us to look upon Merlin and Galahad as 'sun-heroes.' Personally, I am of opinion that the story is of Celtic origin, and that the Knights of the Graal are Welsh saints in armour. A relic of peculiar sanctity — a portable altar, perhaps — used by St David, and famed for its miraculous properties, became confused at a very early period with the Magic Cauldron of pagan tradition; the ruin of the Celtic Church and Celtic State found its symbolism in the desolate 'enchantment' of Britain; the loss or concealment of the relic became the vanishing of the Graal; the flight and death of Cadwaladr the Blessed are translated into the Passing of Galahad. Such, in rough outline, was the legend as it existed amongst the Celts, *c.* A.D. 1100. Then came the devotion of the Precious Blood, the rumour that St Joseph was buried in Glastonbury, having with him in the grave two phials of the Blood of Christ; and at this moment, I conjecture, the Welsh story passed into the hands of the Norman poets and romancers, who added many things from many sources, who added, above all, the high imagination of sanctity and that marvellous power which, as I have noted, was able to transmute the heavy Norman style into the miracle of the pointed arch. This theory, like all others, is full of difficulties, but I think that one of the strongest points in its favour may be found in the *Parsifal,* which, apparently, derives from an early and uncorrupted form of the legend; for, in the *Parsifal,* the Graal is neither a cup nor a bowl — it is a stone. And there is no mention of the Precious Blood.

JUSTICE, LIBERTY — AND FALLACY

SOME MONTHS AGO Mr Wells’s remarkable book, *New Worlds for Old,* came into my hands. It was an eloquent appeal for the reconstruction of society on Socialistic lines, and I felt inclined to say to the author, ‘Almost thou persuadest me.’ But the whole argument was based on the one premiss — that human nature has improved, is improving, and will improve ad infinitum. This, I say, was the base of Mr Wells’s pyramid; without it, he acknowledged, the case for Socialism must collapse, and a Socialistic change would only mean a change for the worse. Mr Wells thought this premiss proven; he alleged certain instances of amelioration, declaring, truly enough, that an advertisement in a field, though ugly, was not so ugly as a hanged man on a gibbet. I ventured to question his thesis of a continuous and real and interior improvement in human nature, and I am glad to call as a witness Mr G. Lowes Dickinson.

This is what ‘Martin,’ representing, I presume, the author, has to say on the question:

> Some of [the great financiers], it would almost seem, are creditable modern representatives of Periander, or of Front-de-Bceuf, or of Caesar Borgia. For it is Power, not wealth or comfort, at which they aim; and in pursuit of that aim they trample under foot all law and all morality. As the ancient tyrant or the medieval baron robbed, so do they; only where he stole lands, and castles, and material goods, they steal the symbols of those things, securities and cash. As the tyrant and the baron tortured and murdered, so do they; only where he with his own hands used the rack and the knife, saw the blood flow, and heard the victim scream, they perhaps never see or learn the consequences of their operations, except when they read in the papers, or hear in conversation as they return from church, that this man is in the Bankruptcy Court, that in the lunatic asylum, while another has committed suicide, leaving his wife and children destitute.

And in this passage, it seems to me, the whole argument of a steady progression to higher things is confuted. We like beef as well as our ancestors did; the difference between them and us is merely this — that we should not like to slaughter an ox with our own hands. Gravy in the dish pleases us very well, but we are careful to forget the fact that the tasty sirloin implies the bloody horrors of the slaughter-house. I am very fond of lobster mayonnaise, but I should not care to he involved personally in the beginnings of that delicacy. The lobster is said to scream during the process of boiling alive.

And yet, though Mr Dickinson recognises the immutability of human nature, as the instance that I have given demonstrates — though he agrees that under present conditions Socialism would be a curse rather than a blessing — yet he is a Socialist. He confesses that the financier is but a torturing, robbing, medieval baron in modern disguise, and he thinks that all this can be changed. He does not affirm, with Mr Wells, that we are steadily becoming better by natural process, but he is sure that we can be made better by artificial process — that is, by breeding:

> With the development of knowledge we may expect that there will come a development in the institution of marriage on the lines of prohibiting, whether by law or opinion or both, unions which it is known will result in bad offspring, and encouraging those which will result in good… Only in quite recent years have a few bold men, like Francis Calton, ventured to assert the importance of breeding for a good stock, and initiated the inquiries that may lead to knowledge on the subject.

And I cannot help speculating as to the possible benefit to humanity that would have ensured if some such entries as these were to be seen in old records: ‘Considering that one Shakespeare of this town hath been shown to be very slothful in business, and to be but of an unthrifty and ill-chanced wit in his buyings and sellings: resolved that he be declared incapable of Holy Matrimony.’ Or, again: ‘Mr Dickens applied for a Matrimonial Licence. Evidence of gross business incapacity and consequent poverty having been given: Licence refused.’ For I am sure that the elder Shakespeares and the elder Dickenses appeared to their contemporaries as most unsatisfactory and futile persons, and there must have been a phthisical tendency in the Keats family.

I do not think that I am doing the author an injustice by these imaginary instances. He names some of the just impediments, as he deems them, to marriage, and they are all of the material kind; and later in his book the sentence occurs: ‘No one who believes, as both Hanington and I do, in a society which is based upon material wellbeing will deny the importance of maintaining production.’ And it seems to me that, while Mr Dickinson recognises to the fullest extent the horrible injustices and meannesses and iniquities of the present social order (or disorder), he has failed to detect the cause of all these evils. And I believe that the cause is to be stated in his own words: our society is all wrong because it is ‘based upon material well-being.’ As for Mr Dickinson’s remedy — his preparation for a true social order by means of ‘breeding’ — I confess that it seems to me as wild as the scheme of the builders of Babel. And what sort of men are we to breed! At first, as I have pointed out, the author seems to say that we are to breed healthy men who will succeed in business; later he would appear to assume that we can breed ‘good’ men — men of common sense, decent instincts, and public spirit. I doubt whether it is possible, by taking thought, to produce the former; I am very sure that it would be as easy to run a phoenix-farm as to breed good citizens by careful selection of the parents. Think of the complexities of the law of heredity; think of John Ridd’s reflections in *Loma Doone,* that the father is thankful if his foals have four legs, not three or five. Imagine the reversions to type in the best-managed human stud-farm — St Francis of Assisi, Mr Charles Peace, and Napoleon Buonaparte — suddenly appearing in Mr Dickinson’s placid stock-yards of voters intent upon material well-being.

I am sorry that the space at my disposal does not allow me to do justice to this admirable and thought-provoking book. I have indicated my disagreement with its main doctrine; I wish I could quote the eloquent and beautiful passage in which the writer confesses his belief that man, ‘sown into the womb of Nature,’ was ‘sown a spiritual seed,’ for it is in that eternal fact that we must seek the answer to the riddle of the Sphinx; it is in the celestial origin of man that we must look for the great work of redemption. Both theory and practice have been busy upon the other hypothesis — that the happiness of Man is to be sought in the region of material good. Both

‘Socialism’ and the modern ‘muddle’ — or industrial system — are based on this premiss; they differ merely as to detail. Neither the one system nor the other seems to be aware that human bliss dwells in the region altogether remote from economics, whether competitive or co-operative.

THE ART OF DIVINATION

THERE IS A certain theological term which I do not know how to translate. It is *ex opere operato,* and I think it is a near relation of the more familiar *ipso facto,* but as to this I am not quite sure. At any rate, its force is this: if you are tied to the mouth of a cannon and the charge is fired, you will be blown to bits *ex opere operato,* and if you are placed in a certain position under the guillotine blade and the lever is pulled, you will be beheaded *ex opere operato.* In each case, that is, the result is independent of your own will, of your own dispositions; and, by way of making the case clearer, I may say that roast beef is not nourishing *ex opere operato.* That is, it would probably kill a typhoid patient, since his body would not be 'disposed' to receive the nourishment that roast beef contains for the healthy. And I am glad to see that this distinction is clearly recognised by 'Grand Orient,' the author of *A Manual of Cartomancy, Fortune-telling, and Occult Divination.*

Now, I do not think that it is a matter of belief or of faith or of hypothesis that the prophetic faculty is occasionally found in man. It is clearly a matter of knowledge. I do not even admit that the case depends on the quantity of the evidence, or the number of cases that may be adduced. One dead man is as good a proof of the proposition that humanity is subject to death as ten thousand dead men; one penny, duly superscribed and stamped, demonstrates its existence as well as ten thousand pence. If I have seen one balloon in the air, I am completely and fully convinced of the existence of the balloon: whole fleets of balloons could not make my conviction more of a conviction. Certainty does not admit of degrees. Faith does admit of degrees. Many men might have sufficient faith in a proposition to give up all their worldly goods for the sake of it, and yet the same men might not be willing to offer their bodies to be burned in the same cause. But, there being nothing truer than the truth, or more certain than certainty, it suffices to say that the existence of the prophetic faculty is a truth and is a certainty. I quote the first example that occurs to my mind, that of a Cornishman who undoubtedly prophesied the murder of Mr Perceval, the Prime Minister. Here is one balloon: the prophetic faculty, then, is as certain as death, and more certain than the taxes. So far, so good; but now the question arises: is the faculty latent in every one and capable of being called forth in every one by certain ascertained means? A certain method or methods being followed, can any and every human being prophesy *ex opere operato*? Precise analogies might be rather difficult to find, but we may say roughly, that any man, not being an imbecile, may be taught that the result of adding 15 to 15 is 30. Can we say that, as any man can be taught to calculate to a certain extent, so any man may be taught to prophesy to a certain extent? Well, my own inclination is to return a decided negative; but I am checked by the recollection of the conclusions upon astrology formed by the late Dr Garnett, of the British Museum. Dr Garnett was a man of immense learning, and of a distinctly sceptical disposition, but he certainly came to the conclusion that the abstract principles of astrology were true, though I think he had doubts as to the possibility of their practical application. It is possible to have a firm belief in the existence of cosmic laws and yet to hesitate over the question, ‘What will be the exact state of our earth in ten million years?’ Speaking generally and practically, then, we do come to the decision that the prophetic faculty is as the Poetic faculty: an inborn and rare gift which cannot be taught, for which there is no recipe. And this, as I understand, is the opinion of ‘Grand Orient.’ He is good-humoured enough to tell us ‘how it is done’ in many ways — by the ‘wheel of destiny,’ by invoking spirits in the crystal, by ‘Egyptian’ fortune-telling, by the common cards, by the tarot pack, by cabalistic enumerations, and by astrology; but he gives us to understand that, in his opinion, all these things are vanity — vanity, that is, if regarded as methods *ex opere operato*. To put the matter very plainly, ‘Grand Orient’ would not, I think, deny for a moment the possibility of seeing visions in the crystal — or in the teacup, for the matter of that; but he would maintain, very firmly, that the visionary power resides in the seer, and not in the instrument of vision, whether it be crystal, or ink, or the geomantic calculation, or the planetary positions, and he would say also that the old magical farmulæ — the ‘consecrations’ or ‘chargings’ — are wholly subjective, and not at all objective in their influence. Or, in his own words, ‘whatever the process, whatever the instruments, they are simply aids to elicit clairvoyance, and to cast the seer for the time being into a subjective or interior condition.’

I think it may be as well to say a word or two as to the practical aspect of the matter. It is quite true, I believe, that dynamite is a high explosive, and that if a sufficient quantity of it were duly detonated it would blow Westminster Abbey into dust and fragments; it is also quite true that the cholera bacillus may be cultivated. But the truth of these propositions would not justify me in manufacturing dynamite in my back-garden, or in setting up a bacteriological shelf on the kitchen dresser.

OUR ABSURD EDUCATION

I SAID TO a teacher, who was a man, as I looked down on the dirty floor, ‘Those girls would be better learning how to scrub this floor than learning how to make hydrogen.’

These words, quoted already in *T. P. ‘s Weekly,* seem to have been, as it were, the low and distant muttering that precedes a storm; since they were reported the storm has burst. The *Daily Mail* has thrown open its columns to the opponents and the partisans of our educational system; the debate has certainly not been wanting in briskness. To begin with, Mrs Close, who is President of the Children’s Farm Home, declares that the whole of our elementary education has been a miserable sham; Mr Cyril Jackson, Chairman of the Education Committee of the London County Council, replies that Mrs Close is ‘completely ignorant of the whole subject,’ that her facts are inaccurate, and that ‘her criticism is thirty years old.’ A medical officer of the County Council Education Department agrees completely with Mrs Close, and calls the system absurd; the head of a well-known commercial college says that 90 per cent of the Council school children are ignoramuses, and that the standard of knowledge is ‘not a bit better today than it was twenty years ago.’ The chief of an employment agency says that, in his experience, young people of eighteen or nineteen ‘have forgotten all they had learned.’ A leading business man in the City condemns ‘the results of almost every branch of education in this country’:

After seven years at school the average London boy slouches into a business office or warehouse, mumbling or speaking through his closed teeth, unable correctly to copy an address upon an envelope, or to carry a message intelligently from one department to another.

A printer’s foreman writes much to the same effect, and Mrs Burgwin, a high official of the County Council Schools Department, declares that modern education is on the whole excellent, and that the manners of children, both in town and country, have greatly improved through the influence of the schools. On the one side, it will be seen, are two or three scholastic officials, on the other — almost everybody else.

Such, in brief outline, is the debate; but I think that it may interest my readers if I give some detailed extracts from Mrs Close’s act of accusation.

What is the sense (she says) of spending months in teaching country labourers’ children the manufacture of raw silk, lead pencils, and raw cocoa, aided by costly boxes of samples of graphite, plumbago, cocoa beans, and silk from the uttermost parts of the earth? The unlucky teacher’s knowledge of these substances is, of course, most elementary, and the children know the whole thing to be a sham.

What is the use of teaching our southern counties children the names of the ‘villages’ between Stockport and Manchester, some eleven miles of practically continuous town, this being followed by a list of twenty rivers in Hindustan, and the amazing information that the Mississippi runs up hill! I should say that it was explained (?) that this was due to the position of the river relative to the Equator, but we remained as much in the dark as before… The ‘domestic economy ‘classes are, if possible, even more ridiculous. I see girls, not one of whom is much above the charwoman type, studying for weeks together the analysis of the contents of an egg — the quantities being given in decimals, which no one understood. The final item of some dozen being ‘mineral matter, 00.03,’ it is not surprising that in the school-yard the girls told me an egg was a mineral containing decimals.

And ‘Medicus’ supports Mrs Close by relating how girls in the slums are taught to keep house on three pounds a week, and to make puddings requiring half a pint of cream as an ingredient. In some schools, it appears, the girls go through a solemn ritual of polishing grates that never have any fire in them, and of cleaning knives that are never used. Now, first of all, I should like to make a distinction. Are cooking, knife-cleaning, and so forth proper subjects for education at all? Or, in other words, what is education, and what is its object? Setting aside the question of religion as hopelessly controversial, I should say that education is, properly speaking, a method of developing the intelligence, of training the faculties of the mind. If this definition be accepted, then it seems clear that the making of puddings (with cream or without), the cleaning of knives (soiled or spotless), the scrubbing of floors (clean or dirty) are very far from being ideal methods of mental training. Equally must we condemn the strange practices of egg analysis, hydrogen manufacture, and plumbago inspection. I do not say that there is no intellectual gymnastic required in these odd pursuits — an idiot can make neither a pudding nor hydrogen — but I do say that there are infinitely preferable ways of teaching children how to think. Given the first elements, the three R's, on which, I suppose we are all agreed, the teacher might hand a copy of *Lorna Doone* to one child, a *Rob Roy* to another, a *David Copperfield* to a third. The result would, I am sure, be infinitely better than anything that a wilderness of hydrogen bottles could produce. Of course, there is a certain difficulty to be faced. Many people will tell me that in the case of poor children, at all events, education does not mean a course of intellectual training, but does mean a course of instruction in the useful arts of getting a living and keeping alive. Well, if this be so, the case for our present system is no better, but rather worse. If our boys and girls are to be 'educated,' to earn so much a week in this, that, or the other occupation, for Heaven's sake let them be educated properly. If a boy is to be a clerk, then let him be taught to write well, to type well, to be an expert in shorthand. If French be regarded as a money-making accomplishment, let him be taught real French, not the queer dialect that Mrs Close heard spoken, which dialect she supposed to be Yiddish. And if a girl wants to be a servant, by all means let her learn the business of a servant. There is much room, certainly, for some such course. I have been in theatrical rooms, in the houses of well-to-do people in Lancashire, where one might imagine that the secret of boiling a potato was as lost as the Great Word of Hiram Abiff, and that the art of cooking a steak transcended the wit of mortal and fallible beings. Let us choose, I say, one system or the other; let us try to make the children intelligent and civilised human beings, or let us make them practical wage-earners, hoping that all such superfluities as thought and civilisation and humanism may be, somehow or other, added unto them. But do not let us continue in the present hopeless muddle, which hesitates between these two objects and achieves neither. It is bad enough for a boy to be devoid of intelligence; but it is deplorable when, being unintelligent, he cannot copy a letter, deliver a message, or spell the commonest words in his mother tongue.

Then there arises the question as to whether a school is the best place for the learning of many crafts. For those which are concerned with pen and ink school is, or ought to be, the best place possible, but there are crafts which can only be learned by actual apprenticeship. Thus, one would say that the future carpenter, having acquired enough reading, writing, and arithmetic to serve all the needs he is likely to experience, had better be apprenticed to his trade as soon as possible, so that the rough elements may be conquered while he is still young. We hear every day that competition is fierce, and grows still fiercer; that the number of men unemployed and half-starving is terrible to contemplate. Clearly this is not the age in which to waste time in gibbering about plumbago, in egg mining, in tracing the course of the Mississippi, or in dilating on the exports of Borrioboolah Gha. I do not suppose that the workmen employed by Chippendale knew anything whatever about the place of origin of their mahogany, but they knew a great deal about making chairs and tables out of the mahogany. Again, I say, let us not halt between two opinions, spoiling good workmen and making bad scholars. Let us choose one way or the other, and, if we are to be practical, let us be practical altogether.

THE CULT OF THE SECRET

THE OTHER DAY, according to the daily Press, an old offence was furnished with a new excuse. The offence was, indeed, painfully unoriginal — it has provided comic writers with material for thoughtless merriment for I don't know how many years. It was simply an affair of an errant husband, of a man who crept upstairs at one in the morning, whereas he should have been at home at six p in eating his high-tea. But this bad man's explanation of his conduct was novel and startling. He came home late, he said, because he was a member of a secret society! I forget how the little dispute ended, but one cannot help wishing well to the teller of a daring tale. And, after all, it might have been a true story: perhaps our friend was simply a Freemason who liked to combine the picturesque with the truthful. The interesting point is that the husband's excuse, though it strikes one as something strange and new when exhibited in the cold columns of the daily Press, is, or might be, one of the most ancient in the world. I have just mentioned the Freemasons; there are those who profess to find the strongest resemblances between the rituals of the Craft and certain ceremonies of ancient Babylon. And, so far, Babylon is the oldest civilisation of which we know anything; its records, I believe, carry us back to the dim borders of the year 7000 B.C. Egypt, too, had its secret rites; though I do not know what authority there is for the theory that the famous Book of the Dead is in reality the ritual of an Initiation Ceremony. In itself this view is not improbable. The Book of the Dead is an account of the passage of the soul from this world to the world to come, and it is possible that by the dramatic representation of this great journey the living were supposed to be prepared for the inevitable and actual experience of death and judgement. However this may be, we know that ancient Greece abounded in rites of secret initiation. There were the mysteries of the Cabeiri at Samothrace, the mysteries of Dionysus (or Bacchus), and, chief of all, the great Eleusinian mysteries, which were amongst the most important features of Greek civilisation. Africa of today (which is in all probability extremely like the Africa of five thousand or ten thousand years ago) is honeycombed with secret societies, which are not without their terrors even to Europeans; the Australian Bushman, who represents man in a very early stage of development, has his initiations; so has the Red Indian, so had the Polynesian. It is clear that the gentleman of the newspaper paragraph was telling an age-old and a worldwide tale.

But, after all, it is not necessary to decipher Babylonian tablets or Egyptian papyri, to visit the Congo or the innermost parts of Australia, to learn that the ‘Discipline of the Secret’ is both ancient and universal. We do not always remember that here in England — nay, in London itself — we have amongst us the most primitive race in the world; that inset, as it were, into our modern and commonplace and surface civilisation there is another civilisation, antique (or rather prehistoric), fantastic, and hidden. It is hidden because it is everywhere seen, because it is eminently visible; because its rituals and ceremonies are given names that disguise their real significance. It is a commonplace of human observation that the object which everybody can see and everybody does see is apt to become dark and obscure and occult. Familiarity may not always breed contempt, but it certainly breeds indifference and ignorance; and so the world had to wait a long time before the falling apple received its true interpretation And so it is with the mysterious race to which I am alluding. Even as I write these lines I happen to glance out of the window and see the Strange People engaged in their mysteries.

It is a fine September evening. Men and women are passing to and fro; the workmen are leaving their ‘job’; one can hear quite plainly the heavy rumble of the ‘Underground,’ the hum and rattle of the motor-bus, and the clatter and jingle of the drays. Nobody seems to take the slightest notice of the Strange People. But there they are in the flushed, fading light — some fifteen or twenty of them, dressed in robes of all colours, in the very middle of the street. One, who is in dark attire, stands in the centre, and the others, hand joined to hand, revolve slowly about this figure, chanting as they do in an odd, barbaric mode. I cannot hear the words of the song, and even if I could it is quite possible that they would be unintelligible to me. (I wonder how many of my readers know the meaning of ‘Eener, deener, deiner duss,’ one of the solemn chants of this People.) But I can see that a distinct ceremony of some kind iÿ being enacted. The revolving figures change places; one suddenly appears standing beside the central personage in the midst of the circle, another is cast into the street without it, and then the rite is interrupted by a hansom cab. This is a faithful description of ‘children at play’ in the north-western district of London, and it is probable that if one wished to know the exact meaning and purport of these proceeding; one would have to search the graves of Palaeolithic men or the ‘Proceedings’ of the Anthropological Society. Some of the pleasantest of these ‘games’ are dramatic representations of the primitive custom of immolating a human victim and of placing the corpse in the foundations of any new building.

And now that we have got our truly primitive race under close observation we can see how absolutely human is the desire for ‘a secret,’ a mystery. If you watch three children together you will probably find that Jack and Bill have an inner word that may not be imparted to Ned; he is ‘uninitiated.’ One may say, then, that a ‘secret society’ in its rudest form is well-nigh a necessity of life to average children; it is an instinct which must be gratified, or else there is a sense of vanity and emptiness. As the child grows older the first crude beginnings are naturally elaborated; I believe there is hardly such a thing as a boys’ or girls’ school without its ‘secret society,’ a formal and elaborate affair, with a lodge — it may be in a shrubbery, it may be in a barn, with its passwords, its symbols, its vows to keep ‘the mystery’ hidden for ever from the world. And when the boy grows up he very probably becomes a Freemason, a member of a body which, in spite of learned research, remains still obscure and mysterious in its origins as in its ceremonies. It is not, perhaps, so very difficult to discover the fate of Hiram Abiff as it is exhibited to the brothers; the question is by whom, when, and where were Hiram and his history first imagined? I suppose that there are thousands, nay, millions of perfectly ordinary, respectable, commonplace people, who go into the City, or on the Bourse, or to Wall Street, or to the Great Fair of Nijni-Novgorod, who pay rates and taxes, and cultivate their gardens, and go to church without ever suspecting that they belong to a society which for some centuries was, in the strictest sense, a secret brotherhood, with its initiation ceremony, its second degree, its great third (or Master’s) degree, its passwords, symbols, countersigns, and reserved and hidden doctrine. Yet such was the Christian Church of the first centuries; and still in the East the deacon cries before the most sacred portion of the Liturgy begins:

‘Let all the Catechumens (the uninitiated) depart.’

ROUGE ET NOIR — AND THE UNKNOWN

HERE IS A paragraph from a daily paper, which has just attracted my attention:

> Lord Rosslyn's first day's trial in the demonstration of his system for overcoming 'the bank' at roulette… resulted in his being loser of £189 out of his capital of £10,000. His opponent, Sir Hiram Maxim, maintains that no 'system' can win in the long run.

Now, I have not followed this great contest day by day; in the first place I am not a betting man, and, secondly, any system which demands a capital of £10,000 is emphatically no concern of mine. But from an abstract point of view the question is not without interest, since if Lord Rosslyn proves that his method is really infallible it is clear that gambling on roulette will become a thing of the past — for the rich, at all events. For, on the one hand, the gambler goes to Monte Carlo to enjoy the pleasures of uncertainty, and, on the other hand, the owners of the bank rely on the supposed percentage of chances in their favour. And since rich people can always find unspeculative investments for their money, it is clear that the backing of numbers and colours will become the luxury of the poor!

On the face of it the instinct of gambling is one of the oddest oddities of human nature. I was once in the company of a number of people with pink faces and high collars and light clothes and binoculars, who 'talked horse' without intermission; the odds had evidently entered into their souls, and their knowledge of 'form' was quite amazing. I felt like a man ignorant of mathematics at the Wranglers' Club, but I took the expert who wore the largest checks apart and asked for his candid opinion on 'racing,' from the commercial standpoint, and he answered, quite frankly, that it was 'a mug's game': a yearly loss, he said, was almost certain. Now, I believe that this would be the verdict of almost any betting man; and one only needs to read the paper to see cases — almost daily cases — in which a ‘certainty’ has turned out, indeed, a certainty of ruin and bankruptcy and disaster — sometimes with hard labour thrown in. It is true, of course, that bankers sometimes lose their money, and that grocers come to grief, but then these are exceptional mishaps. As a rule, the banker and the grocer who stick to their business are pretty well assured of a comfortable living and an old age secure from want; but how many country houses, how many comfortable villa residences have been earned by backing horses? No; it is clear that my friend with the check suit was quite right: it is ‘a mug’s game,’ a desperate adventure, with the probabilities dead against one, with an almost certain loss at the end of it. And, in spite of all this, man has always gambled and always will gamble, whatever commonness, morals, a care for the main chance, and the jaws of his country may say to him. It is clear that when we define man as a rational animal we must do so with some grave reserves.

For the fact is that man is not a rational animal, he is sometimes a supra-rational animal and sometimes an infra-rational animal. It sounds paradoxical, but it is certainly true that the gambling instinct is a perverted and corrupted form of the greatest human qualities. If little boys did not waste their money and imperil their positions in life by taking an interest in ‘all the winners and S. P.’ — well, in the first place there would be fewer evening papers in London, and secondly, there never would have been a Homer, a Shakespeare, or a Turner; and the autumn poets, who are now being reviewed in scores, would never have written a line. You cannot imagine a bee backing the winner (or, more probably, the loser), and an ant playing Blind Hookey is a mere nightmare; but then it would be equally ridiculous to imagine the bee writing a book and the ant modelling in clay. In other words, our vices and follies come from the same stock as do our gifts and graces; and the name of that stock is certainly not reason. It is unreasonable to put ten thousand pounds on a horse; it is unreasonable to volunteer on a forlorn hope; it is unreasonable to make lyric poetry or to enjoy it; there is no reason in pure music or in falling in love — but in all these processes and actions there is abundant humanity.

From what has gone before it seems quite clear that the love of gain is not at the root of the gambler’s passion. The miser — the man who loves money for its own sake — will toil for gain, will starve himself for gain, and perhaps murder for gain; but he will not risk the loss of what he holds so dear. No: the charm of the wager is the charm of the hazard, of uncertainty, of the voyage into the unknown; in the very risk lies all the delight. Gambling, in fact, is the poetry and the adventure of the unimaginative man; it is his poor attempt to satisfy his human instincts; it is his method of escaping from the prison of dullness, of commonplace, of matter-of-fact. It is one of many such methods, most of which are as futile or more futile. Here, again, one sees the strong distinction between the man and the bee. The latter, it is evident, is the happiest of bees living in the best of all possible hives; it is compact of certain strong desires which are perpetually being gratified; it is incapable of trespassing for a moment beyond the bee-world — for it the hive can never be out of joint. And on the other hand man suffers from an eternal dissatisfaction with himself and his surroundings, with his thoughts and his actions; he is like one beating at the doors of a palace, ever striving to enter in. In dreams, perhaps, he has seen a vision of the wonders within, or he has caught through cracks and crevices of the walls glimpses of immortal and satisfying delights; his ears have heard faint echoes of an enchanted song. To use a common idiom, man is a fish out of water, who is perpetually trying to get back into water.

Well we know the names of those who have succeeded; these are the saints and the sages, the poets, the musicians, the painters, the architects, the great artists of the world. But the tragedy is that while all desire, few attain: few can understand the means of attaining. Some succeed in killing the impulse altogether, and ‘settle down’ to a life which is almost animal — so many hours of work, so many hours of sleep, sufficient beef and beer, and a little money in the bank. But there are others who back the Red and ‘have a bit on’ a favourite horse. In the East there are people who take bhang and haschisch and smoke opium, in the West there are those who inject morphia and drink huge overdoses of alcohol; they set out for the enchanted palace of their dreams and awake in the gutter, in the hospital, in the home for inebriates.

I have often thought that the ignoring of this secret and ‘irrational’ tendency of human nature is the cause of many failures, the explanation of the disaster which has overtaken many well-meant schemes. For instance, I believe the chief dogma of Democracy is that all men are born ‘free and equal.’ This may be true; but then most Democratic thinkers must have added (in an undertone, perhaps) ‘and logical’ — which is not true. So with

‘Temperance’ Reform, so with ‘Anti-Betting Leagues; they attack a symptom, but not the disease itself; or, to resume my former metaphor, it may be that by some accident or series of accidents certain legitimate doors to the palace have been gradually closed; hence the frantic endeavour to press in by ways that end in failure only — or perhaps in destruction. At all events, it is certain that any survey of humanity which excludes the imaginative faculty and provides no outlet for its exercise is bound to lead to error in theory and to disaster in practice.

THE MOTH AND THE FLAME

LAST MONTH THERE was an inquest on the body of a woman found drowned on the seashore.

It was stated that she had told a relative that the sight of water always had a powerful fascination for her, and that when she saw it she seemed to have no control over herself… The coroner remarked that incidents of water having a fascination were not unknown. Some people experienced a similar feeling when looking down from a height.

The report from which I have quoted is a brief one; and one wonders whether it occurred to anybody present that Poe had written a curious essay on this very subject, ‘The Imp of the Perverse.’ The great American writer points out that many men — perhaps all men at one time or another — are subject to this extraordinary instinct impelling them to seek their own destruction. Like the coroner at the inquest, Poe instances the man on the brink of the precipice: his flesh shudders with horror, all his physical being revolts from the sight of the awful depth and the rocks beneath, and yet he lingers, drawn by some mysterious impulse, to his own destruction. Then there is the instance of the murderer who, in spite of himself, feels that he must proclaim his terrible secret to the world, thereby becoming, virtually, his own judge and executioner. In a phrase, we might say that man is subject to the fascination of destruction.

I was reading some time ago a very interesting explanation of the well-known behaviour of moths confronted with a bright light. Everybody has seen the wretched creatures beating about a gas-globe, endeavouring to come to the flame, and success means, of course, scorched wings and death. And yet one has also seen a moth slightly burnt, presumably in pain, returning again and again till it is consumed, or till it can fly no more. Well, the theory that I read, which is that of a very distinguished foreign scientist, is to the effect that the moth, with its peculiar vision, mistakes the candle-flame or gaslight for daylight, that it is trying to get out of the darkness, as man lost in a winding cavern might rush forward on seeing a sudden gleam in the distance. Now, speaking with due diffidence, I cannot accept this explanation for a moment, for the reason that the moth is a native of night and of darkness, and avoids the true daylight to the best of its ability. Sometimes one of these creatures, flying into a room at night, conceals itself in a curtain-fold. If you chance to disturb it the next morning, and in doing so expose it to the daylight, it will immediately do its best to take refuge in darkness behind another fold; it is evidently distressed by the rays of the sun. Clearly, then, the only light which attracts the moth is a light of destruction and death; it does not desire the star or the sun, but only the candle-flame. And again, birds, which must have a very different kind of vision from that of insects, will dash themselves to pieces against the windows of a lighthouse; presumably they, too would fly into the flame if it were not too strongly guarded.

I am sorry to say that I have no theory to propound in place of that which I have rejected. The moth and the candle are to me a mystery, since the creature seems to be acting in direct opposition to the whole course of Nature, to the law of self-preservation. So with the birds: they often develop a superhuman sagacity in the detection of snares, in the avoidance of men with guns; and yet they fly madly against the lighthouse window, and fall dead into the sea. Sportsmen have told me that you must use the contrivance of a Machiavel if you wish to get a shot at certain birds, and yet these wary and cautious creatures will dash themselves to pieces in the effort to get at a brilliant light, which they cannot possibly regard as something good to eat! Salmon, too, can be lured to the surface — and to the spear’s point — by the exhibition of a flaring torch; and I have heard that there is no better bait for this fish than a morsel of scarlet cloth. Now, the salmon does not feed on burning torches, nor — so far as I know — on large scarlet flies; and yet these objects are an irresistible attraction to it. What is the explanation of this and of the similar conduct of the moths and the birds?

Whatever the solution of the enigma may be, it is interesting to note the parallel between the moth and the man. Both the one and the other suffer from the fascination of death and destruction. Is this a mere coincidence, or have we here varying manifestations of one instinct? In the case which I cited at the beginning of this article the jury, very naturally, brought in a verdict of 'Suicide while of unsound mind'; but we must be careful to distinguish between this impulse and ordinary suicidal mania. The unfortunate woman whom the water drew to death had no delusions of any kind or sort; she did not drown herself because she was persecuted by imaginary enemies, because the Emperor of China was plotting against her, or because she had committed the Unpardonable Sin. She perished through a fascination which exercises a certain weak power over most of us, which in her case swelled to an irresistible command, which bore her to the depths of the water as the singed moth is borne to the heart of the flame. And — to quote a very different instance — readers of *Martin Chuzzlewit* will remember how Bailey Junior, certainly not a morbid character, lingered behind on the roof of 'Todger's' to walk on the parapet, 'contemplating with a delight peculiar to his sex and time of life any chance of dashing himself into small fragments.' Bailey, in brief, was obsessed by the 'Imp Of the Perverse.'

Now the death of the woman was evidently of no service either to herself or to anyone else; it was both spiritually and materially unprofitable. But the question arises whether this instinct, in a modified form, is not demonstratively of the greatest service to humanity. To take an instance. We speak of a great soldier's contempt of death: should we not rather say his love of death or of the chance of death? Perhaps the most wonderful actions of the battlefield have been performed, not by men who overcame their natural fears through a sense of duty and a sense of shame, not by men who by nature or by training were indifferent to danger, but rather by men who loved danger for its own sake, who found in the expectation of instant death the most poignant of all pleasures. And may we not imagine that some of the most heroic rescues of men by men have been the work of those who knew the wonderful fascination of deadly peril? The history is silent as to the after-life of Bailey Junior; but one would not be surprised to hear that he went down a precipitous cliff to rescue some victim of the advancing tide, contemplating with a more exalted delight the 'chance of dashing himself into small fragments.' And, again, there are the explorers, the mountaineers, the men who venture into the waste of ice or into the waste of sand; these, too, must know something of the 'Imp of the Perverse.' There must be this mysterious force impelling them to leave comfort, honour, and profit for some desperate adventure of the wilderness or of the rocks, for the risk of a parched or frozen death. The inventor, too, must often be of the same company: the first balloonist, for example, was doubtless acquainted with the joys of peril. And in the spiritual sphere it may seem a paradox, but is it not possible that the martyrs in the flames were men tasting the supremest bliss? The mathematicians tell us that there is a sphere — they call it infinity — in which parallel straight lines meet; it has often struck me that this axiom may apply to worlds that are not mathematical — that the supreme life may be the supreme paradox. According to the natural order — or what we think the natural order — the instinct of life is the strongest of all instincts; perhaps if we carry our analysis a point further we may discover that the instinct of death is stronger still. Then, returning to the moth and the flame, is it not within the bounds of possibility that it and the other creatures who seek their own destruction in such (apparently) aimless fashion are in reality displaying one of the greatest of all human qualities in its rude and primitive condition, in its inchoate state? There is a vast gulf between a hen and her chickens and a mother and her children; but from small rills and petty fountains the great deep of maternal love draws all its mighty and blessed waters. So the moth burning in the candle-flame may be alike the symbol and the physical origin of the highest joy of self-sacrifice.

Bridles and Spurs

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BRIDLES AND SPURS

ONE OF THE most tiresome men I ever knew was always talking about nature. I don't know what he meant by nature. I don't believe that he knew what he meant by nature. Usually, I think, he spoke of it as something good and just and beautiful, discerning and dividing the true from the false. Thus, a very wealthy man of his acquaintance became ill, and was glad of the company of my tiresome friend. 'In spite of all his money,' said the tiresome one, 'when Dame Nature gave him a tap on the shoulder — there he was.' I have no notion of what this means. I doubt whether it means anything at all. I told the fellow that he was talking nonsense; that nature simply meant the sum of things; everything that is; that if a sunset was nature, so also was a louse; in short that if nature were 'a holy thing' in the words of philosophic Snawley, she was also 'a rum one,' in the definition of philosophic Squeers.

It has always struck me as marvellous that Johnson was afforded grace — I would almost say — to give Rousseau the lie, to cast down his false doctrine and stamp upon it. For Rousseau, as we all know, preached to foolish and too-attentive ears the doctrine of the state of nature, and of the return to nature. He saw that things were very much amiss; and, indeed, he was right, since they always are amiss. But he went on to say that they were amiss because man had departed from the state of nature, and might be put right by man's returning to the state of nature. And what did he mean? I don't think Rousseau was in so hopeless a state as the tiresome man: he had a meaning in what he said. By a state of nature, so far as can be gathered, he meant the state of savagery; a condition of things in which man lives without laws or institutions of any kind, civil or ecclesiastical; in which there are no conventions, no customs, no immemorial traditions, no usual habits which have grown by long and general consent to have the force of law. For example, supposing yourself to be the guest of a Duchess: there is no law in England that I know of to Prohibit your spitting on Her Grace's drawing-room carpet, if you be so inclined. Yet, I am very sure that there are many people who will rob and swindle their neighbour, and covet his goods, and bear false witness against him, and injure him in body, soul, and spirit gaily and freely, who would be quite incapable of defiling that noble carpet. And I spoke of long consent as giving custom the force of law. It need nor be so very long. When Dr Johnson was in Paris amidst the exquisite elegancies and politenesses of the old regime, he saw a lady of quality spit on her drawing-room floor, and rub out the spittle with her foot.

But at all events: when Rousseau preached that gospel of a return to nature he was thinking of savagery, a state of things free from all law, all custom, all convention, all hierarchy, all rule and all rulers. It was pretty much the state that Shelley viewed, when he wrote:

Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt — from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself.

And, as I say, Johnson would have none of it. He knew that it was all poisonous nonsense, and declared that it would give him very great pleasure to sign Rousseau’s sentence of transportation, as a bad man, as one of the worst of men. And here is the marvel: that Johnson believed that Rousseau’s picture of the savage state was a true one; that there were people living in these conditions, without king, priest, custom, or law. ‘Very well,’ said the Doctor in effect, ‘I allow that there are such men, and I say that they are no better than wild beasts.’ We know better. There are no such men. The farther back we go, the more elaborate the structure of human society becomes; the more complicated the vast corps of rules and regulations, ordering not only public actions and transactions, but also the most domestic, private, and intimate details of every day life.

Take the case of Mrs Green, the wife of the South African missionary. Mrs Green went into her kitchen to confer with her two black servants as to the work and business of the day; the subject of dinner naturally being included in the discussion. A basket of fruit was produced: would it do for a tart? ‘No,’ said the mistress. ‘I think it’s too green.

The two black girls turned ashen grey, and waited for the bolt of heaven to fall. Mrs Green had been guilty of a frightful infraction of their law. She had uttered the name of her husband: a horrid transgression. She should have varied her phrase, and said: ‘It’s not ripe enough.’ In extreme cases, in which no paraphrase would serve, the proper course would be to summon a boy of under five years, whisper the tremendous name of Green into his ear, and bid him whisper it in turn to the person concerned.

That is real savagery; about as remote from the false and idle dreams of Rousseau and Shelley as anything that the mind can conceive. No doubt, the levee of King Louis XV was a complicated business, a highly ceremonial business, a business of many intricate rubrics, rules and regulations. But courtiers are a limited class, and levees come to an end, and wigs and court dress can be exchanged for loose caps, soft slippers, easy gowns. The life of a savage is a perpetual levee, in which every minute detail of his life is ordered. Civilisation may be good or bad; this, perhaps, is uncertain. But it is very certain that civilisation is a process which makes more and more for simplicity. I can remember the days of frilled shirt fronts, and later, the splendid liveries of the Row.

What Rousseau really meant, then, was that man might gain happiness by ceasing to be a man and becoming a beast. This, no doubt, is a false proposition; but, yet worse, it is a loose proposition. What sort of a beast? An antelope, or an ant? An antelope, I suppose, has perfect liberty, till a lion, also enjoying the blessings of freedom, makes a dinner of him. Is that the life which Rousseau and Shelley had in mind; or did they propose to subject man to the iron, inevitable, merciless discipline of an ant’s nest? Likely enough: it must be remembered that when the Pilgrim Fathers hanged Quakers, they called it the enjoyment of liberty of conscience. It was not only Habbakuk who was *capable de tout.*

But to return to that nature, from which we started: can we say more of it than this: that it is really Pan, the sum of everything that is, from Wordsworth’s *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* to the untrapped bacillus of influenza, still roaming free from the tyranny of man: ‘equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless, exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king over himself.’

Is that all we can say of this famous nature; beyond the fact that the word has been the fruitful parent of more intolerable drivel and nonsense than any other word to be found in the dictionary? I think there is one thing to be said, at all events; and that is that in nature there is a boundless and persistent difference, inequality, or, in Bacon's phrase, strangeness of proportion. One oak leaf is very like any other oak leaf; but it is never a replica of any other oak leaf. You can see the difference if you will take any two oak leaves, and examine them closely. So with mountains, so with minds: there are no two mountains, no two minds exactly alike. It is quite certain, then, that whatever sense you give the word equality, there is no such thing in nature.

There is a saying often quoted. I have forgotten who first uttered it, and I quote from memory; but it goes something like this: 'I can never believe that one set of men is born, saddled and bridled, ready to be ridden; while another set of men is born, booted and spurred, and ready to ride them.' I am sorry that the gentleman, whoever he may have been, was never able to believe this — since it happens to be the exact and certain truth. A melancholy truth, perhaps; it is a melancholy truth that water drowns and fire burns; but it is true. You have only to turn into any history book, or into any industrial town, or open any newspaper to be convinced of the truth of the proposition which the man couldn't believe. Of course, there are good riders and bad riders, kind rulers and cruel tyrants, amongst the kings of the earth and of big business. But as to the dictum of the riders and the ridden; one may say that it is the truth: *'Megis yr oedd yn y dechreu, y mae yr awr hon, ac yn y wastad, ac yn oes oesodd.'* From the beginning of all beginnings, and at this hour, and into the waste of time, and to the age of the ages.

A FORGOTTEN BOOK

HAS ANY ONE here read Beroaldus Juvelius on the Fallibility of Human Judgement? I daresay not. This great folio, printed at Lubeck in the year 1615, when the Rosicrucian controversy was at its height, as it might be a living and blazing example of that fallibility of judgement which the prudent Juvelius weighed, examined, anatomised, was in its own day overwhelmed by the occult follies of the age. It slept as it was born; and no one has been curious enough to awaken it.

Yet the book deals with matters of everlasting interest, and everyday interest too, to every one of us. We are making judgements every other minute of our lives, every jack man of us, from the highest mathematician to the man who feeds the pigs. Einstein forms his judgement as to Space-Time; the pig farmer forms his judgement as to the capacities of the pig with the black spot for fattening up — and some one in between the two forms a judgement as to my prose, and decides that it is horrid. And there goes a man to the scaffold, and a noose, and violent death: on the judgement of twelve of his fellows. What right has any one of these to his judgements; from Einstein to the juryman? What grounds have we for receiving them, for giving them our assent? Can we test them? If so, what are the tests?

Such, in bare outline, are some of the topics which engaged the attention of the learned Swede — or, more probably, Finn — of the early seventeenth century; and it seems to me that they are as alive now, in the early twentieth century, as they were then. Indeed, I have had an instance of this urgent modernity within the last twenty-four hours. Last night, Mr Desmond McCarthy, an esteemed critic, an admirable judge of a good book and a bad book, and of the difference between them, was broadcasting his opinion of that queer production, the *Life of George Bernard Shaw* by Frank Harris and George Bernard Shaw. ‘I read every word of it with interest,’ said Mr McCarthy in effect, ‘but it is a literary monstrosity,’ And he went on to compare it, immensely to its disadvantage, with the *Life of Hendrik Ibsen,* recently translated from the Norwegian: a perfect biography, according to Mr McCarthy; a great picture of a great man.

Very good. But this morning I open the *Daily Telegraph,* and read a criticism of this very life of Ibsen, by that most eminent and judicious critic, Mr J. C. Squire. And Mr Squire says, quite frankly, that he found the book so intolerably, so intensely dull that his strongest resolution was needed to carry him through it. It was a black London fog to him, with only here and there a ray of light, when Ibsen was allowed to speak in his own person.

And the best of it is this. At the beginning of his article, Mr Squire quoted two or three paragraphs from the *Quarterly Review.* The reviewer, poor man, had to deal with *Endymion* by John Keats. He read the first book, he says, and could make nothing of it; and so he felt that it would be safe to leave the other three unread. Mr Squire agrees that the *Quarterly* critic was wrong; but wishes that he had the courage to follow his example in leaving three parts of the Life of Ibsen unread. That is his point; but how admirably the passage from the *Quarterly* illuminates our meditation on the fallibility of human judgement. The *Quarterly Review* was written by scholars, by men of literary experience, and of approved merit: it can find nothing in Endymion but unintelligible nonsense. And a few years later, Jeffrey, of the *Edinburgh Review,* declared that the only poets of the age who would survive were — Rogers and Campbell. And do not let us forget that Johnson considered *Lycidas* to be a compound of bad taste and worthless poetry; while to Keats and his friends, Johnson's poetry was a joke. Carlyle, again, found nothing in Keats but a 'maudlin, weak-eyed sensibility,' and discovered Lamb to be a drunken cockney, with a 'frostified,' very offensive, humour.

And these, judges and judged, were great men; some of them among the greatest of men. 'If they do these things in the green tree…'

But, after all, these are merely literary judgements? What, then, about the judgements of those useful, homely, practical, organs; the palate and the stomach? They have in Touraine, the land of Rabelais the land of stout eaters of fine dishes, of chosen drinkers of good wine, a great delicacy; little cheeses made of goats' cream. I saw them, snowy white, nesting in green vine leaves, as they put on the dessert in that sixteenth century inn, La Crouzille. I helped myself with eager anticipation: received the essence of a whole herd of mountain goats and thought my mouth was withered forevermore. And, you remember the Banquet after the Manner of the Ancients in *Peregrine Pickle?* The host said that he was a little uncertain as to the *nitron* of the ancients; so in making the classic soup, he had used asafetida instead. Well; the French marquis declared the soup was excellent, on his word of honour; but he was taken home in his sedan chair, in a sad state, soon afterwards. But the German baron finished his plate and asked for more.

Do you know what is the great Christmas dish in Germany at the present day? It is carp, boiled in beer, and eaten with sweet cakes. You think, I suppose, that such a dish would be horribly nasty; sickening perhaps. But my Tourainian friend, M. Venier, told me that he had once eaten lamb with mint sauce. ‘I didn’t like it,’ he said, and there was a bitter emphasis in his tones that let me know he was putting his judgement into gentle words, to spare my English feelings. I am free to confess, on the other side, that young lamb without mint sauce is to me as a sonnet that lacks the final, crowning line; a thing imperfect, maimed; joy turned into sorrow and regret.

Let it be understood that all the while I am following my author, old Beroaldus Juvelius. The argument, if you can find it, is his: I have merely fitted it with modern, or more or less modern, instances. And, still following him; let me relate how I was sitting one afternoon with some friends, at Henekey’s, in the Strand. One of the men said to another: ‘You know Confucius has come through?’ He lowered his voice a little, but I heard him and exclaimed, *‘What?’* in a voice of such rasping virulence that the waitress started, and regarded me with surprise and rebuke.

But what ground had I for my implied judgement: that the spirit of the great Kung, who died about two thousand five hundred years ago, had by no means manifested itself at any séance of the Spiritualists?

THE STRANGE TALE OF MOUNT NEPHIN

I WAS SAYING that I once heard X say to Y: ‘You know, of course, that Confucius has come over?’ — and that I didn’t believe a word of it. Well, I didn’t and I don’t; but, if one comes to think of it, I should find it difficult to justify my disbelief on strictly rational grounds. Who are we to pretend to understand the laws of the kingdom of the unseen? Confessedly, demonstrably, we blunder daily, we blunder hideously over the laws of our own region. We condemn innocent men, we acquit guilty men. We stone the prophets and the poets; we laud and laurel horrible quacks and impostors. Germany makes certain of tremendous victory; and comes to the most appalling grief. And betting men back horses as ‘dead certs,’ which, somehow, crawl in at the tail of the field. Evidently, we know very little about things seen: how shall we presume to be dogmatic about things unseen? What right had I to be derisive and incredulous about the supposed manifestations of the great sage of China?

None whatever, taking the proposition— ‘Confucius has come over’ — simply as it stands. I know nothing whatever about the present state of the spirit of Confucius or its possibilities; and I have no right to any opinion on the subject. My defence for my derision must be founded on the fact that this was the pronouncement of a Spiritualist. Now I know from long experience that the Spiritualists are highly credulous folk, that they have been deceived, cheated, humbugged again and again, and that they never learn caution or the critical habit of mind. The medium with the faked slate is found out; and is succeeded by the medium with the faked photograph; and the exposed ‘spirit’ photographer yields place to the manipulator of ectoplasm — which turns out, in due time, to be cheese cloth. So, on the whole, I think I was justified. I may yet be brought to believe in the apparition or manifestation of Confucius; but not on Spiritualistic evidence. Emphatically, what the Spiritualist says is not evidence; when he speaks on his own topic. When he talks about chess or chemistry or the culture of roses he may be the most trustworthy of men.

So much for grounds of disbelief; now for the more difficult matter: grounds of belief in one of the strangest stories that I have ever heard. And let me say at once that it appeared in Light, which is the principal Spiritualistic paper in England, and that, for all I know, the narrator herself may be a Spiritualist. I do know one thing: that she was most unwilling to publish her experiences, lest she should be thought a fool. And it is to be further remarked that whatever may be thought of her tale, it is certainly not a Spiritualistic tale. Its atmosphere is wholly remote from that of the séance.

Well: to our adventure. On or about July 20th, 1929, a party of six people set out to climb Mount Nephin, by Lough Conn, in County Mayo, Ireland. There were three men and three women, and of the women, one, with an injured knee, turned back after an hour's climb, and was to wait at the cottage where the party had left their car. It was a clear and sunny day. The climb began at eleven, the summit was reached at a quarter to three, and at three o'clock the descent began.

We started down in groups and singly, my husband by himself, F.H., James and myself together, and the other man quite a bit ahead of us. Suddenly, F.H. turned away, and vanished over the shoulder of the mountain. Little was said, for she often took her own way down the various mountains we climbed during the summer. James and I continued our way for a while, then turned to each other and said 'Something has happened to F.H.!' We felt so sure of this that we called to the other two men, who returned. We agreed that they should go back to the mountain to where she was last seen, and search for her, while I should continue down, and meet them at the cottage.

The teller of the tale set out on her way down the mountain, keeping a sharp lookout for the missing F.H. She sat down and heard 'a funny kind of crying' behind her, the crying of a lost child. She looked about her and saw a figure which she took to be James, waving to her. She walked towards the figure; but there was no one there. She sat down again, and admired the view, and 'someone laughed,' directly behind her. The figure that seemed James again appeared and disappeared, and the narrator at last reached the cottage, expecting to find there the girl with the injured knee.

The cottage people told me she had not been there all the afternoon. Presently she came in very angry, saying that early in the afternoon I had come down the mountain and waved to her, but had not waited for her to come up. (She had not gone very far, as she stumbled in a bog, and found the walking too hard.) Obviously I had not done any such thing.

At half-past seven, the men came back. They had seen nothing of the missing girl, F.H. One of the men, James, had twice seen, ‘out of the tail of his eye,’ a club whirling down on him, and he had, each time, taken flying jumps to avoid it. The party were feeling extremely worried about the disappearance of F.H., and the narrator began to question the man of the cottage. Were there holes or quarries on the mountain into which one might fall? Nothing of the kind. Might there be children on the mountain? All the children had been at school.

Then:

‘What about the Little People?’

He became very severe, and turned to go out, saying ‘We do not talk about that.’

And poor, missing F.H.? They found her, at last, in a police station at the foot of the mountain. And she told a very odd story.

She does not know, (writes the narrator,) she cannot possibly imagine what happened to her. She can only say that it was as though she had lapsed into, complete unconsciousness, and all the while thought she was walking beside us. She was in reality walking straight away from us. She does not know what it was that ‘took’ her suddenly; she said it was as though there were no time for a moment, and some strange force were pulling her away. Then she realised that we were not there, and heard the crying of voices. She went in the direction of the sound, thinking she would find someone; on crossing a ravine, the voices were still audible, and she heard someone blowing a horn, but no one was in sight. Then she thought she saw a small person beyond and below her, possibly a child; she went down towards it, but on crossing another ravine, found no one, though the voices still continued. After this, she realised she was lost, and headed for the white roadway below her, and walked about eight miles to a police barracks, where we later found her.

I believe every word of that strange story; but I find it difficult, or rather, impossible, to give the grounds of my belief. Sometimes we can appeal to the character of the teller of the tale; but I know nothing of the character of the lady who tells this tale of Mount Nephin. She is, or was, a university lecturer; and it might be urged that university lecturers are not in the habit of making up outrageous fictions. This is, probably, a true proposition; but it falls very far short of demonstrating the veracity of the story. I can only say that, to me, the whole narrative reeks of the truth; I am convinced that the persons of the tale really experienced the impressions and sensations which they say that they experienced.

And what, or who, caused these impressions and sensations? There, I must be content to symbolise with F.H., who lost her way. ‘She does not know, cannot possibly imagine, what happened to her.’ I neither know, nor can I conjecture the causes of the things that happened to this party of hill climbers. Were they harried and misled by the Little People, the Daioine Sidhe, the fairies? I am with the ‘man the cottage’ here; I don’t want to talk about that — because I know nothing of it. Tradition, even wild tradition, is often trustworthy in a high degree: I could bring forward many instances in proof of that proposition. But the original traditions of the Little People have been hopelessly corrupted by literary inventions: the fairies of Shakespeare, and Herrick and the other Elizabethans have travelled far from their native hills and wilds. I dare not say that the people who climbed Mount Nephin in July, 1929, were beset by fairies; but I think we may say that experiences such as theirs were the foundation of the older fairy lore.

PICTURES ON THE CARDS

A VERY PLAUSIBLE case might be made, I believe, for the proposition that life would be intolerable — if it were not for its evils.

Nonsense? Well, take one evil; worry, anxiety, that painful obsession of the mind which has been held responsible for so many shattered souls. ‘It is not work that kills men; it’s worry,’ I once heard a famous divine declare; and I have often felt inclined to agree with him. It is not work, however hard, that poisons life. Often, in old days, 1 have gone into the hay fields and watched the mowers with their scythes advancing across the meadow; scythes, arms, legs, bodies swinging in perfect measure. The sun beat down, the mowers steamed with heat; the work, so they say, uses and tries every muscle of the body: but it all looked jolly — to use an old word — and they looked jolly; and with what a relief they lifted up the great stone jars of small cider or small beer that were kept cool in the shade of the pollard beech. Then, after a mighty draught of the cold drink, back to the work again, and the long sweet swathes fell before the shining scythes; and so till then sun went down behind the mountain wall in the west, and the mowers went home, tired and cheerful. A hard day’s work, but a good day’s work, without a pang in it.

Such hours as these do no harm to any man; such work, as the clergyman said, does not kill. I admit that there is work of a very different order. I often wonder how any man can be a coal miner; and yet the men of the mines are often cheerful fellows. ‘You can’t keep them out of the pits,’ a Welshman once said to me. Then there are the house-breakers, who stand on a high wall and hack at it with their picks, and the men who wheel barrows of bricks at a brisk trot on a bounding scaffolding plank, I know not how many feet above the ground. But such forms of work are so dangerous that they only need to be taken up in the right social quarters to become highly fashionable sports. Work, then, is endurable, and may be enjoyable. But worry…

It is the slow, but burning poison of life; a worm that dieth not, a fire that is not quenched; an anticipation of hell itself. It is the black care that sits behind the horseman; the terrible companion that draws the curtain at night, and appears, strangely, awfully disguised in the dreams of the sleeper. It wakes with him at dawn, and strikes a pang through his breast. It mingles venom with his meat and his drink, with all his thoughts, and words, and deeds. We had rather meet a stranger than his dearest friend; for with a stranger one can act a part. He cannot read his well-loved books: good wine breeds but greater loathing on a fevered palate. He is almost ready to cry: Who will put me out of my misery?' and, often enough, finding life unendurable ends it by his own violence.

And the strange thing is that we go to pains and labour to make counterfeit cares, imitation anxieties, feigned worries of all sorts. As if a man's real troubles were not enough for him, he invents a tortuous enigma called chess, grows pale over its problems, and racks his brains by way of resting them. And, as if chess were not difficult enough, he refines upon its tortures, and plays the game in a dialogue, without seeing the board; plays three, six, a dozen games at once: seeks out any device to increase his troubles. Then there is another popular torture called bridge. Some time ago, the world gathered round a bridge table in New York. The doings on that table formed an important item, day by day, in our English newspapers. We read how the players worried so over the game that their nerves got on edge, and they addressed each other with considerable acrimony. At last the contest came to an end; and I must say that the only sensible comment on the affair that I read was in a provincial American paper And that was: 'What of it?' What of it, indeed? Haven't we, most of us, enough real and actual cares without these phantasmal anxieties. There are Kings and Queens of darkness with powers of life and death and torment, and Knaves in plenty to rob us of all we have: and yet we must, of our own free will, call on the pictures on the pictures on the cards to harry us.

But the paradox goes all through life. We cannot keep our pet dogs in peace. Mrs Smith, the owner of the famous Pekinese Ling Pu, shows him, and bursts into tears because her pet is beaten by Mrs Brown's Wang Lu. And I daresay that the heart of the grower of roses is often pierced by a like thorn. I remember once calling on some people at Wimbledon. There was a beautiful garden, and I knew that my friends were proud of their roses. It was the day before the local flower show, and the weather was showery. We strolled out on the lawn after tea: and there, instead of roses, were umbrellas. All the umbrellas, parasols, sunshades that the house could provide were stuck here and there about the beds; the object being to protect the precious blooms from the assault of the rain, so that they might be perfect for the show next day. Here, I thought, is a taking of anxious thought for the morrow: these people are worrying about their roses, instead of enjoying: them.

And the moral of this grave discourse is to the address of the fanatics, the cranks, the red-hot reformers of the universe. By all means let us help the lame dog over the stile and raise the blind man from the ditch. But do not let us endeavour to abolish stiles and ditches; since, if we had none, we should at once proceed to construct them with immense pains, labour, and expense. In Mr Aldous Huxley’s latest book, there is a picture of a world without evil. It is an unspeakably awful place.

THE ANCIENT SPEECH

MR AGATE, ONE of our most distinguished literary and dramatic critics, said a very striking and arresting thing in one of his articles. He was reviewing a book, the author of which had declared that in his opinion, great music, the music of Mozart and Beethoven, was the very climax of civilisation: in itself Civilisation, and the pure essence and expression of civilisation.

Mr Agate would have none of it. He swept music aside, and with it architecture, sculpture, painting, all the arts; including, I suppose, literature, though I don’t think literature was expressly mentioned. ‘None of these things,’ he said, ‘counts. When I speak of civilisation, I mean good sewage.’

Let us not endeavour to score off Mr Agate. It would be very simple to ask him why, holding that good drains made good men, he passed his days in judging plays and books; matters, according to his doctrine, of no consequence whatever. I suppose his answer would be: ‘Because I want to earn a lot of money, so that I can afford to live in a house where the sanitation is perfect; and so I give in to human folly.’

But we will not cross question Mr Agate; there is always something unmannerly, almost brutal about the argumentum ad hominem, the confronting a man with the consequences of his own opinions. I have quoted this saying about sewage, because I believe it to be a survival, because I believe that it is the utterance of a doctrine now dying, soon to be dead.

With a kind of brusque and biting humour, no doubt, Mr Agate intended to signify that he was a utilitarian and a materialist; a believer of the school of Jeremy Bentham, of the elder Mill, of the sect known as the Philosophic Radicals, who uttered their voices in parliament as Bright and Cobden, who are expressed in literature by Mr Gradgrind, the Hard Fact man. The sect spoke in a leading article in The Times, when William IV was to be crowned. ‘What nonsense all this is,’ said, in effect, the weighty article.

‘What possible good can be effected by greasing (anointing) the person of the sovereign?’ And the gentle, though shallow, Macaulay prophesied utilitarianism when he spoke of ancient philosophy; of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and the rest. The leaves of this tree of ancient philosophy are beautiful indeed, Macaulay allowed. But, he asked, where is the fruit of the tree? Do Plato and Aristotle lead to the gas works and the locomotive engine? If not, what is the use of philosophy?

And, be it said in all sincerity and gravity, this utilitarian faith is by no means to be blown away with a contemptuous puff of the breath. It appeals, in one way or another to all of us. Before we laugh at it, let us ask ourselves whether we are completely indifferent to our bodies, to our comforts and discomforts, to the body’s sickness and health, to its starvation or repletion. Suppose I say that I don’t think that Macaulay’s engine, or our motor cars and airplanes matter twopence, that it is of no real consequence whether we go fast or slow. Very fine; but my friends would tell me to walk to London and back, fifty-two miles in all, the next time I have to go to town; and then to say how I liked it. No; there is no denying that utilitarianism is a faith of universal appeal, of high cogency. There is only one thing to be said against it, and that is, that it is entirely incredible. We may be reciting the ‘I believe in one Utility,’ the ‘Our Father Bentham,’ the ‘Hail Sewage full of chloride’ and the rest: and the wind in the trees, or the glitter of the brook, or a line of Keats will scatter it all away; and we awake from nightmare, and know that the well being of the body is the means; the joys of the spirit the end. Utilitarianism, materialism are dying creeds: I shall yet see Mr Agate on the mourners’ bench of a better faith.

You can see signs of the change in all quarters and in all manners, both high and low. I hardly venture to touch on the esoteric doctrines of the sciences; but it has long been evident that Prospero’s exposition of the universe is far nearer the truth of things as modern science sees it, than the science, or rather, nescience of the Tyndall, Clifford, Spencer school of the ‘seventies of the last century. The very names of these people have already something obsolete about them; they will soon be utterly forgotten.

But let us not say more of these matters, which as I have confessed, are too high for me. Let us seek our signs in familiar things. Here is my instance.

Some ingenious person has invented a new cough-lozenge, a sort of medicament in which we are necessarily and perpetually interested, here in England. The benevolent inventor has called his dose (we will say) ‘Bung.” He advertises it, and his advertisement has just caught my eye on the back page of the paper. Here it is:

Teacher says:

Bung is best to ease the throat and warm the chest.

You observe that this eloquent appeal is in verse. Why in verse? To attract attention the better. But why should a jingling verse attract attention? It certainly does. The pleasing example I have cited is one amongst many: solid men of business, great concerns, the keenest professors of the art of publicity — a word I dislike — all entreat our custom with their simple rhymes. There is the Underground Railway of London: that sings:

Underground everywhere:
Quickest Way, Cheapest Fare.

And it was said that the late Lord Northcliffe, that great master of the art of advertising, paid a heavy fee to the author of:

Weekly Dispatch Best of the Batch

It attracts. But why does it attract? Let me ask you another. Why did Hesiod, who lived in the eighth century B. C., write his Works and Days in rolling hexameters? The Works and Days is a ‘Poor Richard’ book, a collection of the simple maxims of unsophisticated country folk, who love to hear their own experience, their own rough-hewn common sense corroborated and condensed into a phrase. ‘The half is greater the whole,’ says Hesiod to the man who will go to law, resolved to have his claim satisfied to the uttermost, forgetful of lawyers' costs. 'Many things fall out between the edge of the cup and the lip,'

'Potter hates potter, and one craftsman another' — one sees the origins of our 'There's many a slip 'twix the cup and the lip,' and 'Two of a trade never agree.'

But why did this remote, ancient, primitive Greek put his keen observation, his homespun wisdom into verse?

The reason is that poetry comes before prose, just as singing comes before speaking. Chanted poetry is the natural utterance of primitive man; spoken prose is a later artificial invention. All poetry was contemptible to the utilitarians, the materialists, the rationalists, the Benthamites: it was a senseless jingle, worthy only of savages.

And now; see how we return to the old way, and recommend our cough-drops with a song.

The fact is, that if we have anything of real consequence to say, we say it in poetry; and it is only natural that a man who has goods for sale should deem them of the utmost consequence.

MUTTERINGS IN THE DARK GROVE

‘FROM ENVY, HATRED, and malice,’ prays the Litany, ‘Good Lord deliver us.’ Black vices all of them; immorality of the most essential kind, since they proceed from the soul of the man, not from the body merely, like the ‘immorality’ of conventional — and corrupted — popular teaching. And of these three forms of wickedness, the strangest is envy, since it has no material justification, no rational incentive. You can put up a sort of defence for the vice of covetousness. Covetousness is practical, even though it be villainous. Here is a man with an ox and an ass, and I have neither. I covet the fellow’s cattle, and I will do my best to get them from him for my own use and benefit. At all events; covetousness has a material good in view, and can plead a defence in reason. But envy is a sort of transcendental form of vice; it is, like poetry and music, beyond reason; a corruption of the higher, not the lower, parts of a man.

To use a familiar idiom; you get nothing out of it. A few years ago, I was talking to that eminent man of letters, George Moore; and he was giving me a brief, rough sketch of a little play he had in his mind to write. The: period was the sixteenth century; and Bacon, with vast designs hidden deep in his mind, hovers about the Globe theatre in Southwark. Something about one of the actors arrests his attention, and he asks man’s name. ‘Shakespeare.’ The name attracts him; perhaps the contrast between the gallant and knightly picture in the word and the mean condition of the poor player who bears it amuses the mighty sage; and he determines that this illiterate actor, with barely enough of letters to learn his part, shall be the mask through which Bacon is to utter profound, immortal wisdom.

‘I like the notion,’ said my author. ‘It appeals to me very much. I think I shall do it.’

I wondered why he liked the notion. I asked him if he a lover of dons — the learned, professional class.

‘No,’ said he, ‘it’s not that. But the thought of pulling down the great figure of Shakespeare entertains me.’

There you have Envy. Note that, as I have pointed out, it is quite irrational. The envious man, if he succeed, gains nothing; since he only magnifies Bacon at Shakespeare’s expense. He has not even the horrid satisfaction of the Puritan, as he hacked and destroyed the carved work of the churches. The Puritan could boast that he had lessened the beauty of the world to an appreciable extent: but the Plays remain, whatever you say about their authorship. But there it is, and there you have the root of the portentous folly called Bacanianism. It has certainly brought about its own punishment, by beguiling its professors into such an abyss of imbecility as the world has never known before. It has gone far beyond its origins and primitive doctrine: that the plays accredited to Shakespeare were really written by Bacon. It has made Bacon the author of all the great literature of the age, both English and foreign. Montaigne’s Essays and Cervante’s Don Quixote are expressly claimed for him; and these claims are justified by arguments which would be quite incredible; if they had not been advanced. The occultists have taken a hand in this queerest of queer games. Bacon, they say, was the founder of the Rosicrucians and the Freemasons; and he was the secret director of the papermakers, who embodied the concealed wisdom of the persecuted Albigenses in their watermarks. It is all hideous balderdash. Its very existence is a sort of miracle of nonsense; it is all the result of the strange vice of envy.

And Shakespeare is by no means the only victim of this extraordinary passion. A distinguished author has written a book about the Brontes, and to my astonishment he revives in it the fable that Patrick Brontë deserves some of the credit generally given to Emily Brontë alone for her book, Wuthering Heights. Nothing that can be called evidence is adduced to prove this assertion. A great deal of old literary gossip and idle chatter has been told anew, but repetition cannot turn what the soldier said into evidence. Emily Brontë was reserved, averse from society, difficult of approach. This is true; what is not true is the deduction: therefore it is impossible that she should have written Wuthering Heights; with the further deductions that Patrick Brontë must have written it for her, and that Charlotte accepting the book as wholly and solely the work of her sister was a deliberate liar. It is all wild extravagance; as wild almost as the Bacon-Shakespeare delirium, and like it, due to the mysterious sin of envy: the desire to lower a high figure. It is strange; but there was an attack directed against this high and tragic figure of Emily Brontë from another point of view. Between forty and fifty years ago, somebody — I forget his name — wrote a book in which he asserted that the story of Wuthering Heights was, in fact, the story of the Brontë — or rather, Prunty — family in Ireland; that the Pruntys had been dispossessed and ruined by an interloping Heathcliff; and that Emily, writing her book, was merely retelling the family legend, as she had received it from her father. Proof? Not a vestige of proof, not a scintilla of evidence; no reason to suppose that there is a word of truth in the tale: and yet it proceeds from the same motive as the assignation of the authorship to Patrick. The process of thought is more obscure, far less offensive in its method, far less repugnant to ordinary common sense; but the trend of it is plain enough. If Emily Brontë were no creator, but merely a reteller of a family tale: then, evidently, she is by no means so great a person as we supposed. The end of the one attack is as the end of the other.

— By the way, and quite apart from the main argument, it is odd to note how men vary in their tests as to the possibility of one or another having written the books assigned to them. The Baconians say that a man who wrote such a vile and crabbed hand as Shakespeare could never have written the plays. But when Charles Kingsley received a letter from Dean Stanley one morning, he took it to the window, and said at the end of ten minutes: ‘I am sure this is a beautiful letter of dear Stanley’s, but, so far, the only word I can read looks like ‘damn’.’ And Andrew Lang had a special compositor assigned to him at the printing house; the only man who could read his copy. Shakespeare’s father was a general dealer: and so they say that Shakespeare could not have written the plays. Keats’s father was a groom, who married the widow of the man who kept the Livery Stable in Moorfields: but they do not say that Keats could not have written the poems. Shakespeare has been called a ‘yokel’ — as American would say, a ‘rube,’ a ‘hayseed’ — and so they argue that he could not have written the plays. But Hogg, the Ettrick shepherd, was, by his origin an illiterate boor and remained a boor all his days: yet nobody denies his authorship of the exquisite and mystic Kilmeny. I do not know why the standard applied to the one is not applied to the other. —

Well, envy, as we have seen, is a hideous vice, highly to be avoided — especially since it leads us to make such dreadful fools of ourselves. And yet, like the toad, ugly and venomous: envy has this use, that it is a witness to the existence of the secret dweller in man, that strange creature who is both above the beasts and below them. Envy, as I said, is a transcendental vice, a sin of the spirit, not of the body. Man has his habitation in the streets and in the market-place; but he dwells also in an ancient grove. He hears there the song of the nymphs: hic cantat et saltat aetemus nympharum chorus. But he hears also the evil mutter of the Ægipans.

THE OLD GRAMMAR SCHOOL

A CORESPONDENT IN America wrote to me a while ago, and asked me for my views on education. I gave them; and they were much to this effect, though I quote from memory. There is only one way of education, I told my friend, wrapping purple and dictatorial robes about me. You must go to school in an ancient town; rather, if it can be managed, in an ancient cathedral city. I will not say that cloisters are absolutely indispensable, but if they may be had, it will certainly be very much the better. A quiet green quadrangle, a close within a close, will do a great deal of good, and there should be grey walls about these green still places, and late fifteenth century stone mullioned windows looking out on them, and behind these walls and windows the abodes of Priest Vicars, or Vicars Choral, or Minor Canons. Gardens, where peaches ripen on old red walls, slope down to the river; the mystical mount of the cathedral rises above all; and somewhere in a nook near all these delights, is the old grammar school, built itself of old stone, founded five hundred years ago: though a thousand year old foundation, if you can get it, is better still. To such a school, thus girt about with beauty and peace, must you go when you are ten years old or thereabouts, and for the next eight or nine years you must devote yourself to Latin and Greek and to very little else. You must grind away at the dry grammars of both these tongues till the knowledge of them is mechanical, subconscious: like the technique of the violinist. Year after year, the process must go on, till you are ready to render the Stock Exchange Article into Latin Elegiacs, and the Lady's Page into Greek Sapphics with careless facility. Then you can go — and learn anything you like. You have been ground; you are sharp. If it be, unfortunately, your destiny to earn your living by talking or writing nonsense, you will be able to do so with a far rounder relish than anyone who has not gone through the classic mill.

Thus, in writing to my American correspondent, I was given the craft to keep back the truth, I acted the old tag: Simulo quod non, dissimuloque quod est. I pretended that the educational scheme I have indicated above was still at work; I dissembled the true state of things. The parent of today would have to fight the head master to secure for his son the true classic curriculum. I picked out for my own son the oldest foundation within my means. It was only early Elizabethan, I regret to say, but it had the repute of being a place which stuck to the ancient ways; and I was careful to enter the lad on the classical, not the modern, side. Before long, I found that he had given up Latin verse and was, instead, reading a text book called, From Metternich to Bismarck, and was also endeavouring to master the history of the political intrigues between the great Whig families of the eighteenth century. Indeed, this latter affair is one of the profoundest chapters in the huge, unedited History of Nothing] but growing boys are not ripe for such deep studies: it is, or should be, the peculiar use and privilege of their age to learn something; even if it be only: Dum, in the sense of until, is followed by the subjunctive. Indeed, I remember well a friend puzzling over a prescription that the doctor had given him for his neuralgia. Sumendus dum dolor absit ran the signature; and the patient translated cautiously: 'To be taken while the pain is absent.' I bade him recall his boyhood, before the shades of the prison house of the Higher Mathematics had closed about him. ''Dum in the sense of until,' I whispered low. "To be taken till the pain goes.'

'True, the chemist would, most likely, have set him right; but why trust to the chemist?

I allowed, then, my American to suppose that England was still devoted to the two great literatures of the ancient world. He wrote back enviously. 'I love your system of education,' he said, 'for its complete lack of democracy,' and added that in his opinion democracy was responsible 'for half of our troubles.' I daresay he was right enough there; but he was wrong in thinking that the old grammar schools were undemocratic. At all events, my old grammar school was very far from being exclusive. The boys were the sons of county parsons, of doctors, lawyers, squireens, farmers, and the town tradesmen. It was not that the grocer and the ironmonger wanted 'to turn their sons into gentlemen.' In two instances that I remember, the lads went cheerfully from Sophocles to the shop. The ironmonger, I recollect, was especially anxious that his boy should become an elegant Latin versifier. The grocer's son was somewhat to seek in this art, and I did his elegiacs for him; my fee being a pound of Roquefort cheese, which, I suspect, cost him very little. And now, I hope, both of them flourish in

Blackfriars Street and the High Way. They must long have passed the Chair, but I have no doubt that they follow His Worship the Mayor in all their bravery to the Cathedral on the great feast days of the year. The old grammar school was a good, sober, altogether English thing. It was not high minded, it had no proud looks, nor windy pretensions. It undertook to teach Latin and Greek thoroughly. It did so; and it is gone.

RIDDLES AND SYMBOLS

HOW ARE WE to explain the enormous attraction that a puzzle, a riddle of any kind has for nine-tenths of humanity?

To take an example, the thing called Crosswords. It became a popular diversion, I suppose, ten or twelve years ago. I noted its arrival, I remember thinking that it might last a year or perhaps two, and then be forgotten. So far as I can see, Crosswords are more popular than ever. And they are not merely the delight of the simple; there are Crosswords for the learned, enigmas that require deep and curious reading for their solution, towards which no little hand-books of allusion nor easy dictionaries will avail. For all I know Crosswords will outlast Democracy. And there I set a little Puzzle of my own: is the period implied long or short?

At all events, and whatever happens, and even presuming the extinction of those odd, chessboard diagrams: we may be sure that some successor will be found; mankind will still continue to delight in enigmas of one kind or another.

But why? Because, as I said before, worry is such an essential part of life that if we have no actual worries we must go forth and invent them? That may be part of the explanation, but it is too general; we want something more specific if we are to elucidate this all but universal passion for the riddle. And, perhaps, the answer is that we love enigmas because we live in an enigma; and riddles may be as necessary to our spiritual, or mental, health as oxygen is to our bodily. Indeed; lacking oxygen, we perish; and it may be that man deprived of puzzles, would also perish, would cease at all events to be man as we know him. There is a well known text about seeing in a glass darkly; the Latin version is per speculum in aenigmate — in a glass in a riddle. We see, not the real things, but the symbols of them; and there is this deduction, which, I think, is permissible: the symbols may be utterly unlike the realities. To take a very familiar and easy example: we say that an anchor is a symbol of hope. Very simple, a little too simple, it may be, to be impressive. As an anchor preserves the ship in the storm of deep waters, so hope preserves man in the tempest of his life. But how little resemblance there is between this pronged and barbed mass of iron, and the emotion, the resolution of the soul that we call hope. And how futile would be the work of the surgeon who should make an autopsy on the body of a notoriously hopeful man, a man of whom they said, ‘he always kept hope in his heart,’ thinking that he might discover a small iron anchor imbedded in that muscular organ. I wish this were an extravagant instance; since I do not like to believe that our age is as stupid as many hold it to be. But it is by no means extravagant. In quite recent years, an eminent man of science, demonstrating in an easy and jocular manner the non-existence of angels, showed that if the angels’ wings were to have any power of propulsion, the angels’ breast bones must project immensely; at least eighteen inches from the main structure of the body, if I remember rightly. In other words, he proved that anchors cannot be part of the structure of the human heart, and, therefore, that there is no such thing as hope.

The confusion of the personage who picked the angels’ wings to pieces is, of course, a confusion over a very simple symbolism, a confusion such as one would look for rather amongst literal and unsophisticated savages than amongst civilised men. But there may be symbols more obscure than the pictured intimations of security and swiftness; chiefly obscure perhaps, because they are not generally recognised as symbols at all. Take for example the science of arithmetic, a steadfast thing, so we would all declare, feeling that, though often tiresome and inconvenient, it is more surely founded in hard fact than are the bases of the everlasting hills. But consider this old, old riddle of the Greek philosopher, whose name, I regret to say, I have long since forgotten.

You are to imagine a race; a speed contest. And, oddly enough, the two runners are, Achilles, the swiftest of men; and the Tortoise, the slowest of the beasts. Let us say, if you please, that Achilles runs a hundred times faster than the Tortoise — you may say, if you like, a thousand times; but the puzzle is not affected, and a multitude of noughts do not decorate the page. Very fairly, the swift-footed hero is penalised or handicapped: Achilles stands poised at scratch, while the Tortoise has a start of a hundred yards. They are off: and you expect to see Achilles flash past the tardy reptile almost with the speed of light.

But it is not so. Let the difference between the speeds of the competitors be remembered: it is the ratio of 100 to 1. Therefore; when Achilles has run the hundred yards that separate him from the Tortoise; that beast has run a yard. Achilles spurns that yard behind him: but the Tortoise has still the advantage, though it be but the hundredth part of a yard. Achilles may well think that the race is over; but he is mistaken. The Tortoise is still in front. Not by a great deal; only by the thousandth of a yard; but it will serve. And so into the waste of infinity the race goes on. The space that separates the two eternally grows less and less, but cannot be annihilated: the Tortoise is in advance for ever.

And this shocking enigma has weighed upon the world for two thousand four hundred years or more. Many solutions have been attempted, but, so far I know, none has been successful. One of the most futile is one of the oldest: solvitur ambulando: try it and see what happens; get your quick runner and your tortoise, see the man go past the reptile in a flash, and think no more about it. But this will never do. As De Quincey points out; the essence of the puzzle is in the opposition between theory and practice. Of course we know that in fact Achilles would be vanishing in the distance, while the Tortoise was still crawling painfully across his first foot of space; but arithmetic opposes her Everlasting No; to this monstrous goal does our belief in the science of two and two make four lead us.

I believe that the philosophic inventor of the riddle considered it as an argument against the possibility of motion. It might equally be taken as an argument against the validity of reason. Or, again, it might be held to annul and make void the whole art of arithmetic with all its laws.

But I believe the sane conclusion to be that arithmetic is a symbol, just as the points, lines, plane surfaces of geometry are symbols. These things, as we know them, are not realities. We can draw a mark on the paper, and say that it is a line. It is not a line; for a line, by definition, is length without breadth; and no mortal hand can form that, nor any mortal eye behold it. But the mark on the paper is a symbol of a line, and sufficiently serves our limited ends and purposes.

There is, doubtless, a real geometry and a real arithmetic; but they are not to be discerned in the dim glass of humanity. They belong to another order of being; to the world of the clear vision.

THE HOLY GRAIL

'IF WE ARE to enjoy life as it should be enjoyed,' I said to the company sitting under the sixteenth century beams of the King's Arms Inn, 'we must have mystery; some sort of enigma, or puzzle, or problem to solve. To each man, his mystery according to his measure: a Crossword Puzzle — or the legend of the Holy Grail.'

It is the truth, though nobody will believe it, though many have fought with the mysteries and with the mystery of life itself as if these were wild beasts at Ephesus. One of these fights is called the Reformation; and from the seeds sown on that sad battlefield grew popular Protestantism, and Vegetarianism, and Teetotalism, falsely called Temperance: all the grievous and weary table of taboos which make life — a trying business at the best of times — a little more trying, a little more hard to bear than it need be.

Then there was another rising against the mysteries: the battle against the mystery of the Lord's Anointed. I have seen the ceremony, and heard the words of the rite— 'Be thou anointed on the breast with holy oil' — which make a man into a King. Well; this mystery was found to be intolerable long ago; and thus came Democracy — which is now beginning to be found out in all sorts of quarters, some of them unexpected enough. The rule of Stalin is not exactly democratic. 'We don't want to hear about majorities; we are in a minority, and we mean to get what we want,' says An Poblacht, the organ of the Irish Republicans, Professor Unamuno was, perhaps, the most eminent Republican in Spain: before the Republic. A few months ago, he said, 'This government — the government of the Spanish Republic — is worse than the Inquisition.'

But all this by the way; to be considered as an argument in favour of the mysteries in general, and as an introduction to one of the greatest of literary mysteries; the origin of the legend of the Holy Grail. Here is a puzzle which is complete in every respect; since it is hardly possible to utter three words on the subject without qualifying them directly afterwards.

For example: the Grail romances were written between 1170 and 1220. What did the word, Grail, mean to the readers of these romances? Well, it meant to them a very big dish, of a certain depth. It was the dish on which the show piece of the medieval banquet was set: the Boar's Head, or the Peacock. One must think of something very like the dish set before Papa at the midday Sunday dinner of the early and middle Victorians. There was Papa, and Mamma, and the eight children. There was Aunt Anne, and Cousin Ottery, and her two little boys. There was the Governess. There was the Curate. And for this company and for the four or five servants, a big sirloin was needed, and a big dish to hold it and its accompanying gravy. And just such a dish, of precious metal, certainly, came into the mind of the twelfth century reader of the romances of the Grail.

But, you will say, this is, from every point of view, intolerable. The Grail is a Chalice. Exactly. Robert de Borron, one of the earliest writers on the subject, says so. He says that the Grail was the bowl in which Joseph of Arimathæa gathered the Blood of the Lord, as he laid His Body in the tomb. But he also says that the tomb itself was an image of the Chalice, while the stone covering the tomb was a figure of the Paten. And then he proceeds to speak of the Chalice as if it were the Paten; as if it held the Bread and not the Wine. It will be said that this is a pack of inextricable confusion. Indeed it is nothing else; and here, be it remembered, we are dealing with the work of one writer. Another of the early romances, the Grand Saint Graal, describes the Grail as the Paschal Dish of the Passover, the dish that held the Paschal Lamb; and this identification, it may be noted, is consonant with the meaning commonly assigned to the word in the twelfth century, but entirely dissonant from the Chalice conception.

We vacillate, then, between the contradictory images of Chalice, Dish, and Sepulchre; but we are by no means at the end of our perplexities. In the Parzival of Wolfram von Eschenbach (written before 1210) the Grail is neither Tomb, Chalice, nor Dish. It is a Stone, on which a Dove from Heaven lays a Consecrated Host once a year, on Good Friday. This Stone is named Lapis Exilis, which I believe to be Lapis ex coelis, the Stone from Heaven. And its ordinary office is to supply the Knights who guard it with a perpetual feast of meat and drink; preserving them also in eternal youth. It is not difficult to understand how a century or so later the word Grail meant in Germany a revel, a debauch. Finally, it should be said that the late Dr

Skeat, of Cambridge, the philological expert, derived the word Grail from a conjectured Low Latin word, cratella, a diminutive of crater. This would mean, a small bowl.

And so, at the very beginning of the study of the subject; rather, before we begin to study the subject, we are involved in a maze of confusion and perplexity, of irreconcilable definitions of the Vessel about which the Romances revolve.

And how to account for this very extraordinary state of things? Strictly speaking; there is no true explanation. That is, we cannot show that Chalice, Sepulchre, Dish, and Stone were really the same thing; that there is nothing irreconcilable between the various definitions of the sacred object. They are irreconcilable; just as Shakespeare's account of the colloquy between Hamlet and the Ghost is irreconcilable with Hamlet's later definition of the grave as that bourne from which no traveller returns. There is a dissonance here which cannot be resolved; but we may guess how it happened. Shakespeare was refurbishing the old play of Hamlet, and introduced his own disbelief in ghosts, without noticing, or, perhaps, without caring that the Ghost remained the hinge on which the drama turned. So, with this Grail puzzle: the solution of the dissonances, or, rather, the explanation of the way in which they came about has its analogies with the solving of the Shakespearean difficulty. We have not one man rewriting an old play: but we have several men working on several ancient legends and adding to the old stories new matter of their own.

Some years ago, Professor Saintsbury, the man who had read everything, and was reputed to be the most learned literary student in the world, was confronted by the Grail riddle. In spite of his all but universal knowledge of literature, he gave it up. He could find no trace of the legend in the first half of the twelfth century. Geoffrey of Monmouth, the glorifier — though not as some hold, the inventor — of King Arthur, knows nothing of the Grail. The Mabinogion, embodying some very old Welsh legends, has not a hint of it. And then, in a few years, as Professor Saintsbury expresses it, 'the heather is on fire.' One Grail romance follows another. The Professor leaves the riddle where he found it.

And I propose almost to follow his example: excepting for a hint or two to be taken or left, as the reader pleases. And, in the first place: no quester, however curious in his research, will find any trace of what may be called the Chalice Motive in pre-Grail literature. The Holy Cup, with its most sacred Content, was an invention of the twelfth century; not a Celtic legend of remote antiquity. And note here that the Parzival, the early thirteenth century version, written by the German, Wolfram von Eschenbach, knows nothing of Chalice or of the Bowl. The Grail of the Parzifal is a Stone.

But, though we shall find no mention of Chalice or Bowl containing the Precious Blood of Christ; we may find in obscure places, the first elements of the conception, the root from which it grew. Professor Saintsbury was an omnivorous reader; but, probably enough, if he so much as heard of the Legend which William of Malmesbury wrote about the year 1130 for Glastonbury Abbey, he would have classed it, unseen, as one of those books which are no books. But, in this Legend, written, no doubt, from information imparted by the Glastonbury monks, it is stated that somewhere in the Abbey precincts there is buried the body of St Joseph of Arimathæa, and, with the body of the Saint, two vials containing the Precious Blood. And here we have the origin of the Chalice Motive.

Again we must search in strange quarters, remote from literature, as it is ordinarily understood. A Welsh bishop of StDavid’s, who called himself something like Rhygyferch, but who was known in Latin as Ricemarchus, wrote the Legend of St David, somewhere towards the end of the eleventh century, say, about 1090. He speaks of an altar — a portable altar is, no doubt, intended — given to St David by his consecrator, the Patriarch of Jerusalem. In this altar, the Body of the Lord had been laid. It was called the Mystic Altar, and the Gift from Heaven. Since the Saint’s death it had not been seen by mortal eye. It remained hidden, covered with skins.

In such dark places, then, he who would know the origins of the Grail Romances must make his search. He will find, or so I believe, hints of the decay and ruin of a great Church, which once pushed its outposts to the very gates of Rome, and spoke with the Pope on equal terms; of its Liturgy, (‘the Grail Mass’), proscribed; of its mystic altars hidden away from profane eyes and profane hands.

If he be more fortunate: than I he may also discover how the pagan tale — a bit of folklore — of a magical feeding vessel was joined to the Christian and sacramental legend of the vanished, or almost vanished, Celtic Church: to the infinite confusion of the Grail romances and their readers.

And, in any case, the important thing to do is to get The Holy Grail: Its Legends and Symbolism, by A. E. Waite. It embodies the research of the last thirty years, and tells the whole tale, so far as it can be told, from beginning to end.

THE BITTER IMPATIENCE

IT IS NEARLY thirty years ago — to be exact, twenty-eight years ago — since I first saw Richard Middleton. We met at the New Bohemians; a club which flourished in its queer way from about 1900 to 1914. The War ended it. Some of the old members met again in company about ten years ago; but things had changed and we with them. We could neither laugh nor quarrel in the old way: it was all over.

The New Bohemians was a club in a pub, and came therefore of a very old and honourable ancestry, deriving from Johnsonian, nay, from Shakespearean origins. When I joined in 1906, it held its weekly meetings at the Prince’s Head in Buckingham Street; a narrow, undistinguished street that goes down from the Strand, not far from Charing Cross, to the river. Every Thursday evening, if I remember, a room on the first floor of the Prince’s Head was at our disposition. Here was a long table with chairs about it, and at one end members who came early, between six and seven of the evening, would find a white cloth laid, with knives and forks. Perhaps one, or two, or three would avail themselves of these facilities, and have a chop, boiled potatoes, and a pint tankard of bitter beer at a cost of eighteenpence or thereabouts. Others would drop in by degrees, and join in the beer and conversation. By half past seven or eight, a dozen men might be in the room. The cloth was drawn, a chairman was elected, and the set order of the night began.

In the first place, the waitress set before the chairman an old cigar-box with a slit in the lid. The chairman slipped a coin or coins through the slit, and passed the box round, the way of the sun. Everybody put in a coin or coins. Then, each man gave his orders: ‘half tankard of bitter,’

‘Scotch,’

‘bottle of Bass.’ The first named drink cost twopence, the other two, threepence each. The waitress brought them on a tray, the chairman opened the cigar-box and paid her; and somebody got up and said: ‘Mr Chairman, I beg to propose a motion that Toryism (or Liberalism) is the curse of the country,' or, 'that Paradise Lost is unreadable,' or 'that the English Church is an illogical compromise,' or 'that a great deal of Tennyson is negligible,' or that Swinburne is entirely wanting in true passion.' It might be anything; but whatever it was, we went at it hammer and tongs, till the tankards grew dry, and it was time to pass about the box again, and order another round of drinks.

But note that contrivance of the cigar-box with the slit in the lid. We were all sorts of people, following all manner of crafts. There was an admirable little fellow, with a taste for the play, who was a journeyman tailor, and used to set our table in a roar with stories of the tailor's shop and the Polish Jew master; stories of the Potash and Perlmutter order. There was an Admiralty official, a steady, stout good humoured fellow. There was a city solicitor, who had learned Latin on his daily journeys in the train. There were three or four journalists. There was an officer of the Customs, a newspaper cartoonist, a novelist or two, a musician, an actor, a writer of 'lyrics' for musical shows, and a few whose occupation remained a secret. Not one of us had money in any solid sense, but some had (sometimes) a little more than others. Hence the box with the slit; each man gave what he could; and thus no one member knew what the other gave.

Such was the society in which I found Richard Middleton; and I am bound to say that I do not think he was very happy in it. At that time, he was a clerk in some Insurance Office; but the desire of poetry already consumed him; and I believe that he found everything that was not poetry irrelevant and unpleasant. He was, I suppose, one of the youngest members. It is said that youth is a serious time. It is not so always; there are (or were) plenty of young men as careless and lighthearted as you please; but it is certainly true that when youth is sad, it is sad indeed, and Middleton saw a very gloomy world. Our fooleries irritated him, he was apt to take offence at harmless nonsense, and when he heard two members gravely discussing the comparative merits of the Sarum and Roman Rites, he felt that time was being scandalously wasted. Now and again, when 'Scotch,' and 'Bass' and 'Bitter' had gone their cheerful rounds for three or four lively hours, and it had been fully determined that La Belle Dame Sans Mercy was the greatest lyric in the world, quarrels, three parts burlesque, might break out with great (apparent) asperity, and members would be addressing each other as

‘Sir,’ in the heavy Johnsonian manner. We knew it was all nonsense, but Middleton took it seriously, and, as it seemed to me, enjoyed our ill temper much more than our good humour. There was an affinity between his spirit and the bitterness of things. A laugh would vex him, or at least give him very slight pleasure; but there was a sense in which he enjoyed a snarl. There are many good people who are, quite unconsciously, most at their ease and in their element when trouble seems brewing.

I have thought at times how much more fortunate Middleton and these other young fellows were than I in the days when youth and the desire of letters and poverty were upon me; these three things that are hard to bear when they come as companions. There was no jolly table at the Prince’s Head spread for me in those far off ‘eighties, there were no tankards filled, no friends to wrangle with and laugh with. I was allotted the solitary cell, and I have sometimes thought I was hardly treated. But perhaps not. Perhaps the bitter bread is best eaten alone, I incline to think so at the last from the example of Middleton. Here was a man of an intensely melancholy constitution, with a strong and just belief that he had the matter of poetry within him, with a burning impatience for success and acknowledgement; here was a man, you would have said, for whom the New Bohemians should have been the best medicine in the world; distracting him from his sad contemplations, from those sudores et angores et dolores which are so often the portion of lettered men. The cure for these dismal maladies is, one would think, just the jollity and nonsense and good fellowship and argument to be taken in a tankard of beer that our old Club proffered. Avalez, ce sont des herbes, the New Bohemians cried cheerfully; but on Middleton this good dose had no effect. It was to him ineffective gall and bitterness, like the rest of life; and he had not the patience to wait for the transmutation of the cup.

LOST BOOKS

READING DICKENS… IT is strange to see, emerging from the novels he wrote, like fumes from a cauldron, the vague cloudy emanations of the novels he never achieved.

That is a quotation from Miss Sylvia Townsend Warner’s introduction to The Week End Dickens, a book that every good Dickens man must buy very quickly. For its title tells its purpose. It is not at all meant for that feeble and unworthy race who are content to study their authors in books of ‘selections’ and ‘choice passages’ and ‘wit and wisdoms.’ It is by no means for your tit-bits scholar. On the contrary: it is intended for the man who knows his Dickens backwards; for deep students who can reel off the plot of No Thoroughfare and indicate the scheme of the Mudfog papers.

The case is thus. The good lover of Dickens now and then leaves his home and his books; perhaps for week ends, as Miss Warner suggests, perhaps for waste places. He cannot take with him the whole seventeen volumes. He cannot exist without Dickens. The position is desperate; but The week End Dickens solves the problem. It goes into a small pocket; and all the essences of Dickens are contained in it.

But that by the way. Our affair is with that sentence in the Introduction concerning those tales that Dickens never wrote. I believe that the point is well taken. Miss Warner particularises. Dickens had floating in his consciousness— ‘mind’ were too precise — a dim notion of a novel about the Marshes. This became Great Expectations. And then, again, there was the great London novel:

… dark with fog, daubed with the rich colours of cheerful taverns, or red blinds screening warm parlours; a London of tangled alleys, lost graveyards, solemn deserted wharves at night, with the mysterious river running through it.

That novel, we may say, is dispersed through the volumes. A great deal of it is contained in Pickwick. Look in The Old Curiosity Shop for the passages describing the end of Quilp: that is a tremendous chapter of the London novel. The plot of Little Dorrit is most tortuous, most futile; and Clennam is almost as uninteresting as the people we meet every day. But the Marshalsea chapters: there is a splendid fragment of the great work that was not to be; and the bit about Dockhead in Oliver Twist — the scene of Bill Sikes's taking off — there is a purple passage from the lost opus. But one has to read all about little Oliver, not a very entertaining child, to get at it. And, worse still, there is Rose Maylie and her excellent clergyman: they are not to be avoided on the road that leads to Dockhead. And so I am always inclined to declare that Pickwick remains the best of all Dickens's books. There are better things in David Copperfield than anything in Pickwick. Mr Pecksniff and Mrs Gamp in Martin Chuzzlewit are supreme: so is Quilp in The Old Curiosity Shop. But think of that shocking bounder Steerforth, of the appalling Agnes; of young Martin and Mary; of Little Nell and her Grandfather. There are no such terrors to avoid in Pickwick. When you have once skipped the infamous first chapter, you are safe.

It is a curious thing, but it is true, that some of the greatest writers have had the severest struggles in finding the just medium in which to express that which is within them. Sir Walter Scott is a notable example of this paradox; and he succeeded, as perhaps Dickens succeeded, in spite of himself. I have no doubt Sir Walter intended with all his heart to write a Legend of Montrose, and did his very best to write a Legend of Montrose. What he did was to write a Legend of Dugald Dalgetty; and we are thankful for his splendid error. Sometimes, the two elements meet. A very striking instance of this is given by Leslie Stephen. Bailie Nicol Jarvie, of Glasgow, has been taken prisoner by Rob Roy's wife, and proceeds to plead kinship.

'I dinna ken,' said the undaunted Bailie, 'if the kindred has ever been weel redd out to you yet, cousin — but it's kenned, and can be proved. My mother, Elspeth Macfarlane (otherwise Macgregor), was the wife of my father, Denison Nicol Jarvie (peace be with them baith), and Elspeth was the daughter of Farlane Macfarlane (or Macgregor) at the shielding of Lock Sloy. Now this Farlane Macfarlane (or Macgregor), as his surviving daughter, Maggie Macfarlane, wha married Duncan Macnab, of

Stuckavrallachan, can testify, stood as near to your gudeman, Robin Macgregor, as in the fourth degree of kindred, fur —

The virago lopped the genealogical tree by demanding haughtily if a stream of rushing water acknowledged any relation with the portion withdrawn from it for the mean domestic uses of those who dwelt on its banks.

But it will be noted, Scott does not really tell us what Helen Macgregor said. He paraphrases her remarks, gives us a polite précis of her speech. I am inclined to think that he knew quite well the actual words that the lady uttered; and that he found them a great deal too coarse for anything but a vague and stilted indication of their content. Still; it is often true that Scott falls into false heroics, into melodramatic bombast. The reason may be not that he was incapable of the true heroic, but rather that the weight of his time and world made the expression of it impossible. There was an heroic Scott. This man was a fervent Jacobite, a devout Catholic, and a firm believer in occult mysteries. And what would have happened to him, if he had spoken out and uttered himself in the Edinburgh of 1820-30, when Jeffrey edited the Edinburgh Review? It must be noted that Scott was no hypocrite; rather, his intellect conformed to the general thought of his age. As a rational being he submitted himself to the judgements of his contemporaries. They said that the rule of the Stuarts was bad and tyrannical, and had been well ended. It must be so, said Scott, everybody says it is so. But: at the same time, he was a good deal relieved by the death of the Cardinal of York, the legitimate Henry IX of Great Britain and Ireland. Henceforth Scott felt that he could give without any reserves or secret hesitations his loyal allegiance to King George III. So with the occult arts: they were absurd superstitions, relics the dark ages, to hint a belief in such things was to put oneself out of the court of intelligent and educated men. And, indeed, Guy Mannering cannot laugh too much at the astrology which he has picked up at Oxford, the last home and retreat of outworn faiths. But it will be noted that every one of his predictions is fulfilled to the letter. And Scott was accustomed to speak in terms of extreme severity of the Roman Catholic religion: and died murmuring the old Latin hymns. He was, in fact, a man divided against himself so far as these matters were concerned: it is no wonder that he was incapable of clear utterance when heroic speech was needed. His heart was fixed on the one side; his reason conformed to the common judgement of his day. And so, the books that he might have written are lost for ever.

TRUE TO LIFE

SO THEY ARE finding out, after all these years, that Dickens was a considerable man. I am amused. I knew that in 1873 or thereabouts, when I first opened the pages that I shall never close. But, through most of my working years, I have always been conscious of an undertone of contempt — of kindly contempt — when Charles Dickens and his books were mentioned. It was funny; you could hardly deny that. But Punch and Judy was funny, or the children thought so. And you would scarcely compare Punch and Judy with serious drama. I did, by the way. I said that Punch and Judy would outlast Judah, a very serious drama, by Henry Arthur Jones. And I believe that I was not far out in my prophecy. Still, that was the state of things so far as Dickens was concerned. People were indulgent. They said: ‘Excellent reading for boys’ — and changed the subject to Stendhal and the Chartreuse de Parme. As if you were to change the subject from Rembrandt’s ‘Mill’ to the anatomical drawing of a louse’s stomach!

Well; I gather that all this nonsense is over, or getting over. People acknowledged to be intellectual are writing books about Dickens. It has been pointed out that Proust was an earnest and indefatigable student of Dickens, that Proust discovered a deep and profound symbolism in Dickens. And so — as I gather — there is no more to be said. Dickens is a great man.

Am I delighted? Not vastly, I fear. I never am so much pleased as I ought to be on these occasions. For example; I know a good dinner when I have it. A little soup, hot, and clear, and strong: a roast fowl with a lettuce or endive salad: a dish of spinach done with cream, or green peas cooked, not in water, but in butter: a bit of Roquefort and a pear, or a few grapes: there, I say, is a good dinner; and when it is despatched, both body and mind cry gratefully, Amen. And I do not think that I am in the least gratified when Medicinæ Doctor, that well known scientific authority, comes along and begins to babble about proteids and carbohydrates and vitamins, and more especially about vitamins: and tells me at last that I have died scientifically, even to the last fraction of an ounce: ‘a perfectly balanced diet.’ No; I am certainly not well pleased; not a bit of it. For the fact is; that in my heart, I don’t believe Medicinæ Doctor knows what he’s talking about; I have a suspicion that the chatter concerning vitamins is humbug. And, furthermore, I hold a secret doctrine to the effect that, in the last resort, all science is a lie.

A lie, that is, as; a photograph is a lie; as a photograph of a landscape is a lie compared with the picture of it that Turner painted. Science deals in information; if you would have the truth you must go to the arts. For science is wholly of this world, but the arts communicate in their mysterious manner the secrets of that other world which lies beyond the vision of most of us. It is, doubtless, for that reason that people are willing to give enormous sums of money for the great masterpieces of painting. They want to see the truth, and that can only be seen through the eyes of the painter. Note well; there is no question of likeness. Clearly, it is beyond our power to ascertain whether Romney’s sitters were like the portraits that he painted of them. So far as I know, no possessor of a great landscape has troubled himself to visit the scene depicted with the purpose of verifying the painter’s accuracy. For, you cannot have a blueprint of the light that never was on land or sea. Though, by the way, the poet must have meant ‘the light that ever is on land and sea’ — if we have but the gift of vision to discern it.

Art, I say, is not chiefly concerned with likeness. And so, after certain devious wanderings, we are back again with Dickens. For, one of the main accusations laid against him by the foolish is just this: that his characters are not like anybody. That is; you, and I, and Tother, and even to Totherest, are ready to affirm and declare that we have never even been willing to say: ‘Though that bald man calls himself Mortimer and wears spectacles; yet we know him to be the veritable Wilkins Micawber.’ Very good; let it be so. And what about it? Where is the law providing that all characters in fiction must be like somebody that we have met? Who laid this law down? I know nothing of either law or legislator; nay, I am firmly convinced that they do not exist; otherwise, that the criticism of Dickens, declaring that his characters are not ‘lifelike,’ is nonsense. After all; the greatest romance in the world is Don Quixote and no man ever met or ever will meet anybody like Don Quixote. Of course we may say of one man that he is quixotic, just as we may say of another man that he is a perfect Micawber in his habit of waiting for something to turn up. But note the significance of that. By speaking in such a way, we clearly recognize the truth that it is the absurd heroes of romance who are real. They are the archetypes dwelling in the ineffable heaven of the imagination; we are their more or less feeble and confused copies. We see a man with certain qualities, and so we refer him to his archetype, Don Quixote or Mr Micawber. It seems fantastic; but I believe that if these great beings had the power of utterance as well as of existence, it is they who would say of the rest of us: ‘They don’t seem very life-like.’ Indeed, I think we must feel, all of us, how dim and shadowy we are compared with these immortals; how indistinct and vague is the figure that we make even in our own eyes. Many a man sets out in the morning glowing with high Quixotic resolutions, and slinks back at night a sunken, sorry Sancho Panza.

True to life? These figures of Cervantes, Dickens, of the great romancers are of the very heart of life, of the real life which art reveals to us.

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THE SECRET OF THE SANGRAAL

INTRODUCTION

THE FOLLOWING ESSAYS on the matter of the Holy Graal were written in 1907. On its being proposed that they should be reprinted, I had thoughts of rewriting them; but I have changed my mind. In the first place, I am a bad hand at the new handling of old work; if I try to do so I find that the article, or the story, or whatever it may be, has, as it were, set; and is not to be made again into the likeness of anything recognisable. Secondly, I am not aware that any new light has been shed upon the mystery of the Sangraal. I have read Miss Jessie L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance,* and have admired both its learning and its ingenuity. But Miss Weston has failed to convince me that the Graal Legend rests on the two bases of a fertility cultus and of a secret Gnostic sect which persisted in Wales up to the Conquest. As to the Gnostic sect; that, I think, is clearly a dream and a fable; there is no evidence of anything of the kind; and the hint given by Miss Weston that she has secret information from initiates is almost conclusive — to those who know anything about occultists. It is a melancholy thing: but a Dolorous Enchantment is laid upon these unfortunate persons, and the effect of this Enchantment is that they are seldom able to speak the truth.

The Fertility motive is not quite so simple. Let us grant, if you will, that the question of fertility, which is the question of life, both for ourselves and for our cabbages, is behind everything. If we go far back enough, it is clear that we can do nothing in this world if we are so unlucky as to be dead; and this applies equally to the phallic hypothesis of the origin of everything, which can be worked in very well with the fertility hypothesis. Sometimes there seems a conflict between the two, and on this point see Miss Harrison's treatment of the affair of the Maypole. Formerly — even as early as the unscientific age of Prynne the Puritan — the maypole was nothing more or less than a phallus, a gross symbol of the reproductive forces of nature. But Miss Harrison denies this. The maypole, she declares, was not an imitation phallus, but an imitation tree; it was originally hung with green boughs, and its signification was an appeal to the real trees in the wood to put out their leaves once more. Just as the sailor imitates the wind that he desires by whistling for it, so, says Miss Harrison, did the countrymen imitate the trees in the wood by making a mock tree, called a Maypole.

Now, supposing we choose to believe the one theory of the maypole or the other; or even both at once: what light shall we gain as to the actual emotions and intent of the seventeenth or sixteenth century people who danced about the maypole? I venture to say, none whatever. They were not moved at all by either consideration. They were not invoking the reproductive forces of nature by rearing up the image of the phallus. They were not addressing any invocation to the woods or to anything else. They were being jolly, or merry, at a certain time of the year, in a traditional manner. For all I know, our learned people may decide that the game of marbles was originally a reminder to the spheres to keep on rolling. If I am told so, I shall not deny the doctrine, but I shall maintain that the boys who handle their alley tors and commoneys on London pavements know nothing of it. Granted this hypothetical origin of marbles; it has nothing whatever to do with the game of the twentieth century as played by Bob and Bill in Southwark or Hornsey. So, dancing may have been in the first place an imitation of anything you like, an invocation of whatever you please, animal, vegetable, or mineral. But such considerations are wholly out of account if we are writing on the minuet or the gavotte; the fox-trot or the jazz. To put the same thing in a different way; if I call a friend — behind his back, of course — an imbecile, I am not thinking of a weak, old man tottering with a stick, but very likely, of a strong young man swaggering without one.

Or, to put the same thing in a different way again: the stimulation of fertility, animal or vegetable, has nothing in the world to do with the Graal romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and its connection, if any, with the legends from which the romances sprang is of the same nature as that which exists between ‘imbecile’ and ‘in baculo.’

In a word, I have read nothing in the books of the Fertility people which inclines me to modify or retract anything which I wrote on the Graal seventeen years ago.

And there is one last reason, a slight one, which has induced me to leave these notes as I find them. They open with a topical allusion to a tale which was current in 1907. I think it might be called the first of the foolish tales of Glastonbury. There have been many since, but in those days Brother Johannes had not forgotten his mother English and learned the speech of Wardour Street. The silly tale in question was to the effect that the Holy Graal had been found in a well or stream near Glastonbury, and in the first of these articles following I tell the story as it appeared in a newspaper. As will be seen, the newspaper, acting no doubt on information received, said that a British Museum expert had pronounced in favour of the antiquity of the supposed sacred vessel. I do not know whether this were the case, but I do know that soon afterwards an undoubted authority — I think the President of the Society of Antiquaries — declared that the supposed Graal was a modern forgery.

But the whole story was an odd one, indeed. It is a grief to me that I have forgotten many of the details, but in broad outline it was something like this. A gentleman is travelling in Southern France, and in the window of a curiosity shop he sees an object which attracts him strangely. It is a saucer-shaped vessel of blue glass, shot with silver. He goes into the shop, buys the object, and when he is back in England, shows it to his father, who is at once deeply interested and agitated. ‘This is most important,’ he is supposed to have said. ‘During my lifetime I must have charge of it, but when I die, it will come to you.’ I am not sure whether the tale represented the older man as adding: ‘This is the Holy Graal,’ or merely: ‘This is exactly what I conceive the Holy Graal to have been.’

Well, in due course of time the Blue Saucer descended from father to son. I do not know how long it had been in his possession before a voice or a vision or the sense of the fitness of things bade him place the vessel in a well or stream of Glastonbury. And I have forgotten, if I ever knew, how long it lay in the said waters, before voices or dreams or visions came to two young ladies of Bristol city and told them all about it. At all events they retrieved the object, and took it back with them to Bristol. It went on journeys then; it inhabited, for a while, a safe in a city office. And then, it would appear, it made a stay in the library of some great London house. Dom Adrian Gasquet was making some researches in this library at the time and was guided by the saucer, dropped, it seemed, somewhat unceremoniously behind the books on one of the shelves, to a volume, before unheard of, which solved all the difficulties of the thousand years dispute between the Eastern and Western churches. This fact I learnt from a document drawn up by a distinguished occultist; the very initiate who, a few years later, told a friend that the Germans who fell during the retreat from Mons were found to be full of arrows — shot, I suppose, by my own faithful Bowmen.

Somehow or other the ‘Graal’ found its way back to Bristol, where it was housed in a befitting shrine. Here it reconsidered matters in the light of modern advanced thought. It became liberal in its views and, naturally, strictly undenominational. Its standpoint approximated, so far as I can remember, to that of Brother Johannes, whom I have mentioned already, and it gave oracles on many topics, not being limited by the bounds of a narrow ecclesiasticism. After all, they didn’t know everything down in Caerleon or Camelot — or Judee. I heard of one of these oracles, from a friend of mine, who was then a teacher of singing. There was a concert at Bristol, and my friend was in the artist’s room with a lady, a pupil of his. He heard from the platform the strains of a violin playing a very indifferent modern composition.

‘Why on earth do they play that rubbish?’ he asked, with some appearance of contempt.

‘Oh, didn’t you know?’ replied the lady, shocked and awed also. ‘That piece has been ordered to be played by the Holy Graal.’

It must be fifteen years since I heard this history, and that was the last news that came to me of the Graal of Glastonbury and Bristol. Possibly it no longer manifests so openly; possibly it has been taken away and hidden in some secret place — say, in another curiosity shop. But I think the story was worth preserving. I have said elsewhere that I am quite sure that an invitation to witness the ‘Feeding of the Dragons: Morning Dress’ at Hampton Court would be pretty widely accepted.

There are two points which I should like to emphasise. It has been said by the upholders of the ‘pagan’ theory of the Graal legend that certain possessions and pageants in some of the romances can have no possible relation to Christian sacramentalism. This is true. These circumstances have no relation whatever to Christian sacramentalism. They come from the (doubtless) pre-Christian tale of Peredur or Percival; the Exile, Return and Vengeance story. They are presented before Percival to remind him of the wrong that has been done in his house, and to incite him to take vengeance on the wrongdoers. I have endeavoured to explain in the course of these notes how the two perfectly distinct stories were drawn together into one. The medieval romance writer believed, above all things, in combining his materials; and his materials were, more or less, anything and everything that came to his hand. A bit here from a missionary legend, a bit there from a folktale, a scrap from an apocryphal gospel, a reflection of the war between the Roman and the Celtic churches, a fragment of Welsh Hagiology, a notion gathered from the Lays of Marie de France, a 'high' doctrine of transubstantiation, 'traces' of bardic teaching, as much fighting as you please derived from the Gestes and human nature, the courtly story of sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere; these are some of the materials which the writer of Graal romances, 1170-1220, had in his mind as he sat at his desk. But, as I must repeat once more, while he revolved many things, there were two thoughts that were absent even from his nightmares: the thought of the stimulation of fertility, animal and vegetable; and the thought of the sect of Gnostic initiates who survived in Britain, almost into his own age. And if he had found himself thinking of the Spear and Chalice as sexual symbols, I believe he would have poisoned himself on the spot.

Then, another point: the case of the wounded, or maimed, or stricken King, who is the keeper of the Graal. It may almost be said that each romance has a different explanation of the King's condition. The confusion seems hopeless, the problem before the modern critic impossible of solution. But in the first place, one fact emerges: that since each romance writer gives a different reason for the Graal King's disablement it seems pretty clear that there was no reason to give; no reason, that is, in the legendary materials from which he drew his tale. One thing only was clear to the writer's mind: that the King, the Lord of the Graal Castle, the keeper of the Holy Mysteries, the entertainer of the questing knights was himself sorely stricken, unhealed by the Vessel of healing which he kept. Why? The authors of the romances did not know in the least, and so each one invented an explanation, the best he could think of. And it is my belief that the solution of this puzzle of the wounded King is to be found in the story of

Bran, as told in the *Mabinogion.* In this story Bran is a British king who goes over to war in Ireland. He was remarkable in this, that he was so tall that no house could hold him. In fighting he is wounded by an enemy spear in his foot. Thereupon he calls his companions, the heroes, about him, and strangely commands that they cut off his head, and bear it to a certain castle or palace, promising that the head will give them as rich entertainment as ever he himself had done — so long as they forbear to open the door that looks on Cornwall. This accordingly was done; and for many years the heroes were enchanted by the Entertainment of the Venerable Head. They lived, as it were, in the state of Paradise, feasting and rejoicing, and listening to the singing of the Three Fairy Birds of Rhiannon, whose voices sounded close at hand and yet echoed as if they came from beyond the waves of ocean. The end will be guessed: one of the heroes at last opened the door that looked on Cornwall and Paradise was lost forever.

And here, I believe, we have the origin of the Graal King, Keeper of the Holy Things, Keeper of Paradise itself; and yet himself maimed, smitten, unhealed. And the odd thing is that a most curious parallel to the tale of Bran is to be found in the folklore of the Indians of North America. Mark Twain — of all people! — quotes it at length in his *Life on the Mississippi.* In the Red Indian story the primary fault was the neglect of a girl to observe a certain ceremony of puberty, whereon it became necessary that the head of her brother should be cut off, lest ruin should come upon the world. But, this severed head, exactly in the fashion of the Venerable Head of Bran Vendigeid, becomes ruler and administrator, guide and protector of the household.

It is barely possible that the Indian folklore has been ‘corrupted’ by Welsh missionaries. But this appears very unlikely, especially on consideration of the nature of the Indian story. And so, perhaps, the story of the Venerable Head is one of the oldest stories in the world. It went through its changes in Britain: the Fatal Wound remained, but the Head was no longer seen, save in one very notable passage in the Grand Saint Graal. The story was baptised, just as the demigod Bran became an early Christian saint in the estimation of uncritical Welshmen; and so in the end this strange figure and symbol of an infinite past becomes the mysterious Wounded King, the Lord of the Castle of the Graal.

THE SECRET OF THE SANGRAAL

It is really rather refreshing. ‘Scare heads’ are presumably inevitable; in the pleasing language of their inventors they seem to have ‘come to stay.’ Well; if we *must* have them it is much better to be confronted with:

MYSTERY OF A RELIC FINDER BELIEVES IT TO BE THE HOLY GRAAL TWO ‘VISIONS’ DISCOVERED AT GLASTONBURY

than with an array of trumpet-toned capitals which tell us the King is going to meet the Kaiser at Marienbad. And the story told is quite a curious one. A saucer-shaped vessel, made of bluish-green glass into which silver leaf had been introduced, was found in a well at Glastonbury. The newspaper accounts leave its genuineness an open question; but we are informed that a British Museum expert who has seen the vessel pronounces in favour of its antiquity, and considers it to be of Phoenician workmanship. So goes the history of the matter; there is also a legend.

The legend is more difficult. It is an affair of spiritual voices, of visions declaring the vessel to be the cup used by our Lord at the Last Supper that He made, of seeresses who describe the object without seeing it, of dreams in which a woman appears holding the vessel in her hands, of a strange radiance which is diffused from this (possibly) Holy Relic.

But there are some curious points in the tale, apart from its supernormal ingredients. In the first place the cup reporters speak of the vessel as a cup. It is not a cup; it is a saucer; and therefore it is idle to speak of it as the chalice of the Last Supper. In the second place, the discoverers, who say it is the Holy Graal, once the great relic of Glastonbury Abbey, are apparently ignorant of the fact that Glastonbury never claimed the possession of any such object. William of Malmesbury, who wrote the Glastonbury Legend in the first half of the twelfth century, says that the body of Joseph of Arimæatha was buried somewhere in the abbey precinct, and that with his body there were two phials of the Precious Blood; the idea may have been suggested to Gul. Marisburiensis by the fact that a phial said to contain the Precious Blood had just been brought to Bruges. But so far as we are aware the monks of Glastonbury who ‘discovered’ the body of King Arthur in the reign of Henry II never ‘discovered’ the body of St Joseph or the phials.

Then, again, there is the consideration that, with one exception, the Romances insist on the final withdrawal of the Graal either into a vague region of mystery, or as in the great Galahad Quest, first to Sarras and finally to heaven. The one exception is Wolfram's *Parzival,* where the Graal is left at Montsalvatch guarded by the 'Templesiens'; but the followers of Wolfram, pressed probably by the universal tradition, bore away the Graal at last to the realm of Prester John. Of course, there is the question of what the word really means. Paulin Paris thought it came from 'Grail Book' (Mass Book); as a matter of fact the Gradual was called the Grail in the Middle Ages, and according to Ducange a Grail Service meant a morning service or mass. But more modern scholarship derives the word from a conjectural form, *cratella,* a diminutive of *crater*, and the word seems to have implied to the twelfth-century mind a sort of shallow desert-dish standing on a stem or foot. Now there is neither foot nor stem to the vessel just 'discovered' at Glastonbury; and yet it is odd enough that a sculptured stone at Nigg in Scotland depicts two Celtic priests bowing in adoration before something which resembles a saucer on a stem, over which hovers a dove bearing a Host in it beak. In this connection it must be remembered that the Graal was a vague object to the romance writers; in the *High History,* for example, the object assumes five different forms, the last of which is a chalice.

There is a very short and easy way of dealing with the legend. Somehow or other you get hold of a theory, make up your mind that it is true, and then manipulate your evidence. The simplest way is to select the particular romance which fits in best with the theory that you have acquired; and then you ignore all the other romances which may conflict with it more or less. The best instance of this method is Dr Sebastian Evans' ingenious and attractive *In Quest of the Holy Graal.* Dr Evans, it must be said, was the accomplished and admirable, if somewhat archaistic translator of one of the Romances, to which he gave the title *The High History of the Holy Graal,* and on this particular romance he founded his theory. It is an attractive one, as I have said; but it is quite terrible!

There is a very odd and inexplicable incident in most versions of the legend. Logres, that is Britain, is supposed to be in the doleful condition of enchantment; physically and spiritually the land languishes, and the keeper of the Graal is sick of a mystic wound. All that is required is for the chosen knight of the adventure to come to the Graal Castle; and then the holy vessel is borne before him as he sits in the hall. He must then ask what the Graal is and whom it serves; whereupon the evil enchantments will be annulled, the sick keeper will be healed, and all that is broken will be made whole. For one reason or another the knight does not ask this question on his first visit; consequently the doleful state of Britain continues and the wounded keeper of the mysteries is unhealed. It should be mentioned that the keeper is sometimes called the King Fisherman, sometimes the Rich Fisher; and this title, be it noted, is not the smallest of the many difficulties in this extraordinary tale.

Well; Dr Sebastian Evans knew what all this meant. I should first mention that in the particular romance which he selected Logres is not 'enchanted' on the arrival of Percival at the Graal Castle; misfortunes fall upon the land afterwards, in consequence of Percival's unhappy failure to put the question to the keeper. Here again is another illustration of the difficulties which beset the Graal student — the romances disagree with one another on the most important points. But Dr Evans' interpretation of the whole legend is, briefly, as follows. It is, he says, an allegory of the events which fell out in England in the reign of King John, when the realm was laid under an interdict by the Holy Father. Percival, the hero of the quest, is St Dominic; King Fisherman is the Pope, the King of Castle of Mortal (or Deadly Castle) is the Emperor. Sir Gawain is Fulke the Troubadour, Lancelot is the elder Simon de Montfort, and Galahad is St Francis of Assisi. The silence of Percival means that St Dominic omitted to ask the Holy Father a certain question. The circumstances were these: Dominic was conferring with the Pope on the Albigenses, with special reference to the question of the exemption from interdict enjoyed by the Cistercian Order. But he never thought of discussing the question of interdict and Cistercian exemption in any other country besides Languedoc; and so when England was laid under interdict, the Cistercians were not allowed to say mass — and this was the dolorous enchantment of the Isle of Britain.

This is the crudest outline of Dr Sebastian Evans' theory; and it must be said that it is worked out in his book with the greatest ingenuity and the nicest skill, and that some of the analogies between the history of the time and the *High History* are quite extraordinary. They are so extraordinary that I am almost tempted to believe that they were expressly contrived by the

Great Enemy of the Literary Students — a very malevolent devil he — that Dr Evans might be led to adopt a theory which is, undoubtedly, quite preposterous.

It would be a tedious and long task to demonstrate the vanity of the Evans' theory; I hope its evident falsity will become apparent in the course of this note. But it may be said, by the way, that there is one fatal and manifest flaw which vitiates the whole argument, and that is that the Graal legend is the Legend of a Great Loss. The Graal in the *High History* is finally taken away into the unseen, in the *Queste* it is removed to heaven; another romance ends with the statement that it was henceforth seen of none 'so openly,' and the tales which carry on the legend of Montsalvatch remove the sacred thing to the realms of Prester John. But, in actual history, the interdict was removed and mass was once more freely celebrated; the discrepancy is quite fatal. And from another point of view: is it credible that a Cistercian, writing *c.* 1220 in Norman French, would ever dream of 'getting up' obscure Celtic legends and details of Welsh folklore with the idea of giving his ecclesiatico-political allegory a picturesque setting? Or, yet again: I am 'a man in the street,' I am sorry to say, as to the precise dates of the manuscripts, but I believe the learned are tolerably well agreed that some of the Graal Romances at all events were written years before the English interdict was heard of.

I have gone so far with Dr Sebastian Evans' theory because it is the most ingenious of all the 'straightforward' explanations of the Graal story. There are many other writers who are quite as certain, and not nearly so interesting. There is the 'pagan' school, which regards the whole story as a bit of pre-Christian Celtic folklore, into which 'Christian fetichism' was crudely and pitiably introduced in the twelfth century; there is the frankly nonsensical 'Sun Myth' theory, according to which Galahad and Merlin are 'sun-heroes'. This latter explanation has now gone the way of all such rubbish; but I daresay it has been succeeded by the equally ridiculous 'Covent Garden theory,' and for all I — know Galahad may now be explained in certain quarters as *Caulahad,* or Cabbage Hero. Then there is the notion that the Graal Romances are, somehow or other, a Templar manifesto, the veiled utterance of the 'secret doctrine' of the poor fellow soldiers of Christ. Here again we may say: how account for the introduction of obscure Welsh names, for the introduction of obscure Celtic customs in books which are supposed to represent the teachings of a cosmopolitan order of chivalry with its headquarters in the East? But the most decisive answer to this hypothesis is: that in the first place there is no earthly reason to suppose that the Templars had any secret doctrine, or, if we are to believe one or two very dubious charges made against them, their doctrine was distinctly anti-sacramental. And the doctrine of the Great Romances is, on the other hand, hyper-sacramental. It would be just as reasonable to declare that Ultra-montanism originated in the bosom of the Wee Kirk; but people *will* talk nonsense about the Templars. Then there is somebody who says that water was a symbol of purity, truth, wisdom, and salvation, and so the vessel which contained water became a symbol of these great things. It is fine; but as it happens the Graal did not contain water. There are other and still wilder theories, most of them devoid of the mere semblance of reason.

It seems likely that these attempts at explanation are so far from being satisfactory, because they attempt a task which is in the nature of things impossible. If you are asked to explain the Graal legend you are really being asked a dozen questions, not one single question; and the attempt to reply to all these interrogatories with a single answer is bound to end in failure. And, again; it is always a mistake to say that X *is* A when you know in your heart that you should have remarked that: 'There is a good deal to be said in favour of the statement that X is A' or even 'There is a bare possibility that X is A'. But it seems so weak to content oneself with such timid affirmations as these after a course of long and wearisome research; and so the bolder way is followed, and the truth is obscured. I want to say at the outset that I am content to be weak; what I *know* about the Graal is very little, but I have a vision of certain probabilities, some quite strong and some rather doubtful.

It is my opinion, then, that the Legend of the Graal, as it may be collected from the various Romances, is the glorified version of early Celtic Sacramental Legend, which legends had been married to certain elements of pre-Christian myth and folklore. I say legends, not legend, because it seems highly improbable that the numerous and important differences between the various romances could have arisen, if there had been one recognised legend, one *Textus Receptus* of the story. And the legend as we know it is a glorified version: it was the work of an age that knew how to transmute Norman architecture into the marvellous beauty of First Pointed, or Early

English. I should think that this process in architecture, which we know did take place, offers a pretty fair analogy to the transmutation of scattered Celtic legends into the splendid and glorious history of Galahad and the Sangraal. Only, unfortunately, while we can point to tangible and mighty evidence in stone of the one process, we have only very fragmentary proofs of the other.

But I think we can say for certain that at least one X *is* A — that the origins of the Graal are certainly Celtic. Otherwise one would have to conceive the Anglo-Norman romance writer as ‘mugging up’ Celtic literature, learning Welsh, wandering over Glamorganshire and Caermarthenshire in search of obscure names on tombstones, which names he would presently carefully distort into a French form, making himself acquainted with the unending genealogies of the Welsh saints and heroes. He would, for instance, have discovered with some pains the name Avalloch in early Welsh pedigrees, and then have made it into Evelake, and have smiled at the result. He would have visited St Dogmael’s, inspected the Bilingual Ogham Stone with the inscription *Sagramni maqui Cunatemi,* and have gone on his way rejoicing, conscious that ‘Sir Sagramour’ in his forthcoming romance would be both melodious and entirely correct. I do not think that this was the way in which romances were written in the twelfth century; though a twentieth-century story-teller might well use some such methods. In the same way the *High History* has the following passage:

> The history witnesseth us that in the land of King Arthur at this time there was not a single chalice. The Graal appeared at the sacring of the mass in five several manners that none ought not to tell, for the secret things of the sacrament ought none to tell openly but he to whom God hath given it.

The history goes on to say that the last of the forms assumed by the Graal was that of the chalice, and that from the pattern seen in the mystery King Arthur caused chalices to be made for the churches of Britain, a ‘brief having been found under the corporal declaring that God’s will was that in such a vessel should His Body be sacrificed. Now in the *Leabar Breac* (written c.1097, but evidently following very ancient tradition) we hear that under the rule of Columcille or Columba there was a mass chalice in every church. It is difficult to determine the exact force of the these allusions, but Miss Evelyn Underhill (Mrs Stuart Moore), a very weighty authority in such matters, has afforded a possible explanation. She suggests that there was a strong Egyptian influence in Celtic Christendom, and points out that the hermits of the Egyptian desert showed a strong tendency to become Catholic Quakers; that is, to live solely the life of contemplation, without the use of sacraments. Hence, the command of St Columba in fact, and the command of King Arthur in the romance. This is, of course, a conjecture, but it seems to me a brilliant one. But I cannot imagine anything more profoundly uninteresting than an attempt to show that there is no connection between the passage in the *High History* and the passage in the *Leabar Breac.* Again, it is known, I suppose, even to those who know but very little of Celtic things, that every Saint in Britain and Scotland and Ireland had his holy bell — many examples of these bells still remain in wonderful preservation, some of them still retaining the reputation of miraculous powers — and in the chapter of the *High History* which has been cited the holy bell is almost of as much importance as the Graal itself. It was one of those that had been cast by King Solomon, one for God, one for Our Lady, and one for the honour of the saints. King Arthur thought that he had heard this bell ringing all the way of his journey from Cardoil to the Graal castle, and he commanded that bells should be made after the pattern of it. It is distinctly *not* conceivable that such details as these should be inserted to give an archaic and Celtic atmosphere to a twelfth-century tale; we are forced to conclude that the French or Anglo-French Romance writers were working on old Celtic materials; the people who say that the Normans made up the whole story out of their heads are clearly out of court.

So far so good: but now comes the difficulty: what did these Celtic materials amount to? Here knowledge ceases, and opinions, more or less probable, begin. But in the first place it would be well to be clear on one point: Percival was *not* the original Graal knight; though the first book (now existent) which utters the great word Graal of Chrestien de Troyes, of which Percival is the hero. It seems certain that Percival was not the hero of the old Legend, because the ‘Peredur’ of the *Mabinogion,* a late form of the Legend from which Chrestien doubtless derived his *Conte,* has no mention of the Graal at all: and such is the case with the English metrical legends of Percival. Peredur (or Percival), is, as Mr Nutt has pointed out, an Exile, Return, and Vengeance story, doubtless pre-Christian. Chrestien was engaged in turning the tale into French verse, hears some vague rumours of the Graal Legend, and mentions the Graal, so vaguely that it seems doubtful whether he knew what a Graal was. Wolfram von Eschenbach, who followed Chrestien, says, truly enough, that he had not got the right story; the appearance of the Graal is a mere dubious incident introduced without much reason into the tale of Percival. One can see, perhaps, what made Chrestien think of it; in the *Mabinogion* mention is made of a salver in which a man's head swims in blood; it was the head of Peredur's cousin slayed by the sorceresses of Gloucester; it was the reminder to Peredur that he must execute vengeance on these sorceresses. But a dish full of blood might well remind Chrestien of another strange story that he heard of a miraculous vessel; and so he, tentatively, introduces the Graal into his romance, into a tale of a quite distinct origin and meaning. Chrestien, then, does not count: but he coupled the name of Percival with the Graal Legend, and so we find later writers, such as the authors of the *High History* and the *Parzival,* adopting Percival as the Graal hero.

It is undoubtedly futile to make the story of the Sangraal a purely pagan legend, into which Christian Symbolism intruded at a late period. It is futile — to take one reason out of many — because the story of the Sangraal is essentially and chiefly a high, mystic, sacramental, and Christian legend: take away its Christianity and it is merely a queer bit of folklore. The Gargantua has, of course, folklore elements or traces, perhaps in the proportion of.0001 to the thousand, but the book does not owe its value or its interest to the old farmhouse tales about a giant. It is pretty much the same case with the Graal histories. There are, undoubtedly, pre-Christian elements in the mythos; the 'feeding properties' of the Blessed Vessel are, are, perhaps, the most distinct of these, and carry one back to the Bardic Cauldrons, to the *mwys* of Gwyddno Garanhir, who, it may be noted, derived his revenue from a salmon-weir, and may have thus counted for something in the invention of the title 'Rich Fisherman'. These were miraculous feeding-vessels — illustrations of a conception which is, perhaps, worldwide, which is certainly not peculiar to Celtdom, since there is a mill which will give a perpetual supply of flour to Kalevala. And one sees that these cauldrons of eternal refection could well be married to the instrument of the *dulcissimi convivii,* for there are numerous authorities which might be cited in favour of the belief that the Eucharist feeds not only the soul but the body. And on the other hand, the pagan cauldron was not wholly physical: it would not ‘cook the food of a coward’. We can see, I think, without much difficulty that the Cauldron of Ceridwen might well be fused with the Chalice of the Eucharist; and we may allow that certain properties of the Sangraal were suggested by the basket of Gwyddno Garanhir, the horn of Bran Galed, the cauldron at Tyrnog, and pan and platter of Padarn Beisrudd and other such food-and-drink-multiplying rarities of the isle of Britain.

And there is another point in which pre-Christian legend may have had an influence; that is the ‘quest motive’. Arthur ventured into the depths of the underworld in search of magic treasures, and here, I think, we have the origin of the search for the Graal, which I do not believe formed part of the sacramental legend in its earliest form. This was a legend of vanishing and of loss, not of finding; the two motives have been combined with wonderful skill in the *Queste,* where Galahad achieves the Graal, discovers the holy and thermaturgic object after many perils; and yet in the end Galahad dies and the Graal is borne up to heaven. And I really think that when we have admitted these traces we have given all the credit that can justly be given to the pagan elements in the story. And even in the matter of the quest idea which is decidedly most important; I am not sure that we have a purely pre-Christian motive. The wanderings of the Celtic monks may count for a good deal; it is wonderful to think that the typical adventure of the medieval knight-errant — the leaping into a boat without oars or sails, trusting utterly to the deep and the design of God, was, one might almost say, part of the ordinary routine of the average Celtic monk.

It is curious to note the final manifestation of the boat without oar or sails. It descended from the Celtic monks or hermits to the Arthurian knights, and from them it came down to the fantastic ‘literary’ knights of the Spanish romances of chivalry. And from these it passed to one who is, in a sense, the most glorious of all knights — though he is also the most glorious of all jokes. When Don Quixote discussed the matter of chivalry with the Curate and the Barber in the first chapter of the Second Part, he spoke thus:

No one now, issuing from the wood, penetrates yonder mountain, and then treads the barren, lonely sore of the sea — mostly a tempestuous and stormy one — and finding on the beach a little bark without oars, sail, mast, or tackling of any kind, in the intrepidity of his heart flings himself into it and commits himself to the wrathful billows of the deep sea… and finds himself, when he least expects it, three thousand leagues and more from the place where he embarked.

So much for the theory; and when it came to practice, the Knight was not found wanting. As Don Quixote and his Squire were riding by the banks of the Ebro, they discovered a small boat, without oars or any other gear, that lay at the water's edge, tied to the stem of a tree growing on the bank. Don Quixote at once dismounted and ordered Sancho to dismount. Sancho, a notoriously obtuse man, failed to draw the obvious inference and asked why. Whereupon the Knight answered:

> Thou must know, Sancho, that this bark here is plainly, and without the possibility of any alternative, calling and inviting me to enter it, and in it to go to give aid to some knight or other person in need of it, who is no doubt in some sore strait; for this is the way of the books of chivalry and of the enchanters who figure and speak in them.

And, in sober fact, even so late as the reign of King Alfred such a boat, with three monks in it, drifted on to the coast of Cornwall from some 'cell' on the shores of Ireland, and when the Northmen came to Iceland they found there a population of such adventurers. Celtic 'monk-errantry' is a strange matter; one does not know how far these voyages were the expression of missionary zeal, how far they were due to the desire for a greater solitude than might be had in the cell, for the 'desart in ocean' that St Columba's monk tried to discover, or how far they were really voyages to the semi-pagan, semi-Christian paradise, deep Avalon of the apple-blossoms far beyond the waves, the Glassy Isle where, some say, Merlin is hidden, having with him the Thirteen Rarities of Britain. In these voyages, undoubtedly, we have the origins of all that is most poetic and most romantic in the romances of chivalry; and the journeys of the Celtic monks may have had some share in the Quests of the Knights of the Graal.

There is another possible element which must be examined and estimated for. Though Dr Sebastian Evans is undoubtedly wrong in his main thesis, I should like to think that there is 'something' in another theory of his. Dr

Evans holds the view that Geoffrey of Monmouth’s curious book was written to order, written to further certain ambitions of the House of Anjou, which dreamed of a British Empire and a British Church — the latter independent of the Roman Curia. Geoffrey wrote of the glories of the British kings, and these glories, according to Dr Evans, were to be taken over by the Normans, as the legitimate successors of King Arthur. One wonders whether this were so; if so it would explain certain things which are at present hard to understand; it would explain, for example, how men dared to set up Josephes, an imaginary son of St Joseph of Arimathæa, as a rival to St Peter — as infinitely superior to St Peter. Christ himself, according to one of the Romances, makes Josephes bishop, styling him the Moses of the New Covenant. Was Josephes intended to be the legendary founder of a British Christianity, not merely independent of, but infinitely more exalted than the Christianity of St Peter and his successors the Popes? This is a question on which more light is needed; but if it were established it would certainly do something to explain the odd air of contemporary allusion which some of the Romances possess.

II

The evidence for the Celtic and Sacramental origins of the Graal legend is to be found, directly, in the lives of the Welsh saints, especially in the life of St David. Indirectly, it may be gathered from many works which treat of early British Christianity.

Now, before we began to trace certain analogies between our legend and the ecclesiastical histories, it will be well to say a word or two about Celtic Christianity. And in the first place, there rises the question: was the Celtic Church of the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries the continuous successor of the Christian Church which undoubtedly existed in Britain during the Roman occupation? Or, again: did Christianity conquer the whole island during the Roman rule, or was it confined, with exceptions, to the garrison towns and to the country adjacent to such towns? There is no certain answer to either of the questions. But the more probable opinion seems to be that the Christianity of St David, St Dyfrig, St Teilo, St Iltyd, and their successors was in the main a new, or a greatly modified form of Christianity, grafted perhaps on certain remnants which had survived the Roman exodus. There are reasons to be given for these (probable) conclusions. There are no early Welsh legends which profess to give the story of the first introduction of religion into Britain, though all the legends take it for granted that the faith was established from early times. The hagiology of the British Church begins, for all practical purposes, with the post-Roman period, and tells how Pelagianism having overwhelmed the island, certain saints from Gaul came over, routed the heretics, and established orthodoxy. It has been suggested that for Pelagianism we should read Paganism, and that the two saints, Germanus and Lupus, were, in reality, the evangelisers of Britain. No doubt, there were Christians scattered about here and there; but the rather late monumental stone, with the inscription *Homo Christianus fuit*, inclines one to believe that Christianity was the exception rather than the rule. Celtic scholars have wondered how an imaginative people could have been attracted by the heresy of Pelagius — which is more stupid and unenlightened than the common run of heresies — and the answer *may* be that the British never were attracted by this New Theology of the fifth century. Of course, there is the story of Bran Vendigeid; but here we have an evident transmutation of a purely pagan demi-god into a Christian saint. Gildas (a contemporary of King Arthur) knows nothing of this legend, nor indeed of any material whatsoever for the early history of British Christianity. We may take it then as a working hypothesis at all events that the early Celtic memory could go no further back than the period of the Saints Germanus and Lupus, and this period, therefore, would be, so far as our inquiry is concerned, the epoch of the Christianisation of Britain.

From which tentative but highly probable conclusion it follows that the Celtic legends which were available for the Anglo-French romance writers of the twelfth century were legends which referred to the saints of the fifth and sixth centuries, and not to the saints or missionaries of the first, second, and third centuries. These doubtless had existed; but for one reason or another they had not succeeded in dwelling in the Celtic memory. And so, when we read in a romance of Joseph of Arimathaea coming from Palestine to Britain in the first century, we may translate that sentence into: X came from Gaul to Britain in the fifth century. In other words, the British Church of the Romances is a glorification of the British Church from *c.*420 to *c.*666, about which time Cadwallader, the last king of Britain, died, the Relics of the Saints were removed or lost, and Celtdom and the Celtic Church began to suffer their long death-agony.

Now, the lives of St David, St Carannoc, and of other saints of the same period are accessible in histories which date from the end of the eleventh or the beginning of the twelfth century; but whatever may be said of the date of compilation, the material used is certainly antique. There is little or no trace of Norman or Roman influence, and the manner of the legends and of the incidents described is exactly similar to the manner of the seventh century life of St Columba by St Adamnan. As an example of the primitive and uncorrupted state of the Welsh hagiologies, I may mention that Arthur, whose name occurs a few times, is very far indeed from having attained the position which he occupies in Geoffrey of Monmouth; he does not even foreshadow the Arthur of the Romances. In one tale 'a certain tyrant named Arthur' is punished by a saint for his impiety; in another Life he is represented as being in a district about twenty miles from Caerleon, the splendid capital of the later Arthurian legend, and Arthur does not know in the least where he is! Of course there may have been another set of early Welsh stories in which Arthur was already a mystic figure, indeed it is almost certain that this was the case; but the absence of all romantic treatment of him in the lives of the Welsh Saints proves, I think, pretty conclusively that we may accept them as handing on faithfully traditions of the seventh and sixth centuries.

These traditions, then, are legends of the Christianising of Britain, and of the great men who carried out the work — and such done into high romantic dialect is the story of the coming of the Sangraal. To take the case of St David first: his birth was foretold to his father by an angel in a dream. Sant (or Sandde) was to go out hunting, when he would find three things — a stag, a fish, and a honeycomb, prophetic of the son who should be born to him; and the adventure duly fell out as the angel had foretold. The honeycomb prophesied David's wisdom, 'for as the honey is in the wax, so he will hold a spiritual sense in an historical instrument' — a sentence which I venture to think a very remarkable one. But 'the fish denotes his aquatic life… therefore David will be surnamed David of Aquatic Life.' Note here the analogy of the saint and the 'Rich Fisherman' of the Graal Romances; and while this point is under consideration it may also be remarked that in South Wales there is a 'Church of the Watermen' — they were rescued from the water and nourished by miraculous fishes — and that one of the saints — Ilar is actually called Bysgottwr, or Fisherman. It is certain, then, that early Celtic Christianity was acquainted with the Icthus symbolism, and it would appear that at a later period the significance of the fish had been forgotten. The phrase ‘denotes his aquatic life,’ the title ‘vir aquaticus’ seem to show that the writer of the Life was ignorant of the fact that the fish is Christ, and more especially the Christ present in the Eucharist. It is not difficult, perhaps, to imagine that from this ignorance, this confusion, arose the figure of the Roi Pêcheur, the Rich Fisherman, who keeps the Graal, the Holy Vessel which held ‘the Mighty, Unpolluted Fish,’ that is the Body and Blood of Christ: *panis ipse verus et aquce vivce Piscis.* In the earliest of the Romances the ancestor of the Graal keepers is made to catch a fish, which gives him his title; it is not difficult, I say, to suppose that such a story should be invented to account for a forgotten symbolism; and the associations which I have noted between certain of the Welsh saints and the Fish are at least worthy of attention.

There are many curious circumstances in this Life of St David. At the Synod of Llandewibrefi it is said that David was acknowledged as ‘sovereign of the saints of the Isle of Britain… as God gave Mattheus in Judaea… Christ in Jerusalem, and Peter in Rome… so He has given St David to be in the island of Britain’. The passage is a curious one; there are already traces of the extravagant claims made for Josephes in the romances. Still more curious is another passage. The Patriarch of Jerusalem, who is represented as the consecrator of David, gave him: ‘a certain hallowed altar in which the Lord’s Body had reposed, which abounded in innumerable virtues. Never was this altar seen after the death of the bishop [St David] by any son of man; but it lies hidden, covered with skins… And hence the common people call it the Gift from Heaven.’ And in another passage this altar is called *anceps* (doubtful, perilous, mysterious), which may be interpreted by a passage from the life of St Carannoc, to whom ‘Christ gave an honourable altar from on high, the colour of which no person could comprehend.’ In these three quotations, it seems to me, one has already the germ of the Graal, and of the claims made by its keepers. For it should be noted that in the early romances the chalice idea is by no means a fixed and constant one. We have seen how in the *High History* the Graal assumed five forms, the last of which was the chalice, while in the metrical romance of Borron, and in the Grand Saint Graal, the Holy Vessel is taken as the antitype of the sepulchre in which Joseph of Arimathæa had laid the Lord, and Wolfram says the Graal is a stone called Lapsit Exillit — *lapis ex coelis?* It should be remarked also that the word graal (cratella) implies not so much a chalice as a shallow bowl on a stem; to the medieval mind it must have given the idea of a vessel something like the dishes on which dessert is served. St David's altar was, in the earlier legend, a gift from the Patriarch of Jerusalem, later it became a gift from heaven; and its 'virtues,' its thaumaturgie powers were due to the fact that in it, *dominicum jacebat corpus.* It is an altar, and yet there is already the suggestion of hollowness in its shape, and above all it is an altar in which the Lord's Body had been laid; it is not difficult to see how the name of Joseph of Arimathæa was suggested to later writers. And if the gifts which were called afterwards *e coelo venientia* were at first, in a more sober spirit, presents, though miraculous presents, from the Patriarch of Jerusalem; then, it would be likely enough that St David, at first consecrated by the Patriarch, should ultimately be consecrated by Christ from heaven. And the equations of St David with St Peter, with Christ Himself are undoubtedly in the same line of thought as the wild and extravagant claims made for Josephes in the Great Saint Graal. It is worth noting, too, how there is already something mysterious about the appearance of the Object; it is called dubius, anceps; the similar altar given from heaven to St Carannoc is of a colour that no man can comprehend; St David's altar was not seen openly after the saint's death, even as the Graal vanished in the romances. So, when William of Malmesbury was 'writing up' Glastonbury Abbey (c. 1130, perhaps sixty years before the earliest of the romances written) he speaks of St David's altar, known as Sapphirus, as one of the treasures of the place; lost for a long time and then recovered. I do not think that it is temerarious to say that in the legends of these Welsh saints, hallowed in the east, endowed with miraculous altars of divine origin and of wondrous form, evangelisers of Britain, there is the probable ancestry of the great romances of the Graal.

So much for the direct analogies between the Celtic legends and the Graal books; the indirect are, perhaps, as interesting. It is difficult, I think, to read the Lives of the Celtic Saints without recognising that a great deal of the atmosphere of the romances derives from the hagiologies. Take the following passage from the Life of St Columba by St Adamnan:

For three days and three nights he allowed no one to approach him, and remained confined in a house which was filled with heavenly brightness. Yet out of that house, through the chinks of the doors and keyholes, rays of surprising brilliancy were seen to issue during the night. Certain spiritual songs also, which had never been heard before, he was heard to sing. He came to see… many secrets, hidden from men since the foundation of the word, fully revealed.

One of St Columba's monks saw him on another occasion enter the church; 'and along with him at the same time a golden light that came down from the highest heavens'; this light was seen several times, and when the saint died the whole church was filled with heavenly brightness. It would be impossible to read of these appearances of celestial light without being reminded of the glorious brightness that accompanied the manifestations of the Graal. So when St Cadoc (to whom the Church of Caerleon is dedicated) died: 'a great brightness shone on the people devoutly engaged in performing his funeral rites, so that no one of them was able to sustain it'. And again in the life of St Fechin, a Scotch saint, we are told that when St Fechin entered his church the multitudes saw light shining from the windows and the doors. Another topic of the romances is illustrated in the legend of St Tathan, who found a little ship, without oars or sails, and entering boldly, was borne to Britain; and in the strange story of the Sacred Fire of St Cadoc, we hear how his holy relic, having been defiled by the profane, vanished away, and the hurts and doles were healed no more. St Iltyd, again, solitary in his cave by the shore, saw approaching a ship, on which was 'an altar divinely supported'. The oarsmen gave St Iltyd 'the perfumed body of a very holy man, whose name they told him, which he was never to utter'. Taking these and other similar tales into consideration; we might almost pronounce that the heroes of the romances are Celtic monks in armour; there has been a certain fusion between the 'monk errant' of the Celtic legends and the knights of Charlemagne, and from this admixture, which one may say was being realised at the time in the Templar Order, proceeded Galahad and the knights of the Graal.

Now, it is to be noted very carefully that when a Celtic biographer speaks of the 'relics of the saints' he does not mean their bones. He means any holy vessels or objects which have belonged to them: such as the altars of which we have spoken; books, bells and croziers. This is of great importance in considering the passage in Geoffrey of Monmouth, who repeats the prophecy of the angel to Cadwallader, the last king of Britain. Cadwallader died in foreign lands — in Rome, according to the Normanised Welshman of the twelfth century, but probably in the East, perhaps in Jerusalem, in the original legend. Prosperity shall return to Britain, says the angel, when Cadwallader's bones are restored to the island and when the relics of the other saints, which had been hidden on account of the fury of the pagans, should be revealed. Here, we see, there was an old legend which connected the vanishing of certain holy objects with the great loss and doom of Britain. In the romances the loss is a final one, so far as the relic — the Graal — is concerned; in the Celtic tradition there was to be a restoration of all things; Cadwallader was to return, Saxons were to be eradicated, and bards were to flourish, in the words of a poem in the (twelfth-century) Red Book of Hergest, which, however, makes no mention of any relics. The romances contemplate a certain fashion of restoration — Arthur was to return and rule once more — but the Graal, it would appear, has gone forever. Does this mean that the House of Anjou still clung to the idea of a British Empire, but had given up the thought of an independent British Church? I do not venture to give even an opinion, much less a judgement; I scarcely dare suggest the possibility of the politics, ecclesiastical or civil, of the time having had any influence in the concoction of the Romances. Wolfram, it is true, following a Graal tradition which differs curiously from the tradition of the Anglo-French romances, refers to the Chronicles of the House of Anjou as one of the sources by which he corrected Chrestien's imperfect and erroneous story: this may be either an important clue or an empty compliment to a powerful reigning house: I take refuge in confessed ignorance.

It is now time to examine a curious fact in Celtic tradition — that is the extraordinary veneration given to the relics of the saints, the remarkable powers ascribed to these relics, and the strange story of their hereditary keepers. We have already seen that in the Celtic Church practically every saint left relics behind him — bells, books, croziers, etc. So far as I know, the honour given to these objects, the miracles ascribed to them are quite unique in the history of Christianity; and I am strongly tempted to believe that the 'relics' were, in reality, the sanctified successors of tribal palladia, of certain objects which, *mutatis mutandis,* had exercised the same powers and commanded a like veneration in heathen times. The saint's relic, in Celtdom, could do almost anything: the prosperity of the tribe (afterwards, perhaps, of the race) was bound up with its safe preservation and reverent custody; and terrible penalties sanctioned the due observance of the relic ritual. Only those authorised by hereditary or acquired powers might so much as look on some of these objects; and in most cases they were enshrined in reliquaries, rich with all the splendour and mystic symbolism of Celtic art. And I think that it is worth noting here the very great difference between the Roman and the Celtic attitude towards such relics and holy objects. Briefly, the difference was this: the Roman view was that the more you looked on the relics the better for you; the Celts, on the other hand, held that unless you had certain special qualifications you had better not come near the relics, under pain of blasting or death. The Book of St Columba was borne in battle, and brought victory to the clan, if carried by one of pure heart — it is curious to note here the motive which, perhaps, developed into the conception of Galahad. Other relics gave oracles; there was a bell that refused to ring save in the hand of the saint for whom it was destined by God; another bell sailed through the air guiding its saint to an appointed place, other relics were angel-borne from heaven; one, being removed from its shrine and habitation cried aloud, day and night, till it was restored. Some healed diseases, others detected criminals or restored lost cattle. In a word, it would be very difficult to exaggerate the immense importance which these relics occupied in the Celtic mind; and at the present day the healing cup of Nant Eos is revered in Wales, not only for its potent cures, but also as ‘a Venerable Gift of the Almighty’. So late as 1887 a harper, to whom the relic had been solemnly exhibited, felt profound remorse for having treated the holy thing lightly and irreverently. The man came again in a miserable condition of mind, and he was only pacified by a second exhibition of the relic, to which he paid devout reverence. In Scotland and in Ireland many of the relics also survive; and some, wonderful to say, still belong to the descendants of their original keepers. Indeed; the keeping of certain relics was in many cases incorporated into the feudal system; charters are extant granting land in return for the due custody of some holy bell or crozier, and in one or two instances the keeper was even a sort of popular title of nobility. Sad enough are the ends of some of these old songs; a battered iron bell, with faint traces of its former splendours still surviving, turned up by the plough, or found by boys playing in a cave by the seashore; a poor Irish schoolmaster of the eighteenth century, last of the keepers, bequeathing some wonderful piece of Celtic workmanship to the man who had befriended him — such are some of the last chapters of these strange histories. The keepers, it should be remarked, were in almost all cases the collateral descendants of the saints whose relics they had in custody; and there was more than a trace of the belief that something of the original virtue and sanctity of the saint descended to his successor in the guardianship of the relics. It was remarked that the Irish of the twelfth century were so ignorant that they believed the possessor of St Patrick's relics to be *ipso facto* archbishop of Armagh. Such are the facts as to the hereditary relic keepers of Celtic Christendom: it is for the student of the Graal romances to judge as to the probability of the existence of these keepers having originated the wonderful story of the hereditary guardians of the Holy Graal.

M. Paulin Paris had a most interesting theory as to Galahad. We have seen that Cadwallader, the 'last King of Britain,' was in Welsh legend expected to return once more, restoring all things, and bringing with him the 'relics of the saints'. Cadwallader, indeed, loomed a more heroic figure than Arthur in the Welsh imagination; Celtdom canonised him, and the churches bearing the name Llangadwaladr were built in his honour. It is noteworthy that while all other Welsh saints are styled *sant* (or sometimes *agius),* Cadwallader shares with the mystic Bran the title of Blessed, or Vendigeid *(benedictus*). One does not know what was the true history of the real man's life and death, there are various stories; but it is certain that the date assigned for his death coincided with the death sentence of Celtdom, both in Church and State. The 'yellow hag' — some form of plague — swept away the Cymri by thousands, the Saxons tightened their grip and extended it over the whole island, and strangely enough, the making of Celtic saints ceased. The Celtic monk-errants had swept all over the continent of Europe; they had set up the rule of St Columbanus at Bobbio, by the Pope's door, and Columbanus had addressed the Holy Father as an equal, not without a hint that any case of error or heresy on the part of the Chief Bishop of Christendom would meet with due correction from the Celtic monk. But the tide turned. Cadwallader died, the 'relics of the saints' were lost, or taken into concealment, and everywhere the Roman power prevailed, abolishing Celtic customs and rites, and doing its work so thoroughly that no Celtic liturgy has survived. A dreary enchantment (from the Celtic point of view) fell upon the sanctuaries of the saints, and the abomination of desolation, in the form of the Roman missal, succeeded the High Offering of the Perpetual Choirs of the Isle of Britain.

Now M. Paulin Paris thinks that the name and the tale of Galahad are derived from the name and the tale of Cadwallader. In the case of the name (which was sometimes spelt Catgualart and Catgualatyr). I think M. Paulin Paris is right; and for the tale — well, there is a good deal to be said for his point of view. As Galahad, the last possessor of the Graal in the *Queste,* went to Sarras, carrying the holy vessel with him, so Cadwallader went to Jerusalem (for ‘Rome’ in Geoffrey of Monmouth is almost certainly a substitution, partly due to a confusion between the names of the Welsh hero and a Saxon king) carrying with him, presumably, the ‘relics’ which are to return with him. It is to be noted, also, that as Galahad was of the lineages of Joseph of Arimathæa and of Our Lady so also was Cadwallader descended collaterally from the Blessed Virgin and St David. But it would be rash, I think, to assert that the story of the British king was more than a rough sketch for that splendid and glowing figure of Galahad. The romance writer had heard an old legend, perhaps, a wandering and uncertain and broken tale with the last glow of the Celtic fire still shining dimly from it; and from these poor fragments he built up the miracle of the *Queste.* It would be unsafe to say that the Celtic legend counted for much more than a hint in the execution of that wonderful romance.

III

It will be understood, I hope, that these papers do not pretend, in any sense whatever, to be so much as an outline of the great literary question of the Sangraal. They are merely notes and hints and suggestions on certain interesting points in the legend; and my hope is that they may stimulate more learned and more fortunate questers to a deeper research.

It is not altogether necessary, then, for me to apologise for omissions; since if I once began to do so, I should never have done; but there is one point which I should have mentioned in my first chapter, in treating of the ‘pagan’ elements in the story. This is the very singular and significant appearance of ‘a Head so rich and beautiful that never mortal saw aught so glorious’ in the wonderful description of the Graal worship at Sarras, in the Grand Saint Graal. This Head was borne by one of the angels in red vestments, who served the great Rite; it is impossible, I think, to deny its close relationship to the venerable Head of Bran, which would have made an eternal paradise for the heroes — if they had not disobeyed a certain prohibition. Meat and drink and entertainment, and the enchanted song of the Fairy Birds of

Rhiannon were the portion of the followers of Bran — till they opened the door that looked towards Cornwall; and then all delights and pleasures vanished away. The ‘Rich Head’ of the Graal Romance is undoubtedly the pre-Christian demigod or deity, consecrated to the service of the Holy Vessel; it is interesting to find so positive a proof of the Celtic origin of the Legend. By the way, it may be remembered that there are many traces of this Head cultus in Celtdom; in Pembrokeshire, for instance, there is a well, sacred to St Teilo, the water of which heals sickness, if administered by the Hereditary Keeper in the skull of the saint. In Scotland, again, there was a saint’s skull which was washed, ritually, and the water of the washing was regarded as holy and salutary; and I should like to be instructed in the real meaning of such place names as Holyhead and Penzance. Do they mean ‘the Holy Headland,’ or do they imply that in these places there was a special cultus of the ‘Venerable Head’? It is interesting to note that Penzance bears as arms a head on a dish, supposed, of course, to be the Head of St John the Baptist.

But, for our especial purpose this ‘Rich Head,’ strangely introduced into the Graal Ritual, is of very high interest. For one cannot help thinking of that other Head — the head of Peredur’s slain cousin, exhibited to him in a dish full of blood. This latter was not a holy object; it was, apparently, an incitement to vengeance on the murderers. The dish full of blood, the spear ever dripping with blood, cried to Peredur for vengeance; we have here, I suppose, an instance of the traps and confusions and coincidences which lurk in the Romance Literature of the Sangraal, and also an example of the way in which two streams of quite distinct origin are joined into one.

To pass on to the more immediate purpose of this article: there are many reasons for supposing that the Romances celebrate and glorify the curious and ancient quarrel between Roman and Celtic Christianity. In some of the earliest versions of the Legend, we hear of a distinct rite called the ‘Graal Service’. This ritual was performed at Terce (the medieval hour for the principal mass of the day); it was called ‘going to Grace,’ and it would seem that the worshippers were rapt into an ecstasy. Again, in the *High History* we hear of ‘the priests and hermits of the Graal,’ who are removed by the Lord God into a sure place during the usurpation of the King of Castle Mortal; and in the *Queste* the ‘service of the Holy Graal’ was performed divinely in the precious chapel where the Holy Graal used to appear. To me it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that in such passages as these we have highly romantic allusions to the Celtic Church; the possessor of sacrosanct and Eucharistic Relics, *e coelo venientia,* and of a distinct Eucharistic Rite. How far we may take the Romance allusions is conjectural, and perhaps will always remain conjectural. It may be that the allusions of the *High History* and the *Queste* are fairly accurate accounts of events which really happened, it may be that they have the slenderest historical foundations; we do not know and probably we never shall know.

And now as to the peculiarities of the Celtic Church as distinct from the Roman. Here many we are in a region of few certainties and again possibilities and probabilities. One thing, at least, is certain: the anti-Celtic fervour of the Roman authorities was so thorough that there is no such thing as a Celtic Liturgy in existence; and, perhaps, the latest reference to such a thing dates back to the twelfth century, when the remnant of the Culdees are reported as celebrating ‘some kind of barbarous rite’ in a corner of a Scotch church. There are few certainties beyond this; but there are probabilities.

I have already said that I accept as a working hypothesis the theory that the Celtic Church was really the work of the fifth century, and that it was organised by Gallican missionaries; and that being granted it follows necessarily that the churches of Britain and Ireland were of the type that is called Oriental. Of course, all Christianity is, in origin, a Syrian mission; but for whatever reason or reasons, the local Roman Church became differentiated from all others at a very early period, and developed a Liturgy — the Latin Mass — which it is convenient to call Western. It would be tedious in the highest degree to examine minutely the variations between the Rite of Constantinople and the Rite of Rome; it will be sufficient to say that the most important of the many differences between the two services is the presence of the Epiclesis in the Eastern, and its absence from the Western Eucharist. The Epiclesis is the Invocation of the Holy Spirit on the Elements (in some Eastern Rites on the congregation also), and in the Divine Liturgy of St James it runs as follows:

Have mercy on us, O God, according to Thy great goodness, and send upon us, and upon these proposed gifts, Thy most Holy Ghost who descended upon Thy holy Apostles in the likeness of fiery tongues in the upper room of the holy and glorious Sion, at the day of Pentecost: send down the same most Holy GHOST, Lord, upon us, and upon these holy and proposed gifts, that coming upon them with His holy and good and glorious presence, He may hallow and make this bread the holy Body of THY CHRIST.

People. Amen.

Priest. And this cup the precious Blood of THY CHRIST.

People. Amen.

It is by this formula, or by some equivalent prayer, that the present Orthodox Church of the East believes the mystery of the consecration to be effected; the West — the Roman and English churches — on the other hand, make the efficacy of the sacrament to depend upon the due recital of the Words of Institution. And yet I believe that the Eastern Church would hardly declare all the consecrations of the West to be void and of none effect.

This, then, is the Epiclesis, and it is almost certain that the British Liturgy possessed some such formula. It is not absolutely certain, because, as I have stated, there is no Celtic Liturgy in existence; but the probability is very high — indeed, considering the derivation of the Celtic Church of the fifth century from the Church of Vienne and Lyons, is almost inevitable. It should be noted, by the way, that the early Gallican Church in question occupied a peculiar position with respect to the Epiclesis. The formula was not, as in the East, an integral and essential portion of every Mass; it occurred in the Eucharists on certain saints' days, and not on those of others, and such, we may presume, was its place in the ritual of Celtic Christendom — unless, indeed, the Celts followed the more primitive and allied Mozarabic Rite, in which, I think, the Invocation of the Holy Spirit is invariably used.

Now, in some of the Graal Romances there are curious references to certain 'secret words' used in the Eucharist; a claim is made, if the expression may be allowed, for a super-valid consecration. Robert de Borron, for example, says that he dare not speak of the secrets revealed to Joseph, and if he would he could not, without the Great Book:

Ou les estoires sont escrites,

Par les grans clercs feites et dites,

La sont li grant secre escrit,
Qu'on nomme le Graal.

Is this a reference to a Celtic Liturgy, or rather to a vague rumour of a Celtic Liturgy? Are the 'grant secre' of the Graal Service the Prayer of Invocation? I think there is a remote possibility that this is so; I dare not say more. Wales conformed to the Roman Church between 750-809; and therefore we may conclude that the prescription of the Celtic Liturgy began towards the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth centuries. It is quite likely that the native ritual was not extinguished without a struggle; it is quite likely that it continued to be celebrated by patriot recluses, by 'saints' who had oratories among the rocks and among the woods for a long period after the Roman Missal had become the only legal use; it is quite likely that the primitive Liturgy endured long enough for the rumour of it to have reached the ears of the Romance writers. The Graal Service was said divinely in the precious chapel where the Graal itself had once been wont to appear. This may mean that the Celtic Ritual was used, after long pretermission, in an oratory where once some venerated altar, reputed to be of heavenly origin, had been preserved — it would be temerarious to say more.

There is another probable argument in favour of this identification of the Graal Service with the British Rite. In the Grand Saint Graal, the first Mass is described — in connection with the alleged Apostolate and Primacy of Josephes, son of Joseph of Arimathaea. The passage is as follows:

Laiens fist Josephe le premier sacrement qui onques fust fais a celui peule, mais il eut moult tost accompli, kar il ne dist que celes paroles seulement, qant Jesu-Cris dist a ses dessiples a la chaine: 'Venes, si mangies et chou est li miens cors qui pour vous et pour maintes autres gens sera livre a martire et a torment.' Et autress; leur dist del vin: 'Tenes et si beves tout Car chou est li sanc di ma nouviele loy, li miens meismes, ki pour vous sera espandus en remision des pechies.'

Now the Roman Formula of Consecration is, for the bread:

Hoc est enim Corpus meum, and for the wine:

Hic est enim Calix sanguinis mei, novi et æterni testamenti: mysterium fidei: qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum.

The question is: where did the author of the Grand Saint Graal get his formulae? Professor Warren, an authority on Celtic Christianity, thinks that there is ‘ground,’ but not ‘proof for *confrangetur,* as the word in use in the lost British Liturgy. It may be noted that there is proof of very early intercourse between the Egyptian and Celtic churches, and that the Coptic consecration formula is similar to that of the Romance in its use of the future tense. Again, it is not wise to do more than suggest a probability. It would be delightful if one could point to the words of the Grand Saint Graal as an undoubted fragment of the lost Ritual of our fathers: but to do this were to play the Higher Critic in his wildest moods. It may be that here we have a remnant of the Celtic Liturgy; we must not be more positive. The general position — that the ‘Graal Church’ symbolises the Celtic Church — is, I think, probable in a very high degree; the particular conclusions must be left in doubt and in mist.

There is one very odd circumstance about the *Parzival* of Wolfram von Eschenbach. We have seen that he accused Chrestien of having told the wrong story; he himself professes that he corrected Chrestien by the *Chronicles of the House of Anjou*, and by the narrative of one Kyot, or Guiot, a Provencal. However that may be, the *Parzival* is in one most important respect entirely distinct from all the other romances. A graal, as we have seen, probably implied to the readers of the romance, a shallow bowl (or deep dish) on a stem and foot, and we have noted also the curious uncertainty which seems to have existed as to the exact shape of the Holy Vessel. In one romance it assumes five forms, the last of which is the chalice, in another it is an image of the sepulchre in which Christ’s body was laid by Joseph; the paten being the stone slab placed on top of the grave. It is at once a chalice, and also the vessel in which Christ willed that His Body should be offered and sacrificed; there is a singular ambiguity. One story says that it was the vessel in which Christ washed the Apostles’ feet; another that in it He ‘made His sacrament’. And one cannot help thinking of St David’s Altar, *in quo dominicum jacebat corpus.*

In the *Parzival* the Graal is a stone called Lapsit Exillit. It was hallowed, its virtue was ever renewed, by a Dove that brought on the Good Friday of each year a consecrated Host from heaven, laying It on the Graal. There is no reference whatever to the Precious Blood; and it seems impossible that the Graal of Wolfram's conception could have served any of the uses of a cup or chalice. It was a stone that had fallen from the crown of Lucifer when the great angel was driven from heaven; a precious stone presumably; and one is reminded of William of Malmesbury's reference to St David's Altar lost, and restored (so he says) to Glastonbury, and called *Sapphirus.* I do not say that Wolfram's story proves that the Graal was originally an altar and not a chalice; I am content to affirm that it is evidence strongly in favour of that hypothesis. The sculptured stone (eighth or ninth century, I believe) at Nigg, in Scotland, would seem to illustrate an idea not remote from Wolfram's. In the centre of the stone there is figured a vessel like a very shallow champagne glass, or a saucer on a stem; above this hovers a dove, holding in its beak a round disc, resembling a wafer. On each side an ecclesiastic bows in adoration; and below two lions crouch to the ground.

Now, accepting as an hypothesis the altar theory, the question naturally arises: How did the altar become transformed into a chalice? This, I think, is not an insoluble enigma; and the answer may probably be obtained from William of Malmesbury's eulogy of Glastonbury Abbey, in which there are several notable points. Firstly, it is said by William that the body of Joseph of Arimathæa was buried somewhere in the precincts of the abbey, and so far as I know there is no earlier mention of Joseph in connection with Glastonbury or with Britain. The story dates from *c.* 1130-40. Secondly, it states that with the body were buried two phials containing the Precious Blood of Christ; and here, it seems to me, we have the secret of the Graal of the romance writers. Nor is it difficult to trace this invention of the legend to its origin. Somewhere in the thirties of the twelfth century, a crusading knight had remitted to the town of Bruges a phial said to contain the Blood of Christ, which the Church of Antioch had given him, in reward for great services rendered against the miscreants. The phial in question, which is still preserved at Bruges, and venerated by the faithful, is adorned with work of the seventh or eighth century; beyond that date, of course, history must give place to legend. But it is certain that in the beginning of the twelfth century the cultus of the Precious Blood received a great impetus; and the inventive William endowed Glastonbury with a Relic which would be certain to enhance the prestige of the convent. It does not seem hard to imagine that the Norman-French romance writers combined two distinct objects, the altar of St David or of some other Welsh saint, with the supposed phials of Glastonbury, and that the union of the two instruments produced the Sangraal. An altar could not hold blood; a phial would not serve in the Eucharistic connection which attached to the altar, and so a compromise was effected and the Holy Graal, at first a vague and ill-defined object, put on at last the form of the chalice, and yet was spoken of as the vessel in which God willed that His Body should be offered. There is no proof of all this: most likely there never will be; but it seems to be a very probable solution of a most difficult question.

Then, of course, there is the substitution of the name of Joseph of Arimathæa for our (hypothetical) Welsh saint; and here again the difficulties do not strike me as insuperable. So far as I know there is no reason to suppose that the Legend of Joseph as the Evangelist of Britain existed before the beginning of the twelfth century. But it was fashionable, if we may use the term, for every Church in Christendom to claim an Apostolic or semi-apostolic origin; and it is easy to understand that such names as Dewi and Carannoc, Iltyd and liar, had no particular prestige or enchantment for Norman-French ears, or for readers of Paris town. The Precious Blood cultus had suggested the phials, the belief of the Glastonbury monks that the body of Joseph was buried in their abbey, was, possibly, a convent tradition; it was simple to put things together, to make Joseph the founder of British Christianity, and the possessor of a priceless relic. The apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus supplied the tale of his imprisonment by the Jews; his voyage to Britain was probably suggested by the Legend of the Saintes Maries de la Mer, and, indeed, one of the names occurring in the Grand Saint Graal is taken bodily from the Provencal story; and so the romance grows, mingling Celtic legends, apocryphal gospels, missionary tales, a popular cultus, and sheer invention in books of the most wonderful and glorious inspiration. And this last is, after all, by far the greatest element. Matters of varying merit went into the crucible; it was the power of the medieval artistry that was the red powder, glistering and glorious as the sun, which transformed, transmuted, re-created, glorified, changing copper into gold, wandering and broken legends into splendid romance. The change seems to me not improbable; for the thirteenth century was the age in which Salisbury Cathedral was built, and the time that could raise the rough ashlar to such power and glory and dominion and spiritual life, was doubtless able to form rough literary materials into the great temple of the Graal Romances.

THE STROLLER

I

SOME JESUIT IN the eighteenth century said of Ælillar the younger that he was *ingeniousus puer sed insignis nebulo;* and I always think that the phrase applies most beautifully and perfectly to Mr George Moore. He is a mighty clever chap — and a confirmed ‘rotter’. His last book, a sort of pocket Casanova, is the work of a ‘rotter,’ and his nonsense about the English language being worn out is the talk of a rotter. Casanova is inimitable (luckily, on the whole, I think), and the English language is infinitely the finest in the world, if people will give themselves the trouble to learn how to use it.

But one work of Mr George’s is in a different category: the *Mummers Wife* is quite a good story as far as it goes; it is perhaps the only work in English which attempts the problem of writing about the stage in a serious spirit. There are plenty of other books of course on the same subject, some of them very amusing, some of them great nonsense (Mr Horace Wyndham should know that the stage manager does not put up the train calls), but the *Mummer’s Wife* is easily the best of the lot.

But the stage is such a big subject. George Moore’s book is, I should think, an excellent transcript of life in a *Cloches de Corneville* touring company *(c.* 1880), and it isn’t a bit like the stage life that I knew something about, and I have seen some varieties and odd contrasts too.

I first used grease paints at the Comedy Theatre, about seven years ago. I went up a good many flights of stairs and found myself in an odd, bare little room, on the door of which my name was written with others. It was an excellent dressing-room, really; experience has told me that, but at the time it struck me as uncomfortable. A wardrobe man came in presently and gave me a bundle of clothes, and I put on the trunk hose and a sort of russet cassock and girdle. When I had just finished buttoning the thing up, the wardrobe man came in again, and explained that it fastened at the back. We made the alteration. Costumes mostly button up the back, I suppose to ensure the existence of the race of dressers. So I was all right, except for my face. Then, happily for me, old Gobbo came in, and I asked him how about 'make up'. He said, 'What do you want to look like?' and I told him that as a member of the Venetian mob, I thought an olive hue would be the correct thing. He translated 'olive' into the words 'Three, Eight, and Ten,' and went into the next room to borrow sticks of grease paint of these numbers from Morocco. Morocco was busy; he was bellowing like an angry bull at two unfortunate Doge's Trumpeters, who were 'breathing' their instruments; and the bellowing of Morocco was louder than the blast of the horns. I got the paints and put on a fairly successful coat of colour for a first attempt. The reason why old Gobbo did not lend me paints himself was that he did not use them. His skin was sensitive, and he painted it in water-colours with a camels-hair brush. He was (and is) a great artist in make up, with an eye for detail. I remember I saw him putting a little grey crêpe-hair on the tip of his nose, to indicate extreme old age.

I got on the stage in good time: they were just beginning to call 'Overture and Beginners, gentlemen, please,' and I stayed on it a couple of minutes, and then I had nothing to do till the Trial Scene was called, and then I went down and helped to hoot Shylock from a rostrum something like a flowerpot stand in a greenhouse. The hooting was easy enough, but the 'displaying of emotion' in dumb show was quite the most difficult task that was ever given to me on the stage. Englishmen are not gesticulatory, and when they do use gesture in common life, their gestures are usually horribly ungraceful; but when they try to use gestures on the stage they are ridiculous, especially if they are new beginners. I must have looked from the front like a bad case of St Vitus's dance, complicated with idiocy. Still, I had 'gone on the stage'.

It has happened, since then, that the people who were so good to me, a middle-aged ignoramus, have got on. Old Gobbo is one of the cleverest and best-known character actors in London, and Morocco — he that drowned the blast of the trumpets — is the manager of a great London theatre at the present moment; and there are many others whom I have not mentioned who are as celebrated as these two, and deserve all the fame that has come to them. For the greatest good fortune that can befall a beginner had been given me; I had joined Mr F.R. Benson's company.

One must be patient with heresy: I suppose the Inquisition *was* rather a mistake. So one must bear as quietly as one can the statement that is sometimes made — that there *are* other companies besides Benson's. Of course I know that this proposition is ridiculous on the face of it: I always move away from a man who talks like that; he is sure to be on the verge of mania, and of violent mania too. Before I joined the company I used to meet such persons occasionally. They told me that the Bensonians were very nice gentlemanly fellows, who played cricket and football capitally — it was a pity they couldn't act. Later, when I knew more, I understood the value of this criticism and something of the status of the critics. These were mostly people who had been touring with the 'Gramophone Girl Company Number Three' and the 'Baron and Barmaid Company Number Four' for quite a number of years. One of them had played the same part in *Charley's Aunt* on tour since the early nineties; he was very severe on the Bensonian lack of talent. People who have seen Mr Oscar Asche's Maldonado and Petruchio say that he has quite a good notion of acting, and Mr Lyall Swete has his admirers, I understand. And one has gathered that, Mr O.B. Clarence's 'old men' are rather excellent in their way.

But the best days with the Bensonians were the days on tour, and, above all, at Stratford-on-Avon. The Memorial Theatre there is quite hideous — a sort of cross between a German town hall and an Independent meeting-house — but it stands on a meadow by the river, and one could sometimes escape by a newel stair for a few minutes and listen to the nightingales' chorus sounding from the other banks. And the old town is quite wonderful; and there at night one realises the tremendous force of the phrase about hearing the chimes at midnight. At eleven o'clock Stratford-on-Avon is all dark and quiet. There is a tavern there where they make real beer — an operation which one had supposed to be a lost secret, like the arts of the old glass painters, and the fashioners of raised gold glories in illuminated manuscripts. Some people whisper that at the Windmill, Stratford-on-Avon, they make beer out of malt and hops; and I believe the big brewers think that that sort of thing ought to be put a stop to.

There were great gatherings at the Windmill and at the Shakespeare too. I agree with Dr Johnson. He had a very poor opinion of a man who did not mind his belly. I go further, I think nothing of a man who neglects his beer. Such an one is probably a Protestant; and I can't say worse than that. We

Bensonians would, I think, have satisfied Mr Belloc of our Catholicity—'wine' being taken in its universal rather than in its particular sense. There were great gatherings then in the old taverns; and it must be remembered that the Benson company of those days was a sodality of old friends who had vagabonded over England together for ten years and upwards. They must have been something like a company of wandering craftsmen in the Middle Ages, with their sense of companionships and their sense of their craft. For they really liked their job and took it seriously; and I believe it is quite archaic now for a workman to take his work seriously. In time, no doubt, when we get really advanced, engine-drivers and pilots and signal-men will all be dashing amateurs — like 'modern' actors and novelists. Then there will be some sport in travelling. I am afraid I was too old and stupid to learn very much from the Bensonians; but, at all events, I know that one has to kneel on the knee next to the audience.

We played about twelve plays in the fortnight we spent at that exquisite and lovely Stratford-on-Avon, They gave me little 'bits' in most of the plays; sometimes I spoke the words, sometimes a great horror of forgetfulness seized me and I 'dried'. There is no feeling like the sensation of 'drying': you are sailing along with tolerable complacency through a sentence, and four or five words from the full stop you realise with lightening-like suddenness that you haven't the remotest idea of how to begin the next phrase! Your heart does something strange and unpleasant, you grow white under the paint, the stage swims round you, and you hear your voice dying away to a miserable quaver. Very likely the prompter is away from his corner; or if he is there one is usually too far gone to profit by his remarks. I 'dried' horribly in 'Mouldy', and I haven't forgotten it yet, though it is a good many years ago. But I managed to utter all 'Joseph's Servant's' remarks; and impersonated no end of 'Lords' and 'Countrymen' and 'Messengers' who flit through the great Histories. And then, on the last Saturday of our stay at Stratford-on-Avon, the stage-manager told me that I was to play 'Nym' in the *Merry Wives* on Monday night at Worcester.

II

It certainly was 'a bit of a pill'. I mean that for a beginner to be word-perfect in 'Nym' and to be easy in all the business and positions at such short notice was something of an undertaking. But here one gets a glimpse of the various regions and dialects of the stage. If I had used the phrase 'bit of a pill' to a Bensonian he would not have understood what I meant, or if by some chance he knew the idiom he would have told me with a coldly corrective air that the Benson company had no part in the worlds of musical comedy and melodrama.

I remember an illustration of this diversity of language happening at a London theatre a year or two after I had gone on the stage. Blank (a very good actor and a Bensonian) was rehearsing, and spoke a line something in this fashion:

'I remember with what an air y' flung y'r verses at me.'

'Not so much of the "old," Blank, not so much of the "old,"'said the actor-manager, who was taking the rehearsal.

Blank did not know what the manager meant. He had been more years on the stage than I had spent months, but his experience had not been so various as mine. I was able to explain that the manager had expressed a desire for a less melodramatic style of elocution; for 'you' and 'your,' instead of'y' and 'y'r.' The Bensonians have a dialect of their own; they and they alone are aware that the tavern nearest to the theatre is a properly called 'The Hog and Bristles,' whatever its sign may be; to 'boil' with a man signifies to occupy the same rooms on tour; and 'ancient stoal' and 'aged mackerel' are ways of indicating an elderly individual. Then, again, there is another region and another language: dubious these and verging on the 'portables' or booths. There are exceptions, of course but, as a rule, it would be unwise to associate over intimately with an actor who knows the meaning of the phrases 'nix munjare' and 'omee of the caser'. Experts in thieves' slang will recognise the words, and I have met players who could carry on a conversation of some length in this dialect.

By the way, I wonder whether Dickens was right in his interpretation of the important word 'ponging'.

'Missed his tip at the banners, too, and was lax in his ponging,' said Master Kidderminster, and member of Mr Sleary's Horseriding Company, in *Hard Times.* 'Was short in his leaps and bad in his tumbling,' Mr Childers (another member of the company) interpreted.

Now, a Bensonian who said, 'I went on and ponged for all I was worth,' would mean that he rolled out his speeches in a declamatory manner; but with the actors of the booths the word implies improvising, inventing speeches and dialogue on the spur of the moment.

Well, anyhow, that ‘Nym’ was a bit of a pill. We had been rehearsing *Richard III* all the morning of Saturday; it was the only rehearsal that we had. There was a matinee in the afternoon, and the performance of *Richard III* at night; and when that was done the company adjourned in a body to a certain inn and stayed there. There is a legend that a round of drinks came to eighteen shillings on that occasion, but I think this must be an exaggeration. But there was no time for learning ‘Nym’ on Saturday, so I did my best with it on Sunday afternoon at Worcester. Of course, an actor of experience would have had the part at his fingers’ ends in an hour; but I was an actor of inexperience and my heart sank. I had a rehearsal next morning; it was in itself terrible. The leading man, who played Ford, did not come, and I don’t blame him; so one had to imagine his presence, and the prompter read his lines. One had to imagine a lot. The rehearsal was in a tavern room, and a table stood for a house, and a three-legged stool for a grassy bank, and a terrace and a flight of steps remained without symbols of any kind whatever. It was all a dreadful and confusing game of make-believe — for a beginner.

My name is Corporal Nym: and I speaks and I avouch ’tis true: — My name is Nym, and Falstaff loves your wife — Adieu.

‘Up the steps and half-way along the terrace at adieu, Mr Dash,’ said the prompter. I climbed the steps that weren’t there, and went along that noumenal terrace.

I love not the humour of bread and cheese; and there’s the humour of it. Adieu.

‘Now, then, go off left and turn on your exit and say’:

My name is Nym, and Falstaff loves your wife.

‘Thank you: that’ll be all right at night.’

I did not think it would be all right. I felt sick; my sensations reminded me of the first day of term after the holidays. And it was an awful experience. There were three scenes: Act I, Scene I, where Falstaff and his followers meet Shallow; the room in the Garter Inn; and the scene with Page. I ‘grinned like an idiot’ (in Coleridge’s phrase) as I uttered that final *Falstaff* *loves your wife,* and went up to change into one of Ford's servants who bear the luck basket. I believe I got through pretty well, considering: I know the Old Woman clapped me on the back afterwards and said something about 'the nervous ones doing best'; and I remember that my terror rose to such a height in that last, rather 'tricky' speech, that it soared above me, as it were, and I forgot all about it I was only conscious of being intensely annoyed by Page's attitude of smiling incredulity; and I suppose that is the mode in which a player should do his playing — if he can only keep control over his memory.

Well, that was the Bensonian system of rehearsing; it was a case of learning to swim by being pitched into the water. No end of things were left to the player's own taste and fancy. I believe that in the whole history of the great company there are only legends of two dress rehearsals having taken place; one, I think, for *Richard II* and one for *Anthony and Cleopatra.* The rehearsal which I have described was exceptionally sketchy; we often rehearsed on the stage with the scene set (more or less). I remember that we had five rehearsals in all for that year's production at Stratford-on-Avon — *King]ohn* — and everybody felt comfortable — except myself. I had to pull away the cloak from the body of Prince Arthur, saying: *Who killed this prince?* It sounds simple enough, but I wasn't. A took me aside and showed that the action must precede the word, B pointed out that the contrary process was far more effective, and C demonstrated over a tankard that words and movement should be simultaneous. And then Mr Benson asked me what my opinion was. I said I hadn't got any; and he laughed. It was a little confusing perhaps; but one sees by such an incident how the Bensonians interested themselves in the show as a whole; how they were ready to help a raw beginner over his fag and trifle of a part. I am afraid that the average actor cares no twopence for any part except his own, and is not apt to worry himself over other people's performances — unless these performances affect him personally.

Of course, there is something to be said against this scant and somewhat conversational method of preparing a piece. It is not likely, perhaps, to make for a show that goes like clockwork — smooth, complete, polished to the last degree. I daresay that there were a few rough edges in a Benson production till the company settled down into their parts. But there may be something of truth in William Morris's indictment of nineteenth-century art and craft as being altogether too smooth for perfection, too much polished by mechanical means to give true pleasure. And I think this dictum applies to a certain extent to stage-work, especially to the playing of the minor parts and to the management of crowds and tumults. You get ease and certainty and polish, doubtless, with your two months' rehearsal at the London theatre; but it is a question whether you do not lose vigour and 'go' and the dash of originality that often accompanies technical deficiency. The piano-organ makes no mistakes, and the greatest player may blunder once or twice in a piece. I believe the Bensonian London crowd was a wonderful piece of work, and Sir Henry Irving's trained supers are said to have run round in rings like mechanical mice. So much for the audience's point of view; there is, of course, no question that the Bensonian method is infinitely better for the actor. It makes him think, it makes him inventive, he feels that he has some responsibility and some importance. The other way produces automata, who naturally act like automata. Besides, thinking it over calmly, is the audience's point of view of any consequence? No artist worth his salt cares what his readers or his audience think about his work: his object in life is to express himself in his art to the very best of his ability — and by so doing he does please the only audience that matters: the audience of the intelligent and understanding. As for the people who go to theatres and enjoy the 'drill' of musical comedy — they don't count; not as critics of legitimate stage-work, at all events. Their taste, such as it is, is most fitly gratified at the Military Tournament or at a review; and there is certainly something to be said from one point of view for symmetrical order. But the play, the Shakespeare play, I mean, should have its rough edges, its counterfeits of the odd corners and varieties of life; and this end is certainly best attained by few rehearsals and large individual liberties.

III

We stayed a week at Worcester. It was an old ramshackle theatre in those days, thick with dirt, and a happy hunting-ground of insects. Some of our ladies suffered horribly, and one of them, I believe, used to undress every night over a sheet with a view to making captures. It was all done up and clean and bright when I returned to Worcester two or three years ago; and the mention of that second visit reminds me of how some actors were deceived by a minor canon of the cathedral. The good ecclesiastic had no intention of deceiving; the actors' disappointment was of their own contrivance. It happened thus: The company in question was being ‘feted’ to a certain extent; I believe that one hospitable woman went to the length of asking all of us to afternoon tea — I do not know whether meat and eggs were provided. Anyhow, the players who went were certain, for once in a way, of a meal of some sort, and it was, no doubt, very gratifying to the intellect and fashion of Worcester to see live actors eating. On the top of this wild revel there was an invitation from the Cathedral to the men of the company if they liked to come round one of the minor canons would be happy to show them certain parts of the building to which the ordinary public were not admitted.

Now, the average actor, I am sorry to say, knows but little of Gothic art; but he generally has an indistinct notion that the medieval architects were occasionally guilty of marvellous improprieties; and, then, the invitation was to ‘men only’. On the whole, the affair looked promising, and a joyous band sallied forth, their eyes round with anticipation. They only saw some odd corners of the crypt, and a disused chapel or two: Worcester had no *musée privée* for their amusement. It was felt that a rather ungenerous deception had been practiced on a simple and unsuspecting race.

Mr Benson turned me out at the end of six months. I wanted more money, and the management, I suppose, felt (with some reason) that beginners should be cheap; and so I left. I should have been content with what I had, for I might almost say that six months’ practice with Benson is worth six years with another company. I remember a lad (who is now a ‘star’) asking where else he would have the chance of playing three several parts (each with, some ‘character’ in it) in the course of one evening: one can imagine the difference between such a training as this and the usual ‘‘oh’ and ‘ah’ with others’ part, which may go on, night after night, for six months on end. I did not see this at the time, so I left, having previously got an engagement at an important London theatre for a great production. The manager had happened to look in on one of our performances at a suburban house, and I was playing a ‘bit’ so unimportant that it was not mentioned in the cast; it was an official who says a couple of dozen words and reads a letter in one of the Shakespeare plays. I believe I ‘scored’ by being simply official and indifferent, instead of displaying a vivid, almost an hysterical interest in the progress of events; anyhow, the great man gave me an engagement — which lasted for two years. This story has two morals. The first is, that it as wise to do one’s ‘bit’ as well as possible, even if the part be beneath contempt, the place a rather out of the way theatre, and the occasion a Bank-Holiday matinée. The second moral, which is much more important, is that it was all bad luck. I have played a very important part at a very important theatre in London for several months as well as I knew how — and nothing whatever came of it, except the weekly salary. It would be easy to say, of course, that while I might read a letter and keep quiet well enough a real part was beyond me, but I believe this explanation to be untrue, though unflattering. One of the most promising of our dramatists wrote of his own accord to me, saying that I had played the part ‘quite admirably’ — but his admiration had no practical results, so far as I was concerned. Nevertheless, it is wise to do one’s ‘bit’ as well as possible, whether it be Hamlet or a Sea Captain, and whether the scene be set in a West End theatre or in a barn at Stow-on-the-Marsh. Anyhow, one will have the satisfaction of knowing that one is co-operating with the angels. The other plan always annoys me. I think the actor who ‘cods’ and ‘fluffs’ and ‘dries’ — I should say the actor who plays jokes on the stage, knows his words imperfectly, and breaks down — because the management is poor or unimportant, or because he thinks there is nobody of consequence in front, is a dirty dog, and a dishonest dog too.

The production for which I was engaged was not due for several months — it turned out to be nine — and I wanted to ‘fill in’. To begin with, I got a three weeks’ engagement in ‘Pastorals’. Nearly all of the players were Bensonians, so I was still amongst friends. We had three wonderful weeks, which are still dear in my memory. The sun shone all the time, and under such conditions the theatrical shepherd’s life is a delightful one, though it is sometimes rather laborious.

Of course, the conditions are very different in many ways from those of the theatre. The finer touches are impossible — it is out of the question to cultivate the nuance, the delicate tone of meaning in the open air. All such shade and half-tones of significance would be drowned by the noise of the wind amongst the leaves, or would vanish into empty space. Some ‘pitches’ are much better than others. I remember a delightful one amongst the pine-woods of Hampshire. The players strolled down a hillside, through trees and bushes, bracken and heather, and the rising ground behind the ‘stage’ reverberated their voices to the audience. Near Derby, too, there is a pleasant dell, in which the conditions were somewhat similar; but even in such favoured spots as these ‘breadth’ is essential, and the real delicacies of such a part as Malvolio are apt to be lost. Then, again — a point of purely technical interest — the make-up has to be very different from that of the theatre. Under the electric light of the ‘limes’ many things are possible. A streak of ‘blue-liner’ will look like a natural shadow, and dark red, properly applied to the eyebrows, will give the effect of black much better than black itself — dead blacks are nearly always weary on the stage, they look hard, unnatural, obvious paint, and the same maxim may be applied to crépe-hair. But on a sunny afternoon, on a smooth lawn, with your audience perhaps a yard away, it is out of the question to smear your face with blue and crimson: one must go more closely to nature, and I fancy that people who have been in pastorals always make up better than those who only limelight know. There is, of course, a school which thinks that the more crazy a make-up looks in the dressing-room, the better it will appear from the front, *sed de hoc dubito.* Breadth is no doubt essential; a maze of little lines, a ‘Clapham Junction’ make-up, cannot possibly carry for more than the first few rows of the stalls; and there are many actors who do not seem to be aware that the most cunning effects, if they be not large, simply merge into a pale white patch from the point of view of the dress-circle. Everything must be enlarged; eyebrows must be broader than they are by nature, a high light must be painted on the nose that it may stand out, and so forth; but one must be aware of certain conventional exaggerations, such as light patches of colour laid on spots which are not naturally highly coloured. ‘Juvenile’ actors, for instance think that dabs of carmine on the temples give them a youthful appearance; but they are probably mistaken. In the pastoral play make-up is necessary, because the ‘character’ parts have to paint to obtain their effects, and the natural hues of those playing ‘straight’ parts would look dull by force of contrast; but the tinting should be delicate and slight, and powder should be used with a very sparing and judicious hand.

We went to some odd places on our tour. I remember being hugely pleased at Northampton. I had been recommended to some rooms, and, knocking, the door was opened to me by a very nice old lady with ringlets. She spoke with that pleasant distinction which the old English *bourgeoisie* once possessed, and we were coming to terms when she asked suddenly whether I was one of the actors. I said yes, and the good old soul drew herself up and said: ‘We are poor, but we have not quite come to that yet. Good-day and thank you.' So I had to go to a 'temperance hotel'. There is one good temperance hotel in England: it is not at Northampton, but at Newark-on-Trent. I have never been at a dirty temperance hotel, and I have never known an establishment of this sort except that one that was not infinitely more disgusting than the dirtiest cabin in Ireland. I do not know why these places are so nauseous; it may be the pitchpine panelling, or it may be the thick glasses from which one drinks.

We were giving our show — *As You Like It* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* — in the grounds of a large lunatic asylum at Northampton. It was melancholy to hear the howls of the raging maniacs from within the asylum, it was more melancholy to see the blank, settled misery on the faces of our audience. Our Touchstone was a merry fellow, but his quips and grimaces did not break through that gloomy curtain of melancholia. We fixed on one man as the maddest of all — on his face alone there was a constant chuckle, a distillation of infinite imbecility. We heard afterwards that he was the chaplain of the asylum, and the chuckle was in appreciation of our efforts.

IV

There are some strange exits and entrances in the Pastoral Play. I remember once — it was at Stafford, I think — our green room was a haystack by a stream, the side of the haystack furthest removed from the audience. This position was not far from the audience, and we could hear the dialogue pretty well — when the wind did not sound too loudly in the willows. A man would wait, in great comfort and security till he heard the play approaching to within a page of his entrance; then it was necessary to climb an iron fence, walk down a little lane, and cross a bridge. Some shelter was afforded by the trees and bushes that grew by the bank of the stream; he would creep cautiously along in their shadow as the dialogue went on, and at last break away, and crossing another bridge, enter the 'stage'. Of course, all this was a matter of some judgement; it is one of the varieties which lend charm to the pastoral life. Sometimes there is a regular stand; a stage is built up and screened with canvas, and one gets on and off the stage at a minion's warning, as though in an ordinary theatre. I reprobate this practice; it is not 'playing the game,' in my opinion. I remember once in Hampshire, Rosalind and Orlando, Jaques and Touchstone, and the rest of that company of forest wanderers, made their entrance by strolling down under the pines, knee deep in heather and bracken; and I should think those fantastic figures, glinting amongst the green, must have added no small charm to the show.

It is a pity that one cannot be a pastoral player all the year. In a wicked, tiresome world such as this is, when men earn their living for the most part by ‘doing business’ or by such other evil and squalid tricks, there seems nothing more innocent or more charming than this device of wandering from wood to wood in odd dresses, in doublets and trunk hose, with false beards and painted faces, speaking Shakespeare’s lines, and trying to murmur the airs of Arden in the fairy age to this dull and gloomy time. But the pastoral hour is, by force of circumstances, a short one; and odd things succeed it. I found myself back in London without work, and going along Fleet Street one Sunday I ran across a former stage-manager coming out of vanished Thanet Place. I told him firmly that I wanted a shop, and after a few moments’ reflection, he remembered that he had accepted an engagement, which he could not possibly fulfil, in a moment of enthusiasm late the night before. So he passed on the address to me, and in some dim southern suburb I interviewed the management. It was a lurid little drama of love, jealousy, and intrigue, called *The Just Punishment*, and we played it at a theatre which I will call The Old Jago Varieties. The street where the house was situated has been described by East End experts; it is one of the seething pits of modern civilisation; I should doubt whether there was an honest house within a mile of it. There was a notice in the front of the house, relating the adventures of a client who had argued with the business manager. The Jago gentleman had made his points with a broken ginger-beer bottle, applied to the manager’s skull: ‘two months hard’ was the end and term of his story. The stage-door-keeper, a gigantic Highlander, who told me that he spoke ‘the Gaelic,’ and that his real name was something like Vich Ian Vohr M’Callum Conochie, informed me that the real industry of the district was coining; robbery with violence and picking pockets being diversions and sports of leisure hours. The dressing-rooms were dark and dingy dens, just behind the orchestra; I should think I dressed within two feet of the big drum. Rats ran in and out like kittens, and sometimes popped up cheerfully from the one wash-hand basin at the end of the passage. I played a comic (but good-hearted) Irish servant; and that Jago audience were even more terrible than the pastoral audience of old ladies following one in the text of *As You Like It* at a distance of three feet off. In the ordinary theatre people usually keep quiet till they find the actor intolerable and not to be endured; at the Jago one entered on the scene and confronted a howling mob, yelling, fighting, shouting, roaring. The actor simply had to roar them down — if he could. It was a great training of the nerves.

The Sketch lasted for a fortnight; and then I went into melodrama. It was an odd play enough. A naval lieutenant had rescued a gorilla, who lay wounded somewhere on the West Coast of Africa. The grateful animal had become fondly attached to the lieutenant, who, for reasons to me obscure, brought the beast to France and housed him in a barber's shop. I gather that the lieutenant had retired from our Navy; but he wore the uniform on all occasions, and the band heralded his entrances by a few bars of *They all Love Jack.* I cannot attempt to unfold all the tortuous windings of the story. There was a golden-haired woman called 'Pretty Louise,' who eventually became the lieutenant's own; she had been brought up by an old gentleman, who was the father of one of the worst of men. I forget what his criminal associates called him; but he wore a black moustache, and smoked no end of cigarettes. He killed the old man in the first act, and did something illegal and tortuous as well, which had the effect of driving out Pretty Louise into the world, penniless and unprotected. The villain — who had, of course, the worst designs — hoped that she would be at his mercy; but she fled and took a garret above the barber's shop where the gorilla lived, where two comic French Gendarmes resorted for shaving, where a very cheerful soubrette brought home the barber's (comic) wash. There, I cannot tell the whole story; but, looking back, I don't think that the gorilla came from the West Coast of Africa, or from anything like it. I think he came straight out of the *Murders in the Rue Morgue.* He climbed up to the garret at the end of the play, in the nick of time, for Pretty Louise lay helpless at the villain's feet. The gorilla did not precisely make short work of the scoundrel, for they had a regular set-to to weird music; but I need scarcely say that justice was done. I should have said that earlier in the play the Bad Man had tried to purchase the gorilla, with a view to torturing the poor beast with boiling water and white hot irons. The lieutenant looked at him fixedly for a moment, strode down to the footlights, and said:

'Sir, this Ape is my friend; and *we Englishmen* don't *sell* our friends.'

I think the horridly pathetic death of the beast, which ended the piece, was a mistake in melodramatic art, for the tour only lasted six weeks. We had opened in Leeds, had gone north to Byker, an ugly suburb of Newcastle-on-

Tyne, had descended then on Ipswich — a charming place with notable Pickwickian associations, where the stage is supposed to have a greater 'rake' than any other theatre in England, or in the world for all that I know. Then a week in Margate — quite empty, and quite pleasant, and quite useless, from the theatrical point of view; and finally the 'drama' house at Eastbourne saw the last of the Gorilla and the Villain, and Pretty Louise. I was a family lawyer in the first act, and I had been so conscientious as to buy my collars and neckties at a Soho draper's. I looked all right, I believe, but I didn't look in the least like any French *notaire* that I have seen, and I have known several. But, then, a French notaire in real life is not a bit like the English idea of a lawyer, and it does not pay to be too realistic, least of all in melodrama. In the second act, and for the rest of the play, I was the barber. It was a tolerably quick change, but an easy one. The hair wetted and brushed to a peak on the forehead gave the notion of a close French crop; the frock coat was replaced by a white apron, and moustaches and an Imperial made the disguise complete. The lawyer was more or less intelligible, but the barber, though a much longer part was to me a puzzle, and prolonged reflection has failed to suggest that the barber meant anything at all. His conversation was distinguished by a complete lack of point or purpose.

Before I packed from a very pleasant, though unfortunate, management, I had got another engagement, and after a week's rehearsal we opened at Maidenhead in a piece which I shall call *The Professor and the Poppet.* I had been 'under-rehearsed,' the part was rather long, things were not going very well with me generally, from London to Maidenhead (inclusive) there was a thick, cold, white fog, and the theatre at Maidenhead is, or was, much less comfortable than a decent barn. It was a damp, chilly barn, without anything so pleasant as straw in it, the ethos of the company did not much appeal to me, I was hideously nervous — on the whole I was, perhaps, more thoroughly miserable than I have ever been, before or since. I am afraid I did but little justice to my part of a drunken (and impossible) actor-manager of a provincial company.

V

I had about six weeks with the farcical comedy which I have called, I think, *The Professor and the Poppet.* At the end of the fourth week — to use, a technical expression — I 'bunged in my notice,' not being able to stand the management any longer. The management was, I believe, the most honest and the most offensive that I have ever encountered. Its word was its bond, and was never broken; its manners were beastly! Mr Williamson, as I will call it, had a curious experience, which was, perhaps, accountable for a good deal that was not charming. He was a Yorkshireman to begin with, and frankly, I don't like the Yorkshire character. A man in the train observed to me the other day that the Yorkshireman says what he thinks; 'and the worst of it is,' he went on, 'he always thinks such nasty things'. Then Mr Williamson had gone on the stage *via* the 'Gramophone Girl,' Number 3 Company; he had sung in the chorus, and had done a little business managing. This was his experience of the theatre when somebody left him money, and he started *The Professor and the Poppet* on its foolish, but fortunate, career. He had the most futile ideas as to the way to manage a company; he compared the art to that of the trainer of a restive, or even vicious horse; 'one must keep one's company well in hand,' he observed to me; and the way in which he kept his company well in hand was by making the most offensive remarks that he could imagine. Nothing was ever right; a man's show was 'rotten,' his collars were too high, his coat was too short, his voice was too low, in his great scene he 'just missed it'; and so on and so on.

I should like to write a little catechism for managers. It would begin something like this:

Q: Are you out for your health?

A: No; I am out to make money.

Q: How are you going to make money?

A: Partly by the excellence of my 'advance-work' and partly by giving a good show.

Q: How do you propose to ensure a good show?

A: Firstly, by choosing my actors carefully; secondly, by rehearsing them efficiently; and, thirdly, by praising them constantly.

Q: Why should you praise them?

A: Because an actor can only play well when he is feeling pleased with himself.

Q: But suppose you praise a man and he continues to play badly?

A: Then I give him his notice.

Q: Is there no other alternative between praise and notice?

A: NONE WHATEVER.

I do not know how the other way, Mr Williamson's way and the insane way, is ever adopted; but I am afraid it is not very uncommon. It invariably leads to the worst results, as might be expected. Fancy standing by a painter and hissing in his ear as he worked that his perspective was all wrong, his anatomy childish, and his colouring that of an oleograph in a bar-parlour. He would not produce his best; he would kick you, promptly; and here is the actor's folly that he too often refrains from kicking. We hear on all sides lamentations as to the wretched state of the theatrical profession, and the reason of this wretched state lies wholly in two grave defects of the average actor's character; he is a coward, and he is selfish, and selfish in a peculiarly short-sighted fashion. The men who have 'arrived,' who sit in the comfortable arm-chairs in the London Club, are utterly and entirely indifferent to the miseries of the less fortunate, of the unhappy hordes who stray about the country at the mercy of the 'management' — swindled, 'done down,' humbugged, lied to, left to starve by the roadside now and then. It is nothing to Mr A and Mr B, who are getting £25 a week with ease and comfort, that their brothers are delivered over to wretchedness; and when Mr A is to join the society which means to fight this miserable state of things, he says: 'What good will it do *me*?' While B may observe that he strongly disapproves of Trades Unionism. A and B, in a word, are selfish brutes, without bowels of compassion, without sense of brotherhood, nay, without ordinary prudence. For, sooner or later, the wheel may turn, engagements may fail, and then A and B will descend into the pit that they have suffered to be dug for others. The cowardice of actors is much more pardonable; since it is the cowardice of slaves. So long, it seems, have the players been under the managerial heel, so often have they seen the man who has dared to resist tyranny trampled on, none of his fellows finding courage to stand by him, that they accept the present state of things as a sad necessity; not one of them has the fire in his belly to resist, to incur the stigma of being ‘a troublesome man to have in a theatre’ a managerial idiom which signifies a person who objects to being swindled. It will be incredible, probably, to craftsmen of other mysteries, but it is true that the great majority of contracts today are ‘seven-show contracts’: in plain English, the actor acts for nothing if he acts in the afternoon. Imagine a bricklayer setting his bricks gratuitously at midnight — the nearest analogy I can find for the matinée which brings in something to the management, but nothing at all to the actor. And then, again, there is another notorious trick. The actor is engaged at a certain salary for, say, twelve weeks; he accepts, weekly, small pay in consideration of the three months’ employment that (he believes) is guaranteed him. A tour list is supplied, with all the towns which are to be visited — and, it may be, after the company has been ‘on the road’ for a fortnight, the wretched players see a document on the call-board, informing them that the date from August 20th to August 27th has not yet been filled in. This means a ‘week out,’ a week without pay, and very possibly after seven more weeks another call goes up, and the company learns that the tour will terminate in a fortnight’s time. I believe that such proceedings are wholly illegal, besides being morally abominable and the actor bears it. He does not grin (except, perhaps, with the grin of incipient starvation); but he does nothing. He may talk a little in his dressing-room, but no murmur ever reaches the managerial ears, if it did, the murmurer would be set down as a ‘troublesome man in the theatre,’ and his name would be entered in the Great Black Book of the Touring Managers’ Association, and he would get no more engagements — or so he fears. Now and then, of course — very rarely the actor-worm does turn, goes to law and wins his case, if the fraud has been violent, open, and impudent in a very high degree. This is the worst offence of all, and I am sorry to say that I have known actors to discuss such a case and to side with the fraudulent management. I cannot conceive a much deeper depth of cowardice and slavery than this. It is, in itself, a witness to the power and extent of managerial oppression; it is on a level with the behaviour of Mr Squeers’s pupils, compared with it the occupation of the ‘copper’s nark’ — a policeman’s spy — is of Spartan courage and of the martyr’s virtue.

A point of less consequence is the state of certain theatres ‘behind’. A week or two ago I was at a place called Gainsborough. The dressing-rooms were beneath the stage level, and they were somewhat malodorous; but these are little things. But they were lighted by unguarded gaslights; and here I think the generous heart of the public ought to be moved. *De nobis facile est; scelus est comburere auditores.* It wouldn’t matter, of course, if the actors were burned to death; there are plenty more of them to be found in Maiden Lane, at ‘one one,’ or ‘thirty bob a week, old chap.’ But in all probability the fire kindled by the roasting actors and their belongings would spread to the auditorium; and that would be horrible. The other case I have noted was in Morpeth, in Northumberland, and here my dressing-room steamed and ran with water. There was a great pipe high in the wall, and from this pipe the drops fell thick on the clothes hanging below; all the walls were in streams and rivulets; the air was that of a neglected crypt. If the local management would kindly provide an open grave or two the arrangements would be quite complete. And one descended, hot from the stage, into this dismal, icy and dripping vault.

I remember some years ago doing a week with a very important company indeed, at the Borough Theatre, Stratford, in East London. I was on the stage during the second act of a great costume play; somebody was being defied with large gestures and great rolling phrases, when, suddenly, there was a hiss (as Stevenson says) of the indignant pit: the whole stage was illumined by what might have been blue light-ning-flashes, and swirls of evil smelling vapour curled slowly from the back. It was only a ‘walker-on’ narrowly escaping instant death by electrocution. I do not understand the technique of electric lighting; but, so it turned out, some simple and necessary precaution had been omitted by the local management, and the wings bristled with possible death-traps. The ‘walker-on,’ who was in full fifteenth-century armour, had sat down on what looked like a harmless piece of board — it was quite dark behind the scenes — and he was instantly surrounded by flames and flashes; he escaped destruction by happy chance.

If ‘the profession’ likes all this; if it likes to be bullied, and swindled, and humbugged, and underpaid, and cheated; if it likes to exist at the mercy of the touring managers; if it likes poisonous stinks, death by fire, death from dripping vaults, from electric currents — then there is nothing more to be said. But if it does not like these things — it had better join the Actors’ Union, and be quick about it.

WHEN I WAS YOUNG IN LONDON

I

I WAS OUT hunting the other day; and the scent of the old chase came back to me across the bridge of thirty years and more.

I have often wondered whether I am still alive and going about the London streets with the same eager wonder and curiosity, the same sense of voyage and travel and discovery in strange seas by marvellous capes and outland continents. I mean that I wonder whether the young man from the country still wanders about the streets with that thirst of knowledge in him, that desire for the rare and singular in literature, and that old delight of hunting for it at a cheap rate in the confusion of the bookseller's dusty shelves. With the same desire of knowledge I say: and I hasten to explain, of knowledge for its own sake, for its own delight, for its own great pleasure; not the desire of that knowledge which puffeth up and passeth examinations. Before I went forth to revisit the old hunting-grounds I took counsel with the bookseller of the Great Turnstile, whom I knew well in the old dear dusty days. He said everything was changed.

It's all a different style of thing from what it was in our days. Then there were piles of dusty, dirty books on the floor, and everywhere, and a man with a clay pipe stood behind the counter. The old snuffy book-buyers would come in, and one minute they would be grubbing on the ground on all fours, and then they would be on the top of the ladder amongst the cobwebs — they didn't care for cobwebs — and they would wipe their hands with a handkerchief that looked a week old.

Now we keep the books nicely dusted in glass cases, and there's a carpet on the floor. The customer drives up in a smart motor-car, and we put him in a comfortable chair, and tells him exactly what he wants. The old-fashioned book hunters knew what they wanted.

So much for the opinion of the trade. Having obtained it, I went on my way and tried to find my old London and the old shops. I struck across Lincoln's Inn Fields and sought out Clare Market, by Clement's Inn. The Inn has gone; the old courts, the gracious seventeenth-century hall, the pleasant house in the middle of a garden. Of Clare Market, ancient, dirty, and smoky, hardly anything is left — and my bookshop has departed in the last few months. There I once bought *Lumen de Lumine* for ten shillings; and the Turnstile man had told me that the book would fetch three guineas in these days. What is *Lumen de Lumine* about?

I don't believe anybody knows. It is by the brother of Vaughan the Silurist, author of'They are all gone into a world of light'.

Coming down south, I tried to rebuild the eastern end of the Strand as I had known it in those days when every stone of London seemed precious and magical. I set up Holywell Street again; that narrow antique street, more tortuous in its dealings than in its direction. For here there were artful men who tried to persuade us that the histories of Gargantua and Pantagruel by Master Francis Rabelais were high-spirited, amatorious, lively reading; and I often chuckle at the thought of the lad who plucked Rabelais from between *Maria Monk* and *Gay Life in Paris,* and out-moded sculduddery of G.W.M. Reynolds, and began to read eagerly one of the most difficult and profound books in the literature of the world.

And there was a big shop on the left hand of Holywell Street as you went eastward. It was piled mightily and hugely with tall folios and thick parchment quartos, and big labels told you that here was an Elzevir going for eighteenpence. There were Elzevirs, true enough, with the Sphere on the title-page, and they were not dear to anybody who wished to give his shelves a grave and learned air. But seriously, they weren't worth twopence; very few Elzevirs are; and only deep experts, armed with a millimetre rule, should attempt to buy these.

Holywell Street has vanished utterly, and Nutt's in the Strand has been translated to Long Acre. I reverence Nutt's in the Strand. I had wondered about Sappho for years. I had heard of the majesty and splendour of Sappho, of a lyric beauty that seemed more fit for the stars than for the earth. Sappho for me had become one of the things that are almost too good to be true; theoretically one admits their existence, but practically one does not expect to have actual experience of them — I had to pinch myself when I took my ticket for Arles and Avignon and Tarascon by Rhone.

Well, one gloomy, rainy, gaslit afternoon in the autumn of’81 I went into Nutt’s in the Strand, and said I wanted Sappho. I don’t think I would have been astonished if the shopman had ordered me out of the shop. Instead, he went to his shelves, brought down a book in dark blue paper covers, and said, ‘Sappho; four shillings’. And so I read in Greek — I can’t read Greek now — of immortal Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, high on her rainbow-throne; and felt almost like De Quincey when he bought opium on a wet afternoon from the chemist in the gloomy Pantheon, and found, all amazed, that happiness could be put into a bottle and sold for a little money, with change given.

Blessed for ever be the memory of Nutt’s in the Strand. The shop stood, I think, somewhere between the two churches, near the shop of the butcher who said that he sold Welsh mutton, and floured all his joints to show that he spoke the truth.

And there was another old bookshop, across the road, where one Saturday afternoon I found a book in a faded brown cover which brought me face to face with the Absolute.

II

Where is ‘Chocolate as in Spain’; where is the rich smell of Rimmel’s soap; where is the shop of the filter and the ball, falling and rising in the fountain? What has happened to the Strand Theatre? In the place where it stood there seems to be a railway station; but I know better. I feel certain that as the night falls the booking clerks and the liftmen of the Strand station on the Piccadilly Tube glance quietly at one another:

Do you remember, sweet, a roaming
Just before the day’s decline?
The poets call it in the gloaming,
And other folks the hour to dine.

At the Ivy Inn they laid us covers,
But we would not say what fare,
And, like a silly brace of lovers,
Unto the waiter did declare:
O talk not of meat or of drink,
But by yonder starry sky above,
If we must eat, why, we think
Some strawberries and cream, the food of love.

No, it is not exactly great verse — and yet, rather, it is high poetry, for Marius sang it in 1880, and Florence St John was with him and Ashley played the old Marquis in *Madame Favart* in the vanished Strand theatre.

Alas, many features of the Strand have vanished since I first saw it on that July evening, thirty-three years ago. Not only have the old theatres disappeared. Old houses by the dozen have given place to new hotels, ancient purlieus and byways and passages and Inns of court have made way for palaces of buildings and waste gardens of purple flowers; and there is more than all this; the very spirit and soul of the street have changed; it no longer gives one the sense of being in the very heart and core of London, of participating in the very quintessence of the capital.

I do not think that this mystic mantle of the Strand has fallen upon any other street of the quarter. It isn't merely a case of the old Strand theatres, the Globe, the Olympic, and the Opera Comique having been pulled down; for if these be gone, new theatres have been built in their places. It isn't the theatres that made the old Strand; there are plenty of them in Shaftesbury Avenue; but the old spirit is certainly not to be sought there. No: I think the secret is that the London of my young days was concentrated, whereas the London of 1913 is diffused. There is no longer a centre to it; you can no longer say 'here, and here alone, I am at the heart of the wonder and the gaiety and the excellence of London'.

The first play that I saw in town was *The Pirates of Penzance* at the Opera Comique, in Wych Street. I did not care for it very much; for one thing the

Norman pillars in the second act waved gently in the theatre breeze; and if I knew little of back-cloths I knew a good deal about Norman piers and arches. Then the music was too good; it reminded me of the glees and madrigals of the Philharmonic Society at Hereford, where I was at school; and I did not want to be reminded of school in any way.

But I remember that my father, though a clerk in holy orders, was delighted with a remark of the Pirate King's to the effect that piracy, compared with respectability, was almost honest. I was too young for such high wisdom as this, and I enjoyed myself more at *Les Cloches de Corneville, Madame Favart,* and *La Fille du Tambour Major.* This last piece was given at the Alhambra, a theatre in those days. We dined at the Cavour; a large bottle of violet-coloured and most delicious wine being included. In 1880, not merely priests, but bishops, archbishops and patriarchs might have dined there at six or seven or eight. But I do not think that they would have cared for the supper scene between eleven and twelve.

More serious theatrical memories came to me yesterday as I passed the bottom of Wellington Street. There still stands the Lyceum portico; and at the Lyceum I saw Irving as Romeo in the spring of'82. I believe that Irving's Romeo was not a success; but it impressed me with its poetry. The lover was gaunt and hollow-cheeked; and so much the better lover, it seemed to me; and for effect of the theatre I have never seen the dawn from Juliet's window surpassed.

All the ground about here is full of memories. There are the shops of the theatrical costumiers; once they seemed magical places, but later recollections associate them with wigs, well-fitting and ill-fitting, the smell of grease-paints, and the sting of spirit gum. Drury Lane Theatre amidst change is unchanged; but a scarlet corporal's guard marched under the colonnade thirty years ago; and I can't think that the latest autumn drama is as good as the first. I can never remember whether it was *Youth* or *The World,* but I know that the ship was blown up by an infernal machine, and that Augustus Harris fought with the villain on a raft in mid-ocean, and was rescued, to the happiness of us all.

The other day I was talking of the old bookshops, and as I turn into York Street remember that I have stood behind the counter as well as before it. One day, in happy ignorance, I sold a seven and sixpenny book for ten and six, and when my master heard of it he appeared to think that I might yet do nobly. But a week later I disposed of a ten shilling volume for five shillings; and the bookseller seemed almost to despair.

The counter was only my place occasionally. My real business was in a dim garret in Catherine Street, above the publishing offices of Vizetelly. Here, musty, fusty, dusty, in crazy confusion, were all the mad dreams and a few of the high visions of the world. The Catherine Street cock-loft — a street now goes over the site of the house — contained a wonderful collection of occult literature, and it was my affair to catalogue these English, Latin, Greek, French and German books, and write notes under their titles about devils and witches and the Sabbatic Goat and the Spagyric Stone and the Furnace of the Wise.

And one afternoon, as I wrote assiduous in the midst of these great labours, the hot summer Strand became tumultuous. A murmur swelled into a roar, the street was tormented into a ringing chorus of shrill clamant voices. The newsboys were selling the *Pall Mall Gazette* containing the first instalment of a remarkable series of articles called *The Maiden Tribute of Modem Babylon.*

III

In 1880 London was manifested to me as a city all glorious and glittering with light. And if that town of my boyhood could be reconstructed now, with its old lighting, I should find it sombre and gloomy, an abode of shadows and dark places, ill-lit with flickering and unsteady yellow flames.

But, in truth, I came up to town in that long ago time with the very greatest advantages. How great these advantages were was brought home to me a year or two ago on a night when I was a guest of the Omar Khayam Club. On these occasions it is the unhappy lot of one of the votaries of roses and red wine to say something civil about the guests of the evening, and on this particular night I was glad to hear myself praised for a translation of the *Heptameron* that I had made in the prehistoric times of which I am writing. I was glad; everyone likes a hand, as Foker very rightly told Pendennis; but my thoughts went back to dearly-loved wintry fields, and the deep narrow lane under the hedges and the black woods. By that dark lane, by those lonely fields, I went evening after evening with my packet of manuscript, and waited by the stile where the footpath to Caerleon-on-Usk from

Llandegfeth crosses the road. Presently the postman's horn would come faintly sounding through the still twilight air; the postman himself appeared, stumping along stoutly. I gave him my packet, and went back home along the dark lane; faint lights twinkling from the farmhouses on the hillsides far away, a dim moon rising from the obscure depths of the forest of Wentwood, above the waters of the Usk.

And then one night in July I saw for the first time all the glittering gas lamps of the Strand, lamps glittered on the thronged pavement and the crowding people and the hurry and rush of the street. All the air was alive with gaiety and cheerful faces, and the shops were all brightness and wonder; as it were, very treasure houses, illuminated places full of Arabian marvels that one had heard tell of, but might scarcely hope to see. The crowds pressed about the theatre doors, about these amazing theatres, where they acted plays; and to and fro the swift hansoms went flashing, to the music of jingling bells.

And yet greater wonders: I walked down Surrey Street from the dingy, comfortable, private hotel, and there was the great sweeping curve of the Embankment, a semi-circle of resplendent silver moons. It was the electric light of vague surmises, the incredible was made visible, and I felt that I was now taken up into the great ineffable glory of London. Grandeur and splendour were fulfilled on me.

And yet, as I say, it was but a dim place to the London of today. The silver-blue electric lights only shone on the embankment and (I think) in front of the Gaiety Theatre. The rest of the town was lit by the old yellow gas, flickering and wavering before the wind, in its square lamps. It was fifteen years at least before the coming of the green incandescent gas — which is of the hue of the glow-worm's light — twenty before the general adoption of electricity, twenty-five years before Oxford street was lit by electric lamps of rich glowing amber. And there were no electric signs in those days; no inscriptions in green and gold and ruby and yellow, flashing and flaming and changing against the sky; no fiery serpents writhing upon a dusky wall, no phoenix in its burning red, dying and re-aspiring, no torches with rushing fires to emblazon the darkness.

But, as I say, I saw London for the first time under the best auspices; it shone for me bright and haloed in glory against the background of the dark wood and the still, wintry fields, and the lonely lane that climbs the long hill to Llanddewi Fach from Caerleon-on-Usk.

It was a good many years after this when I succeeded in renewing something of my own first impressions in the heart of a friend. Strangely enough this friend was a French confrere, an inhabitant of Paris. Now my recollections of Paris at night — which are faint enough, represent it to me as a well-lit and glittering city; but somehow or other M. Roulet — he was meridional and pronounced his name Roulette — left London convinced that it was a city partly of mysterious and aweinspiring gloom and darkness, partly of sudden flashing fires, but chiefly of blazing, flaring, glittering gaiety, outdoing and surpassing the brightness of the towns of the South.

I think it was accident which fashioned this picture in his mind. We went to see the pictures in the National Gallery one afternoon. M. Roulet admired Hogarth heartily, passed through the modern British room with the remark, *'Voila une impression de très mauvaise peinture,'* and standing on the steps outside formally and firmly denied the proposition that Trafalgar Square was the finest site in Europe. Then a fog came on, and took him down by Somerset House— '*belle architecture de ville'* — to the Embankment.

The river rolled black, funereal. Clouds and whorls of yellow fog surged and drifted across the sky; even as we looked it blackened and thickened. Out of this terrible darkness Waterloo Bridge loomed tremendous, and the confusion of buildings on the other shore, now appearing, now vanishing, put on unearthly shapes. Roulet was amazed, awe-stricken. 'I have never seen anything like this,' he murmured. This cannot be London; it is no modern city; it is rather the magical resurrection of Babylon, dead for ages.'

Suddenly from the summit of a dark tower across the water a light flamed up and died down again into blackness. A temple of fire-worshippers,' said my French colleague, and he would not hear me when I said it was an advertisement of a brand of whisky.

And as for the other aspect of London; I took him night by night to the Leicester Square quarter. He saw theatres, music-halls, cafés all brilliant and lighted up; he trod pavements as thronged and bustling as the Cannebière at Marseilles — and the Café de l'Europe let him help himself to absinthe. And so it seemed to him that he had never seen anything aught so gay.

I did not tell him of another London that I knew; of the suburban streets that then wandered out westward with sparse gas lamps, of how these lights got fewer and farther apart, till at last the suburban street became a road, and the road a muddy lane, and looking back one could see all the fires of London reflected dimly in the sky, as if far away awful furnace doors were opened.

IV

The other day a man who had been reading these recollections of a vanished world asked me why I didn’t try my hand at an article on the restaurants and chop-houses of the early ‘eighties. I said I would see what I could do, but I grinned as I said it, the reason of that grin may appear below.

Not that I am entirely ignorant of the tavern of thirty years ago. I have said that I dined one night at the Cavour in Leicester Square, a restaurant which has not altered much, I think, since 1880. I did not dine there again until 1900, and I can only remember one great change; he bottle of violet coloured wine was no longed included in the price of the dinner, and, as far as I know, this custom of included wine has become rare in London. I am sorry for it, since that (apparently) free vintage reminds me always of France, and there is nothing that I like better than to be reminded of that pleasant land of warm sunshine, red wine, and good roasting cooks. Then, again, I once went into the vanished St James’s restaurant, sacred, I believe in many a tender heart as ‘Jimmy’s.’ It is not sacred in my heart; I had roast lamb and mint sauce there one day in July, 1880 and the lamb was distinctly and unpleasantly high. I never entered St James’s again.

Another and a better tavern comes up in my memory. This was the old Cock in Fleet Street, the place where Tennyson drank that famous pint of port, and received the myth of the origin both of the titular bird and his attendant head waiter. I remember well eating my chop in one of the old boxes near the Jacobean fireplace. I had got odd notions in my head about Fleet Street, derived, I think, from the early study of Boswell. I had lunched once or twice at the Cock; but one day I resolved to go there late and make a night of it. Templars and wits and scholars no doubt would be there; Tennyson, I understood, had left town for the Isle of Wight; still English literature would be well represented, and I might make valuable acquaintances. So I entered the tavern somewhere between nine and half-past — and found the waiters making ready to close the place for the nigh. I suppose I was only about fifty years too late in my visit at that hour.

Another ancient and departed house that I visited occasionally was the Bell in Holborn. It was the last complete and perfect example of the galloried Inns of London; there were, I think, two tiers of galleries running round the courtyard; the Phiz picture of the Southwark Inn in *Pickwick* might pass for a portrait of the Bell in Holborn as I remember it. I did not go there for food; but for the pleasure of drinking beer in tankards in grave, antique, and dignified surroundings. I have a feeling that the company in the parlour at night was chiefly composed of detectives, graziers, and commercial travellers from the North.

But why did I grin when it was suggested to me that I should recall my experiences of the old chop-houses and restaurants? Why, because during my early years in London I so rarely had anything to eat. I did not exactly know what it was to sleep at the sign of the Beautiful Star — though I have often wondered how I managed to keep a roof over my head — but certainly I knew very well what it was to dine with Duke Humphrey. For me the ‘half a loaf is better than no bread’ saying was no mere vague proverbial metaphor, but a literal statement of my experience for days and weeks and months and years. I lived in a room in Clarendon Road, Notting Hill Gate. I wish I could say that it was a garret, but it was not; there was no slope in the roof. Still it had the advantage of only measuring some ten feet by six; and this, I think, is smaller than the average literary garret space. A step-ladder for ascent to the roof in case of fire was hung horizontally on the wall of the landing, and between the rungs I had disposed my library. I used to read Homer in Greek for fun in those days, and for really light reading — on lazy Sunday mornings, for instance — I had Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy,* a work on which I look back with tender reverence and delight.

They were good days; after their severe and austere and ascetic fashion. I had picked up Aldrich in one of those dusty grimy hunts in the second-hand bookshops about the Strand, and I became entranced in the study of the Scholastic Logic — which is the only real logic, and a science infinitely offensive to the spirit of the present age. And so failed to acquire that knowledge of the chop-houses that should have decorated this column of reminiscence. I would go into town by the smoky and sulphurous District

Railway, resolved to dine well, if plainly, at the Cock. But the good shabby old books drew me; and I spent the chop money on a copy of Whateley; and went back to Clarendon Road all a flutter of joyful expectation, and set about the *Elements* as I drank green tea and munched dry bread.

I am sorry that I did 'the right thing,' and played to the gallery with such an unfailing enthusiasm for the old traditions. I feel that the buying of a book on logic instead of buying a good grilled chop is perilously like something out of a book — and a somewhat melodramatic book, at that. I can't help; it actually happened so.

But, in common honesty, I must confess that I had moments of sensual indulgence. I remember finding in a shop in Acton a History of the Literature of the Middle Ages that filled me with delight. I read in it for the first time Walter Map's poem *Mihi est proposition in taberna mori,* and I was so enchanted by the rich rhymed Latin that I felt the occasion must be fitly celebrated. So when I came to the baker's shop opposite to the Uxbridge Road station I not only bought a loaf of common bread, but two solid chunks of gingerbread. It was a terrible debauch. And once a week, when times were reasonably good, I used to have an excellent chop and potatoes at a pleasant old public-house on the Chiswick Road, just before you get to Turnham Green. I am not certain whether it still stands unaltered or whether it is the tavern I saw being rebuilt and utterly ruined for all decent people a few months ago.

V

Looking back upon the Clarendon Road period of my early experience in London, I gladly remember that I had a heart for poetry as well as for the logic of the school-men. I read all of the poetry I could get hold of; and my researches were delightfully unsystematic. Everybody knows the 'hundred best books' method of reading, and I daresay that for many people it may be a good plan to work with a chart, which will give you at a glance your scheme of lyric poets, arranged and dated in their centuries. But such a scheme would never do for me; I was rather like those early mariners who worked a vague reckoning by the stars, and yet had the consciousness of being on a voyage of great discoveries.

Thus on a fine summer afternoon with shillings in my pocket I enter the old Denny's that stood at the westward end of Holywell Street, and buy

Swinburne’s *Songs before Sunrise,* which is brave work when one is seventeen. Again, on a gusty winter’s night, I am wandering along the high road at Hammersmith, and finding a second-hand bookshop at the corner of a quiet street I go in and find one volume of *The Earthly Paradise,* and buy it for three and six. Another day gives me Waller — stiff, stilted and insignificant save for ‘Go Lovely Rose’ — and Cowley, both in eighteenth century duodecimos. I lit upon Warton, but even my enthusiasm could make but little of him, though Dr Johnson said that he loved the fellow. I think I discovered him in a shop in Acton Vale, opposite the brickfields. But were the book good or were it bad, it was ever an adventure, the portal of a new world.

And I not only read poetry, but like other young men with what is called a taste for literature I wrote a large quantity of verse. It was all very bad and imitative and hopeless; still my first instinct of composition made me metrify what I called my thoughts. And here, it seems to me, is the disproof of all the arguments of the rationalists. For no one can maintain that verse is a rational mode of expression; we do not in practical life utter our desires in measured feet or in the jingle of rhymes. But, unfailingly, the young man, burns for poetry, and tried to declare whatever is in his inmost heart by ‘morrow and sorrow’ and ‘moon and swoon’ and ‘mountain and fountain.’ The fact is, the natural man is also the ritual man; and poetry is one of the greatest of the rites and sacraments of life.

It was only rarely at this period that I ventured into what I call the real London, the London of the Strand and Regent Street and Piccadilly. For a brief time I worked in a publisher’s office in Chandos Street, which was then paved with cobbles. I had a desk in a room where a number of young men were doing something or other — I don’t know what — with photographic albums, and an electric bell above my head summoned me at intervals to the presence of my chief who had succeeded Walter Besant as ‘editor’ to the firm. I was just going to describe the nature of my employment, but I am sorry to find myself as vague about my own occupation as on that of my companions who did something with albums. I remember that I had to write daily reports to the chief office in Belfast, but I have no notion as to what I reported. I only know that these documents were required to be written in a fair hand, to have a nice and even margin, and to bear the letter and number ‘Dl’ at the head of this margin. The House was extremely kind to me, and offered to raise my wages when I said I was going, after a month’s trial. But though I have forgotten what my work was, I well remember I didn’t like it, and do I left Chandos Street.

It was then that my wanderings on the western verges of London began. I taught a little Latin and less Greek to small children, at first for the whole day, and then in the mornings only. This was the great time of the dry bread, green tea, and tobacco diet, diversified by the occasional chop at the Chiswick tavern, and now and then by a meal of a biscuit, cheese, and a glass of beer at a little tumbledown public-house on the road between Turnham Green and Gunnersbury. It was a queer little place — a trim row of villas has long ago marched over its site — with a high-pitched roof of red tiles and an immense growth of ancient ivy that quite covered one sagging end. At the back were market gardens stretching all the way to Acton. That reminds me of yet another fashion of my dinners. I would buy two or three penn’orth of a certain square flat biscuit in which currents were embedded, and take the bag to a gate on a lonely road that wandered through these dank market gardens. The I would sit on the gate and munch, and afterwards smoke, and old women who worked amongst the cabbages would now and then beg tobacco. I always gave liberally of this, and enjoyed doing so.

The reason for my enjoyment was an odd one. I lived a life of such desperate loneliness that I might almost have been Robinson Crusoe on his Island. I had few friends in London, no friends at all of my own age, so during months which drew into years I did not know any real speech of fellow to fellow; though I walked daily amidst myriads I was yet alone. Thus there were moments — too many of them — when the sense of isolation was nigh to overwhelming me; I was, as it were, a ghost, who moves among the multitude of living men, desirous of speech with them, and yet unable to communicate in anything. So I was grateful to the old market-garden women who asked for tobacco for their clay pipes; they demonstrated to me that I was still alive and had tastes which were shared by other human beings.

I do not often find myself in those western suburbs now, but whenever I go Acton way, or through Brentford, or by Perivale, or stand in Kew Gardens looking at Syon House, I think I see the young man with the moustache slouching along the roads, always alone; sitting on the stiles of the by-paths, peering into the windows of the suburban bookshops, or eating those famous currant biscuits for his dinner. Sometimes the young man wished that the March winds were not quite so piercing, or else that his old great-coat might be made a little warmer.

Day after day I wandered about in this fashion; and in the wintertime I was glad when I got home of nights that my room was so small. For, wanting a fire, the gas jet warmed it, and when the weather was at its coldest I kept on my great coat. Once in my room I lit the spirit lamp, and made a great brew of tea, and sat down to my books and — usually — to happiness. One night, I remember, I had found Pomponius Mela and the other ancient geographers in the Portobello Road. It was a fine edition, a Stephanus of 1520 or thereabouts, and I made a great night of it in the little room. There was much green tea, a thick cloud of tobacco, and all the wonder of the writer who tells of the eternal dances of the fauns on the African mountain, of the clanging cymbals of their companions sounding in seamen’s ears from a wild shore — *tinnitus cymbalorum per oram maritimam.*

THE GLITTER OF THE BROOK

MR. AGATE, ONE of our most distinguished literary and dramatic critics, said a very striking and arresting thing a few weeks ago. He was reviewing a book, the author of which had declared that in his opinion, great music, the music of Mozart and Beethoven, was the very climax of civilisation: in itself civilisation, and the pure essence and expression of civilisation.

Mr. Agate would have none of it. He swept music aside, and with it architecture, sculpture, painting, all the arts; including, I suppose, literature, though I don’t think literature was expressly mentioned. “None of these things,” he said, “counts. When I speak of civilisation, I mean good sewage.”

Let us not endeavor to score off Mr. Agate, as we say, referring to that sacred British institution, cricket. Let us not get gay with him, as I believe you say in America. It would be very simple to ask Mr. Agate why, holding that good drains make good men, he passed his days in judging plays and books; matters, according to his doctrine, of no consequence whatever. I suppose his answer would be: “Because I want to earn a lot of money, so that I can afford to live in a house where the sanitation is perfect; and so I give in to human folly.”

But we will not cross-question Mr. Agate; there is always something unmannerly, almost brutal about the *argumentum ad hominem*, the confronting a man with the consequences of his own opinions. I have quoted this saying about sewage, because I believe it to be a survival, because I believe that it is the utterance of a doctrine now dying, soon to be dead.

With a kind of brusque and biting humor, no doubt, Mr. Agate intended to signify that he was a utilitarian and a materialist; a believer in the school of Jeremy Bentham, of the elder Mill, of the sect known as the Philosophic Radicals, who uttered their voices in parliament as Bright and Cobden, who are expressed in literature by Mr. Gradgrind, the Hard Fact man. The sect spoke in a leading article in The Times, when William IV was to be crowned. “What nonsense all this is,” said, in effect, the weighty article. “What possible good can be effected by greasing (anointing) the person of the sovereign?” And the gentle, though shallow, Macaulay prophesied utilitarianism when he spoke of ancient philosophy; of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and the rest. The leaves of this tree of ancient philosophy are beautiful indeed, Macaulay allowed. But, he asked, where is the fruit of the tree? Do Plato and Aristotle lead to the gas works and the locomotive engine? If not, what is the use of Philosophy? And, be it said in all sincerity and gravity, this utilitarian faith is by no means to be blown away with a contemptuous puff of the breath. It appeals, in one way or another, to all of us. Before we laugh at it, let us ask ourselves whether we are completely indifferent to our bodies, to our bodily comforts and discomforts, to the body’s sickness and health, to its starvation or repletion. Suppose I say that I don’t think that Macaulay’s engine, or our motor cars and airplanes matter twopence, that it is of no real consequence whether we go fast or slow. Very fine; but my friends would tell me to walk to London and back, fifty-two miles in all, the next time I have to go in town; and then to say how I liked it. No; there is no denying that utilitarianism is a faith of universal appeal, of high cogency. There is only one thing to be said against it, and that is, that it is entirely incredible. We may be reciting the “I believe in one utility,” the “Our Father Bentham,” the “Hail Sewage full of chloride” and the rest: and the wind in the trees, or the glitter of the brook, or a line of Keats will scatter it all away; and we awake from nightmare, and know that the well being of the body is the means; the joys of the spirit the end. Utilitarianism, materialism are dying creeds: I shall yet see Mr. Agate on the mourners’ bench of a better faith.

You can see signs of the change in all quarters and in all manners, both high and low. I hardly venture to touch on the esoteric doctrines of sciences; but it has long been evident that Prospero’s exposition of the universe is far nearer to the truth of things as modern science sees it, than the science, or rather, nescience of the Tyndall, Clifford, Spencer school of the ‘seventies of the last century. The very names of these people have already something obsolete about them; they will soon be utterly forgotten.

But let us not say more of these matters, which as I have confessed, are too high for me. Let us seek our signs in familiar things. Here is my instance.

Some ingenious person has invented a new cough-lozenge, a sort of medicament in which we are necessarily and perpetually interested, here in England. The benevolent inventor has called his dose (we will say) “Bung”. He advertises it, and his advertisement has just caught my eye on the back page of “The Daily Mail”. Here it is:

Teacher says:
Bung is best -
to ease the throat
and warm the chest.

You observe that this eloquent appeal is in verse. Why in verse? To attract attention better. But why should a jingling verse attract attention? It certainly does. The pleasing example I have cited is one amongst many: solid men of business, great concerns, the keenest professors of the art of publicity - a word I dislike - all entreat our custom with their simple rhymes. There is the Underground Railway of London that sings:

Underground everywhere:
Quickest way, cheapest fare.

And it was said that the late Lord Northcliffe, that great master of the art of advertising, paid a heavy fee to the author of:

Weekly Dispatch
Best of the Batch

It attracts. But why does it attract? Let me ask you another. Why did Hesiod, who lived in the eighth century B.C., write his “Works and Days” in rolling hexameters? The “Works and Days” is a “Poor Richard” book, a collection of simple maxims, of unsophisticated country folk, who love to hear their own experience, their own rough-hewn common sense corroborated and condensed into a phrase. “The half is greater than the whole”, says Hesiod to the man who will go to law resolved to have his claim satisfied to the uttermost, forgetful of lawyers costs. “Many things fall out between the edge of the cup and the lip”, “Potter hates potter, and one craftsman another” - one sees the origins of our “There’s many a slip ‘twixt the cup and the lip”, and “Two of a trade never agree”.

But why did this remote, ancient, primitive Greek put his keen observation, his homespun wisdom into verse?

The reason is that poetry comes before prose just as singing comes before speaking. Chanted poetry is the natural utterance of primitive man; spoken prose is a later, artificial invention. All poetry was contemptible to the utilitarians, the materialists, the rationalists, the Benthamites: it was a senseless jingle, worthy, only of savages.

And now see how we return to the old way, and recommend our cough-drops with a song.

The fact is, that if we have anything of real consequence to say, we say it in poetry; and it is only natural that a man who has goods for sale should deem them of the utmost consequence.

LONDON THIRTY YEARS AGO

WHEN I FIRST came up to London the days of the great revel were already over. Deep down in Wales, of winter nights, when the lanes were hedge-deep in snow, and we gathered close about the flaming logs, I had heard men speak of the gaieties of the entertainments of London. They babbled of Cremorne, of the Argyll Rooms, they chuckled as they recalled the Chief-Baron Nicholson and *Judge and Jury,* they praised the Alhambra as the home of all delights. But when I first saw the glow of the myriad gas lamps the curtain had already fallen on all these wild doings. London no doubt amused itself much as before, but not so openly. One danced, perhaps, as merrily as ever; but one did not dance in the open air as at Cremorne, but behind doors made tight and fast; and thus, no doubt, a highly important moral principal was asserted. A year or two ago on a stifling summer night I tried to dine under the sky at some exhibition at Shepherd's Bush. I found that this orgy could not by any means be sanctioned; and though the flesh craved for a cutlet and a cool jar of Munich beer in the fresh air, the spirit was delighted to find that virtue still reigned in London. In our better moments, of course, we all know that beer and cutlets consumed under the stars are immoral.

But I must not dilate upon these forbidden pleasures. In 1880, when I first saw London, I was most of all curious about 'the play'; and in the second place I wanted to see 'the sights.' It is Thackeray, I think, who interprets the enthusiasm for 'the play' in the orthodox fashion. It was no sectarian passion: it did not discriminate between this play and that: in those simple days the problem drama, now becoming so curiously old fashioned, had not come into existence. The lad from the country, at all events, drew no nice distinctions between Shakespeare, melodrama, Gilbert and Sullivan opera, and opera comique from the French; he rested on his innocent faith that the theatre was heaven, and the rising of the curtain the final revelation of bliss. It really didn't matter what the play was or was not; one was seventeen and in the pit, and the footlights were brightening — that was sufficient joy. And oh! the wonders and the savours and the colours of those Neapolitan ices that they brought round between the acts! I always used to get the book of the words when the play was comic opera: it was part of the delight to follow the chorus in such literary gems as:

The coach is come, the coach must dine Out with the meat, out with the wine.

Meanwhile ere on the food we rush, We think we'd like a wash and brush!

Well, we certainly relished the play amazingly, we harmless simpletons of the early 'eighties, and looking back and peering into my heart I believe that some of our pleasure was due to a vague, latent sense that the theatre was, if not exactly wicked, at least a hazardous and daring sort of institution. I did not come of Puritan stock, I am thankful to say; my relations had no sort of formal or specified objection to make against the playhouse. But in 1880 actors and actresses were a part of the great magic of the unknown world before me, and their realm, the stage, was perilous, desirable fairyland.

The theatre was certainly a principal part of the enchantments of London, but it was not all. In the rectories of the early 'eighties we still believed in 'the sights.' I have said that we were a simple folk. So when I first came up to London I was taken to see the sights: and I am bound to say that they profited me very little.

Then we went to the Crystal Palace. The generation that came before me had admired this glassy monstrosity with single hearts. Dickens had said that there was nothing like it in fairyland, and none but Ruskin was found to reply sarcastically that Mr Dickens was quite right; that fairyland held nothing so hideous. But no father from the country would have felt at ease in his mind, if he had not shown his son the Crystal Palace; and so we went to Sydenham. The place bored me, I am glad to recollect, but I was interested by the endive salad that they served there. I tasted it for the first time; salad meant lettuce in the country, and nothing but lettuce.

I escaped the monument and Madame Tussaud's Waxwork: I don't know how. But I saw the exhibition at the Royal Academy and liked the pictures very much. At the Tower of London a countryman put his head on the block and grinned. I climbed up to the Whispering Gallery and St Paul’s Cathedral and the verger whispered, and I declared I heard what he said. I didn’t hear anything, but I thought I would follow the line of least resistance. And I went to Westminster Abbey and Westminster Hall. On the right hand side as one went in there were doors in the wall, and going softly through one of these, I found myself in one of the Law Courts which sat there in those days. The new Law Courts were opened a year later.

And looking back through all the years and, and questioning myself as to what I thought of it all, I am constrained to confess that I thought nothing at all. I realised nothing; the dome of St Paul’s was then no marvel to me, though now I admire and wonder every day, as I go down Fleet Street, and see Wren’s great magistery. The only thing I liked at the tower was a big raven and I was heartily glad to see that there were still ravens at the Tower, when I went there the other day. Again I confess: when I was sixteen I would have given the History of England and all its works and arts and monuments for the moment when the curtain went up at the old Globe, and the chorus began to sing:-

Just look at that, just look at this,
Don’t you think we’re not amiss,
A glance give there, a glance give here,
Tell us if you think we’re dear.

And the tune they sang and the melody of the singing voices ‘ring in my heart for aye’ — to quote a ballad we liked in those days.

THE JOY OF LONDON

I

TO THE IMAGINATIVE man, I suppose nothing has so great an attraction as that which has some savour of mystery about it. He who is something more than a mere automaton, a mechanical performer of certain mechanical tasks, returning day by day, feels instinctively that he is born to voyage in the unknown, to live always in contemplation of a great perhaps. And here, I think, we touch on the secret of one of the most powerful of the many attractions of London.

Its people are numbered, its trades are classified, all the circle of its vast ‘O’ is mapped and charted, it is divided and subdivided to a nicety; and yet he who truly knows London will confess that he knows it not, and is most sure that he never will know it. It is mapped and charted; but only for the logical understanding, never for the imagination. London in its essence, is an object of faith, not of science.

The sense of all this dawns upon one slowly and by degrees. I do not know how this may be with the born Londoner, or whether such an one receives by right of birth the inspiration and the dream of London’s infinitude, of the unplumbed seas of its multitudinous life. But speaking as one of those who have come up from the silent lanes to the sounding streets, I say that the perception of the mystery of London is of slow growth. I saw it first as a place of unimagined gaiety: the Strand and Regent Street and Piccadilly and Bond Street all ablaze with splendid shows and theatres — places of alluring enchantment — and lines of glittering lamps: this was my London, a glorious but limited city.

It was, as I say, by the experience of years that I came to learn how small a part of the cast territory of London I had charted and explored. I moved about from one quarter to another, gradually drawing near to the centre; from Wandsworth I passed to Turnham Green, from Turnham Green to Holland Park, from Holland Park to Bloomsbury, from Bloomsbury to

Soho; and so the infinite varieties of London and its life were, little by little, brought home to me, and the lesson was made plain by R.L.Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights.* From that time forth I thought of the great town as a sailor may think of the ocean or an Arab of the desert; as an object always to be studied, and explored, but never to be known fully, as a region of perpetual surprises and discoveries and adventures of the spirit.

In the eastern tales one reads with a curious and deep satisfaction of the man who, passing along an accustomed road by a track which he has trodden every day of his life, espies suddenly a door in the wall which he had never noticed before. The man opens, enters in, and is made a partaker of the great sacrament of wonder; a new and unsurmised world is shown to him. Such an adventure, I repeat, we read of with a keen relish, as I maintain, due to the fact that door leading to an unknown territory is a symbol of the adventures for which the human spirit is made, as a hot and dry and dusty throat is made for the brook by the way, for the cold water that wells rejoicing from the heart of the rock.

And so, when I think in the most general terms of the pleasures and advantages of London, I think of this Arabian quality that it possesses in such a supereminant degree. There is always a door in the wall, the existence of which one had never noticed or suspected; to surprises and discoveries and inventions in London there is no end. I have trodden the pavements of the Strand now for close on thirty-four years; and a week or two ago I set foot for the first time in a street somewhere near the Little Theatre, an 'old fashioned' street of queer little shops, from which one ascends a steep flight of steps into the main thoroughfare.

I had long known Pentonville as a dreary, dusty hill; but on an autumn day as I climbed it, I saw one of its grey, grim housefronts all glowing purple with rich bunches of ripe grapes. Dionysius crowned and triumphing on that sad mount of Pentonville; the southern Latin vine glade and flourishing *in sicco;* this was as good and joyful a thing to me as the blaze of the blossoming gorse to the botanist Linnaeus. And yet; I do not know that it was better than the discovery of the Writing Master. He lives or lived in the same street, a little higher, and he had placed his show case on his garden railings. Here behind the glass were specimens of an art that I had thought lost, of flourished and elaborate and conscious penmanship, relics of an age when people wrote well and legibly, because they had been first taught to write beautifully, to take a pleasure in writing for writing's sake. I think the Pentonville writing master's chief specimen was a swan exquisitely flourished with one stroke of the pen.

There are always surprises. Not so many now as there were thirty years ago; it is difficult in these days to fall suddenly upon the old-fashioned country town or hamlet. Once one had only to walk from five to ten miles away; though the advance guard of the raw red villas had already come within a field of the corn-merchant's shop with the bow windows and the small square panes.

The villas have mostly come and conquered since those days, and the old inn has been rebuilt and spoilt; still, here and there you can see the dip of a roof that was set up when Charles II was King. The sixteenth-century barge-board has long gone from Brentford, but there are still fascinations in that queer old town, and I agree with Dr Johnson in preferring it before Glasgow.

Then, the eccentricities of London architecture have their peculiar wonder. There are still left, I think, a few odd specimens of a former delight of the retired London citizen; the summer house in the garden.

I remember gothic ruins made of clinkers in Gunnersbury, but I believe these have vanished. There are still good things left, however; the fanciful ironwork of balconies dating from 1830-40, and examples of sham-gothic from the earliest to the latest period. See for a very fine example of the Horace Walpole gothic the doorway of the hall of Staple Inn, in Holborn, and if you will walk around the streets between King's Cross and Islington you will find the medieval idea struggling, with indifferent success, to express itself in the tracery of the window-panes. Fanlights are a special study.

And then, beside these odd remnants and oddities, there stretches the vast expanse of the modern suburbs; all red and new, shiny and flimsy, climbing the green hill before your eyes, breaking into the heart of the old wood. And the myriads who live in these new houses; who are they?

City clerks, very likely, for the most part, but there will be a sprinkling of high mystics, and here and there an alchemist who watches for the

Engendering of the Crow, and hopes yet to see the glory of the Son Blessed of the Fire.

II

A few years ago when I was still, theoretically, on the stage, but practically already off it, a fallacious old person said he had taken the Britannia Theatre, Hoxton, and steadfastly proposed to revive the golden days of Mrs Sarah Lane and her stock company. He enlisted me in his band, after ascertaining, by tape measurement, that I was not too short nor too broad for parts of moderate and tempered heroism, and the rehearsals began. And they soon ended without the play coming to the judgement of the Hoxton and Shoreditch amateurs of the drama; but in the meanwhile I had a very agreeable experience.

I was walking up from the trams to the Britannia and looking into the shop windows when I saw in one of them certain objects that swept me back some thirty-five or forty years. Somewhat old, somewhat battered, somewhat weary, somewhat doubtful of the famous stock company that was to be, suddenly became a boy again and saw scenes that had once been very dear and enchanting and familiar.

I was staring into the window of the original toy-theatre shop; and there before me were the very scenes and the very characters of my own toy-theatre which I had not beheld since 1875 or thereabouts. To tell the truth, it was so long ago and so many things had happened since those days, so many and such deep waves had gone over me — my fellow countrymen will remember the phrase ‘plant yr tonau’ and understand — that the foolish, dear toy-theatre had passed quite out of my consciousness. It was only when I stared into that sacred shop window in Hoxton that I perceived that it had never been forgotten.

With what a rush it all came back! The gallant figures, blue and yellow and green and red, that one cut out with mother’s scissors and set marching and in action in slender frames of tin; here they all were, gay on their sheets. They were of an old type when I first knew them; 1840, I suppose, was stamped on their ingenious countenances; but empires had gone down and they were still unchanged. And the proscenium of the theatre itself was unaltered; the same whiskered conductor raised a baton that had never fallen through all these heavy years; the same ladies and gentlemen in evening habits of yellow and blue gazed in perpetual delight from the private boxes on either side. Here were the sets for *Masaniello* and *Timour the Tartar,* what Neapolitan richness in the one, what craziness of Oriental architecture in the other. There are scenes in *Timour* which are like nothing on earth — saving the Brighton Pavilion and a house that used to stand, and may stand still, for all that I know, between Torquay and Paignton.

I had found the toy theatre again, and it was the true theatre. The rehearsal of our new play at the Britannia appeared the phantasm; and indeed it was so from all practical points of view.

And all this is an example of the manner in which dreams are realised in London, and, as it were, made concrete. The toy theatre of my boyhood had come to me out of the vague; now, after all these weary years I had found its place of origin, of its source and its begetting. It is, as I have said before in *The Evening News,* in the country that one reads of Sappho, and imagines wondrous things of Sappho; it is in London that one goes into a solid shop in the solid strand — alas! since then both solidities have vanished like cloudwrack at sunset — and buy for earthly shillings Sappho in the original Greek and in blue paper covers.

Sometimes, of course, the town does not realise the country dream. I remember how I used to walk four or five miles to a certain railway station where the London papers were obtained. I read them eagerly, even to the advertisements, and especially the theatrical advertisements. They were announcing *The Shaughraun, Les Cloches de Corneville,* and *Madam Flavart* in those departed days, and at the end of each advertisement one read, ‘For Cast, see Under the Clock.’ The reference was really to the lists of the actors and actresses set forth under the picture of a clock in another column of the paper; but quite in good faith, I chose to make up for myself the image of a vast architectural clock somewhere in the heart and centre of London, at the base of which the various casts were displayed.

This I found not to be so, ‘far from it,’ as Mr Pecksniff said of his youthful speculations concerning pickled onions and elephants and castles. But as a general rule it is nevertheless true that, in small things and great, London confirms the fancy of the country; it shows to the eyes that which the imagination had conceived.

Think what brave words the country boy reads in books! Mrs Gaskell tells us how that one brave word ‘London’ itself had so impressed itself on the imagination of the poor, distracted Patrick Bronte that he had studied the great town as if it were a science, and was able to set Londoners right concerning short cuts and obscure passages, as he talked to them in the Haworth inn. Patrick Bronte never realised his dream of the immense city; and one is sorry for him, but many of us who have come from places as obscure as Haworth or much more obscure, have known what it is to dwell on these words and at last to realise their force in concrete fact and experience. And London provides and marks the term of many of these journeys of the spirit.

And, though I urge a point which is somewhat opposed to my own philosophy of things in general, I cannot but confess that in many instances the actual thing equals and even surpasses the thing imagined. I must say that I found Provence even more beautiful than Provence imagined; I will not believe that any thinking person can honestly say that London has ‘disappointed’ him. It is greater, more wonderful, than the images that we have made of it in our minds. For once, the actual giant within the tent is vaster than the pictured giant without.

But the words, as I say, that one reads, and dreams of, one sees at last realised in one or other of the myriad streets. The boy reads of swords, and perhaps has a toy sword as a plaything, a ‘sword’ comes to him almost a symbol and a sacrament, some-thing splendid and terrific and vague like ‘Bagdad’ and ‘Rome’ and ‘martyr.’ He comes up to London and sees the Guards at Whitehall; awful figures all shining and scarlet, with actual drawn swords in their hands, glittering and terrible, and eloquent of sudden death. And faith is realised, and more than realised.

III

It was only the other day that, speculating on the immensities of London, I pictured, or tried to picture, its uttermost limits, and, and showed the serried lines of raw red houses covering the fields that were green yesterday, climbing the high hill, penetrating into the deep heart of the old wood. I asked who it was that inhabited all this great array of houses and streets, and the answer, I think, was: ‘City clerks for the most part, with a sprinkling of high mystics and a few convinced alchemists.’ I knew that this was no mere rhetoric, and a day or two later I received the current copy of the Journal of the Alchemical Society. And several of the most prominent members give addresses in suburbs that most people would call commercial and commonplace. 'Kelly' is a sage, doubtless, but much is hidden from him. He is quite unaware that the chief English authority on the Kabbala is domiciled at Ealing.

And then again, it was once my mission to penetrate to the newest — and therefore the obscurest — parts of Croydon to talk to a certain gentleman who ministered to some vaguely religious body there. The point — the journalistic point — about my quarry was that he has formerly served in the German army and had sailed on the northern seas as a whaler; such a career was justly considered somewhat out of the common. I found I had to leave all such homely and friendly things as railway stations and tram lines far behind me; I must put out in *vastissimum pelagus,* into the immeasurable sea of the suburb, if I would find my man. I dis-covered him at last in a new house in a new road that might have risen from the earth in the night the night before my visit, and now was finally sealed as part of greater, or rather greatest, London. The pastor received me with the utmost courtesy, and told me that all the reports that I had heard were true; furthermore, he had been a priest of the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church, and was a Licentiate of the University of Salamanca.

A Licentiate of Salamanca! I had never dreamed that I should be found worthy to meet such a personage, save in golden Cervantes and the picaresque romances of Spain; I received as great a pleasure as I once imparted to a friendly business man from the North, in London for the first time, who finding me, all a stranger to him, drinking absinthe at midnight in the Café de l'Europe in Leicester Square, felt that at last he was seeing life — and devilry.

But hearing of Salamanca, I began to quote *Barbara Celarent* and to praise the scholastic logic. The pastor of… the Universal Church, we will call it, cordially agreed with me, and added that the Roman Catholic religion was the only Scriptural form of Christianity.

'If I were a Christian,' he said, 'I should be a Roman Catholic, but I am convinced that what the gospels embody is a distorted form of the worship of Adonis.'

I was talking about this gentleman to a friend a day or two ago in a Fleet Street tavern. My friend expressed his cordial agreement with the praise of scholasticism and declared that for a really able statement of the atheist position there was nothing to approach the opening section of St Thomas Aquinas's *Summa.*

Which reminds me that I once had a very agreeable discussion with a sub-editor on 'essence' and 'substance' at a newspaper dinner; also, that it was in the purlieus of Lincoln's Inn that a Chinese gentleman handed me a cup of that curious tea called 'Water Fairy,' and I have eaten as good bouillabaisse in Wardour Street as Pascal himself prepares at his tavern in the Old Port of Marseilles.

Here, then, is another aspect of the joys of London. He whose mind is rightly prepared is constantly affected by the sensation of strangeness, of that slight novelty which Coventry Patmore declares to be one of the marks of a work of genius in the arts. And strangeness always appears to me to be not perhaps the differentia, but, say, the inseparable accident of all excellence, whether it be excellence of life or thought or cookery or wine. We may be talking of a great saint, of one who carried out that almost intolerable command of Thomas à Kempis— 'love to be unknown, and to be thought of no consequence' — and we say, 'how could he do it, how could he really feel like that?' And we shall ask much the same question about Captain Scott and his companions, we shall feel that a great picture or a great poem is in fact a miracle — an accomplishment beyond all reasonable expectation — and as for an old Burgundy, there is no greater applause to be bestowed than 'What a wonderful wine!'

So it is with London. To its surprises of sense and of spirit there is no end. It has not only that joy, which I have pointed out before, of realising and more than realising one's expectations, of showing the boy who has read of crucibles in books, crucibles in a shop-window; but it continually exhibits something new and altogether unexpected. A cynical character in Mrs Leveson's latest novel says of marriage, 'one does not run after a bus when one has caught it.' London is a bus that no one has ever caught. It is an ocean that no one has voyaged all over, whether in body or in spirit.

I do not think that there are any more awful concepts presented to the human mind than the eternities and infinitudes of time and space. Not for one moment, as it seems to me, can one imagine beginning or end to time, or limit to space; and yet time without beginning or end and space without bounds are conceptions equally intolerable to the soul. We can neither deny nor affirm; we are left in a perpetual suspense.

And the sight of the map of London always leaves me with a sense of a kind of lesser infinitude — if the phrase may be allowed. Here are marked streets and alleys and squares and bye-ways, which strike the eye as past numbering. They were all here, in undoubted brick and stone and marble and mortar, and yet one feels that no living man has trodden them all; that to the most energetic and leisured explorer there must ever be myriads of streets that he will never enter. And, extending the notion, how many houses must remain unvisited; secrets throughout all ages to all but a very few?

Thus does London make for us a concrete image of the eternal things of space and time and thought.

RE-DISCOVERY OF LONDON

I

YEARS AGO, I remember, I used to wander, by day and night, about the western limits and outposts of this most vast London. I would go out and pass from street to street with the purpose of escaping from London and attaining the true country. The streets at last faded into open fields, and I would say ‘I am free at last from this mighty and stony wilderness.’ And then suddenly, as I turned a corner the raw red rows of houses would confront me, and I knew that I was still in the labyrinth.

Or, in the night, I had fled away from the burning of the myriad lamps and the patter of the ceaseless, restless feet, I stood on a hill in a sweet summer darkness, and relished again the scent of night dews and green leaves: and lo! across the dim valley, lines of trembling fires, and still I was shut in as by ardent walls.

This was thirty years ago or more, and since then London has swollen like a flood, and engulfed many fields and woods and thickets that were then green. Its extent is mighty almost beyond the power of imagination, huge in a way that no mileage figures can express. For it is to be noted, our minds place things in categories, and judge each by its own standard. The Chestnut Avenue at Hampton Court is broad, though one can cross it in a minute: and so London among cities is vast as Sahara among deserts.

So it was with something of awe that I set out the other day on the first of a series of explorations of this immensity. A chance word determined my direction, and I fixed on Tooting. I have been a Londoner for nigh on thirty-four years and I had never seen Tooting; I only knew it in connection with a foolish tale of a train that was ‘the two to two to Tooting.’

Now the ‘Londoner’ declared a week or so ago that for him it was useless to define the neighbourhood of Stroud Green by saying that it was near Crouch End, since he knew no more of the latter than of the former. So I will not say that Tooting is by Balham; I will rather assume a knowledge of the Strand, and more particularly of the eastern corner of Wellington Street on the south side of the Strand aforesaid. Here I took the Merton motor-bus, No. 48.

It bore me over Waterloo Bridge, turned into the York Road to the right, then into the Westminster Bridge Road — a quarter that I cannot love — so into the Kennington Road. I mark in passing that here we are in an eighteenth century suburb; I have just guessed a row of houses as *c.* 1790, when I pass a similar row dated 1786, and feel quite pleased to find myself only four years out. Here are some projecting iron balconies of attractive design; and a few houses are pleasantly shaded and embowered in trees of growth.

From the Kennington Road to the Kennington Park Road, thence into the Clapham Road, a broad way which passes through Stockwell and then becomes Clapham High Street. Here there is not much character, and on Clapham Common I perceive a tendency to baldness — what the doctors call *alopecia areata* — and also a tendency to accumulate an unseemly litter of waste paper.

About the Common a few of the old houses are left; in them, I suppose, once lived members of the famous Clapham Sect, a race notable for the length of their prayers and the size of their pineapples. But for the most part the old houses and lawns and gardens are gone; interminable red brick streets of little villas have surged over them. Over hills and down valleys the red brick lines rise and surge and dip and cover the plains, spreading far as the eye can reach, and one street is like another street, as wave is like to wave.

So by Balham Hill, by Balham High Road. Somewhere here is ‘Kosman Church,’ the church of ‘The Confraternity of Faithists.’ I know nothing of them, but I dislike both their English and their Greek. In Balham I see a few of the old houses still in occupation, houses of the old snug order, with stabling and coach-house. But here is one that has become a laundry, another is a printing office, a third is a political club, the front garden of a fourth is filled with tiles and drainpipes. To right and left more raw red streets, sometimes with waste patches of ‘undeveloped’ land between the rows.

The Balham High Road — calling itself madly at one point, ‘The Boulevard’ — becomes the Upper Tooting Road, and this comes to a sort of open place whence ways go in every direction. I conclude that this is Tooting, as much as anything is Tooting, and I get down.

There is nothing very remarkable here, a few seventeenth and eighteenth century houses, low and modest, still standing, a great many new red and shiny shops, a house covered by a climbing rose in full blossom. But walking along, I see on a wall the odd inscription, ‘Salvador, S.W.’ And Salvador turns out to be a narrow passage which winds and twists to right and left and leads, so far as I can see, to no where in particular. On each side of it there are homely, pleasant cottages, each of which has a delightful little garden. There are vines and creepers on the cottage walls, and in the well-tilled little gardens onions and hollyhocks and potatoes and carnations and cabbages all flourish together. I am delighted to think that there are still places within the great ring of London where a poor man may cultivate his carnations and cabbages and have a little house to live in; instead of two or three or four cells in one of those hateful, gaol-like ‘buildings.’

I am out again in the high road, and come to a dividing of the ways. On the left the trams go off toward Streatham by a broad, straight road that leads to a waste land. On a big board the merits of this land are proclaimed; it is said to be Ripe and Desirable; but for me its name shall be called Horrible and also Desolate. The sun is burning and flaming; the trams glide away on the straight road, glinting and scintillating and flickering in the noonday light, till they are received into a distant settlement of new red streets, beyond which, dim in the hot haze, is a wooded height.

The road to the right leads through a quarter called Tooting Graveney. Peering through chinks in some hoardings I see what remains of the Graveney Brook, trickling sadly by a broken hedge, through a field in ruins.

II

I do not say that this is the quickest way to Islington. You may get into the diving tram on the Embankment and be switchbacked to the Angel in no time, nor are motor-buses lacking to those who must be in Upper Street in a hurry; but the lover of the picturesque will follow the lines which I shall indicate and get to Islington by the Great Percy Street route.

The starting point is to be taken from Holborn, at the corner of the Gray's Inn Road. You cross Theobald's Road; Clerkenwell and the fabled East-end are to your right; Bloomsbury lies grey towards the setting of the sun. Guildford Street gives you a distant view of Russell Square as you go by, but these are regions comparatively well-known. Moreover, civilisation has made heavy inroads into Bloomsbury; I have heard a distinguished professor of the Fine Arts lament for it, as for a place whose old dim and dingy glories are departed. But to eastward and to northward still remain all the splendours of the unknown.

You draw on northward and pass the back of one side of Mecklenburgh Square on your left. Now is the time to leave the Gray's Inn Road. All the streets that go off to the right are valuable; Flora in *Little Dorrit* lived in one; in Acton Street there was an authentic apparition chronicled by Andrew Lang. But choose Frederick Street and prepare to wonder; for you will soon perceive that you have left the London that you know far behind. There is something different, something strange in the whole look of the quarter. It is hard to analyse, this separate quality; but I suspect it mainly resides in this: that whereas most of our known London is either new altogether or new in great part, here it is the rarest thing to find any building younger than sixty years.

Frederick Street, I conjecture, dates from 1810-20. It shows here and there stuccoed pilasters, a few elaborate iron balconies, occasionally a window with a curving iron canopy over it. One goes gently down into the King's Cross Road; here after long beating about obscure streets I once found in a window a fine example of wax flowers.

Then a steep hill rises you, and a green grove. The hill is Great Percy Street, the grove stands in the midst of Percy Circus. The architecture here seems to be of the 1840-50 period; and now, I would say, we are come into the Silent Land. Here should the studious man dwell, this is the very place for the poor student — are there any poor students now, by the way? — whose needs are peace and short distance from the British Museum. There is hardly anybody about; I passed through a short street without meeting a soul; there are no shops here to draw people; there is deep, leafy silence.

For trees grow everywhere in this happy place. They lean over garden walls, they congregate together in hushed squares, they swell richly from little patches of odd ground, from behind railings, in every unexpected corner, and there are short flights of steps which lead to mysterious alleys or passages or byways going to nowhere in particular; here, too, you shall find unexpected ash groves and sweet quivering poplars and little houses strangely tucked away. Here is no jangle of the tram, here no motor-bus snorts and rattles as the gear is changed. In half an hour's walk I saw neither taxi nor car of any sort; for the storms of our age do not beat upon this place.

It is hard to leave these quiet backwaters, but strike boldly on through Great Percy Street, by Amwell Street, into Claremont Square, which is built round a great cistern of the New River Company. Now we are on the highest peak of Pentonville, and look down on the mists that drape King's Cross. Let us reverently remember that Mr Guppy once lodged in Pentonville, and so pass on the Angel, the fair crown of Islington. For a little way comes High Street, then Upper Street succeeds. It is a broad street. On the left as you go north the houses on high ground are set in a shallow bow or bay. Here and there a grave red brick house two hundred years old: to the right a music-hall, once the theatre where Miss Emily Soldene danced and sang and capered in the early Offenbach days. On the left again the Agricultural Hall. This last, we may say, is the one known point in the region, for hither come the fatted beasts in December. If you are 'to Dunster' or 'up over to Porlock,' you may easily meet good country fellows who know the Agricultural Hall; and so it would be, I have no doubt, in far Highland glens, on Yorkshire moorlands.

But main roads are like capitals; one does not look in them for characteristic features. I take a turning to the left at random, and after the rackety trams and buses of Upper Street again the silences close upon me. I used to be a constant if unsystematic explorer in this quarter; but now for the first time I set foot in this little square. It is built of three-storied houses; the lower part stucco, the upper yellow brick faded with age. The trees in the enclosure grow as they will, the grass is unshorn and fast blotting out the paths; and no one comes that way. Then across Liverpool Road and into another square which is all grey brick and sham perpendicular. I know that square, and I know also that I am in Barnsbury.

A shy sort of a place, Mr Morgan in *Pendennis* called the Temple. I think I would call Barnsbury a shy sort of a place. It is the sort of a place that I would slink into very quietly if I wished for any reason to be rather latent than patent in the general scheme of things. I remember that I was not at all astonished to read that a nobleman of a very ancient race had retreated into Barnsbury and died there. A brave Liberal newspaper said that the nobleman had chosen Barnsbury because he wished to lead a simple, middle-class life; but I regret to say that it was brandy that led him to these quiet groves.

From the height of Barnsbury, then, I gaze down upon the valley of the Caledonian Road, which seems remote and deep and very far below. I stand by an open space, and on one side of it is a terrace of little houses, with old gardens in front of them, with luxuriant vines upon their walls, and here, a vine hedge parts one garden from another. I say old gardens, because I always feel that ages blesses a garden as it blesses good wine, as it blesses good building, softening all asperities and sharp corners in all three, giving that strangeness in the proportion which makes the chief delight in all things, both material and spiritual.

I leave this quiet corner, and find myself again in a square that I have never seen before, I think the ugliest that I have ever seen. Its four sides are like the four walls of a hideous factory.

Back in Upper Street; again a turn to the right, and I touch on Canonbury, where I find at the bottom of a lane a mews and then a field that was apparently forgotten by the builders of seventy years ago. Hereabouts I note tree-shadowed obscure back ways, with discreet, green postern gates opening on them from high garden walls. I look and am delighted and sigh; for a quarter of a century ago I should have gone home and found a tale to fit those green doors and shadowy passages, and now I can find tales no more.

I come back to the main road, and reach a point where Islington and Canonbury and Highbury and Holloway seem to meet and mingle; and the warm summer rain comes down upon me like a mist.

III

About 20 years ago I used to tear a friend of mine away from his studies in the higher magic and make him join me in a certain quest. We were both enthusiasts in all that relates to Edgar Allan Poe, and we wished to see with our eyes the old house in Stoke Newington where, for a brief while, he had been at school. So we would sally forth and explore and beat about first for Stoke Newington and then for that old house shadowed by old elms that Poe describes. To the best of my belief and recollection A. E. W. and myself failed to find the school; but we found many things, we enjoyed the delights of those that penetrate into unknown, virgin territory — and I verily believe that on some dull, wintry afternoon of ‘94 or ‘95 we must have set foot, all unaware, within the limits of Clapton. I have not visited it since, till the other day. I had the vaguest notions of its place on the vast London map, ‘north-easterly Epping Forest way’ was the nearest indication I could summon to my mind.

After investigation I fixed the starting-point at the southern corner of Tottenham Court Road. Here I took a bus and went by Theobald’s Road, past Gray’s Inn, into Rosebery Avenue. Look down from a sort of viaduct, you look into the Italian quarter that stretches from here to Hatton Garden; here long ago was Fagin’s den; here, a little higher, is Exmouth Street, one of the ways by which the Artful Dodger conducted Oliver Twist. So, by the cisterns of the New River Company, to Islington, and thence, we take the right-hand way which is Essex Road. Here are dark balconied crescents that the ash trees overshadow; to the left is bowery Canonbury; to the right a grim and arid region, a stony, untracked wilderness. Long, sad streets stretch away towards the City; ugly factories with tall chimneys, uglier churches, close these lamentable treeless vistas.

We turn to the right into Ball’s Pond Road, we touch on Kingsland and Dalston, and avoid these *infames scopulos.* Another bus crosses our track; it is chartered from Walthamstow to Camberwell Green. Thus are the most unlikely places brought near to one another in the facile London of today. The Graham Road leads into Mare Street, Hackney, and from this we turn northward into the Lower Clapton Road.

At first this seems just a street, like any other street. On one side there is a hugeous tabernacle of some dissenting community, of an architecture that is monumental and appalling. Then as I climb I find very grave and dignified Georgian houses of warm red brick standing in their gardens. Here is a red-brick row, windows flush with the walls, that must date from 1715-20. I come to an elaborately laid-out public garden with a pool and a fountain in the midst of it; and on one side of this garden are peaceful, ancient almshouses, one-storied, with red-tiled roofs and diamond window-panes.

I look down a street of small modern villas that diverges from the main Road on the right. This street goes down hill, and beyond it there is a prospect of and Italianate, campanile-looking tower rising high from a valley, and beyond again, rising ground and sunlit trees, blue in the distance. The tower, I find, rises from the edge of a wide green open space, thinly planted with trees. I return to the main Road — now called Upper Clapton Road — and find it early Georgian on the left, early Victorian on the right. It is to be noted that as late as 50 years ago they were building houses here of coachouse and stable rank.

Another turn leads me past small, genteel, lace-curtained, poor houses. Many children play in this road, which goes down to a ragged edge of that open space which I have mentioned. Here at the bottom are raw ends of raw red streets, a raw-looking dissenting chapel, a haphazard half-made track that leads to a factory and a chimney; I find a faint flavour of a Lancashire industrial village here.

From this point the Upper Clapton Road is most deliciously embowered in trees. The shops have ceased, on each side are old and elderly houses, well set-back from the pavement, grave in a sweet shade of limes and elms and beeches, cool with green lawns, with hints and glimpses of spacious gardens behind them. And here I come to an avenue, so well planted with limes and chestnut trees of growth that the green boughs meet over the roadway and cast a perfect shade. On either side of this avenue largish houses in well-timbered grounds and gardens; and at the lower end of this eminently dignified and pleasant and greeny way I cross another road, and I find the following astonishing prospect:

In the centre a ragged, untrimmed track leads to a factory with two chimneys. The foreground is nettles and docks and the disorder of an overgrown rubbish heap, and the rubbish heap descends to a railway line and a coal yard. Beyond are level fields — marshes the map calls them. A goods train goes slowly by on another line in the middle distance. To the right, in the background, are streets densely packed together, church spires, factory chimneys, high ground with houses climbing up it; to the left the blue water of certain reservoirs, and in the distance the wooded heights of Epping Forest, beautiful as if they rose in a dream.

Once more back to the highway and, crossing it, I fall into a system of leafy avenues. Here the houses are smaller, are in fact, ‘semidetached’; but so well are the roads planted that one has almost the sense of being in a wood. Indeed, I am just wondering if I am on the edge of some wild wooded place, still preserved in the midst of the streets, when my road suddenly becomes a double line of shops, and this goes past a railway station which is called Stoke Newington, into a broad, tram-traversed way which is Stamford Hill.

Finally, the Upper Clapton Road leads to Clapton Common, which is high ground, and feels high ground, for a brisk fresh wind blows across it. It is bordered with well-grown lime trees, it has a fine terrace of 1760 on one side, many snug habitations of later date on the other side; where the pool is, where the silver-green willows grow.

IV

The ship, I think, had done for ever with perils and deep waters and warning lighthouse flames. All its voyages have been accomplished, and now it rests in a sure haven till time and summer and winter shall at last resolve it into rust and dust.

I came upon this vessel as I was treading the mazes of Ferry Lane and the parts thereto adjacent. At the bottom of the lane is Ferry House in its walled garden, its grave eighteenth century front hung with creepers, its lawn tree-bordered. Its windows look over a muddy creek, then comes a kind of embanked walled island that seems to grow a crop of the grossest rankest weeds. Here are sheds of corrugated iron, beyond a hideous grey warehouse, at last the deep trees of Kew Gardens. And turning back I come upon this famous ship, Queen, derelict and aground in the mud of a narrow enclosed backwater of the river. On one side a wall, on the other a timber-yard; in the midst the little old tug. All her ironwork is rusted, weeds and grasses and flowers are growing in the cracks of the deck planks, her crumbling funnel is bowed humbly as before the decree of fate. That is what I saw in a corner of Brentford.

I have a hazy notion that somehow or other, and in spite of the City of London, Brentford is the chief town of the county of Middlesex. Still vaguer is a belief that there were once kings of Brentford; more precise the impression that up to recent years and living memories Brentford was the headquarters of the Middlesex elections.

You can get at it in various ways. There are two railway stations there, but I have never yet met a man who had got into a train or out of a train at a Brentford station. It may be approached from Hammersmith or from Shepherds Bush by tram, and I was set down at its gates the other day by motor-bus 27, which passes along the Marylebone Road on its way to Twickenham.

The bus turns into Kensington High Street by the parish church; it goes through Hammersmith, through Turnham Green; past the quiet villas and the still remaining orchards and cabbage gardens of Gunnersbury; and at Kew Bridge you must get down if you would peer into the secrets of Brentford.

It is one long wavering street. It begins with a high water tower, which is so ugly as to be almost majestic; it ends beyond the canal with late sixteenth or early seventeenth century cottages, which overhang the street; once there was an unmistakable fifteenth century house in Brentford, its gable adorned with a richly carved oaken bargeboard. This is gone; but between the two extremes I have noted there are gasworks — and dignified houses of the mid-eighteenth century. There are plenty of those bow shop-windows with small panes of glass that are now finding their way into museums; also there are plenty of tin sheds and dreary warehouses. Here a goods yard; next to it the deep shade of overhanging, intertwining boughs; hollyhocks look over the wall where they stack drain pipes and tiles ready for the barge below.

Well, to begin at the beginning, I give my usual tribute of admiring horror to that famous water-tower. I note that bulbous metallic growths have sprung up about its base. I shudder at them as I always shudder at elaborate mechanisms and apparatus which I do not understand; I know these green bulbous things under the tall tower will appear to me in the nightmares that are to come. As a relief, I cross the street and go down an alley past tile yards and timber yards to the muddy banks of the river. The tide is dead out; I look upon a valley of glistening slime; in the hollow of it a shallow trickle of water, and close by me, resting on the mudbank, is a barge with tawny sails, the ‘Yieldsted, Rochester.’

The sails glow in the fierce sunlight; on an adjacent barge there is a tremendous hammering going on. Straight in front, beyond the shallow water, rises the island, all dense undergrowth and high trees, ‘quivering with leaves’ like a nobler island in an old story, and indeed, it is pleasant in the blaze of heat and light to watch the poplar leaves dancing and to hear their rustle; not unlike the murmur of the sea heard from inland. Down the river towards Kew Bridge boys are bathing; and I hope that they know how to use that island, how to get wonder and Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn ‘adventures’ out of it.

I come up to the surface again, as it were, and please myself with the prospect of the seventeenth century Salutation tavern. All its lines dip and bend beneath the weight of years; and then going along the street I note how from this northern side Brentford breaks off into little alleys and passages which seem to lead into little arid courts and yards of grim cottages. Back to the riverside; up the river the view is of factory chimneys, cranes, mud — and the tender silvery shoots of a willow bed. Going further westward the gasworks are announced by a grey, dead wall and a noisome smell; and on the other side of the way are the gasometers, which are, surely, the most horrid things that the eye can behold — excepting, perhaps, an ancient church ‘restored.’

Little old ‘cottage’ shops with bulgy windows show the odd miscellany of such merchandise which belongs to such places; and behind the little shops one can see odd little back parlours of a triangular shape. Across the road a house stands back from the pavement, and so dense is the avenue of trees leading up to it that only its chimneys are visible.

There are some pleasant street names in Brentford. Running Horse Yard got its name, no doubt, from a vanished inn; then there is Town Meadow, which is now but back streets and courtyards, Half Acre, and The Butts.

I pass Montgomery’s Wharf. Once some business flourished here; it flourished in sheds and it used many barrels. The windows of the sheds are broken, the barrels lie scattered, and in the yard is a gigantic growth of burdocks, pale purple mallows, and thistles. I cross the road and take a turning to the right, a road furnished with tram lines, a free library, the vestry hall, two railway stations, and some newish villas. It has also a field, or rather waste, which appears to be the place where all the broken-down gigs and worn-out waggons of the parish are shot; and so they lie there broken and disconsolate, one waggon being loaded to the brim with rusty scrap-iron, which it will clearly, never deliver at any destination.

Going northward, this road shows on one side an eighteenth-century hamlet of half a dozen houses — why on earth were they ever planted there? — and goes on into the open fields.

But I turn back and come to the western end of Brentford by another way. I go through the irregular open space called The Butts — lined with old trees and old houses — and come upon the canal where the barges lie, gaudy with strange Egyptian ornament in red and green and yellow.

V

I believe that I should have known that a chimney-sweep lived in the alley, even if I had not seen one of the craft coming out of it. For those who have been curious in their observation of the byeways and odd corners of London recognise that the stones and regions of the great wilderness have their destinies and that these destinies are fulfilled. So there are certain quarters which are appointed as sanctuaries, and, as it were, cities of refuge and hiding-places; so there are alleys meant to harbour chimney-sweeps. And thus I was gratified but not at all surprised when I saw a chimney-sweep issuing from the particular alley in Pimlico that I have in my mind.

It goes off from the main Road, narrow, dark and obscure. It is made of little mean houses two storeys high. It is built of brick that was once a dingy yellow, and is now become of no particular colour; an ugly little way enough, and one side of it is the back wall of a row of gardens. But from over this wall a great and noble and glossy figtree has grown and flourished and spread abroad; and thus, in spite of all, my chimneysweep dwells in his alley like a Syrian, under a happy shade.

This is by way of introduction to a brief study of Pimlico. I owe it to the gentleman who confessed to me the other day that he did not know where Pimlico was; and though the matter be not of the highest interest, yet it is not altogether barren, as is evident from the true story of the Chimney-Sweep and the Eastern Figtree.

Pimlico, once extending to Hyde Park Corner, now lies south of Victoria, and I began my inspection of it by walking down the Vauxhall Bridge Road, which is dull and dingy, and not notable in any way. Here is Vauxhall Bridge; to the right, at the approach to it, the pleasant shade of Bessborough Gardens; to the left porticoed houses with Ionic pillars.

By the bridge there is a yard where they make garden furniture from the timbers of brave old ships; and here are the figure-heads of departed vessels; heads of old admirals who led our billowing sails to victory long ago. I turn now to the west and enter the long Grosvenor Road, which runs beside the river and makes the southern boundary of Pimlico. And here I remark on a feature which is characteristic of the whole neighbourhood. If I were so happy as to be writing, not in English but in Greek, I should certainly have to coin an adjective; I should speak of'myriad porticoed' Pimlico. For the quarter abounds in Porticoes, with pillars now of Ionic, now of the Doric order.

The effect is no doubt highly classical, but I find that the contemplation of avenues of porticoes somehow induces a gentle melancholy. Here by the river the porticoed houses are tall and substantial, and built, no doubt, for substantial householders; but I am afraid that the three bell-handles to each door signify a certain abatement in the fortunes of the place.

Now there are factories and warehouses and wharves on the river side of the street. The King’s Scholars’ Pond was once here for the Westminster boys’ bathing; now it is the L.C.C. Pumping Station, and has also some connection with hydraulic power.

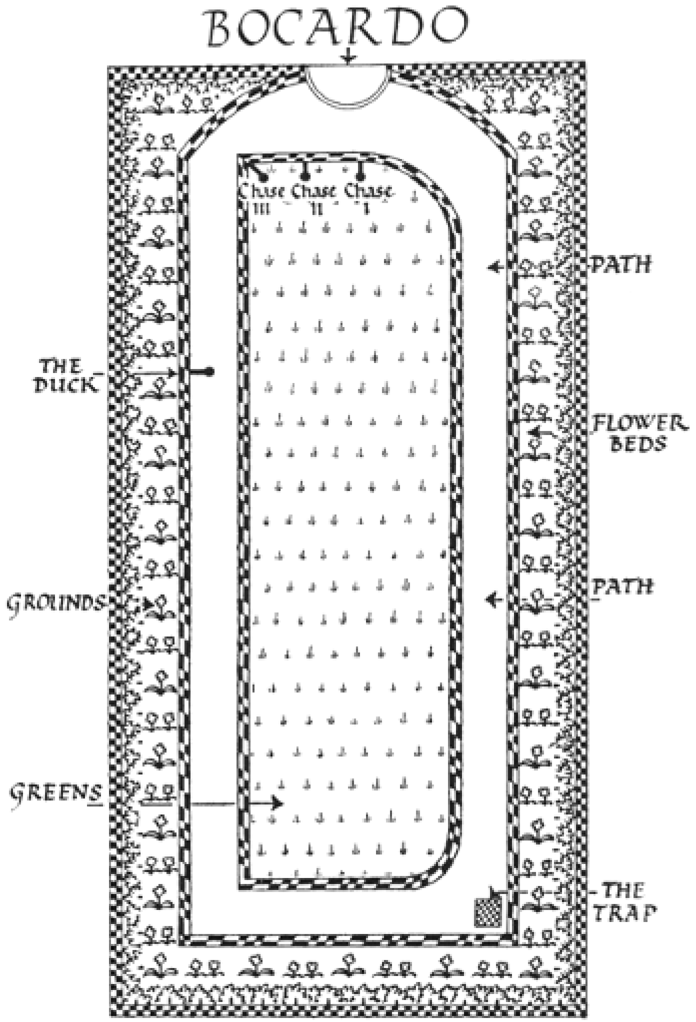
Well-grown plane trees border the south side of the road, and presently by the river is Pimlico Garden. I look across the turbid water, silver-pointed by the sun, and in a haze of heat there rise the great factories and warehouses, and a dusky fume is over them in the still, stricken air. Cranes hang out over the water and dip and rise again, here a tall chimney, there a gasometer. Close to the garden barges with tawny sails wait by the wharves and take in loads of cement and beer barrels.

Then on the right side of the road is the green of St George’s Square. Here there are big houses, basement, ground floor, and four stories above, well kept and garnished with flowers. Through the trees and the misty of heat comes the sound of a strange song, of solemn ancient modulations. Almost I could think that a high voice was chanting ‘Miserere mei Deus’ with whatsoever in that psalm is after written. But I track the singer down and find a cart, three wild-headed children and a woman, and the woman is singing ‘Will you buy my sweet lavender?’

Wharves again by the river, grim, grey warehouses on the other side of the road. A steamer coughs and chokes and drags along a trail of black barges; then a passenger boat forges up the river, well laden, and furnished, I am glad to see, with a harp, an instrument which has always been necessary to the success of a true water party. Little houses on the right have pleasant creeper-grown verandahs, canopies over their windows and trees growing agreeably wild in front gardens; and so to Chelsea Bridge and Chelsea Bridge Road, the western boundary of Pimlico. The Guards Barracks are on the right, the Hospital Gardens on the left, and so back into the heart of Pimlico by Pimlico Street, and thence into a retired road, where the houses have Persian blinds, which, I observe, are not used. But the Virginia creeper grows thick over many of the windows and makes a better shade. There is peace and stillness in this place, and inserted in one of the fanlights is a plaque of St Francis of assisi, with his brothers, the birds, flying about him.

I get into the southern end of the Buckingham Palace Road and cross Ebury Bridge into Warwick Street. Here the portico is again supreme, and various tastes have left some of the pillars in their natural dingy stucco, while others are shiny black, yellow, green, red — and one specimen, I think, imitates the rich veined green of the marble called *verdi de prato.* In this part are the squares, Eccleston and Warwick, built, like all Pimlico, between 1805 and 1835; serious, solemn places, to be blessed for the green islands they afford amidst all this arid stoniness. To right and left issue dull streets in a monotonous maze of dingy plaster, tedious yellowy brick; and at last Warwick Street, having lost all its porticoes and most of its pride, becomes an avenue of costers barrows, a place wherein to buy tomatoes and bananas and miscellaneous literature, and so empties itself into the Vauxhall Bridge Road.

Personally, I feel that the fault of Pimlico is its uniformity. In this respect, if in no other, it resembles Salisbury Cathedral, the only English cathedral (I think) which is of one style throughout. No doubt the right eye could appreciate the austere beauties of the Pimlico porticoes; but I am a goth: I crave the element of surprise, the joy of the unexpected.


BOCARDO
Chase III
Chase II
Chase I
PATH
THE DUCK
FLOWER BEDS
GROUNDS
PATH
GREENS
THE TRAP

DR JOHNSON'S DISAPPEARING ACT

MOST READERS OF Boswell's Johnson are aware that there is a singular hiatus, a blank tract, in Boswell's minute survey of his hero's life, letters, and writings. Up to the year 1745, everything is carefully chronicled, and we follow the Doctor's doings almost month by month, sometimes from day to day. Business letters are put in, such as the following to Mr Cave, the founder of *The Gentleman's Magazine:*

'DEAR SIR

You may remember I have formerly talked with you about a military dictionary. The eldest Mr Macbean, who was with Mr Chambers, has very good materials for such a work, which I have seen, and will do it at a very low rate. I think the terms of War and Navigation might be comprised, with good explanations, in one 8vo. Pica, which he is willing to do for twelve shillings a sheet, to be made up a guinea at the second impression. If you think on it, I will wait on you with him.

I am, Sir, your humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

Pray lend me Topsel on Animals'

This is not a letter of the highest importance, though the 'rates per thou.' (about 4s a thousand words, with a problematic increase to 7s.) may interest the Author's Society. But Boswell put in every scrap relating to Johnson that he could find; nothing could be too trifling for his purpose. Hence the gap in the story during 1745-46 is all the more remarkable.

The year before, Johnson had published his life of Savage, a book that touched on a secret story and a bitter controversy and an extraordinary — and very bad — character. The *Life of Savage* probably did a good deal to get Johnson known, for he was still an obscure man and a very poor one. ‘His circumstances,’ in Boswell’s words, ‘were at this time much embarrassed.’ And yet, with one trifling exception, Johnson, badly in need of money for himself and his wife, seems to have been totally idle all through the years ‘forty-five and ‘forty-six. The trifling exception was a pamphlet: *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth, with remarks on Sir T. H.’s Edition of Shakespeare.* This was in fact a prospectus of a new edition of Shakespeare which Johnson meditated; it could bring in no immediate profit. For the rest: silence for two years, Boswell conjectures at large: ‘As we do not trace anything else published by him during the course of this year, we may conjecture that he was, occupied entirely with that work.’ But his Shakespeare was not published till 1765; twenty years later. And, again under the date 1746: ‘It is probable that he was still employed upon his Shakespeare. It is somewhat curious that his literary career appears to have been almost totally suspended in the years 1745 and 1746, those years which were marked by a civil war in Great Britain, when a rash attempt was made to restore the House of Stuart to the throne. That he had a tenderness for that unfortunate House is well known; and some may fancifully imagine that a sympathetick anxiety impeded the exertion of his intellectual powers: but I am inclined to think that he was, during this time, sketching the outlines of is great philological work. None of his letters during those years are extant, so far as I can discover.’

It is certainly a puzzling matter, this sudden gulf of silence. Johnson seems to disappear utterly from the scenes of his activities; he neither writes ‘copy’ for the printer, nor letters to his friends. Nothing is known about him for two whole years. An explanation has been suggested. It has been said that he marched with Prince Charlie, that he was in the army of the Young Chevalier.

And there is, at first sight, some plausibility in the theory. In principle, Johnson was a Jacobite. He held that if a man had a right to his own property then the House of Stuart had a right to the throne of England. Moreover, he had an affection for the Stuarts. He would not suffer a word to be uttered against the Church of England — or Charles II! And, again, in his younger days at all events, he had an active hatred for George II, the de facto King of England in 1745. And in ‘forty-five Johnson was a young man of thirty-seven, and a strong young man, perfectly fitted to bear the toils of a campaign. Did he, then, arise and follow Charlie; and is this fact the reason for the blank in his life?

The conjecture is plausible, but impossible. Johnson was a truth-telling man; and Boswell heard him declare that ‘if holding up his right hand would have secured victory at Culloden to Prince Charles’s army, he was not sure that he would have held it up… so fearful was he of the consequences of another revolution on the throne of Great Britain.’ This is decisive.

Where then, was Johnson in 1745-1746? I believe it to be highly probable that his ‘embarrassments’ consigned him to the Fleet Prison, and that his sufferings there were such that he did his utmost to blot them out of his recollection, and to keep the dismal episode from his friends.

TOM O’BEDLAM AND HIS SONG

I

FROM THE HAG and hungry goblin
That into rags would rend ye,
And the spirit that stands
By the naked man
In the book of moons, defend ye,
That of your five sound senses
You never be forsaken,
Nor wander from
Yourselves with Tom
Abroad to beg your bacon.

While I do sing, ‘Any food, any feeding,
Feeding, drink or clothing?
Come dame, or maid,
Be not afraid,
Poor Tom will injure nothing.’

II

Of thirty bare years have I
Twice twenty been enraged,
And of forty been
Three times fifteen

In durance soundly caged
On the lordly lofts of Bedlam,
With stubble soft and dainty,
Brave bracelets strong,
Sweet whips, ding-dong,
With wholesome hunger plenty.

And now I sing, ‘Any food, any feeding,
Feeding, drink or clothing?
Come dame, or maid,
Be not afraid,
Poor Tom will injure nothing.’

III

With a thought I took for Maudlin,
And a cruse of cockle pottage,
With a thing thus tall,
Sky bless you all,
I befell into this dotage.
I slept not since the Conquest,
Till then I never waked,
Till the roguish boy
Of love where I lay
Me found and stript me naked.

And now I sing, ‘Any food, any feeding,
Feeding, drink or clothing?

Come dame, or maid,
Be not afraid,
Poor Tom will injure nothing.’

IV

When I short have shorn my sow’s face
And swigged my horny barrel,
In an oaken inn
I pound my skin
As a suit of gilt apparel.
The moon’s my constant mistress,
And the lowly owl my morrow;
The flaming drake
And the night-crow make
Me music to my sorrow.

While I do sing, ‘Any food, any feeding,
Feeding, drink or clothing?

Come dame, or maid,
Be not afraid,
Poor Tom will injure nothing.’

V

The palsy plagues my pulses
When I prig your pigs or pullen
Your culvers take,

Or matchless make
Your chanticleer or sullen; When I want provant, with Humphrey
I sup, and when benighted,
I repose in Paul’s
With waking souls,
Yet never am affrighted.

But I do sing, ‘Any food, any feeding,
Feeding, drink or clothing?
Come dame, or maid,
Be not afraid,
Poor Tom will injure nothing.’

VI

I know more than Apollo,
For oft, when he lies sleeping,
I see the stars
At bloody wars
In the wounded welkin weeping.
The moon embrace her shepherd,
And the queen of love her warrior,
While the first doth horn
The star of morn,
And the next the heavenly farrier.

While I do sing, ‘Any food, any feeding,
Feeding, drink or clothing?

Come dame, or maid,
Be not afraid,
Poor Tom will injure nothing.'

VII

The gypsy Snap and Pedro
Are none of Tom's comaradoes; The punk I scorn
And the cutpurse sworn,

And the roaring boys' bravadoes; The meek, the white, the gentle
Me handle, touch, and spare not,
But those that cross
Tom Rhinoceros
Do what the panther dare not.

Although I sing, 'Any food, any feeding,
Feeding, drink or clothing?
Come dame, or maid,
Be not afraid,
Poor Tom will injure nothing.'

VIII

With an host of furious fancies,
Whereof I am commander,
With a burning spear
And a horse of air
To the wilderness I wander; By a knight of ghosts and shadows
I summoned am to tourney

Ten leagues beyond
The wide world’s end —
Methinks it is no journey.

Yet I will sing, ‘Any food, any feeding,
Feeding, drink or clothing?
Come dame, or maid,
Be not afraid,
Poor Tom will injure nothing.’

TOM O’BEDLAM AND HIS SONG

I

It has long struck me that the rationalists have neglected a weapon that should have been their chief instrument of assault. For, if we think of it, they are continually opposed by the existence of a creature that disproves all their arguments, and, by the mere fact of its being, reduces the whole structure of their intellectual position into a heap of rubbish.

Rationalism should be a term of the widest significance. It signifies, or it should signify, that all our thoughts, words, and works must issue from one principal only: that of the human reason. Not the philosophic Reason, with the capital letter, of Coleridge and his school; for this reason is a purely transcendental faculty, which is given to us — according to Coleridge and his friends — from on high in order that we may apprehend God, who is the highest, and then see God, the Divine Essence, in all things, so that mountains and seas and flowers and stars are all wonders and miracles, manifestations to our senses of certain realities which are above all sensible perception. This Reason, it is very clear, is by no means the reason of any rationalistic system; it is, indeed, exactly the principal which Rationalism exists to deny, ridicule, explode; it is mysticism: an extended sacrementalism, which finds the *latens Deltas* in all the regions of manifestation; which is ready to fall down and worship, like Linnaeus, at the sight of Wimbledon Common blazing with gorse-blossom; which will meditate in rapture at the sight of a little valley set about with dark old thorntrees, and see in a poor cottage with ancient beams and a bending red-tiled rooftree a veritable house in heaven. The frame of mind which responds in this fashion to the theatre of the universe and the spectacles presented in it, is, very evidently, not a rationalistic one; and perhaps Coleridge would have escaped some misunderstanding, if he had spoken of intuition rather than Reason.

The reason which the rationalists have in mind is, of course, the faculty which in Coleridge's system is called the understanding: the faculty which, as it were, stands under an object, scrutinises it, holds it up to the light, forms a logical judgement as to what it is, and why it is, and how it is. It operates equally in the most everyday affairs of common life, and in the elaborate investigations of science. You may say to a countryman: You must have come round by the highroad, three miles out of your way. Why didn't you take the short cut across the fields, and come by Green Lane?' He will answer: 'Because I knew that after all that rain this morning there would be three feet of water in Green Lane by the Mill.' Your friend is a rationalist; he can give a reason for his action, and his reason is founded on experience. And when a man of science assures you that, however unlikely it may seem to you, the water in the glass, in the well, in the ocean is a compound, in a certain fixed proportion, of two invisible gases, hydrogen and oxygen, he also is a rationalist. He also speaks from experience; from experiment. Of course there may be difficulties and doubts in the rationalist doctrine as there are in other doctrines. For example: if the countryman had said that he didn't take that short cut, because his only love had told him that she never wished to see his face again as they were walking together in Green Lane by the Mill; and he could never bear to go that way afterwards, then I can imagine a dispute arising as to whether the man's action in walking three miles out of his way were rational or not. The stricter professors, I think, would cast him out as a mystic; but a more liberal school might grant that, given these unpleasant mental associations, the man was wise to avoid the spot, since the mind can undoubtedly influence the processes of digestion. But one treads here on delicate and difficult ground.

However, speaking in broad and general terms, I believe we have a pretty clear notion of the rationalist position. It requires above all things demonstration, and it propounds as its end the physical good of man. No better example of true rationalism can be given than the well-known passage in which Macaulay proves the uselessness and futility of all systems of philosophy. Philosophy, he says in effect, never led to the invention of the steam engine; it bore no fruit; it did nothing to advance the material and physical well-being of man: therefore, it is useless. This is, indeed, rationalism in its purity; though likely enough Macaulay hardly realised all the implications of his sentence on Plato and Aristotle.

But this saying of Macaulay's leads me well enough to my point: Rationalism signifies, or should signify, a criterion applied to the whole universe. In practice, rationalist means an enemy of religion: a man who says, in the first place, that theology is not demonstrable; and, secondly, that religion is not obviously and certainly for the physical and material good of humanity. Very well: these are sound rationalist principals: but how is it that a man holding them is often an admirer of great painting, great architecture, great statues, great literature?

Years ago, I set an examination paper. Here it is.

II — Explain, in rational terms, the 'Quest of the Holy Graal.' State whether in your opinion such a vessel ever existed, and if you think it did not, justify your pleasure in reading the account of the search for it.

III — Explain, logically, your delight in colour and line.

IV — What do you mean by the word 'music'? Give the Rational explanation of Bach's fugues, showing them to be (a) as true as Biology and (b) as useful as Applied Mechanics.

V — Estimate the value of Westminster Abbey in the Avoirdupois measure.

VI— 'The light that never was on land or sea.' What light? Radio Active? If so, state the method of treatment, and the beneficial results to be anticipated.

VII— 'Faery lands forlorn.' Draw a map of the district in question, putting in principal towns, and naming imports and exports.

VIII — Show that ‘heaven lies about us in our infancy’ must mean, ‘wholesome maternal influences surround us in our childhood’.

So far as I know there has been no attempt to answer these questions. And I trust that the inference to be drawn from them is pretty obvious: that no true rationalist can admit the arts into his system of life and thought. He has no business to admire Malory. He admires the beauty of its style? Ask him when the quaint turn of phrase fed a hungry man or fired a blast furnace. Ask him where is the sense, where is the utility of pasting pigments on a canvas and making believe when you look at the result that you see mountains and rivers, clouds and trees. And, as Macaulay would express it, what is the fruit of music; how does it compare in its appetising and digestive properties with Worcestershire Sauce? And so on, and so on: our rationalist is confronted with this vast scheme of the arts, which he must confess, if he be an honest man, is open to all the objections he is ready to bring against the theological scheme and the religious scheme. God, he declares, is nothing but an undemonstrable absurdity. What, then, is Beauty? He is contemptuously amused by the symbolism of the jewelled and golden New Jerusalem, adorned like a bride?: with what face can he pretend to admire:

Full fathom five thy father lies:

Of his bones are coral made; Those are pearls that were his eyes:

Nothing of him that doth fade, But doth suffer a sea change Into something rich and strange:

Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:

Hark! now I hear them, —

Ding, dong, Bell.

The description of the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse may be a mere piece of symbolism, not intended to be taken literally. We say of a friend: ‘He has a heart of gold” and nobody believes, or is intended to believe, that the man’s heart is actually metallic. But the lines quoted above are a mass of statements which are false, and demonstrably false. We know that submerged human bones do not and cannot turn into coral, and that pearls are a secretion of the oyster, and nothing else. It is clear, then, that Shakespeare’s lyric is without the rationalistic pale; that it is as intolerable to the rationalist as the Litany of Loretto. Undemonstrable beauty is no more for him than undemonstrable deity.

And yet — here is the difficulty — it is certain that man from the very earliest times had this desire of beauty. You dig deep into the earth, down below the great flood of Babylon, and you find all things made for beauty; you go amongst the rudest savages, and the common pots and pans of their poor life have on them marks and signs that are meant for adornment; you pierce far beyond the dawn of history into the stone age, and there was some unimaginably remote ancestor scratching the picture of the reindeer on the reindeer’s bone, after the beast had been eaten.

Here, then, is the position. Man from the beginning has been profoundly irrational; that is, he has sought for God, and truth, and beauty, by the ways of religion, philosophy, and art. What is the convinced rationalist to say to this? There is only one thing that he can say. I noted at the beginning of this essay that there was a creature which, by its mere existence, reduced all the arguments of rationalism to rubbish. That creature is man: the eternally irrational. And the only justification possible to the rationalist is to show that a mammal, very similar in structure to the apes, in the beginning went mad, and by so doing became man. It is by this madness that man is differentiated from other animals, and it is the business of rationalism to bring back man to sanity; that is, to bestiality. A pig would not relish his wash any the more because the trough containing it was curiously adorned; let the rationalist teach us to eat our wash from vessels as rude and as void of idle ornament, and their great work will be achieved.

II

I cannot conceal from myself that all that I have written above will probably strike most readers as a piece of elaborate irony. It will be supposed that I have marshalled arguments and gathered facts together with the purpose of reducing the rationalistic and utilitarian position to an absurdity; with the object of saying at last: ‘You see that on your own hypotheses it is as absurd to seek for truth and beauty as it is to seek for God; that if all theologies are to fall, then all the arts and all the philosophies must fall with them. In the end, therefore, you must confess that man, in so far as he differs from his fellow animals, is a madman; and that his only reasonable course is to retrace his steps, and become more a rational animal, as pigs, monkeys, and goats are rational.' Thereupon, our rationalist is to confess that such a conclusion, though it follow from his own premises, is absurd. And I shall say: 'Then give up your nonsensical system, and come to church like a good boy.'

I confess that all this is highly plausible; but it is altogether mistaken. It is not my object to entice the rationalist either into a logical pit or into church. I confess that it has always struck me as strange that men should jeer at the *Quicunque vult* of St Anathasius with one breath, and admit Euclid's definitions of a point, a line, and a plane surface with the next. They must realise, if they will reflect a moment, that no man hath seen a line at any time. But this is purely by the way.

As to the main position; so far am I from believing that the proposed definition of man as the mad mammal is monstrous on the face of it, that I can see a good man very strong and menacing arguments in its favour. And, in the first place, we have used the word 'monstrous'. Well, let us admit, if you will, that the 'mad mammal' definition is monstrous: why should we conclude that it is, therefore, untrue? I am not addressing those persons, if there be any such, who think that they understand the universe: I am afraid that I am in no doubt at all as to their mental condition. I take it for granted that to all of us the universe, the constitution of things, from the remotest stars to our own secret thoughts, is a profound mystery, an enigma which we recognise as beyond solution, even beyond conjecture. We have accumulated some useful facts — we can send telegrams though we have not the remotest knowledge of what the electric force is — we have made many guesses, some of them plausible; but as to the full, final, and perfect explanation of all things, we have never hoped in our wildest dreams that this ever will be, or ever could be, given us. How, then, can we regard 'monstrous' as synonymous with 'untrue'? For all we know, the whole universe is monstrous; nay, it is most certain that if we could understand it, it would appear monstrous to us; utterly incredible in the strangeness of its design — or in its titanic chaos.

But apart from this there are all the objections that have already been urged: the objections which show that the quest of God and the quest of Beauty are alike irrational. I confess that I see no obvious way of meeting these objections on rational grounds. If we allow, as we must allow, that the human race has been addicted throughout the whole of its history to these quests and pursuits, then it seems to me that we must also allow that the human race is devoid of reason, or, in other words, is mad. If we hear John Smith, of Tooting Common, declare that his suburb is an ancient Egyptian settlement, that it was named in honour of a well-known Pharaoh, and that the true spelling is Tutankhamen, we pronounce him mad. Why, then, do we proclaim the mighty genius of a man who says that human bones and eyes, submitted to the action of sea water, turns into coral and pearls?

And again, leaving the region of the arts, is a man who climbs terrific mountains, at the instant peril of his life, a sane being? Is a man who seeks, through horrible miseries and dangers, the North Pole or the South Pole, a sane being? Is a man who rows himself blue in the face in a boat race a sane being? Is a man who tortures his brain at chess a sane being? In each case, be it noted, the dangerous, painful, mind-tormenting action is done for its own sake, 'for the fun of the thing,' not for any material gain. Is the pursuit of pain or terror of mind and body, 'for fun,' as a species of sport or enjoyment, a rational pursuit?

And there are other considerations which seem to throw doubt on the sanity of man. He is tormented by a continual unrest, with a continual uncertainty, with a perpetual uneasiness, with an abiding dread and terror of things without and things within. He cannot make up his mind as to his position in the Universe; nor can he make up his mind what he ought to eat for dinner. The polytheist Hindus say that it is a mortal sin to eat beef; the monotheist Mohammedans are equally clear as to the iniquity of pork; the Western Vegetarians hold that all flesh is an abomination. Then, there is Christianity, divided against itself, on every possible point, and, for instance, on its principal rite. In the one hand, this rite seems undoubtedly to contemplate the drinking of wine; but many millions of Christians maintain that the consumption of alcohol in any form is a very grave offence. As with meat and drink, so with government and civil order: nothing is settled, everything is debated, and, often, to the shedding of blood. It would be possible, perhaps, to furnish an analogy with such a society as this: a society in which almost every member has his own fixed idea, which differs from the fixed ideas of all the other members; in which the most absurd delusions and pursuits abound; in which all kinds of restraints are necessary; in which violent outbreaks are a constant danger. But that kind of society is called a Lunatic Asylum.

But as to this continual unrest and uncertainty which seem to be characteristic of our race: we are told by science that we, like the other animals, are the product of evolution. How, then, account for the difference between us and them? Whence that unrest and doubt from which all the tribes of the beasts are free? To put it on the lowest ground: they know quite well what to eat for their dinners. You do not find a bee tasting a bluebottle in a tentative manner; nor do you see a blackbird endeavouring to make honey. There is no prophet amongst tigers urging them to eat grass, and it is idle to offer a cow a meat diet. The beasts are vexed by no uncertainties, doubts, shapeless terrors; no cares or sorrows are laid on them. Indeed, a mystic theologian has conjectured that they still inhabit that Paradise from which man was expelled. On the one side, then, perpetual peace; on the other, perpetual unrest. Which is to be called the side of sanity?

Thomas Hardy surveyed the spectacle of humanity, and found that on the whole, man was wretched, that human life was a tragedy. And he thought the source of our misery lay in this: that the human mind is so made that it craves from life joys and delights and satisfactions that life cannot possibly afford. Men, he would say, are as fish out of water; their lives a hopeless desire, an agonised longing for some element from which they are eternally separated. What is such a state but madness? The desire of the moth for the star: the desire that ends in fiery torment.

III

I think it would be difficult, or, rather, impossible logically to refute the proposition that man is to be defined as the mad animal; that the difference between us and the other animals lies in this, that their brains are ordered, while ours are disordered. We must be content, I believe, to say that it may be so, and then to affirm, without hesitation, that it is not so. It is possible that the whole universe, so far as we are concerned with it, is an infernal practical joke; but we make an act of faith and declare that the reason — the reason of the rationalists — is a quite secondary and minor faculty of the human cosmos, that its place in the hierarchy of our being is about is of about the same consequence as the Prime Minister's boot boy is to the fortunes of the realm of England. For the petty needs of our daily life we require reason; it is useful too in setting our thoughts in rank and order, as a junior clerk is useful in setting his master's papers in order; but it is wholly ancillary and subservient. Of itself, it can originate nothing, discern nothing, create nothing; it is only of value when it remains strictly within its very humble circle of duties. It is true that the reason may be right in declaring this, that, or the other to be extravagant, irrational, lunatic. For example, it would be right in declaring that Egyptian pyramids of two, three, four thousand years B.C. were not built to prophesy anything whatever concerning our labour market in the present century. But the reason is right only by accident. It can see that the pyramid proposition is highly improbable, and refuse to believe it. But the reason will also see that Homer's proposition, that his characters addressed each other in hexameter verse, is highly improbable, and hence conclude that Homer must have been mad: and we perceive that it is the rationalist and not the poet who is mentally deranged. Again and again this boot boy, this second housemaid, this junior clerk, that we call the reason, must be kept strictly in its proper place and must be severely limited to the narrow round of its proper functions. It may usefully admonish us that we have appointments with Bellows, Clarke, and Bixleigh before 1, that DOE dem. JIPES *versus* WIGZELL comes up again on Tuesday, that William the Conqueror began to reign in 1066, that sweet port is often unwholesome, that *morning* must not be rhymed with *dawning,* and that Mont Blanc is in France, not in Switzerland. There are many such useful and humble duties for this faculty to perform, and so long as it keeps within its limits it does well. Let it endeavour to transcend these limits, to utter laws for the weighty matters and the larger things of life: then there is confusion. It is the rationalist, the utilitarian, the Gradgrinds and M'Choak-umchilds who are the true madmen of the world. No doubt, the man who believes that he is the emperor of China is demented, and is properly shut up in a n asylum, since his delusion may be troublesome to his fellow citizens. But this poor fellow's error in believing is a small thing compared with the error of the rationalist in disbelieving. The delusion of the one is particular, of the other universal: for the rationalist delusion is that all the things which make life dear and precious and wonderful, all that gives their acutest savour to the rarest joys of men, all that lights up the dark place of this world and fills it with glory: all this power and magistry is at the best a tolerable madness, an uncertifiable dementia. May, it is assuredly Gradgrind who is the maniac: Keats is the sane man, and with him Euclid, who dared to soar into a world of wild contradictions, to discern the point which is without parts or magnitude, the line which is length without breadth.

It is hardly necessary, I suppose, to insist that man lives in a lower world, an animal world, as well as in a higher, a spiritual world. As a denizen of this lower world, it is his business to go to the beasts, the ant, the bee, and the rest of them and make due provision for the needs of his animal existence. He must gather a salary in place of honey, and store up investments in place of the squirrel's nuts. But so far is he removed from his fellow animals, that in most cases he finds this getting of his daily bread a painful necessity, a thing to be endured because it cannot be avoided. He knows that 'business' is not his true business. The bee is made to go to the flowers, but man knows that he is not made to go to the City; and if he has received proper theological instruction, he is aware that all this toiling for his daily bread is part of a curse and a penalty that is laid upon him. It is something that has to be done, and done as well as possible, with all his might; but the necessity remains a sad one, and the man still knows that his true world, his true life are elsewhere.

And the various aspects of this other world, in their infinite differences, make up a fantastic spectacle. It is incredible, and therefore — as we may say with that discovering Tertullian — true, that one man finds his way out of the City — out of the business of bread winning — through immortal verse or celestial music; another escapes by the track that leads over a golf-course, where he is eaten up by the zeal of knocking small balls into small holes. Some of these ways are difficult, dangerous, painful, desperate; for it is by no means the difficulty of the daily task that makes it odious. It is far more difficult and far more painful to climb mountains than to empty dustbins; and a chess player racks his brains more severely than any accountant. But of all ways of escape the surest and the best are — naturally enough — those that lead farthest away from the prison of the body to the free lands of the spirit. I need not say that man's true life is not in 'the City,' but in the other City: and there are strange festivals and entertainments in Syon

IV

Of these entertainments one of the strangest is *Tom o'Bedlam's Song.* There are all sorts of signs and omens to tell a man that he is growing old; and Mr Frank Sidgwick's learned article on the Song in *The London Mercury* tells me of my growing years in an odd manner. For *Tom o'Bedlam* has been familiar to me from very early days. I read it again and again in a favourite book of mine, to which I was apt to recur, when half an hour or an hour was to be given to miscellaneous reading. The book was old Isaac Disraeli's *Curiosities of Literature,* a museum of queer, beautiful, strange, remote things: all the odds and ends that had attracted a browser amidst old books, a mind that was rather inquisitive than critical. It helped me to pass many a lonely evening with delight, and I had always thought of it as a resource to many. But it seems I have lived into an age which knows nothing of the *Curiosities.* For Mr Sidgwick begins his article with the sentence:

'Many readers of this generation must have met with *Tom o'Bedlam* for the first time, as I confess I did, in Mr Walter de la Mare's *Memoirs of a Midget.'*

From Mr de la Mare's romance, the Song was traced to Mrs Meynell's anthology, *The Flower of the Mind*, whence the author of *Memoirs of a Midget* derived it, and thence to Disraeli. But Mr Sidgwick went beyond the *Curiosities of Literature,* beyond Disraeli's source, a collection called *Wit and Drollery,* dated 1682, even to a manuscript known as *Giles Earle's Songboo*dated 1615, but made up of material which goes back to the great Elizabethan age.

The Song is put into the mouth of a Tom o'Bedlam. Bethlehem Hospital was overful, and its governors were glad to rid themselves of their more harmless cases, of poor fellows whose distractions and delusions were not likely to be harmful to themselves or others. 'There poor distracted men,' says Aubrey, 'had been put into Bedlam, where recovering some soberness, they were licentiated to go a begging; *i e.,* they had on their left arm an armilla of tinn, about four inches long; they could not get it off; they wore about their necks a great horn of an ox in a string or bawdry, which when they came to an house for alms, they did wind, and they did put the drink given them into this horn, whereto they did put a stopple.'

This practice of licensing ceased about the time of the Great Rebellion. Afterwards, even in the first decade of the eighteenth century, there were men who showed badges and pretended that they came from Bethlehem. But these were impostors, and the Hospital formally disowned them, and proclaimed them knaves.

‘These are to give notice, that there is no such liberty given to any patients kept in the said Hospital for their cure, neither is any such plate as a distinction or mark put upon any lunatick during their time being here, or when discharged thence. And that the same is a false pretence to colour their wandering, begging, and to deceive the people, to the dishonour of the Government of that Hospital.’

This order was made in 1675, but the fraudulent Tom o’Bedlams are heard of as late as 1708.

It was one of the ancient, true, legitimate vagabonds who was supposed to chant the Song, wandering by moonlight or lightening or starlight in wastes, by blasted heaths, by marshlands, under black woods, in that old lonely England, where there were many desolate ways. Of course, the Tom o’Bedlam songs — several were written, and even a *Mad Bess Song* — were a pure literary genre, as pastoral poetry was a literary genre in all ages. Madness to dullness is nearly allied: Kit Smart with his *Song to David* is a rare exception to the rule. But the unknown Elizabethan poet made a Tom o’Bedlam in his own image, and mingled sublime imagination with haggard grotesques in this singular invention.

I must confess that I prefer the Disraeli reading of the first verse to that of Mr Sidgwick’s manuscript, which, of course, we must hold to be the *textus receptus.*

From the hag and hungry goblin
That into rags would rend ye,
And the spirit that stands
By the naked man
In the book of moons, defend ye.

Thus the manuscript, and thus, we must presume, the unknown author's vision of his dream. But, like as they say the folksong is formed by a sort of unconscious, unpremeditated collaboration, a phrase here, a word there; altered from generation to generation by one singer and another, often, I dare say, to suit the humour of the moment, a fancy, right or wrong that here was a rounder, or a madder, or a sadder utterance than the way of the old singers: so I hold it has been with our Song. For, Disraeli, following his printed text of the late seventeenth century, reads:

From the hag and hungry goblin
That into rags would rend ye,
All the spirits that stand
By the naked man
In the book of moons defend ye,

I believe this reading — say, rather, this singing — came to some light puisne of the Inns of Court in a dark, low room of the old Devil tavern in Fleet Street, of a night when the candles on the board seemed dimmed and a great and terrible wind blew and beat upon the walls till the beams of the house groaned and shook; and they looked out and saw how the white moon drove in a chase through the clouds across the heavens. They threw more dry wood on the fire, and laurel boughs to spurt and crackle in the flame, and as in all this heat and light the candles paled, the cups were filled anew with enchanted Gascon wine, and a dark young man with long black hair began the old Song of the golden age of Elizabeth. He had looked at that shining victorious moon, and saw the spirits of the moon high above all the dusky, ugly shapes that prowl about midnight woods and hide amongst grim rocks, and gather round slimy pools in outland places. And there came to him also, as he sat at the board and saw the jewel glowing in the wine, the memory of an ancient written book he had once glowered at, and read only a line here and a line there, and had stayed a little longer before some of the figures. And there was one of these figures lettered, *Microcosmus Exaltatus seu Homo in Coelis sub Nomine*: that is, The Microcosm in Exaltation, or, the Man in the Heavens, under the name Kether. It showed a naked man, with the Pentacle, the Five-pointed Star, shining over his head, and his arms stretched wide, and signs and symbols of an old wisdom inscribed on all the parts of his body, the sun and the moon to right and left of him. And as the young man remembered this, it mingled with the madness of the old Song, and so when his turn came, he chanted the first verse as they printed it afterwards, in the shape that Disraeli copied.

‘The madness of the old Song’: say rather the high, supreme sanity of the old Song. For, since we have abjured rationalism and all its irresistible and most false conclusions, we see that it is man’s true difference and mark that he can soar into regions that, like Keat’s faery lands forlorn, are not to be charted on any map of the earth or the stars. The wise old saying went that all things are lost in mystery; there are flaming walls that bound the world of our thought; pillars of Hercules beyond which no ship can sail. And yet it is our privilege that now and again there is one who has passed beyond these walls, these bounds, these pillars, who has looked on the other side and has brought back its secrets, which are only to be uttered in symbols. It is the light which shines beyond the fiery walls that enlightens us and all the sensible world about us; that can take the common words that we use in our common life of every day and set them in such a pattern that they become incantations of power to enrapture men through ages of ages. Think of all the sentences that have been uttered and have perished since the day of Isiah and Homer: But their words endure forever. *Homo sapiens:* yes, but only *sapiens* in so far as he transcends all that the prudent men call wisdom: only wise in so far as he sees that the wisdom of Polonius is worth nothing.

The Song speaks of the wildest visions that are to be seen beyond the walls of the world. A man may go on a journey, and see cities of climbing spires and golden palaces, he may view rich vineyards purple and gold in the sunshine, laughing harvests, towering mountains. But, if he cares to stray a little from the highroad, there are deep, dark, and secret places. There are haggard rocks that grin and mouth at him, as if the hag and hungry goblin had been changed to stone. There are hollows in the gloom of ash trees, places holy and enchanted, upon which the traveller will gaze in silence, hardly daring to enter. There are paths that lead down lonely hills, and when the twilight falls, it is evident that they must end in fairyland. There is a valley that I know, not very far from the common road; narrow, surrounded by steep hills on every side: a place of marsh and strange reeds and rushes and ghostly flowers. All about it the woods hang on the hills, and down by the marsh many of the trees have perished, and still stand in that hollow place, where the wind is silent; stand white, phantasmal, with white branches piercing out of the green leaf. And so with the journeys of the spirit; on these also there are wild and haggard and desolate places to be seen. Coleridge had viewed them, Edgar Allen Poe also, when he forgot to listen to his Raven and his Bells; and the unknown author of *Tom o'Bedlam* moved amongst them as if a native of their darkness. He knows not the ways of the sun; his moon and stars are enchanted; he sees in the heavens the wars and the wantonings of the older deities; the wood where he lies of nights becomes to him the old Gothic cathedral of St Paul's, many pillared, high vaulted in darkness, inhabited by the waking, whispering spirits of the dead.

Fortified by his journeyings and sojournings in such waste lands, he goes forth to the last encounter of the spirit, to meet the ghostly knight who dwells beyond the ends of the earth.

'Methinks it is no journey.' No, indeed; for it is the shortest of all journeys, since it is accomplished in the twinkling of an eye.

THE ONLY WAY

PEOPLE HAVE BEEN gaping and wondering over the famous Quinn Sale at the Anderson Galleries in New York. The great feature was the collection of Conrad manuscripts; the manuscripts of a writer who suffered many years of deadly, frosty neglect while blown out, inflated nonentities were swelling and ballooning and flaunting to the skies in a quite amazing and monstrous manner; going into their fiftieth, seventieth, hundred-thousandth editions, and being treated generally by the press and public as if they were veritable substances, not fortuitous aggregations of wind and emptiness.

These balloons have all burst long ago. The flatulent books are all forgotten. The wastepaper man and the pulper know how the end came. But the manuscripts of the neglected man of genius have just brought — how much was it? Twenty-five thousand pounds; thirty-thousand pounds? At all events a huge sum; greatly to the encouragement of all enemies of the balloon and windbag species.

But I am afraid, also to the discouragement of many worthy lovers of such rarities. There are, of course, many good booklovers who have no devotion for the relic, who do not desire to touch the book that Shakespeare's hands touched, or to see the words that he wrote with his own pen. But there are others whose hearts are kindled by the sense of personal communion that such things give them. They would gladly possess a few lines written him on the flyleaf, a proof sheet with his 'dele' marks and second, happier thoughts scribbled on its margins. And these will say, as they read of manuscripts, sold for £1000, for £1200, for £1600 each:

'It's no good. Collecting is a rich man's game.'

That's where the mistake is. Collecting, the real sport, the adventurous quest, the voyage of discovery is a poor man's game — provided that the poor man has the necessary enthusiasm, the necessary scent of literature. It does not imply much skill or a large allowance of the spirit of adventure for a man to buy a gold-mine or an oilfield after the gold or the oil has been discovered and assayed and proved. The real man is he who divines by certain mysterious indications which he would, perhaps, be puzzled to explain or define, that gold is hidden beneath the barren hill, and acts on his belief.

So with first editions, with manuscripts, with all sorts of odds and ends that lie scattered about the great track of letters. You must be rich, indeed, if you would buy these things after their value has been discovered; let it be your place to be the discoverer of their value.

I was talking the other day to a man whom we will call Robinson, a man, I would say, by no means in the first order of merit, and yet collected in a small way. He was showing me an old scrap book he had kept many years ago.

‘Look at that,’ he said. ‘You see it is a mere pamphlet, a thing of twelve or sixteen pages, I wrote it as an advertisement for a publisher. He used to put it into his books and parcels, with other lists and leaves and leaflets. Three or four people, goodness knows why, kept their copies for thirty-five years or so — and one changed hands the other day for ten pounds!’

Those three or four people divined that the advertisement ‘mud’ contained gold in paying quantities. That is the method of the true collector.

And another instance. Only two years ago a friend of mine — not Robinson — wrote a few paragraphs for a theatre program. The generous management gave the program away to the audience. This summer a London bookseller sold a copy of one of these programs to an American gentleman for twelve-and-six; and the American gentleman is aware that he made a very good bargain.

And the undiscovered gold-fields are to be found everywhere. They are to be sought in catalogues, in bookshops, in the twopenny box, in street stalls, in bundles of old dusty magazines, in newspaper cuttings that have grown yellow with forgetfulness at the bottom of the cupboard.

Like the old alchemists, we can truly say: ‘The matter of our work is everywhere present.’

THE GRAY’S INN COFFEE HOUSE

WHEN DAVID COPPERFIELD came back to England and London after three years’ absence he put up at the Gray’s Inn Coffee House. Used to sunshine and light air, and gay little dinners under dancing leaves, he saw, as he says, ‘more fog and mud in London in a minute than he had seen in a year.’ And the Coffee House: that at first — was somewhat heavy & oppressive.

It had such a prescriptive, stiff-necked, long-established, solemn, elderly air. I glanced about the room which had had its sanded floor sanded, no doubt, in exactly the same manner when the chief waiter was a boy — if he ever was a boy, which appeared improbable; & at the shining tables, where I saw myself reflected, in unruffled depths of old mahogany; and at the lamps, without a flaw in their trimming or cleaning; and at the comfortable green curtains, with their pure brass rods, snugly enclosing the boxes; and at the two large coal fires, brightly burning; and at the rows of decanters, burly as if with the consciousness of pipes of expensive old port wine below…

From all this, and from ‘the slow comfort of the meal’ and from the pint of special port which seemed to come of its own accord to the table of the old gentleman in long gaiters, David drew the conclusion that London was a place of slow progress, & that his friend Traddles would hardly make a living at the Bar under twenty years — even if he made it then.

This conclusion was all wrong. Traddles had already excited & interested the legal profession by his argument in DOE *dem.* JIPES *versus* WTGZELL, & was getting on very well. So, there being nothing whatever to be said on this score against the Gray’s Inn Coffee House and its ways, we may consider ourselves free to enjoy our dinner there — if we can find it.

That is the hard part. I can remember taverns that were like it, or something like it, forty, thirty, twenty-five years ago. I never saw anything quite so choice, discreet, orderly & comfortable as that vanished Coffee House by the Holborn Gate of Gray's Inn: but there were snug places where you could get good meat and good drink, and enjoy the flavour of a long tradition with your food. People have told me that the good clubs still provide good food. It may be; but at one, of established dignity, I found that they did not know how to cook Yorkshire Pudding. At another, of a gayer, perhaps wealthier, sort, the same pie, the *plat de la maison,* as my host informed me, was full of the bones of the birds of which it was composed, and at the third, well reputed amongst thoughtless men who like to eat well, the curried fowl was an excellent boiled fowl which had been spoilt by the addition of a little raw curry powder to the white sauce.

The question is whether it is possible to reconstruct the Coffee House that David, or rather Dickens, loved in his heart, though he hankered at first for the sunlight and the gaiety of the boulevard.

The material aspect of the place might not be difficult to recapture. Tables and partitions of dark, well-polished mahogany; are, no doubt, to be procured; green curtains are easy, and the electric lamps can be well-kept. Electric, not oil lamps. One must beware of mere antiquarianism; and so linoleum of obscure hue would replace the sand patterns of a hundred years ago. And the head waiter of that period wore knee-breeches if he served at an establishment of repute; but if I saw a waiter of these days dressed so, I should fear lest all the goodness of the soup had bought the fancy dress. The open fireplaces, with good, flaming coal burning in them, we can manage easily; and also brass plate - warmers with piles of plates: a comfortable sight to the diner. All really simple enough: it only remains to see about the dinner.

Only the other day a man was talking to me about his native place and the annual fair held in the High Street, and the roasting of the ox whole. 'And what does it taste like?' I asked.

He replied with emotion:

'It tastes as beef ought to taste.'

I knew what he meant. And what he meant was that nine-tenths of the beef we eat most emphatically does not taste as beef ought to taste. It is not in the least nasty; not, I suppose, unwholesome. It is almost flavourless. No great violence would be done to the palate or the understanding if one were told it was mutton. It is pale and woebegone: it might almost be veal, so far as the colour is concerned. The outside fat, what there is of it, is a sickly yellow, in place of a rich crinkle of the darkest brown. I have forgotten to mention that you will find your sad slice of this stuff all leanness, whereas in real English beef, as Jos Sedley so rightly noted, the lean is throughout intermingled with fat. And as for flavour; I wonder how many there are who can recall with me the delicious sapidity of the ‘Christmas Beef of the old days, beef that had been fattened for the feast, beef at its best and highest. It was accompanied by Yorkshire Pudding — not a solid and a greasy and a viscous slab, sodden and detestable, but a dish that seemed to have gone through some great convulsion of nature and the oven, and to have emerged triumphant. There were golden plains and valleys all smiling before you; but here & again internal heats had blown the smooth regions into volcanic and mountainous appearances, blackened as by hidden fires. Below all this, bland delight, fit to mingle with the full flavours of the smoking beef. Add to this, if you are of dry, austere habit, the shred horseradish, fresh dug from the kitchen garden; or perhaps, your heart being set on richness, that same horseradish, pounded & compounded & made velvety with cream. For vegetables: potatoes, in the brown jackets of the yeomanry, huge, stout fellows, which, broken, fall in a dry, white flour on the plate; and, if all this is not enough, you may add a dish of Jerusalem artichokes, simple in themselves, without sauce, save, perhaps, for a dab or two of butter, added when they are laid in the dish.

And there you have a feast too good for any but Britons, or very hungry, honest men.

And I wish I could tell you where you can go and get it, & pay your four or five bob for it — with crusty bread & ripe Stilton included — and be thankful. We all know where we can enjoy the exquisite dishes of the French in their finest perfection. It is not difficult to dine, & dine very well a la bonne cuisine bourgeoise — mussels, pieds de porc grilles, roast fowl and salad with a petit brin d’ail to inspire the latter, & a dish of epinards a la creme. I know the place where after you have eaten the famous chicken soup with the minced chicken in balls, & devoured cold plaice fried in olive oil accompanied by monstrous pickled cucumbers, you put out your cigarette as the sun sets — if it be a Friday night. In the same street I have relished lobster in the Canton fashion, dressed with bamboo shoots, & eaten the dish called the 'Hundred Buddhas', with old Rice Wine, & the pale golden tea, 'Water Fairy', to follow. There is, or was, up in Soho, a hestiatorion, where stuffed aubergines cry out garlic with full voices, as they repose in hot oil, and the landlord, though a native, makes such wild work with his Greek quantities as would cause the Head to grope for his thickest cane. And there is the lobster's claw, hidden in the Japanese custard pot, decked with delicate & tiny herbs — close to Shaftesbury Avenue.

But where is that dish of good roast beef with vegetables, Yorkshire, and horseradish?

I don't know; and so I wish we could restore the Gray's Inn Coffee House.

It is a question both of the meat and the cooking of it. The tasteless, forbidding trash that usurps the honoured name of beef may be cow beef from a dairying district, or hungry pasture bed that has never known the taste of 'cake.' But most probably it is colonial or foreign stuff, bred in far, dreary plains and prairies where the herbage is not at all like the rich, dark green grass of our English meadows. The meat has been chilled or frozen, thereby loosing any flavour it may have possessed originally. It is cheap; & food in its shabbiest form. And so with all the accompaniments of the dish. The eggs that made the Yorkshire Pudding were weary with their long journey from the ends of the earth; and the cook didn't know the rules of the Yorkshire game. The potatoes were the cheapest obtainable, from the clay lands. They had been boiled by a person who did not recognize that there is an art of boiling potatoes. In colour, they were green & yellow; in texture, waxlike; to the taste, offensive. They were ugly, stony things: *petrce scandali et lapides offensionis.* The other vegetable was probably cabbage, slabbed cabbage, perhaps, cut in squares, with a reek to sicken a starving man.

The Gray's Inn Coffee House, *rastitutus*, would take care that its beef was bred and fed in England or Scotland by approved breeders of fat stock. Having obtained its prime joints, it would not dream of putting them into ovens. They would be duly spitted & roasted & basted in front of blazing coal fires. Baked meat is not roast meat; though we may flatter ourselves that it is the same thing, or, if it isn't, that it is just as good. But, as Bishop Butler remarked, things are as they are and the consequences of them will be as they will be.

So there, illustrated by one example, a dish of roast beef with its attendant circumstances, we have the principles on which the good English tavern must be restored, if it is ever to be restored.

The great difficulty is this: that the average man who likes a decent meal has, through long years of bad practice, ceased to connect the notion of good eating with English cooking. He has his lunch at some place near his business: he regards it as a necessary process of 'stoking. If he wants a nice dinner, he goes to a French or Italian restaurant. It will be hard to convince him that plain roast beef can be a rare treat.

I have forgotten one point. It is a most vital point, but they are calling 'Time, gentlemen, please!' and I must go. But with this moral story.

About the middle of the eighteenth century, a very bold, bad man, named Casanova, was running wild all over Europe. I think it was in Cologne, then under the happy rule of the Prince Archbishop, that something very nice was served after a monstrous good dinner. In tiny, gilded glasses there came a drink that was dark amber, with the light of gold shining in it. They asked Casanova what he thought it was. He said:

'Is it some rare Imperial Tokay?'

It was old English ale.

We were once a great people.

A NOTE ON POETRY

‘THERE IS A world elsewhere; its language is called poetry.’ And that is one of the many attempts to define the indefinite.

Others are, perhaps, better known. Wordsworth said that poetry was emotion recollected in tranquillity; with Mathew Arnold, it is a criticism of life; Milton held that it must be simple, sensuous and passionate. To Edgar Allen Poe, poetry is the rhythmical creation of supernal beauty. And, no doubt, there are other essays towards the definition of poetry.

But to be concrete; to approach the question in the spirit of Thomas Gradgrind, the Hard Fact man: here are some lines from the work of a great and venerated poet

… danger cannot but attend
Upon a Function rather proud to be
The enemy of falsehood, than the friend
Of truth, to sit in judgement than to feel.

The Function, it may be explained, is the attempt to subject the poetic process to systematic and logical prose analysis; and the quoted lines express Wordsworth’s opinion that this procedure is incompetent and ineffective. Probably, Wordsworth was right; but the question is, whether the passage itself is poetry in the true sense of the word.

Poetry, not prose, came first in time, and at the very beginnings of poetry in Europe, something strange happened. With all respect to that great multitude of Bards and Seers and Skalds, who uttered their incantations without record remaining, I suppose we may say that the verse of Europe began with Homer and Hesiod. Conjecturally, one lived in the ninth century B.C., the other in the eighth. It doesn’t matter in the least what views you may happen to hold upon the authorship of the poems called Homeric; it signifies little that Homer — if there were a Homer — was probably born at Smyrna, and that Hesiod's father came from Cyme, also in Asia Minor. It remains that the body of literature in verse which stands under these two names is the earliest known in Europe. Homer, they say, wrote somewhere in the ninth century B.C.; Hesiod in the eighth. Both used the same dialect of Greek, both the same metre. But, while Homer's hexameters uttered the splendour and the terror of the great battle beneath the walls of Troy, and the wonders and enchantments that befell Ulysses before he won back to Ithaca at last through many perilous seas: Hesiod wrote of simple things for simple country people. He had nothing to say of the great clanging battle for Troy, nothing of the Lotus Eaters, of that land where it seemed always afternoon. He never touched at Calypso's fairy isle, or showed the horrid transmutation of Circe's magic cup, or partook of the fruit that ripened all the year in the gardens of Alcinous. Instead of all this, he made the music of his rolling hexameters discourse wise saws and simple instances. He had a dispute with his brother about their father's will, and advises that a friendly settlement on a fifty-fifty basis may pay better than taking the quarrel into the Courts. Hesiod, in fact, held that, even in sleepy Boetia, the law was 'an edged tool of uncertain application, very expensive in the working, and rather remarkable for its properties of close shaving than for its always shaving the right person.' And so he says, summing up the case, 'the half is better than the whole.' The proper study of mankind, in Hesiod's opinion, is eminently man: the man in the street and on the land, going about his everyday business, given sometimes to odd tricks and manners, occasionally prejudiced, sometimes over-optimistic. Hesiod notes his ways: he observes in a fine line that 'Potter hates potter, and one craftsman another,' or as we put it in simple prose: 'Two of a trade never agree.' He has advice to offer: 'Don't be too sure: a good deal may happen between the lip and the brim of the cup.' Such is the sense of his resonant, heroic lines, and here we agree with Hesiod that the warning word deserves to be set to music; and so we say, 'There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip' — and that, not a doubt of it, is sound sense. But again, the question arises, as it arose over that passage from Wordsworth: whether in resonant Greek or in simple English, is the line poetry?

However that may be, the double tradition of Homer and Hesiod maintained itself through all the ages of European versification. There is the exquisite felicity of the Horatian ode, with its sad undying music of all love and pleasure and delight passing away, of all the flowers fading, of the cypress as the sole abiding tree. But Horace also walked the streets of Rome much in the spirit of Thackery perambulating St James’s and Mayfair; amused, acute, observant of men and manners. He wrote, too, an excellent versified manual of dramatic poetry full of weighty precepts, many of which are as applicable today as ever they were; in the spirit if not in the letter. Thus, Horace bids his playwright to beware of solving those difficulties in the last act by producing a god from the machine, ‘unless,’ he says, ‘you have got your plot and your characters into such a terrific knot that there is no other way of loosening it.’ Bearing this maxim in mind, our common reviewer of novels may often murmur to himself as he comes to the last page: ‘rather a case of much ado about very little,’ and ‘that last coincidence was a bit thick.’ And then, there is:

... mediocribus essepoetis

Non homines, non Di, non coneessere columnce.

‘Neither angels nor men, nor publishers can stand second-rate poetry.’

Cross authors will note with gratification that Horace considers publishers to be sub-human; but, this little stroke apart: what a sensible, what an excellent observation; a sort of ‘Trespassers will be Prosecuted’ notice on the gate which leads to the Sacred Grove of Poetry.

But why on earth didn’t Horace say it in prose? One is reminded of the story of the theatrical luggage and the Stuttering Tenor. At the last moment, just as the Guard was going to wave his flag, the Prima Donna Assoluta became anxious about the Company’s belongings. She hailed the Tenor, the first man she saw, and urged him hysterically to run and make sure— ‘or we shan’t be able to open at Hanley on Monday night.’ He ran like a hare down the platform, recollected that it would take him three or four minutes to deliver the message in common speech, and so chanted to the porter in resonant recitative from Trovatore-. ‘Is all the Company’s baggage in the van?’

And, then again, there is the similar and even more striking instance of Virgil, who wrote in the Æneid that tremendous epic of rise and majesty of Rome. He felt that a Treatise on Farming in all its Branches would fit the times and the will and pleasure of Augustus Cæsar; and so he cast his maxims, cautions, processes, and recipes into hexameter verse and the measure of the Æneid. One of these recipes instructs the beekeeper how to get a swarm of bees by burying a calf. I believe the method is now obsolete, at least in scientific apiarian circles.

The traditional of delivering in verse matter, which most of us would emphatically declare to be an affair for prose, persisted through the ages. I believe that there are circles where the late A.E.Housman is honoured, not for his Shropshire Lad, but for his critical edition of the Astronomica of Manilius; a poem on Astrology in five books, says the Classical Dictionary. Skipping a few centuries, and coming to our own century, we have Tusser's poem on Husbandry. Later there is Dyer's Fleece. But Dr Johnson objects 'that the woolcomber and the poet appear to be such discordant natures, that an attempt to bring them together is to couple the serpent with the fowl.' There was a poem also on how to grow apples and the right way of making cider — technically excellent, said an expert — and there was Grainger's Sugar Cane, made immortal by a passage in Boswell.

Having talked of Grainger's Sugar Cane, I mentioned to him Mr Langton's having told me, that this poem, when read in manuscript at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, had made all the assembled wits burst into a laugh, when, after much blank-verse pomp, the poet began a new paragraph thus:

'Now, Muse, let's sing of rats'

And what increased the ridicule was, that one of the company, who slily overlooked the reader, perceived that the word had been originally mice, and had been altered to rats, as more dignified.

And: I have never seen Darwin's Loves of the Plants — is it called that? — but I should suppose that the indicated attempt to suffuse a metrical manual of the Linnæan system of Botany with sentiment must be even more preposterous than Dr Grainger's cry to his Muse to help him to sing of Rats.

Well; this is but a bald and skeleton account of a long and curious history: the persistent and serious employment of verse on matters which are eminently suited for prose exposition. Among these matters I would reckon Hesiod’s advice to litigants, Horace’s hints for playwrights, Virgil’s treatise on farming, and Dr Grainger’s work on sugarcane. And I would include also Wordsworth’s discussion of the principles of poetic criticism in the medium of laborious and unmusical blank verse.

However, it is on a comic note that the history of the misappropriation of the verse-form ends. It has been taken into the service of commerce, and helps to sell useful articles of trade. Somewhat in this fashion:

When life is drear

Try *Robert Elsmere* and

Lost your pal?

Read *Das Kapital.*

Indeed, the art of wedding verse to advertisement is not so modern after all. It must be more than a hundred years since these lines were written:

If I know’d a donkey wot wouldn’t go To see Mrs JARLEY’S wax-work show, Do you think I’d acknowledge him?

Oh no no!

Then run to Jarley’s —

But the vital question is, not how this odd practice has ended, but how it began; and here the difficulties are great and the matter deeply obscure. To go back as far as we may into origins, I think we may take it as sure that men sang before they spoke. In other words, the common belief that ordinary modern speaking is natural, and singing artificial is false. To Jones of Surbiton, who prospers in the City, common speech is, doubtless, natural, and song an art to be acquired with pains and perseverance if it is to be a pleasing song. But if you could go back to Jones's grandfather, who liver Mynyddisllwyn way or in the parish of Llanfihangel Torfaen, you would hear that gentleman's voice rising and falling in measured tones, with eloquent modulations and singing closes. His voice had its ordered and various inflections and intonations; very much after the fashion of the Epistle Tone and the Gospel Tone which you may hear in church any Sunday if you like to go to High Mass especially if the Use is that of Sarum. Old Mr Jones's speech was in fact a song; though a very simple song. The tune of that old, natural speech was not always simple. In the year 1907, when I was enjoying that famous holiday of mine on the stage, I was touring in the fit-ups and the smalls, and found myself in the town of Morpeth in Northumberland. Three or four of the Company had got into the same rooms: very decent rooms, though the atmosphere suggested that no window and scarcely any door had been opened for fifty years. Well, somebody spoke of tea, and the lodging-house servant observed: 'You need not worry; your tea will be all ready for you in half-an-hour.' She 'observed'? Rather she chanted a strange and haunting melody, a fragment of song from a ruined realm of faery, or, perhaps, a curious variant of the Antiphon, Vidi Aqam.

And such was the first speech of man? Certainly, the first utterance of man that deserved the name of speech. But, perhaps, it may be lawful to conjecture that there was a time when this ancestral mammal deserved the title of stick-in-the-mud; he was of earth, earthy. He signified his wants and his emotions after the fashion of the beasts and birds, his companions. He had his vocal system, more elaborate, perhaps, than that of his fellows: an affair of growls and grunts, howls and screams and vague, murmuring noises; unformed, unshapen sounds that meant 'pterodactyls,' 'ware mammoth,' 'meat,' 'drink,' 'Mrs Mud, I want you,' and so forth. Indeed, there are people who still speak this ancient language: grunts and snarls and growls have survived the age of the iguanadon.

And then: something happened to this being; something very extraordinary. Its nature and effect are both in deep doubt. There are, roughly, two schools of thought who hold diametrically opposite views on the question. One body of opinion considers that from this far-off event, everything began to go wrong; but other men maintain that from this change, or development, or whatever you like to call it, everything began to go right.

Years ago, my very old friend, Arthur Edward Waite and I found ourselves in that pub of happy memories, the Yorkshire Stingo, in the Marylebone Road. Waite had observed the sign, and boldly asked for a glass of Yorkshire Stingo. The landlord laughed, said he hadn’t got any Stingo, and suggested Burton. Waite grumbled at the time; but afterwards he moralised the affair in a collection of aphorisms. The paragraph ran something like this:

Once, wandering by a dull and dusty byway of this mortal life, I came upon a tavern called the Yorkshire Stingo. I went in, and asked for Stingo; but there was none. So the Universe continually promises Stingo; but it has none to give us.

And, somewhat after the same fashion, Thomas Hardy, meditating on the general misery of mankind, thought that the human mind had so developed throughout the ages that it had come to demand of life the satisfaction of all manner of wants and desires, longings and aspirations, which life had no power to fulfil or satisfy. And the being who is consumed by a longing for the non-existent may justly be deemed mad. Waite, I think, held that, somewhere and somewhen, the traveller would be refreshed in full measure with the new wine of the Kingdom; but Hardy could not believe in such a festival. And so, a good materialist friend of mine once remarked to me that, though he loved high poetry, yet, as an alienist, he held it to be a form of mania. If he had been put to it, I think he would have declared that the lark was not a blithe spirit, but a bird; and that nightingales were not immortal.

And there, I believe, the dividing line between the two schools that are opposed on this question is clearly marked. The one party, if it would be frank, must hold that man went mad: the other set will have it that he got up from the ground and began to see life.

At any rate; he began to do very strange things. He found that he could not relish the content of pot or pan or bowl unless a rude ornament of one sort or another ran around the rim. He painted pictures of beasts and battles on the walls of his cave. He made graven images, he took to dancing in set measures. He turned the grunts and growls and howls of the old muddy days into a song. But I believe that it would be very dangerous to be dogmatic as to the origins of poetry: that strictly measured speech moving by sure laws, making its more special appeal to the ear than the speech of common use. Perhaps it was the specific language of rites and incantations, holy or unholy, celebrated in dark places and on high places: a sacred form of utterance reserved for sacred and secret things, gradually becoming known and used for the exterior as well as for the interior ceremonies. With Homer it was still an utterance set apart for the world of wonder and of terror and of beauty; but soon after Homer's day, Hesiod — as we have seen — was using his language of enchantment to enforce the homeliest lessons of practical common sense. It must be said, that he also wrote what might be called A Metrical Church Catechism; but in his most characteristic work, writing at the dawn of European literature, his viewpoint was essentially the same as that of Alexander Pope, writing in the Reigns of Queen Anne and the first Georges. This must remain a very strange thing: as if one set a recipe for apple-dumplings to the Londonderry Air — or told the strollers that their tea would be ready in half-an-hour in the song of the fair birds of Rhiannon. Perhaps, the fact was, that if a thing was to be written down it had to be written in verse-form. Prose was not regarded as a possible medium for the permanent. Prose, singing prose, was good enough for chat; but the thing that mattered, Literature, must be expressed in verse.

Anyhow; so it happened in the beginning of western literature, and so it has been happening ever since; and it does not seem that anyone found this common usage of a sacred speech strange, distasteful, or unbecoming. Nobody, it appears, wondered that Virgil should sing of the great deeds and adventures of pious Æneas and of crops that exhaust the soil in the same tones, to the same tune. Formally, the Romans of the Augustan Age still called any man who wrote in the verse-form 'a sacred bard,' but they evidently saw nothing queer, nothing objectionable in the bard using his sacred mode of utterance to describe Fast Life in Rome — or Beekeeping. Horace called himself Musamm Sacerdos, the priest of the Muses; speaking as a Hierophant of the Mysteries, he bids the profane, the uninitiated, stand far off: but he uses the liturgical language — that is, verse — for the telling of some very funny stories. In one respect, this use of the verse-form in treating of matters which have no relation to poetry in the proper sense of the word must be said to be justified. No one can be sorry that Dryden attacked the Whig dogs and the bad vercifiers of his age in verse: and one cannot think calmly of Pope's character of Addison being delivered in prose. Satire is not poetry, since satire is the expression of dislike, contempt, hatred; and these are by no means sacred or poetic springs; but the metre and the rhyme make ‘Atticus’ deadly. If it had been written in prose, it would probably have been merely ill-mannered and tartly disagreeable. Pope spoke nothing but the truth when he said he lisped in numbers. He was, by nature and of origin, numerosus; verse was his native speech and prose an acquired idiom. Honest Johnson held that Pope and Poetry were synonyms; if Pope’s work be not poetry, he said, then where is poetry to be found? But the Doctor wrote of Lycidas; ‘In this poem there is no nature, for there is no truth; there is no art, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a pastoral, easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting.’ Johnson sincerely held that Lycidas was trash, and unpleasant trash at that, Yet: Lycidas is poetry, and Pope’s satire of Addison is not. And, why not?

Let us return to our definitions. There is Wordsworth’s famous ‘emotion recollected in tranquillity.’ Clearly, this will not serve us. The emotion thus recollected may certainly find its expression, and often does find its expression, in prose. Sir Walter Scott, roaming over the Cheviots as a young man in search of Border Ballads, experienced certain emotions which he recollected in middle age, and re-embodied them in Dandie Dimont of Guy Mannering. Dickens saw and smelt Debtor’s Prisons when he was a boy, and knew how the darkening day gloomed among the mists of the Medway marshes: look for the recollections and magic reflections of these emotional experiences in David Copperfield, Little Dorrit, and Great Expectations. Jingle’s flight with the Spinster Aunt, and the chase after him of Mr Pickwick and Mr Wardle are reminiscences of the reporters midnight rushes to catch the edition of the Chronicle: stormy weather, a world without of black darkness, ill-made roads, a plunging, jolting chaise, drunken postboys, and the transcribing the shorthand notes of Lord John Russell’s speech by the quivering glimmer of a carriage-lamp. It would be temerarious to assume that the mind of Emily Bronte was ever in a state of tranquillity; but her recollections of the dreadful heights and hollows of the Haworth scene took the form of prose in Wuthering Heights.

As for Mathew Arnold’s ‘criticism of life’: it really won’t do. In a sense, one cannot object to Life, because it includes everything, from a Meditation on the Four Last Things to the discovery of an obese caterpillars in the salad. In another sense, Life is as objectionable as Nature; both words, covering everything, therefore signify nothing. But if we are to use English in its usual and traditional sense, a criticism of anything is a reasoned judgement of that thing. It must exclude passion and emotion, it must shut out prejudices of every kind. It must banish all intuitions, half-hints, and intimations which are not logical propositions; it must view the facts and all the facts, and balancing the favourable evidence against the unfavourable, deliver its considered, final sentence — splendida arbitria.

Full fathom five is not like that. It is not a weighed and balanced judgement on life or on anything else. It is not based on facts of any kind. It is an outburst of simple, sensuous, and passionate emotion.

And that brings us to Milton's famous utterance. Poetry, he says, must be simple, sensuous and passionate. He is right; and that is why we are bold to say and bound to say that the Wordsworthian passage quoted above, is not poetry:

… danger cannot but attend

Upon a Function rather proud to be

The enemy of falsehood, than the friend

Of truth, to sit in judgement than to feel.

This passage is based on the syllogism — in Camestres? —

A fervid and friendly approach is required for the consideration of poetical questions.

A formal logical analysis in prose excludes such an approach.

Therefore: A prose analysis is not a suitable method of investigating the poetic process.

Clearly then, the verse is not simple, involving as it does the construction of a syllogism; it certainly excludes sensuous images — a Function sitting in judgement can hardly be called a sensuous image — and it is founded not on passion but on reason. Therefore, again, it is not poetry.

But though Milton gives us the qualities — or more of the qualities — of poetry, he does not define the thing in itself. He tells us what it is like; but not what it is. He omits, for example, the very difference of poetry which formally distinguishes it from prose: that is, its measured appeal to the ear, or rather, through the ear. Note and underline, ‘measured.’ Fine prose usually or always appeals to the ear:

And the door shall but shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low.

Here, indeed, is an appeal to the ear, but it is not a measured appeal; it is not constructed according to a fixed metrical system. It perfectly fulfils the Miltonic definition by qualities, being eminently simple, sensuous, and passionate, and yet it is not poetry since it lacks metre. The matter of poetry is there, but not the mode. So, a speaker’s voice may be musical — that is, sweetly sounding — but his speech is not music, which demands a progression of tones moving by fixed laws.

Milton’s definition, then, must be rejected as insufficient: there remains the word of the marvellous Edgar Allen Poe. He defines Poetry and the rhythmical creation of supernal beauty; and I do not see that anything can be added to the phrase or taken from it. It expresses in exact and concrete form the vaguer, ‘there is a world elsewhere; it’s language is called poetry’; which Poe condenses into the one word. Supernal. It includes all that should be included; it excludes all that should be excluded: it is the perfect definition.

It seems, then, that accepting Poe’s essential definition, and Milton’s phrase as a qualitative comment on it, we are in a position to distinguish between verse, however fine, however exquisite, and pure poetry. But before we go further on our voyage of discovery of poetry, ten leagues beyond the wide world’s end, it may be well to look to our baggage. Some of it we cannot take with us. It is hard lines, perhaps; but it is absolutely necessary to leave our common sense behind. Lemuel Gulliver, at the court of Brobdingnag found, as he looked at the maids of honour, that his eyesight was microscopic; and that these lovely ladies were by no means what they seemed to their gigantic lovers. Gulliver's glances penetrated a little way and but a very little way beneath appearance; modern science, using more powerful and more delicate instruments, has comfortably assured us that the visible, tangible, phenomenal world of things does not bear the faintest resemblance in act or fact to that world as it is apprehended by science. Our common sense tells us that it is this, that, and the other; science declares, firmly and distinctly, that it is wildly remote from this, that, or the other. The table and chair as they seem to the ordinary man are not a bit like that table and chair as they are known by the scientific man. An old discovery enough: it was noted long ago that when the Astronomer Royal leaves his Observatory, his hat seems bigger to him than the moon. And, therefore, we may the more readily agree to refrain from talking of common sense when we look at that world of vision which is poetry.

For, apart from theories and theorems, facts are stubborn things. Here is one of them:

Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes;
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.

There are, indeed, two hard facts here — the first is that those lines are poetry, and high poetry; the second, is that their content is wildly remote from common sense, or anything approaching common sense.

Again:

Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven, or near it

Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Common sense is convinced that a lark is a bird.

And finally, the best and highest of all — as I believe:

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I heard this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

I do not think it is necessary to labour the point, that these lines are wildly remote from common sense. But it may be of interest to recall that a very few years ago, a critic of repute stated in his highly reputable newspaper that, since Keats supposed nightingales to be immortal, he was, evidently, a poet rather of fancy than imagination; that is, I suppose, a minor, not a major, poet.

But, in deed and beyond dispute, these lines, and, especially, the last two of them, are of the very heart, and core, and essence of poetry. Their loveliness, I take it, is indisputed; but it is not the loveliness of earth — of common sense — it is the loveliness of that world which is elsewhere, of that loveliness that Shelley spoke in Adonais — who is Keats.

He is a portion of that loveliness
Which once he made more lovely.

… A portion of the eternal, which must glow
Through time and change, unquenchably the same.

And, it is to this world of vision and ecstasy, to this world elsewhere, to Edgar Allen Poe's sphere of supernal beauty, that the whole body of poetry must be referred. The nearer it approached the perfect utterance of the poet.

As Wordsworth justly intimated in his laborious blank verse, common sense, or the logical understanding, is beyond its powers in attempting to adjudicate in the High Court of poetry. Many years ago, though by no means of the examining craft, I ventured to set a paper which dealt with our present subject amongst others germane to it. My poetry question ran —

'Faery lands forlorn.' Draw a map of the district in question, putting in principal towns, and naming exports.

We know that it cannot be done. We are in a fix. We cannot define, since the matter is indefinable. We cannot deny, since we know it is there. We must be content to follow in the steps of those who confess the most exact science of mathematics, and accept hints, symbols, words half-uttered, almost subterfuges. We see the flower on the wall; that is certain. It is also certain that we know nothing essential about it.

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower — but *if I* could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,

I should know what God and man is.

It is true that botany will give us a good deal of information, some of it curious and interesting enough, about the little flower: but Botany deals in surface and appearance, not in being and essence. There might be people who would be interested to have information about the teeth in Keats's head; but this would not help them to know Keats.

So, after all, we must be content with such information as the poets afford us, if we wish to know something of their work and of that supernal world which they inhabit — now and then. As I was saying, we must be content with what we have, as the mathematicians are, presumably, content with what they have. We all know that no man hath seen a Line at any time, since length without breadth is, necessarily, invisible. It seems tolerably certain that there never were such creatures as Gorgons or Dragons; but there might have been; their existence would not outrage the laws of reason. But the Line of Geometry, and its Plane Surface — which has no depth — are contradictions in terms. They are not, and they cannot be. As for the Point, which has neither Parts not Magnitude; this belongs to pure transcendence. And all three elementary definitions of the most exact of the sciences are like nothing but those dreams which are shattered into glittering dust at the moment of waking, since they cannot endure before the presence of the waking world.

Nevertheless; we take a brave pencil and make a mark on the paper and make believe that it is, indeed, a Line. We draw something like a table-top, and are bold to call it a Plane Surface. Again, the pencil digs downward on the white expanse; and small black blob of carbon appears and stands for the Point — Which is, and yet is not. And, on these foundations of dream, a mighty science, and a pure science — as we believe — is firmly built.

So let Shelley's Lark remain in spirit, and let Keats's Nightingale abide immortal: in that world which is elsewhere; which is the very world.

Or, we may say — if you like it better so — that there is in the human consciousness, as it were, a space or tract which is sensitive to the approach and presence of poetry and painting, of music and architecture; to that dim, unconjectured region whence all these arise: in fine, to the arts. This tract is utterly independent of the logical understanding of common sense, and of reason — in the popular, and not the Coleridgean significance of the word. This territory, with poetry and the other arts which flourish in it, is not merely of the nature of man, it is man, it is that which makes man to be what he is. Its presence in the consciousness is that which differences man from pig, however Learned the pig may be.

If this tract must have a name, perhaps it should be styled Wonder; though Coleridge, in Kubla Khan, calls it Xanadu.

The Letters

Machen, 1900

Selected Letters of Arthur Machen

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15th July 1887

To our trusty and well beloved, Harry Spurr, Greeting:

We arrived in these delicious solitudes on Saturday last, with minds and bodies somewhat shattered by the horrors of the excursion train; but the mountain air did soon refresh us. On Monday we went for a good long walk to a place called Wentwood Chase and ate our lunch under the greenwood tree. Tomorrow we hope to go to a place called Uske; and propose to undertake several small excursions of the same kind till the time is up. I am devoting to a large extent to the consumption of tobacco and find that amusement more profitable than ever, since the scents of cavendish are mingled with those of meadowsweet and roses and honeysuckle… Yesterday I went to the ancient and honourable city of Caerleon-on-Uske, which is, in fact, my birthplace. They had some foolery called a bazaar, into which I allowed myself to be entrapped, and where I was most hideously bored, fussed, and worried. I am going to write to Mr Ruskin to ask his opinion of bazaars.

Well, as you may imagine, there is no news *here* to tell: and I lack wit to invent *matter*. So do remain,

Yours very faithfully and infernally,

Arthur Machen

22 July 1887

Dear Spurr,

… I have certainly had splendid weather, and we have tramped about hill and dale, by mountains and river through this delicious land to our heart’s content. We have tasted of the native beverage *cwrw dda*, as also of *seidr* we have drunk from holy wells and the mountain torrents, we have laughed, sung and joked in a thoroughly Silurian manner. I have read out your letters to Miss Hogg, who approves of them altogether and sends you her kind regards. My pipe is still going at high pressure, and as you say, the local vendors of the lusty cavendish and the bland honey dew begin to look out for investments and adopt conservative views… I cordially agree with Mr Ruskin, concerning bazaars. They are as you say, damnable institutions, altogether devilish and filthy, and cannot be regarded except as a preparation for the infernal torments of the Bottomless Pit… during my short holiday… things have been settled in the pleasantest way possible; the manner of which I will expound to you when we meet…

Well! here’s luck and to our merry meeting.

Yours very sincerely,

Arthur Machen Silurist

98 Great Russell Street, London.

7 October 1887

My dear Zingaro,

Or wanderer over the Realm of England both on this side sea and beyond seas; your epistle received this morning with much joy. It caused, however, several of those roars which you seem to deprecate. We have been going on pretty well at York Street, and have taken, one way or another, a good deal of money. The new *Lucifer* is just out, and with it an important leaf of mine of *Works of Theosophy and Occult Science*, skilfully faked by hand of the Phoenix. I forget whether the Doom of the Obscure Thing was pronounced before you left; I meant that sudden, terrible and final pronouncement of sentence, where no time is left for pleading, and all perceive the thing is bust.

After November no more Walford, praise the pigs. The High Class Gypsy has been in once or twice; I believe he spends most of his time in that Resort of the Learned Vagabonds, the British Museum, slogging away at his Lives of the Alchemists; to be published by us. I fancy it will be rather a good thing.

Now this is as long a letter as I can write you between breakfast and 10 o’clock, so farewell, and may fair winds waft you to the enchanted Region of York Street. Vale.

Yours very faithfully,

Arthur Machen, Silurist

12 Melina Place, NW8.
July 17th 1923

My dear Spurr,

Many thanks: I am sorry you can’t come tomorrow; but that shall be for another near day.

I have been to a doctor at last. His prescription is simple:

Eat nothing that you like.

Drink nothing that you like.

Take an earthquake — in powder form — twice a week.

Still, it is beginning to do me good.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, NW8.

24 March 1924

My dear Spurr,

There are some funny folks in N. Y. City. I will insert your explanation as you suggest. My real emotions were: ‘How this rumour would hurt the feelings of the Governors of Pentonville, Wormwood Scrubs, Broadmoor and other excellent and well-managed institutions.’

When do you return? I am awaiting the *Precious Balms* matter from the typist, and have just reminded her about it.

A ‘friend’ of mine in Chicago, Vincent Starrett, is issuing another private volume of my stuff with Covici-McGee. I just grin; there is nothing else to do.

I hope all prospers well with you.

Yours very sincerely,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, NW8.

Aug. 14.’24

My dear Spurr,

Thank you very much. I hope my business man did not in any way pester you. I told him that I did not want any money now: what I asked him was — how much was due to me on account of P.B. *Precious Balms,* I supposed he would find out that by reference to his own memoranda. However, no harm done.

have told you the terms on which I will sign etc the ‘Arméd Man’. I never change my terms.

With regard to *Eleusinia*: it is for you to consider whether this reprint can be made to pay, say, £100 for each of us. Literary merit, I suppose has little to do with an affair of this kind; but ‘E.’ is certainly boyish balderdash. I can manage the Introduction all right. I should think a facsimile of the original title would make a more suitable frontispiece than the caricature.

Yours very sincerely,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, NW8.

14 December 1927

Moving, God help! tomorrow, to 28 Loudoun Road, N.W.8.

My dear Spurr,

1. — Do you happen to know the address of one Keating (I think 'T.F.') of New York? He is a great Conrad collector. I am doing a job for him, and in the horror and confusion of this move, his letter has gone astray. If you can send me the address, it would help me out of a horrid mess.

2. — Will you give me £20 for *The Chronicle of Clemendy* 1st edition?

You will infer, and rightly, that things are not too well.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Northend House, Northend, Nr Henley on Thames.
November 2nd. 1893

Messrs Elkin Mathews & Lane Dear Sirs,
herewith send for your consideration a in a story called *The Great God Pan.*
If unsuitable, would you be so kind as to return it to me?

I remain Yours faithfully,

Arthur Machen

36 Great Russell St., W.C.

Jan. 20.’94

Messrs Elkin Mathews & John Lane

Dear Sirs,

About 2 months ago I sent you a in s., called *The Great God Pan,* which you acknowledged at the time.

Could you give me any idea as to whether it is likely to prove suitable?

I remain Yours faithfully,

Arthur Machen

36 Great Russell Street, WC.

February 3rd. 1894

John Lane, Esq.

My dear Sir,

am sending you the pieces I mentioned in my last letter.

They are all pasted into a scrap-book, and I have ticked with red pencil the stories and articles which seem to me most appropriate for the purpose.

As a possible alternative to some of them, I also send a MS tale (10,000 words) called ‘The Inmost Light’.

I send in the scrap-book a proof of the etching I shewed you the other night. It seems to me a very good one, and I think we should have no difficulty in coming to terms with the artist. Don’t you think an etched frontispiece adds very much to a book: a genuine etching is now a perfect rarity. In the print-shops I see nothing but process work.

I remain Yours faithfully,

Arthur Machen

P. S. Mrs Machen has hunted in the back numbers of the *Ladies Pictorial* for ‘Penelope’ but without success. She also consulted the pseudonyms in Hazell, but ‘Penelope’ is not there!

36 Great Russell Street, WC.

March 8. 1894

John Lane, Esq.

My dear Sir,

I herewith return you the MS of *The Great God Pan,* and *The Inmost Light.*

I have done my utmost to meet the suggestions of your reader, as you will see by the paper enclosed with MS, giving particulars of what I have been able to effect, and of what I have been obliged to leave undone.

Suggestions II and I, which I could not carry out are really cases of 'can't'; I have tried and failed.

The only case of 'won't' is the suggestion to cut out the 1st chapter 'The Experiment' and with it the motive, from *The Great God Pan.* The 'credibility', the whole effect of the story rest on this. If I were writing in the Middle Ages I should need no scientific basis for the reason that in those days the supernatural *per se* was entirely credible. In these days the supernatural *per se* is entirely incredible; to believe, we must link our wonders to some scientific or pseudo-scientific fact, or basis, or method. Thus we do not believe in 'ghosts', but in *telepathy,* not in 'witchcraft', but in *hypnotism.* If Mr Stevenson had written his great masterpiece about 1590-1650, Dr Jekyll would have made a compact with the devil; in 1886 Dr Jekyll sends to the Bond Street chemists for some rare drugs.

I trouble you with all this explanation in order that you may see that my refusal to make this demanded change is not a case of common author's irritability, but a question of principle and artistic method.

I remain Yours faithfully,

Arthur Machen

36 Great Russell St., W.C.
August 28. 1894

John Lane, Esq.

Dear Mr Lane,

We are leaving town on Friday next. I suppose the in s of *The Great God Pan* is all right; I wrote to your firm in the sense you indicated.

May I ask you if in the re-arrangement of your business you are likely to have any vacancy in the editorial department? I should very much like to undertake editorial work, of which I have had a good deal of experience.

I remain Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

4 Verulam Buildings, Gray's Inn, WC.

July 18. 1896

Dear Sir Paul England,

Thank you very much for your letter of appreciation. The instrument of language is such a delicate thing and is so usually ignored that a man who tries to use it to some purpose has in a general way to be content with his own applause, even if he can get that. It is a pleasure therefore to be assured from outside that something a little curious has been done. I always compare literature to Alchemy; the gold, the ideal book, is never found, but on the way one sometimes discovers rarities.

I should be very glad to see you; we are at home (nearly) every afternoon but would you come on Monday or Tuesday at 4? Let me have a line to say which day would suit you. You need have no scruples as to taking my time; a good talk is never an interruption.

I remain

Yours very truly,

Arthur Machen

5 — Cosway Street, London: N.W.

Feb. 12.1906

My dear England,

think our last letters ‘crossed’: I wrote you an answer to your last but one, addressing it to the ‘School of Expression’: I hope you got it. I am glad you have come into your Johnson; it has always been a great favourite of mine. But, like Johnson, I have always been much fond of the Biographical side of literature: I had much rather read gossip about Pope than his verses: And there is something enchanting to me about the black darkness and barbarism that overshadowed the eighteenth century. Think of the life of an obscure man of letters in London over 1725-1750: There is something almost mystic in its dread obscurity and peril and ‘unknown-ness’; coupled as these qualities are with the utter spiritual obscurity that had settled on most minds at that time. Read even Smollett (a very clever fellow) on Gothic Architecture *apud Humphry Clinker*— ’tis a curious feast to the philosophic mind. I love in Johnson to come across the scrappy references to unknown poets — Hamilton of Bangour, for instance — of whom I want to learn no more, certainly not to read their poems — calf 12mo probably.

There is no news of any interest over here that I am aware of. The ‘Dream’ is coming off in a month or so; and is to be succeeded by ‘Measure for Measure’. Some anonymous humorist sent Stuart a bundle of blue pencils! We hear rumours that Garnet is returning with you; is there any truth in these? Leslie Faber is going to read *Omar Khayyam*!, to the accompaniment of a string quartet. Xtopher played over some of the music he has written for this festival: it struck me as beastly; and I believe I do not differ from Xtopher in this opinion. But what a horrible idea altogether. Leslie, I believe, says that he is to have a theatre of his own in two years time. I have been amusing myself lately by going to the British Mjuseum where I make researches into the origin of the Holy Grail Legend to gratify a curiosity excited by Waite’s ingenious but (I think) mistaken theory on the subject. He is inclined to believe the Legend the cryptic manifesto of the ‘Interior Church’; he would love to connect it with Cabalism, the Templars, the Albigenses. Now I am always telling him that nothing good ever comes out of heresy, but he won’t believe me. There is one circumstance that puzzles me; I wonder whether you can throw any light on it: the early Celtic writers make the epithet ‘glassy’ = holy or blessed or ‘magic’. Glastonbury is *ynys* written = the glassy isle: a certain book belonging to St Columba is *liber vitreus*: the monastic house on Bardsey Island is *Ty gwitrin* = the glass house, and Merlin in one legend vanishes in a glass boat. What is the idea, I wonder? Is it the *shining brightness* of glass, or its greenish (fairy?) colour, or what? On the general question of the Grail, I am happy to say that I do not think it will be possible to come to any cut or dried conclusion. Nutt and the folklorists have done their worst with it in the worst spirit, but it has eluded them. And I believe our Neo-Buddhists have spoken too!

Were you not amused with our general election? There is going to be fun in the House; not at first, perhaps, but later. As for the clergy and the schools, I cannot pity them. They have had the chance of teaching the Faith — instead of which they have taught Moses in the Lion’s den, Daniel in the Bullrushes, and (to the advanced) the one assurements of the Temple and the kings of Israel and Judah!

If you have not read ‘The Light Invisible’ by Robert Benson: do so quickly — *liber vere mysticus.*

I drink all good things to Garnet in ‘Garnet’.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

6 Cosway Street, N.W.

Feb. 7. 1910

My dear England,

We were very much grieved to hear from Williams this morning that you have got an attack of appendicitis. W. tells us that yesterday's news was good, and that you will escape an operation; so I hope that they will let you out of hospital before long. But one has so many troubles that it is a little hard to be bothered with the body. I have such excellent health myself, that I am sure I should regard appendicitis as a great impertinence.

I don't know that our news is much. We are so constantly occupied in wondering where next week's income is to come from, that ennui is perpetually banished. I had an interview the other day with old Brammall, the manager of the Britannia, Hoxton. He told me with an air of triumph, that he only got his pantomime past the censor on the day that it was produced. He seemed to think this a notable achievement: it made my liver glow with difficult bile (Horace) as saw a long perspective of similar follies, leading, I should think, to a tour round Hanwell, Colney Hatch, Bethlehem, Earlswood and Broadmoor.

Did you hear the last of the Belle Kennedy? It is just creeping into the papers. Last Wednesday she called at the D.M. *Daily Mail* office, and sent up a note to the Editor to the intent that she was at that moment poisoning herself in the waiting-room. The editor rushed down and found that she had done it — *à la* Mantaline. She is now doing well in hospital. The odd thing is that all this tale got into the American press, and was kept out of the English papers, till this morning.

We are anxious to learn news of Frank. You know, I think, that his neglect of his teeth brought him into a sad state of sickness — milk for ten days — and now I believe he is going to stay with the aunts at Milford and then with the Warners at Harrow. We have just signed the lease of our new flat, and Tom the Cat has been solemnly written into the Deed, so that 'other animal' is legally defined as 'not including a cat'. This is very gratifying.

Other items: a gentleman named Klingender wrote to me to say that he was going to commence publishing and to resurrect ‘Hieroglyphics’: what would I like to write for him? I told him what I would write, and he told me what he would pay — and on that we parted company. His nature was profoundly Klingenderish.

I have been asked to write for the *English Review* now under the editorship of Austin Harrison (dramatic critic of the *D. Mail,* and literary editor of the *Observer).* I get so many liberal offers that I can hardly believe that my boots are in holes. We were down at Warburton’s the other Sunday. He told me that he was playing the Bull in the ‘Blue Bird’, and shortly after, that one of his lines was, ‘You have now exactly 1395 seconds before you in which to choose.’ This struck me as most inconsistent in a Bull; and it turned out that he doubled *Time* with the *Bull.*

Well, I hope that you may soon obtain a good deliverance out of hospital and out of the pains of appendicitis.

With all our best wishes

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Edward House, Lisson Grove, N.W.

June20.1910

My dear England,

Many thanks for your letter; I hope you are making great strides towards a perfect recovery.

know Exmouth, that is, I know it as a ‘Blue Myth’ knows it. I have been there twice with Garnet Holme and Billy. The first time, I remember, there were great revelries on a place ‘the island’; the second time it rained furiously and we had to play in a hall. We were followed by no less a person than Courtice Pounds! Going to Exmouth as a ‘myth’ I have but vague impressions of the place; it struck me, I think, as a charming and delightful country, but lacking in that touch of wonder and mystery which the Welsh country seems to possess. But this may be the mere prejudice of a Welshman; or if not prejudice, that odd link between the man and his native soil, which certainly exists in some cases.

I think there are reasons why vagrant actors *should* be better than other people in that they are earning their living by doing work which they like. So few people are able to unite work and liking. So it is that very few actors are *accidiosi;* they are free, at all events, from that weary and lethargic boredom which — according to Dante — is a sure passport to hell. But when actors get on well, and get a ‘London engagement’, I am afraid that they become, very often, ordinary world’s people, declining into a sad state of pomposity and respectability, which is dismal to witness.

The *Academy* case gave me one of the most amusing days that I have ever spent. Of course the case should never have been brought into court at all; if I had been on the paper when Horton wrote his famous letter to the *Daily News,* I would have taken the skin off his back in the next week’s issue, under some such heading as ‘O Thou False Tongue’.

Still, it was great fun: to see how Carson set out to bully and found himself the bullied was as entertaining as can be, and the *obiter dicta* of Darling, J. were excellent. Darling, by the way, in his summing up made a much better speech for the *Academy* than that made by their own counsel, the amiable and feeble Cecil. Of course, a good many of the quips were spoilt in the reporting.

Thus:

The Judge: Now Mr Machen, what would you say of John Knox?

Mr M: My lord, I am quite unable to say what I think of John Knox — *in this place!* This was quite mangled.

As for the *Academy* article; it was atrocious in taste and unspeakably silly in argument; its offence was worse than anything of Dr Horton’s. But I do not regard Crosland as a responsible human being. Douglas ought to know better.

I would not call *Barnaby Rudge* tedious. It has such excellent things: The Maypole, Dennis, Tappertit, Miggs, Chester, the locksmith, and those scenes in Newgate. Dicken’s hatred of Protestantism is, as you say, very singular. It was quite unreasoning, I should think, and may represent a Catholic tradition and sentiment in their last stages. Ruskin, I believe, said of D. that he had the same sort of love for old churches and buildings as has a jackdaw! And this, I should suppose, was a judgement pretty near the mark.

I am going to the Pageant tomorrow for the *Evening News.* I do not dislike this sort of work, though I do not like it. The mischief is that there is not nearly enough of it! I am not at all good at smelling out what is going to happen and then ‘suggesting a story’.

I would advise the old mixture of a little gin with that lime juice. Gin does a world of good in the sick room.

Williams was around the other night: Pigeon I have not seen.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Edward House, Lisson Grove, N.W.

Monday

My dear England,

‘Helen’ is not very interesting.

Ruskin is utterly wrong about architecture, because architecture is the art of building, not of providing spaces for ornament and sculpture. To judge of a cathedral, I would say one should stand half-a-mile away. Its art is seen in its great proportions, in the relations of choir to nave, both to transepts, these to spire or tower, all to pitch of roof. Judge it as you would a mountain seen from afar, judge it with regard to its bases and foundations and its high peaks. Afterwards, you may view the ornaments and sculptures, as you may esteem flowers and grasses and mosses on the mountain side.

Wretched old fool! He reminds me of ‘John Halifax’ and ‘The Three Musketeers’. I used to ask myself why I had not read those books. Finally, I found them both in theatrical lodgings — and read them. I perceived how right I had been in neglecting them.

See the enclosed. How true it is that a filthy tongue is the index and prophet of a filthy people. The nation that is capable of the beastly word that I have marked, is easily capable of the beastly action in question; I’d ‘blasser’ them.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Edward House, Lisson Grove, N.W.

Sunday

My dear England,

The poet who loved a gross, gay tale was Tennyson. He did not demand wit; but that quality which is called Rabelaisian. I do think that there is genius in the fabric of ‘Charles Auch’, but there is folly also to an extent almost miraculous. The author’s father was a John’s man, and yet she could speak of Cambridge as ‘an academe celestial’!

quite agree with you as to Crabbe, speaking from a very slight acquaintance. He was a luminous man, though his light fell on mean places. I was brought up on Sala’s ‘Twice Round the Clock’, and re-reading after 35 years or so, was astonished to find how good it still tasted. Of course there are terrible phrases. ‘Piscatorial Bourse’, I think, for Billingsgate, a terrible fount of speech from which the dialect once called ‘Telegraphese’ flowed; but there was a real core in Sala. He was not a Roman in those days, and in fact, I believe, only became a Roman *in articulo* or pretty near it. He was received by Cardinal Vaughan. ‘Silence’ I have not read; ‘Transformation’ I looked into and disliked when I was a boy; but ‘The Scarlet Letter’: there, in the idiom of that great and friendly people, you have the goods!

Did you see that I have been down to Torquay to watch ‘the pictures’ being made? I enjoyed myself enormously; I do not know which I liked more; the pine trees in the sunlight on the cliff, looking Italy, or the company of the actors and the ‘shop’ of the stage. *Canis Reversus;* and I came back to the office feeling homesick. We had a lot of sailing and rowing to do, and when a picture was about to be taken the leading man suddenly said he was very sick, and would have to go ashore. Whereupon the management angrily declared that nothing could be done without ‘loyal co-operation’. But how can you rescue a drowning woman, if you are in the pangs of sea sickness? It would not look well.

Drink your absinthe as long as you can at Brighton; London is accursed.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, NW8.

Wednesday

My dear England,

Many thanks for your letter. The ‘Fragments of Life’ certainly cost me the most horrible pains, after the first chapter. I do not know how I ever got it finished. There is a version with a false ending in *Horlick’s Magazine.* I remember one oddity which accompanied the writing of the latter portion: my feet felt cold as ice, with a kind of non-natural chill. Which, indeed, I perceived to be the case; for, writing in the kitchen in Cosway Street, I opened the gas oven and lit the gas, proposing to put my feet inside! But on taking off my stockings, I found that by the test of feeling with my hands, the feet were *not* cold at all. This was very odd; it did not seem to me to promise a blessing on the work.

As for the ‘Chronicle’: the stories, *qua* stories are — really, Mrs Todgers — so very, very bad. But I began the book when I was 22 1/2and ended it when I was 23 1/2.

On Whitsunday morning I was rolling to St Clement Danes Church, on my way to the North Gallery. I will be with you next Saturday at 1.30.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

February 18.1931

My dear England,

I think that Moore can write very beautiful and delicate English: he is undoubtedly *ingeniosus.* But the *nebulo* is continually spoiling the ingenious one's work, reminding him that fleecy clouds are exactly like the lace on ladies' underclothing; that, owing to the hopeless degradation and vulgarization of the English tongue, the literature of the future must be written in Welsh and Irish; that Anne Brontë was the genius of the family: reminding him, in fine, of a thousand imbecilities. His early second-rate Zola was quite good in its way: 'The Mummer's Wife' is, no doubt, almost a photograph of some particular *Cloches de Comeville* company. I cordially agree with 'Mummer Worship'. I like actors very much indeed: when they are content to be actors. I judge from that amazing Garvin notice, that G. is trying to do his very best for a man he likes, who has written a bad book.

Did you see the 'advance' note about Sylvia's new poem in last Sunday's *Observer*? A good send off.

Tell Marques to buy his 5,8 and dark liver — quite enough to begin with.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

You were saying that I once saw a good deal of Moore: that was as the *Evening News* interviewer.

1 — Verulam Buildings, Grays Inn, W.C.
May 21.1897

Grant Richards, Esq.

Dear Mr Richards,

Thanks very much for your kind letter of the 20th inst.

Now as to your criticism of *Phantasmagoria*: I can only say that very possibly you are right, but I hope not! The MS is ‘going the rounds’, and I daresay will not find a publisher, or certainly, not for some time. The *Pan* was written at the beginning of’91, and was published at the end of ‘94! Looking as clearly as I can at this present book, I think there are undoubtedly many and grievous faults in it, but I believe that as a whole it is on a higher level than the former novels, that there are things in it which beat anything I have done (see the comedy of *The Critic!).*

You object to the environment of the beginning; but it is the environment which largely shapes the character: it is these *bacilli* of the village which are largely responsible for the pathological condition of the patient.

The episode you mention is undoubtedly morbid, but it is meant to be morbid, and is, I think, good art. Good policy I am sure, with you, it is not, and I was not in the least surprised when you declined the MS. I should have been much surprised, though very glad, if you had accepted it. You will remember that almost my first remark was that you would probably find it ‘impossible’.

I wish you would come and see us here. We are at home nearly every day from 4 p m. We shall be away for a week from next Monday, but after that you will always find us.

I remain

Yours very truly,

Arthur Machen

Edward House, Lisson Grove, N.W.

June 18.1910

Martin Seeker, Esq.

Dear Mr Secker,

I am sorry, but as I told you, *The Secret Glory,* if published at all, will have to fetch that £100 minimum.

But I am not in a hurry! *The Hill of Dreams* was written in 1897, published in 1907.

Please accept my best wishes for a prosperous beginning of your publishing career.

Yours very truly,

Arthur Machen

P. S. I have always been of the opinion that my books have not been properly handled. They should not be put on the market as ordinary 6/- novels, but rather in the style adopted — I think — for *Marius the Epicurean*: blue boards, white backs and a price like 10/6 net.

Edward House, Lisson Grove, N.W.

Nov. 2. 1915

Dear Mr Seeker,

I should be very glad for you to publish *The Secret Glory* on these terms: £100 in advance of 25% royalty; this £100 to be paid now, on delivery of the manuscript.

The copyright to be leased to you for a period of seven years.

American rights on usual terms.

I will write to Savage; the proprietor of *The Gypsy* on hearing from you. I gave Savage the story for his quarterly; but as the August number is not yet announced, I hardly think that *The Gypsy* need be considered.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

From a letter to an American correspondent:

5 May 1924

As to Starrett, I am sorry, but I am having nothing to do with him. He has turned pirate; both *The Shining Pyramid* and *The Glorious Mystery* are impudent piracies done without my knowledge, approval or consent. I passed over the former of the two offences because Starrett had done a lot for me, but the second crime has tipped up the scales. These affairs are causing me very serious embarrassment in your country. My publisher in New York blames me for not refusing the cheque for *The Shining Pyramid.* I laughed and told him that was an impossibility. I could not refuse the cheque since there was no cheque, and never has been a cheque. If those two books had been brought out by a smart bookseller under the Black Flag, I should have accepted the fact as perfectly natural. But I fail to understand the sort of friend who picks your pocket as he tells you what a fine fellow you are.

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, London, N.W.8.

March 23.1925

Dear Mr Carter,

Very good: I await communication from Elkin Mathews, and will discuss the matter with him.

There are morsels of this quarter, once so delicious, still left. But peculiarly evil flats are rising on every side, and will no doubt continue to rise, till there is nothing left of the old grace of St John’s Wood. And where an old house and garden still remain the owners in most cases lop their trees into revolting forms, suggestive of gout!

This is a very bad age in most things, and amongst its evils I reckon the ‘garden cities’ as the worst.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

28 Loudoun Road, London, N.W.8.

Dec. 26.1927

My dear Savage,

Your letter came on the very Christmas morning: many thanks for your old-fashioned and good wishes. *Blwddyn newydd dda y chwi* - which is to say, a Happy New Year to you.

Indeed; may it be better than the last.’27 has been to us a year of sorrows and fears. Poor Hudleston is dead — a few days after you left England. He had a tremendous liking for you. We miss him most bitterly. I have written a brief biographical note as an Introduction to the English edition of his new book: *Gentleman Johnny Burgoyne.*

Our new house is a minor grief. It is much larger and more ‘convenient’ in every way than the old; and we loathe it, since it has no mystery in it.

Let your American friend send his book to: Victor Gollancz, 14 Henrietta Street, W.C.2.

envy you both away down there: beyond the rates and taxes. Here, as it seems to me, there is nothing but trouble.

Remember me to Flanagan.

With all good wishes.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

28 Loudoun Road, London, N.W.8.

Jan. 26.’28

My dear Savage,

Thank you so much for the Broadway House introduction. I have been waiting to write to you till the matter was concluded, and it is now settled; that I shall do them a treatise to be called ‘Sabazius’ — the name of the mystic Bacchus. Of course it will be nothing; I have been dead for some time, but I cannot afford to say so. You are alive, and I hope you get on tremendously with your novel.

No news, I think. The usual few at Henekeys on Jan. 7; the usual vain attempts to convince Gow that the ghost neither walks nor talks: Garland calm, watching the case on behalf of the Holy Father. I forget whether I told you that owing to the changes at the *Princess Royal,* we have moved down the road to the *Duke of York,* where the landlord has got in our customary drinks and does his best to oblige.

hope Flanagan is all right now.

I have been doing one or two articles for the cheerful and engaging Hayter Preston, of the *Referee.*

Yours,

Arthur Machen

P. S. I hear the Life of Crosland is out: price One Guinea.

28 Loudoun Road, London, N.W.8.

April 25.1928

My dear Savage,

We have been away, recovering from a minor influenza, for the last fortnight. I am writing this day to Gollancz, injecting a hint.

I am sorry, indeed, that you have no better news to report. I had a saddish note a few weeks ago from old Waite. I wrote back, miserable enough myself, to the effect that it seemed rather hard; that I thought each of us, in his own way, had tried to do his best for a good many years, that we deserved a happier ending, and so forth. Let me include you in our little list.

As for Caradoc: I passed on your notion, as I told you; but I did not hope for any good result. I have not heard from him for about 4 months.

Yet in spite of all, as I ended to old Waite: ‘Yet His Name is the Merciful, the Compassionate.’

Yours,

Arthur Machen

28 Loudoun Road, London, N.W.8.

Nov. 5.’28

Dear Mr Wilson,

In the first place, please let me say that I thoroughly appreciate the position with respect to the Lectures.

As to the question, whether Philosophy can be of any service to workingmen, I think a ruling which covers this question was given on Saturday, July 30th, 1763, by that Chief Justice of Human Intelligence, Samuel Johnson. Johnson and Boswell had taken oars at the Temple Stairs for Greenwich. The question arose whether a knowledge of Greek and Latin was an essential requisite to a good education. Johnson said, ‘Most certainly’, adding that it was wonderful what a difference learning made even in the common intercourse of life. Boswell said that many people got through the common business of life very well, without any learning.

‘Johnson “Why, Sir, that may be true in cases where learning cannot possibly be of any use; for instance, this boy rows us as well without learning, as if he could sing the song of Orpheus to the Argonauts, who were the first sailors.” He then called to the boy, “What would you give, my lad, to know about the Argonauts?”

“Sir” (said the boy) “I would give what I have!” Johnson was very much pleased with his answer, and we gave him double fare.’

And the Doctor added that any man of uncorrupted mind would give what he had for knowledge.

This I take it, is the theoretical truth of the matter. In practice, there must be limitations. For instance, it would be a good thing — in theory — if a Durham miner were able to read *Omar Khayyam* in Persian and the *Mabinogion* in Welsh; but in practice he has no time for the studies involved. There is one study, I think, in which *every one* who has anything to do with the things should engage; and that is Logic, Scholastic Logic. By far the best manual is *Elements of Logic* by Richard Whately. I would have every man in your class go through this book: I think it of the very first consequence.

With all good wishes
Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

July 24. 1930

Dear Mr Morrissey,

Pray accept my most grateful thanks for your thesis. Naturally, I have read it with great interest, since every man is interested in his own works & days. And —— so far as a man can be a judge in his own cause — it strikes me as fair & judicious. You are quite right, for example, about the ending of ‘The Terror’: it is muddled and bad. It would have been much better to leave the mystery without explanation. And, as you say, I am no novelist. I do not like to see ‘The Hill of Dreams’ and ‘The Secret Glory’ discussed as novels. They are, or they are meant to be, Romances: tales of adventure of the spirit.

By the way: ‘Clemendy’ derives in no way from the ‘Mabinogion’.

I am afraid that the publication of your admirable thesis would not be a profitable adventure. Seven or eight years ago; I think there might have been money in it; but not now. Your country men ‘discovered’ me at that date or a little earlier; but since then they have firmly replaced the earth on my remains, and trodden it down hard. I judge by the Royalties my American publisher sends me. Over here nobody knows any thing about me. Still, I have found, on the whole, a very great deal of enjoyment in the writing of books.

If you can be troubled, I wish you would send a few photographs of Nashville and Vanderbilt University. And — here is a point of local learning — is there any old English origin discoverable for the Tennessee mountain idiom ‘we uns’ and ‘you uns’? It often happens that what we call *Americanisms* turn out to be ancient English words and phrases, long forgotten in England.

With renewed thanks for your most valued present

I remain

Yours very sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, High St., Amersham, Bucks.

Feb. 24. 1931

Dear Mr Morrissey,

In the first place, please accept my apologies for this long delay. Extenuating circumstances are; poor health, old age, and idleness.

No, I am not contemplating a new book. To the best of my (sorrowful) belief, I have said my say. It is a pity, since I always found writing a book made an excellent burrow: it keeps one warm.

If you had your thesis on hand, say, nine or ten years ago, I would advise publication. But now, to use an inelegant English idiom, I am ‘dead mutton’ in your country — and in mine. But I have had very good sport in literature. It was the whimsicality inherent in the constitution of the universe that arranged for ‘The Bowmen’ — not exactly a masterpiece — to be my one popular success.

I see you complain of the torrid summer of 1930. Here, it rained every day from July 15 to August 25. Then, for a week, the thermometer went up to 89°, 90°, 92°, 94°. And then it rained, roughly speaking, for the rest of the year. Now, we are having fine, sunny mornings and night frosts. You, I suppose, are beginning to feel the warmth of spring.

I hope the antique shop is turning out well.

With all good wishes

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, High Street, Amersham, Bucks.

Oct. 14.1930

Dear Mr Owlett,

Please give Lady Watson my warmest thanks, and tell her that I should be proud indeed to possess the MS of one of his lyrics.

It is dreadful to think that a great English poet should be brought in his old age to such a pass; but this is the age of Greta Garbo and all guttersnipes: not of Poets.

It has been for some time my impression that we are entering on a period of barbarism quite as destructive of God and all goodness as that which followed the ruin of the Roman Empire.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

Jan. 29.’31

Dear Mr Owlett,

I hope my delay in writing may have caused no inconvenience. I am sorry to say I mislaid your address.

To summarize our conversation of last Saturday: I think we agreed that the best way lies between two extremes. To invest the money and dole out miserable quarterly sums by way of relieving a man who may not live to receive more than two instalments is, clearly, out of court. It is a scheme which would only occur to a barbarian — or a man of business. On the other hand, I gathered from you that there were objections against handing over the entire sum forthwith. The middle course suggested was, I think, to pay out, say, £50 or £60 a month for the next six months.

Of course, should any special need or emergency arise, the Committee would have a free hand to meet it. Suppose, for example, that the doctors thought that a stay in Madeira — or anywhere — was advisable: then the Committee should make a special grant forthwith.

That, I believe, was the general trend of our discussion.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

6 Cosway Street London, NW.

February 24th 1910

My dear Jepson,

Thanks very much for *No. 19.* I am saying a word in season about it in the *Nation.* I have *not* pointed out that Marks is not a Welsh name, since I know that you harbour an obstinate superstitition on this point.

Scene: Fotheringay Castle *Queen Elizabeth*: I will give my virrrgin body to a mann —

Stage Manager: Gaze at *Leicester* on that line: he's the man you mean, you know.

Queen Elizabeth: Maikes it seem a bit warm, don't it? — and begett a race of (confidentially) kings etc etc.

But I have grave fears that on his noble piece the curtain will never rise. The management is a compound of bad record and present imbecility that is in itself a rich entertainment. I would not have it altered, but I am afraid that it is not good for business.

I once met a Colonel years ago. He was Colonel Trotter, I think of the 93rd. His manner was highly offensive and his wife was Evangelical. I trust that both have now come safe to Purgatory fire.

Every night and all as the old Lyke-Wake Dirge says; and that the gross, leaden, and peccant parts of Colonel Trotter (of the 93rd) and of his wife are now being refined away in the Immortal Athanor.

I know nothing of Astrology. I understand that it involves mathematical calculation; therefore I knew that it was not for me. As to my sign: I once heard the Young Man in Spectacles and a person known as Sephariel discussing in my presence whether I was under Libra or Aries: I do not know. Such of their arguments as I understood, struck me as childish and nonsensical in the extremist degree.

I think it quite well that Keep is gone to his own place, both phenomenally and noumenally. Mahatmas have (practically) ceased; but mediums abide for ever…

With kindest regards to you both,

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Edward House, Lisson Grove, London NW.

July 28th. 1910

My dear Jepson,

I am sorry to say that my memory for dates is so scandalous that I doubt whether I can supply the required date.

However, I know when I was born — March 3rd, 1863. I was married to A.H. in 1887; she died in 1899. I married D. P. H. on June 25th, 1903. I fear that this is not precise enough, but I can do no better.

I suppose you are on the point of going out of town. We leave on Tuesday for three weeks; two in Pembrokeshire and one near Esher.

I wish you had a few more editorships at £10 a week to hand on. At the present, affairs are in such a state that the mere English stoicism, however imaginary, is too weak for the occasion. I can only say… that the other day I read in the paper that some costermongers can make £1 a day in good times and rarely fall below 10/- a day in bad!

What price sour milk?

England will never be Merry England more till we return to the Catholic Faith, Beef Steaks (with an Onion, if you will), and the Strongest Ale: this last to be consumed in enormous quantities.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, High Street, Amersham, Bucks.

September 15 th 1933

My dear Mr Ireland,

I have wondered, now and again, whether I should issue another summons; but I concluded, to use your own phrase, that life was complex; that you had your reasons for silence.

But, let us try anew. Next Tuesday is Amersham Fair; an ancient, noisy, and gaudy business, stretching the whole length of this old street — which has altered little in the last hundred years. Will you come down and look at it, and listen to it? If so, we should be very glad to see you between 6 & 7. There will be a sandwich and a glass of punch. If you come, remember that this house is in the Old Town at the bottom of the hill. Over the door, is the inscription, LYNWOOD, and it is best to knock, not ring.

It is, indeed, hard to deal with the mysteries. Hard, as you and I know, to express them in art; hard even to speak of them. It was St Paul, I think, who heard things which it was not lawful to utter. And, it is to be remembered, that only a hair's breadth divides the mysteries from the blasphemies. That may be seen only too clearly in the pitiable obscenities of A *Glastonbury Romance.* And there is the other confusion: I have known Spiritualists to be styled mystics — wherein they are most vilely miscalled. I have seen a good deal of them in my day, and also of people of a somewhat higher order, who would call themselves occultists; but they are all in utter darkness.

I hope you will come on Tuesday. But if you are for quiet; then we will choose another day.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

High Street, Old Amersham, Bucks.

September 17th 1941

Dear Dr Ireland,

In the first place: let me congratulate you cordially on being for the present hard at work, and on being stuffed with ideas for the future. What better fortune can a creative artist desire? Even a good and great drink at a happy hour in the right place and in fit company is not so choice a gift as this. I shall await December 29th with most pleasurable anticipation.

To your questions: there is a uniform edition of my books, called the ‘Caerleon’ Edition, nine volumes of it. I should think it might be had cheaply enough, since it was ‘remaindered’ years ago. As to separate vols: if these are out of print in the Adelphi edition, I believe they are all right in the original 7/6 editions. Anyhow; why not try for second hand copies at Foyles’, Charing Cross Road, London, W.C.

As to the man whom you wish to dose with the Silurian Mysteries; I think your plan is right: 1. *Far Off Things 2. Things Near and Far* 3. *London Adventure* 4. H*ill of Dreams.* The notion is to interest the desired reader in the author, in the concrete; before you lead him to the author’s imagined world. I should always recommend a reading of Mrs Gaskell’s *Life of Charlotte Bronte* as a preface to the works of Charlotte Bronte.

All my thanks for your most benevolent and active interest in my books.

Write again soon

Yours,

Arthur Machen

PS. I don’t think that any very illuminating survey of my writing has been done.

Lynwood, High Street, Old Amersham, Bucks.

May 28th 1946

My dear Dr Ireland,

Many thanks for the Rameau. I am reading it with pleasure, though an ignoramus in the great art of music. The Fellows of All Souls at Oxford were formerly required to be *mediocriter musice docti,* to have a moderate skill in music. My standard is very much lower.

Could you get down here on Saturday, June 8th? Beat on our knocker at Noon; and we will go down to the King’s Arms and try and get something to eat and drink. We have lived into evil days on both counts.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

Feb. 12.’37

Dear Mr Millar,

In reply to your question: there is no biography of me, recent or otherwise. The true story in the *Western Mail* cutting derives ultimately from an extinct paper, *The Outlook,* in which it was inserted by a friend of mine many years ago.

Fytton Armstrong (otherwise John Gawsworth) wrote a life of me, which, for one reason or another, failed to please the publishers.

Thank you for the article on Caradoc; I agree with you that it is temperate and judicious. Caradoc was always a bit of a *farceur,* inclined to caricature. But I am very far from saying that his violent attack is void of foundation.

I should be very much honoured by an honorary degree from the University of Wales. But — a delicate point — I am a man of very narrow means, and I do not think I should be justified in spending my guineas on the cap, gown and hood of the degree.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

April 19.1937

Dear Mr Millar,

I am delighted to hear that you are now for all practical purposes fit, well and recovered. As you say, the mere slip of the foot kills the Australian; while you happily survive a mountain whirlwind.

It is extremely kind of you and Mrs Collins to busy yourselves in this matter of the degree; but let me beg of you not to bother and worry yourselves. Don't give the affair more trouble than it deserves.

Here is my sketchy pedigree. My aunt Maria (daughter of Daniel II) just remembered the Old Red Priest, and used to say I was very much like him; especially in a big voice, and a trick of bellowing!

If I were in Australia; it would come upon me to arise, as the Highland song says, and get me back to Henllys!

don't remember receiving any letters from Monmouthshire folk about my work; with the notable exception of the late Major Addams Williams, Llangibby.

Note: it was *The Great God Pan,* not *The Hill of Dreams* that was translated into French: by the late P. J. Toulet, a literary man of some distinction.

I *think* (I do not know) that *The Bowmen* sold about 80,000 copies. The 2nd edition had several additional tales, & new matter in the Preface: this, I believe, was reprinted till the demand was exhausted.

You have my full authority to make enquiries of the American publishers. I am very misty about these details of editions and so forth. With our best regards to Mrs Millar and yourself.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

Dec. 29.'37

Dear Mr Millar,

Many thanks for your kind letter and good wishes. Pray receive in return our wishes; to you, your wife, and your family for all good fortune and happiness in 1938.

I am sorry to say that poor Waite is not yet himself again. He gets up for a short time every day; but is advised to keep as quiet as possible. When we get into the seventies, injuries do not heal readily; and I think he must be 78.

We are having but sorry weather here, and I suppose it is not much better at Newport. I have a vivid recollection of January 18th, 1881, when there began a snowstorm that went on for 36 hours.

Pray commend us to our Newport friends: Mr Collins, Mr Fletcher, Mr Hando.

I remain Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

Dec. 21.’43

Dear Mr Millar,

In the first place; let me wish you and Mrs Millar and all your house a very happy Christmas. Will your sons be at home? I hope they are well.

I think you are all a little harsh to the B.B.C. people responsible for ‘The Shining Land’.

Don Quixote is one of the greatest books in the world: but Don Quixote without Sancho Panza would be nothing or next to nothing. And Sancho was a very gross, illiterate, guzzling, swilling and knavish fellow. Compliment poor Davies & myself by calling us a composite Don Quixote: then, that Monmouthshire poacher, who called as a witness ‘my sister Blodwen’s eldest daughter’s young man’ may take Sancho’s place.

Look at it that way.

Next year, if we live, may we keep Christmas with open lights.

Yours very sincerely,

Arthur Machen — Leolinus Siluriensis

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

July 3.’39

Dear Mr Michael,

That cautionary, ‘if I can’, of mine was lucky. I don’t know anything about my own bibliography in any exact sense.

But here are one or two things I think I can correct in the enclosed:

A was the ‘Fragment of Life’ (and ‘The White People’) published as a separate book in 1906? If so,. I have forgotten. Both tales are included in the collection: *The House of Souls.*

B ‘Confessions of a Literary Man’. This, with a very few very minor alterations, was published under the title of *Far Off Things.*

C ‘The Way to Attain’. A few sheets of my complete translation of *Le Moyen de Parvenir were* printed. Danielson, I believe, had a few sets. The grossness of Béroalde, Canon of Tours (1610) sickened the printers. I rewrote, cut out here, added there; and the result was *Fantastic Tales.*

But if you want to resolve questions of Machen Bibliography, go to the Doctor of that Science, John Gawsworth, 33 Great James Street, London, WC1. If he is not too busy, I am sure he will help you.

I am likely to be more useful over literary questions:

‘What did you mean precisely by that?’

‘What is the allusion in this?’

And, largely in mere irrelevance, for example; that photograph was taken at Perth, in 1907, when I was playing Sir Daniel Ridgeley in Pinero’s, ‘His House in Order’.

And again: the Review that gratified me extremely. It was in the old *Westminster:* I forget what book of mine was under notice, but the reviewer said: ‘Mr Machen, whom some may remember as an impressive actor,’ etc., etc.

I have to break off. I have got your MS list of Additional Titles, and will refer to them when I answer your next letter.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

July 23.'39

Dear Mr Michael,

I have annotated the List to the best of my ability. As to *The House of Souls:* this was an 'Omnibus'. It contains: 'A Fragment of Life', 'The White People', 'The Great God Pan', 'The Inmost Light', 'The Three Impostors', 'The Red Hand'.

And as to the stage:

Joined F. R. Benson in 1901 — about a fortnight before the death of Queen Victoria.

Left Benson in June 1901. Was engaged by George Alexander to play a small part in *Paolo & Francesca.* In the meantime: Played in *Pastorals* run by Harcourt Williams and Garnet Holme: the company almost wholly Bensonians. This for 1 — weeks.

Played then Comic Irishman in music-hall sketch called *The Just Punishment,* at the 'Hoxton Varieties' and another East End Hall, called, I think, the 'Cambridge'. This for a fortnight.

Then in *The Silent Vengeance,* a melodrama written by Harry Grattan of the Gaiety, run by Charles Terry, a brother of Ellen. This for 6 weeks, on tour.

Then in *The Varsity Belle,* a farcical comedy run by a Mr Parrington. This for 6 — weeks, on tour.

Then in an old comedy tour in the West, run by Garnet Holme and a Mr Frost, a business manager for Forbes Robertson and others. This for a fortnight: at the end of which I began rehearsing *Paolo & Francesca* at the St James's Theatre.

Such was my first year on the stage. An outline of later years may follow in a short while.

All my books have appeared in book-form.

Salutations to Mynydd Maen & Twyn Barlwm.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

Oct. 13.’39

Dear Mr Michael,

I hope, anyhow, that you and your wife enjoyed your holiday, in spite of the shadows on it, and the troublesome ending. We are in dark days; but the odd thing is that everybody says it is a fine season for books. The theory is that, it being disagreeable and dangerous to go abroad, people are sitting at home and reading hard.

You addressed Armstrong quite correctly. I am sending on one of your Lists to him, by way of reminder, with your address in case he has mislaid it. He really is a busy and distracted man. He edits some ‘Digest’ or other, and has to glance through One Thousand Books and Papers in One Thousand Minutes every month.

Now to our queries.

A Few Letters were privately printed in Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A. — I think for some club there.

The Glorious Mystery — a collection of odds and ends of articles and stories, made in America.

Tom O’Bedlam — an essay on the old song, printed in America. I have never seen a copy. The slump of’30,’31 came down on the U.S.A. and the man who commissioned the essay. It was printed, I believe, but nobody sent me a copy.

La Grande Trouvaille was issued by the Ingenious Mr Searle — somewhere about the same date as *Collector’s Craft.* I am inclined to think there was a third leaflet from the same source; but my memory of these transitory things is at its vaguest.

Stage Calendar Spring — Summer, 1902: *Paolo & Francesca* at the St James’s.

Autumn 1902 - Spring 1903: *If! Were King* at the St James’s.

Spring 1903: Not in production of *Old Heidelberg* at St J’s:

Went on Tour with Alexander in that piece & in *If! Were King* in autumn, 1903, and played in *Old Heidelberg* at the St James's till spring of 1904.

April - June 1904. With F. R. Benson at Stratford-on-Avon, and in Public School Tour of an English version of *Agamemnon, Libation Bearers,* and *Furies.*

Autumn, 1904. With Tree Company on Shakespearian Tour.

Autumn, 1905. *Mice and Men* Tour: Smalls & Fit-ups.

Autumn, 1907. *His House in Order* Tour: Smalls & Fit-ups.

Spring, 1909. Farewell — to all intents and purposes — to Stage with the part of the Enchanter in *Henry VI, Part II.* With Benson, at The Coronet, Notting Hill Gate, and at Stratford-on-Avon. Remarkable only for this: — that Shakespeare gives the magician's part simply as: *Conjuro te* etc,. I wrote up 'etc', to two or three pages of res. So far as I know, I am the only actor who ever wrote his own part in Shakespeare.

It was exactly the farewell to the beloved stage that I should have chosen; especially since, as the theatrical heaven darkened & the stage thunder began to mutter and my cue got near, Lady Benson came behind me and murmured in my ear — after her wholly charming and delightful fashion — a story very remote from the business of the approaching scene.

To conclude all fitly, I sent in my bill for this final performance at Stratford thus:

To summoning Foul Fiend, Aschmoddai (Hebrew Characters); jjs.

To discharging same: jjs.

The business manager told me later that the Auditor of Accounts was a good deal puzzled.

I have told you a long tale.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

LETTERS TO COLIN SUMMERFORD. 1924-1947

12 Melina Place, London, N.W.8 Feb.

12th 1924

My dear Sir,

I am much obliged by your letter. The ‘Celtic Church and Grail’ motive in ‘The Secret Glory’ is founded on six months’ research in the British Museum. Not, I hasten to add, that I ‘read up’ the subject in order to make a book, but having read to satisfy my curiosity, the topic occurred to me a year afterwards, when I was planning ‘The Secret Glory’.

I find it difficult to give you any leading authorities; as the result was obtained from a very large number of books. I look into my old notebooks at haphazard, and see a title: ‘Early Xtian Monuments of Scotland’ (Allen and Anderson authors) and find a passage underlined about the *Cathach* (I think a Book of the Gospels that had belonged to St Columba). The passage underlined is: *‘it is not lawful to open it’*. This was important to me as illustrating one of the distinctions between the Roman and the Celtic Churches: the Romans exhibit their relics as much as possible to excite the devotion of the faithful: the Celts kept their relics in secrecy; it was dangerous for the unqualified to look on them. You see how this bears on the Grail legend; how it is one of the many small points which tend to establish the general conclusion: the Legend of the Grail is, in one of its aspects, the Legend of the Celtic Church.

Now here is a case of a book read through for the sake of one passage; and there are many dozen cases like it.

I wish you would call on me when you are next in town. I could then shew you these old notebooks of mine. We are always in on Saturdays at nine p m.

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, London, N.W.8

March 13.’24

Dear Summerford,

Many thanks: I should like to see the Abbé’s book very much. I will return it to you with my notebooks and with Miss Jessie Weston’s fallacious ‘From Ritual to Romance’, when you write from your home.

I said ‘fallacious’; but we are all fallacious, more or less, in this quest: chiefly because we never know whence information may come. A certain Venerable Head appears in one of the Grail visions. That Head is no doubt from the *Mabinogion* story of Bran Bendigeid. But how astonishing to find in a Red Indian myth, cited by Mark Twain in his ‘Life on the Mississippi’, a Head of very similar character! So it is impossible to exclude any source; and that means that the search is hopeless. The word of the enigma may be lurking in a bound volume of ‘The Pink’Un’!

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

For the Mozarabic Rite: try Messrs Cope and Fenwick, Liturgical Publishers, London. I am afraid I have no more exact address.

12 Melina Place, London, N.W.8

March 13.'24

Dear Summerford,

I hope 'this finds you' completely recovered. Will you let me know the dates of your stay within reach of London. I should like you to come and lunch with me at Stones in Panton Street. I will bring along the notebooks and 'From Ritual to Romance' and you might bring the *Chrétientés Celtiques.* Stones is far from being a good place, I am sorry to say; but it was founded in 1770, and there is a little old mahogany left.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, N.W.8

March 29th 1924

Dear Summerford,

Can you meet me outside Stone’s in Panton Street, next Thursday, April 3rd at noon?

Herewith is a little book which may interest you. The Welsh in it is, I am afraid, dubious. I got my friend, Caradoc Evans, to read the proofs, but I believe he knows Welsh by ear, not by letter.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, London, N.W.8

April 23rd 1924

Dear Summerford,

Pray keep the notebooks and the Weston book as long as you like. I can’t see that the lady makes out any real case for the existence of a Gnostic Sect in Britain in the Xlth century. Though, oddly enough, there is a passage in the Introduction to the *Grand St Graal* that might be patient of such an interpretation.

I am glad you liked St Mark’s Mass. That unhappy choir! They have suffered for the last iii years from a succession of bad organists. Now they have an organist who is an artist — too much of an artist for them.

With all good wishes

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, London, N.W.8

May 12.1924

My dear Summerford,

In the first place; keep the book and the notebooks as long as you like. You will probably be having an exeat in the course of the term? If so you might bring up the books and I will lend you in exchange A. E. Waite's 'Hidden Church of the Holy Grail'.

Now, of course, your request for advice is impossible. No man can advise another; fortunately or unfortunately. But, putting this objection on one side for the moment, you do not tell me of your immediate dispositions. That is: how long are you staying at Winchester? Does your father desire that you should go to Oxford and take a degree? I need not tell you that you owe him absolute obedience up to the age of 21, and after that a very reverent consideration of his desires.

I doubt whether there is much to be said for the publishing proposition. I have seen a little of it (getting on for forty years ago) and I don't see that you could expect to get much out of it. A great deal depends, of course, on the question of means. Will you have enough to keep alive on? That is, I suppose, £200 a year. If so, you might go to a publisher and ask to be allowed to loaf about his office and do what you are told for nothing. You would soon find out whether the business appealed to you; and if your services appealed to the publisher, he would put you on the salary list. As for journalism: keep out of it. In my opinion, it is not the profession of a gentleman, and I had eleven years of it. You will see what I think of it, if you read my autobiographical book 'Things Near and Far'.

Have you any feeling for the stage? If so, I can tell you where to get a training for a moderate fee. That has been one of my many crafts and I look back on it with the fondest affection.

But at last the fatal difficulty recurs. I cannot advise you because I do not know you, and you cannot tell me for you do not know yourself!

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen
Evelyn Underhill’s book is called ‘A Column of Dust’ — not very good.

12 Melina Place, London, N.W.8

May 20. 1924

My dear Summerford,

I was very glad to get your letter of May 16: and pray write to me whenever you feel inclined.

I note what you say about your stay at Winchester. Then you need not worry for the next two years, or perhaps three. You may have to settle things then, or possibly four years after that, on leaving the University. So get all the learning you can and do not trouble about what will happen in 3 or 7 years time. A man wrote to me last year of his approaching financial troubles: ‘I do not know what will happen at the beginning of next year.’ I wrote back sending him to ‘the Book’: ‘let the beginning of next year take thought for the things of itself. And nothing in particular did happen!

I am glad you liked ‘Dog and Duck’. Did you note that the destruction of Geometry was really a strong argument for the Faith?

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, London, N.W.8

July 11th 1924

Dear Summerford,

If necessary and when the time comes I will tell you how to live on £2 a week.

I am very glad to hear you are all right. You are wise to leave the future to take care of the future; let it take thought for the things of itself.

Many thanks for Miss Weston’s book, and pray do not distress yourself for one moment about the trifling patch on the binding. It doesn’t matter in the least. I don’t believe in her thesis for one moment: she has entirely failed to prove that a Gnostic sect persisted in Britain up to the Xlth century. She is beset by two opposing absurdities: the folly of the ‘fertility’ people, and the of the occultists. She talks in her book of secrets having been communicated to her, and when people talk like that, sense is over.

Pray keep the notebooks as long as you wish.

Could you come round here on August 9th (Saturday) at 9 p m.? We are always at home on Saturdays at that hour.

You speak of Glastonbury. It is a sad thing; but that holy place is possessed or obsessed by occultists of the worst type, who get messages from the ghosts of medieval monks in sham-antique English.

You will find ‘Things Near and Far’ inferior to the earlier book.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, London, N.W.8

July 25. 1924

Dear Summerford,

You need not bother to write: we are always here on Saturday evenings at 9 p m. But if some other evening be more convenient: then let me have a line two or three days beforehand.

I have just been engaged in the agreeable task of ‘going for’ Miss Weston. A series of Graal articles that I wrote in 1907 are to be reprinted, with other matter, some time early next year; and I have written an introduction to them. (Did you order a copy of ‘Precious Balms’? I believe the whole edition was subscribed before publication. Only very few copies were sent out for review.)

There was once a habit of making an antithesis between St Paul and St John, as if between intellect and intuition. This is mostly false.

I forget whether I ever drew your attention to Coventry Patmore’s *Religio Poetae* and ‘Rod, Root and Flower’. I am sure you would be deeply interested in both.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

You are going to Brittany? Polish up your Welsh!

Station House, Penally, Pembrokeshire Aug. 23-I think-

1924

Dear Summerford,

I only hope you are having better weather than we are!

Of course the connection of the Dove with the Mass — or *Offeren* as we said in Wales — is not peculiar to Celtdom. The medieval tabernacle in England was usually in the form of a Dove suspended by chains. It is highly curious that the Roman Missal ignores the work of the Holy Spirit in the Mass. It would be interesting to enquire — if enquiry were possible — whether the Dove and Host and Stone motive in the *Parzival* of von Eschenbach is not a Legend or Mythos constructed on a pictorial symbol; such as is the Nigg stone.

I am happy to hear of the good results produced on a Unitarian by 'The Secret Glory'. I think I had rather be an Atheist than a Unitarian.

My new book 'The London Adventure' will be published on the 28th. It is very bad; and very sad for me. You in your day will find out the misery of failing or failed powers.

With all good wishes

Yours very sincerely,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, London, N.W.8

Nov. 22nd'24

Dear Summerford,

A bankrupt never feels his beggary so keenly as when he is called on for aid!

The first measure I would commend to you is to write to:

The Revd J.N. Newland Smith The Vicarage Kingskerswell Devon.

You saw him, you remember, at the door of his church, and had a word or two with him. I know that he is capable of helping you, and I am sure that he will be willing to do so. He left St Mark's last July much to our regret.

Do not believe for a moment that one must be a Celt to see God! Every race has its own way of approach, its own manner of excellence. The Celts have their peculiar advantages — and also their deep defects. You will note, in the imaginative world, how little they have actually *done,* achieved. The Romance Literature of Europe was, doubtless, inspired by the Celt; but *written* by the Anglo-Norman.

I am delighted to hear about the Unitarian: may he prosper within and without.

There is one thing I would like to impress upon you. Among those who follow the interior life, there is a tendency, latent though often undefined and unexpressed, to belittle the moral law, the chiefly negative precepts of the Decalogue. And it is true that these are to the End as the rules of Grammar are to the achievement of Shakespeare. And it is true that those who have attained rarely or never think of them. It is moreover undoubtedly true that no man can get to heaven by *not* stealing, by *not* committing adultery. But, on the other hand, none of these is to be disobeyed with impunity, for one moment.

I think the case is this. The Decalogue is *intus et foris scriptus.* For the majority it preserves the decencies and moralities of the social order. For those of a more interior order; it is the condition, though not the cause, of their light. Covet your neighbour's ox; and that light will begin to grow dim.

You have all my prayers and good wishes

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

You may mention my name of course to Newland Smith.

12 Melina Place, London, N.W.8

March 24th 1925

Dear Summerford,

Could you look in here on Monday, April 6th at 9 p m.? Or, if not, mention some time and place more convenient. I shall have Notebook No. II at your disposal; though I think I embodied all the results of my research in the Graal Essay. It is amusing in its way: but owing to the fact that very few of the Reviewers know anything whatever about the subject, they slide nervously past the Essay, murmuring ‘Stimulating’ or ‘somewhat tedious’ as the case may be. So I am deprived of the pleasure of being attacked.

I was very much obliged to you for giving me the information as to ‘The Shining Pyramid’. I came to the conclusion that no fraud was involved; only the grossest carelessness and mismanagement. A large ‘only’ for me, who have to live on what my books bring me.

Dr Frere’s book is very fine indeed. The Responses and verses have somewhat in them which is extraordinarily noble and compelling: thank you.

Urquhart’s translation of Rabelais is *the* translation; and perhaps there can be none better. My impression on reading and comparing the original with the English version was that the book had been, somehow, thickened — rather than coarsened. It is as if one had translated Burgundy into whiskey — into a very fine whiskey, indeed.

The aim of the ‘Secret Glory’ was higher than the aim of the ‘Hill of Dreams’; but alas! the former book broke in my hands. I got on a wrong track, cancelled about 20,000 words; and published a fragment.

You say you will never do anything at writing. You don’t know; the only receipt is: try hard for a dozen years or more, break your heart half-a-dozen times, go down into desolation and come up again, and then begin all anew. A nice life, isn’t it?

Sebastian Evans’s ‘High History’ is a fine piece of work. It is a pity that he let himself be ensnared into a very foolish theory of the matter.

Yours very sincerely,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, London, N.W.8

April 15th 1925

Dear Summerford,

have known my very dear friend A. E. Waite for 38 years; and I have not the faintest notion as to his real beliefs. In hopeful moods I am inclined to think that he is a Deist; but in stem fact I should think that Pantheism is his veritable label. He was brought up strictly in the Roman Faith, and has always had the warmest enthusiasm for the Roman Church— ‘as a great system of symbolism’, as he once explained to me. I have often told him that his case is exactly like that of the late President Thiers, who once said: *‘Je ne suis pas Chrétien: mais je suis toujours Catholique Romain.’* It is a strange case.

I will certainly write my name in ‘Stiggins’ whenever you like to bring it along. And I hope that will be soon. Remember, if you find yourself by chance in London over Saturday, we are always in that night at 9.

Yours very sincerely,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, London, N.W.8

Sept. 30th'25

Dear Summerford,

By all means keep the Grail book and the notebook as long as you please.

I hope you enjoyed your holiday. For once, I believe the West had better weather than the East. We had a great deal of noble sunshine and a very good and leisurely time. It was a little spoilt for me by the necessity of writing a weekly article for the *Graphic* and also writing Introductions: to a portfolio of symbolic drawings which I did not understand, to Brillat-Savarin's *Physiologie du Goût,* to 'The Canning Wonder' (my own book) and to Lady Benson's 'Overture and Beginners, Please' — stage annals and reminiscences. I brought into this the last chapter of 'The Secret Glory' about 'The Hathaway Company'; the Benson Company being intended when I wrote it.

I have some notion of trying to find a French book on the Compagnonnage, the ancient Freemasonry of French workmen, very curious in its way. If the material seemed likely I would translate it — and vex old Waite horribly; he having a theory of Freemasonry which makes the existence of the Compagnonnage highly inconvenient.

Pray let me know when you are to be in town: I want you to lunch with me.

With our best wishes

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

My last work is the composition of an inscription for a new sacring bell at St Mark's: *Mater Dei Maria ora pro nobis in via.*

12 Melina Place, London, N.W.8

Oct. 21st, 1925

Dear Summerford,

Many thanks for your letter of Oct. 2nd.

What a very odd circumstance; this offering of earth, carrots and twigs! I can make nothing of it; but I should have made a good deal of it about thirty years ago! Indeed, I invented something of the kind in one of my short stories.

Alas! It is sad to grow old. A couple of years ago, a man was telling me a very striking notion for a story which he wanted me to use. I said: ‘Talk to me about that in 1890’!

I hope the Canning book will be out directly, but, likely enough, the publishers will put it off to February next. Publishers often do the displeasing thing.

Translate the Grail Books! They are a Library: they would fill a large room: it would be the task of a lifetime. *You* might think of it.

I shall be most happy to sign ‘The Secret Glory’ whenever you will.

We have begun to use the new Sacring Bell at St Mark’s; it has a reverend sound.

With all our good wishes

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Mind you let me know when you have a day in town: you must lunch with me.

12 Melina Place Jan. 14.1926

Dear Summerford,

Thinking it over, I feel that it would not be very good manners to send a savage assault on the schoolmaster's craft — to a schoolmaster. I have a reverence for the College motto. Your venerated founder had certainly 'a message for this age'.

I once went to the Rite of Irving at their 'Cathedral' in Gordon Square. You know the subtitle of the sect; what they call themselves? It is 'The Catholic and Apostolic Church'! Their 'Mass' is quite dignified. All present (of the sect) communicate, being marshalled from their seats in due order by two deacons. In the midst of the service a silence; then a voice suddenly uplifted, wailing on vowels, or so it seemed to me, in a somewhat terrifying manner. As you may be aware, I know something of the matter of sorcery; and it is curious that the Tongues (as it is called) is very like an Incantation. It is supposed to be a heavenly language, as a courteous deacon informed me.

I trust you have succeeded with the Scholarship.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, N.W.8

Jan. 30th 1926

Dear Summerford,

The heartiest congratulations of us both on your success. You are one of the very few people who are elected to be round pegs in round holes. You are deeply interested in Theology, Liturgiology, and the history of the early British Church — and you are bidden to study all these subjects! It is wonderful.

One note of the connection between the Grail Romances and the Celtic Church has occurred to me lately. In the Romances and the C. Church, it is only the elect who may see the Holy Things — Lancelot, you remember, is blasted, not healed, by the *theoria* of the Grail. Amongst the Latins this is not so: the more of a sinner you are, the more need of seeing and revering the mysteries.

As to the Irvingites: the ‘Angel’ (Bishop) celebrates in a Gothic Chasuble. But what is the story of the transformation of a Presbyterian Congregation that went crazy into what we must call a Catholic sect? I do not know.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

The Merchant Taylors’ School Badge is the Lamb and Flag.

12 Melina Place, N.W.8

March 3rd 1926

Dear Summerford,

‘First there comes David, Then there comes Chad, Then comes Wenwoloc
As though he were mad.’

I was born on his day in the year 1863. He has variant names: Gwynllyw and (oddly) Woolos.

I am ordering a copy of ‘The Secret Glory’ to be sent to you. Will you pass it on to Mr Robinson? I shall be obliged.

I never met Dr Warren. I think I told you that I wrote to him for information —— and in a short time found myself giving it. There is the necessary defect of specialism; you have no time to go outside your subject, and indeed, being a specialist, you do not know where to go. I, being a smatterer, could bear the Celtic Church in mind while I was investigating the Grail Romances.

I expect the stacks of ‘The Great Return’ have gone down a bit, but I don’t know. Somebody told me the other day that the book now fetched 5/-.

I will remember the good Canon of whom you speak.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, N.W.8 March 5.’26

Dear Summerford,

Forty years ago I read in *The Tablet* a sonorous and satisfying phrase which has always remained in my memory. Some position was being condemned, and of it the writer said that it was:

‘itijuriosa, perniciosa, male sonans, et plurium errorum productrix’.

These words apply admirably to the *Ch. Times* position as to the iconostasis, or Rood screen. It is absolutely false. The screen is an image of the Veil through which we pass (see Epistle to the Hebrews) into the Holy Place. It also signifies that the Holy Sacrifice is a Holy *Mystery,* a thing discerned in part, *per speculum in aenigmate.* It was in use in the East where there was no sudden irruption of half-taught barbarians. It was pierced in the West and became the Rood screen, as the sense of the *Mysteries* — not to be viewed too clearly — grew dim: this was the period when the ‘squints’ were made, to enable people in the aisles to see the altar. The end of the process is manifest in the Modem Roman Church, where the altar is to stand high and dry, the most visible object in the church.

The Romans of Southwark pulled down the Screen that Pugin had made in their Cathedral some years ago.

As for the rest of the article; it is a mass of falsities and hypocrises: full of *suppressio veri et suggestio falsi.*

‘The shabby leavings of the Middle Ages’.

I like that. Are the Gothic Cathedrals shabby? And if, on the surface they became so, who made them so?

I never see the *Church Times.* It became the organ of Satan many years ago.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, N.W.8

March 12.1926

Dear Summerford,

Did you get ‘The Secret Glory’ all right? Denny the bookseller says he has sent it.

If Mr Robinson talks to you about the book, point out to him that whereas most writers dwell on the vices of public schools, it is their virtues, all that they are most proud of, which stink in my nostrils. Individual vices are, comparatively, of little consequence. My friend Waite said once, very truly, that the crimes of the Borgias are of no account when compared with the Nonconformist Conscience.

Is there a chance of seeing you about Eastertide?

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place N.W.8

July 19. 1926

Dear Summerford,

Tell me when you can have lunch with me. We are in town up to and including August 14th; then for Penvro. Why don’t you arrange to take a short holiday of your own at Tenby or Penally? I want to show you the place where the heroes heard the singing of the Three Fairy Birds of Rhiannon at the Entertainment of the Venerable Head, and, unhappily, opened the door which looked on Cornwall.

I had a letter from Dom Robinson. He said that ‘The Secret Glory’ was a travesty of the system of the Great Public Schools. I replied that we did not seem in perfect agreement on the matter.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, N.W.8

Nov. 15.'26

Dear Summerford, I hope you are having a very good time. Remember it is your duty to enjoy yourself enormously at Oxford.

One of your Winchester masters, Leeson, has been appointed Head of the Merchant Taylors'. What character do you give him?

Have you looked up David Kimpton, whom you met here just before going up? I wish you would, if you could manage it. I think he is a very good fellow. I believe he proposes to take Orders. Worcester is his college.

If, after your Degree, you still think of going into a Publisher's House; I believe I know of one that you would like. This is Peter Davies, who, if I recollect, was about the night you were here. A long, thin, somewhat sombre looking man. He is, in fact, the original of Barrie's 'Peter Pan'. But he has grown up, and issues, so far, only books of real interest.

How do you get on with Waite's book on the Grail?

With the best wishes of us both

Yours very sincerely,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, N.W.8 Nov. 24.'26

Dear Summerford,

Many thanks for your letter. I am glad you give Leeson such a good character.

suppose it is the corruption of our nature which makes us in practice equate 'duty' with the disagreeable. But it is no doubt a high duty to enjoy the delightful. See the awful fate of the people who didn't enjoy life — the accidious — in Dante. This grievous sin is laid, justly or unjustly, against the University to which you belong. It is externally manifest in that affected weariness and languor which is called 'the Oxford manner'. I have known sufferers who cannot say: 'That is very beautiful', but will drawl out, as if half-asleep, 'it seems raaaather interesting'. The Publicans and Sinners, you will remember, did their very best to enjoy life. Their methods were doubtless mistaken in some particulars; but they were preferred before the Scribes and Pharisees — the Dons of their day!

I don't know where you can find the Grail Texts. Write to A. E. Waite, 156 High Street, Ramsgate, and say that I told you to do so.

Tell the new Cope and Fenwick to let us have — if not the whole liturgy — a sample chunk of the Mozarabic Rite, displaying the Epiclesis, in Latin and English.

If you will let me know a day when you will be in town in the vacation, I will let you know where you shall lunch with me. I am glad you take to Kimpton. It will, perhaps, be your business to lead him to the Catholic Faith.

Yours very sincerely,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, N.W.8

Dec. 13 1926

Dear Summerford,

I am much pleased that Waite gave you the information that you wanted. I have written him a line; reminding him that next month it will be forty years since we met. Alas, Postumus!

Pray bring Mr Lane — poor man! — with you next Saturday: and bring Mr Fairtlough too, if he will come. But what day can you appoint to meet me at Stone's, at 1 p in for a beefy lunch? Saturdays, in the afternoon, is a *dies non* for me: any other weekday save Friday, when Stone's is no place for a Catholic.

I note the Cope and Fenwick policy: a judicious one, I am sure. 'Ornaments injade' is more or less Knopf's property. And as for 'the new book': I fear there is little prospect of any such thing.

Yours very sincerely,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, N.W.8.

March 3rd 1927

Dear Summerford,

It is lucky for the Firm that it is not employing me as a translator of the Mozarabic Liturgy. I finished my serious study of the Latin tongue just 47 years ago!

Thank you very much for writing to Lane. I will await his letter with due serenity. Of course you and Fairtlough will not expect to make ‘real money’ out of Liturgies. From the nature of the case, the public for such matter is and will be a very small one. I suppose the average liturgical book, published at 10/6 — 16/- is lucky if it sells 1000 copies; and this is probably an optimistic estimate. Such books are bought by the inner circle of experts: if you could tap the *Church Times* public with 2/6 translations, you *might* get a circle of 3000 readers: again an optimistic forecast. I think it would be idle to expect anything better.

Yours very sincerely,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, N.W.8

Holy Wednesday, 1927

Dear Summerford,

‘London Calendar’? That is the subtitle of ‘Dog and Duck’, a volume of essays. I think they are very decent essays. As for ‘The Dragon of the Alchemists’; I wrote the Introduction to it, but I really have not the remotest notion of what it is about! I met the author once or twice and found him a singularly pleasant man, but I didn’t like to ask him what he meant by his book.

St Mark’s uses black apparel in Holy Week; I don’t know how the Sarum order is.

We saw John Davenport the other day. He was just going to meet his father: a subject for an historical painter.

May your Easter be blessed.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

You know how St Philip Neri, meeting the students of the English College at Rome *(temp.* Eliz. R.) used to hail them — *Salvete flores Martyrum?*. Well, the young man next to Fairtlough — Saturday night — has just resigned his desk in the family building business for the career of letters. May he intercede for us in the time of his glory.

28 Loudoun Road, N.W.8

25. 11.’28

Dear Summerford,

Many thanks for your letter. I did not know that I had attracted the favourable notice of that ruffian and his friends. He was abominable, no doubt; and he was also an ass and a quack. The combination is not a very usual one. One cannot be very serious in one’s condemnation of a man who says he is Therion, the Apocalyptic Beast.

I hope all goes well and happily with you; and I hope that you and Mr Fairtlough will not fail to appear on a Saturday night, when you are next in town.

Hilary has begun studying Hebrew, and seems to like it. He began the other night to tell me about Tetragrammaton!

As to Loudoun Road: it is only the smallest portion of the terrors, afflictions, and dismays with which it has pleased Tetragrammaton (blessed be his Name!) to lay upon these my later years.

Yours very sincerely,

Arthur Machen

28 Loudoun Road, N.W.8

St Denis,'28

Dear Summerford,

Many thanks for your letter with its most entertaining account of your doings at Molesey. I would think that our V.H. Frater, Sacramentum Regis, otherwise, A. E. Waite, would declare that the Rite of Molesey was voided, the sanctuary stripped and bare, the lamps extinguished, and the Relics taken away into a deep concealment.

Indeed there is a certain sacred story, as to which there were profane (uninitiated) references in verses by Sybil Waite, quoted to you when you were here last.

'When London's mighty city With orgies seemed to scorch.'

But it is related, with due veils and concealments, that on the morning of the Coronation of our Sovereign Lord, King Edward of happy memory, seventh of that name since the Conquest, Mrs Menteith came out of Gray's Inn at about eight of the morning, and was seen to get into a four wheeler. And, indeed (και δη και) it is declared by Waite *that she never got out of it,* that a mere simulacrum and appearance arrived at Molesey; that the word was lost; and that a mere substituted word took its place. But these are sacred matters.

Your Mass of the Rocks reminds me somewhat of the Mass of Lavenham, Suffolk. But the Priest of Lavenham lights XVIII candles for Low Mass!

With all good wishes from Mrs and myself.

Yours very sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Pray excuse pencil.

28 Loudoun Road, N.W.8

Dec. 27.’28

My dear Summerford,

All our thanks for your good wishes; and the same to you for the coming year. I suppose you will go down finally in a year’s time, and begin what is called life. I have seen John Davenport twice, and was very glad to see him well, and pleased with Cambridge and his college. If the oddly named ‘intelligentzia’ has no worse effect on him than that of causing him to utter rhyming jingles; then it is very well indeed. For the hatred of rhyme is, often, a very marked and malignant symptom of the disease in question, causing that monstrosity called *vers libre.*

We hope to see you and Mr Fairtlough on the first Saturday night that you can manage. Old Waite was in town about three weeks ago. I thought him in excellent health and spirits. I again urged him to write that book which is to let us know what he really believes. I am inclined to think that he may find the task a difficult one.

Yours very sincerely,

Arthur Machen

I agree with you about Christmas cards. I don’t like them nearly so much as I did about 1868-74.

28 Loudoun Road, London, N.W.8

Jan. 12.’29

My dear Summerford,

Could you put in a word for me with that young Lane of whom we were talking the other day? *Not* to influence him favourably on behalf of a literary masterpiece; but to ask him if the Firm can give me any ‘reading’. I have some experience in that art. I should be much obliged if you could manage this.

I hope your party went off to rights. (My spouse once rebuked me for using this phrase; but I showed it to her in ‘Gulliver’s Travels’.)

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

28 Loudoun Road, London, N.W.8

Jan. 18.’29

My dear Summerford,

Your course is obvious. Tell the young woman to buy ‘The Shining Pyramid’ (Seeker) and read the Note on the Graal there contained. I do not know that any valid new light has been thrown on the question in later years. I am sure that the late Miss Jessie Weston was quite misguided. As for telling all about the Graal in a letter: that is nonsense. I speak with authority, since I once, in accordance with orders, put the Graal in a box, to use a technical phrase, which I hope you do not understand.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

28 Loudoun Road, N.W.8

Jan. 21.’29

My dear Summerford,

You are most kind in all you say, and I hope I shall be able to fall in with your benevolent schemes. I will let you know when I hear what plans the Club Secretary has made for me. I do not quite know, by the way, why I am lecturing at Oxford. I know, very well indeed, that I do not want to lecture at Oxford, or at any other place. I suppose the truth is that with a man of the constitution called ‘easy-going’, it is more unpleasant to refuse a request rather than to grant it — provided the discomfort attached is not very great. I flung down an invitation to lecture in the Bishoprick of Durham for a week, with a small fee, without hesitation; the misery involved being very great.

If that girl delays to get ‘The Shining Pyramid’ the consequences are on her own head.

I remain Yours very sincerely,

Arthur Machen

28 Loudoun Road, London, N.W.8

June 22nd 1929

Dear Summerford,

Uncertain as to your present address, I am writing to Exeter, where there is, no doubt, a manciple or Protonotary, or something of the kind who will forward letters.

On Monday next, June 24, we move to Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

Kindly peruse the enclosed character. Would it be any good to show it to young Lane? If you think it would, you would oblige me very much by doing so, if the opportunity should arise: if not, throw it away.

Yours very sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

Aug. 14.’29

Dear Summerford,

Thank you so much for your very kindly thought. But I am not going to the Benson Dinner; the last Benson Dinner; for what is to come hereafter, with women at the board, will be nothing.

Hilary’s schooling will end next Christmas. I believe his present notion is to go and build organs, but nothing is settled. It is a pity that Leeson, a most amiable man, is a Liberal — in the broad sense of the word. How is it, said the Doctor, that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty from the drivers of slaves? So it was, and so it is, however; and so Liberal Leeson makes my boy learn history out of a book warmly commending Henry VIII, one of the filthiest tyrants that the world has seen.

When you do come to Amersham you will be welcome.

Yours very sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

Feb. 21.1930

Dear Summerford,

It is extremely good of you to forgive my silence and total neglect of your kind Christmas wishes. My negligence is partly due to an obstinate *accidia,* and partly to the fact that just before Christmas I fell down stairs and gave myself a very nasty shock, and a few days later had a severe and lasting fit of gout. Like the clergyman in *Hamlet* I lay howling. Now, I am glad to say, we are all as well as we are likely to be.

Will you and Fairtlough come along Saturday sennight about nine, to drink Punch? It is St David's day — *Dydd Dewi Sant* — and should be a good day. And would Fairtlough do us the great favour of conveying a passenger — Mrs Lynch whom I think you have met? If you can come, we will write to Mrs Lynch and fix it up.

I am afraid I can think of nothing for Peter Davies. I am glad he is doing well.

I suppose Waite is still talking of that 'Secret Church' of the H.G. — which has no existence, and in which he doesn't believe himself. I sent him some time ago 'From Ritual to Romance'. And that is about another Secret Church which has no existence. But Miss Weston's Church is quite different; being a Gnostic Sect, which survived in Wales up to the Xlth century!

Do I look as if I knew a Mercer?

Hilary has taken the Apron, and so far likes his job very well, and, I gather, promises well at it. He lodges during the week with the Clerk of St Mark's, our cousin.

Thanks very much for your kind offer of Bed and Brandy. You do not express the latter easement; but I have gathered that it is annexed.

Let me know as soon as may be, whether you can both come on March 1st.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

March 4th 1930

Dear Summerford,

To begin at the beginning: we were very sorry indeed that you and Fairtlough could not come on Saturday; more especially as your letter seemed to say that there was not much prospect of your being able to come on any discernible Saturday. I hope you will both reconsider this?

Thank you so much for your good wishes. It seems a long time since March 3rd, 1863. I cannot think the date was a well chosen one. March 3rd 1820 would, I think, have been more suitable, with a run up to, say, 1890. In that event, I should not have had the pain of living into an age which I regard with ever increasing horror, hatred and contempt. For example: I hear rumours that the squire here, Tyrwhitt Drake, is thinking of selling his estate. You will find somewhere in Coventry Patmore the most wise sentence: that the ploughboy, though he does not know it, is the happier because of the existence of the duke.

‘The Rod, the Root and the Flower’ is, indeed, a most profound book: more difficult than the *Religio Poetae,* also a treasure of wisdom. You know that some of the articles in *Religio* were contributed to the *St James Gazette*? *There* is a measure of the change that has come upon us. It strikes me that the difference between the end of the Roman world and our own will be this: that our barbarians are from within, not without.

The method of Wason’s promotion — I hope it will be so — pleases me very well. It has a certain ancient, homely touch about it which is very comfortable.

I have just been reading for the first time, ‘Antic Hay’. ‘Pooh’: that is my criticism. The fellow is quite aware that he is being very shocking; he means to be very shocking. Compare him with Casanova: the Italian knows that his method of living is completely right, the only method for a man of sense, education and sensibility.

May Fairtlough’s cold be a decent old-fashioned cold, such as one used to get; not the six weeks venom of these days.

Yours,

Arthur Marchen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

July 26.'30

My dear Summerford,

For some time past, I have been thinking of searching The Book with respect to you. I am sure there is some text, 'Forsake not the counsel of the aged' — or words to that effect, as the stage manager used to say to beginners who had to take their cues from Benson.

You know you are always welcome here; and the question of time is for you. If you have a car, come along at 8.30 and drink punch. If not, take the 3.25 from Marylebone, and have tea, with a drink in the xvjth century King's Arms to follow. Aug. 2 will suit us perfectly. Will Fairtlough come also? And John Davenport?

What a book is *Belle and the Dragon*!' But *I* would not revisit the scene. The souls have gone thence: they that seem to be there are but *Klippoth,* shells. But on this see *Kabala Denudata* of Knorr von Rosenroth.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

July 31st'30

My dear Summerford,

The 3.25 from Marylebone is a handy train; and if your friend can come, pray bring him along. I am sorry we do not grow *urtica pilulifera* here. But we have curious herbs: tansy, hyssop, marjoram, savory and rue. One or all of these might do good. But there is not any right Anticyran Hellebore.

Remind me to show you a Thesis for the Degree of Master of Arts, submitted to the Faculty of Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn. U.S.A. If it is received with boisterous mirth, I shall be very much hurt!

I told you long ago that the true doctrine is that Mrs Menteith *never got home* on the morrow of the sacring of King Edward VII of happy memory.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

March 3rd 1931

My dear Summerford,

Thank you very much. I think Wenwoloc *means* all right, but…

Well, for one thing, he hardly seems to have made up his mind about the spelling of his name. There is your version, and the one I have just used; and I think that in the Gentility of the Saints of the Isle of Britain it is Gwynllyw; and as the Patron Saint of Newport, Mon., he is Woolos. So, perhaps, on the whole…

Moreover…

(You know the Great Legend of that last word? In the days when things were, perhaps, better managed at *The Times* office — and in other places — than they are now; the rule was that when a gentleman was to write a leading article, a bottle of port was taken to his room. Dr Wace, afterwards Dean of Canterbury, was on one occasion asked to write two leaders, and two bottles of port were taken to his room. The hours passed on, no bell was rung for the copy messengers. Finally, Dr Wace was found fast asleep, his head on the table. On the pile of 'blue slips' beside him was the one word 'Moreover'. The two bottles of port were empty.)

Did you see that, on analysis, the soil of Cornwall proved to reek with arsenic? There is more poison in a handful of Cornish soil than in the dead, poisoned body buried in it. I always thought so. I always put the letters 'G.H.' after Cornwall, in addressing anybody there. They signify, 'God help'.

Well, you have got a queer job in Talbot Square; but there is an element of waggery — to quote Waite on the constitution of the universe — in it. It would suit me better than the other job at the Stock Exchange.

Have you heard anything of John Davenport? I am afraid he is distressing those excellent people of his. He won't even take the trouble to write to his mother: a sad fellow.

Do come down for tea and a drink any Saturday — March 14 excepted. Name your day and take a Day Return ticket, Marylebone, 3.25.

What was the notion of making the Café Royal like the waiting room of a gaol?

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

Thursday 9 July 1931

Dear Summerford,

Thank you, indeed. A gorgeous book, one of the finest I have seen. That is, *foris;* as to *intus,* I will write you later; since, as it happens, I have a big bundle of Benn books this week, and nearly all of them have to be read. That is, they are not good, but their badness does not appear in the first chapter.

I am delighted to have such a good report of A.E. W. and Sybil. The old man is evidently in the height of health, in body and mind. I should love to hear him expounding his latest doctrine of the Hidden Church: as false as hell, I am sure, but what does that matter? In my latest letter to him, I suggested that to many of the Graal problems there is no answer; no vital answer that is: I cited Hamlet: people are still enquiring what is deeply hidden in that matter of the ghost: Hamlet talks to his father's ghost, and then speaks of that bourne from which no traveller returns. The answer is, simply, that Shakespeare was a careless fellow, who wrote in a hurry.

When you write to Brightman again, do ask him if he considers this a valid formula:

Car chou est li sanc di ma nouviele loy, li miens meismes?

I should be most interested to hear his judgement on this, and on the *mysterium fidei.* I did not know that there was an answer to the latter question. Has Brightman ever considered the possibility of fervent improvisation as a liturgical source?

How are we to account for the fact that the *hwyl,* the singing eloquence of the Welsh Methodists, is, pretty nearly, the Preface Tone?

On July 27 we visit niece Sylvia Warner for 10 days. Do fix a day before that: a wire in the morning ample notice.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

July 24,’31

Dear Summerford,

He works in a mysterious way: in a sense I am sorry not to see you tomorrow; but on the whole it is well, for tomorrow my chief admirer, Fytton Armstrong, aged 19, comes, and he would not amuse you. It was only by threats that I dissuaded him from reprinting *Eleusinia:* pitiable doggerel that I wrote when I was 17, that would have disgraced 7.

The formulae of the *Grand Saint Graal* (? *c.* 1200) runs as follows:

‘Come and eat, and this is my body which shall be delivered to martyrdom and torment for you and for many other people.’

‘Take and drink, for this is the blood of my new law, my very same, which shall be shed for you in remission of sins.’

suppose ‘my very same’, *li miens meismes,* means, ‘my very own (blood)’. Of course, I did not suppose that Brightman would know or care anything about the Grail Legend, but it struck me that he might be interested in the extraordinary formula: of questionable validity, though, I suppose, *li miens meismes* might be held to supply the defect of *li sane di ma nouviele loy.* In the formula of the break; I know of no parallel to the phrase ‘delivered to martyrdom and torment’, not even in the wild Liturgies of Arabia and Ethiopia.

Of course, to the Grail student this account of ‘the first Mass that was ever said’ by the — wholly imaginary — Josephus, son of Joseph of Aramathea, opens difficult questions:

1. — How did the Romance Writer, almost certainly a cleric, dare to distort the sacred history in this manner?

2. — Why didn’t he use the Roman formulae — or go to the Gospels?

3. — Where did he get his formulae?

4. — Why didn’t the ecclesiastical authorities come down on him?

We shall return on Aug. 6. How about that weekend for you? I am glad you are to be released from the tents of Kedar.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

How I envy A.E.W. that struggle to write 300,000 words! May he prosper.

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

Sept. 3rd 1931

Dear Summerford,

I have left your letter unanswered for a month; since you intimated that throughout August you would be here and there. Now, let me try to fix you up for Saturday Sept. 19th. It is Fair Day here, and the sight of the booths all along the old street, flaming and gay, is good for the eyes. I hope you will come. I have fixed Armstrong up for Sept. 12th.

I should like very much to have the views of the Egg-headed Divine on that Formula. I think I had better translate the whole passage; since, apart from the wording of the Formula, the question arises: is a mass which consists solely of the words of Institution, a mass at all? And that, according to the text, was the Mass of 'Josephe'. 'It was very soon done, for he only said these words which Jesus Christ said to His disciples at the Supper.'

To me, there is an evil Protestant stench about this— 'It's so simple', as Drage used to say — and the puzzle is, where does it come from? — the date being *c.* 1200 and the general trend of the Grail Romances being highly to exalt the Sacrament of the Altar.

I heard from Waite the other day: he has compelled Walter Hutchinson to consent to the Grail book running to 350,000 words! There are powers for you.

As you have despised the Venusian Bard and (I am sure) no end of General Councils and Provincial Synods, and have consulted Babylonian Numbers: well, I hope it may all come true and soon. But I wish you could make it Duckworth. Putnam's head man once treated me to lunch at Gatti's.

Yours very sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

Oct. 12.’31

Dear Summerford,

We will despatch the Bergamots this day. They are snail-bitten, I regret to say, but the fact does not impair their vitality.

By removing ‘The Circle’ from the range of the little typist, you diminish the miracle, but you increase your chance of success. Do not think of ‘The Witch Review’ as a title. It sounds funny, and people would hate to ask for it. Years ago, Harry Furniss tried to found a comic paper. He called it ‘Lika Joko’ after his signature in *Punch,* but, though a good paper, it did not do. People don’t like going into a shop with an apologetic grin on their faces. That objection applies also to ‘The Ghost’.

Waite’s title for a magazine he ran 40 years ago was good:

The Unknown World or

The Unseen World or

The Wizard World (rather cheap)

or

Magic (apt to suggest Maskelyne and Devant)

or *The Veil* (melodramatic)

My favourite is The Unseen World.

In my opinion, the two dangers chiefly to be guarded against are credulity and insincerity. A.E. W. put no end of stuff into ‘The Unknown World’ that he knew to be balderdash: ‘The Occult Review’ — is it going still? — put in lots of stuff that it *ought* to have known to be balderdash: my friend Gow, when editor of ‘Light’, wallowed in balderdash.

Two guineas is exactly the sum I thought of. As to length:? 1200 words.

You know, of course, how important the make-up, setting and cover are? Here my unsolicited advice is to avoid all funny stunts, such as using I.c where custom prescribes caps: as *the unseen world* And, pray, nothing of Euclid's geometry on the cover! I mean, in the depiction of the human form; for it occurs to me that a Red Pentacle on a Green Ground would be in every way appropriate, effective, and cheap.

Here is a suggestion for a No. 1 article. 'Old Moore's' almanac for the current year, greatly to my surprise, contrived to predict, exactly not generally, the present political to-do. Let someone get all the astrological almanacs for 1931 and go through the predictions, comparing prophecy with fact.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

Dec. 12.’31

Dear Summerford,

Then I will find out what Saturday after Xmas young Mr Armstrong is likely to turn up — he is impending — and we can fix up a day for you.

Are you settled at Dryden Chambers? I took over the site nearly 40 years ago and built an extremely agreeable French Café. On fine, warm days, one drank red wine of Touraine there, sitting at little tables in the courtyard. See, *The Three Impostors.* A friend of mine once kept a gay lady freely in his chambers there, and afterwards, by ill advice, married her. He was much amazed when he was instantly turned out. The strange thing is that he was the son of Tommy Case, Waynflete Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Oxford: since his conduct was neither moral nor philosophic. The poor fellow is said to have ended, sadly enough, as a schoolmaster; so we see what Waynfleterie leads to.

am not astonished at the delay in producing *The Riddle;* I am afraid that my getting two quid out of you was rather on the Waynflete side of morals. Still; miracles do happen.

Per speculum in aenigmate: our translators rendered the phrase, ‘in a glass darkly’. But there is a shade in the Latin which they did not get. I do not know what the original Greek phrase is. I hope you will get into Methuens: a good firm, I should think. We saw about Peter Davies. The Great Oes will soon be upon us.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

Feb. 12.’32

Dear Summerford,

have a proposition of a publishing kind: it is to make a selection of the best things in the works of Charles Dickens. Of course the true Dickensian has these works complete on his shelves; but they would make a bulky addition to his baggage on a journey to Baile-Atha-Cliath or Samarkand. The notion is, to give him the quintessence of his author in a handy book, the size of which would be a matter for the publisher’s judgement. One can conjure a great deal into a small compass, using India paper. If you think there is anything in it: would you put it to the House? Or would it be better for me to write, direct? There is nobody ill here at present; and I hope Dryden Chambers can speak as fairly.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

My selections would, generally, be made with the view of getting rid of the ‘Little Nell’ element in Dickens.

Amersham, Bucks.

July 8.’32

Dear Summerford,

I am very sorry. Not hearing from you, I thought that the typing job was, for one reason or another, unacceptable to your man. Time pressed, and a week ago, I sent all the stuff I had done to an agency. I wish I had written to you again.

Poor Uncle Ernest! What he will say to ‘The Green Round’ I do not know. Gollancz told me that Sir Ernest was a man absolutely without religion; but I trust that this is not the case. He will want consolation.

I am afraid that the task of rendering the *Conte del Graal* is quite definitely beyond my powers. But why do you approach me? Is there not one who probably knows the *Conte* backwards; who would grumble, indeed, at the offer —— on the ground that the poem has only 32,000 lines instead of 64,000 or, better still, 164,000? Surely you cannot hesitate.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

July 20,’32

Dear Summerford,

Many thanks for your felicitations. Who am I to bandy compliments with my sovereign? I am pleased to see that the other winner of the £100 prize is Aylmer Maude; the Tolstoy man. He once wrote to me, very civilly, asking me to write an introduction to one of the volumes in his new edition of Tolstoy.

I replied, civilly also, I trust, but mentioning my profound conviction that no Russian should be taught to read or write.

Do not let me mislead you as to the Grail book and A.E. W. One man cannot guarantee another man’s work. I can only say that he strikes me as the obvious man for the job. He has an enthusiasm for the subject; though that enthusiasm may not always be according to reason. Still; for all I know, your ends may be served better by hunting in the Schools for a Scholar well taught in Middle French, who will undertake to render the poem exactly into Grammatical English.

Miss Mary Butts and Rodker Long ago, I lunched with Rodker. There was a lady, lean, dark, haggard. She had cooked plovers for lunch. They were a dull blue within. I had a whole one, and I ate it, and declared that it was altogether excellent upon my word of honour. That was what the French Marquis said in *Peregrine Pickle* about the soup flavoured with assafetida, a substitute for the nitron of the ancients. Unlike him, I was not carried away in a chair directly afterwards. I wonder whether this amiable woman, if indifferent cook, was the Mrs Butts of today.

Do not dream that I shall ever write an authoritative article on Geomancy — or anything else. I am a smatterer; not an authority. (See pp. 21, 22 ‘Things Near and Far’.) But I am sorry for your contributors. For your Encyclopaedia will have to make all the others look silly. ‘Geomancy, a form of Divination known from very ancient times’ — but that won’t do for you. *You* want to know: exactly how ancient? Egypt, Babylonia, Jews, China? Savage races? earliest and simplest form to be found where and when? Western form derived from Eastern? Distinctions between the two? Tampered with by Renaissance, or modem, occultists? I am content to know that the magician’s brother in Aladdin used Geomancy. He practised the art with sand, kept in a box.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

Oct. 28’32

Dear Summerford,

hope you have got over that gastric influenza by this time? I believe it is a hideous malady.

When are we to look for you down here? A post card a day or two in advance; and we will await you.

Do you remember my notion of a Dickens selection: not a substitute for complete works, but a viaticum to take away in your pocket? Well, without any communication from me, Sylvia Warner has done just the book that was in my mind, and done it admirably. It is called ‘The Week End Dickens’.

If you *do* go on with that Grail notion, and don’t find the obvious man; give Oliver Stonor a chance, if it may be. He would find it child’s play after *Le Moyen de Parvenir.*

When is Aleister Crowley going to bring his action against Nina Hamnett? When muck meets mud…

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Conte de Graal: poem by Chrétien de Troyes and others, who continued it.
Percival le Gallois: prose, translated by Sebastian Evans under the title, ‘The High History of the Holy Graal’.

Amersham, Bucks.

Nov. 29.'32

My dear Summerford,

We were delighted to see you. The notice business is merely to ensure that you shall find somebody at home at the end of a tiresome journey: though it is rarely indeed that we are out of an evening.

had been reflecting — and I never explained that Grail business. Here enclosed is the distinction between the two Romances. I do not think that the *Conte* has ever been translated; but I am not sure. Both books are concerned with Percival, but they differ widely, both in matter and in spirit. The prose Romance (The 'High History') has the singular episode of an ecclesiastical regulation ascribed to King Arthur, which, in fact, was made by St Columba. The regulation, providing that every church must have a chalice, is in itself highly significant; and its provenance and ascription are significant also as shewing how a Grail romancer went to work: he took his goods wherever he found them; in this case in an Irish Book of the XI or Xllth century; the *Leabhar Breac* — Freckled Book.

Mrs and Miss are looking forward to Friday night: 6.30 as arranged.

I have been consulting the Old Man's book for those data as to the *Conte* and the *Percival*: it is a confusion, but what a golden and glorious confusion: a noble book, indeed.

When you wish to give us a good evening: repeat your visit.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

April 8.’33

Dear Summerford,

Very many thanks: I shall be there. I know the Ivy: I once dined there with Caradoc Evans and a strange meinie. I shall not recall myself to Constance Collier; but, long ago, when she was a Merry Wife of Windsor, I was Mr Justice Shallow.

I don’t think I have seen the Old One since’27; and I believe that it was in your flat that we met. It will be a very great pleasure to me to see him again.

You should have a great time at Dublin. The word must be: *Usquebaugh yn aur*: whiskey in a crock of gold. I once spent three or four days in Belfast with drunken Protestants who believed in — and dreaded — the *daoine sidhe.* They nearly killed me. I will get Norah Hoult’s Dublin address: you might — or might not — look her up.

Benn are dispensing with my services in three months’ time. There is something solemn in being sacked at seventy.

You will let me know the hour and place of meeting on April 20?

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Should we, then, go to Barbary also? Is there balm in Barbary that will minister to a purse diseased?

Amersham, Bucks.

April 21.’33

Dear Summerford,

I hoped to hear from Stonor this morning, and so to send you Norah Hoult’s address. But I have not; and no doubt he is away on holiday. As soon as I get that address, I will forward it.

Let me thank you most heartily for one of the pleasantest days I have had for a very long time. I don’t know when I have enjoyed myself so much. Good company, good meat, and good drink: a rare combination. I confess I had at the time and afterwards certain qualms on your behalf. I greatly fear that you heard too much about St David’s Altar, and other matters congruous therewith. If so; set it down to your account of charity!

I thought the Old One in famous condition of body and mind. I confess I was a little put out when he said he was quite well: the first time I had heard that *ab initio symboli;* otherwise, all the years I have known him.

Enjoy yourself well in Dublin: I crave pardon: in Baile-Atha-Cliath. I wonder how it is that in the Welsh branch of the Celtic tongues, every letter is pronounced: in the Scoto-Irish, very few. In Welsh that name would be called ‘Byley Atha Clee-ath’.

Pray give Mr Stephens my respectful admiration.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

April 27.'33

Dear Summerford,

Very many thanks for your kind offices with the *Observer.* I shall look out for the Grail review with interest. So far, I have seen nothing at all adequate about the Old One's book. Whatever one may think of his theories: it is the only book in existence which gives a full account of all attempted solutions of the puzzle.

I have heard Stonor talk of A.E. with much reverence. I know nothing or next to nothing about him; but I think the spectacle of A.E. leading George Moore into caverns and clefts of the rock, if haply he might find the gods of pagan Ireland, belongs distinctly to the Comic Muse. It seems to me in the vein of Aristophanes. I once saw George Moore when they were 'putting him through it'— 'it' being the world of hidden things. Yeats arrived one evening, with George Moore in tow, at the Society of the Three Kings. They gave, as it were, a stool to George to sit on; and he was to be a good boy and listen heedfully.

You are having an admirable time in Dublin, it is clear. I once stayed a brief while in Belfast of the Black North. I perceive that there are links between the two capitals, however great their severances.

In the main, this matter of the Celtic Spirit seems to me to be comparable to the matter of making bread. You put a little, a very little barm (the froth of fermenting beer) into the great mass of dough; and it *rose,* it was leavened. But, you couldn't have done much with the barm by itself. But do not speak of this till you are away from Baile-Atha-Cliath.

All our best,

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

May 31.’33

Dear Summerford,

You must now be quite all right again after Dublin. Do you feel once more a Saxon; or, should I say, perhaps, a Brython, not a Gael?

I heard from Stonor the other day. He seemed a little anxious about Norah. It would relieve him, I think, if I could pass on a report from you that she was well and flourishing. I am cadging and mumping around and about; but I have not yet found my fortune.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

June 20’33

Dear Summerford,

It is strange; but not long ago I heard from a Lisbon friend, who has been suffering horribly from sinuses, even to the extent of the surgeon’s knife; and now you write from Jethou of antrums. I hope they are quite right by this. I remember Jethou as a great green hill, in line with Herm, rising out of the sea, and I hope it has not altered since I saw it — in the year 1877. Then, St Peter Port was a pleasant old town: that, probably, is not quite so pleasant now.

was afraid you would not be able to do much with the *Observer.* I did a weekly article for them in 1926,’27, called ‘Queer Things’; and suddenly I was thrown out. I never heard what my sin had been.

With this letter, or, perhaps, shortly after it, you will be getting a book called ‘The Green Round’. Let us annotate this book in the proper scholastic manner; let us cf it. And in the first place; Cf. The Apothecary *(Romeo and Juliet).*

Cf also, the story of the Chelsea Pensioners. Evans, the editor of the *Evening News,* loved to pull the leg of J. M. Dick, the Sporting Editor, so one ugly Saturday in winter, he began:

‘Well, Dick, got any big football story today?’

‘Villa versus Pensioners, of course,’ said Dick.

‘Pensioners! Do you mean to tell me you dig out those poor old… gentlemen and make them play football on an afternoon like this. It’s a bloody shame!’

Dick just escapes apoplexy.

I am glad to hear that Norah Hoult is flourishing so famously.

Is it your first reading of *Don Quixote?* If so you are to be highly envied. Note amongst the wealth of proverbs: The laws follow the Prince’s will. This refers to the trial by Ordeal of Fire between the Roman and Mozarabic

Rites. The Roman Missal went up in blazes: the Spanish Ritual remained unscorched; and the King said: ‘We will use the Roman Missal.’

With all our best Yours,

Arthur Machen

Amersham July 12.’33

Dear Summerford,

This, in the hope that you are back again and utterly restored to health and strength. Gogarty; and he to be a poet, too: I should not have anticipated felicity from his knife. But, I confess, I am extremely anti-Irish.

We hope to see you and Mrs Mackenzie down here before long: do make the journey. And I want to hear your first impressions of’Don Quixote’, which I read first just about 60 years ago. It has been one of my great companions through life.

I hope Guernsey has kept its old constitution. I described it to the American Wister — author of ‘The Virginian’ — and he expressed the most fervent wish that his country could have so happy and just a form of government.

Well; let us hear your news and see your face.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

25 July'33

Dear Summerford,

Your letter was a great relief. We were afraid that you were making a slow recovery; this especially, after a too brief visit from Sibyll Ray, who gave us the notion that you had been very ill indeed. Hence our joy at hearing that, at length, all is well.

I *won't* say 'it's very good of you to praise "The Green Round"', because I am sure that you would not speak well of it unless you thought well of it. But I may meditate — sending a copy of my book to this poor man, and practically compelling him not only to read it, but to write a brief favourable review of it! But I am resolved to believe that you and Mrs Mackenzie are right, and that I am wrong. As for press notices; I have never been much in the way of getting a pretty press. Haven't I shewn you my little compilation, entitled — pleasantly, I think— 'Precious Balms'?

I should like very much to get a commission to write another 40,000 word story; but my agent has not succeeded in getting anything of the kind; though Cape very handsomely promised to read such a story, if I liked to send it along. But this offer, though immensely gratifying, won't do. It was the fact that I had received £50 on account that carried me through over 'The Green Round'. I knew I *had* to finish it, to send in something by a certain date.

Now here is a difficult business, this Stonor-Hoult affair.., Do not, please, imagine that we claim any jurisdiction over other people's morals: I hope we heed the Apostle's: 'study to be quiet and mind your own business'…

Try and come down before long. We are well — save that Mrs finds the heat very trying.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

Sept. 22nd'33

Dear Summerford,

In the first place; I am charged by Mrs with love, and many thanks for your letter.

As to Besterman; I recommended him for the Besant life, because he is both a Theosophist and a critical man. This seems a contradiction; but B. has I am sincerely sorry to have bothered you about nothing. If (I am afraid) it This is what has happened. Two years ago, or so, I transcribed *Eleusinia* for somehow managed to reconcile the one attitude with the other. If you see him, get him to show you how Spiritualists produce their raps: very impressive.

As to the other Life which is contemplated: the unhappy Armstrong. Gawsworth turned up here the next morning. It seems — according to him — that the publishers, Rich and Cowan, proposed the book to him, commissioned him to write it, and paid him money in advance. I told him, therefore, that I would not forbid, denounce, or commit any other malignant act against it; on condition that I became censor, and struck out anything that I held to be actively objectionable: Rich and Cowan to take the resultant copy or leave it, as they pleased. So, refrain, if you will, from speaking to Seeker (G.H.) on the matter.

I have instructed Armstrong (G. H.) to be very little biographical and as fiercely critical as he pleases. It is a bad business:

Excuse the lack of accents.

It *was* a jolly evening — thanks to you, Norah Hoult, and the green-fingered Absinthe, child of the sea.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Armstrong (£10). At his request, I wrote a brief Intro, showing how it was done. It is that, no doubt, which he has sent to the paper. Of course, it is his property.

(Sub sigillo) And, by the way, never have any dealings of any kind with M. P. Shiel; if you can help it. He took in Gollancz. You know what that means. That, I daresay, is no secret; but *my* speaking of M.P.S. and the matter is.

Our best Yours,

Arthur Machen

They are still talking of how Dowsett, the amiable Gasman, knocked down 30 coconuts at the Fair. In a generous spirit, he declares that his muscles were invigorated and his vision rectified by Dog and Duck Punch.

Amersham, Bucks.

Nov. 25’33

Dear Summerford,

Can you lend me £10? We are absolutely down and out. My ‘Reading’, as I think I told you, came to an end in June. Shortly after, Sir Ernest Benn engaged me to write for his new weekly ‘The Independent’, at ‘the old salary’ = £5 a week. When November came, and payment for October, I got a cheque for £14.10.0. I remonstrated, and Sir Ernest assured me that my impressions of our interview were mistaken; and that he was paying by space — with a limitation, by the way, on the amount of space I am to occupy. So there you are. If you can lend me the money, I promise you, you shall be paid; but I should be dishonest if I named a date.

Here is the sort of thing I am doing for ‘The Independent’. Don’t reium.

Yours very sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

June 21.’34

My dear Summerford,

It has given us great pleasure to hear from you. It will give us greater, if you and Mrs Mackenzie will be so kind as to come and see us. If you can manage it, let us know a couple of days ahead, so that we may have our party to ourselves.

am very sorry to hear that you have been suffering from depression: that most horrible of maladies, rightly called *Balneum Diaboli* by ancient authors. I suppose the jaundice bore its part in the offence? If a man’s liver is amiss, though all else be well, it makes him ready to hang himself.

As to our finances (G.H.) we just manage to hang on by a narrow margin, which trembles and wavers terribly at times, in sympathy with Uncle Ernest’s humours and careers. Perhaps I might enjoy it if I were a younger man. I remember some grim sports of my youth in which there was a certain relish. But at 71!

As to editors, you know: thank you very much. But will they bear it? I daresay my writing is old-fashioned; but if that review I did for the *Observer* be passable: I should very much like any reviewing that is going, anywhere.

Hilary ceased to be the Catholic Organ Builder’s Guild, and turned himself into a Small Holder. He was here a week ago and seemed well and happy: I hope he will be able to live by the job. It is a hard one; but a good deal better, he tells me, since the Government stuck a duty on foreign stuff.

By the way; if the opportunity offers, would you show the enclosed to Desmond MacCarthy, and ask him if he agrees? I don’t want it back. Now name an early date for a joint visit.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

March 19.’35

My dear Summerford,

don’t approve of your plans at all — since if they be carried out we shall hardly ever see you. But I think you will like Caldy very much: a beautiful island by a beautiful coast: a country very well called by the old bards, ‘the land of illusion and enchantment’. Note the old parish church at Caldy: compare it with Gumfreston church on the mainland, and decide whether they are pre-Norman or no. I think that they may well be of the 8th century.

It is a good thing that the island is purged of that dubious breed of Anglo-Roman monks. They were no credit to Angles or Romans. When I first encountered them there was one of them called Father Iltud. They had copied his name in its earliest spelling out of the books, to be correct, and pronounced it as if it were English. The saint is called, and usually spelt, ‘Iltyd’. Cf. *‘uffern dan,* a military expression, used in drilling Welsh regiments. It is pronounced ‘iffairne dahn’. Literally, it means ‘hell fire’: technically, it may be equivalent to ‘shun!’ for all I know.

Alas, poor Benn! He says that he lost £10,000 on the first twelve months of ‘The Independent’, and I daresay he did. Anyhow, he shut it down three weeks ago, and I am left howling. Oddly enough, it was ‘given me’ a few days before the end that I had better look out, so the ‘Sunday Times’ is wondering whether it would like a column something in the manner of the ‘Radio Reflections’ that I contributed to ‘The Independent’; while Ellis Roberts is (I hope) doing his best with another bundle of samples.

By the way; you will have a competitor in the solitary way, and in the contempt of riches. Stonor was here a few weeks ago. His complaint was that he was working so hard at quantity surveying that he had no leisure for books or literature; and secondly that he was earning so much money that he was in danger of becoming a dipsomaniac. That was his *gravamen,* his *reformandum* was to take a cottage by Dunkery Beacon, Exmoor, at a rental of 4/- a week and there support himself by writing.

Let us hear from you again soon.

With our very best wishes Yours,

Arthur Machen

We hear from Muriel George that John has had a book accepted and is ‘better’.

Amersham, Bucks.

May 7.’35

My dear Summerford,

Many thanks for the card. I thought you would like Caldy: a place of old enchantment: island and mainland are a second home to me. You know the prehistoric export of the county? — a kind of bluish rock, essential to the Rite of Stonehenge, Avebury and such temples: whatever that rite may have been. Give our very best to Norah Hoult. I hope she got Purefoy’s letter.

To use the idiom of a friendly nation: the Jubilee was a wow. The roar of cheering coming over the wireless was tremendous. Amersham kept it up tremendously. Janet waited on six old men at the banquet for the aged and made it her pious care to fill and re-fill every glass with beer all through the proceedings. At night a torch light procession, a most famous sight, going through the street on the way to the Bonfire and Fireworks in the Park.

I have been soothed — the word is Boswell’s — by a very pleasant article, ‘Arthur Machen, *Théoricien de L’Esthétisme’* by Madame M. L. Cazamian, *Professeur à la Sorbonne,* in the *Revue Anglo-Americaine* of Paris.

Let me hear from you again

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

May 23.’35

My dear Summerford,

There is something moving (in my opinion) in the spectacle of a bad old man struggling with adversity.

I know that you and Mrs Mackenzie will do whatever you can, but I know also that formes are not elastic. If there is no room; well, there isn’t.

I am afraid research *is* out of the question. Do you think Gollancz would give me something on account of a ‘shocker’? If I were paid money in advance I should be forced to write the book — as in the case of’The Green Round’. You and other people have said kind things to me about it, but my own opinion of it, in the process of writing, was so bad, that nothing but the sheer compulsion of £50 received on a/c could have made me finish it.

I have a subject floating in my mind — a gang of children murderers (that is, of children who murder, not are murdered) with horrid suggestions and implications.

You know how welcome will be the visit of Mrs Mackenzie and yourself; but beware the 3rd of June. We have one of our rare engagements on that day.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

Oct. 4.’35

My dear Summerford, Whenever more than two or three people come here, I awake next morning with the profound conviction that I have grossly neglected every one of them. I beg forgiveness.

How is the ‘Life’? Does it move, does it march, does it trot? If so, I hope that understanding of which you spoke has been reduced to fair black and white, and that it is a good understanding.

Janet is enjoying herself vastly, walking on in the *Merchant.* She finds the conversation of Property Men, Wardrobe Mistresses, and such like most entertaining. This is a good sign of a vocation.

once went into a pub with a young and solemn journalist. A quiet man at the bar: ‘Don’t you remember me, sir? I made the crossbows for the Scottish Archers.’ The young journalist’s notions of history became a heap of confusion.

Note for the ‘Life’. There is no better introduction to me than any connection with the stage, down to the Stage Doorkeeper. I shall never cease to regret that I once spent an evening with E. Nesbit, her husband, Bland, and a sandy young man from Balliol, when I might have spent it with Charley Pounds. It is a satisfaction to recall that I told the Balliol man that he ought to go to Salamanca or Valladolid: a counsel which he received in a very sullen manner.

Mrs enquires when Mrs Mackenzie is coming to see her again. She says she finds it necessary, like dram drinking; and I know that she means this well, though it may sound oddly. I second the invitation cordially, and include yourself.

Our Greenwood is going to Sofia, on film business.

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

March 3rd, 1936

My dear Summerford,

1863 is a while ago, isn’t it? Thank you so much.

Can’t you bring those Riches and Cowans to the point of yea or nay? I detest indecision. I believe they are obligated by a bond to bring out my collection called ‘The Cosy Room’. There are things in it, dating from 1890, that make me sick to look at. Nevertheless, since Armstrong went through the pains of digging them all out, typing them when dug, finding an agent, getting them published, and getting me some money: — I felt forced in mere decency to dedicate the book to him.

Spurred by this fine example of Armstrong’s, I have entered into a contract with Hutchinson to produce, by the end of July, a collection of short stories amounting to 50,000 words. I have already done 10,000 of them. I am sure that, in the words of Dryden (more or less) you will not, from the dregs of Art, think to receive what the first sprightly running could not give.

We do hope that in April we may see you and Mrs Mackenzie again. With all our best wishes

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

May 4.’36

My dear Summerford,

What an excellent notion. I am writing to Norah Hoult about it.

It is some time since you have come from London to this place; so let me recommend the 3.25 from Marylebone: the train that is always there. Norah came by it with great success a couple of weeks ago. Once, she trusted to Baker Street, a station where doubt and treachery lurk hidden, and in consequence she got to Amersham rather late, as the result of travelling via Watford, the Circular Route, which I do not recommend.

I am mentioning this train to N.H. — still it is not compulsory; and if you both choose another way, only let us know what time you are to be expected.

Saturday next is *not* May 11. It is May 9.

have just finished another volume of short stories — long shorts: 50,000 words.

The Doctor, being asked his views as to the preaching of women, said: ‘Why, Sir, it is like a dog standing on his hind legs. He does not do it well; but the wonder is that he should do it at all.’

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Methuen again? Good.

High Street, Amersham, Bucks.

St Martin’s Morrow ‘36

My dear Summerford,

When will you learn that from the literary-business point of view I am quite hopeless?

A little over 40 years ago, it was proposed to me to write a history of French Gardening from the earliest times to that present day. The fee was to be £20, but that is not to the point. I declined — greatly to the wrath of the Old One, who said he would have taken the offer and knocked off the book in a brace of shakes: and I have no doubt that he would have done it, sufficiently well.

You know that Martinez Pasquale said to Louis Claude de St Martin: ‘We must be content with what we have.’ It is also necessary to be content with what we are. I often used to wish that I could write a novel.

Did you note the L.C.J. ‘s address on Horace? He suggested ‘artistic neatness’ for *‘curiosa félicitas’*. I suggested ‘exquisite felicity’ to Peterborough, the ‘columnist’ of the *Daily Telegraph.* He wrote me a civil note, approving of the emendation, but doubting whether exquisite quite got *curiosa.* However, he added, ‘Horace at his best is always untranslatable.’

Was it Petronius Arbiter who used the phrase in question? Lord, Lord. It sounds as if it might be connected with John Jershom Jezreel, the New and Latter House of Israel, and that Tower at Chatham, built for the Hundred and Forty Four Thousand.

I do, now and then, receive jejune typewritten letters from the Old One, *per* Somebody. He writes of his getting on with a little work on Secret Rituals, amounting, up to the present, to some 600 pp in quarto. The people at Hutchinson’s wonder how it is that they often find Walter sobbing quietly when they bring in his afternoon tea. He is as helpless as a little child in the hands of the Mighty Old One.

As to the Life; would you like to do it? If so, by all means, so far as I am concerned, go ahead. My own opinion is that no life can properly be written

— published, let us say, while the subject lives. Then, in this particular case, I am very sure that it would be a disastrous commercial failure.

We are both deeply grieved to hear that the car is going. Make an effort, before it is too late, and give us a couple of days' notice of the visit. There are lots of nuts, waiting to be salted, peppered and toasted.

Janet is engaged: to one Martin Pollock, of that respectable family which has given us many esteemed judges in the last hundred years. Aged 21, a B.A. of the University of Cambridge, proceeds next year to a London Hospital for the practical part of his medical instruction, spent a month of the long vacation at Moscow, sent Janet a picture postcard shewing Lenin's Tomb. The world is a wide place and I daresay that it holds still more horrible objects.

And the days darken round me, and the years, Among new men, strange faces, other minds.

All our loves to you and to Mrs Mackenzie,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

Monday. July’37

Dear Summerford,

Please receive my most grateful thanks; I am fortunate to have such a friend. Again and again: thank you.

What astonished in my latest little encounter with Fleet Street — the Street of Adventure, as it has been beautifully called — was not the fact; I have known publishers, editors, all the tribe too long for that to cause me any surprise; but rather the discovery so constantly renewed that it is worth while for well to do, even very wealthy men, to cheat a very poor man out of pitiful little sums, monies that these people can hardly see. But if one brings the instance under general principles, one ceases to be amazed: neither the Saint nor the man of letters ever neglects the little things.

It will be a very great pleasure if you and Mrs Mackenzie and your company will come and see us. Let me have a line a day or two ahead. We are very rarely away, but we are sometimes away: for instance, we are keeping Thanksgiving with an American gentleman next Saturday.

I am delighted to hear of your Oxford appointment; you could not do better.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

I note what you say about cheque date.

High Street, Old Amersham, Bucks.

July'37

My dear Summerford,

I am sure that you had a very splendid holiday in Provence. I had — 41 years ago.

'The Hill of Dreams' has had its best compliment. You say Provence reminded you of the book: I could wish for nothing better. And, as it oddly happens, there is a connection between the *terrafabulosa* and the tale. When I was writing the first chapter, in February, 1896, in Verulam Buildings, Gray's Inn, in describing a hot summer, it came upon me to utter the sentence: 'and white walls of old farm houses blaze in the sunlight as if they stood in Arles or Avignon or famed Tarascon by Rhone'.

Whereupon I said to myself: (more or less) 'that sounds good to me; I'll go there' — and did so the following August.

We have just returned from a very delightful visit to Clomendy Wood, between Caerleon and Usk; guests of Mr and Mrs Laybourne. They took us all over the country in a big car for the highways and a little car for the narrow lanes; by all sorts of places, open and secret, that I had not seen since I tramped them in the 'seventies and 'eighties. We talked Llangibby Hunt, of what Efan the Huntsman said to Old Lawrence the Master on a proposition to feed the hounds in a new way, of Lord Raglan's nose bleeding over the Hunt Supper, of how a member of the congregation of Llanddewi Fach (my father's old church) wondered whether he would be strong enough to hold down the Rector A. Williams if he suddenly developed Homicidal Mania in the pulpit — which seemed more than likely. I was happy to give Mrs Williams, Llangibby, a bit of hot news: that Tom Parr, the man who spoilt Caerleon, was an illegitimate descendant of the family of Ambrose, Waun-y-pwll, extinct *c.* 1860. I am sorry to say that Purefoy, listening attentively to all the stories of the good old days, came to the conclusion that the Nobility and Gentry of Gwent were a race of madmen.

When are you and Mrs Mackenzie — to whom our loves — renewing your acquaintance with the kitchen of the King's Arms? Please name an early date — excepting July, 10, 13 and 16. I have been thinking how strangely holidays and changes differ: Provence, Paris with the Greenwoods, Clomendy Wood — all admirable, but *immane quantum discrepant.*

And by the way: Laybourne said to me: 'I can't imagine how you managed to give such an admirable description of Penhow Castle in "The Chronicle of Clemendy".'

'Well,' said I, 'I saw it for the first time yesterday, when you drove past the Castle.'

I could see he didn't believe me; not a word. I mention this, not for the sake of the personal compliment, but because the circumstance illustrates the true theory of Literature as distinct from Journalism. *Prius in mente quam in corpore;* and *corpus* doesn't matter much anyhow in Literature. Yet Mr Blank still goes to Dashe in search of Local Colour for his forthcoming book.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

Sept. 7.’37

My dear Summerford,

I hope you are most thoroughly enjoying Paris, after your dip into Teutonism. Two things occur to me concerning Paris.

Do you know the stained glass of the Sacré Coeur, Montmartre? It struck me as very remarkable — and very beautiful.

And What a pity the Government added sugar to the official Pernod. I always like mine unsweetened.

We celebrate the Fair on Sept. 20. Be here about, or rather at, 7 p m. I do hope Mrs Mackenzie will be available: Purefoy is writing to her.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

Dec. 23’37

My dear Summerford,

Not long after the war, I was accustomed every Saturday to take a glass of dubious and metallic absinthe in a Mooney pub in a turning off Fleet Street. The barman came from County Tipperary; and on one occasion, after serving me with my absinthe, he gave the next customer his dose of Irish from the same measure.

‘What’s this you’re giving me? It’s got a quare taste.’

The barman leant over the bar and said in a confidential, impressive, stage whisper:

‘*There’s good in it.* It’s absinthe. It’s very dear.’

The customer was satisfied, as one having the best of the bargain.

And so I am sure there is good in ‘The Crystal Cabinet’ for which I thank you very much. But what made the woman think that the verb may be omitted in an English sentence? Thus:

I walked under the trees. Green trees. Leafy trees. Old trees. Trees that Dr Johnson might have admired, if he had happened to care twopence about trees of any kind or sort.

This painful gibberish was introduced by one Bart Kennedy 30-40 years ago and was highly approved by Lord Northcliffe.

We must fix that January meeting. Till then may you make the merriest Xmas.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Mrs says that she has not read the book, that her taste was formed in extreme youth by ‘Comin’ Through the Rye’ and ‘Cometh up as a Flower’, and so she may love ‘The Crystal Cabinet’.

The following recipes were enclosed with the letter of 23 December 1937.

PUNCH

Dog and Duck No. 1.

Take Gin and Sauternes, the latter the sweeter the better, and mix according to the taste and capacity of yourself and your friends. N.B. the white Burgundies won’t do.

Dog and Duck No. 2.

As above: but with the addition of any small Burgundy or Bordeaux. The quantities have never been measured; they are ascertained in mixing and follow the taste of the mixer. Or, as one has said: ‘Dog and Duck Punch is an essentially fluid conception.’

Rum Punch (hot)

1 Bottle Rum*

1 Quart Green Tea — after 3 or 4 minutes decoction Juice of 4 Lemons.”

“3 Oranges Peel of Lemon and Orange Sugar to taste Grate 6 lumps of sugar on the lemons Keep hot and covered.

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* Rum is weaker now than in 1905. Perhaps another 1/2 bottle?

High St., Amersham, Bucks.

May 17,’38

My dear Summerford,

It is benevolent of you to tell me that you liked the Waite review. I hope the Old’Un liked it! I am sitting in the shade and keeping quiet. But we cannot let you away to the misty islands without a word. When are you going? If not immediately; then, will you and Mrs Faith come down between 5-6 Saturday, May 28? If immediately: will next Saturday May 21 serve? I insist on Saturday because that is the best chance of getting something eatable. I think the Henry VII Arms have found out that the rebuilt Crown is not a formidable competitor —— *and so canis reversus…*

Yours,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

Oct. 14.’41

My dear Summerford,

write to urge on you the performance of a Corporal Work of Mercy.

The case is thus. You know, I think, that A. E. Waite has been very ill for the last year or more. For some reason, I know not what, Mrs Waite is now resident in North Wales; so there is no one at hand to type letters; while Sybil suffers badly from a Neuritis in the arms, which makes writing very painful for her. I have kept up a sort of one-sided correspondence with Waite, with a very occasional note from Sybil. In the last of these she says:

‘What has happened to Colin? He came to see us before he went into the monastery, but we have not had a line since he left it.’

The address is:

Gordon House Bridge Nr Canterbury, Kent.

And there is another Corporal Work of Mercy which is also to be urged on you: that is, to show yourself here. We have been vaguely hoping for the last few weeks that you and Norah would manifest at the King’s Arms some Sunday; or turn up here, morning or evening, at about the time when ‘they’ open.

I hope all goes well with you. In case you do not see the horrible paper, I enclose a leaf of it. Who would have thought that modem Eire could furnish a new version— ‘The man who disliked MacNeice’ — of the ancient, ‘The man who struck O’Hara?’

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

July 9.'"

My dear Summerford,

We had a very cheerful and smiling time with you and Baker, and I am glad indeed to understand that the experience was common. Talk not of the 'feast'; it was not in any proper sense a meal; it might pass, monastically, as a collation. But it may be said, I think, that the Griffin's decent *ordinaire* mitigates, to some extent, the austerities of the board.

It was a great pleasure to write to you at the Friary; I like jawing, both by script and mouth; and in the region of script, I herewith enclose a very delightful tribute to my faculties in that department. The document — non-returnable — consists of extracts kindly made for me by a friend, from an article in *The Manchester Guardian,* by one Hogan. I found a great relish in being carried back to the old Verulam Buildings' age, and to the business that employed me there. I wrote to Hogan, thanking him, and telling him about the Bamsbury House with the Green Stain: how I used to urge it to Waite as a desirable residence for him; merely causing the First Mrs Waite to regard me with a greater and deeper loathing than before.

I have put your remarks before Purefoy; and she just says she is quite well. What is one to do?

There is really something extremely exhilarating in being told that there is 'lots more money where that came from'. I can't imagine how you do it, but I believe, with my grateful, amazed recollection of your achievement of March 3.'43. But I think there is no immediate need to meditate manoeuvres. At present, I have in bank just £1690, and I think I ought to worry along on this for some while yet.

Many thanks for the Tree of 'Gentility' (as the Welsh lists of the Saints call such a document) of the late Mrs John Davenport. I was once quite familiar with the aspect of her grandfather and grandmother. They were opposite to me in Great Russell Street, period'93-'95 — and I often saw Ian at the window, script in his hand, learning a part, and illustrating it with the other hand in gesture: a grim, lean man. More smiling, more gracious, the moving apparition of Mrs Ian, daughter of Joe, beloved of the Airs and Graces. She would, like rosy fingered dawn, leap from her dim couch and appear at her window, in what looked like scanty pink fleshings, smile at Great Russell Street and the world, and proceed to do her hair. She was like the isle of Zacynthus in Homer: ‘Very conspicuous’.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

Dec. 4.'"

My dear Summerford,

Here is the odd gipsy story. What emerges, for me, is the tribal view that the tribe is quite competent to settle its own little troubles by its own law and custom and dislikes the intervention of the Gentile Magistrate. We used to have them about us in Llanddewi: my father used to compare phrases from Borrow with the local idiom in his progress through the lanes. He once baptized a gipsy baby by the odd name of Gentilee.

get up now after breakfast and lounge about. I believe the Dr thinks I go on as well as may be. She hints that I am rather old.

Sorry to hear the last news of Norah: that she has got a cold. Her colds are apt to be bad colds. And she will be vexed by the death of Heinemann Evans, who liked her work. She found him, I believe, a very pleasant fellow. I did not; partly, because he told me that a chapter of mine was a recollection of a former life; partly, because he wrote me a pretty curt letter when I applied for some 'reading' for his firm.

When you write to the Bakers pray put in our very cordial regards.

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

March 5.’45

My dear Summerford,

Very many thanks for your good letter and your good wishes. I have been feeling a good deal brighter for the last 2 or 3 weeks; not so limp as I was when you last saw me. Conveyed by the family I was again at the King’s Arms yesterday and felt no worse for the trip.

Pray dismiss from your mind, utterly and entirely all anxieties about that money. Just don’t think of it at all. These are the small bothers that are solved by time.

I am never quite sure what year it was when we met, but I think it must have been in’24 or’25. I believe you were under 16 at the time. You can still relish ‘The Secret Glory’? I am surprised and pleased too, I do assure you. There are so few books, I find, that ‘keep’ well. I read a book, enjoy it very much: look at it again in 5 or 10 years time and find that it has all turned to dust.

Pray remember me very cordially to Fr Wason. Has he tried ‘Things Near and Far’? I incline to think the former book the better of the two, but I have heard the reverse opinion expressed.

hope that someone will be ‘raised up’ — see A.E. Waite — to take the place of the Swedenborgian; and that before long.

Our love and best wishes

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

July 9.’45

My dear Summerford,

Now then! Will you do your best to collect at the Griffin, on Tuesday, July 17, at 12.30: —

Yourself, Norah, James Stephens, Barbara? And will you let me hear as soon as ever you can? Things are in such a state here that it is necessary to give notice. The King’s Arms is mostly shut, so the other places are apt to be crowded out. At the Griffin, the little *ordinaire* is finished. The cooking remains; but if you will look on the visit as the Visitation of the Sick, you will be all right. Of course I should very much like to meet Stephens. I praised ‘The Crock of Gold’ as well as I could in the *Evening News* about 30 years ago.

I do assure you that little matter of money does not cause me the slightest inconvenience. In the past I have dimly noted little yellow slips among cheques from the Bank, signifying payments from you. But you will attend to all that, since I am not capable of attending to anything much.

When you are in Barra, keep a sharp look out for Fairies, Peechts, and that sort of people. There was a correspondence in the *Sunday Times* a few weeks ago on odd numeral words and ‘Fairy Counting’ which recalled old interests of mine very vividly. It would have been very useful for a story I was writing in’95.

Now let me hear directly that you are all coming on Tuesday, July 17.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

Sept. 25.’45

My dear Summerford,

It is very pleasant to hear that you relished the little party at the Griffin: but let the praise be given to Stephens; a very rare fellow and fine company. It must be 34 years since I did my best for ‘The Crock of Gold’ in the *Evening News*. About the same time there was another good companion discovered; a very different one, Caradoc Evans, very turbulent, highly entertaining. He united a strong dislike of Calvinist Preachers with extreme delight in and reverence for their ‘singing religious eloquence’ which you know as the *Tonus Prefationis*. On one occasion he had gone to a Welsh chapel in the London suburbs to hear a famous preacher, and told me: ‘Indeed, it was lucky I thought of it beforehand and had a couple of pints, or he would have got me.’

How did the gale go with you on Barra? I read of it, and murmured the lines of Bums in his Address to the Devil: ‘I’m wae to think upo’ yon den (Hell!) E’en for thy sake.’ But there is one thing: your Paying Guest’ got his value and more: he who goes to the Hebrides does not look for the weather of the Hesperides.

Of Sheep’s Head, the following moral story is told. All my days I had a peculiar distaste for all the odds and ends of animals: all the materials which went to Don Quixote’s Saturday dinner, which the author calls ‘pains and breakings’. I had never so much as looked on any of them, save only kidneys — till I came to inhabit theatrical rooms in Rupert St., Soho. On a certain day there, midday dinner was Sheep’s Heart. I found it sorry eating, tough and tasteless. Hoping, I think, to mend this, I went out at a venture to cadge a supper from Sandy Stewart, a journalist, in Gray’s Inn. The supper was Sheep’s Head. I call this, rubbing it in.

Much in the style of the recent gale at Galway: it just took off the roof of the Anglican Cathedral: very marked, it seems to me.

You would like to Journalize a bit? I suppose the recipe is to write to a friend in Fleet Street. Have you asked Norah about it? Reverting to the kitchen: I once knew an actor who felt bound to abstain from Blood and from things Strangled. He never told me what his attitude was as to Things Offered to Idols.

Purefoy sends her love, and sends two recent discoveries: Turbot in white sauce, with corncobs. Bream: white sauce and young artichokes; both excellent.

We light a candle to St Mary of Amersham for your safe return.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

7 Oct.’46

My dear Summerford,

If I were in communion with the See of Rome, I should ask you to procure for me everything of a plenary kind that the Holy Father has in stock, since infirm old age is in need of any number of indulgences, absolution, pardon and remission, that is to be had. I can see very little, I forget everything, and I never know where it is. ‘It’ = anything. Which reminds me somewhat of the last will and testament of Rabelais. I have nothing, I owe a great deal, and the rest I leave to the poor. Or, more concisely, I should have written to you long ago. I assure you that you have not been out of mind; but you have certainly been out of sight for a sadly long day. For our sake and your own I wish you could offer a clearer, nearer prospect of return. If you could have reported that the smuggling industry was in a flourishing condition, and that Schiedam and Rightnantz were nestling under every rock: there might be something to be said for Barra; but as it is — *Juge crudelis terras, fuge litus avarum* as soon as you can.

News. Janet and her husband are still in the purlieus of Bristol. He has some sort of a job there. But they can find no place to live in, and so are quartered on mother-in-law, not an ideal position for either party. Hilary has set up as Electrician at Northampton, and I hope he will do well. But I should have been better pleased if he could have got back to his old firm, who always treated him and his family very well indeed. But: not a house to be found in all Penvro within possible vicinity of his job. And, I gather, from an American correspondent of the B.B.C. that housing is in an ever more horrible condition in U. S. A., where, let it be noted, they have not a Labour government. A day or two ago, we lunched at the King’s Arms with Oliver Stonor and Sister Barbara. Stonor has had a novel accepted by Gollancz, on good terms, he says. I expect you have heard that Barbara is parted from Pickup. We both thought that Norah had made a great success out of difficult material in her latest book. Indeed, I wrote to her that the result was grubby but grand. And I do hope that she will do well out of it financially.

Ours is the guinea-fowl’s cry: ‘Come back.’

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Purefoy's Postscript.

'Tell him I am madly pickling white cabbage instead of red: just as good!' P.S. (mine)Were you aware that Broad Beans, picked much too soon, make a delicious dish?

High St., Old A., Bucks.

Ap. 1’47

My dear Dpt,

Alas! It is all off. My dear wife died suddenly on Palm Sunday. Yesterday. Don’t bother to write. Tell Tommy. I think he will be sorry.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Amersham Wednesday 9 April 1947

My dear Summerford,

Many many thanks. You were always dear to her, in the early years and in the late. I hope we shall meet before very long. But you will see only half of me.

Your grateful

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

A sunny day in Sept. Postmark 25 September 1947

My dear Summerford,

Thank you yet again for your cheerful cheering letter. I was more particularly pleased, because I have been meditating for some time that the spectacle of the old one on his last legs could not be very exhilarating. You reassure me, and I hope you are right.

Janet and her husband departed to Bristol a few days ago, and Mrs Hilary does her very best, and gives me every possible care, early and late. Hilary, in view of the Basic Petrol Charge, gave up his job at High Amersham and has got a new one, which pleases him better, because purely electrical, at the Euston Road. He goes off at 7 and comes back at 7. He likes the people at the new place, as well as the work, particularly a workman who is an Austrian Jew, who is amusing.

He and I, I gather, both owe you our thanks for promoting the kind offices of Mrs Glock, who introduced him to the electric chief of Covent Garden. There was a good job for him there and he would have liked it very much, but he would have had to be about the theatre, or, at least, within call, from 10 to after the fall of the curtain. This, he felt, would shatter ‘the home’. He was sorry, and I was sorry.

I think Norah Hoult, Cook aiding her, managed to slip away to Italy, and I hope she is having a great time there. I shall be very glad to see her back, for I am badly in need of cheering, and she always cheers. Did you hear on the wireless the case of Henriquez, who met a Commando, was taken back to camp a bag of broken bones, was given up by the Army Surgeons, and then cured in three weeks by sitting on the banks of a river and doing a little mild fishing — this on the orders of a person described merely as ‘the great surgeon’? Henriquez said he left his hearers to judge how it was done: he didn’t know. But the bones, which had been obstinately apart, under all the Army surgeon’s efforts, including a sort of iron cage, joined up securely after the three weeks spent by the river. Curious?

Janet says the inside of her (prefabricated) house is rather like a ship’s cabin: everything folds back on the wall. It amuses her. The Fair is just over: to me a rather sad reminder of the old days.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Amersham Monday 6 October 1947

My dear Summerford,

Storm and rain in Barra, and here we wonder gratefully whether the summer will ever end. The finest since 1921.I almost think the finest I have ever known. Though'68 or'69 was amazing when the mountain caught fire.

Come when you will; we have no appointments. I hope we may be able to get a drink at the King's Arms. Coleridge said Swift was the *anima Rabelaisii habitans in sicco.* We all dwell in a dry place.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

LETTERS TO A. E. WAITE. 1902-1942

A. E. Waite, on whose invitation Machen joined the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

13 Rupert Street, W.

Monday

My Dear Waite, Be not forgetful of the summons for tomorrow (Tuesday). You must go into the *Wine Bar* at Stone's, & if you see no one there, ask for Mr Ayrton, and then you shall be taken into the appointed place. But be there by two, without fail, if you would see long days in the land of the living.

There is still silence over all the mystic territory. It is true I have received a letter, but rather, I believe, from the terrestrial & inferior Shepherdess than from the Supernal Lilith. However, I have made an appointment with her, which I shall keep alone, that I may more thoroughly discover whether she have any Rite to administer. Otherwise, as I have said, there is silence & dimness over all things. 'In the good time the torches shall be lighted, and there shall be the voice of singing in the Syon.'

Yours fraternally,

Arthur Machen

13 Rupert Street, W.

Sunday

My Dear Waite,

I think the Fairy Melusine gave you to understand in the course of your impressive conversation yesterday that I could not see you on Wednesday, on account of the matinée. Will Thursday do instead? And if so, could not Melusine also be present, that we might discuss the very grave affair of your reformation, which dates, I think, from tomorrow? It seems to me a 3 bottle problem, if any true light is to be cast on the matter.

I believe I am deeply pledged, *sub conditione,* to submit to the Latin church. Here also there is need of a conference; and indeed there seems to be to be enough matter between us to authorize a session without end. We have done amiss in the past, my dear brother, in neglecting one another, and it seems to me that we should repair our errors by a more constant association. For the day of the great battle Armageddon assuredly draws nigh, and the time is short.

Will Thursday at 4, Café de l'Europe, suit you? Let me know.

Yours fraternally,

Arthur Machen

13 Rupert Street, W.

Saturday

My Dear Waite,

In the first place let me ask you to visit me here on Wednesday next at 5.30 for tea and conversation. Let it be done punctually and without fail. Secondly, let me tell you of my interview with the Shepherdess on Friday last. It has filled me with alarm, after much the same fashion as I was filled with alarm to see that Christopher was unable to eat his luncheon some fortnight ago. What did I find? A pleasant, pretty woman who did not much interest me, whom I greeted without joy and left without a sense of loss. And I remembered the acute and exquisite delight that her mere presence had once afforded me; the romances, the wonders, the fascinations that she had once dispensed as from an inexhaustible house of treasure; and my anguish was great, not because I had desired and lost her, but because I knew that if she were to be given to me now, she would be but little to me. And my anguish was great *because I desired desire.* I remembered something I had written about one 'who, as it were, shivered in the eternal ice, and yet was insensible to the heat of fire, even if it were given him'.

It is clear that I ought to go to a spiritual Derby, call in a ghostly doctor, and live on spiritual milk and soda for many days — following the analogy of Christopher & the beefsteak.

But I do not know how this can be done, and shall be glad of your profound consideration and advice. I only know that Mrs Rosse, late Lilith, does not interest me at all: I confess and deplore it, because a great sacrament is taken away, and none other given to replace it.

We wonder and adore while we tremble; being assured that Life is to come, that Love is to be plenteously bestowed, that we shall see the good things of the Lord in *terra viventium. Immo vere, frater Dilecta,* even now the *Mensa dulcissimi convivii* is prepared. Write to us concerning these latter things.

Yours fraternally,

Arthur Machen

13 Rupert Street, W. Wednesday

My Dear Waite,

I saw Dorothy Purefoy yesterday, and asked her if she would meet you on Friday at the Cafe. She would have been overjoyed, bur she has folk coming to tea.

Do you, nevertheless, call here at 4 on that day, and we will proceed to the Cafe or delay here as you feel inclined. Let it be done without fail, since (to use a phrase altogether mundane), the times are ‘ticklish’ and require great consultations.

The Page’s Pageant seems to advance with rapid steps, and the Page appears inclined to preconise a Feast of Eight Torches with Ruling of the Choir. Her mother, with an asperity unworthy of a mother in Yisroal, has acquired a habit of raining blows on her head, charging her with whoredom the while; the which amenities have caused Berthelda to declare that she will have ‘peace’.

Yours fraternally,

A. M.

5 Cosway Street *In Vigilie Nat. Dni* 1905

Dilectissime Frater,

In return for your card, take from us both all good wishes to you & to yours, now & always. In the great Names, & by the great Names may you always be defended from persons who, in themselves harmless idiots, are yet symbols & omens of danger & distraction & perturbation within & without. *Dissipentur inimici tui: ab homine iniquo et doloro Dni eruat te.* I am sorry you did not join us the other day: there was a defection, from one cause or another, well nigh universal; & this much hinders our working. But I fear you have hardly penetrated the peculiar veils which we use in this special Order, & the said veils are certainly very remote from those which experience has led you to expect. May I hint to you that very curious circumstances in the way of grades & the fashion in which they are taken are latent in the society? I mean that it is possible that the grades as they are commonly known do not always coincide with certain other grades interior & more secret. Do not think that I am making pretensions of that kind which, (I am sure), must be to you most familiar & accursed in your dealings & parleyings with secret Orders. But — to say as much as it is convenient or possible to say — you know, do you not, that this world in all things, & above all in interior things, is a world of paradox. To take an example of what I mean: Florence Farr & Blackden are, I believe & suppose, learned in all the 'Wisdom of the Egyptians', in all 'occult' knowledge. But — for all essential purposes — they are about as complete a pair of 'rotters' as I have ever seen. This is a paradox; not without suggestive application. And: another point: the average secret society presupposes, as you yourself have said, that the initiator is, in a certain sense, superior to the initiated, superior, that is, because he possesses certain information which he imparts to the neophyte; who is, by this process, admitted into a circle of knowledge outside which, (by the hypothesis) he stood, before his initiation. Now, imagine if you will, a society which makes no pretence of knowing anything which the outsider, the neophyte, does not know; which has no temple or circle to which admittance is given; which bids its members look within, & uncover, & remove, & Behold, & Make the Great Interior Entrance —— from Within to Within, instead of from Without to Somebody Else’s notion of Within. I hasten to say that these are hints & suggestions & not by any means Scientific Information. And let me add: *it is all secret from Miss* B!

We have been most wonderfully fortunate in worldly things this Xmas. A fortnight ago we really & literally had not nearly enough to eat. And then came presents: two £5 notes; two pheasants, a dozen of wine, a fowl, two plum puddings, a great box of chocolates, & minor gifts. To cap all this Grant Richards writes to say that he will buy the copyright of those books of mine for the £50 which I demanded. I shall believe this, though, when I get his cheque. He also repeats, more or less, his proposals for a new book. I wish I thought I could do it; but I fear there is little hope. However; if he becomes definite I shall try what I can do.

I wish I could report to you as handsome things of the Supersubstantial Bread. Alas! there is still dryness, dryness, dryness; there is darkness within, the doors are closed, the ears are deaf & the sound of the incantation is not heard in the streets. I know of no help but in the homely maxim of ‘patience & perseverance’. After all; what have I deserved else? what do I deserve else?

Have you ever remarked the fact that a bodily benefit is put forward by the church as the result of a good Communion? Such benefit is noted, I find, in the ‘Imitation’, & is prayed for in the mass. Curiously enough, in the Anglican Rite the phrase ‘preserve thy *body* & soul to everlasting life’ is used. I have reason to believe that the claim is no vain one. I think, too, that there are facts which some have noted that make it most improbable that such corporeal effects are the results of ‘imagination’. If I give you a glass of plain water, & tell you, as soon as you have swallowed it, that it contains a powerful though tasteless cathartic drug, you will, likely enough, be violently ill on the spot; though the water is absolutely pure. But if I give you a glass of water in a ritual, saying: Drink this; it is the Communion of Death: & you go away expecting that nothing very much will happen to you — certainly nothing bodily — & yet fall dead in four or five hours time when you have forgotten all about the Ritual — then, I think, we may fairly conclude that ‘there is something in it’.

Did I show you that curious story of Jondar in the *Arabian Nights*? If I did, you will remember that Jondar, searching after an Enchanted Treasure, (symbolizing, from its description, Wisdom & Power), has to *knock / // /// on* a gate & then has to pass through Seven Trials. He is required to *submit*: to stretch forth his neck to the swordsman, to bare his breast to the Archers &c till at last his mother appears, & her he must curse & revile & make to take off her clothes! Is not all this very suggestive of a Ritual? Do you know of any mention of *masonic knocking* as early as this? (10th or 11th century isn't it?) Oddly enough Jondar is a widow's son, who is persecuted & finally killed by his two wicked Brothers. And oddly enough he is given an Enchanted Saddle Bag from which every kind of food can be produced — the Graal, is it not, in its earlier form? It seems to me we have here some odd points, which ought to lead to something.

I wish you could send me the collections you have made on the Graal. In the first place I should very much like to read them; & secondly, coming fresh to the subject points might strike me which might prove useful in the investigation. But, I think we ought to know more about the survival of the Gnostic Sects; & I am inclined to doubt whether the Manichaean sect is the only possible origin. There were other Gnostic heresies which might easily have lingered in the Syrian hills — which, perhaps, are there now.

Forgive all this discursion & discussion: but you know Mahomet must in certain circumstances go to the mountain.

I remain, very dear Brother,

Yours ever fraternally

A. M.

5 Cosway St., N.W.

21 Feb. 1906

Dilectissime,

Very many thanks for your good epistle. Firstly: as to the practical matter. Nutt's epitomes *are* epitomes and nothing more: absolutely dry enumerations of the events: like this something: 'Percival, the son of a widow (1) brought up in ignorance of the world (2) sees three Knights (3) and asks his mother what they are (4) &c &c.' This is not what I mean: I suggest *extracts,* nicely translated, eked out by full *summaries,* where and if the text threatens to become of undue length. I do not think, though, you need be afraid of the length: one can get a lot of matter into an average-sized book, and if needful you could have two volumes without any difficulty from the publisher's point of view, or the selling point. Next, as to our working together, I hardly see how this can be, except indirectly. You know that all my notes are at your disposition in the fullest sense, for any purpose you may have: but if I understand you aright, they are not likely to be of much service to you; since they tend to support a hypothesis which it would not interest you to work out. When I began this investigation I had three main points before me: (1) The Celtic Church (2) The Templars (3) The Albigenses, or some other possibly existing society. It is by a process of exhaustion that (2) and (3) have vanished; as I have been convinced that the Graal has no more to do with either one or the other than it has with the Particular Baptists. But you must not think that I believe the 'Theory' I sent you exhausts the whole case: it merely posits the probable Celtic *prima materies* from which the Graal Legend as we have it, was shaped. This is not to say that the Romancers have not introduced much new matter into their recasting.

Now, I gather that your position with respect to the proposed work — say rather with respect to any work on the subject — is somewhat difficult. You have a theory, but you can get no convincing evidence in support of it. This is a position which you must consider with yourself: but I again repeat you must think of all my notes as absolutely your own — if they are of service to you.

I must tell you that I read Sebastian Evans's book yesterday, and found it most entertaining. Here are his solutions:

Percival = S. Dominic Galahad = S. Francis of Assisi Gawain = Archbp. Fulk Lancelot = Simon de Montfort senior The Rich Fisher = Innocent III Percival's Silence = The failure of Dominic to discuss the Universal Exemption of the Cistercians from Interdict with Pope Innocent. Gawain's Silence = The failure of Fulk in the same way.

The 'blasting' that befell Lloegrwys = The Interdict on England 1208 - 1214.

The Recovery of the Graal = The Removal of the Interdict.

The Graal = Celebration of the Eucharist.

All this is most ingeniously and elaborately supported. Two points strike me (1) How does this theory explain the final withdrawal of the Graal? (2) Can it not be absolutely shewn that the 'Silence of Percival' was known and written down before 1208-1214?

I think there are three ways of explaining the 'Withdrawal of the Graal'; which as you say is most important, since it signifies that True Masses have ceased from the world. Firstly, we may take this as a remanent from the Folk Lore, which is always ready to assume that 'once upon a time' there were great marvels and happenings, which have ceased to be. It is the 'long, long ago' feeling, which admits there are no marvels and miracles now, but believes there were such things of old time.

Secondly, it may be the expression of some Celts' opinion that the Mass, without the Epiclesis, is a maimed mass.

And again; it may be the union and commixture of these two feelings: and this is my *personal* explanation of the matter and also the disappearance of the actual relic. Was there not a tacit convention that we should avoid mere argument? If this still stands: good: if not: have at you for *all* your opinions as to the Church and the Heresies! From them all, so far as I understand them, I wholly and heartily dissent: in the hypothesis of the Holy Assembly I do not believe: in the Popish Church as the *Sole* Custodian of the Faith or

Sacraments I utterly disbelieve! I am ready if necessary to maintain theses on all these points, when and where you will.

I expect you on Saturday at the Museum, somewhere on the A range of desks *before* 4:30.

I remain Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

5 Cosway Street, N.W.

Tuesday

Dilectissime,

Herewith I send you the titles of Werner: you will see that the plays you are interested in are included in the ‘Theater’.

Also find herewith a brief acknowledgement from Benson. I shall be curious to learn what use he proposes to make of our masterpiece. You see he calls it *my* play: of course I told him that it was our joint labour. In any case, I feel certain that he will not give an order to his wardrobe master for the making of seven dalmatics of red silk — to say nothing of a set of red episcopal vestments. It would *be possible* of course to dress the seven as Eastern Deacons — albs and red stoles — but I should prefer dalmatics.

With respect to the Dove in Holy Grail symbolism — you know that the Blessed Sacrament was reserved in England (and I think everywhere) in the Middle Ages in a vessel shaped like a Dove. ‘Dove-House’, Columbarium was synonymous with Tabernacle. The sculpture I told you of — a Dove holding a wafer over a vessel shaped thus —— alludes, perhaps, to this custom; or rather the custom and the sculpture both allude to the working of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist; a matter which became and remains somewhat obscured in the west. I have written to the author of the *Church Times* article on the Healing Cup, asking if there is any kind of documentary evidence. In my opinion it is probable that the relic is much earlier than the crusades — wooden chalices date back to centuries IV and V. I propose also to take steps to find out the meaning of those curious statements about the chalice in the ‘High History’ and the ‘Panegyric’ of S. Columba.

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

We shall meet on Saturday; and after the Rites you will come home with us. Purefoy will be at M.M.H. at 1.30 for examination.

5 — Cosway Street, N.W.

Tuesday

Dilectissime,

I see that we shall meet on Saturday next: mind you set your house in order so that you can come home with us for the evening. I must again urge on you the weekly meeting at the Garrick Tavern, on Fridays, at 2 p m.

Proposition (after reading morsels of strange, outlandish, dubious Liturgies —— Coptic, Jacobite, Nestorian, Abyssinian &c).

The tom and soiled hem of the Raiment of Holy Church compared with the whole Sacristy of ‘Occultism’ is as Fair Rubies and Orient Pearls compared with Mud and Dung.

Proposition. The most holy and interior Truths or Mysteries, being uttered or formulated, *ipso facto,* become foolish and soul-poisoning Heresies. So ‘Protestantism’ itself was once a holy, everburning Lamp. The Doors were opened, and it was instantly made and remains a Black Smoke of Perdition, and a Pestiferous and Stinking Vapour.

You will be interested to hear that I have found an Albigensian Ritual, containing the Rites of Admission, Consolation, and Consolation of the Sick. Date about 1250-1260. ‘Dissenting’ in tone: no hint of Eucharist: ‘Consolation’ (administered by laying on of a Book and of Hands and by the Kiss) described as the Baptism of the Holy Ghost and of Fire. Ministers the *ancien* and the *bons hommes.* But, oddly enough, the chief, one might say the only, ornament of the MS is the *Fish;* which is repeated again and again! sometimes it is an initial letter, sometimes a Fish in the margin is caught by a line attached to a letter in the text.

I have found out some curious coincidences about an early British person I have been investigating lately. We will call him X, or rather St. X, as he was much reputed for holiness, and for the planting of Xty in Britain.

Firstly, then, his birth was prophesied by the catching of a Fish.

2. — He was famous under a Welsh nickname which is said to mean *Vir Aquaticus.*

3. — He was of the Lineage of King David.

4. — He had ancestors of the name of ‘Avallach’.

5. — He is described as providing the Xtians with the Sacred Vessels for the Eucharist.

6. — The first church he built was at Glastonbury.

7. — He obtained his Order from Jerusalem where he was given a mysterious Altar in which the Lord’s Body had lain. This altar, the matter of which no man could comprehend, was transported to him through the air from Jerusalem, and vanished after his death. William of Malmesbury says it was ‘lost’ for a long time, and identifies it with the Glastonbury Altar stone, called *Sapphirus.* It is called *altare anceps* by an earlier writer (c. 1090 A.D.), *anceps* meaning both ‘uncertain’ and ‘perilous’.

8. — Cadwaladr the Blessed after whose death in 664 the whole British Church for some unknown reason drooped and pined away, was of Saint X’s Lineage, and was called the Last King of Britain. Cadwaladr is said to have gone on some kind of holy errand to some far land; and it was believed that with the return of his bones (or of himself, reincarnate), with the return also of certain lost relics all things would be restored and the Golden Age be renewed.

It makes the foundation of a pretty hypothesis, which may or may not be strengthened. Let us always remember Prof. Saintsbury’s caution, and decline to say *nous savons* unless we *do* know.

I have looked up the Bollandists on S. Joseph of Arimathea. They scoff at the ‘Apostle of Britain’ Story, and say, more or less rudely, that it was invented by the Liar who wrote about King Arthur.

By the way, I see that Nutt, in his little book, is of the opinion that the G. Romances ‘reveal attempts to claim for the Knightly priesthood a position and sanction equal if not superior to those of the regular priesthood’. He is speaking, of course, of the Templars, and he thinks that Henry II ‘backed up’ this movement.

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

6 Cosway Street, N.W.

Thursday

Dilectissime,

We hope to turn up to Tea & Equinox next Saturday: you will come back with us, I hope.

know the possibility of keeping anything secret interests you; & I think that the case of ‘Shelta’ is probably unique. About 30 years ago, I suppose, Leland heard two men jabbering a strange lingo in the Euston Road. This lingo turned out to be a secret Gaelic language: a mixture of primitive Gaelic, rhyming slang, back slang, Latin, Greek, & Hebrew invented by Irish monks *c.* 900 A.D., & transmitted by them, through the ecclesiastical metal workers of Ireland to the tinkers of today. The secret was kept, say, from 900 to 1875!

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

6 Cosway Street, St. Marylebone N. W.

Tuesday

Dilectissime,

What has befallen you? You go out into the confusion of the night, and are seen no more. I have been expecting more proofs of the Graal.

We went down for ten days into the country in August and had a very pleasant time. I trust you are keeping well and that 'things' — meaning worldly matters — are tolerable, or more than tolerable.

I am dwelling in the midst of alarms. On receiving my last *Academy* cheque I was startled by its appalling minuteness, and on reckoning up my contributions found that, without any intimation to me, they had reduced my rate by 10% per thousand! Alas for the word of an English noble! I regard the scutcheon of the proud Douglases as stained. I have written a very civil letter to Douglas, pointing out the demerits of the case, and suggesting that it must be a clerical error in the office. But I fear me that my *Academy* days are done. In the meanwhile I have got an apology for a job on a lousy sheet called 'T.P.s Weekly'. Of course it is all the doing of the extraordinary Crosland, who acts, I think, from some obscure and mysterious centre of purposeless malignity, without any true Act of the Will, properly so called. I do not know to what he would be 'referred' cabalistically but he seems to me to approximate to those Ghosts who are always breaking crockery, and throwing saucepans about, without any very clear idea of why they do it, or what they want. As a student of things deep, obscure, and hidden beneath the earth, I am sure you will be interested in a remark that I heard Crosland make. After proclaiming (with oaths) his entire devotion to the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church; he declared (also with oaths) that there was more holiness to the square yard in the Primitive Methodist denomination than in any other sect or assembly of Christians. On the whole I am inclined to think that a Paper should be read on him at Oliver's.

I received a brief note from England this morning informing me that he has just been received into the Roman Fold. I trust it will be to his soul's health.

Woolley, the curate, has got a 'job' on the phrase 'a Watcher and a Holy One' from the Prophet Daniel. He intends to prove that 'a Watcher' is an emissary of Satan; and I believe he will devote his life to this great task. Is purposeless mania to be the chief feature of the days before the last great battle called Armageddon?

When shall we see you?

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

6 Cosway Street, N.W.

Monday ‘after Sept. 21, 1908’ added in pencil

Dilectissime,

We were sorry not to see you on Saturday night. I think Purefoy had said something to our vicar about the possibility of your coming round, as the said priest called and hoped you would come, since he wanted you to give him some tips about the angels!

I gather that the Dr Cobb of whom you have spoken is not exactly a *persona grata* in Catholic Anglican circles. He is regarded as a renegade, a Hensley Henson (= a rationalist) under a feeble disguise of mysticism, and finally as a ‘blasphemous madman!’

Is what I call the ‘Bristol Graal’ stirring at all?

When are you coming round?

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

6 — Cosway Street, N.W.

Omn. Anim. 1908

2 November

Dilectissime,

I should have written to you before to say that I cannot be with you on Wednesday, since Hudleston has a fortnight's engagement to dine with me on that night. I am sorry. When can you come here? I ask particularly because I have a drink that might 'do you some good'. One of the Stingo people mixed absinthe and Italian vermouth in one bottle by mistake. They were going to throw it down the sink, but Mr Brown said 'Mr Machen may like it!' I tasted it, and called on the rocks to cover me.

I wish I had your power of recuperating by the way of Rites. Yesterday I heard Mass, went to evensong, and then sang the Vespers of the Dead. This morning I 'assisted' at High Mass at 7 *a m.!* We are both tired to death; in spite of the fact that these high rites were performed with great liturgical exactness.

Perhaps it would be as well — in the event of the remaining proofs not being forthcoming in a day or two — if you would send me your great and marvellous conclusions in the whole matter of the Graal in numbered and summarized form, so that I could present your case in your own words to my intelligent readers of *T.P.'s Weekly*, And since they are so intelligent: You had better not go beyond words of two syllables! I have not heard yet from Rebman about my book; and I scarcely know what I want to hear. Great is my need of money indeed; but strong is my conviction that, in my case, they would do no good.

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

12 Melina Place, London, N.W.

8 Dec. 13.’26

Dilectissime Frater,

Very many thanks for your kind reply to Summerford (Exeter College) who wanted to know about the Grail Romances. He is a very promising lad. I believe that he is going into a publishing business with a friend older than himself. It is a small liturgical publishing firm that they have acquired; & I gather that they want to make it more general. I know not what they will make of it.

Herewith a brief note on an old topic. There is something very pleasing in the operations of a Magic Stone being ended by the Board of Agriculture. The enclosure has not survived.

With every good wish

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

It is very nearly 40 years since we first met!

And, by the way, Gow told me that you had come to regard the Universe as a joke of the Eternal; & from what I could infer, not a very good joke at that. I perceive you will end by symbolizing with ‘Rosicrucian’ Jennings. *Send for Father Murphy: quick!*

12 Melina Place, London, N.W.8

Feby.8.1927

Frater Dilectissime,

I am so glad you found some minor treasures in the ashes. Dustmen, they say, are sometimes gladdened by the rare discovery of a silver spoon! By the way, I believe my Arthurian story is the only version that makes Lancelot 'Bishop of Canterbury'!

I am sorry; but I have only single copies of 'Precious Balms', & 'Strange Roads'. 'P.B.' is simply a collection of all the bad reviews of my books from 1895-1924. 'S.R.' is a small thing: two articles of mine made into a little book. They are not bad articles; but nothing to write home about. It never struck me that either book would signify anything to you.

I think you will be glad to hear that Hilary (aged 15) is clamouring to learn Hebrew in place of Physics (what *is* that nonsense?) &, he hopes, Mathematics. Of course he shall learn Hebrew, & read the *Greater Holy Assembly* in the original, and Hebrew always comes in useful for incantations.

Are you still thinking of that book I told you to write: your Confession of Faith & Doctrine without the veil of symbolism? Why don't you combine it with a loose autobiography? I can answer for it that it would be of vital interest & high value.

With all good wishes, vows, & prayers

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

(Have you read anything about the Revised Common Prayer? I regard it as a miracle; it is so much better than I had expected.)

Lynwood:
Amersham: Bucks.
Aug. 20.1929

Frater Dilectissime,

All my thanks: just what I wanted.

As for the end of a literary life; there is a picturesque way, & a plain way of putting it. You may say that it is a very sad thing that a life of strenuous work, conscientiously performed, should be rewarded with penury & all the miseries and terrors that come in its train. Or, again, you may say that if a man brings goods to the market, whether they be books or cheeses, they must, above all, be marketable. The man may urge that his cheeses were the best he could make, & that it is not his fault if they failed to please. It will be answered — in the words of the judge in 'Erewhon'— 'It may not be your fault, but it is a fault in you.' Do you remember the case? The prisoner was charged with Pulmonary Consumption, a felony. His defence was that he had counterfeited the disease for purposes of fraud; a perfect defence, if he could have sustained it.

I don't remember the title I suggested for your book. Has 'Behind the Veil' (of symbolism) been used? I was very much struck by a sentence I saw somewhere in Hugh Benson: to the effect that he held the Catholic Faith 'by analogy'. He meant, I suppose, that while he believed in 'the foot of the mountain', he did not expect to find mountains based on gigantic human feet, with toes and toenails. I thought the point a remarkable one.

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

April 28.’30

Dilectissime Frater,

It was a very great pleasure to receive your letter: you did a good action in writing it.

First as to Williams & his *War in Heaven*: I am afraid the book is of little value. It is largely spoilt by its corrupt following of Chesterton: the Archdeacon, full of craft & piety, with his refrain of ‘For His mercy endureth for ever’, is pure Chesterton. The Latin, of course, is just wild, & your postcard satisfied me that Williams was wrong in thinking that Black Magicians’ Latin has rules peculiar to itself. Gollancz, the publisher, is a most amiable Jew, but I am afraid he lacks discretion. More than a year ago he announced that he was reprinting the complete works of M. P. Shiel. Three or four were issued; & then silence. I often wondered what happened, but I fear I shall never know. A prospectus was issued, giving a short life of Shiel, written by himself: a mass of the most infernal & extraordinary lies. I don’t know whether you remember, but in Gray’s Inn, I used to have a sort of parlour game of asking people to what race they supposed Shiel belonged, & each one guessed a different nation. And Jew Gollancz told me that he was quite sure that S. was a Jew, till he read a bit of Hebrew in one of his own books, & pronounced Tetragrammaton ‘Jehovah’.

As to the Grail: I know of no other example of the incident of the omitted question — which is made odder, if I remember, by the fact that Percival had been strictly instructed that it is bad manners to ask questions. (A curious survival, by the way, of this ancient rule of politeness is found in court circles: you must not ask royalty even whether it has enjoyed the shooting, or whether it admires the scenery.) But I am inclined to think that the question is a matter for the folklorists, that it belongs to the pre-Christian element, & that it has no real concern with the root matter of the Grail. I place it, in fact, in the same class as the Wounded Keeper, who belongs, as I hold, to a remote antiquity. But is there no *Folk Lore Journal,* or some such paper, in which you could appeal for skilled information on this point?

I have no belief in ‘heretical sects’ as a source of any Grail doctrine. Whatever the Grail may be, it is written in exaltation of the Sacrament at the Altar; & whatever heretical sect you choose, you will find, I believe, that its doctrine of the Sacrament is null, dull, and Protestant. You remember that Albigensian Ritual I found? I could hear something very like it any Sunday; in any meeting house.

Hutchinsons are scoundrels, & always have been. Their conduct to you is entirely blackguardly, & just what I should expect from them. I hope you will recover.

You say nothing of your health or Sybil’s? I hope you are both well. I forget whether I told you that Hilary has been building organs for the last four months. He seems to like it.

Now, remember: when you write to me, you do a good work.

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, High St., Amersham, Bucks.

March 30.1932

Dilectissime Frater,

Now you, of all people are the last to ask, ‘Why’. The *ratio essendi* (scholastic Gerund) of the enclosed the enclosure is missing may be dark to you, but you know well that we are surrounded by mysteries; that it is of the definition of man that he can ask many questions which he can never answer.

How are you, & how is Sybil? I hope that you are making grand progress in your terrific task.

Paul England is dead. I have not yet heard fully how & of what; but I gather that he had fallen into a sad condition of mind & body: neurasthenia, I think they call it.

With all good wishes

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

March 6th, 1933

Frater Dilectissime,

What a present! I cannot thank you enough for it, & for the inscription to old friendship, to many adventures of body and spirit undertaken together in the gardens & the halls of Camelot in the days that were. And, by a happy chance, the book came on the day after my seventieth birthday: a good omen for such days as are to come.

Do you know what was the first thing I looked up, as soon as string & brown paper were abolished from the book? Why, that matter of the Albigenses & Simon de Montfort, which has been a weight on my mind for months. *Now,* I understand why St Louis loved the story; & am much relieved. You cannot extract the odours of the sanctuary from the matter of the muckheap. It was, certainly, horrible to slaughter & massacre & burn those poor wretches: but I like them none the better for the violence & cruelty of their punishment — though I like the authority, civil & ecclesiastical, worse.

It is a grand book; & I find it well produced; the page is admirably clear, a comfort to dim eyes.

Shortly, I shall begin to write to you about it.

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

I am drinking Noble Square Face this very day to the prosperity of the *magnum.* I was too late with *John O'London;* I feared it would be so.

Lynwood, High St., Amersham, Bucks.

Dec. 19.’35

Frater Dilectissime,

The hour draws on; the Clerks are singing the Great Oes; I give you the greeting of Christmas: *induamus arma Lucis.*

Did I ever tell you, how, going to Mass on a Christmas morning, when we lived in Melina Place, I saw, down in Lisson Grove, the milkman going his rounds. He knew nothing of me, but I knew, somehow, that he was a Welshman. So I shouted across the street: *Nadôlig Llawen* (pronounce: *Ithlowen:* the *th* to be insinuated between the two *lls,* as if a man said *Elthl* for *Ethel)* — Merry Christmas. He leapt into the air, & answered with a torrent of his native tongue, with tremendous joy.

I have just been glancing over the current *Light:* they still send it to me, as I suppose they do to you. I find there the true significance of Xmas, that Myers has gone a bit reincarnationist, & all about St Paul, as delivered by the Cummins —— who, I think, was Bligh Bond’s typist till she discovered that she could do it on her own, without the bother of Bligh Bond. It is all rather Melancholy.

I remember speaking of Bligh Bond & his Glastonbury nonsense to the learned Oswald Barron, the antiquary. ‘No doubt.’ said he, ‘they think that the early mediaeval Latin for William was *Gulielmus.* They’re wrong: it was *Willelmus.* ‘

And your news? What work finished: what on hand? Let us hear of it. You are like *Sylvanus Urban* in Johnson’s Latin Ode: *Urbane, nullis fesse laboribus.* What would an editor of today say, if a contributor addressed him in smooth Alcaics? Anyhow, I am sure he would not print them in the next issue of the magazine. I enclose a cutting that may or may not have an interest for you.

Our news begins with Janet, who has made a promising enough beginning to the precarious career of the stage. We have seen her as the Apparition of the Crown’d Child in *Macbeth,* also as the Parlour maid (with dreadful screams) in *Jekyll and Hyde.* She has been re-engaged for *Faust* after

Xmas. What little she has to do, she does well. Hilary, in a small farm near Northampton, has begun to write to some purpose. He has a beautiful little Xmas story, ‘Caspar on the Dole’ in a recent no of ‘G.K.’s Weekly’. For myself: Armstrong (he wrote to you once) went grubbing in my dustbins for 45 years, & got together a collection of short stories, which will be published in the coming spring. It is a strange and — to me, at all events — an appalling thing to be confronted with the casual, temporary stuff of 1890. But there is a little money in this shady transaction. What about the old French saying: *dégoûté defame, et affamé d’argent?* And, another small matter: Hutchinson has asked me to write a Preface to a book Philip Sergeant is getting together: ‘Witches and Warlocks’, I think it is to be called.

To you and your family, & your wife and Sybil, all our love and Christmas wishes.

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

Faust. Do you remember how we had beer at the old, vanished Bell in Holborn, and went to see *Faust* at the Lyceum — nearly 49 years ago?

Lynwood, High St., Amersham, Bucks.

April 11.’36

Dilectissime Frater,

In the first place: I would say that the Autobiography, so happily commissioned, is, in effect, the book which I urged you to write some time ago —— your unofficial, ‘unvestimented’ views of life as you have led it and seen it. You will put down everything which strikes you as significant, & leave out everything which seems void of consequence or meaning — and the result will be rich reading. Selwyn & Blount are reputable publishers, a firm of good name.

Fytton Armstrong earned that dedication. If it had not been for him, there would have been no such book. He dug and scraped in old literary dustbins, got the stuff typed, discovered the agent, who found the publisher. I believe the ‘Life’ at which, as you know, he made an attempt is now abandoned. And very well too, since, externally, there is nothing to write about, and internally, I have done it all already in 2 books called, ‘Far Off Things’ & ‘Things Near & Far’.

‘All so good together’: I remember your comment on that text— ‘Does she mean that time when we sat up all night drinking port, with Menteith locked in his bedroom, till at 8 o’clock in the morning, the housemaid came into the room, just as she fell on my neck, & I said, “You drunken little cat!”’I hope she fares well, or tolerably well. I think you said she had made money by speculating — which seems strange — *Medio de fonte jocorum Surgit amandi aliquid.*

They are pleasant & diverting memories. You remember your interior doctrine that, on a somewhat scandalous morning of Coronation, Dora, though she visibly and phenomenally got into a cab in Holborn, *never got home.* There is something of what the blasted Reformers called ‘most comfortable’ in this teaching.

And since we are discoursing of interior things: tell me if I am right in declaring that the Serpent did not ascend beyond Daath (the logical understanding) in the Tree of Life? And furthermore; that being so, we may speak of the world of Kether, & the works of it as un corrupted? Or, in terms of literature, may it justly be said that Pope’s Character of Addison is of Daath, while Coleridge’s *Kubla Khan* is of Kether?

All this, let me tell you, relates to a mystical painter of mine in a 50,000 word collection of stories, commissioned by your old pal Hutchinson. Which reminds me. The original editor of *The Evening News* liked pulling the leg of Dick, the sporting editor. So he would go to him and ask what was to be the football news of the day. ‘Well’, Dick might reply, ‘the Pensioners & Bromley United ought to show good sport.’ (You know football people called the Chelsea team ‘the Pensioners’?) Whereupon Evans, in simulated horror: ‘What! do you mean to tell me that you make those poor old b — s, with half their arms & legs missing, turn out & play football on a day like this?’ Whereupon Dick turns purple with rage.

But; de me fabula.

And finally; most hearty congratulations on your report of yourself, that in spite of hard & weary & all night toiling in the masonic boat with 12 hours sleep, you would be as good a man as ever.

Who could say better of himself?

With all our good wishes to Sybil, your wife & yourself

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

P.S. It has suddenly struck me that you used to suffer badly from your feet. Do you still? If so, & if the trouble is on the soles, write to Mr J. W. Simpson, Aldwych House, The Strand, London W.C. 2 — and say Please send me a pair of Iodine Socks Mans size? — enclosing 1/3.

Purefoy and I have worn them for the last eight months. They have entirely cured most damnably painful callouses. The pain ceases in about 6 weeks.

A.M.

High St., Amersham, Bucks.

May 18.'36

Dilectissime Frater,

In the first place: I think it is the general rule that in imaginative literature, as distinct from mechanical, though often highly valuable, bookmaking, no man can help another.

But, in exception to this rule, I remember that you gave me very important help in the matter of 'The Garden of Avallaumus', described as rather a disease than a book. You did this by urging me to 'cut the cackle and come to the 'osses' — though you did not use the Circus Master's idiom.

By the way: Jekyll was the mixed, natural man, good predominating. Hyde was pure Evil.

Now for your Memoirs. What you are looking for, I suspect, is the point of view, the key, from which & in which they are to be written. Since a man can only illustrate usefully from his own experience: I may say that I experienced your difficulty, in writing my memoirs (called, 'Far Off Things' & 'Things Near & Far'). Referring to them now, I seem to have solved the problem by writing a book which might have been called 'Pictures, Memories, Impressions, & Digressions'. Nothing in the least systematic, no tinge of: 'I was born on March 3rd 1863, at Caerleon-on-Usk, in Monmouthshire. My father, & etc.'

Now, of course, since you are A.E.W. & not A.M. *your* problem is, no doubt, entirely different from mine; & my vein of solution cannot be yours. But I gather that you also are not going to have any truck with systematic autobiography. Think then of topics & not dates, & of topics in which you have a vivid interest. For example: in the course of many years study & investigation, you had found no evidence that such an art as Magic had any existence. Moreover, you went on to say that you had found no evidence of that lower form of Magic which is said to induce delusion. In other words: 'Not only have I no proof that spirits can be evoked: I have no proof that the magician can make the other man (the spectator) think spirits have been evoked.'

Well; ‘I come from my vineyard, I know nothing’ (Sancho Panza); but here is a topic which should make interesting discussion?

Another possible point. You wrote to the effect that you had seen certain rituals, the mere existence of which was known to very few people. Good: now ask yourself whether the matter of these rituals contains any truth or doctrine, of high consequence to the soul of man, not already known & acknowledged by the masters of the interior life.

To give an example of what I mean; I would cite masonry, & its doctrine of a Loss. I admit the picturesque & novel *manner* in which the doctrine is presented: but the matter of it is all in Genesis. — or: what do *you* say?

Many thanks for your *Daath* information. Now; shall we call this doctrine — whatever its origin — new? I am not sure.

I hope your spouse is better by now.

With our best wishes to you both

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

High St., Amersham, Bucks.

Nov. 16.’36

Frater Dilectissime,

So many thanks for your letter of Oct. 18, which I have left unanswered for all these shameful weeks. I believe you are right in thinking that there are hints or indications of new paths in ‘The Children of the Pool’: — but it is getting very late & dark for treading of strange ways.

Now, here is a proposition. Fortify yourself.

The next time you are in town: will you come down here, dine, & spend the night (in a pub hardby)? I will meet you at the station, & take you down the hill in a ‘bus. Your train would be from Marylebone Station at 3.25.

Don’t say no: I repeat: *vesperascit.*

Is the *magnum* finished & passed for press? Writing the other day to Summerford who was enquiring after you, I said: ‘When they take in Walter Hutchinson’s tea of an afternoon, they find him sobbing quietly to himself. They think they hear the words “600 pages in quarto” amidst his tears. He is impotent in the grasp of the mighty Old One.’

In case you do not see the *Observer,* mark the enclosed now missing. It looks to me a most interesting attack on this bewildered question. The Reviewer does not seem fully aware that the latest science justifies the main proposition of the alchemists: the transmutability of matter, or elements, so-called.

Never bother about the S. *Wales Argus* cuttings. The minor prophet who is unknown in his own country is generally lucky, if he knew it.

I have had an interesting newspaper controversy with one Lord Raglan as to tradition & Mithraism, & a very old man in Hampshire, who said his father had told him there was a Golden Calf somewhere in the ‘buried church’ of the parish. Lord Raglan says he has come across 3 or 4 similar traditions, ‘but’, he adds, ‘of course no Golden Calf has ever been found in any of these places; so that shows what tradition is worth.’ I don’t think he fully appreciates the bearings of the case.

Do you know that one of these tales has contrived to get into the Roman Breviary under the Feast of the Apparition of St Michael?

I should think Mead was quite wrong in his attribution of that Ritual. I don't think he was a solid man.

Now: let me have a favourable answer to my question and invitation.

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

You note, in the Review, the allusion to Flamel. I was rapt and fascinated by Flamel's story as given in a vol of Dickens's *Household Words:* I read it more than 60 years ago!

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

April 14.’37

Dilectissime Frater,

This is sad news & bad news, too. We are extremely sorry to hear of your wife’s illness. Pray express to her our sympathy & wishes for a speedy and thorough recovery.

We will try again towards the end of May.

Was it at the King’s Arms you spent your day with Bailey Weaver? I thought he stayed at the Griffin.’ What a splendid liar he was when he was in the bonds of sin & brandy & morphia and good dinners. When he purged and lived theosophically I found him mouldy & deplorable. Years afterwards I came upon a storied inventor of fables, a sometime Roman Priest, named Moritz Weston. Did he ever come your way? I found, to my sorrow, that I had lost my relish of mighty lies; & when Weston told me how he had disguised himself as a woman in order to steal a document from the French Foreign Office; I was simply bored.

He ought to have been good enough for anybody. He had been a Rosicrucian, a silver miner in Nevada, a whaler in the arctic; he was a graduate of Heidelberg & Oxford; he was a Licentiate of Valladolid. He held the Xtian Gospels to be an Adonis Ritual. And I was merely bored!

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

April 28.’38

Frater Dilectissime,

I got the book all right; & I have heard something of the afterthoughts as to price & wrapper, & all that nonsense.

The drivelling imbecilities of the people who call themselves men of business cannot amaze me. Did I tell you what happened to me over my last book? I had sent the MS. to my agent, & I was hungrily awaiting the small sum due to me on delivery. I waited for 3 weeks, & then asked the agent to hurry Hutch up. She replied that she didn’t quite know what to do, as the MS. was 20,000 words short. A couple of days later she wrote that she had made a little mistake; it wasn’t 20,000 words short, or any words short.

Yours is a wonderful book; of the deepest interest to me from beginning to end. Those early chapters are most affecting; in some ways reminding me a good deal of my early days in London, when I lived in my cell in Clarendon Road & wandered out westward, & knew Acton as a little old town, & the ways of Perivale, & the worries of Brentford.

Though I was solitary, & you found friends by degrees, there again, is sad reading, some of it. I am reminded of Johnson in his old age. As he sat, musing, people would sometimes catch a low murmur: ‘Poor man! And then he died’. He was thinking of old friends of the black, starving, Grub Street days.

You have really written the book that I have urged you to write, more than once. You have cast off symbols, & have opened your mind plainly.

I can’t review it competently: for one thing the Editor has limited me to 800 words. But you have my mind on it.

Our best to Sybil. You will feel better as I shall, when it gets warmer.

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

May 29.'38

Dilectissime Frater,

You have always suffered my reviews gladly: so doing you have doubtless acquired merit.

In fact — & more particularly on this occasion— 'you remind me of a man':

 —— I hope you have not forgotten your old formula, the formal preface to great threatenings of judgement and ruin.

But this man that you remind me of was a Hindoo, & an ascetic, a man of blameless life & innocency. Unfortunately for him, we were suppressing the Indian Mutiny, & the English soldier, coming upon the holy man in his meditation, bayoneted him on general principles. As he died, the saint, looking with great composure on the soldier, observed: 'Thou also art *that'*.

You speak of heaviness and inhibitions, & I feel that too. On purely physical grounds, I put such maladies down to north east winds & the human liver. I hope we shall feel better, the pair of us, when the winds die down, & a little warmth comes to the sun. We are at least recovered here from one of the worst chills that I have ever experienced: in my case complicated by that liver I have just spoken of. A cold in the head, a violent cough, an ache in every joint, a band of iron *outside* the head, a puddle of confusion *inside* it, fever, deliriums of nights, collapse of all appetite, & a profound conviction that a little drop of drink would do me a great deal of harm. What a way to live!

I never tried Vodka, since I have never been drawn to anything Russian. Now I like the Dutch, & respect them, & all the varieties of Hollands I find admirable. And I think I told you, that an acquaintance who knows the Netherlands, informed me that the Dutch regard the watering of Schiedam as quite absurd and unthinkable.

I read the *Times Lit. Sup* review; and it gave me the impression that the writer of it was strongly & strangely attracted by your book & would have liked to praise it. But the subject matter was so much outside his range, that he didn’t know how to begin.

An odd party came down to see us the other day.

Item, a former theatrical manager who ran our last tour.

Item, a ‘leading man’, one De Mamey Item, a Superintendent, from ‘the Yard’

Item, Jimmy Wilde, ex-fly-weight champion of the world.

There entered, I think, into this composition something of that strangeness in the proportion, which Bacon praises so highly & so justly.

And, by the way, I have always thought that this Bacon dictum is one of the profoundest & most significant things uttered.

Remember us most cordially to your wife and Sybil.

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

Greenwood read your book with very great affection.

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

March 19.'40

Frater Dilectissime,

A day or two ago, I was reading, as I often am, in 'Shadows of Life', & came upon a very minor mystery. It is contained in your notes on William Sharp, & refers to Mrs Sharp: 'She also wrote verse in her earlier days, under the name of Graham R. Tomson'.

Now, in the late 'eighties there was a lady — whose name originally I don't remember — married to a barrister. She left him for an artist, named Graham Tomson, & I think wrote verse under that name. She then abandoned Graham Tomson for one Marriott Watson, who was one of Henley's young men on the *National Observer,* wrote in the very bright *Pall Mall Gazette* of the day, wrote books, including a 'Keynote'. Thus I met 'Mr & Mrs Marriott Watson' at a 'Keynotes Dinner' given by John Lane, c. 1895. In Lane's List of this period you find: —

Watson (Rosamund Marriott)

Vespertilia and other Poems.

A Summer Night and other Poems.

I have a quite vague recollection of a handsome woman: — and that is all. I think that she & he are both dead years ago. But, surely, this Rosamund couldn't have been also, Mrs. Sharp, of a somewhat later period?

I disagree, profoundly, with La Rochefoucauld's dictum: that there is something not wholly displeasing to us in the misfortune of our best friends. La Rochefoucauld was doubtless *armiger auratus & generosus* — even *generosissimus* —— but his saying is cheap, & cheapness does not become a gentleman. It is also a He — a matter of less consequence, perhaps; since lying is sometimes a painful duty. But though the axiom as it stands is false; it is yet true that there is some small comfort in the thought— 'we are in the same boat'; in misfortune, if you like, but still companions.

On two 'Royalty Dates', then, I sent my Royalties on to a friend. On each occasion, they were contained in a Postal Order for 1/4; &, before the War, 1/4 just bought a ‘Double’. My Christmas Royalties, through some chance which I forget, ran to 17/6. This sum I kept, for this sum I thanked Heaven. We have nothing to complain of. If, for one reason or another, our work fails to interest large numbers of people; the result, our Royalties in shillings and pence, are inevitable.

As to your health; you will go slow and lie quiet, & I am sure you will soon be all right. And you have the advantage, that the weather is growing gentler, & the change will be good for all of us. Here, the winter has been quite hideous: 2 months of the hardest frost, with a couple of slight short thaws, so that when the frost returned, the wet ground turned to glass, & we went abroad with socks over our shoes.

I heard from Brother Vivian Summerford at Christmas, & am looking for another letter soon. Novices may receive as many letters as their friends like to write them; but they are only allowed to write letters themselves at Christmas & Easter. I think his chief impression of the cloister in his first week’s experience was that it was a very cold place. But they did bravely on Twelfth Night: they had Cakes & Ale — & good ale, too — and the whole Convent, from the Prior to the Lay brothers, danced Sir Roger de Coverley, & kept it up till past eleven. P Don’t pass this on. Just before he went in he was discussing his brand of politics — some noisome *saloperie* of Communism-cum-Pacifism, it happened to be just then — to one of the Fathers, who responded: ‘He who is not loyal to his King will never be loyal to his God.’

The Father evidently has the root of the matter in him. Look in the Book: ‘He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen,’ &.t c.

But poor Summerford had been seeing a good deal of Compton Mackenzie in the last few years. And when that English Officer, who spied for Germany, & was known for a time to the Press as, ‘the Prisoner in the Tower,’ came out of gaol, he was cordially entertained by Compton.

And, by the way, it gave me the greatest pleasure, at our last meeting with Summerford, to hear from him that Compton was beginning to think that there might be a good deal to be said for the theory that we, the English, are the Lost Ten Tribes. I thought to myself: ‘Lucky for you, my young friend, that the cloister gates are closing on you. Else, we should have seen you going over the Egyptian Pyramid with a graduated rule & the Table of

Pyramid-Feet & Pyramid-Inches, calling out the measurements to Compton Mackenzie *in sabulo.'*

Which, oddly, reminds me. Lee is coming down here, with Lester, next week; & he will try to convert me to the Cummins (?) Scripts; & I shall try to keep my temper.

Do give our warmest regards to your wife & Sybil; & though, perhaps, you are all off 'the Drink' for the present, let me give to you all the friendly greeting of the Bar Parlour: *'Cheerio.'* Which, being interpreted, is *Leebari.*

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

May 17.'40

Frater Dilectissime,

What cheer? Don't answer, with *Captain Bunsby* in Dickens, 'Damned bad'.

do hope you are feeling much better than when you wrote last; that you, your wife, and Sybil are all relishing the sun. Are you facing out the storm at Broadstairs? I confess that I would rather be somewhere in Central Wales — Builth or Brecon — than a mere 26 miles from town. It is possible, no doubt, to find faults of many kinds in Hitler — but one cannot deny that he is a thorough man. He does not scamp his work.

When you find a *scriba velociter scribens* — in point of fact, a typist — to your hand, don't forget the minor mystery of 'Graham Tomson.' Was the 'Mrs Sharp' you knew a beautiful dark creature?

You knew Ernest Rhys, I think? Or did you only encounter him in business? His autobiography is reviewed in *The Times* 'Lit. Sup.' today. I should call him fortunate in his life. He was clearly born to edit series, & he edited series: — and a very useful work, too. I once met him, & was not greatly drawn to him. But our meeting was, I believe, one of the three Unfortunate Encounters of the Isle of Britain. A most amiable man of my acquaintance asked me to meet Rhys at Stone's. And the kind host brought a friend of his with him. Inevitably, as it seemed, a certain community of race, age, interests, & employment led Rhys & myself to talk together a good deal. Thereupon, our host in a very bitter manner, bid his friend notice that such nobodies as *themselves* could not expect to share in any conversation with such magnates as *ourselves* — Rhys & I. The evening was chilled.

Another Unfortunate Encounter of the Isle of Britain was my meeting with Masefield, now Laureate Poet. That was even more unfortunate.

I had an Easter letter from Colin Summerford. The habit seems to be fitting more easily than it did at first.

You are one of the few people who knew me when I looked a little like the enclosed the enclosure is missing; shall we say, like a somnolent Daudet. Nimes, where he came from, is very much a Roman town; so is Caerleon-on- Usk; but Nimes is a fiercer, more fiery place. In all respects — the amiable landlady, whose hotel gave on the perfectly preserved Temple of Diana, was speaking of the Bull Fights in the Arena, and said, in a hissing manner: ‘the people down here love *Blood.’* In old Caerleon we preferred *Beer.*

Did you ever read Daudet’s *Les Trois Messes Basses*? They were the masses of Christmas. The Priest had seen the magnificent Réveillon Feast spread by Monseigneur, whose chaplain he was. He longed for that feast, he could only see the Truffled Turkey over the Altar. His masses went faster & faster; his Server became the Devil: & when the Priest said: — *Dom scum* the Server answered *Sputuo.*

I need not tell you that this affair had a bad end.

Again: all our good wishes to you and yours. Let us try hard to live into a better age.

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

July 3.'40

Dilectissime Frater,

We were very much distressed to hear of those 'attacks' of which you speak. I see a month has passed since your letter: I do hope you are all the better for its passage.

I suppose the truth is that the good & strong air of the Isle of Thanet is *too* good, & *too* strong for you. I confess I should like to hear that you have moved, for the time, into some moist & warm valley of the west & south, where the wind is too tired to blow. You remember our old Marylebone Vicar, Newland Smith? He helped you over some Greek; in *Lumen de Lumine* I think it was. Well, his heart was threatening, or more than threatening, & he lived for 12 years near Torquay. A Cockney in vain; he cursed his parishes & parishioners steadfastly for all those years, & would have thrown Dartmoor on the dust-heap, if it could have been done. But the climate cured all that heart trouble in less than no time, & it has stayed cured.

As for bombs & planes & roarings on sea & land; I was talking to a man here about flying from all such things, & telling him that I had a friend older than I, a little troubled about his heart, who lived at Broadstairs & found explosives soothing. He burst into eldritch screams, & ran down an alley.

I see the Case of the two Graham Tomsons must remain a mystery.

Janet is the fortunate member of our family. I think I told you that she went out, not quite a year ago, for a six weeks visit to friends in New York. As she was about to return, there came the war; and she has been entertained by her kind hosts ever since. They have shown her Connecticut, & what remains of the New England that your mother knew. They took her down south to Georgia, where she saw plantation negroes, Spanish moss, & the cardinal bird. Her last excursion has been to the Rocky Mountains, where she sat a Mexican saddle, & learnt the cowboy seat.

We were relieved, I can tell you, to hear from Hilary a week or ten days ago, back, safe and sound, from France. So far, we have had no details of his campaigning. An earlier letter, from France, expressed high appreciation of the country, the people, the omelettes, & the good little red wine at 2 /2 d a glass. He found the Church-Latin of the country a little puzzling at first.

All our very best wishes to you, to your wife, and to Sybil.

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

Aug. 17.’40

Dilectissime Frater,

Lee & Lester were down here about a month ago; and Lee said that he understood you have moved to the Canterbury neighbourhood.

But, since I am not sure that you have returned to the old Bishopsbourne address; I send this to Betsy, hoping that it will reach you. And I trust the report that you have gone inland is true; not chiefly on account of bombs and bangs, but rather because inland airs are milder than seafront breezes. Three years ago, when poor Greenwood took us to Paris, I thought the seabreezes of the Channel crossing would do me no end of good. I was all but dead when I was hauled into the train at Dieppe.

From an accursed print called the *New Statesman,* I have extracted the enclosed. I have a vague notion that I once met Ladbroke Black; & yet again, I cannot remember anything about him. I judge from his obituary notice that he was a very good fellow, but a very bad journalist. The notion that it is clever to describe something you haven’t seen is held, or was held, I believe, outside the Reporters’ Room; but not inside. That path is plainly marked: *This Way to the Sack and Boot* — an ill tavern, where all the drinks are sour.

I wish I were a Folklorist. For this reason: the other day when I was meditating, as I often do, on our old Grail studies, it struck me that Merlin, *National* Enchanter, is a unique figure in early legend & romance. I emphasize ‘national’: what may be called private enchanters and wizards are, of course, plentiful enough; but I cannot recall another instance of a magician who stage-managed a whole people.

Can you put me right on this point?

I need not say that I hope & Purefoy hopes that you are feeling much better. Pray commend us to your wife and Sybil; & if I say that the aromas and the savours of certain noble meats & of certain bottles of opimian Burgundy are still grateful; let me remind you that it was a great and good man who said: ‘I mind my belly very carefully and very studiously; and I take it that he who does not mind his belly will mind nothing else.’

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

Do you remember how, long ago, we explored Bermondsey, & how the Bermondsey Barmaids, on our calling for Gin, would offer us: ‘Two Two’s’. Those twopenny drinks would be about 15s 2d each now.

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

Sept. 16.’40

Dilectissime Frater,

Fourteen years ago or thereabouts, I met ‘Egyptian’ Budge. I told you of the encounter, & I remember your asking me, if I met him again, to enquire of him whether the Book of the Dead was dramatically enacted in Egypt. I never saw Budge again, I am sorry to say — he was famous company — and the question was not put; but here, from an unexpected quarter, comes the answer to it. If you would like to verify; you might write to Ivor Brown, c/o *The Observer,* & ask for his sources.

Did you ever hear of Budge’s Vision of Examination, when he was an undergraduate? He told me how he dreamed the same dream, three times, on the night before his examination in Cuneiform; seeing the Paper, with one question for which he was not prepared. On the third repetition, he got up, made tea, & went thoroughly into the matter of the question. The next morning, fact justified the dream in every particular, including some quite trivial and insignificant circumstances.

I hope that the change inland has done you good. Do give our most cordial remembrances to your wife & to Sybil.

I don’t think we have any news. Hilary, under arms, prepares to defend us from invasion. Janet roams about the U.S. & sees the Red Man in his flaming blankets.

But; by the way, there is some news — unless you have already heard it. Colin Summerford found that he was not called to be one of the Lord’s Watchdogs; and left the Priory, about a month ago, with the blessing of the fathers. I know not what he will do next; nor, I think, does he.

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

High St.
Old Amersham, Bucks.
Dec. 18.’40

Excuse ‘Copy Paper’ and being without a Breviary, I know not which of the Great Oes is now sounding in Choirs and Places where they sing —

Dilectissime Frater,

Every good and happy wish to you, to your wife, and to Sybil from Purefoy and myself.

I hope you are much better since the summer: that the bombs do not vex any of you over much. Here, we often fall asleep to the drone of Geman planes; but so far, the old town remains undamaged and untouched. Mass in the morning is said in darkness, save for the two altar candles & the lamp before the Sacrament: there is a solemnity about the scene.

The other night: ‘listening in’ I heard a Welsh country postman tell of his experiences now, in the dark of the morning. There were perils in roads & lanes from lorries, cars, bicycles; but what took me & made me think forthwith of you was his tale of a lonely cottage, far from the common tracks of men. Here there lives an old woman, who has a letter once a week. There are three ways of getting to this cottage, & the Postman has tried them all. One by the marsh: (it was here that I thought of you & certain lines in ‘The Soul’s Comedy’) but in the dark, he lost his footing, & found himself sinking in black ooze & mire. One by the dense thicket of trees & undergrowth: but the boughs caught him, & he was swung into the air, saying to himself, ‘if I hang & die here, nobody will ever find my body’. The third way is by fording the river, (a shallow one I suppose); and beyond the wet & the run of the waters, that, by comparison, he found easy.

I almost think that a very Secret Doctrine must be latent in this fable.

I wrote to you before the Xmas of 1886: now I write again, 54 years after.

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

In the Great Oes, 1941 i e. 17-23 December; in fact 1940

Dilectissime Frater,

It must be just about 55 years ago since you & I corresponded; since you got letters dated ‘Llanthewi Rectory’. We have lived into another world. Like the Bishop of Hippo, we heard the Barbarians thundering at the gates. May our day show a better issue than his. It is curious to read the letters of Sidonius — born at Lyons, 431; died at Clermont, 489 — He is living through it all, still a perfect Roman country gentleman, & doesn’t quite understand what is happening. ‘No good talking Latin in Belgium or on the Rhine, now; a censorship on letters; very odd to see a Frankish wedding the other day, everybody armed to the teeth, more Mars than Venus about it, I thought. However, I daresay we shall live long enough to laugh at our fears’ — and so on. When I first read this, four or five years ago, I thought how very odd it would be to see the bridegroom & his friends at an Amersham wedding carrying their guns to the church door. But I don’t know: they might well be in ‘battle kit’. I suppose Franks were also in battle-kit.

As to *Casanova:* I have letters from America, asking me when it will be issued; & I can only answer, I don’t know. I believe there was some trouble caused about 18 months ago, by the man who issued an edition here in the earlier twenties. He fancies the copyright belongs to him: I don’t think it belongs to anybody. However that may be as regards England, it certainly doesn’t apply to the U.S. But I don’t worry; as I told you, I have had the money & I don’t want the book. The first edition, I remember, I gave you; second, I gave to another friend; I can get on well without the third. The Penguin business does really concern me, since the publication of the book would bring me £50 down. I had a letter from the Penguin firm the other day, from which I gather that they are still struggling bravely against Adversity and Hutchinson, and Seeker and Warburg & the rest. I wish them well in their endeavours. As to *The Handy Dickens*; I infer that Constables will be publishing it in the Spring; & whenever it comes my way, it shall certainly come yours, & quickly, you know, I daresay, that there are often discussions to be heard on the BBC, discussions about everything from

Mangold to Magic. The other night I was a good deal disgusted to hear one of these discussion gangs uttering what were pretty well my sentiments about ‘characters’ in fiction, laying down the principle — for example — that if a character in a story were really lifelike, then the book must be rotten! *Pereant illi qui ante nos nostra dixerunt*; but what about those who say things *after* us? I laid down my doctrine in the matter 40 years ago in *Hieroglyphics’,* & hence my difficulty, & I fear, lack of unction in writing the Dickens Introduction. I can’t say the same thing all over again with ease & relish. I was glad to hear one, but only one, of the discussion people keeping to the good old stupid way. He said that the character of Micawber was not primarily intended to be amusing; but rather to enforce the Mid-Victorian moral of careful economy.

There is one of these B.B.C. discussions which often entertains us: that is the thing horribly called ‘The Brains Trust’. At it I have heard Professor Joad, reckoned, I believe, a man of science, profess his belief in the theory, at least, of Black Magic. The ‘Question’ had been sent in: ‘What about Black Magic?’ & the Professor, replying, said that he was convinced that there were evil powers as well as good in the make up of the universe, & that it might be possible to approach those powers, and — well, there you were; there was your Black Magic for you. He added that, if you could brush aside the great mass of imposture, & penetrate to the core of the Spiritualist séance, there you would find a manifestation of the powers of evil. He weakened his case, in my opinion, by advancing the Poltergeist — which he investigated at Borley Rectory — as another emissary of Satan. Can evil manifest itself through Bad Boy Monkey Tricks? It seems to me highly improbable, at the least.

Another surprise from the B.B.C. Aldous Huxley, once perhaps the brightest, smartest, most contemptuous of the Bright Young Literary Scoffers of the nineteen twenties, has given his judgement of the art of acting in terms more vehement & more damnatory than those of the late Cardinal Manning. Huxley experienced a change of heart some years ago. He was at first inclined to think that salvation was to be found in Mexican Serpent Worship, as expounded by the late D. H. Lawrence, & went to New Mexico, to see how the cultus worked among the Indians there. But this, it seemed, would not do; & he is now, I gather, a High Mystic, chiefly on the Christian basis, but with support from the *Bhagavat Gita.*

Let me finish on an Annoying Note. To delay on the Paston matter for a moment: the phrase struck me as highly curious & enigmatic; but I don’t think it could possibly have any reference to fifteenth century freemasonry. But what I — want to say is, that in my belief the fundamental matter of the 3rd Degree was a traditional ceremony of the journeymen, the paid labourers, on a man having finished his apprenticeship, & becoming a master mason, entitled to a higher rate of pay: that the men who worked it had no notion of any high or spiritual significance in what they did or said, that the main notion of the whole thing was a mixture of jocularity & the giving of a bit of a jolt to the candidate. The notion that a young fellow should have a bit of a jolt when he ceases to be a boy & is to be accounted a man, is most ancient & most diffused. The definition of ‘jolt’ varies: amongst the Red Indians, the young fellow had iron hooks run through his arms & was swung round & round in the air before he could be reckoned a warrior. Among the Coopers of England, the young fellow was (quite recently) put into a cask & trundled round & round the yard. When they let him out, he stood a bottle of whiskey.

Finally: it is highly improbable that the Rite — the words accompanying the Ceremony — were ever written down.

There: put that in your pipe and smoke it.

And with all our love to you & Sybil.

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur machen

Nota bene, that I do not attempt to trace the admittance ceremony of the medieval journeymen masons to its ultimate origins. Possibly, these were most ancient & august, & the rites had become rude in a long transmission through the hands of illiterate labourers: I know not.

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

Sept. 17’41

Dilectissime frater,

Many long years ago, as you sat at your board in Ealing I remember your filling a small glass — a ‘pony’ glass I think they called it — with whiskey in its purity, which you thereupon drank. You considered the matter judicially for a short while, & then gave sentence: ‘This does me no good, Machen.’ And I am hoping that this summer, such as it has been, has done better for you than that glass of whiskey, drunk forty years ago or more.

Not long since, Purefoy & I, relishing a rare cup at the King’s Arms, fell to talking of those old days & of you, & we wondered whether we had ever related to you the sad story of the Marquis d’Autische. On the chance that this was formerly omitted; let it now be related.

The Marquis d’Autische, then, was a French Nobleman, of ancient & distinguished race. An ancestor of his, it is said, crusaded with St. Louis, & thus derived his title. The Marquis of, say, 40 years ago, was all that he should have been, loyal to the House of the lilies, *bien pensant,* profoundly Catholic. But there were moments, rare moments, when doubts assailed him; & in one of these painful seizures he was heard to exclaim: *Je ne croisai jamais que le bon Dieu auraitfondé son eglise sur un calembour!’*

He was thinking, of course, of Ev ei ó ττετρος και -ιτετρα ταντη όικοδομηοαι την εκκλησίαν μον

And that reminds me: do you recall what the Norman Prior called Friar Tuck in *Ivanhoe*? *Tu es petra scandali et lapis offensionis.* I suppose that the Prior in the book is not a bit like the Prior in the 12th century, nor the irregular clerk of that age: but how jolly it all is! And it has been said that jollity is joy talking in the vulgar tongue.

Let me defend Sir Walter against an accusation that some might find latent in one of the above sentences: *Ivanhoe* is quite as true a picture of England in the Xllth century as *Hamlet* is of Denmark in the tenth.

Did you ever know anything of the thinking of Bergson, brother-in-law of our old friend, S. Liddell MacGregor Mathers? I never read him, being put off, I think, by his discovery that Life was to be explained by the *elan vital.* This reminded me too much of the country doctor. I had remarked to him that I understood that asparagus was only beneficial to the action of the kidneys. ‘If that is so,’ said he, ‘the effect must be due to the presence of asparagin.’ But I saw somewhere the other day that Bergson held that the faculty by which man apprehends reality is akin to the faculty of instinct in animals. This struck me as impressive.

Brief News. Hilary, who has now been in the army for more than two years, thinks that he will be ordered abroad again before long. Janet, who has been in the USA for two years, got back to Amersham last Sunday, *via* Halifax, Greenland, Iceland, Northern Ireland, Liverpool. She sailed on a small Dutch ship, & that, perhaps, may explain the happy circumstances that she brought with her 2 bottles, not of ‘Noble Square Face’, but of the nobler Bols. Mark the felicity of the mere name: it seems to figure the utterance of one, who having enjoyed this rare spirit, perhaps too fully, should endeavour to say ‘bottles’.

I hope Sybil is well & that your wife is well. You hate letter writing I know; but tell Sybil that a brief line from her would be gratefully received.

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

April 8.'42

Dilectissime frater,

Please give my hearty thanks to Sybil for her letter. I know that with that obstinate & most distressing neuritis the business of pen and ink must be a painful one; & I almost feel a sinner when I put her to it. I hope that both you & she are feeling some degree of aid from these milder airs. What a winter it has been! Do you remember a formula in frequent use with you some 42 years ago or thereabouts, a formula prefacing remarks to my address of a highly minatory and terrific nature? The formula was: 'You remind me of a man.' Well, this last winter reminds me of the winter of 1895 — six weeks of frost, a jolly dinner at the Greyhound with you, your wife, & Mrs Menteith: Bucellas; & the story of the Black Seal which I was writing just then. It is hard to realize that in this interval of 47 years a whole world has passed away & that you and I have survived into a new age. But so it is.

Let me give you an instance, trivial & jocose.

Three or four weeks ago, the retiring Archbp of Canterbury, Dr Lang, was addressing a meeting of the S.P.C.K. He said in the course of his remarks: 'And, now, will you excuse me for a few minutes. I have to see these… photographers. I won't mention the adjective.' (Howls of laughter from the S.P.C.K.)

Can you conceive an Archbp practically blessing the expletive 'bloody' in 1895? And, by the way, Lang is probably ignorant of the fact that 'the adjective' is derived from the terrific medieval oath: 'By God's Blood'. It is curious that the corresponding 'woundy' has utterly failed to survive. I wish the new Archbp., Temple, were as innocent as Lang. He was delivering serious addresses in this Holy Week. He suggested that the darkness of the Crucifixion might have been occasioned by 'a coincidental eclipse of the sun'. There is a feebleness of mind here, which seems parallel to me with the mental state of those who derived the inn sign of *The Goat and Compasses* from 'God Encompasseth Us'.

Another sign of the new age: serious & dolorous, this omen. The other night, feeling somewhat low & downcast, I said at the King's Arms that I would have a Double Gin. What do you think it cost Me? Two shillings and fourpence; & I suppose that, allowing for the watery adulteration of the distiller, I got just about the amount of spirit that you and I received in those 'twos' that we drank at Bermondsey, in the former age. This drink of the New World did me no good. I don't think it would have done me any good if there had been 2/4 to spare in my pocket. Perhaps it would be not only harsh but hasty to say of our rulers *miseriam potius quam victoriam apti evocare.* It is, doubtless, a great process that is going on. To this day, nobody knows why the Roman Empire collapsed.

I am glad you were entertained by the Dickens Preface. How odd that such a man as Plato, set up by the judgement of more than two thousand years amongst the very highest of men, should have been not merely mistaken in his opinions of art, but entirely ignorant of what art was, what it was for, what it was about. Who would believe that this supreme philosopher had attained on this matter to the critical eminence of our George II, who 'hated Boetry and Bainting'. So it is; & it is quite incredible.

I hope you noted the passage relating to the spiritual things concealed under the correspondence of a 'comfortable cup o'tea'. High doctrine here, if you will believe me.

With all our good wishes to you & to Sybil, & better health to you both.

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

April 12.'42

Dilectissime frater,

Here, then, is the Sweeney Todd. I am interested to see that, apparently, there is a genuine 18th century English tradition behind the fable. I had read somewhere that it was founded on a French feuilleton.

Do you know anything about Montague Summers? He is, I believe, *presbyter Romanus,* & dresses as a cleric. He has written about Restoration Drama, & also on occult matters — very credulously on these latter. For some reason or another, if you mention his name, you are apt to encounter an uplifted eyebrow or a latent grin. As Sancho Panza says: 'I come from my vineyard; I know nothing.'

By the way, reading a day or two ago in your 'Shadows' — a book I love to read in — I see you make some question as to how I met the Young Man in Spectacles. It was at the G.D. I have no notion of whether he be alive or dead; I have forgotten his very name. But why should one trouble? The play is over, the actors have put off their costumes, dressed in their 'street dress', & gone home. There is no sense in desiring to follow them there.

I am all the more sure of that, from the very occasional appearance of the lady who once depicted so brilliantly the role of 'the Fair Wanton'. I assure you these are sad and rather ghastly occasions.

But 'street dress' awakes a cheerful ocasion of the stage. I was touring with a Tree Company from His Majesty's. We were depicting 'Julius Caesar', & Brutus & another principal, alone on the stage, were commenting on the shouts of 'Ave Caesar', proceeding from the mob 'off'. One night, no shouts were heard; consequently, the remarks of Brutus & the other conspirator must have been puzzling to the house. Just before the curtain went up on the next set, the Forum Scene,— 'Friends, Romans, Countrymen' &c — the Stage Manager, in a dark Disguise Cloak, appeared in the assembled mob, & said, addressing the Super Master, who was one of them, 'Look here! What the… do you mean by not giving those "Ave Caesars"? If that happens again you can put on your street dress & go back to Hell, or Jerusalem, or His Majesty's Theatre! I don't want you here. Now then (turning to the Roman mob at large) "We will be satisfied! We will be satisfied!"' Thus indicating the shouts that took up the curtain, the Stage Manager melted into the wings.

The skies & the airs seem to mend. Do you & Sybil follow this example.

Yours ever fraternally,

Arthur Machen

LETTERS TO JOHN GAWSWORTH. 1929-1947

28 Loudoun Road, NW8

Jan. 22nd'29

Dear Mr Armstrong,

I will sign the book with great pleasure, and write something about Caerleon-on-Usk on the first page. Caerleon — *castra legionum.* It was the headquarters of the second Augustan Legion for about 300 years. In Welsh, the word is pronounced 'Kirelayon'. The people who live there call it 'Care-lee-on', and I have heard a porter on the platform name it 'Ca'leen'.

If you are interested in my Clarendon Road days; you will find a full account of them in Chapter V of my book *Far Off Things* — whence I suppose, S. P. B. Mais got his materials. I have never seen his article. My number was 23 and I lived behind the little window on the top floor, next to the bow window. The period was 1883-84-85.

With all good wishes,

I remain Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks, March 31 1930

Dear Mr Armstrong,

Many thanks for your letter. I will begin with two counsels, one particular, the other general.

1. — If I were you, I would not do any business with the ingenious Mr Searle, of Wardour Street.

2. — I should think that the collecting of 'Machen Items', save at prices under 10/-, is a pursuit of doubtful — or not at all doubtful — wisdom. There may be a recovery, of course; but I should think probably not. This week I am 'reading' for the House of Benn, a MS dealing with collecting modem authors. My name is not even mentioned…

I have no duplicate copies of my books. I know nothing of the Book Market, so I don't know whether £6 is high for *Anatomy.*

I have the most pleasant memories of my interview with Stephen Graham. He was everything that was kind and courteous. I congratulate you on the 2 strings to your bow. I have found the House of Benn most pleasant to serve. And, by the way, I do not believe for one moment, that Quiller Couch said anything about 'slime'. He probably said that he had spent a whole day in being interviewed, and that he was bored to tears; and I don't wonder. But Swete, I am sorry to say, a man of many qualities and accomplishments, liked hurting people's feelings — or trying to hurt them.

Thank you very much for *Strange Roads.* It was found t'other day among Hilary's props. He had never given it to me…

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

St George 1930

Dear Mr Armstrong,

I am afraid I have got to be disappointing. Thinking over your *Residences* proposal, I have come to the conclusion that I must not be concerned in it, either in signing or preface-writing. If I were thus concerned, people would say: ‘Whom does he think himself: Shakespeare, Milton, or only Charles Dickens?’ I should look a terrible ass.

If you go on with the scheme, minus signatures and preface, you would be prudent if you took samples around the trade, and found out how many orders you could secure.

I don’t know the Hereford street numbers. The Castle St house — red brick —— was on the left hand side of the street, as you pass out of the Cathedral Close, towards the upper end — nearer to the Close gate, that is. The St Ethelbert st house — St E. st continues Castle st at an angle — is the last of a stucco row, a corner house: it being understood that you are still going away from the Close. But of course both houses may have been pulled down long ago. I should think you could get a trip to Newport on as good terms as the Hereford ticket and Newport commands Caerleon, Llanthewy Rectory, and what I somewhat egoistically call ‘my country’.

I am sorry for the matter of the *Residences*: but it would not do.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

June 28.’30

Dear Mr Armstrong,

Any Saturday or Sunday (July 5 excepted) that suits your uncle will suit us; and pray give him our best thanks.

One of the best of the photos is my cloaked figure in the wet street; I think that both the street and I are most picturesque.

You mistake the force of the phrase I used about Parsons. I am sure he is the last person to borrow money. The phrase: ‘I don’t think I’ll borrow half a crown to get drunk with Chose’, means: ‘I don’t care much for Chose’s company’. I found Parsons a gloomy man. Of course I will sign your typescript of *Eleusinia.* An American named Evans has asked me to reserve the *Fleet Street* MS. I have told him that £20 is a preposterous price, but that I do not care to sell it for less. No; I am not selling the Note Book.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

By the way: I don’t think I impressed on you strongly enough the utter — and malignant — falsity of that gossip you heard about Savage sponging on Middleton. I speak with authority and know the tale to be an infernal lie.
A.M.

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

July 10. 1930

Dear Mr Armstrong,

Thank you very much for the prints: they are excellent. And so were the Maids of Honour, for which all thanks.

Fleet Street is not really a nice street; I don't wonder you find it distasteful. But you have the resisting power of youth. You are 18, and there are some diseases which comparatively trifling to the young, are serious matters when they make their attack on the middle-aged and elderly. I was 48 when I caught Fleet Street, and 55 when I caught chickenpox. They were both severe attacks; but *you* can laugh at 'the Street'.

Can you come here on Aug. 10? I shall be very glad to sign anything going. Thank your uncle for myself and Mrs. He gave us both a delightful afternoon. And remember us to your cousin; who is being held up to Janet as an example.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

July 16. 1930

Dear Mr Armstrong,

The photographs are superb; thank you very much. We shall expect you on Aug. 10 at 4.30.

A wonderful feat to get a letter from Waite. I didn't know there was any method of getting *Horlicks* — beyond advertising for it. There are some admirable and curious articles by Waite in it; and the marvel is that he persuaded old Horlick to run such a magazine; which would do the milk more harm than good.

As to Fleet Street: again I would say that it is good to get the drudgery over young. I tried to learn Welsh at fifty — I should like to know Welsh — but I found I couldn't stand grinding the elements.

I hope your uncle and Elizabeth and all the family will have a great time at Dawlish. It is a delicious country.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

Oct. 28’30

Dear Armstrong,

… Now as to your tour in Monmouthshire. The best train for Newport leaves Paddington about ten to nine a m., arriving at 11.30 or thereabouts. Three miles away (train or bus) is Caerleon. Four miles from Caerleon is Llanthewy Vach Rectory: no bus. But unless I know how long you propose to stay, and whether you intend to hire a car; it is difficult to guide you about the country. However, we will suppose that you put up at the Hanbury Arms, Caerleon, and have no car.

You first of all go to the Vicarage, and inspect the Register for March 1863: name Arthur Llewelyn Jones. I do not know anything about registers: the particulars may include the name of the house where I was born: if so you will be able to find it — unless pulled down. This done; set out to walk to Llanthewy; passing through Ponthir (Pont-heor) and keeping to the right. You will climb up and up, and the top of the hill is Common Cefn Llwyn. There is no common: somewhere to the left is *imagined* to be the Roman Fort in *The Hill of Dreams.* Down the hill to the level where I used to await the postman with my *Heptameron* copy: up again: Llanthewy Church to the right, grave of my father and mother in churchyard — approach by lane. Back to main road, up hill: Llanthewy Rectory on right. You return to Caerleon. The head of the Faun was in the hall of what is now the doctor’s house. Hardby is the Roman amphitheatre but this is now excavated; in my time it was all green.

Next day: go over Caerleon bridge, and passing through Caerleon-ultra-Pontem, take the old Usk road. Kemeys *{A Fragment of Life)* on right. Newbridge (5 miles from Caerleon). Turn up to right, and pass Bertholly (1st Chapter *Great God Pan:* summer residence of Professor Gregg), and if you will get into Wentwood, and if you go to the top, I think you will see the Grey Hills where the Professor was taken by the fairies. But these you should look out for in the train, after you have come out of Severn Tunnel on the right…

N.B. Returning from Llanthewy (1st day), ask at Common Cefn Llwyn for the lane to Llanfrechfa *(f* sounds v*),* the ruin was on the left; and if you like to go on, you will come out of the 'turnpike' road, and can get to Caerleon that way.

3rd day. Take train from Caerleon to Llantarnam, and there ask the way to Twyn Barlwm: 3 or 4 miles, but a steep climb at the end. Mynydd Maen (pronounced Munnith Mayne) is of the same range, to the north. When you get back to Caerleon, ask for Pont Sadwrn (Pons Saturni) and you will see the Soar Brook fall into the Usk.

4th day. Take train from Caerleon to Abergavenny (see *Chronicle of Clemendy*) and returning, get out, if you will, at Pontypool Road Station. You can wait for the next train, or walk back to Caerleon…

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

Jan. 8’31

Dear Armstrong,

You will be glad to hear that I have written the Introductory Note to *Eleusinia,* and am preserving the draught in accordance with your desire.

As to Pembrokeshire: thejourney takes from about 9 a in to about 3.30 p m. A return ticket costs about £3. The scene, of wonderful beauty, is the background of *The Great Return, The Terror*, one of the ‘Strange Roads’ and the short story, called, I think, ‘Out of the Earth’. It deserves more than two days. I finished *Things Near and Far* on the sand dunes at Penally. All the places are close to each other, and a pub at Tenby or Penally would be a convenient head quarters.

I will keep the pen for you. Earache gone but deafness tiresome.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

Jan. 23.’31

Dear Armstrong,

Answering two letters. Do send your list of residences and firms when ready:

will look them over.

The Hesperides Press is mistaken. The Preface to their *Way to Succeed* is a revised version of the Boni and Liveright Preface.

The Red Priest of Castletown (or Castleton; I am not certain which. Consult Glamorgan Gazetteer). *fferiad coch:* he had red hair. He was the Revd Hezekiah Jones. One of his brothers was the Revd Daniel Jones, who died *c.* 1820 Curate of St Fagan’s, near Cardiff. His son was the Revd Daniel Jones, sometime Vicar of Caerleon-on- Usk — my grandfather. I believe this race of Joneses came *(c.* 1750) from Carmarthenshire. There were branches (cousins of mine) in Anglesea and London, 50 years ago. About that time I met 15 Jones cousins one Sunday afternoon — disliked them all, and never saw them more. A distant cousin is Mrs Priestley (Mrs Priestley the novelist, as we should say in Wales) who is descended from Daniel of St Fagan’s.

Richard Middleton. I was never a Reader for Unwin. The only proof I could have read for them was the proof of my Introduction. The truth of the Middleton Savage friendship is very simple. The two men were great friends, and if there were any question of money between them, it would be Savage’s, since Middleton had no money, and, at that time, Savage had. A further reason is, that Savage is one of the most generous men I have ever met. Not for one moment would I say that Middleton ‘sponged’ on Savage: between friends, real friends, there can be no question of any such thing. I never got on with Middleton; an ungenial, gloomy fellow, with a grievance against life.

I never fix myself down to appointments in prospect. Come, by the usual train, Saturday, Feb. 7. I am not well: deaf, with an evil chill hanging about me.

I would like to see a Jordan-Smith photograph.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

Aug: 8:’32

Dear Armstrong, Pray quote me on ‘Gold Like Glass’, if it will do you any service.

I should like to see the ‘Anthology’ proofs if convenient. We are not going away until the end of the month.

My price for the MS of *The Green Round* is £25. I have quoted it to Spurr, in answer to his question. I was pleased to find that he and I had arrived at the same estimate.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

Feb. 8.’33

Dear Armstrong,

In the first place; it is my bounden duty to warn you against undertaking the work you propose to undertake. There are minor reasons against it; but chief of all, is the major premise (see *Whately,* not *Whateley)-}*

Major Books about Machen are interesting to very few people.

Minor This is a book about Machen.

Conclusion: Therefore, this book is interesting to very few people.

There you are: irresistible in *Barbara* and I hope you see the next syllogism in *Celarent:* books interesting to very few people don’t sell etc etc.

I remember three years ago or so having a very glowing letter from America; I think the writer was Van Patten, but I am not sure. But, anyhow, it was glowing, and ended up with something about holding a Machen Dinner: I wrote back that I was delighted; and scarcely liked mentioning the fact that my total American Royalties for the past year amounted to a little under £5.

So there you are; and if you resolve to go on I can only say, ‘And God give you a good deliverance’ — as the Clerk of the Court used to remark to the Prisoner of the Bar, when they had quite made up their minds that he must hang.

I said there were minor objections. One is that it is a ticklish thing to write a man’s life during his lifetime. For example; I might not care to have any letters to Lane printed; and what a nuisance that would be for you…

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

June 13.’33

Dear Armstrong,

It is extremely good of you to take all this trouble: a thankless job — and I shall be a good deal astonished if it is a successful one, I have long parted with illusions; not that I ever harboured many.

Pray look around on Saturday next. Your plan of sending a list of questions is a good one: consideration makes for accuracy. Nothing like black and white.

My copies of ‘The Green Round’ have come. At the request of the firm, I wrote the ‘blurb’ for the jacket. To this they have prefixed an imbecile paragraph of their own, telling the world what a splendid fellow I am. It is the sort of thing that moves the sensible reviewer to just a contemptuous comment.

Pray give our best regards to Mrs. And, by the way, I hope the uncertain prospects of *Everyman* of which she spoke to me some time ago, are now both certain and good.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

Aug. 11.’33

Dear Armstrong, I think you have done nobly: thank you very much. It must have been a vile task.

As to *Clemendy*, £20 to 14/-; what does the Psalmist say: put not your trust in *prices.* This book business is just a small chapter in a big volume of depreciation, following naturally on a monstrous appreciation. Before long there will be a readjustment, but not to the high watermark of the early twenties.

We shall see you, then, next Saturday, and I trust Mrs with you. I have not yet received your questions.

I have been wanting to say: present my compliments to Miss Dorothy Sayers, and beg her from me to make a study, biographical and critical, of Wilkie Collins. From a few things she has written about him, I am sure she would make a very choice book. I believe he was a queer customer: all the better for her purpose.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

Aug. 14.'33

Dear Armstrong,

I am writing this day to *The New Statesman* re *The Pantomime Man.* I am doubtful of success since Ellis Roberts, the former Literary Editor, who sent me an occasional book for review, has left the paper some time ago.

Have you got a copy of 'The Cosy Room'? I should be much obliged. I am putting up a notion for a series in this vein to some agents, and they want to see *The Cosy Room* before they start.

Your number up with Rich & Cowan, if *Pantomime Man* doesn't do well? Don't bother about that: your number there will be up all right a very few weeks after the issue of your book about me. However, I did my best to dissuade you in *Barbara* and, I think, in *Celarent.*

We hope to see you both next Satdy.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

High St., Amersham, Bucks.

23 Aug.’33

Dear Armstrong,

The Sunday Times sent its proofs in duplicate, so I send you the enclosed, knowing your fondness for these curiosities. The sentence in the margin is not in the article.

‘The Machens’ Little French Maid’

Let me beg you not to make Shiel the authority for any statement about me or my life. The man is an inveterate liar.

Our best regards to you and Mrs.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

Sept. 4.’33

Dear Armstrong,

In the first place, I hope that you and your wife are having a very pleasant time in Devon, and secondly that she may very soon find a betterjob. Not that I have ever thought much of the process of earning an honest livelihood. I remember writing in 1900 to my *confrère,* P. J. Toulet, (translator of *Pan):* ‘I shall soon be reduced to the sad and disgusting necessity of earning my own living.’ He approved in the strongest terms of my choice of adjectives: I approve them still.

Thank you very much for your kind review and for the *Terror* cutting. I think it must have been in 1922 that I wrote the Benson article. F.R.B. was going to South Africa. I don’t remember anything about giving the staff to Foster; but it may be so, and anyhow it’s of no consequence. I gave it to Benson, anyhow.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks.

Thursday 7 September 1933

Dear Armstrong,

Herewith the questions answered to the best of my abilities. But many of the matters you ask about are trifling, and I don't think I ever remembered them! As Edward Walford's 'devil', I wrote the Ballantyne obituary for him in the law paper and met A. E. Waite for the first time while I was doing it, under the big Dome.

The photograph in the *Play Pictorial* is not of me. I suppose the groups of the subsidiary villains were unsatisfactory: none appeared.

Best regards to you both.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

Sept. 19.’33

Dear Armstrong,

I accept your £5 proposition. I will not attempt to rewrite, but will correct any errors of fact, to the best of my ability…

Now look here. I must bring you a sense of your great blessing. You talk of your ‘swan song’. And you 21! I must confess that I remember feeling in the year 1892 that I was finished. That was imbecile enough; though I was 8 or 9 years older. Swan song, indeed. Why you have hardly begun to say ‘cheep, cheep’, and you have your life before you. I am 70. I think it extremely unlikely that I shall ever write another line worth reading; but it is not impossible.

More advice. When you told me you were going to write this Life, I shewed you in *Barbara* and *Celarent* that it would do no good; that it wouldn’t do. After glancing through the chapters you sent me, I am still sure that it won’t do. On general principles, it is always undesirable to write the lives of the living. It is done sometimes, I believe, in the case of politicians; but such ‘Lives’ are mere election puffs. And when, as in my case, the subject of the life is practically unknown, commercial disaster is certain to attend literary impropriety.

Keep your five pounds: put your notes away — and wait a little.

You say, I see, that you are not attempting any critical estimate of my work. Now this is the kind of book that can be written in the subject’s lifetime with propriety; though, in my case, it would be commercially worthless.

With best wishes to you both, and good counsel (believe me) to you.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Amersham, Bucks. Sept. 22.’33

Dear Armstrong,

Herewith your copy, duly clawed by me, according to the King’s Arms Treaty of the 20th inst. And now; criticize the *Books* as freely as ever you please, and leave Man as much alone as may be — and so spare me the use of the Censor’s pencil.

I am going to look up for you a bundle of letters to a dead friend, returned to me. I believe they are somewhat interesting.

With our best wishes to your wife and hopes for a speedy job.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Lynwood, Amersham, Bucks.

Sept. 27.’33

Dear Armstrong,

Can you send along that £5 for my revising services?

Here are the letters I spoke of: they are less interesting than I thought, but you may get a bit here and a bit there. I have enclosed a note on dates and residences to give some guide — vague enough — as to the date of the letters. They were written to Paul England (c. 1865-1932) concert singer, translator of songs and librettos (several for Beecham), author of a volume of poems, teacher of singing, man of books.

Best regards to your wife and yourself.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

High Street, Old Amersham, Bucks.

May 19.’37

Dear Armstrong,

Many thanks: I will send along the address to the French firm. Shall I suggest, *‘Abandon-nos ces lieux’* for ‘let us go hence’? I will think it over.

The first edition of *Le Grand Dieu Pan* appeared in 1901; I hadn’t heard of any other; it was in a green paper wrapper.

The Greenwoods were our hosts on the Paris visit. We started on April 23rd and returned on Tuesday April 27th.

I will return you the Yorick *menu* when I renew my stock of large envelopes. I was not at the dinner in question, though I have been Christopher Wilson’s guest at the club. What has become of the series of portraits of members, painted by Sime?

Colin Still, as a practical man, has told Rich & Cowan exactly what I told you four or five years ago, on conclusions obtained *in modo et figura.* The coincidence of the theoretic and practical reason is striking.

With our best to you both.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Clomendy Wood, Nr Caerleon, Mon.

Saturday 1 July 1937

Dear Armstrong,

We are staying with friends: let that explain all that is amiss.

As a matter of fact, we are having a most gorgeous time with the Laybournes of the above address, on the western slopes of Llanhenoc, looking on the trees about Llanthewy Rectory, and the full sweep of the mountain beyond. We are driven all over the country; in the Rolls car for the roads, and in the Morris for the lanes.

No doubt the Jones of the catalogue is my cousin. His father was a physician of Finsbury Sq. I had thought his Xtian name was Jacob; but evidently not so. I remember trying to read *Inez* or 'Iquez' — a pamphlet in brown paper wrapper. I never heard of *Hood's Magazine.*

A pity about *Eleusinia* — as you want it.

Would you and your spouse come on Saturday *after next* at the usual hour; I have a trifle for you, a paged proof of 'The Shining Pyramid', to go into a publication of Faber's 'Welsh Stories'.

Our best remembrances to Rainey.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

Would Rainey like to come with you, Saturday sen'night?

Forgot to put in catalogue; will keep it for you.

A.M.

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

Dec. 5.’38

Dear Armstrong,

If you can get a *Great Return,* will you send it along with invoice?

On the whole, if poor old Saintsbury can keep going, some portion of my Irving article will survive into his collection. But no MSS; he sent me typescript.

I am booked to write a story for the *Welsh Review,* edited by Glyn Jones — a grave man, who spoke at the Newport Lunch. The first number appears in February next. I haven’t heard yet as to the date of the last number.

With our best to you both,

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Greenwood — you remember him at the pub? — is going filming shortly with Laughton and wife.

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

Dec. 7.’38

Dear Armstrong,

I am extremely obliged. I wish I could give you the required date for the Astrologer; but I have no notion of the time; therefore, I fear, we shall never know who was the Lord of the Ascendant, or who was afflicted in the Twelfth House!

No hurry about Waite’s book.

The other day I wanted three books: Mrs Earle’s *Pot Pourri from a Surrey Garden,* Clement Shorter’s *Brontë Circle,* and Willa Cather’s *One of Ours.* Each in its way is a real book; the Brontë book more especially. I have just heard that all are o p., and am trying Foyles. But they are books which should not be out of print.

You never met Clement Shorter? He would say: ‘Cub id, Bister Bachad, cub id’ — and then talk of ‘we Scandinavians’. He was very dark for a Scandinavian. The best to you both.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

P. S. There comes into my mind the notion of a bit of honest work I think I could do, if anyone would pay me for it: *The Week End Dickens* — a series of selections with an introduction. The notion is, not to provide for the man who has little of Dickens, and will only read him in scraps; but rather, for the man who knows and likes him so well that he is unwilling to be wholly destitute of Dickens in trains and by strange bedsides. Sylvia Townsend Warner did something like this five years ago; but she, or more likely her publishers, made the mistake of turning it into a sort of puzzle, by leaving some of the characters’ names blank in the text, and filled in at the end of the book: a silly plan.

A.M.

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

Nov. 9.’39

Dear Armstrong,

What strikes me is that the *Digest*, so far from dying of the Wars should fatten on them. It is a collection of chunks and very well selected chunks; and what can be more suitable for the trenches? And no mistake could be greater to suppose that the army as it is, here and abroad, is on the ‘Comic Cuts’ level.

The only thing against it is the title, which is Johnsonian, learned and obsolete —— that is for the average mass of man. Still, I suppose the title must stand. It is extremely good of you to fish the publishing waters for the Dickens book. I have got the whole scheme of selections ready, and will sent it on to you in a day or two, with the information desired.

I didn’t know there had been two shots at the notion. Sylvia Townsend Warner wrote a noble Intro to her *Week End Dickens:* but the mere format of the book, within and without damned it from the beginning. It looked, in binding and on page, exactly like an Educational Textbook. Moreover, it was done on the Snip Principle, instead of on the Chunk Principle.

Well; do let us have that date, as soon as you can manage it.

With our love to you both,

Yours,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

Feb. 12.’40

Dear Armstrong,

Upon my word: you would have done better if my prophecy had been fulfilled in the letter. A few kicks, a goblet of liquid fire, and a few moral tableaux; not pleasant, perhaps, but better than your actual portion of — Itis, and Pneumonia and Gruel.

I hope you begin to mend seriously. Can’t you get ‘seconded’ for editorial service in grand Cairo, under the sun?

We have had waterbursts, but only on the ground-floor — and that was untenanted at the time.

I note what you say about the Dickens book. If Routledge should want to take it on, it will be necessary to look closely into the agreement. They had a director who called himself Stallibras — *un qui estate les bras* — his real name being Sonnenschein; and the firm may keep up the tradition. Somewhere in 1887, I copied out a Sonnenschein agreement at Redway’s request. ‘Even *we* may learn something from that’, he said humbly, and yet with a touch of dishonest pride about him.

As to *Casanova.* The article consists of the 12 vols of the Casanova’s Society edition (as disrupted by the printer), the MS of the translated note, and the MS of my ‘Translator’s Preface’ which runs to 8,500 words, with the first proof of this preface. For this, I should like £20.

Very many thanks; but we have *The New England Nun*; a present, I think, from Goldsmith.

Kidnapped Poets of Great James St. I told you, I think, that I had once visited The Pines — in the post-Swinburnian age. I found Watts-Dunton a feeble, amiable old man. You remember Wilfred Blunt’s phrase as to Swinburne’s condition, when found: ‘He was dying of drunkard’s diarrhoea’.

You don’t say what your spouse got for keeping Xmas in a Fire Escape. I hope they let her off lightly.

Well, as I say, with others, in the Chorus of the *Agamemnon*… rendered in our version Yet, let the house's tale How dark so e'er Show yet an issue fair.

I am sorry to state that it didn't do anything of the kind; but let's hope that you and Mrs Armstrong and all of us may have better luck.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

Feb. 17.'40

Dear Armstrong,

Pistols pointed at your head? How would you like machine-gun nests?

can only say: *Uffern Dan* — which means 'Hell Fire', and is understood to be a word of command in the Welch Regiment. Pronounce: 'Iffairn Dahn'.

I'll see what can be done with *Casanova-,* but I am afraid the times are not very hopeful. I am beginning with Rota: could you oblige with 2 or 3 other 'likelies'?

You do that *Digest* extraordinarily well. Big type and little: all very good. Rothenstein commits one curious error: he speaks of Burne Jones as a Socialist. He was, in fact, a Gladstone Liberal, and, as it appears in his Life by Lady B-J, he was most distressed when Morris turned Socialist — anarchist, rather.

There won't be any Maginot Line or any other line — except the writing and editing line — for you.

With our love to you both Yours,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

Feb. 25.'40

Dear Summerford Armstrong,

hope you are much better by this time; since I am going to bother you. But remember: 'The merciful man is mindful to his bothered, as well as to his beast.' In the first place: will you address and post the enclosed — if there is a Peter Davies firm still going? If not — put it in the fire or the W.P.B. No don't. There is a cutting enclosed which I should like back.

Secondly: as to the Dickens book. If Routledge doesn't want it, do you think that the other man you mentioned, who does want it, would make an advance now; I to furnish a Preface forthwith?

Tertio: I am in correspondence with Rota as to *Casanova,* and expect to settle one way or another before long.

Again, I hope you are better and that your spouse is well.

Our love to you both,

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

March 20.'40

Dear Armstrong,

We are very much relieved to hear that you are all right again. It is true that you are, evidently, very hard at work; a condition that I have always cordially disliked. Still, it is better than pneumonia — I suppose. Do give Shiel my cordial congratulations; I am delighted to hear the news. I suppose that his expedition to Palestine will be delayed by the war. I remember the J.H.V.S. Syndicate, which was looking for the Ark of the Covenant, was held up by the Italo-Turkish War. They knew exactly where to go, being guided by the researches of Javelius, who discovered the cipher of Ezekiel.

look forward to the promised booklet of verse. *(Mind of Man*) I should think it would be some time before I hear from Peter Davies! I had no notion he was gone to the Wars — or, most certainly, I would have refrained from troubling him.

Rota is not inclined to be optimistic. Still, as I reminded him, *Casanova* is a constant.

Send you back the Irishman with the thumb of the ready typist.

Yours,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

Oct. 30.'41

Dear Armstrong,

Somewhere about 60 years ago, or, perhaps, a little more, at this season of the year, I remember hearing my father (who knew such scraps of Welsh as I possess) trying to persuade an old lady (who knew more Welsh than English) that the popular Welsh festival of Oct. 31st, known as *Noscyn à gaia,* should really be pronounced *Nos galan gaeaf,* which means 'the Eve of the Calends of Winter', otherwise, the Night before Winter. The old Welshwoman laughed consumedly, and held his doctrine in profound derision; but I saw a few nights ago a 'Welsh Talk' under the latter heading. It was a noisy discussion, as it appeared, on the celebration, and there were one or two references, derisory, from the eloquent tones of the speakers, to what they did at the feast as kept in 'Scotlahnd'. Nevertheless, and in spite of all, I hope you may keep Hallowe'en cheerfully.

We are both more sorry than I can say to hear your Marlow news. I was grieved at the story you had to tell when you were here; and I am more greatly grieved now. In such a case third parties can do nothing better than be sorry. But it is a good thing that your interests are in capable hands.

But I think the great topic of consolation and hope is: that the game is a long one, and you have only just sat down at the table. I was born in 1863, you in 1912; so I can talk like that. Mark you; I don't say that it is a splendid game; but it has its great moments.

And now for nonsense. Constable is doing wonderful things with *The Handy Dickens.* Sadleir wrote triumphantly some time ago, that in spite of all difficulties, he has secured Ardizzone to do a Title - Frontispiece. I got the proof of this lately. Ardizzone has excelled himself. He has changed the title to *A Handy Dickens.* The design consists of 7 or 8 vignettes, illustrating scenes from the works of Dickens. The designs are not original; they are what I should call rough recollections of Phiz, covered with a pale pink wash. But the point about them is; that not one of them illustrated any passage or scene that occurs in the selection!

I must quote a line from a favourite classic of mine:
‘Can Limburger smell worse?’

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

April 8.’43

Dear Armstrong,

… a piece of news. In February, Colin Summerford raised the cry that my eightieth birthday was coming, and sent round the hat. The result was a fund (to which your mother most kindly contributed in your name); a very comfortable cheque, and a Lunch.

Picture: 80 candles on the board, 40 people about it: myself sitting between Lady Benson and Sir Max Beerbohm: Miss Lally chatting to Augustus John: W. W. Jacobs and Stella Gibbons to Mrs Machen. The typescript of my brief oration will be at your disposition.

Hilary has been in Italian hands since last June. One gathers that his state is tedious, but tolerable.

Now, when you write, do make the address most clear, beyond the possibility of error.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

Jan. 18.'45

Dear Armstrong,

There is a letter looking for you somewhere in the world. It excuses a long silence; and it may never find you, so I will recapitulate. I never got really well after my pneumonia experience of a year ago. Late in last autumn, the Dr had to be summoned in a hurry. He said 'tired heart', rest, etc; and so I lounge about in a dressing gown, in a hopeless sort of way. I remember very well that cheerful meeting at the King's Arms; and I hope that we shall all meet again there, and I hope that there will be something to drink. Of course, all wine has long ago been drunk: but one can often get threepenn'orth of gin or whiskey for three shillings, and a threepenny bottle of bass for 1/-.

I am sorry to hear of your loss of two old friends, Hudson I don't think I ever heard of: Sturge Moore's name I have long known. I think I saw it in Elkin Mathews' and John Lane Lists, before the days of the Bodley Head. I do not really know Max Beerbohm. I met him for a few minutes — at Theodore Wratislaw's — in 1899: he kindly supported my application for a Civil List Pension: and he was very pleasant at the'43 lunch. I was pleased to hear gentle applause from him, when I spoke of *Little Women* as 'that delightful book'. I forgot: I have another complaint/excuse. I see very badly. So last night I read *Precious Balms* — because the type is large, clear, with double leads; and I confess it did me some good to find that the *Lady's Pictorial,* in 1894, said *The Great God Pan* was an 'unmanly' book. Lately, I have been reading Maisie Ward's G. *K. Chesterton* — informing, even interesting here and there; but dullish as a whole. Norah Hoult has written a very good novel, *There Were No Windows,* a tragic book, on the last years of Violet Hunt.

Our love and best wishes,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

April 16.'45

Dear Armstrong,

Imprimis: let me tell you that my sight has become very uncertain, and so let me beg you to make your address *splendidior vitro* — clearer than glass. I am sorry to hear that Collins has proved an ingrate. Never mind: when I was about 9 years your senior, I had 4 neat MSS in a drawer, all turned down in various circumstances of disgrace. For example, Allen & Unwin (t. Fisher Unwin) told me that 'Hieroglyphics' seemed to be 'super journalism' — a phrase not intended as a compliment. I think I must have told you that 'Penguin Books' asked me to make a selection of short stories 4 or 5 years ago. The scheme was held up by Hutchinson demanding a fee of £20 for two stories. Now, I understand, Hutch has relented, and the book may go forward. Or it may not. You know the Doctor's couplet: 'Alas, what ills the scholar's life assail'. I often feel it is a great pity that 'publisher' won't scan as a substitute for 'patron' in the second verse.

I saw a very commendatory allusion to your paper on 'The Dowson Legend' in the *Sunday Times* or *Observer* yesterday. I used to hear of him now and again from Jepson — who thought drink had been his ruin.

T'otherday Cyril Clemens (Intern. Mark Twain Society) wrote asking if I had known Arthur Symons 'very well'. I told him that I was remarkable for hardly knowing any of the Nineties men at all.

I hope you will be back in October; I hope I shall be here to see; I hope there will be something to drink at the King's Arms.

Our best wishes,

Yours,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

June 12.'45

Dear Armstrong,

Not so much your 'illegible scrawl' as my bad eyesight — a dreadful drawback to life, in all sorts of ways.

am glad to say that all our long anxieties about Hilary are over. He is returned, somewhat oddly — and very happily — looking better than we have ever seen him, and as cheerful as you please. You would think that tough fighting, his walk through Italy, Italian and German prison camps made up into a famous holiday. He is not sure when he will be out of the army; but since he enlisted in the early summer of'39, I suppose he may hope for an early exit.

Can they give you some apparatus to contain and restrain that sad ankle of yours? The very knowledge that one must walk with great care is apt to lead to nervous and unsteady steps. Do remember us to your brother and his wife; I remember our very pleasant meeting at the King's Arms — how many years ago? Cyril Clemens! You put a note of exclamation. I fully assent. He seems to me to lead an absurd life; and I don't see that there can be much profit in it. And again the note of exclamation: Gerald Gould! I once read an article by him demonstrating that Keats was mistaken in supposing the nightingale to be immortal; and thence deducing that Keats had no imagination, but merely fancy.

There was a letter in the *Sunday Times* this week which almost made me snuff the battle from afar, and to remark 'Ha, ha' in the manner of Job's war horse. It was in a correspondence on the curious fact that, till quite lately, Cumberland shepherds counted their sheep by Welsh Numerals. This particular letter was from one Professor Gruffydd, M.P. (of whom I know nothing) relating that his grandmother, (*ob.* 1912) used to recite certain words — Hôn, Thôn, Fedar, Fen —— which she called 'Fairy Counting'. The Prof said absurdly, as I think, that they were of Germanic origin: I reflected that they might have fitted very well into the 'Novel of the Black Seal'. But that was finished 50 years ago.

I have heard no more from ‘Penguin Books’ about their proposed selection from my tales; but I can wait without much impatience.

I don’t think I told you that poor Ben, who used to bring our drinks at the King’s Arms, was lost on a bomber in the Mediterranean. He was an excellent fellow.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

July 31.’45

Dear Armstrong,

I don’t think I know the Goodens: I may have met them some time ago at the King’s Arms. I think Mrs G. is right about The Griffin; it is a very pleasant pub: but a long walk for me in these days. There is always something to drink there, and it is always open: whereas the King’s Arms is often shut, and when open, it is apt to say: ‘no whiskey’, ‘no bottled beer’, and so forth.

It is against such infamies and many others like them, that Britain has risen in its might, and swears it will Nationalize the Bank of England.

have always wanted to know where Shakespeare got his ‘Jack Cade’ stuff for *Henry VI, Pt 2.* From *Chronicles*? Or Tradition? There are some very moving appeals put into Jack Cade’s mouth:-

‘You shall all be free, and I will rule over you.’

‘The five-hooped pot shall have ten hoops, and I will make it felony to brew small beer.’

—— I quote from a long memory.

Journalists and friends have been working hard to portray Countess Margot. It is odd how all the stuff I have read is a failure. They say ‘scintillating’, ‘sparkling’, individual’, ‘wonderful hostess’, ‘what wit’, etc etc: but nothing comes over. It is an extremely difficult art, this of portrait painting. I often think of odd personalities that I have known — and know that I could not transfer them to the page.

I know a little of the man on whom you are lecturing, Jones, from occasional references in Boswell. He is styled in one piece of contemporary verse, ‘Harmonious Jones!’ He had what I consider the sensible habit of always propounding to himself a classic model, when he projected a new book. If, for instance, Jones thought of writing on the Governance of India, he would propose as a model, Aristotle on Politics.

Do give our cordial regards to your brother and his wife and may your release come soon. This is what the Lama said to the Cobra: but don’t say I called you one.

All the best,

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

May 3.'46

Dear Armstrong,

am very glad to hear you are back; and I suppose you are not sorry. And if you have not a roof you have a job, and the latter will provide the former in due time. Tell Aneurin to hurry up.

Will you lunch with us at the Kings Arms on Satdy, May 18 as soon after 12 as you can manage? Go into the little old room which we always frequented: you will find us there, or we will suddenly appear.

I have saved up for you a proof copy in wrapper of the little Penguin book, *Holy Terrors*. I will bring it along.

All the best,

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

Let me prepare you, for what the few years have done for me: imperfect copy, many leaves missing, poor condition, binding damaged!

High St., Old Amersham, Bucks.

Jan. 10.’47

Dear Armstrong,

I am extremely sorry to hear of that pleurisy. It is not dangerous, but I believe extremely painful and distressing, and tiresome in a very high degree. I do hope you will be soon rid of it.

Now for apology. Believe me I am profoundly grateful for all the trouble you have taken on my behalf for these many years past; but I am totally incapable of doing what you wish. I have ‘gone off’ badly since we met. That was my last visit to the Griffin. About a month ago, I went as far as the K. Arms —— and I am only just recovering. I cannot read or write, to any purpose: I am in fact a helpless invalid. But: when you are quite recovered and the airs are milder, if you and your wife will come to tea, you and I will sit in a corner and mutter for a while, and I will try to answer any questions you may put, your voice being directed to my practical ear.

Good luck to your projected edition of your poetry.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur Machen

The Criticism

Arthur Machen: A Novelist of Ecstasy and Sin by Vincent Starrett

NOTE

With singular unanimity critics for thirty years have slighted the work of Arthur Machen. A line suffices for him in Holbrook Jackson's "The Eighteen Nineties," and Mr. Blaikie-Murdoch ignores him completely in "The Renaissance of the Nineties"; yet those are the standard works on the period to which, chronologically, at least, Machen belongs. Mr. Turquet-Milnes, with greater appreciation, gives him a half-chapter in his scholarly work, "The Influence of Baudelaire," but even that is made up largely of quotations from "The Hill of Dreams," to prove Machen a descendent of Baudelaire — an error to which I subscribed until Machen himself disillusioned me, although the assertion is still partially true.

Because, in my opinion, Arthur Machen is the outstanding artist of his time, and one of the great masters of all time, I wrote the following paper, which first appeared in Reedy's *Mirror* for October 5, 1917. That issue is not now obtainable, and, as calls for it continue to come to me and to the publisher, I find ground for a belief that Machen may, at length, be coming into his own, a tardy phenomenon which I am happy to hasten so far as it lies within my power. Mr. Walter M. Hill shares this feeling and this brochure is the result.

I am indebted to Mr. William Marion Reedy for permission to reprint those parts of the article which appeared in his journal.

V.S.

ARTHUR MACHEN

SOME THIRTY ODD years ago a young man of twenty-two, the son of a Welsh clergyman, fresh from school and with his head full of a curiously occult mediaevalism, privately acquired from yellowed palimpsests and dog-eared volumes of black letter, wrote a classic. More, he had it published. Only one review copy was sent out; that was to *Le Livre*, of Paris. It fell into the hands of Octave Uzanne, who instantly ordered Rabelais and Boccaccio to “shove over” on the immortal seats and make room by their side for the author. The book was “The Chronicle of Clemendy”; the author, Arthur Machen.

Three years ago, about, not long after the great war first shook the world, a London evening newspaper published inconspicuously a purely fictional account of a supposed incident of the British retreat from Mons. It described the miraculous intervention of the English archers of Agincourt at a time when the British were sore pressed by the German hordes. Immediately, churchmen, spiritualists, and a host of others, seized upon it as an authentic record and the miracle as an omen. In the hysteria that followed, Arthur Machen, its author, found himself a talked-of man, because he wrote to the papers denying that the narrative was factual. Later, when his little volume, “The Bowmen and Other Legends of the War,” appeared in print, it met with an extraordinary and rather impertinent success.

But what had Machen been doing all those long years between 1885 and 1914?

In a day of haphazard fiction and rodomontade criticism, the advent of a master workman is likely to be unheralded, if, indeed, he is fortunate enough to find a publisher to put him between covers. Mr. Machen is not a newcomer, however, as we have seen; no immediate success with a “best seller” furnishes an incentive for a complimentary notice. He is an unknown, in spite of “Clemendy,” in spite of “The Bowmen,” in spite of everything. For thirty years he has been writing English prose, a period ample for the making of a dozen reputations of the ordinary kind, and in that time he has produced just ten books. In thirty years Harold Bindloss and Rex Beach will have written one-hundred-and-ten books and sold the moving picture rights of them all.

Of course, it is exactly because he does not write books of the ordinary kind that Arthur Machen's reputation as a writer was not made long ago. His apotheosis will begin after his death. The insectial fame of the "popular" novelist is immediate; it is born at dawn and dies at sunset. The enduring fame of the artist too often is born at sunset, but it is immortal.

More than Hawthorne or Tolstoy, Machen is a novelist of the soul. He writes of a strange borderland, lying somewhere between Dreams and Death, peopled with shades, beings, spirits, ghosts, men, women, souls — what shall we call them? — the very notion of whom stops vaguely just short of thought. He writes of the life Satyr-ic. For him Pan is not dead; his votaries still whirl through woodland windings to the mad pipe that was Syrinx, and carouse fiercely in enchanted forest grottoes (hidden somewhere, perhaps, in the fourth dimension!). His meddling with the crucibles of science is appalling in its daring, its magnificence, and its horror. Even the greater works of fictional psychology— "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," if you like — shrink before his astounding inferences and suggestions.

It is his theory that the fearful and shocking rites of the Bacchic cultus survive in this disillusioned age; that Panic lechery and wickedness did not cease with the Agony, as Mrs. Browning and others would have us believe.

Of Hawthorne, Arthur Symons wrote: "He is haunted by what is obscure, dangerous, and on the confines of good and evil." Machen crosses those perilous frontiers. He all but lifts the veil; himself, indeed, passes beyond it. But the curtain drops behind him and we, hesitating to follow, see only dimly the phantasmagoria beyond; the ecstasies of vague shapes with a shining about them, on the one hand; on the other the writhings of animate gargoyles. And we experience, I think, a distinct sense of gratitude toward this terrible guide for that we are permitted no closer view of the mysteries that seem to him so clear.

We glimpse his secrets in transfiguring flashes from afar, as Launcelot viewed the San Graal, and, like that tarnished knight, we quest vainly a tangible solution, half in apprehension, always in glamour. But it is like Galahad we must seek the eternal mysteries that obsess Arthur Machen. There is no solution but in absolution, for it is the mysteries of life and death of which he writes, and of life-in-death and death-in-life. This with particular reference to Machen’s two most important books, “The House of Souls” and “The Hill of Dreams,” in which he reaches his greatest stature as a novelist of the soul.

There are those who will call him a novelist of Sin, quibbling about a definition. With these I have no quarrel; the characterizations are synonymous. His books exhale all evil and all corruption; yet they are as pure as the fabled waters of that crystal spring De Leon sought. They are pervaded by an ever-present, intoxicating sense of sin, ravishingly beautiful, furiously Pagan, frantically lovely; but Machen is a finer and truer mystic than the two-penny occultists who guide modern spiritualistic thought. If we are to subscribe to his curious philosophy, to be discussed later, we must believe that there is no paradox in this.

But something of what we are getting at is explained in his own pages, in this opening paragraph from his story, “The White People,” in “The House of Souls”: “‘Sorcery and sanctity,’ said Ambrose, ‘these are the only realities. Each is an ecstasy, a withdrawal from the common life.’” And, a little later, in this: “‘There is something profoundly unnatural about sin … the essence of which really is in the taking of heaven by storm.’”

One gathers from a general vagueness on the subject that sin is not popular in these times. There are, of course, new sins and advanced sins and higher sins, all of which are intensely interesting. The chief puzzle to the lay mind is why they should bear these names, since they are usually neither new, advanced and high, nor particularly sinful. I am speaking of sin as an offense against the nature of things, and of evil in the soul, which has very little to do with the sins of the statute book. Sin, according to the same Ambrose I have quoted, is conceivable in the talking of animals. If a chair should walk across a room, that would be sinful, or if a tree sat down with us to afternoon tea. The savage who worships a conjurer is a far finer moralist than the civilise who suspects him — and I use the name moralist for one who has an appreciation of sin.

This is not the sin of the legal code. *Ambrose* I conceive to be Arthur Machen. There are only two realities; sorcery and sanctity — sin and sainthood — and each is an ecstasy. Arthur Machen's is the former.

Perhaps his most remarkable story — certainly I think his most terrible story, is "The Great God Pan," at first published separately with "The Inmost Light"; now occurring in "The House of Souls." It is the story of an experiment upon a girl, as a result of which, for a moment, she is permitted a sight of the Great God, beyond the veil, with shocking consequences. Yet it is told with exquisite reticence and grace, and with a plausibility that is as extraordinary as it is immoral. Here is the conclusion of that story:

"What I said Mary would see, she saw, but I forgot that no human eyes could look on such a vision with impunity. And I forgot, as I have just said, that when the house of life is thus thrown open, there may enter in that for which we have no name, and human flesh may become the veil of a horror one dare not express…. The blackened face, the hideous form upon the bed, changing and melting before your eyes from woman to man, from man to beast, and from beast to worse than beast, all the strange horror that you witnessed, surprises me but little. What you say the doctor you sent for saw and shuddered at, I noticed long ago; I knew what I had done the moment the child was born, and when it was five years old I surprised it, not once or twice, but several times, with a playmate, you may guess of what kind…. And now Helen is with her companions."

There is the very quintessence of horror in the unutterable suggestion of such passages. As for "The Hill of Dreams," I have found its reading one of the most desolate and appalling experiences in literature. Reading it, himself, years after publication, its author decided that it was a "depressing book." That is undoubtedly true, but spiritually as well as technically it marks to date the topmost pinnacle of his tormented genius. It reaches heights so rarefied that breathing literally becomes painful. To the casual reader this sounds absurd; hyperbolical if not hypocritical rant; but in a day when a majority of critics find it difficult to restrain themselves in speaking of Harold Bell Wright, and place Jeffery Farnol beside Fielding and Thackeray, one cannot go far wrong in indulging a few enthusiasms for so genuine an artist as Arthur Machen.

Of the reviewers into whose hands fell this remarkable book, in the year of its publication, 1907, only one appears to have valued it at its real worth — the editor of *The Academy*, who, carried away by the tale and its telling, turned out a bit of critical prose which might have been lifted from the book, itself. “There is something sinister in the beauty of Mr. Machen’s book,” he wrote. “It is like some strangely shaped orchid, the colour of which is fierce and terrible, and its perfume is haunting to suffocation by reason of its intolerable sweetness. The cruelty of the book is more savage than any of the cruelty which the book describes. Lucian shuddered at the boys who were deliberately hanging an ungainly puppy; he had thrashed the little ruffian who kicked the sick cat, before he wrapped himself away from the contact of such infamy in the shelter of his own imaginings. For in ‘The Hill of Dreams’ you seem to be shown a lovely, sensitive boy who has fashioned himself a white palace of beauty in his own mind. He has had time only to realize its full beauty when disease lays its cold touch upon him, and gathers him into her grasp, until he lies decaying and horrible, seeing his own decay and seeing that his decay makes the white palace foul. The boys did not chant songs as they looped the string round the neck of the uncouth puppy. Mr. Machen fashions prose out of the writhings of Lucian, who is dear to him: and his prose has the rhythmic beat of some dreadful Oriental instrument, insistent, monotonous, haunting; and still the soft tone of one careful flute sounds on, and keeps the nerves alive to the slow and growing pain of the rhythmic beat. Lucian in ecstacy of worship for the young girl whose lips have given him a new life, pressed his body against sharp thorns until the white flesh of his body was red with drops of blood. That, too, is the spirit of the book. It is like some dreadful liturgy of self-inflicted pain, set to measured music: and the cadence of that music becomes intolerable by its suave phrasing and perfect modulation. The last long chapter with its recurring themes is a masterpiece of prose, and in its way unique.”

After that, there would seem to be no need for further comment on “The Hill of Dreams.” But there is — there is!

Quite as important as what Mr. Machen says is his manner of saying it. He possesses an English prose style which in its mystical suggestion and beauty is unlike any other I have encountered. There is ecstacy in his pages.

Joris-Karl Huysmans in a really good translation suggests Machen better, perhaps, than another; both are debtors to Baudelaire.

The “ecstasy” one finds in Machen’s work (of which more anon) is due in no small degree to his beautiful English “style” — an abominable word. But Machen is no mere word-juggler. His vocabulary, while astonishing and extensive, is not affectedly so. Yet his sentences move to sonorous, half-submerged rhythms, swooning with pagan color and redolent of sacerdotal incense. What is the secret of this graceful English method? It is this: he achieves his striking results and effects through his noteworthy gift of selection and arrangement. I had reached this conclusion, I think, before I encountered a passage from “The Hill of Dreams,” which clinched it:

“Language, he understood, was chiefly important for the beauty of its sounds, by its possession of words resonant, glorious to the ear, by its capacity, when exquisitely arranged, of suggesting wonderful and indefinable impressions, perhaps more ravishing and further removed from the domain of strict thought than the impressions excited by music itself. Here lay hidden the secret of suggestion, the art of causing sensation by the use of words.”

Was it ever better expressed? He defines his method and exhibits its results at the same time. And dipping almost at random into the same volume, here is a further example of the method:

“Slowly and timidly he began to untie his boots, fumbling with the laces, and glancing all the while on every side at the ugly, misshapen trees that hedged the lawn. Not a branch was straight, not one was free, but all were interlaced and grew one about another; and just above ground, where the cankered stems joined the protuberant roots, there were forms that imitated the human shape, and faces and twining limbs that amazed him. Green mosses were hair, and tresses were stark in grey lichen; a twisted root swelled into a limb; in the hollows of the rooted bark he saw the masks of men…. As he gazed across the turf and into the thicket, the sunshine seemed really to become green, and the contrast between the bright glow poured on the lawn and the black shadows of the brake made an odd flickering light in which all the grotesque postures of stem and root began to stir; the wood was alive. The turf beneath him heaved and sunk as with the deep swell of the sea….”

And:

“He could imagine a man who was able to live on one sense while he pleased; to whom, for example, every impression of touch, taste, hearing, or seeing should be translated into odor; who at the desired kiss should be ravished with the scent of dark violets, to whom music should be the perfume of a rose garden at dawn.”

This is not prose at all, but poetry, and poetry of a high order. And it is from such beautiful manipulation of words, phrases, and rhythms that Machen attains his most clairvoyant and arresting effects in the realms of horror, dread, and terror; from the strange gesturings of trees, the glow of furnace-like clouds, the somber beauty of brooding fields, and valleys all too still, the mystery of lovely women, and all the terror of life and nature seen with the understanding eye.

So much for Arthur Machen as a novelist. It is a fascinating subject, but it is also an extensive one, and the curious, tenuous quality of his work may lead one into indiscretions.

* * *

The peculiar philosophy of Arthur Machen is set down in “Hieroglyphics” and in “Dr. Stiggins: His Views and Principles.” The first chapter of the latter work is a scathing satire on certain foibles and idiosyncracies of the American people — such as lynching, vote-buying, and food-adulteration — but as it is, on the whole, a polemical volume which, by the nature of the subjects it treats, can have less permanent interest than the author’s other work, it may be put to one side; although as a specimen of Machen’s impeccable prose it must not be ignored.

In “Hieroglyphics” he returns to those ecstasies mentioned in “The White People” and gives us further definitions. The word ecstasy is merely a symbol; it has many synonyms. It means rapture, adoration, a withdrawal from common life, the other things. “Who can furnish a precise definition of the indefinable? They (the ‘other things’) are sometimes in the song of a bird, sometimes in the whirl of a London street, sometimes hidden under a great, lonely hill. Some of us seek them with most hope and the fullest assurance in the sacring of the mass, others receive tidings through the sound of music, in the color of a picture, in the shining form of a statue, in the meditation of eternal truth.”

“Hieroglyphics” is Arthur Machen’s theory of literature, brilliantly exposited by that “cyclical mode of discoursing” that was affected by Coleridge. In it he promulgates the admirable doctrine that fine literature must be, in effect, an allegory and not the careful history of particular persons. He seeks a mark of division which is to separate fine literature from mere literature, and finds the solution in the one word ecstasy (or, if you prefer, beauty, wonder, awe, mystery, sense of the unknown, desire for the unknown), with this conclusion: “If ecstasy be present, then I say there is fine literature, if it be absent, then, in spite of all the cleverness, all the talents, all the workmanship and observation and dexterity you may show me, then, I think, we have a product (possibly a very interesting one) which is not fine literature.”

Following this reasoning, by an astonishing sequence of arguments, he proceeds to the bold experiment of proving “Pickwick” possessed of ecstasy, and “Vanity Fair” lacking it. The case is an extreme one, he admits, deliberately chosen to expound his theory to the *n*th. degree. The analytical key to the test is found in the differentiation between art and artifice, a nice problem in such extreme instances as Poe’s “Dupin” stories and Stevenson’s “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,” as Mr. Machen points out. By this ingenious method the “Odyssey,” “Oedipus,” “Morte D’Arthur,” “Kubla Khan,” “Don Quixote,” and “Rabelais” immediately are proven fine literature; a host of other esteemed works merely, if you like, good literature.

“Pantagruel” by a more delicate application of the test becomes a finer work than “Don Quixote,” and in the exposition of this dictum we come upon one of the mountain peaks of Machen’s amazing philosophy.

He begins the discussion with a jest about the enormous capacity for strong drink exhibited by *Mr. Pickwick* and his friends, and reminds us that it was the god of wine in whose honor Sophocles wrote his dramas and choral songs, who was worshipped and invoked at the Dionysiaca; and that all the drama arose from the celebration of the Bacchic mysteries. He goes on to the “Gargantua” and “Pantagruel,” which reek of wine as Dickens does of brandy and water.

The Rabelaisian history begins: “*Grandgousier estoit bon raillard en son temps, aimant à boire net*,” and ends with the Oracle of the Holy Bottle, with the word "*Trinch … un mot panomphée, celebré et entendu de toutes nations, et nous signifie, beuvez*." "And I refer you," continues Machen, "to the allocution of Bacbuc, the priestess of the Bottle, at large. 'By wine,' she says, 'is man made divine,' and I may say that if you have not got the key to these Rabelaisian riddles, much of the value — the highest value — of the book is lost to you."

Seeking the meaning of this Bacchic cultus, this apparent glorification of drunkenness in all lands and in all times, from Ancient Greece through Renascent France to Victorian England, by peoples and persons not themselves given to excess, he finds it again in the word ecstasy.

"We are to conclude that both the ancient people and the modern writers recognized ecstasy as the supreme gift and state of man, and that they chose the Vine and the juice of the Vine, as the most beautiful and significant symbol of that Power which withdraws a man from the common life and the common consciousness, and taking him from the dust of earth, sets him in high places, in the eternal world of ideas … Let us never forget that the essence of the book ('Pantagruel') is in its splendid celebration of ecstasy, under the figure of the Vine."

At this point Mr. Machen places the "key" in our hands and declines further to reveal his secrets. In *Mr. Pickwick's* overdose of milk punch we are to find, ultimately, "a clue to the labyrinth of mystic theology."

By his own test we are enabled to place Arthur Machen's greatest works on the shelf with "Don Quixote" and "Pantagruel"; by his own test we find the ecstasy of which he speaks in his own pages, under the symbol of the Vine, and under figures even more beautiful and terrible. For minor consideration he finds in Rabelais another symbolism of ecstasy:

"The shape of gauloiserie, of gross, exuberant gaiety, expressing itself by outrageous tales, outrageous words, by a very cataract of obscenity, if you please, if only you will notice how the obscenity of Rabelais transcends the obscenity of common life; his grossness is poured out in a sort of mad torrent, in a frenzy, a very passion of the unspeakable."

In Cervantes he finds the greater deftness, the finer artifice, but he believes the conception of Rabelais the higher because it is the more remote. *Pantagruel's* "more than frankness, its ebullition of grossness … is either the merest lunacy, or else it is sublime.” And the paragraph that succeeds this one in the book, perhaps it is part of the same paragraph, sums up this astonishing philosophy with a conclusion calculated to shock the Puritanic. Thus:

“Don’t you perceive that when a certain depth has been passed you begin to ascend into the heights? The Persian poet expresses the most transcendental secrets of the Divine Love by the grossest phrases of the carnal love; so Rabelais soars above the common life, above the streets and the gutter, by going far lower than the streets and the gutter: he brings before you the highest by positing that which is lower than the lowest, and if you have the prepared, initiated mind, a Rabelaisian ‘list’ is the best preface to the angelic song. (!) All this may strike you as extreme paradox, but it has the disadvantage of being true, and perhaps you may assure yourself of its truth by recollecting the converse proposition — that it is when one is absorbed in the highest emotions that the most degrading images will intrude themselves.”

And so on…. The sense of the futility almost of attempting to explain Machen becomes more pronounced as I progress. You will have to read him. You will find his books (if you are fortunate) in a murky corner of some obscure second-hand bookshop.

Arthur Machen was born in Wales in 1863. He is married and has two children. That is an astonishing thought, after reading “The Inmost Light.” It is surprising indeed to learn that he was *born*. He is High Church, “with no particular respect for the Archbishop of Canterbury,” and necessarily subconsciously Catholic, as must be all those “lonely, awful souls” who write ecstasy across the world. He hates puritanism with a sturdier hatred than inspires Chesterton; for a brilliant exposition of this aversion I commend readers to his mocking introduction to “The House of Souls.” That work, “The Hill of Dreams,” and “Hieroglyphics” were written between 1890 and 1900, after which their author turned strolling player and alternated for a time between the smartest theatres in London and the shabbiest music halls in London’s East End. For the last six years or so he has been a descriptive writer on the London *Evening News*.

His works not before mentioned comprise a translation (the best) of the “Heptameron”; “Fantastic Tales,” a collection of mediaeval whimsies, partly translated and partly original and altogether Rabelaisian and delightful; “The Terror,” a “shilling shocker” (his own characterization), but a finer work withal than most of the “literature” of the day, and “The Great Return,” an extraordinary short tale which may find place some day in another such collection as “The House of Souls.”

I have mentioned “The Chronicle of Clemendy,” calling it a classic, and something further should be said about that astonishing book. It is the Welsh “Heptameron,” a chronicle of amorous intrigue, joyous drunkenness, and knightly endeavor second to none in the brief muster of the world’s greatest classics. In it there is the veritable flavour of mediaeval record. Somewhat less outspoken than Balzac in his “Droll Stories,” and less verbose than Boccaccio, Machen proves himself the peer of either in gay, irresponsible, diverting, unflagging invention, while his diction is lovelier than that of any of his forerunners, including the nameless authors of those rich Arabian tapestries which were the parent tales of all mediaeval and modern facetiae.

The day is coming when a number of serious charges will be laid against us who live in this generation, and some severe questions asked, and the fact that we will be dead, most of us, when the future fires its broadside, has nothing at all to do with the case.

We are going to be asked, *post-mortem*, why we allowed Ambrose Bierce to vanish from our midst, unnoticed and unsought, after ignoring him shamefully throughout his career; why Stephen Crane, after a few flamboyant reviews, was so quickly forgotten at death; why Richard Middleton was permitted to swallow his poison at Brussels; why W.C. Morrow and Walter Blackburn Harte were in our day known only to the initiated, discriminating few; their fine, golden books merely rare “items” for the collector. Among other things, posterity is going to demand of us why, when the opportunity was ours, we did not open our hearts to Arthur Machen and name him among the very great.

I have let this last assertion stand as part of the original article, although Mr. Machen writes me that I am in error. “I never read a line of Baudelaire,” he says, “but I have read deeply in Poe, who, I believe, derives largely from Baudelaire.” Of course, it is the other way ‘round, Baudelaire derives from Poe, but my own assumption is rendered clear. — V.S.

THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE BARD

In the darkness of old age let not my memory
fail:
Let me not forget to celebrate the beloved land
of Gwent.
If they imprison me in a deep place, in a house
of pestilence,
Still shall I be free, remembering the sunshine
upon Mynydd Maen.
There have I listened to the song of the lark,
my soul has ascended with the song of the
little bird:
The great white clouds were the ships of my
spirit, sailing to the haven of the Almighty.
Equally to be held in honour is the site of the
Great Mountain.
Adorned with the gushing of many waters —
sweet is the shade of its hazel thickets.
There a treasure is preserved which I will not
celebrate;
It is glorious and deeply concealed.
If Teils should return, if happiness were restored
to the Cymri,
Dewi and Dyfrig should serve his Mass; then a
great marvel would be made visible.
O blessed and miraculous work! then should my
bliss be as the joy of angels.
I had rather behold this offering than kiss the
twin lips of dark Gwenllian.
Dear my land of Gwent: *O quam dilecta tabernacula*.
Thy rivers are like precious golden streams of
Paradise, thy hills are as the Mount Syon.
Better a grave on Twyn Barlwm than a throne
in the palace of the Saxons at Caer-Ludd.

ARTHUR MACHEN

THE PRAISE OF MYFANWY

O gift of the everlasting:
O wonderful and hidden mystery.
Many secrets have been vouchsafed to me,
I have been long acquainted with the wisdom
of the trees;
Ash and oak and elm have communicated to me
from my boyhood,
The birch and the hazel and all the trees of
the greenwood have not been dumb.
There is a caldron rimmed with pearls of whose
gifts I am not ignorant;
I will speak little of it; its treasures are known
to the Bards.
Many went on the search of Caer-Pedryfan,
Seven alone returned with Arthur, but my spirit
was present.
Seven are the apple-trees in a beautiful orchard;
I have eaten of their fruit which is not bestowed
on Saxons.
I am not ignorant of a Head which is glorious
and venerable;
It made perpetual entertainment for the warriors,
their joys would have been immortal;
If they had not opened the door of the south,
they would have feasted for ever,
Listening to the song of the fairy Birds of
Rhiannon.
Let not anyone instruct me concerning the Glassy
Isle;
In the garments of the saints who returned from
it were rich odours of Paradise.
All this I knew, and yet my knowledge was
ignorance.
For one day, as I walked by Caer-rhiu in the

principal forest of Gwent,
I saw golden Myfanwy as she bathed in the brook Tarogi,
Her hair flowed about her; Arthur’s crown had dissolved into a shining mist.
I gazed into her blue eyes as it were into twin heavens,
All the parts of her body were adornments and miracles.
O gift of the everlasting:
O wonderful and hidden mystery:
When I embraced Myfanwy a moment became immortality.

ARTHUR MACHEN

The Autobiography

Arthur Machen, c. 1905

Far Off Things

This is the first of three autobiographical volumes written by Machen. It was first published in 1922 and covers his early life, up to the mid-1880s. His childhood in Gwent, South Wales is evocatively conveyed, especially the lyrical passages detailing Machen's appreciation of the Welsh countryside.

The publication of his autobiography is testament to the new appetite for Machen's work that emerged in the 1920s. Indeed, after the war Machen found himself something of a literary celebrity, especially among American readers, who had rediscovered the decadent style in which he so excelled and who created a ready audience for his later work.

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DEDICATION

TO ALFRED TURNER

THIS IS A book, my dear Turner, which I had in my heart to write for many years. The thought of it came to me with that other thought that I was growing — rather, grown — old; that the curtain had definitely been rung down on all the days of my youth. And so I got into the way of looking back, of recalling the far gone times and suns of the 'seventies and early 'eighties when the scene of my life was being set. I made up my mind that I would write about it all — some day.

Some day would undoubtedly have been Never; if it had not been for you. I had not spoken of the projected book to you or anyone else; but one fine morning in 1915 you ordered me to write it! You were then, you will remember, editing the London Evening News, and as a reporter on your staff I had nothing to do but to obey. The book was written, appeared in the paper as "The Confessions of a Literary Man," and now reappears as "Far Off Things."

So far, good. I enjoyed writing the book enormously; and, I frankly confess, I enjoy reading it. In a word, I am not grumbling. But there is one little point that I do not mean to neglect. My complacent views as to "Far Off Things" may not be shared by other and, possibly, more competent judges. And what I want to impress on you is this: that if there is to be trouble, "you are going to have your share of it." You ordered the book to be written, you printed it in your paper, you have urged me to reprint it, not once or twice, but again and again.

Now, you remember Johnson on advising an author to print his book. "This author," said the Doctor, "when mankind are hunting him with a canister at his tail can say, 'I would not have published, had not Johnson, or Reynolds, or Musgrave, or some other good judge commended the work!'"

Now you see the purpose of this Epistle Dedicatory. It is to make it quite clear that, if there is to be any talk of canisters and tails, the order will run:

“Canisters for two!”

Arthur Machen

Chapter I

ONE NIGHT A year or so ago I was the guest of a famous literary society. This society, or club, it is well known, believes in celebrating literature — and all sorts of other things — in a thoroughly agreeable and human fashion. It meets not in any gloomy hall or lecture room, it has no gritty apparatus of blackboard, chalk, and bleared water-bottle. It summons its members and its guests to a well-known restaurant of the West End, it gives them red and white roses for their button-holes, and sets them down to an excellent dinner and good red wine at a gaily decked table, flower garlanded, luminous with many starry lamps.

Well, as I say, I found myself on a certain night a partaker of all this cheerfulness. I was one guest among many; there were explorers and ambassadors and great scientific personages and judges, and the author who has given the world the best laughter that it has enjoyed since Dickens died: in a word, I was in much more distinguished company than that to which I am accustomed. And after dinner the Persians (as I will call them) have a kindly and courteous custom of praising their guests; and to my astonishment and delight the speaker brought me into his oration and said the kindest and most glowing things imaginable about a translation I once made of the “Heptameron” of Margaret of Navarre. I was heartily pleased; I hold with Foker in “Pendennis” that every fellow likes a hand. Praise is grateful, especially when there has not been too much of it; but it is not to record my self-complacence that I have told this incident of the Persian banquet. As I sat at the board and heard the speaker’s kindly compliments, I was visited for a twinkling part of a moment by a vision; by such a vision as they say comes to the spiritual eyes of drowning men as they sink through the green water. The scene about me was such as one will find nowhere else but in London. The multitude of lights, the decoration of the great room and the tables, above all the nature of the company and something in the very air of the place; all these were metropolitan in the sense in which the word is opposed to provincial. This is a subtlety which the provinces cannot understand, and it is natural enough that they are unable to do so. The big town in the Midlands or the North will tell you of its picture galleries, of its classical concerts, and of the serious books taken out in great numbers from its flourishing free libraries. It does not see, and, probably, will never see, that none of these things is to the point.

Well, from the heart of this London atmosphere I was suddenly transported in my vision to a darkling, solitary country lane as the dusk of a November evening closed upon it thirty long years before. And, as I think that the pure provincial can never understand the quiddity or essence of London, so I believe that for the born Londoner the country ever remains an incredible mystery. He knows that it is there — somewhere — but he has no true vision of it. In spite of himself he Londonises it, suburbanises it; he sticks a gas lamp or two in the lanes, dots some largish villas of red brick beside them, and extends the District or the Metropolitan to within easy distance of the dark wood. But here was I carried from luminous Oxford Street to the old deep lane in Gwent, which is on the borders of Wales. Nothing that a Londoner would call a town within eight miles, deep silence, deep stillness everywhere; hills and dark wintry woods growing dim in the twilight, the mountain to the west a vague, huge mass against a faint afterlight of the dead day, grey and heavy clouds massed over all the sky. I saw myself, a lad of twenty-one or thereabouts, strolling along this solitary lane on a daily errand, bound for a point about a mile from the rectory. Here a footpath over the fields crossed the road, and by the stile I would wait for the postman. I would hear him coming from far away, for he blew a horn as he walked, so that people in the scattered farms might come out with their letters if they had any. I lounged on the stile and waited, and when the postman came I would give him my packet — the day's portion of "copy" of that Heptameron translation that I was then making and sending to the publisher in York Street, Covent Garden. The postman would put the parcel in his bag, cross the road, and go striding off into the dim country beyond, finding his way on a track that no townsman could see, by field and wood and marshy places, crossing the Canthwr brook by a narrow plank, coming out somewhere on the Llanfrechfa road, and so entering at last Caerleon-on-Usk, the little silent, deserted village that was once the golden Isca of the Roman legions, that is golden for ever and immortal in the romances of King Arthur and the Graal and the Round Table.

So, in an instant’s time, I journeyed from the lighted room in the big Oxford Street restaurant to the darkening lane in far-away Gwent, in far-away years. I gathered anew for that little while the savour of the autumnal wood beside which the boy of thirty years before was walking, and also the savour of his long-forgotten labours, of his old dreams of life and of letters. The speech and the dream came to an end: and the man on the other side of the table, who is probably the most skilful and witty writer of musical comedy “lyrics” in England, was saying that once on a time he had tried to write real poetry.

I shall always esteem it as the greatest piece of fortune that has fallen to me, that I was born in that noble, fallen Caerleon-on-Usk, in the heart of Gwent. My greatest fortune, I mean, from that point of view which I now more especially have in mind, the career of letters. For the older I grow the more firmly am I convinced that anything which I may have accomplished in literature is due to the fact that when my eyes were first opened in earliest childhood they had before them the vision of an enchanted land. As soon as I saw anything I saw Twyn Barlwm, that mystic tumulus, the memorial of peoples that dwelt in that region before the Celts left the Land of Summer. This guarded the southern limit of the great mountain wall in the west; a little northward was Mynydd Maen — the Mountain of the Stone — a giant, rounded billow; and still to the north mountains, and on fair, clear days one could see the pointed summit of the Holy Mountain by Abergavenny. It would shine, I remember, a pure blue in the far sunshine; it was a mountain peak in a fairy tale. And then to eastward the bedroom window of Llanddewi Rectory looked over hill and valley, over high woods, quivering with leafage like the beloved Zacynthus of Ulysses, away to the forest of Wentwood, to the church tower on the hill above Caerleon. Through a cleft one might see now and again a bright yellow glint of the Severn Sea, and the cliffs of Somerset beyond. And hardly a house in sight in all the landscape, look where you would. Here the gable of a barn, here a glint of a whitewashed farm-house, here blue wood smoke rising from an orchard grove, where an old cottage was snugly hidden; but only so much if you knew where to look. And of nights, when the dusk fell and the farmer went his rounds, you might chance to see his lantern glimmering a very spark on the hillside. This was all that showed in a vague, dark world; and the only sounds were the faint distant barking of the sheepdog and the melancholy cry of the owls from the border of the brake.

I believe that I have seen at all events the main streets of London at every hour of the day and night. I have viewed, for example, Leicester Square between four and five of a summer morning, and have marvelled at its dismal disarray and quite miserable shabbiness of aspect. With the pure morning sun shining upon its gay places in clear splendour they are infinitely more "shocking" than they can appear at night-time to the narrowest of provincials. The Strand is a solemn street at two in the morning, Holborn has a certain vastness and windiness about it as the sky grows from black to grey, and at six the residential quarters seem full of houses of mourning, their white blinds most strictly drawn.

And at one time I had almost as full a knowledge of my native country, though not so much with respect to the category of time as to that of place. I have, it is true, seen the sky above the dark stretch of Wentwood Forest redden to the dawn, and I have lost my way and strayed in a very maze of unknown brooks and hills and woods and wild lands in the blackest hours after midnight. But the habits of the country, unlike those of London, generally fail to give reason or excuse for night wanderings. If you stayed in friendly and hospitable company much after ten of the night, it was usually a case of the spare room, newly aired sheets, one pipe more, and so to bed. This at all events on nights that were very black or tempestuous with wind and rain; for on such nights it is difficult to make out the faint footpath from stile to stile, and only the surest sense of locality will enable one to strike the felled tree or the narrow plank that, hidden by a dense growth of alders, crosses the winding of the brook. But from very early years indeed I became an enchanted student of the daylight country, which, I think, for me never was illuminated by common daylight, but rather by suns that rose from the holy seas of faery and sank down behind magic hills. I was an only child, and as soon as I could walk beyond the limits of the fields and orchards about the rectory, my father would take me with him on such parish visitations as were fairly within the stretch and strength of short legs. Indeed, I began my peregrinations at a still earlier period, for I can remember a visit to the mill, that was paid when I was a passenger in a perambulator, and aged, I suppose, about three.

Later these travels became more frequent, and I have recollections, still fresh and pleasant, of sitting still in old farm-house kitchens while my father was about his ghostly business. Always, even in the full blaze of summer, there would be a glint of fire on the cavernous hearth and a faint blue spire of wood smoke mounting the huge hollow of the chimney. The smell of this wood smoke scented and sweetened the air, in which there was usually a hint of apples stored away in loft or cellar, somewhere behind one or other of the black tarred doors that opened from every wall in the long, low room, and here and there bevelled what should have been an angle. By the hearth stood a big curving settle on one side, on the other there was usually an armchair for the farmer's wife. One small window, with square leaded panes, with solid oaken mullions, looked out on the garden, and so thick were the walls — they were always heavily "battered," or sloped outward towards the ground — that there was a depth of at least three feet between the window panes and the inner wall of the room. There was whitewash within and without, renewed every spring, and it is one of the most beautiful circumstances in Gwent that this custom of whitewash prevails. To look up to a mountain side and to see the pure white of the walls of the farms and cottages established there, fronting great winds, but nestling too in a shelter of tossing trees, gives me even now the keenest pleasure. And if on a summer day one climbs up amidst those brave winds and looks down on all the rolling land of Gwent, it is dotted with these white farms, that shine radiant in the sunlight.

And these farm-house kitchens were floored with stone, which was so purely and exquisitely kept that people said "one could eat bread and butter off Mrs. Morgan's kitchen floor." Such a place was, and still is, my notion of comfort, of the material surroundings which are fit to house a man. Now and then, in these later days, my business — never my pleasure — calls me to our Hôtel Glorieux or our Hôtel Splendide; to the places where the rooms are fifty feet high, where the walls are marble, and mirrors and gilding, where there are flowery carpets and Louis Quinze chairs and the true American heat. I think then of the kitchens of Pantyreos and Penyrhaul, as Israel in exile remembered Syon.

But it is not in summer-time that it is best to remember these places, excellent though the thought of their coolness and refreshment may be. I like to think of them as set in a framework of late autumn or deep mid-winter. I will be more curious than De Quincey: no mere bitter wind or frost, not even snow will serve my turn, though each of these has its admirable uses.

But let me have a night late in November, let us say. Every leaf has long been down, save that the beech hedgerow in the sheltered forest road will keep its tawny copper all through the winter. Rain has been sweeping along the valleys for days past in giant misty pillars, the brooks are bank high with red, foaming water; down every steep field little hedgerow streams come pouring. In the farmyards the men go about their work clad in sacks, and if they may will shelter under penthouses and find work to do in the barns.

Give me a night in the midst of such weather, and then think of the farm atop the hill, to which two good miles of deep, wandering lane go climbing, and mix the rain with a great wind from the mountain: and then think of entering the place which I have described, set now for the old act of winter. The green shutters are close fastened without the window, the settle is curved about the hearth, and that great cavern is ablaze and glorious with heaped wood and coals, and the white walls golden with the light of the leaping flames. And those within can hear the rain dashing upon shutter and upon closed door, and the fire hisses now and again as stray drops fall down the chimney; and the great wind shakes the trees and goes roaring down the hillside to the valley and moans and mutters about the housetop.

A man will leave his place, snug in shelter, in the deepest glow of the fire, and go out for a moment and open but a little of the door in the porch and see all the world black and wild and wet, and then come back to the light and heat and thank God for his home, wondering whether any are still abroad on such a night of tempest.

Looking back on my native country as I first remember it, I have often regretted that I was not born say twenty or thirty years earlier. I should then have seen more of a singular social process, which I can only call the Passing of the Gentry. In my father’s parish this had taken place very long before my day, or his either. Indeed, I am not quite sure that any armigerous families had ever inhabited Llanddewi; though I have a dim notion that certain old farm-houses were pointed out to me as having been “gentlemen’s houses.” But an adjoining parish had once held three very ancient families of small gentry. One was still in existence well within my recollection, another became extinct in the legitimate line soon after I was born, and the third had been merged in other and larger inheritances.

There were no Perrotts left, and their house had been "restored," and was occupied as a farm. I often sat under their memorials in the little church, and admired their arms, three golden pears, and their crest, a parrot; altogether a pretty example of *heraldia cantans*, or punning heraldry. Of the other two houses one was a pleasant, rambling, mouldering place, yellow-washed, verandahed, and on the whole more like a *petit manoir* in Touraine than a country house in England. The third mansion was a sixteenth-century house built in the L shape, and here dwelt in my childhood the last of the ancient gentry of the place.

Even he was descended from the old family in the female line. The old race had been named Meyrick, and they had given land in the thirteenth century that a light might burn before the altar of a neighbouring church for ever. The family affirmed that at one time they had owned all the land that could be seen from a certain high place near their house, and very possibly the tradition was a true one. They had remained faithful to the Latin Church through all the troubles — up to the year of Napoleon Buonaparte's sacring as Emperor by the Pope in Notre-Dame. And when the reigning squire of Lansoar heard the news he raged with fury, and saying, as the story goes, "Damn such a Pope as that!" left the Roman Church for ever. His grandson, whom I knew, always read the Bible in the Douay version and praised the Papists. Indeed, he used often to end up, addressing my father, "In fact they tell me that you're more than half a Roman Catholic yourself, and I like you none the worse for it!"

He was an extraordinary old man. In his youth he had been busy one morning packing up his portmanteau to go to Oxford. News came that his father was ruined; it was probably in the wild smash of speculation that brought down Sir Walter Scott. The young man quietly unpacked his portmanteau and took possession of the mill, not many yards from his own door. He ground corn for the farmers; he did well; he moved into Newport, and became, I think, an importer of Irish butter. Probably, also, he had his share in the industrial developments of Glamorganshire and Monmouthshire, then at the height of their prosperity. At any rate in twenty years or so the fortunes of the old house were redeemed. The drawing-room of Lansoar had been used as a barn for storing corn; in my day it was the most gracious and grave room that I have ever seen. The old family portraits were back on the walls, the old tapestried chairs were in their places, there was not a thing in the room less than a hundred years old, and the squire sat beside his hearth, looking — as I have found out since those days — exactly like Henry IV of France.

He had travelled a good deal in his time, and was supposed to have had his fancy taken by the clothes he had seen worn by the Heidelberg students. So he wore an odd sort of vestment striped with black and dull red, and gathered in with a belt of the same stuff. We called it a blouse, but it must have been something of the shape of a Norfolk jacket. In the evening he would put on a black velvet coat which, as he told me, he got from Poole's at the price of five guineas. Smoking he abominated, and it was never allowed at Lansoar, save when Mr. Williams of Llangibby was a guest.

The owner of Lansoar was in many ways a kindly and benevolent old gentleman, but I think we in the country were chiefly proud of his temper. It was said to be terrific, even in a land of furious, quickly-raised rages. People told how they had seen the old man's white moustache bristling up to his eyes; this was a sign that the fire was kindled. And, as I once heard him say, "the Meyricks always get white with love and hate." It was said that his sister was the only person who met him on something like equal terms. She was an ancient gentlewoman with a tremendous aquiline nose and was more like a marquise of 1793 going proudly to instant execution than can possibly be imagined. She and her brother differed — it is much too mild a word, I am sure — so fiercely as to what were the true armorial bearings of the family that when these were to be emblazoned above the dining-room hearth a compromise had to be arranged, and two shields were painted, one on each side.

I am sorry that I was too young to observe Lansoar and its ways with intelligent interest. The people that lived there were of a race and sort that have now perished utterly out of the land; there never will be such people again. But I was banished from Lansoar for the last year or two of the old squire's life. I had left school and was at a loose end at home, and I heard I had fallen under heavy displeasure. It seemed that the descendant of the Meyricks had known a doctor who had lived in Paris on five shillings a week at the beginning of the nineteenth century; he wished to know why I was not living in London on five shillings a week in 1880. The answer would have been that I had neither five shillings nor five pence a week; but one did not answer Mr. James of Lansoar.

I am heartily sorry that the class which he represented has perished. I am sorry to think of all their houses scattered over Gwent; now mere memorials of something that is done for ever and ended. One came upon these houses in every other valley, on every other hillside, looking pleasantly towards the setting sun. They are noble old places, even though they are noble in a humble way; there are no Haddon Halls in Gwent. But these old homes of the small gentry of the borderland — now for the most part used as farm-houses — show their lineage in the dignity of their proportions, in the carved armorial bearings of their porches. The pride of race that belonged to the Morgans, Herberts, Meyricks that once lived in them has passed into their stones, and still shines there.

There is a great book that I am hoping to write one of these fine days. I have been hoping to write it, I may say, since 1898, or '99, and somewhere about the latter year I did write as many as a dozen pages. The *magnum opus* so far conducted did not wholly displease me, and yet it was not good enough to urge me forward in the task. And so it has languished ever since then, and I am afraid I have lost the MSS. that contained all that there was of it long ago. Seriously, of course, it would not have been a great book if it had been ever so prosperously continued and ended; but it would have been at least a curious book, and even now I feel conscious of warm desire at the thought of writing it — some day. For the idea of it came to me as follows:

I had been thinking at the old century end of the work that I had done in the fifteen years or so before, and it suddenly dawned upon me that this work, pretty good or pretty bad, or as it may be, had all been the expression of one formula, one endeavour. What I had been doing was this: I had been inventing tales in which and by which I had tried to realise my boyish impressions of that wonderful magic Gwent. Say that I had walked and wandered by unknown roads, and suddenly, after climbing a gentle hill, had seen before me for the first time the valley of the Usk, just above Newbridge. I think it was on one of those strange days of summer when the sky is at once grey and luminous that I achieved this adventure. There are no clouds in the upper air, the sky is simply covered with a veil which is, as

I say, both grey and luminous, and there is no breath of wind, and every leaf is still.

But now and again as the day goes on the veil will brighten, and the sun almost appear; and then here and there in the woods it is as if white moons were descending. On such a day, then, I saw that wonderful and most lovely valley; the Usk, here purged of its muddy tidal waters, now like the sky, grey and silvery and luminous, winding in mystic esses, and the dense forest bending down to it, and the grey stone bridge crossing it. Down the valley in the distance was Caerleon-on-Usk; over the hill, somewhere in the lower slopes of the forest, Caerwent, also a Roman city, was buried in the earth, and gave up now and again strange relics — fragments of the temple of “Nodens, god of the depths.” I saw the lonely house between the dark forest and the silver river, and years after I wrote “The Great God Pan,” an endeavour to pass on the vague, indefinable sense of awe and mystery and terror that I had received.

This, then, was my process: to invent a story which would recreate those vague impressions of wonder and awe and mystery that I myself had received from the form and shape of the land of my boyhood and youth; and as I thought over this and meditated on the futility — or comparative futility — of the plot, however ingenious, which did not exist to express emotions of one kind or another, it struck me that it might be possible to reverse the process. Could one describe hills and valleys, woods and rivers, sunrise and sunset, buried temples and mouldering Roman walls so that a story should be suggested to the reader? Not, of course, a story of material incidents, not a story with a plot in the ordinary sense of the term, but an interior tale of the soul and its emotions; could such a tale be suggested in the way I have indicated? Such is to be the plan of the “great” book which is not yet written. I mention it here chiefly because I would lay stress on my doctrine that in the world of imagination the child is indeed father of the man, that the man is nothing more than the child with an improved understanding certainly, with all sorts of technical advantages in the way of information and in the arts of expression, but, on the other hand, with the disadvantages of a dimmed imaginative eye and a weakened vision. There have been a few men who have kept the awe and the surmise of earlier years and have added to those miraculous gifts the acquired accomplishments of age and instruction; and these are the only men who are entitled to the name of genius. I have said already that in my boyhood and youth I was a deep and learned student of the country about my home, and that I always saw it as a kind of fairyland. And, cross-examining my memory, I find that I have in no way exaggerated or overcoloured these early and earliest impressions. Fairyland is too precise a word; I would rather say that I saw everything in something of the spirit in which the first explorers gazed on the tropical luxuriance and strangeness of the South American forests, on the rock cities of Peru, on the unconjectured seas that burst upon them from that peak in Darien, on the wholly unimagined splendours of the Mexican monarchy. So it was with me as a child. I came into a strange country, and strange it ever remained to me, so that when I left it for ever there were still hills within sight and yet untrodden, lanes and paths of which I knew the beginning but not the end. For it is to be understood that country folk are in this respect like Londoners: that they have their customary tracks and ways which lead more or less to some end or other; it is only occasionally that either goes out determined not to find his way but to lose it, to stray for the very sake of straying. Thus I walked many times in Wentwood and became familiar with the Roman road that passes for some distance along the summit of that ancient forest, but only once, I think, did I set out from the yellow verge of the Severn and cross the level Moors — a belt of fen country that might well lie between Ely and Brandon; really, no doubt "y môr," the sea — and wonder for a while at the bastioned and battlemented ruins of Caldicot Castle, and so mount up by the outer hills and woods of the forest, through Caerwent, past the Foresters' Oaks, a grove of trees that were almost awful in the magnificence of their age and their decay, and so climb to the ridge and look down on the Usk and the more familiar regions to the west.

And, as you may judge, it was only the knowledge that one must not frighten one's family out of its wits and that camping out in forests without food or drink is highly inconvenient that kept me on this comparatively straight path. So all the while, as I paced an unknown way, yet more unknowns were beckoning to me on right and left. Paths full of promise allured me into green depths, the wildest heights urged me to attempt them, cottages in orchard dells seemed so isolated from all the world that they and theirs must be a part of enchantment. And so I crossed Wentwood, and felt not that I knew it, but that it was hardly to be known.

I have already mentioned, I think, that I was an only child. Add to this statement that I had no little cousins available as play-fellows, some of these being domiciled in Anglesea, others in London; that it was only by the merest chance and on the rarest occasions that I ever saw any children at all, and I have given some notion of the extreme solitude of my upbringing. I grew up, therefore, all alone so far as other children were concerned, and though I went to school, school did not seem to make much difference to my habit of mind. I was eleven years old at the time, and I suppose I was "set" to loneliness. I passed the term as a sort of interlude amongst strangers, and came home to my friendly lanes, to my deep and shadowy and secret valleys, as a man returns to his dear ones and his dear native fields after exile amongst aliens and outlanders.

I came back, then, again and again to solitude. There were no children's parties for me, no cricket, no football, and I was heartily glad of it, for I should have abhorred all these diversions with shudderings of body and spirit. My father and mother apart, I loved to be by myself, with unlimited leisure for mooning and loafing and roaming and wandering from lane to lane, from wood to wood. Constantly I seemed to be finding new, hitherto unsuspected tracks, to be emerging from deep lanes and climbing hills so far but seen from the distance, matters of surmise, and now trodden and found to be Darien peaks giving an outlook upon strange worlds of river and forest and bracken-covered slope. Wondering at these things, I never ceased to wonder; and even when I knew a certain path and became familiar with it I never lost my sense of its marvels, as they appeared to me.

I have read curious and perplexed commentaries on that place in Sir Thomas Browne in which he declares his life up to the period of the "Religio Medici" to have been "a miracle of thirty years, which to relate were not a history, but a piece of poetry." Dr. Johnson, summing up the known events of Browne's early life, finds therein nothing in the least miraculous; Southey says the miracle was the great writer's preservation from atheism; Leslie Stephen considers that the strangeness "consists rather in Browne's view of his own history than in any unusual phenomena." "View of his own history" seems a little vague; but however critical sagacity may determine the sense of the passage, I would very willingly adopt it to describe these early years of mine, spent in that rectory amongst the wild hills of Gwent. Of my private opinion, I think there can be little doubt that when Sir Thomas Browne used the word “miraculous” he was thinking not of miracles in the accepted sense as things done contrary to the generally observed laws of nature, but rather of his vision of the world, of his sense of a constant wonder latent in all things. Stevenson, I believe, had some sense of this doctrine as applied to landscape, at least, when he said that there were certain scenes — I forget how he particularised them — which demanded their stories, which cried out, as it were, to have tales indited to fit their singular aspects. This, I think I have shown, is a crude analysis. I should put it thus: this group of pines, this lonely shore, or whatever the scene may be, has made the soul thrill with an emotion intense but vague in the sense in which music is vague; and the man of letters does his best to realise — rather, perhaps, to actualise — this emotion by inventing a tale about the pines or the sands. Such at all events was my state through all the years of boyhood and of youth: everything to me was wonderful, everything visible was the veil of an invisible secret. Before an oddly shaped stone I was ready to fall into a sort of reverie or meditation, as if it had been a fragment of paradise or fairyland. There was a certain herb of the fields that grew plentifully in Gwent, that even now I cannot regard without a kind of reverence; it bears a spire of small yellow blossoms, and its leaves when crushed give out a very pungent, aromatic odour. This odour was to me a separate revelation or mystery, as if no one in the world had smelt it but myself, and I ceased not to admire even when a countryman told me that it was good for stone, if you gathered it “under the planet Juniper.”

And here, may I say in passing, that in my opinion the country parson, with all the black-coated class, knows next to nothing of the true minds of the country folk. I feel certain that my father, if asked by a Royal Commission or some such valuable body, “What influence has astrology on your parishioners?” would have answered: “They have never heard of such a thing.” In later years I have wondered as to the possible fields which extended beyond the bounds of our ignorance. I have wondered, for example, whether, by any possibility, there were waxen men, with pins in them, hidden in very secret nooks in any of the Llanddewi cottages.

But this is a mere side-issue. To return to my topic, to that attitude of the child-mind which almost says in its heart, “things are because they are wonderful," I am reminded of one of the secret societies with which I have had the pleasure of being connected. This particular society issued a little MS. volume of instructions to those who were to be initiated, and amongst these instructions was the note: "remember that nothing exists which is not God." "How can I possibly realise that?" I said to one of the members of the society. "When I read it I was looking at the tiles on each side of my fireplace in Gray's Inn, and they are of the beastliest design it is possible to imagine. I really cannot see anything of Divinity in those tiles." I do not remember how my objection was met; I don't think it was met. But, looking back, I believe that, as a child, I realised something of the spirit of the mystic injunction. Everywhere, through the darkness and the mists of the childish understanding, and yet by the light of the child's illumination, I saw *latens deitas*; the whole earth, down to the very pebbles, was but the veil of a quickening and adorable mystery. Hazlitt said that the man of genius spent his whole life in telling the world what he had known himself when he was eighteen. Waiving utterly — I am sorry to say — the title of man of genius, I would reaffirm Hazlitt's proposition on lower grounds. I would say that he who has any traffic with the affairs of the imagination has found out all the wisdom that he will ever know, in this life at all events, by the age of eighteen or thereabouts. And it is probable that Hazlitt, though he never dreamed of it, was but re-expressing those sentences in the Holy Gospels which deal with the intimate relationship between children and "the Kingdom of Heaven." In the popular conception, of course, both amongst priests and people, these texts are understood to refer to the innocence of childhood. But a little reflection will satisfy anyone that in the true sense of the word children are only innocent as a stone is innocent, as a stick is innocent; that is, they are incapable of committing the special offences which to our modern and utterly degraded system of popular ethics constitute the whole matter of morality and immorality. I remember a few years ago reading how an illustrious Primitive Methodist testified on the sacred mount of Primitive Methodism at some anniversary of the society. He said that his old grandmother had implored him when he was a boy never to drink, never to gamble, never to break the Sabbath, and, he concluded triumphantly, "I have never done any of these things."

"Therefore I am a good Christian" is the conclusion evidently suggested. This poor man, it may be said, knew no better, but I am much mistaken if the majority of our Anglican clergy would not accept his statement as a good confession of the faith. The New Testament for all these people has been written in vain; they will still believe that a good Christian is one who drinks a cup of cocoa at 9:30 and is in bed by ten sharp. And to such persons, of course, the texts which assert the necessity of becoming like little children if we would enter the Kingdom of Heaven are clear enough; it is a mere matter of early hours and plenty of cocoa — or, perhaps, of warm bread and milk. But, personally, I cannot at all symbolise with them. I look back to the time when the mountain and the tiny shining stone, the flower, and the brook were all alike signs and evidences of an ineffable mystery and beauty. I see myself all alone in the valley, under hanging woods, of a still summer evening, entranced, wondering what the secret was that was here almost told, and then, I am persuaded, I came near to the spirit of St. Thomas Aquinas: *Adoro te devote latens Deitas*.

There comes to me from very long ago the memory of a burning afternoon in the hot heart of July. I am not sure whether it was in the dry summer. This was in '68 or '69 — I am not certain which — and it was notable for many things in my recollection. Firstly, the mountain caught fire. This sounds a terrific and unlikely statement, considered with relation to the temperate and reasonable geology of this land, which has known nothing for many æons of volcanoes or burning mountains. What had happened, of course, was that the heather and wild growth on the mountain had somehow been fired, and so all through that hot August I remember looking westward to the great mountain wall, and watching the dun fume that drifted along its highest places; looking with a certain dread, for there was something apocalyptic in the sight.

Another notable event was the failure of the water supply. The rectory stood almost on top of a long hill that mounted up from the valley of the Soar, there were no ponds or tanks in its curtilage and the drought of this year exhausted the water in the great butt that stood in the yard and received the streams from the roof in rainy weather. This, of course, was not drinking water; that we obtained always from a well deep in the brake, about a quarter of a mile from the house; and without contempt for other and more elaborate beverages, I may say that there are few draughts more delicious than cold well-water, dripping from the rock, and shaded in its hollow basin by the overhanging trees. Our London water is, I believe, perfectly wholesome, but it is absolutely tasteless, no doubt through the manifold purifications and purgations which it has undergone. But well-water has a savour and a character of its own, and the product of one well will often differ in a very marked degree from that of another. Before my day, oddly enough, we had in the county a connoisseur or gourmet of wells. He was a clergyman, and he had been heard to boast that he had tasted the water of every well in the forest of Wentwood. Our own well in the rectory brake was thought excellently of by good judges of clear cold water.

I think it was in this year of the burning mountain that the rectory paid a call on Mr. and Mrs. Roger Gibbon, of the Wern, on a blazing afternoon. They were very old people, and the stock of the Gibbons — I am not using their real name — was one of the most ancient and honoured in the land of Gwent. I suppose, indeed, that they would look on many dukes as parvenus of yesterday. Furthermore, this branch of the race was quite comfortable and well-to-do in money matters.

They received my father and my mother and myself with the heartiest kindness — they had known my father from his boyhood — and insisted on the necessity of some refreshment. So presently the maid came in with a tray and old Roger solemnly mixed for my father and mother, for his wife and himself, four reeking glasses of hot gin. I think that, all things considered, this was the very strangest refreshment ever offered. The old people swallowed their boiling spirit with relish, my parents took their dose with shuddering politeness, and the thermometer rose steadily. Roger and Caroline had been quarrelling about a carpet before we came, and after a decent interval the quarrel was resumed. Roger addressed himself to my mother.

“She would buy it too small. I told her it would be too small, and there it is, with three or four feet of the floor showing. And what do you think she says, Mrs. Machen? She says she will have the bare boards painted green to match the carpet. I say that’s ridiculous, don’t you think so? [Without waiting for an answer, and bellowing to deaf old Caroline.] There, Caroline, I told you what everyone would say. Mrs. Machen says it’s ridiculous. The idea of painting the boards green!”

And the old man, turning to my father, told him in a lower voice and with considerable enjoyment of some home-made wine that his wife had concocted. She had stored it in a cupboard in their bedroom, and Roger told how he used to lie awake at night laughing as he listened to the bottles bursting, the old lady being much too deaf to hear the reports.

Old Gibbon was an expert shot, but he could never be persuaded to use the new-fangled percussion caps. He brought down his birds to the last by means of flint and steel. He was an enthusiastic fox hunter also, but he never hunted on horseback. Up to something past the middle of his life the Llangibby Hounds had been hunted afoot, the Rector of Llangibby being the master, and afoot Roger Gibbon followed them up to his old age. And so cunning had he become in matter of wind and scent and lie of the country that he rarely failed to be in at the death. I doubt whether he knew much of the world outside of a twenty-mile radius, Caerleon being taken as the centre of the circle. But when Roger Gibbon was quite an old man people told him that he ought to see London. So he went to London. He walked out of Paddington Station and saw London, as he thought; and, filled with a great horror and disgust and terror at what he had seen, he trotted back into the station, and paced the platform till the next train for the west started. He got into that train, and returned to the Wern and to the shelter and companionship of his hills and woods, and there abode till the ending of his long days.

It was strange how in those times people were fixed in the soil, so that for many miles round everybody knew everybody, or at least knew of everybody. It is all over, I suppose, and again I think it is a pity that it is over. It was a part of the old life of the friendly fires, and the friendly faces, and when, rarely enough, in this great desert of London, I meet a friend of those old days, I think we both feel as if we were surviving tribesmen of some sept that has been “literally annihilated” or “almost decimated” — to use our modern English.

One says: “Do you remember that walk over Mynydd Fawr to the Holy Well?” The other replies: “How good the beer at the Three Salmons tasted that day we walked all the way from Caerleon on the Old Usk Road.” “Let me see; when was that?” “April, ‘83.” And we look on one another and, lo, our heads have whitened and our eyes are beginning to grow dim.

But, as an instance of the fellowship and brotherhood that there was in the land of Gwent in the old days, here is a true story. I have told of fierce old

Mr. James, of Lansoar, the ancient squire. Well, there had been a raging and tremendous quarrel between Mr. James and a neighbouring farmer called Williams, and as Williams was an honest and excellent and placable old man, there was not much doubt as to who was the aggressor. After years of hate, on one side at all events, a false rumour went about the county that Mr. James had lost all his money, in “Turkish Bonds,” I think. Then did old Mr. Williams, the farmer, go up one night secretly to old Mr. James, the squire, and altogether heedless of the white face and the furious glance and the bristling moustache that greeted him, he offered all he had to his enemy.

May he remember me from his happy place.

Chapter II

BY THIS TIME I hope that I have made a sort of picture of my conditions as they were up to the time that I left school at the age of seventeen. Solitude and woods and deep lanes and wonder; these were the chief elements of my life. One thing, however, I have so far omitted, that is the matter of books, which I will now consider.

And, firstly, I must record with deep thankfulness the circumstance that as soon as I could read I had the run of a thoroughly ill-selected library; or, rather, of a library that had not been selected at all. My father's collection, if that serious word may be applied to a hugger-mugger of books, had grown up anyhow and nohow, and in it the most revered stocks had mingled with the most frivolous. There were the Fathers, in the English version made by the Tractarians, and there was also no end of "yellowbacks" bought at Smith's bookstalls on railway journeys. There was a row of little Elzevir classics, "with the Sphere," bound in parchment that had grown golden with its two hundred and odd years; there was also Mr. Verdant Green in his tattered paper wrapper as my father had bought him at Oxford. Next to Verdant Green you might very likely find the Dialogues of Erasmus in seventeenth-century leather, and Borrow in his original boards — we read Borrow at Llanddewi long before there were any Borrovians — might hide an odd volume of "Martin Chuzzlewit" (in a "Railway Edition") which had tumbled to the back of the shelf. Hard by stood Copleston's "Prælectiones Academicæ," and close to it a complete set of Brontë books, including Mrs. Gaskell's "Life," all these in yellowish linen covers, being, I imagine, the first one-volume edition issued by the publishers. And here again Llanddewi in the woods may claim to have been in advance of its age, for we were devoted to the name of Brontë.

Suppose the weather did not beckon me, I would begin to go about the house on the search of books. I might have "Wuthering Heights" in my mind and be chasing that amazing volume very closely, and be, in fact, hot on the scent, when I would be brought up sharply by my grandfather's

Hebrew grammar. I always loved the shape and show of the Hebrew character, and have meant to learn the language from 1877 onwards, but have not yet thoroughly mastered the alphabet. I once, indeed, got so advanced as to be able to spell out the Yiddish posters which cover the walls in the East End of London, and I remember being much amused when I had deciphered a most mystic, reverend-looking word and found that it read "Bishopsgyte." But I believe that in Yiddish the two "yods" represent the "a" sound.

Well, this Hebrew grammar would distract me from the hunt of Emily Brontë's masterpiece, and by the time I had decided that Monday would be soon enough for a serious beginning in Hebrew, while I meditated in the meanwhile on the beauty of the names of the four classes of accents — Emperors, Kings, Princes, and Dukes, I think — it was likely enough that I had got hold of Alison's "History of Europe," or "The Bible in Spain," or a book on Brasses. And by the time I had gloated over the horrors of the French Revolution as described in Alison, or had marvelled at Borrow in the character of a Protestant colporteur, or had admired the pictured brasses of Sir Robert de Septvans, Sir Roger de Trumpington — winnowing fans on the coat-armour of the one, trumpets on the shield of the other — and Abbot Delamere of St. Albans it was tea-time, and I probably spent the rest of the evening with a bound volume of "Chambers's Journal," "All the Year Round," "Cornhill," or "The Welcome Guest." These were always a great resource; and I particularly wish that I still possessed "The Welcome Guest," a popular weekly dating from the late ‘fifties of last century. It was full of work by people who afterwards became famous, and now, again, are fading into forgetfulness. John Hollingshead we still remember, though it is only the elderly who can tell much now of "the sacred lamp of burlesque," which was kept burning at the Gaiety. Hollingshead was a contributor to "The Welcome Guest," so also were the Brothers Mayhew and the Brothers Brough, so on a great scale was George Augustus Sala, who wrote in it "Twice Round the Clock" and something that was called, I fancy, "Make Your Game or, the Adventures of the Stout Gentleman, the Thin Gentleman, and the Man with the Iron Chest." This was a "lively" account of a visit to the gaming tables then existing in Germany. The Stout Gentleman was one of the Mayhews, the Man with the Iron Chest was Sala himself; and I met the Thin Gentleman many years afterwards in a cock-loft in Catherine Street, where I was cataloguing books on magic and alchemy and the secret arts in general. The cock-loft was over the Vizetellys' publishing office, and the Thin Gentleman was old Mr. Vizetelly. We "larned" him to publish a translation of "La Terre" by sending him, an old man past seventy, to gaol for three months. He died soon afterwards; I forget whether his death took place before or after the very handsome and official and "respectable" reception and entertainment that were given to Zola on his visiting England.

I must say that I should like to see the old "Welcome Guest" volume again. I am afraid I should not admire its literature very much, for Sala, the chief contributor, had already acquired those vicious mannerisms which pleased the injudicious. He would speak of Billingsgate as a "piscatorial bourse," for instance. I am afraid I should find it all terribly old-fashioned. But I should like to hold the fat volume again and glance through its pages, for they would bring back to me the long winter evenings, and the rectory fire burning cheerfully, and the heavy red curtains drawn close over the windows, shutting out the night.

I must say that I found a great joy and resource in these old magazines. If one were in a mood averse from reading in the solid block, if the hour did not seem propitious for beginning once more "Pickwick" from the beginning, it was a delight to think of those bound volumes all in a row, and of the inexhaustible supply of mixed literature which they contained. For just as there was always the chance, and indeed the likelihood, of making new discoveries in the happy confusion of the Llanddewi library, so it was with these rows of "Household Words," "Chambers's," "All the Year Round," "Welcome Guest," and "Cornhill"; there was always the possibility of a find; some tale or essay hitherto overlooked or neglected might turn out to be full of matter and entertainment. And so the most unlikely events happened. You would expect to find good things of all sorts in a magazine edited by Charles Dickens, but you would hardly expect to find there the curious thing or the out-of-the-way thing. Still, it was in a volume of "Household Words" that I first read about alchemy in a short series of papers which (I have since recognised) were singularly well-informed and enlightened. I do not wish it to be understood that I myself have any strong convictions on the matter of turning inferior metals into superior, though I believe the later trend of science is certainly in favour of the theoretical possibility of such a process. Nor do I hold any distinct brief for the very fascinating doctrine which maintains, or would like to maintain, that the great alchemical books are really symbolical books; that while seeming to relate to lead and gold, to mercury and silver, they hide under these figures intimations as to a profound and ineffable transmutation of the spirit; that the experiment to which they relate is the Great Experiment of the mystics, which is the experiment of God. This, I say, is a fascinating theory; whether it have any truth in it I know not, and perhaps it is one of those questions of which Sir Thomas Browne speaks; questions difficult, indeed, and perplexed, but not beyond all conjecture. But, however this may be, I recollect that those articles in that old, half-calf bound volume of "Household Words," while not affirming this, that, or the other doctrine as to alchemy in so many distinct words, did suggest that a few of the old alchemists, at all events, were something more than blundering simpletons engaged on a quest which was a patent absurdity, which could only have been entertained by the besotted superstition of "the dark ages," which had this one claim to our attention inasmuch as the modern science of chemistry rose from the ashes of its foolish fires.

This is not the place for a discussion of the art of Thrice Great Hermes; the matter is cited here as an example of the odd and unexpected way in which my attention, I being some eight or nine years old, was directed to a singular and perplexing subject which has engaged my curiosity at intervals ever since. I see myself sitting on a stool by the rectory hearth, propping up "Household Words" against the fender, quite ravished by the story of Nicholas Flamel, who found by chance "The Book of Abraham the Jew," who journeyed all over Europe in search of one who would interpret its figures to him, who succeeded at last in the Operation of the Great Work, and was discovered by the King's Chamberlain living in great simplicity, eating cabbage soup with Pernelle, his wife. These fireside studies of mine must have been made forty-three or forty-four years ago, but I still think the story of Nicholas Flamel and Pernelle, his wife, an enchanting one. But then I re-read the tale of Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp only the other day, and I am still thrilled and perplexed by that most singular and important fact; that the genie declared himself to be the servant of the Roc's Egg.

I am sorry to have to confess that the rectory shelves held no copy of "The Arabian Nights." I made up this deficiency soon after I went to school by buying an excellent edition, issued, I think, by Routledge for a shilling. This edition is now, the booksellers tell me, out of print, and it is a pity, for now if you want the book there is nothing between an edition obviously meant for the nursery, with gaudy plates, and Lane’s version for thirty shillings. I speak not of Burton, for I found myself unable to read a couple of pages of his detestable English, made more terrible by the imitations of the rhymed prose of the original. I came upon something which went very much as follows: —

Then followed the dawn of day, and the Princess finished her allotted say, Praise be to the Lord of Light alway, who faileth not to send the appointed ray ——

and so on, at much greater length; highly ingenious, no doubt, and also infinitely foolish.

I remember once wasting hours — nay, days — in the effort to render Rabelais’ “Verses written over the Great Gate of the Abbey of Thelème” into English, following as far as I could the rhyme system. Now, according to the French notion, “don” is a perfect rhyme to “pardon,” and so Rabelais wrote: —

Or donné par don,
Ordonne pardon
A cil qui le donne;
Et bien guerdonne
Tout mortel preudhom
Or donné par don.

That is, the final sound of each line is almost identical with the final sound of every other line; and of this I made: —

For given relief,
Forgiven and lief
The giver believe;
And all men that live
May gain the palm leaf
For given relief.

Soon afterwards, while I was resting from this mighty effort, I read in Disraeli’s “Curiosities of Literature” a quotation from Martial: Turpe est difficiles habere nugas— ’Tis folly to sweat o’er a difficult trifle.’ I was convinced of my sin. I suppose that the real translator when confronted by such puzzles contrives to think of an indirect rather than a direct solution. For example, the right way of getting the effect of the Arabic jingle into English might be sought by the path of alliteration; or possibly blank verse might give to the English reader something of the same kind of pleasure as that enjoyed by the Oriental in reading a prose which infringes on the region of poetry. And it may be that the queer music of Rabelais could be echoed, at least, in English by the use of assonance.

Here is, indeed, a diversion, but it has arisen, legitimately enough, from that shilling, paper wrapper volume of “The Arabian Nights” bought in 1875 or ‘76 or thereabouts. And another event of like importance was my seeing De Quincey’s “Confessions of an English Opium Eater” at Pontypool Road Station. This also I instantly bought and as instantly loved, and still love very heartily. It always vexes me to detect, as I constantly do detect in modern critics, the subtle desire to run down De Quincey. The critic is afraid to make a frontal attack — the stress of these times will win pardon for the phrase — since he knows that he will be opposed by such splendours and such terrors— “an army with banners” — as the English language can scarce show elsewhere. He is quite aware, since he is, ex hypothesi, an able critic, that De Quincey deliberately used our tongue as if it had been a mighty organ in mightier cathedral, so that the very stones and the far-lifted vault and the hollow spaces of the towers re-echo and reverberate and thrill with tremendous fugal harmonies. And our critics are advised also that De Quincey was no mere player of clever tricks with the language; his was not the amusing Stevensonian method of counting the “l’s” and estimating the value of medial “s’s” and the terrifying effect of the final reiterated “r.” There was none of this; he wrote in the great manner because he thought in the great manner. The critic cannot deny this; he must admit the beauty and pathos of the Ann episode and of the vision of Jerusalem; but still he will hint a fault and hesitate his dislike of this greater master. The reason is not far to seek. All realism is unpopular, and De Quincey was eminently a realist.

Now I know that I am touching here on a great question. I hope to debate it at length later on; for the moment I would merely say that I define realism as the depicting of eternal, inner realities — the “things that really are” of Plato — as opposed to the description of transitory, external surfaces; the delusory masks and dominoes with which the human heart drapes and hides itself. But, all this apart, I cannot help dwelling on the manner in which I associate these early literary discoveries of mine with the places where they were made.

You may hear friends and lovers discussing after many years the manner of their first meeting; Daphnis as Darby will remind Chloe — now Joan — how they saw one another for the first time at the Smiths' garden-party, and one plate of their bread and butter tasted slightly of onions, and the curate achieved six faults running at lawn-tennis, and it came on to rain. So I can never take up De Quincey without thinking of the dismal platform at Pontypool Road, and the joy of coming home for the holidays, and the mountains all about me as I stood and waited for my father and the trap and read the first pages of the magic book. Those great mountains, and the drive home by the green arched lanes, abounding in flowers, and the very dear look of home amidst its orchards; all these are part and parcel of my joy in the "Confessions" for ever. And so again with another noble book; with one of the noblest of all books, as I have ever esteemed it. I am a very small boy; about seven or eight years old, I conceive, and my mother takes me with her to pay a call on Mrs. Gwyn, of Llanfrechfa Rectory. The ladies talk, and I, seeking quietly for something to entertain me, light in a low bookcase on a fat, dumpy little book. I suspect it was the oddity of the shape, the extreme squabness of the volume, that first took my fancy, and then I open the pages — and I have never really closed them. For the dumpy book was a translation of "The Ingenious Gentleman, Don Quixote de la Mancha"; and those are words that will thrill a lettered man as the opening notes of certain fugues of Bach will thrill a musician. I heard nothing of the amiable talk of the ladies. I was deep in the small print — alas! it would now blind my tired eyes — and when my mother rose to go I clung so desperately and piteously to the fat little book that the kind Mrs. Gwyn said she would lend it to me, and I might take it home. For which benevolence I am ever bound to pray for her good estate, or for her soul; as it may chance to be.

So, as Hereford Station spells for me, principally, "The Arabian Nights," as De Quincey is linked with domed mountains and green lanes and the return home: the Ingenious Gentleman advanced to greet me, mysteriously enough, in the drawing-room of the rectory of Llanfrechfa, and I shall always reckon Frechfa — the “freckled” — as among the most venerated of the Celtic saints.

For a long time, as it seems to me, I have been talking of discoveries of books; discoveries in our own Llanddewi shelves, in the shelves of neighbours, on railway bookstalls. We shall hear more of books by and by, of books found in very different places — Clare Market and the Strand of 1880 and back streets by Notting Hill Gate are even now looming before us — so for the present we may hear more of the conditions of that Gwent where I was a boy and a young man.

I have said that I was born just a little too late to witness the Passing of the Gentry. Few of them survived into my day, and I was too young to see with intelligence that which still remained to be seen of the old order. But one thing I do remember, that the gentry of those times, even when they were wealthy, lived with a simplicity that would astonish the people of to-day. Those who know “Martin Chuzzlewit” will remember how Tigg Montague, who was Montague Tigg, lunched luxuriously in the board room of his city office. The meal was brought in on a tray and consisted of “a pair of cold roast fowls, flanked by some potted meats and a cool salad.” There was a bottle of champagne and a bottle of Madeira. This was the luncheon of vulgar and ostentatious luxury in the ‘forties; compare it with the kind of midday meal that the modern Montague would eat at the Hôtel Splendide or the Hôtel Glorieux; the meal of the man who eats and drinks as much to impress others with his wealth as to gratify his own appetite.

Well, I have often seen “the old Lord Tredegar” eating his luncheon. My father and I would be in the coffee-room of the King’s Head, Newport, waiting for the ostler to put in the pony. And there in one of the boxes sat the old lord — a very wealthy man — eating his luncheon; which was bread and cheese and a tankard of ale. And, oddly enough, on the one occasion on which I visited the Ham, the magnate thereof, Mr. Iltyd Nicholl, was enjoying a meal similar in every respect to that of Lord Tredegar — though I believe he had a little cold apple tart after his cheese. We, of the middle people, always dined at one on meat, pudding, and cheese; tea followed at five, an affair of bread and butter and jam, with, possibly, a caraway loaf. Hot buttered toast was distinctly festal. The day closed so far as meals were concerned with bread and cheese and beer at nine o'clock. On rare occasions, once in three years or so, a number of clergy who called themselves collectively the Ruridecanal Chapter came to hear a paper read and also to a dinner. This would probably consist of a salmon of Severn or Usk — which muddy waters breed incomparably the finest salmon in the world — of a saddle of Welsh mutton from the mountains, and of a rich sweet called, very lightly and unworthily, a trifle. There would be a dessert of almonds and raisins and, according to the season, home-grown apples and pears or greengages. These delicates would be displayed on a service which showed green vine-leaves in relief against a buff ground, bordered with deep purple and gold. It was hideous, and, I should think, Spode.

In the autumn my mother used to concoct a singular dish which she called fermety. It is more generally known as frumenty; you will find it mentioned in Washington Irving's "Christmas," where the squire makes his supper off it on Christmas Eve — no doubt because it was the traditional fasting dish for the Vigil of the Nativity. It was made, so far as I can remember, of the new wheat of the year, of milk, of eggs, of currants, of raisins, of sugar, and of spices, "all working up together in one delicious gravy." No doubt a very honourable dish and a most ancient and Christian pottage; but I am not quite sure that I should like it, if it were proffered to me now. Among the farmers a few of the elder people still breakfasted on *cawl*, a broth made of fat bacon and vegetables, and decorated, oddly enough, with marigold blossoms. And a fine old man whom I once met in a lane spoke violently against tea, as a corrupting thing and a very vain novelty. For women, he said, it might serve, but the breakfast for a man was a quart of cider with a toast. But most of the farming people breakfasted on rashers of bacon, cooked by being hung on hooks before the fire in a Dutch oven. With the bacon they ate potatoes, which were done in a very savoury manner. Take cold boiled potatoes, break into small pieces, fry (or rather, *faites sauter*) in bacon fat, then press into a shallow dish, pat to a smooth surface, and brown before the fire. This is a breakfast that goes very well with a keen mountain breath of a morning.

And I believe that cheese always formed part of the farmers' breakfast, as a kind of second or cold course. This was of their own making, and was of the kind called after Caerphilly, a little town with a huge ruinous castle in a hollow of giant hills. It is a white cheese of a creamy consistency and delicate flavour, and is to be commended for the making of Welsh rarebit. The farmers, as I say, ate it at breakfast, again at twelve o'clock dinner, after hot boiled fat bacon and beans or cabbage, and again at tea, where, to their tastes, it seemed to go very well with bread and butter — I find it hard to realise in London that bread and butter can be a choice delicacy — and a sweet, such as an open-work raspberry tart. And, of course, the Caerphilly cheese appeared again at supper, and with bread and onions it was always the hedgerow snack of the man in the fields.

And the cider of that land was good. It was a greenish yellow in colour, with a glint of gold in it if held up to the light, as it were a remembrance of the August and September suns that had shone mellow on the deep orchards of Gwent. It was of full body and flavour and strength, smooth on the palate, neither sweet nor sharp; and I do not think there was anyone in Llanddewi parish so poor as not to have a barrel or two in his cellar against Christmastide and snowy nights, though to be sure in years wherein apples were a scanty crop some of the smaller folk increased the bulk of their cider by strange expedients. Pears went to the mill always, and as a matter of course. In most of the orchards there were one or two big pear trees, and possibly the wisdom of the Gwentian ancients had concluded that a slight admixture of pears with the apples improved and mellowed the cider. But in scanty years, when the man with but a few trees saw bare boughs in autumn, he went to his garden, dug up a barrow load or two of parsnips and added them to his apples. I cannot say anything as to the resultant juice, since I never tasted it.

There was no wretched poverty in Llanddewi, because almost everybody had a little land of his own. Tenant farmers there were, of course, who held of Mr. John Hanbury, of Pontypool Park, lord of the manor of Edlogan; a manor named after a certain Edlogion who was a prince of the sixth century and the protector of Cybi Sant. But besides his tenants and those of other landlords there was a numerous race of small freeholders, who owned eighty, fifty, ten acres of land, and so down till you came to a holding of a house and a garden and a mere patch by the roadside. But with a garden and a patch of land a clever cottager of the old school could do a great deal. I remember an old man named Timothy who lived in a house very small and very ancient in the midst of the fields, far, even, from a by-road; and he thought in greengages as a Stock Exchange man thinks in shares. For about his old cottage there were three or four, or maybe half a dozen, greengage trees that had been planted so long ago that they had grown almost to the dignity of timber, and spread wild branches high and low and far and wide, so that one might say that old Timothy lived in a grove or wood of greengage trees. So you may conceive how deeply the poor old man thought of these gages, beside which his little orchard of damsons and bullaces was of small account. A really plentiful crop, when the big boughs were heavy and drooping with rich green, sun-speckled fruit, meant to him abundance and luxury; and bare trees spelt on the other hand a bare winter and some pinching of poverty, though nothing beyond endurance. Timothy was a smallholder on the smallest scale, but there were many people of two, six, or twelve acres who did very well in their humble way — which I have always thought is the happy way, if one can attain to it. The man would work for a farmer in the day-time, and often be sturdy enough to do many things on his own estate on summer evenings; and all the day long his wife was busy with her pigs and bees and fowls, and perhaps with two or three cows. There was a good market for their produce at Pontypool, a town on the verge of the industrial district, for the colliers and the tinplate workers love to feed richly. I once saw a woman putting the last touches to a flat apple tart in a little tavern called Castell-y-bwch (Bucks' Castle) on the mountain side. She drew out the tart from the oven, prised open the lid of pastry, and inserted some half-pound of butter and half pound of moist Demerara sugar, and then put back the lid and replaced the pastry in the oven; so that apple juice, sugar, butter should fuse all together. That is a fair sample of hill cookery; other people of the hills would buy fresh butter at a high price, and give what they were asked for "green" Caerphilly cheese, still melting from the press; and they loved to plaster butter heavily on hot new bread and then crown all with an equal depth of golden honey. And they had a goodly appetite also for great fat salmon, caught in the yellow Usk water; and so the fishermen of Caerleon and the little farmers of such parishes as Llanddewi profited hugely by these mountain tastes.

Many years afterwards I lived for a short while on the Chiltern Hills. Here was a different tale. In a whole parish there was, I think, barely a single small holder; the little properties had all been bought up by the great landlords. There was no comfort about the tumbledown, leaky cottages which, in many cases, depended for their drinking water supply on dirty water-butts. None of the farm labourers had fowls or pigs or bees; the farmers, their employers, did not allow the men to keep pigs or fowls lest they should be tempted to steal corn and meal.

So the poorer folk were divided into two classes — the good-humoured wastrels, who “went on the parish” at the slightest provocation and without the slightest shame, and a few more prosperous, sour, ill-mannered boors, who were consumed with an acrid “Liberalism” and with a rancorous envy of anyone better off than themselves.

But at Llanddewi the small holder of land, so far from envying or hating the great landlord, took, as it were, a pride in him. I remember Mrs. Owen Tudor, owner of nine or ten rough acres of wild land in Llanddewi, being both grieved and angry when she heard that a great and ancient Gwentian house might be forced to sell a certain portion of their estates through the pressure of bad times in the early ‘eighties. She, too, was a landowner — of rushes chiefly and alder copses and bracken — and of ancient, though unblazoned, family, and if the great Morgans suffered, so also did she suffer.

It comes to my mind that I must by no means forget Sir Walter Scott and all that he did for me. And to get at him it is necessary that we enter the drawing-room at Llanddewi. I was amused the other day to see in an old curiosity shop near Lincoln’s Inn Fields amongst the rarities displayed small china jars or pots with a picture of two salmon against a background of leafage on the lid. I remember eating potted salmon out of just such jars as these, and now even in my lifetime they appear to have become curious. So, perhaps, if I describe a room which was furnished in 1864 that also may be found to be curious. I may note, by the way, that we always applied the word “parlour” — which properly means drawing-room, and is still, I think, used in that sense in the United States of America — to the dining-room, which was also our living room for general, everyday use. So Sir Walter Scott speaks of a “dining-parlour,” and Mr. Pecksniff, entering Todgers’s, of the “eating-parlour.” And now the word only occurs in public-houses, in the phrase “parlour prices,” and even that use is becoming obsolete.

But as for the Llanddewi drawing-room: the walls were covered with a white paper, on which was repeated at regular intervals a diamond-shaped design in pale, yellowish buff. The carpet was also white; on it, also at regular intervals, were bunches of very red roses and very green leaves. In the exact centre of the room was a round rosewood table standing on one leg, and consequently shaky. This was covered with a vivid green cloth, trimmed with a bright yellow border. In the centre of the cloth was a round mat, apparently made of scarlet and white tags or lengths of wool; this supported the lamp of state. It was of white china and of alabastrous appearance, and it burned colza oil. One had to wind it up at intervals as if it had been a clock. In the sitting-room, before the coming of paraffin, we usually burned “composite” candles; two when we were by ourselves, four when there was company.

Over the drawing-room mantelpiece stood a large, high mirror in a florid gilt frame. Before it were two vases of cut-glass, with alternate facets of dull white and opaque green, of a green so evil and so bilious and so hideous that I marvel how the human mind can have conceived it. And yet my heart aches, too, when, as rarely happens, I see in rubbish shops in London back streets vases of like design and colour. Somewhere in the room was a smaller vase of Bohemian glass; its designs in “ground” glass against translucent ruby. This vase, I think, must have stood on the whatnot, a triangular pyramidal piece of furniture that occupied one corner and consisted of shelves getting smaller and smaller as they got higher.

Against one wall stood a cabinet, of inlaid wood, velvet lined, with glass doors. On the shelves were kept certain pieces of Nantgarw china, some old wine-glasses with high stems, and a collection of silver shoe-buckles and knee-buckles, and two stoneware jugs. The pictures — white mounts and gilt frames — were water-colours and chromo-lithographs. Against one of the window-panes hung a painting on glass, depicting a bouquet of flowers in an alabaster jar. There was a plaster cast in a round black frame, which I connect in my mind with the Crystal Palace and the Prince Consort, and an “Art Union,” whatever that may be: it displayed a very fat little girl curled up apparently amidst wheat sheaves. A long stool in bead-work stood on the hearthrug before the fire; and a fire-screen, also in bead work, shaped like a banner, was suspended on a brass stand. On a bracket in one corner was the marble bust of Lesbia and her Sparrow; beneath it in a hanging bookcase the Waverley Novels, a brown row of golden books.

I can see myself now curled up in all odd corners of the rectory reading “Waverley,” “Ivanhoe,” “Rob Roy,” “Guy Mannering,” “Old Mortality,” and the rest of them, curled up and entranced so that I was deaf and gave no answer when they called to me, and had to be roused to life — which meant tea — with a loud and repeated summons. But what can they say who have been in fairyland? Notoriously, it is impossible to give any true report of its ineffable marvels and delights. Happiness, said De Quincey, on his discovery of the paradise that he thought he had found in opium, could be sent down by the mail-coach; more truly I could announce my discovery that delight could be contained in small octavos and small type, in a bookshelf three feet long. I took Sir Walter to my heart with great joy, and roamed, enraptured, through his library of adventures and marvels as I roamed through the lanes and hollows, continually confronted by new enchantments and fresh pleasures. Perhaps I remember most acutely my first reading of "The Heart of Midlothian," and this for a good but external reason. I was suffering from the toothache of my life while I was reading it; from a toothache that lasted for a week and left me in a sort of low fever — as we called it then. And I remember very well as I sat, wretched and yet rapturous, by the fire, with a warm shawl about my face, my father saying with a grim chuckle that I would never forget my first reading of "The Heart of Midlothian." I never have forgotten it, and I have never forgotten that Sir Walter Scott's tales, with every deduction for their numerous and sometimes glaring faults, have the root of the matter in them. They are vital literature, they are of the heart of true romance. What is vital literature, what is true romance? Those are difficult questions which I once tried to answer, according to my lights, in a book called "Hieroglyphics"; here I will merely say that vital literature is something as remote as you can possibly imagine from the short stories of the late Guy de Maupassant.

The hanging bookcase in the drawing-room under the marble bust of Lesbia and her Sparrow is not only rich and golden in my memory from its being the habitation of the Waverley Novels. This had been treasure enough, indeed, to make the shelves for ever dear; but there was more than this. The bookcase held, besides Sir Walter's romances, my father's school and college prizes, dignified books in whole calf and in pigskin, adorned with the arms of Cowbridge School and Jesus College, Oxford, in rich gold. Here was the Judicious Hooker, whose judiciousness, I regret to say, I could never abide nor stomach; here that noble book, Parker's "Glossary of Gothic Architecture," in three volumes, one of text and two of beautifully executed plates; and here was an early volume of Tennyson.

Of these two last-named books I can scarcely say which is the more precious and eminent in my recollection. The one stands for my initiation into the spirit of Gothic, and I think that is one of the most magical of all initiations. More furious and frantic nonsense has been talked about "paganism" than about almost any other subject; it will only be necessary to think of Swinburne with his "world has grown grey" phrase to indicate what manner of nonsense I have in mind. But the fact is that the heart of paganism was not exactly contrite or broken, but certainly resigned, with an austere and stoical acceptance of fate, which is not without its beauty and its majesty. The nearest modern equivalent to the classic or pagan spirit is Calvinism — the Œdipus Tyrannus is nothing but the doctrine of predestination set to solemn music — and this austere spirit stamped itself on all the finest Greek art. It is somewhat softened in Plato, for Plato drew from the East by way of Pythagoras, but the beauty of Greek tragedy, architecture, sculpture, is essentially austere and severe. It is Calvinism in marble; and judgment and inexorable vengeance on guilty sinners are sung in choral odes.

Now winter has its splendours; but with what joy do we welcome the yearly miracle of spring. We and the whole earth exult together as though we had been delivered from prison, the hedgerows and the fields are glad, and the woods are filled with singing; and men's hearts are filled with an ineffable rapture. Israel once more has come out of Egypt, from the house of bondage. And all this is expressed in the Gothic, and much more than this. It is the art of the supreme exaltation, of the inebriation of the body and soul and spirit of man. It is not resigned to dwell calmly, stoically, austerely on the level plains of this earthly life, since its joy is in this, that it has stormed the battlements of heaven. And so its far-lifted vaults and its spires rush upward, and its pinnacles are like a wood of springing trees. And its hard stones, its strong-based pillars break out as it were into song, they blossom as the rose; all the secrets of the garden and the field and the wood have been delivered unto them. And not only is all this true of building. Take a common iron nail that is to be driven into a door. The Gothic smith would so deal with that nail that its head should become a little piece of joy and fantasy, a little portion of paradise. Nay, take the letter A, as the Romans gave it to us; a plain, well-built, business-like letter, admirably fulfilling its purpose, with no nonsense about it. Now look at a thirteenth-century illuminated manuscript and seek out this A. It has every kind of "nonsense" about it; of that nonsense that makes earth into heaven. It is not only that it glows with rich raised gold, that it is most imperially vested in blue and in scarlet, but its frigid form has relaxed into beauty; it is no longer a mere letter, it is as a wild rose-tree in a hedge. From it spring curves of infinite grace, which enclose the page of text, and hair-line branches break from the main stem and blossom out into flowers of paradise: so the wild roses, delicate, enchanting, sway and quiver over the green field in the month of June.

So much for the "Glossary"; now for the other volume, the little early Tennyson. My attention was directed to this in an odd manner. One of the masters at school had called me a "lotus-eater," and I was much pleased with the sound of the phrase, though the master did not mean to be complimentary, and I had no notion as to what a lotus-eater really was. But in the course of the next holidays, rummaging at random among the books at the rectory, as my custom was, I opened the Tennyson and found the poem of "The Lotos-Eaters" with the "Choric Song" annexed. I began to read that I might be instructed as to the exact nature of my crime. I read on, enchanted, and it was then, in my twelfth or thirteenth year, that I first delighted in poetry as poetry, for its own sake, apart from any story it might tell.

And here I find an extraordinary difficulty in "making a distinction," as the casuists say, between two very different kinds of literary pleasure. For some time I had enjoyed great literature in such books as "Don Quixote" and Sir Walter Scott's romances; but "The Lotos-Eaters" — which is also, I think, great literature — gave me a quite new and peculiar delight. Hitherto it had been the story which had charmed me; but now I found myself delighting in the music and melody of verse, in the "atmosphere" of the poem, in the "colour" of the words — to use terms of which I disapprove, but for which I can find no efficient substitutes. I suspect, indeed, that I found in Tennyson's poem the transmuted and golden image of my own solitary and meditative habit of mind; and this may have counted for something in the sum of my delight. The master, a cheery, excellent young man as I remember him, may have made a correct diagnosis; I had been a lotus-eater for years without knowing it, and so recognised Ulysses' entranced companions as my true comrades in dreams. It may have been so; but in any case I have always dated my inoculation with the specific virus of literature from my reading of those verses in the little calf-bound volume.

Chapter III

SOME YEARS AGO I was asked by the editor of a well-known paper to write a short series of articles about London. The subject seems ambitious enough, and indeed London considered either physically or intellectually is so vast and mighty a world, that the study of any one — of even the smallest and least considerable — of its aspects may well be the task of a lifetime. But, so far as I can remember, my instructions were of the liberal and catholic kind. I mean, I was not required to write of the great city as the goal of the timber merchant or of the dealer in precious stones, or of the makers of chasubles, or of the fashioner of wigs, but rather to depict it as the end sought by all these, and by myriads more. And so I set about the task in my usual spirit, firmly convinced, that is, that better men had said all that there was to say on the matter brought before me, and yet resolved to do my best and to try to make something of the job in one way or another. So I set to work, and found, strangely enough, that though I was writing about London, I was also writing a mystical treatise, on a text which I will not divulge in this place. But for the beginning of my series I remember that I went back a good many years to the time when London began to call to me. I often speculate now in these later days as to how it would have been with me if this call had never come. For I have certain friends — very few of them — still living in Gwent and on its borders who have not heard the summons. The special family that I have in mind has lived in those regions for more centuries than I can tell. It would be a bold and learned Welsh herald who would trace them to their beginnings on the Celtic side, but on the Norman they go back to Sir Payne Turberville, the companion of Fitzhamon, and even in Wales a story of nine hundred years is a long story.

Well, coming down a little through the ages, the Rowlands that I knew — of course, their grandfather knew my grandfather — are still on the soil. Certainly a younger son has crossed the Severn, but the two others have not moved their habitations more than ten or twelve miles in the last fifty years. From half-way between Newport and Cardiff to Newport, from Newport to a mile east of Newport, then to four miles east of Newport, at last to three miles west of Cardiff: they will surely be laid in the land of their fathers at the end. So it might have been with me, perhaps, if it had not been for the blood of certain Scottish sailors intermingled with the stay-at-home stock of Gwent. But I often wonder, as I say, how it would have happened to me if I had found a home under the shadow of Twyn Barlwm instead of becoming a dweller in the tents of London. Tents, I say advisedly, for, with the rarest exceptions, Londoners have no homes. This was true in a great measure nearly two hundred years ago, when Dr. Johnson first came to London from Lichfield; it is now all but universally true.

But, anyhow, the call of London, partly external and partly internal, came to me, and for some months before I left the old land for the first time I was imagining London and making a picture of it in my mind, and longing for it. I turned up the old magazines and re-read Sala's "Twice Round the Clock." I came upon the strange phrase, "the City," in stories, and wondered what the City signified. And I began to have an appetite for London papers. For it should be understood that at Llanddewi Rectory a London paper was a thing of the rarest appearance. I think I can remember that when the Prince of Wales — afterwards King Edward VII, of happy memory — was dangerously ill, my father made some kind of arrangement — I cannot think what it could have been — by which he got the "Echo" of those days, not only on week days, but on Sunday afternoons. And in ordinary times, when we went into Newport on market days, we might possibly bring back a "Standard" or a "Telegraph," but likely enough not. We saw the "Western Mail" occasionally, the "Hereford Times" once a week; weekly also came the "Guardian," an excellent paper, but with more of Oxford, Pater, and Freeman, and Deans, and Dignitaries in it than of London or Londoners. Indeed, I remember how the news of the fall of Khartoum came to the rectory. I had been spending the evening with some friends across a few miles of midnight and black copse, and ragged field and wild, broken, and wandering brook land, and I remember that not a star was to be seen as I came home, wondering all the while if I ever should find my way. One of my friends had been in Newport that day, and had seen a paper, and so when I got back at last and found my father smoking his pipe by the fire, I announced the news in a tag of Apocalyptic Greek: Khartoum he polis he megale peptoke, peptoke; Khartoum the mighty city, has fallen, has fallen. And sometimes I wonder now in these days, when I am nearer to the heart of newspapers, whether our work in Fleet Street, with its anxious, flurried yell over the telephone, its tic-tac of tapes, its slither and rattle and clatter of linotypes, its frantic haste of men, its final roar and thunder of machinery ever gets itself delivered at last on a midnight hillside so queerly as the tragic news of Khartoum was delivered in the “parlour” of Llanddewi Rectory.

But the days came when above the clear voice of the brook in the hidden valley, above the murmur of the trees in the heart of the greenwood there sounded from beyond the hills to my heart a clearer voice, a mightier murmur. London called me, and all documents relating to this new unknown world became matters of the highest consequence and significance, and so London papers must by all means be obtained.

Far and long ago that spring and summer of 1880 now seem to me. It was then that London began to summon, and I was filled with an eager curiosity to know all about the new world which I was to visit.

As I have explained, the London paper made a very rare and occasional appearance at Llanddewi-among-the-Hills, and I don’t think that any of us felt any aching need of it. But now for me “Standard” and “Telegraph” became mystic documents of the highest interest and most vital consequence; these were the charts to the Nova Terra Incognita; every line in them came from the heart of the mystery and was written by men who were learned in all the wisdom of London. London papers I must have; that was certain; so I set out to get them.

The nearest point at which these precious rarities were obtainable was Pontypool Road Station, about four miles distant from Llanddewi Rectory. It was the place where I had bought my copy of “De Quincey” some years earlier, and is now sacred to me on that account. But in this month of April thirty-five years ago I thought little of De Quincey or of his visions. Columbus, I suspect, while he watched the fitting of his caravel forgot any mere literary enthusiasms that he might have once possessed; for him there was but one object and that was the tremendous, marvellous, terrible venture into the unknown that he was soon to make. So it was with me; London loomed up before me, wonderful, mystical as Assyrian Babylon, as full of unheard-of things and great unveilings as any magic city in an Eastern tale. It loomed up with incredible pinnacles — to quote Tennyson on another city — and in its mighty shadow all lesser objects disappeared. De Quincey? After all he was not without value, since he spoke of Oxford Street; still, I wanted later news of the City of the Enchanters. So three or four times a week I walked the four miles to Pontypool Road, taking the short cut across the fields which leaves the by-way at Croeswen and brings one out on the high road from Newport to Abergavenny, somewhere about a mile from the station, near the lane which wanders through a very solitary country into Usk.

Pontypool Road Station lies, as I have said, under mountains, or rather under the huge domed hills which we in Gwent call mountains. It is one of the many meeting-points between the fields and the "works," and is always associated in my mind with a noise of clanking machinery and a reek of black oily smoke of rich flavour, which this generation would not recognise, since it is only to be imitated by blowing out a tallow candle that has long wanted snuffing; and now there are neither tallow candles nor snuffers. Here, then, of a "celestial" agent of W. H. Smith I bought my papers; usually the "Standard" and the "Daily Telegraph." The "Morning Post" was, I think, twopence in those days, and twopence was too much to give for a daily paper, and, moreover, we had a vague belief that the "Morning Post" was almost exclusively concerned with the social doings of the aristocracy, splendid matters, doubtless, but no affairs of mine. With these two papers, then, and once a week with a copy of "Truth," I would make my way out of the station, and along the high road till I came to the stile and the lonely path across the fields, and alone under a tree or in the shelter of a friendly hedge I would open my papers, cut their pages, and plunge into their garden of delights. One of my chief interests in these journals — perhaps my chiefest interest — was the theatre; and I am sure I cannot say why this was so. As far as I can remember I had up to this time witnessed three performances of stage plays, and of these three one was certainly not "legitimate," being a drama of the circus called "Dick Turpin's Ride to York." Its chief incidents were firing pistols and leaping over five-barred gates, and I must have been about seven when I saw it at Cardiff. Then in '76 I was at Dublin, and saw "Our Boys," and was very heartily bored, and finally in '78 or '79 I went with a school-fellow to the skating-rink at Hereford — I remember the former as well as the latter rinking mania — and enjoyed a touring company's rendering of "Pinafore." And, looking back, I believe that it was then that the delightful poison began to work; then when in that ramshackle barn of a place in the Hereford backstreet the curtain went up on the Saturday afternoon, and eight men dressed as sailors began to sing: —

We sail the ocean blue,
And our saucy ship's a beauty;
We're gallant men and true,
And attentive to our duty.

I remember that, young as I was, I could not help feeling that eight was a very small number for the male chorus. This circumstance confirms me in a belief which I have long entertained that Heaven meant me to be a stage-manager. True, I could never master simple addition, and a stage-manager has to keep accounts. Still, I should not have been the first stage-manager whose ledgers were filled with "comptes fantastiques."

But here I am under my tree or my hedge on a sunny morning of that Gwentian spring of so many years ago, eagerly opening the paper and turning to the theatrical advertisements in that part of the journal which I have in later years learned to call the "leader page." I read about Mr. Henry Irving at the Lyceum and Mr. Toole at the Folly — I do not think the vanished theatre was known as Toole's in those days. Mme. Modjeska and Mr. Forbes-Robertson were, I believe, at the Court, Dion Boucicault's play, "The Shaughraun," was running at the Adelphi — or, stay, was this old house of melodrama then the home of "The Danites"? In Wych Street, at the Opera Comique, was "The Pirates of Penzance"; "Madame Favart" enchanted at the Strand; "Les Cloches de Corneville" was at the Globe or the Olympic, I forget which. And, said each advertisement, "for cast see under the clock."

I was vividly interested in that phrase, "For cast see under the clock," which I read in the sibylline leaves of my London papers. The real meaning of the words never occurred to me; I conceived that somewhere, in some dimly-imagined central place of London, there was a great clock on a high square tower, and that this tower was so prominent an architectural feature as to be known all over London as "the clock." And at the base of this tower, so I proceeded in my fancy, there were displayed bills or posters, containing the casts of all the plays of all the theatres. I never found that mighty tower in

London, but it was many years before it dawned on me that "the clock" was merely the pictured clock-face in the newspaper itself, under which the full casts were then printed.

As I have said, I cannot quite make out the sources of this intense interest of mine in the theatre. But I suspect that for the time I had got into that strange frame of mind to which Thackeray alluded when he asked a man if he were "fond of the play." Thackeray's friend replied, I think, to the effect that it depended on the play, whereupon Thackeray told him that he didn't understand in the least what the phrase "fond of the play" implied. Thackeray was right; for this attitude of mind is universal, not particular; and oddly enough, I believe it is very little related to any serious interest in the drama as a form of art. There is so vast a gulf between the theatre of to-day and that of thirty-five years ago that I do not know whether it is now possible for anybody to be "fond of the play" in the old sense; but if there be such people left, I am sure that they have not the faintest interest in the proposals to build and endow a national theatre. For to those in the happy state to which Thackeray alluded, the theatre was loved not for itself, but as a symbol of gaiety; I would almost say of metropolitanism as opposed to provincialism. I have known countrymen relating their adventures in London almost to wink as they included a visit to the Globe or the Strand in the list of their pleasures; the theatre represented to them the "chimes at midnight" mood.

Thackeray meant — do you like the mingled gas and orange odours of the theatre, do you like the sound of the orchestra tuning, the sight of the footlights suddenly lightening, can you project your self readily into the fantastic world disclosed by the rising curtain, and afterwards, do you like a midnight chop at Evans's, with Welsh rarebit to follow, and foaming tankards of brown stout, and then "something hot"; in fine, do you like to be out and about and in the midst of gaiety at hours of the night when your uncles and aunts and all quiet country people are abed and fast asleep? That is what Thackeray meant by his question, and I suppose that our modern, serious lovers of the drama would regard the man who was fond of the play in this sense as an utter reprobate, a stumbling-block and a stone of offence. But it was in that sense that I pored devoutly over everything relating to the theatre that I found in my newspapers, as I delayed in my walks home from Pontypool Road, not being able to refrain any longer.

Well, the day dawned at last for dreams to come true — or as true as they ever come. My father and I set out one fine Monday morning for Paddington, starting, I think, at about eleven o'clock from Newport, and getting to London by five in the afternoon. This was then the best train in the day; for the Severn Tunnel was not yet made, and we went all the way round by Gloucester. It was a six hours' journey, and now one can get from London to Newport in two hours and a half. At Westbourne Park we changed and got into the Underground system, and so came to the Temple Station on the Embankment. Thence it was a short walk to the private hotel in Surrey Street where my father had always stayed on his infrequent visits to town. I have forgotten the name of the hotel; — Bradshaw's office is built on the site of it — it was Williams's, or Smith's, or Evans's, or some such title, and as I believe was then the way, it was understood to be more or less the preserve of people from the west. I suppose there were other little hotels for parsons and small squires of the east and north and south; for all the streets that go down from the Strand to the river were then occupied by these private hotels and by lodging-houses. Craven Street, by Charing Cross, is the only one of these streets that has at all preserved the old manner, which, let me say, was a dingy and dim but on the whole a comfortable manner. Our hotel was just opposite the pit door of the old Strand Theatre, and in a former visit my father and mother, sitting at their window, had had the gratification of seeing Mrs. Swanborough sitting at her window over the way knitting busily. Now all our ladies, however smart, have become knitters, but if I had been writing these reminiscences a few years ago I should have asked: "Can you imagine a London manageress of these days sitting and knitting in her room at the theatre?"

We went out for a short stroll before eating, and for the first time I saw the Strand, and it instantly went to my head and to my heart, and I have never loved another street in quite the same way. My Strand is gone for ever; some of it is a wild rock-garden of purple flowers, some of it is imposing new buildings; but one way or another, the spirit is wholly departed. But on that June night in 1880 I walked up Surrey Street and stood on the Strand pavement and looked before me and to right and to left and gasped. No man has ever seen London; but at that moment I was very near to the vision — the *theoria* — of London.

After the astounding glimpse at the Strand we went back to the private hotel in Surrey Street and had something to eat. I am not sure, but I think the meal consisted of tea and ham and eggs, the latter beautifully poached. I know that my mind holds a recollection of this simple dish very admirably done in connection with Smith's, or whatever the place was called; and I believe it was eaten in the evening of our arrival. And I may say in passing that the hotel had a pleasant, well-worn, homely look about it; very plain, but extremely comfortable. I think that my bedroom carpet was threadbare and that the bed was a feather bed; at all events one slept sublimely there under the roof, under the London stars.

Then for the Strand again, now sunset flushed, beginning to twinkle with multitudinous lamps — I had hardly seen a lamp-lit street before — and so to the Opera Comique, where they were playing "The Pirates of Penzance." The Opera Comique was somewhere in Wych Street, which has gone the way of the streets of Babylon and Troy; purple blossoms and big hotels and other theatres that I know not grow now in the place where it once stood. We went to the upper boxes of the Opera Comique and enjoyed ourselves very well. I remember my father being especially pleased with the Pirate King's defence of his profession: "Compared with respectability it's almost honest," or words to that effect. But, oddly enough, I was a little disappointed. There was not the sense of gaiety that I had expected. For one thing the music reminded me of the classic glees and madrigals which I had heard discoursed by the Philharmonic Society at Hereford, where I was at school, and I did not want to be reminded of Hereford. And the female chorus hardly looked as thoughtless as I could have wished; it seemed to me that they might very well have come fresh from the rectory like myself. Of course, it was all very well to be ladylike, and so forth; but what I asked of the stage was careless devilry, the suggestion, at all events, of naughtiness. In fact, my attitude was perilously near to that of the Arkansas audiences as analysed by the Duke in "Huckleberry Finn": "What they wanted was low comedy — and maybe something ruther worse than low comedy." But I was not really quite so bad as the "Arkansaw lunkheads." We went on another night to "Les Cloches de Corneville," a most harmless production, I am sure; and *that* was what I wanted. I was enchanted from the rising of the curtain; there was the sunlit scene in Normandy, charming, smiling, and a whole row of pretty girls, evidently as thoughtless as the lightest heart could wish, dancing down to the footlights and singing: —

Just look at that,
Just look at this,
Don’t you think we’re not amiss?
A glance give here,
A glance give there,
Tell us if you think we’re dear.

And — not one of these girls looked as if she could have come from any conceivable rectory. Decidedly, “Les Cloches de Corneville” was the comic opera for my money. What a pleasing thrill the scene afforded when the entire village, for some reason that I cannot well remember, dressed up as Crusaders and Crusaderesses, and came suddenly into the room of Gaspard, the miser, and the big bell began to toll and the gold was poured out in a torrent on the ground. “When the heir returneth, then shall ring the bell, so the legend runneth, so the old men tell”; in some such words was this grand peripeteia announced in the text. So the heir no doubt returned and married the extra pretty girl whose name I have forgotten — she was not Serpolette, I know, for Serpolette was comic, delightfully, impudently comic, but still comic, and so no mate for the hero. Serpolette, I think, having regard to the Unities, ought to have married the thin but amusing assistant of the Bailie; but I do not know whether this were so. But I am sure everybody was happy ever after, and of “Les Cloches” and other comic operas like it I say, in the words of Coleridge’s friend: “Them’s the jockeys for me!”

I have never been able to make up my mind as to the respective merits of “Les Cloches de Corneville” and “Madame Favart,” which was running at the Strand. “Les Cloches” had the more coherent plot of the two, and the great scene of the miser and the crusaders was more effective in its stagey way than anything in “Madame Favart,” but, then, Florence St. John was Madame Favart, and to old playgoers I need say no more. And Marius, a delightful French comedian, was in the cast; and there were those songs dear to memory: “Ave, my mother,” “The Artless Thing,” “To Age’s Dull December,” and

Pair of lovers meet,
Stolen vows are sweet,
Sighs, etcetera.
Love is all in all,

On a garden wall,
Never heed papa.

This was sung by Marius, who had no voice in particular, but an infinite Gallic relish and unction and finish in everything that he did. The fourth piece that we went to in this wonderful week was “The Daughter of the Drum Major,” at the Alhambra, then a theatre, with an extremely roomy, comfortable pit. This last piece made but little impression on me. From my recollection, it seems to have been more in the modern mode, that is, a mere excuse for showing off a “beauty chorus” without the little touch of thin, theatrical but pleasant romance that delighted me in the two other plays. But the poverty of the play was atoned for by the happy circumstance that before going to it we dined at the Cavour. And the Cavour in 1880 was exactly like the Cavour in 1915, save in this one matter, that on the earlier date there was included in the price of the dinner a bottle of violet wine.

Looking back through the years and comparing the London of the early ‘eighties with the London of to-day, one circumstance emerges very clearly in my mind: that is, that the early London had an infinitely “smarter,” wealthier air than the later. I say “air” advisedly, to make it clear that I knew nothing of the real interior life of the place, or of the resources of its rich inhabitants. I judged of London purely by its exterior aspects, as one may judge of a passing stranger in the street, and decide that he goes to an expensive tailor, without knowing anything of the condition of his banking account. So, I say that the outward show and lineaments of the London of 1880 were much more refulgent and splendid than those of the last few years. I was a good deal surprised when the truth of this first dawned on me some three or four years ago. For I believe that as a matter of fact the new London is a much wealthier, more luxurious, more extravagant place than the old. The rich people of to-day spend hundreds instead of tens, thousands for the hundreds of their fathers; the “pace” of the splendid has increased enormously in the last thirty-five years; and all the facilities for expending very large sums of money have also increased to a huge extent. So well was I convinced of all this when I fell to comparing the London of my boyhood with the London of my middle age that at first I thought that there must be a fallacy somewhere, and I was very willing to believe that those early impressions of mine were illusions, natural enough in a lad who had never seen any more splendid streets than those which the Newport and Cardiff of those days had to show, than the venerable, peaceful, ancient ways of Hereford, whose stillness was only broken by the deep, sweet chiming of the cathedral bells. But when, interested, I went into the facts of the question, I found that I had not been mistaken in my first view — i.e., that London was a smarter-looking place thirty years ago than at the present day, and this for several reasons.

To begin with, there is the trifling matter of men's dress. I do not know whether we have yet realised the fact that the frock coat is rapidly becoming "costume," verging, that is, towards the status of levee dress. Already, I believe, it is only worn on occasions of semi-state, at functions where the King is expected, at smart weddings, and so forth. Before long it will probably attain the singular twofold state of "evening dress," which is worn all day long by waiters and by what are conveniently called gentlemen after seven o'clock in the evening. So very likely the frock coat will soon be seen on the backs of the maître d'hôtel, the hotel manager, the shopwalker, the major-domo — if there be any majores-domo left — as a kind of uniform or livery, while it will also be the afternoon wear of dukes at great social functions. And so with the silk hat; it has not gone so far on the road of obsolescence as the frock coat, but, unless I mistake, it has entered on that sad way.

Here, then, is the point of contrast. Between 'eighty and 'ninety — and later still — practically every man in London went about his business and his pleasure with a high hat on his head. Every man, I say, above the rank of the mechanic; certainly all the clerkly class; Mr. Guppy and his friends were still faithful to this headdress; which, be it remembered, was once universal all over England, so that even smock-frocked farm labourers wore it. As for the London of pleasure, the West End, it would have been quite impossible to conceive a man of the faintest social pretensions being seen abroad in anything else. And now, I go up and down Piccadilly, Bond Street, the Row at the height of the London season, and see — a few silk hats and morning coats, it is true — but the majority of well-dressed men in "lounge" suits and grey soft hats and black and grey bowlers.

Now let it be clearly understood that I have no passion for black coats and shiny hats myself, nor for the dazzling white linen which has largely given way to soft, unstarched stuffs. But it is not to be denied that all those habits had a “smart” appearance, and that a pavement crowded with shiny black hats, shiny white cuffs and collars, and long black frock coats made a much more imposing show than the pavement of to-day, on which the men’s dress is very much as they please. The modern men look extremely comfortable and well at their ease; but they do not scintillate in the old style. A soft grey hat does not flash back the rays of the sun.

Then, another point and a most important one: the coming of the motor. I suppose the kind of motor-impelled vehicle which one is likely to see in Hyde Park may very well have cost seven or eight or nine or ten times as much as the horse-drawn carriages which I remember going round and round so gay and so glorious. Well, I have watched the modern procession of motor-cars, and they are about as impressive as a career of light locomotive engines. It may indeed in course of time become fashionable to go up and down the Row in express locomotives capable of drawing their hundred coaches at a hundred miles an hour, but the effect would not be smart. Now, the old equipages were undeniably the last word of smartness; in themselves they were enough to tell the stranger that he had come to the very centre of the earth, of its riches and its splendours. There were the high-bred, high-spirited, high-stepping horses, in the first place, groomed to the last extreme of shiny, satiny perfection, tossing their heads proudly and champing their bits and doing the most wonderful things with their legs. The bright sunlight of those past London summers shone on their glossy coats, shone in the patent leather of the harness, shone and glittered on the plated bolts and buckles and ornaments. And the carriages were of graceful form, and the servants of those days sometimes wore gorgeous liveries; and scores of those brilliant equipages followed on one another in an unending dazzling procession. That was the old way; now there are some “Snorting Billies” that choke and snarl and splutter as they dodge furtively and meanly in and out of the Park, like mechanical rabbits bolting for their burrows.

While I contrast the London of my young days and the London of my old — or present — days, I would like it to be remembered that I am, so far, only contrasting the two cities from one point of view, the point of view of smartness. I have not been saying that 1880 London was more sensible than 1915 London; but merely that the former struck an outsider as a more brilliant place than the modern city. The fact is that I have the most cordial approval for all social pomps and splendours, so long as I am not required to take part therein. I hate wearing frock coats and silk hats and shiny shirts; but I am very well pleased to sit in the pit, as it were, and watch those exalted persons who are cast for the decorative parts going through their brilliant performances. And, after all, if a man finds that plate armour is uncomfortable, that is no reason why he should not delight in seeing other people wearing it, and wearing it with dignity. And in speaking of the Hyde Park and Rotten Row of the old days I mentioned that there were some gorgeous servants' liveries still left in 1880. And while we are on that matter, I may say that I have never sympathised at all with those persons who have found something mean and ridiculous in a manservant in purple and gold or in blue and crimson, unless, that is, the point be taken that only a splendid duty should be dignified with a splendid vestment, and in that objection I admit there is some force. Not that I agree for one moment that there is anything contemptible in "menial" service; but I am willing to allow that it may not be altogether seemly for a faithful fellow, whose business is to hold on behind a carriage and wait at dinner, to outshine a bishop in pontificals. But I suspect that the people who sneered at poor Jeames and his plush were not actuated by this reasonable motive, but rather by that vile "Liberal" objection to splendour as splendour. The man who found "Blazes" ridiculous would probably find the King in his Coronation robes equally ridiculous. And so you may go on, up the scale and down the scale; but the only logical alternative to splendour is Dr. Johnson's proposed suit of bull's hide — all beyond that is superfluity and vain show, according to the doctrine of the wretches who in times not long past sold antique civic ornaments, such as chains and maces, on the ground that the Mayor of Little Pedlington did not need such gauds to help him in his customary task of sentencing "drunks."

There is one more point in connection with the Row. Twenty-five years ago the appointed hour was five o'clock in the afternoon. Then people sat in the chairs and walked up and down and looked at the carriages, and I remember a friend observing to me this singularity, that though the place was public and open to anybody, still only those persons who were dressed in the regulation costume — frock coat and silk hat for men — ever came near the sacred ground. The people in lounge suits and bowler hats stood apart, and watched the show from some distance. Well, the hour of the Row is now in the morning; but there is a greater change. There are still "smart" people there; but there are also people who cannot by any possibility be described as smart, not even if they be judged by the very lax standards of these days.

In another matter the London of to-day is much less impressive in its outward show than the London of 1880; that is in the aspect of its principal streets. There are still excellent shops in Bond Street, Regent Street, and Piccadilly; but there is no longer in any of them that air of exclusiveness and expensiveness that I can remember, and this is particularly true of Regent Street. In 1880 you felt as soon as you turned up the Quadrant that anything you might buy therein would certainly be dear; the very stones and stucco exuded costliness and the essential attars of luxury. I feel convinced that the cigars of Regent Street were of a more curious aroma than cigars bought in any other street, that it was the very place wherein to purchase a great green flagon of rare scent as a present for a lady, that if you happened to want a Monte Cristo emerald this was the quarter wherein to search for it. That was my impression, but lest it should be mere fancy, a year or so ago I asked one of the older shopkeepers whether the street was quite what he and I remembered it. He said very emphatically it was not at all what it had been; and I feel sure that he was right, and that in a less degree the other principal shopping centres have declined from their former splendour.

And this for two reasons; first, the curious modern tendency of the best and most luxurious shops to scatter and disperse themselves abroad about the side streets of the West End, leaving gaps which are filled in most cases by dealers in cheaper wares. And secondly, the coming of the popular tea-shop has, in my opinion, done a very great deal to “unsmarten” the streets of which I am speaking. Let it not be understood for one moment that I would speak despitefully of cheap tea-shops; that would indeed be vilely thankless in one who has often made the principal meal of the day at an A.B.C. — large coffee, threepence; milk cake, twopence; butter, a penny — and has been grateful that for once in a way he has dined. But, it cannot be pretended that a milk cake is a costly or a curious dish, or that a plate of cold meat for sixpence or eightpence is an opimian banquet; and so, when I pass a popular tea-shop or eating-house, I feel that my dream of luxury and expense is broken; and that something of glitter and splendour has passed away from the West End of London.

I spent the years from the summer of 1880 to the winter of 1886 in a singular sort of apprenticeship to life and London and letters and to most other things. Sometimes I was in London; then for months at a time I was out of it, back again in my old haunts of Gwent. I had hot fits of desire for the town when I was forced to stay in the country; and then, settled, or apparently settled, in the heart of London, its immensities and its solitudes overwhelmed me, the faint, hot breath of its streets sickened me, so that my heart ached for the thought of the green wood by the valley of the Soar, and for the thought of friendly faces.

They say that in old Japan they had a wonderful and secret art of tempering their sword blades. Now the steel was placed in the white heat of the fire, now it was withdrawn and plunged into the water of an icy torrent; and then again the trial of the furnace. So heat and cold were alternated, according to an ancient and hidden tradition, till at last the craftsman obtained an exquisite and true and perfect blade, fit for the adorned scabbard of a great lord of Japan. When I think of those early years of mine I should be reminded of the process of the Japanese sword-craftsman — if only the heart were as tractable as steel. The Kabbalists, I believe, take the view — a gloomy one — that the innermost essence of man’s spirit goes out from the world in much the same state as that in which it came into the world; and it is certainly true that some men seem incorrigible; neither fire nor ice will temper them aright.

During these early years of my London experience I lived under very varying conditions. I lived with families, and I lived alone; I lived in the suburbs and in the centre; I had enough to eat, and then narrowly escaped starvation. My first habitat was in the High Street of a southern suburb. My memory holds a picture of an ancient street of dignified red-brick houses, a Georgian church, and a stream of quite inky blackness. The old houses had old gardens behind them, green enough, but with a certain grime upon them that made them strange to eyes unused to this combination of soot and leafage. But it was quite easy in those days to get from the suburb to the open country.

Not that I desired any such excursions, for my notion of an ideal residence was then a lodging in one of the streets or courts or passages going down from the Strand to the Thames. This was a dream that I realised years afterwards, when many waters (not of the Thames) had passed over my head. It was well enough, and I used to go out and get my breakfast at the "chocolate as in Spain" shop at the west end of the Strand, on the north side. It was well enough, I say, but it was not absolute paradise. And, furthermore, and in an interior parenthesis, let me say that the chocolate at the old Strand shop was not as in Spain, though very decent chocolate. The Spanish service of chocolate — I encountered it when I was in Gascony — consists in this, first that the chocolate is made extremely strong and thick, and secondly that with it comes a goblet of ice-cold well-water, to be drunk after the chocolate, on the principle, I suppose, of the Scots who drink water, not with whisky, but after it.

Well, to return to the more or less — chiefly less — direct current of my tale, after my sojourn in the southern suburb came a return to the country, where I remained eight or nine months. It was during this exodus or hegira, I think, that I was excommunicated by old Mr. James, of Lansoar, because I was loafing at home instead of living on five shillings a week in London. But my long sojourn in Gwent was in fact due to a very dismal discovery having been made of me by certain persons called examiners. They found me utterly incapable of the simple rules of arithmetic; and hence I was debarred from the career which I had been contemplating. And here I would say that I am almost proud of myself for my quite extraordinary arithmetical incapacity. I am not merely dull and slow, but desperate. I am so wanting in the mere faculty of counting as to be curious, like those tribes of savages that can say "One, two, three, four, five … many." There are people who make a living by exhibiting their arithmetical skill in the music-halls; someone writes on the blackboard a multiplication sum of fifteen figures multiplied by fifteen figures, and a second or two after the last figure is drawn the arithmetical artist utters the result. Well, I am at the opposite end of the scale, and I have sometimes wondered whether "Incompetent Machen" would not be quite a good turn. It would make anybody laugh to hear me doing a sum in simple addition. It is like "Forty-seven and nine, forty-seven and nine, forty-seven and nine." I ponder. Then a brilliant idea strikes me. I pretend the problem is "forty-seven and ten." I get the result, fifty-seven, deduct one and proceed.

Well, I came to London again in the summer of '81, thinking of another and quite a different career, which did not involve, on the face of it, that little difficulty of arithmetic. Again I was in a suburb, and again in an old one, but this time the quarter was in the far west. I stayed in Turnham Green, then a place of many amenities standing amongst fields and gardens and riparian lawns, which, long ago, have been buried beneath piles of cheap bricks and mortar, for a year and a half, and then again I altered my plans, or fate rather altered them for me. I started on a new tack and kept it for a month, and then somehow slid into a backwater, in which I was afloat and nothing more than afloat. Summoning this period into recollection, I find my position very much like to that of certain ancient and outworn barges, grass-grown, flower-grown, that I have come upon suddenly in improbable back alleys of water, in the midst of a maze of by-streets at Brentford; but, locally and literally, I was then living in a small room, a very small room, in Clarendon Road, Notting Hill Gate.

I have already stated that when I first came up to London I had no thought of literature as a career. Indeed, I never have thought of it as a career, but only as a destiny. Still, my meaning is that it in no wise dawned upon me as I travelled up from Newport to London in the early summer of 1880 that writing of any kind or sort was to be a great part of my life's business. And yet, before I had lived a month in the old red house by the inky stream, I was trying to write, in the intervals of a very different task, in an atmosphere which was utterly remote from literature of any kind. How was this? Partly, I suppose, because of the very large proportion of Celtic blood in my veins. It is quite true that the Celt — the Welsh Celt, at all events — has directly contributed very little to great literature. This I have always maintained, and always shall maintain; and I think all impartial judges will allow that if Welsh literature were annihilated at this moment the loss to the world's grand roll of masterpieces would be insignificant. I, speaking from the point of view of my own peculiar interests, I should be very sorry to miss my copy of the "Mabinogion," and there are certain stanzas of the poem called "Y Beddau"— "Vain is it to seek for the grave of Arthur" — which have a singular and enchanting and wizard music; but in neither case is there any question of a literary masterpiece.

Yet there is in Celtdom a certain literary feeling which does not exist in Anglo-Saxondom. It is diffused, no doubt, and appreciative rather than creative, and lacking in the sterner, critical spirit which is so necessary to all creative work; still it is there, and it is delighted with the rolling sound of the noble phrase. It perceives the music of words and the relation of that music to the world. I was taking a lesson in Welsh pronunciation some time ago, and uttered the phrase "yn oes oesodd" — from ages to ages. "That is right," said my Welsh friend, "speak it so that it makes a sound like the wind about the mountains." And, with or without the leave of the literary rationalists, I would say that the spirit of that sentence is very near to the heart of true literature.

So far then, as a man three-parts Celt, I was by nature inclined to the work of words, and there was, moreover, a feeble literary strain in my own family. There was a second cousin, or Welsh uncle, I am not certain which, who had composed a five-act heroic blank verse drama, called "Inez de Castro," which was almost, but not quite, represented by the famous Mrs. Somebody at the Lane in the early 'fifties. And then, more potent still, was the heredity of bookishness, the growing up among books that had accrued from grandfathers and uncles and cousins, all men who had lived all their days amongst books, and had sat over country hearths on mountain sides, reading this leathern Colloquies of Erasmus, this little Horace in mellow parchment, with the Sphere of Elzevir.

And then there was the old-fashioned grammar school education, of which it must be said, by friends and foes, that it is an education in words. One spent one's time, unconsciously, in weighing the values of words in English and Greek and Latin, in rendering one tongue into another, in estimating the exact sense of an English sentence before translating it into one or another of the old tongues. So that a boy who could do decent Latin prose must first have mastered the exact sense and significance of his English original, and then he must also have made himself understand to a certain extent, not only the logic but the polite habit of each language. I remember when I was a very small boy rendering "Put to the sword" literally into "Gladio positi." "Well," said my master, "there is no reason on earth why the Romans shouldn't have said 'gladio positi,' but as a matter of fact they *did* say 'ferro occisi' — killed with iron." And if one thinks of it, he who has mastered that little lesson has also mastered the larger lesson that literature is above logic, that there are matters in it which transcend plain common sense. And so, the long and the short of it was, that in 1880 I began to try to write.

Now I believe that one of the most tortuous and difficult questions that engages philosophy is the theory of cause and effect. I think, though I am not quite sure, that in one of Mr. Balfour's philosophical books this matter is treated, and the familiar case of a sportsman's pulling a trigger, firing a gun, and thereby bringing down a bird, is made an instance. What is the "cause" of the bird's death? Roughly speaking, of course, the pulling of the trigger; but roughly speaking is not the same thing as philosophically speaking; and if anyone be so simple as to conclude that roughly speaking means truly speaking and that philosophy is all nonsense, let me remind him that when he enjoys his after-dinner cigar in his arm-chair he is not conscious of the fact that he is being whirled through space, like a top, at the most terrific speed.

So, if I remember rightly, Mr. Balfour left the philosophical "cause" of the bird's death an open question, if not a question altogether beyond determination of human wit; and thus it is with the impulse that sends off a harmless young fellow on the career of letters. One can talk of the causes that impel a grain of corn to grow from the ground; sound seed, good soil, good farming; dry weather, wet weather, each in its season; but at the last the engendering of the green shoot remains a mystery. And so it is a mystery that near midsummer in 1880 I suddenly began to write horrible rubbish in a little manuscript book with a scarlet cover; rubbish that had rhymes to it.

But if ultimate causes lie beyond those flaming walls of the world that put bounds to all our inquisition, it is not so hard to trace those causes which are proximate. The bird dies because the shot hit it in a vital part, the corn sprouts because it is put into the ground — and I began to write because I bought a copy of Swinburne's "Songs Before Sunrise."

I forget how I heard of this name, which once loomed so fiery and strange a portent, which still, in the estimation of many excellent judges, stands for a great literary achievement. I know it was while I was down in the country, because I can remember one of our clergy, an Eton and Christchurch man, telling me gossip about the poet, who had in those early days retired from the world to Putney. It is to be supposed that I had read something concerning Swinburne in one of those wonderful London papers that came over our hills from another world, that might almost have fallen from the stars they were so wholly marvellous. But, somehow or other, I was possessed by an eager curiosity concerning this Swinburne, convinced in advance — I cannot remember how — that here I should surely find an unexpected, unsurmised treasure. And so, one hot, shiny afternoon, I came up from the old Georgian suburb by the black stream, crossed Hungerford Bridge, and made my way into the Strand; into that Strand which is as lost as Atlantis. And going eastward past many vanished things, past the rich odours of Messrs. Rimell's soap-boiling, I came to St. Mary-le-Strand, and the entrance of Holywell Street. At the southern corner of this street, facing the east end of the church, there stood Denny's bookshop, and, gold in my pocket, I went in with a bold appearance, and said, "Have you got Swinburne's 'Songs Before Sunrise'?" The shopman did not seem in the least astonished at my question. He said he had got the book, and produced it, and showed it me, and the very cover was such as I had never seen before, provocative, therefore, in a high degree. And so I bought the book and carried it out of Denny's into the sunlight in a great amazement.

For, be it remembered, one did not go into a provincial bookshop in that easy way and say, "Have you got this or that?" For the chances were about a thousand to one that they hadn't got it, and never would have it. It is odd, but I cannot remember exactly the nature of the stock of the average country bookseller; my impression is of Bibles, Prayer Books, Church Services, and Pitman's Shorthand Manuals. So, if you wanted a book in the county town, you did not say, "Have you got so-and-so?" but "Will you get me so-and-so?" and in four or five days you called and the book was ready. But I had a notion that in this wonderful London the bookshop would actually have the book that you wanted, there actually in presence, and waiting for you on its shelves. I had a notion, I say, but again, it seemed almost incredible that there should be such shops in the world, and so when the bookseller under St. Mary-le-Strand said "Yes," quite simply, and handed me the "Songs Before Sunrise" in two or three seconds, I was amazed and exultant too; the legend of London, though marvellous, was evidently a true one.

Now I have a friend who is very fond of preaching the doctrine of what he calls the cataclysm. He holds that we are all much bettered by an occasional earthquake, moral, mental or spiritual. He says that volcanoes which suddenly burst out from under our feet are the finest tonics in the world, that violent thunderstorms, cloud-bursts, and tornadoes clear our mental skies. The treatment is heroic, but my friend may be right; certainly that volume of "Songs Before Sunrise" was to me quite cataclysmic. First there was the literary manner of the book, which to me was wholly strange and new and wonderful, and then there was the tremendous boldness of it all, the denial of everything that I had been brought up to believe most sure and sacred; the book was positively strewn with the fragments of shattered altars and the torn limbs of kings and priests.

How do the lines go? I quote from memory, but they run something like this: —

Thou hast taken all, Galilæan, but these thou shalt not take;
The laurel, the doves and the pæan, the breasts of the nymph in the brake.

Clearly this was a terrible, a tremendous fellow, an earth-shaking, heaven-storming poet. And so between my endeavours to qualify for passing the preliminary examination of the Royal College of Surgeons, I began to write; I should think the most horrible drivel that ever has been written since rhymes first jingled. I can't remember, oddly enough, whether I tried to imitate Swinburne; I know one copy of verses was "inspired" by a picture called "Harmony," which I think was hung in the Academy of 1880. It depicted a mediæval maiden playing the organ, while a mediæval youth watched her in a dazed and love-stricken condition. This is positively the only one of these early horrors of mine, of which I have any recollection; my memory is purged of the rest of them, I am glad to say. I merely mention these things because they illustrate a very singular point in literary psychology; in universal psychology, for the matter of that. For I believe it is a rule that almost every literary career, certainly every literary career which is to be concerned with the imaginative side of literature, begins with the writing of verses. Nay, people who are to live lives quite remote from literature will often try to write poetry in their youth; and on the face of it, this is a great puzzle. For poetry, be it remembered, is the most "artificial" kind of literary composition, it is immeasurably the most difficult, it is by far the most remote from that which is commonly called life. Why, then, does the inexperienced beginner, devoid of all technical ability, invariably essay this most difficult technical task on his entry into the literary career?

The problem of the boy in the back room, not far from the dark stream of the Wandle, writing verses in the red notebook, is really one of the enigmas of the universe; it is rather a Chinese-box puzzle; riddle is within riddle.

For if we start at the beginning of things, or at what seems to us to be the beginning of things, we are met by the question as to why there should be any such thing as poetry in the universe. I need not say how much wider this question is than it seems; how it must be asked about all the arts, about fugues and cathedrals and romances and dances. It is an immense question; immense when one considers that with nine people out of ten the great criterion is, “Does it pay?” That is, will it result in a larger supply of fine champagne, four ale, roast legs of pork, and mousses royales to the population? Will this scheme of things enable Sir John to keep a fifth motor-car, or will it get Bill meat three times a day? That is, at last, the test by which we judge all things. It is an old and approved British test; by it Macaulay condemned the whole of Greek philosophy, because that philosophy did not lead up to the invention of the steam engine. Now, it is quite clear that poetry, speaking generally, pays neither the producer nor the consumer of it; it does not lead to motor-cars, beefsteaks, vintage clarets, or four ale. It is not even moral; not a single man has ever been induced to drink ginger-beer instead of beer by reading Keats.

I must pause for a moment; I fear that it may be thought that I am trying to be funny or — more injurious accusation! — trying to be clever. I am not trying to be either; I am stating the simple facts of the case. Hardly a month passes by without some indignant person pointing out in the Press that Engineering and Commercial Chemistry are infinitely more useful — i.e., lead to more beefsteaks — than Latin and Greek; and that when Oxford and Cambridge find out that obvious truth they may become of some service to the State. Indeed, it is only a few weeks ago since a gentleman wrote to a paper showing that military training was better for a boy — i.e., would make him the better soldier — than “silly old” Greek plays. And let me acknowledge that these contentions are perfectly true; just as it is perfectly true that fur coats are much warmer than Alcaics. So, I say, here is the problem: the common, widely accepted test of the right to existence of everything: does it pay, does it add to the physical comforts of life, is quite clearly opposed to the existence of poetry, and yet poetry exists. Therefore, either the poets and the lovers of poetry are mad, or else the common judgment is … let us say, mistaken. I need scarcely say that I incline to the latter solution of the problem, and so qua human being, I am not ashamed of trying to write poetry by the Wandle, though I recognise, qua Arthur Machen, that I was, very decidedly, not born a poet.

For I firmly hold the doctrine that the natural, the arch-natural expression of man, so far as he is to be distinguished from pigs and dogs and goats, is in the arts, and through the arts and by the arts. It is not by reason, as reason is commonly understood, that man is distinguished from the other animals; but by art. I can quite well conceive the Black Ants sending the message "Hill 27 fell before the Red Ant attack early this afternoon," but I cannot conceive either Red or Black Ants writing odes or building miniature cathedrals. The arts, then, are man's difference, that which makes him to be what he is; and when he speaks through them he is using the utterance which is proper to him, as man. For, if we once set aside the "does it pay" nonsense, which is evidently nonsense and pestilent nonsense at that, we come clearly and freely to the truth that man is concerned with beauty, and with the ecstasy or rapture that proceeds from the creation of beauty and from the contemplation of it. And youth, as I think I have pointed out before, is the time of revelation. It is children who possess the "kingdom of heaven," to them are vouchsafed glimpses of that paradise which is the true home of man, and so it is that the boy with literature in his blood naturally makes his first efforts in the region of poetry, which is the heart and core of all literature.

The heart and core; for, as in the individual man, so in the whole history of men literature begins always with poetry, just as speech began with song. First, the magic incantation, sung about strange secret fires in hidden places by wild men, then the ballad or lyric, then Homer, then Herodotus, with the odours of the sanctuary of poetry still about him, though he has come down into the market-place of prose. And it is not necessary to go farther in time or space than the Northumberland of a few years ago to hear phrases common enough, things of everyday, set to enchanting melodies. I shall never forget how once in the years of my wandering I came one wet autumn afternoon to a little town called Morpeth. It struck me as a dingy place enough, "un petit trou de province, sale, noir, boueux," and my lodging was dingy, and musty too, in a house kept by an old invalid woman who moved about in a wheel chair and grumbled if a window were opened. But when it came to the question of the stroller's tea, the servant-maid, who came, I think, from the wild places of that land, said consolingly: "You need not trouble yourselves; you shall have your tea in half an hour." No doubt the girl was mortal, but she spoke the tongue of the immortals; her phrase about our tea was chanted to an exquisite melody that might have come from the Gradual — or from fairyland.

The natural man, then, is a singer and a poet, and so we may say that all artists are in reality survivals from an earlier time, and so it is that even in these later days the lad, with something of the youth and true nature of his race restored to him for a brief hour, sits in solitary places and endeavours to exercise his birthright. Alas! he stutters deplorably in his speech as he delays by the Wandle, inditing verses; but it is thus that he would declare that he is a citizen of no mean city; he would fain say through those sorry rhymes, *Civis cœlestis sum*.

Chapter IV

WELL, I SAW the first of Augustus Harris's autumn dramas at Drury Lane, heard the newsboys calling out the death of Miss Neilson one misty evening up and down the Strand, and went back to Gwent in the character of a bad penny; and so fell to writing of those autumn and winter nights, when all the house was still.

Poor wretch! For this is the misery of literature, that it has no technique in the sense that music and painting have each its own technique. The young painter and the young composer, having acquired a certain mechanical skill in the elements of their arts, have studios and schools which they can attend. They have masters who lead them in their several ways, or who tell them, if necessary, to abandon those ways with all convenient speed. But for the lad with letters on the brain there is no help, no guidance; nor is there the possibility of any direction in the literary path. Now and then people send me manuscripts, and ask for my opinion; I give it because I am weak, but I always tell them that in literature the other man's opinion is not worth twopence.

No; the only course is to go on stumbling and struggling and blundering like a man lost in a dense thicket on a dark night; a thicket, I say, of rebounding boughs that punish with the sting of a whip-lash, of thorns that most savagely lacerate the flesh — it is the flesh of the heart, alas! that they tear — of sharp rocks of agony and black pools of despair. Such is the obscure wood of the literary life; such, at least, it was to me. You struggle to find your way; but again and again you ask yourself whether, for you, there is any way. You think you have hit upon the lucky track at last. And lo! before your feet is the black pit. And such is not alone the adventure of little, ineffectual, struggling men. How old was glorious Cervantes, now serene for ever amongst the immortals, when he found his way to that village of La Mancha? Fifty, I think, or almost fifty. And he had been striving for years to write plays, and poetry, and short stories of passion and sentiment; and it was only the roar of applause that thundered up from the world when the Knight and the Squire were seen riding over the hill that convinced Cervantes that at last he had discovered his true path; if indeed he ever were convinced in his heart of the magnitude and majesty of the achievement of “Don Quixote.”

And if these things are done with the great, what will be done with the little? If the clear-voiced rulers of the everlasting choir are to suffer so and agonise, what of miserable little Welshmen stammering and stuttering by the Wandle, in the obscure rectory amongst the hills, in waste places by Shepherd’s Bush, in gloomy Great Russell Street, where the ghosts of dead, disappointed authors go sighing to and fro? For the fate of the little literary man there is no articulate speech that is sufficient; one must fall back on aoi or oimoi, or alas, or some such vague lament of unutterable woe.

Now one of the first agonies of the learner in letters is the discovery of the horrid gulf that yawns between the conception and the execution. Some years before this winter of 1880, when I was at school, I had read the tale of Owain in the Mabinogion, of the magic sudden storm, and of the singing of the birds after it. And going out for a walk one half-holiday with a school-fellow, just such a sudden storm, as it seemed to me, overtook us as we went down into a beautiful valley not far from Hereford; and after it there was a like joyful singing of birds in the trees. And somehow the magic atmosphere of the old tale, mingled with the enacting, as it were, of one of its chief circumstances, left on my mind a very strong and singular impression which, when the desire of literature came upon me, I yearned to put into words. I did so, in the blank verse form, and sent the “poem” to the “Gentleman’s Magazine,” and this I think was my first attempt to get into print. I need not say that my nonsense was returned to me, with thanks; but I wish I knew why I chose that particular magazine. It must have had some especial attraction for me, since ten years later I sent Sylvanus Urban a prose article, which he accepted and paid for at the appropriate eighteenth-century rate of a guinea a sheet; that is sixteen pages. But I must say in all fairness that Sylvanus warned me in advance of his rate of payment.

But that gulf between the idea as it glows warm and radiant in the author’s heart, and its cold and faulty realisation in words is an early nightmare, and a late one, too. For the beginner, if he suffer from many terrible disappointments, has also the consolations of hope, fallacious though these may prove to be. This scheme that looked so well has certainly come to the saddest grief, but there may be better luck next time; if this road have led to nothing but a blank wall of failure, that way may rise from the valley and climb the hill and lead into a fair land. It is later in the life of the literary man, when he has tried all roads and made all the experiments, that his final sorrow comes upon him. He may not be forced to say, perhaps, that he has been a total failure; he may, indeed, be able to chronicle achievements of a minor kind, successes in the estimation of others. But now, with riper understanding, he perceives, as he did not perceive in the days of his youth, the depth of the gulf between the idea and the word, between the emotion that thrilled him to his very heart and soul, and the sorry page of print into which that emotion stands translated. He dreamed in fire; he has worked in clay.

I did not know (happily for myself) of these things in the ending of the year 1880; and so, when all the rectory was abed and asleep, I sat up by a dying fire writing a “poem” on a classic subject.

The classic “poem” was finished some time in the winter of 1880-81, and then I performed a bold action. I sent the manuscript — I can see it now, written in a sprawly hand on both sides of ordinary letter paper — to a Hereford stationer, and bade him print me one hundred copies thereof. He, strangely enough, did so, and I saw myself in print for the first time. I have been looking at my copy of this work, I should think the only copy in existence, and wondering whether I would quote a few lines from it. I have decided against this course. But, after all, I was only seventeen when I wrote “Eleusinia.”

But the little pamphlet had its influence on my life. My relations decided, after reading it, that journalism was the career for me; a decision that then seemed to me both reasonable and pleasant, which now strikes me with amazement, nay with stupefaction. Since those days I have found out a good many things concerning both poetry and journalism; and looking over that old copy of “Eleusinia,” I have meditated on what career I should advise for the author of that work if he were now to consult me. I give it up; I abandon the problem utterly. And yet, strange as it seems, strange most of all to me, my relations were justified after all. I did become a journalist, just thirty years afterwards. But by 1910, those who had arranged this destiny for me were long dead and delivered from all their troubles. I remember my father, who knew about as much of the matter as I did, sketching out my future career. I was to go to London to learn the business first of all, shorthand, of course, and all that sort of thing. A chief portion of the task, he said, half jocularly, would be to lurk in the entrance-halls of great houses and write down the names of distinguished guests on the nights of grand receptions. And then, eventually, some few hundreds would come to me, and with this I was to buy an interest in a small local paper, and so, I suppose, write leaders and live happily ever after. The programme has not been carried out literally. The few hundreds have been more agreeably spent long years ago, and my editor never sent me to get the names of distinguished guests at great houses — knowing, wise man, that I should make a sad mess of such a business. But one of my first "assignments" in journalism was to describe a Giant Apple. I chased after that apple from Bond Street to Covent Garden, from Covent Garden back to Bond Street, and wrote in my paper about its smiling face, wishing my poor father were alive to hear the story of my long-deferred entrance into the art and mystery of the journalist. He would have laughed consumedly; and from my dear remembrance of him, I think he would have found a quotation from Horace to meet the case. Once, I recollect, it turned out that the odd man at the rectory, supposed to be a bachelor, had abandoned a wife and twelve children — all of them small ones, for aught I know — somewhere in Gloucestershire. A policeman came for poor Robert, and my father was very sorry for the man, even though he were a sad dog, and a notorious toper of ale. But the rector thought of the phrase: "Raro antecedentem scelestum deseruit pœna," and cheered up amazingly.

Well, on the strength of the verses about the Eleusinian mysteries, I am to be a journalist, and consequently, as it was thought in those days, I must learn shorthand, so that I may be able to write a hundred and fifty words in a minute. And here again comes a chapter as sad as that which I have written on my arithmetic. I never learnt shorthand effectively, because I was too stupid to learn it. The queer thing is that when I was quite a little boy at school this art of shorthand had a strange and mysterious attraction for me. Why? I am sure I don't know; why did the small boys of my generation love dark lanterns? Robert Louis Stevenson has written an enchanting essay on the fascination of this instrument of the mysteries; but I am not quite sure that even he has penetrated to the heart of the enigma. For I, though a lonely child, knew the joy of the dark lantern, and it was a great and exceeding joy. The glowing of heat that rose from its roof — corrugated, I think? — the rank smell of its oils were charms that somehow carried me over the borders of this common world into an exquisite region of wonder and surmise. And now I come to look back into days horribly distant — the shorthand question must wait for a while — I perceive that there was a perfect ritual, or ceremonial rather, of the Dark Lantern, the origins of which are as obscure to me as are the origins of other primitive mysteries. Of one thing only I am certain, and I speak with all due deference to the author of "The Golden Bough," not forgetting Miss Jane Harrison; the lantern service of my early boyhood had no reference whatever to the young crops or to the sprouting of the corn. As I lit the wick I did not say, "O Sun! shine thou also on the land and make it warm so that there may be many cabbages, so that green peas may not be lacking to the lamb which is equally nurtured by thy beams." Of course, I am quite willing to allow that, as a general rule, an anxiety about the spring crops fully explains the origin of all painting, all sculpture, all architecture, all poetry, all drama, all music, all religion, all romance: I admit that the Holy Gospels are really all about spring cabbage, that martyrdom and mass are spring cabbage, that Arthur is really arator, the ploughman; that Galahad, denoting the achievement and end of the great quest, is Caulahad, the cabbage god. I admit all this because it is so entirely reasonable and satisfactory, and, indeed, self-evident; but though all Frazerdom should rise up against me, I cannot allow that when I lit my dark lantern I was inviting the sun to help the crops.

There was some sort of obscure connection — I seem to remember — between Dark Lanterns and Masks. They were both properties in singular mysteries of a formless character which were enacted in dark shrubberies on dark nights, just before bed-time. It was well understood, I know, that these objects must be kept in secret places, and must not by any means be seen by the uninitiated; and the uninitiated were everybody besides myself. And here, I believe, I was following unconsciously, but most strictly, the rules of all primitive mysteries throughout the world. The Greeks of the historical period had become lax; they carried about the mystic fan of Iacchus in public procession. But amongst the Blackfellows of Australia, where the rites are much nearer to the original purity of their institution, the mystic fan is not seen, only heard. Therefore the Dark Lantern and the Mask were kept hidden in an obscure cranny of the coach-house, which was at the end of an overshadowed drive at some distance from the rectory. They were produced under the cover of the darkness, these sacramental instruments, clouds and stars and the dim boughs of trees and tangled undergrowth alone saw them. There were certain solemn words which accompanied the ostension of the objects, but they were in a language which I have long forgotten. But some day, when the turmoil has died down, when the clouds have cleared for the sunset and the apparition of the evening star, as I sit by a western shore awaiting the boat of Avalon, I shall write my last treatise, under the title of "The Dark Lantern and the Mask," *libellus vere mysticus*. And here I give notice to all good and lawful men that I am duly seized of the above title, so that they may abstain from intromitting with the same.

This digression of the dark lantern proceeded, naturally enough, from my speaking of shorthand. This art, I said, appealed to me when I was a boy, and its appeal was that of a kind of mystery writing, of a script not in common use. For my acquaintance did not lie in journalistic circles. I knew nobody who could write shorthand or understood anything about it, and so the three books of Pitman— "Teacher," "Manual," and "Reporter" — were three mystery books, so far as my small world was concerned. But now, in later years, having written that famous poem on the initiation of Eleusis, I was to be a journalist, and to be a journalist I must learn shorthand. And then I found Phonography a mystery indeed, and too great a mystery for me, since I could not attain to it. I muddled about with it for three or four years; I actually made some use of it in one of my queer employments, but I never wrote it decently. I was too fumble-fisted; try as I would, I could not form the characters with elegance or accuracy. My p's and b's would wobble and bend till they looked like f's and v's, if I tried to halve a letter I quartered it. A kindly reporter gave me a hint: "Don't bother about the thick and thin lines," he said, "I never do." And no doubt the skilled shorthand writer can play all manner of tricks with the system, but I was not a skilled writer, and I took the reporter's advice and made bad worse. My last shorthand lesson was taken in 1885, long after I had ceased to think of journalism as a profession. Indeed, I cannot now remember why I continued to waste my time over a craft that I could not master; but I suppose I thought the endeavour gave an air of respectability and solidity to my proceedings that they would have lacked without it. From June 1881 to December 1882 I was more or less vaguely bent on the journalist's career. I remember feeling somewhat discouraged during this period by reading an advertisement for a journalistic position in a London paper. The applicant could write shorthand at the rate of one hundred and fifty words a minute, he understood all about reporting, he was an expert at “leaderettes,” and quite willing to take a turn at the case — all for thirty shillings a week. This did not seem promising, but I need not have disturbed myself; my journalistic days were not yet, nor for many years to come. In the meanwhile I read variously and became thoroughly familiar with Boswell’s Johnson (in Mr. Percy Fitzgerald’s edition). And one windy, gusty night, when the costers’ flares in the back streets were burning with a rushing sound, I came upon a secondhand bookshop on the main road between Hammersmith and Turnham Green, and went in and found an odd volume of William Morris’s “Earthly Paradise.” Now followed the old trouble, and in a worse form. As Swinburne’s “Songs Before Sunrise” had first set me versifying, so the “Earthly Paradise” reinforced the original virus. And now I had acquired some slight facility of a worthless sort, and so I began to imitate William Morris, and spent the odd hours of six good months in writing a sham-Greek tale in rhymed couplets; which I tore up thirty years ago. And then I discovered Herrick, and tried to imitate that inimitable writer; but this effort, though vain in itself, was not so wholly vain. For it brought me, as it were, into the seventeenth century, into an age which I have loved ever since with a peculiar devotion. Ten years later I went on pilgrimage to Dean Prior and Dean Churchtown, and in spite of the restored church, trod the lanes under the moor with reverence, since Herrick’s feet had passed by those ways.

But now towards the end of the year 1882, after I had known London, on and off, for nearly two and a half years, all that feeling of its immense gaiety with which I had approached it in the first place was dropping from me. I began to realise, very gradually and by dismal degrees, that the gaieties of London were commodities that had to be bought with money, and that I had none. The theatre had ceased to charm me, and I am very sorry to say that it has never charmed me since; that is from the point of view of the man sitting in the pit. By the end of ‘82 I had quite definitely ceased to be “fond of the play.”

For now London began to assume for me its terrible aspect. It was rather a goblin’s castle than a city of delights; if indeed it had not become a place of punishment wherein I was condemned to hard labour through many dreary and hopeless years.

Chapter V

IN THAT WONDERFUL volume which is called the Grand Saint Graal we are told how the hermit Nasciens received a magic book from paradise. It was divided into portions, and one of these portions was intituled “Here Begin Terrors.” I can find no words that might more fitly introduce the tale of my solitary life in London. I was only twenty; I was poor; I was desolate. And I frizzled all the time (or most of it) on the fire of my own futility; I longed to make literature, and I could only write nonsense.

I was employed for a time in a house of business in a street north of the Strand and parallel to it, which, I suppose, must have been Chandos Street. I know that it was still paved with cobble-stones. My employers were publishers — the firm has for many years ceased to exist — and I was something or other in what is called the “editorial” department. But to the best of my belief publishing books was but a minor part of the energies of the house, and I should think a later growth. The real staple was wholesale stationery; there was an important “line” of copybooks, there was a great deal done with ornamental and decorated albums, and also with pictorial calendars. The Shakespeare calendar of the House is still in existence, or was in existence a year or two ago, and it bears the name of the vanished firm. Mr. (afterwards Sir) Walter Besant had been the “editor” of Messrs. Chandos and Co., but just before I made my first trial of business life he had resigned, and his place was taken by a very kindly literary gentleman, whose name I have forgotten. Afterwards he edited a series, if not several series, of anthologies, and was, I believe, appointed Professor of English Literature at some Indian seminary of learning. I do not know whether he is still alive. Well, it was my business to assist this gentleman. I think I was engaged as his “secretary,” but I was known in the House as his “clurk.” I am trying to recollect what I actually did to assist him.

My first job on the morning of my arrival I can remember. I made a copy of Mr. Gladstone’s Latin version of the well-known hymn, “Rock of Ages”:

"Jesu, pro me perforatus," it began. And then I had to take down in shorthand and afterwards write in longhand a stern letter to somebody who had made a mistake in the name of King Alfred's grandmother. This error had occurred in one of a series of Board School history books that the firm was publishing; and this circumstance alone gave me a loathing and hatred for the whole business, since I thought then, and think still, that the name of King Alfred's grandmother is not of the faintest consequence to any reasonable being. It is the kind of fact which would interest a German deeply; he would spend years of his life to find out all about it; but such is not the occupation of a gentleman.

In the afternoon of that day we became a little livelier. My chief contributed a London letter to some Scottish paper — he came from the northern part of this island — and again my shorthand was required. The London letter was distinctly gay in its tone, it dealt in a cheerful spirit with some early incidents in the career of a certain admirable actress whose talents then engaged and delighted us. As I took it down it struck me as over worldly for the readers of the "Haddaneuk Herald," and sure enough my man reconsidered the matter and struck out the gaieties from the copy. And how did that famous shorthand of mine serve me? Not so vilely, considering all things. I had a quick memory then, and remembered many of the phrases that had been dictated, and I could read quite a lot of the characters that I had formed, and others gave me a vague sort of intimation of the sense; just as the neumes helped the church-singers of the earlier ages; they were quite useful if you knew the tune.

I search my memory for further details of my occupation with Chandos and Co. I think that the Shakespeare Calendar occupied me during odd hours for a week or more. This was January, and I was set to the preparation of the calendar for the next year. It was not a difficult task, and I was furnished with a sort of album, containing the Shakespeare calendars for the past six or seven years, and my only business was to make a new almanack out of these old elements. Thus January 1, 1884, gave the Shakespearean quotation that had been assigned to December 27, 1877; for January 2 I chose a motto that had pertained to February 6, 1882, and so forth. It was easy, but dull. And I was dull, too, or I would have invented Shakespearean lines that Shakespeare never wrote, and trusted to the all but universal ignorance of Shakespeare. I did something like that, when I was an older and a merrier man. I persuaded a friend of mine, a young fellow of literary tastes, that one of the most famous phrases ascribed to Shakespeare was in reality a gag, invented by Mr. F. R. Benson's stage manager. "Do you mean to say," said my friend, "that this Mr. Randle Ayrton invented 'a poor thing, but mine own'?" "Certainly," I replied. "Then," said he, "Ayrton must be a most wonderful man." And I wonder how many of my readers know exactly how the matter stands — without referring to the play?

And then what else did I do for my pound a week in Chandos Street? Chiefly, I think I took down and transcribed a daily report to the head office of the firm, which was in Belfast or Dundee or some such town. I don't remember in the least what it was about, whether it dealt with King Alfred's grandmother's name or with other matters. But I had to write about two quarto pages daily of this report, and put D 1 in the margin. I think D 1 meant Literary Department; but the whole thing was the terror of my life. For it had to be neatly written, with a fair and level margin on each side; and this I could by no means achieve. Again and again my D 1 was condemned as a ragged and untidy performance, and I had to copy it out all over again, as if I had been a careless schoolboy — as, indeed, I was from the firm's point of view.

And I sit in my corner, trying to write a round, clear, clerkly hand, trying to remember that of the two forms of the small "t" one was much to be preferred, trying to observe the rule that "today" must be written as one word, not two, and that for commercial purposes "draft" must be spelt with "f," not with "ugh"; and thinking of the nightingale in the thorn bush by the Soar, in the still valley.

Here I was, then, in Chandos Street, a peg of no particular shape at all in a perfectly round hole, feeling very miserable indeed. We were, I believe, somewhat cramped for room, and I had a desk in the album department. Here three very cheerful and kindly young fellows of about my own age did something with handsome albums. I don't know in the least what they did; so far as I could see they took albums out of tissue paper and put them back into tissue paper all day long. One of them, the senior of the room — he must have been three or four years older than any of us — was just about to make a real start in life. He used to tell me all about it when we were alone together for a minute or two, as sometimes happened. There was a young lady whom he was to marry in a few months' time, and he had made arrangements for setting up as a stationer in Harlesden, and he meant to push Chandos's stuff — albums and everything — and to do well and be happy. "Poor man, and then he died," to quote one of Dr. Johnson's muttered undertones. I do not know how far his short life at Harlesden was successful or felicitous. But as for me, I hated it all. It was not that the work was hard, but that I took no interest in it, and saw no reason why it should be done at all, or why anybody alive should do it. So I looked about me, and through the favour of a friend I got a little teaching of small children at twenty-five shillings a week. Then I gave notice to Messrs. Chandos. They were very kind; they offered me twenty-five shillings a week to stay, but I thanked them and said no. It was the business atmosphere of the place that I detested; I have always agreed with the small boy in "Nicholas Nickleby" who uttered the great maxim, "Never Perform Business." The teaching which followed was certainly not exciting, but I did not mind it. Indeed, having to teach Euclid, I found to my amazement that it was about something, and actually was a coherent and reasoned scheme of things, not a mere madhouse puzzle, as I had always imagined. But then my own geometrical instruction had been limited. It consisted simply in this: Fourteen Euclids were served out to fourteen small boys. The mathematical master then said: "Learn the Definitions, Axioms, and Postulates." That was my first and my last lesson in geometry; though I duly went through the accustomed books of Euclid, trying to learn by heart what was to me mere unmeaning gibberish.

At this time and for the next year and a half I was living in Clarendon Road, Notting Hill Gate — or Holland Park, to give the politer subdirection. I am sorry to say that I had not a garret, since the houses of that quarter, being comparatively modern, do not possess the sloping roofs which have seen the miseries of so many lettered men. Still, my room had its merits. It was, of course, at the top of the house, and it was much smaller than any monastic "cell" that I have ever seen. From recollection I should estimate its dimensions as ten feet by five. It held a bed, a washstand, a small table, and one chair; and so it was very fortunate that I had few visitors. Outside, on the landing, I kept my big wooden box with all my possessions — and these not many — in it. And there was a very notable circumstance about this landing. On the wall was suspended, lengthwise, a step-ladder by which one could climb through a trap door to the roof in case of fire, and so between the rungs or steps of this ladder I disposed my library. For anything

I know, the books tasted as well thus housed as they did at a later period when I kept them in an eighteenth-century bookcase of noble dark mahogany, behind glass doors. There was no fireplace in my room, and I was often very cold. I would sit in my shabby old great-coat, reading or writing, and if I were writing I would every now and then stand up and warm my hands over the gas-jet, to prevent my fingers getting numb. I remember envying a man very much indeed on a certain night in late winter or early spring. It was a very cold night; there was a bitter north-easter blowing, and the wind seemed to pierce right through my old coat and to set my very bones shivering and aching. I had gone abroad, because I was weary of my den, because I was sick with reading and in no humour for writing, because I felt I must have some change, however slight. But it was an evil and a bitter blast, so I turned back after a little while, coming down one of the steep streets that lead from Notting Hill Gate Station to Clarendon Road. And half-way home I came upon a man encamped on the road by the pavement. He was watching over some barrows and tools and other instruments of street repair, and he sat in a sort of canvas wigwam, well sheltered from the wind that was chilling me to the heart. His coat, too, looked thick and heavy, and he had a warm comforter round his neck, and before him was a glowing, ardent brazier of red-hot coals. He held his hands and his nose over the radiant heat, and smoked a black clay pipe; and I think he had a can of beer beside him. I envied that man with all my heart; I don’t think I have ever envied any man so much.

Occasionally I had applications for the loan of a book from my step-ladder library. These came from the lodgers on the ground floor, an Armenian and his wife, who annoyed the landlady by sleeping in cushions piled about the carpet and hanging their blankets in front of the doors and windows. It was the Armenian lady who had literary tastes, and her desire was always for “a story-book.” I never saw her or her husband, but I often heard him calling Mary, the servant. He would stand at the top of the kitchen stairs and shout “Marry! Marry!” and then, reflectively, and after a short interval, “Damn that girl.” He gave a fine, Oriental force to the common English “damn.” Other lodgers that I remember were a young Greek and a chorus girl, mates for a single summer. They occupied the first floor and were succeeded by a family from Ireland. I have a confused notion that there was something a little queer about the head of this household. He was, I think, a major, and I know he was Evangelical. As I went down the stairs I heard him more than once uttering in loud, earnest tones the words, “Let us pray.” This was startling; and one of his daughters would always shut the door of their room with a bang on these occasions, and that was startling, too.

The little table in my little room turned out to be a very useful piece of furniture. I not only read at it and wrote on it, but I used it as a larder. In the corner nearest the angle of the wall by the window I kept my provisions, that is to say, a loaf of bread and a canister of green tea. Morning and evening the landlady or “Marry” would bring me up a tray on which were a plate, a knife, a teapot, a cup and saucer, and a jug of hot water. With the aid of a kettle and a spirit lamp, which came, I think, from under that serviceable table — one may fairly say from the cellar — I made the hot water to boil and brewed a great pot of strong green tea.

In the first months of this life of mine an early dinner was added to the fees of my teaching; later, my pupils changed, and the dinner disappeared. I then used to spend the hour in the middle of the day in wanderings about Turnham Green and the waste places round Gunnersbury, making my meal on a large Captain’s biscuit and a glass of beer. I varied this repast by taking it in various public-houses. In those days there were still pleasing and ancient taverns scattered along those western roads. One I remember in particular, a very old, tumbledown house, set at the edge of the market gardens, which then approached almost to Turnham Green. There was not a straight line about this old, old house, its roof-tree dipped and wavered, and the roof was of mellowed tiles, and one end of the place was quite overwhelmed by a huge billow of ivy. I used to think that highwaymen must have lurked in the little room where I took my biscuit and glass of ale; and the food and drink tasted much better on that account. The old tavern, and its leaning sheds and ragged outbuildings, its red roof and its green ivy; all are gone long ago. There is a row of raw houses where it stood, and I hate them. Sometimes I did not have any beer, either because I did not want any, or because it struck me as too great a luxury. Then I would buy a small bag of currant biscuits and take them to the region of the market gardens and devour them, sitting on a gate or sheltering behind a hedge. I don’t know how it is, but these feasts are always connected in my mind with a grey and gloomy sky and a very cold wind, so that I shiver when I think of flat, square biscuits in which currants are embedded. But I have a reverence for them, too. There were, I confess, days of gross debauch. Once a week, or once a fortnight at the least, I went to a goodly and spacious and ancient tavern on the high road, and had a grilled chop, potatoes, bread, and beer; which came to one and a penny or one and twopence. *Les Cotelettes de Mouton*, *Sauce Bénie* the dish is called by the experts of the *haute cuisine*. I can recommend it. And in the evenings I sometimes exceeded, though not so violently. I would, nine evenings out of ten, buy my provision of bread at a shop at the bottom of the long main road, opposite or nearly opposite to Uxbridge Road Station. The shop kept a very choice kind of gingerbread, and I would buy a couple of bricks of this gingerbread, and munch them with a high relish as a supplement to the common bread.

As the spring of 1883 advanced, and the weather improved and the evenings lengthened, I began the habit of rambling abroad in the hope of finding something that could be called country. I would sometimes pursue Clarendon Road northward and get into all sorts of regions of which I never had any clear notion. They are obscure to me now, and a sort of nightmare. I see myself getting terribly entangled with a canal which seemed to cross my path in a manner contrary to the laws of reason. I turn a corner and am confronted with an awful cemetery, a terrible city of white gravestones and shattered marble pillars and granite urns, and every sort of horrid heathenry. This, I suppose, must have been Kensal Green: it added new terror to death. I think I came upon Kensal Green again and again; it was like the Malay, an enemy for months. I would break off by way of Portobello Road and entangle myself in Notting Hill, and presently I would come upon the goblin city; I might wander into the Harrow Road, but at last the ghost-stones would appal me. Maida Vale was treacherous, Paddington false — inevitably, it seemed, my path led me to the detested habitation of the dead.

Be it remembered that my horror at the sight of Kensal Green Cemetery was due to this, that, odd as it may seem to townsfolk, I had never seen a cemetery before. Well I knew the old graveyards of Gwent, solemn amongst the swelling hills, peaceful in the shadow of very ancient yews. I knew well these garths. There was Henllis, high up on the mountain side, in the place of roaring winds, under the faery dome of Twyn Barlwm. I had lingered there of autumn evenings while the sun set red over the mountains, and a drift of rain came with the gathering darkness, as the yew boughs beat upon the east window of the church. There were graves there with flourished inscriptions, deeply cut, and queer Welsh rhymes — *dyma gareg dêg*: —

Here’s a rare stone — of death.
Beneath it lies
A rarer dust, that shall arise
By heavenly breath alone; and climb the skies —
We trust.

I knew the churchyard of Llanddewi, looking down the steep hillside into the chanting valley of the Soar, and Kemeys, between the Forest and the Usk, and Partrishw, in the heart of the wild mountains beyond Abergavenny. These places of the dead were solemn with old religion, and the tones of *Dirige* and *De Profundis* and *Requiem Æternam* sang still about them on their hills; but this white ghostly city of corruption — there was nothing but horror in it! Still, I see myself on these wanderings, beating to and fro in the stony wilderness, entangled, as I say, in the endless mazes of unknown streets. Now I would succeed in breaking away. I would pass that sad zone of destruction and disgrace that always lies just beyond the furthest points of the suburb. These are the places where the hedges are half ruined, half remaining, where the little winding brook is defiled, but not yet a drain, where one tree lies felled and withered, while its fellow is still all green. Here curbstones impinge on the fields, and show where new, rabid streets are to rush up the sweet hillside and capture it; here the well under the thorn is choked with a cartload of cheap bricks lately deposited. I would pass over these dismal regions and come, as I thought, into the fair open country, and then suddenly at the turn of the lane I would be confronted by red ranks of brand-new villas: this might be Harlesden or the outposts of Willesden.

I think that on the especial occasion that I have in mind the red row of houses must have been some portion or fragment of Harlesden. I remember that, like the cemetery, this impressed me as a wholly new and unforeseen horror, something as strange and terrible as the apparition of a rattlesnake or a boa-constrictor might be to an English child, wandering a little away into the orchard or the wood near the house. I had never lived in a world that might have prepared me for such things; in Gwent — in my day, at all events — there was no such phenomenon as this sudden and violent irruption of red brick in the midst of a green field; and thus when I came round the corner of a peaceful lane and saw in the midst of elms and meadows this staring spectacle, I was as aghast as Robinson Crusoe when he saw the track of the foot on the sand of his desert island.

… And here I would make a parenthesis, and say that so long as my writing habits had any concern with the imagination I never departed from the one formula. This not consciously; in fact, I have a secret doctrine to the effect that in literature no imaginative effects are achieved by logical predetermination. I have told, I think, how I was confronted suddenly and for the first time with the awe and solemnity and mystery of the valley of the Usk, and of the house called Bartholly hanging solitary between the deep forest and the winding esses of the river. This spectacle remained in my heart for years, and at last I transliterated it, clumsily enough, in the story of "The Great God Pan," which, as a friendly critic once said, "does at least make one believe in the devil, if it does nothing else." Here, of course, was my real failure; I translated awe, at worst awfulness, into evil; again, I say, one dreams in fire and works in clay. But, at all events, my method never altered. More legitimately than in the instance of "The Great God Pan" I made the horrid apparition of the crude new houses in the midst of green pastures the seed of my tale, "The Inmost Light," which was originally bound up with "The Great God Pan." And so the man in my story, resting in green fields, looked up and saw a face that chilled his blood gazing at him from the back of one of those red houses that once had frightened me, when I was a sorry lad of twenty, wandering about the verges of London. The doctor of my tale lived in Harlesden.

And if I may pursue this subject farther I would suggest that the whole matter of imaginative literature depends upon this faculty of seeing the universe, from the æonian pebble of the wayside to the raw suburban street as something new, unheard of, marvellous, finally, miraculous. The good people — amongst whom I naturally class myself — feel that everything is miraculous; they are continually amazed at the strangeness of the proportion of all things. The bad people, or scientists as they are sometimes called, maintain that nothing is properly an object of awe or wonder since everything can be explained. They are duly punished.

If we go more deeply into this text of Horror and Harlesden, it will become apparent, I think, that what is called genius is not only of many varying degrees of intensity, but also very distinctly of two parts or functions. There is the passive side of genius, that faculty which is amazed by the strange, mysterious, admirable spectacle of the world, which is enchanted and rapt out of our common airs by hints and omens of an adorable beauty everywhere latent beneath the veil of appearance. Now I think that every man or almost every man is born with the potentiality at all events of this function of genius. *Os homini sublime dedit, cœlumque tueri*: man, as distinct from the other animals, carries his head on high so that he may look upon the heavens; and I think that we may say that this sentence has an interior as well as an exterior meaning. The beasts look downward, to the earth, not only in the letter but in the spirit; they are creatures of material sensation, living by far the greatest part of their lives in a world of hot and cold, hunger and thirst and satisfaction. Man, on the other hand, is by his nature designed to look upward, to gaze into the heavens that are all about him, to discern the eternal in things temporal. Or, as the Priestess of the Holy Bottle defines and distinguishes: the beasts are made to drink water, but men to drink wine. This, the receptive or passive part of genius, is, I say, given to every human being, at least potentially. We receive, each one of us, the magic bean, and if we will plant it it will undoubtedly grow and become our ladder to the stars and the cloud castles. Unfortunately the modern process, so oddly named civilisation, is as killing to this kind of gardening as the canker to the rose; and thus it is that if I want a really nice chair, I must either buy a chair that is from a hundred to a hundred and fifty years old, or else a careful copy or replica of such a chair. It may appear strange to Tottenham Court Road and the modern furniture trade; but it is none the less true that you cannot design so much as a nice arm-chair unless you have gone a little way at all events up the magic beanstalk.

Still, many of us have our portion of the passive or perceptive faculty of genius; we are moved by the wonder of the world; we know ourselves as citizens of an incredible city, we catch stray glimpses of faery Atlantis, drowned beneath the ocean of sense. But it is one thing to dream dreams; and quite another to interpret them, and in this active faculty of interpretation, or translation of the heavenly tongues into earthly speech, there are infinite degrees of excellence. And the masters in this craft of interpretation are few indeed. And the final conclusion — a sad one for me — is that if I could have “translated” the Horror of Harlesden competently I should have been a man of genius.

Still, I see myself all through that year 1883 tramping, loafing, strolling along interminable streets and roads lying to the north-west and the west of London, a shabby, sorry figure; and always alone. I remember walking to Hendon and back — this must have been on a whole holiday — and to this day I can’t think how I found my way there, through what clues I struck from the north parts of Clarendon Road into the Harrow Road, and how I knew when to leave the Edgware Road and bend to the right. Anyhow, I got there and back, tired enough and glad of the half-loaf of bread that awaited me.

Then I became learned in Wormwood Scrubs and its possibilities. It was and is a very barren and bleak place itself, but in those days there was an attractive corner on the Acton side of the waste, that I was fond of contemplating. This was a sort of huddle of old cottages and barns and outhouses with a fringe of elms about them. It did my eyes good then as now to look on something that was old and worn with use and mellow; my eyes that were bleared and aching with the rawness and newness of multitudinous London. To me an old cottage, with its little latticed porch and its tangled garden patch, was veritable balm; I would gaze on such a place with refreshment and delight, as desert travellers must gaze on the cold pools and green leafage of an unexpected oasis. I used to light on these little, humble, pleasant retreats in my walks — there were many more of such cottages in the outskirts of London then than now — and make impossible plans for migrating from the urbanity of Clarendon Road into one of these hidden places, where there would be a garden for me to walk in, and perhaps a summer-house overgrown with white roses, and a little low room with oldish furniture. But I found no such place, and still went prowling in a kind of torment of the spirit by the highways and by-ways of the west. Acton used to do me good; it was then more like a country town than a modern suburb. On the right hand, as you came up from the Uxbridge Road under the railway bridge, there were then some grave and dignified houses of the early Georgian period, with broad lawns before them and big gardens behind them. On the left was the Priory, with spacious and park-like grounds and many greeny elms. Legends about the first Lord Lytton hung about the Priory, and it was whispered that the old lady who kept the lodge-gate had in her day written daring poetry, of the erotic kind. There are laundries and rows and rows of little houses now where the Priory stood; the Georgian houses on the other side of the road have all been pulled down. But I have a notion that the last time I went that way I saw a second-hand bookshop on the London side of the railway bridge, where in ‘83 I bought an old, odd volume of Cowley’s poems.

The second-hand bookshop, which includes the bookstall, is one of the many things that I have dabbled in; but I have never been sworn to the hunt over the old shelves as to a devouring passion. I lack the great incentive: the love of rare books on account of their rarity. I have a great respect for the collector of such things, and I often envy him his sudden joys of discovery; it must be like finding a golden treasure in a rubbish heap; but I could never follow his example. Still, I often used to amuse myself by grubbing about the dusty shelves for an odd hour or two, turning over vast masses of insignificance — of insignificance for me, at all events — conning titles, diving into prefaces, glancing doubtfully over strange pages, wondering whether this or that or the other would bring me the best entertainment for the few shillings that I had to spend. In these new days the young man with a thirst for literature has his labours simplified; the classics of the world are ready for him, nicely printed, in a handy form, and at a low price. He has simply to go into a shop, put down his shilling, and get his book, and it is all over. This would never have done for me. When I bought a book I required and obtained a long drawn-out, deliberated pleasure; I considered that the possession of three-and-sixpence or five shillings entitled me to a whole afternoon’s rich enjoyment. Just as ladies of the suburbs make arrangements — as I understand — to come up to town and do a little shopping, and have a delicate cress-sandwich or two in Regent Street, and then go to a matinée at the theatre, and have creamy cakes for tea before they start back for the red villas: so did I use to travel from Notting Hill Gate to Charing Cross, and stroll up Villiers Street, and walk along the Strand, relishing its savours, which never grew stale to me. For I do believe that the old Strand, before they destroyed it with their porphyries and their marbles and Babylonian fooleries and façades of all sorts, was the very finest street in all the world. I know quite well its manifest and manifold weaknesses and faults, if it were to be regarded from the point of view of a classical town-architect. There was no plan, no design about it, no uniformity; its houses were of all shapes, sizes, periods, and heights; it had no more been designed than a wild hedgerow has been designed. And there, exactly, was its infinite and subtle and curious charm. Nothing could be more urban or urbane than the Strand; and yet it had grown, as the green brake grows, as the cathedrals and the country houses of England grew from age to age, gathering beauty as they increased. The Strand was an altogether English street, and it was the very heart of London. In it, or beside it, were the theatres and the bookshops and the cookshops; to north and south odd passages and stairs and archways admitted the curious into the oddest places and quarters. You were weary of the traffic and the pattering feet? Then you could turn into New Inn or Clement's Inn and enjoy deep silence. You wanted to see the old hugger-mugger of the London back streets, dark taverns of the eighteenth century, where men had lain hidden from the hangman? Here was Clare Market for you. You had heard that "Elzevirs" were very rare and curious books, and would like to see an Elzevir? You would lose your opinion of their rarity, for you would see as many Elzevirs as any man could desire in Holywell Street, where I believe they were to be bought by the sack, as if they had been coals. And Elzevirs apart; the naughty prints and books of Holywell Street were as good as a play. For I believe that the Row had turned naughty somewhere in the early 'fifties; it had then got in its stocks — and had kept them. Here were the works of G. M. W. Reynolds in large volumes; "Mysteries of the Court of St. James," and such weariness. Here was the faded coloured engraving of a young female of extreme gaiety — with ringlets, and the appearance of the chambermaid in the once-famous print, "Sherry, sir." And with all the curiosity, and variety, and oddity and richness of the Strand, it had the while a manner of snug homeliness and cosiness and comfort about it which was quite inimitable. To be in the Strand was like drinking punch and reading Dickens. One felt it was such a warmhearted, hospitable street, if one only had a little money. Unfortunately, I was never on dining terms, as it were, with the Strand; but I always felt that if it only knew me it would have called me "old boy" and given me its choicest saddles of mutton and its oldest port, and I felt grateful. Somehow I always warmed my hands when I got into the Strand … and they were often chilly enough.

Such, then, was my preparation for a book-foray in the heart of London, this relished, leisurely, savoury walk along the Strand; and then I might dive into Clare Market by Clement's Inn and look for mystery books in a certain shop that I knew there. I bought one of the most curious — I do not say the best — books in the world, Vaughan's "Lumen de Lumine" in a shop in Clare Market, and still I should be much obliged if someone would tell me what "Lumen de Lumine" is about. Or I might try Denny's, at the western end of Booksellers' Row, or like enough go grovelling round the shelves of Reeves and Turner, who were then in the southern bend of the Strand, opposite to St. Clement Dane's Church.

One dull afternoon, I remember, I ran to earth in this shop on a lower shelf a dim, brown elderly-looking book in cloth covers called "Ferrier's Institutes of Metaphysic." It repaid me many times over for the couple of shillings that I gave for it. I took Ferrier home in delight to the little room in Clarendon Road, and made a great deal of green tea, and found the dry bread of quite admirable flavour, and smoked pipes and read the new book far into the night. Before I went to bed Ferrier had quite convinced me of the truth of the proposition — which looked odd at first — that we can only be ignorant of that which we can know. This means, of course, that no man can be ignorant of the existence of four-sided triangles; which is evident enough. But as I fell asleep, I felt I had had a tremendous day.

I look back upon myself in that little room in Clarendon Road with some amazement. I come in from one of my long, prowling walks — I may have been to Hounslow to look for the Heath, or I may have been to Hampton Court — and make my meal of bread and tea, and then settle down to tobacco and literature. I find that my landlady turns off the gas at the meter at midnight, so I provide myself with carriage candles, which I fix up somehow on the table. I read on night after night. It may be Homer's "Odyssey," or it may be "Don Quixote" — to which I have been faithful ever since I found the book in the drawing-room of Llanfrechfa Rectory — it may be that singular magazine of oddities, Disraeli's "Curiosities of Literature," it may be Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy"; a great refuge, this last, a world of literature in itself. Or I am reading Pepys for the first time, with ravishment, or Pomponius Mela "De Situ Orbis" in a noble Stephanus quarto, or Harris's "Hermes," or Hargrave Jennings on the Rosicrucians; this last one of the craziest and most entertaining of books, which had a little later an odd influence on my fortunes. It was a sad blow to me to find out afterwards, chiefly through the medium of A. E. Waite's "Real History of the Rosicrucians," that, as a cold matter of fact, there were no Rosicrucians. A Lutheran pastor who had read Paracelsus, wrote, early in the seventeenth century, a pamphlet describing a secret order which had no existence outside of his brain. Naturally enough, societies arose which imitated, so far as they could, the imaginary organisation described by the fantastic Johannes Valentinus Andrea; I should not be surprised, indeed, to be told that such societies are now in being in modern London; but these orders are late "fakes"; the 'seventies and 'eighties of the last century saw their beginnings. There are no Rosicrucians — and there never were any.

Or I am reading Carlyle— "Sartor Resartus" or the Johnson and Burns and Walter Scott Essays — and I must say that I think a good many young men of this age would be all the better for a Carlyle course. For though Carlyle was not the prophet of full inspiration that the time just before my own imagined, though he exalted brute force into a place that belongs to the Divine Wisdom, though his original Calvinism hung like a dark and obscuring cloud over all his life, yet I know not any man of these days that is worthy to dust Carlyle's hat or to clean his pipe for him.

There is a passage in the Johnson essay telling how the poor, agonised, heroic doctor made for himself a boat of the transient driftwood and enduring iron, and sailed down Fleet Ditch, "the roaring mother of dead dogs," to the City that hath foundations; the phrases ring still in my heart, noble music; worthier stuff than the prophecies of to-day — or should I say of yesterday? These, so far as I can make out, bid us abstain from meat and beer and tobacco, and the State shall give us a pound a day and save our souls alive. This message does not ring in my heart a noble music; I think Carlyle would have called it "a damned potato gospel." I read Carlyle, then, in my little room, and find a strange encouragement and strength in him. His picture of life is of a bitter struggle, and so indeed I find it — at twenty. Man, in Carlyle, is a poor wretch in thin and ragged clothes, out on a blasted heath, with all the heavens and all the clouds crashing and pouring upon him; blackness over him, hailstorms and fire showers his portion in the world. Get into whatever kennel or doghole you can find, says Carlyle, and shelter yourself from the blast so long as you can keep it, and be thankful. I liked the doctrine then, and it still seems to me a very good philosophy.

So I read and meditated night after night, and I am amazed at the utter loneliness of it all, when I contrast this life of mine with the beginnings of other men of letters. These others have often gathered friends of all sorts, both useful and pleasant, at the University; they have come of well-known stocks, every step they take is eased for them, their way is pointed out, there are hands to help them over the rough and difficult places. Or, even if they have not been at Oxford or Cambridge, if they have not come of "kent folk," they know, somehow or other, young fellows of their own age, with whom they can engage in endless talk about letters over eternal pipes and ever-welling tankards. One informs another, one, consciously or unconsciously, charts the other's way for him. I am often made quite envious when I see and hear how a young man, fresh on the town, drops so easily, so pleasantly, so delightfully into a quite distinguished place in literature before he is twenty-five. He enters the world of letters as a perfectly well-bred man enters a room full of a great and distinguished company, knowing exactly what to say, and how to say it; everyone is charmed to see him; he is at home at once; and almost a classic in a year or two.

And I, all alone in my little room, friendless, desolate; conscious to my very heart of my stuttering awkwardness whenever I thought of attempting the great speech of literature; wandering, bewildered, in the world of imagination, not knowing whither I went, feeling my way like a blind man, stumbling like a blind man, like a blind man striking my head against the wall, for me no help, no friends, no counsel, no comfort.

Somehow or other, out of a welter of reading of the most miscellaneous and shapeless sort, out of long walks and long meditations, out of moonings and loafings by Brentford and the parts thereto adjacent, there rose up in the spring of 1883 the beginnings of something that had a vague resemblance to a book. I had finished that miserable "poem" which attempted the manner of William Morris, and from that time my attacks of verse-writing became brief and trifling, causing no uneasiness. And, this trouble happily over, I became immersed in the study of scholastic logic, and gave many days and nights to Whately's "Elements." I got Thomson also, and dallied with the quantification of the predicate, but I found such devices too new-fangled; what I wanted was the logic of the mediæval schools, and in this I took a singular and intense delight.

And here is a paradox, which may be worthy the consideration of the curious: that age which was above all the age of logic, was also the age of the most luxuriant and splendid imagination. The scholars and thinkers of the Middle Ages have been reproached with idolising the logical process to a point of utter extravagance, with treating the syllogism as a sort of divining rod by which all the treasures of the spiritual, intellectual, and physical worlds could be discovered and drawn up from the dark womb and chaos of things into the light of the sun. These reproaches, I think, have chiefly proceeded from people to whom exact thinking has proved unpleasant and unprofitable; but it is certainly true that the logical art was deeply and profoundly and constantly studied in the thirteenth century — which was the age of the marvellous imagery, the great magistry of the Gothic cathedrals, of the Arthurian romances, of Dante. Nay, it is interesting to note that Coleridge and De Quincey, two main agents of the "renascence of wonder" at the beginning of the nineteenth century, were both practised logicians. It would seem, therefore, that the dream and the syllogism have between them a certain secret alliance and bond, and so, naturally enough, two of the most extravagant dreams, "Alice in Wonderland," and "Alice Through the Looking-Glass," were the visions of a master of logic. As for the Snark, I can inform the inquisitive as to his true abode. He dwells in the place that is called Bocardo.

And so I steeped myself in these rare and entrancing studies, for such they seemed, and still seem to me. And thus I would sit on a bench on that bald, arid, detestable Shepherd's Bush Green, and be in reality, though not in actuality — let us for the moment adapt our discourse to the matter, and make the distinction — in cool, grey cloisters of the Middle Ages, walking in the silvery light with the Master of the Sentences, with the Angelic Doctor, listening to the high, interminable argument of the Schools. High, indeed, as dealing with immortal essences, not with monkeys' guts; interminable also in the manner of the cathedral rushing upwards to the stars which it cannot attain, of the old modes in which there are no true closes, but rather hints of undying melodies far beyond their endings; interminable, according to the dictum of one of these dark-robed Masters; *omnia exeunt in mysterium*. For there is a quest to which there is no term, nor bound, nor limit: *pelagus vastissimum*. Meditating these things, the jangling of the old horse trams might disturb me, and I would carry my quiddities to green fields by Hanger Hill, or to solitary places in Osterley Park, beyond Brentford, and so muse till the shadows came and sent me homeward under the twinkling, wavering lamps of those far-off days. Then for much tobacco, the disjunctive hypothetical syllogism and the strict rigour of the game. I am afraid very little of the old science has remained with me, but now and then I come with some amusement on distinguished personages engaged in what they suppose is argument. I see no arguments; but undistributed middle terms are thick as October leaves in Wentwood.

From such a soil, then, the thing that had certain resemblances to a book rose up and gradually took shape, so far as it ever had any shape. It came up out of my logic books and out of Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy," and so it was called "The Anatomy of Tankards." For, having enough sense, even though I was only twenty, to know that I could not write a serious treatise concerning the high doctrines that entranced me, I wrote a grave burlesque of what I loved. I examined into the essence of the tankard, I sought deeply into its quiddity, I divided its properties from its accidents, and distinguished again between the separable and inseparable accidents. I showed philosophically and conclusively that if there were no tankards there would be no men, that is, no rational or civilised men. For the ancient Greeks truly taught that man was raised from the brutish to the spiritual state by Bacchus, the giver of the vine. By wine is man made divine; and a diviner, says Bacbuc: and since wine must be contained before it can be drunk, it is clear that without tankards man cannot become divine; that is, cannot be man at all, in the proper sense of the term. And so on, and so on, with an infinite deal of easy dictionary learning, with much twisting of my logic formulæ; it was all too elaborate, elephantine, prolonged; a little thing that might have been well enough in its way drawn out into a big thing, and so spoiled. Still, I was only twenty, and twenty is apt to worry its bone long after all the meat has disappeared.

But if I could only have written the real book — that is, the dreamed, intended book — and not the actual book! Then, I promise you, you should have had high fantasies; not only arguments that began with a pebble by the way and rose upward to the evening star, that deduced all the shining worlds in an ineffable sorites from one mere letter of the alphabet. You should not only have been in at the death when Achilles caught at last the tortoise and passed him by, spurning his body into that utter void where parallel straight lines meet; you should have had an English Rabelais.

I remember taking my thoughts of the book up to Ealing Common one autumn evening. The work was drawing to a close, and I stood meditating the matter, looking from the height down towards Brentford. There was a wild sunset, scarlet and green and gold, and as it were, gardens of Persian roses, far in the evening sky. I stood by an old twisted oak, and thought of my book as I would have made it, and sighed, and so went home and made it as I could.

Chapter VI

THE KIND OF life that I have been trying to indicate lasted for about eighteen months, and then my pupils mysteriously disappeared. Mysteriously, I say, for I have completely forgotten what became of them, and by what ways they left me. At all events, they vanished, and I, being destitute, returned to Gwent and my old home. There they were almost as poor as poverty, but they were glad to see me. And I, waking in the morning to the brave breath from the mountain, wandering in the sunshine — it was summer-time — about the gardens and the orchards, revisiting the green, delicious heart of the twisted brake, listening once more to the water bubbling from the rock; I thought I had been translated from hell to paradise.

For, be it remembered, I have dealt gently with the days of Clarendon Road. I have spoken for the most part of the happier hours, of eager reading, of finding an enchanting book on dusty shelves, on the delights of the mind, on the capacity of changing dreary, common Shepherd's Bush into the cloistered walks of the Schools, on the joy of obtaining some kind of literary utterance. I have said little of the black days and the waste nights, of the desolation that would sometimes engulf me as it were with a deep flood. For many weeks at a time I never spoke to any human being; save to my pupils on Euclid and Cæsar, and this was a speech that was no speech. And being born, I believe, with at least the usual instincts of human fellowship and a great love of all genial interchanges of thought and opinion, this silence seared my spirit; to the interior sense I must have shown as something burnt and blasted with ice-winds and fires. Indeed, when I was released from this life in the manner that I have described, I came out, as it were, a prisoner from the black pit of his dungeon, all confused, trembling, and afraid, scarce able to bear the light of genial affection. For a long while I spoke but little, and then with difficulty; I was fast losing the habit of speech. Indeed, the eighteen months in Clarendon Road had been a very grave experience; but I think that what affected my relations most in my demeanour was this: for a long time I would cut myself a piece of dry bread at tea, and munch it mechanically, having forgotten all about the use of butter. This struck them as dreadful; one might be poor, but to eat dry bread was more than poverty; it was beggary. When my aunt first noticed this trick of mine, she pushed the butter dish towards me, saying in a disturbed voice that there was no need for *that* any more.

And for many days I was in a sort of swoon of delight. I had no desire for activities of any kind; I had all the happy languor of the convalescent about me. It was bliss to stroll gently in that delicious air, to watch the mists vanishing from the mountain-side in the morning, to see again the old white farms beneath Twyn Barlwm and Mynydd Maen gleaming in the sunlight, to lie in deep green shade and to feel that I was at home again; that my troubles were over. I did not fret myself by inquiring as to whether they would not begin again. Indeed, in this first passion of relief, I loved to imagine myself as dwelling for the rest of my days amidst friendly faces in a friendly land, and devoting, say, fifty years to healing the wounds of eighteen months. It is a sorry thing to be but twenty-one and to feel so.

But it is thus, I suppose, that the man of the imaginative cast of mind pays, and pays heavily, for whatever qualities he may possess, and it will always be a question whether the price exacted be not too dear and beyond all proportion to the value received. But the case, I apprehend, is this: Mr. Masefield has said, very finely, that literature is the art of presenting the world as it were *in excess*. To the lovers in Mr. Stephen Phillips's drama of "Paolo and Francesca" the earth appears a greener green, the heavens a bluer blue; all beautiful things are raised to a higher power by the fire of their passion; the whole world is alchemised. And this state, which is a result of love, is the condition of imaginative work in literature, and so the man who is to make romances sees everything and feels everything acutely, or, as Mr. Masefield says, excessively. Now there would be nothing amiss in this state of things if these exalted and intensified perceptions could be utilised when there was a question of making a book and then abrogated and laid aside with pen and ink and paper. Unluckily, however, this cannot be so managed; and too often the dealer in dreams finds that his magic magnifying glass is tight fixed to his eyes and cannot be moved. And thus a mere common bore or nuisance appears to him as dreadful as Nero or Heliogabalus, the possibility of missing a train is as tragical as "Hamlet," and the pettiest griefs swell into the hugest sorrows.

I, in truth, had suffered; I had been through a dreary and a dismal experience enough; but my pains had racked me to excess; the pinpricks, unpleasant in plain earnest, had become stabs of a poisoned dagger. And so I came back to Gwent as to Avalon; there to heal me of my grievous wounds. So, as I say, it was mercifully given to me to saunter under the apple trees in July and August weather, to watch the sun and the wind on the quivering woods, to wander alone, and yet how deeply consoled and medicined, by the winding Soar Valley. Now and again I recollected, as I hope we shall recollect earthly torments in Paradise, as things over and paid for, the interminable, cruel labyrinths of London. I saw myself again, a half-starved, unhappy, desolate wretch astray in those intolerable, friendless, stony mazes of Notting Hill and Paddington and Harrow Road; I came again by obscene, obscure paths to Kensal Green, the place of the whited sepulchres. Or the hideous raw row of suburban houses would suddenly confront me, surging up, a foul growth, from the green meadow, or the sick reek of the brickfields by Acton Vale blew in my nostrils. And the grim little room and solitude for the end of every journey!

I recollected these things, but though only days or weeks had been interposed between my happy state and my endurance of them they were as torments suffered in some remote æon. I said to myself, “I am as they that rest at last,” and almost heard the words *In Convertendo*: with whatso in that psalm is after written.

Among the books that I kept in my step-ladder library in Clarendon Road I mentioned that queer piece of sham learning and entertaining extravagance “The Rosicrucians: Their Rites and Mysteries,” by Hargrave (or Hargreave?) Jennings. I said that this odd volume had eventually a curious influence on my life; and this was as follows: I was reading Herodotus and that portion of Herodotus which treats of Egypt — I have long ago forgotten the Muse which names the book — and Herodotus, it will be remembered, was very deeply interested in the Mysteries of the Egyptian religion. In treating of these occult things of Osiris the historian mentions certain singular matters which were highly pertinent to Mr. Jennings’s thesis — if Mr. Jennings could be said to have had anything so definite as a thesis. But “The Rosicrucians” contained no mention of that which Herodotus had seen when night was on the Nile, so I ventured to write to the ingenious author, pointing out the particular passage which, I thought, would interest him. Mr. Jennings did not answer my letter; he was odd to extremity in most things, but in this particular he conformed perfectly to all the literary men whom I encountered in my early days. I came into contact with four or five men of a certain reputation; or perhaps I should say I came within sight of them; and they could very easily have flung me a word or two of encouragement, which would have been very precious to me then. But I never had that word, and so was forced to go on and do my best without it; the better way, no doubt, but a hard way. But though the author of "The Rosicrucians" did not reply to my letter, he passed my name and address to another man, a young fellow who had just set up as a publisher, and was going to issue one of the astounding Jennings books. So Davenport, the publisher, sent me his catalogue of new and second-hand books, and I, on reading it, sent him the manuscript of my "Anatomy of Tankards."

Here a parenthesis, if not several parentheses. We are now in 1884, and I had finished the "Anatomy" in the autumn of 1883. Soon after it was ended I sent the MS. to a gentleman who was then but in a small way. He is now a very eminent publisher indeed, and loved so much by his authors — by some of them at all events — as to be known as "Uncle." Well, "Uncle" (though, alas! it was not fated that he should ever be uncle-in-letters of mine) sent back the MS. in due season with a letter that almost made up for any disappointment my first "boomerang" may have occasioned.

His letter delighted me, not because it was specially complimentary, nor because it gave evidence of a careful and critical reading of the rejected manuscript, but because it was almost a replica of the publisher's letter which introduces Mr. Tobias Smollett's admirable epistolary romance, "Humphry Clinker." My actual publisher so resembled Smollett's feigned bookseller in the manner of his letter that I should suppose the one had deliberately made the other his model, did I not know "Uncle" to be far too good a man to read such a book as "Humphry Clinker." I have not got my Smollett by me, I am sorry to say, so I cannot quote, but I may mention that both publishers made a very liberal use of the dash, or mark of parenthesis, and were curious in avoiding the word "I."

My letter ran somewhat as follows: —

"Dear Sir,

“Referring to your favour of the 17th ult., enclosing MS. of work, ‘Anatomy of Tankards’ — have read MS. with interest — fear it would hardly command large sale — have had little encouragement to speculate lately — would recommend topic of more general public interest — hoping to have pleasure of hearing from you on some future occasion.

“Etc. etc.”

I was delighted, only a few years ago, to find that “Uncle’s” hand has not lost its epistolary cunning. A distinguished friend of mine had been good enough of his own motion — not with my knowledge — to write to this publisher suggesting that a book by me would ornament his catalogue. The publisher approached me by letter. I wrote to him briefly, saying that I was just finishing a romance. He wrote back: “Sorry you speak of a romance — fear there is very little sale for those old things — however,” etc. etc.

I did not trouble to go into whatever might lie beyond the portals of “however.” But note the phrase, “those old things.” It seems to me more precious than gold that has passed the furnace.

But to return from this backwater of narrative; I found Mr. Davenport established in an old street in the quarter of Covent Garden. I got to know this street well afterwards, and to like it, too, for all its associations and circumstances. Over the way, opposite to Davenport’s offices, was the house where they said De Quincey had written his great book; there were theatrical shops all tinsel and wigs and grease paints close at hand, and on market days the street was all apack with carts and waggons and clamorous with marketmen who are still a rough and primitive and jovial race. Indeed, the market overflowed into York Street and submerged it, and I have had to leap over an undergrowth of green, springing ferns established on the office steps. Mr. Davenport had written me a very agreeable letter, and we had a very agreeable interview. The book on his publication-list which had attracted my attention was called “Tavern Talk and Maltworms’ Gossip,” and an admirable little anthology it was, compiled (as I found out afterwards) by Davenport himself. I thought there was a certain congruity between this book and my “Anatomy of Tankards,” hence the despatch of the manuscript to York Street. The publisher liked my book very much. He wanted to publish it badly; but there were certain preliminaries to be adjusted before this could be done, and I did not see how the obstacle could be surmounted. This conference took place at that singular hour of my career when my pupils seemed to melt away from me, as though they had been morning dew. I was just bound for the country, and the publisher agreed to hold the little matter of which I have spoken in suspense.

So I went westward, and there in Gwent there were kind people who had known my father all his days, and my grandfather before him, and so, for the sake of "the family," they helped me to arrange those "preliminaries." And, after all, perhaps it is fair enough that a man should pay his footing when he enters the craft.

So here was another element or elixir in the potion of my bliss, that I was drinking among those dearly-beloved hills and woods of Gwent. The bad old days were all over, and my torments were past; Clarendon Road and all its sad concatenations were like a black wrack of cloud seen far down on the horizon, as the sun rises splendid on a bright and happy day. I was come to the territory of Caerleon-on-Usk which was Avalon; and every herb of the fields and all the leaves of the wood, and the waters of all wells and streams were appointed for my healing. And my book was going to be published; I was to see myself in print, between covers — vegetable vellum they turned out to be — and I should be reviewed in London newspapers; and, not a doubt of it, be happy ever after.

Mr. Pecksniff, it will be remembered, spoke of the melancholy sweetness of youthful hopes. "I remember thinking once myself, in the days of my childhood, that pickled onions grew on trees, and that every elephant was born with an impregnable castle on his back. I have not found the fact to be so; far from it." Nor have I found "the fact" to be so. Still, these visions of fair print and title-pages and reviews are very pleasant in the green of youth, and they helped to make that summer of 1884 delightful for me. I "worked in" the thought of the coming proof-sheets — even the anticipation of a proof-sheet is almost too much joy at twenty-one — into my escape from hard bondage, into the summer sunlight, into the odours of the solemn woods at night, into the cool breath of the brook, into the twilight fires of the sky above Twyn Barlwm. They were brave days while they lasted.

And now and again I had gallant tramps over the country with my old friend Bill Rowlands. I saw Bill a couple of years ago, after an interval of a quarter of a century, and Bill wore a long black coat and a solemn collar, having been a clerk in holy orders for many years. But when I began to speak of the little tavern at Castell-y-Bwch there was a twinkle in Bill's eye, and at the mention of the chimes of Usk, we both laughed till we cried — and perhaps we did cry internally. But I said to Bill, "Now I am going to take you to the Café Royal; it's the best I can do for you. But I wish it were the Three Salmons at Usk!" — where, if I remember rightly, we had bread and cheese and a great deal of beer and hot brandy and water to follow.

But that was a great day. We had gone over hill and dale, through the depths of woods and over waste lands, finding footpaths in the most unsuspected places that we had never dreamed of. And I remember that these footpaths gave me a singular impression of travelling in time — backwards, not forwards, as in Mr. Wells's enchantment. For the track of feet was but barely marked, and seemed on the point to fade away altogether, and the stiles that we climbed were of old, old oak, whitened and riven with age, and the outlets of these paths were into deep, forgotten lanes where no one came. And if one passed a house, it was roofless and ruinous; its gable-wall standing grey, with fifteenth-century corbel stones. The garden wall was fallen into a heap of stones, and the fruit trees were dead or straggled into wildness. So it seemed to me that we had fallen on old ways that were not of our day at all, and no one, perhaps, had been there for fifty or a hundred years, and if we saw anyone it would not be a man of our time. Bill, I am convinced, thought nothing of all this; his talk was of B.N.C. and mad tricks and all the mirth in the world, and I warmed the chilled hands of my spirit at his gaiety, as I had longed to warm my bodily hands at the watchman's brazier, glowing red in the cold London street. So Bill and I came at last into Caerleon, having succeeded by much extraordinary wandering in making five miles into ten, and at Caerleon we drank old ale at the Hanbury Arms, which is a mediæval hostelry, close to the Roman tower by the river. And then nothing would satisfy us but to go to Usk by the old road; again, ten miles instead of five, but with our "short cut" imposed upon it, a good fifteen miles.

The way goes over the river; on the right are King Arthur's Round Table and the relics of the Roman city wall of Isca Silurum, as the Second Augustan Legion, garrisoned at Caerleon, called the place. Then through the village, still known in my days as Caerleon-ultra-pontem, and so into that most wonderful, enchanted, delicious road that winds under the hillside, under deep Wentwood, above the solemn curves and esses of the river. We passed Bulmore, which does not mean a moor of bulls, but pwll mawr, the great pool, of the Usk river. It is a farmhouse now, but once a retired officer of the 2nd Augustan had his villa here, and his graveyard also: and here, I think, in the orchard, as they were planting some young trees, they found the stone inscribed: *Ave, Julia, carissima conjux; in æternum vale*. Hail, Julia, dearest wife; farewell for ever.

And here, to the best of my belief, Bill was telling me how an undergraduate friend of his at B.N.C., a schoolfellow of mine, found himself under the painful necessity of screwing up the Dean in his rooms; the screws employed being coffin-screws, headless, that is, and not to be extracted without enormous pains.

We went on our way by the river, and passed under Kemeys, a noble grey old house, with mullioned windows and Elizabethan chimneys. There is such a peace about this place, such a sweetness from the wood, such a refreshment from the water, so grave a repose upon it, that I translated to Kemeys one of my heroes, a clerk in Shepherd’s Bush. This clerk had found out that all the bustle and activity of modern life are delusions and wild errors, and his reward was to be that he should end his days at Kemeys, sheltered from all turmoil and vanity, garnered from the evil world.

The peace of Kemeys was the peace of all the valley of the Usk, and what balms it exhibited to my spirit only those can know who have been bred in such places, and have experienced the jar and dust and racket of some great town, and then have returned to the old groves.

My friend Bill and I went swinging along the winding lane beside the winding river, and as we went the sound of pouring waters sang to us. For now the over-runnings of the wells of Wentwood came from the hill as rivulets, and about each stream its twisted thicket grew, accompanying it all down the steep, to the river below. We passed little Kemeys church, watching above the pools of the Usk, and then on the hillside, almost in the shadow of the forest, was Bartholly, that solitary house which awed me for years, so that I made my awe into a tale. And here was Newbridge, crossing a river that had now ceased to be tidal and yellow, and had become glassy clear, and so on northward, and it seemed into silences and solitudes that grew ever deeper and more solemn, more evidently declaring the great art-magic of God that has made all the world. The day drew on, the sun sank below wild unknown hills — neither of us had ever been this way before — and the green world was dim for a while, and then was lighted up with the red flames of the afterglow. The evening redness appeared, and in those fires the ash tree became of immortal growth, the round hills rose above no earthly land, the winding river was a faery stream. Then, veil upon veil rising from the level, rising from the fountains in the wood, mists closing in upon us.

My friend Bill said we should never get to Usk at this rate; he felt sure that there must be a short cut across the fields. So we took the first stile that appeared and set out over country that was utterly unknown to us; and the marvel was that we ever got to Usk at all — or to anywhere for the matter of that. I have a confused recollection of walking for hours in a gathering darkness, through jungles and brakes of dark wood, climbing hills that rose fantastic as out of dreamland, going down into dusky valleys where white mist rose icy from the courses of the brooks, threading an uncertain way through quaking marshland, and the regions of the distance as vague as shapes of smoke.

The bells were ringing nine when we came out of this dim world into Usk, and to the lights and cheerfulness of the Three Salmons, to ale and to laughter. There was a wonderful old fellow, a Water Bailiff, making the mirth of that cheerful, ancient parlour; and he told us of the tricks he had played on poachers and fishermen till we roared again. He was a fellow of strange disguises; if one of his stories were to be believed he had caught the most famous salmon poacher of the Usk by assuming the gait and utterance of a calf seeking for its mother at midnight. The tale may have been true; it was certainly an excellent entertainment.

Such was one of our days; and again we would go wandering over the mountains to west and to northward; climbing up into great high wild places of yellow gorse and grey limestone rocks, stretching and mounting onward and still beyond, so that one said in one’s heart “for ever and ever. Amen.” High up there; the sunlight on that golden gorse, on the yellow lichens that encrusted the rocks ringed in old Druid circles, the great sweet wind that blew there, the heart of youth that rejoiced there, all the dear shining land of Gwent far below us, glorious; it is all an old song.

And there was a day on which we mounted over Mynydd Maen and came down into a valley in the very heart of the mountains, and walked there all the day, and in the evening returned again over the mountain at the southern end, winding under Twyn Barlwm as the twilight fell. It is only music, I think, that could image the wonder of the red sky over the faery dome, and the gathering dusk of the night as it fell on the rocks of that high land, on the streams rushing vehemently down into the darkness of the valley, on the lower woods, on the white farms, gleaming and then vanishing away. Only by music, if at all, can such things be expressed, since they are ineffable; not to be uttered in any literal or logical speech of men. And if one looks a little more closely into the nature of things it will become pretty plain, I think, that all that really matters and really exists is ineffable; that both the world without us — the tree and the brook and the hill — and the world within us do perpetually and necessarily transcend all our powers of utterance, whether to ourselves or to others. Night and day, sunrise and moonrise, and the noble assemblage of the stars, are continually exhibited to us, and we are forced to confess that not for one moment can we proclaim these appearances adequately. We stammer confusedly about them, much as a savage who had been taken through the National Gallery might stammer a few broken sentences, the applicability of which would be more or less dubious. “Woman — very bright round head,” might be the Blackfellow’s “description” of a famous Madonna; and a Turner would be summed up as “plenty clouds — one big tree.” And in like manner we, confronted, not only with things remote and majestic, but with things familiar and near at hand, stutter a few lame sentences, endeavouring to describe what we have seen. And thus all literature can be but an approximation to the truth; not the “truth” of science, for that is a figment of the brain, a non-existent monster, like dragons, griffins, and basilisks; but to that truth which Keats perceived to be identical with beauty. And it is further evident that even this approximation to the truth of things is a matter of the utmost difficulty and not very far from a miracle, inasmuch as in a generation of men there are only two or three who achieve it, who in consequence are hailed as men of the highest genius.

Of course, there are persons for whom “truth” implies “even gilt-edged securities slumped heavily,” or some such statement. To them, I tender my sincere apologies.

The proof-sheets of my book began to appear early in that autumn of ‘84; they made me rapturous reading. And while I was correcting them, with a vast sense of the importance and dignity of the task, Davenport, the publisher, was writing to me, asking if I had any ideas for new books, and throwing out suggestions of his own.

Now this was very pleasant, for it all tended to persuade me, in spite of any doubts and fears of mine, that I was really a literary man. I would read Davenport’s letters again and again, and deliberate gravely with myself over the answering of them; I enjoyed this very much indeed. But the correspondence led to no practical result; because I could not then — or ever — perform the Indian mango trick. The expert conjurers of the East, as is well known — in magazine fiction — will put a seed into a flower pot, cover up for a second or two, and lo! there is a little plant. Again the concealment; the plant has grown, and so forth, till within the space of five minutes you can gather ripe mangoes from the tree that you saw sown. This is the mango trick of fiction; that of fact, as I have seen it, is about the dreariest and most ineffective piece of conjuring imaginable. But, as I say, I could never imitate those fabled Orientals. If Mr. Murray and Mr. Longman were to jostle one another on my doorstep, clamouring for a masterpiece, and offering Arabian terms, it would make no difference; if I had no book within me, I should not be able to produce one on demand. In practice, I have found that I take about ten years to grow these things; though I have one in my mind now that was first thought of in 1898-99 and is not yet begun.

So Mr. Davenport’s letters produced no literature, interesting though they were; and I must say that a less sluggish mind would have found them stimulating in a high degree. But the literary publisher struck on cold iron; he suggested, I remember, a volume of scathing criticism— “like Mozley’s Essays” — as likely to receive his most favourable attention. But, really, I could not think of anybody that I particularly wanted to scathe — now, perhaps, I could oblige a publisher in search of anathemas and Ernulphus curses — and I had not read Mozley, nor have I read him to this day. Then I, on my side, suggested a book to be called “A Quiet Life,” this being, in fact, a description of the life that I was then gratefully and gladly leading. I sent a specimen chapter, and so far as I remember Davenport counselled me to defer the writing of *that* sort of book till I was eighty or thereabouts. I daresay he was right. Then my half-dozen copies of "The Anatomy of Tankards" reached me; and I believe that as soon as I saw the book printed and complete in its (vegetable) vellum boards I began to be ashamed of it. I think that this was hard lines, but the trick has been played on me again and again; and I do believe that a moderate, not excessive, dose of the good conceit of oneself is one of the chiefest boons that parents should beg from fairy godmothers for their offspring. For life is necessarily full of such buffetings and duckings, such kicks and blows and pummellings, that balms and elixirs and medicaments of healing are most urgently indicated, and there is nothing equal to this same rectified spirit of conceit. It may tend to make a man an ass, but it is better — or more agreeable, anyhow — to be an ass than to be miserable.

Then came the reviews, and they did me some good, for, as far as I remember them, they were kindly and indulgent. I think the critic of the "St. James's Gazette," then in its glory under the editorship of Greenwood, spoke of "this witty and humorous book," while he said, with absolute justice, that I had ruined the popularity of my parodies by their prolixity. Then the publisher, despairing, I suppose, of getting any ideas out of me, produced a notion of his own. He sent me three or four French texts of the "Heptameron," and bade me render it into the best English that I had within me; and so I did forthwith, for the sum of twenty pounds sterling. I wrote every night when the house was still, and every day I carried the roll of copy down the lane to meet the postman on his way to Caerleon-on-Usk.

And so my story has come round full circle. In the first of these chapters I told how the kindly speaker at the Persian Club, praising my version of the French classic, transported me in an instant from that shining banqueting hall in the heart of London, over the bridge of thirty years, into the shadows of the deep lane. Again it was the autumn evening, and the November twilight was passing into the gloom of night. There was a white ghost of the day in the sky far down in the west; but the bare woods were darkening under the leaden clouds; the familiar country grew into a wild land.

And I, with time to spare, walk slowly, meditatively down the hill, holding my manuscript, hoping that the day's portion has been well done. As I come to the stile there sounds faint through the rising of the melancholy night wind the note of the postman’s horn. He has climbed the steep road that leads from Llandegveth village and is now two or three fields away.

It grows very dark; the waiting figure by the stile vanishes into the gloom. I can see it no more.

THE END

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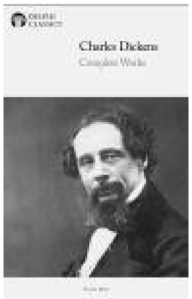

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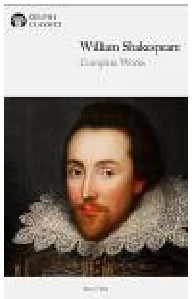

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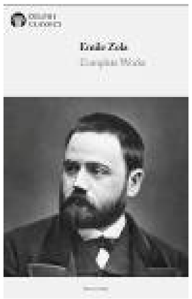

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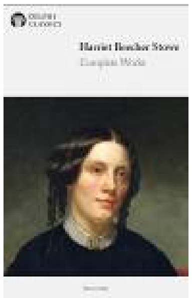

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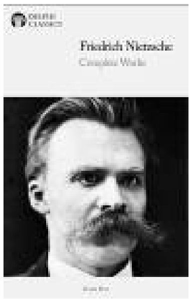
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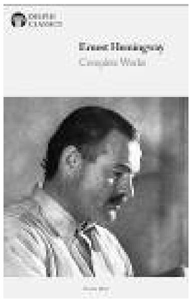
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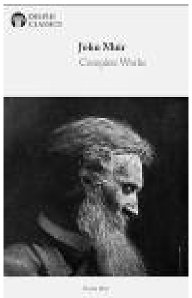

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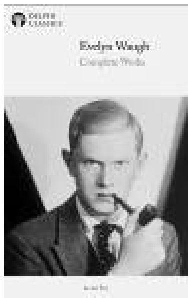

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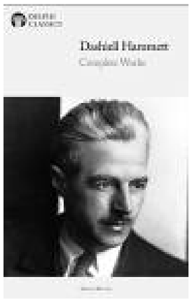
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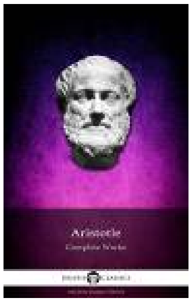
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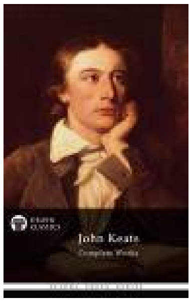

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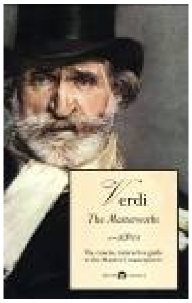

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